

# Engaging all young people in meaningful learning after 16: A survey

Gregor Jackson and Annabel Hudson

ICM

# **Engaging all young people in meaningful learning after 16: A survey**

**Gregor Jackson**

**Annabel Hudson**



© Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

First published Spring 2009

ISBN 978 1 84206 132 9

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report Series**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report Series publishes research carried out for the Commission by commissioned researchers

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Commission. The Commission is publishing the report as a contribution to discussion and debate.

Please contact the Research Team for further information about other Commission research reports, or visit our website:

Research Team  
Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Arndale House  
The Arndale Centre  
Manchester  
M4 3AQ

Email: [research@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:research@equalityhumanrights.com)

Telephone: 0161 829 8500

Website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

You can download a copy of this report as a PDF from our website:  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com/researchreports](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/researchreports)

If you require this publication in an alternative format, please contact the Communications Team to discuss your needs at:  
[communications@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:communications@equalityhumanrights.com)

# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Tables</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Figures</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aims of the research	1
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Profile of the sample	3
1.5 Interpretation of the data	3
1.6 Report structure	4
<b>2. How well do young people think they are doing and how engaged</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Are young people doing well?	5
2.3 Do young people feel able to improve their situation?	6
2.4 Dropping out	8
2.5 Summary	10
<b>3. Factors affecting engagement in learning at school</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Introduction	12
3.2 Happiness at school	12
3.3 Feeling physically and emotionally safe at school	13
3.4 Subject relevance and style of teaching helps learning	15
3.5 Had a say in the education received	17
3.6 Ease of learning/equal treatment/ability to realise potential	18
3.7 Worried about failure	20
3.8 Summary	21
<b>4. Support and advice</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Introduction	23
4.2 Receiving information and advice	23
4.3 Careers or Connexions advisers	24
4.4 Felt encouraged to do well at school	26
4.5 Support and encouragement from parents	27
4.6 Summary	31

<b>5. Aspirations and trajectories</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1 Introduction	33
5.2 What young people will do after Year 11	33
5.3 Why young people intend to follow these routes after Year 11	35
5.4 Long-term plans	36
5.5 Career aspirations – what young people think they will be doing	38
5.6 Career aspirations – what young people would like to be doing	42
5.7 Attitudes to getting a job and future career	45
5.8 Summary	49
<b>6. Engaging all young people in meaningful learning</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1 Introduction	51
6.2 Helping all young people stay in education or training until 18	51
6.3 Making learning more attractive post 16	52
6.4 Summary	56
<b>7. Conclusions</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>61</b>
Appendix 1 Guide to statistical reliability	61
Appendix 2 Guide to socio-economic definitions	62
Appendix 3 Sample profile	63
Appendix 4 Marked-up questionnaire	66
Appendix 5 End notes	83

## Tables

	<b>Page</b>	
Table 2.1	Are young people doing well? (Subgroup differences)	6
Table 2.2	Do young people feel able to improve their situation? (Subgroup differences)	8
Table 3.1	Happiness at school (Subgroup differences)	13
Table 3.2	Feeling physically and emotionally safe at school (Subgroup differences)	15
Table 3.3	Subject relevance and style of teaching helps learning (Subgroup differences)	17
Table 3.4	Had a say in the education received (Subgroup differences)	18
Table 3.5	Ease of learning/equal treatment/ability to realise potential (Subgroup differences)	19
Table 3.6	Worried about failure (Subgroup differences)	21
Table 4.1	Young people who have not received the right information or advice – white/ethnic minority	24
Table 4.2	Careers or Connexions advisers (Subgroup differences)	25
Table 4.3	Felt encouraged to do well at school (Subgroup differences)	27
Table 4.4	Support and encouragement from parents or carers (Subgroup differences)	29
Table 5.1	Career aspirations – teacher	39
Table 5.2	Career aspirations – white/ethnic minority	40
Table 5.3	Career aspirations – NEET	40
Table 5.4	Career aspirations (Subgroup differences)	42
Table 5.5	Attitudes to getting a job and future career (Subgroup differences)	47
Table 6.1	Making learning more attractive post 16 (Subgroup differences)	56

## Figures

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1 Are young people doing well? (Total)	5
Figure 2.2 Do young people feel able to improve their situation? (Total)	7
Figure 2.3 Young people who have considered dropping out (Total)	9
Figure 2.4 Why young people have considered dropping out (Total)	10
Figure 3.1 Happiness at school (Total)	12
Figure 3.2 Feeling physically and emotionally safe at school (Total)	14
Figure 3.3 Subject relevance and style of teaching helps learning (Total)	16
Figure 3.4 Had a say in the education received (Total)	17
Figure 3.5 Ease of learning/equal treatment/ability to realise potential (Total)	18
Figure 3.6 Worried about failure (Total)	20
Figure 4.1 Receiving information and advice (Total)	23
Figure 4.2 Careers or Connexions advisers (Total)	24
Figure 4.3 Felt encouraged to do well at school (Total)	26
Figure 4.4 Support and encouragement from parents or carers (Total)	28
Figure 5.1 What young people will do after Year 11 (Total)	33
Figure 5.2 What young people will do after Year 11 (Subgroup differences)	35
Figure 5.3 Why young people intend to follow these routes after Year 11 (Total)	36
Figure 5.4 Long-term plans (Total)	37
Figure 5.5 Career aspirations – what young people think they will be doing (Total)	38
Figure 5.6 Career aspirations – what young people would like to be doing (Total)	43
Figure 5.7 Career aspirations versus career expectations (Total)	44
Figure 5.8 Career aspirations versus career expectations (Total)	45
Figure 5.9 Attitudes to getting a job and future career (Total)	46
Figure 6.1 Helping all young people to continue in education or training until 18 (Total)	52
Figure 6.2 Making learning more attractive post 16 (Total)	54
Figure 6.3 Making learning more attractive post 16 (Total)	55

## **Acknowledgements**

ICM would like to thank Susan Botcherby, Research Manager, at the Equality and Human Rights Commission for her help and advice in developing this project.

Special thanks also go to the 1,021 young people who took part in this survey.



## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout the report:

<b>ABC1</b>	Combination of socio-economic groups A, B and C1. See Appendix 2: Guide to socio-economic definitions for more details
<b>C2DE</b>	Combination of socio-economic groups C2 and DE. See Appendix 2: Guide to socio-economic definitions for more details
<b>DCSF</b>	Department for Children, Schools and Families
<b>EHRC</b>	Equality and Human Rights Commission
<b>EMA</b>	Educational Maintenance Allowance
<b>NEET</b>	Young people who are not in education, employment or training
<b>SEG</b>	Socio-economic group

## **Executive summary**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's new young voices project explores how to engage all young people in England in meaningful learning after the age of 16. Central to the project is the wish to understand more about how a wide range of groups of young people engage or disengage, by listening to what young people themselves have to say.

ICM Research was commissioned in November 2008 to undertake a quantitative survey to gain the representative views of 14–18 year olds. A qualitative study and review (including stakeholder interviews) of all that is known about engaging young people in meaningful learning were also commissioned, to complement the survey.

This executive summary presents the key findings of the quantitative survey. ICM interviewed 1,021 young people aged 14–18 years in England, by telephone, between 6 and 17 January 2009.

### **Summary**

The Young People's Voices survey provides a rich dataset with which to understand the attitudes and feelings of this often marginalised group of people. The overall picture across a range of measures is positive, with most young people describing themselves as performing well and possessing the ability to improve their situation. Overall attitudes to school are upbeat and the majority have formulated their career aspirations. The emerging picture challenges 'Broken Britain' stories common in the media and elsewhere, and demonstrates the extent to which young people – the future of Britain – want to engage, are supported by their parents/schools and understand the value of getting a job.

On the other hand, there are a number of areas that cause concern. There is a sense that 'the system' is failing some young people who find a number of barriers in their way, related to their home, school or themselves. This is manifestly the case when looking at the sizeable numbers of young people who are unhappy, feel physically or emotionally unsafe, are not doing well, and lack appropriate support and information at school. In addition, fear of failure is predominant.

The survey includes the perspectives of a wide range of young people in order to investigate the influence of factors known to be associated with inequality. Where significantly different, findings are reported for young people by ethnicity, gender, disability status, religious affiliation, socio-economic group (SEG) and not in education, employment or training (NEET). Young people aged 16 and over were given the opportunity to identify their sexual orientation. The survey reveals that the overall figures look very different when viewed through the lens of subgroups of young people.

It's important to note that small base sizes for the following subgroups mean that any observed differences between these groups and the rest of the population should be read as indicative rather than representative:

- NEET
- Disabled
- Not happy at school
- Not doing well
- Not emotionally/physically happy at school

To summarise, the findings present a reasonably encouraging picture, but raise a range of concerns regarding young people. Particular concerns are raised regarding the evidence on young people with characteristics known to be associated with inequality of education and employment outcomes.

### **How well do young people think they are doing and how engaged are they?**

On average, there is a great deal of optimism and hope with most (95 per cent) young people feeling that they are doing 'very' well (32 per cent) or 'fairly' well (63 per cent) in their current situation. However, five per cent of young people feel they are not doing so well, or are not doing well at all, which equates to approximately 160,000 young people aged 14–18 in England. The five per cent of those who feel they are not doing well rises to eight per cent of young people in Years 12 and 13, and soars to 62 per cent of those NEET.

There is a strong sense of agency among young people with almost all feeling either 'very' able (37 per cent) or 'fairly' able (61 per cent) to improve their current situation. Overall, just two per cent do not feel able to improve their lot. This proportion is significantly higher among those who are or were not happy at school (10 per cent), NEET (10 per cent) and disabled young people (13 per cent).

One in 10 (11 per cent) young people say that they will drop out or have considered dropping out from their current situation, a proportion which translates into approximately 350,000 youngsters across England. This rises to two in 10 young people in different forms of post-16 education, those with a disability or long-term illness, and a quarter of those who are or were not happy at school.

### **Factors affecting engagement in learning at school**

A sizeable minority of young people are negative about how they feel or felt at school. As many as one in 10 is (or was) not happy at school, (approximately 400,000). This figure is considerably higher among NEET young people and those who believe they are not doing well (43 per cent and 46 per cent respectively). The findings suggest that how young people feel about school can have a considerable impact on what they will do after the age of 16.

In addition, a significant minority of young people do not, or did not feel physically (seven per cent or approaching a quarter of a million) or emotionally safe (five per cent or approximately 160,000) at school. Socio-economic status plays an important part in how safe a young person feels about school. Those belonging to SEG ABC1 are more likely than C2DE young people to feel both physically and emotionally safe at school. NEET young people and those who have a disability are considerably less likely than average to feel physically and emotionally safe. This set of results may partly explain why the NEET group of young people are not in any form of learning at such a young age. The proportions of young people who do not feel emotionally or physically safe are a matter of great concern. Luckily, the majority of young people do feel safe at school.

One in 10 young people (nine per cent or approximately over a quarter of a million) say the subjects they study, or studied, are, or were not relevant to them. The number is considerably higher among NEET young people (31 per cent). C2DE young people are around twice as likely (13 per cent) as ABC1 young people (7 per cent) to say subjects are/were not relevant. Similarly, one in 10 (10 per cent or approximately over a quarter of a million) say that the style of teaching does, or did not help them to learn, rising to 41 per cent among NEET young people.

Around three-quarters of young people (73 per cent) feel they have had, or did have, a say in the education they received compared to two in 10 (20 per cent) who feel they do not, or did not, have a say. NEET young people and those not doing well are least likely to feel they have influence (49 and 48 per cent respectively).

Fear of failure is palpable in the research with a substantial minority – 37 per cent or approximately 1.2 million young people – worried about not succeeding at school. Almost half (46 per cent) of C2DE white girls fear failure, compared to just over a quarter (27 per cent) of ABC1 white boys. This is a reminder that many young people live under great pressure to succeed educationally and fear that they will not make it.

### **Support and advice**

Eight in 10 young people feel they have had enough information and advice to make the right choices about their future. However, two in 10 (18 per cent or approximately 700,000 young people in England) say they have not had enough information and advice, rising to a quarter of those from ethnic minorities.

The majority of young people aged 14–18 have had a one-to-one interview with a careers or Connexions adviser at school although a quarter have not (27 per cent or approximately 900,000). Although some of this figure can be accounted for by 14 and 15 year olds who have yet to see an adviser, two in 10 (18 per cent) 16–18 year olds have not had a one-to-one interview with a careers or Connexions adviser.

Young people are largely positive about their parents/carers: almost all say they have been encouraged and helped by their parents. Five per cent feel their parents are not there for them. Three times as many NEET young people (16 per cent) and

13 per cent of those who describe themselves as 'not doing well' say their parents are not there for them. Those young people who are NEET, who do not feel they are doing well and who have not had enough information and advice, are more negative in general about the support they have received from their parents, highlighting a link between parental support and a young person's development. Those three groups are also more negative about school in general.

### **Aspirations and trajectories**

Plans after the end of Year 11 appear to be influenced by socio-economic status, with approaching half of ABC1 young people intending to continue at school into sixth form, compared to a third of C2DE young people. Twice as many C2DE as ABC1 young people plan to go to further education college.

Enhanced career prospects are the main reason why young people intend to stay in education or training after Year 11. Four in 10 say it will improve their chances of finding a job and a similar number say that they need the qualifications to go to university. A third of girls cite the fact that they enjoy learning/studying as the main reason, compared to only a quarter of boys.

A large majority (82 per cent) of those who are currently in education expect to work full-time once they have completed all of their education. This figure is dramatically lower among NEETs, of whom just less than four in 10 (37 per cent) expect to be working full-time six months from now. At first glance, this might suggest that these young people have somehow 'opted out' of the system. However, on closer inspection, the picture is more complex. Around one in seven NEETs (14 per cent) expect to be working part-time and a similar number say they will be on an educational course, at college or university (16 per cent) or unemployed but looking for work (15 per cent). Encouragingly, the majority of these young people do not envisage being NEET in six months' time. Less than one in 10 (seven per cent) say they will be unemployed and not looking for work, while a similar proportion (eight per cent) do not know what they will be doing.

In terms of the kind of work young people think they will be doing when they get a job, the most popular occupation is teaching (mentioned by nine per cent). One in 20

think they will work in the media (television, journalism, reporting, etc) or ICT-related jobs (including web and games design).

Gender appears to be a more important differential than social class in accounting for differences in career aspirations, and the findings reinforce existing stereotypes to some extent. Regardless of socio-economic group, boys are more likely than girls to expect to work in engineering, ICT, skilled trades, building, construction or architecture, or as a mechanic. Similarly, girls are more likely to expect to work in teaching, hairdressing/beauty therapy, childcare and nursing or midwifery. No boys at all expect to be working in any of the latter three categories. ABC1 boys and girls are significantly more likely to expect to work in banking, finance and accountancy than their C2DE counterparts.

In addition, the findings are analysed by gender and ethnicity within class. ABC1 white boys are around twice as likely as C2DE white boys to expect to become a teacher or police officer. White C2DE boys are more than twice as likely as ABC1 white boys to expect to become a mechanic and are much more likely to expect to work in the skilled trades. C2DE white girls are four times as likely as ABC1 white girls to expect to work in childcare and are twice as likely to expect to become a nurse, midwife or nursery nurse. ABC1 white girls are much more likely than C2DE white girls to expect to become a social worker or work in acting or the performing arts.

Almost all young people (98 per cent) agree that it is important to them to get a job. Those most likely to say it is not important to them to get a job are NEET young people and those who are/were unhappy at school (both five per cent). The importance of feeling good about school is reinforced here, with an important minority becoming detached from the labour market at a young age. Nine in 10 (92 per cent) expect to have a self-defined successful career. This sense of optimism and hope is a continuous theme in the survey. Although optimistic, alarm bells ring again for those young people NEET (15 per cent), not doing well (14 per cent), are not/were not emotionally or physically safe (14 per cent), or are/were unhappy (eight per cent) at school who do not expect to have a successful career.

Young people also lack confidence in the labour market, in that as many as a quarter think they will always find it hard to get a job (26 per cent) or will have to take any job they can find (24 per cent), though as the findings above suggest, they are optimistic that they will make it a success once employed. Young people from lower socio-economic groups are least confident about the labour market. A third of C2DE young people believe they will always find it hard to get a job (33 per cent) or will have to take any job they find (22 per cent); significantly more than the 20 per cent and 19 per cent respectively of ABC1 young people who say the same.

### **Engaging all young people in meaningful learning**

When asked for their top three recommendations to make learning more attractive to all young people so that everyone can take part and succeed, the top four suggestions are: to make learning more fun and enjoyable (18 per cent), to make a better range of subjects available that are suitable for everyone (17 per cent), to make learning more practical/hands-on (16 per cent), and to offer more help, advice, support and guidance (14 per cent).

For boys (19 per cent), and C2DE white boys in particular (23 per cent), those NEET (20 per cent) and disabled (22 per cent), the number-one priority is making learning more practical/hands-on. For girls (21 per cent), and those in sixth form college (23 per cent), a better range of subjects that are suitable for everyone is key.

Around one in 10 say: make more information about learning available; make learning more relevant to future careers; do things differently/make learning more interesting; show young people what they can achieve by learning; and teachers, friends and family should be more encouraging/inspire greater confidence. Financial considerations might have been expected to figure more prominently in the minds of young people, but only one in 10 mentioned making the Educational Maintenance Allowance available to everyone or the provision of general financial incentives to stay on.

In interpreting the findings it is evident that improving the quality of communication and direct engagement with young people is key to increasing engagement in learning. Improving the learning experience and options for learning are also



important recommendations. In particular, there is a strong message about making learning more practical and hands-on and ensuring there is a better range of subjects suitable for everyone. The importance of targeted information, support, advice and guidance for young people is the final recommendation. The primary role for improving engagement in learning after 16 appears to rest with teachers/ educationalists, with significant supporting contributions from family, friends and careers/Connexions advisers.

### **Subgroups summary**

The overall results disguise underlying differences in attitudes and experiences among key groups of young people. It is evident that the largely positive results are more likely to be found in certain sections of the 'mainstream' population.

Disabled young people are less likely than the population in general to feel emotionally and physically safe at school. In addition, they are less likely to feel able to achieve their potential, to find it easy to learn, to say they have considered dropping out of learning and are more likely to worry that they will fail.

NEET young people are more likely to feel physically and emotionally unsafe, to say they will drop out of learning and to experience obstacles to learning across a range of indicators. NEET young people tend to have low career aspirations.

Socio-economic status has a considerable impact upon how a young person feels about school and engagement. Those belonging to SEG ABC1 are more likely than C2DEs to feel both physically and emotionally safe at school, to find subjects relevant, to feel able to achieve their potential and to find it easy to learn, and are less likely to worry about failure. ABC1 white boys, in particular, show a higher level of confidence than any other white group. C2DE young people are much more likely than their ABC1 peers to worry about failure, believe they will always find it hard to find a job and think they will have to accept any job they can get. This indicates a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed.

In addition to differences in aspiration, girls worry more than boys about failure, think they will always find it hard to get a job and are less likely to feel emotionally safe.

Young people from ethnic minorities tend to be consistent with the general population although there are some areas where their views and experiences diverge. For example, a higher proportion of young people from ethnic minorities than young people on average worry about failure at school and believe they will always find it hard to get a job.

## **Implications**

The young people's research raises a number of critical issues that warrant further consideration.

Improving engagement of all young people in learning after 16 could be achieved by:

- Improving the quality of communication and direct engagement with young people.
- Paying greater attention to how happy young people are in learning environments and taking action to improve physical and emotional safety.
- Continually improving the learning experience, so that it is enjoyable and engaging.
- Enhancing opportunities for practical/hands-on approaches to learning.
- Widening the range of learning options available so that there is something appropriate for everyone.
- Improving the quality of support to young people, including relevant and appropriate information, advice and guidance.

Some groups of young people are less engaged and more unhappy/alienated from learning, showing tendencies to detach from the labour market at a young age. They therefore will require more targeted approaches in all of the above proposals.

The primary responsibility for improving the engagement of young people in learning after 16 appears to rest with teachers and educationalists, with significant supporting contributions from family, friends and careers/Connexions advisers.

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Background**

The 2008 Education and Skills Bill states that, from 2013, young people in England will remain in education or training until their 18th birthday. The first pupils to be affected are those entering secondary school in September 2009. The primary responsibility for participating in education or training will rest with the young person.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission believes that the genuine and meaningful engagement of all young people in education is a prerequisite for reducing inequality and improving life chances. The Commission is also committed to hearing 'new voices', especially those that are not always heard. In order to bring these two aspirations together, the Commission designed a project for 'new young voices'. The project consists of three new research studies, two young people's debates and an adult specialist event.

