YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH RACE & FAITH AT SCHOOL

National Pupil Survey Headline Findings Report

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UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

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More information on the study can be found at

www.youthexpression.org

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NATIONAL PUPIL SURVEY REPORT

Introduction

Youth Engagement with Race and Faith at School is a peer-reviewed study funded by the Leverhulme Trust, and carried out by a team of researchers at University of Birmingham. The study runs from 2022 to 2025, and seeks to make a major contribution to understanding the factors in and out of schools that support young people to express themselves democratically on race and faith equality[1] issues. Part of the study involves a national survey of Year 10 pupils and their teachers in state-funded mainstream secondary schools across England. This report presents key descriptive statistics from the pupil survey, and further group-specific and correlational analysis will be carried out in subsequent publications.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3156 Year 10 pupils from 29 state-funded mainstream secondary schools across 8 regions of England[2] completed the school survey online in school between January and July 2023. The survey found that while many young people had positive things to say about their relationships with teachers, significant proportions indicated pupils did not share their social or political views at school, and many raised concerns about school (including peer) climate, and engagement of race and faith equality. The most significant findings from this survey are outlined below.

[1] Our use of the term 'faith equality' does not refer to theological/philosophical values. Here it refers to a form of social inequality, i.e., the removal of systematic prejudice towards, and minoritisation of specific religious/non-religious groups. We use the term 'faith' in a social scientific rather than theological sense, to recognise that both religious and non-religious orientations to the world involve a variety of personal investments and attachments.
[2] Data was not obtained from the Yorkshire and the Humber region (see Table 1 in the main report).

Young People's Views on Equality and Wider Political Issues

Race and faith equality mattered to most, and most viewed race and faith inequalities in the labour market and education as a problem in England. The majority also felt unfair treatment of young people because of their age was a problem in England.

- Most reported that race (65%) and faith (54%) equality matters to them.
- A high proportion (69%) believed lack of access to a good job due to one's skin colour, ethnicity, religion, or nationality is a problem in England.
- Similarly, 51% believed that lack of access to a good education due to these factors is a problem in England.
- 43% viewed 'unfair treatment of *people like me* because of our skin colour, ethnicity, religion, or nationality' as a *big* problem. 61% of those from Black, African, Black Caribbean and Black British backgrounds and 55% of those from Asian or Asian British backgrounds took this view. Notably, 37% of those from White backgrounds also took this view.
- The majority (63%) felt 'unfair treatment of people like me because of our age' was a problem in England.
- When asked about hypothetical scenarios that might be 'good' or 'bad' for a democratic society:
    - The majority (69%) believed it is 'good' that pupils are supported to share their religious values in lessons.
    - Most (57%) thought it is 'bad' that people who often share hatred online are allowed to keep their social media accounts
    - 40% considered it 'bad' that pupils are called 'extremists' online for engaging in a peaceful anti-racism protest at school.

Youth Civic and Political Engagement Inside/Outside School

Friends and family were the most common parties with whom young people report sharing their views. School and classrooms mattered as sites of learning, but were not the most prominent venues that young people felt they could share their views. Social media was the most common site of learning about social and political issues. However, social media was one of a number of more public settings where young people reported less commonly sharing their views.

- Most reported sharing what is important to them by discussing opinions with friends or classmates outside class (70%) and/or with others in lessons (61%).
- A significant percentage (45%) reported pupils usually do not, or never bring up current political events for discussion in class.
- Most reported being comfortable sharing their views with friends (80%) and at home (77%).
- 75% reported learning most about political issues from social media, but most (60%) do not share their views on social media/online. Only 10% reported always feeling safe expressing their views online, with 41% usually not/never feeling safe to do so.
- When classmates say something that they strongly disagree with, the majority (52%) stated they might keep their feelings private. When another pupil says something offensive to them, the majority (43%) stated they would talk to friends about it.
- Posting on social media was the least common likely response to disagreement or offense.

School Climate and Engagement with Equality Issues

The majority saw teachers as treating them fairly and supporting them to express their views. But there were significant concerns about bullying, racism and religious intolerance, lack of peer respect, safety, accurate teaching about different communities' histories and real-life concerns, and youth opportunities to change school policies. A number of these concerns appeared heightened for Black, African, Black British and Caribbean young people, and young people in rural schools.

- The majority (68%) agreed that most of their teachers treat them fairly, and 73% agreed that teachers (always or sometimes) encourage them to express their views.
- However, only half (50%) agreed that most teachers would stop pupils from being bullied. More than half (54%) disagreed that pupils treat each other with respect. Similarly, only 40% agreed their school is a place where pupils feel safe.
- Less than half (47%) agreed that the history of people from their racial or ethnic background is accurately taught in their school. 40% disagreed that their school teaches about real issues and problems affecting their lives.
- Opinions were mixed on whether young people feel confident reporting racism or religious intolerance that happens at school. While 39% agreed that pupils feel confident doing so, 32% disagreed and 29% were unsure.
- The majority (47%) disagreed that pupils have a voice in changing school policies when needed, while 21% were unsure.
- Lower proportions of young people in rural schools reported positive experiences of the above issues than those in urban schools.
- In future, the largest proportion (70%) would talk to others about their views, rather than engage in more public political actions. Only 10% would contact a politician.

Implications of the Survey Findings

Our findings paint a picture of young people as generally in favour of deliberative democracy, as being concerned about race and faith inequalities, as valuing good relationships with their teachers, and as being circumspect about social media. The findings indicate that concerns raised in public discourse about young people being unable to tolerate views they find problematic are not well founded. However, young people are navigating very complex, globalised relationships and knowledge online, in-school, and with their various local and international communities. The findings reflect a strong need to offer all young people a school environment that nourishes their political development and addresses matters of race and faith equality in a sophisticated and meaningful manner. In the 'implications' section of the main report, we point to a number of apparent weaknesses in education policy, particularly in the areas of inspection, curriculum and political impartiality, which we contend require much deeper engagement with issues of race and faith inequality.

NATIONAL PUPIL SURVEY: MAIN REPORT

Introduction

This report explores the perspectives of young people (typically aged 14-15) on issues of race and faith equality, the various forms of civic and political actions they undertake both within and outside of school, their sources of information on social and political matters, as well as the receptiveness of the school environment (including peers and teachers) to discussions related to race and faith equality.

The report is based on a survey of 3156 Year 10 pupils in England conducted online in 29 mainstream state-funded secondary schools between January and July 2023. The survey is unique, because it combines a number of issues often kept apart because they are examined by researchers from different disciplines. We bring together a focus on young people's views on race and faith equality, the forms of civic and political action they undertake inside and outside school, where they learn about and share their views on social and political issues, and how conducive the school climate is to sharing their views and engaging on race and faith equality issues. In the next section below, we share some general trends found in the research in these areas. We then outline the survey methodology and response rate. Subsequent sections share our findings on young people's political views, the nature of youth civic and political engagement both inside and outside of school, young people's comfort levels in expressing their opinions within and beyond the school environment, the places where young individuals learn about political issues and share their perspectives, the interplay between fair treatment, school climate, and youth expression, and the extent of schools' engagement with issues of race and faith equality. Building upon these findings, the final two sections will analyse the implications of the results for policy considerations and outline plans for further analysis and research.

What Do We Already Know About Youth Views and Experiences?

It is often argued that foundational academic skills are vital, but insufficient for enabling young people to thrive in a world that demands an open, culturally engaged approach, a moral perspective rooted in human rights, and a commitment to social justice and

active civic/political engagement (Losito et al. 2018). However, the voices of young people are significantly underrepresented in our public political discourse (British Youth Council 2023). This situation is arguably compounded by moral panics about the alleged need to 'protect' children from political speech in schools (Kitching et al., forthcoming). It thus is imperative to gain insight into young people's engagement of broader social and political issues, and how their environment influences these factors.

While it is not possible to find strictly comparative data to our own survey, it is worth noting some findings from recent surveys that indicate general trends on the above issues.

- A January 2023 survey by the British Youth Council of 360 member organisations found 85% disagreed that there were enough opportunities for young people to learn about politics and democracy at school (British Youth Council 2023).
- A May 2022 survey by the US-based Pew Research Center (2022) of 1316 pairings of young people aged 13-17 and a parent found young people much more commonly post about their accomplishments and family life, than political and religious beliefs, and small minorities use social media for political activism.
- Kempner and Janmaat (2022) showed that pupils in more 'socially privileged' and ethnic majority schools in the UK participate more in school councils.
- The Black British Voices survey found that of approx. 500 under-25 year-olds, 87% disagreed that employers and businesses are doing enough to address employment gaps for Black young people.
- In the higher education context, the Speaking Freely: US College Survey (Naughton, Eastman et al. 2017) revealed that 87% of students feel comfortable sharing ideas and opinions in their college classrooms and 93% of students agree that their school should invite a variety of guest speakers to campus.

Survey Methodology and Response Rate

In developing this survey, we conducted a comprehensive review of prior relevant survey reports. We examined relevant questionnaires, including the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016, Speaking Freely (US College Survey) 2017, HEPI's survey on What Students Think of Free Speech 2016, and the PISA 2018 Global Competence Questionnaire. These reports provided us with valuable insights

into tried and tested questions on social and political views, civic education, and freedom of expression in or around education contexts.

To ensure we were asking the right kinds of questions, we engaged in discussions with our Project Advisory Board, comprised of academics, education professionals and equality advocates from across England. Once we had a full draft of the survey, we conducted a rigorous piloting exercise primarily focusing on the survey's administration, timing, and accessibility of the questions to young people. The pilot phase involved surveying 107 Year 10 pupils across three state-funded secondary schools in October 2022. We retested the survey with 93 pupils from this cohort in November 2022, to assess both its internal and external validity and reliability. The results indicated that the internal reliability[3] of the questions was strong. Similar results were obtained from the second survey round, which included 93 pupils who had previously participated. This suggests a strong level of external reliability[4] for the survey. However, following these two rounds of piloting, we adjusted some questions by revising wording, or adding further response options, to ensure that all possible answers were adequately captured.

To frame the population and identify the relevant sample set, we first identified mainstream state-funded secondary schools in England using the gov.uk school database in October 2022[5]. This filtering generated a list of 3,081 state-funded open secondary schools in England. These schools were then categorised based on their broad governance type (academy/free, maintained, voluntary aided). Schools were further subdivided into three geographic characteristics: rural, urban, and urban major, within each of the nine regions of England. We then randomly selected schools according to these characteristics, using a sampling target of 1.75% (52 schools altogether). Amid challenges in recruiting schools to participate, we eventually secured participation in the pupil survey from 29 schools from different regions of England. The profile of responding schools and pupils is outlined below.

[3] Internal reliability refers to the degree to which the items or questions within the questionnaire consistently measure the same underlying construct or concept.
[4] External reliability refers to the degree of similar responses in two/more surveys with the same questions and respondents in two different times.
[5] Please see Appendix A for a breakdown of the initial sampling frame.

Summary of Participant Demographic Features

As Table 1 outlines, 3156 pupils completed the survey, from 29 schools across 8 regions of England.

Table 1: Number of participating schools and pupils by region of England[6]

Region	Number of schools	Number of pupils
East Midlands	1	103
East of England	4	378
London	5	419
North East	2	115
North West	3	393
South East	6	836
South West	2	148
West Midlands	6	764
Total	**29**	**3156**

The majority of schools participating were academy/free schools, followed by local authority maintained voluntary aided schools, as seen below in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of participating schools and pupils by broad school type

School type	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Academy/Free School	23	2506
LA Maintained School	3	267
Voluntary Aided School	3	383
Total	**29**	**3156**

[6] Descriptions of school types and urban/rural locations are available in appendices A and B.

