

SPECIAL TEST: DG's Exotic IT175
How to Keep Your Hot Bike Cool
Christmas Guide to Beginner Bikes



**Kawasaki's
Six**

CYCLE WORLD

DEC. '78

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America's
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Enthusiasts'
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First Test
BMW R65

**Better Things Come
in a Smaller Package**



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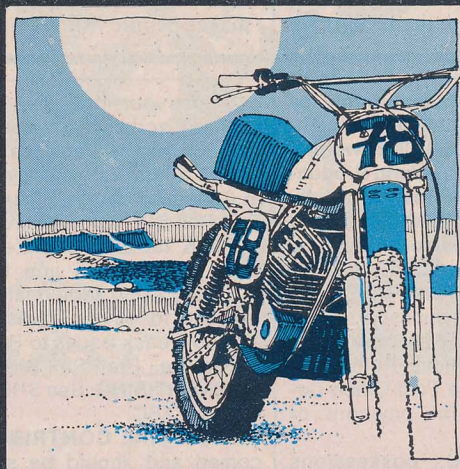
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THE BMW R65, a portrait by Robert Monkton



THREE FOR THE TREE

Honda XR75, Kawasaki KD100, Yamaha GT80MX; A Christmas Selection of Beginner Bikes

■ Nature has given parents only one really useful weapon in the Battle of the Generations: We have the money.

Force is of course against the rules, and the kids have all the other weapons. They have all the facts, they have the numbers—"All the other kids . . ."—and they have more determination. Every kid in the world is prepared to say "I wanna" until mom's or dad's "no" becomes "Oh, all right."

This is mentioned here as warning as well as introduction. It's that time of year again. Visions of motorcycles are dancing through their heads. Santa's elves are seeing if they can get a bit more wheel travel out of last year's forks. The 10-to-13 set has been getting ready for the campaign for months. They've had their grubby fingers on every minicycle in town. They've talked to the other kids. They've read the test reports and the race results and the win posters and soon as you admit that yeah, he (or she) has grown a couple inches, and you did say that when they were big enough to touch the ground was time enough for a bike, the kid is ready.

"Got just the bike picked out, dad. Won its class at the Minicycle Nationals last year."

Look out.

Motocross is good sport. Whether a kid goes racing or not depends on the kid, and the parents. We have nothing against racing.



What we are noting here is a change in the beginner bike class.

When our oldest man bought bikes for his oldest kids, the choice was legion. Every major factory and most of the smaller firms had a catalog full of small motorcycles, in mild states of tune and thus ready to hold up under the thrashing most kids will dish out. Some of the makes (now gone, thank goodness) seemed to have done their engineering in the dark but at least they were offering machines for the little people who'd be riding them.

Came time for us to look around this year and surprise! The popular models are racing bikes. Not playbikes with number plates, but true competition machines with two-moto-grenade engines and the power to wheelie in top gear while carrying a grown man.

Right. That's what the kids want, that's what sells today and that's what the factories are making the most noise about. Bikes for kids who've never ridden are pushed off to one corner of the showroom. Can't blame the manufacturers, as they stay in business building what people buy. We suspect this has happened because the kids want racing bikes and they do all the talking.

This, then, is a test intended for parents, the ones with the money and thus the final say, and any kid caught with these pages hidden beneath the mattress along with those other magazines is gonna catch it when your father gets home.

The test began with research. Which of the brands available most places have motorcycles designed to be ridden by kids with no experience?

Then we did field testing, by rounding up an assortment of kids and letting them ride each bike.

The range was normal for a comparison test, in that we had a 16-year-old who's been riding since he was 10 and is thus an expert beginner and could report on what the test machine actually was doing. We had a 13-year-old who's been riding for several months. He knows the basics and can tell one bike from another but because he isn't as fast as his father he's obviously an intermediate beginner. And we borrowed an 11-year-old who'd never started an engine or controlled a throttle, although he's the king of the block on his bicycle.

The kids had almost as much fun as we did. As compensation, we figured if we gave them cash, they'd blow it on jelly-beans or worse, on rock records. If we'd given the money to their parents, mom and dad would have done something practical, like put it in the bank and we're kid enough to know how much fun that is.

