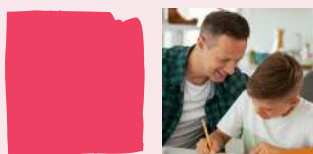


The National Parent Survey

for Wales

2024



862 parents in Wales have their say on being a parent in 2024

Supported by



Introduction from Jason Elsom



Too often parents are overlooked when it comes to big policy debates, so we designed the National Parent Survey (NPS), the UK's largest poll of its kind, to give parents a voice in policy decisions that affect them or their children.

This year, we commissioned YouGov to speak with 5,490 parents across all four nations, to enable us to publish an 'UK NPS', a NPS for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, London, parents of children eligible for Free School Meals, and parents of children with Special Educational Needs. These will be accessible free of charge at www.nationalparentsurvey.com, as is the full data set. **This report presents the results from 862 parents in Wales.**

Whilst the 2023 NPS focused primarily on parents' views of their children and their children's education, this year we have asked parents to tell us more about the challenges they face themselves. We are grateful to policymakers, researchers, educators, parents, and others for reading the 2023 NPS at least seven thousand times and thrilled to see policymakers reflect its findings in launching policies, or commencing the review of policies, relating to poverty, smartphone use by children, the cost of school uniform, and outdoor education. We hope that you will find the 2024 NPS useful in your work and welcome your feedback.

Parents are struggling with the cost of living

This year's National Parent Survey for Wales shows us that parents are still struggling with the cost-of-living crisis with more than a third of parents telling us they are struggling to make ends meet. More than four in ten parents told us they have less than £500 in the bank for a rainy day while some parents have skipped meals and rationed heating to pay household bills. When it comes to school costs, it isn't just uniform that is a major worry for parents, they tell us school trips are a big concern too. All the little extras demanded by schools quickly add up.

We need to make sure that the cost of school is part of any approach to reducing poverty. Parentkind

is calling on the Welsh Government to establish an independent advisory body on the cost of school which should publish an annual assessment and make recommendations to ministers on how to reduce school costs.

We also need to recognise the potential role of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in helping parents in need with the introduction of a new match funding proposal recommended by Parentkind. This 'Parent Fundraising Guarantee' would incentivise new PTAs in the poorest communities to set up and raise money for schools to support enrichment, school trips and help with school uniform costs.

Helping parents to balance work, life and family time

We champion flexible working, because it works for parents. All of our staff work remotely and this year's survey discovers that half of working parents in Wales are now working at home some or all of the week and nine in ten say this helps them better balance being a parent with a job.

A third of working parents have reduced their hours, but worryingly a third of parents working part time say doing so has hurt their career prospects.

We need to change the way we think about work to help parents with an expectation that home working is a default where it can be. We want to see the Welsh Government be much more active in changing the conversation on working from home to help parents, both mums and dads, to balance work, life and family time.

Cracking down on social media and smartphones

Last year we discovered that the amount of time children spend on smartphones and screens was a huge worry for parents. This year we have looked more closely at this issue.

Almost half of all families are now regularly arguing over the amount of time their children spend on screens with children now spending on average three hours and 15 minutes a day on tablets,

smartphones and games consoles outside of school. Some children are spending more time on screens than they do at school.

We can't ignore this issue and Parentkind has led calls for a smartphone ban for under-16s. Tinkering won't do, we need to send a clear message backed by parents that children shouldn't own a smartphone until they are 16 and a new social media age of consent should be introduced by the Welsh Government, with no child allowed on social media platforms until this age.

It is okay to say children should enjoy school

More than half of parents say their child has suffered with a mental health issue during the last 12 months, with more than three in ten of these children missing school as a result. Secondary school children are more likely to have experienced a mental health problem and are less likely to enjoy school. We shouldn't be afraid to say all children should enjoy school.

Any changes to the way we deliver education and assess learning should consider the pressures put on children and the impact on their mental health. We should work towards measuring school enjoyment and making it part of the way we inspect schools.

Giving every child the chance to take part in after-school clubs

Every child should have access to weekly extracurricular activities and after-school clubs. The evidence from our poll is too few children are taking part in clubs and activities after school: more than a quarter of children in Wales don't do either – this is more than in other parts of the UK.

The Welsh Government should work towards a new funding settlement for after-school clubs and activities to make them just as much a part of our education system as a maths or English lesson.

Parents are the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle

Children spend more than 80% of their time outside of school, but parents say more than half of secondary schools don't give them enough information on how to support their child's learning at home.

We need to do much more to improve the link between home and school. The Welsh Government should develop a 'kitemark' for engaging with parents and Estyn should put this in their inspection frameworks as they have done in Northern Ireland. The Parentkind 'Blueprint for Parent-friendly Schools' provides a template for any new approach.

One in three parents don't think homework is useful and one in three say it causes arguments at home.

Some children don't even have a space at home to do homework in. We need a national conversation on how homework can help children to learn but avoid causing family conflict. The Welsh Government should announce an expert review of homework and how to encourage children to enjoy learning again and find time for clubs outside of school.

Reduce the temptation for a term time holiday

Despite the media narrative that the "social contract" between schools and parents is broken almost three quarters of parents agree that every school day matters. Many have even sent their children to school when their children have been unwell. One in five children have refused to go to school in the last year despite their parent thinking they should go and one in seven parents say it is harder to get their child to school since the pandemic.

The issue of unauthorised term time holidays came out strongly in our survey, with more than seven in ten parents saying it is okay to miss school for a day or more for a holiday. Parents are often put in a difficult position with family holidays that are substantially cheaper during term time.

The Welsh Government should review the marketing and pricing of holidays primarily marketed at families to see if there's anything that can be done to reduce the gap between the cost of a holiday in term time and one in the school holidays.

Commit to listening to parents when decisions are made

Ministers should commit to consulting parents as standard ahead of major policy announcements so their voices are always heard.

They should commission large-scale annual assessments of parent opinion conducted by an independent body to accurately understand the views of parents and their satisfaction with their child's education.

This year's National Parent Survey is the largest yet and shows that much more needs to be done to support parents by listening to their concerns. This large-scale parent poll should be a call to action for governments across all parts of the UK and for elected representatives who want to speak up for parents.



Jason Elsom
Chief Executive, Parentkind



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Parents – anyone in a parenting role
FSM – Free School Meals
ALN – Additional Learning Needs
Teens - children aged 12-18 (due to the age bands used in the questionnaire)

View all of the data online here:

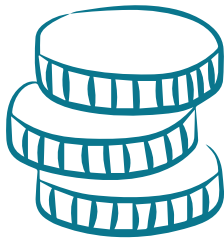


Some regional and national differences

Whilst lots of the feedback from parents was similar across the UK, below are some of the differences between nations and regions.

1 Northern Ireland

- most likely to say homework is a cause of arguments
- most likely to be concerned about costs of school uniforms, materials for classes, voluntary donations and after school clubs
- child most likely to be negatively influenced by people on social media



2 West Midlands

- most likely to have taken out a loan or credit card for school costs
- child most likely to have visited GP with a mental health issue

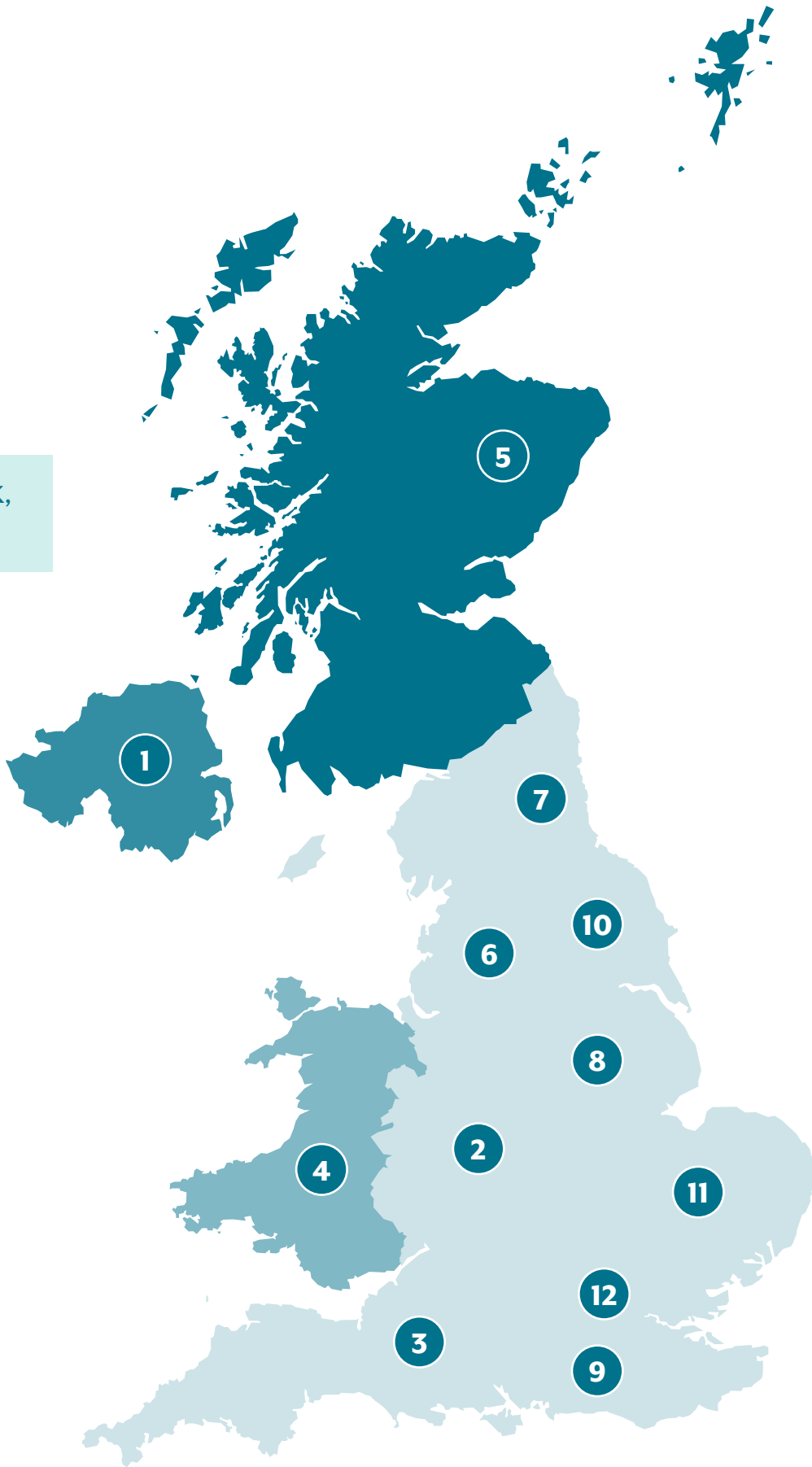
3 South West

- most likely to have reduced their working hours to spend more time with their child



4 Wales

- most likely to say they're unhappy most of the time
- least likely to be happy with the quality of education their child receives
- most likely to consider child missing school for a holiday



5 Scotland

- least likely to say child's school takes attendance seriously
- least likely to struggle with school costs



6 North West

- least likely to have rainy day savings of £500+
- least likely to say their employer is parent friendly

10 Yorkshire & the Humber

- most likely to have had a flexible working request refused
- most likely to have skipped meals

7 North East

- most likely to get into debt each month
- least likely to work from home

11 East

- child most likely to have issues with sleep due to screens
- more likely to have barriers limiting family activities

8 East Midlands

- child most likely to have had a mental health issue in last 12 months
- least likely to find parents' evenings useful

12 London

- most likely to take on an extra job/hours to help finances
- child most likely to attend clubs or out-of-school activities
- most likely to use a school breakfast club
- most likely to be more relaxed about school attendance since the pandemic

9 South East

- child with mental health issue most likely to have missed school

What parents in Wales told us

37%
of parents are
struggling to
pay their bills

28%
of parents are
worried
about affording
their rent or
mortgage



One in five
parents struggle to
afford the cost of
sending their child
to school



Half of
working
parents
regularly work
from home



One in seven
working parents
have had a
flexible working
request denied

**More than
a quarter**
of children don't
attend activities
after school, paid
or unpaid



More than
a quarter
of parents have
poor mental health



240,000
children have
experienced a
mental health
challenge in the
last year



**More than
three in
ten** children
experiencing poor
mental health have
missed school

Four in ten
parents don't
spend as much
time as they would
like to helping with
school work



**Less than a
quarter of**
parents have
time for their
hobbies



**Three in
ten**
parents think
society values their
role as a parent

37% of primary
school children spend
at least three
hours a day
on a digital
device



More than
a third of
parents
say their child
is missing out on
sleep because they
spend too much time
on screens

On a typical weekday,
13% of children
spend more time on
phones and screens
than they do at
school

Homework
is a cause of
arguments for
a third
of parents and
their children



Almost two thirds of
secondary schools
don't give parents
enough information on
supporting their child's
learning at home

17% of
parents are
unhappy with
the education
their child
receives

13% of
children feel
unsafe at
school

One in ten
primary school
parents would like to
use a breakfast club
but can't access one

71% of parents
would consider
their child missing
school for a
holiday



Seven in ten parents say the
risk of a fine has no impact on their
child's attendance at school

One in five children have
refused to go to school in the
last year, despite their parent
thinking they should go

**37% of
parents are
struggling
to pay
their bills**

Cost of living and poverty

28% of parents are
worried about
affording their
rent or mortgage



Parents are most
likely to skip meals
if they are on the
lowest incomes

It comes as no surprise that one of the biggest concerns for parents right now is the cost of living. More than a third of parents told us they are struggling with their finances and more than one in four are worried about falling behind on rent or mortgage payments. More than four in ten parents have less than £500 in the bank for a rainy day.

Unsurprisingly, some families are more likely to report having to tighten their belts over the last year than others. Lower-income parents, parents with a disability and/or with a child with ALN are far more likely to have skipped meals, rationed the heating, or used a food bank than other parents. Mums are more likely than dads to have skipped meals, rationed the heating or taken on an extra job or extra hours to help with costs of having children.

One in five



parents struggle
to afford the cost
of sending their
child to school

More than **half of
parents**
are concerned
about the cost of
school uniforms



“

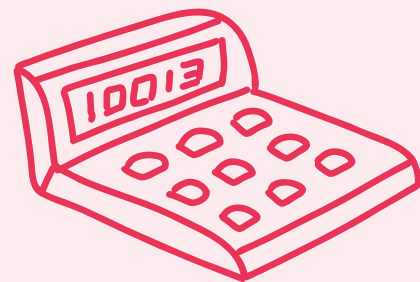
As a lone parent and an unpaid carer, financial worries are the biggest challenge. I would go hungry myself rather than use a food bank, but we eat out of the bargain section, and dress out of charity shops.

- Parent response

Parents' biggest challenges

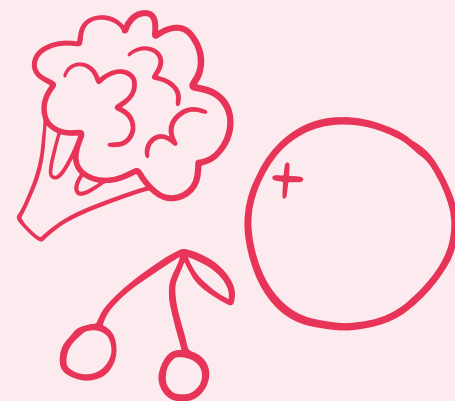
“

At the moment it would have to be the financial challenge, due to the cost of living it's more difficult to do activities with children, provide clothing, electronics etc.



