

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING IN SCOTLAND: ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

### Introduction

This note presents findings from a survey of secondary school pupils in Scotland. The aim of the research was to better understand the extent to which young people feel they can influence decision making among adults in general, at out-of-school activities and in schools.

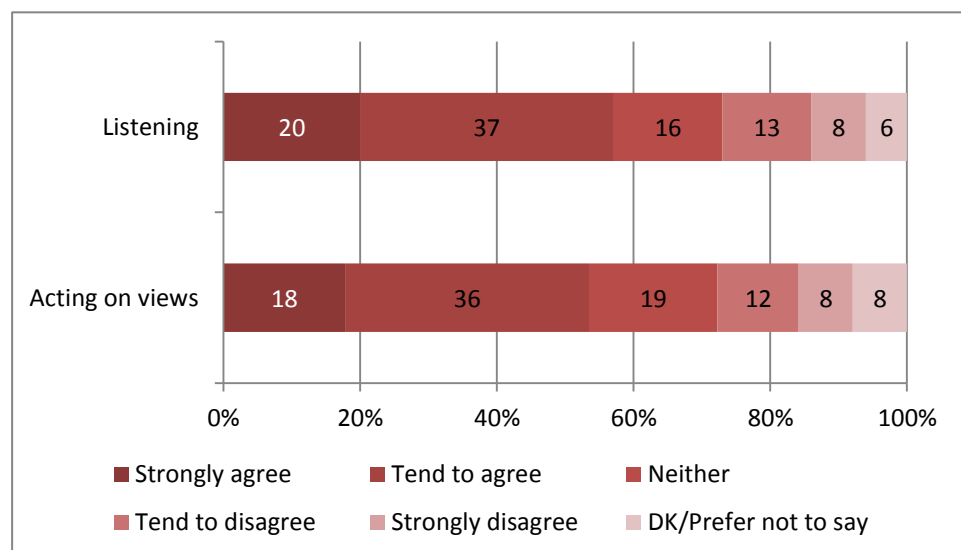
### Background

This research was commissioned to inform the participation theme of Year of Young People (YOYP) 2018, which focuses on enabling young people to significantly influence public services and decisions which affect their lives, and to increase opportunities for young people to take part in positive activities and experiences.

The survey findings provide a baseline for the position prior to the YOYP and provide an understanding of different aspects of young people's involvement in decision making, as well as variation between different socio-demographic groups.

### Perceptions of adults listening and acting on views

When asked about adults in general, over half of young people surveyed agreed that adults were good at listening to their views (58 per cent) and that adults were good at taking their views into account when taking decisions that affect them (53 per cent).



Around a fifth disagreed that adults were good at: listening to their views (20 per cent); and taking their views into account when taking decisions (19 per cent).

Boys were more positive than girls on both these statements. For example, 62 per cent of boys agreed that adults were good at listening to young people’s views, compared to 55 per cent of girls.

Pupils perceptions of adults worsened substantially between S1 and S5. For example, 72 per cent of respondents in S1 felt that adults generally were good at taking their views into account when making decisions, compared to 42 per cent of S5 respondents. However, perceptions then improved slightly in S6.

Respondents with a physical or mental health condition were much less positive. Among those with a health condition, 30 per cent disagreed that adults were good at taking their views into account when making decisions, compared to 15 per cent of those without a health condition.

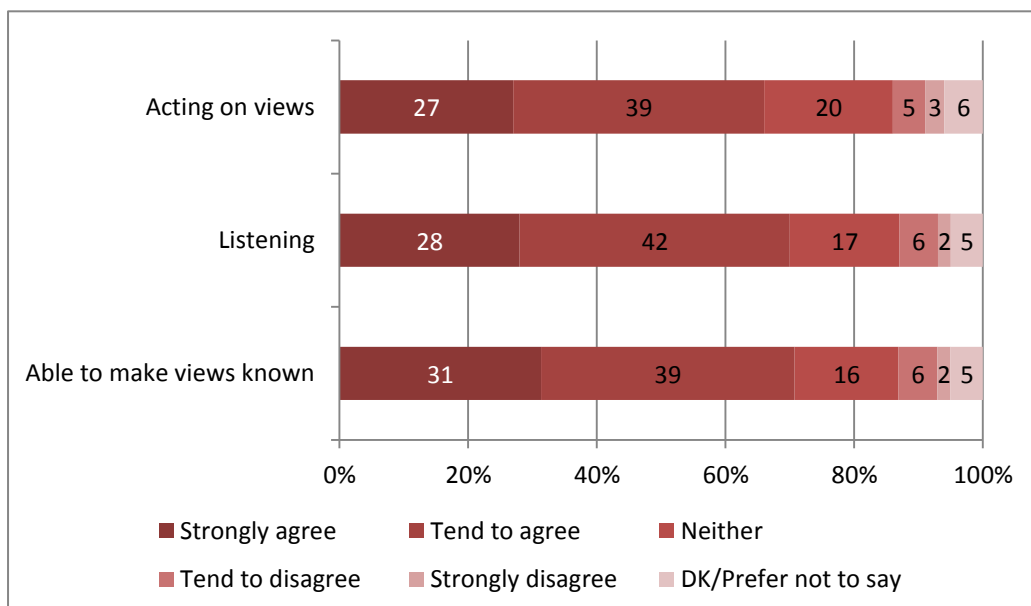
### Barriers to being listened to and having views heard

