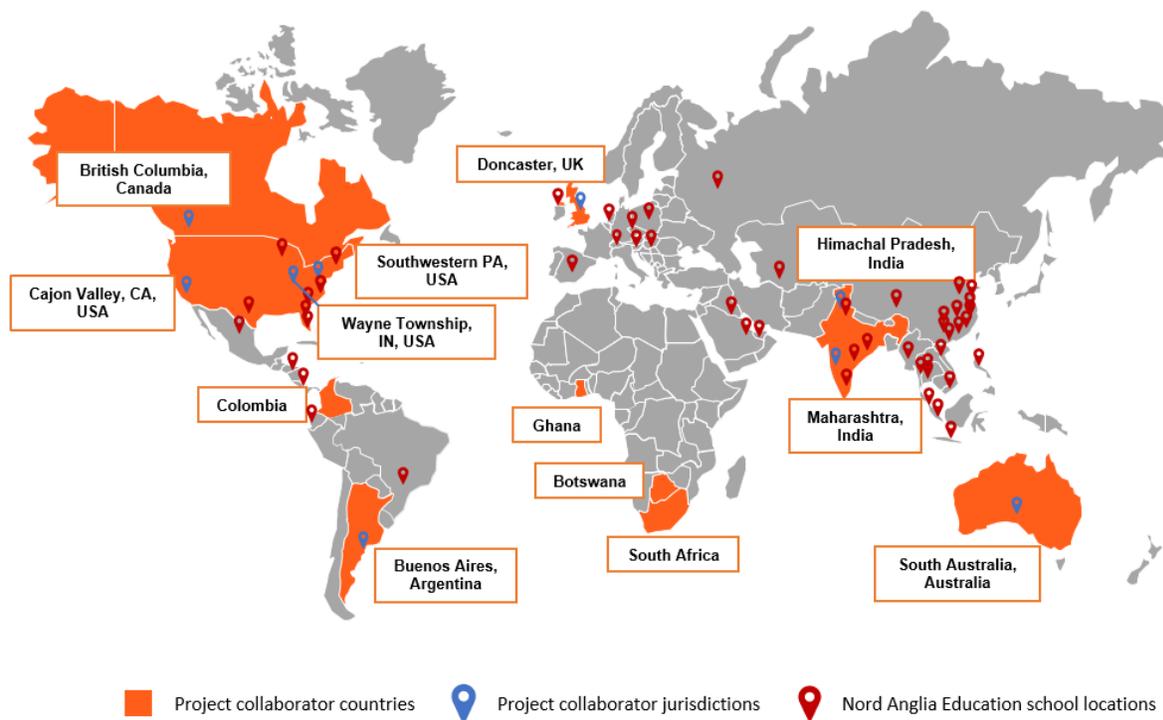


## PERSPECTIVES FROM PARENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Rebecca Winthrop

Mahsa Ershadi

Grace Harrington



## 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

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

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 a consultation 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<sup>2</sup> 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.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa is the 24<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world (World Atlas, 2019). While South Africa has a large youth population, the percentage of the population under 18 years of age has declined from 37.4% in 2005 to 34.5% in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2021).

## **EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

As with much of the world, South Africa was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The onset of the pandemic in early spring 2020 caused widespread disruptions to the education system. On March 18, 2020, schools throughout the country were closed. This significantly hindered learning opportunities for children. Certain schools tried to open throughout the next few months but were forced to close again. It is estimated that by the beginning of August, children in South African schools lost between 30 and 59 days of schooling on average (Amnesty International, 2021).

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

Despite these setbacks, the country is diligently working towards a better-quality education for all students. According to the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE), the National Development Plan Vision 2030, “envisages that by 2030, South Africans should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes.” The DBE is focused on improving support for teachers, improving school infrastructure, and improving curricula in an effort to prepare students for the work force.

## Schools

Education is a high priority in South Africa and received the largest share of the government spending budget at 5%, serving over 13 million students in primary through secondary school (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2021). According to Statistics South Africa, almost 99% of children aged 6-13 and 96% of children aged 14-17 attended school in 2018. In the past three years, this number has increased to 98.8% of children ages 7-14 enrolled in school (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2021).

## **SURVEY OF PARENTS**

From October 30, 2020 to January 11, 2021, CUE distributed a 27-item live call survey to parents and caregivers of students enrolled in South Africa. A total of 1,800 primary caregivers responded to the survey. To collect data representative of the population in South Africa, 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 385 responses from primary caregivers in South Africa. 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).

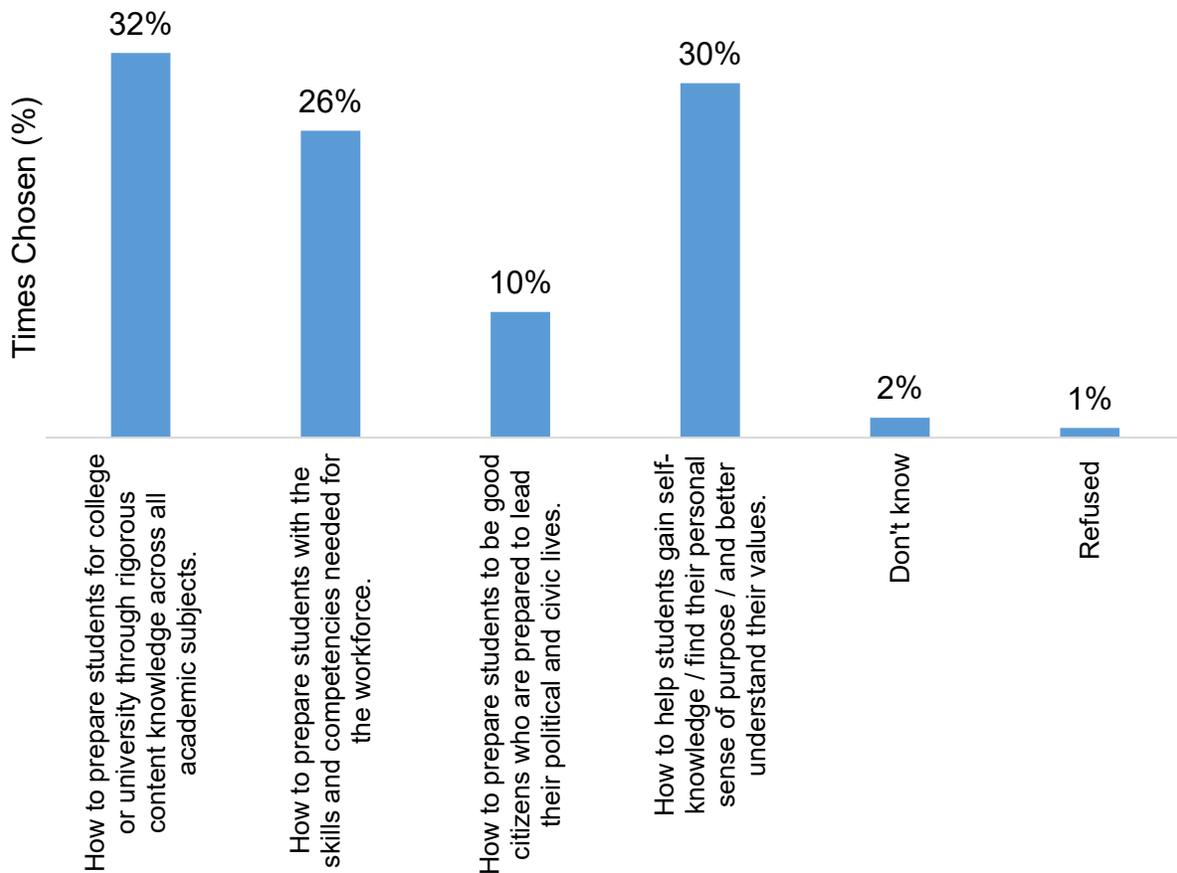
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our project collaborators at the Western Cape Education Department, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

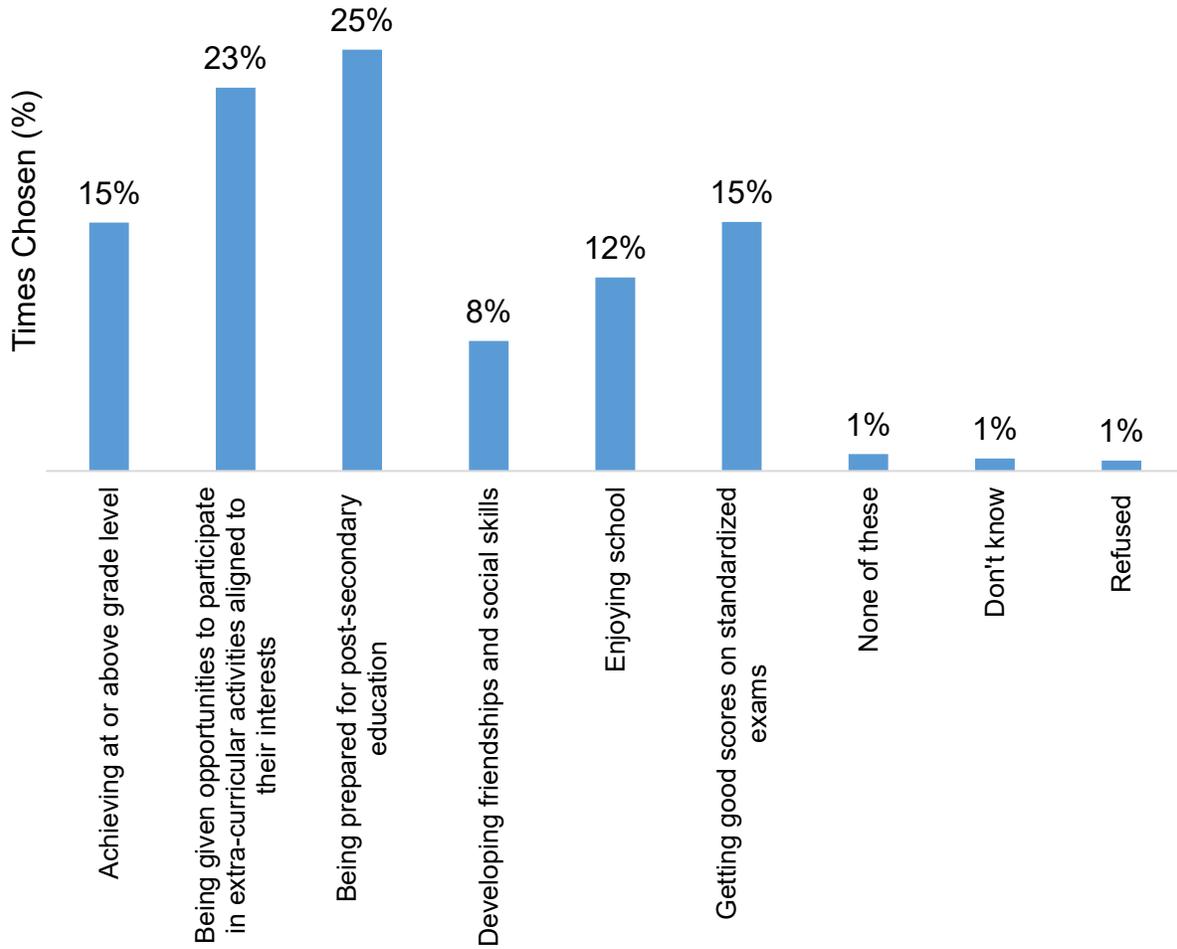
### Parents' beliefs on the purpose of school and perceived alignment with teachers

