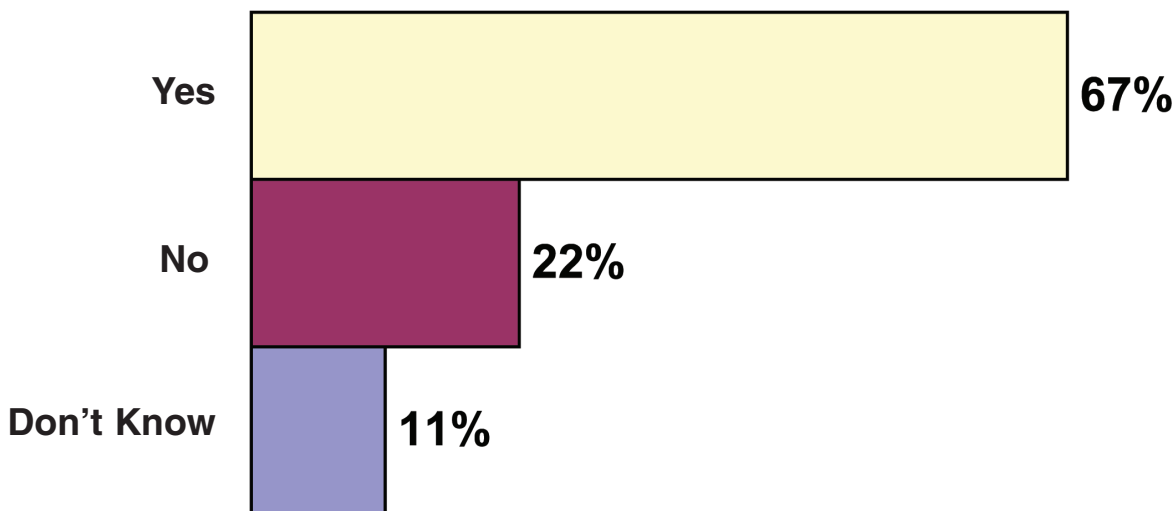


INDEPENDENT SURVEY DEMONSTRATES HIGH LEVEL OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR WATER FLUORIDATION

An independent, national survey conducted by NOP Omnibus shows that 67% of people in Britain think fluoride should be added to water if it can reduce tooth decay.



Do you think fluoride should be added to water if it can reduce tooth decay?

The survey, conducted by NOP on behalf of the British Fluoridation Society in July 2003, is based on over 2000 interviews with adults aged 15+ across Great Britain. The sample is designed to be representative of the population of Great Britain as a whole. The NOP survey used established methods of obtaining a random sample, and as such is a reliable indicator of opinion in the population as a whole.

42% of people mistakenly think that they have fluoride added to their drinking water already.

In fact, only around 10% of the population has fluoride added to their drinking water - mainly in the West Midlands and the North East of England. We believe that coverage should be increased to 25-35% of the population to include those areas of the country where dental health is poor.

Most people don't know that fluoride is present naturally in water

The survey showed that only 28% of the population think that there is any fluoride present naturally in water. In fact, fluoride is naturally present in all drinking water. In some parts of the country, Hartlepool in the North East of England for example, this natural level reaches the optimal for dental health (around 1 part of fluoride per million parts of water). But in most parts of the country the natural level is too low to protect against tooth decay (less than 0.3 parts of fluoride per million parts of water).

The question: Is it valid?

Opponents of water fluoridation argue that the question "Do you think fluoride should be added to water if it can reduce tooth decay?" is misleading, and that if NOP listed the harmful medical effects of water fluoridation then the response to the question would be quite different. However, the important point here is that there is strong evidence that water fluoridation does reduce tooth decay, whilst there is no convincing evidence of any harmful medical effects.

In fact, the evidence that water fluoridation reduces tooth decay is so convincing that we believe it would be legitimate to ask "do you think that fluoride should be added to drinking water **BECAUSE** it reduces tooth decay?" However, NOP advise that the wording 'IF it reduces tooth decay' is more balanced.

The high level of public support for water fluoridation was spread evenly across different groups of the population.

Men and women were equally supportive

Population group	In favour of fluoridation
Men	67%
Women	67%

The youngest age group (15 to 24) showed the highest level of support, but support was similarly high across all the age groups - including those aged 65 and over.

Population group	In favour of fluoridation
15 to 24 year olds	70%
25-34 year olds	67%
35-44 year olds	68%
45-54 year olds	63%
55-64 year olds	66%
65 years and older	66%

Support was fairly evenly balanced across the different social groups.

Population group	In favour of fluoridation
Social group AB	64%
Social group C1	68%
Social group C2	68%
Social group DE	67%

Support among people with children was slightly higher than among those with no children.

Population group	In favour of fluoridation
With children	70%
Without children	65%

Around different parts of the country, support was highest in the North East region - where some water supplies are already fluoridated. However, support for fluoridation did not vary substantially from region to region.

TV area	In favour of fluoridation	TV area	In favour of fluoridation
N.E (Tyne Tees)	72%	South West (WCT)	68%
Lancs (Granada)	70%	Scottish	67%
Yorkshire	67%	Border	61%
Mids (Central)	65%	Grampian	66%
Wales & West (HTV)	68%	North	68%
East Anglia (Anglia)	68%	Midlands	66%
London (Carlton/LWT)	66%	South	65%
Southern (Meridian)	63%		

Further information on the benefits and safety of water fluoridation is available from the British Fluoridation Society, Ward 4, Booth Hall Children's Hospital, Charlestown Road, Blackley, Manchester M9 7AA.

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NOP Omnibus carried out this study on their RLO survey between 3-8 July 2003