

# Death and Life After Death

Children's Concepts

Dr Rachel Jepson



# Hypotheses

## 1. Age:

Younger children are as able as older children to conceptualize death and life after death

## 2. Faith:

Children with no faith-base are as able as those with a faith-base to conceptualize death and life after death

## 3. Gender:

Boys are as able as girls to conceptualize death and life after death

## 4. Location:

Children not living in a multi-faith and multi-cultural region are as able as those who do to conceptualize death and life after death



**What does the  
word death  
mean to you?**



**Do you think  
there is life  
after death?**



**What do you  
think comes  
after death?**



Aspects of RE: Children's Questionnaire

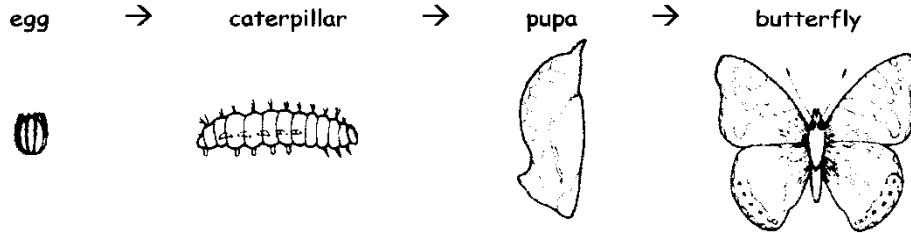
Please try to answer these questions the best you can.  
Some of the important words are written in **bold**.  
Where there is more than one box, tick  which is right for you.  
It is important that you try to share what **you think and believe**.

Please write your name here, if you wish: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you a boy  or a girl ?

**Stages of life**

You may know that a butterfly has several life stages:



2. People's lives have **several stages**. What do you think they are? Please write here:

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3. What do you think is the **last** stage of people's lives? Please write here:

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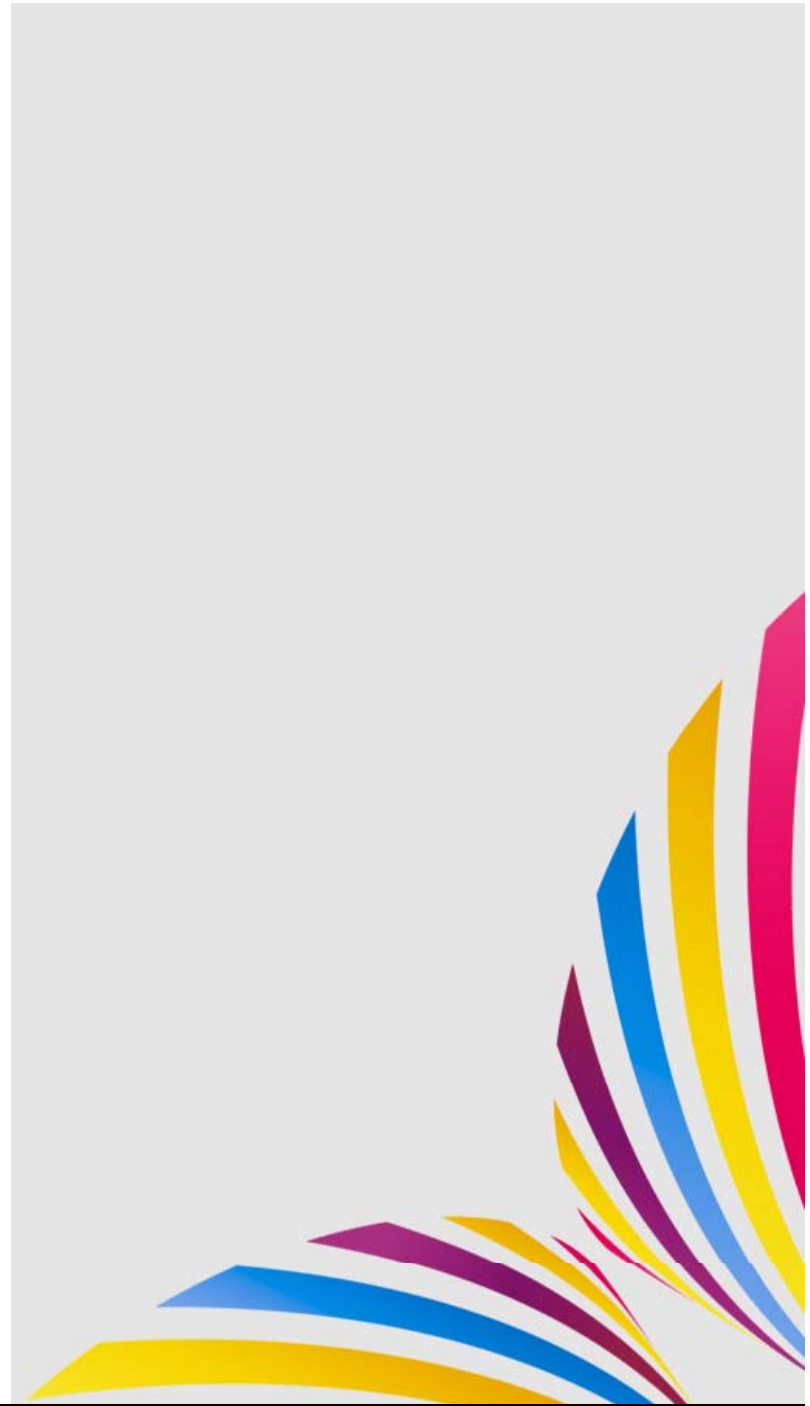
4. What does **being alive** mean to you? Please write your thoughts here:

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5. At what stage does **death** come in people's lives? Please write here:

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**End of life**

6. Why do you think a person dies? Please write here:

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7. What does the word **death** mean to you? Please write your thoughts here:

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8. What do you think **happens** when someone dies? Please write here:

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9. What **feelings** might people have when a pet or someone they love dies? Please write your thoughts here:

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10. What do you think comes **after** death? Please write here:

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11. Do you think there is **life after death**? Please tick  one answer:

- Yes
- Maybe
- Don't know
- No

12. If your answer is *yes* or *maybe*, write down what life after death **means** to you.

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**Saying goodbye and remembering**

13. How might you say **goodbye** to a pet or a person who has died? Please share your thoughts here:

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14. How might you **remember** a pet or someone you have loved who has died? Please share your thoughts here:

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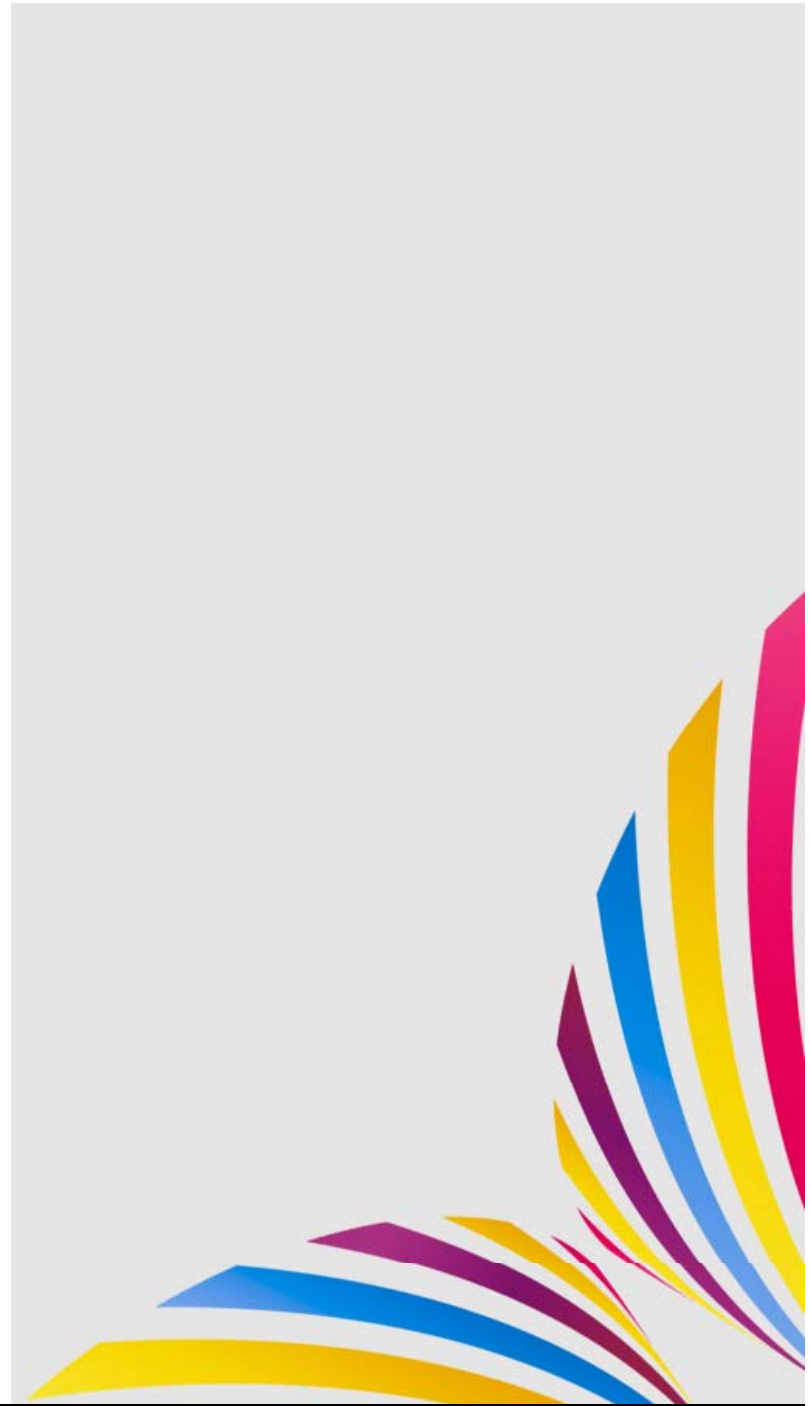
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15. Have you ever had the chance to **share** with someone what you think and believe about death and/or life after death? Please tick  one answer:

- Yes  Who was it with? Please write here: \_\_\_\_\_  
Don't remember   
No

16. **Where** have you found out what happens when someone dies? Please tick  more than one answer:

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| In assembly at my school                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In my class   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In the playground                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| At a club eg Brownies, Cubs, latchkey               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My parents told me                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My grandparents told me                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I found out somewhere else. Please say where: _____ |                          |                          |



17. Talking about these things can be difficult for some people. **Who** do you find the most helpful people to talk to? Please give a score to each of these by ticking ✓ one number on each line.

- ① means you think they are unhelpful; ② means you think they are quite helpful;  
 ③ means that you think they are helpful

	Unhelpful	Quite helpful	Helpful
With my teachers at my school	①	②	③
With my friends	①	②	③
With my parents	①	②	③
With my grandparents	①	②	③
With someone at my church, mosque or temple	①	②	③
Someone else. Please write who: _____	①	②	③

18. If there is **anything else** you would like to share about your thoughts or beliefs about death and life after death then please write it here:

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19. Would you say that you **belong** to one of these religions? Please tick  one answer:

- |           |                          |             |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hindu       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jewish    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sikh        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Muslim    | <input type="checkbox"/> | No religion | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Another one. Please write here: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Do you ever **go** to a church, mosque, synagogue or temple? Please tick  one answer:

- Yes   
 No

21. If your answer is **yes**, then **how often** do you go to a church, mosque, synagogue or temple? Please tick  one answer:

- |             |                          |                    |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Every day   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once a month       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | A few times a year | <input type="checkbox"/> |



22. We all have **happy** and **sad** memories. Please write about one of each or you may like to draw.

**My sad memory**

**My happy memory**

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts by filling in this questionnaire 😊  
I hope that you have enjoyed answering these questions.

