

Populus research report

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues Survey of public attitudes on professions and morals June 2014



Methodology

Populus interviewed 2,065 adults in Great Britain online between the 20th and 22nd June 2014.

Results were weighted to be representative of adults in Great Britain in terms of age, gender, SEG and region. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For more information see www.populus.co.uk.

Executive summary

- People believe that the professions for which it is most important to be a morally good person are doctor, politician, and teacher.
- Respondents believe that the most important character strengths for being a good doctor are honesty and kindness, with women in particular putting a greater emphasis on the latter. The most important character strengths of lawyers according to respondents are honesty, judgement and perseverance. For teachers, the top three most important traits are love of learning, fairness, and creativity.
- The majority of respondents who have had a recent doctor's appointment say the doctor demonstrated kindness and honesty, with more women remembering the former and more men the latter. Of those who have had recent professional contact with a lawyer less than half encountered fairness and perspective, and one-fifth say the lawyer did not demonstrate any of the prompted character strengths. Most respondents who have had recent contact with a teacher say they remembered the teacher demonstrating love of learning, humour, fairness and creativity, while only one in ten say the teacher did not demonstrate any of these.
- More than 80% of respondents think that it is important for both a good doctor and a good teacher to be also a morally good person. Fewer people think this is the case for lawyers but more than two-thirds still think that a good lawyer needs to be a morally good person too.
- According to respondents, the most important character strengths for children and adolescents are honesty and self-control. Furthermore, nearly all respondents think it is important that schools help children develop good character and more than half agree that teachers are generally competent to do so. Half believe that character-building should be taught as a separate subject on the school curriculum, although one-fifth disagree.



Summary tables

Q.1 Below is a list of professions. Please rank, in order of priority, the top three for which you feel it is most important to be a morally good person. [All respondents]

	Most important	Top 3 most important
Doctor	41%	77%
Politician	20%	41%
Teacher	16%	60%
Nurse	8%	38%
Lawyer	7%	33%
Military	5%	21%
Business/Finance	2%	10%
Dentist	1%	11%
Journalist	1%	8%

More than two-fifths of respondents (41%) believe that it is most important for doctors to be a morally good person, followed by politicians (20% most important) and teachers (16%).

Nearly four-fifths (77%) put doctors in their top three professions for being a morally good person, followed by teachers (60%), politicians (41%) and nurses (38%).

Q.2 Please rank the top three character strengths, in order of priority, which you think are the most important for a good doctor to demonstrate in their practice. [All respondents]

	Total Top three most important	Male Top three most important	Female Top three most important
Honesty	85%	85%	85%
Kindness	67%	63%	71%
Perspective	41%	41%	40%
Teamwork	37%	33%	41%
Self-regulation	27%	26%	28%
Prudence	17%	23%	12%
Modesty	12%	13%	11%
Forgiveness	6%	8%	5%
Gratitude	6%	6%	6%
Appreciation of beauty	2%	3%	1%

The vast majority of people believe that being honest is one of the most important character strengths for a doctor, with 85% of respondents putting this as one of the top three most important. Two-thirds (67%) say kindness is one of the most important traits.



Men and women differ slightly regarding which character strengths they expect from a doctor. While more men than women feel that prudence is among the most important (23% vs. 12% respectively), women have a greater appreciation than men for kindness (71% vs. 63% respectively). Similarly, teamwork is more important among women than among men (41% vs. 33% respectively).

Q.3 Please rank the top three character strengths, in order of priority, which you think are the most important for a good lawyer to demonstrate in their practice. [All respondents]

	Total	18-24	65+
	Top three most important	Top three most important	Top three most important
Honesty	82%	65%	95%
Judgement	75%	66%	86%
Perseverance	53%	55%	55%
Prudence	29%	20%	36%
Curiosity	16%	30%	10%
Creativity	16%	20%	8%
Love of learning	10%	14%	6%
Forgiveness	8%	16%	2%
Love	8%	11%	1%
Spirituality	4%	3%	*

For more than four-fifths of respondents (82%) honesty is among the top three most important character strengths of lawyers, closely followed by judgement (75%). More than half (53%) mention perseverance as one of the top three most important character strengths and less than one third (29%) say this about prudence.

Younger respondents are considerably less likely than older ones to perceive honesty and judgement as most important character strengths of lawyers. Just two-thirds of respondents aged 18-24 mention honesty or judgment as one of the top three (65% and 66% respectively). This is compared to 95% and 86% respectively among respondents aged 65 or older.



Q.4 Please rank the top three character strengths, in order of priority, which you think are the most important for a good teacher to demonstrate in their practice. [All respondents] [All respondents]

	Total Top three most important	Male Top three most important	Female Top three most important
Love of Learning	68%	66%	70%
Fairness	61%	57%	65%
Creativity	48%	49%	47%
Kindness	40%	36%	43%
Social Intelligence	39%	39%	40%
Perspective	19%	20%	18%
Curiosity	10%	11%	9%
Modesty	7%	11%	3%
Gratitude	6%	8%	4%
Spirituality	4%	4%	3%

The top three most mentioned character strengths for being a good teacher are love of learning (68%), fairness (61%) and creativity (48%).

