



## **National Parents Council Primary (NPC)**

**Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee  
on**

**Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science**

To inform the Committee's examination of the topic  
**"Ensuring that Schools are open in a manner which is both safe and sustainable".**



**Supporting Parents  
Supporting Children**

**24<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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## **Introduction**

National Parents Council Primary (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in primary or early education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

### **NPC Vision**

NPC want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### **NPC Mission**

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

### **NPC's Key Activities are:**

Representing the parents' voice in primary education

Advocacy

Building participation

Service delivery

### **NPC Service Delivery**

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

### **Helpline**

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The helpline staff listen, and gives information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

### **Training and Development**

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

### **Website**

The NPC's website [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie) aims to provide parents with information regarding primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding primary education issue

## NPC Opening Statement

NPC welcomes the opportunity to make its submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in order to inform the Committee's examination of the topic "Ensuring that Schools are open in a manner which is both safe and sustainable".

To inform this submission NPC issued a survey to parents that was open from 1pm on the 19th of October 2020 to 1pm on the 20th of October 2020. Eleven thousand one hundred and nine (11,109) responses were received during this time. Its important to note that these results from parents are in the main very positive about the safety of schools for their children and this was conducted at the same time as it was announced that the country was going into level five of restrictions.

As can be seen in the results parents are mainly happy with the way schools have reopened and are happy with the communication between home and school. Children also are reported by the parents as being happy to be back at school. Parents report being somewhat more anxious than their children about being back in school with over 80% of children as parents reported as not worried about going to school, and although parents do have more concerns still 77% report not being worried or only slightly worried. Although the results are in the main very positive about the work that whole school communities are doing to keep the schools open safely it is important to acknowledge that for some parents and students this is still an anxious worrying time and some parents are reporting dissatisfaction with adherence to regulations on school transport and difficulty in getting and giving information from and to the school.

A number of parents did want to see changes to how their child's school would continue to operate in the context of COVID-19 and some frequent themes in the additional comment's sessions were:

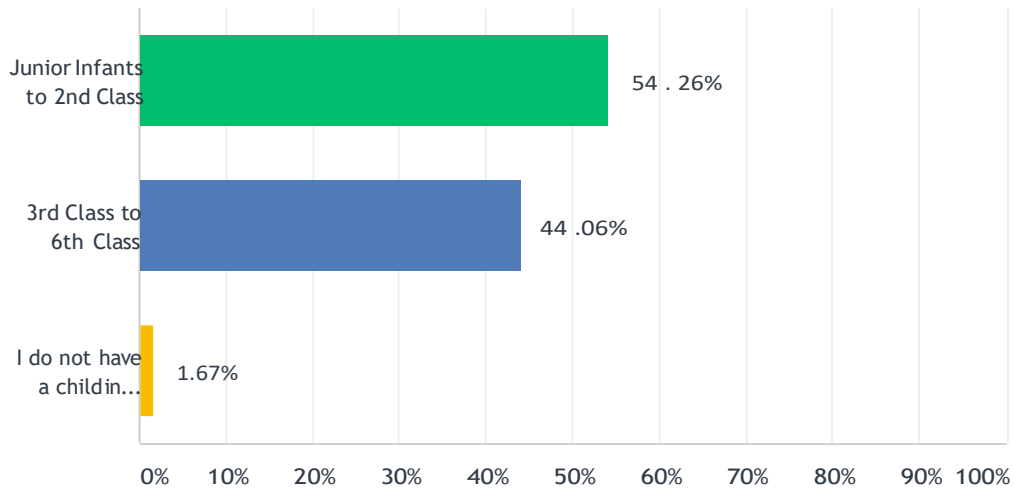
- Improving adherence to regulations on school transport
  - Whilst many parents reported being very happy with school transport some parents were concerned regarding children sitting wherever they want to and not in the same place each day, a preference that all children should wear masks on school transport and that children from different schools were mixing on the same bus.
- Parents congregating at school gates and lack of mask wearing and social distancing
  - Many parents referenced that whilst they understand that outside of the school is somewhat outside of the schools remit they felt at risk dropping off and collecting their children due to parents congregating and not adhering to COVID regulations regarding social distancing and wearing masks.
- Development work on remote/blended learning in case of a further lock down that is effective for primary school age children
  - This issue was raised by many parents who felt that their children regressed during the school lock down time. Their young children could not learn independently and struggled to continue with schoolwork as was set. Parents requested that resources would be diverted to developing effective remote learning methodologies suitable for primary aged children.