Table 3: Number of participating schools and pupils from urban/rural locations

Urban/rural[7]	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Rural	7	752
Urban	13	1497
Urban Major	9	907
Total	**29**	**3156**

The key demographic characteristics of the participating young people were:

- Gender: 50% girls, 42% boys, 3% non-binary and 5% preferred not to disclose.
- Religion[8]: 42% no religion, 32% Christian, 8% Muslim, 7% 'any other religion', 2% Hindu, 1% Jewish, 1% Sikh, and 1% Buddhist. 7% preferred not to disclose.
- Ethnicity: 67% White[9], 13% Asian or Asian British, 7% Black, African, Black British or Caribbean backgrounds, 7% mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 3% 'another ethnic group'. 4% preferred to not disclose.
- Mother or Main Parent/Guardian's qualifications: 33% were not sure about their parent/guardian's highest qualification; 27% University degree of higher, 11% a University education below a degree, 10% A-Levels, 10% GCSEs, 4% no educational qualification. 6% preferred to not disclose.
- Differences/Disabilities: Out of multiple-choice options regarding differences or disabilities, 18% reported experiencing mental health issues, 11% dyslexia; 11% any other physical or emotional issues, 9% autism, 7% vision impairment, 5% speech problems, and 4% deaf or hard of hearing. 14% preferred not to disclose any disability/difference.

Representativeness of the Data

Several factors are important in assessing how well our survey data compared to the national population of secondary school pupils. Our survey achieved a significant response rate, although we do not claim it to be nationally representative.

[7] For definitions of urban, rural, and urban major, please see Appendix B.
[8] While the religious/non-religious profile of our respondents is similar to that in the wider population (see Appendix C), responses from Jewish, Sikh and Buddhist young people amount to approx. thirty people in each group.
[9] Based on the assumption that young people identifying as Irish Traveller or Gypsy have markedly contrasting experiences of school than other groups classified in Census terms as White, we analysed Irish Traveller and Gypsy respondents' data (from 35 respondents) separately from the 'White backgrounds' data. As part of further analysis of all ethnic categories, we will conduct further analysis of the responses of White groups in due course.

Nevertheless, regarding ethnicity and religion, our survey demonstrates a strong resemblance to relevant national demographics. The data on gender does not perfectly mirror national categories due to our inclusion of 'non-binary' as an option. Nevertheless, overall proportions of boys and girls in both datasets are similar. In terms of geographic location, the survey generally aligns with national demographics in rural and urban areas. However, there is a slight gender disparity in urban major regions, where girls are more represented. For a detailed account of representativeness, please refer to Appendix C.

FINDINGS

1. Young People's Views on Equality and Wider Political Issues

In this section, we examine young people's views on how much race and faith equality matters to them, the extent to which they see inequality as a problem, and their views on what is good or bad for a democratic society. These questions give us some insight into young people's own social and political views.

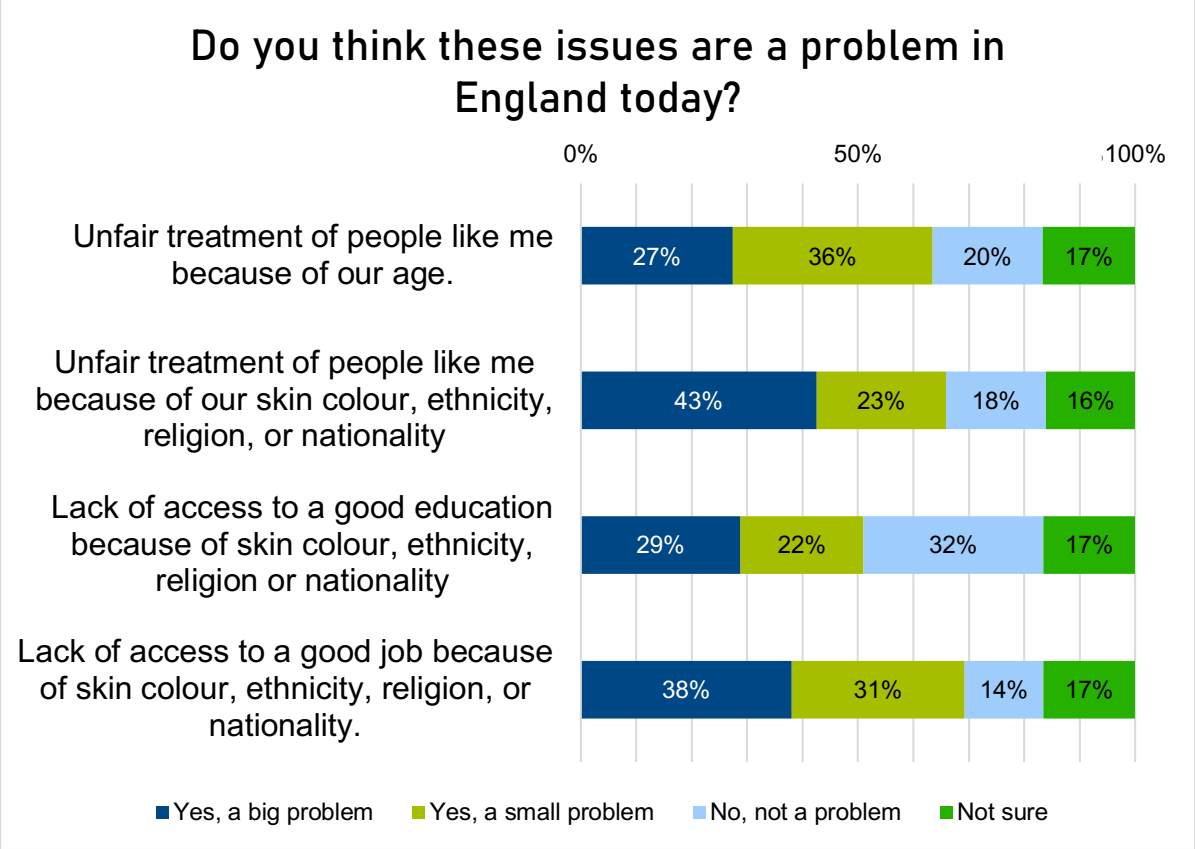
The majority reported that both race (65%) and faith (54%) equality[10] matters to them. While 5% reported race equality does not matter to them, twice that proportion (10%) said faith equality does not matter to them. The majority (69%) reported the view that lack of access to a good job because of skin colour, ethnicity, religion, or nationality is a problem in England. Percentage responses to this question were highest amongst Black, African, Black British or Caribbean young people (76%), followed by Asian and Asian British young people at 75%. 67% of White pupils took this view. Amongst religious groups, 76% of Muslims took this view. Higher proportions of girls (76%) than boys (63%) also took this view.

The majority (51%) of the whole group also reported the view that lack of access to a good education because of skin colour, ethnicity, religion or nationality was a problem

[10] Race equality was defined to participants as 'where people of different ethnic backgrounds have an equal chance to succeed in life, to express their identity and values, and to be treated with respect.' A similar definition was used for faith equality, but referred to religious and non-religious groups.

in England. A larger proportion (32%) were inclined to view access to a good education as *unproblematic* compared to access to a good job (14%). As Figure 1 indicates, around 17% were consistently unsure about these questions.

Figure 1: Respondents' views on race, faith and age-related issues in England today

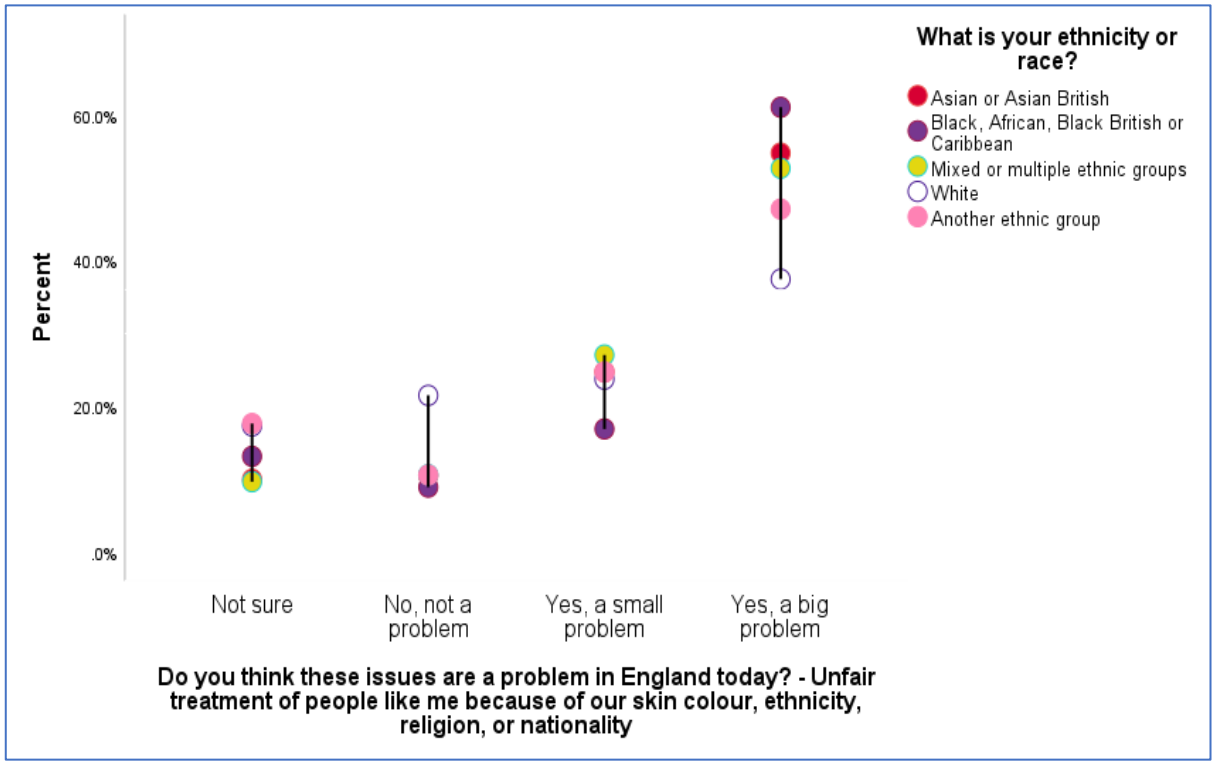


The majority (66%) also viewed 'unfair treatment of people like me because of our skin colour, ethnicity, religion, or nationality' as a problem in England. Amongst the overall group, the majority (63%) also reported that 'unfair treatment of people like me because of our age' was a problem in England.

Figure 2 below breaks down the question of 'unfair treatment of people like me because of our skin colour, ethnicity, religion or nationality' by ethnicity. Higher proportions of those who regarded this issue as a *big* problem were from Black, African, Black Caribbean, or Black British backgrounds (61%) and Asian or Asian British backgrounds (55%). Notably however, 37% of those from White backgrounds saw 'unfair treatment of people like me' as a big problem; this included 37% of British,

English, Northern Irish, Scottish or Welsh respondents. Amongst religious groups, Muslim young people reported the highest percentage view of 'unfair treatment of people like me' as a big problem (53%).

