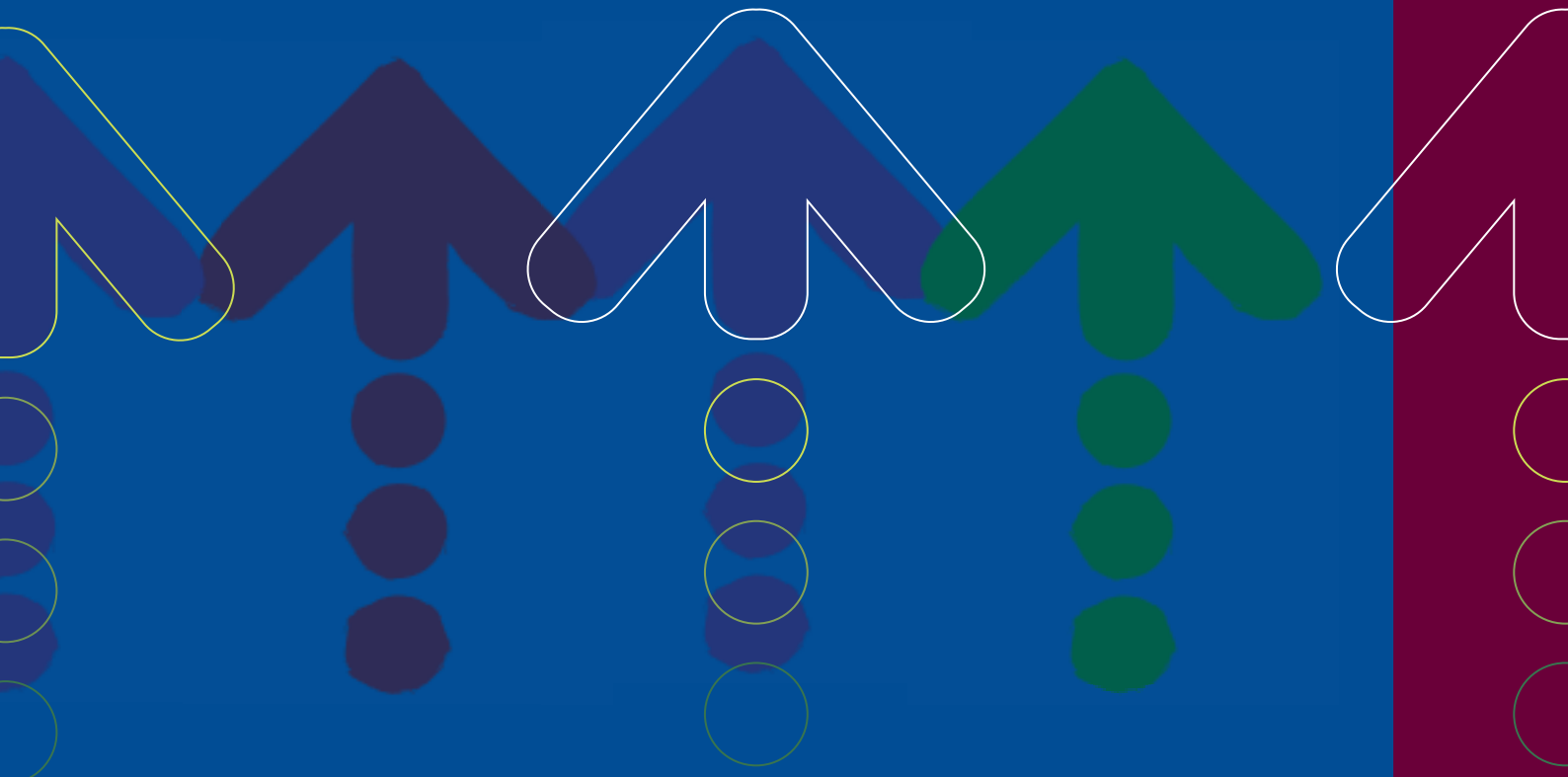


research report

Raising the leaving learning age

are the public convinced?

A survey of parents and teenagers



Frank Villeneuve-Smith,
Liz Marshall and Silvia Munoz



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Foreword

This research explores the attitude of teenagers and parents to one of the most significant changes in education policy that we're likely to see for a generation. For the past 35 years teenagers have been able to choose to leave learning at 16 and data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that a small but significant number do. Some go on to low-skilled jobs and others join the ranks of the unemployed or pursue other paths. If the proposals in *Raising expectations* are implemented these two paths will no longer be open to teenagers.

Arguably, for these proposals to be successful, policy-makers need widespread public support for the notion that post-16 education and training is good for the individual, the community and the economy. Without public support any requirement for 16 and 17 year olds to remain in learning will be difficult to enforce and may flounder.

This is why we felt it was crucial to explore the views of parents and teenagers at this time. The research begins by broadly exploring whether people support the idea of compulsory learning after 16. It goes on to look at issues such as whether people believe in the expressed benefits of learning and their attitudes towards the rights of teenagers to make a free choice at 16.

Compliance is one of the most contentious areas in *Raising expectations* and this research does not shy away from tackling this issue. Interestingly, it reveals that there is very little appetite among parents and even less among teenagers for hard measures to be taken against young people who refuse to participate in learning. Instead, there is more support for a combination of extra help, financial support and soft penalties. Indeed, the research questions the extent of support policy-makers will get from the public if teenagers who drop out of learning are faced with criminal or civil penalties.

The proposals in *Raising expectations* represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to put in place a system that will help improve our nation's skills, raise the ambitions of teenagers and tackle the blight of deprivation. But, as this research shows, there is still more work to be done to convince the public that compelling all teenagers to remain in post-16 learning will tackle our social ills and the job is a complex one. The debate is set to continue.

John Stone

Chief Executive
Learning and Skills Network

1 Executive summary

This research explores the attitudes of parents and teenagers towards the proposals in the *Raising expectations* Green Paper. It is based on a public opinion poll of 920 parents and 380 teenagers, which ran between 30 March and 10 April 2007. The results were analysed by Learning and Skills Network statisticians.

It begins by considering whether parents and teenagers broadly support the proposal to make it compulsory for all young people to remain in some form of compulsory education or training until their 18th birthday. It goes on to look in more detail at whether they agree with the suggested benefits of the proposals and how participation in learning might be enforced.

There is a broad base of support for the change among adults, with 71.2% of parents agreeing that the proposals are a good idea. Teenagers, by comparison, are less enthusiastic about the proposals with only 50.5% expressing support for the change.

A socio-economic analysis of the results provides some intriguing findings. Seventy-seven percent of parents from low-income families broadly support the proposal, and are the group most likely to express support. The group least likely to support the proposals are middle-class, white-collar parents – 30% of them disagree with the proposals and 65% agree.

One of the criticisms of the proposals is that they override the existing freedom of 16 year olds to choose whether or not to continue learning, an issue that the research explores with both teenagers and parents. The majority of parents (59.7%) support the view that the state should guide 16 year olds and that they aren't ready to make a choice of their own, while a clear majority of teenagers (71.3%) are in favour of retaining their right to choose. The most revealing answers to this question come from the parents who disagree with the broad proposals. An unequivocal 93.8% of this group agree that 16 year olds have the right to choose whether or not to stay in learning.

The government has suggested that this change will bring about many social, economic and individual benefits. The research explores to what extent parents and teenagers share this view. Parents and teenagers appear to agree with the idea that raising the leaving learning age will benefit business and the individual, but they are less convinced that it will bring about the promised social change:

- 68.1% of parents agree that the move will provide employers with a better trained workforce
- 72.4% of parents agree that the change will help provide teenagers with the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career

- only 20.9% believe that it will reduce the number of teenagers who get involved in crime
- only 13.2% of parents believe that it will help reduce teenage pregnancy.

Compulsion is one of the most contentious areas of the proposals and *Raising expectations* makes it clear that the government believes that there will be limited compliance without enforcement. Perhaps inevitably, parents do not believe that young people from the most vulnerable groups in society will comply with the change:

- 82.6% of parents believe that teenagers who have drug or alcohol addiction will not comply
- 83.2% believe that teenagers who are involved in crime will not comply.

A more surprising result is that 80.9% of parents believe that young people who simply lack interest in education and training will not comply.

The issue of responsibility goes hand in hand with compliance – but who should take responsibility for ensuring that teenagers take part in learning? The survey results show a clear message to ‘keep it in the family’. Among parents, 45.3% believe it is their responsibility and 28.4% think it is the teenager’s responsibility. By comparison, 56.3% of teenagers say they should be responsible for ensuring they continue in learning and only 22.9% think it is a parental responsibility.

Enforcement is another contentious area. The results show that while parents agree that doing nothing is not an option, there is little public appetite for hard measures against young people who don’t take part in learning. The greatest weight of support among parents was for young people to be offered financial incentives, with 65.5% believing that this will ensure their participation. In direct comparison, only 11.3% of parents support the idea of issuing fines and only 15.4% support the idea of criminal sanctions. Like parents, teenagers did not support penalties for those who drop out of learning and did support the idea of offering financial incentives.

Finally, survey participants were asked what steps should be taken to persuade employers to offer teenagers structured training. The idea that won most support (59.1%) was offering tax breaks and the next most popular idea was imposing hard penalties, such as prosecuting company directors who refuse to comply (31%).

The survey shows that although there is considerable support for raising the leaving learning age, the picture is more complex than this over-arching figure would suggest, with both positive messages and a series of challenges for policy-makers.

2 Background

In March 2007 the government launched the *Raising expectations* Green Paper,¹ which sets out proposals for making it compulsory from 2015 for all teenagers to stay in some form of education or training until they reach their 18th birthday. If successfully implemented, this change could be the most significant shift in education policy in a generation. The government has promised that it will help ensure that all young people can fulfil their own potential, tackle the blight of deprivation, inequality and poverty, and provide employers with the sort of skilled workforce that will ensure they are able to compete in an ever more competitive global market.

In the proposals, the government says that not all teenagers will be required to continue learning in a classroom until they are 18. Instead, they will be given options that could range between undertaking A-levels at a school or college, doing a vocational course at a college or doing structured on-the-job training, such as an apprenticeship. As long as teenagers are working towards a qualification they will be free to choose a path that best meets their individual talents and goals.

The compulsory element of the proposals is one of the biggest changes. It will no longer be an option for teenagers to be simply economically inactive or to do a job that does not provide formal and accredited training. Indeed, the Green Paper does not shy away from considering ways to penalise those who do not participate in education or training voluntarily. A highly accurate registration system is proposed that will enable local authorities and guidance service providers to monitor young people. Those who drop out of education and training will be helped by guidance professionals; they will offer active encouragement and practical support to persuade the teenager to re-engage. If all else fails, a teenager may be issued with a Civil Attendance Order and there are likely to be sanctions through either a civil or criminal process if this is subsequently breached.

1 DfES (2007). *Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16*. HMSO

The proposals followed the Leitch Review of Skills, which highlighted the need for Britain to improve the skills of its workforce to ensure businesses are able to remain competitive. But providing skilled workers is not the only argument in support of this change. Under the present system, most young people decide whether to remain in formal education or training at the age of 16. Despite initiatives to encourage teenagers to stay on, currently only 76%² in England choose to continue learning. The UK participation rates place us number 20 out of 30 OECD countries.³ Many young people from deprived backgrounds are simply not engaging with a system that could help guarantee them a better future.

The statistics on the cost to both the individual and country of non-participation in post-16 learning make stark reading, as well as highlighting some of the arguments in support of the change. A recent report published by the Prince's Trust and the Royal Bank of Scotland Group, based on research conducted by the London School of Economics,⁴ provides some compelling evidence. The researchers suggest that around one-fifth of young people in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and around nine percent of young people in England belong to this NEET group.

In the report, the researchers estimate that youth unemployment costs the economy £10 million each day and costs the state around £20 million per week in Jobseeker's Allowance payments alone. The cost to the individual is also acute: the average wage return of staying on in education or training is about 11% for men and 18% for women over a lifetime. Earnings are not the only thing affected: low educational achievement is linked to health problems and crime rates. And, say the report's authors, improving the educational achievements of one generation is likely to inspire the next.

It is many years since the 1919 Education Act made it obligatory for all children to remain in education until they were 14 and the 1944 Education Act raised the school-leaving age to 15. Moreover, it is 35 years since legislation was introduced to raise the school-leaving age to 16,⁵ Could this be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get it right for the individual, economy and society?

The proposals in *Raising expectations* are not without critics. Alison Wolf, Sir Roy Griffiths Professor of Public Sector Management at King's College, London is one commentator who has raised concerns. In an article in the *Financial Times*, Professor Wolf suggested that making it compulsory for teenagers to stay in education or training until they are 18 was a restriction on personal freedom and made little economic sense.⁶ She argued that under the current system whether or not teenagers decide to stay on in education they are making a 'rational decision'. In the article she went on to suggest that there is little value in completing a low-level qualification or training scheme and that getting a job, even a low-skilled job, substantially increases the chance of teenagers getting another one in the future.

2 Green Paper on raising the participation age, Ministerial Statement, Alan Johnson, March 2007

3 Green Paper on raising the participation age, Ministerial Statement, Alan Johnson, March 2007

4 The cost of exclusion: counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK, Prince's Trust 2007

5 V&A Museum of Childhood, Education legislation in England since 1800, accessed from www.vam.ac.uk/moc/childrens_lives/education_creativity/education_england/index.html on 11/4/07

6 'The harm in forcing children to stay on at school', Professor Alison Wolf, Financial Times, 16/01/2007

Professor Wolf asserted that forcing teenagers to attend low-level post-16 courses does little to raise their standards of literacy and numeracy, and also wrote that 'you cannot make people learn if they neither want to nor see the point of it'.

The Green Paper does not shy away from describing the sanctions that employers who take on young people and deny them training will face. The paper says that the government wants to minimise the burden on the employer but at the same time intends to investigate how it can build on existing checking and enforcement arrangements to support the change in policy. If employers are not complying with their new duties they will first be asked to remedy the situation; if they continue to fail to meet their duties they will be issued with an Enforcement Notice; and if such a notice is ignored they will be faced with a fine.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI), which broadly supports the proposals, has also voiced concerns. In a statement released on 22 March 2007 its Director-General, Richard Lambert, said that we need a qualifications system that captures the on-the-job training that many firms already offer and that disaffected young people might be put off if the programmes on offer remind them too much of school.⁷

The potential sanctions for teenagers who do not comply with the change have also attracted critics, with teachers' and lecturers' unions expressing their concerns. Commenting on the Green Paper, Steve Sinnott, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: 'This is entirely the wrong approach. The government appears to want it both ways: voluntary involvement in education and training post-16 but being criminalised if you do not take part.'⁸ The University and College Union (UCU) has also expressed concerns over the proposals. In a statement released on 22 March 2007, Paul Mackney, Joint General Secretary of UCU, called for adequate funding for the proposals, and for the use of incentives as opposed to penalties.⁹

Indeed, there is a great deal to get right before the education system is ready to support this change in policy. The Green Paper itself recognises that some crucial elements need to be put in place before the change can be accommodated.

