PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

NPC Vision

The National Parents Council want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential

NPC Mission

The National Parents Council 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 education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children and young people.

Values

NPC knows that when parents and schools work together, children do better. Therefore, NPC believes that in order to achieve this parents must feel:

Engaged: Parents must be actively engaged in the education of their children.

Supported: Parents' involvement in children's education must be supported by the attitudes, beliefs and practices of all members of the school and broader education community.

Partners: Parents must be viewed as partners in facilitating children's learning and be supported in this role by the school and broader education community.

Valued: Parents should be viewed as full partners in the decisions that affect their children and their family.

Welcomed: Parents should be welcome in the school, and their support and assistance sought as a valuable resource to support children's education in the school.

Connected: All communication and dialogue with parents must be regular, open, two-way and meaningful.

National Parents Council Key Activities

SERVICE DELIVERY

NPC's services are developed to empower 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 give 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 aims to provide parents with information regarding education at early years, primary and post primary levels.

ADVOCACY

NPC engages in awareness-raising activities and campaigning and lobbying at a national level on the objectives of its Strategic Plan.

REPRESENTING PARENTS

NPC represents the voice of parents through representation on external bodies and other mediums. NPC consults with parents and brings parents' views to bear on education policy.

BUILDING PARTICIPATION

NPC builds participation strategies and activities to ensure parents and children are an integral part of the work of NPC.

Structure of the Report

This report is organised into six sections.

- Section 1 presents the overall analysis and results of the survey, combining responses from all school types.

- Sections 2–6 provide a more detailed breakdown, focusing on specific educational settings:

    - Early Years
    - Primary
    - Post-Primary
    - Special Schools
    - Special Classes within Mainstream Schools

The decision to separate findings by school type stems from clear differences identified in parents' experiences across these settings during the pandemic. By presenting the data in this way, we aim to give a fuller picture and ensure that the voices of parents from each context are represented.

At the same time, the overall analysis remains available in Section 1 for readers who wish to view the combined results alongside the detailed breakdowns.

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NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

SECTION 1

OVERALL PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes to children's education. Schools closed, learning moved online, and social rules affected families. To learn more about the longer-term effects, the National Parents Council (NPC) asked parents about their children’s experiences during and after the pandemic. The goal was to understand how students were affected in their learning, friendships, and feelings, and where more support may be needed.

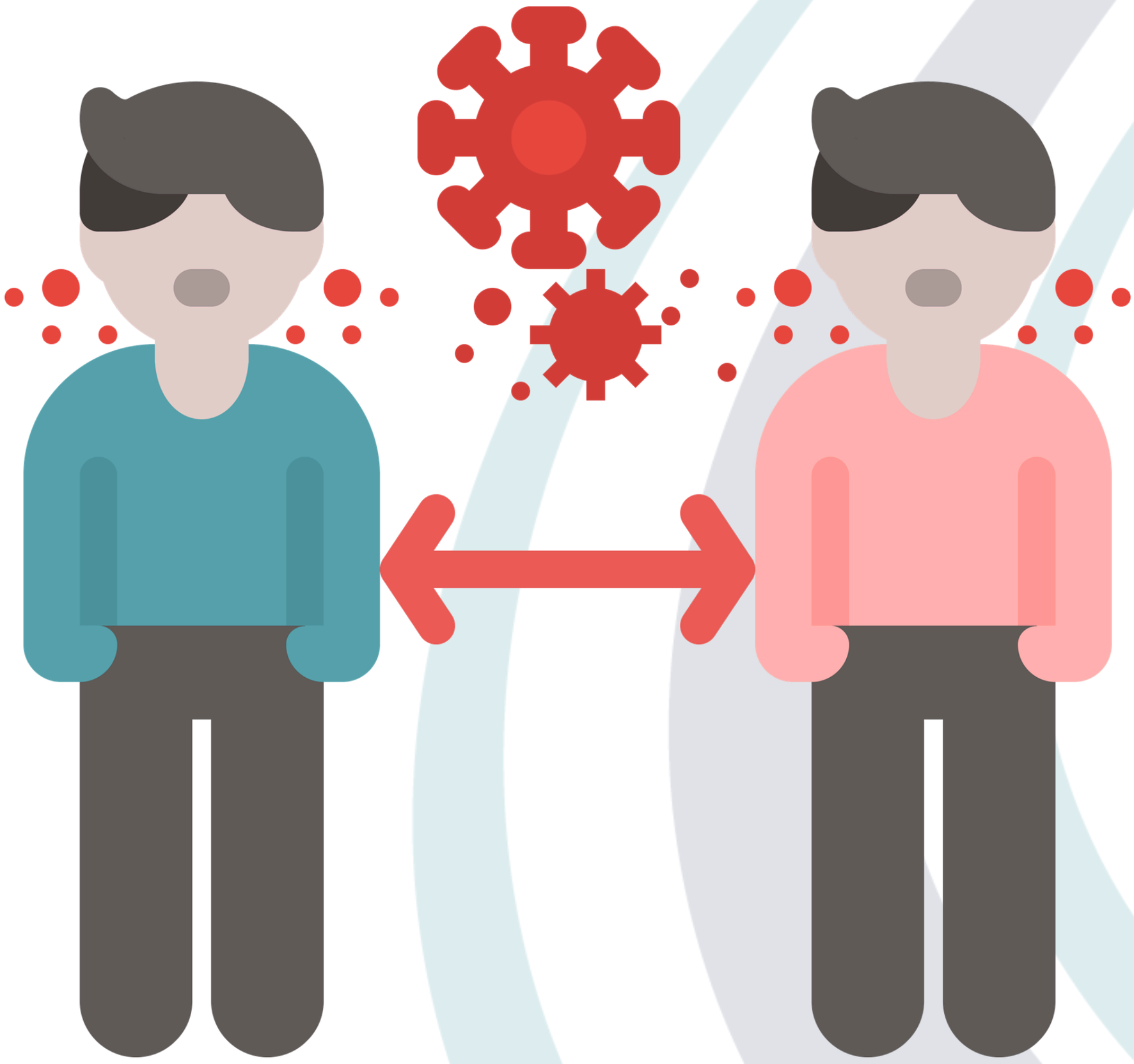
Parents were invited to share their point of view through a consultation that included both structured and open-ended questions. This helped what kind of schools children went to, what problems they faced, and how well schools supported their learning. Parents also shared views on remote learning, school communication, and what should could be done differently if something like this happens again.

The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during June - August 2025. The survey was sent to the NPC data base of parents of children in early years, primary, and post-primary, special schools, and special classes in mainstream schools. The survey was open from 20 of June 2025 till the 15 of August 2025. During this time, a total of (811) parents completed the survey. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey will be shared in this section.

Surveys

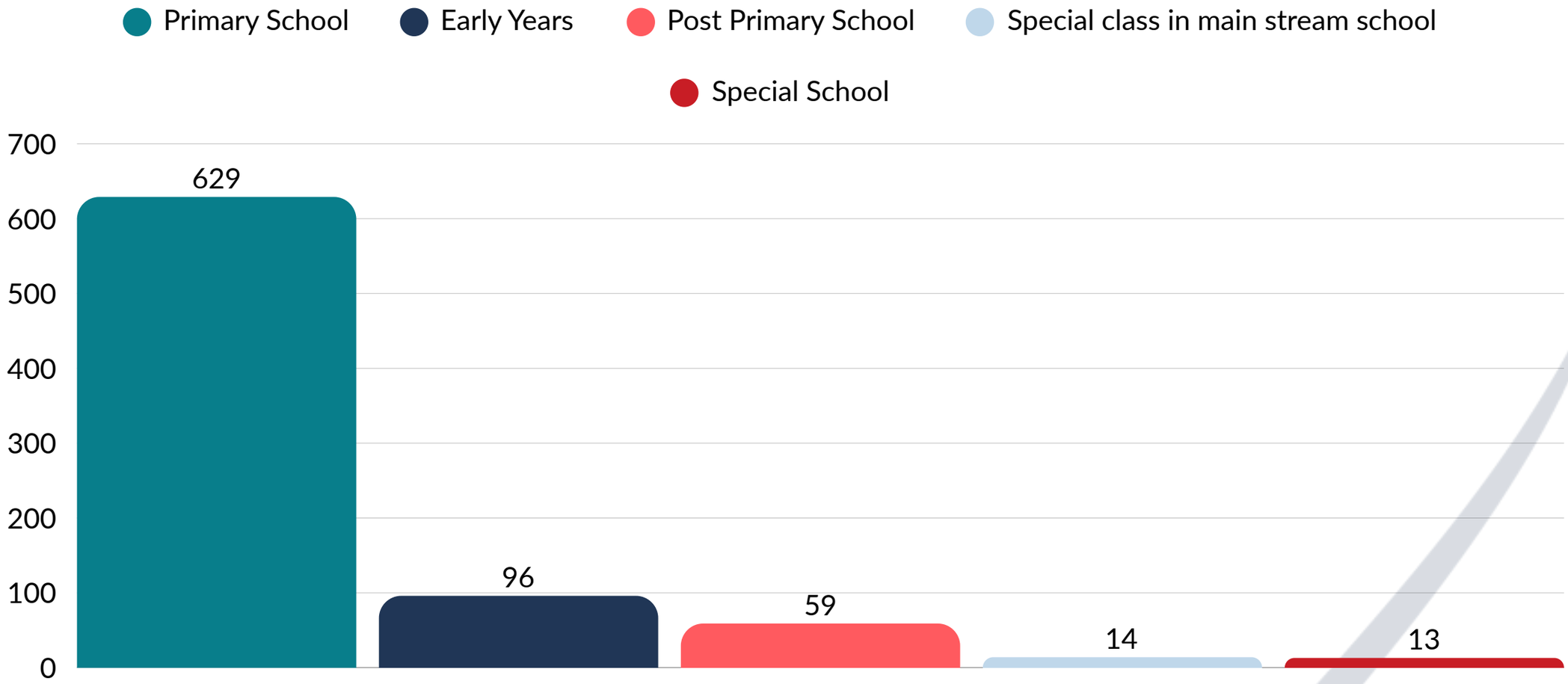
A survey titled Covid-19 was sent to parents to collect feedback. The survey asked a number of questions to find out how parents felt about their children's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and any current lasting effects.

It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This gave parents the opportunity to choose answers that suited their views and also share extra thoughts. Parents were also asked to tell us how well schools supported their child's learning needs. The main results of the survey, including key points and parents' opinions, will be shared in this section.



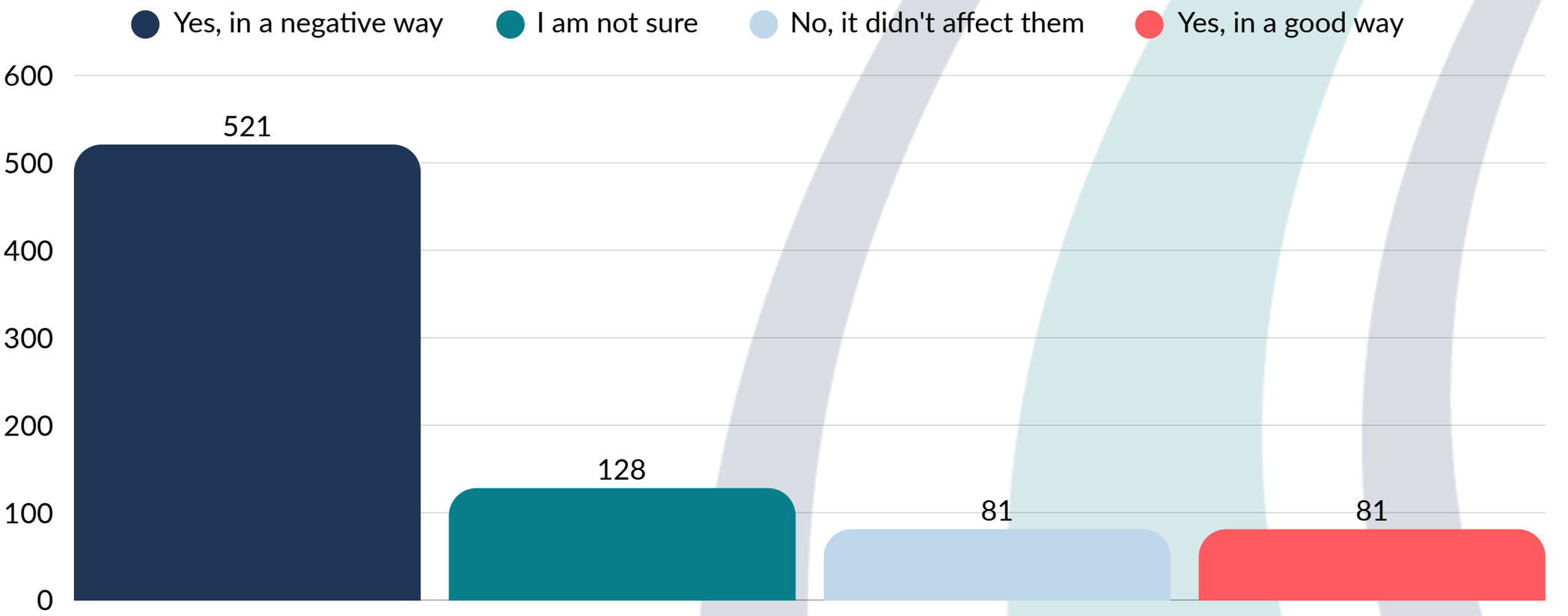
Survey Findings

When parents were asked about the type of educational setting their child attended during the COVID-19 pandemic, only a small number of children attended special classes in mainstream schools and special schools. The majority of parents reported that their child was in a primary school setting, while fewer children were in early years or post-primary settings (see Figure 1).



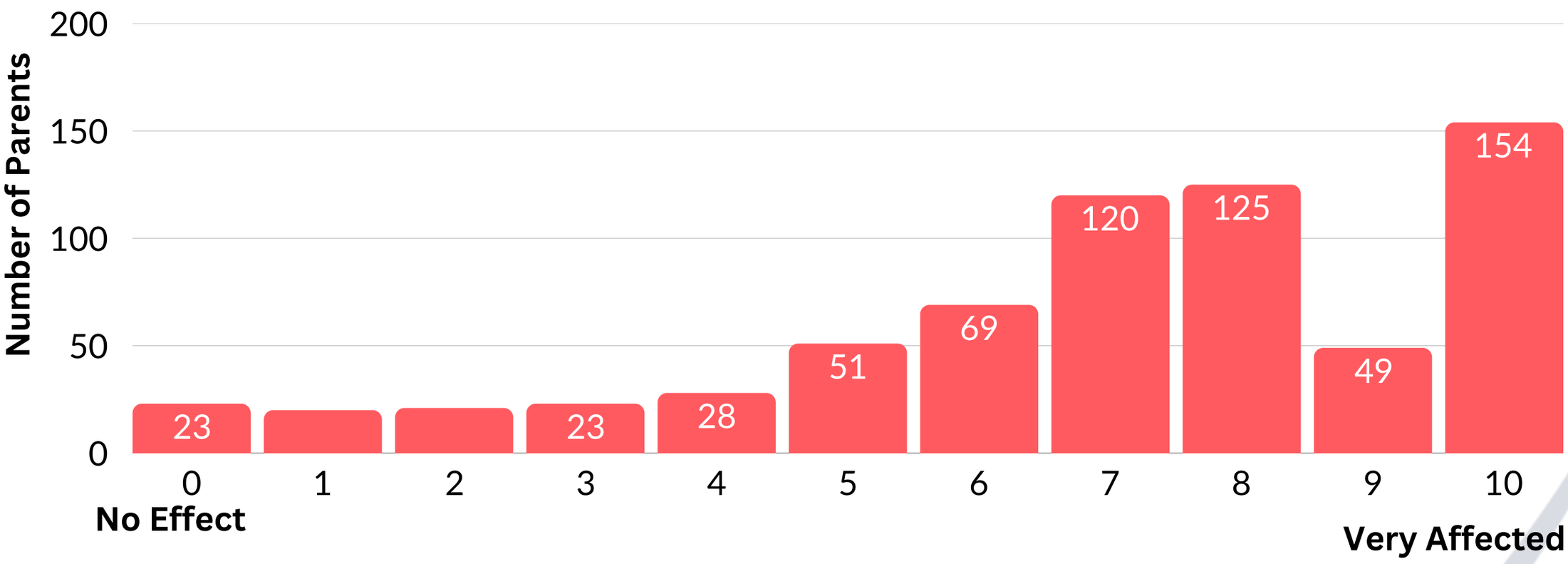
(Figure 1)
What type of education setting did your child attend during the COVID-19 period?

When asked whether school closures during the pandemic affected their child, the majority of parents reported a negative impact. A smaller group were unsure, while an equal number of parents said the closures had no impact or had a positive effect (see Figure 2).



(Figure 2)
Did school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affect your child?

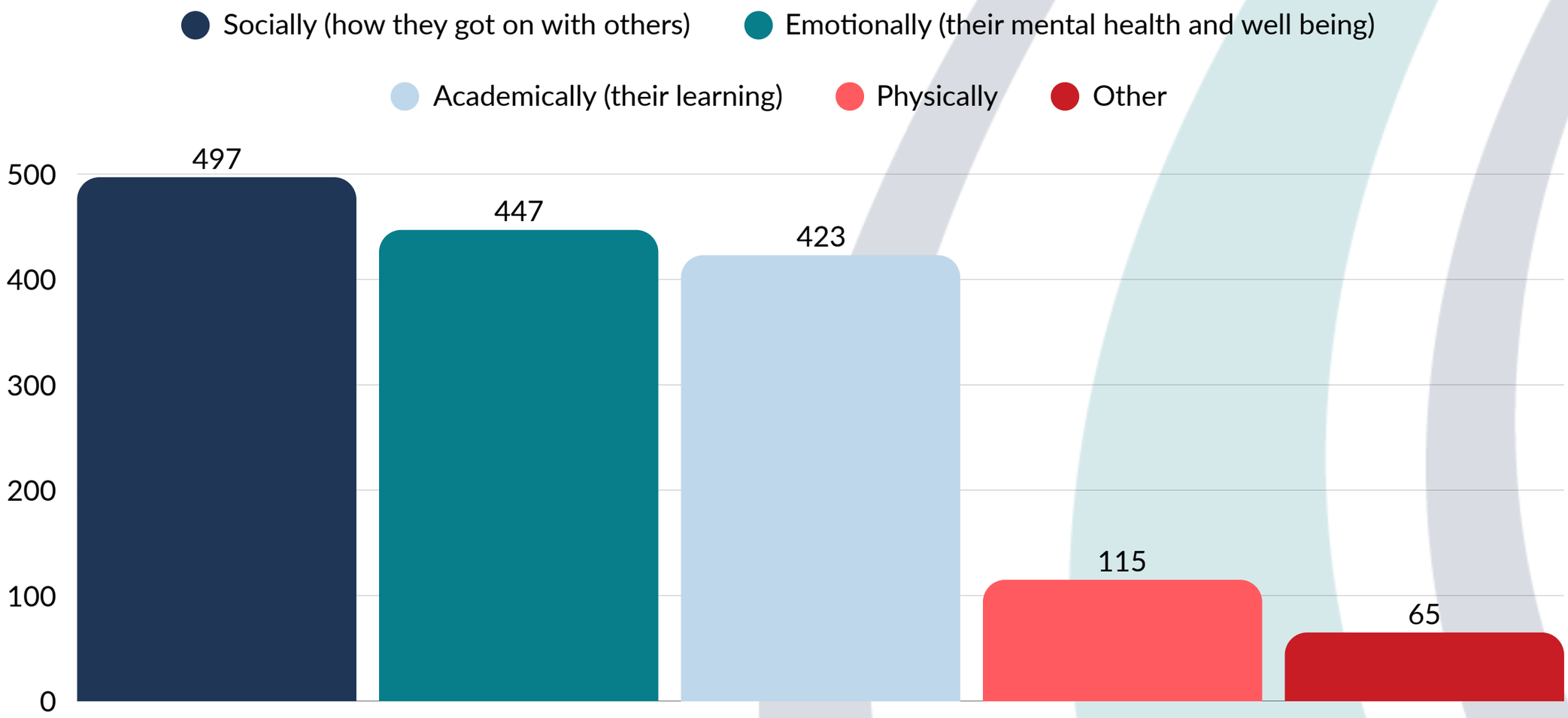
Parents were asked to rate the extent to which school closures affected their child. Most responses were between 7 and 10, indicating a strong impact. Fewer parents gave moderate scores between 4 and 6, while a smaller number rated the effect between 0 and 3 (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3)

To what extent did the school closures affect your child?

When parents were asked how school closures affected their child, parents most commonly selected social, emotional, and academic impacts. Physical effects and other types of impact were mentioned less frequently (see Figure 4).



(Figure 4)

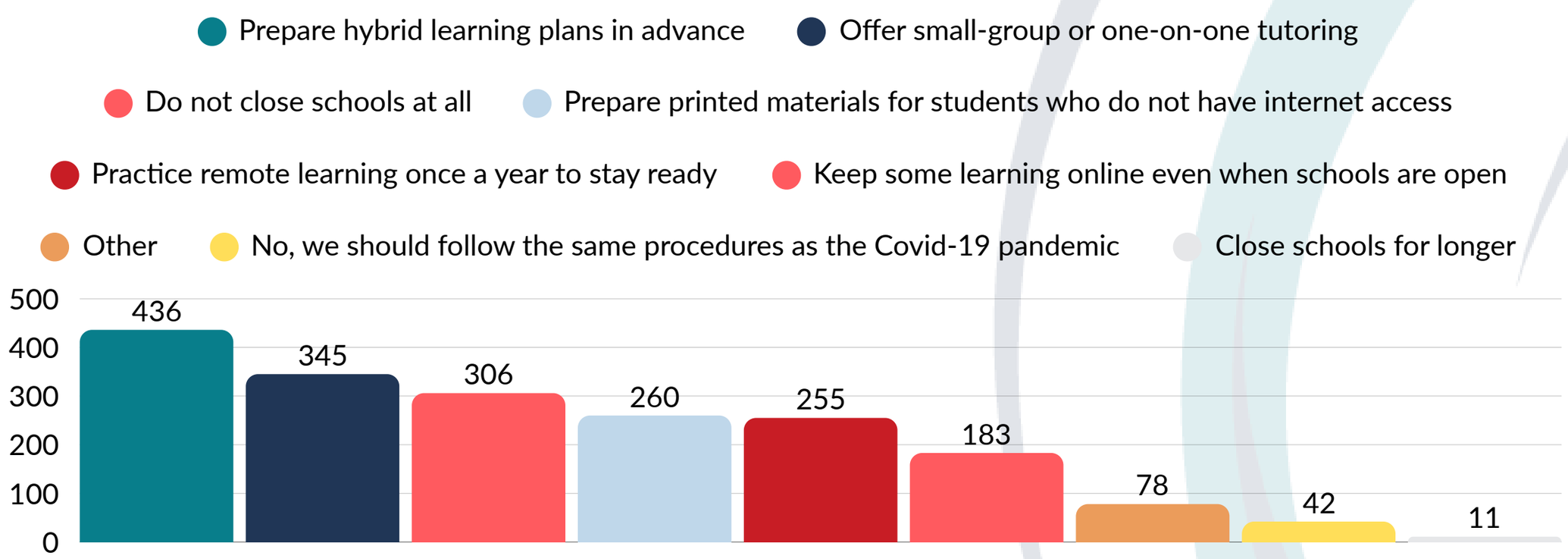
How did the school closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

Parents shared a wide range of experiences about how school closures affected their children. While some said their children were not much affected or were too young to notice, others described more serious impacts. Many parents reported academic challenges, including falling behind in learning, poor standards of online education (or none at all), and delays in identifying learning needs. Emotional and social effects were also common, with children missing their friends, feeling lonely, or developing anxieties about social interaction and hygiene. Some children showed behavioural changes or physical effects, while others refused to return to school.

A few families found positive aspects in the closures, such as spending quality time together, relief from bullying, or a break from a rigid curriculum that did not suit their child's needs. Parents also mentioned the difficulty of balancing work and supporting their children's learning, especially during the first lockdown.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

When parents were asked what should be done differently if a similar event happened in the future, they suggested a variety of approaches. The most popular options included preparing hybrid learning plans in advance, providing small-group or one-on-one tutoring, and avoiding school closures. Many parents also recommended providing printed materials for students without internet access and practising remote learning each year to stay prepared. A few parents supported keeping some learning online when schools are open, and only a small number favoured following the same procedures as during the Covid-19 pandemic or extending school closures (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)
If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)

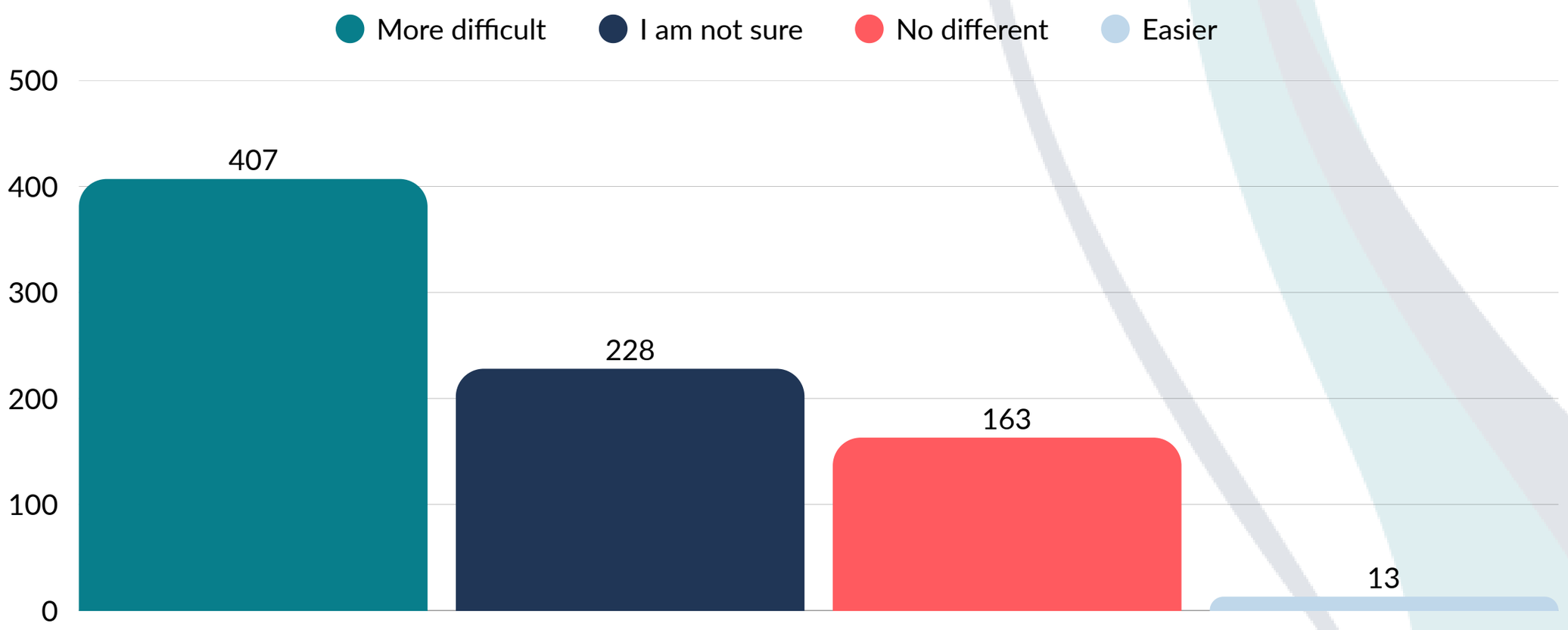
Parents shared a variety of thoughtful and sometimes passionate ideas about how education could be carried out differently in future emergencies. Some felt that the pandemic response did not pay enough attention to children with additional needs, noting that Ireland was slow to prioritise their return to school compared with other countries. Others highlighted the need for consistent plans across schools, as experiences varied widely – some schools provided excellent support, while others offered very little contact or guidance.

A few parents suggested regular training for teachers in IT and digital tools to ensure readiness. Others recommended making remote learning more interactive and social, including activities such as storytelling, chatting, and supervised group work. There were also suggestions for outdoor learning spaces, shorter school hours with blended learning models, and improved communication between schools and families.

Some parents expressed frustration with fear-based messaging during COVID-19, saying it caused anxiety and confusion for children. Others noted the need for support hubs for parents and children, access to age-appropriate educational videos, and more flexible approaches to the curriculum that go beyond core subjects. A few proposed national repositories of best practices for teachers and more frequent parent-teacher meetings to monitor progress.

