

# WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study

# 11th Annual Survey

## Annual Report | 2022-23



# Background

The WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS) is an annual longitudinal study to chart the progress of children and young people growing up in Wales. Each year, we survey three cohorts from schools across Wales and ask questions about their experiences of school and their perspectives on national and international issues.

Here, we provide a summary of key findings from our 11th survey (2022-23). Summaries of results for all of our questions from each year of the survey (2012 onwards) are available on the WISERD Data Portal [dataportal.wiserd.ac.uk](https://dataportal.wiserd.ac.uk)

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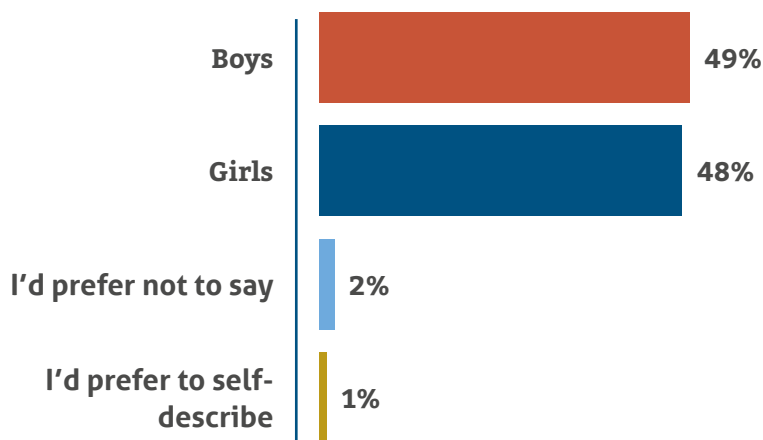
# Demographics

In our 11th annual survey, we invited pupils from years 7, 9 and 11 to take part in the survey and received responses from over 800 pupils.

We work with schools on a voluntary basis and target those who have already participated so as to retain pupils for longitudinal analysis as much as possible. We aim to collect a sample from all over Wales, with a good representation from differing socio-economic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.

## Gender

We asked our participants 'What is your gender?' and allowed them to select one of four options, including one that allowed them to self-describe:



## Nationality and ethnicity

67% of this year's participants identified their nationality as Welsh, 13% as English, 10% as 'other' and 8% as British. Irish and Scottish given responses were too small to report.

87% reported their ethnicity as 'white', 4% as 'any other racial or ethnic group', 2% mixed black, 1% Indian, and other ethnicities were too low in number to report.



## FSM

23% of our sample reported eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM). 71% did not, while 6% chose not to respond.

## Faith schools

8% of this year's participants attended schools of Christian denominations.



## Urban/rural

63% of our survey lived in built-up areas which are relatively 'urban' in a Welsh context.

## Language medium

42% of our participants attended Welsh-medium schools or bilingual-medium schools.

