

Customer Perception Tracking Research

General Public Survey

BMG Research



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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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1 Introduction

Background

In 2006, the DCSF commissioned BMG Research to undertake a 3 year Customer Perception Tracking study of the general public, parents of children and young people aged up to 19, and young people aged 11-19.

The aims and objectives of the tracking study are to:

- Monitor perceptions of the overall quality of state education provision at all stages from early years provision through to Higher Education.
- Measure attitudes towards various issues such as children's safety and wellbeing at school and in the community, children and young people's role and role in the community.
- Understand perceptions towards participation in higher education.
- Understand the overall perception of England as a place to grow up.

This report covers the findings from the survey of the general public.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted by telephone between December 2007 and January 2008 amongst 1000 respondents across the UK. The sample interviewed was designed to be broadly representative of the general public. The demographic profile of the sample of interviewed respondents is a good reflection of the population of the general UK population overall. This is included in Section 9 of the report.

Tests for statistical significance are based on the number of interviews achieved and the relevant percentage figure. The maximum standard error at the 95% level of confidence for the total sample, based on a 50%:50% response is +/-3.1%. The nearer the percentage reported moves to 100% or 0% (i.e. there is a majority responding one way or another), the smaller the standard error. A reported percentage of 90% / 10% would be subject to a standard error of just +/-0.6% at the 95% confidence level.

Format of report

This research report details findings from the survey of the public. The findings are structured around DSO objectives, with data provided on key question area for each DSO:

- DSO 1: Secure the wellbeing and health of children and young people
- DSO 2: Safeguard the young and vulnerable
- DSO 3: Achieve world class standards in education
- DSO 4: Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged families
- DSO 5: Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 16 and beyond
- DSO 6: Keep children and young people on the path to success
- England as a place to grow up in (cross-cutting DSO objectives)

Tables and figures have been used throughout the report to illustrate the data. Where tables are used to collate total scaled responses, such as those who agree (strongly + slightly) versus those who disagree (strongly + slightly), the total positive responses (ie, total agree, total very + quite etc) are illustrated in **bold**, while the total negative responses (ie, total disagree, total not very + not at all etc) are illustrated in grey.

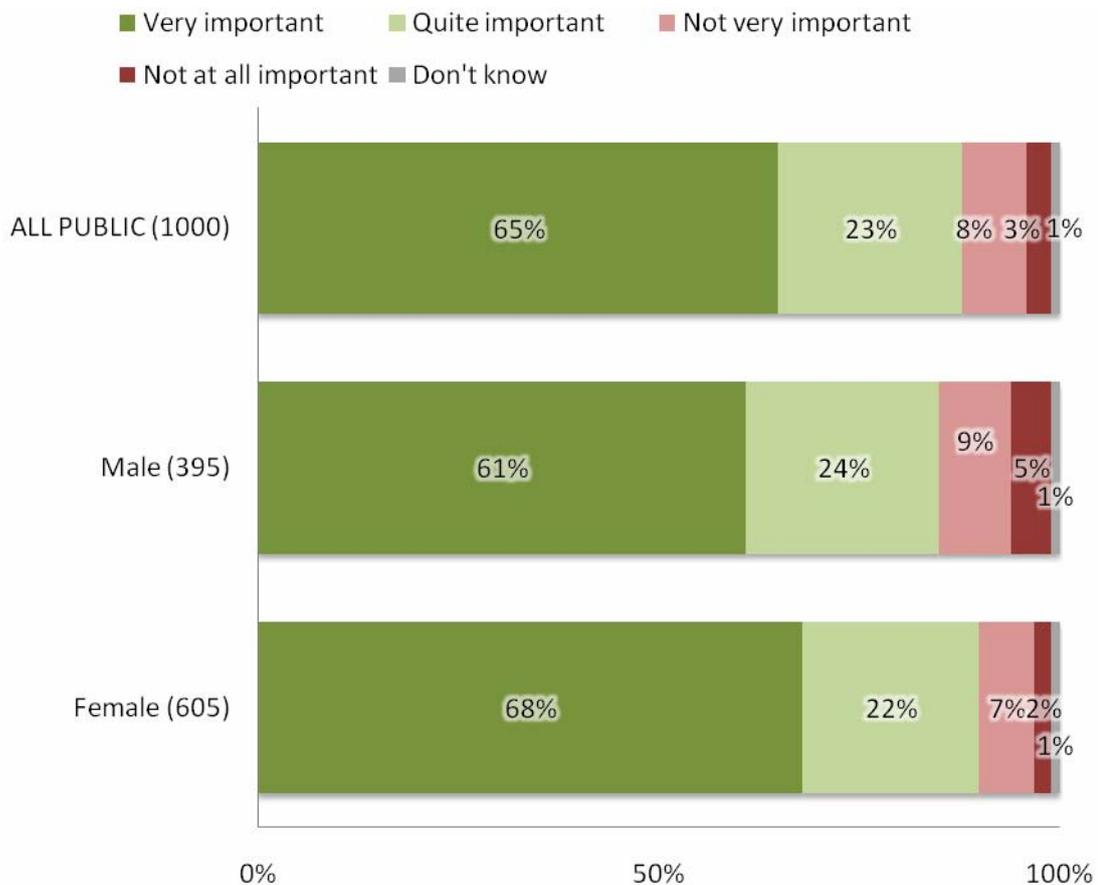
2 DSO 1: Secure the wellbeing and health of children and young people

2.1 Value of early learning

Respondents were asked to rate how important they think it is for children aged 3-4 to attend some form of pre-school, nursery or early learning before they go into full time education at the age of 5. The majority of respondents agree that it is important, with 88% of all respondents in agreement that this is the case. While most respondents agree that this is very or quite important, some differences are evident in the proportion of respondents who feel this is *very* important.

A difference in opinion exists between male and female respondents, where female respondents were more likely to feel that early learning was important for children (90% of female respondents agree, compared to 85% of male respondents).

Figure 1: Q11: How important do you feel it is for children aged 3-4 to attend some form of pre-school, nursery or early learning before they go into full time education at the age of 5?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

DSO 1: Secure the wellbeing and health of children and young people

2.2 Ease of using public transport

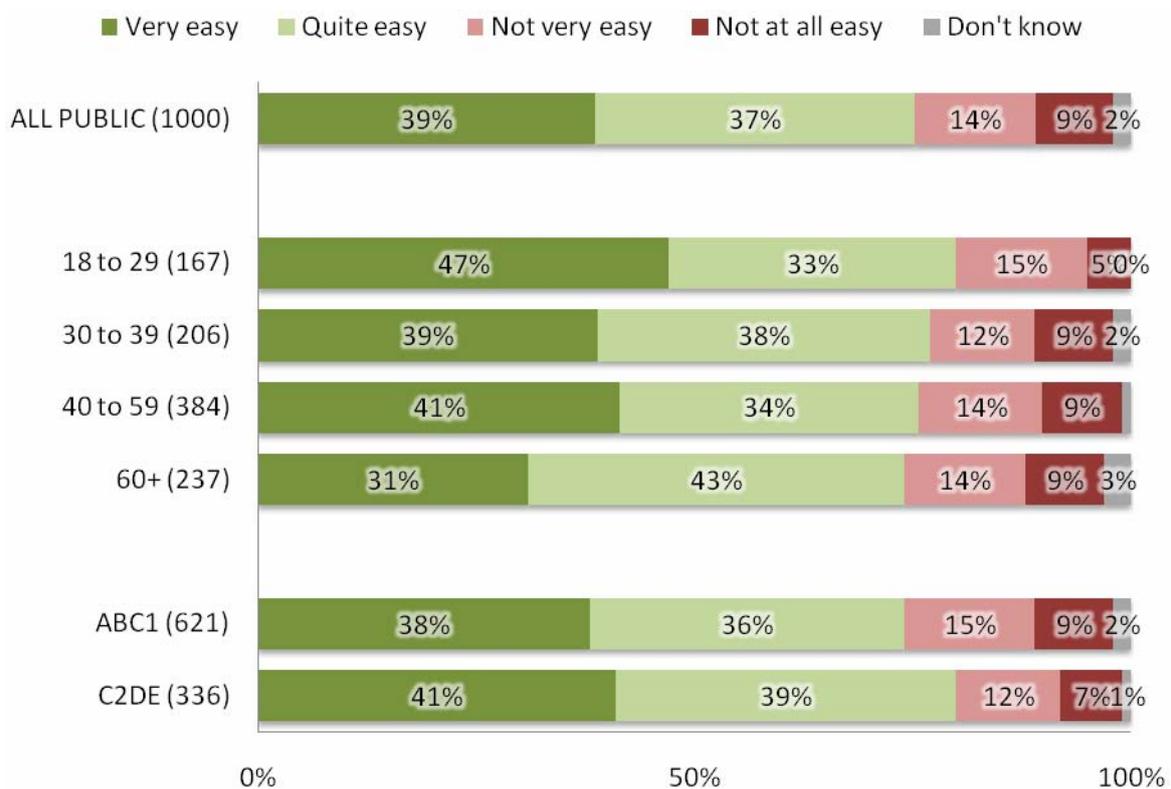
Respondents were asked to think about transport in their local area, and to rate how easy it is for children in their local area to get to school, college, university or work without travelling by car (i.e. to catch public transport, walk or cycle).

