

Brothers
& Sisters
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A National Voice Survey About Sibling Contact Within The Care System



Siblings Matter to Children from Care

ANV consulted children and young people in 2006 about the issues that were most important to them. Sibling contact was considered an important issue and so we conducted a poll across England to find out more.

Over 100 children and young people aged 10–25 answered our survey about contact with their brothers and sisters. For children and young people from care, who often live away from birth parents, siblings are vital. Contact with ex-foster brothers and sisters is clearly important too.

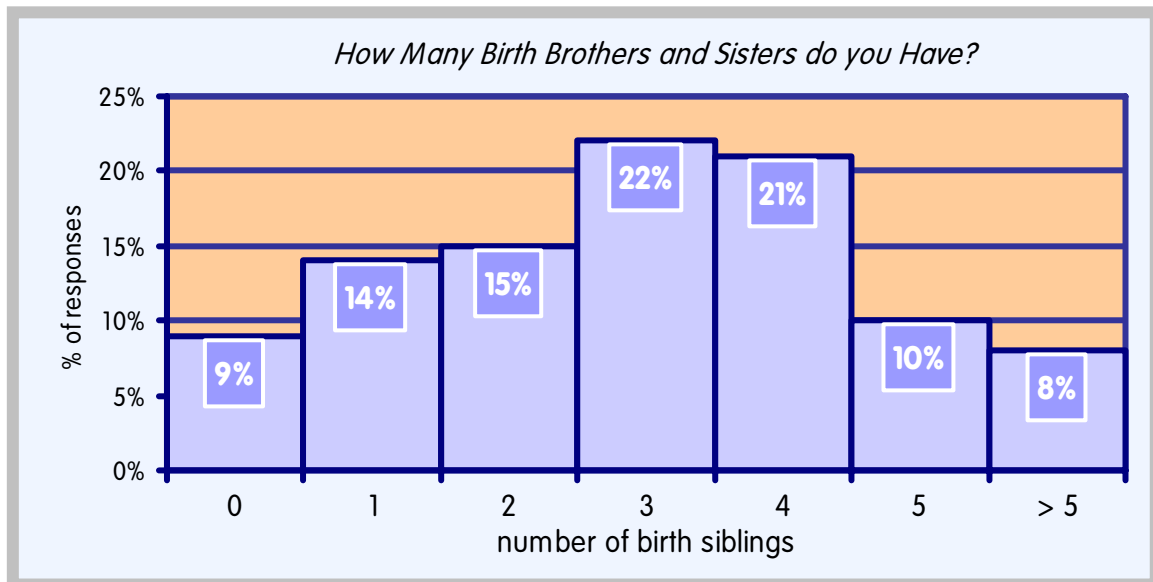
Key Findings

- There were 112 responders to the questionnaire.
- 91% of survey responders have at least one **birth** sibling compared to 54% who have at least one **foster** sibling.
- 84% of those with **birth** siblings do **not** live with them. 62% of those with **foster** siblings do **not** live with them.
- 83% of responders who do **not** live with their **birth** siblings would like to see more of them. 38% of responders who do **not** live with their **foster** siblings would like to see more of them.
- 75% of responders with **birth** siblings have some problems with seeing them compared to 37% who have problems seeing **foster** siblings.
- Social workers have been the most helpful and supportive to those trying to maintain contact with **birth** siblings while those trying to keep in touch with **foster** siblings believe that **foster** parents have been the most helpful.
- Respondents tend to live nearer to **foster** siblings with 75% of them being within 1 hour travelling time compared to 55% of **birth** siblings.
- 75% of responders with **birth** siblings would like to see them more frequently. 37% of responders with **foster** siblings would like to see them more frequently.

How Many?

Of the 112 survey responders, 91% (102 people) have at least one **birth** brother or sister with the most popular response being three siblings (22%) closely followed by four siblings (21%). 8% of responders have more than five **birth** brothers or sisters (*chart 1*).

Chart 1



The overall average number of **birth** siblings is 3 (for the purpose of calculating an average, it has been assumed that if a person has more than 5 **birth** siblings that they have 6 **birth** siblings).

The average number of **birth** brothers and sisters varies by region, from 1.7 in Yorkshire and Humberside to 3.7 in the West Midlands (*table 1*).

The largest number with no **birth** siblings is in Yorkshire and Humberside (6%).

Table 1	Number of responders	Average number of birth brothers and sisters
Yorkshire and Humberside (12)	20	1.7
London (3)	10	2.5
North East (4)	3	2.7
South East (8)	16	3.1
South West (9)	31	3.3
North West (5)	16	3.3
East Midlands (2)	5	3.6
East (1)	8	3.6
West Midlands (11)	3	3.7

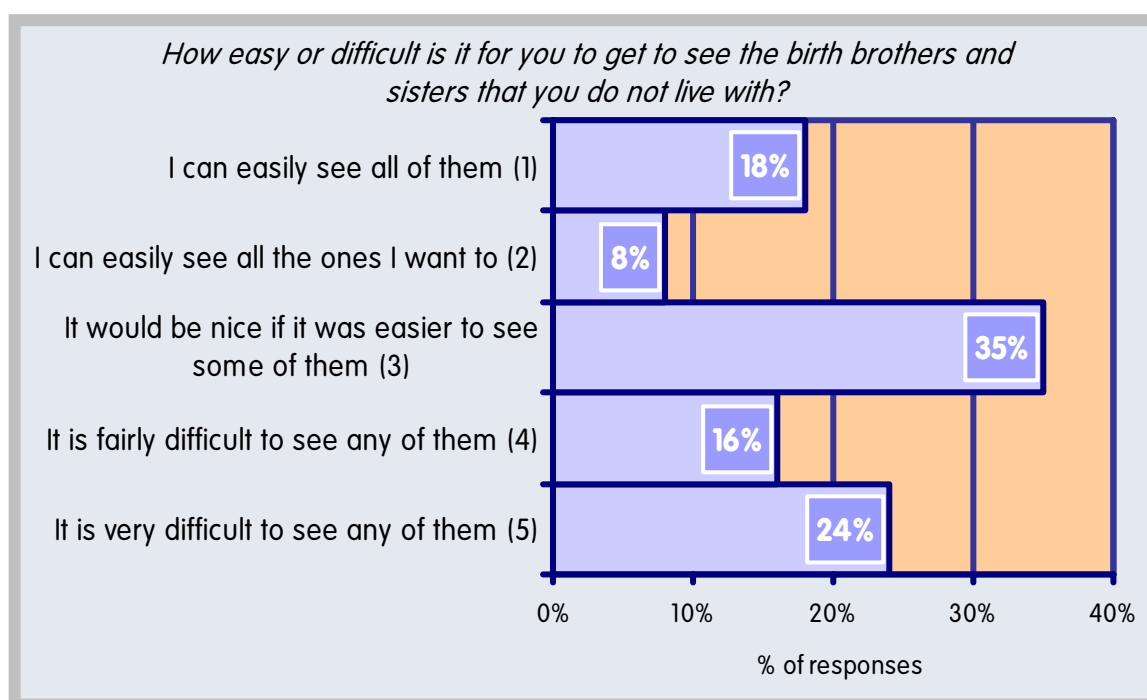
How Easy is it to See Them?