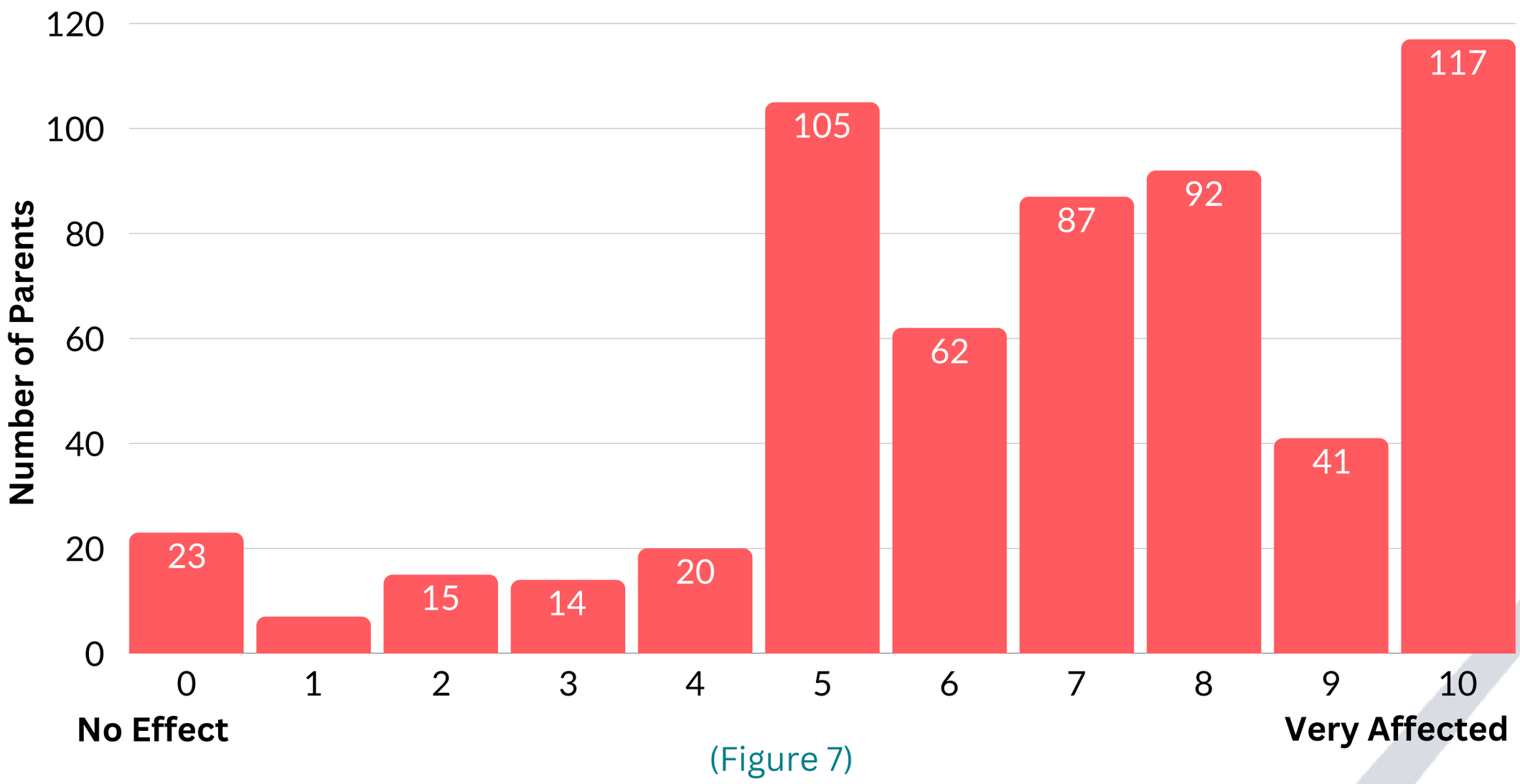
*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

When parents were asked whether school closures made it more difficult for their child to move to the next stage in their educational journey, nearly half of parents said the transition was more difficult. The remaining parents said that they were unsure or the closures made no difference (see Figure 6).



(Figure 6)
A transition is when a child moves from one school setting to another. Do you think school closures made your child's transition?

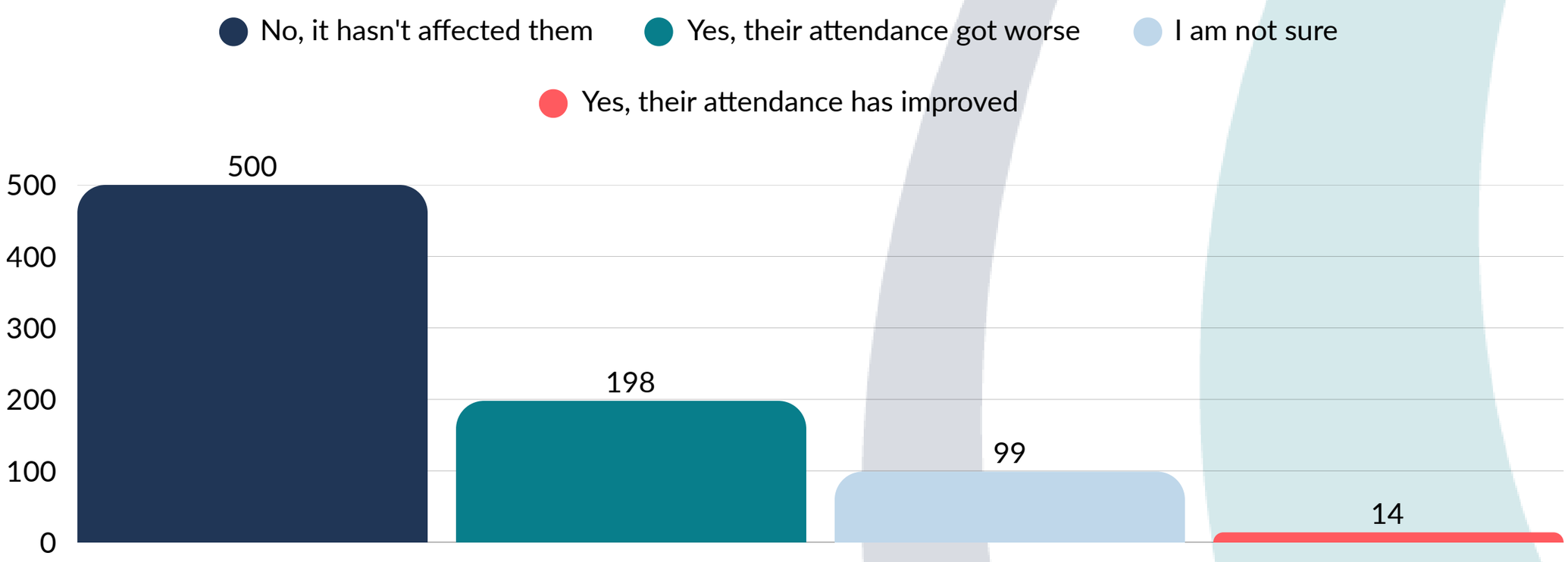
Parents were asked to rate the impact of school closures on their child's transition between school settings. The majority gave a high rating (7–10), indicating a strong effect. A smaller group gave a moderate score (4–6), and the fewest rated the effect as low (0–3) (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

To what extent do you think school closures affected your child's transition?

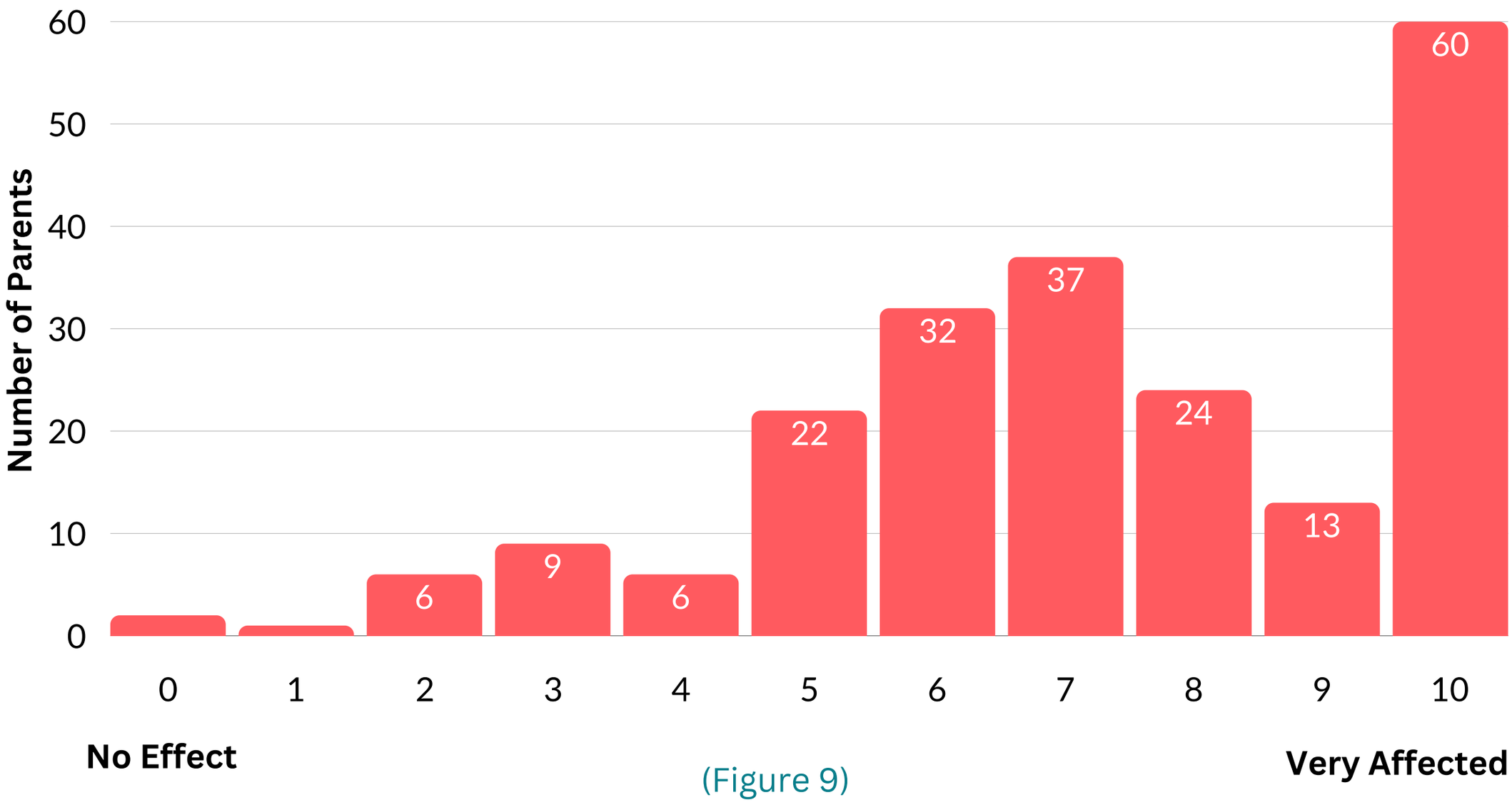
When parents were asked whether their child's current school attendance had been affected by COVID-19 closures, most parents said it had not. A Number of parents reported a decline in attendance, while others said they were unsure or saw improvements (see Figure 8).



(Figure 8)

Do you think your child's current attendance at school is affected by school closures during COVID-19?

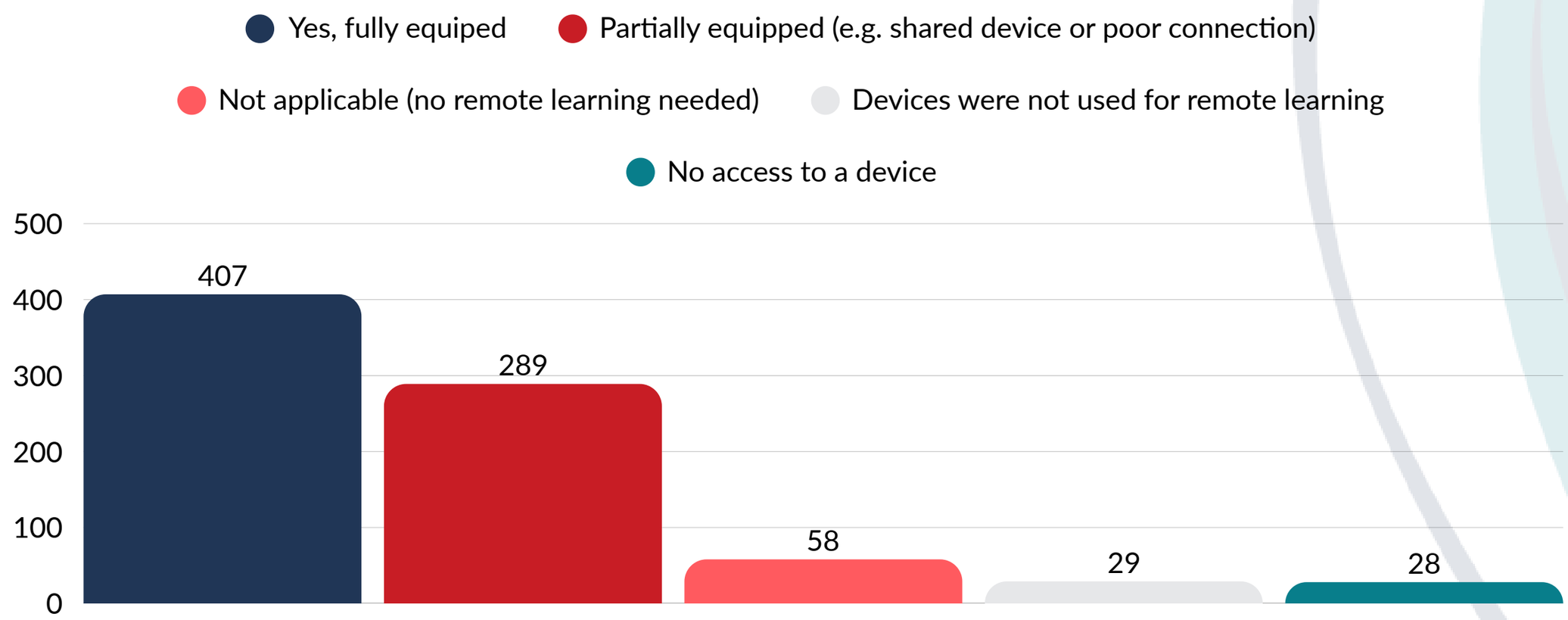
Parents were asked to rate the extent of COVID-19 school closures on their child's current attendance. The majority of parents who chose to answer this optional question gave mid-range ratings (5–7), indicating a moderate effect. A smaller number of parents gave high ratings (8–10), and the smallest group gave low scores (0–4) (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)

To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during Covid-19?

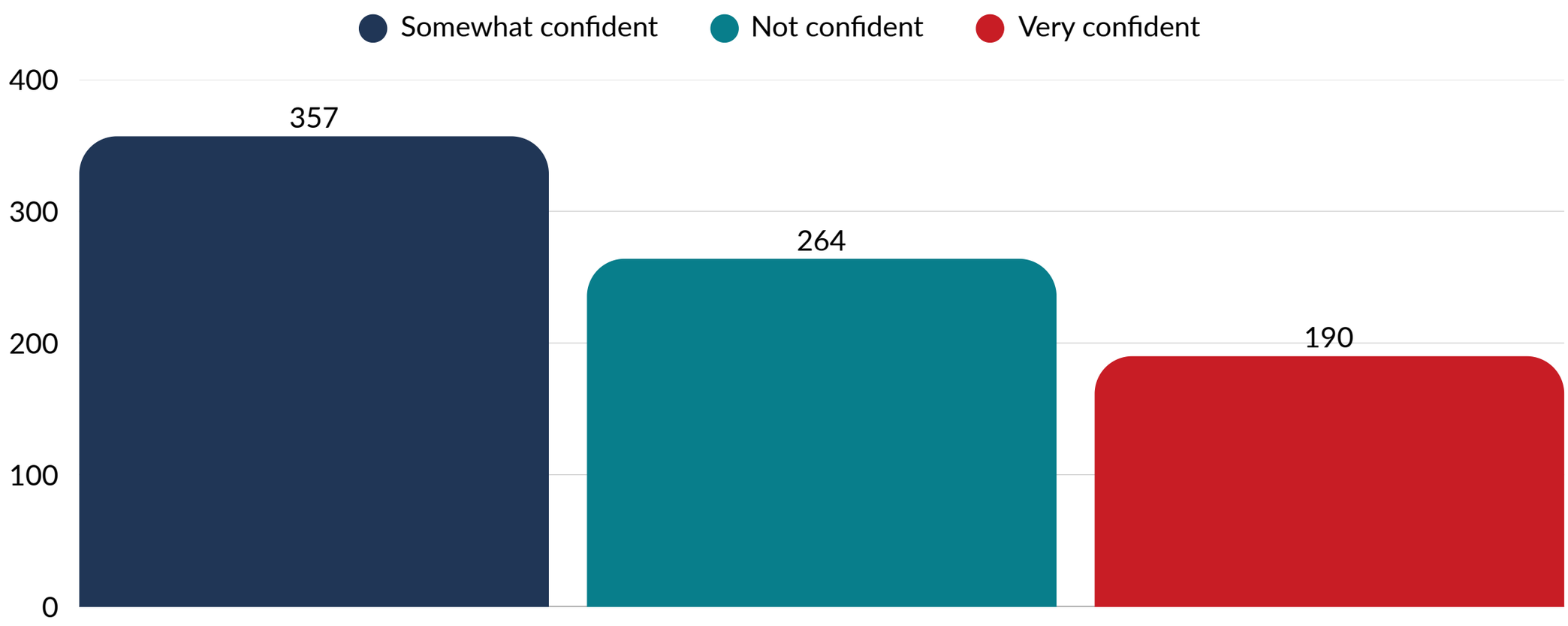
When parents were asked whether their child had access to a device and internet for remote learning, most parents said their child was either fully or partially equipped. A small number reported no access, or that no devices were used for learning (see Figure 10).



(Figure 10)

When schools were closed during COVID-19, did your child have access to a device and internet for remote learning (if applicable)?

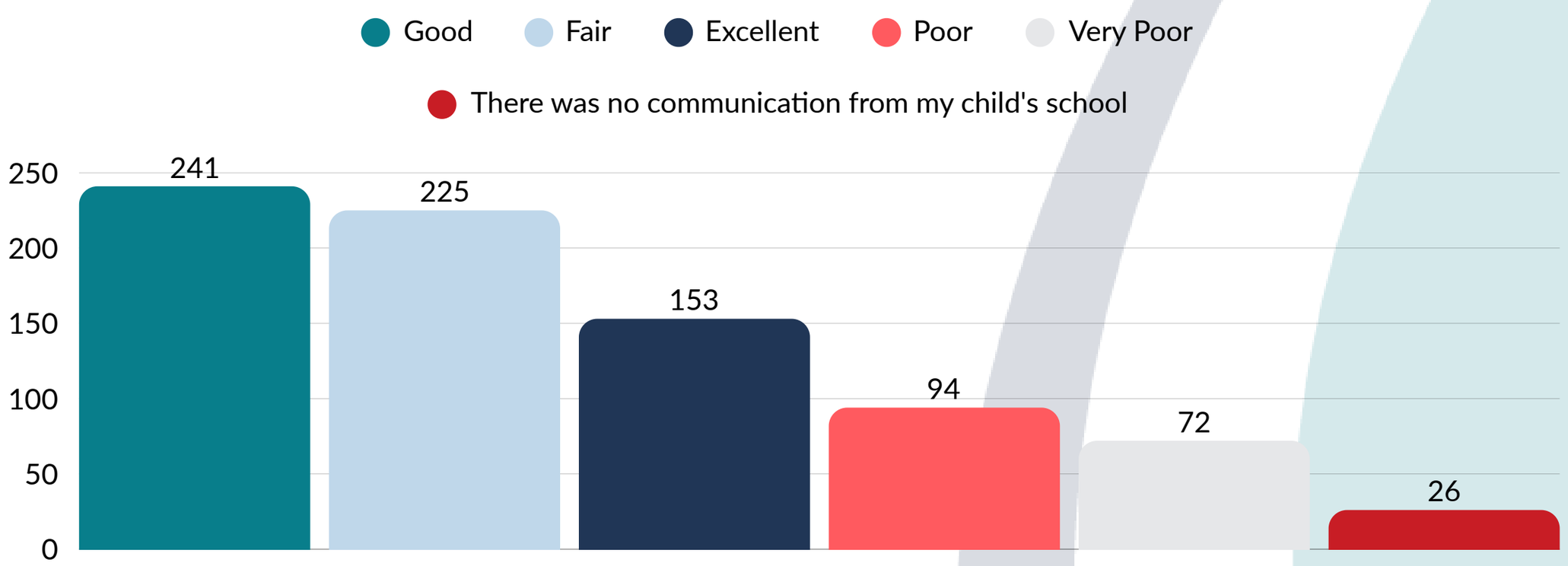
When parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning at home during school closures, nearly half said they felt somewhat confident. Fewer reported feeling either not confident or very confident (see Figure 11).



(Figure 11)

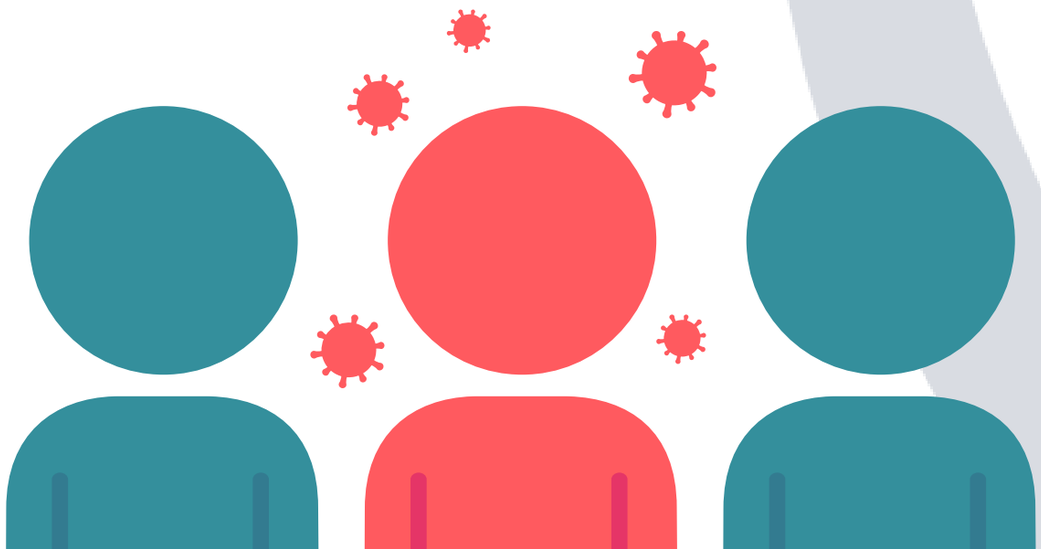
How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?

When parents were asked to rate communication from their child's school during closures, most parents rated it as good or fair. Smaller numbers of parents rated it as excellent, poor, or very poor, with a few saying there was no communication at all (see Figure 12).

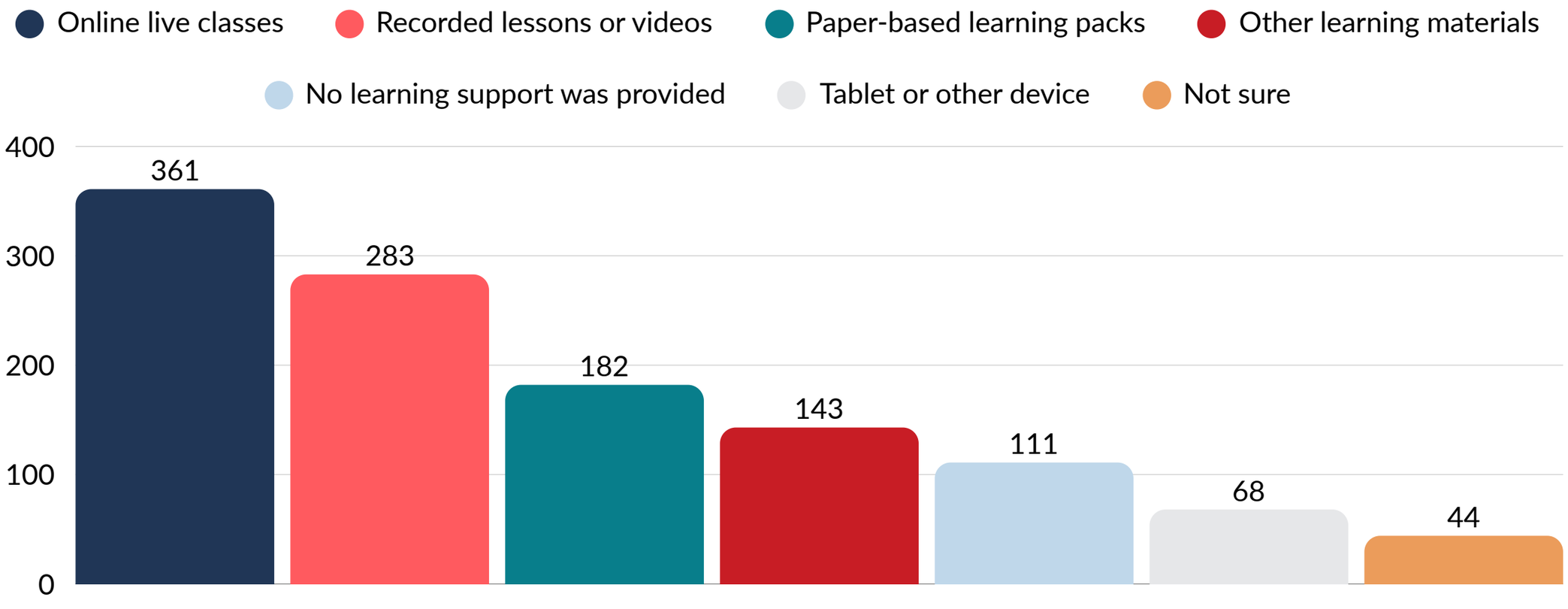


(Figure 12)

How would you rate the communication from your child's school during school closures?

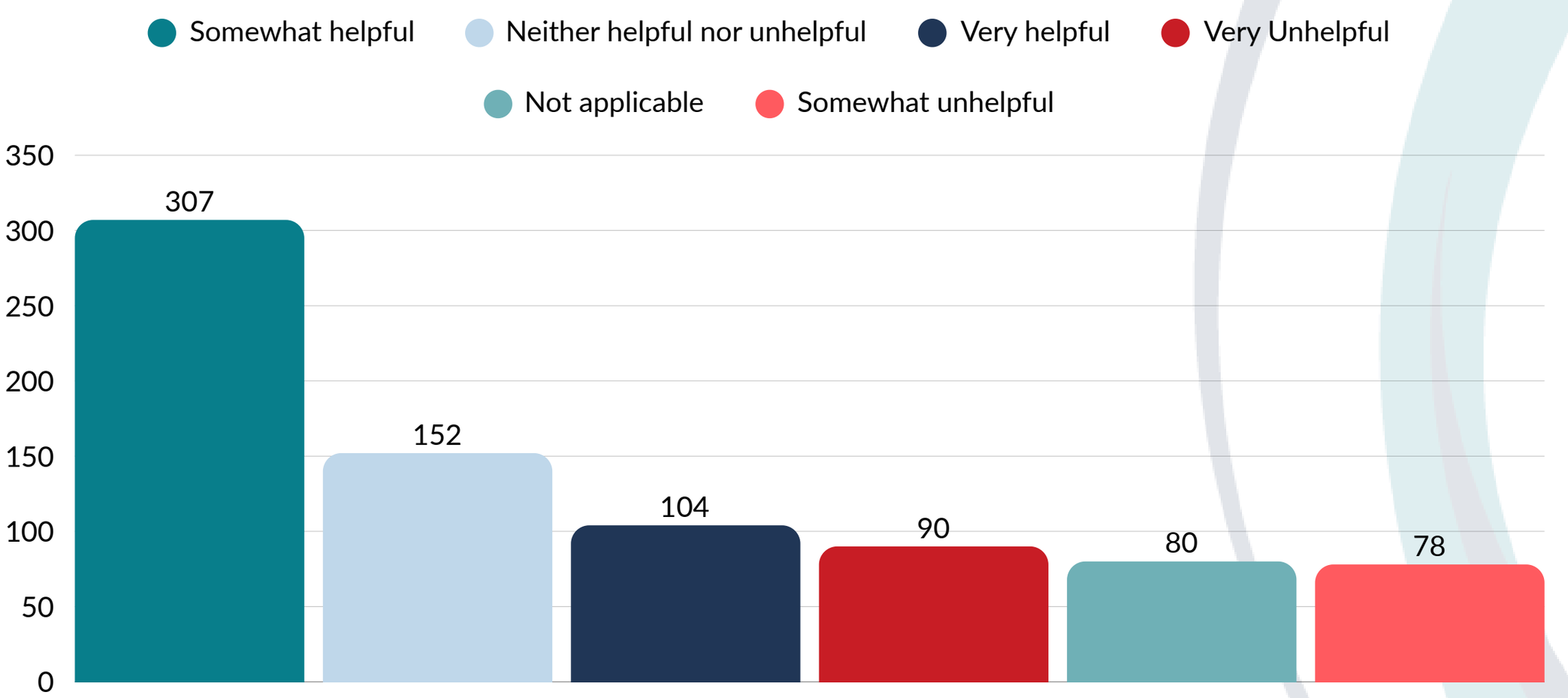


When parents were asked what kind of learning materials or support their child received during school closures, the most common response was online live classes, followed by recorded lessons or videos. Paper-based learning packs were also widely used. Few parents mentioned other types of learning materials, and even fewer said their child received a device or no support at all. A small number were unsure what was provided (see Figure 13).