Figure 2: Respondents' views on 'unfair treatment of people like me' as a big problem



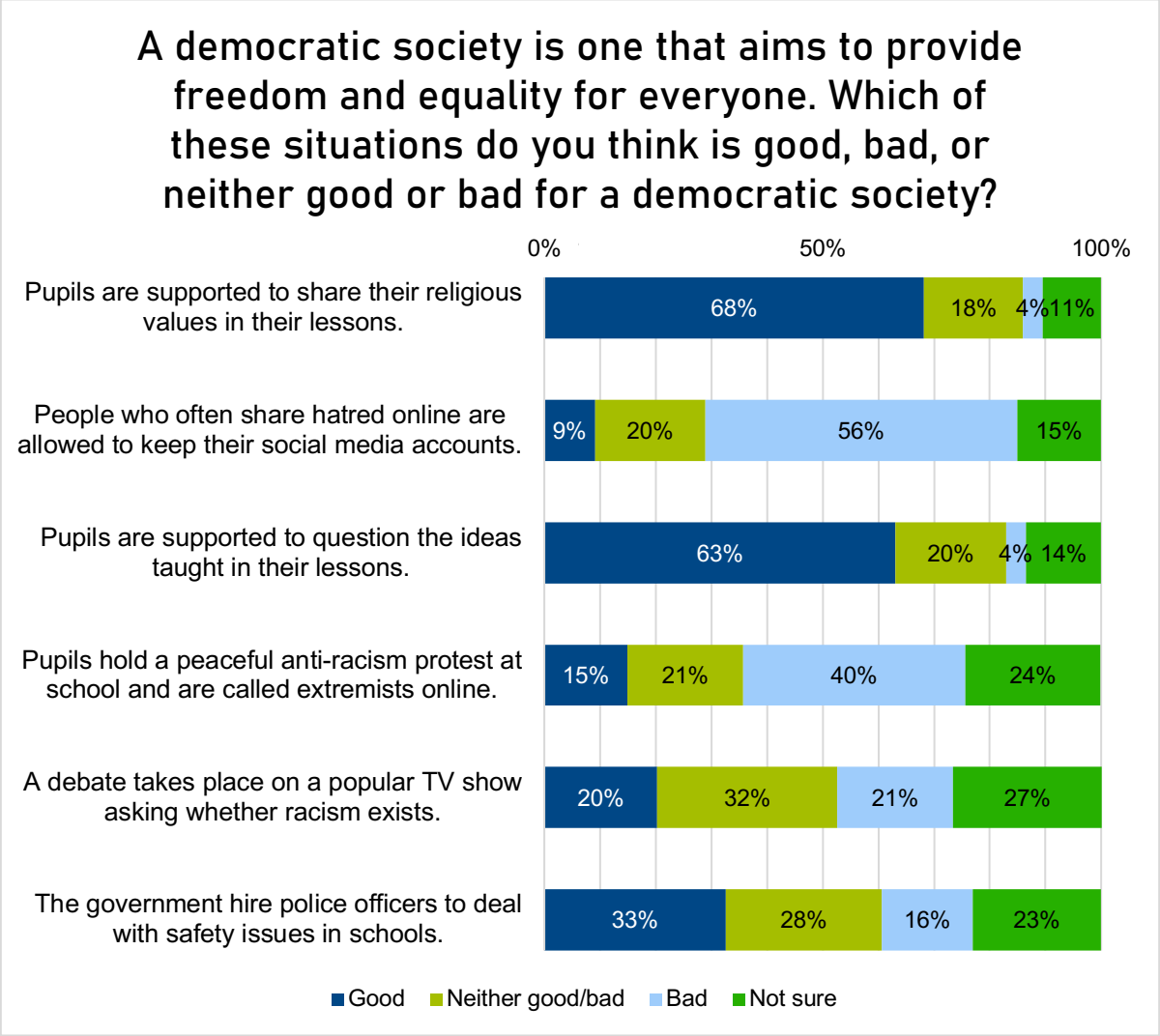
Next, we posed some hypothetical, but commonly occurring scenarios to the participants, and asked whether they felt these scenarios were good or bad for a democratic society[11]. As Figure 3 demonstrates:

- The majority (69%) considered it 'good' for democracy when pupils are supported to share their religious values in their lessons. Only 4% perceived it as 'bad'.
- A smaller majority (57%) thought it was 'bad' for democracy that people who often share hatred online are allowed to keep their social media accounts (while 9% thought it was good for democracy).

[11] We defined a democratic society as 'one that aims to provide freedom and equality for everyone'. Of course, the question assumes that participants agreed with this definition, and the general idea of a democratic society.

- When it comes to pupils questioning the ideas taught in their lessons, 63% view it as 'good' for democracy with 4% regarding it as 'bad.'
- As the chart below shows, the responses become more mixed when it comes to more complex scenarios around peaceful anti-racism protests, debates about the existence of racism, and the presence of police in schools.

Figure 3: Respondents' views on how certain scenarios affect a democratic society



As noted above, 40% considered it 'bad' that pupils are called 'extremists' online for engaging in a peaceful anti-racism protest at school. The highest group responses by those defining this scenario as 'bad' were (by religion) from Muslim young people at 50% and (by ethnicity) young people from Mixed or multiple ethnic groups at 49%, followed by Black, African, Black British or Caribbean young people at 48%.

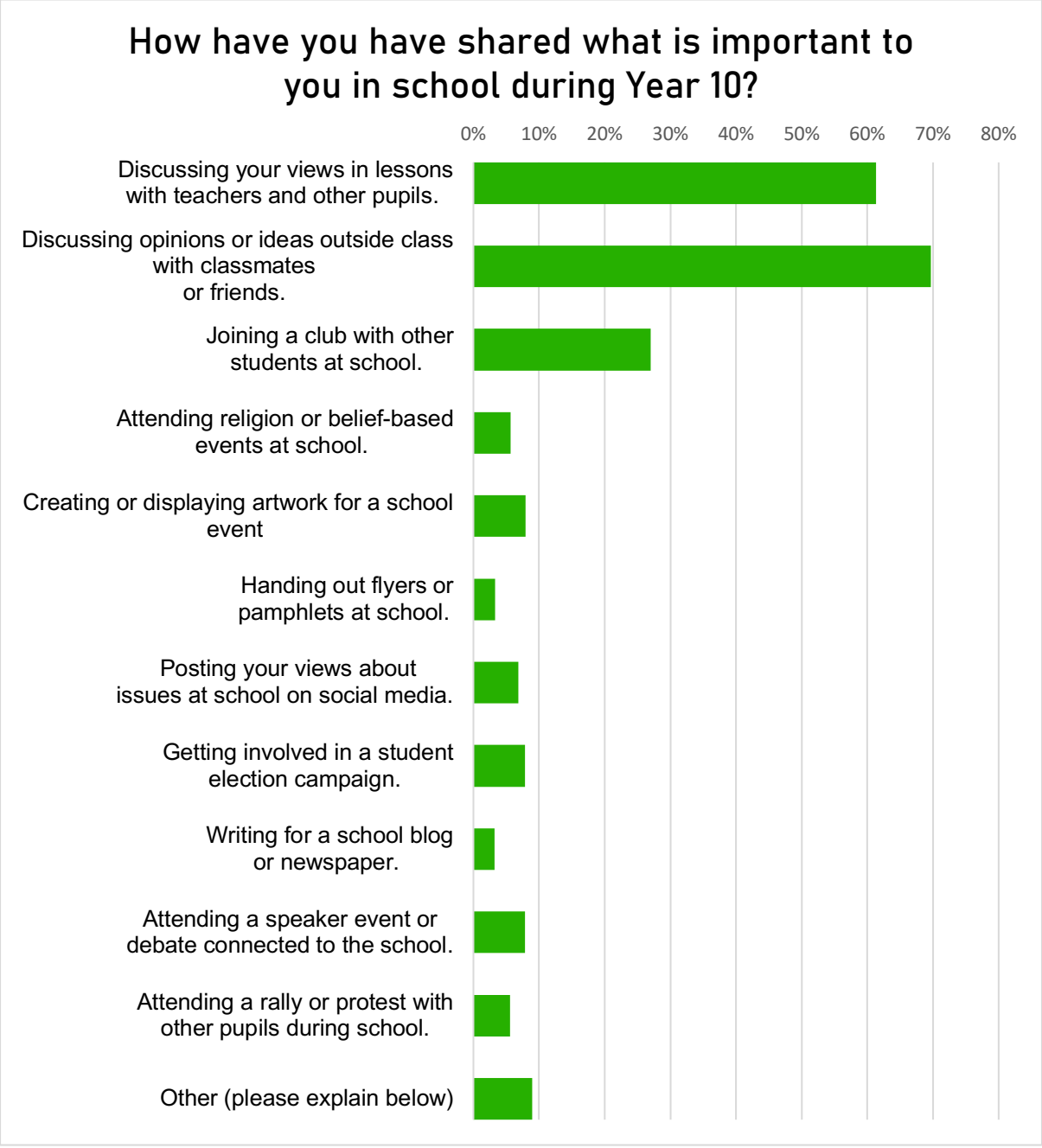
In summary, in this section, we see that large proportions of respondents report race and faith equality as mattering to them. The majority see lack of access to a good job or education as a problem in England. Almost two thirds also see unfair treatment of people their age as a problem. The questions about democracy indicate that most support religious expression and the regulation of hate speech, and most challenge the misrepresentation of peaceful protests. However, some of the more complex questions provoke more uncertainty, and potentially more problematic views on race equality. For example, 20% regarded the idea of a popular TV show debating whether racism exists as a good thing, and 27% were unsure. This indicates the need for further civic and political education on what is a productive topic of debate. It is notable that on average, 37% of White British, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or Welsh young people regard 'unfair treatment of people like me' on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity, religion or nationality as a big problem, indicating the need to further consider how ideas of racism as 'reversible' (and therefore an individual rather than systemic issue) can be addressed.

2. Youth Civic & Political Expression Inside/Outside School

In this section, we discuss how young people shared what is important to them in Year 10, how often they bring up current political issues for discussion in class, and how they might respond to another pupil saying something they strongly disagree with or find offensive.

When we asked participants how they shared what was important to them during their time in Year 10, the largest percentage (70%) said that they discussed their opinions with classmates or friends outside of class. Using multiple options, 61% also said that they discussed their views in lessons with teachers and other pupils. The least common reported activities were attending religion or belief-based events at school (6%), attending a rally or protest with other pupils during school (6%), handing out flyers or pamphlets at school (4%), and writing for a school blog or newspaper (3%). These are outlined in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: How respondents shared what is important to them at school in Year 10



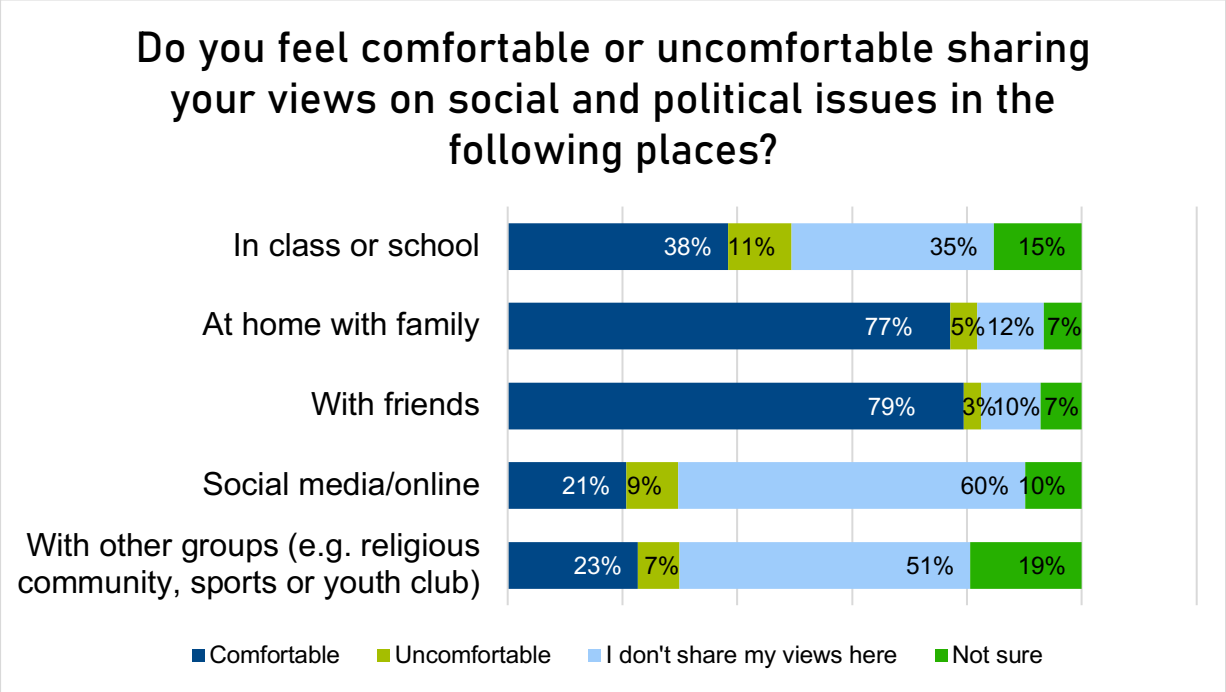
Connecting with questions in Section 3 later, we noted a few potential differences in the ways young people share what is important to them based on whether they have more positive or negative perceptions of the school climate. For instance:

- *68% agreed that most of teachers treat them fairly*. This group reported discussing their views in lessons with teachers and peers in higher proportions[12].
- *64% agreed that most teachers listen to what they have to say*. This group reported discussing their views in lessons in higher proportions[13].
- *28% disagreed that most teachers listen to what they have to say*. This group reported participating in rallies or protests with other pupils during school in higher proportions[14].
- The 28% that disagreed that most teachers listen to what they have to say also reported posting their views on social media in higher proportions[15].

However, the above data in Figure 4 does not specifically refer to social and political issues. Indeed, when asked specifically about such issues, friends and family were the most common places young people reported sharing their views. As Figure 5 (below) demonstrates, the majority (79%) reported feeling comfortable sharing their social and political views with friends. Similarly, 77% reported feeling comfortable expressing their opinions at home with family. Notably, only 38% reported feeling comfortable sharing their views in class or school, while 35% choose not to share, and 11% reported feeling uncomfortable. On social media or online platforms, the majority (60%) reported not sharing their views, with 21% feeling comfortable and 9% feeling uncomfortable[16]. In other group settings, such as religious communities or sports clubs, 50% reported not sharing their views, while 22% reported feeling comfortable, and 7% reported feeling uncomfortable doing so.

[12] 72% of this group, vs 62% of the entire population surveyed.
[13] 70% of this group, vs 62% of the entire population surveyed.
[14] 41% of this group, vs. 6% of the entire population surveyed.
[15] 41% of this group, vs. 3% of the entire population surveyed.
[16] A minority of respondents (10%) reported 'always' feeling safe to express their views on social and political issues online. 30% indicated they felt safe sharing their views online "sometimes." However, a substantial portion of pupils (26%) said that they usually do not and 15% never feel safe doing so in the online space, and an additional 18% reported they were unsure.

Figure 5: Places respondents feel comfortable sharing social/political views



Figures for girls suggested greater discomfort with sharing views online: 16% reported feeling comfortable, 9% were uncomfortable, and 65% reported not sharing views online.

In a separate set of questions (see Figure 11 later), we found a significant proportion reported limited likelihood of young people initiating political discussions in class. 45% said pupils usually do not/never do so in class. Percentage responses of those saying pupils usually do not/never bring up current political events by ethnicity were highest amongst young people from White backgrounds (46%). This was followed by Black, African, Black British or Caribbean (41%) and Asian or Asian British (38%) young people. The following respondent indicated that friends and family were a safer place to share views than in class, in part because of peer pressures and lack of respect, but also because of problems of accuracy in how race and faith issues are taught (see Section 3 below).

> *"I think pushing people to share faith ideas or opinions contrary to popular belief in class, when its not doing something like debating*

where you are there to debate and people have chosen to be there is unhelpful because people don't listen and it can lose you friends… I prefer to discuss these ideas and issues with my friends (even if we might disagree) or family because then there's actual respect and history of knowing each other involved which helps the conversation a lot. And on the topic of education about race and terms surrounding it, most people just learn what is and isn't okay with friends and stuff but the stuff taught in school is often irrelevant and education about (different) backgrounds and stuff always seem unbelievably (irrelevant) especially when a friend who actually experienced that tells me its (sic) wrong, or I know its wrong. So discussing things like white privilege and stuff never happens and might be helpful."

White, Christian, Girl, Academy/Free School, South East England

By contrast, the below respondent shared a positive experience of sharing their views in the context of discussions about religious and intersecting equality issues.

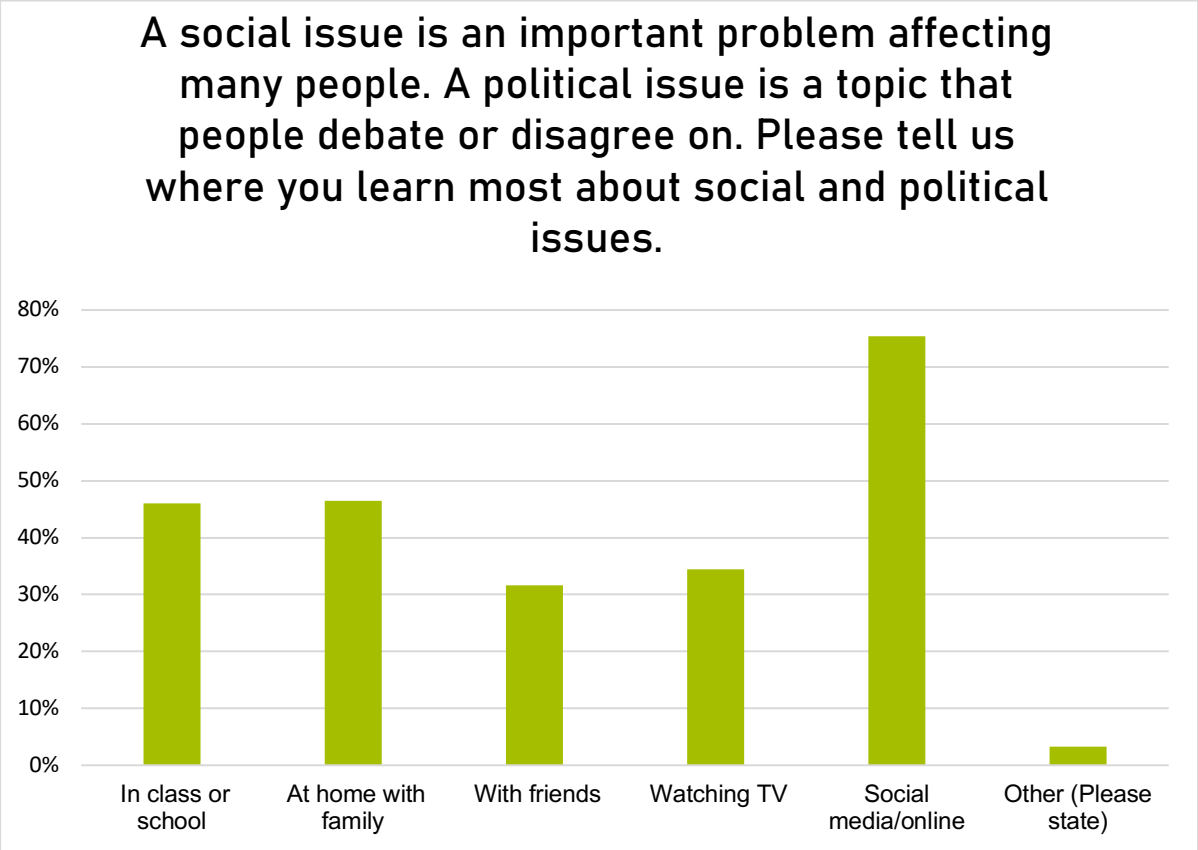
In DRE (Denominational Religious Education) we had a discussion about the LGBTQ+ community and specifically trans people. A lot of students asked questions respectfully and voiced their opinions. I was glad I had the right to express my thoughts on this, and discuss it with my classmates."

White, No Religion, Non-Binary, Voluntary Aided School

The above data indicates a very mixed picture on respondents' willingness to share their social and political views at school. On the one hand, it is clear that friends and family were the preferred place for young people to share their social and political views: and it is clear that they draw on this resource, as only a small minority do not share their views here. As we see in Figure 7 below, in a multiple-choice question, school is equally as popular as home, and more popular than friends and TV as a site

for *learning* about social and political issues. However, the largest proportion (75%) reported learning the most about social and political issues from social media[17].

Figure 7: Places respondents report learning about social/political issues



Responses to disagreement and offense

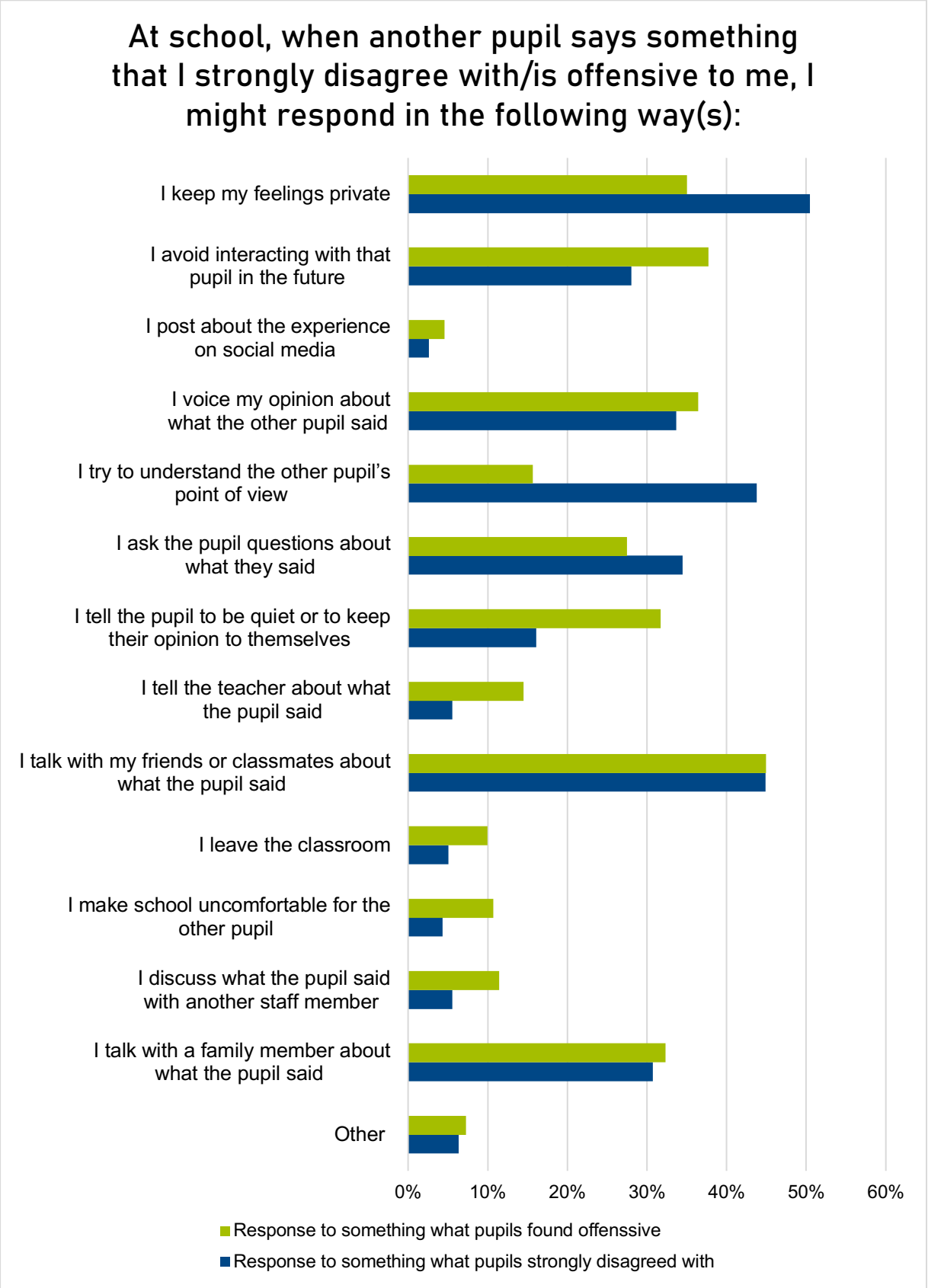
In the context of public debates characterising young people as wishing to shut down opinions they disagree with, we sought to find out how respondents may react to views that may be difficult to hear. As Figure 8 demonstrates, when asked what they might do when another pupil says something they strongly disagree with (and using multiple choice options), 52% said they might keep their feelings private. 42% reported they would try to understand the other pupil's point of view, and the same percentage said

