

RESULTS OF FLUORIDATION SURVEY

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using telephone interviewing with a Random Digit Dialling (RDD) sample. A specialist supplier was used to supply a random sample of numbers derived from all possible numbers known to exist on the Isle of Man. Because the sample is not drawn from telephone directories, ex-directory numbers are included as well as listed numbers. Numbers were not cross-checked against the Telephone Preference Service, as this do-not-call list concerns marketing calls, not market research calls.

Because some age and gender groups are more difficult to get hold of on the telephone, quota controls were set to minimise the bias that would result from these differences in availability. Quota controls were set for age and gender, based on data from the last Isle of Man census.

Interviewing was conducted from GfK NOP's telephone interviewing centre in Luton, by members of the panel of fully trained interviewers. All interviewers received a personal briefing about the survey before starting work.

Interviewing took place from 12-18 May, and **1,000 interviews were conducted in total**. The achieved sample matched the Census figure to within 1%, and so no corrective weighting was carried out.

Because of the use of quotas, it is not technically correct to use sampling errors, but experience of election polls shows that in practice random sample sampling errors provide a reasonable indicator for quota samples. With this caveat in mind, and given the 1,000 sample size, the sampling error on a finding around 50% would be +/- 3%, while on a finding of around 25% or 75% it would be around +/- 2.5%.

RESULTS

Q1 Do you think tooth decay rates on the Isle of Man are above the average UK level, below it, or about the same?

Base: All respondents = 1000

	%
Above average	22
Below average	9
About the same	41
Don't know	28

There was low awareness of the relative state of the island's teeth in comparison with the UK. Although it is true that twice as many gave the correct answer – that tooth decay is more prevalent on the Isle of Man than the national average – as gave the incorrect one, only one in five of all respondents gave the correct answer.

The biggest group were the 41% who thought tooth decay on the Isle of Man was the same as in the rest of the UK, and the next biggest the 28% who admitted they didn't know. It is likely that the former group also contained many people who didn't really know – asked a question like that to which one doesn't know the answer; “about the same” is a sensible guess.

Just 22% stated that tooth decay is more prevalent on the Isle of Man, while 9% thought it was less than the UK average.

There was no difference between men and women on this question. Older respondents were less likely than younger ones to say tooth decay was above average, but they were also less likely to say below average – this is basically a function of their greater propensity to say don't know. There was, however, a significant difference between those with and without children under 16. Those with children were more likely to say decay rates were higher on the Isle of Man.

Q2 In fact tooth decay levels on the Isle of Man are considerably higher than the average UK level. In many countries, and in some parts of the UK, fluoride is added to the water supply to try to reduce tooth decay. Many scientists and most professional medical and dental organisations believe adding fluoride to water is a good way to reduce tooth decay, but some other scientists claim that adding fluoride to water has little effect on tooth decay, and is a risk to people's health. Would you personally favour or oppose fluoride being added to the water in the Isle of Man?

Base: All respondents = 1000

	%
Strongly favour	12
Favour	17
Neither favour nor oppose	14
Oppose	19
Strongly oppose	35
Don't know	3

When asked about their own support for fluoridation, just over half (54%) were either opposed or strongly opposed, while 29% favoured or strongly favoured it and a further 14% were neither opposed or in favour. Not only were there more who opposed it – those opposed felt more strongly about it. While those in favour split fairly evenly between those favouring and strongly favouring fluoridation, those against split almost two to one strongly against.

Men were more likely to support fluoridation than women – 32% of men were in favour, compared with 25% of women – and they were also less likely to be opposed – 52% of men compared with 58% of women.

There was again an age differential, but this time it was the 35-54 age group who stood out. They were slightly (but not significantly) more in favour of fluoridation than the under-35s, and considerably more so than the over-55s.

Those with children in the household were more likely to be in favour of fluoridation than those without, possibly reflecting a greater concern for the dental health of their children, but even among this group those opposing fluoridation outweighed those supporting it by 48% to 33%.

Those who were aware that tooth decay levels are higher on the Isle of Man than the UK average were much more likely to support fluoridation than other groups, presumably because they felt it would be efficacious. Although there were relatively fewer thinking tooth decay is lower on the Isle of Man than the average, meaning the results must be treated with some caution, it is noticeable that this group was by far the most strongly opposed to fluoridation. Among this group fully 64% of this group were opposed, while only 48% of those aware that rates on the island are actually higher were opposed.