



The  
Children's  
Society

# Bracknell Forest survey of children and young people, 2013

Final report

Produced in partnership with Bracknell Forest Council



Bracknell  
Forest  
Council

Photograph modelled for The Children's Society | © Larry Bray

A better childhood. For every child.

[www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

## **Acknowledgements**

This report has been prepared by staff at The Children's Society. We would like to thank all the children, schools and organisations in Bracknell Forest who participated in the research and consultation which made this report possible.

We would also like to acknowledge the support given for this project by Sue Curbishley and other staff at Bracknell Forest Council.

© The Children's Society, January 2014

## Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Key findings.....	5
3. Details about the survey and consultation work.....	6
4. Life as a whole.....	12
5. Feelings about different aspects of life.....	18
6. School.....	22
7. Local area.....	25
8. Bullying and safety.....	29
9. Health and appearance.....	36
10. Alcohol and smoking.....	40
11. Conclusions.....	44

## **1. Introduction**

The Bracknell Forest survey of children and young people, 2013 provides a unique insight into the lives of children and young people aged eight to 18 living in Bracknell Forest. Almost 2500 children and young people in 12 primary schools, five secondary schools and one special school participated in the survey.

The survey questionnaire covered all the key aspects of children's lives from their feelings about life as a whole, to their relationships with family and friends, and their perspectives on school and the local area. The survey questions were taken from a larger set of questions on children's well-being that have been developed and validated by The Children's Society and the University of York. This means that it is possible to compare many of the answers given by children in Bracknell Forest with the national picture for England.

The aim of undertaking the survey is to identify the aspects of life where children in Bracknell Forest are doing well, and those where they are not doing so well, in order to identify potential local priorities for improving well-being.

## 2. Key findings

This report presents the main findings from the survey. A summary of key points is as follows:

- Most children in Bracknell Forest aged eight to 15 are relatively happy with their lives while around 8%<sup>1</sup> of children have low overall well-being. This proportion is similar to the national average.
- Children's well-being declines with age. Also, children who say they are disabled or have difficulties with learning, those who receive free school meals and those who are not living with their family are more likely to have low well-being.
- Children's levels of happiness with many aspects of their lives are similar in Bracknell Forest to the national average. Children in Bracknell Forest are happier than average with their prospects for the future, their money/things, the amount of choice that they have, their home and their school. They are slightly less happy than average with their health and appearance.
- In terms of school and learning, children in Bracknell Forest appear to be relatively happy with most aspects of school life, and slightly happier than the national average with their relationships with teachers.
- Children in Bracknell Forest generally expressed positive views about their local area, on or above the national average.
- Around a quarter of the children surveyed said that they had been bullied in the last year. This included bullying in school, going to and from school and in their local area, but also bullying online and through texting. Experiences of being bullied are linked with lower than average overall well-being.

---

<sup>1</sup> 8% of the children taking part in the survey in Bracknell Forest scored less below the midpoint for a question about happiness with life as a whole, while 8% scored below the midpoint for a life satisfaction scale comprised of five statements about satisfaction with their lives.

### 3. Details about the survey and consultation work

The survey questionnaire was developed by The Children's Society in consultation with Bracknell Forest Council. It covers all of the aspects of children's lives that are included in The Children's Society's Good Childhood Index:

- Feelings about life overall
- Self (appearance)
- Health
- Family relationships
- Friendships
- Home
- School
- Local area
- Money and possessions
- Time use
- Choice and autonomy
- The future

All these topics have been found to be important aspects of how children view, and feel about, their lives<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, the survey also asked about:

- Bullying
- Safety in general
- Exercise and nutrition
- Alcohol and smoking

Questions on bullying were taken from the research programme on well-being developed by The Children's Society and University of York<sup>3</sup>. The questions about safety in general, alcohol, smoking, exercise and nutrition were of specific interest to the local authority, and were designed specifically for this survey.

The questionnaire also asked children for information about their age, gender, ethnicity, abilities and living situation.

The questionnaire was aimed at years 5 and 6 in primary school and all year groups in secondary school. However, the questions about alcohol and smoking were only asked of children in school years 9 and above (13 years old and over). Although the survey was only carried out in schools in Bracknell Forest, a

---

<sup>2</sup> Rees G, Goswami H & Bradshaw J (2010) *Developing an Index of Children's Subjective Wellbeing in England*. London: The Children's Society.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Rees G, Bradshaw J, Goswami H, Keung A, Main G & Pople L (2012) *The Good Childhood Report 2012: A review of our children's well-being*. London: The Children's Society and [www.childrenssociety.org.uk/well-being](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/well-being) for more information.

number of the young people in the follow-up consultations were attending college and so some of the quotes relate to college rather than school.

## **Recruitment and administration**

Based on the age range for the survey, 35 mainstream primary, secondary and special schools in Bracknell Forest (and the academy) were invited to participate in the survey, and just over half elected to take part: five out of six secondary schools, 12 out of 28 primary schools, and the only special school.

In addition, The Children's Society carried out face-to-face consultations with children and young people in two of the primary schools, two of the secondary schools and the special school that took part in the survey. Face-to-face consultations were also carried out with specific groups of young people e.g. young carers, looked after children and members of the Youth Council (for more details of the consultation, see 'About the consultation').

The survey was administered online by The Children's Society. Children and young people were able to access and respond to a secure online questionnaire which varied according to school year to ensure that the content of the questions was age-appropriate.

The survey was conducted in accordance with an ethical protocol approved by The Children's Society's research ethics panel, consisting of internal and external experts. Schools were provided with a letter outlining the purpose and content of the survey to be distributed to parents if they wished. The survey was voluntary and no questions were mandatory.

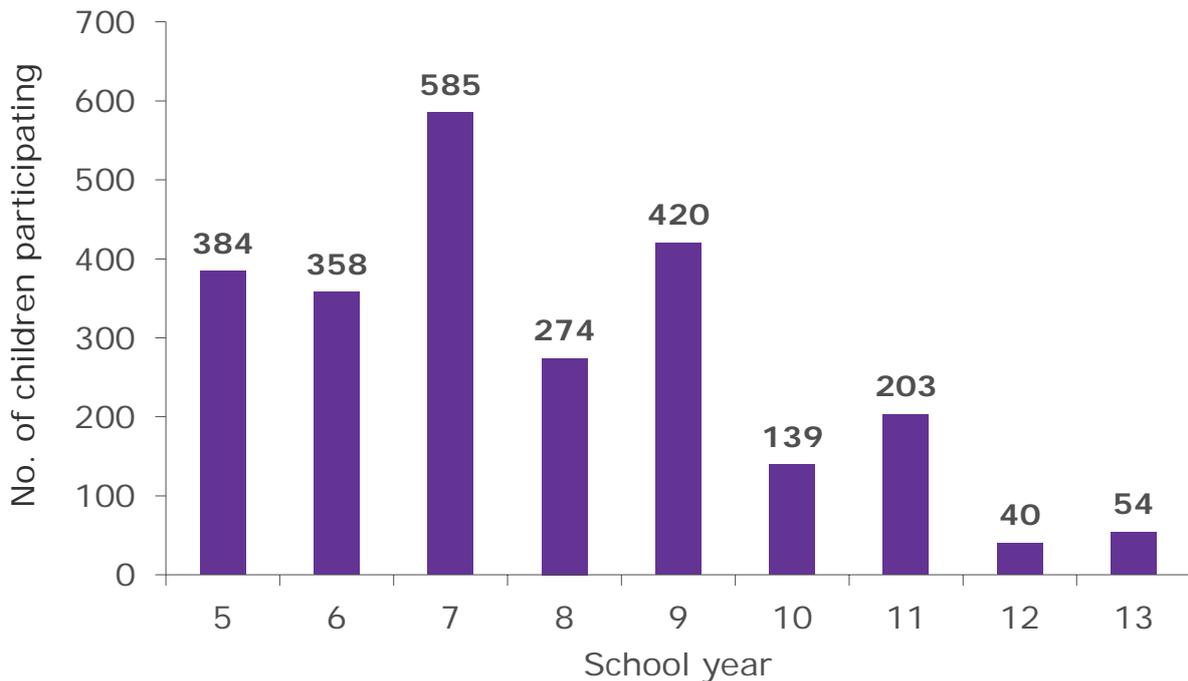
Data cleaning and statistical analysis of the questionnaire has been conducted by staff in The Children's Society's in-house research team.

## **Profile of the children and young people taking part in the survey**

The sample was well balanced between females (51%) and males (49%).

The numbers participating in each school year are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Numbers of children by school year**



*Data: Years 5 to 13, unweighted*

As there are variations in the numbers of children in each year group who participated in the survey, all findings presented in this report have been weighted by age and gender so that they are broadly representative of children across the entire age range covered. This also facilitates comparisons with the national picture.

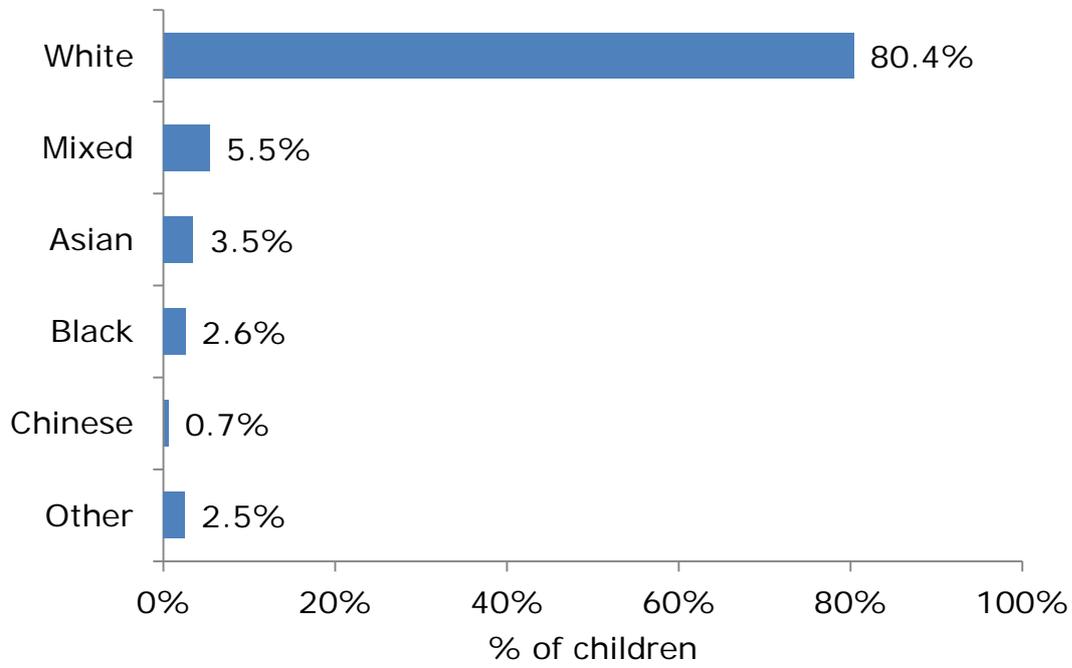
However, as the number of young people in years 12 and 13 were small (under 100), it has not been possible to include their responses in the analysis. However, findings relating to the young people in years 12 and 13 are included in individual reports for participating schools.

Some other information on the profile of children participating in the survey is as follows:

- Just under 98% of children lived with their family. The remainder lived in a foster home, children's home or another type of arrangement.
- Around 18% said that they lived in two homes for some of the time. This may include, for example, children who split their time living with two separated parents. This proportion is fairly typical of the national picture.
- Around 4% of the sample described themselves as disabled.
- Around 15% of the children described themselves as having difficulties with learning. However, substantial numbers of children (around 20%) did not answer this question.

- The majority of children (80%) described their ethnicity as White. Of the remainder the largest proportion (6%) described their ethnicity as Mixed.

**Figure 2: Ethnic origin of children in the survey**



*Data: Years 5 to 13, unweighted*

Of those that said that they lived with their family:

- 98% lived with their mother
- 78% lived with their father
- 8% lived with their mother's partner e.g. stepfather
- 1% lived with their father's partner e.g. stepmother
- 52% lived with their sister(s)
- 57% lived with their brother(s)
- 2% lived with their grandmother
- 2% lived with their grandfather
- 2% lived with other relatives
- 2% lived with other people.

## **Presentation of findings**

This report presents an overview of findings from the survey as follows. First, we look at children's feelings about their lives as a whole. Then we provide key findings on the different aspects of children's lives covered in the survey.

In each section we make some comparisons within the sample (mainly on the basis of age and gender) and where possible make comparisons with data from nationally representative samples of children and young people in the same age group in England as a whole.

We have used statistical tests to check whether differences between groups within survey (e.g. females and males) are statistically significant. Where we have said that a difference is statistically significant this means that there is less than a 1% likelihood of the difference happening purely by chance. This is a standard threshold used by researchers for surveys of this type.

## **About the consultation**

Following the completion of the survey by almost 2500 children, The Children's Society consulted with children and young people face-to-face on the key issues that emerged from initial analysis of the survey. Over 200 children and young people took part in the face-to-face consultations. The aim was to explore and illustrate with children's own words some of the issues raised by the survey, and specifically the following topics:

- Health and appearance
- Local area, including facilities
- Local adults
- Safety in the local area and online
- Traffic and transport
- School.

The Children's Society carried out consultations with two primary schools, two secondary schools, the special school, two groups of young carers, a group of looked after children and the Youth Council. The school consultations involved classes in year groups 5 to 11. We used a variety of class activities that allowed children and young people to reflect on the survey findings, consider their own responses and discuss them with their peers. We recorded some of their comments and they provided some written comments through some of the activities.

In this report, we present some written and verbal comments from children and young people from the consultation alongside the main themes of the survey to which they relate.

Our intention is to provide an insight into the types of issues that children and young people raised when we asked them about the key themes emerging from

the survey. The comments included here are therefore illustrative rather than representative, and they offer a summary rather than a full discussion of the consultation exercise.

Although we have a record of where the comments were made, we do not identify children to protect their anonymity. In some cases (e.g. when the consultations took place in school) we are able to include information on age and gender, but otherwise this is not possible because it would risk identifying individual children.

## 4. Life as a whole

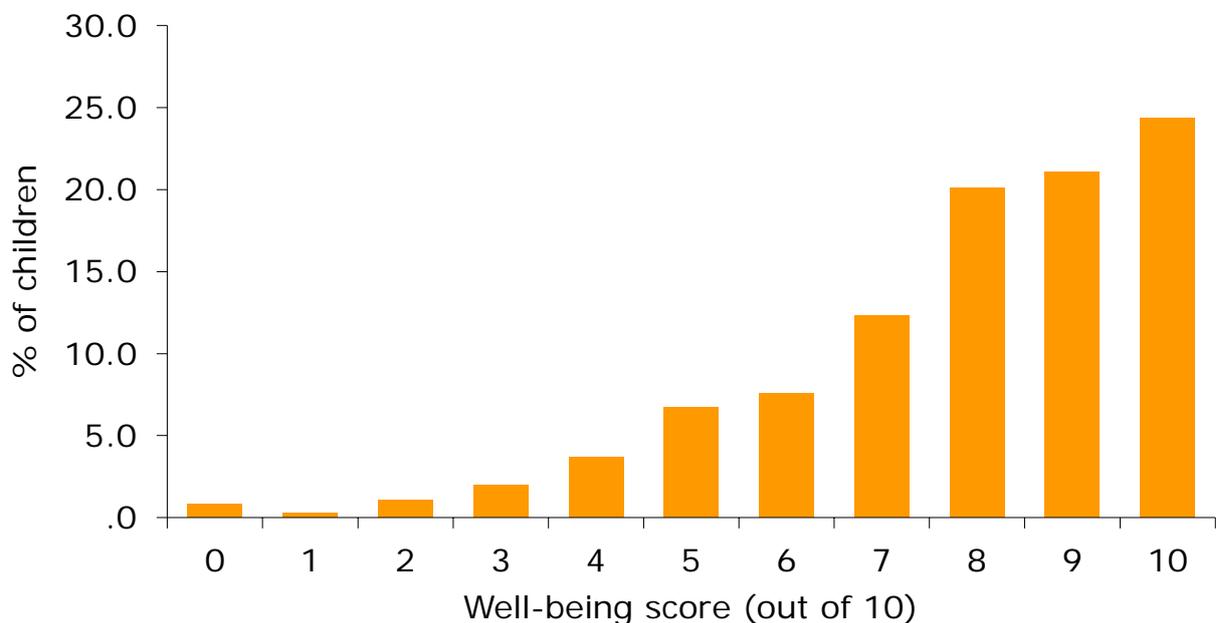
The questionnaire asked children how they felt about their lives as a whole. International research with adult populations indicates that there are different components of 'well-being':

- Levels of happiness, which can vary from day to day or hour to hour
- Feelings of satisfaction with life, which are much more stable
- Feelings of personal development or 'flourishing'.

