



**PORTLAND/THE JUBILEE  
CENTRE: MPs  
PERCEPTIONS OF  
CHARACTER EDUCATION**

**JULY 2015**

## OBJECTIVES

- To assess the views of MPs with regard to character and virtue education in schools, and within the world of work.
- To establish a baseline for future research.

### *Low base sizes*

*Findings marked with an asterisk (\*) are where the number of MPs in a group is below 50. These results should be treated as indicative rather than representative. This is particularly true for the Scottish National Party.*

## METHODOLOGY

June 2015 MPs Panel Survey	
Sample size	150
Fieldwork dates	21 <sup>st</sup> May – 3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2015
Weighting	By party and region to be representative of the whole of the House of Commons

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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## Continued support for character education

There is continued and considerable support for the teaching of character education in schools among MPs. MPs are five percentage points more likely now, than in December 2014, to agree that character education should be taught in schools. The value of character education is clearly noted across the House with three quarters of MPs agreeing that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results.

## Cross-party appeal

Conservative MPs are notably more favourable towards character education than in December 2014; contributing to an increased cross-party consensus on its appeal. Seven in ten MPs in both the Conservative and Labour parties agree that character education should be taught in school – representing a nine percentage point increase in the proportion of Conservative MPs agreeing with this statement.

## Value for the professions

MPs across the House are notably more likely now, than in December 2014, to see the importance of training teachers in character education. Conservative MPs in particular are more likely than previously to agree that it is important that each of the professions tested are trained in character education. However, the Conservative Party are less convinced by the value for this for the legal profession with three in ten disagreeing that it is important for these professionals. Nevertheless, this proportion has decreased from four in ten in December 2014.

# PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

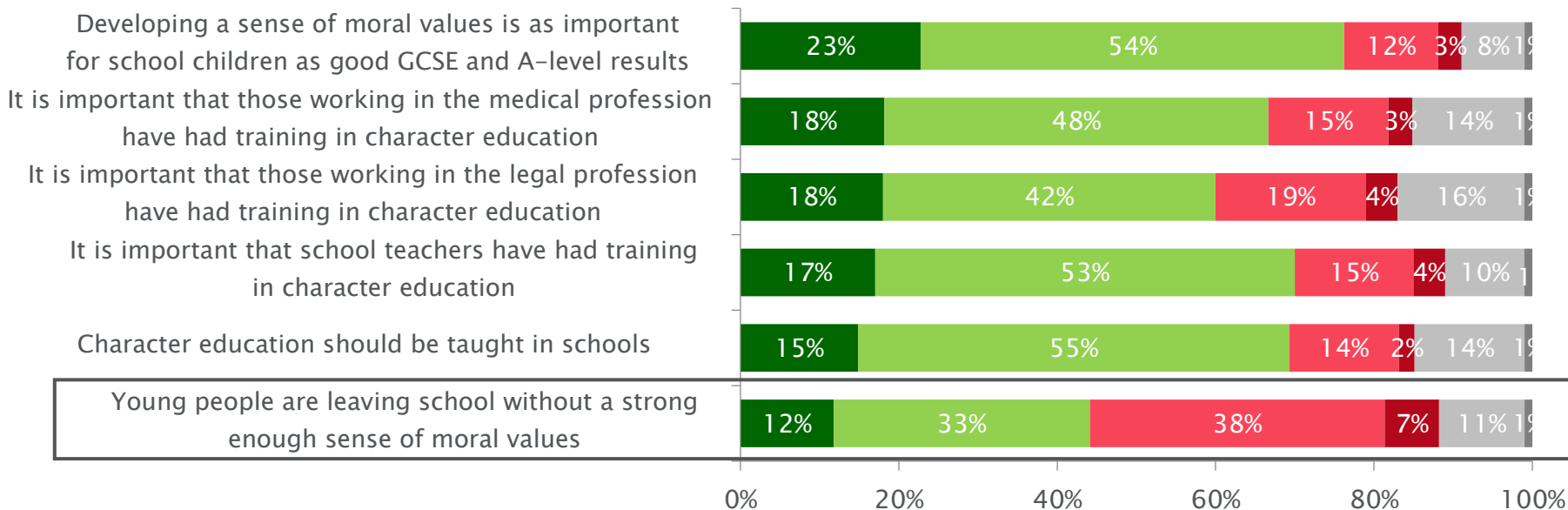


# SEVEN IN TEN MPs AGREE THAT CHARACTER EDUCATION SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS

There is considerable support for character education, and an understanding of its worth, across the House. Seven in ten (70%) MPs agree (strongly, or tend to agree) that character education should be taught in schools, while three quarters (77%) agree that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results.

## Perceptions of character education – June 2015

■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Tend to agree  
 ■ Tend to disagree  
 ■ Strongly disagree  
 ■ Don't know  
 ■ Not stated



However, MPs are split as to whether young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values – identical proportions of MPs agree as disagree with this statement (44% each).

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (n=150)

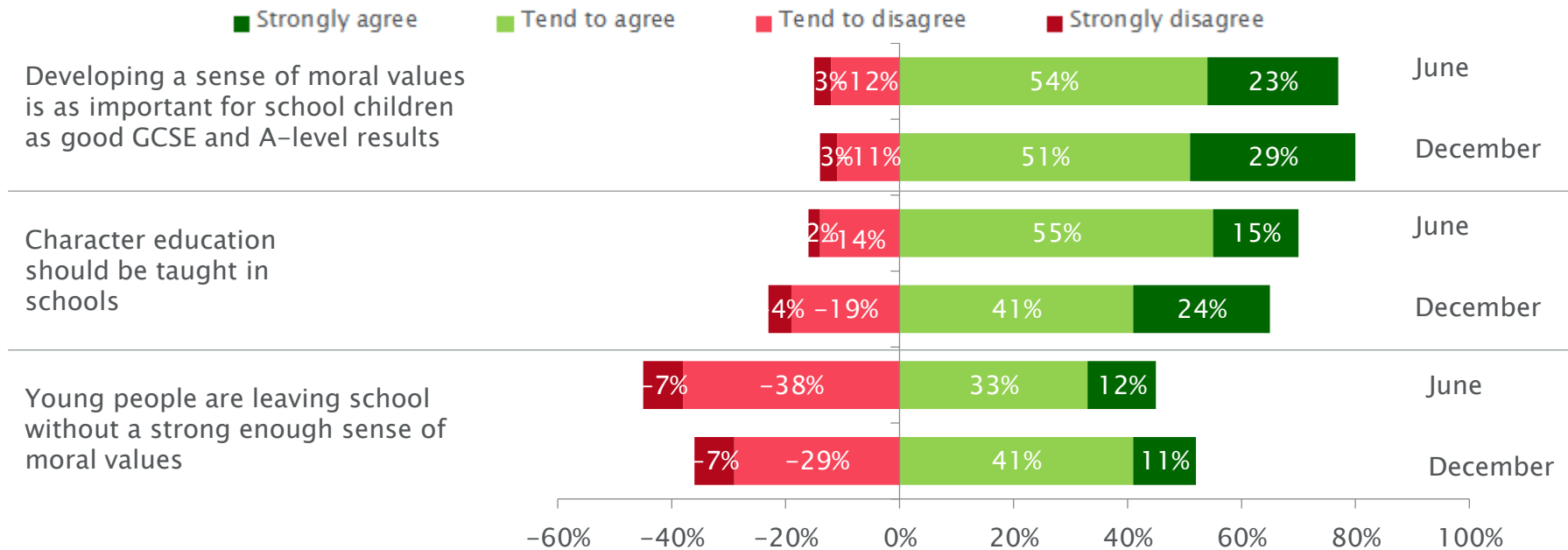
**CHARACTER  
EDUCATION FOR  
YOUNG PEOPLE**



# MPs CONTINUE TO SHOW HIGH LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

Support for character education within Westminster continues to be relatively high, with seven in ten (70%) MPs in June agreeing that character education should be taught in schools, compared to 65% who did so in December 2014. However, MPs in June 2014 are equally as likely to agree and disagree that young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values – suggesting that messaging should not focus on a potential death of moral values among young school-leavers but should instead focus on the positive impact of character education within the classroom.