- Teachers wearing masks rather than visors
  - Most parents reported that they were very happy with the safety procedures inside the classroom however some parents raised concerns that some teachers were wearing visors rather than masks and questioned the safety of this practice.
  
- Importance of keeping schools open
  - A significant number of parents commented on the importance of keeping schools open and cited the negative impact that the school closure had had on their children.
  
- Concerns regarding lack of permission for children to socialize and talk to friends at break times with other children in their pod/classes.
  - A small number of parents raised concerns regarding strict regulations for socialising in the school yard in some instances meaning that children who were in the same pod in the class were not permitted to play together in the yard due to a policy at breaktime regarding social distancing for all children.
  
- Parents raised concerns about ventilation in the classroom
  - Ventilation was raised by parents in two areas. Some parents were concerned that the classrooms were not being ventilated appropriately whilst other parents were concerned regarding ventilation and cold classrooms making it uncomfortable for children and making it difficult for them to concentrate and learn.
  
- Some parents reported anxiety and concern regarding schools staying open
  - Whilst the majority of parents were concerned about keeping schools open a number a parents did report that they felt schools should be closed under level 5 restrictions and that their should be more options for families regarding remote and blended learning until a vaccine is available.

In the rest of the report you will see the statistical results of the survey.

## Q1 Is your child in?

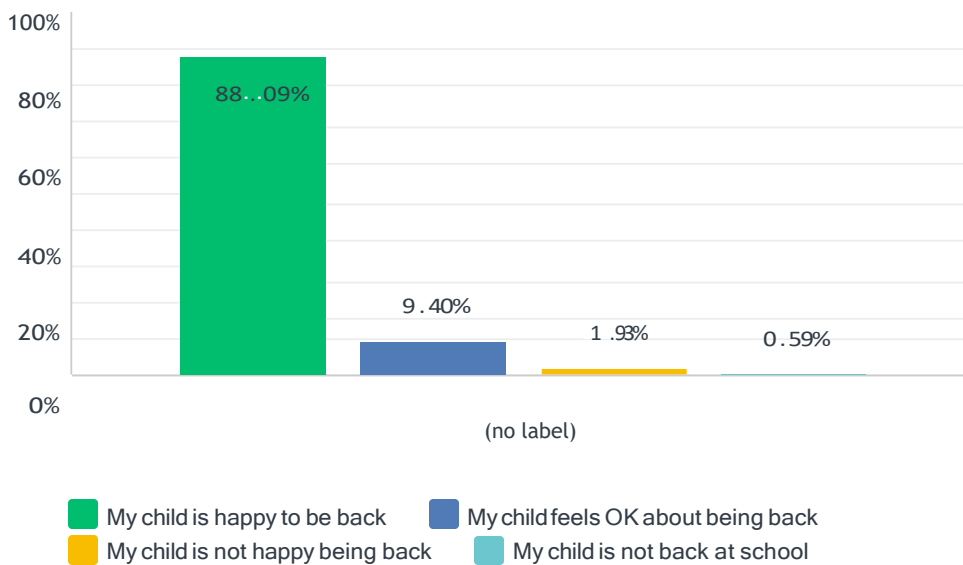
Answered: 11,109 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Junior Infants to 2nd Class	54.26%	6,028
3rd Class to 6th Class	44.06%	4,895
I do not have a child in Primary School	1.67%	186
TOTAL		11,109