The key elements include:

- 14–19 diplomas, which will offer young people of all abilities flexible learning routes that are relevant to the world of work
- a Foundation Learning Tier, which will replace the current complex range of provision and qualifications below Level 2 and promises to be easier for employers and learners to navigate
- Apprenticeships and creating a system where there is a place for every young person who wants to take up this type of training

7 Keeping young people in school or training until 18 welcome but detail is crucial to success, CBI, 22/02/07 accessed from www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/0363c1f07c6ca12a8025671c00381cc7/15e37460baf4eecd802572a6003a913f?OpenDocument on 15/4/07

8 Raising of the school leaving age to 18, NUT, 22 March 2007 accessed from www.teachers.org.uk/resources/word/pr2207.doc on 15.4.07

9 Education and training until 18 must be voluntary and backed by resources, UCU, 22 March 2007 accessed from www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2087 on 15/4/07

- a new pastoral support system that will help prevent young people from disengaging from the education system; the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) will announce the new guidance in 2008 based on pilots that will trial different approaches, due to start this year
- new functional skills qualifications that will help people master English, maths and ICT to a standard that will enable them to take part effectively in everyday life.

Putting these factors into place over the next six years will be crucial to the success of the proposals to extend the compulsory leaving learning age. This is a particular challenge when you consider that a national Apprenticeship scheme is the only element already in place, and this is not without its problems. Learning and Skills Council (LSC) figures show that during 2006/07 only 55% of young people who joined an Apprenticeship at Level 2 went on to complete the entire framework.¹⁰ However, this is a marked improvement on 2004/05 rates, which ran at 40%¹¹ and 2005/06 completion rates, which ran at 53%. There are also reports that 'in some parts of the country those that want to start an Apprenticeship are unable to find places'.¹²

Quite simply, there's a long journey ahead before the proposals can become a reality.

10 Success rates in LSC-funded work-based learning provision, Learning and Skills Council, 9/03/07

11 'Apprentices stay the course', Peter Kingston, *Guardian*, 13/03/07

12 *Guardian* 13.03.07

3 Research aims and methodology

The proposals in the *Raising expectations* Green Paper arguably demand something of a change in public attitudes towards post-16 education and training. Under current arrangements most teenagers make a decision about their learning future at 16 and remaining in learning is optional. However, the Green Paper asserts that not taking part in learning will no longer be an option for 16 and 17 year olds. The success of this policy will, in part, depend on the support it has among parents and teenagers themselves.

Therefore, the overarching aim of the research was to test the attitudes of parents and teenagers towards making it compulsory for young people to take part in some form of formal education or training until their 18th birthday. The two groups included in the research are:

- parents of current teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18
- teenagers who are currently between the ages of 13 and 18.

Research commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has already explored the attitudes of the general public towards extending the leaving learning age. The research broadly questioned whether people think it is a good idea for teenagers to remain in education or training until they are 18, whether there should be a change in the law and whether employers should provide more training. Unsurprisingly, people supported the ideas put to them in the questions with nine out of 10 people saying that they support the idea of young people staying in education or training until they are 18.¹³

The aim of LSN's research was specifically to explore the attitudes of those parents with teenage children who are on the cusp of making this important decision about their future or have made this decision recently; and teenagers who are in either of these two positions.

Evidence on the attitude and opinions of teenagers and parents was collected through a public opinion survey. A questionnaire was developed which aimed to explore some of the issues raised by the Green Paper in detail. Specifically it explored the views of parents and teenagers on the broad proposal – whether teenagers have a right to make a free choice about their future at 16; if people believe in the benefits of post-16 education and training put forward in the Green Paper; and how they believe a new system could be enforced (see Annex 2 for survey questions).

¹³ Staying on in education or training is widely supported – Johnson, DfES, 6/03/07 access via www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0036 on 16/04/07

The questions were structured into three broad areas:

- the proposal to raise the leaving age to 18
- how business, society and the individual might benefit if teenagers are required to stay in education or training until 18
- the penalties that the public believe could be applied to ensure that teenagers do not drop out.

The survey was conducted on LSN's behalf by online polling company, MyVoice Research. The survey firm uses an opt-in online panel, which is made up of 150,000 people who have agreed to take part in surveys.

The survey was launched on 30 March 2007 and ran until 10 April 2007. All the parent groups were targeted directly and, once they had completed the survey, were asked to invite their 13–18-year-old child to complete the set of questions for teenagers. To manage the complexities associated with researching the attitudes of teenagers, MyVoice Research also included some additional teenager samples to ensure that an adequate number of surveys were completed. Market Research Society (MRS) guidelines on permissions for minors taking part in opinion polls were observed (see Annex 5).

A total of 920 adults and 380 teenagers responded to the survey. Both these samples provide a 95% probability of accurately representing the views of the population. The confidence interval of the parent population is + or – 3.2% and + or – 5.0% for the teenager sample.

Adults and teenagers from all regions in England were invited to take part in the survey. A representative spread of parents and teenagers of both genders and different social groups was also targeted. However, it should be noted that one of the limitations of online research is that it has a limited capacity to collect responses from the most deprived sections of the community. In England there are around 7700 cared-for children who are living in secure units, homes, hostels or residential schools, and there are approximately a further 1500 who live independently or are in residential employment.¹⁴ The survey methodology meant that the views of these teenagers and their carers could not be collected. The regional and demographic breakdown of the survey is presented in Annex 1.

Once the survey was completed, the results were assembled and verified electronically by MyVoice Research. The statistical analysis was undertaken by the quantitative research team at LSN, and the analytical process was carried out using the statistical analysis package SPSS version 15.0. The parent and teenager sample responses were analysed individually and therefore the results have been reported on independently throughout the report.

Geodemographic analyses were carried out on the data to investigate information about the socio-economic background of respondents and patterns in their responses. Postcode level information was used to attach social demographic details of respondents which in this case were based on those defined by Mosaic™ UK. Mosaic™ is a geodemographic segmentation system that is based on over 400 data variables including information from the 2001 Census. Developed by Experian, it classifies the population of the UK into 61 types aggregated into 11 groups. The Mosaic™ system enabled the responses from the poll to be analysed by regional and social group. Refer to Annex 4 for a summary of the 11 Mosaic™ Groups.

4 Survey results and analysis

This section sets out the results of the survey, exploring the opinions of parents and teenagers on changes proposed in the *Raising expectations* Green Paper and the issues that are likely to influence their success. It also presents the results by region and socio-economic group where there are significant differences in responses. Other factors, such as the opinions of those who disagree with the proposal, are presented when they provide additional insight into views of teenagers and parents towards the proposals.

The results are presented in three themes:

- the overall view of parents and teenagers – do they believe that the proposals are a good idea?
- how do parents and teenagers see the potential benefits for business, the community and individuals?
- compulsion and how to prevent teenagers from dropping out of education and training before they reach their 18th birthday.

The complete set of responses to the survey is presented in Annex 3.

4.1 Is raising the leaving learning age a good idea?

Early survey questions explored people's initial reaction to raising the leaving learning age. They were asked whether:

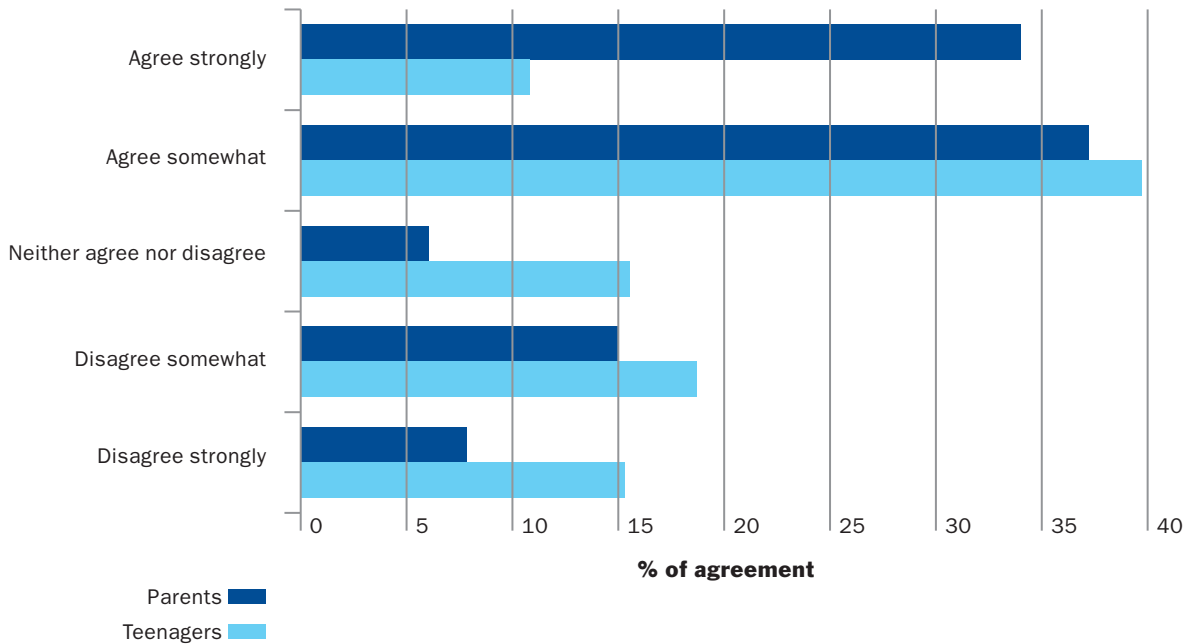
- the proposal to make it compulsory for teenagers to remain in education or training is a good idea
- 16 year olds should have the right to choose whether or not to continue learning, or whether they are not ready to make that choice.

4.1.1 The views of parents and teenagers

To establish their strength of feeling, parents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to raise the leaving learning age.

The results are presented below in figure 1.

Figure 1 To what level do you agree or disagree that making it compulsory for teenagers to remain in education or training until 18 is a good idea?



A clear majority of parents (71.2%) think that raising the leaving learning age is a good idea, 22.8% disagree and 6% are undecided.

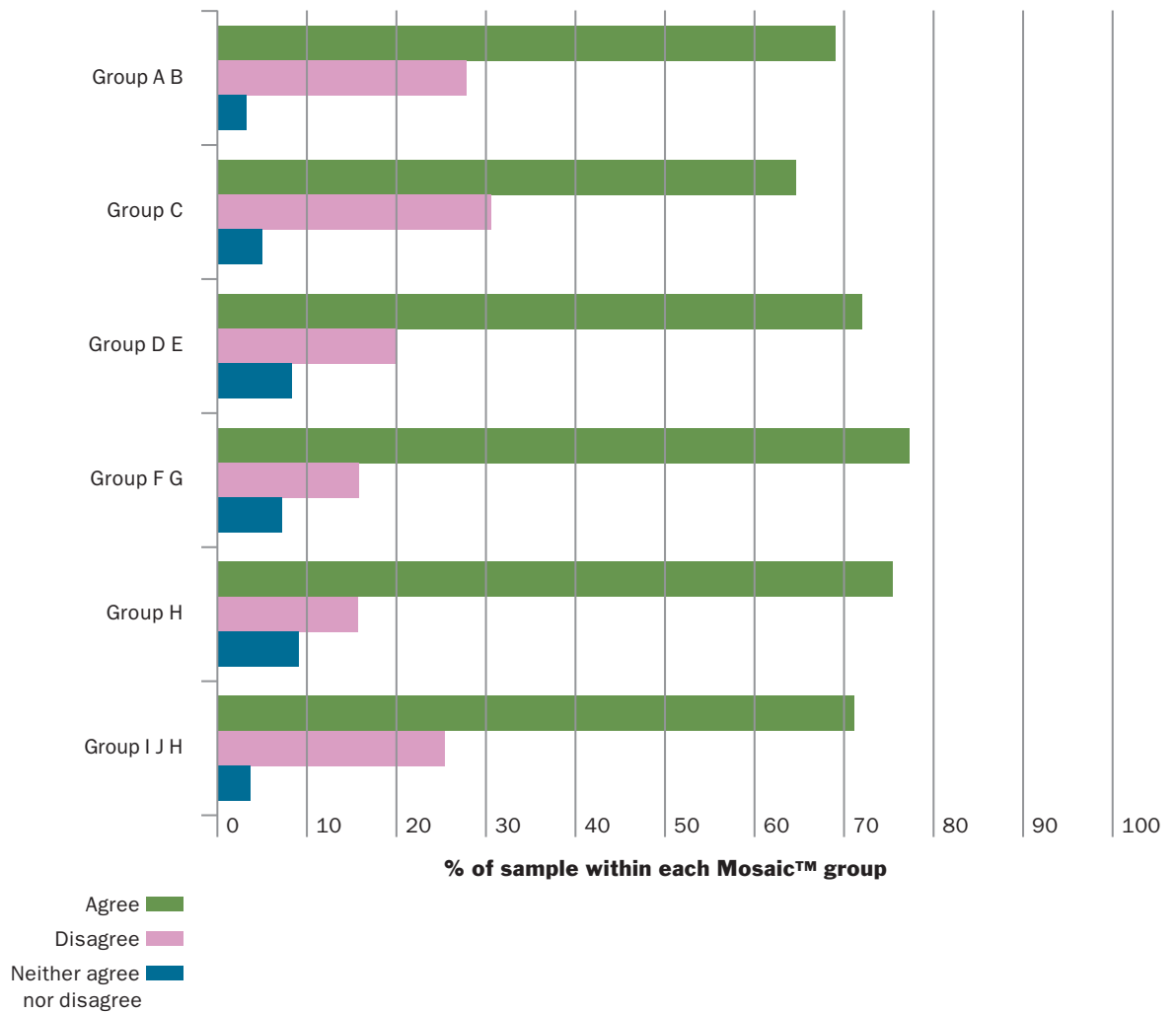
The survey shows that teenagers are less enthusiastic about the proposals than parents, with only a slim majority (50.5%) agreeing. A substantial minority (33.9%) do not agree. In addition, parents were much more likely than teenagers to agree strongly. Thirty-four percent of parents agreed strongly, compared to just 10.8% of teenagers.

There was little regional variation that was not within the margin for error of the survey. The key exception is London, where 83.8% of parents¹⁵ agreed with the proposal and 13.5% disagreed.

¹⁵ Difficulties in obtaining geographical information about the teenage dataset have made regional or socio-demographic analysis of this group problematic.

The Mosaic™ analysis revealed some significant results by socio-economic group. Seventy-seven percent of parents from low-income families (Mosaic™ socio-economic groups F and G – see Annex 4 for a full description of Mosaic™ groups) thought that raising the leaving learning age to 18 was a good idea, making them the social group most likely to agree with the proposal. By comparison, middle-class parents with white collar jobs (Mosaic™ socio-economic group C) were more likely than any other group to disagree with the proposals and the least likely to agree. Just over 30% of them disagreed with the proposals and 64% agreed.

Figure 2 Do parents agree? Results by socio-economic status defined by Mosaic™ groups.



The overall 71.2% agreement with the proposal represents a broad base of support for the change but contrasts with a recent DfES survey which suggests that ‘nine out of ten’ people support the proposal. However, the DfES survey asks ‘It is a good idea for teenagers to remain in education or a form of work-based training such as an apprenticeship up to the age of 18’.¹⁶ This is arguably a question about the importance of staying on in education, as opposed to asking whether raising the compulsory leaving learning age is a good idea. When the DfES survey asks whether the law should be changed, support drops to 66%.