We asked children a question about the second bullet point: how happy they are with their life as a whole. For this question children could respond on a scale from zero to 10 where zero = 'very unhappy' and 10 = 'very happy'.

Children's answers to this question are shown in Figure 3. Almost a quarter (24%) of children felt 'very happy' with their lives as a whole, while around one in 12 (8%) scored less than five out of 10 for this question indicating dissatisfaction with their lives. The mean score for this question was 7.8 out of 10.

**Figure 3: Happiness with life as a whole**



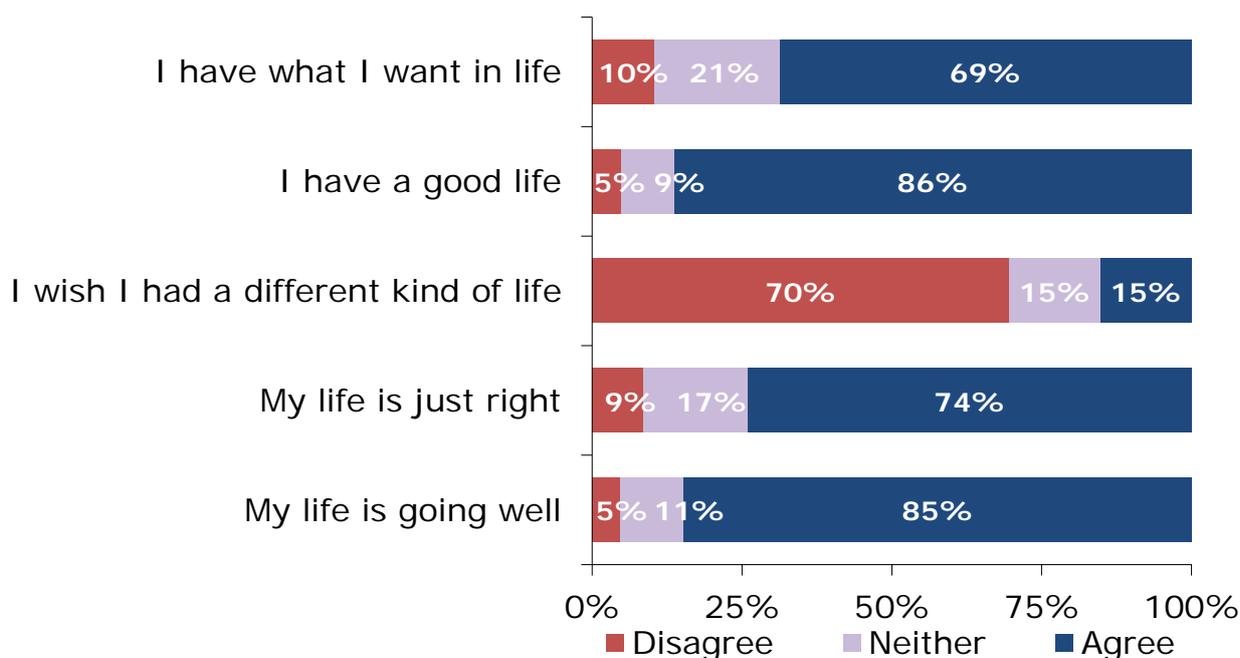
*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by age and gender*

These findings on life satisfaction are broadly in line with our national estimates. Most children in Bracknell Forest are relatively happy with their lives as a whole. On the other hand, the findings also suggest that around 8% of children in this age group have 'low' well-being, meaning that they scored below the midpoint of

the scale. If this statistic were scaled up to reflect the borough as a whole, this would equate to almost 1000 children aged eight to 15 in Bracknell Forest<sup>4</sup>.

This single-item question about life as a whole is useful for getting a basic picture of how children feel about their lives overall, but we also included another set of questions about children’s life satisfaction, which can be used to create a score of children’s well-being that is more statistically robust and can be used to compare well-being between different groups of children. These questions are in the form of statements that children are asked how much they agree or disagree with. The statements, and children’s responses to them, are shown in the Figure 4 below. This shows that most children agree or strongly agree with all the statements (except for the third statement, which is phrased negatively). Between 5% and 15% respond negatively depending on the question asked.

**Figure 4: Additional questions about life satisfaction**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

These questions can be used to calculate an overall score of well-being, or life satisfaction. The scores are calculated by adding together children’s answers to each question (scores for statement three are reversed). This gives a total ranging from zero to 20. This life satisfaction score for the Bracknell Forest sample is broadly in line with our national estimates, although children in the Bracknell Forest sample appear to have a slightly higher than average score.

<sup>4</sup> Based on recent estimates of the population of Bracknell Forest from Census statistics

For simplicity, in this report we will look particularly at the differences between children who scored 'high' and 'low' for this set of questions. We will count all children who scored below the midpoint of the scale as having 'low' well-being, since these children were more likely to disagree with the sentences than agree with them. We will count all children who scored at or above the midpoint as having 'high' well-being. We will use this measure as a key indicator to explore variations in well-being amongst children in Bracknell Forest and to compare children in Bracknell Forest with national averages.

Using this scoring system:

- 92% of children in Bracknell Forest survey had high life satisfaction and 8% had low life satisfaction.

Research shows that answers to these kinds of questions do not reflect a temporary state. For example, our research suggests that around half of children who have low life satisfaction now will still do so in six months' time.

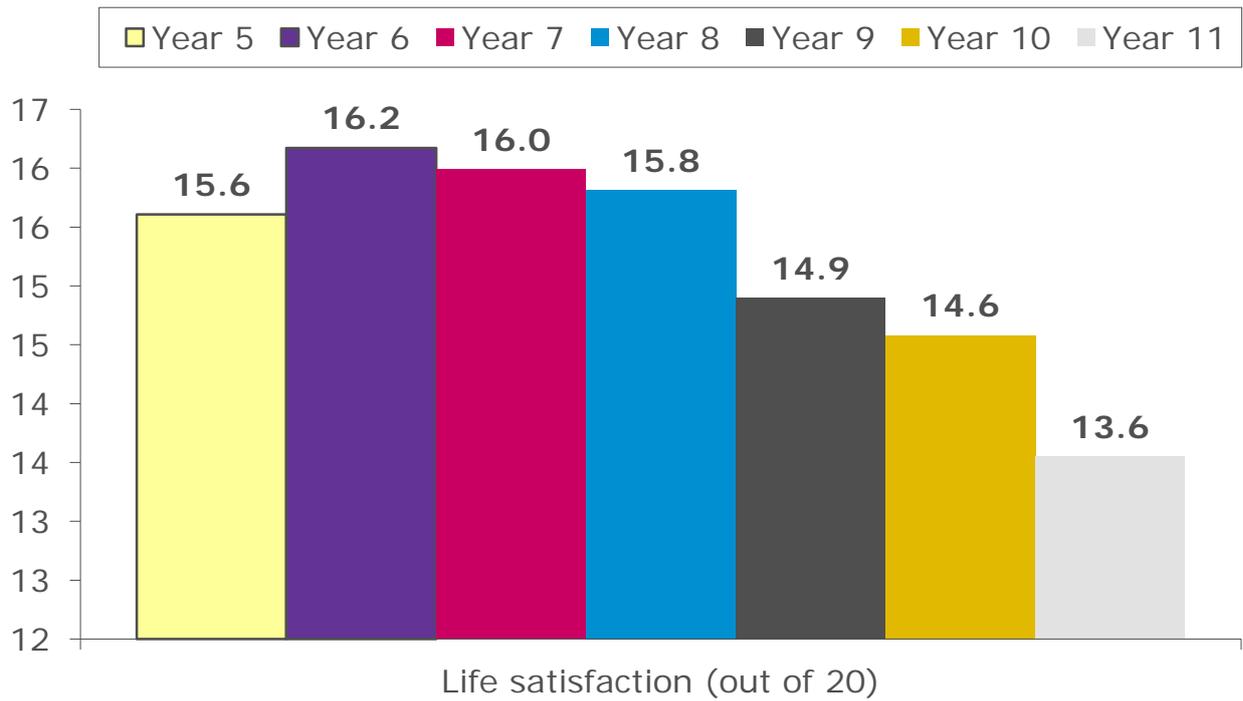
International research also suggests that low well-being is linked with a range of other longer-term problems and issues in children's lives. It is therefore important to understand the factors that cause low well-being in order to consider what measures might be taken to provide support to children who are in this situation.

Surprisingly, the research on well-being indicates that factors that might be expected to explain variations in children's (and adults') well-being such as gender, ethnicity, family structure and economic status are not as important as might be anticipated. There are variations in well-being according to these factors (for example, children in poorer families do tend to have lower well-being than children in richer families). However, these types of factors can only explain a small part of the variations in well-being. Amongst children in England our research suggests that all of these types of factors put together explain less than 10% of the variation in life satisfaction.

These results are confirmed by analysis of the Bracknell Forest survey. For example, females were a little more likely to have low life satisfaction (9%) than males (7%) but these differences were not statistically significant.

On the other hand, in line with our national research, there are significant age differences in well-being. As shown in Figure 5, in general, children's well-being declines with age. This pattern is consistent with our national research.

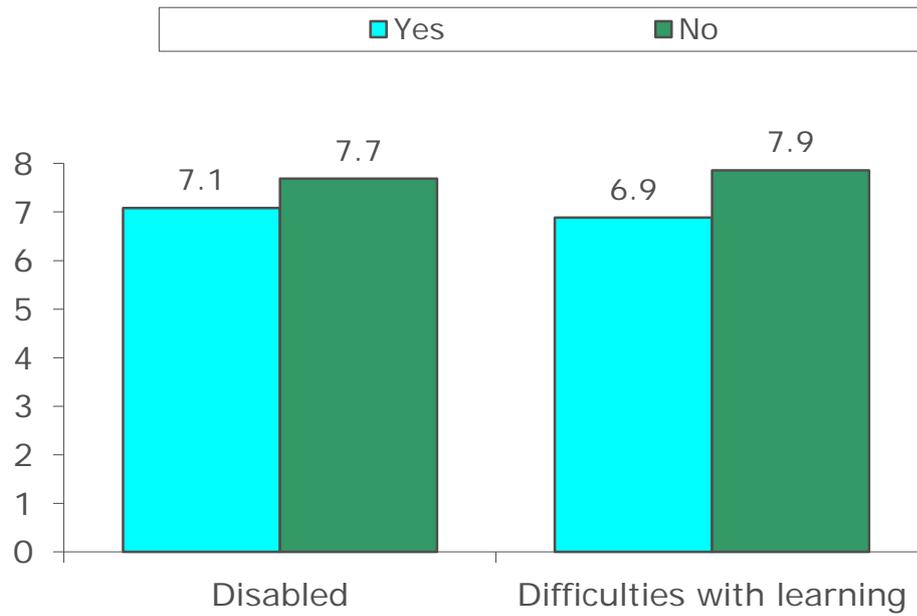
**Figure 5: Average well-being by school year**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

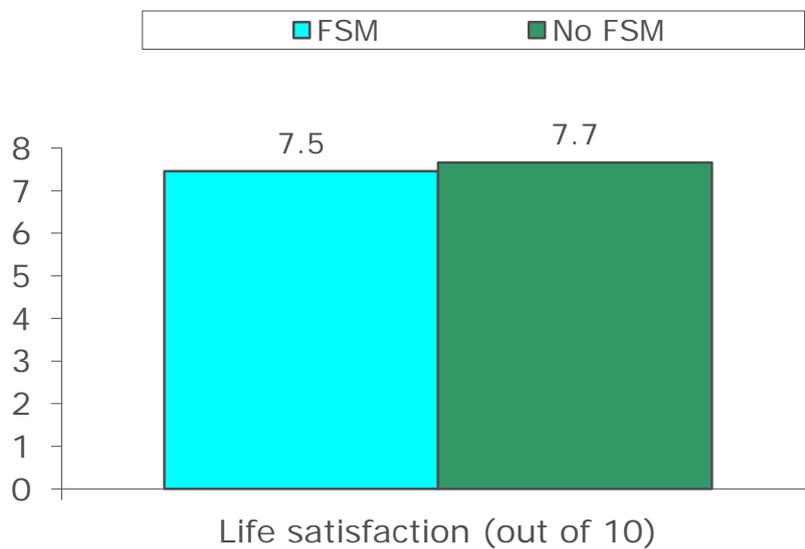
We also looked at differences in average well-being in Bracknell Forest according to other factors covered in the survey. Children who said that they were disabled, had difficulties with learning or received free school meals had lower average well-being than other children. These differences were all statistically significant.

**Figure 6: Average well-being by disability/difficulties with learning**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

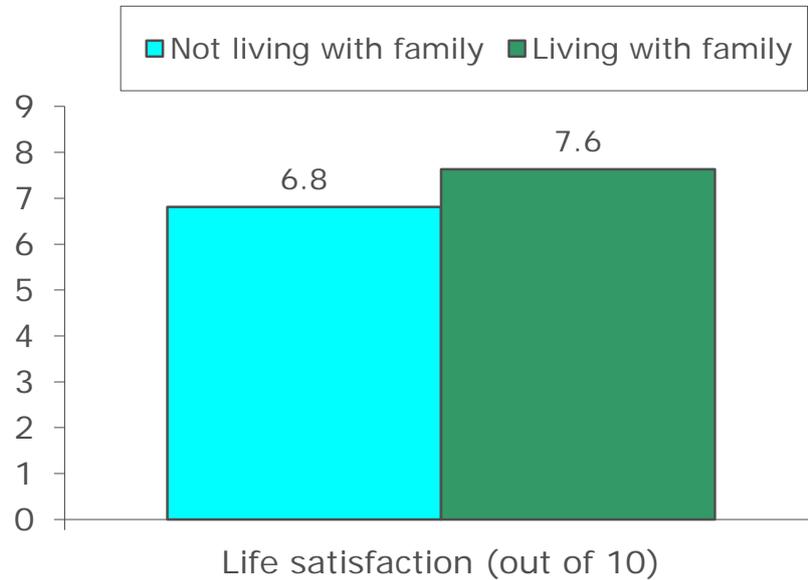
**Figure 7: Average well-being by receipt of free school meals (FSM)**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

The small number of children not living with family also had significantly lower average well-being than those living with family.