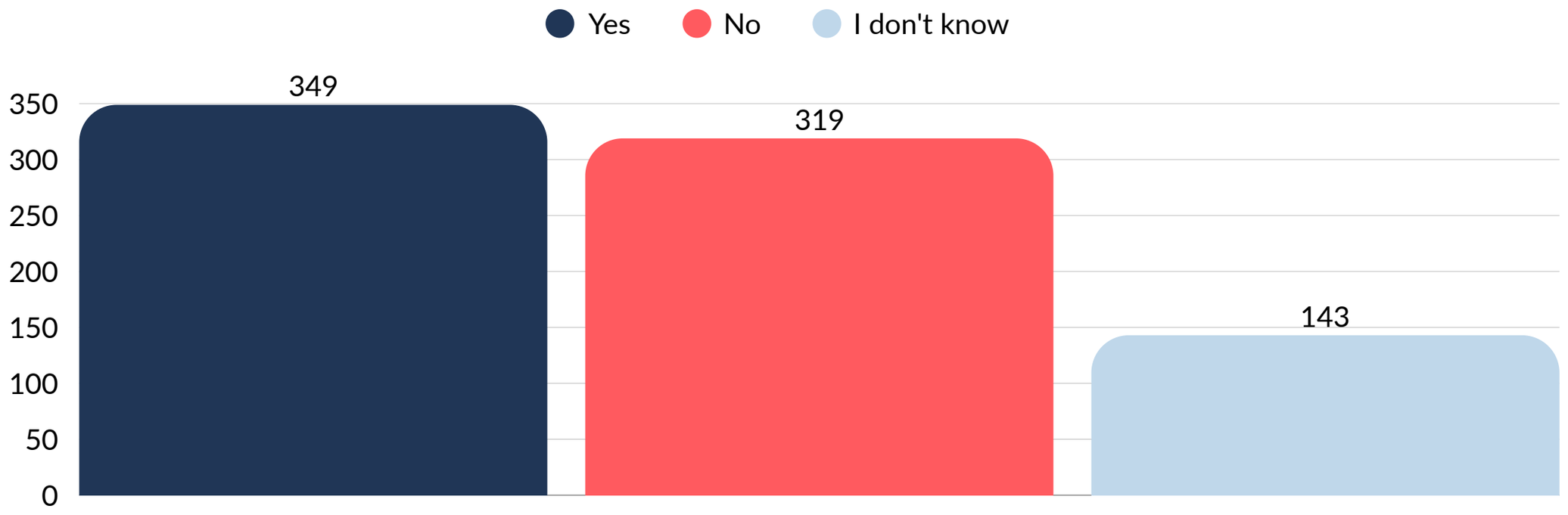
(Figure 13)
What type of learning materials or support was provided during closures? (Select all that apply)

When parents were asked how helpful their child found the materials and support provided during closures, most parents rated them as somewhat or very helpful. Fewer said they were unhelpful or had no strong opinion. Some indicated the materials were not applicable to their child (see Figure 14).



(Figure 14)
How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?

Parents were asked whether they believed the government made the right decision regarding mask use in schools during COVID-19. Responses were divided, with slightly more agreeing with the decision than disagreeing. Others were unsure (see Figure 15).



(Figure 15)

During COVID-19 there was a requirement to wear masks in schools some of the time. Do you think the government made the correct decision regarding the use of masks in schools during COVID-19?

Following parents' responses on whether the government made the right decision about mask use in schools during COVID-19, they were invited to explain their views in more detail. Their responses revealed a wide range of experiences and opinions. Some parents supported the decision, saying masks helped protect vulnerable children, staff, and family members, and enabled schools to remain open. They valued the sense of social responsibility and safety it created, particularly in classrooms with immunocompromised students. A few also noted that their children adapted well and understood why mask-wearing was important.

However, many parents raised concerns about the negative effects of mask-wearing on children's wellbeing. Common issues included increased anxiety, difficulty breathing, and discomfort, particularly for children with sensory issues, asthma, or additional needs. Parents felt masks interfered with learning, especially for younger children who rely on facial expressions to develop language, social skills, and emotional understanding. Some said masks led to social withdrawal, fear, and long-term emotional effects, with children still struggling to reconnect with peers or feel safe in school.

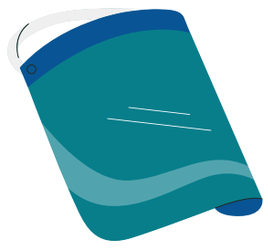
Others were strongly opposed to the mandate, questioning the scientific evidence behind it and expressing frustration about inconsistent enforcement and poor communication around exemptions. Some felt the policy was politically driven rather than child-centred, and a few described it as traumatic or damaging to their children's development. Parents of children with special educational needs were particularly concerned, saying that mask-wearing added to existing challenges and that schools were often unprepared to support these students during closures.



Overall, while some parents felt the government acted appropriately given the circumstances, many believed the mask policy lacked nuance and failed to consider the diverse needs of children. The responses show a deep emotional impact and highlight the need for more thoughtful, inclusive, and evidence-based approaches in any future public health emergencies.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Suggestions and Open Space for Parents' Views



The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems around the world, and in Ireland, parents were deeply affected by the government's decisions on school closures, remote learning, and the overall handling of education during this crisis. Their views reflect a complex and emotional picture, marked by both appreciation and frustration, along with a strong desire for better preparation in the future.

Mixed Reactions to Government Decisions

Some parents supported the government's cautious approach, recognising the uncertainty and fear that defined the early stages of the pandemic. They appreciated the effort to protect vulnerable children and families and accepted that decisions were made with limited information. A few parents said their children benefited from being at home, especially those who did well with one-to-one attention or who found school environments overwhelming. These parents also praised teachers who adapted quickly and helped maintain a sense of routine and connection.

Most parents, however, were critical. Many felt education was not prioritised and that children were treated as an afterthought. They described the long school closures as highly disruptive, with lasting effects on children's learning, social development, and emotional wellbeing. Some children are still experiencing anxiety, school refusal, and learning gaps years later. Parents argued that schools should have remained open, particularly when other parts of society continued to function, and they felt closures were out of proportion to the actual risks for children.

Impact on Children and Families

Parents spoke in detail about the emotional impact on children. Many described rising anxiety, behavioural regression, and difficulties settling back into school life. Children missed important milestones, social experiences, and the daily structure that school provides. For families with children who have additional needs, the effects were even more severe. The loss of routine and specialist support caused major setbacks, with some children now needing interventions such as therapy and medication.



Parents of children with disabilities and neurodivergent conditions felt especially let down. They explained that their children lost access to essential supports, and that the closure of special schools and the absence of tailored online learning were particularly damaging. Several said their children regressed badly during this period and are still affected today.

Challenges for Parents and Frontline Workers

The heavy burden on parents was a recurring theme. Many struggled to balance full-time work with home learning, often without proper support or resources. Some had to give up their jobs, while others faced mental health difficulties. Parents felt unsupported and overwhelmed, particularly when schools offered only minimal contact or expected them to take on teaching roles without training or tools.

For frontline workers, the pressure was even greater, as they had to keep working while also managing their children's education from home. Parents also spoke about the emotional strain of trying to create stability for their children while dealing with their own fears and responsibilities. Some described the experience as traumatic, with long-lasting effects on family life and mental health.

Inconsistencies and Inequalities Across Schools

Another major concern was the inconsistency of how schools responded. Some schools provided daily online classes and structured support, while others relied on worksheets or occasional check-ins. This difference was viewed by parents to be unfair. Parents called for a more consistent national approach, with clear expectations and accountability, to ensure all children receive fair and adequate education during emergencies.

Parents also pointed out that children from disadvantaged backgrounds were hit harder. A lack of devices, internet access, and quiet learning spaces meant that remote learning was almost impossible for some families. Parents urged the government to improve infrastructure and support to make education more equal in future crises.

Recommendations for Future Planning

Looking ahead, parents called on the government to develop strong contingency plans for future disruptions. They suggested hybrid learning models, more training for teachers in digital tools, and greater investment in technology. They also stressed the importance of keeping schools open wherever possible, given their crucial role not only in education but also in children's overall wellbeing and development.



Parents emphasised the need for clearer communication, inclusive strategies for children with additional needs, and better support for families without internet or devices. They suggested schools should be equipped with flexible learning options, clear protocols, and resources to help children recover both academically and emotionally.

Overall Reflection

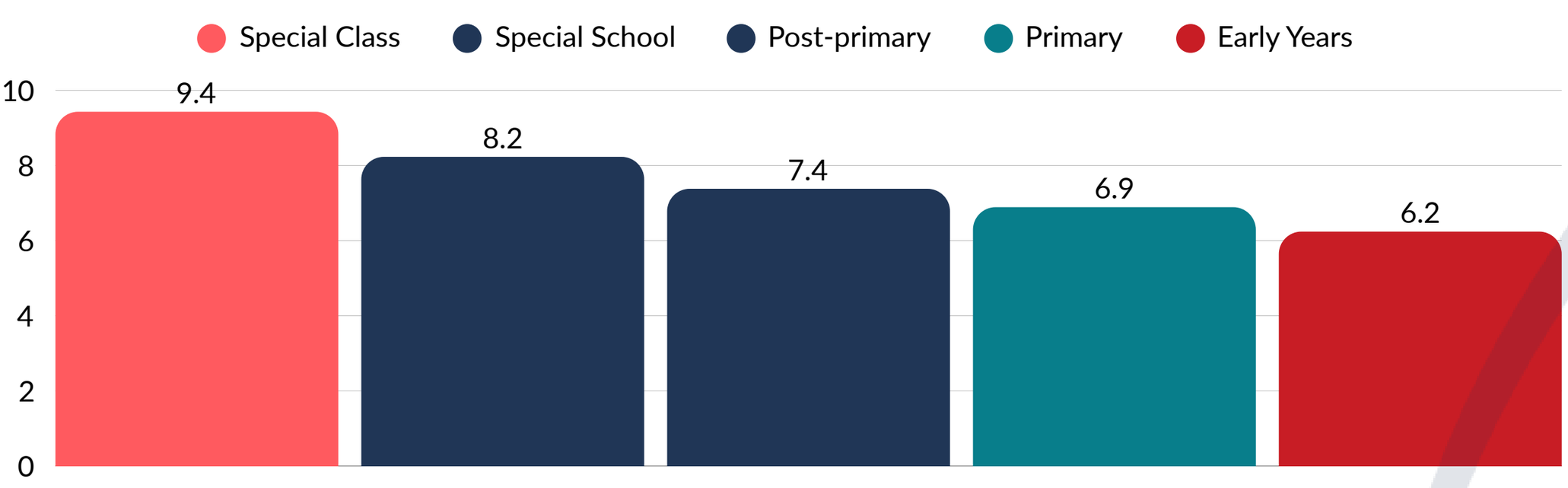
Parents' responses provide a vivid picture of the challenges faced during the pandemic. While some acknowledged the government's efforts, most expressed concern and called for meaningful change. The pandemic exposed serious weaknesses in educational planning and support, and parents want lessons to be learned. Their message is clear: children must never again be left behind in times of crisis. Parents' voices highlight the urgent need for a more resilient, inclusive, and fair education system—one that can respond swiftly and compassionately to future challenges.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



Analysis of Answers Across Different Educational Settings

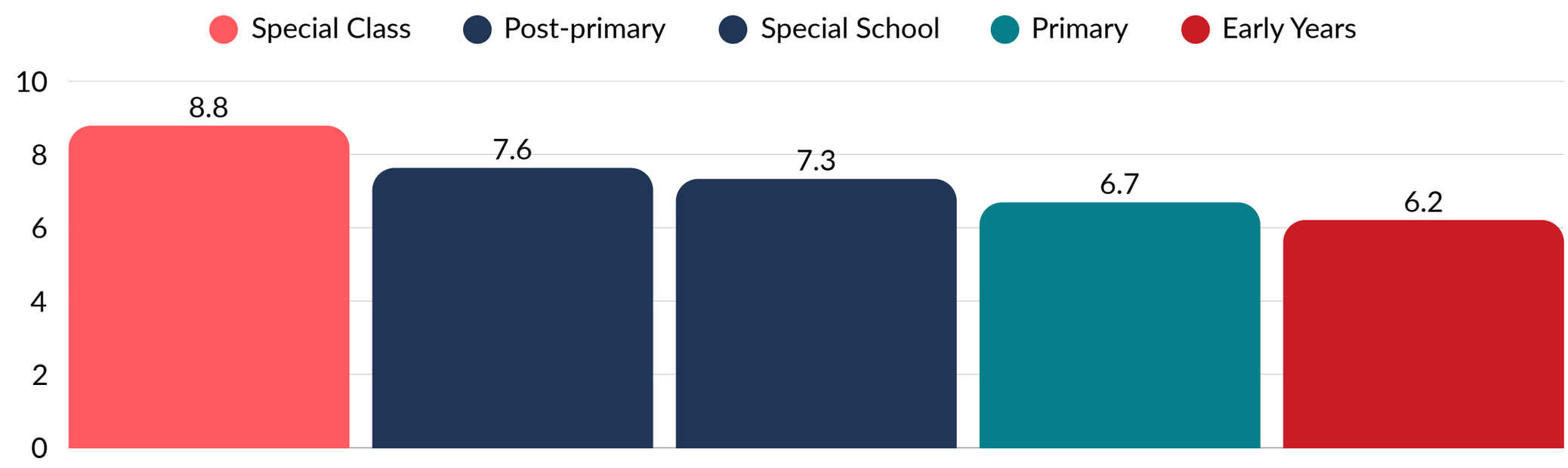
A closer analysis of the different school settings showed us that school closures affected children differently depending on their school setting. In order to make meaningful comparisons we scored the answer to the question regarding disruption out of 10 and checked to see if there was a statistically significant difference. Parents of children in special classes reported the highest level of disruption, with an average score of (9.4) out of 10. This was much higher than all other groups and was the only statistically significant difference found. Parents of children in special schools also reported a strong impact (8.2), followed by those in post-primary (7.4) and primary schools (6.9). The lowest impact was reported for children in early years education, with an average score of (6.2). These results show that children with additional needs, especially those in special classes, were hit hardest by the school closures (see Figure 16).



(Figure 16)
To what extent did school closures affect your child?

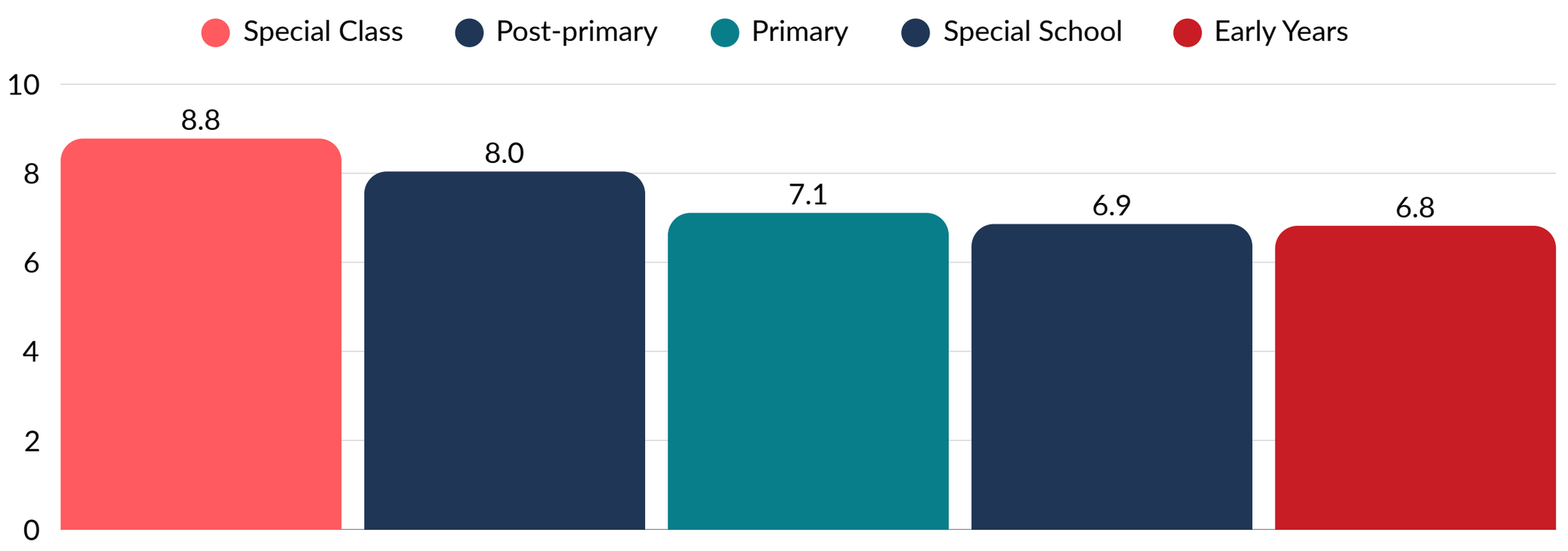
Parents reported varying levels of impact from school closures on their child's transition, depending on the educational setting. Children in special classes were most affected, with an average score of 9, followed by those in post-primary settings (8). Parents of children in primary and special schools reported a moderate impact (both scoring 7), while those in early years settings noted the lowest impact (6). The only statistically significant difference was between early years and special classes, suggesting that children in special classes faced the greatest challenges in transitioning during school closures.





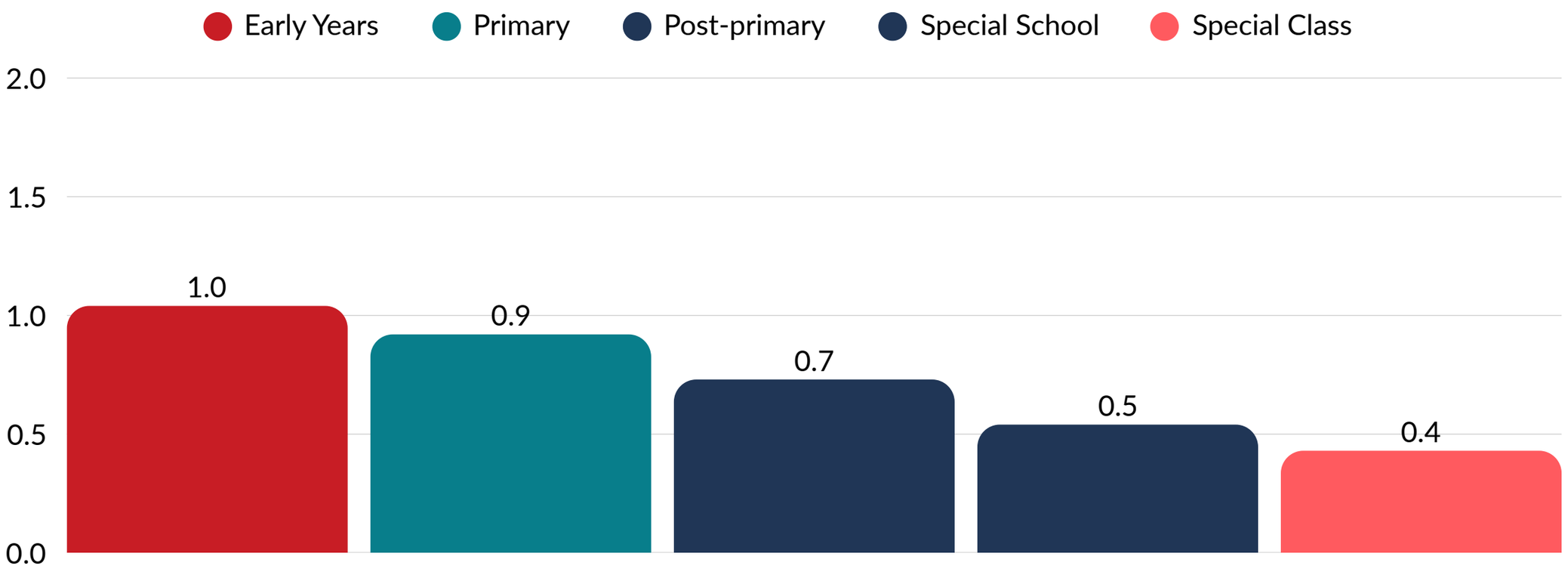
(Figure 17)
To what extent do you think school closures affected your child's transition?

When we analysed the responses from parents who reported The greatest impact was observed among children in special classes, with an average score of 8.8 on a 0–10 scale. This was followed by post-primary (8.0), primary (7.1), special schools (6.9), and early years (6.8). While these scores suggest that attendance was broadly affected, no statistically significant differences were found between school types, indicating that the impact was felt across the board regardless of setting (see Figure 18)



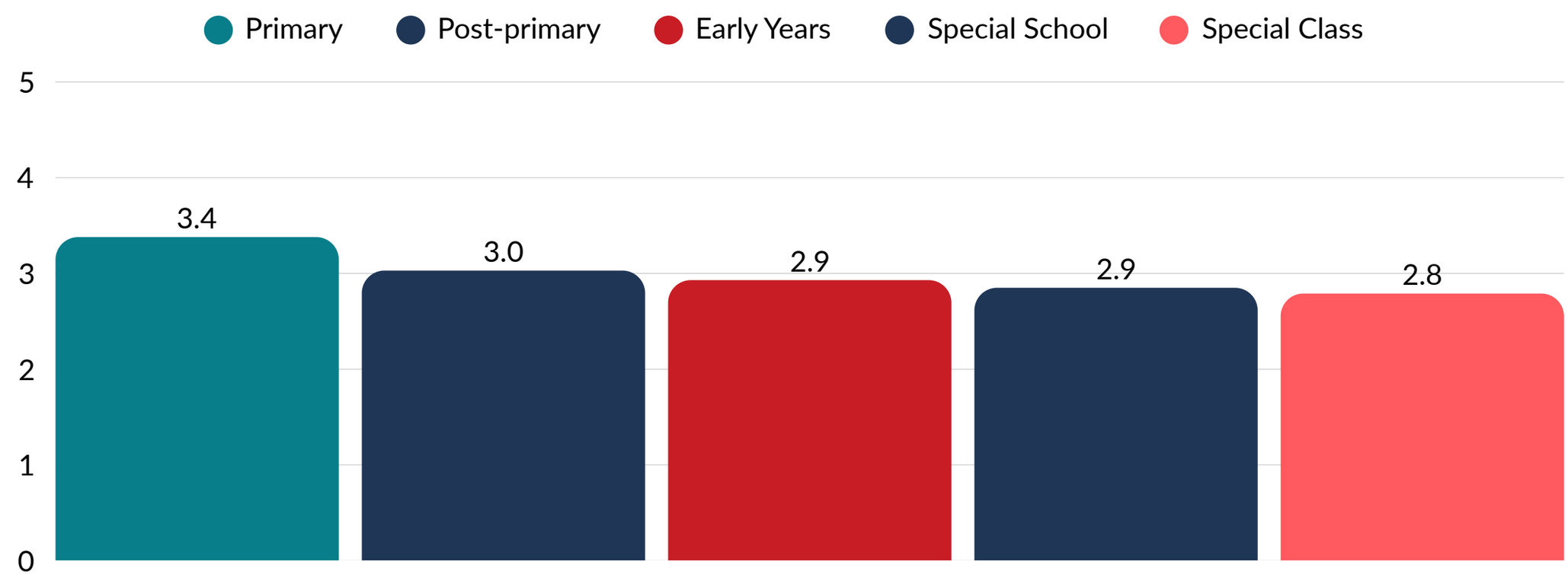
(Figure 18)
To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during COVID-19?

Confidence in supporting children's learning at home during school closures was generally low across all educational settings, with responses measured on a 0–2 scale. Parents of early years children reported the highest confidence (1.0), followed by those in primary settings (0.9). Confidence dropped among parents of post-primary students (0.7), and was lowest among those with children in special schools (0.5) and special classes (0.4). Despite these differences, the results were not statistically significant, indicating that many parents, regardless of setting, faced challenges in supporting home learning (see Figure 19).



(Figure 19)
How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?

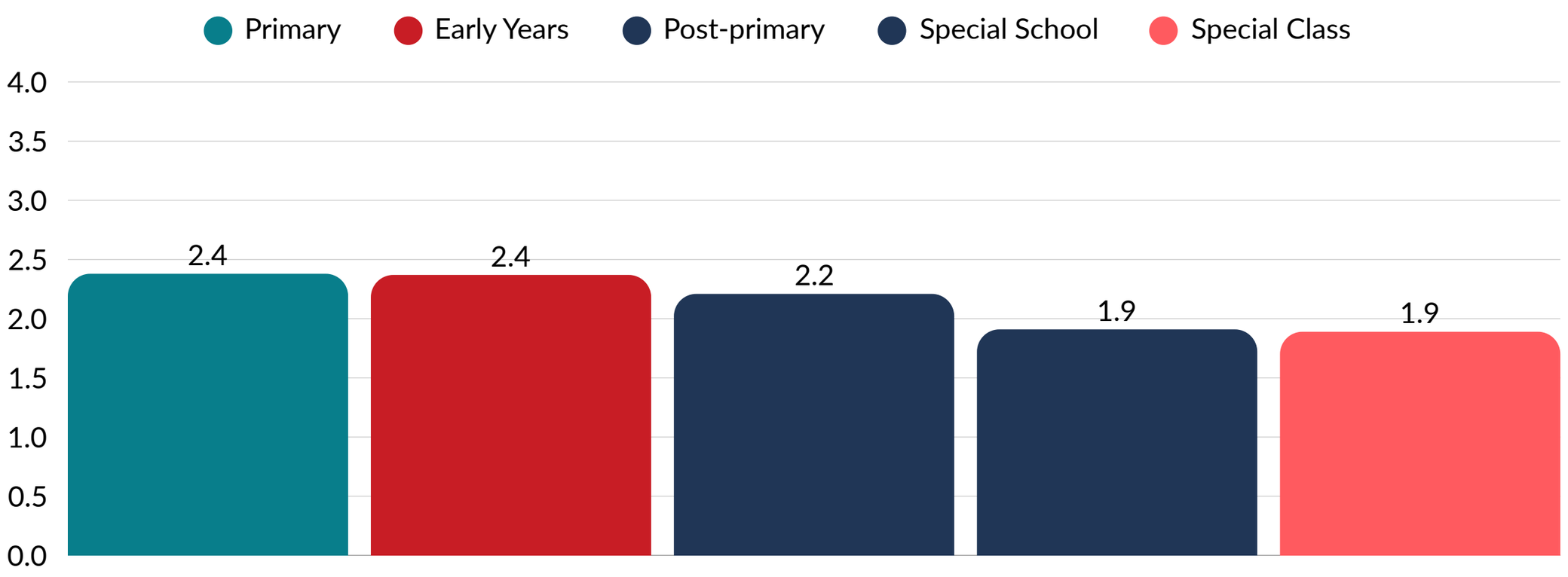
Parents gave modest ratings for communication from their child's school during COVID-19 closures, with responses measured on a 0–5 scale. The highest average score came from primary school parents (3.4), followed by post-primary (3.0), early years (2.9), and special schools (2.9). The lowest rating was reported by parents of children in special classes (2.8). While these scores suggest there is room for improvement in how schools communicated during closures, no statistically significant differences were found between the groups (see Figure 20).



(Figure 20)
How would you rate the communication from your child's school during school closures?

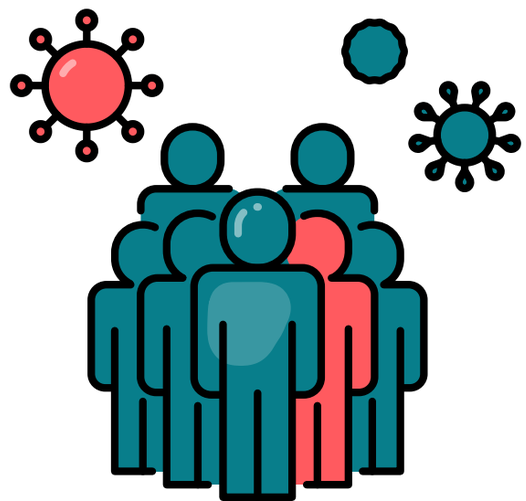


Parents rated the materials and support provided during school closures as only somewhat helpful, with responses measured on a 0–4 scale. The highest ratings came from parents of children in primary and early years settings (both scoring 2.4), followed by post-primary (2.2). Parents of children in special schools and special classes reported the lowest levels of helpfulness (both scoring 1.9). Although these differences suggest variation in perceived usefulness, they were not statistically significant, indicating a general need to improve the relevance and effectiveness of support across all settings (see Figure 21).



(Figure 21)

How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?



Impact of School Closures Across Educational Settings

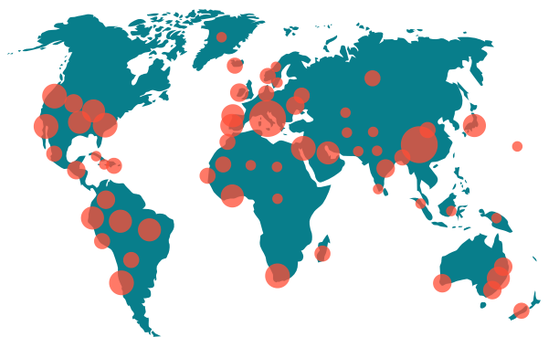
In question four of the survey, parents were asked How did the school closures affect your child? Across all types of education, one common theme was the loss of routine. Whether in Early Years, Primary, Post Primary, or specialised settings, children suddenly lost the structure that school provides. Social isolation was another shared experience, though its effects varied. All groups missed their peers, but the consequences ranged from mild frustration to severe behavioural regression. Emotional strain—seen as anxiety, boredom, or withdrawal—was present everywhere, though the intensity differed. Families also reported some unexpected positives, such as closer family bonds, though these were much more common in some groups than others.

The differences between settings stood out clearly. For children in Early Years, school closures had little academic impact since formal learning had only just begun. The main challenges were social and emotional, such as adjusting to life outside the home or fear of masks and distancing. At the same time, this group saw the most positive outcomes, with parents noting valuable bonding and greater independence—benefits rarely reported by older children.

Primary school children faced a more complex reality. Academic concerns became central, with some children thriving thanks to strong parental support while others fell behind due to limited online provision or lack of capacity at home. Social isolation was significant, and emotional issues such as boredom, frustration, and school refusal began to appear. For children with additional needs, closures made things worse by delaying assessments and widening developmental gaps.

In Post Primary settings, experiences shifted sharply. While a small number of students benefited academically, many disengaged, often linked to mental health struggles. Missing key developmental milestones, such as those often provided in Transition Year activities, was particularly difficult at this stage. Social experiences were mixed: some teenagers missed their peers intensely, while others—especially those with social anxiety—welcomed the break. Mental health was the dominant issue, with some students unable to return to in-person learning even after restrictions lifted.

Children in Special Classes were especially affected by the loss of routine and structured interaction. Parents told us predictability is crucial for these students, and its absence often triggered distress and, in some cases, obsessive or repetitive behaviours. This behavioural dimension was largely absent in mainstream settings, highlighting the greater vulnerability of this group.



