

**May 2020**

# HOME-SCHOOLING

IN NORTHERN IRELAND DURING  
THE COVID-19 CRISIS

**The experiences of  
parents and carers**

**Glenda Walsh, Noel Purdy, Jill Dunn, Sharon Jones,  
Jonathan Harris, Mark Ballentine**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Chapter One: Context and Review of the Literature.....	5
<i>Introduction: Impact of COVID-19 on schooling in Northern Ireland</i> .....	5
<i>Elective Home Education</i> .....	7
<i>Digital Learning in the current crisis</i> .....	8
<i>Impact of home-schooling</i> .....	10
Chapter Two: Methodology.....	15
<i>Ethics</i> .....	15
<i>Methods</i> .....	15
<i>Procedure and Participants</i> .....	15
<i>Analysis</i> .....	16
Chapter Three: Results .....	17
<i>Uni-Variable Results</i> .....	17
<i>Exploratory Results</i> .....	56
<i>Analysis of Open-ended Questions (Questions 41 and 42)</i> .....	70
<i>Cartography of Selected Results</i> .....	85
Chapter Four: Discussion/Conclusion.....	89
<i>Discussion Points</i> .....	89
<i>Limitations of the study</i> .....	93
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	94
References .....	95

## Executive Summary

The COVID-19 crisis has forced parents/carers to assume a greater role than ever before in their child/ren's education. It has tested schools and teachers to their limits in terms of adapting fast to providing (mostly online) resources for home learning, and thrown children into a new, confined online learning environment at home. All this, amid a broader context of fear and uncertainty caused by a global pandemic.

Despite the upheaval, it is vital that our children's education and our families' wellbeing is monitored and understood by policymakers, service providers, and the research community. The Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement ran an online survey on parents/carers' experiences of home-schooling during the lockdown in early May 2020, which received over 2000 responses from across Northern Ireland. The survey asked how parents/carers were approaching home-schooling, how schools were supporting them, and what could be done to better support their households.

### Summary of Key Findings:

1. Education and parent/carer employment status mediate a strong divergence in experience. Parents/carers educated to university level are over 4 times more likely to be working from home than parents/carers with no qualifications, who are much more likely to have been furloughed. Those with university-level education are the most likely to become directly involved in their children's home-schooling through teaching them directly (26.7%) or actively supporting their children's learning (52.6%). In contrast, parents/carers without a degree are more likely to report lower levels of confidence in managing home-education, and to report simply 'monitoring' their child's learning.

2. Essential workers are least able to devote time to home-schooling. This survey highlights the particular challenges faced by Essential Workers. They are least likely to engage directly in their child/ren's home-schooling (e.g. least likely to teach or actively support their learning) and are the most likely parents/carers to encourage their child/ren to learn independently as a result of having to work shifts outside the home. Essential Workers are often working longer hours than before and are at greatest risk of becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus. While not universal

among the group of Essential Workers, the strongest expressions of frustration and desperation came from within this group, struggling with physical exhaustion, fear of infection, an inability to spend as much time with their children to support their learning, and, in several cases, a resulting sense of guilt and anger.

3. Parents/Carers are calling for live teaching and pre-printed resources. Almost a quarter of respondents do not have a printer, and many expressed a desire for more printed packs of work to be provided and complained of the costs incurred in providing printer ink and paper. We also found that only half of children have their own device to access online resources for schoolwork. When asked for a single recommendation to improve home-schooling, parents/carers' most common call was more live interaction with teachers. This could be for as little as twenty minutes once a week, either to introduce new curricular topics, or (especially with younger children) to allow some peer or pastoral interaction to raise motivation levels. We acknowledge the valid concerns of teaching unions and school leaders around the safeguarding of children and teachers, and encourage creative thinking about how the benefits of teacher/pupil interaction may be achieved safely.

4. Lockdown is affecting each child differently. The study provides some insights into children's experiences of the lockdown learning period. Older children tend to prefer learning at school (and miss school more) while younger children are more likely to prefer the home environment. Most parents/carers suggest that children's social skills and behaviour haven't changed since schools closed. The area where children are most likely to have benefitted is in their emotional well-being, where around 1 in 5 claim that there has been an improvement. By contrast, 3 in 5 claim that their child/ren's level of motivation to learn has become worse since home-schooling began.



# Chapter One: Context and Review of the Literature

## *Introduction: Impact of COVID-19 on schooling in Northern Ireland*

To date, the year 2020 has been utterly remarkable. Few people in Northern Ireland would have predicted that by the end of its first quarter, due to the impact of the Covid-19 virus, the majority of our pre-school settings, schools, colleges and universities would close their doors to pupils, with the exception of children of essential workers and those deemed most vulnerable. Most of our children and young people remain, for the time being, at home.

On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced, as part of a radical package of measures taken to deal with the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19 in Northern Ireland, that schools in the region would close at the end of the school day on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March. This included 'schools in all sectors, Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) settings, all statutory nursery settings, all pre-school education provided in non-statutory settings funded under the Pre-School Education Programme and all statutory/generic/non-targeted youth settings'. All such centres should remain closed to pupils until further notice, but remain open for staff to access resource materials, make arrangements for remote learning, and facilitate provision for vulnerable children and children of essential workers. The primary aim was to keep the numbers of pupils present on school premises to a minimum. In a statement on 19<sup>th</sup> March the Education Minister Peter Weir made clear the concern of the Executive for the welfare of children and young people. He pledged to work with the Minister for Communities to put in place arrangements to provide for vulnerable children and young people and those who avail of Free School Meals. He also said that the Department of Education (DE) would continue, as far as possible, to make provision for the continuation of learning.

According to a Letter from the Education Minister on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, some 519 schools remained open and permission was granted for hub-style collaboration between schools. Guidance on such cluster arrangements for the provision of safe and welcoming supervised learning environments for vulnerable children and children of key workers was issued on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 by the Education Minister. Further

guidance on social distancing in educational settings was issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020, with guidance on emergency childcare provision from the Health and Education Ministers following on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020. The key message was that if children could stay at home, they should do so. Detailed Covid-19 guidance on vulnerable children and young people was published on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2020, while the Education Minister launched the Safer Schools App (including guidance and resources for teachers and parents/carers on safeguarding issues) on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020. A suite of support resources relating to mental health and wellbeing; learning; sensible use of digital resources; Special Educational Needs; and Irish Medium Education was made available online by DE for parents and carers. Resources were also made available in a range of languages other than English and Irish, including Arabic, Polish and Portuguese. In a briefing of 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the Permanent Secretary for Education, Derek Baker, stated an assumption that, when schooling would resume again in Northern Ireland, it would follow a blended model combining school attendance with distance learning. Importantly, a notice was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020 temporarily disapplying or modifying education duties from the original duty to a 'best endeavours' duty.

In the space of just a few weeks, schooling as we know it has been dismantled, and not only in our region, but around the globe. In Northern Ireland, following government guidance, principals and teachers in schools have worked to engage as far as possible with the families and children belonging to their communities: keeping in contact; providing guidance, learning materials and advice; and encouraging the continuation of learning by digital means and/or printed packs of resources. As reported by the media, some have also responded to material needs as they have become apparent, distributing food to families in contexts of deprivation (Archer, 2020). The experience of principals and teachers in the region has been transformed by the distance that now exists between them, their colleagues, and their pupils. The sudden onset of this and the consequent absence of thorough training for this new model of learning and instruction has presented challenges. Pupils, separated from the physical community of the school, have been adapting to a new dynamic of spending weekdays as well as weekends with their immediate family, rather than seeing their teachers and friends on a daily basis. Parents and carers have found themselves suddenly tasked with navigating the strange and challenging waters of multitasking at home as they seek to look after children and elderly and vulnerable family members, support their children's

learning, and go out to work (as Key or Essential Workers) or carry out the duties of work from often hastily established home workstations.

### *Elective Home Education*

It is important at the outset to distinguish the current enforced 'home-schooling' during the pandemic crisis from the experiences of the now minority community of those who had already chosen to Educate Otherwise through what is known as Elective Home Education (EHE). In the UK, figures pertaining to EHE children are estimates, ranging from 50,000 – 150,000 (Conroy, 2010), of whom around 20,000 are currently registered with local authorities (Badman, 2009). A more recent freedom of information request to local authorities in England suggested that 29,805 children were being home educated in 86 out of 152 council areas (Staufenberg, 2017). The BBC reported in 2018 a 40% rise in EHE numbers over 3 years (BBC, 2018). In Northern Ireland, Article 45 (1) of the 1986 Education and Libraries (NI) Order makes reference to the choice to educate at home rather than at school. Guidelines for EHE published by the Education Authority (EANI, n. d.) for home educating families state that parents must provide an education that is: Efficient, Full Time, and Suitable. The guidelines clarify that home education is not required to follow school hours or terms, and there is no funding available to support home educating families. The EANI guidelines include details of a procedure for exploring and addressing concerns with a home educating parent.

The main reasons why parents have previously chosen to educate their children at home (through EHE) are moral, religious, or related to Special Educational Needs (particularly ASD) or school bullying (Morton, 2010). In the UK there is no requirement for EHE to follow the National Curriculum, and some families may choose to educate at home in order to avoid it (Rothermel, 2003; Monk, 2004; Kendall and Taylor, 2016). The priority given to assessment in schools, and the associated pressures, constrictions and anxiety, have also been highlighted, together with unhappiness at school, as key reasons for families to begin EHE (Williams, 2018). Some home educators cite advantages of a home education for children with Special Educational Needs, including lack of obligation to follow a prescribed curriculum or a formal timetable, as well as an increase in time and continuity of therapy or health care. Some case studies document that parents have withdrawn their children with Special

Educational Needs from school, believing their needs remained unmet. Kendall and Taylor (2016, p. 308) in a qualitative study focusing on the experiences of home educating parents of children with SEN found that important factors influencing the decision to educate at home included 'the failure of schools to engage with parents, lack of knowledge and understanding around specific special needs and the impact of the school environment upon the child. It raises questions about the effectiveness of formal schooling provision particularly for children on the autistic spectrum'. In other cases, children in EHE were excluded by schools (Badman, 2009).

In an interesting study of EHE among traveller communities, D'Arcy (2014, p. 832) highlights the complex relationship between inclusion and exclusion with relation to schools and EHE. She concludes that 'The EHE system as it stands is problematic because it cannot ensure all children can access the resources and support they need to become autonomous. Support and resources for EHE are limited, especially if the child has SEN. The freedom to legally choose home education over school is thus not necessarily, from these data, an inclusive practice. Depending on the capital and social resources available, some children will have a positive experience whereas others will be much more limited'. Bhopal and Myers (2015) described EHE among Traveller families as associated with the perceived risks to communities posed by modernity and globalisation (EHE is perceived as a means of retaining a unique identity), and of perceived risks to child welfare.

Home education can also act as a last resort for those families believing that mainstream schools fails to meet the needs of gifted children (Winstanley, 2013). EHE parents have argued that children should be allowed to develop intellectually at their own rate, expanding their talents and following personal interests (Badman, 2009). Some have chosen EHE in response to a perceived lack of academic growth in children, or concerns regarding underachievement (Jolly and Matthews, 2018). Importantly, EHE affords both control of the curriculum and freedom as to the order and rate at which the curriculum is pursued (Jolly and Matthews, 2020).

### *Digital Learning in the current crisis*

It is important to note that during the current school closures parents and carers have not chosen voluntarily to home-school their children. Indeed a growing number of



commentators would argue that the term home-schooling is used inappropriately given the current context of enforced, largely unprepared home learning as many parents also continue to work. Parental work may be outside the home as Key or Essential Workers (with day care not teaching provided in schools) or inside the home where parents must juggle their own work demands with supporting their children's learning via (mostly) online resources:

*Whatever some of us may tell ourselves during these weeks, parents haven't been doing what teachers do. Not that they were supposed to – this has been an emergency, not some bizarre competitive parenting contest. However, had it been, it wouldn't even have been close. What has played out (if all went to plan) is more akin to a temporary parent-cum-teaching assistant, steered online by their school. (Ellen, 2020)*

During the current school closures in Northern Ireland due to Covid-19, digital learning resources have proved vital for schools as they seek to continue to encourage learning as far as possible. The efforts of DE to point in the direction of such resources have been mirrored in the endeavours of media organisations such as the BBC and RTE. RTE launched its Home School Hub on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020, offering bilingual learning programmes for one hour each day presented by primary teachers and tailored to the primary curriculum. From 20<sup>th</sup> April, BBC Bitesize offered 'the biggest push on education in its history' (BBC, 2020), composed of a wide range of online lessons created with teachers and other educational experts including videos, animations, practice activities, quizzes and games in a range of topics for children and young people aged 5-15. Celebrity features include lessons given by Sir David Attenborough and fitness instructor Joe Wicks. In Northern Ireland, CCEA and BBC Northern Ireland have launched an interactive programme of educational activities designed in accordance with the Northern Ireland Curriculum (CCEA, 2020).

However, the use of digital resources has raised a number of concerns, including safeguarding of children and teachers. The Department for Education (2020) has stressed the importance of schools in England following safeguarding procedures and has stated that there is no expectation that teachers should live stream or provide pre-recorded videos. Schools in Northern Ireland have been encouraged to use the secure EA C2K services when facilitating home learning (Cross, *Belfast Telegraph*, May,

2020). Teachers' unions have also issued guidance on digital instruction during the lockdown. By way of example, the NASUWT (2020a) has stated that 'under no circumstances is it appropriate for schools to insist that teachers or school leaders make telephone calls or hold one-to-one videoconferences with children' and has issued a detailed checklist (NASUWT, 2020b) for the use and management of remote learning which members are encouraged to complete before they engage in any remote learning. Particular concerns have been expressed in relation to livestreaming using video conferencing apps such as Zoom. The NASUWT checklist insists, for instance, that members must be satisfied that:

*livestreaming represents the most effective means of delivering a particular learning objective or whether other remote learning approaches would be more appropriate;*

*they are not being compelled to use livestreaming, but have selected this approach themselves as a matter of informed and free professional choice;*

*the use of livestreaming will involve a manageable number of pupils and will not educationally disadvantage those students who do not have access to relevant technology;*

*explicit and informed written parental consent has been secured for their children to participate in livestreamed lessons;*

*livestreaming will not involve one-to-one contact with pupils.*

As reported in *Schools Week* (Booth, 2020) concerns about the potential for abuse of technology were also expressed by Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of College and Schools Leaders. The article also notes the FBI warning over 'zoom-bombing' where conferences were hijacked and disrupted by the introduction of inappropriate images.

### *Impact of home-schooling*

A recent report has also highlighted the financial implications of home-schooling, where parents have not received financial support for their children's learning, and yet have reported increased expenditure. In a briefing note, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS, 2020a) observed on 20<sup>th</sup> April that the UK government furlough scheme 'allows

parents to give up work completely to look after children, but it does not reimburse them for working shorter hours. This incentivises couples to have one parent give up work completely while the other works their regular hours, which is likely to increase gender inequalities'. The IFS recommended that the government reimburse employees who reduce their hours to manage childcare responsibilities.

Moreover, concerns have been widely expressed about a possible widening of the educational gap between rich and poor incurred by closing schools. According to Prof Becky Francis as reported by the BBC (Richardson, 2020) 'poor children tend to be most affected academically by being out of school'. Francis said that it is quite likely that 'any gaps in achievement between richer pupils, will be widened as a result of the school shut down'. In particular, the issue of digital poverty has been highlighted as a potential cause of such a gap (Purdy, 2020).

Cullinane and Montacure (2020) in a research briefing for the Sutton Trust noted the heightened importance of the home learning environment during lockdown. They reported that while 30% of children in middle class families are likely to engage with live and recorded online lessons, only 16% of working class pupils are likely to do so. The study also found that 'In the most deprived schools, 15% of teachers report that more than a third of their students would not have adequate access to an electronic device for learning from home, compared to only 2% in the most affluent state schools. 12% of those in the most deprived schools also felt that more than a third of their students would not have adequate internet access'. The report recommended that while schools remain closed, all children should be provided with access to the resources need to facilitate online learning; that disadvantaged pupils should have access to additional one-to-one or small group tuition to reduce the impact of school closures; that training should be provided to teachers to enable them to deliver content to students online, and that schools should consider running 'catch up classes' for children from poorer backgrounds over the summer or when schools return.

Following a survey of over 4,000 parents of children aged 4-15 carried out between 29<sup>th</sup> April and 12<sup>th</sup> May, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS, 2020b) reported on 18<sup>th</sup> May that better-off students have access to more resources for home learning and that although almost 60% of all of the parents surveyed have found it hard to support their children's learning at home, parents of better-off children report feeling more

capable of supporting them. The study also found that children from wealthier families were spending more time each day studying than their less wealthy peers.

Burke and Dempsey (2020), in an emergency report on Covid-19 practice in primary schools in Ireland, asked school leaders about their experiences of moving towards distance learning. They found both advantages and disadvantages for teachers and learners. Advantages for some learners included an ability to explore online/distance learning; to revise what they have learnt; and to spend more quality time with family. Disadvantages for learners included missing out on the social aspect of school; inability to engage with distance learning due to access; and concern for food, safety and general wellbeing among some disadvantaged pupils. Advantages for teachers included being safer at home with their families; an opportunity to embrace the world of digital learning and to continue with their Continuing Professional Development. Disadvantages for teachers included feeling under pressure or uncomfortable about providing online learning; anxiety about catching up when schools re-open; and worry about some children staying at home without the supports they usually receive in school. There was evidence of a digital divide among both teachers and learners, and the study noted inequality in the experiences of learners and called for more support particularly for children and young people with SEN and EAL. Targeted guidelines and support for teacher development were also recommended.

Furthermore, a recent editorial of *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* (8<sup>th</sup> April, 2020) highlighted the risks to the wellbeing of children and young people as a result of school closures, pointing to risks associated with ‘restrictions in learning, socialising, and physical activity for pupils, and the substantial risks to the most vulnerable children, including those in low-income settings’. Children and young people have reported that they are struggling, missing the routines of school and the support of their teachers and friends (Bain, 2020; Hunt, 2020).

Some potential advantages and positive experiences of lockdown home-schooling have also been identified. *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* (2020, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020) also notes that ‘the pandemic offers an opportunity for young people to develop and hone their resilience and adaptability, and appreciate the value of social responsibility and self-sacrifice for the protection of the most vulnerable’. Moreover, some young people prefer to learn at home, undistracted at home at their own pace

and following their own interests. Thirteen-year-old Veronique Mintz writing in *The New York Times* (5<sup>th</sup> May, 2020), explained that she was learning more through distance learning than she did previously at school. She described instances of poor behaviour management by teachers, and disrespectful behaviour by students, that regularly disrupted her learning in school. She argued that distance learning has given her greater control and focus, and that collaboration online enriches her learning.

The risk of children failing to return to school after restrictions have eased has also been raised (*The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health*, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2020). This was the case in some African countries after Ebola, and current parental anxieties relating to Covid-19 contamination could lead to similar results closer to home until a vaccine is found.

Moreover, one study (Childcare UK, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020) of 2273 parents found that almost 1 in 4 parents claimed they were more likely to home school their children after the current coronavirus pandemic is over. More recently the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS, 2020b) reported on 18<sup>th</sup> May that fewer than half of the parents they surveyed would send their children back to school if they had the choice, and that higher-income parents would be more willing to do so than lower income parents.

A decision-making strategy to guide how the Executive will review the current restrictions was published by the Northern Ireland Executive on 12<sup>th</sup> May (Northern Ireland Executive Office, 2020). This five stage plan is criteria-led rather than calendar-led and includes details of the envisaged way forward in education. It is clear from this document that the return to pupil attendance at school in Northern Ireland will be managed in gradual phases, involving smaller groups of pupils in the earlier phases rather than the entire school cohort. Even when greater numbers of pupils do start to return to school in Northern Ireland, in the short term at least, learning will follow a blended model, including both face to face and online learning.

All this implies that many children and young people will continue, for the foreseeable future, to spend more time than they did in previous years learning at home. This 'new normal' in the months ahead will have significant implications for the roles of teachers and parents, and the experiences of children and young people in Northern Ireland, and in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. It is with this in mind, and within a fast-

changing policy context, that the current study sought to gain insights into the experiences of parents and carers supporting their children's learning at home during lockdown.



## Chapter Two: Methodology

### *Ethics*

This study was guided by the ethical principles and protocols of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and ethical approval for the research was granted by the Research and Scholarship Committee of Stranmillis University College, Belfast (Ref. 2020/08)

### *Methods*

For the purposes of garnering a wide range of parents' perspectives on home-schooling in the current Covid-19 pandemic, a quantitative approach was adopted employing an online survey for data collection. The questionnaire was set out in the following sections:

- background information about parents/carers, their child/ren and school
- about parents/carers' experience of home schooling their child/ren
- parents/carers' opinions on their child/ren's experiences of home schooling
- challenges experienced and support required

A variety of response option formats was utilised including checklist responses, scaled responses, and some open-ended responses to allow for respondents to explain their answer in greater depth if they wished.

Before distribution, a pilot study of the survey was carried out with three parents. Their responses and comments made in relation to the content, layout and wording of the survey were then incorporated into the final version.

### *Procedure and Participants*

The survey was advertised on the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and was available for a period of 10 days, until 8th May 2020.

On Facebook, the survey was visible to 81,054 people and had 6,663 engagements which included 1,196 reactions, comment and shares. On Twitter, the first Tweet with the survey achieved 3951 impressions with 338 engagements and the final Tweet before the deadline date achieved 1111 impressions and 56 engagements. The survey was also sent to Northern Ireland schools on a College mailing list with a request for it to be forwarded to registered parents. There were 894 schools on this mailing list including nursery, primary and post-primary schools.

The survey had 2035 usable responses, once partial responses and responses from outside Northern Ireland were removed. Responses came from every part of Northern Ireland, exclusively via the web form hosted on Smart Survey.

### *Analysis*

Univariate analysis was performed on the quantitative and simple qualitative data, to identify overall trends in the data. This informed the construction of a concept map of relationships between variables, and an exploratory analysis of these bivariate relationships.

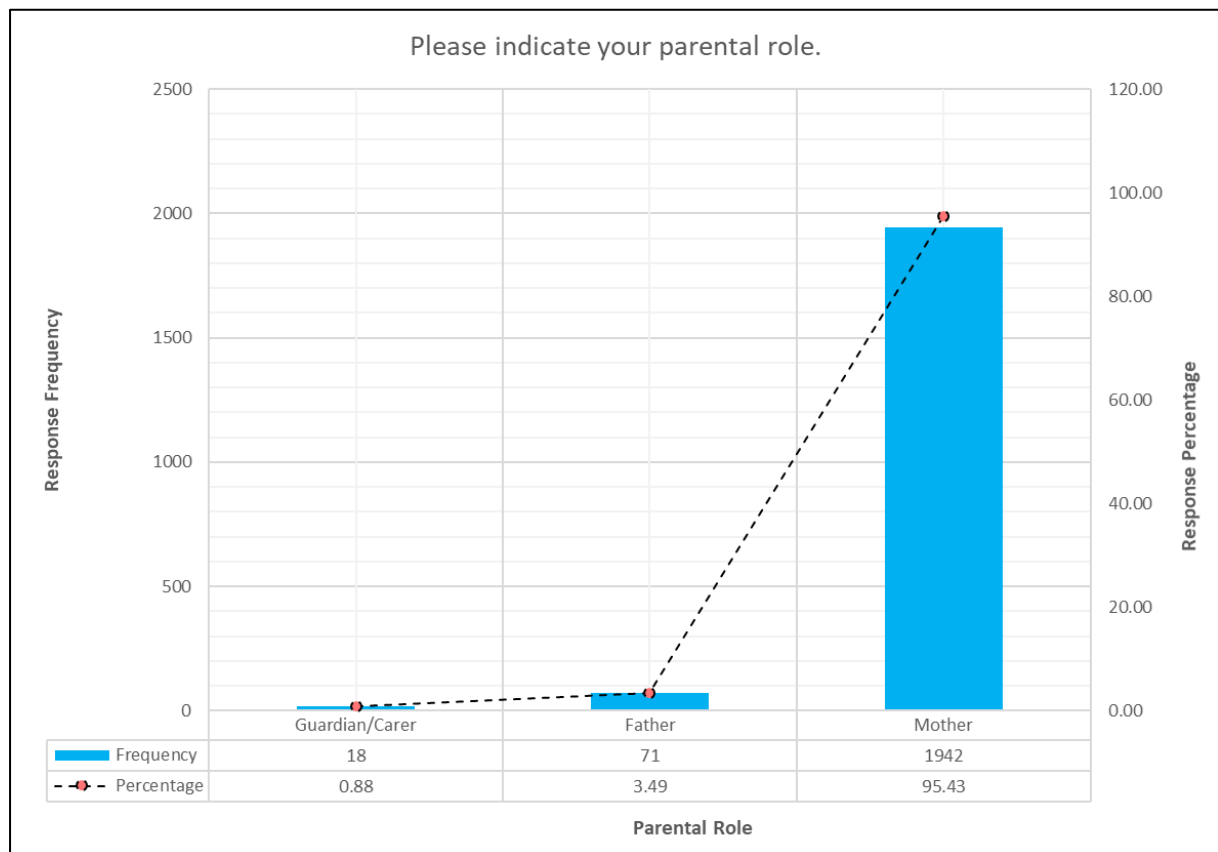
Open question responses containing more complex qualitative data were analysed by deductive coding to draw out common core themes. These codes were then quantified in order to identify common responses across the data set.

Geographical data has been mapped using a GIS package to identify broad geographical patterns (e.g. of computer availability, of home vs. school learning preference). The survey data was mapped by postcode area in a series of choropleth maps to highlight geographical inequalities within the data.

## Chapter Three: Results

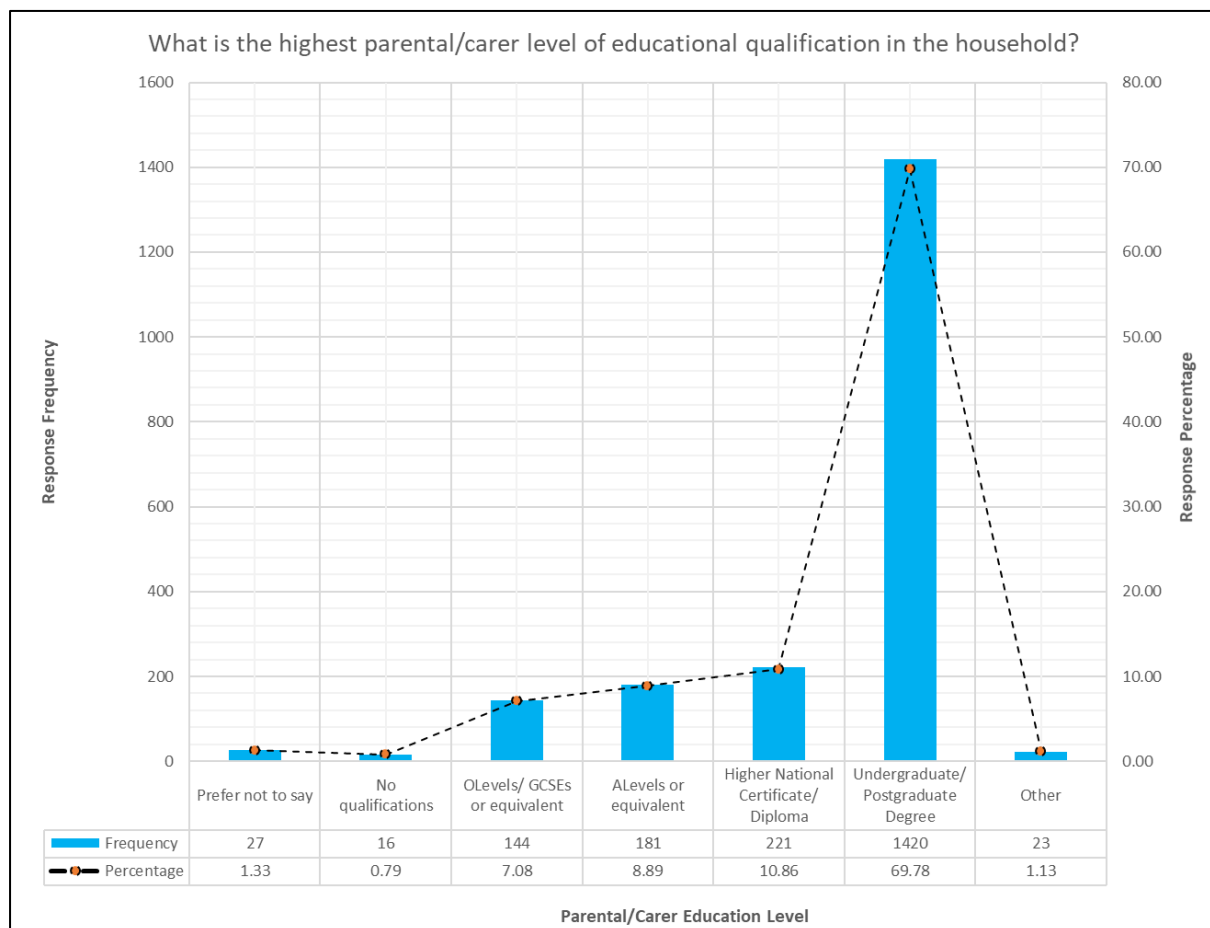
### *Uni-Variable Results*

The survey was successfully completed by 2035 respondents. Respondents included mothers, fathers and guardians/carers (Q1) as shown in Figure 1. The overwhelming majority of survey respondents were mothers at 95.43% (n=1942). Fathers represented 3.49% (n=71) and guardians/carers 0.88% (n=18) of respondents respectively. 0.2% (n=4) of respondents did not answer.



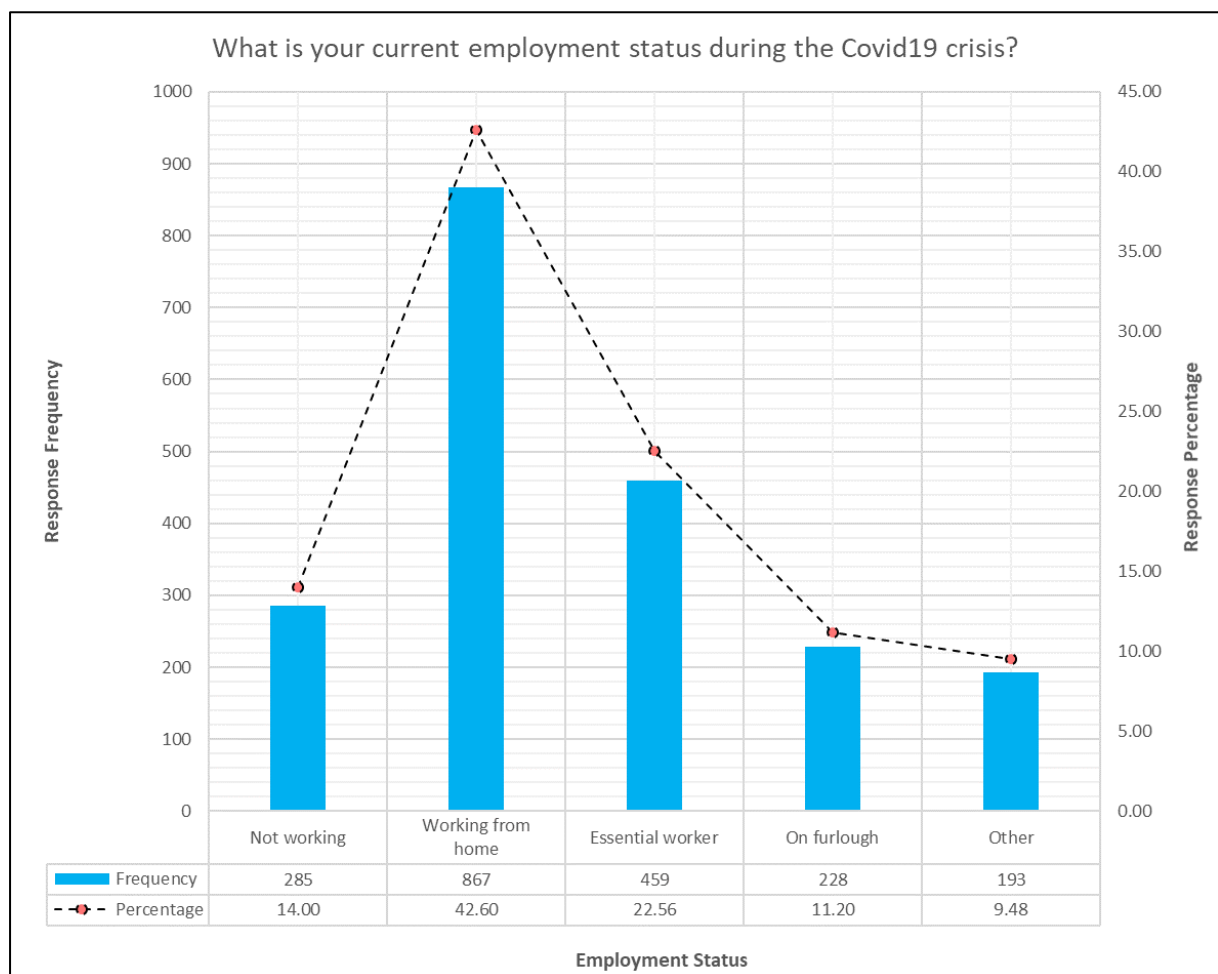
**Figure 1: Parental role (Q1).**

Respondents were asked what the highest parental/carer level of educational qualification is in the household in Q10. The results are shown in Figure 2. A significant majority of respondents selected undergraduate/postgraduate degree as the parental/carer highest level of education in their home at 69.78% (n=1420). The results indicate that 10.86% (n=221) of respondents are educated to Higher National Certificate/Diploma, 8.89% (n=181) are educated to A-Level or equivalent, 7.08% (n=144) are educated to O-Level/GCSE or equivalent, and 0.79% (n=16) have no qualifications. 1.33% (n=27) prefer not to say, and 1.13 (n=23) identify as 'other'. 0.15% (n=3) of respondents did not answer.