The new young voices project explores how to engage all young people in England in meaningful learning after the age of 16. Central to the project is to the wish understand more about how a wide range of groups of young people engage or disengage, by listening to what young people themselves have to say.

ICM were commissioned in November 2008 to undertake a quantitative survey to gain the representative views of 14–18 year olds. A qualitative study and review (including stakeholder interviews) of all that is known about engaging young people in meaningful learning were also commissioned, to complement the telephone survey.

## **1.2 Aims of the research**

In particular, this quantitative survey examines the key influences affecting young people's decisions to stay in learning after 16 and what barriers exist (social, cultural, structural, attitudinal) to their engagement. It assesses how they feel about their current situation, what support they have received, how they feel (or felt) about school, and their plans for the future. It also asks young people what they would

recommend in order to encourage and support all young people to engage in meaningful learning after 16.

### **1.3 Methodology**

ICM interviewed a total of 1,021 young people (aged 14 to 18 years) in England by telephone. A representative sample of 14 to 18 year olds was interviewed, with quotas set by age, gender, region and ethnicity to ensure a representative sample. A profile of the sample is appended (see Appendix 3).

At the analysis stage, the data was weighted by age, gender, region and ethnicity to match the profile of young people as a whole using ONS population estimates and 2001 Census information. The 2009 population estimates suggest that there are 3,241,960 people aged 14–18 years in England.

Responses have been analysed by a wide range of demographic variables; detailed breakdowns have been provided in a separate volume of computer tables.

Demographic data was collected on:

- gender
- ethnic group
- disability status
- sexual orientation
- religious affiliation
- age
- type of education, employment or training
- NEET
- highest level of qualification
- socio-economic status of parent/s (or the respondent themselves if 17 or 18)

The data has been analysed by demographic variables, where base sizes are large enough to be robust. The data set is large enough to enable interlocking analysis in the white group, by gender and socio-economic status.

#### **1.4 Profile of the sample**

The respondents aged 14–18 are in a range of education or work-related settings. A small minority are NEET.

Population estimates for 2009 suggest that there are 3,241,960 people aged 14–18 in England. Looking at the sample more specifically:

- 61.3 per cent are at school (which translates as 1,987,321 young people)
- 16.4 per cent are at sixth form college (531,681 young people)
- 12.5 per cent are at university or sixth form college (405,245 young people)
- 4.1 per cent are in some form of work or training related setting (132,920 young people)

Recent data from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009) suggests that 9.4 per cent of 16–18 year olds fall within the NEET category; 8.2 per cent of the interviews with 16–18 years olds were conducted with this group.

A full profile of the achieved sample is in Appendix 3.

#### **1.5 Interpretation of the data**

It is important to remember that a sample, not all young people in England, has been interviewed. Therefore, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. A guide to statistical reliability is in Appendix 1.

It is also important to note that small base sizes for the following subgroups mean that any observed differences between these groups and the rest of the population should be read as indicative rather than representative:

- NEET
- Disabled
- Not happy at school
- Not doing well

- Not emotionally/physically happy at school

Where percentages do not total 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of ‘don’t know’ categories, or multiple answers. An asterisk (\*) denotes any value less than half a per cent but greater than zero.

## 1.6 Report structure

The remainder of the report contains detailed analysis on the main findings of the study, including demographic and attitudinal subgroup analysis. Each chapter includes the following:

Chapter 2	<p><b>How well do young people think they are doing and how engaged are they?</b></p> <p>This chapter explores how well young people are doing, their ability to improve their current situation and the proportion of young people considering dropping out of learning.</p>
Chapter 3	<p><b>Factors affecting engagement in learning at school</b></p> <p>This chapter explores happiness, feeling emotionally and physically safe, the relevance of subjects, the impact of teaching styles, having a say and fear of failure at school.</p>
Chapter 4	<p><b>Support and advice</b></p> <p>This chapter explores whether young people are receiving the right information and advice to make choices, the incidence of one-to-one sessions with careers or Connexions advisers, and support and encouragement from parents.</p>
Chapter 5	<p><b>Aspirations and trajectories</b></p> <p>This chapter explores young people’s aspirations for the future, namely their desire to work, expectations of the labour market and the type of job they would like and expect to get.</p>
Chapter 6	<p><b>Engaging all young people in meaningful learning</b></p> <p>This chapter highlights the measures young people recommend in order to improve the engagement of all young people staying in education or training after the age of 16.</p>

## 2 How well do young people think they are doing and how engaged are they?

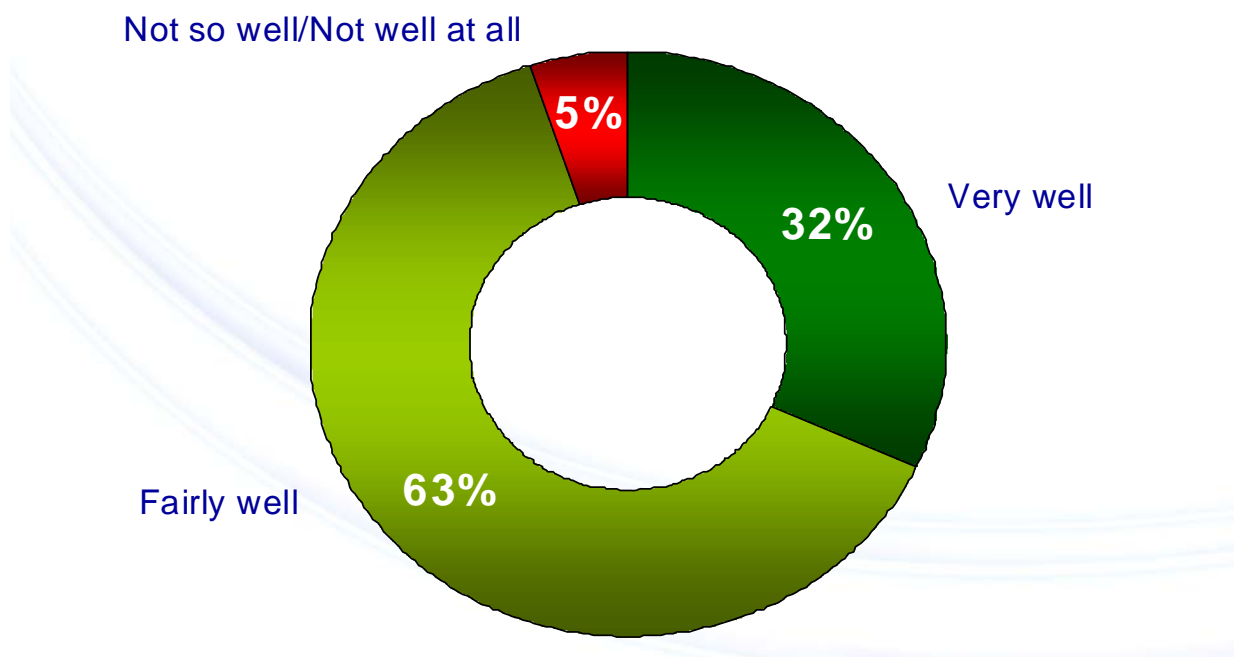
### 2.1 Introduction

The media is awash with stories about young people and teenagers, many of them negative in their tone. This chapter therefore explores how well young people themselves think they are currently doing and whether they feel they possess the ability to improve their own situation. It also looks at existing or likely 'drop-out' rates and the reasons why young people consider leaving learning.

### 2.2 Are young people doing well?

Young people were asked how well they think they are doing in their current situation, whether in education, training, work or something else. On the whole, there is a great deal of optimism, with a third (32 per cent) feeling that they are doing 'very' well and six in 10 (63 per cent) that they are doing 'fairly' well. Only one in 20 (five per cent) feel that they are 'not doing so well' or are 'not doing well at all' (see Figure 2.1), equivalent to approximately 162,098 young people.

**Figure 2.1 Are young people doing well? (Total)**



**Q13. How well do you think you are currently doing? Would you say...?**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

As we will see throughout this report, clear differences emerge between those who think they are doing well and those who do not, across a range of questions. In addition, the average figures mask a wide range of statistically different findings when you ‘drill down’ to analyse young people by other group variables (see Table 2.1).

Whereas a third (32 per cent) of young people in general state that they are doing very well, rising to over half (53 per cent) of those working, the proportion is considerably lower among disabled young people (18 per cent).

The five per cent of those who feel they are not doing well rises to eight per cent of young people in Years 12 and 13, and soars to 62 per cent of those NEET.

**Table 2.1 Are young people doing well? (Subgroup differences)**

Young people who say that they are doing very well	
	%
Total	32
Disabled	18
Working	53
Young people who say that they are not doing well	
	%
Total	5
Years 12 and 13	8
Unhappy at school	23
NEET	62

---

**Q13. How well do you think you are currently doing? Would you say...?**

---

**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

---

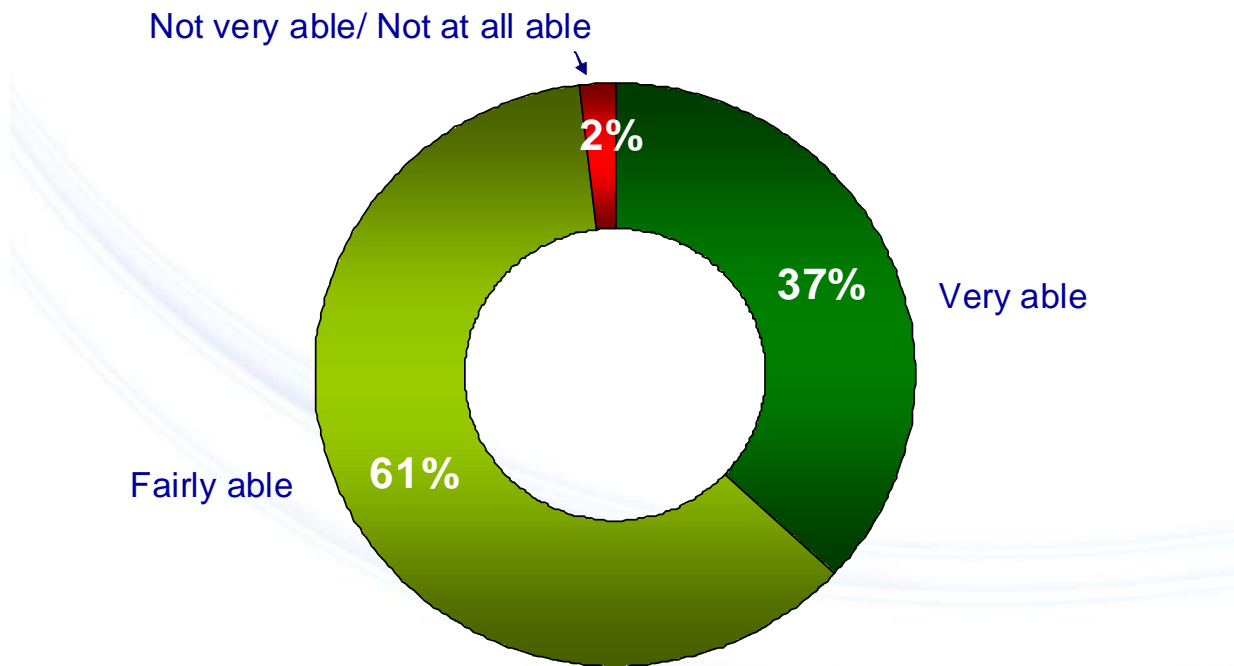
*Source: ICM Research*

### **2.3 Do young people feel able to improve their situation?**

There is a strong sense of optimism and agency among young people in the survey, with almost all feeling either ‘very’ able (37 per cent) or ‘fairly’ able (61 per cent) to improve their current situation.



**Figure 2.2 Do young people feel able to improve their situation? (Total)**



**Q14. And do you feel able to improve your current situation? Is that...?**

**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

While overall just two per cent<sup>i</sup> of young people do not feel able to improve their situation, this proportion is significantly higher among those who are or were not happy at school (nine per cent), indicating the extent to which experiences at school can impact upon motivation. There is a link between unhappiness at school and young people's inability to improve their situation. Furthermore, 13 per cent of disabled young people do not feel able to improve their situation whereas 10 per cent of NEET young people feel the same. This suggests that there is a great deal of ability to be harnessed.

It would seem that negative feelings about school can become a serious barrier to how young people engage in learning later on.

**Table 2.2 Do young people feel able to improve their situation?  
(Subgroup differences)**

<b>Young people who feel very able to improve</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Total	37
Ethnic minority	50
<b>Young people who do not feel able to improve</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Total	2
NEET	9
Unhappy at school	10
Disabled	13

---

**Q14. And do you feel able to improve your current situation? Is that...?**

---

***Base: All respondents (1,021)***

---

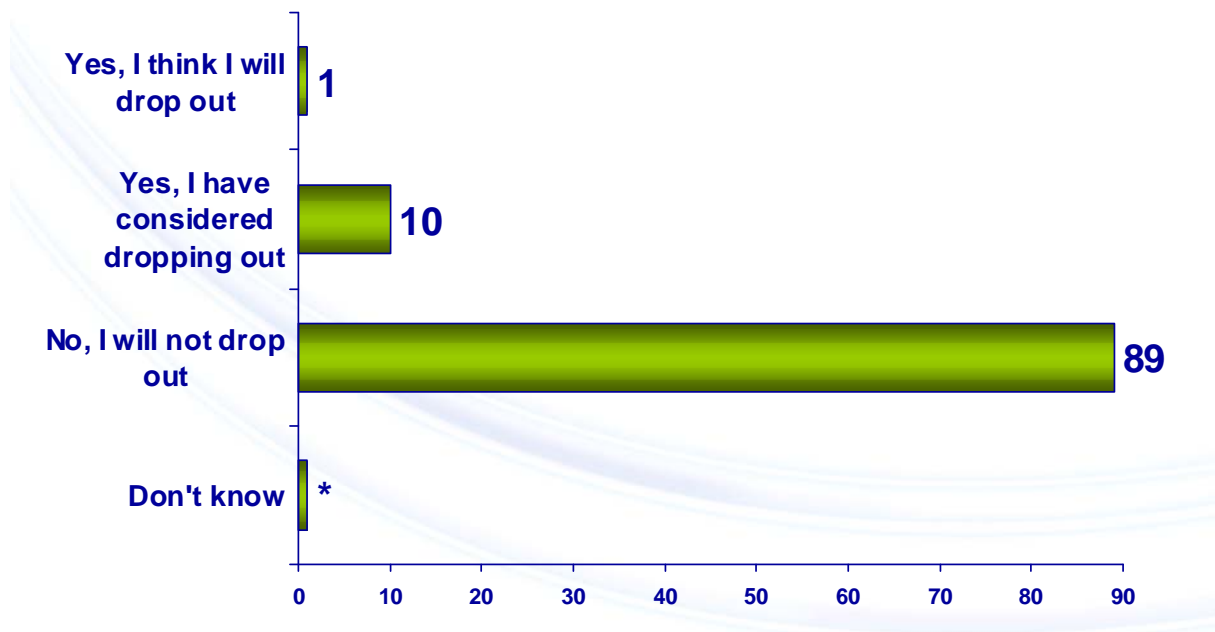
*Source: ICM Research*

## **2.4 Dropping out**

One in 10 (11 per cent) young people say that they will drop out or have considered dropping out from their current situation, a proportion which would translate into 356,616 youngsters across England. This rises to two in 10 young people in different forms of post-16 education.

The proportion of young people considering dropping out is considerably higher among those with a disability or long-term illness (22 per cent), and those who are not happy at school (25 per cent).

**Figure 2.3 Young people who have considered dropping out (Total)**



**Q7. Have you considered dropping out from your current situation?**  
*Base: All except those not in education, employment or training (970)*

The top four reasons for considering dropping out are (see Figure 2.4):

- Not liking what they are doing.
- What they are doing is too difficult.
- They don't fit in.
- They do not get enough help.

**Figure 2.4 Why young people have considered dropping out (Total)**



**Q8. Why is that? (considered dropping out from your current situation)**  
*Base: All except those not in education, employment or training who will/have considered dropping out (103)*

## 2.5 Summary

Overall, the survey reveals a great deal of optimism and agency among young people. A third (32 per cent) feel that they are doing ‘very’ well and six in 10 (63 per cent) that they are doing ‘fairly’ well. In addition, almost all feel either ‘very’ able (37 per cent) or ‘fairly’ able (61 per cent) to improve their current situation.

At the same time, a significant minority – 11 per cent or approximately 350,000 young people – say that they will drop out or have considered dropping out from their current situation.

Moreover, whereas overall just two per cent of young people do not feel able to improve their situation, this proportion is significantly higher among those who are or were not happy at school (nine per cent). There is a link between unhappiness at school and young people’s inability to improve their situation, particularly evident among disabled young people and those who are NEET.

Throughout this report, clear differences emerge between those who think they are doing well and those who do not, across a range of questions.

### 3. Factors affecting engagement in learning at school

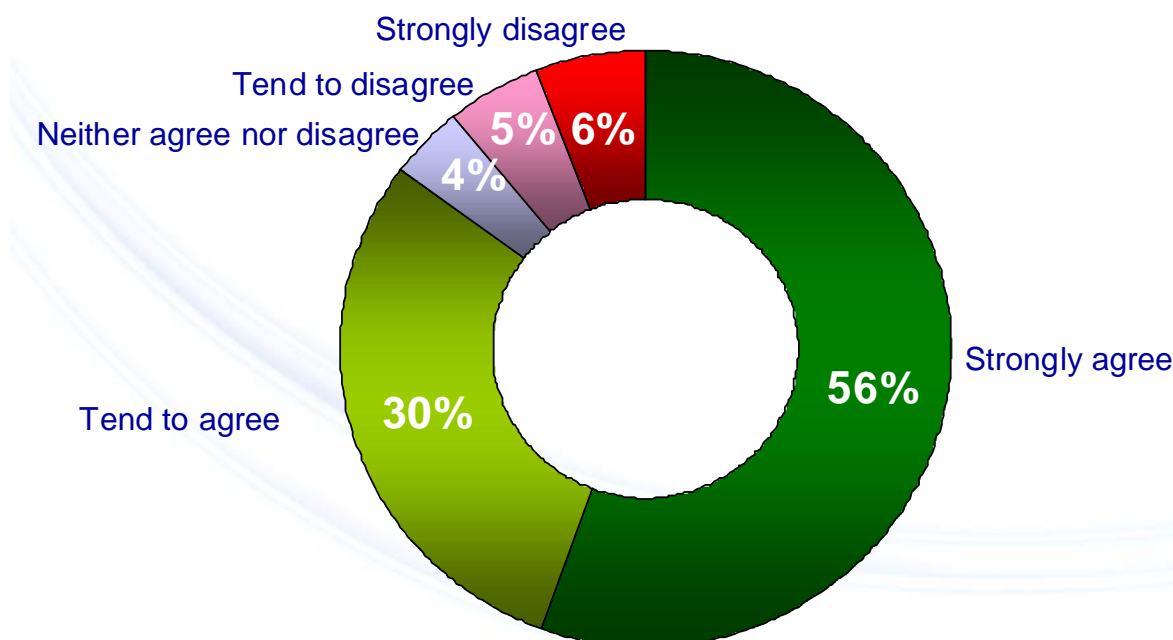
#### 3.1 Introduction

Young people were asked for their views and experiences of a range of issues that have been associated with engagement in learning. These included feeling happy, equal treatment and being emotionally or physically safe. They also included the relevance of subjects and style of teaching, and whether young people had been consulted about their learning.

#### 3.2 Happiness at school

Young people who had left school were asked if they had been happy there and the same question was asked of young people currently in school. On average, the majority of young people (85 per cent) are, or were, happy at school. However, 11 per cent – or approximately 0.35 million young people – say they are, or were, not happy. As the report will illustrate, there are notable differences between those who are/were happy at school and those who are/were not on a number of measures.

**Figure 3.1 Happiness at school (Total)**



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I am/was happy at school.**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Forty four per cent of young NEET people were happy at school, which suggests that it is not necessarily unhappiness at school that is the main driver for young people becoming NEET. However, the unhappiest groups are young people who are not doing well (46 per cent agree) and NEET (43 per cent). As we have seen earlier, there is a relationship between those who are not doing well and are NEET.