**Figure 8: Average well-being by home type**



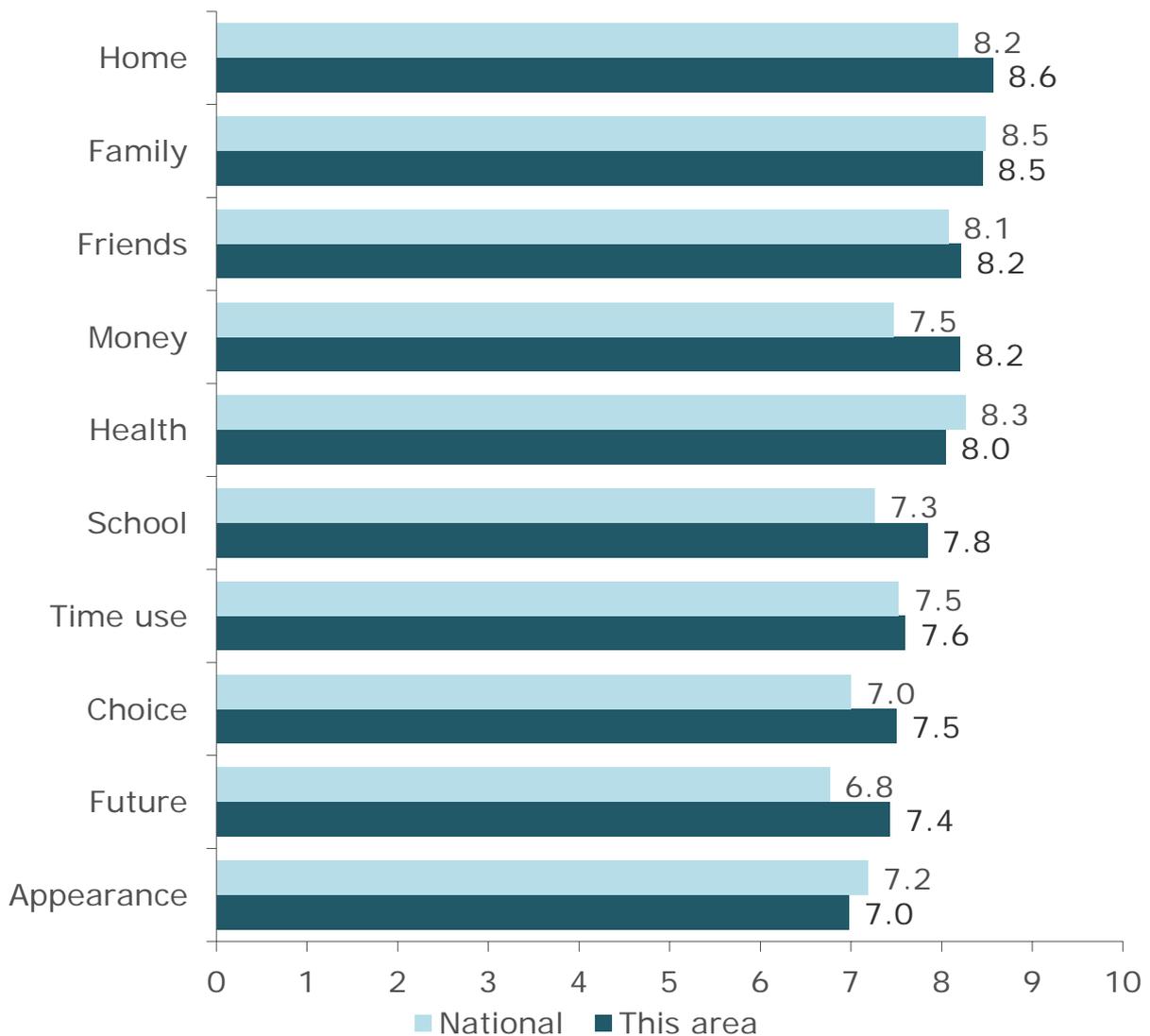
*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

Despite these differences according to individual characteristics and economic factors, research indicates that other conditions in children's lives, such as the quality of family relationships and experiences of bullying, are far more important determinants of their well-being. So in the remainder of this report we look at findings from the Bracknell Forest survey regarding how children feel about different aspects of their lives, which have been shown to be important influences on their overall well-being.

## 5. Feelings about different aspects of life

In the survey we used questions from our Good Childhood Index which ask children how happy they feel with different aspects of their lives. Children were asked to rate each aspect from zero to 10 where zero = 'very unhappy', five = 'neither happy or unhappy' and 10 = 'very happy'. The mean scores for children's responses to these questions are shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Happiness with different aspects of life**



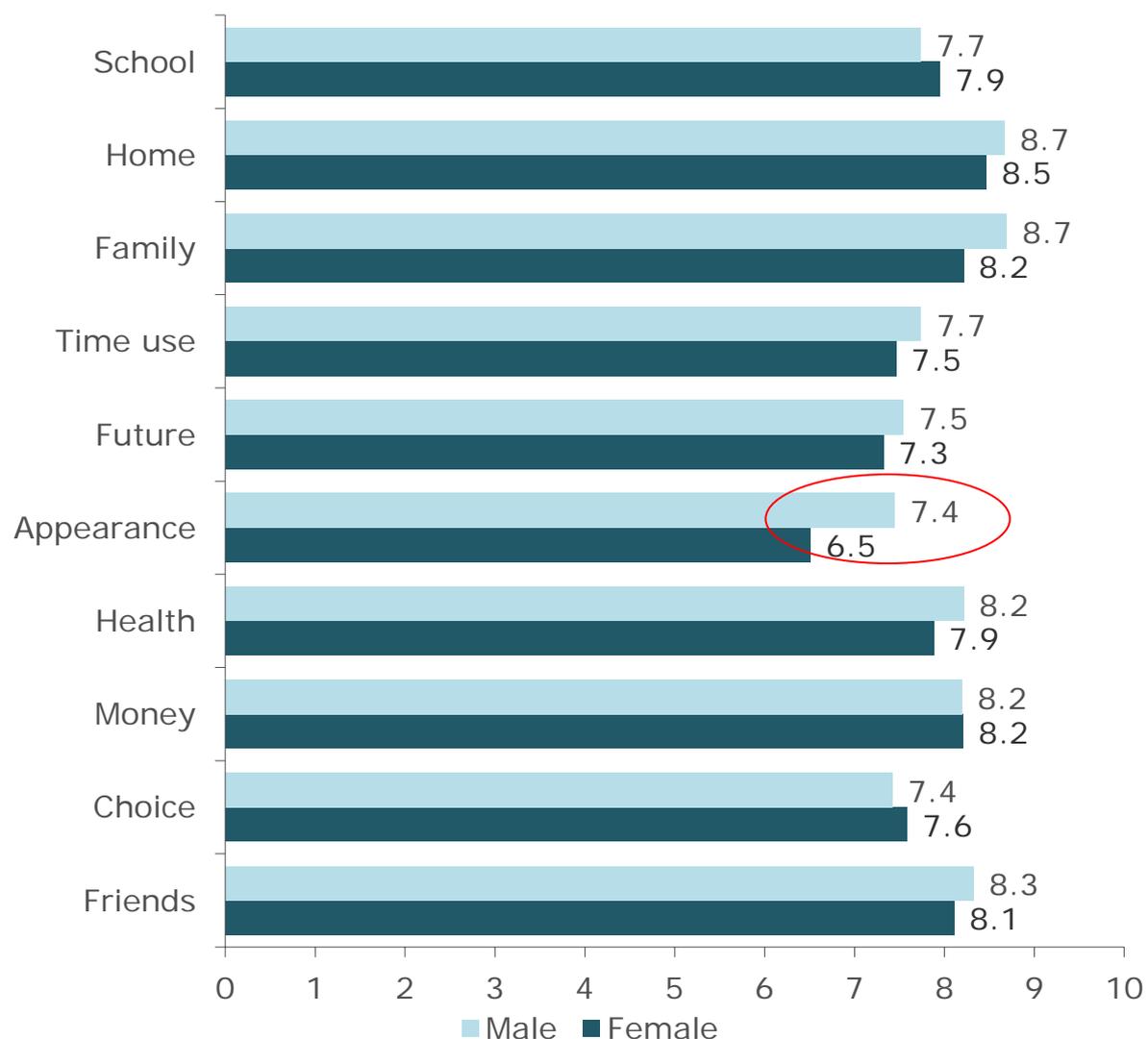
*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

As can be seen, there are some quite wide variations in how children evaluate different aspects of their lives. They tend to be most positive about their home, their relationships with family and friends, and the money/possessions that they have. They tend to be less positive about other aspects such as appearance, choice and the future.

The patterns shown in Figure 9 above are similar to the picture we have built up from our national research with children. For many of the above aspects, the mean scores for children in Bracknell Forest were close to the national average for children in a similar age range. However for the future, money/things, choice, school and home in particular, children in Bracknell Forest were above the national average, and for two aspects – health and appearance - the mean scores in Bracknell Forest were very slightly lower than the national average. These are not major differences but they do provide insights into some aspects of life for further discussion with children.

There are a number of gender differences in respect of The Good Childhood Index, as can be seen in Figure 10 below, and some of these were statistically significant. Boys were happier than girls with their appearance, their relationships with family, health and time use.

**Figure 10: Gender differences in happiness with different aspects of life**

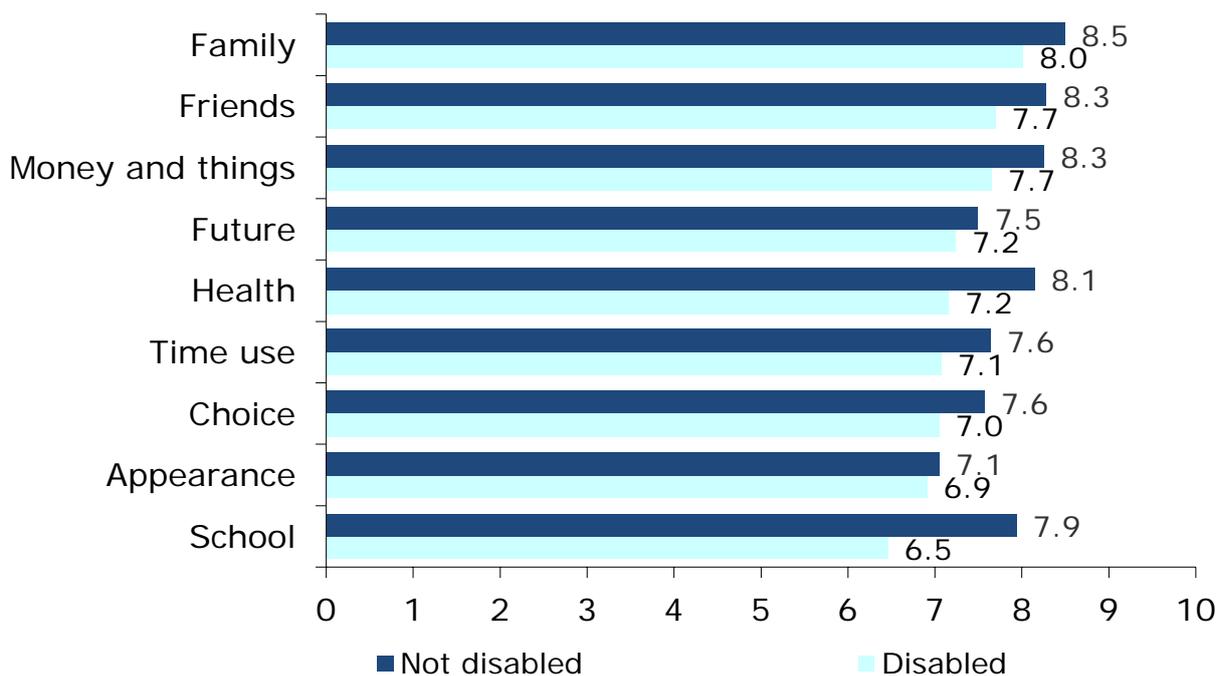


*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We also found differences in respect of The Good Childhood Index between sub-groups of children, such as those who said that they were disabled or have difficulties with learning.

Figure 11 shows children’s average scores on The Good Childhood Index according to whether they said they were disabled or not. Disabled children had lower levels of well-being across all aspects of life. Most of these differences were statistically significant, with the largest differences relating to school and health.

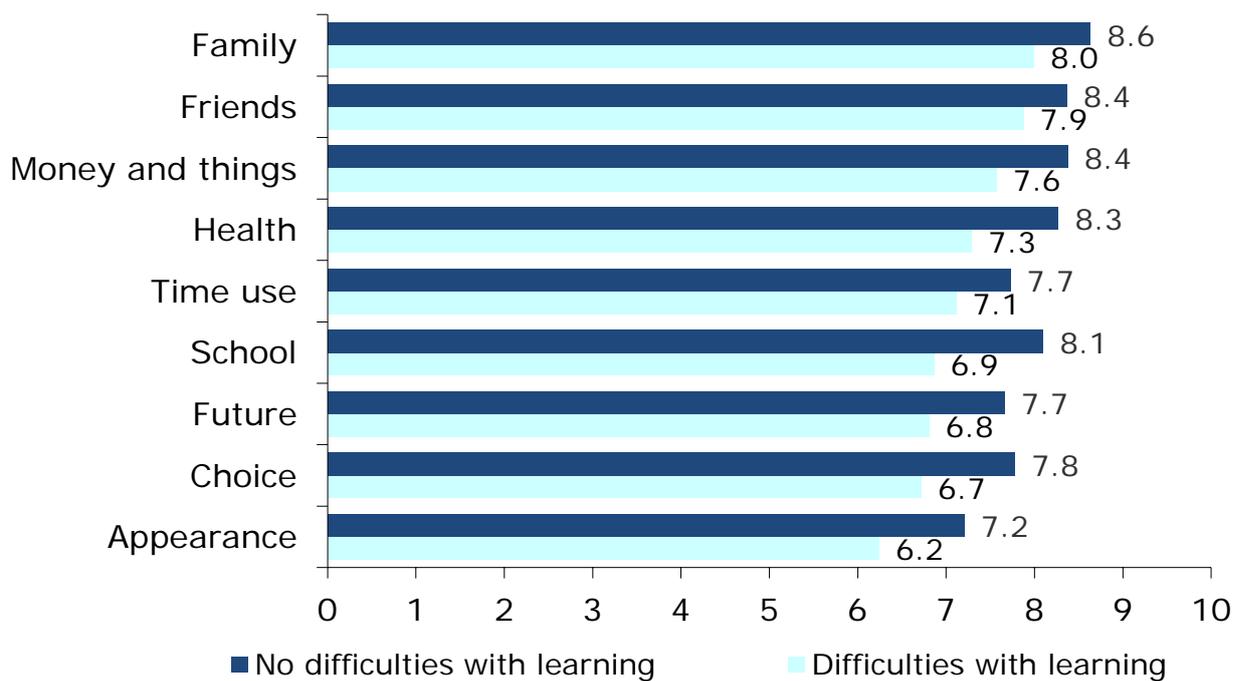
**Figure 11: Disability and The Good Childhood Index**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

Figure 12 shows children’s average scores on The Good Childhood Index according to whether they said they had difficulties with learning or not. Children who said they had difficulties with learning had lower levels of well-being across all aspects of life, and again, most of these differences were statistically significant, with the largest differences relating to school, choice, health, appearance and the future.

**Figure 12: Difficulties with learning and The Good Childhood Index**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

In the remainder of this report we look in a little more detail at the findings on children's feelings about different aspects of their lives and about other topics identified as of particular local interest – bullying, safety and health-related behaviours.

## 6. School

We asked children how important they thought it was that they achieved good marks for school work, tests and exams. Overall, three-quarters (76%) of children thought that it was 'very important' to achieve good marks and a further 19% thought it was 'quite important'. Just 1% thought it was 'not very' or 'not at all' important, and 4% were not sure.

**Table 1: Importance of doing well at school**

How important is it for you to get good marks in your school work, exams or tests?