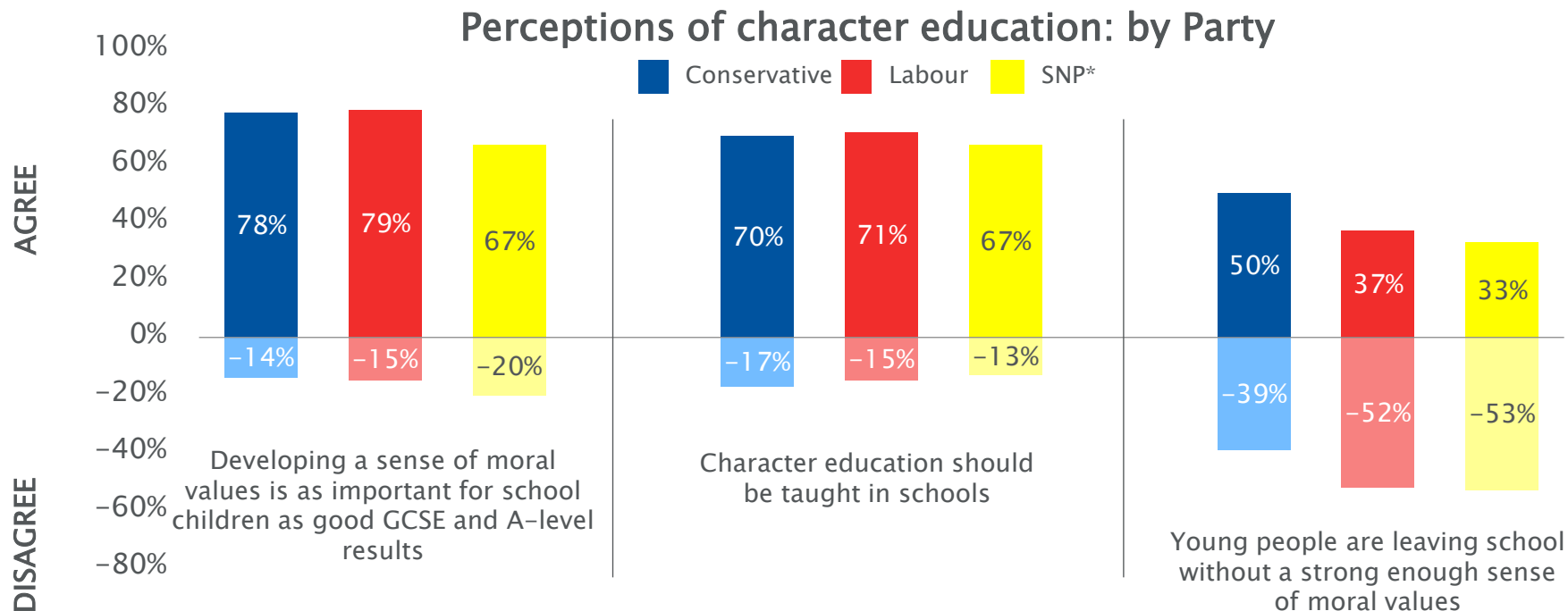
## Perceptions of character education – over time



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (n=150)