## Q2 How happy is your child about being back at school?

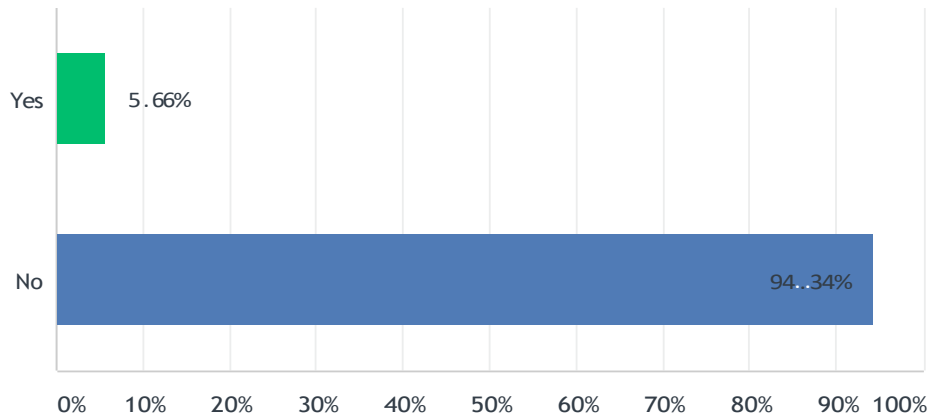
Answered: 11,109 Skipped: 0



	MY CHILD IS HAPPY TO BE BACK	MY CHILD FEELS OK ABOUT BEING BACK	MY CHILD IS NOT HAPPY BEING BACK	MY CHILD IS NOT BACK AT SCHOOL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	88.09% 9,786	9.40% 1,044	1.93% 214	0.59% 65	11,109	1.15

### Q3 Is your child using school transport to get to school?

Answered: 10,887 Skipped: 222

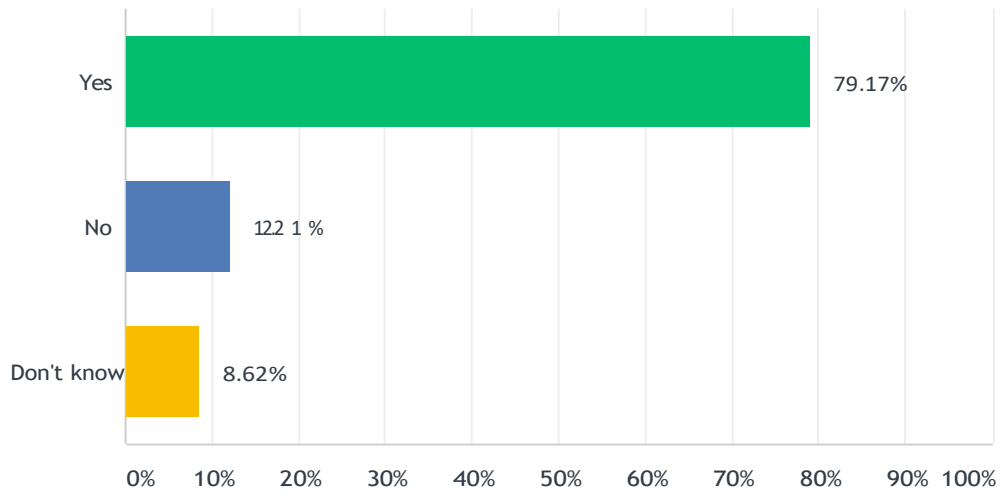


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	5.66%	616
No	94.34%	10,271
TOTAL		10,887



## Q4 Are you happy with the arrangements in place regarding your child using school transport?

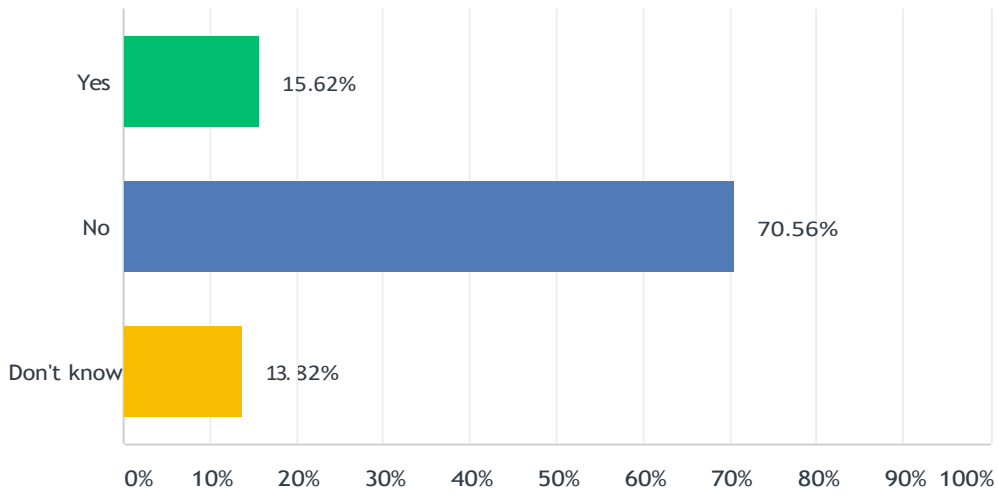
Answered: 557 Skipped: 10,552



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	79.17%	441
No	12.21%	68
Don't know	8.62%	48
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>557</b>

