

Parentkind

The National *Parent* Survey

For Northern Ireland



2025



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THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

301
parents in
Northern
Ireland have
their say
on being
a parent in
2025

Introduction from Jason Elsom



We are proud to present the UK's largest annual poll of parents, the biggest yet. Our work with YouGov addresses many tough and highly topical matters facing parents in 2025. We look at their views, hopes, struggles, and fears. **This report presents the results from the 301 parents in Northern Ireland.**

This year we have sought their views on the special educational needs crisis, crime and the safety of their children, their own loneliness, the happiness of their children, behaviour, discipline and much more.

Our aim is to provide clarity to policymakers, researchers, and those supporting parents through the challenges they face. The National Parent Survey is a call to action for governments across the nations to help parents as they do the most important job any of us will ever do.

Children spend the vast majority of their childhood outside of a classroom, but we spend very little time talking about what happens beyond the school gates. That's where Parentkind comes in.

As the largest parent charity in the UK, we work with over 14,000 parent groups and an army of almost two hundred thousand parent volunteers to support other parents and children, strengthen communities and build relationships. Parent volunteers raise almost £140 million a year for schools, money that goes directly to the front line. If a school has a parent

group supporting it, it is likely that they are part of the Parentkind community.

We hope that you will find this report incredibly useful, but I encourage you to further explore the wealth of additional data from the YouGov survey available at www.nationalparentsurvey.com, including the UK report, which is based on the views of 5,866 parents from across the four nations. There you can examine the views of parents by nation, region, type of school, family income, relationship status, age of child, phase of education, gender of parent or children and more.

At Parentkind, we never pit parents against teachers, there is no them and us – most teachers are parents themselves and clearly understand the difference they can make. We need to get serious about the role of parents in schools and their role in raising children, from birth right through to the teenage years. That's why we publish the National Parent Survey.

The data in the National Parent Survey should spark debate. It should make parents part of our conversation and part of the solution to many of the challenges facing society today.

Jason Elsom
Chief Executive, Parentkind

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Contents

6 What parents in Northern Ireland told us in 2025

8 Crime and safety

- 10 Parents' fears over their children's safety
- 11 Giving children independence
- 13 Safety at school

14 Special educational needs (SEN)

- 16 Assessments for special educational needs
- 17 Provision of support
- 19 Parents' experiences of having a child with special educational needs

22 School life

- 24 Happiness at school
- 25 Behaviour in schools
- 27 Bullying in schools
- 28 The purpose of school
- 29 School holidays
- 30 Parents' opinions on AI

32 Parenting challenges

- 34 How parents find parenting
- 35 Loneliness
- 36 Impact of parenting on mental health
- 37 Support from grandparents

40 Home life

- 42 Bedroom poverty
- 43 Children helping at home
- 44 Parents talking to their children
- 45 Parents' hopes for their child's future
- 46 Parents' smartphone use
- 48 Smacking bans

50 The hidden cost of education

- 52 School catchment
- 53 Private tutoring
- 55 Technology required by schools

56 Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) and gender questioning children

- 58 Attitudes towards the Relationship and Sexuality Education curriculum
- 61 Gender questioning children in school

64 What we should do in response to the National Parent Survey 2025

66 Methodology

Parents – anyone in a parenting role
FSM – Free School Meals
SEN – Special educational needs

The National Parent Survey 2025 Patrons

We are grateful to the following organisations for supporting this research:



What *parents* in Northern Ireland told us in 2025

Half of parents worry about their child being physically assaulted

3 in 10 teenagers are not *allowed* to go to the nearest park with friends

1 in 20 children feel *unsafe* at school

27% of parents have asked schools to *assess* their child for special educational needs

1 in 6 children are *unhappy* at school

Only half of parents are *supportive* of how behaviour is managed at their child's school

15% of parents say their child has been *bullied* at school in the last year

Fewer than 3 in 10 parents think preparing children to pass exams should be a *priority* for schools

A third of parents want a *shorter* summer holiday

Only 1 in 8 parents think schools *should* use AI for school work in the classroom

1 in 3 parents find parenting *difficult*

1 in 10 parents feel *lonely* every day



4 in 10 mums say being a parent has had a *negative* impact on their mental health in the last year

Nearly half (47%) of working parents rely on grandparents for *childcare*

1 in 3 parents find it *hard* to talk to their child about their own mental health

3% of children share a bedroom with an adult because of a lack of space at home

Only half of children make their bed *regularly*

Three quarters of parents are *worried* about what the future holds for their child

Parents are *split* on whether or not smacking should be banned

4 in 10 parents worry they set a *bad example* for their children by using their phone too much

3 in 10 parents said school *catchment* was a factor when deciding where to live



A third of children are *required* to have a laptop or tablet by their school



3 in 10 children have had *private tutoring*

Fewer than half of parents are *always* informed of the content of RSE lessons in advance

9 in 10 parents think schools should *inform* them if their child has changed gender at school as long as there are no concerns about their safety at home



Crime and safety

Photography: istock.com/Monkeybusinessimages

Parents’ fears for their children’s safety

Fears for children's safety

? How often, if at all, do you worry about your child being a victim of the following?

	Worry regularly	Worry sometimes	Worry rarely	Worry never
Physical assault	13%	38%	30%	18%
Knife crime	6%	22%	27%	44%
Sexual assault	11%	31%	29%	27%
Grooming	10%	36%	29%	23%
Being involved in gangs	5%	12%	24%	57%
Gender discrimination	6%	13%	17%	61%
Racial discrimination	2%	8%	13%	75%

Base: All parents (301)











Photography: istock.com/Anchiy

Giving children independence

Children's independence

? Which, if any, of the following do you allow your child to do?

	All parents
 Play in a friend's garden	67%
 Go to the nearest park with friends	46%
 Be at home on their own	49%
 Stay overnight at a friend's house	43%
 Go shopping by themselves	41%
 Go into the nearest town with friends	36%
 Travel on public transport on their own	42%
 None of these	15%

Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/Daisy-Daisy

Safety at school

Feeling unsafe at school

? To the best of your knowledge, does your child feel unsafe at school?



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/SolStock

Photography: istock.com/izusek



Special educational needs

Photography: istock.com/SolStock

Assessments for special educational needs

Requests for an assessment for special educational needs

? Have you ever asked your child's school (current or previous) to assess your child for possible special educational needs?



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/sturti

Provision of support

Special educational needs in the classroom

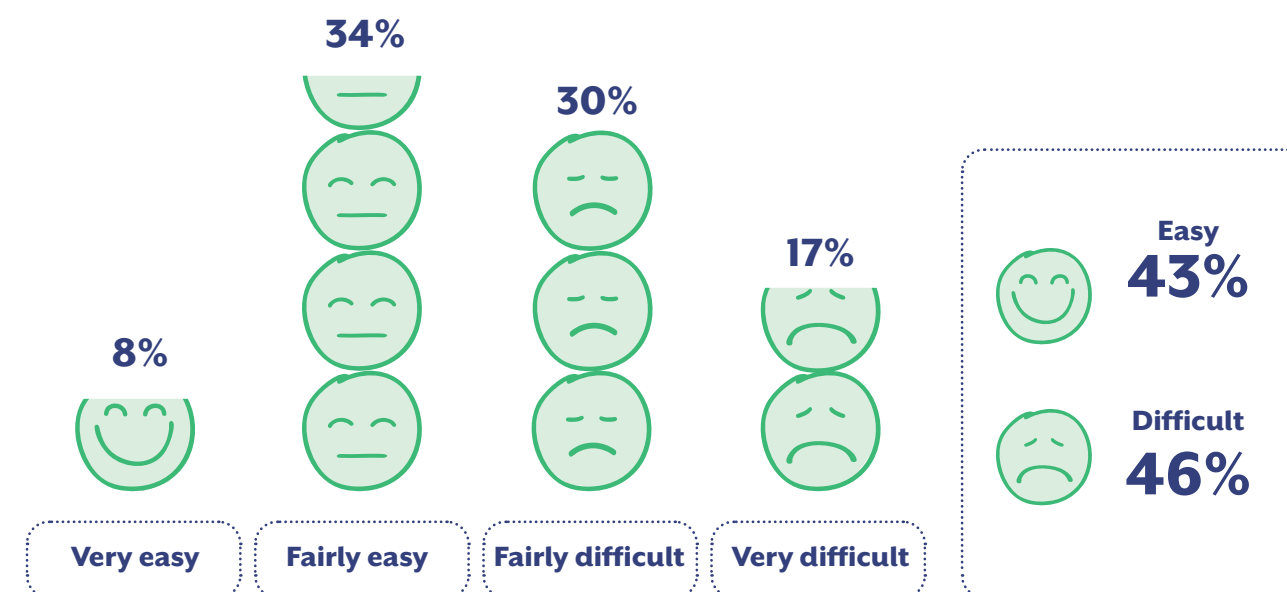
? To what extent, if at all, are your child's special educational needs being met at school?



Base: All parents whose child has a statement of special educational needs or who is discussing special educational needs with school (60)

Ease of getting special educational needs support

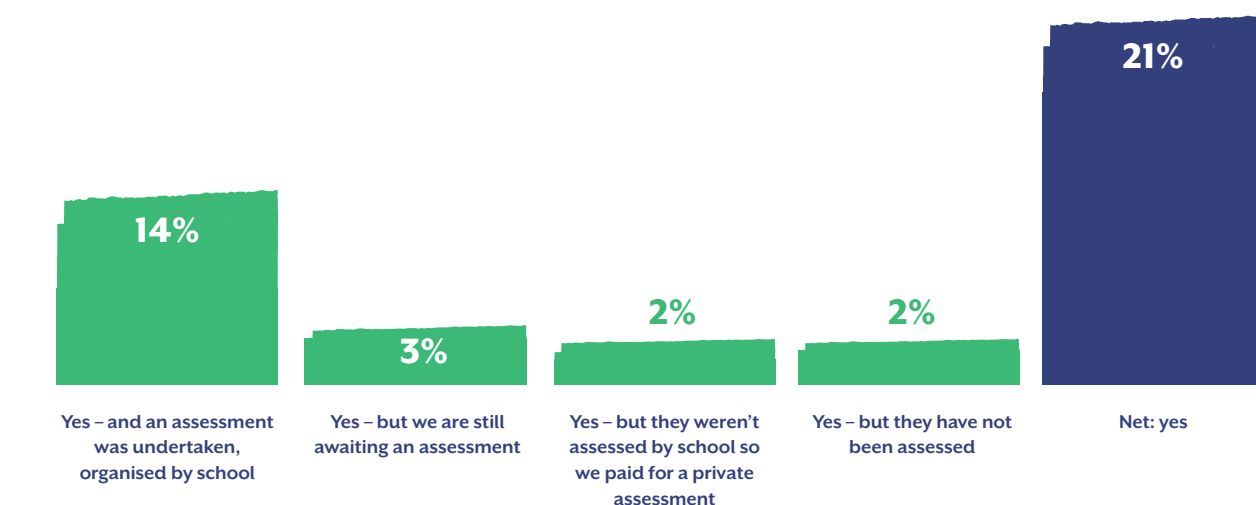
? How easy or difficult has it been for your child to receive the special educational needs support they need to learn effectively at school?



Base: All parents whose child has a statement of special educational needs or who is discussing special educational needs with school (60)

Requests for an assessment for extra time in exams

? Have you ever asked your child's school (current or previous) to assess your child for additional time in exams?