The vast majority of respondents agree that it is easy to travel without using the car (76%), with four in ten (39%) reporting that they find it very easy, and over one in three (37%) reporting that they find it quite easy. Just fewer than a quarter (23%) of respondents finds it not very or not at all easy.

Younger respondents are more likely to think it is easy for children to get to school or college without travelling by car, as 80% of 18-29 year olds feel that it is easy, including 47% who feel it is very easy, with this proportion decreasing to 74% of respondents aged 60+, comprising 31% who feel it is very easy.

Respondents in socio-economic group C2DE are more likely to feel it is easy for children to get to school or college without travelling by car, as 80% agree, compared to 74% of those in group ABC1.

Figure 2: Q14. Thinking about transport, how easy would you say it is for children in your local area to get to school or college without travelling by car - that is to catch public transport, walk or cycle?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

3 DSO 2: Safeguard the young and vulnerable

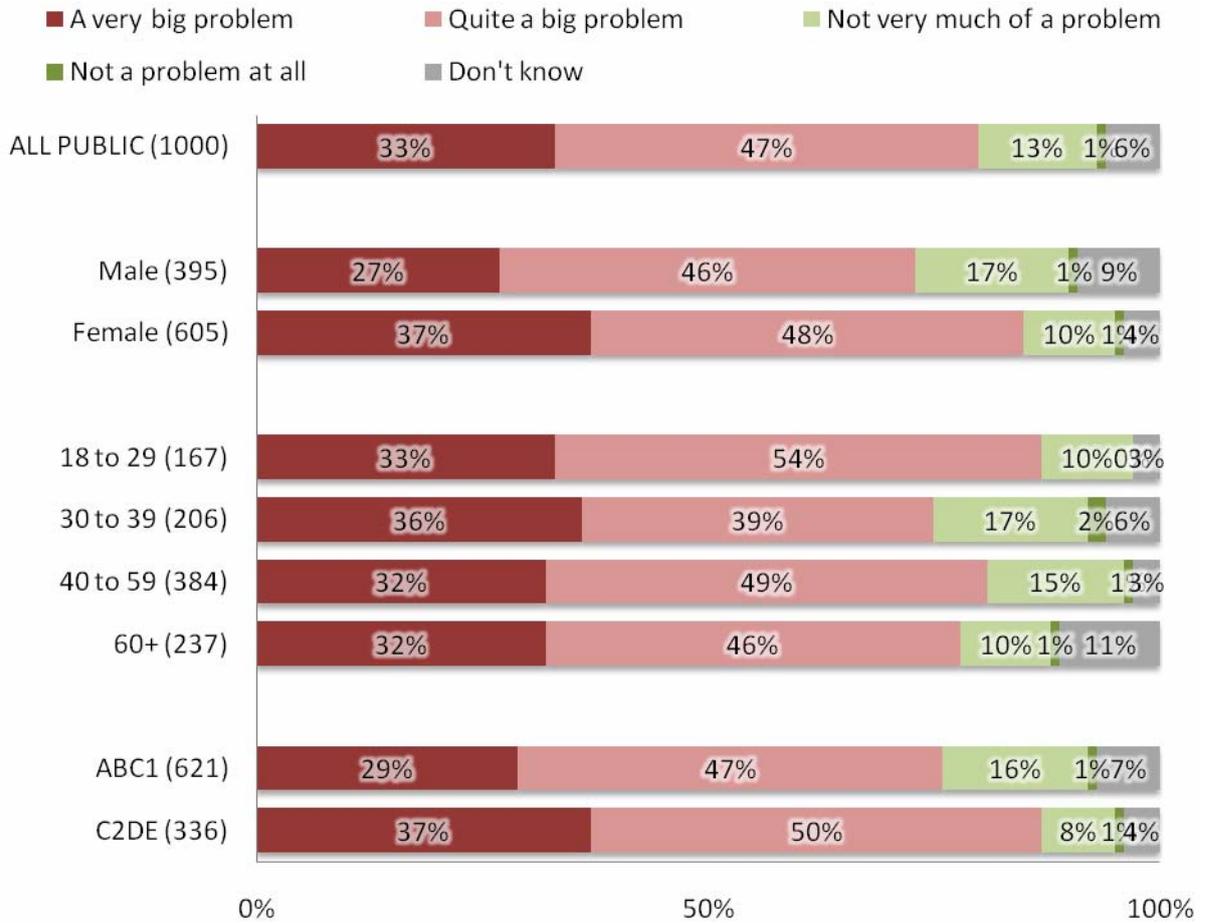
3.1 Bullying

Respondents were asked the extent to which they feel bullying is a problem in schools in England today. Four in five (80%) feel that bullying is a problem to some degree.

Males are less likely to report bullying as a problem than females (73%, compared to 85% respectively). Younger respondents aged between 18 and 29 are more likely to feel that bullying is a problem than those aged 30 and over (87% of 18-29 year olds feel this is a problem, compared to 75% of 30- 39 year olds, 81% of 40-59 year olds and 78% of those aged 60+).

When looking at differences by socio-economic group (SEG), respondents in group C2DE are more inclined to report bullying as a problem than those in ABC1 groups (87% compared to 76% respectively).

Figure 3: Q7: To what extent do you think bullying is a problem in schools in England today? Would you say it is...?

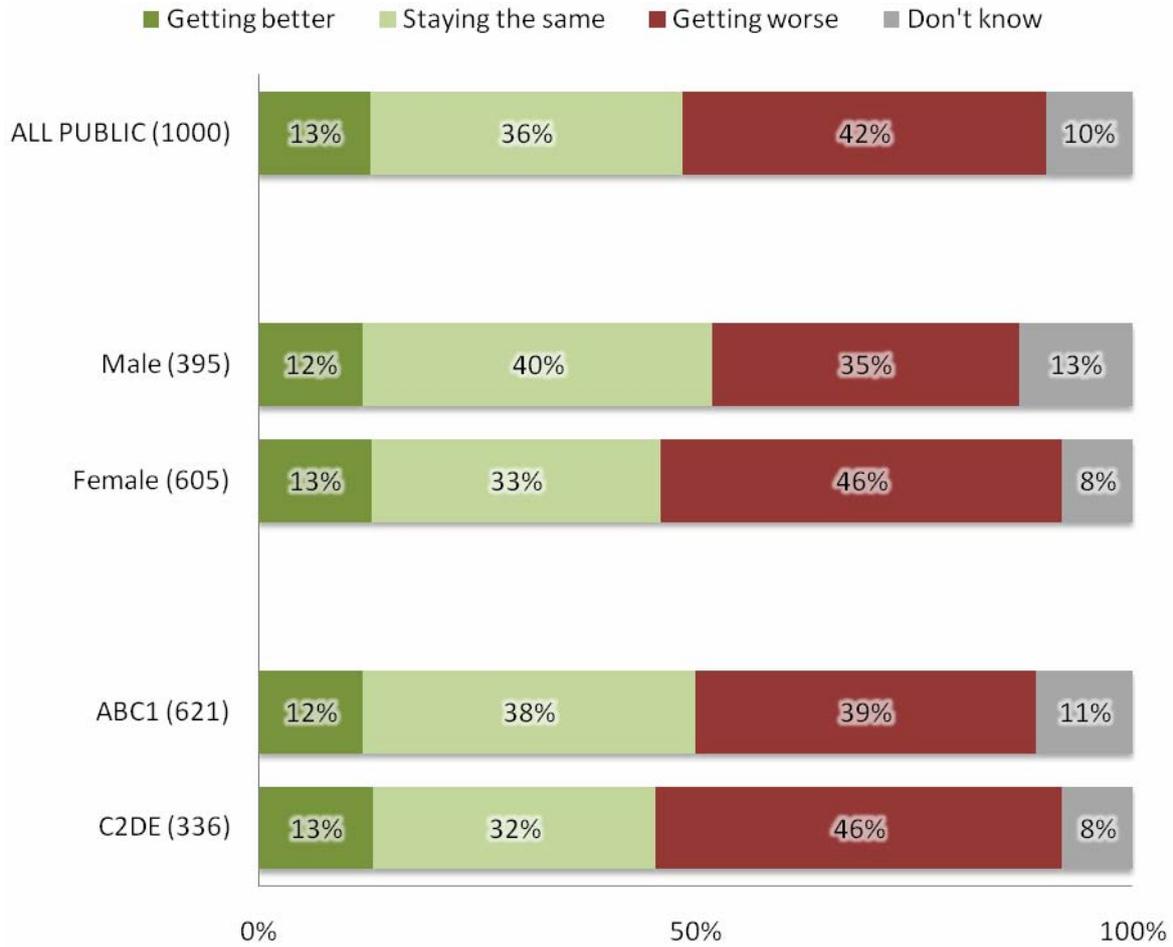


Sample bases shown in parentheses.