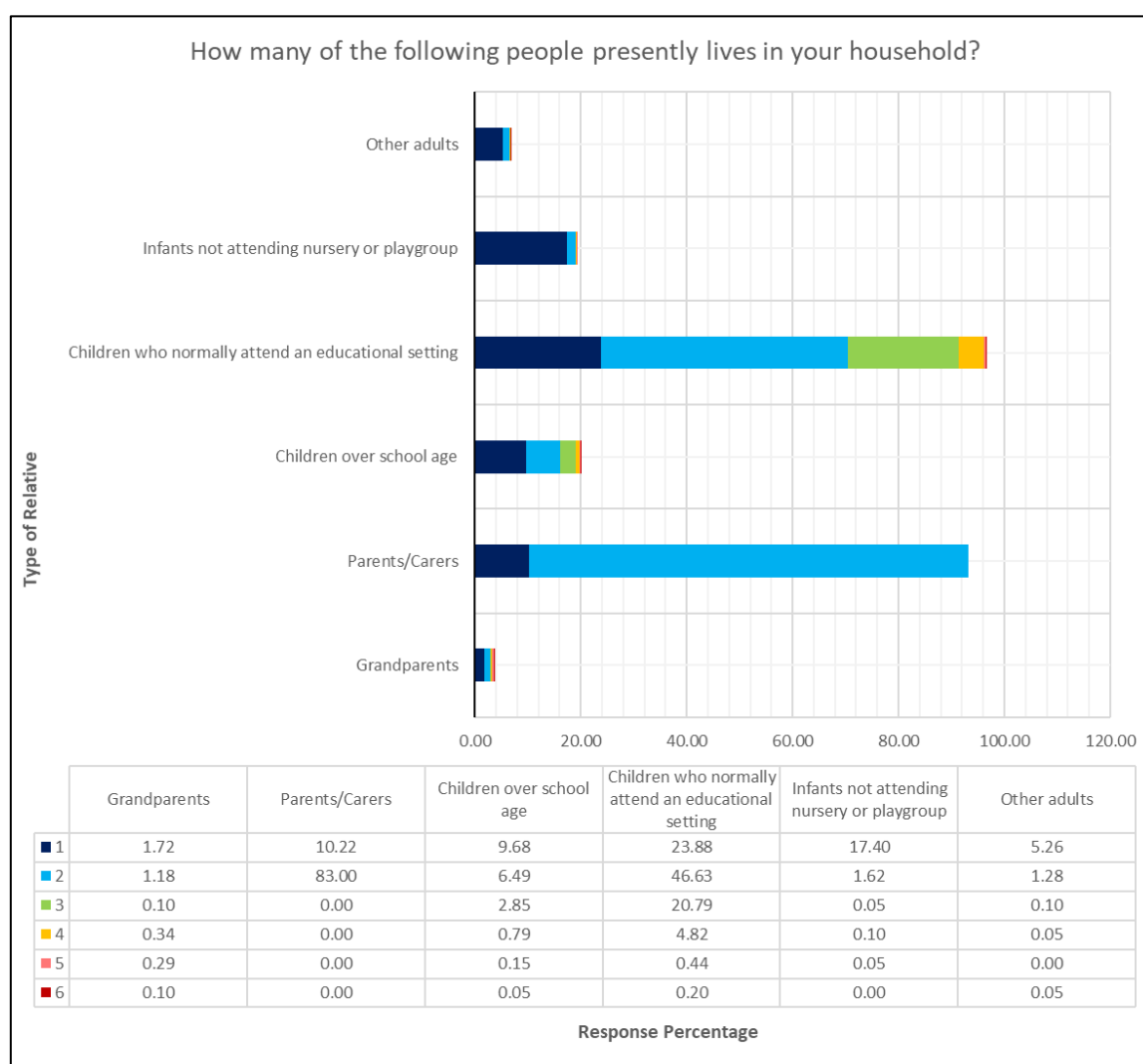
**Figure 2:** Parental/carer level of education in the home (Q10).

Respondents were asked to identify their employment status during the Covid19 crisis (Q11). See Figure 3. As shown, 'working from home' received the highest percentage of responses (42.60%, n=867) by a clear margin. The results also indicate that 22.56% (n=459) of respondents identify as an essential worker during the Covid19 crisis. 14% (n=285) are not working, 11.2% (n=228) are on furlough, and 9.48% (n=193) identify as 'other'. 0.15% (n=3) of respondents did not answer.



**Figure 3:** Employment status during Covid19 crisis (Q11).

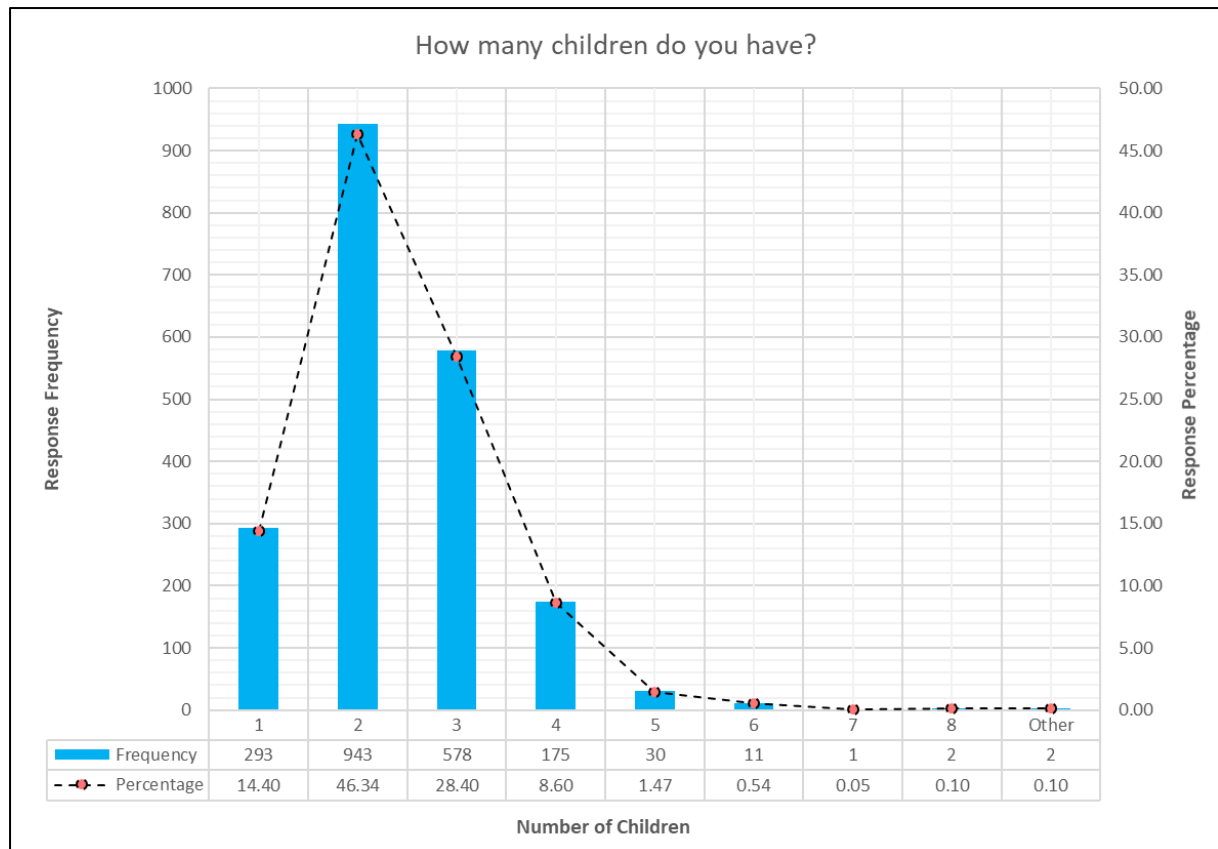
In Q4, respondents were asked how many people presently live in their household. The results are shown in Figure 4. The type of relative with the highest number of responses is 'children who normally attend an educational setting' with 96.76% (n=1969) of respondents answering. This is closely followed in number of responses by 'parents/carers' with 93.22% (n=1897) of respondents answering. 20% (n=407) of respondents indicated that they lived with children over school age, 19.21% (n=391) with infants not attending nursery or playgroup, and 3.73% (n=76) with grandparents respectively. 6.73% (n=137) lived with other adults. All respondents answered Q4. As shown in Figure 4, households with parents/carers, have a majority of 2 parents/carers (83%, n=1689). Households with children who normally attend an educational setting, are most likely to have 2 children at an educational setting (46.63%, n=949).



**Figure 4: Relatives who live with you (Q4).**

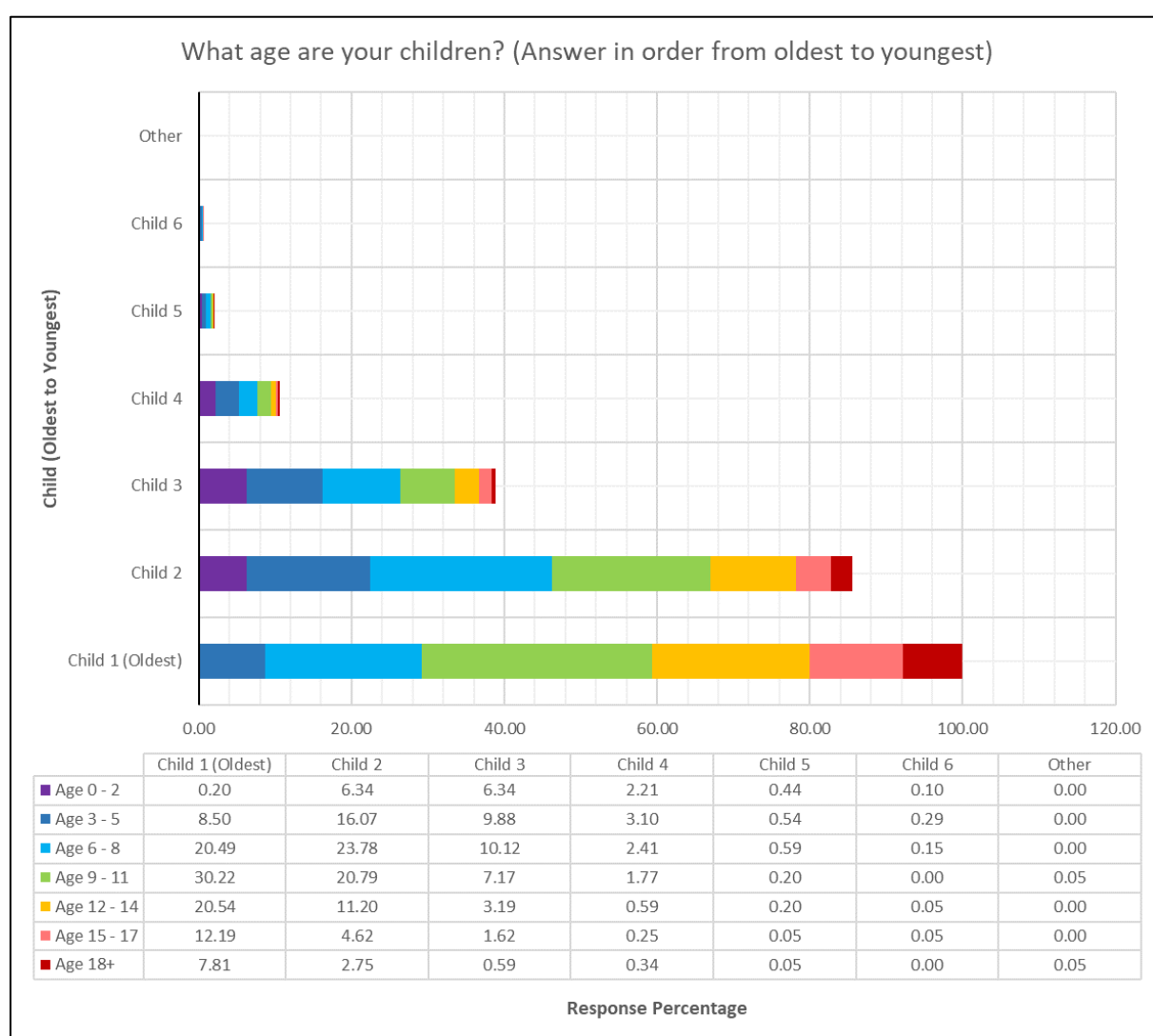


Respondents were asked how many children they have (Q3). See Figure 5. The results show that the most common response was 2 children (46.34%, n=943). 28.40% (n=578) of respondents have 3 children, 14.40% (n=293) have 1 child, 8.60% (n=175) have 4 children, 1.47% (n=30) have 5 children, 0.54% (n=11) have 6 children, 0.05% (n=1) have 7 children, and 0.10% (n=2) have 8 children. All respondents answered.



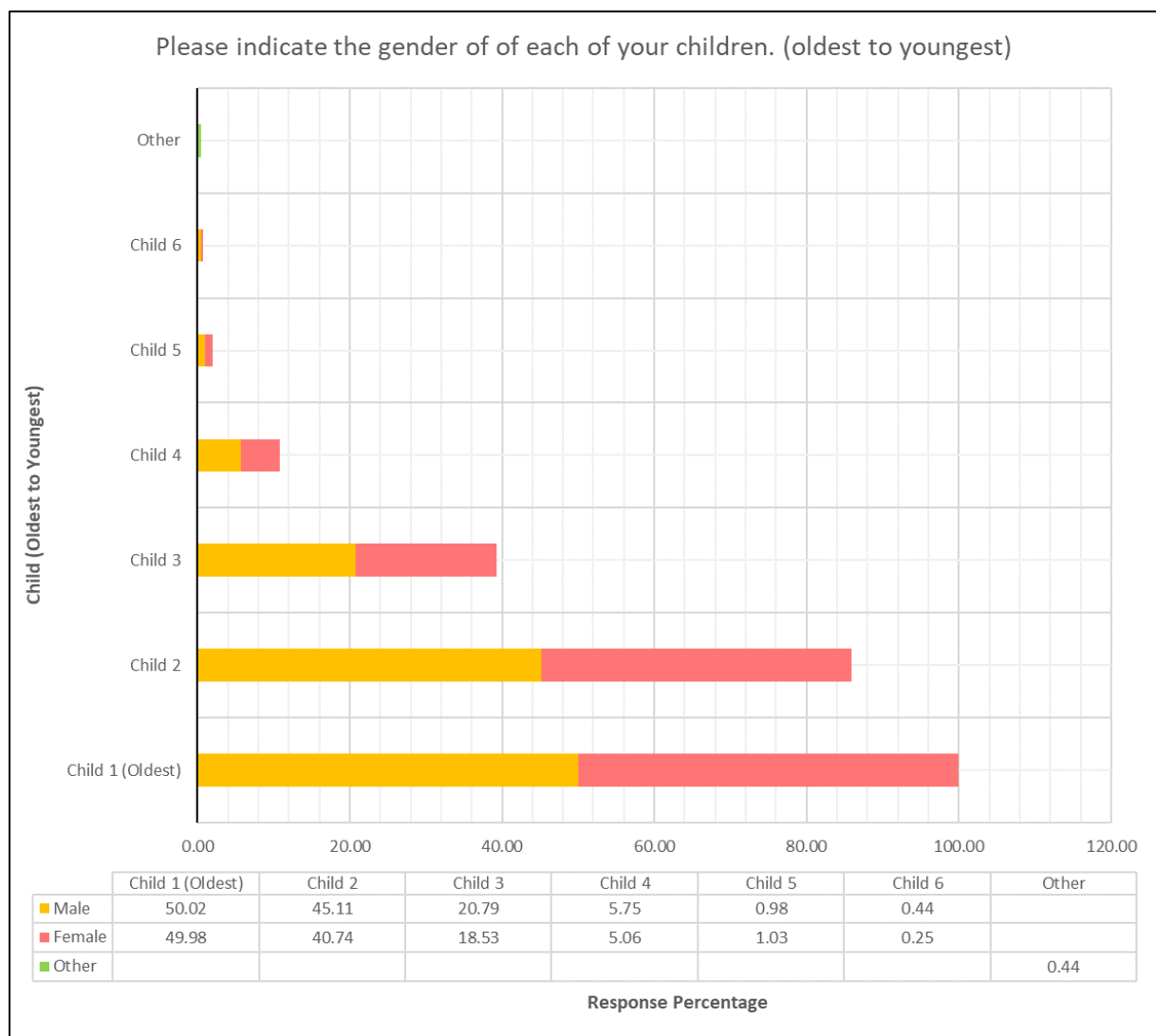
**Figure 5: Number of children (Q3).**

In Q5, respondents were asked what the ages of their children are. See Figure 6 for results. As shown, for child 1 the most common age group is 9 – 11 (30.22%, n=615) which corresponds to a mean of 11, mode of 10 and standard deviation of 4.42. For those with a second child the most common age group is 6 – 8 (23.78%, n=484), for child 3 the most common age group is also 6 – 8 (10.12%, n=206), for child 4 it is age 3 – 5 (3.10%, n=63), for child 5 it is age 6 – 8 (0.59%, n=12), for child 6 it is age 3 – 5 (0.29%, n=64), and finally for all other children the most common age group is both age 9 – 11 (0.05%, n=1) or age 18+ (0.05%, n=1). Only 1 respondent did not answer.



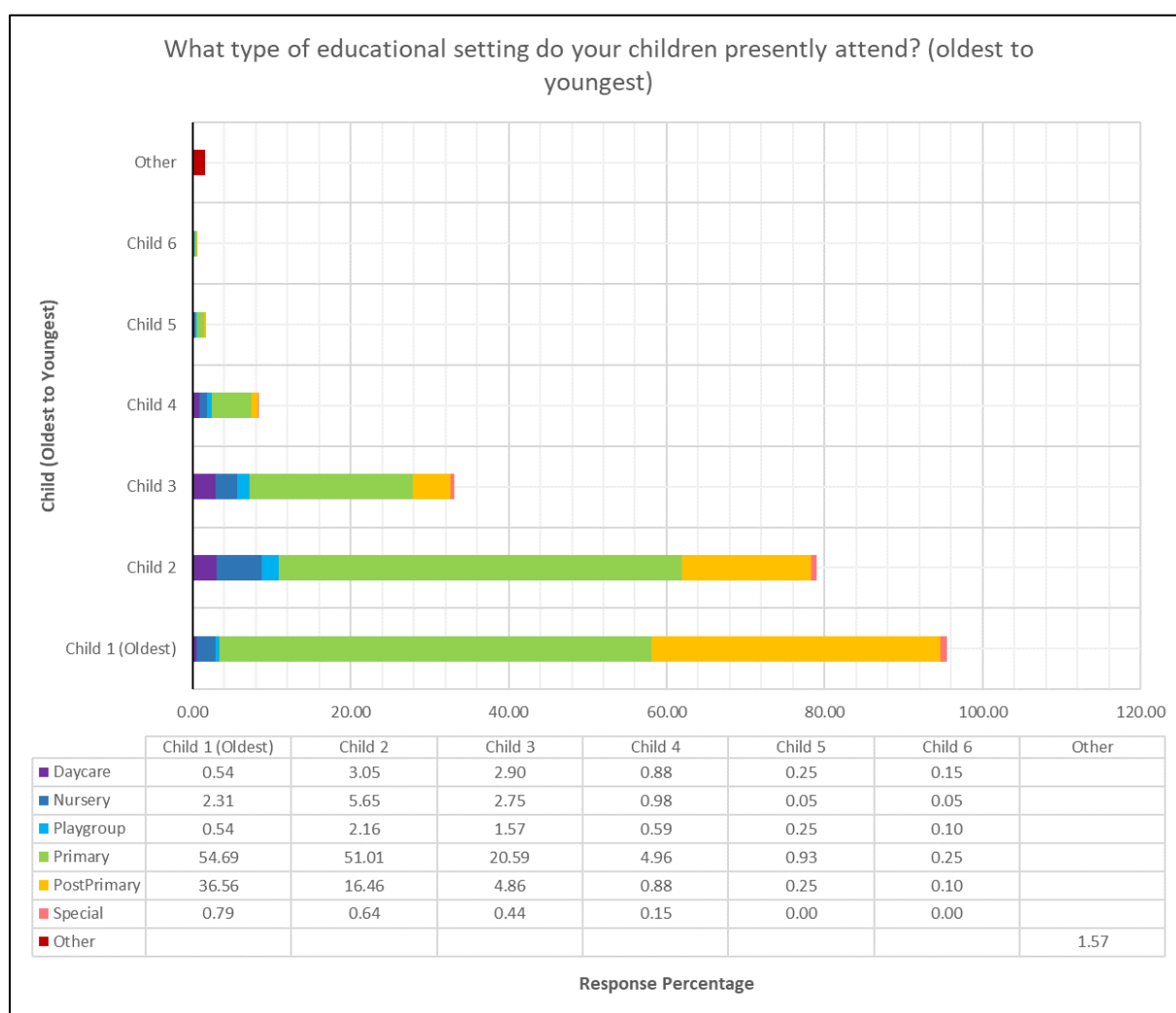
**Figure 6: Age of children (Q5).**

Respondents were asked in Q6 to select the gender of their children as shown in Figure 7. It appears that male children are more common in this sample. 50.02% (n=1018) are male first children (oldest) with the remainder female (49.98%, n=1017). For those with a second child, 45.11% (n=918) are male with 40.74% (n=829) female. For child 3, 20.79% (n=423) are male and 18.53% (n=377) are female. For child 4, 5.75% (n=117) are male and 5.06% (n=103) are female. For child 5, 1.03% (n=21) are female and 0.98% (n=20) are male. For child 6, 0.44% (n=9) are male and 0.25% (n=5) are female. There are also respondents with other children beyond the first 6 representing a very small percentage of the sample (0.44%, n=9). All respondents answered.



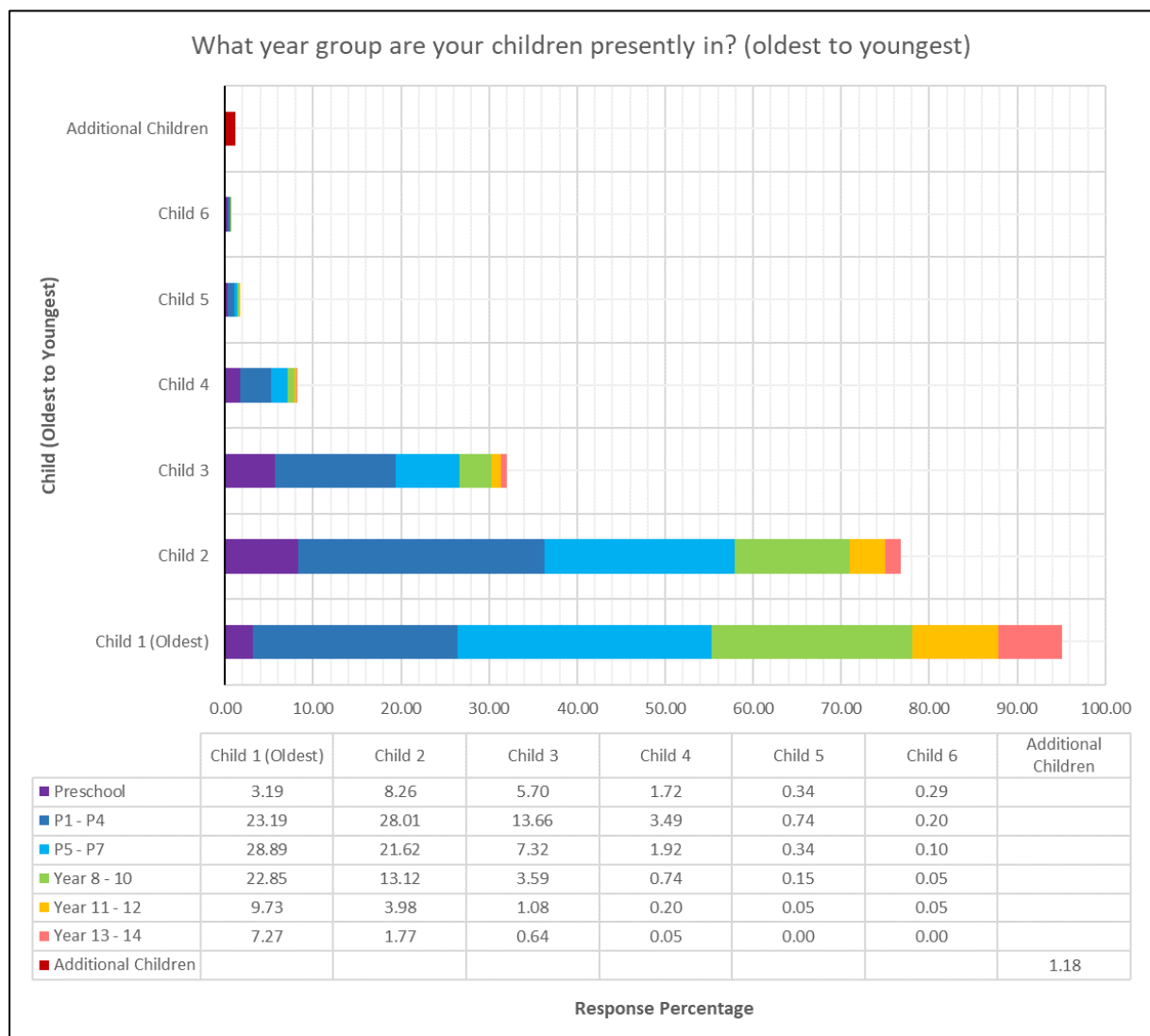
**Figure 7: Gender of children (Q6).**

Respondents were asked about the types of educational setting their children attend. See Figure 8 for results. The most common type of educational setting is primary school for all children which corresponds to Figure 6 with primary school age groups being the most common in the sample. The second most common type appears to be post-primary as shown in Figure 8. 54.69% (n=1113) of respondents have first children (oldest) at primary level. 51.01% (n=1038) have a second child also at primary level. 20.59% (n=419) have a third child at primary level. 4.96% (n=101) have a fourth child at primary level. 0.93% (n=19) have a fifth child at primary level. 0.25% (n=5) have a sixth child at primary level. There were also respondents with additional children beyond the first 6 (1.57%, n=32). 4.57% (n=93) of respondents did not answer.



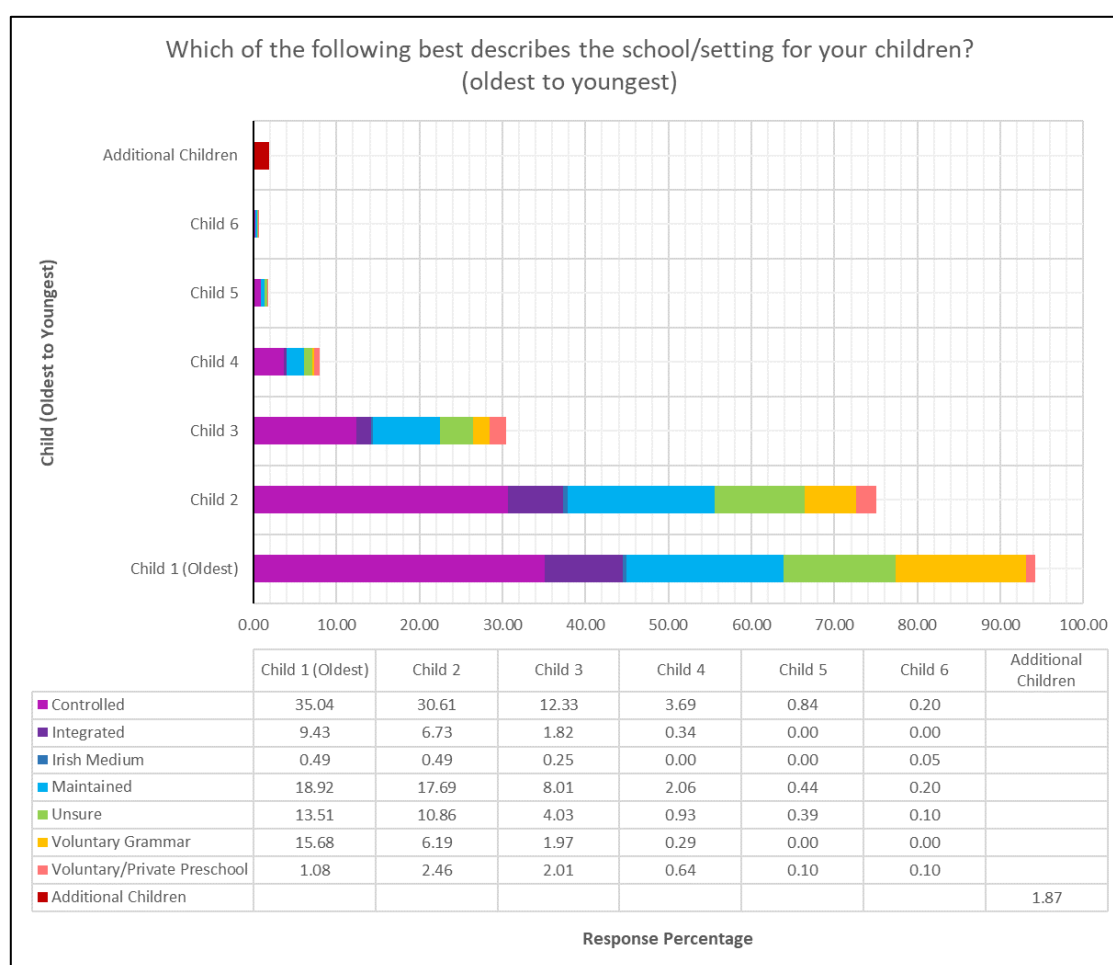
**Figure 8:** Education settings attended by children (Q7).

Respondents were asked what year group their children are in (Q8) with the results shown in Figure 9. Again, as expected when considering Figure 6 and 8, P1 – P7 is the most common year group for all children. For first children, P5 – P7 is the most common (28.89%, n=588). For a second child, P1 – P4 is the most common (28.01%, n=570). For a third child, P1 – P4 is the most common (13.66%, n=278). For a fourth and fifth child, P1 – P4 is again the most common, 3.49% (n=71) and 0.74% (n=15) respectively. For a sixth child, preschool is the most common (0.29%, n=6). Additional children represented a very small percentage of the sample (1.18%, n=24). Furthermore, 4.86% (n=99) of respondents did not answer.



**Figure 9: Children's year groups (Q8).**

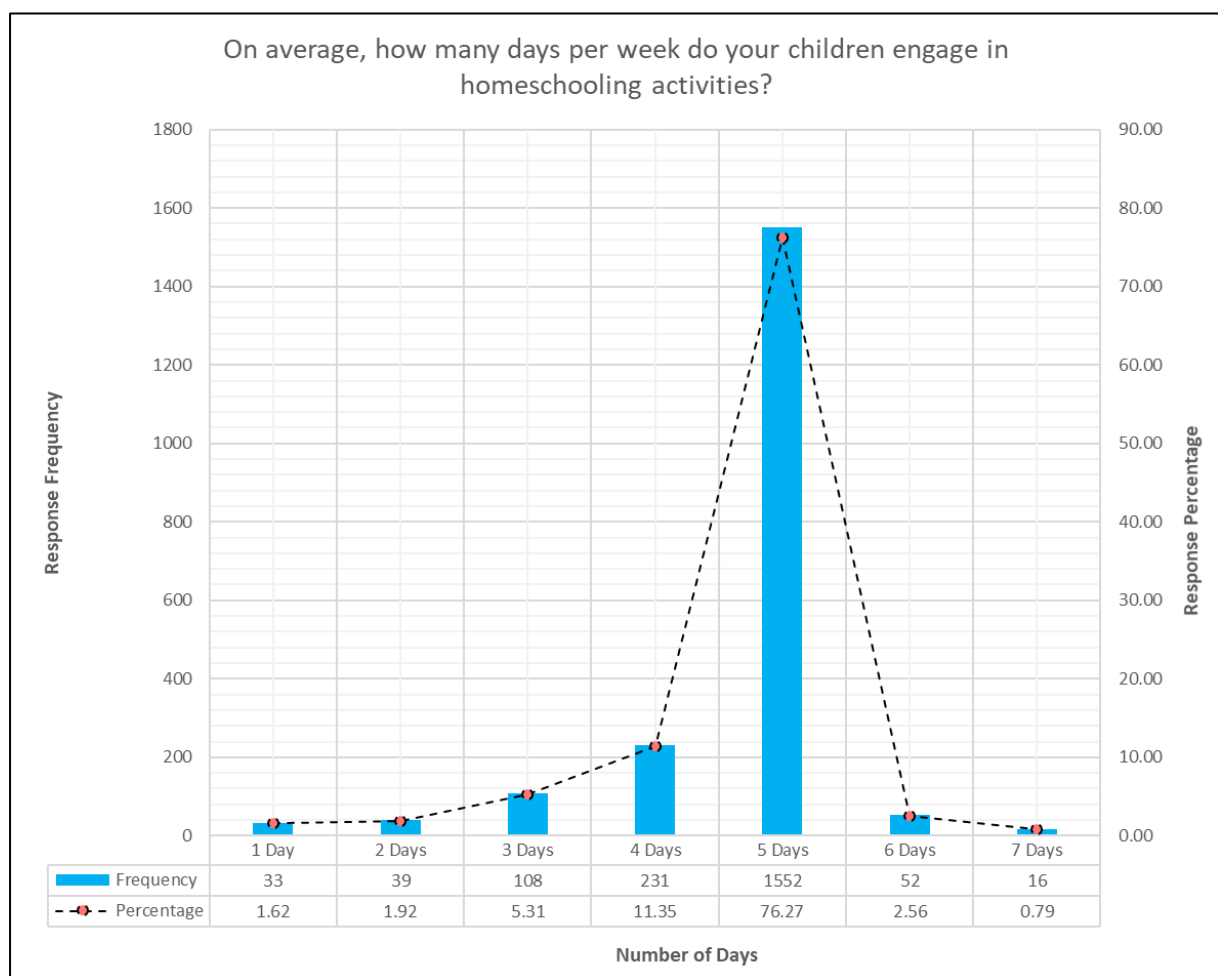
Q9 asked respondents to describe their children's school/setting. As shown in Figure 10, the most common type reported is 'controlled' schools for all children, and 'maintained' schools are the second most commonly reported. 35.04% (n=713) are respondents with a first child who attends a controlled school. 30.61% (n=623) are respondents with a second child who attends a controlled school. 12.33% (n=251) are respondents with a third child who attends a controlled school. 3.69% (n=75) are respondents with a fourth child who attends a controlled school. 0.84% (n=17) are respondents with a fifth child who attends a controlled school. A sixth child is equally likely to go to a controlled or maintained school, with 0.20% (n=4). Figure 10 conveys how many respondents are unsure of the type of school their children attend, for example, 13.51% (n=275) are unsure of which type of school their first child attends. Additional children represent 1.87% (n=38). 5.85% (n=119) of respondents did not answer.



**Figure 10: School/setting for children (Q9).**

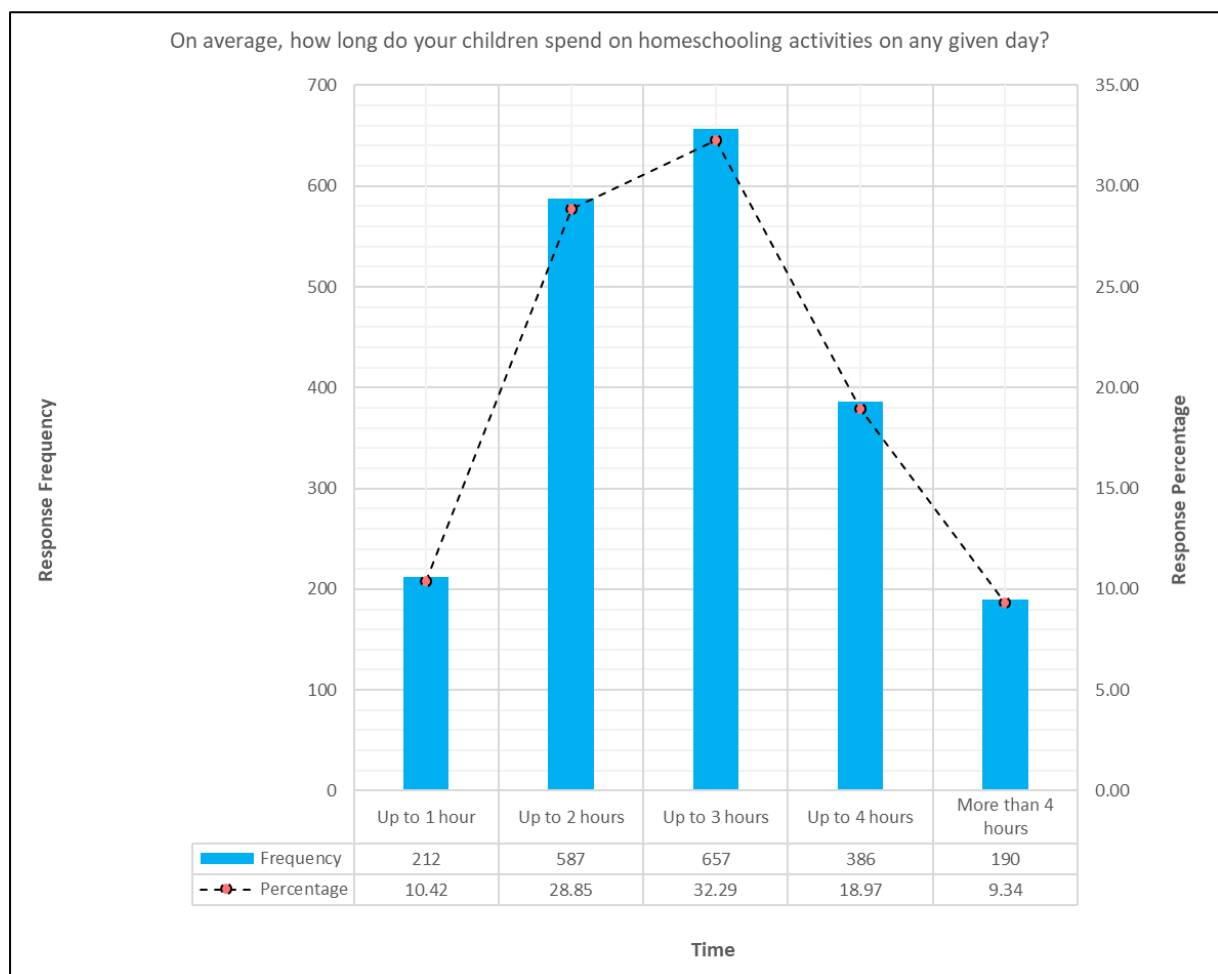


Respondents were asked, on average, how many days per week their children engage in home-schooling activities (Q12). As shown in Figure 11, the most common number of days spent on home-schooling activities each week is 5 days (76.27%, n=1552) with a substantial margin in contrast to the other options. 11.35% (n=231) of respondents report 4 days, 5.31% (n=108) report 3 days, 2.56% (n=52) report 6 days, 1.92% (n=39) report 2 days, 1.62% (n=33) report 1 day, and finally, 0.79% (n=16) report 7 days. 0.2% (n=4) of respondents did not answer.