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/skynesher

Parents' experiences of having a child with special educational needs

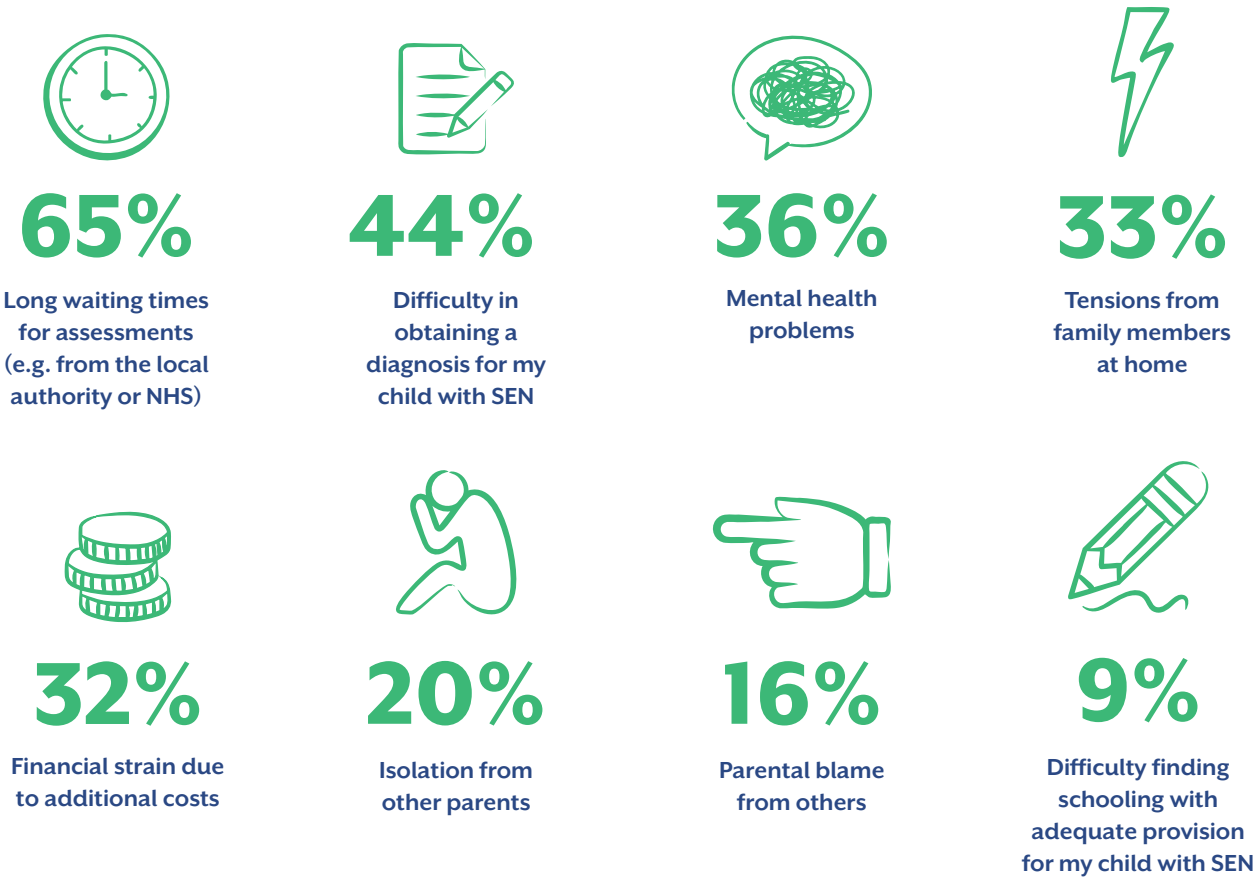
? Which, if any, of the following have you done in order to help manage your child's special educational needs?



Base: All parents whose child has a statement of special educational needs or who is discussing special educational needs with school (60)

Impact of managing child’s special educational needs

? Which, if any, of the following have you experienced as a result of having a child with special educational needs?



Base: All parents whose child has a statement of special educational needs or who is discussing special educational needs with school (60)



Photography: istock.com/SolStock



Photography: shutterstock.com/NataliaNeriabina



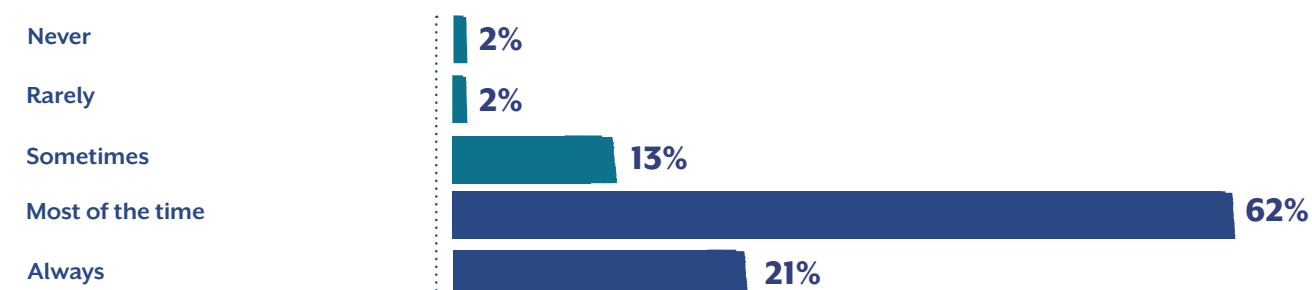
School life

Photography: istock.com/Monkeybusinessimages

Happiness at school

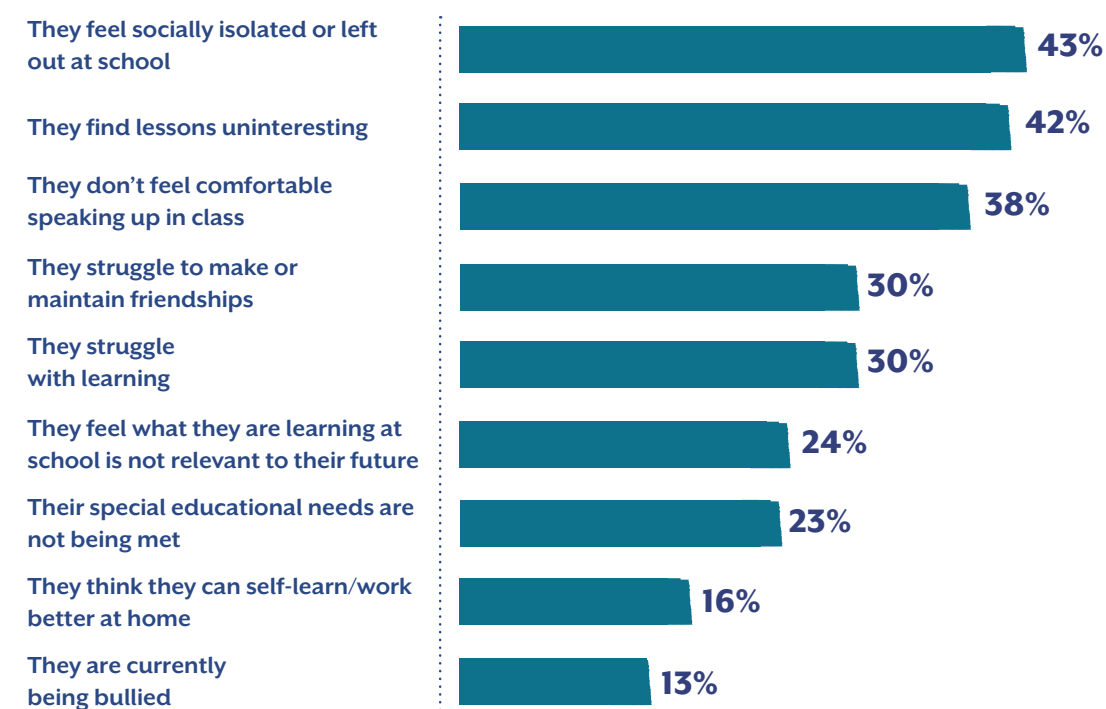
Child's happiness at school

? To the best of your knowledge, do you think your child is happy at school?



Base: All parents (301)

? If sometimes/rarely/never happy at school, which of the following do you think are reasons for this?

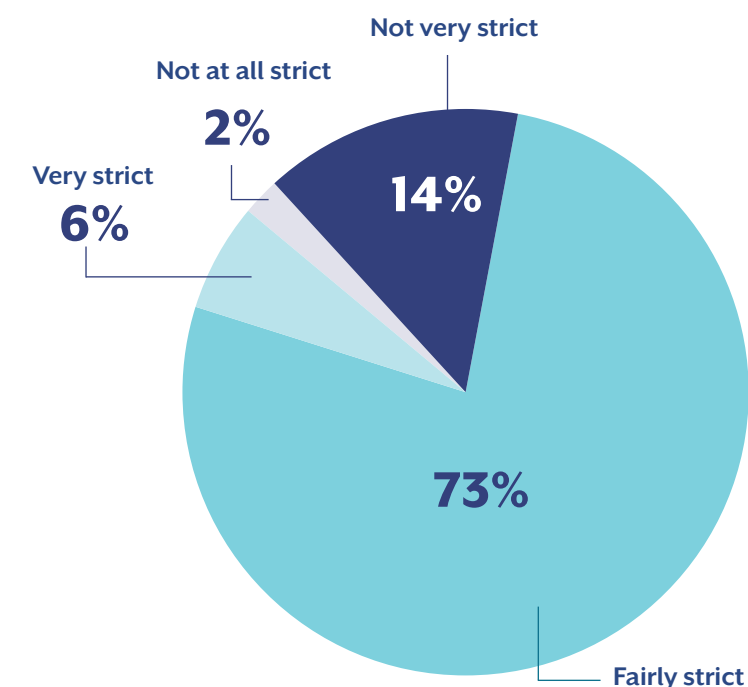


Base: Parents whose child is sometimes/rarely/never happy at school (53)

Behaviour in schools

Behaviour management at school

? How would you describe how behaviour is managed at your child's school?



Base: All parents (301)

Photography: istock.com/Monkeybusinessimages



Impact of how behaviour is managed

? Which, if any, of the following are an outcome of the behaviour management policies at your child's school?

	All parents
My child knows what behaviour is expected from them at school	68%
Children at my child's school are generally well-behaved	59%
I am supportive of how behaviour is managed at my child's school	52%
My child's learning is sometimes disrupted due to poor behaviour from children in lessons	21%
Children at my child's school are disciplined for insignificant infringements	11%
My child is scared of getting disciplined at school	10%
My child feels unsafe at school due to a lack of discipline	4%
My child struggles to attend school because the school is not strict enough	1%
My child struggles to attend school because the school is too strict	2%

Base: All parents (301)