¹⁶ Staying on in education or training is widely supported – Johnson, DfES, 6/03/07 access via www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0036 on 16/04/07

4.1.2 A matter of choice?

One of the objections to the proposal raised by commentators¹⁷ is that it overrides an existing freedom 16 year olds have to choose whether or not to continue in learning. Instead, this will be replaced with a series of options set by the state. To address this, the survey sought to explore this issue by asking respondents to choose between two statements.

Statement 1: 'Sixteen year olds have a right to choose whether or not to continue their education or training at 16, and the state should not take away their right to choose.'

Statement 2: 'Most 16 year olds are not yet ready to make such an important decision about their future, so it is right for the state to guide them in this way.'

A majority of parents (59.7%) agreed with statement two, supporting the view that state is right to guide them. A substantial minority (40.3%) agreed with statement one, indicating that they believe 16 year olds are ready to make the choice on their own. The results for this question showed little variation by region or socio-economic group, with differences that could be explained by the sample's margin of error.

The number of respondents who agree that the state is right to guide 16 year olds is lower than the number who agree with the proposed changes (which by implication requires state intervention). This could be for a variety of reasons:

- respondents hold an ideological view on the role of the state vs the responsibilities of the individual
- respondents have a view on the readiness of 16 year olds to make independent life choices
- respondents hold political views on the actions of the current government.

Intriguingly, the issue of personal choice, the readiness of 16 year olds to make choices that affect their future and the role of the state, appears to play a major part in the thinking of parents who object to the raising of the leaving learning age. Of the 22.8% of respondents who disagree with the reforms, an unequivocal 93.8% agreed that 16 year olds have the right to choose whether or not they remain in education or training and the state should not take this away.

A clear majority of teenagers were also in favour of retaining their right to choose whether to stay on or not, with 71.3% supporting this view. When this finding is combined with relatively low support for the change among teenagers, it arguably lends weight to the calls by youth advocacy organisations such as the British Youth Council¹⁸ for greater consultation with young people.

¹⁷ 'The harm in forcing children to stay on at school', Alison Wolf, *Financial Times*, 17 January 2007

¹⁸ 'Consult young people on school leaving age, ministers are told', B Pindar, *Times Educational Supplement*, 13 April 2007 p.26

Key findings – is raising the leaving learning age a good idea?

- a clear majority of parents (71.2%) think that raising the leaving learning age is a good idea
- teenagers are less enthusiastic about the proposals than parents, with only a slim majority (50.5%) agreeing
- there is little regional variation, with the exception of London, where 83.8% of parents agree that it is a good idea
- middle-class white collar parents are most likely to disagree with the proposals and are arguably among the least likely to be affected by the change
- a majority of parents (59.7%) agreed that the state is right to guide 16 year olds and take away their right to choose
- of the 22.8% of parents who disagree with the reforms, an unequivocal 93.8% agreed that teenagers should retain the right to choose
- a clear majority (71.3%) of teenagers were in favour of retaining their right to choose.

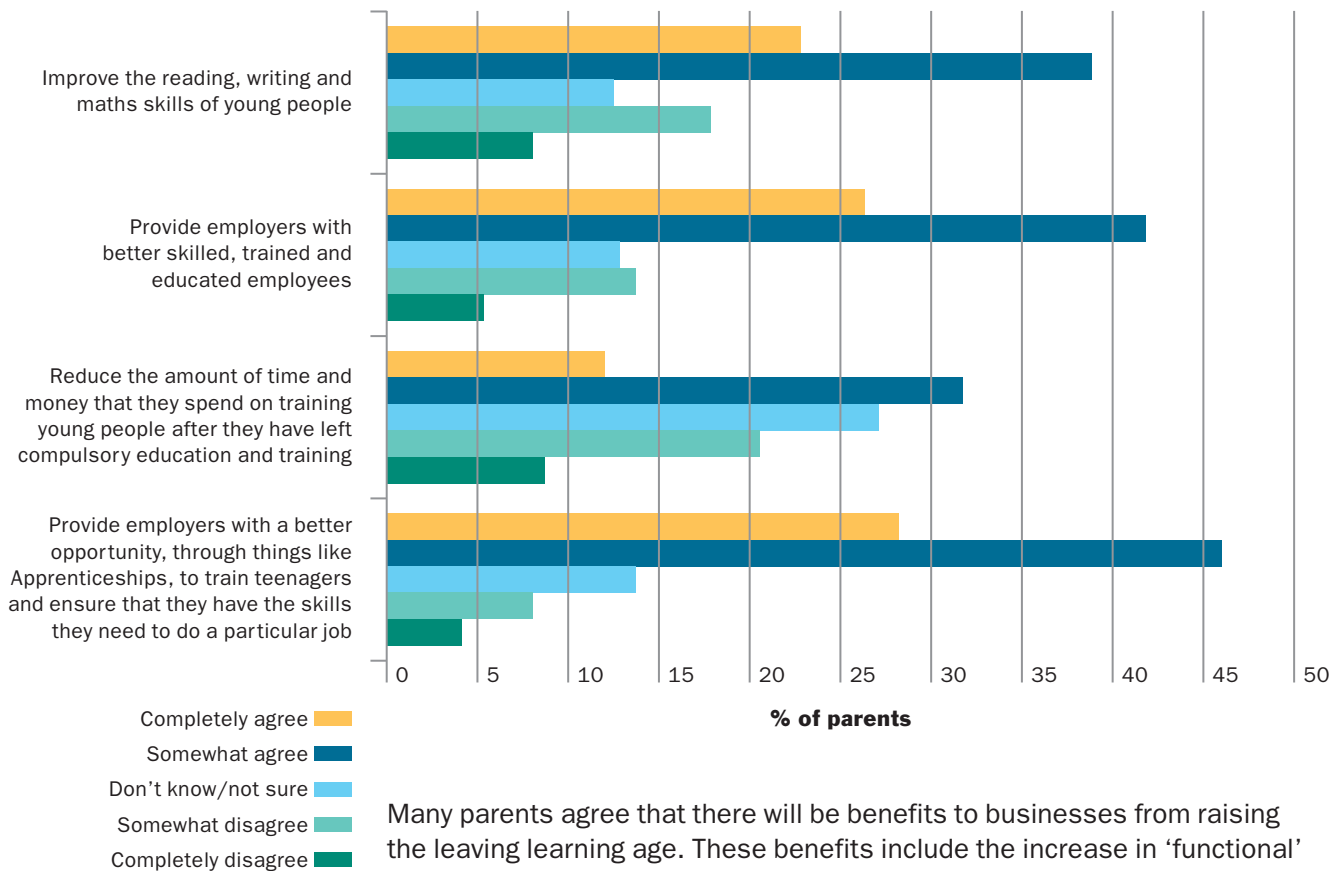
4.2 Do parents and teenagers see the potential benefits?

As discussed in Section 2, *Raising expectations* sets out the potential benefits of raising the leaving learning age to the economy, communities and individuals. The next section of the survey explored the extent to which parents and teenagers believed that the proposed changes would deliver those benefits.

4.2.1 The benefits to business

Business groups such as the British Chamber of Commerce and the CBI have welcomed the proposals as a positive step, believing that the move will increase the overall skill levels of UK PLC. The survey asked a series of questions to explore whether parents and teenagers agree. The results are shown in figures 3a for parents and 3b for teenagers.

Figure 3a Responses of parents: ‘In my opinion, business will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training until they are 18 because it will...’



Many parents agree that there will be benefits to businesses from raising the leaving learning age. These benefits include the increase in ‘functional’ literacy and numeracy called for by employers’ groups (CBI 2006).¹⁹ Just over 61% of parents agree that the move will improve the reading, writing and maths skills of young people. In addition to the ‘three Rs’, parents also agree that there will be an increase in the overall skill level of employees, with 68.1% of parents agreeing that the move will provide employers with better skilled employees.

A large percentage of parents saw the benefits to business of offering teenagers on-the-job training through initiatives such as Apprenticeships. Just over 74% of parents agreed that the proposals would provide employers with opportunities to train teenagers and ensure they have the skills they need to do a particular job.

However, parents are less sure (54.2% either disagree or are unsure) that it will reduce the amount of time and money that employers will need to spend on training young people after they have left compulsory education and training.

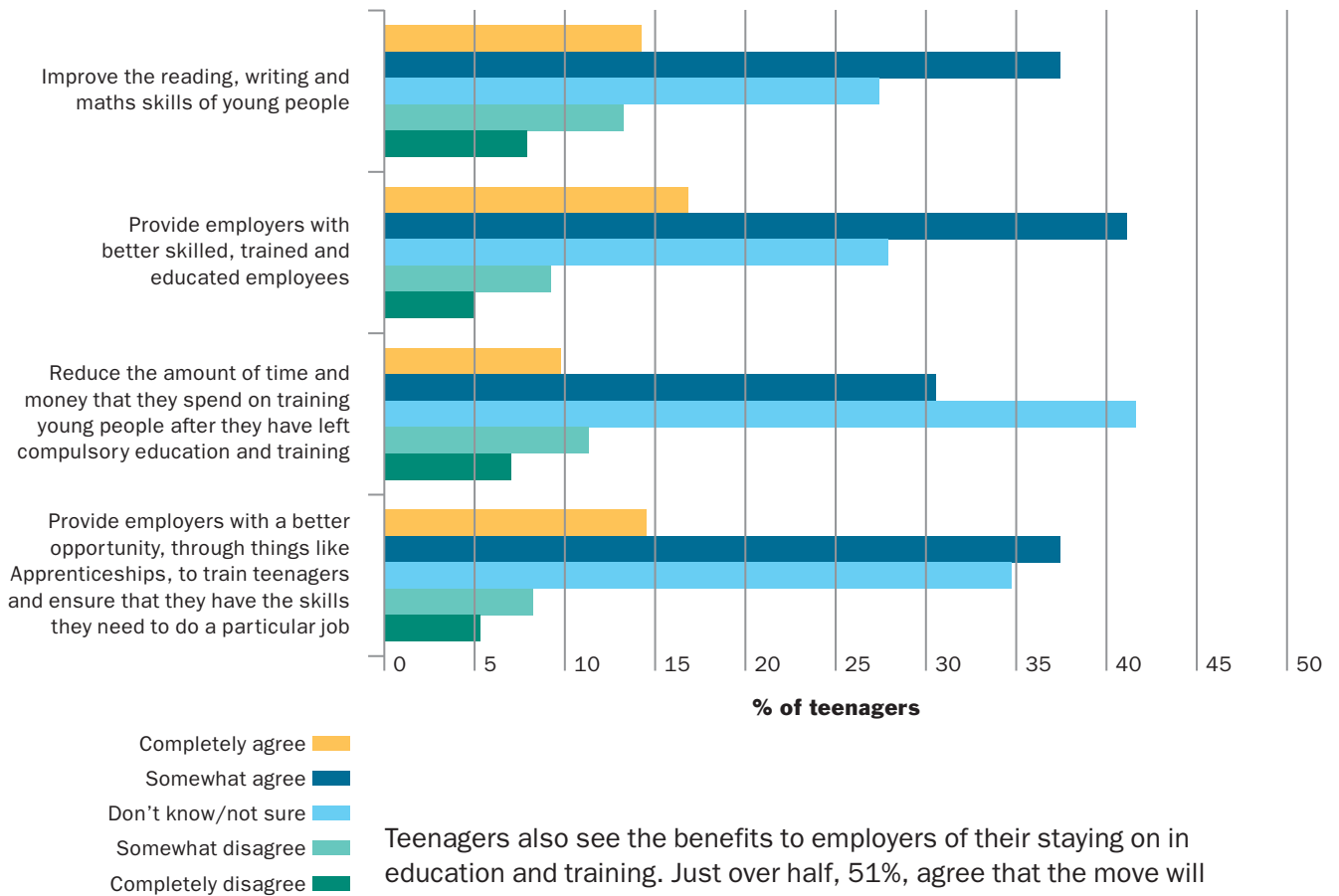
The views expressed by parents were held relatively evenly both regionally and across socioeconomic groups when the margin for error of the sample is taken into account.

¹⁹ CBI (2006), *Working on the three Rs – employers’ priorities for functional skills in Maths and English*. Confederation of British Industry.

Intriguingly, the 22.8% who disagree with the proposed change hold significantly different attitudes towards the potential benefits of raising the leaving learning age. Of this group, 65.3% disagree that the move will improve reading, writing and maths skills; 57.6% disagree that it will provide better skilled, trained and educated employees; 64.3% disagree that it will reduce the amount of time and money employers will need to spend training young people.

The motivation behind the level of disagreement would need further research. The potential causes could include cynicism about the education system, or reflect concerns over the performance of education at 14–16 voiced by organisations such as the Institute of Directors.

Figure 3b Responses of teenagers: ‘In my opinion, business will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training until they are 18 because it will...’



Teenagers also see the benefits to employers of their staying on in education and training. Just over half, 51%, agree that the move will improve reading, writing and maths skills; 57.9% agree that it will provide better skilled, trained and educated employees; 51.9% agree that it will ensure they will have the skills they need to do a particular job.

Teenagers are significantly less likely than their parents to agree that the proposed change will lead to specific benefits. This is not because they disagree (disagreement scores remain broadly similar to those of parents), but because many teenagers say that they do not know or are not sure.

4.2.2 The benefits to communities

A variety of social benefits have been put forward to support the case for raising the leaving learning age²⁰. In a speech to the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), Alan Johnson said: 'The evidence suggests that the younger a person leaves school, the more likely he or she will be to use drugs, become engaged in prostitution or commit crime; finally winding up in prison, unemployed or homeless – often all three²¹.'

Consequently, the survey explored the extent to which parents and teenagers believe that raising the leaving age will deliver broader societal benefits. The results are set out in figures 4a for parents and 4b for teenagers.

Parents appear to be more convinced than teenagers that individuals will benefit from the proposed changes. For example, 69.8% agree that the changes will help teenagers develop the skills they need to become responsible adults; 65.2% agree that the changes will improve the long-term aspirations and ambitions of teenagers, especially those from deprived backgrounds; 70.3% agree that they will reduce the number of young people who are unemployed.

However, parents appear less convinced that raising the leaving learning age will help tackle broader societal challenges. Many disagree that there will be an impact on antisocial behaviour (42.2%); teenage pregnancy (62.8%); involvement in crime (52%); taking drugs (58.8%) and the risk of teenagers becoming homeless (44.9%).

The views expressed by parents were held relatively evenly both regionally and across socioeconomic groups when the margin for error of the sample is taken into account.

The 22.8% of parents who disagreed with the proposed change once again presented very different views. A high proportion (between 80% and 91%) did not agree that there would be potential social benefits such as a reduction in antisocial behaviour and teenage pregnancy.

20 Green Paper on raising the participation age, Ministerial Statement, Alan Johnson, March 2007

21 Alan Johnson speech to the SSDA, 6 March 2007

Figure 4a Responses of parents: ‘In my opinion, the community will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training because it will...?’

