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Research and analysis

# Children's social care questionnaires 2024

Published 17 October 2024

## Applies to England

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## Summary of findings

We received a total of 43,777 responses to the survey from all audience types this year, of which 6,995 were from children. This was slightly fewer than we received last year (45,655) but included more responses from children (6,614).

These are our main findings:

- The responses across the different groups of children were broadly in line with last year's responses.
- Most children who responded to the survey were positive about the place where they live or stay and the people they interact with.
- Nearly all children who responded said they felt safe where they live or stay. But more children in residential special schools said that they did not feel safe all the time than in the previous 2 years.
- Children living in residential special schools were the most likely to say that they did not get along with their peers, but they were also the most likely to spend time with people who are important to them.

- Nearly all children living in supported accommodation said that they felt safe where they lived, but they were least likely to spend time with the people who are important to them.
- Children living in foster care were more likely than other groups to report getting on with other children in the household. More children living in foster care said that they spend time with people who are important to them than last year.

## Background

We use online surveys to gather views about children's homes, secure children's homes, adoption services, fostering services [\[footnote 1\]](#), supported accommodation, residential family centres, boarding schools, residential special schools and further education (FE) colleges with residential provision. [\[footnote 2\]](#)

The surveys are for:

- children
- learners
- parents
- foster carers [\[footnote 3\]](#)
- staff
- social workers
- other professionals, such as independent reviewing officers

We ask providers to share the online questionnaire with these groups of people on our behalf.

The survey was open between 5 February and 24 March 2024.

We use the responses, along with other information we have, such as previous inspection findings and any concerns we receive, to decide the timing of the next inspection and what to focus on when we do inspect.

Trained staff read the responses as soon as they come in, to identify any potential safeguarding concerns. If they note any concerns, they immediately refer them to the inspectors and their managers, who decide on the appropriate action to make sure that children remain safe at the places where they live or stay. If any responses raise serious concerns, we take the appropriate action immediately. [\[footnote 4\]](#)

The questions we asked in 2024 are the same as those we asked in 2023. They focus on the most important things we want to know about children's experiences. This year, we have also included children and young people who stay in supported accommodation, as Ofsted started to register this accommodation in April 2023. We have received 454 responses from children and young people who live in supported accommodation. [\[footnote 5\]](#)

Like last year, we are publishing the accompanying data for all adult responses separately. [\[footnote 6\]](#)



## Who are the children we are talking about?

The Department for Education has reported that almost 84,000 children are looked after . [\[footnote 7\]](#) [\[footnote 8\]](#)

68% of looked-after children live with foster carers.

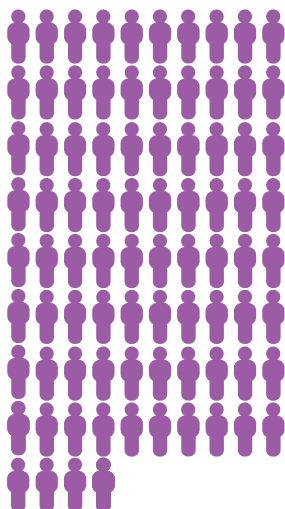
This year, 6,995 children told us about the place where they live or stay, for example their children’s home, a residential special school, or with foster carers. Not all of these children are looked after. [\[footnote 9\]](#)

View the [accompanying data for this publication in an accessible format](#).

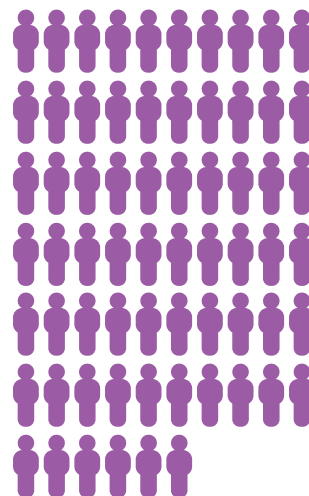
According to the Department for Education’s 2023 statistics:\*



There are almost **12 million** children aged between 0 and 17 years in England.



**83,840** are children looked after.



This year, **6,995** children told us about the place where they live or stay, such as their children’s home, residential special school or foster carers. Not all children are children looked after.



**68%** of children looked after live with foster carers.

\*As at the date of publication, the Department of Education had not yet released statistics for 2024.

