



Final report: Work experience analysis
September 2020- August 2021

Access Accountancy

July 2022

Executive summary (1)

- **Access Accountancy was founded by and for the accountancy profession, to realise a more representative workforce by socio-economic background.** The mission is to ensure that everyone has an equal chance of accessing the accountancy profession based on merit, not background.
- **Over the last six years, the Bridge Group has been appointed as the independent body to collate and validate signatories' data, as it relates to their commitments to this mission.** This has included two data-sets, focusing on applicants and hires to entry-level roles (including school leavers and graduates) and those school-aged pupils participating in work experience. From 2023, our data analysis will also include whole workforce diversity and progression, considering whether SEB affects who gets ahead among signatories.
- **This report focuses on the work experience data for the period Sep 2020 to Aug 2021, including the eligibility of participants and the impact of participation.** We have analysed the background characteristics of participants, and most have completed a standardised survey that we have designed and shared with signatories.

Executive summary (2)

- **Compared with the previous two years, there has been an increase in the number of work experience candidates who are eligible against [Access Accountancy criteria](#) (and the % who are eligible from the overall cohort).**

In 20/21, 651 work experience candidates met the criteria, compared with 119 in the previous year and 585 in the pre-pandemic year of 18/19.

In 20/21, 91% of the overall work experience population were eligible against Access Accountancy criteria, compared with 86% in the previous year, and 62% in 18/19.

- **There has been a significant increase in the diversity of work experience candidates by ethnicity.**

The percentage of Black respondents has tripled from 8% to 24% between 2018-19 and 2020-21.

- **Feedback from participants about the impact of work experience continues to be overwhelmingly positive.**

The percentage of those who rated their awareness of careers in this sector as 'Excellent' or 'Good' more than doubled between pre (43%) and post survey (93%).

Executive summary (3)

- **Access Accountancy is setting the bar for how a profession can collaborate to make change happen. The depth and longevity of the data shared here is not available in any other profession; and it will be important that this collaboration continues to be progressive and maintains momentum. In the report, we detail recommendations, including:**
 - It would be helpful to understand in more detail why some organisations are not submitting data, and to address this.
 - Future analysis should include identifying if work experience participants have subsequently applied to an Access Accountancy signatory, and whether they have been successful.
 - Future analysis should capture and explore the relative impact of different models of work experience - virtual, hybrid or in person.
 - Alongside SEB, gender and ethnicity data, we should also collect the home location of work experience candidates, to understand in more details the geographic reach of Access Accountancy.

Headlines

- Compared with the previous two years, there has been an increase in the number of work experience candidates who are eligible against Access Accountancy criteria (and the % who are eligible from the overall cohort).

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Response rates

	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Pre survey N	799	203	713
Post survey N	700	216	582
No. of firms submitting data	7	6	14

Total number of eligible work experience candidates

	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
No. of work experience candidates validated as meeting the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria	651	119	585	1,013	743	1,450
Total	4,561					

Note: These figures were only based on data that was submitted by the firms. It is possible that there were more Access Accountancy work experience candidates from 2015-2021 who met the eligibility criteria. However, their data was not submitted for analysis.

Work experience eligibility: 2018-2020

- The percentage of respondents who met the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria has increased considerably from 2018-19.
- Although the sample was significantly smaller in 2019-20 than in 2018-19 and 2020-21, the graph suggests an upward trend in work experience candidates meeting the eligibility criteria.

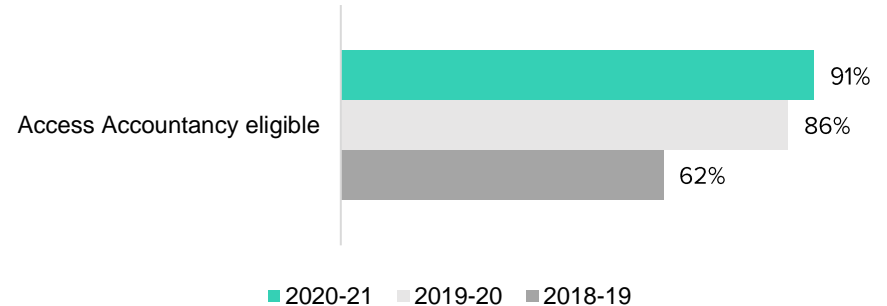


Figure 5. Percentage of students meeting the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria

(2020-21 No of eligible students=651; 2019-20

No of eligible students=119; 2018-19 No of eligible students=585)

Work experience: key findings

- Seven firms provided data on 799 work experience candidates at presurvey and 700 at post survey. Students undertook placements between September 2020 and August 2021.
- Most respondents (91%) were validated as meeting the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria of attending a state school **and** at least one further criterion, with 100% attending a state school. Note that there were some candidates for whom it was not possible to identify eligibility on any criteria (n = 61).
- The sample size of work experience candidate data this year is significantly higher than that of the previous year. However, the completeness of the data varied considerably across the firms. This may be due to the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in firms having to adapt their work experience programme(s) to a digital format or cancel them.
- Findings from the impact analysis were as positive as in the previous year. Following the work experience, there was a 29% increase in respondents who rated their 'Application interview technique' as 'Excellent' or 'Good'.
- Respondents who rated their awareness of careers in this sector as 'Excellent' or 'Good' rose from 43% at pre survey to 93% at post survey. At post survey, 89% of respondents also said they were 'very much' or 'possibly' interested in a professional services / accountancy career.

Work experience data

- Seven firms provided data on 799 work experience candidates at presurvey and 700 at post survey.
- Work experience candidate eligibility data is drawn from the survey responses completed by work experience candidates and from application records.
- Data was submitted by BDO, Deloitte, EY, Grant Thornton, ICAEW, KPMG, the National Audit Office and PwC. Given that some firms only submitted either the pre or post survey, reported much lower post survey response rates, or provided partial data, a matched analysis of respondents between pre and post survey was not possible.
- The overall survey figures are up from 2019-2020 (approximately 500 more respondents for the pre and post surveys). This may be because we received data from more firms, and the fact that some firms' work experience took place in 2021 following the Covid-19 lockdowns. However, the completeness of the data submitted varied markedly across the firms.
- The percentage of missing data differed across survey questions. Where there is a large percentage of missing data, the base figure or total sample will be reported.

Demographic and socio-economic data

- 58% of respondents identified as female, 41% as male and less than 1% as non-binary.
- 39% of respondents who provided ethnicity data (N=593) were of Asian ethnicity, 27% were White and 24% identified as Black. A further 6% identified as Mixed and 4% as 'Other'.
- As shown in Figure 1, there was a similar percentage of respondents from a high and low socio-economic background (SEB) based on parental occupation.

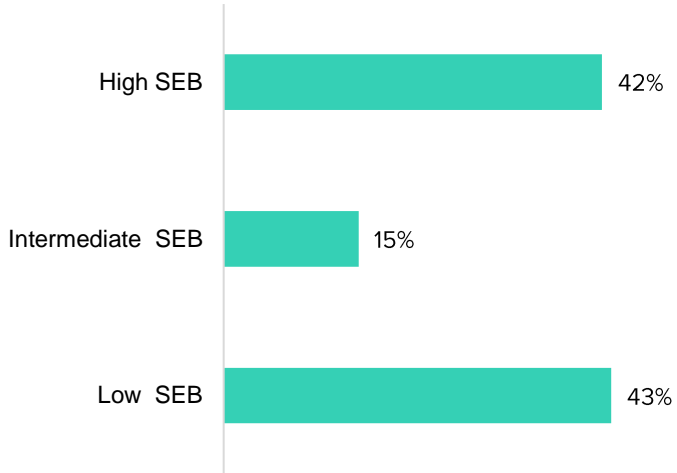


Figure 1. Socio-economic background of candidates based on parental occupation (N=222)

Ethnicity

- The percentage of Black respondents has tripled from 8% to 24% between 2018-19 and 2020-21.
- The percentage of Asian respondents has gradually increased from 34% to 39% since 2018-19.
- White respondents have dropped from 47% in 2018-19 to 27% in 2020-21.