Research shows that teacher training has the strongest impact on changes in instruction that students receive. Which one of the following teacher trainings should a principal of a school choose for teachers to attend? (sample size=1800)



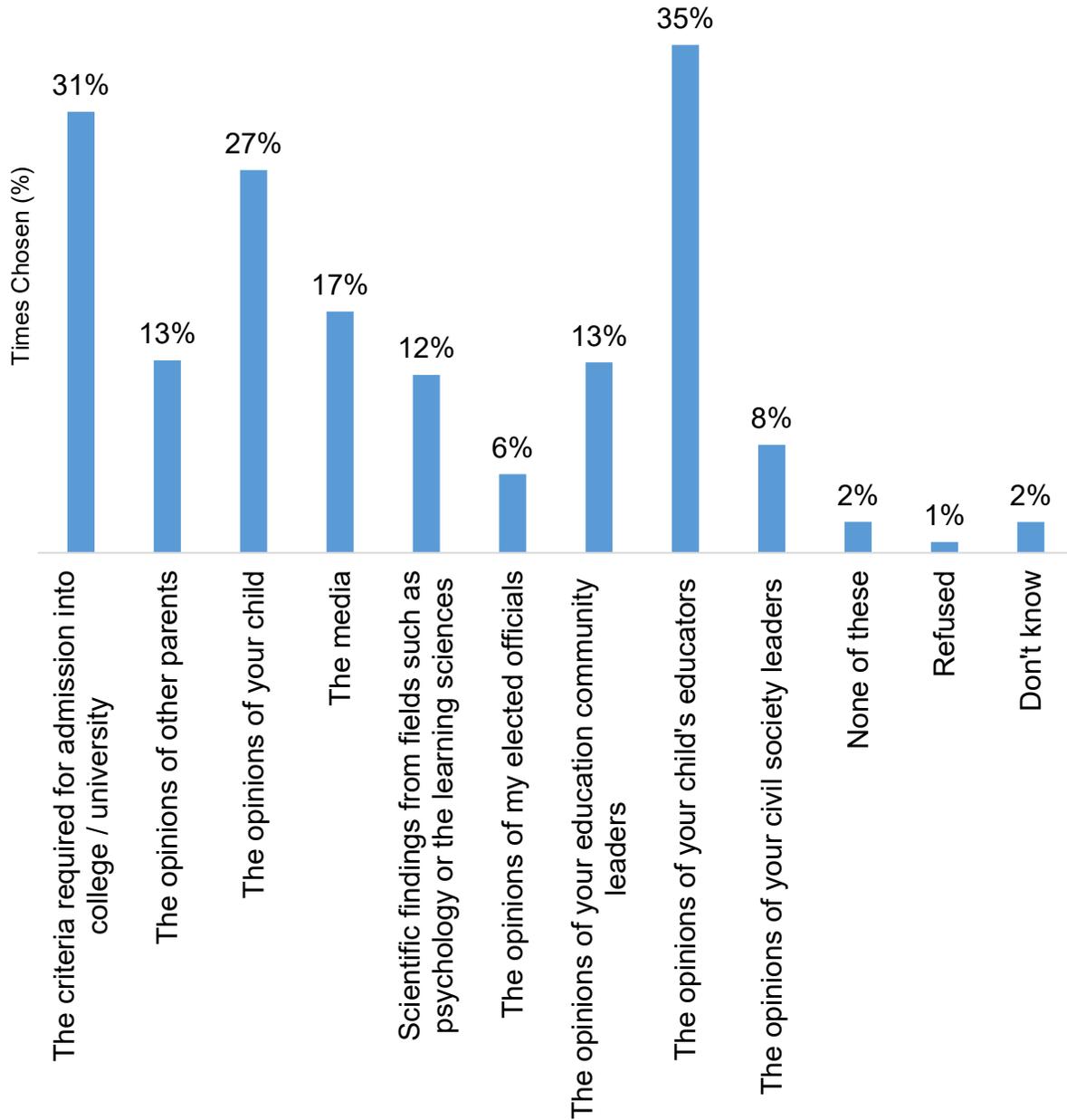
## Parents' indicators of quality and perceived alignment with educators

Would you say you are satisfied the MOST with your child's education when your child is...  
(sample size 1800)

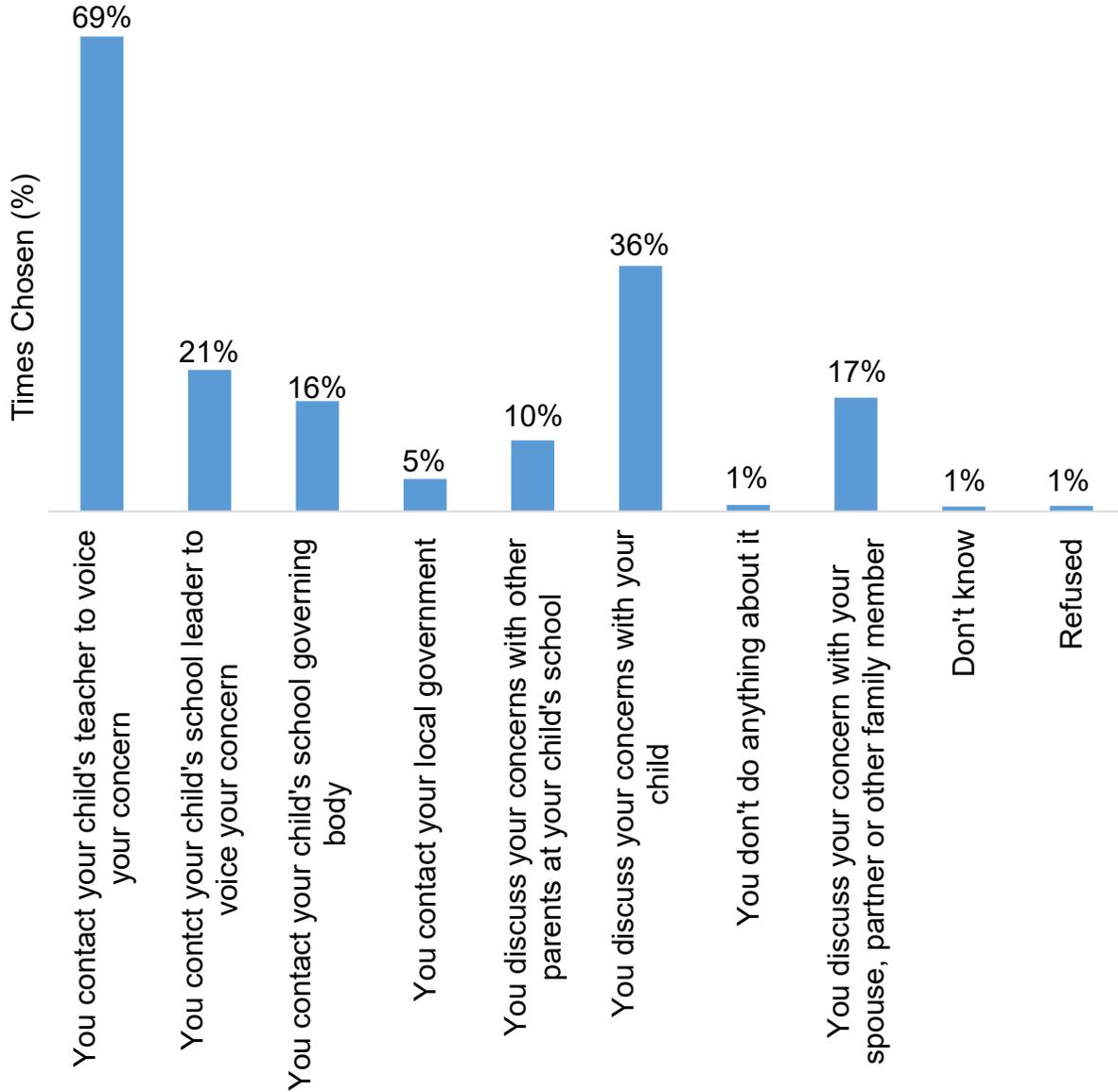


## Parents' sources of information

What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child?  
(sample size=1800)

