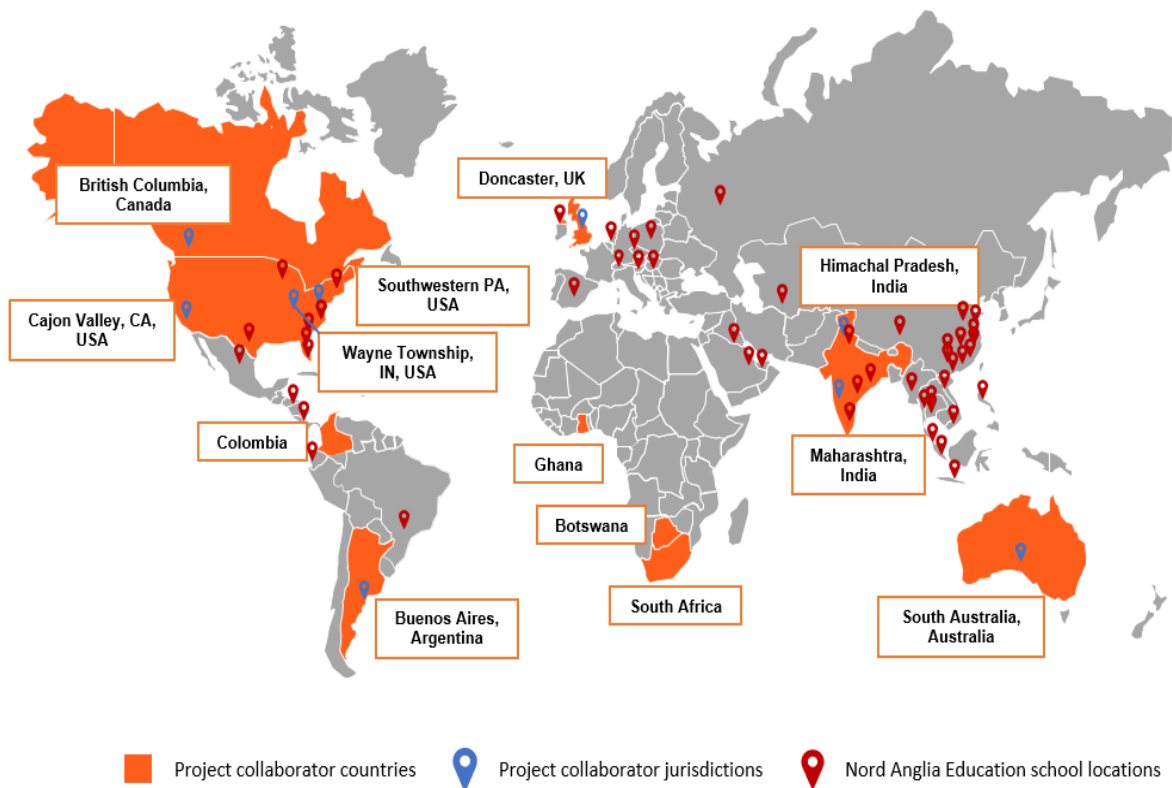


# PERSPECTIVES FROM PARENTS IN DONCASTER, UNITED KINGDOM

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## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION NETWORK**

In January 2020, the Center for Universal Education at Brookings (CUE) 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. A recurring theme from the consultations was a desire of decision makers 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.

## **EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused mandatory shutdowns and mass disruption of schooling worldwide. In the United Kingdom, over 8 million students enrolled in nursery to year 13 were affected. Educators responded to the crisis by rapidly shifting their in-class lessons online so that students could continue to learn remotely. 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 coronavirus-related school closures propelled new and necessary ways of teaching and learning to ensure access to

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<sup>1</sup> The suggested citation for this report is: Winthrop, R., Ershadi, M., & Partington, S. (2021, March). *Family engagement in education network technical report: Perspectives from parents in Doncaster, United Kingdom*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.

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

education for all students. Schools across the country are slated to begin a gradual process of reopening to students for in-person schooling beginning March 8, 2021 (“Schools, pupils, and their characteristics,” 2021).

## **DONCASTER**

The Metropolitan Borough of Doncaster is located in South Yorkshire, England. Doncaster has a total population of more than 310,000 residents, of which 91.8% of residents are White British. In terms of Doncaster’s educational profile, approximately 42% of the working age population have achieved a Level 3 qualification (A Level or equivalent). As of 2019, Doncaster’s employment rate was at a record level, with 72.8% of the working age population employed (“Doncaster State of the Borough,” 2019).

### **Schools**

Doncaster has 127 primary schools, 36 secondary schools, and 32 schools/colleges that serve students age 16-18 seeking further education. More than 47,000 students are enrolled in Doncaster-state-funded mainstream primary, secondary, and special schools (“All schools and colleges in Doncaster,” n.d.). Approximately 22% of children in Doncaster live in low-income families. More than 70% of 5-year-olds have a good level of development, as defined by the Department of Education. The persistent absence rate in secondary schools is 18.8% (“Doncaster State of the Borough,” 2019).

### **Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council**

The Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council is the local authority of Doncaster and provides the majority of local government services, including educational services. The Doncaster Council aims to better align education, skills and employment through raising local attainment levels and providing youth the necessary to skills to secure jobs in the borough (Doncaster Council, 2021). A key initiative of the Doncaster Council is to engage with and support children and young people’s priorities, particularly along the themes of safety, healthiness and happiness, achievement, and equality (Participation & Engagement Strategy, n.d.).

## **SURVEY OF PARENTS**

From July 10, 2020 to August 26, 2020, CUE in partnership with the Doncaster Council distributed a 34-item online survey to parents and caregivers of students in Doncaster. A total of 1130 primary caregiver responded to our survey. To collect data representative of the population of Doncaster, 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 percent and margin of error at 5 percent according to guidelines for research activities (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Based on our apriori calculations, we aimed to collect 383 responses from primary caregivers in Doncaster. All survey items were optional such that respondents could choose to provide a response to a subsequent question without having responded to a previous question. As a result, the response proportions per survey item options do not always sum to 100 percent.

## **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. CUE will however share the survey instrument upon request. Please send inquiries to: [leapfrogging@brookings.edu](mailto:leapfrogging@brookings.edu).

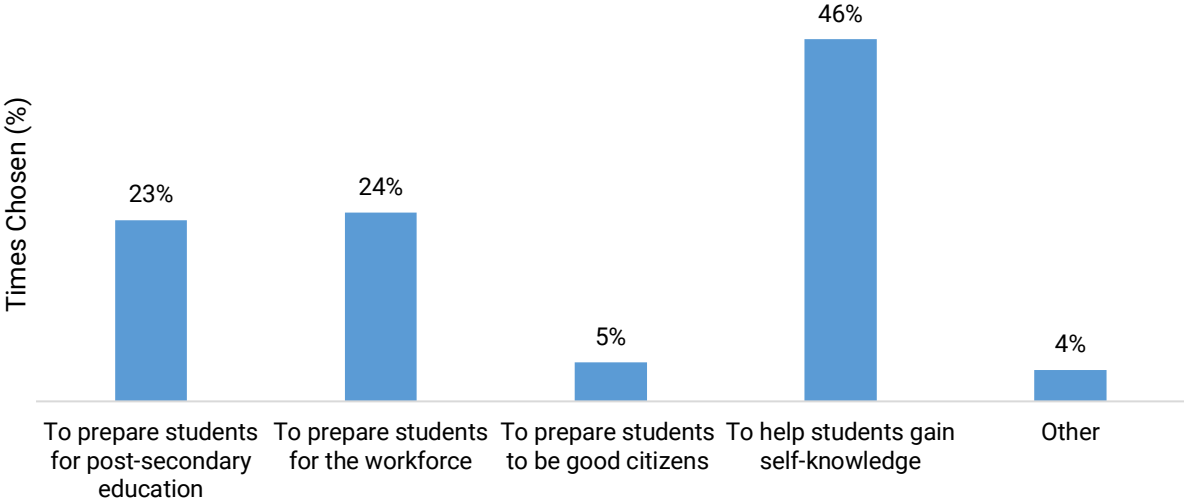
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our project collaborators at the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

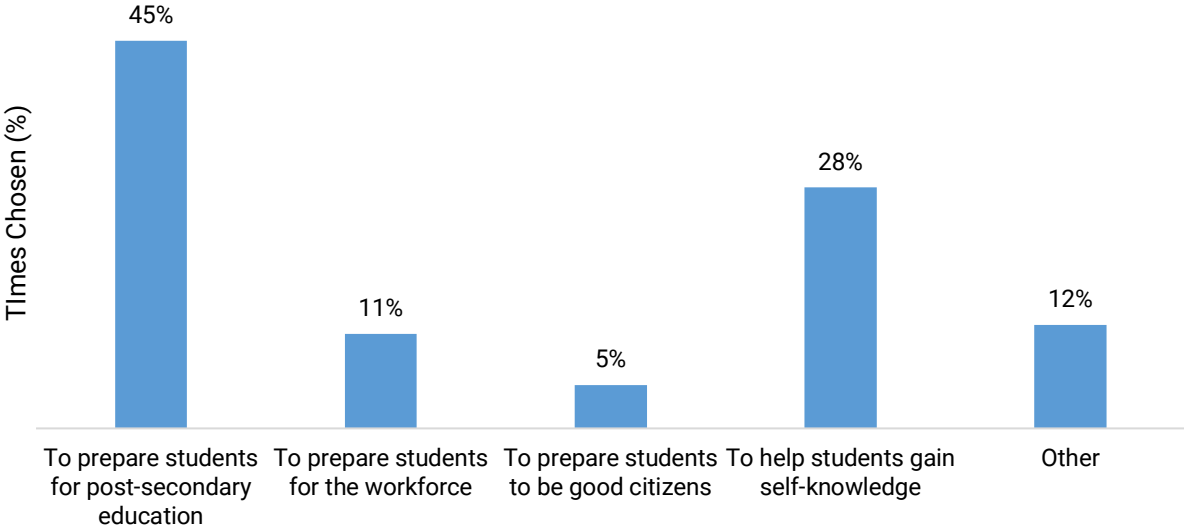
# SURVEY FINDINGS

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

I believe that the most important purpose of school is:  
(sample size=709)

