



Department  
for Education

# COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel

March findings Report

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**IFF Research Ltd**



Government  
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## Executive Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned the COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP) to collect robust and quick turnaround research in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PPP aims to help DfE make evidence-based policy decisions, monitor the impact of the COVID-19 / post-COVID-19 situation, and see how views and experiences of parents and pupils change over time. The research has been structured into two broad phases:

- The recruitment wave (August 2020) invited pupils in years 6-13 and parents of pupils in reception to year 10 in the 2019/20 academic year to take part in a 15-minute online survey and join the PPP. Panel members were sampled from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and contacted by letter, inviting them to take part in an online survey (push-to-web approach).
- Subsequent waves involved inviting panel members to take part in regular 5-minute surveys. There have so far been eight subsequent survey waves between September 2020 and March 2021.

The August to October findings report discussed the findings from the recruitment wave (August 2020) and first three subsequent waves in mid-September 2020, September/October 2020 and late October 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The November to February findings report discussed the findings from the three waves in November 2020, December 2020 and February 2021.<sup>2</sup>

This findings report discusses the headline findings from the wave conducted in March 2021.

## School attendance

### Attendance between January and March 2021

Pupils and parents were asked if they or their child had attended school at all while schools were closed to the majority of pupils between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March. Three-in-ten (28%) secondary pupils reported physically attending school at some point in this period. Just over a third (37%) of primary parents said that their child had attended during this time.

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<sup>1</sup> See Parent and Pupil Panel: August to October findings

<sup>2</sup> See Parent and Pupil Panel: November to February findings

## Attendance in the past two weeks (March 2021)

Pupils and parents were also asked about their recent attendance. Those that had been attending for more than two weeks were asked about their attendance in the last two weeks, while those that had been attending for two weeks or less were asked about their attendance since school had been open to them.<sup>3</sup>

The proportions of pupils attending every day had increased compared to when schools were last open to the majority of pupils in December 2020. Over four-in-five secondary pupils (83%) whose school was open to them had attended school every day since it opened, compared to the two-thirds (66%) in December 2020.

Pupils in years 7-10 were more likely than those in years 11-13 to have attended every day since schools were open to them (89% vs. 72%).

## Reasons for non-attendance (March 2021)

Pupils and parents were also asked why they or their child did not attend every day their school was open. The most common reasons were directly related to COVID-19 (49% of secondary pupils, 48% of primary parents and 47% of secondary parents).

In March 2021, a fifth (19%) of parents of secondary pupils reported anxiety/mental health as the reason their child had not attended school every day, a higher proportion than primary parents that wave (8%) and an increase compared parents of secondary pupils reporting this in December 2020 (10%).

## Travel

There was no change in the main mode of transport used by pupils attending secondary school between late November and March 2021, with pupils most commonly travelling to school on foot (41%) or by private car or van (27%).

## Face coverings

One-in-twenty (6%) pupils reported being exempt from wearing a face covering.<sup>4</sup> The majority of pupils who were supposed to wear a face covering (i.e. were not exempt) did so at all or most of the time whilst in lessons at school (93%) and whilst inside at school but not in lessons (93%). Around half of all pupils wore their face covering whilst outside

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<sup>3</sup> The reported two weeks that pupils and parents will have been thinking about would fall between 9<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> March.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to face masks or coverings. Pupils were asked questions which referred to both e.g. "Are you exempt from wearing a mask/face covering, e.g. due to a medical condition?"

on school grounds all or most of the time (47%), and 38% of pupils wore a face covering whilst travelling to and from school most or all of the time.

Pupils had a somewhat positive attitude towards face coverings. Whilst they agreed that face coverings made others (87%) and themselves (70%) feel safe, four-in-five found wearing a face covering made it difficult to communicate with others (80%) and more than half (55%) felt wearing a face covering made learning more difficult (55%). Despite this, pupils were supportive of wearing a face covering in school, with around three-quarters (73%) agreeing that schools should make pupils (that are not exempt) wear face coverings while attending school.

## **Access to technology at home**

There has been an increase in access to technology at home between the start of the Autumn term 2020 and March 2021, through the provision of devices such as laptops/tablets or access to the internet at home for pupil. In mid-September 2020, 7% had been given a device and 5% access to the internet. In March 2021, one-in-five parents (18%) reported that their child had been given a device such as a laptop, and one-in-ten (10%) also reported that their child had been given help to access the internet.

In March 2021, parents of pupils who have been given internet access and/or a device (laptop or tablet) felt their child was more engaged in learning as a direct result of being given technology for use at home (60%), and two-in-five saw an improvement in their child's confidence using the computer and the internet (42%). Most parents whose child was given internet access and/or a device did not use these themselves (84%). Those that did, used it for personal use (e.g. emails, online shopping) (10%), work (7%) or searching for work (3%).

## **Remote education**

In March 2021, more than three-in-five (63%) parents of pupils and three-quarters (75%) of pupils had experienced a barrier to learning from home during the most recent period of school closures (between the 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021). Year 11-13 pupils were more likely to report having faced at least one barrier to learning compared to year 7-10 pupils (84% vs 70%).

Lack of motivation to study / complete work was the barrier parents (49% primary parents and 46% secondary parents) and secondary pupils (61%) most commonly identified as impacting their ability to learn at home. Furthermore, lack of motivation to study was the barrier that pupils found the most difficult with 43% saying lack of motivation made learning from home difficult to a great extent.

## Catching-up on learning

When asked how concerned they were about catching up on different subjects they study, pupils studying science were most worried about catching-up on this subject (43%). Pupils were least worried about catching up on physical education (14%), music (11%) and PSHE (10%). Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to be worried about catching up on: maths (45% vs 33%); science (52% vs 35%); history (30% vs 22%); and languages (36% vs 28%). However, they were less worried about catching up on physical education (10% vs 17% of male pupils).

## Online safety

In March 2021, parents were asked about their experiences of keeping their child safe online. A large majority of parents (86%) reported being aware of what their child was doing online, with fewer than one-in-ten (7%) reporting that they were not. Primary parents were more likely than secondary to say they were aware of what their child was doing online (90% vs 82%) and almost twice as likely to say they were very aware (51% vs 26%).

Almost all parents (99%) said that they took at least one action to ensure their child's safety online and more than three-quarters (76%) took three or more. Talking with them about what they can and can't do online (74%), talking with them about how to stay safe online (70%) and monitoring what they are doing yourself (64%) were the three most common actions taken.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

### Parent wellbeing

In March 2021, when compared to August 2020, parents reported lower scores for happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, whilst reporting higher anxiousness scores. Two-thirds of parents (66%) gave a high happiness score (7-10) in March compared to seven-in-ten (72%) in August, whilst a quarter of parents (25%) reported a high anxiousness (6-10) score in August, compared to 28% in March 2021. Across all four measures, parents with a child eligible for free school meals (FSM) or considered to have a Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND), were more likely to give negative wellbeing scores compared to parents overall.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Glossary for full definitions.

## Loneliness

In March 2021, parents were also asked about feelings of loneliness for the first time since August 2020. One-in-ten parents had reported often feeling lonely in the summer, which rose to 16% in March 2021. Similarly, pupils were more likely to report 'often' being lonely in March compared to August (16% vs 12%), but less likely than when asked in February 2021 (20%).

## Pupil wellbeing

In February 2021, there was a sharp decrease in the happiness levels of pupils as reported by their parents, compared to previous waves. This was during the time of the third UK lockdown, and when schools were not open to the majority of pupils. However in March 2021, parents reported happiness scores for their children that returned to pre-Christmas levels. For example, 82% of parents gave a high score (7-10) for their child's happiness, compared to 71% in February 2021 and 83% in December 2020.

As with happiness, parents reported a more positive picture on anxiousness in March 2021 compared to the previous wave in February. Sixteen percent of parents gave a high anxiousness score (6-10) in March 2021, compared to 18% in February 2020. The increase in reporting of 'low' anxiousness between February and March (65% vs 72%), has been driven by parents of primary school pupils.

The recovery in wellbeing measures was also seen amongst pupils' own reported scores. For happiness (6.8 vs 6.9) respectively, life satisfaction (6.6 vs 6.7) and worthwhileness (6.6 vs 6.7) mean scores in March 2021 mirrored those seen in December 2020. However, anxiousness scores grew (although not significantly) from 3.5 in February 2021 to 3.6 in March 2021. In this most recent wave, older pupils (4.6), female pupils (4.0) and pupils with SEND (4.0) continued to have higher anxiousness scores compared to pupils overall (3.6).

## Pupil anxiousness

When asked about the cause of a high anxiousness score (6-10), keeping up with schoolwork was the most common reason reported by pupils (63%), although this was lower compared to February 2021 (71%), followed by uncertainty over the future (62%). In March 2021, uncertainty over grades was referenced by 61% of secondary pupils with high anxiousness. Fewer pupils were anxious about not being able to see family or friends or socialise in March compared to February 2021 (41% vs 61%).

## **Impact of school attendance on mental health**

Throughout the PPP, pupils and parents have been asked whether or not physically attending school or college has had a positive or negative impact on their (or their pupil's) mood and mental health.

In March 2020, four-in-five (80%) secondary parents felt being back at school or college had had a positive impact on their child's mood and mental health, compared to 62% of secondary pupils reporting this. Parents of primary pupils were more likely to think being back at school had had a positive impact than secondary parents (87% vs 80%).

Compared to late November 2020, fewer secondary pupils reported physically attending school having a negative impact on their mental health (21% vs 14% in March 2021). Moreover, a quarter of pupils (24%) thought it had had a very positive impact, compared to a fifth (19%) in late November and December 2020.

In March 2021, pupils who had physically attended school in the past two weeks were more likely to give a higher mean score for happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, and a lower anxiousness mean score compared to those that had only attended most or some days.

## **Social worker support**

There was a small but significant increase in parents reporting their child was supported by a social worker between August 2020 and March 2021 (1% to 2%). Three percent of secondary pupils said they were supported by a social worker in March 2021, the same proportion as in August 2020.

## **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

In March 2021, 17% of parents reported their child to have SEND. Of these parents, 43% reported their child not being able to access the support they need in March 2021, down from 52% (of parents with a child with SEND) in February 2021. Support staff not being available (41%) was the most common reason why parents felt they were unable to access the support their child needed in March 2021.

## **Childcare**

One-in-ten (10%) parents had used wraparound childcare since schools had reopened on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, similar to the proportion of the parents who in February 2021 reported using wraparound childcare in the Autumn Term 2020 (11%). As expected, primary parents were far more likely than secondary parents to report having used wraparound

childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (18% vs. 1%). Of those that had not used childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the main reason given by all parents was that they didn't need it (78%), with secondary parents more likely than primary parents to report this (85% vs. 71%).

The vast majority (88%) of parents were not planning on using school age wraparound care, holidays clubs or out-of-school setting childcare in the Easter 2021 holidays. The main reason given for this was the same reason as given for not using childcare in term time, that childcare was not needed (76%).

## **Secondary pupils' recent activities**

In the past seven days, two-thirds (66%) of secondary pupils had spent at least some time going out to a shop, café or other place outside their house which wasn't school, and half (53%) had spent time outdoors with people they did not live with (e.g. in the park, playing, walking). Three-in-ten (29%) reported spending time indoors with friends or family they did not live with.

## **Rapid asymptomatic testing**

The majority (91%) of secondary pupils reported being tested for COVID-19 in the previous 7 days to being surveyed and 92% of secondary parents reported their child had been tested in this time period too. Just 1% of pupils had received a positive COVID-19 result in the previous 7 days, 89% received a negative result and 9% had not been tested. Nearly all (94%) pupils who had experienced home testing for COVID-19 were confident in conducting this test at home.

Pupils were generally less concerned about COVID-19 testing in school in March 2021 compared to in February 2021. In February 2021, two thirds (67%) of pupils held at least one concern about being tested, in March 2021 this fell to 57%. Two-in-five (41%) pupils held no concerns about testing in school in March 2021, compared to 30% with no concerns in February 2021.

# Introduction

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting school closures, the Department for Education (DfE) wanted to conduct robust, quick turnaround research to assess the on-going views and experiences of parents and pupils from the start of the 2020/21 academic year. The research aimed to help DfE make evidence-based policy decisions, monitor the impact of the COVID-19 / post-COVID-19 situation, and see how views and experiences of parents and pupils change over time. The research has been structured into two broad phases:

## 1. Recruitment Wave

In August 2020, pupils who were in year 6 - 13 and parents of pupils who were in reception to year 10 in the 2019/20 academic year were invited to take part in a 15-minute online survey via invitation letters sent to their home address. Both parents and pupils were sampled (by year group) from the National Pupil Database (NPD), and by completing the survey became part of the COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP). The PPP comprised of 7,191 parents (of primary and secondary pupils) and 5,327 secondary pupils who took part in the first 'COVID-19 Parent and Pupil Panel' survey.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Subsequent Waves

Between the recruitment wave and the first subsequent wave all pupils moved up a year group. Pupils that had moved into years 7-13 and parents of pupils who had moved into year 1 to year 11 in the 2020/21 academic year were invited to take part in up to six subsequent short online surveys (each lasting around five minutes) during the 2020/21 academic year, between September 2020 and February 2021. Parents and pupils were asked to re-consent to take part in further waves of the panel, until Summer 2021.

The August to October findings report presented the findings for the first four PPP waves with these parents and pupils. IFF have also put together a November to February findings report which presents the findings for the subsequent three waves. **This report presents the findings from the March 2021 wave.** Comparisons to previous waves are made where relevant.

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<sup>6</sup> For more demographic information on panellists see the August – October findings report or Technical Report.



**Table 1. Parent and Pupil Panel (PPP) waves to date<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Fieldwork period</b>	<b>Fieldwork reference</b>
Recruitment Wave	7,191 parents and 5,327 secondary pupils	13 August – 1 September 2020	August 2020
Wave 1	4,005 parents	16-20 September 2020	September 2020
Wave 2	3,491 parents and 1,780 secondary pupils	30 September – 4 October 2020	September/October 2020
Wave 3	731 school leavers	4-9 November 2020	School leavers - November 2020
Wave 4	3,542 parents and 1,661 secondary pupils	30 October – 1 November 2020	Late October 2020
Wave 5	3,388 parents and 1,612 secondary pupils	25-30 November 2020	Late November 2020
Wave 6	3,237 parents and 1,555 secondary pupils	16-21 December 2020	December 2020
Wave 7	3,082 parents and 1,537 secondary pupils	3-5 February 2021	February 2021
<b>Wave 8</b>	<b>3,084 parents and 1,531 secondary pupils</b>	<b>22-26 March 2021</b>	<b>March 2021</b>

This report discusses the findings of the Wave 8 results. It presents the key findings from each question (or series of questions on a related topic) before focussing on any significant subgroup differences.

For each question, subgroup differences by pupil year group, sex, ethnic group, eligibility for free school meals (FSMs), and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) status were explored and statistically significant differences (at the 95% level of confidence) have been highlighted in the text, whereas differences that are not

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<sup>7</sup> Wave 8 is the wave included in this report

statistically significant are not discussed.<sup>8 9</sup> Occasionally, other relevant subgroup differences are explored for specific questions (such as key worker / employment status for childcare needs).

Where tracker questions have been asked across two or more waves of the survey, additional analysis has been carried out to test for statistically significant changes in responses between the survey waves and significant changes over time have been highlighted in the text.

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<sup>8</sup> Eligibility for FSMs is used a proxy for socioeconomic status, with those pupils eligible for FSMs considered to be living in greater socioeconomic deprivation than those pupils who were not eligible for FSMs.

<sup>9</sup> See [Glossary](#) for definitions.

## Methodology

This report covers PPP wave 8 which was conducted in late March (22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> March).

Parents and pupils who had originally signed up for the PPP in August 2020, had only consented to take part in up to seven waves until February 2021. Consequently, all panellists were contacted ahead of wave 8 to ask them whether or not they would be happy to remain on the panel, and therefore continue to be invited to future surveys. Table 2 shows the number of parents and pupils who consented to remaining on the panel.

**Table 2. Number of parents and pupils on the original and new PPP panel**

Year Group 2020/21	All parents		Secondary pupils	
	Original panel	New panel for wave 8 onwards	Original panel	New panel for wave 8 onwards
Year 1	573	408	-	-
Year 2	595	436	-	-
Year 3	616	444	-	-
Year 4	573	423	-	-
Year 5	594	452	-	-
Year 6	584	425	-	-
Year 7	668	484	325	208
Year 8	785	587	376	231
Year 9	740	520	367	236
Year 10	714	515	656	418
Year 11	749	531	697	440
Year 12	-	-	667	375
Year 13	-	-	669	427
School leavers	-	-	1,570	756
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,191</b>	<b>5,225</b>	<b>3,757</b>	<b>2,335</b>

As can be seen, a subset of the new panel agreed to take part in wave 8 and, as with all waves, results were weighted to be representative of the pupil population. Key demographics for respondents at wave 8 are shown in Table 3.

More information about the methodology of the panel, including participant characteristics can be found in the Technical Report.

**Table 3. Unweighted demographic profile of wave 8 respondents<sup>10</sup>**

	Number of parents	% of all parents	Number of pupils	% of all pupils
All	3,084	100%	1,531	100%
Primary	1,537	50%	0	-
Secondary	1,547	50%	1,531	100%
PUPIL: FSM	476	15%	290	19%
PUPIL: SEND	454	15%	219	14%
PUPIL: Child in need (CIN) <sup>11</sup>	29	1%	13	1%
Ethnicity: White	2,582	84%	1,146	75%
Ethnicity: Asian	182	6%	177	12%
Ethnicity: Black	65	2%	62	4%
Ethnicity: Mixed	61	2%	77	5%
Ethnicity: Other	53	2%	26	2%
Gender (of pupil): Male	1,580	51%	609	40%
Gender (of pupil): Female	1,504	49%	922	60%
Region: East Midlands	301	10%	160	10%
Region: East of England	402	13%	178	12%
Region: London	289	9%	206	13%
Region: North East	138	4%	68	4%
Region: North West	394	13%	183	12%
Region: South East	554	18%	254	17%
Region: South West	356	12%	162	11%
Region: West Midlands	344	11%	167	11%
Region: Yorkshire and Humber	306	10%	153	10%

Source: Pupil information (year group, FSM, SEND, CIN, Ethnicity, Gender, Region) sourced from information held on the National Pupil Database. Parental ethnicity and gender sourced from survey responses on the recruitment wave survey.

<sup>10</sup> Note percentages do not always sum to 100% due to some respondents not providing demographic data, or demographic data not being held on the NPD.

<sup>11</sup> See Glossary for full definition.

It is worth noting that the secondary parents and secondary pupil groups refer to pupils in slightly different year groups. The secondary parents group reflects the views of parents with pupils in years 7-11 in the 2020/21 academic year, while the secondary pupils group includes the views of pupils in years 7-13 in the 2020/21 academic year. The inclusion of more senior pupils (years 12-13) in the pupil group may help to explain some of the disparities between secondary pupils and secondary parents in this report.

Pupils were sampled from those in years 6 – 13 in the 2019/20 academic year. Pupils moved up a year level between the recruitment wave in August 2020, during the 2019/20 academic year, and the first follow up pupil survey conducted in September/October 2020, in the first term of the 2020/21 academic year. Throughout the report we refer to pupils by the year group that they were in during the academic year of the wave in discussion. For example, a year 6 pupil that was recruited in the August 2020 wave is referred to as a year 6 pupil in the August 2020 wave, but a year 7 pupil from the September/October 2020 wave onwards. Similarly, a year 13 pupil in August 2020 is referred to as a ‘school leaver’ in the 2020/21 academic year. A breakdown of pupils by school year is shown in Table 4 below.

Year 11 pupils in August 2020 moved into year 12 in the 2020/21 academic year; it is estimated that around half of those who moved from year 11 to year 12 left school, with many of them moving to FE and sixth form colleges. As such, findings for year 12 likely represent all year 12 students, not just those in school sixth forms. Year 12 pupils in August 2020 who moved into year 13 in the 2020/21 academic year are only representative of those in school sixth forms.

**Table 4. Breakdown of wave 8 pupil respondents by year group**

Year Group 2019/20	Year Group 2020/21	Number invited to take part in wave 8	Response rate <sup>12</sup>	Number who took part in wave 8
Year 6	Year 7	208	70%	146
Year 7	Year 8	231	67%	154
Year 8	Year 9	236	65%	154
Year 9	Year 10	418	65%	270
Year 10	Year 11	440	61%	269

<sup>12</sup> Response rates were capped using quotas per year group and so the response rate may under-estimate the number of parents and pupils who would have completed the survey.

<b>Year Group 2019/20</b>	<b>Year Group 2020/21</b>	<b>Number invited to take part in wave 8</b>	<b>Response rate<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Number who took part in wave 8</b>
Year 11	Year 12	375	72%	269
Year 12	Year 13	427	63%	269
Year 13	'School Leavers'	-	-	-

## School Attendance

In March 2021, parents and pupils were asked about schools reopening, as well as school attendance, both before schools reopened to all pupils and since.

From 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, all schools and colleges were permitted to open to all pupils. The exact opening date was flexible, to allow for set up of COVID-19 measures, including asymptomatic testing. From the point of re-opening, physical attendance in school was mandatory for most pupils. Shielding guidance was in place between 6<sup>th</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and advised that clinically extremely vulnerable pupils did not physically attend school between these dates (covering the period during the third lockdown and initial weeks following the wider-opening of schools).

### Attendance between January and March 2021

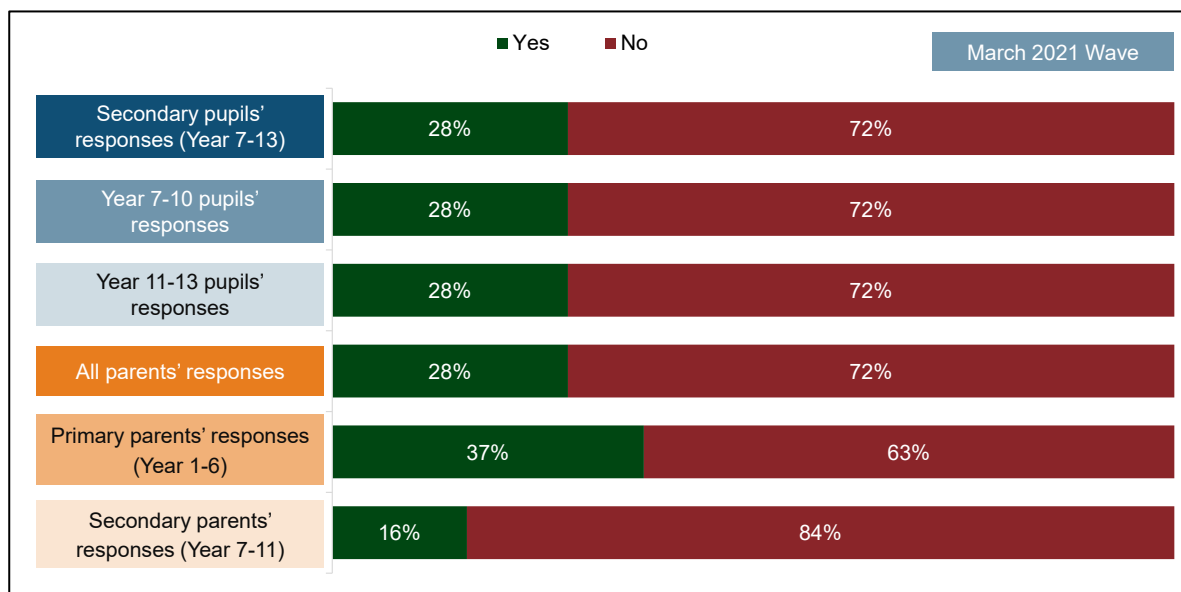
Pupils and parents were asked if they or their child had attended school at all while schools were closed to the majority of pupils between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March. As shown in Figure 1, 28% of secondary pupils (years 7-13) had physically attended school at all in this period and this was the same split by younger and older pupils.

Around one-in-six (16%) parents of secondary pupils (years 7-11) said their child had physically attended at all in this time, while a higher proportion (37%) of primary parents (years 1-6) said that their child had attended.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It is not clear what is driving the difference in attendance figures reported by secondary parents and secondary pupils, but one likely explanation is that some pupils were including 'virtual/remote' attendance not just 'physical' attendance when answering.

