Survey of public attitudes towards conduct in public life

Final draft report

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Prepared for:

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Prepared by:

Bruce Hayward, Ed Mortimer and Tim Brunwin
BMRB Social Research

Telephone: 020 8433 4072

Email: bruce.hayward@bmrb.co.uk

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The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Acknowledgements

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Bruce Hayward, Ed Mortimer and Tim Brunwin, June 2004

Executive summary

Introduction

In March 2003 the Committee on Standards in Public Life commissioned BMRB Social Research to conduct a national survey of public attitudes towards the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain. The survey was part of a long term study to establish a benchmark of public opinions about standards of conduct in public life and followed on from a preliminary stage of exploratory qualitative research conducted by the National Centre for Social Research in 2002.

The aims of the survey were:

- to establish what the public sees as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of elected and appointed holders of public office and the extent to which the Seven Principles of Public Life reflect public priorities;

- to assess how far the public believes that the behaviour of holders of public office is, for the most part, acceptable or unacceptable;

- and to assess how far the public believes that holders of public office are effectively held responsible and accountable for their conduct.

BMRB interviewed a nationally representative random sample of 1,097 adults aged 18 or over in Britain between 5th November 2003 and 7th March 2004. Interviews were carried out in respondents' homes using computer assisted interviewing (CAPI). The response rate at in-scope addresses in the sample was 53.7 per cent.

Key findings

1 The political context and influences on public opinion

When asked about the basis of the opinions they had given in the survey, respondents were particularly likely to cite the media, especially television and the printed media, as having influenced their views, and less so to mention personal influences such as their own experience or their friends and family.

The survey took place during a period when the political landscape was dominated by issues associated with the war against Iraq, in particular the criticisms levelled at the Government's dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the death of Dr. David Kelly and the ensuing inquiry by Lord Hutton. While respondents who claimed that their

opinions had been influenced by external events were in a minority, these issues figured prominently among those that they mentioned as having had a bearing on their views.

More generally, **the influences that respondents cited are suggestive of a shift in emphasis from *sleaze* to *spin* as the key public concern in relation to standards in public life**. The fact that the examples respondents gave almost invariably, if predictably, involved the alleged misconduct of those in public office reflects the emphasis on misconduct in media coverage of standards issues. If people's perception of the media as a key influence on their opinions is accepted as being valid, it follows that a potential consequence is for the public to have exaggeratedly negative perceptions of how those in public office behave.

2 Trust in public office holders

The findings in this survey reflect patterns found elsewhere in research on trust in public office holders, notably that **people express higher levels of trust in 'frontline' professionals and those whom they perceive to be impartial or independent than they do in senior managers and administrators and those whom they perceive to be politically motivated**.

When asked to say which of a number of professions – including a range of senior public office holders and other professions – they trusted to tell the truth, more than three-quarters of respondents said that they trusted doctors, head teachers, judges and local police officers, while only a quarter said that they trusted MPs and government ministers. Levels of trust in other types of public office holder – senior police officers, NHS managers, local councillors, senior civil servants and local authority managers – fell in between these two extremes.

Interestingly, there was a significant gap between the proportion of respondents who said that they trusted their local MP (47 per cent) than said that they trusted MPs in general (27 per cent). This might be seen as an indication that **people trust party politics at the national level considerably less than they trust MPs in their constituency role**.

Levels of trust varied by age and educational attainment. Trust in most professions was higher among young adults (aged 18-24) and those with higher education qualifications and lower among those with no educational qualifications.

3 Public expectations and priorities

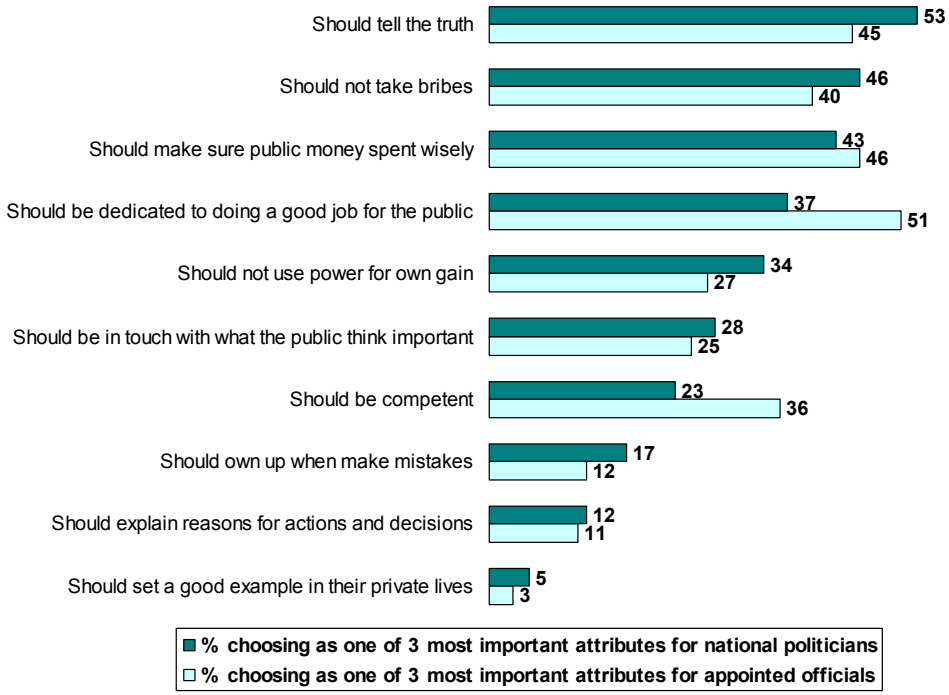
The survey findings show that the general public has high expectations of its elected and appointed representatives. The public expects senior public office holders – whether elected or appointed – to uphold a wide range of values and principles in the way in which they behave. Of ten attributes, based on both values inherent in the Seven Principles and other values that emerged as public priorities in the exploratory research, nine – all concerned with the public role of office holders – were regarded as extremely or very important for both elected and appointed officials by more than 80 per cent of respondents. **Private behaviour emerges as a lower priority for the public when compared with public conduct, but is still regarded by most people as being important for both national politicians for appointed officials**.

While the general public attaches considerable importance to a wide range of principles of conduct, **honesty – defined in its broadest sense, rather than in the Committee's sense of declaring and resolving conflicts of interest – and the public service ethic emerge as key priorities** (Figure 1).

Although the key priorities are broadly similar for elected and appointed officials, **people place more emphasis on the importance of dedication to public service, competence and financial prudence in relation to appointed officials and of honesty, financial propriety and accountability in relation to national politicians**.

Figure 1 Most important attributes for national politicians and senior appointed officials

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Tables 31 and 78)

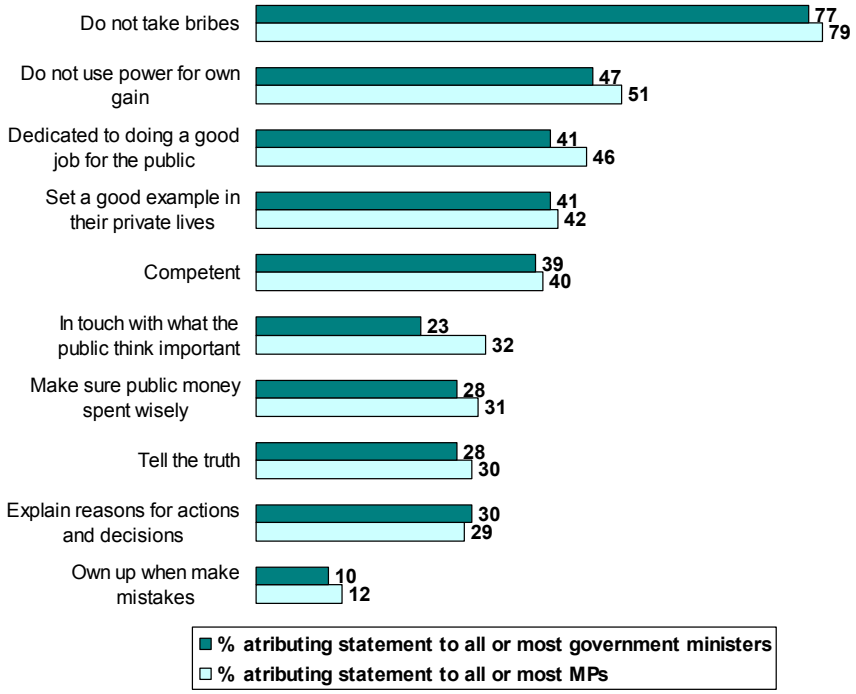
In general the results suggest that the priorities of the general public, in terms of the attributes they look for in public servants, are similar across different groups in the population. The main exception to this rule concerns private behaviour, which was considered more important by older respondents and those without educational qualifications than by other groups, although all sub-groups considered it the least important of the ten attributes.

4 Perceptions of the behaviour of public office holders

Public perceptions of how national politicians behaved in relation to these same ten attributes revealed mixed views about the standards of conduct of MPs and government ministers (Figure 2). While most people believe that overtly corrupt practices such as accepting bribes are the exception rather than the rule, and the majority credit at least a reasonable proportion of national politicians with being competent and dedicated to public service, the public is less charitable in its judgements of the honesty with which politicians communicate with the public, reflecting the earlier finding on levels of trust.

Figure 2 Statements attributed to all or most MPs and government ministers

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Tables 42 and 53)

MPs and government ministers are particularly poorly rated on handling mistakes – **there is a widespread perception of a culture in which politicians try to cover up the mistakes that they make, which sits uncomfortably alongside a strongly expressed desire among the public for them to 'come clean'**. In general, the findings suggest that people tend not to discriminate between government ministers and MPs in the way in which they perceive politicians to behave, although MPs tended to receive slightly higher ratings than government ministers and the latter were particularly likely to be perceived as being out of touch with public priorities.

While these results do not portray national politicians in Britain in a particularly positive light, they generally echo the findings of other research on a similar theme. Thus, while the results show that people have, at best, mixed views about the standards of conduct of MPs and government ministers, this is not in itself a new or surprising finding.

The more detailed findings indicate that confidence in the behaviour of national politicians is somewhat higher than average among groups that would be expected to be relatively well

informed about politics – those with higher education qualifications, readers of broadsheet newspapers, those with a political party affinity and those with an interest in current affairs.

Perceptions of appointed officials and local politicians also reflected the findings on levels of trust in public office holders, with head teachers generally perceived quite positively and senior police officers more highly regarded than either senior managers in the NHS, senior civil servants or elected and appointed local authority officials. In common with national politicians, there was a tendency for respondents to rate appointed officials and local politicians less positively in relation to handling of mistakes than in relation to other attributes.

5 MPs and voting in parliament

In their views on what should and should not influence MPs when voting on important national issues in Parliament, **the general public tends to reject party loyalties and political leadership as legitimate influences on MPs' decisions and firmly rejects self-interest as a guiding principle**. Instead people believe that MPs should vote on the basis of the public interest (the 'Selflessness' Principle) and they value personal integrity and independence of opinion over adherence to the party line.

The over-riding importance that the general public attaches to the public interest as a guiding principle for MPs' voting behaviour is affirmed by the finding that 94 per cent of respondents considered "what would benefit people in the country as a whole" as a reasonable basis on which to vote, 62 per cent choosing this as the most important of ten possible factors. In contrast, only 32 per cent of respondents thought it reasonable for an MP to consider the wishes of his or her party leadership when deciding how to vote and less than one per cent thought that the views of the party leadership should be the key factor that dictated MPs' voting.

While the majority of respondents believed that decisions on voting behaviour should be guided above all by the public interest, only ten per cent felt that most MPs would vote on this basis in practice. Instead, the most widely held perception was that voting behaviour would be dictated by party political considerations, 21 per cent feeling that most MPs would vote according to the expectations of their party leadership and 17 per cent that they would vote on the basis of what would make their party more popular. There was, however, little evidence to suggest that people felt that MPs voted on the basis of self-interest.

6 *Views on public sector recruitment practice*

There is widespread approval among the general public of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as a guiding principle in public sector recruitment. Efficiency, though widely regarded as important, is generally seen as a secondary consideration. Selection on merit emerges as a key priority for the general public, 53 per cent of respondents rating the principle of awarding public sector jobs to the best candidates as the most important of seven criteria, while the second most popular option – ensuring that all applicants for a job had a fair chance of success – was chosen by 28 per cent. Efficiency-based criteria were rarely considered to be the most important.

The more detailed findings show that the more highly qualified a person and the more advanced they are in a professional, 'white collar' career, the more likely they are to prioritise selection on merit as a recruitment principle. Hence those with higher education qualifications, full-time students and those in managerial and professional occupations were all particularly likely to rate the principle of awarding jobs to the best candidates as the most important of the seven criteria.

The public's concern that competition for public sector jobs should be fair is also apparent in their firm rejection of cronyism in public sector recruitment. In the context of their views on what help or advice a council official should be allowed to give a friend who was a potential candidate for a senior council job, respondents widely rejected the notion that the official should provide the friend with privileged information or that they should try to put pressure on the interviewing committee to appoint the friend.

However, there is a clear disparity between public expectations and perceptions in this respect. **While people believe that appointments to public office should be based on the principle of selection on merit, there is a widespread perception that formal procedures are often bypassed in favour of cronyism**. Furthermore, the belief that this practice is on the increase is more prevalent than the view that it is in decline. While perceptions in relation to cronyism did not vary substantially between sub-groups, those with higher educational qualifications, readers of broadsheet newspapers and younger respondents all tended to express less cynical views on the subject than others.

7 *Media scrutiny and the private lives of public office holders*

The finding that most people think it important that senior public office holders maintain high standards in their private behaviour is reflected in views about media scrutiny of the private lives of public servants. The majority of respondents felt that senior public office

holders, irrespective of their position, should accept a certain level of media examination of their private behaviour.

The fact that people consider it more important for national politicians than for appointed officials to set a good example in their private lives is also reflected in their views on media scrutiny. While around 75 per cent of respondents felt that national politicians should accept at least a certain level of media interest in their private lives, only around 60 per cent applied the same stipulation to appointed senior public officials and local councillors.

On the whole people accepted that there were limits to the extent to which senior public office holders should expect the media to examine their private lives. However, a sizeable minority of respondents (24 per cent in the case of government ministers and 20 per cent in the case of MPs) thought that national politicians should accept that the media examine every aspect of their private lives. In relation to senior public officials and local councillors, these proportions fell to 13 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

Opinions on this issue were broadly similar across different sub-groups. However, young people (aged 18-24) were more likely than other age groups to advocate the right to privacy.

8 Public office holders and accountability

Although mistrust of the media – in particular the tabloid press – is relatively widespread, **people nonetheless see the media as an effective channel for policing the behaviour of public office holders and perceive it to perform this role more successfully than official activity does**. Although more than half of respondents felt confident that the authorities were committed to improving standards in public life, only about 40 per cent felt confident that the authorities would either uncover or punish wrongdoing in public office. In contrast, 79 per cent were confident that the media would expose wrongdoing.

This finding is not surprising: media activity in exposing the misdemeanours (or alleged misdemeanours) of public figures is much more visible to the general public than official activity in this sphere and it seems likely that, even when official activity in exposing wrongdoing is reported in the media, some people would attribute the activity itself to the media.

In this context, it is encouraging that **73 per cent of respondents, when told about the type of work that the Committee does, thought that standards in public life would improve as a result of this work**, albeit most of them anticipating that the gain would be minor rather than significant.

9 *Overall perceptions of standards in public life*

Although, when asked in detail about different aspects of behaviour in relation to different types of public office holder, people tend to be quite critical, overall perceptions of the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain are, in the main, either neutral or guardedly positive. Forty-five per cent of respondents felt that overall standards were quite or very high, although only 3 per cent thought that they were 'very high'. Forty-two per cent rated standards overall as neither high nor low, while only 10 per cent thought that they were quite low and 1 per cent that they were very low.

Opinion was divided on whether standards were improving or deteriorating or had remained unchanged in recent years. While 28 per cent of respondents felt that standards had improved, when compared with a few years ago, and 30 per cent that they had deteriorated, the largest group (38 per cent) felt that standards had remained the same. Among those who perceived a change, either for the better or for the worse, most thought that the change had been slight rather than significant.

For the most part British people perceive the standards of conduct of public office holders in their own country to be as high as or higher than average for Europe. Thirty-three per cent of respondents felt that standards of conduct were higher than average in Britain and a further 45 per cent that they were about average. Only 14 per cent thought that they were lower than average for Europe.

In common with findings elsewhere in the survey, overall perceptions of public office holders did not differ markedly between sub-groups within the population. However, those with higher education qualifications, readers of broadsheet newspapers and Labour supporters – all groups that expressed a higher than average level of confidence in national politicians - were all more likely than average to rate standards overall as being high.

Conclusions

The Seven Principles of Public Life largely succeed in articulating public expectations of the conduct of senior public office holders, although the Committee might wish to consider whether the Principles should embrace a broader definition of 'honesty', in order better to reflect the value that the general public attaches to the principle of 'telling the truth'.

How far public confidence in the honesty of public office holders, in particular that of national politicians, can be increased, is open to question – the absence of trust in politicians is so widespread as to make a disparity between public expectations and perceptions seem inevitable. The survey findings suggest that many people perceive the demands of party politics and the interests of the public to be in conflict and therefore to limit the extent to which their expectations can be met. The fact that so many people – irrespective of their background and the extent of their political engagement – think that MPs should vote on the basis of the public interest, and not according to the party line, suggests that they feel that party politics is somehow at odds with the public interest or, at least, is more concerned with the partisan interests of politicians than with the needs of the country. While this mood of suspicion of party politics prevails, it is likely to colour people's views of politicians' behaviour and, arguably by association, their views of senior managers and administrators in the public sector.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a national survey of public attitudes towards the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain. The survey was commissioned by the Committee on Standards in Public Life as part of a long term study to establish a benchmark of public opinion about standards in public life. The survey was carried out by BMRB Social Research.

Background to the study

The Committee on Standards in Public Life was set up in October 1994 by the then Prime Minister, John Major MP. Its terms of reference are:

"to examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards in public life".

The terms of reference cover a range of categories of public office holder, encompassing elected and appointed public office holders at a national and local level.

In its First Report in 1995, the Committee drew up the Seven Principles of Public Life, as a statement of the values "inherent in the ethic of public service." These Principles have been central to each of the Committee's subsequent reports, which have covered most of the major groups of public office holders. The Seven Principles, which are intended to apply to all public offices, are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. The scope of each Principle, as it relates to the conduct of public office holders, is defined by a short explanatory statement. The Principles and explanatory statements are reproduced at the front of this report.

The Seven Principles have been widely adopted by public institutions, and are broadly in line with the most common ethical principles adopted in the 29 OECD countries. In this context, the Committee feels that they are likely to be both acceptable and helpful to public office holders. However, prior to this study, the Principles have not been tested against public opinion. In 2001, following the appointment of Sir Nigel Wicks to chair the Committee, it was decided that the Committee should undertake research in order to explore whether the Principles reflect the general public's priorities in relation to the conduct of public office holders; and to gauge public opinion on how well public office holders measure up to the Principles.

It was decided to conduct this research in three stages:

- Stage 1 involved exploratory qualitative research, designed as preparatory work for the national survey. The work was carried out by the National Centre for Social Research in February and March 2002 and was based on focus groups among a total of 122 people from six regions in Great Britain. The findings of the work were published by the National Centre for Social Research in January 2003 (Graham *et al.*, 2003).

- Stage 2 involved developing and testing questions to be administered in the national survey. This work was carried out by BMRB Social Research between March and October 2003.

- Stage 3 was the national survey and was carried out by BMRB Social Research between November 2003 and March 2004.

Previous research on standards of conduct in public life

There is a considerable body of research into political attitudes and political trust, both in this country and internationally, much of which covers ground that is relevant to this study. Important independent sources of data in this sphere in the UK include The British Social Attitudes series, which has monitored public opinion in relation to a range of political and social issues since 1983, frequently examining political trust and engagement, and occasionally exploring standards-related issues, and the British Election Study, which has been conducted around the time of each general election since 1964. There have, however, been few detailed studies of standards of conduct in public life prior to this one. Mortimore (1995) examined sleaze in Britain around the time when the Committee on Standards in Public Life was established, when allegations of sleaze against the Conservative administration were at their height; and Dunleavy *et al.* (2001) reported findings on public attitudes towards sleaze and the role and duties of MPs, among other topics, drawn from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust State of the Nation series of surveys. More recently, a survey for the Audit Commission (Duffy *et al.*, 2003) explored trust in public institutions, covering some of the areas explored in this research in relation to police forces, hospitals and local authorities. Each of these studies provides useful comparative data against which to set the findings of this study, and reference is made in the report to findings from previous research where relevant. However, this study represents the first systematic examination of the expectations and perceptions of the general public in relation to the standards of conduct of senior elected and appointed public office holders in Britain.

Stage 1 research

The Stage 1 research (Graham *et al.*, 2003: p. iii) found that people's views generally reflected what had been found in previous research on public attitudes towards standards in public life, in particular:

- that the public believes that standards matter and should be enforced through a system of independent regulation;
- that there is ambivalence and disagreement among the public about whether the private lives of public office holders should be subject to public scrutiny;
- and that there is considerable doubt about whether standards are currently being upheld.

In relation to this specific study, the research also found that:

- while all of the Seven Principles of Public Life featured in the public's view of what standards matter in public life, the public's definition of what the Seven Principles meant was sometimes wider than the definition adopted by the Committee;[1]
- The most important standard for the public was 'honesty.'[2]

[1] In fact, Table 3.1 in the Stage 1 report (pp. 38-39) shows that there is nothing in the Seven Principles, taken as a whole, that contradicts the general public's view of the standards that should be upheld. Similarly, most of the requirements for standards voiced by the general public are encompassed within the Principles. There are semantic differences between the Committee's definitions of terms such as 'Honesty' and 'Integrity', which are purposively narrow in their focus and the general public's interpretation, which is often broader in scope. The public also includes attributes within the definition of what constitutes good conduct that could be said to be beyond the remit of the Committee, for example, 'remaining in touch with the people' and 'exhibiting vision and foresight'. These might be seen as desirable traits in a public office holder, and indeed qualities that some public office holders would be expected by their employers to display, but they are not 'standards' in the sense implied by the Committee's terms of reference.

[2] Again, this refers to 'honesty' in the wider sense used by the general public, rather than Honesty as defined in the Seven Principles

Aims and objectives of the survey

The aims and objectives of the survey were:

1. To establish what the public sees as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office

   Within this aim the objectives were to assess:

   (a) what the public believes to be appropriate or inappropriate behaviour on the part of those holding public offices, both in general and in particular cases, and how far expectations are different for different appointments;

   (b) how far the Seven Principles map the beliefs about appropriate behaviour held by the public, and how far other principles or values might be involved;

   (c) whether the public sees some types of behaviour as of greater significance than others.

2. To assess how far the public believes that the behaviour of holders of public office is, for the most part, acceptable or unacceptable.

   Within this aim the objectives were to assess:

   (a) How far the public believes that elected representatives today for the most part behave appropriately in the conduct of their office;

   (b) How far the public believes that civil servants and other appointed office holders behave appropriately.

3. To assess how far the public believes that holders of public office are effectively held responsible and accountable for their conduct.

   Within this aim the objectives were to assess:

   (a) Whether the public feels confident that unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office will be exposed;

   (b) Whether the public believes unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office will be punished.

Research methods

Stage 2: Questionnaire development

The questionnaire for the survey was developed by the research team at BMRB Social Research in consultation with the Committee's Research Advisory Board. Further input was provided by a team of academics from the University of Oxford[3] who had an interest in the subject matter and were involved in the work that led to the development of the specification for the research.