84% of the responders who have at least one **birth** brother or sister do **not** currently live with **any** of them. 10% lived with **some** of them while only 6% lived with **all** of them. 83% of the responders who have **birth** brothers or sisters that they do **not** live with would like to see more of them.

75% of responders with **birth** brothers or sisters that they do **not** live with have some problem with seeing all or some of them with the largest number stating that it would be nice if it was easier to see some of them (*chart 2*).

18% of responders said that they can easily see all of them and 8% stated that they can see all the ones that they want to (*chart 2*).

Chart 2

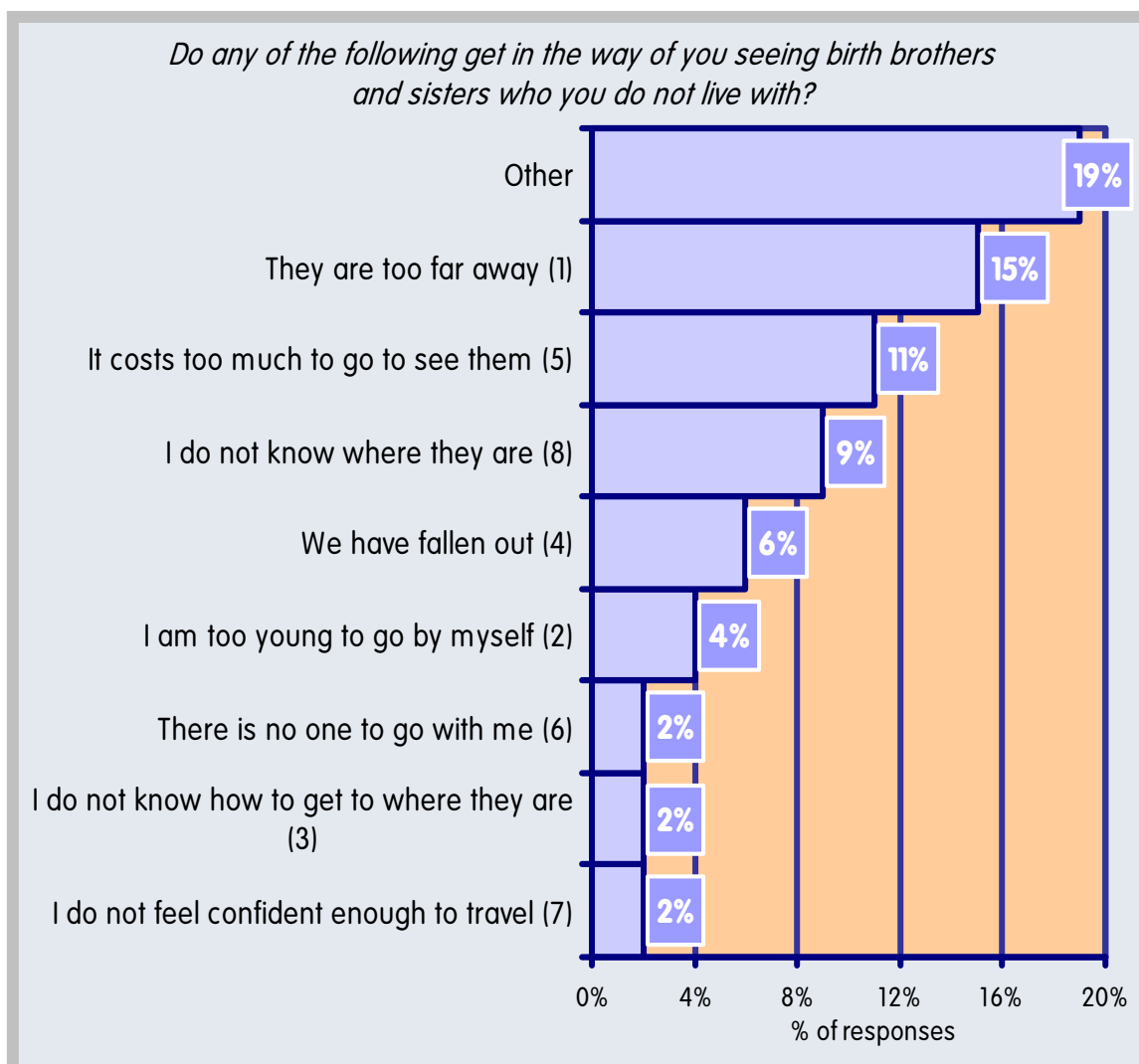


What Gets in the Way of Seeing Them?

When asked what gets in the way of seeing **birth** siblings who they do **not** live with (*chart 3*), 15% of responses indicated that they were too far away whilst 11% of responses stated that it cost too much to go to see them. 19% of responses stated some other reason besides those listed on the survey. Some examples are as follows:

- “she might not want to meet me”
- “I do not know where some of them are”
- “I do not have contact with my dad and they live with him”
- “my social worker doesn’t let me”
- “many of my brothers and sisters have grown up without me and I do not feel that they know me”
- “my youngest brother lives with my nan and we don’t get on”
- “my mum will not let me see them”
- “social services get in the way”
- “not being able to travel independently”
- “my parents get in the way”
- “she is at school through the week” (*Chart 3*)

Chart 3



Who Helps to Keep in Touch?