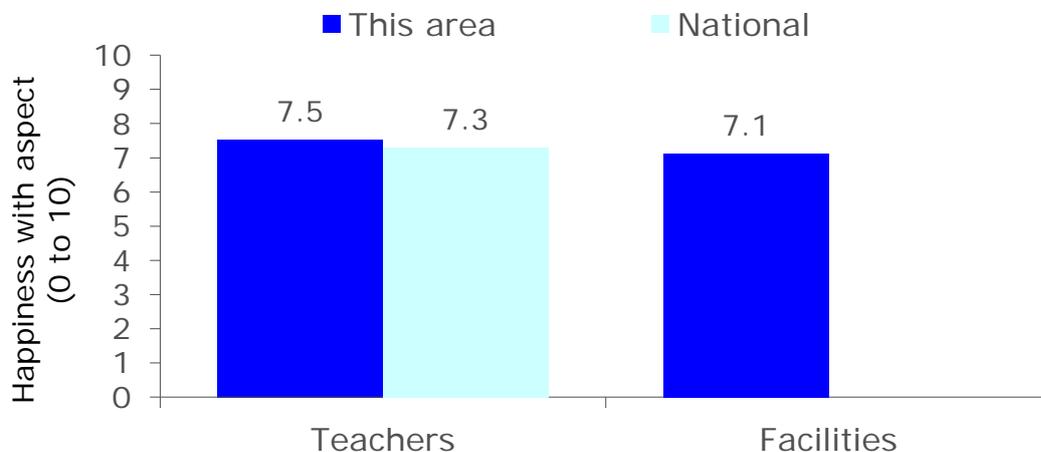
Not at all important	<1%
Not very important	1%
Quite important	19%
Very important	76%
Not sure	4%

*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

These findings are similar to our national research on this issue. And, in keeping with the national picture, commitment to school achievement increases with age. The proportion of children thinking that this was 'very important' rose from 67% in Year 5 to 81% in Year 11.

We also asked children to rate different aspects of their school experience –the school facilities and their relationships with teachers - on a scale from zero to 10. The mean scores for these questions are shown in Figure 13. Children in Bracknell Forest were more satisfied with their relationships with teachers than they were with the school facilities. Their satisfaction with their relationships with teachers was slightly higher than what we have found in our national research. There is no national comparison data for school facilities.

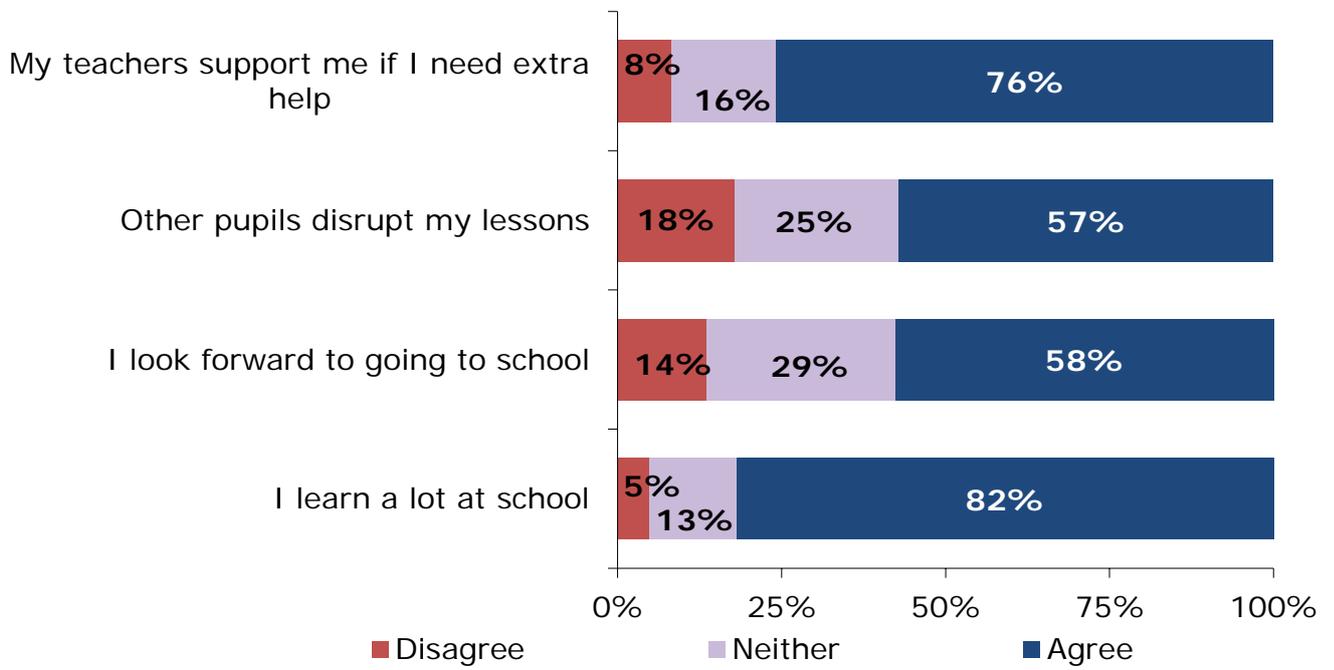
**Figure 13: Happiness with different aspects of school**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

In addition, we asked children to respond to four specific statements about school life using an 'agree-disagree' format. Two statements were about school in general, one related to teachers and the last was about the behaviour of other pupils. Responses to these statements are shown in Figure 14 below.

**Figure 14: Views on school**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

When we talked to children during the consultation stage about school life, there were plenty of positive comments about teachers being kind, supportive and listening to children:

*'Teachers are very kind to pupils', child in year 5.*

*'I think teachers are good at their jobs because they listen to us.'* Girl in year 5.

*'The teachers make the lessons fun', boy.*

However, some children described their teachers in more negative terms:

*'Teachers are always angry', boy.*

*'They always tell you off for nothing', boy .*

*'We have learning support, but you are literally only allowed that if you have like a disability or like dyslexia or something otherwise you don't have any other support at all'.*

A lot of children's comments about school related to their friends, peers and feelings of safety. The quality of children's relationships with others at school is clearly of central importance to how they feel about school.

*'I'm happy coming to school cause in the morning I play with my friends', girl in year 5.*

*'I don't feel confident coming to school because people hate me.'* Boy in year 5.

*'I think some people break up too much, it's upsetting', girl in year 5.*

*'I think that: 'I'm going to school, I'm safe'', boy in year 5.*

In our survey, we asked children whether they would like to go on to further full-time education after leaving school. The responses are shown below:

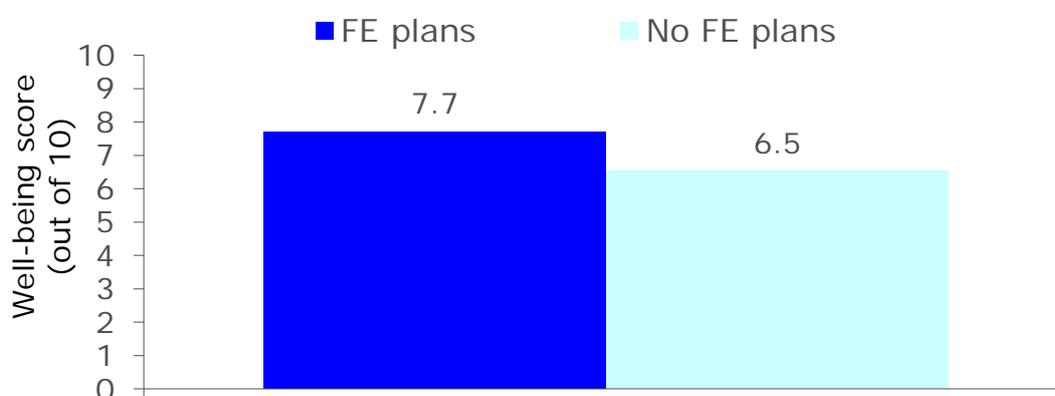
**Table 2: Further education plans**

Would you like to go on to do further full-time education at a college or University after you finish school?	
Yes	65%
No	7%
Don't know	28%

*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

When we looked at whether young people's further education plans were linked to their life satisfaction, we found that the group of children who said that they did not plan to go on to further full-time education had much lower than average levels of overall life satisfaction.

**Figure 15: Average well-being by further education plans**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

## 7. Local area

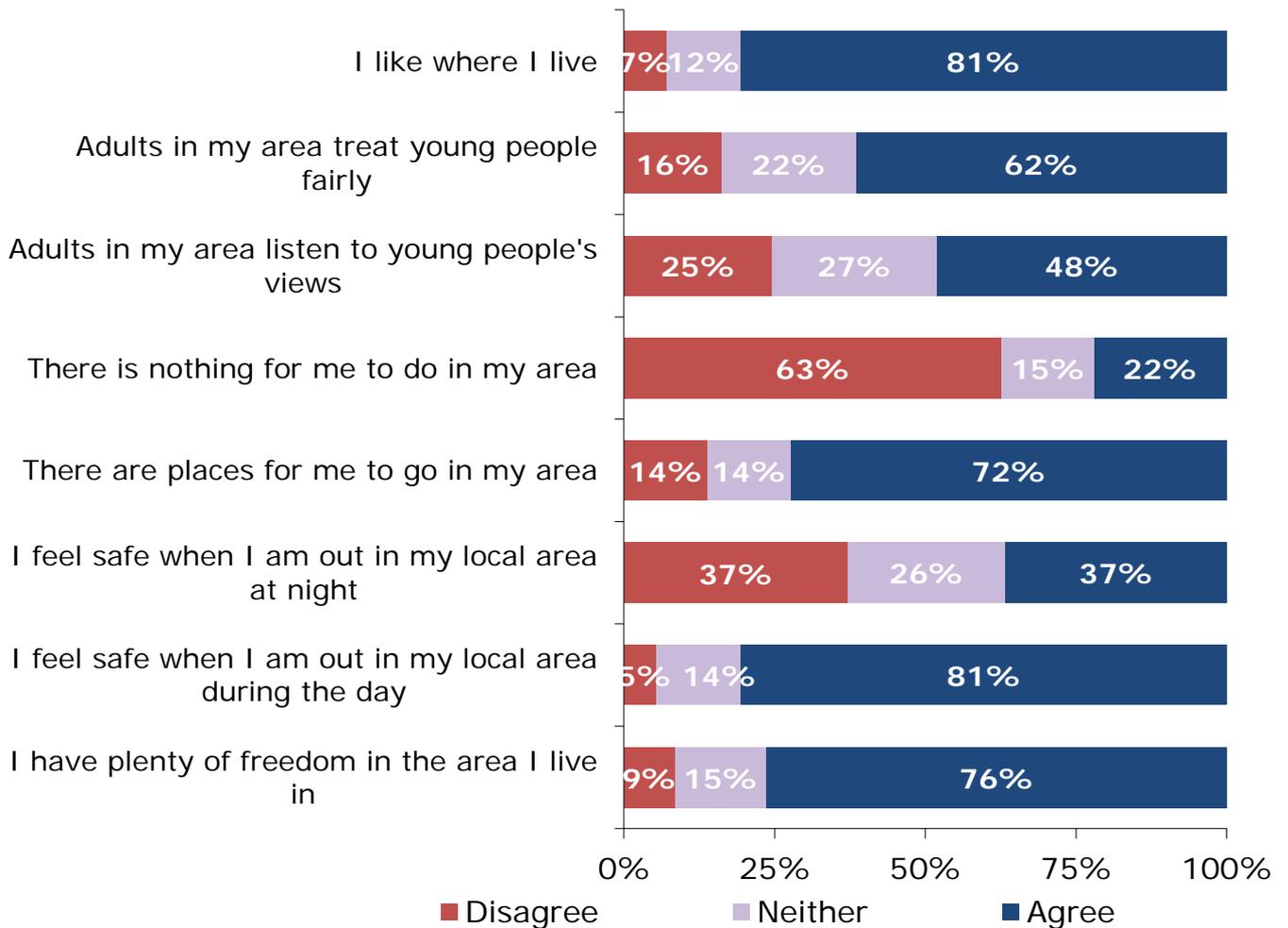
*'There's like loads of parks, you've got the cinemas, the Lookout and the Bracknell Leisure Centre, you've got all sorts of sports.'* Boy in year 9.

*'There's nothing to do and when there is you've got to pay extraordinary prices for it.'*

*'They took out the Hub. I used to go there sometimes and I think there's more to do at school than there is outside of school, like after school clubs and stuff.'* Boy in year 9.

We asked children to respond to a number of specific statements about their area using an 'agree-disagree' format. There was a general statement about the area in which children live, two statements about local adults, two statements about local facilities, and three statements about children's feelings of safety and freedom. Responses to these statements are shown in Figure 16 below.

**Figure 16: Views about the local area in general**

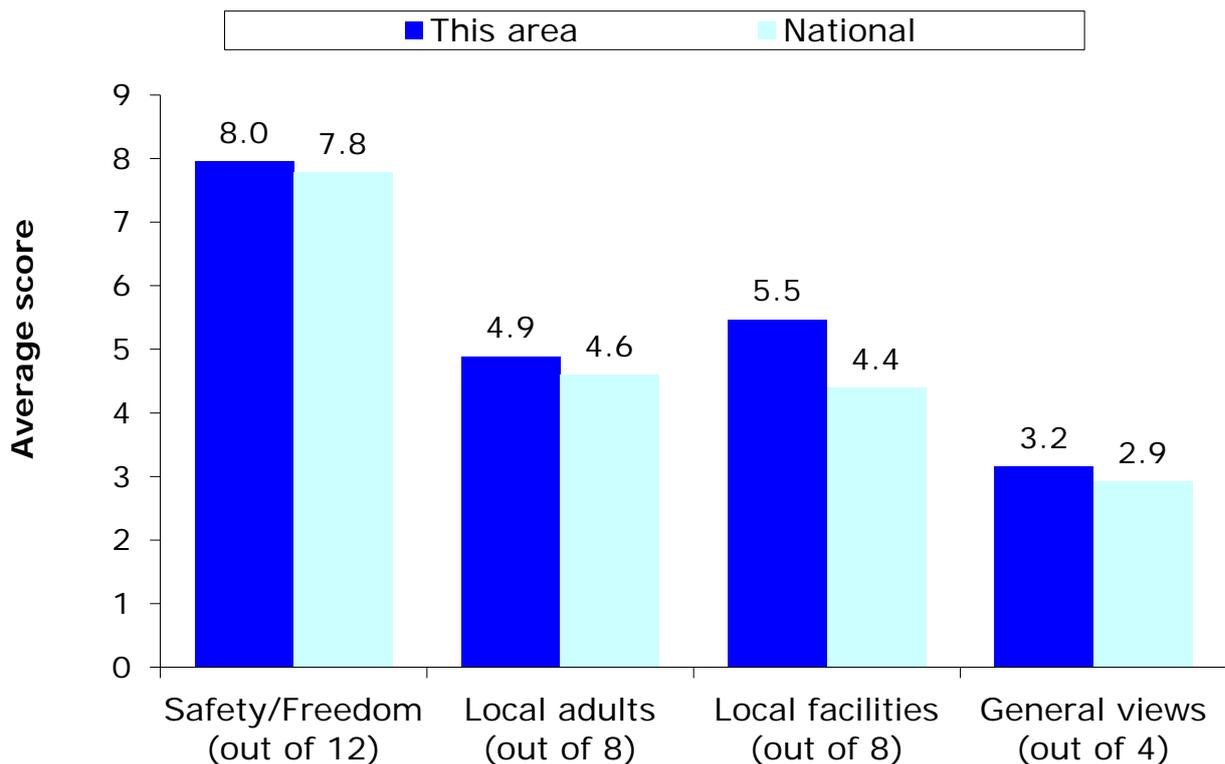


*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

As can be seen from Figure 17, in comparison with data from our national research on this topic, children that took part in the Bracknell Forest survey:

- Gave fairly typical responses regarding their safety and freedom, local adults and their general views
- Were more satisfied than the national average with the facilities in their local area.

**Figure 17: Views about local area, national comparisons**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

When we talked to children during the consultation stage about their local area, we asked them how they feel about adults in their local area, including neighbours and people that they don't know. Many of children's comments were positive, but they also expressed displeasure about the way that they are sometimes treated by local adults.