A draft questionnaire was prepared for testing and presented at the June 2003 Committee meeting. The questionnaire was then tested in four stages. First the BMRB research team carried out two stages of face-to-face cognitive interviews with members of the general public. These interviews were used to probe people's understanding and interpretation of key questions, concepts and terminology. Sixteen interviews were completed in total and the questionnaire revised after each stage. The questionnaire was then pilot tested in two stages in August and September 2003. Face-to-face computer-assisted interviews were carried out in respondents' own homes by BMRB interviewers and observed by members of the BMRB research team and representatives from the Committee's Research Advisory Board and Secretariat. Twenty-eight interviews were completed in total and the questionnaire revised after each stage. A final version of the questionnaire was then prepared and approved at the October 2003 Committee meeting.

Stage 3: The national survey

The survey was conducted face-to-face in respondents' own homes using CAPI[4] between 5th November 2003 and 7th March 2004. Interviews were carried out by fully-trained interviewers from BMRB's national face-to-face fieldforce. A total of 1,097 interviews was completed with adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain. The average interview length was just under 40 minutes.

The sample design was a conventional multi-stage clustered random design using the small user Postcode Address File (PAF) as the sample frame. The design aimed to produce a

[3] Professor Anthony Heath, Department of Sociology/CREST; Professor Miles Hewstone, Department of Experimental Psychology; Dr David Hine, Department of Politics & International Relations; and Dr Bridget Taylor, Department of Politics & International Relations;

[4] Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing

representative sample of 1,000 adults aged 18 and over living in private households in Great Britain, excluding the highland and island areas of Scotland. This is the type of design typically used in high quality face-to-face interview based social surveys, such as the British Social Attitudes Survey, the British Election Study and the British Crime Survey.

A total of 1,728 addresses in 72 post code sectors was originally issued to interviewers. On the assumption that 10 per cent of addresses would not contain a private household and that 65 per cent of selected adults would take part in the survey, this sample would yield around 1,000 interviews. However, because co-operation levels were lower than expected, it was necessary to issue additional sample and, towards the end of fieldwork, to offer respondents a £10 incentive to take part in the survey. When fieldwork was closed, 2,208 addresses in 92 post code sectors had been issued, yielding a total of 1,097 usable interviews from 2041 in-scope addresses.[5] This represented a response rate at in-scope addresses of 53.7 per cent.

Although the response rate was lower than had been anticipated, it is not far below the response rate of 61 per cent achieved on the most recently published BSA (Park *et al.*, *eds.* 2004, p. 264). In spite of the relatively low response rate, the demographic profile of the achieved sample, after design weighting had been applied to correct for inequalities in selection probabilities inherent in the sample design, reflected the population profile sufficiently well for non-response weighting to be unnecessary.

A detailed account of the survey design, methods and response rates is provided in the Technical Appendix.

Structure of the report

The findings of the survey are reported in eight main chapters.

Chapters 1 and 2 aim to set the scene for the findings reported in Chapters 3 to 8. Chapter 1 examines respondents' own perceptions of what influenced the opinions they expressed in the survey, how strongly these opinions were felt and to what extent they were based on knowledge or ignorance of the subject matter; Chapter 2 looks at how widely public office holders of different types are trusted to tell the truth and how they compare with other professionals in this respect.

[5] All addresses except those that were untraceable; not yet ready for occupation or empty; derelict or demolished; business or institutional premises; contained nobody aged 18+; or were out-of-scope for another reason.

Chapters 3 and 4 address large parts of Aims 1 and 2 of the research: Chapter 3 explores, for a range of types of public office holder, how important people consider different aspects of conduct to be, while Chapter 4 examines how they perceive public office holders to behave in relation to these same aspects of conduct.

Chapters 5 to 7 further address these aims, but in relation to specific aspects of conduct: Chapter 5 looks at what the public thinks MPs should taking into account when deciding how to vote in parliament and what they actually thinks influences their decisions; Chapter 6 explores the expectations and perceptions of the public in relation to recruitment for public sector appointments; and Chapter 7 the issue of private behaviour and the extent to which people think public office holders of different types should expect and accept media scrutiny of their private lives.

Chapter 8 addresses Aim 3 of the research. First, it assesses how far the public believes that holders of public office are effectively held responsible for their conduct, comparing perceptions of the roles played by the authorities and the media in holding public office holders to account; and, second, it examines whether people feel that the work undertaken by the Committee is likely to have an impact in improving standards in public life.

Chapter 9 examines people's overall perceptions of standards in public life in Britain, both in absolute terms and relative to standards in the recent past and standards across Europe.

The main findings of the research are then drawn together in Chapter 10, which considers the conclusions and implications of the findings.

The technical appendix to the report contains a detailed account of the survey methodology and response rates.

Reporting conventions

The commentary in Chapters 2 to 9 is supported by summary tables and figures. These give the unweighted base of respondents answering the question(s) concerned for the sample as a whole and for any sub-groups shown in the table or figure. The statistics reported in tables and figures are generally percentages, unless otherwise stated. The symbol '*' in a table represents less than 0.5 per cent, but not zero, which is shown as '0'. The table reference under each figure or table refers to the source table in the full set of data tabulations, which has been issued separately.

Differences reported in the commentary between sub-groups within the sample are either statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level[6] or are judged by the researchers to reflect real differences, on the basis of similar findings elsewhere in the study.

[6] See the Technical Appendix an explanation of sampling errors, confidence intervals and design effects.

1 The political context and influences on public opinion

In this opening chapter we discuss some of the issues and problems that arise when asking questions about standards in public life. We also describe the political landscape against which the survey was set and consider how external influences such as the media and contemporaneous political events might have had a bearing on the views expressed by respondents, looking at what respondents themselves felt had influenced their opinions, and to what extent these perceptions are likely to be valid.

1.1 Asking questions about standards

One of the difficulties facing the researcher designing a study of public attitudes towards standards in public life lies in how to ask questions on a subject about which most participants will at best have a layman's knowledge and at worst know nothing at all. For example, there is little point asking what people think of the intricacies of the rules surrounding conflicts of interest. While a survey about crime can reasonably ask people to say what they think is a suitable punishment for burglary, since the subject is grounded in their day-to-day sphere of experience, it would not make sense to ask them what punishment should be levied against an MP who has failed to declare a gift or against a local councillor who has helped to push through a friend's planning application: the general public does not have enough knowledge about the context surrounding these issues to make a reasoned judgement.

In general this means that questions have to be kept quite simple. For example, it is reasonable to ask people how important they think it is that politicians tell the truth or that they act in the public interest rather than in their own, or whether MPs should listen to their conscience or to their party leader when deciding how to vote in parliament. Even with questions like these, however, there are pitfalls. People's answers can, for example, be coloured by what they see as being socially desirable responses; and what they say is important can be a camouflage for what really drives their perceptions of politicians and other public office holders.

It is particularly problematic to ask people how they perceive public office holders to behave in practice and even more so to ask their opinions on whether formal accountability mechanisms are functioning effectively. Even a well informed respondent would have difficulty saying how widespread a specific type of misconduct was amongst a particular group of public office holders or how frequently misdemeanours went unexposed. There is, after all, no objective measure of the incidence of misconduct on which public perceptions might be based. The best a survey of this nature can do is to ensure that people

feel able to give answers to the questions asked (for example, by keeping them simple and through careful development and piloting) and to ask questions that will enable judgements to be made about where the public's priorities lie in relation to standards in public life and to point to areas where there may be particular cause for concern.

Any interpretation of the survey findings, in particular those on how public office holders are thought to behave, needs to bear in mind that they reflect the subjective perceptions of the general public in a domain in which their knowledge is limited. However, this *caveat* should not be taken to imply that public opinions are any the less valid or important.

1.2 Engagement with the subject-matter

People's views on current affairs - and on the issues raised in this survey – are likely to be influenced by a wide range of factors. These include their family background, their upbringing and education, their environment and personal experiences, their friends, peers and work colleagues, their media consumption, etc. They are also likely to be influenced by how interested they are in the subject matter, how much they know about it and how strongly they feel about it. Responses to a survey such as this will inevitably be affected by current events, and by the filtering of individual respondents' views through these various factors.

The majority of respondents expressed at least some interest in current affairs in general: 45 per cent said that they had 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' of interest, 32 per cent that they had some interest and 23 per cent that they had little or no interest. Reported interest in current affairs was greater among men than among women; increased in line with age and level of educational attainment; and was greatest among readers of daily broadsheets and lowest among readers of daily tabloids and those who did not read a daily newspaper.

The majority of respondents - 59 per cent - claimed to have known at least a reasonable amount about the subject matter coming into the survey. However, only seven per cent said that they had known a lot about it and 41 per cent that they had known little or nothing. No objective measure of actual knowledge was taken in the interview, so we are reliant on the respondent's own assessment of their knowledge, which might either over- or under-estimate their actual knowledge.

There was a strong correlation between self-reported knowledge of the subject matter and interest in current affairs – 95 per cent of those who said that they had a great deal of interest in current affairs also said that they knew a lot or a reasonable amount about the subject. However, even among those who said that they had little or no interest in current affairs, around a quarter claimed to know a lot or a reasonable amount about the subject.

More than eight in ten respondents (82 per cent) said that they felt either very or quite strongly about the issues raised in the survey, 24 per cent saying that they felt very strongly. Strength of feeling increased somewhat with age and level of educational attainment and was strongly associated with self-reported knowledge of the survey subject matter and interest in current affairs. Among those who said that they knew a lot about the subject matter, 97 per cent said they felt strongly about the issues covered by the survey, 61 per cent that they felt very strongly. Among those who said they had a great deal of interest in the subject-matter, the equivalent proportions were 99 and 63 per cent.

1.3 Self-reported influences on opinions

Any attempt to ask people how their opinions have been formed raises difficult fundamental questions about the process of belief formation, the development of attitudes, and the degree to which attitudes are anchored in aspects of the environment, the personality, or some complex dynamic. There are uncertainties over the degree of insight that people have about the way in which they arrive at their views and how people think they arrive at them is not necessarily quite the same as how they do arrive at them.

It is common for people to like to think that their views have been formed independently and that they are not being influenced by the media or advertisements, despite evidence of the importance of such influences. To take an example from the area that we are considering, people may believe that politicians are sleazy, and they may believe that this view has a basis in evidence, whether or not they are able to remember details, but this does not necessarily mean that the evidence is the basis for their belief. Their belief may be a function of distance, a degree of political detachment or disenchantment, a tendency to project frustration, or some other factor.

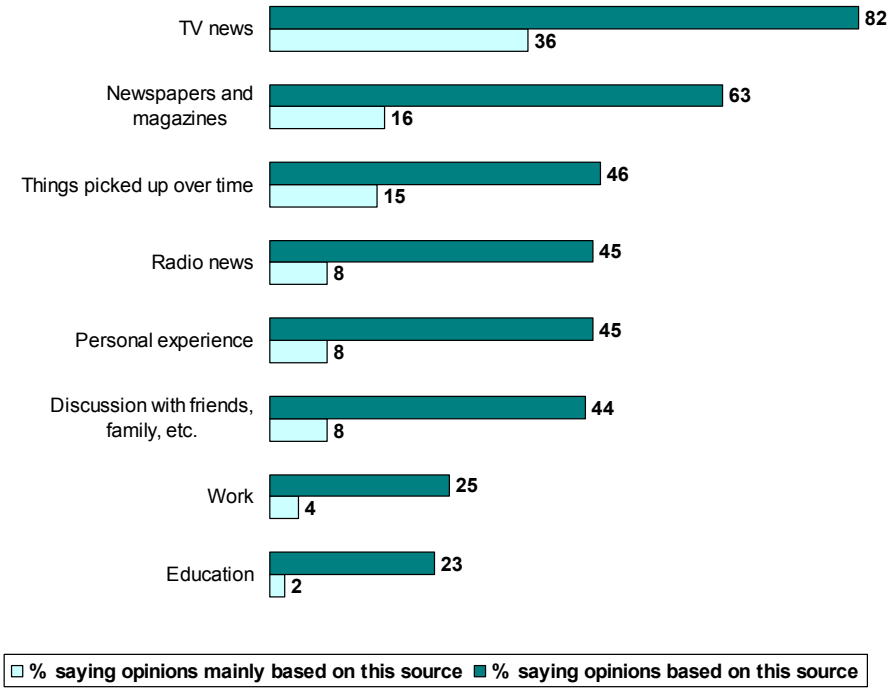
While it is possible to ask what are the sources of information, evidence, or experience on which people base their assessment of what standards are met by those in public office, what might be discovered is that people are able to cite some things as sources of information, but that those things may not in fact account for the beliefs they hold.

In spite of these limitations, it was felt that it would be useful to ask respondents both what sources of information or influences they felt had had a bearing on views that they had expressed in the interview and whether they had had specific events in mind when answering questions. Notwithstanding the limitations discussed above, this information still provides an interesting insight into the factors or events that come into play in influencing opinions about standards.

Towards the end of the interview, respondents were shown a list of factors that might have influenced the opinions they had given and were asked which their opinions were based on and which one they were *mainly* based on. Figure 3 shows the responses to these questions.

Figure 3 Self-reported influences on respondents' opinions

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Tables 142 and 143)

The media, in particular television and printed media, featured strongly in the influences that respondents cited: eighty-two per cent of respondents said that their views were influenced by television news programmes, while 63 per cent mentioned what they read in newspapers and magazines and 45 per cent radio news programmes.

Respondents were somewhat less likely to mention more personal influences as having a bearing on their opinions. Similar proportions mentioned things the respondent picked up over time (46 per cent); their own personal experiences (45 per cent); and what they talked about with friends, family and colleagues (44 per cent). Fewer still mentioned their work (26 per cent) or education (23 per cent) as factors they thought had influenced their answers to the survey questions, although these factors were much more commonly mentioned by those with higher educational qualifications and those who reported a high level of interest in current affairs and of knowledge in the survey subject matter.

When respondents were asked to say which of the influences their opinions were *mainly* based on, television was the most widely mentioned source, by 36 per cent of respondents, while newspapers and magazines were mentioned by 16 per cent and personal experiences by 15 per cent.

Television news programmes were less likely to be the main influence for men (33 per cent) than for women (40 per cent); for those with a higher education qualification (26 per cent) than either those with other qualifications (39 per cent) or those with no qualifications (44 per cent); and for those who read broadsheet newspapers (26 per cent) than for tabloid newspaper readers (47 per cent). Although most sub-groups mentioned television news programmes more often than other sources as the main influence of their opinions, those who said that they knew a lot about the survey subject matter were more likely to say that their opinions were based mainly on their personal experiences (32 per cent, versus 17 per cent mentioning television news).

1.4 The political context and the influence of specific events

Any survey that attempts to measure attitudes, and to track them over time, carries the risk that external events occurring at or around the time of a particular sweep of the survey might influence the attitudes that are being measured. There is certainly evidence for this happening in surveys of political attitudes. O'Hara (2004, p. 263), for example, notes that levels of trust in the US Government increased sharply in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001. It is important, therefore, in informing interpretation of the survey findings, to provide an account of relevant contemporaneous events.

In the period following the commissioning of this research project, through the questionnaire development and right through the entire fieldwork period, the political scene in the UK was dominated by the war against Iraq, along with associated issues such as the Government's dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the suicide of government scientist Dr David Kelly, the subsequent inquiry into Dr Kelly's death led by Lord Hutton, the publication of his report and its consequences for politicians and journalists. It seems inevitable that these events would have some bearing on the attitudes expressed in this survey.

However, there were other significant events taking place throughout 2003 and at the start of 2004 which might have impacted on respondents' opinions, including disputes within both the Labour and Conservative parties, as well as high profile cases of crime and punishment. Table 1 shows some of the main events occurring in 2003 and early 2004.

Table 1 Key events during 2003 and early 2004

Month		Date	Event
January 03		30th	Publication of the Government's dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction
February		7th	Government admits that parts of dossier on Iraq lifted from academic sources and compiled by mid-level officials in Downing Street communications department.
		15th	Stop the War march in London and elsewhere
		26th	House of Commons vote on the policy of going to war with Iraq over WMD
March		17th	Resignation of Robin Cook from the Cabinet
		20th	US and British forces begin attacking Iraq
April		8th	Publication of the Committee's 9th Report
May		1st	President Bush announces the end of major military combat in Iraq
		12th	Resignation of Clare Short from the Cabinet
		29th	Andrew Gilligan's report on "sexing up" the dossier
July		10th	Dr David Kelly named as the source of the "sexing up" claim
		18th	Death of Dr David Kelly
		21st	Release from custody of Jeffrey Archer after serving a sentence for perjury
		28th	Release of farmer Tony Martin after serving sentence for shooting and killing burglar
August		1st	Opening of the Hutton Inquiry
		29th	Resignation of Alastair Campbell
September		11th	Publication of the Government's response to the Committee's 9th Report
		24th	Publication of Iraq weapons dossier
		25th	Hutton Inquiry closes
October		14th	Parliamentary standards commissioner, Sir Philip Mawer, announces an investigation of Iain Duncan Smith's payments to his wife, Betsy, for secretarial services
		29th	Iain Duncan Smith loses vote of confidence of Conservative MPs
November	**Survey field-work period: 5th Nov 03 - 7th March 04**		
December		13th	Capture of Saddam Hussein
		17th	Sentencing of Ian Huntley and Maxine Carr over the murder of Soham schoolgirls
January 04		28th	Publication of Hutton Report. Resignation of Gavyn Davies, Chairman of BBC
		29th	Resignation of Greg Dyke, Director General of BBC
		30th	Resignation of Andrew Gilligan
February			
March		29th	Iain Duncan Smith is cleared over improper payments to his wife

In order to obtain a measure of the extent to which such events might have influenced responses in the survey, respondents were asked whether their answers to any of the questions in the survey had been influenced by recent events that they might have heard or read about and, if so, which events these were.

Thirty-nine per cent of respondents said that their responses had been affected by events. Younger respondents (aged 18-24) were more likely than average to say they were influenced by events (53 per cent), as were those who had a great deal of interest in current affairs (50 per cent) and those who felt very strongly about the issues covered in the survey (48 per cent).

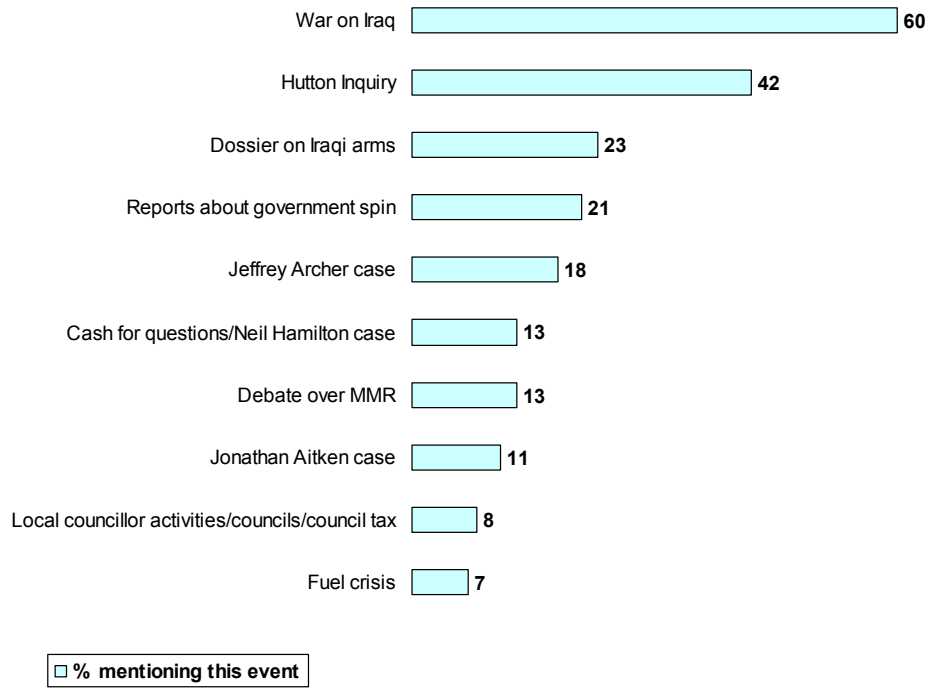
There were also differences between those interviewed before and after the publication of the Hutton Report into the death of Dr David Kelly. Of those interviewed before publication, 36 per cent said that they had been influenced by events; among those interviewed after publication, this proportion rose to 46 per cent. Those interviewed after publication were also more likely than those interviewed before to go on to say that the Hutton Inquiry had influenced their views, 57 per cent of the former saying that it had, compared with 36 per cent of the latter.

The Hutton Inquiry and the conflict with Iraq from which it emerged figures prominently in the events that respondents said had influenced their answers (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Could you say what events might have influenced your answers?

Base: All respondents influenced by recent events (422)

Events mentioned by less than 5% of respondents are not shown



(Table 145)

In total, 74 per cent of respondents who said that their answers had been influenced by recent events (29 per cent of all respondents) mentioned events associated with the war against Iraq. Aside from the conflict with Iraq, the involvement of national politicians in crime, sleaze and spin were all mentioned by a significant minority of respondents to this question. The number of mentions of the 'cash for questions' and Jonathan Aitken cases, although relatively small (eight per cent of all respondents mentioned one or the other) are nonetheless suggestive of the lasting impact that individual cases of sleaze can have. Other issues that had previously been in the news, such as the fuel crisis and the MMR vaccine debate were also mentioned as influences on responses.

An interesting feature of these responses is that those that exemplify *sleaze* (Archer, cash for questions, Aitken) are all associated with figures from the pre-1997 Conservative administration, while mentions of sleaze associated with the current administration are notable by their absence.

The influences that respondents cited are suggestive of a shift in emphasis from sleaze to spin as the key public concern in relation to standards in public life.

In their place are responses associated with *spin*: the Hutton Inquiry/Iraqi Arms Dossier, reports about government spin, MMR. While there have been incidents of alleged sleaze associated with figures from the current administration (for example, Geoffrey Robinson, Keith Vaz, Peter Mandelson) – these do not seem to have imprinted themselves on the public consciousness to the extent that they did in the mid-90s, a period in which both the media and the Labour opposition consciously elevated government sleaze as a political issue in the minds of the electorate. Under the current administration, however, the media has switched the focus of its scrutiny of the government from sleaze to spin, and this seems to be reflected here in the way in which people responded to this question: the influences that respondents cited are suggestive of a shift in emphasis from *sleaze* to *spin* as the key public concern in relation to standards in public life. Negrine and Lilleker (2004) make a similar point in their discussion of media coverage of political scandals:

"The 'back to basics' scandals are now engraved in public memory as a feature of the Major government, just as 'spin' will become the hallmark of the Blair government. In this respect, 'spin' is the new 'sleaze'!" (p.72).

A further point worth making here is that the examples of sleaze given by respondents here are concerned either with criminal activity (perjury) or alleged misconduct in office (cash for questions). There were virtually no mentions of what O'Hara (2004, p. 213) refers to as 'sexual shenanigans'. This seems to suggest that the latter are not high on people's agenda when they think about standards in public life, a premise that is explored further in Chapters 3 and 7.

Finally, what is notable (although hardly surprising) about the events mentioned at this question is that most of them concern either the misconduct of individual politicians or issues that have led to the probity or competence of the Government coming under question or criticism. They seem implicitly, therefore, to invite negative perceptions of the conduct of public office holders and, in particular, that of national politicians.

It is perhaps not surprising that people think in this way, since this is what they hear or read about in the media, where coverage of the issues is likely to be focused on proven or alleged misdemeanours, even if the coverage is balanced. Of course people will still make up their own minds about these issues, but it seems likely that they will be influenced in their opinions (as most of them suggest that they are) by the regular flow of media stories about wrongdoing in public office and that this might result in exaggeratedly negative perceptions of how those in public office behave. In interpreting the survey findings, it is worth keeping in mind this tendency for the public to focus on the negative.

2 Trust in public office holders

The subject of this report is public attitudes towards the conduct of senior public office holders, both elected and appointed. From Chapter 3 onwards, the findings focus solely on this group. In this chapter, however, we look at how senior public office holders of different types measure up against other professional groups, in terms of how far the public trusts them to tell the truth.