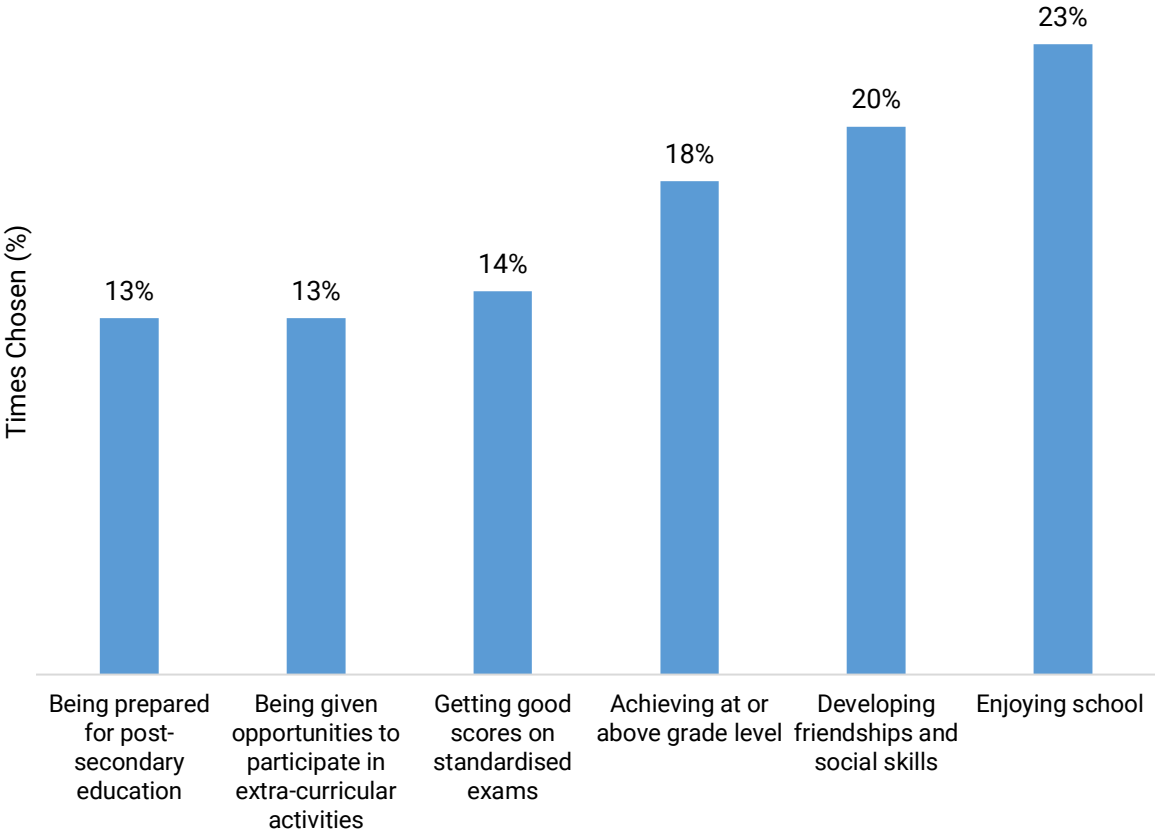


I believe that my child's educators believe that the most important purpose of school is:  
(sample size=617)



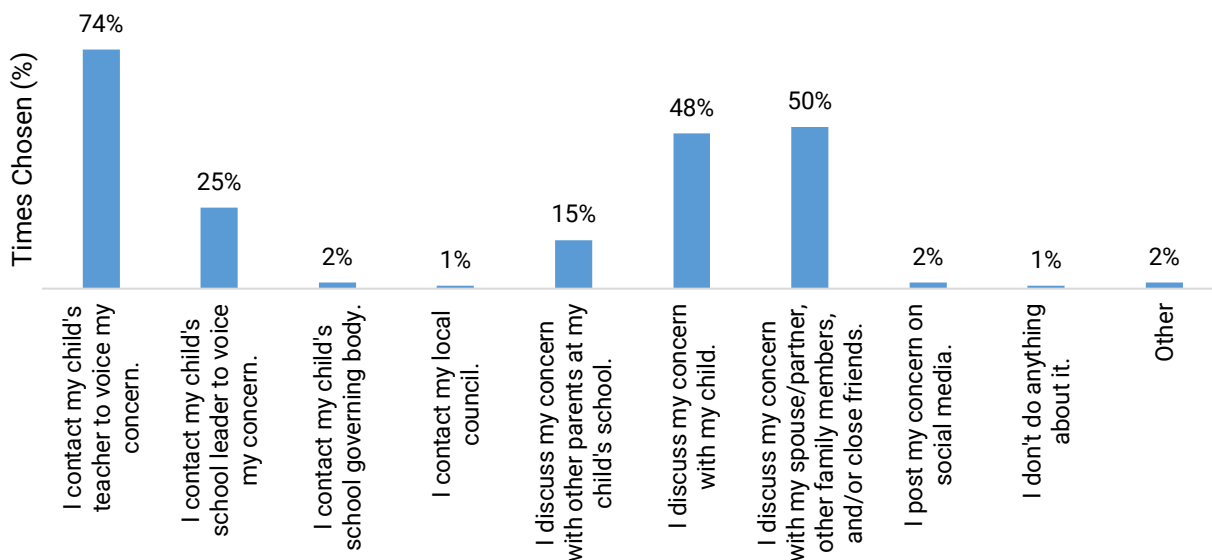
**Parents' indicators of quality and perceived alignment with educators**