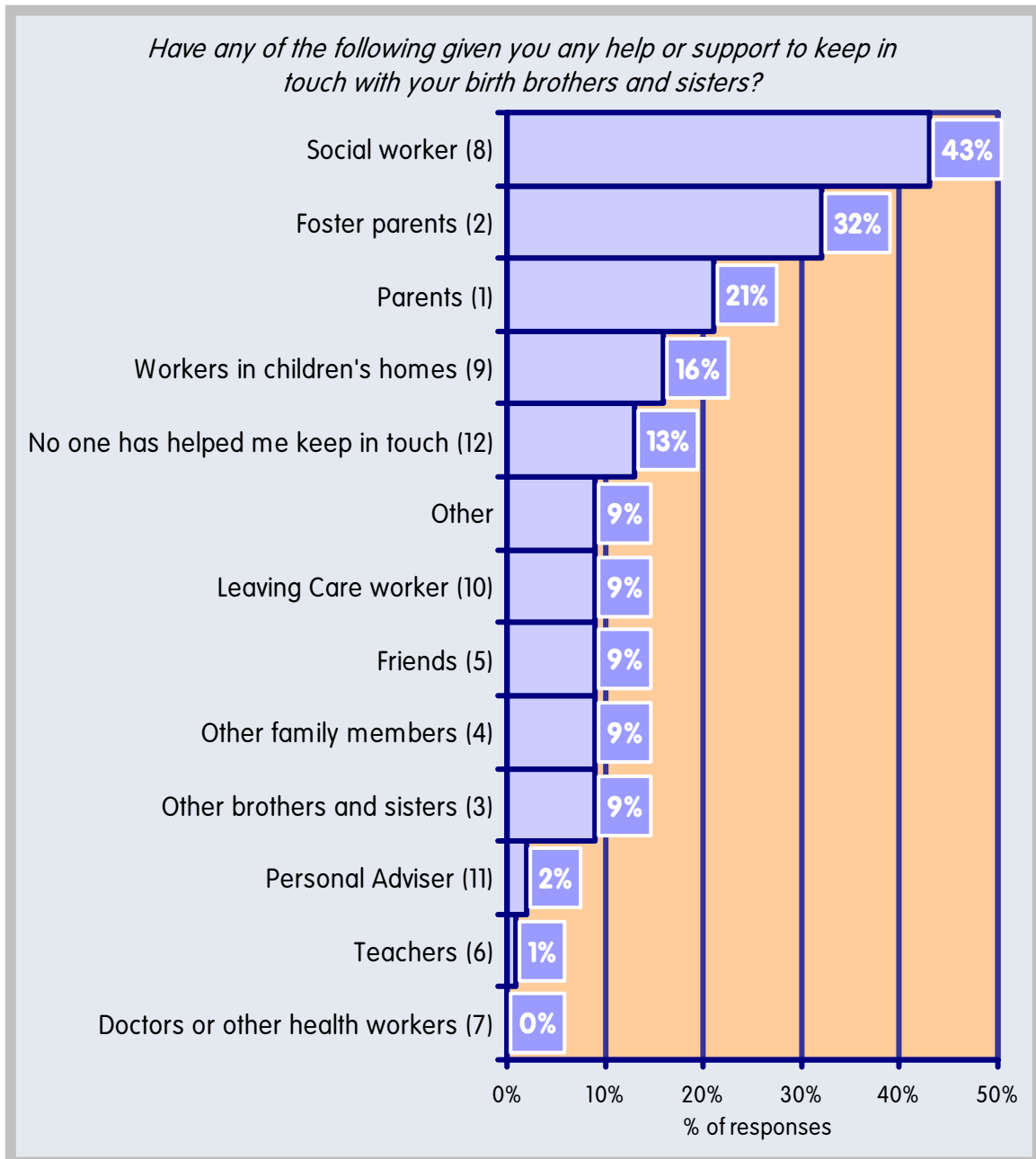
The survey showed that social workers have given the most help or support to responders to keep in touch with their **birth** siblings (43%), followed by foster parents (32%) and parents (21%) (chart 4).

Comments regarding the help and support from social workers included:

- “a little”
- “Only because I rang all of the time. Not actually because they thought it was important.”
- “forwarded contact details”
- “meetings with mum”
- “paid for me to go by coach or train to Birmingham”
- “working my mum and court”
- “Travel warrants”
- “arranges contact”
- “went to see my dad with social worker”
- “arranged visits with sisters carer.”
- “maybe, hopefully”
- “helped in seeing”
- “tried sorting things out but did not work.”

- “provided money”
- “Ask for number”
- “Took me to see him”
- “My social worker has tried”
- “Social workers said they would help us, step by step, but they just gave me his number, and told me how to get there.”
- “they have tried to get them all to contact”

Chart 4



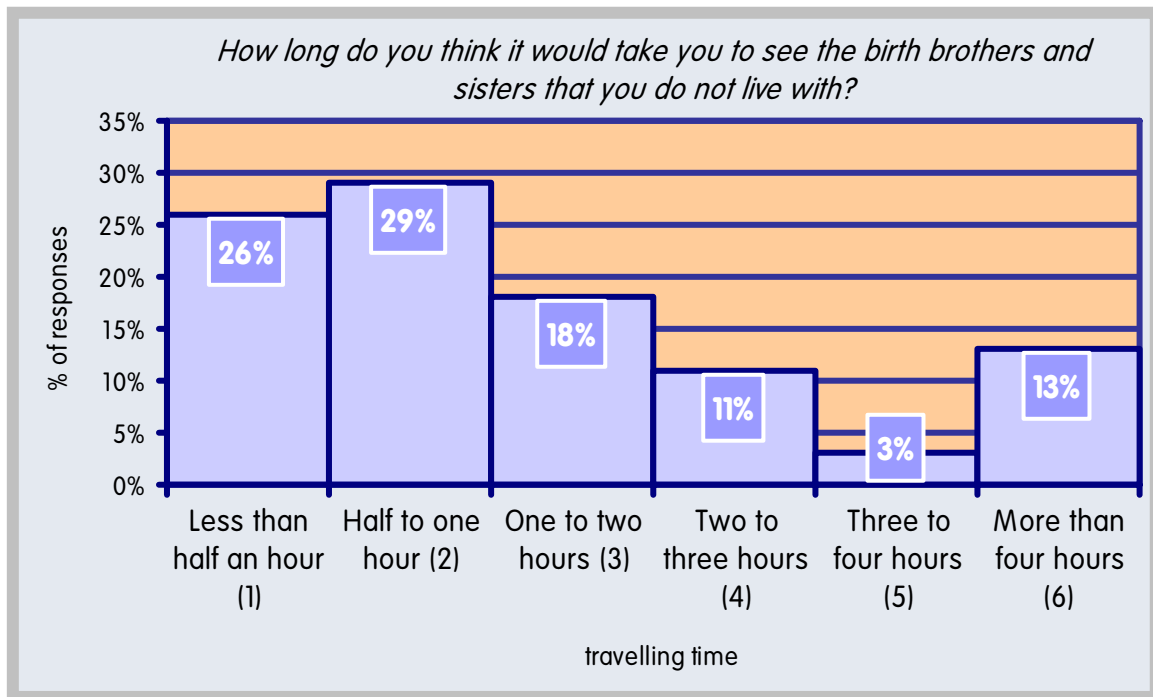
Doctors or other health workers, teachers and personal advisers have given the least help or support to responders to keep in touch with their siblings and 2% of responses stated that no one has helped them to keep in touch (*chart 4*).