## Q5 Would you like to see any changes as to how the school transport is operating?

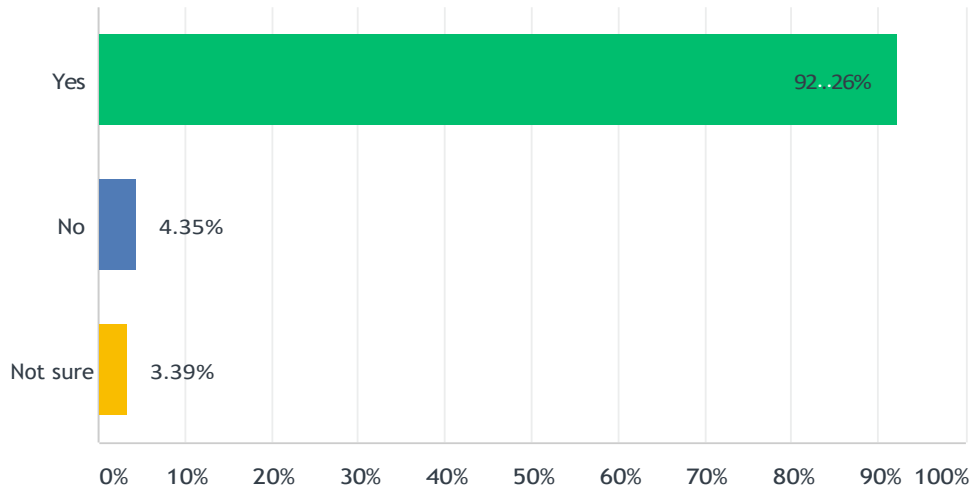
Answered: 557 Skipped: 10,552



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	15.62%	87
No	70.56%	393
Don't know	13.82%	77
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>557</b>

### Q6 Did you feel you had enough information from the school in advance of the school reopening about the new procedures which would be in place when the school reopened?