Along with the test bikes we'd borrowed riding gear, so at the end of the field work we handed each kid the helmet, jersey and gloves and if the folks at Hondaline, Yamaha Parts Division and Kawasaki Accessories balk at that, well, we reckon they've made an investment in future customers, as we'll see later.

Note: The three bikes shown here are not the only true beginner bikes on the market. They are mass-produced, which means parts and service are easier, and they were chosen with an eye toward differences in size. Some kids begin younger and some are larger or smaller than others.

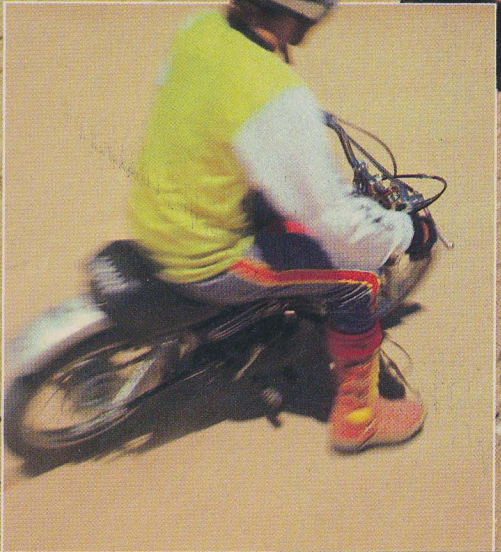
HONDA XR75

Honda's entry has been around for so long that it's almost the benchmark in beginner bikes. It's different in that it's a four-stroke, and because the XR75 has always been a strictly off-road model. Honda used to have the two-stroke MR50 and the dual-purpose XL70, but both are out of production due to lack of demand and both were entirely different from the XR.

As you'd expect from Honda, the XR has a single overhead camshaft and like its bigger brothers, the XL100, 125 and 175, the 75 has two valves per cylinder.

Everything in the bike is completely conventional and scaled down, that is, the ratios of wheelbase, wheel travel, engine power, etc., are just as they'd be in a larger Honda dirt bike. And like the bigger four strokes, the XR is heavy. It won races at





first, then could win if modified to the teeth and now can only win in its own class. Honda has kept the faith. Here the XR75 still is, despite the Suzuki RM and Yamaha YZ.

KAWASAKI KD100

The men at Kawasaki's test fleet took some persuasion, as they kept wondering if we wouldn't rather wait until the KX80 ("It'll put those yellow-tank turkeys in the weeds.") is available. No. This is an adult test of kid bikes, so they delivered the KD100, smallest real motorcycle in the line.

The KD is one generation old, a survivor from the days of the G7 and F6 and all the others whose names had nothing to do with intended usage or displacement. The KD has a two-stroke engine with rotary valve and enclosed carburetor, not a bad thing when you figure if it's tucked away the kids can't fiddle it. There's oil injection, also a safety item because the owner doesn't have to work out what 1:20 is in gallons to ounces of oil.

The KD is one of three Kawasaki 100s, the others being dual purpose, tuned for 11 or 8.5 bhp, that is, small experienced rider or new kid. The KD has the new kid's engine, but has been stripped of lights and turn signals and fitted with knobby tires. Despite its age, the KD is a dirt bike and a useful one.

YAMAHA GTMX

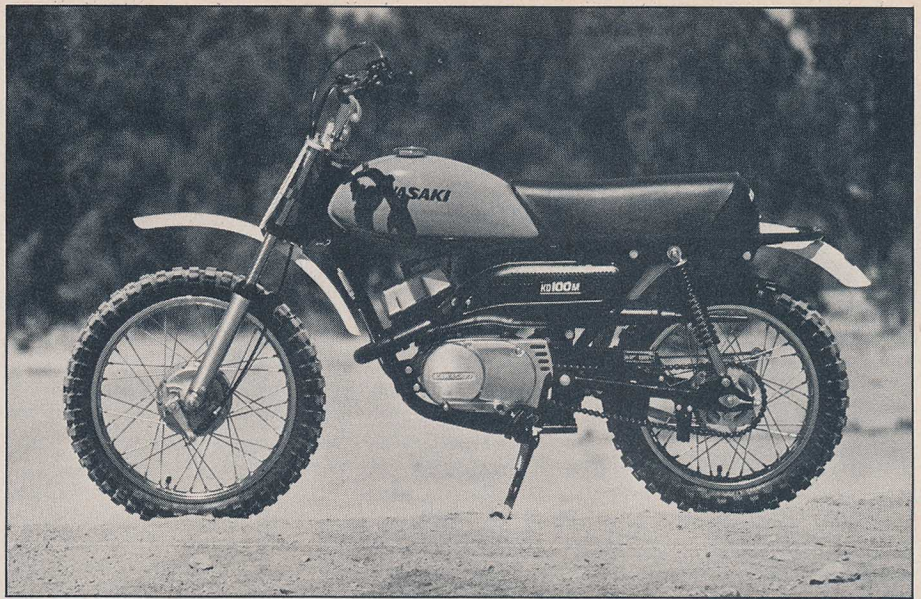
Speaking of strange names, the Yamaha beginner machine is not a motocross racer and it surely isn't a Grand Touring mount. Instead, it's the smallest of our trio.