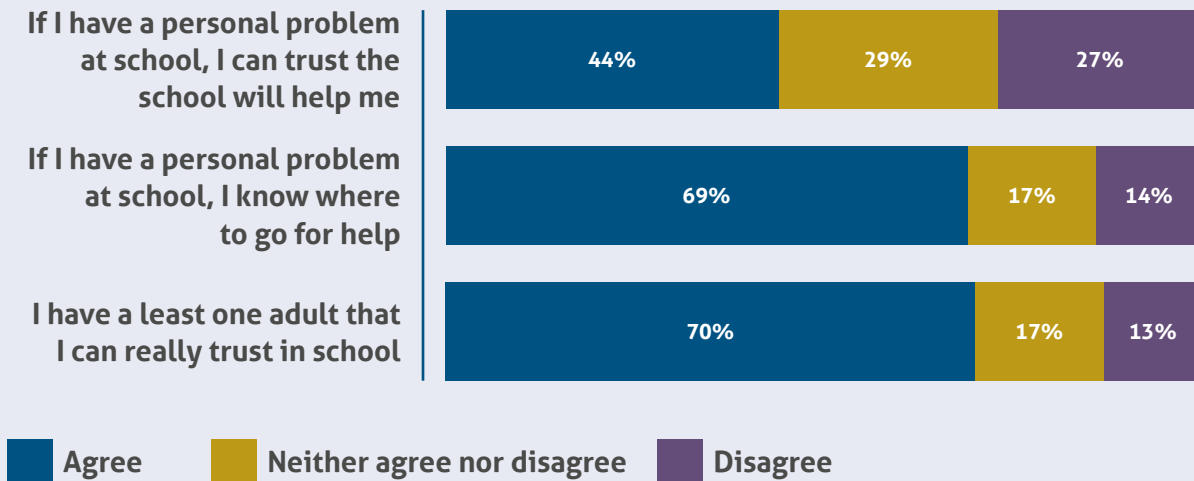
# Trust



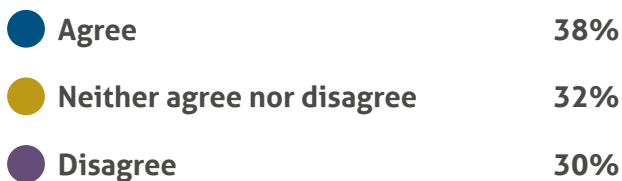
**Just under half of pupils (44%) feel they can trust the school to help them if they have a personal problem.**

While most pupils feel they have support at school, 14% of pupils say they do not have 'at least one adult' they can really trust at school and do not know where to go for help if they have a personal problem.

## Finding support at school



## Pupils have mixed opinions on whether their school deals with conflict well:



# Confidence

Pupils are most confident in their skills of coming up with creative ideas (95% are either 'somewhat' or 'very confident').

14% are 'not confident at all' when it comes to studying on their own and almost one in five pupils are not confident writing essays and coursework. However, our cohorts were primarily from years 7 and 9 and our data suggest that this confidence increases with age.

## Pupils are least confident in their skills in:

- 1 Coding and computer programming
- 2 Speaking Welsh
- 3 Learning a new language

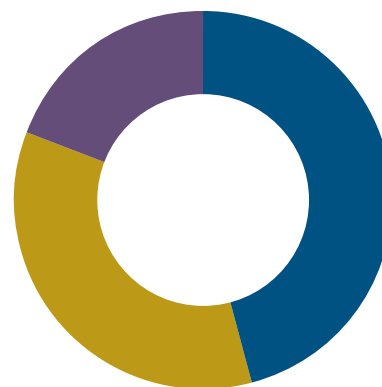
A third of pupils also lack confidence in public speaking (e.g. presenting work in front of the class) and half of pupils are not at all confident in performing in front of people (e.g. singing, acting).



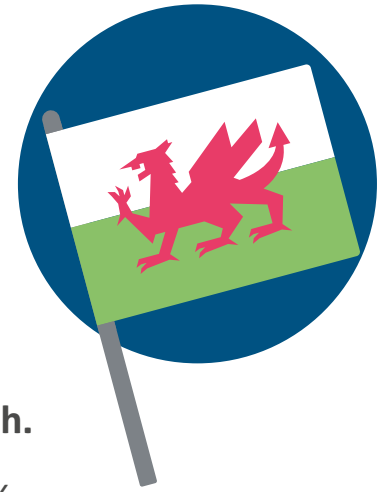
## Pupils are very mixed on confidence in their leadership skills:

Being in charge of something (e.g. a class project, captain of a team)

- Somewhat confident 46%
- Very confident 35%
- Not confident at all 19%



# Welsh language



## Pupils were asked who encourages them to speak Welsh.

Teachers were identified as the people who encouraged pupils to speak Welsh most, chosen more frequently than 'parents', 'friends', and even 'no-one', regardless of school medium or language in the community.