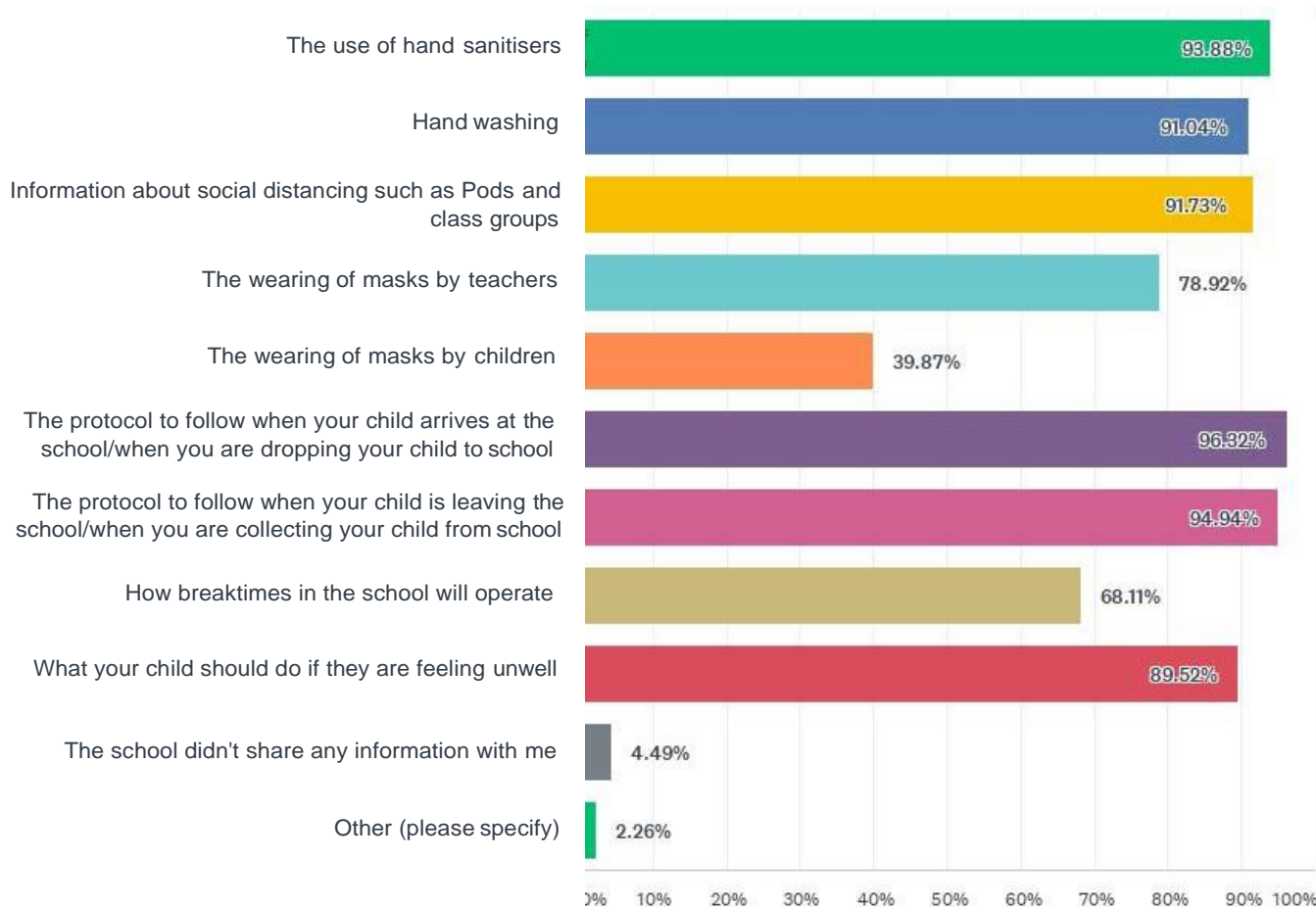
Answered: 10,567 Skipped: 542



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.26%	9,749
No	4.35%	460
Not sure	3.39%	358
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10,567</b>

### Q7 Which if any of the following information did your school share with you with regard to COVID-19 (please tick as many options as you would like)

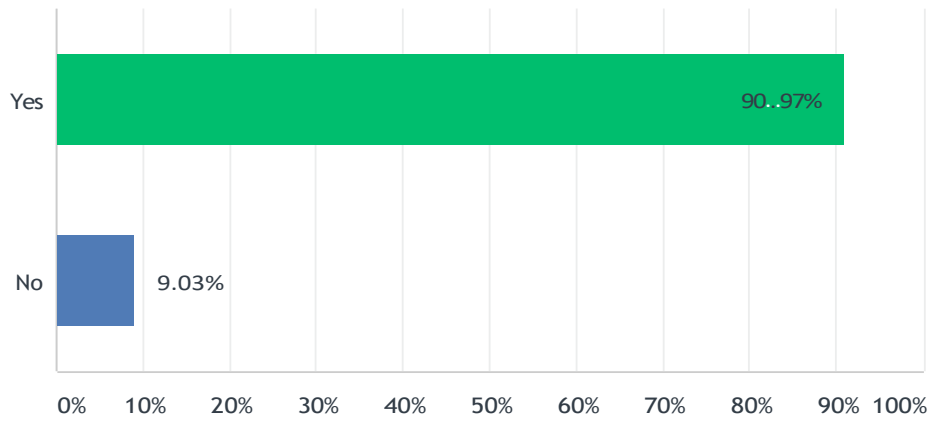
Answered: 10,567 Skipped: 542



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The use of hand sanitisers	93.88%	9,920
Hand washing	91.04%	9,620
Information about social distancing such as Pods and class groups	91.73%	9,693
The wearing of masks by teachers	78.92%	8,339
The wearing of masks by children	39.87%	4,213
The protocol to follow when your child arrives at the school/when you are dropping your child to school	96.32%	10,178
The protocol to follow when your child is leaving the school/when you are collecting your child from school	94.94%	10,032
How breaktimes in the school will operate	68.11%	7,197
What your child should do if they are feeling unwell	89.52%	9,460
The school didn't share any information with me	4.50%	475
Other (please specify)		
Total Respondents: 10,567		