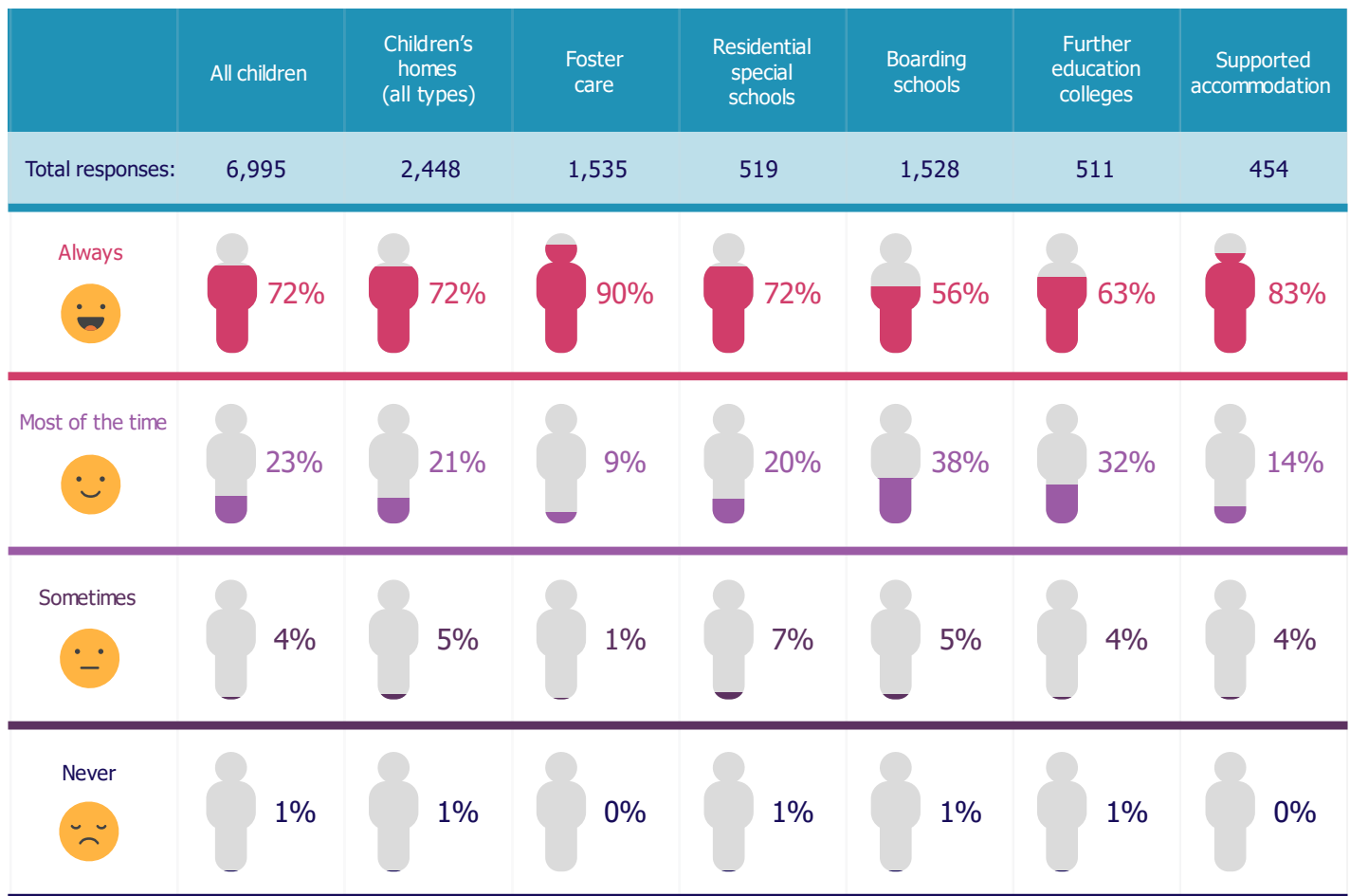
## What we found in 2024

### Do you feel safe where you live or stay?

This year, 93% of children living in a children’s home reported feeling safe ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’, a slight decrease from 95% last year. The percentage of children living in foster care who felt safe ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ remained consistently higher than other groups, at 99% over the past 3 years. Meanwhile, 97% of children in supported accommodation reported feeling safe ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’.

Children in residential special schools were more likely to say that they ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ felt safe, with 8% choosing these answers this year, up from 7% last year and 5% in 2022.

**Figure 1: Do you feel safe where you live or stay?**



Children’s homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children’s homes.

View the [data for figure 1 in an accessible table format](#).

**What children told us about feeling safe where they live or stay:**

“There is constantly kicking off which from my past trauma it makes me feel unsafe and the staff are ok but sometimes I get scared of them I don’t know why.”  
(child in a children’s home)

“I worry when staff leave the home to work other places.”  
(child in a children’s home registered as a residential special school)

“Well it’s just weird being away from home. I kind of don’t know the people here as well as my family and friends so I am not sure I can trust everyone here but it is decent.”

(child in a boarding school)

“When people have arguments, it upsets me and I feel like I want to leave but this doesn’t happen very often.”

(child in foster care)

“I really like living here because it gives me a feeling of security.”

(child in supported accommodation)

“I feel safe there. It is not as noisy or as mad as the place I used to live. I like having a regular routine. I really enjoy all the trips out and having lots of opportunity to try new things – like swimming and going to the park.”

(child in foster care)

“I like where I live and it’s fun to come back to the house from coming back from my sisters or school. They support me and look after me and try do their best for me. i feel safe and happy and i like all the team and children in the home. They push me to be better at school and in my relationship with my girlfriend.”

(child in children’s home)

“My placement where I live is great. I feel safe and comfortable. I always can ask for support if I need.”  
(child in supported accommodation)

## **Do you get along with the staff where you live or stay?**

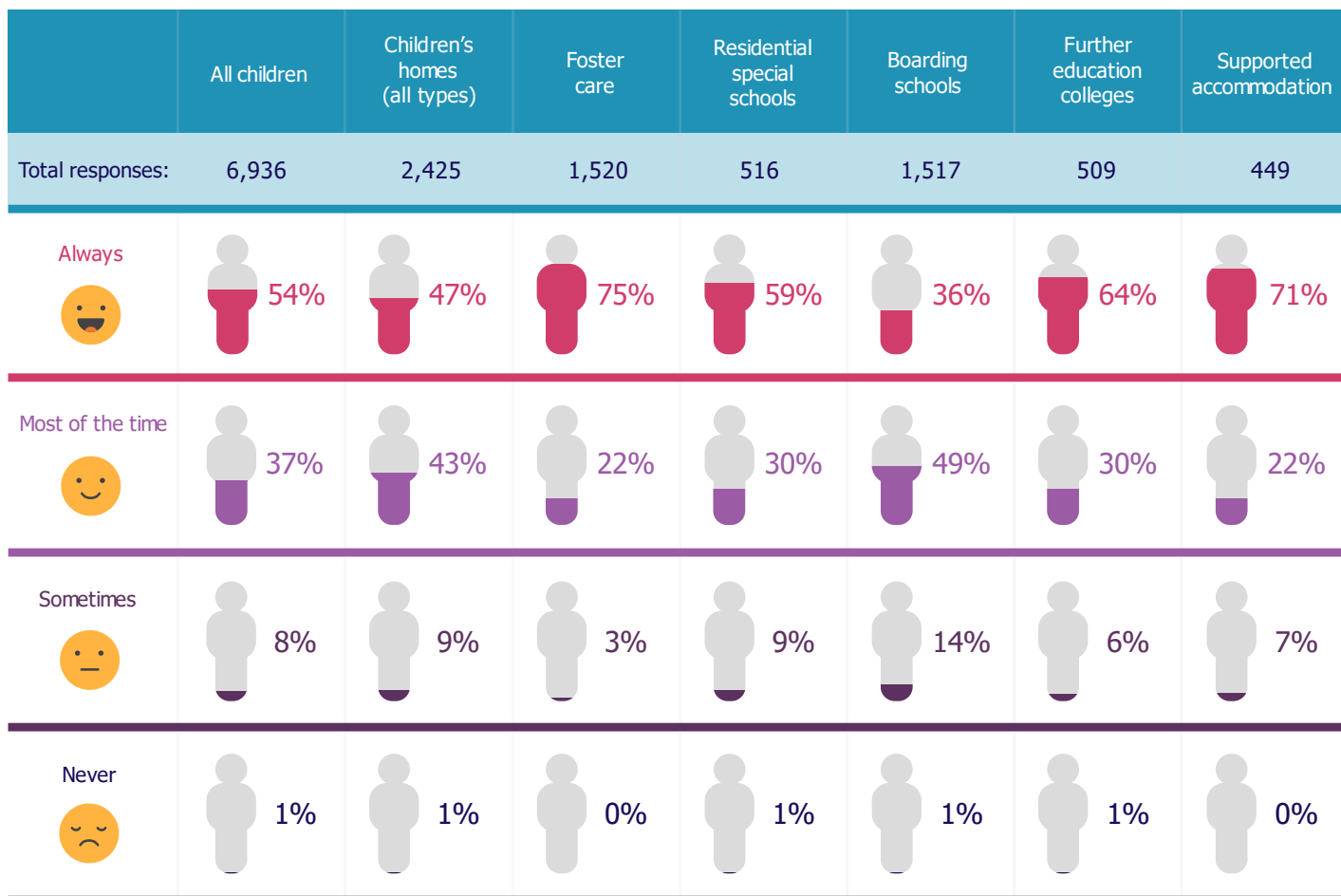
We asked children how they feel about their relationships with staff or carers where they live or stay. Most children (91%) reported that they get along with staff or carers ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’.