Respondents were then asked whether they feel the problem of bullying in schools over the last five years is improving, staying the same or getting worse. One in eight (13%) feels the problem is getting better, while just over a third (36%) feels that the extent of the problem is staying the same. Two in five general public respondents (42%) feel that the problem of bullying in schools is getting worse.

Females are more likely to feel that the problem is getting worse (46%) than males (35%), as are respondents in socio-economic group C2DE (46%) than those in group ABC1 (39%).

Figure 4: Q8: Do you feel that the problem of bullying in schools over the last five years is?

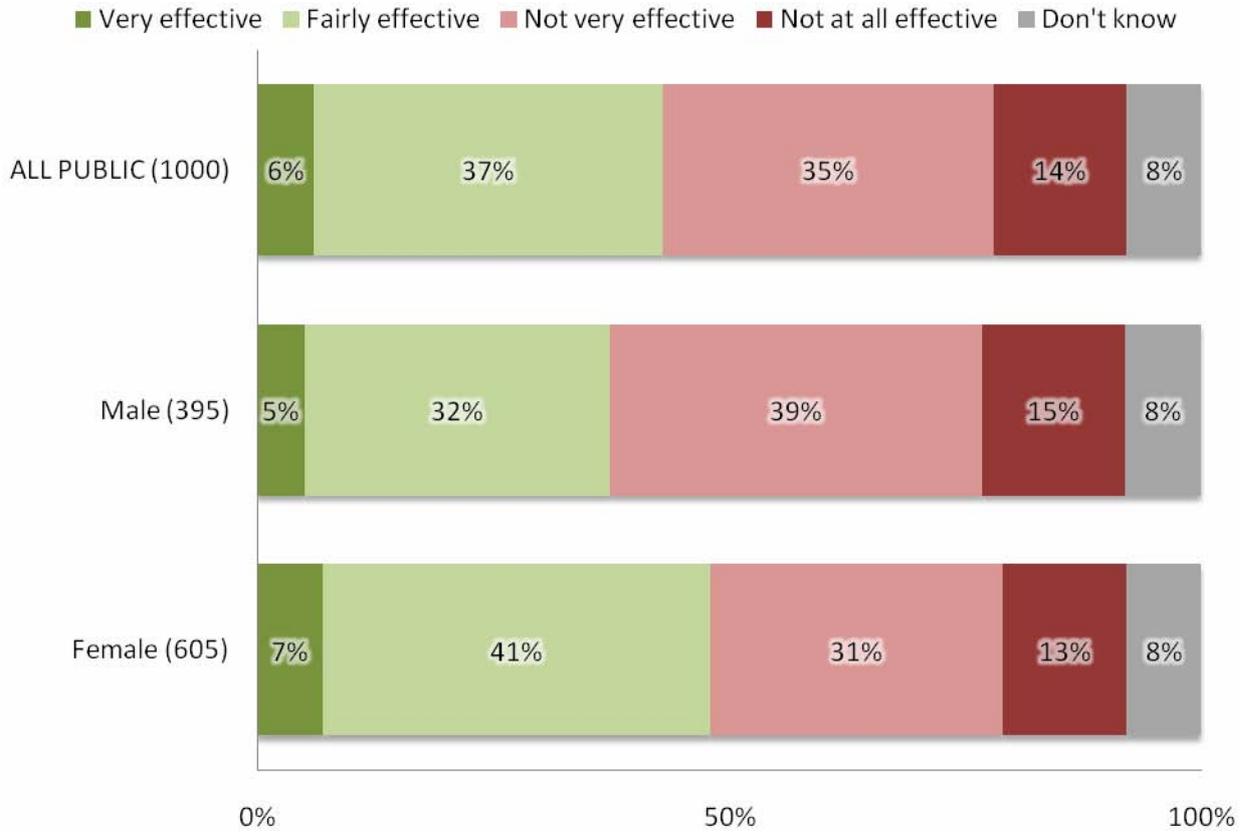


Sample bases shown in parentheses.

Respondents were then asked to consider in general how effective they think school or college staff are at dealing with bullying. General public respondents here are almost evenly split, with half (49%) feeling that staff are not effective, and just over two in five (43%) feeling that staff are very or fairly effective.

Female respondents are more likely to feel that school or college staff are effective at dealing with bullying (48%) than males (37%).

Figure 5: Q9: In general how effective do you think school staff are at dealing with bullying?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

3.2 Safety of Young People

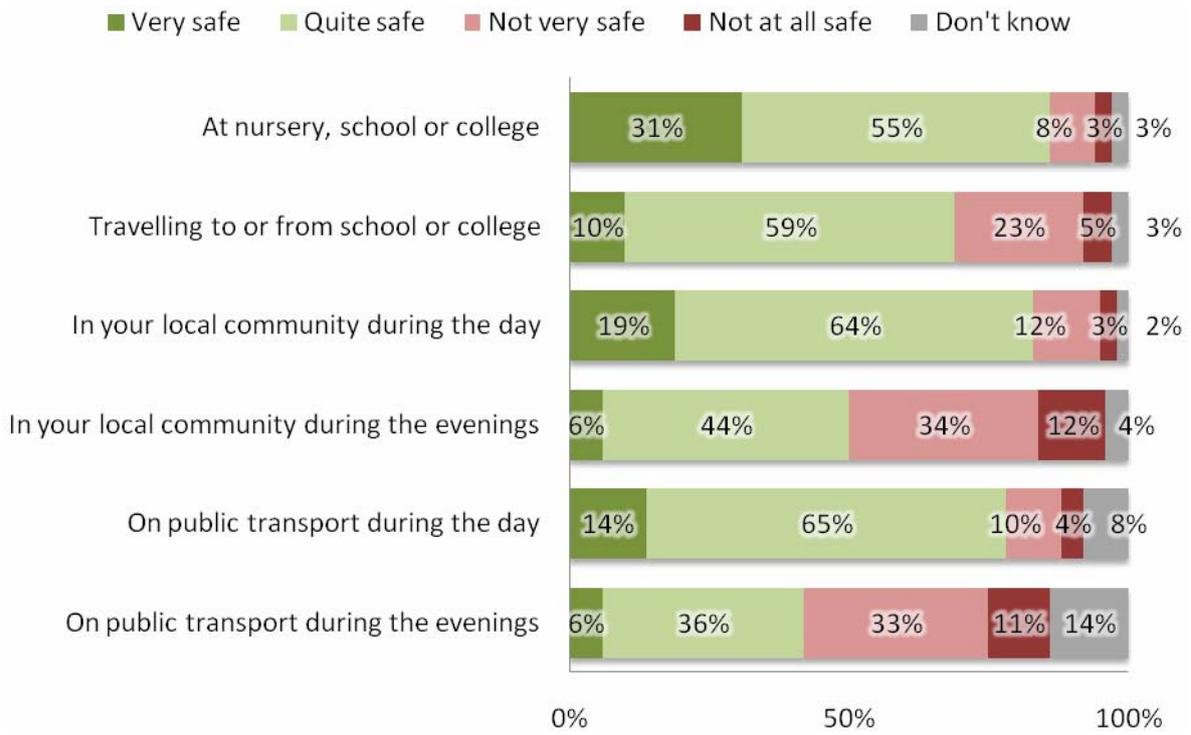
Respondents were then asked to think about the safety of young people in general in England today, and were asked how safe they feel children and young people are in a range of situations.

As illustrated in the figure below, the majority of respondents feel that all situations are safe for young people during the day, although opinion is divided when considering situations for young people at night.

The situations rated safest by general public respondents are at nursery, school or college, rated as safe by almost nine in ten (86%), followed by the community during the day, rated safe by slightly fewer (83%), and public transport during the day (79%). Just over two in three (69%) feel it is safe travelling to or from school or college, while 28% feel it is not safe.

Thinking about situations in the evenings, half of respondents (50%) feel it is safe for children and young people in their local community during the evenings, while 48% feel it is not safe, and 42% feel it is safe on public transport during the evenings, and 44% feel it is not safe. This means that respondents are equally divided on whether their local community is safe or not safe, while the majority view by 2% is that public transport is not safe in the evenings.

Figure 6: Q10: How safe do you feel it is for children and young people...?



Sample base: 1000, All public

DSO 2: Safeguard the young and vulnerable

These findings are largely consistent by gender and age groups, however some differences are apparent by socio-economic group. Those in group DE are more likely to feel it is not safe for children and young people in all situations, particularly during the evenings, as the majority view among this group is that their local community is not safe during the evenings (50%, compared to 45% who feel it is safe), and that public transport during the evenings is not safe (47%, compared to 35% who feel it is safe).