**Table 3.1 Happiness at school (Subgroup differences)**

<b>Young people who are/were happy at school</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Total	85
NEET	44
<b>Young people who are/were unhappy at school</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Total	11
NEET	43
Not doing well	46

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I am/was happy at school.**

**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

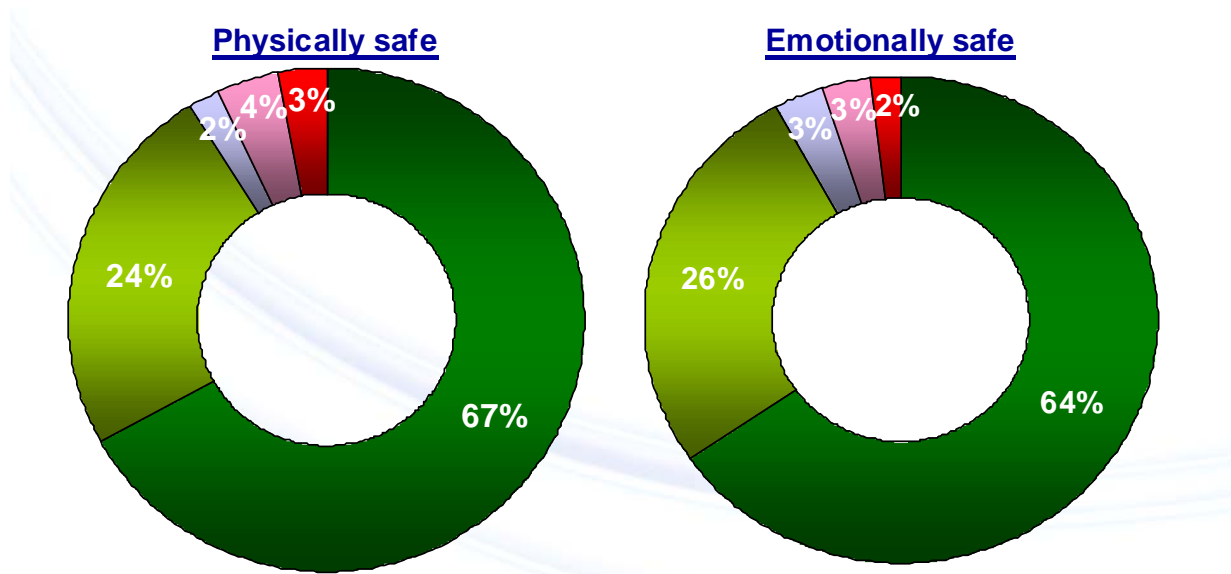
*Source: ICM Research*

### **3.3 Feeling physically and emotionally safe at school**

Encouragingly, the vast majority of young people say they feel, or felt, physically safe at school (91 per cent agree with this statement). The same proportion (91 per cent) said that that they feel, or felt, emotionally safe at school. A significant minority of young people do not/did not feel physically (seven per cent or approximately 230,000 young people) or emotionally safe (five per cent or approximately 160,000 young people) at school.

**Figure 3.2 Feeling physically and emotionally safe at school (Total)**

Strongly agree  
  Tend to agree  
  Neither/nor  
  Tend to disagree  
  Strongly disagree



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I feel/felt physically safe. I feel/felt emotionally safe.**  
*Base: All respondents (1,021).*

Socio-economic status has a considerable effect on how safe a young person feels about school. Those belonging to SEG ABC1 are more likely than C2DE young people to feel both physically and emotionally safe at school (as per Table 3.2).

Disabled young people are less likely than the population in general to feel physically and emotionally safe.

Perceptions of safety also vary according to current learning status. NEET young people and those who have a disability are considerably less likely than average to feel physically and emotionally safe. This set of results may partly explain why the NEET group of young people are not in any form of learning at such a young age.



**Table 3.2 Feeling physically and emotionally safe at school  
(Subgroup differences)**

<b>Feel/felt physically safe at school</b>	
	<i>% disagree</i>
Total	6
ABC1	5
C2DE	8
Disabled	17
NEET	17
<b>Feel/felt emotionally safe at school</b>	
	<i>% disagree</i>
Total	6
ABC1	4
C2DE	8
NEET	17
Disabled	24

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I feel/felt physically safe at school. I feel/felt emotionally safe at school.**

***Base: All respondents (1,021)***

*Source: ICM Research*

### **3.4 Subject relevance and style of teaching helps learning**

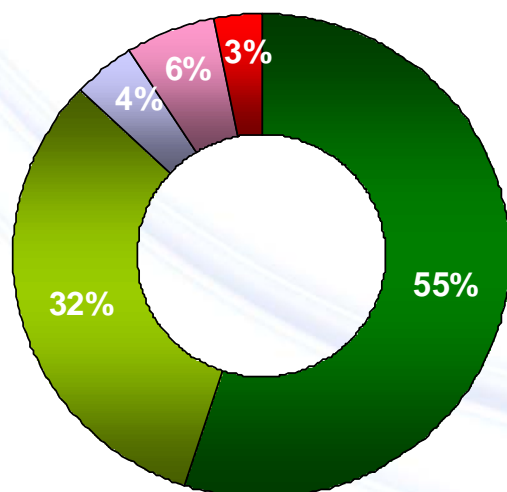
While the majority of young people who are currently at school, or who have left, feel the subjects are, or were, relevant to them, one in 10 (nine per cent) say that they are not. Again, this translates into large numbers of young people( approximately 300,000 individuals aged 14–18).

Similarly, one in 10 (10 per cent) young people say that the style of teaching does not help them to learn (approximately 320,000 individuals aged 14–18 in England).

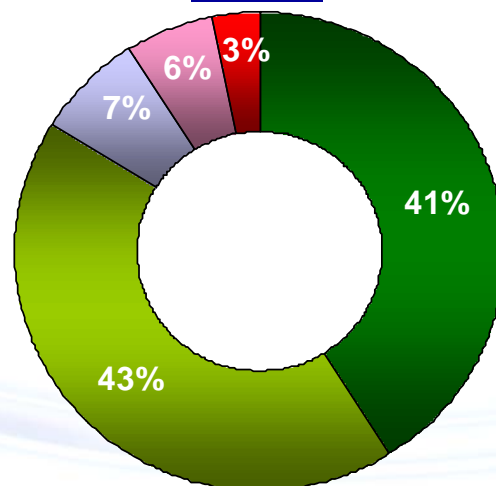
**Figure 3.3 Subject relevance and style of teaching helps learning (Total)**

Strongly agree  
  Tend to agree  
  Neither/nor  
  Tend to disagree  
  Strongly disagree

**Subjects are/were relevant**



**Style of teaching helps/helped me learn**



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: the subjects are/were relevant to me. The style of teaching helps/helped me learn.**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Those who are NEET or are in some form of work/training (59 per cent and 65 per cent respectively) are less likely than young people in general to say the subjects are/were relevant to them. Socio economic status is a factor here too (ABC1, 90 per cent; C2DE, 84 per cent).

One in 10 young people (nine per cent or approximately over a quarter of a million) say the subjects they study, or studied, are, or were, not relevant to them. The number is considerably higher among NEET young people (31 per cent). C2DE young people are around twice as likely (13 per cent) as ABC1 young people (seven per cent) to say subjects are/were not relevant. Similarly, one in 10 (10 per cent or approximately over a quarter of a million) say that the style of teaching does, or did, not help them to learn, rising to 41 per cent among NEET young people.

**Table 3.3 Subject relevant and style of teaching helps learning (Subgroup differences)**

	Subject are/were relevant % agree
Total	87
Working	65
NEET	59
ABC1	90
C2DE	84

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: the subjects are/were relevant to me.**

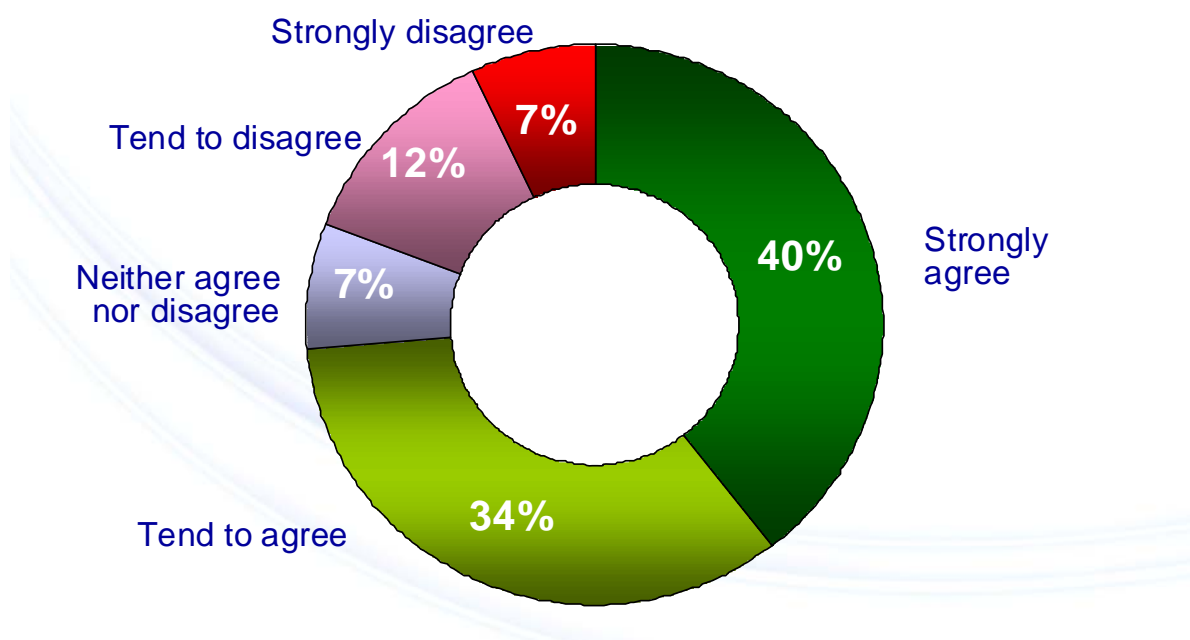
**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

Source: ICM Research

### 3.5 Had a say in the education received

Approaching three-quarters of young people feel they have had (or did have) a say in their school education compared to two in 10 (20 per cent) who feel they have not/did not have a say.

**Figure 3.4 Had a say in the education received (Total)**



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I feel I have/felt I had a say in the education I receive(d). Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Those not doing well (47 per cent) and those NEET (46 per cent) are most likely to feel they have not/did not have a say in their school education.

**Table 3.4 Had a say in the education received (Subgroup differences)**

	<b>Have/had a say</b>
	<i>% agree</i>
Total	73
Happy at school	77
Doing well	74
Not doing well	49
NEET	48

---

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I feel I have/felt I had a say in the education I receive(d).**

---

**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

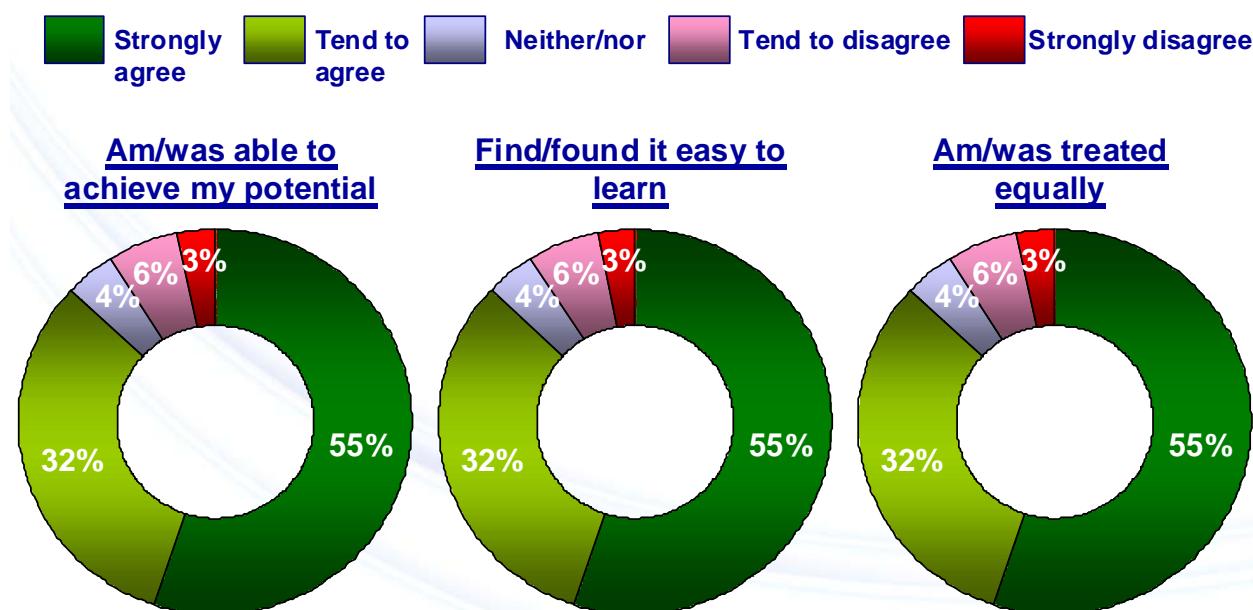
---

*Source: ICM Research*

### **3.6 Ease of learning/equal treatment/ability to realise potential**

Around eight in 10 young people find/found it easy to learn at school (81 per cent) and are/were treated the same as other people their age (83 per cent). A larger proportion (86 per cent) believes they are, or were, able to achieve their potential.

**Figure 3.5 Ease of learning/equal treatment/ability to realise potential (Total)**



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I am/was able to achieve my potential. I find/found it easy to learn. I am/was treated the same as other young people.**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Table 3.5 indicates that those NEET, disabled young people, and those who are/were unhappy at school are much less likely to agree with the statements.

**Table 3.5 Ease of learning/equal treatment/ability to realise potential (Subgroup differences)**

	Am/was able to achieve potential % agree	Find/found it easy to learn % agree	Am/was treated equally % agree
Total	86	81	83
Unhappy at school	53	41	55
NEET	52	57	64
Disabled	71	60	73

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I am/was able to achieve my potential. I find/found it easy to learn. I am/was treated the same as other young people.**

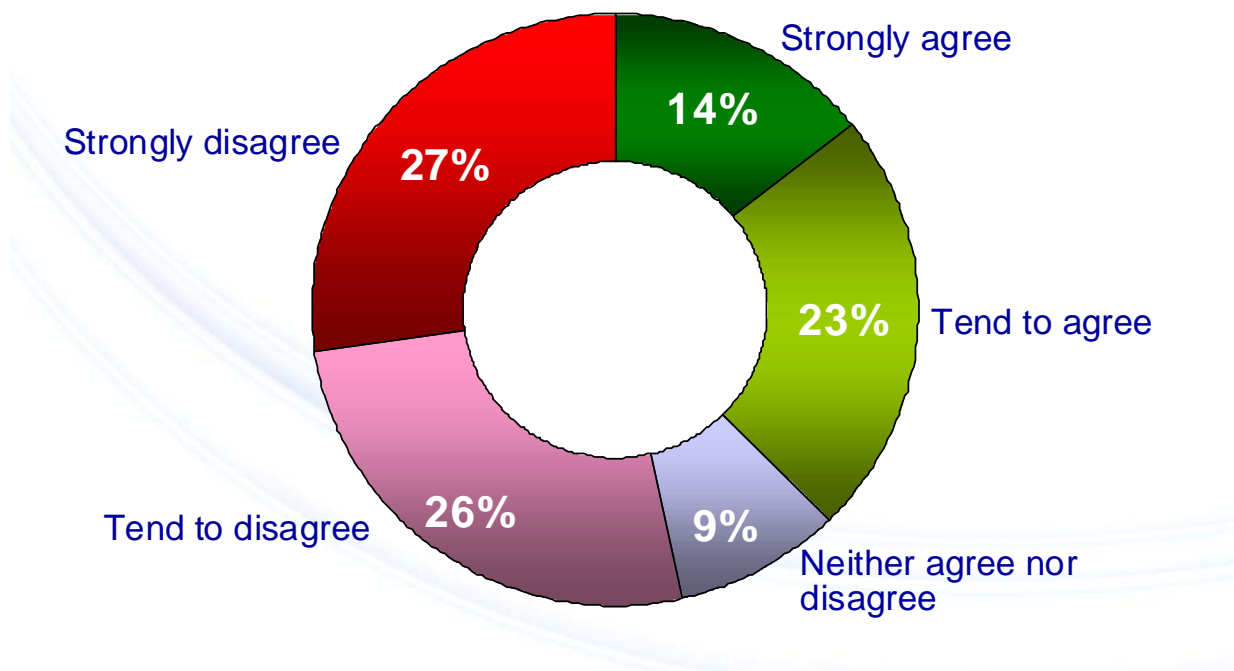
**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

Source: ICM Research

### 3.7 Worried about failure

The most striking finding, however, is centred on the substantial minority of young people – 37 per cent – who are, or were, worried about failure in school. This is a reminder that many young people, while broadly happy with their situation and with the help they receive, live under great pressure to succeed educationally. Fear of failure is palpable in the research.

**Figure 3.6 Worried about failure (Total)**



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I am/was worried I will/would fail.**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Only a quarter of ABC1 white boys (27 per cent) admit fear of failure, compared to four in 10 ABC1 white girls and C2DE white boys (both 38 per cent) and approaching half (46 per cent) of C2DE white girls.

**Table 3.6 Worried about failure (Subgroup differences)**

---

	<b>Worried will/would fail</b>
	<i>% agree</i>
Total	37
ABC1 white boys	27
ABC1 white girls	38
C2DE white boys	38
C2DE white girls	46

---

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I am/was worried I will/would fail.**

***Base: All respondents (1,021)***

*Source: ICM Research*

---

### **3.8 Summary**

The most palpable issue affecting the majority of young people is fear of failure. In addition, one in five young people feel they have not had/did not have a say in the education they receive(d) at school. Over one in 10 young people struggle/or struggled with aspects of their schooling including feeling unhappy (11 per cent, approximately 350,000 individuals) and unsafe (nine per cent, approximately 300,000 young people).

Socio-economic status has a considerable impact upon how a young person feels about school and engagement. Those belonging to SEG ABC1 are more likely than C2DEs to feel both physically and emotionally safe at school, to find subjects relevant, to feel able to achieve their potential and to find it easy to learn, and are less likely to worry about failure. ABC1 white boys, in particular, show a higher level of confidence than any other white group.

Disabled young people, meanwhile, are less likely than the population in general to feel physically safe. In addition, they are less likely to feel able to achieve their potential and to find it easy to learn, and are more likely to worry that they will fail.

A similar picture emerges for those who are NEET – the views of young people in this group towards schooling tend to be less favourable than the population as a whole.

The fact that a young person with a long-term illness/disability or in a lower socio-economic group is more likely to have a negative experience of school is a matter of concern. As the findings show, young people's views about school can have a considerable impact on other parts of their lives, how they feel about themselves and what they do after they reach 16. Those whose experience of school is unfavourable are more likely to leave school, and possibly to opt out of education, employment or training.



## 4. Support and advice

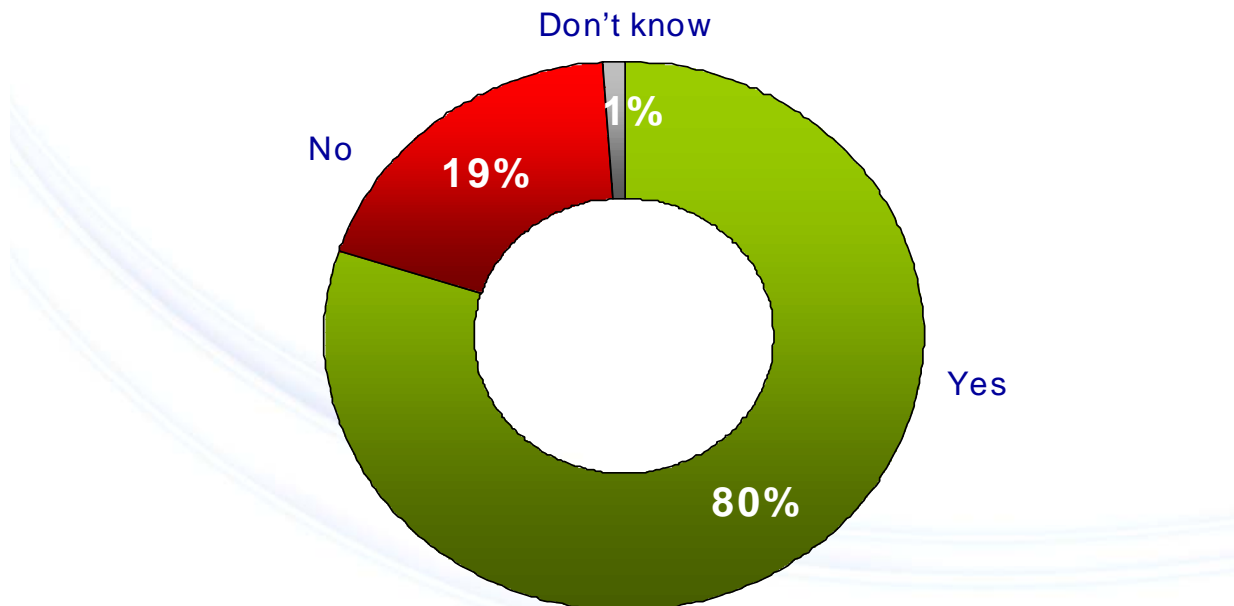
### 4.1 Introduction

Young people were asked for their views about the level of support they receive. The research quantifies whether young people believe they have enough information and advice to make the right choices about their future and the proportion of those who have had a one-to-one with a careers/Connexions adviser. Parental influence and support is explored in this chapter.