This year, 97% of children in foster care reported that they get along with their carers ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’. The largest change was among the children living in residential special schools: 90% responded ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’, compared with 94% in 2023.

This year, 15% of children in boarding schools said they get along with staff ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’, up from 12% in 2023.

### **Figure 2: Do you get along with the staff where you live or stay?**





Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

View the [data for figure 2 in an accessible table format](#).

## What children told us about getting along with staff:

"I always feel very safe and listened to around the staff and other children who live in the house, I always get to do exciting activities and i always have a fun time inside the house because the staff here make it very enjoyable. I love living at the [home]."  
(child in a children's home)

"Some positive aspects of my boarding experience are the friendliness of the staff, the activities are fun and varied. However, the food served is not at the level or variety advertised, the facilities such as heating are not always working and there is sometimes inconsistencies depending on who the

students (i.e., personality type etc)".  
(child in a boarding school)

"That my carers are really nice and funny I don't ever want to leave them I even learned how to use a drill all because of my dad (foster) even when we fall out I love them to bits."  
(child in foster care)

"I am new in to care and i have only lived at the home since December last year. The staff are so nice and friendly and i could not have asked for more support than i have been given since my time here. The staff have help me through a difficult time over the past couple of months and all their help I really am thankful. The home has given me a purpose in life to achieve getting into education and employment. I get along with all the staff and they always have time to talk to all the other young people in the home. I don't feel alone anymore living at the home I have built up a better understanding on how to achieve my goals in life. I am 18 soon and all staff are helping me to understand about paying bills."  
(child in supported accommodation)

"I like the staff they are always kind they always care and if you are upset you can talk to them and the young people that you get put with you always fit in we all get along and it is a nice house always clean."  
(child in a children's home)

## **Do you get on with the other children where you live or stay?**

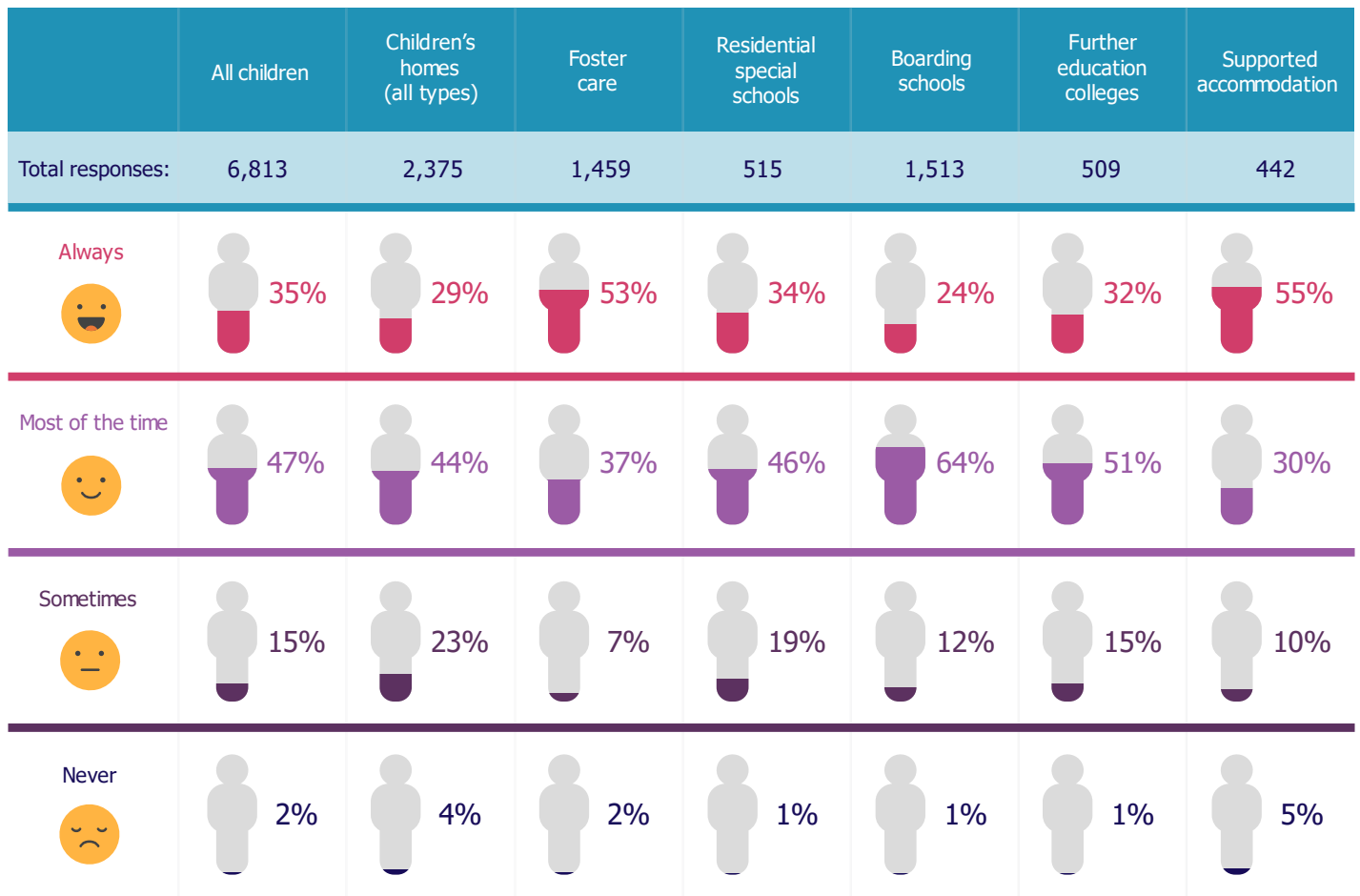
In the latest survey, 82% of children reported getting along with other children

