

Young People and the Scottish Parliament

Summary Report for Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

7th April 2015



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Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
1.1	Introduction.....	3
1.2	Interpretation of findings.....	3
2	Summary.....	4
3	Key findings.....	5
3.1	Pupils' knowledge of the Scottish Parliament.....	5
3.2	Pupil engagement with the Scottish Parliament.....	6
3.3	Children and young people's involvement with the Scottish Parliament.....	7
3.4	Pupils' concerns about local issues.....	9
4	Appendix.....	13
4.1	Sampling.....	13
4.2	Publication of data.....	13
4.3	Quality.....	13

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of questions asked by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People as part of Ipsos MORI Scotland's Young People in Scotland Survey 2014. The questions covered pupils' knowledge and views of the Scottish Parliament and reporting concerns on local issues.

In total, 58 secondary schools throughout Scotland took part in the survey, with 2,016 pupils completing questionnaires. The age groups included in the survey were 11-18 year olds in S1 to S6. Fieldwork was carried out between 23rd September and 14th November 2014.

1.2 Interpretation of findings

When interpreting the findings, it is important to remember that the results are based only on a sample of the Scottish secondary school population, and not on the entire school population. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between subgroups are therefore significant.

When differences between estimates are specifically commented on in this report, these differences are statistically significant. For example, reporting that 'boys are more likely than girls to say they know at least 'a fair amount' about what the Scottish Parliament does' would indicate that the gender difference is significant at the 5% level.

Data are weighted by gender, year group, urban-rural classification and SIMD classification¹. The effect of weighting is shown in the computer tables.

Where percentages do not sum up to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of don't know/not stated categories, or multiple answers.

For detail of the approach to sampling, see Appendix.

¹ Gender and year group were weighted by data from the Scottish Government Pupil Census (2014) data. Urban rural classification was weighted by data from the Scottish Government Pupil Census (2013) data since 2014 data was not available at the time of analysis. SIMD classification was weighted by data from National Records Scotland 'Population Estimates by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2012)'.

2 Summary

Overall, less than half of pupils said that they knew about what the Scottish Parliament does, with 42% of pupils saying they knew either 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal'. The same proportion of pupils (42%) said they did not know very much about what the Scottish Parliament does, with 13% saying that they had heard of it but knew nothing about what it does.

The most common ways in which pupils had engaged with the Scottish Parliament were 'seeing it on television' (71%) and 'learning about it at school' (62%). More than a third of pupils (35%) said that they had been to the Scottish Parliament in person. A quarter had visited the Scottish Parliament with school, while 12% had visited with either family, friends, someone else or on their own.

In terms of children and young people's involvement with the Scottish Parliament, pupils attached a high level of importance to MSPs listening to children and young people. The majority (81%) thought that it was 'important' or 'very important' that MSPs listened to the views of children and young people, with half feeling that this was 'very important' (49%).

While most pupils placed a high level of importance on MSPs listening to the views of children and young people, they were less likely to think that this happened in practice. Just over half of pupils thought that MSPs did not listen to the views of children and young people (56% of pupils said MSPs did not listen 'very much' or 'at all'). In comparison, only a quarter of pupils thought that MSPs do listen (26% of pupils said MSPs listen 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal').

Pupils also felt it was important that children and young people were involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, although not as important as being listened to by MSPs. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of pupils said it was 'important' or 'very important' that children and young people were involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

Pupils said that they would be most likely to talk informally with family (41%) or friends (35%) if they had a concern about a local issue. Saying they would talk to, or contact someone in a formal capacity, such as a local councillor (27%), a local council office (23%) or an MSP or MP (19%) was less common.

Opinion among pupils was divided over whether or not they think their views are taken into consideration over local issues. A third of pupils (33%) thought that their views would be listened to, while a quarter thought that they would not (26%). Just under a third of pupils (31%) said that they did not know.