**I am satisfied with my child's education when my child is:  
(sample size=640)**

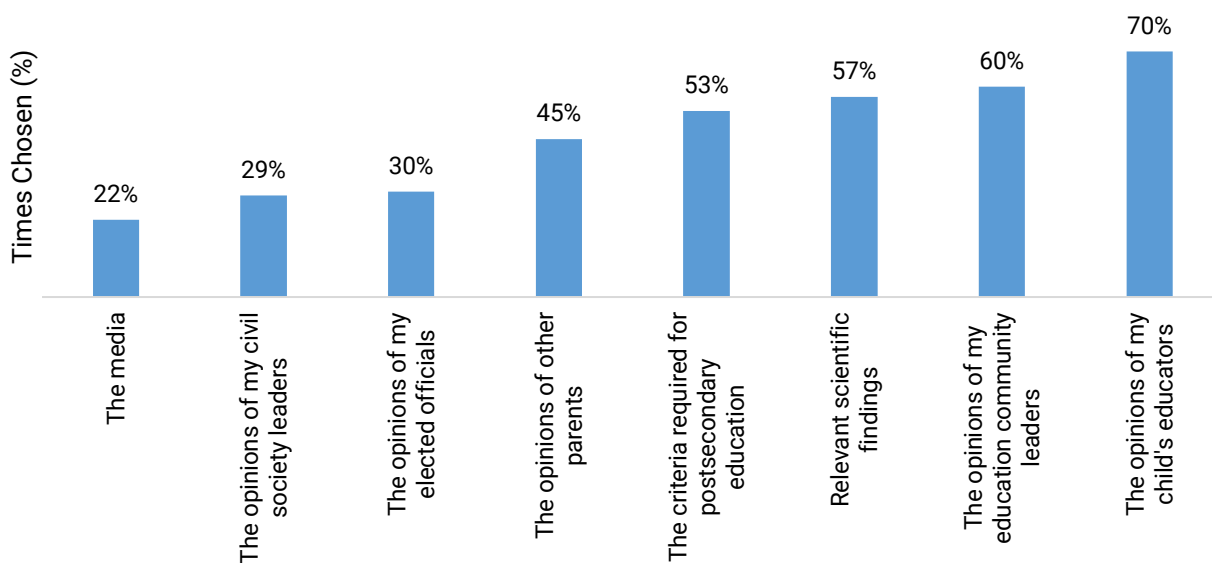


## Parents' sources of information

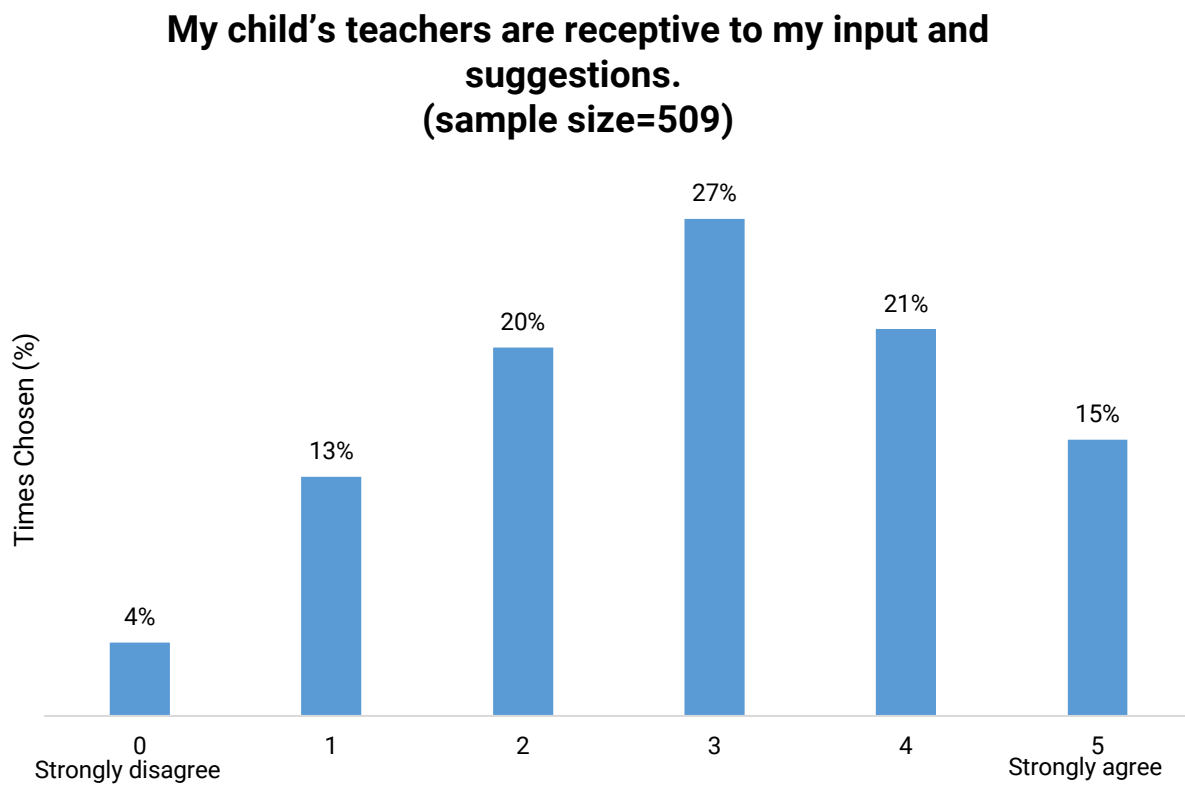
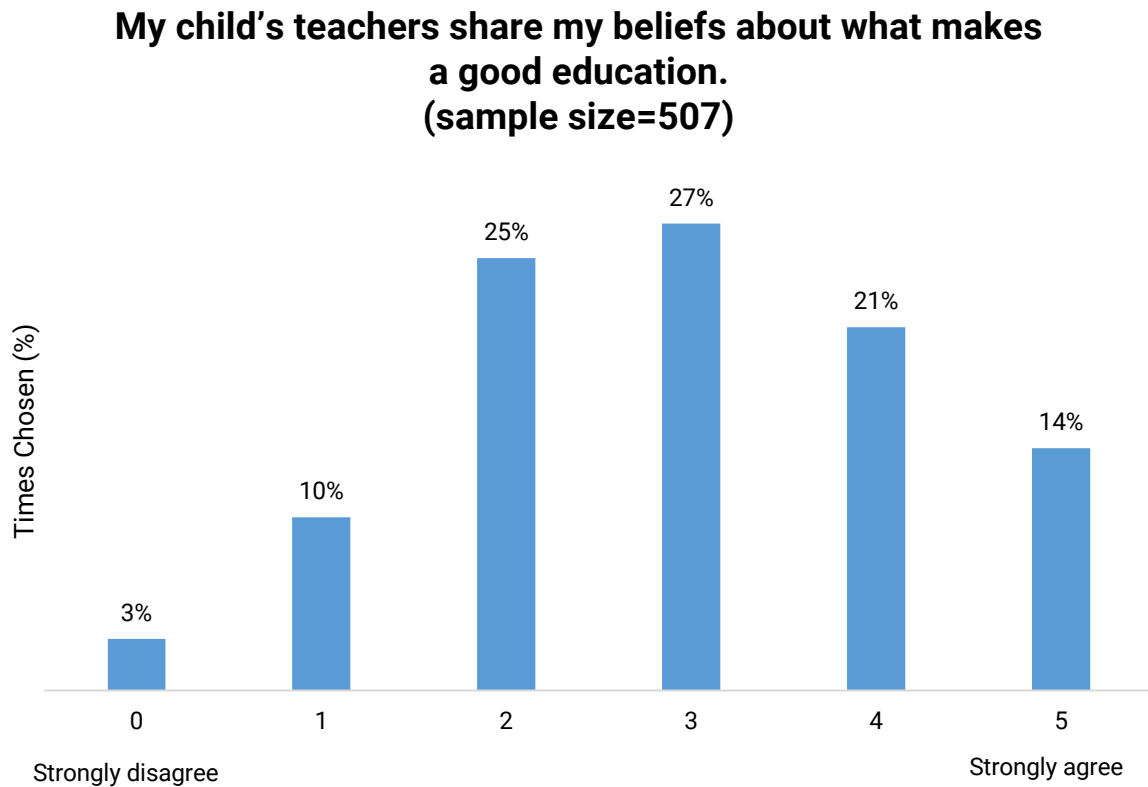
### How do you react when something about your child's education bothers or upsets you? (sample size=547)