‘always’ or ‘most of the time’.

Children in foster care were most likely to say that they get along with other children in the household ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ (91%).

The highest proportion of children who responded ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ were from children’s homes (27%).

**Figure 3: Do you get on with the other children where you live or stay?**



Children’s homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children’s homes.

View the [data for figure 3 in an accessible table format](#).

### What children told us about getting on with the other children:

“The home in which I live in is fun and everyone gets along I have a good relationship with the other children in the household and I also have a good relationship with my foster carers and I am extremely happy to be living in foster carers care and they always listen to my thoughts and opinions and

views also I get along with their children and their care is the BEST place for me.”

(child in foster care)

“The house is one of the best house after my parent home I felt comfortable living in, I have access to community activity, the children in the home are lovely and staff are friendly. i have access to lot of sensory toys, indoor activity. i am always supported by staff to live independently as i can and they are always there for me when i have emotional Breakdown. my new home is a lovely home to live in.”

(child in a children’s home)

“I like all my friends and school, I get to play with them regularly and we go swimming, cinema, play tennis and go out for dinner. My carer takes to me clubs, football and swimming, and activities, bowling, climbing, ninja warrior etc. They encourage me to have different friendship groups. I will be going to high school soon and we did a lot of research into the best school for me. I am very happy that my social worker listened to my choice.”

(child in foster care)

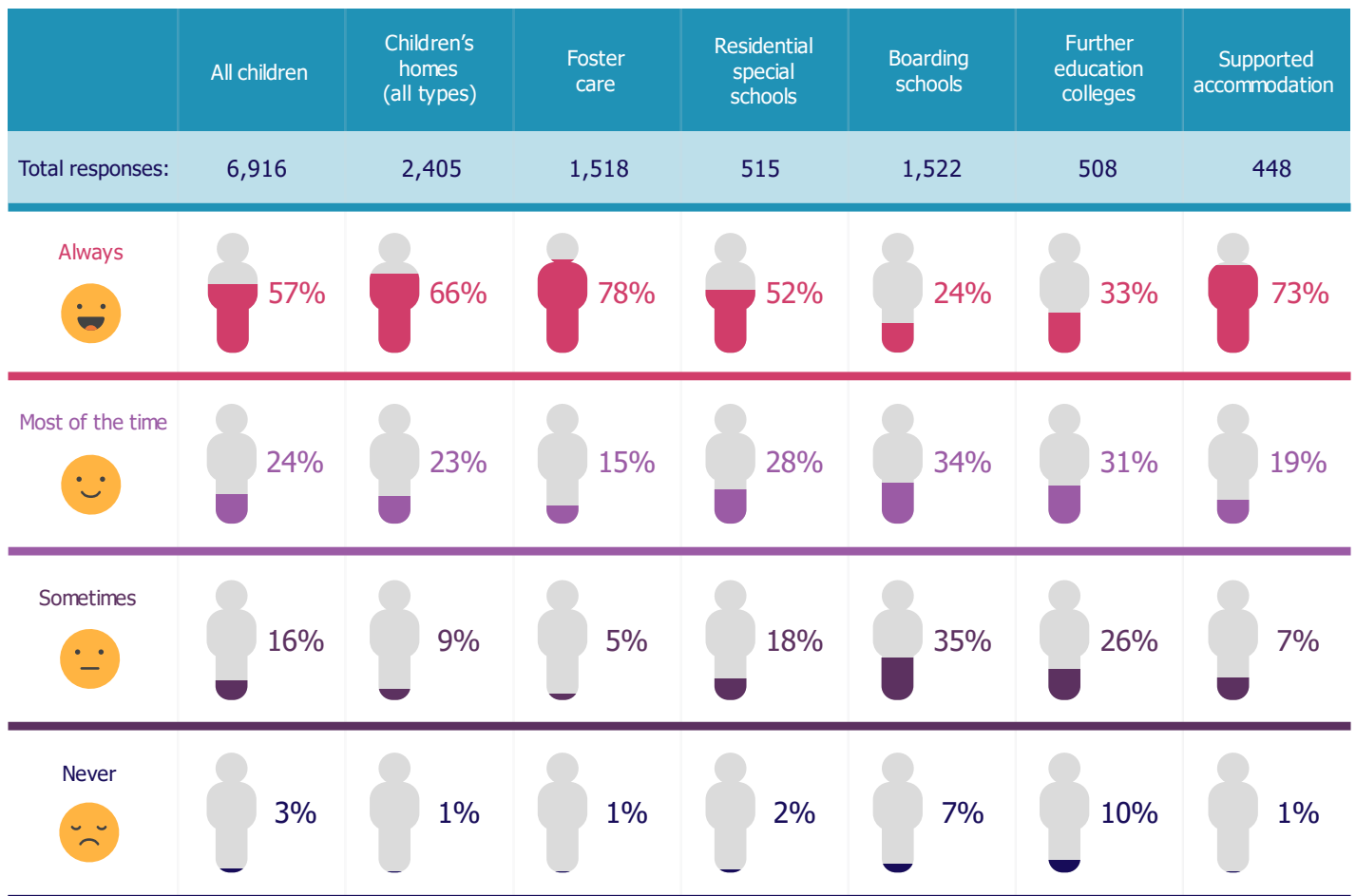
## **Do the staff where you live or stay ask you about things that are important to you?**

The proportion of children living in children’s homes and children living in foster care who reported that staff ask them about things that are important to them ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ was broadly consistent with last year. The majority of children in supported accommodation (92%) also said staff ask them about these things ‘always’ or ‘most’ of the time.