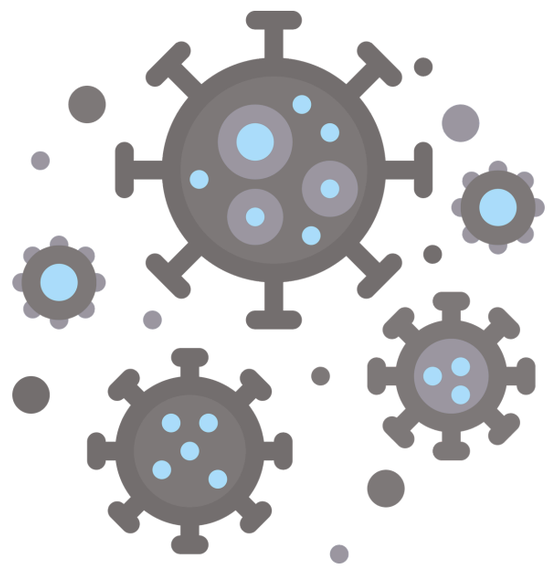
Finally, children in Special Schools experienced the most negative outcomes. Unlike other groups, where some positives were found, almost all impacts here were adverse. Behavioural regression was common, and the loss of intensive, individualised support—impossible to replicate at home—made these children the most at risk of long-term setbacks.

In short, while all children shared the experience of disrupted routines and isolation, the severity and nature of the impact varied. Early Years were least affected academically and sometimes gained socially within the family. Primary students faced mixed academic progress with growing emotional challenges. Post Primary students struggled most with mental health and disengagement. Children in Special Classes and Special Schools bore the greatest burden, with behavioural regression and developmental loss that mainstream groups did not face.

Lessons for Future Pandemics: What Should Be Done Differently in Education

In question five of the survey, If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? Across Early Years, Primary, Post Primary, Special Classes, and Special Schools, parents agreed that far better preparation is needed if another pandemic or similar emergency occurs. They called strongly for clear and consistent strategies from the Department of Education, with practical guidance for both schools and families. Parents also wanted to see some form of educational continuity maintained—whether through online learning, hybrid models, or small in-person groups—so that children are not left without support. Another point raised across all groups was the importance of social connection. Parents felt that keeping children connected with peers and teachers is just as vital as academic work, since it helps reduce feelings of isolation. Above all, there was a recognition that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work, and that flexibility is essential to meet the diverse needs of children.

Despite these shared themes, priorities differed depending on the setting. Parents of young children in Early Years stressed that online learning was simply unsuitable at this stage. They preferred approaches that would minimise closures altogether or provide play-based activities rather than formal lessons. Where closures could not be avoided, they asked that they be short, well-communicated, and not dominated by rigid online schedules.



In Primary schools, parents were more critical of the response. They pointed to inconsistent teacher engagement and felt there was too much reliance on parents to manage learning. Many wanted structured online classes with real-time teacher interaction, instead of schools only assigning worksheets. A strong theme was the need for teacher training in digital tools, as gaps in IT skills were seen as a major weakness. Parents suggested hybrid learning, small group sessions, and national standards to make sure all schools deliver education consistently.

For Post Primary students, the emphasis was on making better use of technology. Some parents reported that online learning worked well for older children, especially in schools already equipped with devices. They argued that this option should remain available and called for best practices to be gathered and built into teacher training. At the same time, they stressed the need to tackle digital inequality, since not all families had access to reliable devices or internet connections.

Parents of children in Special Classes were clear that closures should not apply to this group, as the loss of routine and specialised support was especially damaging. They argued that in-person learning should be prioritised for these children wherever possible, or that tailored alternatives should be provided for those unable to engage online.

Finally, parents of children in Special Schools highlighted the severe impact of prolonged closures and the uncertainty of repeated stop-start reopening. They recommended catch-up programmes during the summer to address lost time, as well as regular practice with remote learning to ensure readiness if closures happen again. However, they emphasised that in-person education must remain the priority, given how much these children depend on intensive, face-to-face support.



Parental Perspectives on Mask Mandates in Schools During COVID-19

During COVID-19 there was a requirement to wear masks in schools some of the time. Parents were asked if the government made the correct decision regarding the use of masks in schools during COVID-19? Across all school settings, parents were divided on the government's decision to require masks in schools. A common thread was the tension between protecting public health and supporting children's development. Many parents accepted that masks were a necessary step to help keep schools open and protect vulnerable people. Others, however, focused on the harm they felt masks caused to children's learning, communication, and emotional wellbeing. Practical concerns were also widespread, with parents doubting whether children could wear masks correctly and questioning whether the policy was truly effective. Looking ahead, there was broad agreement that any future measures should be more flexible and take account of children's age, stage of development, and additional needs.

As for the key differences between the educational settings, the way masks affected children varied depending on their school stage. Among parents of children in Early Years and Primary settings, the strongest concerns were about communication and emotional development. They emphasised that young children rely heavily on seeing faces to learn speech and social skills, and masks got in the way of this. Some parents also said masks were frightening or overwhelming for their children, making school feel stressful rather than safe.

At Post Primary level, views were more mixed. Some parents supported masks as necessary for keeping schools open, while others felt they created barriers to socialising and building friendships. The main concerns here were not about speech development but about the social and psychological toll of wearing masks for long periods.

For children in Special Classes and Special Schools, the impact was described as especially damaging. Parents explained that many of these children rely on lip-reading, need clear facial cues, or have sensory sensitivities that make mask-wearing particularly difficult. Some described the policy as "cruel" or "harmful," especially when schools did not allow exemptions. Parents in these settings also raised concerns about fairness, arguing that a single, blanket policy ignored the unique needs of children with disabilities.



Parental Perspectives on Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

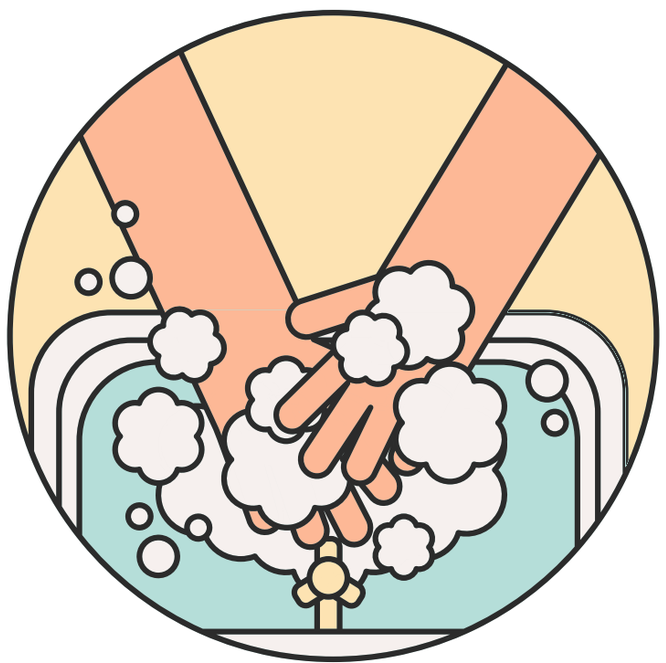
The open-ended responses from parents across different school settings give a powerful picture of what families went through during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the details of their experiences varied, several strong themes came through again and again.

The biggest issue for many parents was the closure of schools. They often described these closures as lasting too long and, in some cases, being unnecessary—especially as the pandemic went on. Parents felt the closures placed heavy pressure on families, disrupted children's learning, and did not properly account for children's wider developmental and emotional needs. Some parents recognised that the situation was complicated and that caution was needed, but there was a common feeling that decisions lacked balance and forward planning.

Remote learning was another major theme. Parents said it was inconsistent and often ineffective. Many felt it placed too much responsibility on families, especially at primary level, where parents often had to step into the role of teacher without enough guidance. The quality of online learning varied widely between schools—and even between teachers in the same school—which left families feeling unsupported and unequal. While some older, more independent students managed reasonably well, for many families remote learning was a source of stress, conflict, and falling behind academically.

Parents also highlighted the emotional and social toll of the pandemic. They described children becoming more anxious, refusing school, or losing social and communication skills. Many felt that children's mental health was overlooked in both school and government responses, and that the long-term effects were not being taken seriously. This was especially damaging for children with additional needs, who lost not only their routines but also access to therapies and specialist supports.

Another theme was inconsistency in how schools responded. Some schools adapted quickly and provided regular online classes, while others offered very little. Parents described a system that felt fragmented, with no clear national standards. This inconsistency left families frustrated and, in many cases, feeling on their own.



When reflecting on government decisions, parents' views ranged from understanding to deeply critical. Some accepted that the situation was unprecedented and that decisions were made under pressure. Others felt strongly that children were not prioritised, and that the government failed to guarantee a minimum level of education during closures. Parents called for better preparedness, clearer communication, and fairer support for all children if something like this happens again.

The impact of closures also looked very different depending on children's age and school type. In early years settings, some parents were more accepting, saying their children were too young to fully understand what was happening. Still, some questioned whether closures were proportionate, given how important early socialisation is for young children. In primary schools, the weight of remote learning was most keenly felt. Parents described being stretched thin by the demands of both work and home-schooling, often without enough support. Many saw their children fall behind academically—particularly in reading and writing—and noticed rising levels of stress, frustration, and social withdrawal.

For post-primary students, parents noted that older children could work more independently, but they still faced difficulties. Motivation often dropped, state exams added pressure, and many students struggled emotionally. Some parents suggested that more flexible learning options should be built into the system, recognising that not every teenager learns best in a traditional classroom.

The most severe and lasting impacts were reported by parents of children in special schools and special classes. For these families, school is more than just education—it is also therapy, structure, and vital social contact. Losing these supports caused serious regression in some children, with emotional and behavioural consequences that, for some, remain years later. Remote learning was largely unworkable, and many parents described feeling completely abandoned, left to cope with their children's complex needs alone. The feeling of being forgotten by both schools and government came through strongly and painfully in these accounts.

In conclusion, while all parents understood that the pandemic posed extraordinary challenges, their experiences were shaped by the particular needs and contexts of their children. The responses highlight the need for future planning to be more inclusive, consistent, and centred on children's needs. Above all, they show how important it is to listen to families—especially those with the most vulnerable children—when designing policies and supports for times of crisis.



SECTION 2

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION - EARLY YEARS

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes to children's education. Early years (EY) settings closed, and there was little support for children at this stage of their learning journey. To learn more about the longer-term effects, the NPC asked parents about their children's experiences during and after the pandemic. The goal was to understand how children were affected in their learning, friendships, and feelings, and where more support may be needed.

Parents were invited to share their point of view through a consultation that included both structured and open-ended questions. This helped us understand what problems they faced, and how well EY setting supported their learning. Parents also shared views on remote learning supports, school communication, and what should could be done differently if something like this happens again.

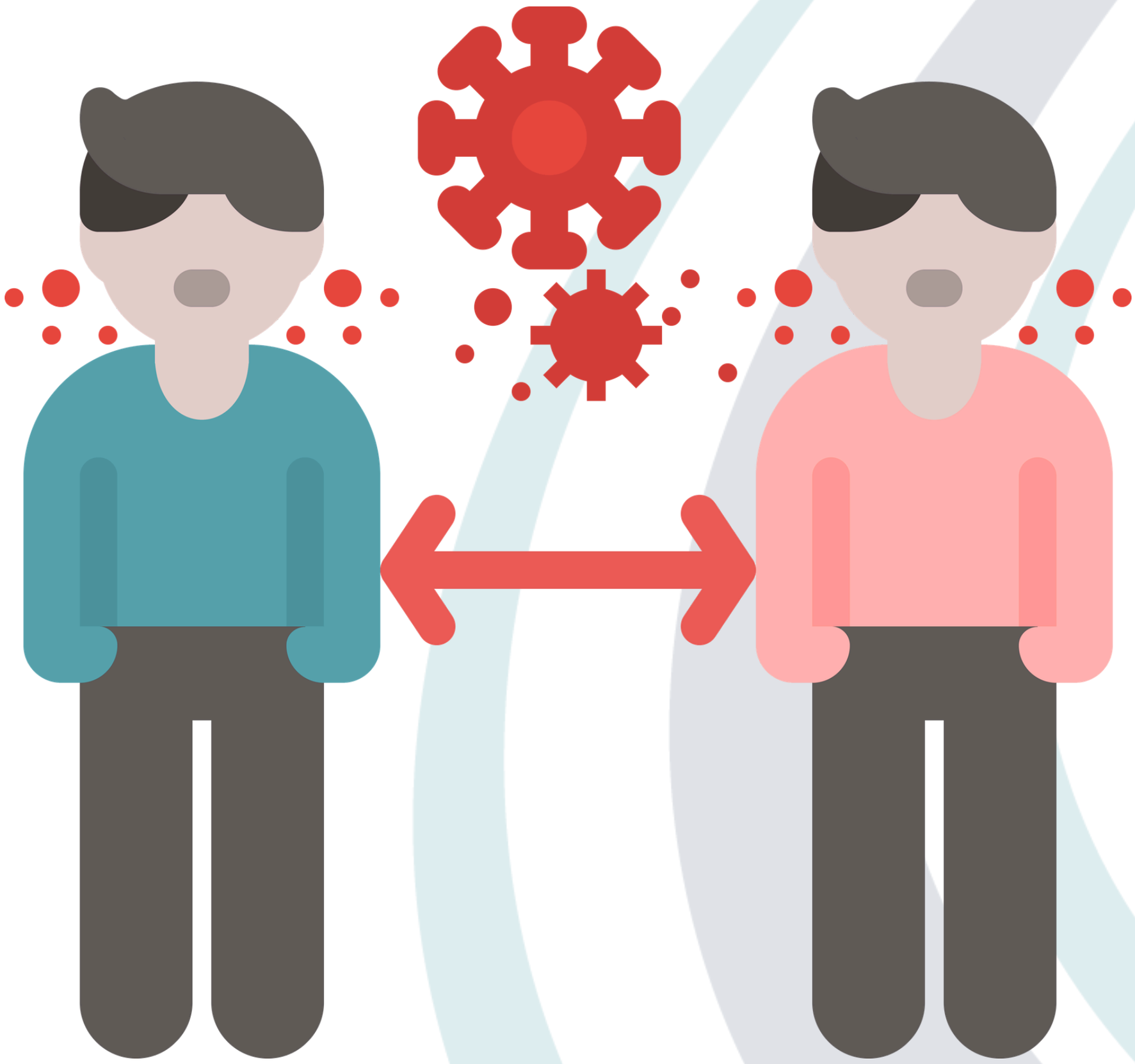
The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during June - August 2025. The survey was sent to the NPC data base of parents of children in EY who had consented to receive such e mails. The survey was open from 20th of June 2025 till the 15th of August 2025. During this time, a total of (96) parents completed the survey. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey will be shared in this section.



Surveys

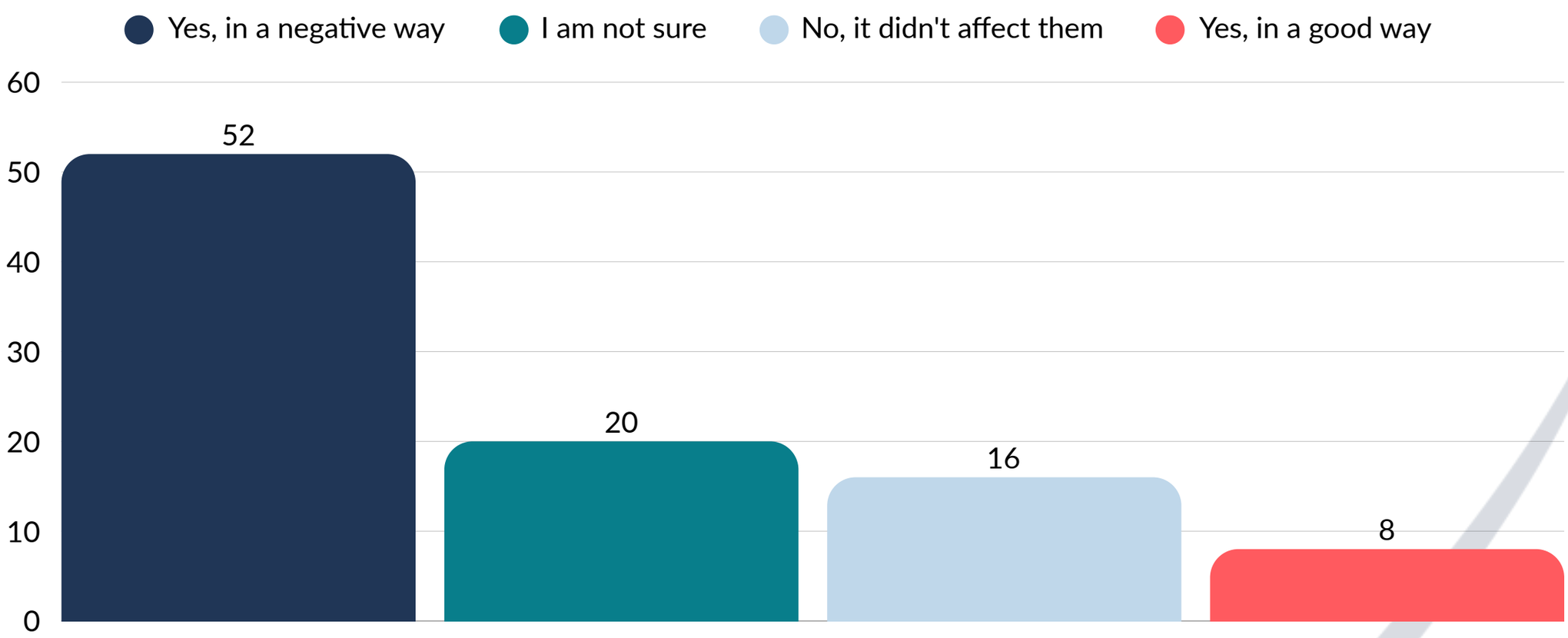
A survey titled Covid-19 was sent to parents to collect feedback. The survey asked a number of questions to find out how parents felt about their children's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and any current lasting effects.

It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This gave parents the opportunity to choose answers that suited their views and also share extra thoughts. Parents were also asked to think about how well EY setting supported their child's learning needs. The main results of the survey, including key points and parents' opinions, will be shared in this section.



Survey Findings

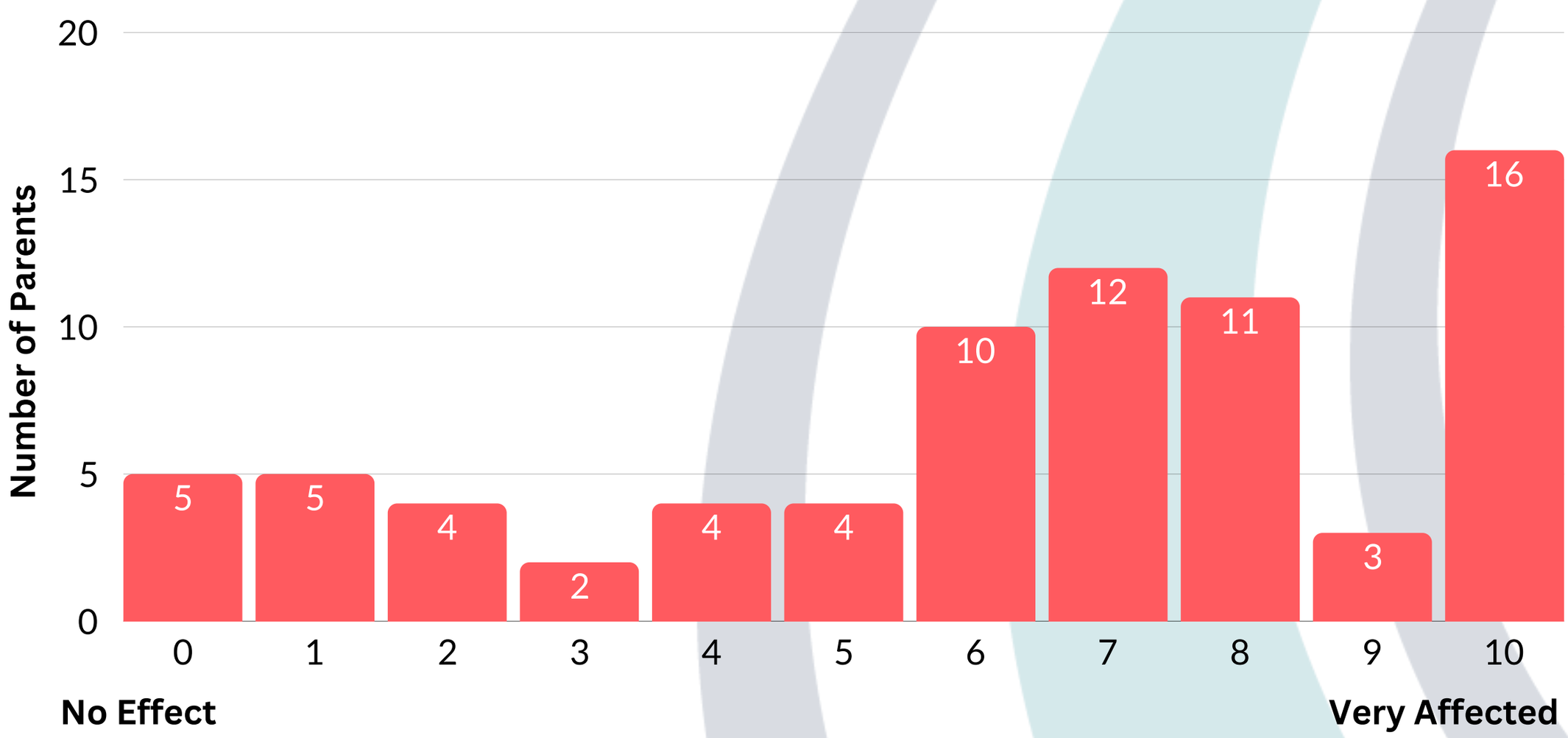
When asked whether EY settings closures during the pandemic affected their child, most parents reported a negative impact. Smaller numbers said they were unsure, felt the closures had no impact, or believed they had a positive effect (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Did EY settings closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affect your child?

Parents were asked to rate the extent to which EY setting closures affected their child. Most responses were between 7 and 10, indicating a strong impact. Few parents gave moderate scores between 4 and 6, while a smaller number rated the effect between 0 and 3 (see Figure 2).

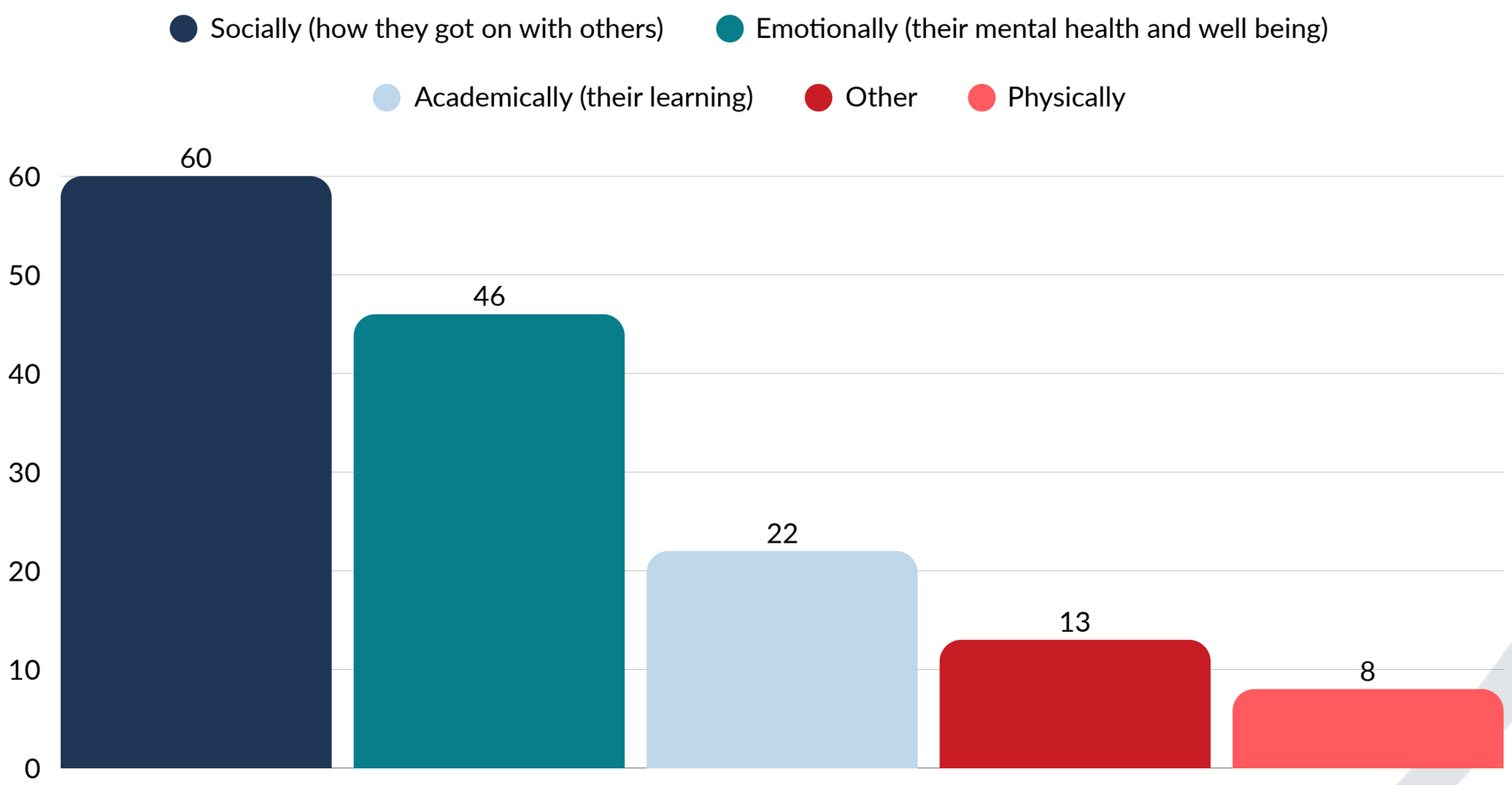


(Figure 2)

To what extent did the EY settings closures affect your child?



When parents were asked how EY setting closures affected their child, parents most commonly selected social, emotional, and academic impacts. Physical effects and other types of impact were mentioned less frequently (see Figure 3).



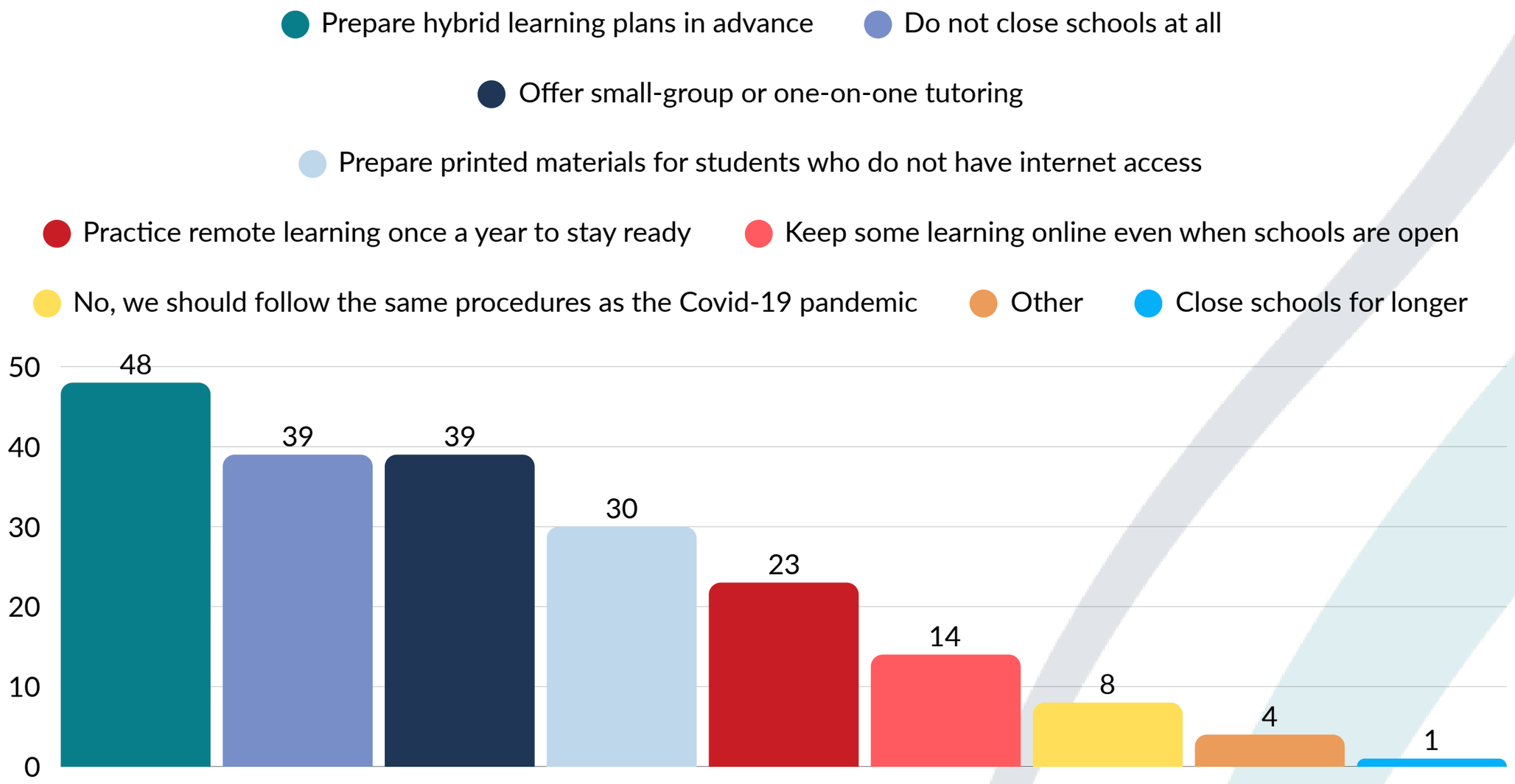
(Figure 3)
How did the EY settings closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

Some parents chose “Other” to describe how EY setting closures affected their children. A few said their children were not really affected, while a small number noticed stronger impacts, like delays in starting primary school, trouble adjusting to a new school environment, or changes in social development. One parent said their child became scared of masks and social distancing, which made it harder for them to feel close and affectionate. Another parent pointed out a positive side: the extra time allowed for independent play and more family bonding.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



When parents were asked what should be done differently if a similar event occurred in the future, they suggested a range of approaches. Many said it would help not to close EY setting at all. A few parents felt we should do the same as during the Covid-19 pandemic or close EY setting for longer (see Figure 4).