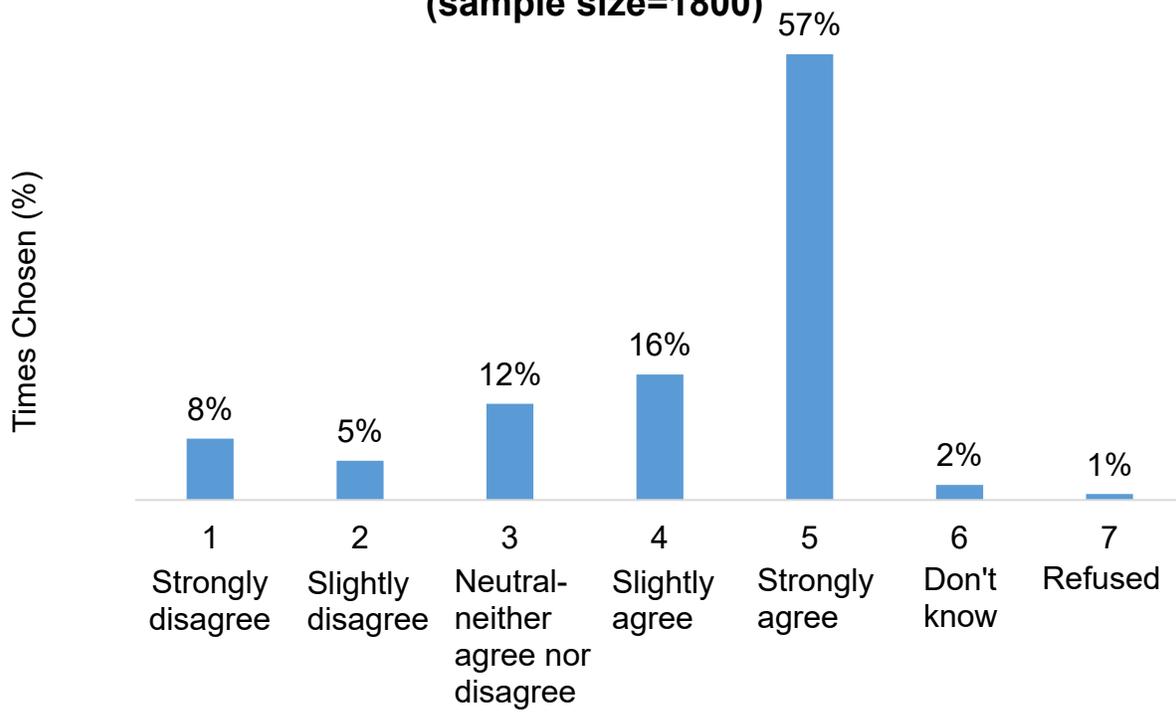


## How do you react when something about your child's education bothers or upsets you? (sample size=1800)

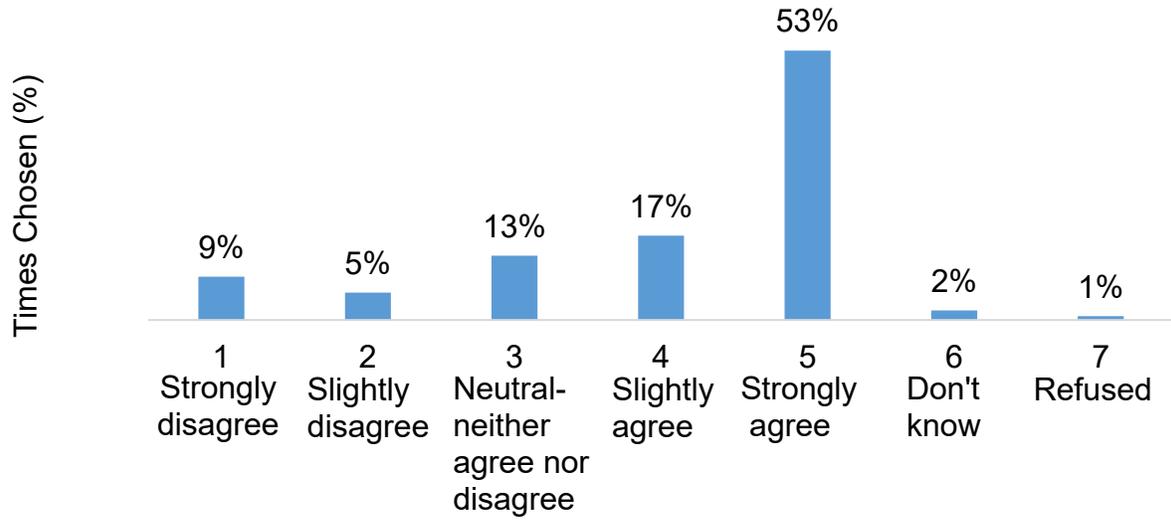


## Parents' trust of and perceived alignment with teachers

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: my child's teachers share my beliefs about what makes a good education:  
(sample size=1800)

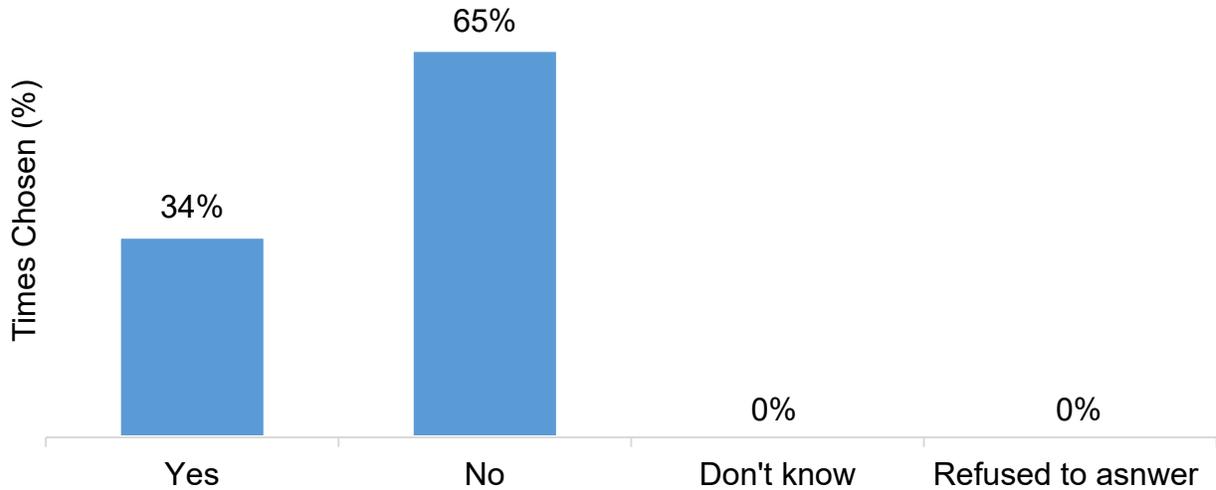


**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: my child's teachers are receptive to my input and suggestions:  
(sample size=1800)**