The highest proportion of children who responded ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ were from boarding schools (42%), followed by FE colleges (36%). This is an improvement from 2023, when it was 41% for FE colleges, but remains high. The proportion of

‘sometimes’, and ‘never’ responses is also high among children at residential special schools, at 20%. This is similar to last year, when it was 21%.

**Figure 4: Do the staff where you live or stay ask you about things that are important to you?**



Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

View the [data for figure 4 in an accessible table format](#).

### What children told us about staff asking about things that are important to them:

“Staff know what is important for me and always help me to do things i need. they help me see my family and friends, i like it here so much and they are very kind and caring.”  
(child in a children's home)

“That my voice is always heard at all times. Also i have an important part of the family who care about me. I can be myself.”

(child in foster care)

“This school has been a great boarding experience and I think that it is very good at keeping their students safe. It has also helped me become more independent and they have made me ask myself the important questions about my future that I wouldn't have done on my own.”

(child in a boarding school)

“i feel safe, i have a good relationship with my adults, i feel like i can talk to them about things that are important, doesn't matter what it is.”

(child in a children's home)

“It's a great place to express your feelings and to show your true self. Your confidence builds with the right people around you who support you.”

(child in supported accommodation)

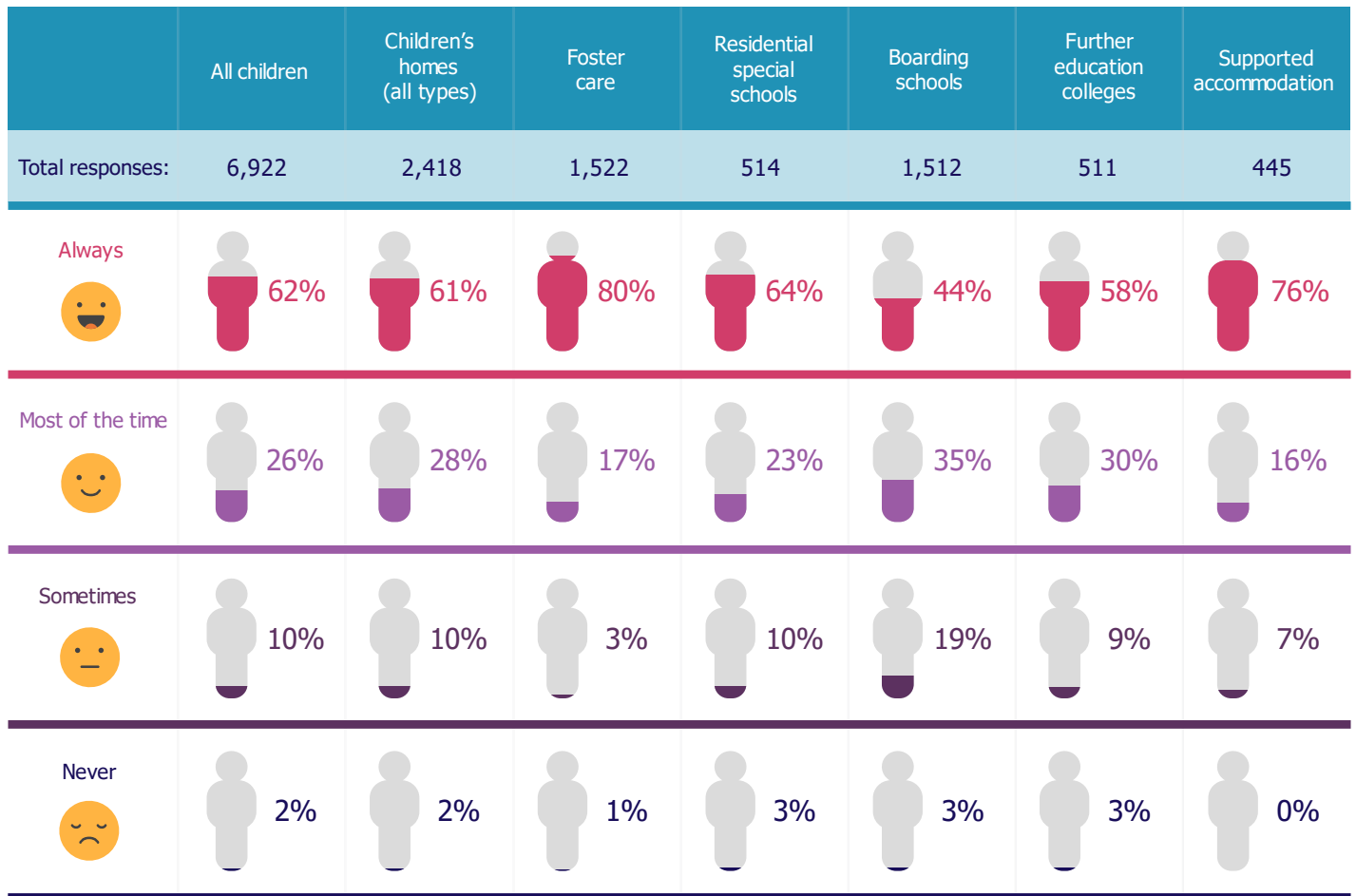
## **Do the staff where you live or stay listen to you?**

The percentage of children living in children's homes and children living in foster care who said staff listen to them 'always' or 'most of the time' was 89% and 97% respectively, similar to last year (90% and 95%). Ninety-two percent of children living in supported accommodation responded 'always' or 'most of the time'.

