Missing People Family Feedback Survey 2014

Missing People is committed to listening to, and learning from, people who use the charity's services. In line with the Service User Involvement Strategy 2010, Missing People conducts an annual survey with families who have reported a family member missing to the charity. This report outlines the main findings and recommendations from the fifth wave of the survey conducted between January and March 2014.

1. Executive Summary

Key points:

- Satisfaction with the services provided by Missing People continues to be extremely high and families are particularly positive about the quality and expertise of the support provided by the charity's staff and volunteers.

- The services provided by Missing People are viewed as adding considerable value to the work of the police, particularly the range, reach and speed of the publicity the charity offers and the quality of the emotional and practical support for families.

- The areas where families would like to see more or new services include advocacy support and services for families after the missing incident is resolved.

- Use of social media as a communication channel, both generally and as part of a publicity appeal, has increased and, correspondingly, so has interest in support to help families use social media more effectively.

The families and their missing relatives

"I miss him so much. It is five months now and it is still so painful."

- One hundred and sixty-eight family members of missing and formerly missing adults and children were surveyed. All had used Missing People's services for the first time during 2013.

- People who participated in the survey were mostly women aged over 35 years looking for male relatives.

- At the time of interview 68 per cent of the missing relatives had been found alive, seven per cent had died whilst they were missing and 25 per cent were still missing.

- The police were investigating the disappearance for 118 of the families, whilst 50 families were using the charity's lost contact tracing service.

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Initial contact and expectations

"I was really hoping that we could find him."

- One in three people were aware of the charity before their relative went missing. Families most commonly found out about the charity through police referrals. In line with relatively low awareness, 38 per cent of families did not have any expectations of how the charity might help them when they first got in touch. Among families who did, expectations centred on help with the search and publicity, or the hope for a reconnection. Only five per cent said they expected to receive emotional and practical support for their family which suggests there is scope to better promote the availability of these valued aspects of the charity's service through our referral partners.

- The charity's ability to meet or exceed expectations remains strong (64 per cent), although this does represent a small drop compared with last year. Families whose relative is still missing and those whose initial expectations focus on a reconnection are more likely to say their expectations were unmet or only partially met, indicating that, as found in previous years, failure to achieve a reconnection can impact on assessment of the charity for some.

Service experience

"The charity was amazing. They surpassed my expectations. Everyone I spoke to was exceedingly polite, kind and compassionate. Thank you so much."

- Overall satisfaction with Missing People's services continues to be high across a range of measures and this year satisfaction returned to levels similar to 2012 after a slight dip in some ratings last year. Areas where satisfaction had most improved were: ease of making the first contact with the charity; response to families' initial enquiries; and support after the disappearance had been resolved. Satisfaction was slightly higher among families whose relative had been found than those whose loved one was still missing.

- Almost all families (96 per cent) would recommend Missing People to someone in a similar situation. The work of the charity is also perceived to add value to the work of the police (85 per cent), particularly for the range, reach and speed of publicity Missing People can offer, as well as the quality of emotional and practical support provided to families by our staff and volunteers.

- Where a publicity appeal had been launched almost all families felt the amount of publicity had met or exceeded their expectations (87 per cent). Furthermore, among the 48 families where there was a publicity appeal and their relative was subsequently found, 20 felt that the publicity appeal had a direct impact on the outcome. While most families were overwhelmingly positive about the publicity, a few were frustrated with perceived delays or communication around the appeal suggesting some scope to review the clarity and efficacy of the charity's communication around publicity.

- Increased use of social media as a communication channel is evident from the survey findings, both generally and as part of a publicity appeal.

Impacts on families

"It has caused me tremendous mental strain and anguish."

- Almost half the families (47 per cent) said they had experienced a physical or mental health problem as a result of their loved one going missing and comments from the families continue to demonstrate how the impacts can be significant, enduring and overwhelming. Eighteen per cent had experienced practical difficulties which is the lowest incidence we have recorded across the five years of the survey.

New services

"People go missing for a reason so I think it is about knowing who is there to help you after you've found the person."

- Advocacy support, in other words, help to make representations on behalf of families to official agencies and companies, was again the most requested new service. Families would also welcome more support after the missing incident is resolved and the findings show that emotional and practical difficulties do not automatically cease when their missing loved one is found but that gaining access to appropriate support can be difficult. Missing People is currently conducting research about reconnecting missing children and adults which will further explore how services to support the reconnection process can be improved. The charity is also developing an 'After Missing' support project in Wales, funded by the Big Lottery, which will help previously missing people and their families come to terms with their experiences with the aim of supporting the reconnection and reducing the likelihood of further missing episodes.

Supporting the charity

"Missing People offered me hope when I was struggling to find hope... I had somewhere to contact and get things rolling. Thanks for that support and your continued support."

- Three in four families would like to support the charity in some way in the future, including contributing to research and campaigning work, financial support, attendance at family support events and sharing their experiences to help other people who are in a similar situation. This strong level of engagement is likely to reflect the high levels of satisfaction with the charity observed throughout the findings.

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2. About the survey

The main aims of the survey are:

- To gather information directly from families, about their experiences, in a confidential way.

- To measure families' satisfaction with Missing People.

- To measure changes in satisfaction over time.

- To find out what new services families would like to be provided.

This year there were 364 eligible[1] families in the sample, of whom 168 (46 per cent) fully completed the questionnaire between 9th January and 22nd March 2014. Surveys were conducted mainly by telephone (131, 78 per cent) with a smaller number (37, 22 per cent) completed online. The eligible pool of families was smaller than in 2013, but the same proportion of families was reached and took part in the survey.

The survey is conducted with families who had their first contact with the charity in the previous calendar year and families can only take part in the survey once. This means that the findings represent a snapshot of new families contacting the charity in each given year, but does not measure the change in each family's experience or opinion over time[2].

Telephone surveys were conducted by a team of four interviewers drawn from volunteers within the charity's Services team. They were trained for the paid role and supported by an Administrative Assistant.

This was the third time the online version of the questionnaire has been made available. People contacted by telephone were able to request the online version as an alternative to a telephone interview, and the online questionnaire was also sent to all eligible families for whom Missing People does not have a UK telephone number, and to people who were not successfully contacted by telephone during the fieldwork period. The proportion of respondents completing the online version of the questionnaire is slightly higher this year compared with the 2013 and 2012 surveys (22 per cent compared with 13 and 12 per cent respectively).

Some questions were not asked of the online respondents, for reasons of length and appropriateness. Where this was the case, analyses are based on the number of people who were asked the question (i.e. 137 telephone responses). One hundred and sixty-seven emails were sent, of which 37 people took part.

All respondents were offered the opportunity to request a call from our Services team to discuss their case in recognition that talking about their missing loved one during the survey could raise issues and emotions that they may want to talk through with a trained support worker. At the end of the survey all respondents were also provided contact details for Missing People's 116 000 helpline and offered numbers for other support organisations in case they felt the need to discuss their case at a later date.

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[1] In order to be eligible to take part the charity must have a UK telephone number or email address for a family contact. Missing person cases are also excluded from the survey sample if there is an ongoing criminal investigation, if the missing person is wanted for police or immigration investigation, or if the missing person has requested that Missing People does not inform their family that they have been in contact.
[2] This enables the charity to get a consistent picture of families' experiences when they first contact the charity. Families who continue to receive support from Missing People for more than a year are given regular opportunities to provide feedback.