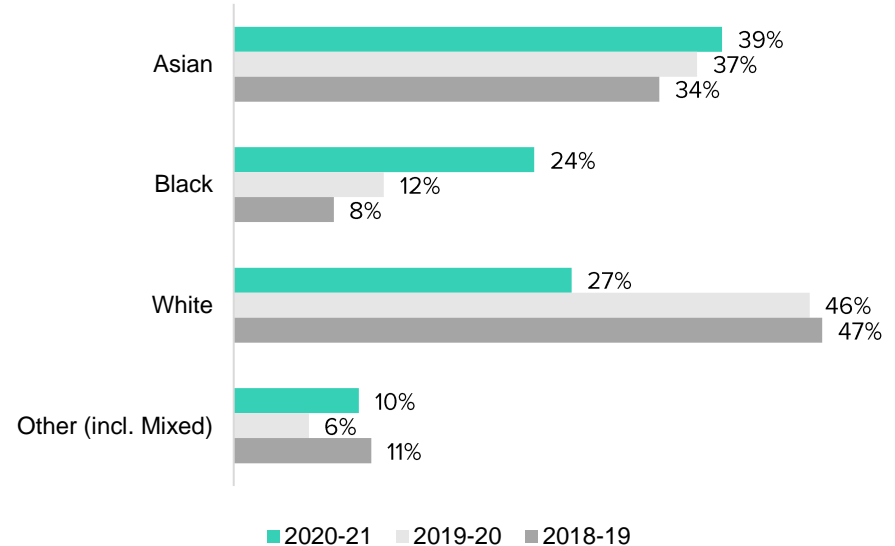


Figure 2. Respondents' ethnicity (2020-21 ethnicity N=594; 2019-20 ethnicity N=138; 2018-19 total N=713)

Work experience eligibility

- Seven firms provided data on a total of 799 work experience candidates at pre survey.
- 100% of respondents attended a state school.
- About three in four respondents (75%) were FSM eligible or would be a first generation university student.
- These criteria are not mutually exclusive amongst respondents.
- The percentage of respondents meeting these criterion is significantly higher in 2020-21 than in 2019-2020. This may be due to greater volume of data received in 2020-21 or type of firms who had submitted data.

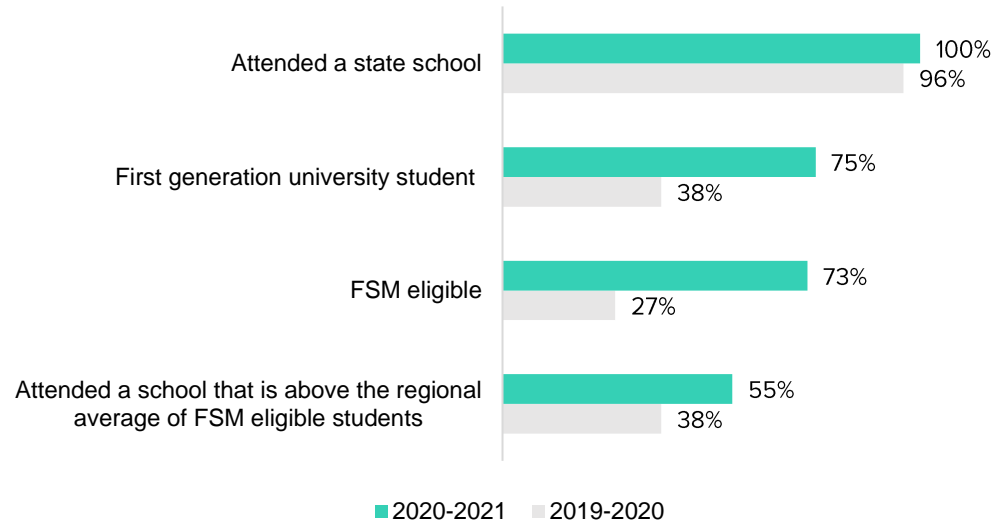


Figure 3. Socio-economic background of candidates (2020-21: N ranges from 398 to 714; 2019-2020 N ranges from 190 to 203)

Work experience eligibility

- Overall, 91% of respondents have been validated as meeting the Access Accountancy eligibility criteria of attending a state school **and** at least one further criterion.*
- Most respondents (64%) were meeting two or more criteria (in addition to attending a state school).
- Missing data** on whether respondents' schools were above the regional average for FSM eligibility (N=401) suggests the real figure could be higher.