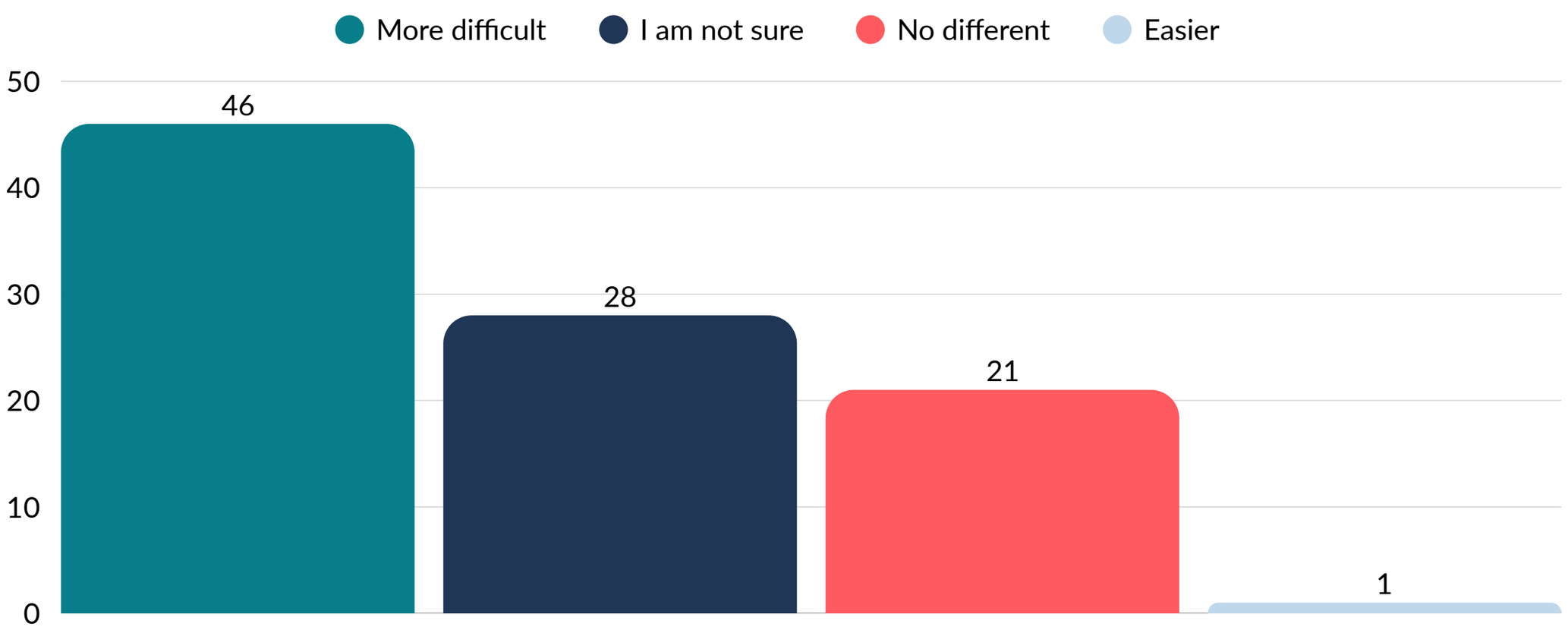
(Figure 4)
If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)

Three parents chose "Other" and shared their thoughts. One suggested that EY setting responses should depend on the type of emergency — for example, while closures may have been appropriate early in the COVID-19 pandemic, they might not be necessary in the future. They emphasised the need for flexible, ready-to-implement plans rather than rigid lesson structures. Another parent supported a tailored approach based on children's age, and a third noted that online learning is ineffective for very young children.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



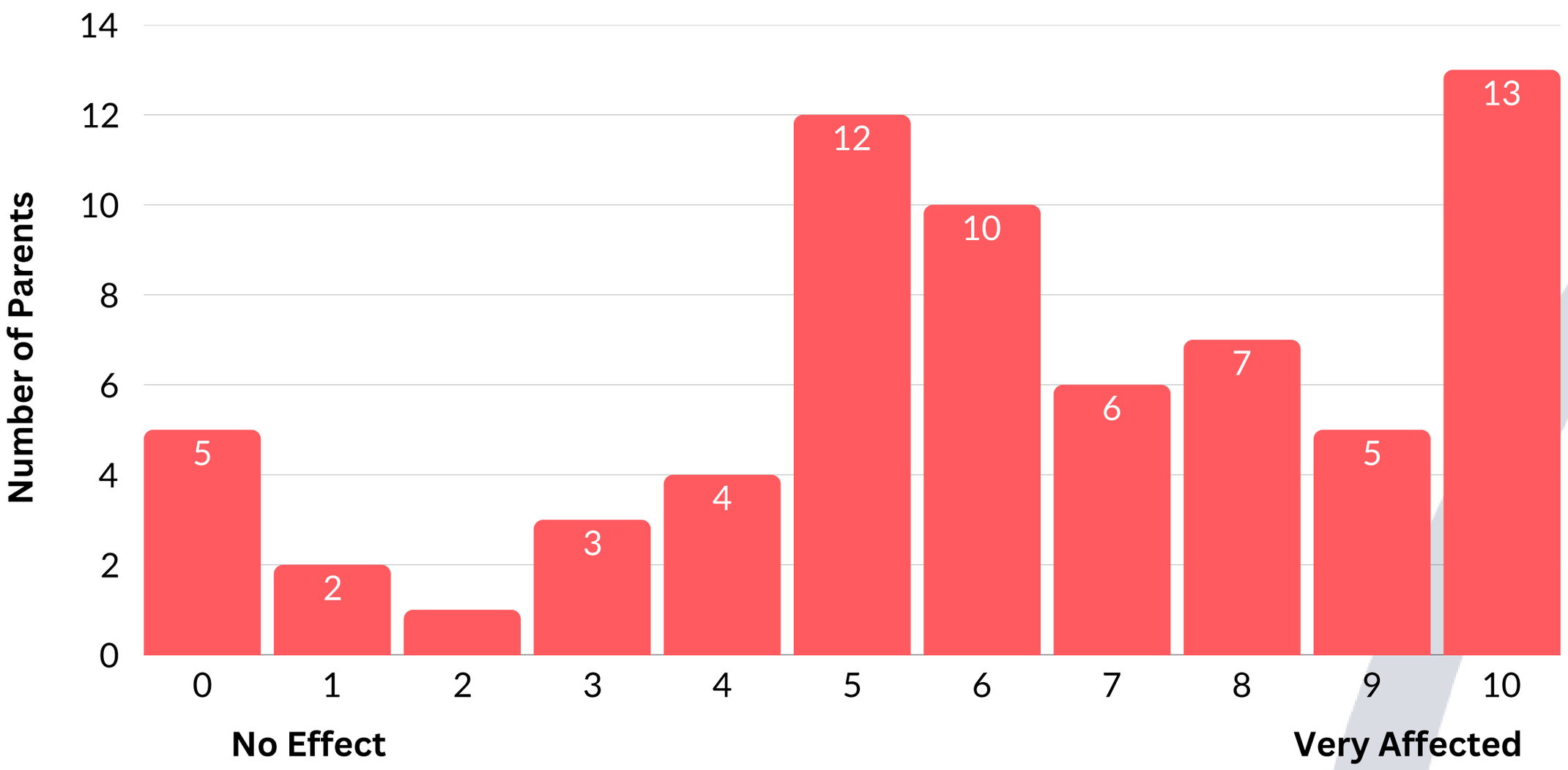
When parents were asked whether EY setting closures made it more difficult for their child to move to the next stage in their educational journey, the majority of parents said the transition was more difficult. The remaining parents said that they were unsure or the closures made no difference (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)

A transition is when a child moves from one school setting to another. Do you think school closures made your child's transition?

Parents were asked to to rate the impact of EY setting closures on their child's transition between school settings. The majority gave a high rating (7–10), indicating a strong effect. A smaller group gave a moderate score (4–6), and the fewest rated the effect as low (0–3) (see Figure 6).

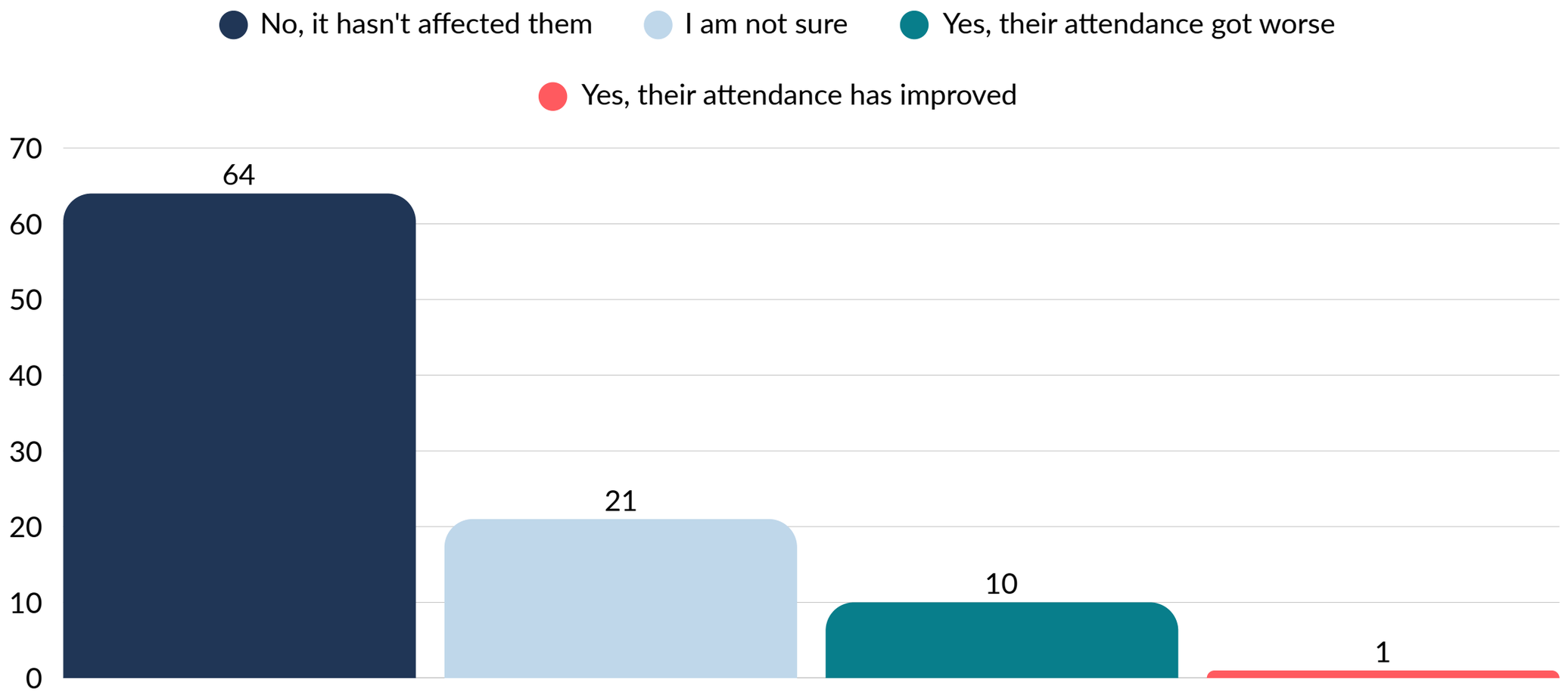


(Figure 6)

To what extent do you think EY settings closures affected your child's transition?



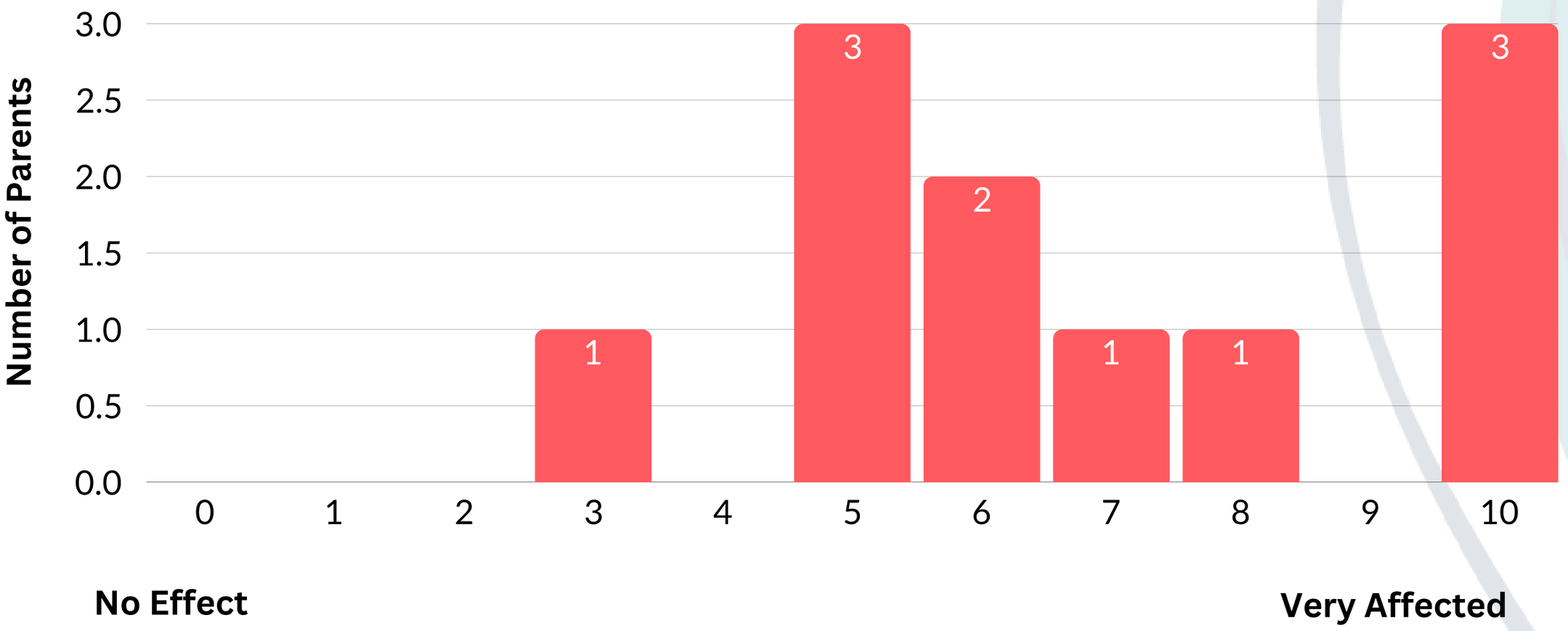
When parents were asked whether their child's current school attendance had been affected by COVID-19 closures, most parents said it had not. A number of parents were unsure, while others reported a decline in attendance. Only one parent saw improvements (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

Do you think your child's current attendance at school is affected by school closures during COVID-19?

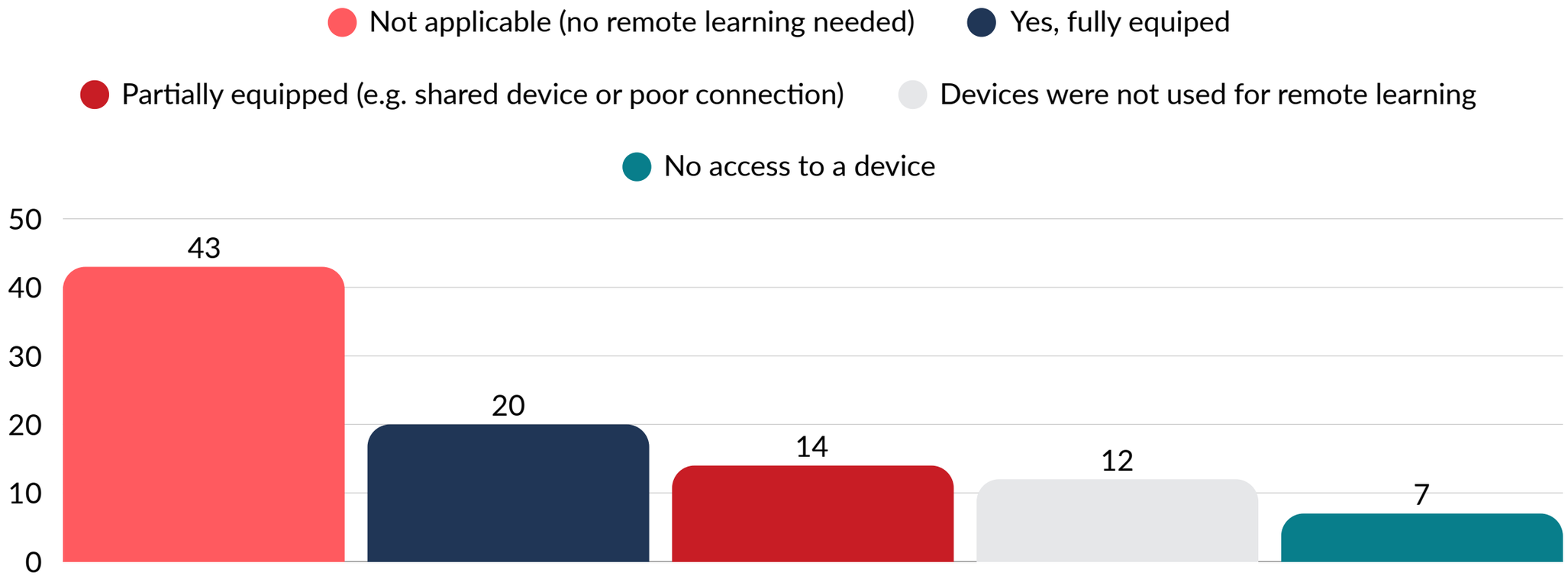
Parents were asked to rate the extent of COVID-19 EY setting closures on their child's current attendance. The most common ratings were in the moderate range (4–7), followed by high ratings (8–10). Low ratings (0–3) were the least frequent (see Figure 8).



(Figure 8)

To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during Covid-19?

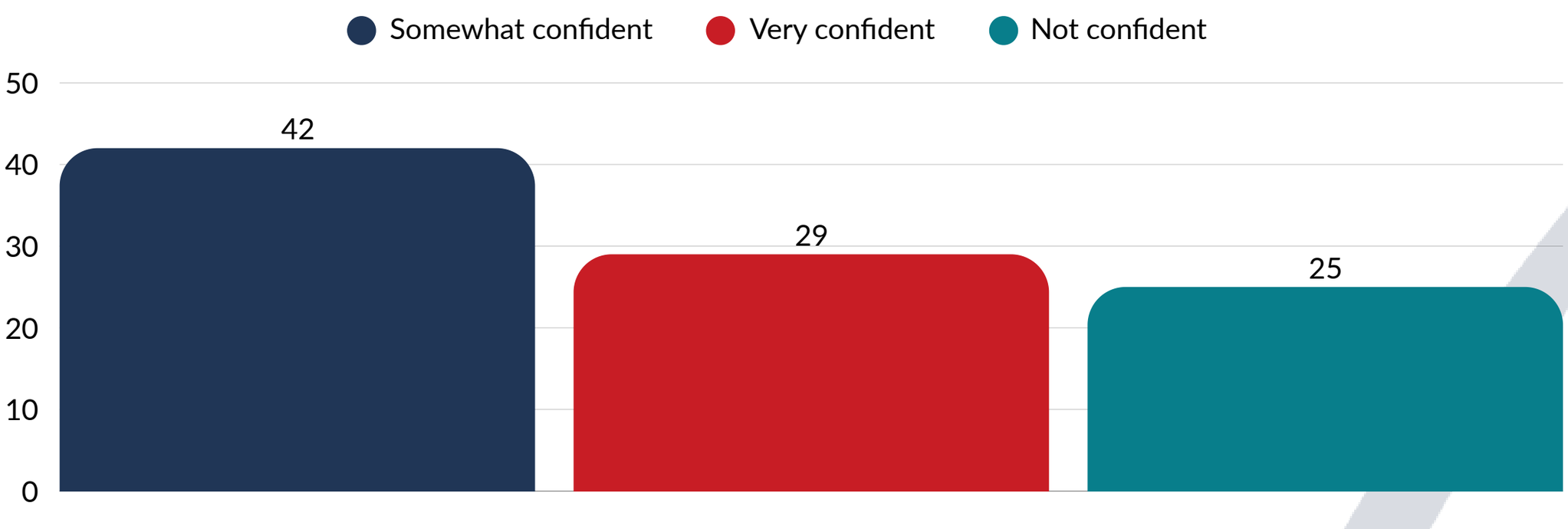
When parents were asked whether their child had access to a device and internet for remote learning, most said no remote learning was needed or their child was either fully or partially equipped. A small number reported that no devices were used for remote learning or that their child had no access (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)

When schools were closed during COVID-19, did your child have access to a device and internet for remote learning (if applicable)?

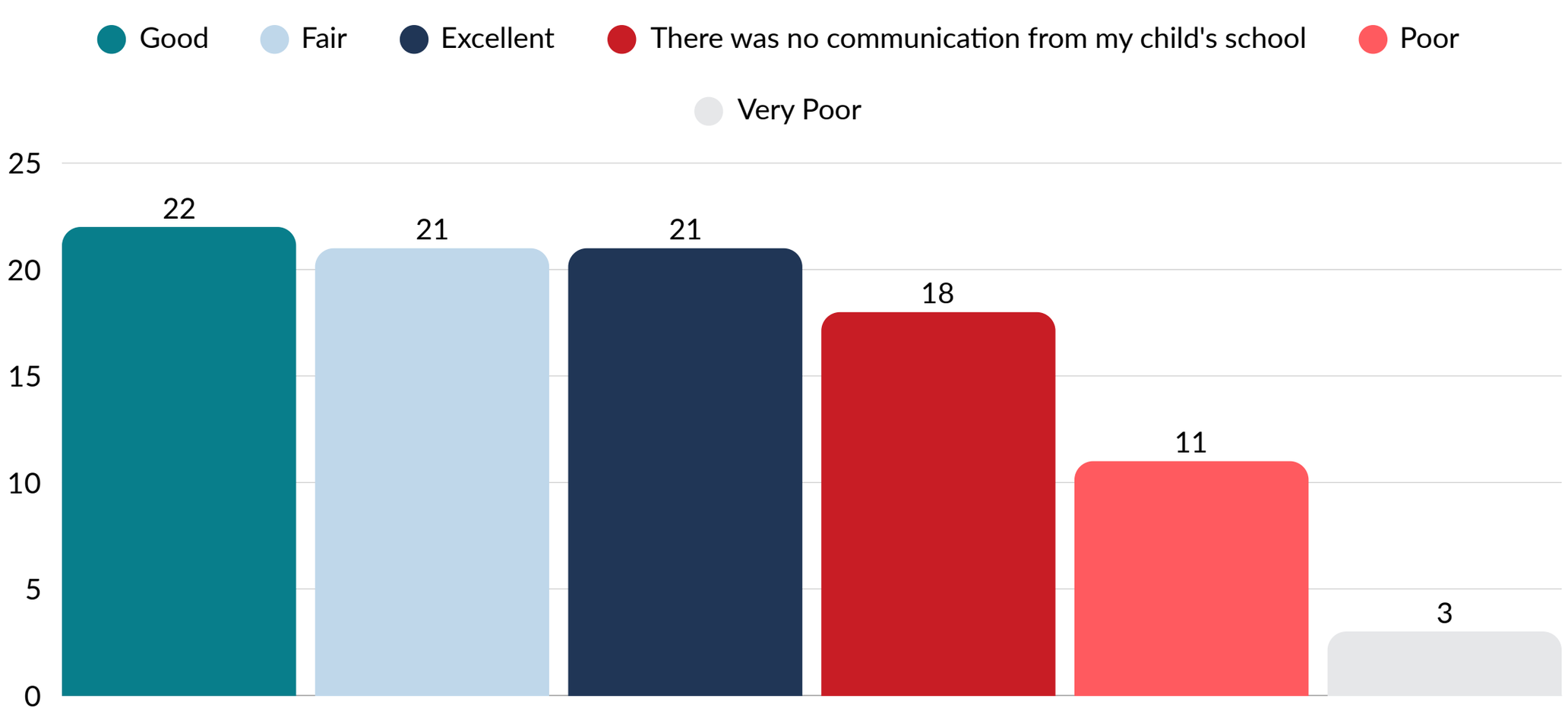
When parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning at home during EY setting closures, most said they were either somewhat confident or very confident. A smaller number said they felt not confident (see Figure 10).



(Figure 10)

How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?

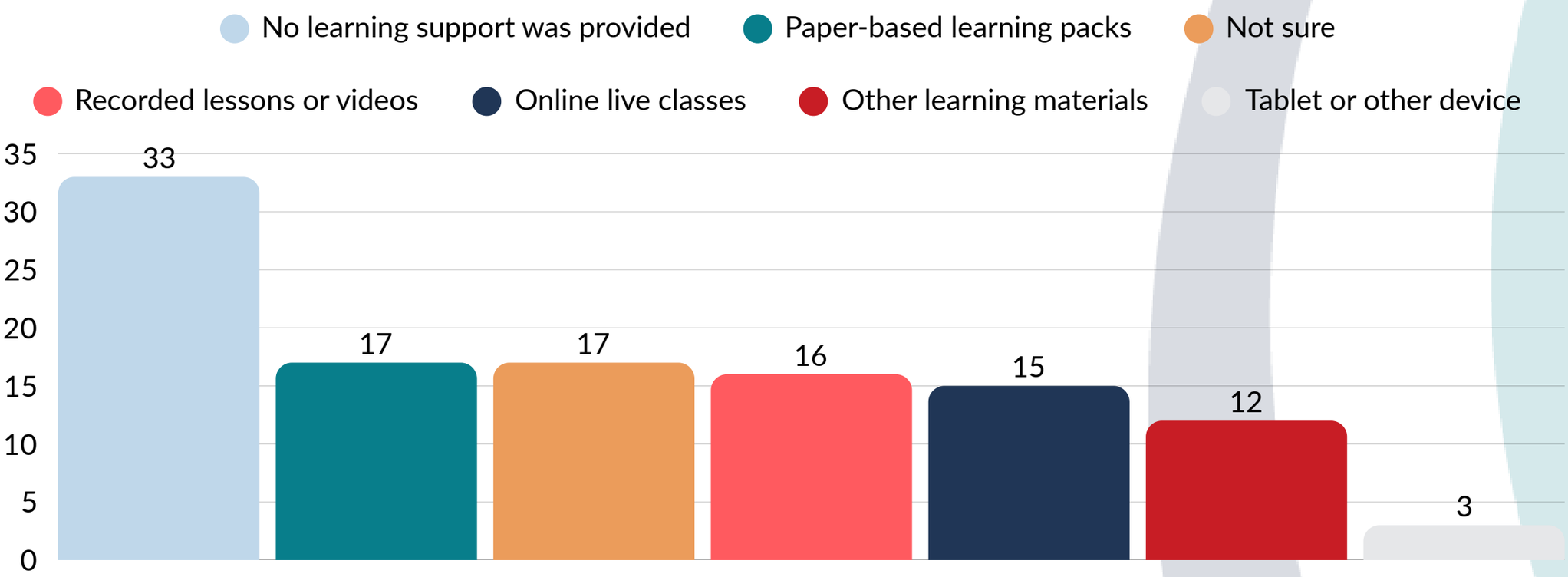
When parents were asked to rate communication from their child's EY setting during closures, most rated it as good, excellent, or fair. A smaller number said there was no communication at all, while fewer rated it as poor or very poor (see Figure 11).



(Figure 11)

How would you rate the communication from your child's EY settings during school closures?

When parents were asked what kind of learning materials or support their child received during EY setting closures, the most common response was that no learning support was provided. Many parents were unsure or mentioned receiving paper-based learning packs. Some children received recorded lessons or videos and online live classes, while a few parents said their child had access to other learning materials (see Figure 12).