### What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child? (sample size=454)

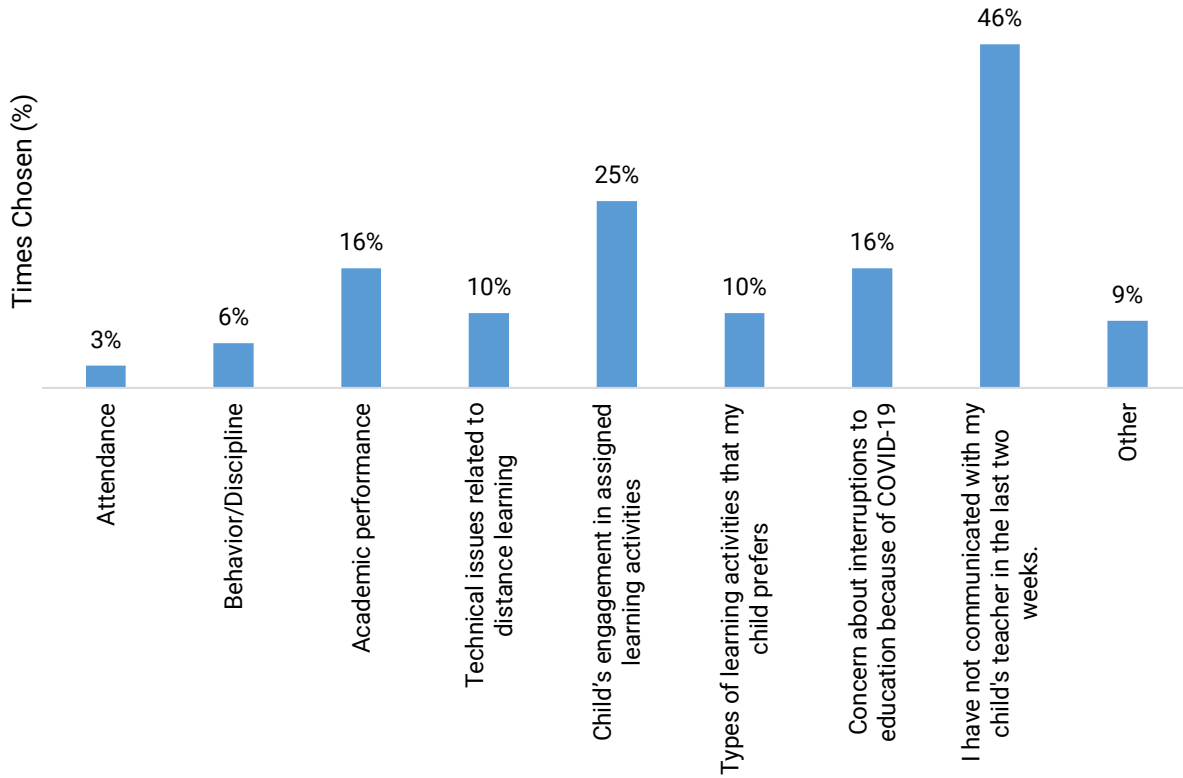


## Parents' trust of and perceived alignment with teachers



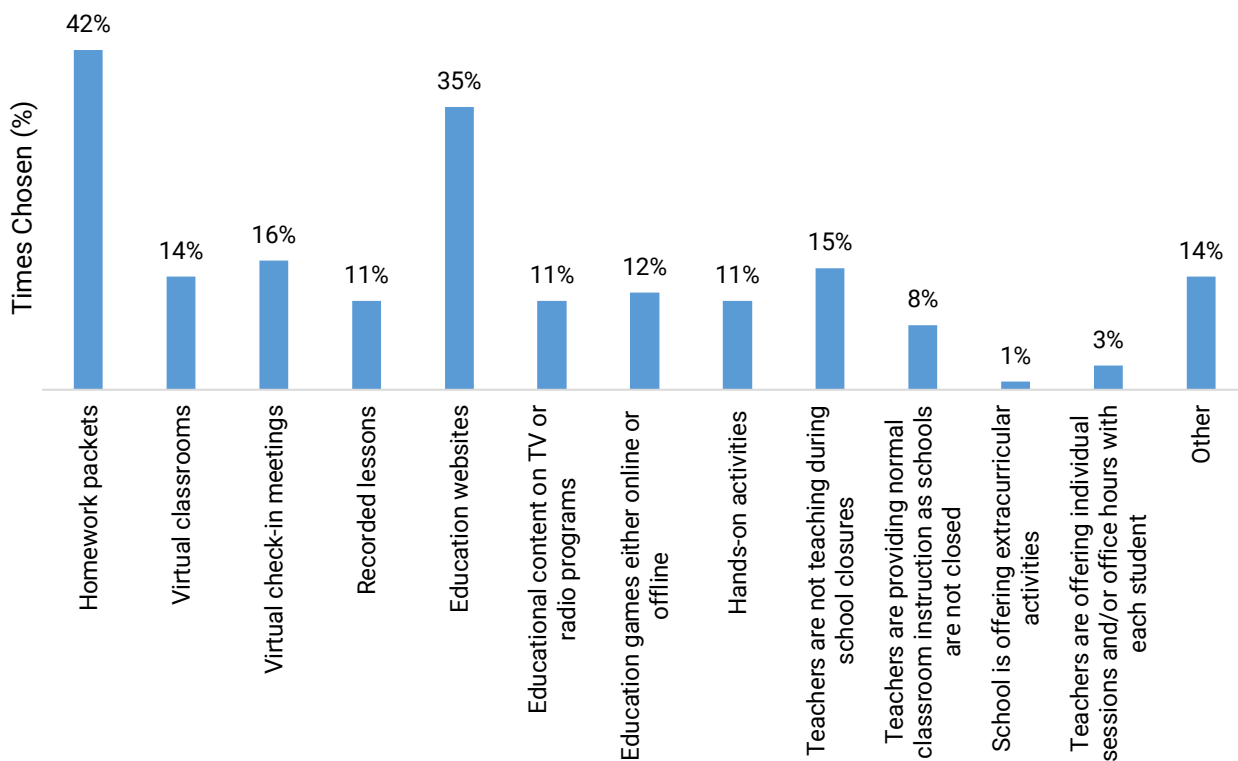


**In the last two weeks, what have you communicated to your child's teacher about?  
(sample size=553)**

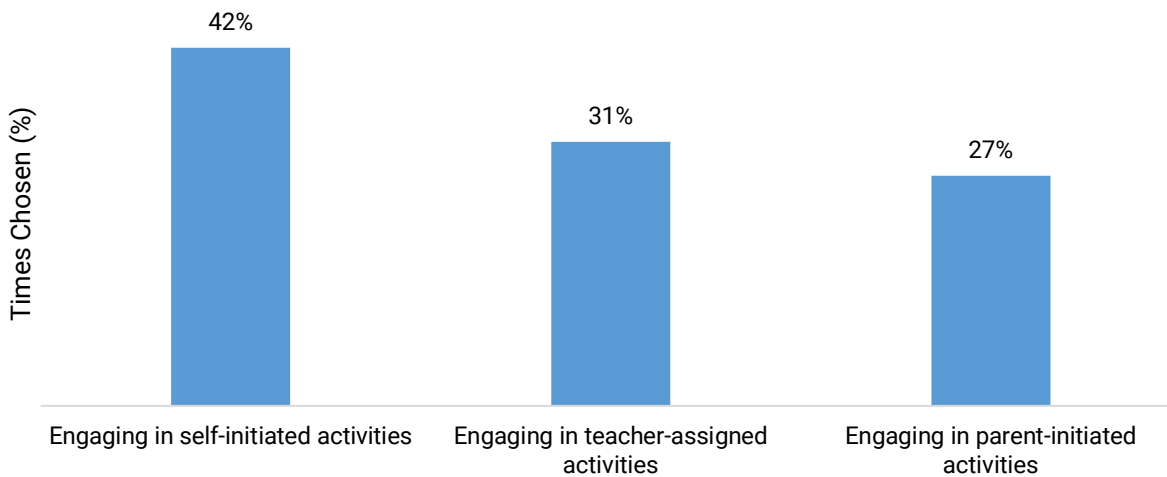


## Parents' opinions on pedagogy

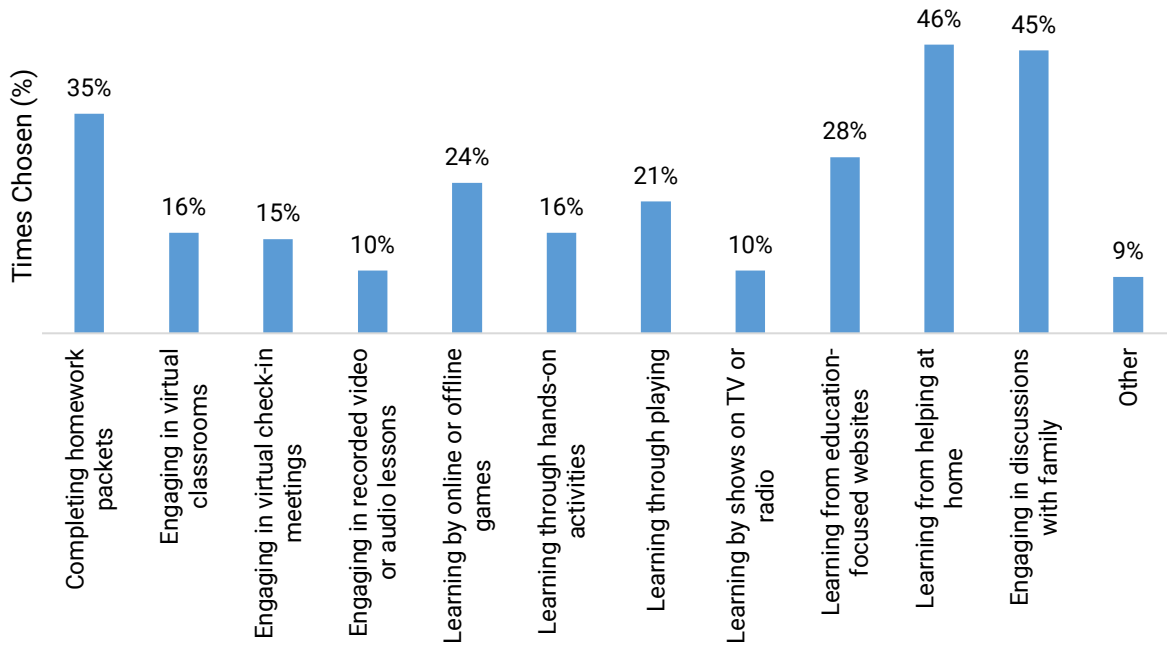
**In the last two weeks, how are you child's teachers continuing to teach?  
(sample size=899)**



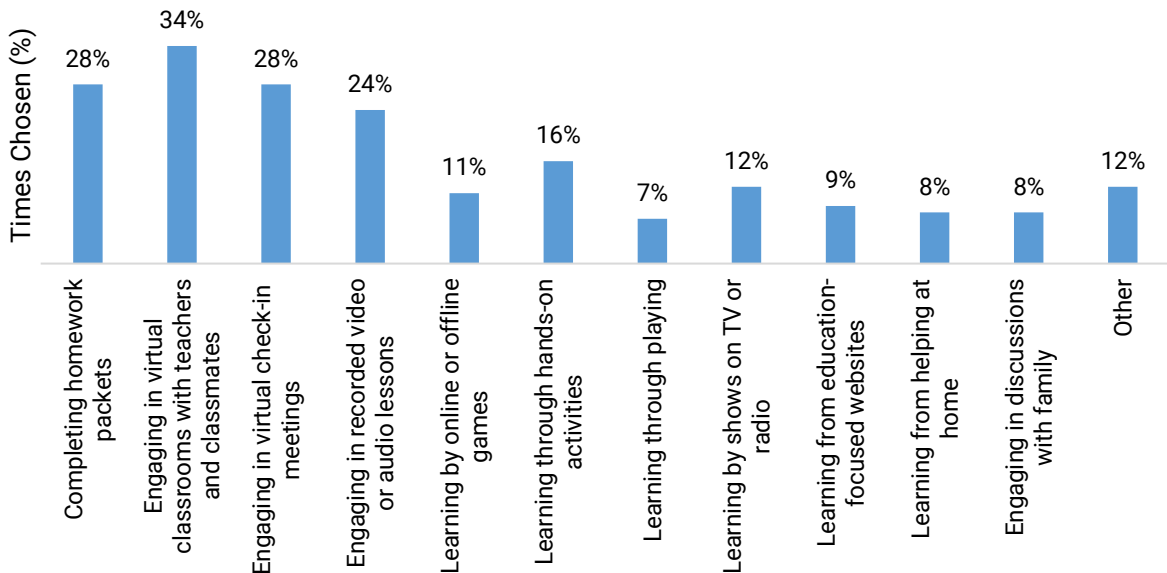
**How is your child spending the majority of their time right now?  
(sample size=834)**



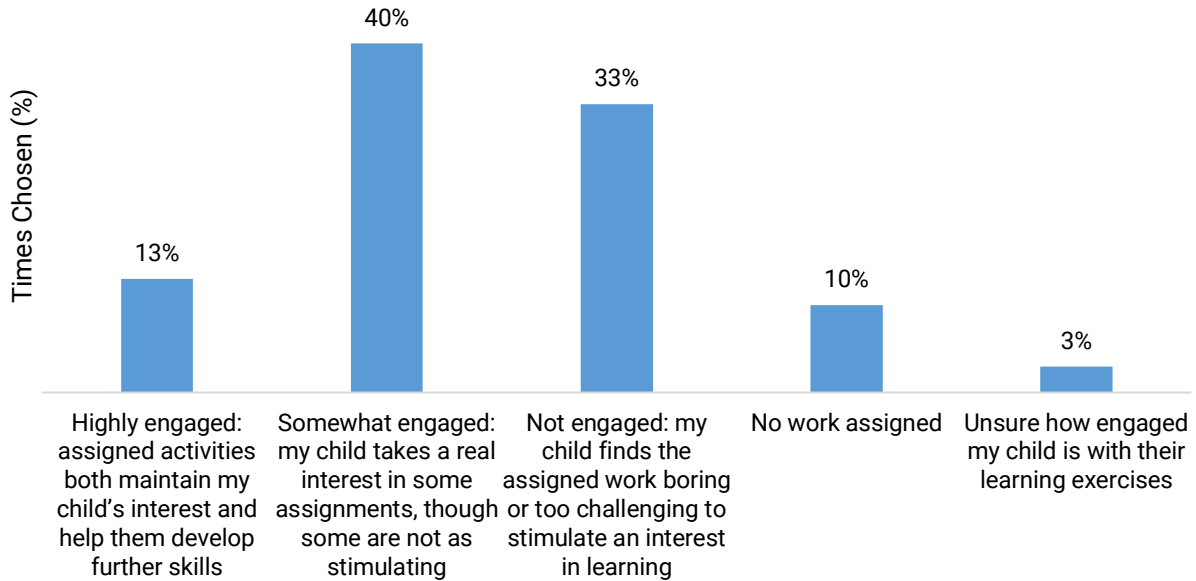
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the MOST satisfied with? (sample size=757)**



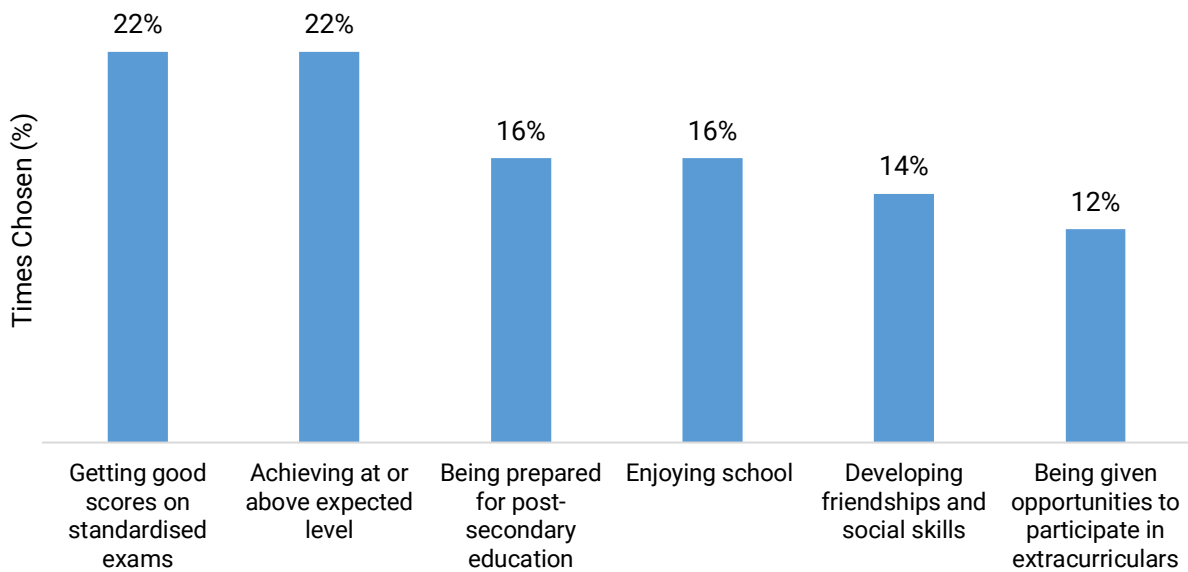
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the LEAST satisfied with? (sample size=628)**