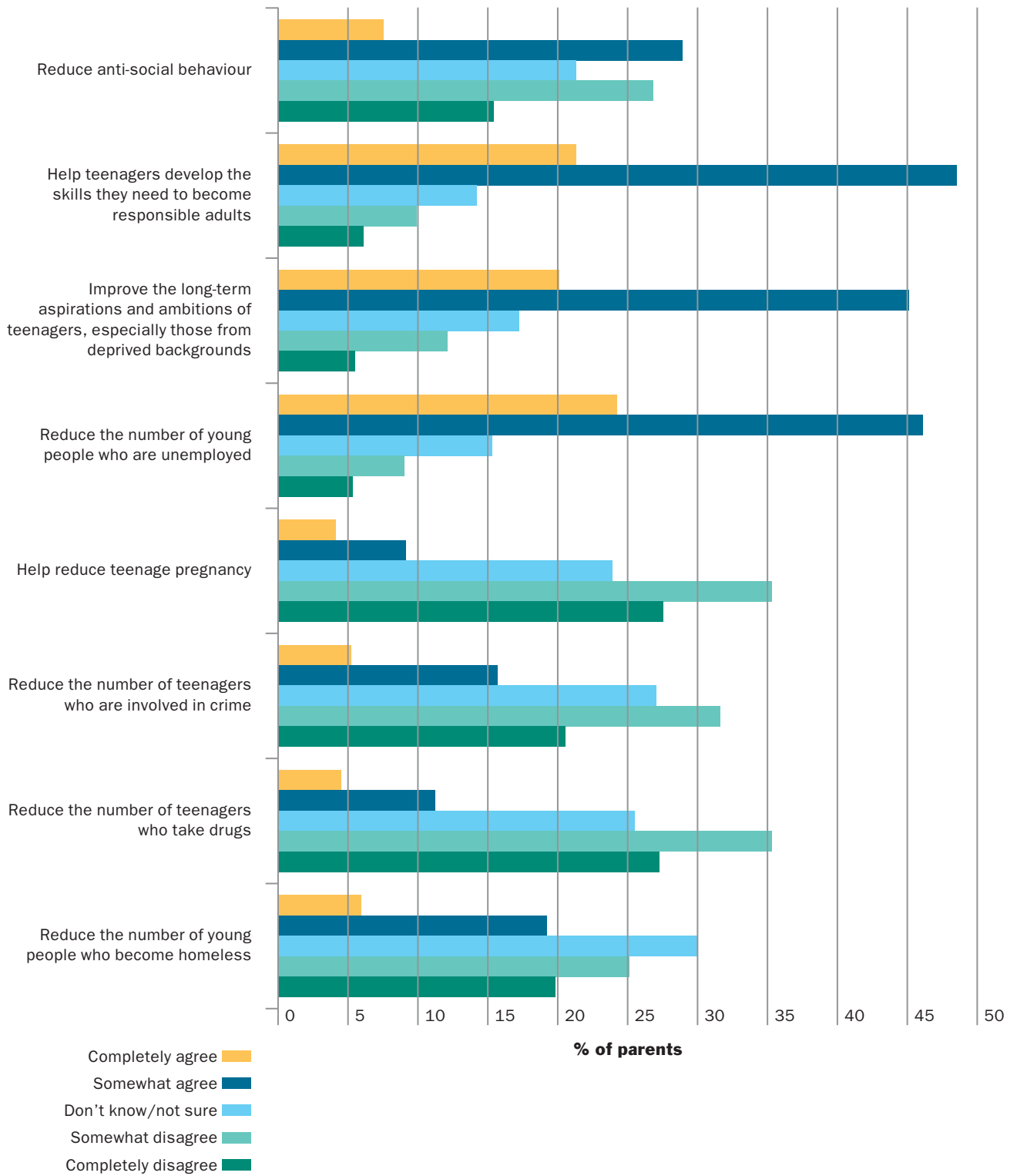
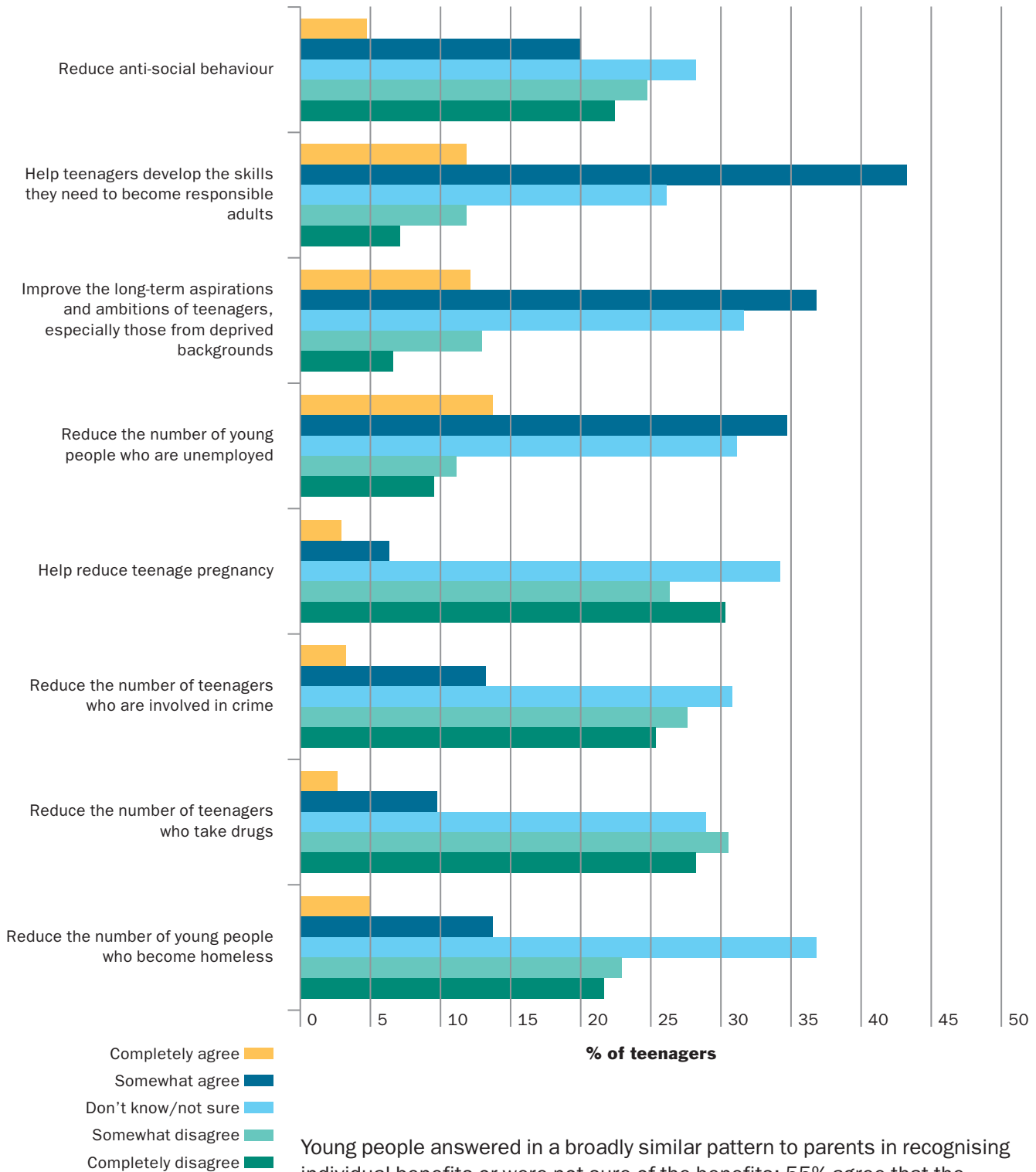


Figure 4b Responses of teenagers: ‘In my opinion, the community will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training because it will...’



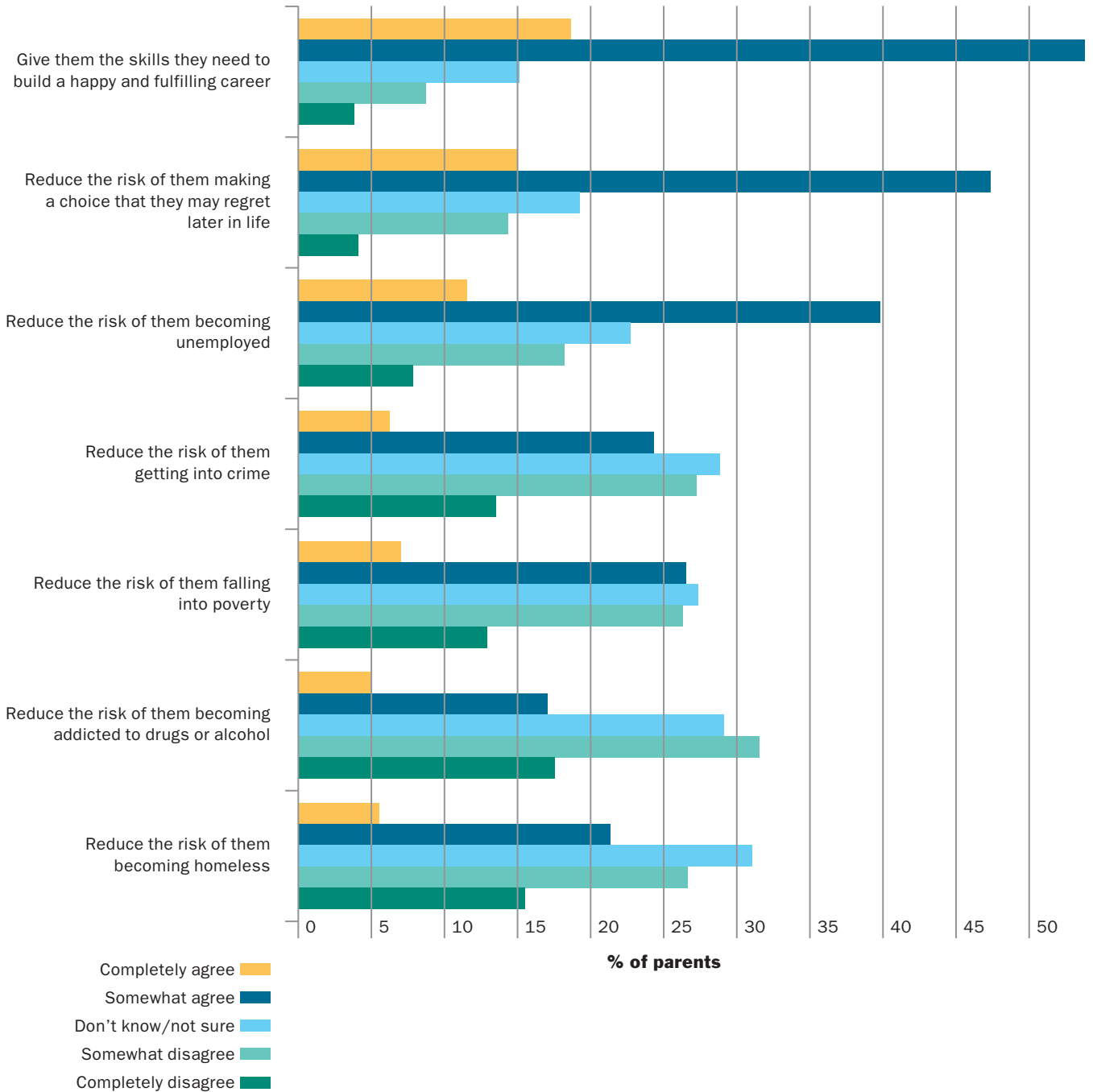
Young people answered in a broadly similar pattern to parents in recognising individual benefits or were not sure of the benefits; 55% agree that the changes will help teenagers develop the skills they need to become responsible adults; 48.4% agree that they will reduce the number of young people who are unemployed.

Teenagers were also less likely to see the link between raising the leaving age and broader social benefits. They disagreed in similar percentages to parents on issues such as crime and teenage pregnancy. Teenagers were also more likely to indicate that they did not know if raising the leaving learning age would support social change.

4.2.3 The benefits to the individual

Raising expectations states that ‘Young people themselves know very well that their future depends on their education and the skills that they can acquire.’²² The survey explored the potential benefits of raising the leaving learning age to the individual – both in terms of economic potential and broader social risks. The results are set out in figures 5a for parents and 5b for teenagers.

Figure 5a Responses of parents: ‘In my opinion, teenagers will benefit if they remain in education or training because it will...’

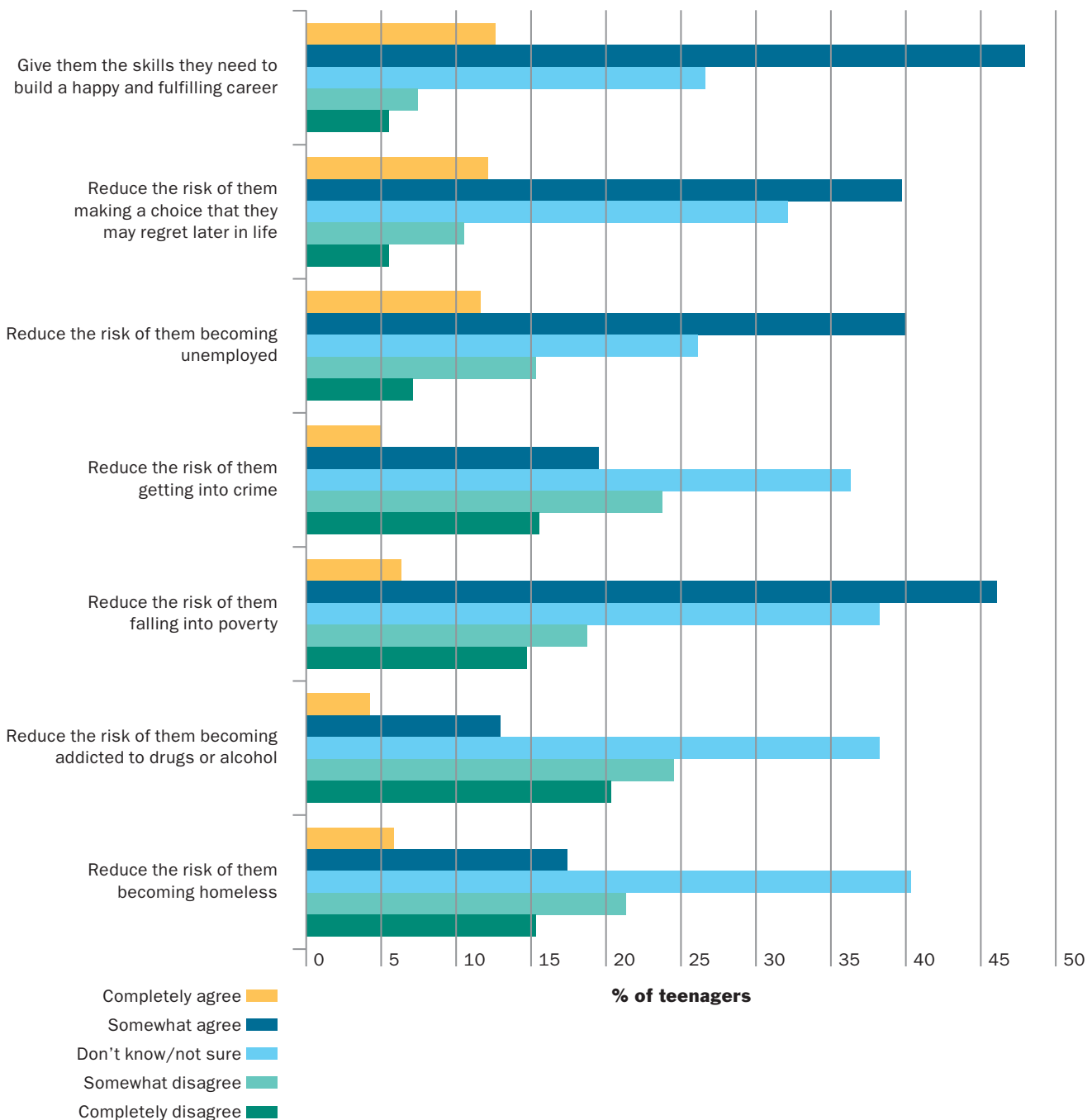


22 DfES (2007) Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16, p10, HMSO

The results mirror the findings in section 4.2.2 above, with parents much clearer on the economic benefits of the proposals than on the role of education in reducing social risks.