As part of the introductory section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to say, for each of 17 professions, which they would generally trust to tell the truth and which they would not. This question has been used in numerous surveys on political trust over a number of years, and was adapted to include a wide range of the types of senior public office holder that are the subject of this research. The question was included in the survey partly as a 'warm up' for respondents, before introducing more detailed questions on the behaviour of public office holders, and partly as a point of reference against other surveys on trust, as well as against other findings from this survey. Although simplistic in its formulation, it enables the main survey findings to be set in a broader context, showing how public office holders of different types compare with other professionals in terms of the confidence that the general public has in them.

Table 2 shows the proportion of respondents saying that they would or would not generally trust particular professions to tell the truth. The 'Net trust' figure in the third column is the proportion that would not trust a profession subtracted from the proportion that would. Professions are listed in descending order of 'Net trust', with senior public office holders covered elsewhere in this research shown in italics.

Table 2 Which of these professions would you generally trust to tell the truth?

Base: All respondents (1,097)

Note: Public office holders covered in this research are shown in italics	Generally trusted to tell the truth?		
	Yes	No	Net trust*
	%	%	%
Family doctors	92	7	+85
Head teachers in schools	84	12	+72
Judges	80	16	+65
Local police officers on the beat in your area	77	17	+60
Senior police officers	68	26	+42
Television news journalists	49	46	+3
Your local MP	47	45	+2
Senior managers in the National Health Service	44	49	-5
Local councillors	41	52	-11
Top civil servants	37	53	-16
Journalists on newspapers like the Times, Telegraph or Guardian	38	56	-18
Senior managers in local councils	35	56	-21
MPs in general	27	67	-40
People who run large companies	24	68	-43
Government ministers	24	70	-46
Estate agents	20	75	-55
Journalists on newspapers like the Sun, the Mirror or the Daily Star	7	89	-83

* Net trust = % who would trust the profession to tell the truth minus the % who would not trust the profession to tell the truth

(Table 19)

The extent to which the general public trusts different professions to tell the truth varies very considerably between professions. Among the 17 professions asked about, family doctors were the most widely trusted, 92 per cent of respondents saying that they would trust them to tell the truth. Also among the most trusted professions were head teachers, judges and local police officers in the respondent's own area, each of which were trusted by more than 75 per cent of respondents.

Among the least widely trusted professions were heads of large companies and government ministers, each trusted by 24 per cent of respondents, and estate agents, by 20 per cent. Tabloid journalists were trusted least of all the professions, only seven per cent of respondents saying that they trusted journalists on newspapers like the Sun, the Mirror and the Daily Star. Even among respondents who read tabloid newspapers during the week, only ten per cent said that they trusted the journalists on those newspapers to tell the truth. This lack of trust might be seen as a reason for tabloid readers to give little credence to what they read in the tabloid press. However, as we saw in Chapter 1, the printed media

featured strongly as a perceived influence on the views that people had given in the survey: among tabloid readers, 70 per cent said that newspapers and magazines had influenced their views and 19 per cent that their views were based mainly on what they read in newspapers and magazines.

Levels of trust in different types of senior public office holder vary considerably. Among appointed senior officials, head teachers, judges and senior police officers, as reported above, fare relatively well, but other groups are less widely trusted. Senior managers in the National Health Service were trusted by 47 per cent of respondents; top civil servants by 37 per cent; and senior managers in local councils by 35 per cent.

Respondents were asked about three types of politician: local councillors; government ministers and MPs. Local councillors were trusted by 41 per cent of respondents, while, as reported above, Government ministers performed worst among politicians, only 24 per cent of respondents saying that they trusted them to tell the truth. Respondents were asked about both MPs in general and their local MP, with strikingly different results: 47 per cent of respondents said that they trusted their local MP, compared with 27 per cent saying that they trusted MPs in general.

As would be expected, these findings closely reflect those of other surveys in which this question has been used. For example, a recent survey for the British Medical Association (BMA) that asked the same question with a similar list of professions (MORI, 2004), also found that 92 per cent of respondents trusted doctors to tell the truth, while teachers were trusted by 89 per cent, judges by 75 per cent and government ministers by 23 per cent.

In broader terms, the findings generally reflect tendencies identified in other research (see, for example, Mortimore, 2002; Duffy *et al.*, 2003) for people to trust 'frontline' professionals and professions with whom they have day-to-day familiarity (doctors, teachers, local police officers) and professions that they perceive to be impartial or independent (judges); to be less trusting of senior management (NHS managers, senior civil servants, local authority managers, heads of large companies); and to be particularly distrustful of national politicians (MPs and government ministers).

People express higher levels of trust in 'frontline' professionals and those whom they perceive to be impartial or independent than they do in senior managers and administrators and those whom they perceive to be politically motivated. The difference in the proportions trusting MPs generally and their own MP is arguably indicative of people trusting party politics at the national level less than they trust MPs in their constituency role.

The difference in the proportions trusting MPs generally and their own MP is arguably indicative of people trusting party politics at the national level less than they trust MPs in their constituency role.

Further comparison with the above-mentioned MORI/BMA survey seems to reinforce these patterns. For example, while the MORI/BMA survey asked about television news *readers*, who might be said to be both 'familiar faces' and impartial reporters of events, this survey asked about television news *journalists*, a less familiar group and one that might be expected to elicit a lower level of trust, both because, as a generic group, journalists tend not to be widely trusted[7] and, possibly, because of associations with the Hutton Enquiry. The MORI/BMA survey recorded that 70 per cent of people trusted television news *readers*, this survey that only 49 per cent trusted television news *journalists*. Similarly, while the MORI/BMA survey found that 51 per cent of respondents trusted 'civil servants' to tell the truth, this survey found that only 37 per cent trusted '*top* civil servants' (with its implication of greater seniority/distance from the 'front line') to do so.

There are exceptions to these general rules: senior police officers, for example, are widely trusted, although less widely than police officers on the beat; and head teachers, as we have seen, are very widely trusted, although the proportion who trusted them in this survey (84 per cent) is slightly lower than the proportion who said that they trusted teachers more generally in the MORI work for the BMA (89 per cent). These groups could be seen as administrators and as representing management, but it seems more likely that they are perceived as frontline professionals, in the same way that hospital consultants, for example, would be seen as frontline professionals rather than as management.

There was some variation in levels of trust between different sub-groups within the population, in particular by age and educational attainment. Levels of trust in most of the professions were higher among young adults (aged 18-24) and those with higher education qualifications and lower among those with no educational qualifications. Government ministers were the only profession where there was a meaningful difference in perception based on political allegiance: 30 per cent of respondents who identified themselves as Labour supporters said that they trusted government ministers, compared with 18 per cent of Conservative supporters. This tendency for supporters of the incumbent administration to express more positive views about politicians than supporters of the opposition has been noted elsewhere (see, for example, Bromley *et al.*, 2001, p. 207).

[7] In the MORI/BMA survey, 20 per cent of respondents said that they trusted 'journalists' to tell the truth.

3 Public expectations and priorities

3.1 Introduction

The first of the three aims of the research was to establish what the public sees as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office. Within this aim, specific objectives were to evaluate how far the Seven Principles map the beliefs about appropriate behaviour held by the public, and how far other principles or values might be involved; and whether the public sees some types of behaviour as of greater significance than others. These objectives are addressed in this chapter of the report, which explores, for a range of types of public office holder, how important people consider different aspects of conduct to be. Chapter 4 then goes on to examine how people perceive public office holders to behave in relation to these same aspects of conduct, thereby allowing a comparison to be made between expectations and perceptions of behaviour.

Respondents were asked how important they considered a number of behavioural attributes to be for MPs and government ministers and which of these attributes they felt were the most important for these two groups. They were then asked how they perceived MPs and government ministers to behave in relation to the same attributes, by indicating the proportion of each group to which they felt each attribute applied (see Chapter 4). A similar set of questions was then asked in relation to appointed senior public officials[8]. However, in view of the limited time available in the interview, a reduced list of attributes was used to measure perceptions of behaviour, in order to allow for views to be gathered on a number of specific types of public servant.

The attributes used in these questions were drawn up with reference to the Seven Principles and the Stage 1 qualitative research findings. The aim was to be able to assess and compare expectations and perceptions of behaviour both in relation to values implied by the Principles and values that emerged as important in the qualitative research.

Table 3 shows the list of attributes used, together with the specific Principle(s) to which they relate.

[8] Respondents were asked to rate the importance of different attributes in relation to appointed officials only. Perceptions of behaviour were asked in relation to a number of categories of appointed official and local councillors.

Table 3 Behavioural attributes used in the research

Behavioural attribute	Which of the Seven Principles the attribute relates to
They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public	Selflessness
They should not use their power for their own personal gain	Selflessness, Objectivity
They should not take bribes	Selflessness, Integrity
They should own up when they make mistakes	Accountability, Openness
They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	Accountability, Openness
They should make sure that public money is used wisely	This is included as fiscal prudence emerged as an important consideration for some respondents at Stage 1 of the research
They should set a good example for others in their private lives	This is included as private behaviour emerged as an important consideration for some respondents at Stage 1 of the research
They should tell the truth	This relates to findings from Stage 1 of the research about a desire for public office holders to act in an honest manner. As discussed earlier, it is distinct from the Principle of 'Honesty' in the Seven Principles, in that the latter is concerned solely with declaring private interests and resolving conflicts of interest.
They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	This emerged at Stage 1 of the research as being important to the public, but not covered by the Seven Principles
They should be competent at their jobs	This emerged at Stage 1 of the research as being important to the public, but not covered by the Seven Principles

None of the attributes relates directly to the Committee's Principle of Honesty. This is largely because the Committee defines honesty in relation to dealing with conflicts of interest, rather than in a broader way: *"Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest."* However, 'honesty', in its broadest sense, was found to be an imperative for the general public at Stage 1 of the research, underpinning many of the values according to which people expected public office holders to behave, as it could be said to underpin a number of the attributes in the above list. The Principle of Leadership (which involves promoting and supporting by example the six other Principles) is also not covered by the attributes.

3.2 Expectations of national politicians

Respondents were given a pack of ten shuffle cards,[9] each showing one of the behavioural attributes described above, and were asked to take each statement in turn and, thinking about MPs and government ministers, to place the card on a section of a board showing the following options:

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Quite important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

Respondents were then given back the cards that they had rated as 'extremely important' and asked to pick out the *three* characteristics that they felt were most important for MPs and government ministers.[10]

Most of the attributes on which respondents were questioned were expected to provoke a positive reaction and people's responses did indeed confirm their importance, since nine out of the ten were rated as 'extremely' or 'very' important by more than 80 per cent of respondents. The question, however, was primarily concerned to elicit differences in emphasis between the attributes, and the analysis concentrates on the figures for those rating the attribute as 'extremely important', since this is where the greatest differentiation in perceived importance is observed.

Table 4 shows the proportion of respondents rating each of the attributes as 'extremely important', and the proportion who rated each as being one of the three most important aspects of behaviour. The attributes are presented in rank order, based on the proportion rating them as 'extremely important'. Where an attribute has been based on one of the Seven Principles, the Principle to which it most closely relates is indicated in brackets.

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[9] Small cards containing statements, which the interviewer shuffles before handing them to a respondent so that the statements are presented in a random order. The respondent then indicates his/her responses by sorting the cards into piles or on to a board showing a number of response options.

[10] If the respondent had rated only three characteristics as 'extremely important', these were coded automatically as the three most important. If the respondent had selected fewer than three as 'extremely important', any rated 'extremely important' would be coded automatically as among the three most important, with further attributes needed to make up the three most important chosen from those rated as 'very important' and, if necessary, 'quite important', etc.

Where an attribute has been drawn from priorities identified in the Stage 1 research, it is shown in italics.

Table 4 Importance of specific behavioural attributes for MPs and government ministers

Base: All respondents (1,097 for importance; 1,095 for three most important)

Note: Attributes drawn from priorities identified in the Stage 1 research, rather than being based on the Seven Principles, are shown in italics

	Rated as 'Extremely Important'	**Rated as one of the three most important attributes**
	%	%
They should not take bribes (Selflessness/Integrity)	88	46
They should tell the truth	75	53
They should make sure that public money is used wisely	*73*	*43*
They should not use their power for their own personal gain (Selflessness/Objectivity)	72	34
They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public (Selflessness)	64	37
They should be competent at their jobs	58	23
They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	56	28
They should own up when they make mistakes (Accountability/Openness)	55	17
They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions (Accountability/Openness)	43	12
They should set a good example for others in their private lives	31	5

(Tables 30 and 31)

As noted above, nine of the ten attributes were rated 'extremely' or 'very' important by more than 80 per cent of respondents. The exception – that MPs and government ministers should set a good example for others in their private lives – was nonetheless regarded as 'extremely' or 'very' important by 60 per cent of respondents and at least 'quite important' by 86 per cent.

Private behaviour emerges as a lower priority for the public when compared with public conduct, but is still regarded by most people as being important for both national politicians and appointed officials.

It is clear, then, that all of these attributes are of some importance to the large majority of people, and this fact should not be overlooked in interpreting the findings.

The rank order in which the attributes are placed, based on the proportion rating them as 'extremely important', shows issues of basic honesty (not taking bribes, telling the truth) and the 'public service ethic' (acting in the public interest, using public money wisely) emerging as key priorities, while private behaviour and, to a lesser degree, explaining actions and decisions are in general rated as somewhat less important.

Honesty – defined in its broadest sense, rather than in the Committee's sense of declaring and resolving conflicts of interest – and the public service ethic emerge as key priorities.

In the terminology of the Seven Principles, Selflessness tends to feature towards the top end of the list, while Accountability and Openness feature further down. Of the attributes not directly drawn from the Seven Principles, 'telling the truth' emerges as a key priority, as it did at Stage 1 of the research.

The rank order changes slightly when based on whether or not an attribute was considered one of the three most important, with "They should tell the truth", mentioned by 53 per cent of respondents, the most likely of the attributes to be included as one of the three most important. This is perhaps not surprising, since 'telling the truth', like the value of 'honesty' identified at Stage 1 of the research, is an over-arching principle that could be seen as encompassing or superseding attributes such as owning up to mistakes. It is quite possible that, in choosing the three most important attributes, respondents will have tried to select attributes that could be interpreted as covering others.

The relative importance to people of the different attributes becomes more apparent once they are asked to prioritise just three of the ten: at this point, being in touch with what the general public thinks is important; competence; owning up to mistakes; explaining actions and decisions; and private behaviour all emerge as lower priorities, when compared with the other attributes.

In general the results suggest that the relative importance that people attach to the different aspects of behaviour covered in the research, and the rank order in which they place them, do not vary substantially between different groups in the population. The main exception to this rule concerns attitudes towards private behaviour, which varied by age and educational attainment. The importance attached to national politicians setting a good example for others in their private lives increased with age, the proportion regarding this attribute as extremely important ranging from 22 per cent of those aged 18 to 34 to 44 per cent of those aged 65 and over. In relation to educational attainment, those with higher education qualifications were least likely to consider private behaviour extremely important

(21 per cent), those with no qualifications most likely to do so (44 per cent). It should be added that, while older, less educated people attached more importance than others to politicians maintaining high standards in their private lives, they still considered this aspect of behaviour as being the least important of the attributes covered in the research.

3.3 Expectations of senior public officials

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the same set of attributes for senior public officials. This group was defined for respondents as being *"people with senior management jobs in government departments, local councils or other public bodies, who make important decisions about the service they work in. For example, the head of a council's housing department, the chief executive of an NHS hospital, a chief police officer, etc. These people have not been elected to their jobs, but have had to apply for them."* The question was asked in the same way as for MPs and government ministers. The results are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Importance of specific behavioural attributes for senior public officials

Base: All respondents (1,097 for importance; 1,094 for three most important)

Note: Attributes drawn from priorities identified in the Stage 1 research, rather than being based on the Seven Principles, are shown in italics

	Rated as 'Extremely Important'	**Rated as one of the three most important attributes**
	%	%
They should not take bribes (Selflessness/Integrity)	82	40
They should tell the truth	*76*	*45*
They should make sure that public money is used wisely	*71*	*46*
They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public (Selflessness)	71	51
They should not use their power for their own personal gain (Selflessness/Objectivity)	67	27
They should be competent at their jobs	*65*	*36*
They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	*52*	*25*
They should own up when they make mistakes (Accountability/Openness)	47	12
They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions (Accountability/Openness)	42	11
They should set a good example for others in their private lives	*23*	*3*

(Tables 77 and 78)

The results were broadly similar to those for national politicians. All of the attributes were again of some importance to the large majority of people, with the key issues of basic honesty and the 'public service ethic' again emerging as key priorities. Private behaviour was again regarded as the least important of the ten attributes and was seen as less important for senior public officials than for MPs and government ministers.

However, while the similarities between the results for elected politicians and appointed officials were more striking than the differences, more emphasis was placed on dedication to public service, prudence and competence, and less on honesty, in relation to the latter. While honesty emerged clearly as the most important attribute for elected politicians, dedication to public service was more likely than telling the truth to be chosen as one of the three most important attributes for appointed officials and spending money wisely just as likely as honesty to be chosen.

People place more emphasis on the importance of dedication to public service, competence and financial prudence in relation to appointed officials and of honesty, financial propriety and accountability in relation to national politicians.

Seventy-one per cent of respondents said that it was extremely important for senior public officials to be "dedicated to doing a good job for the public", compared with 64 per cent who said the same was true for MPs and government ministers. Indeed, when respondents were asked to identify the three most important attributes, dedication to public service (mentioned by 51 per cent of respondents) was the most likely of the ten to be included in relation to appointed officials, but only fourth in the list for national politicians (37 per cent).

Similarly, respondents were more likely to say that it was extremely important for appointed officials to be competent at their jobs than for national politicians (65 per cent compared with 58 per cent) and to choose competence among the three most important attributes (36 per cent for appointed officials, compared with 23 per cent for MPs and government ministers).

The relative importance that respondents attached to different attributes again tended not to vary to any great extent, as was the case in relation to national politicians, although the difference in attitudes towards private behaviour by age and educational attainment was again apparent here.

4 Perceptions of the behaviour of public office holders

Chapter 3 established that the general public has high expectations of its elected and appointed representatives. People expect MPs, ministers and other public officials to uphold a wide range of values in their public roles and to exhibit a responsible attitude in their private lives. Although honesty and the public service ethic emerge as key priorities, other qualities, such as competence and an awareness of public concerns, are also valued. In this chapter, we examine how the general public perceives public office holders to measure up against these stringent criteria.

Chapter 1 highlighted the problems associated with asking people to judge the behaviour of public office holders: that people may lack the information necessary to make valid judgements, in particular since there is no objective measure available of the incidence of misconduct on which their perceptions might be based; and that their views are likely to be coloured by media coverage, with its tendency to focus on wrongdoing. While these factors need to be borne in mind in interpreting the survey findings, they should not be seen to diminish the validity or importance of public opinions.

4.1 Perceptions of the behaviour of MPs and government ministers

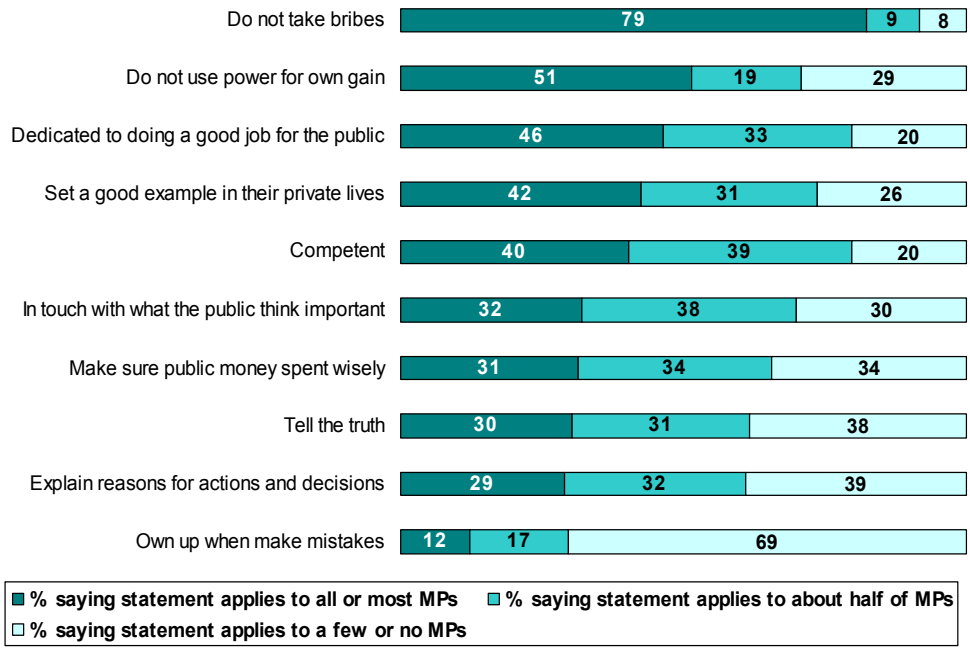
After they had assessed the relative importance of the ten behavioural attributes for MPs and government ministers, respondents were asked to indicate the proportion of each group to which they felt each attribute applied - all, most, about half, a few or none.

Figures 5 and 6 summarise the responses to this question in relation to MPs and government ministers respectively.[11]

[11] In the two figures, two of the statements used in the questionnaire ("They take bribes" and "They use their power for their own gain") have been translated to positive attributes ("They do not take bribes" and "They do not use their power for their own gain"), in order to make for easier comparison with the other attributes. In presenting the data in this way, the assumption has been made that a respondent who said that a few MPs/government ministers take bribes would have said that most MPs/government ministers do not take bribes, had the original statement been expressed as a positive attribute (and similarly for the second concerning abuse of power).

Figure 5 Proportion of MPs to whom statements apply

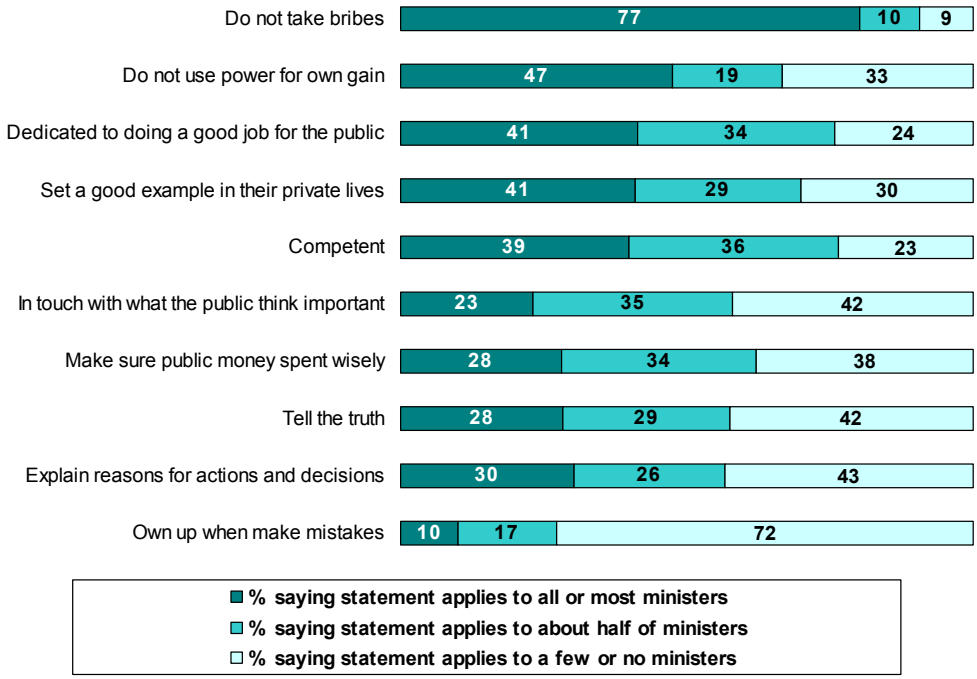
Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 42)

Figure 6 Proportion of government ministers to whom statements apply

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 53)

Taken out of context, these results might be seen as quite damning and, indeed, they do not portray national politicians in Britain in a particularly positive light. Less than half of respondents, for example, felt that any one of the positive attributes applied to most or all MPs or government ministers.