Women are more likely than men to believe that fairness is among the top three most important character strengths of a good teacher. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of women feel this way compared to 57% of male respondents. Men, on the other hand, are slightly more likely than women to emphasise creativity (49% vs. 47%) and perspective (20% vs. 18%) as most important character strengths of a good teacher.

Q.5 If you have had a recent appointment (within the last year) with your doctor, did they demonstrate any of the following? Please select all that apply. [All respondents who have had a recent appointment]

	Total	Male	Female	65+
Kindness	63%	56%	69%	65%
Honesty	59%	64%	55%	69%
Judgement	42%	49%	35%	51%
Teamwork	18%	21%	16%	26%
None of the above	11%	10%	11%	8%

Nearly two-thirds of respondents who have had a recent doctor appointment say their doctor demonstrated kindness (63%) and more than half experienced honesty (59%).

Women are more likely than men to remember their doctors demonstrating kindness at their recent appointment (69% vs. 56% respectively), while more men than women say they encountered honesty (64% vs. 55%) and judgement (49% vs. 35%).



Older respondents are generally more likely than the average to encounter any of the above character strengths at a doctor's appointment.

Q.6 If you have ever had professional contact with a lawyer (barrister or solicitor), did they demonstrate any of the following in that consultation? Please select all that apply. [All respondents who have had contact]

	Total	Male	Female
Fairness	45%	40%	50%
Perspective	40%	37%	43%
Judgement	38%	40%	37%
Perseverance	21%	21%	22%
None of the above	21%	24%	18%

Less than half of respondents who have ever had professional contact with a lawyer encountered fairness (45%). Women, however, are more likely than men to have experienced fairness from a lawyer.

In contrast, one in five respondents (21%) say the lawyer they had contact with did not demonstrate any of the above character strengths. This proportion is higher among men than women (24% vs. 18% respectively).

Q.7 If you have had recent contact (within the last year) with a teacher in school or college, did they demonstrate any of the following? Please select all that apply. [All respondents who have had recent contact]

	Total	Male	Female
Love of learning	57%	58%	56%
Humour	53%	49%	57%
Fairness	51%	50%	53%
Creativity	47%	46%	48%
None of the above	9%	7%	10%

More than half of respondents who have had contact with a teacher within the last year say they have encountered love of learning (57%), humour (53%) and fairness (51%) and only 9% say the teacher did not demonstrate any of the above character strengths.

Women are more likely than man to say the teacher demonstrated humour (57% vs. 49% respectively).



Q.8 To what extent do you agree with the following statements (Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly, Don't know). [All respondents]

		Total	Male	Female
I believe that to be a good doctor, you also need to be a morally good person	Agree strongly	50%	46%	54%
	Agree	37%	38%	37%
I believe that to be a good lawyer, you also need to be a morally good person	Agree strongly	40%	36%	44%
	Agree	32%	31%	32%
I believe that to be a good teacher, you also need to be a morally good person	Agree strongly	52%	47%	56%
	Agree	37%	37%	37%

Half of respondents strongly believe that to be a good doctor or a good teacher you also need to be a morally good person (50% and 52% respectively), with a further 37% and 32% agreeing with these statements.

Just 40% of people strongly agree a good lawyer needs to be a good person, with 32% somewhat agreeing.

Women are more likely to strongly agree that to be good at any of these professions someone has to be a morally good person.

Q.9 From the following list, which three would you rate as the most important for children and adolescents to have? Please rank the top three in order of priority [All respondents]

	Total Top three most important	Male Top three most important	Female Top three most important
Honesty	81%	82%	80%
Self-control	71%	72%	70%
Compassion	48%	42%	54%
Courage	36%	33%	40%
Humility/Modesty	32%	37%	27%
Gratitude	21%	23%	19%
Justice	11%	12%	11%

Four-fifths of respondents (81%) believe it is important for children or adolescents to be honest, and 71% believe that self-control is among the top three most important character strengths of children and adolescents.

Women put a greater emphasis than men on compassion (54% vs. 42%) and courage (40% vs. 33%) as some of the most important character strengths, while men are more likely than women to highlight humility/modesty (37% vs. 27%) and gratitude (23% vs. 19%).



**Q.10 To what extent do you agree with the following statements:
[Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree,
disagree strongly, Don't know] [All respondents]**

Most respondents think character is an important component in children's education and the majority believe that teachers are competent for this.

		Total
It is important that schools help children develop good character	Agree strongly	51%
	Agree	40%
	Neither nor	6%
	NET: Disagree	1%
Teachers are generally competent to develop good character in children	Agree strongly	16%
	Agree	41%
	Neither nor	27%
	NET: Disagree	11%
Character-building should be taught as a separate subject on the school curriculum.	Agree strongly	20%
	Agree	33%
	Neither nor	25%
	NET: Disagree	17%

Nearly all respondents agree that it is important that schools help children develop good character, with half agreeing strongly (51%).

Fewer people agree that teachers are generally competent to develop good character in children, with 16% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing. One in ten disagrees with this statement (11%).

Respondents are more divided on the issue of character-building as a separate subject on the school curriculum. Whilst more than half agree that character-building should be taught as a separate subject, almost one-fifth disagree and 25% are undecided.