### 4.2 Receiving information and advice

Eight in 10 (80 per cent) young people feel they have had enough information and advice to make the right choices about their future while two in 10 (19 per cent) say they have not. This distinction is an important one: if a young person feels they have not received enough information and advice, this has a negative impact on their responses to other questions, a pattern which is explored in the report.

**Figure 4.1 Receiving information and advice (Total)**



**Q11. Do you feel you have had enough information and advice to make the right choices about your future?**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

This figure rises to a quarter (26 per cent) of young people from ethnic minorities, significantly higher than the figure for white young people (18 per cent).

**Table 4.1 Young people who have not received the right information or advice – white/ethnic minority**

		Had enough information and advice
		% No
Total		19
White		18
Ethnic minority		26

**Q11. Do you feel you have had enough information and advice to make the right choices about your future?**

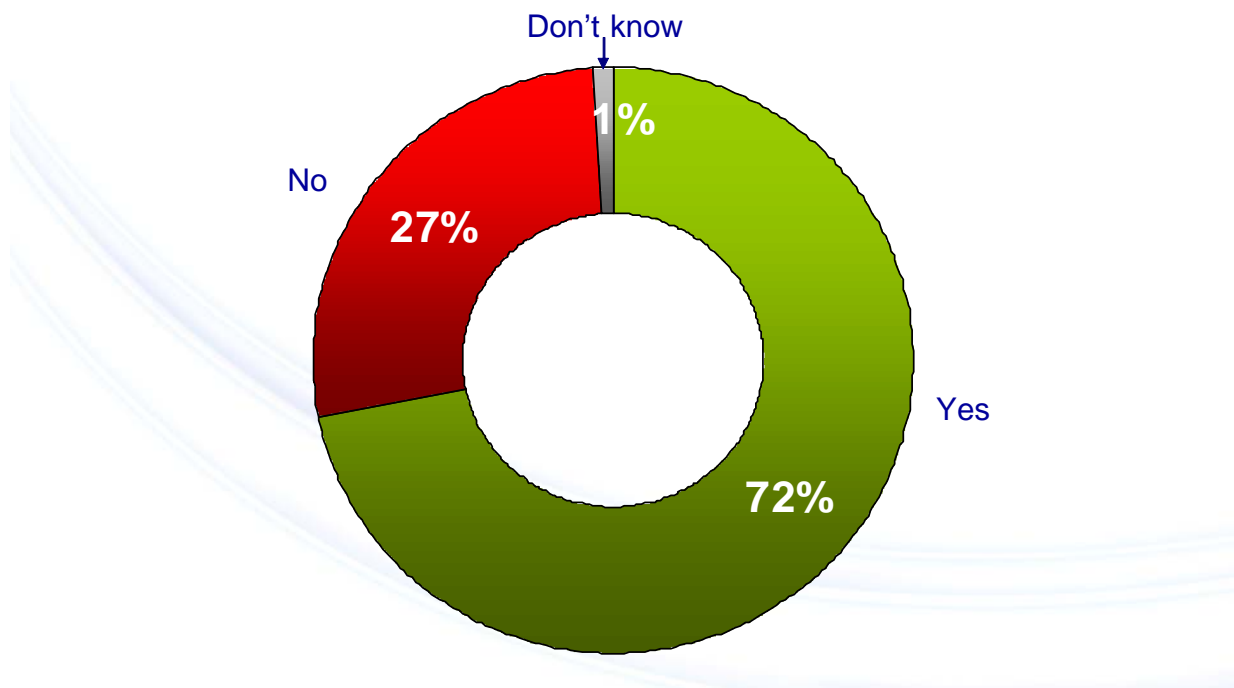
**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

*Source: ICM Research*

### 4.3 Careers or Connexions advisers

Seven in 10 young people (72 per cent) say they have (or had) one-to-one interviews with a careers or Connexions adviser at school and just over a quarter (27 per cent) say they have not.

**Figure 4.2 Careers or Connexions advisers (Total)**



**Q10. At school do you/did you have one-to-one interviews with a careers or Connexions adviser? Base: All respondents (1,021).**

The older age bracket (16–18 year olds) is more likely than the younger one (14–15) to have had one-to-one interviews with a careers or Connexions adviser (81 per cent compared to 58 per cent). It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that those in Years 12–13 (77 per cent), sixth form college (77 per cent) and further education (83 per cent) are all significantly more likely to have had sessions than pupils in Years 9–11. This is illustrated in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Careers or Connexions advisers (Subgroup differences)**

		<b>Had careers/Connexions one-to-one</b>
		<b>% Yes</b>
	Total	72
	14–15	58
	16–18	81
	In Years 9–11	64
	In Years 12–13	77
	At sixth form college	77
	In further education	83

---

**Q10. At school do you/did you have one-to-one interviews with a careers or Connexions adviser?**

---

**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

---

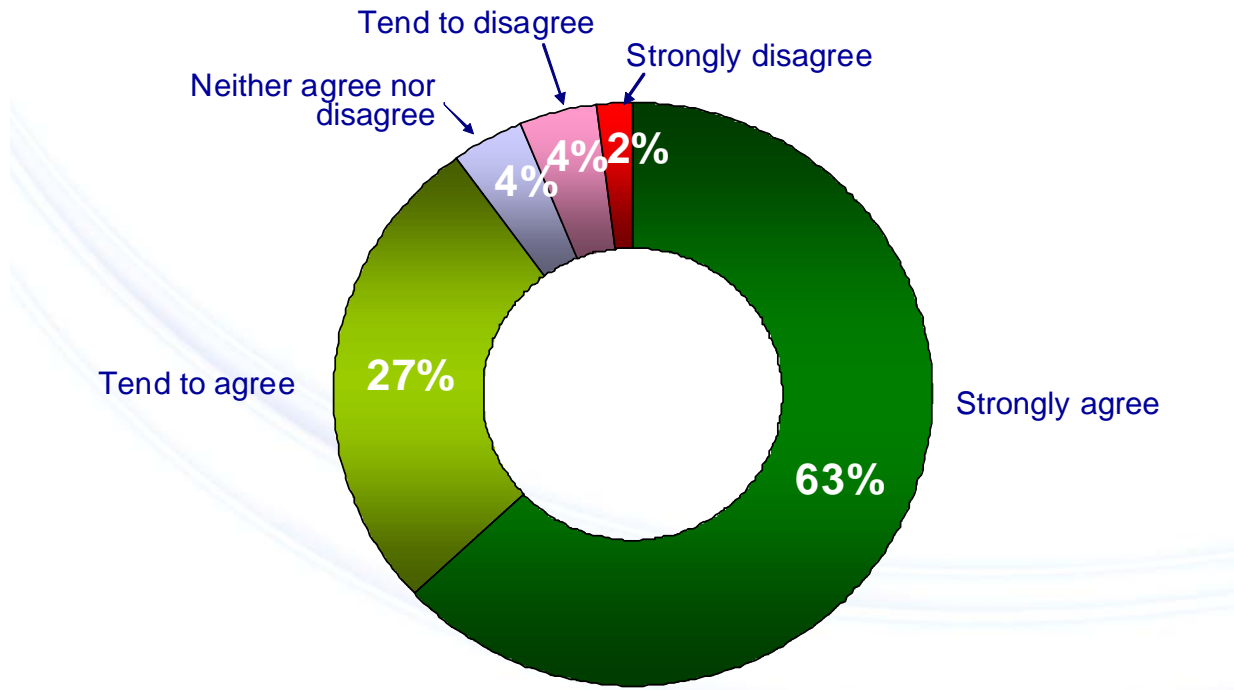
*Source: ICM Research*

Two in 10 (18 per cent) of 16–18 year olds say they have not had a one-to-one interview with a careers or Connexions adviser. This means that a fifth of young people have not accessed this type of specialist advice and support regarding their futures.

#### 4.4 Felt encouraged to do well at school

Nine in 10 (91 per cent) young people say they felt encouraged to do well at school.

Figure 4.3 Felt encouraged to do well at school (Total)



**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I feel/felt encouraged to do well.**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

In reverse, those young people NEET, not emotionally/physically safe, who find subjects not relevant/teaching style not helpful, working or disabled were significantly more likely to say they had not felt encouraged to do well at school.

**Table 4.3 Felt encouraged to do well at school (Subgroup differences)**

---

	<b>Feel/felt encouraged to do well</b>
	<i>% Disagree</i>
Total	6
NEET	29
Not emotionally/physically safe	26
Subjects not relevant/teaching style not helpful	22
Working	19
Disabled	15

---

**Q9. Thinking about school, for each statement, I would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it: I feel/felt encouraged to do well.**

**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

*Source: ICM Research*

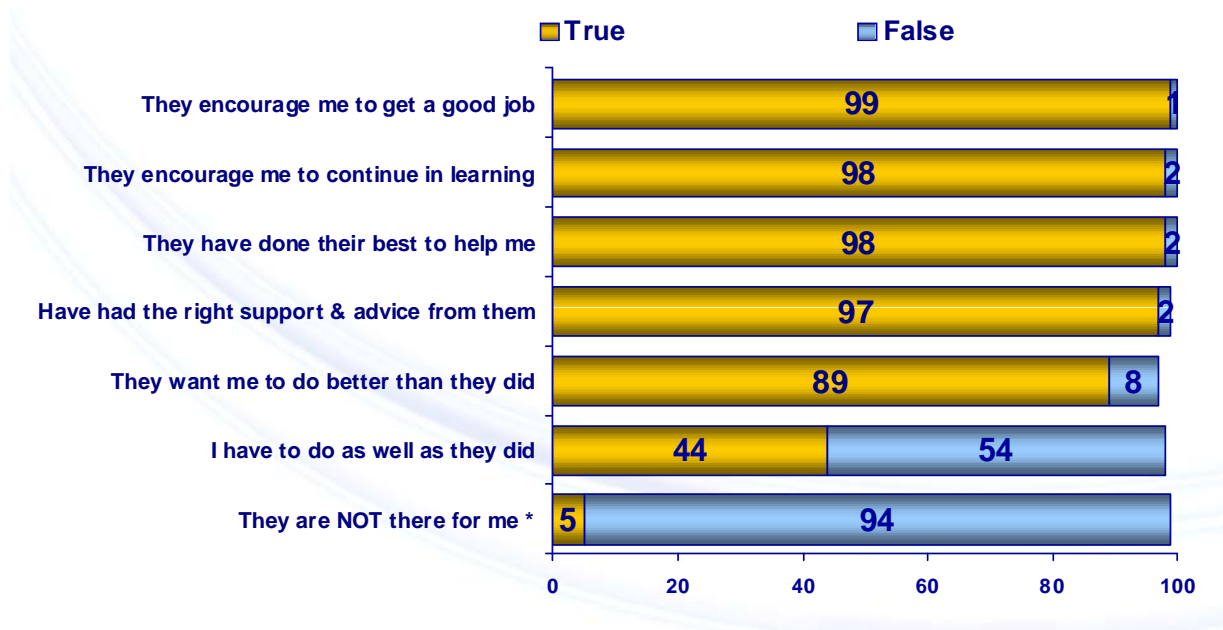
---

#### **4.5 Support and encouragement from parents**

Young people are largely positive about their parent(s) or carer(s). Almost all say they encourage them to get a good job (99 per cent), to continue in learning (98 per cent), have done their best to help them (98 per cent) and have given them the right support and advice (97 per cent). Just one in 20 (five per cent) say their parent(s) or carer(s) are not there for them, approximately 160,000 young people aged 14–18.

The overwhelming majority (89 per cent) say it is true their parents want them to do better than they did; half this number of young people (45 per cent) believe they have to do as well as their parents. Nonetheless, this still means a substantial number of young people – approximately 1.5 million young people – are under pressure to perform better than their parents did.

**Figure 4.4 Support and encouragement from parents or carers (Total)**



**Q12. Thinking about your parent/carer, I would like you to tell me whether each of the following statements is true or false. \* Negative statement**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Age and gender appear to make little difference to how young people feel about support from their parent(s) or carer(s), although ethnicity and socio-economic status do appear to exert an influence. Young people from ethnic minorities are significantly less likely to say their parents have done their best to help them or to say that they have to do as well as their parents did. Young people from socio-economic group ABC1 are more likely than C2DEs to say they have had the right support and advice from their parents, and less likely to agree that their parents are not there for them. On the other hand, C2DE young people are more likely to say their parents want them to do better than they did. These results are set out in Table 12.

**Table 4.4 Support and encouragement from parents or carers  
(Subgroup differences)**

---

	<i>% True</i>
	<b>They encourage me to get a good job</b>
Total	99
NEET	96
Doing well	99
Not doing well	96
Received enough info and advice	100
Haven't received enough info and advice	97
	<b>They encourage me to continue in learning</b>
Total	98
NEET	93
Doing well	99
Not doing well	93
Received enough info and advice	99
Haven't received enough info and advice	97
	<b>They have done their best to help me</b>
Total	98
White	98
Ethnic minority	95
Doing well	98
Not doing well	91
Received enough info and advice	98
Haven't received enough info and advice	96

---

---

	<b>Have had the right support and advice from them</b>
Total	97
ABC1	99
C2DE	95
NEET	94
Doing well	97
Not doing well	91
Received enough info and advice	98
Haven't received enough info and advice	95
	<b>They want me to do better than they did</b>
Total	89
White	88
Ethnic minority	91
ABC1	86
C2DE	92
NEET	83
	<b>I have to do as well as they did</b>
Total	44
White	43
Ethnic minority	53
	<b>They are not there for me</b>
Total	5
ABC1	4
C2DE	7
NEET	16
Doing well	5
Not doing well	13

---

**Q12. Thinking about your parent/carer, I would like you to tell me whether each of the following statements is true or false.**

**Base: All respondents (1,021)**

*Source: ICM Research*

Those not in education, employment or training (NEET) feel their parent(s) or carer(s) are less supportive than young people overall. Fewer feel they have had the right support and advice, that their parents are there for them, or that they are



encouraged to continue in learning or to get a good job. They are also less likely to say their parents want them to do better than they did.

How young people feel about the support they have received from their parents correlates strongly with how well they feel they are currently doing in learning and with how much information and advice they feel they have received in general. Broadly speaking, those who do not feel they are doing well in their current situation are more negative about the support they have received from their parents on a range of measures, including encouragement to continue in learning or get a good job. Those who say they have not had enough information and advice are also more negative about their parents. This indicates a link between parental support and a young person's development.

Significant differences in attitudes towards school are also found between those who feel they have had enough information/advice and those who do not: the former are more positive about school than the latter on all counts. The fact that there is such a strong correlation between having the right information and advice on the one hand and attitudes to school on the other suggests that young people who are struggling at school are more likely to feel unsupported in their career than their peers.

#### **4.6 Summary**

In summary, it is undoubtedly positive that the majority of young people feel they have had sufficient information and advice to make the right choices for their lives. Similarly, most young people currently or at some point in the past have had a one-to-one with a careers/Connexions adviser at school. However, a significant proportion of the population have not experienced enough information, advice or guidance.

Overall, young people are largely positive about their parent(s) or carer(s). However, pressure is a key ingredient in the lives of many young people – 44 per cent believe they have to do as well as their parents and five per cent (or approximately 160,000) of young people aged 14–18 feel their parents are not there for them.

Significant differences in attitudes towards school are also found between those who feel they have had enough information/advice and those who do not: the former are more positive about school than the latter on all counts. The fact that there is such a strong correlation between having the right information and advice on the one hand and attitudes to school on the other suggests that young people who are struggling at school are more likely to feel unsupported in their career than their peers.

## **5 Aspirations and trajectories**

### **5.1 Introduction**

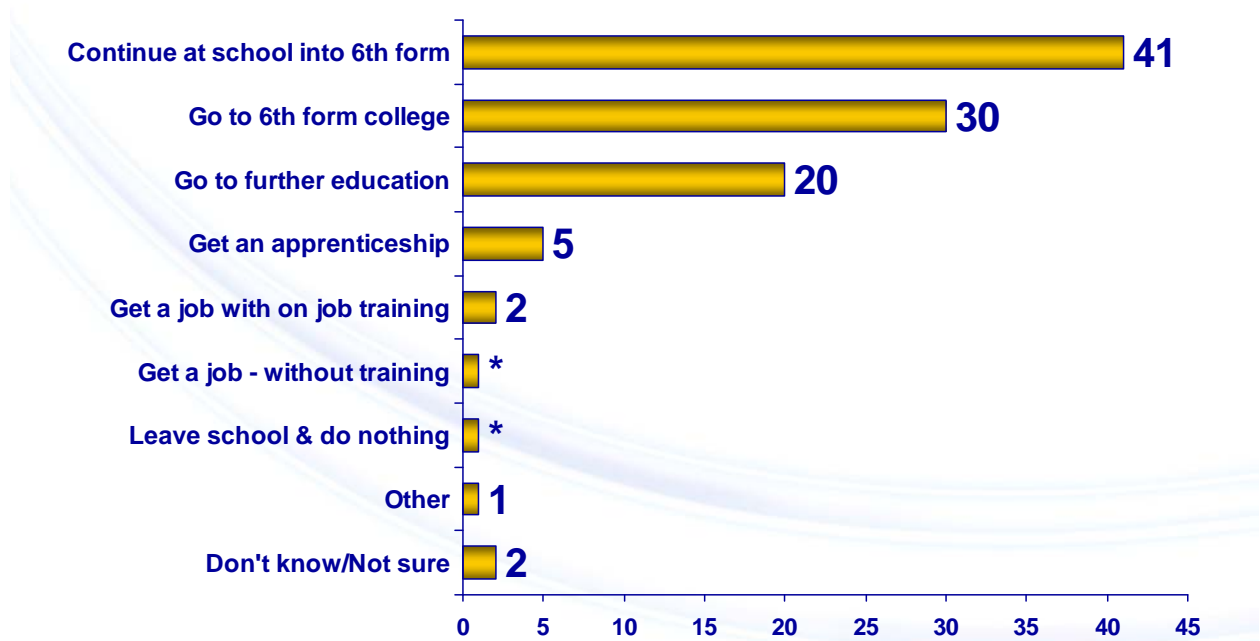
A key aim of the research is to understand more about young people's aspirations and future career paths. Young people aged 14–16 were asked what they will do after Year 11 in terms of staying on at school, going into sixth form, aspiring to go to university, or doing something else.

This chapter also explores the longer-term career plans of young people, including the levels of jobs they would like to reach, and those they expect to be doing when they leave learning and education. It concludes by highlighting young people's attitudes to getting a job, future career and expectations of the labour market.

### **5.2 What young people will do after Year 11**

Half of the sample were in Years 9, 10 or 11 and still in compulsory education. When asked what they will do when they get to the end of Year 11, the majority indicate that they wish to stay in education. Four in 10 (41 per cent) intend to continue at school into the sixth form, three in 10 (30 per cent) plan to go to sixth form college and a further two in 10 (20 per cent) will go into further education. A small number of young people think they will either get an apprenticeship (five per cent) or a job with on-the-job training (two per cent), while very few expect to get a job without training, or leave school and do nothing (less than one per cent in each case). Only two per cent say they are not sure or do not know what they will do when they reach the end of Year 11.