Parents can see that raising the leaving learning age can provide teenagers with the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career (72.4%); prevent them making choices they later regret (62.5%); and reduce the risk of unemployment (51.2%). However, they are uncertain that the proposals will reduce the risk of teenagers becoming involved in crime (40.7% disagree, 28.8% are not sure); becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol (49% disagree, 29.1% are not sure) or becoming homeless (42.1% disagree, 31% are not sure).

Figure 5b Responses of teenagers: ‘In my opinion, teenagers will benefit if they remain in education or training because it will... ’



Teenagers follow a similar pattern to parents in recognising the economic benefits of education, albeit with a much greater level of uncertainty. This uncertainty is the hallmark of teenagers' responses when considering the impact of the proposals on reducing economic and social risk. For example, teenagers are more likely not to be sure than they are to agree or disagree when considering the issue of homelessness.

Consequently, asserting 'Young people themselves know very well that their future depends on their education...' may be premature. While both parents and teenagers can, on balance, see the link between raising the leaving learning age and their economic success, the case has not yet been made on the broader social benefits – regardless of the body of research evidence available to date.

Key findings – the potential benefits

- many parents agree that there will be benefits to businesses from raising the leaving learning age.
- 61.6% of parents agree that the move will improve the reading, writing and maths skills of young people
- 68.1% of parents agree that the move will provide employers with better skilled, trained and educated employees
- however, the views of the 22.8% who disagree with change present a markedly different picture
- teenagers can also see the benefits to employers of their staying on in education and training
- parents appear to be more comfortable with the idea that there will be individual benefits rather than broader societal benefits
- teenagers answered in a broadly similar pattern to parents in recognising individual benefits
- parents can see that raising the leaving learning age can provide teenagers with the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career (72.4%).

4.3 Preventing teenagers from dropping out

Compulsion is arguably the most contentious issue in the proposal to raise the leaving learning age. *Raising expectations* argues that there will be limited impact without enforcement.²³ Organisations such as the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and UCU have expressed their concerns over the proposed penalties for non-compliance.

The survey sought to explore the views of parents and teenagers around these issues, asking three types of question:

- will teenagers comply – exploring views on the scale of the enforcement challenge
- who will take responsibility for ensuring they comply?
- what is the balance between enforcement and incentives?

4.3.1 Will teenagers comply with the change?

The survey asked teenagers and parents whether they believed that members of certain groups were more or less likely to comply if the leaving learning age is raised. The results are set out in figures 6a for parents and 6b for teenagers.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, parents do not believe that teenagers from the most vulnerable groups in society will comply with the change. For example, 82.6% of parents believe that teenagers who face extreme problems such as drug or alcohol addiction will not comply; and 83.2% believe that teenagers who are involved in crime will not comply. *Raising expectations* specifically recognises these challenges and sets out options for supporting the most vulnerable groups of young people.

What is perhaps more surprising is that a clear majority of parents (80.9%) believe that teenagers who simply lack interest in education and training will not comply. This may point to the need for some form of rigorous enforcement, or it may reveal the scale of the enforcement challenge, particularly among teenagers who are not motivated to learn.

A further point of interest is that those 22.8% who disagree with raising the leaving learning age are more likely to indicate that they believe the groups of young people listed in the question will not comply with the change. This perhaps indicates concerns in the ‘no’ group around compliance and enforceability.

The views of teenagers show a high degree of consistency²⁴ with the views of parents, with one notable exception. When asked whether they believed a bright teenager under severe pressure from their friends to leave at 16 would comply with the change, 37.4% of teenagers said that they would not comply, compared to 22.5% of parents. *Raising expectations* reiterates the role of the ‘trusted adult’²⁵ set out in *Youth matters* but does not explore the role of peer pressure in the decision-making of young people.

24 Within the margin of error of the survey

25 DfES (2007) *Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16*, p41, HMSO

Figure 6a Responses of parents: In your opinion, how likely are the following groups of young people to comply with the change?

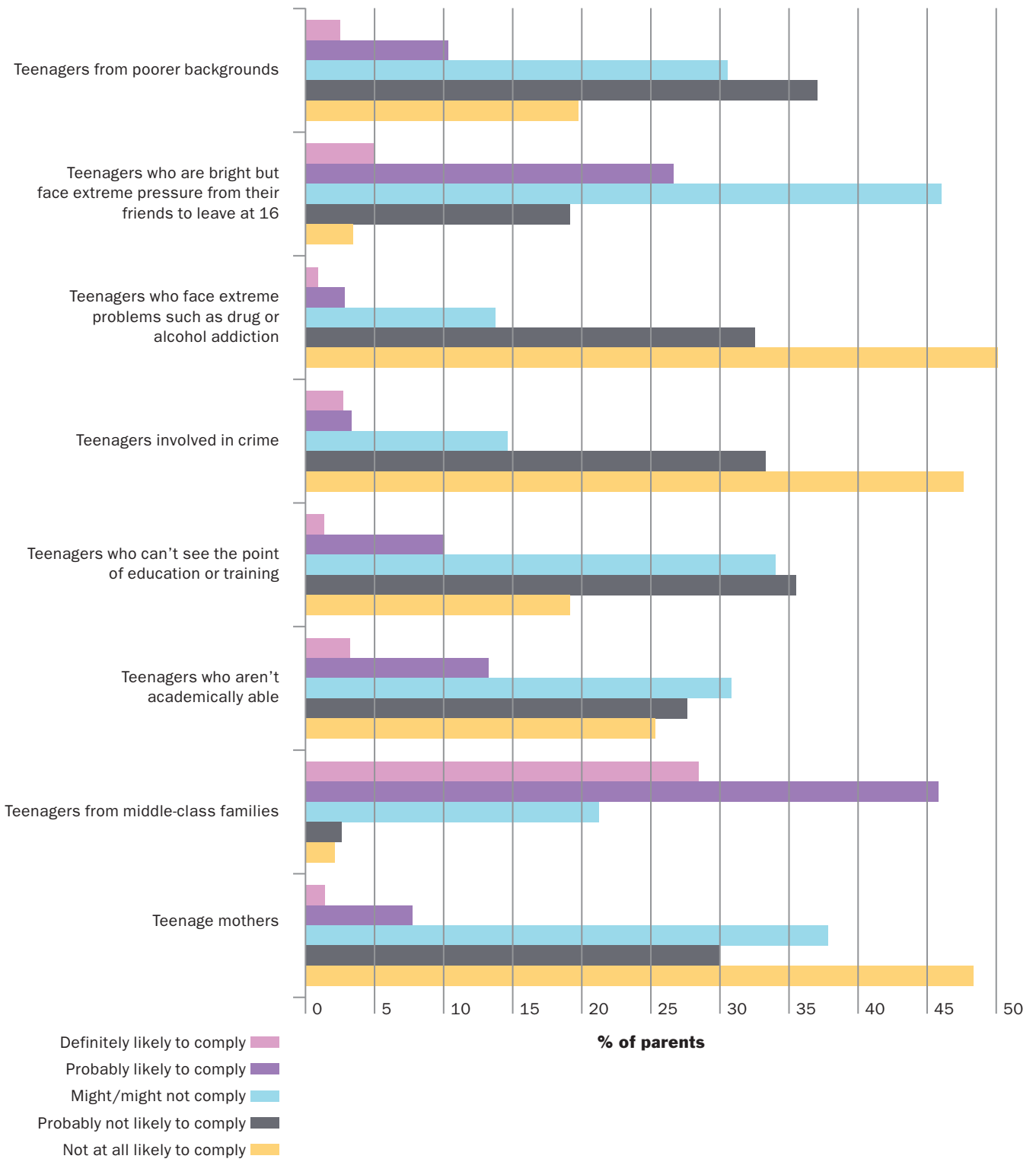
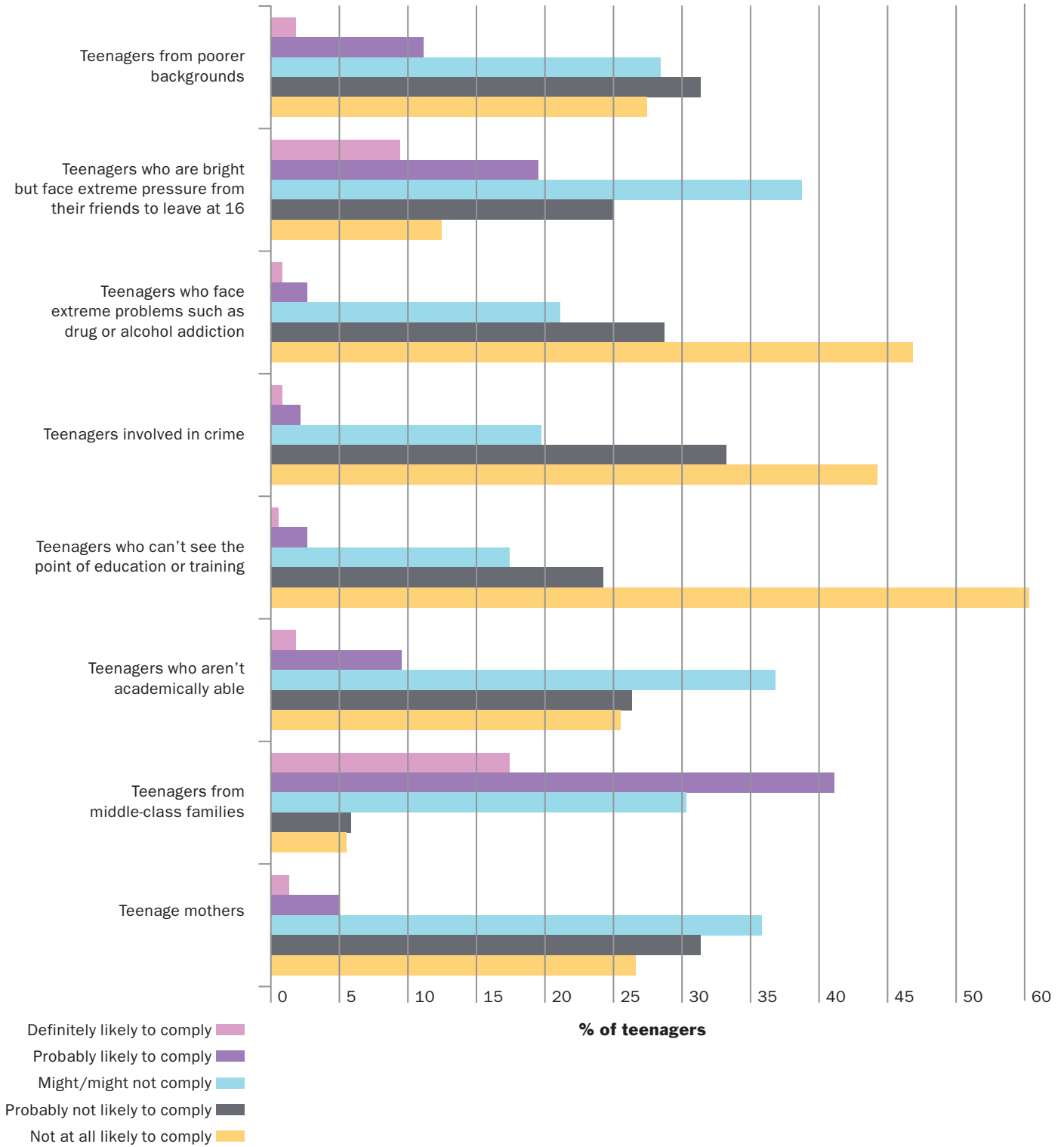


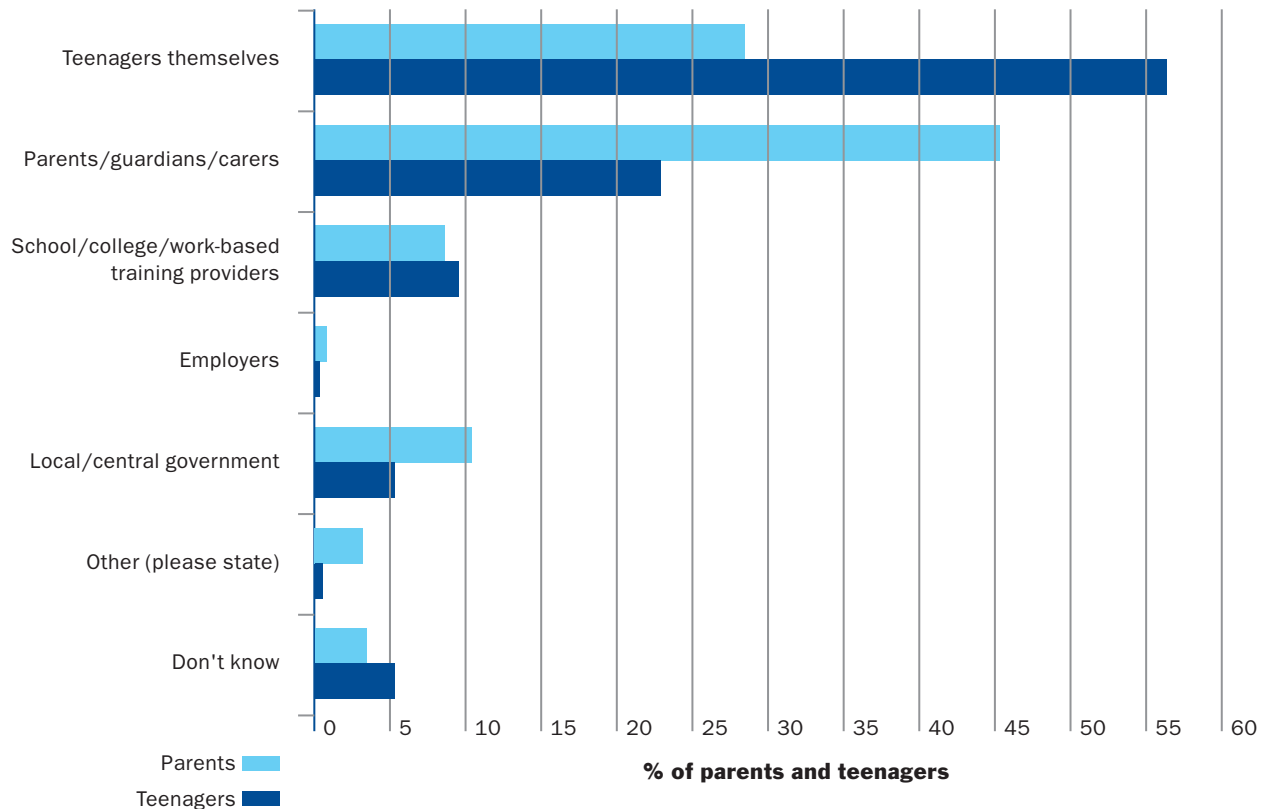
Figure 6b Responses of teenagers: In your opinion, how likely are the following groups of young people to comply with the change?’