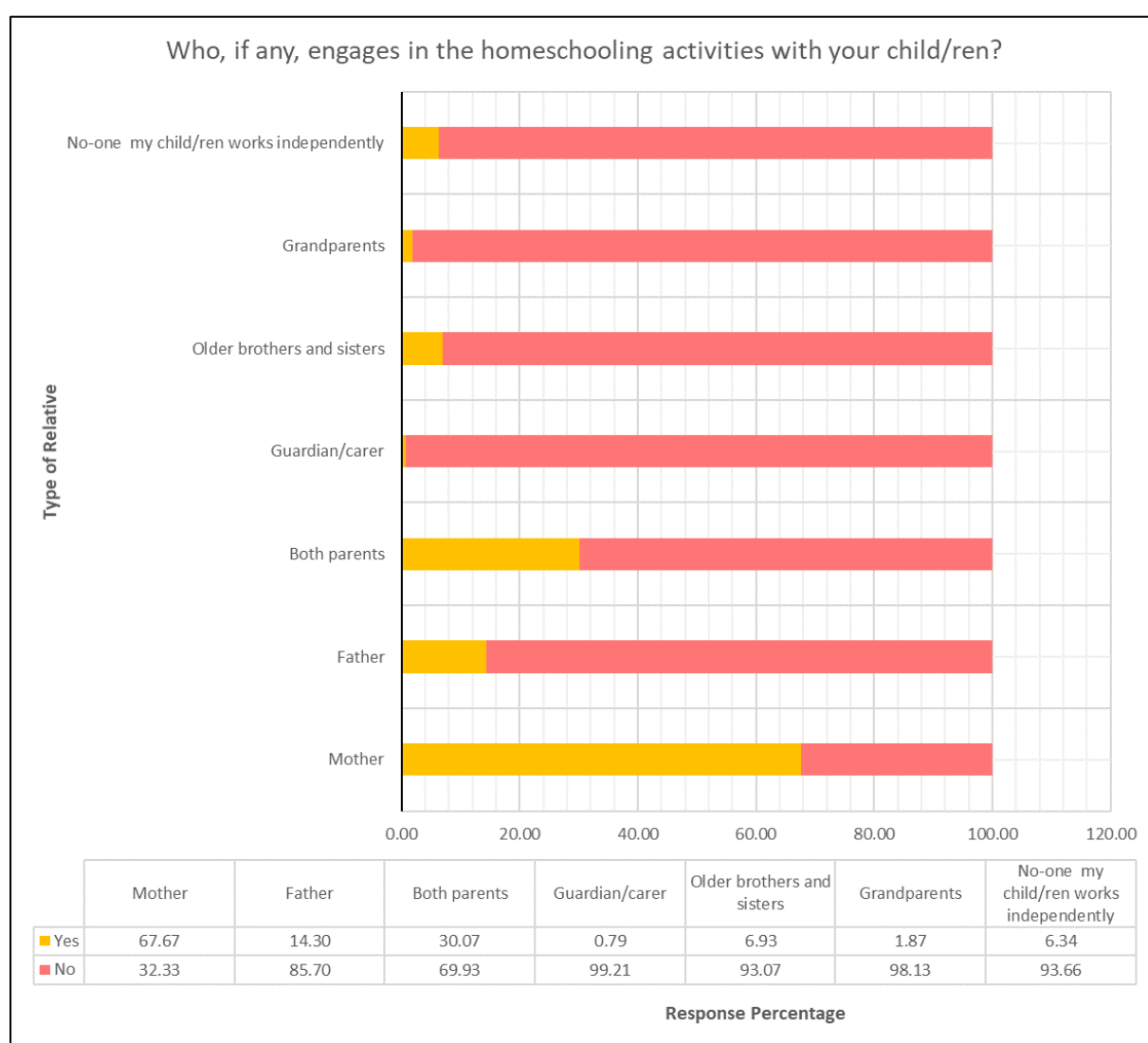
**Figure 11:** Average number of days per week engaged in home-schooling (Q12).

Q13 asked respondents, on average, how long their children spend on home-schooling activities on any given day. Figure 12 highlights that the most common length of time children are reported to spend each day on home-schooling activities is up to 3 hours (32.29%, n=657) with a close second being up to 2 hours (28.85%, n=587). 18.97% (n=386) report up to 4 hours, 10.42% (n=212) up to 1 hour, and 9.34% (n=190) more than 4 hours. 0.15% (n=3) did not answer.



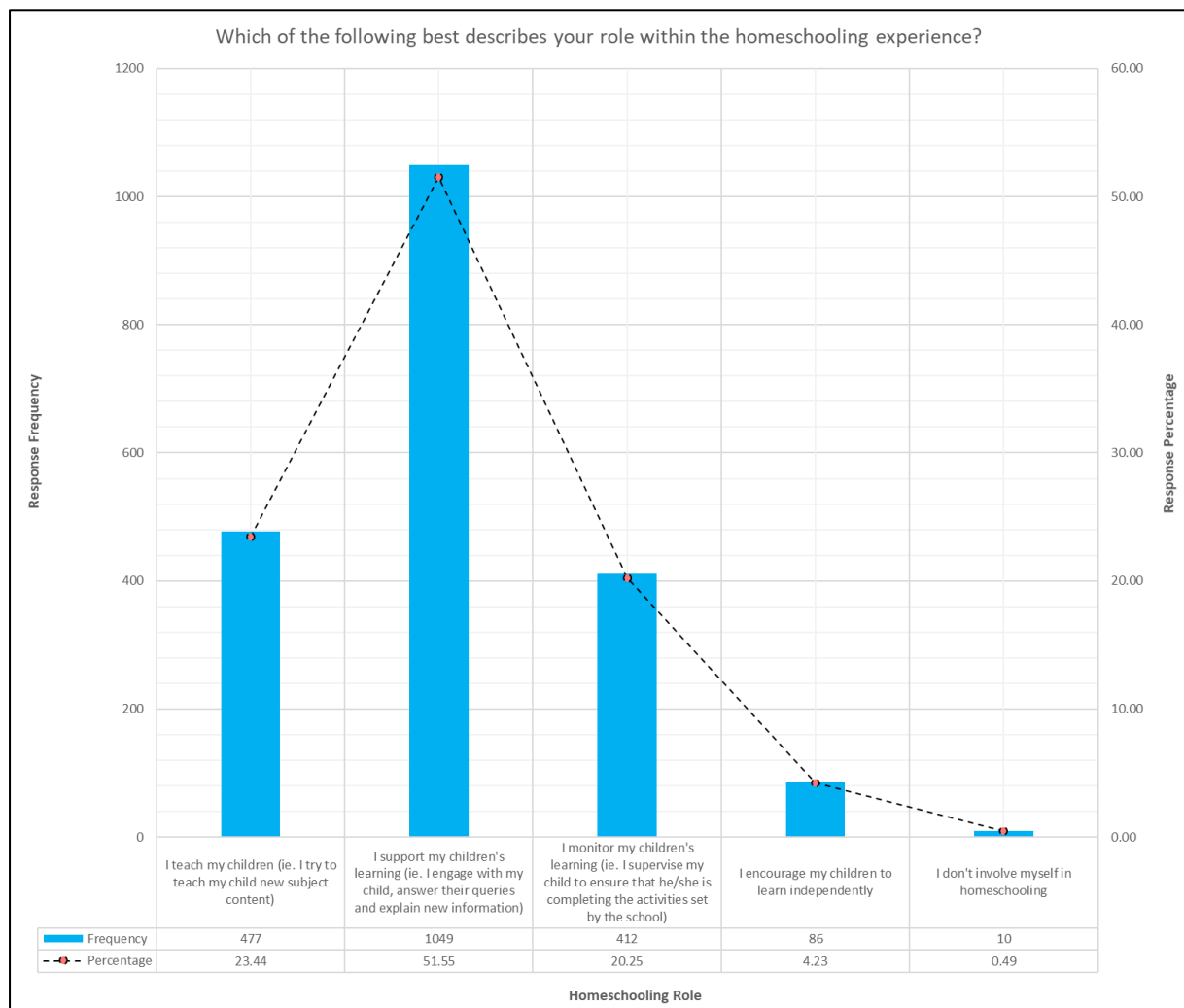
**Figure 12:** Average number of hours spent on home-schooling activities each day (Q13).

Respondents were asked, who, if any, engages in the home-schooling activities with their children (Q14). As shown in Figure 13, the mother is the most common response by a clear margin (67.67%, n=1377). 30.07% (n=612) report that both parents engage in home-schooling activities. 14.30% (n=291) selected the father as engaging in home-schooling activities with the children. 6.93% (n=141) of respondents selected older brothers and sisters, 1.87% (n=38) report grandparents, and 0.79% (n=16) report guardians/carers. Finally, 6.34% (n=129) of respondents selected 'no-one as their child/ren works independently'. All respondents answered Q14.



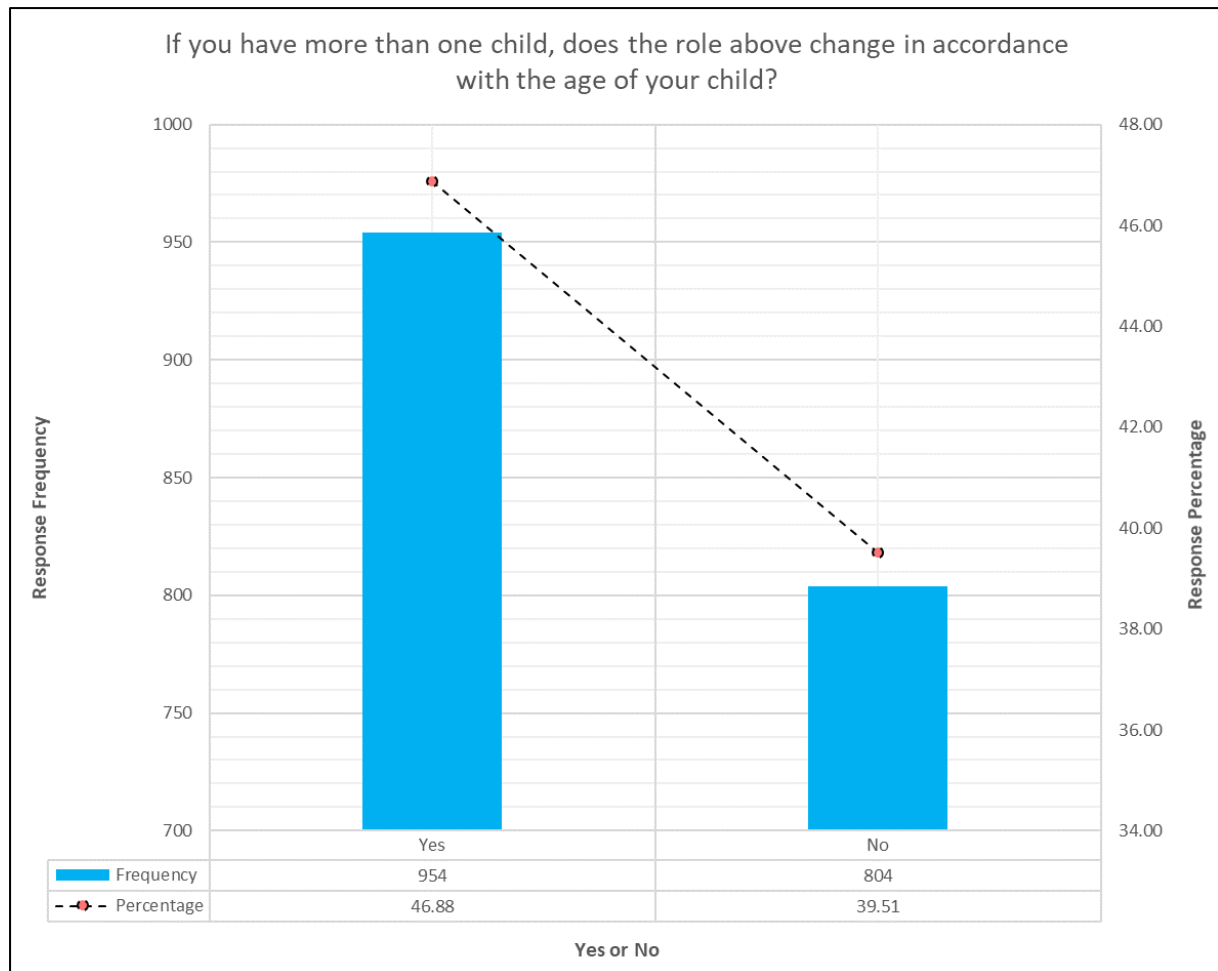
**Figure 13:** Who engages in home-schooling activities with children? (Q14)

Q15 asked respondents to identify their role within the home-schooling experience. The results are shown in Figure 14. The most common response is, 'I support my children's learning' by a clear margin (51.55%, n=1049). 23.44% (n=477) teach their children, 20.25% (n=412) monitor their children's learning, 4.23% (n=86) encourage their children to learn independently, and 0.49% (n=10) don't involve themselves in home-schooling. 0.05% (n=1) of respondents did not answer Q15.



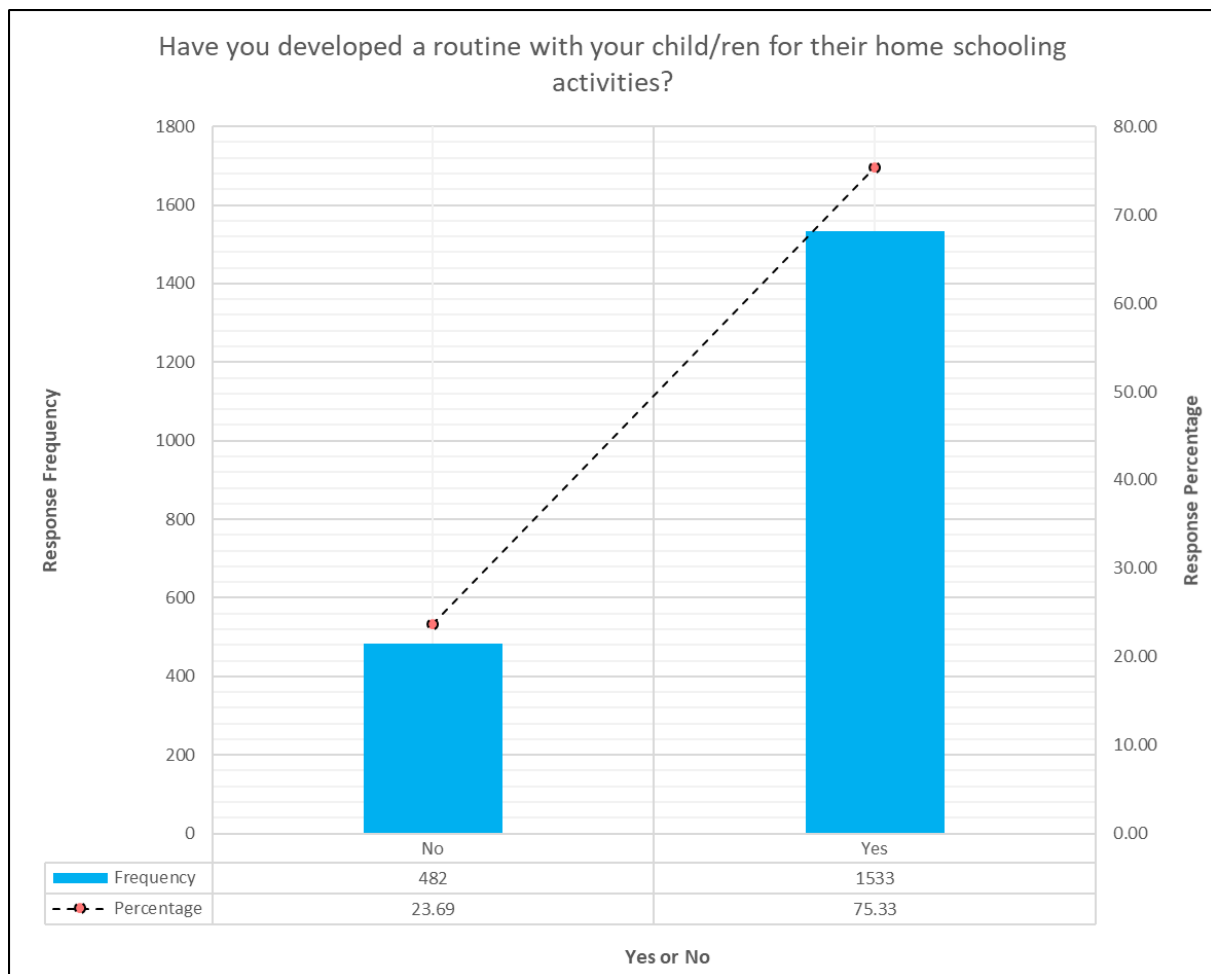
**Figure 14:** Role within the home-schooling experience (Q15).

Respondents were asked, if they have more than one child, whether their role changes in accordance with the age of the child (Q16). The majority of respondents answered 'yes' (46.88%, n=954) with a close 39.51% (n=804) answering 'no'. 13.61% (n=277) of respondents didn't answer. Details varied but in general parents noted that older children were able to work more independently than younger children.



**Figure 15:** Changing role with age of children (Q16).

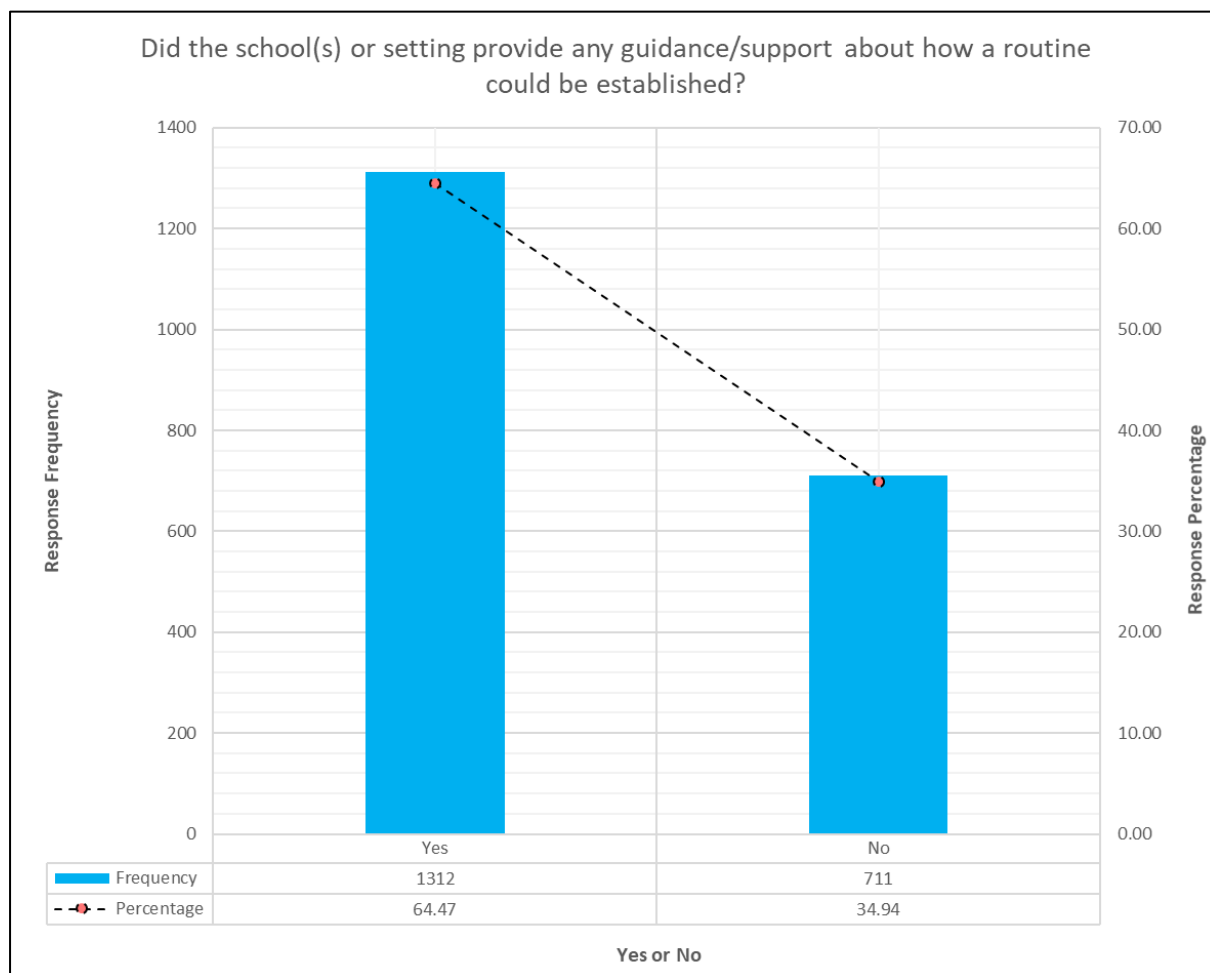
Q17 asked respondents if they developed a routine with their child/ren for their home-schooling activities, with results shown in Figure 16. The majority of respondents answered yes by a clear margin (75.33%, n=1533). 0.98% (n=20) of respondents did not answer Q17.



**Figure 16:** Developing a routine for home-schooling activities (Q17).

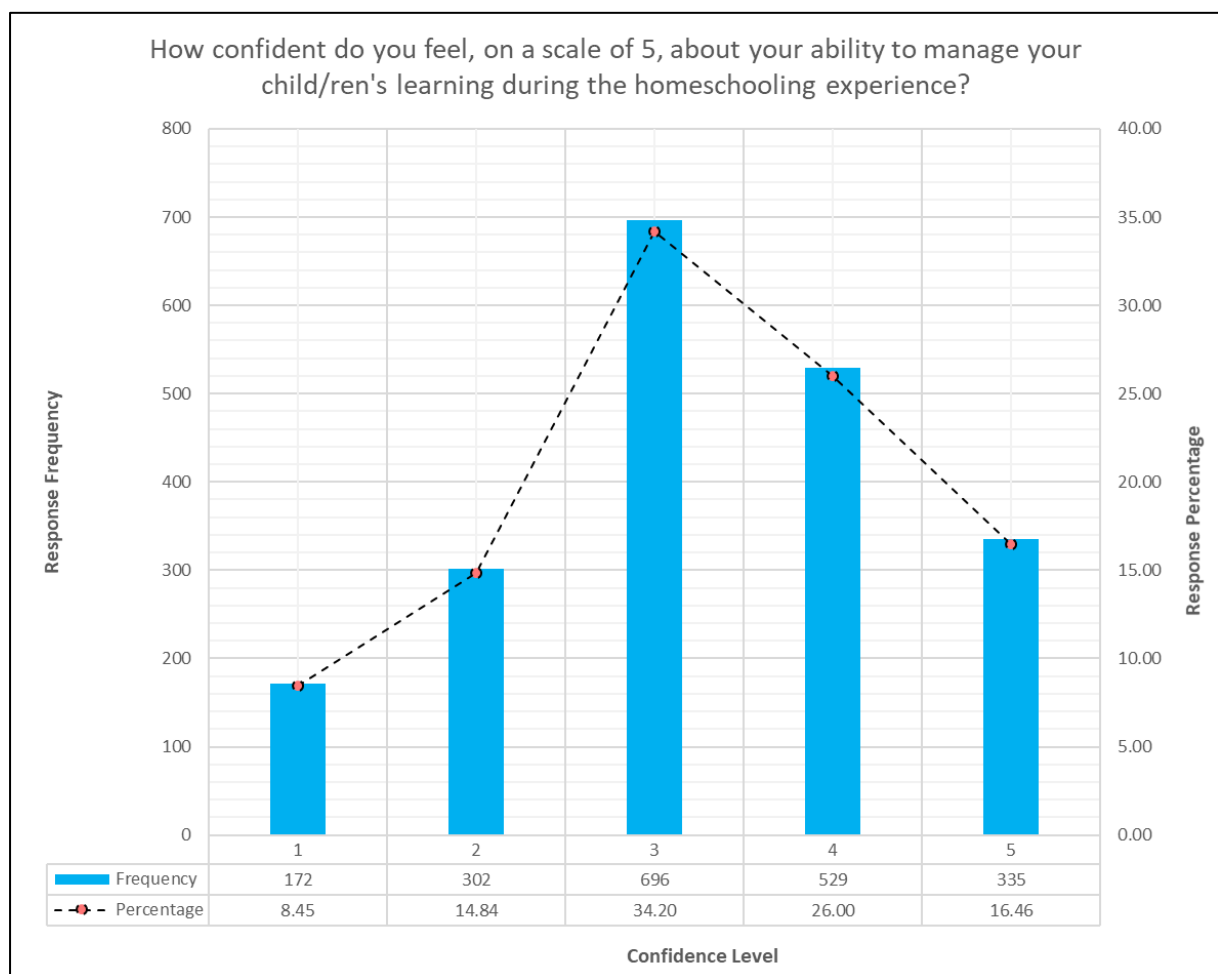


Respondents were asked if the school or setting provided any guidance/support about how a routine could be established (Q18). The majority of respondents answered yes by a clear margin (64.47%, n=1312). 0.59% (n=12) of respondents did not answer.



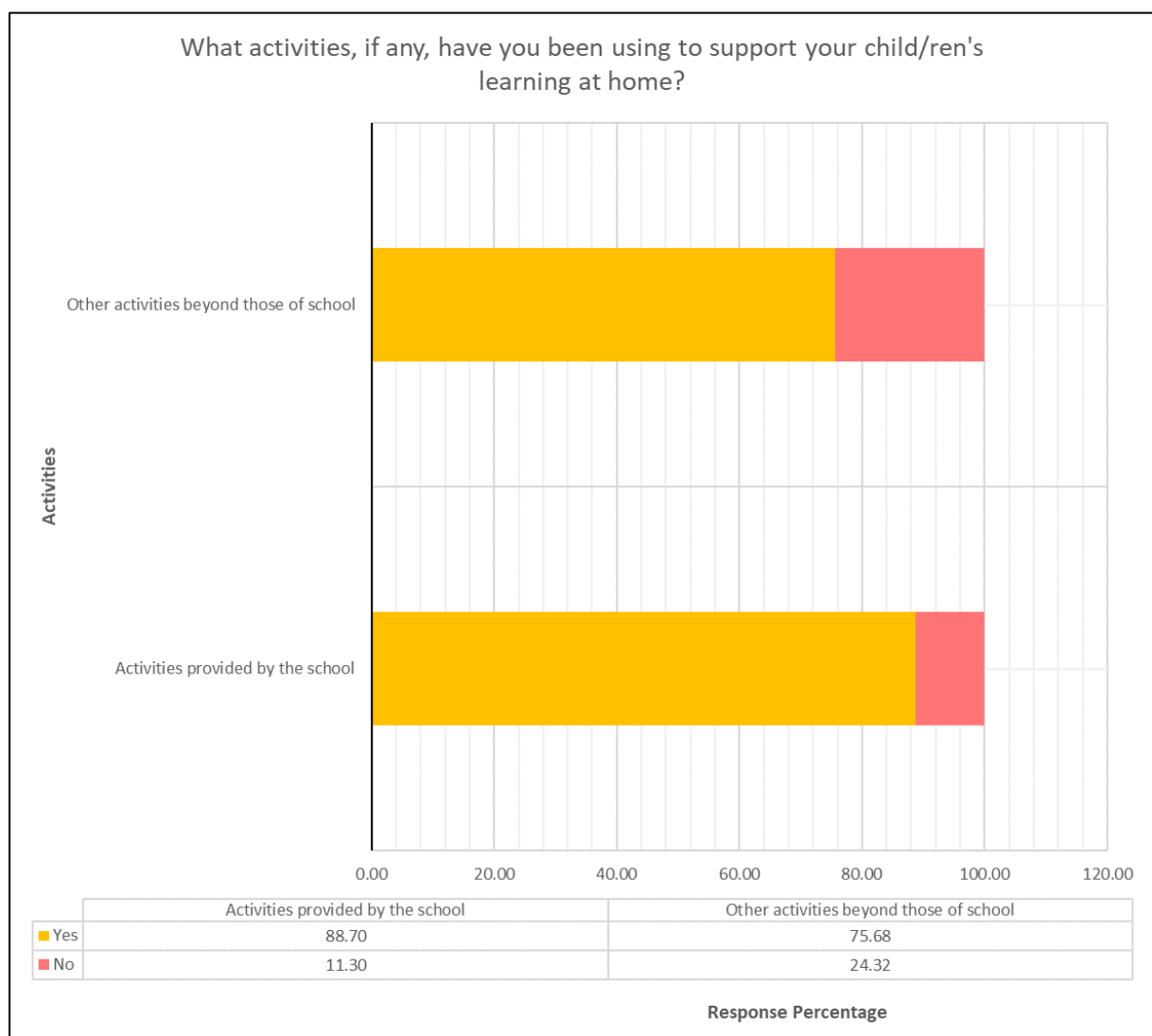
**Figure 17:** Guidance/support on developing a routine (Q18).

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, their confidence in their ability to manage child/ren's learning during home-schooling (Q19). As Figure 18 shows, the majority of respondents gave themselves a rating of 3 (34.20%, n=696). 26% (n=529) gave themselves a rating of 4, 16.46% (n=335) a rating of 5, 14.84% (n=302) a rating of 2, and finally 8.45% (n=172) a rating of 1. 0.05% (n=1) of respondents did not answer Q19.



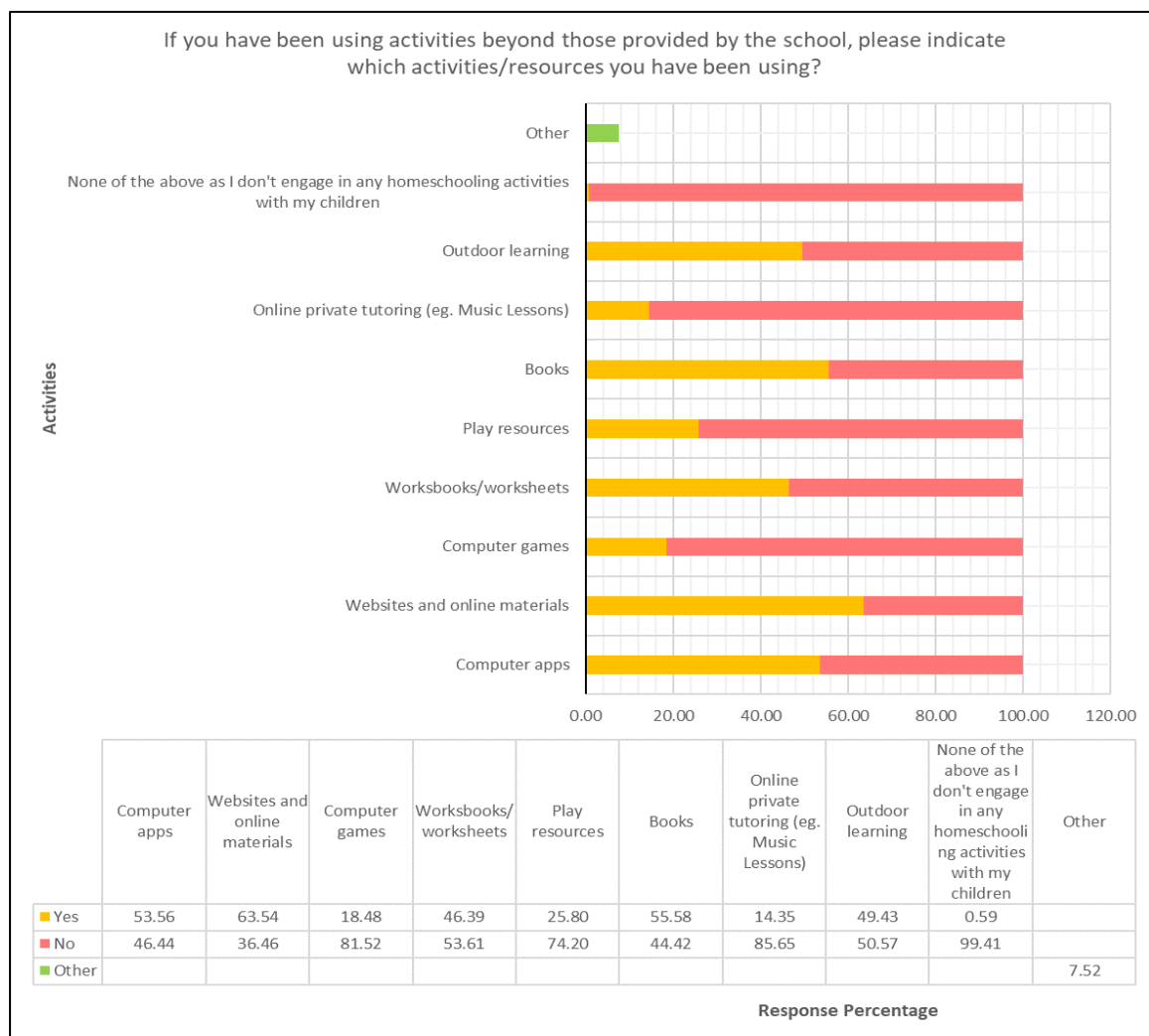
**Figure 18:** Confidence in ability to manage child/ren's learning during home-schooling (Q19).

Q20 asked respondents about what activities they have been using to support child/ren's learning at home. The results are shown in Figure 19. The vast majority of respondents answered yes to both 'activities provided by the school' (88.70%, n=1805), and 'other activities beyond those of school' (75.68%, n=1540). The remaining answered no to both respectively. All respondents answered Q20.