# THERE IS A CONSENSUS TOWARDS CHARACTER EDUCATION ACROSS THE HOUSE

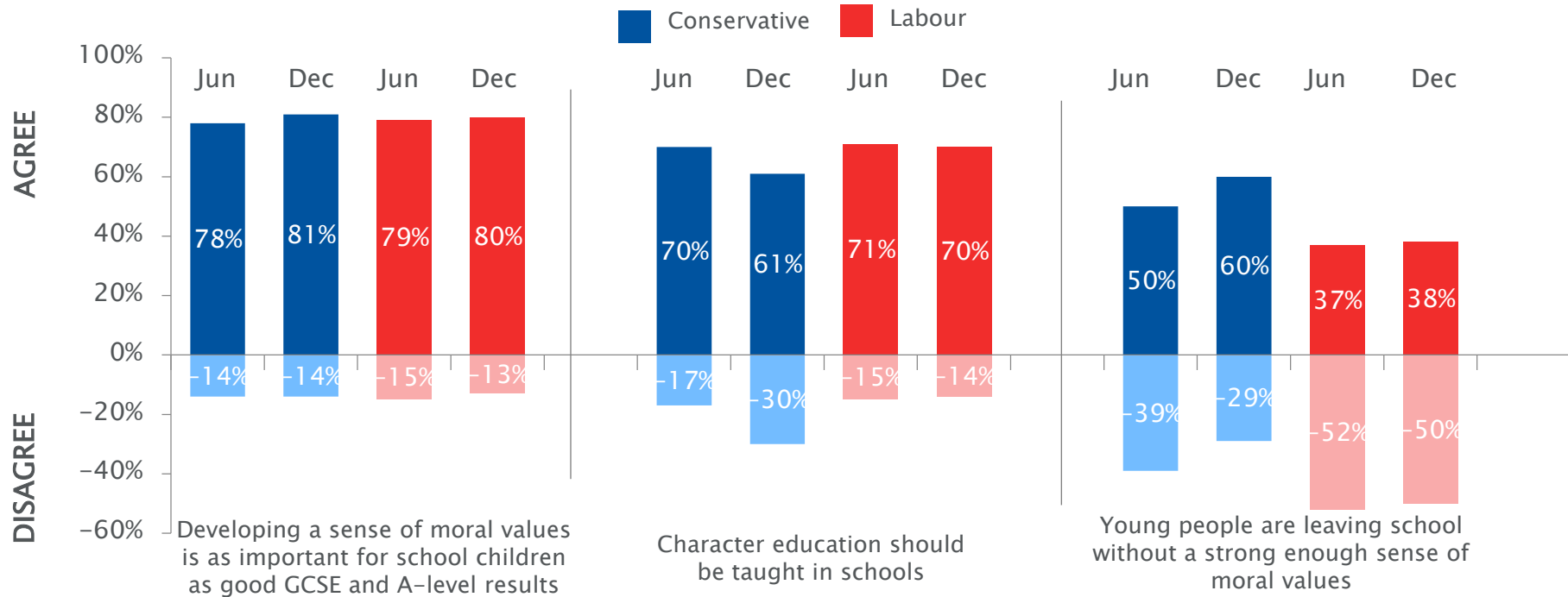


All major parties are in agreement that character education should be taught in schools, with seven in ten MPs from both the Conservative (70%) and Labour (71%) parties agreeing with this statement. Those in the Conservative Party are more likely to feel strongly about this, with just less than one in five (18%) Conservative Party strongly agreeing that character education should be taught in schools, compared to 7% of Labour MPs – perhaps relating to recent statements from Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, on this subject. MP are divided by party in regards to the current state of character education. Whereas half of Conservative MPs (50%) agree that young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values, half of Labour and SNP MPs disagree with this statement (52% and 54% respectively).