In addition to those options listed on the survey, ‘other’ responses included: “myself”, “guardian”, “me”, “solicitor”, “support worker” (*chart 4*)

Travel Time

55% of the **birth** brothers and sisters who do **not** live with the responders live within 1 hour travelling time whilst 26% live within half an hour. 13% live more than 4 hours away (*chart 5*).

Chart 5



More or Less?

Overall, responders would like to see their **birth** brothers and sisters more frequently. Table 2 shows how often responders currently see their **birth** siblings vs. how often they would like to see them.

To take low counts into consideration, the responses for the current situation have been grouped into 'once a month or less' (this includes 'Not at all') and 'more than once a month'.

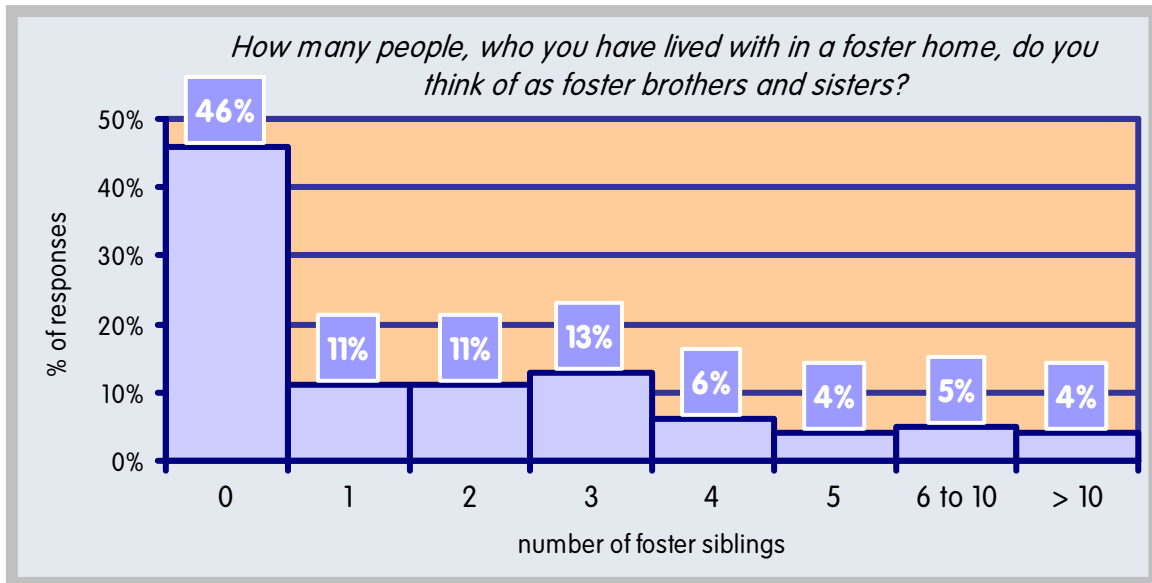
This clearly shows that, although a large number of responders would like to see their **birth** siblings more often than they currently do, there are some who are quite happy with the current situation and there are a few who would like to see less of them.

Table 2		How often would like to see birth siblings			
		Less often	Same	More often	Total responders
How often currently see birth siblings	Not at all/Once a month or less (1,2,3)	0%	12%	88%	67
	More than once a month (4,5,6)	14%	41%	45%	29
	Overall	4%	21%	75%	96

How Many?

Almost half of all responders to the survey (46%) do **not** have anybody that they think of as a **foster sibling** (*chart 6*).

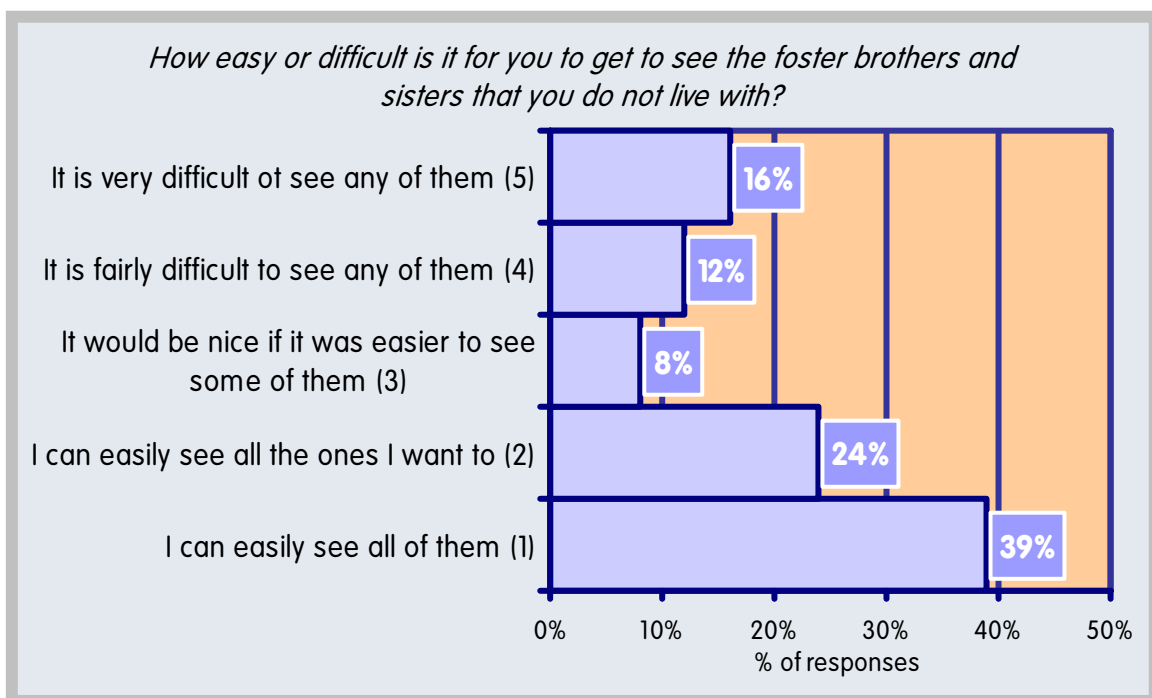
Chart 6



How Easy is it to See Them?