The GT's ancestry is camping bike, stemming from when grown people bought the smallest-available motorcycles with street equipment and carried them lashed to the camper's bumper. Great machines for zipping down to the store while the left-behinds get to struggle with the tent.

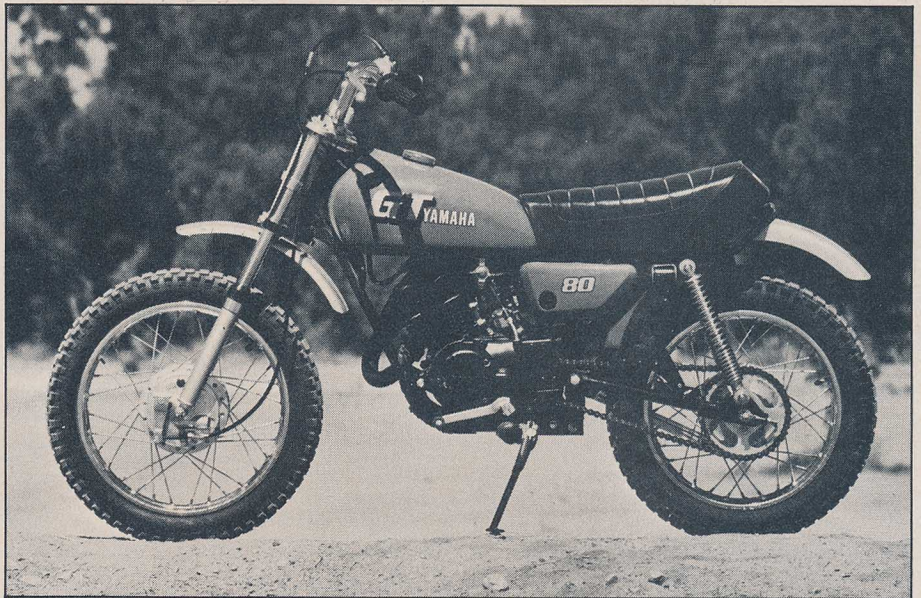
The two-stroke Single has a reed valve and oil injection, which fits the beginner class as noted above. Like the others in this group, it has center-mount front axle, conventional telescopic forks and rear spring/shock suspension, drum brakes, primary kick start.

There is some evidence the product planners didn't research this project completely, as the GT still has rubber-covered footpegs while the other two bikes have proper cleated metal ones. And the GT comes with trials-tread tires, the best choice for a dual-purpose motorcycle but a minus for a bike that can't legally be used on pavement.

