

Should more children get free school meals?

24th September – 01st October 2021



90.13%

of Primary voters said Yes.



88.26%

of Secondary voters said Yes.



93.68%

of 16+ & College voters said Yes.

Free school meals are offered to children from low-income households and improves a child's health whilst helping to decrease the poverty trap. Due to the pandemic, many schools had closed leaving many school-aged children from a financially struggling background, without their daily free school meal. This week, VotesforSchools took a closer look at the campaign End Child Food Poverty #WriteNow. Throughout September, The Food Foundation are campaigning to ensure that no child goes hungry in the UK.

Marcus Rashford successfully campaigned to expand free school meals in the summer holidays during the pandemic. He is spearheading the #WriteNow campaign and is calling on the Government to do much more.

It's highly important the government see what young people think about issues that directly affect them. In this VoteTopic Lesson, VotesforSchools explored the different sides of free school meals and gave young people all over the UK the opportunity to have their voice heard on this issue. 37,979 voters took the opportunity to have their say!

Sample of 37,979 voters

If you want more information of the exact split of the sample size across the different categories below, please contact us at lara@votesforschools.com.

Please Note: The sample size featured reflects the number of pupils and students that cast their vote on this topic during the week in which this vote was held. This sample size does therefore not reflect the number of pupils and students who discussed this VoteTopic but did not get a chance to participate in the voting.

VoteTopic Overview:

Primary, Secondary, 16+ & College voters all discussed the same Question "Should more children get free school meals?".



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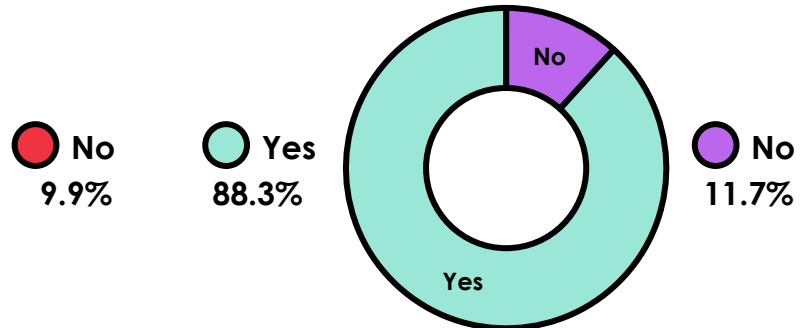
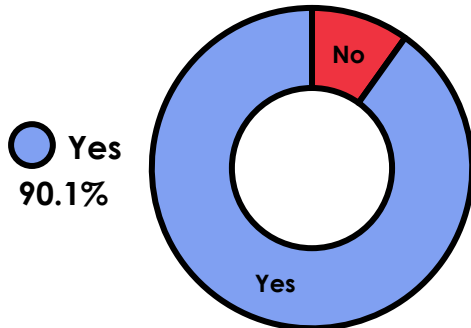
Grand Total

Primary:

Yes 90.13%
No 9.87%

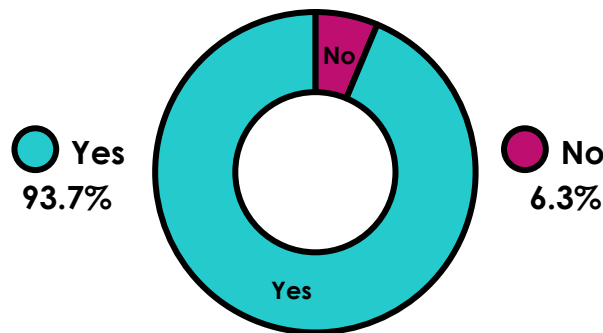
Secondary:

Yes 88.26%
No 11.74%



16+ & College:

Yes 93.68%
No 6.32%



Some of our voters who chose **No** pointed out the cost of free school meals and that instead of providing free school meals to more children, the government should increase wages. One Primary voter from Kent who voted **No** commented the following:

"The government should **pay more for wages** so that people can **afford** to feed their children."

However, one College voter from West Yorkshire who voted **Yes**, pointed out the following:

"Whilst **increasing wages** for families would also be good to do, it **doesn't fix the issue** of food poverty for children. Providing free school meals for all children really would **solve this problem** directly."

And a Secondary voter also from West Yorkshire said:

"It is **important** that more children have **free school meals** because if you just **earn more money**, you **still may not be able to pay** for food at school or at home."