**Figure 1: Whether attended between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave: L84/L94\_P2W8. Thinking about the period between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, when schools were closed to most pupils, did you physically attend school at all during this time? All pupils (n=1,531) Primary parents (n=1,537) Secondary parents (n=1,547)

Parents of pupils considered to have a SEND were more likely to have physically attended during this period compared to those without SEND (37% vs. 26%). Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) pupils were more likely to have physically attended than White pupils in this period (33% vs. 27%).<sup>14</sup>

## Attendance in the past two weeks (March 2021)

Pupils and parents were also asked about their recent physical attendance. Those that had been attending for more than two weeks were asked about their attendance in the last two weeks, while those that had been attending for two weeks or less were asked about their attendance since school had been open to them.<sup>15</sup>

The proportions of pupils attending everyday had increased compared to when schools were last open to all pupils in December 2020. As shown in Figure 2 over four-in-five secondary pupils (83%), whose school was open to them at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March, had attended school every day, an increase compared to the two thirds (66%) that said this in December 2020.

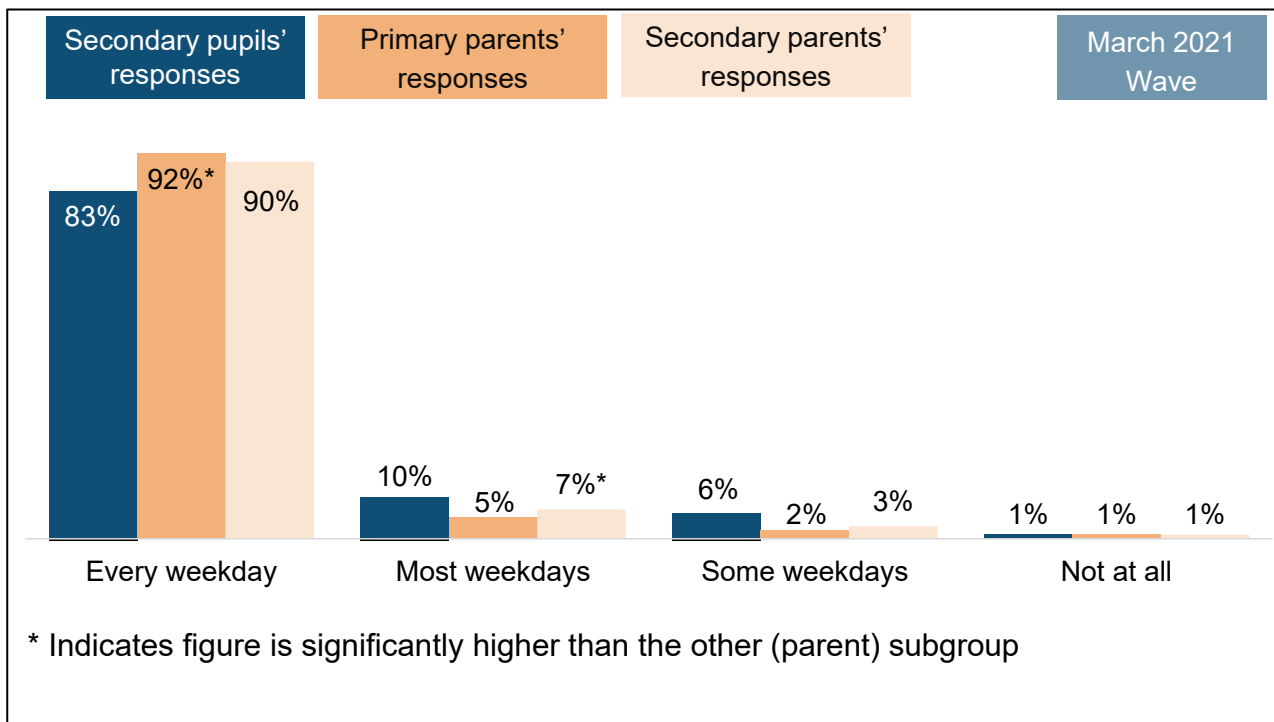
<sup>14</sup> See Glossary for full definition.

<sup>15</sup> The reported two weeks that pupils and parents will have been thinking about would fall between 9<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> March.



Parents of primary pupils reported 92% had attended every day, which had increased from 80% in December 2020. Nine-in-ten parents of secondary pupils (90%) said their child attended everyday, also an increase compared to the two thirds (67%) that said this in December. Only 1% of (primary and secondary) parents said pupils had not attended at all since schools were open to them in March 2021, compared to 3% of primary parents and 6% of secondary parents in December 2020.

**Figure 2: School attendance since school was open to pupil**

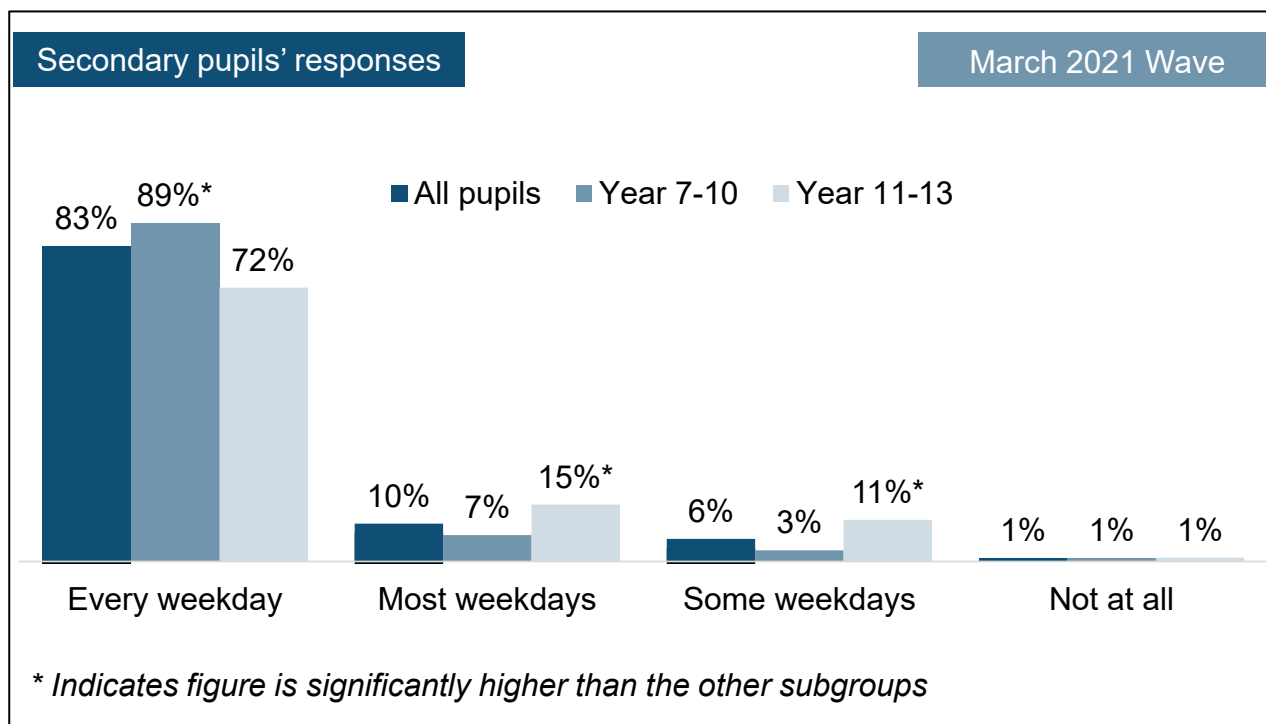


Source: PPP March 2021 Wave L86/L96\_P2W8. “Since school, or college has been open to you, how often, if at all, have you physically attended school or college?” All pupils whose school has been open to them at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March (n=1524) All primary parents whose pupil's school has been open at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March (n=1,527) All secondary parents whose pupil's school has been open at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March

Secondary pupils whose school had been open to them for over 2 weeks were more likely than average to have attended school every day since it was open to them (86% vs 83% of all secondary pupils).

As shown in Figure 3, pupils in year 7-10 were more likely than those in years 11-13 to have attended every day since schools were open to them (89% vs. 72%).

**Figure 3: Attendance since school was open to pupils**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave L86/L96\_P2W8. “Since school, or college has been open to you, how often, if at all, have you physically attended school or college?” All pupils whose school has been open to them at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March (n=1,524), year 7-10 pupils whose school has been open to them at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March (n=721) and year 11-13 pupils whose school has been open to them at all since 8<sup>th</sup> March (n=803)

Secondary pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to have attended every day (78% vs. 84% non-FSM eligible pupils), as were pupils considered to have SEND (77% vs. 84% without SEND).

Similarly, parents of primary pupils eligible for FSM were less likely to say their child attended school every day (87% vs. 94% non-FSM eligible).

## Reasons for non-attendance (March 2021)

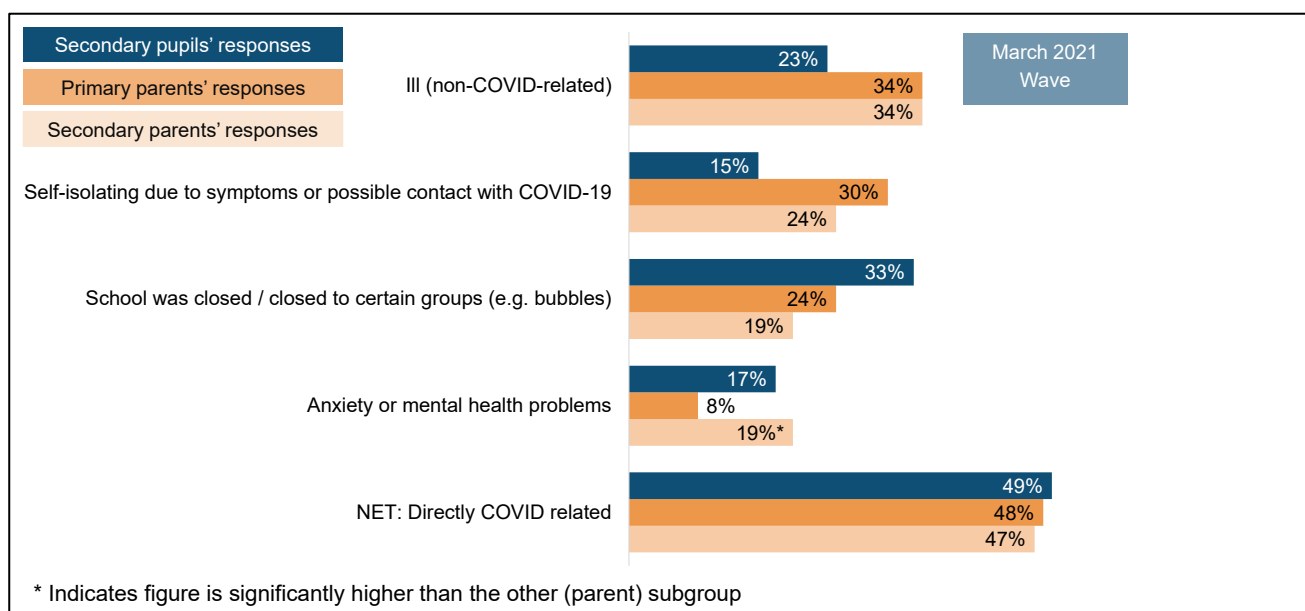
Pupils and parents were also asked why they or their child did not attend every day since school was open to them or their child.<sup>16</sup> As shown in Figure 4, the most common reasons were directly related to COVID-19 (49% of secondary pupils, 48% of primary

<sup>16</sup> Parents and pupils were also asked the reasons why they or their child did not attend school ‘at all’. However, due to the small number of parents (n=23) and pupils (n=19) asked this, it has not been included in this report.

parents and 47% of secondary parents). The most common individual reason given by primary and secondary parents was non-COVID-19 related illness (34%), which over one-in-five secondary pupils (23%) also gave as a reason for not attending every day. A third of secondary pupils (33%) said that their school was closed to certain groups.

Over one-in-six (17%) secondary pupils said that they had not attended every day due to anxiety/mental health issues.<sup>17</sup> Only 8% of parents of primary pupils reported this.<sup>18</sup> A fifth (19%) of parents of secondary pupils gave anxiety/mental health as the reason for non-attendance every day, an increase from 10% in December 2020 and a higher proportion than primary parents.<sup>19</sup> Pupils in years 7-10 were more likely than those in years 11-13 to say they had not attended every day due to anxiety or mental health problems (25% vs. 12%), as were female pupils compared to male pupils (23% vs. 12%), and pupils eligible for FSM (34% vs. 13% non-FSM).

**Figure 4: Top reasons for not attending school every day since school was open to pupils**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 : L29/L28 “Why has [PUPILNAME] not physically attended school every day?” Pupils who have attended school some or most of the time since school reopened on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (n=285). Parents of primary pupils who attended school 'some' or 'most' days since school reopened on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (n=109) Parents of secondary pupils who

<sup>17</sup> In line with the 13% of secondary pupils reporting this in December 2020.

<sup>18</sup> In line with the 4% of parents of primary pupils reporting this in December 2020.

<sup>19</sup> This pattern of secondary parents being more likely than primary parents to report anxiety/mental health issues as the reason for non-attendance was also seen in December 2020 (4% primary parents vs 10% secondary parents).

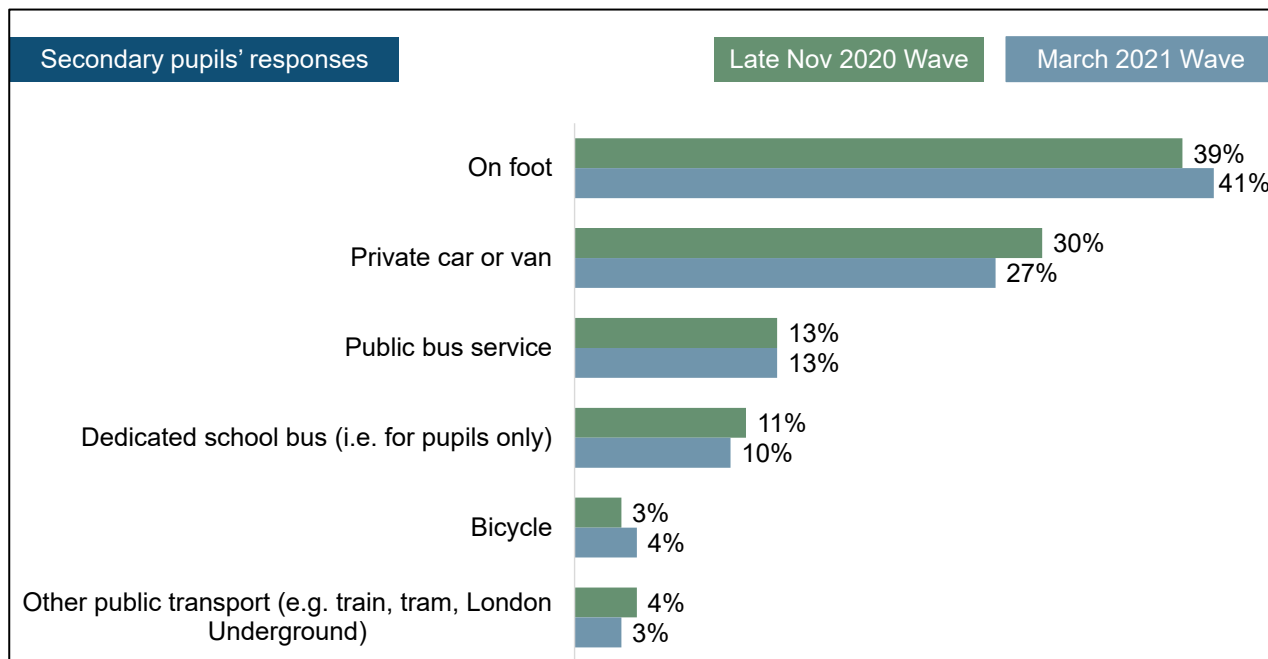
attended school 'some' or 'most' days since school reopened on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (n=145) Answer options selected by 5% or less of parents not shown in chart.

The proportion of secondary pupils self-isolating due to COVID-19 symptoms had decreased since December (15% vs. 37%) and the proportion of secondary pupils not attending school every day due to COVID-19 reasons decreased between December 2020 and March 2021 (71% vs 49%).

## Travel

In November 2020 and March 2021, secondary pupils were asked about the main mode of transport they used to get to school or college. As shown Figure 5, pupils attending secondary school most commonly travelled to school on foot (41%) or by private car or van (27%). There has been no change in the main mode of transport used by pupils between late November and March 2021.

**Figure 5. Main ways that pupils travel into school / college**



Source: March 2021 Wave 8, H9: "What is the main way that you currently travel into school or college?" Base: All pupils except those who have not attended school at all since they reopened or their school remains closed (n=1,505)

The following patterns were reported in March 2021, which were similar to those seen in late November 2020:

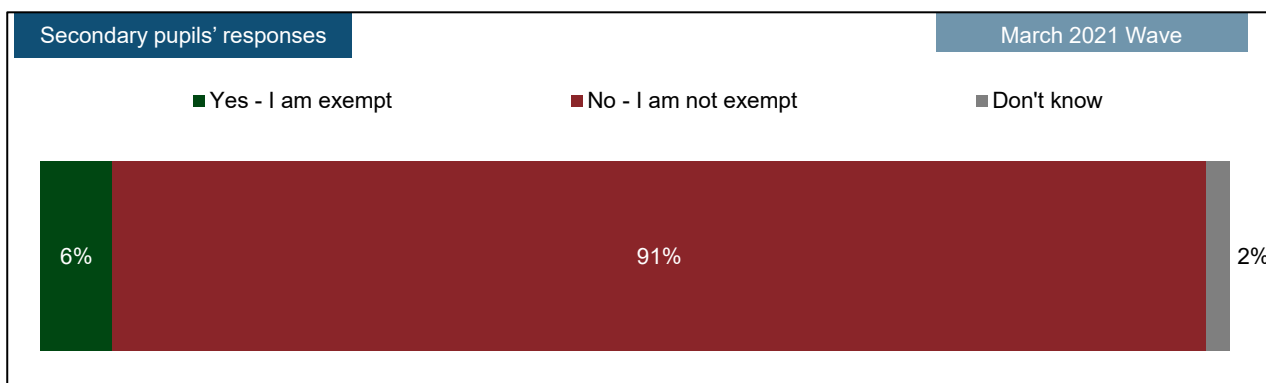
- Younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to travel on foot (44% among year 7-10s vs. 35% among year 11-13s) but less likely to travel in by public bus (10% of year 7-10s vs. 20% among year 11-13s).
- Female pupils (15%) were more likely than male pupils (12%) to travel in by public bus.
- Urban pupils were more likely than rural to travel in on foot (45% vs. 23%) but less likely to travel in by dedicated school bus (6% vs. 32%).

## Travel and face coverings

### Face covering exemptions

All secondary pupils were asked whether they were exempt from wearing a face covering (for example for a medical condition).<sup>20</sup> The majority (91%) were not exempt, whilst 6% were exempt and 2% did not know, as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6. Secondary pupils face covering exemption**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 H24 “Are you exempt from wearing a mask/face covering, e.g. due to a medical condition?” All pupils (n=1531).

Pupils with SEND were more likely than those without SEND to report being exempt from wearing a face covering (17% vs. 5%), as were pupils who were eligible for FSM, compared to non-FSM pupils (13% vs. 5%).

### Wearing a face covering

Secondary pupils<sup>21</sup> were asked how often they wore face coverings in the following scenarios:

- In lessons at school
- When outside on school grounds but not in lessons
- When inside at school but not in lessons
- When travelling to and from school

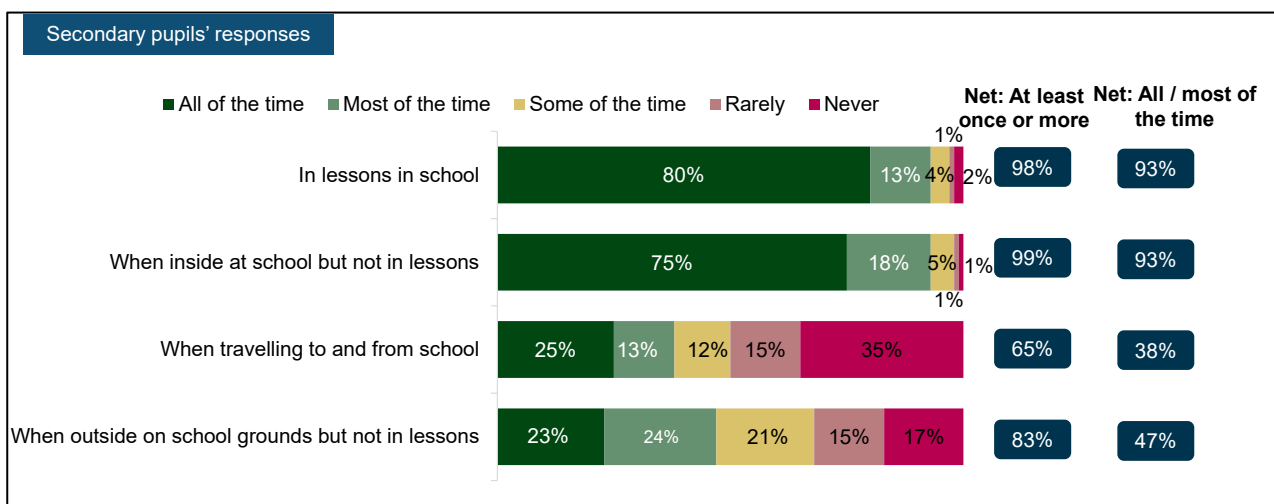
<sup>20</sup> This refers to face masks or coverings. Pupils were asked questions which referred to both e.g. “Are you exempt from wearing a mask/face covering, e.g. due to a medical condition?”

<sup>21</sup> All secondary pupils were asked this question with the exception of those who have not attended school at all since they have reopened, those in which their school remains closed or those who are exempt from wearing face coverings.

The following findings are from pupils excluding those who are exempt for wearing face coverings. As shown in Figure 7, it was common for pupils to wear a face covering all of the time in lessons (80%) and when inside at school but not in lessons (75%). Always wearing face coverings when travelling, to/from school or when outside on school grounds, was less common.

DfE recommend that in schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by pupils when moving around the premise and outside the classrooms (e.g. in corridors/communal areas) where social distancing cannot be easily maintained. DfE also recommend that pupils and adults should wear face coverings in classrooms / during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. DfE do not recommend for face coverings to be worn outside on school premises.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 7. Frequency of face covering wearing amongst secondary pupils**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 H25: “How often, if at all, do you wear a mask / face covering in the below circumstances?” All pupils except those who have not attended school at all since they have reopened, or their school remains closed or they are exempt from wearing masks (n=1,412)

In all four scenarios, pupils’ views on whether schools should make pupils wear face coverings at school (unless they are exempt) was linked to whether pupils wore one. Pupils who thought schools should do this, were more likely to report wearing a face covering ‘all the time’ at school (on the grounds outside, in school but outside lessons and in lessons), compared to those who thought schools should not make pupils wear

22

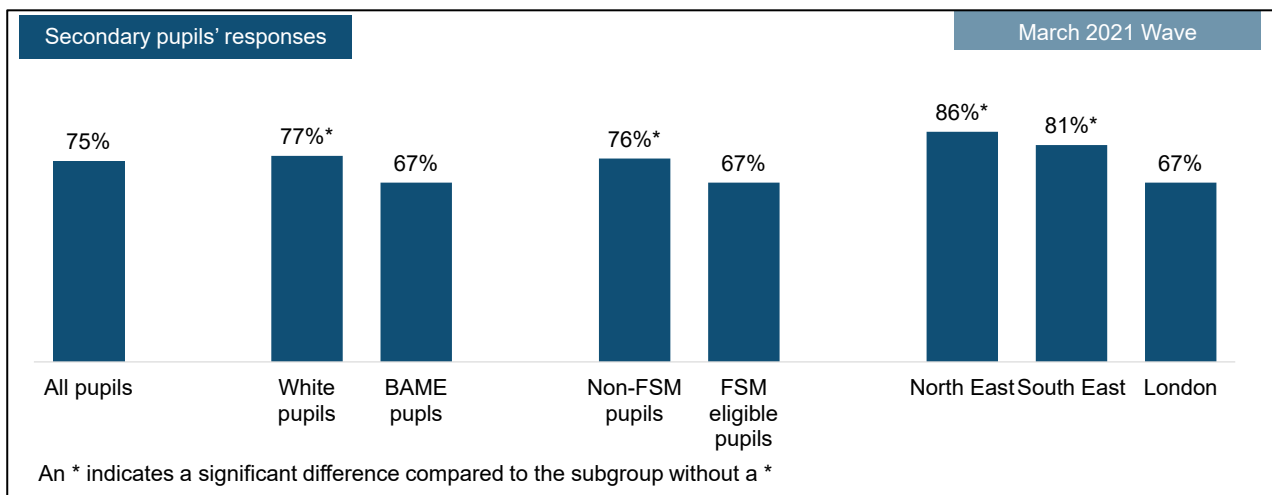
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face coverings at school. More detailed analysis of responses to this question are in Figure 11.