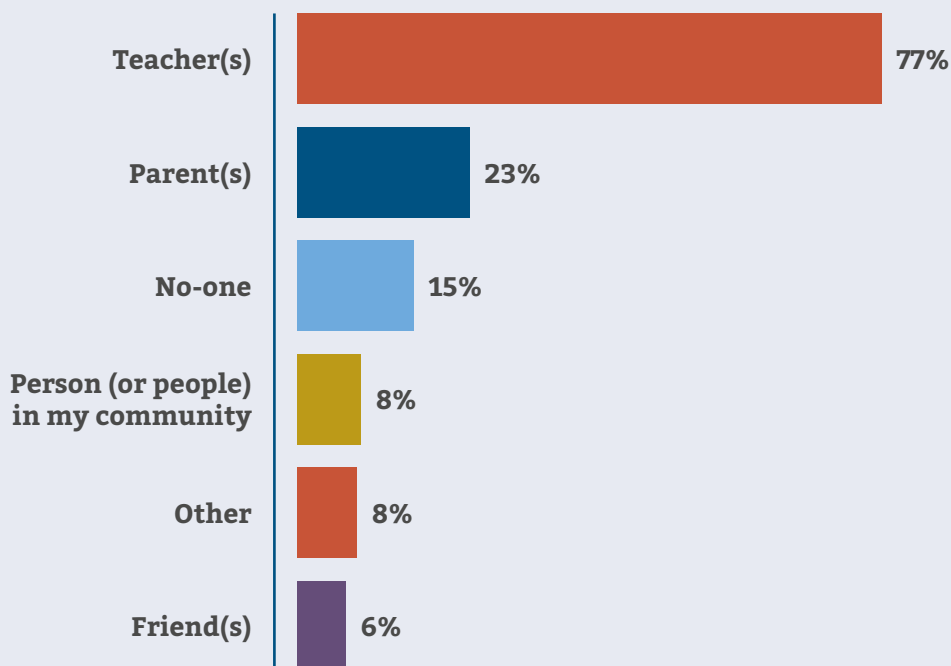
In each school, at least some pupils said they felt encouraged to speak Welsh by community members, though the percentage varied from 3% to 23% depending on the school. In many schools surveyed, pupils also felt encouraged by friends, though this was not the case for all English-medium schools.

In each of the schools surveyed, there were pupils who said that no-one encourages them to speak Welsh, although this varied from 30% in one school down to 4% in another.

One in five pupils said that they have felt judged for speaking Welsh and most often it has been by their classmates. They felt judged for the way they spoke Welsh and for speaking Welsh instead of English, though the former was selected twice as much as the latter.



## Does anyone encourage you to speak Welsh?



# School uniforms



More than half of the pupils in our survey agree that wearing a school uniform stops them from being able to express their personality at school, whereas just under a quarter disagree.

- Agree 52%
- Disagree 24%
- Neither agree nor disagree 24%



Pupils are divided on whether having a school uniform makes them feel equal, with 40% feeling it does not, but 38% feeling that it does.

One in five pupils (22%) feel that every school should have a compulsory uniform.

53% feel that pupils make fun of each other for what they wear – 14% often and 39% sometimes, though the frequency varies between schools.

More than half of pupils have been told off for the clothes they wear, with the number of pupils sent home following the same trend:

	Told off	Sent home
Clothes	52%	10%
Shoes	42%	6%
Jewellery	24%	2%



Of all the pupils who responded to our survey, 11% have been sent home for their school uniform or appearance. This figure varies from 5% in some schools to 20% in others.

# Climate concerns

**Over 80%**  
of pupils say they are either a little or very concerned about air pollution, water pollution and climate change.