**Figure 5.1 What young people will do after Year 11 (Total)**

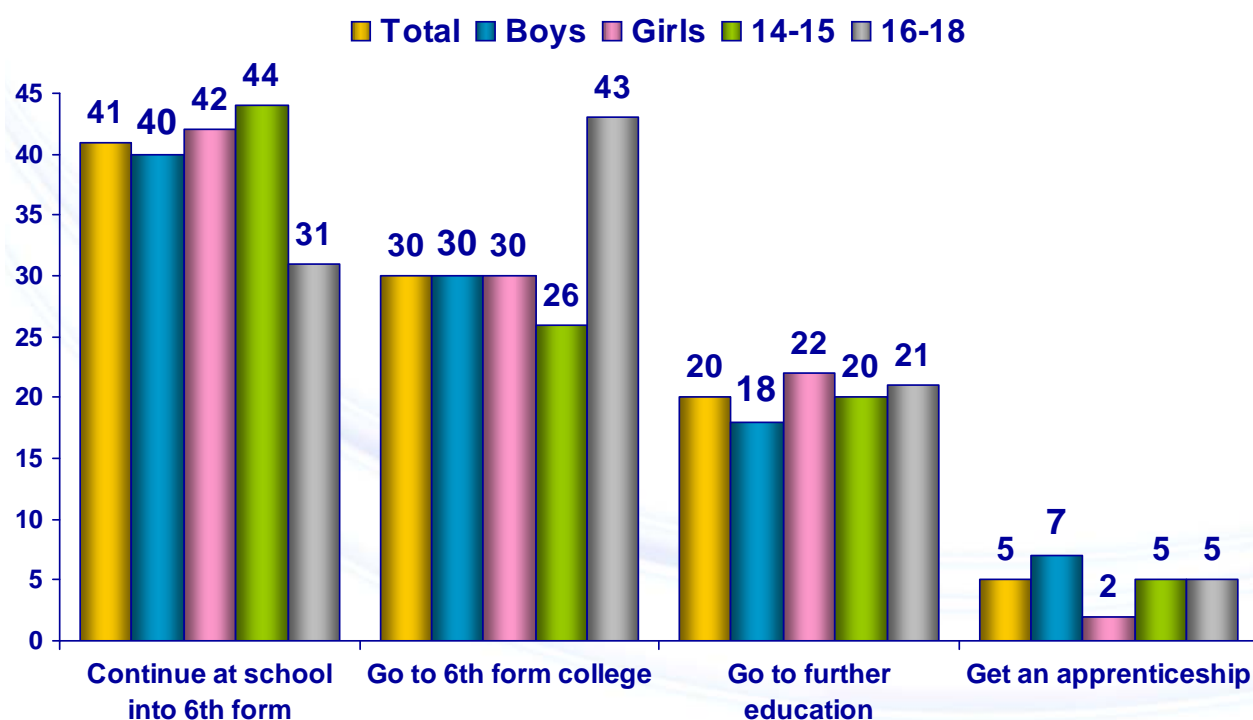


**Q15. When you reach the end of year 11 in school, do you think you will...**  
**Base: All who are currently in Years 9, 10 & 11 (493)**

Those aged 16 are less likely than 14–15 year olds to say they will continue at school into sixth form (31 per cent compared to 44 per cent). They are also more likely to say they will go to sixth form college (43 per cent, compared to 26 per cent of 14–15 year olds).

Boys are three times more likely than girls to say that they will enter an apprenticeship (seven per cent versus two per cent).

**Figure 5.2 What young people will do after Year 11 (Subgroup differences)**



**Q15. When you reach the end of year 11 in school, do you think you will...**  
*Base: All who are currently in Years 9, 10 & 11 (493)*

Young people's plans appear to be, at least in part, affected by socio-economic status. Close to half (47 per cent) of ABC1 young people plan to continue at school into sixth form, compared to a third (33 per cent) of C2DE young people. Twice as many C2DE as ABC1 young people plan to go to further education college (28 per cent and 14 per cent respectively). As many as a third (31 per cent) of C2DE white girls say they will go to further education college.

### **5.3 Why young people intend to follow these routes after Year 11**

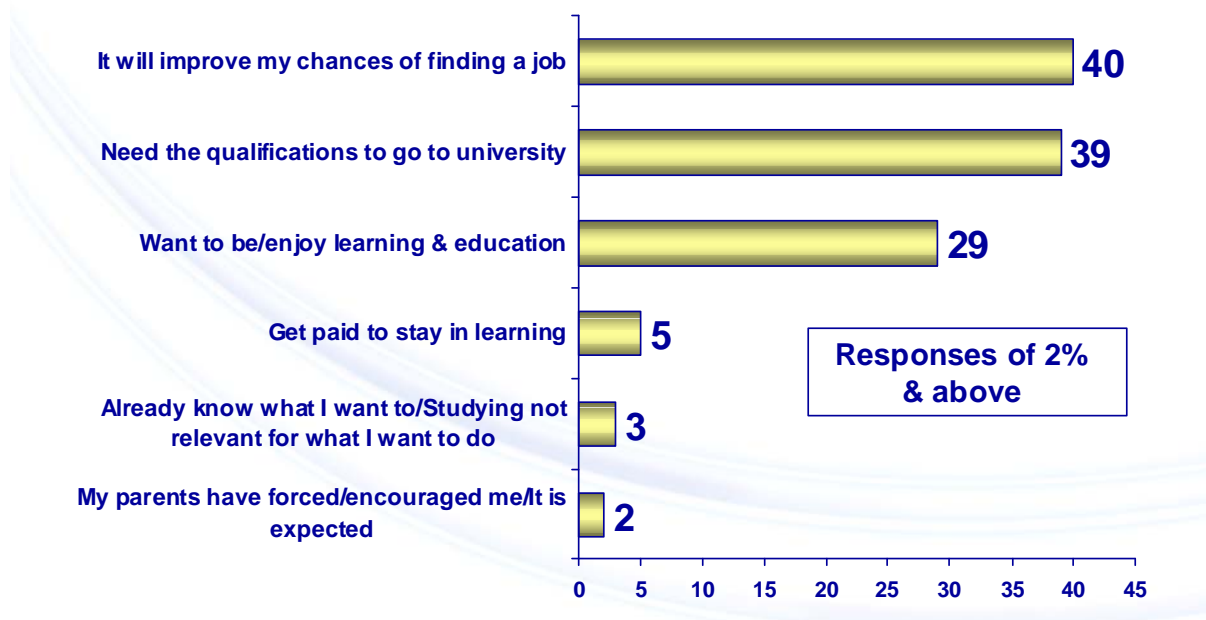
Enhanced career prospects is the principal reason why young people in Years 9–11 intend to stay in education or training, with four in 10 (40 per cent) saying it will improve their chances of finding a job and a similar number (39 per cent) saying that they need the qualifications to go to university. The next most frequently cited reason is that they enjoy learning and want to carry on in education, mentioned by three in 10 (29 per cent). The Education Maintenance Allowance appears to provide an

incentive to a small number, with one in 20 (five per cent) saying they will stay in learning because they are paid to do so.

A third of girls (34 per cent) cite the fact that they enjoy learning/studying as the main reason they will stay in education or training, compared to only a quarter of boys (24 per cent).

Young people in SEG ABC1 are significantly more likely than their C2DE peers to cite the need for qualifications to go to university (44 per cent versus 31 per cent).

**Figure 5.3 Why young people intend to follow these routes after Year 11 (Total)**

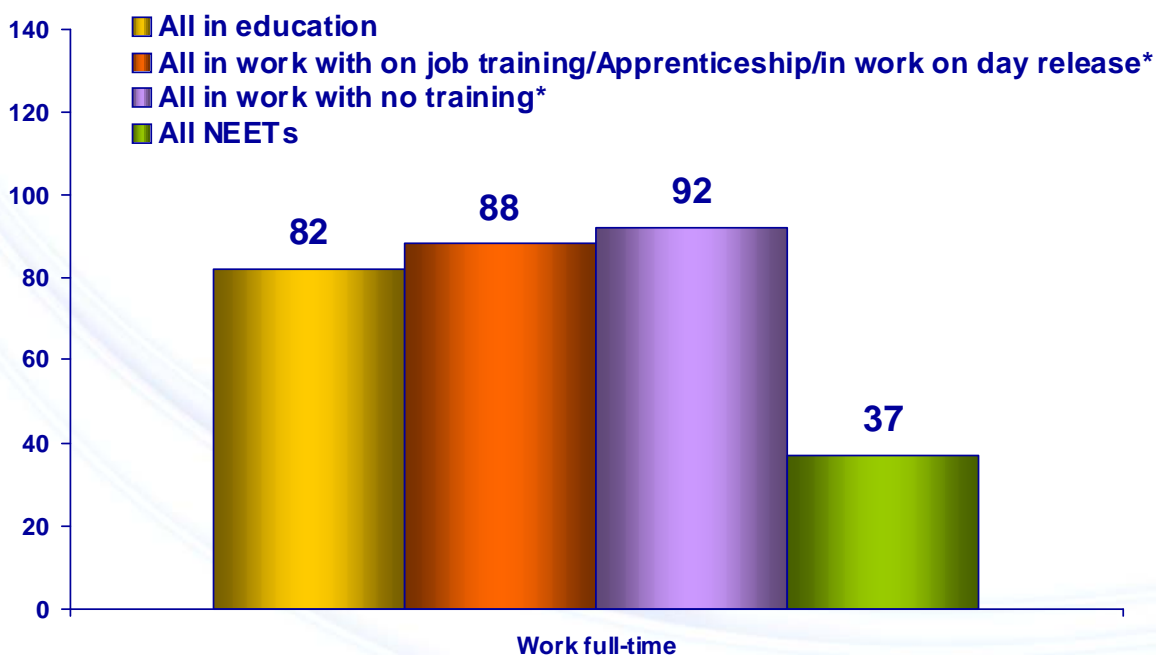


**Q16a. What are the main reasons why you will...?**  
*Base: All in Years 9-11 who will continue in education or training (481)*

#### 5.4 Long-term plans

A large majority – eight in 10 – of those who are currently in education (82 per cent) expect to work full-time once they have completed all of their education (including school, college and university). Nine in 10 young people (88 per cent) who are currently in work with training, or doing an apprenticeship, think they will work full-time once their training is complete. A similar number (92 per cent) of those who are in work with no training expect to be in full-time work in a year’s time.

**Figure 5.4 Long-term plans (Total)**



**Q3. What do you think you will be doing after you have completed your training/a year from now/in six months' time?**

**Base: All in education (921); All in work with on job training/Apprenticeship/In work on day release (30); All in work with no training (12); All NEETs (51) \*Small base size**

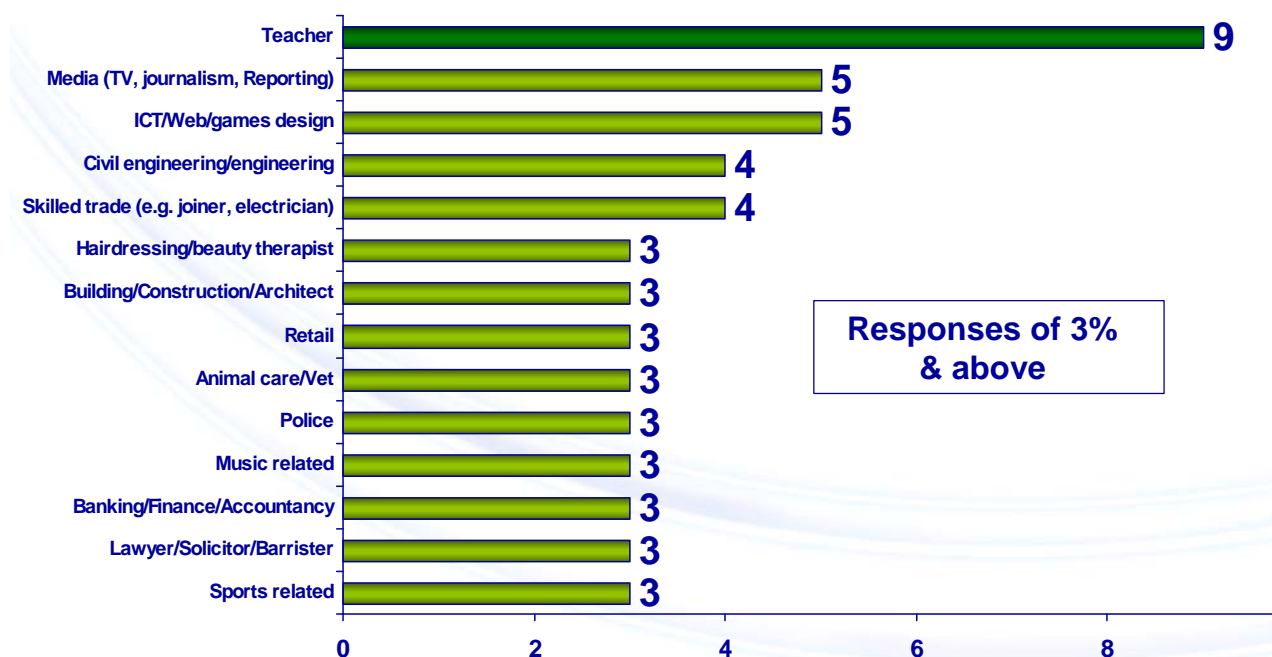
However, the state of affairs is dramatically different among those who are currently not in education, employment or training, of whom just over a third (37 per cent) expect to be working full-time six months from now. At first glance, this might suggest that these young people have somehow 'opted out' of the system. However, on closer inspection, the picture is more complex. Around one in seven NEET young people (14 per cent) expect to be working part-time and a similar number say they will be on an educational course, at college or university (16 per cent) or unemployed but looking for work (15 per cent). Encouragingly, these young people do not envisage being NEET in six months' time. Fewer than one in 10 (seven per cent) think they will be unemployed and not looking for work, with eight per cent not knowing what they will be doing.

### **5.5 Career aspirations – what young people think they will be doing**

The survey enabled young people to explore their aspirations and expectations for employment post education. Young people were asked what they think they will be doing when they have completed their education, or in a year's time for those already in apprenticeships or work.

This question yielded a wide range of responses. The most popular aspiration for young people on average is teaching, cited by one in 10 (nine per cent), followed by jobs in the media (television/journalism/reporting) or ICT-related jobs (including web and games design), both mentioned by five per cent of young people. Engineering or a skilled trade are also highly popular, both cited by four per cent of youngsters. This is a picture we might anticipate since these are the areas of work that young people are most exposed to at this stage in their lives, whether in education or in their personal/family lives.

**Figure 5.5 Career aspirations – what young people think they will be doing (Total)**



**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**  
*Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work (945)*

**Differences in aspiration by subgroup**



There are observable gender differences with girls more likely than boys to think they will become a teacher (13 per cent versus five per cent), and boys more likely to anticipate a career in ICT (eight per cent compared to two per cent of girls) or engineering (seven per cent compared to one per cent of girls). Hairdressing or beauty therapy is only mentioned by girls (seven per cent) as is childcare (four per cent), while building, construction or architecture is cited by six per cent of boys and less than one per cent of girls.

White young people are more likely to think they will become teachers (10 per cent) than those from ethnic minorities (three per cent). The latter are more likely to expect to be in banking/finance/accountancy (six per cent compared to two per cent) or business management (four per cent versus one per cent).

**Table 5.1 Career aspirations – teacher**

	<b>Teacher</b>
	%
Total	9
Boys	5
Girls	13
White	10
BME	3
Happy at school	10
Unhappy at school	3

**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**

**Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work (945)**

*Source: ICM Research*

How young people feel – or felt – about school impacts on their views about future careers. Perhaps intuitively, those who are or were happy at school are more likely to consider that they will be a teacher (10 per cent) than those who are not/were not (three per cent). The latter are more likely to anticipate a career in retail (eight per cent, against two per cent of those who are/were happy at school) or the armed forces (six per cent compared to two per cent).

**Table 5.2 Career aspirations – white/ethnic minority**

	Total	White	Ethnic minority
Teacher	9	10	3
Banking/finance/accountancy	3	2	6
Business management	2	1	4
Doctor/surgeon	2	1	5
Medicine	1	1	5

---

**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**

---

**Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work (945)**

---

Source: ICM Research

NEET young people are significantly more likely than other young people to think they will be working in retail (21 per cent), building, construction or architecture (12 per cent), hairdressing/beauty therapy (11 per cent) or office work/administration (nine per cent), possibly reflecting the lower than average expectations of this group.

**Table 5.3 Career aspirations – NEET**

	Total	NEET
Retail	3	21
Building/construction/architecture	3	12
Hairdressing/beauty therapy	3	11
Office work/administration	2	9

---

**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**

---

**Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work (945)**

---

Source: ICM Research

For those who are already in work or training, the top expectations are a skilled trade (12 per cent), office work or administration (seven per cent) or building, construction or architecture (seven per cent). It is possible that some of the young people who have given these answers are already employed in these respective fields and anticipate that they will continue in them.

Table 16 shows those jobs where there are significant differences between four key subgroups: ABC1 white boys, ABC1 white girls, C2DE white boys and C2DE white girls. Each group is assigned a colour and where it is significantly more likely than another group to mention a job, it is shaded in that colour. So, for example, eight per cent of both ABC1 white boys and C2DE white boys think they will work in civil engineering/engineering, significantly more than ABC1 white girls and C2DE white girls (two per cent and one per cent respectively).

Most crucially, Table 16 shows that gender appears to be a more important variable than socio-economic status. The expectations that boys and girls have about their future profession appear to reinforce existing stereotypes. Regardless of socio-economic group, boys are more likely than girls to expect to work in engineering, ICT, skilled trades, building/construction/architecture or as a mechanic; viewed as 'traditionally male' professions. Similarly, girls are more likely to expect jobs in teaching, hairdressing/beauty therapy, childcare and nursing/midwifery; 'traditionally female' occupations. No boys at all expect to be working in any of the latter three categories. A clear class divide can be seen in one choice of profession – banking/finance/accountancy – with ABC1 boys and girls both more likely to expect to get these jobs than their C2DE counterparts.

**Table 5.4 Career aspirations (Subgroup differences)**

	ABC1 white boys %	ABC1 white girls %	C2DE white boys %	C2DE white girls %
Civil engineering/engineering	8	2	8	1
Computer engineering/web/games/design/ICT	8	1	6	3
Teacher	7	14	4	13
Skilled trade (plumbing, carpentry, etc)	6	0	9	0
Building/construction/architect	6	1	7	0
Police force/police officer	6	2	3	3
Sports related/professional sports	5	1	3	2
Armed forces	4	*	5	0
Banking/finance/accountancy	4	3	0	2
Mechanic/car mechanic	2	0	5	1
Drama/acting/performing arts	1	4	0	1
Something to do with science	0	2	3	3
Forensic science/crime scene investigation	0	1	1	3
Social worker	0	4	1	1
Hairdressing/beauty therapist	0	7	0	8
Childcare	0	2	0	8
Nursing/midwife	0	2	0	4
Nursery nurse	0	2	0	5
Fashion/fashion designer	*	3	0	2

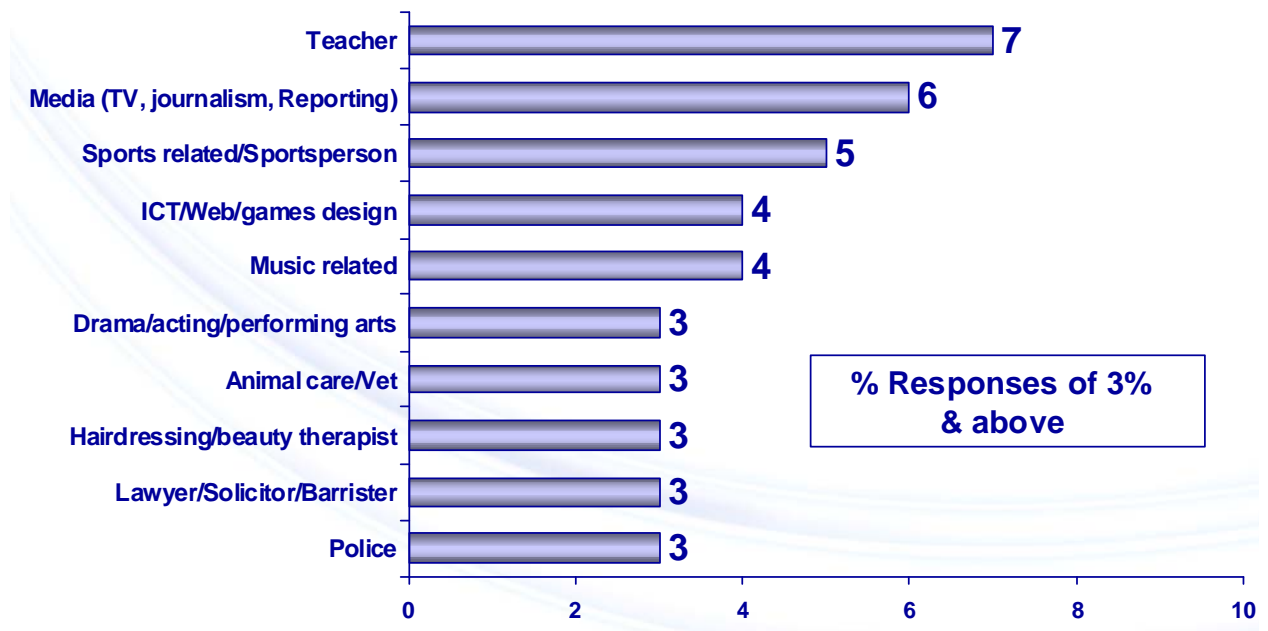
**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**

*Source: ICM Research*

**5.6 Career aspirations – what young people would like to be doing**

On the related question of what young people would like to be doing if given the choice, the top two preferred career areas are teaching (seven per cent) and the media (six per cent), largely mirroring what they expect to be doing. However, while engineering and skilled trades are both high up on the list of expected careers, they are not what young people would most like to be doing, mentioned by only two per cent in either case.