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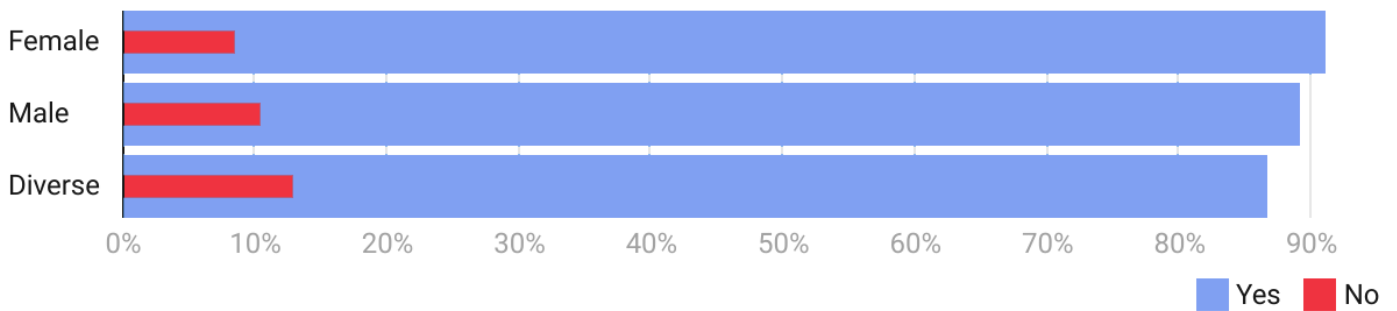


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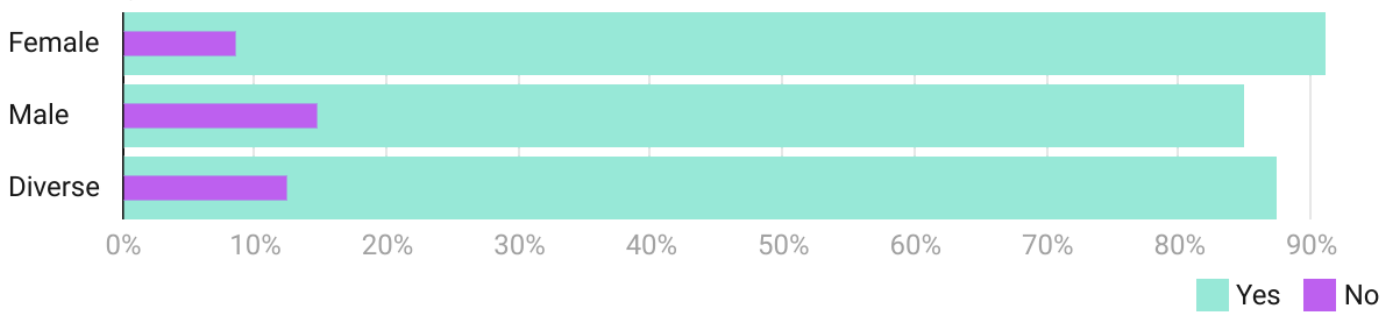


Gender

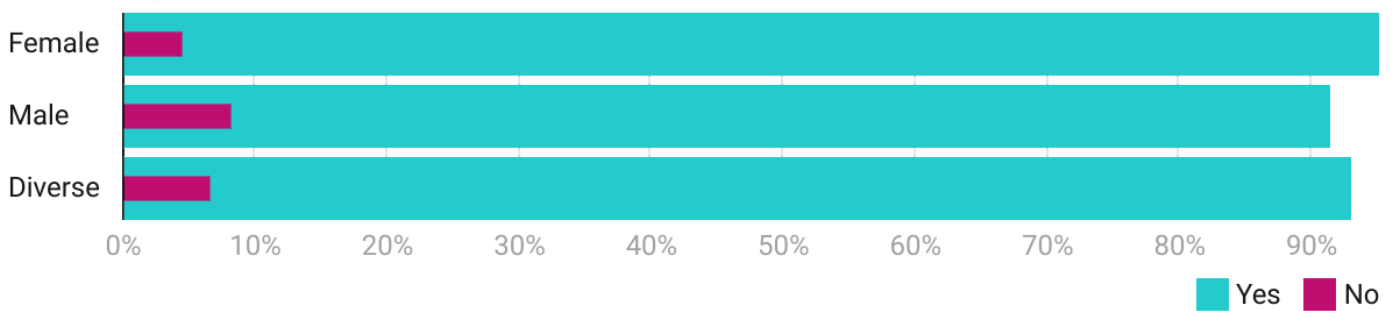
Primary



Secondary



16+ & College



Primary:

	Yes	No
Female	91.22%	8.78%
Male	89.29%	10.71%
Diverse*	86.85%	13.15%

Secondary:

	Yes	No
Female	91.28%	8.72%
Male	85.10%	14.90%
Diverse*	87.45%	12.55%



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16+ & College:

	Yes	No
Female	95.27%	4.73%
Male	91.59%	8.41%
Diverse*	93.24%	6.76%

*Votes collected as "Diverse" include students that identify as gender diverse, as well as students that wish not to disclose or were not able to specify their gender.