3 Key findings

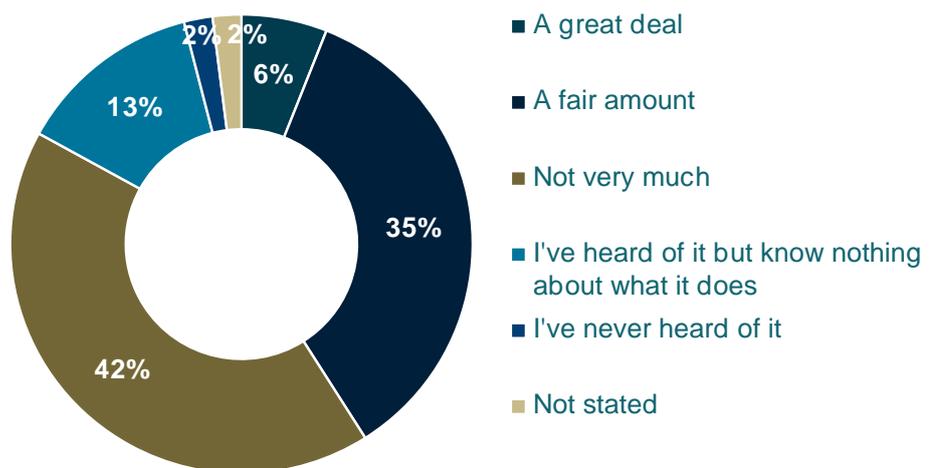
3.1 Pupils’ knowledge of the Scottish Parliament

Pupils were asked how much they knew about what the Scottish Parliament does. Overall, less than half of pupils said that they knew what the Scottish Parliament does (42% of pupils said they knew either ‘a fair amount’ or ‘a great deal’) (Figure 3.1).

Forty-two per cent of pupils said that they did not know very much, 13% said that they had heard of but knew nothing about what the Scottish Parliament does and 2% had never heard of the Scottish Parliament.

Figure 3.1 – Pupils’ knowledge of what the Scottish Parliament does

How much do you know about what the Scottish Parliament does?



Base: All pupils (2,016)

Source: Ipsos MORI

There were differences in levels of knowledge by both gender and age. Boys were more likely than girls to say they knew what the Scottish Parliament does (45% of boys, compared with 39% of girls).

Pupils in S6 were more likely to say they know about what the Scottish Parliament does than pupils overall. Fifty-four per cent of S6 pupils said that they knew at least ‘a fair amount’ about what the Scottish Parliament does, compared with 42% overall.

It should be noted that the survey took place just after the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum. Campaign groups targeted young voters aged 16 to 17 who would previously not have had the opportunity to participate in political voting. This may explain in part the

higher levels of knowledge of the Scottish Parliament among senior pupils, a trend that can be seen across the results.

3.2 Pupil engagement with the Scottish Parliament

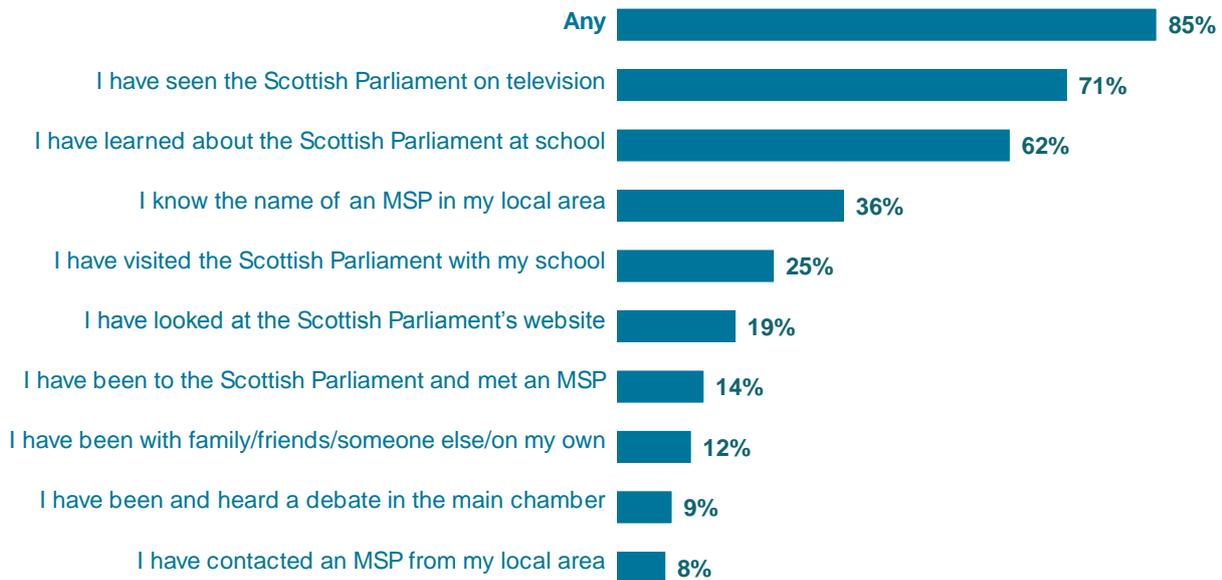
In order to identify the ways in which pupils engaged with the Scottish Parliament, pupils were presented with a series of statements and asked which of the activities, if any, they had done.