[This questionnaire is part of a Religious Education Research Project conducted by Rachel Jepson BEd (Hons) MA in primary schools with approval from the School of Education, the University of Durham. February 2001]

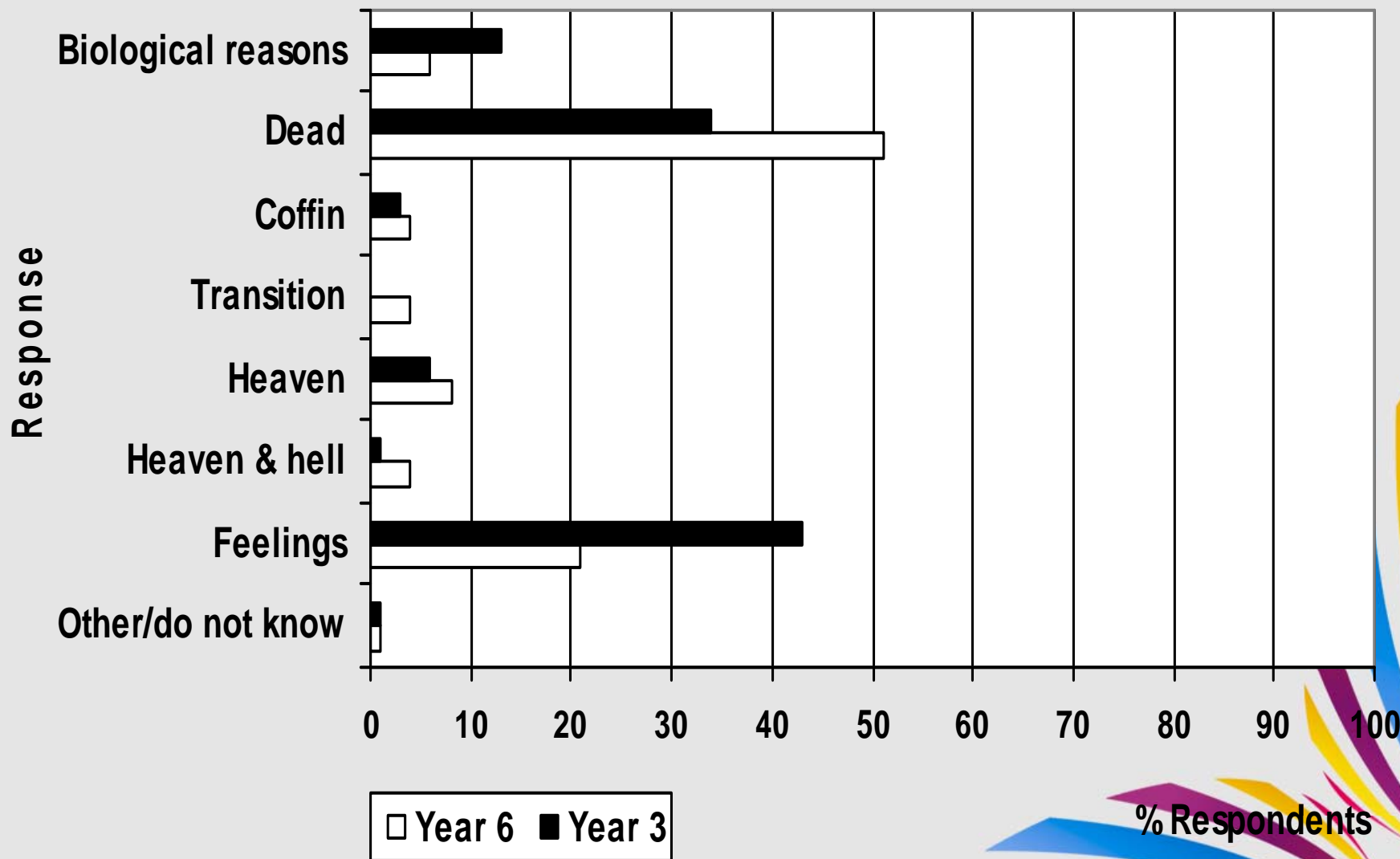


## **Age hypothesis:**

Younger children are as able as older children to conceptualize death and life after death



# What does the word death mean to you? (n = 757)



The word death means to me **no more life**,  
carrying on, we are gonna die.

[Year 3; Sikh]

The word death means to me when you die  
and **never live again**.

[Year 6; Muslim]



Time to **leave earth** .

[Year 3; Christian]

It means when you end your life, and **leave everything behind** .

