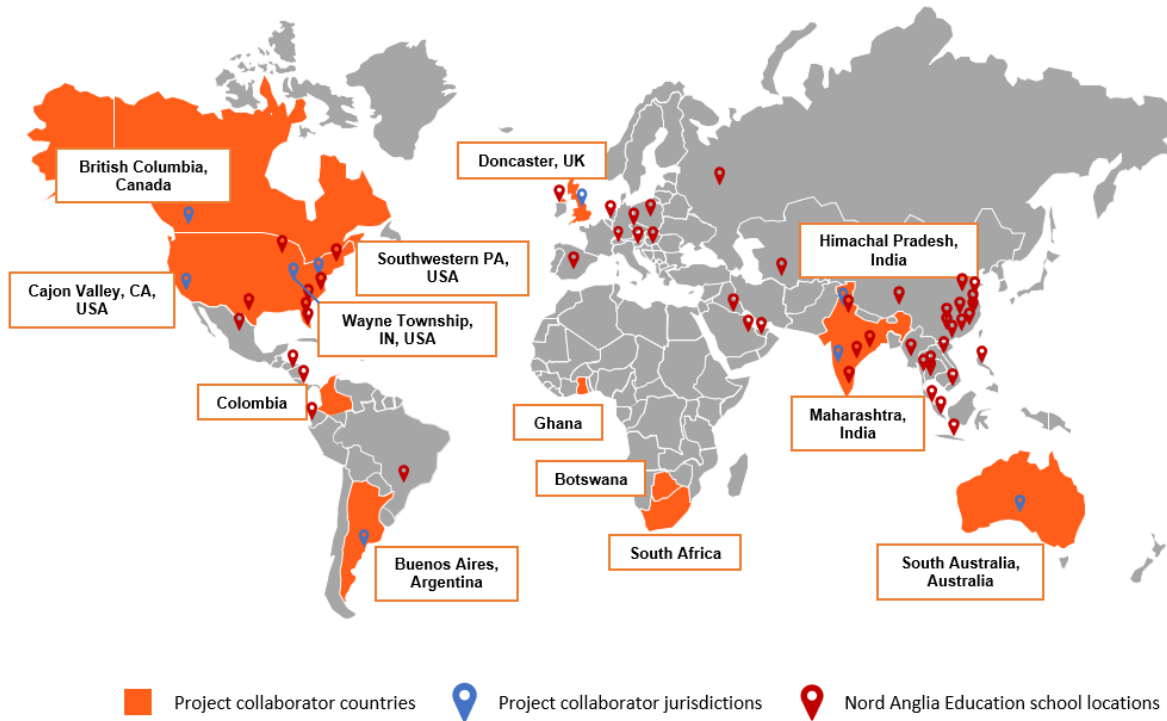


## PERSPECTIVES FROM PARENTS IN BOTSWANA

Rebecca Winthrop

Mahsa Ershadi

Jessica Alongi



## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION NETWORK**

In January 2020, the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings launched a new project focused on family and parent engagement in education.<sup>1</sup> The project emerged out of CUE’s work on harnessing [education innovations](#) to address inequality and help all young people, regardless of the community in which they are born, develop the full breadth of competencies and skills they will need to thrive in work, life, and citizenship in the 21st century. In 2019, CUE conducted consultations across 15 countries with 50 education decisionmakers—from ministers of education to school leaders—that were focused on advancing teaching and learning strategies that supported whole child development, or as some call it, the development of academic plus 21st century skills. A recurring theme from the consultations was a desire of decisionmakers to have more and better strategies for engaging parents and families. Together with 41 project collaborators across 10 countries, members of CUE’s [Family Engagement in Education Network](#), CUE has been exploring what it takes to build strong family-school partnerships, especially in contexts striving to address inequality and deliver a broad suite of skills and competencies for their children.

## **BOTSWANA**

Botswana is an upper-middle income country with one of the fastest growing economies in the world, prior to the pandemic. As of 2017, close to 21.4% of the country’s total budget was distributed to the Education Sector (UNICEF, 2017). Botswana has a population of 2.3 million people, with the majority of individuals living in rural areas. The government’s recent education sector plan articulates a vision for Botswana to transform into a knowledge-driven economy, emphasizing the importance of education to improve the quality of the labor force (UNICEF, 2017).

