

How to Describe Numbers

In order to describe charts and graphs, you need to master the language of numbers. Here is a breakdown of key vocabulary.

🔑 **Percent / Percentage.** There is a difference in how these two words are used. The word percent comes after a number. *Ten percent of people study abroad.* Percentage comes after words like 'the', 'a', 'this' and 'that'. Often, it is preceded by an adjective. *A very small percentage of people study abroad.*

Fractions - Here is a basic set of figures.

0-5	a small fraction
10	one tenth
20	a fifth
25	a quarter
33	one third
40	two fifths
50	a half
60	three fifths
66	two thirds
75	three quarters
80	four fifths

➔ Match the terms on the left to the numbers on the right.

- | | | |
|------------------|---|-------|
| two fifths | • | • 75% |
| one tenth | • | • 25% |
| a half | • | • 4% |
| a third | • | • 20% |
| three fifths | • | • 50% |
| three quarters | • | • 80% |
| two thirds | • | • 66% |
| a small fraction | • | • 60% |
| a fifth | • | • 33% |
| four fifths | • | • 10% |
| a quarter | • | • 40% |

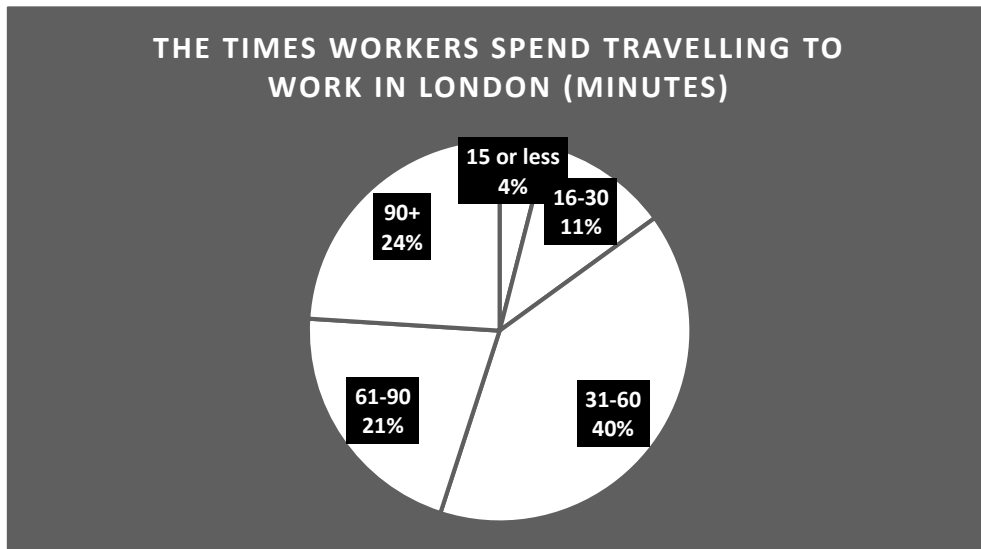
In the exam the numbers will likely not be exact. You need to describe the numbers.

Basic meaning			
about	approximately	around	more or less
more than	just over	slightly over	
less than	just under	almost	nearly
exactly	precisely		

➔ Match the items on the left to the items on the right.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|-----|
| nearly 20% | • | • | 10% |
| more or less 50% | • | • | 76% |
| precisely one in ten | • | • | 52% |
| approximately a quarter | • | • | 9% |
| just under 10% | • | • | 31% |
| slightly over half | • | • | 48% |
| almost a third | • | • | 26% |
| just over three quarters | • | • | 18% |