“

Finding the money to support my family. The cost of living has taken everything.



“

Getting good food on the table. Clothes. Cost of taking them out. Even ice creams for four people is £14!!!

Sacrifices parents have made for financial reasons

Have you done any of the following for financial reasons over the last 12 months?

Rationed the heating

43%

Skipped meals

21%

Taken on an extra job/extra hours to help with costs of having children

13%

Taken out a loan, or taking on debt (such as a credit card) to pay for school costs

11%

Used a food bank

6%



Base: All parents (862)

Parents’ top school cost concerns

Thinking about the financial cost of your child going to school which, if any, of the following are of particular concern to you?



Base: All parents (862)

Looking specifically at the costs associated with their child’s school, uniform tops the list of school costs that are particularly concerning to parents, closely followed by trips, then technology and school meals and drinks. Just 23% of parents are not concerned by any school

costs. Lower-income parents, disabled parents, parents with a child with ALN and parents with three or more children are more likely to be concerned about school costs than other parents.

Half of working parents now regularly work from home

Balancing work and home time

Half
of working
parents now regularly
work from home



One in seven



parents have had a flexible
working request denied

Three in ten



working parents have
changed jobs to spend more
time with their children

52%

of working mums
have reduced their
hours to spend more
time with their children



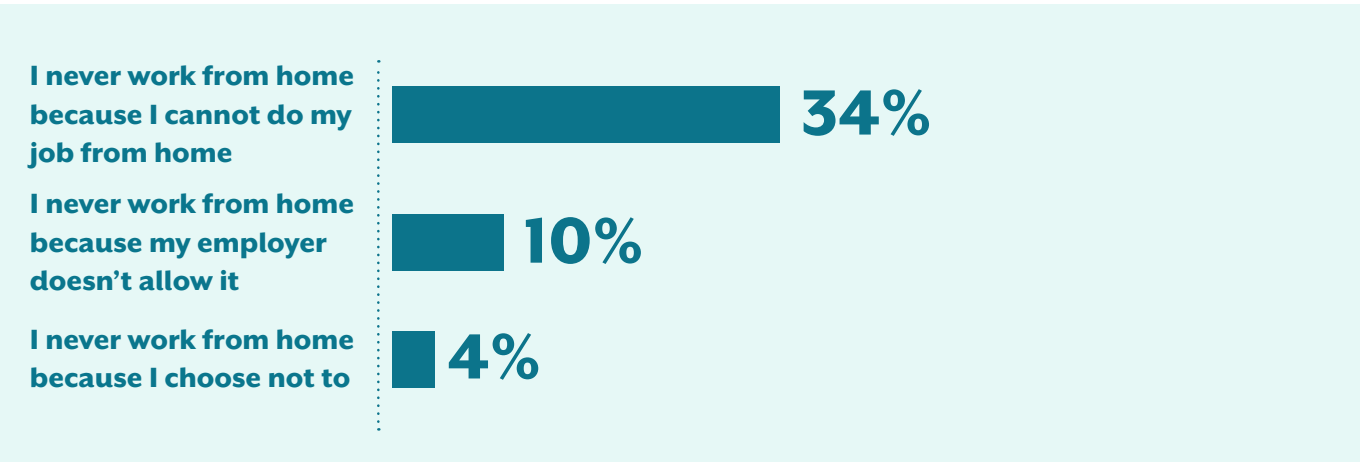
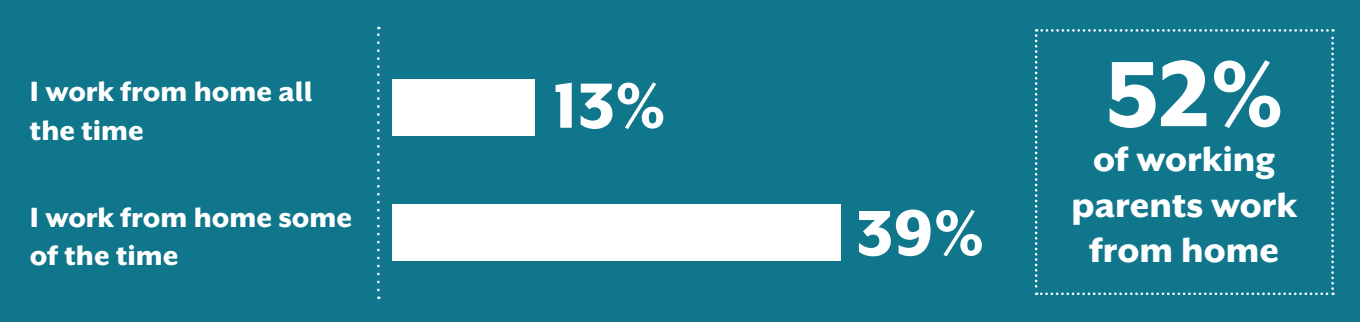
The Covid-19 pandemic changed the world of work forever. Those who could do their jobs remotely had to adjust quickly, but when restrictions were lifted not everyone headed back into the office. Parents are leading the shift away from commuting to work, with over half now working from home at least some of the week. This is good news for parents, as working from home is having a positive impact – nine in ten parents say working from home makes it easier to balance work with parenting.

While this is great for those with flexible employers, not everyone has been able to take advantage of this. A third of working parents (40% of mums and 29% of dads) never work from home because they cannot do their job from home whilst one in ten parents (14% of dads and 5% of mums) have been told by their bosses they can't work from home at all, and one in seven have had a flexible working request refused, a higher proportion than the UK average.



How often parents work from home

Which, if any, of the following best describes your working situation?



Base: All respondents working full or part time (701)

90% of parents say working from home makes it easier to balance work with parenting



When balancing work with home, working mums continue to be more impacted than dads. More than a third of mums have changed jobs to spend more time with their children and more than half of mums have reduced their working hours to be with their families compared with fewer than one in four dads having done either.



27% of working mums have seen a negative impact on their career prospects due to working part time compared with 8% of dads



Changing jobs or hours for family reasons

Have you ever reduced your hours at work or changed jobs to spend more time with your children?

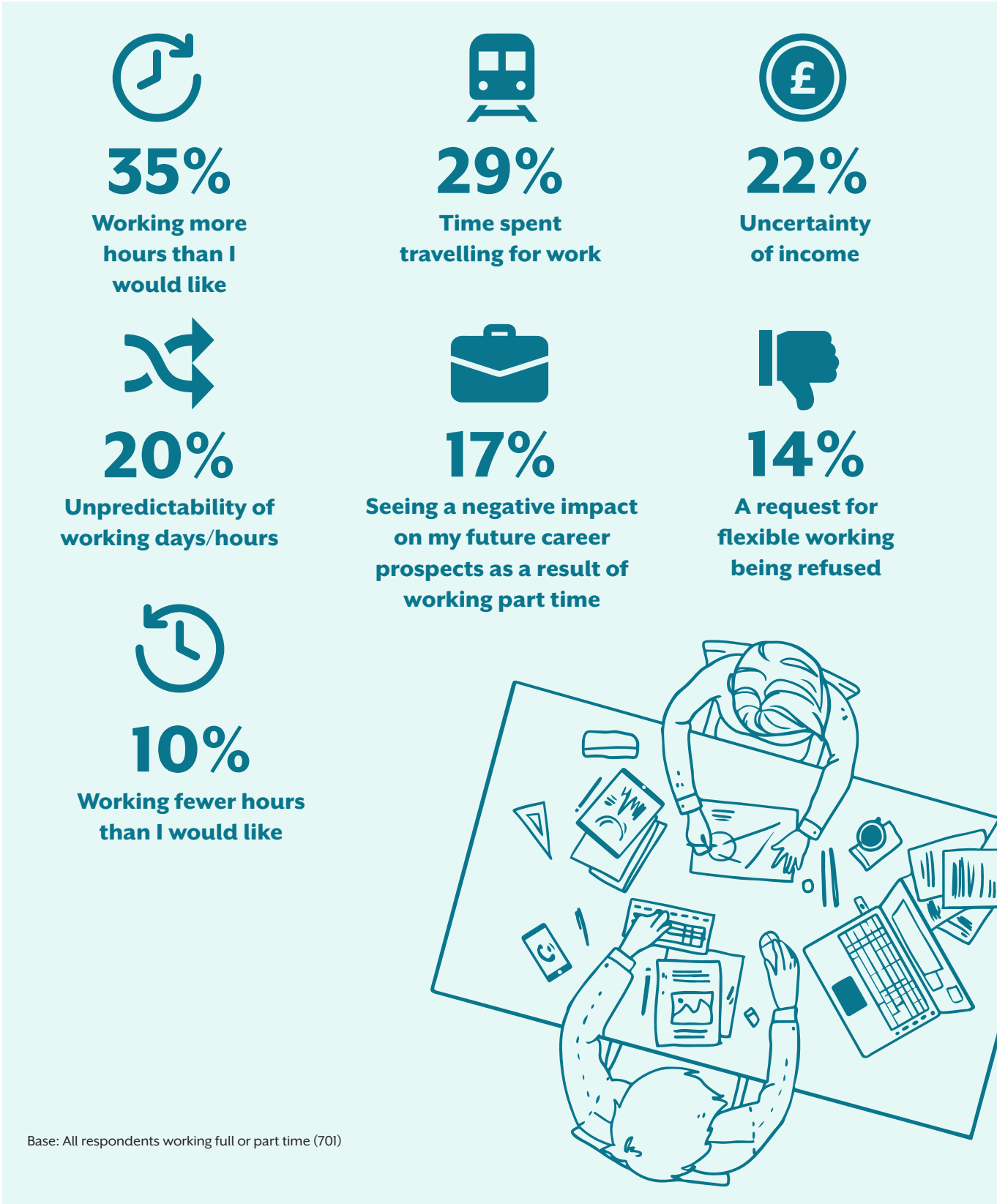


Working parents were asked whether or not they consider their employer as parent friendly. 36% of parents described their employer as very parent friendly, and 42% as somewhat parent friendly. 14% said their employer is not parent friendly. When asked whether, aside from pay, there is anything more their employer could do to help them as a parent, the most frequent response was flexible working hours, as well as other suggestions including working from home options, a compressed working week, increased flexibility during the school holidays, childcare support, more understanding from their organisation, and improved leave policies.

One in seven parents told us their workplace is not parent friendly

The challenge of working life for parents

Which of the following challenges have you experienced in your work?



More than
a quarter
of parents
describe their
own mental
health as poor
or very poor

Mental health and wellbeing



Four in ten
poorer parents have
poor mental health

**More than
three in ten**
children experiencing
mental health issues have
missed school

All parts of the UK are in the midst of a mental health crisis. The topic has dominated the news, and our research has confirmed just how significantly this is impacting families. More than a quarter of parents in Wales describe their mental health as poor or very poor. The fact that more than a quarter of parents said they aren't happy most of the time signifies a desperate need for intervention to improve the quality of life for a large number of families across Wales.

Poor mental health significantly impacts on many aspects of parenting discussed in this report. For example, more than half of parents with poor mental health have withdrawn from friends and/or from family and more than one in five have missed work in the last year due to their struggles. These parents are also more likely to be worried about affording rent/mortgage payments and struggle with school costs. They are also more likely to say they don't spend as much time doing family activities as they would like to compared with parents with good mental health.

Children are more likely to
have a mental health issue
if their parent's own
mental health is poor

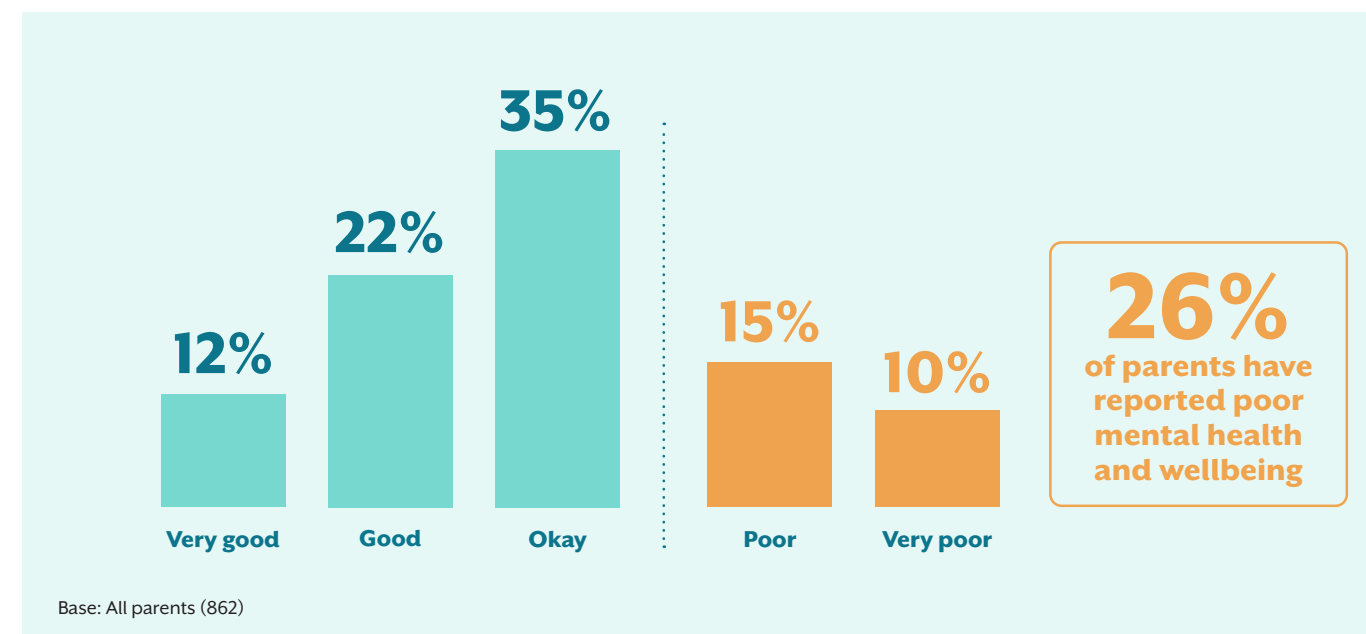


240,000
children have experienced
a mental health challenge
in the last year



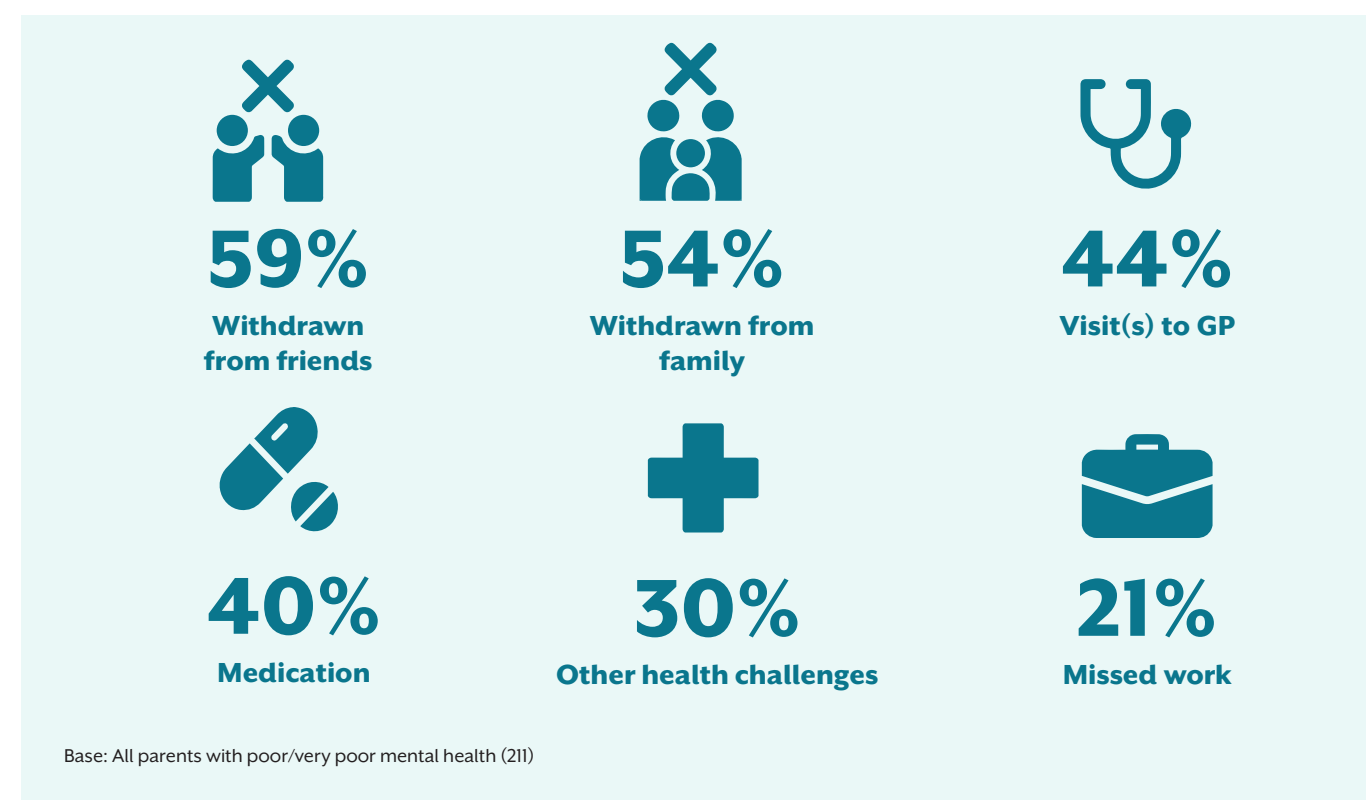
Parents' own mental health

How good has your own mental health and wellbeing been over the last 12 months?