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3. Main Findings

Who took part?

- Table 1 summarises the profile of family members who took part in the survey.

- One hundred and twenty-one (72 per cent) of the family members that responded were female and 47 (28 per cent) were male. Most respondents (85 per cent) were aged 35 or over, including a third (32 per cent) aged between 45 and 54. The age and gender profile of respondents is consistent with surveys in previous years.

- Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had children aged under 18 living in the household. The total number of children living with respondents was at least 119.

- Seventy-nine per cent of respondents identified themselves as white, which is slightly lower than UK-wide proportions[3]. Seven per cent of respondents identified themselves as Black or Black British and five per cent as Asian or Asian British. English was the main language spoken at home in 93 per cent of the households. Other languages reported by respondents included: Arabic, Urdu, Greek, Slovakian, Spanish, Tamil, Malay and Welsh.

- Forty-five per cent of families owned their own home, either outright or with a mortgage, whilst 28 per cent rented from the council or a housing association, and 21 per cent were private renters.

- Financially, just under half of families felt that they were 'doing alright' or 'living comfortably', slightly higher than in 2013[4] (46 per cent in 2014 versus 38 per cent in 2013). A further 30 per cent considered themselves to be 'just about getting by' (36 per cent in 2013), whilst 20 per cent were finding it financially 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' (25 per cent in 2013).

- Eighty-seven per cent of all respondents had internet access at home, in line with the last two years of the survey (84 per cent in 2012 and 83 per cent in 2011). Similarly, 85 per cent had access to an email address they can use for personal email, again stable from the 2013 and 2012 surveys. However, use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter was up slightly this year to 61 per cent (compared with 50 per cent in 2013 and 54 per cent in 2012).

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[3] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/no--145--autumn-2011/jrd-population-trends-145.pdf

[4] Dates used throughout the report refer to the year which the survey was carried out and the findings published. For example: 2013 means that the survey was carried out in 2013 among a sample of families who had used Missing People's services for the first time in 2012. This is consistent with previous reports of the annual survey findings.

| Table 1: Demographic profile of family members participating in the survey*				
Gender	**%**	**Children under 18 in the household**		**%**
Men	28	Yes		39
Women	72	No		58
		Not answered/refused		2
Age		**Housing tenure**		
Under 25	2	Rented from a council/housing association		28
25-34	13	Rented privately		21
35-44	17	Owned with a mortgage		23
45-54	32	Owned outright		22
55-64	21	Refused/no response		6
65+	15			
Ethnicity		**Internet access at home**		
White	79	Yes		87
Black or Black British	7	No		13
Asian or Asian British	5			
Other	8			
Financial situation		**Access to email address for personal correspondence**		
Living comfortably	17	Yes		85
Doing all right	30	No		15
Just about getting by	30			
Finding it quite difficult	11	**Use social media**		
Finding it very difficult	10	Yes		61
Refused/no response	4	No		39
Base: All families (168)				

*Some percentages do not sum to 100, or some combined percentages differ to the sum of individual category percentages, because of rounding.

What are the characteristics of the missing people and the search?

- Table 2 summarises the characteristics of the missing people that relatives who took part in our survey had contacted the charity about[5]. Just over two thirds (68 per cent) of the missing people were male and 32 per cent female.

- Figure 1 shows that the age profile of the missing women was much younger than the men. Two in five of the missing women (42 per cent) were under the age of 18 at the time they went missing versus just eight per cent of the missing men. In contrast, 58 per cent of the missing male relatives were aged over 35, compared with 32 per cent of women.

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[5] The profile of the relatives of missing people from our survey findings is not representative of all missing people nationally because our survey is conducted with families contacting Missing People for the first time in the last year, rather than all families with a missing relative.

Fig 1: Age and gender profile of the missing people that families contacted the charity about
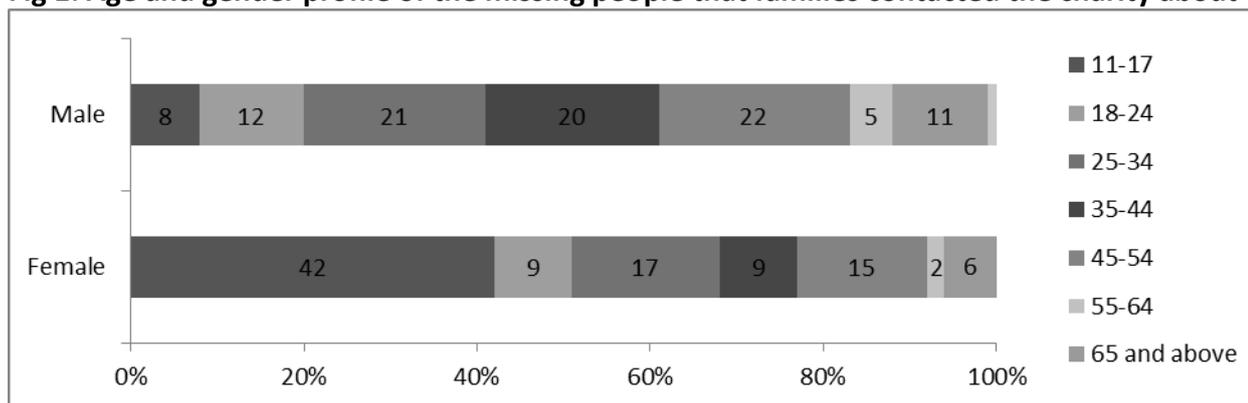
- The families were most commonly searching for sons and daughters (27 per cent and 17 per cent respectively), followed by brothers, fathers, and husbands (14, 9 and 8 per cent respectively). Smaller numbers of families interviewed had contacted Missing People about their sister, mother or daughter (5, 2 and 2 per cent respectively). Fifteen per cent were looking for other relatives including grandchildren, nieces, nephews, friends and cousins.

- As shown in the previous section (table 1), 72% of respondents were women looking for missing loved ones. Overall, the most common relationships between the family members who took part in the survey and the missing people were:

  - mothers looking for sons (n=31, 18 per cent);
  - mothers looking for daughters (n=23, 14 per cent);
  - sisters looking for brothers (n=17, 10 per cent);
  - fathers looking for sons (n=15, 9 per cent);
  - daughters looking for fathers (n=10, 6 per cent)
  - wives looking for husbands (n=10, 6 per cent)
  - brothers looking for brothers (n=7, 4 per cent)

- One hundred and fourteen family members (68 per cent) who took part in the survey reported that their missing family member had been found alive and 42 (25 per cent) that the person was still missing at the time of interview. A further 12 people (seven per cent) said that their family member had died whilst missing.

- Around half of family members said that their relative had been missing for less than six months (51 per cent). Correspondingly, forty-eight per cent had been missing for more than six months, including eleven per cent missing for more than ten years. Just two per cent of family members said that their relatives were missing for 48 hours or less, reflecting that fewer families get in touch with the charity if the person is only missing for a short time, or at the start of the missing incident.[6] The duration of the missing episode was longer for the families whose relatives were still missing at the time of interview: all but two said they had been missing for more than six months, compared with just one third (35 per cent) of families whose relative had been found alive. All but one of the 11 family members whose relative had died whilst missing said that they had been missing for six months or less.