### Q8 Have you been able to inform the school about any concerns you might have since your child returned to school?

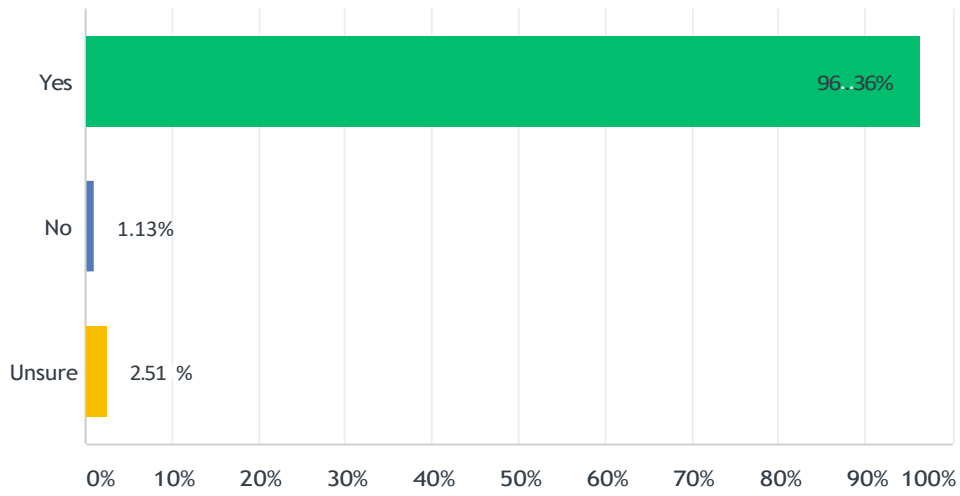
Answered: 10,511 Skipped: 598



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.97%	9,562
No	9.03%	949
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10,511</b>

### Q9 Do you know how to contact the school about your or your child's concerns?

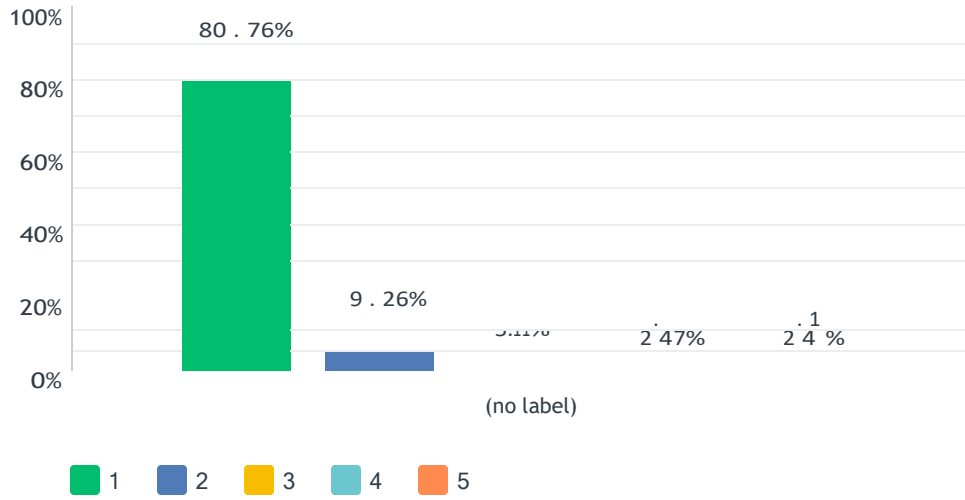
Answered: 10,511 Skipped: 598



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	96.36%	10,128
No	1.13%	119
Unsure	2.51%	264
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10,511</b>

**Q10 On a scale of 1 to 5 is your child worried about going to school?  
With 1 being not worried and 5 being very worried.**