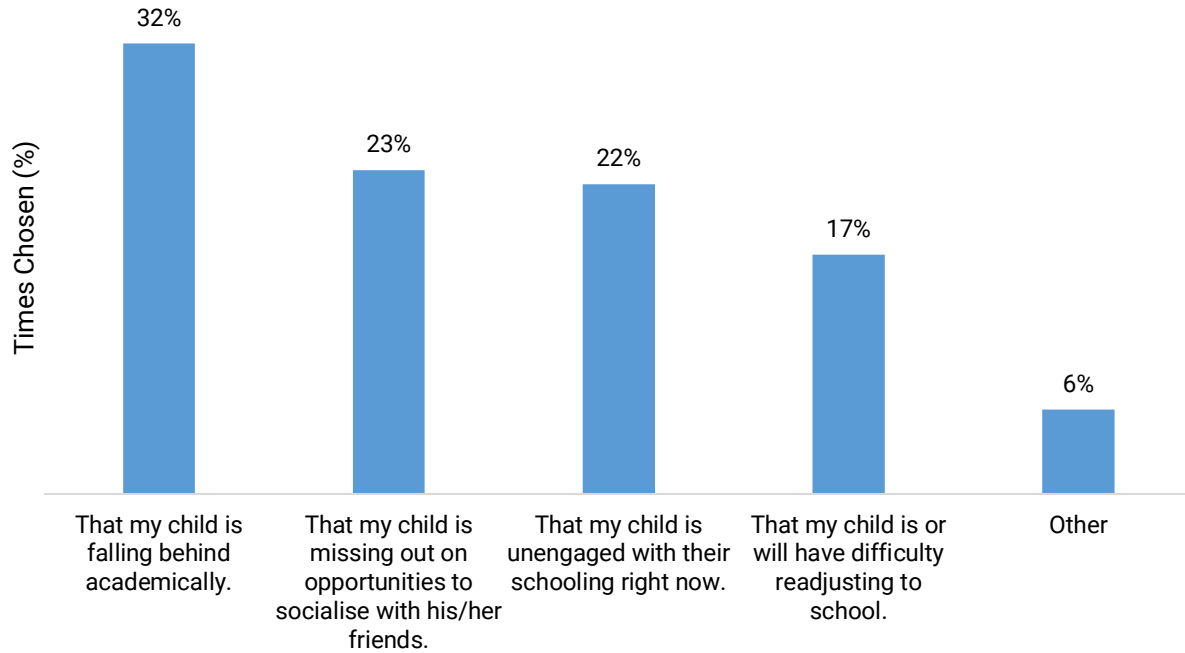
**How engaged is your child with the activities their teacher has assigned?  
(sample size=550)**



**I believe that my child's educators are satisfied with their students' education when their students are:  
(sample size=539)**

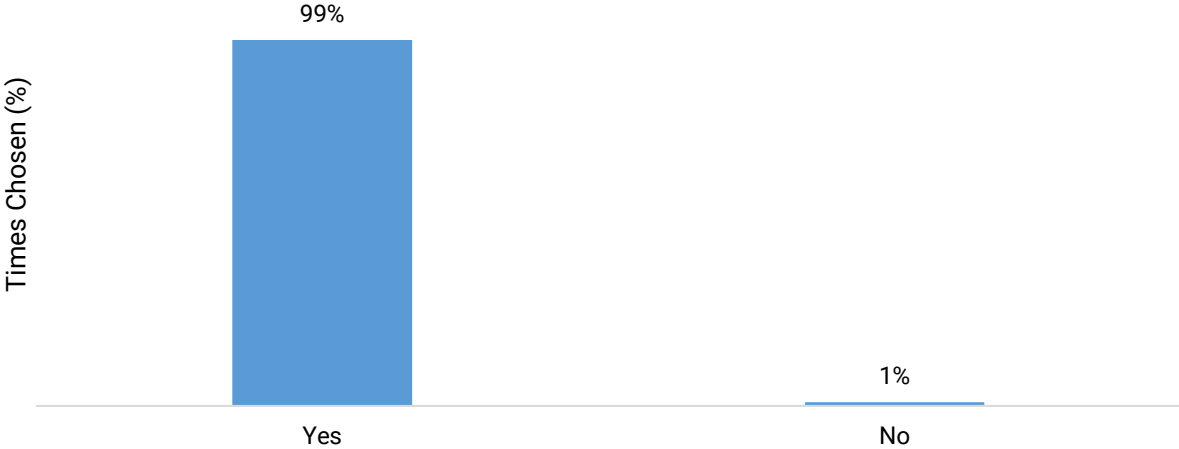


**With regards to your child's education right now, what worries you the MOST?  
(sample size=556)**

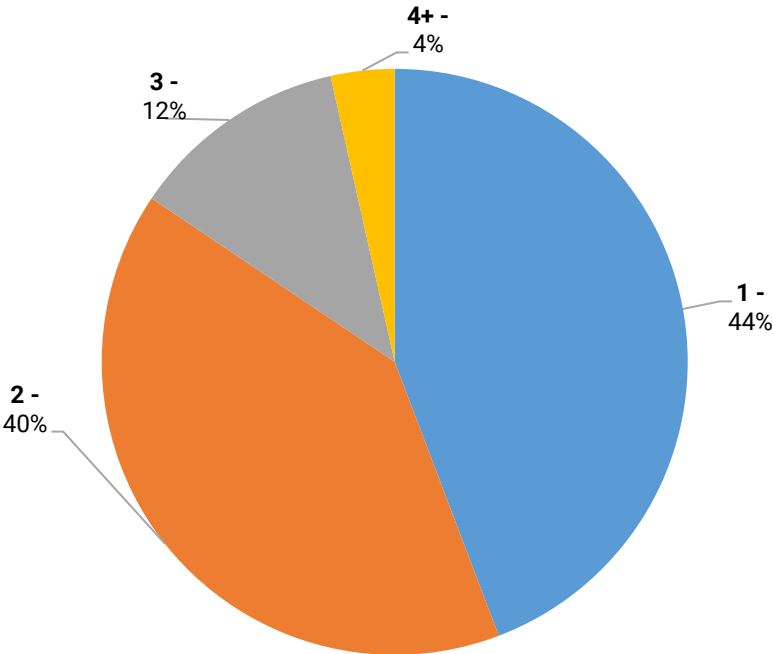


# Demographics of Survey Respondents from Doncaster

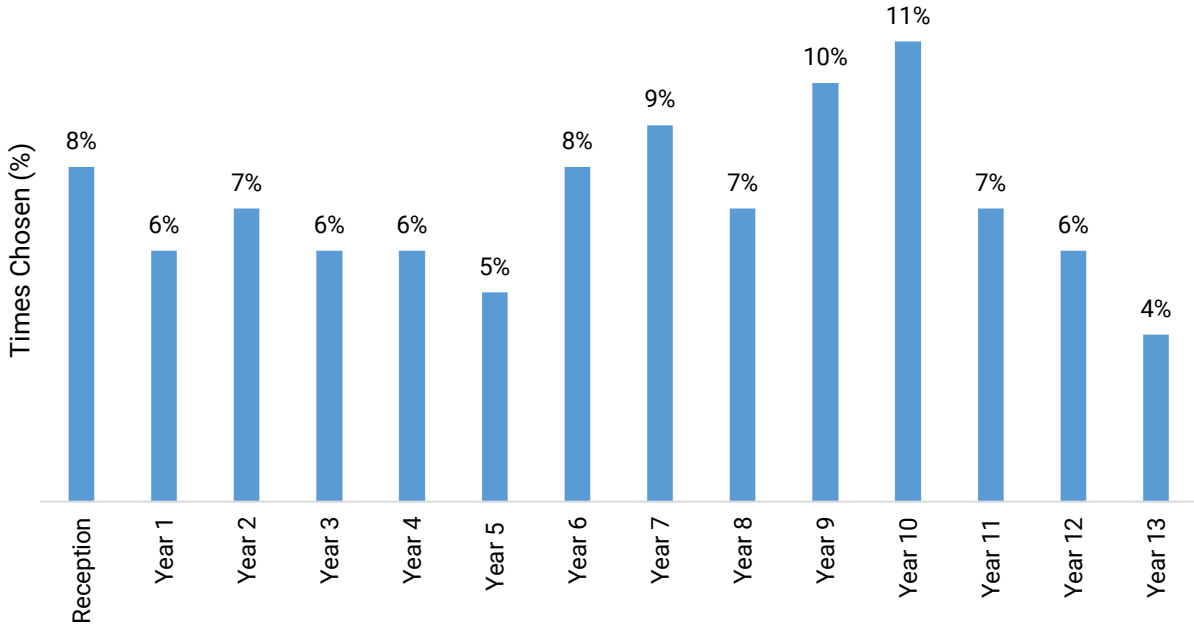
**Are you your child's primary caregiver?  
(sample size=465)**