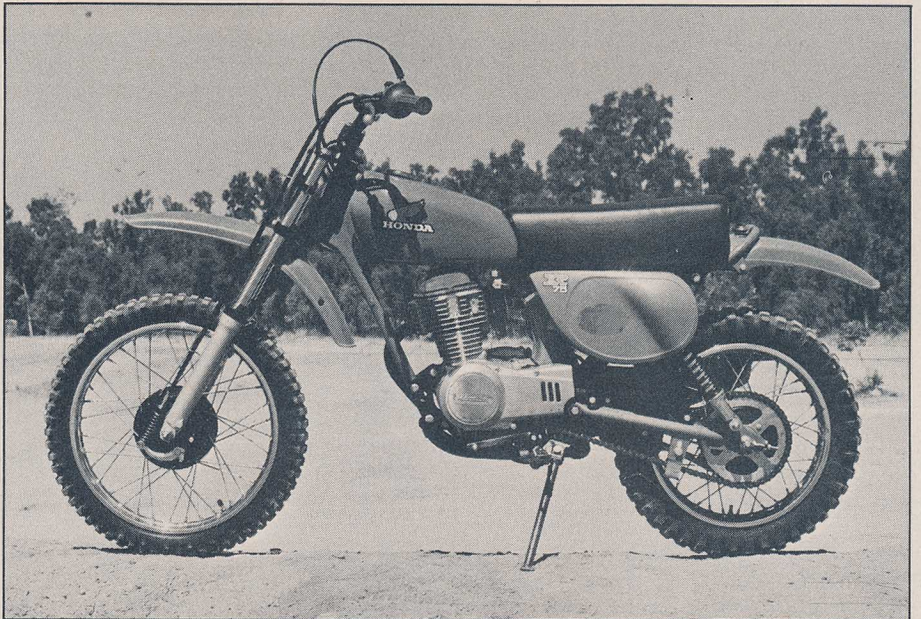
There are also signs of cost-cutting. The clutch and brake cables don't have protective boots, they can't be adjusted at the lever, and the levers pivot on tabs welded to the bars instead of the standard clamps. You can loosen the clamps enough to give when the kid drops the bike, which you



Kawasaki KD100



Yamaha GT80MX



Honda XR75

can't do with permanent tabs.

The GT also comes with an important difference.

Shift pattern is N-1-2-3-4. Four speeds. With neutral at the bottom.

This is good thinking. As we older parents have learned the hard way, just because we all got used to what is now the federally-mandated shift pattern doesn't mean we understood it at first. New riders struggle with low gear, then a tiny nudge into neutral or a firm pull for 2nd. And if the engine stalls, as they do when you're learning about throttles and torque, neutral can be harder to catch than the tooth fairy.

By blocking off or removing the lowest gear and giving the rider a neutral he can find first and every time, Yamaha has made riding a motorcycle a heap easier for the beginner. With an engine tuned for low-rev output and long life, and with top speed no concern, four wide ratios are fine.

Even a kid who can ride a bicycle has one new thing to learn with each foot and his left hand, and two new things to learn with his right hand, so 1-N-2-3-4-5 can be something he adjusts to later.

RIDING IMPRESSIONS

Keeping in mind that kids are as subject to prejudice as their parents, the riding and learning experience with the three test machines and the three test riders worked out in a predictable pattern.

The expert kid didn't like the Yamaha very much. Two small for a 16-year-old, not enough power and shucks, if he could learn how to find neutral hidden away like that, why can't everybody?

More to the point for our purposes, all the controls worked properly, he could jump the bike and land correctly, and pull wheelies, do berm shots and slides with no hint of poor handling.

The intermediate was less critical of the Yamaha but not especially impressed. He was sent out to do his usual practice riding; figure 8s, short downhill for braking and powerslides around pylons, it being his father's theory that if you can provoke slides and control them, you can control them if they catch you by surprise.

The beginner didn't know that he wasn't supposed to dislike motorcycles with trials tires and rubber pegs and no proper gearshift pattern.

He quickly proved that an 11-year-old can master fuel petcock and ignition switch and choke and kick starter. Neutral at the bottom seemed fine and the concept of pulling up with his toe came easy.

For the first hour or so he was limited to stop-and-start. Ride from this pylon to that pylon. Stop. Find neutral. Walk the bike around. Ride back here. Stop. And so forth. Then he was allowed to ride around the pylons in wide circles. (We were lucky here. Escape Country, the motorcycle park where the testing took place, has a fine big

flat practice area.)

Something new to our experience was that the kid didn't stall the motor, not on the Yamaha or the Honda or the Kawasaki. Either the new rider, Tommy by name, has unusual talent, or the three factories involved in this group test have provided better low-speed torque and gradual clutches than we knew. Or maybe both.

Lack of engine braking, mentioned by the intermediate, didn't occur to the beginner. He didn't know he was supposed to have engine braking and he learned to conquer downhills with regular brakes, after the first try in which he learned what happens when you haul on the front too hard. Didn't faze him, though.

