



Remote Learning: the Digital Divide

LAPTOPS AND DEVICES FOR REMOTE LEARNING

• In the first week of the January 2021 lockdown, just 10% of teachers overall report that all their students have adequate access to a device for remote learning (Figure 1). While 17% report that more than 1 in 5 of their students don't have such access.

• There are substantial differences between the state and private sector, with just 5% of teachers in state schools reporting that all their students have a device, compared to 54% at private schools.

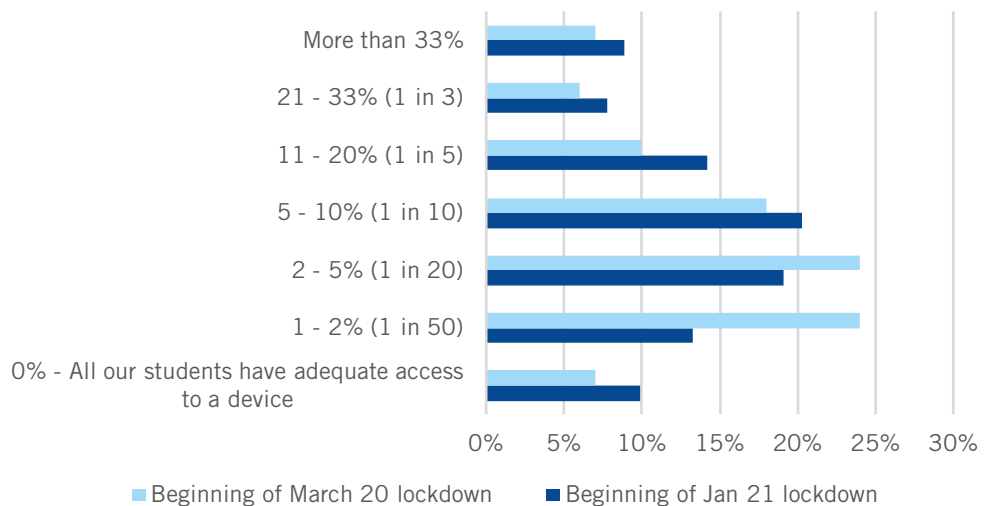
• Inequality may have actually become worse since the beginning of the March lockdown. In the private sector, 54% now report that all their children have devices, compared to 42% in the last lockdown, whereas in state schools it rose only slightly from 4% to 5%. At the other end of the spectrum, the number in the state system reporting more than 1 in 5 lack access has risen from 13% to 18%.

• While 32% of teachers in the most deprived schools report more than 1 in 5 lacking devices, this is just 5% at the most affluent state schools and even lower, 3%, at private schools (Figure 2). The gap between private schools and the most deprived state schools has actually widened in the time since March 2020.

• While the government has embarked on a major programme of laptop distribution since the spring

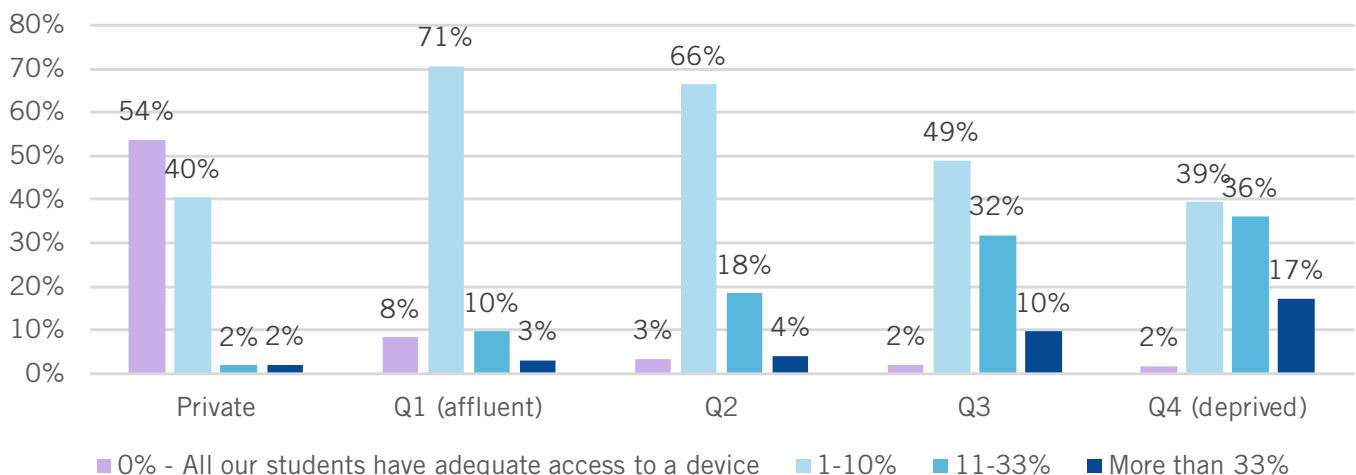
of 2020, this data shows how steep the challenge remains, particularly for the most deprived pupils. Government expectations on remote learning have risen in the current lockdown, and schools are likely to have better information on home circumstances for remote learning, which may be reflected in the increased sense from teachers that many pupils don't have access to adequate devices to support the required level of learning.