62% of the responders who have at least one **foster** brother or sibling do **not** currently live with **any** of them. 27% live with **some** of them and 12% live with **all** of them.

Chart 7



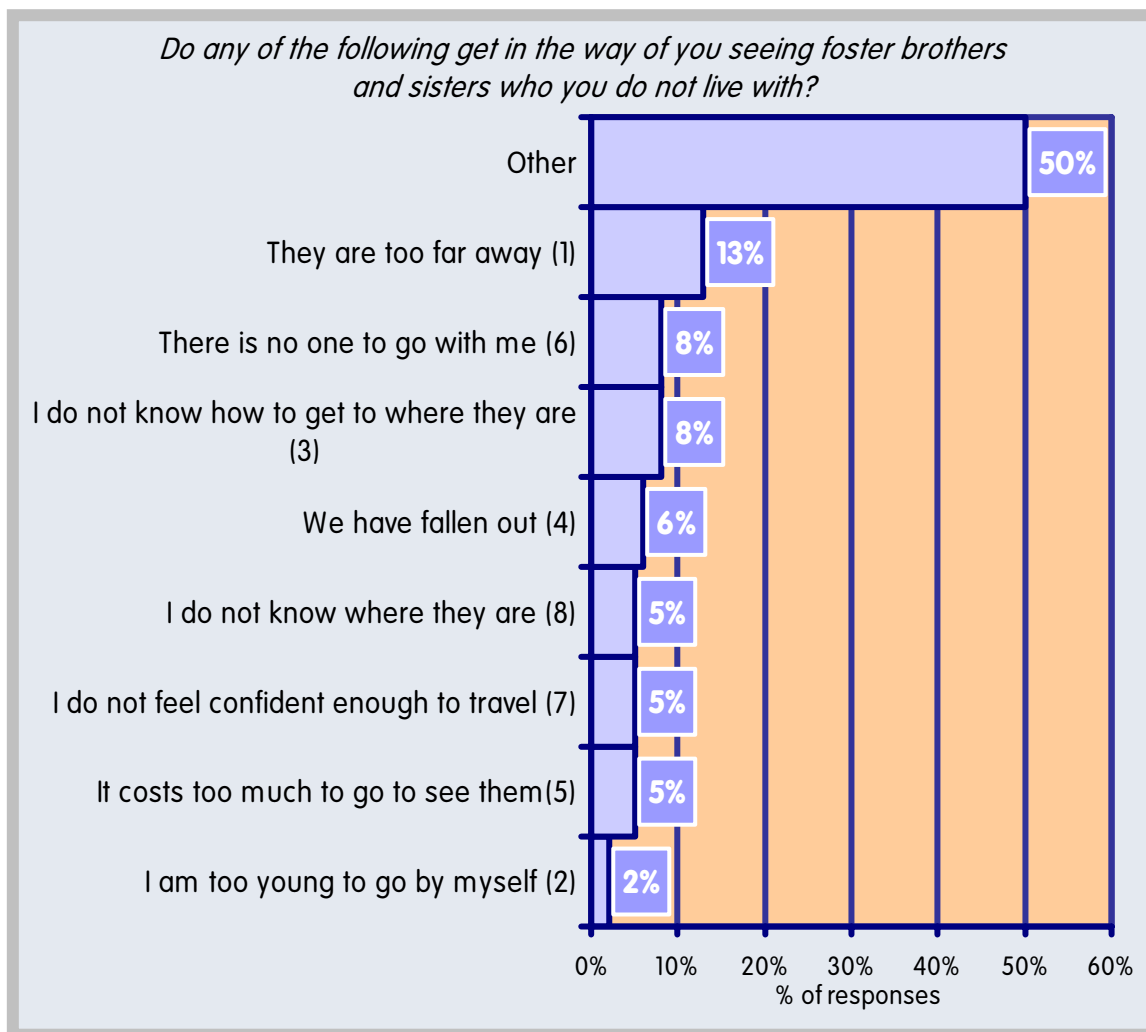
Only 38% of responders who have **foster** siblings that they do **not** live with would like to see more of them, compared to 83% who would like to see more of their **birth** siblings that they do **not** live with.

37% of responders with **foster** siblings that they do **not** live with have some problem with seeing all or some of them. 63% stated that they can easily see all of them or all those that they want to (*chart 7*).

What Gets in the Way of Seeing Them?

Half of responses to the question, “Do any of the following get in the way of you seeing **foster** brothers and sisters that you do **not** live with?” stated some reason other than one of those listed on the survey.

Chart 8



Some of the ‘other’ replies indicated that there is actually no problem with seeing **foster** siblings meaning that the results for ‘other’ are slightly over-inflated in comparison to the other responses. Some examples are as follows:

- “fell out with foster parents”
- “my mum stop me”
- “myself and them are very busy”
- “I left on a bad time”
- “work and college”
- “their carers are stopping me” (*chart 8*)