Children living in boarding schools were most likely to report that staff listen to them 'sometimes' or 'never', with 22% choosing these responses. This was a small increase compared with 19% in 2023 and 2022. Twelve percent of children from FE

colleges said that staff listen to them ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’, an improvement from 18% in 2023 and 22% in 2022.

**Figure 5: Do the staff where you live or stay listen to you?**



Children’s homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children’s homes.

View the [data for figure 5 in an accessible table format](#).

**What children told us about staff listening to them:**

“Very nice I’m in my second year here and it’s great the staff are amazing and very caring and always ask if you’re okay and if you have an issue they are always there to listen and help you, I cannot fault our residential staff at all they are amazing and always reassure you and make you feel safe. They’re amazing.”  
(child in an FE college)

“because sometime staff annoyed me but same time i am appreciate that they have help me every time when i needed but I’m still happy because the staff most lucky to have them! some time they keep stay inside, haven’t take me to go out often.”

(child in a residential special school)

“The food is very nice here. I would eat this all the time, even at home. The boarding staff are always very kind and always listen to me. The boarding is very fun as there is a lot of stuff to do here. The people here at boarding are very easy to get along with. We learn a lot of important things that we may need in the future. Bye bye.”

(child in a boarding school)

“They listen when I ask for overnights with family and my boyfriend. They help me get to work and college. They care and keep me safe .”

(child in a children’s home)

“the staff is very caring and they listen to everything that I have to say, they are very supportive with what I do and they don’t judge me for anything. I feel very listened to here.”

(child in supported accommodation)

“It’s a comfortable place and they care about our problems. Staff support us with anything we need and they always try to talk to us and make us feel as if this is our home. I am happy here and haven’t been in a good place before in the UK like I am here because we get freedom and they treat us like adults.”

(child in supported accommodation)

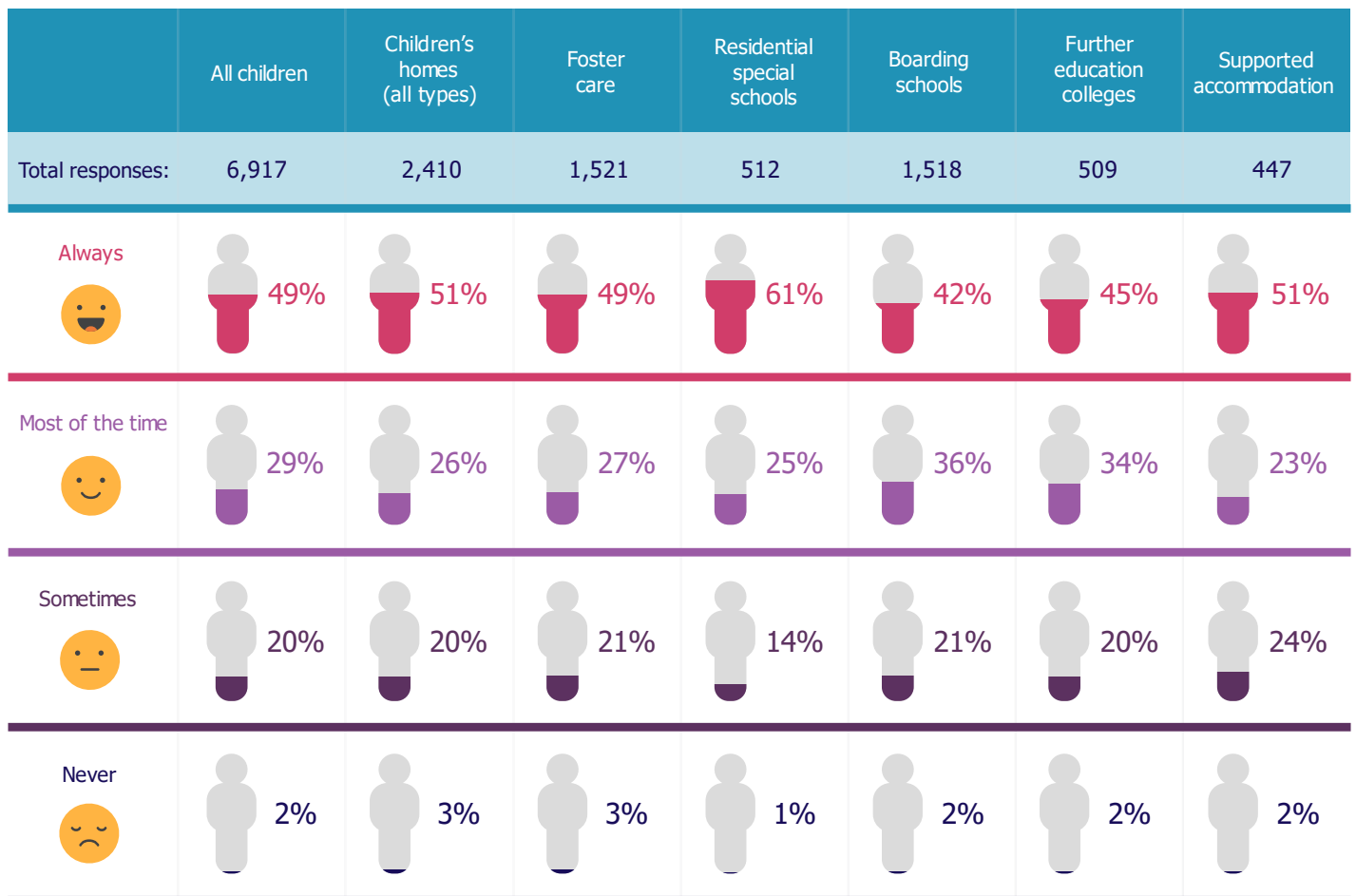


# Do you spend time with people who are important to you?

This year, 77% of children living in children’s homes said they get to spend time with people who are important to them ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’. This was similar to the proportion in 2023 (78%). Among children living in foster care, 76% responded ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ – a small improvement from 74% in 2023.