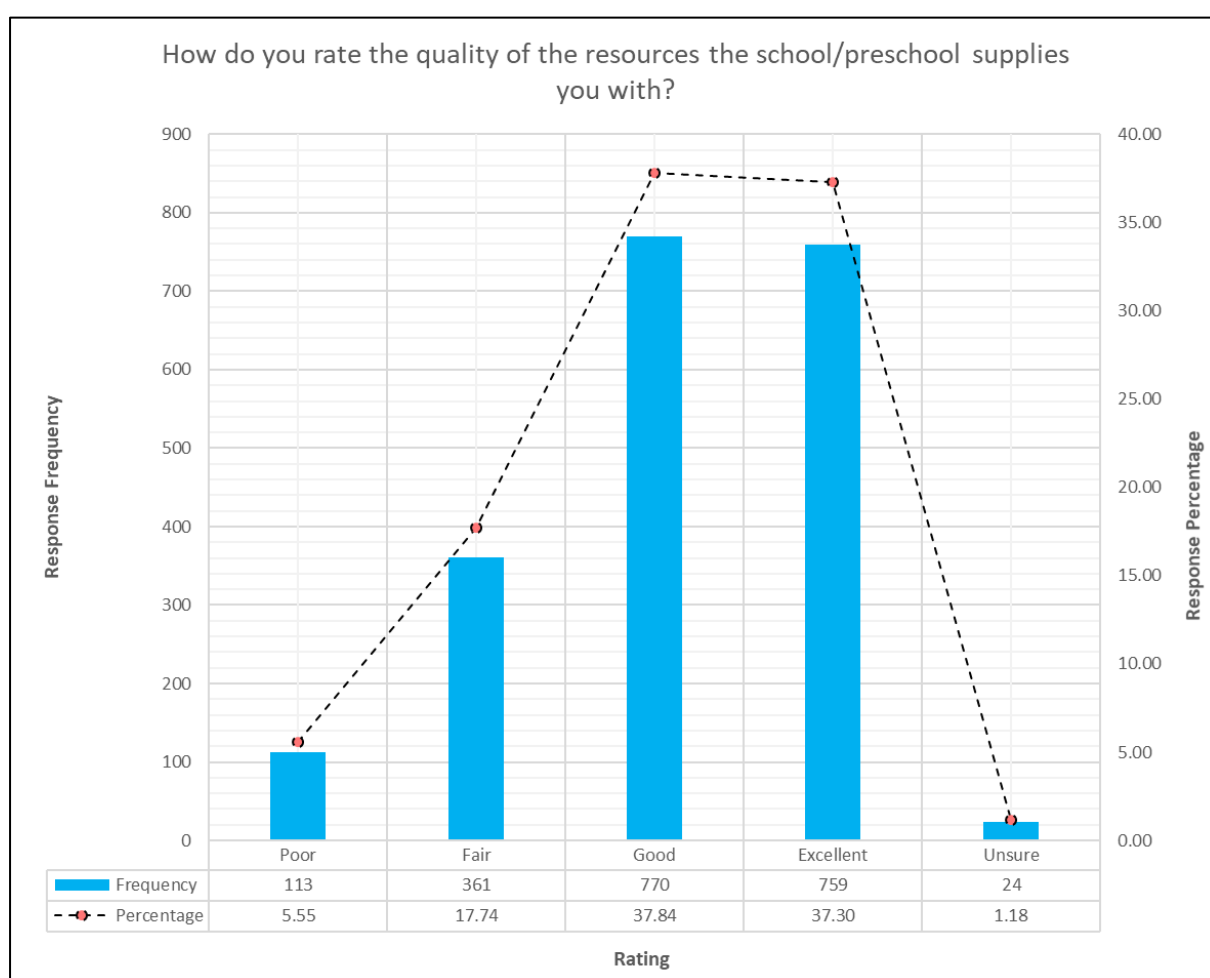
**Figure 19:** Activities used to support child/ren's learning at home (Q20).

Respondents were asked about what activities/resources they have been using beyond those provided by the school (Q21). The results are shown in Figure 20. Websites and online materials (63.54%, n=1293), books (55.58%, n=1131), and computer apps (53.56%, n=1090) proved to be the most popular amongst respondents. 49.43% (n=1006) of respondents said 'yes' for outdoor learning, 46.39% (n=944) said 'yes' to workbooks/worksheets, 25.80% (n=525) said 'yes' to play resources, 18.48% (n=376) said 'yes' to computer games, and 14.35% (n=292) said 'yes' to online tutoring. Only 0.59% (n=12) of respondents said 'yes' to 'none of the above as I don't engage in any home-schooling activities with my children'. 7.52% (n=153) of respondents identified 'other' activities or resources (where the most common additional activity listed was baking/cooking). All respondents answered Q21.



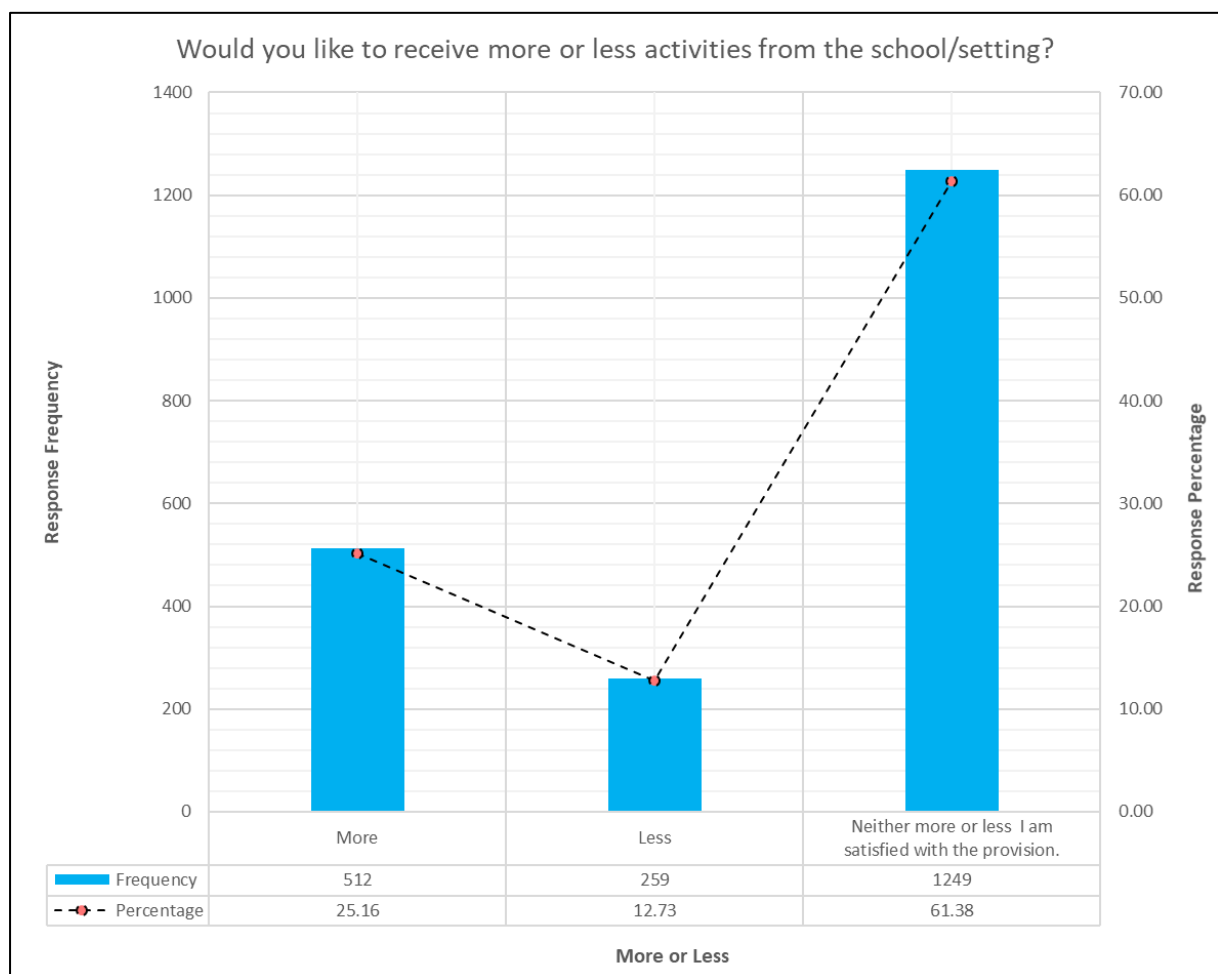
**Figure 20:** Activities/resources used beyond those provided by the school (Q21).

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of resources the school/preschool supplies (Q22). As Figure 21 shows, the vast majority of respondents stated either 'good' (37.84%, n=770) or 'excellent' (37.30%, n=759). 17.74% (n=361) stated 'fair', 5.55% (n=113) stated 'poor', and 1.18% (n=24) stated that they were 'unsure'. 0.39% (n=8) of respondents did not answer Q22.



**Figure 21:** Quality of resources the school/preschool supplies (Q22).

Respondents were asked if they would like to receive more or less activities from the school/setting (Q23). As shown in Figure 22, the majority of respondents said they would like neither more nor less as they are satisfied with the provision (61.38%, n=1249). 25.16% (n=512) said that they would like more activities, and 12.73% (n=259) said that they would like less activities. 0.74% (n=15) of respondents did not answer Q23.



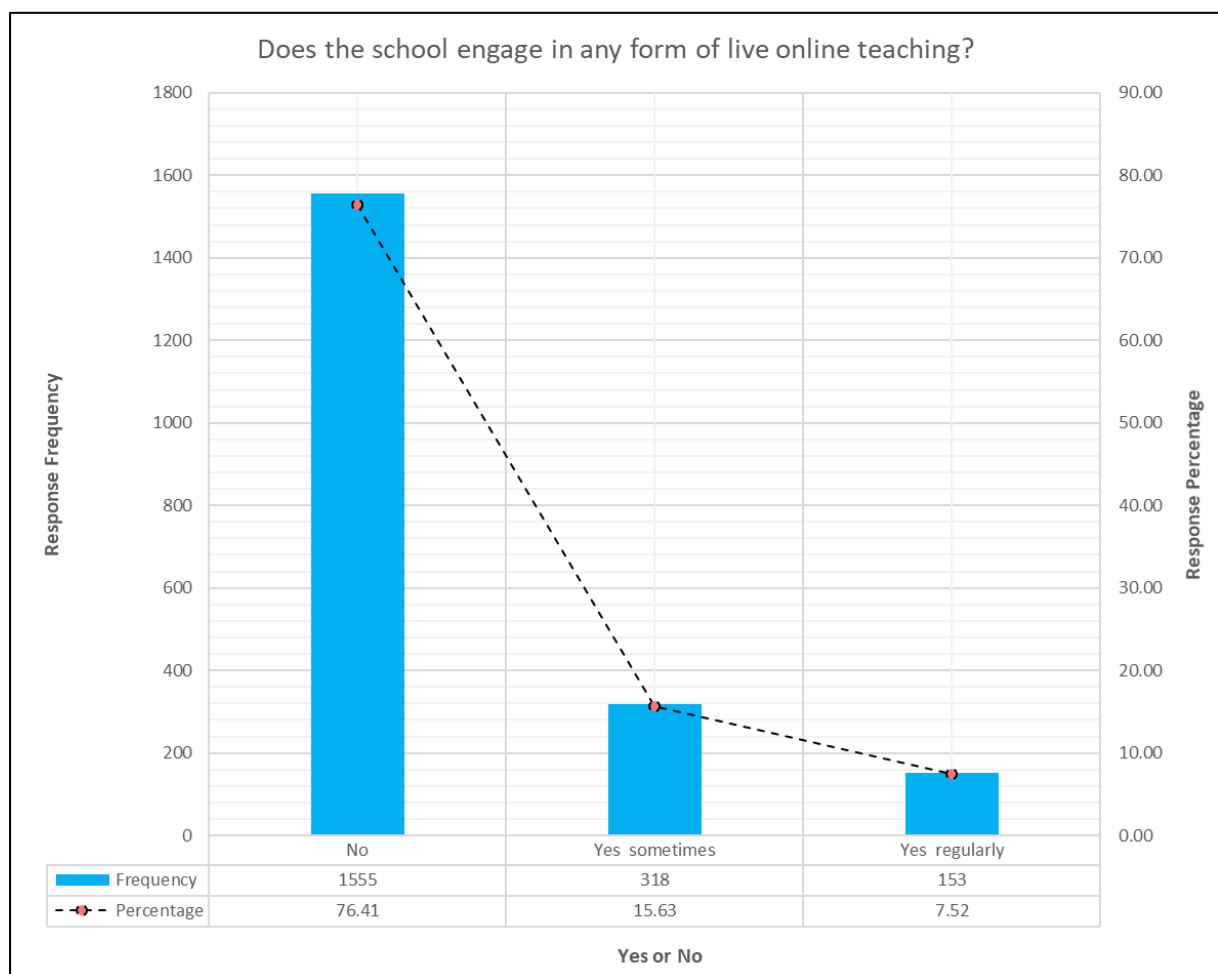
**Figure 22:** More or less activities from the school/setting (Q23).

Q24 asked respondents about how they receive activities from the school/pre-school setting. Figure 23 shows that the most common method is via online learning platforms (68.75%, n=1399). 46% (n=936) of respondents collected from the school before closure. 26.88% (n=547) of respondents selected the use of the school website, and 17.54% (n=357) stated the use of school email. 18.67% (n=380) of respondents selected 'other' methods. All respondents answered Q24.



**Figure 23:** Receiving activities from the school/preschool setting (Q24).

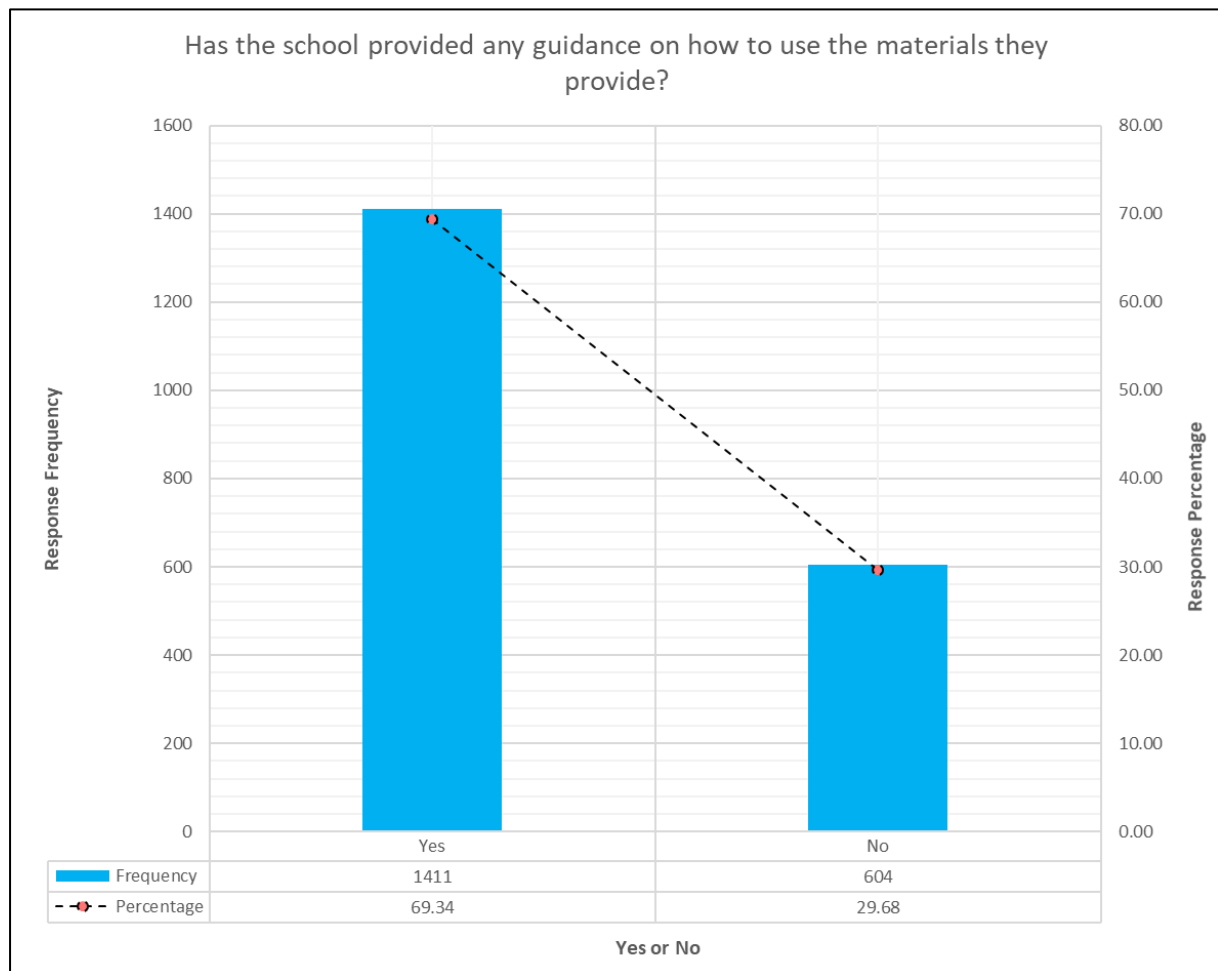
Q25 asked respondents if the school engages in any form of live online teaching. Figure 24 shows that the vast majority of respondents said 'no', that the school does not engage in any form of live online teaching (76.41%, n=1555). 15.63% (n=318) stated 'yes' – *sometimes* the school engages in live online teaching, and 7.52% (n=153) stated 'yes' – the school *regularly* does. 0.44% (n=9) of respondents did not answer Q25.



**Figure 24:** School live online teaching (Q25).

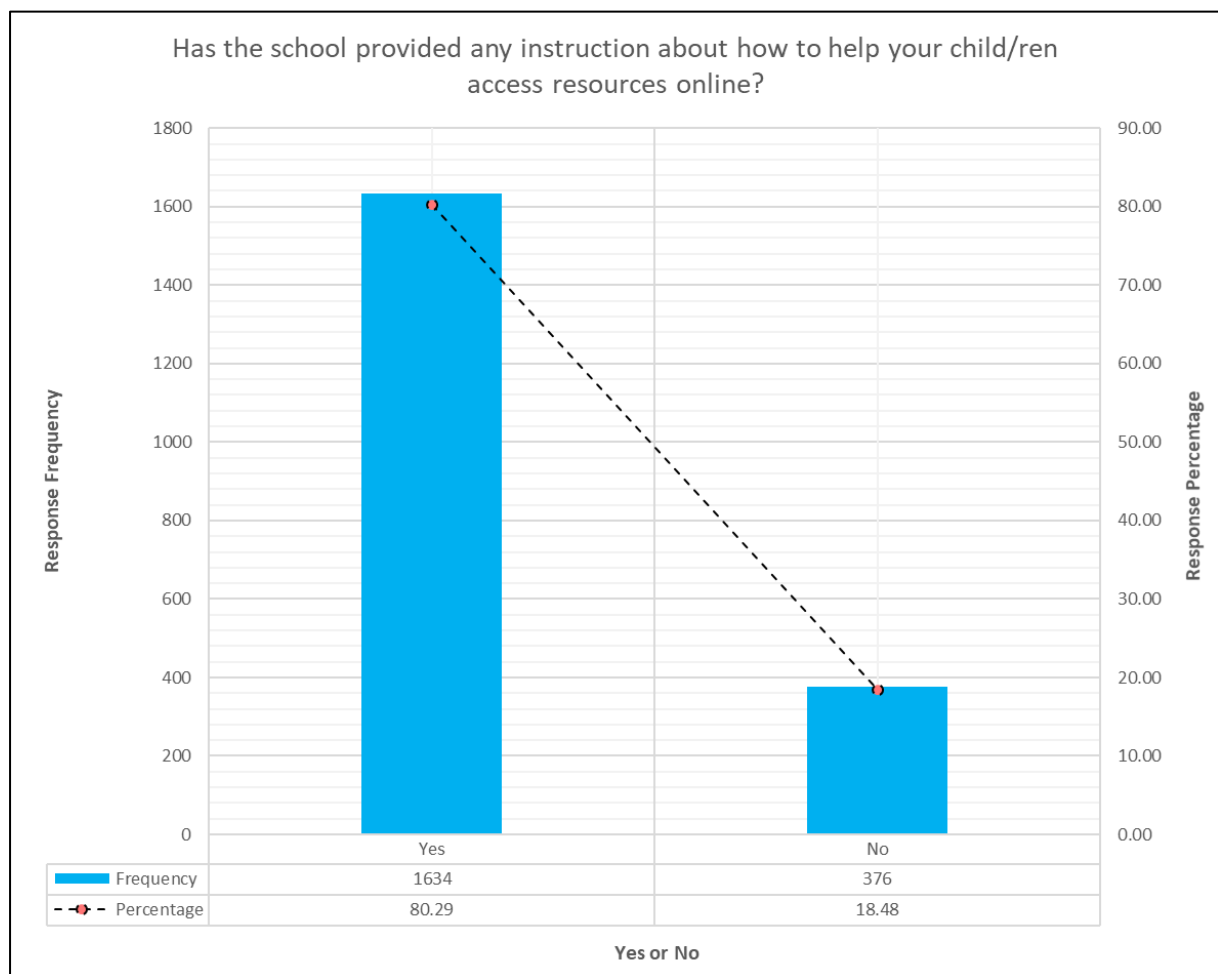


Respondents were asked if the school also provided guidance on using the materials they provide (Q26). The majority of respondents answered yes, the school did/does provide guidance (69.34%, n=1411), whereas the remainder answered no. 0.98% (n=20) of respondents did not answer Q26. See Figure 25.



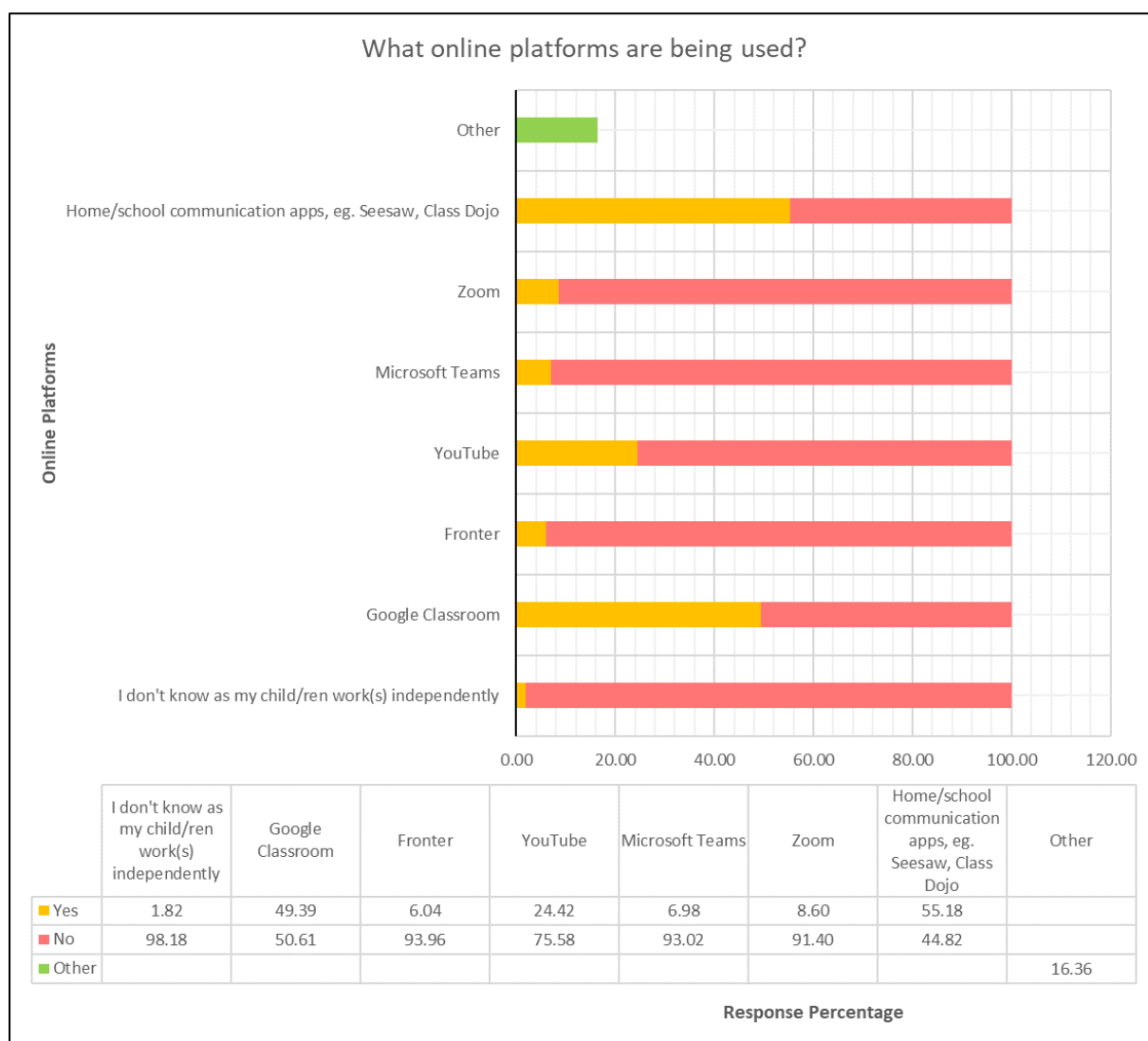
**Figure 25:** School provision of guidance on using the materials they provide (Q26).

Respondents were asked if the school provided instruction on how to help children access online resources (Q27). The vast majority of respondents answered ‘yes’ – the school does provide instruction on how to help children access online resources (80.29, n=1634), with the remainder answering ‘no’ – the school does not. 1.23% (n=25) of respondents did not answer Q27.



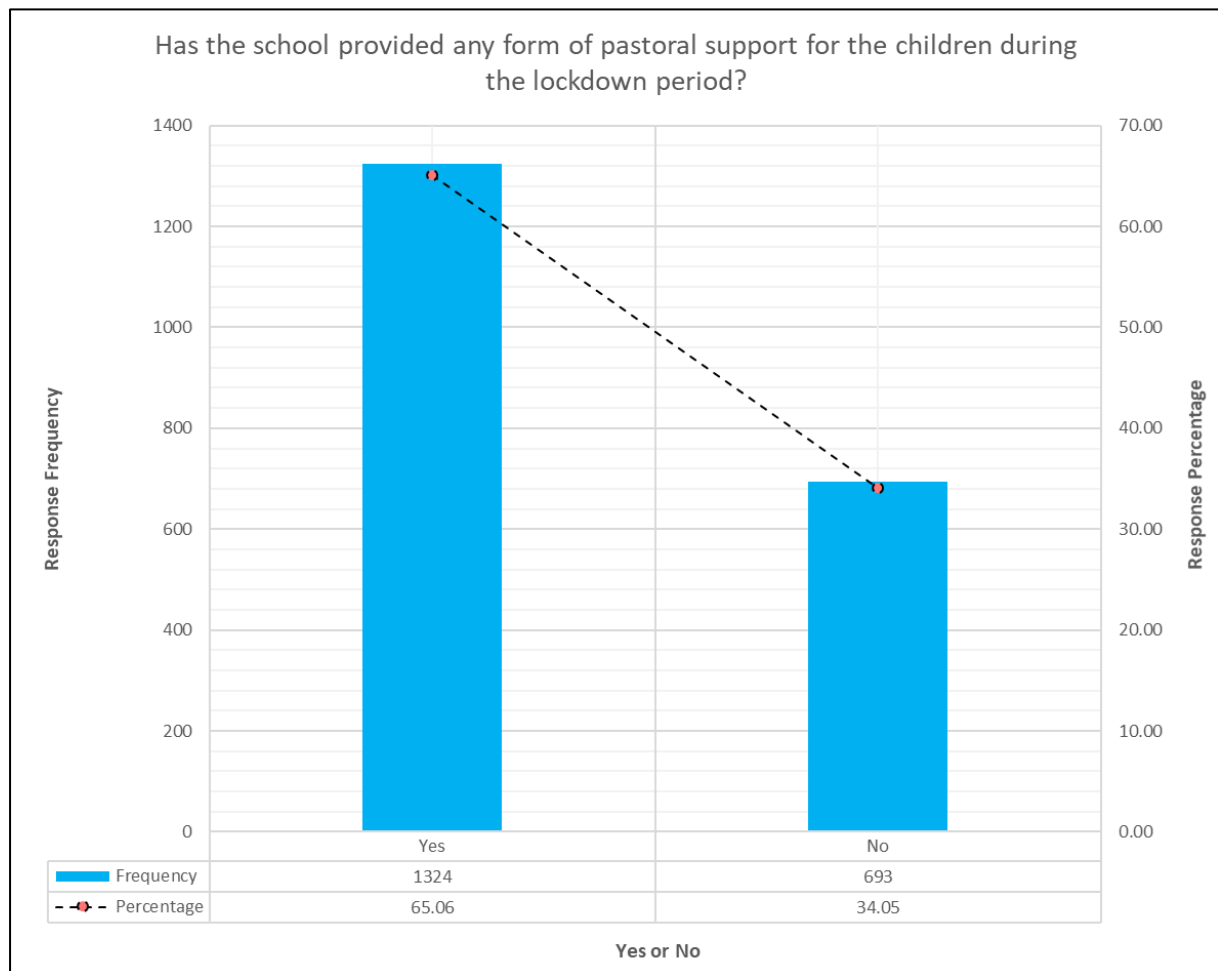
**Figure 26:** School provision of instruction on how to help children access online resources (Q27).

Respondents were asked about what online platforms they are using in home-schooling (Q28). The most common platform is home/school communication apps (55.18%, n=1123), followed by Google Classroom (49.39%, n=1005) as shown in Figure 27. 24.42% (n=497) of respondents reported use of YouTube, 8.60% (n=175) stated use of Zoom, 6.98% (n=142) stated use of Microsoft Teams, and 6.04% (n=123) stated use of Fronter. Only 1.82% (n=37) reported that they 'don't know as my child/ren work(s) independently'. 16.36% (n=333) of respondents provided 'other' platforms. All respondents answered Q28.



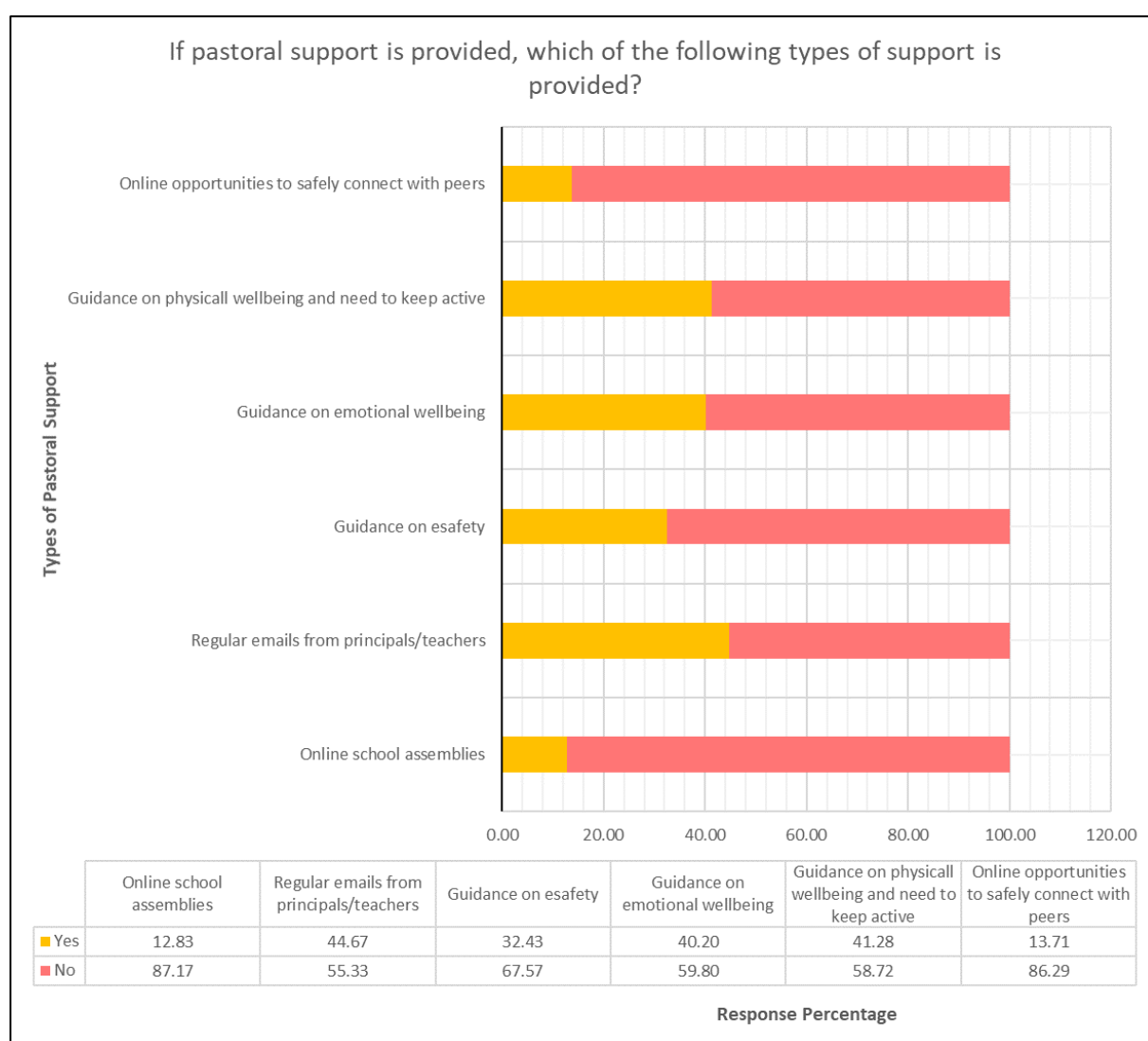
**Figure 27: Online platforms being used (Q28).**

Respondents were asked if the school provided pastoral support during lockdown (Q29), with results shown in Figure 28. The majority of respondents answered 'yes' – the school did provide pastoral support (65.06%, n=1324), with the remaining respondents answering 'no'. 0.88% (n=18) of respondents did not answer Q29.