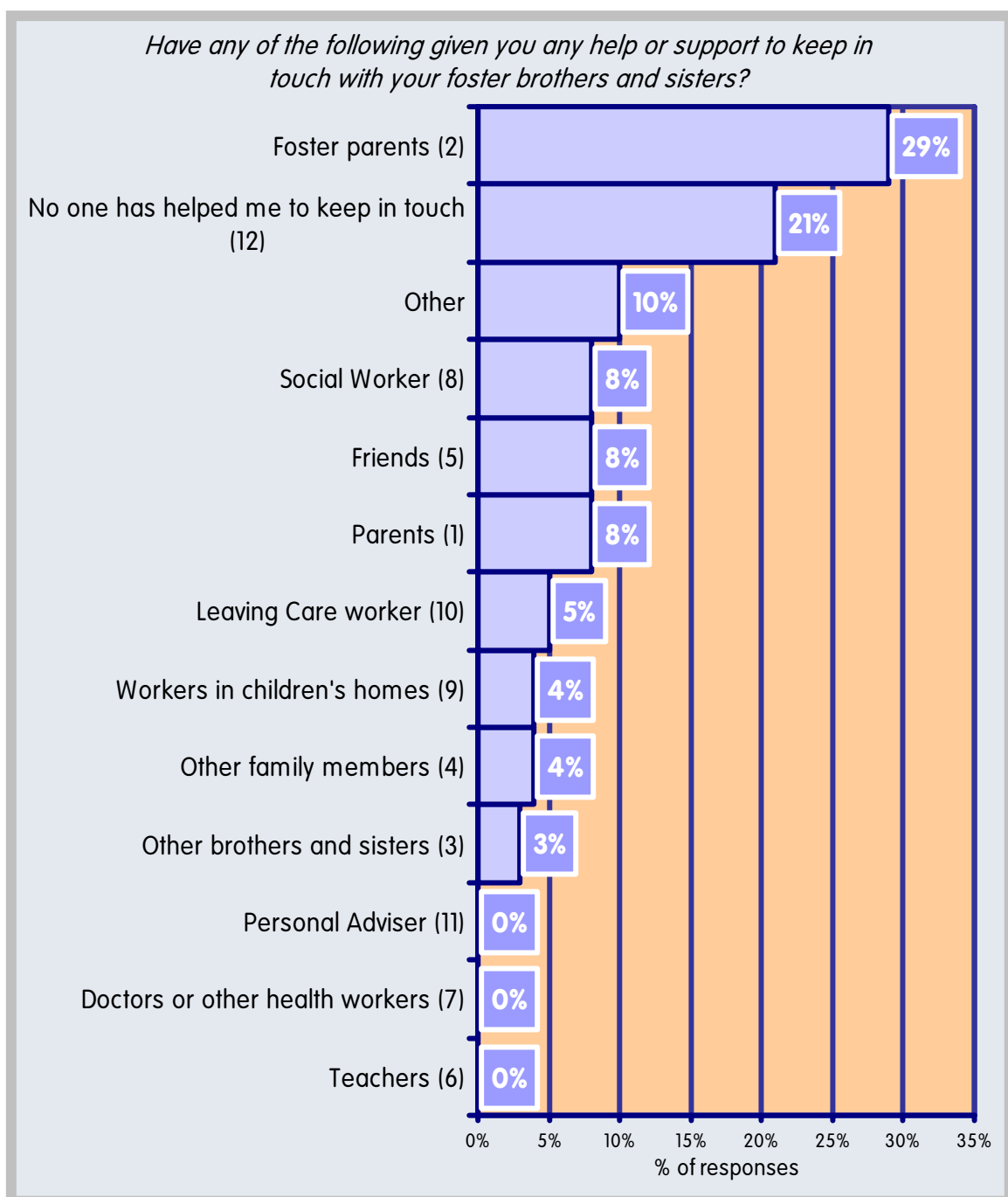
Who Helps to Keep in Touch?

The survey showed that **foster** parents have given the most help or support to responders to keep in touch with their **foster** siblings (29% of responses). Comments regarding their help and support included:

- “inviting us down when free”
- “provide lifts and money for travel”
- “tell me to stay in touch”
- “always say I am welcome” (*chart 9*)

A fifth of responses indicated that no one has helped them to keep in touch with their **foster** siblings and 10% stated some other response to those listed on the survey. These included “I choose to not see them because when I left it was really bad” (*chart 9*)

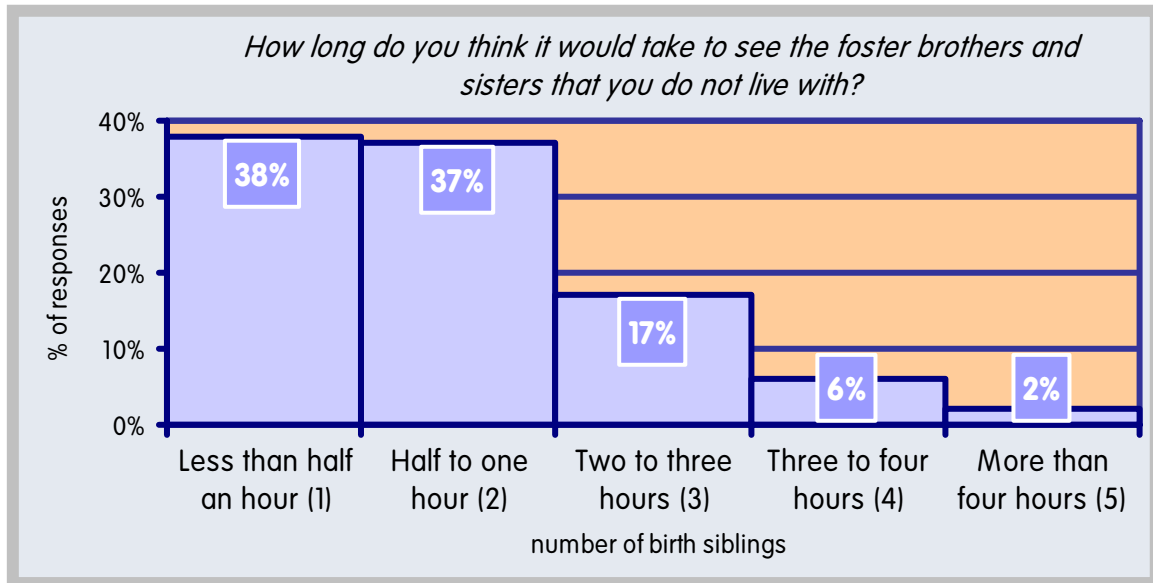
Chart 9



Travel Time

75% of the **foster** siblings who do **not** live with the respondents live within 1 hour travelling time. 2% live more than 4 hours away (*chart 10*)

Chart 10



More or Less?

Table 3 below shows how often responders currently see their **foster** siblings vs. how often they would like to see them. As previously with **birth** siblings, the responses for the current situation have been grouped into 'once a month or less' (this includes 'Not at all') and 'more than once a month' to take low counts into consideration.

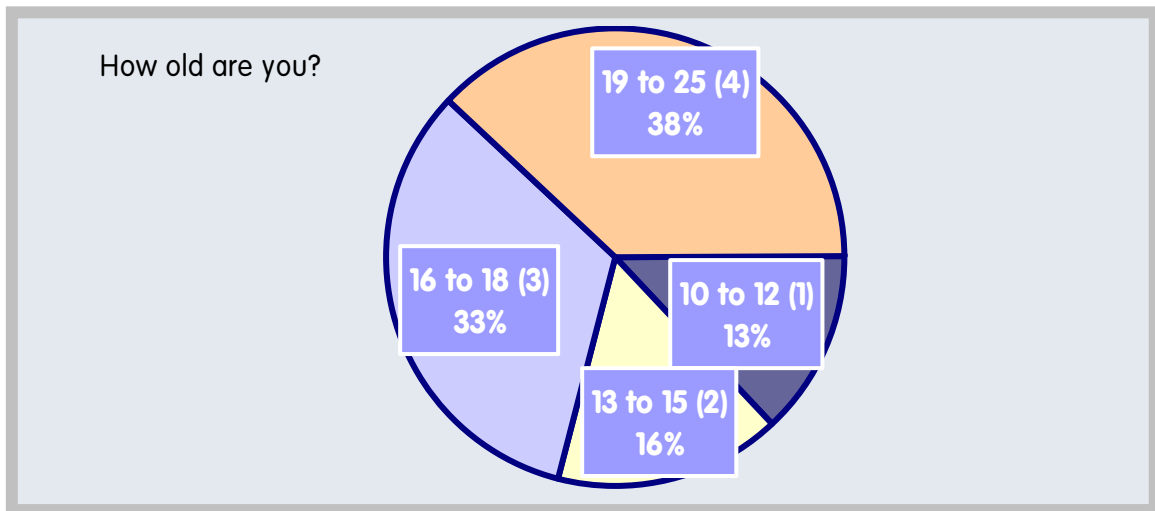
Overall, over half of survey responders are quite happy with how often they currently see their **foster** siblings (53%) but over a third (37%) would like to see them more often. Almost half of those who currently see their **foster** siblings once a month or less (48%) would like to see them more often.