However, seen in the context of other research on a similar theme, the results do not seem surprising. For example:

- Results from the State of the Nation Poll, commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust in October 2000 (reported in Dunleavy *et al.*, 2001), show similarly high levels of scepticism about the standards of conduct of national politicians:

  – While 19 per cent of respondents in this survey thought that at least half of government ministers took bribes and 17 per cent that at least half of MPs did so, 49 per cent of respondents in the State of the Nation poll thought that "financial sleaze in government" was a major problem and 39 per cent that it was a minor problem;

– While 71 per cent of respondents in this survey thought that no more than half of government ministers told the truth, 66 per cent in the State of the Nation survey thought that "government ministers not being truthful" was a major problem and 26 per cent that it was a minor problem. Similarly, 57 per cent saw "the government using spin-doctors to manipulate the media" as a major problem, while 30 per cent felt that it was a minor problem.

- An earlier survey (Gallup, 1994, cited in Mortimore, 2002) found that 64 per cent of people agreed that "most members of Parliament make a lot of money by using public office improperly", a finding which seems far more damning than the 29 per cent of respondents in this survey who thought that all or most MPs used their power for their own personal gain.

- While 31 per cent of respondents in this survey thought that all or most MPs made sure that public money was spent wisely, and 28 per cent felt that the same was true for all or most government ministers, 33 per cent of respondents in The 2000 British Social Attitudes Survey (Park *et al.*, *eds.*, 2002) trusted governments of any party a lot or quite a bit to "spend taxpayers money wisely for the benefit of everyone". In the same survey, 77 per cent of respondents agreed that "generally speaking, those we elect as MPs lose touch with people pretty quickly", while in this survey, 68 per cent thought that no more than half of MPs were in touch with what the general public thinks is important.

Thus, while the results show that people have, at best, mixed views about the standards of conduct of MPs and government ministers, this is not in itself a new or surprising finding.

The results suggest that people tend not to discriminate between government ministers and MPs in the way in which they perceive politicians to behave. Although MPs tended to receive slightly higher ratings than government ministers, the overall scores of the two groups were very similar on most attributes and there was a strong tendency for respondents to rate the two groups in the same category on individual attributes. The only attribute on which the perceptions of the two groups differed notably was that of being in touch with what the general public thinks is important: MPs (32 per cent all/most vs. 30 per cent a few/none) were more likely than government ministers (23 per cent vs. 42 per cent) to be seen to be in touch with people's priorities.

The attributes on which MPs performed worst were concerned with honesty, openness and accountability: telling the truth, explaining the reasons for actions and decisions and owning up to making mistakes. The same attributes, together with being in touch with what the public think is important, were also weak points for government ministers.

There is a widespread perception of a culture in which politicians try to cover up the mistakes that they make, which sits uncomfortably alongside a strongly expressed desire among the public for them to 'come clean'

Both groups were rated particularly poorly on owning up when they made mistakes: just 12 per cent of respondents thought this applied to all or most MPs, with the figure for ministers just ten per cent. Although the attributes relating to openness and accountability were not among people's most important priorities, "telling the truth" (which arguably encompasses openness) was, as we saw in Chapter 3, the attribute most likely to be chosen among the three most important for MPs and government ministers.

Public perceptions of the standards of behaviour set by MPs and government ministers varied to some extent among different groups in the population. Broadly speaking, confidence in the behaviour of national politicians was somewhat higher than average among groups that would be expected to be relatively well informed about politics – for example, those with higher education qualifications, readers of broadsheet newspapers, those with a political party affinity and those with an interest in current affairs. These findings tend to echo those of other studies on political attitudes (see, for example, Bromley and Curtice, 2002). Table 6 illustrates this pattern in relation to perceptions of whether MPs tell the truth, showing higher than average levels of confidence among each of these groups.

Table 6 Perceptions of the proportion of MPs who tell the truth – sub-group differences

Base: All respondents

	Unweighted base	Proportion of MPs perceived to tell the truth: All or most	Few or none	Net rating
	n	%	%	%
Highest qualification				
- Higher education qualification	344	37	30	+6
- Other qualification	460	30	39	-9
- None	291	22	45	-23
Political party affinity				
- Labour	250	38	29	+9
- Conservative	157	29	31	-2
- Liberal Democrat	65	34	29	+6
- None	563	27	44	-17
Interest in current affairs				
- A great deal	120	30	37	-7
- Quite a lot	368	39	27	+12
- Some	348	26	40	-14
- Not very much	213	26	52	-26
- None at all	46	16	56	-40
Daily newspaper readership				
- Broadsheet	237	40	27	+13
- Mid-market	277	27	39	-12
- Tabloid	286	27	39	-13
- None	322	31	39	-8

* Net rating = the % saying that all or most MPs tell the truth minus the % saying that few or none tell the truth

(Table 38)

4.2 Perceptions of the behaviour of senior public officials

Having examined perceptions of national politicians, we now move on to explore perceptions of appointed officials and local councillors.[12] Having established their views on the importance of different aspects of behaviour in relation to appointed senior public officials, respondents were asked to rate the behaviour of these officials, together with local councillors, on a number of criteria.

To have asked respondents to rate a number of different types of official against each of the ten behavioural attributes would have taken too long. Questionnaire testing had also shown that respondents soon became fatigued and demotivated when repeatedly presented with the same question format. It was decided, therefore, to reduce the ten attributes to four aspects of behaviour that provided reasonable coverage of the values implied in the larger set of statements, and that encompassed both values represented in the Seven Principles and those that had emerged as public concerns in the preliminary qualitative research. The four chosen were:

- Honesty
- Dedication to public service
- Accountability, in terms of acknowledging mistakes
- Prudence, in terms of usage of public money

The questions were asked in relation to five types of appointed official and local councillors. In order to keep the question to a manageable length, office holders were grouped into two sub-sets of three and matched sub-samples of respondents were asked about one of the sub-sets only, as shown below.

<u>Sub-sample A</u>

- senior managers in the NHS;
- senior police officers;
- top civil servants;

[12] In early drafts of the questionnaire, local councillors were dealt with separately from appointed officials. However, questionnaire testing indicated that people's perceptions of local councillors were often very vague and that they became confused between local councillors and appointed council officials. It was therefore decided to ask about local councillors alongside appointed officials.

Sub-sample B

- managers who run local council services;
- local councillors;
- head teachers in schools.

Managers of local authority services and local councillors were purposively included in the same sub-set, in order that respondents would differentiate between them.

The format in which these questions were asked differed from that used for MPs and government ministers. Respondents were asked to rate each type of official on a seven-point scale, with the end points of the scale labelled as illustrated in Figure 7 below. Thus a score of 6 or 7 indicates that respondents generally saw the group concerned as honest, dedicated to public service, etc., a score of 1 or 2 that they perceived them as being dishonest, putting their own careers above the public interest, etc. A rating of 4 represented the mid-point in each case. In presenting the results in this section, we focus on the proportions giving positive (6 or 7) and negative (1 or 2) scores, and the mean score for each attribute.

Figure 7 Dimensions on which appointed officials and local councillors were rated

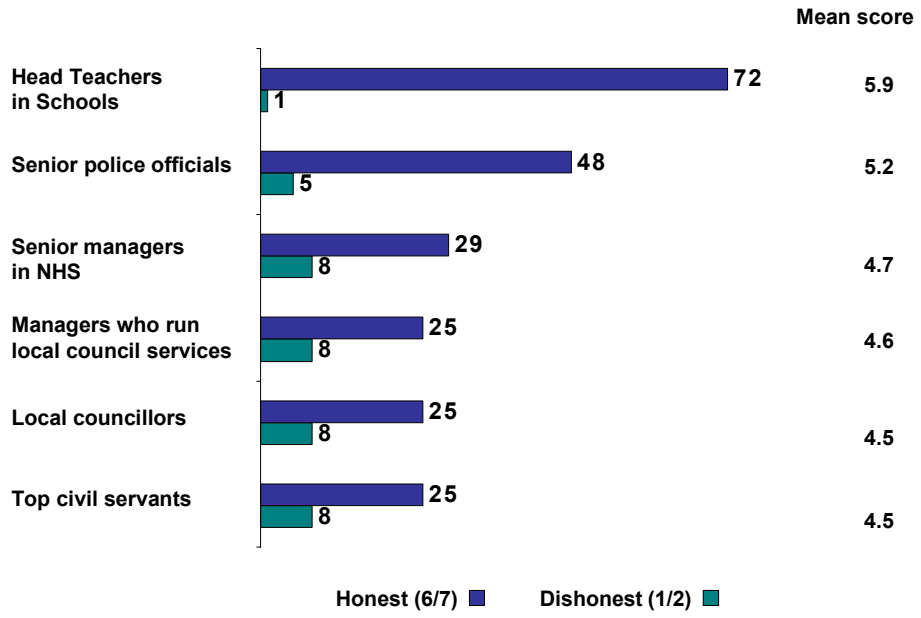
Honest						**Dishonest**
7	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Dedicated to public service						**Put their careers above the public interest**
7	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Spend public money wisely						**Waste public money**
7	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Own up when they make mistakes						**Try to cover up their mistakes**
7	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

4.2.1 Honesty

Figure 8 shows how the six groups of office holder were rated in terms of honesty. The groups are shown in descending order by mean score.

Figure 8 Rating of senior public officials: Honesty

Base: All respondents (Sub-sample A 547; Sub-sample B 550)



(Table 85)

Of the six groups of public office holder covered, head teachers were the most likely to be regarded as honest, with a mean score of 5.9 and 72 per cent of respondents giving them a score of 6 or 7. Only one per cent of respondents felt that head teachers were "dishonest" (i.e. gave them a score of 1 or 2). Senior police officers were ranked second in terms of honesty, with a mean score of 5.2, 48 per cent rating them 6 or 7 and five per cent giving them a score of 1 or 2.

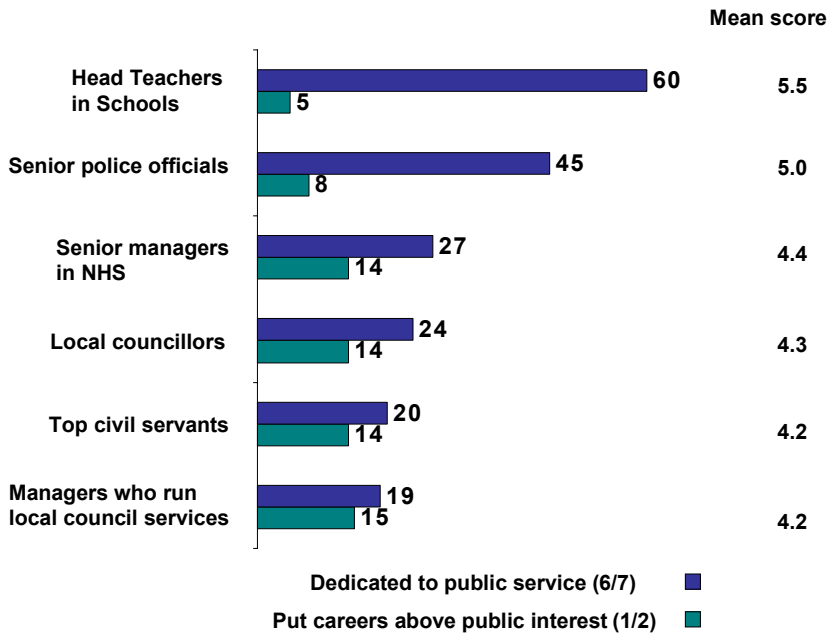
Although the remaining groups were much less likely to score 6 or 7 on this measure, each of them was scored 1 or 2 by less than ten per cent of respondents. Hence most respondents felt that these groups of office holders were neither especially honest nor especially dishonest. In each case, the mean score was above the mid-point of 4, ranging from 4.5 for senior civil servants to 4.7 for senior managers in the National Health Service.

4.2.2 Dedication to public service

Figure 9 shows how senior public officials were rated in terms of dedication to public service.

Figure 9 Rating of senior public officials: Dedication to public service

Base: All respondents (Sub-sample A 547; Sub-sample B 550)



(Table 92)

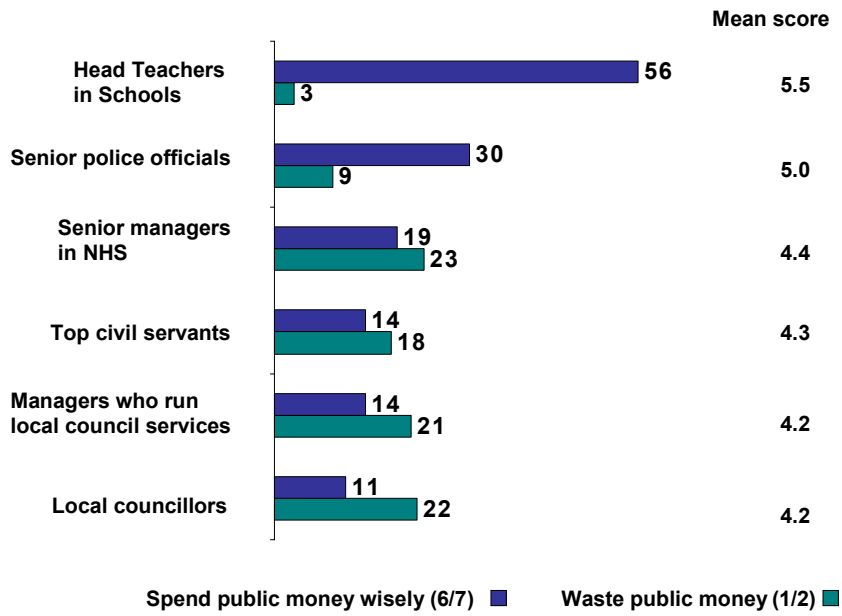
The results on this measure were similar to those for honesty, although the ratings were somewhat less positive. Head teachers in schools were again held in the highest regard of the six groups, with a mean score of 5.5 and 60 per cent of respondents rating them a 6 or 7, while senior police officers were again ranked second. The remaining four groups performed less well, but nonetheless each averaged above the mid-point of 4, with the majority of respondents scoring them between 3 and 5 on the scale. Of these four groups, senior civil servants and managers who run local council services performed worst on this measure, only one in five respondents scoring them 6 or 7.

4.2.3 Use of public money

Figure 10 shows the extent to which respondents felt that each profession spent public money wisely.

Figure 10 Rating of senior public officials: Use of public money

Base: All respondents (Sub-sample A 547; Sub-sample B 550)



(Table 106)

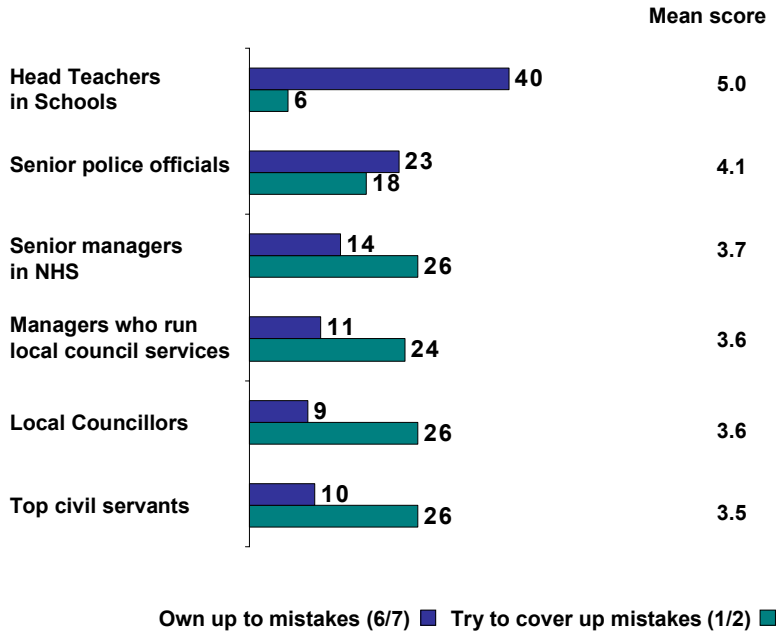
The results broadly follow the pattern of those for honesty and dedication to public service. Head teachers were by far the group most widely considered to spend public money wisely (56 per cent), again followed by senior police officers (30 per cent). The remaining four groups were all more likely to be seen to waste money than to spend it wisely. With the exception of head teachers, the ratings for each of the groups were lower than for either honesty or dedication to public service, although, even among the groups with the poorest ratings, mean scores were around the mid-point of 4.

4.2.4 Acknowledging mistakes

Figure 11 summarises the findings for the last of the four issues covered, whether senior public officials were seen to acknowledge or to cover up mistakes that they made.

Figure 11 Rating of senior public officials: Acknowledgement of mistakes

Base: All respondents (Sub-sample A 547; Sub-sample B 550)



(Table 99)

While the results follow a similar pattern to those for the other attributes, with head teachers (40 per cent) and senior police officers (23 per cent) most likely to be seen to own up to mistakes, the ratings on this measure are lower than for each of the other attributes. This finding reflects the earlier finding that both MPs and government ministers were rated particularly poorly on owning up when they made mistakes. This finding is also supported by recent research for the Audit Commission (Duffy *et al.*, 2003), which found that only 13 per cent of respondents agreed that "public sector organisations like local councils, local NHS hospitals and local police services are always open and honest about mistakes they make."

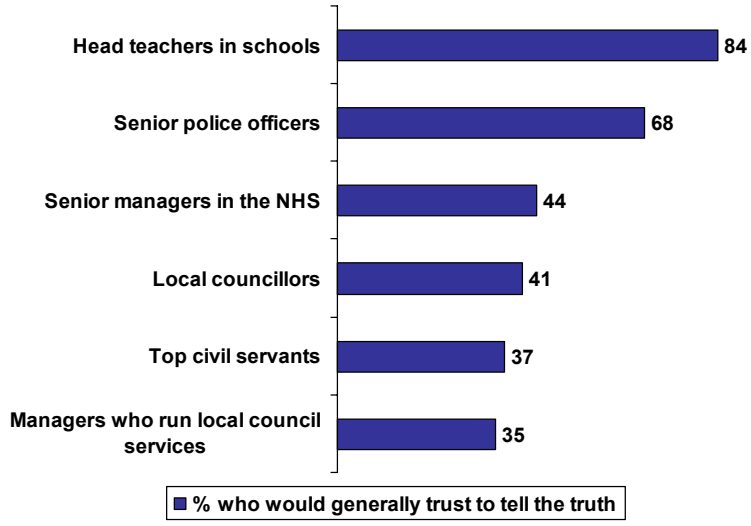
4.2.5 Summary

A consistent pattern emerges from the data reported in this section, revealing a markedly higher regard among respondents for the standards of behaviour of head teachers, when compared with the other types of senior official about whom respondents were asked. Senior police officers were consistently ranked second behind head teachers, although generally with much lower ratings. Perceptions of the behavioural and professional standards of councillors, NHS managers, senior civil servants and managers who run local council services were less positive, with NHS managers tending to receive slightly higher ratings than the other groups. However, the average ratings for these groups tended to cluster around the mid-point of the rating scale, rather than being towards the bottom of the scale. In terms of their performance against the four attributes, office holders were rated most positively on being generally honest, least so on owning up to mistakes.

The results closely mirror the findings reported earlier on trust in public office holders (see Figure 12 below). Head teachers were trusted by 84 per cent of respondents (the second most trusted profession) and senior police officers by 68 per cent, while less than half of respondents trusted any of the four other types of senior public official.

Figure 12 Trust in senior public officials

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 19)

5 MPs and voting in parliament

The findings reported thus far provide an assessment of people's priorities in relation to the general standards that public office holders should uphold, as well as a measure of how well people think different types of office holder perform against these standards. In order to further understand where people draw the boundaries between what they regard as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, respondents were asked how they felt public office holders should and should not behave in a given scenario.

The first of these scenario-based questions was set in the context of an MP voting in parliament and sought to explore people's views on what criteria MPs should and should not take into consideration when they are voting, and what criteria they believe govern MPs' voting behaviour in practice. One of the aims of this question was to explore the extent to which people recognise that MPs are part of a partisan political system and therefore accept party loyalties and political leadership as legitimate influences on the decisions that individual MPs take.

Respondents were asked to think of the scenario of an MP voting on "an important national issue" in Parliament, and were given a set of cards showing factors that might have a bearing on how MPs vote, including factors associated with party allegiance, as well as other criteria, such as the public interest, the MP's own self-interest and the MP's own personal beliefs. Respondents were then asked:

- to sort the cards into factors that they thought were reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote and those that they should definitely not take into account;

- to select the one factor which, in their opinion, was the most important for MPs to take into account;

- and, in order to establish the relationship between what people think *should* influence MPs' voting behaviour and what they think *does* influence them, to say which one of the factors they thought most MPs would base their decision on.

Table 7 summarises the responses to the first of these questions.

Table 7 Which of these do you think it is reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote and which should they definitely not take into account?

Base: All respondents (1,097)

	Reasonable to take into account	Should definitely not take into account	Don't know
	%	%	%
What would benefit people in the country as a whole	94	4	2
What the MP's party election manifesto promised	85	11	4
What would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency	81	15	3
What the MP personally believes to be right	69	27	4
What the MP's local party members would want	58	36	6
How the MP's party leadership thinks he or she should vote	32	63	6
What the MP thinks will make his or her party more popular with the general public	31	64	5
How the decision might affect the MP's political career	15	81	4
What would benefit the MP's family	9	87	3
How the decision might affect the MP's chances of getting a job outside politics	9	88	3

(Table 64)

The results indicate widespread endorsement of the Selflessness[13] Principle. Respondents were particularly likely to cite factors that related directly to acting in the public interest as being reasonable for MPs to take into account, 94 per cent mentioning "what would benefit people living in the country as a whole" and 81 per cent "what would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency".

The general public tends to reject party loyalties and political leadership as legitimate influences on MPs' decisions and firmly rejects self-interest as a guiding principle

Conversely, the large majority of respondents felt that MPs should *not* take into account factors relating to their own self-interest when deciding how to vote. Hence 88 per cent of

[13] *"Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends".*

respondents thought that MPs should not consider how the decision might affect their chances of getting a job outside of politics; 87 per cent what would benefit their family; and 81 per cent how the decision might affect their political career.

While selflessness emerges as an important principle here, other factors were widely acknowledged to be reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote. Voting in accordance with election manifesto promises was very widely mentioned (by 85 per cent of respondents), while 69 per cent felt that it was reasonable for MPs to vote on the basis of their personal beliefs and 58 per cent that it was reasonable for them to consider the wishes of local party members.

Only a third of respondents, however, viewed the wishes of the party leadership as a reasonable basis for voting behaviour, while a similar proportion thought it was reasonable for an MP to vote on the basis of what would make his or her party more popular with the general public.

These findings suggest quite a widespread rejection of party allegiance as a reasonable basis for an MP's voting behaviour. Having said this, the wishes of *local* party members were somewhat more widely accepted as a valid basis for voting than those of the party leadership, again reflecting that people tend to have greater empathy with the local 'front-line' than with the machinery of the national institution. While the widespread approval of voting in line with manifesto promises might appear to contradict this finding, this may be better understood as a matter of honesty and accountability – if people promise one thing and are elected on that basis, then they should do what they promise.

The relatively widespread support for MPs voting on the basis of their own beliefs also reinforces the rejection of partisanship, indicating that people value personal integrity and independence of opinion over adherence to the party line. This latter finding is supported by trend data from the British Social Attitudes survey (Bromley *et al.*, 2001), which show the proportion of respondents regarding it important that an MP be independently minded increasing consistently, from 37 per cent in 1983 to 56 per cent in 2000, while the proportion considering party loyalty important has remained static over time, at between 42 and 44 per cent.