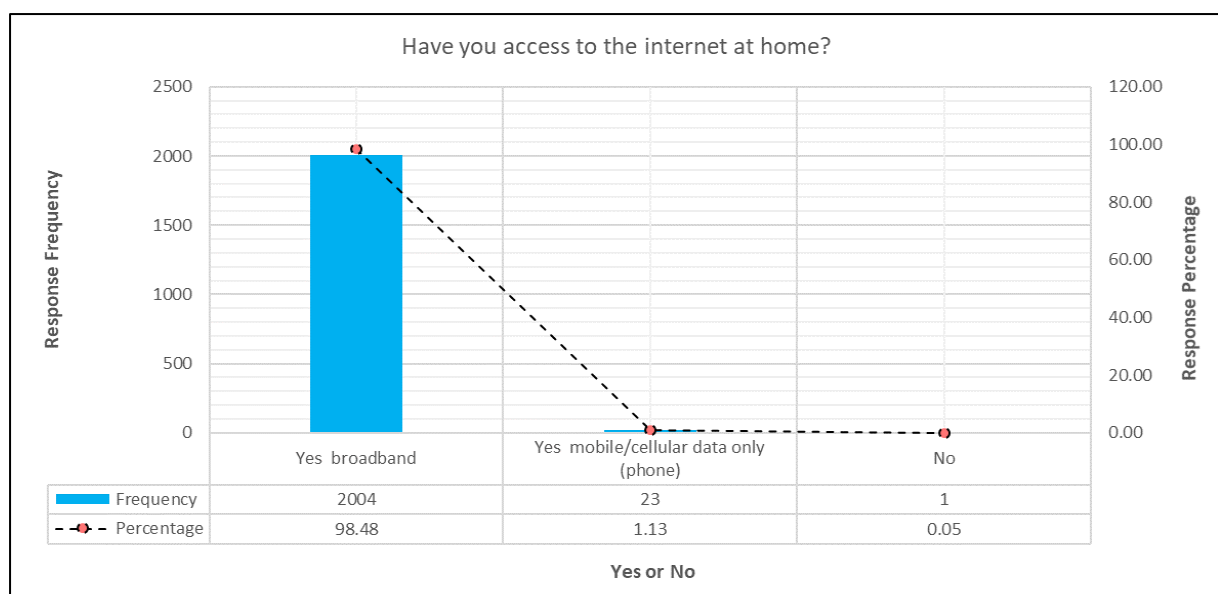
**Figure 28:** School provision of pastoral support during lockdown (Q29).

Respondents were asked about the types of pastoral support provided (Q30). As highlighted by Figure 29, The most common types of pastoral support provided includes, 'regular emails from principals/teachers' (44.67%, n=909), 'guidance on physical wellbeing and need to keep active' (41.28%, n=840), 'guidance on emotional wellbeing' (40.20%, n=818), and 'guidance on e-safety' (32.43%, n=660). 13.71% (n=279) of respondents said yes for 'online opportunities to safely connect with peers', and 12.83% (n=261) said yes for 'online school assemblies'. 9.58% (n=195) of respondents provided 'other' types of pastoral care. All respondents answered Q30.

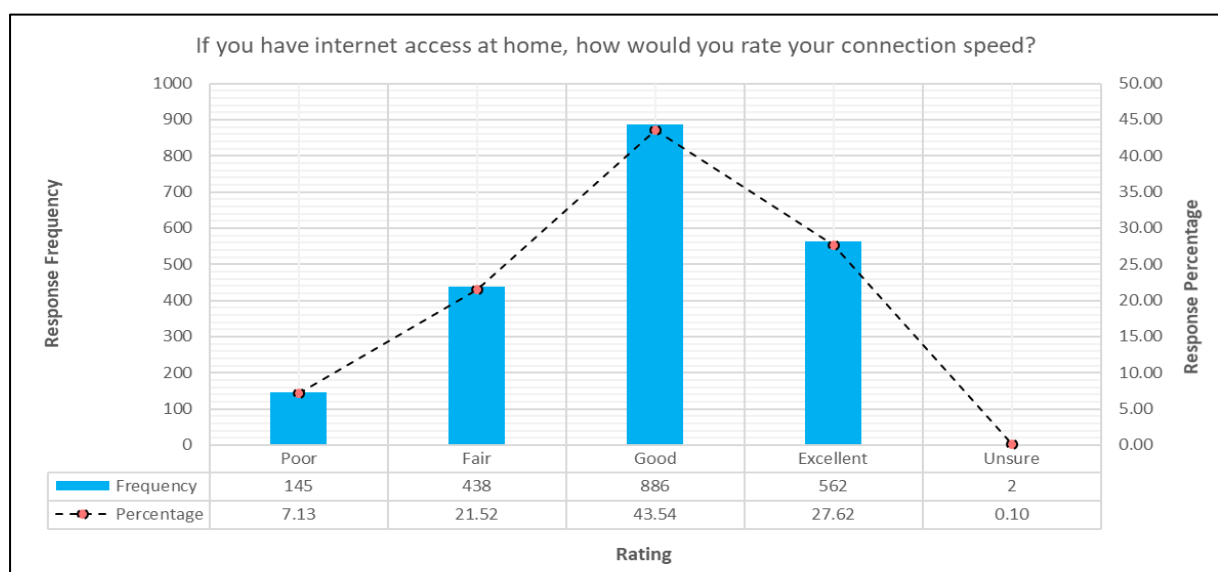


**Figure 29:** Types of pastoral support provided (Q30).

Q31.1 asked if respondents have internet access at home. 98.48% (n=2004) said yes - broadband, 1.13% (n= 23) said that they have mobile/cellular data only (phone), and 0.05% (n=1) said no (Figure 30a). 0.34% (n=7) of respondents did not answer Q31.1. In addition, Q31.2 asked respondents to rate the quality of their internet connection (Figure 30b). 43.54% (n=886) rated their connection as good, 27.62% (n=562) rated it as excellent, 21.52% (n=438) rated it as fair, 7.13% (n=145) rated it as poor, and finally, 0.10% (n=2) were unsure. 0.1% (n=2) did not answer Q31.2.

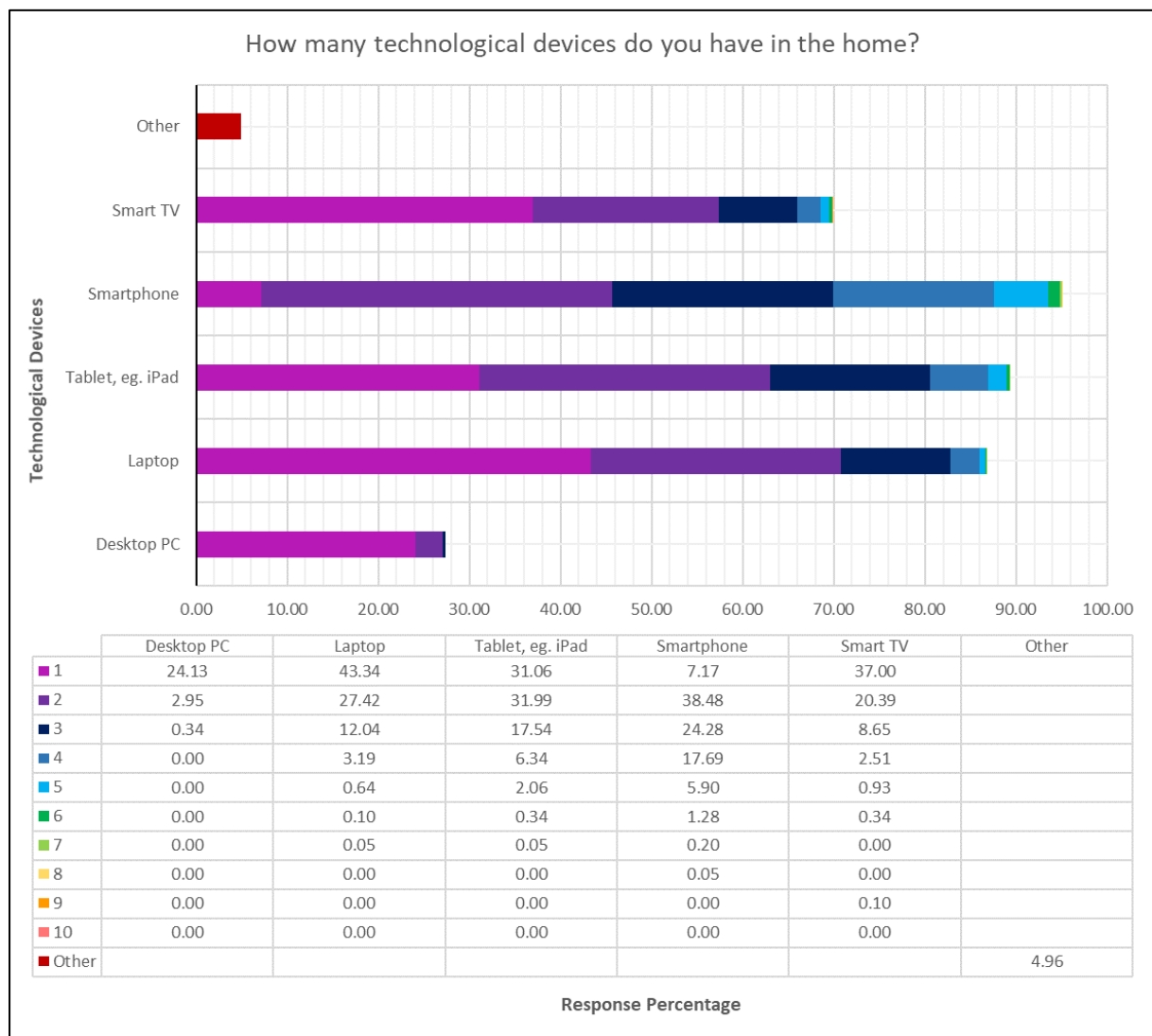


**Figure 30a: Access to internet at home (Q31.1).**



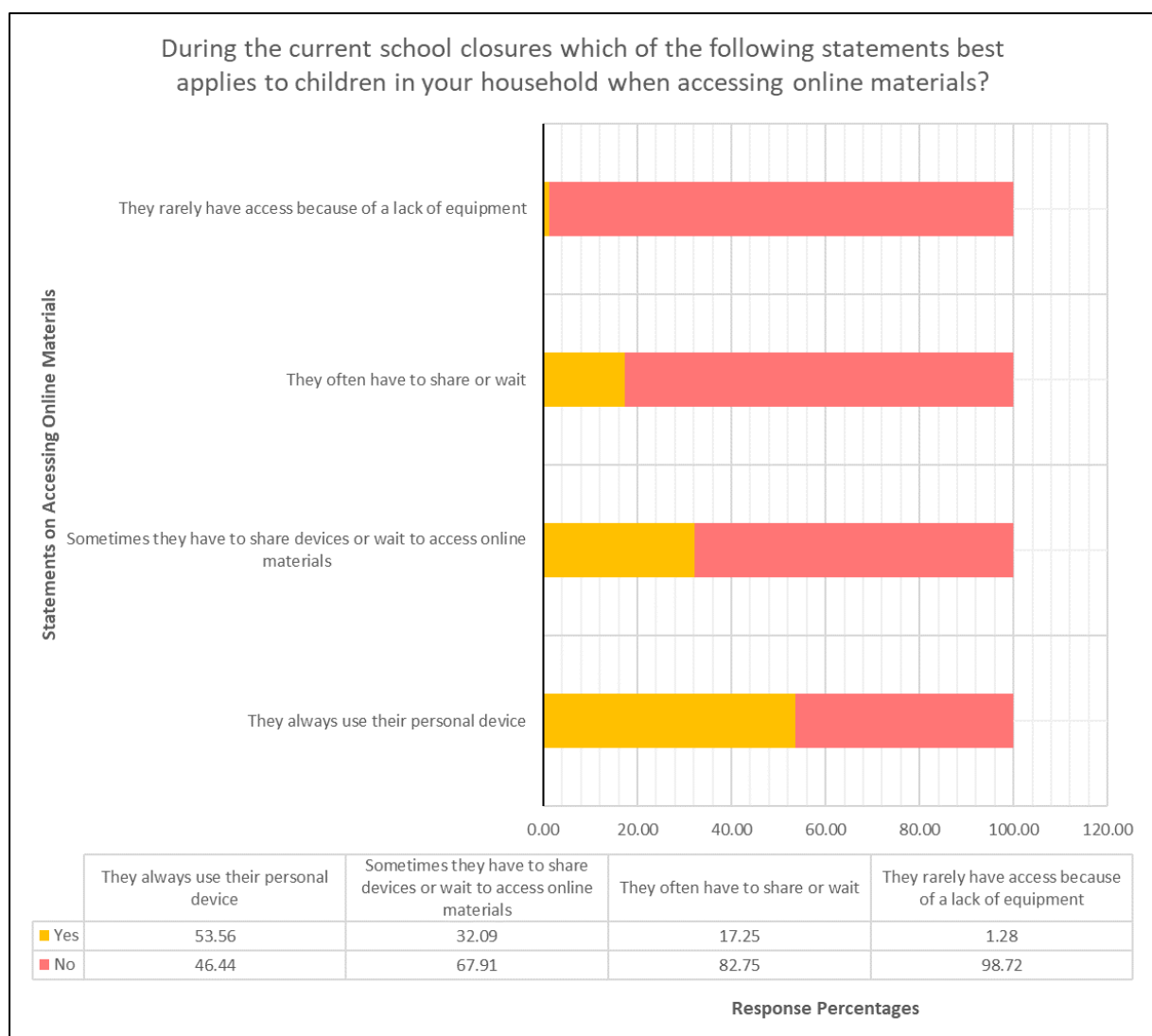
**Figure 30b:** Quality of internet access at home (Q31.2).

Q32 asked respondents how many technological devices they have in the home. The results are shown in Figure 31. As illustrated, 27.42% (n=558) of respondents have at least 1 desktop PC and 86.78% (n=1766) have at least 1 laptop. 89.39% (n=1819) have at least 1 tablet and 95.04% (n=1934) have at least 1 smartphone. Furthermore, 69.93% (n=1423) have at least 1 smart TV. 4.96% (n=101) of respondents report 'other' devices at home.



**Figure 31:** Number of technological devices in the home (Q32).

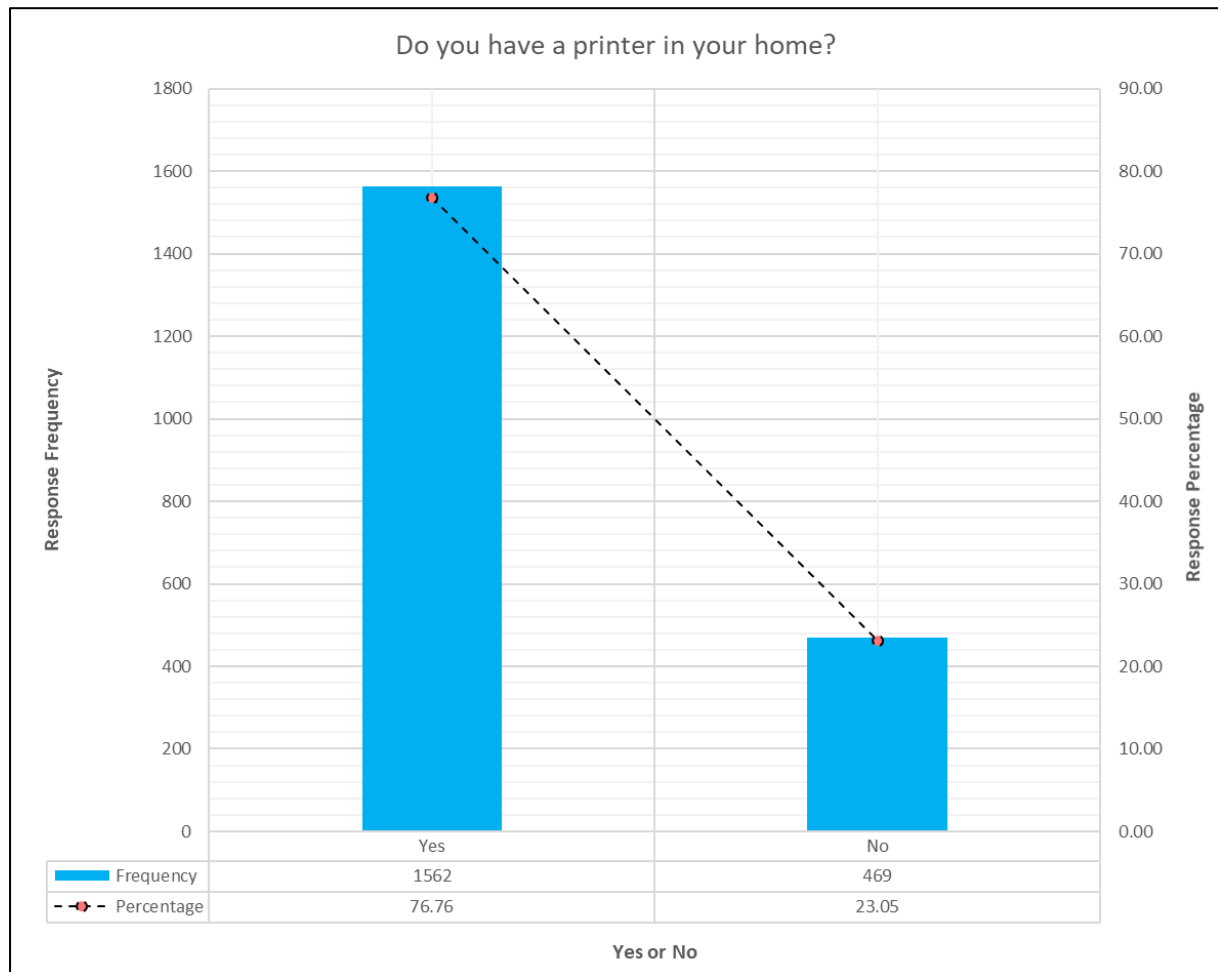
Q33 asked respondents what statement best applies to children in their household when accessing online materials during the current school closures. As Figure 32 conveys, the most popular response is that, ‘they always use their personal device’ (53.56%, n=1090). This is followed by, ‘sometimes they have to share devices or wait to access online materials’ (32.09%, n=653), ‘they often have to share or wait’ (17.25%, n=351), and finally, ‘they rarely have access because of a lack of equipment’ (1.28%, n=26). All respondents answered Q33.



**Figure 32:** Accessing online materials (Q33).

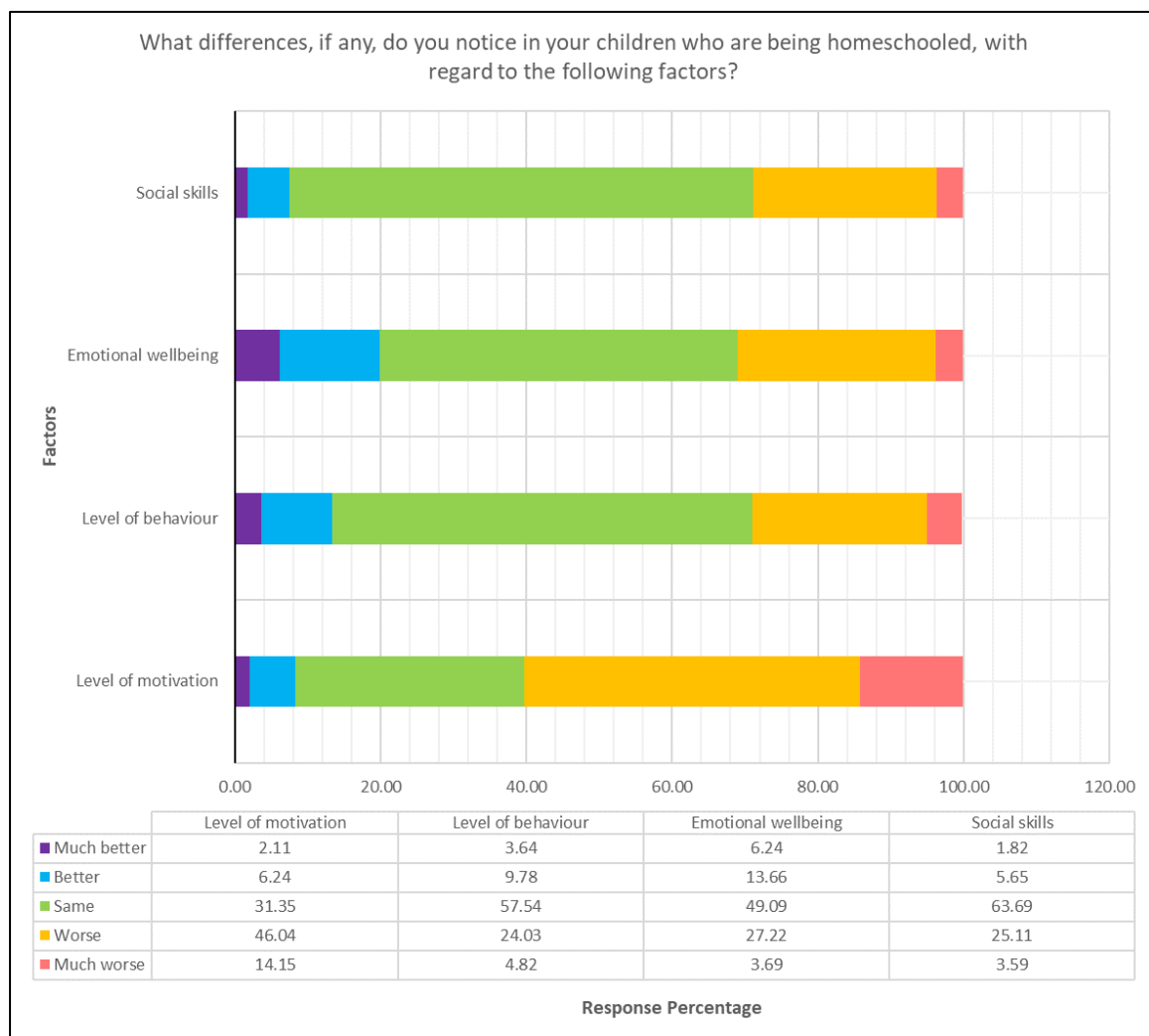


Q34 asked respondents if they have a printer in the home. As shown in Figure 33, the majority of respondents do have a printer (76.76%, n=1562), with the remainder stating they do not. 0.2% (n=4) of respondents did not answer Q34.



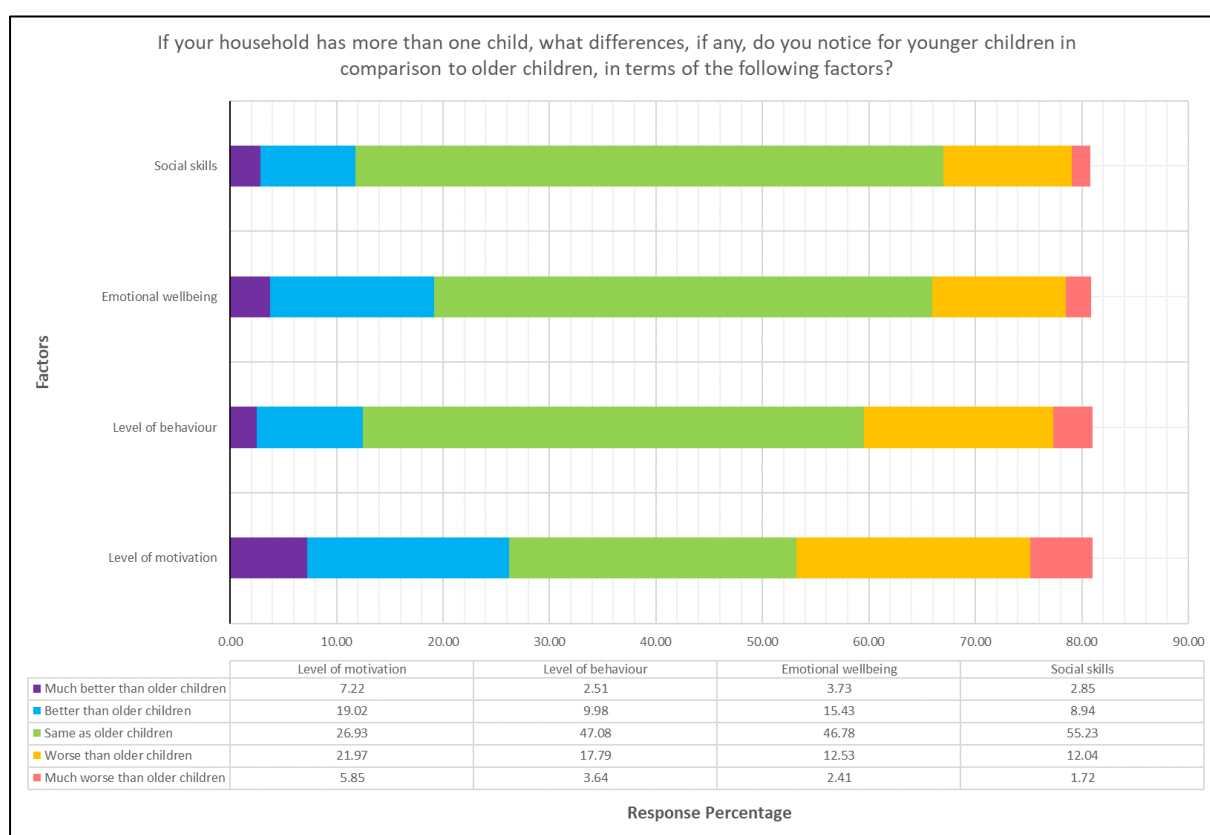
**Figure 33:** Printer in the home (Q34).

Q35 asked respondents what differences they notice in their home-schooled children. Results are shown in Figure 34. For social skills, emotional wellbeing and level of behaviour, the most common response is 'the same' with 63.69% (n=1296), 49.09% (n=999), and 57.54% (n=1171) respectively. This is followed second, by 'worse' for social skills, emotional wellbeing and level of behaviour with 25.11% (n=511), 27.22% (n=554), and 24.03% (n=489) respectively. In contrast, the most common response for level of motivation is 'worse' with 46.04% (n=937), and secondly, 'same' with 31.35% (n=638). Level of motivation sees an increase in responses for 'much worse' in comparison to the other three factors with 14.15% (n=288), compared to 3.59% (n=73), 3.69% (n=75), and 4.82% (n=98) for social skills, emotional wellbeing and level of behaviour respectively. Up to 0.2% (n=4) of respondents did not answer Q35.



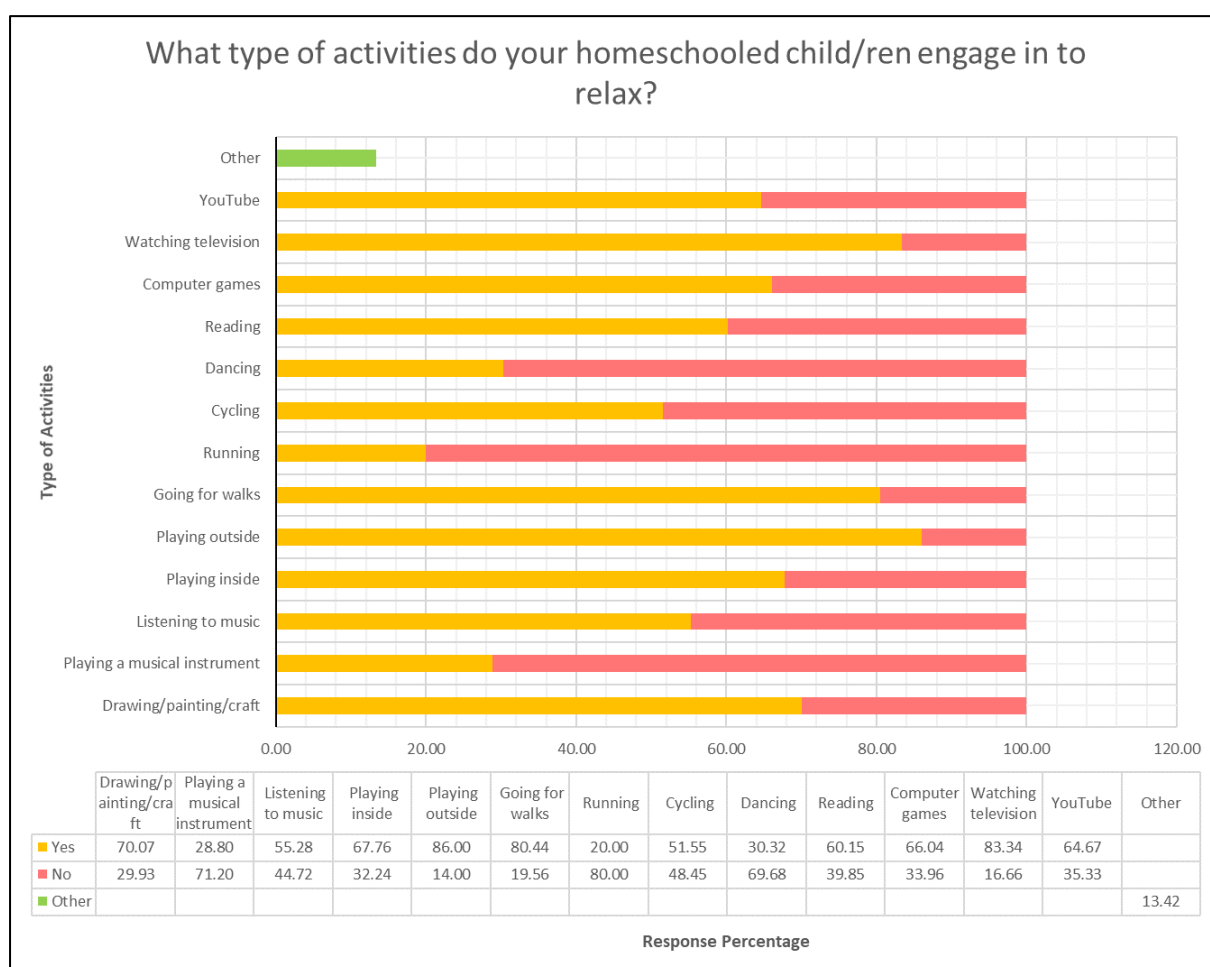
**Figure 34: Differences in children being home-schooled (Q35).**

Question 36 asked respondents about what differences they notice for younger children in comparison to older children in regard to several factors. Results are shown in Figure 35. The most common response for social skills, emotional wellbeing, level of behaviour and level of motivation is 'same as older children' with 55.23% (n=1124), 46.78% (n=952), 47.08% (n=958), and 26.93% (n=548) respectively. However, level of motivation has a sizeable number of 'worse than older children' responses with 21.97% (n=447) coupled with a sizeable number of 'better than older children' responses with 19.02% (n=387). Up to 19.21% (n=391) of respondents did not answer Q36, in particular, as not all respondents had more than one child.



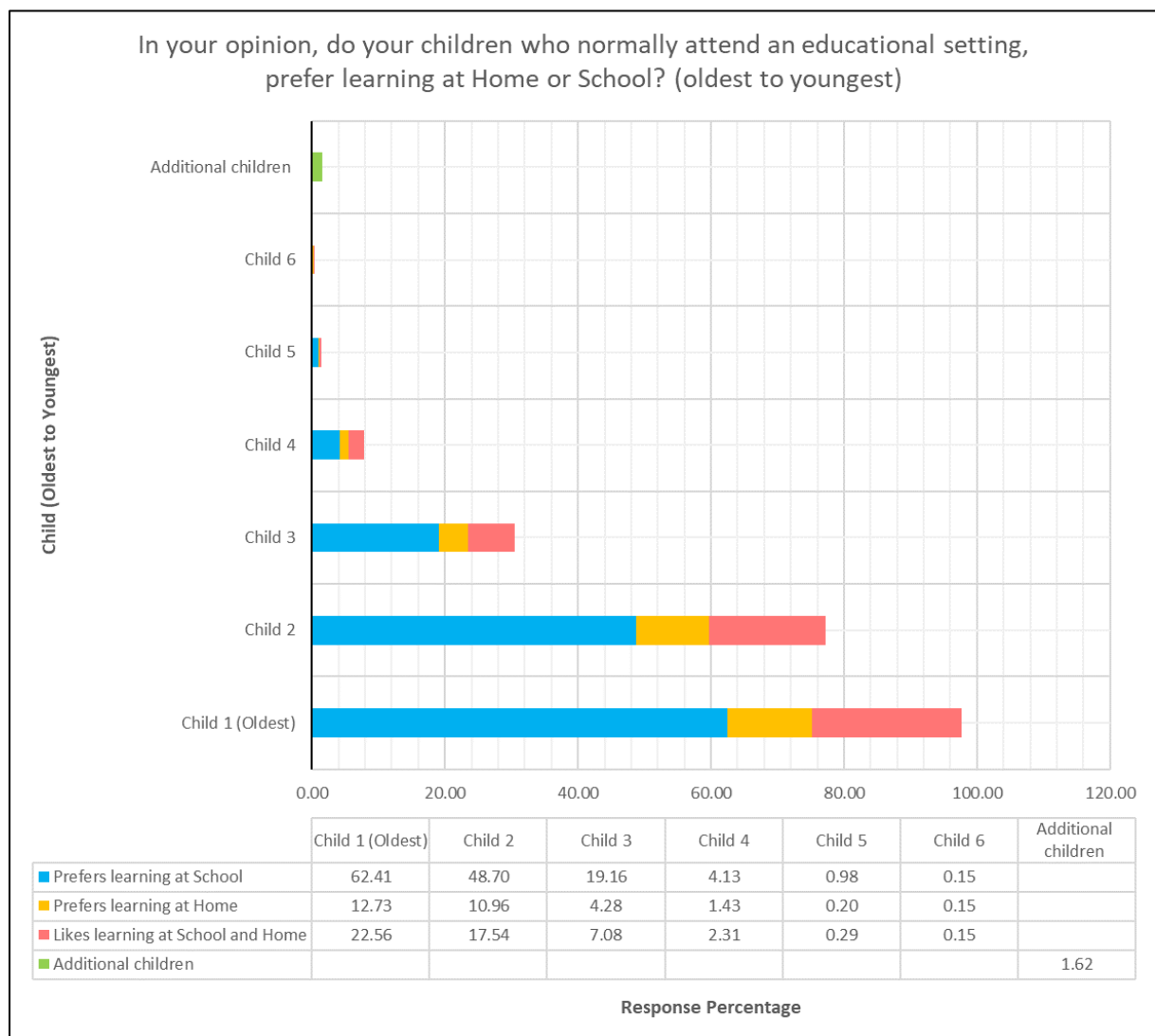
**Figure 35: Differences between home-schooled younger and older children (Q36).**

Q37 asked respondents what type of activities their home-schooled child/ren engage in to relax. As illustrated in Figure 36, there are a diverse array of options. It is clear that a high number of respondents' child/ren engage in each of the relaxing activities. The most popular being 'playing outside' (86%, n=1750), 'watching television' (83.34%, n=1696), 'going for walks' (80.44%, n=1637), 'drawing/painting/craft' (70.07%, n=1426), 'playing inside' (67.76%, n=1379), 'computer games' (66.04%, n=1344), 'YouTube' (64.67%, n=1316), 'reading' (60.15%, n=1224), 'listening to music' (55.28%, n=1125), and 'cycling' (51.55%, n=1049) respectively. 30.32% (n=617) of respondents report 'dancing', 28.80% (n=586) report 'playing a musical instrument', and 20% (n=407) report 'running'. 13.42% (n=273) responded with 'other' activities (where baking and sports were common responses). All respondents answered Q37.