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[6] Data from the UK Missing Persons Bureau shows that nearly 90% of missing *incidents* are resolved within 48 hours (UKMPB, 2013: 26). It should be noted that the number of reports of missing *incidents* does not equate to the number of *people* going missing, as individuals may be reported missing to the police on more than one occasion.

Table 2: Characteristics of the missing people that families had contacted the charity about				
Gender of missing person	%	**Missing Person's status**		%
Female	32	Found alive		68
Male	68	Still missing		25
		Died whilst missing		7
Age of missing person at time of disappearance		**Duration of the missing episode**		
11-17	18	Up to and including 48 hours		2
18-24	12	48 hours, up to one week		14
25-34	20	More than 1 week, up to 1 month		23
35-44	17	More than 1 month, up to 6 months		13
45-54	20	More than 6 months, up to 1 year		8
55-64	4	More than 1 year, up to 2 years		9
65 and above	9	More than 2 years, up to 5 years		13
Don't know	1	More than 5 years, up to 10 years		7
		More than 10 years		11
Relationship of the missing person to the family member		Don't know		1
Sons	27			
Daughters	17			
Brothers	14			
Fathers	9			
Husbands/male partners/ex-partners	8			
Sisters	5			
Mothers	2			
Wives	2			
Other relationship	15			
Refused	1			

Base: All families (168)

*Some percentages do not sum to 100, or some combined percentages differ to the sum of individual category percentages, because of rounding.

- Of the 114 people who had been found alive, 37 per cent (42 people) had been missing more than once, including seven per cent (8 people) who had been missing more than ten times. Of the 42 people who had been missing more than once, 22 were aged between 11 and 17 and this group also tended to be missing for a shorter length of time (one month or less).

- Eighty-seven per cent (99 families) of those whose missing relative had been found alive had subsequently had contact with their found family member whilst 12 per cent (14 families) reported the missing person had chosen not to resume contact.

Had the missing person been reported to the police?

- Seventy per cent of all respondents had reported their family member missing to the police. Three in four reports (74 per cent) were made within 48 hours.

- Over half (56 per cent) of families felt that the police officers investigating their case communicated well with them, while 26 per cent thought communication was poor.

"They [the police] were very kind and sensitive."

"The police have gone out of their way to keep in touch."

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"They should be a little bit more understanding. Some were really nice and came a couple of times and empathised. Some just needed to be more human."

- Thirty-six families (21 per cent) had not reported the missing person to the police. Eleven said they did not do so because the missing person was an adult and a further eight thought that the missing person was not sufficiently vulnerable to justify police involvement. Other reasons given were that they did not think the police could do anything to help (four families), or would not be interested (one family).

- Fourteen families (eight per cent) had tried to report their relative as missing to the police but the police had not registered it as a missing persons case.

- Missing People will launch a publicity appeal for a missing person to help gather information from the public when permission is given by the police and family. These appeals may also reach the missing person themselves and encourage them to make contact.

- When someone has lost touch with a relative, or if the police do not consider the missing person to be vulnerable, Missing People offers a lost contact tracing service which may be able to help by tracing the missing person and providing them with the opportunity to reconnect with their friends and family. Emotional and practical support from the charity is available to all families.

- Table 3 profiles the missing relatives whose families are using the lost contact tracing service and those where the disappearance was being investigated by the police. The table shows that the missing person in lost contact cases was more likely to:

  - still be missing at the time we interviewed the families (42 per cent lost contact versus 18 per cent)
  - be missing for a longer period of time (96 per cent had been missing for more than one year versus 16 per cent)
  - be older at the point of disappearance (42 per cent were aged 45 or older when they went missing versus 29 per cent)
  - only have gone missing once (82 versus 56 per cent; only families whose relative had been found alive were asked this question).

- There were no significant differences in the demographic profile of the family members we interviewed between those using the lost contact tracing service and families whose relative's disappearance was being investigated by the police.

Table 3: Characteristics of the missing person in lost contact and police cases*			
	Lost Contact[7]	Police[8]	Total
Base (n)	*(50)*	*(118)*	*(168)*
	%	%	%
Missing person's status			
Found alive	56	73	68
Still missing	42	18	25
Died whilst missing	2	9	7
Duration of the missing episode			
Missing for one year or less	4	83	60
Missing for between one and two years	14	7	9
Missing for between two and five years	32	5	13
Missing for between five and ten years	18	2	7
Missing for more than ten years	32	3	11
Don't know	0	1	1
Age of missing person			
11-17	2	25	18
18-24	10	13	12
25-34	28	16	20
35-44	16	17	17
45-54	28	16	20
55-64	4	4	4
65 and above	10	8	9
Don't know	2	0	1

*Some percentages do not sum to 100, or some combined percentages differ to the sum of individual category percentages, because of rounding.

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[7] Families using the Missing People Lost Contact tracing service.
[8] Families where the police are investigating their relative's disappearance.

SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Accessing Missing People

- Just one in three (34 per cent) family members interviewed had heard of the charity Missing People before they became personally affected by missing; correspondingly 64 per cent had not. Families using the lost contact service were less likely to have heard of the charity than family members where a missing persons investigation was being undertaken by the police (24 versus 37 per cent), possibly because for most lost contact families this was the first time their relative had gone missing. During the survey some families commented that they think the profile of Missing People should be raised.

"It is a very low key service. Perhaps more awareness of the charity would be good."

"Making people more aware of the charity and having greater links with social services."

- As in previous years, families most commonly found out about the charity from the police (34 per cent in line with the 2013 and 2012 surveys), rising to almost half (45 per cent) of all cases where the police were investigating the missing person's disappearance. Around a quarter (24 per cent) first discovered Missing People via the internet, and this was much more common for families using the lost contact tracing service (48 per cent). A further 10 per cent found out about the charity through word of mouth and eight per cent via the television.

- Seventy per cent of family members had used the Missing People website (in line with 66 per cent who had used the website in 2013 and up from 58 per cent in 2012). Table 4 shows that by far the most common reasons for accessing the website were to find out about the services Missing People provides (53 per cent), or how to contact the charity (46 per cent). A quarter (25 per cent) used the website to look at an appeal for a missing person, whilst 18 per cent viewed a poster of a missing person and 17 per cent searched for guidance leaflets. Families' use of the website is broadly in line with previous surveys.

Table 4: Reasons for visiting the Missing People website www.missingpeople.org.uk		
	(n)	%
To find out about Missing People's services	89	53
To find out how to contact Missing People	77	46
To look at a missing person web appeal	42	25
To view a poster of a missing person	31	18
To look for guidance leaflets	28	17
To make a donation	6	4
I have never looked at the website	50	30
Base: All families (168)		

*Columns are not additive because respondents could report more than one reason.

- Of the 21 respondents who had downloaded the guidance, 15 said that it had answered their questions and a further two that the guidance had *somewhat* answered their questions.

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Initial expectations

- Families were asked what their expectations of Missing People were before they got in touch with the charity. Table 5 shows their responses and the differences in expectations between families using the lost contact service versus those where a missing persons investigation was being conducted by the police. Consistent with the low awareness of the charity discussed above, 38 per cent of families did not have any expectations of Missing People, or were unsure what to expect before they got in touch, particularly among families being supported by the charity for cases investigated by the police (42 per cent versus 28 per cent of lost contact families).