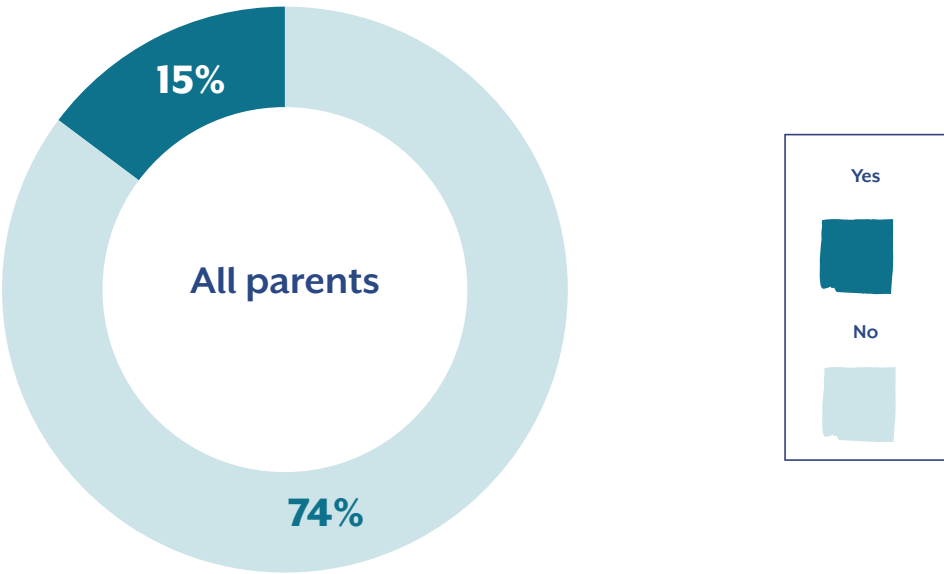


Photography: istock.com/Daisy-Daisy

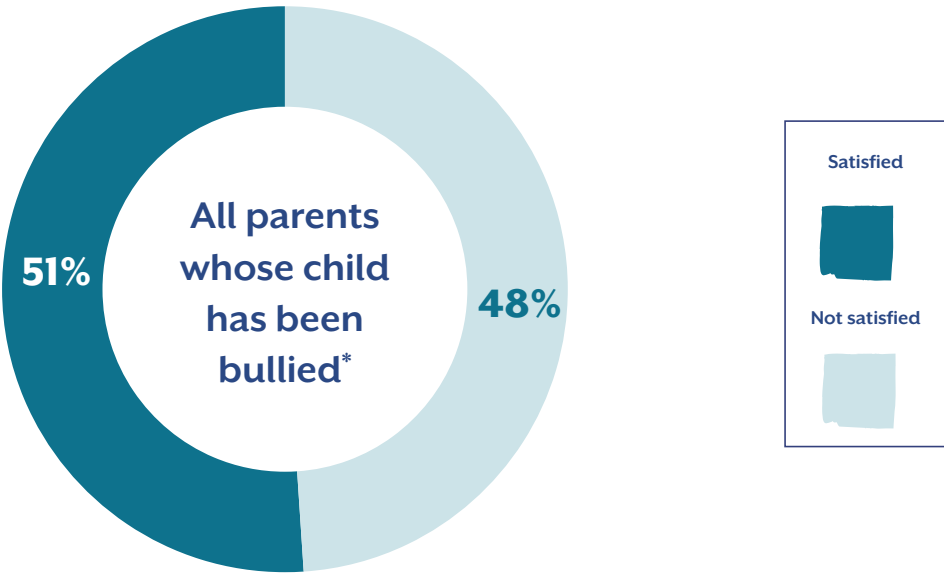
Bullying in schools

Bullying

? Has your child been bullied by another pupil at school in the last year?



? If yes, how satisfied were you with how the school dealt with the situation?

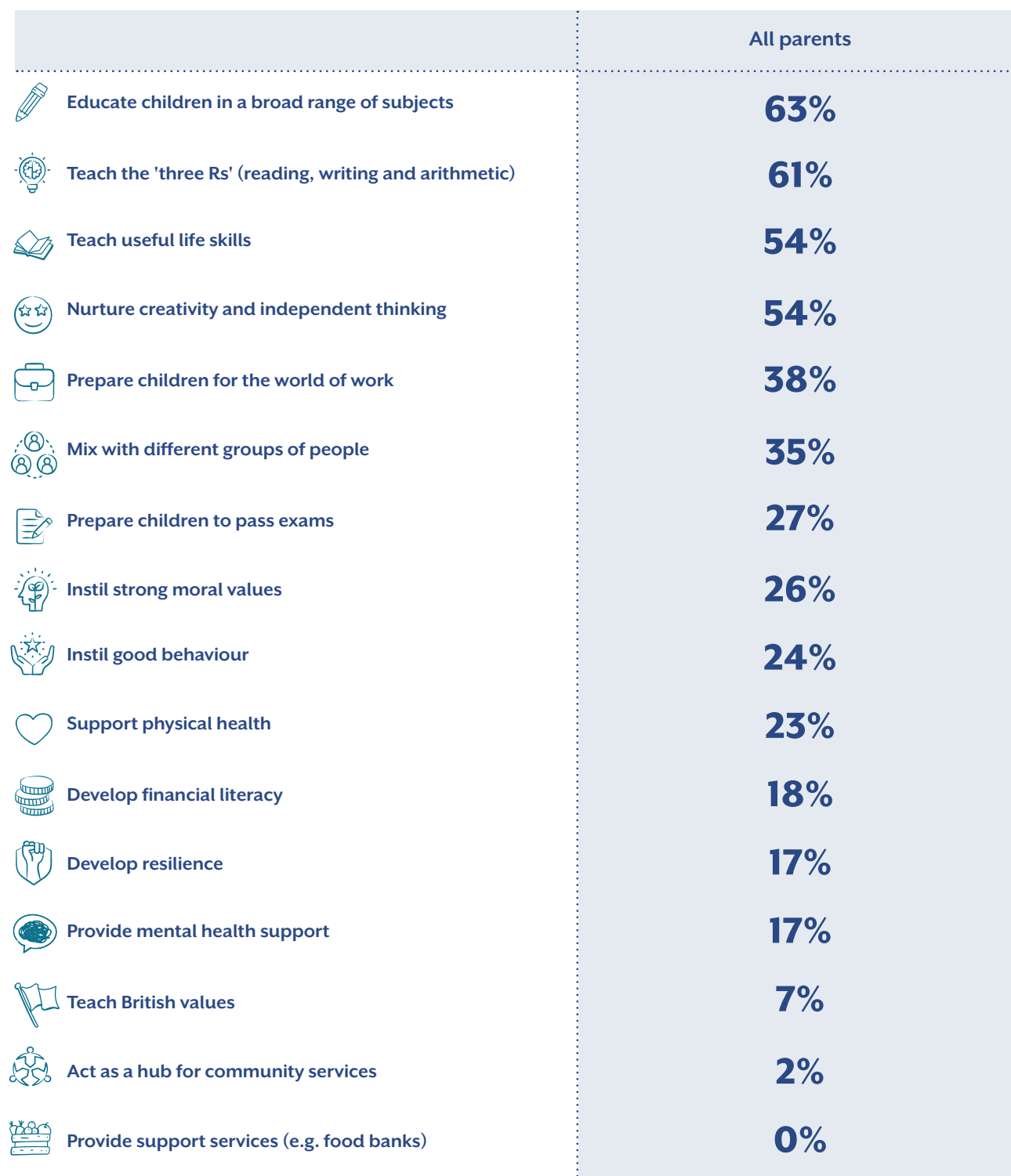


Base: All parents (301), all parents whose child has been bullied in the last year (44) * Caution low base size

The purpose of school

Parents' top five priorities for a school

? Which, if any, of the following roles do you think are most important for a school to fulfil? (up to five answer options)

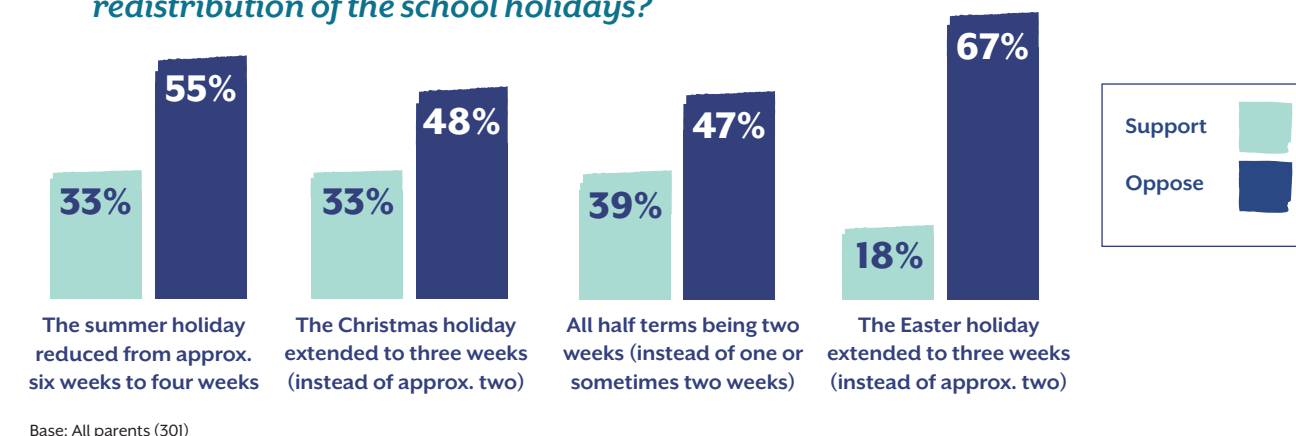


Base: All parents (301)

School holidays

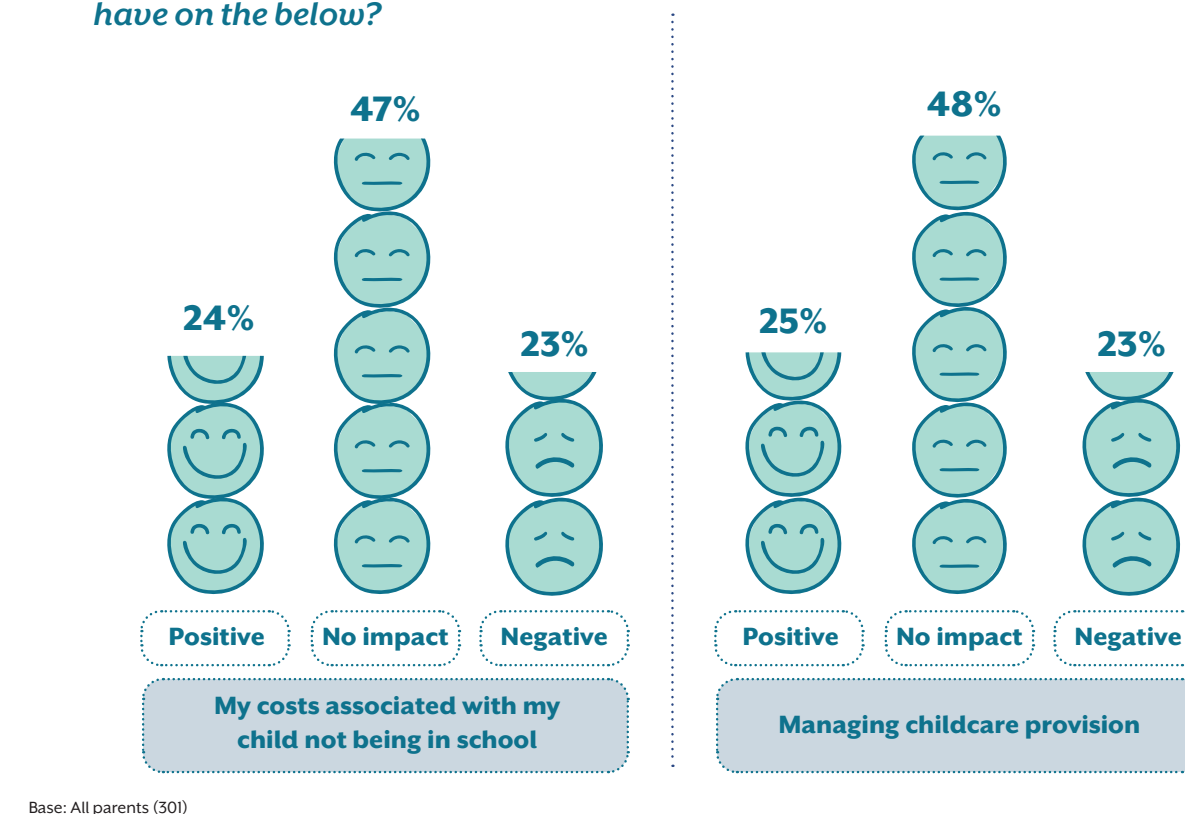
Possible changes to the school holidays

? To what extent would you support or oppose any of the following changes in the redistribution of the school holidays?