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (Con=59, Lab=66, SNP=15)

# CONSERVATIVE MPs ARE BECOMING MORE AWARE OF THE VALUE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

## Perceptions of character education – by Party over time



While Conservative MPs are notably less likely now, than in June 2016 (50% vs. 60%) to say that young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values, they are notably more likely to say that character education should be taught in schools (70% vs. 61%); perhaps reflecting their majority position in Government and recent announcements regarding character education made by the Education Secretary.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (Con=59, Lab=66, SNP=15)

# CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR THE PROFESSIONS

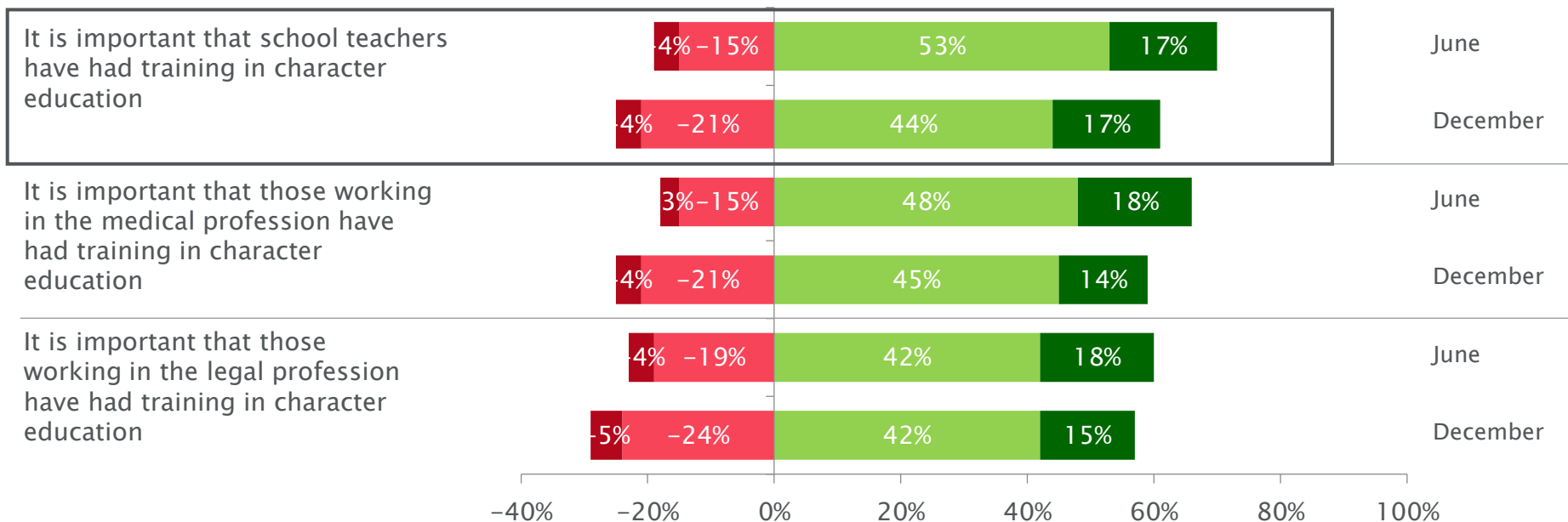


# MPs INCREASINGLY SUPPORT THE TEACHING OF CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR THE PROFESSIONS

MPs show increasing support for the teaching of character education across the medical, legal and teaching professions, with character education for teachers in particular has seen a nine percentage point increase in importance among MPs (70% compared to 61% in December) indicating the success of work in this area.