## **EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused mandatory shutdowns and mass disruption of schooling worldwide. In Botswana, over 600,000 students enrolled in primary through secondary school were affected (UNESCO, n.d.). The education community in

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<sup>1</sup> The suggested citation for this report is: Winthrop, R., Ershadi, M & Alongi, J. (2021, March). *Family engagement in education network technical report: Perspectives from parents in the city of Botswana*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.

Botswana had to rapidly pivot to remote learning strategies. Like many countries around the world, this meant developing new forms of collaboration between schools and families. As a result, parents<sup>2</sup> and families have been given a front row seat to how and what their children learn “in school,” and academic outcomes and student success hinge on parent involvement now more than ever before.

The Botswana education system serves approximately 525,000 students (UNICEF & The World Bank Group, 2019). Schooling can be public or private: 87% of students attend public schools while 10% attend private school (*Education in Botswana*, n.d.). The Ministry of Basic Education is responsible for overseeing the activities of primary and secondary education. In order to improve education, the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) was established in 2015. The aims of the ETSSP include strengthening primary education, improving teacher education, revising the education management system, and improving education policies (UNICEF & The World Bank Group, 2019).

The Botswana education system is divided into the following stages: preschool, primary education, junior secondary education, and senior secondary education. Preschool is intended for children ages 5 to 6 years old and is not compulsory. Typically, preschools are run by communities or private organizations. Beginning in 2015, the government began providing two-year preschool programs for children (*Education Stages*, n.d.). Primary education -- grades 1 through 7 -- is compulsory for children ages 6 to 13 years old (*Education System in Botswana*, n.d.). Curricula for primary schools are created by each school based on state guidelines (*Education Stages*, n.d.). Junior secondary education, grades 8 through 10, are also compulsory and are for 13- to 15-year-olds. After completing the Junior Certificate Examination, students may choose to continue onto senior secondary education or start work. Senior secondary education includes grades 11 and 12 and are for children ages 15 to 17. These grades are not compulsory (*Education System in Botswana*, n.d.).

There has been an increase in educational attainment in Botswana. Nearly 100% of children ages 8 to 14 years old attend school, which is notable in terms of educational participation for a majority of the compulsory school grades. However, there are sharp decreases after the age of 14, showing that children in Botswana are less likely to move

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term “parent” throughout to denote a child’s parent, guardian, or caregiver.

onto senior secondary education and onto tertiary education (UNICEF & The World Bank Group, 2019).

There is room for improvement in Botswana's education system. Their scores were only very close to the average for all countries assessed in the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), with an average reading score of 535 and an average math score of 521. Looking at other assessments of national education, Botswana has performed poorly compared to other countries. In particular, Botswana had the third worst score when looking at the joint scores of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2011, with only 36% of test takers reaching the low international benchmark score of 400 (UNICEF & The World Bank Group, 2019).

## **SURVEY OF PARENTS**

From June 23, 2020 to July 31, 2020, CUE and its project collaborator Young Love distributed a 9-item survey via Facebook and WhatsApp to parents and caregivers of students enrolled in Botswana. A total of 1,051 primary caregivers responded to the survey. To collect data representative of the population in Botswana, we determined our sample sizes before commencing data collection by assuming that the student population in this jurisdiction was equal to the parent population, thus using a conservative approach, which dismissed the possibility of siblings. We set our confidence level at 95% and margin of error at 5%, according to guidelines for research activities (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Based on our prior calculations, we aimed to collect 384 responses from primary caregivers in Botswana. All survey items were optional such that respondents could choose to provide a response to a question without having responded to a previous question. As a result, the response proportions per survey item options do not always sum to 100%.

## **SURVEY AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

A selection of survey responses is presented below. The order in which the results are presented here does not reflect the order in which the respondents completed the questions on the survey. However, CUE will share the survey instrument upon request. Please send inquiries to: [leapfrogging@brookings.edu](mailto:leapfrogging@brookings.edu).