Impact of possible changes to the summer holiday

? Imagine the school holidays were redistributed across the year, meaning that the summer holidays were reduced to four weeks. What impact, if any, would this have on the below?



Parents' opinions on AI

Parents' views on AI

? Which, if any, of the following summarise how you are currently feeling about the future impact of AI?



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/SolStock



Photography: istock.com/svetikd



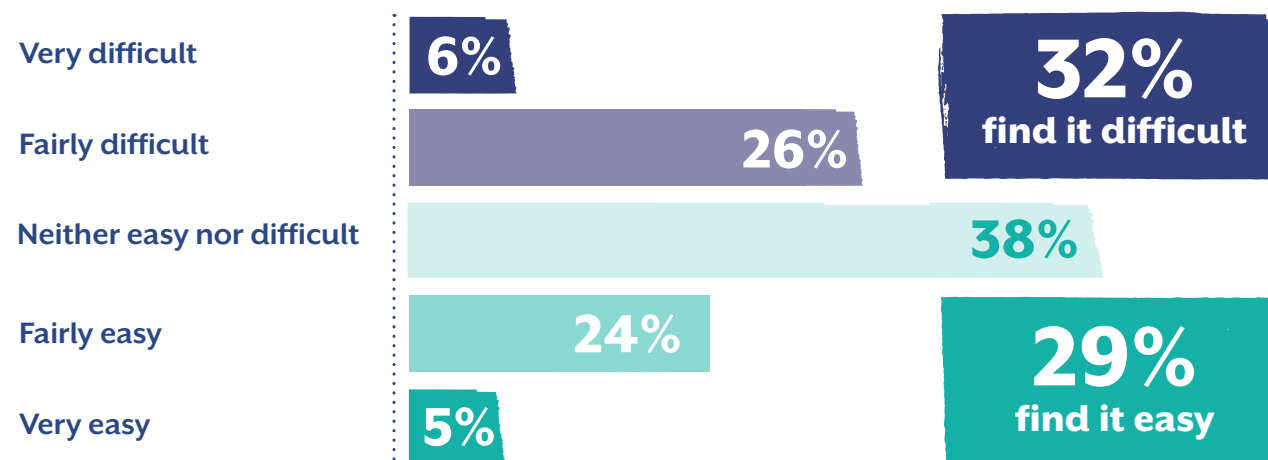
Parenting challenges

Photography: istock.com/Monkeybusinessimages

How parents find parenting

Being a parent

? How easy or difficult do you find being a parent?



Base: All parents (301)

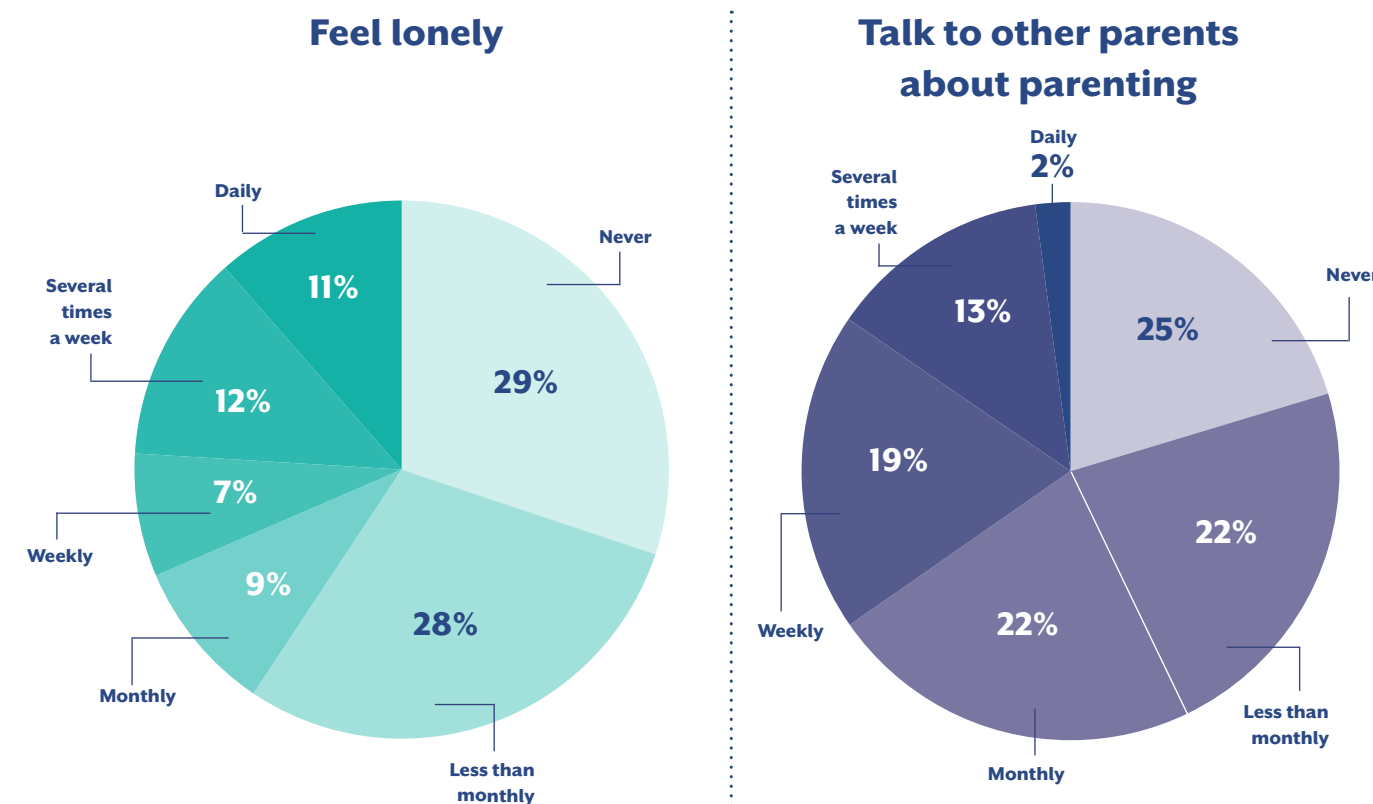


Photography: istock.com/Daisy-Daisy

Loneliness

Loneliness and talking about parenting

? How often, if at all, do you...



Base: All parents (301)

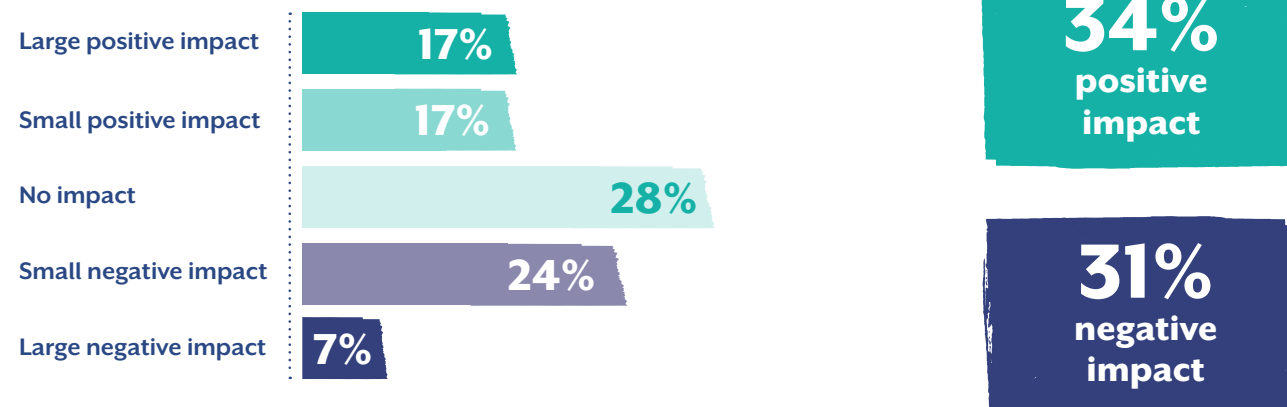


Photography: Shutterstock/Inside Creative House

Impact of parenting on mental health

Impact of parenting on mental health

? To what extent, if at all, has being a parent impacted on your mental health in the past year?



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/Marizza

Support from grandparents

Childcare support from grandparents and other family members

? How often, if at all, do you rely on grandparents, or other family members for 'free' childcare so you/your partner can work?



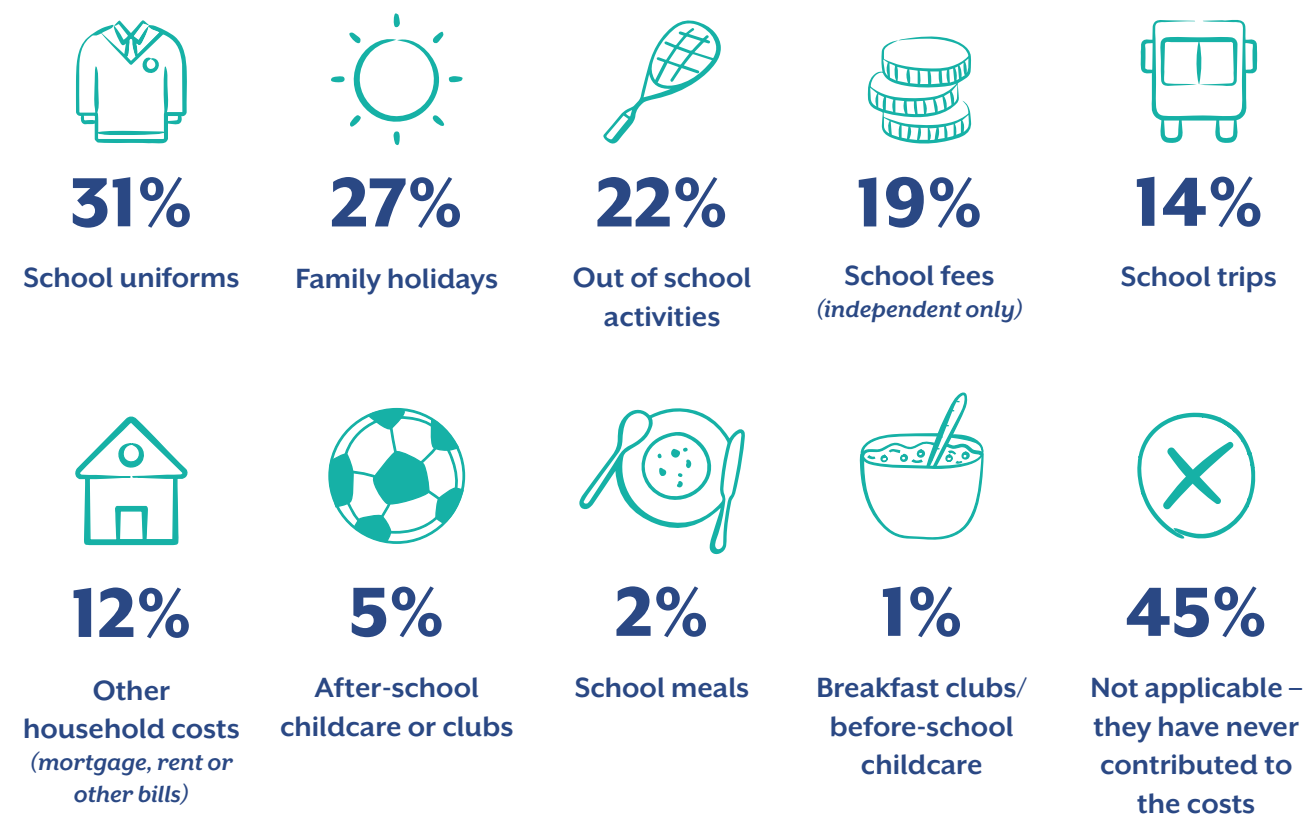
Base: All working parents (257) and working parents with a living parent (206). Another family member excludes child's parents