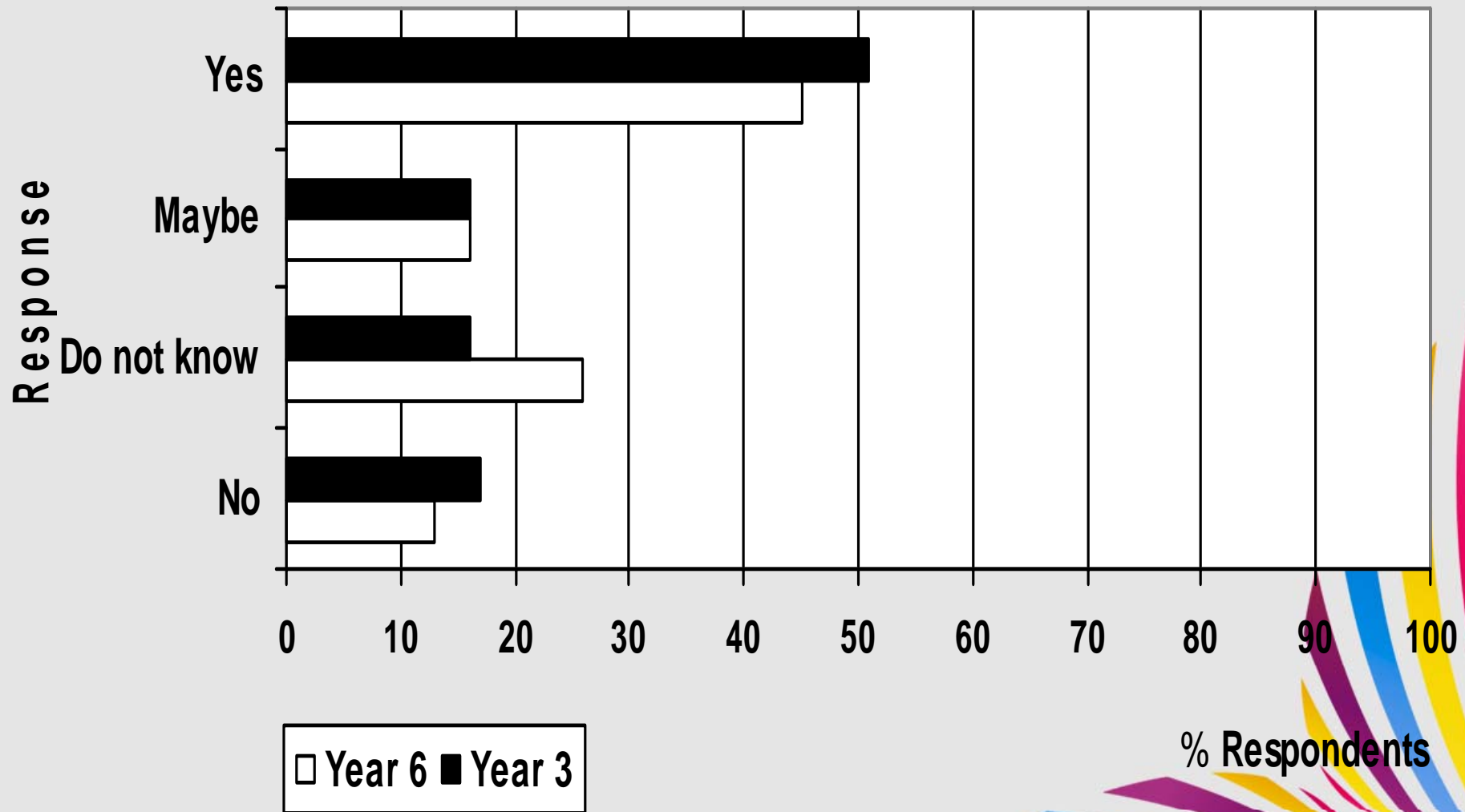
[Year 6; no religion]



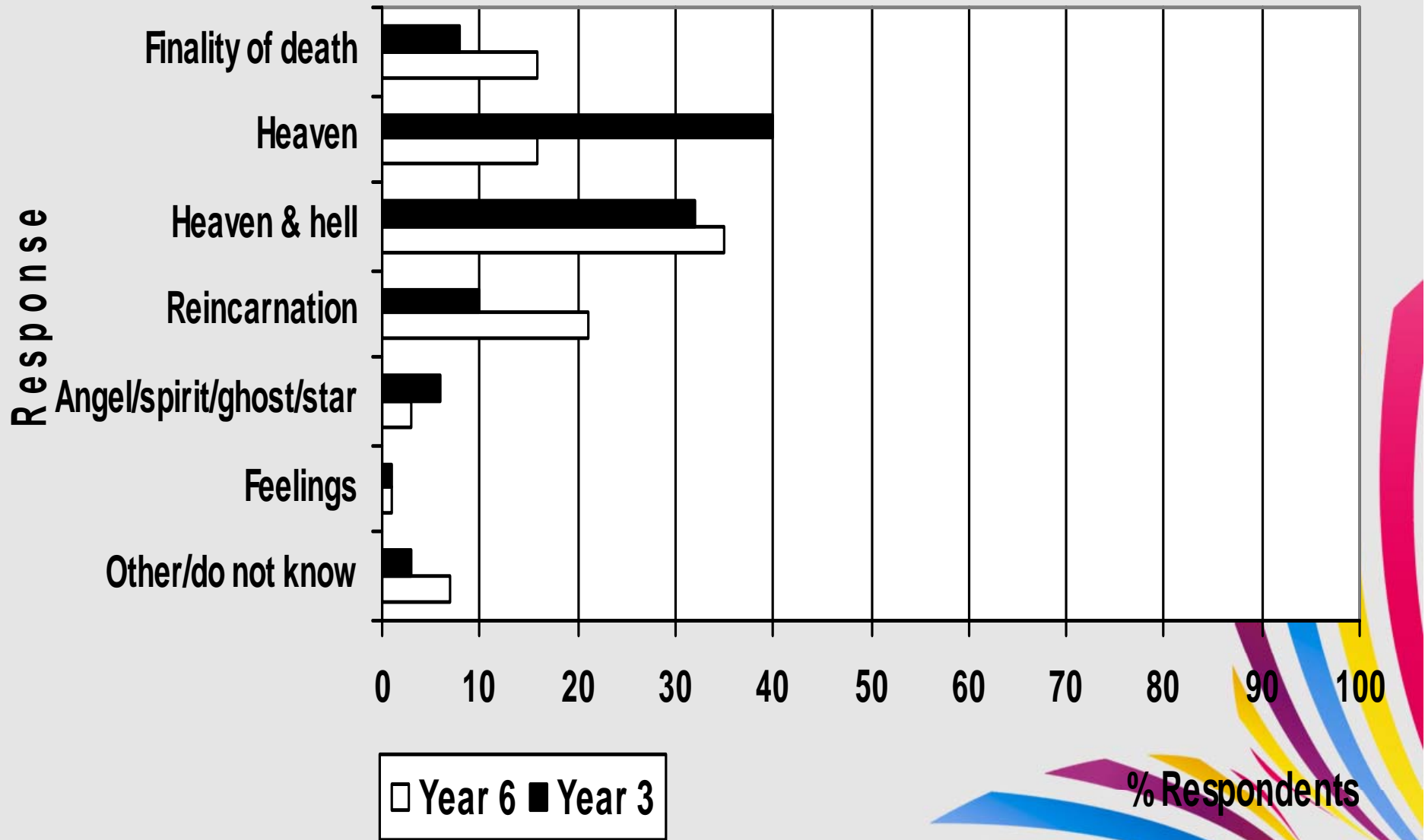
## Do you think there is life after death? (Birmingham and Durham data combined)