"I didn't have any expectation because the police put me in touch."

"I had no idea what to expect as it was a very surreal situation. I just wanted as much help to find my missing person as possible."

- Families' expectations most commonly focussed on the hope for a reconnection with, or a message passed to, their missing relative (17 per cent), particularly among those using the lost contact service (28 per cent).

"I was quite hopeful to be honest. I don't understand why someone [their missing relative] *could want nothing to do with you* [RESPONDENT] *for no reason whatsoever. I was pinning a lot on it that you would be able to trace him."*

"I thought you might be able to pass on my details to my brother and find out if he's alive."

"Really hoping that we could find him."

"That the charity would be able to help locate my sibling and that they would not disclose her details to me if she didn't want this to happen."

- Other initial expectations of the charity included assistance with publicity (12 per cent) - although this was higher for families where there was a police investigation into their relative's disappearance (14 versus four per cent of families using the lost contact tracing service) - and professional expertise to assist with the search (five per cent). Fewer expected that the charity would offer support, information and advice to the families of missing people (five per cent).

"I thought it was to let people know that my dad was missing but it then turned into a lifeline for guidance and support."

"I think it was for the publicity. I didn't realise you offered family support."

"Such a hectic time I don't really think I had an expectation, I suppose just helping to spread the word and publicise it."

"Put pictures up of her on the website so that people would see her."

"To provide support and advice on how to handle the situation."

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- Nine per cent of families admitted they had very low expectations that Missing People would be able to help them at all (20 per cent for lost contact families versus four per cent for police families), and a further four per cent were simply desperate for any additional help that was available.

"I don't think I had any [expectations]. I think I was so desperate I just wanted someone to say: 'Yes that is fine; this is what we can do for you'."

*"I wasn't really sure that you would be able to help me but I was just praying you could find her."*

Table 5: Initial expectations of Missing People by police and lost contact families			
	Total	**Police**	**Lost contact**
Base (n)	*(168)*	*(118)*	*(50)*
	%	%	%
No expectations/was not sure	38	42	28
Reconnection/message passed	17	12	28
Publicity	12	14	4
Low expectations	9	4	20
Help with the search	5	6	2
Support for the family	5	6	2
General help	4	4	4
Desperate/last resort	4	3	4
Other	8	8	8

Were expectations of Missing People met?

- In total, 64 per cent of respondents said their expectations of Missing People had been exceeded or completely met. This is a slight drop compared to last year (72 per cent) and is broadly similar to 2012 and 2011 (69 per cent and 64 per cent respectively, see figure 2 below). The change compared with 2013 was driven by the fact that slightly more in 2014 than 2013 say expectations were partially met (20 versus 16 per cent), or said they did not know (11 versus 7 per cent) – mainly because they did not know what to expect before getting in touch with Missing People.

Figure 2: How well respondents' expectations of the charity were met*
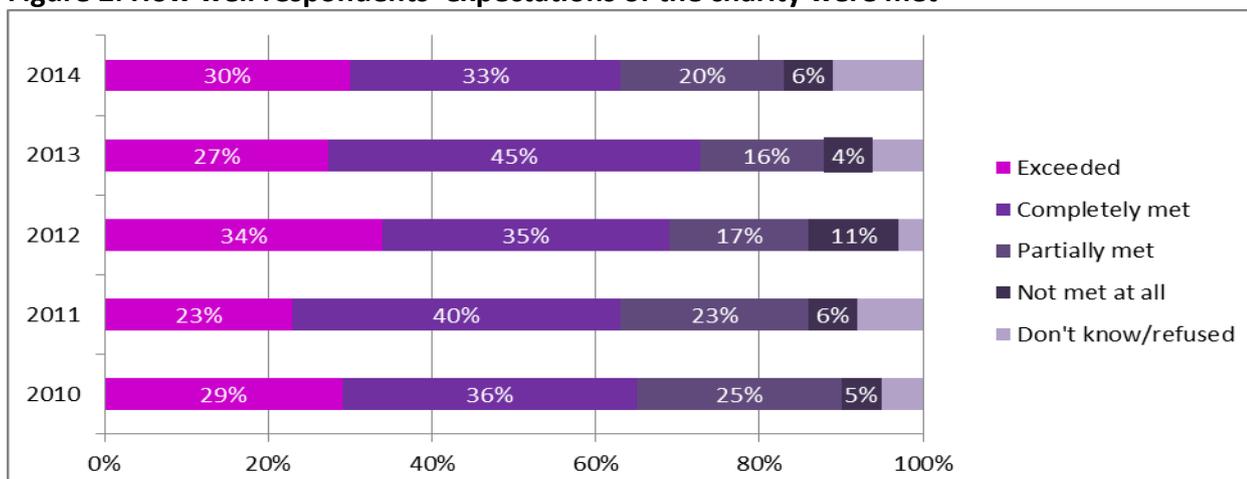
*Some percentages do not sum to 100, or some combined percentages differ to the sum of individual category percentages, because of rounding.

- Table 6 shows the extent to which families whose cases had been resolved, and families whose relative still remained missing, felt their initial expectations had been met by the charity. The key difference is that families whose relative had been found were more likely to say that their expectations were exceeded or completely met (75 per cent), than families whose relatives were still missing (29 per cent). Of the 42 families whose relatives were still missing, 19 (45 per cent) said that their expectations of Missing People had been partially met and a further seven (17 per cent) that their expectations had not been met at all. These findings are similar to those in previous years.

Table 6: How well respondents' expectations had been met by missing person status						
	Found		**Still Missing**		**Total**	
Base (n)	(126)		(42)		(168)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Exceeded	48	38	3	7	51	30
Completely met	47	37	9	21	56	33
Partially met	14	11	19	45	33	20
Not met at all	3	2	7	17	10	6
No Response	1	1		0	1	1
Don't know	13	10	4	10	17	10

- Families of lost contact relatives were much more likely to say that their expectations of the charity had only been partially met or not met at all than those where a police investigation into the disappearance was being conducted (40 versus 19 per cent). As table 3 showed, in lost contact cases the person was also more likely to still be missing at the time of interview which could also be driving this difference in opinion. Overall, the responses suggest that, although the outcome of the case does have some relationship to whether family members feel their expectations have been met, it is still possible for the charity to meet or exceed families' expectations even when their relative remains missing (12 out of the 42 families whose relative was still missing in this survey).

- There are also differences in whether the expectations of families were met by the charity depending on what those initial expectations were. Table 7 shows that expectations were less likely to be fully met or exceeded for families whose initial expectation focused on a reconnection. This suggests that for some families, failure to achieve a reconnection does impact on their assessment of the charity. However, Missing People will only pass a message to a missing person if they are willing to receive one and the charity respects their decision if they are not ready, or do not want, any contact with the relative searching for them.

"I was very pleased they found her very quickly but I wanted to pass a message onto her but they wouldn't do that. Bit disappointing."

- All the families who held low expectations of the charity when they got in touch said that Missing People had completely met or exceeded their expectations.

"I didn't think it was going to be that brilliant, but to be honest I don't think I would have got through it without them [Missing People].*"*

Publicity

- Seventy-one respondents (45 per cent) reported that there was a publicity appeal for their missing relative, all but two of which were cases being investigated by the police. In 48 of these families, the missing person had subsequently been found alive. Of those 48 families, 20 respondents believed that the publicity had influenced the outcome of the disappearance (including 18 where Missing People had arranged the publicity appeal).