*'There are some nasty people around who don't want you playing out', child in year 6.*

*'One lady doesn't think we should be playing outside. But some people in my estate are really nice', child in year 6.*

*'If you smile some say 'what you looking at', so I don't bother next time', child in year 6.*

*'I went swimming with my friend and this woman was sighing because she didn't think we should be there.'*

We also asked about children's feelings of safety. Despite scoring slightly above average for their feelings of safety and freedom in the survey, their comments suggest that many of them do not feel completely safe in their neighbourhoods:

*'There's quite a lot of people who aren't very nice. I can't go out on my own I always have to go out with more than two people'.*

*'A random person followed me then chased me till I ran home',* child in year 5.

*'If I'm honest I just stick at the café at college cos I feel safe at college'.<sup>5</sup>*

*'I don't feel safe because there are lots of teenagers',* child in year 6.

*'People scream at night and it makes me feel unsafe',* child in year 6.

We also included a question to ask children what three things, if any, would improve their area, and gave them a list of priorities for improvement. The top priorities for children in Bracknell Forest were:

- More shops (43%)
- Better parks and playgrounds (40%)
- Less crime (35%)
- More sports facilities (31%)
- Safer area (30%)
- Less traffic (30%).

Figure 18 shows how children's responses to this question compare with the national picture. In comparison to national averages, children in Bracknell Forest were:

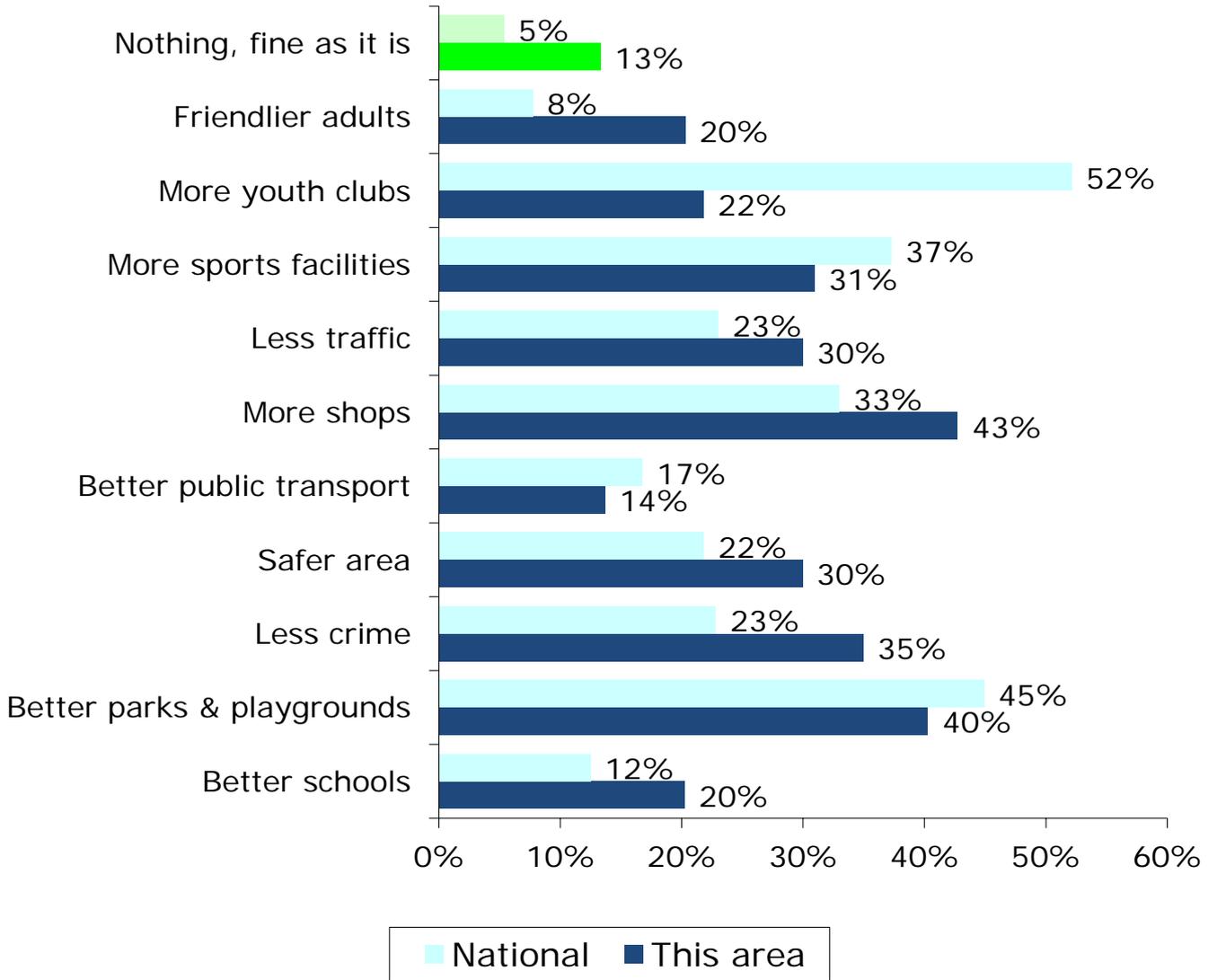
- More likely to say that nothing needs to be improved.
- More satisfied with:
  - Parks/playgrounds
  - Youth clubs
  - Sports facilities.
- More likely to identify to identify the following as issues for improvement:
  - Safety and crime

---

<sup>5</sup> NB Although the survey was only carried out in schools in Bracknell Forest, a number of the young people in the consultations were attending college and so some of the quotes relate to college rather than school.

- Shops
- Schools
- Traffic
- Friendlier adults.

**Figure 18: Views about improving the local area**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

During the consultation, children made a number of comments about public transport and traffic in their neighbourhoods:

*'I'm in by quarter to six because the last bus is at quarter to six'*

*'Buses are terrible. I found out this morning that there's no more Thames Travel buses from the 12th January so I don't know how I will get into college.'*<sup>6</sup>

*'I think walking is actually quicker at the moment, it took me about 45 minutes the other day to get to my friends and it normally takes me 15 minutes to walk.'*

*'I worry about the amount of cars and vans near school',* child in year 6

When we asked them about crime in their local area, a lot of their comments focused on drug dealing:

*'There are drug dealers where I live and I don't feel safe',* child in year 5

*'I'm not out at night at Bracknell....Too much has happened at the moment, stabbings, I've witnessed a few drug deals.'*

*'Because my upstairs neighbour she has kids that deal in drugs and they are always getting drunk and they always shout and scream a lot, we live in a flat and our upstairs neighbours are really scary'*

*'It was really awkward they give you a really dirty look, I was just sat there with my mate, and um these guys came running up the stairs and it was horrible, it made me feel really, really uncomfortable and I shouldn't have to feel uncomfortable in town.'* (Young person talking about witnessing a drug deal)

---

<sup>6</sup> NB. Although the survey was only carried out in schools in Bracknell Forest, a number of the young people in the consultations were attending college and so some of the quotes relate to college rather than school.

## 8. Bullying and safety

*'If you are the odd one out like you probably get bullied and that doesn't make you do something, it just makes you feel bad about yourself.'*

*'Sometimes, because I'm like a different race I've had a lot of nasty comments and I've told the teachers and they say like it will stop but it doesn't because it keeps on carrying on.'* Girl in year 9.

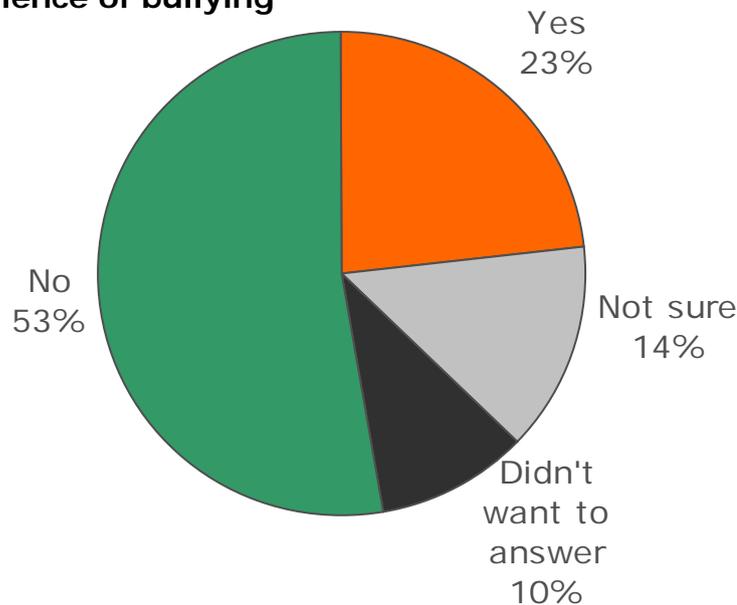
*'I hate it when I get bullied',* child in year 6.

*'I have seen a lot of bullying going on with my friend at the moment, and they say that at college there isn't bullying. They are dealing with it but not in a good way.'*<sup>7</sup>

Children's experiences of bullying have been shown in our national research to have strong associations with levels of overall well-being<sup>8</sup>.

In the Bracknell Forest survey we asked some questions about this topic, which were adapted from previous studies. First we asked children whether they had been bullied in the past year. Children were told *'This can include things like being hit, kicked or pushed, people taking your belongings, being called nasty names or being made fun of.'* In response, just under a quarter (23%) said that they had been bullied. A further 14% were unsure and 10% did not want to answer the question. Over a half (53%) said that they had not been bullied.

**Figure 19: Prevalence of bullying**



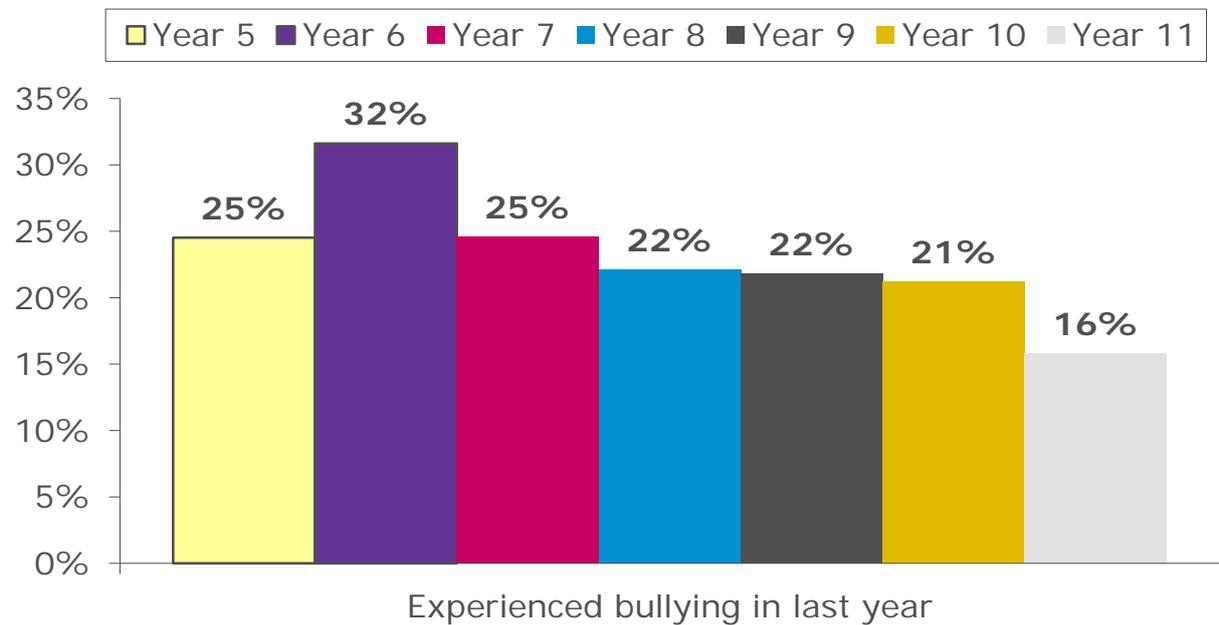
*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

<sup>7</sup> NB. Although the survey was only carried out in schools in Bracknell Forest, a number of the young people in the consultations were attending college and so some of the quotes relate to college rather than school.

<sup>8</sup> Rees G, Bradshaw J, Goswami H & Keung A (2010) *Understanding Children's Well-being: A national survey of young people's well-being*. London: The Children's Society.

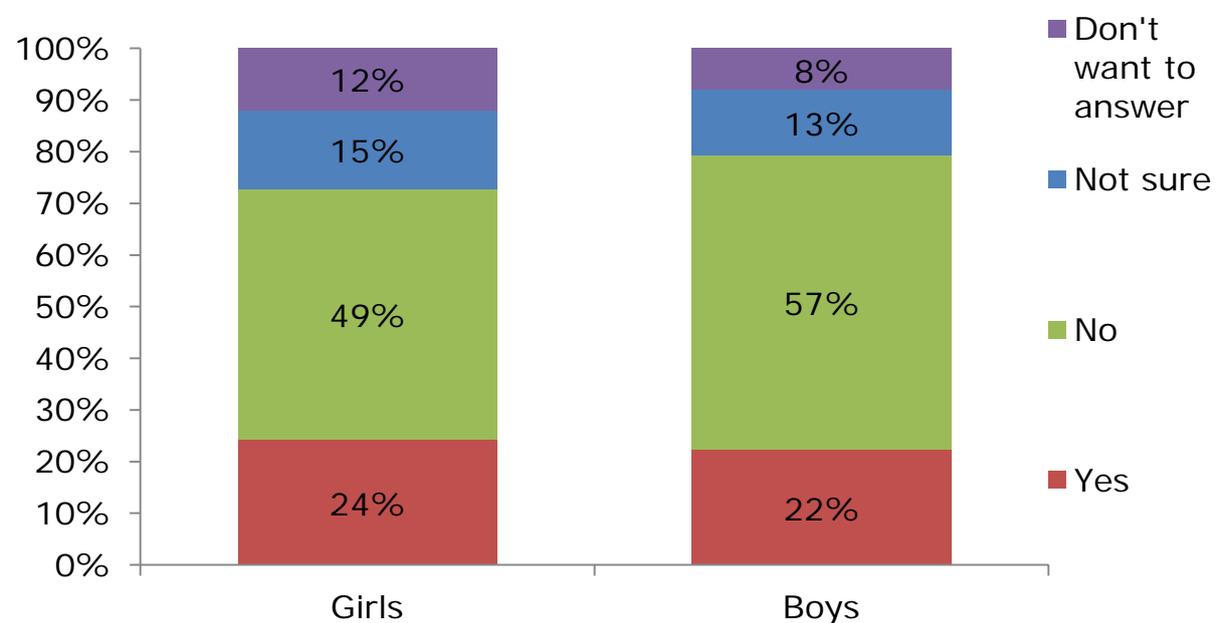
There were age and gender differences in experiences of bullying, with younger children and girls more likely to say that they had been bullied.