Photography: istock.com/SolStock

Financial contributions from grandparents

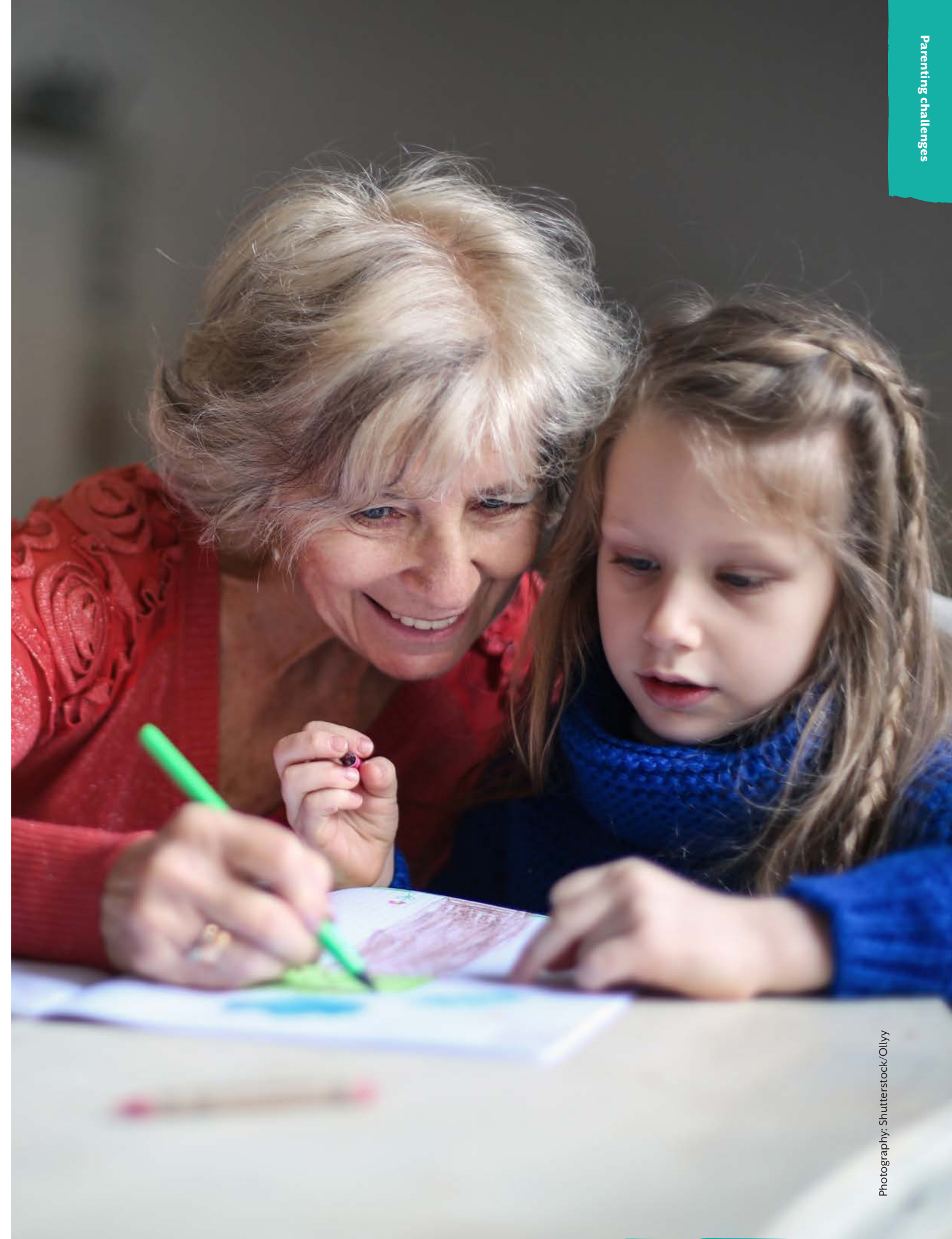
? Which, if any, of the following have your child's grandparent(s) ever contributed towards the cost of?



Base: All parents with a living parent (240)



Photography: Shutterstock/Gorodonkoff



Photography: Shutterstock/Ollyy



Home life

Photography: istock.com/lbjorn

Bedroom poverty

zz

3% of children

share a bedroom with an adult because of a lack of space in the home only

12% of children

share a bedroom with a sibling because of a lack of space in the home only

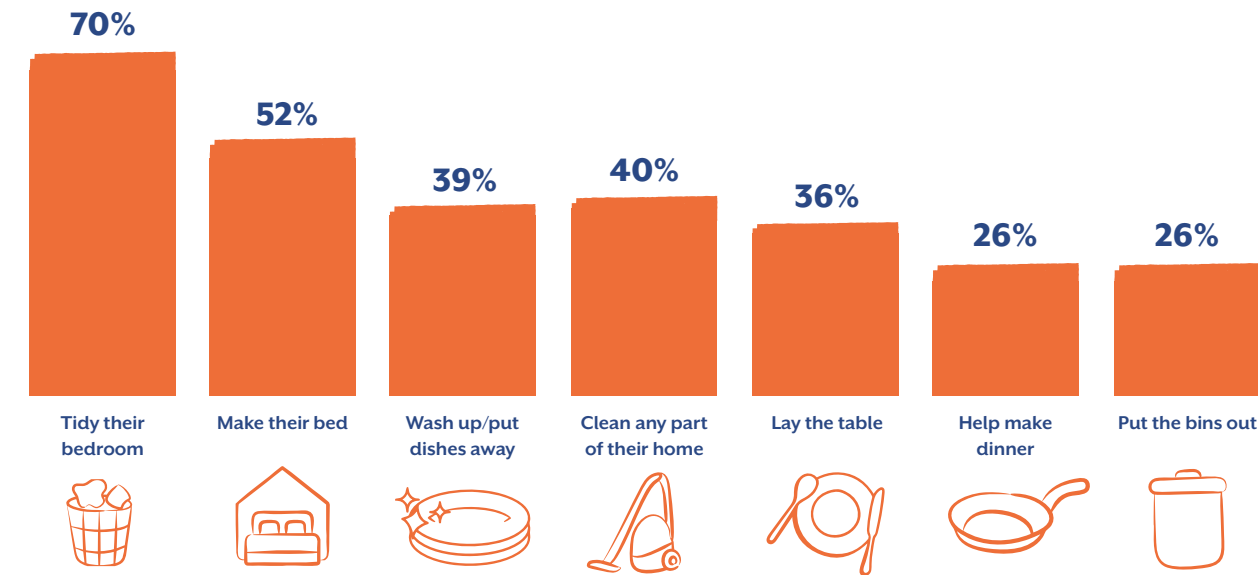


Photography: istock.com/miracsaglam

Children helping at home

What tasks children do regularly

? Which, if any, of the following does your child do regularly in your household?



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: Shutterstock/Volodymyr TVERDOKHLIB

Parents talking to their children

Discussions with children

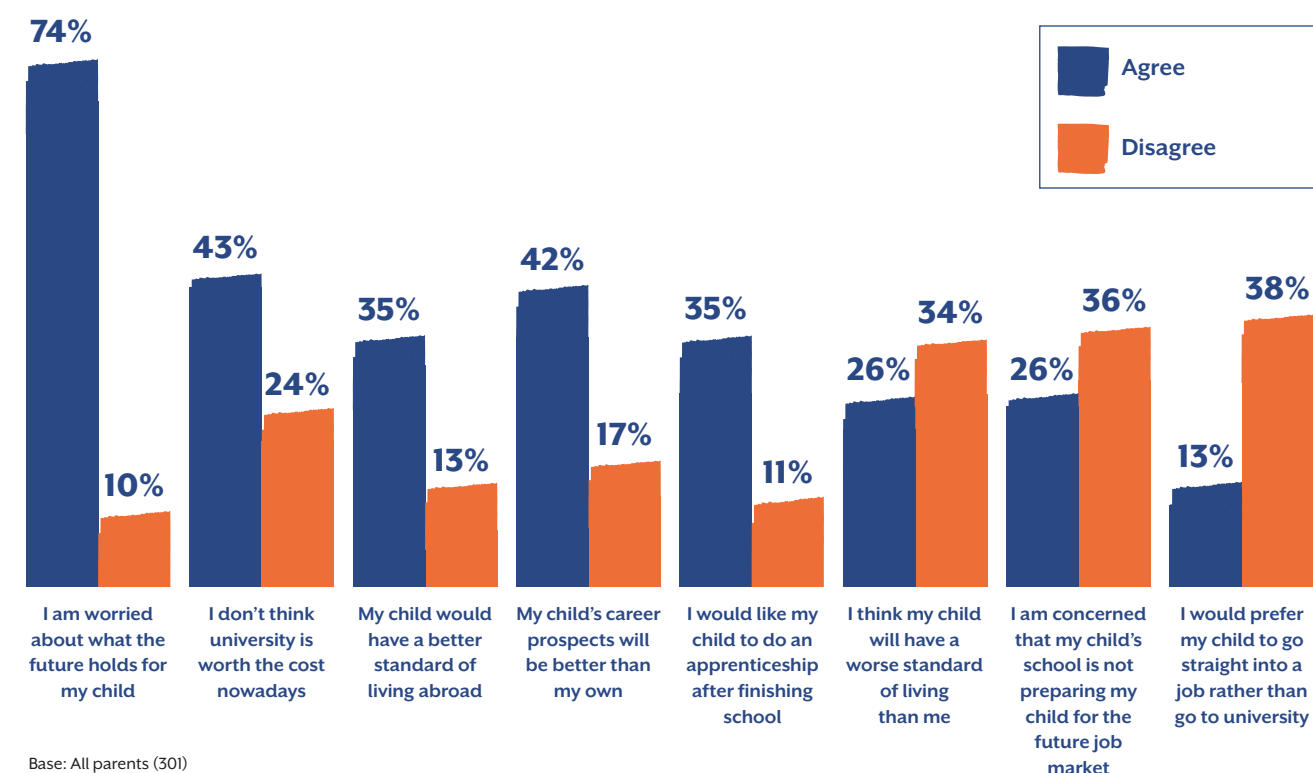
? How easy or difficult would you find discussing the following with your child?



Parents' hopes for their child's future

Parents' reflections on their child's future

? To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to your child's future?



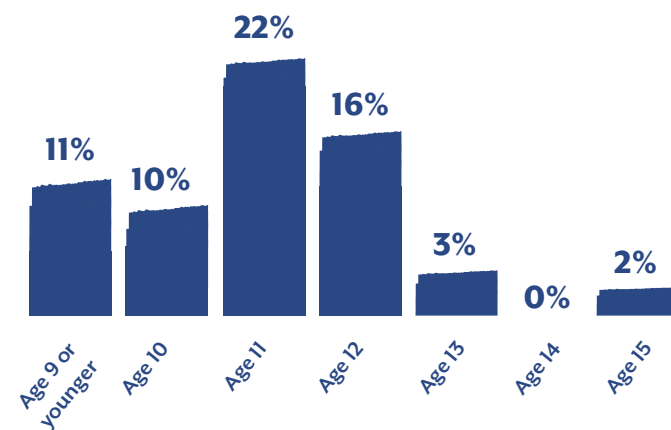
Photography: Shutterstock/SolStock



Parents' smartphone use

Age child given smartphone

? How old was your child when they first had their own smartphone?



* Not applicable - my child has never had a smartphone - 35%

Base: All parents (301)

Reasons for child having a smartphone

? Which, if any, of the following reasons explain why your child has a smartphone?