The most commonly selected reason for why adults don’t listen to young people was ‘it doesn’t fit with what they want to hear’ (38 per cent), followed by ‘they don’t like their views being challenged’ (33 per cent).

The most commonly selected reason for why adults don’t act on young people’s views was ‘they don’t like their views being challenged ‘ (30 per cent), followed by ‘they don’t have the power to make any changes’ (26 per cent) and ‘they don’t think that my views are important’ (also 26 per cent).

Girls, young people with a health condition, and those in the later school years were more likely to select each of the barriers, and were also less likely to say that there were no barriers.

### Perceptions of adults running out-of-school activities



Respondents were more positive about adults who run out-of-school activities than adults in general. 70 per cent of respondents agreed that they felt able to let adults know their views on how

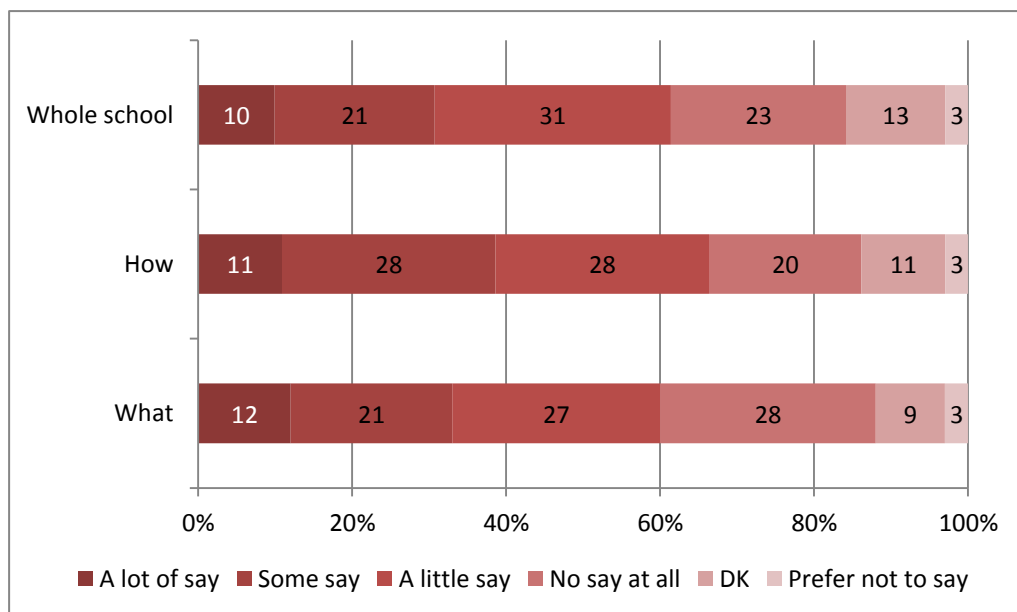
the activities are run, the same percentage agreed that adults who run these activities were good at listening to their views, and 66 per cent agreed that adults were good at taking their views into account when taking decisions.

Pupils in the older school years were more negative about adults listening to them and acting on views, but the pattern was less strong than for questions about adults in general.

### Perceptions of say in the running of schools

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about how much say they had in schools.

Thirty four per cent of respondents felt that they had a lot of or some say in what they learn, 39 per cent in how they learn and 31 per cent in decisions affecting the whole school.



Around half felt that they had a little or no say for each measure.

There was little variation in perceptions between different socio-demographic groups.

### Methods

The Young People in Scotland Survey is an online omnibus survey run by Ipsos MORI Scotland. A representative sample of 1,780 pupils from 50 secondary schools throughout Scotland took part in the survey. The age groups included in the survey were 11-18 year olds in S1 to S6. The data was weighted by gender, year group, urban-rural classification, and SIMD classification. The survey took place in schools from September to November 2017.

The analysis and reporting was undertaken by the Scottish Government, Children and Families Analytical Services.

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this social research publication:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [socialresearch@gov.scot](mailto:socialresearch@gov.scot) for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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