"His picture was on Missing People's website and he found his picture on the internet and realised he was considered missing and that someone was worrying about him and he came back."

"For the missing people who aren't thinking of coming back, I think seeing their poster may have an effect on them of at least phoning home."

- Missing People had arranged publicity for 54 of the families, 30 had arranged publicity themselves and 22 families said the police had arranged the publicity.

- Thirty-two respondents (45 per cent of those who had received publicity) reported that their relative's appeal had received about the amount of publicity they had expected and a similar proportion (30 respondents, 42 per cent) felt they had received *more* publicity than expected. Eight families (11 per cent) said the amount of publicity their missing relative received was less than expected. Interestingly, only one family who thought the publicity appeal did not affect whether their relative was found felt that they had received too little publicity.

"I wanted more on TV but the police wouldn't allow it."

- Some of the comments families made during the survey also indicate that there can be frustrations in perceived delays with publicity appeals going live – particularly when families are desperate to locate their missing loved one – as well as frustrations with communication from Missing People about the publicity. The charity is dependent on getting the appropriate sign off and permissions from both the family and police before a publicity appeal can go live so this, and the confusion and desperation families can feel, may also, in part, influence their assessment of the launch of the publicity appeal.

"The process seems really long. It seems to take ages to get from the time it was first suggested until when it occurred. About a week."

- Table 7 below shows the types of publicity undertaken. In line with last year, posters (83 per cent) and posting the appeal on the Missing People website (68 per cent) remain the most common sources of publicity. Three in five also used print or social media (each 58 per cent); the use of social media for publicity has increased significantly since 2013 (34 per cent had used social media for publicity in 2013). Appeals on the television (14 per cent) and radio (13 per cent) were less common. Three families had used a local Missing People Search Day as part of the publicity appeal to raise awareness of their missing loved one. A Search Day is a local event organised by charity volunteers with the purpose of sharing active appeals for missing people using an information stand at a busy venue such as a shopping centre or football ground.

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Table 7: Type of publicity*		
	(n)	%
Posters	59	83
Missing People website	48	68
Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	41	58
Print media (e.g. Big Issue, Metro, Daily Record)	41	58
Television	10	14
Radio	9	13
A local Search Day	3	4
Base: All families where there was a publicity appeal (71)		

*Columns are not additive because respondents could report more than one type of publicity

Publicity advice from families

- Families were asked what advice they would give to other people in a similar situation about making a publicity appeal. The responses illustrate the complexity of the emotional impact of publicity appeals on the missing person's family. Some families said that the publicity appeal was helpful because it visibly demonstrated something practical was being done to help the search for their missing loved one and that people cared. Equally, others cautioned that the process of making the missing incident public, and having to deal with the consequences of other people knowing about it, can also be upsetting and challenging.

"I think it [publicity] is really important. I think… it helps you cope better and people are prepared to support you as they understand the situation you are in."

"There were plenty of people who contacted the police saying they had seen my brother. It all turned out to be a wild goose chase. I would say it [publicity] is an absolute must but you have got to be prepared to be disappointed."

"It was a bit of a shock reading about it in the paper."

- A number of families also highlighted the potential impact of publicity on the missing person themselves particularly if they are vulnerable or are choosing to have a bit of time away from home. In May 2014, Missing People launched the Support Partner Network which provides a new tool to help address this. The network includes 200 partner organisations and provides a system through which appeals for missing people can be shared when the police feel it is not safe or appropriate to publicise the disappearance of the missing person in the public domain. Partners sign an agreement to only share briefings about missing people with staff and volunteers and limit the display of information to non-public areas.

"You have got to consider very carefully the person you are trying to contact, also, perhaps, immediate family who might be affected. You don't want to alarm people unnecessarily. In the first instance they might just want some space."

Satisfaction with Missing People's service and support

- Levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the service received from Missing People remains high (figure 3). Staff and volunteers providing support to the families of missing people were rated extremely positively, with their warmth and kindness, levels of expertise and understanding of individual families' cases all receiving very high levels of satisfaction (95, 94 and 93 per cent respectively).

- In line with their high levels of satisfaction, 96 per cent of families said that they would recommend Missing People to someone in a similar situation. Families commented that it is valuable to have another source of help both for support and publicity.

"Without hesitation. It was the best thing to do."

"Anyone that can help is great. It is a relief."

"Being able to get in contact when you wanted to. It is extremely important as you go through different phases. They would try to get someone to call you back if they couldn't help straight away. Staff were very honest. Some had more experience than others but were informative and honest about what they could do."

Figure 3: Satisfaction with each aspect of the service provided by Missing People

*N=168 unless otherwise stated

- When compared with findings from previous years (figure 4), the general trend is that satisfaction has returned to levels similar to 2012 and earlier after a slight dip in satisfaction with some aspects of the service last year. Satisfaction has most improved this year with the ease of making the first contact with Missing People (+11 percentage points) and the response that families received to their initial enquiry (+10 percentage points). For families whose relatives were no longer missing, satisfaction with contact from Missing People after their case had been resolved also increased by +10 percentage points compared with 2013.

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with service 2010-2014**
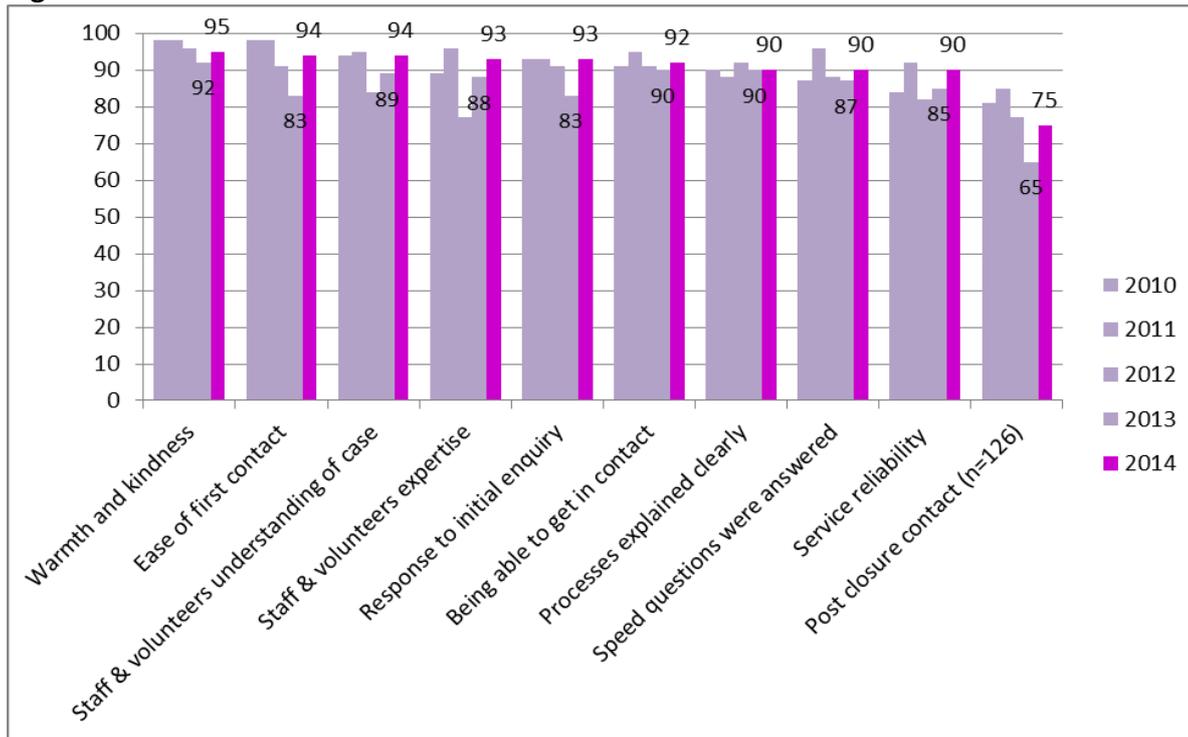
Overall satisfaction over time