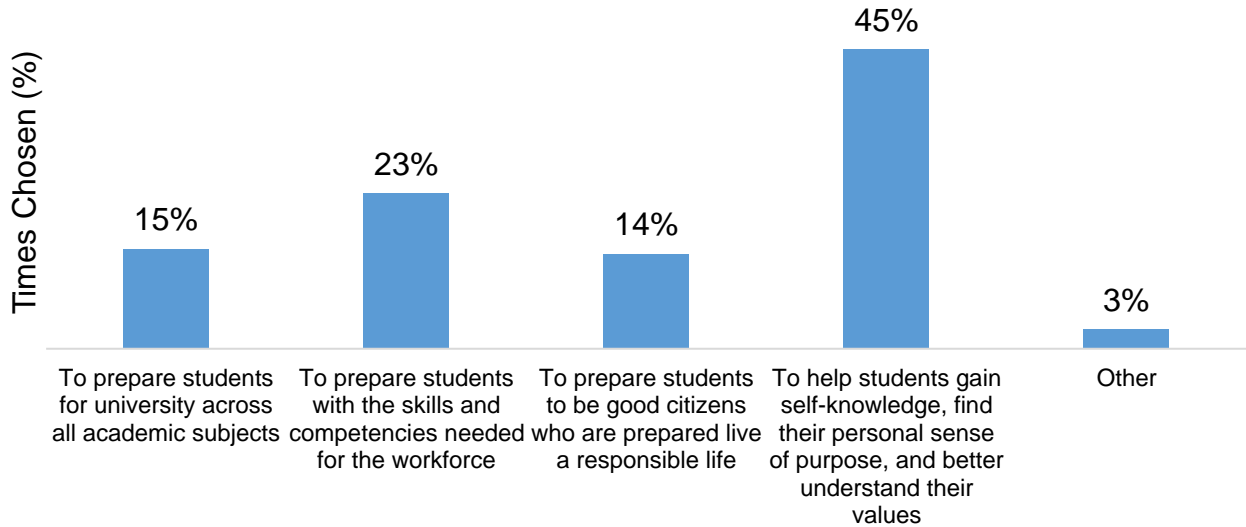
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our project collaborators at Young 1ove, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

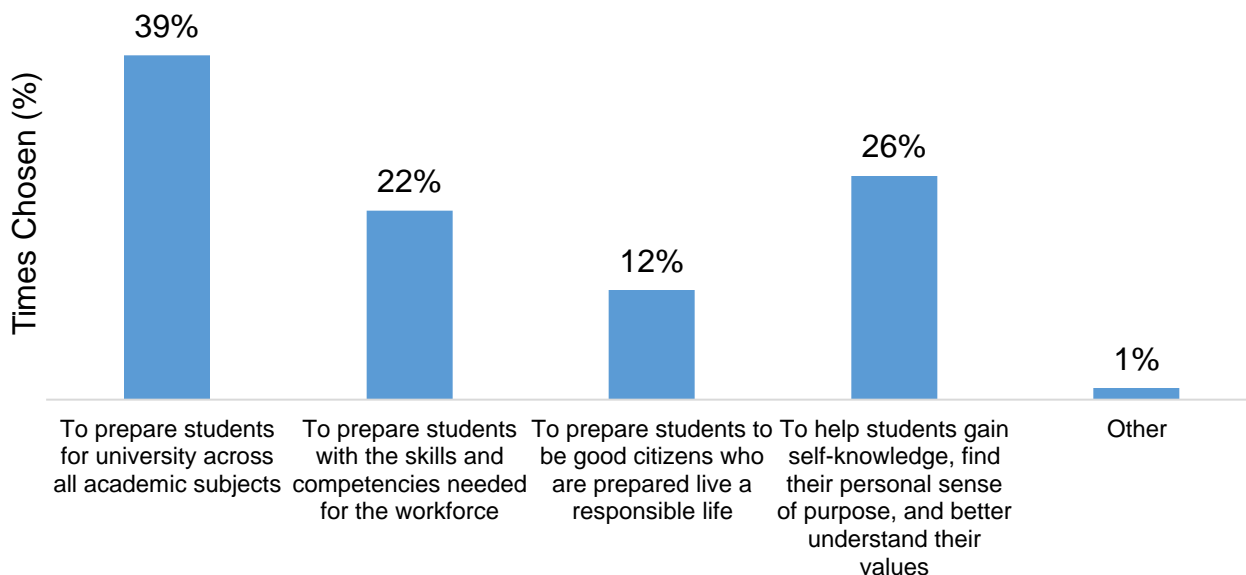
## SURVEY FINDINGS

### Parents' beliefs on the purpose of school and perceived alignment with teachers

I believe that the MOST important purpose of school is:  
(sample size=1051)