80%

To allow them to contact me more easily



45%

To help them access the internet for school work



43%

Most of their friends have one



38%

So I can monitor their location (e.g. 'find my friends')



24%

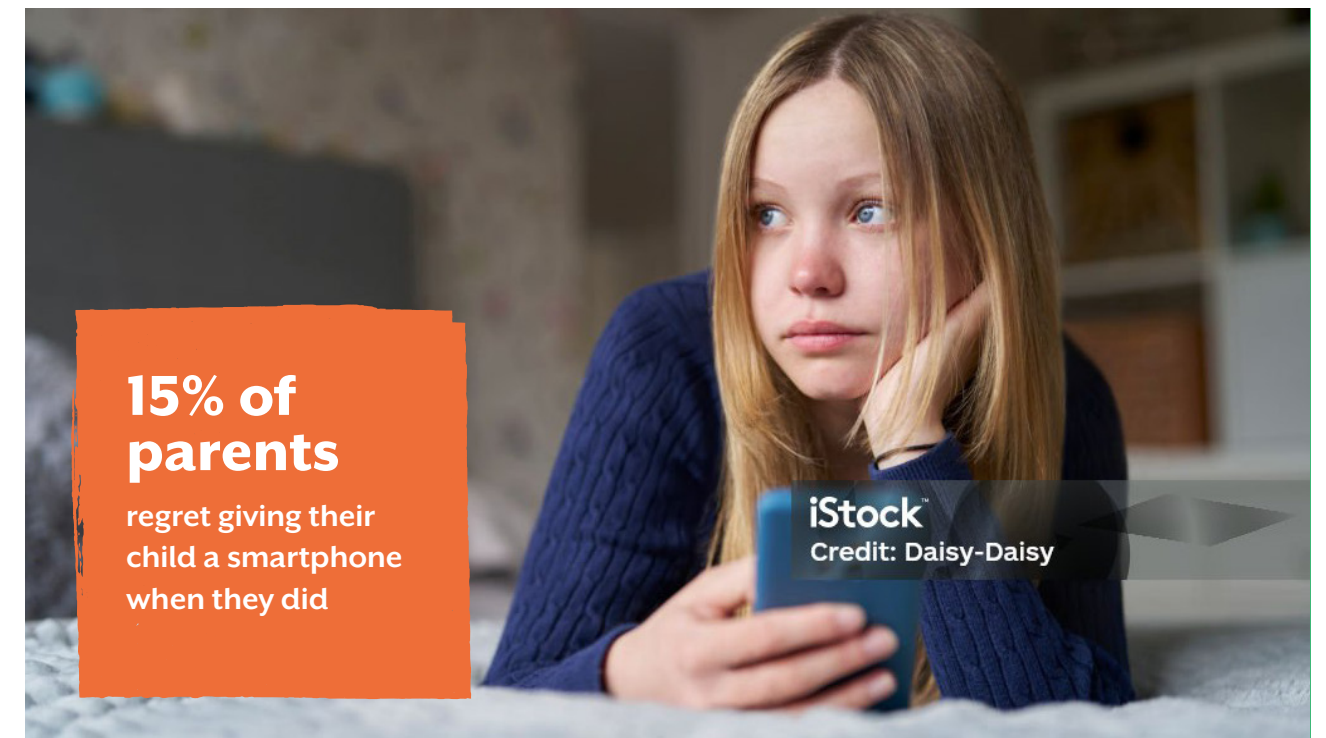
To help them access social media to keep in touch with their social group



11%

Because they put pressure on me to buy them one

Base: All parents whose child has a smartphone (200)



15% of parents

regret giving their child a smartphone when they did

iStock
Credit: Daisy-Daisy

Photography: Shutterstock/Daisy-Daisy

Parents' own smartphone use

? Which, if any, of the following statements apply to you?



I spend too much time on my smartphone

48%



I worry that I set a bad example to my children by using my phone too much

42%



I can't go more than an hour without looking at my phone

21%



Sometimes I do not engage with my children when they would like my attention because I'm using my phone

23%



I spend time on my phone as I feel lonely

15%



I feel that I'm addicted to using my smartphone

18%



Sometimes I use my smartphone while eating dinner with other family members

20%



The time I spend on my phone gets in the way of things I would like to do with my children

10%



My children tell me I spend too much time on my phone

8%

Base: All parents (301)

Smacking bans

Parents' views on smacking

? Do you think it should or should not be legal for parents to smack their children?



40%

It should be legal
for parents to smack
their children



38%

It should be illegal
for parents to smack
their children



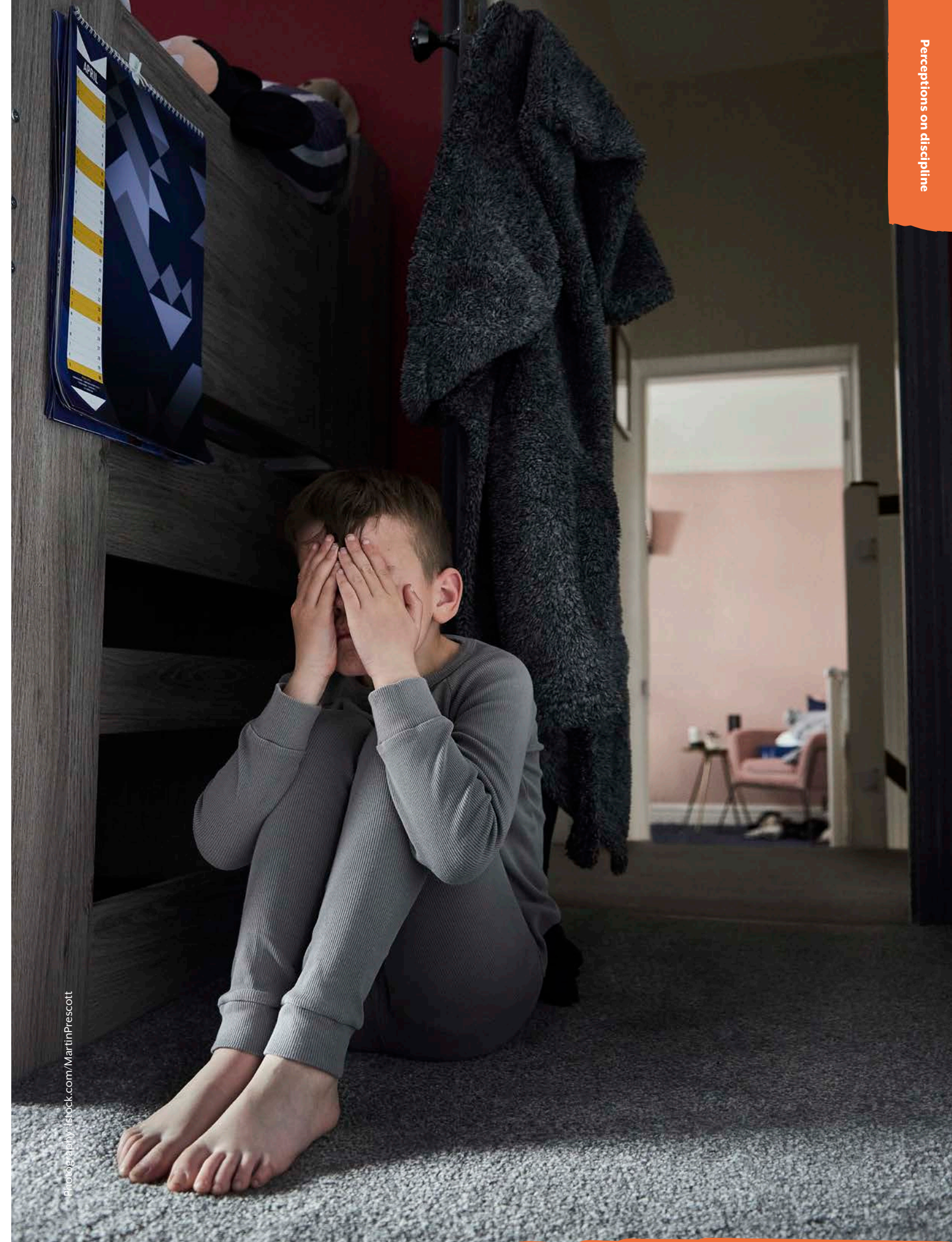
22%

Don't know

Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/izusek



Photography: istock.com/MartinPrescott



The hidden cost of education

Photography: istock.com/DGLimages

School catchment

Moving house for school catchment

? Thinking about the choices you've made when choosing where to live, which, if any, of the following statements best applies to you?

I have chosen where I live(d) with the main reason being to live within a catchment area for a school I wanted my child to go to



I have moved house with school catchment area in mind, but not as the main reason



School catchment area has never been a reason for choosing where I live(d)



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/Monkeybusinessimages

Private tutoring

Private tutoring

? For which, if any, of the following subjects has your child ever had a tutor for outside of school?



14%
Maths



5%
English



2%
Science



13%
11+ exams



2%
A special educational need
e.g. dyslexia

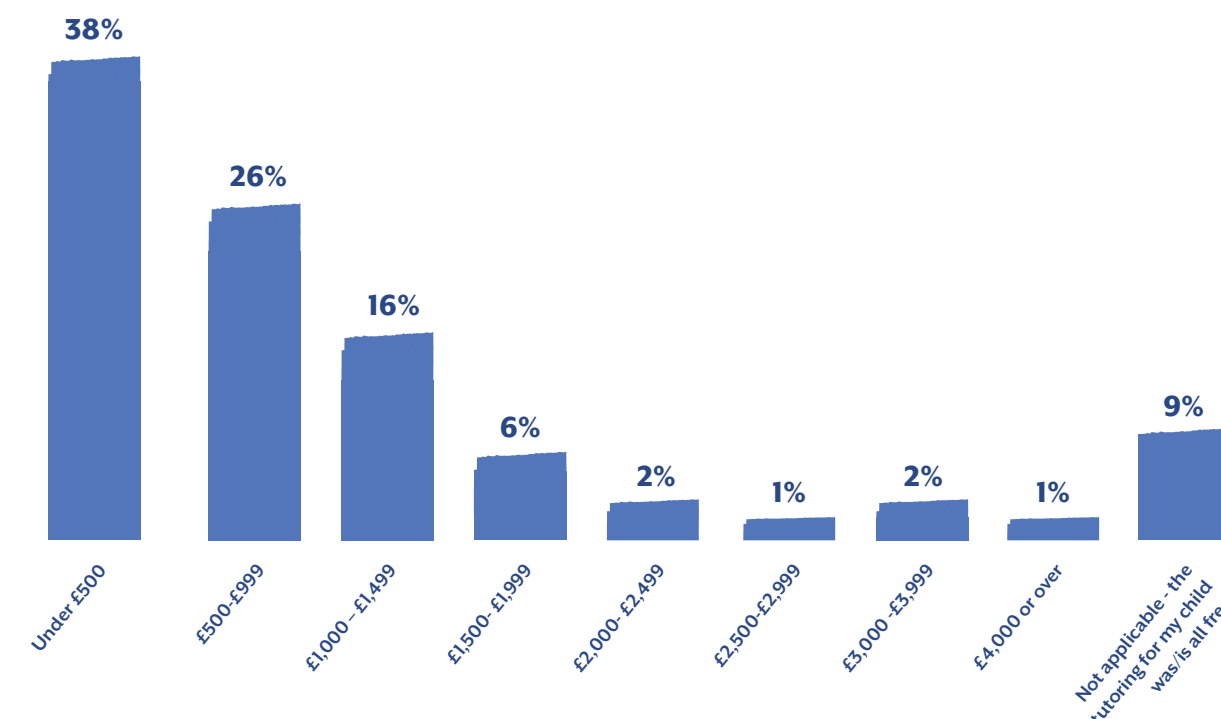


68%
Not applicable – my child has never had a tutor outside of school for any subject