Response	Count	Age		Total Respondents
		Year 3	Year 6	
Yes	Observed count Expected count % Observed	<b>175</b> 165 <b>51%</b>	<b>190</b> 200 <b>45%</b>	<b>365</b> 365 48%
Maybe	Observed count Expected count % Observed	<b>55</b> 54 16%	<b>65</b> 66 16%	<b>120</b> 120 16%
Do not know	Observed count Expected count % Observed	<b>56</b> 75 16%	<b>111</b> 92 <b>26%</b>	<b>167</b> 167 22%
No	Observed count Expected count % Observed	<b>58</b> 50 17%	<b>53</b> 61 13%	<b>111</b> 111 15%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	Observed count Expected count % Observed	<b>344</b> 344 <b>100%</b>	<b>419</b> 419 <b>100%</b>	<b>763</b> 763 <b>100%</b>

# Do you think there is life after death? (n = 763)



# What do you think comes after death? (n = 763)



First you have to put them in the **grave** and dig and put them underground. Then your **spirit** goes to God. If people have been bad and done dumb things they go to hell. Good people who help people and don't make people upset go to God in heaven. **God chooses** where people go.

[Year 3; Muslim]

After death you get **buried**. After death life in heaven comes. This is for the people who have been good. The people who haven't been good go to hell. The **judge** of this is **God**.

[Year 6; Muslim]



Everybody will go to heaven and come back to life in heaven who **believes in God**.

[Year 3; Christian]

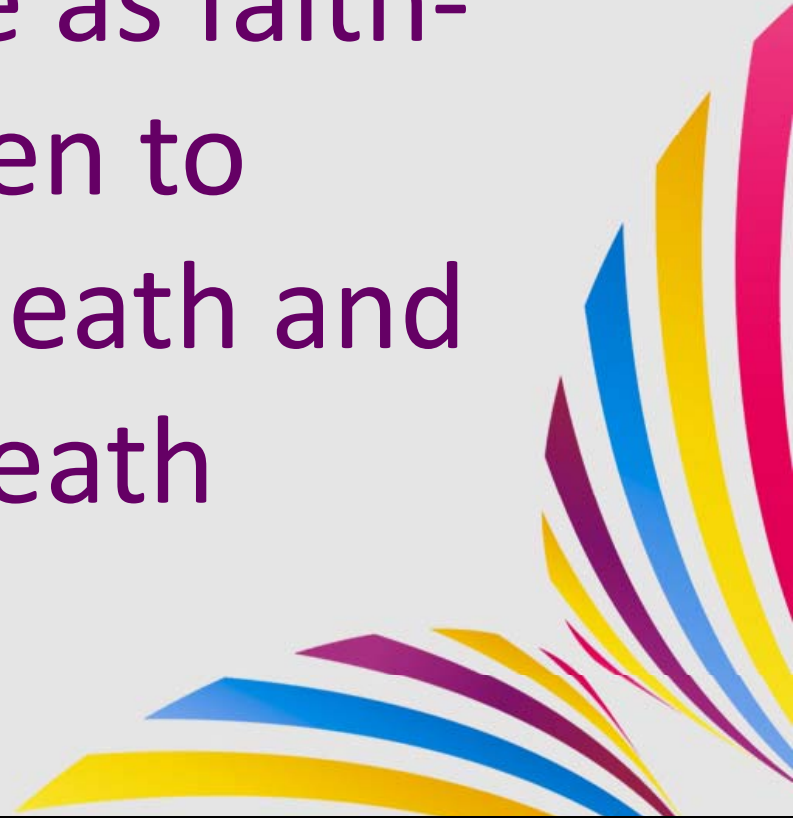
I think death is the end of the body.  
Their **spirit** goes to heaven. God decides.

[Year 6; Sikh]