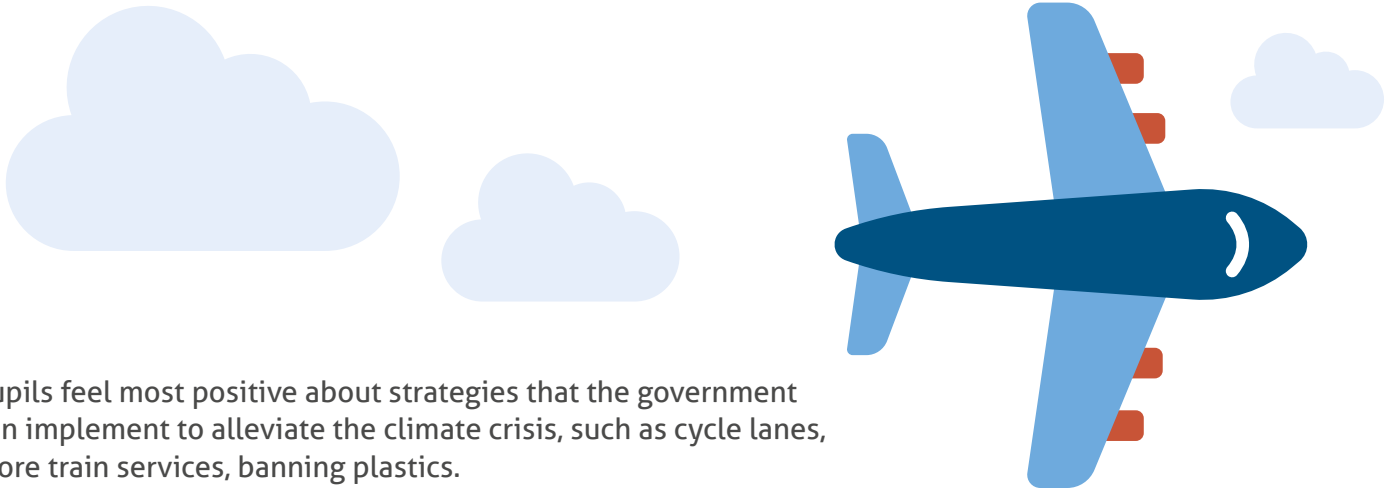
On the other hand, pupils are optimistic about current levels of air pollution in their area: more than half think that the air quality is good or very good, though over a quarter admit that they 'don't know'. Whilst the proportions of responses vary from school to school, this trend remains constant across Wales, whether more rural or more urban.

Pupils overwhelmingly feel that governments have a lot of responsibility to act on climate change, while they are less sure of the role of businesses and individuals.