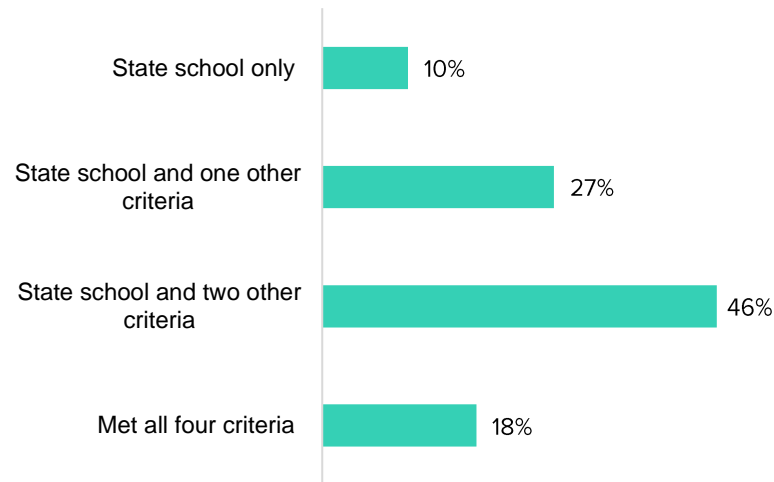


Figure 4. Eligibility of candidates attending schools in England (N=738)

*Eligibility criteria include having attended a state school / college and meeting one of the following: eligibility for FSM in the last six years; or attending a school that is above the regional average of FSM eligible students; or would be of the first generation in their immediate family to attend university

** Missing school data including those who attended school overseas and regional FSM eligibility data in Scottish and Welsh schools. Missing data was excluded from analysis on school type and regional FSM.

Impact analysis: all respondents

Abilities (1) ‘Excellent’ to ‘Very Poor’

The following analysis looks at all pre and post survey responses. Firms had used two different scales in their post survey responses. For those who had use the ‘Excellent’ to ‘Very Poor’ scale, respondents reported positive outcomes at post survey. The biggest changes were in ‘Application interview technique’ and ‘Self-confidence’ with a 29% and 27% increase of those who rated themselves as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’ respectively.

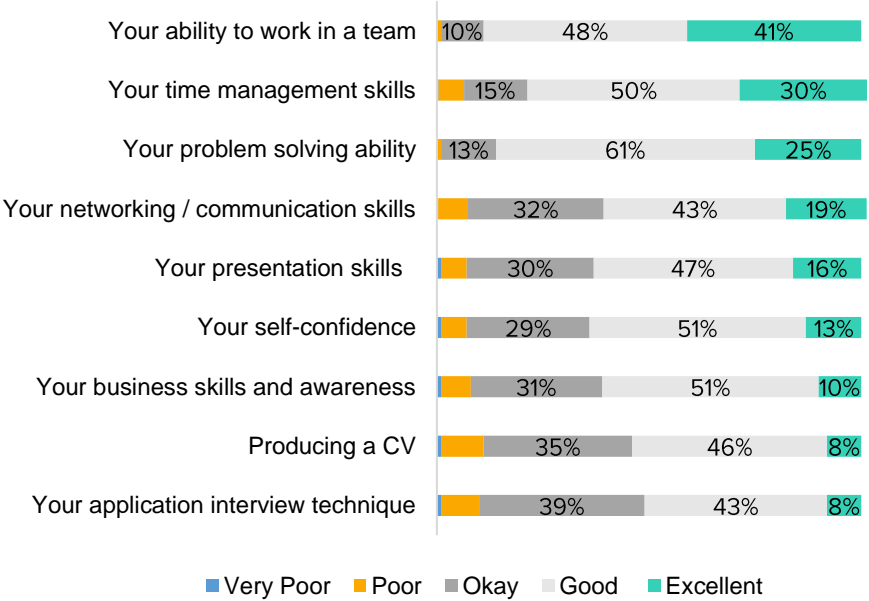


Figure 6. Rating of abilities prior to work experience (N ranges from 797 to 799)