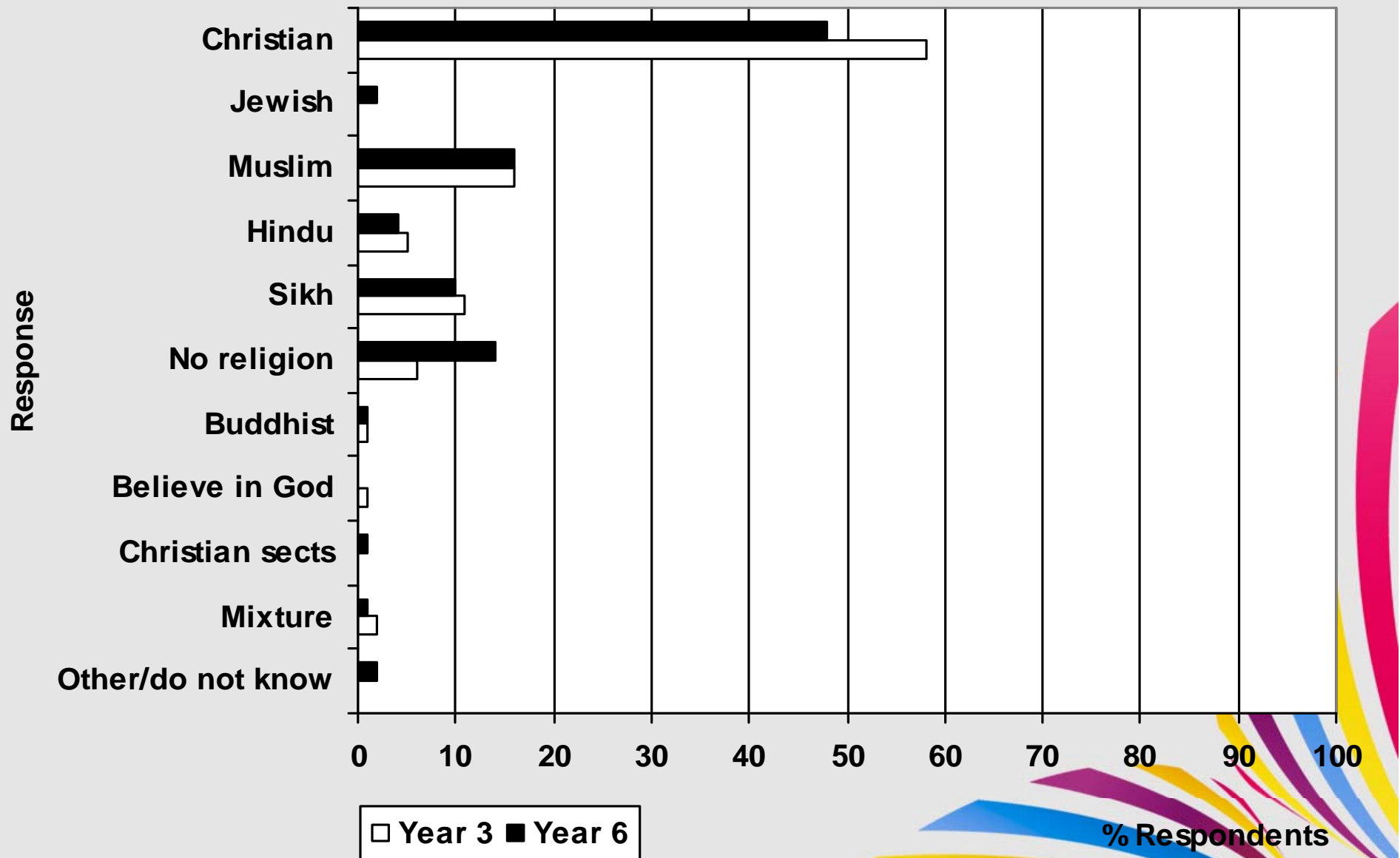


## **Faith hypothesis:**

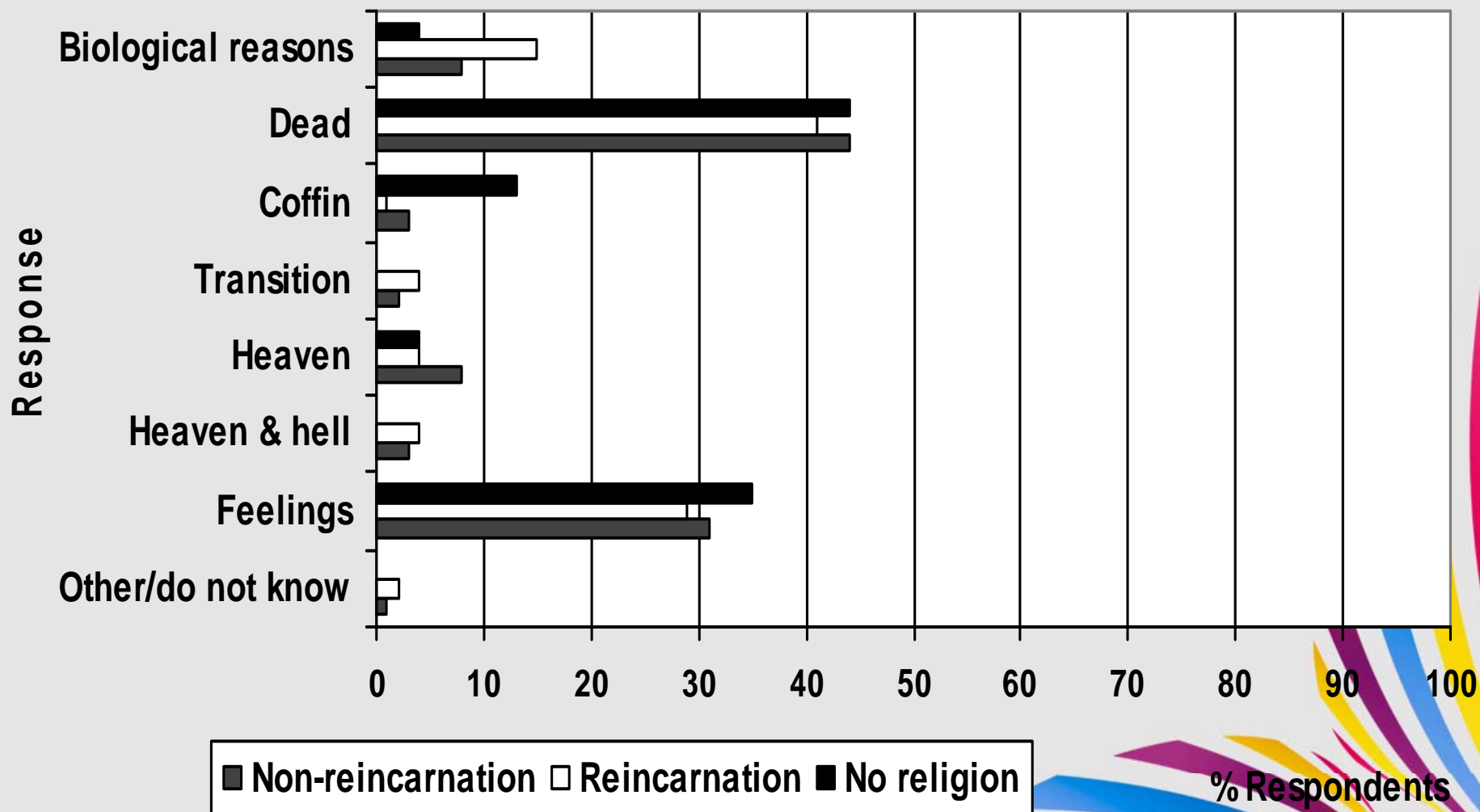
Children with no faith-  
base are as able as faith-  
base children to  
conceptualize death and  
life after death



# Would you say that you belong to one of these religions? (n = 757)



# What does the word death mean to you? (n = 752)



Nothing left — the **end** of a life

[no religion]

Death to me means the **end** of your life  
(expired like credit cards).