Table 1: Q10: How safe do you feel it is for children and young people...?

	ALL PUBLIC		AB		C1		C2		DE	
	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-
...At nursery, school or college	87	11	88	9	89	9	87	11	81	17
...Travelling to or from school or college	69	28	72	26	67	32	71	26	64	31
...In your local community during the day	83	15	84	14	84	14	83	15	77	19
...In your local community during the evenings	51	45	52	45	50	47	51	42	45	50
...On public transport during the day	79	13	78	14	83	11	82	12	70	18
...On public transport during the evenings	42	44	44	43	44	46	41	42	35	47
Sample bases	1000		385		236		179		157	

4 DSO 3: Achieve world class standards in education

4.1 Quality of education

Respondents were asked to rate the current quality of various stages of publicly funded education on a four-point scale from very good to very poor. The figure below shows the positive and negative ratings for each aspect amongst all respondents who provided a valid response (don't know responses are therefore excluded).

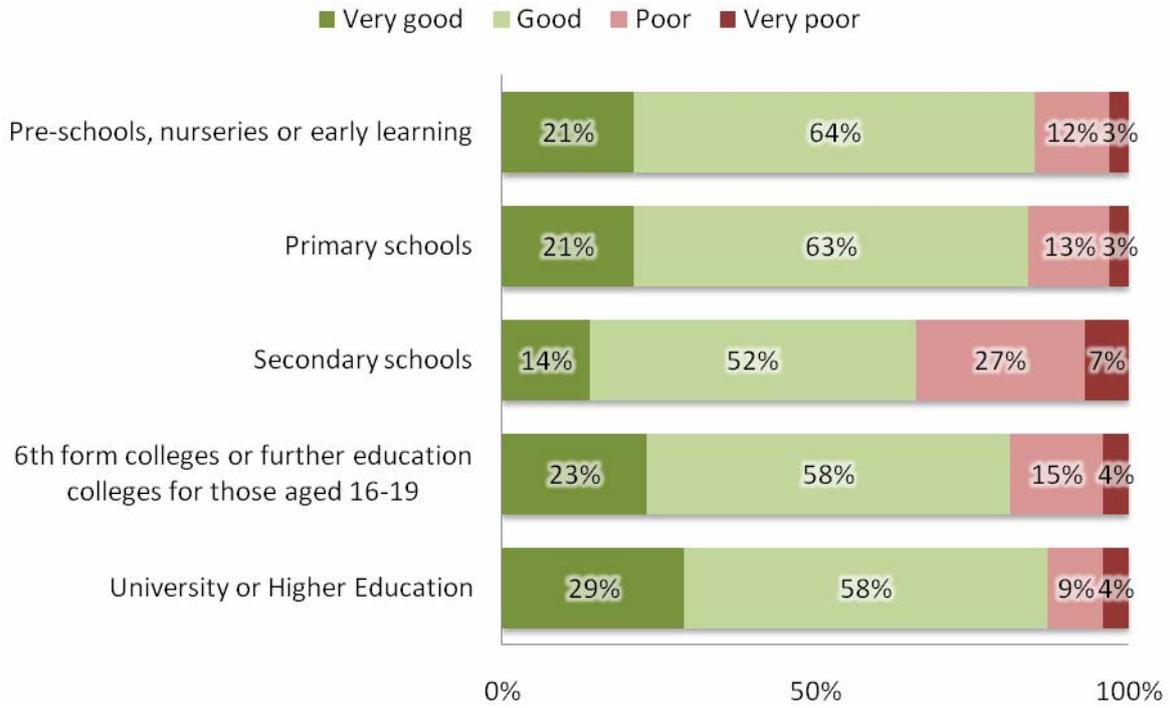
Overall, the majority of general public respondents feel that the current quality of publicly funded education in all these stages is good, with a minority rating any stage as poor to any degree.

Respondents were most likely to rate the current quality of university or higher education as good as almost nine in ten gave a positive rating here (87%). This is followed by the younger education stages as nurseries, pre-schools and early learning were rated positively by 85%, while 84% feel that the quality of primary education is good. 6th Form colleges or Further Education colleges were felt to provide good quality education by 81%.

Secondary schools were most likely to be rated as very or quite poor, by a third of general public respondents (34%), although still the majority of respondents rate secondary schools as good (66%).

DSO 3: Achieve world class standards in education

Figure 7: Q1: How would you rate the current quality of publicly funded education in ... (SCHOOL TYPE)?



Sample base: 1000, All public

DSO 3: Achieve world class standards in education

Differences by age of respondent are highlighted in the table below. Respondents' views become slightly more negative as their age increases, so that those aged 60+ are most likely to have a negative view of the current quality of publicly funded education, while younger respondents are most likely to be positive.

This difference in opinion is clearly illustrated in the views of the youngest and oldest groups regarding secondary schools, as 59% of respondents aged 60+ feel the quality of education provided is good, and 41% of these respondents feel the quality is poor. This compares to 72% of 18-29 year olds who feel the quality of education provided in secondary schools is good, while 28% feel it is poor.

Table 2: Q1: How would you rate the current quality of publicly funded education in ... (SCHOOL TYPE)?

	ALL PUBLIC		18-29		30-39		40-59		60+	
	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-
Pre-schools, nurseries or early learning	85	15	92	8	86	14	84	16	81	19
Primary schools	84	16	88	12	87	13	83	17	78	22
Secondary schools	65	35	72	28	66	34	64	36	59	41
6th form colleges or further education colleges for those aged 16-19	82	18	84	16	79	21	79	21	86	14
University or Higher Education	87	13	91	9	90	10	87	13	80	20
Sample bases	1000		167		206		384		237	

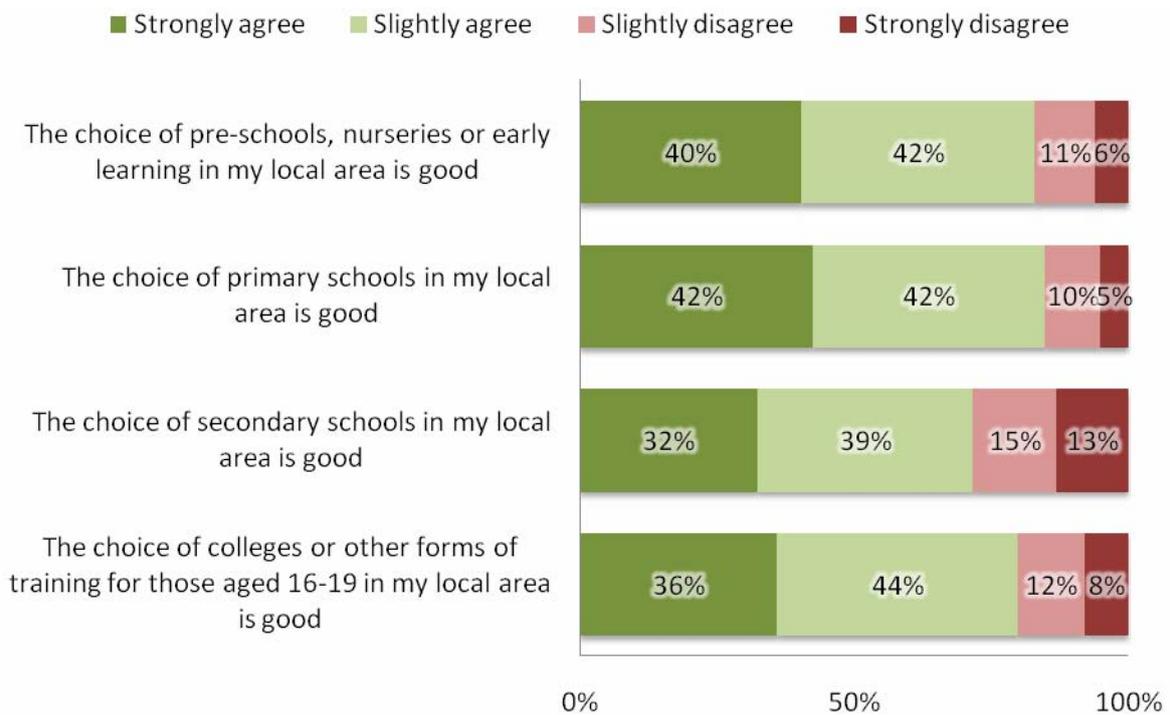
4.2 Choice

General public respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with a range of statements concerning the choice of publicly funded education in their local area at each stage of education up to age 18.

On the whole respondents feel that there is a good choice of pre-schools, nurseries or early learning, and a good choice of primary schools in their local area, with over eight in ten respondents agreeing this is the case (82% and 84% respectively).

When it comes to the later education stages respondents are less likely to agree that the choice is good, although those who do feel the choice is good still make up the majority, with seven in ten respondents (71%) agreeing that the choice of secondary schools is good, and eight in ten (80%) agreeing that the choice of colleges and training for 16-18 year olds is good.