[17] In a separate question, a majority (44%) specified TikTok as the platform where they learn the most about social and political issues. This was followed by Instagram and YouTube (14% each). An additional 8% cited Twitter as the platform they learn most from.

they would talk with their friends or classmates about what the pupil said. 32% reported they would talk with a family member about what the pupil said. It is notable that a small minority (16%) might adopt more concerning behaviour in the case of strong disagreement, such as telling the other pupil to be quiet or keep their opinion to themselves. The least proportion would post about the experience on social media (3%).

When asked what they might do when another pupil says something offensive to them, 43% said that they would talk with friends or classmates about what the other pupil said. 40% might avoid interacting with that pupil in future. 36% reported they might keep their feelings private, and 35% would voice their opinion about what the other pupil said. Notably, in the case of offense, 38% might avoid that pupil in the future, and 32% indicated they would tell the pupil to be quiet or keep their opinion to themselves. Again, the least percentage of the pupils said that they would leave the classroom (8%) and/or post about the experience on social media (4%).

Figure 8: How respondents may react to something they disagree with/find offensive



We looked deeper into how young people, who saw race and faith inequalities as a 'big' problem affecting them, might respond to disagreement or offense. Specifically, we examined the data on those who view 'unfair treatment based on their skin colour, ethnicity, religion, or nationality a big problem'. The figures were not substantially different to the total group, indicating that those who held stronger views did not envisage adopting more confrontational approaches to disagreement or offense. In response to strong disagreement, of those who view unfair treatment of them (on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or nationality) as a big problem:

- 51% would keep their feelings private (vs. 52% of the whole group).
- 43% would talk to their friends or classmates about what the pupil said (vs. 42% of the whole group).
- 40% would try to understand the other pupil's viewpoint (vs. 42% of the whole group).

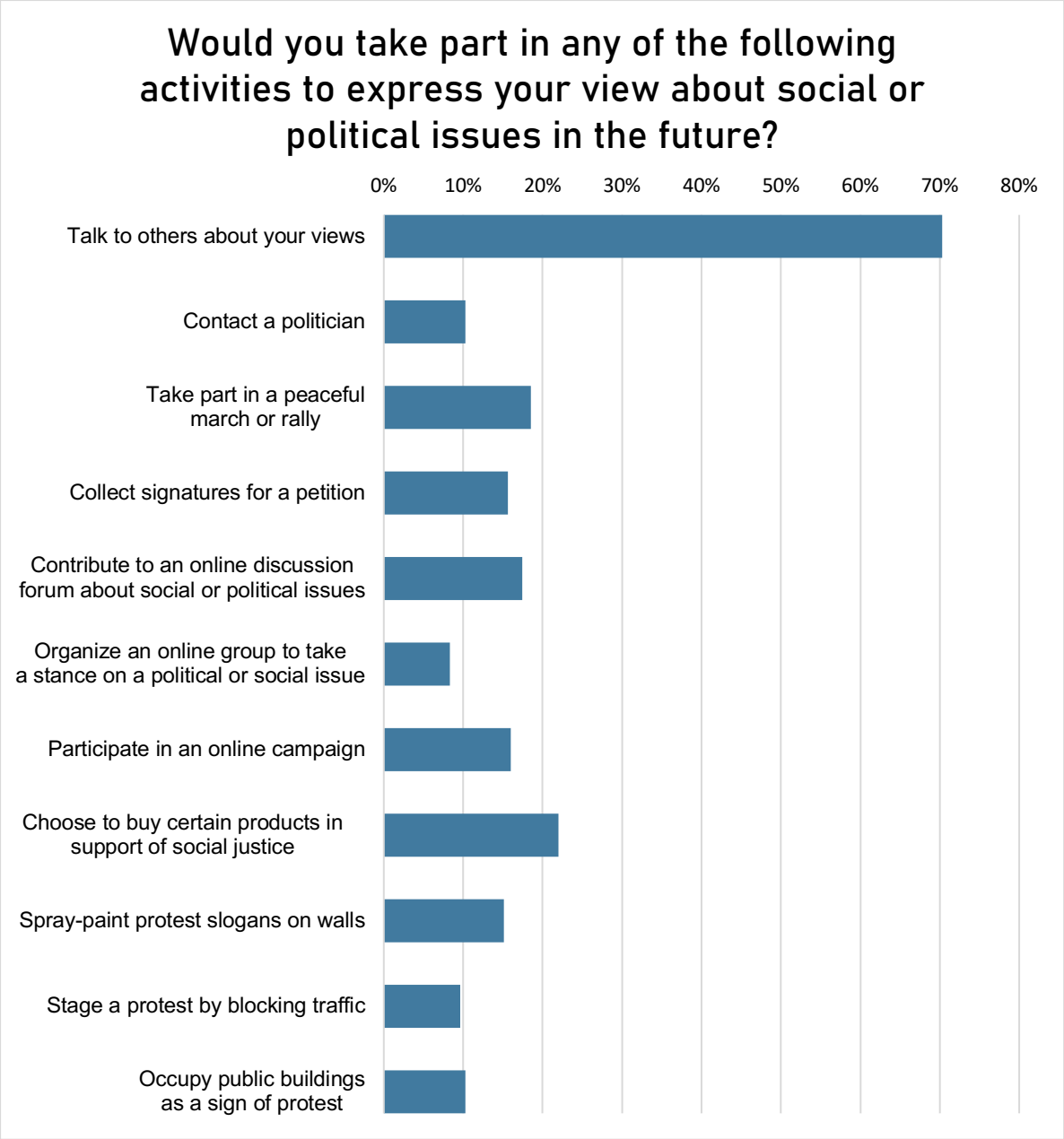
When it came to an instance when a pupil said something offensive to them:

- 45% would talk to their friends or classmates about what the pupil said (vs. 43% of the whole group).
- 38% would avoid interacting the pupil in the future (vs. 40% of the whole group).
- 36% would voice their opinion about what the other pupil said (vs. 36% of the whole group).
- 35% would keep their feelings private.

Future expression of social and political views

When asked what young people would do in future to express their views, the findings (in Figure 9) reflected the existing majority preference for engagement with those closest to them. 70% of respondents said that they would talk to others. 22% would choose to buy certain products in support social justice (e.g. a t-shirt for an anti-racist group). Additionally, a notable proportion (19%) would take part in a peaceful march or rally. Notably, only 10% would contact a politician, and the same proportion would stage a protest by blocking traffic and or occupy public buildings as a sign of protest.

Figure 9: Young people's future engagement in social and political expression



In summary, this section indicates that friends and family are important and preferred spaces for sharing social and political views. While school is an important site of learning about social and political issues, the data raises significant questions about the extent to which young people are willing to share their views at school, and there are indications that the degree to which pupils feel they are listened will affect how they express themselves. It is clear that social media is the most popular space for

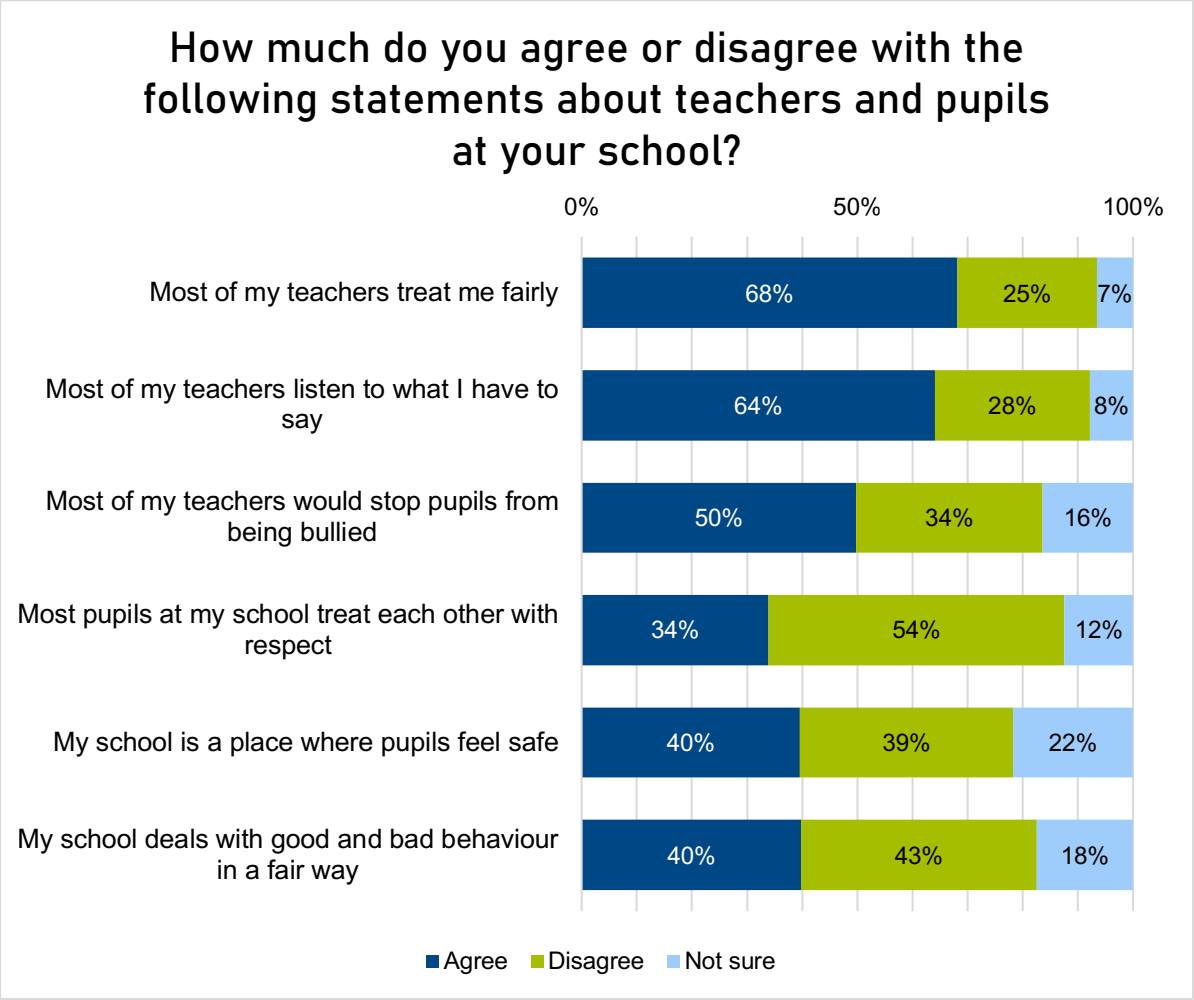
young people to learn about social and political issues, but it is not a space they commonly feel safe or comfortable in sharing their views. These findings have an impact on how young people respond to things they disagree with or find offensive; most will keep their feelings to themselves, or share them with someone they trust. It is clear that most young people are more likely to 'live with' strong disagreement or offense, and small minorities may adopt more direct or confrontational measures. The pressure of sharing in front of peers, may be one aspect of why many pupils don't wish to share their views in school/class. But the final section below indicates respondents feel there are problems with how a significant minority of schools treat young people, deal with racism, religious intolerance and general bullying, and how they address the histories and experiences of different pupils' communities. These concerns likely impact on the possibility of young people expressing themselves on such issues.