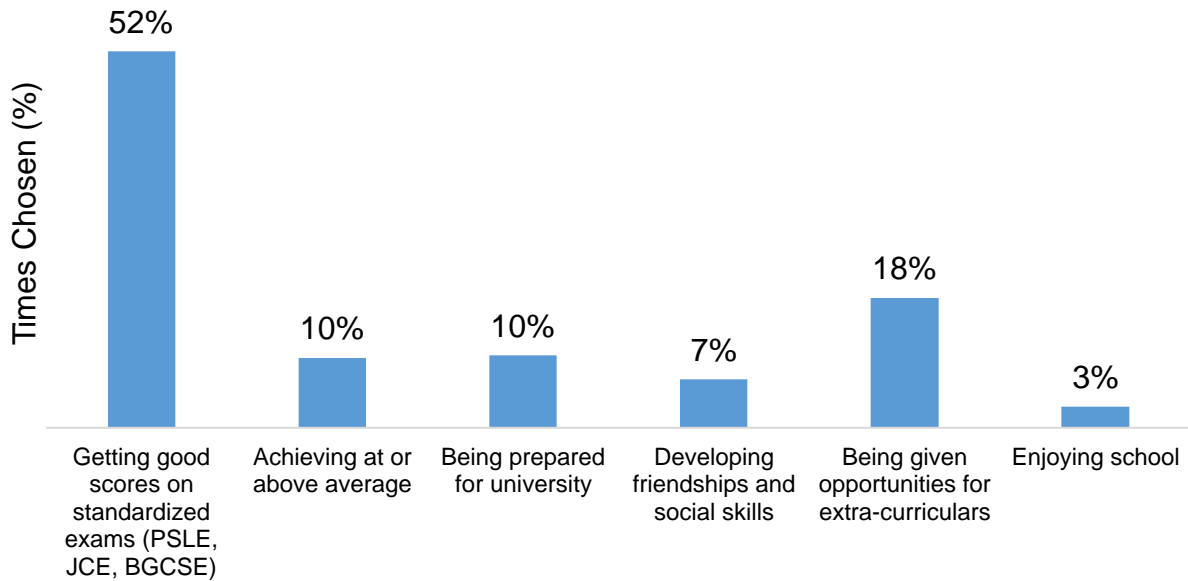


In my opinion, school administrators and teachers believe the MOST important purpose of school is:  
(sample size=1051)