Children living in supported accommodation were the most likely to respond negatively to this question, with 26% choosing ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’. Children staying in residential special schools had the highest proportion of ‘always’ and ‘most of the time’ responses, at 85%. This was also the highest positive response rate last year (84%).

**Figure 6: Do you spend time with people who are important to you?**



Children’s homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children’s homes.

View the [data for figure 6 in an accessible table format](#).

**What children told us about spending time with people important to them:**

“I call my foster carers mum and dad and their children are my brothers and sisters. I am an only child and always wanted brothers and sisters. My foster brother calls my Mum - mum, when I FaceTime her and we all ok with that.”  
(child in foster care)

“I like my activity’s going to SPACE and jungle world. Staff help me with my independence. They help make sure I see my mum and brothers every week and keep them up to date with all of my fun or anything important.”  
(child in a children’s home)

“the home is sweet, the staff are nice and caring and it is closer to where my mum lives. the staff are really funny and sound and the manager is the best one i’ve had whilst i’ve been in care :)”  
(child in a children’s home)

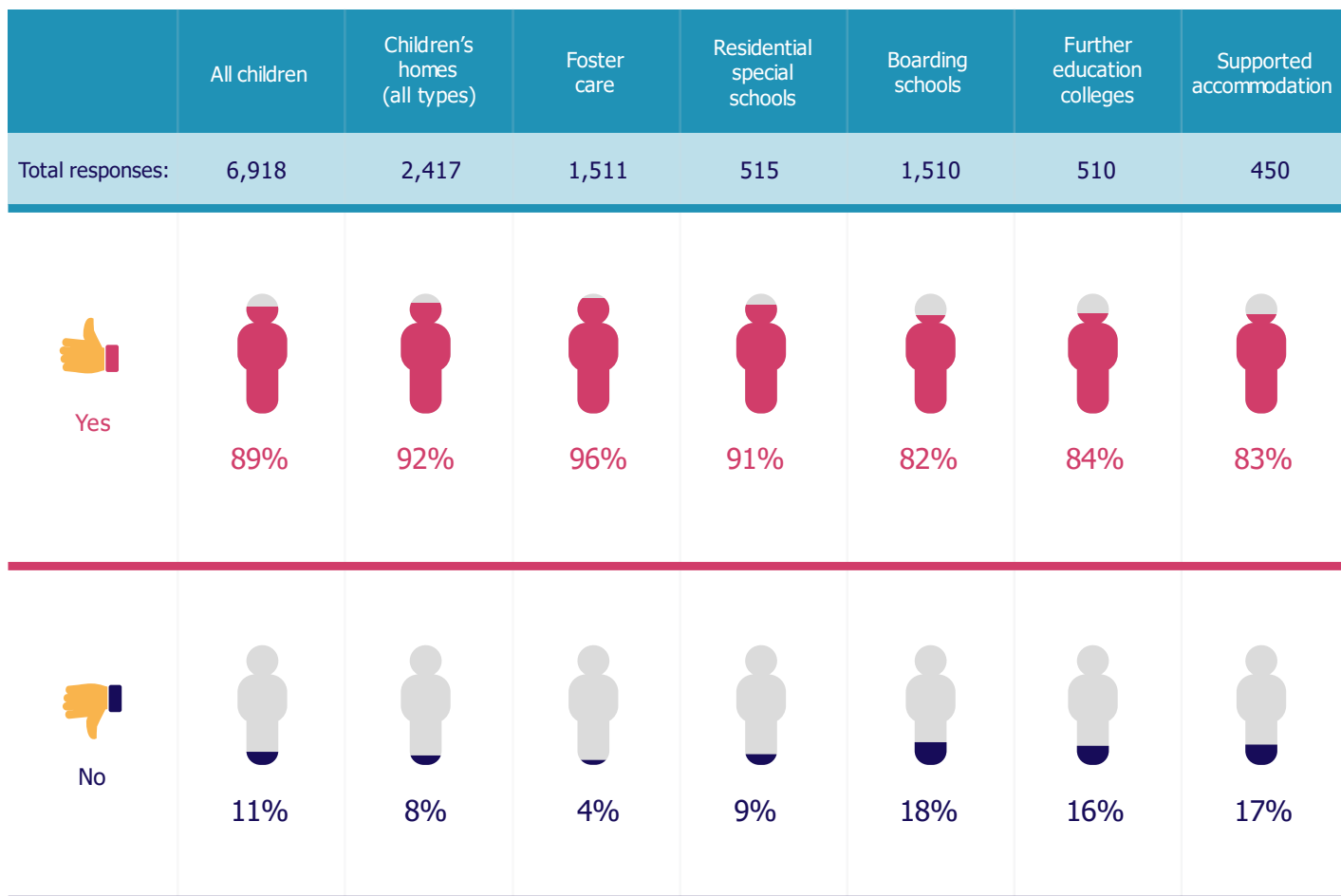


## **In the last week, did you do something fun?**

Among children living in children's homes, 92% said they did something fun in the last week, compared with 94% in 2023. The proportion of children living in foster care who responded 'yes' remained the same as last year, at 96%. Of children living in supported accommodation, 83% said they did something fun the previous week.

The highest proportion of children saying 'no' was among children living in boarding schools (18%), supported accommodation (17%) and FE colleges (16%). However, this was an improvement for FE colleges compared with last year, when 1 in 5 children said they did not do anything fun the previous week.

**Figure 7: In the last week, did you do something fun?**



Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

View the [data for figure 7 in an accessible table format](#).

### What children told us about doing something fun:

"i love that i get to go out all of the time and the staff take me swimming and im getting really good now."  
(child in a children's home)

"It is fun because they do lots of fun stuff with the children who are there and they make you feel safe and happy. They also listen to what you have to say and make sure that you are happy and that you make the most out of your time there. So it is a pleasure to be there."  
(child in a children's home)

“I like living where we do... it’s near my friend and I didn’t have to change my school. She listens to us and makes sure we get to see our Mum and sisters. She’s kind and makes a good hot chocolate. my room is being decorated too and I got to choose what I wanted.”