## Wearing a face covering in school (not in lessons)

Almost all (99%) pupils reported they had at least once worn a face covering when inside at school (excluding in lessons). Three-quarters (75%) of pupils wore their face covering inside school (but not in lessons) all the time, 18% did most of the time, 5% some of the time and 1% rarely did. Only 1% of pupils (who were not exempt from wearing a face covering) never wore their face covering in this circumstance. There were differences in how often pupils wore face coverings in school, but not in lessons, by different sub-groups, as shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Secondary pupils wearing a face covering all the time when in school (not in lessons), by ethnicity, FSM eligibility and region**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 H25: “How often, if at all, do you wear a mask / face covering in the below circumstances? Wearing a mask in school (not in lessons)” All pupils except those who have not attended school at all since they have reopened, or their school remains closed or those who are exempt from wearing masks (n=1,412), all White / BAME pupils who match that criteria (n=1,069 / 332), all non-FSM / FSM eligible pupils who match that criteria (n=1,172 / 251), all pupils in the North East / South East / London who match that criteria (n=64 / 229 / 189)

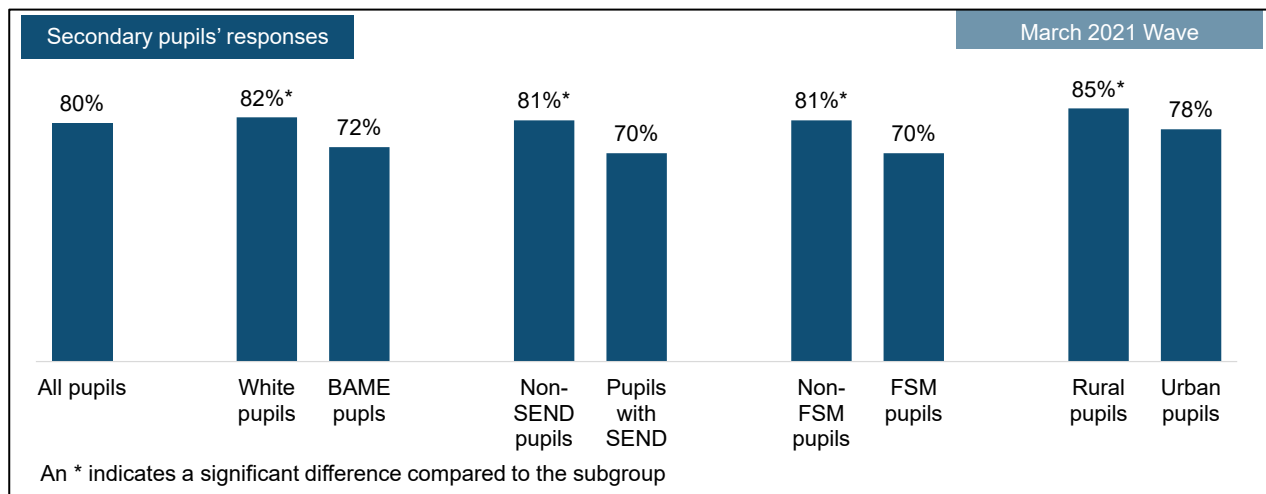
Pupils who thought that schools should make pupils wear face coverings in school (unless they are exempt) were more likely to report wearing a face covering in school (excluding in lessons) all the time (77% vs. 69% compared to those who do not think schools should make pupils wear face coverings in school).



## Wearing a face covering in lessons

Nearly all pupils reported they had worn a face covering at least once when in lessons at school (98%), with four-in-five (80%) doing this all the time, 13% doing it most of the time, 4% some of the time and 1% rarely. Only 2% of pupils (who were not face covering exempt) never wore a face covering in lessons. Again, there were differences in face covering wearing behaviour across different pupils, as shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9 Secondary pupils wearing a face covering all the time when in school (in lessons), by ethnicity, SEND status, FSM eligibility and geography**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 H25: “How often, if at all, do you wear a mask / face covering in the below circumstances? Wearing a mask in school (in lessons) ” All pupils except those who have not attended school at all since they have reopened, or their school remains closed or those who are exempt from wearing masks (n=1,412), all White / BAME pupils who match that criteria (n=1,069 / 332 ), all non-FSM / FSM eligible pupils who match that criteria (n=1,172 / 251) all urban/rural pupils who match that criteria (n=1,141 / 282), all SEND / non-SEND pupils (n=181 / 1,242)

Pupils who thought that schools should make pupils wear face coverings in school (unless they are exempt) were more likely than those who did not agree with this, to report wearing a face covering in lessons all the time (81% vs. 73%).

## Wearing a face covering outside on the school grounds

It was less common for pupils to report wearing a face covering when outside on school grounds. Whilst around four-in-five (83%) had worn a face covering at least once when outside on school grounds, only 23% were doing this all the time, 24% did most of the time, 21% some of time and 15% rarely did. Older pupils (year 11-13) were more likely to wear a face covering outside all the time, compared to younger pupils (year 7-10) (30% vs. 18%).

Around three-in-ten (29%) pupils in London wore a face covering in this circumstance all of the time, significantly more than an average of 23% of pupils. Only 13% of pupils in the South West reported doing this all of time, significantly lower than average. More than a quarter (28%) of pupils in the North East reported never wearing a face covering in this circumstance, significantly higher than an average of 17% of all pupils who reported this.

Whilst inside school (both in and out of lessons), White pupils were more likely than BAME pupils to wear face coverings all the time, however on school grounds outdoors, BAME pupils were more likely to wear a face covering all of the time (32%), compared to White pupils (20%). A similar proportion (18%) of White pupils reported never wearing a face covering in this scenario, higher than the BAME pupils who reported this (13%).

Pupils eligible for FSM were more likely to wear a face covering all the time in this scenario, compared to non-FSM pupils (28% vs. 22%), and non-FSM pupils were almost twice as likely to report never wearing a face covering in this scenario, compared to FSM pupils (18% vs. 10%).

Pupils who thought that schools should make pupils wear face coverings in school (unless they are exempt) were more likely than those who did not agree with this, to report wearing one on school grounds outside all the time (25% vs. 16%).

## **Wearing a face covering travelling to school**

Around two thirds (65%) had worn a face covering at least once when travelling to and from school, with a quarter (25%) doing this all of the time. Around a third (35%) never did this.

Face covering wearing was closely adhered to on dedicated school buses. Of pupils who reported their main method of transport to school was a dedicated school bus, all (100%) pupils reported wearing a face covering on at least one occasion whilst travelling to and from school. 85% did this all of the time, 12% most of the time and the remaining 4% some of the time.

It is mandatory for children aged above 11 to wear a face covering on public transport (unless they are exempt). Face covering wearing remained high on public bus services, but not as high as on dedicated school buses. Pupils who were exempt from wearing a face covering were not asked this question. 98% of pupils whose main mode of transport to and from school was a public bus service, wore a face covering at least once. Around two-thirds (63%) wore a face covering all of the time on the public bus, a further quarter

(26%) did most of the time. Of those that travelled to school via other public transport, 37% wore a face covering all the time, a further 50% did most of the time.<sup>23</sup>

In instances in which the mode of transport does not require a pupil to wear a face covering, reports of wearing one to and from school were far lower. However, 17% of pupils whose main mode of transport to and from school was on foot wore a face covering all/most of the time whilst on their way to or from school, and a further 36% had done some of the time/rarely.

Looking at the difference by subgroups for this scenario is limited, as the response is heavily affected by the mode of travel taken to and from school. Older pupils were more likely to report wearing a face covering when travelling to and from school at least some of the time compared to younger pupils (70% vs. 62%), however this difference is partly accounted for by the fact that older pupils were twice as likely to report taking a public bus to school compared to younger pupils (20% vs. 10%), in which wearing a face covering is mandatory.

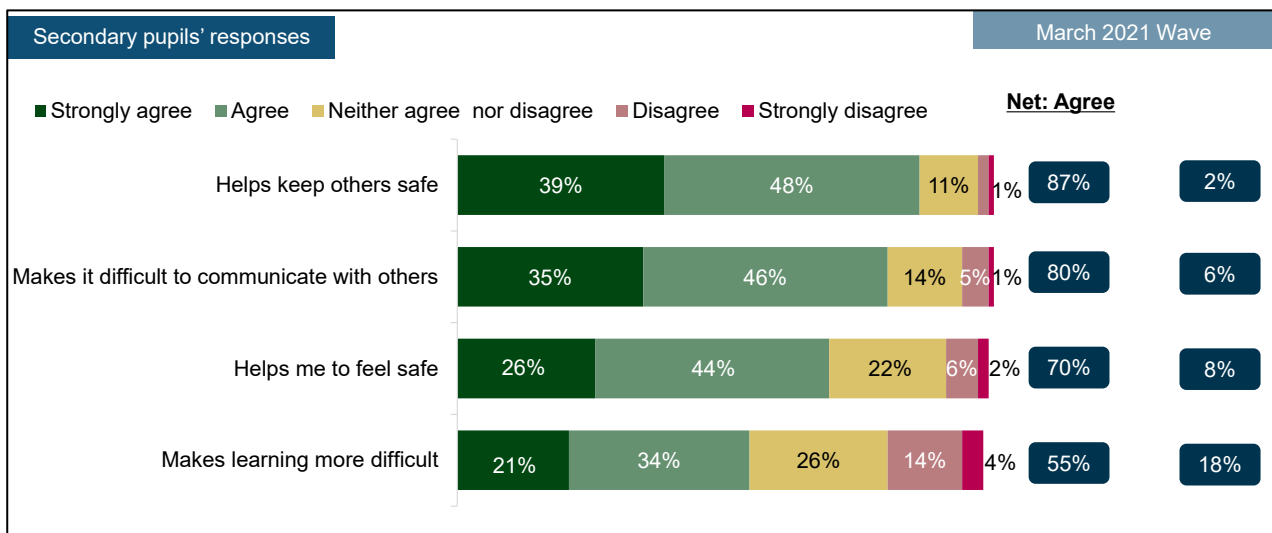
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<sup>23</sup> Travelled to school via other public transport (n=45)

## Attitudes towards wearing a face covering

Pupils had a somewhat positive attitude towards wearing face coverings. As shown in Figure 10, whilst they generally agreed that face coverings made others (87%) and themselves (70%) feel safe, 80% found wearing a face covering made it difficult to communicate, and more than half felt wearing one made learning more difficult (55%).

**Figure 10. Pupils attitudes towards wearing a face covering**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 H26: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? Wearing a mask / face covering...” All pupils (except those who are exempt from wearing masks) (n=1,432)

There were few significant differences by subgroups for each statement presented, nor a consistent pattern across them. The following section presents differences that did arise.

### Wearing a face covering.... helps keep others safe

Nearly nine-in-ten (87%) pupils agreed that wearing a face covering helps keep others safe. Just 2% disagreed with this, and 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Pupils who lived in a household with someone who was considered at high risk of COVID-19 (as self-reported in August 2020), were more likely than those without someone at high risk in their home to report that wearing a face covering helped to keep others safe (95% vs. 87%).

## **Wearing a face covering.... makes it difficult to communicate with others**

Four-in-five (80%) pupils agreed that wearing a face covering made it difficult to communicate with others, just 6% disagreed with this, and 14% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Around one-in-ten (9%) pupils eligible for FSM disagreed with this statement, suggesting communication was not difficult with a face covering - this was higher than the 5% of non-FSM pupils who reported this.

## **Wearing a face covering.... helps me to feel safe**

Seven-in-ten (70%) pupils reported wearing a face covering made them feel safe, only 8% disagreed with this statement. Quite a high proportion (22%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Unlike other statements, BAME pupils were significantly more likely than White pupils to report that wearing a face covering made them feel safe (75% vs. 69%). Year 9 pupils specifically were more likely on average to disagree that wearing a face covering made them feel safe, compared to the average of all pupils (14% vs. 8% average). Just 2% of year 7 pupils disagreed that wearing a face covering made them feel safe (the lowest of any year group).

## **Wearing a face covering.... makes learning more difficult**

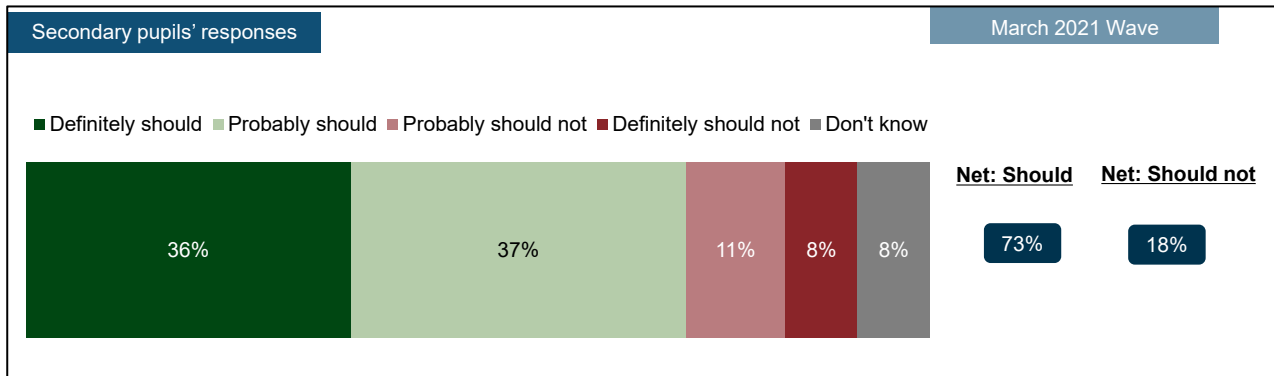
Just over half of pupils (55%) thought wearing a face covering made learning more difficult. Around a fifth (18%) disagreed that it made learning more difficult, and around a quarter (26%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Younger pupils (year 7-10) were more likely than older pupils (year 11-13) to report that wearing a face covering made learning more difficult (58% vs 51%). Year 7 pupils in particular felt wearing a face covering made learning more difficult, with 66% reporting this compared to the average of 55% across all age groups.

## **Pupils' views on face coverings being mandatory**

Three-quarters (73%) of pupils thought that secondary schools should make pupils wear face coverings while attending school (unless they are exempt). Around a fifth (18%) disagreed and thought secondary schools should not do this, and 8% did not know.

**Figure 11. Pupils view on rules regarding wearing face coverings**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 H27: “Do you think secondary schools should or should not make pupils wear masks while attending school, unless they are exempt?” All pupils (n=1537)

Female pupils were significantly more likely than male pupils to think schools should make pupils wear face coverings while attending school (76% vs. 71%), as were non-FSM eligible pupils compared to pupils eligible for FSM (74% vs. 67%). Whether or not pupils themselves were exempt from wearing a face covering did not impact on whether they thought non-exempt pupils should be made to wear one in school.

## Access to technology for home learning

This section presents findings from questions asked to parents about whether their child had access to the technology needed for remote education, what, if any, perceived benefits these technologies provided and whether parents themselves have used the device/internet access provided.

### Receiving a device / the internet

Since March 2020 schools, local authorities and social workers have been trying to help pupils learn from home by providing them with devices (such as laptops or iPads) or tools to access the internet (such as 4G wireless routers, mobile network data uplifts or Wi-Fi codes). These efforts have been supported by the Department's Get Help with Tech programme, which is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including making 1.3 million laptops and tablets available for disadvantaged children and young people. The Department has also provided support for over 100,000 families to get online through uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers. In March 2021, one-in-five parents (18%) reported that their child had been given a device such as a laptop, and one-in-ten (10%) also reported that their child had been given help to access the internet. When this question was first asked of parents in mid-September 2020, 7% had been given a device and 5% access to the internet, showing a significant increase in the provision of both between the start of the Autumn Term 2020 and the end of the Spring Term 2021.

Parents of BAME pupils were more likely than parents of White pupils to report that their child had been given a device (30% vs. 14%) or access to the internet (14% vs. 9%). Parents of children eligible for FSM were twice as likely than non-eligible children to report that their child had been given a device (37% vs. 14%), and the internet (13% vs. 9%).

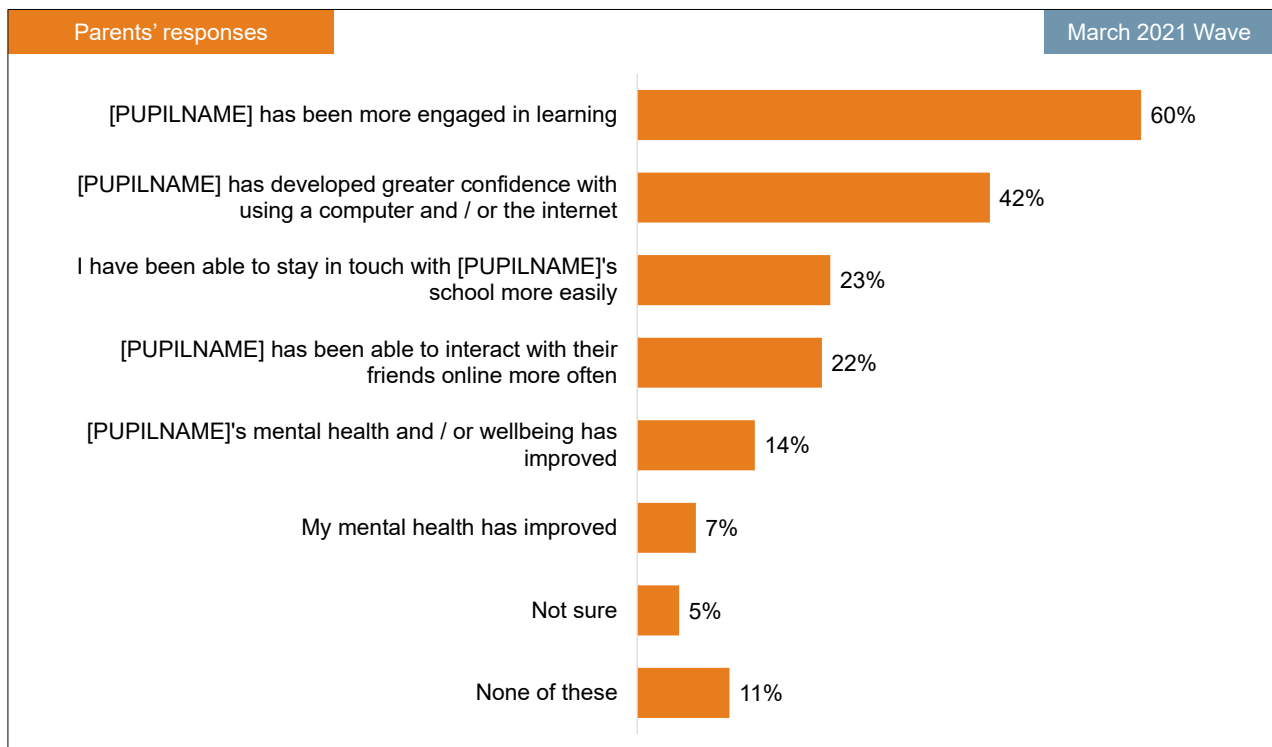
### Benefits of receiving a device / the internet

Parents whose children had been given access to the internet or a device to help with home education were asked if they saw any direct benefits. Three-in-five (60%) reported that their child appeared more engaged in learning, with a further 42% reporting they felt their child had developed greater confidence with using a computer and / or the internet. As shown in Figure 12, only one-in-ten (11%) of parents reported seeing none of these benefits.

Parents of pupils who got a device were more likely than parents of pupils given access to the internet to report their child as more engaged in learning as a result of receiving either (62% vs. 50%). Conversely, parents of pupils who received access to the internet

were more likely to report that they were able to stay in touch with their child’s school, compared to parents of pupils who received devices (32% vs. 22%).

**Figure 12. Benefits of receiving a device / the internet**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 C21: “What benefits have you seen as a direct result of [PUPILNAME] being given access to a device (laptop, computer or tablet) and/or the internet?”  
All parents whose child had been given a device/internet access (n=416)

Primary parents were almost twice as likely than secondary parents to report seeing their child develop great confidence on the computer / the internet (52% vs 30%), as well as the parent feeling they were more able to stay in contact with their child’s school (primary 31% vs secondary 14%).

Parents of BAME pupils were more likely to report seeing a great confidence in their child when using a computer/the internet as direct result of receiving a device/internet (52% vs. 34%). Whilst parents of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely to have received a device/the internet, there was no significant differences between FSM parents and non-FSM parents in terms of the benefits they reported.

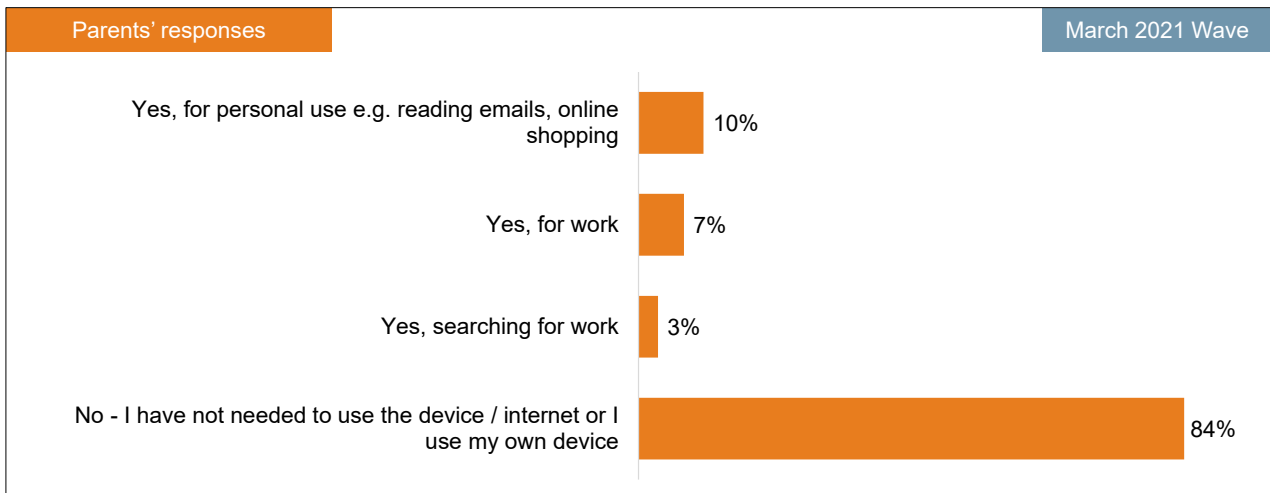
## Parents use of device / the internet provided for their child

Parents who reported their child had received a device or internet connectivity for their child’s remote learning were asked whether they themselves had used either the device or the internet access. As shown in Figure 13, parents did not tend to use the devices /



internet their child had been given, only a sixth (16%) reported that they had. Personal use (emails, online shopping etc) was the most common reason for use, reported by 10% of parents, followed by for work (7%) and for work searching activities (3%).

**Figure 13. Parents own use of devices / the internet provided for their child**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 C22: “Have you personally used the provided device (laptop, computer or tablet) and/or access to the internet?” All parents whose child had been given a device/internet access (n=416)

Parents of secondary pupils were more likely than primary parents to report not using the device/internet (89% vs. 79%), as did White parents compared to BAME parents (91% vs. 71%).