## How much responsibility do you think governments, businesses and individuals have to act on climate change?



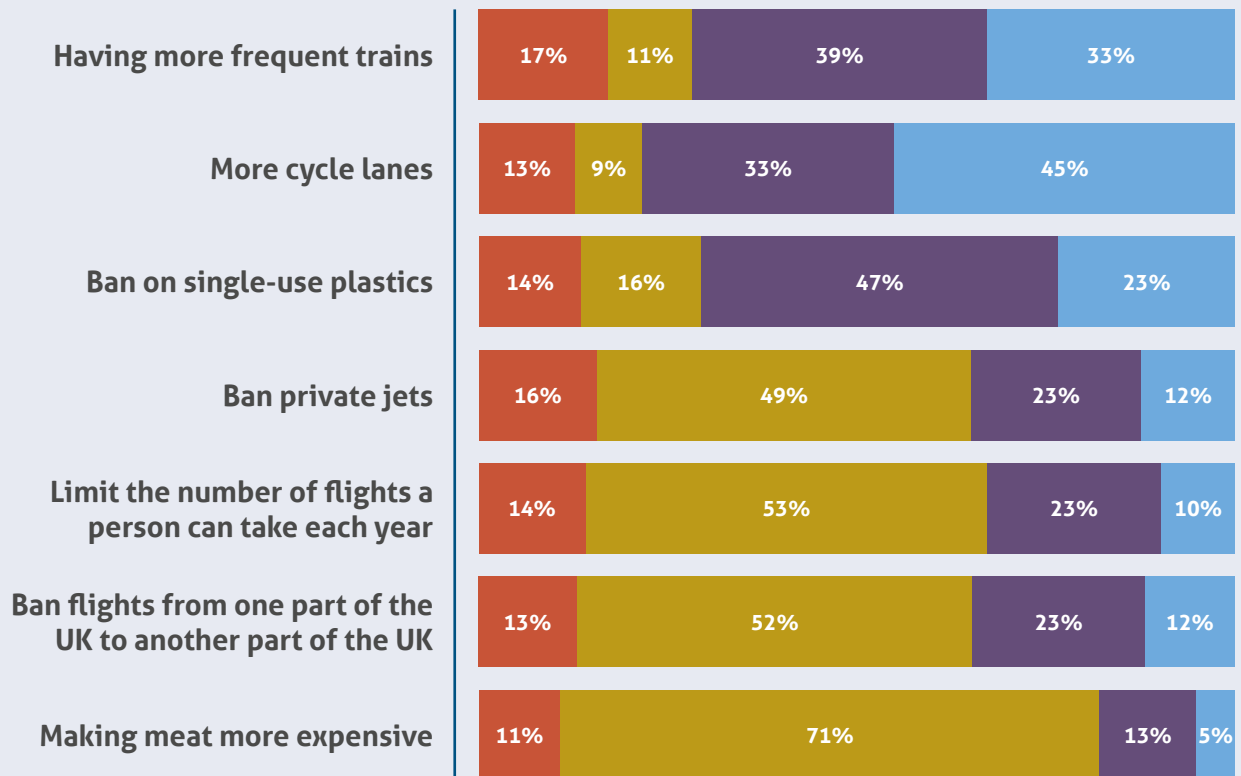




Pupils feel most positive about strategies that the government can implement to alleviate the climate crisis, such as cycle lanes, more train services, banning plastics.

They are significantly less in favour of curtailing individual freedoms, including banning private jets and UK-internal flights, with increasing the price of meat being the least popular option provided (71% of pupils 'do not support').

### Do you support or oppose the following ideas to combat climate change?



■ Don't know  
 ■ Do not support  
 ■ Somewhat support  
 ■ Strongly support

# Politics and constitution

**65%**  
of pupils agree that it is important to vote.

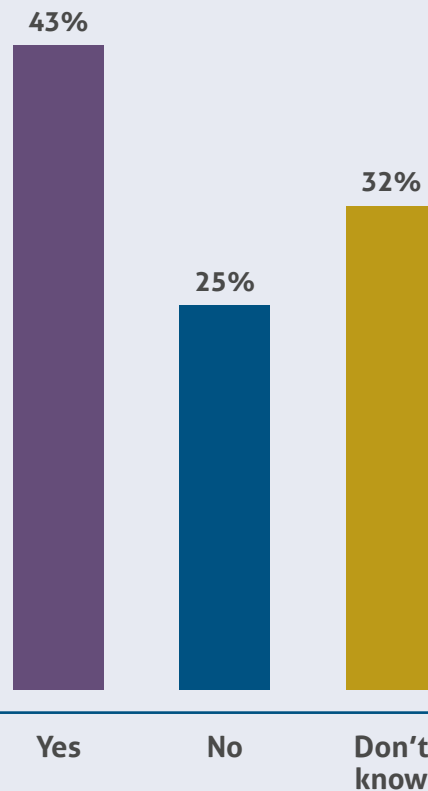


Just under half of our pupils (48%) responded 'no' to the question 'Should Wales be an independent country that is not part of the UK?' 22% responded 'yes' and 30% said they were 'not sure'.

More pupils believe that the Welsh Government cares about them (40%) than the UK Government (29%).

43% of pupils feel that we should have a monarchy, with a quarter disagreeing.