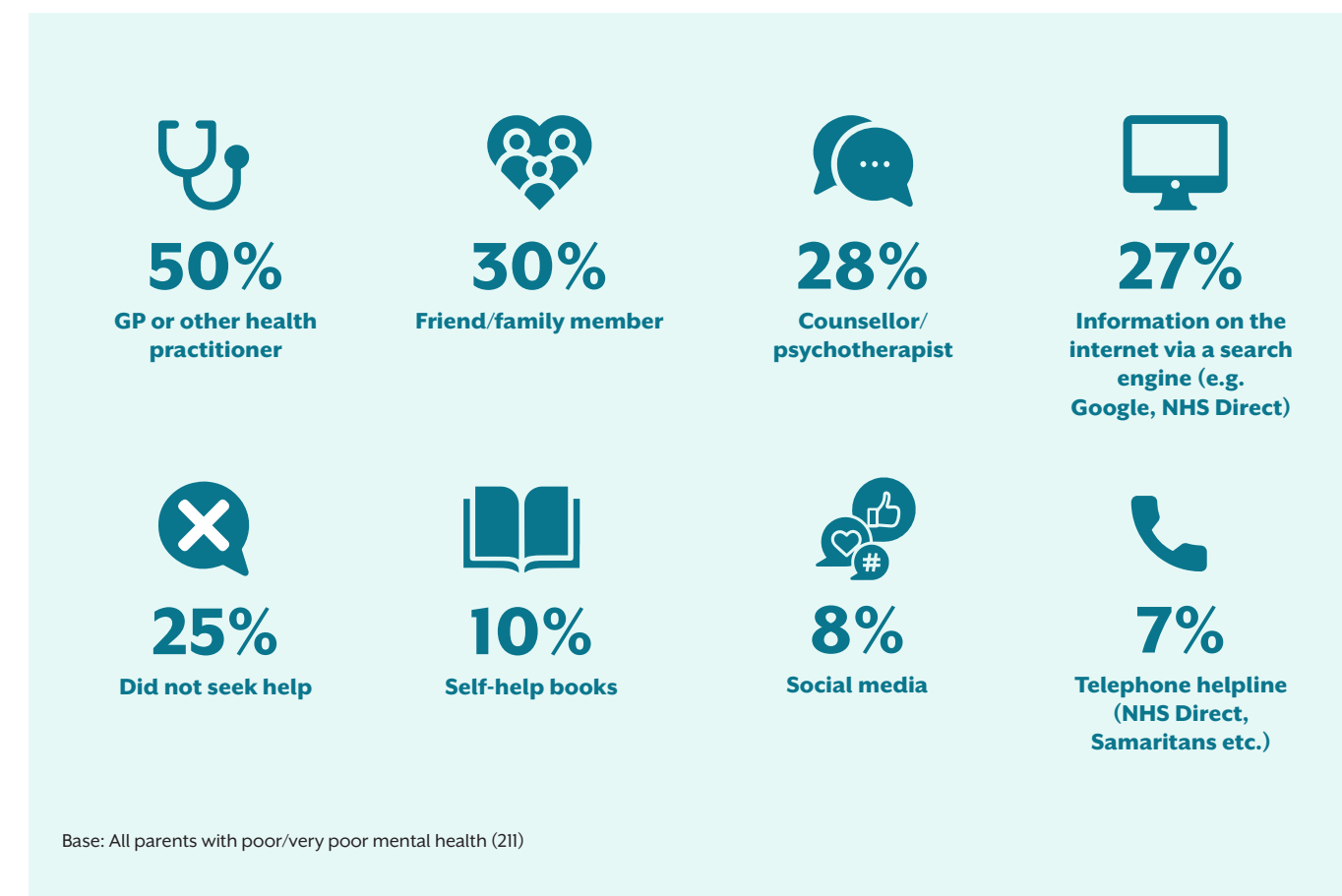
Impact of parents' poor mental health

How have you been impacted by your poor mental health in the last 12 months?



Where parents get help for their own mental health

Where, if anywhere, have you sought help regarding your mental health?



Parents' happiness

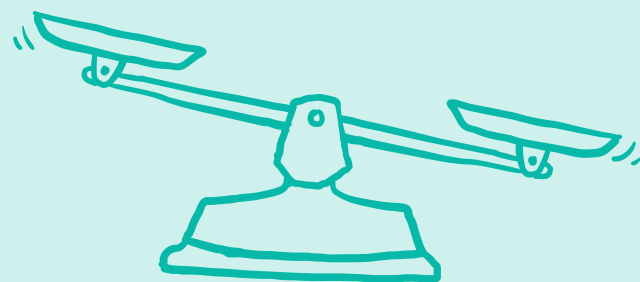
Overall, how happy are you most of the time?



Parents' biggest challenges

“

Managing my own mental health to minimise impact on the children. Also work-life balance, trying to get enough income without compromising family life.



“

Spending as much time with them as possible while maintaining my own mental health.



“

Dealing with my son's poor mental health, I feel helpless.



Parents with poor mental health are less likely to...

have a child who enjoys school

53% vs 75%

be happy with the quality of education their child receives

61% vs 74%

be optimistic for their child's future

49% vs 73%

get the help they need to support their child from the school

40% vs 56%

feel valued by society

17% vs 44%



say that every school day matters

71% vs 79%

more likely to...

be struggling with finances

65% vs 20%



want to spend more time doing learning activities as a family

72% vs 48%

struggle to afford the costs associated with sending their child to school

38% vs 15%

be worried about affording rent/mortgage payments

47% vs 20%

have experienced work challenges



say homework is a cause of arguments

41% vs 26%

have skipped meals

42% vs 11%

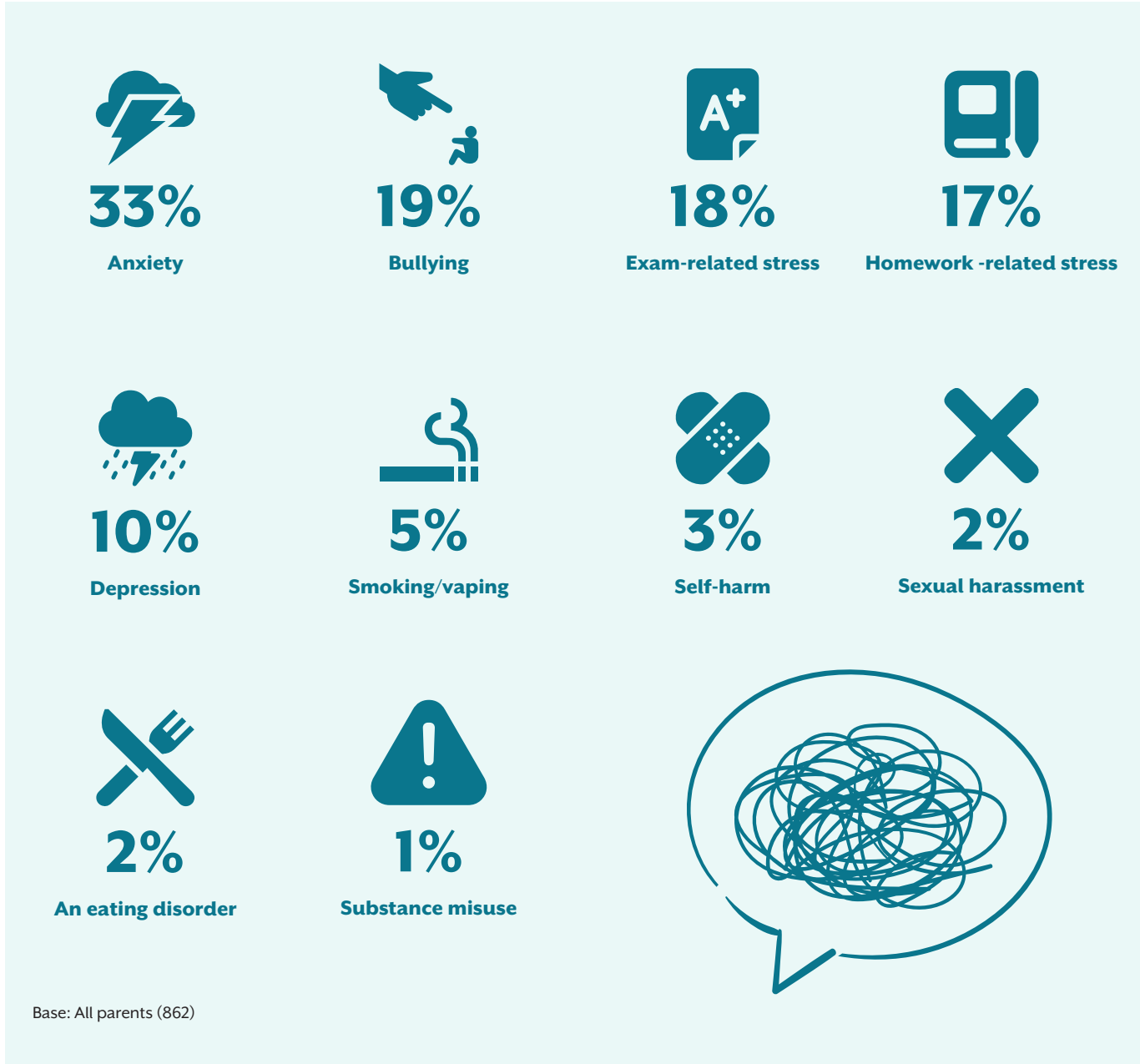


...than parents with good mental health

Base: All parents with poor/very poor mental health (211) v all with good/very good mental health (301)

Children’s experiences of mental health issues

In the last year, has your child experienced any of the following?

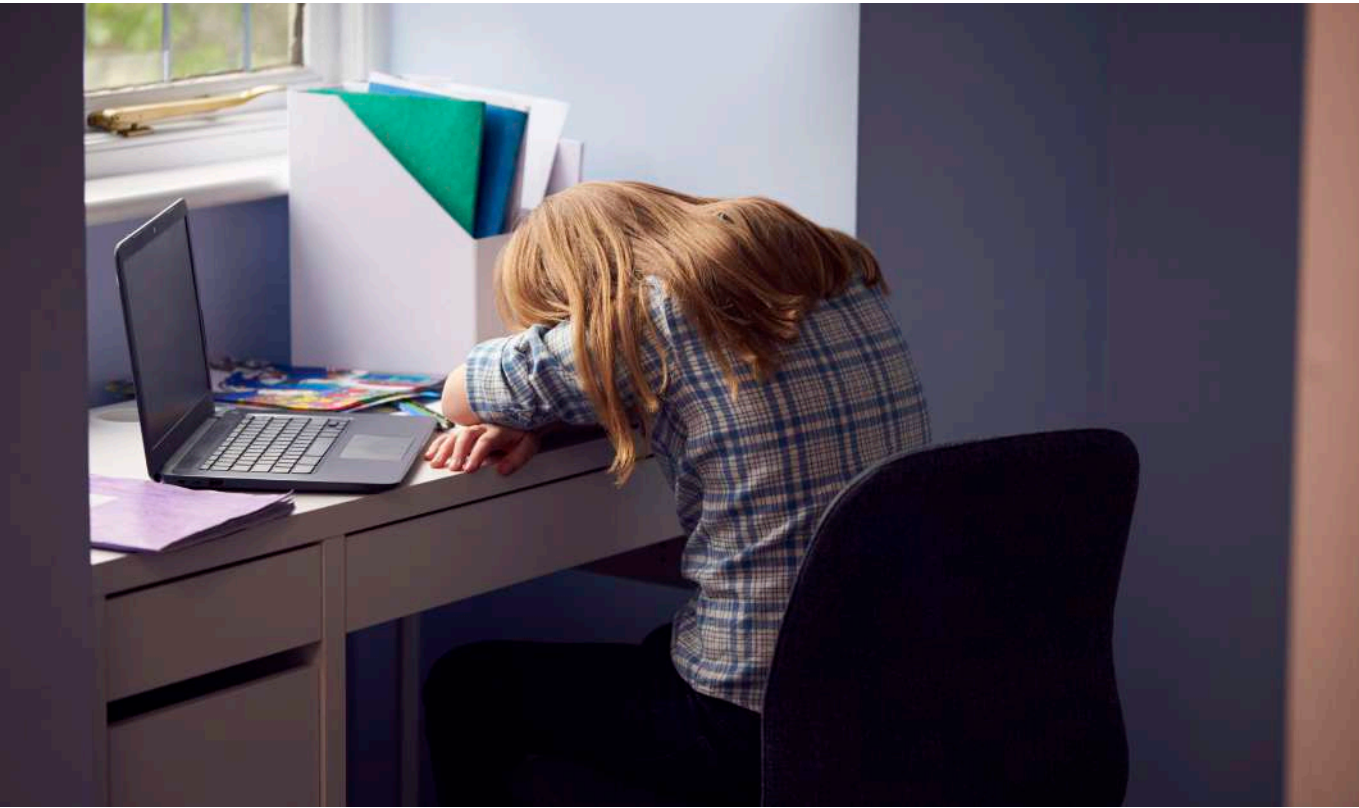
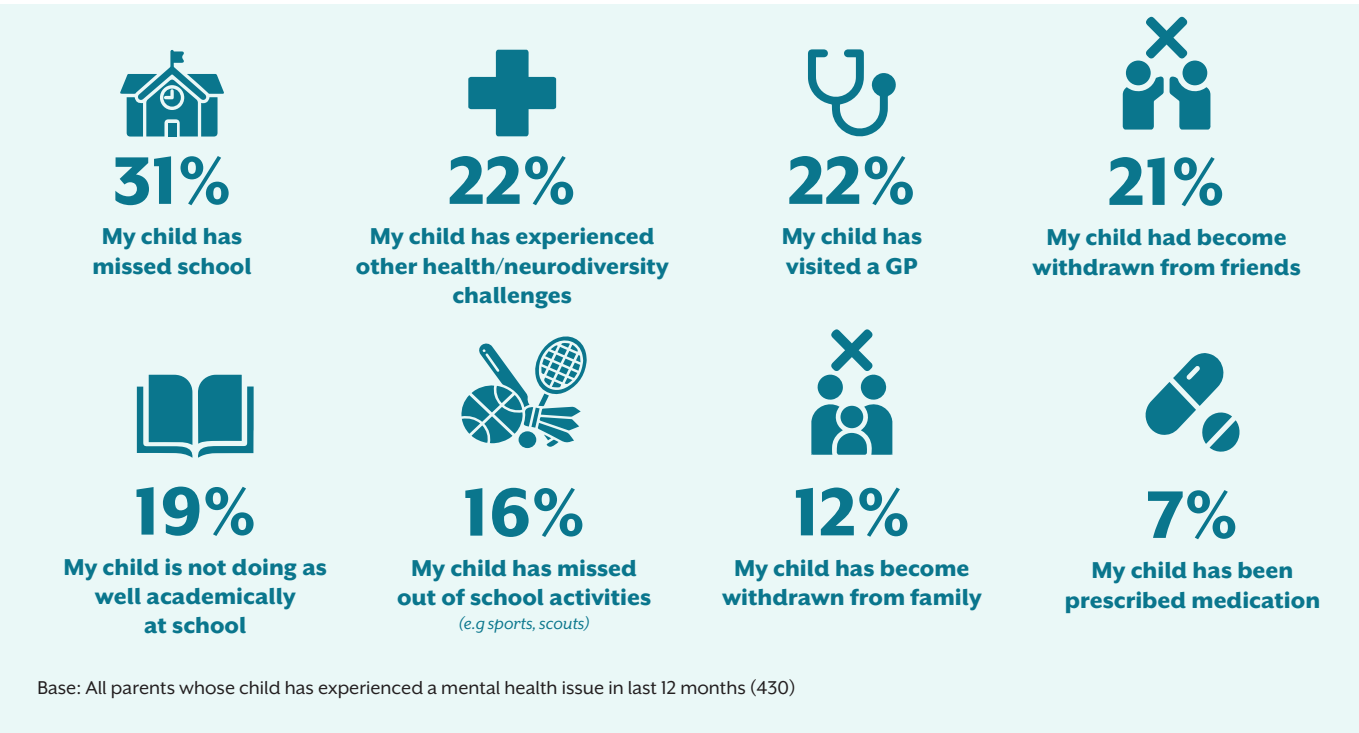