## Remote education

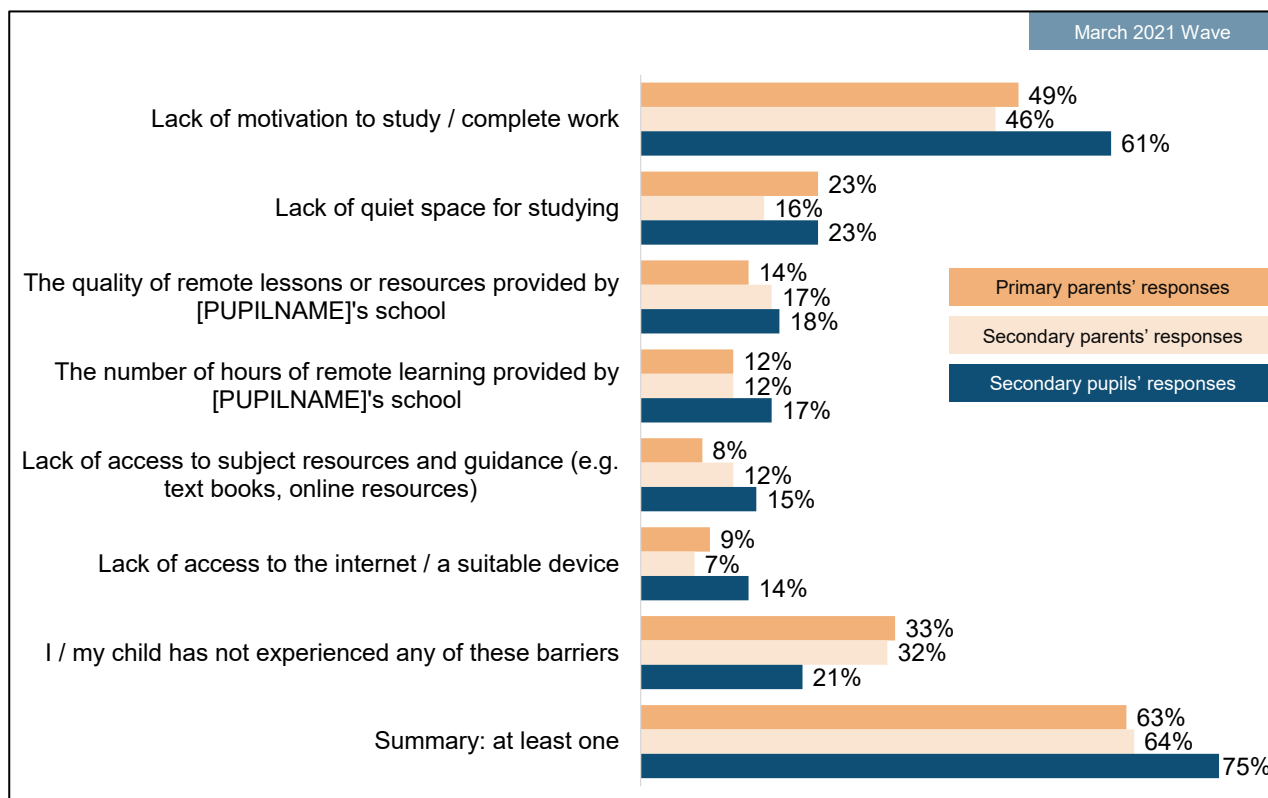
Throughout the PPP, parents and pupils have been frequently asked about their experiences of remote education. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the department published guidance regarding the provision of remote education in response to national lockdown and restricted school attendance. To support schools in delivering remote education a comprehensive package of support continues to be available via the Get Help with Remote Education on gov.uk. The DfE have also published information for parents and carers on remote education and how they can best support their child while learning from home where this is needed.

Throughout PPP, parents and pupils have been frequently asked about their experiences of remote education.

In March 2021, more than three-in-five (63%) parents of pupils and three-quarters (75%) of pupils had experienced a barrier to learning from home during the most recent period of school closures (between the 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021). In the February 2021 wave, 46% of parents of pupils and 47% of pupils offered any remote education in the last two weeks reported barriers that had made it difficult to learn at home.

As shown in Figure 14, lack of motivation to study / complete work was the barrier to learning at home parents (49% primary parents and 46% secondary parents) and secondary pupils (61%) most commonly identified.

**Figure 14. Barriers parents and pupils have reported to learning from home**



Source: PPP Wave 8, L102 / L104: "Which of the following barriers, if any, have you / your child experienced while learning at home?" All pupils / All parents (n= 1,531 / 3,084)

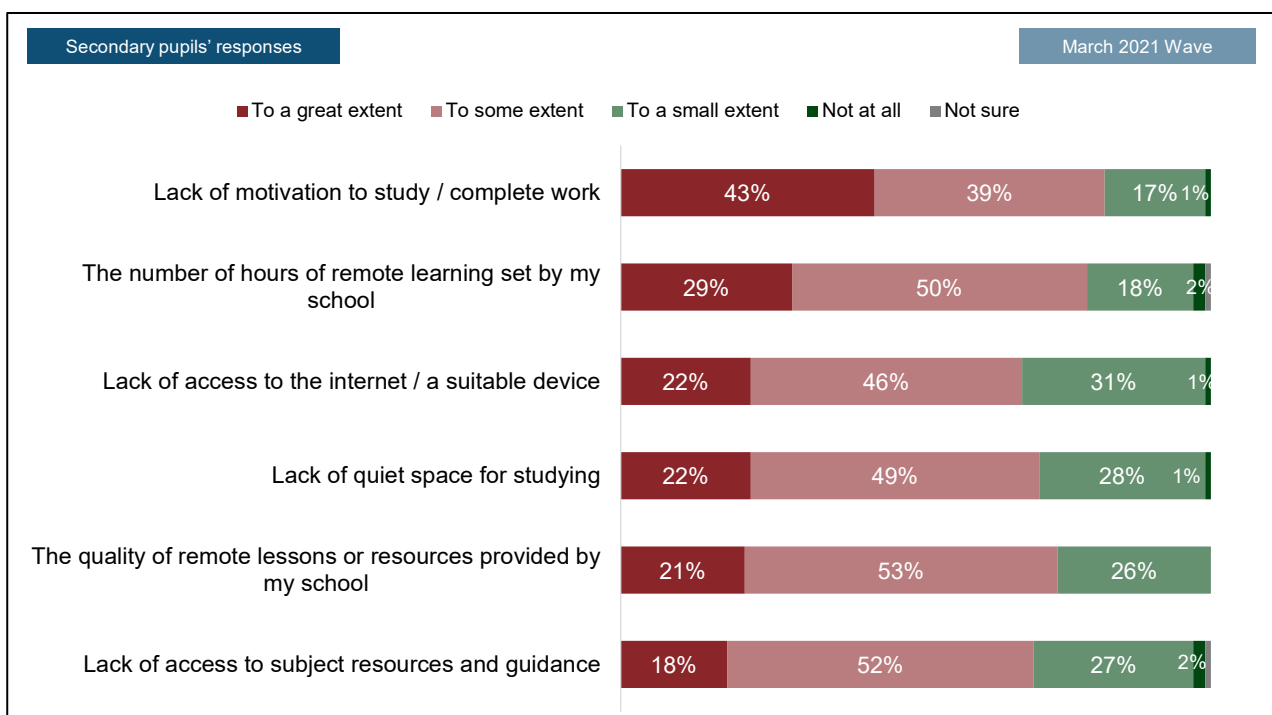
The following groups were more likely to report at least one barrier to learning:

- Older pupils, over nine-in-ten (91%) year 13 pupils and 84% of years 11-13 (compared to 70% of years 7-10).
- Female pupils compared to male pupils (80% vs 71%).
- Parents of pupils considered to have SEND (72% vs 62% of those not considered to have SEND). This difference was not reflected for pupils, with those considered to have SEND and those not broadly in line (73% vs 75%).
- Pupils with low happiness (87% vs 69% with high happiness), low life satisfaction (89% vs 67% with high life satisfaction), low worthwhileness (89% vs 67% with high satisfaction) and those with high anxiousness (86% vs 67% with low anxiousness).

- The lower the household income parents had: 73% of those with a household income of £15,000 - £24,999, 67% of those at £25,000-£44,999, 61% at £45,000-£99,999 and 56% of those earning £100,000 or more).<sup>24</sup>

As well as being the most commonly reported barrier to learning at home, lack of motivation to study was also the barrier that pupils found made learning at home most difficult (43% to a great extent and 39% to some extent), as shown in Figure 15. This also matches what parents of secondary pupils reported about their pupils (31% to a great extent and 45% to some extent).

**Figure 15. The extent to which barriers made it difficult for secondary pupils to learn at home**



Source: PPP Wave 8, P103: “To what extent, if at all, have these barriers made it difficult for you to learn at home?” All pupils who reported a barrier (n= 210 for Lack of access to the internet / a suitable device to 938 for Lack of motivation to study / complete work)

Older pupils were more likely than younger pupils to report that a lack of motivation to study (34% of year 7-10 pupils vs 53% of year 11-13 pupils) and the number of hours of remote education set by their school (23% vs 37%) made it difficult to learn at home to a great extent.

Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to report lack of motivation to study made it difficult to learn at home to a great extent (48% vs 37%).

<sup>24</sup> Household income was self-reported by parents upon joining the panel in August 2020.

FSM eligible pupils were more likely than non-eligible pupils to report the following as barriers to learning to a great extent:

- Lack of quiet space for studying (34% vs 18%)
- Lack of access to subject resources (30% vs 15%)
- Lack of motivation to study (55% vs 41%)
- The number of remote hours learning set by their school (44% vs 25%)
- The quality of remote lessons or resources provided by their school (40% vs 18%)

BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to report the following difficulties made it difficult to learn at home to a great extent:

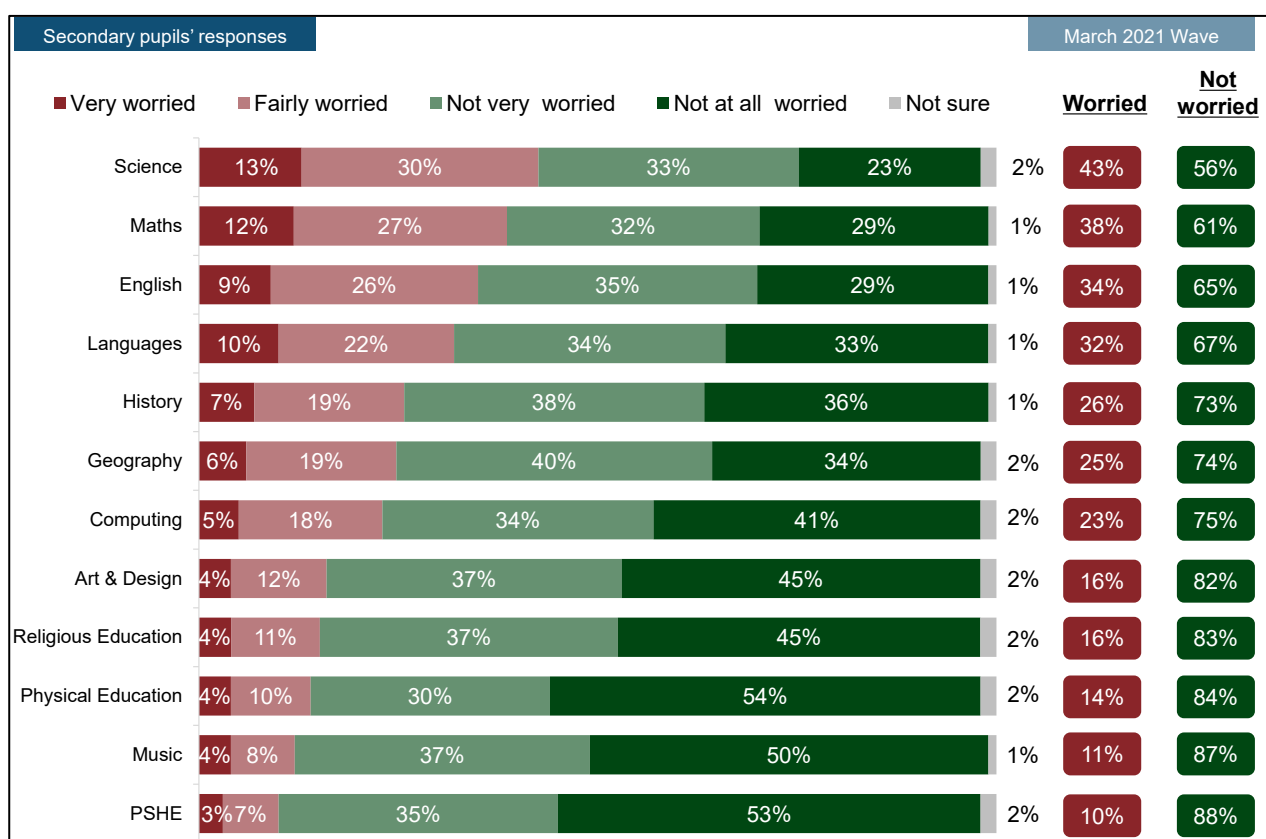
- Lack of quiet space (31% vs 17%)
- Lack of motivation to study / complete work (51% vs 40%)
- Lack of access to subject resources and guidance (33% vs 14%)

## Catching-up on learning

In March 2021, pupils were asked about what subjects they were studying in the academic year 2020/21 and whether they had concerns about catching-up on any missed learning.

Maths (85%), science (85%) and English (83%) were the subjects pupils most commonly studied and the subjects that pupils studying these subjects were most likely to be worried about catching up on (38%, 43% and 34% respectively). Pupils were least worried about catching up on physical education (14%), music (11%) and PSHE (10%).

**Figure 16. Concern about catching up on missed learned in different subjects**



Source: PPP Wave 8, L99: "How worried are you, if at all, about catching up on..." All pupils studying each subject: science (n=1,165), maths (n=1,142), English (n=1,089), languages (n=752), history (n=752), geography (n=712), computing (n=538), art and design (n=606), religious education (n=630), physical education (n=796), music (n=440) and PSHE (n=533)

Older pupils (in years 11-13) were more likely than younger pupils (in years 7-10) to be worried about catching up on all subjects, except for physical education and PSHE.

Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to be worried about catching up on: maths (45% vs 33%); science (52% vs 35%); history (30% vs 22%); and languages (36%

vs 28%). However, they were less worried about catching up on physical education (10% vs 17% of male pupils).

FSM eligible pupils were more likely than those not eligible to be worried about catching up on all subjects, except for PSHE and art & design.

BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to be worried about catching up on: English (44% vs 31%); science (49% vs 41%); geography (36% vs 21%); history (34% vs 23%); languages (44% vs 28%); physical education (19% vs 12%); and religious education (25% vs 13%).

Pupils considered to have SEND were more likely than those not considered to have SEND to be worried about catching up on: English (43% vs 33%); maths (48% vs 37%); geography (34% vs 23%); history (43% vs 23%); computing (34% vs 21%); languages (43% vs 30%); physical education (22% vs 13%); religious education (24% vs 14%); PSHE (19% vs 9%).

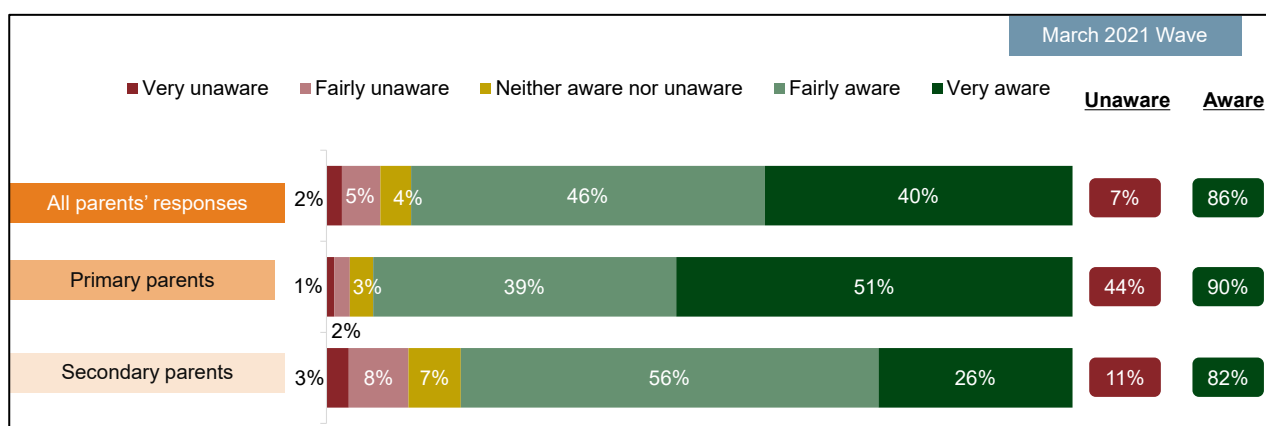
## Online safety

Ensuring that children stay safe online is a key objective of the Government’s online harms policy and forthcoming Online Safety Bill. As well as ensuring a safe online environment, it is important that children have the knowledge and skills to make informed and safe decisions online. Alongside the Online Safety Bill, DCMS have committed to publishing a Media Literacy Strategy to support user safety online. DCMS has asked for online safety questions to be included to enhance understanding of how confident parents feel about protecting their children online, particularly on how aware they feel they are about what their children are doing online and specific steps they have taken to protect their children online. DCMS will continue to undertake research and engagement with parents, carers and representative organisations to understand how and why people experience online harm and how this can be mitigated.

In March 2021, parents were asked about their experiences of keeping their child safe online. As shown in Figure 17, a large majority of parents (86%) said they were aware of what their child was doing online, with fewer than one-in-ten (7%) reporting the opposite. Two-in-five parents (40%) said they were very aware of what their child was doing online.

Primary parents were more likely than secondary to say they were aware of what their child was doing online (90% vs 82%) and almost twice as likely to say they were very aware (51% vs 26%).

**Figure 17 Parents’ awareness of what their child is doing online**



Source: PPP Wave 8, L106: “How aware or unaware do you feel about what your child is doing online?” All parents / primary parents / secondary parents (n= 3,084 / 1537 / 1547). Prefer not to say 1% of less in each instance, not applicable 3% or less in each instance.

The following groups of parents were more likely to say they were aware of what their child was doing online:

- Parents of White pupils (87% vs 84% of BAME pupils)



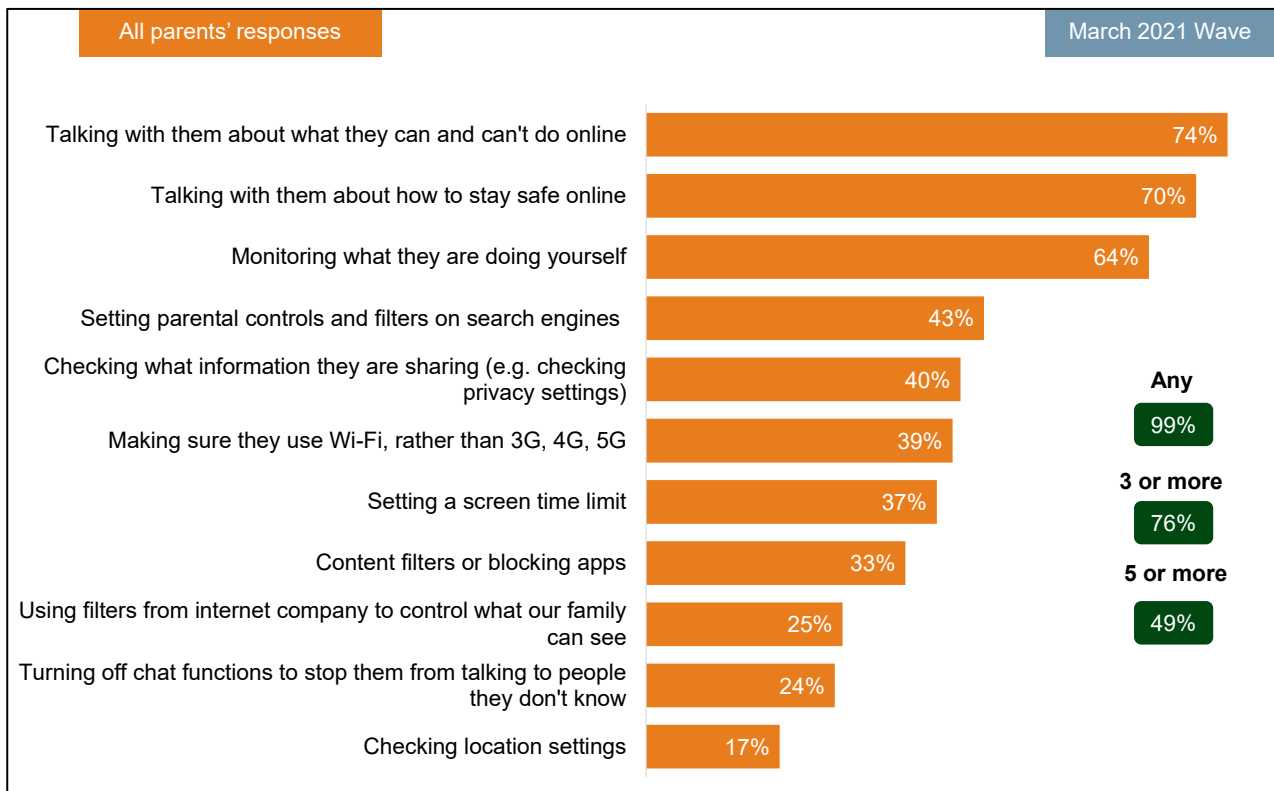
- Parents who reported high levels of happiness scores for their pupil (88% vs 75% reporting low happiness) and low anxiety for their child (88% vs 83% of high anxiety)
- Parents reporting high happiness (89% vs 81% with low happiness), high life satisfaction (89% vs 80% with low life satisfaction) and high worthwhileness (89% vs 79% with low worthwhileness) for themselves.
- Parents of pupils given access to the internet by their school/local authority for remote education (91% vs 86% overall).

Almost all parents (99%) took at least one action to ensure their child’s safety online and more than three-quarters (76%) took three or more.

The three most common actions taken were: talking with them about what they can and can’t do online (74%), talking with them about how to stay safe online (70%) and monitoring what they are doing yourself (64%).

Parents of primary pupils were more likely to have taken multiple actions, with 83% taking three or more and 58% taking five or more (compared to 66% and 37% among secondary parents). The only action secondary parents were more likely to take than primary parents was talking with their child about how to stay safe online (73% vs 67%).

**Figure 18. Actions taken by parents to ensure their child’s safety online**



Source: PPP Wave 8, L107: Which, if any, of the following actions do you regularly do to ensure your child is safe online?" All parents (n= 3,084). Code more than 3% selected show. Prefer not to say = 1%, None = 3%.

Parents of White pupils were more likely to have taken multiple actions, with four-in-five (80%) taking three or more and more than half (52%) taking five or more (vs 65% and 38% of parents of BAME pupils).

Parents of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely than those not eligible to check what information their child is sharing (46% vs 39%) but less likely to set a screen time limit (28% vs 39%).

Parents from high income households were more likely to take actions involving dialogue with the child, such as talking with their child about what can and can't do online (83% of those earning £100,000 or more vs 67% of those earning Under £15,000) and talking with them about how to stay safe online (79% of those earning £100,000 or more vs 65% of those earning under £15,000).

Single parents were less likely than those not from single parent households to talk with their child about what can and can't do online (70% vs 75%), to set parental controls and filters on search engines (39% vs 44%), set a screen time limit (27% vs 39%) or use filters from an internet company (21% vs 26%).

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Pupil mental health and wellbeing is an ongoing priority for the DfE. The pandemic and associated lockdown measures are affecting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in a variety of ways. Being in school is likely to be beneficial for children and young people, while being away from school will likely have had some negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

At each wave of the PPP, parents and pupils were asked a series of ONS-validated questions about personal wellbeing, including how happy they felt yesterday, their life satisfaction, the extent to which they feel the things they do in life were worthwhile, and their anxiousness levels. DfE is tracking these questions over time to understand how young people and their families are coping with the pandemic.