[reincarnation; Hindu]

It means your life has **ended** so you need  
to enjoy it.

[non-reincarnation; Christian]

Death is when someone's life **ends**.

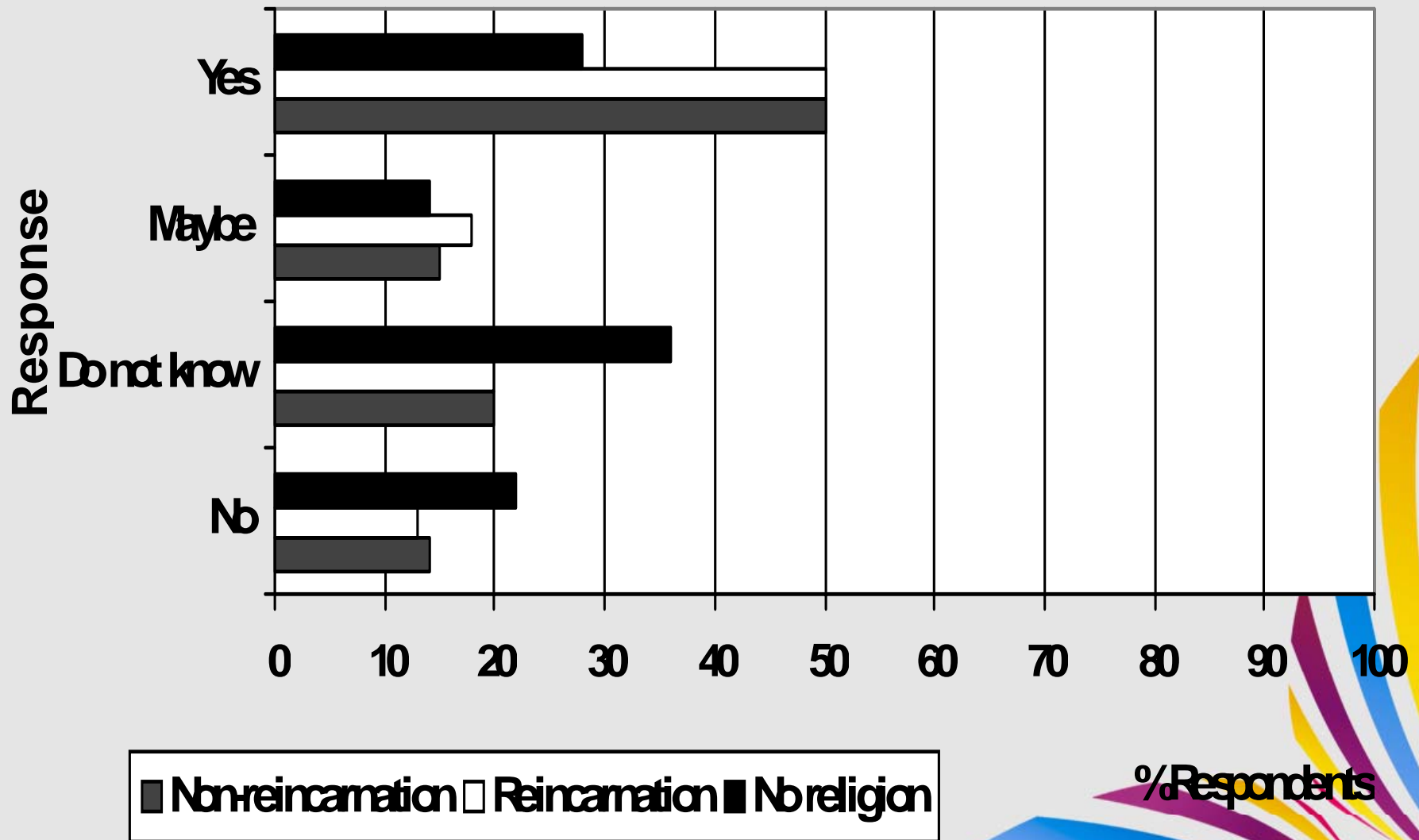
[non-reincarnation; Jewish]