Figure 1. Proportion of a teacher's class who lack a device for remote learning, all schools: March 2020 and January 2021



Source: Teacher Tapp survey of teachers in England, January 7th 2021, March 25th 2020

Figure 2. Proportion of a teacher's class who lack a device for learning Jan 2021, by deprivation level of school



Source: Teacher Tapp survey of teachers in England, January 7th 2021

INTERNET ACCESS

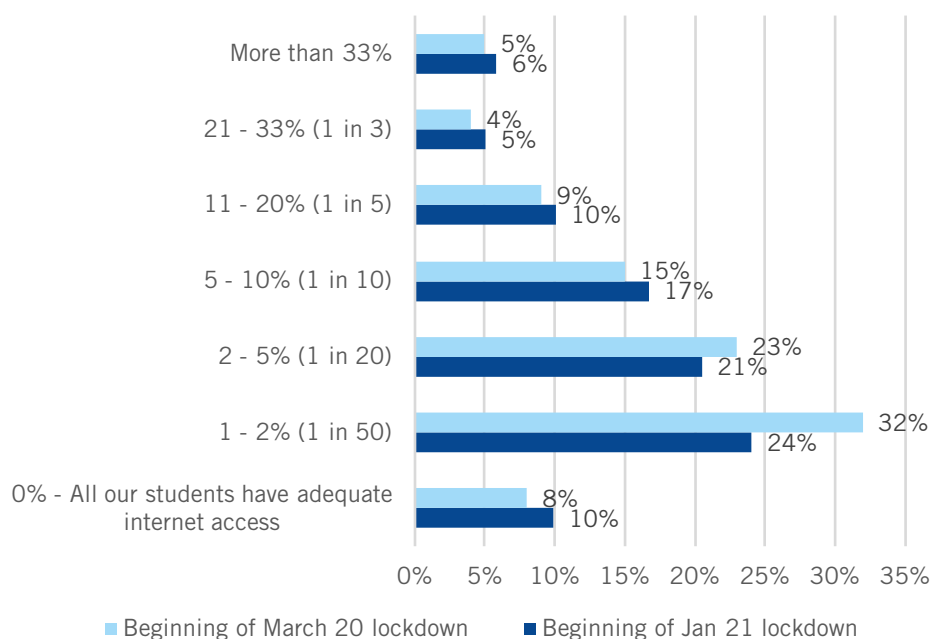
- A similar number of teachers (just 10% overall) report that all of their students have access to the internet. However, again this obscures a substantial difference between the state and private sector, where 51% of teachers in private schools report that all of their students have internet access, compared to 5% at state schools. This gap has grown since March 2020, when the figures were 38% and 6% respectively.
- 11% of teachers overall report that more than 1 in 5 of their pupils don't have adequate internet access for learning, slightly more than the 9% who reported this in March 2020. (Figure 3)
- 21% of those in the most deprived schools report more than 1 in 5 pupils lack internet, compared to 3% in the most affluent state schools, and just 1% at private schools. (Figure 4)
- Again, the situation has not improved substantially since March last year, and if anything, appears to have worsened slightly, potentially reflecting the more intensive demands of online learning this term.