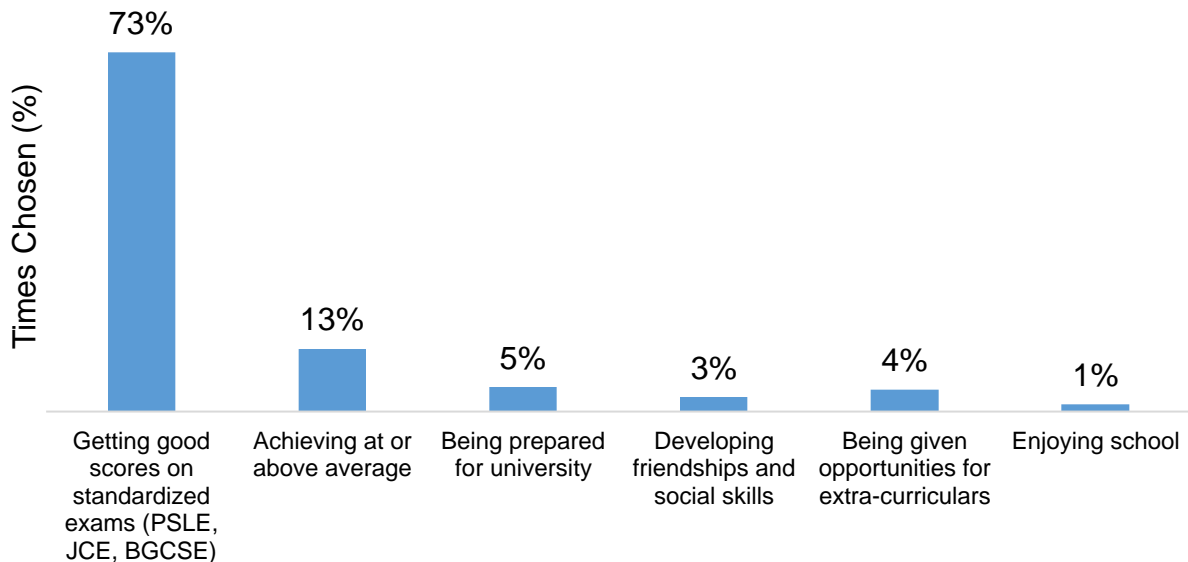


## Parents' indicators of quality and perceived alignment with educators

### The MOST important part of my child's education is: (sample size=1051)

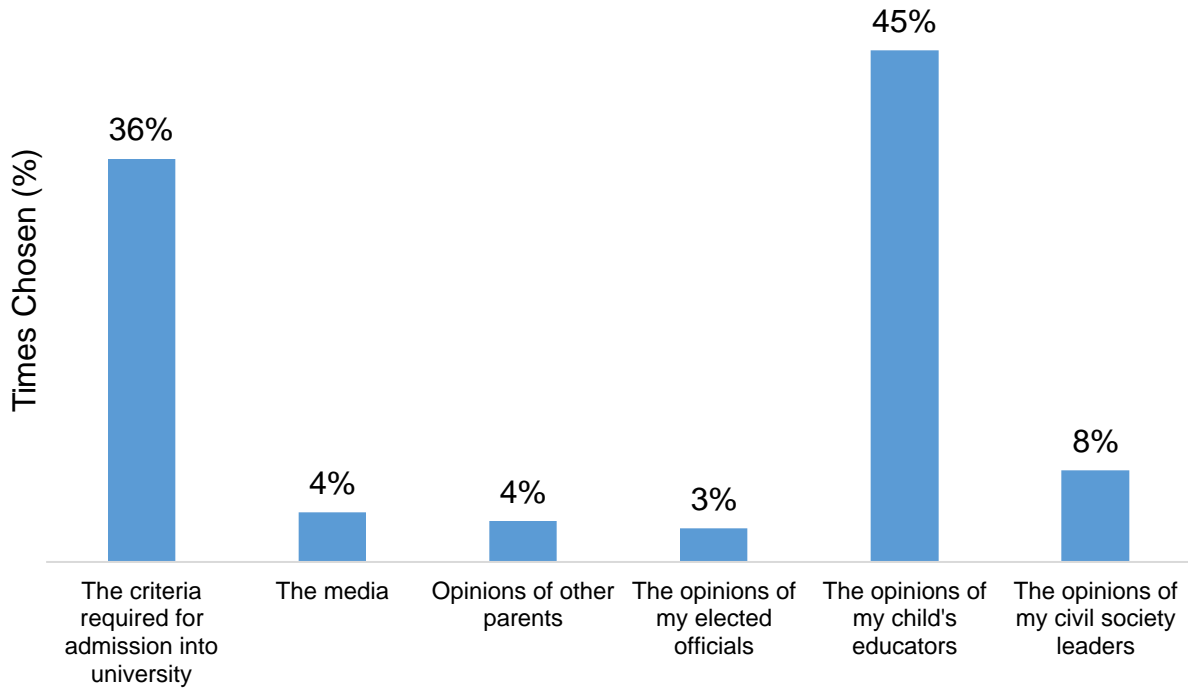


### In my opinion, school administrators and teachers are MOST satisfied with education when their students are: (sample size=1051)



## Parents' sources of information

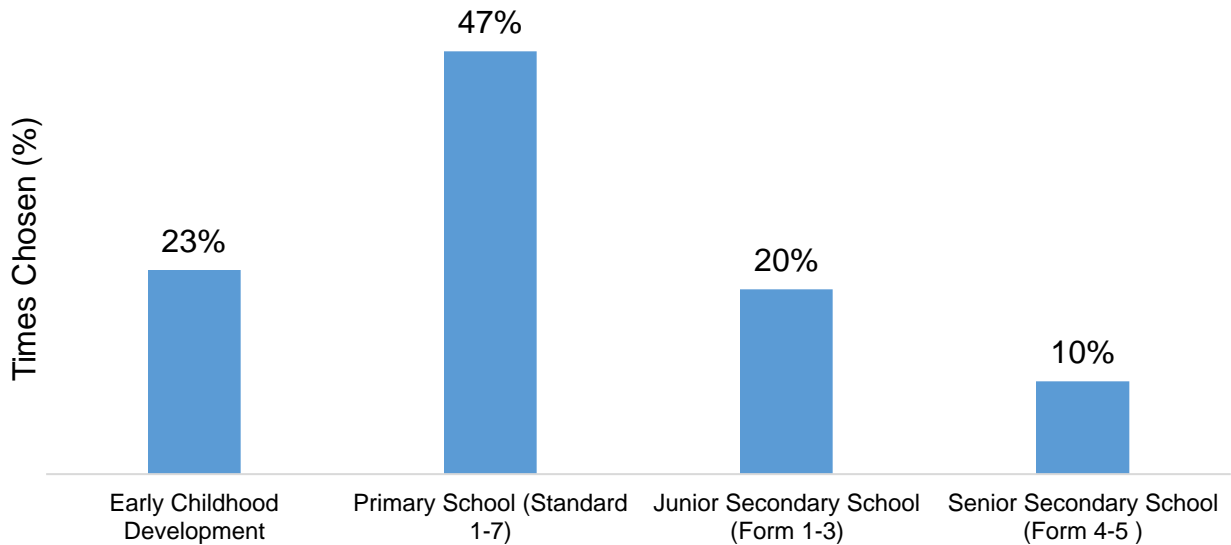
Which of the following informs your opinion on what makes for quality education for your child?  
(sample size=1051)