4.3.2 Whose responsibility?

Any issue of compliance raises the question of responsibility. The survey explores who parents and teenagers think should be most responsible for ensuring that teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in some sort of work-based training after the age of 16. The results are set out in figure 7.

Figure 7 Who do you think should be most responsible for ensuring that teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in some sort of work-based training after the age of 16



The clear message from the survey is that both parents and teenagers would prefer to keep the responsibility within the family unit (73.7% and 79.2% respectively). Only 10.4% of parents believe the responsibility should fall on government and only 8.6% believe that the responsibility rests with learning providers. Employers are seen as having negligible responsibility to ensure teenagers attend.

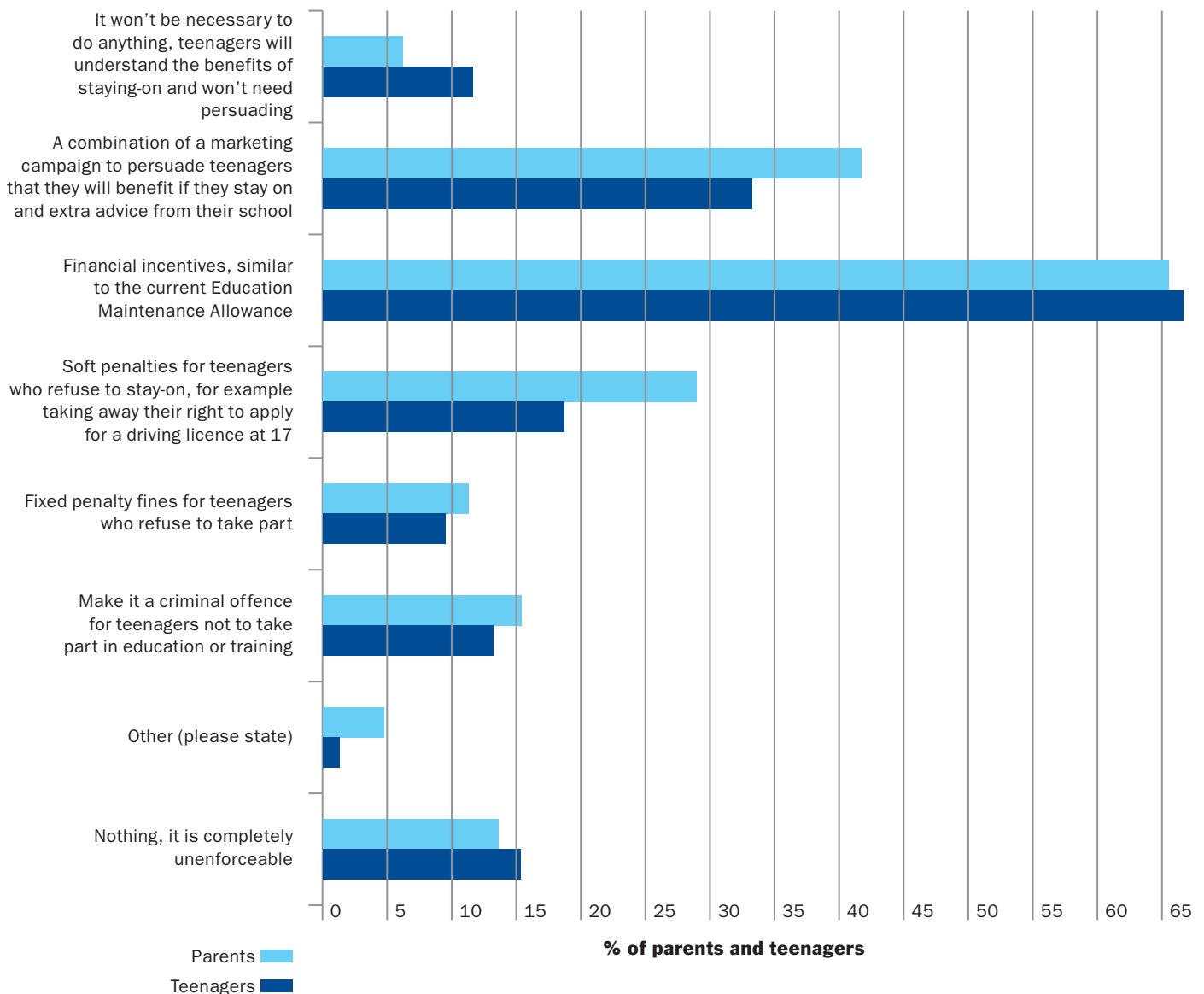
Both parents and teenagers indicate that they believe they themselves should be most responsible for ensuring the new requirement is met. There is an element of spread in opinion across socio-economic groups: 54% of parents from wealthier socio-economic groups (Mosaic™ groups A and B) believe that parents/guardians/carers should be most responsible whereas only 40.9% of parents of the most disadvantaged groups (Groups F and G) believe this.

The views held by parents who disagree with the proposals overall are notable. In this group, 50% believe that teenagers should be responsible for ensuring that they themselves comply with the change. This perhaps supports the idea that the ‘no’ group have a view on the maturity of teenagers to make choices, as suggested in section 4.1.2.

4.3.3 Carrots and sticks?

Raising expectations presents a range of enforcement and incentive options to ensure that teenagers comply with the proposed change to the leaving learning age. The survey set out to explore the opinions of parents and teenagers by presenting a range of measures and asking which would ensure that teenagers participated in education or training post-16. The results are set out in figure 8.

Figure 8 In your opinion, which of the following will help ensure that all teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in structured work-based training after the age of 16? Please tick all that apply.



The first point of interest is that there is limited support (6.2%) among parents for doing nothing. However, the harshest penalties proposed for persistent non-compliance in *Raising expectations* – fixed penalty notices and criminal sanctions – also draw limited support from parents – 11.3% and 15.4% respectively. Softer measures such as withholding driving licences have more, but limited support, with only 28.9% agreeing. Clearly, the case for more rigorous compulsion has yet to be made.

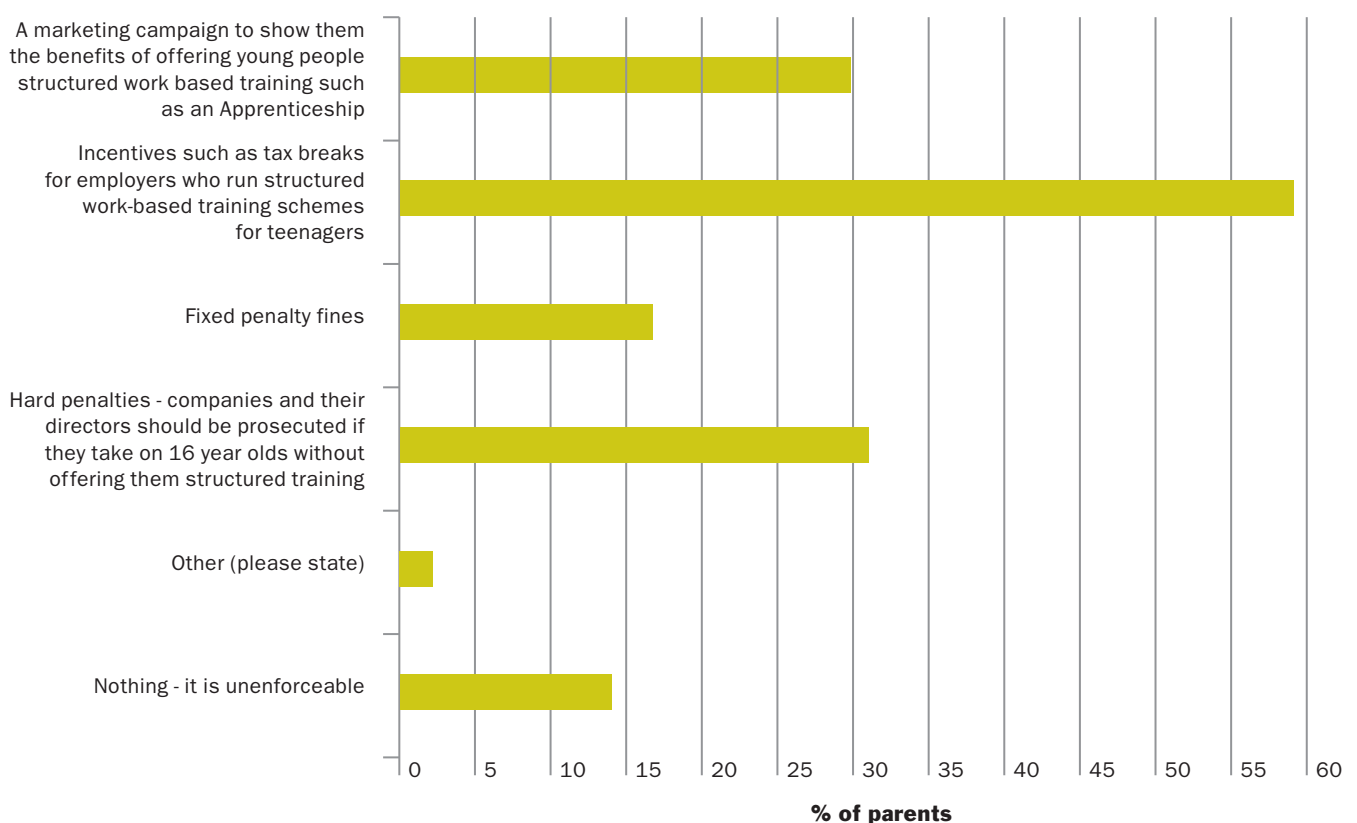
The greatest weight of support is for financial incentives, similar to the current Education Maintenance Allowance, with 65.5% of parents believing that this will ensure participation. This figure rises to 72.4% among parents from more deprived socio-economic groups (Mosaic™ groups F and G). Persuasion is also favoured over compulsion, with 41.7% of parents favouring a marketing and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) push.

As one might expect, those who disagreed with raising the leaving learning age in principle, were considerably less in favour of penalties than the wider sample. However, after support for financial incentives (44.8%), the notion that the proposals are unenforceable got the most support from that group (37.6%), pointing to another potential cause for the objections of this group.

Teenagers did not support soft or hard penalties for young people who drop out of learning; furthermore, fewer young people than parents supported the idea of penalties. The idea that gained the most support among teenagers was, again, financial incentives (66.6%). They were, however, less sanguine about the impact of a marketing campaign/more information and guidance on their choices.

The survey also explored with parents what the penalties might be for employers who did not provide training to 16–18 year-old employees. The results are presented in figure 9.

Figure 9 Responses of parents: In your opinion, which of the following will persuade employers not to take on 16-18 year olds without offering structured training ? Please tick all that apply.



The pattern mirrors parents' views on ways to ensure teenagers comply with the proposed change. Parents were most likely to support the notion of financial incentives for employers (59.1%), such as tax breaks. However, the next most popular (31%) option for parents was hard penalties, such as prosecution for employers who did not provide training for 16–18 year olds.

Key findings – making teenagers stay on

- parents do not believe that teenagers from the most vulnerable groups in society will comply with the change
- a clear majority of parents believe that teenagers who face no further barrier than a lack of interest will also not comply (80.9%)
- on the issue of which groups are likely to comply, teenagers' views broadly mirror those of parents
- both parents and teenagers would prefer to keep the responsibility for participating within the family unit (73.7% and 79.2% respectively)
- only 10.4% of parents believe the responsibility for participating should fall on government
- however, there is limited support (6.2%) among parents for doing nothing
- fines and criminal sanctions draw limited support from parents
- the clearest support is for financial incentives, with 65.5% of parents believing that this will ensure participation
- teenagers were similarly unsupportive of soft or hard penalties for non-compliance, with even lower support than parents.

5 Conclusions

The survey initially found broad support for the proposal to raise the leaving learning age among parents, with 71.8% agreeing that it is a good idea. However, the picture is considerably more complex than this over-arching figure would suggest, with both positive messages and a series of challenges for policy-makers.

The first area of complexity is the relative lack of engagement with the idea by teenagers, whose support for the idea can be described as lukewarm at best (50.5% agree with the proposal). Many teenagers do see the potential benefits of the change but they have concerns about losing the right to choose whether to participate in post-16 education and training and they appear unsupportive of the penalties that are proposed if they do not participate. Consequently, policy-makers may wish to consider broader communication with this group, perhaps welcoming the wider consultation proposed by the British Youth Council²⁶.

The second area of complexity stems from both teenagers and parents who appear to be unaware of the broader benefits of participation in post-16 education and training. The results from the survey suggest that both groups believe that the proposals make economic sense and are mainly positive about their ability to improve things such as the skills of the workforce. However, parents and teenagers simply do not see engagement in education and training as a route to reducing the number of young people who face extreme social problems, such as being drawn into crime or substance misuse. It can be argued that the current emphasis on communicating the importance of skills by policy-makers has been successful; however, more work is needed to communicate the wider benefits of learning as shown by an increasing body of evidence.

The next area of complexity is the concern among parents over penalties for non-compliance. Although *Raising expectations* is clear that civil or criminal proceedings would be a last resort, the limited support for these measures would suggest that these simply add to the concerns of parents. Policy-makers arguably have a choice between more effectively communicating the need for enforcement, and making it clear that penalties will be proportionate and appropriate, or considering other measures for ensuring compliance.

²⁶ 'Consult young people on school leaving age, ministers are told', B Pindar, Times Educational Supplement, 13 April 2007 p.26

The final area of complexity is the views of parents and teenagers who do not agree with the proposals. Their motivations for disagreeing appear to range from the ideological, issues around the rights of the individual and the role of the state; to the practical, whether the reforms are in fact enforceable and whether they will bring the benefits envisaged by the government. However, it would be perhaps be more surprising if reforms of such significance did not attract a wide variety of opposition, from people who either view them from a different paradigm or simply question their potential to be successful. The debate is set to continue.