A composite score was created from satisfaction with individual aspects of the service from Missing People as a measure of respondents' overall satisfaction with the charity and from this mean, median and mode satisfaction scores were calculated. Figure 5 compares these scores over the five sweeps of the survey.[9] The mode (most common) score remains the maximum +2.0. The median and mean scores remain constant with the two previous sweeps of the survey (+1.6 and +1.8 respectively). Mean and median satisfaction scores were slightly higher among families where the missing person had been found alive than where they were still missing at the time of the survey (table 8). Overall satisfaction levels were the same among families using the lost contact tracing service and those where there is a police missing persons investigation.

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[9] Each year, family members whose case was opened in the previous calendar year have taken part in the survey. Each respondent takes part only once. This means that we cannot measure an individual's changing satisfaction over time. Rather, we can review how snapshots of different years differ from each other.

Figure 5: Overall satisfaction; mean, median and mode scores over time
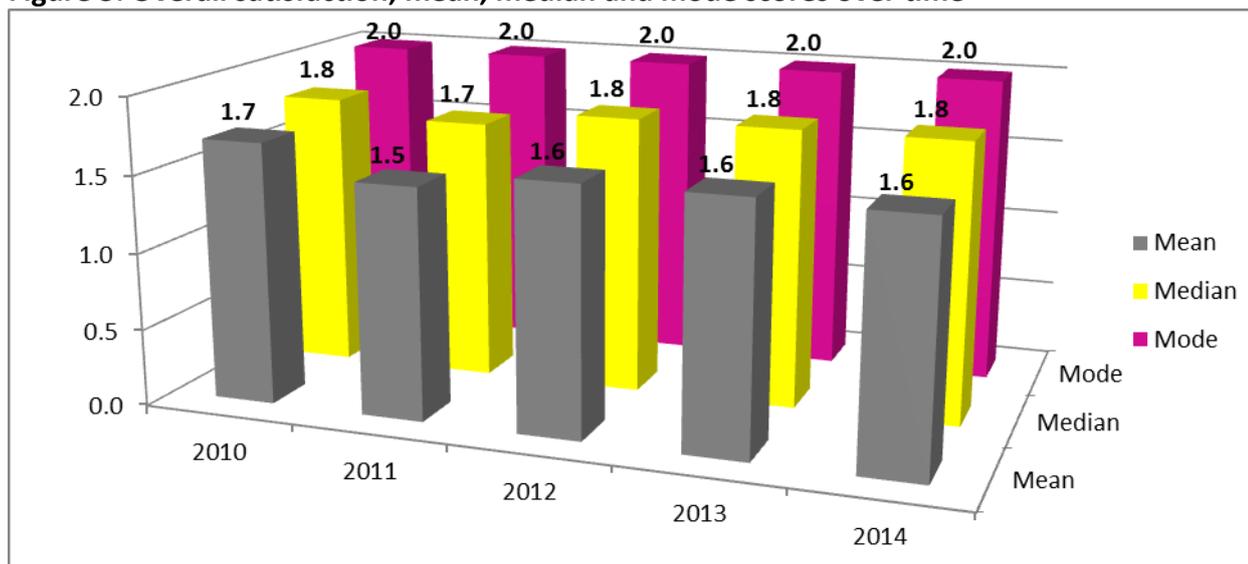
Table 8: Satisfaction scores by missing person's status, 2010 to 2014										
	2010		**2011**		**2012**		**2013**		**2014**	
	Still Missing	**Found Alive**	**Still Missing**	**Found Alive**	**Still Missing**	**Found Alive**	**Still Missing**	**Found Alive**	**Still Missing**	**Found Alive**
Mean	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6
Median	1.6	2.0	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.8
Mode	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0

Value added by Missing People to the service provided by the police

- Eighty-five per cent of families who reported their missing relative to the police said that Missing People added value to the service provided by the police (up from 77 per cent in 2013 and 79 per cent in 2012 and 2011). This includes over half (56 per cent) who felt the charity added '*a great deal*' of value. The main ways that families thought Missing People added value to the police were: the ability to offer a range of publicity for their missing loved one; and the speed of the charity's response. The activity around the publicity appeal helped to give families a visible sense that something was being done to resolve the disappearance.

"We couldn't have asked any more from Missing People of keeping my son in the public eye."

"Missing People were able to put a publicity appeal into motion with access to publications like the Metro etc. Missing People have access to digital boards too."

"Responsive. Active. Helpful."

"Missing People were able to give a bit more peace of mind that someone else was involved. Overall the service I received from everybody was excellent."

- Families also felt that Missing People added value through the expert emotional support, understanding and empathy it provided (18 families), indeed some found it easier to talk to our staff and volunteers than to the police. Others perceived the roles of Missing People and the police as quite distinct: viewing the function of the charity as providing support to the family enabling the police to focus on the investigation of the missing incident.

"I just didn't know what I was going to do but then the person I spoke to took it all in hand and got on with things. It was great to speak to someone who understood because you felt like no-one else did. I didn't want sympathy, just somebody to help me and that is what I got from Missing People."

"Missing People are more sympathetic and have the time to listen if you wanted to talk."

"I think that because you [Missing People] specialised more in this area you were more empathetic and understanding of what was going on."

"Knowing that there was someone there to talk to if we needed to. Always helpful because you know there is somebody there if you feel you can't cope."

- Other ways that Missing People was perceived to add value to the work of the police included providing emotional support around the clock, giving families advice on how to work with the police and what to expect from the missing persons investigation.

"I phoned the police every day for an update. Missing People helped provide an understanding of what I was going through in their family support service."

"Missing People were the number I could call when I felt things were getting all too much. I could call at five in the morning."

Experiencing missing

As shown in *Living in Limbo: The experiences of, and impacts on, the families of missing people* (Holmes, 2008), families experience a range of practical impacts when someone goes missing, as well as the emotional and social effects.

- One hundred and thirty-nine respondents were asked about the impacts they had experienced as a result of a family member or friend going missing and table 9 details their responses.

- This year's survey shows a slight drop in physical and mental health concerns, as well as financial, legal or ownership problems, resulting from their family member going missing. Nevertheless, just under half (47 per cent) had experienced either physical (24 per cent) or mental (45 per cent) health problems as a result of their family member going missing. The following comments from families help to illustrate how the impacts of a loved one being missing can be significant, overwhelming and enduring.

"It's very upsetting and it leaves a big hole."

"I have been very depressed about it and my daughter has been on medication."