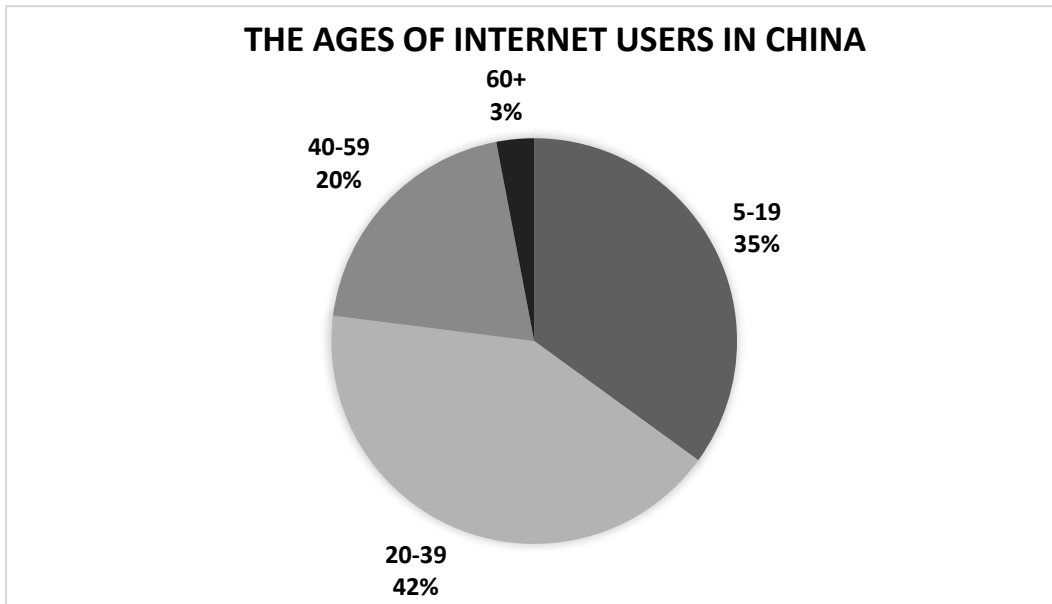
➔ Look at this pie chart and put one qualifier and one number in each space.



Qualifiers	Numbers
Just over	A fifth
Precisely	A small fraction
Just under	A quarter
Slightly over	Two-fifths
Only	A tenth

1. _____ of people spend 15 minutes or less travelling to work.
2. _____ of people spend between 16 and 30 minutes travelling to work.
3. _____ of people spend between 31 and 60 minutes travelling to work.
4. _____ of workers spend between 61 and 90 minutes travelling to work.
5. _____ of workers spend over 90 minutes travelling to work.

➔ Write three more sentences describing the numbers in this pie chart.



Just over a third of internet users in China are between five and 19 years old.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

There are other ways to describe numbers. Here is some key vocabulary.

🔑 **Proportion** – a part, a number considered in relation to a whole.

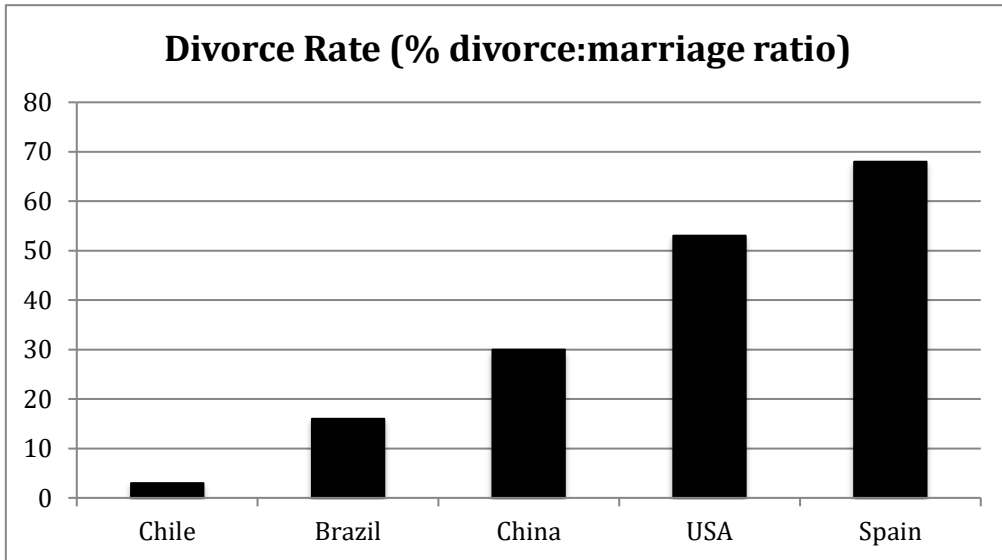
🔑 **Majority** – the greater number or part, especially more than half.

🔑 **Minority** – a smaller number or part.

Percentage	Descriptor
0-5	an insignificant minority/number
6-19	a small number
20-39	a good proportion
40-55	a large proportion
56-90	a significant majority

🔑 **Rate.** A number measured against some other quantity. For instance, let's look at the infant mortality rate, which is the number of deaths of children under 1 year of age per 1,000 live births. In Sweden, the infant mortality rate is 2.6/1000 live births, but we just say, 'The infant mortality rate in Sweden is 2.6.'

➔ Use the phrases above to write three more sentences about this bar chart.



Example: A small number of couples divorce in Chile.

1 _____

2

3