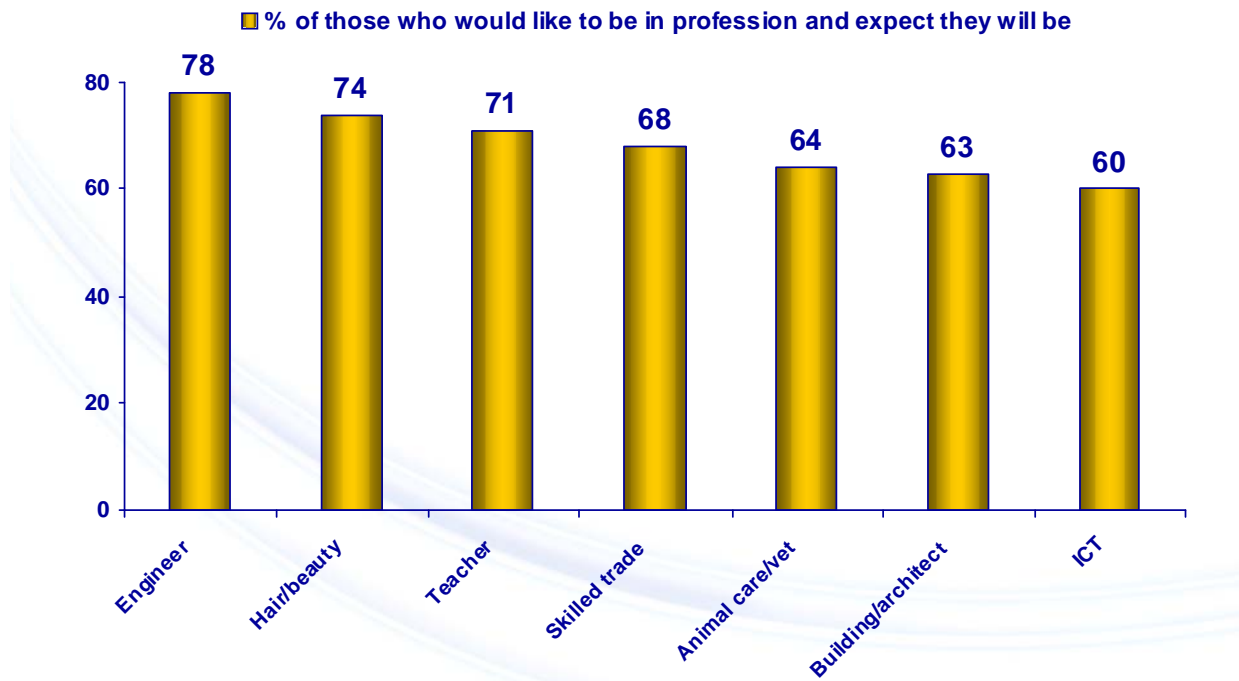
**Figure 5.6 Career aspirations – what young people would like to be doing (Total)**



**Q4b. And, if you could choose, what kind of work (i.e. type of job) would you like to be doing? Base: All respondents (1,021).**

In analysing how young people’s expectations of what they will be doing tie in with what they would like to be doing, eight out of 10 (78 per cent) of those who would like to be an engineer think that is what they will become. Around three quarters (74 per cent) of young people who want to work in hairdressing or beauty therapy think they will achieve this aim, and seven in 10 (71 per cent) of those who would favour a career in teaching expect to work in this field (see Figure 5.7).

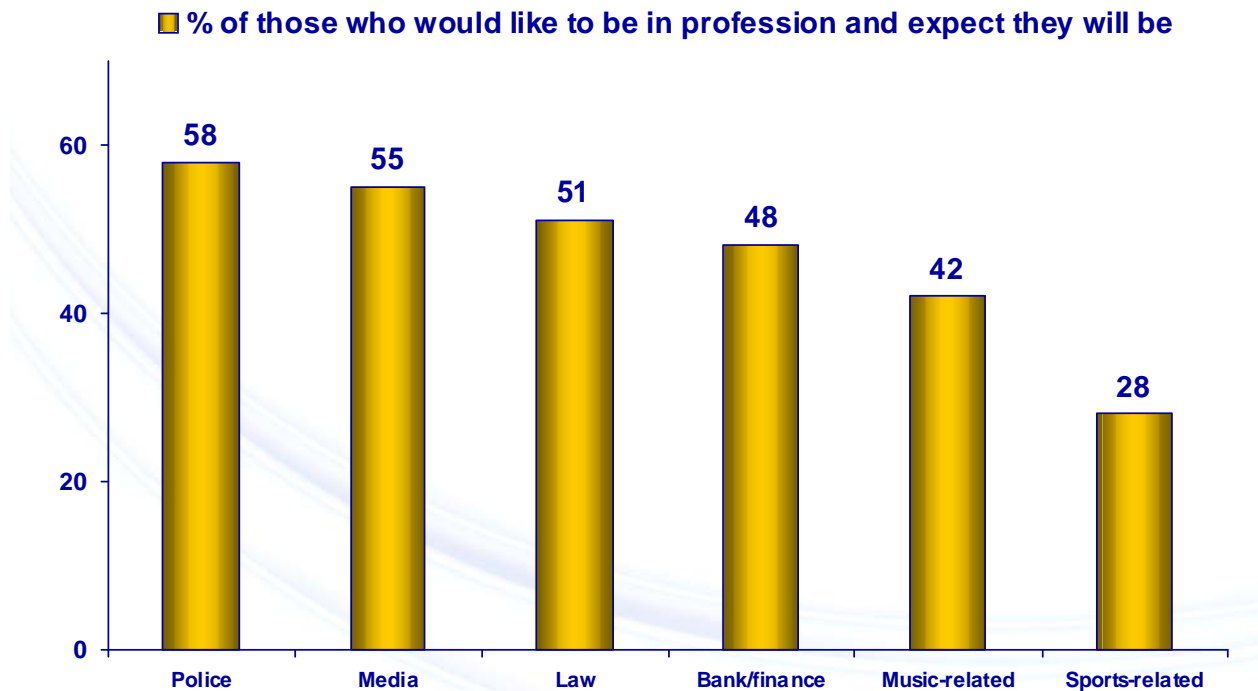
**Figure 5.7 Career aspirations versus career expectations (Total)**



**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**  
*Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work (945)*  
**Q4b. And, if you could choose, what kind of work (i.e. type of job) would you like to be doing?** *Base: All respondents (1,021).*

In contrast, only three in 10 (28 per cent) of those who would like a sports-related job expect to have one and only four in 10 (42 per cent) of those who want to work in a music-related role think that they will.

Figure 5.8 Career aspirations versus career expectations (Total)



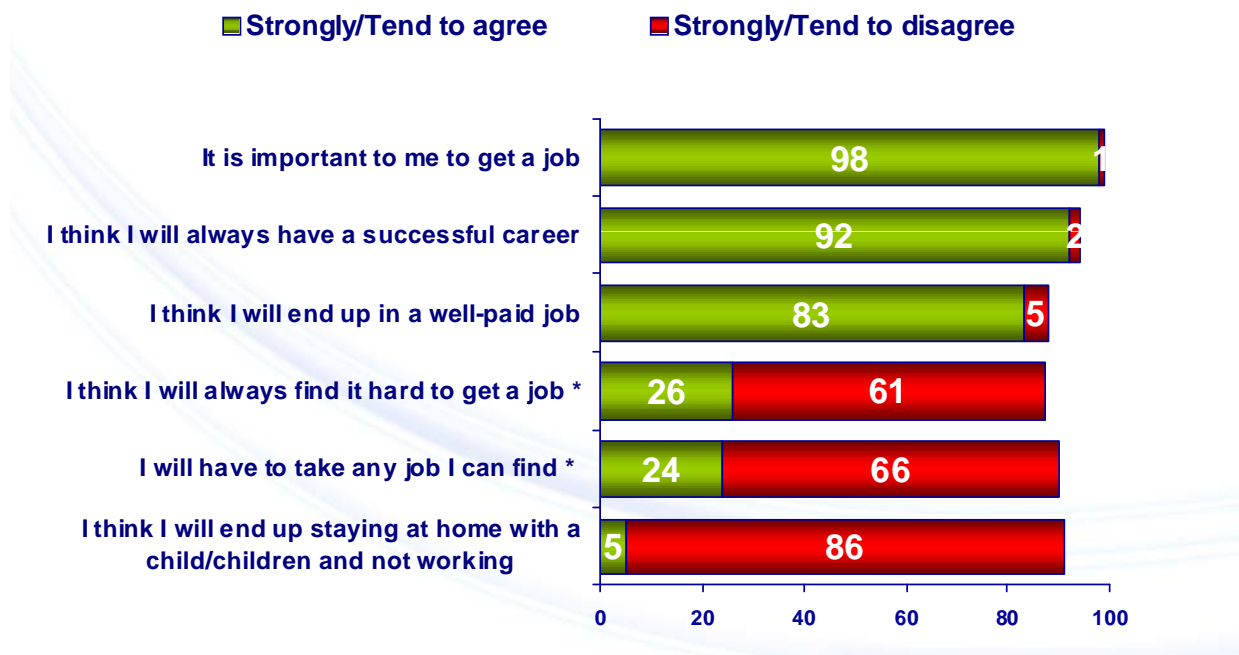
Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?  
Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work (945)  
Q4b. And, if you could choose, what kind of work (i.e. type of job) would you like to be doing? Base: All respondents (1,021).

### 5.7 Attitudes to getting a job and future career

Almost all young people (98 per cent) agree that it is important to them to get a job. Nine in 10 (92 per cent) expect to have a successful career, while eight in 10 (83 per cent) think they will end up in a well-paid job. The slight differences in the responses here suggest that for at least some, successful does not necessarily mean well-paid.

As many as a quarter of young people on average think they will always find it hard to get a job (26 per cent) or will have to take any job they can find (24 per cent). This represents approximately 850,000 and 800,000 young people aged 14–18 respectively. This means there are considerable numbers of young people who, despite feeling it is important to get a job, anticipate that they will always struggle to find work and/or that they will have little choice of what kind of work they do. This is a theme which is only likely to get worse as the economic recession continues.

**Figure 5.9 Attitudes to getting a job and future career (Total)**



**Q6. Thinking about your future, for each statement I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with it. \* Negative statements**  
**Base: All respondents (1,021).**

Analysis of young people’s attitudes to getting a job by demographic subgroup is revealing. Socio-economic status has a clear impact, with a third of C2DE young people believing they will always find it hard to get a job (33 per cent); significantly more than the 20 per cent of ABC1 group. A similar difference is found among those who feel they will have to take any job they can find (32 per cent of the C2DE group and 19 per cent of the ABC1 group).

Ethnicity has a more ambiguous effect. While young people from ethnic minorities are more likely than white young people to think they will end up in a well-paid job (91 per cent and 82 per cent respectively), they are also more likely to believe they will always find it hard to get a job (34 per cent compared to 25 per cent). This may reflect a certain resilience among young people from ethnic minorities who, although they perceive more difficulty in finding a job, are ultimately more optimistic about their ability to progress to a high-paid position. The perceived greater difficulty in finding work may also highlight anticipated discrimination in the workplace.



Among white young people, ABC1 boys are much more confident than the population in general that they will end up in a well-paid job (89 per cent, compared to 79 per cent of ABC1 white girls and 81 per cent of both C2DE white boys and C2DE white girls). Meanwhile, one in 10 (10 per cent) C2DE white girls believe they will end up staying at home with a child/children and not working; significantly more than any other white group.

**Table 5.5 Attitudes to getting a job and future career (Subgroup differences)**

	<i>% Agree</i>
<b>I think I will always have a successful career</b>	
Total	92
Happy at school	94
Unhappy at school	83
Doing well	93
Not doing well	79
NEET	80
<b>I think I will end up in a well-paid job</b>	
Total	83
Male	86
Female	81
White	82
Ethnic minority	91
ABC1 white boys	89
ABC1 white girls	79
C2DE white boys	81
C2DE white girls	81
Happy at school	85
Unhappy at school	74
NEET	65
<b>I think I will always find it hard to get a job</b>	
Total	26
Male	29
Female	23
ABC1	20
C2DE	33
White	25
Ethnic minority	34
Happy at school	24
Unhappy at school	44

Doing well	24
Not doing well	65
Disabled	59
NEET	66

**I will have to take any job I can find**

Total	24
ABC1	19
C2DE	32
Doing well	23
Not doing well	47
Disabled	51
NEET	59

**I think I will end up staying at home with a child/children and not working**

Total	5
Male	3
Female	6
ABC1	3
C2DE	7
ABC1 white boys	2
ABC1 white girls	4
C2DE white boys	4
C2DE white girls	10

---

**Q6. Thinking about your future, for each statement I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with it.**

---

***Base: All respondents (1,021)***

---

*Source: ICM Research*

Only a quarter of young people who feel they are currently doing well believe that they will always find it hard to get a job (24 per cent) or that they will have to take any job they can find (23 per cent), compared to two thirds (65 per cent) and a half (47 per cent) respectively among those who do not think they are doing well.

Six in 10 (59 per cent) disabled young people think they will find it hard to get a job compared to only a quarter (24 per cent) of those without a disability or long-term illness.

Young people who are not in education, employment or training are much less optimistic than other groups about their chances of ending up in a well-paid job or of having a successful career.

## **5.8 Summary**

When asked what they will do when they get to the end of Year 11, the majority of young people indicate that they wish to stay in some form of education. The fact that just two per cent say they are not sure, or do not know what they will do, indicates young people have been formulating their futures. Young people in Years 9–11 cite improved career prospects as the principal reason why they intend to stay in education or training.

A large majority of those who are currently in education (82 per cent) expect to work full-time once they have completed all of their education (including school, college and university). The most popular aspiration for young people is teaching, cited by one in 10, followed by the media (television/journalism/reporting) or ICT-related jobs (including web and games design), both mentioned by five per cent of young people. There is a broad consistency in terms of the type of jobs young people would like to do and what they think they will end up doing.

In terms of their attitudes towards getting a job, positively, almost all young people agree that it is important to them to get a job. Most expect to have a successful career and to end up in a well-paid job. However, a quarter of young people think they will always find it hard to get a job or will have to take any job they can find.

The findings among young people as a whole, however, disguise wide variations in sub-sections of the population. Young people's plans appear to be influenced by socio-economic status. Close to half of ABC1 young people plan to continue at school into sixth form, compared with a third of C2DE young people. Twice as many C2DE as ABC1 young people plan to go to further education college. Almost a third of C2DE white girls say they will go to further education college. Young people belonging to socio-economic classification ABC1 are significantly more likely than their C2DE peers to state the need for qualifications to go to university.

A gender divide is also evident in terms of job aspirations. Most notably, girls are more likely than boys to think they will become a teacher and boys are more likely to anticipate a career in ICT or engineering. Hairdressing or beauty therapy is only mentioned by girls, as is childcare, while building, construction or architecture aspirations are predominantly male.

Continuing a theme already established in this report, NEET young people are an outlier with regards to career aspirations. Among those who are currently not in education, employment or training, just over a third expect to be working full-time six months from now. This is considerably lower than average, although they do not envisage being NEET in six months' time. These young people are more likely than others to aspire to jobs in manual or low-skilled occupations.

## **6 Engaging all young people in meaningful learning**

### **6.1 Introduction**

A central aim of the research is to explore what can help in supporting all young people to engage in learning after 16. Young people were asked to respond to a range of measures aimed at helping all young people to continue in education or training until 18.

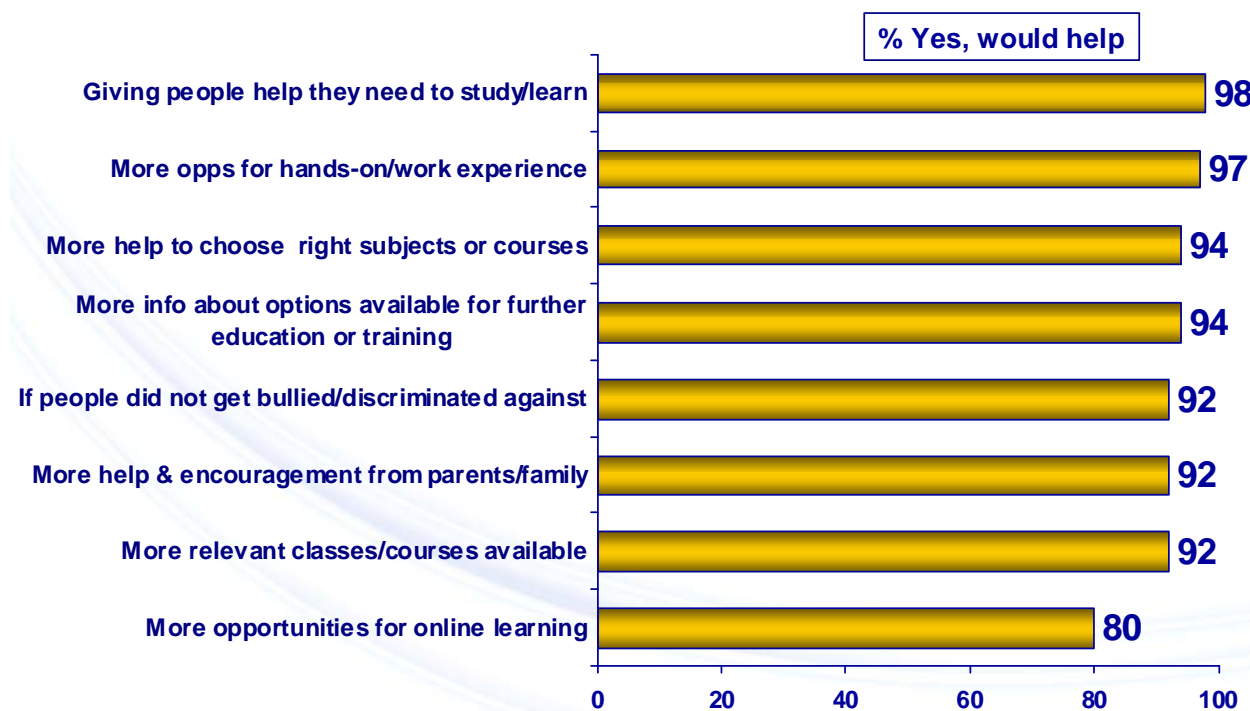
Young people were asked to imagine that they had been given the job of making learning more attractive to all young people after 16 so that everyone can take part and achieve, and to state what their top three recommendations would be.

### **6.2 Helping all young people stay in education or training until 18**

There is broad agreement that each of the measures might help. The measures were drawn from existing literature on engaging young people in learning. The exercise was designed to test the degree to which young people believe in the measures under proposal.

Almost all (98 per cent) think it would be beneficial to give people the help they need to study/learn. This is hardly surprising and suggests a consensus around this ideal. However, the fact that more than nine in 10 think there should be more opportunities for hands-on/work experience (97 per cent), more help to choose the right subjects or courses (94 per cent) and more information about the options available (94 per cent) suggests a high degree of agreement and consensus. While findings earlier in the report indicate that a majority of young people feel they have the information and advice they need, there appears to be recognition that there are those who could benefit from more.

**Figure 6.1 Helping all young people to continue in education or training until 18 (Total)**



**Q19. Some young people are less likely than others to remain in education and training after 16. Which of the following things would help all young people continue in education and training until 18?**  
*Base: All respondents (1,021).*

Most of those interviewed (92 per cent) also think that it would help if young people were not bullied or discriminated against. On the one hand, this may simply echo agreement that there is no place for bullying and discrimination and that it should be eliminated. Alternatively, it may be that young people have experience, first or second hand, of bullying in their place of study, something which is reflected in their response to this question.

The proposal that attracts the least support is to create opportunities for more online learning, although this is still supported by the majority (80 per cent).

### **6.3 Making learning more attractive post 16**

Young people were asked for their top three spontaneous recommendations to make learning more attractive to all young people so that everyone can take part and achieve after 16.

The top four recommendations are as follows:

- To make learning more fun and enjoyable (18 per cent).
- To make a better range of subjects available (17 per cent).
- To increase the amount of practical/hands-on work (16 per cent).
- To offer more help/support/advice (14 per cent).