Table 3		How often would like to see foster siblings			
		Less often	Same	More often	Total responders
How often currently see foster siblings	Not at all/Once a month or less (1,2,3)	9%	42%	48%	33
	More than once a month (4,5,6)	13%	75%	13%	16
	Overall	10%	53%	37%	49

Age

The largest proportion of the 112 survey responders are aged 19 to 25 (38%), followed by the 16 to 18 age group (33%) and 13 to 15 year olds (16%). The smallest group of responders, in terms of age, are those aged 10 to 12 (13%) (*chart 11*).

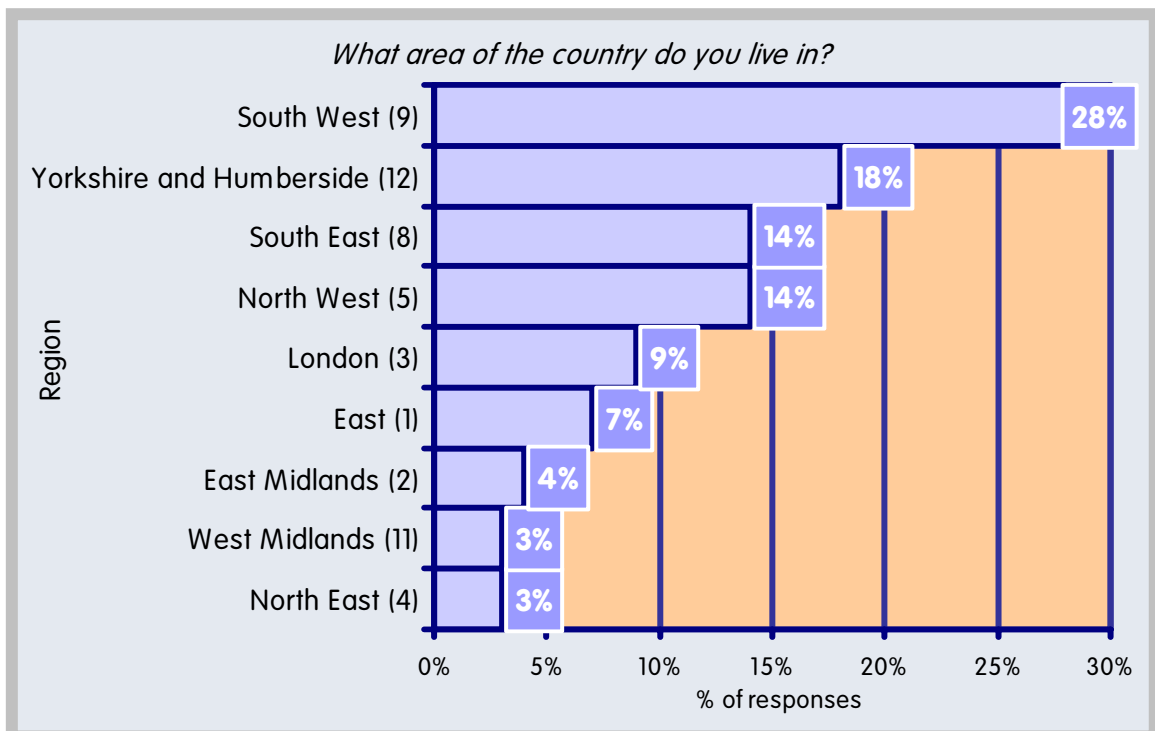
Chart 11



Location

The largest group of responders to the questionnaire live in the South West of the country (28%) followed by Yorkshire and Humberside (18%). The North East and the West Midlands had the lowest number of responders, both with just 3% of the total (*chart 12*).

Chart 12



To see if the location of the survey respondents is representative of the country as a whole, a comparison has been made to the population estimates available from the Government National Statistics website for persons aged 0–24. Responders to the Brothers & Sisters survey are between the ages of 10 and 25 and, as it is not possible to exactly match these age groups to the National Statistics population estimates, the comparison should be taken as a guide only.

An index of 1 for a region indicates that the proportion of people surveyed in that particular region is in line with the national population estimates and that the region is well represented in the survey. An index of greater than 1 indicates that the region is over-represented and less than 1 indicates that the region is under-represented.

Table 4 below shows that, in terms of region, responders to the B&S survey are not representative of the country as a whole. The South West and Yorkshire and Humberside, in particular, are over-represented. However, it is worth bearing in mind that this is meant as a guide only as it is not an exact like-for-like comparison.

Table 4	National Statistics population estimates 2004, 0–24 age group *	B&S survey	Index of B&S survey population vs. National Statistics population estimates
East (1)	11%	7%	0.67
East Midlands (2)	9%	4%	0.52
London (3)	15%	9%	0.59
North East (4)	5%	3%	0.53
North West (5)	14%	14%	1.03
South East (8)	16%	14%	0.90
South West (9)	9%	28%	2.92
West Midlands (11)	11%	3%	0.25
Yorkshire and Humberside (12)	10%	18%	1.72

* Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=14356>
Regional Trends 39 Data
Ch03 Population.zip 3.02.xls

Average Age

A guide to the average age of respondent by region can be calculated by using the mid-point of each age group.

This shows that the North East has the oldest respondents with an average age of 22 followed by the South East with an average age of 18.56.