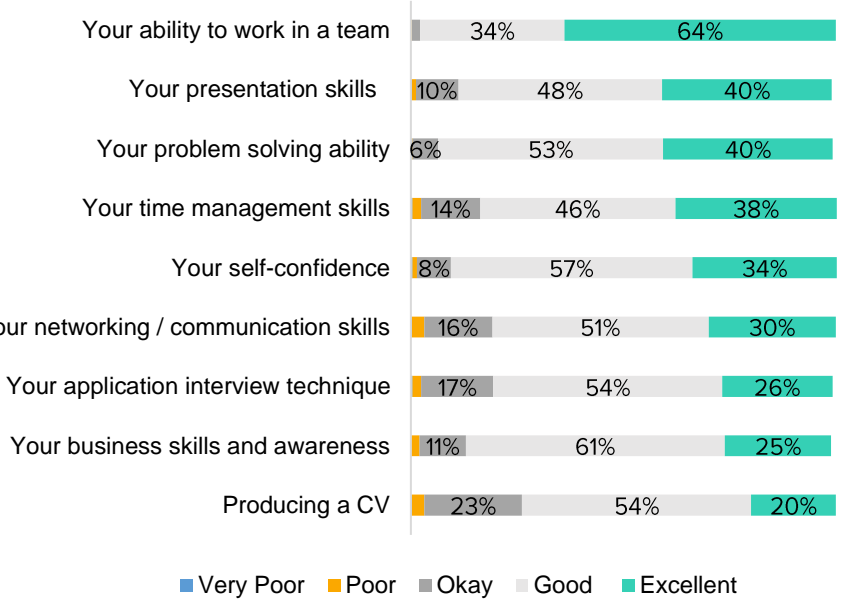


Figure 7. Impact of work experience on all abilities (N=423)

Abilities (2) 'Increased a lot' to 'Decreased a lot'

The following analysis looks at all pre and post survey responses using a **different Likert scale** ('Increased a lot' to 'Decreased a lot') at post survey than the previous slide. Firms had used two different scales in their responses. Outcomes were very positive with the vast majority of respondents saying that their business skills and awareness (94%) and networking/communication skills (93%) had increased at post survey.

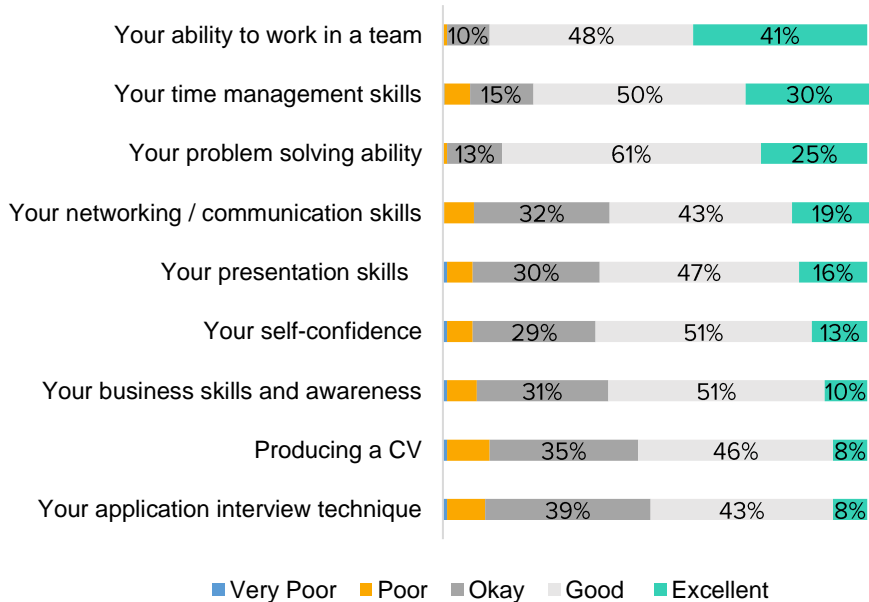


Figure 8. Rating of abilities prior to work experience (N ranges from 797 to 799)



Figure 9. Impact of work experience on all abilities (N=231)

Awareness of careers

- Respondents were asked about their awareness of careers in the professional services/ accountancy at pre and post survey.
- The percentage of those who rated their awareness of careers in this sector as 'Excellent' or 'Good' more than doubled between pre (43%) and post survey (93%).
- This is a particularly positive finding given that most work experience placements at this time were conducted virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