- One in five (18 per cent) of the families interviewed had experienced a practical or legal difficulty as a result of their love one going missing, most commonly in dealing with a bank, or problems handling social security benefits (12 and 11 per cent respectively).

"I received a letter to say he [missing person] was in debt. I paid some money and then it happened again a few months later. I paid £200."

"Problems with getting information about whether or not he was drawing money [benefits] from the Post Office."

"Massive problems with benefits and DWP. I was not getting any money at the time."

Table 9: Impacts family members experienced as a result of their relative going missing					
	2010 (n=155)*	**2011 (n=145)***	**2012 (n=126)***	**2013 (n=196)***	**2014 (n=139)***
	%	%	%	%	%
Mental health concerns	-	41	45	54	45
Physical health concerns	-	39	31	36	24
Any health impact	**-**	**41**	**50**	**54**	**47**
Problems dealing with bank/building society	17	16	16	15	12
Problems dealing with social security/ benefits	8	17	13	12	11
Other Legal, Financial or Ownership	9	-	12	16	6
Problems dealing with rent	-	14***	6	7	5
Insurance Company	4	8	4	4	1
Problems dealing with Joint assets/ accounts.	-	-	-	-	1
Problems dealing with media	3	11	5	5	1
Problems dealing with mortgage	17**	6	2	5	0
Any practical or legal impact	**31**	**27**	**29**	**30**	**18**

*Columns are not additive because respondents could report more than one impact.
**In 2010 the question asked about 'mortgage, rent or bills'.
***In 2011 the question asked about 'rent or bills'.

New services

- Families were asked what new services would be useful for the families of missing people. The new services most commonly suggested spontaneously were counselling (8 per cent) and regional face-to-face support (7 per cent), followed closely by family support groups, post-missing support, help with social media, online support forums and advocacy services.

"Easy and immediate access to counselling service for a person whose loved one is found dead. It took a couple of months for me to find a therapist."

- Family members responded positively when prompted with a variety of potential new services that could be offered to families of missing people. Figure 6 shows the percentage of family members who, when prompted, said they would be (or would have been) 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to use each of the listed potential services. The service families would be most likely to use is advocacy support to make representations on their behalf to official agencies and companies (69 per cent). Almost three in five families whose relative had been found (58 per cent) said they would be likely to use aftercare services to help support them when the missing person has been found.

"When somebody is found there doesn't seem to be any support as to the reasons why he ran away. There is a lack of support for after care to help stop it happening again. There are waiting lists everywhere. Plus the immediate family are trying to cope emotionally with the fact they have been away in the first place."

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- Fifty-seven per cent of families would be likely to use help with social media (particularly those who already use social media for other purposes: 64 per cent likely). Around half of families would use local family support events, tailored support for children and young people (rising to 66 per cent of those with children under 18 living in the household), followed by support for dealing with the media and support provided online.

Figure 6: Likelihood of using new services
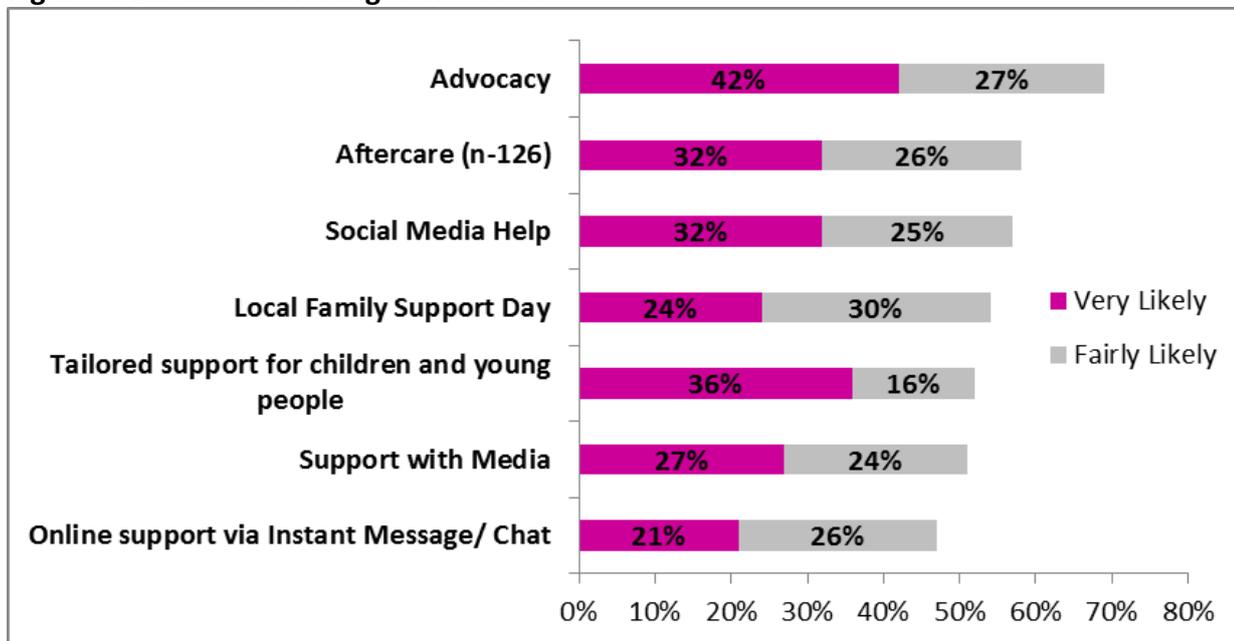
New services for children and young people

- This year families were also asked their views on potential new services specifically aimed at children and young people under the age of eighteen who are affected by someone going missing. We were interested in finding out about all children who might be affected by the person's disappearance (not just children who live in the same household as the respondent), for example close family friends, or other young relatives and friends[10]. In total, 65 families (39 per cent) said that children and young people had been affected by the missing incident, equating to at least 112 children. Children most likely to be affected were aged between 12 and 17 (52 families), followed closely by primary school aged children (41 families). Fewer said that the pre-school aged children had been affected by the relative going missing (19 families) and for some this was because they felt the children had been too young for the disappearance to have had any impact.

"The children were too young to understand what was going on."

- Families were asked what kind of new services targeted at children and young people who are affected by a person going missing would be useful. Suggestions included: support to help explain what is happening; services which provide a young person with the opportunity to contact someone outside of the family or with a shared experience; and counselling services. A few families also acknowledged the importance of giving focus to children and young people living through the experience of a friend or family member going missing as their needs can often be overlooked when parents and carers are dealing with both the search and their own emotions.

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[10] It is worth noting that the views on new services for children and young people from this survey represent the families' perspectives and do not take account of opinions of children and young people themselves, nor professionals working in relevant areas.

"Someone to help fill in the gaps. Explain what is going on."

"Maybe just speaking to other children who are going through the same sort of thing. It might be easier to talk to someone outside the family."

"A bit of support from somebody, it is really hard to reassure them when you are trying to look for the missing person yourself. The children get left in the background."

Supporting the charity

- Figure 7 shows that the majority of families thought it acceptable for Missing People to contact families who have been in touch with the charity to ask for their support (82 per cent), although opinion was more divided over whether it is appropriate to do so whilst the relative is still missing (37 per cent agree) or only when the situation has been resolved (33 per cent). Interestingly, families whose relative had been missing for longer than six months were more likely to say it is acceptable to ask for support whilst the relative is still missing than families where their relative was found within a shorter time period (43 versus 33 per cent). The comments below illustrate the complexity of families' views on this issue.