More than half of parents told us their child has faced a mental health problem in the last year, such as anxiety, bullying or homework-related stress, with children from poorer households, with ALN, in secondary or post-16 education or with a parent with a disability more likely to struggle than other children.

More than three in ten children experiencing poor mental health have missed school because of their mental health problems. Addressing this is a big issue for parents who say dealing with the mental health crisis is one of the most important issues facing the education system today. Not enough is being done – 19% of parents told us their child isn’t doing as well academically as a direct result of poor mental health.

The impact of children’s mental health

Thinking of your child’s mental health experiences which, if any, of the following has happened as a result?



**Four in ten
parents don't
spend as much
time as they
would like to
helping with
school work**

The pressure on parents' time

**Less than
a quarter**

of parents
have time for
their hobbies



32% of parents
say household chores
and caring
responsibilities
get in the way
of spending
time with their
children



Parenting is one of the most important roles in society, but it's also one of the toughest. There are so many competing priorities for parents to juggle, including household chores and caring responsibilities – almost one in three parents (and 37% of mums) said these get in the way of spending time with their children. For poorer families, the barriers are more financial and health-related whilst a lack of time is a greater barrier for parents with higher incomes.

**Less than a
third**
of parents think
society values their
role as a parent



For poorer parents the biggest barriers to family activities are cost, their own mental or physical health, chores, work and their child's mental or physical health



Barriers to spending time on family activities

- 46% The cost
- 40% I don't have enough time due to paid work responsibilities
- 32% I don't have enough time due to non-paid responsibilities
- 26% My child isn't interested
- 19% My own mental/physical health
- 8% My child's mental/physical health
- 7% I'm not sure how to do some of these activities

Sample: 862 parents in Wales who have at least one child aged 4-18 in school
Base: All parents (862)

Time spent on family activities

Do you spend as much time as you would like to on the following family activities?

Activity	Yes, I spend as much time as I would like doing this	No, I'd like to spend more time doing this
Doing learning activities as a family (e.g. visits to museums etc.)	37%	59%
Doing activities as a family for fun	47%	52%
Reading with/to my child for fun	45%	44%
Supporting my child with school work	53%	42%
Eating meals together with my child/children	67%	31%
Talking to my child	72%	28%

Sample: 862 parents in Wales who have at least one child aged 4-18 in school
Base: All parents (862)

Time spent on parents' own activities

Do you spend as much time as you would like to on the following activities for yourself?

Activity	Yes, I spend as much time as I would like doing this	No, I'd like to spend more time doing this
Pursuing a hobby for myself	22%	70%
Sport and exercise	26%	64%
Meeting my friends and socialising	28%	61%
Religious activities	31%	11%

Sample: 862 parents in Wales who have at least one child aged 4-18 in school
Base: All parents (862)



Barriers to spending time on parents' own activities

- 52% I don't have enough time due to non-paid responsibilities
- 47% I don't have enough time due to paid responsibilities
- 39% The cost of these activities
- 26% My own mental/physical health

Sample: 862 parents in Wales who have at least one child aged 4-18 in school
Base: All parents (862)

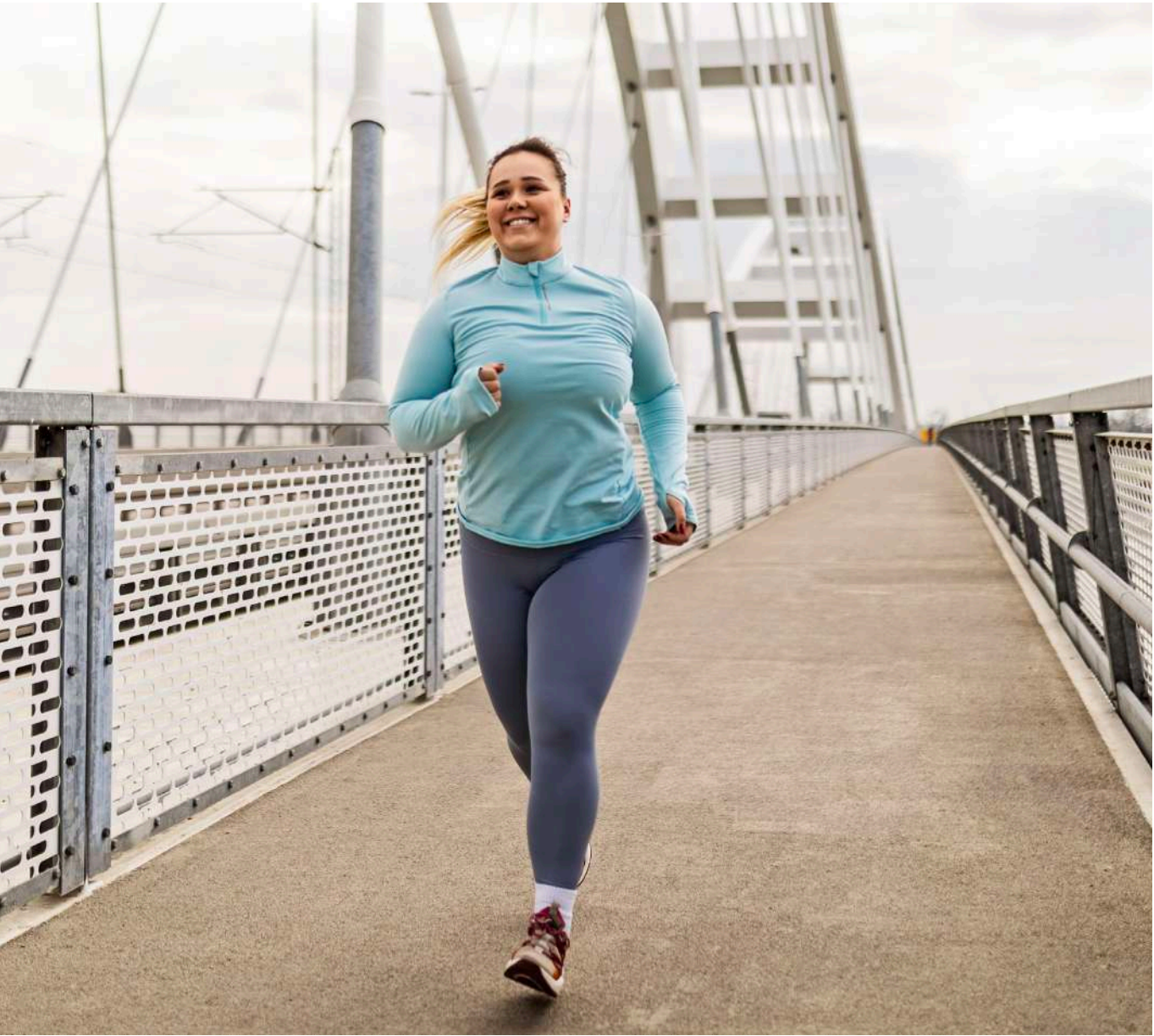
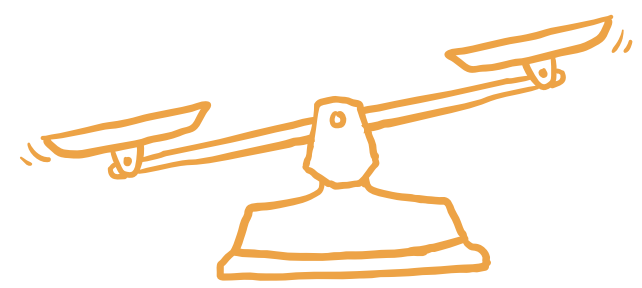
It's not just family time that parents say they're missing out on. Four in ten parents told us they don't spend as much time as they would like to help with their child's school work and 44% of parents would like to spend more time reading with their child for fun. Given the overwhelming evidence that parental engagement is vital in a child's academic success, this is a worryingly high statistic.

Only around a quarter of parents have enough time for hobbies, to meet up with friends or exercise as much as they would like to. These activities are not a luxury, but an essential component for health and wellbeing.

When asked why they don't have enough time to themselves, more than half of parents (and 58% of mums) said chores or caring responsibilities were the cause.

For poorer families, again the biggest barrier is cost whilst for more affluent families it is a lack of time due to paid work.

There are signs that being a parent isn't seen as important with less than a third of parents thinking society values their role as a parent.



Parents' biggest challenges

“

Balancing work and family life: I value both family life and my career, but it can be difficult to achieve a healthy work-life balance and find time for my own needs.



“

It gets difficult to manage work, home and child, everything together. I want my child to have a good upbringing but I don't get enough time. I want to give her more time and help her in learning but most of the time I am very tired from my work and household chores that makes it difficult for me to do it.



“

Finding enough time in the day to meet my child's needs, work full- time, manage housework and have time to myself, being a single mum.

**Children spend
an average of
3 hours 15
minutes on
electronic devices
outside of school
on a typical
weekday**

Screen time and its impact

On a typical weekday

13% of children spend more time on phones and screens than they do at school

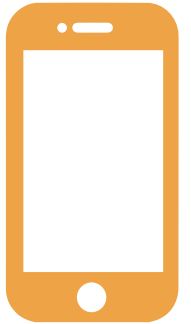
More than a **third** of parents say their child is missing out on sleep because they spend too much time on screens

There's no doubt that the future is digital. Technology has changed the way we learn, work and socialise. It is and will continue to be a huge part of our children's lives, but how much screen time is too much? On a typical weekday, parents said their children spend on average 3 hours and 15 minutes on electronic devices outside of school. Parents with a child with ALN and with a child aged 14-15 report longer screen time for their children than other parents.

Looking specifically at younger children, parents in Wales told us that 37% of primary school children spend at least three hours a day on a device - equivalent to at least a month of screen time a year. 7% of primary school parents said their child spends seven hours or more on their phone or playing computer games a day, which is not only more time than they'd typically spend at school, but is also more than two months of screen time a year.

37%

of primary school children spend at least 3 hours a day on a digital device



49%

of parents say screen time causes arguments

“

I have 3 children, aged 3, 9 and 13..."screen time" affects all 3 of them in different ways and is easily the largest cause of friction and arguments in our house.

- Parent response

Parents' biggest challenges

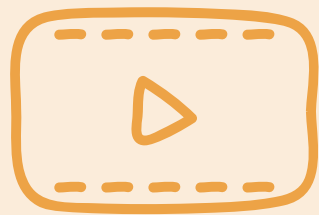
“

Bringing up children without them ever being able to switch off as all of their friends are constantly online.



“

Guiding my child in this new technological world to make good choices and not become stressed or over influenced by comparing herself to false ideals.



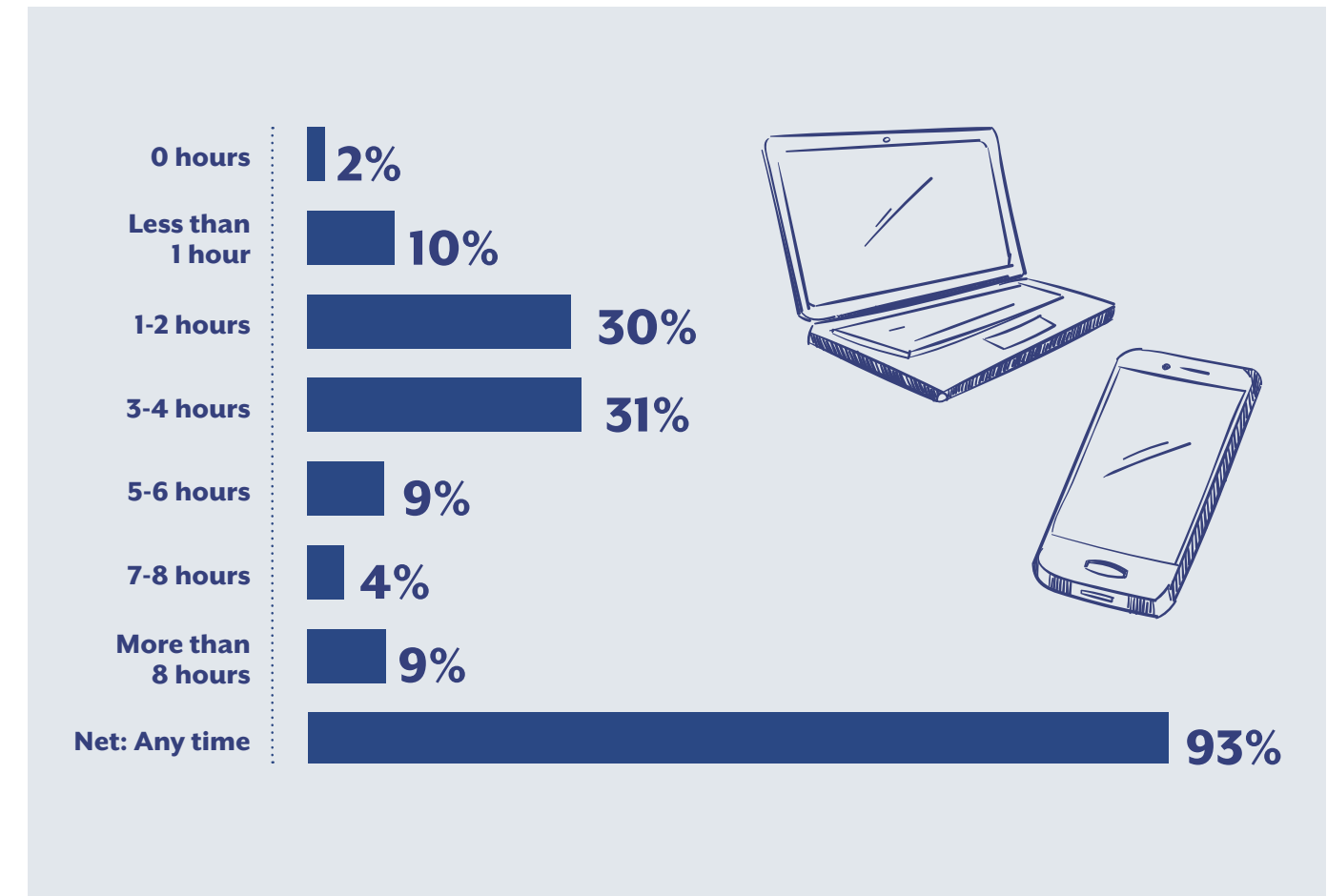
“

I worry about the negative impact of social media on my daughter's mental health.