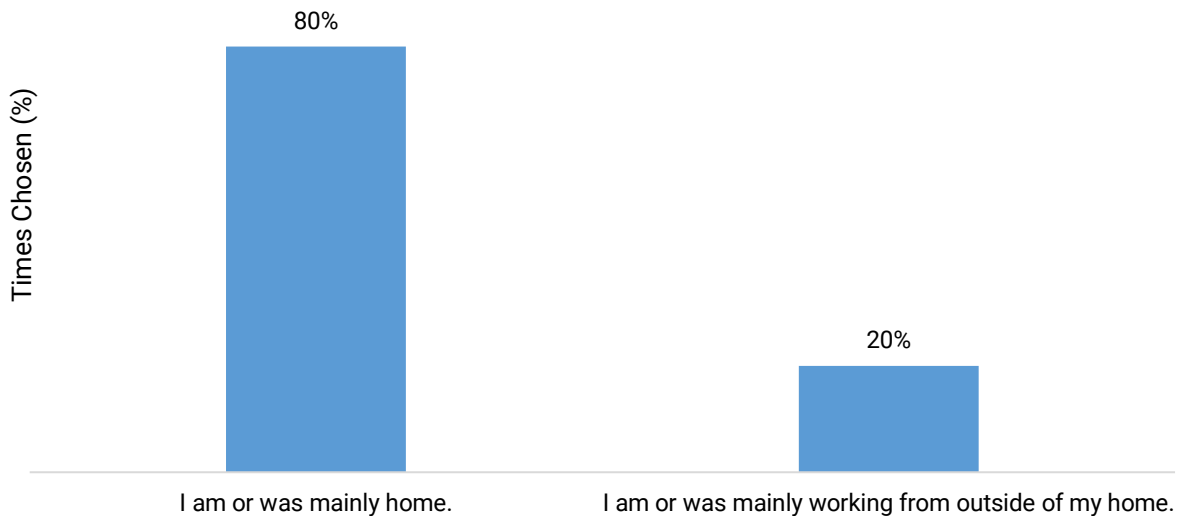
**How many children do you have who are currently in reception through year 13 in school and live at home with you?  
(sample size=1086)**



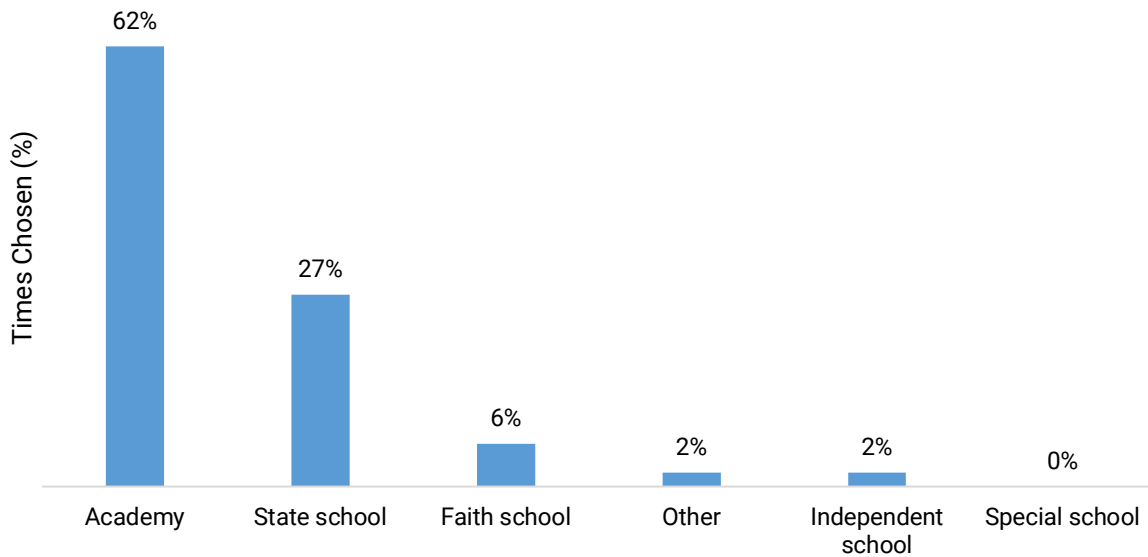
**In which year is your oldest child who is enrolled in school  
(reception to year 13)?  
(sample size=1060)**



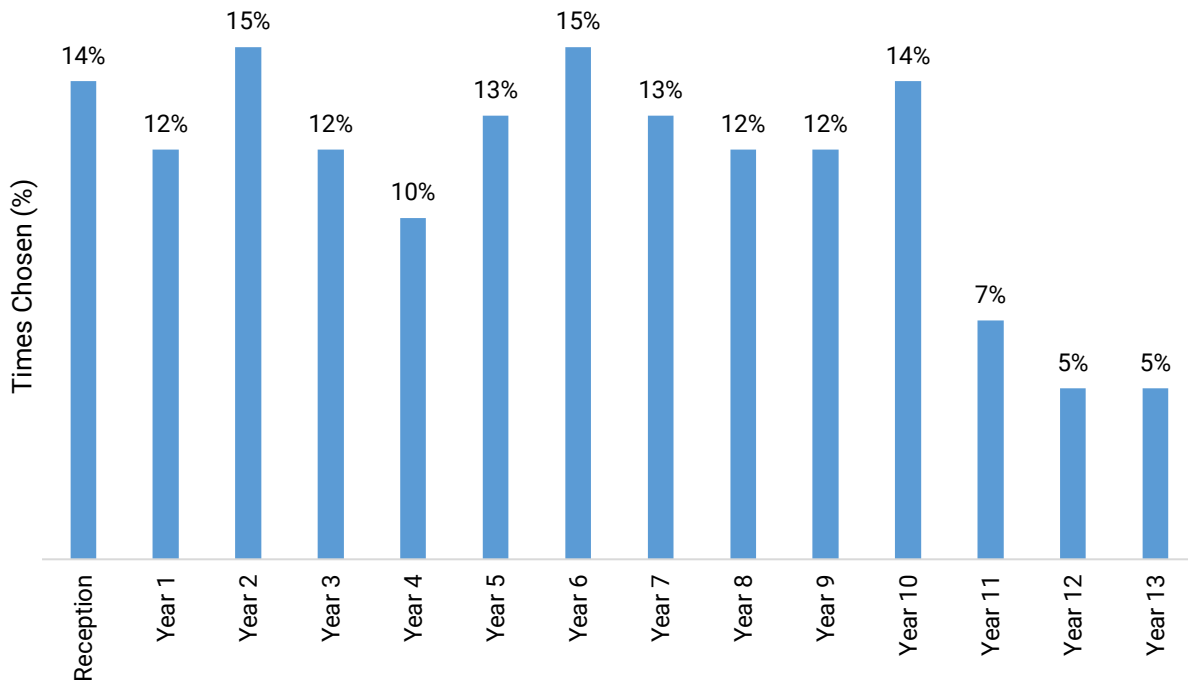
**During your child's school closure, are or were you mainly  
home (whether employed or unemployed) or are or were  
you mainly working from outside your home?  
(sample size=464)**



**In what type of school is your child enrolled?  
(sample size=459)**

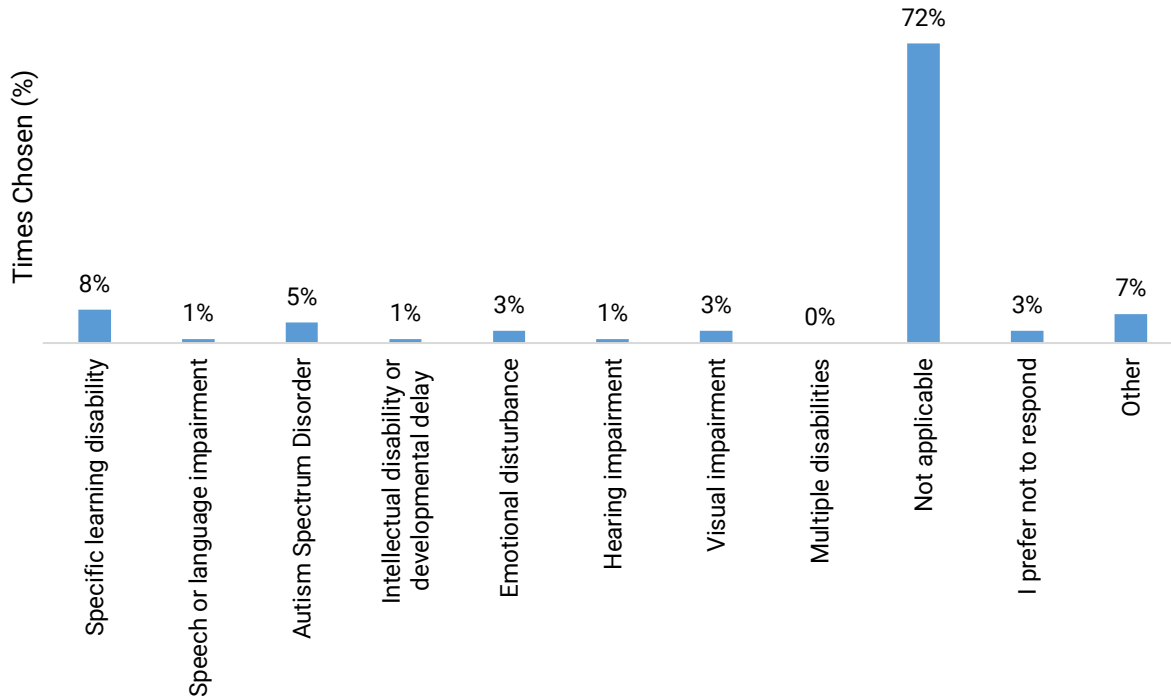


**In what grade(s) is/are all your school aged children? For  
this question, please consider all your children.  
(sample size=458)**