"I think you shouldn't ring direct to ask for money, but it might be OK to send a letter after they were found."

*"Even if it [missing incident] is ongoing it might be okay to but depends on the situation."*

"It depends how long the person has been missing. It should be on a case by case basis. Not one size fits all."

"When it is ongoing you are not in the right state of mind to think about it [supporting the charity]."

"I would give it [support] in my own time. I don't want to be asked."

- Only seven per cent of the families interviewed had been asked for a donation by Missing People, although 19 per cent had actually made a donation to the charity.
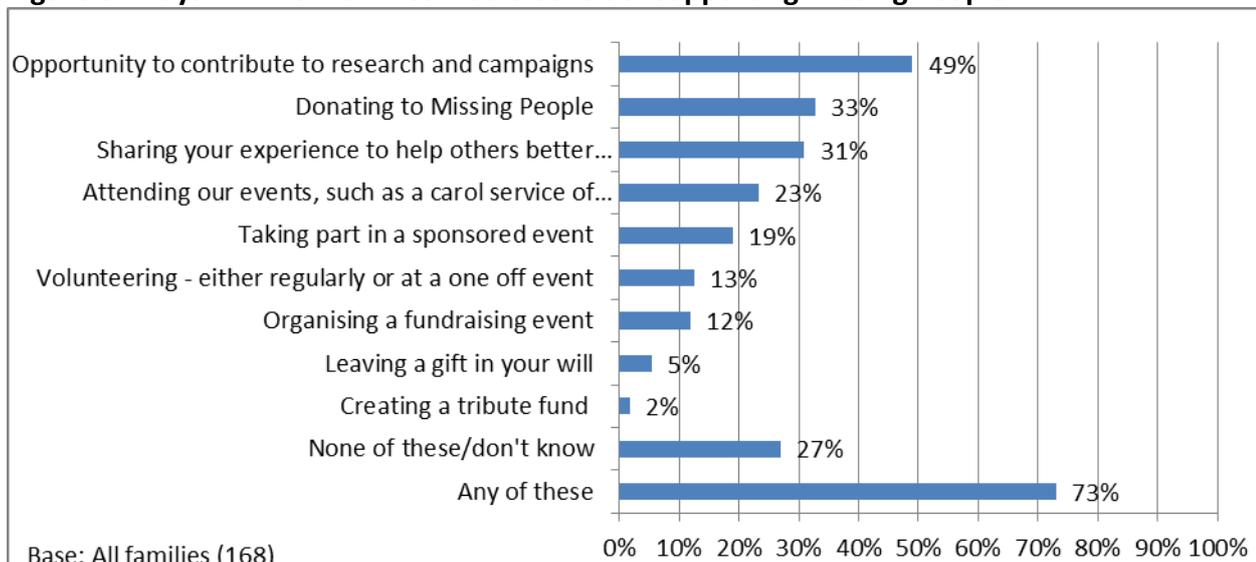
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Figure 7: Families supporting Missing People
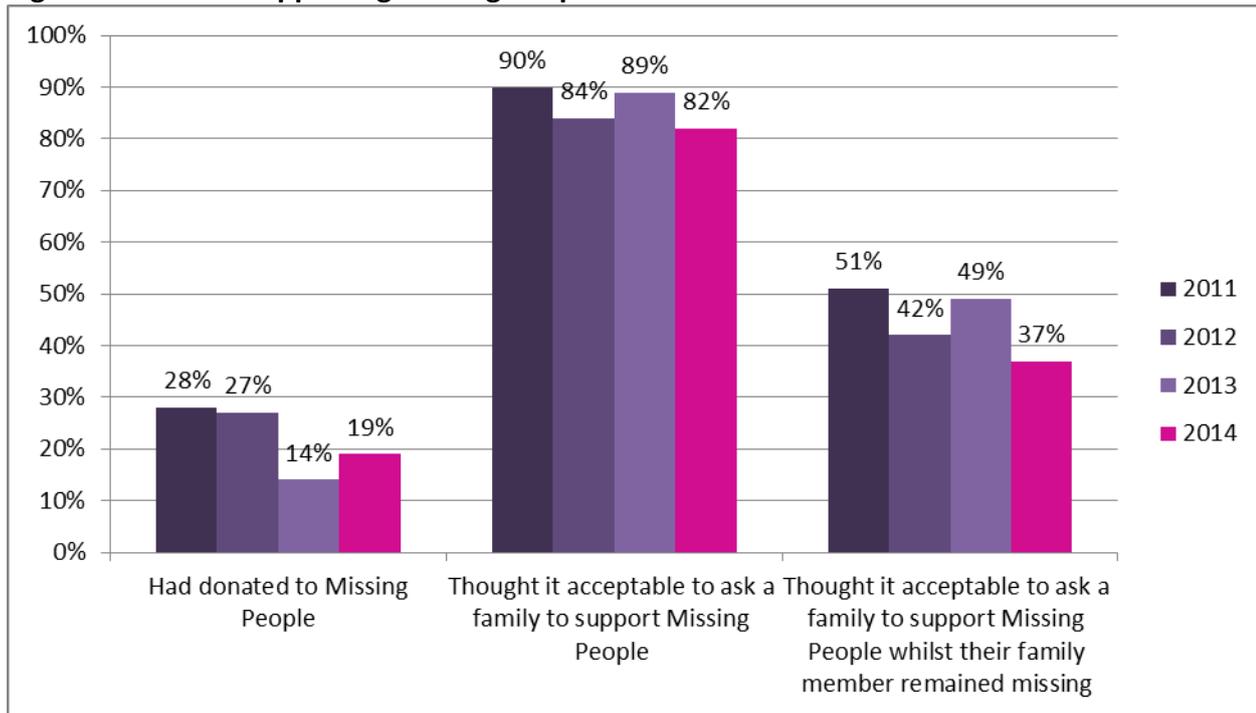
- Figure 8 shows that almost three in four families (73 per cent) expressed an interest in supporting the charity in some way. Half the families (49 per cent) said they would like the opportunity to contribute to research and development projects and support Missing People's campaigning work. Around three in ten would like to support Missing People either through donating to the charity (33 per cent), or sharing their experiences to enable Missing People to help other families and stakeholders better understand experiences of a relative being missing (31 per cent). Around one in five also said they would support the charity through attendance at one of our events like the annual Carol Service (23 per cent) or by taking part in one of the sponsored events the charity promotes such as Miles for Missing People (19 per cent).

"If we find my son all the funds left over will be donated to Missing People."

Figure 8: Ways in which families would consider supporting Missing People

Base: All families (168)

Concluding comments

Missing People is committed to listening to, and learning from, people who use the charity's services. The results, in this our fifth annual survey of families, provide us with a measure of how well we are delivering our services to families as well as helping us to develop and improve new and existing services. Examples of actions resulting from findings of previous annual surveys include developing online guidance, introducing a counselling service and establishing an online forum for families. In addition, we regularly use the findings to support funding applications, create business cases for new services and help direct our policy and campaigning work. The findings from the survey this year will enable us to build upon the services and support we offer to the families who have had a relative go missing and ensure we can continue to provide a lifeline when someone disappears.

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