Children's time spent on screens

How much time does your child spend on electronic devices outside school on a typical weekday? (e.g. phones, tablets, games consoles, pcs)



Base: All parents (862)

When we asked parents of primary school children if they were concerned about screen time as their child gets older, at least three quarters said they are. And these concerns are not unfounded, given that six in ten teenagers spend at least three hours a day on their phone or computer, and one in six spend seven or more hours a day looking at a screen. When asked how they feel about the amount of time spent using electronic devices, 57% of parents of secondary school-aged children said they are worried.

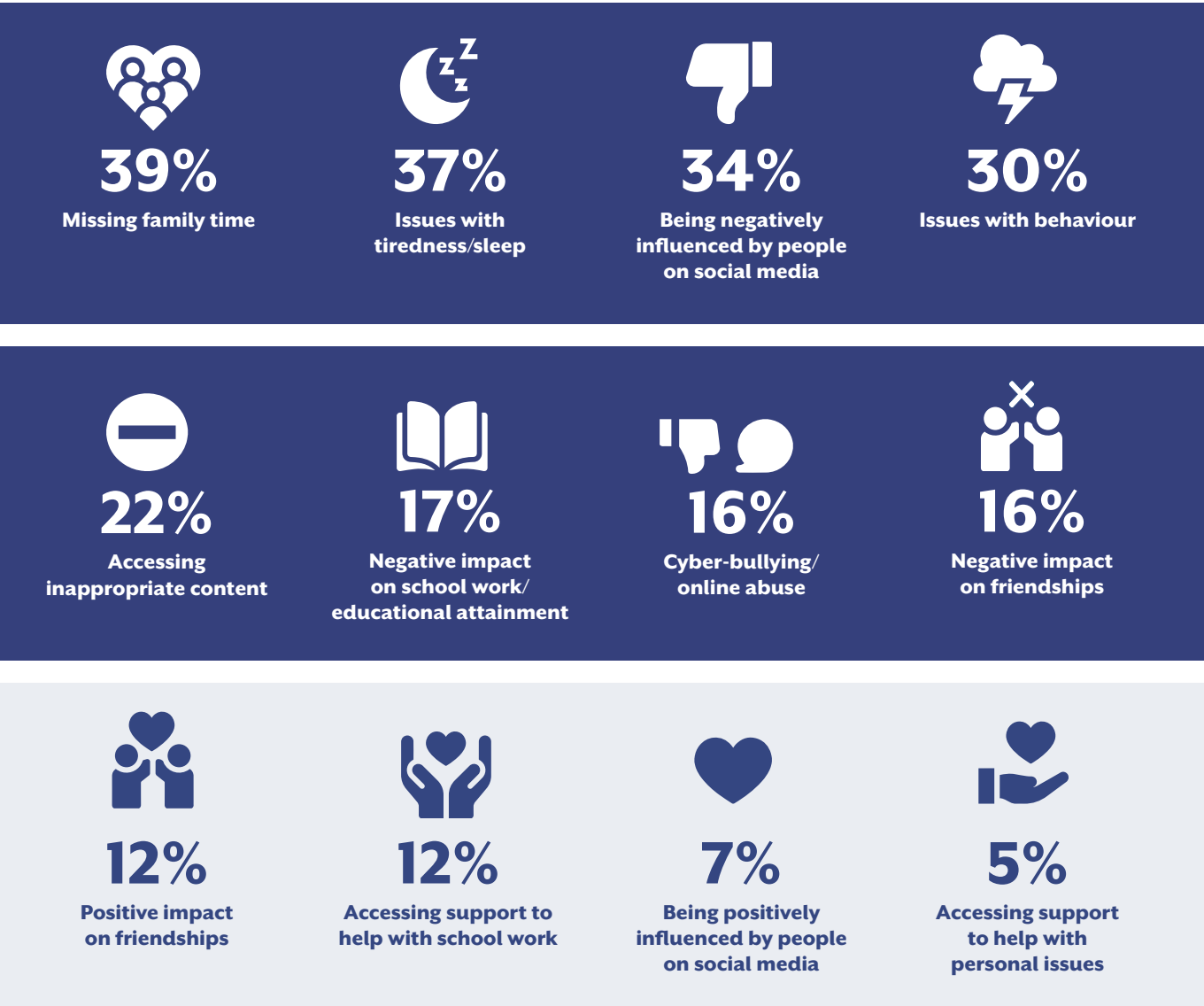
These concerns are causing friction at home, as almost half of parents told us screen time has led to arguments in recent weeks. Three in ten parents said screen time is also worsening their child's behaviour, and nearly four in ten parents said their child is missing out on valuable family time due to their use of electronic devices.

Screen time is even affecting children's physical health, with more than a third of parents saying their child is missing out on sleep because of it. Great Ormond Street Hospital recommends children aged 6 to 12 get 9 to 12 hours of sleep a night and teenagers get eight to ten hours. When you factor in the school day and the amount of reported time spent on devices, it is clear many children are prioritising screens over sleep.

More than a third of parents said their child has been negatively influenced by people on social media whilst 16% of parents said their child's screen use has led to cyber-bullying/online abuse. One in six parents said it has had a negative impact on their child's school work or educational attainment.

Effects of screen time

What are the impacts, if any, of your child’s time spent on electronic devices?

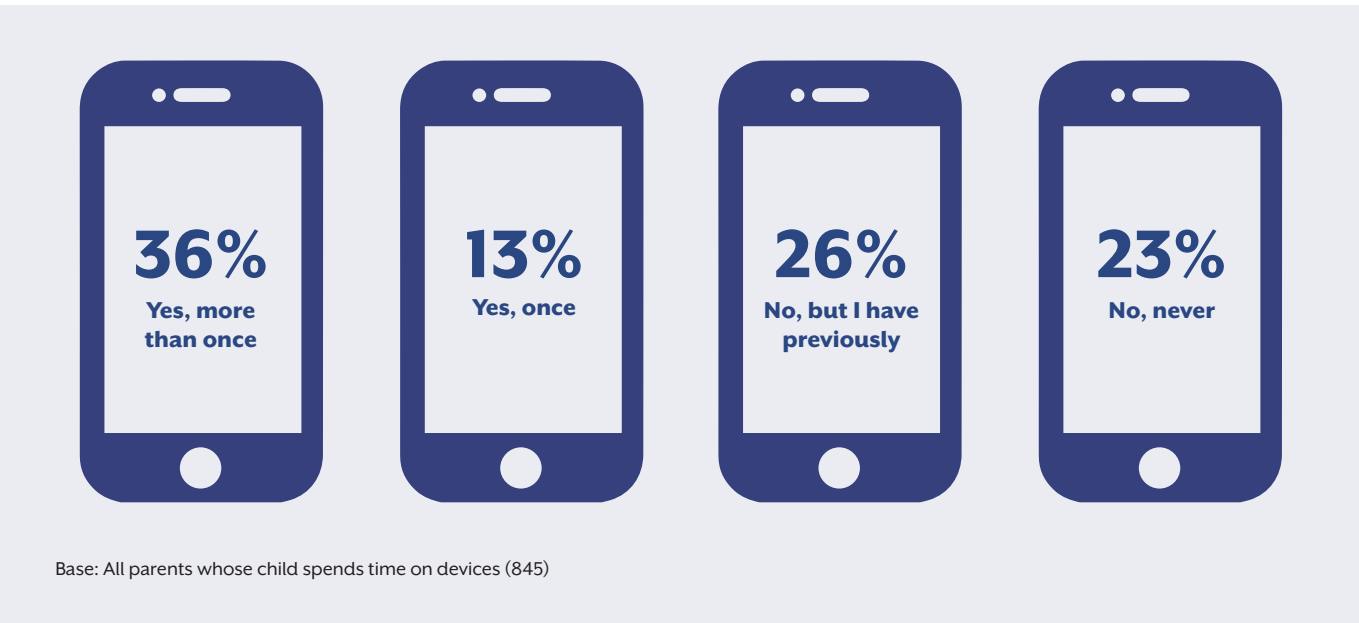


Base: All parents whose child spends time on devices (845)




Disagreements over screen time

Have you had a disagreement with your child over their time spent on electronic devices in the last few weeks?



13% of children feel unsafe at school

Parents' views on education

17%  of parents are unhappy with the education their child receives

More than a quarter of children don't attend activities after school

17% of parents in Wales are unhappy with the education their child receives. When asked about specific elements of the curriculum, almost half (48%) of parents said there is too little focus on developing financial management skills at their child's school - rising to 58% of parents with a child at secondary school or in post-16 education. 36% of parents said their child's school doesn't focus enough on preparing children for the future job market and 35% of parents feel their child's school doesn't focus enough on developing life skills such as self-confidence and the ability to cope with setbacks. 33% of parents said there is too little focus on teaching vocational subjects and 32% of parents said there's too little focus at their child's school on developing skills that are useful outside of school e.g. critical thinking, teamwork and time management. Other aspects of the curriculum where at least a quarter of parents said there was too little focus were developing good mental health and

82% of primary school mums using them say that breakfast clubs help them get to work on time



Almost half of parents say there's too little focus on financial management skills in the curriculum














wellbeing, developing oracy skills and preparing children to become responsible citizens.

As well as the subjects being taught, the potential stress of exams can affect parents' satisfaction with their child's education. Nearly one in four parents said teenagers do too many exams at GCSE level, and one in five parents believe fewer subjects should be taught at GCSE level. There is more agreement post-GCSE, although one in ten parents still feel there are too many subjects taught in 6th form and one in eight parents too many exams at post-GCSE level.

There is not a great deal of support for the core subjects of English, maths and science to be mandatory after the age of 16: only, 21% of parents think English should be studied until aged 18, 25% believe maths should be studied until 18 and 22% think the same for science.

Importance of school curriculum















How important do you think it is that your child's school curriculum focuses on the following?

		Very important	Somewhat important	Total importance*
	Develops skills that are useful outside of school (e.g. critical thinking, teamwork)	76%	22%	98%
	Teaches life skills (e.g. self-confidence, the ability to cope with setbacks)	75%	22%	97%
	Develops skills in expressing yourself fluently (i.e. oracy)	70%	27%	97%
	Prepares children to become responsible citizens	69%	27%	96%
	Develops an in-depth knowledge of English, maths and science	65%	31%	96%
	Develops good mental health and wellbeing	73%	22%	95%
	Develops skills related to financial management	64%	32%	95%
	Develops good physical health	59%	36%	95%
	Prepares children for the future job market	56%	37%	93%
	Teaches vocational subjects	47%	41%	88%
	Teaches about relationships and sex education (secondary/post-16)	45%	43%	88%
	Teaches about relationships education (primary)	47%	39%	86%
	Teaches non-traditional academic subjects (e.g. drama, music)	39%	40%	79%
	Supports children's spiritual development	25%	42%	67%

Base: All parents (862)
*Please note figures may not add up due to rounding

Focus on school curriculum

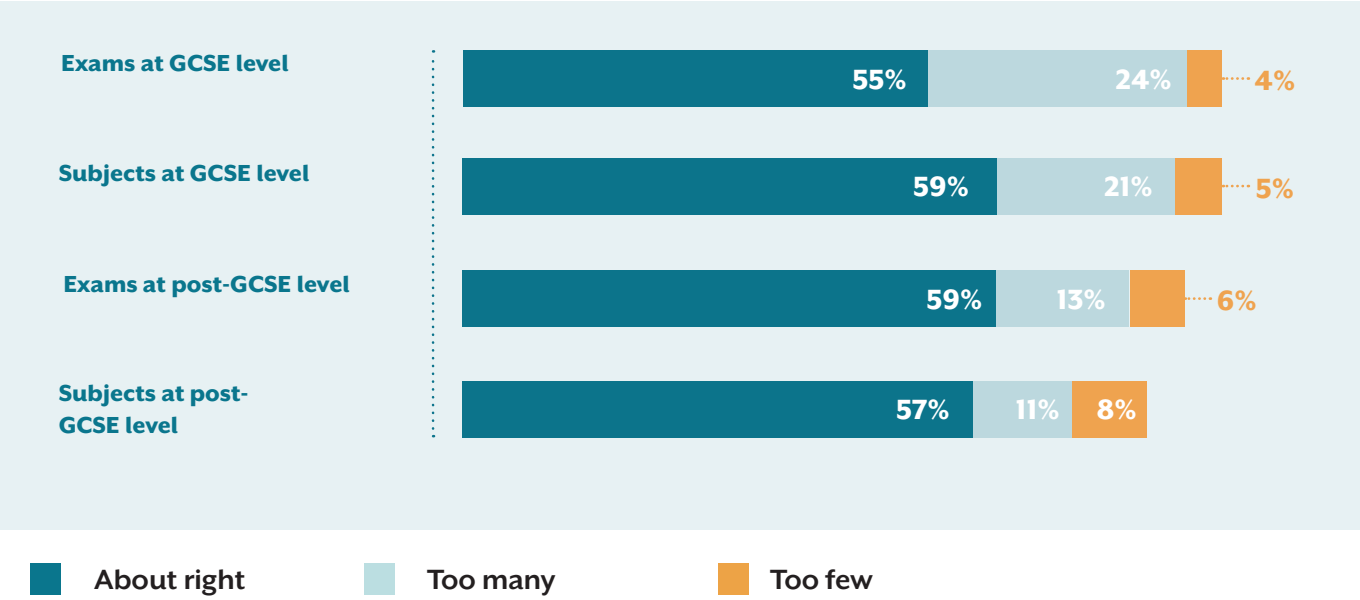
Do you think the curriculum at your child's school focuses on the following topics too much, too little, or about right?