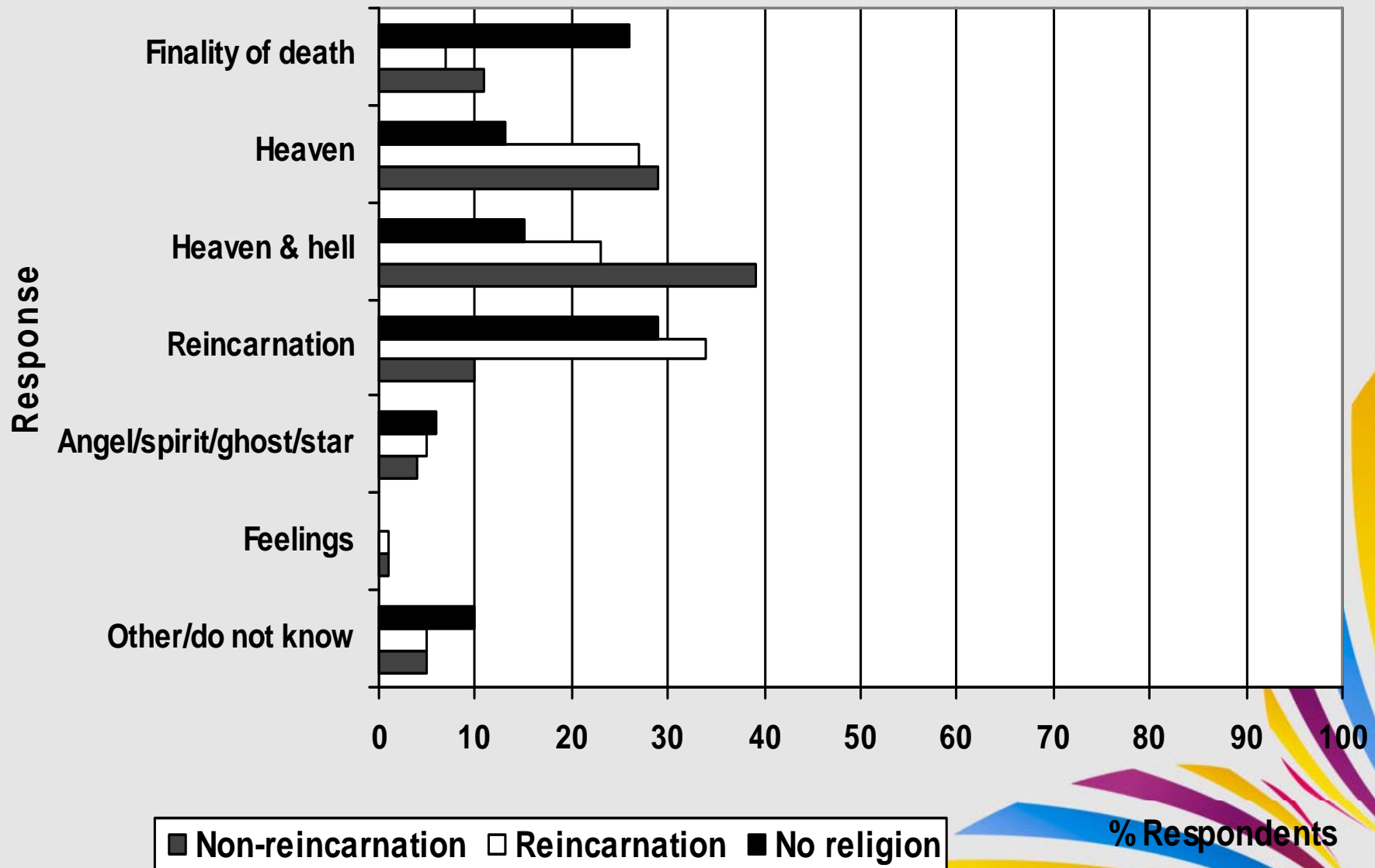
## Do you think there is life after death? (Birmingham and Durham data combined)

Response	Count	Faith			Total Respondents
		Non-reincarnation	Reincarnation	No religion	
Yes	Observed count	<b>276</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>363</b>
	Expected count	263	63	37	363
	% Observed	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>28%</b>	48%
Maybe	Observed count	<b>84</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>118</b>
	Expected count	86	20	12	118
	% Observed	15%	18%	14%	16%
Do not know	Observed count	<b>112</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>166</b>
	Expected count	120	29	17	166
	% Observed	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>36%</b>	22%
No	Observed count	<b>77</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>111</b>
	Expected count	80	19	11	111
	% Observed	14%	13%	<b>22%</b>	15%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	Observed count	<b>549</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>758</b>
	Expected count	549	131	78	758
	% Observed	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Do you think there is life after death? (n = 758)



# What do you think comes after death? (n = 758)



More life in heaven but not everybody will go there.  
**Good** people go to **heaven**, **bad** people go to **hell** and  
**God decides** this.

[no religion]

A **soul** comes out of the body and it goes to heaven.  
**Good** people go to **heaven** and **bad** people go to **hell**.  
**God decides** this.

[reincarnation; Sikh]

I think **God takes your soul** and you rest in peace in **heaven**  
— **good** or **hell** — **bad**. **God decides**.

[non-reincarnation; Christian]

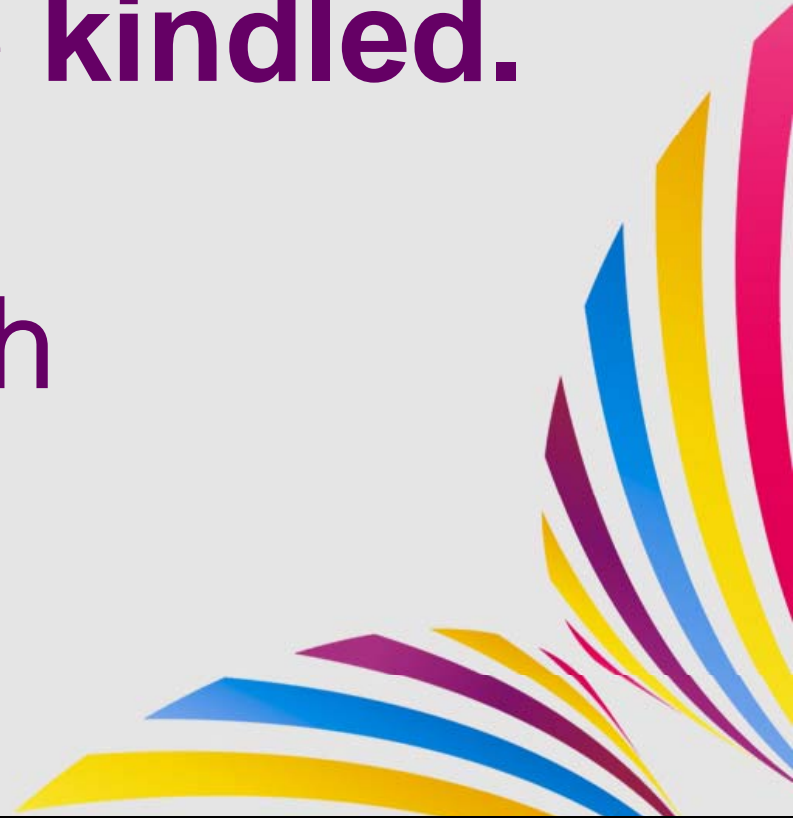
A funeral and in my religion you might go to heaven or hell.  
If you do really **bad things** you might go to **hell**, if you do a  
**good thing** you might go to **heaven** but it is **decided by**  
**God**.

[non-reincarnation; Muslim]



**The mind is not a  
vessel to be filled  
but a fire to be kindled.**

Plutarch



**The word death means a  
lot to me it can bring tears  
to my eyes!  
It signifies never seeing life  
as meaningless.**

**Year 6 girl**