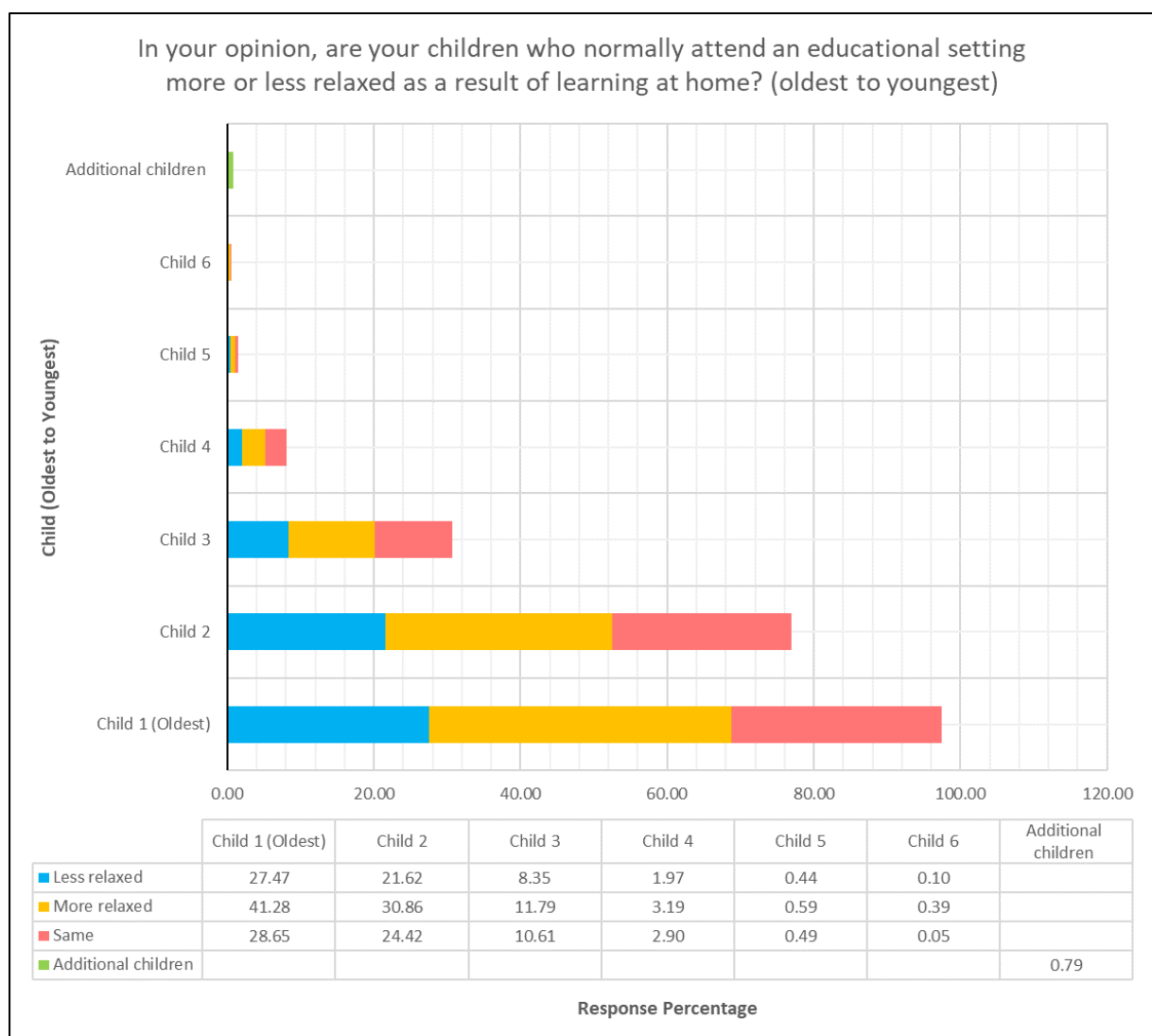
**Figure 36:** Activities home-schooled child/ren engage in to relax (Q37).

Q38 asked respondents if their children, who normally attend an educational setting, prefer learning at home or school. Results are shown in Figure 37. Across the board it is clear to see that the most popular response is that children prefer to learn at school. For example, for a first child, 62.41% (n=1270), for a second child, 48.70% (n=991), and for a third child, 19.16% (n=390). This is followed secondly by, 'likes learning at school and home', again across the board. For example, for a first child, 22.56% (n=459), for a second child, 17.54% (n=357), and for a third child, 7.08% (n=144). Those with additional children total 1.62% (n=33). 2.31% (n=47) of respondents did not answer Q38.



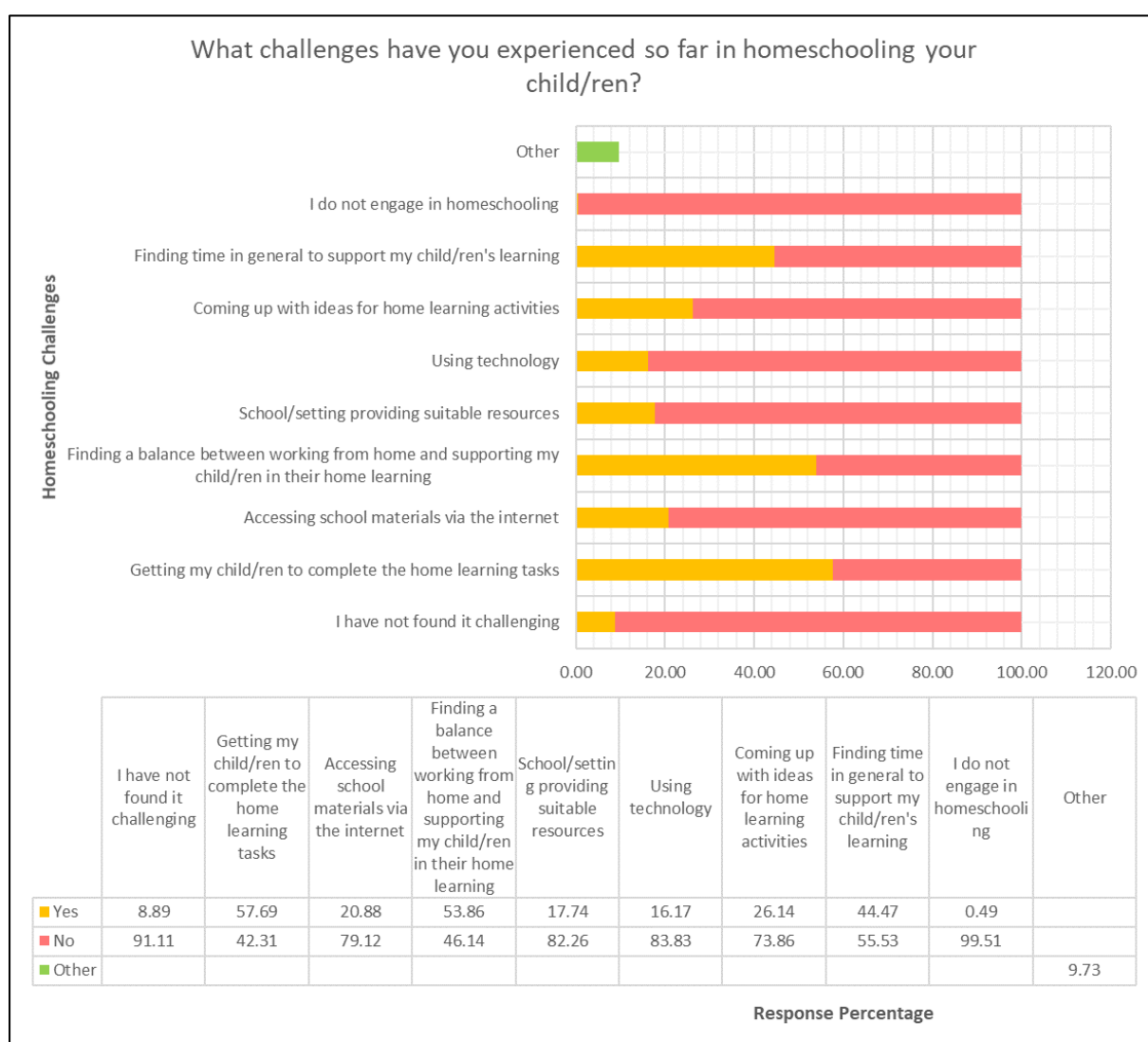
**Figure 37:** Children's preference for learning at home or school (Q38).

Respondents were asked if their children, who normally attend an educational setting, are more or less relaxed as a result of learning at home (Q39). See Figure 38 for results. The most common response across all children is 'more relaxed'. For example, for child 1, 41.28% (n=840), for child 2, 30.86% (n=628), and for child 3, 11.79% (n=240). Although the 'less relaxed' and 'same' response options have moderately high frequencies across all children as visible in Figure 38. Additional children total 0.79% (n=16). 2.60% (n=53) of respondents did not answer Q39.



**Figure 38:** Are children more or less relaxed learning at home (Q39).

Q40 asked respondents about what challenges they have experienced so far in home-schooling their child/ren. As shown in Figure 39, there are a range of challenge categories. The categories with the highest number of 'yes' responses include, 'getting my child/ren to complete the home learning tasks' (57.69%, n=1174), 'finding a balance between working from home and supporting my child/ren in their home learning' (53.86%, n=1096), and 'finding time in general to support my child/ren's learning' (44.47%, n=905). The remaining challenges have 26.14% or less responses. 0.49% (n=10) do not engage in home-schooling. 9.73% (198) of respondents provided additional challenges. All respondents answered Q40.



**Figure 39: Challenges experienced in home-schooling (Q40).**

### *Exploratory Results*

An exploratory analysis of variable relationships was conducted to expand upon the uni-variable findings. Several key themes emerged that formed the basis for high-level exploratory analysis, namely:

- Employment status
- Education level
- Home-schooling role
- Home-schooling confidence
- Parental role (mother, father, guardian/carer)
- Average number of days, and hours per day spent home-schooling
- Home-school routine planning
- Routine planning support/guidance
- Age of children
- Opinion on home-schooling vs school

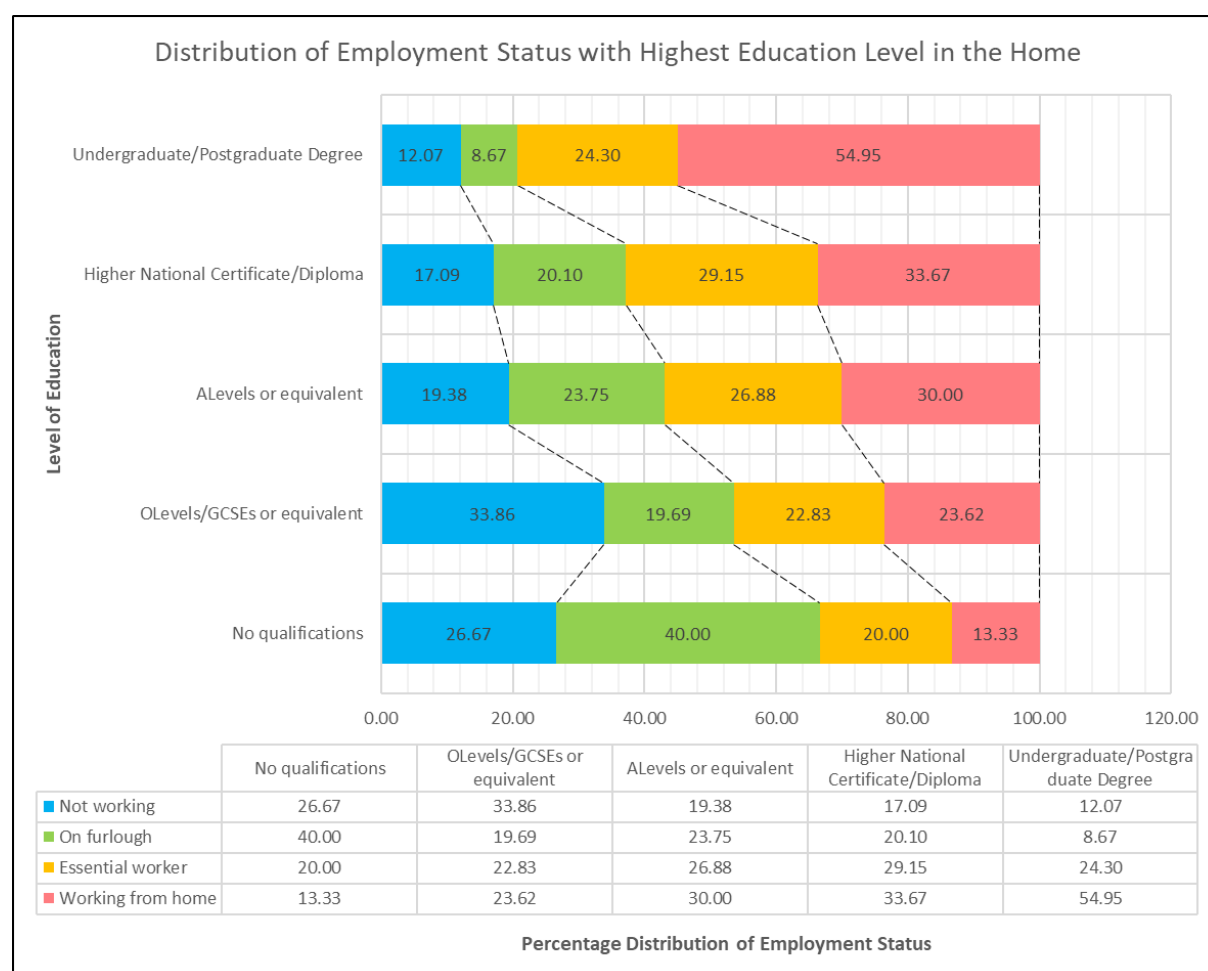
### Setting Context: Comparing 'Employment Status' and 'Highest Education Level in the Home'

As illustrated in Figure 40, there is a visible trend. Namely, with increasing frequency of 'highest education level in the home', there is an increasing tendency for respondents to be working from home: 13.33% of all respondents who have no qualifications, 23.62% of all respondents who have O-Levels/GCSEs or equivalent, 30% of those who have A-levels or equivalent, 33.67% of respondents with Higher National Certificate/Diploma, and finally 54.95% of those at undergraduate/postgraduate degree level. The likelihood of being an essential worker is similar at all levels of education with those at A-Level or equivalent, and Higher National Certificate/Diploma having slightly higher percentages of key workers, 26.88% and 29.15% respectively. Those with no qualifications appear least likely to be an essential worker (20%) and are most likely to be on furlough (40%).



Undergraduates/postgraduates are least likely to be on furlough (8.67%), especially when considering that they are the most likely group of respondents to be able to work from home. Respondents with O-Levels/GCSEs or equivalent, are most likely to be not working (33.86%), followed by those with no qualifications (26.67%). Undergraduates/postgraduates are least likely to be unemployed (12.07%).

p=	5.49667E-10
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	12
X <sup>2</sup>	68.74460022

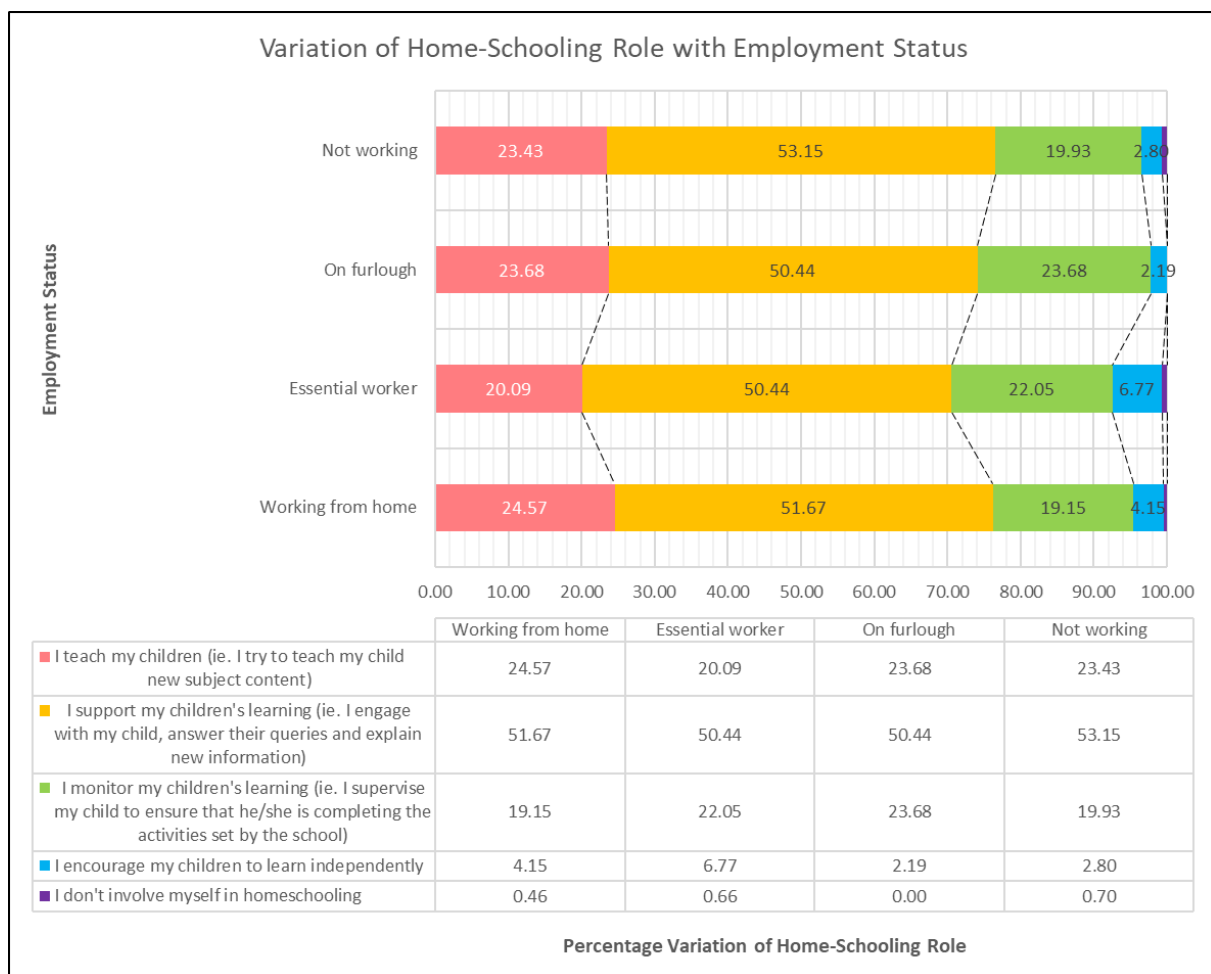


**Figure 40:** Distribution of employment status with highest education level in the home.

### Impact of 'Employment' and 'Highest Educational Level in the Home' on 'Home-Schooling Role'

Figure 41 illustrates the variation of home-schooling role with employment status. As shown, respondents who fall within the 'working from home', 'on furlough', or 'not working' categories, are most likely to teach their children directly with 24.57%, 23.68% and 23.43% respectively. Essential workers are least likely, by a small margin, to directly teach their children (20.09%). Essential workers and those on furlough are joint least likely to support their children's learning (with 50.44%), although this is again by a small margin with those 'working from home' (51.67%), and those 'not working' (53.15%). Essential workers are most likely to encourage their children to learn independently (6.77%) and second-most likely to monitor their children's learning (22.05%) just behind those on furlough (23.68%). Overall, essential workers appear to struggle the most out of the employment categories to adopt a more pro-active role within their children's home-schooling.

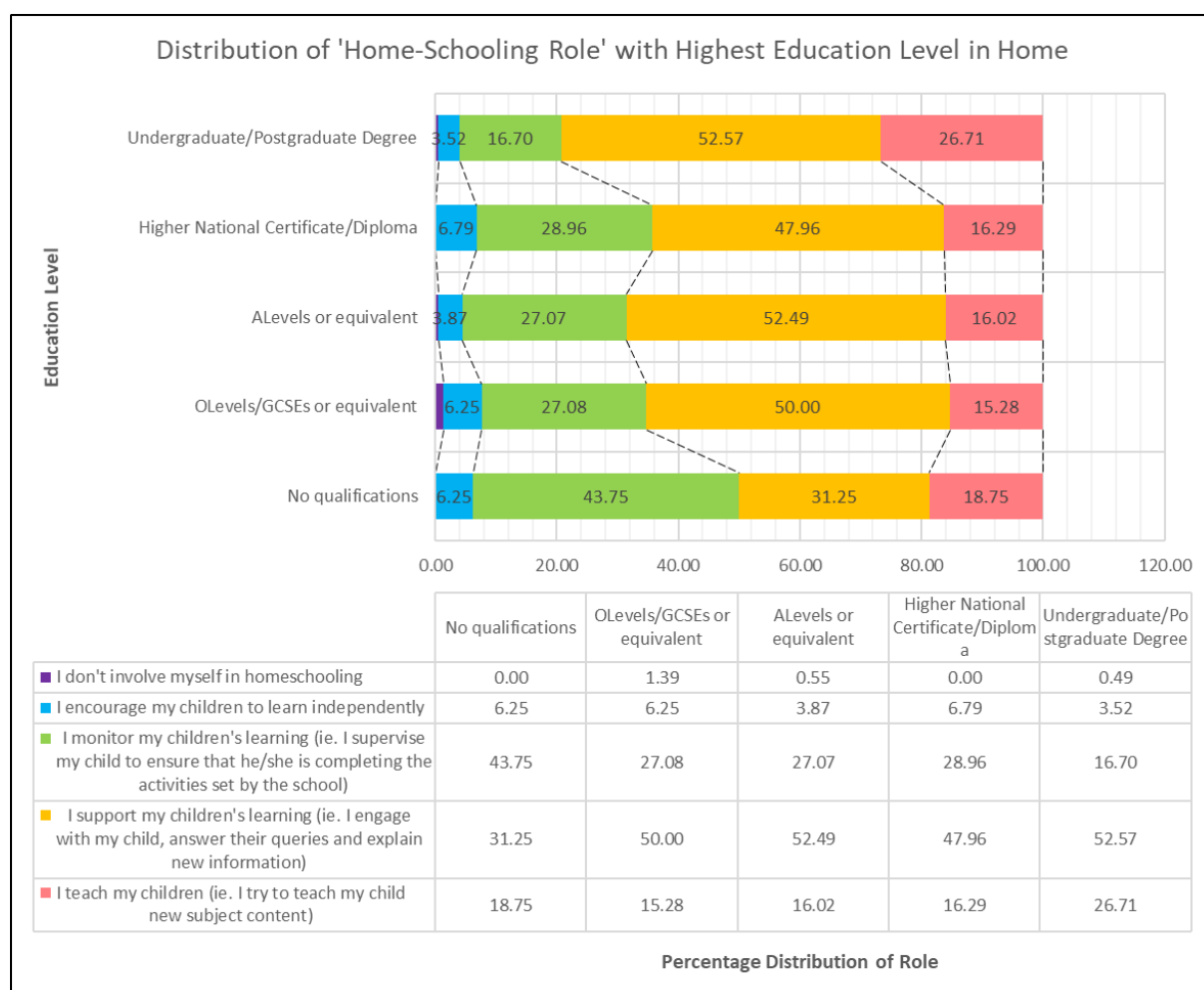
p=	0.958168631
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	12
X <sup>2</sup>	4.994313293



**Figure 41:** Variation of home-schooling role with employment status.

The distribution of the home-schooling role with highest education level in the home is shown in Figure 42. It is clear to see that respondents with undergraduate/postgraduate education level in their home are most likely to become directly involved with their children's learning. For example, they are the most likely to directly teach (26.71%) and support (52.57%) their children's learning. Interestingly, this is expected since undergraduate/postgraduates are most likely to work from home (Figure 40), and those who work from home are most likely to teach and support their children's learning (Figure 41).

p=	0.00898389
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	20
X <sup>2</sup>	37.94884019



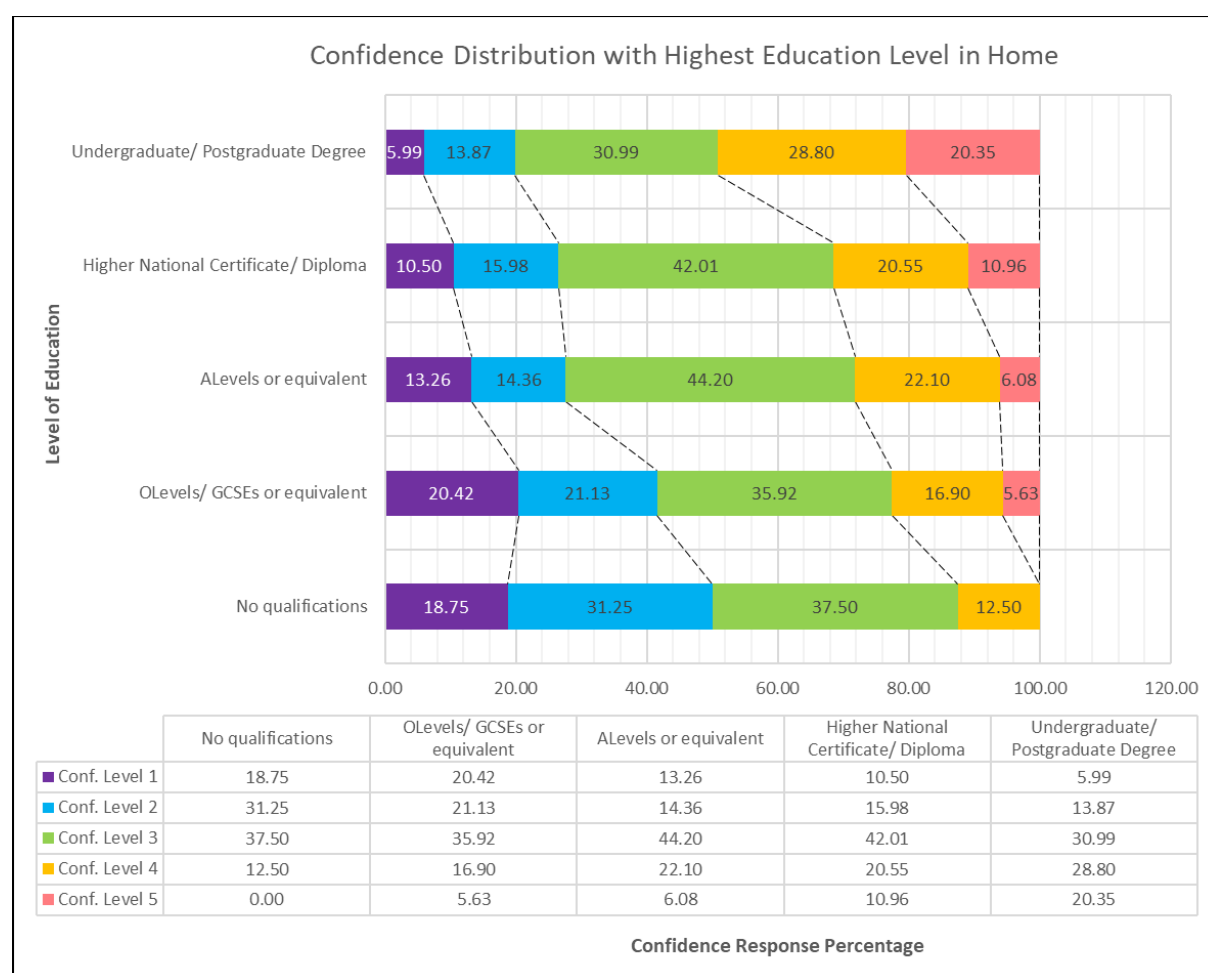
**Figure 42:** Distribution of home-schooling role with highest education level in the home.

### Highest Education Level in the Home, Impact on Confidence in Home-Schooling Ability and the Home-Schooling Role

As conveyed within Figure 43, there is a trend, or swing in confidence from lower confidence to higher confidence as the highest education level in the home increases. Respondents with undergraduate/postgraduate level education within their homes are

more likely to have the most confidence i.e. 20.35% at level 5 and 28.80% at level 4 which may factor, in addition to high likelihood to work from home (Figure 40), into these respondents' high likelihood to become more involved in their children's home-schooling through adopting a more pro-active role (Figure 41).

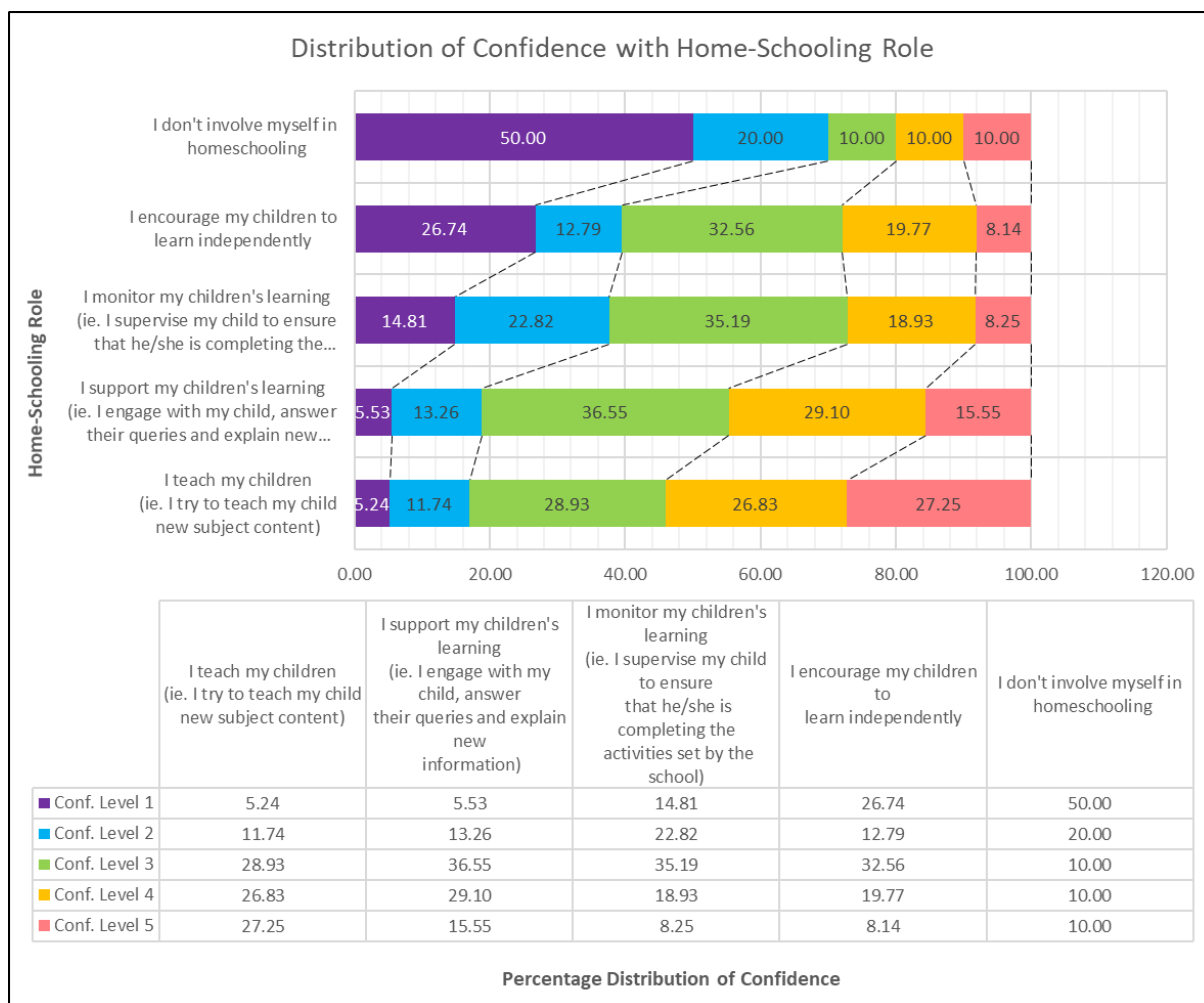
p=	1.66443E-08
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	20
X <sup>2</sup>	76.2804517



**Figure 43:** Distribution of home-schooling role with highest education level in the home.

This belief is corroborated through comparison of confidence distribution with home-schooling role as illustrated in Figure 44. As shown, it is clear that as confidence increases so too does the likelihood of more direct involvement in children's home-schooling. Those with the most confidence in their home-schooling ability are more likely to teach (e.g. 27.25% at level 5, 26.83% at level 4, 5.24% at level 1). Followed by support (e.g. 15.55% at level 5, 29.10% at level 4, 5.53% at level 1), monitor (e.g. 8.25% at level 5, 18.93% at level 4, 14.81% at level 1), encourage (e.g. 8.14% at level 5, 19.77% at level 4, 26.74% at level 1), and no involvement (e.g. 10% at level 5, 10% at level 4, 50% at level 1) respectively.

p=	4.43046E-18
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	16
X <sup>2</sup>	120.4853781

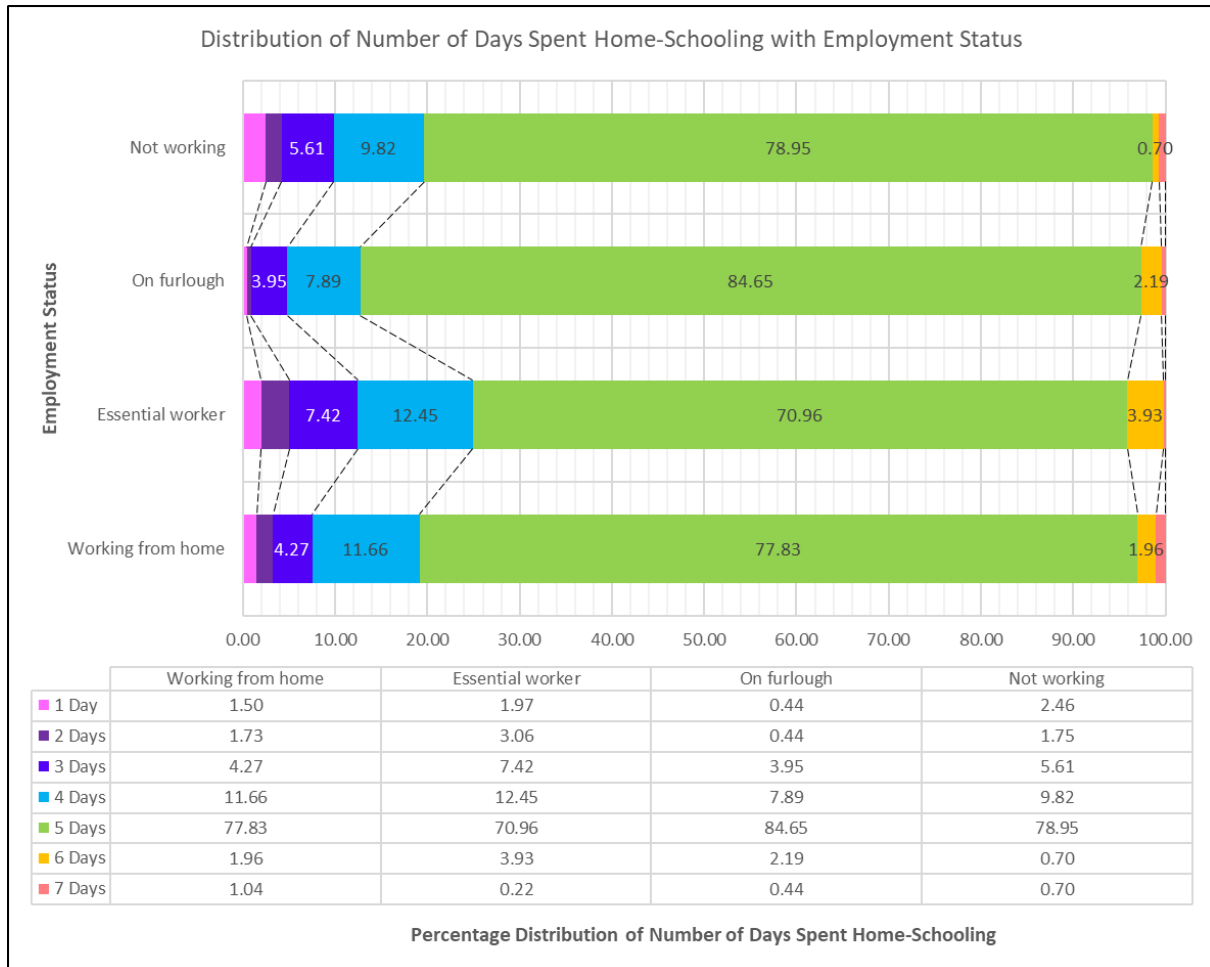


**Figure 44:** Distribution of confidence with home-schooling role.

### Impact of 'Employment Status' on the Amount of Time Spent on Home-Schooling

Figure 45 shows the distribution of number of days spent home-schooling with employment status of respondents. The most popular average amount of days spent on home-schooling within a given week appears to be 5 days across all employment categories as it makes up the bulk of all frequencies for those categories. However, those on furlough appear to have the greatest likelihood of at least 5 days per week on home-schooling (84.65% at 5 days). This is followed by those not working at 78.95% and those working from home at 77.83% Essential workers appear to be most likely to struggle to meet 5 or more days (70.96%) in addition to the increased likelihood to struggle to adopt a more pro-active role as discussed.

p=	0.925075739
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	18
X <sup>2</sup>	10.20307981



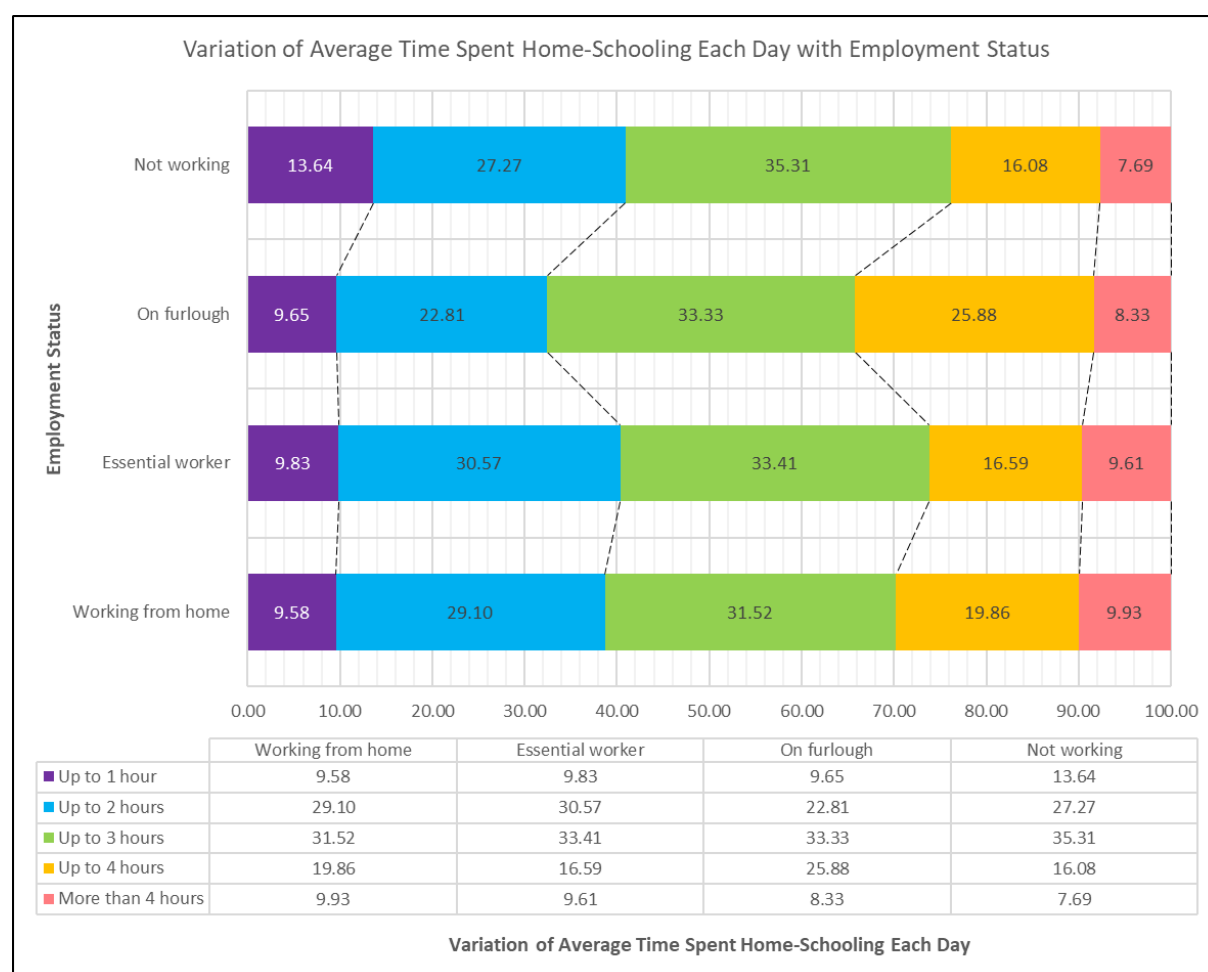
**Figure 45:** Distribution of number of days spent home-schooling with employment status.