Opinions on what is and is not reasonable for an MP to take into account when voting in parliament might be expected to vary considerably among different sub-groups within the population. In fact, while there is some variation in opinion, in particular by educational attainment, people's views tend to be broadly similar across different sub-groups. This is illustrated in Table 8, which shows how views vary by educational attainment. The table shows a 'net approval' figure for each factor, which is equal to the proportion who think

that the factor should not be a consideration subtracted from the proportion who think it is a reasonable consideration.

Table 8 Factors that an MP might take into account when deciding how to vote in Parliament: net approval by educational attainment

Base: All respondents (1,097)

Base:	Total 1,097	Higher education 344	Other qualifications 460	No qualifications 291
		% 'net approval'*		
	%	%	%	%
What would benefit people in the country as a whole	+90	+93	+93	+80
What the MP's party election manifesto promised	+74	+81	+73	+67
What would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency	+66	+77	+61	+59
What the MP personally believes to be right	+42	+57	+37	+35
What the MP's local party members would want	+23	+29	+19	+21
How the MP's party leadership thinks he or she should vote	-31	-31	-36	-21
What the MP thinks will make his or her party more popular with the general public	-33	-50	-32	-13
How the decision might affect the MP's political career	-66	-70	-73	-50
What would benefit the MP's family	-78	-86	-80	-66
How the decision might affect the MP's chances of getting a job outside politics	-79	-86	-82	-66

** Net approval = % who think it is reasonable for an MP to take the factor into account minus the % who think the MP should definitely not take the factor into account*

(Tables 54 - 63)

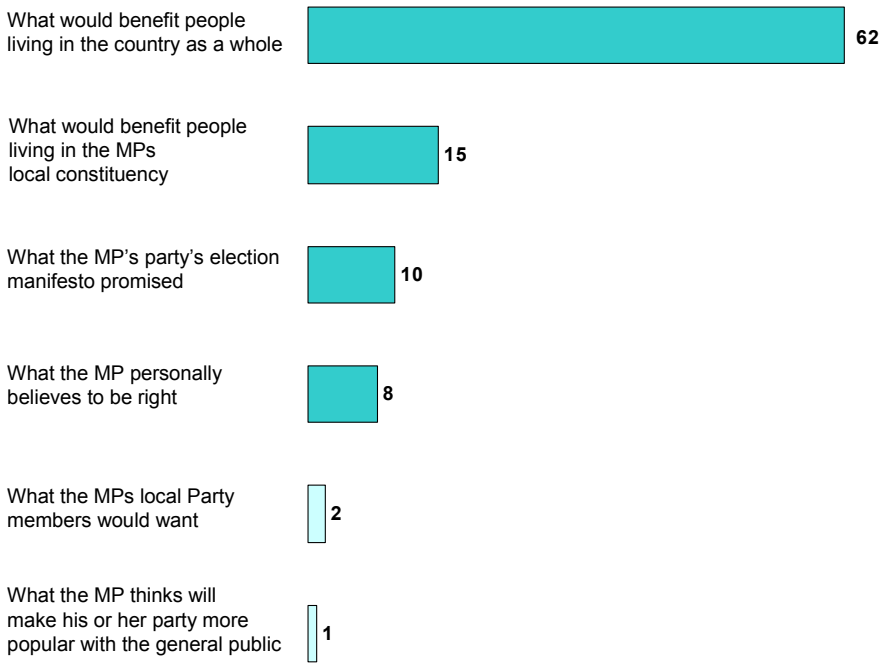
Although the table shows that support for selfless motives increases with educational attainment, with the converse being true for self-interested motives, the overall ranking of the factors is more or less the same for each of the groups. Interestingly, those with higher education qualifications are less likely than those with no qualifications to accept the party whip as a reasonable basis on which to vote, and noticeably more likely to acknowledge the validity of voting according to personal belief. The same is true for respondents who said

that they had an affinity with a political party, when compared with the unaffiliated. Hence groups that tend to have an above-average interest in politics, and who therefore might be expected to recognise the need for politicians to take a partisan line in their voting behaviour, are in fact less likely than others to do so and are more concerned with the freedom of politicians to vote independently and according to their conscience.

Respondents were next asked to select the one factor which, in their opinion, was the most important for MPs to take into account when voting on an important issue in Parliament (Figure 13).[14] Factors mentioned by less than 0.5 per cent of respondents are not shown on the chart.

Figure 13 Most important factor for an MP to take into account when deciding how to vote in Parliament

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 65)

[14] If respondents selected only one factor as being reasonable, this was automatically coded as the most important factor.

The responses to this question reinforce the value attached by respondents to the Principle of Selflessness without regard for partisan political forces and the idea that decisions should be taken based on the public interest. Sixty-two per cent of respondents said that consideration of what would benefit people living in the country as a whole should be the most important factor for an MP to consider, 15 per cent opting for what would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency. Given that the scenario was presented as concerning "an important *national* issue," it is not surprising that most people saw the national interest as over-riding the local interest in this instance.

With the exceptions of voting in accordance with election manifesto promises (mentioned by 10 per cent of respondents) and the MP's personal beliefs (by 8 per cent), the other factors attracted only negligible support.

Broadly speaking, these findings are in line with those found in the 1996 Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust State of the Nation survey, as reported in Dunleavy *et al.* (2001). Sixty-five per cent of respondents in the State of the Nation survey said that MPs should be most loyal to the interests of their constituents, compared with 12 per cent saying that they should be most loyal to the views of their local party, 11 per cent their own conscience and only four per cent the national party leader.

There were few notable sub group differences at this question - the national interest was deemed the most important factor for MPs to take into account by all sub groups.

Finally, respondents were asked which factor they thought most MPs would base their decision on in practice. Table 9 summarises the responses to this question, shown alongside those to the previous question (which factor respondents felt should be most important).

Table 9 What people think most MPs would base their decision on in practice versus what they think is the most important thing for MPs to take into account

Base: All respondents (1097)

	What most MPs would base decision on in practice	Most important thing to take into account
	%	%
How the MP's party leadership thinks he or she should vote	**21**	*
What the MP thinks will make his or her party more popular with the general public	17	1
What the MP personally believes to be right	12	8
How the decision might affect the MP's political career	11	*
What the MP's party's election manifesto promised	10	10
What would benefit people living in the country as a whole	**10**	**62**
What would benefit people living in the MPs local constituency	7	15
What the MPs local Party members would want	6	2
How the decision might affect the MP's chances of getting a job outside politics	1	*
What would benefit the MP's family	1	*
Don't Know	4	*

(Tables 65 and 66)

Although there was little consensus among respondents about the factors most likely to influence an MP's voting behaviour in parliament, there is nonetheless a clear discrepancy between the factors that people think should influence voting behaviour and their perception of what happens in practice.

While the majority of respondents believed that decisions on voting behaviour should be guided, above all, by the public interest, only a small minority felt that most MPs would vote on this basis in practice. Instead, the most widely held perception, perhaps not surprisingly, was that voting behaviour would be dictated by party political considerations. Twenty-one per cent of respondents felt that most MPs would vote according to the

expectations of their party leadership and 17 per cent that they would vote on the basis of what would make their party more popular with the general public. As reported earlier in this section, only around three in ten respondents felt that each of these was a reasonable factor for MPs to take into account when voting and a negligible number that either should be the deciding factor. Conversely, while 62 per cent of respondents had said that the national interest should be the key factor governing MPs' voting behaviour, only 10 per cent felt that it would be in practice for most MPs.

Although there is a mismatch between expectations and perceptions on this issue, there is little evidence here to suggest that people feel that MPs vote on the basis of self-interest. Although ten per cent of respondents thought that most MPs would vote on the basis of how the decision might affect their political career, the two factors least likely to be felt to be reasonable for MPs to take into account - family considerations and career prospects outside of politics – were also the two that people were least likely to perceive as key factors in practice.

Support for the notion that most MPs vote in parliament according to the party line was higher than average among groups that would be expected to have an above-average interest in politics: those with higher education qualifications (27 per cent); those who said that they knew a lot about the survey subject matter (32 per cent); those with a great deal of interest in current affairs (30 per cent); and those who read daily broadsheet newspapers (30 per cent).

6 Views on public sector recruitment practice

The large majority of appointments to public office are governed by the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. In the terminology of the Seven Principles, "*In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit" (Objectivity).*

A number of questions were devised to explore people's views in relation to the principle of selection on merit. Specifically, these questions sought to establish:

- the relative importance that people attach to principles such as merit, fairness and efficiency in relation to recruitment for public sector appointments;
- what people perceive to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in recruitment situations;
- how widely people think that the principle of selection on merit is upheld in public life in Britain;
- and whether people believe that the relevant authorities are doing more than in the past to hold to account those who fail to uphold this principle.

This chapter reports the findings from these questions.

6.1 Merit and efficiency in recruitment to public office

The Committee was interested in exploring people's views in relation to the balance between merit and efficiency in the way in which public appointments are made. For example, do people prioritise speed and cost-efficiency over fairness and inclusiveness or vice-versa?

Respondents were presented with a set of seven criteria and asked to say, for each one, how important they felt it was when government departments and other public services were recruiting people for jobs. Except in cases where respondents rated one of the criteria as more important than all of the others, they were then asked to say which one criterion they considered most important. The seven criteria are shown below, divided into those based on principles of merit, fairness and openness and those based on principles of efficiency.

Criteria based on merit, fairness and openness

- It should be easy for people to find out about jobs that are available
- Everyone who applies for a job should have a fair chance
- Jobs should be awarded to the best candidates
- People should be recruited from a wide range of backgrounds
- People should not give jobs to people just because they know or like them

Criteria based on efficiency

- It should be easy to recruit people quickly and efficiently
- The cost to the public of recruiting people should not be too high

Table 10 shows how important people considered each of the seven criteria. The criteria are ranked in order of importance on the basis of the proportion of respondents rating them as 'extremely important' or 'very important'. Criteria based on principles of efficiency are show in italics in the table.

Table 10 Relative importance of different criteria for making public appointments

Base: All respondents (1,097)

	EXTREMELY/ VERY IMPORTANT (NET)	Extremely important	Very important	Quite important	Not very important	Not at all important
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Job should be awarded to the best candidates	**95**	81	15	3	1	*
Everyone who applies should have a fair chance	**95**	72	24	4	*	*
It should be easy for people to find out about jobs	**87**	50	37	12	1	*
People should not give jobs to people because they know or like them	**82**	57	25	9	4	4
People should be recruited from a wide range of backgrounds	**72**	39	32	18	8	2
It should be easy to recruit people quickly and efficiently	**63**	23	39	29	7	1
The cost of recruiting people should not be too high	**56**	23	34	32	9	1

(Table 120)

The findings show that people value the principles of *both* merit *and* efficiency in relation

There is widespread approval among the general public of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as a guiding principle in public sector recruitment.

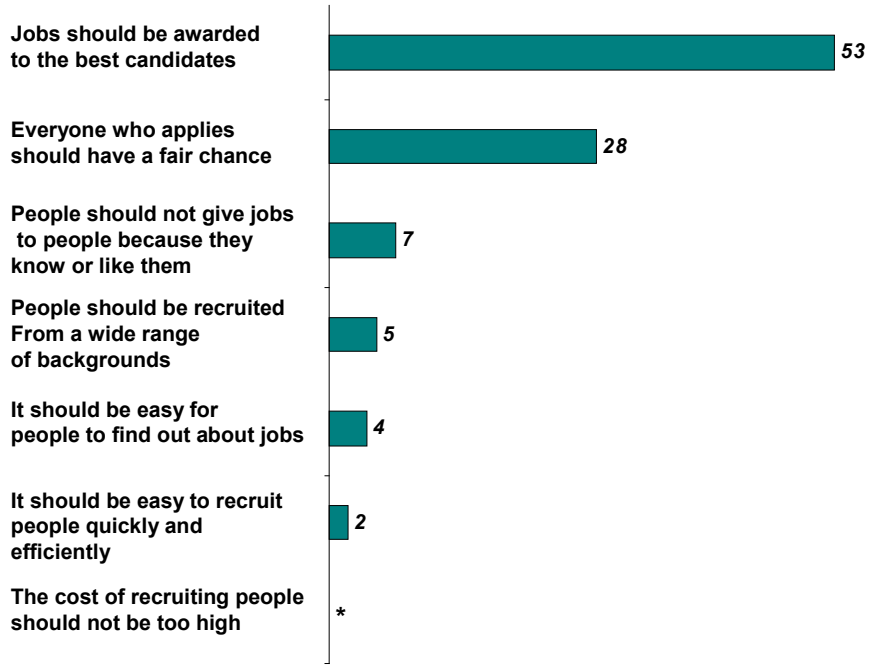
to public sector appointments: each of the seven criteria was seen as 'extremely important' or 'very important' by more than half of respondents, while few perceived any of the criteria to be unimportant.

Merit and fairness, however, emerge as key priorities for the general public, while speed and cost are low priorities, relative to the other criteria: while 81 per cent of respondents considered it extremely important that jobs should be awarded to the best candidates and 72 per cent that all applicants for a job should have a fair chance, less than a quarter felt the same way about completing the recruitment process quickly and efficiently and keeping costs down. Making information about jobs accessible, avoiding cronyism and diversity were all seen as higher priorities than efficiency.

The importance that people attach to selection on merit and fairness in public appointments, over and above other criteria, is even more apparent in the responses to the second of the two questions, which asked respondents to say which one of the seven criteria they regarded as the most important (Figure 14).

Figure 14 Most important of seven criteria for making public appointments

Base: All respondents (1,097)



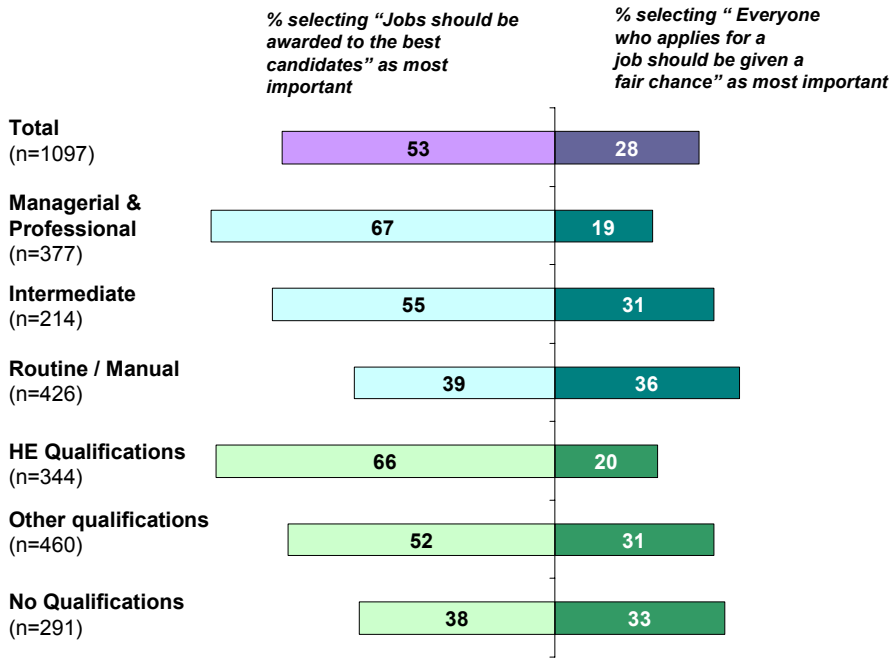
(Table 121)

Selection on merit, in particular, emerges as a key priority for the general public, more than half of respondents (53 per cent) rating the principle of awarding jobs to the best candidates as the most important of the criteria, compared with 28 per cent opting for the principle of fairness – ensuring that everyone who applies for a job has a fair chance. Each of the remaining five criteria was rated most important by less than ten per cent of respondents, with efficiency-based criteria least likely to be rated as the most important.

An analysis of these findings across a range of sub-groups shows that selection on merit and fairness are consistently rated as the most important of the seven criteria, although the extent to which people choose one over the other varies, in particular by the respondent's educational attainment and socio-economic classification (Figure 15).

Figure 15 Perceived importance of merit and fairness as recruitment criteria

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 121)

Broadly speaking, the more highly qualified a person and the more advanced they are in a professional, 'white collar' career, the more likely they are to prioritise selection on merit as a recruitment principle. Hence those with higher education qualifications and those in managerial and professional occupations were particularly likely to rate the principle of awarding jobs to the best candidates as the most important of the seven criteria. Conversely, those with no qualifications and those in routine and manual occupations gave almost equal weight to selection on merit and fairness.

While these results might suggest an element of self-interest in people's judgements, the over-riding finding from these questions remains that there is widespread approval among the general public of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as a guiding principle in public sector recruitment. Efficiency, on the other hand, though widely regarded as important, is generally seen as a secondary consideration.

6.2 Perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in recruitment situations

In order to explore what people perceive to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in public sector recruitment situations, respondents were presented with the following scenario:

Suppose a vacancy has been advertised for a senior job in the local council. A council official, who is not involved in deciding who gets the job, thinks a friend would be good for the job.

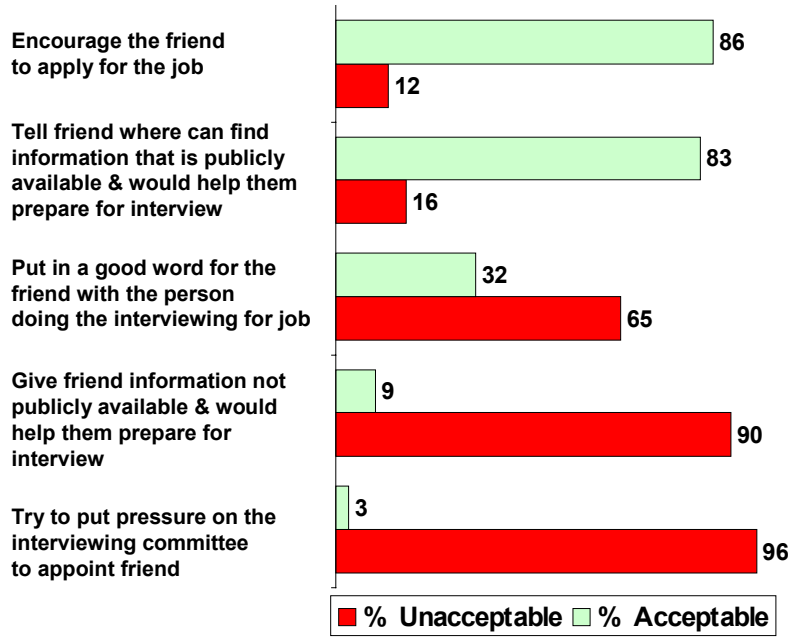
Respondents were then shown the following list of actions that the council official might take (with the order of presentation of the items randomised) and asked which they thought would be acceptable for the official to do and which would be unacceptable:

- Encourage the friend to apply for the job
- Tell the friend where they can find information that is publicly available and would help them prepare for the interview
- Give the friend information that is not publicly available and would help them prepare for the interview
- Put in a good word for the friend with the person doing the interviewing for the job
- Try to put pressure on the interviewing committee to appoint the friend

Figure 16 shows responses to this question, with the actions shown in rank order, from most to least acceptable.

Figure 16 Perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in recruitment situations

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 112)

There was a reasonable consensus of opinion on four of the five actions: the large majority of respondents felt it was acceptable both for the council official to encourage the friend to apply for the job and for the official to tell the friend where they could find publicly available information that would help them prepare for the interview. Few, on the other hand, thought that it was acceptable for the official to provide the friend with information that was not publicly available and fewer still that they should try to put pressure on the interviewing committee to appoint the friend. There was less of a consensus on whether it was acceptable for the official to put in a good word for the friend: a third felt that it was, two thirds that it was not.

Opinions did not vary between sub-groups to any great extent on three of the five actions: providing the friend with information that was not available to other candidates and leaning on the committee were widely considered unacceptable across all groups, and encouraging the friend to apply for the job widely regarded as acceptable. There was more variation in opinion on the two remaining actions. Those with higher education qualifications (91 per cent) were more likely than those with no qualifications (65 per cent) to think it acceptable for the official to guide the friend towards publicly available information; as were those in managerial and professional occupations, when compared with those in routine and manual occupations (92 per cent versus 73 per cent).

Respondents who said that they knew a lot about the survey subject matter (14 per cent), and those who had a great deal of interest in current affairs (21 per cent) were less likely to say that it would be acceptable for the official to put in a good word for the friend, when compared with respondents as a whole (32 per cent). There was also a tendency for older respondents to be somewhat stricter than younger people in their interpretation of what was and was not acceptable.

6.3 Perceptions of actual recruitment practice

Having established that people generally endorse the principles of objectivity, selection on merit, fairness and open competition in appointments to public office, this section now goes on to examine perceptions of actual recruitment practice and how practice is seen to have changed over time. Constraints on questionnaire space meant that this subject could not be explored in great detail. It was decided, therefore, to focus on the subject of cronyism in the appointment of public office holders.

Respondents were asked a series of three questions:

- How often did they think people in public office got jobs through someone they knew, rather than going through the correct procedures?

- Did they think this kind of thing had increased or decreased in the last few years or stayed about the same?

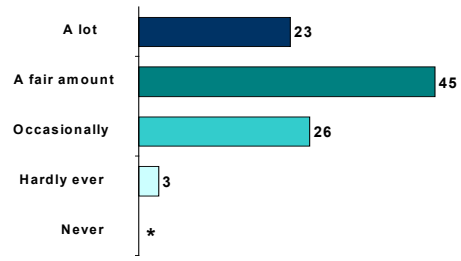
- And did they think the authorities clamped down on this kind of thing more or less than they did a few years ago, or about the same amount as they did?

Figure 17 shows the results for these three questions for the sample as a whole.

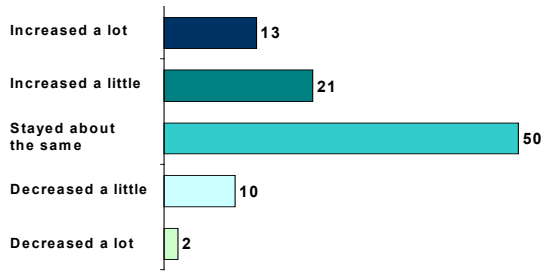
Figure 17 Perceptions of cronyism in the appointment of public office holders

Base: All respondents (1,097)

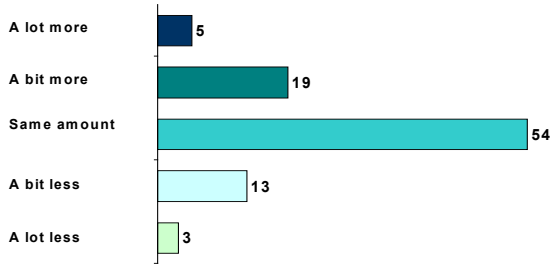
How often people in public office get jobs through someone they know, rather than through the correct procedures



Whether this kind of thing has increased or decreased in the last few years or stayed about the same



Whether the authorities clamp down on this kind of thing more or less than they did a few years ago, or about the same amount as they did



(Tables 122 - 124)

The results show that there is a widespread belief that cronyism is common in the appointment of public office holders: 23 per cent of respondents felt that people got jobs through someone they knew 'a lot' and 68 per cent that this happened 'a lot' or 'a fair amount'.

While people believe that appointments to public office should be based on the principle of selection on merit, there is a widespread perception that formal procedures are often bypassed in favour of cronyism.

Furthermore, the majority of people do not see cronyism as a practice in decline: while the largest group of respondents (50 per cent) perceived no change in recent years in the extent of this practice, 34 per cent felt that cronyism had become more widespread and only 12 per cent that it had become less so. Finally, although 24 per cent of respondents thought that the authorities were now doing more to clamp down on cronyism than in the past, compared with 17 per cent who felt that they were doing less, the largest group (54 per cent) saw no change over time.