**Figure 20: Age differences in bullying**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

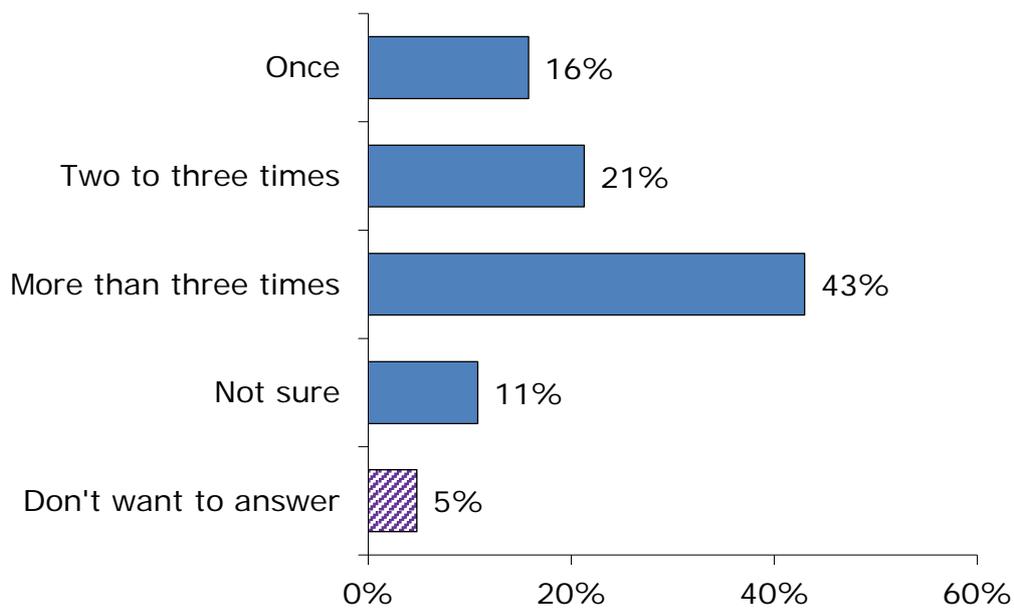
**Figure 21: Gender differences in bullying**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

For the 23% who said that they had been bullied, we asked how often they had experienced bullying. As can be seen from Figure 22 below, the most common response was 'more than three times'.

**Figure 22: Frequency of bullying**

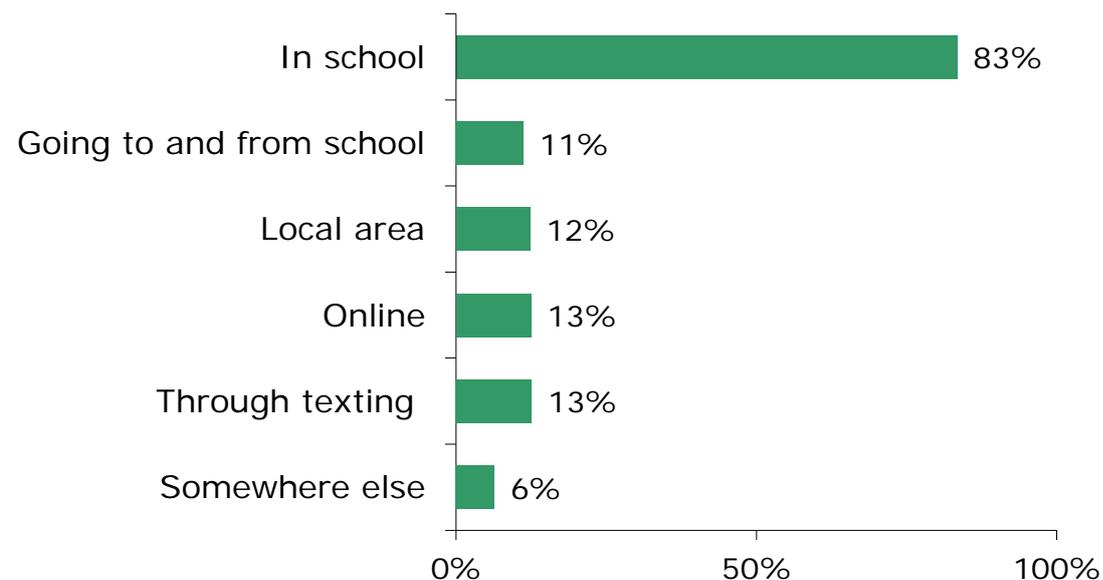


*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We also asked children about where the bullying had happened. As can be seen from Figure 23 below, the vast majority of bullying occurred at school. There was also evidence of bullying travelling to and from school, in the local area and online or through texting.

*More than one response was possible for these questions so percentages add up to more than 100%.*

**Figure 23: Locations of bullying**

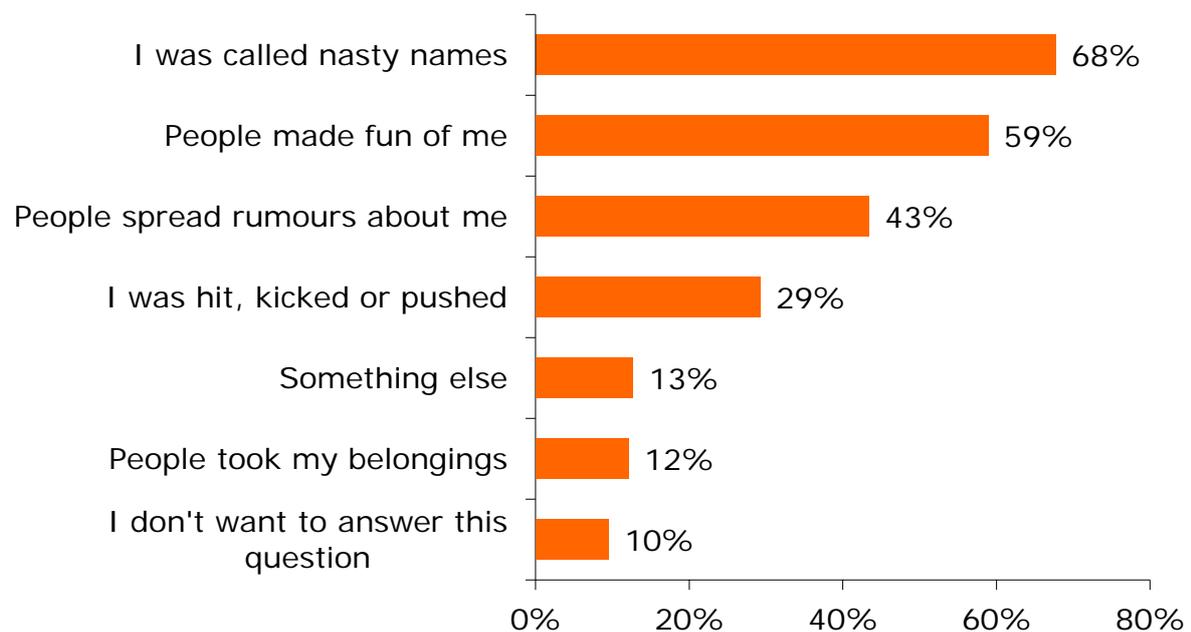


*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We also asked children what type of bullying they had experienced. As can be seen from Figure 24 below, the most common type of bullying was name-calling and being made fun of, although over a quarter (29%) of children reported physical bullying. Boys (43%) were much more likely than girls (17%) to report being 'hit, kicked or pushed', while girls were more likely than boys to report name-calling (72%), being made fun of (64%), and rumours being spread about them (52%).

*More than one response was possible for these questions so percentages add up to more than 100%.*

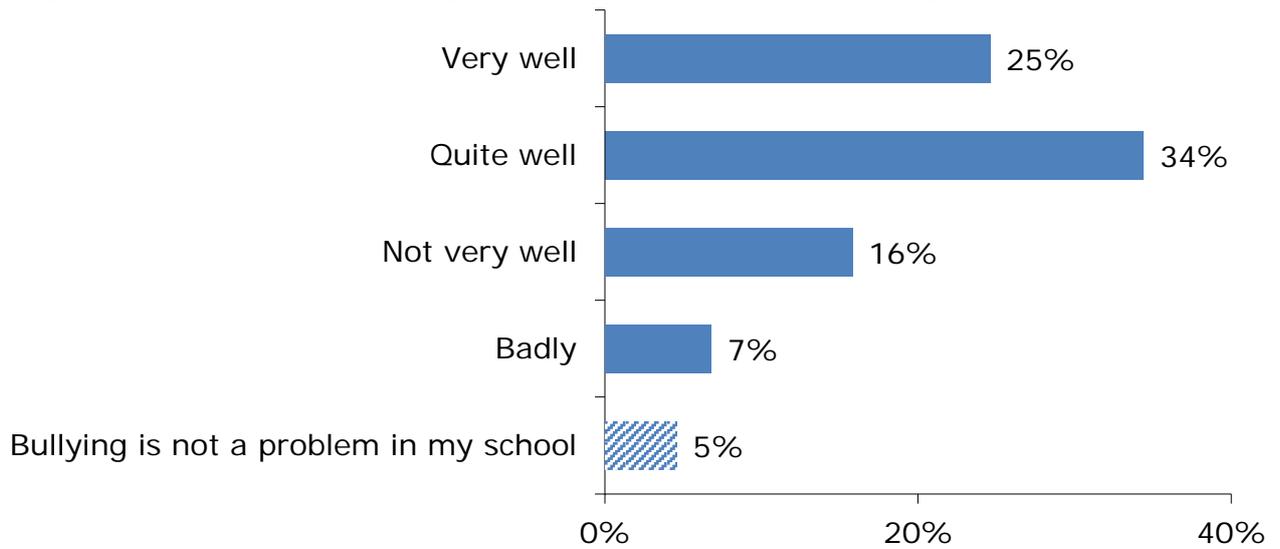
**Figure 24: Types of bullying**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

And finally, we asked children how well they felt their school deals with bullying. Most children gave positive responses to this question, but almost a quarter (23%) responded negatively.

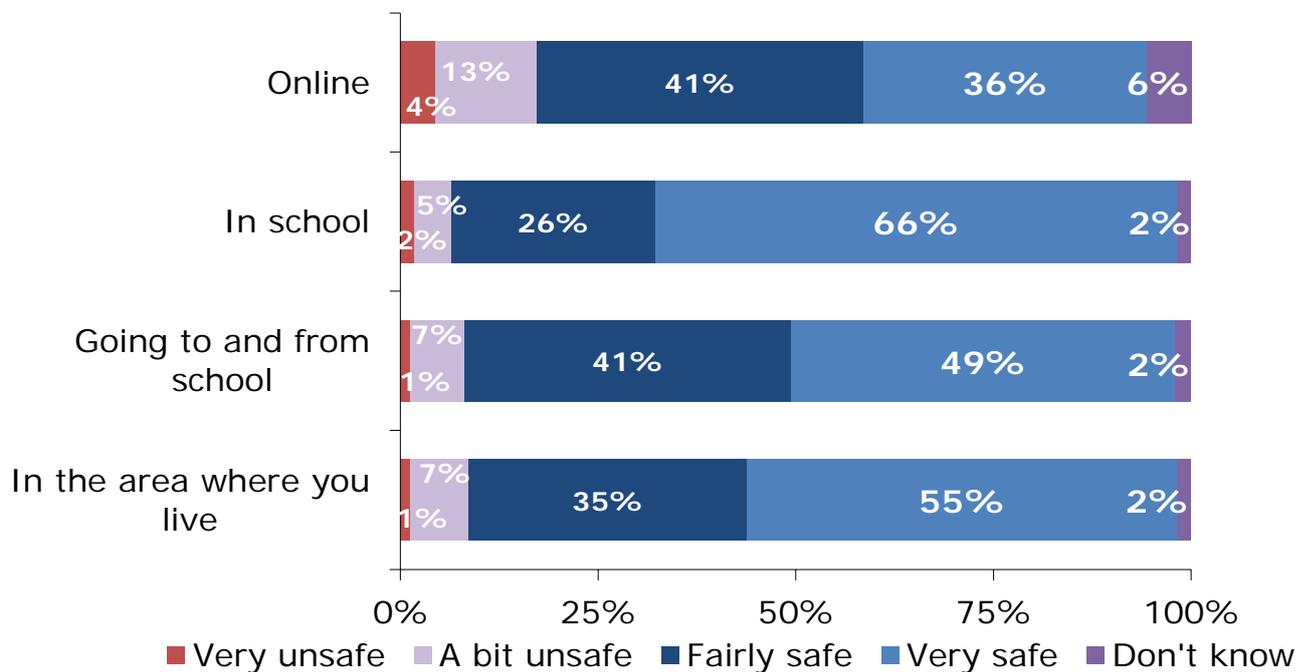
**Figure 25: How well does your school deal with bullying?**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

Bracknell Forest Council also wanted to explore children’s feelings of safety in different environments. As can be seen from Figure 26 below, children said they feel safest in school and least safe online. This is an interesting finding, given our earlier finding that children are most likely to be bullied in school.

**Figure 26: How safe do you feel...?**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We talked to children about their feelings of safety online during the consultation stage about their local area:

*'I don't feel completely safe (online)'* girl in year 6.

*'Rude pop ups – they're everywhere'*, girl in year 6.

*'You can search for something like music and it takes you onto a rude site – it makes me feel horrible'*, girl in year 6.

*'My little brother went on to a horrible site by accident and brought me the tablet because the pictures wouldn't go away. It was horrible'*, girl in year 6

*'The chat rooms on x box and mine craft - people swear a lot and say rude things'*, boy in year 6.

*'On multiplayer games random people want to be friends with you'*, boy in year 6.

*'You could be talking to strangers'*, girl in year 6.

*'Cyber bullying needs sorting out'*, girl in year 6.

*'Facebook, because people say they're one age but you don't really know if they are. It could be anybody'*, girl in year 6.

*'Offensive comments on Twitter'*, girl in year 6.

## 9. Health and appearance

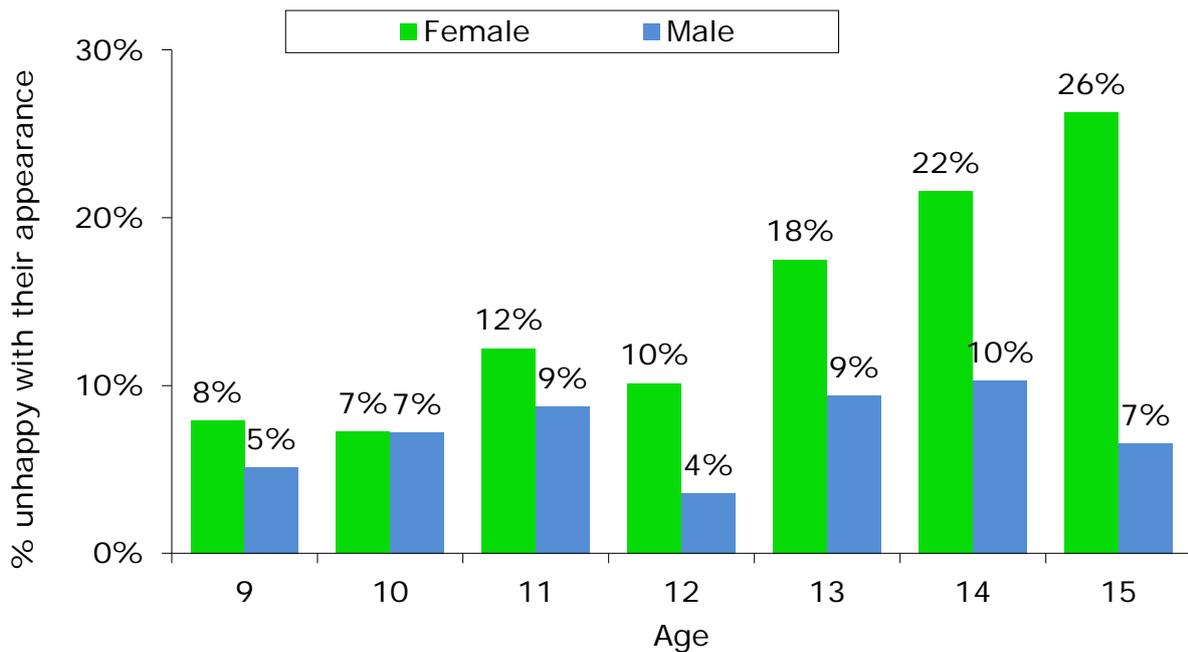
*'It's like you have magazines and then people who take a look out of that and then you'll get judged all the time so you get pressured into like looking a certain way otherwise you're not good enough.'* Girl in year 9.