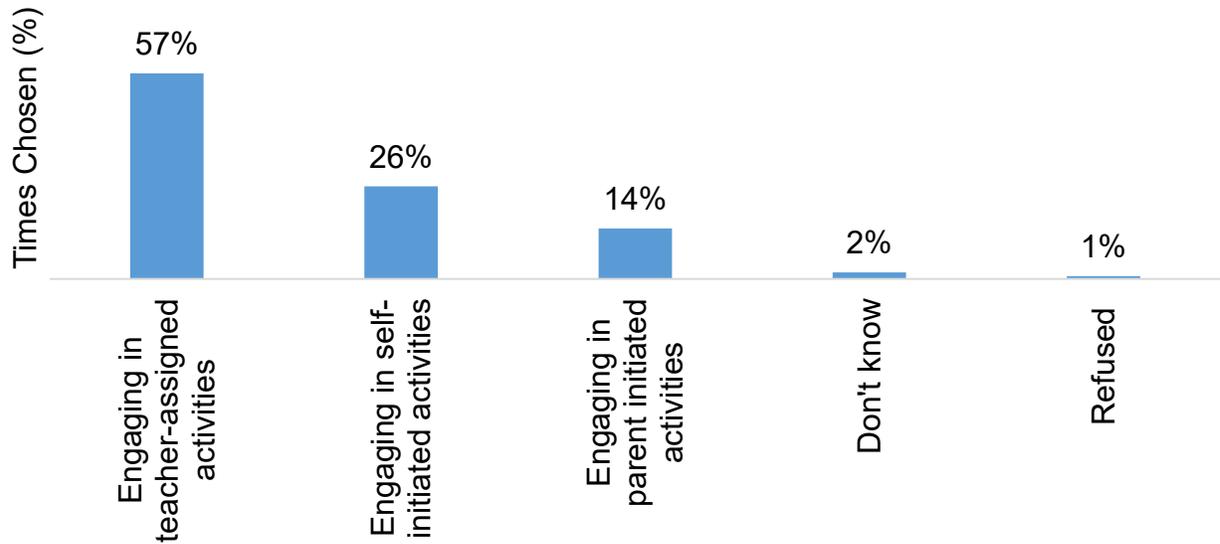


## Parents' opinions on pedagogy

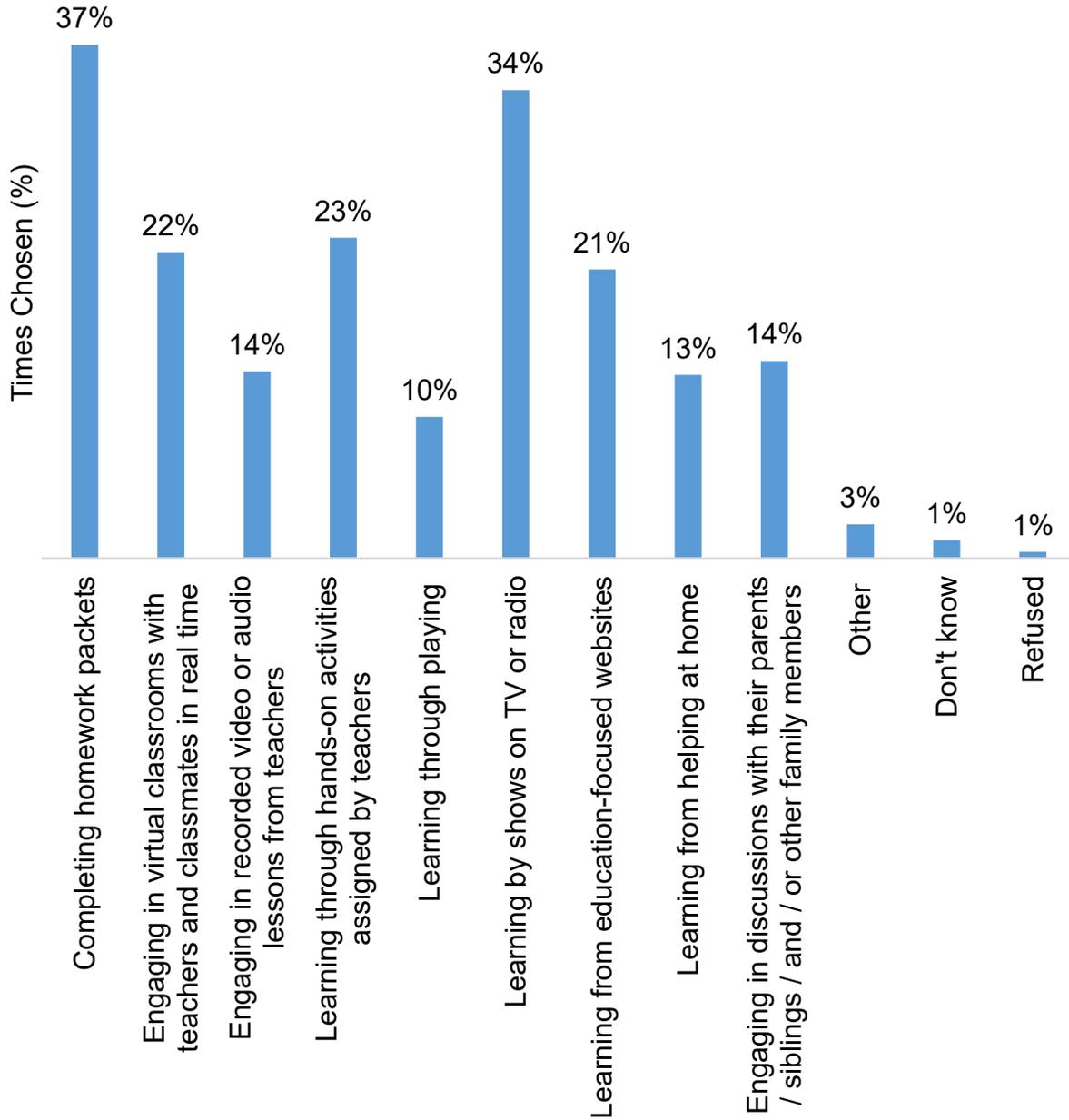
**Is your child currently distance learning from home?  
(sample size=1800)**



**On which of the following activities is your child  
spending their time on the MOST?  
(sample size=1783)**



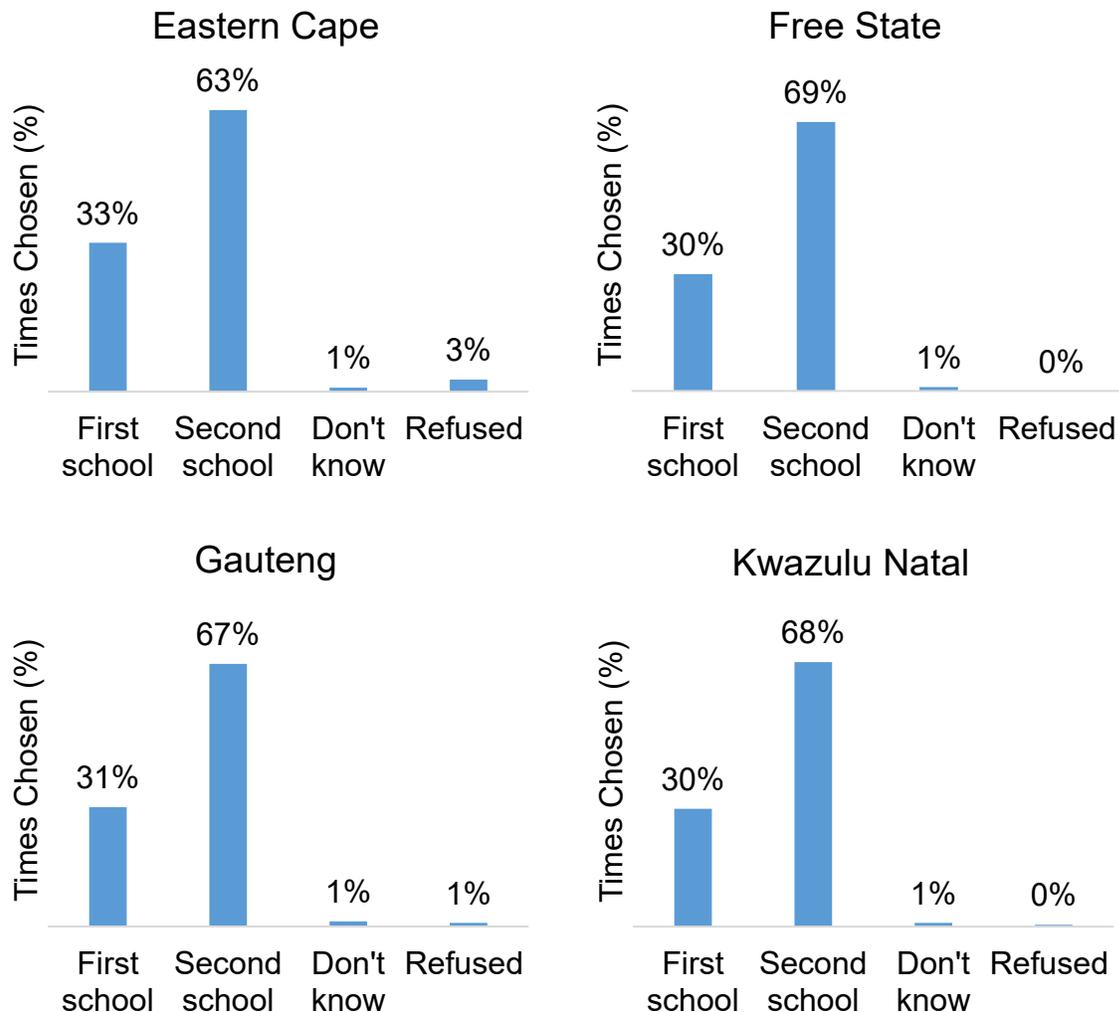
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you satisfied with?  
(sample size=1800)**

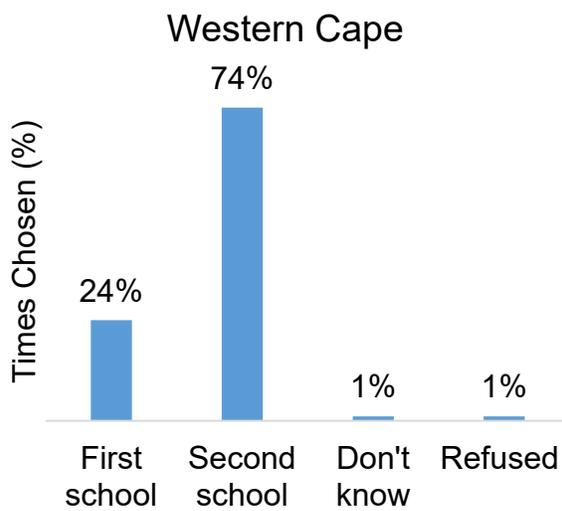
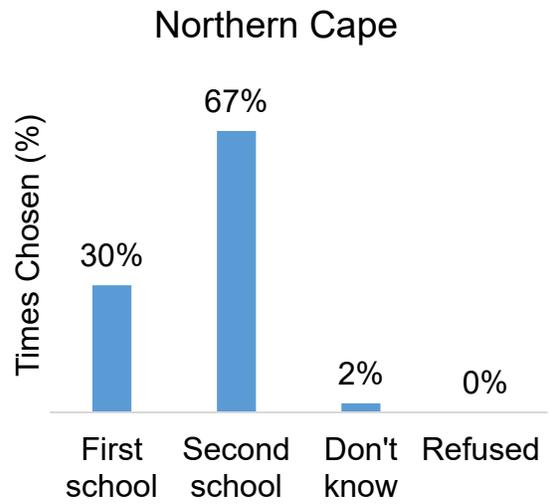
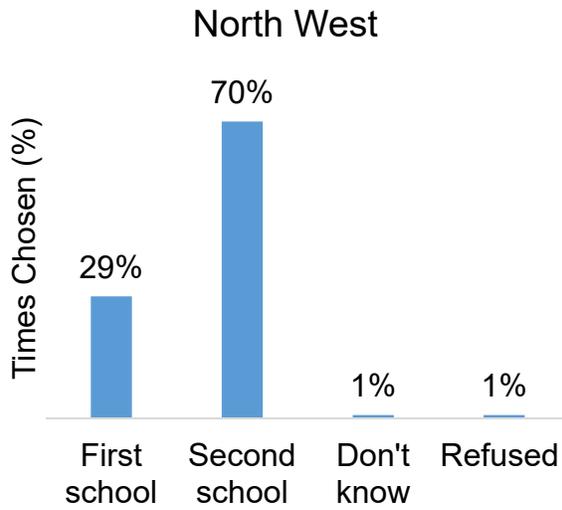
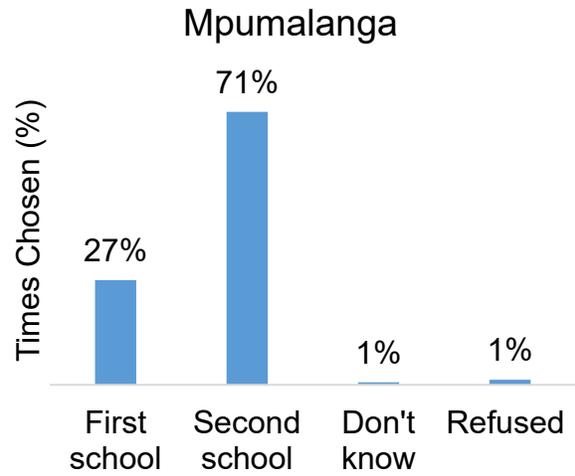
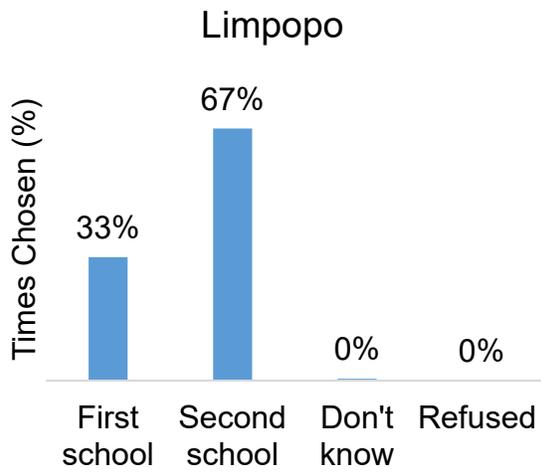