The following chart looks at the above **YES VOTES** and reflects how the results between the gender groups compares to the overall results of Primary, Secondary and 16+ & Colleges:

	Primary	Secondary	16+ & College
Female	↑ +1.09%	↑ +3.02%	↑ +1.59%
Male	↓ -0.85%	↓ -3.16%	↓ -2.09%
Diverse*	↓ -3.28%	↓ -0.81%	↓ -0.44%

Age

Total - Primary, Secondary & 16+ & College:

Year Group	Yes	No
Reception	54.55%	45.45%
Year 1	85.78%	14.22%
Year 2	90.29%	9.71%
Year 3	92.76%	7.24%
Year 4	91.44%	8.56%
Year 5	90.00%	10.00%
Year 6	88.71%	11.29%
Year 7	87.44%	12.56%
Year 8	88.44%	11.56%
Year 9	88.96%	11.04%
Year 10	88.67%	11.33%
Year 11	88.88%	11.12%
Year 12	93.47%	6.53%
Year 13	95.29%	4.71%
Vertical Tutor Group	86.90%	13.10%



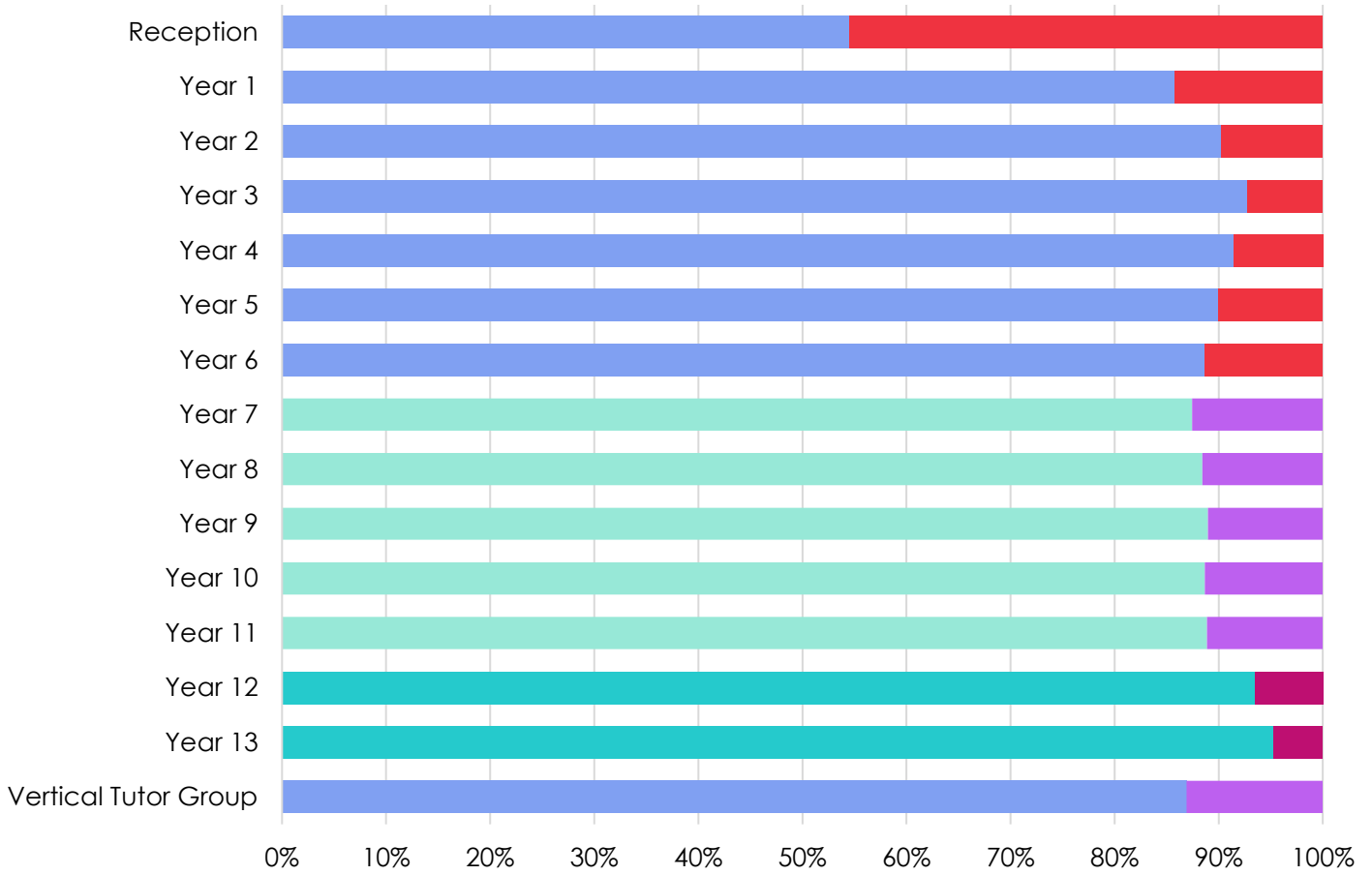
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Amongst voters, a common theme for voting **Yes** was children's wellbeing and how free school meals benefit this.