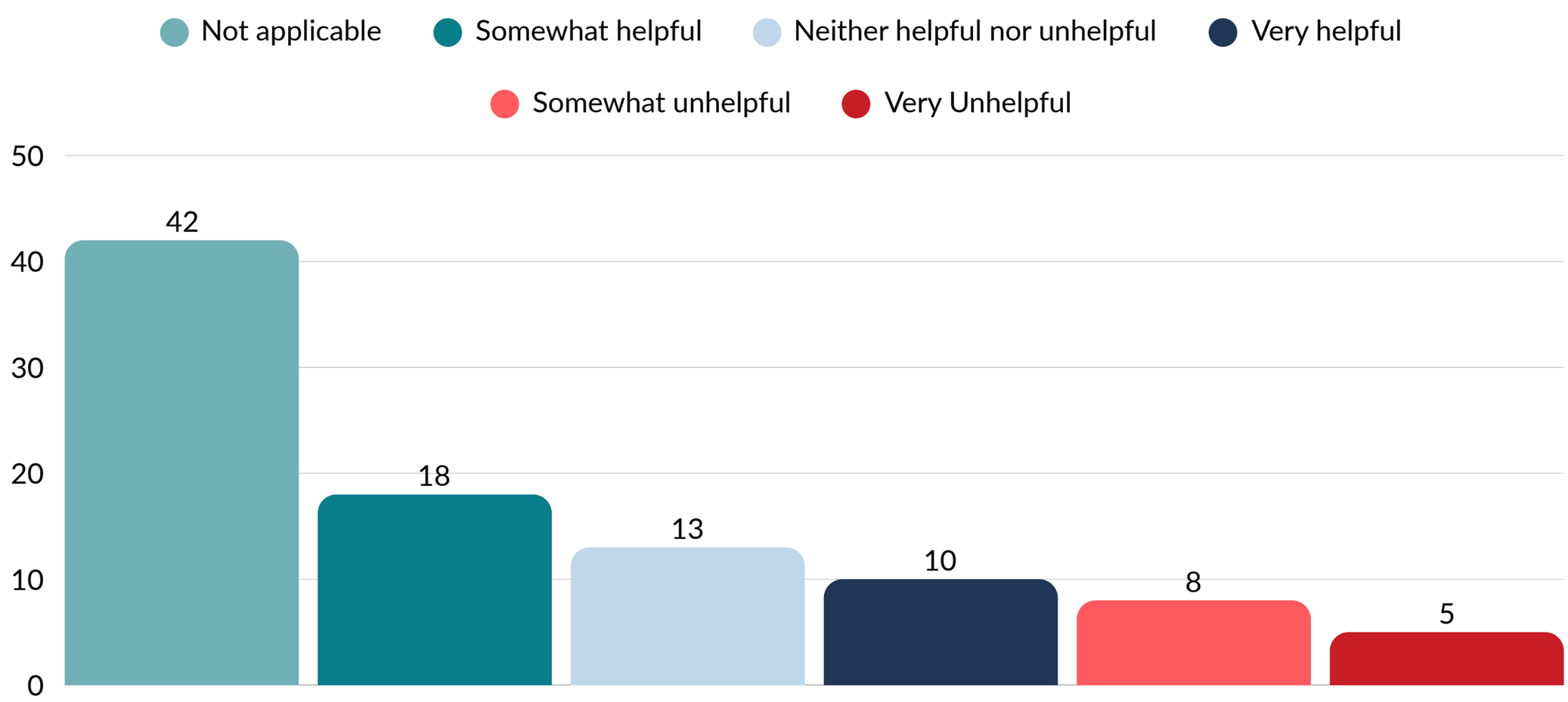


(Figure 12)

What type of learning materials or support was provided during closures? (Select all that apply)



When parents were asked how helpful their child found the materials and support provided during EY setting closures, most thought they were not applicable to their child. Others felt they were somewhat helpful, while a smaller number described the materials as neither helpful nor unhelpful. Fewer parents rated them as very helpful, somewhat unhelpful, or very unhelpful (see Figure 13).



(Figure 13)
How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?



Section 2 Conclusion

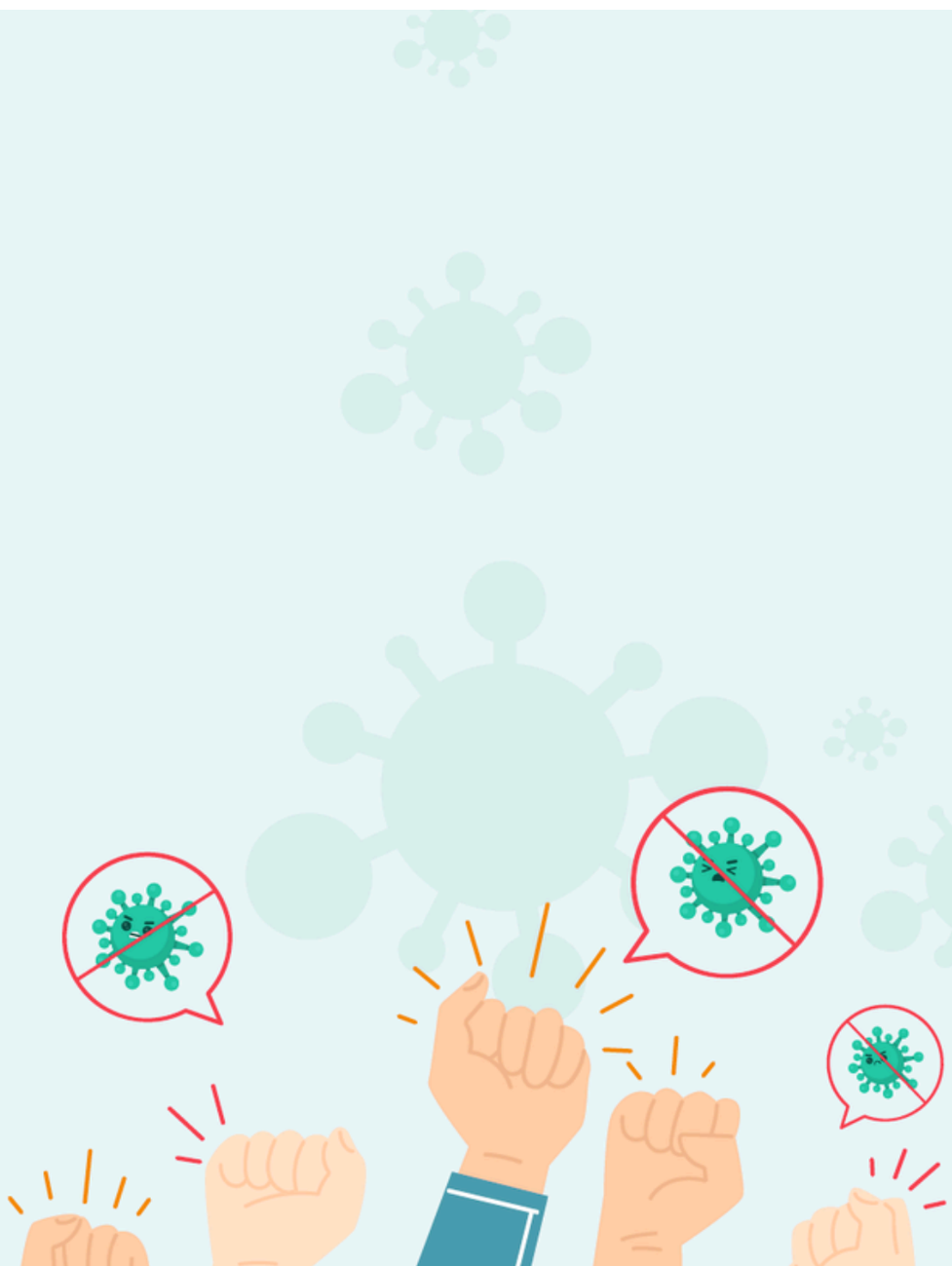
This section shows that the COVID-19 pandemic affected children's learning, wellbeing, and development in many different ways. Most parents described big challenges, particularly with social skills, emotional health, and educational progress. But some parents also noticed positives, such as closer family relationships and children becoming more independent.

For most families, EY setting closures were harmful—especially during important transitions, like starting primary school or moving up a stage. Yet a smaller number of parents said the impact was minimal or even positive, showing that experiences varied widely.

Access to online learning was uneven. Many families said they received little or no material, while others managed well and felt able to support their child's learning at home.

Looking ahead, parents strongly want EY settings to be better prepared for future crises. They suggested having flexible hybrid learning plans, improving communication with families, making sure all children have fair access to resources, and treating EY setting as essential services. Parents of children with additional needs were especially clear that more support is urgently needed, as long delays for services are still common.

Overall, the findings reflect a wide range of parental experiences. These voices point to the need for future planning that puts children's education, wellbeing, and social development at the centre, so no child is left behind in times of disruption.





SECTION 3

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION - PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes to children's education. Schools closed, learning moved online, and social rules affected families. To learn more about the longer-term effects, the NPC asked parents about their children’s experiences during and after the pandemic. The goal was to understand how students were affected in their learning, friendships, and feelings, and where more support may be needed.

Parents were invited to share their point of view through a consultation that included both structured and open-ended questions. This helped us understand what problems they faced, and how well schools supported their learning. Parents also shared views on remote learning, school communication, and what should could be done differently if something like this happens again.

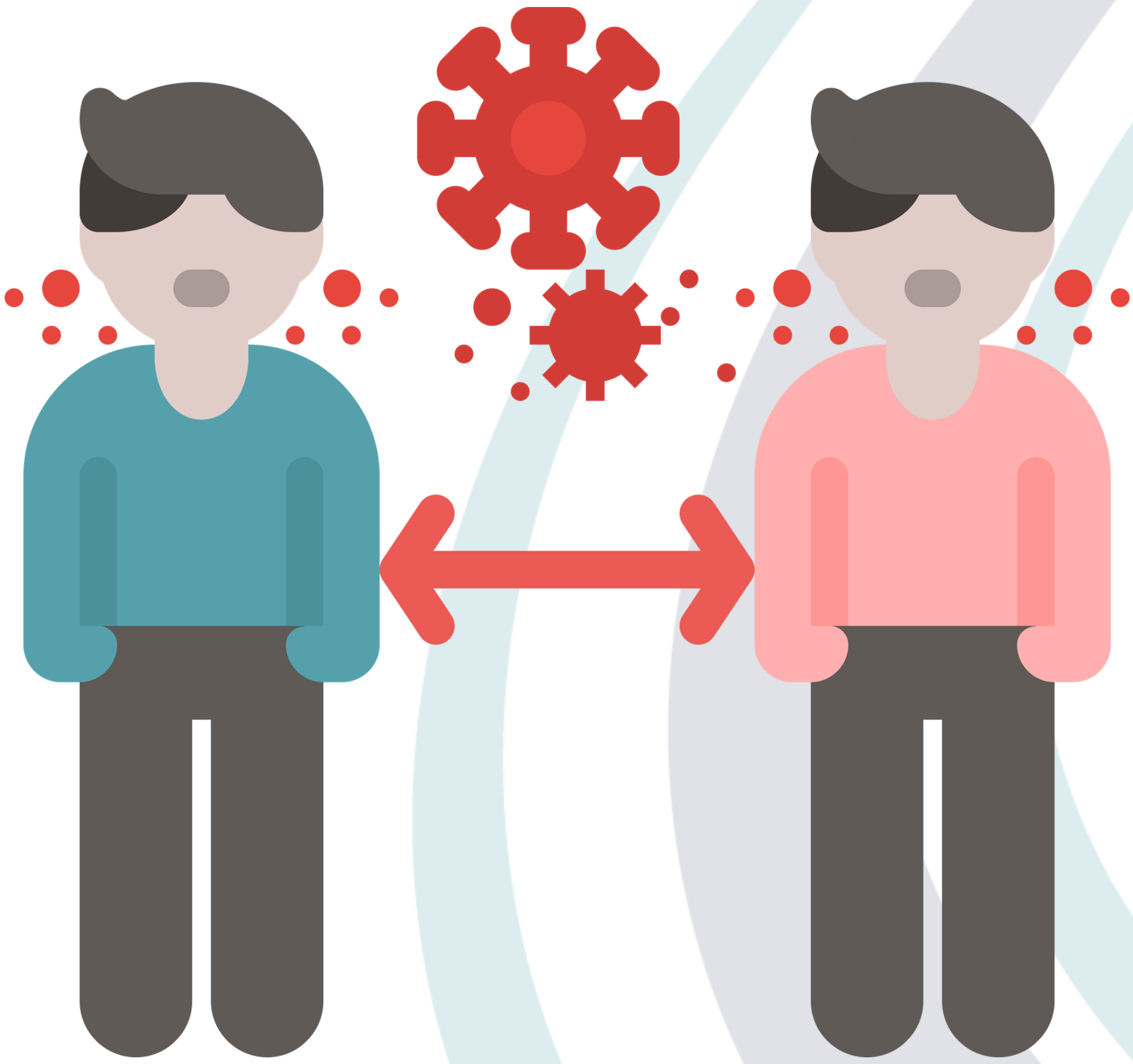
The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during June - August 2025. The survey was sent to the NPC data base of parents of children in primary schools. The survey was open from 20th of June 2025 till the 15th of August 2025. During this time, a total of (629) parents completed the survey. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey will be shared in this section.



Surveys

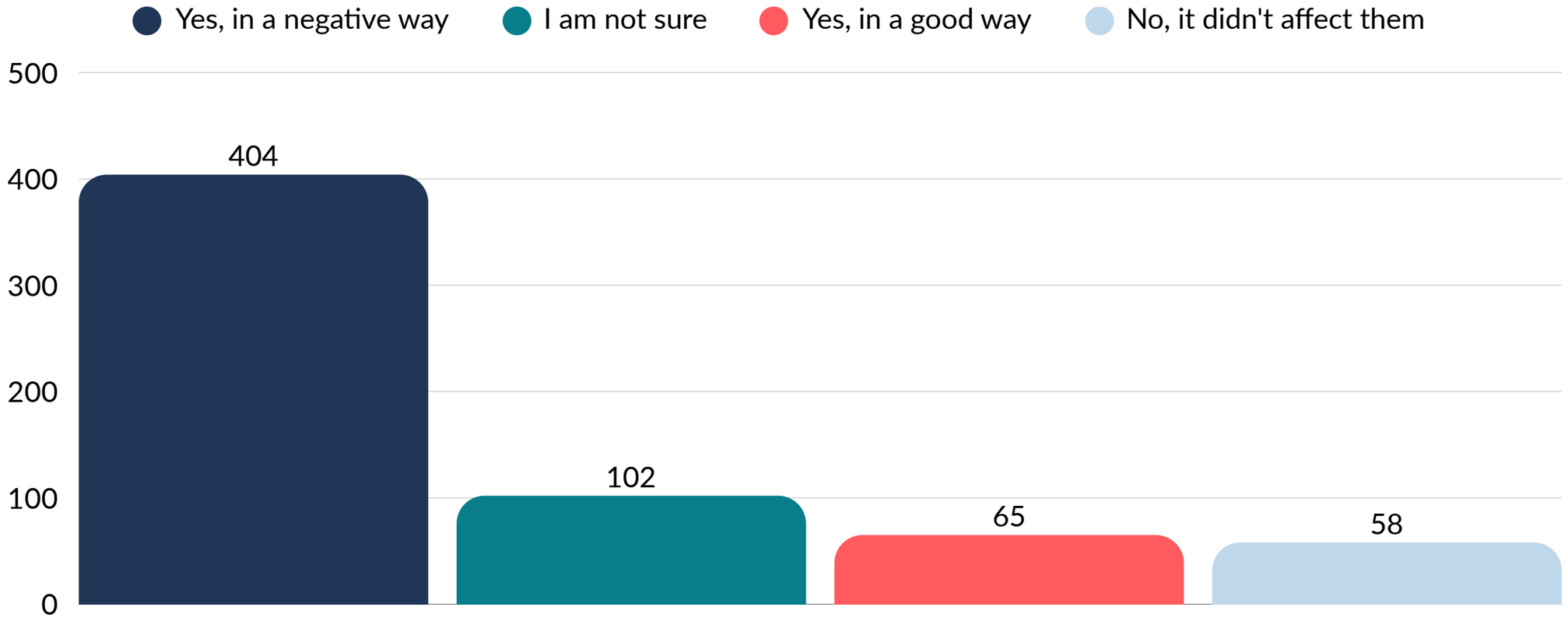
A survey titled Covid-19 was sent to parents to collect feedback. The survey asked a number of questions to find out how parents felt about their children's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and any current lasting effects.

It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This gave parents the opportunity to choose answers that suited their views and also share extra thoughts. Parents were also asked to think about how well schools supported their child's learning needs. The main results of the survey, including key points and parents' opinions, will be shared in this section.



Survey Findings

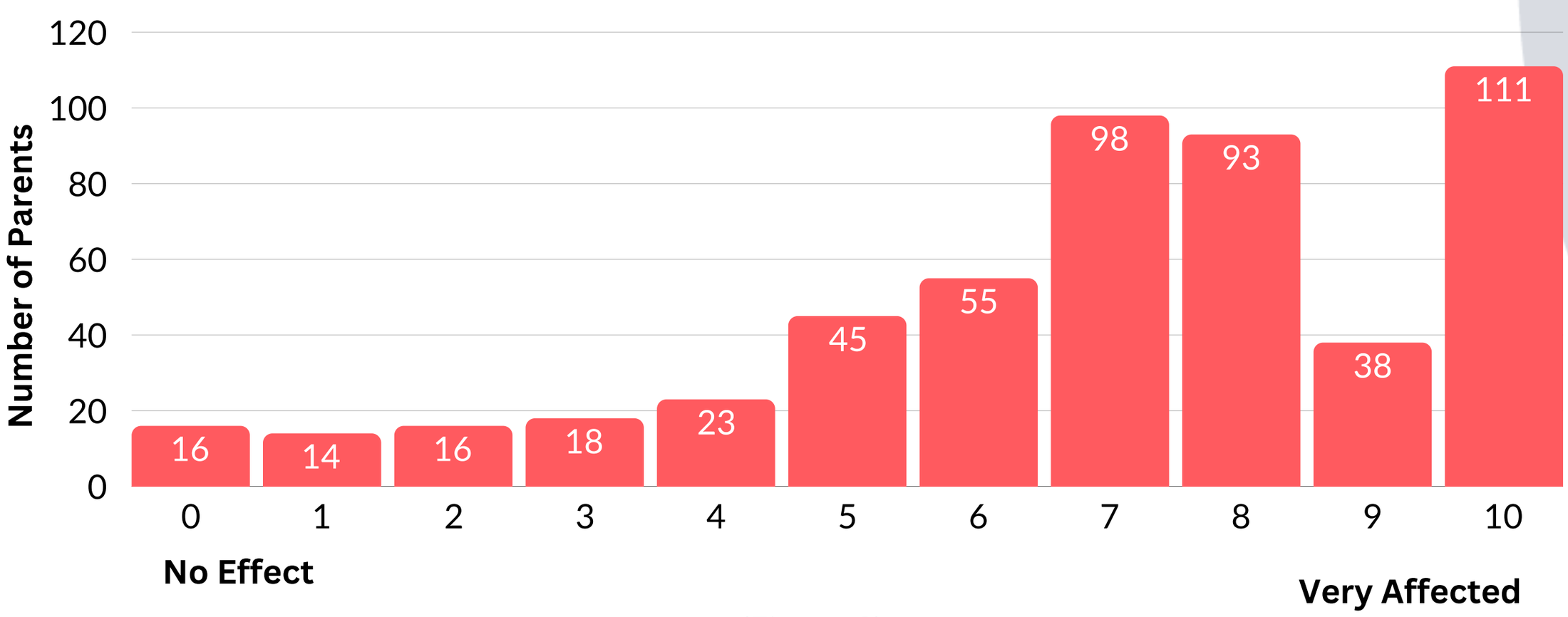
When asked whether school closures during the pandemic affected their child, the majority of parents reported a negative impact. A smaller group were unsure, while few parents said the closures were beneficial or had no impact (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Did school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affect your child?

Parents were asked to rate the extent to which school closures affected their child. Most responses were between 7 and 10, indicating a strong impact. Few parents gave moderate scores between 4 and 6, while a smaller number rated the effect between 0 and 3 (see Figure 2).

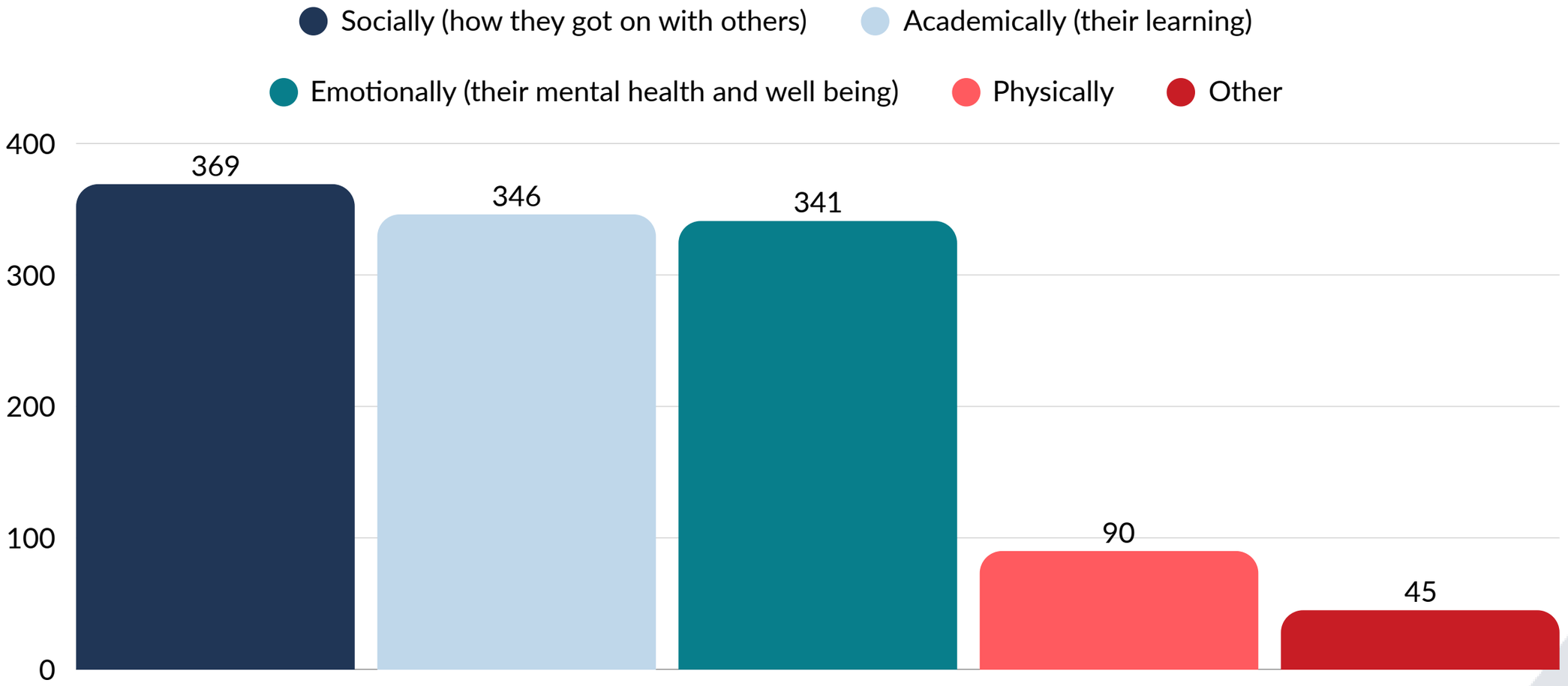


(Figure 2)

To what extent did the school closures affect your child?



When parents were asked how school closures affected their child, parents most commonly selected social, academic, and emotional impacts. Physical effects and other types of impact were mentioned less frequently (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3)
How did the school closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

Parents shared a wide range of experiences about how school closures affected their children. Some reported little or no impact, particularly for very young children, those transitioning into post-primary school, or those naturally suited to a quieter pace of life. A number of families highlighted positive outcomes: children who stayed socially connected through online games or local peers, opportunities for outdoor play and neighbourly interaction, and in some cases, relief from bullying or rigid routines. For others, the closures offered valuable family time, with siblings bonding more closely and one family noting the opportunity to share their faith more deeply.

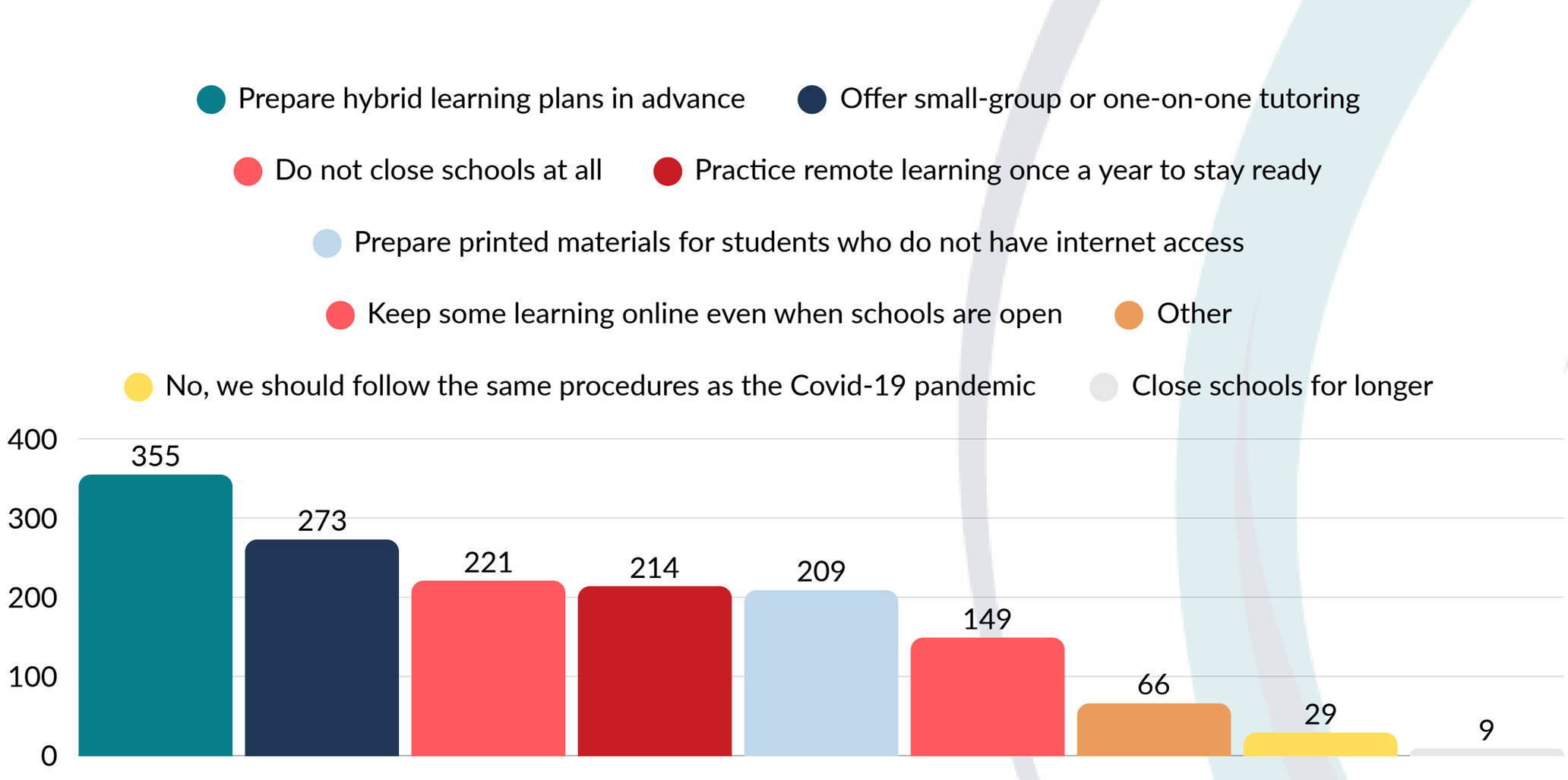
For many, however, the experience was more mixed. Parents described mild challenges such as boredom, disconnection from school, and missing friends. Some children experienced loneliness where school provision was limited or inconsistent, requiring parents to step in to provide structure and support. Balancing work and academic support proved especially difficult for some families, with children falling behind peers. In certain cases, the lack of teacher interaction meant that additional learning needs, such as dyslexia or neurodevelopmental differences, went unrecognised until later and became more pronounced over time.

More serious difficulties were also reported. Some children developed school refusal, anxiety around social interaction, or ongoing academic struggles, including poor handwriting and spelling difficulties.

Missed milestones such as first communion preparation or the traditional end-of-year experiences in sixth class were also a source of disappointment. While some schools provided meaningful support during closures, others relied heavily on worksheets and homework, which parents felt did not adequately meet children's needs. Despite these challenges, many families worked hard to support their children at home, with varying degrees of success.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

When parents were asked what should be done differently if a similar event occurred in the future, they suggested a range of approaches. The most popular options included preparing hybrid learning plans in advance, offering small-group or one-on-one tutoring, and avoiding school closures altogether. Many parents also recommended practising remote learning annually to stay prepared and providing printed materials for students without internet access. Few parents supported keeping some learning online when schools are open, and only a small number favoured following the same procedures as during the Covid-19 pandemic or extending school closures (see Figure 4).



(Figure 4)

If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)



Parents offered a wide range of reflections and suggestions on how education could be better managed during future emergencies. Many felt the response to COVID-19 was disproportionate and poorly planned, particularly for children with additional needs such as dyslexia and ADHD. Several parents expressed frustration that Ireland was slow to prioritise these children's return to school compared with other countries, and that the closures highlighted how heavily society relies on schools for broader services such as therapy and meals.

A recurring concern was the lack of consistency across schools. While some schools provided strong support and regular interaction, others offered minimal contact, leaving parents to manage education largely on their own.

This inconsistency led some families to change schools altogether. Parents called for a national or standardised approach to remote learning, with clear expectations for teacher engagement and lesson delivery. Many stressed that simply assigning homework was not sufficient, and that teaching should have continued in some form, even if online.