**Parents presented with a scenario of 2 classrooms and asked:  
 “Which would you suggest that your friend chose to send her child to?”  
 (sample size=1800)**

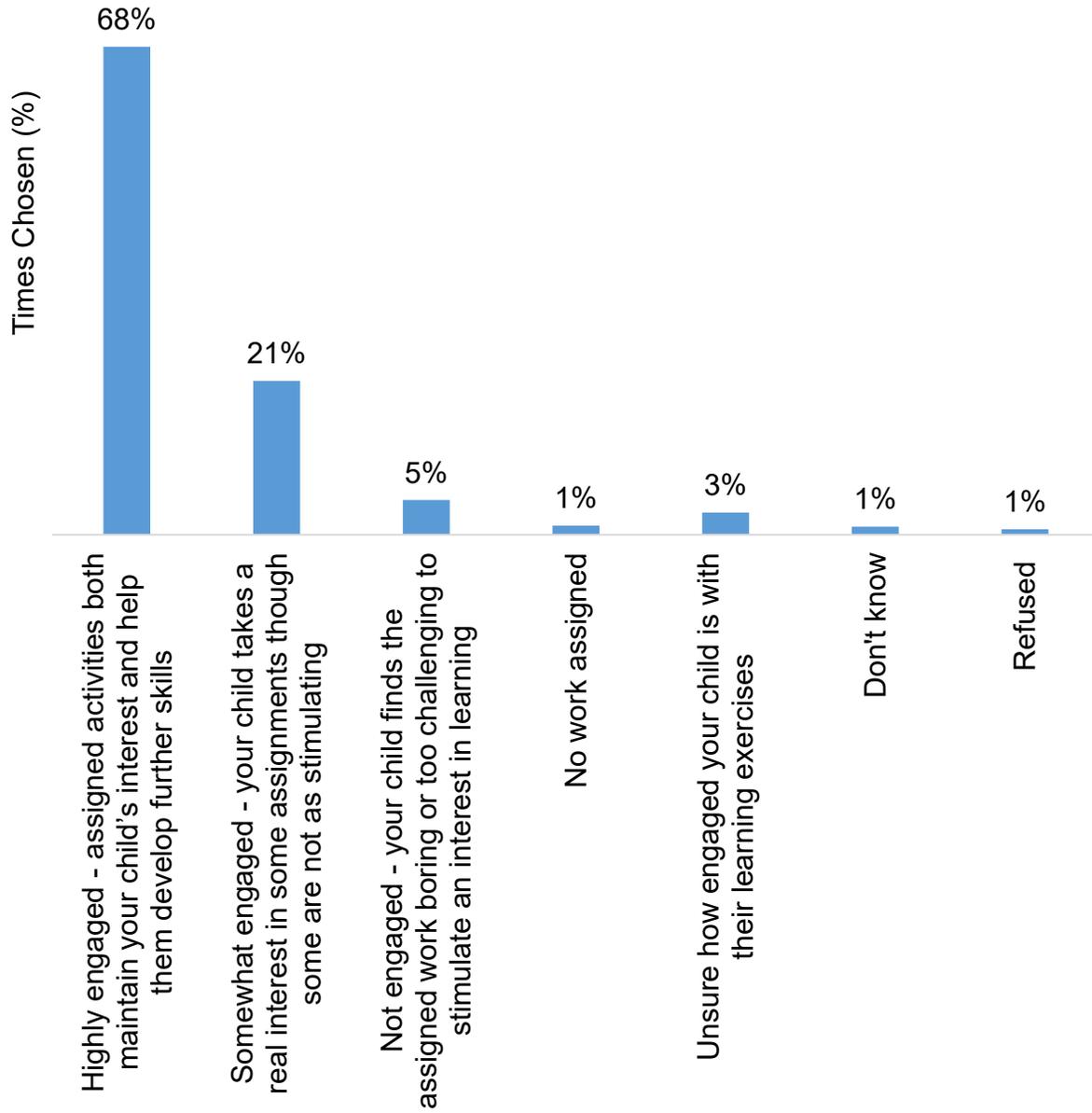
First School: Children are sitting in a classroom in rows of desks facing the front of the class and taking notes while listening to the teacher who is standing at the front of the room reviewing course material.

Second School: Children are in a classroom sitting in small groups facing each other and working together on a class project. The teacher is walking around the room answering questions the children have.



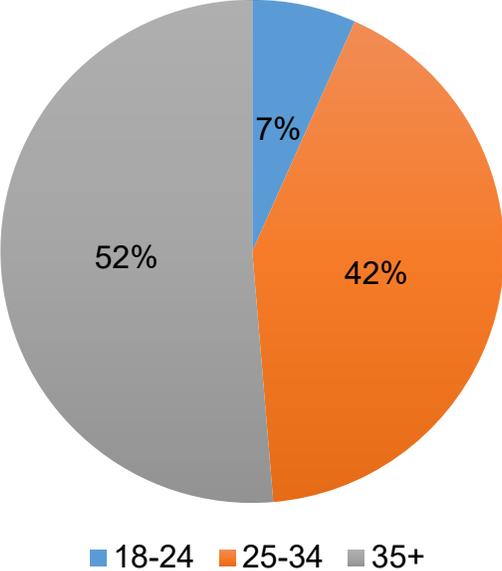


**How engaged is your child with the activities their teacher has assigned?  
(sample size=1800)**

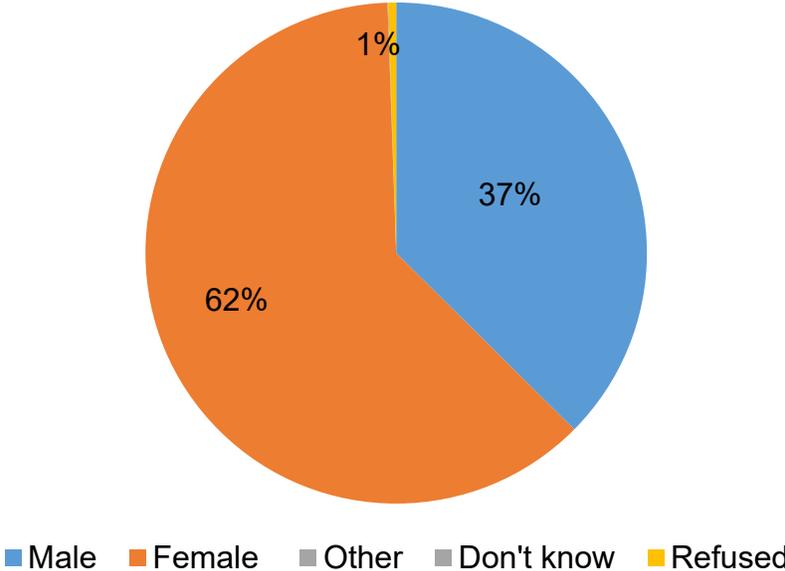


**Demographics of Survey Respondents from South Africa**

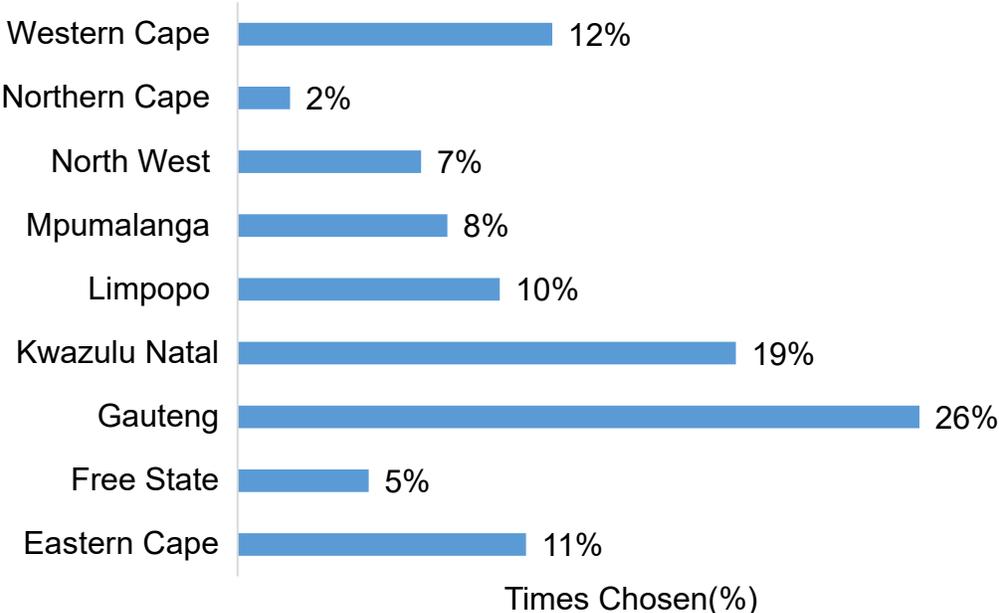
**How old are you?  
(sample size=1800)**