Annex 1 Sample characteristics

Parent sample

Total sample size – 920

Regional breakdown

	Frequency	Percent
East	125	13.6
East Midlands	71	7.7
London	74	8.0
North East	55	6.0
North West	130	14.1
South East	158	17.2
South West	96	10.4
Unknown	18	2.0
West Midlands	100	10.9
Yorkshire And The Humber	93	10.1
Total	920	100.0

Demographic/socioeconomic breakdown

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	269	29.2
Female	651	70.8
Total	920	100.0

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
25 – 29	3	0.3
30 – 34	26	2.8
35 – 39	150	16.3
40 – 44	260	28.3
45 – 49	260	28.3
50 – 54	153	16.6
55 – 59	53	5.8
60+	15	1.6
Total	920	100.0

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	607	66.0
Single	52	5.7
Widowed	20	2.2
Cohabiting	115	12.5
Divorced	94	10.2
Separated	32	3.5
Total	920	100.0
Qualification achieved*	Count	Percent
Masters/PhD	30	3.4
SRN full industrial apprenticeship	10	2.1
University degree	139	15.7
GCE O Level/GCSE	523	59.1
Teachers Training Certificate	42	4.7
Secretarial Diploma	36	7.7
Higher National Certificate	80	9.0
Ordinary National Degree	48	5.4
Professional institutes final exam	36	7.7
Other	131	28.1
GCE A Level	230	26.0
No academic qualifications	104	11.8

* Note: In some cases, parents may have achieved more than one qualification therefore the total sum of counts will equal more than the total sample size of 920.

Mosaic™ groups*	Frequency	Percent
Group A Symbols of Success	66	7.5
Group B Happy Families	121	13.8
Group C Suburban Comfort	164	18.7
Group D Ties of Community	159	18.2
Group E Urban Intelligence	33	3.8
Group F Welfare Borderline	20	2.3
Group G Municipal Dependency	107	12.2
Group H Blue Collar Enterprise	122	13.9
Group I Twilight Subsistence	14	1.6
Group J Grey Perspectives	42	4.8
Group K Rural Isolation	27	3.1
Total	875	100.0

* Note: not all records could be matched to a group due to missing geographical information.

The distribution of the sample across Mosaic™ Groups is consistent with the profile of the general population, with most of the sample falling within Mosaic™ Groups C and D and to a lesser extent, Groups B and H. The profile of teenagers is similar to that of parents. A description of Group characteristics is attached in Annex 4.

Areas of very high deprivation, council estates and low-income families are represented by Mosaic™ Groups F and G (14.5% of sample) whereas the more affluent areas of low deprivation are identified by Group A and B (21.4% of sample).

Groups C and D represent ‘middle-class’ society described as families living in successfully established mature homes, white-collar jobs or living in close-knit inner city and manufacturing towns with unsophisticated tastes. Together these groups of people represent 37% of the sample.

Group H represents ‘lower middle class’ society profiled as not well-educated, living in small towns and council estates. This group of parents make up approximately 13.9% of the sample.

Teenager sample

Total sample size – 380

Demographic breakdown

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	177	52.4
Female	161	47.6
Total	338	100.0

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
13	27	7.1	8.0
14	44	11.6	13.0
15	74	19.5	21.9
16	91	23.9	26.9
17	75	19.7	22.2
18	27	7.1	8.0
Total	338	88.9	100.0
Question skipped	42	11.1	
Total	380	100.0	

Annex 2 Survey questions

Introduction

The government says that it wants to raise the school-leaving age, so that young people remain in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. This does not mean that all young people will have to remain in the classroom. They will need to be working towards a qualification by staying-on at school, going to college, or by doing structured 'on-the-job training', such as an Apprenticeship.

The Learning and Skills Network is an independent not-for-profit organisation with expertise in education and training. They would like to know your views on the plan.

Q1 Firstly, we need to know what age group you fall into, so we can send you to the right part of the questionnaire. Please tick the box below that corresponds to your age bracket...

1. 15–16
2. 17–18
3. 19–24
4. 25–29
5. 30–34
6. 35–39
7. 40–44
8. 45–49
9. 50–54
10. 55–59
11. 60+

Q2 Do you have children? If so, please indicate what age bracket they fall into? Please tick ALL age brackets that apply...

1. Yes – aged 0–5
2. Yes – aged 6–12
3. Yes – aged 13–16
4. Yes – aged 17–18
5. Yes – over 18 years
6. No – I have no children

Q3 To what level do you agree or disagree that making it compulsory for teenagers to remain in education or training until 18 is a good idea?

1. Agree strongly
2. Agree somewhat
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree somewhat
5. Disagree strongly

Q4 In your opinion, how likely are the following groups of young people to comply with the change?

1. Teenagers from poorer backgrounds
2. Teenagers who are bright but face extreme pressure from their friends to leave at 16
3. Teenagers who face extreme problems such as drug or alcohol addiction
4. Teenagers involved in crime
5. Teenagers who cannot see the point of education or training
6. Teenagers who are not academically able
7. Teenagers from middle-class families
8. Teenage mothers

Options

1. Not at all likely to comply
2. Probably not likely to comply
3. Might/might not comply
4. Probably likely to comply
5. Definitely likely to comply

Q5 Pick the statement you most agree with...

1. 'Sixteen year olds have a right to choose whether or not to continue their education or training at 16, and the state should not take away their right to choose'
2. 'Most 16 year olds are not yet ready to make such an important decision about their future, so it is right for the state to guide them in this way'

Q6 Look at each of these statements and say whether you agree, disagree or do not know.

In my opinion, business will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training until they are 18 because it will...

1. Improve the reading, writing and maths skills of young people
2. Provide employers with better skilled, trained and educated employees
3. Reduce the amount of time and money that they spend on training young people after they have left compulsory education and training
4. Provide employers with a better opportunity, through things like Apprenticeships, to train teenagers and ensure that they have the skills they need to do a particular job
5. Provide cheap labour through apprenticeship schemes

Options

1. Completely disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Don't know/not sure
4. Somewhat agree
5. Completely agree

Q7 Look at each of these statements and say whether you agree, disagree or do not know.

In my opinion, the community will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training because it will...

1. Reduce anti-social behaviour
2. Help teenagers develop the skills they need to become responsible adults
3. Improve the long-term aspirations and ambitions of teenagers, especially those from deprived backgrounds
4. Reduce the number of young people who are unemployed
5. Help reduce teenage pregnancy
6. Reduce the number of teenagers who are involved in crime
7. Reduce the number of teenagers who take drugs
8. Reduce the number of young people who become homeless

Options

1. Completely disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Don't know/not sure
4. Somewhat agree
5. Completely agree

Q8 Look at each of these statements and say whether you agree, disagree or do not know.

In my opinion, teenagers will benefit if they remain in education or training because it will...

1. Give them the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career
2. Reduce the risk of them making a choice that they may regret later in life
3. Reduce the risk of them becoming unemployed
4. Reduce the risk of them getting into crime
5. Reduce the risk of them falling into poverty
6. Reduce the risk of them becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol
7. Reduce the risk of them becoming homeless

Options

1. Completely disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Don't know/not sure
4. Somewhat agree
5. Completely agree

Q9 Who do you think should be most responsible for ensuring that teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in some sort of work-based training after the age of 16?

1. Teenagers themselves
2. Parents/guardians/carers
3. School/college/work-base training providers
4. Employers
5. Local/central government
6. Other (please state)
7. Don't know

Q10 In your opinion, which of the following will help ensure that all teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in structured work-based training after the age of 16?

Please tick all that apply...

1. It won't be necessary to do anything, teenagers will understand the benefits of staying-on and won't need persuading
2. A combination of a marketing campaign to persuade teenagers that they will benefit if they stay on and extra advice from their school
3. Financial incentives, similar to the current Education Maintenance Allowance

4. Soft penalties for teenagers who refuse to stay on, for example taking away their right to apply for a driving licence at 17
5. Fixed penalty fines for teenagers who refuse to take part
6. Make it a criminal offence for teenagers not to take part in education or training
7. Other (please state)
8. Nothing, it is completely unenforceable

Q11 In your opinion, which of the following will persuade employers not to take on 16-18 year olds without offering structured training?

1. A marketing campaign to show them the benefits of offering young people structured work-based training such as apprenticeships
2. Incentives such as tax breaks for employers who run structured work-based training schemes for teenagers
3. Fixed penalty fines
4. Hard penalties – companies and their directors should be prosecuted if they take on 16 year olds without offering them structured training
5. Other (please state)
6. Nothing – it is unenforceable

Q12 You mentioned that you had at least one teenager living with you. We would like to get their opinions on this very important issue. Are they available to answer a few questions similar to those you've already filled in? We only need to talk to one of them if you have a house full!

It will only take a couple of minutes however it is very important that your teen answers for themselves. Please do not fill in the rest of the survey for them.

Questions for teenagers

Q1 Hi - hopefully you are the teenage son or daughter of a MyVoice Research community member. Would you mind answering a few questions about the school leaving age?

1. Yes – happy to answer
2. No – don't want to answer

Q2 To what level do you agree or disagree that making it compulsory for teenagers to remain in education or training until 18 is a good idea?

1. Agree strongly
2. Agree somewhat
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree somewhat
5. Disagree strongly

Q3 In your opinion, how likely are the following groups of young people to comply with the change?

1. Teenagers from poorer backgrounds
2. Teenagers who are bright but face extreme pressure from their friends to leave at 16
3. Teenagers who face extreme problems such as drug or alcohol addiction
4. Teenagers involved in crime
5. Teenagers who can't see the point of education or training
6. Teenagers who aren't academically able
7. Teenagers from middle-class families
8. Teenage mothers

Options

1. Not at all likely to comply
2. Probably not likely to comply
3. Might/might not comply
4. Probably likely to comply
5. Definitely likely to comply

Q4 Pick the statement you most agree with...

1. 'Sixteen year olds have a right to choose whether or not to continue their education and training, and the state should not consider taking away their right to choose.'
2. 'Most 16 year olds are not yet ready to make this important decision, so it is right for the state to guide them.'

Q5 Look at each of these statements and say whether you agree, disagree or do not know.

In my opinion, business will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training until they are 18 because it will.

1. Improve the reading, writing and maths skills of young people
2. Provide employers with better skilled, trained and educated employees
3. Reduce the amount of time and money that they spend on training young people after they have left compulsory education and training
4. Provide employers with a better opportunity, through things like Apprenticeships, to train teenagers and ensure that they have the skills they need to do a particular job
5. Provide cheap labour through Apprenticeship schemes

Options

1. Completely disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Don't know/not sure
4. Somewhat agree
5. Completely agree

Q6 Look at each of these statements and say whether you agree, disagree or do not know.

In my opinion, the community will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training because it will...

1. Reduce anti-social behaviour
2. Help teenagers develop the skills they need to become responsible adults
3. Improve the long-term aspirations and ambitions of teenagers, especially those from deprived backgrounds
4. Reduce the number of young people who are unemployed
5. Help reduce teenage pregnancy
6. Reduce the number of teenagers who are involved in crime
7. Reduce the number of teenagers who take drugs
8. Reduce the number of young people who become homeless

Options

1. Completely disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Don't know/not sure
4. Somewhat agree
5. Completely agree

Q7 Look at each of these statements and say whether you agree, disagree or do not know.

In my opinion, teenagers will benefit if they remain in education or training because it will...

1. Give them the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career
2. Reduce the risk of them making a choice that they may regret later in life
3. Reduce the risk of them becoming unemployed
4. Reduce the risk of them getting into crime
5. Reduce the risk of them falling into poverty
6. Reduce the risk of them becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol
7. Reduce the risk of them becoming homeless

Options

1. Completely disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Don't know/not sure
4. Somewhat agree
5. Completely agree

Q8 Who do you think should be most responsible for ensuring that teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in some sort of work-based training after the age of 16?

1. Teenagers themselves
2. Parents/guardians/carers
3. School/college/work-base training providers
4. Employers
5. Local/central government
6. Other (please state)
7. Don't know

Q9 Which of the following do you think will persuade teenagers to remain at school, go to college or take part in structured work-based training after the age of 16?

Please tick all that apply...

1. It won't be necessary to do anything, teenagers will understand the benefits of staying-on and won't need persuading
2. A combination of a marketing campaign to persuade teenagers that they will benefit if they stay on and extra advice from their school
3. Financial incentives, similar to the current Education Maintenance Allowance

4. Soft penalties for teenagers who refuse to stay-on, for example taking away their right to apply for a driving licence at 17
5. Fixed penalty fines for teenagers who refuse to take part
6. Make it a criminal offence for teenagers not to take part in education or training
7. Other (please state)
8. Nothing, it is completely unenforceable

Annex 3 Survey results

To what level do you agree or disagree that making it compulsory for teenagers to remain in education or training until 18 is a good idea?

Table 1a

	Parents		Teenagers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Agree	655	71.2%	192	50.5%
Disagree	210	22.8%	129	33.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	55	6.0%	59	15.5%
Total	920	100.0%	380	100.0%

Table 1b (Table 1a broken down by original categories asked)

	Parents		Teenagers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Agree strongly	313	34.0	41	10.8
Agree somewhat	342	37.2	151	39.7
Neither agree nor disagree	55	6.0	59	15.5
Disagree somewhat	138	15.0	71	18.7
Disagree strongly	72	7.8	58	15.3
Total	920	100.0	380	100.0

Regional comparison

Table 2

Parents	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
East	67.2%	25.6%	7.2%
East Midlands	66.2%	23.9%	9.9%
London	83.8%	13.5%	2.7%
North East	72.7%	16.4%	10.9%
North West	78.5%	17.7%	3.8%
South East	66.5%	29.1%	4.4%
South West	67.7%	25.0%	7.3%
Unknown	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
West Midlands	67.0%	25.0%	8.0%
Yorkshire And The Humber	76.3%	19.4%	4.3%

Mosaic™ – Socio economic status comparison

Table 3

Parents only	Agree no.	Agree %	Disagree no.	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree no	Neither agree nor disagree %
Groups A, B	129	69.0%	52	27.8%	6	3.2%
Groups C	106	64.6%	50	30.5%	8	4.9%
Group D, E	138	71.9%	38	19.8%	16	8.3%
Groups F, G	98	77.2%	20	15.7%	9	7.1%
Group H	92	75.4%	19	15.6%	11	9.0%
Group I, J, K	59	71.1%	21	25.3%	3	3.6%
Total*	655	71.2%	210	22.8%	55	6.0%

Source: Experian, April, 2007

Note: * Sum of Mosaic™ groups does not equal total figure as not all records could be matched to a group due to missing geographical records.

Parents with no qualifications

Table 4

	Frequency	Percent
Agree strongly	33	31.7
Agree somewhat	31	29.8
Neither agree nor disagree	18	17.3
Disagree somewhat	12	11.5
Disagree strongly	10	9.6
Total	104	100.0

The right choose: Pick the statement you most agree with...