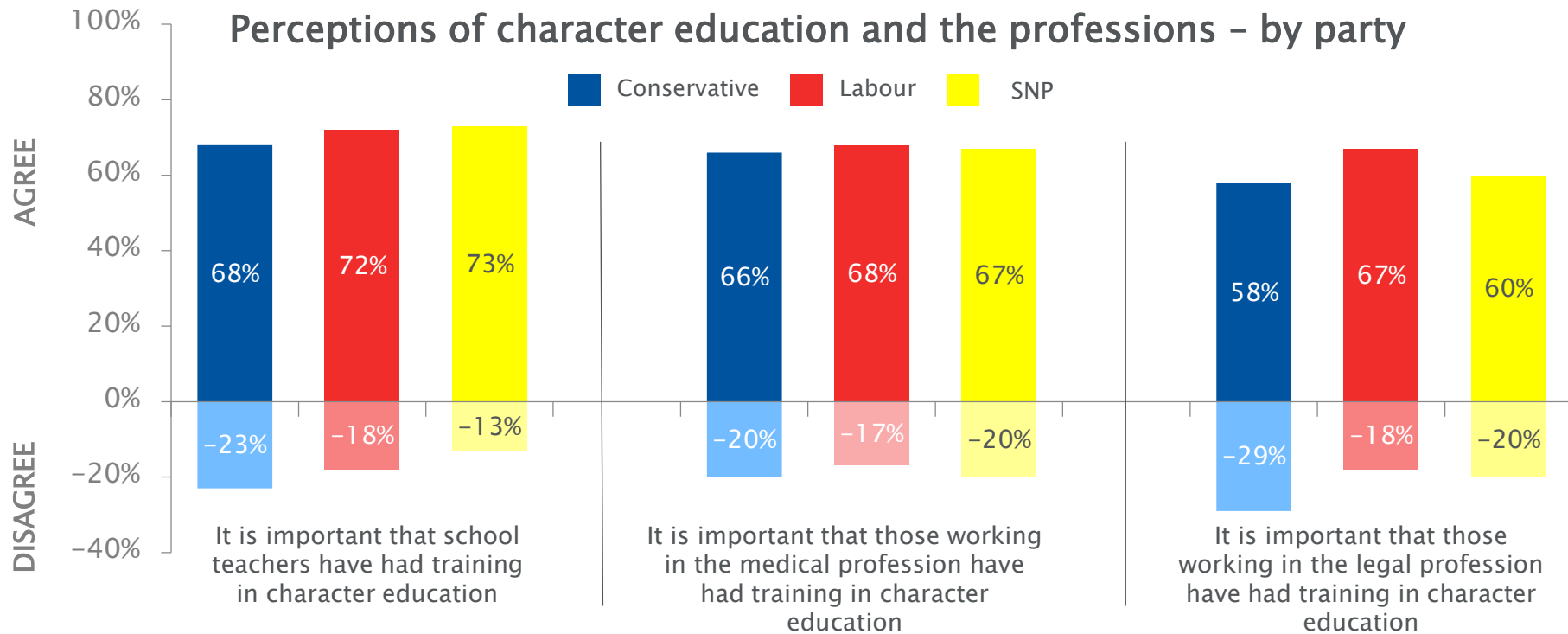
## Perceptions of character education and the professions – over time

■ Strongly agree    
 ■ Tend to agree    
 ■ Tend to disagree    
 ■ Strongly disagree



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (n=150)

# CONSERVATIVE MPs ARE SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY THAN LABOUR MPs TO DISAGREE WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING PROFESSIONS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