Figure 8: Q2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the choice of education institution is good?



Sample base: 1000, All public

DSO 3: Achieve world class standards in education

Most sub-groups of general public respondents conform to these views, although as illustrated in the table below, the choice of pre-schools, nurseries or early learning is rated as good by slightly fewer respondents in the socio-economic group ABC1 (80%), than respondents in group C2DE (86%), while the choice of secondary schools is also rated as good fewer in group ABC1 (69%) than in group C2DE (75%).

Table 3: Q2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the choice of education institution is good?

	ALL PUBLIC		ABC1		C2DE	
	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-
Pre-schools, nurseries or early learning	82	18	80	20	86	14
Primary schools	84	16	83	17	86	14
Secondary schools	71	29	69	31	75	25
Colleges or other forms of training for 16-18s	80	20	79	21	79	21
Sample bases	1000		577		318	

5 DSO 4: Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged families

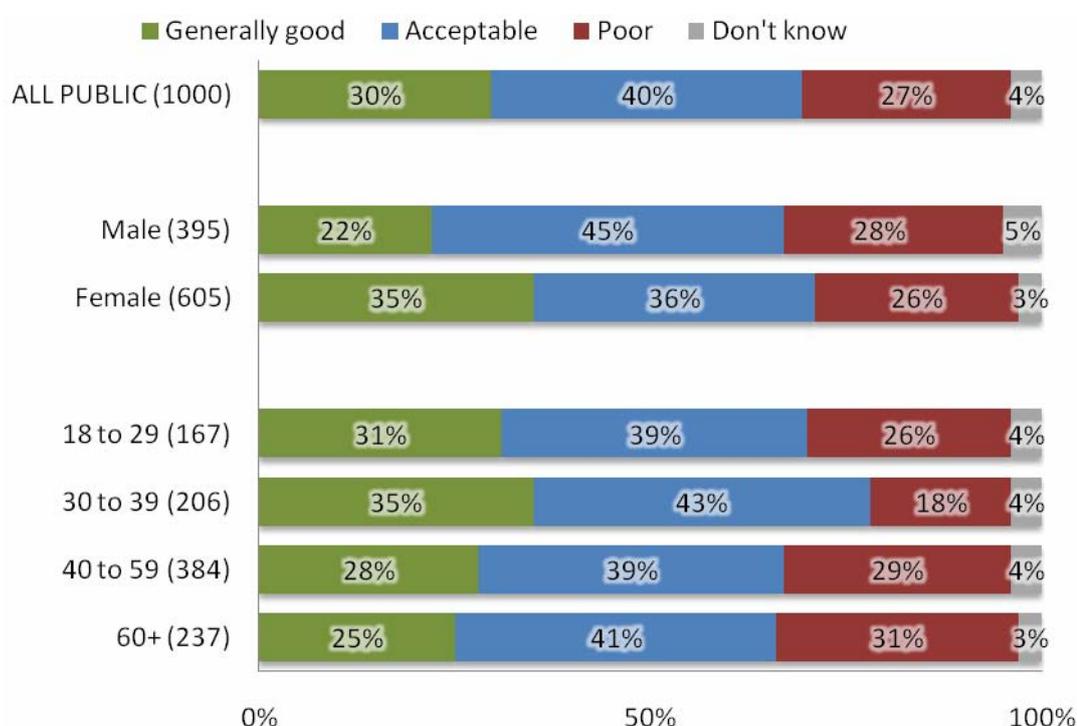
5.1 Behaviour at schools and colleges in the local area

Respondents were asked how they would describe pupil behaviour at schools or colleges in their local area. The majority of respondents feel that pupil behaviour is generally good (30%) or acceptable (40%), while around a quarter (27%) feels that it is poor.

Some difference in opinion is apparent between male and female respondents, and respondents in different age groups. Female respondents are more likely to describe pupil behaviour as generally good (35%) than males (22%), who are more likely to describe it as acceptable (45%, compared to 36% of females).

Looking at the age of respondents, those aged 30-39 are least likely to feel pupil behaviour is poor (18% rate behaviour as poor), while those aged 40-59 or 60+ are most likely to do so (29% and 31% respectively).

Figure 9: Q5: Would you describe pupil behaviour at your local schools/colleges as?



Sample bases in parentheses.

DSO 4: Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged families

Respondents who reported bullying to be a problem in schools in England are more likely to feel that pupil behaviour in schools and colleges in their local area is poor (29% do, compared to 19% of respondents who feel that bullying is not a problem).

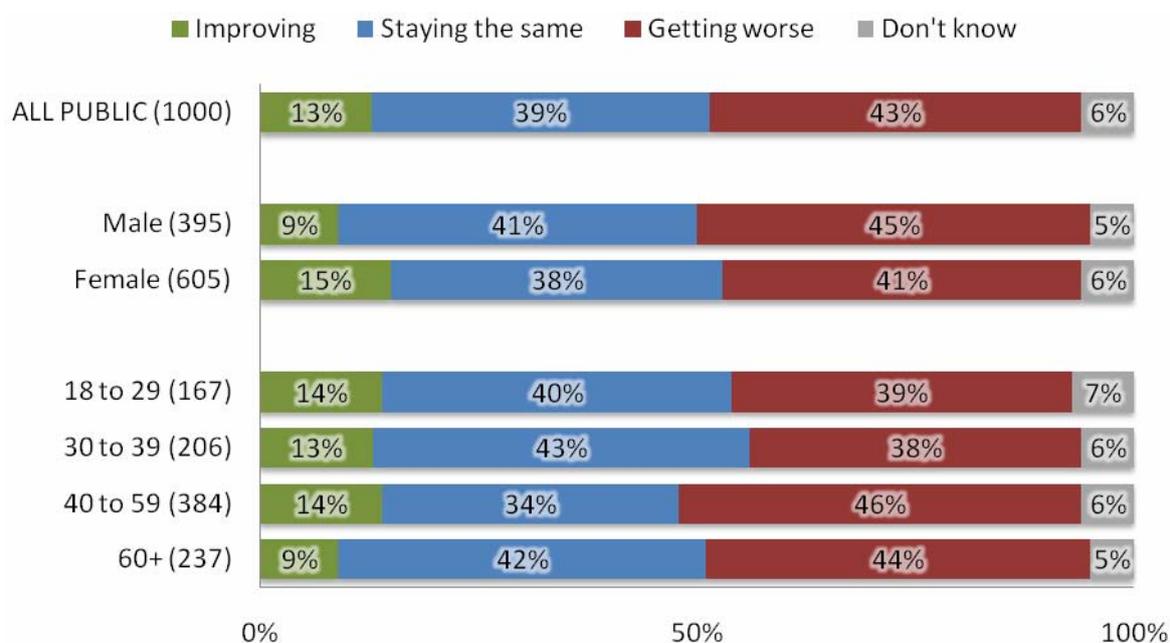
5.2 Improvement in pupil behaviour

General public respondents were then asked whether they felt standards of pupil behaviour in schools or colleges were generally improving, staying the same or getting worse. As illustrated below, respondents are almost equally split between those that think standards of behaviour are getting worse (43%), or staying the same (39%). Further, one in eight respondents (13%) feels that standards of behaviour are getting better.

Female respondents are more likely than males to have a positive outlook on standards of pupil behaviour, as 15% report that standards are improving, compared to 9% of males.

Older respondents aged 60+ are least likely to see improvements (9% feel standards are improving, and 44% feel standards are getting worse). Similarly those aged 40-59 are more likely to feel standards of pupil behaviour are getting worse (46%).

Figure 10: Q6: Thinking about your child's school/ college, do you feel that standards of pupil behaviour generally are improving, staying the same or getting worse?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

DSO 4: Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged families

Respondents who describe pupil behaviour as poor are more likely to feel that standards are getting worse, as 68% of those who rate behaviour as poor feel standards are declining (and 5% of these report improvement), compared to 29% of respondents who rate behaviour as good (and 19% of these report improvement).