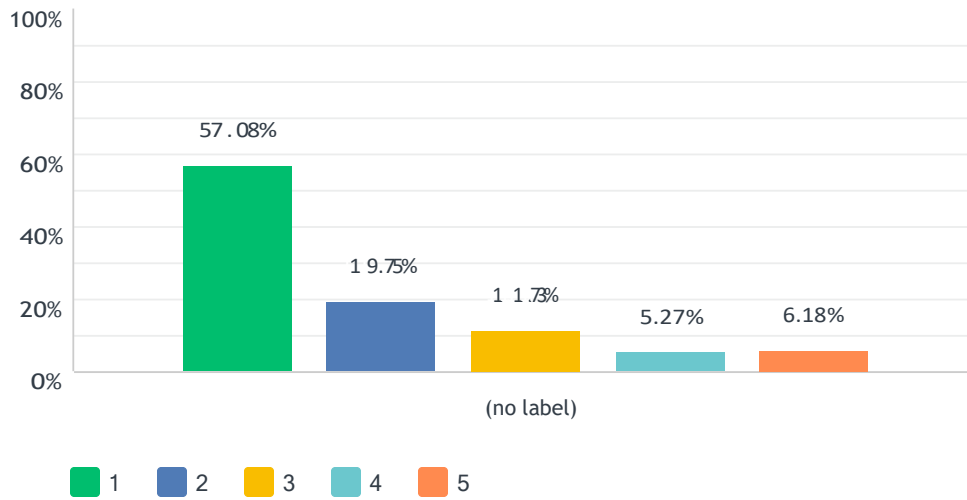
Answered: 10,458 Skipped: 651



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	80.76% 8,446	9.26% 968	5.11% 534	2.47% 258	2.41% 252	10,458	1.37

### Q11 On the scale of 1 to 5 are you worried about your child going to school? With 1 being not worried and 5 being very worried

Answered: 10,456 Skipped: 653

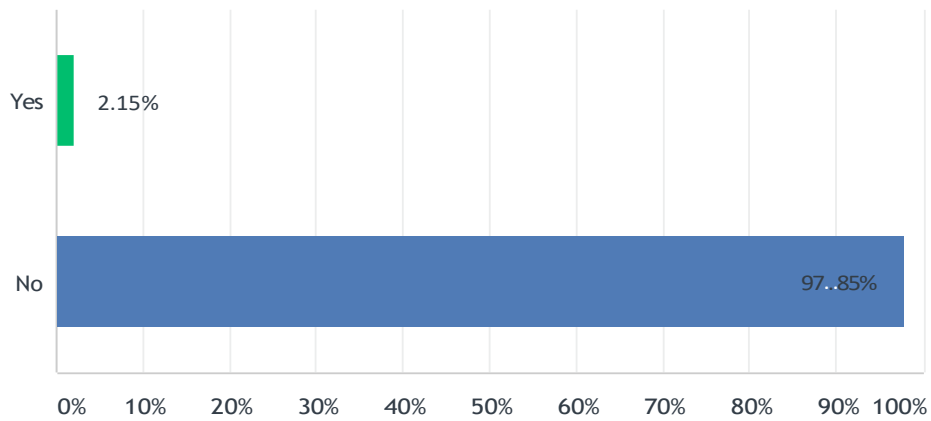


	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	57.08% 5,968	19.75% 2,065	11.73% 1,226	5.27% 551	6.18% 646	10,456	1.84



## Q12 Have you decided to home school your child due to Covid-19?

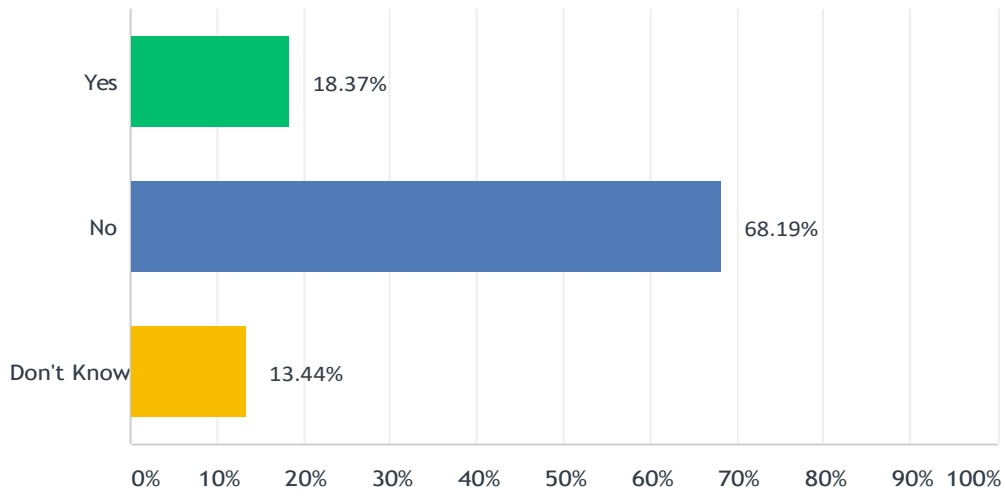
Answered: 10,456 Skipped: 653



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	2.15%	225
No	97.85%	10,231
TOTAL		10,456

### Q13 Would you like to see any changes to how your child's school continues to operate during COVID-19?

Answered: 10,403 Skipped: 706



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	18.37%	1,911
No	68.19%	7,094
Don't Know		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10,403</b>