Figure 46 compares the average number of hours spent each day home-schooling with employment status of respondents. Those on furlough appear to be more likely to invest 3 or more hours each day in comparison with the other employment categories (e.g. 33.33% at up to 3 hours, 25.88% at up to 4 hours, 8.33% at 4 hours or more). However, there is little variation across the other categories in regard to the



frequencies. Those who are not working, and essential workers have slightly lower frequencies on 'hours per day' across the board in comparison to those participants working from home.

p=	0.914273735
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	12
$\chi^2$	6.035660983

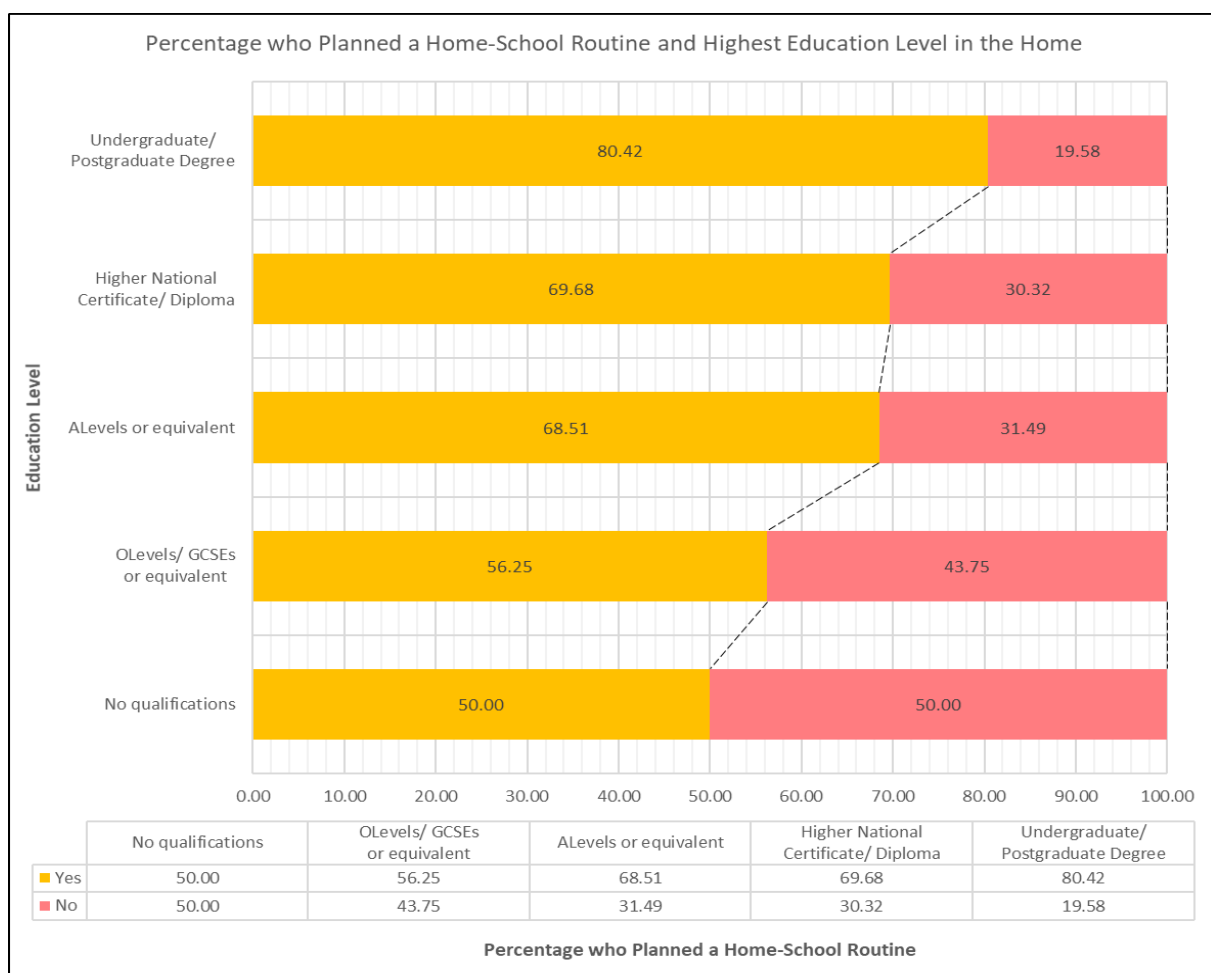


**Figure 46:** Variation of average time spent home-schooling each day with employment status.

### Impact of 'Highest Education Level in the Home' and 'Support/Guidance' on Home-School Routine Planning

Given the relationship of education level with confidence level, the respondents' planning of a home-schooling routine was compared with education level in the home (Figure 47), and also with the provision of guidance/support on how to actually plan a routine (Figure 48). Figure 48 reveals a trend where the likelihood of having planned a routine increases with highest education level in the home. As shown, this is a stepped increase with the highest frequency at undergraduate/postgraduate level with 80.42%.

p=	0.000116258
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	5
X <sup>2</sup>	25.40687629

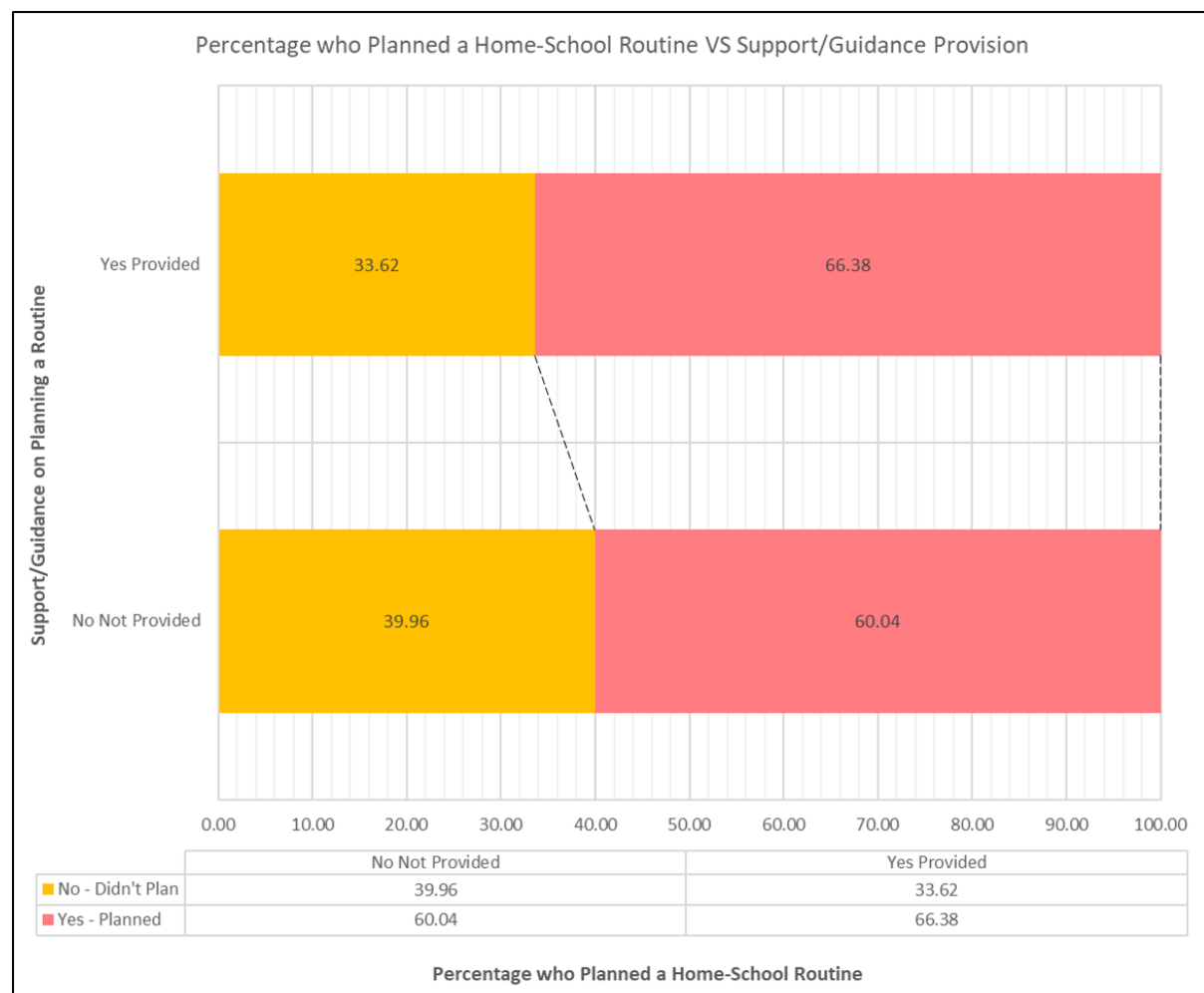


**Figure 47:** Percentage who planned a home-school routine and highest education level in the home.

Figure 48 shows that respondents who received guidance/support on how to plan a home-school routine are, to a small degree, more likely to have actually planned a routine (66.38%) compared to those who did not receive guidance or support (60.04%).

However, when considering Figure 47, highest education level in the home appears to be a significant factor in the likelihood of planning a home-school routine.

p=	0.352291616
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	1
X <sup>2</sup>	0.865185527

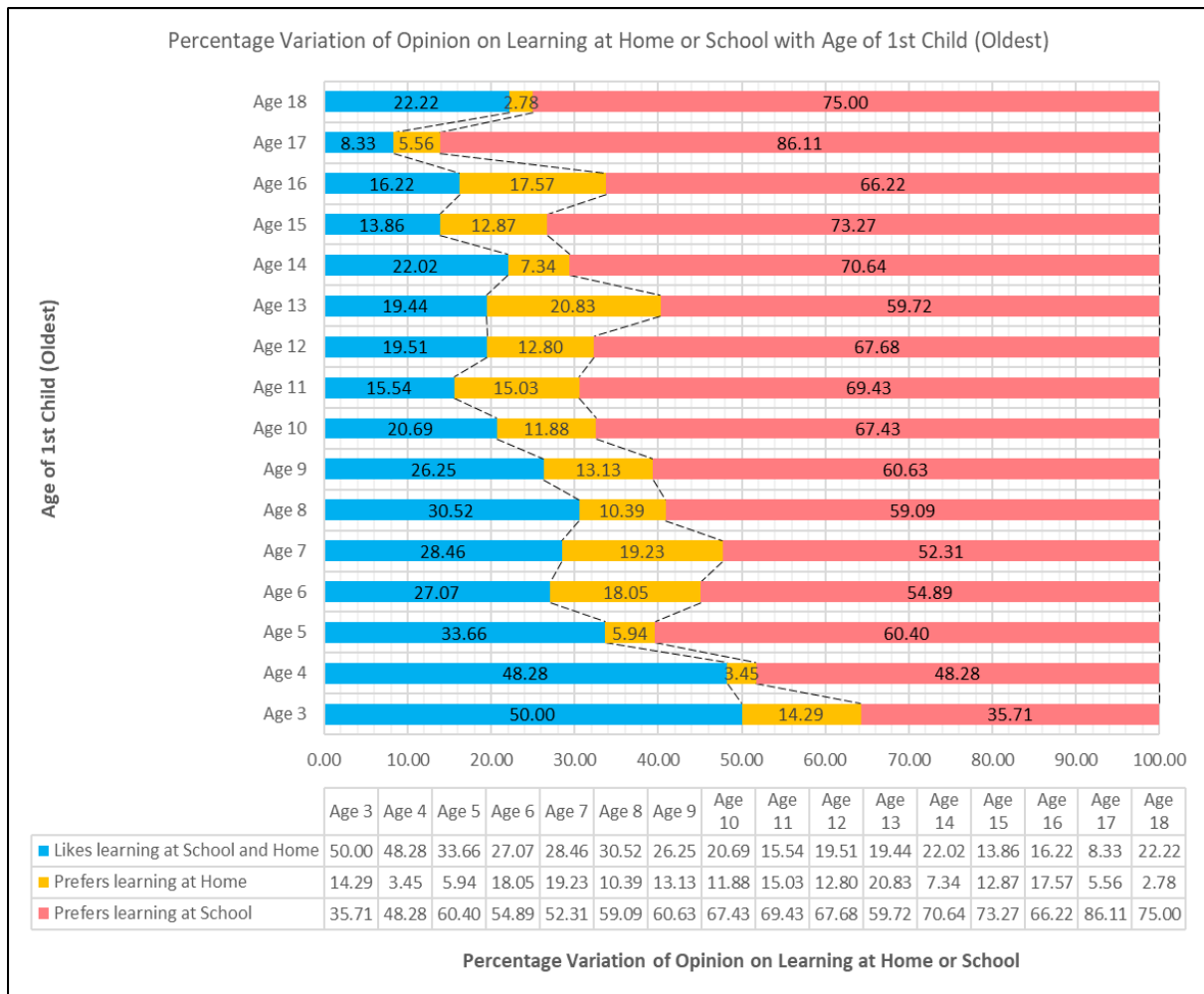


**Figure 48:** Percentage who planned a home-school routine VS support/guidance provision.

### Children's Opinions on the Home-Schooling Experience

p=	4.1055E-18
alpha=	0.05
d.o.f.=	30
X <sup>2</sup>	151.2015176

Figure 49 (see next page) illustrates the variation in opinion on home-schooling versus learning at school with the age of the 1<sup>st</sup>, or oldest child. The oldest child was selected as it provided a wide range of responses for comparison. The ages were narrowed to age 3 to 18 – the most likely ages at which home-schooling would be taking place. As shown in Figure 49, there is a trend whereby the likelihood of a child saying that they like learning at both home and school decreases with age up to 18 years old. The likelihood of a child saying that they prefer learning at school appears to increase with age.



**Figure 49:** Percentage variation of opinion on learning at home or school with age of 1<sup>st</sup> child (oldest).

### *Analysis of Open-ended Questions (Questions 41 and 42)*

Respondents were asked ‘*What ONE thing could your school or the government do to make home-schooling work better for all of your children?*’ (Q41). The open-ended answers were analysed and coded by broad theme and then subtheme, based on the first suggestion made in the response (some respondents listed several). A small minority of parents/carers (7.5%, n=153) felt that there was no change needed. Of those who did make suggestions, the five main themes to emerge were demands for the following:

- More online/live interaction with teachers/peers
- More guidance from schools
- More effective teaching/resources
- Measures to address practical challenges of home-schooling
- Planning/consideration of future implications when schools re-open fully

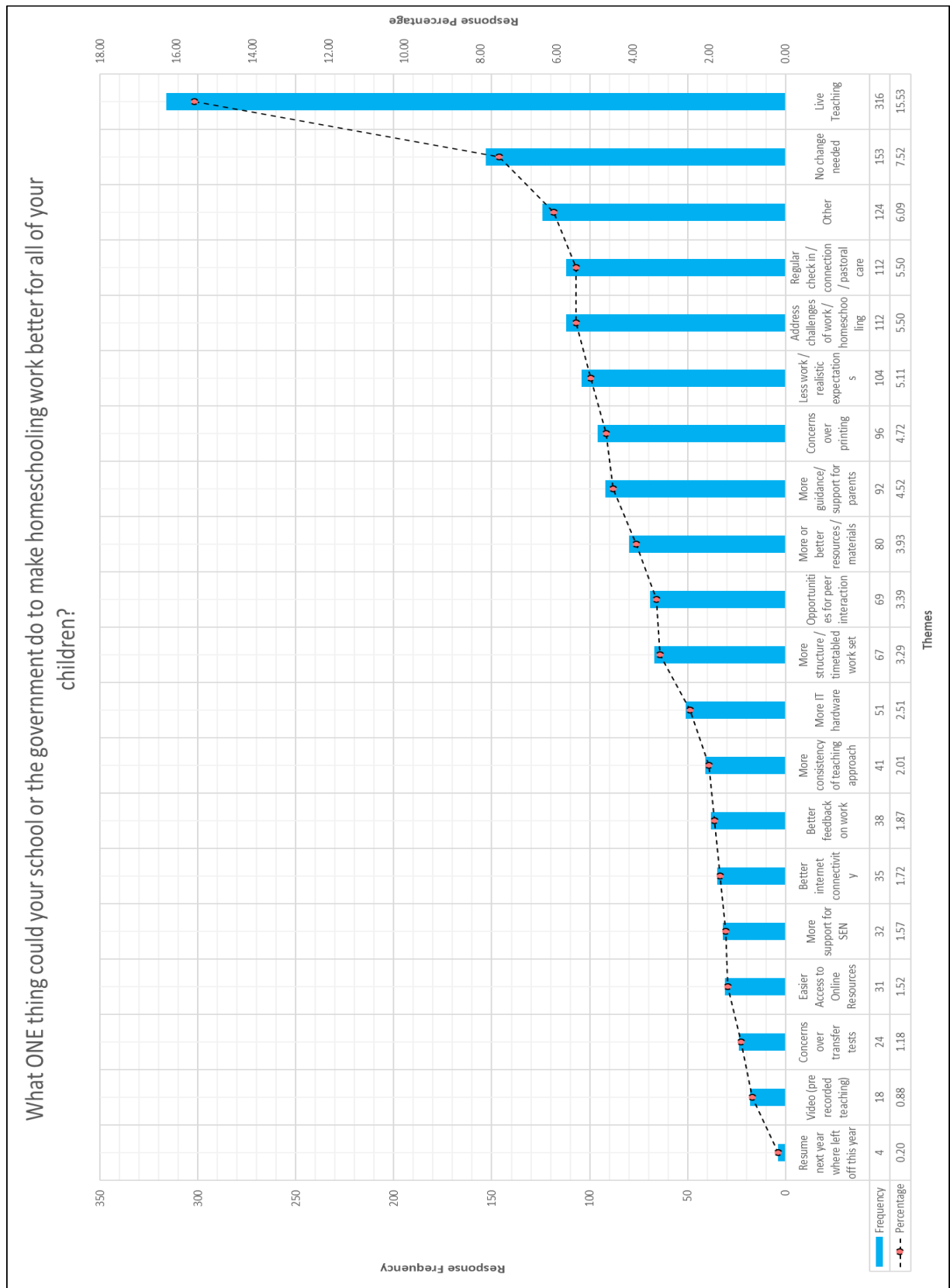
The full results are displayed in **Figure 50** and are explored in more detail below with illustrative examples.

The **first** and most common broad theme to emerge from the open-ended responses was a desire from parents for more interaction with the school using digital and video conferencing technology. This can be broken down into several subthemes: live teaching, live check-ins/pastoral calls, and opportunities for peer interaction. In total, 515 parents (25.3% of all respondents) called for more online interaction with teachers/peers.

The most common specific suggestion by far was for schools to offer live online teaching (e.g. using zoom or other video conferencing technology). This was proposed by 15.5% (n=316) of the parents/carers. In many cases the suggestion was made that this could be a weekly lesson or two, or an introductory lesson to a new topic to help pupils learn more effectively and to enhance their engagement and motivation.

There was some consternation that this was not available to schools here, whereas in other parts of the world it was being offered to pupils learning at home:

*“More virtual engagement with the children like school assemblies and short periods of virtual learning (teacher led with peers)”*



**Figure 50** What ONE thing could your school or the government do to make homeschooling work better for all of your children?

*“Teacher doing face to face lesson e.g. via zoom even for 15 min numeracy and 15 min literacy especially when introducing a new concept.”*

*“School could be teaching using Google classroom video conference calls. I do know that as a teacher we have had to think about the safe guarding involved in this but it appears that this is what most schools worldwide are doing.”*

*“Feel it should be more virtual like I know is happening at my friend's private school in Italy. Children log in to Zoom for 0900 and are taught by a teacher. A task is set. Time is set to return to teacher. The classroom assistant then enters a zoom class with his x amount of children he has to look after.”*

Many other parents (5.5%, n=112) also wanted regular live online communication with the class teacher(s) and school to check in on academic progress but also to maintain a pastoral connection with the children. In these responses, parents were keen to know that the school and teachers cared about their children and their mental health, rather than simply teaching them new curricular content. Comments made often highlighted that children were missing school and regular connection and communication with their teacher.

*Just maybe a bit more contact be it a video call or a telephone call. My daughter is deeply upset she misses her teacher so much. Everything she does at home is to make her teacher proud and I think she misses the social contact of school.*

*I would like my son's form teacher to engage in a video call once a week to chat to him and check how he is managing.*

*Provide more emotional support/resources for pupils struggling with missing social interaction. Engage in some video to pupils to keep connection with school. Have more communication between school and parent to help up skill parent, as how children are engaging with work has changed over the weeks.*

For many other parents (3.4%, n=69) the first suggestion made was for the school to provide opportunities for their children to interact in real time with their classmates via online conferencing, as they were concerned that they were missing out on the benefits of social interaction. This was particularly keenly felt by parents of younger children who, it can be assumed, are less likely than older children to have access to their own social media accounts through which to keep in touch.



*Some keeping in touch activities, like games or something in zoom. Although my daughter is screen free generally, during lock down her skating team and music school are both doing online zoom lessons each week I do allow her to participate in these. If her class did the same it would help her socially, and I would allow her to participate. (Parent of P5 child)*

*Interaction between peers they miss their friends so much. We live out of the town, so they don't see any kids their own age. (Parent of 2 children: P3 and pre-school)*

*To try and get some sort of event in place where all the kids in the class can see each other for a quiz or fun event. Use Zoom or something similar to make the kids feel like they are together. (Parent of P7 child)*

*More interaction and ways for kids to communicate in learning with their peers. (Parent of 2 children: Year 8 and P5)*

Interestingly, the issue of child protection/safeguarding which has been cited as a barrier to teachers/schools setting up live video conferencing with pupils was mentioned by just two of the parents. A total of 18 parents (0.9%) asked instead for more pre-recorded teaching videos to be uploaded, perhaps for this reason. However, for other parents, it would seem that live interaction with pupils is an issue which presents few if any concerns, certainly when weighed against what they perceive to the significant benefits to be gained from live interaction. One parent expressed the view that the safeguarding issue/barrier was something for which a solution could and must be found:

*I also think that live teaching should be developed more effectively, with some thought given to the child protection/safeguarding implications of teachers zooming children. There must be a way around this (seeking parental consent etc.) which would allow teachers to engage safely with children in a live setting. Online worksheets and tasks are not a substitute for interacting with a real teacher.*

The **second** broad theme to emerge was the desire from parents to have more guidance from schools (9.33%, n=190). This broad theme was further broken down into three subthemes: a desire for more detailed instructions for them to help support the home learning (4.5%, n=92), more structure or timetabling to provide order to the learning rather than simply uploading an array of online resources (3.3%, n=67), and

guidance on how to access the online resources (1.5%, n=31). The data was further analysed by highest educational qualification of the respondents, but it was found that parents/households with no qualifications or educated only to GCSE/O-level were no more or less likely to ask for additional guidance than better educated parents. A sense of frustration was expressed by some that their schools were not providing enough guidance and expecting them as parents to become teachers, a role for which they had (in most cases) neither prior training nor experience:

*Provide guidance on what our children should be able to do or aiming towards by the end of June. Some parents will not want this pressure but for others like myself, it would help me focus their learning more. At least I would know what I am aiming towards.*

*Try to provide more information on how to teach the material. Worksheets are fine if you are familiar with the curriculum which I am not and I'm wary of not explaining material to my child properly.*

*Set out a clear & realistic "timetable" at the beginning of each week*

*Provide a timetable of what will be expected the following week, on a Friday, so that we can get ready and plan the week ahead. This is normal sent in a Monday morning by which time I am working.*

*Guidance on how to access google classroom as still can't get on but did manage to work my way round teams but all complicated*

*More simple access methods*

The **third** broad theme relates to the quality of the teaching, the materials and teacher interaction and represented the first recommendation for a total of 295 parents (14.5%). This theme was further broken down into five subthemes: a desire for fewer resources and more realistic expectations from teachers (5.1%, n=104); a contrasting wish for more resources or better/ more appropriate teaching resources (3.9%, n=80); a call for greater consistency of approach between teachers and schools in terms of approach and expectations (2.0%, n=41); a wish to have more feedback from teachers on work completed by children at home (1.9%, n=38); and a call for greater support and/or differentiated teaching to meet the learning difficulties of children with special educational needs (1.6%, n=32).

Fewer resources and more realistic expectations

*Do not bombard parents with a crazy amount of work in one go. As a mother I want the best for my child. However, I also want a healthy happy child who can enjoy this time at home. I do appreciate what my school has done for my children but it's just far too much and this feeling of pressure is not right. Other mothers are feeling exactly the same way.*

*Reasonable expectations and bigger focus on mental wellness*

More/more appropriate resources:

*Currently only providing literacy and maths resources other topics would be appreciated.*

*Have more resources available so we can challenge the more able student!  
At times the work is too easy for my son and he is not being stretched!*

Consistency of Approach

*Every school is doing their own thing. A coherent approach agreed by DENI to home schooling with support from EA. Schools are being left to find their way in the dark. They are trying their best with limited guidance*

*A Code of Conduct needs to be decided between all schools so that every school/teacher is doing the same thing. From my own reading on social media it appears that some are offering lots of support and assistance while other schools are taking a back seat. This should not be the case as the children and parents are the ones who are paying the price.*

More feedback

*There has been no feedback on work completed by either of our schools. As parents we have to mark & correct the work, on top of doing our full time hours as essential frontline workers.*

*The one thing I think could work better from school is feedback. My son puts a huge amount of effort into his work and only one or two teachers provide feedback. It doesn't stop us from doing the work but it would be nice for him to receive feedback. Some teachers don't even acknowledge the work.*

Differentiation/SEN

*Ensure children with learning difficulties have differentiated work - this has not been provided for my son*

*Help for my youngest son would be good he has autism and he is missing out on speech therapy and routine s sooner school is open for him the better mission out a lot and no rest for me as a carer*

The **fourth** main theme to emerge related to the practical challenges for parents as a result of juggling work commitments (as either a keyworker or working from home), and/or accessing online resources and then being able to print them. This was the first concern for a total of 294 parents (14.4%). This broad thematic area was subdivided into a total of four subthemes as follows: balancing work and home-schooling commitments (5.5%, n=112); concerns over printing – practicalities, cost implications, and calls for more printed resources to be made available to collect from schools (4.7%, n=96); the need for more hardware e.g. laptops, tablets to access the online resources (2.5%, n=51); and, a call for better broadband services, especially from those in rural communities (1.7%, n=35). Here there were many comments from parents who were clearly struggling to ‘juggle’ the demands of their own work (either outside the home or within) with the daily challenge of home-schooling their children. Although the experiences of keyworkers and those working from home are self-evidently quite different, in both cases there were calls for greater government support and/or understanding as well as allowances / reduced demands on the part of employers as many parents felt very stressed and under enormous pressure to meet two competing sets of expectations. Essential workers in particular expressed concern that they were often working longer hours than before, and were finding it hard to manage the increased demands of frontline work, inadequate childcare, and home-schooling.

A representative selection of comments is provided below:

Working/Home-school demands

*The school has been fantastic but i think if the government offered voluntary furlough for working parents rather than working from home then my household would be more relaxed, there would be more continuity and my youngest in particular would not be trying to compete for attention and my own mental health would be better and my stress levels would be reduced.*

*Allow greater flexibility for key workers to be able to provide their children with some home schooling opportunities as my children have little support from us with their schooling and we are having to use annual leave to be able to*

*complete work with them on our time off from very stressful jobs that are even more pressurised than ever. There is a massive risk of front line staff completely burning out as they are using leave to then squeeze in a weeks worth of school work in a day or 2 which is stressful for everyone involved.*

*If parents need to homeschool then they should be allowed a reduction in hours of workload from employers [employers?] to allow for this. Very stressful and children's learning is being affected as parents try to balance all their commitments particularly at a time when we are concerned about our job security*

*Persuade employers to give staff time to home school children. Am expected to work full time and home school my children very stressful!!! In fact work seems to be busier than ever with more meetings scheduled.*

*Recognise that most parents are not teachers and that most are working full time as well as schooling their own children! Making sure that they are aware of individual families circumstances and their ability to access materials, manage to complete work and also the additional stress this can place on already overwhelmed parents and children.*

*Relax the amount of time in the working week that parents are requested to work. This would allow parents to educate their children without the constant stress of needing to log on themselves. I am doing about 90% of my work in the evenings... After 8pm and working until around 2am...The current situation is not sustainable in the long term.*

### Printing Materials

*The government could provide extra funding to parents to cover the costs of buying paper and ink for printing resources.*

*Make it all online and not to be printing off a hundred sheets of paper a week for 3 children.*

*Issue packs weekly*

### IT hardware

*A laptop and printer would be a great help, with only access to my phone, it's difficult to read screen and some tasks cannot be undertaken at all*

*Provide free or discounted tablets*

*Not assume we have access to a tablet to complete see saw tasks we don't and I am having to amend them to be suitable for my 7 year old to complete using the shared home computer that I am also working from home on. I think they forget not everyone has the technology at home at times. It needs to be a level playing field.*

Better internet / broadband connectivity

*the broadband in my area is very poor and we can not avail of online resources or partake in zoom meetings which puts us at a disadvantage.*

*Government to provide money to improve the Internet Broadband speed, especially in rural areas.*

The **fifth** and final broad theme to emerge was in terms of looking ahead to the future and the resumption of school. A total of 24 parents (1.2%) raised concerns over the impact of school closures for their child's preparation for the AQE/PPTC tests scheduled for the autumn term. The comments ranged from a demand for clarity around whether the tests would still be going ahead, to calls for them to be postponed or scrapped altogether, given the disruption to schooling since March and the potential for inequality of opportunity for the children sitting the tests. No parents called for the tests to go ahead as normal starting in early November:

*My eldest is due to take transfer test in November, make them delay this. Make sure no child is at a disadvantage because of this epidemic.*

*The government could scrap this year's AQE exam as this year's P6 children have lost 4 of the most crucial and important school months of their lives!*

*Honestly, sort out the situation regarding selection for post-primary so that it is not so onerous on children and their families. The costs around the transfer process in terms of children's mental health is ridiculously high even at normal times, but in times like these, when suddenly parents and children are functioning in a vacuum of information and being expected to accomplish all of the subject content coverage that a qualified teacher would usually be presenting (often while caring for dependents and doing their own jobs as well!), it seems truly unfair. Educational authorities have been relatively clear about A levels and GCSE processes but meanwhile, parents and families of children in P6 have been left hanging.*

Four parents (0.3%) called for schools to resume teaching the curriculum where schools had left off in March 2020 (“Forget about it. Start back where kids left off. All will be at different levels of learning”).

Among the ‘other’ comments were a small number of calls for clarity around when schools will re-open and a total of 17 calls (1.1%) for schools to re-open immediately (e.g. “Frankly, get them back to school. This situation is untenable for working parents - we are incredibly stressed and it is rubbing off on the kids.”). There were also isolated comments in relation to the need to support all children on their return:

*The whole cohort is affected, my main concern is that the education system won't allow these kids time to catch up educationally and plough on when they go back to school and this will result in stressed kids who worry they aren't doing well enough educationally.*

The final survey question, **Q42**, invited parents/carers to add any further comments regarding the home-schooling process. While only just over a half of respondents (n=1019) chose to add any further comments, upon reading, it is immediately clear that the range in parental experiences of home-schooling during lockdown is vast. When the comments were analysed, over half (57.1%, n=582) reflected negative experiences of home-schooling. There were nonetheless a minority of parents (14.5%, n=148) for whom the experience was positive. A total of 180 parents (17.7%) added comments which were both negative and positive. The remaining 109 comments (10.7%) were more general reflections on home-schooling or the future implications of the experience.