## Do you think we should have a royal family in the UK?



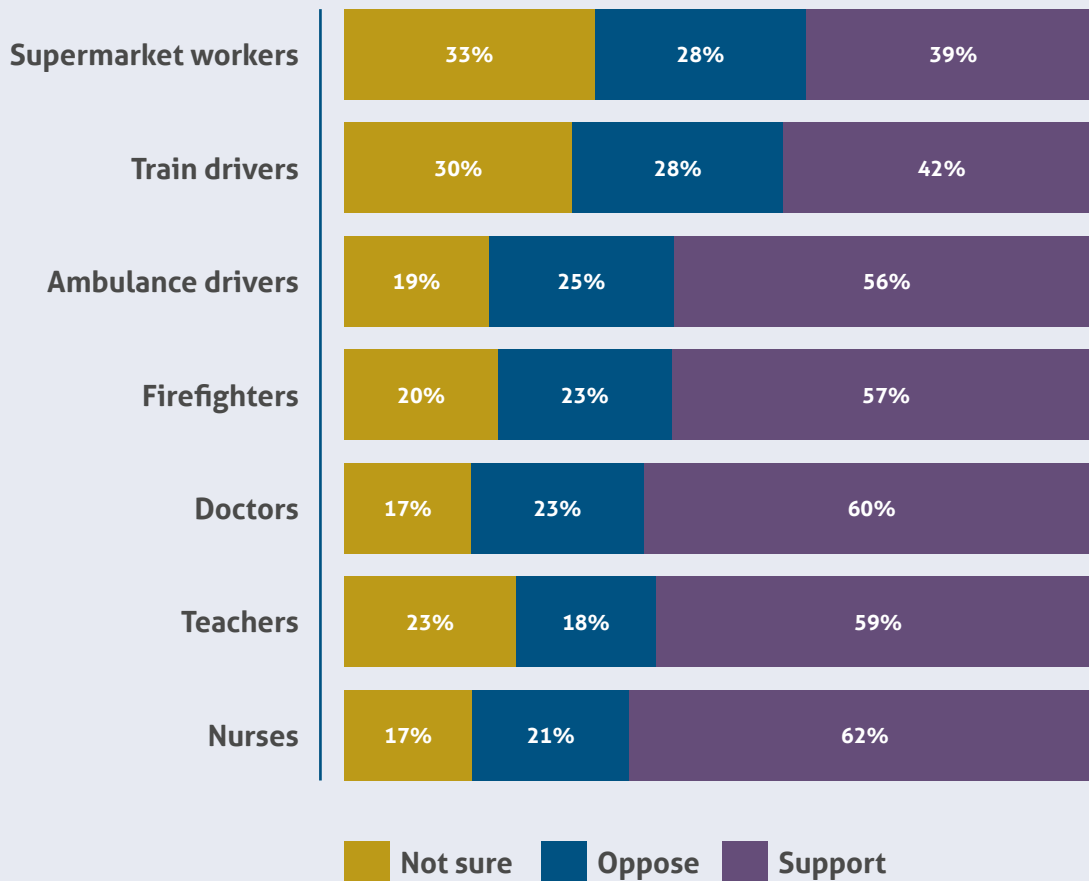
# Strikes and protests



Pupils are most supportive of teachers, healthcare workers and emergency workers going on strike (56-62%) and least supportive of train drivers (42% supporting) and supermarket workers (39% supporting) going on strike.

17% of pupils have protested a school rule or policy. The majority of pupils have protested what they are allowed to wear (71%) and have most frequently protested by breaking a rule or signing a petition.

## Do you support or oppose strike action from these groups of workers



# School trips

**41%**

were unable to go on school trips they wanted to attend, although the most common reason (30%) was that there was something else that the pupils did not want to miss.

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**17%**

say their teachers would not allow them to go on the school trip.

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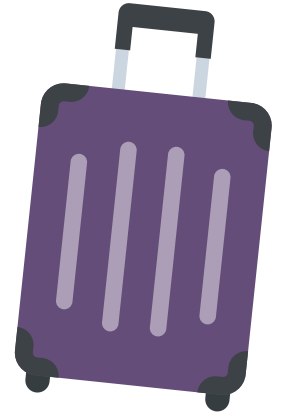
**17%**

say their parents/carers could not afford for them to go on the trip.

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**14%**

simply say that their parents did not think they should go.