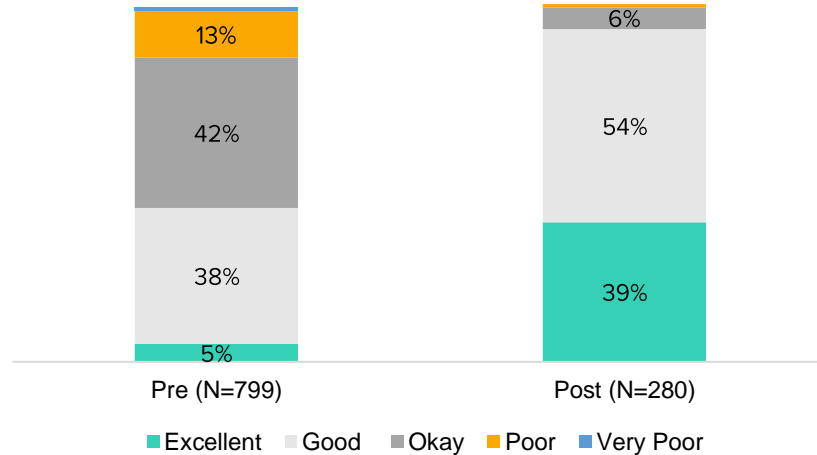


Figure 10. Awareness of careers in professional services / accountancy before and after work experience

Interest in careers

- There were no major differences in interest in careers between pre and post surveys.
- Most respondents (89%) were 'very much' or 'possibly' interested in a career in professional services/accountancy following the work experience.
- At post survey, the percentage of respondents who were 'very much' or 'possibly' interested in a career in this sector (89%) was also comparable to that in 2019-2020 (91%).

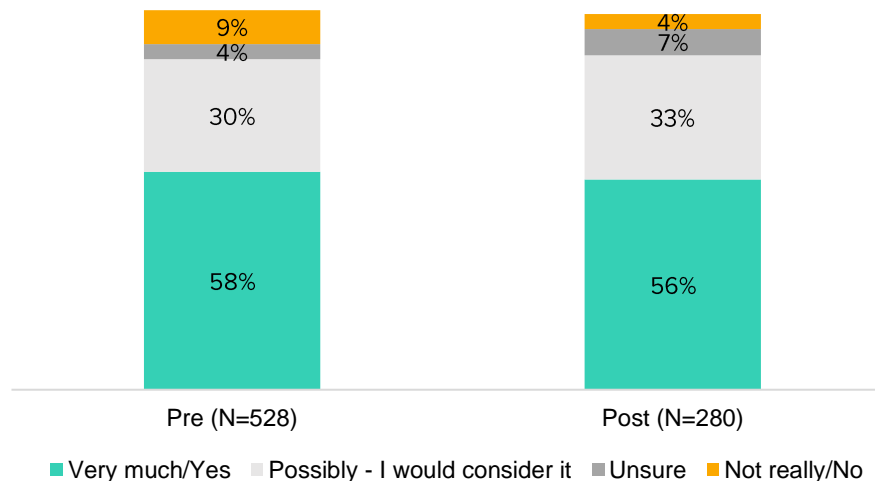


Figure 11. Awareness of careers in professional services / accountancy before and after work experience

Recommendations

- **It would be helpful to understand in more detail why some organisations are not submitting data** – i.e. is this because they are not running placements, not collecting the data, or are finding it challenging to share it?
- **Future analysis should include identifying if work experience participants have subsequently applied to an Access Accountancy signatory**, and whether they have been successful. This could simply involve capturing DOB and initials in the work experience surveys (we do this for matching pre and post surveys) and then linking this to application data shared by firms.
- **Future analysis should capture and explore the relative impact of different models of work experience** - virtual, hybrid or in person.
- **Alongside SEB, gender and ethnicity data, we should also collect the home location of work experience candidates**, to understand in more details the geographic reach of Access Accountancy; and the extent to which young people in social mobility cold spots are being engaged.

Appendix: firms submitting selection/hires and work experience data

Work experience data
BDO
Deloitte
EY
Grant Thornton
ICAEW
KPMG
National Audit Office
PwC

Firms that confirmed their work experience placements had been postponed/cancelled due to Covid-19
Blick Rothenberg
Duncan & Toplis
MHA MacIntyre Hudson
Price Bailey