The general tenor of these findings does not vary between sub-groups, although some groups are less sceptical about the issue than others. Those with higher education qualifications were less likely than those with no qualifications to think that cronyism in public appointments occurred a lot (16 per cent versus 33 per cent) or that it had increased a lot (8 per cent versus 20 per cent), and more likely to believe that it had come under more scrutiny than in the past (31 per cent versus 18 per cent).

Similarly, readers of daily broadsheet newspapers were less likely than readers of either tabloids or mid-market dailies to think that cronyism was common or had increased, and more likely to think that it had come under more scrutiny than in the past. Interestingly, those who did not read a daily newspaper at all held similar views to broadsheet readers on this issue.

Young people (aged 18-24) tended to have less pessimistic views than older groups, in particular than those aged 65 and over, who were the age group most likely to perceive a decline in standards and scrutiny. Those who said that they knew a lot about the subject matter of the survey were more likely than those who admitted to knowing nothing to feel that both cronyism and scrutiny were on the increase.

7 Media scrutiny and the private lives of public office holders

Although the private conduct of public office holders is not within the remit of the Committee, the public's beliefs and perceptions in this regard are important, since what people know or have heard about the private conduct of public office holders may well help shape their overall perceptions of them.

The Stage 1 research explored the question of whether public office holders should be held accountable for their private behaviour. The research found little consensus among respondents as to whether and in what circumstances private behaviour mattered. However, there was general support for the separation of the public role from the private life of public office holders, except in certain circumstances, for example if the private behaviour of public office holders was at odds with the values they were espousing in their public capacity.

Earlier in this report it was established that, while many people consider it important that politicians and senior public officials set a good example in their private lives, attributes relating more directly to the office holder's public role are usually seen as being more important. People were slightly more likely to see private conduct as being important for MPs and government ministers than for senior public officials, while older people and those with no qualifications were more likely than others to regard private behaviour as important. Opinions were divided on the extent to which MPs and government ministers set a good example in their private lives.

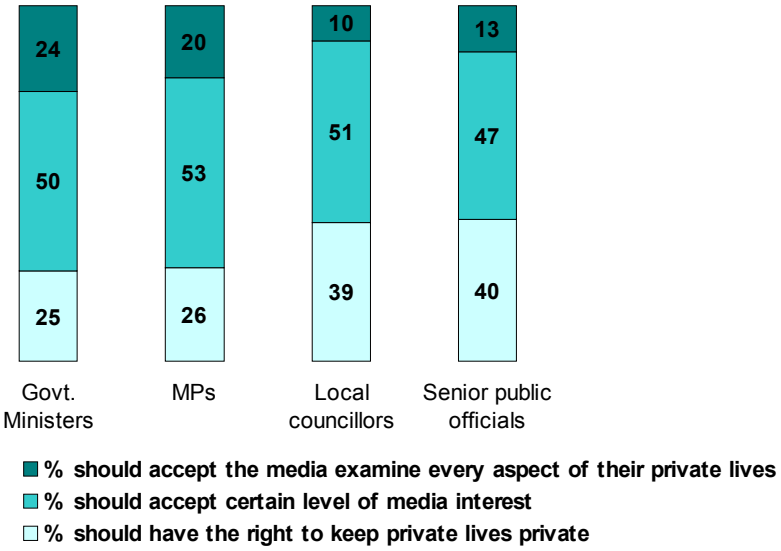
The issue of private behaviour was explored further through a question that asked respondents to say which of the following three statements was closest to their own opinion, in relation to a number of different types of public office holder:

- They should have the right to keep their private lives private
- They should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives
- They should accept that the media examine every aspect of their private lives - 'it comes with the job'

Respondents were asked the question in relation to MPs, government ministers, local councillors and senior public officials (Figure 18).

Figure 18 Extent to which people feel that public office holders should expect scrutiny of their private lives

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Tables 125 - 128)

While there is quite widespread support for the view that elected national politicians should expect at least some media scrutiny of their private lives, opinions are more evenly divided in relation to local councillors and senior public officials. Seventy-four per cent of respondents thought that government ministers should accept at least a certain level of media interest in their private lives and 24 per cent that they should accept that the media examine every aspect of their private lives. Views on MPs were similar, although slightly fewer people felt that MPs should be prepared for the media to scrutinise all aspects of their private lives. Sixty per cent of respondents felt that local councillors, and the same proportion that senior public officials, should expect some media scrutiny of their private lives. However, in each case, only a small minority thought they should accept that the media examine every aspect of their private lives.

Opinions on this issue were broadly similar across different sub-groups, although young people (aged 18-24) were consistently more likely than others to say that public office holders should have the right to keep their private lives private. Among those who read daily newspapers, tabloid readers were, perhaps surprisingly, slightly more likely than average to feel that MPs and government ministers should have the right to keep their private lives private, while broadsheet readers were more likely than average to say that they should accept a certain level of media interest, but not unlimited scrutiny.

8 Public office holders and accountability

This chapter addresses the third main aim of the study, to assess how far the public believes that holders of public office are effectively held responsible and accountable for their conduct, comparing perceptions of the roles played by the authorities and the media in holding public office holders to account and establishing whether people feel that the work undertaken by the Committee is likely to have an impact in improving standards in public life.

8.1 Confidence in the accountability of public office holders

Within the overall aim of assessing how far the public believes that holders of public office are effectively held responsible and accountable for their conduct, the specific objectives were to assess whether the public feels confident that unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office will be (a) exposed and (b) punished.

In order to address these objectives, respondents were asked:

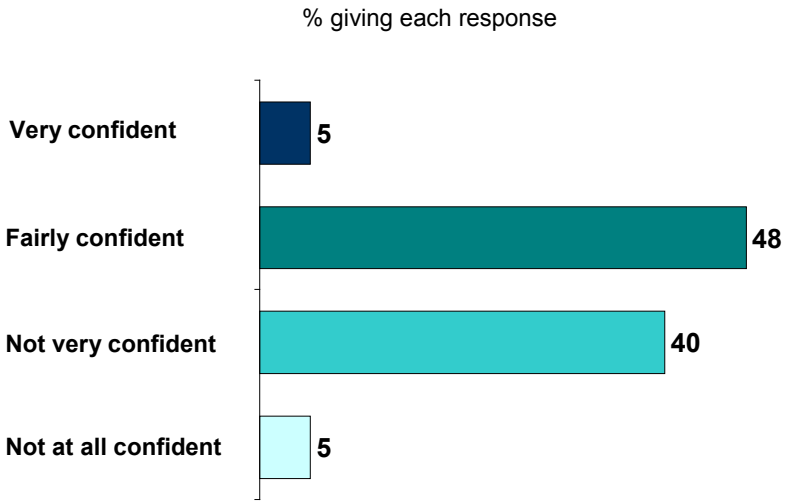
- how confident they felt that the authorities in Britain were committed to improving standards in public life;
- how confident they felt that (a) the authorities and (b) the media would generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office[15];
- and how confident they felt that the authorities would punish people in public office when they were caught doing wrong.

Figure 19 summarises the responses to the first of these questions.

[15] The order of presentation of the question was rotated, so that half of respondents would answer in relation to the authorities first and half in relation to the media first, in order to avoid an order effect of always presenting one of the two questions first.

Figure 19 How confident do you feel that the authorities in Britain are committed to improving standards in public life?

Base: All respondents (1,097)



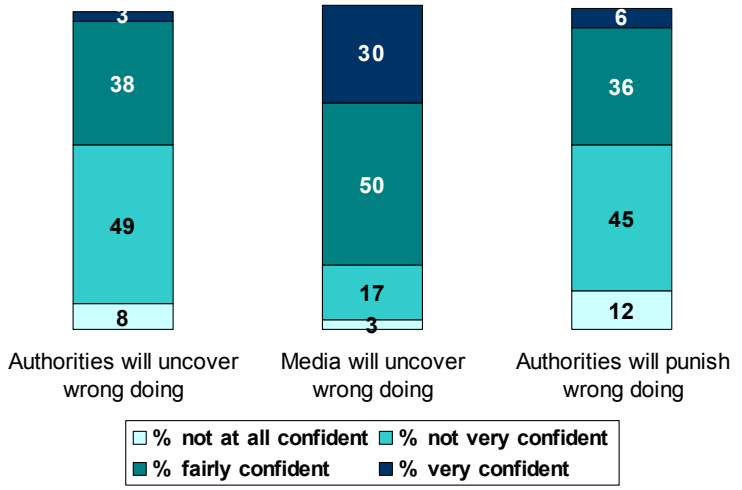
(Table 133)

Just over half (54 per cent) of respondents said that they felt confident that the authorities were committed to improving standards in public life, although only five per cent felt 'very' confident. There was not a great deal of variation between sub-groups on this measure. However there was some division along party lines (69 per cent of Labour supporters were confident, compared with 40 per cent of Conservative supporters); and by education level (59 per cent of those with a higher education qualification were confident, compared with 47 per cent of those with no qualifications). Results by daily newspaper readership indicated that broadsheet readers (60 per cent confident) were more confident than average, readers of mid-market dailies (49 per cent) less so.

Figure 20 shows the results for the remaining three questions in this section.

Figure 20 Confidence that wrongdoing will be uncovered and punished

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Tables 136 &137)

The results indicate that quite significant proportions of the general public are yet to be convinced that holders of public office are effectively held responsible and accountable for their conduct through official channels, while the media is much more widely seen as providing a mechanism for exposing wrongdoing among public office holders.

People see the media as an effective channel for policing the behaviour of public office holders and perceive it to perform this role more successfully than official activity does

While only around four in ten respondents felt confident that the authorities would either uncover or punish wrongdoing by public office holders, twice this proportion were confident, and 30 per cent 'very' confident, that the media would expose wrongdoing. This finding is perhaps not surprising: media activity in exposing the alleged misdemeanours of public figures is much more visible to the general public than official activity in the same area. Even when the media are reporting the activity of the authorities in exposing wrongdoing, it seems reasonable to assume that some people might attribute the activity to the media.

Sub-group analysis of these results reveals few distinct patterns. Again there is a division along party lines on the questions concerning the authorities, although this is less

pronounced than on the question of the authorities' commitment to improving standards. Perceptions of the media did not vary markedly by newspaper readership.

8.2 Can the Committee make a difference?

As we have noted elsewhere in this report, it is likely that many people will have limited or no knowledge of the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life or of other organisations engaged in similar work. For this reason it is likely that the achievements of such organisations might go largely unnoticed by the general public and would have limited impact on public attitudes. In order, therefore, that the survey could provide some measure of public opinion about the *potential* value of the Committee's work, it was decided to inform respondents about the Committee and some of its work and to ask them whether or not they thought that the Committee's work would help to improve standards in public life.

Respondents were first asked whether or not they had heard of the Committee on Standards in Public Life[16] before they were first contacted about the survey. Forty-two per cent of respondents said that they had heard of the Committee. Intuitively, this figure seems surprisingly high and it seems likely that it over-estimates the true awareness level. In order to test this hypothesis, BMRB ran a question on its weekly omnibus survey, which asked a nationally representative sample of 1,010 people whether or not they had heard of a number of organisations. The Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Nolan Committee and the Wicks Committee were each included separately in the list, together with the National Audit Office. In addition, two fictitious organisations ('The Commission on Public Sector Fraud' and 'The Brunwin Commission') were included in the list in order to assess the extent to which people might over-claim awareness. In the event, 49 per cent of respondents said that they had heard of one or more of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Nolan Committee or the Wicks Committee, a higher reading than in this survey. However, 21 per cent also claimed to have heard of The Commission on Public Sector Fraud, suggesting that the true level of awareness of the Committee is probably much lower than either survey records.

All respondents (whether or not they said that they had previously heard of the Committee) were then shown a card that provided a brief summary of the Committee's activities and achievements, as shown below.

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[16] In the actual question, it was also explained that the Committee had previously been known as the Nolan Committee and was sometimes now known as the Wicks Committee.

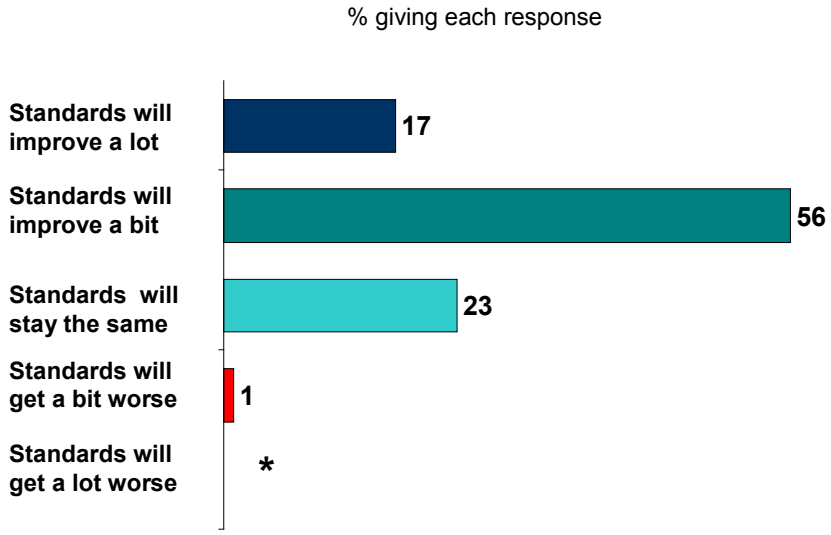
The Committee recommends measures to the Prime Minister to improve standards in public life. Measures already introduced following recommendations by the Committee include:

- **Rules that MPs and local councillors must declare information about income and assets**
- **An independent officer who investigates allegations against MPs.**
- **Tighter rules to make sure that people appointed to public sector jobs are chosen on merit**
- **New rules that large donations to political parties must be made public**

Respondents were asked what effect they thought these measures would have on standards in public life in Britain, choosing their answers from a five-point scale from "Standards will improve a lot" to "Standards will get a lot worse" (Figure 21).

Figure 21 What effect people think Committee measures will have on standards in public life

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 139)

73 per cent of respondents, when told about the type of work that the Committee does, thought that standards in public life would improve as a result of this work.

It is arguable that this question, by its very nature, might lead respondents to a positive view. However, it is still encouraging that the large majority of respondents (73 per cent) felt that standards would improve as a result of the work of the Committee, even though most expected only a small improvement. Opinions did not vary between sub-groups to any notable extent on this measure.

9 Overall perceptions of standards in public life

Previous chapters of the report have examined public attitudes towards specific aspects of the behaviour of public office holders in Britain. The findings reported thus far present a mixed picture. Most people believe that overtly corrupt practices such as accepting bribes are the exception rather than the rule, but there is a widespread belief that cronyism is common in the appointment of public office holders. While the majority of people credit at least a reasonable proportion of national politicians with being competent and dedicated to public service, most do not trust politicians either to tell the truth or to give priority to the public interest when voting in Parliament. Perceptions of appointed officials and local councillors are neither particularly positive nor negative, although head teachers and senior police officers fare better than senior civil servants, health service administrators and both elected and appointed local authority officials. While most people are confident that unacceptable behaviour on the part of public office holders will be exposed, they are much more likely to expect this to happen through the media than through official channels.

In this chapter, we go on to examine people's *overall* perceptions of public office holders and to explore the relationship between overall perceptions and attitudes towards specific types of public office holder.

Towards the end of the interview, having been asked about specific aspects of behaviour in relation to different types of public office holder, respondents were asked to think about public office holders as a whole, with the explanation that this meant government ministers, MPs, local councillors and senior public officials. They were then asked how they would rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain overall[17]; how they thought standards of public office holders in Britain compared with a few years ago; and how they thought standards of public office holders in Britain compared with those elsewhere in Europe.

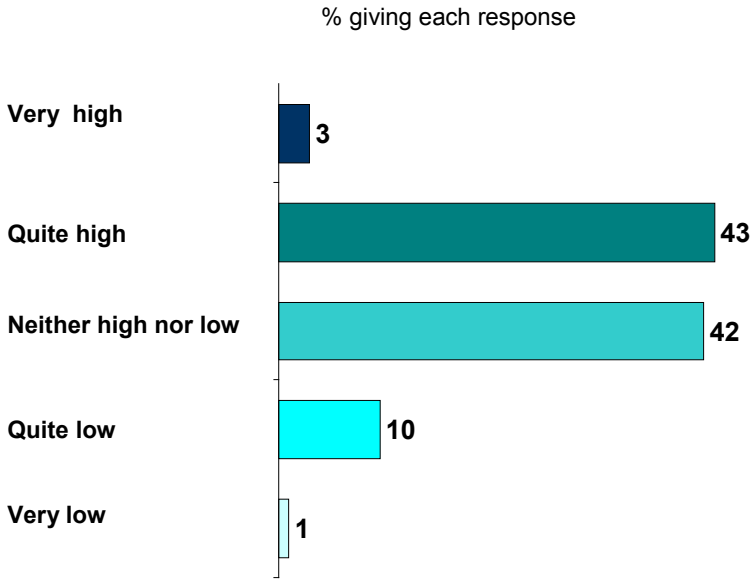
9.1 The current situation

Figure 22 shows how respondents rated the current standards of conduct of public officers in Britain overall, on a five-point scale from 'Very high' to 'Very low'.

[17] Interviewers were instructed to add, where necessary, that what was meant by 'standards of conduct' was "how far public office holders as a whole tend to be honest, act honourably and try to make sure they serve the interests of the public."

Figure 22 Overall, how would you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain?

Base: All respondents (1097)



(Table 130)

In the main people are either neutral or guardedly positive about the overall standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain. Although very few respondents felt that standards were 'very high', only a small minority expressed negative views.

Multivariate analysis was carried out to explore whether or not people's overall perceptions of public office holders were associated with their perceptions of individual types of public office holder. This was done by looking at the relationship between a respondent's overall rating of the standards of public office holders and whether or not they trusted different types of public office holder to tell the truth. The analysis showed that people's overall ratings were somewhat more strongly associated with their views of national politicians than of appointed officials and local politicians.

Although, when asked in detail about different aspects of behaviour in relation to different types of public office holder, people tend to be quite critical, overall perceptions of the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain are, in the main, either neutral or guardedly positive.

In common with findings elsewhere in the survey, views were broadly similar across most sub-groups within the population, but tended to be more positive among Labour supporters, those with higher education qualifications and readers of broadsheet newspapers.

This is illustrated in Table 11, which shows the variation in the proportion of respondents rating standards as very or quite high, according to whether or not respondents said that they trusted different types of senior public office holder.

Table 11 Proportion of respondents rating standards as high by trust in public office holders

Base: All respondents (1,097)

	% who trust this group rating standards as high	% who do not trust this group rating standards as high
Government ministers	67	37
MPs in general	65	36
Senior managers in local councils	61	36
Senior managers in the NHS	56	34
Head teachers in schools	48	26
Top civil servants	57	36
Local councillors	55	35
Senior police officers	51	31

Table 12 shows how perceptions varied between selected sub-groups within the population.

The figures shown are the proportions rating standards of conduct as high (very or fairly) and low (very or fairly) and the 'net rating', which is the second figure subtracted from the first.

Table 12 Overall rating of the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain - sub-group differences

Base: All respondents

	Rating of standards			
	Unweighted base	High	Low	Net rating
	n	%	%	%
Highest qualification				
- Higher education qualification	344	51	10	+41
- Other qualification	460	46	13	+34
- None	291	37	12	+24
Political party affinity				
- Labour	250	52	6	+46
- Conservative	157	45	14	+31
- Liberal Democrat	65	48	8	+40
- None	563	43	12	+31
Interest in current affairs				
- A great deal	120	51	11	+41
- Quite a lot	368	52	11	+41
- Some	348	42	11	+31
- Not very much	213	35	13	+22
- None at all	46	38	16	+22
Daily newspaper readership				
- Broadsheet	237	53	11	+42
- Mid-market	277	42	10	+32
- Tabloid	286	41	11	+30
- None	322	45	14	+31

* Net rating = the % rating standards as very or quite high minus the % rating them as very or quite low

(Table 130)

Generally speaking, opinions did not vary markedly between sub-groups. Indeed multiple regression analysis did not identify any significant association between selected demographic variables and people's overall rating of the standards of conduct of public office holders. However, the most notable sub-group differences were that:

- Those with a higher education qualification (net rating +41 percent) were more positive than those with no qualifications (+ 24 per cent);

- Labour supporters were somewhat more positive than Conservative supporters (+46 per cent versus +31 per cent), as would be expected under a Labour administration, and than those with no political affiliation (+ 31 per cent);

- Those who were interested in current affairs were more positive than those who were not interested (+41 per cent versus +22 per cent);

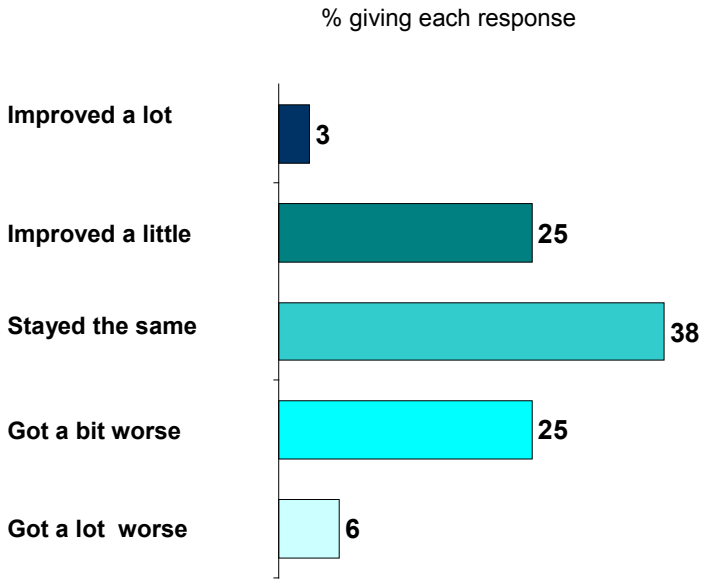
- Those who read broadsheet newspapers during the week (+42 per cent) were more positive than either readers of tabloids (+30 per cent), readers of mid-market dailies (+32 per cent) or those who did not read a daily newspaper (+31 per cent).

9.2 Are things getting better?

Respondents were next asked how they felt standards of public office holders in Britain today compared with a few years ago (Figure 23).

Figure 23 How do think standards of public office holders in Britain today compare with a few years ago?

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 131)

Similar proportions of respondents felt that the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain had deteriorated in the past few years as felt that they had improved. However, few perceived a significant change in either direction and the largest group of respondents felt that that standards had remained the same.

Opinions varied considerably more on this measure (Table 13) than on the overall rating measure. In particular:

- The likelihood of respondents to feel that standards had fallen in the past few years increased with age. Young adults (those aged 18-24) held more positive views than other age groups and were the only age group more likely to perceive an improvement in standards than a deterioration (with a net improvement score of +25);

- Opinions divided predictably along party political lines, with Labour supporters more positive than Conservative supporters (+14 per cent versus -34 per cent), although even among Labour supporters, 25 per cent felt that standards had deteriorated;

- Those who read mid-market newspapers during the week were less positive than average (-17 per cent versus -2 per cent overall).