Our expert loved the Honda XR. It is, in his view, a proper dirt motorcycle albeit underpowered for his tastes. The XR is in balance, the gear ratios work with the engine and although there isn't much wheel travel by motocross standards the suspension has been designed so it bottoms out gradually. We'd see the kid fly through the air and whump! he'd land with no sideways motion or pitching. Good little bike, this, although it's really too small for a 16-year-old of average height or maybe a few inches shorter.

The intermediate liked the XR even more, surely because that's what he learned to ride on and has been practicing on for the past few months. Old Home Week to him and naturally he said the controls, the engine, everything about the bike were the best the world has ever seen. We probably should have discarded everything the intermediate said about the XR, but we only had three bikes in class and three kids on staff.

The beginner was a bit intimidated. Some of this must have been due to the size. He moved from the Yamaha to the Honda and the latter machine felt big, at a time when any motorcycle was a challenge.

Tommy had no trouble with the engine. He didn't like the shifter. First, the standard pattern was new to him and although he understood the theory his left toe had a hard time, just as the other kids had when they began riding.

Less expected, he couldn't shift up. He couldn't say why, exactly, but when he was allowed to proceed from 1st gear, he kept finding neutral against his will and then bogging the engine because he'd slowed down and forgotten to keep the revs up. Frustrating.

(There was a happy ending. Back on the Yamaha, he came zooming up a hill, grinning from ear to ear. "I did it! I was in 2nd gear!")

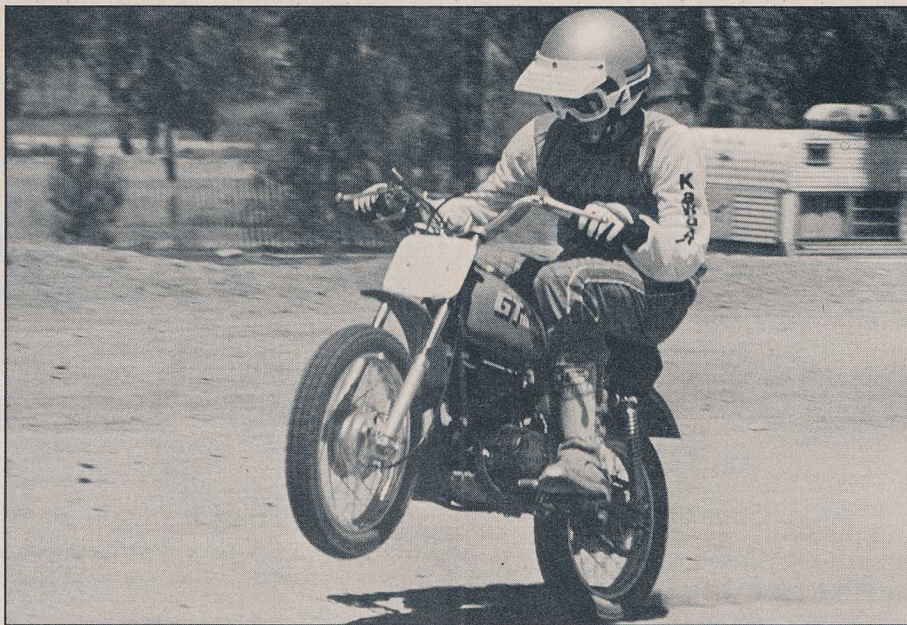
The other two kids had no trouble shifting the Honda, so we'd guess the difficulty was in the beginner's mind, or maybe Yamaha has a good thing there, so good that the normal way makes riding more of a learned skill than it needs to be.

For the Kawasaki, our expert soldiered on. What it is, he said, is a road bike without lights and with knobby tires. Too much weight in front. You can't lift the front wheel for obstacles and the front tire skates in turns. Brakes okay. Engine strong, compared with the others but not enough for him, as we could have told him. At his speeds, the Kawasaki didn't handle well, although there were no serious flaws that got him in trouble.

The intermediate isn't yet good enough to be able to report in the above manner. He said the KD was fine with him except it felt heavier than the XR (true) and the throttle was too quick.

