

My Favourite Subject – exploring people’s favourite subjects from their time at school and the lasting impact of teachers: a survey on behalf of *Get Into Teaching*

Introduction

Kindred Agency commissioned research company Censuswide to carry out a survey on behalf of the *Get Into Teaching* campaign to explore people’s favourite subjects from their time at school, and the impact of teachers well beyond the classroom years.

The purpose of the survey was aimed at understanding the extent to which people feel their teachers’ passion for their subject helped spark an interest in their favourite subjects, and whether people’s current job or career is related to one of their favourite subjects from their time at school. Findings from the survey were used to inform campaign development and marketing, in particular public relations activity to position teaching as an opportunity for those looking for a fulfilling and rewarding career option. Press releases based on the main survey findings were proactively shared with target national and regional media for publication. These releases included information about how those considering a career in teaching can find out more.

Methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide in accordance with the [MRS Code of Conduct \(2019\)](#) between 1st April 2021 – 9th April 2021. The aim was to gain a representative sample of 2,000 adults over the age of 18 in England, including those employed and those unemployed but looking for work. The final response was from 2,016 adults. The following groups were excluded from the survey: teachers, anyone unemployed and not looking for work, or those who were retired. Respondents were asked a set of single answer and multi-answer questions. All responses were gathered using an online survey and individuals were recruited via a random and anonymous sample selection, from an online “double opt-in” panel (where all eligible respondents are required to answer the demographic screening questions again to take part in the survey) of the general public in England.

The Censuswide panel was originally recruited via sampling specialists and since has grown organically. Panellists can opt to answer all surveys but will be filtered out if a survey is not relevant to them. Panellists are also invited to participate in surveys via a newsletter. Censuswide employs members of the [Market Research Society](#) and its research activity abides by the [ESOMAR](#) principles.

The way these surveys were built meant that respondents were asked a number of preliminary screening questions to gather their demographic data, which could be used to analyse the data. This demographic data included age group, gender, work status, city and region.

Questions were based on a range of topics and themes exploring:

- The range of subjects respondents enjoyed the most from their time at school
- What aspects of their favourite subject at school respondents enjoyed the most

- Whether respondents felt that their teachers sparked their interest in their favourite subject and inspired curiosity
- How much their job or career is related to their favourite subjects from their time at school
- The extent to which people enjoy being taught something new if it is rooted in everyday life
- How people feel when they help someone else engage with subjects they are passionate about
- Respondents' knowledge around some subject-specific questions based on topical ones that case study teachers have used in their lessons.

In the survey, we are working with a 3.09% margin of error (and a 95% confidence interval), which means that if the research were to be repeated, we would expect the percentages to differ no more than 3% either way from the current results data.

Summary findings

Respondents were asked to select up to three subjects they enjoyed the most when thinking back to their time at school. Respondents answered as follows: English (36%); maths (26%); history (25%); art & design (21%); geography (18%); biology (16%); PE (16%); home economics/food technology (13%); music (13%); design & technology (12%); ICT/Computing (12%); modern foreign languages (9%); chemistry (9%); physics (7%), RE (6%); and citizenship (2%). Just over 4% said they didn't enjoy any subject the most and 3% said "other".

Respondents were asked, when thinking about their favourite subject at school, which aspects did they enjoy about it the most: 45% said they were naturally good at it; 39% said they were already interested in this subject; 32% said the more they were taught, the more they enjoyed it; 30% said their teacher's passion for the subject engaged them in the lessons; and 28% said their teacher's way of explaining the subject made it click. Alongside this, 24% said it allowed them to express themselves as a person; 21% felt it relevant to the world around them; 19% said it encouraged them to consider different viewpoints on topics; and 8% said their family got them interested in it. Additionally, 4% said there were no particular aspects that made them enjoy their favourite subject the most and under 1% said "other".

Asked, if their teacher's passion for their subject helped spark the interest in their favourite subject, respondents answered as follows: 34% said yes definitely, 39% said yes somewhat, 19% said no not really, 4% said no definitely not, and 4% said they didn't know. When respondents were asked if their current job/career related to one of their favourite subjects from your time at school, they answered as follows: 14% said yes very much, 25% said yes somewhat, 20% said no not very much, 26% said no not at all, and 14% were not employed and didn't have a favourite subject at school. Asked if they think they use any knowledge in their current job role, that they gained from being taught their favourite subject/s at school, respondents answered as follows: 22% said yes definitely, 37% said yes somewhat, 23% said no not really, 16% said no definitely not, and 3% said I don't know.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement "*Teachers can help spark a student's interest in a subject and inspire curiosity*": 50% said strongly agree, 35% somewhat agree, 13% neither agree nor disagree, 1% somewhat disagree. Respondents were also asked

to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement *“Being taught something new is more enjoyable if it’s related to the world around me/rooted in everyday life”*: 33% strongly agree, 45% somewhat agree, 19% neither agree nor disagree, 2% somewhat disagree, and 1% said strongly disagree.

Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with a number of statements about how engaging and inspiring others about a topic they are passionate about makes them feel. In response to the statement *“Helping someone else engage/get excited about a topic/subject matter that I am passionate about, makes me feel energised”* respondents answered as follows: 33% strongly agree, 44% somewhat agree, 19% neither agree nor disagree, 3% somewhat disagree, 2% strongly disagree. To the statement *“Helping someone else engage/get excited about a topic/subject matter that I am passionate about, makes me feel that I am making a difference”*: 36% strongly agree, 42% somewhat agree, 18% neither agree nor disagree, 3% somewhat disagree, 1% strongly disagree. To the statement *“Helping someone else engage/get excited about a topic/subject matter that I am passionate about is a rewarding feeling”*: 39% strongly agree, 39% somewhat agree, 18% neither agree nor disagree, 3% somewhat disagree, 1% strongly disagree.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked some topical subject-specific questions that some teachers use in their lessons. For a history question, respondents were asked which statement from a list they thought to be true in relation to *“The idea of social distancing to reduce the spread of a disease”* and respondents answered as follows: it has been around for hundreds of years (26%); was a new concept in 2020 (25%); has been around for thousands of years (20%); has been around since the start of the last century (13%); 13% stated not sure, and 2% said none of the above. On another subject-based question related to maths and music, respondents were asked whether they believe the statement *“Music wouldn’t exist without mathematical structures”* to be true or false and respondents answered: true (52%), false (25%) and not sure (24%).

The city-based statistical variations report:

City-based data	Birmingham	Bradford	Brighton	Bristol	Hull	Leeds	Leicester	Liverpool	Manchester	Newcastle	Nottingham	Norwich	Oxford	Plymouth	Sheffield	Southampton
<i>Number of respondents per city in the overall sample</i>	119	101	100	101	100	101	100	100	108	101	100	101	100	101	101	100
Respondents in a job or career related to one of their favourite subjects from their time at school*	42%	45%	45%	36%	38%	49%	44%	34%	41%	41%	34%	37%	46%	32%	31%	36%

Respondents who said their teacher's passion for their subject helped spark the interest in their favourite subject **	80%	72%	70%	73%	73 %	80%	74%	73%	70%	69%	75%	64%	76%	76%	79%	74%
Respondents who say that they use knowledge they gained from being taught their favourite subjects at school in their current job role**	68%	72%	63%	65%	35 %	77%	59%	52%	63%	56%	56%	61%	59%	53%	53%	54%
Respondents who agree*** that teachers can help spark a student's interest in a subject or inspire curiosity	87%	86%	89%	87%	85 %	89%	86%	86%	82%	87%	85%	80%	82%	89%	80%	85%
Respondents who agree*** that being taught something new is more enjoyable if it's related to the world around them / rooted in everyday life	76%	79%	79%	82%	75 %	75%	80%	85%	74%	79%	81%	68%	82%	80%	73%	79%
SUBJECT RELATED QUESTION: Respondents who thought the Idea of social distancing to reduce the spread of a disease was a new concept in 2020	26%	27%	20%	27%	29 %	20%	29%	27%	27%	33%	30%	21%	24%	28%	24%	17%

SUBJECT RELATED QUESTION: Respondents who correctly identified that music wouldn't exist without mathematical structures.	55%	50%	48%	52%	43 %	45%	53%	61%	54%	53%	48%	51%	54%	58%	49%	46%
Respondents who agree*** that helping someone else engage or get excited about a topic they are passionate about makes them feel that they are making a difference	82%	82%	86%	71%	73 %	81%	86%	85%	75%	81%	78%	71%	76%	79%	74%	80%

The regional statistical variations report:

Regional-based data	East of England	Greater London	East Midlands	West Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	Yorkshire and the Humber
<i>Number of respondents per region in the overall sample</i>	216	230	229	138	103	208	334	230	328
Respondents in a job or career related to one of their favourite subjects from their time at school*	38%	49%	39%	44%	43%	36%	42%	32%	40%
Respondents who said their teacher's passion for their subject helped spark the interest in their favourite subject **	67%	72%	75%	80%	68%	71%	76%	72%	77%
Respondents who say that they use knowledge they gained from being taught	58%	63%	61%	73%	56%	57%	57%	56%	56%

their favourite subjects at school in their current job role**									
Respondents who agree*** that teachers can help spark a student's interest in a subject or inspire curiosity	78%	83%	84%	83%	85%	86%	87%	87%	88%
Respondents who agree*** that being taught something new is more enjoyable if it's related to the world around them / rooted in everyday life	70%	77%	76%	78%	81%	79%	82%	82%	77%
SUBJECT RELATED QUESTION: Respondents who thought the Idea of social distancing to reduce the spread of a disease was a new concept in 2020	26%	23%	25%	29%	36%	26%	21%	27%	24%
SUBJECT RELATED QUESTION: Respondents who correctly identified that music wouldn't exist without mathematical structures.	48%	53%	49%	55%	49%	57%	54%	54%	49%
Respondents who agree*** that helping someone else engage or get excited about a topic they are passionate about makes them feel that they are making a difference	70%	73%	83%	78%	78%	80%	81%	75%	81%

* This finding combines respondents who said 'Yes, somewhat' or 'Yes, very much'.

** This finding combines respondents who said 'Yes, somewhat' or 'Yes, definitely'.

*** This finding combines respondents who said they 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Questions 3 & 6 are based on a smaller sample size than the 2,016 surveyed. (1,927 & 1,732 respectively)