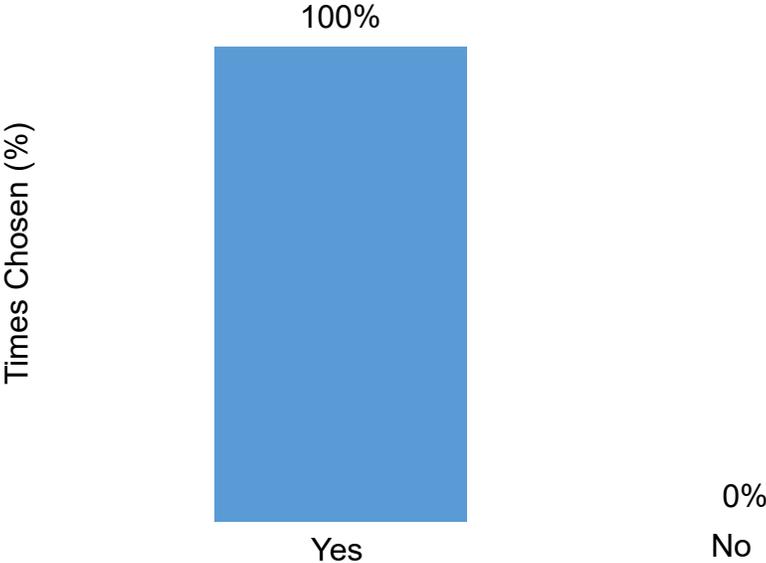
**What is your sex?  
(sample size=1800)**



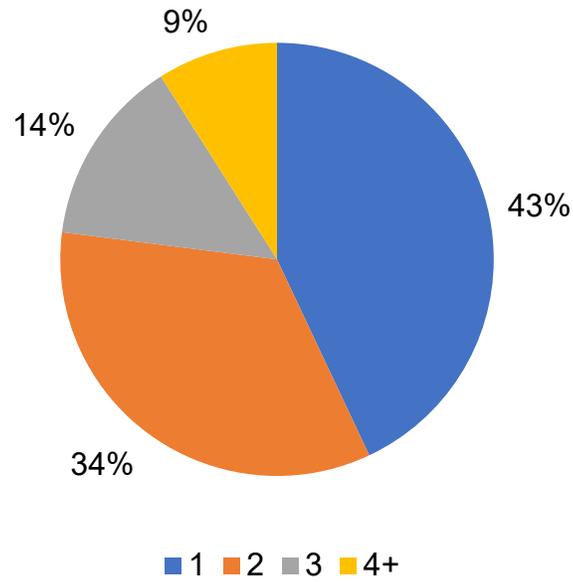
**What region do you currently live in?  
(sample size= 1800)**



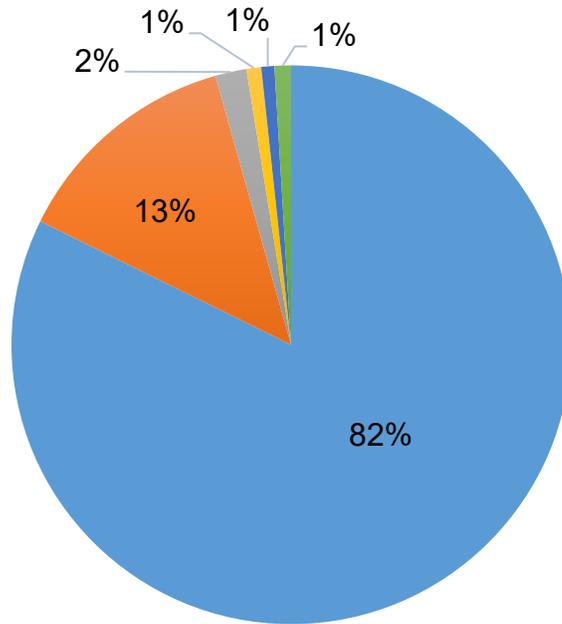
**Are you your child's primary caregiver (i.e., the adult who assumes the most responsibility in caring for the health and well-being of the child)?  
(sample size: 1800)**



**How many children do you have who are currently in kindergarten through senior high school and live at home with you?  
(sample size: 1800)**

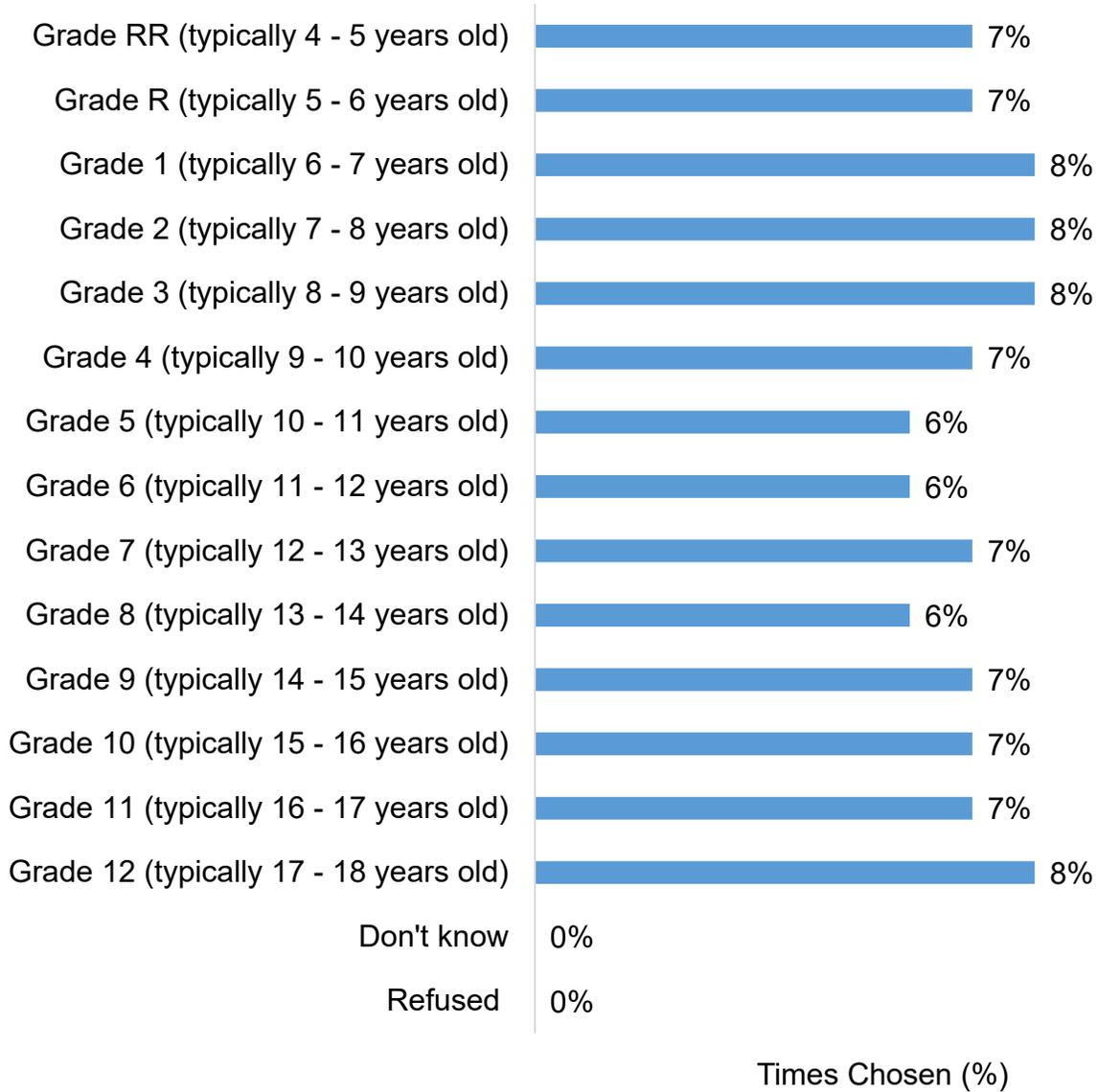


**In what type of school is your child enrolled?  
(sample size= 1800)**

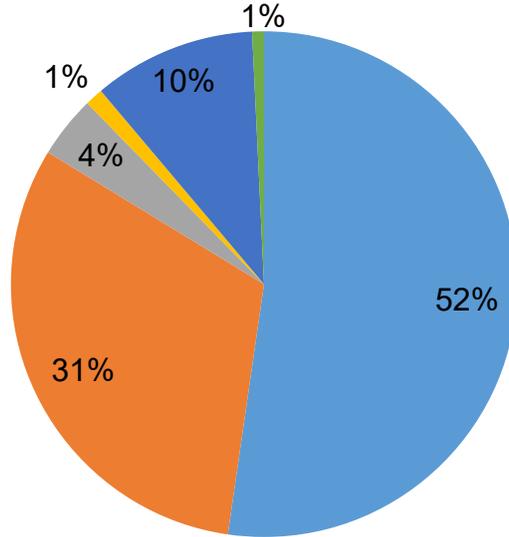


- Traditional public school
- Traditional private school
- Religious school
- Other
- Don't know
- Refused