The most common ways in which pupils engaged with the Scottish Parliament were 'seeing it on television' (71%) and 'learning about it at school' (62%) (Figure 3.2).

Just over a third of pupils (35%) said that they had been to the Scottish Parliament in person for at least one reason. Twenty-five per cent had visited the Scottish Parliament with school, 12% had visited with either family, friends, someone else or on their own and 9% of pupils had heard a debate in the main chamber.

Figure 3.2 – Pupil engagement with the Scottish Parliament

Which, if any, of the following things have you done?



Base: All pupils (2,016)

Source: Ipsos MORI

S6 pupils and those living in the least deprived areas were more likely than pupils overall to have engaged with the Scottish Parliament. Forty-five per cent of S6 pupils and 35% of pupils in the least deprived areas had visited the Scottish Parliament with school, compared with 25% overall. Similarly, 18% of S6 pupils and 17% of pupils in the least deprived areas had visited either with family, friends, someone else or on their own, compared with 12% overall.

S6 pupils and pupils in the least deprived areas were also more likely than pupils overall to know the name of a local MSP. Forty-eight per cent of S6 pupils and 42% of those in the least deprived areas know this, compared with 36% overall.

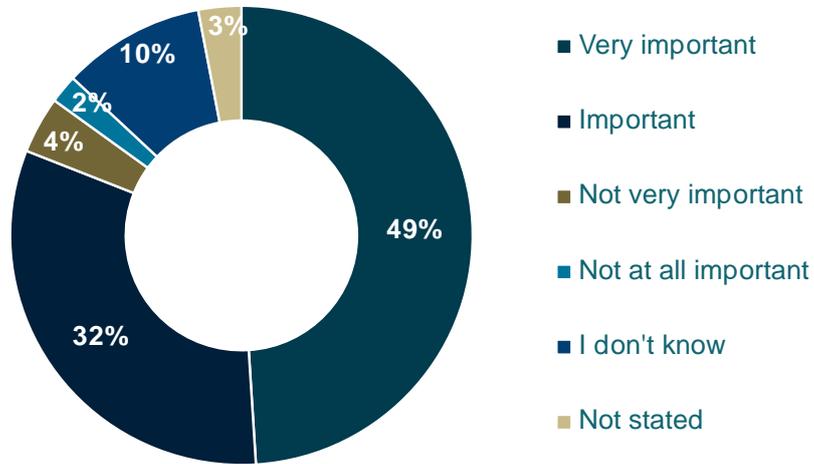
3.3 Children and young people’s involvement with the Scottish Parliament

Pupils were asked how important they felt it was that MSPs listened to the views of children and young people, the extent to which they thought MSPs actually did so and how important it was that children and young people are involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

The figures highlight the high level of importance pupils attach to MSPs listening to children and young people. The majority (81%) thought that it was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ that MSPs listened to the views of children and young people, with half feeling that this was ‘very important’ (49%). Only 6% of pupils thought this was unimportant (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 – Importance of MSPs listening to the views of children and young people

How important or unimportant is it that MSPs listen to the views of children and young people?