		Too much	About right	Too little
	Develops skills related to financial management	1%	30%	48%
	Prepares children for the future job market	2%	37%	36%
	Teaches life skills (e.g. self-confidence, the ability to cope with setbacks)	2%	50%	35%
	Teaches vocational subjects	2%	40%	33%
	Develops skills that are useful outside of school (e.g. critical thinking, teamwork)	1%	51%	32%
	Develops good mental health and wellbeing	4%	55%	28%
	Develops skills in expressing yourself fluently (i.e. oracy)	2%	60%	26%
	Prepares children to become responsible citizens	1%	57%	26%
	Develops good physical health	2%	69%	21%
	Teaches non-traditional academic subjects (e.g. drama, music)	9%	62%	19%
	Teaches about relationships education (primary)	5%	51%	18%
	Teaches about relationships and sex education (secondary/post-16)	8%	60%	14%
	Develops an in-depth knowledge of English, maths and science	8%	73%	13%
	Supports children's spiritual development	18%	53%	10%

Base: All parents (862)

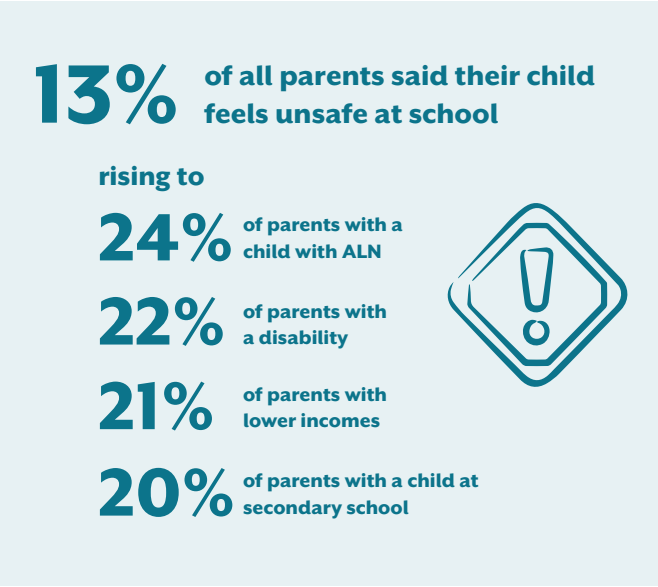
Exams and subjects studied

Do you think children take too many, too few, or about the right number of...



Base: All parents (862)

It isn't just about what they're taught, the school environment plays a part too. 13% of all parents in Wales said their child feels unsafe at school, the equivalent of more than 60,000 children.



It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that more than a third of parents told us they have considered homeschooling their child with parents with a child with ALN most likely to have considered

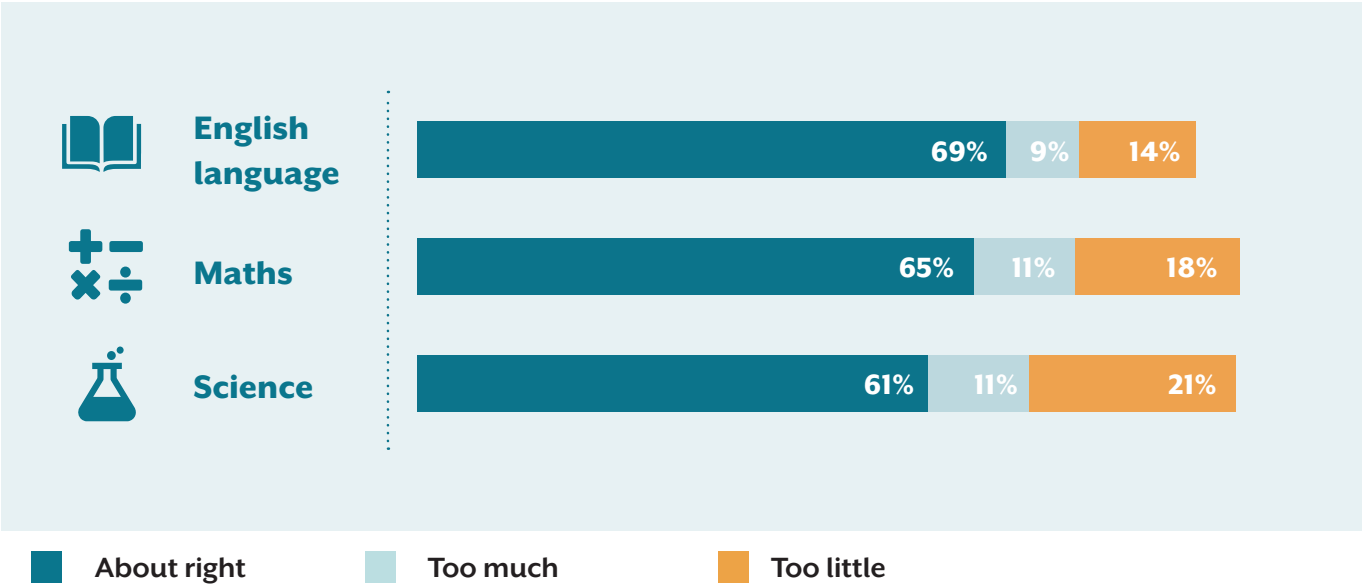
doing so than other parents. When parents considering it were asked why, a range of reasons were given including thinking that homeschooling would provide a better education, or it would better support their child's wellbeing and special educational needs.

Outside of the curriculum, we asked parents about their experience with their child's school breakfast club. 37% of primary school parents use school breakfast clubs, with another 8% wanting to use one but not able to due to either no breakfast club or there being no space for their child. In terms of benefits, more than eight in ten primary school parents using their school breakfast club said it helps them get to work on time; more than four in ten said their child likes to play with friends before school and a third said it helps them get their child to school on time.

When asked about universal breakfast clubs and free school meals, 85% of all parents back free breakfast clubs for all primary school children, and 85% support free school meals for all primary school children.

Focus on the core subjects

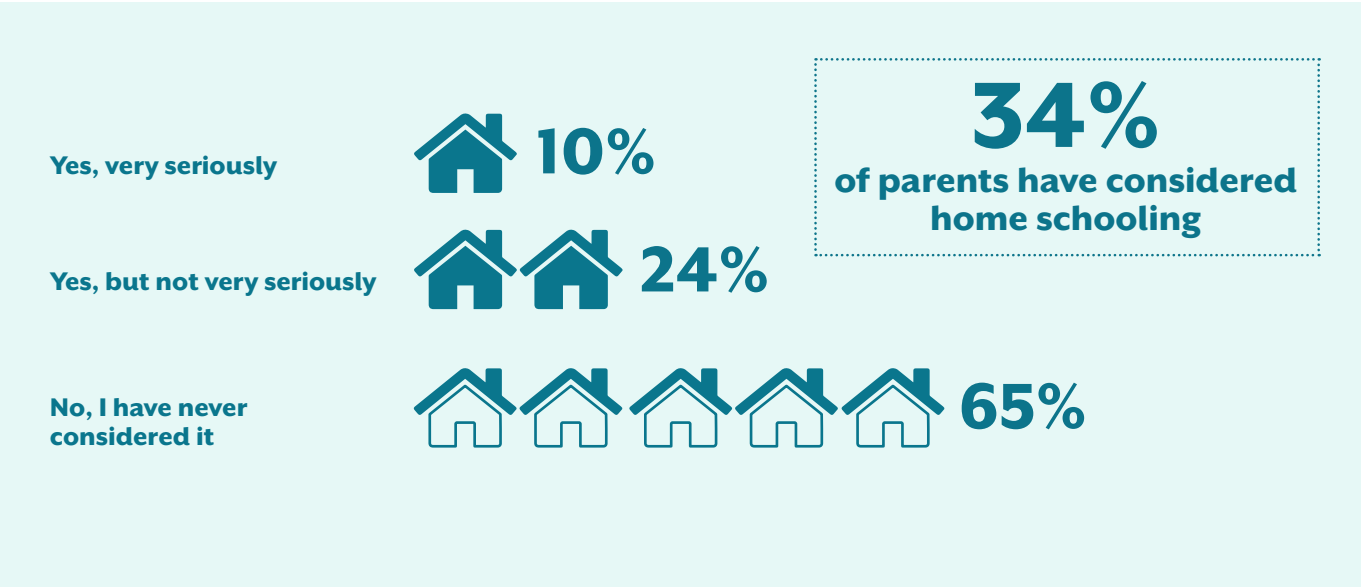
Do you think that in school there is too much, too little, or about the right amount of focus on a child's performance in...?



Base: All parents (862)

Parents who have considered home schooling

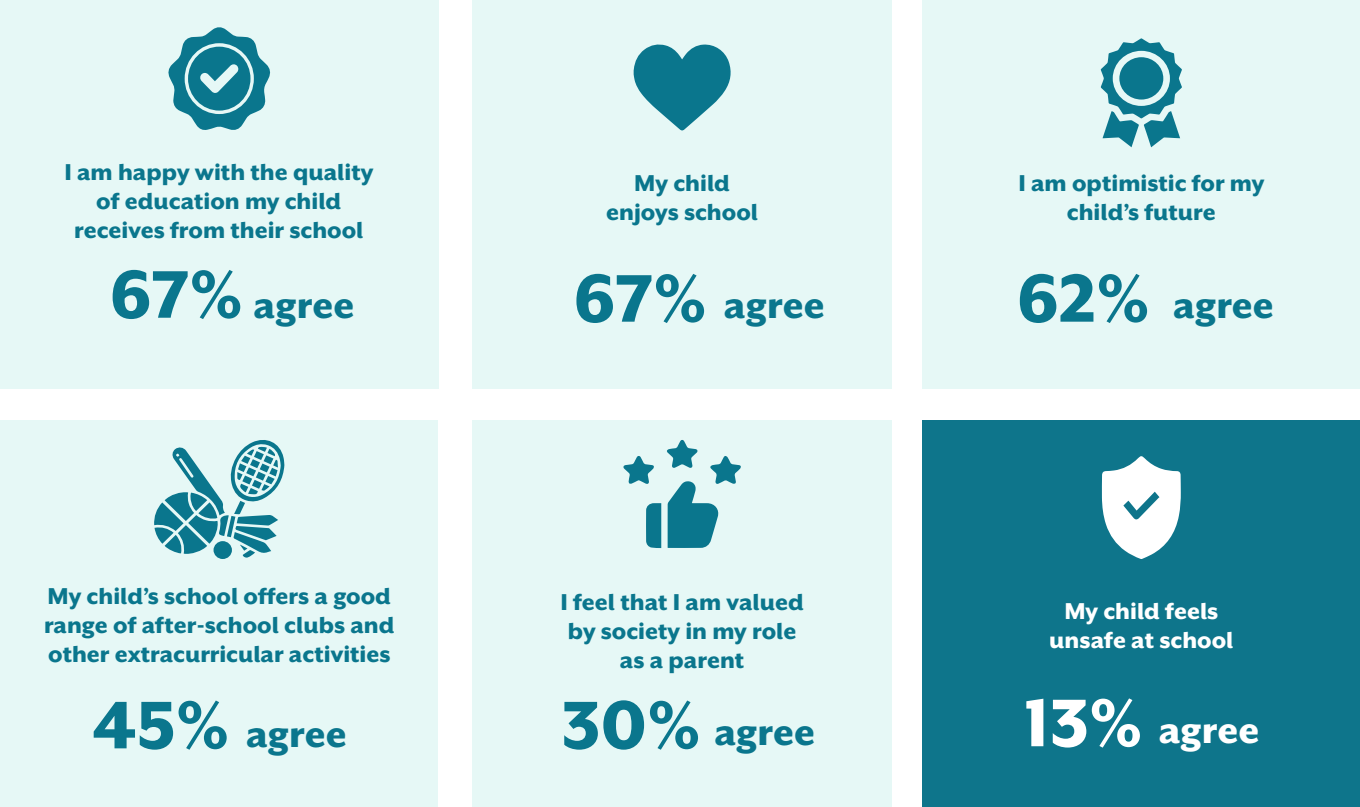
Have you ever considered homeschooling your child(ren)?



Base: All parents (862)

The school experience

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

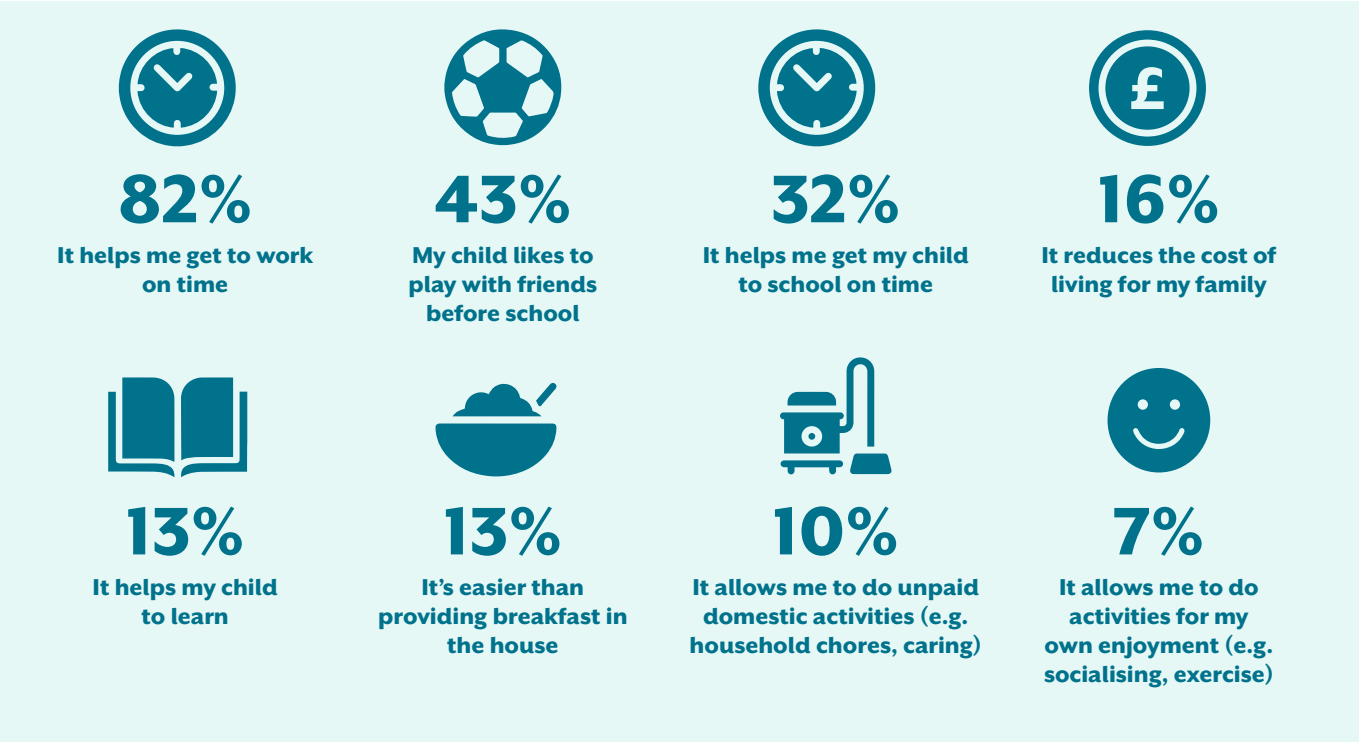


Base: All parents (862)



Benefits of attending school breakfast club

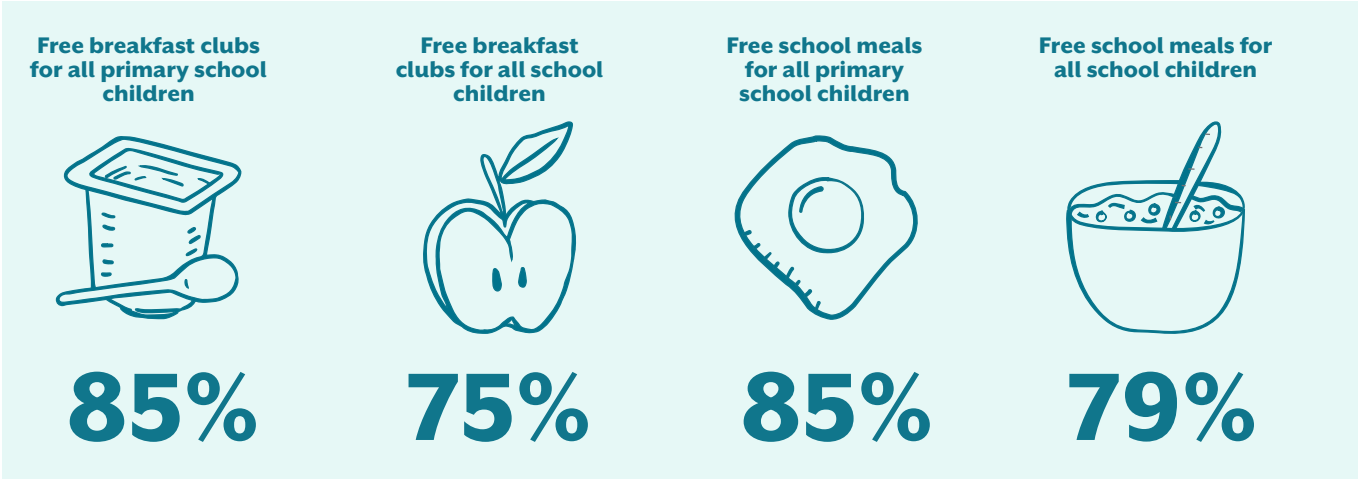
What are the main benefits of a breakfast club for your family?