The expert didn't agree. What was happening was that the 100 has more power than the 75, and the two-stroke revs quicker than the four-stroke. So when the intermediate turned on power, he got more than he wanted.

Likewise for the beginner on the KD. He didn't have the experience to tell, but



he did say he was having more trouble wrestling the KD than the other two bikes. Allot some for the difference in size, but even so, a kid on a bike too big for him will learn more slowly than the kid whose first mount fits.

FINDINGS

These are good little bikes, each of them. We're glad to see them on the market because we like to think there's a place for dirt bikes that aren't motocross bikes, and for kids who want to ride for fun, not trophies.

Judged as dirt bikes, the Honda is the

best. It was supposed to be a dirt bike only and there have been no compromises or shared parts to take away from its off-road capabilities. The XR75 is just like a motocross bike except it weighs more, demands less maintenance and isn't as powerful.

The two-strokes are mildly tuned and we doubt either the Yamaha or the Kawasaki would be any more bother than the Honda. The 80 and the 100 are time-tested engines. Keep the kid out of the carb, don't let him save up for a racing exhaust and either bike should last forever.

The Yamaha's main selling points are its size, the smallest and thus the easiest for

younger kids, and the shift pattern, which (by our test, anyway) is easier for the novice.

The Kawasaki's selling point is its engine size. The 100 is larger and will pull more weight. Good starting place for an older kid, and one that won't be outgrown in a few months.

We don't need a winner here. Whichever bike is under the tree on Christmas morning will be everything the kid wanted.

Remember how we paid the test riders?

His mother tells us Tommy wore his Yamaha jersey to bed. That's what beginner bikes are supposed to be about. ☐

SPECIFICATIONS	Honda XR75	Kawasaki KD100M3	Yamaha GT80 MXF
List price	\$549	\$499	\$519
Suspension, front	telescopic fork	telescopic fork	telescopic fork
Suspension, rear	swing arm	swing arm	swing arm
Tire, front	2.50-16	2.50-16	2.50-15
Tire, rear	3.00-14	3.00-14	2.75-14
Engine	sohc Single	two-stroke Single	two-stroke Single
Bore x stroke	48 x 41.4mm	49.5 x 51.8mm	47 x 42mm
Piston displacement	74.9cc	99cc	72cc
Compression ratio	9.5:1	7.3:1	6.8:1
Claimed power	7.9 bhp @ 10,500 rpm	8.5 bhp @ 6500 rpm	na
Claimed torque	4.5 ft. lb. @ 10,000 rpm	6.9 ft. lb. @ 5500 rpm	na
Carburetion	20mm Keihin	19mm Mikuni	16mm Teikei
Ignition	magneto/points	magneto/points	magneto/points
Lubrication system	wet sump	oil injection	oil injection
Oil capacity	1.9 pt.	1.3 pt.	1.1 pt.
Fuel capacity	0.8 gal.	1.6 gal.	1.3 gal.
Recommended fuel	regular or low-lead	regular	regular
Starting system	primary kick	primary kick	primary kick
Air filtration	oiled foam	oiled foam	oiled foam
POWER TRANSMISSION			
Clutch	multi-disc, wet	multi-disc, wet	multi-disc, wet
Primary drive	straight-cut gear	helical gear	helical gear
Final drive	# 420 chain	# 428 chain	# 420 chain
Gear ratios, overall:1			
5th	13.99	8.68	na
4th	16.47	9.88	12.08
3rd	20.41	11.78	15.34
2nd	26.53	15.99	21.47
1st	39.21	26.43	34.89
DIMENSIONS			
Wheelbase	45.0 in.	43.3 in.	41.1 in.
Seat height	28.0 in.	27.3 in.	26.2 in.
Seat width	6.3 in.	6.8 in.	7.8 in.
Handlebar width	28.3	28.0 in.	27.1 in.
Footpeg height	9.5 in.	8.6 in.	9.0 in.
Ground clearance	7.6 in.	7.0 in.	8.0 in.
Front fork rake angle	27.2 deg.	27.0 deg.	26.5 deg.
Trail	3.0 in.	2.9 in.	2.7 in.
Curb weight			
(w/half-tank fuel)	151 lb.	159 lb.	136 lb.
Weight bias,			
front/rear, percent	43.7/56.3	45.9/54.1	46.3/53.7