Base: All pupils (2,016)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Girls were more likely than boys to think that it was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ that MSPs listen to the views of children and young people (84% of girls, compared with 80% of boys). Similarly, pupils in the least deprived areas were more likely than pupils overall to think this was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (86%, compared with 81% overall).

Knowledge of the Scottish Parliament was also linked to pupils’ views on this issue. Pupils who said they knew at least ‘a fair amount’ about what the Scottish Parliament does were more

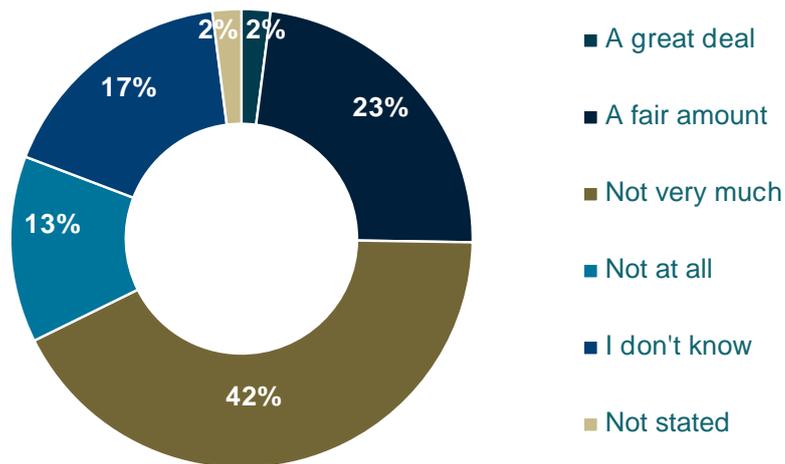
likely than pupils overall to think it was 'important' or 'very important' that MSPs listen to the views of children and young people (87%, compared with 81% overall).

While most pupils placed a high level of importance on MSPs listening to the views of children and young people, they were less likely to think that this happened in practice.

As shown in Figure 3.4, just over half of pupils thought that MSPs did not listen to the views of children and young people (56% of pupils said MSPs did not listen very much or at all). In comparison, only a quarter of pupils thought that MSPs do listen (26% of pupils said MSPs listen 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal'). Almost a fifth of pupils did not know if MSPs listen to children and young people or not (17%).

Figure 3.4 – How much MSPs listen to the views of children and young people

How much do you think MSPs listen to the views of children and young people?



Base: All pupils (2,016)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Boys were more likely than girls to think that the views of children and young people were listened to by MSPs (28% of boys, compared with 23% of girls).

Again, knowledge of the Scottish Parliament was also linked to pupils' views on this issue. Pupils who said that they knew at least 'a fair amount' about what the Scottish Parliament does were more likely than pupils overall to think that children and young people's views were listened to by MSPs (34%, compared with 26% overall).

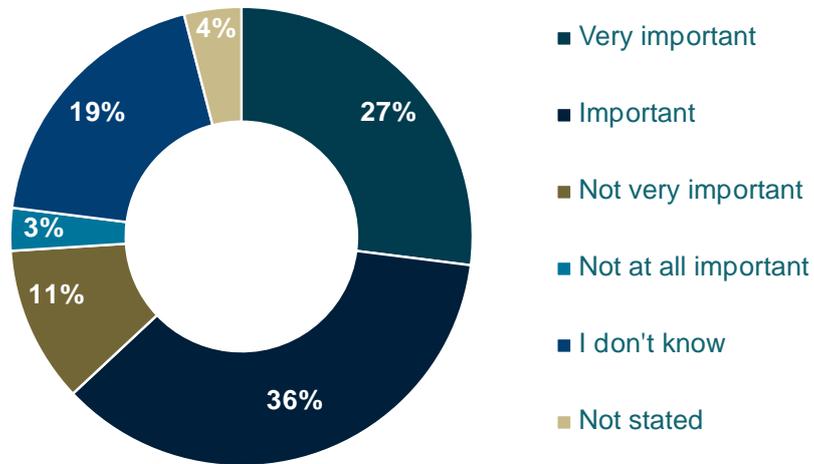
While pupils felt it was important that children and young people were involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, it was not considered as important as being listened to by MSPs.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of pupils said it was 'important' or 'very important' that children and young people were involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, with just over a quarter

saying this was ‘very important’ (27%). Fourteen per cent of pupils said this was unimportant, while 19% said that they did not know. (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 – Importance of being involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament

How important or unimportant is it that children and young people are involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament?