Base: All parents with a child attending a primary school breakfast club (150)

Support for roll out of free breakfast clubs/free school meals

To what extent would you support or oppose the roll out of...?

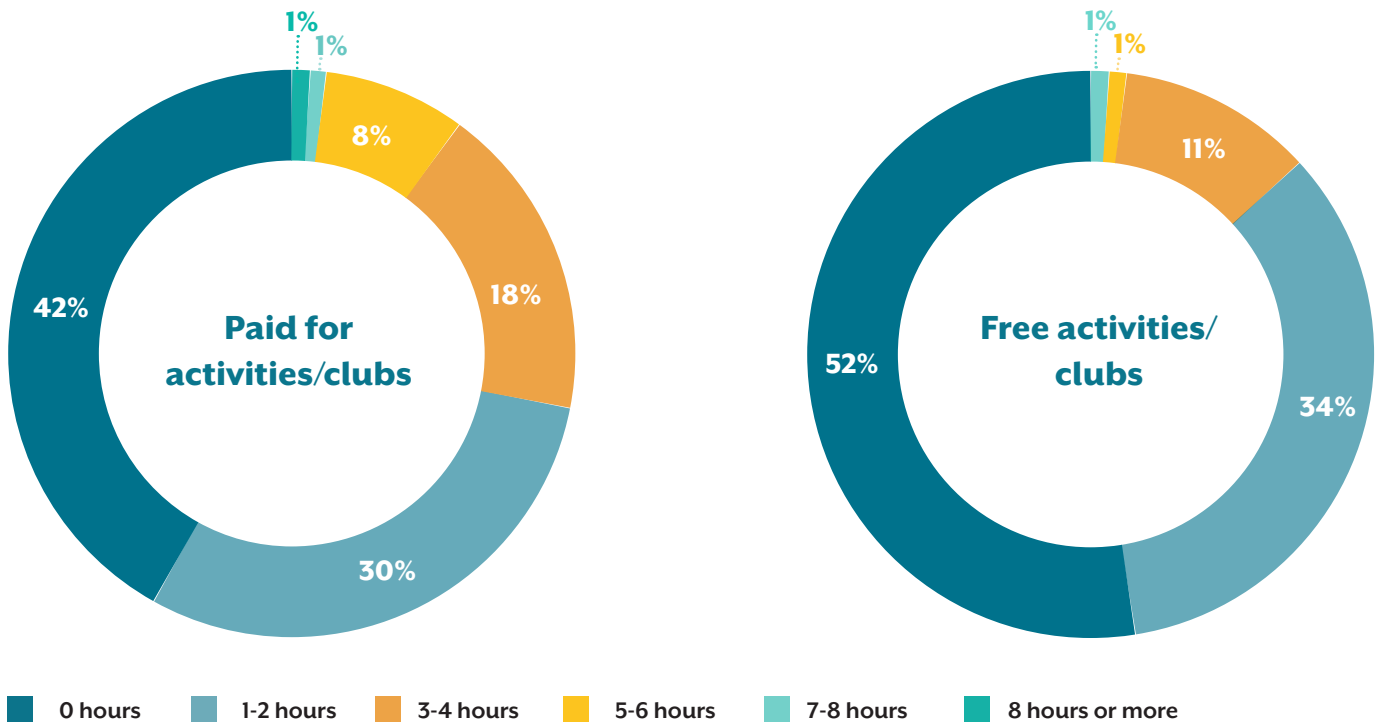


Base: All parents (862)



Time spent at clubs/activities per week

In a typical school week, how many hours does your child spend at school clubs or out of school activities?



Sample: 862 parents in Wales who have at least one child aged 4-18 in school
Base: All parents (862)

58% of parents said their child spends time at paid for clubs or out of school activities averaging just under three hours a week. Half of parents said their child spends time at free school clubs or out-of-school activities, averaging just over 2 hours a week. However, more than a quarter of children don't do either – this is more than in other parts of the UK.

Parents in Wales are also least likely to say their child's school offers a good range of after-school clubs and extracurricular activities than parents in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Whilst two-thirds of parents said their child enjoys school, those with a child with ALN are less likely to say their child enjoys school, as are parents with a child at secondary school or in post-16 education, parents with a disability and those from lower-income households.

62% of parents are optimistic about their child's future but just 67% are happy with the quality of education their child receives from their school. Parents with a child with ALN, parents with a disability and parents with a child at a secondary school are less happy than other parents.



**71% of
parents
would
consider
taking their
child out of
school for a
holiday**

School attendance

**One
in five** 
children have refused to go to
school in the last year, despite their
parent thinking they should go

 **More than half**
of parents have sent
their child to school
despite being ill

In recent years, a lot of pressure has been put on schools and parents by the Welsh Government to bring down the number of pupil absences, which remain much higher than before the pandemic. Whilst more than nine in ten parents say their child does not miss school unless it is unavoidable and more than half of parents have sent their child to school when they are ill, contrary to this, less than three quarters of parents agree that every school day matters and 71% of parents told us that it's okay to miss school for a day or more for a holiday – higher than anywhere else in the UK.

Several parents went on to say that the cost of family holidays in the school holidays is their biggest challenge as a parent. When asked about fines specifically, only a third of parents in Wales support the policy of fining parents if their child misses more than five days of school without authorisation or a good reason with nearly six in

A quarter
of parents are more
relaxed about their
child's attendance since
the pandemic

**Less than
three
quarters**
of parents agree that every
school day matters

ten parents opposing it – again, higher than other parts of the UK. Furthermore, whilst 28% of parents said the risk of a fine makes them less likely to take their child out of school for an unauthorised term time holiday, two thirds of parents said the policy has no impact on their decision to take their child out of school.

28% of secondary school parents said they are more relaxed about their child's school attendance since the end of the pandemic. 18% of parents with a child at secondary school say it's now harder to get them to school compared to before the pandemic. One in five children have refused to go to school in the last year, despite their parent thinking they should go, with parents with a child with ALN, poorer parents and parents with a disability more likely to encounter resistance than other parents.

Experiences of school attendance

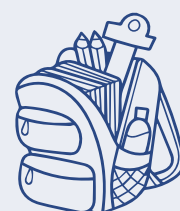
Thinking about your child's attendance at school, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

14%



say it is harder to get their child to attend school compared to before the pandemic

25%



are more relaxed about their child's attendance compared to before the pandemic

Base: All parents (862)



Perceptions of school attendance

Thinking about your child's attendance at school, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



73% | **12%**
Agree | Disagree

I believe that every school day matters



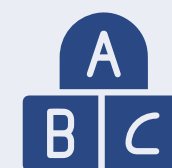
71% | **16%**
Agree | Disagree

I have/would consider my child missing school for one or more days for a holiday



84% | **3%**
Agree | Disagree

My child's school takes attendance very seriously



92% | **8%**
Yes | No

My child does not miss school unless it is unavoidable



54% | **36%**
Yes | No

My child has attended school despite being poorly



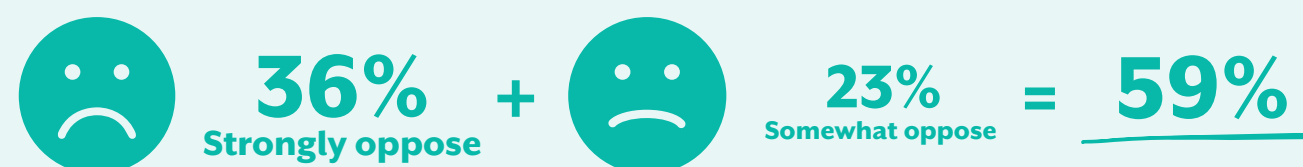
21% | **71%**
Yes | No

My child has refused to go to school in the last year, despite me thinking they should go

Base: All parents (862)

Support for policy of fining parents for taking children out of school for holidays

To what extent do you support or oppose the policy of fining parents if their children miss more than five days of school without authorisation or a good reason?



Sample: 862 parents in Wales who have at least one child aged 4-18 in school
Base: All parents (862)

28% of parents say the risk of a fine makes them less likely to take their child out of school for an unauthorised term time holiday

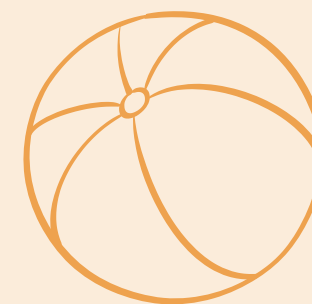
66% say it has no impact



Parents' biggest challenges

“

Children who have overall good attendance should be allowed to take term time holidays without a fine. Holidays and trips are educational. Persistent poor attendance should be fined, not one-off holidays.



“

The cost of holidays is so much more expensive during holidays so we do go away just before term ends in the summer otherwise it gets too expensive.



“

Feeling guilty for not taking them on holiday or fun places because of the cost of living even though [I am] working all the time.



A third of parents are regularly having arguments with their children over homework

Parents supporting learning

A quarter of primary school children don't have a space to do homework at home

One in four parents doubt they could speak to the headteacher of their child's school within 24 hours

Research shows that parent participation has a big impact on a child's academic success, and parents tell us they do want to be more involved. However, parents at 41% of primary schools and 65% of secondary schools said they do not get enough information on how to support their child's learning outside the classroom.

While 60% of all parents said homework is useful, this is the lowest of all the UK nations. Secondary school parents, parents with a disability or with a child with ALN are more likely to say homework is not useful than other parents. This said, parents in Wales are less likely to say homework is a cause of arguments than parents from other nations. Mums, parents with a child with ALN and

A third of parents don't think the homework their child receives is useful

Almost two thirds of secondary schools don't give parents enough information on supporting their child's learning at home



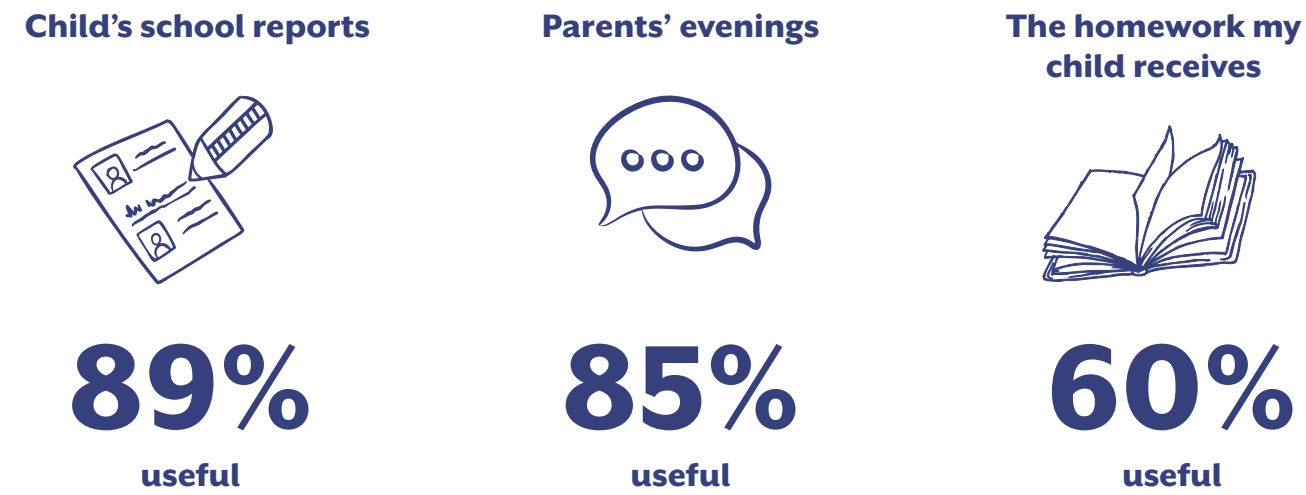
poorer parents are more likely to say homework causes arguments than other parents in Wales.

According to parents, one in eight children use AI to help with their homework, with markedly higher usage amongst young people in post-16 education (25%) and secondary school (14%) than at primary school (5%).

There's also the question of whether all homes are suitable environments for children to learn in. A quarter of primary school children and nearly one in ten secondary school children don't have a designated space at home to do homework in.

The value of school reports, parents’ evenings and homework

How useful, if at all, do you think the following are?