Base: All parents (301)

Spend on tutoring

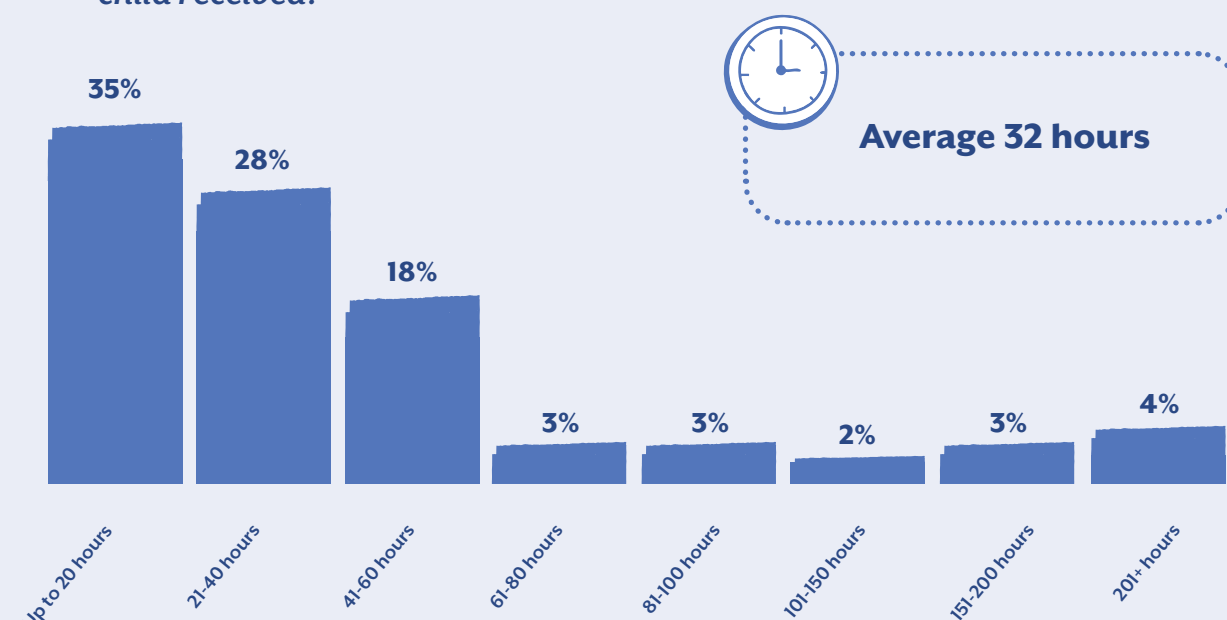
? How much, if anything, do/did you spend on average per year on tutoring for your child?



Base: All parents whose child received tutoring outside school (106)

Time spent on private tutoring

? In a typical year, roughly how many hours of tutoring has your child received?



Average 32 hours

Base: All parents whose child received tutoring outside school (106)

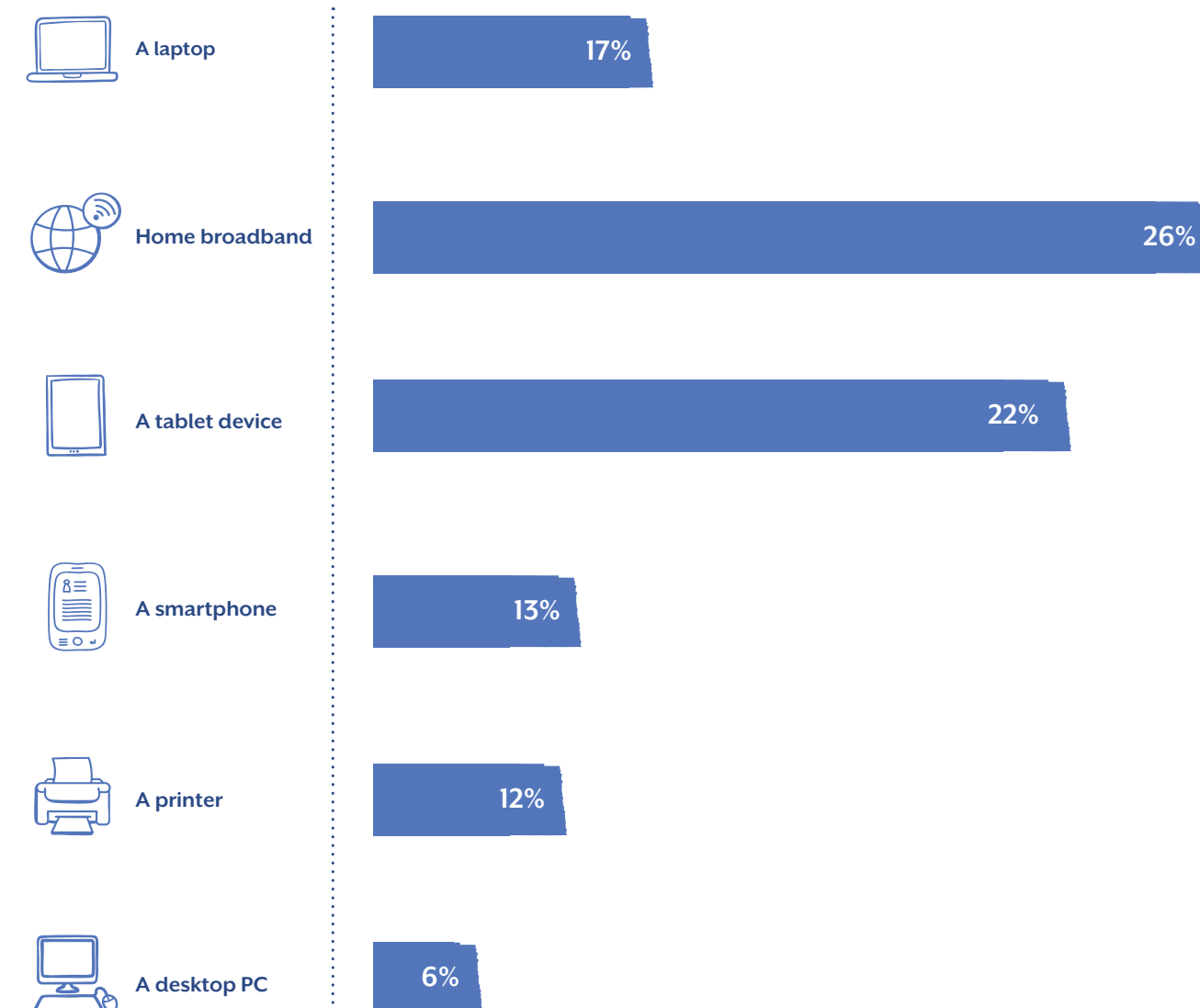


Photography: Shutterstock/Gpointstudio

Technology required by schools

Technology required by schools

? Which, if any, of the following has your child's school required them to have?



Base: All parents (301)

A photograph of four students in school uniforms (white shirts and blue ties) sitting at a desk in a classroom. They are all smiling and looking towards the right. The student in the foreground is a young man with dark skin and curly hair. Behind him is a young woman with long blonde hair. To her left is a young man with curly brown hair. On the far right is another young woman with long brown hair. They are all looking towards the right side of the frame. The background shows a whiteboard and a chalkboard.

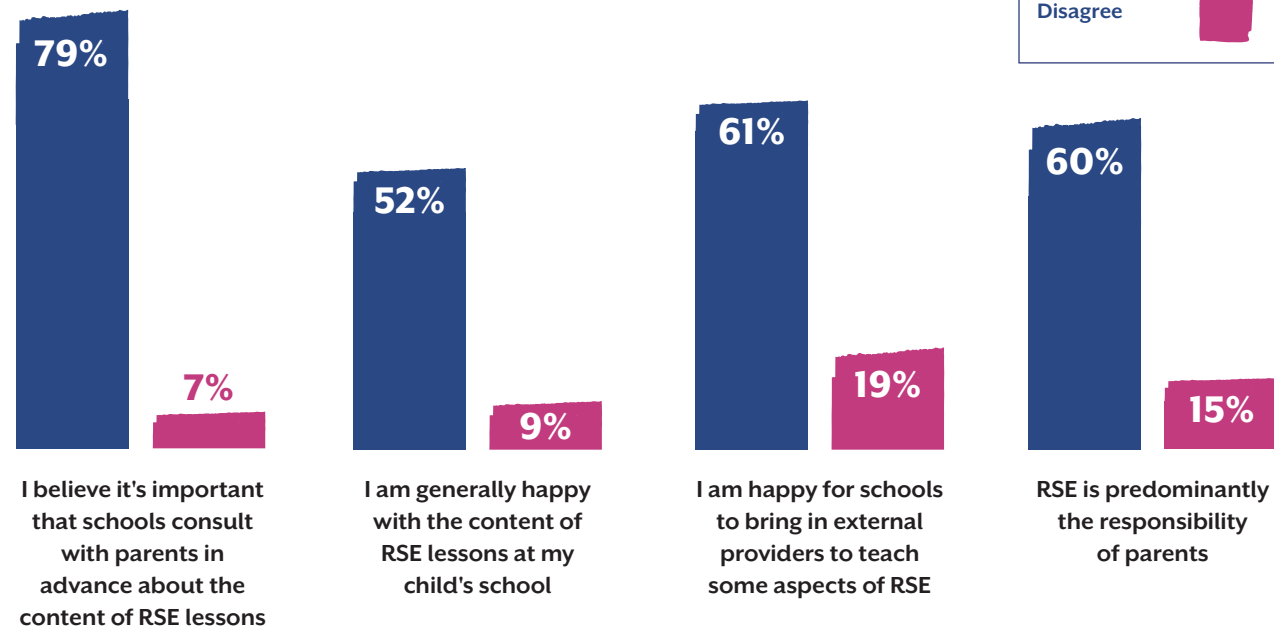
Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) and *gender questioning* children

Photography: istock.com/Monkeybusinessimages

Attitudes towards the Relationship and Sexuality Education curriculum

Relationship and Sexuality Education in schools

? To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to RSE?



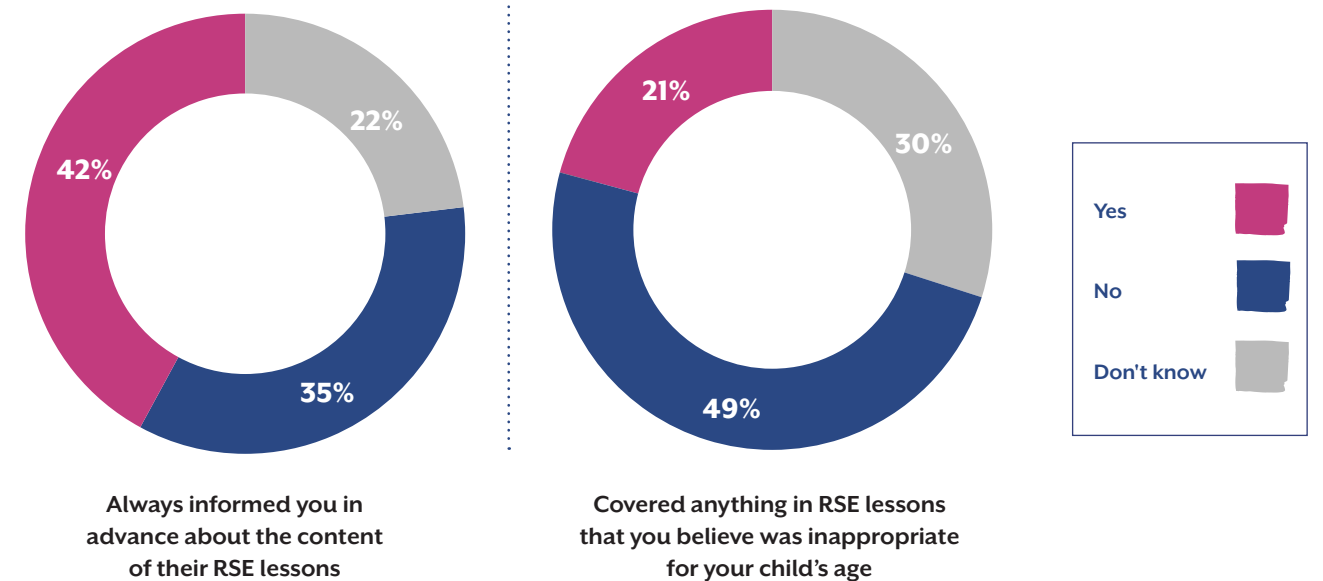
Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/Caiaimage/Chris Ryan

Relationship and Sexuality Education content in schools

? Has your child's school...?