The questions in this series are asked in a similar way, using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'. The questions ask pupils 'overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?', 'overall, how satisfied are you with your life?', 'overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?' and 'overall how anxious did you feel yesterday?'. Parents are asked the same questions in relation to their child for both happiness and anxiousness, and in this wave about themselves.

It is important to note that for the first three measures, a high score of 7-10 is a positive score as it suggests high levels of happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, whereas for the anxiousness measure a low score of 0-3 is a positive score as it represents low levels of anxiousness and a high score (6-10) is a negative score for those who were considered anxious.

## Parent wellbeing

### Parents' happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness

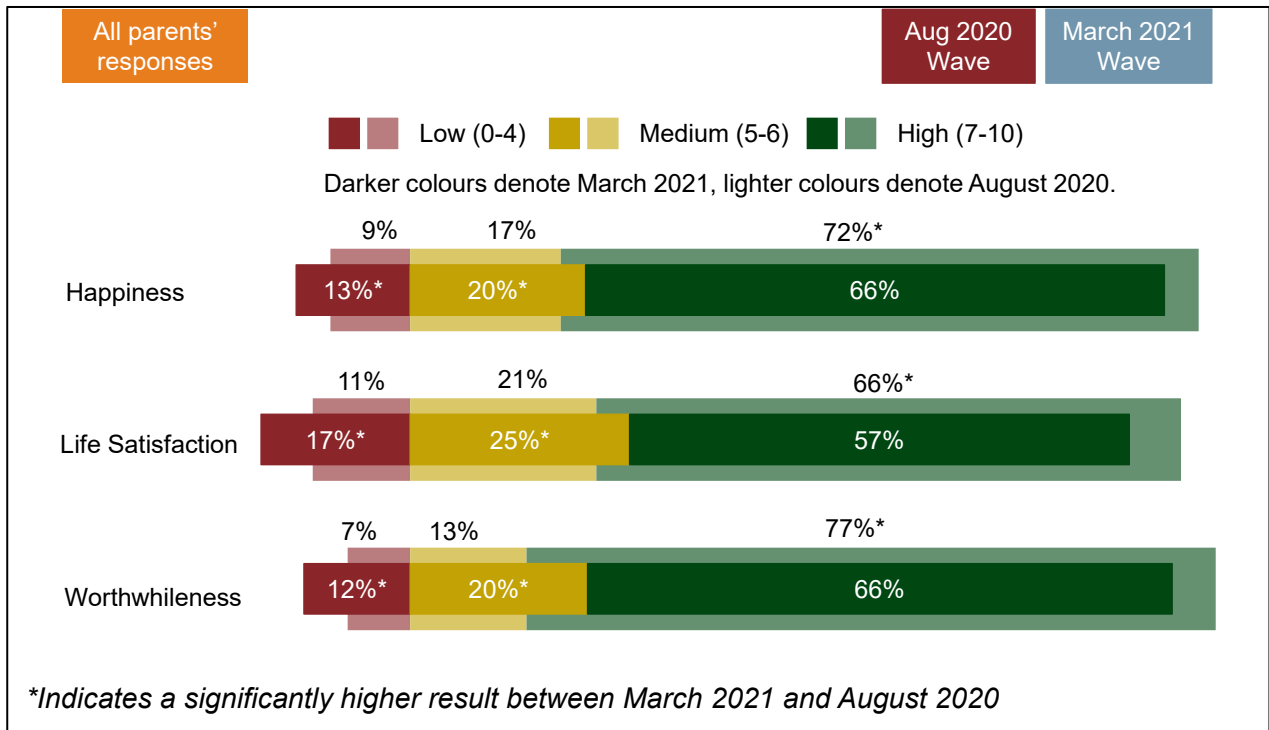
In the March 2021 wave, parents were asked about their own mental health and wellbeing and these figures have been compared to responses in August 2020.<sup>25</sup> As shown in Figure 19, parents reported lower scores for all three wellbeing measures in March 2021, compared to last summer. For instance, two-thirds of parents (66%) gave a high happiness score (7-10) compared to seven-in-ten (72%) in August. One-in-ten parents gave a low life satisfaction score (0-4) in August (11%), compared to 17% in March 2021. Parents' wellbeing scores reported in mid-September 2020 (the only other

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<sup>25</sup> Parents were also asked mental health and wellbeing questions in September 2020 but not since.

time asked) were broadly between those reported in August 2020 and March 2021 and can be seen in the Aug-Oct findings report.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 19. Parents’ views of their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness**

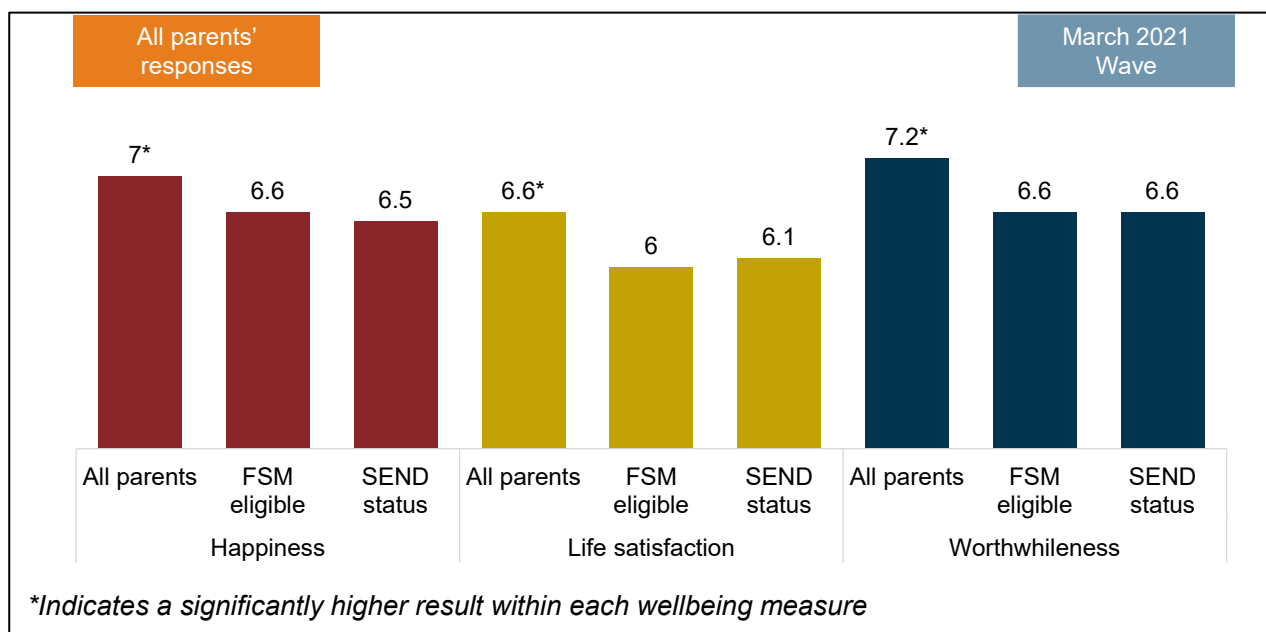


Source: PPP March 2021 and August 2020 Wave, B16: “Rating of each measure on scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”” All parents (March n=3,084 / Aug n=7,191).

As shown in Figure 20, parents with pupils eligible for FSM and parents of pupils with a SEND, were more likely to give lower wellbeing scores compared to parents overall. This was also the case in August 2020.

<sup>26</sup> See Parent and Pupil Panel: August to October findings

**Figure 20. Parents' views of their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, by FSM eligibility and SEND status (mean scores)<sup>27</sup>**



Lower happiness scores were also more likely in March 2021 amongst the following groups:

- Female parents compared to male parents (6.9 vs 7.4).
- White parents compared to BAME parents (7.0 vs 7.2).
- Parents in rural areas compared to those in urban areas (6.9 vs 7.1).
- Parents in a single parent household compared to those who are not (6.8 vs 7.1)<sup>28</sup>

Lower life satisfaction scores were also more likely in March 2021 amongst the following groups:

- Female parents compared to male parents (6.5 vs 6.8).
- Parents in a single parent household compared to those who are not (6.2 vs 6.7).

Lower worthwhileness scores were also more likely in March 2021 amongst the following groups:

- Parents in a single parent household compared to those who are not (6.9 vs 7.3).

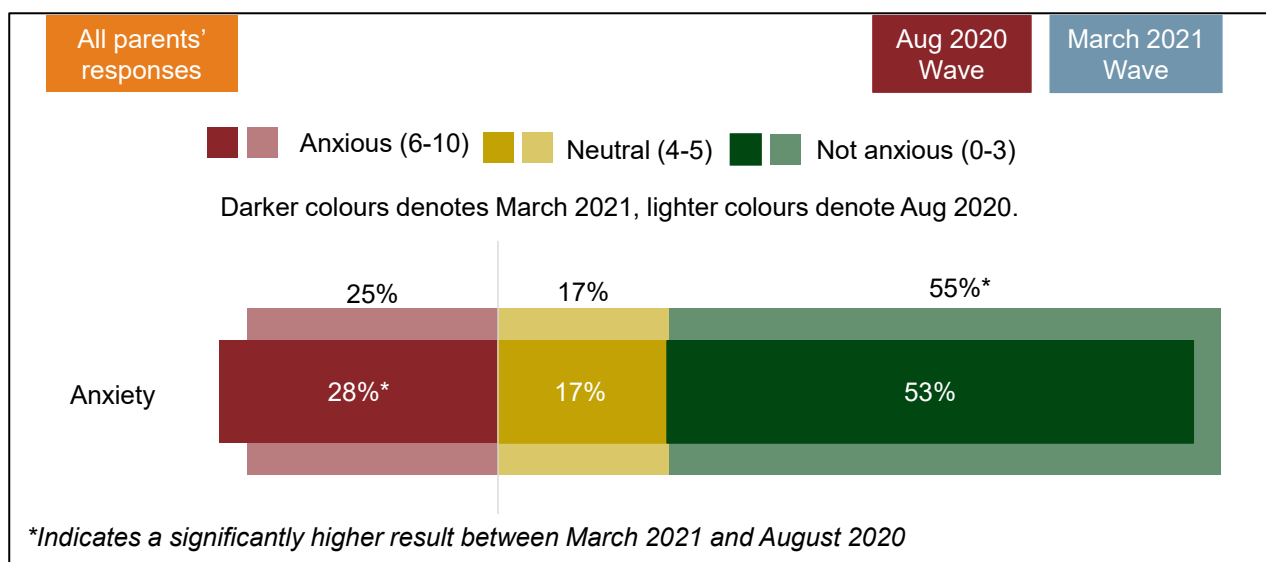
<sup>27</sup> See [Glossary](#) for definitions.

<sup>28</sup> Single parent household status is based on data collected in August 2020.

## Parents' anxiousness

Whilst parents' scores for their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness decreased between August 2020 and March 2021, their scores for anxiousness increased. As shown in Figure 21, a quarter of parents reported a high anxiousness score in August, compared to 28% in March 2021. In mid-September, 30% of parents reported a high anxiousness score.

**Figure 21. Parents' views of their own anxiousness**



Source: PPP March 2021 and August 2020 Wave, B17: "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?" All parents (March n=3,084 / Aug n=7,191).

In March 2021, higher anxiousness scores were more likely amongst the following groups:

- Female parents compared to male parents (3.7 vs 3.0).
- Parents with a child eligible for FSM, compared to those don't (4.3 vs 3.3). The same pattern was reported in August 2020.
- Parents with a child with SEND compared to those who don't (4.3 vs 3.3). The same pattern was reported in August 2020.
- Parents in a single parent household compared to those who are not (4.1 vs 3.3). In August 2020, there was no significant difference in anxiousness between these two groups.
- There was no difference in mean scores, however primary parents were more likely to give a high or very high anxiousness score compared to secondary parents (30% vs 26%); a pattern also reported in August 2020.

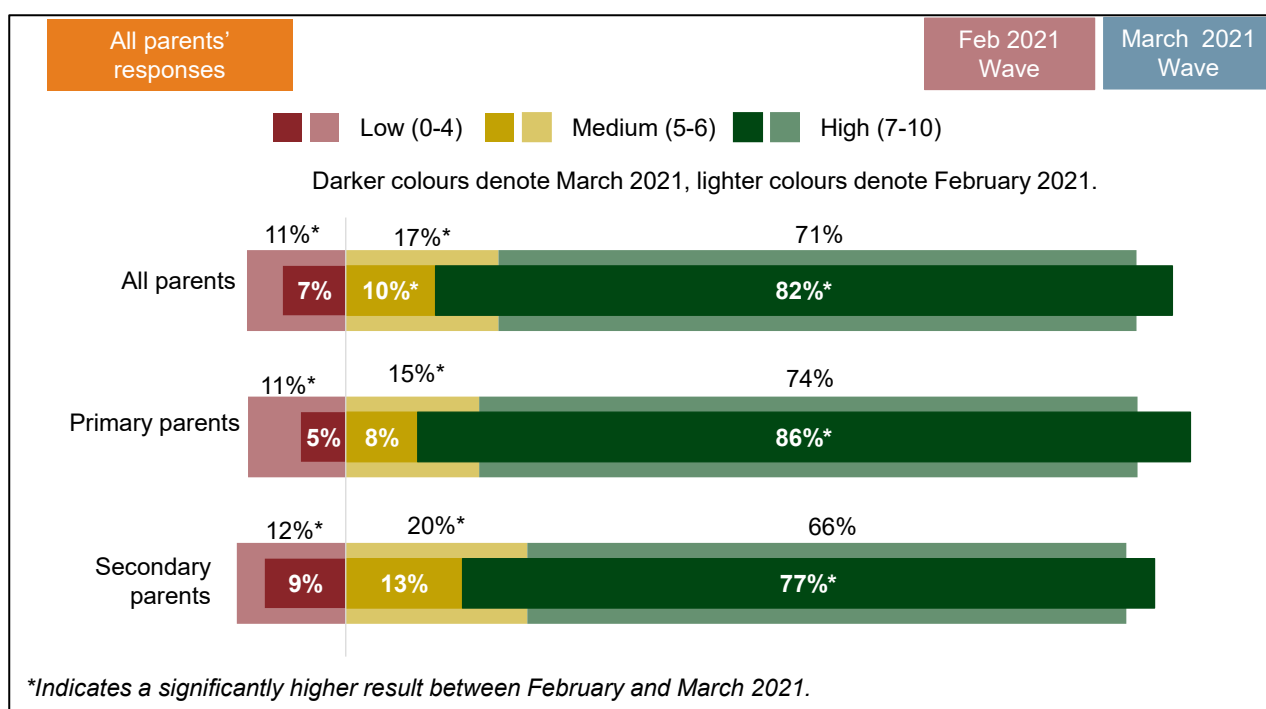
## Pupil wellbeing

### Parents' views on pupil happiness

In February 2021, there was a sharp decrease in the happiness levels of pupils, as reported by their parents, compared to previous waves. This was during the time of the third UK lockdown, and when schools were not open to the majority of pupils. As shown in Figure 22, parents reported happiness scores have since improved in March 2021 (to the levels seen before Christmas). Eighty-two percent of parents gave a high score (7-10) for their child's happiness, compared to 71% in February. At the same time, fewer parents (7%) gave a low score (0-4) for their child's happiness compared to February (11%).

Consistent with previous waves, primary parents were more likely to give a high score for their child's happiness compared to secondary parents (86% vs. 77%).

**Figure 22. Parents' views on pupil's happiness**

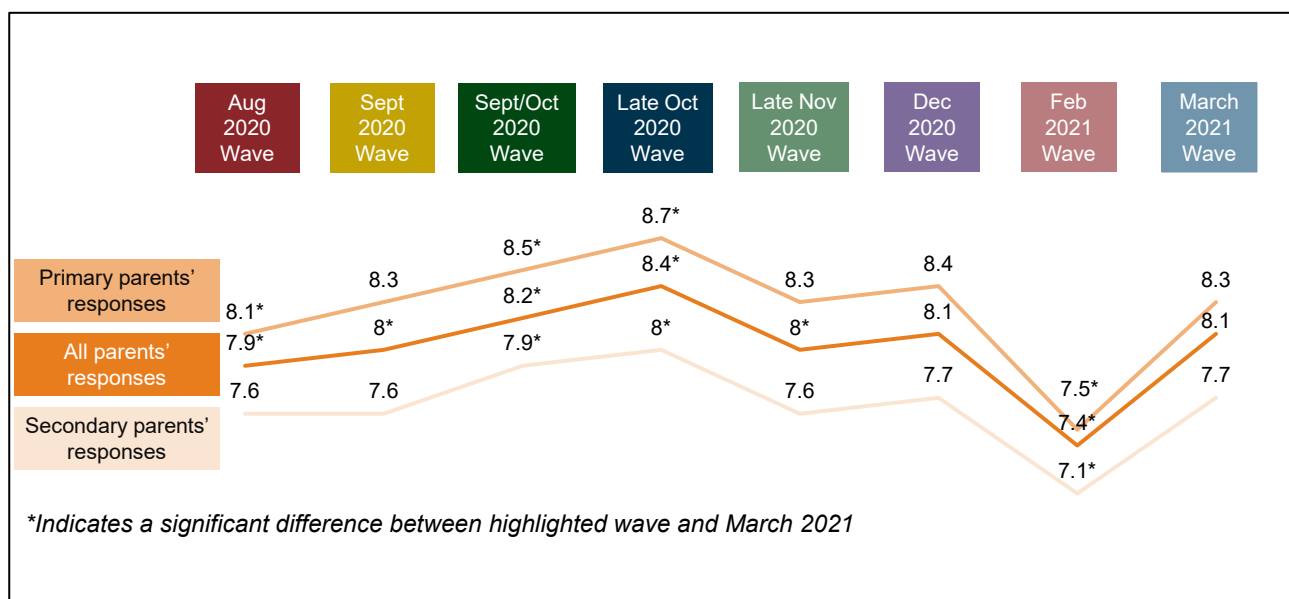


Source: PPP March 2021 and February 2020 Wave, O1: "Overall, how happy did Pupil appear yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'?" All parents (n=3,084 / n=3,082), primary parents (n = 1,537 / n=1,541), secondary parents (n = 1,547 / n=1,541).

Building on the above, in March 2021, parents reported happiness mean scores returned to levels reported at the end of the Autumn 2020 term, as shown in Figure 23. Although

mean scores are slightly different between primary and secondary parents, the trend has been the same throughout the period shown.

**Figure 23. Parents' views on pupil's happiness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and March 2021, O1: "Overall, how happy did Pupil appear yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'?" All parents (n=7,191 / n = 4,005 / n = 3,491 / n = 3,542 / n = 3,388 / n = 3,237 / n = 3,082 / n= 3,084), primary parents (n=4,203 / n = 1,987 / n = 1,712 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,697 / n = 1,618 / n = 1,541 / n = 1,537), secondary parents (n= 2,988 / n = 2,018 / n = 1,779 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,691 / n = 1,619 / n = 1,541 / n=1,541).

Consistent with earlier waves, lower happiness scores for their children were more likely in March 2021 amongst the following parents:

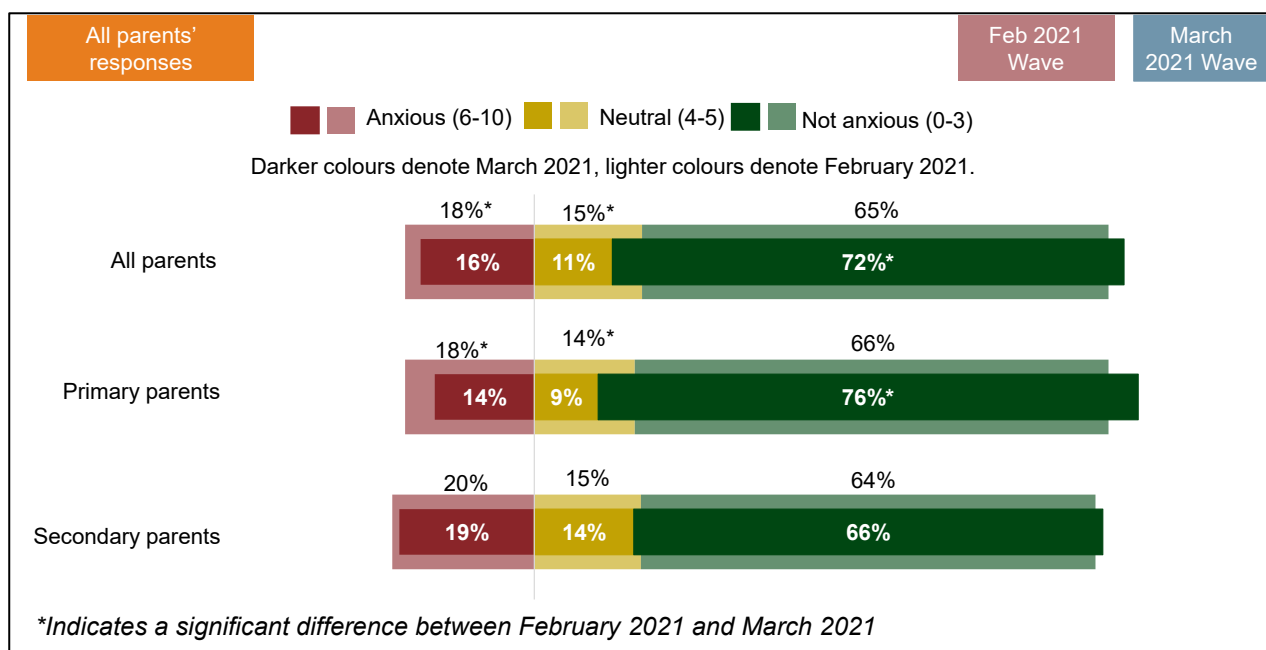
- Secondary parents than primary parents (7.7 vs. 8.3).
- Parents whose child is eligible for FSM versus those whose child is not eligible (7.6 vs. 8.1).
- Parents whose child has SEND versus those whose child had no SEND (7.6 vs. 8.1).
- Parents of pupils who are supported by a social worker compared to those who are not (6.3 vs 8.1).
- Parents of pupils who physically attended most or some days of school in the past two weeks compared to those who attended every day (7.1 and 7.2 vs 8.1).



## Parents' views on pupil anxiousness

As with happiness scores, parents gave more positive perceived scores for anxiousness in March 2021 compared to the previous wave in February. As shown in Figure 24, 16% of parents gave a high anxiousness score (6-10) in March 2021, compared to 18% in February 2020. The increase in low anxiousness scores between February and March (65% vs 72%), was driven by parents of primary school pupils.

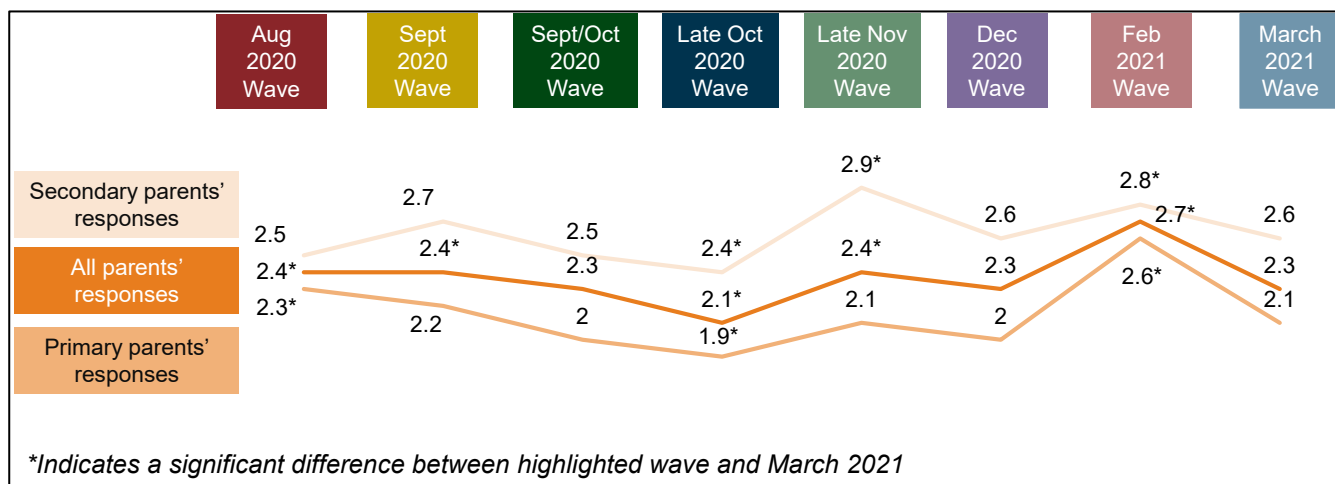
**Figure 24. Parents' views on pupil's anxiousness**



Source: PPP February 2021 and December 2020 Wave, O2: "On a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did Pupil appear yesterday?" All parents All parents (n=3,084 / 3,082/ n = 3,237), primary parents (n = 1,537 / n=1,541), secondary parents (n = 1,547 / n=1,541).