Around one in 10 suggests:

- Making more information about learning available (11 per cent).
- Making learning more relevant to future careers (11 per cent).
- Doing things differently/making learning more interesting (10 per cent).
- Showing young people what they can achieve by learning (10 per cent).
- Teachers, friends and family encouraging/inspiring confidence (nine per cent).

Indeed, when aggregating the findings for making learning more enjoyable and making learning more interesting – the first and seventh priorities – it is evident that ways to directly communicate with/engage young people and teaching style is the single most important recommendation in the eyes of young people. This chimes with an earlier finding that for one in 10 young people, the style of teaching they receive/received does not/did not help them to learn.

Recommendation two centres around the range of options open to young people and ensuring there is something suitable for everyone, reflecting the earlier finding showing one in 10 believe subjects at school are not relevant.

Recommendation three refers to increased experiential learning/vocation-orientated learning.

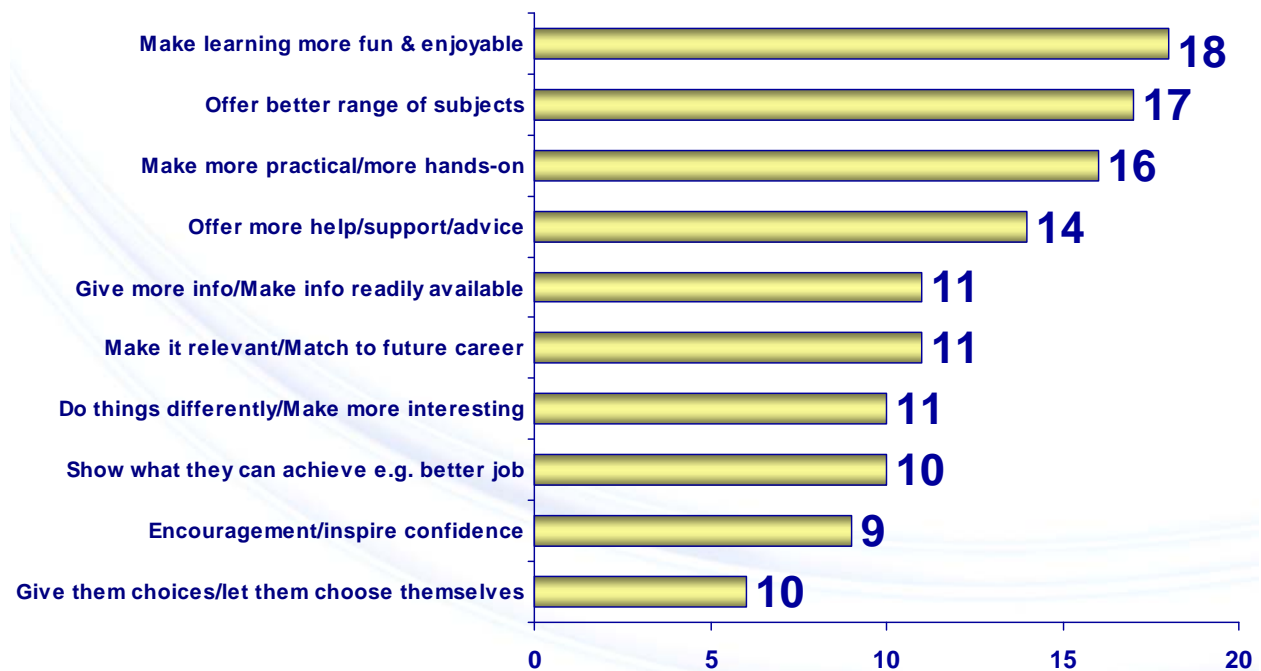
Recommendations four and five relate to the importance of information and advice, a prominent theme throughout this research, and encapsulated in the fifth of young people who say they have not received enough information and advice to make the right career choices.

At first glance, it is also perhaps surprising that financial incentives appear so low down young people's suggestions to make learning more attractive. However, on closer analysis we can see that around one in 10 mention financial considerations if we combine the answers to:

- Making Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)<sup>ii</sup> funding available to everyone/advertise EMA more (five per cent).
- Monetary gain/incentive/Financial rewards to stay on (five per cent).

The most frequently stated recommendations are shown in Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

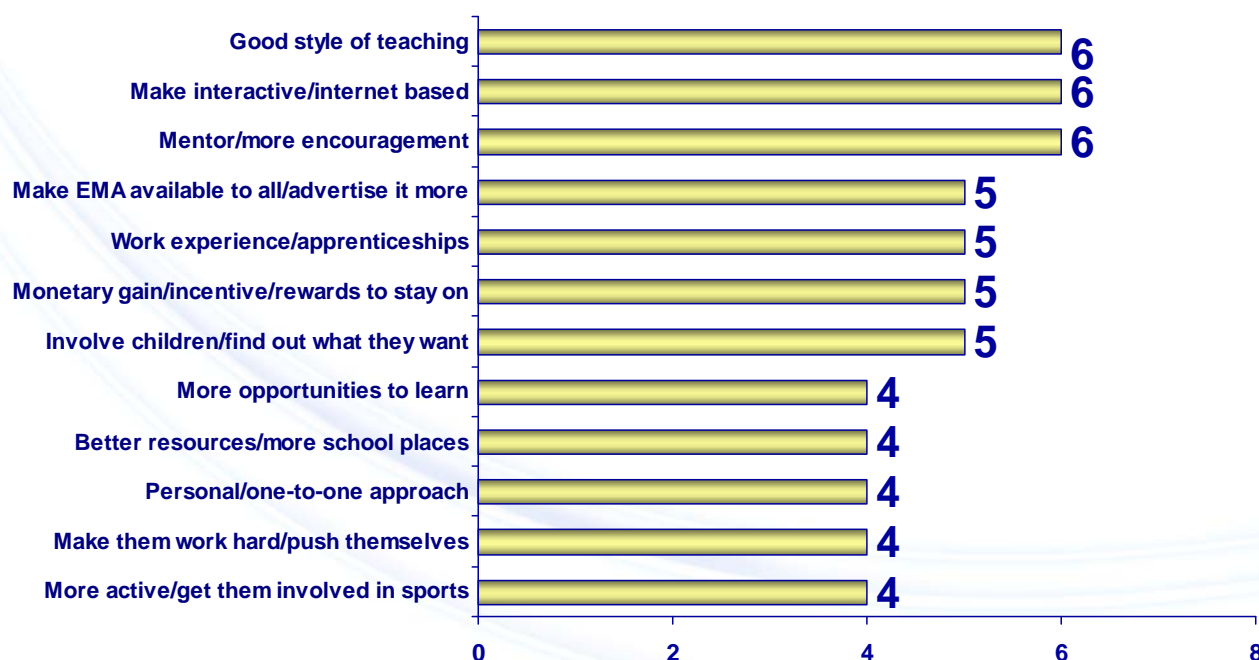
**Figure 6.2 Making learning more attractive post 16 (Total)**



**Q20. If you were given the job of making learning more attractive to all young people after 16 so that everyone could take part and achieve, what would your top 3 recommendations be? Base: All respondents answering Q20 (775)**



**Figure 6.3 Making learning more attractive post 16 (Total)**



**Q20. If you were given the job of making learning more attractive to all young people after 16 so that everyone could take part and achieve, what would your top 3 recommendations be? Base: All respondents answering Q20 (775)**

The top four recommendations tend to be in the top four among most subgroups of young people, though in different orders of priority.

More girls than boys suggest that a better and more varied range of subjects should be made available (21 per cent compared to 13 per cent), while boys are more likely than girls to say that there should be more practical/hands-on work (19 per cent versus 13 per cent).

Those aged 14–15 are more likely than 16–18 year olds to say that more help/support/ advice should be offered. This finding may partly be explained by the fact that the younger age group is less likely to have had a one-to-one session with a careers Connexions adviser.

The views of NEET young people are different to the population as a whole. This group is much more likely to prioritise making learning more practical with hands-on

experience (20 per cent), offering a better range of subjects (16 per cent) and making learning more enjoyable (13 per cent).

A similar trend can be discerned among disabled young people where the top three recommendations are:

- To increase the amount of practical/hands on work (25 per cent).
- To make more information about learning available (23 per cent).
- To make learning more fun and enjoyable (22 per cent).

The key subgroup differences are set out in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Making learning more attractive post 16 (Subgroup differences)**

Boys	Girls	14–15	16–18	Ethnic minority	Disabled	NEET
More practical/hands-on (19%)	Better range of subjects (21%)	More fun/enjoyable (22%)	Better range of subjects (19%)	More fun/enjoyable (22%)	More practical/hands-on (25%)	More practical/hands-on (20%)
More fun/enjoyable (18%)	More fun/enjoyable (18%)	More help/support/advice (19%)	More fun/enjoyable (15%)	Better range of subjects (17%)	Give more information/ensure readily available (23%)	More fun/enjoyable (13%)
Better range of subjects (17%)	More help/support/advice (16%)	More practical/hands-on (19%)	More practical/hands-on (15%)	More help/support/advice (14%)	More fun/enjoyable (22%)	More help/support/advice (10%)

**Q20. If you were given the job of making learning more attractive to all young people after 16 so that everyone could take part and achieve, what would your top three recommendations be?**

**Base: All respondents answering Q20 (775)**

Source: ICM Research

## 6.4 Summary

To summarise, there is broad agreement with a range of proposals to support young people to continue in education or training until the age of 18. Young people are most supportive of the proposals to give people the help they need to study/learn (98 per cent) and that there should more opportunities for hands-on/work experience (97 per cent).

The top four recommendations from young people themselves are: to make learning more fun and enjoyable (18 per cent); to make a better range of subjects available (17 per cent); to increase the amount of practical/hands-on work (16 per cent), and to offer more help/support/advice (14 per cent).

## 7 Conclusions

The young people's research raises a number of critical issues which the Commission, policy-makers, educationalists and other interested parties need to consider.

- To some extent, the findings undermine some of the negative views about young people, especially teenagers, prevalent in our society and promoted in the media. Young people aged 14–18, on the whole, are by their own admission performing well and feel empowered to improve their own position. In general, school is, or has been, enjoyable for most youngsters. Learning is valued, as is aspiring to work full-time. These findings should go some way to dispelling some of the downbeat stories about young people and their contribution to Britain's 'broken society'.
- It cannot be ignored, however, that certain groups of young people feel marginalised in learning and, by implication, society as a whole. This is particularly the case with disabled young people and those who are not in education, employment or training. Young people from CD2E groups can struggle on the margins of learning. For many, it is clear 'the system' is failing them, that the opportunities to learn and fulfil their potential are not universally available. A key objective therefore should be to take measures to ensure all young people can benefit from learning, nurturing the country's future talent.
- Understanding the relationships between young people's circumstances on the one hand and their attitudes to school on the other is crucial to identifying the causes of disengagement. There are connections between how well young people feel they are doing, whether they feel they have had the right information and advice, how able they feel to improve their current situation, their views about the support they have received from their parents and their overall attitudes towards school. It is beyond the remit of this study to understand how these relationships work, though further research could begin to draw some conclusions.
- One of the main factors driving engagement is the pressurised climate in which young people operate. Fear of not succeeding at school is profound, many worry about the prospect of finding a job, and a significant number feel they have to do

better than their parents did. Parental influence and guidance will always be strong but should not be at the expense of a young person's emotional wellbeing brought about by undue pressure. For those young people who receive no support at all from their parents/carers, and where fear of failure is manifest, an additional support base is required. The impact of the recession on job and training prospects makes this even more crucial.

- The prevalence of bullying is further underlined in this research. With around one in 10 young people feeling either emotionally or physically unsafe it is evident that many of those aged 14–18 cannot hope to fulfil their learning potential within an environment of intimidation. Further steps need to be taken to eradicate the causes of bullying and unfair treatment and to promote equality.
- Happiness at school is a key discriminator. Leaving aside the vast majority who speak positively about their experience of school, those who are unhappy tend to be negative towards all other aspects researched in this study. It conditions their responses to other aspects of schooling, their attitudes towards the support they receive and their perceptions of themselves and their future. In essence, a bad experience impacts on a young person's self-worth. Making school a happier time for all young people should be a priority.
- Helping all young people to stay in education or training until 18 should remain a key desire. There are no 'quick wins' but medium- to longer-term priorities might include: making learning more enjoyable; offering a better range of subjects/subjects suitable for everyone; making learning more practical, and offering more advice/support. This would go some way to making learning more accessible to all and potentially offset the one in 10 young people who consider dropping out of education and training all together.

## References

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2009) *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 Year Olds in England*. London: DCSF

## Appendix 1: Guide to statistical reliability

The respondents to the Equality and Human Rights Commission Young People’s Voices Survey are only samples of the total ‘population’ of young people aged 14–18 in England, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody in that demographic had been interviewed (the ‘true’ values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the true values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95 per cent – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the ‘95 per cent confidence interval’.

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	Statistical reliability		
	10%/90%	30%/70%	50%/50%
50 interviews	8.4	12.8	14.0
100 interviews	5.9	9.0	9.8
300 interviews	3.4	5.2	5.7
500 interviews	2.6	4.0	4.4
1,021 interviews	1.8	*2.8	3.1

\* For example, with a sample of 1,021 where 30 per cent give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the true value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of plus or minus three percentage points ( $\pm 2.8\%$ ) from the sample result.

## Appendix 2: Guide to socio-economic definitions

The grades detailed below are the social class definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, and are standard on all surveys carried out by ICM Research.

<b>Socio-Economic Grades</b>		
	<b>Social Class</b>	<b>Occupation of Chief Income Earner</b>
A	Upper Middle Class	Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high-ranking grades of the Services.
B	Middle Class	People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, heads of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors and upper grades of the Services.
C1	Lower Middle Class	All others doing non-manual jobs: nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants/constables and middle ranks of the Services.
C2	Skilled Working Class	Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprenticeships, foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long-distance lorry drivers, security officers and lower grades of Services.
D	Working Class	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships, machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	Those on lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.



## Appendix 3: Sample profile

	Number of people Unweighted	Unweighted %	Weighted %
<b>Total:</b>	1,021	100	100
<b>Educational/work status:</b>			
In Year 9 at school	66	6	7
In Years 10/11 at school	427	42	42
In Years 12/13 at school	133	13	12
At sixth form college	167	16	16
At further education college	114	11	12
At university	14	1	1
In work with 'on-the-job training'	10	1	1
In an apprenticeship	19	2	2
In work with day release	1	*	*
In work with no training	12	1	1
Not in education, employment or training	51	5	5
Other	7	1	1
<b>Gender:</b>			
Male	514	50	52
Female	507	50	48
<b>Socio-economic grade:</b>			
A	143	14	9
B	272	27	17
C1	226	22	29
C2	191	19	21
D	129	13	16
E	60	6	8
<b>Ethnicity:</b>			
White	898	88	89
Mixed	36	4	3
Asian or Asian British	40	4	3
Black or Black British	35	3	3
Other ethnic group	12	1	1

## Sample profile continued

	Number of people Unweighted	Unweighted %	Weighted %
<b>Illness/disability:</b>			
Yes, substantially affected	15	1	2
Yes, but not substantially affected	25	2	3
No	971	95	95
Refused	10	1	1
<b>Religion:</b>			
Non-religious	730	71	72
Christian	242	24	23
Buddhist	0	0	0
Hindu	7	1	1
Jewish	2	*	*
Muslim	20	2	2
Sikh	4	*	*
Other	6	1	1
Don't know	1	*	*
Refused	9	1	1
<b>Sexual orientation:</b>			
(Base: all 16–18 year olds (621))			
Heterosexual/straight	596	96	96
Gay	2	*	*
Lesbian	0	0	0
Bisexual	9	1	2
Other	2	*	*
Prefer not to say	10	2	2
Don't know	2	*	*
<b>Qualifications predicted at end of Year 11:</b>			
(Base: all those in years 10 and 11 (427))			
5 or more GCSEs with minimum grades of A*–C	352	82	81
5 or more GCSEs at any grade	57	13	14
Less than 5 GCSEs	10	2	3
Other	0	0	0
Would rather not say	2	*	*
Don't know	6	1	1

## Sample profile continued

	Number of people Unweighted	Unweighted %	Weighted %
<b>Highest qualification received so far:</b>			
<i>(Base: All except those in Years 9–11 (528))</i>			
5 or more GCSEs with minimum grades of A*–C	260	49	48
5 or more GCSEs at any grade	45	9	9
Less than 5 GCSEs	41	8	8
NVQ level 1 (or level 1 in another vocational qualification)	16	3	3
NVQ level 2 (or level 2 in another vocational qualification)	17	3	3
NVQ level 3 (or level 3 in another vocational qualification)	6	1	1
1 or more AS-levels	92	17	16
1 or more A-levels	24	5	4
No qualifications	10	2	2
Other	8	2	2
Would rather not say	7	1	2
Don't know	2	*	*
<b>Region:</b>			
North East	52	5	5
North West	140	14	14
Yorkshire and Humberside	107	10	11
East Midlands	89	9	9
West Midlands	112	11	11
Eastern	116	11	11
Greater London	136	13	13
South East	167	16	17
South West	102	10	10

## Appendix 4: Marked-up questionnaire

- Where results do not sum to 100 per cent, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated.
- Results are based on all respondents (1,021) unless otherwise stated.
- An asterisk (\*) represents a value of less than one half or one per cent, but not zero.
- Where base sizes are very small data is given in numbers (N) rather than percentages (%).

### Q1. First of all, can I just check how old you are? SINGLE CODE.

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
14	19	17	21
15	21	23	19
16	28	29	28
17	20	20	20
18	12	11	12

### Q2. And, are you currently at secondary school or doing something else? SINGLE CODE. PROBE.

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
In Year 9 at school	7	6	7
In Years 10 and 11 at school	42	42	43
In Years 12 and 13 at school	12	10	13
At sixth form college	16	16	16
At further education college	12	11	12
At university	1	2	1
In work with 'on-the-job training'	1	1	*
In an apprenticeship	2	3	1
In work with day release	*	*	0
In work with no training	1	2	1
Not in education, employment or training	5	6	5
Other	1	1	*
Don't know	0	0	0

**Q3a. What do you think you will do, after you have completed all of your education (that includes school, college and university)?**  
**PROBE. SINGLE CODE.**

*Base: All who are in education.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(921)</i>	<i>(448)</i>	<i>(473)</i>
Work full-time	82	79	85
Work part-time	5	6	5
Be unemployed and looking for work	*	*	1
Be unemployed and not looking for work	0	0	0
Be self-employed	3	5	2
Other	2	2	1
Don't know	7	8	6

**Q3b. What do you think you will do after you have completed your training?**  
**PROBE. SINGLE CODE.**

*Base: All who are in work with 'on-the-job training', in an apprenticeship or in work with day release.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(30)</i>	<i>(23)</i>	<i>(7)</i>
Work full-time	88	92	74
Work part-time	0	0	0
Be unemployed and looking for work	0	0	0
Be unemployed and not looking for work	0	0	0
Be self-employed	7	6	9
Educational course/college/University	6	2	17
Other	0	0	0
Don't know	0	0	0

**Q3c. Thinking about a year from now, what do you think you are most likely to be doing? PROBE. SINGLE CODE.**

*Base: All who are in work with no training.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(8)</i>	<i>(4)</i>
Working full-time	92	100	76
Working part-time	0	0	0
Be unemployed and looking for work	0	0	0
Be unemployed and not looking for work	0	0	0
Be self-employed	0	0	0
Educational course/college/university	8	0	24
Other	0	0	0
Don't know	0	0	0

**Q3d. What do you think you will be doing in six months' time?**

PROBE. SINGLE CODE.