3. School Climate and Engagement of Race and Faith Equality

We already noted in Section 1 that young people who report more positive relationships with teachers also report discussing what is important to them in class in higher proportions than the overall group. This section reports in more depth on young people's perceptions about how fairly they are treated by their teachers, peers and wider school policies. We then go on to examine further the relationship between this climate and the likelihood of young people expressing themselves.

As Figure 10 shows, when asked about the different aspects of school climate, the majority (68%) agreed that most of their teachers treat them fairly. Similarly, the majority (64%) feel that most of their teachers listen to what they have to say. However, by contrast, only half (50%) agreed that most teachers would stop them from being bullied. More than a third (34%) disagreed, and 17% were unsure. Similarly, only 40% agreed that their school is a place where pupils feel safe, while 38% disagreed, and 22% were unsure. Only 34% agreed that most pupils treat each other with respect, whereas more than half (54%) disagreed, and 13% were unsure. Lastly, only 39% agree that their school deals with good and bad behaviour fairly. 42% disagreed, and 18% were unsure.

Figure 10: Fair treatment, bullying, respect, and safety at school



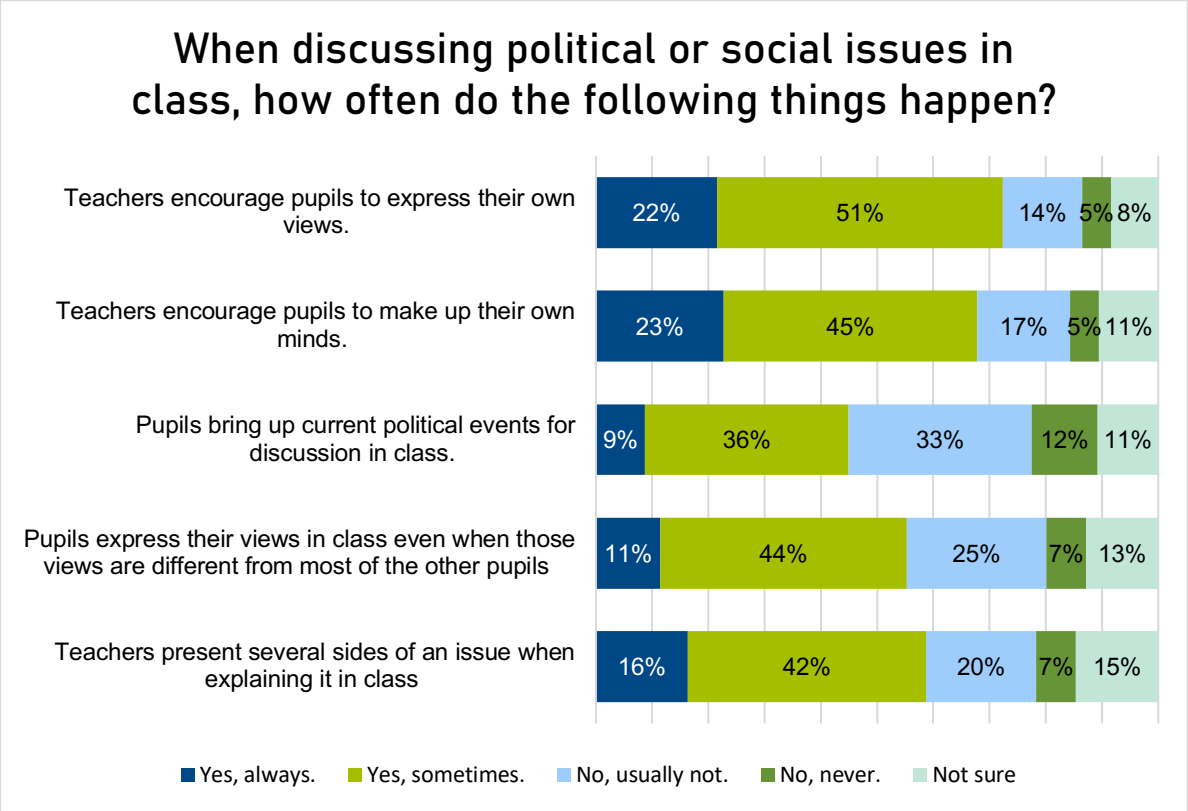
The highest positive response by ethnicity on 'most of my teachers treat me fairly' was from Asian or Asian British young people (73%). The highest positive response by religion/non-religion was from non-religious young people (72%). The lowest positive response by non-White ethnicity was from Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean young people (58%). In relation to the statement 'most of my teachers listen to what I have to say'. Asian and Asian British young people showed the highest agreement at 68%. Black, African, Black British or Caribbean young people displayed the lowest agreement at 55%.

In terms of gender, fewer girls (37%) than boys (46%) agreed that their school is a place where pupils feel safe. 45% of Black, African, Black British or Caribbean pupils disagreed that their school is a place pupils feel safe, the highest percentage disagreement by a non-White group. Albeit a very small group, responses from the

cohort of Irish Traveller or Gypsy young people (n=35) to the questions in Figure 10 above were markedly more negative than the whole group. Only 24% agreed most teachers treat them fairly; 38% agreed most teachers listen to what they have to say; 32% agreed most teachers would stop pupils from being bullied; 18% agreed pupils treat each other with respect, 29% agreed their school is a place pupils feel safe.

Figure 11 below shows that 73% reported the view that teachers (either always or sometimes) encourage pupils to express their own views. Similarly, 68% reported that teachers encourage pupils to make up their own minds. However, as noted earlier, when it comes to discussions about current political events, 45% reported pupils usually do not or never bring up these topics for discussion in class. 55% said pupils express their views, even when they differ from the most others. Conversely, 32% reported pupils usually not or never do this. 59% believe that their teachers present multiple sides of an issue in class. However, around 27% reported this practice typically does not occur.

Figure 11: The extent to which diverse views are encouraged/shared



Examining the above findings across different ethnic groups, Asian and Asian British young people appeared most positive in several aspects. Young people of Asian or Asian British background had the highest agreement (77%) that teachers encourage pupils to express their own views. Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean young people showed the lowest agreement at 63%. When asked if teachers encourage pupils to make up their own minds, White young people displayed the lowest agreement (57%), while young people from mixed or multiple ethnic groups had the highest positive response (69%). In terms of pupils initiating discussions on current political events, Asian or Asian British young people had the highest percentage response (52%). Similarly, they demonstrated the highest positive response when asked if pupils express their views in class even when those views differ from most others (60%). Furthermore, Asian or Asian British students (66%) responded most positively about teachers presenting multiple sides of an issue, in contrast with Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean, and Mixed or multiple ethnic group students at 52%.

It was notable in the data that lower proportions of young people from rural areas expressed positive responses to various aspects of their school environment, in the areas of:

- Most of my teachers listen to what I have to say (59% vs. 64% nationally)
- Most of my teachers would stop pupils from being bullied (46% vs. 50% nationally).
- Pupils are supported to practice their religion or beliefs in my school (46% vs. 59% nationally).
- My school is a place where pupils feel safe (35% vs. 40% nationally)
- Pupils have a voice in changing school policies when needed (25% vs. 34% nationally).

However, rural school respondents' views on how schools address racism are generally in line with national responses.

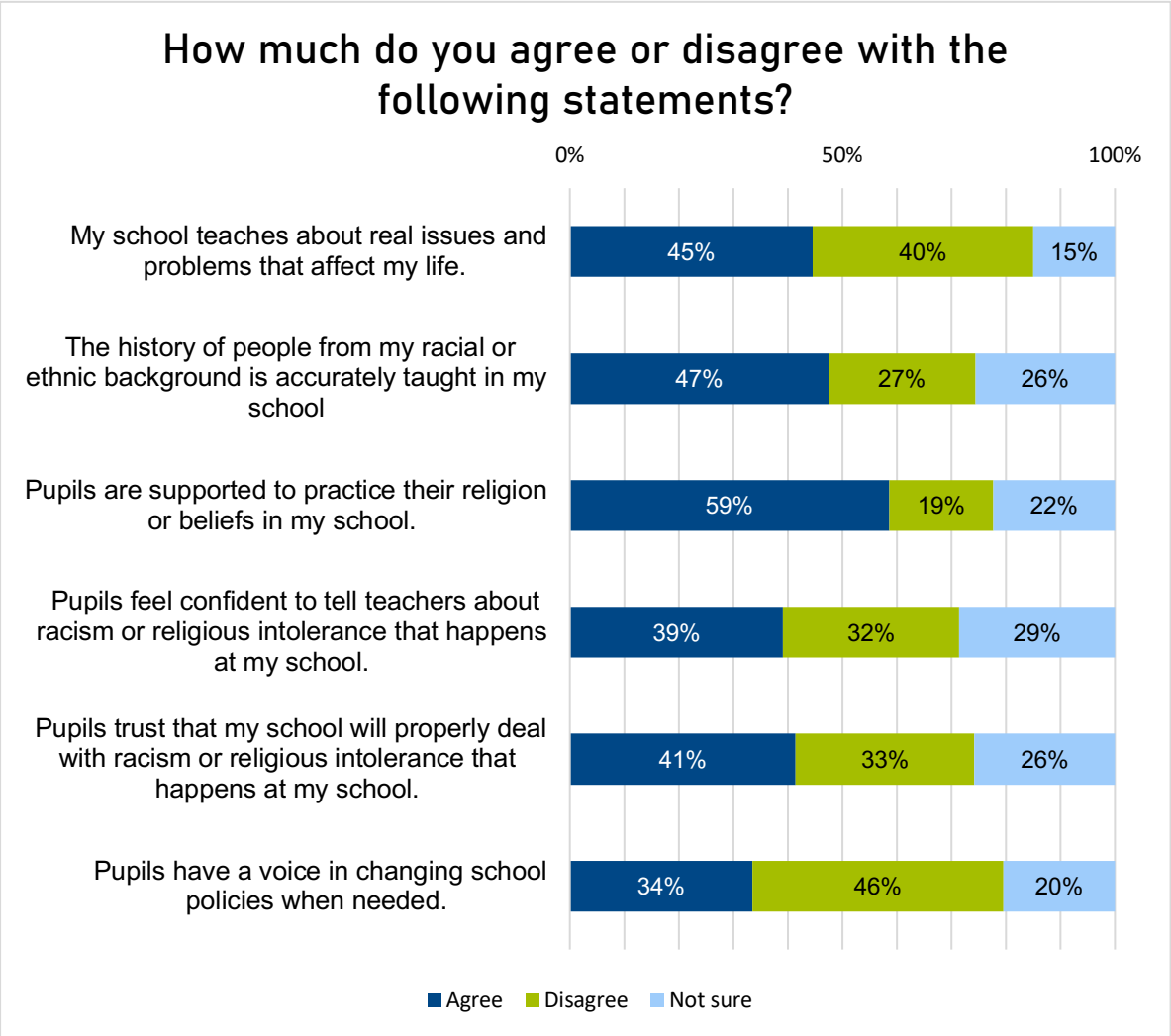
The extent of school engagement with race, faith and wider equality issues

This section draws on young people's perception of the extent they feel that their school engages with race, faith and wider equality issues. We asked how the school deals with these issues, and how prepared their teachers are to discuss those issues in class. As the quote below indicates, some young people were very critical of how their school responds to these issues.