As shown in Figure 25, anxiousness mean scores for pupils (as reported by parents) in March were in line with those seen in December 2020. Scores in February 2021 (2.7) were the highest seen across all waves.

**Figure 25. Parents' views on pupil's anxiousness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and March 2021, O2: “On a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did Pupil appear yesterday?” All parents (n=7,191 / n = 4,005 / n = 3,491 / n = 3,542 / n = 3,388 / n = 3,237 / n = 3,082 / n = 3,084), primary parents (n=4,203 / n = 1,987 / n = 1,712 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,697 / n = 1,618 / n = 1,541 / n = 1,537), secondary parents (n= 2,988 / n = 2,018 / n = 1,779 / n = 1,771 / n = 1,691 / n = 1,619 / n = 1,541 / n=1,541).

Broadly consistent with the findings in previous survey waves, higher mean scores of anxiousness for their children were more likely amongst the following parent groups:

- Parents of secondary pupils compared to primary pupils (2.6 vs 2.1).
- Parents whose child is eligible for FSM (3.0 vs. 2.2 where the child is not eligible)
- Parents whose child has SEND (3.4 vs. 2.1 among non-SEND).
- Parents of pupils who are supported by a social worker compared to those who are not (3.3 vs 2.3).
- Parents of pupils who have physically attended school most days in the past two weeks (3.0) compared to those who have attended every day (2.3).

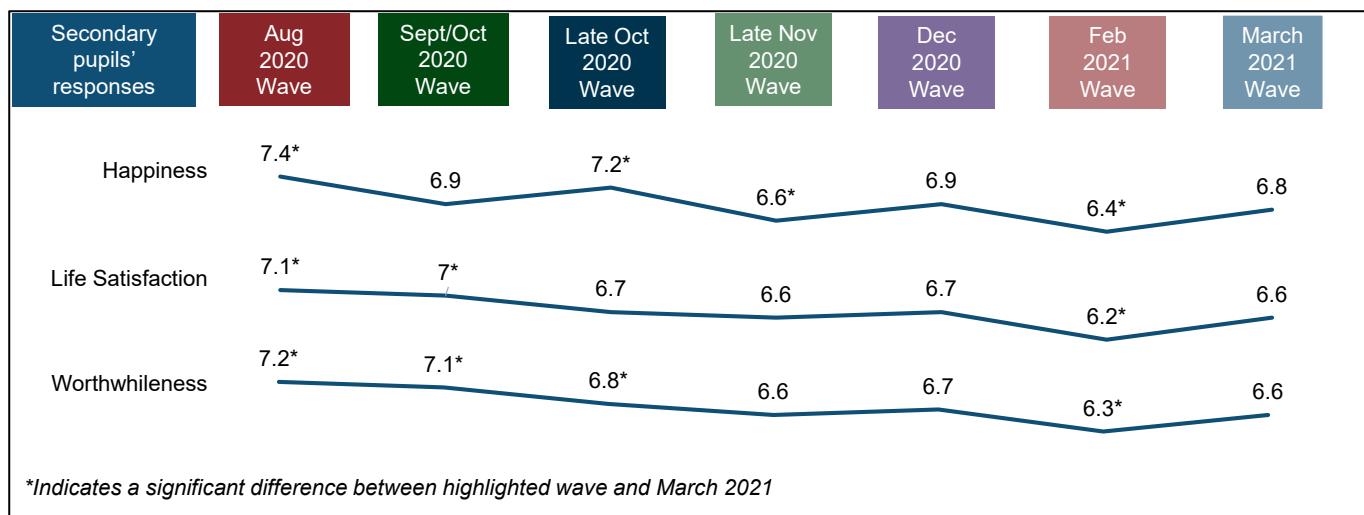
## Pupils' views on their own wellbeing

Secondary pupils were also asked about their own levels of happiness, life satisfaction, the extent to which they feel the things they do in life were worthwhile, and their feelings of anxiousness.

## Pupils' views on their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness

As shown in Figure 26, there has been a shift towards more negative scores across each of the three wellbeing measures since August 2020, with February 2021 showing the lowest reported scores. In March 2021, scores have returned to their pre-Christmas levels, in the same way parents' reported scores for pupils did.

**Figure 26. Pupils' views of their own happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and March 2021, B5: "Rating of each measure on scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely"" Secondary pupils (n=5,327 / n=1,780 / n=1,661 / n=1,612 / n=1,555 / n=1,537 / n=1,531).

Consistent with previous waves, older pupils (years 11-13) were significantly less likely to be doing well compared to younger pupils (years 7-10) across all three measures:

- Happiness: 7.2 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 6.1 for years 11-13 pupils
- Life satisfaction: 7.1 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 5.6 for years 11-13 pupils
- Worthwhileness: 7.1 for years 7-10 pupils vs. 5.6 for years 11-13 pupils

Since August 2020, female pupils have continued to report poorer wellbeing scores than their male counterparts for all four measures. In March 2021, female pupils had significantly lower mean scores for happiness (6.2 vs 7.4), life satisfaction (5.9 vs 7.2), and worthwhileness (6 vs 7.1).

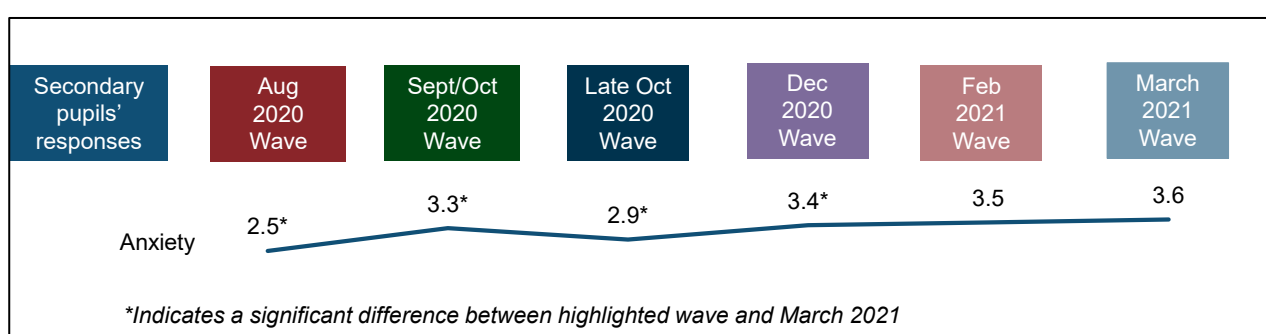
As reported in December 2020 (but not in February 2021), White pupils were more likely to give high scores for happiness and life satisfaction (7-10) compared to BAME pupils:

- Happiness: 64% for White pupils vs 57% for BAME pupils.
- Life satisfaction: 59% for White pupils vs 51% for BAME pupils.

## Pupils' views on their own anxiousness

Whilst pupils' reported happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness scores recovered in March 2021, anxiousness scores increased, as shown in Figure 27. Although not a significant difference from February 2021, the increase is significant over the course of the school year. As mentioned above, parents reported scores for pupils improved during this time, however this was solely driven by primary parents.

**Figure 27. Pupils' views of their own anxiousness (mean scores)**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and March 2021, B6: "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely'" Secondary pupils (n = 5,327 / n = 1,780 / n = 1,661 / n = 1,555 / n = 1,537 / n = 1,531).

Anxiousness scores were higher amongst the following pupils (patterns seen across previous waves):

- Older pupils (years 11-13) compared to younger pupils (years 7-10) (4.6 vs 3).
- Female pupils compared to male pupils (4.4. vs 2.8).
- Pupils with SEND compared to pupils without SEND (4.0 vs 3.5).

Unlike in December 2020 or February 2021, pupils who are eligible for FSM were more likely to report higher anxiousness scores in March 2021 compared to pupils not eligible (3.9 vs 3.5).

## Pupils' reasons for feeling anxious

In March 2021, pupils who gave a high anxiousness score (6-10) were asked a follow up question asking what in the last two weeks<sup>29</sup> has made them feel anxious.

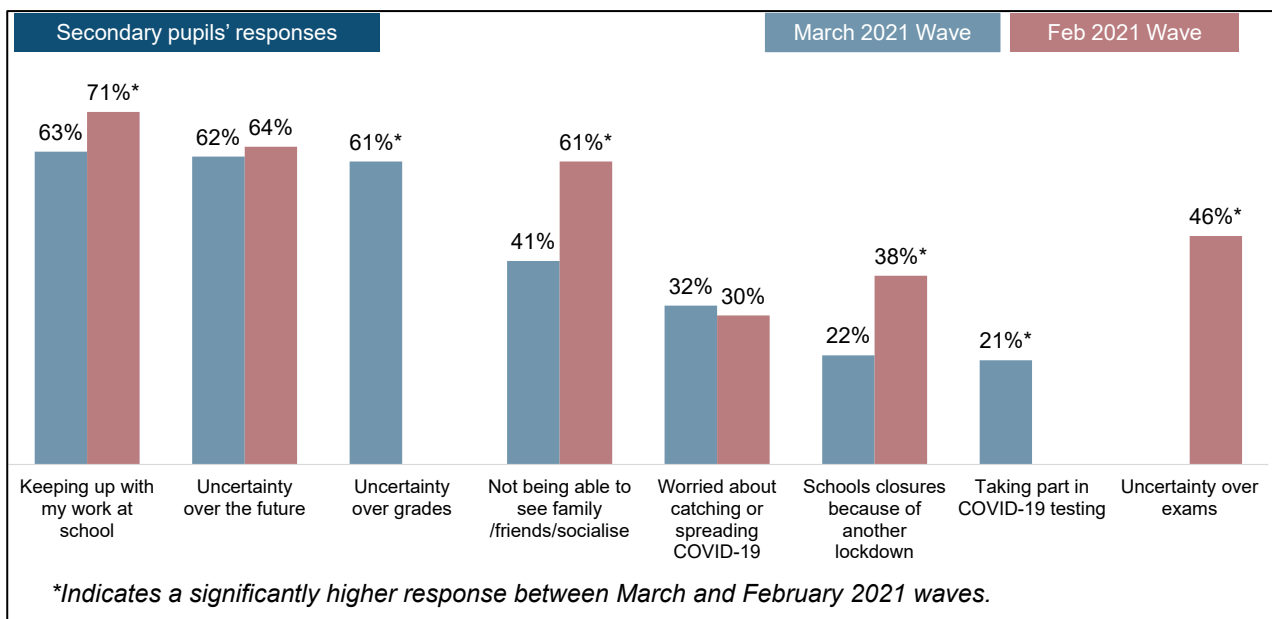
<sup>29</sup> The reported two weeks that pupils will have been thinking about would fall between 9<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> March.

As shown in Figure 28, keeping up with schoolwork was the most common reason making pupils feel anxious (63%), although this was lower compared to February 2021 (71%), followed by uncertainty over the future (62%). In March 2021, when it was presented as an answer option, uncertainty over grades was selected by 61% of secondary pupils with high anxiousness.<sup>30</sup> Uncertainty about exams was a frequently reported cause of anxiousness in February (46%) when it was presented as an answer option, although four pupils actually referenced it in the ‘other (please specify)’ answer option in March.

Fewer pupils were anxious about not being able to see family or friends or socialise in March compared to February 2021 (41% vs 61%), most likely a reflection of social distancing measures easing during this period and schools being open to the majority of pupils once again.

Three-in-ten pupils (32%) were worried about catching or spreading COVID-19, and this was even across year groups, and in line with the proportion anxious about this in February 2021 (30%).

**Figure 28. Reasons why pupils with high anxiousness were feeling anxious**



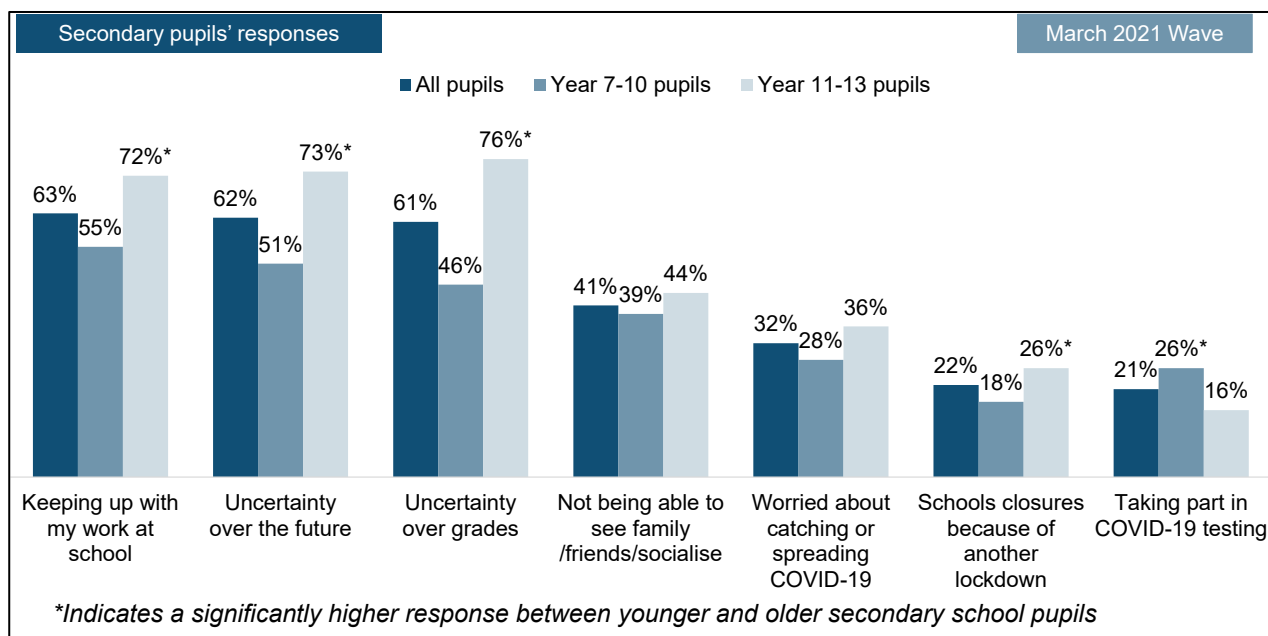
Source: PPP February 2021 and March 2021 Waves, B24C: “Thinking about the last two weeks, what do you think has made you anxious?” Secondary pupils who said they had high feelings of

<sup>30</sup> This had not been presented as an answer option in February and no pupils mentioned this spontaneously in the ‘other, please specify’ category.

anxiousness (n = 544 / n=517). This question was an open text box in February 2021 (spontaneous), and then defined answer options in March 2021.

As shown in Figure 29, those in years 11-13 were much more likely to be anxious about keeping up with school work, uncertainty about the future, uncertainty about grades and school closures than those in years 7-10.

**Figure 29. Reasons why pupils with high anxiousness were feeling anxious**



Source: PPP February 2021 Wave, B24C: "Thinking about the last two weeks, what do you think has made you anxious?" Secondary pupils who said they had high feelings of anxiousness (n=544), year 7-10 pupils who said they had high feeling of anxiousness (n=181) and year 11-13 pupils who said they had high feelings of anxiousness (n=363).

In March 2021, female pupils were more likely to state the following as the main cause of their anxiousness compared to male pupils:

- Keeping up with my work at school (72% vs 48%)
- Uncertainty over the future (69% vs 50%)
- Uncertainty over grades (69% vs 48%)

However, they were less likely to state taking part in COVID-19 testing as being the cause of anxiousness: 16% of female pupils compared to 29% of male pupils.

BAME pupils were more likely to state uncertainty over grades as the main cause of their anxiousness, compared to their White peers (76% vs 57%), but less likely to state not being able to see / visit family or friends as the reason (31% vs 44%).

As seen in February 2021, in March 2021 FSM-eligible pupils were more likely to report being worried about catching or spreading COVID-19 as a cause for their anxiousness compared to non-FSM-eligible pupils (42% vs 29%).

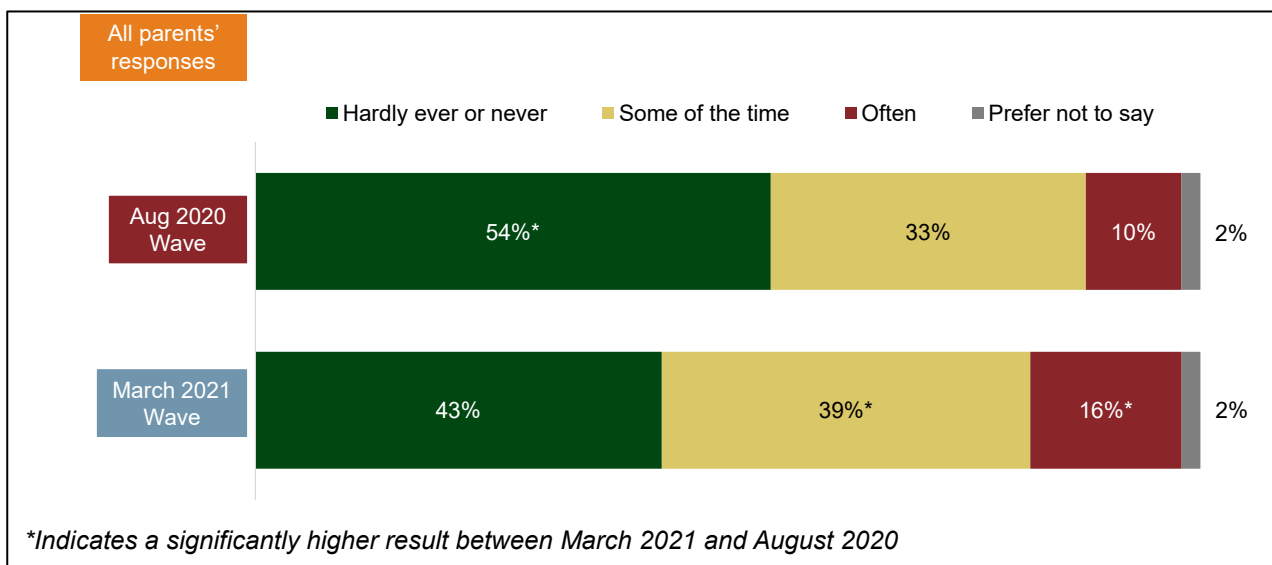
## Loneliness

Loneliness is a key risk factor for poor mental health in children and young people, as well as adults. Social distancing measures and school closures for most pupils throughout the past year will likely have affected parents' and pupils alike.

### Parents' loneliness

In the March 2021 wave, parents were also asked about their own mental health and wellbeing for the first time since August 2020.<sup>31</sup> As shown in Figure 30, two-in-five parents (43%) reported hardly ever or never feeling lonely, compared to over half in August 2020 (54%). One-in-ten parents had reported often feeling lonely in the summer, which rose to 16% in March 2021.

**Figure 30. Percentage of all parents who felt lonely**



Source: PPP waves August 2020 and March 2021, B22: "How often do you feel lonely?"  
Secondary pupils (n=3714 / n=3,084).

The following parents were more likely to report feeling lonely 'at least some of the time':

- Female parents compared to male parents (58% vs 44%).

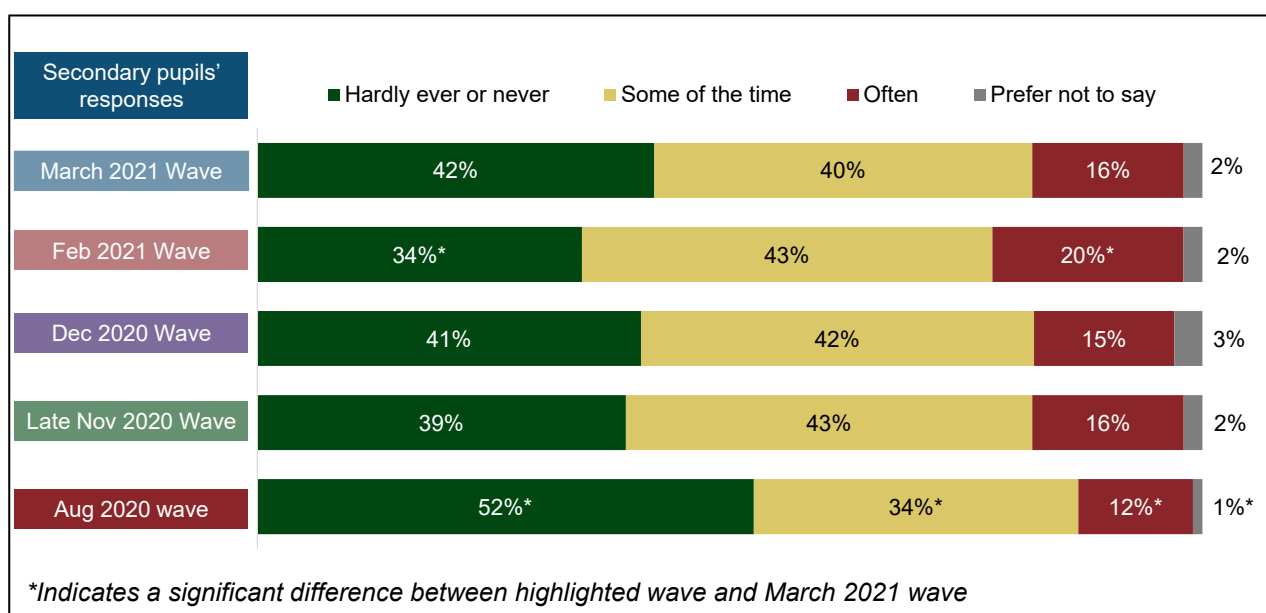
<sup>31</sup> August 2020 was a period of time when fewer social distancing measures were in place in the UK compared to March 2021.

- Parents whose child is eligible for FSM compared to parents of a non-eligible FSM child (69% vs 52%).
- Parents who currently have a child they consider to have a SEND compared to those who do not (63% vs 53%).
- Parents in a single parent household compared to those who are not (70% vs 50%).<sup>32</sup>

## Pupils' loneliness

In March 2021, 42% of secondary pupils reported hardly ever or never feeling lonely. This was a similar proportion to pupils in December 2020 (the last time schools were open to the majority of pupils), but still lower than August 2020.

**Table 5. Percentage of secondary pupils who felt lonely**



Source: PPP waves between August 2020 and March 2021, B12: "How often do you feel lonely?"  
Secondary pupils (n=5,327 / n=1,612 / n=1,555 / n=1,537 / n =1,531).

Similarly, to previous waves:

- Year 11-13 pupils were more likely than average to have felt lonely at least some of the time (72% vs. 46%), particularly year 12 and 13 pupils (78% respectively compared to 55% on average).
- Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to have often felt lonely (23% vs. 9%).

<sup>32</sup> Single parent household status is based on data collected in August 2020.