SUPPLY OF DEVICES

- At the beginning of the new national school shutdown in January, almost half (47%) of state school senior leaders report their school has only been able to supply half of their pupils or fewer with the laptops they have needed.
- Just 18% report that they have been able to supply devices to all of their pupils who have needed one. A further third say they have been able to address most of the need.

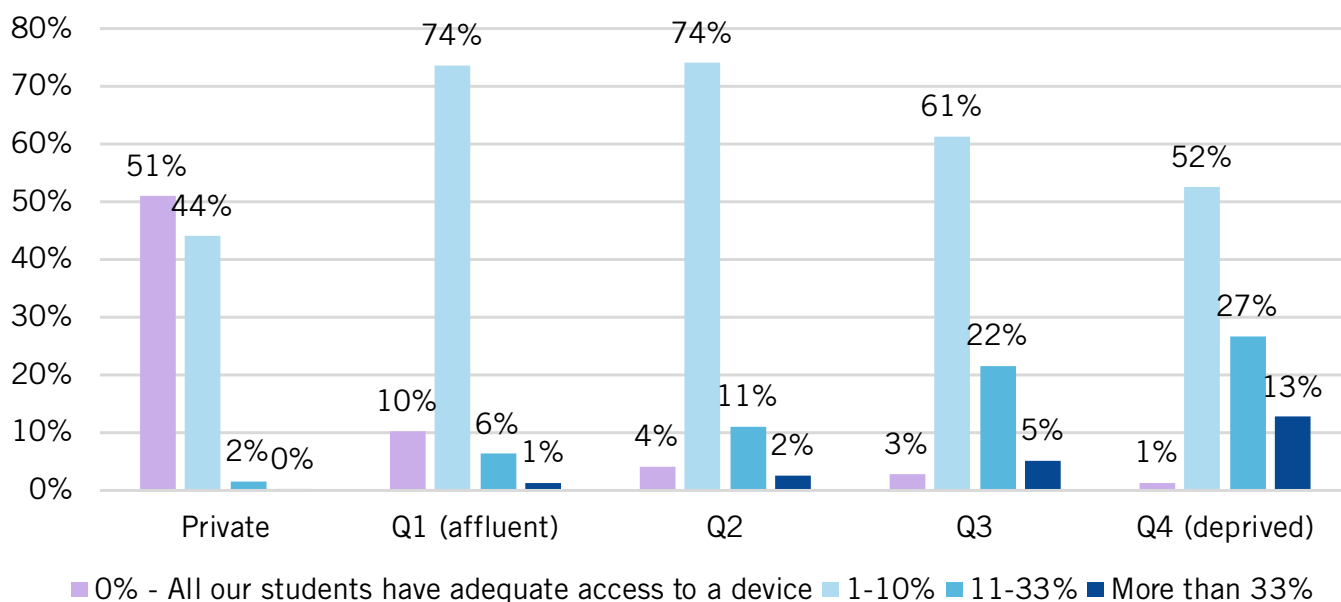
- In the most deprived schools, 56% of leaders report they haven't been able to help half or more of their pupils who needed devices. This compares with 39% at the most affluent state schools. In contrast, virtually no private schools reported such an issue. (Figure 5)
- Primary schools are also encountering greater challenges, with 55% of state primaries reporting being unable to supply half or more of demand compared to 30% of

Figure 3. Proportion of a teacher's class who lack adequate access to the internet, all schools: March 2020 and January 2021



Source: Teacher Tapp survey of teachers in England, January 7th 2021, March 25th 2020

Figure 4. Proportion of a teacher's class who lack adequate access to the internet Jan 2021, by deprivation level of school



Source: Teacher Tapp survey of teachers in England, January 7th 2021

secondaries. (Figure 6)