# Aspirations

**After school or college, over a third of pupils plan to go to university.**

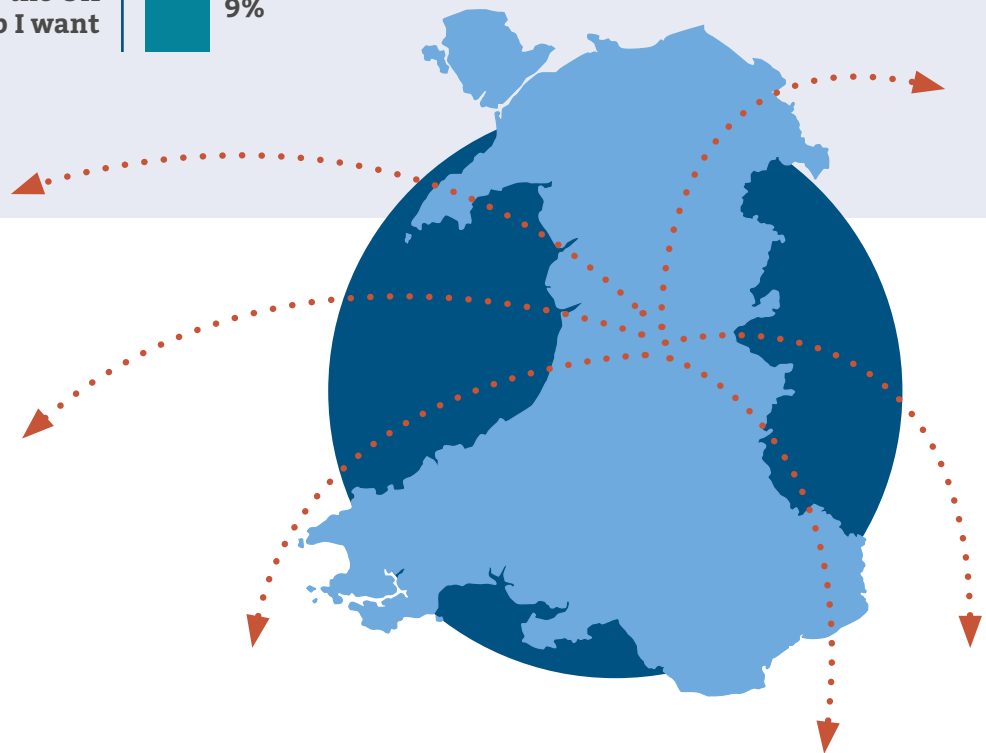
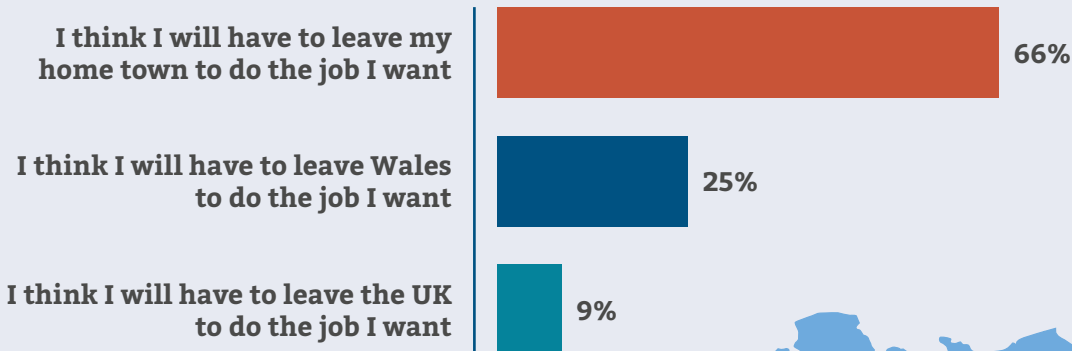
Almost a fifth of pupils want to look for a job.

5% of pupils want to join the military, but this varies greatly by school – this 5% is made up of pupils from just two of the schools surveyed.

Two thirds of pupils feel that they will have to leave their town to do the job they want and a quarter think they will have to leave Wales entirely.



## Moving for work



# Funding

The WMCS is based at Cardiff University and is funded by the Welsh Government.

# About us

The Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD) is a national, interdisciplinary, social science research institute. We have been designated by the Welsh Government as a national research centre.



[wiserd.ac.uk](https://wiserd.ac.uk)



[@WISERDNews](https://twitter.com/WISERDNews)

# How to get involved

If you work at a school and would like to participate in the WMCS, please get in touch:  
[WMCS@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:WMCS@cardiff.ac.uk)

WISERD works in partnership with a wide range of different organisations. If you would like to find out more about our research, are interested in working with us on a joint event or would like to co-produce a piece of research, please get in touch.