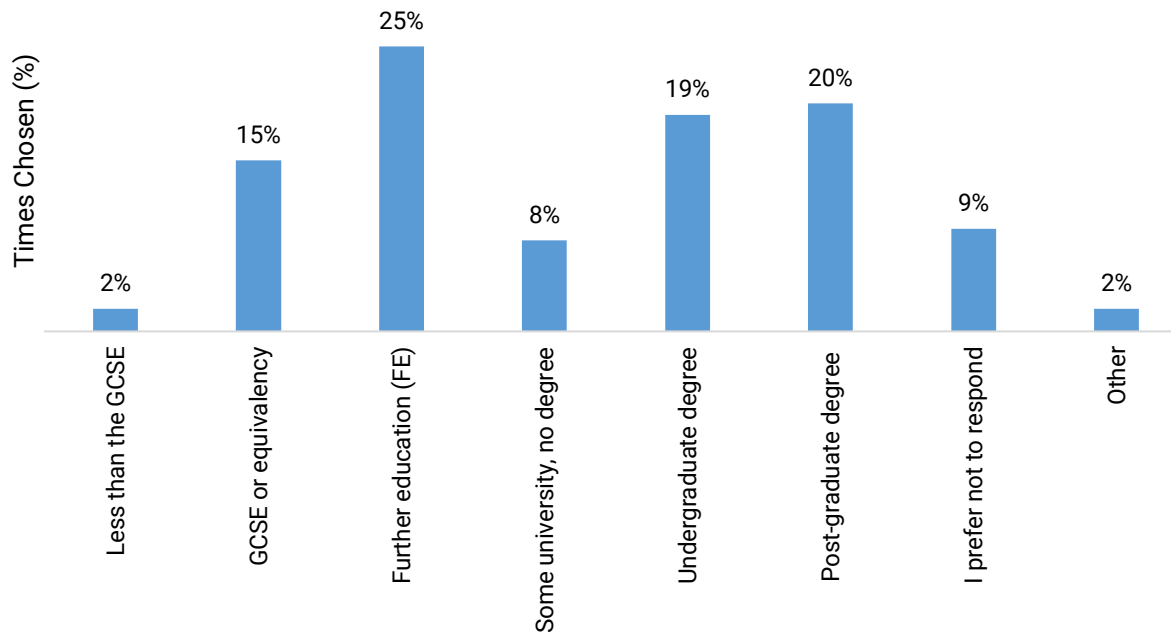




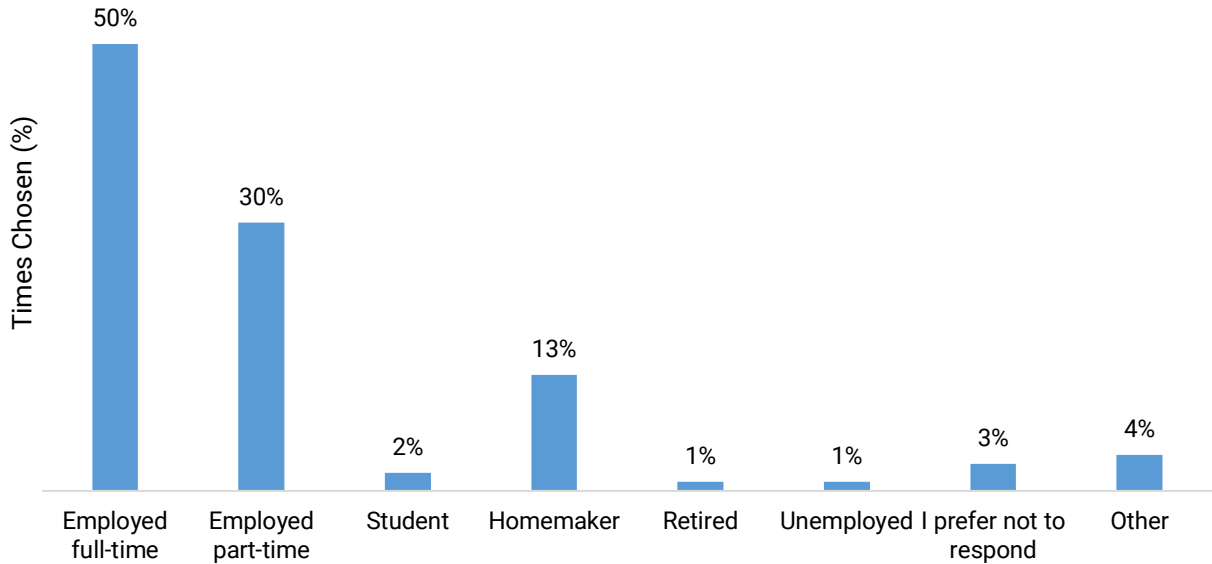
**Has your child been diagnosed with any of the following?  
(sample size=376)**



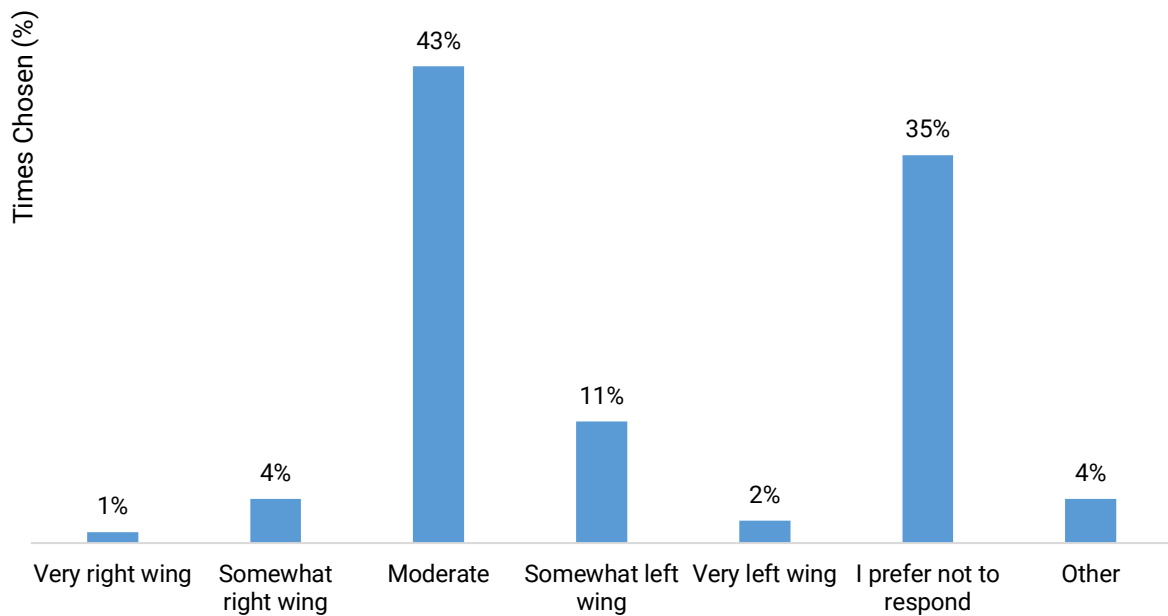
**What is your highest level of education attained?  
(sample size=452)**



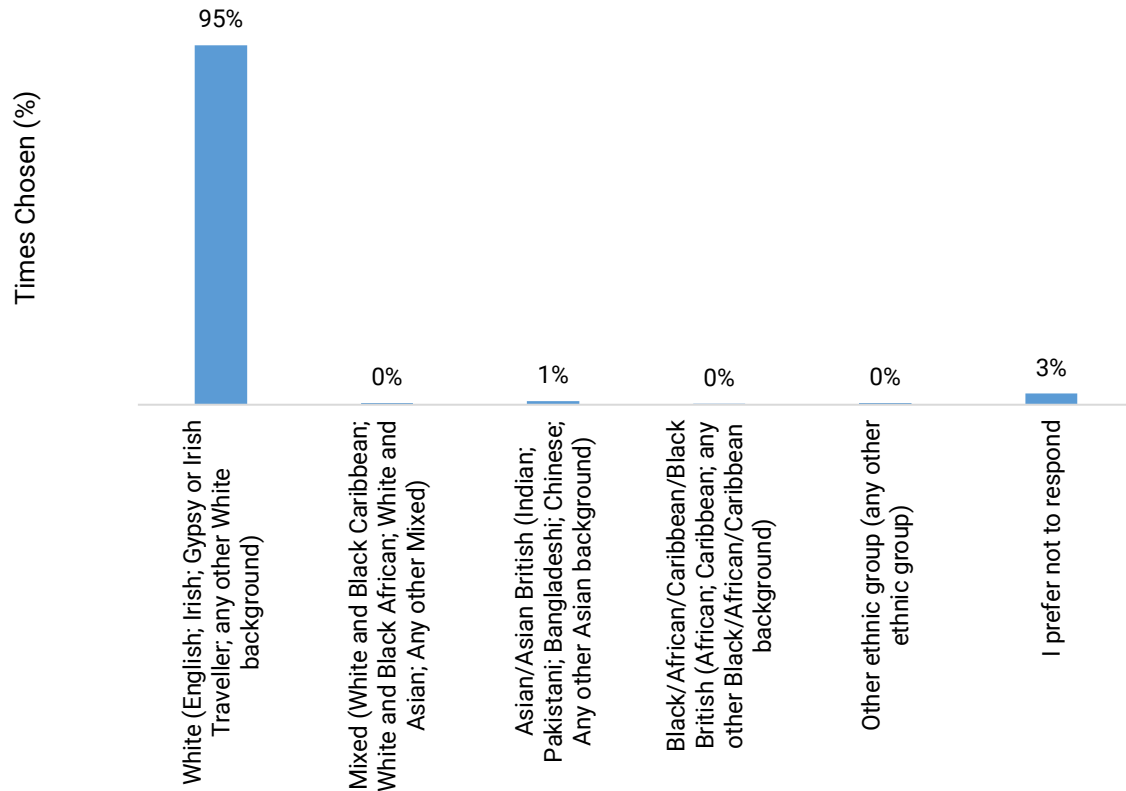
**What is your current employment status?  
(sample size=460)**