Table 13 Rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain compared with a few years ago – sub-group differences

Base: All respondents

	Rating of standards			
	Unweighted base	Improved	Got worse	Net improvement
	n	%	%	%
Age				
- 18 -24	87	43	19	+25
- 25 -34	185	26	26	1
- 35 - 44	217	27	31	-3
- 45 - 64	353	26	34	-9
- 65+	253	27	34	-7
Political party affinity				
- Labour	250	39	25	+14
- Conservative	157	14	48	-34
- Liberal Democrat	65	25	28	-3
- None	563	29	26	+2
Daily newspaper readership				
- Broadsheet	237	26	28	-1
- Mid-market	277	20	37	-17
- Tabloid	286	32	28	+4
- None	322	32	29	+3

* Net improvement = the % who rating standards as having improved minus the % rating them as having got worse

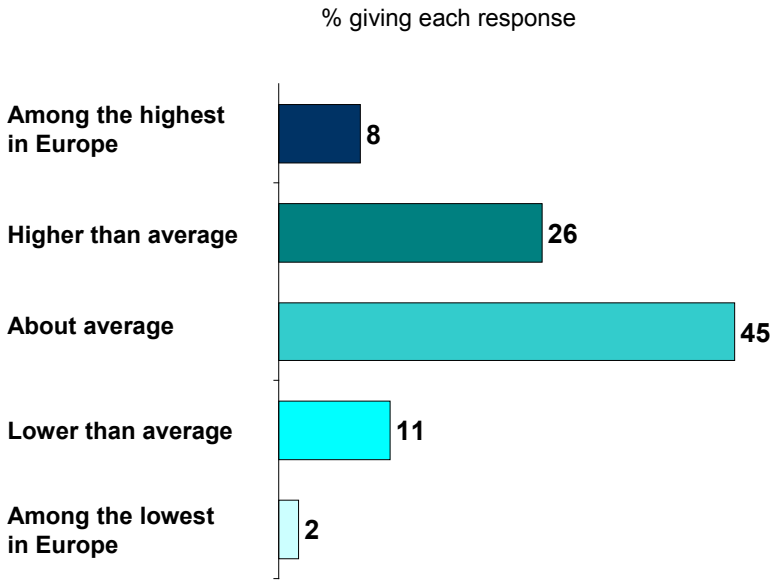
(Table 131)

9.3 Is Britain setting the standard for Europe?

In order to provide a context against which people's perceptions of standards of conduct in Britain could be judged, respondents were asked to say how they felt the standards of public office holders in Britain today compared with those elsewhere in Europe (Figure 24).

Figure 24 How do you think standards of public office holders in Britain today compare with those elsewhere in Europe?

Base: All respondents (1,097)



(Table 132)

For the most part British people perceive the standards of conduct of public office holders in their own country to be as high as or higher than average for Europe. A third of respondents felt that standards of conduct were higher than average in Britain and a further 45 per cent that they were about average.

Opinions again varied considerably more on this measure (Table 14) than on the overall rating measure. In particular:

- Men were much more likely than women to feel that standards were higher than average in Britain (+30 versus +10);
- The likelihood of respondents to rate standards in Britain as being higher than average increased with age and interest in current affairs;
- Respondents with higher education qualifications and those who read broadsheet newspapers were more likely than average to rate standards of conduct in Britain as being higher than average for Europe.

Table 14 Rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain compared with those elsewhere in Europe – sub-group differences

Base: All respondents

	Rating of standards			
	Unweighted base	Higher than average	Lower than average	Net rating
	n	%	%	%
Gender				
- Male	529	43	13	+30
- Female	568	24	15	+10
Age				
- 18 -24	87	26	25	+1
- 25 -34	185	25	18	+7
- 35 - 44	217	28	14	+13
- 45 - 64	353	36	11	+25
- 65+	253	45	9	+36
Highest qualification				
- Higher education qualification	344	41	10	+31
- Other qualification	460	31	16	+14
- None	291	30	14	+16
Interest in current affairs				
- A great deal	120	49	6	+43
- Quite a lot	368	43	11	+32
- Some	348	27	15	+12
- Not very much	213	22	19	+3
- None at all	46	19	26	-7
Daily newspaper readership				
- Broadsheet	237	47	11	+36
- Mid-market	277	32	15	+17
- Tabloid	286	29	15	+14
- None	322	30	14	+16

* Net rating = the % rating standards in Britain as higher than average for Europe minus the % rating them as lower than average for Europe

(Table 132)

10 Summary and conclusions

The purpose of this research was to address the following questions:

1. What does the public see as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of elected and appointed holders of public office? Are specific types of behaviour considered more important than others? And to what extent do the Seven Principles of Public Life reflect public priorities?

2. How far does the public believe that the behaviour of holders of public office, both elected and appointed, is, for the most part, acceptable or unacceptable?

3. How far does the public believe that unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office will be exposed and punished?

In this chapter we discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from the research findings in relation to these questions.

What does the public sees as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of elected and appointed holders of public office? Are specific types of behaviour considered more important than others? And to what extent do the Seven Principles of Public Life reflect public priorities?

The survey findings show that the general public has high expectations of senior holders of public office, both elected and appointed, and expects them to conform to a wide range of standards of behaviour in carrying out their public duties. To a large extent public expectations of public office holders reflect the values inherent in the Seven Principles of Public Life: public office holders are expected to take decisions and allocate resources in the public interest, rather than in their own interest or that of third parties; to behave with financial propriety; to be objective and fair in making public appointments; to be accountable to the public; and to be open and honest in their communications. People attach considerable importance to all of these values.

However, as the exploratory Stage 1 research identified, the expectations of the general public extend beyond the Seven Principles. For example, people also require public servants to be competent and to be in touch with what they think is important and they generally believe that public office holders have a responsibility to act as role models in their private conduct.

On the whole people do not make significant distinctions between elected and appointed office holders in the demands that they make of them, although they place a greater emphasis on the importance of dedication to public service, competence and financial prudence in relation to appointed officials and of honesty, financial propriety and accountability in relation to national politicians.

While the general public attaches considerable importance to a wide range of principles of conduct, those that emerge as key priorities are honesty – defined in its broadest sense, rather than in the Committee's sense of declaring and resolving conflicts of interest – and the public service ethic. Above all, people want those whom they elect and who are appointed to serve them to tell the truth and to put the public interest above all other considerations, including party political considerations. This is evident in the responses that people give when asked to say what factors are reasonable for an MP to take into account when voting on an important national issue in Parliament. While the national interest is almost universally acknowledged as an appropriate basis on which to vote, and is widely seen to be the most important consideration, there is widespread rejection of the notion that MPs should vote along party lines.

How far does the public believe that the behaviour of holders of public office, both elected and appointed, is, for the most part, acceptable or unacceptable?

Few people in Britain believe that standards of conduct *overall* among holders of public office in this country are low. Only 12 per cent of respondents thought that standards overall were low, while 45 per cent felt they were high and 42 per cent that they were 'neither high nor low'. Most respondents did not perceive standards to be in decline and most perceived standards to be average or above average for Europe.

However, when asked in detail about different aspects of behaviour in relation to different types of public office holder, people tend to be more critical. For example, while people are generally trusting of those at the 'front line' of delivering public services – teachers, doctors, local police officers on the beat – they are less likely to extend this trust to public sector managers and administrators and even less so to trust national politicians. Only a quarter of the general public say that they trust MPs and government ministers to tell the truth.

The lack of confidence that people have in the honesty of national politicians is reflected in their perceptions of how MPs and government ministers behave in office. While most people believe that overtly corrupt practices such as accepting bribes are the exception rather than the rule, and the majority credit at least a reasonable proportion of national

politicians with being competent and dedicated to public service, the public is less charitable in its judgements of the honesty with which politicians communicate with the public. This is particularly true in terms of how people perceive MPs and government ministers to handle mistakes – there is a widespread perception of a culture in which politicians try to cover up the mistakes that they make, which sits uncomfortably alongside a strongly expressed desire among the public for them to 'come clean'. Appointed officials and local councillors are also criticised to some extent for not owning up when they make mistakes, although they are generally regarded as being more honest than national politicians.

A further area where there is currently a disparity between public expectations and perceptions is that of public appointments. While people believe firmly that appointments to public office should be based on the principle of selection on merit, there is a widespread perception that formal procedures are bypassed in favour of cronyism.

How far does the public believe that unacceptable behaviour on the part of holders of public office will be exposed and punished?

The research findings show that, while most people are confident that unacceptable behaviour on the part of public office holders will be exposed, they are much more likely to expect this to happen through the media than through official channels: while eight in ten respondents said that they were confident that the media would generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office, only four in ten felt the same about the authorities. Confidence that the authorities would punish wrongdoers was no more widespread.

That people should expect exposure of misconduct on the part of public office holders to be achieved primarily through the media, rather than through official channels, is not entirely surprising, since media activity in this area will always be more visible to the general public than official activity.

Belief that the authorities were committed to improving standards in public life was somewhat more widespread, just over half of respondents saying that they were confident that this was the case, and people were generally optimistic that the work of the Committee would result in an improvement in standards, even though most felt that this improvement would be slight rather than significant.

Concluding remarks

The Seven Principles of Public Life largely succeed in articulating public expectations of the conduct of senior public office holders. However, the Committee might wish to consider whether the Principles could be revised to incorporate a broader definition of honesty, in order better to reflect the importance that the general public attaches to the principle of truthfulness in public office.

How far public confidence in the honesty of public office holders, in particular national politicians, can be increased, is open to question – the absence of trust in politicians is so widespread as to make a disparity between public expectations and perceptions seem inevitable. The survey findings suggest that many people perceive the demands of party politics and the interests of the public to be in conflict and, consequently, it would seem, to limit the extent to which their expectations can be met. The fact that so many people – irrespective of their background and the extent of their political engagement – think that MPs should vote on the basis of the public interest, but not according to the party line, seems to suggest that they feel that government policy (or, for that matter, opposition policy) is somehow at variance with the public interest or, at least, that they perceive party politics to be more concerned with the partisan interests of politicians than with the needs of the country. While this mood of suspicion of party politics prevails, it seems likely that it will colour people's views of all aspects of politicians' behaviour and, arguably by association, their views of senior managers and administrators in the public sector.

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Technical appendix

Research methods

Stage 2: Questionnaire development

The questionnaire for the survey was developed by the research team at BMRB Social Research in consultation with the Committee's Research Advisory Board. Further input was provided by a team of academics from the University of Oxford[18] who had an interest in the subject matter and were involved in the work that led to the development of the specification for the research.

A draft questionnaire was prepared for testing and presented at the June 2003 Committee meeting. The questionnaire was then tested in four stages. First the BMRB research team carried out two stages of face-to-face cognitive interviews with members of the general public. These interviews were used to probe people's understanding and interpretation of key questions, concepts and terminology. Sixteen interviews were completed in total and the questionnaire revised after each stage. The questionnaire was then pilot tested in two stages in August and September 2003. Face-to-face computer-assisted interviews were carried out in respondents' own homes by BMRB interviewers and observed by members of the BMRB research team and representatives from the Committee's Research Advisory Board and Secretariat. Twenty-eight interviews were completed in total and the questionnaire revised after each stage. A final version of the questionnaire was then prepared and approved at the October 2003 Committee meeting.

The cognitive testing and piloting stages of the project identified a number of issues that needed to be taken into consideration in producing the final questionnaire for the survey. Prominent among these were that:

- Respondents did not always readily understand what was meant by "public office holder" and it was therefore necessary to provide an explanation of what was meant by this term, as well as providing a description or explanation of specific types of public office holder.

- Respondents in the pilot tended not to differentiate between MPs and government ministers in the way in which they perceived national politicians to behave. In spite

[18] Professor Anthony Heath, Department of Sociology/CREST; Professor Miles Hewstone, Department of Experimental Psychology; Dr David Hine, Department of Politics & International Relations; and Dr Bridget Taylor, Department of Politics & International Relations;

of this finding, it was decided to measure perceptions of MPs and government ministers separately in the main survey, on the basis that the number of interviews conducted at the pilot stage was insufficient to provide a reliable indication of the extent to which people would differentiate between the two groups. In the event, there was some, but not a great deal of, differentiation at the main stage. If the survey were to be repeated, an option would be ask about the two groups together.

- In early drafts of the questionnaire, perceptions of local councillors were elicited in the same level of detail as for national politicians, and, being elected officials, they were treated separately from appointed officials. However, questionnaire testing indicated that people's perceptions of local councillors were often very vague and that they became confused between local councillors and appointed council officials. It was therefore decided to ask people's perceptions of local councillors in less detail alongside appointed officials and, specifically, to ask about them alongside appointed council officials, so that respondents would make the distinction.

- It did not make sense to ask people's perceptions about senior appointed officials as a single group, since this group was so disparate in terms of the individual types of job holder included within this group. At the same time, both limits on questionnaire length and the risk of respondent fatigue meant that it was not possible to ask perceptions in detail about a large number of types of office holder. It was therefore decided to select a limited number of types of job holder (six), which provided a broad representation of the job holders included within this group and ask two matched sub-sets of respondents about three groups in relation to a small number of key behavioural attributes.

- The questionnaire versions tested in the two pilot surveys exceeded the budgeted interview length, and resulted in respondent fatigue, casting a doubt over the validity of responses given towards the end of the interview. This meant that some prioritising of coverage was required for the final version. Questionnaire cuts included reducing the number of types of job holder about whom the trust question was asked; reducing the number of attributes against which public office holders were assessed; removing a scenario-based question about how local councillors make decisions; and removing a scenario-based questions about private behaviour .

Stage 3: The national survey

The survey was conducted face-to-face in respondents' own homes using CAPI[19] between 5th November 2003 and 7th March 2004. Interviews were carried out by fully-trained interviewers from BMRB's national face-to-face fieldforce. A total of 1,097 interviews was completed with adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain. The average interview length was just under 40 minutes.

Sample design

The sample design was a conventional multi-stage clustered random design using the small user Postcode Address File (PAF) as the sample frame. The design aimed to produce a representative sample of 1,000 adults aged 18 and over living in private households in Great Britain, excluding the highland and island areas of Scotland. This is the type of design typically used in high quality face-to-face interview based social surveys, such as the British Social Attitudes Survey, the British Election Study and the British Crime Survey.

In summary, the sample design involved the following stages:

1. A proportionately stratified sample of 72 postcode sectors was selected with probability proportional to address count;
2. A sample of 24 addresses was drawn in each sector so selected;
3. In the rare cases where a selected addresses covered more than one dwelling, one dwelling was selected at random;
4. One adult aged 18 or over was selected at random from all dwellings containing private households.

The different stages of the design are outlined in more detail below.

Selection of sectors

Post code sectors were selected from a listing of all post code sectors in Great Britain. Before selection, small sectors (containing fewer than 500 delivery points) were

[19] Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing

amalgamated with neighbours, in order to ensure that the sample had a reasonable geographic spread in these areas.

Sectors were then stratified, with a view to maximising the precision of survey estimates, as follows:

1. The population of postcode sectors was divided into twelve regions (the ten Government Office Regions (GORs) in England, plus Scotland and Wales;

2. Within each GOR, sectors were stratified by population density, with variable banding used to divide sectors in each GOR into three equal-sized population density strata;

3. Within each population density stratum, sectors were listed in ascending order of the percentage of individuals in non-manual occupations.

72 sectors were then selected with probability proportional to address count by the method of random start and fixed interval.

Selection of addresses

Within each sector, 24 PAF delivery points were selected by the method of random start and fixed interval. Addresses were ordered by postcode before selection to maximise the geographic spread within the sector. The selection of sectors and delivery points resulted in a total issued sample size of 1,728 delivery points.

Selection of households and individuals in households

In the relatively infrequent cases where a PAF address generated more than one household, one was selected by the interviewers in the field using a random (Kish grid based) selection method.

Individuals aged 18+ in each household were then listed in alphabetical order of first name and one selected for interview by a random (Kish grid based) method.

Additional sample

A total of 1,728 addresses in 72 post code sectors was originally issued to interviewers. On the assumption that around 10 per cent of addresses would not contain a private household

and that 65 per cent of selected adults would take part in the survey, this sample would yield around 1,000 interviews.

However, because co-operation levels were lower than expected, it was necessary to issue additional sample. An additional 20 post code sectors were selected during the course of fieldwork and 24 delivery points selected in each. Selection procedures for the additional sample mirrored those for the original sample.

Response rates

When fieldwork was closed, 2,208 addresses in 92 post code sectors had been issued, yielding a total of 1,097 usable interviews from 2041 in-scope addresses.[20] This represented a response rate at in-scope addresses of 53.7 per cent.

Although the response rate was lower than had been anticipated, it is not far below the response rate of 61 per cent achieved on the most recently published BSA (Park *et al.*, *eds.* 2004).

A detailed breakdown of fieldwork outcomes is provided below.

[20] All addresses except those that were untraceable; not yet ready for occupation or empty; derelict or demolished; business or institutional premises; contained nobody aged 18+; or were out-of-scope for another reason.

Fieldwork outcomes and response rate

	n	%	%
Addresses issued	2,208	100.0%	
Out of scope	167	7.6%	
Insufficient address	*18*	0.8%	
Not yet built/ready for occupation	*3*	0.1%	
Derelict/demolished	*7*	0.3%	
Empty/not occupied	*94*	4.3%	
Business/industrial premises	*28*	1.3%	
Institution	*8*	0.4%	
Nobody in household aged 18+	*5*	0.2%	
Other	*4*	0.2%	
In scope	2,041	92.4%	100.0%
Refused	639		31.3%
Office refusal	*62*		*3.0%*
Household contact but information refused	*156*		*7.6%*
Personal refusal by respondent	*366*		*17.9%*
Proxy refusal	*55*		*2.7%*
Non contact	173		8.5%
No contact with responsible adult	*132*		*6.5%*
No contact with selected respondent	*41*		*2.0%*
Other unsuccessful	117		5.7%
Broken appointment	*32*		*1.6%*
Respondent ill/incapacitated	*23*		*1.1%*
Respondent away /in hospital	*29*		*1.4%*
Language difficulties	*17*		*0.8%*
Other unproductive	*16*		*0.8%*
Full interview	1,097		53.7%

Weighting

Generally speaking, weights are calculated for two reasons:

- to equalise unequal selection probabilities (design weights);

- to compensate for differential non-response amongst survey sub-groups (non-response weights).

The sample design used in this survey gave each *address* an equal probability of inclusion in the sample. However, inequalities in selection probabilities still arise because either one dwelling unit has been selected out of two or more, or (much more commonly) because one individual has been selected out of more than one who is eligible. Design weights were therefore calculated to correct for these inequalities.

In spite of the relatively low response rate, the demographic profile of the achieved sample, after design weighting had been applied, was deemed to reflect the population profile sufficiently well for non-response weighting to be unnecessary. Non-response weights were not, therefore, applied. Before weights were finalised their distribution was inspected for outliers and it was decided to cap weights at 5.0, with the result that six cases had their weights reduced. For convenience, scaling factors were be applied to equalise unweighted and weighted sample sizes.

Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors

The survey used a complex multi-stage sample design which involved both stratification and clustering, and which produces data which require weighting in analysis. For this reason it is not legitimate to calculate standard errors and confidence intervals using the standard text-book formulae which are based on the assumption of simple random sampling. Instead, standard errors should be calculated individually using a method which takes account of both the complexity of sample design and data weighting. At present, the STATA statistical analysis package is most commonly used for such calculations, and we have used it here to produce standard error estimates for 11 of the survey variables.

For these 11 variables the table below shows, for survey estimates based on the whole sample, STATA estimates of three quantities:

- standard error;
- design effect (DEFF in the table);
- design factor (DEFT in the table);

A design *effect* is the ratio of the sampling variance for a complex sample design to that for a simple random sample of the same size, and a design *factor* is the corresponding ratio of

standard errors (and therefore the design factor is the square root of the design effect). For example, a sample of 1,000 selected by means of a complex sample design might have a design effect of 1.4. This design would therefore have a design factor of 1.18 (the square root of 1.4) and would have a standard error of 1.87% around a 50% estimate, which is 1.18 times the size of the standard error around a 50% estimate for a simple random sample (1.58%).

Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors for selected variables

Variable	% giving answer	Standard Error	DEFF	DEFT	Weighted sample size (n)*
Making sure that public money is used wisely rated as one of the three most important attributes of MPs & Government Ministers	42.9%	1.6%	1.14	1.07	1,095
Does not trust MPs	71.3%	1.5%	1.06	1.03	1,028
Does not trust government ministers	74.6%	1.4%	1.01	1.00	1,023
Not reasonable for MPs to take into account how party leadership thinks they should vote when deciding how to vote in parliament on an important national issue	66.3%	1.5%	1.01	1.01	1,034
Agree that MPs have right to keep private life private	26.6%	1.6%	1.37	1.17	1,093
Agree that MPs should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives	53.4%	2.1%	1.96	1.40	1,093
Agree that MPs should accept that the media examines every aspect of their lives	20.0%	1.5%	1.53	1.24	1,093

Agree that government ministers have right to keep private life private	25.6%	1.5%	1.36	1.16	1,094
Agree that government ministers should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives	50.0%	2.0%	1.68	1.30	1,094
Agree that government ministers should accept that the media examines every aspect of their lives	24.4%	1.6%	1.51	1.23	1,094
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain: very high	2.6%	0.6%	1.28	1.13	1,080
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain: quite high	43.2%	1.5%	1.04	1.02	1,080
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain: neither high nor low	42.4%	1.6%	1.06	1.03	1,080
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain: quite low	10.4%	1.1%	1.46	1.21	1,080
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain: very low	1.4%	0.3%	0.91	0.95	1,080
Proportion of government ministers who own up when they make mistakes: all	2.2%	0.5%	1.20	1.10	1,089
Proportion of government ministers who own up when they make mistakes: most	7.6%	0.8%	0.98	0.99	1,089
Proportion of government ministers who own up when they make mistakes: about half	17.3%	1.0%	0.72	0.85	1,089
Proportion of government ministers who own up when they make mistakes: a few	52.8%	1.4%	0.81	0.90	1,089
Proportion of government ministers who own up when they make mistakes: none	20.1%	1.4%	1.35	1.16	1,089

Proportion of MPs who own up when they make mistakes: all	1.5%	0.3%	0.89	0.94	1,087
Proportion of MPs who own up when they make mistakes: most	11.0%	1.0%	1.16	1.08	1,087
Proportion of MPs who own up when they make mistakes: about half	17.4%	1.0%	0.83	0.91	1,087
Proportion of MPs who own up when they make mistakes: a few	54.7%	1.6%	1.14	1.07	1,087
Proportion of MPs who own up when they make mistakes: none	15.4%	1.4%	1.56	1.25	1,087
Which party closer to: Labour	22.5%	1.4%	1.20	1.10	1,097
Which party closer to: Conservative	14.8%	1.4%	1.59	1.26	1,097

* excluding Don't knows

Multiple regression analyses

Regression of overall rating of standards on public life on demographic and newspaper readership variables

As described in Chapter 9, respondents gave an overall rating of standards of conduct in public life on a five point scale ranging from "very high" to "very low". This variable was regressed on the following demographic variables:

- age (5 age bands);
- highest qualification (two dummy variables: (i) whether had a higher education qualification; (ii) whether had no qualification)
- whether or not an owner occupier;
- whether married or not;
- whether had children or not;
- whether or not in a managerial/professional or intermediate occupation (NS-SEC).

Three newspaper readership variables were then added to this basic regression. These were:

- whether or not read the Daily Mail or Daily Express at least twice a week;

- whether or not read one of the tabloids at least twice a week (Daily Mirror, Sun, Daily Star, Daily Sport or Daily Record);
- whether or not read one of the broadsheet newspapers at least twice a week (Guardian, Independent, Times, Daily Telegraph or Financial Times).

The regression analysis demonstrated no significant relationship between respondents' assessments of overall conduct in public life and the above demographic variables, whether entered alone or in combination with the newspaper readership variables ($R^2 = 0.01$ in both cases).

Regression of overall rating of standards on public life on who can be trusted to tell the truth

Assessment of overall conduct in public life was also regressed on eight dummy variables, each indicating whether or not one of the following could be trusted to tell the truth:

- Government ministers;
- MPs in general;
- Senior managers in local councils;
- Senior managers in the NHS;
- Head teachers in schools;
- Top civil servants;
- Local councillors;
- Senior police officers.

The aim of this exercise was to assess whether people's overall assessment of conduct in public life trust was particularly linked to their trust in one or another type of public figure.

Overall the regression was highly significant ($p<0.0001$) and delivered an R^2 value of 0.12 (indicating that 12% or the variance of overall assessment could be "explained" by variation in the trust variables).