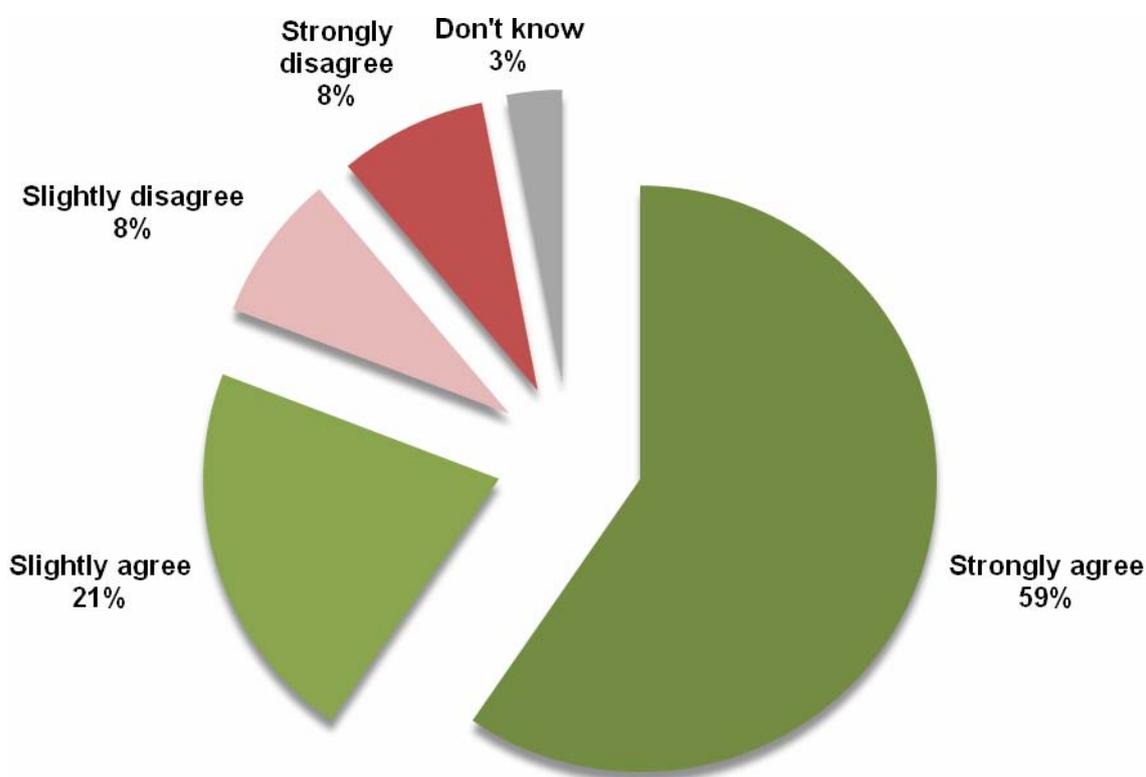
5.3 HE financial barrier

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that it is still more difficult for students from lower-income families to go to university than it is for students from families that are financially better off.

Overall, four in five (80%) respondents agree that it is still more difficult, while one in six (16%) disagree that this is the case.

These views are consistent across all groups of respondents, regardless of age, socio-economic group, or qualifications achieved.

Figure 11: Q4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is still more difficult for children from lower-income families to go to university than it is for students from families that are financially better off?



Sample = 1000, All Public

6 DSO 5: Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 16 and beyond

6.1 Schools and colleges as preparation for working life

Respondents were asked how well they feel schools and colleges in England prepare young people for working life.

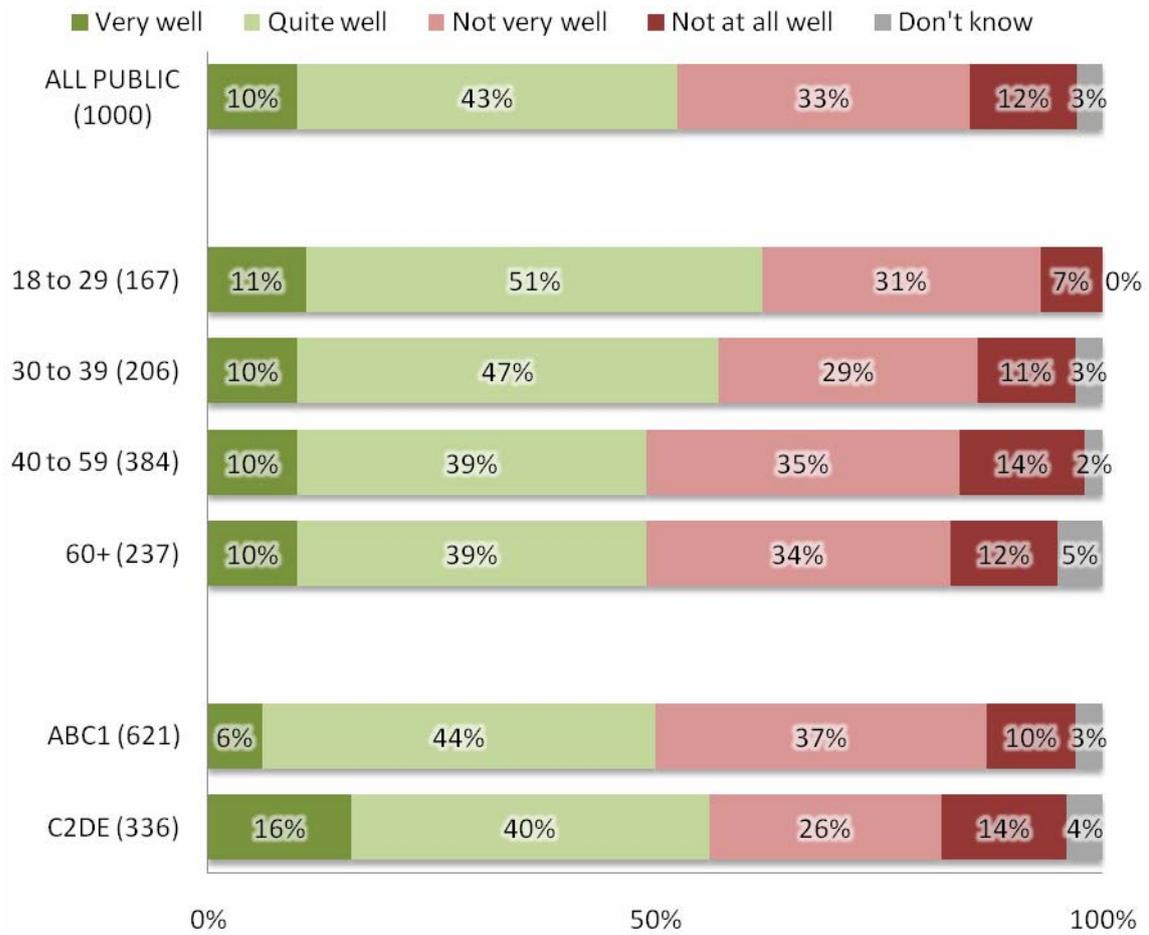
General public respondents are slightly more likely to feel that they prepare young people very or fairly well (53%), than not well (45%).

Younger respondents aged between 18 and 29 are more likely to feel that schools and colleges prepare young people for working life compared with those aged 40+ (as reported by 63% of 18-29 year olds, compared to 57% of 30-39 year olds and 49% of those aged 40-59 or 60+).

Respondents in socio-economic group C2DE are more likely than those in group ABC1 to feel schools and colleges prepare young people well for working life (56% do, compared to 50% of those in group ABC1).

DSO 5: Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 16 and beyond

Figure 12: Q3: Overall, how well do you feel schools and colleges in England today prepare young people for working life?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

7 DSO 6: Keep children and young people on the path to success

7.1 Young people's role in the community

General public respondents were asked to think more generally about young people in their local community today, and to rate their agreement with a number of statements on a scale where '1' indicates strong disagreement and '4' indicates strong agreement.

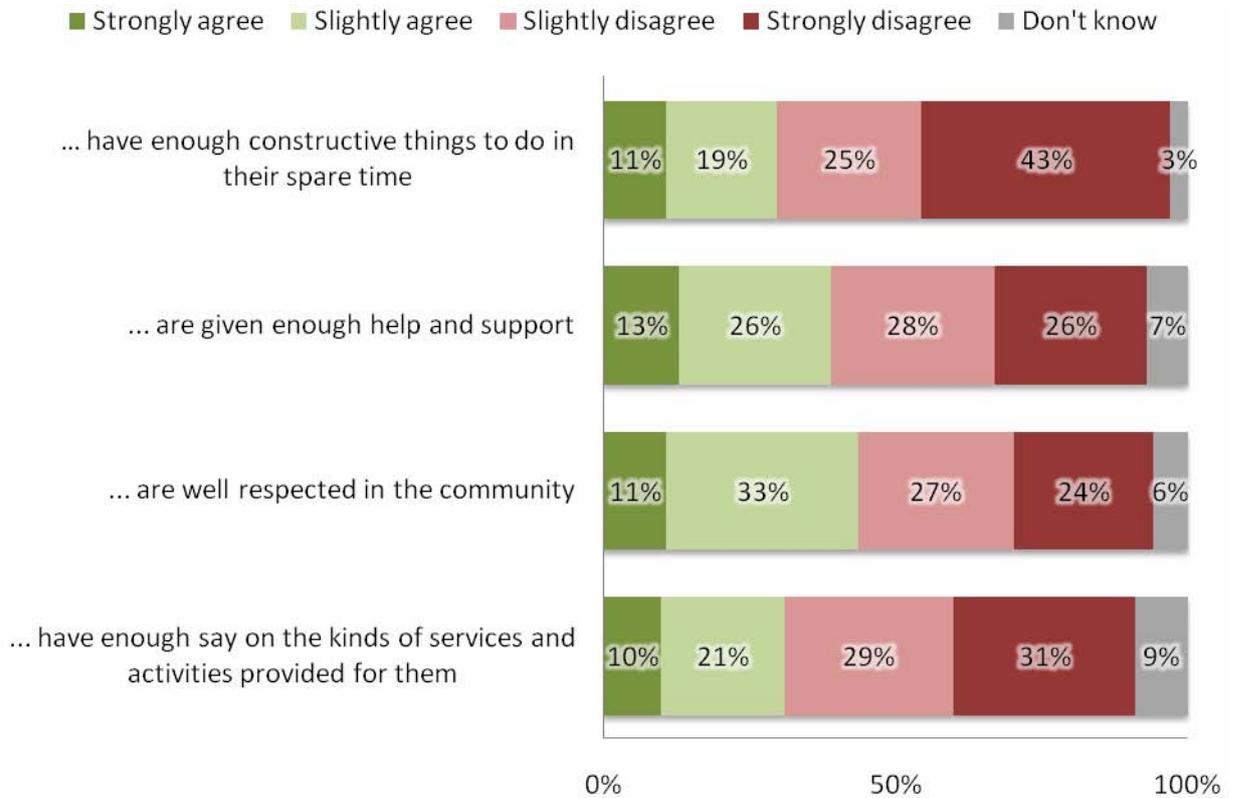
Amongst all respondents the level of agreement with these statements is lower than the level of disagreement, which means that in general the general public disagrees that young people in their local community have sufficient provision in terms of constructive things to do, help and support, respect from the community or enough say on services and activities provided for them.