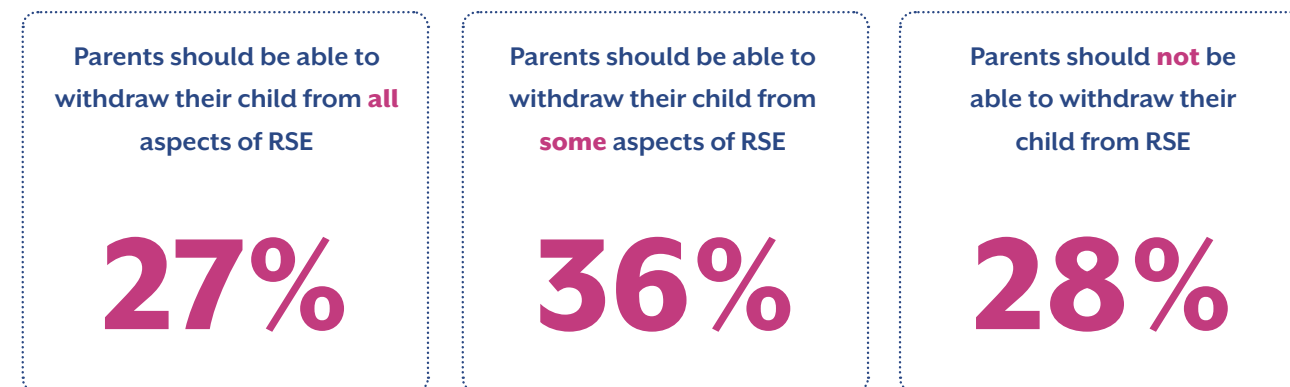
Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/Caiaimage/Sam Edwards

Right to withdraw from Relationship and Sex Education

? Currently, across the UK, policies vary on whether parents should be able to withdraw their child from Relationship and Sex Education. Which, if any, of the following best summarises your opinion?



Base: All parents whose child attends secondary/post-16 education (184)



Photography: istock.com/Daisy-Daisy

Gender questioning children in school

The gender debate

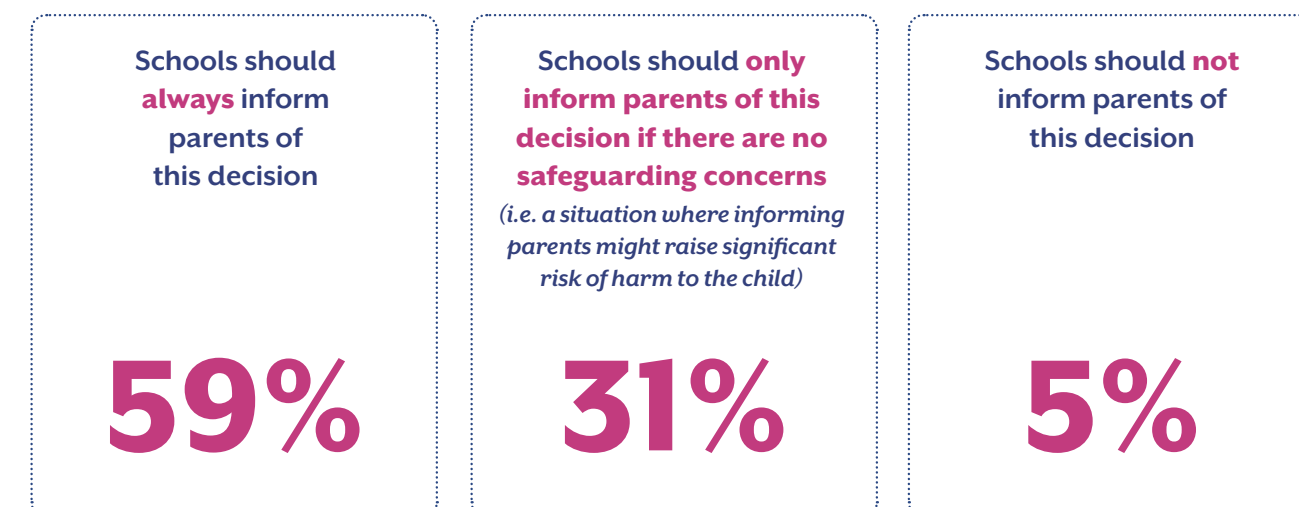
? Which, if any, of the following of these best reflects your view?



Base: All parents whose child attends secondary/post-16 education (184)

Informing parents about a gender change

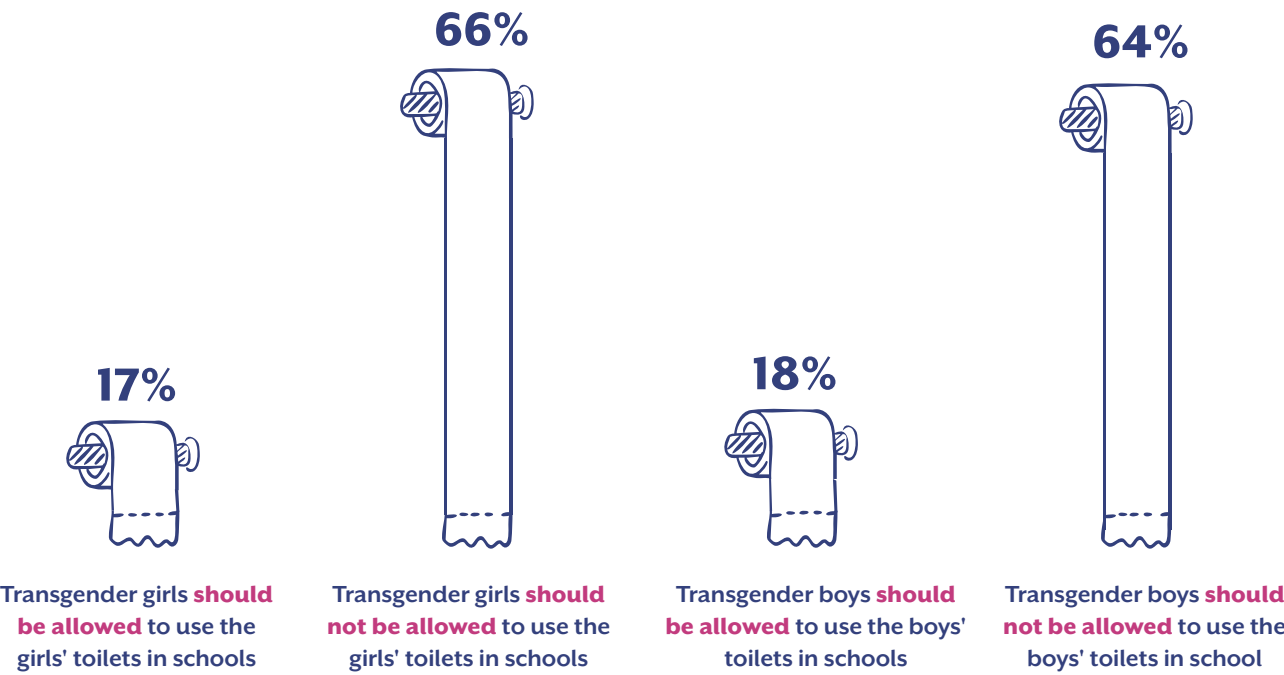
? Imagine a pupil has disclosed to their school that they would like to be known by a different name and/or pronoun and had not told their parents. Which, if any, of the following best reflects your view?



Base: All parents (301)

Use of school toilets

? In the following questions, a transgender girl is someone who was biologically male at birth but now identifies as a girl. A transgender boy is someone who was biologically female at birth but now identifies as a boy. Do you think...



Base: All parents (301)



Photography: istock.com/xavieramau



Photography: istock.com/izusek

What we should do in response to the National Parent Survey 2025

1 Children should enjoy school

Being happy at school should be an expectation for every child.

We need a new national measure of how happy children are at school and roll out school-level data tracking tools that allow headteachers and school inspectorates to monitor how happy children are at school.

2 Give children their independence by banning smartphones and social media

We need to give children their childhood back.

This means a national effort to remove smartphones from children and help them reacclimatise to real life. The UK urgently needs to become a world leader in removing access to social media and smartphones for our children and help them rediscover the world on their doorstep.

3 The National Parent Survey shows parents are split on 'smacking bans'.

There's no clear parent majority either way.

There will be strong views on either side of the argument, but any attempt to change the law needs to demonstrate it has the support of parents and that parents are heard in the debate.

We are calling for supporters to make the case to parents and demonstrate parental support for any change in the law.



4 Reimagined PTAs can tackle parent loneliness and provide help to parents

Parenting is hard and parents tell us they feel isolated and lonely.

There is an important role for Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) to play in helping bring parents together to talk about parenting and the challenges they face. PTAs are more than fundraising bodies.

The School Census should be amended to include a question on PTAs to establish how many schools have a PTA group.

6 Laptops and tablets are the new school cost worry for parents

It isn't just school uniform that is a worry for parents, technology is increasingly a big concern. A third of children are required to have a laptop or tablet for school, which is a major cost worry for parents.

The Minister for Education should commission an urgent review to establish exactly what technology is required by schools and how much this is costing parents.



5 Parents need to model responsible smartphone behaviour

We need to ban smartphones for children but parents need to model good behaviour.

Parents need to think carefully about the message compulsive scrolling and time spent staring at smartphones sends to children.

We need a national campaign to nudge behaviour and help parents understand the dangers of displaying obsessive smartphone behaviour when children are nearby.

Methodology

The National Parent Survey was conducted online by YouGov. The fieldwork took place from 27th March to 18th April 2025 amongst 5,866 parents in England (3,391), Scotland (1,309), Wales (865) and Northern Ireland (301) who have at least one child aged four to 18 in school. If respondents have more than one child, parents are asked to answer all the questions with their oldest child who currently attends school/ college in mind. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK parents aged 18+. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov plc. **The charts in this report show the results for Northern Ireland parents.** Analysis and reporting was carried out by Parentkind.

Unless otherwise noted, all percentages on the charts/graphics are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Margin of error

As the survey is not polling the entire population of parents in Northern Ireland, but rather a sample of the population, results are subject to a margin of error which is estimated to be up to +/- 5.6 percentage points for the whole sample. This means that, if for instance, according to the survey 21% of respondents say that their child is always happy at school, in reality the proportion is likely to be between 15.4% and 26.6% (i.e. the margin of error would be +/-5.6%).



Photography: istock.com/Andreasr

About Parentkind

Parentkind is the UK's largest parent charity, working with more than 14,000 parent groups and 200,000 parent volunteers to raise almost £140 million a year for schools.

We are the voice of parents in education, our research with parents gives parents a say in education debates.



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