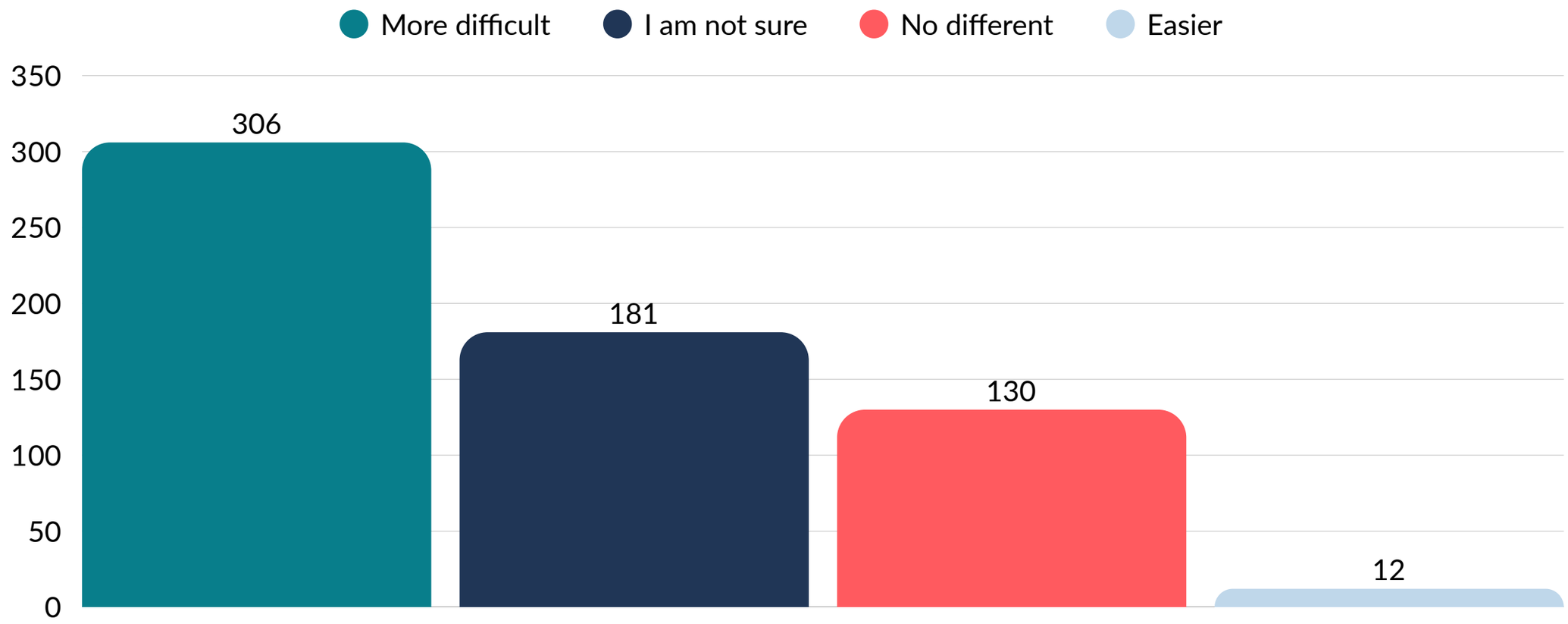
Suggestions for improvement included more interactive and social online learning, such as storytelling, group chats, and supervised activities to help children maintain connections with peers. Some proposed blended models with reduced school hours or partial reopening, while others recommended outdoor learning spaces and air filtration systems to make in-person education safer. There were also calls for better IT training for teachers, more support for parents who are not tech-savvy, and the creation of support hubs with age-appropriate educational resources.

Parents emphasised the need for flexibility and preparedness, suggesting that the Department of Education develop a menu of response options that schools could deploy quickly. They also highlighted the importance of regular parent-teacher meetings, consistent communication, and prioritising in-person contact for younger children and exam years. Some advocated for printed materials and one-to-one or small group tutoring, while others stressed the need to maintain routine and structure, particularly for autistic children.

While a small number of parents expressed extreme views or distrust toward public health measures, the majority focused on practical ways to improve the educational experience during crises. Overall, the feedback underscores a strong desire for more thoughtful planning, equitable support, and a child-centred approach in any future emergency.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

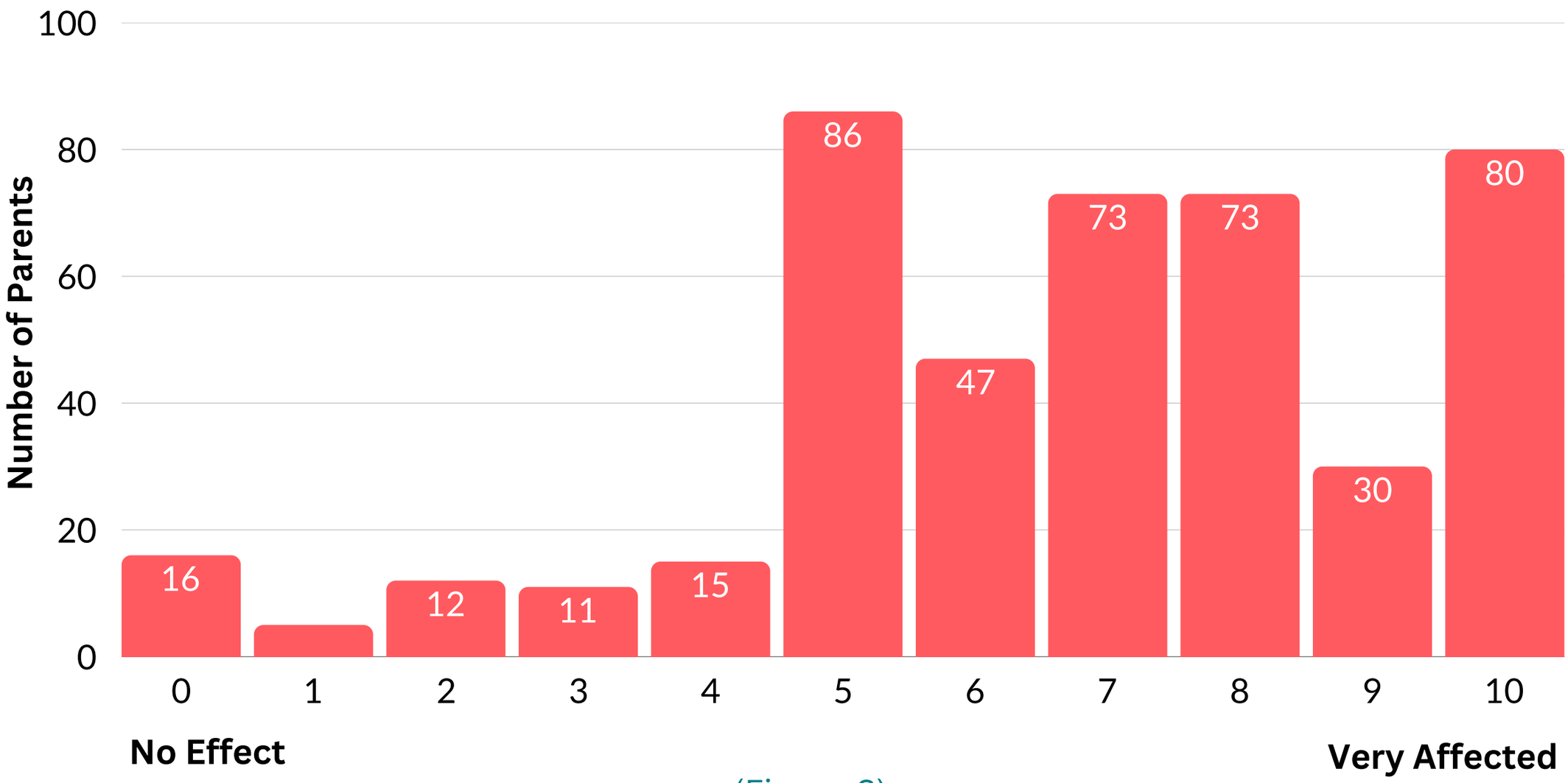
When parents were asked whether school closures made it more difficult for their child to move to the next stage in their educational journey, nearly half of parents said the transition was more difficult. The remaining parents said that they were unsure, the closures made no difference, or easier (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)

A transition is when a child moves from one school setting to another. Do you think school closures made your child's transition?

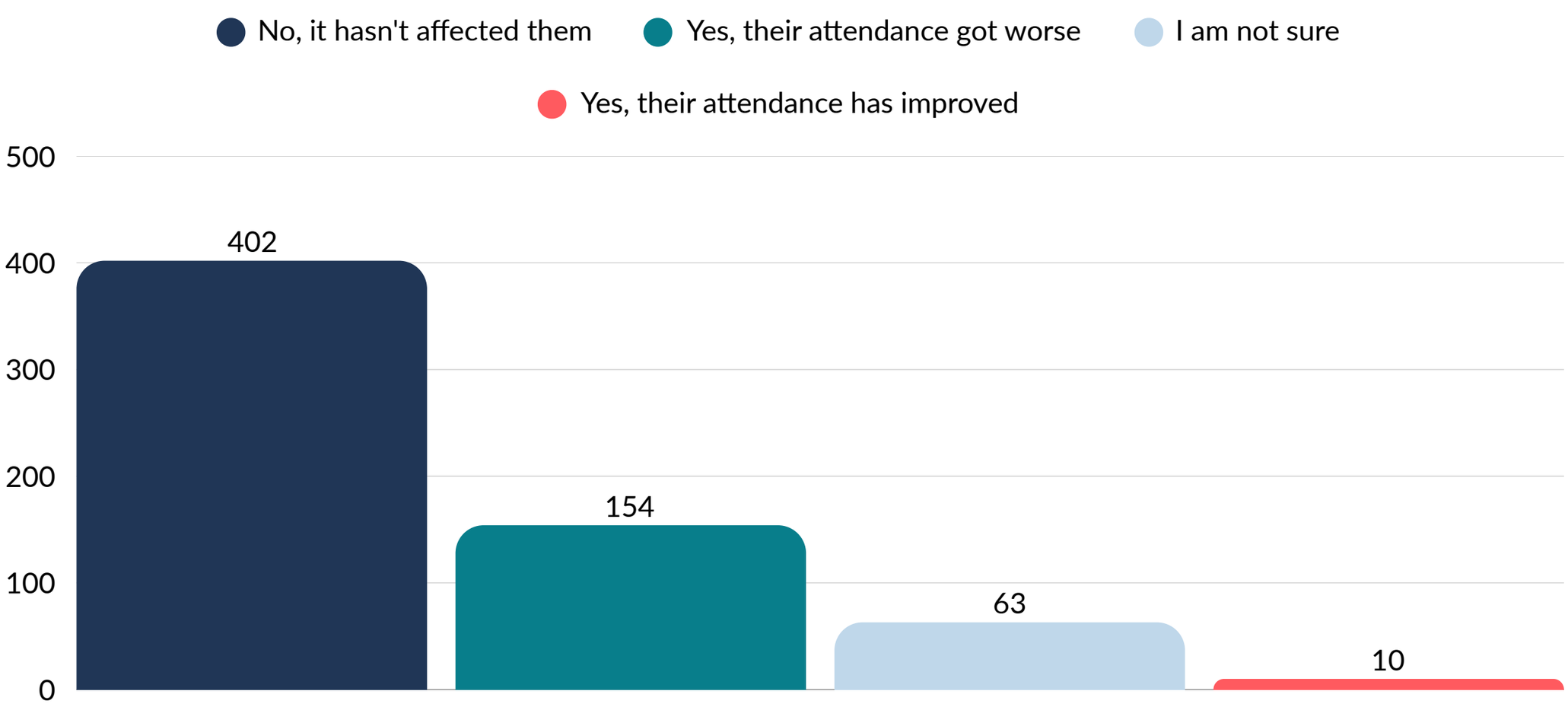
Parents were asked to to rate the impact of school closures on their child's transition between school settings. The majority gave a high rating (7–10), indicating a strong effect. A smaller group gave a moderate score (4–6), and the fewest rated the effect as low (0–3) (see Figure 6).



(Figure 6)

To what extent do you think school closures affected your child's transition?

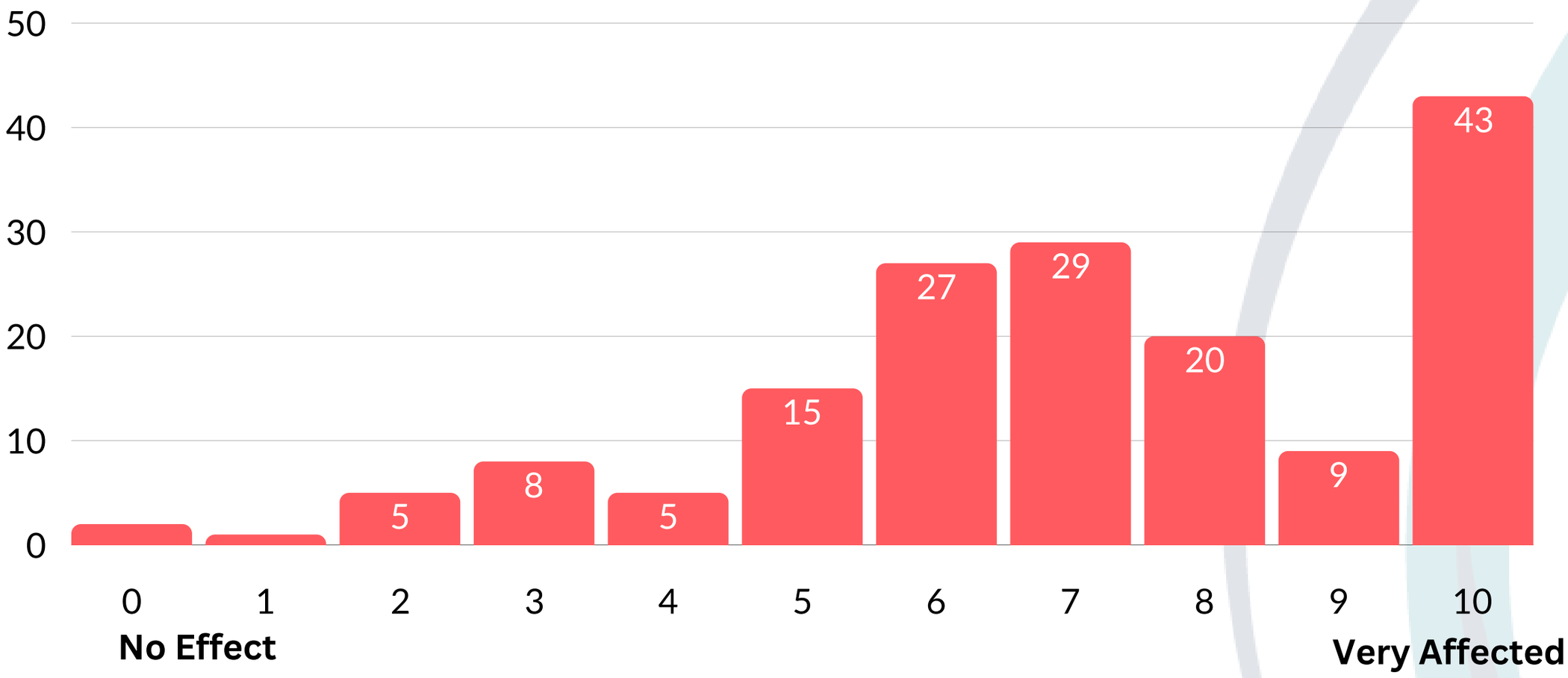
When parents were asked whether their child's current school attendance had been affected by COVID-19 closures, most parents said it had not. A Number of parents reported a decline in attendance, while others said they were unsure or saw improvements (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

Do you think your child's current attendance at school is affected by school closures during COVID-19?

Parents were asked to rate the extent of COVID-19 school closures on their child's current attendance. The majority of parents gave mid-range ratings (8–10), indicating a moderate effect. A smaller number of parents gave high ratings (5–7), and the smallest group gave low scores (0–4) (see Figure 8).

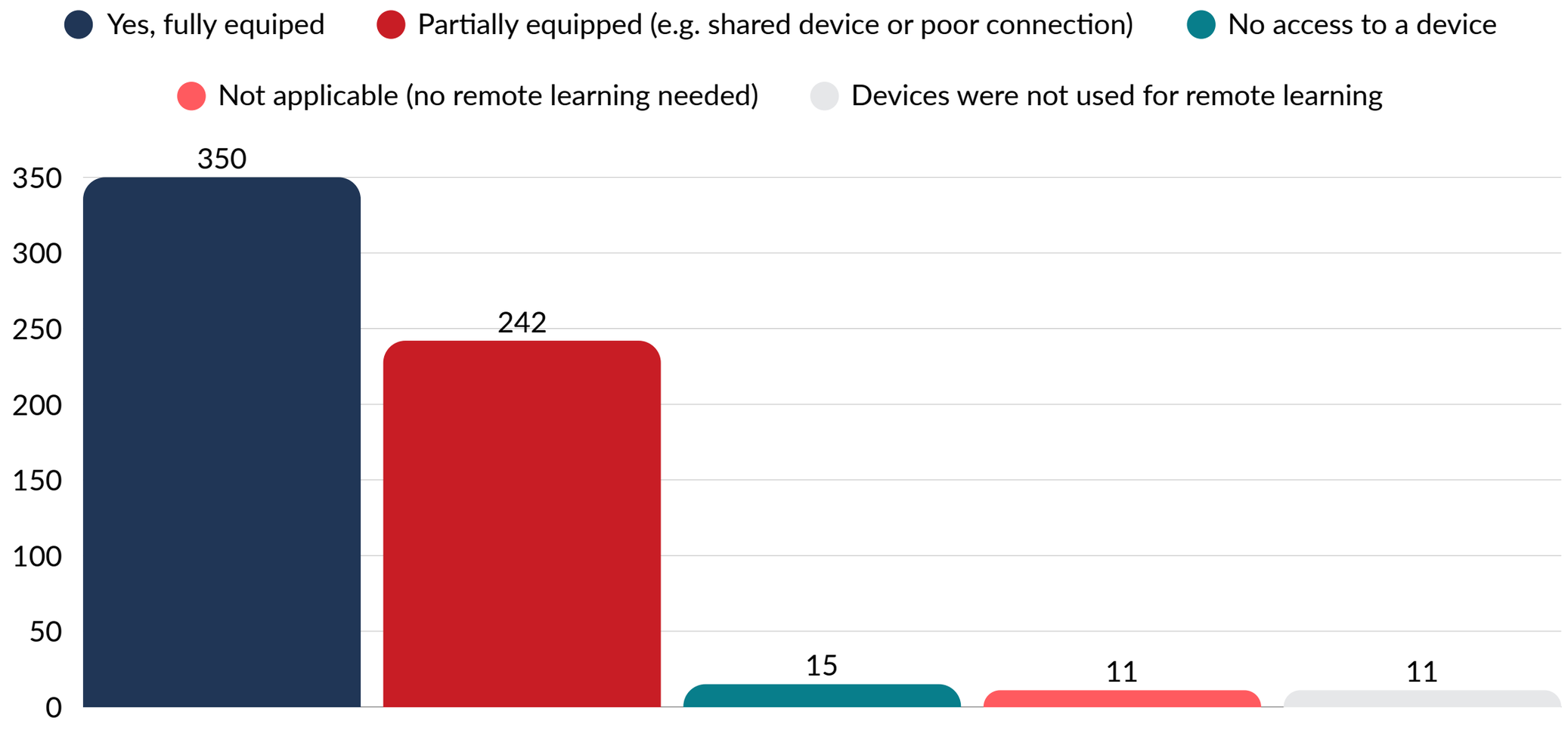


(Figure 8)

To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during Covid-19?



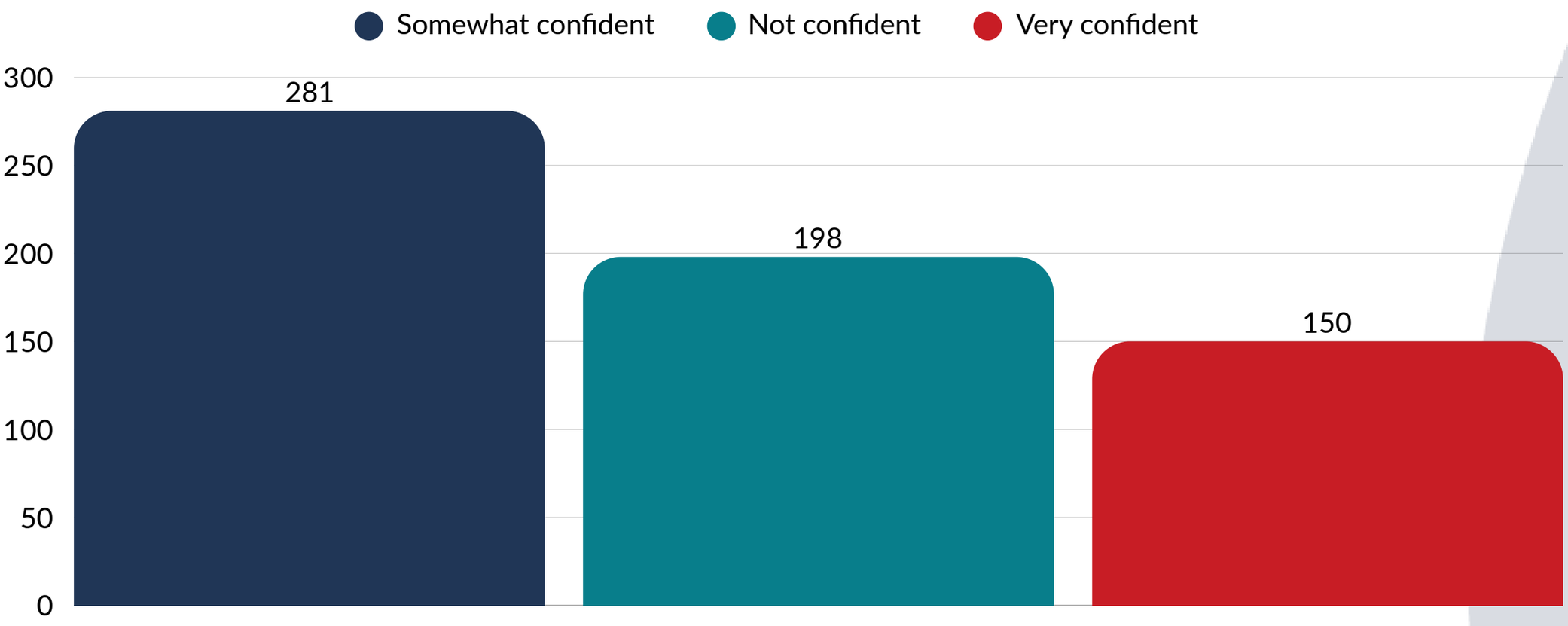
When parents were asked whether their child had access to a device and internet for remote learning, most said their child was either fully or partially equipped. A small number reported no access, no remote learning needed, or that no devices were used for learning (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)

When schools were closed during COVID-19, did your child have access to a device and internet for remote learning (if applicable)?

When parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning at home during school closures, the majority of parents said they felt somewhat confident. A smaller number of parents reported feeling either not confident or very confident (see Figure 10).

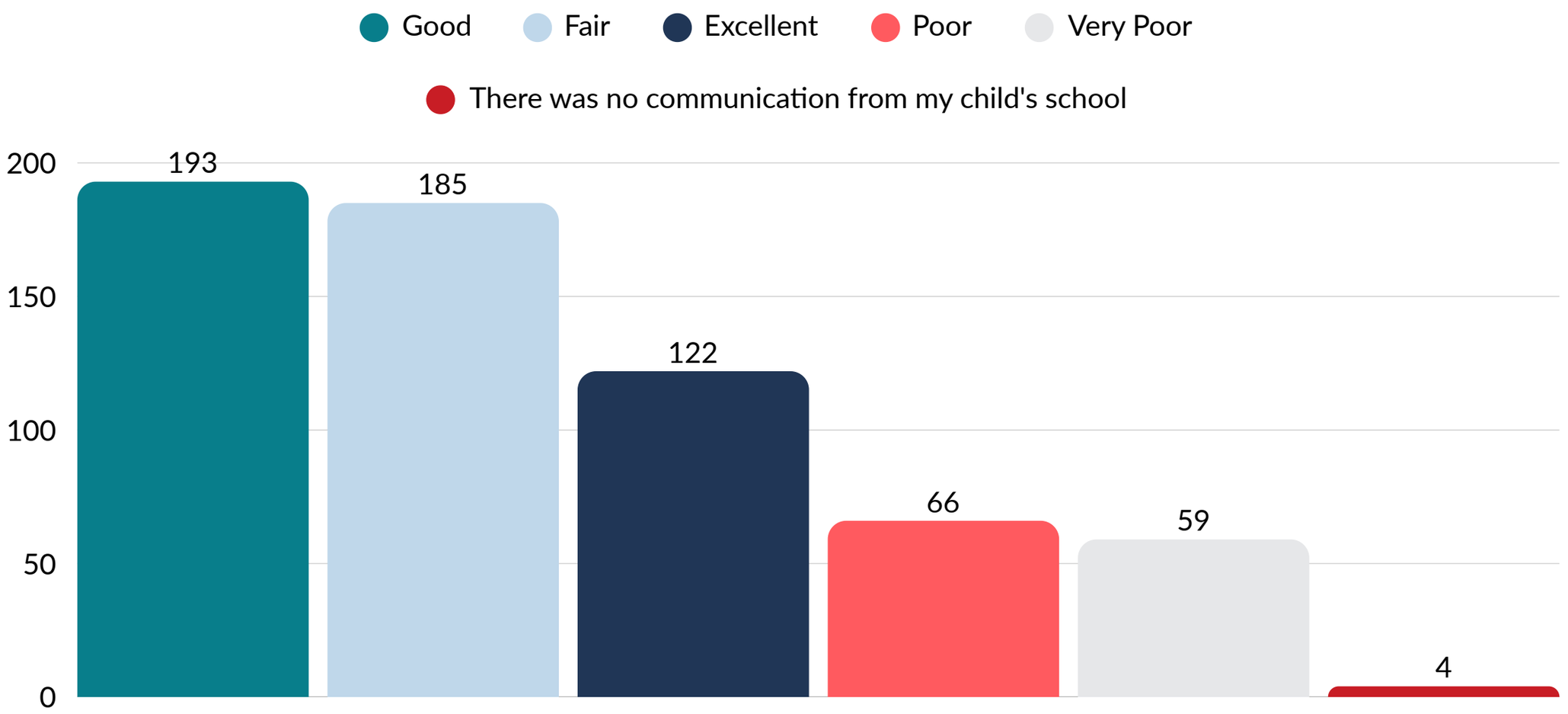


(Figure 10)

How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?



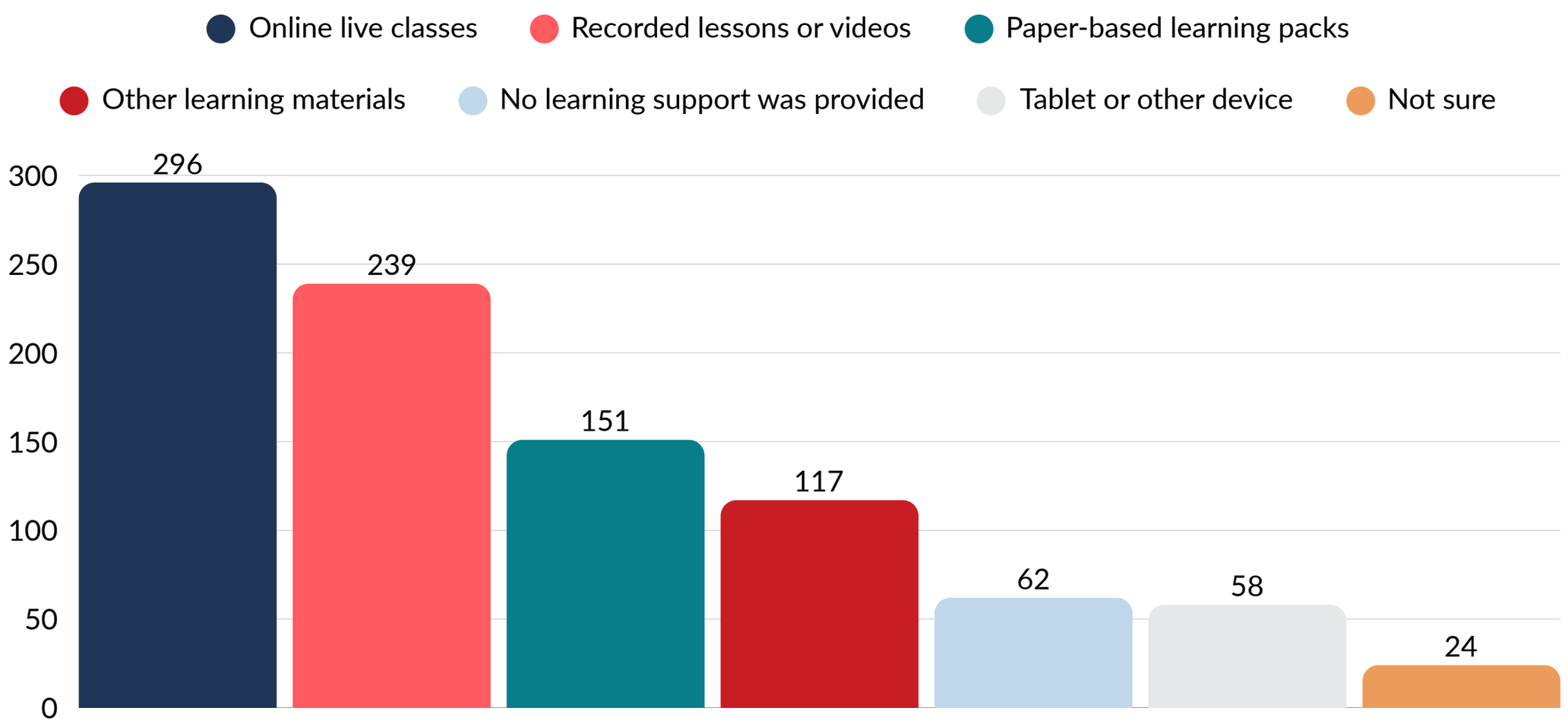
When parents were asked to rate communication from their child's school during closures, most parents rated it as good or fair. Smaller number of parents rated it as excellent, poor, or very poor, with a few saying there was no communication at all (see Figure 11).