**In which year is your oldest child who is enrolled in school (kindergarten to senior high school)?  
(sample size=1800)**

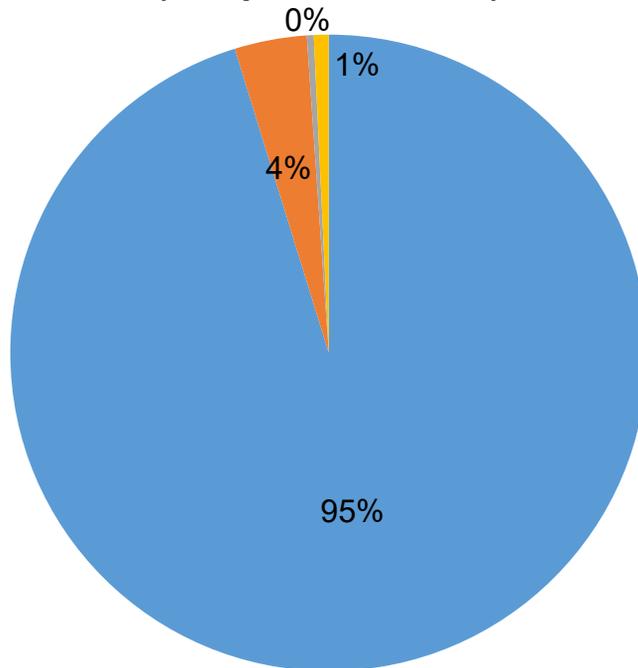


**What is your relationship to your oldest child?  
(sample size: 1800)**



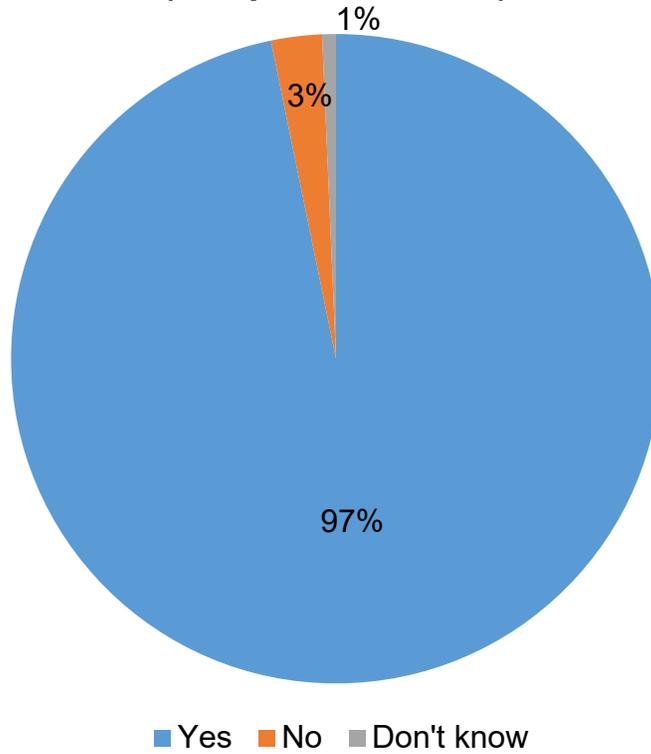
■ Mother ■ Father ■ Grandmother ■ Grandfather ■ Other ■ Refused

**Did your child's school close because of COVID-19?  
(sample size= 1800)**

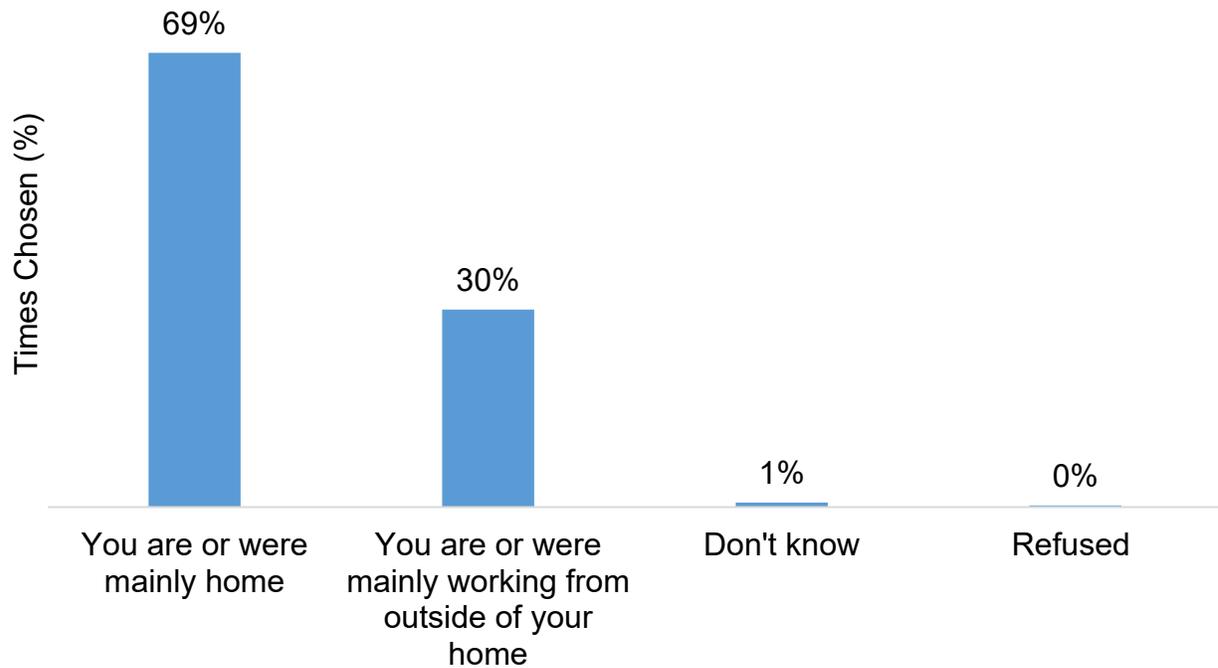


■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know ■ Refused

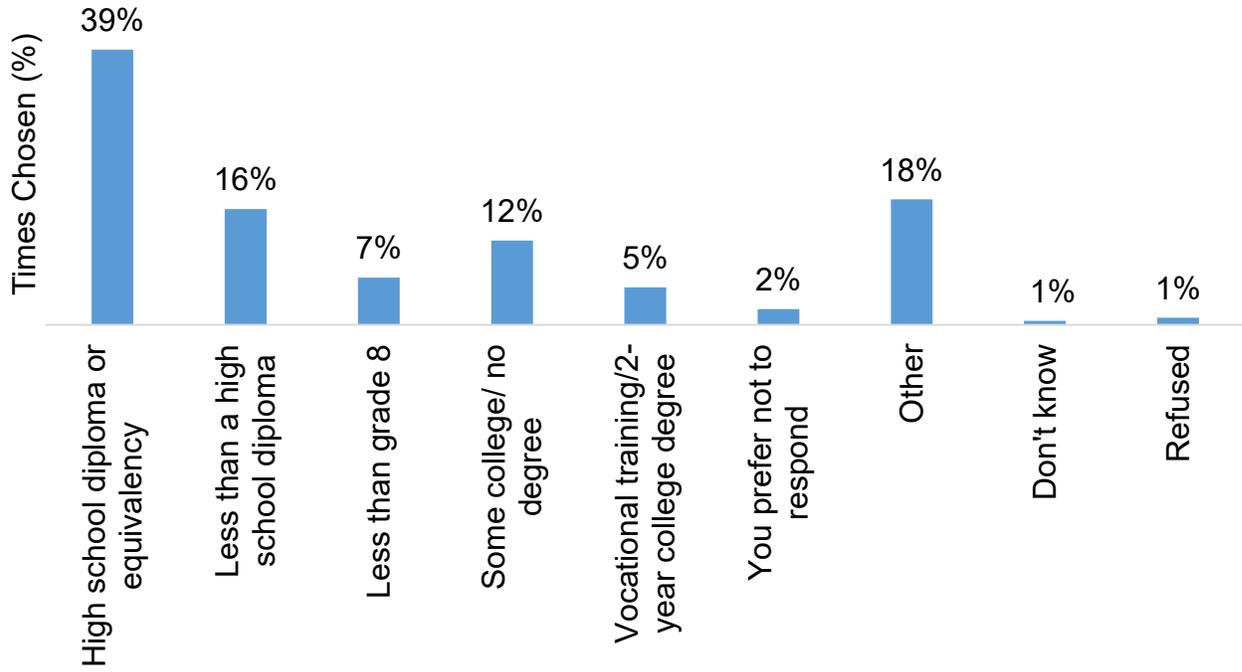
**Did your child's school reopen after closure because  
of COVID-19  
(sample size= 1713)**