*'Peer pressure can turn into bullying'*

In our Good Childhood Index, appearance tends to be the aspect of life that children are least happy with. As shown earlier in Figure 9, this is also true in Bracknell Forest. Furthermore, in the Bracknell Forest sample, children appear to be a little less happy with their appearance than the national average.

There are some important age and gender differences in respect of appearance. Figure 27 shows the proportion of children that are unhappy with their appearance by year group and gender. As can be seen, between ages 12 and 15 girls' unhappiness with their appearance rises substantially, but this is not the case for boys.

**Figure 27: Happiness with appearance by age and gender**



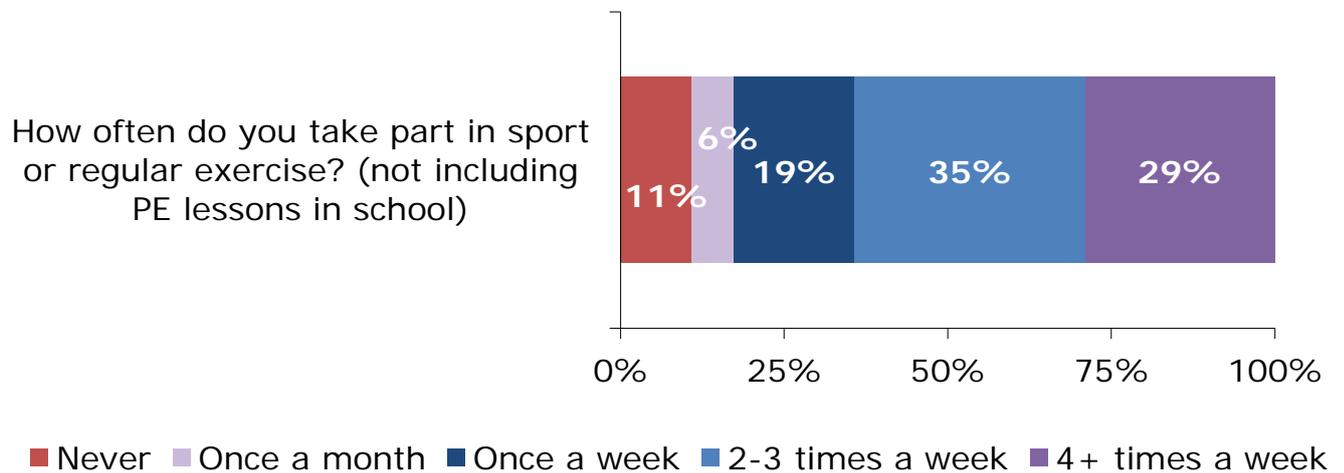
*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

Health was the other aspect of The Good Childhood Index for which the scores for the Bracknell Forest sample were slightly lower than the national average.

Bracknell Forest Council was keen to explore children's exercise and eating habits. In relation to exercise, children were asked how often they take part in sport or regular exercise, and if they never do, what the main reason for this is. Figures 28 and 29 below show children's responses to these questions. Almost two-thirds of children (64%) said that they take part in sport or exercise at least

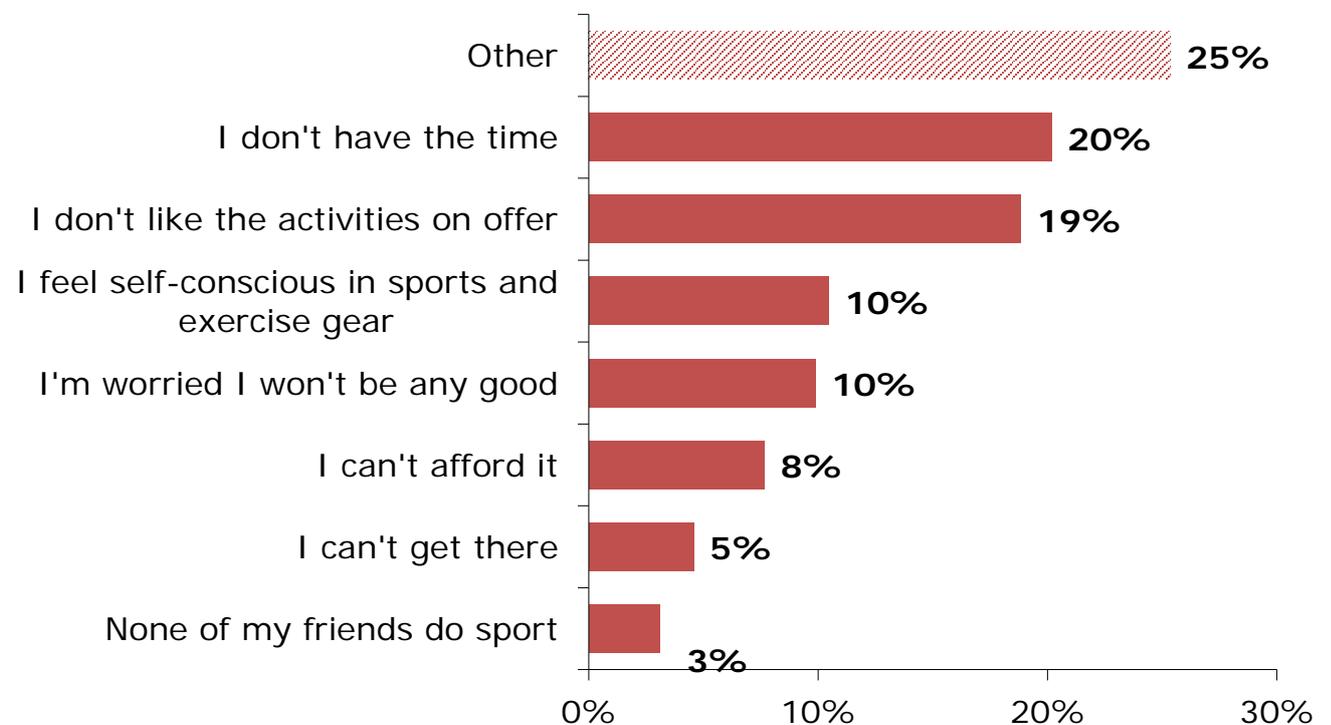
twice a week, but over one in ten (11%) said that they never do. There were significant age and gender differences in response to this question, with year 10s (19%) and girls (13%) more likely to say that they never take part in exercise or sport. The top two reasons for not taking part in exercise or sport – apart from ‘other’ - were not having the time and not liking the activities on offer.

**Figure 28: Frequency of doing exercise/sport**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

**Figure 29: Main reason for not doing exercise/sport**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We asked children about barriers to physical activity during the consultation stage:

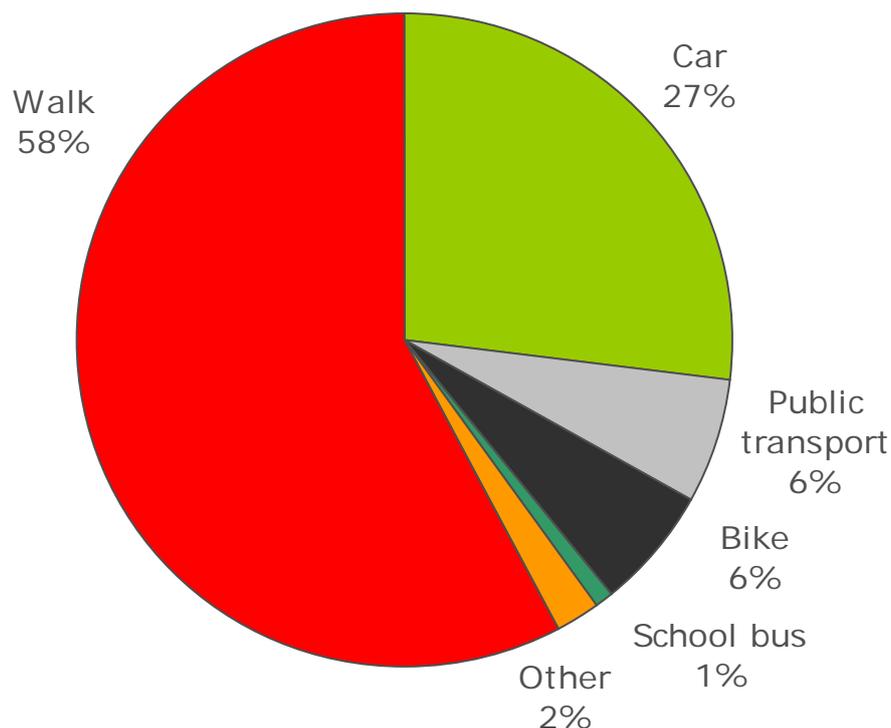
*'It's expensive to do sport'*

*'It's not safe to go for a run where we are... if I'm going to go for a run after college it's like pitch black and there's no footpath and it's all back streets and what if a car comes behind.'*

*'I used to be quite sporty, I used to do swimming about six days a week and maybe about 2 hour sessions. But then it was like getting in the way of school so I quit and then like you slowly like lose your fitness...'* Boy in year 9.

We also asked children about their travel to and from school. As can be seen in Figure 30, the majority of children said they walk to school (58%), although more than a quarter said they go by car (27%).

**Figure 30: Travel to and from school**

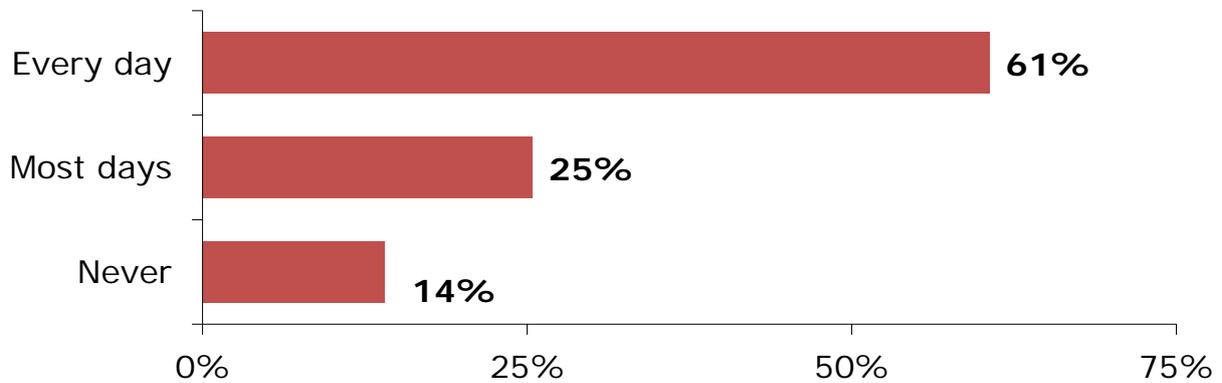


*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

In addition to questions about exercise, we asked children about their eating habits, specifically how often they eat fruit and vegetables and whether they eat breakfast. As can be seen in Figures 31 & 32, the majority of children said they eat breakfast every day, but one in eight children (14%) said they never eat breakfast. There were significant age and gender differences in response to this

question, with year 11s (31%) and girls (16%) more likely to say that they never eat breakfast before school.

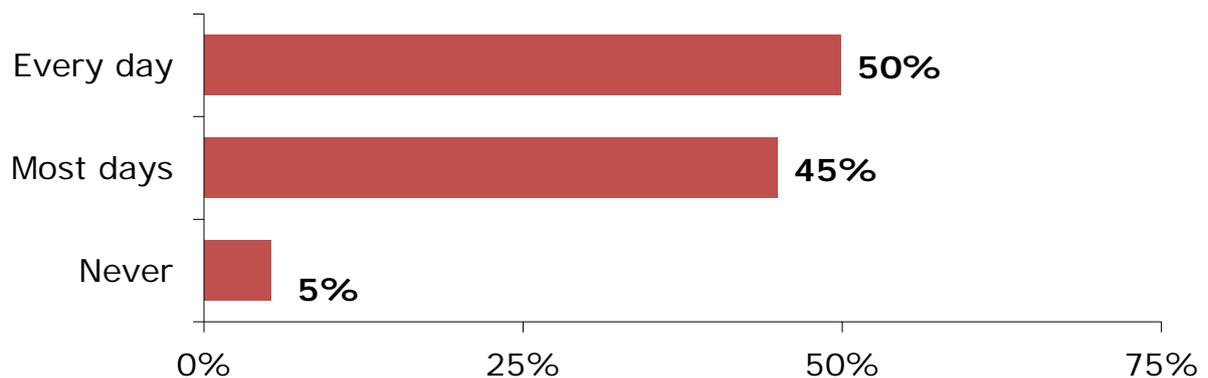
**Figure 31: Frequency of eating breakfast before school**



*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

A smaller proportion of children said they eat fruit and vegetables every day – 50% - but only 5% said they never eat fruit and vegetables. There was also a significant gender difference in response to this question, with boys (8%) more likely than girls (2%) to say that they never eat fruit and vegetables.

**Figure 32: Frequency of eating fruit and vegetables**



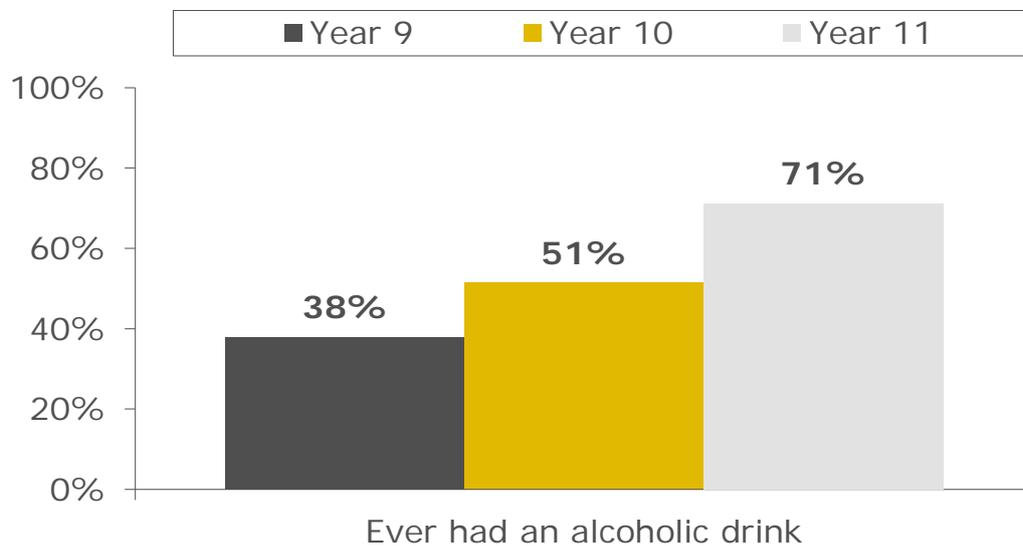
*Data: Years 5 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

## 10. Alcohol and smoking

### Alcohol

The other health-related behaviours that Bracknell Forest Council was keen to explore were young people's consumption of alcohol and cigarettes. Young people in year 9 and above were first asked whether they had ever had an alcoholic drink. Exactly half of the Bracknell Forest sample said that they had drunk alcohol before, and half said that they had not. Not surprisingly there were age differences in young people's responses to this question, with just over a third (38%) of young people in year 9 saying that they had drunk alcohol, rising to more than two thirds (71%) of young people in year 11.