First, and in contrast to earlier questions (e.g. Q40, 41) which focused uniquely on the challenges, a total of 148 parents (17.7% of those who added a comment) took the opportunity in this question to describe the positive impact that the lockdown has had for them. For these parents, it is clear that the home-schooling experience has been enjoyable, offering them an opportunity to spend more time together as family, enjoying a calmer pace of life, and having time to engage confidently and more directly than ever before in their children's learning, supported by appropriate online resources from the school, while also taking time to play more and enjoy the outdoors. Several parents also commented specifically on how their children were also enjoying

the home-schooling experience (though missing their friends and classmates) and four parents even suggested that some home-schooling could be introduced for everyone for one or two days every week in the post-COVID19 future. Of the 148 parents who expressed positive viewpoints, a disproportionate number (17.6%, n=26) were Essential Workers (compared to 23% of Essential Workers overall who completed the survey):

*Loved it tho hard. We are closer.*

*The difference in our kids is amazing they are so much happier and more relaxed the whole house is much less stressed, adults included.*

*I think my children have coped very well - they are settled, contented and enjoy the cocoon of home I think.*

*It has given my children more time to play freely which is positive.*

*We are loving it...so lovely to slow the pace of busy school and work life down a little and really enjoy being together...loads of quality time and learning together!*

*It is often joyful to connect with the children's learning more in each subject and for us all then to take a break together for a walk etc. It is brilliant having great conversations and chatting to each other during the day.*

*Parents are much more in control. Parents have much better understanding of difficulties in specific topics/areas which need focus. My daughter didn't talk about what she was learning at school previously, and I had no way of keeping up to date with topics/areas which needed extra attention. Homework wasn't reflective of the work done in class, and now we have open communication and clear understanding of expectations and targets to be able to celebrate achievements together, which we didn't have before.*

*I would be delighted if at least one day per week was learning from home.*

A small number of parents used the opportunity of this final question to focus specifically on the impact on their children with special educational needs which varied according to the child's individual needs and circumstances. For a small number the time at home has resulted in their child feeling less anxious in a calmer home environment. By contrast a higher number of parents complained of a lack of differentiated work provided, the negative impact caused by the change of routine, and



the removal of respite services, all of which have made the lockdown restrictions much more challenging:

*Our eldest son has ASD he misses the structure of school and is struggling with the uncertainty of school life in P6 and what will happen in P7 and the transfer test*

*Our son has Aspergers. He is v bright but lacks concentration. When he is in the mood to do work, we do it. He needs a lot of attention to keep him in tasks. Generally speaking he is much less anxious than when at school, he struggles with the social side of school which results in massive anxieties and OCD behaviours. These have significantly reduced since he has been at home. His emotional well being is more important than education at present, particularly as his nana died from Covid at the end of May. I will facilitate his learning, but if not keep him busy in the garden, building dens, craft etc.*

*I can't teach my oldest I scared that with her learning difficulties that iv help set her back way further than her peers*

On the other hand, the majority of parents who added further comments felt their experience of home-schooling has been negative with a wide range of terms used including 'challenging', 'stressful', 'torture', 'a nightmare', 'tiring', 'isolating' and 'overwhelming'. The particular challenges identified broadly mirror those outlined in the analysis of Q41 (see above). In some cases the comments expressed highlight high levels of anxiety, stress and exhaustion and a desire that the home-schooling experience would end as soon as possible. For these parents, it is clear that the novelty has definitely worn off. This is seen particularly in comments from some of the essential workers who completed this final question.

*At the beginning it was fun. Now the novelty has wore off. Hard to keep myself motivated to work never mind the boys*

*It sucks.*

*We are crawling in the dark*

*Is it nearly over?*

*It's a nightmare as I don't have time to help my kids as much as I would like*

*We should not be trying to maintain the level of work at home as happens at school. We aren't teachers. We're trying to teach and work.*

*I am finding the homeschool process stressful. I am a single parent and trying to teach my child, work from home, keep my other child entertained, run my house and care for my children is a lot and it is taking its toll. The school has been very supportive but it is just a very challenging time.*

*I'm completely exhausted physically and mentally with work and trying not to fail my children's education especially having 2 kids in p6. I don't want them to fall behind or be failing as a result of both parents working night and days but unfortunately for us we are in the group of workers giving our all but failing our kids to look after others. They has been no support for our kids mental health and well being as they are worried about school and there parents working my 7 yr old cries when I go to work. (Essential Worker)*

The responses also include a small number of strongly worded comments expressing real frustration and resentment against teachers:

*It has been v challenging / difficult and stressful time...To simply close down schools with no forward planning is simply not acceptable...Teachers have had the luxury of remaining at home and receiving full pay (Essential Worker)*

*It's a complete disgrace that teachers are at home being paid full wage and all they do is send out electronic apps that could help the children .our school isnt even open so teachers are no where near it preparing work ...headmistress is at home doing sweet fanny adam nothing . I am still working full time as an essential worker ..working un sociable hours so as I can mind my children during the day . I am exhausted . ..why are the teachers mot furloughed like everyone else ...5.5 months off full pay .. disgusting . All essential workers are working flat to the mat and teachers sitting scratching . My child is meant to be doing the transfer in November and it is up to parents to prep them .. we are not the experts ...I am disappointed disgusted and all support for teachers whenever we return to normality has gone .....we are left high and dry .... (Essential Worker)*

*I think it's disgraceful to expect key workers to work and then come home to homeschool their children totally disgusted with the education authorities stance on this and how it was portrayed! Our primary school is not open for key workers children nor did they encourage them to attend, the one and only*

*week they were open. It sounded an awful environment for the children and they said they wouldn't teach them just*

*t disgraceful when all key workers are working so hard and risking their lives.*

*(Essential Worker)*

Finally, occupying the middle ground is a group of parents who acknowledge that there have been difficulties to face but appreciate the uniquely challenging circumstances, and comment on how everyone (parents *and* teachers) are doing their best. Many have resigned themselves to the challenges of home-schooling, juggling work commitments (at home or as an essential worker) and displaying a remarkable degree of resilience and perseverance in the face of a very challenging situation not of their choosing. These parents spoke of challenges and made a range of suggestions and recommendations, but on reviewing the comments, there is an overwhelming sense of parents trying their best, making the most of their own limited knowledge of the curriculum, and engaging as best they can with new technologies, new ways of learning, and new subject areas to try to support their children. This is expressed in the following examples:

*We are muddling through as best we can tho in a less than ideal situation! I have accepted that we may not cover all the subjects as thoroughly and accurately as the teachers can and that we will miss some deadlines and targets but hope that he can catch up when school eventually returns.*

*I am happier to homeschool and know the school is trying it's best to help in a situation no one has been in. They are doing their best and I would be more worried that my children would go back too soon and become sick.*

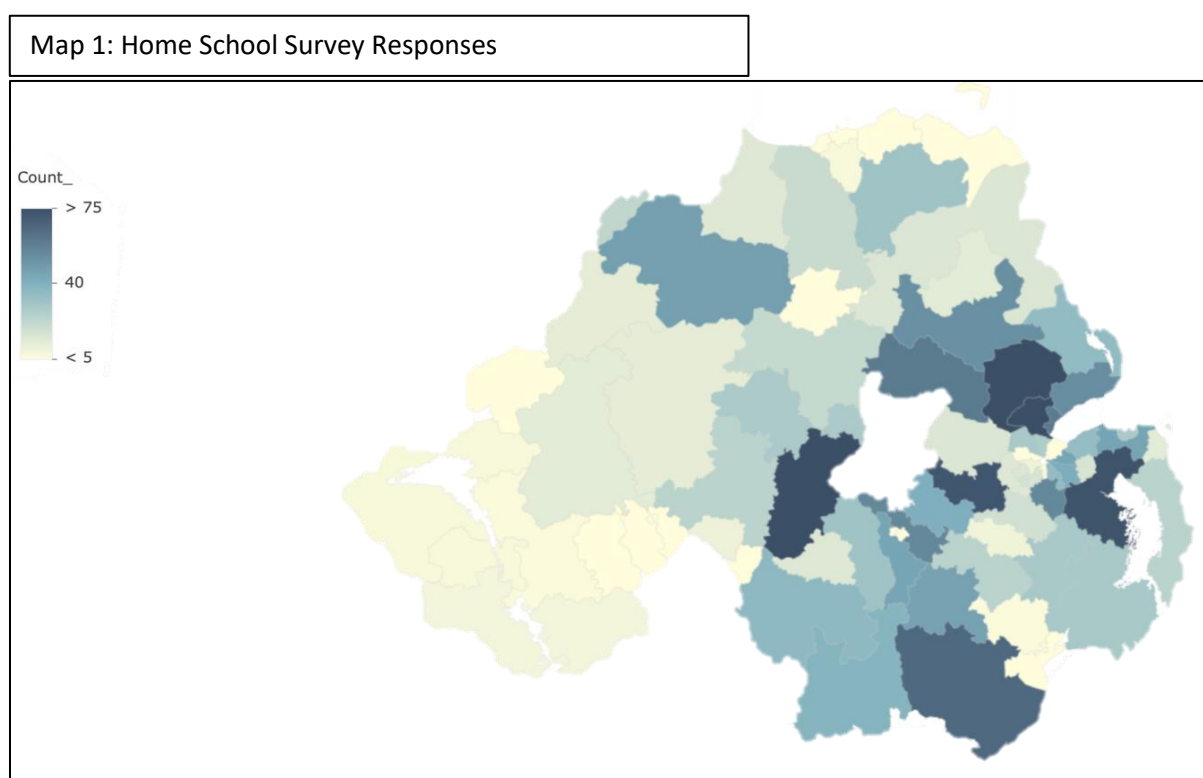
*I generally feel happy and content with home schooling and my children are relaxed and understand the importance of continuing their school studies at this time. That said there is no substitute for school based learning, the input of professionals and interaction with their peers. We are therefore making the best of a bad situation and preservation of health and life has to take priority.*

*I appreciate it is such unknown territory and a difficult time for teachers as well as parents. Everyone is just trying the best they can.*



### *Cartography of Selected Results*

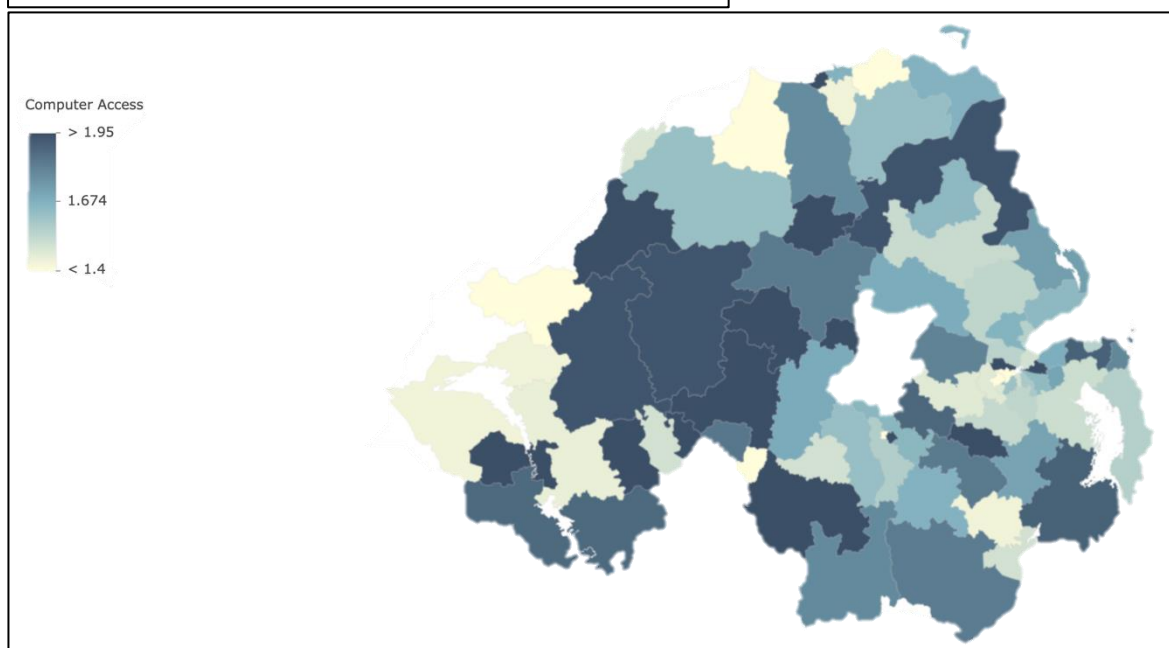
The home-schooling survey collected locational data in the form of postcode area. Map 1 shows the overall number of responses received from each postcode area. This is helpful when considering the overall findings from the survey. Responses were received from every postcode area apart from central Belfast (BT1 & BT2) and from urban, suburban and rural areas, meaning that the survey results can be considered to be broadly representative of the whole of Northern Ireland. However, some postcode areas, particularly in Fermanagh and north Antrim, had fewer than five responses, meaning that the data for these areas is less reliable and that these areas are underrepresented within the sample.



In order to identify areas in which access to online learning is most limited, we took responses to Q33, assigned these responses a numerical value, and found the average for each postcode area. Map 2 shows these results, with darker areas representing more constrained access for children to computers, tablets and other

digital devices for online learning. This would indicate a lack of digital devices for learning available in the home. There is no strong geographical pattern to this data, but areas of County Tyrone are most consistently deprived on this measure. Within urban areas, there appears to be sharp disparities e.g. Belfast, Portadown, Bangor. To complement this data, Map 3 shows the percentage of respondents for each postcode area that reported 'Accessing School Material via the Internet' as a challenge in their household (Q40). Areas where this challenge seems most common are the North West and around Belfast Lough.

Map 2: Access to Online Learning (Q33)



Respondents were asked to rate the quality of resources the school/preschool supplies from 'Poor' to 'Excellent (Q22). Map 4 shows the average score for each postcode area, where poor=1, fair=2, good=3 and excellent=4. There appears to be fairly little geographical variation in the data, and many of the postcode areas with the highest and lowest scores for this variable are also where the fewest responses were recorded (see Map 1). Overall, areas with higher response rates appear to have more 'average' responses to this question, however there are two exceptions worth highlighting. Firstly, BT63 (Craigavon) has a larger number of responses (n=44) but nonetheless returns a low average score (1.57), indicating that the parents in this area who responded to this survey are on average not so happy with the quality of home-schooling resources currently being provided. Secondly, BT40 (Larne) also has a larger number of responses (n=35), but a high average score (2.38), indicating that the respondents from this area are particularly happy with the quality of home-schooling resources currently being provided. Further analysis may reveal why this is the case.

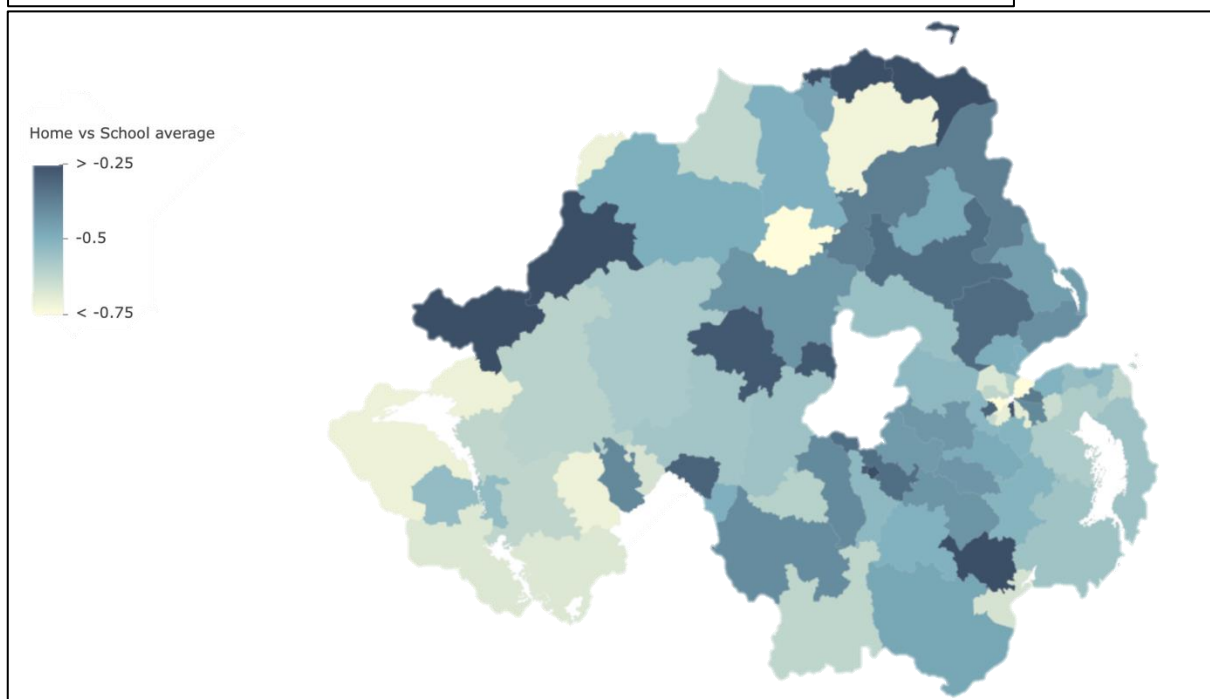
Map 4: Quality of Resources Supplied by School (Q22)



Question 38 asked respondents if their children, who normally attend an educational setting, prefer learning at home or school. Map 5 shows the average preference for

each postcode area, where -1=prefers learning at school, 0=likes learning at home and at school and 1=prefers learning at home. As the survey was aimed at parents, this figure is likely to reflect their point of view rather than that of their children directly. Overall, there appears to be a widespread preference for learning at school. Like Map 4, the outliers identifiable in Map 5 are likely due to the small number of responses from these areas (Fermanagh, north Antrim). However, once these outliers are taken into consideration, there is an identifiable pattern of difference between urban and rural postcode areas, with urban postcode areas in Belfast (BT6, n=35, -0.70) and Derry/Londonderry (BT48, n=22, -0.71) showing a clear preference for learning at school and more rural postcode areas less of a preference, for example BT39 (n=98) and BT42 (n=51) in Antrim each scoring -0.33.

Map 5: Home vs School Preference (Q38)



These maps aim to shed light on some the geographical inequalities that exist in parents' current experience of coronavirus shut-down home-schooling in Northern Ireland. Due to the quantity and scale of the data, only some broad geographical trends have been identified.



## Chapter Four: Discussion/Conclusion

### *Discussion Points*

The detailed results presented in Chapter Three, both quantitative and qualitative, reveal a broad range of experiences and responses among the 2035 parents and carers who completed the online survey. The survey explored their experiences during the current pandemic which has transformed home-schooling from a planned deliberate choice to educate at home taken by a small number of parents into a universal, enforced and largely unplanned requirement in response to an international health crisis, the like of which has not been experienced in any of our lifetimes.

Indeed, it is a point of discussion whether the term ‘home-schooling’ is even the most appropriate term to use, and this is an argument made by several parents in their responses to the open-ended questions:

*We need to stop calling this home schooling, this is definitely not what home schoolers do. This is crisis management, pandemic schooling, isolation schooling etc. Home schoolers have lots of social interactions outside of the home! It fluffs it up and makes it nice referring to it as home schooling. (Q42)*

*Honestly I wish it was not referred to as home schooling as that means I am failing them. Working full time from home while my key worker husband does more overtime than ever before and trying to encourage & supervise any sort of learning is not only seemingly impossible (for me anyway) but also creates so much guilt. I am failing my children regardless of how many social media posts tell me it's ok to not be flourishing etc etc. I'm failing my employer who is paying me for 35 hours work per week but in reality getting a distracted, mistake ridden employee who is physically & emotionally exhausted. We need help. (Q42)*

Having acknowledged the clear difference between COVID-19 home-schooling and Elective Home Education (see Badman, 2009; Conroy, 2010) as discussed in Chapter One, and while not wishing to dismiss the arguments of the parents cited above, the term home-schooling is nonetheless used in this report in line with common usage.

It is clear that the current study has exposed a very wide spectrum of experiences of home-schooling as expressed by parents and carers, from, at one end of the spectrum, those who are highly educated, confident in actively teaching as well as supporting their children's learning and enjoying the opportunity to spend time together 'cocooned' against the danger of the pandemic, to, at the other end of the spectrum, those who are desperately struggling to juggle work and home-schooling commitments with no wider familial support, limited educational qualifications and lower levels of confidence.

The wealth of statistical results, enriched by the qualitative depth of the open-ended responses to Q41 and Q42, highlight four main areas for discussion:

**First**, the divergence in experience appears to be strongly mediated by the level of parental education and by employment status. For instance, when employment status is correlated with highest education qualification (see Figure 40), a stark difference emerges: the more highly educated parents are, the more likely they are to be working from home and the less likely they are to be furloughed. Parents who are educated to university level are over 4 times more likely to be working from home than parents with no qualifications. Parents with no qualifications are almost 5 times more likely to be furloughed than parents with university degrees.

The divergence is further illustrated by Figure 42 which shows that parents with university-level education are most likely to become directly involved in their children's home-schooling through teaching them directly (26.7%) or actively supporting their children's learning (52.6%). By contrast, less well educated parents are much more likely to simply 'monitor' their child's learning. A reason for this is suggested by Figure 43 which exposes low levels of confidence in managing home-schooling among less well educated parents. Parents with university-level education are almost four times more likely to feel confident in their ability to manage their child/ren's home-schooling than parents with no qualifications.

**Second**, this survey highlights the particular challenges faced by Essential or Key Workers. Figure 41 demonstrates that these parents in particular are least likely to engage directly in their child/ren's home-schooling (e.g. least likely to teach or actively support their learning) and are most likely to encourage their child/ren to learn independently, one might assume, as a result of having to work shifts outside the

home. Although falling below statistical significance, Figure 45 suggests that the children of Essential Workers are also least likely to engage in home learning for 5 or more days per week. The qualitative comments expressed in Q41 and Q42 are also uniquely revealing about the particular challenges faced by Essential Workers who are often working longer hours than before and are at greatest risk of becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus. While not universal among the group of Essential Workers, the strongest expressions of frustration and desperation came from within this group, struggling with physical exhaustion, fear of infection, an inability to spend as much time with their children to support their learning, and, in several cases, a resulting sense of guilt and anger.

**Third**, the study examines carefully parents' experiences of how schools have responded to the crisis, and highlights a broad range of school provision. A majority (61.4%) of parents are happy with the amount of resources that their child/ren's school is providing, and over 80% report that the school has provided support in how to access the online resources which they need. Furthermore, almost two thirds (65.1%) acknowledge that their child/ren's school has also provided pastoral support during the lockdown period. However, several significant challenges remain. The survey findings have revealed that while all but one parent in the survey have some form of internet access (and many parents have multiple devices), almost a quarter of homes (23.1%) do not have a printer, which may explain why, in their open comments, so many parents expressed a desire for more printed packs of work to be provided and complained of the additional costs incurred in providing printer ink and paper. This is an area which to date has not been considered either by teachers (in terms of asking pupils to print off pdf worksheets to complete by hand) or by the Department of Education/Education Authority. Consequently, it would be important for teachers to be more aware that on average 1 in 4 of their pupils will not be able to print off worksheets, and/or crucial for policy-makers to address not just the inequality of provision in terms of tablets, laptops etc. (only half of children have their own device) and poor internet access (especially in rural areas) but also in terms of printers, ink and paper, which constitute some of the unacknowledged hidden costs of home-schooling.

The survey also reveals that less than 1 in 6 parents (15.6%) claimed that their child/ren's school engaged in live online teaching. In Q41, which asked for a single

recommendation to improve home-schooling, the most common theme was a call for some degree of live interaction with teachers, even if only once a week for twenty minutes, either to help teach new topics, or (especially with younger children) to allow some peer or pastoral interaction to raise motivation levels. Here many parents spoke of how their children missed school terribly (their classmates but also their teachers) and that uploading worksheets and other materials to an online platform was a poor substitute for the dynamic, personal relationship which is central to teaching and learning. On this particular issue, it is evident that there are justifiable concerns on the part of Teachers' Unions (see NASUWT 2020a/b) that their members could find themselves in vulnerable positions, exposed to unpredictable situations with potentially unsupervised children in home situations. These concerns are real, and cannot simply be swept aside. One parent has argued that "There must be a way around this (seeking parental consent etc.) which would allow teachers to engage safely with children in a live setting. Online worksheets and tasks are not a substitute for interacting with a real teacher." However, until such times as a satisfactory resolution is found to this barrier, then it seems reasonable to suggest an increase in short, recorded video tutorials (e.g. for new topics) or messages of support and encouragement from teachers which can be uploaded and viewed at any time and on any number of occasions by children. Even this compromise solution falls far short of the reality of live teaching in a 'normal' classroom, but is perhaps the single and easiest pedagogical recommendation to implement for the remainder of the lockdown period.

**Fourth**, and finally, the study provides some interesting insights into children's experiences of the home-schooling / lockdown period. The survey reveals that older children tend to prefer learning at school (and miss school more) while younger children seem more likely to prefer the home environment (see Figure 49). Most parents suggest that children's levels of social skills and behaviour have remained the same as before schools closed to them. The area where children are most likely to have benefited is in their emotional well-being where around 1 in 5 parents claim that there has been an improvement. By contrast, 3 in 5 parents claim that their child/ren's level of motivation to learn has become worse or much worse since home-schooling began. This is confirmed by Q40 where almost 3 in 5 parents identified 'getting my child/ren to complete the home learning task' as a challenge they had experienced. There were also many insightful open comments made by parents about how their

children have responded to the unique circumstances of the past few weeks. These reveal a very broad range of experiences, from accounts of more relaxed children enjoying peaceful family time and playing outside or engaging in many different leisure activities (albeit within the confines of the house and garden) to children who are missing their friends and their teachers, struggling to learn, and falling further behind their peers in terms of their educational attainment.

### *Limitations of the study*

There are several important limitations of the current study which must be acknowledged:

First, the study was conducted online only (as a result of COVID-19 social distancing and travel restrictions) but it is accepted that parents with limited or no online access are therefore inevitably likely to be underrepresented in the current sample.

Second, it could be assumed too that those parents who were under most pressure with the competing demands of work (inside or outside the home) and home-schooling, would be less likely to have either the time or the energy to complete a lengthy survey on their experiences.

Third, as with other lengthy written surveys, it is likely that those with lower levels of literacy or those for whom English is not their first language would be less likely to be able to engage with the survey, to understand the questions, or to be able to express themselves fluently in the open-ended questions.

Fourth, the survey was open for just 10 days between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Had the survey been open longer, we may have had an even higher number of responses or been able to track parents' experiences throughout the home-schooling period, exploring possible factors such as home-school fatigue and falling levels of motivation, which are mentioned by some parents in this survey.

Fifth, we have made every effort to analyse the extensive data and produce a comprehensive written report within a very tight timeframe (less than two weeks). We did this out of a commitment to produce findings which will be of immediate benefit to policy makers (DE), support agencies (e.g. EA) and schools as they seek to support parents and children during the period of home-schooling. Had we taken additional

time, we would doubtless have produced a more detailed report but, arguably, it may have been too late to make a real difference in the current crisis.

Sixth, and perhaps most significantly, the survey is limited by asking only parents/carers for their opinions and not the opinions of teachers or, even more significantly, the children/young people themselves whose lives and educational experiences have been transformed almost overnight in a way that no parent alive today has ever experienced themselves as a child. While many parents have tried to describe the impact that home-schooling has had on their child/ren, it is acknowledged that there would be tremendous benefit in exploring children's lived experiences in their own words or through other forms of expression.

### *Conclusions*

As we began, so we conclude: the past few months have been utterly remarkable, forcing parents to assume a greater role than ever before in their child/ren's education, testing schools and teachers to their limits in terms of adapting fast to providing (mostly online) resources for home learning, and throwing children into a new, confined online learning environment at home, all amid a broader context of fear and uncertainty caused by a global pandemic.

Consequently, the purpose of this report is not to ascribe blame, to undermine professional reputations, or to expose individuals. Rather, it has to be accepted that there is a joint responsibility on everyone involved to try to make the situation better for everyone, especially those who, it would appear from this study, are disadvantaged by this continued period of home-schooling as a result of inadequate IT hardware or internet access, compounded by often stressed working parents who are struggling (through no fault of their own) to support their child/ren's learning, crying out for more time, better resources, and more interaction with teachers and peers.

It is clear that for many engaged in home-schooling, by now, in the words of parents in this study "the novelty has wore off" (sic), "Nobody chose this" and "It's flipping really hard work". Let us hope that we can learn the lessons of the past eight weeks so that all children can learn successfully, happily and equitably for the remainder of the lockdown period and beyond.

## References

- Archer, B. (2020) *Hot meals delivered to pupils of north Belfast primary school after generous donation*. *The Irish News*, 21 March 2020. Available at <https://www.irishnews.com/news/educationnews/2020/03/21/news/hot-meals-delivered-to-pupils-of-north-belfast-primary-school-after-generous-donation-1873235/> Accessed 13 May 2020.
- Badman, G., 2009. *Report to the Secretary of State on the review of elective home education in England* (Vol. 610). The Stationery Office.
- Bain, G. 2020. *Northern Ireland pupil on disappointment that future is out of her control after school life ended*. *Belfast Telegraph*, 18 April 2020. Available at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus/northern-ireland-pupil-on-disappointment-that-future-is-out-of-her-control-after-school-life-ended-39137052.html> Accessed 13 May 2020.
- BBC, 2018. Homeschooling in the UK increases 40% over three years. BBC 26 April 2018. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42624220> Accessed 13 May 2020.
- BBC, 2020. *BBC to deliver biggest push on education in its history*. 3 April 2020 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/coronavirus-education> Accessed 08 May 2020.
- Cross, G. 2020. Zoom 'security concerns' force Northern Ireland school to stop using app, claims principal, *Belfast Telegraph*, 15 May 2020. Available at <https://amp.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/zoom-security-concerns-force-northern-ireland-school-to-stop-using-app-claims-principal-39208944.html> Accessed 19 May 2020
- Bhopal, K. and Myers, M., 2016. Marginal groups in marginal times: Gypsy and Traveller parents and home education in England, UK. *British Educational Research Journal*, 42(1), pp.5-20.
- Booth, S. 2020. Coronavirus: Teachers warned against live-streaming lessons. *Schools Week* 4 April 2020. Available at <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/coronavirus-teachers-warned-against-live-streaming-lessons/> Accessed 18 May 2020.
- Burke, J. and Dempsey, M. 2020. *Covid-19 Practice in Primary Schools in Ireland Report*. Maynooth, National University of Ireland Maynooth. Available at [https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Covid-19%20Practice%20in%20Primary%20Schools%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Covid-19%20Practice%20in%20Primary%20Schools%20Report_0.pdf) Accessed 13 May 2020.
- CCEA, 2020. *Home Learning*. Available at <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/home-learning/bbc-ni-home-learning>

Childcare UK (2020) 'Nearly 1 in 4 parents say they are more likely to home school their children after the Coronavirus pandemic is over'. Available at <https://www.childcare.co.uk/news/homeschool> (Accessed 18 May 2020).

Cullinane, C. and Montacute, R., 2020. Research Brief: April 2020: COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief# 1: School Shutdown. London, The Sutton Trust.

D'Arcy, K. 2014. Home education, school, Travellers and educational inclusion, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 35:5, 818-835, DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2014.919840

Department for Education. 2020 Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19> Accessed 18 May 2020

Education Authority Northern Ireland (n.d.) *Moving Forward Guidelines for Elective Home Education*. Belfast, EANI.

Ellen, B. (2020) 'Home schooling is tough, but parents are doing a fraction of teachers' jobs', *The Guardian* 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/02/home-schooling-is-tough-but-parents-are-doing-a-fraction-of-teachers-jobs> (Accessed 18 May 2020)

Hunt, E. 2020. 'I'm losing my teenage years': young contend with life in lockdown. *The Guardian*, 9 May 2020. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/09/im-losing-my-teenage-years-young-contend-with-life-in-lockdown-coronavirus> Accessed 13 May 2020.

Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2020. Trying times: how might the lockdown change time use in families? Institute for Fiscal Studies Briefing Note. 20 April 2020. Available at <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14814> Accessed 13 May 2020.

Institute for Fiscal Studies. 2020. Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children's experiences during home learning. 18 May 2020. Available at <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14848> Accessed 19 May 2020.

Jolly, J. L., & Matthews, M. S. 2018. The chronicles of homeschooling gifted learners. *Journal of School Choice*, 12, 123–145.

Jolly, J.L. and Matthews, M.S. 2020. The shifting landscape of the homeschooling continuum. *Educational Review*, 72(3), pp.269-280.

Kendall, L. and Taylor, E., 2016. 'We can't make him fit into the system': parental reflections on the reasons why home education is the only option for their child who has special educational needs. *Education 3-13*, 44(3), pp.297-310.

Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, 2020. Pandemic school closures: risks and opportunities. *Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* 8 April 2020 (Editorial) Available at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(20\)30105-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(20)30105-X/fulltext) Accessed 13 May 2020.



- Mintz, V. 2020. Why I'm *Learning* More With Distance *Learning* Than I Do in School. *The New York Times*, 5 May 2020. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/opinion/coronavirus-pandemic-distance-learning.html> Accessed 13 May 2020.
- Monk, D., 2004. Problematising home education: Challenging 'parental rights' and 'socialisation'. *Legal Studies*, 24(4), pp.568-598.
- Morton, R., 2010. Home education: Constructions of choice. *International electronic journal of elementary education*, 3(1), pp.45-56.
- NASUWT (2020a). Arrangements for Remote Teaching and Learning Support. Available at <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/arrangements-for-remote-teaching-learning-support.html> Accessed 18 May 2020.
- NASUWT (2020b) NASUWT Checklist for the Use and Management of Remote Learning. Available at <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/f2459799-e0b4-44c4-a8537afd3c0817a9.pdf> Accessed 18 May 2020.
- Northern Ireland Executive Office 2020. Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision Making. Available at <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/executiveour-approach-to-decision-making.pdf> Accessed 13 May 2020.
- Purdy, N. 2020. 'Left to their own devices': the inequality of home schooling (CREU Blog post) Available at <https://www.stran.ac.uk/left-to-their-own-devices-the-inequality-of-homeschooling/> Accessed 18 May 2020.
- Richardson, H. 2020. *Coronavirus: The impossibility of home-schooling a nation*. BBC, 8 April 2020. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-52151411> Accessed 13 May 2020.
- Rothermel, P. (2003) Can We Classify Motives for Home Education?, *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 17:2-3, 74-89.
- Staufenberg, J., 2017. Home education doubles, with schools left to 'pick up pieces' when it fails. *Schools Week*. 7 July 2017. Available at <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/home-education-doubles-with-schools-left-to-pick-up-pieces-when-it-fails/> Accessed 19 May 2020.
- Williams, S. 2018. 'School is very oppressive': why home-schooling is on the rise. *The Guardian*, 3 November 2018. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/nov/03/get-to-be-free-rise-in-home-schooling> Accessed 13 May 2020
- Winstanley, C. (2013) Too cool for school? Gifted children and home schooling, *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(3), 347-362.