Agreement is highest that young people are well respected in their local community (44%, while 51% disagree) and the lowest level of agreement is with regards to whether young people have enough constructive things to do in their spare time (30% agree, while 68% disagree).

DSO 6: Keep children and young people on the path to success

Figure 13: Q12: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements..?

Young people in your local community...



Sample base: 1000, All public

DSO 6: Keep children and young people on the path to success

The pattern of responses is very similar across all sub-groups, although there tends to be a greater level of negative views amongst respondents from a white background, than amongst those from a minority ethnic background on this area, as illustrated in the table below. For example where 61% of white respondents disagree that young people have enough say on the kinds of services and activities provided for them, this compares to 47% of respondents from a minority ethnic background.

Table 4: Q12: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements..?

	ALL PUBLIC		White background		Minority ethnic background	
	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-
... have enough constructive things to do in their spare time	30	67	29	68	38	57
... are given enough help and support	39	54	38	56	49	42
... are well respected in the community	43	51	43	51	46	47
...have enough say on the kinds of services and activities provided for them	31	60	30	61	43	47
Sample bases	1000		900		91	

7.2 Young people’s access to sports/ clubs/ community activities

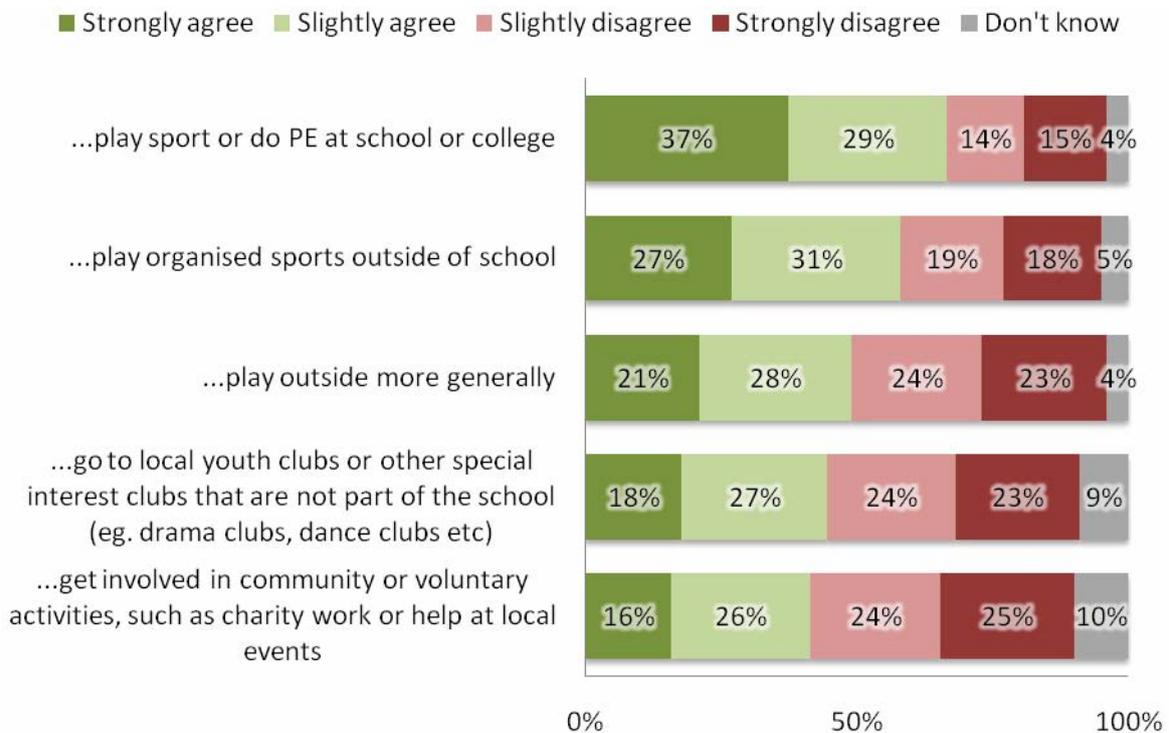
Respondents were then asked to consider in more detail the activities available to young people in their local community. They were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements concerning whether young people are offered enough opportunities to take part in a range of activities.

The majority of respondents (66%) feel that young people are offered enough opportunities to play sport or do PE at school or college, and almost three in five (58%) feel that there are enough opportunities for young people to play organised sports outside of school or college.

However when it comes to playing outside more generally, going to youth clubs or other special interest clubs, or taking part in community or voluntary activities, respondents are less likely to feel there is adequate provision in their local community, as around half of respondents disagree that there are enough opportunities in these areas (47%, 47% and 49% disagree respectively).

Figure 14: Q13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Young people in your local community are offered enough opportunities to...



Sample base: 1000, All public

DSO 6: Keep children and young people on the path to success

Differences exist amongst respondents of different age groups, with younger respondents aged 18-29 being most likely to feel there are enough opportunities for young people to play sports or do PE at school or college (81% agree, compared to 66% of all respondents), play sports outside of school or college (65% agree, compared to 57% of all respondents) to play outside more generally (65% agree compared to 49% of all respondents) and to go to youth clubs (57% agree compared to 45% of all respondents).

However respondents aged 18-29 are less likely than the oldest group aged 60+, and as likely as those aged 30-59 to feel there are enough opportunities for young people to get involved in community or voluntary activities, such as charity work or help at local events, as 41% agree while 53% disagree, which compares to 48% of respondents aged 60+ who agree and 41% who disagree.

Table 5: Q13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Young people are offered enough opportunities...

	ALL PUBLIC		18-29		30-39		40-59		60+	
	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-	% +	%-
...to play sport or do PE at school or college	66	29	81	17	68	26	62	33	60	34
...to play organised sports outside of school	57	38	65	32	58	36	53	43	58	34
...to play outside more generally	49	47	65	34	50	47	44	52	46	47
...to go to local youth clubs or other special interest clubs that are not part of the school (eg. drama clubs, dance clubs)	45	47	57	38	47	47	37	53	46	44
...to get involved in community or voluntary activities, such as charity work or help at local events	42	49	41	53	42	48	38	52	48	41
Sample bases	1000		167		206		384		237	