Two Primary voters from the West Midlands who voted **Yes** commented:

"All children have the **right to nutritious healthy food**. This is important because it **helps us to concentrate** in class and grow big and strong."

"If children don't have **enough food** they **won't be able to learn** and learning is important."

A Secondary voter from Nottinghamshire said:

"Children should all be allowed to eat. We **don't always know** if children are **fed properly** at home and school should be a **safe place** where they are fed."



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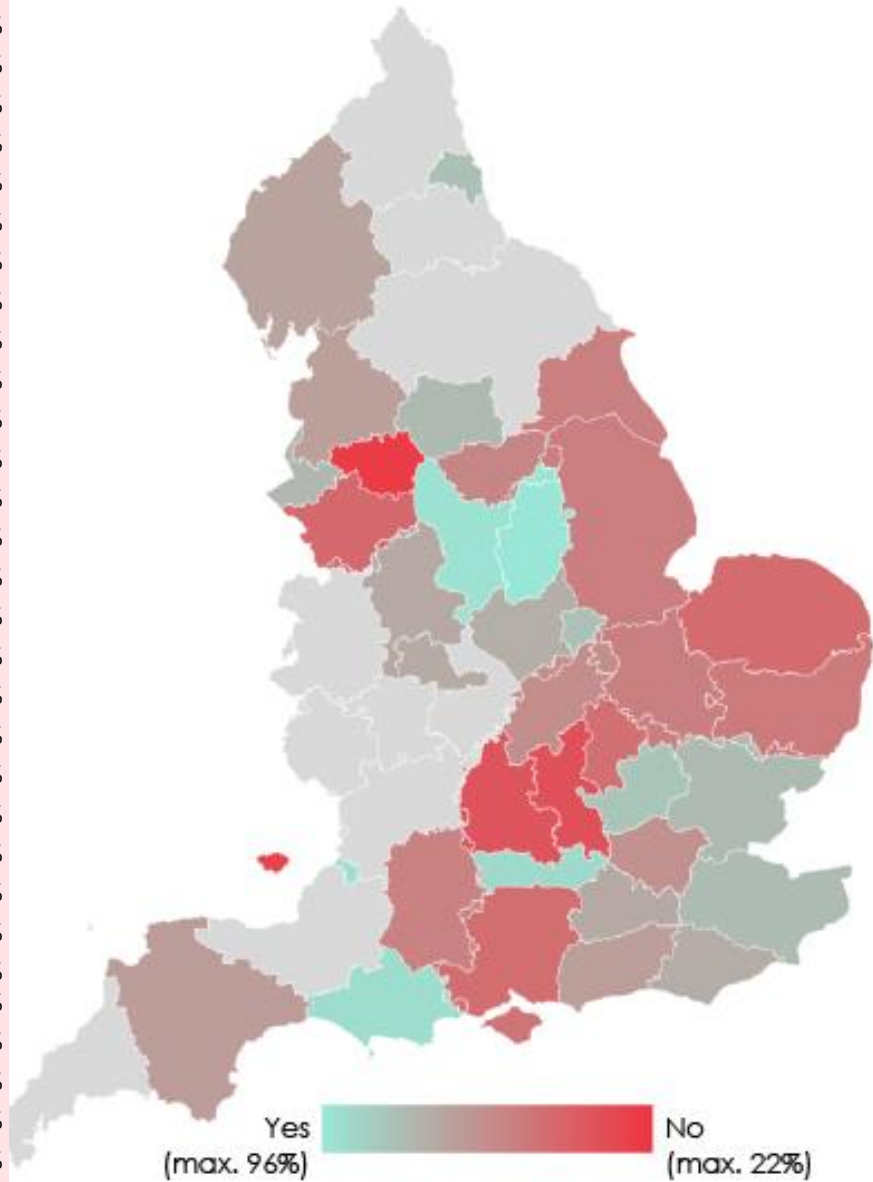
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Location