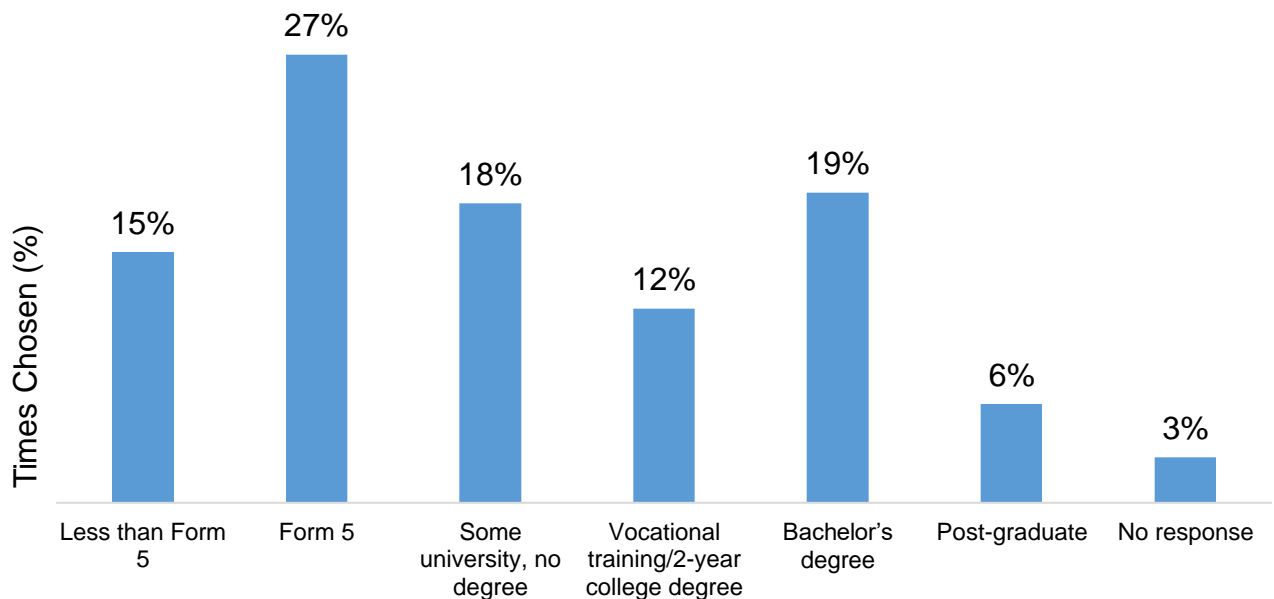


## Demographics of survey respondents from Botswana

**In which standard (grade) is your oldest child who is enrolled in school (preschool to Standard 12)?  
(sample size=1051)**