Base: All pupils (2,016)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Girls were more likely than boys to say that children and young people's involvement in the work of the Scottish Parliament was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (67%, compared with 60%).

S6 pupils and pupils who said they know at least ‘a fair amount’ about what the Scottish Parliament does were more likely than pupils overall to say that children and young people's involvement in the work of the Scottish Parliament was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (81% and 73%, respectively, compared with 63% overall).

3.4 Pupils’ concerns about local issues

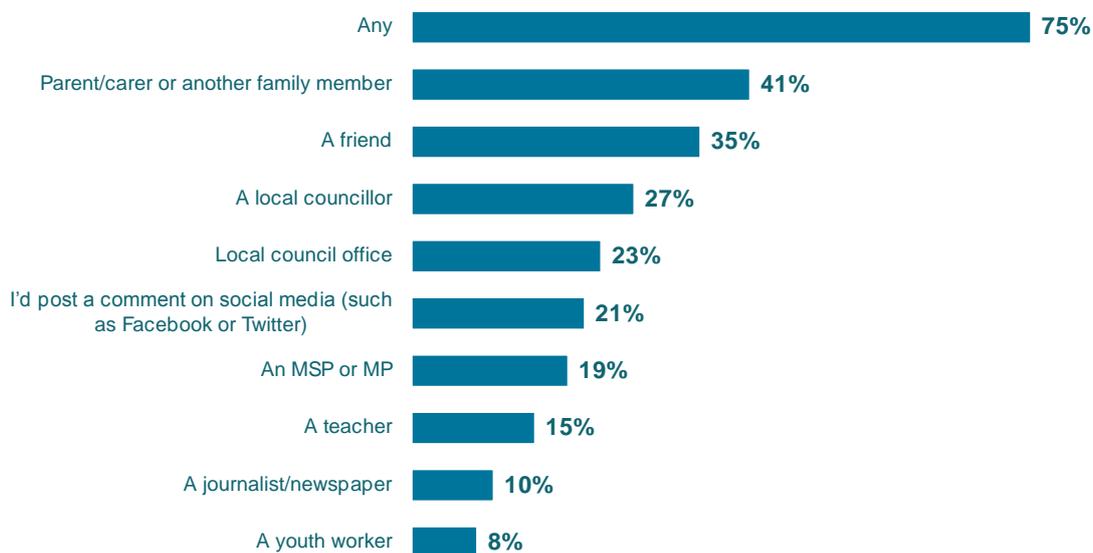
Pupils were asked to select from a list who, if anyone, they would talk to or contact if they had a concern about a local issue (such as a swimming pool/sports centre/library closing down, a new road being built or a new rule about playing in the park).

Overall, the majority of pupils (75%) say they would talk to someone about an issue in their local community. As shown in Figure 3.6, pupils were most likely to say they would talk about local issues informally with family (41%) or friends (35%).

Saying they would talk to, or contact someone in a formal capacity, such as a local councillor (27%), a local council office (23%) or an MSP or MP (19%) was less common.

Figure 3.6 – Who pupils would contact about local issues

Imagine you had a concern about a local issue. Who, if anyone, would you talk to about it?



Base: All pupils (2,016)

Source: Ipsos MORI

S6 pupils and those from the least deprived areas were more likely than pupils overall to say they would contact someone if they had a concern about a local issue (83% and 80%, respectively, compared with 75% overall).

S6 pupils were more likely than pupils overall to say they would talk to or contact someone in a formal capacity: 42% of S6 pupils said they would talk to or contact a local councillor, compared with 27% of pupils overall; 29% would talk to or contact an MSP or MP, compared with 19% overall; and 22% would talk to or contact a teacher, compared with 15% overall.