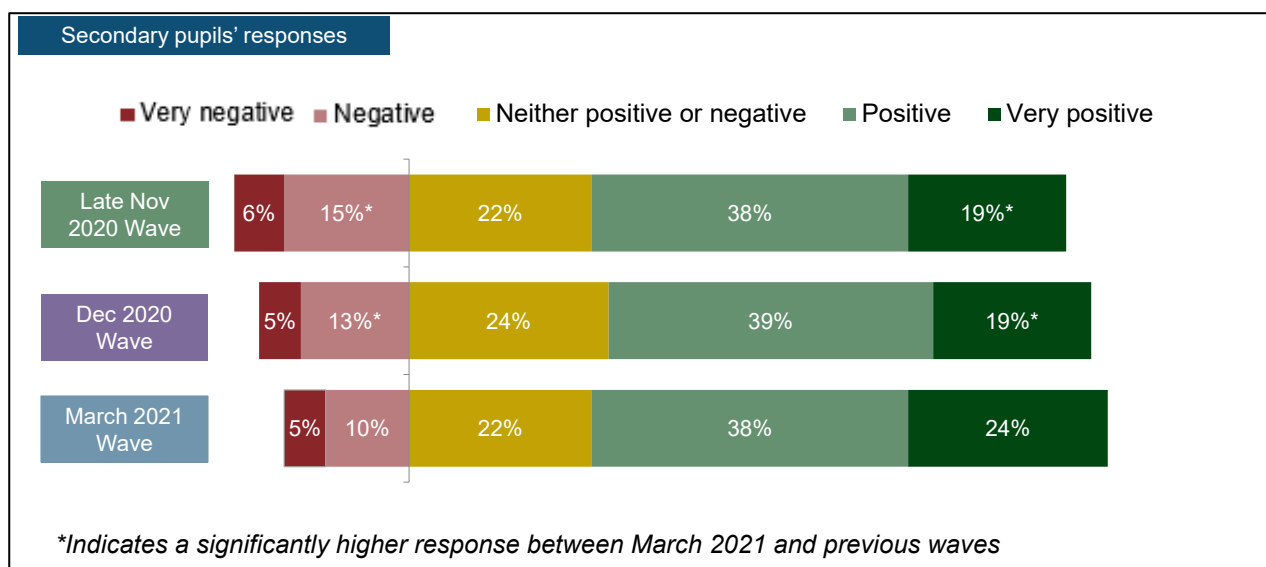
## Impact of school attendance on mental health

Throughout the PPP, pupils and parents have been asked whether or not physically attending school or college has had a positive or negative impact on their (or their pupil's) mood and mental health.

In March 2020, 87% of primary parents felt being back at school or college had had a positive impact on their child's mood and mental health. This was slightly higher than the 80% of secondary parents who reported this. Only 5% of all parents (4% of primary parents and 7% of secondary parents) thought physically attending school had had a negative impact, a similar pattern to previous waves.

Pupils agreed with parents that physical attendance had had a positive impact on their mental health, but not to the same extent. As shown in Figure 31, around two-thirds (62%) of secondary pupils in March 2021 felt that being back at school or college had had a positive impact on their mood and mental health. Since late November 2020, fewer pupils have reported physically attending school having a negative impact on their mental health (15% vs 13% vs 10%). Moreover, a quarter of pupils (24%) thought it had had a very positive impact, compared to a fifth (19%) in late November and December 2020.

**Figure 31. Whether attending school or college has had a positive or negative impact on pupil's mood and mental health.**



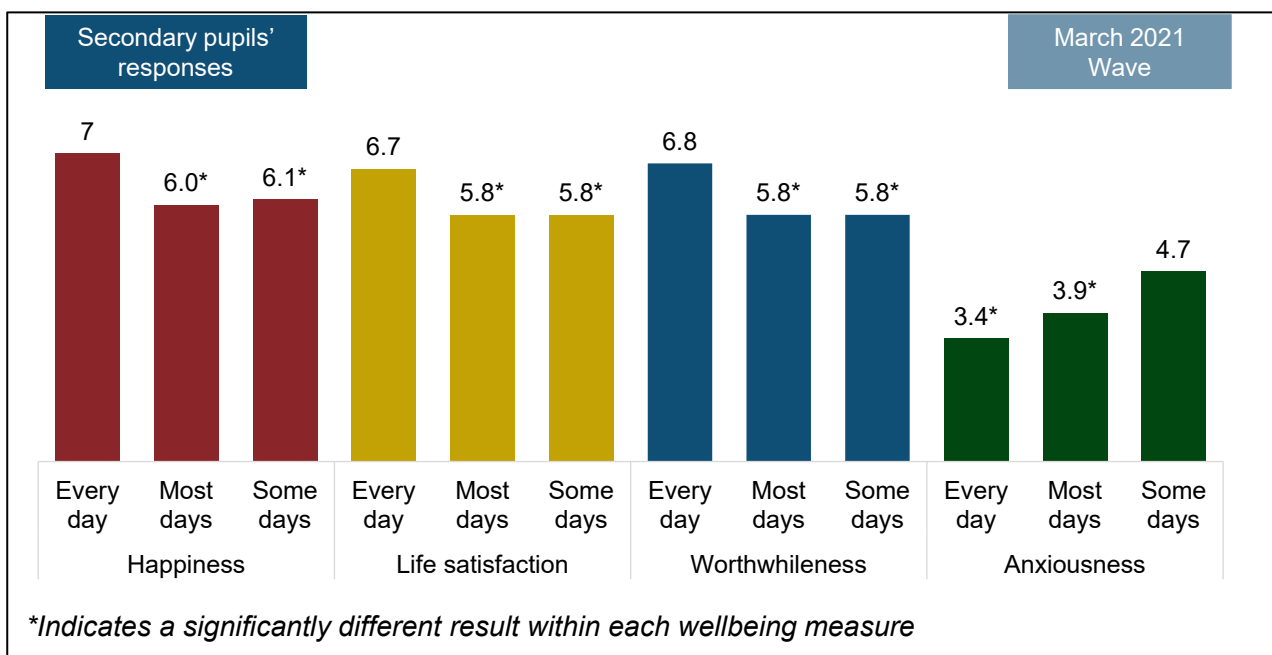
Source: PPP Late November Wave 5, December Wave 6 and March Wave 8, L64: "Overall do you think being back at school or college has had a positive or negative impact on your mood and mental health?" All pupils who have attended school this term (n=1,599 / n=1,540 / n=1,505)

As seen in previous waves:

- Male pupils were much more likely to be positive about the impact of attending school on their mood and mental health (67%) than female pupils (56%).
- Older pupils (years 11-13) were more likely to report that being back at school or college had a negative impact on their mood and mental health than younger pupils (years 7-10) (19% vs 12%).

Impact of physical attendance at school on pupils' mental health can also be analysed using the wellbeing measures reported earlier in the chapter. As shown in Figure 32, pupils who had physically attended school every day in the past two weeks were more likely to give a higher mean score for happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, and a lower anxiousness mean score compared to who had only attended most or some days. The same pattern was seen regardless of how long the pupil's school had been open to them. Whilst the findings suggest these factors are linked in some way, it is not clear how they are linked and it is possible that there are also other factors which relate to this pattern.

**Figure 32. Pupils' views of their own happiness, life satisfaction, worthwhileness and anxiousness, by physical school attendance (mean scores)**



## Social worker support

In March 2021, all parents and secondary pupils were asked whether they were supported by a social worker. Among the parents and pupils surveyed, 2% of parents said their child was supported by a social worker, a small yet significant increase compared to 1% of the panel who reported this in August 2020. 3% of secondary pupils said they were supported by a social worker in March 2021, the same proportion as in August 2020.

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or,
- Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools (or mainstream post-16 institutions).

Many children and young people who have SEND may also have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’.

A pupil receives SEN Support when extra or different help is given from that provided as part of the school’s usual arrangements. A pupil has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan when a formal assessment has been made.<sup>33</sup> A document is in place that sets out the child’s needs and the extra help they should receive.

Children and young people with SEND may have specific specialist support needs, including as set out in their EHC plan. Specialist services include for example: Educational Psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), specialist teachers (e.g., with a mandatory qualification for children with hearing and vision impairment) and therapists (including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists).

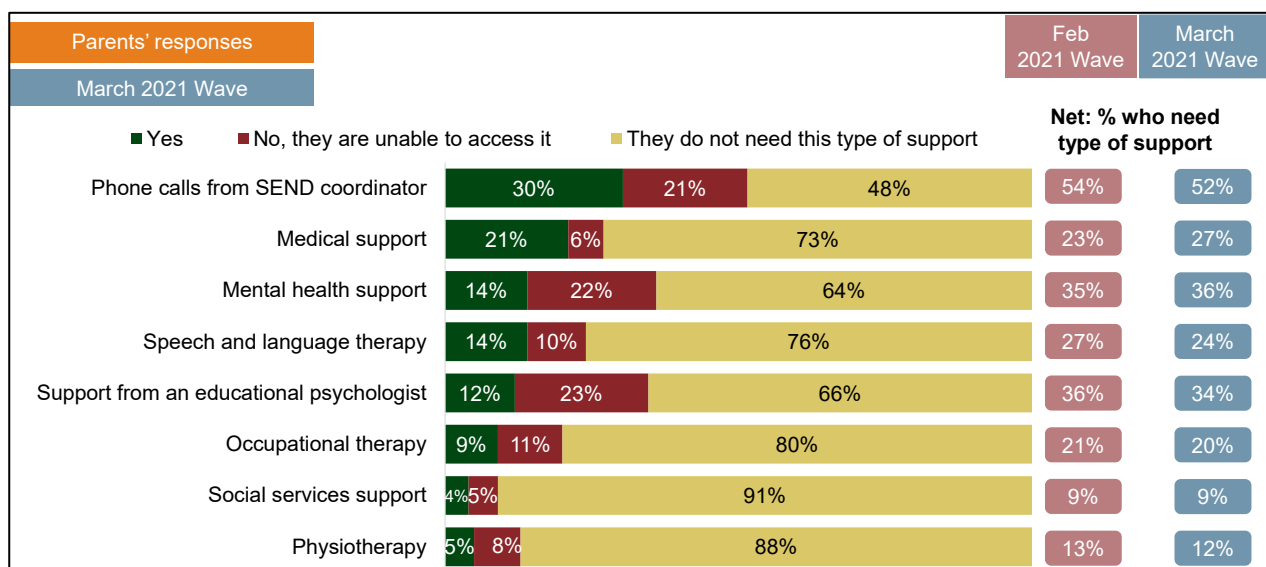
In March 2021, 17% of parents reported their child to have SEND compared to 15% in February 2021. Of these parents, 43% reported their child not being able to access the support they need in March 2021, down from 52% in February 2021. Of these parents, the most common types of support currently being received by their child were phone calls from a SEND coordinator (30%) and medical support (21%), as shown in Figure 33.

Around a quarter (23%) of parents of pupils with SEND reported being unable to access support from an education psychologist and 22% were not able to access mental health support. In each of these cases this amounted to more than half of those whose child needed this support. One in five (21%) were not able to access phone calls from a SEND coordinator equating to around two-fifths who felt their child needed this support.

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<sup>33</sup> See Glossary for full definition.

**Figure 33. Parent views of the extent to which children considered to have SEND were able to access the required support**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 N12: "Is [PUPILNAME] currently receiving any of the following types of specialist support?" Parents who consider their child to have SEND (n=520).

The types of support needed in March 2021 were not significantly different compared to February 2021.

Similar to December 2020 and February 2021, parents of primary age children were more likely than parents of secondary aged children to report their child needing speech and language therapy and not being able to access it (12% vs. 7%).

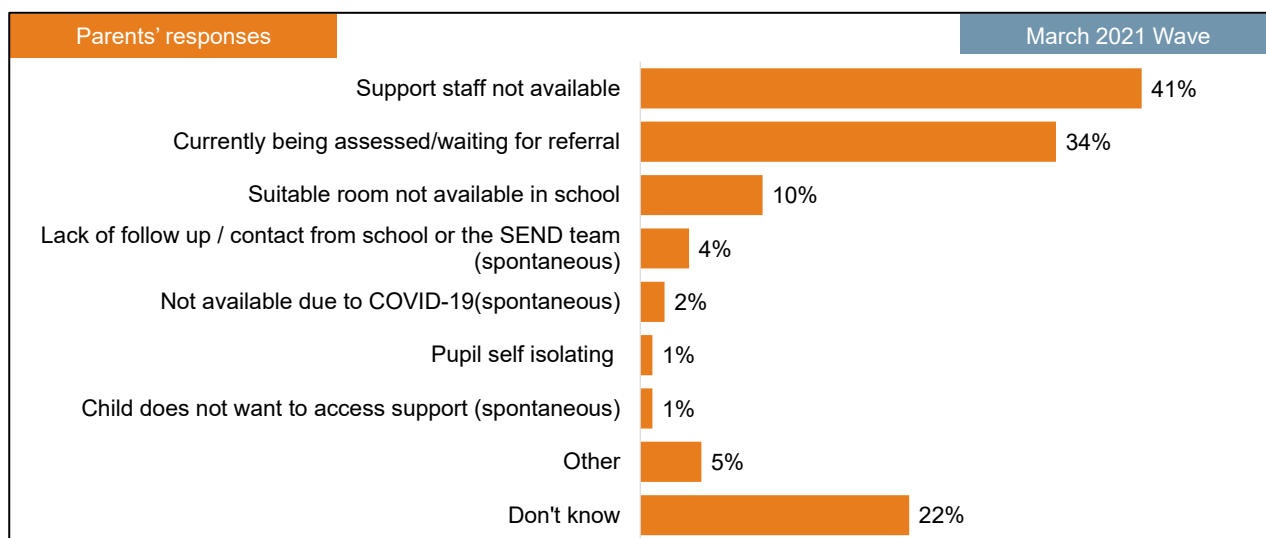
As found in February 2021, parents of pupils with SEND who were also eligible for FSM were more likely to report not being able to access occupational therapy (although needing to), compared to those pupils with SEND but not FSM eligible (14% vs. 7%). In addition, in March 2021, parents of pupils with SEND who were also eligible for FSM were more likely to report not being able to access medical support (although needing to), compared to those pupils with SEND but not FSM eligible (29% vs. 18%).

## Reasons for issues in accessing specialist support

In March 2021, parents who experienced issues accessing support for their child with SEND were asked why. As shown in Figure 34, around two-in-five (41%) parents reported this was due to support staff not being available, followed by currently being assessed/waiting for SEND referral (34%). Lack of support staff availability was the main reason given in both December 2020 (37%) and March 2021, however lack of access to

a suitable rooms/facility has become more of an issue since December 2020, rising from 10% then to 17% in March 2021<sup>34</sup>.

**Figure 34. Parent views on why child is not able to access specialist support**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 N13: “Why is [PUPILNAME] currently unable to access this support?” Parents who consider their child to have SEND and need support but cannot access it (n=235).

<sup>34</sup> Comparison between waves were made between December 2020 and March 2021 as these two times periods were most similar in terms of schools being open for all pupils, and similar response codes used in both surveys.

## Childcare

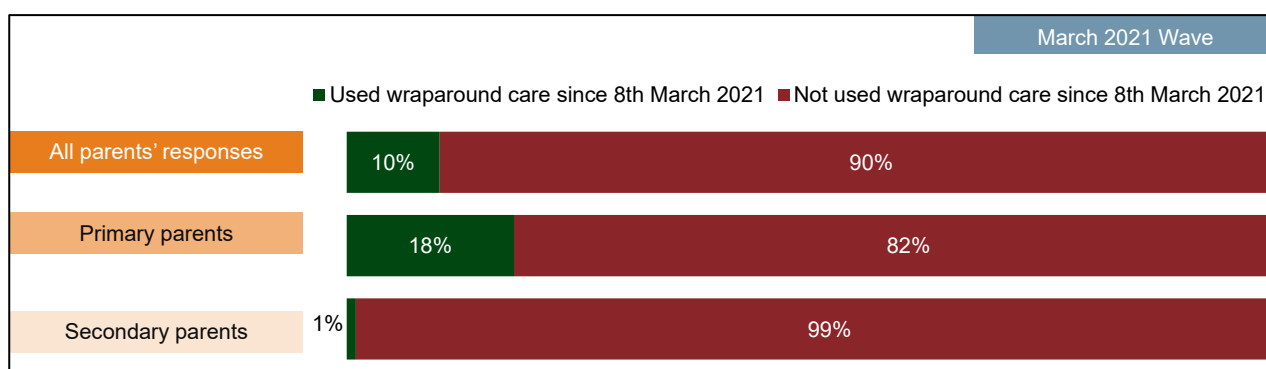
In March 2021, parents were asked about their use of wraparound childcare for their child since school's reopened to the majority of children on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. They were also asked about their intentions for childcare in the upcoming Easter 2021 holidays. These questions build the evidence base on the proportion of parents / carers able to access wraparound childcare relative to the demand for it, and the supply available. This was particularly significant during the November 2020 lockdown and the early part of the 5<sup>th</sup> January - 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 lockdown. Such ongoing data collection enables the department to monitor the sufficiency picture following the wider reopening of the wraparound childcare sector on 8<sup>th</sup> March, in particular for holiday periods when schools are closed.

### Wraparound care since 8<sup>th</sup> March

In March 2021, parents were asked if they had used before or after school wraparound care since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (the date schools reopened to the majority of pupils).<sup>35</sup> One-in-ten (10%) parents reported that they had used wraparound childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March, 90% had not.

In February 2021, parents were asked whether their child attended wraparound care in the Autumn 2020 term. 11% of parents reported their child had, similar to the 10% who reported using it currently in March 2021. As shown in Figure 35, one-in-five (18%) of primary parents had used wraparound care since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, and only 1% of secondary parents had.

**Figure 35. Parent's level of use of wraparound childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 M31: "Has [PUPILNAME] used either before or after school wraparound childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March?" All parents / primary parents / secondary parents (n=3,084 / 1,537 / 1,547).

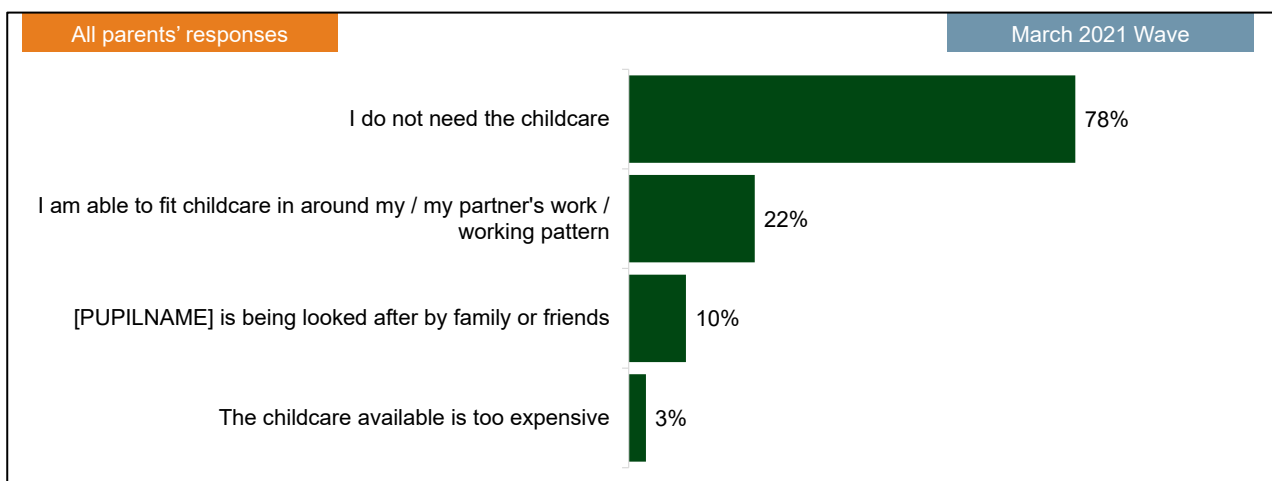
<sup>35</sup> The fieldwork period for this wave was 22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The following subgroups of parents were more likely to have used wraparound childcare for their child since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021:

- Parents of non-SEND pupils compared to parents of pupils with SEND (11% vs. 7%)
- Parents not eligible for FSM, compared to parents of pupils who are eligible (11% vs. 7%).
- Employed parents compared to unemployed parents (12% vs. 5%)<sup>36</sup>
- Parents with key worker status, compared to those without key worker status (16% vs. 8%).<sup>37</sup>
- Parents in the highest household income bracket (£100,000 or more household income per year), compared to average (16% vs. 10% average).<sup>38</sup>

As shown in Figure 35, the majority (90%) of parents had not used wraparound childcare for their child since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The main reason given by parents for not using wraparound childcare in this time period was that they did not need it (78%), followed by being able to fit childcare around their / their partner's work / working pattern (22%). Secondary parents were more likely than primary parents to report not needing childcare (85% vs. 71%), whereas primary parents were more likely than secondary parents to report that they were able to fit in their childcare in around their / their partner's work / working pattern (26% vs. 17%).

**Figure 36. Parents' reasons for not using wraparound childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021**



<sup>36</sup> Employment was self-reported by parents upon joining the panel in August 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Key worker status was self-reported by parents upon joining the panel in August 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Household income was self-reported by parents upon joining the panel in August 2020.

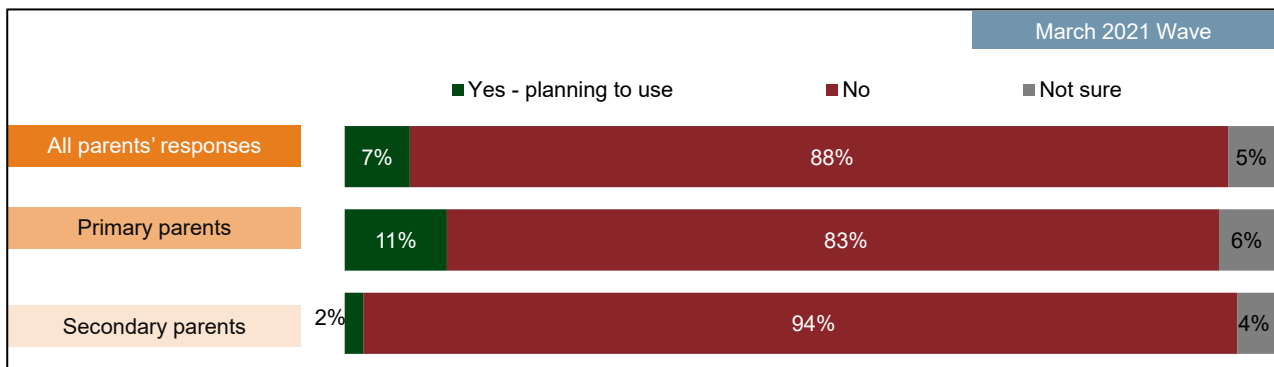


Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 M32: “Why hasn’t [PUPILNAME] attended wraparound (before and after school) childcare since 8<sup>th</sup> March?” Parents who said they have not used wraparound childcare (n=2788). Codes less than 3% not shown.

## Childcare in the Easter holidays 2021

Parents were asked about their plans for school age childcare (including wraparound care, out-of-school settings and holiday clubs) in the upcoming Easter 2021 holidays. Nearly nine-in-ten (88%) parents were not planning to use any of the childcare specified in the Easter holidays (comparable to the 90% of parents who had not used wraparound childcare in termtime since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021). Similarly to the findings reported regarding use of wraparound care since 8<sup>th</sup> March, primary parents were more likely to be planning to use it than secondary parents (11% vs. 2%).

**Figure 37. Parent’s intended use of school age childcare in the Easter 2021 holidays**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 M33: “Thinking about the upcoming Easter holidays, is it likely [PUPILNAME] will attend any wraparound care, out-of-school settings, or holiday clubs?” All parents / primary parents / secondary parents (n=3,084 / 1,537 / 1,547).