Base: All parents (862)

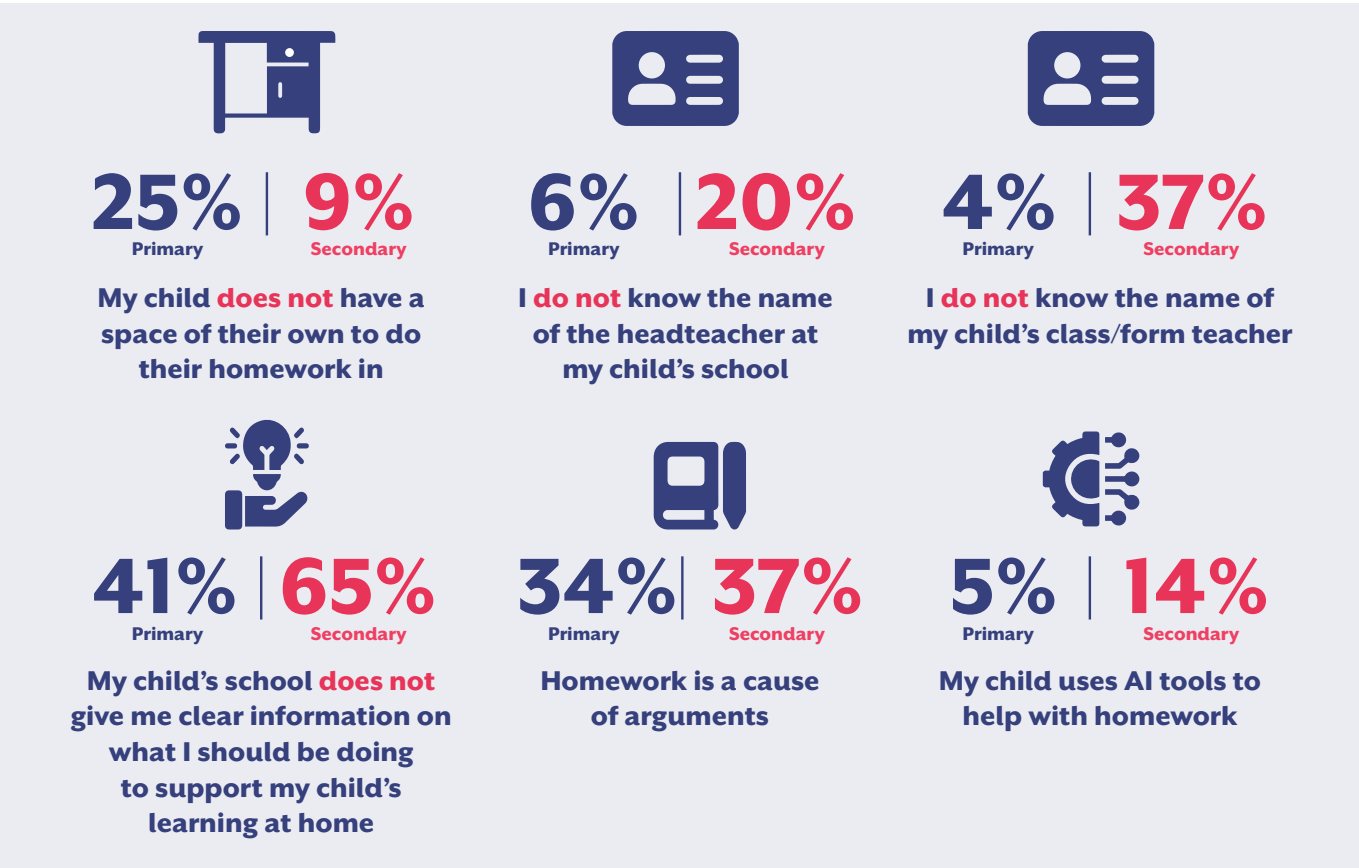
When something goes wrong and parents need to reach out for support, a quarter tell us they don’t think they’d be able to speak to their child’s headteacher if they needed to within a 24-hour period. 17% of parents don’t even know the name of their child’s headteacher,

suggesting more work needs to be done to help parents feel included in the education system, even though 85% of parents saw parents’ evenings useful and 89% found school reports useful.



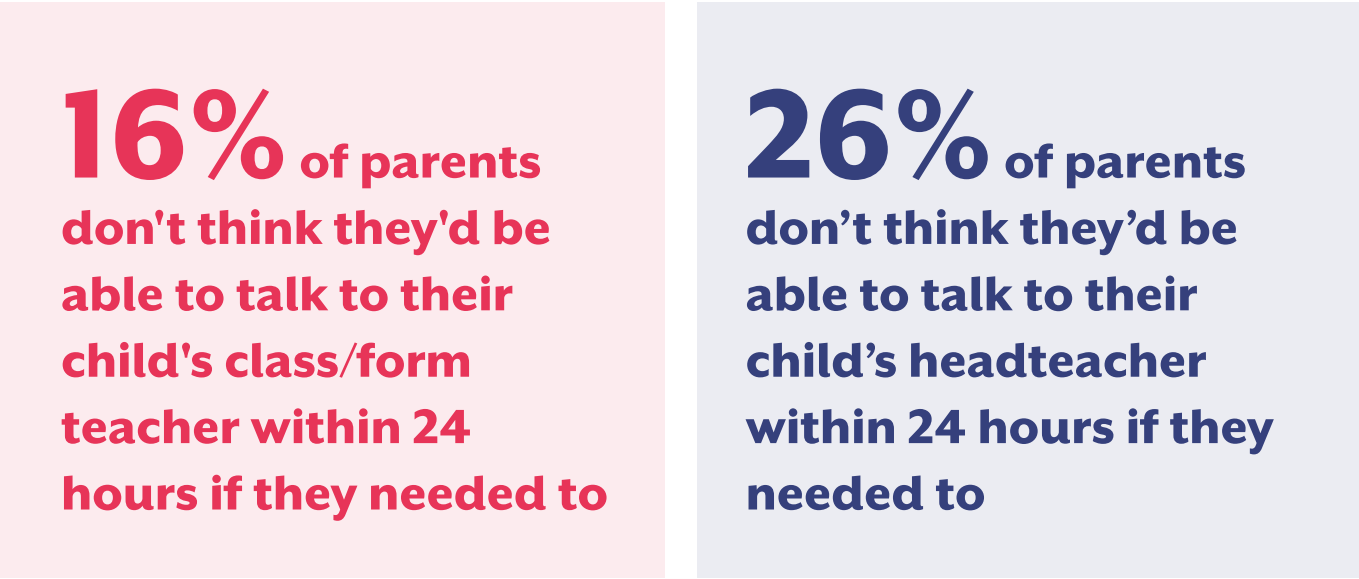
Statements on learning at home

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



Base: All parents (862)

Ability to contact child’s teachers



Parents' biggest challenges

Parents were asked to share their biggest challenge. Hundreds of free text responses were received, the vast majority of which fell into one or more of the following themes.

Pressures on parents' time was mentioned most frequently. Many spoke about **the challenges of juggling work and home life**, of **not having as much time as they would like to spend with their child**, and wanting some **downtime to themselves**.

For many parents, their biggest challenge was **being a good parent** and **raising well-rounded children** - giving their child the right support, being able to understand their child's world and being a good role model as well as concern about making mistakes as a parent and not knowing all the answers.

Health, happiness and **safety** were mentioned many times. Some parents spoke specifically about the challenges of **mental health, healthy eating or bullying**. Whilst many parents were referring to the health, happiness and safety of their child, several parents said

their biggest challenge as a parent was **their own health and wellbeing**.

Lots of parents reported their biggest challenge as **financial**, with the **cost of living** having a significant impact on households. The high cost of **going away in the school holidays** was singled out by some parents whilst others highlighted costs related to **going to school**.

Many parents highlighted their worries about **children's access to social media or the internet** more widely, and the consequences of screen time including unrealistic expectations created by online content, misinformation, and its impact on school work and on children's wellbeing.

Some parents voiced their **concerns about society and their child's future**, including worries about jobs, the state of the world, living standards or the environment. Some parents blamed these concerns on the government.



For some parents their concerns related specifically to **education** or their **child's experience at school**. In a number of cases, this was referring to struggles **accessing appropriate support** for their child with additional learning needs or their **child not enjoying school** whilst for others it was a concern about **homework, what's being taught at school**, their child **not prioritising their studies** or their child's **attendance**.

Some parents said their biggest challenge was managing **the effects of others on their child** - whether other

parents, other children, their own family members. For some parents, the challenge was having **no support** from others and parenting alone.

Several parents highlighted **behavioural challenges** - usually referring to their child's behaviour such as arguments, teenage attitudes, and unsettling behaviour. Occasionally parents were talking about **their own behaviour**, including the challenge of keeping calm or being patient. A few parents said their biggest challenge is **communicating** with their child.



What can we do to help parents?

The 2024 National Parent Survey is the largest survey of its kind and helps us to understand the concerns of parents, what is keeping them up at night and the challenges they face in doing the most important job many of us will ever do. This large-scale parent poll should be a call to action for the Welsh Government and politicians across all parts of the UK.

A government that listens to parents

- **The Cabinet Secretary for Education should commit to listening to parents before decisions are made.** Parents often tell us that they are overlooked when changes are made, we should consult parents as standard ahead of major policy announcements.
- **Commission Estyn to conduct an annual assessment of parent opinion.** We can do much more to understand the views of parents and how happy they are with the education their child is receiving. Schools should be required to support this annual survey to help them understand the views of their parents and provide a national snapshot of parent opinion.

The cost-of-living crisis and helping parents in poverty

- **Help parents with the cost of a family day out.** Many parents are struggling with the cost of living, and our National Parent Survey tells us that school trips and family days out are a big casualty of stretched household budgets, particularly for the poorest parents.

Where the taxpayer is funding trains and other transport infrastructure, we should give away heavily discounted or free family days out for parents on

the lowest incomes. The Welsh Government should look at how the School Essentials Grant could be extended to support days out with an educational value.

- **The cost of sending a child to school should be included as standard in any approach to reducing poverty.** An independent advisory body should be established to assess the true cost of sending a child to school. This advisory body should publish an annual assessment of the cost of school and make recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Education on how to reduce school costs.

While more than half of all parents say they are concerned about the cost of school uniform, this isn't the only concern for parents. The cost of trips is only just behind uniform as a major worry for parents in Wales. There are many other additional school costs that are keeping some parents up at night. Tackling the cost of school is about more than just uniform and any new advisory body needs to look at all the extra costs that can quickly add up for parents.

- **Support new Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in the poorest areas to boost enrichment, school trips and reduce the cost of uniform.** We have no official record of PTA groups, which means we don't know which schools have a PTA and which schools don't. Wales' Pupil Level Annual School Census should be amended to include a question on PTAs to establish how many schools have a PTA group. Once we have this information we should commit to quickly identifying schools in areas of high disadvantage without a PTA group.

The Welsh Government should explore establishing a match fund to support new PTAs in the poorest areas, with a focus on helping parents who raise money for enrichment activities, school trips and help with school uniform costs.

Cracking down on social media and smartphones

- **Ban smartphones for children in Wales.** Children spend significant amounts of their time outside school staring at screens. Simply preventing phone use at school isn't enough. The Welsh Government should take the lead on this issue.
- The Welsh Government should establish a major scientific review of the evidence on the impact of smartphones and social media on children. This review should be the basis for new measures to introduce a social media age of consent at age 16, restrictions on the marketing of smartphones to children under 16 and a total ban on smartphones in schools in Wales.

It's 'okay' to enjoy school

- **Don't be afraid to say children should enjoy school.** Changes to the way we do school should focus on making school more enjoyable. We should announce a series of new measures to report on the enjoyment of school and not just learning for a test.

Giving every child the chance to take part in after-school clubs

- **Every primary and secondary child should have access to weekly extracurricular activities and after-school clubs.** The evidence from our poll is that fewer children are taking part in after-school clubs and activities in Wales than in other parts of the UK. We should work towards a new funding settlement for after-school clubs and activities to make them just as much part of our education system as a maths or English lesson.

We recognise the pressure on public finances, but future spending settlements should work to find the money to deliver an ambitious programme of funded clubs and activities for children.

Helping parents to support their children's learning

- **School inspections** need to report back on parent engagement. Estyn inspection reports should include feedback about how well a school communicates and engages with parents. This is a simple change that should be made quickly to improve engagement with parents.
- **Develop a nationally recognised 'kitemark'** for engaging with parents. We should set an ambition that every school will achieve the standards set out in a new 'kitemark' for engaging with parents. The Parentkind 'Blueprint for Schools' provides a template for any new approach and ministers should build on this.
- **Rethink homework.** Many parents told us homework is causing arguments at home. Parents and children are feeling more pressure than ever and we need a national conversation on how homework can help children to learn but avoid causing family conflict.

Parentkind is calling for an expert review of homework and how we can encourage children to enjoy learning again and find time for clubs outside of school.

School attendance

- **Reduce the temptation for the term time holiday.** Most parents think that every day at school matters, but they are tempted by cheaper family holidays. Parents are often put in a difficult position with family holidays that are substantially more expensive during the school holidays. We're calling for a review of the marketing and pricing of holidays primarily marketed at families to reduce the gap between a holiday in term time and one in the school holidays.

Methodology and sample demographics

The National Parent Survey was conducted online by YouGov. The fieldwork took place from 26th April to 16th May 2024 amongst 5,490 parents in England (3,012), Scotland (1,313), Wales (862) and Northern Ireland (303), who have at least one child aged 4 to 18 in school. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK Parents aged 18+. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov plc. Analysis and reporting was carried out by Parentkind. **This report details the results of the 862 responses from parents in Wales.** 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 the UK, but rather a sample of the population, results are subject to a margin of error which is estimated to be up to +/- 3.3 percentage points for the whole sample. The exact margin of error varies with the proportion considered. This means that if, for instance, according to the survey 26% of respondents strongly agree that their child enjoys school, in reality the proportion is likely to be between 22.7% and 29.3% (i.e. the margin of error would be +/-3.3%). Statistically

Demographics

Please note totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Gender - Are you?

Male	50%
Female	50%

Age - What is your age?

18-34	17%
35-44	35%
45-54	34%
55+	13%

significant differences in results for particular demographic subgroups are mentioned in the report.

Parent and pupil numbers

Where we've made reference to parent numbers in the report, we have first estimated the number of parents of dependent children aged 0 to 18 using ONS data on family and household types, and assuming 'couple' households have two parents and single-parent households have one parent. Using ONS data on the number of children aged 0 to 3 and family composition, along with WHO data on child spacing, we have then estimated the number of parents who have at least one school-age child (aged 4 to 18), which is the number we use in the report.

The pupil numbers in the report have been estimated using information on the total number of primary, secondary or all pupils in Wales published by the Welsh Government in July 2024. Where for example 20% of all parents reported their child had experienced a particular issue in the last 12 months, we have assumed that this would be true for 20% of all pupils.

Nation/region - Where do you live?

Mid and West Wales	19%
North Wales	20%
Cardiff	13%
South Wales Central	7%
South Wales East	23%
South Wales West	18%

Number of children in household - *How many children are you the parent/guardian of in total (i.e. of any ages, including children aged 18 or over)?*

1	39%
2	46%
3+	15%

Age of eldest child - *How old is your oldest child of school age?*

4-5	9%
6-7	10%
8-9	12%
10-11	14%
12-13	16%
14-15	17%
16-18	21%

School phase - *Which one of the following phases of education does your oldest child in school currently attend?*

Primary	42%
Secondary/post primary	42%
Further education (sixth form/ college etc.)	16%

Additional Learning Needs - *Which one of the following phases of education does your oldest child in school currently attend?*

Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none">we have an IDPwe do not have an IDP	17% 9% 8%
No	76%
Don't know/not sure	5%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Parent disability - *Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?*

Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none">a lota little	25% 12% 13%
No	74%
Prefer not to answer	1%

Eligibility for Free School Meals - *Are you claiming any benefits which mean that your child is eligible for free school meals?*

Yes	13%
No	78%
Don't know/not sure	6%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Ethnicity - *What ethnic group best describes you?*

White	94%
Ethnic minority	4%
Prefer not to say	4%

English as an additional language - *is English your eldest child's first language?*

Yes	92%
No	8%

Household income - *What is your gross household income?*

Under £20,000	12%
£20,000 - £34,999	20%
£35,000 - £49,999	20%
£50,000 - £99,999	28%
£100,000+	4%
Prefer not to say	15%



About Parentkind

As a national federated charity, Parentkind gives those with a parenting role a voice in education.

We invest substantial resources in representing parent views on their child's learning to local, regional, and national governments and agencies. Evidence tells us that parental participation in education benefits all children in all schools, and society as a whole.

Parentkind's network of 12,800 Parent Teacher Associations mobilises over 100,000 volunteer fundraisers, raising in excess of £120 million annually to fund vital equipment and services for our schools.

Registered charity number 1072833



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