> *I do not feel as if my school deals correctly with racial issues, as it tiptoes around the a subject and does not correctly acknowledge Britain's large history of racism, instead choosing to focus on America's history of racism, specifically slavery."*
>
> Black, Muslim Girl, Academy/Free school, West Midlands

As Figure 12 outlines, the majority (44%) agreed that their school teaches about real issues and problems that affect their lives, However, a considerable proportion (40%) disagreed with this idea. Less than (47%) agreed that the history of people from their racial or ethnic background is accurately taught in their school, with 27% disagreeing. When asked whether pupils feel confident to tell teachers about racism or religious intolerance that happens at school a mixed response was also received. While 39% agreed that pupils feel confident in telling teachers, 32% disagreed and 30% were unsure. A similar finding was evident when asked if pupils trust that the school will properly deal with racism or religious intolerance. 41% agreed that their school do so, whereas 33% disagreed and 27% were unsure. Notably, and potentially reflecting earlier dissatisfaction with unfair treatment of people their age in England, 46% disagreed that pupils have a voice in changing school policies when needed.

Figure 12: Schools' explicit engagement with race and faith equality issues

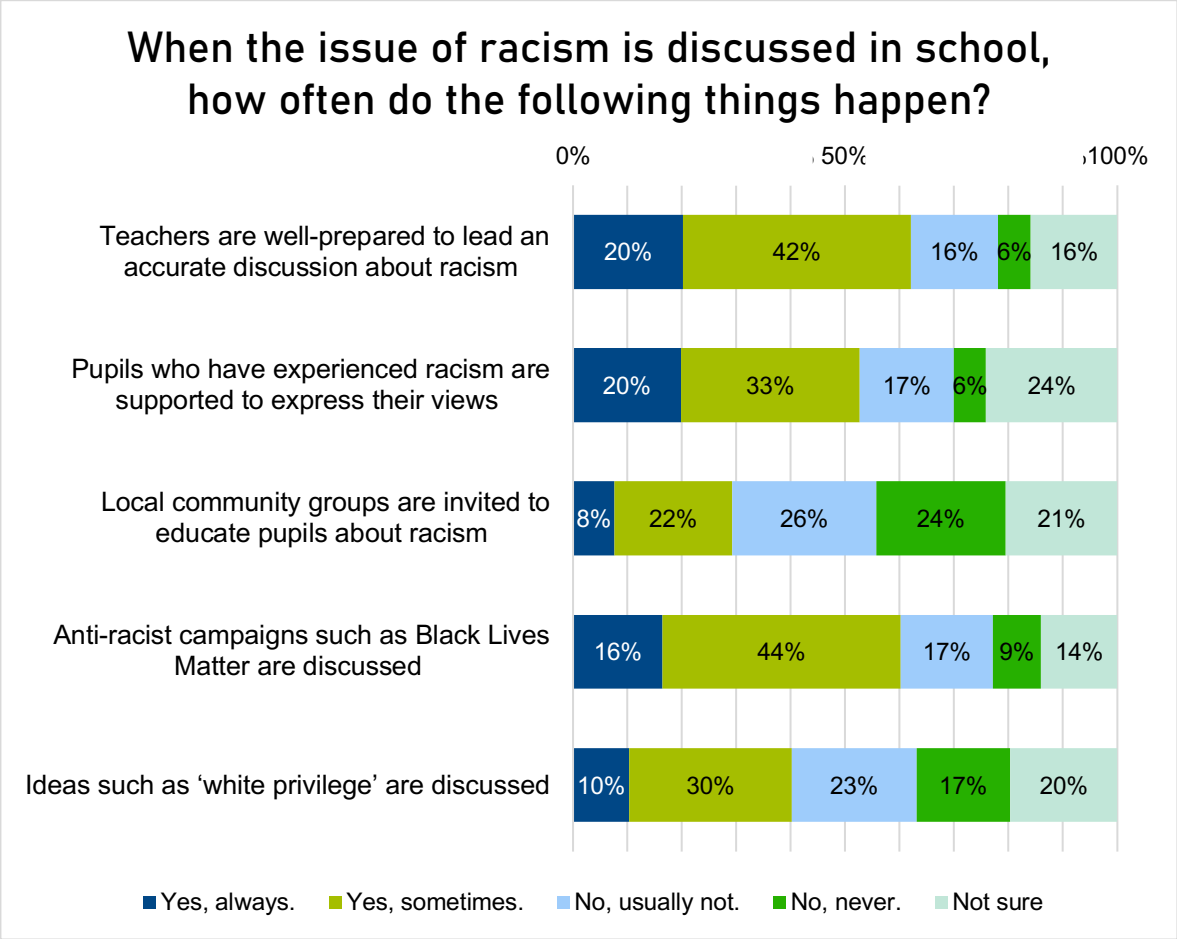


As outlined in Figure 13, we asked a series of questions about what happens when the issue of racism is discussed in schools:

- 61% reported that teachers are always or sometimes well-prepared to lead an accurate discussion about racism. However, a sizeable minority (23%) reported this was usually not or never is the case.
- 52% reported that pupils who experience racism are always or sometimes supported to express their views. However, 23% said they are usually not or never supported.
- A large minority (29%) reported that local community groups are invited to educate pupils about racism, while a half of the respondents reported this usually does not/never happens.

- 59% stated anti-racist campaigns such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) are sometimes or always discussed when the issue of racism is explored in school. 26% reported this usually does not happen or never happens.
- 40% reported that ideas such as 'white privilege' are sometimes/always discussed, and 40% reported such ideas are usually not or never discussed.

Figure 13: What happens when racism is discussed in school



Given significant public debate over political impartiality and discussion of so-called 'contested' views on Black Lives Matter (BLM), we cross-referenced the above data with findings on how often teachers presents several sides of an issue. We found a slightly higher proportion of those who indicated that teachers present several sides of an issue in class, also indicated that BLM was raised in discussions of racism at school. 52% stated BLM was 'sometimes' discussed (vs. 44% of the overall group).

In summary, this section demonstrates that many young people feel that their teachers encourage them to express their views and make up their own minds. However, the data also indicates many young people are unlikely to do so in class when it comes to social and political issues. There are very substantial concerns raised in the survey about how schools address issues of racism and religious intolerance, bullying, peer respect, safety, and how the school deals with good and bad behaviour. Furthermore, the majority (46%) feel they do not have a voice in changing school policies when needed, and substantial cohorts feel their school addresses real problems that affect their lives, and does not teach the history of their community accurately. These findings regarding school climate raise significant concerns about the possibility of young people engaging in a meaningful way with sensitive equality issues.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Freedom of Expression on Race and Faith Equality Issues at School

Young people do not all grow up in the same way and in the exact same stages. Yet, Year 10 (age 14-15) is an important point at which many young people's civic and political consciousness becomes a more visible and important presence in their lives. This is evident from various lines of data. For example, race and faith equality mattered to the majority of the 3156 young people taking the survey, and the majority felt comfortable sharing their views at home with family and with their friends. The data shows the majority do feel teachers encourage them to express their own views.

However, there is a difference between the principle of encouraging pupils to express general views at school, and pupils trusting that *social and political* views can be engaged in a safe, bottom-up, systematic, and fruitful way. As Lundy (2007) argues, 'voice is not enough': children and young people's views need to be actively facilitated, and they need access to the right audiences and influence. 45% of the cohort said pupils usually do not, or never bring up political events for discussion in class. 32% disagree that pupils feel confident about telling teachers about racism or religious intolerance in their school, and a similar figure did not trust that such problems will be properly dealt with. 54% disagreed that pupils in their school treat each other with

respect, and only half (50%) agreed that most teachers would stop them from being bullied. 47% disagreed pupils have a voice in changing school policies when needed.

While 'free speech' has been a focus of government concern in higher education in recent years (DfE 2021), this concern has often taken the form of unsubstantiated moral panic. Young people in schools have almost entirely been ignored in such concerns, and are often presented as needing to be 'protected' rather than enabled to speak, be heard, and have an impact. Despite the existence of the Human Rights Act (1998) as a regulatory framework, our separate analysis of dozens of English policy documents over the past 12 years also indicates a virtual invisibility of a children's rights focus in national education policy (Kitching et al. forthcoming). The survey findings raise significant concerns about the capacity for a significant proportion of young people to speak and be listened to on race, faith and wider matters of concern to them due to issues in their peer and wider school climate. It is apparent for this contingent of young people that the 'personal development' and 'behaviour and attitudes' expectations of school inspection (Ofsted 2023) is not functioning well to address these issues. Indeed, nowhere do these expectations refer to encouraging young people's capacity to engage their rights and be active decision-makers in their schools. At a minimum, it is crucial that the work being done in schools to become Rights Respecting (UNICEF UK 2023) is incentivised, resourced and supported by government, and made a core element of a compassionate school evaluation process. Moreover, there appears to be a particular need to address the concerns of Black, African, Black British and Caribbean young people, and those in rural schools in this regard.

Race and Faith Equality in Formal and Non-Formal Learning Spaces

The survey findings indicate that young people are learning most about social and political issues online. This is not surprising in itself, given the 24-hour online news cycle and the proliferation of social media accounts that address such issues in a variety of creative and accessible ways. However, the majority of young people are not comfortable sharing their views in this space, and the draft version of Online Safety legislation has been criticised for failing to meaningfully address harms facing children and young people while ensuring their right to access information (Judson and Taylor

2023). Schools and non-formal learning spaces *can* play an important role in helping young people to navigate complex political questions. However, there are major concerns about government cuts to youth services in England and Wales (YMCA 2023). In the formal sector, Citizenship Education is only required to be taught in maintained schools, which are now in the minority. The national curriculum itself is largely focused on formal institutions of government, and non-institution-centric forms of civic and political action (including direct protest) are given little room. There is no option to study Politics at GCSE level, which is highly problematic, given its importance to young people's development and their negotiation of political disagreement. Indeed, we find many will keep their feelings to themselves when another pupils says something they strongly disagree with – which may not always be appropriate.

Certainly, the findings indicate the majority adopt a positive, democratic stance on questions of the expression of religious values in school, the regulation of hate speech, and the misrepresentation of peaceful protest. But there are some causes for concern as a sizeable minority (20%) regard debating the existence of racism as being good for democracy, with 27% unsure. Similarly, the data suggests that a notion of racism as reversible exists amongst a sizeable proportion (37%) of White (British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish or Welsh) respondents. These indicate the need for a robust set of guidance and expectations about teaching the systemic nature of racism across the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

The Equality Act (2010) includes race and religion as protected characteristics (DfE 2014). The Act also clarifies that while the content of the school curriculum is excluded from legislation, the delivery of the curriculum is not, and it is expected that schools act in a way that eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relationships across all characteristics. However, the data indicates there does need to be stronger expectations about the accuracy of content taught in schools, and about its relevance to young people's real life problems, which are key aspects of motivation and inclusion at school. Less than 47% agreed the history of people from their racial or ethnic background is accurately taught in school, and 40% disagreed that their school teaches about real issues and problems that affect their lives. It is notable that recent Ofsted (2021) guidance on the teaching of protected characteristics

is geared towards and gender and sexuality specifically, in the context of evaluating Relationships and Sexuality Education. Given the racially and religiously charged nature of recent public discourse over RSE itself (Kitching 2022), It is crucial that the teaching of all protected characteristics is supported and evaluated in a meaningful way that focuses on forms of solidarity across different equality concerns.