Table 5a

	Parents		Teenagers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Sixteen year olds have a right to choose whether or not to continue their education or training at 16, and the state should not take away their right to choose	371	40.3	271	71.3
Most 16 year olds are not yet ready to make such an important decision about their future, so it is right for the state to guide them in this way	549	59.7	109	28.7
Total	920	100.0	380	100.0

Results for table 5a by Mosaic™ group (parents)

Table 5b

Parent	Sixteen year olds have a right to choose whether or not to continue their education or training at 16, and the state should not take away their right to choose	Most 16 year olds are not yet ready to make such an important decision about their future, so it is right for the state to guide them in this way
Mosaic™ Group A, B	39.6%	60.4%
Mosaic™ Group C	36.6%	63.4%
Mosaic™ Group D, E	43.2%	56.8%
Mosaic™ Group F, G	35.4%	64.6%
Mosaic™ Group H	40.2%	59.8%
Mosaic™ Group I, J, K	44.6%	55.4%
TOTAL	40.3%	59.7%

Source: Experian, April, 2007

The benefits of staying on: Parents

Pick the statement you most agree with...

Table 6

% of parents	
In my opinion, business will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training until they are 18 because it will...	Improve the reading, writing and maths skills of young people
	Provide employers with better skilled, trained and educated employees
	Reduce the amount of time and money that they spend on training young people after they have left compulsory education and training.
	Provide employers with a better opportunity, through things like apprenticeships, to train teenagers and ensure that they have the skills they need to do a particular job.
In my opinion, the community will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training because it will...	Provide cheap labour through apprenticeship schemes
	Reduce anti-social behaviour
	Help teenagers develop the skills they need to become responsible adults
	Improve the long-term aspirations and ambitions of teenagers, especially those from deprived backgrounds
	Reduce the number of young people who are unemployed
	Help reduce teenage pregnancy
	Reduce the number of teenagers who are involved in crime
Reduce the number of teenagers who take drugs	
In my opinion, teenagers will benefit if they remain in education or training because it will...	Reduce the number of young people who become homeless
	Give them the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career
	Reduce the risk of them making a choice that they may regret later in life
	Reduce the risk of them becoming unemployed
	Reduce the risk of them getting into crime
	Reduce the risk of them falling into poverty
	Reduce the risk of them becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol
Reduce the risk of them becoming homeless	

	Completely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Don't know/ not sure	Somewhat agree	Completely agree
	%	%	%	%	%
	8.0	17.8	12.5	38.8	22.8
	5.3	13.7	12.8	41.8	26.3
	8.7	20.5	27.1	31.7	12.0
	4.1	8.0	13.7	46.0	28.2
	8.4	20.5	32.2	28.9	10.0
	15.4	26.8	21.3	28.9	7.5
	6.1	9.9	14.2	48.5	21.3
	5.5	12.1	17.2	45.1	20.1
	5.3	9.0	15.3	46.1	24.2
	27.5	35.3	23.9	9.1	4.1
	20.5	31.6	27.0	15.7	5.2
	23.5	35.3	25.5	11.2	4.5
	19.8	25.1	30.0	19.2	5.9
	3.8	8.7	15.1	53.8	18.6
	4.1	14.3	19.2	47.3	15.0
	7.8	18.2	22.7	39.8	11.5
	13.5	27.2	28.8	24.3	6.2
	12.9	26.3	27.3	26.5	7.0
	17.5	31.5	29.1	17.0	4.9
	15.5	26.6	31.0	21.3	5.5

The benefits of staying on: Teenagers

Pick the statement you most agree with...

Table 7

% of teenagers

In my opinion, business will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training until they are 18 because it will...

Improve the reading, writing and maths skills of young people

Provide employers with better skilled, trained and educated employees

Reduce the amount of time and money that they spend on training young people after they have left compulsory education and training.

Provide employers with a better opportunity, through things like apprenticeships, to train teenagers and ensure that they have the skills they need to do a particular job.

Provide cheap labour through apprenticeship schemes

In my opinion, the community will benefit if teenagers remain in education or training because it will...

Reduce anti-social behaviour

Help teenagers develop the skills they need to become responsible adults

Improve the long-term aspirations and ambitions of teenagers, especially those from deprived backgrounds

Reduce the number of young people who are unemployed

Help reduce teenage pregnancy

Reduce the number of teenagers who are involved in crime

Reduce the number of teenagers who take drugs

Reduce the number of young people who become homeless

In my opinion, teenagers will benefit if they remain in education or training because it will...

Give them the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career

Reduce the risk of them making a choice that they may regret later in life

Reduce the risk of them becoming unemployed

Reduce the risk of them getting into crime

Reduce the risk of them falling into poverty

Reduce the risk of them becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol

Reduce the risk of them becoming homeless

	Completely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Don't know/ not sure	Somewhat agree	Completely agree
	%	%	%	%	%
	7.9	13.2	27.4	37.4	14.2
	5.0	9.2	27.9	41.1	16.8
	6.8	11.3	41.6	30.5	9.7
	5.3	8.2	34.7	37.4	14.5
	6.3	10.5	40.0	29.7	13.4
	22.4	24.7	28.2	20.0	4.7
	7.1	11.8	26.1	43.2	11.8
	6.6	12.9	31.6	36.8	12.1
	9.5	11.1	31.1	34.7	13.7
	30.3	26.3	34.2	6.3	2.9
	25.3	27.6	30.8	13.2	3.2
	28.2	30.5	28.9	9.7	2.6
	21.6	22.9	36.8	13.7	5.0
	5.5	7.4	26.6	47.9	12.6
	5.5	10.5	32.1	39.7	12.1
	7.1	15.3	26.1	40.0	11.6
	15.5	23.7	36.3	19.5	5.0
	14.7	18.7	38.2	22.1	6.3
	20.3	24.5	38.2	12.9	4.2
	15.3	21.3	40.3	17.4	5.8

In your opinion, how likely are the following groups of young people to comply with the change?

Table 8a parents

	Not at all likely to comply	Probably not likely to comply	Might/Might not comply	Probably likely to comply	Definitely likely to comply
% of parents	%	%	%	%	%
Teenagers from poorer backgrounds	19.7	37.0	30.5	10.3	2.5
Teenagers who are bright but face extreme pressure from their friends to leave at 16	3.4	19.1	46.0	26.6	4.9
Teenagers who face extreme problems such as drug or alcohol addiction	50.1	32.5	13.7	2.8	0.9
Teenagers involved in crime	51.3	32.3	12.7	2.8	0.9
Teenagers who can't see the point of education or training	47.6	33.3	14.6	3.3	1.3
Teenagers who aren't academically able	19.1	35.5	34.0	10.0	1.3
Teenagers from middle-class families	2.1	2.6	21.2	45.8	28.4
Teenage mothers	23.2	29.9	37.8	7.7	1.4

Table 8b teenagers

	Not at all likely to comply	Probably not likely to comply	Might/Might not comply	Probably likely to comply	Definitely likely to comply
% of teenagers	%	%	%	%	%
Teenagers from poorer backgrounds	27.4	31.3	28.4	11.1	1.8
Teenagers who are bright but face extreme pressure from their friends to leave at 16	12.4	25.0	38.7	19.5	4.5
Teenagers who face extreme problems such as drug or alcohol addiction	46.8	28.7	21.1	2.6	0.8
Teenagers involved in crime	44.2	33.2	19.7	2.1	0.8
Teenagers who can't see the point of education or training	55.3	24.2	17.4	2.6	0.5
Teenagers who aren't academically able	25.5	26.3	36.8	9.5	1.8
Teenagers from middle-class families	5.5	5.8	30.3	41.1	17.4
Teenage mothers	26.6	31.3	35.8	5.0	1.3

Who do you think should be most responsible for ensuring that teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in some sort of work-based training after the age of 16?

Table 9

	Parents		Teenagers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Teenagers themselves	261	28.4	214	56.3
Parents/guardians/carers	417	45.3	87	22.9
School/college/work-based training providers	79	8.6	36	9.5
Employers	7	0.8	1	0.3
Local/central government	96	10.4	20	5.3
Other (please state)	29	3.2	2	0.5
Don't know	31	3.4	20	5.3
Total	920	100.0	380	100.0

Parents defined 'Other' options as:

- all of the above
- a combination of all of the above
- parents and teenagers.

In your opinion, which of the following will help ensure that all teenagers remain at school, go to college or take part in structured work-based training after the age of 16?

Table 10

	Parents		Teenagers	
	No.	%	No.	%
It won't be necessary to do anything, teenagers will understand the benefits of staying-on and won't need persuading	57	6.2	44	11.6
A combination of a marketing campaign to persuade teenagers that they will benefit if they stay on and extra advice from their school	384	41.7	126	33.2
Financial incentives, similar to the current Education Maintenance Allowance	603	65.5	253	66.6
Soft penalties for teenagers who refuse to stay-on, for example taking away their right to apply for a driving licence at 17	266	28.9	71	18.7
Fixed penalty fines for teenagers who refuse to take part	104	11.3	36	9.5
Make it a criminal offence for teenagers not to take part in education or training	142	15.4	50	13.2
Other (please state)	43	4.7	5	1.3
Nothing, it is completely unenforceable	125	13.6	58	15.3

Parents only: In your opinion, which of the following will persuade employers not to take on 16–18 year olds without offering structured training?

Table 11

	Parents	
	Count	%
A marketing campaign to show them the benefits of offering young people structured work based training such as an Apprenticeship	274	29.8
Incentives such as tax breaks for employers who run structured work-based training schemes for teenagers	544	59.1
Fixed penalty fines	154	16.7
Hard penalties – companies and their directors should be prosecuted if they take on 16 year olds without offering them structured training	285	31.0
Other (please state)	20	2.2
Nothing – it is unenforceable	129	14.0

Annex 4 Mosaic™ groups

About MOSAIC

Mosaic™ UK is Experian's award-winning people classification system. It classifies the UK population into 11 main socio-economic groups and, within this, 61 different types. Mosaic™ is also a global consumer classification tool and is available in 23 major countries. It classifies more than a billion consumers worldwide, covering a third of the surface area of the Earth and is available in all of the world's most prosperous economies including China, North America, Europe and Asia Pacific.

Mosaic™ is used in the commercial sector to analyse potential and existing markets for products and services. It is also used by retailers and property investors as a key tool for site location. Mosaic™ is used in the public sector in the UK for a range of applications and is an excellent predictor of many economic variables such as incomes, spending characteristics and housing demand. The police use Mosaic™ to identify neighbourhoods at risk of burglary and other household crimes. The health service uses Mosaic™ to map and analyse vulnerability to a range of medical conditions and the Fire Service uses Mosaic™ to identify households most at risk of fire.

The 11 main postcodes groups are briefly summarised below. For further details of Mosaic™ UK including the range of analytical and information services Experian offers organisations, visit www.business-strategies.co.uk

Group A Symbols of success – career professionals living in sought-after locations

Contains people whose lives are 'successful' by whatever yardsticks society commonly uses to measure success. These are people who have rewarding careers rather than jobs, who live in sought-after locations, who drive the more modern and expensive cars and who indulge in the most exotic leisure pursuits. Most, though not all, appear to enjoy stable household arrangements.

Group B Happy families – younger families living in newer homes

Contains people who are focused on career, home and family. These are mostly younger age groups who are married, or at least in a permanent relationship, and are now raising children in post-war family houses, often in areas of the country with rapidly growing populations. The focus of expenditure is on equipment for the home and garden, and the immediate family unit is the principal focus of leisure activities.

Group C Suburban comfort – older families living in suburbia

Comprises people who have successfully established themselves and their families in comfortable homes in mature suburbs. Children are becoming more independent, work is becoming less of a challenge and interest payments on homes and other loans are becoming less burdensome. With more time and money on their hands, people can relax and focus on activities that they find intrinsically rewarding.

Group D Ties of community – close-knit, inner-city and manufacturing town communities

Comprised of people whose lives are mostly played out within the confines of close-knit communities. Living mostly in older houses in inner-city neighbourhoods or in small industrial towns, most of these people own their homes, drive their own cars and hold down responsible jobs. Community norms rather than individual material ambitions shape the pattern of most residents' consumption.

Group E Urban intelligence – educated, young, single people living in areas of transient populations

Mostly contains young and well-educated people who are open to new ideas and influences. Young and single, few encumbered with children, these people tend to be avid explorers of new ideas and fashions, cosmopolitan in their tastes and liberal in their social attitudes. Although they are eager consumers of the media with a sophisticated understanding of brand values, they like to be treated as individuals, and value authenticity over veneer.

Group F Welfare borderline – people living in social housing with uncertain employment in deprived areas

Comprised of many people who are struggling to achieve the material and personal rewards that are assumed to be open to all in an affluent society. Few hold down rewarding or well-paying jobs and, as a result, most rely on the council for their accommodation, on public transport to get around and on state benefits to fund even the bare essentials. The lack of stability in many family formations undermines social networks and leads to high levels of anti-social behaviour among local children.

Group G Municipal dependency – low-income families living in estate-based social housing

Mostly contains families on lower incomes who live on large municipal council estates where few of the tenants have exercised their right to buy. Often isolated in the outer suburbs of large provincial cities, Group G is characterised as much by low aspirations as by low incomes. Here people watch a lot of television and buy trusted mainstream brands from shops that focus on price rather than range or service.

Group H Blue collar enterprise upwardly mobile families living in homes bought from social landlords

Comprises people who, though not necessarily very well educated, are practical and enterprising in their orientation. Many of these people live in what were once council estates but where tenants have exercised their right to buy. They own their cars, provide a reliable source of labour to local employers and are streetwise consumers. Tastes are mass market rather than individualistic and focus on providing comfort and value to family members.

Group I Twilight subsistence – older people living in social housing with high care needs

Consists of elderly people who are mostly reliant on state benefits, and live in housing designed by local authorities and housing associations. Some live in old people's homes or sheltered accommodation, while others live in small bungalows, set in small enclaves within larger council estates. Most of these people spend money only on the basic necessities of life.

Group J Grey perspectives – independent older people with relatively active lifestyles

Consists mostly of pensioners who own their homes and who have some source of income beyond the basic state pension. Many of these people have, on retirement, moved to the seaside or the countryside to live among people similar to themselves. Today many of these people have quite active lifestyles and are considered in their purchasing decisions.

Group K Rural isolation – people living in rural areas far from urbanisation

Contains people whose pattern of living is distinctively rural. They live not just outside major population centres but also deep in the countryside, in small communities which have been little influenced by the influx of urban commuters. These are places where people with different levels of income share attachments to local communities, and where engagement with the community and with the natural environment are more important to most residents than material consumption.

Annex 5 Market research guidelines on conducting research with children and young people

Key points

- Always get consent from parents for interviewing children.
- No study can ask children something illegal for their age group.
- The language on the questionnaire must be suitable for their age group.

Full guidelines can be found at:

www.mrs.org.uk/standards/downloads/revise/active/children_young_people_mar06.pdf

Raising the leaving learning age

are the public convinced?

In March 2007 the government launched the *Raising expectations* Green Paper, which sets out proposals for making it compulsory from 2015 for all teenagers to stay in some form of education or training until they reach their 18th birthday. If successfully implemented, this change could be the most significant shift in education policy in a generation.

The success of this policy will, in part, depend on the support it has among parents and teenagers themselves. This timely research from LSN explores the views of parents and teenagers on the issue, examining whether they believe it to be a good idea, how they see the potential benefits of the change and their opinions on the proposals for compulsion and enforcement.