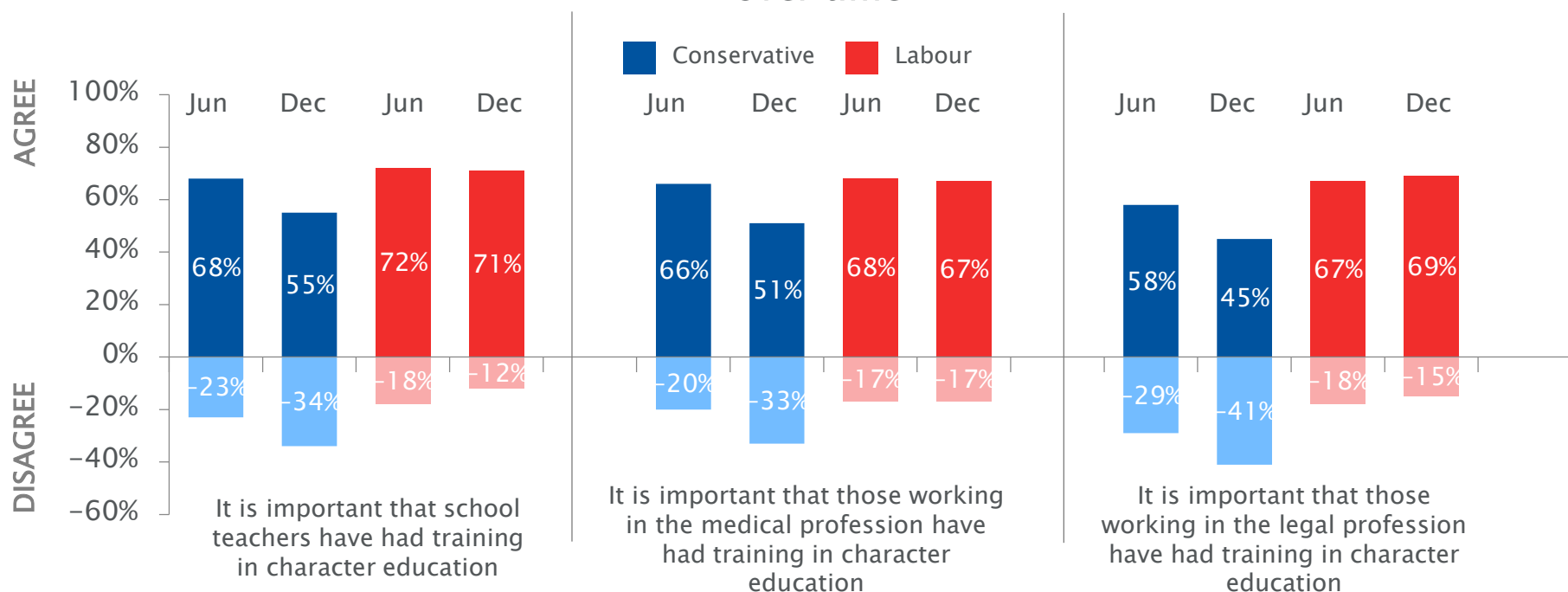


With the exception of the legal profession, Conservative and Labour MPs are fairly aligned in their agreement in the importance of training professions in character education. However, Conservative MPs are more likely than their Labour colleagues to disagree with the importance of training each profession in character education.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (Con=59, Lab=66, SNP=15)

# CONSERVATIVE MPs ARE BECOMING MORE AWARE OF THE VALUE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALLY

Perceptions of character education and the professions – by party over time



Conservative MPs are significantly more likely – an average of 13 percentage points more likely than in December 2014 – to agree that training for each of the professions tested is important, suggesting significant cut-through of messaging in this area or a more positive reception from new MPs.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (Con=59, Lab=66)

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

There is continued and strengthening support for character education among MPs. MPs are more likely now, than in December 2014, to agree that character education should be taught in schools, and are similarly as likely to agree that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Jubilee Centre should seek to build on the firm support for character education by continuing to monitor attitudes in the aftermath of the 2015 General Election. In order to build support for character education among MPs, the Jubilee Centre will need to gain a better understanding of MPs' attitudes and perceptions, specifically regarding the specific values that character education endorses.

There is a clear sense that Conservative MPs are more favourable towards character education now, than in December 2014 - both in terms of the teaching of character education within schools, as well as among professionals.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** This emerging cross-party consensus puts the Jubilee Centre in a strong position. The Jubilee Centre should look to continue engaging with MPs across the House to build advocacy levels, building on the cross-party appeal of character education and taking advantage of the continued focus on character education given by the Conservative Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan.

**NEXT STEPS:** Having established a benchmark of perceptions of character education in the new Parliament, The Jubilee Centre should look to continue to track these data to monitor the impact of future communications and any future policy announcements in this area. Conducting qualitative interviews with MPs to assess their understanding of character education and the areas of most and least appeal, would enable the Jubilee Centre to target its messaging accordingly and gain a deeper understanding into MPs' perceptions.