The table below shows the unstandardised regression coefficients for each predictor variable. Each of these shows the expected difference in overall assessment scale score between those respondents who said they trusted a particular type of public figure and those who said they did not, *after holding the values of all other predictor variables constant.*

It will be noted that all but one of the coefficients are negative: this is because positive overall assessment ratings were associated with low scale scores whereas statements of trust in a public figure were scored higher (coded 1) than were statements of lack of trust (coded 0).

Regression of overall rating of standards in public life on types of public figure trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients

Predictor variable	Unstandardised coefficient	Significance level
Trust in senior managers in NHS	-.134	.007
Trust in head teachers in schools	-.135	.033
Trust in local councillors	-.054	.288
Trust in senor managers in local councils	-.140	.011
Trust in senior police officers	-.092	.072
Trust in MPs	-.199	.001
Trust in top civil servants	.061	.256
Trust in government ministers	-.188	.005

The predictor variables with the highest associations were trust in MPs and in government ministers followed by trust in senior managers in the NHS, trust in senior managers in local councils, and trust in head teachers. Trust in local councillors, senior police officers and in top civil servants were not significantly associated with overall rating of standards in public life.

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Attitudinal research into standards of conduct in public life

BMRB Final Questionnaire

Section A – CURRENT AFFAIRS

ASK ALL
I'd like to start by asking you some general questions.
SHOW CARD A

A1. First of all, how much interest do you generally have in what is going on in current affairs?

A great deal
Quite a lot
Some
Not very much
Or: None at all?

SHUFFLE PACK A and SORT BOARD A (RED)
SHUFFLE CARDS AND HAND TO RESPONDENT

A4a. These cards show different types of people. Please put them on this board to show which you would generally trust to tell the truth and which you wouldn't.

INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY: If there are any you are not sure about, please put them to one side.

1. Estate agents
2. Senior managers in the National Health Service
3. Family doctors
4. Head teachers in schools
5. Journalists on newspapers like the Times, Telegraph or Guardian
6. Television news journalists
7. Journalists on newspapers like the Sun, the Mirror or the Daily Star
8. Judges
9. Local councillors
10. Senior managers in local councils
11. Local police officers on the beat in your area
12. Senior police officers
13. MPs in general
14. Your local MP
15. People who run large companies
16. Top civil servants
17. Government ministers

SECTION B – EXPECTATIONS, PRIORITIES & PERCEPTIONS

Section B questions

ASK ALL

Now I'd like to ask you about elected national politicians - that is, **MPs and government ministers**. This card describes these two groups

SHOW CARD AA - Large

SHUFFLE PACK B and SORT BOARD B

TEXT ON CARD ONLY, NOT ON SCREEN (INTERVIEWER DOES NOT READ OUT)
MPs are politicians whom the general public has elected to represent them in the House of Commons in Westminster. Among other things, they represent a constituency and vote on new laws.

Government Ministers are chosen by the Prime Minister and are usually elected MPs. They are either Cabinet Ministers, like the Home Secretary or Foreign Secretary, or departmental ministers, like the Minister for School Standards.

SHUFFLE CARDS AND HAND TO RESPONDENT

B1a. Please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that MPs and government ministers do the things shown on the cards.

INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY: If there are any you are not sure about, please put them to one side.

BOARD:
Extremely important
Very important
Quite important
Not very important
Not at all important

1. They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public
2. They should not use their power for their own personal gain
3. They should not take bribes
4. They should own up when they make mistakes
5. They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions
6. They should set a good example for others in their private lives
7. They should tell the truth
8. They should make sure that public money is used wisely
9. They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important
10. They should be competent at their jobs

HAND BACK HIGHEST RATED CARDS TO RESPONDENT

B1b. Which three of these do you think are the **most** important for MPs and Government Ministers?

[INCLUDE DON'T KNOW OPTION]

NOTE: B2a/b – Answer scales for both MPs and Government Ministers to appear on one screen, with statement at the top of the screen.

B2a/b. Next, looking at the screen, please say how many MPs and government ministers you think actually do these things. (ROTATE ORDER BETWEEN INTERVIEWS) I'll be asking about MPs and then Government ministersseparately.

[FOR EACH STATEMENT, LOOP THROUGH…]

A. How many MPs do you think this applies to?

B. And government ministers …?

- All
- Most
- About half
- A few
- None

1. They are dedicated to doing a good job for the public
2. They use their power for their own personal gain
3. They take bribes
4. They own up when they make mistakes

5. They explain the reasons for their actions and decisions
6. They set a good example for others in their private lives
7. They tell the truth
8. They make sure that public money is used wisely
9. They are in touch with what the general public thinks is important
10. They are competent at their jobs

RANDOMISE ORDER OF STATEMENTS

USE SHUFFLE CARDS PACK C and SORT BOARD C.
SHUFFLE CARDS AND HAND TO RESPONDENT

B3a. Suppose there is a vote in parliament on an important national issue. Which of these do you think it is reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote and which should they definitely not take into account?

INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY: If there are any you are not sure about, please put them to one side.

1. what the MP's party's election manifesto promised
2. what would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency
3. what would benefit people living in the country as a whole
4. what the MP's local party members would want
5. how the MP's party leadership thinks he or she should vote
6. what the MP personally believes to be right
7. what the MP thinks will make his or her party more popular with the general public
8. how the decision might affect the MP's political career
9. what would benefit the MP's family
10. how the decision might affect the MP's chances of getting a job outside politics

IF MORE THAN ONE 'REASONABLE'. HAND BACK 'REASONABLE' CARDS

B3b. In your opinion, which one of these is the most important thing for MPs to take into account?

ASK ALL

B3c. And in practice, which one do you think most MPs **would** base their decision on?

[INCLUDE DON'T KNOW OPTION]

READ OUT

Now thinking about , **senior public officials** – I mean people with senior management jobs in government departments, local councils or other public bodies, who make important decisions about the service they work in. For example, the head of a council's housing department, the chief executive of an NHS hospital, a chief police officer, etc. These people have not been elected to their jobs, but have had to apply for them.

SHUFFLE PACK D and SORT BOARD D (LIGHT GREEN)
SHUFFLE CARDS AND HAND TO RESPONDENT

B7a. Please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that senior public officials do the things shown on the cards.

INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY: If there are any you are not sure about, please put them to one side.

BOARD: Extremely important
Very important
Quite important
Not very important
Not at all important

1. They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public
2. They should not use their power for their own personal gain
3. They should not take bribes
4. They should own up when they make mistakes
5. They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions
6. They should set a good example for others in their private lives
7. They should tell the truth
8. They should make sure that public money is used wisely
9. They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important
10. They should be competent at their jobs

HAND BACK HIGHEST RATED CARDS TO RESPONDENT

B7b. Which three of these do you think are **most** important for senior public officials?

[INCLUDE DON'T KNOW OPTION]

SHOW SCREEN TO RESPONDENT

B8. I am now going to show you some scales and I'm going to ask you to rate various groups of people according to each scale. So…

Looking at this screen and thinking about (…. POH type), where would you put (…. POH type) on this scale?

And where you would put them on this scale?

And on this one?

And this one?

And this one?

Next, (…. POH type), where would you put (…. POH type) on this scale?

And on this one? etc.

SPLIT SAMPLE - HALF GO THROUGH OPTIONS 1-3, HALF GET 4-6

POH Type

1. Senior managers in the National Health Service
2. Senior police officers
3. Top civil servants
4. Managers who run local council services
5. Local councillors
6. Head teachers in schools

Honest						**Dishonest**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Dedicated to public service						**Put their careers above the public interest**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Own up when they make mistakes						**Try to cover up their mistakes**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Spend public money wisely						**Waste public money**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

[INCLUDE DON'T KNOW OPTION]

SHUFFLE PACK E and SORT BOARD E (DARK GREEN)

B10a. Suppose a vacancy has been advertised for a senior job in the local council. A council official, who is not involved in deciding who gets the job, thinks a friend would be good for the job.

Which of these things do you think it would be acceptable for the council official to do and which would definitely not be acceptable?

INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY: If there are any you are not sure about, please put them to one side.

1. Encourage the friend to apply for the job
2. Tell the friend where they can find information that is publicly available and would help them prepare for the interview
3. Give the friend information that is not publicly available and would help them prepare for the interview
4. Put in a good word for the friend with the person doing the interviewing for the job
5. Try to put pressure on the interviewing committee to appoint the friend

[INCLUDE DON'T KNOW OPTION]

ASK ALL

SHUFFLE PACK F and SORT BOARD F (LIGHT BLUE)
SHUFFLE CARDS AND HAND TO RESPONDENT

B10d. In your opinion, how important are the things on these cards when government departments and other public services are recruiting people for jobs?

INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY: If there are any you are not sure about, please put them to one side.

BOARD:
Extremely important
Very important
Quite important
Not very important
Not at all important

IF NO STATEMENTS PLACED IN TOP THREE CATEGORIES/ONE STATEMENT ONLY IN RESPONDENT'S TOP CATEGORY, GO TO B11. OTHERS ASK B10e.

B10e. Which one of these do you think is most important?

1. It should be easy for people to find out about jobs that are available
2. It should be easy to recruit people quickly and efficiently
3. Everyone who applies for a job should have a fair chance
4. The cost to the public of recruiting people should not be too high
5. Jobs should be awarded to the best candidates
6. People should be recruited from a wide range of backgrounds
7. People should not give jobs to people just because they know or like them

[INCLUDE DON'T KNOW OPTION]

ASK ALL
SHOW CARD B

B13i. Next, how often do you think people in public office get jobs through someone they know, rather than going through the correct procedures?

A lot
A fair amount
Occasionally
Hardly ever
Never?
(Allow DK option)

SHOW CARD C

B13ii And do you think this kind of thing has increased or decreased in the last few years or stayed about the same?
IF INCREASED/DECREASED: A lot or a little?

Increased a lot
Increased a little
Stayed about the same
Decreased a little
Decreased a lot
(Allow DK option)

SHOW CARD D

B13iii And do you think the authorities clamp down on this kind of thing more or less than they did a few years ago, or about the same amount as they did?

IF MORE/LESS: A lot more/less or a bit more/less?

A lot more
A bit more
Same amount
A bit less
A lot less
(Allow DK option)

SHOW CARD E
ASK FOR EACH TYPE OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDER

B11. Thinking about (TYPE OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDER), which of the statements on this card is closest to your opinion?

And for (TYPE OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDER)?
RANDOMISE ORDER OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDERS

MPs
Government ministers
Local councillors
Senior public officials – by that I mean people with senior management jobs in government departments, local councils or other public bodies.

.

SHOWCARD F:

A. Should have the right to keep their private lives private
B. Should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives
C. Should accept that the media examine every aspect of their private lives - 'it comes with the job'

[ALLOW DON'T KNOW OPTION]

Now some questions about public office holders as a whole – by this I mean government ministers, MPs, local councillors and senior public officials.

SHOW CARD F

B14. Overall, how would you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in Britain?

EXPLAIN IF NECESSARY: I mean how far Public Office Holders as a whole tend to be honest, act honourably and try to make sure they serve the interests of the public.

Very high
Quite high
Neither high nor low
Quite low
Very low
(Allow DK)

B15. SHOW CARD G

And how do think standards of public office holders in Britain today compare with a few years ago?

Improved a lot
Improved a little
Stayed the same
Got a bit worse
Got a lot worse
(Allow DK)

B16. SHOW CARD H

And how do you think standards of public office holders in Britain today compare with those elsewhere in Europe?

Among the highest in Europe
Higher than average
About average
Lower than average
Among the lowest in Europe
(Allow DK)

B17. **SHOW CARD I**

i. How confident do you feel that the authorities in Britain are committed to improving standards in public life?

ROTATE ii (a) AND (b) [(c) always comes at the end]

ii. (a) And how confident do you feel that the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office?

(b) And how confident do you feel that the **media** will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office?

(c)And when people in public office are caught doing wrong, how confident do you feel that the authorities will punish them?

SHOWCARD J

Very confident
Fairly confident
Not very confident
Not at all confident

B21. In 1994 the Committee on Standards in Public Life was set up to help improve standards of conduct of public office holders. It was also called the Nolan Committee and is now sometimes called the Wicks Committee. Had you heard of this Committee before we wrote to you?

Yes
No
DK/Not sure

B22. This card describes what the Committee does.

SHOW CARD BB - LARGE
(CARD NOT READ OUT UNLESS NECESSARY)

The Committee recommends measures to the Prime Minister to improve standards in public life. Measures already introduced following recommendations by the Committee include:

- Rules that MPs and local councillors must declare information about income and assets
- An independent officer who investigates allegations against MPs.
- Tighter rules to make sure that people appointed to public sector jobs are chosen on merit
- New rules that large donations to political parties must be made public

SHOW CARD J
What effect do you think these types of measure will have on standards in public life in Britain?

Standards will improve a lot
Standards will improve a bit
Standards will stay the same
Standards will get a bit worse
Standards will get a lot worse
DK

SECTION C. CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

SHOW CARD K

C2. Before today how much did you know about the sorts of things we've been talking about?

A lot
A reasonable amount
A little
Nothing at all

SHOW CARD L

C3. And how strongly do you feel about the things we've been talking about?

Very strongly
Quite strongly
Not very strongly
Not strongly at all

SHOW CARD M

C4. And thinking about the opinions you've given, which, if any, of these they are based on? PROBE: What else?

What you read in newspapers and magazines
What you see on news programmes on television
What you hear in news programmes on the radio
What you talk about with your friends, family or colleagues
Your own personal experiences
The work you do in your job
Your education
Just things you've picked up over time
Something else (SPECIFY)

IF MORE THAN ONE GIVEN

C5. And which would you say your opinions are mainly based on?

ASK ALL

C18. Were your answers to any of the questions in this survey influenced by recent events that you might have heard or read about?

Yes
No
DK

IF YES AT C18

C19. Could you say what events might have influenced your answers?

DO NOT PROMPT
[CODE ALL THAT APPLY]

The Hutton Inquiry/inquest into the death of Dr David Kelly
The war on Iraq
The Iraqi arms dossier
Reports about government spin
Cash for questions/ Neil Hamilton case
Jeffrey Archer case
Jonathan Aitken case
MMR vaccine
Fuel crisis

Others…. Specify…..

ASK ALL
SHOW CARD N

C6. I'm now going to read out a number of things that other people have said to us and I'd like to know how much you agree or disagree with them. Please take your answers from this card. So first …

(ORDER OF STATEMENTS ROTATED)

a. I can influence decisions affecting my local area
b. I can influence decisions affecting this country
c. Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what's going on

Agree strongly
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Disagree strongly

C7. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful dealing with people?

Most people can be trusted
You can't be too careful dealing with people

C8. SHOW CARD CC – LARGE
In the last 12 months have you done any of these things?
IF YES Which ones?
PROBE FULLY: Which others?

ELECTED MEMBERS INCLUDE THE PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST MINISTERS

a) Contacted a local councillor
b) Contacted a Member of Parliament (MP)/an elected member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP)/ an elected member of the Welsh Assembly (MWA)
c) Contacted a public official working for your local council
d) Contacted a public official working for part of Central Government, the Scottish Parliament/Scottish Executive or the Welsh Assembly
e) Attended a public meeting
f) Taken part in a public demonstration or protest
g) Signed a petition
h) Given money to a political party
i) Worked for a party or a candidate in an election campaign.
j) Joined a boycott, that is, refused to buy a particular product or to shop at a particular store
k) Contacted an elected member of the Greater London Assembly - including the Mayor of London
l) Contacted a public official working for the Greater London Assembly
m) DK
n) None of these

C13. Do you generally think of yourself as a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?

Yes
No
Don't Know
Refused

IF 'YES' at C13.

C14. Which party is that? [DO NOT PROMPT]

Labour
Conservative
Liberal Democrat
SNP
Plaid Cymru
Green Party
Other Party (SPECIFY)
Don't Know
Refused

IF PARTY GIVEN AT C14.

C15. Would you call yourself very strong [PARTY GIVEN], fairly strong or not very strong?

Very strong
Fairly strong
Not very strong
Don't Know
Refused

ASK ALL

C16. Did you vote at the last general election in 2001?
Yes
No
Not eligible to vote at the last election
Don't remember

ASK ALL IN SCOTLAND and WALES

C17. Did you vote in the last Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly election?
Yes
No
Not eligible to vote at the last election
Don't remember

SECTION D DEMOGRAPHICS

ASK ALL
D1 INTERVIEWER: CODE SEX OF RESPONDENT

Male
Female

ASK ALL
D2 What was you age at your last birthday?

(RESPONDENT'S AGE MUST BE 18+)

Don't Know
Refused

ALL WHO REFUSE TO GIVE AGE AT D2
D3 Which one of these bands does your age fit into?

18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65+
Don't Know
Refused

NS-SEC QUESTIONS on socio-economic classification

Work
Did you do any paid work in the seven days ending last Sunday, either as an employee or as self-employed?

1 Yes
2 No
DK
REF

[ASK IF Work not = Yes]
Qcombine

SHOWCARD DD - LARGE

Looking at this card could you tell me if you did any of the following in the seven days ending last Sunday? [CODE FIRST ANSWER ONLY]

1. Were you on a government scheme for employment training?
2. Did you have a job or business you were away from?
3. Did you do any UNPAID work for any business that you own in the seven days ending last Sunday?
4. Did you do any UNPAID work for any business that a relative owns?
5. Or were you waiting to take up a new job/business that you had already obtained?
6. None of these
7. DK
8. Ref

[Ask if Work NE Yes and Qcombine = 5 (waiting to take up work)/none of these/DK/Ref]
LookWk4
Thinking of the last FOUR WEEKS ending last Sunday, were you looking for any kind of paid work or a place on a government training scheme at any time in those four weeks?

1. Yes
2. No
3.

[ASK IF LookWk4 = Yes]
AvSrt2
If a job or place on a government training scheme had been available last week, would you have been able to start within two weeks?

1. Yes
2. No

[ASK IF LookWk4 = No or AVSrt 2 = No AND Qcombine=None of these]

WhyNLook

What was the MAIN reason you did not look for work in the last four weeks

1. Student
2. Looking after the family/home
3. Temporarily sick or injured
4. Long term sick or disabled
5. Retired from paid work
6. Other

DK

REF

[ASK IF Work = Yes or QCombine = 1 or 2 or 3 or 4]

InfStudy

Can I just check, are you a full-time student at college or university?

1. Yes
2. No

ASK IF (Work=No/DK/Ref AND Qcombine=5 or 6/DK/Ref) OR Avstr2 = Yes/DK/Ref

JobEver

Have you EVER had a paid job, apart from casual or holiday work?

1. Yes
2. No

DK

REF

[Note - WhenLft dropped]

[ASK IF Work = Yes OR QCOMBINE =1 or 2 or 3 or 4 OR JobEver = Yes]

Indust1

What does/did the firm/organisation you work/last worked for mainly make or do at the place where you work/worked?

[Interviewer instruction – Describe fully. Probe manufacturing or processing or distributing and main goods produced or services provided]

[ASK IF Work = Yes OR QCOMBINE =1 or 2 or 43or 4 OR JobEver = Yes]
JobTit1
What was your (main) job in the week ending last Sunday/your last (main) job?

[INTERVIEWER: PLEASE ENTER FULL JOB TITLE]

[ASK IF Work = Yes OR QCOMBINE =1 or 2 or 3 or 4 OR JobEver = Yes]
JobDes1
What [do/did] you mainly do in your job

[CHECK SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING NEEDED TO DO THE JOB]

[ASK IF Work = Yes OR QCOMBINE =1 or 2 or 3 or 4 OR JobEver = Yes]
SelfEmp
Are/Were you working as an employee or are/were you self-employed?

1. Employee
2. Self-employed

ASK IF SelfEmp=1
EmpStat
In your job [do/did] you have formal responsibility for supervising the work of other employees?

1. Yes
2. No

[ASK IF SelfEmp=1]
Manage
[Do/Did] you have any managerial duties?

1. Manager
2. Foreman/supervisor
3. Not manager/supervisor

[Note - Nemplee dropped]
[ASK IF SelfEmp=1]
NemplDK
Would you say there [are/were] fewer than 25 employees or 25 or more employees at the place where you work/worked?

1. Fewer than 25

2. 25 or more
3. None

[Note - SNemp dropped]
[ASK IF SelfEmp = 2]
NempDK
How many people do/did you employ at the place where you work/worked?

1. Fewer than 25
2. 25 or more

[ASK IF Work = Yes or Qcombine = 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or JobEver = Yes]
FtPt
In your (main) job [are/were] you working… READ OUT

1. Full-time
2. or part-time?

ASK ALL

SHOW CARD EE - LARGE

D4 Starting from the top of this list, please look down the list of qualifications and tell me the letter of the first one you come to that you have passed.

a) Higher degree, eg. MSc, MA, MBA, PhD
b) First degree/Postgraduate Diplomas/PGCE/Professional qualifications at degree level/NVQ/SVQ Level 4 or 5
c) Diplomas in higher education/HNC/HND/BTEC Higher/ Teaching, nursing or medical qualifications below degree level/RSA Higher Diploma
d) A/AS Levels/SCE Higher/Scottish Certificate 6th Year Studies/NVQ Level 3/BTEC National/City and Guilds Advanced/RSA Advanced Diploma
e) Trade Apprenticeships
f) A Level/GCSE Grades A*-C/SCE Standard/Ordinary Grades 1-3/NVQ Level 2/BTEC First/general diploma/City and Guilds Craft/Ordinary/RSA Diploma
g) O Level/GCSE Grades D-G/SCE Standard/Ordinary Grades below 3/NVQ Level 1/ BTEC First/general certificate/City and Guilds Part 1/RSA stage 1-3
h) Don't Know
i) Refused
j) None of these
k) Other

ASK ALL
SHOW CARD O

D5. In which of these ways does your household occupy this accommodation?

Please give an answer from this card.

READ OUT IF NECESSARY

a) Own it outright
b) Buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan
c) Pay part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership)
d) Rent it
e) Live here rent free (including rent free in relative's/friend's property; excluding squatting)
f) Squatting
g) Don't Know
h) Refused

ASK ALL
D6. Can I just check your legal marital status. Are you..

READ OUT AND CODE FIRST TO APPLY

IF COHABITING AND NEVER PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, CODE 1

a) Single, that is never married
b) Married and living with husband or wife
c) Married and separated from husband or wife
d) Divorced
e) Widowed
f) Don't Know
g) Refused

ASK ALL
D7. Are there any children aged under 18 in this household who are financially dependent on you?

Yes
No
Don't Know

ASK ALL

SHOWCARD FF - LARGE

D8. Do you read any of these daily newspapers regularly? By that I mean two or more issues a week.

a) Local daily morning paper
b) Local daily evening paper
c) Daily Express
d) Daily Mail
e) Daily Mirror
f) Daily Sport
g) Daily Telegraph
h) Financial Times
i) The Guardian
j) The Independent
k) The Daily Star
l) The Sun
m) The Times
n) The Scotsman
o) Daily Record
p) Don't know
q) None of these

ASK ALL
D9.
SHOWCARD GG – LARGE

And do you read any of these Sunday newspapers regularly? By that I mean two or more issues a month on average. [QSPAP]

a) The Independent on Sunday
b) Mail on Sunday
c) News of the World
d) The Observer
e) The People
f) Sunday Express
g) Sunday Mirror
h) Sunday Post
i) Sunday Sport
j) Sunday Telegraph
k) Sunday Times
l) Don't know
m) None of these

D10 That's nearly the end of the survey. Just a couple of final questions...

The Committee may want us to interview some people again about their views on standards in public life. Would you be happy for us to contact you again?

IF NECESSARY ADD: You wouldn't have to take part if you didn't want to.

Yes
No
Not sure

D11 IF YES
If the Committee wanted another research organisation to do these interviews, would you be happy for us to pass your name and contact details to this organisation so they could contact you?

Yes
No
DK