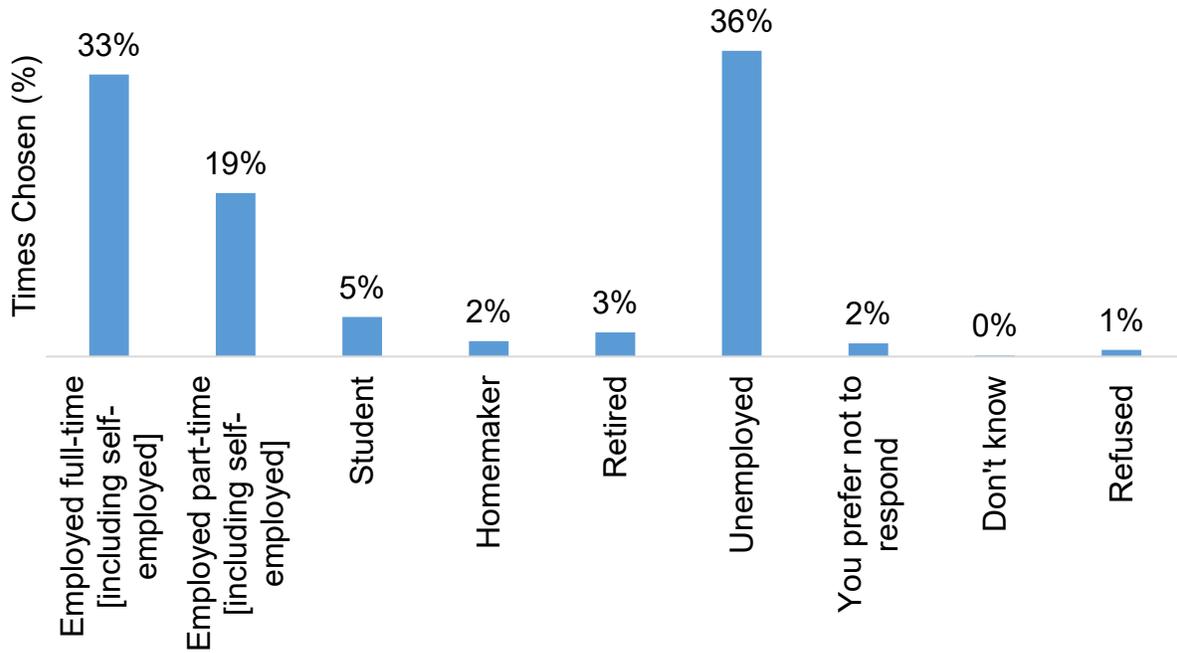
**During your child's school closure, are or were you mainly home (whether employed or unemployed) or are or were you mainly working from outside your home? (sample size=1711)**



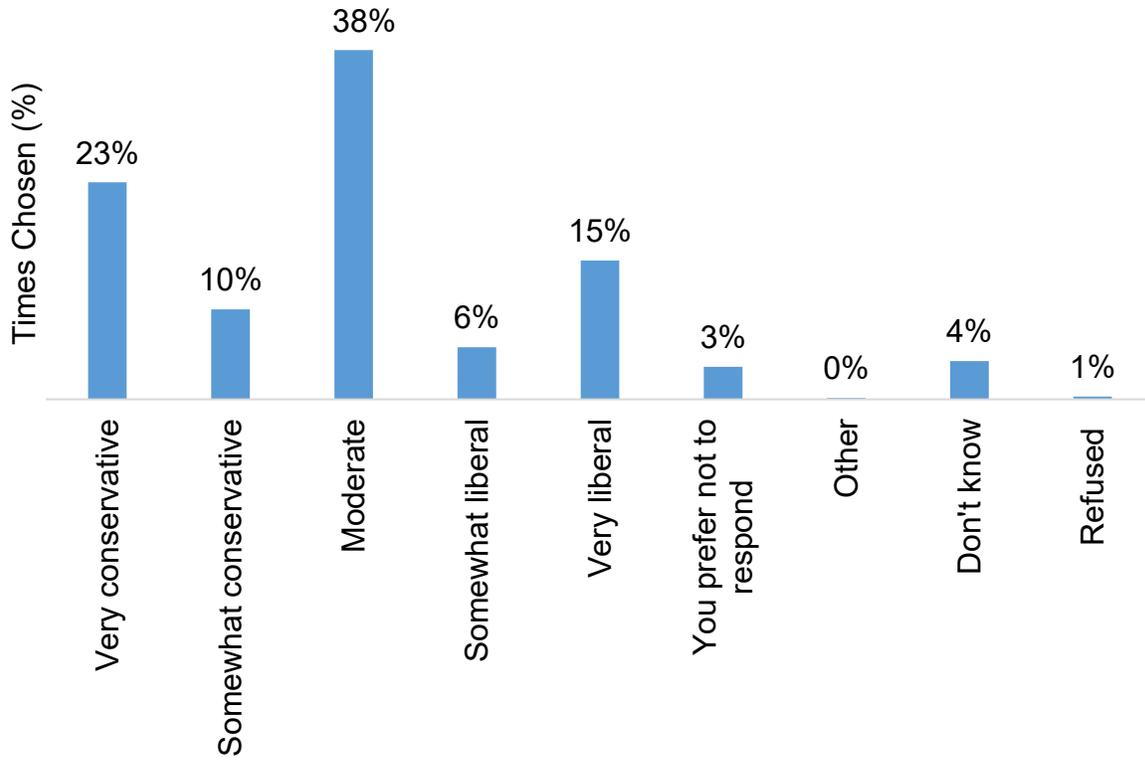
**What is your highest level of education attained?  
(sample size=1800)**



**What is your current employment status?  
(sample size=1749)**

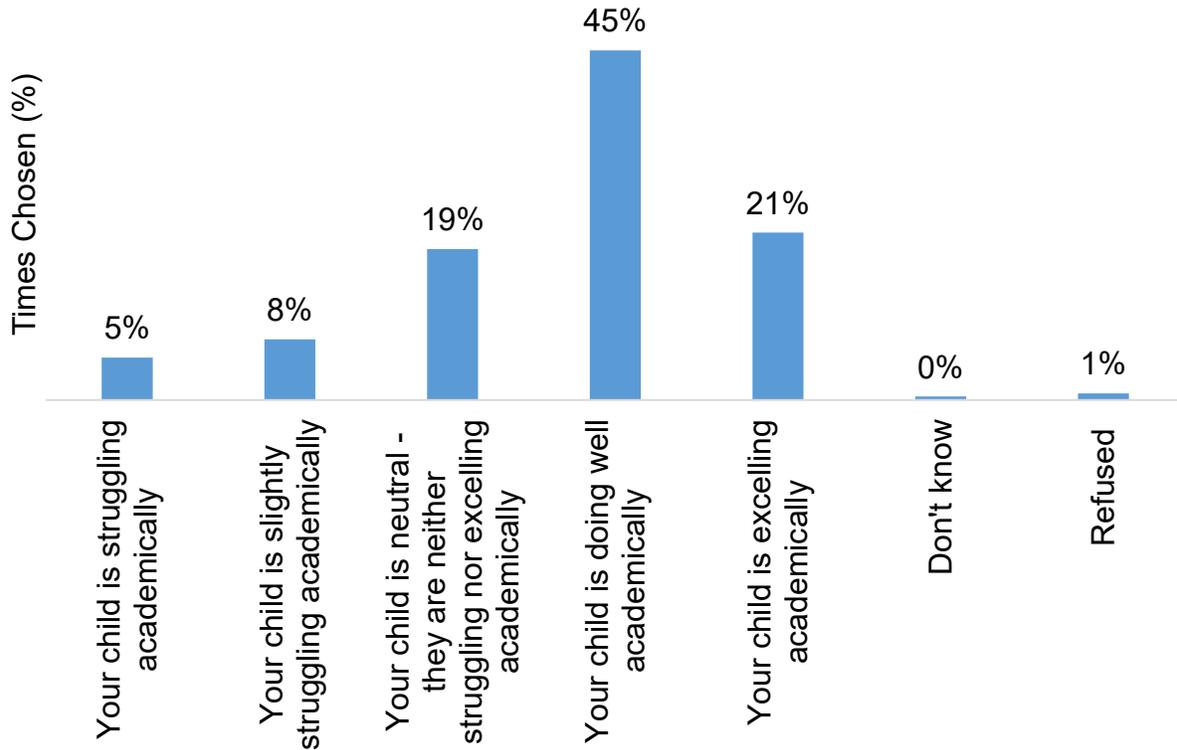


**When thinking about social issues, do you consider yourself to be...?  
(sample size=1800)**

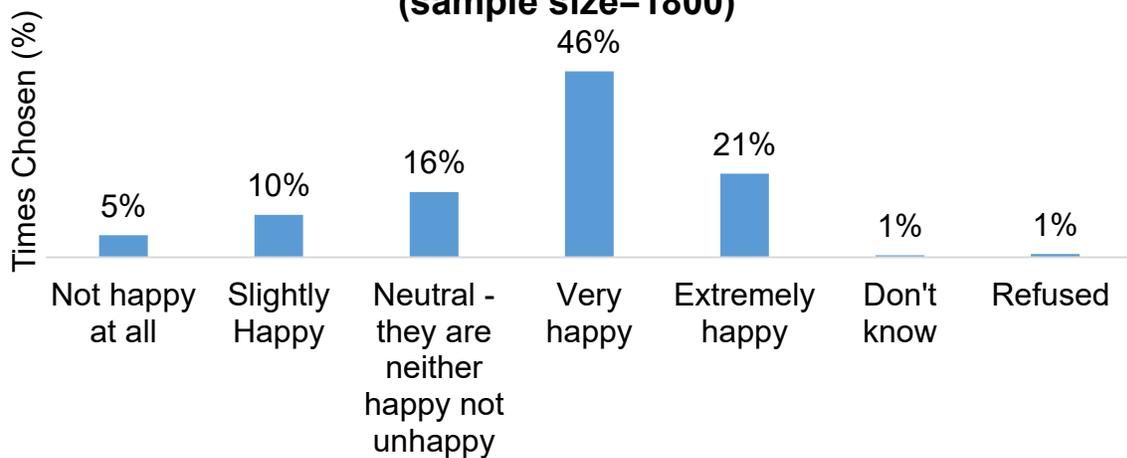


## Parents' satisfaction with their children's education

**How well do you believe your child is doing academically right now?**  
(sample size=1800)



**At the time of this survey, how happy is your child with their education?**  
(sample size=1800)



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