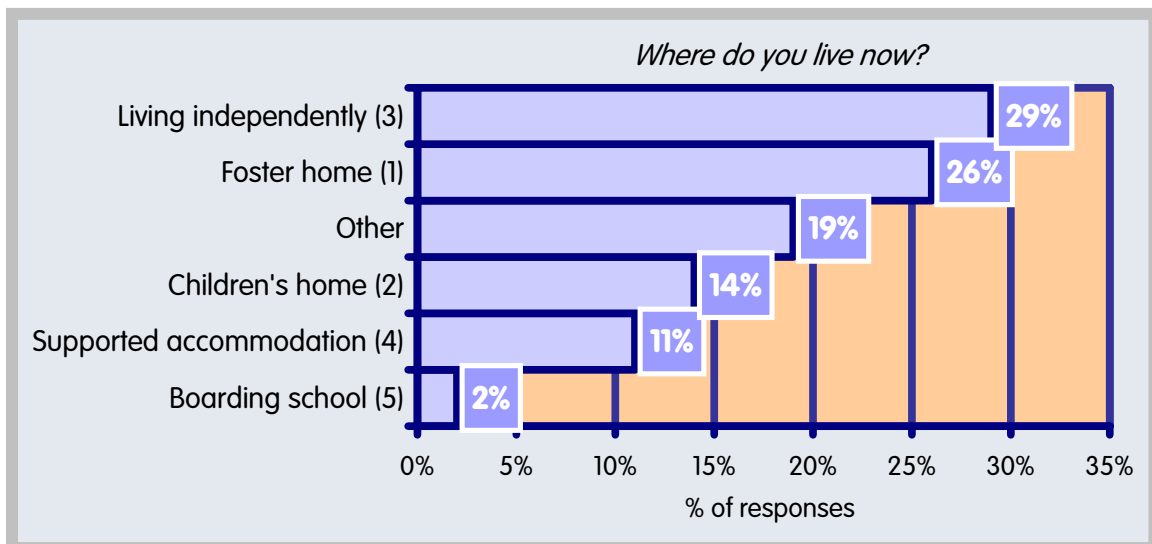
The East of the country and the North West has the youngest respondents with average ages of 16.38 and 16.75 respectively (*table 5*).

Table 5		Number of survey respondents	Average age of respondent
Region	North East (4)	3	22.00
	South East (8)	16	18.56
	East Midlands (2)	5	18.40
	London (3)	10	18.40
	West Midlands (11)	3	17.67
	South West (9)	31	17.45
	Yorkshire and Humberside (12)	20	16.90
	North West (5)	16	16.75
	East (1)	8	16.38

Almost a third of people who responded to the survey are currently living independently (29%) and over a quarter are living in a **foster** home (26%). 19% are living in some other place other than those listed on the survey. Other responses included:

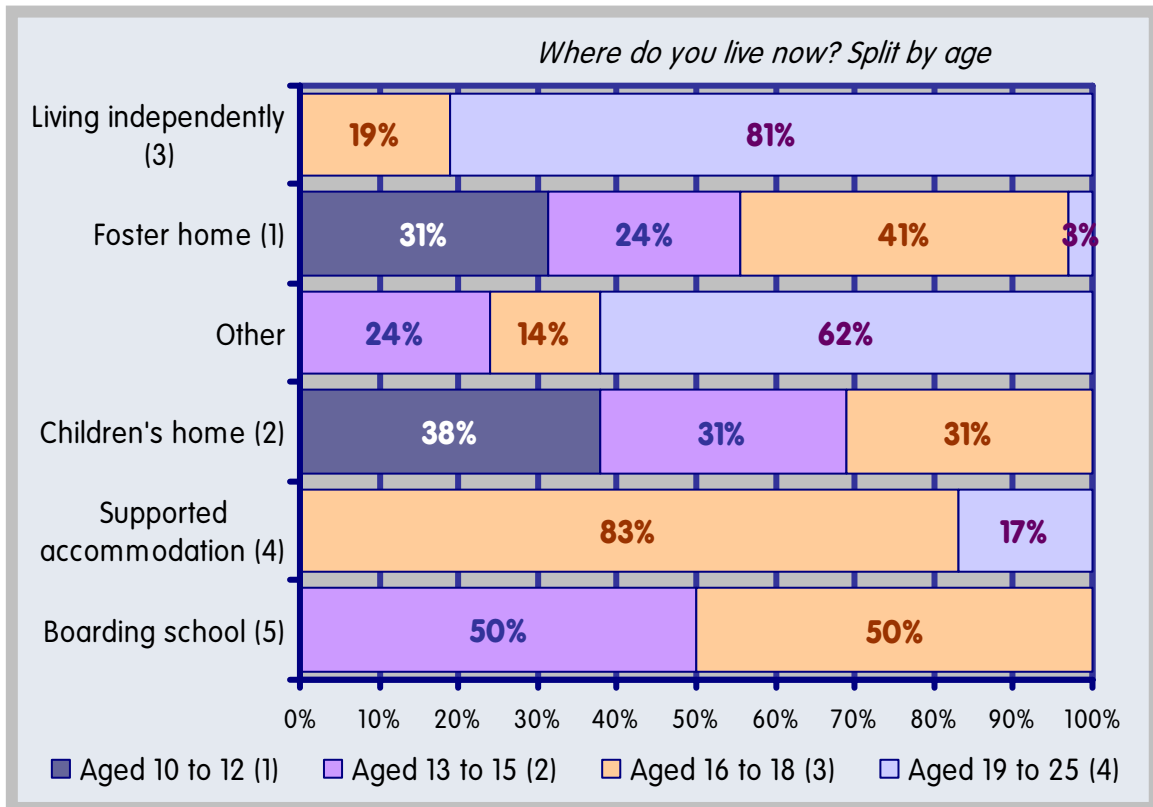
- “lodging with my foster parents”
- “with my mum”
- “with boyfriend”
- “with parents”
- “with grandparents”
- “prison”
- “hostel”
- “at home”
- “at home with my mum”
- “bed and breakfast” (*chart 13*)

Chart 13



Breaking this down by age group shows that 81% of those that are living independently are aged 19–25 and almost half of those living in a **foster** home (41%) are aged 16–18 (*chart 14*).

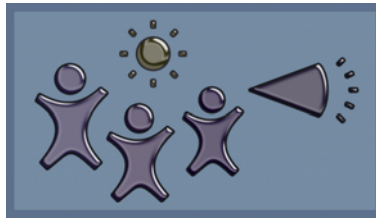
Chart 14



This report provides information on the sample of people who responded to the survey. Due to the small sample size, it can not be extrapolated to represent the whole country.

Please note that some of these figures may be misleading due to the small sample size. All figures refer to the number of responses to a particular question rather than the total number of people who responded to the survey.

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