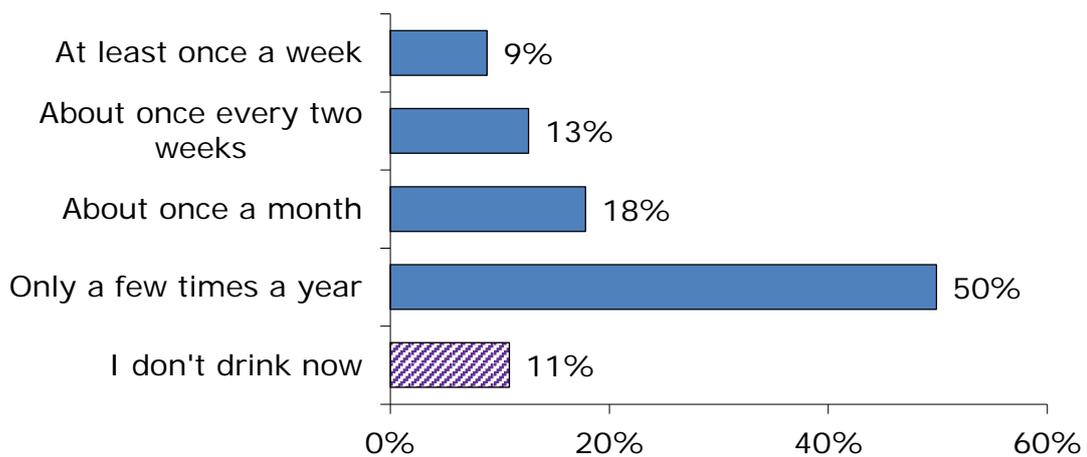
**Figure 33: Alcohol consumption by school year**



*Data: Years 9 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

Young people who said that they had drunk alcohol were asked how often they usually drink. As can be seen in Figure 34, half said that they only drink a few times a year, but almost a quarter (22%) drink at least once a fortnight.

**Figure 34: Frequency of drinking alcohol**

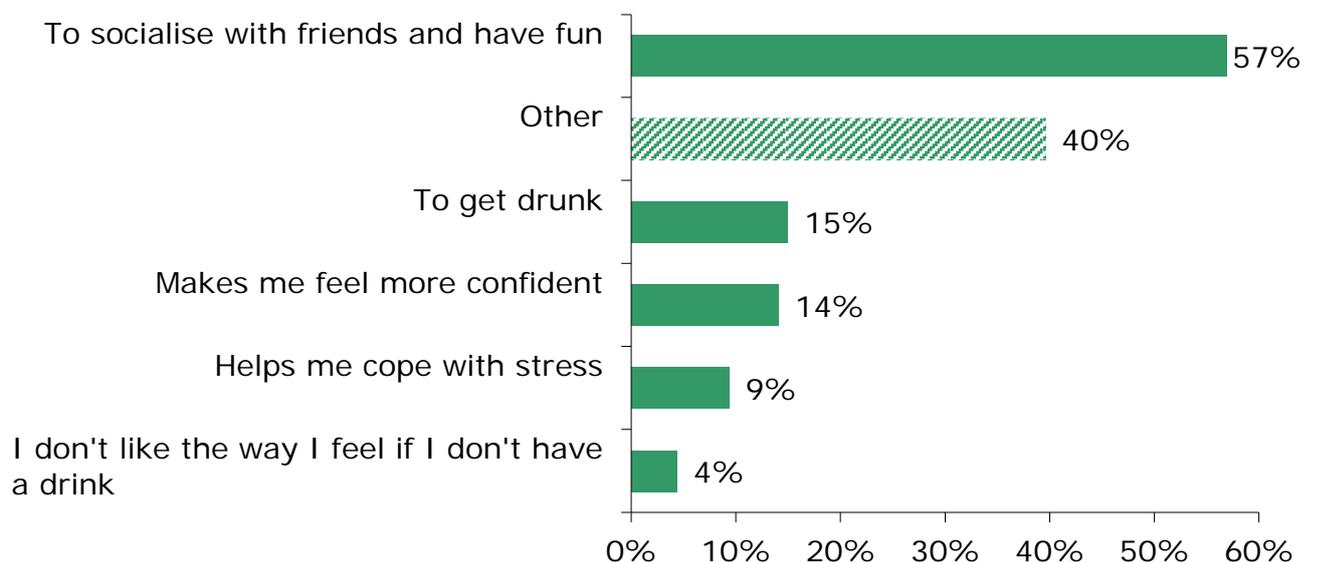


*Data: Years 9 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We asked young people why they drink alcohol, giving them a list of possible reasons for drinking. The most common response was 'to socialise with friends and have fun', however, a significant minority cited increasing confidence and dealing with stress as reasons for drinking.

*More than one response was possible for these questions so percentages add up to more than 100%.*

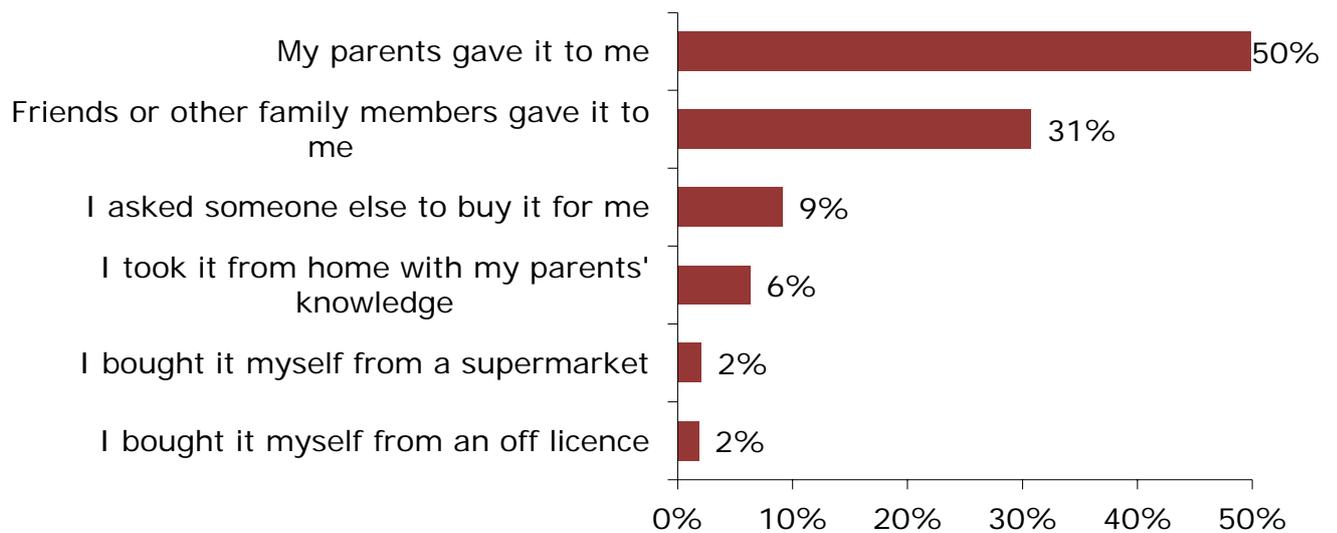
**Figure 35: Reasons for drinking alcohol**



*Data: Years 9 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

We also asked young people where they obtained alcohol and gave them a list of options. The most common response was that they had been given it by their parents (50%), or their friends or other family members (31%).

**Figure 36: Where young people obtain alcohol**

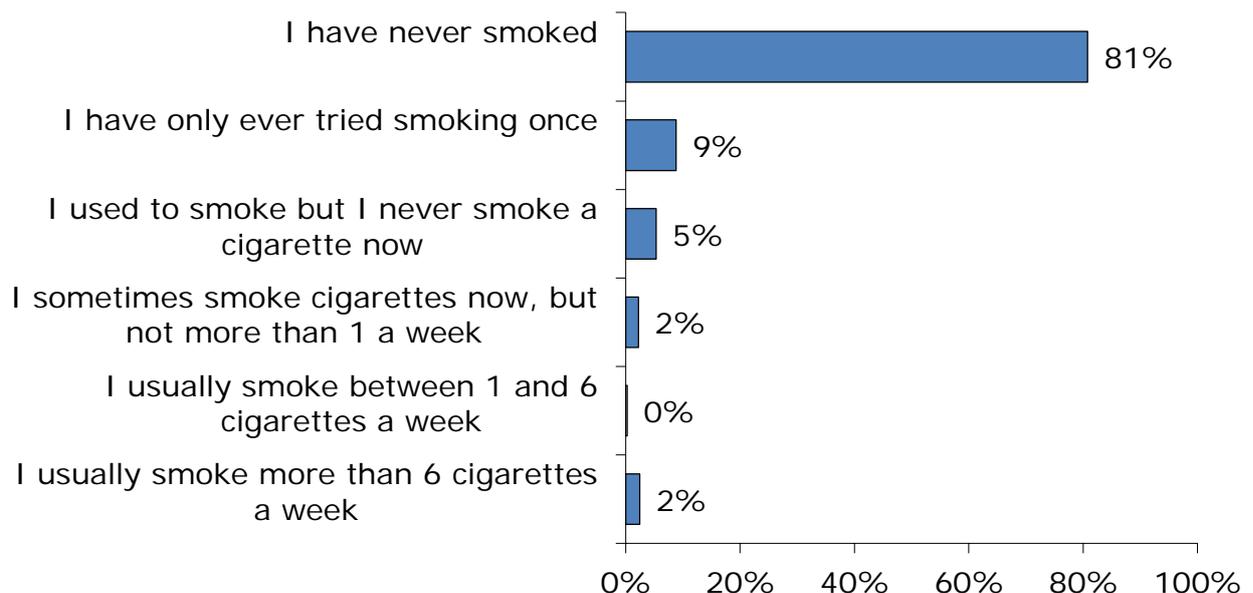


*Data: Years 9 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

### Smoking

Two similar questions were asked about smoking. Again, these questions were only asked of young people in year 9 and above. Firstly, young people were asked if they smoke and if so, how often. As can be seen from Figure 37 below, the large majority of young people said that they had never smoked, and only 4% said they smoked at least sometimes. Interestingly, there were no gender differences in young people's responses to this question.

**Figure 37: Frequency of smoking**

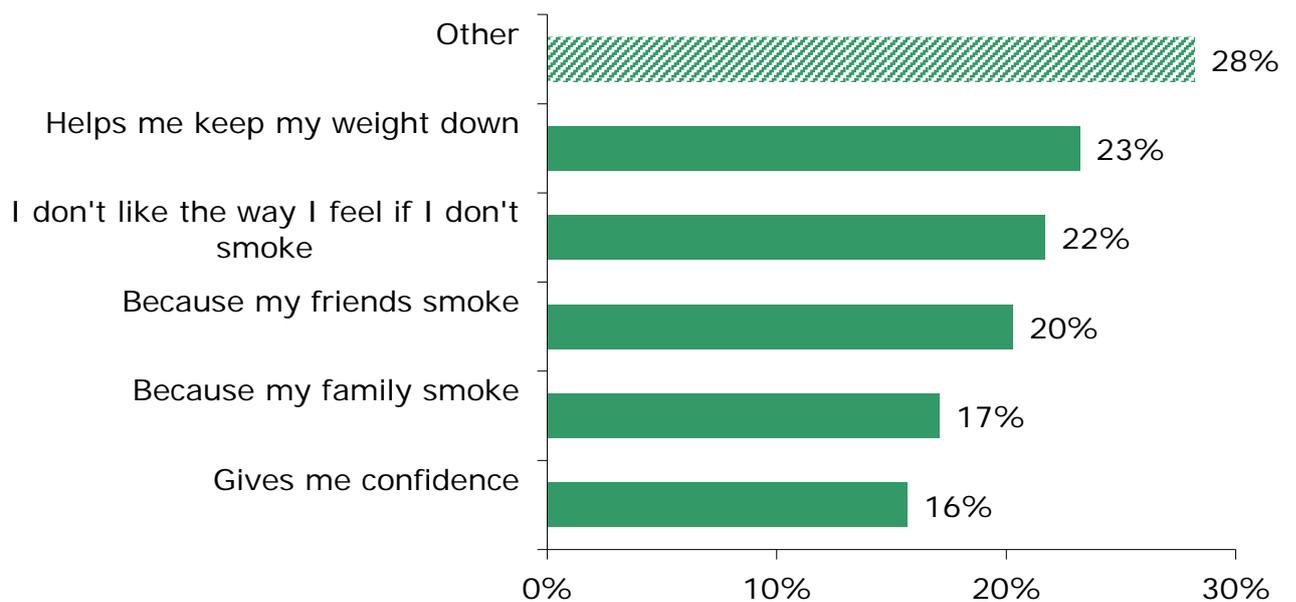


*Data: Years 9 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

Secondly, young people who said they smoke at least sometimes – which was only 38 young people - were asked why they smoke. The most common response, apart from 'other' was that smoking helps to keep weight down.

*More than one response was possible for these questions so percentages add up to more than 100%.*

**Figure 38: Reasons for smoking**



*Data: Years 9 to 11, weighted by school year and gender*

## 11. Conclusions

The Bracknell Forest survey of children and young people, 2013 gained the views of almost 2500 children living in Bracknell Forest who participated in the survey, and over 200 children from two primary, two secondary schools and other specific groups of children who took part in consultations related to the findings from the survey. The survey questionnaire covered a wide range of aspects of children's lives and provides an important insight into children's well-being in Bracknell Forest, and the follow-up face-to-face consultations enable further insight into the findings.

Overall, the large majority of children in Bracknell Forest are satisfied with their lives. Only a minority, in the region of one in 12, are not satisfied with their lives. These proportions are similar to the picture for England as a whole, so on average children living in Bracknell Forest have similar levels of well-being to the national picture.

Furthermore, the survey provides evidence of lower levels of well-being amongst children who say they are disabled or have difficulties with learning, children who receive free school meals and those who are not living with their family. These findings are similar to what we have found in our national research.

The survey does, however, suggest that there are some ways in which the experiences of children in Bracknell Forest differ from the national picture.

With several aspects of life, the children that took part in the Bracknell Forest survey were happier than the national average. There were indications that they were happier with their prospects for the future, their money/possessions, the amount of choice that they have, their relationships with friends and family, their school and their local area. This is encouraging because some of these aspects of life – choice and money/possessions in particular - are important determinants of overall well-being.

On the other hand, there were also two aspects of life for which children in Bracknell Forest appeared to be a little less happy than the national average: health and appearance. Both of these aspects of life appear to have an age and gender profile, with teenage girls the most likely to be unhappy with these areas.

It is helpful to consider these findings in the context of conclusions that we have drawn from The Children's Society's national research programme about the main factors affecting children's well-being. Our national research highlights, for example, the importance of children's happiness with the amount of choice that they have in life, their family relationships and their money/possessions as three of the most important aspects of life affecting wellbeing<sup>9</sup>. Another key finding

---

<sup>9</sup> Rees G, Bradshaw J, Goswami H, Keung A, Main G & Pople L (2012) *The Good Childhood Report 2012: A review of our children's well-being*. London: The Children's Society

from The Children's Society's national research programme includes the importance of children's experiences of bullying. Consequently, how children in Bracknell Forest are faring in respect of these aspects of life are of particular interest.

Together, therefore, the Bracknell Forest survey and The Children's Society's national research programme on children's well-being offer positive indications of the generally high quality of life experienced by children in Bracknell Forest and also suggest some potential priority issues for efforts to improve the wellbeing and lives of children in Bracknell Forest.

## About us

The most disadvantaged children rarely suffer on just one front. We work directly with these children, many of whom have nowhere else to turn, to ensure that they are loved, valued and listened to. With them we fight childhood poverty, harm and neglect.

Our network of programmes includes drop-in services for runaways, as well as children's centres and support for young carers. We support children who are refugees from violence, and we give those in care a voice. We transform the lives of many more children by pressurising government and local authorities to change policy and practice to protect them, and we challenge the negative attitudes that perpetuate harm and injustice.

In hard times, children are among the hardest hit.

We don't just help them survive - we support them to flourish.

[www.childrensociety.org.uk/well-being](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/well-being)

## For more information, please contact:

Larissa Pople  
Senior Researcher  
The Children's Society  
[well-being@childrensociety.org.uk](mailto:well-being@childrensociety.org.uk)

Sue Curbishley  
Senior Performance Analyst  
Children, Young People and Learning  
Bracknell Forest Council  
[sue.curbishley@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:sue.curbishley@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)