The following subgroups of parents were more likely to report intending to use school age Easter holiday childcare:

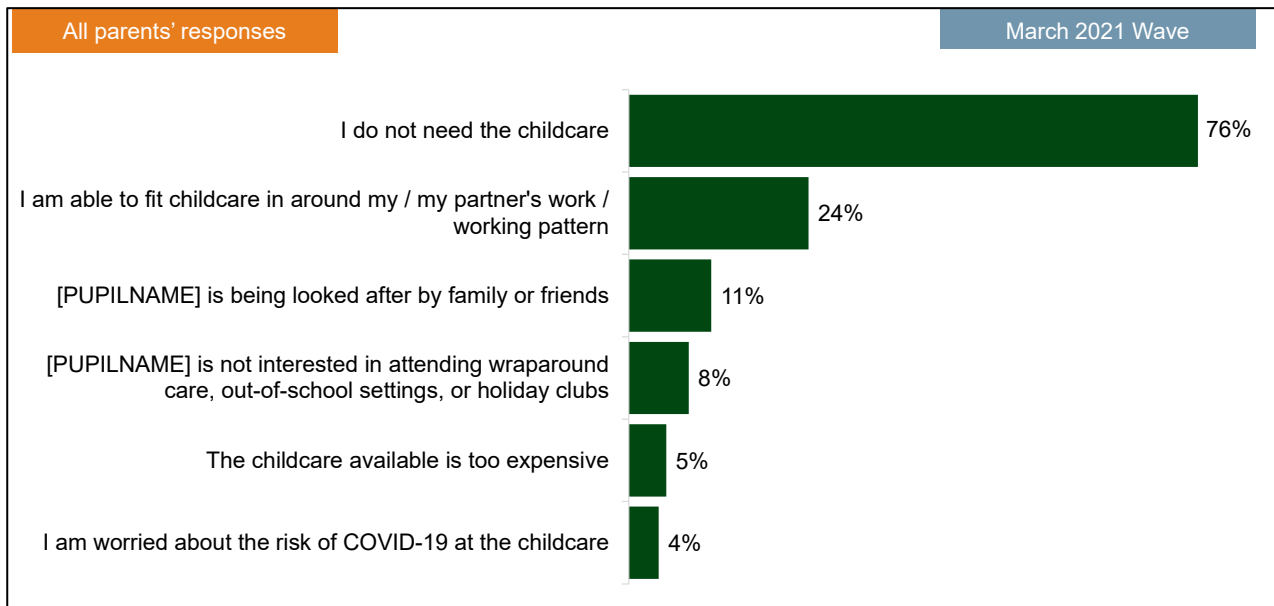
- Employed parents compared to unemployed parents (9% vs. 4%).
- Parents in the highest income bracket (more than £100,000 a year household income) compared to average (15% vs. 7%).
- Parents of non-FSM eligible pupils, compared to FSM eligible pupils (8% vs. 4%).

As shown in Figure 37, the majority of parents were not planning to use school age childcare<sup>39</sup> in the Easter holidays. Similarly to the reasons as to why parents were not using wraparound care in term time (since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021), the main reason given for not

<sup>39</sup> Including wraparound care, out-of-school settings and holiday clubs

planning to use school age childcare in the Easter holidays was that they did not need it (76%), followed by the fact that they were able to fit in their childcare in around their / their partner's work / working pattern (24%).

**Figure 38. Parents' reasons for not intending to use school age childcare in the Easter 2021 holidays**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 M34: "Why won't [PUPILNAME] attend wraparound care, out-of-school settings, or holiday clubs during the Easter holidays?" All parents who said their child won't be attending wraparound childcare in the Easter holidays (n=2752). Codes less than >3% not shown.

## Secondary pupils' recent activities

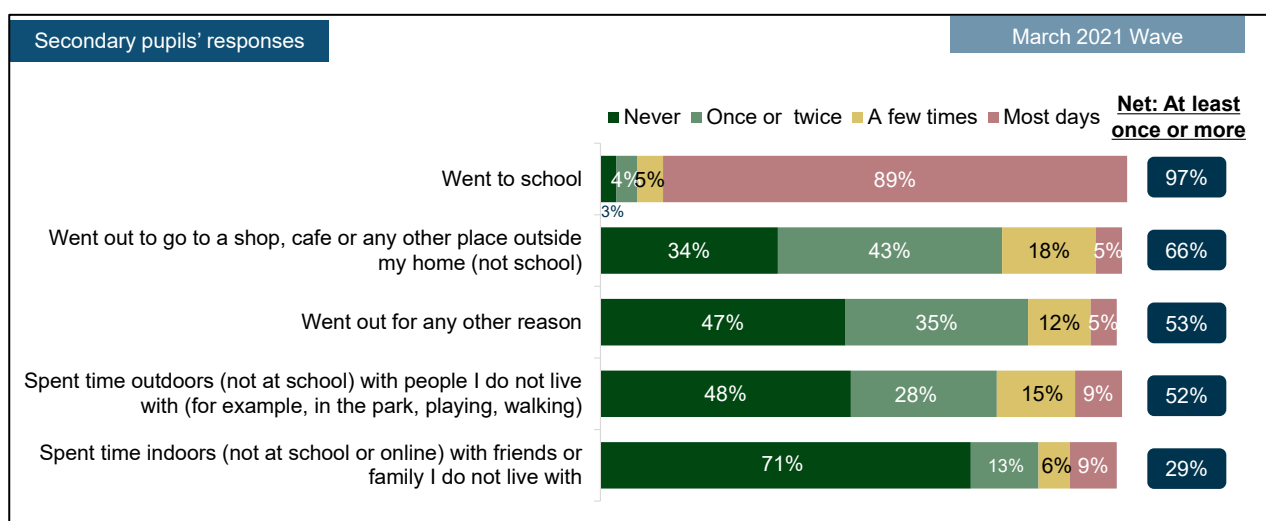
In March 2021, secondary pupils were asked how often, if at all, they had done five specific activities in the previous seven days. This question is in line with a Public Health England survey measure. The activities surveyed were:

- Been to school.
- Been out to a shop or café (or anywhere else outside their home).
- Spent time outdoors with people they do not live with (for example to the park, for a walk).
- Spent time indoors (not at school or online) with friends or family they do not live with.
- Went out for any other reason.

For context, these questions were asked between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, whilst England was in a national lockdown, and the majority of schools had reopened to all pupils.

Going to school was the most commonly reported activity, which 97% of pupils had done at least once in the previous seven days. As shown in Figure 39, two thirds (66%) of pupils had been to a shop or café (or any other place outside their home) at least once or more in the previous 7 days. Around half (52%) had spent time outdoors, such as in the park or on a walk, with people they did not live with. Three-in-ten (29%) had spent time indoors with people they did not live with (excluding being at school).

**Figure 39. Regularity of secondary pupils doing certain activities**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 AD14: "Thinking about the last 7 days, how often, if at all, have you done each of the following?" All pupils (n=1531).

## Spending time in public indoor places

Of pupils who had been to a shop, café, or any other place outside the home (excluding school), there was no significant difference by any subgroup of note.

## Spending time outdoors

Around half (48%) of all pupils had not spent time outside (e.g., in the park/on a walk) with people they did not live with (excluding being at school). Year 13 pupils were more likely than average to have reported never doing this, compared to average (55% versus 48% of all secondary pupils), this was the only difference by pupil year group. BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils not to have spent time with people from out of their household outdoors in the last 7 days (58% vs. 48%).

Pupils who reported lower scores (0-4) on the happiness metrics and life satisfaction metrics were also more likely to report they had not been outside, with other people they did not live with, in the last 7 days, compared to the average across all pupils (low happiness 55% vs 48% and low life satisfaction 54% vs 48%).

## Spending time indoors

Three-in-ten (29%) pupils reported spending at least some time in the previous 7 days indoors (not at school) with friends or family which they did not live with. Of those that reported doing this, as shown in Figure 39, it was most often once or twice that this had happened (13% of all pupils). However, 9% of all pupils reported doing this most days in the last 7 days. It is not possible to know whether the scenarios which pupils responded about involved breaking of COVID-19 guidance, however the question was specific in asking pupils to not think about situations online or in school.

The following subgroups were more likely to have reported spending at least some time indoors (not at school or online) with friends or family they do not live with:

- Younger pupils (year 7-10) compared to older pupils (year 11-13) (30% vs 26%)
- Pupils living in urban areas compared to pupils living in rural areas (30% vs 23%)
- Pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM), compared to pupils who are not (35% vs. 28%)
- Pupils supported by a social worker, compared to those who are not (59% vs. 27%)<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> As self-reported by pupils in March 2021. The base size of those supported by a social worker is n=38.

- Pupils who had attended school between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March (during the national lockdown, in which only specific pupils were eligible to attend school), compared to those who did not attend during this time (36% vs. 26%)
- Pupils who were face covering exempt, compared to those who were not (43% vs. 27%)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The number of pupils who self-reporting in March 2021 that they were exempt from wearing a face covering was n=87

## Rapid asymptomatic testing

As part of the strategy for re-opening of schools, the government requested that schools helped to implement a programme of mass testing for secondary school pupils. Pupils were asked to take three COVID-19 tests administered at school in the period immediately following the return to school and to administer two tests a week at home after that.

In March 2021, pupils and parents were asked about their experiences and views of COVID-19 testing.

### Participation in rapid asymptomatic testing amongst secondary pupils

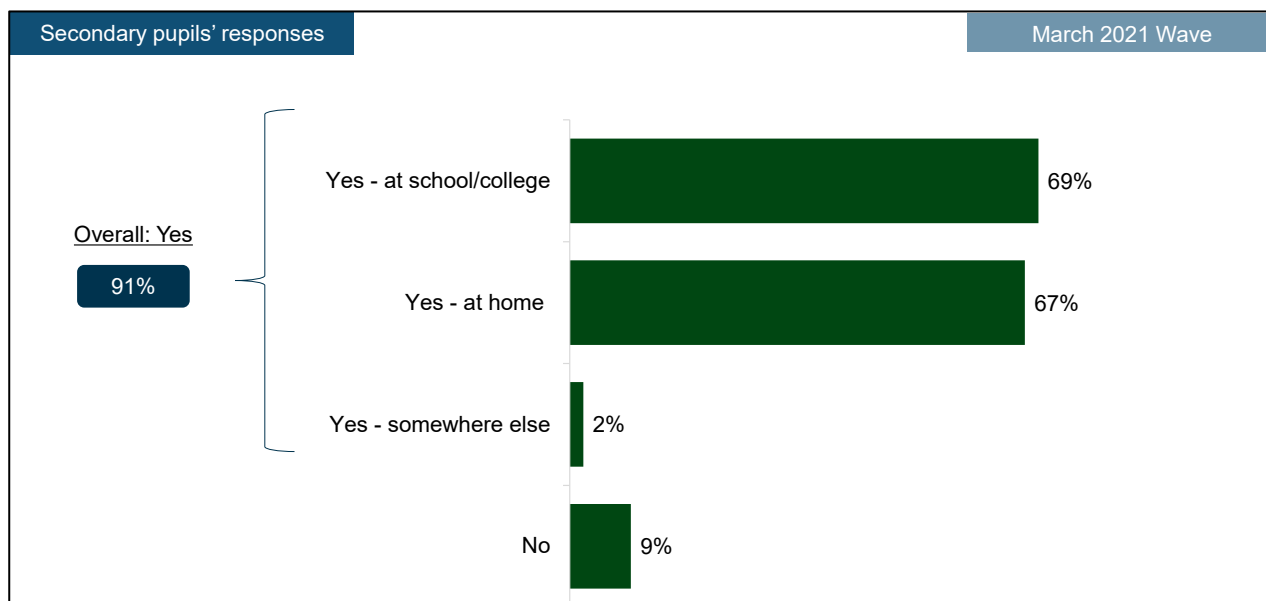
Secondary pupils and parents of secondary pupils were asked if they/their child had taken any COVID-19 tests in the last seven days.<sup>42 43</sup> As shown in Figure 40, the vast majority (91%) of pupils said they had taken a test in the last seven days. Overall, around two-thirds of pupils reported that they had taken a test at school/college (69%) and a similar proportion had taken one at home (67%). A similar majority (92%) of parents also said their child had taken a COVID-19 test in the last 7 days, with two-thirds reporting their child had taken a test at school/college (68%) and at home (68%). Pupils (and parents of pupils) were able to select more than one response, if they had for example taken a test in the last seven days at both home and at school/college

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<sup>42</sup> Secondary pupils were surveyed on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 26<sup>th</sup> 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Parents were surveyed on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021.

**Figure 40. Whether secondary pupils had taken a COVID-19 test in the last 7 days**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 AD12: “During the last 7 days, have you taken any test(s) to see if you have COVID-19 / coronavirus?” All pupils (n=1531). Prefer not to say, less than 1%.

Differences amongst pupils included:

- Older pupils (year 11-13) were more likely than younger pupils (year 7-10) to report not taking a test in the last 7 days (12% vs. 8%).
- BAME pupils were more likely to report not having taken a test in the last 7 days, compared to White pupils (12% vs. 8%). Of BAME pupils, 56% had taken a test at home compared to 71% of White pupils, however BAME pupils were more likely than White pupils to have taken a test in school (73% vs. 67%).
- Pupils with SEND and pupils eligible for FSM were twice as likely as their non-SEND/non-FSM eligible counterparts to have not taken a COVID-19 test in the last 7 days (pupil with SEND 16% vs. non-SEND pupils 8%, FSM pupils 18% vs. non-FSM pupils 7%).
- Pupils that had attended school every day in the last two weeks (prior to being surveyed) were more likely than average to have had a test in the last 7 days (94% vs. 91% average).

Compared to parents whose child had been in school every day or most days in the previous two weeks, parents of pupils who had only been in school for *some* days in last two weeks were far more likely to report that their child had not taken a test in the last 7 days (31% vs. 6% everyday, 11% most days).

Parents of pupils with SEND (13%), with an EHCP plan (29%) and parents of pupils eligible for FSM (13%) were also more likely to report their child had not been tested for

COVID-19 in the last 7 days, compared to parents of non-SEND, no EHCP or non- FSM pupils (7% respectively).

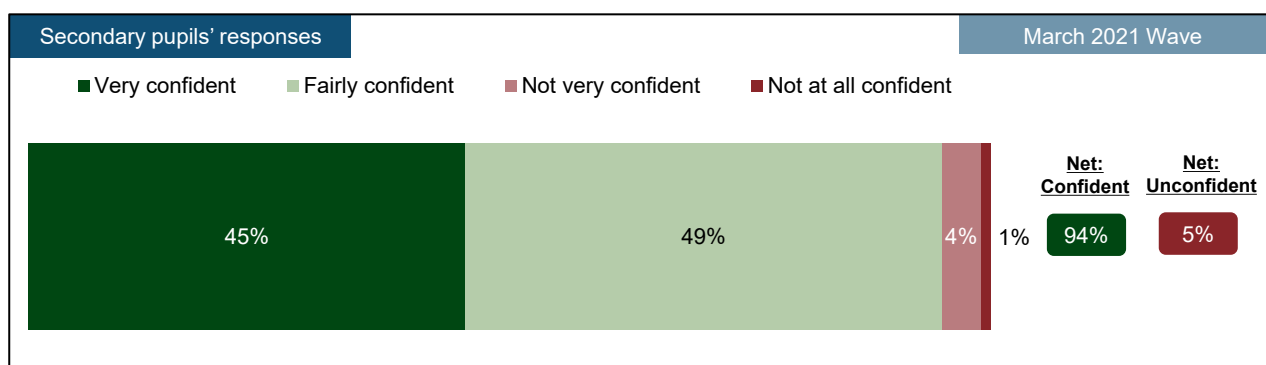
## Secondary pupils COVID-19 testing results

Just 1% of all secondary pupils surveyed had received a positive COVID-19 test (from the test they did within the previous 7 days). Nine-in-ten (89%) had received a negative result, and 9% of all pupils had not been tested. There was little significant difference between subgroups.

## Confidence in conducting a COVID-19 test at home amongst secondary pupils

As reported in Figure 40, around two-thirds (67%) of secondary pupils had conducted a COVID-19 test at home in the 7 days prior to being surveyed. Nearly all (94%) of these pupils were confident in conducting the test at home, as shown in Figure 41.

**Figure 41. Secondary pupils’ confidence in conducting at home COVID-19 tests**



Source: PPP March 2021 Wave 8 AD16: “How confident, if at all, are you conducting COVID-19 / coronavirus tests at home?” All pupils who have conducted COVID-19 tests at home (n=1035). Prefer not to say, less than 1%. Don't know 1%.

Older pupils (year 11-13) were more likely to report being *very* confident conducting the COVID-19 test at home than younger pupils (year 7-10) (50% vs. 42%), as were BAME pupils compared to White pupils (52% vs. 44%).

Whilst just 5% of pupils reported overall being unconfident, this was more prevalent amongst some subgroups:

- Pupils with SEND compared to non-SEND pupils (9% vs. 4%)
- Pupils eligible for FSM compared to non-FSM pupils (10% vs. 4%)



- Pupils who reported that they were exempt from wearing a face covering, compared to those did not report this (14% vs. 4%)

## Secondary pupils' concerns about mass testing

In March 2021, all secondary pupils were asked if they had any concerns about taking a COVID-19 test in school.

Pupils were less concerned about COVID-19 testing in schools in March 2021 (once most had experienced testing), compared to in February 2021 (when most pupils had still not returned to school).

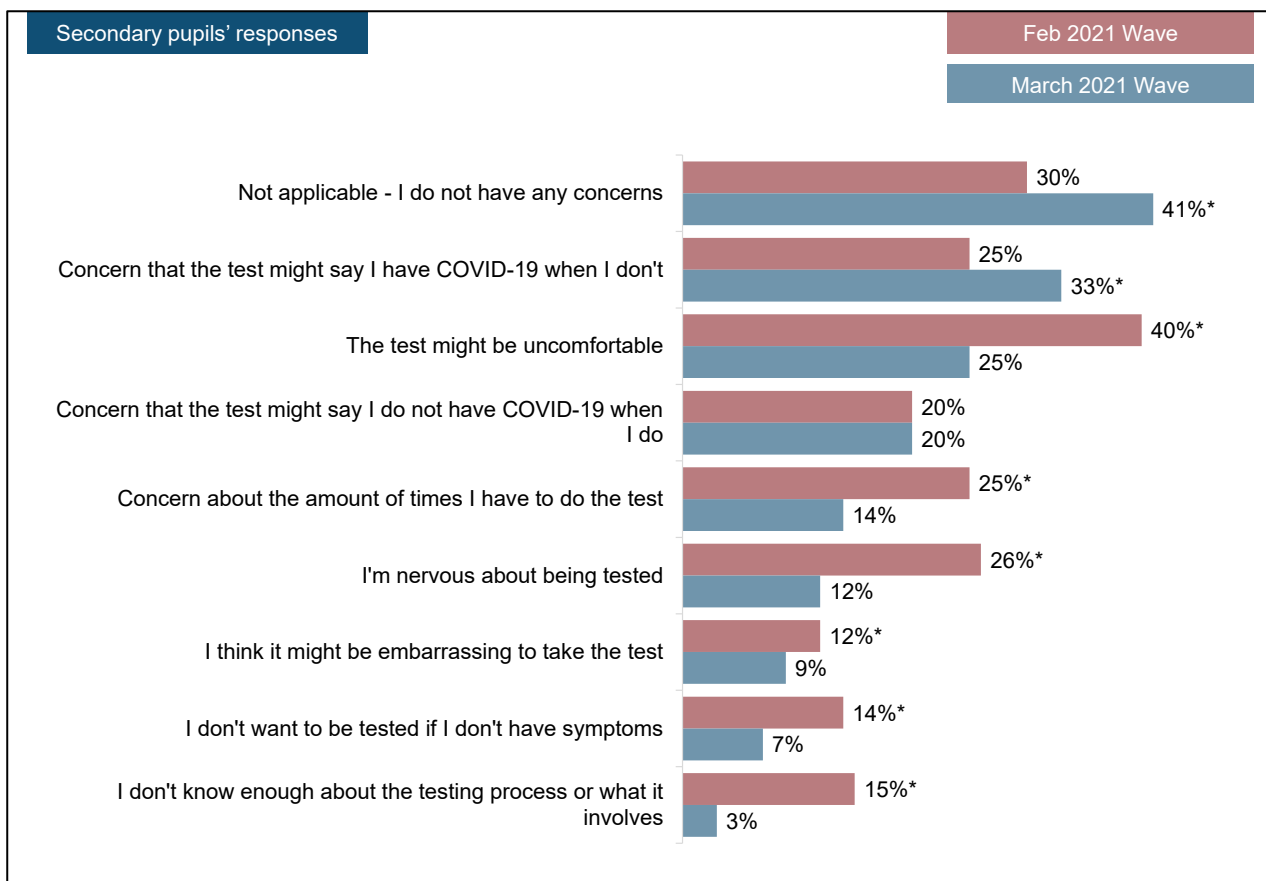
Whilst in February 2021, two thirds (67%) of pupils held at least one concern about being tested for Covid-19 at school, in March 2021 this fell to 57%. In March 2021, two-in-five (41%) pupils had no concerns about taking a COVID-19 test in school, a significant increase from the 30% of secondary pupils who reported having no concerns when asked in February 2021. As shown in Figure 42, nearly all of the suggested concerns were reported by fewer pupils in March than in February.

The most common concern in March 2021 was that the that the test might not be reliable (38%)<sup>44</sup>, followed by the fact that the test might be uncomfortable (25%). The proportion worried that the test might be uncomfortable had fallen from 40% in February 2021.

### **Figure 42. Secondary pupils' concerns about being tested for COVID-19 in school**

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<sup>44</sup> Combining "the test saying they had COVID-19 when they did not" and "the test saying they did not have COVID-19 when they did"



Source: PPP February 2021 and March 2021 Wave 7 / 8 AD10: "Which, if any, of the following concerns do you have around taking a COVID-19 test in school?" All pupils (n=1537 / n=1531). Prefer not to say (Feb 2021 3%, March 2021 2%). Other (Feb 2021 1%, March 2021 1%). Only codes above 3% shown. An \* indicates a statistically significant higher percentage between February and March 2021

Older pupils (year 11-13) continued to be slightly more concerned about the reliability of the test than younger pupils (year 7-10) (43% vs. 35%), whilst younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to report being nervous about the test (13% vs. 10%) or being concerned that the test could be uncomfortable (28% vs. 18%).

Male pupils were more likely to report not being concerned about COVID-19 testing at school, compared to female pupils (45% vs. 36%). This was also the case in February 2021. The test potentially being embarrassing, and the reliability of the test were greater concerns for female pupils than their male peers (14% vs. 6% and 44% vs. 33%).

In February 2021, there were numerous significant differences between White and BAME pupils, however in March 2021 there were no differences by pupil ethnicity.

Pupils who were not entitled to FSM were more likely to report having no concerns (43%), compared to pupils who were eligible for FSM (29%). The main concern of FSM

eligible pupils was that the test might be uncomfortable (35% vs. 23% of non-FSM pupils) and being nervous about being tested (18% vs. 11% of non-FSM pupils).

Pupils who reported in March 2021 that they had been tested (either at home, school or elsewhere, in the last 7 days) were less likely than those who had not been tested to have concerns.

Of those who had been tested and received a negative result, four-in-ten (43%) reported having no concerns, whilst only a quarter (25%) of those who had not yet been tested reporting no concerns. This could suggest that upon experiencing the testing process, pupils become less concerned about the process, or potentially that those who are more concerned about testing do not participate. For example, of those that had not been tested (in the last 7 days), their main concerns around testing were the test being uncomfortable (34% vs. 24% of those tested negative) and being nervous about being tested (28% vs 10% of those who received a negative test).

## Glossary

**BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.** Includes all ethnicities other than White and Unclassified.

**CIN – Children in Need.** This is a broad definition spanning a wide range of children and adolescents, in need of varying types of support and intervention, for a variety of reasons. A child is defined as ‘in need’ under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, where:

- They are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for them of services by a local authority.
- Their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for them of such services; or
- They are disabled.

**EHC Plan – Education Health and Care plan.** This is a legal document that describes a child or young person’s special educational, health and social care needs and explains the extra help that will be given to meet those needs and how that help will support the child or young person,

**FSM – Free School Meal.** Eligibility for FSMs is used a proxy for socioeconomic status. Pupils eligible for FSMs were considered to be living in greater socioeconomic deprivation than those pupils who were not eligible for FSMs.

**Key worker/critical worker** – Parents whose work is critical to COVID-19 and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the government guidance. Children of critical workers and vulnerable children have been able to still access schools or educational settings during periods when they have been closed to the majority of pupils. The term ‘critical worker’ has also been used to describe these workers. This report uses the term ‘key worker’ throughout as this reflects the wording used within the surveys.

**SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability.** A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

Many children and young people who have SEND may also have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision, they will also be covered by the SEN definition.

For more detail, please see the [SEND Code of Practice](#).



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For any enquiries regarding this publication, contact us at:

[omnibus.surveys@education.gov.uk](mailto:omnibus.surveys@education.gov.uk) or [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

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