(child in foster care)

“I am near college and bury town centre that has things to do, i also go to the gym.”

(child in supported accommodation)

“I am happy where I live, the other people could be better for cleaning but they are good people, my staff they listen to me and they help me to go to football matches and shopping, sometimes to college too.”

(child in supported accommodation)

## **What would you like to tell us about the place you live?**

We asked children to tell us anything they wanted to about the place where they lived or stayed. Of the 6,995 children who responded to the survey, 5,615 answered this question.

One of the most common responses from children (around 2,000) was their overall happiness about the place they lived or stayed, describing it as being ‘brilliant’ or similar.

Children also commented on the staff or carers where they lived or stayed. Comments were generally positive, but some children felt they were not listened to.

Children were generally happy about the place they lived or stayed, describing it as fun. Some children, especially in group care, noted that they would like to have more

free time.

Thank you to everyone who has completed our surveys and shared their views with us.

## Annex of data figures

### Data for figure 1: Do you feel safe where you live or stay?

	All children	Children's homes (all types)	Foster care	Residential special schools	Boarding schools	Further education (FE) colleges
<b>Always</b>	72%	72%	90%	72%	56%	63%
<b>Most of the time</b>	23%	21%	9%	20%	38%	32%
<b>Sometimes</b>	4%	5%	1%	7%	5%	4%
<b>Never</b>	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,995	2,448	1,535	519	1,528	511

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

[See figure 1.](#)

### Data for figure 2: Do you get along with the staff where you live or stay?

	All children	Children's homes (all types)	Foster care	Residential special schools	Boarding schools	FE colleges
<b>Always</b>	54%	47%	75%	59%	36%	64%

<b>Most of the time</b>	37%	43%	22%	30%	49%	30%
<b>Sometimes</b>	8%	9%	3%	9%	14%	6%
<b>Never</b>	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,936	2,425	1,520	516	1,517	509

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

[See figure 2.](#)

**Data for figure 3: Do you get on with the other children where you live or stay?**

	<b>All children</b>	<b>Children's homes (all types)</b>	<b>Foster care</b>	<b>Residential special schools</b>	<b>Boarding schools</b>	<b>FE colleges</b>
<b>Always</b>	35%	29%	53%	34%	24%	32%
<b>Most of the time</b>	47%	44%	37%	46%	64%	51%
<b>Sometimes</b>	15%	23%	7%	19%	12%	15%
<b>Never</b>	2%	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,813	2,375	1,459	515	1,513	509

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

[See figure 3.](#)

**Data for figure 4: Do the staff where you live or stay ask you about things that are important to you?**

	<b>All children</b>	<b>Children's homes (all types)</b>	<b>Foster care</b>	<b>Residential special schools</b>	<b>Boarding schools</b>	<b>FE colleges</b>
<b>Always</b>	57%	66%	78%	52%	24%	33%
<b>Most of the time</b>	24%	23%	15%	28%	34%	31%
<b>Sometimes</b>	16%	9%	5%	18%	35%	26%
<b>Never</b>	3%	1%	1%	2%	7%	10%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,916	2,405	1,518	515	1,522	508

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

[See figure 4.](#)

#### **Data for figure 5: Do the staff where you live or stay listen to you?**

	<b>All children</b>	<b>Children's homes (all types)</b>	<b>Foster care</b>	<b>Residential special schools</b>	<b>Boarding schools</b>	<b>FE colleges</b>
<b>Always</b>	62%	61%	80%	64%	44%	58%
<b>Most of the time</b>	26%	28%	17%	23%	35%	30%
<b>Sometimes</b>	10%	10%	3%	10%	19%	9%
<b>Never</b>	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,922	2,418	1,522	514	1,512	511

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.



[See figure 5.](#)

### Data for figure 6: Do you spend time with people who are important to you?

	All children	Children's homes (all types)	Foster care	Residential special schools	Boarding schools	FE colleges
<b>Always</b>	49%	51%	49%	61%	42%	45%
<b>Most of the time</b>	29%	26%	27%	25%	36%	34%
<b>Sometimes</b>	20%	20%	21%	14%	21%	20%
<b>Never</b>	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,917	2,410	1,521	512	1,518	509

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

[See figure 6.](#)

### Data for figure 7: In the last week, did you do something fun?

	All children	Children's homes (all types)	Foster care	Residential special schools	Boarding schools	FE colleges
<b>Yes</b>	89%	92%	96%	91%	82%	84%
<b>No</b>	11%	8%	4%	9%	18%	16%
<b>Total respondents</b>	6,918	2,417	1,511	515	1,515	510

Children's homes (all types) include residential special schools and secure children's homes.

[See figure 7.](#)

## Footnotes

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1. 'Adoption services' includes voluntary adoption agencies and local authority adoption services. We sent the surveys to regional adoption agencies, where they now carry out some local authorities' adoption functions. 'Fostering services' includes independent fostering agencies and local authority fostering services. [↩](#)
2. Under the Care Standards Act 2000, Ofsted has the powers to inspect these types of services. There is no law to say that children, staff and professionals have to share their views with us through this survey. It is optional, and we highly value the information we receive. [↩](#)
3. We do not inspect individual foster carers. We inspect the local authorities and agencies that recruit them. [↩](#)
4. For more on how we use information, [see our privacy notice](#). [↩](#)
5. We sent surveys to 168 supported accommodation providers who were active on 30 Jan 2024. Of these, 109 providers returned responses. [↩](#)
6. The data throughout the report has been rounded to the nearest whole number. This means that some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%. [↩](#)
7. A child who is looked after by a local authority (referred to as a looked-after child) as defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989 means a child (0 to 18 years of age) who is subject to a care order (or an interim care order) or who is accommodated by the local authority. [↩](#)
8. ['Children looked after in England including adoptions'](#), Ofsted, November 2023. [↩](#)
9. In relation to children's homes and fostering services, the responses from children do not solely relate to looked-after children. A number of children who are not looked after receive services: for example, children who receive short breaks or are placed under other arrangements. Most users of short breaks are children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but other children in need may also receive short breaks. The breaks usually have 2 aims: to enable the child to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities and to provide a break for parents. [↩](#)

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