Total - Primary, Secondary & 16+ & College:

	Yes	No
Worcestershire*	100.00%	0.00%
Durham*	100.00%	0.00%
Nottinghamshire	96.12%	3.88%
Derbyshire	95.58%	4.42%
Bristol	95.38%	4.62%
Dorset	95.12%	4.88%
Berkshire	94.79%	5.21%
Hertfordshire	92.75%	7.25%
Rutland	92.31%	7.69%
Tyne and Wear	92.25%	7.75%
Kent	91.88%	8.12%
West Yorkshire	91.77%	8.23%
Essex	91.76%	8.24%
Merseyside	91.45%	8.55%
Greater London	91.18%	8.82%
Leicestershire	90.57%	9.43%
East Sussex	90.41%	9.59%
West Midlands	90.18%	9.82%
Surrey	89.96%	10.04%
Staffordshire	89.96%	10.04%
Cumbria	89.47%	10.53%
Lancashire	89.13%	10.87%
West Sussex	88.97%	11.03%
Devon	88.82%	11.18%
Northamptonshire	87.25%	12.75%
South Yorkshire	86.62%	13.38%
London	86.25%	13.75%
Wiltshire	86.06%	13.94%
East Riding of Yorkshire	85.99%	14.01%
Cambridgeshire	85.94%	14.06%
Lincolnshire	85.84%	14.16%
Suffolk	85.38%	14.62%
Isle of Wight	84.81%	15.19%
Bedfordshire	84.29%	15.71%
Hampshire	84.07%	15.93%
Norfolk	83.89%	16.11%
Cheshire	83.65%	16.35%
Oxfordshire	81.65%	18.35%
Buckinghamshire	81.25%	18.75%
Cardiff	79.87%	20.13%
Greater Manchester	79.21%	20.79%
North Yorkshire	78.27%	21.73%



*Regions with fewer than 25 votes are not displayed on the map. These regions are marked with a * in the table.



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Voter Comments

"All children have the **right to nutritious healthy food**. This is important because it **helps us to concentrate** in class and grow big and strong."

Primary School, West Midlands

"I think yes because some children's families **cannot afford the school meals** and if everyone had a free school meal it would make it **easier for the families** who cannot afford the school meals."

Primary School, Hertfordshire

"I think that more children should get free school meals, because **eating healthily** helps you to **concentrate** more on your **learning**. If they have food, then they **won't go hungry**."

Primary School, Hertfordshire

"The **government** should do more to **help children**. Children are the **future of the country**."

Secondary School, Leicestershire

"We are the 5th **largest economy** in the world and yet we can't **afford** to provide school meals. Free meals should be available to **those who really need it**."

Secondary School, North Yorkshire

"Children should all be allowed to eat. We **don't always know** if children are **fed properly** at home and school should be a **safe place** where they are fed."

Secondary School, Nottinghamshire

"I think it's very important for the government to take note of, especially as **only 1.7 million children are on free school meals** yet **4.3 million live in poverty**. This means that millions of children are **going without food** or may become **malnourished** if their parents can't afford to feed them good quality food with lots of nutrients."

Secondary School, Dorset



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"Whilst **increasing wages** for families would also be good to do, it **doesn't fix the issue** of food poverty for children. Providing free school meals for all children really would **solve this problem** directly."

College, West Yorkshire

"Yes, **more children** should be **eligible**. It has been raised further by Marcus Rashford that lots of people **need extra help** especially with feeding their children due to **very low incomes**. There are people claiming working tax credits to help improve and top up their income, yet their **children are not eligible** for free school meals and so **money is very tight**."

College, Essex

"It is the **quality of the food** in schools and the **education** around **nutrition** that is more important."

Secondary School, Bristol

"**Lowering the price of food** in supermarkets and **school uniform** would be better."

Primary School, Surrey

"I personally believe that school meals should be **free for more children** but I do understand that it is **expensive** for the government so a possibly **better solution** would be to make the **meals a lot cheaper** for more children."

Secondary School, West Midlands

"The government should **pay more for wages** so that people can **afford** to feed their children."

Primary School, Kent

"Not all students should get free school meals **only those that qualify**, the money saved should then be used to provide more school meals **for people who need them**."

College, West Yorkshire



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