*Base: All who are not in education, employment or training.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	(51)	(29)	(22)
Working full-time	37	36	38
Working part-time	14	12	16
Be unemployed and looking for work	15	16	15
Be unemployed and not looking for work	7	9	5
Be self-employed	0	0	0
Educational course/college/university	16	17	15
Other	3	5	0
Don't know	8	6	10

**Q4a. What kind of work (i.e. type of job) do you think you are likely to be doing?**

*Base: All except those who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work or don't know. Please see computer tables for answers of \*%.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(945)</i>	<i>(470)</i>	<i>(475)</i>
Teacher	9	5	13
Media – television/journalism/reporting etc	5	4	6
Computer engineering/web/games design/ICT	5	8	2
Civil engineering/engineering	4	7	1
Skilled trade – plumber/carpenter/joiner/electrician	4	7	0
Building/construction/architect	3	6	*
Hairdressing/beauty therapist	3	0	7
Retail	3	3	3
Animal care/vet	3	2	4
Police force/police officer	3	4	2
Music related/music producer	3	4	2
Banking/finance/accountancy	3	3	2
Lawyer/solicitor/barrister	3	2	3
Sports related/professional sportsperson	3	4	1
Armed forces	2	4	*
Office work/admin	2	2	3
Art and design	2	1	3
Childcare	2	0	4
Psychology/child psychology	2	1	3
Something to do with science (unspecified)	2	1	2
Business management	2	2	2
Mechanic/car mechanic	2	3	*
Graphic design	2	2	1
Drama/acting/performing arts	2	1	2
Doctor/surgeon	2	2	1
Medicine	1	2	1
Advertising/marketing/PR	1	1	2
Forensic science/crime scene Investigation	1	1	2
Fashion designer	1	*	3
Catering/cook/chef	1	1	1
Research/research scientist	1	1	1
Firefighter	1	1	*
Work with languages/interpreter	1	1	1
Politics	1	1	*
Pilot	1	1	1
Healthcare (unspecified)	1	*	1
Agriculture/farming	1	1	0
Hotel/restaurant	1	1	1
Other	7	8	6
Don't know	14	13	16

**Q4b. And, if you could choose, what kind of work (i.e. type of job) would you like to be doing?**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Teacher	7	4	10
Media – television/journalism/reporting etc)	6	6	7
Sports related/professional sportsperson	5	7	2
Computer engineering/web/games design/ICT	4	8	1
Music related/music producer	4	6	1
Drama/acting/performing arts	3	1	6
Animal care/vet	3	2	5
Hairdressing/beauty therapist	3	0	6
Lawyer/solicitor/barrister	3	2	4
Police force/police officer	3	3	2
Doctor/surgeon	2	3	2
Banking/finance/accountancy	2	2	2
Skilled trade – plumber/carpenter/joiner/electrician	2	4	*
Civil engineering/engineering	2	4	1
Building/construction/architect	2	4	1
Mechanic/car mechanic	2	4	*
Fashion designer	2	*	4
Psychology/child psychology	2	1	3
A manager/director within a company	2	2	2
Be self-employed	1	2	1
Retail	1	1	1
Armed forces	1	2	1
Pilot	1	2	1
Childcare	1	0	3
Art and design	1	2	1
Forensic science/crime scene investigation	1	1	1
Catering/cook/chef	1	1	1
A job that involves travelling	1	1	2
A job where I can make lots of money	1	1	1
Other	9	9	9
Don't know	12	12	12

**Q3. Why do you think you will be unemployed and not looking for work?**

MULTICODE.

*Base: All who say they will be unemployed and not looking for work.*

	Total	Male	Female
	N	N	N
<i>Base:</i>	(3)	(2)	(1)
I am/will be caring for a parent/child/sibling/other relative	1	0	1
Health reasons/long-term illness or disability	3	3	0
Other	0	0	0
Don't know	0	0	0



**Q4. Thinking about your future, I am going to read out a number of statements and for each one I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with it. PROMPT. Is that strongly or tend to agree/disagree? READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion
<b>I think I will end up in a well-paid job</b>							
Total	%	32	52	9	4	1	2
Male	%	35	51	8	3	1	3
Female	%	28	53	11	5	7	2
<b>I think I will end up staying at home with a child/children and not working</b>							
Total	%	1	4	8	28	58	1
Male	%	1	2	6	26	64	1
Female	%	6	1	5	10	31	1
<b>I think I will have a successful career</b>							
Total	%	52	40	5	1	1	1
Male	%	52	41	5	1	*	1
Female	%	52	39	5	2	1	1
<b>I think I will always find it hard to get a job</b>							
Total	%	8	18	12	34	27	1
Male	%	7	21	12	31	27	1
Female	%	9	14	12	38	27	0
<b>I will have to take any job I can find</b>							
Total	%	10	15	9	36	30	1
Male	%	10	16	8	37	28	*
Female	%	10	13	9	36	32	1
<b>It is important to me to get a job</b>							
Total	%	89	9	1	*	1	*
Male	%	90	8	1	*	*	0
Female	%	88	9	1	1	1	*

**Q5. Have you considered dropping out from your current situation?**

PROBE. SINGLE CODE.

*Base: all except those not in education, employment or training.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(970)</i>	<i>(485)</i>	<i>(485)</i>
Yes, I think I will drop out	1	1	*
Yes, I have considered dropping out	10	10	10
No, I will not drop out	89	88	90
Don't know/does not apply	*	*	*

**Q6. Why is that? MULTICODE.**

*Base: all who say they will drop out/have considered dropping out.*

*Please see computer tables for answers of 1% and below.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(103)</i>	<i>(56)</i>	<i>(47)</i>
I do not like what I am doing	30	34	25
It is too difficult	21	19	25
I don't fit in	14	12	17
I do not get enough help	13	15	10
Would prefer/need to be working/earning money	9	14	4
Can't afford to continue	7	9	5
Considering another course/option	7	7	7
Boring	6	5	8
Lack of motivation	6	7	4
I think I'm going to fail	5	5	6
Poor teaching quality/low standards of education	4	6	3
Would like to attend better college with more opportunities	3	4	2
Dislike the school/college	3	4	2
Stressful	3	0	7
I am bullied/discriminated against	3	1	5
Workload	2	2	2
Other	12	7	20
Don't know	3	3	3

**Q7. Thinking about school, I am going to read out a number of statements and for each one I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with it. PROMPT Is that strongly or tend to agree/disagree? READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion
<b>a) I am/was treated the same as other young people</b>							
Total	%	54	30	3	7	7	*
Male	%	55	29	3	7	7	0
Female	%	52	31	3	8	6	*
<b>b) I feel/felt physically safe</b>							
Total	%	67	24	2	4	3	*
Male	%	66	25	2	3	3	*
Female	%	68	23	2	4	2	1
<b>c) I feel/felt emotionally safe</b>							
Total	%	64	26	3	3	2	*
Male	%	66	27	3	2	2	0
Female	%	62	26	4	4	3	1
<b>d) I am/was happy at school</b>							
Total	%	56	30	4	5	6	0
Male	%	55	30	5	4	6	0
Female	%	57	29	4	5	5	0
<b>e) The subjects are/were relevant to me</b>							
Total	%	55	32	4	6	3	*
Male	%	51	37	4	6	3	*
Female	%	60	27	4	7	3	*
<b>f) The style of teaching helps/helped me learn</b>							
Total	%	41	43	7	6	3	*
Male	%	41	42	8	6	4	*
Female	%	40	44	5	7	3	1

**Q9. (CONTINUED) Thinking about school, I am going to read out a number of statements and for each one I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with it? PROMPT. Is that strongly or tend to agree/disagree? READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion
<b>g) I am/was able to achieve my potential</b>							
Total	%	50	36	4	6	4	*
Male	%	47	37	5	7	4	*
Female	%	53	34	3	5	5	*
<b>h) I find/found it easy to learn</b>							
Total	%	40	41	6	8	4	*
Male	%	39	41	7	7	5	*
Female	%	41	40	6	9	4	*
<b>i) I am/was worried I will (would) fail</b>							
Total	%	14	23	9	26	27	1
Male	%	9	24	9	28	30	*
Female	%	19	23	9	25	24	1
<b>j) I feel/felt encouraged to do well</b>							
Total	%	63	27	4	4	2	0
Male	%	60	30	4	4	2	0
Female	%	66	25	4	3	2	0
<b>k) I feel I have/felt I had a say in the education I receive(d)</b>							
Total	%	39	34	7	12	7	*
Male	%	36	35	7	14	8	*
Female	%	41	33	8	10	7	*

**Q8. At school do you/did you have one-to-one interviews with a careers or Connexions adviser? SINGLE CODE.**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Yes	72	73	71
No	27	26	27
Don't know/can't remember	1	1	2

**Q9. Do you feel you have had enough information and advice to make the right choices about your future? SINGLE CODE.**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Yes	80	83	78
No	19	16	21
Don't know	1	1	1

**Q10. Thinking about your parent or carer, I would like you to tell me whether each of the following statements is true or false. READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

		True	False	Neither	Don't know
<b>a) I have had the right support and advice from them</b>					
Total	%	97	2	1	*
Male	%	98	2	1	0
Female	%	97	3	1	*
<b>b) They have done their best to help me</b>					
Total	%	98	2	*	0
Male	%	98	2	*	0
Female	%	98	2	*	0
<b>c) They want me to do better than they did</b>					
Total	%	89	8	2	1
Male	%	91	6	2	1
Female	%	87	10	2	1
<b>d) I have to do as well as they did</b>					
Total	%	44	54	2	*
Male	%	46	52	2	0
Female	%	42	55	2	1
<b>e) They are not there for me</b>					
Total	%	5	94	*	0
Male	%	5	94	*	0
Female	%	5	94	*	0
<b>f) They encourage me to continue in learning</b>					
Total	%	98	2	0	0
Male	%	99	1	0	0
Female	%	98	2	0	0
<b>g) They encourage me to get a good job</b>					
Total	%	99	1	*	0
Male	%	99	1	*	0
Female	%	99	1	0	0

**Q11. How well do you think you are currently doing [INSERT FORM OF LEARNING FROM Q2]? Would you say...? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Very well	32	31	34
Fairly well	63	64	61
Not so well	4	4	4
Not well at all	1	1	1
Don't know	0	0	0

**Q12. And do you feel able to improve your current situation? Is that...? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Very able	37	37	36
Fairly able	61	60	62
Not very able	2	3	1
Not able at all	1	1	1
Don't know	*	*	0

**Q13. When you reach the end of Year 11 in school, do you think you will... READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.**

*Base: All who are in Years 9, 10 and 11 at school.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	<i>(493)</i>	<i>(241)</i>	<i>(252)</i>
Continue at school into sixth form	41	40	42
Go to sixth form college	30	30	30
Go to further education college	20	18	22
Get an apprenticeship	5	7	2
Get a job, with 'on-the-job training'	2	2	1
Get a job – without training	*	0	*
Leave school and do nothing	*	0	*
Other	1	1	0
Not sure/don't know	2	2	1

**Q16a. What are the main reasons why you will do that? MULTICODE.**

*Base: All who are in Years 9, 10 and 11 at school and who will continue in education or training.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base:</i>	(481)	(234)	(247)
It will improve my chances of finding a job	40	40	41
I need the qualifications in order to go to university	39	38	40
I want to be/I enjoy learning/studying	29	24	34
I get paid to stay in learning (Educational Maintenance Allowance)	5	5	4
I already know what I want to do/studying or further education is not relevant for me	3	5	2
My parents have forced/encouraged me/it is what my family expect of me	2	3	2
There is no point staying at school after 16/going into further education	1	2	0
There are no jobs/training courses for me	1	1	1
I find school boring/dislike studying	1	1	1
I have not received advice/do not know where to go to find out about opportunities	1	*	1
I am not very good at school/find studying difficult	*	*	0
I don't know which subjects to take	*	0	1
I have no choice/I did not know what else to do	1	1	*
Don't know	5	5	4

**Q16b. What are the main reasons why you will do that? MULTICODE.**

*Base: All in Years 9, 10 and 11 at school who will not continue in education or training.*

	Total	Male	Female
	N		N
<i>Base:</i>	(2)		(2)
I find school/studying boring/I dislike it	1	N/A	1
I do not want to get into debt/I want to start earning money straight away	1		1
Other	0		0
Don't know	1		1

**Q14. What, if anything, would encourage you to stay in education or training after 16? READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

*Base: All who are in Years 9, 10 and 11 at school and who say they will not continue in education or training or don't know.*

**Saying 'Yes'**

	Total	Male	Female
	N	N	N
<i>Base:</i>	(12)	(12)	(12)
a) More information about what options are available for further education or training	11	8	4
b) More help to choose the right subject or course for me	11	7	4
c) More relevant classes/courses available	13	9	4
d) More help and encouragement from parents/family	9	6	4
e) If I knew I would not be bullied/discriminated against	11	6	5
f) More opportunities for online learning	10	6	5
g) More opportunities for hands-on/work experience	12	7	5
h) If I knew I'd get the help I need to study/learn	11	6	5



**Q15. Thinking about what you are doing now, what are the main reasons why you are [INSERT FORM OF LEARNING FROM Q2]? Anything else? MULTICODE.**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base: All except those who are in Years 9, 10 and 11 at school</i>	(428)	(207)	(221)
<b><u>IN YEARS 12 AND 13 AT SCHOOL/ AT SIXTH FORM COLLEGE/AT FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE/AT UNIVERSITY</u></b>			
It will improve my chances of finding a job	56	56	57
I need the qualifications in order to go to university	41	38	44
I want to be/I enjoy learning/studying	34	29	40
To improve skills/better/further my education/ gain more qualifications	10	14	6
Social aspects/make new friends	6	6	6
All my friends are doing it	4	3	5
I did not want to study/train/get a job	3	4	3
Good/new/friendly atmosphere	3	1	4
Location/easy to get home/close to home	2	2	3
Offer different courses/opportunities than school	2	1	3
To advance in my chosen career	2	2	2
To get a better/well-paid job in the future	2	3	1
I get paid to stay in learning (Educational Maintenance Allowance)	2	1	3
The course was not available at school	2	1	2
There are no other options for me/I have no choice/nothing else for me to do	2	2	1
<i>Base: All those in work</i>	(42)	(31)	(11)
<b><u>IN WORK WITH ON-THE-JOB TRAINING/ IN AN APPRENTICESHIP/IN WORK WITH DAY RELEASE/ IN WORK WITH NO TRAINING</u></b>			
I wanted to earn money straight away	34	40	17
Wanted to work/gain on-the-job experience	24	26	21
I found school boring/disliked studying/school	19	13	36
I already knew what I wanted to do/studying/further education was not relevant to me	17	20	11
I need a job for financial reasons/need the money/ to support family	16	15	22
I joined my family business	6	9	0
To gain independence/freedom	4	6	0
To advance in my chosen career	4	2	11
I was not very good at school/found studying difficult	4	2	10

**Q18. (CONTINUED) Thinking about what you are doing now, what are the main reasons why you are [INSERT FORM OF LEARNING FROM Q2]? Anything else? MULTICODE.**

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
<i>Base: All NEET</i>	(51)	(29)	(22)
<b>NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING</b>			
Hard to find jobs/lack of jobs due to the recession	16	11	23
I did not want to study/train/get a job	15	13	17
Health reasons/long-term illness or disability	10	9	11
I have been or will be unsuccessful in getting a place in further education/on a training scheme/getting a job	8	5	11
I have not received any advice or help/do not know where to go to find out about opportunities	7	5	10
I do not know where to go to find out about education/training/job opportunities	5	0	10
I need a job for financial reasons/need the money/ to support family	4	4	5
I found school boring/disliked studying/school	4	0	10
Don't know	2	0	5

**Q16. Some young people are less likely than others to remain in education and training after 16. Which of the following things would help all young people continue in education and training until 18? READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

		Yes	No	Don't know
<b>a) More information about what options are available for further education or training</b>				
Total	%	94	5	*
Male	%	94	6	0
Female	%	95	5	*
<b>b) More help to choose the right subjects or courses</b>				
Total	%	94	6	*
Male	%	91	8	*
Female	%	96	4	*
<b>c) More relevant classes/courses available</b>				
Total	%	92	7	*
Male	%	91	9	*
Female	%	94	6	*

**Q19. (CONTINUED) Some young people are less likely than others to remain in education and training after 16. Which of the following things would help all young people continue in education and training until 18? READ OUT EACH. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE ORDER.**

		Yes	No	Don't know
<b>d) More help and encouragement from parents/family</b>				
Total	%	92	7	1
Male	%	90	10	*
Female	%	93	5	2
<b>e) If people did not get bullied/discriminated against</b>				
Total	%	92	8	1
Male	%	91	9	1
Female	%	93	6	1
<b>f) More opportunities for online learning</b>				
Total	%	80	19	1
Male	%	77	22	1
Female	%	84	16	*
<b>g) More opportunities for hands-on/work experience</b>				
Total	%	97	2	*
Male	%	96	3	*
Female	%	99	1	0
<b>h) Giving people the help they need to study/learn</b>				
Total	%	98	2	*
Male	%	98	2	*
Female	%	98	1	*

**Q17. If you were given the job of making learning more attractive to all young people after 16 so that everyone could take part and achieve, what would your top three recommendations be?**

*Please see computer tables for answers of 3% and below.*

	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Make it more fun/enjoyable/make learning fun	18	18	18
Offer a better range/variety of subjects/ offer a range suitable for everyone	17	13	21
Make it more practical/more hands-on work	16	19	13
Offer more help/support/advice	14	11	16
Give more information/make sure info is readily available	11	11	12
Make it relevant to the students/matching up to future career	11	12	9
Do things differently/make things more interesting	10	10	11
Show them what they can achieve if they carry on/show them they can get a better job	10	10	10
Encourage/inspire confidence (by teachers/friends/family)	9	9	8
Give them choices/let them choose themselves	6	6	6
Good style of teaching/methods of teaching	6	6	6
Make it interactive/internet based	6	6	5
Mentor/more encouragement from the professionals/work advisers	6	6	5
Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)/ make EMA available to everyone/ advertise it more	5	6	5
Work experience/apprenticeships	5	5	6
Monetary gain/incentive/rewards to stay on	5	6	3
Involve the children/find out what they want/ listen to them	5	4	5
Give them more opportunities/give more students the opportunity to learn	4	4	5
Provide better resources/more schools/ places to go for learning	4	5	3
Make it personal/one-to-one approach	4	4	4
Make them work hard/push themselves/ stay focused	4	4	4
Make it more active/more activities/get more people involved in sports	4	4	4
None/nothing	*	1	0
Don't know	1	1	2

## Appendix 5: End notes

---

<sup>i</sup> 64,839 if translated into the number of people aged 14–18 in England.

<sup>ii</sup> Answers would only have been coded as EMA if the respondent has specifically mentioned EMA or a derivation such as ‘Educational allowance’ or ‘Educational funding’.

## Contact us

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website at:

**[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)**

or by contacting one of our helplines below:

### **Helpline - England**

Telephone: 0845 604 6610

Textphone: 0845 604 6620

Fax: 0845 604 6630

### **Helpline - Scotland**

Telephone: 0845 604 5510

Textphone: 0845 604 5520

Fax: 0845 604 5530

### **Helpline - Wales**

Telephone: 0845 604 8810

Textphone: 0845 604 8820

Fax: 0845 604 8830

9am–5pm Monday to Friday except Wednesday 9am–8pm.

Calls from BT landlines are charged at local rates, but calls from mobiles and other providers may vary.

Calls may be monitored for training and quality purposes.

Interpreting service available through Language Line, when you call our helplines.

This report is available for downloading from our website.

If you require it in an alternative format and/or language please contact the relevant helpline to discuss your needs.

This report presents the views, experiences and aspirations of young people to explore how they can be more meaningfully engaged in learning after 16. The findings are based on a telephone survey carried out with 1,021 young people in England aged 14–18.

### WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC

- The majority of existing evidence covers engagement in learning for young people in general, with a growing body of knowledge on young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). There is very little quantitative evidence on young people's perspectives relevant to engagement in learning after 16.
- Aspirations vary by gender, ethnicity, social class and area. White boys have the lowest aspirations. Their educational attainment is also failing to improve at the rates of most other ethnic groups.

### WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS

- The overall picture across a range of measures is positive, with most young people describing themselves as performing very or fairly well and feeling able to improve their situation. Overall attitudes to school are upbeat and the majority of young people have formulated their career aspirations.
- However, one in 10 young people say that they will drop out or have considered dropping out from their current situation, rising to one in five young people in different forms of post-16 education and those with a disability.
- Fear of failure is palpable in the research, with a substantial minority – 37 per cent or approximately 1.2 million young people – worried about not succeeding at school. Almost half of C2DE ('working class') white girls fear failure, compared to just over a quarter of ABC1 ('middle class') white boys.
- Around one in five 16–18 year olds have not had a one-to-one interview with a careers or Connexions adviser and a similar proportion of 14–18 year olds say they have not had enough information and advice to make the right choices about their future.
- Young people lack confidence in the labour market, in that as many as a quarter think they will always find it hard to get a job or will have to take any job they can find. C2DE ('working class') young people are significantly more likely to think this.
- The top four suggestions from young people to make learning more attractive so that all can take part and succeed are: make learning more fun and enjoyable; make a better range of subjects available that are suitable for everyone; make learning more practical/hands-on, and offer more help, advice, support and guidance.
- Inequalities in prospects are more marked for younger workers than for the previous generation.
- Although educational qualifications and training are linked to improved job prospects, many individuals are upwardly mobile without such credentials.