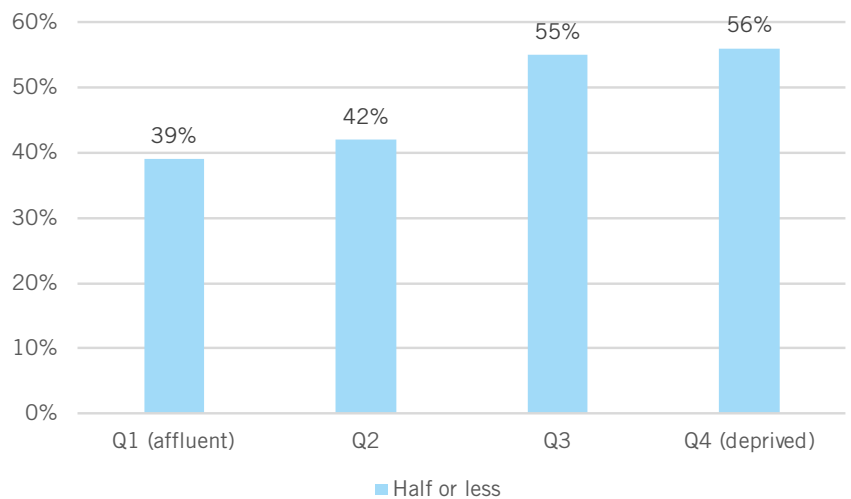
- As the government roll-out of laptops stalled in the autumn, many schools have used their own resources to address the issue. Two thirds (66%) of senior leaders in state schools reported needing to source IT equipment for disadvantaged pupils themselves while waiting for government support.
- This is 72% at secondary schools, and 61% at primary schools. There were no significant differences by levels of deprivation, with schools across the disadvantage spectrum stepping in at similar rates. While a similar question last June indicated that schools in affluent areas were more equipped to step in, it is positive that this pattern appears to have changed.

METHODOLOGY

Teacher Tapp surveyed up to 6,208 teachers in schools across England on 7th January 2021. Survey responses are weighted to represent the national teaching population, according to school funding, phase and region, along with teacher age, gender and level of seniority. Around 1,500 school senior leaders were also surveyed on the 8th and 9th January 2021.

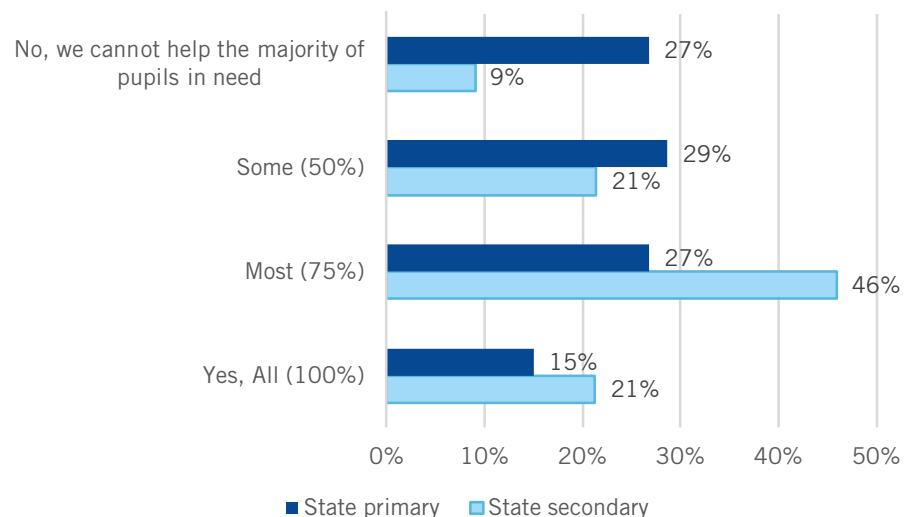
Comparisons with March 2020 are taken from the [Sutton Trust's 'School Shutdown' Impact Brief](#), published in April 2020, based on Teacher Tapp data collected at the beginning of the school closures in March 2020.

Figure 5. Proportion of schools reporting they have only been able to supply devices to half, or fewer, of their pupils who have needed them, by level of deprivation in school (Free School Meal eligibility)



Source: Teacher Tapp survey of school senior leaders in England, January 9th 2021

Figure 6. Do schools have enough laptops/devices for every pupil who has needed to be supplied with one, state schools



Source: Teacher Tapp survey of school senior leaders in England, January 9th 2021