Girls were more likely than boys to say they would talk to family or friends if they had a concern about a local issue. Forty-six per cent of girls would talk to a parent/carer or another family member, compared with 37% of boys, while 38% of would talk to a friend, compared with 32% of boys.

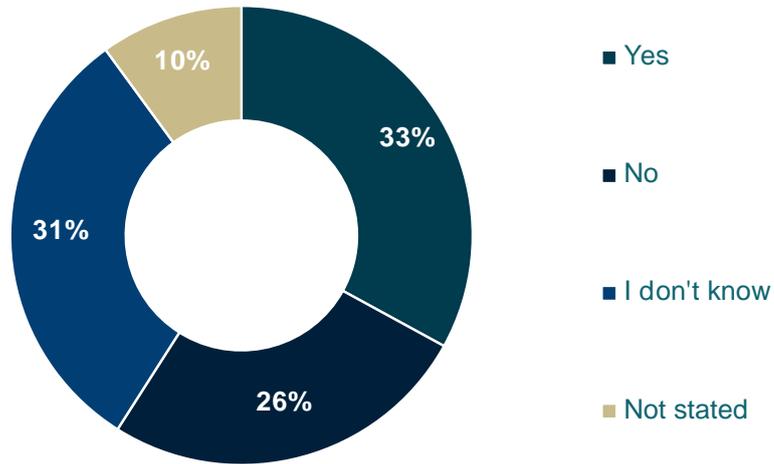
Those who would talk to or contact someone if they had a concern about a local issue were then asked if they thought their views would be listened to. As shown in Figure 3.7, opinion

among pupils was divided over whether or not they think their views are taken into consideration over local issues.

A third of pupils (33%) thought that their views would be listened to, while a quarter thought that they would not (26%). Just under a third of pupils (31%) said that they did not know if their views would be listened to.

Figure 3.7 – Views on concerns about local issues

And do you think your views would be listened to?



Base: All pupils who would talk to people/organisations about a local issue (1,517)

Source: Ipsos MORI

3.5 Conclusion

Overall, knowledge of, and engagement with, the work of the Scottish Parliament was low. While there was no clear pattern by gender, there did appear to be a pattern by pupil age. Older pupils (particularly those in S6) have greater awareness of, and engagement with, the work of the Scottish Parliament than younger pupils.

Pupils thought that their voice should be heard - the majority of pupils reported that it was important that MSPs listen to the views of children and young people. However, most pupils did not think that these views would be listened to in practice.

Pupils who were knowledgeable about the work of the Scottish Parliament, were more likely to think that it was important to engage with that work (either through MSPs listening to their views or by actively being involved with the work of the Scottish Parliament). Furthermore,

they were also more likely to believe that MSPs would listen to the views of young people. It is important to note that this relationship is most likely reciprocal, while knowledge of the Scottish Parliament might drive the belief that engagement is important, it is also possible that believing in the importance of the engagement increases the desire to become knowledgeable about the Scottish Parliament and its work.

4 Appendix

4.1 Sampling

The Scottish Government school contacts database was used as the sampling frame. All state funded secondary schools in Scotland were included in the sampling frame, while independent and special schools were excluded. The overall sample therefore comprised 318 state secondary schools throughout Scotland. This sampling frame was stratified by local authority, school size, and urban-rural classification and a random start point ensured a representative sample of secondary schools was produced.

The age groups included in the survey were 11-18 year olds in S1 to S6, with each school randomly allocated two of these year groups. The survey was administered by class teachers, using self-completion questionnaires in a mixed ability class such as Personal, Health and Social Education or Religious Education, during one classroom period. Teachers were provided with instructions on how to administer the questionnaire to their class. To ensure confidentiality, each pupil was provided with a sealable envelope for their completed questionnaire.

4.2 Publication of data

As with all our studies, there should be no publication of the data without the prior approval of Ipsos MORI Scotland. This would only be refused on the basis of inaccuracy and misinterpretation of the results.

4.3 Quality

All aspects of this study were carried out to the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252.

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