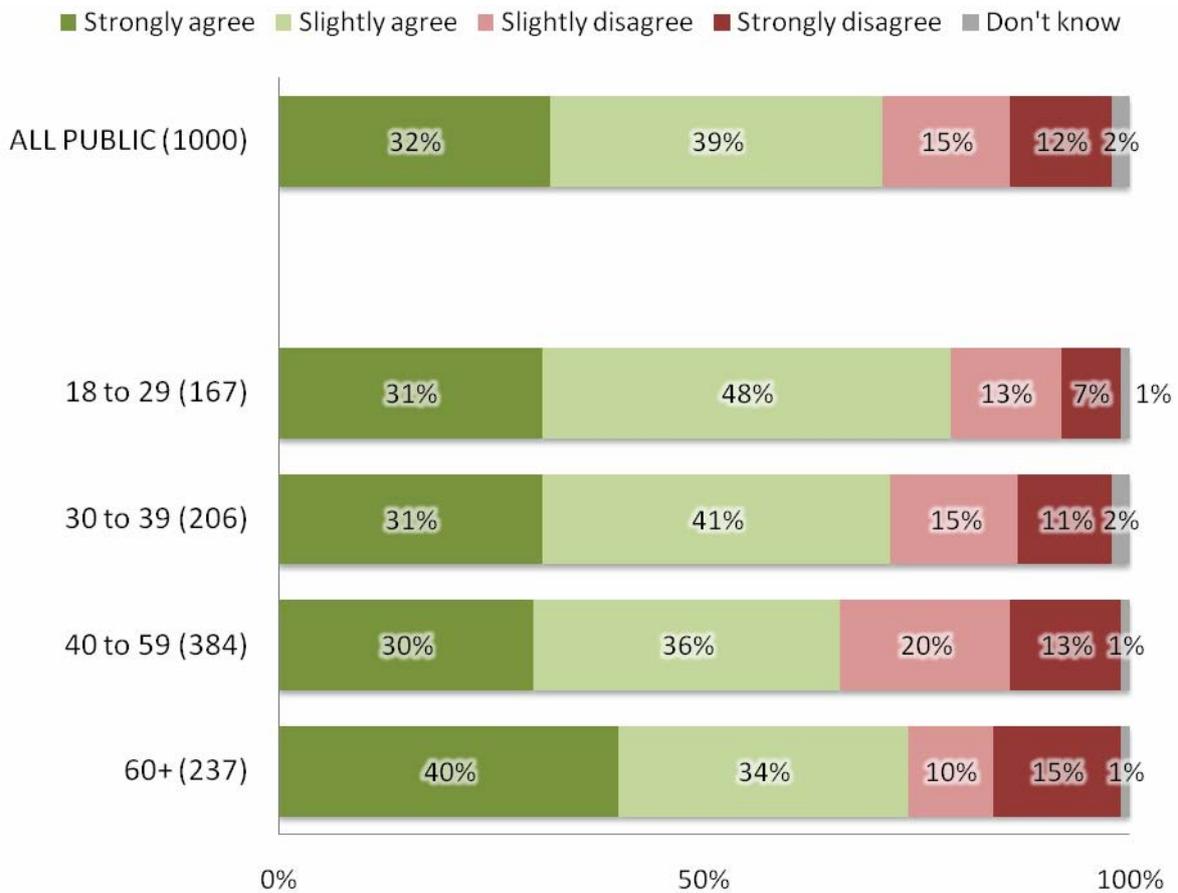
8 England as a country to grow up in

General public respondents were asked to rate the extent of their agreement that England is a good country for children to grow up in. This section analyses their responses in more detail, to understand how respondents' opinions on other issues covered in the survey relate to their overall views on England as a country to grow up in.

Seven in ten (71%) respondents agree that England is a good country for children to grow up in, while just over a quarter (27%) disagree that this is the case.

Respondents in different subgroups largely share the same views in this respect. However those aged 18-29 (78%) are most likely to agree that England is a good place to grow up while those aged 40-59 are least likely to agree (66%).

Figure 15: Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree overall that England is a good country for children to grow up in?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

England as a country to grow up in

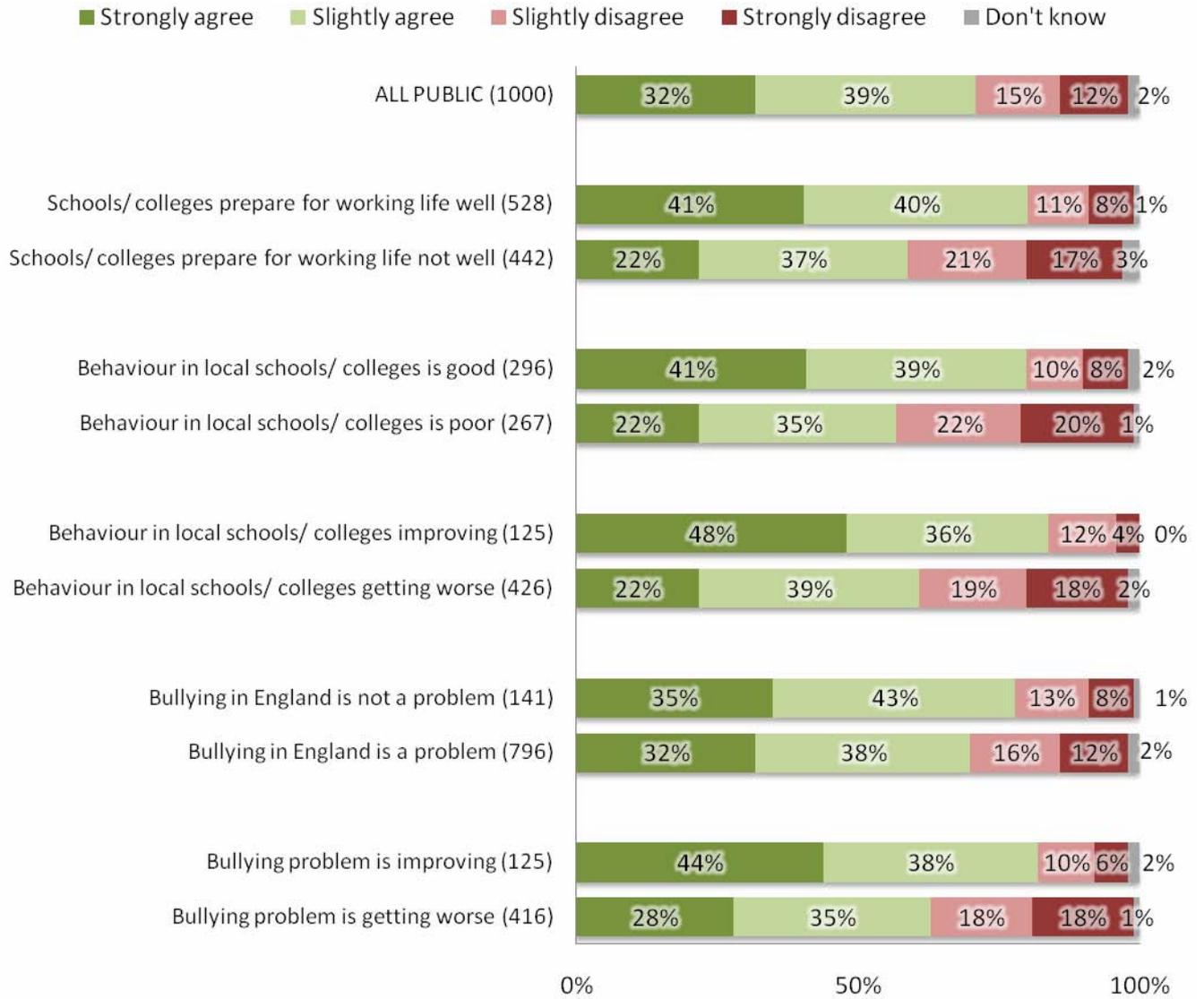
Respondents' views on other issues covered in the survey are reflected in their response to this question. Those with more negative views on whether schools and colleges prepare young people well for working life, or on pupil behaviour or bullying, are more likely to feel that England is not a good country for children to grow up in.

The majority of those who feel that schools and colleges prepare young people well for working life also agree that England is a good country for children to grow up in (81% agree, 19% disagree), which compares to 59% of those who feel that schools and colleges do not prepare young people well for working life, and 38% disagree.

Similarly, 80% of those who feel that behaviour of pupils in local schools and colleges is good also agree that England is a good country for children to grow up in (80% agree, 18% disagree), while amongst those who feel that behaviour of pupils in local schools and colleges is poor, 57% agree that England is a good country for children to grow up in, and 44% disagree.

England as a country to grow up in

Figure 16: Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree overall that England is a good country for children to grow up in?



Sample bases shown in parentheses.

9 Profile of Respondents

Table 6: Profile of respondents

Profile of Public Respondents		%
Age		
	18-29	17
	30-39	21
	40-49	20
	50-59	19
	60-69	13
	70+	10
Gender		
	Male	40
	Female	61
Working status		
	Working - full time (more than 30 hours a week)	42
	Working - part time (30 hours or less)	17
	Unemployed and seeking work for less than 6 months	3
	Unemployed and seeking work for more than 6 months	3
	Not working - Retired	21
	Not working - Not able to work due to illness/ disability	5
	Not working - Looking after the home or family	9
Qualification Achievement		
	A postgraduate degree or doctorate, NVQ level 5 or equivalent	12
	A degree or higher degree, HND, HNC, NVQ level 4 or equivalent	21
	A levels, NVQ Level 3 or equivalent	15
	GCSEs, O Levels, NVQ Level 2 or equivalent	17
	Other	5
	No qualifications	30
Ethnicity		
	White European	86
	Other white background	4
	Black Caribbean	2
	Black African	1
	Other black background	<0.5%
	Chinese	<0.5%
	Indian	2
	Pakistani	2
	Bangladeshi	<0.5%
	Other Asian background	1
	Mixed background	1
	Other	1
	Refused	1
Sample base: 1000		

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