Political Impartiality Policy

Our findings speak perhaps most directly to the laws and policies governing impartiality in English schools (DfE 2022). At the heart of these duties is that schools and teachers are not permitted to promote 'partisan' political views or the views of any organisation, movement or set of ideas that is deemed to be contested. Impartiality exists alongside a slew of other legal duties, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Prevent policy (DfE 2015). Together, these create an intricate web of potentially contradictory policies that can make the teaching and learning of political issues extremely difficult. For example, as Quartermaine (2018) has pointed out, the duty of teachers to be politically and religiously neutral is contradicted by the Prevent policy (DfE 2015), which relies on certain judgements about appropriate political and religious views.

It is noteworthy that the bulk of impartiality guidance focuses on schools and teachers, not young people, with only relatively little space given to political activity by pupils. A statutory demarcation is instituted at age twelve: younger pupils are classed as 'junior' and outright prohibited from partisan political activity in state-maintained schools – this law does not govern the private sector. The logic here seems to be that before the age of twelve, pupils are in a 'developmental stage' – and perhaps too naïve and pliable – to 'be political'. But this seems unlikely given that many of the children around the world who have protested climate change have been under the age of twelve.

The policy, thus, is aimed at young people over the age of twelve, who also comprise our sample. In this context, our findings would suggest that the current duties and guidance are unfit for purpose because they effectively end up preventing young people from meaningfully engaging with the political issues that matter to them. That is, whereas most young people see teachers as encouraging them to express their

views and make up their own minds, the guidance is top-down and neglects the factors that inhibit engagement by a significant proportion of young people discussed above.

In our survey, most respondents said that issues of race and faith equality matter to them. They also pointed towards structural factors whereby one's race and/or faith can become a barrier to economic or professional success. However, recent backlash and threats of legal action by the government over teaching around the Black Lives Matter movement and concepts such as white privilege, which have been caste as 'extreme' and 'partisan'[18], would suggest that young people are being discouraged or prevented from engaging with a broad range of anti-racist positions, and specifically those that are voiced and led by racially minoritised people. This would seem to fly in the face of offering young people a balanced curriculum, which is emphasised throughout English education policies, including impartiality.

In principle, the impartiality guidance accepts that certain things are above debate, such as upholding rights and challenging discrimination, including racism. However, the policy approaches these complex issues with a cold and a-historical logic, often presenting the social world as neatly divisible into coherent political views and their 'opposites'. In the case of racism, for example, the upshot of such an approach is that structural accounts are deemed to be contested. Our point here is not to dismiss the importance of teaching in a balanced manner and presenting opposing views. However, the idea of 'balance' as invoked in the policy 1) already accepts and normalises a highly unbalanced and unequal world, and 2) imposes the notion of balance often at the expense of the equally important concept of nuance. For example, the response across the Western political spectrum – right and left – to the war in Gaza in October 2023 has left little room for young people to take a pro-Palestinian stance, to debate international humanitarian law, or to call for a ceasefire, without being accused of undermining Israel's right to defend itself, or worse, siding with Hamas. This has been exacerbated by the former Home Secretary's deeply misguided and

[18] See for example: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/kemi-badenoch-black-history-month-white-privilege-black-lives-matter-b1189547.html and https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/tories-ban-teachers-promoting-black-26247131

divisive comments equating the displaying of Palestinian flags with support for terrorism.[19] In this vein, there has been a concerted effort by politicians to de-historicise the conflict, as if it started with Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on 7th October 2023. The impartiality guidelines do nothing to help schools and teachers to approach these issues in a meaningful and productive manner, and it is not clear how ideas of 'balance' and 'opposing views' are to be defined in this context.

In sum, our findings paint a picture of young people as generally in favour of a balanced, deliberative democracy, as valuing good relationships with their teachers and as circumspect about social media. But they also reflect a need to offer young people a school environment that nourishes their political development and addresses matters of race and faith equality in a sophisticated and meaningful manner.

Resources and CPD for Schools

The project team are developing a resource bank for schools to engage with these issues, and invite practitioners to email us to gain access to CPD opportunities in the area. Please complete this online form if you are interested to find out more and get engaged with us: https://forms.office.com/e/M87Pf5h210

Further analysis and research plans

This report has presented descriptive statistics, and we intend to drill further into the data to examine how statistically significant certain key findings are. The team have interviewed several national and local-level policy stakeholder interviews, and are conducting in-depth case studies in secondary schools in London and Birmingham to understand how these issues are lived and negotiated on a day-today basis. We are hugely grateful to those who continue to participate in this important research.

[19] See https://news.sky.com/story/waving-a-palestinian-flag-on-british-streets-may-not-be-legitimate-suella-braverman-warns-12981988

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APPENDIX A: SCHOOL TYPE CATEGORISATIONS

Table 4: Description of school types in the survey

Official school type	Features	Survey sampling category
Voluntary aided school	Originally these schools were established and run by Christian/church organisations. They accept local authority (LA) funds, but typically own the school estate, contribute to key costs, have more control over school admissions, staffing and curriculum, and may teach religious education according to their own faith.	Voluntary aided
Voluntary controlled school	These schools were originally established and run by religious organisations. However, while retaining their ethos, they are now entirely LA funded/maintained, the LA oversees staffing and admissions, and the schools follows the national curriculum.	Maintained
Foundation school	These schools replaced some previously voluntary-controlled/county schools and are maintained via LA funding. The governing body employs staff and has responsibility for admissions, and the schools follows the national curriculum.	
Community school	These are local authority-maintained schools, where the local authority employs staff, is responsible for admissions and owns the school estate. All schools follow the national curriculum.	
Academy sponsor-led	Academy schools are directly government funded, manage their own finances and staffing, and largely independent of LA control. They may follow their own curriculum. Sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups and other voluntary groups support these schools. Sponsor-led academies may have been encouraged or forced to switch from maintained status.	Academy/Free
Academy converter	Schools that have successfully applied to government to convert from maintained to academy status.	
Free schools	Entirely new school academy-style schools under 2010 Academies Act.	

APPENDIX B: GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORISATIONS

Table 5: Description of urban and rural locations

Government category	Survey category
(England/Wales) Rural town and fringe	Rural
(England/Wales) Rural hamlet and isolated dwellings	
(England/Wales) Rural village in a sparse setting	
(England/Wales) Rural hamlet and isolated dwellings in a sparse setting	
(England/Wales) Rural village	
(England/Wales) Rural town and fringe in a sparse setting	
(England/Wales) Urban city and town in a sparse setting	Urban
(England/Wales) Urban minor conurbation	
(England/Wales) Urban city and town	
(England/Wales) Urban major conurbation	Urban Major

Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk

APPENDIX C: REPRESENTATIVENESS OF SURVEY DATA

Here, we outline the comparability of our dataset with the wider population, drawing on available national statistics for reference. Collecting data from diverse groups and obtaining a substantial amount of responses in this survey was a significant achievement, given the challenges of ensuring participation during a challenging period for schools in England. It's important to note that the data collected may not be statistically representative at national level due to differences in the categories used in this survey compared to relevant nationally available datasets. For instance, the survey offered pupils a more inclusive approach to gender identity by including 'non-binary' alongside 'boy' and 'girl'. However, the School Census only categorises gender in binary terms as boy or girl. Additionally, despite our iterative efforts, we unfortunately did not receive any responses from one of the regions, Yorkshire and Humber. In this section, we will delve into the comparability of our dataset with the population, drawing on available national statistics for reference.

Table 6: Total schools and pupils (state-funded secondary 2022/23) vs survey

	National	Survey participants	% of National
Year 10 Pupils	639989	3156	0.5
Number of schools	3444	29	0.9

Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk

Gender

It appears that the representation of boys in our survey is somewhat lower compared to national statistics. However, making a direct comparison to the national population is challenging due to differences in our survey categories. Our survey data includes non-binary and 'prefer not to say' categories (as shown in the gender percentages earlier). Nevertheless, the overall proportions of boys and girls in both the national and survey data are broadly similar.

Table 7: Year 10 pupils by gender (boys and girls only)

	National	Survey Participants	% of National
Boys	311145	1259	0.4
Girls	304695	1516	0.5

Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk

Ethnicity

Due to the absence of age/year-based national ethnicity data and the inclusion of a "prefer not to say" option in our survey, direct comparisons with Year 10 pupils' ethnicity data were not feasible. However, when we compared our survey's ethnicity data to aggregated national figures, we found a significant alignment. Our survey sample had a strong resemblance with the broader national distribution of young people by ethnicity. This suggests that our survey results are reasonably representative of ethnicities, even with the added complexity of the "prefer not to say" category.

Table 8: Ethnic groups in the survey and national population

Ethnicity	Survey participation %	National pupil %[20]	National age 14-15 group[21]
Asian or Asian British	13.1	12.8	12.2
Black, African, Black British or Caribbean	7	6.0	6.3
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	6.7	6.8	5.9
White[22]	66.9	70.4	73
Another ethnic group	2.7	2.3	2.6
Prefer not to say	3.6	N/A	N/A

Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk and ons.gov.uk

Religion/non-religion

Overall, religious categories in the survey are broadly aligned with the national percentages with a modest discrepancies. Christian young people present a lower percentage in the survey (32%) compared to the national data (37.3%). Similarly, Muslim young people account for 8% in the survey versus 10.9% nationally. However, the survey shows higher percentages for some other groups: non-religious young people are nearly in line with the national percentage (42% in the survey and 41.9% nationally), while Hindu young people are slightly more represented in the survey at 1.9%, compared to 1.7% nationally. There are also slight increases in the survey data for Buddhist, Jewish, and Sikh young people compared to the national percentages. The "Prefer not to say/Not answered" category exhibits a higher percentage in the

[20] The national percentage is based on the total pupils in England including state-funded nursery, primary, secondary, alternative provision (AP) schools and special schools, and non-maintained special schools. Does not include independent schools.
[21] The column depicting the national pupil percentage encompasses data for all students in England, including both primary and secondary levels. Meanwhile, the age group data (obtained from ons.gov.uk) specifically focuses on year groups 14 and 15, which pertain to students in Year 10, reflecting their ages. After analysing both sets of data, we've observed a significant alignment with our survey data.
[22] Irish Traveller or Gypsy pupils, constituting 1% (n=35) of the White ethnicity group, were excluded from the White category due to the very distinct nature of their experiences of racism in comparison to other subcategories within the White group.

survey (6.7%) than in the national data (6.1%). The category that displays the most significant disparity is 'Any other religion,' showing notably higher representation in the survey compared to the national percentage (0.4% nationally versus 6.5% in the survey).

Table 9: Religion/non-religion in the survey and national population

Religion/Non-religion	Survey %	National %[23]
Buddhist	0.7	0.3
Christian (all denominations)	32	37.6
Hindu	1.9	1.7
Jewish	0.9	0.5
Muslim	8	10.9
No religion	42	41.6
Sikh	1.3	1.0
Any other religion	6.5	0.4
Prefer not to say / Not answered	6.7	6.1

Source: ons.gov.uk

[23] The available national data is derived from the age (14-15 years) information of the general population obtained from the 2021 census. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data about the religious characteristics of pupils in state-funded secondary schools.

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