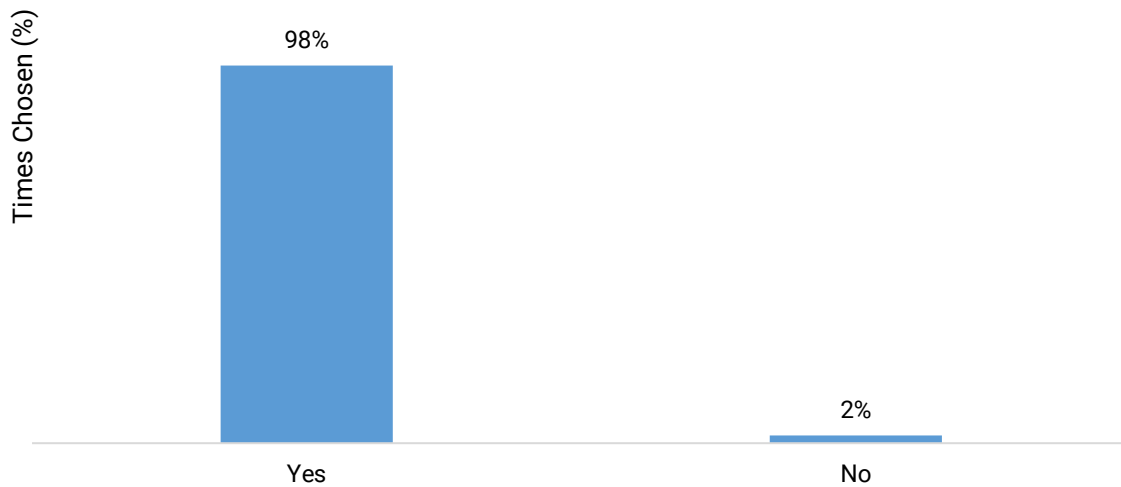
**When thinking about social issues, do you consider yourself to be:  
(sample size=448)**



**Please select the ethnicity you identify as:  
(sample size=458)**

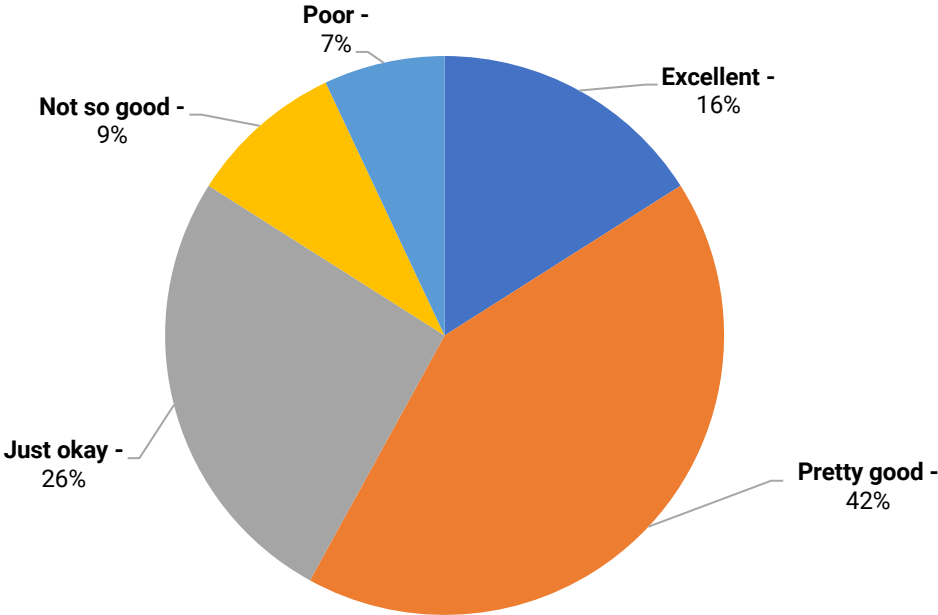


**Is English the primary language spoken at home?  
(sample size=462)**

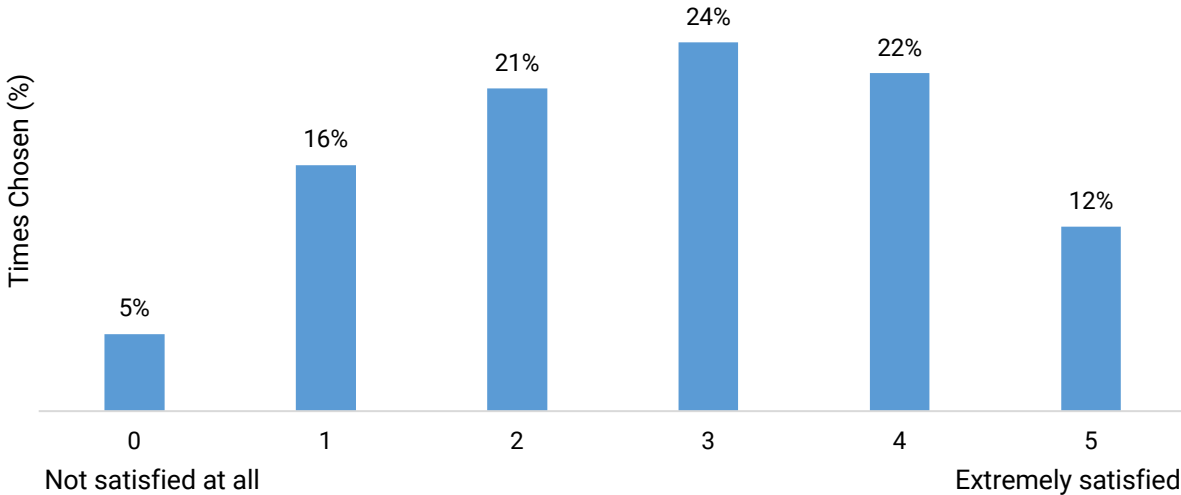


**Parents' satisfaction with their children's education**

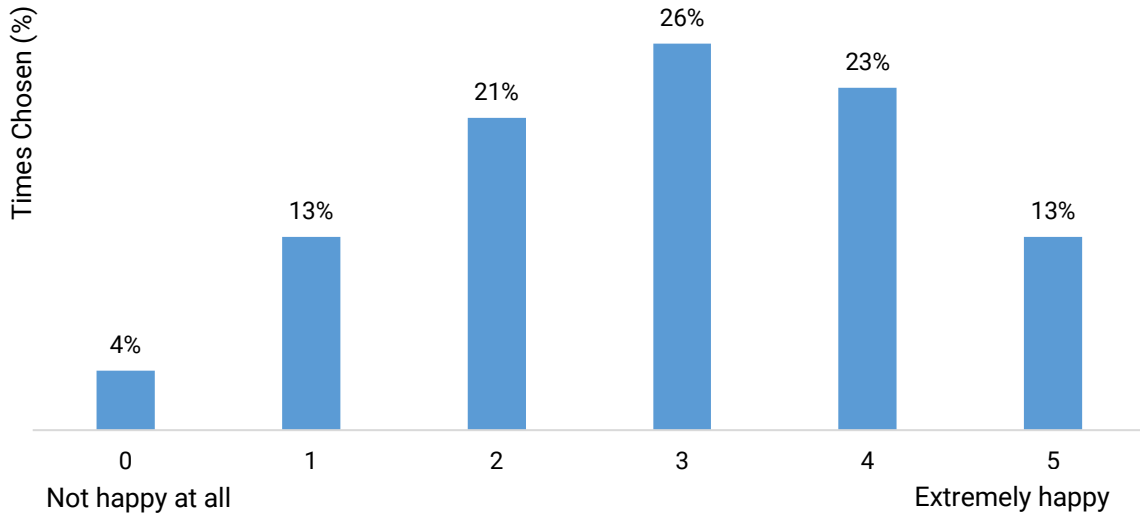
**How would you rate the education that your child is getting from their school right now?  
(sample size=1007)**



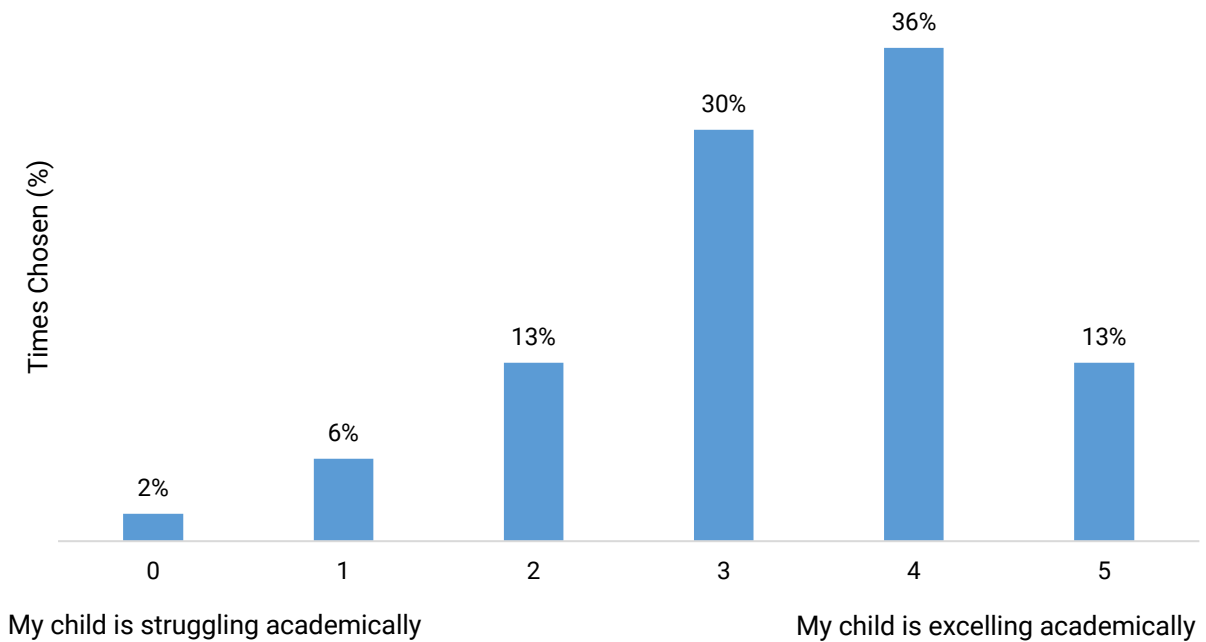
**At the time of this survey, how satisfied are you with your child's education?  
(sample size=746)**



**At the time of this survey, how happy is your child with their education?  
(sample size=778)**



**How well do you believe your child is doing academically right now?  
(sample size=1004)**



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Winthrop, R., Barton A., & McGivney, E. (2018, June 5). *Leapfrogging inequality: Remaking education to help young people thrive*. Brookings Institution Press.