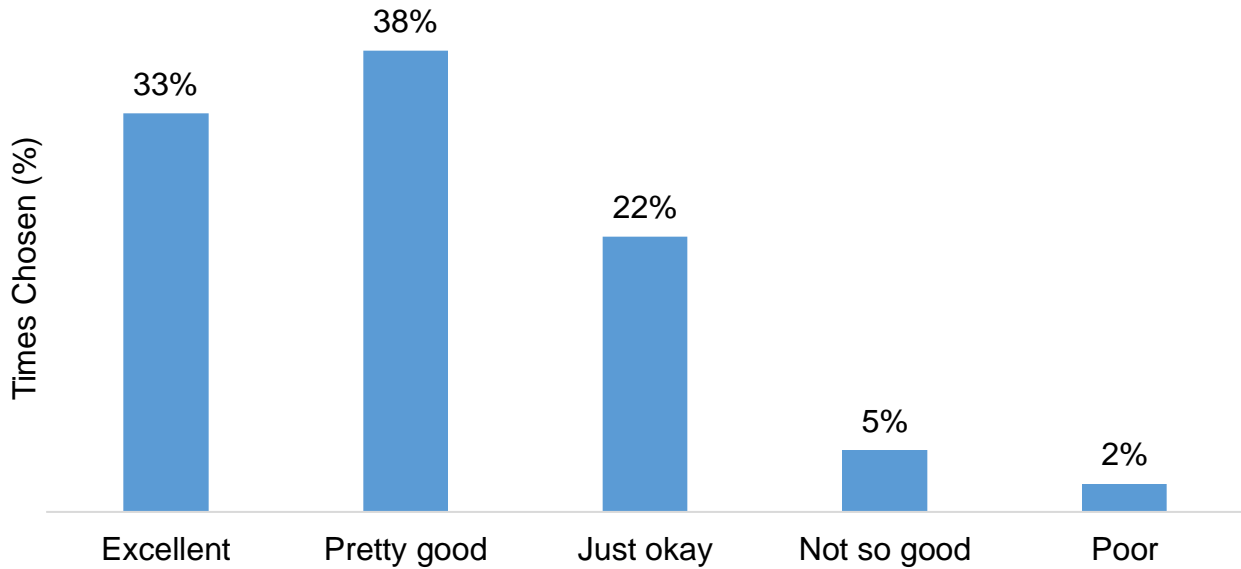


**What is your highest level of education attained?  
(sample size=1022)**

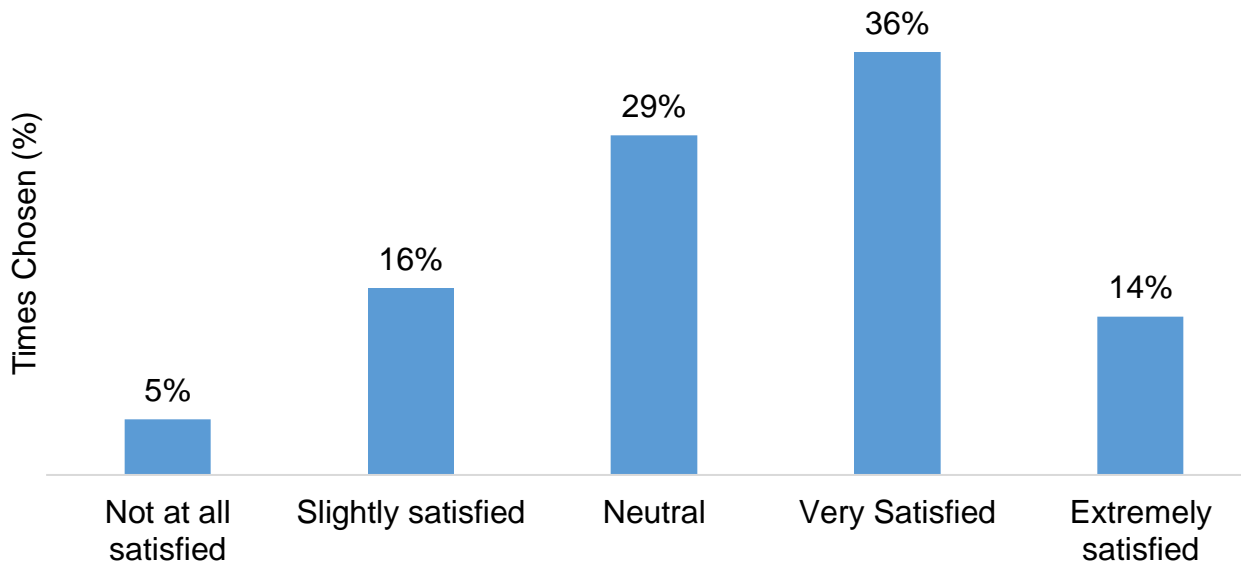


## Parents' satisfaction with their children's education

**Before schools closed, how would you rate the education that your child is getting from their school?  
(sample size=1051)**



**At the time of this survey, how satisfied are you with your child's education?  
(sample size=1051)**



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