(Figure 11)

How would you rate the communication from your child's school during school closures?

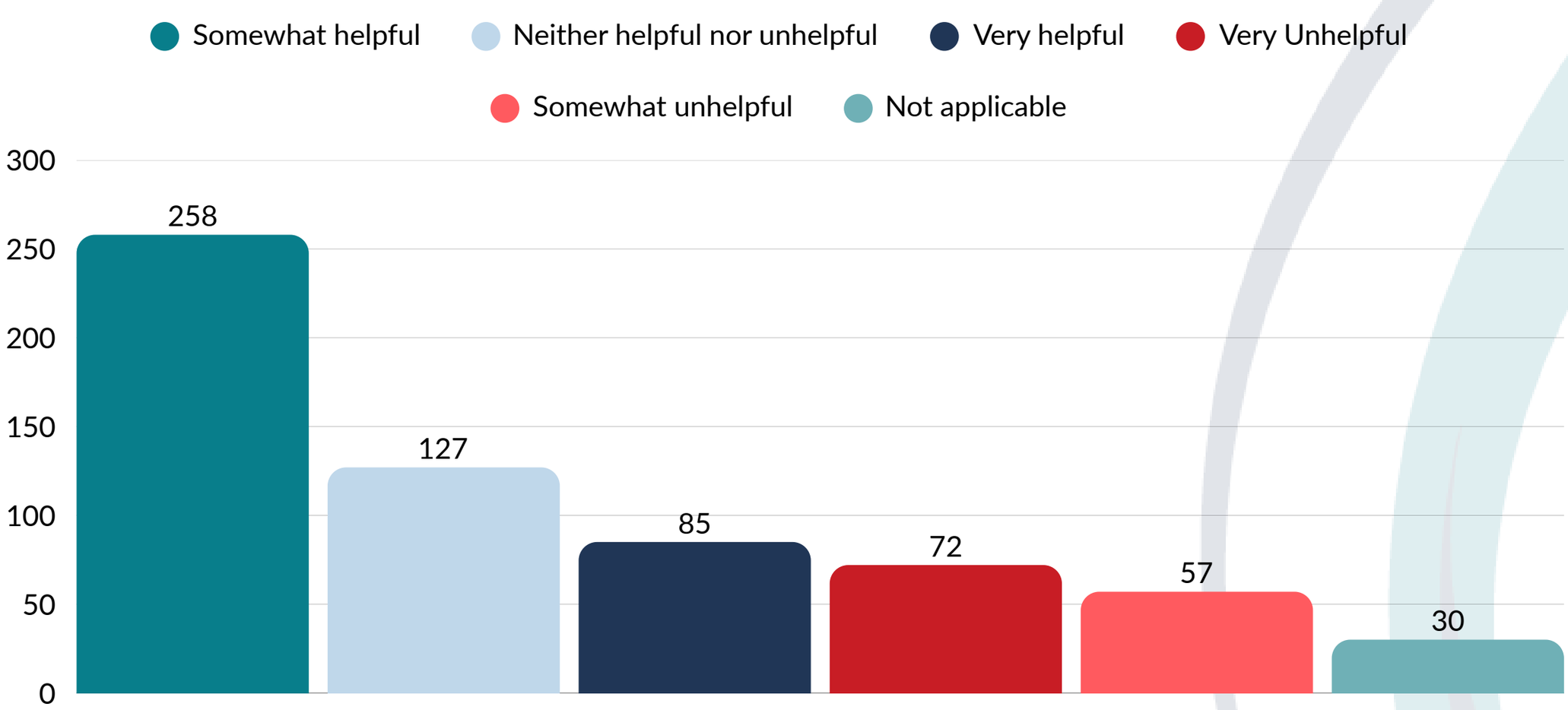
When parents were asked what kind of learning materials or support their child received during school closures, the most common response was online live classes, followed by recorded lessons or videos. Paper-based learning packs were also widely used. Few parents mentioned other types of learning materials, and other small number of parents said their child received a device or no support at all. A small number were unsure what was provided (see Figure 12).



(Figure 12)

What type of learning materials or support was provided during closures? (Select all that apply)

When parents were asked how helpful their child found the materials and support provided during closures, the most common response was that they were somewhat helpful. Many parents also felt neutral, while a smaller group described the resources as very helpful. Few parents viewed them as unhelpful, and a small number said the materials were not applicable to their child (see Figure 13).

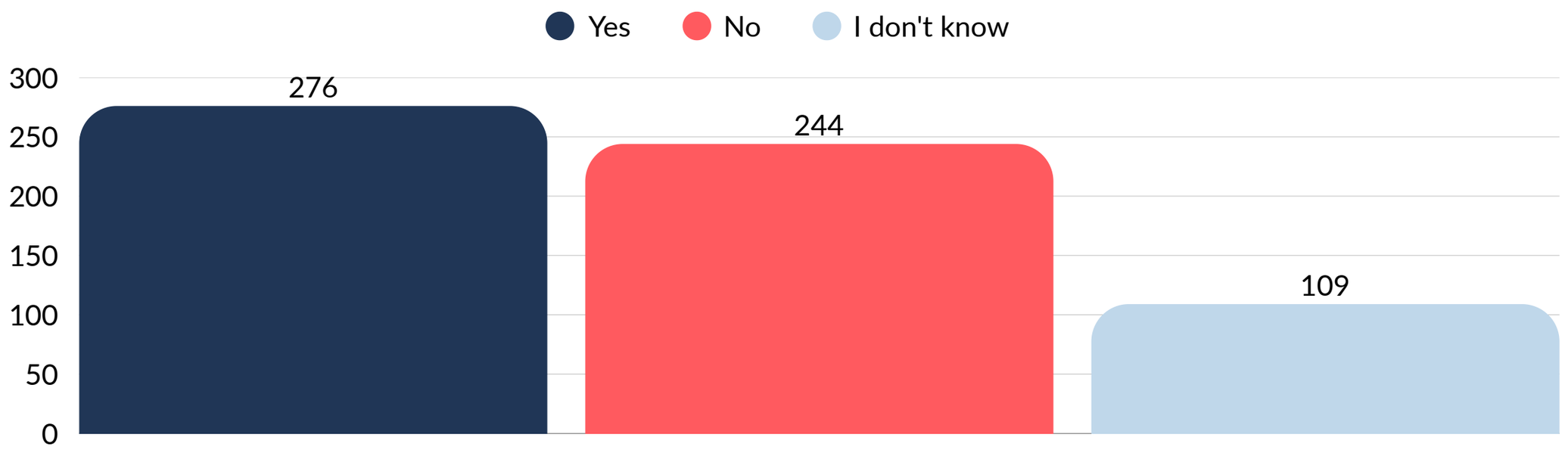


(Figure 13)

How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?



Parents were asked whether they believed the government made the right decision regarding mask use in schools during COVID-19. Responses were divided, with slightly more agreeing with the decision than disagreeing. Others were unsure (see Figure 14).



(Figure 14)

During COVID-19 there was a requirement to wear masks in schools some of the time. Do you think the government made the correct decision regarding the use of masks in schools during COVID-19?

Following parents' responses on whether the government made the right decision about mask use in schools during COVID-19, they were invited to explain their views in more detail. Their comments revealed a wide spectrum of experiences, emotions, and perspectives shaped by children's individual needs, school responses, and wider societal impacts.

Some parents supported the mask mandate, seeing it as a necessary public health measure to protect vulnerable children, staff, and family members. They valued the sense of social responsibility it encouraged and felt it helped keep schools open. A few noted that their children adapted well to wearing masks, particularly when it was presented as a way to protect others. In classrooms with immunocompromised students, masks were viewed as an essential safeguard. Some parents also highlighted the role of hygiene education, saying that masks helped children understand infection control.

However, many parents expressed deep concerns about the negative impact of masks on children's wellbeing. Reported issues included difficulty breathing, discomfort, and increased anxiety—particularly for children with sensory sensitivities, asthma, or neurodivergent conditions. Parents said masks disrupted learning, especially for younger children who rely on facial expressions to develop language, social skills, and emotional understanding. Several described how masks contributed to social withdrawal, fear, and long-term emotional distress, with some children still struggling to reconnect with peers or feel safe in school.



Parents of children with additional needs were especially critical, saying that mask-wearing and school closures compounded existing challenges. Many felt their children were excluded or unsupported, and that schools were unprepared to meet their needs during the pandemic. Some described traumatic experiences, including bullying, isolation, and regression in social and academic development.

Others questioned the scientific basis for the mandate, citing studies they believed showed masks were ineffective or harmful. They voiced frustration about inconsistent enforcement, poor communication, and what they saw as a lack of empathy from schools. Some felt the policy was politically motivated rather than child-centred, and a few described it as damaging to their children's development and mental health.

Overall, while some parents acknowledged that the government acted in good faith given the uncertainty at the time, many believed the mask policy lacked nuance and failed to take account of the diverse needs of children. The responses reflect the depth of emotional impact and highlight the importance of inclusive, evidence-based, and child-focused approaches in any future public health emergencies.

* This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Suggestions and Open Space for Parents' Views

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to education systems worldwide. In Ireland, parents were deeply affected by government decisions on school closures, remote learning, and educational support. Their responses reveal a complex and emotional landscape—marked by both understanding and frustration—and a strong call for greater preparedness in the future.

Mixed Reactions to Government Decisions

Some parents supported the government's cautious approach, particularly in the early stages when little was known about the virus. They appreciated efforts to protect vulnerable families and recognised that decisions were made under immense pressure. A few praised teachers and schools that adapted quickly, maintained regular contact, and provided structure, helping children feel safe and supported.

However, the majority were critical. Many felt education was not prioritised and that children were sidelined in decision-making. They described school closures as disproportionate and damaging, with long-term effects on academic progress, social development, and emotional wellbeing. Parents argued that schools should have remained open, especially when other sectors continued to operate, and that decisions lacked nuance and failed to reflect children's diverse needs.

Impact on Children and Families

Parents spoke extensively about the toll on children. Many described heightened anxiety, social withdrawal, and regression in learning and behaviour. Key milestones and peer interactions were lost, and the absence of school structure made reintegration difficult. For children with additional needs, the impact was particularly severe. The loss of routine and specialist support led to significant setbacks, with some requiring therapy, medication, or additional interventions. Parents of neurodivergent and disabled children felt especially abandoned, citing inaccessible online provision and a lack of tailored support.

Challenges for Parents and Frontline Workers

The burden on families was a recurring theme. Many struggled to balance full-time work with home learning, often without adequate resources or guidance. Some left their jobs, while others experienced burnout and mental health difficulties. Parents felt unsupported, particularly when schools offered only minimal engagement and expected them to assume teaching roles without training.

Frontline workers faced greater pressure, juggling essential jobs alongside childcare and education responsibilities. Several described the experience as traumatic, with lasting effects on family wellbeing. Parents also highlighted the particular challenges for single-parent households and families without access to technology or quiet learning spaces.

Inconsistencies and Inequalities Across Schools

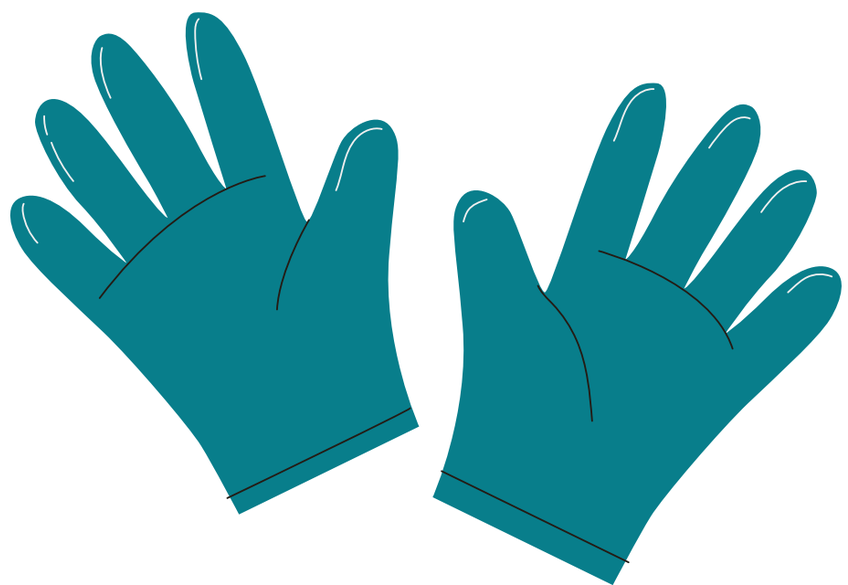
Another major concern was the inconsistency of how schools responded. Some schools provided daily online classes and structured support, while others relied on worksheets or occasional check-ins.. Parents called for a more consistent national approach, with clear expectations and accountability, to ensure all children receive fair and adequate education during emergencies.

Parents also pointed out that children from disadvantaged backgrounds were hit harder. A lack of devices, internet access, and quiet learning spaces meant that remote learning was almost impossible for some families. Parents urged the government to improve infrastructure and support to make education more equal in future crises.

Recommendations for Future Planning

Looking ahead, parents strongly emphasised the need for robust contingency planning that places children's wellbeing and education at the centre. Suggestions included hybrid learning models that can be activated quickly, standardised platforms, and training for teachers to ensure consistency nationwide. Many stressed the importance of daily contact between teachers and students to preserve routine and connection.

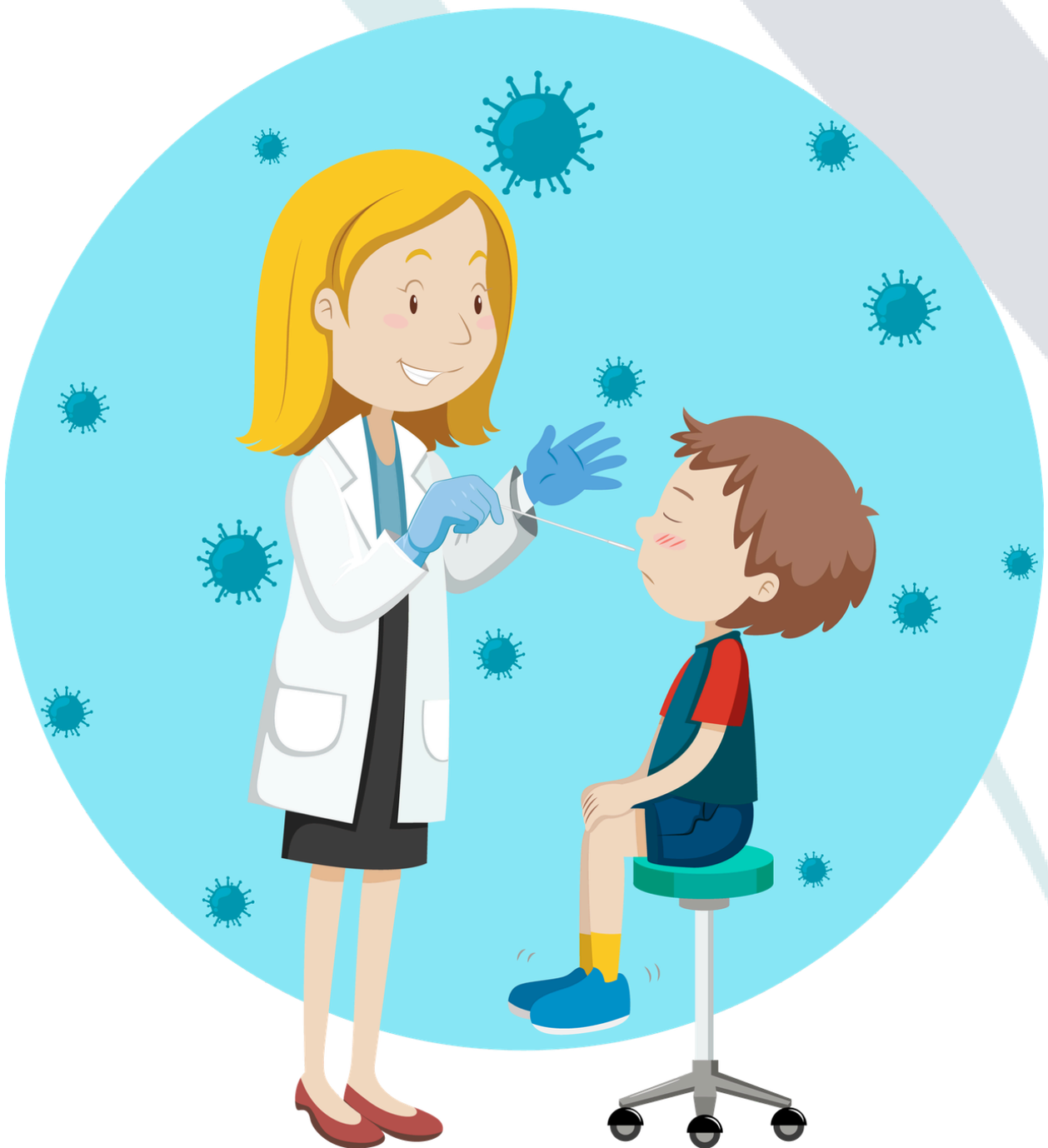
Inclusive strategies were seen as essential, with tailored provision for children with additional needs and continued access to therapeutic and support services. Parents also called for clearer communication from government and schools, with transparent guidance and realistic expectations. Schools, they argued, should be equipped with the necessary technology, flexible learning options, and resources to support children's academic recovery and emotional resilience. Above all, parents urged that schools remain open wherever possible, recognising their central role in children's development, mental health, and social stability.



Overall Reflection

Parents' voices paint a vivid picture of the challenges faced during the pandemic. While some acknowledged the government's efforts, most expressed concern and called for meaningful change. The crisis exposed serious gaps in educational planning and support, and parents want to see lessons learned. Their message is clear: children must never again be left behind in times of crisis. A resilient, inclusive, and equitable education system is essential—not only for academic success but also for the emotional and social development of every child.

*This summary captures the key themes raised by parents; please refer to the appendix for full responses.



Section 3 Conclusion

The findings in this section show how strongly the pandemic affected children's education, friendships, and wellbeing. While some families managed well, many parents described long-term challenges, especially around children's mental health, loss of social connections, and keeping up with learning.

Parents also highlighted unequal access to technology and learning supports, with some children falling behind more than others. Those with special educational needs, disabilities, or neurodivergence were especially at risk, and their families reported higher levels of stress and regression. Views on measures such as masks and restrictions were mixed: some valued them for safety, while others felt they created extra barriers and anxiety for children.

Looking ahead, parents want schools and policymakers to be better prepared. They asked for clear and consistent communication, fairer support for vulnerable learners, and flexible systems such as hybrid learning that can be used when needed. Parents' experiences during COVID-19 offer important lessons to ensure that, in any future emergency, children's education, social development, and emotional health are protected.



NPC
SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

SECTION 4

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION - POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes to children's education. Schools closed, learning moved online, and social rules affected families. To learn more about the longer-term effects, the National Parents Council (NPC) asked parents about their children’s experiences during and after the pandemic. The goal was to understand how students were affected in their learning, friendships, and feelings, and where more support may be needed.

Parents were invited to share their point of view through a consultation that included both structured and open-ended questions. We asked what kind of schools children went to, what problems they faced, and how well schools supported their learning. Parents were also asked to share their views on remote learning, school communication, and what should could be done differently if something like this happens again.

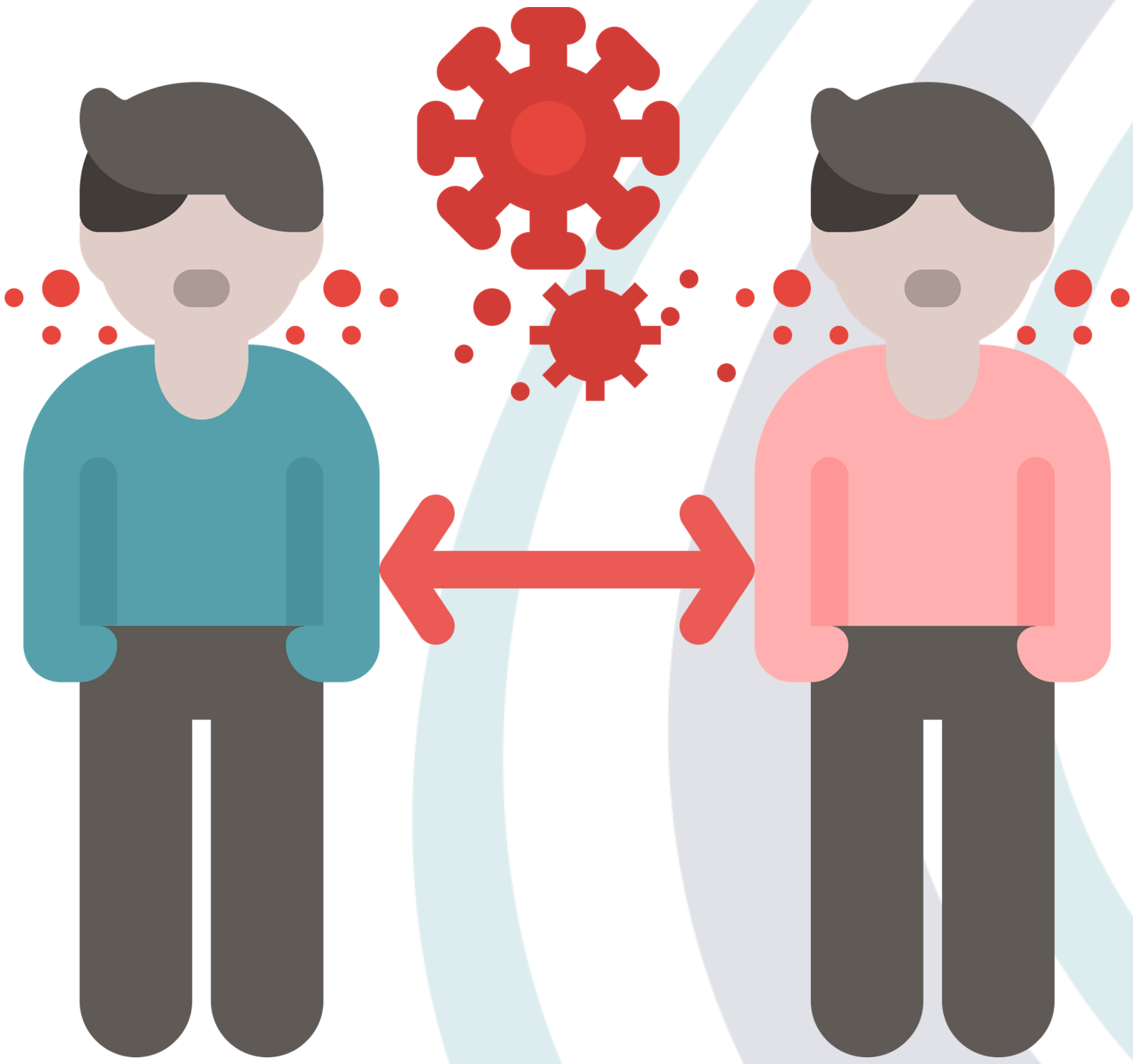
The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during June - August 2025. The survey was sent to the NPC data base of parents of children in post-primary schools who had consented to receive such e mails. The survey was open from 20th of June 2025 till the 15th of August 2025. During this time, a total of (59) parents completed the survey. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey will be shared in this section.



Surveys

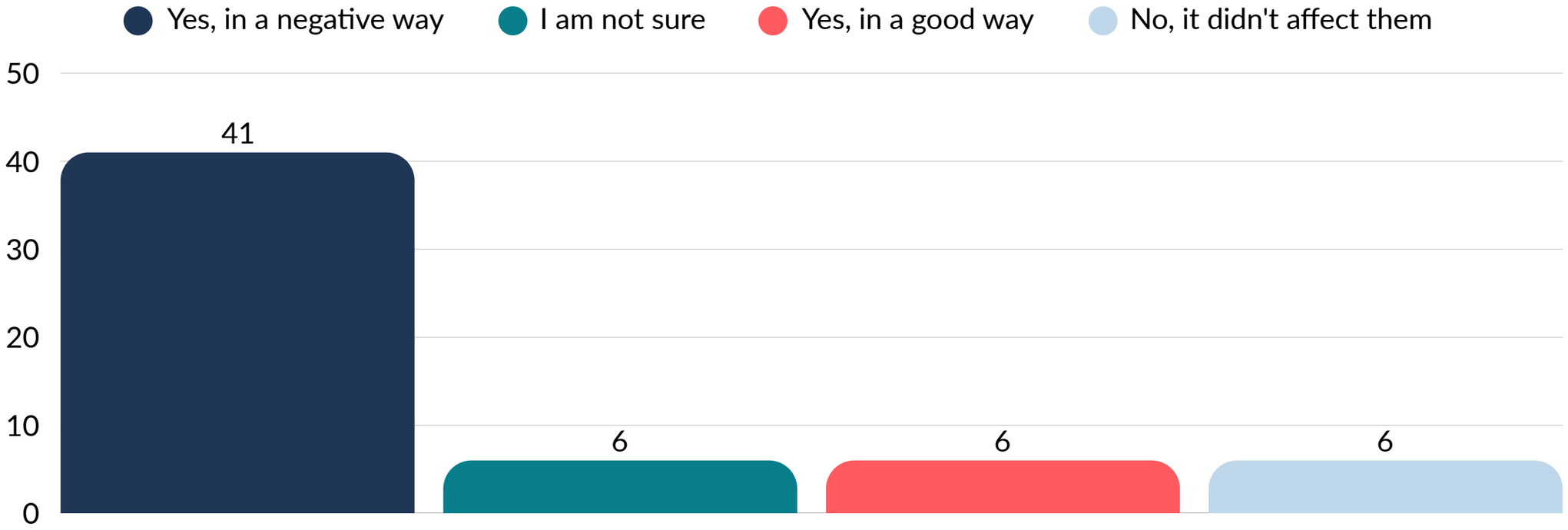
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It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This gave parents the opportunity to choose answers that suited their views and also share extra thoughts. Parents were also asked to think about how well schools supported their child's learning needs. The main results of the survey, including key points and parents' opinions, will be shared in this section.



Survey Findings

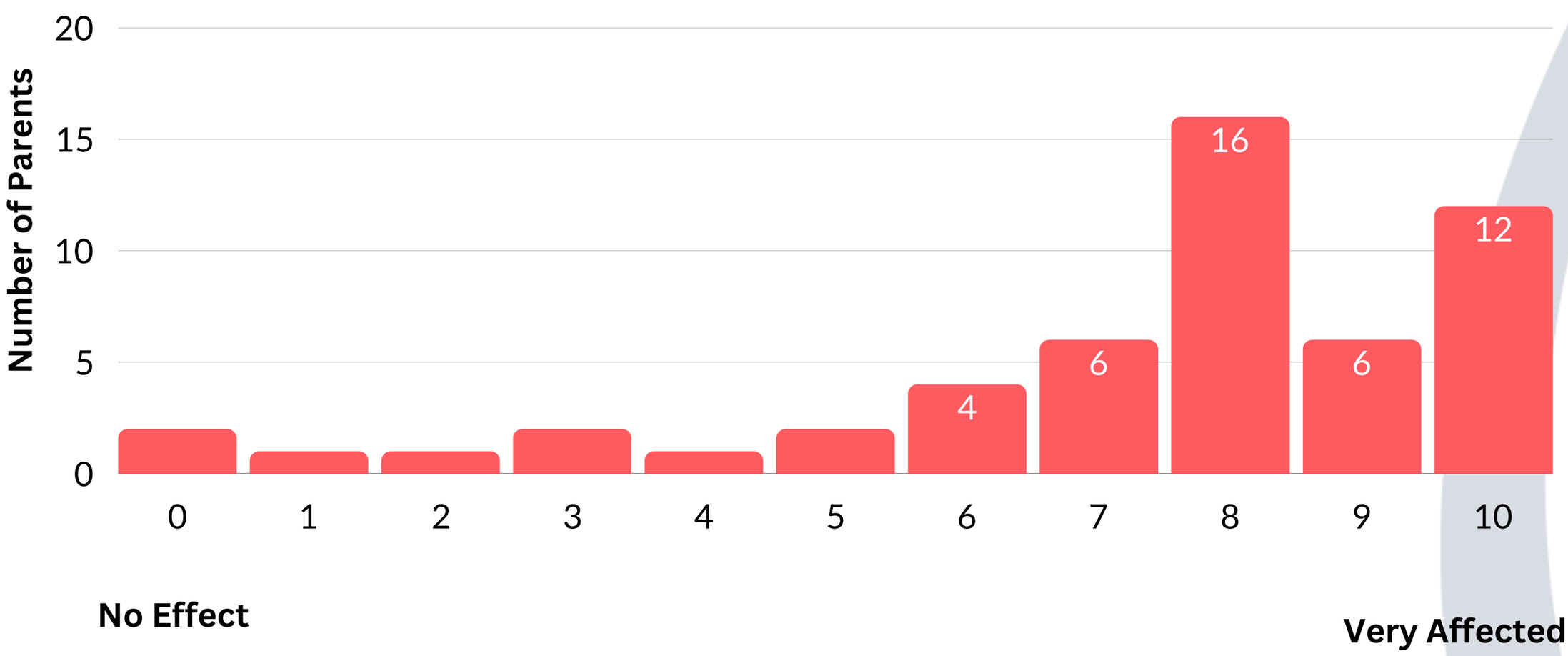
When asked whether school closures during the pandemic affected their child, most parents reported a negative impact. The remaining responses were evenly split among those who felt the closures had a positive effect, those who believed they had no impact, and those who were unsure (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Did school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affect your child?

Parents were asked to rate the extent to which school closures affected their child. Most responses were between 7 and 10, indicating a strong impact. Few parents gave moderate scores between 4 and 6, while a smaller number rated the effect between 0 and 3 (see Figure 2).

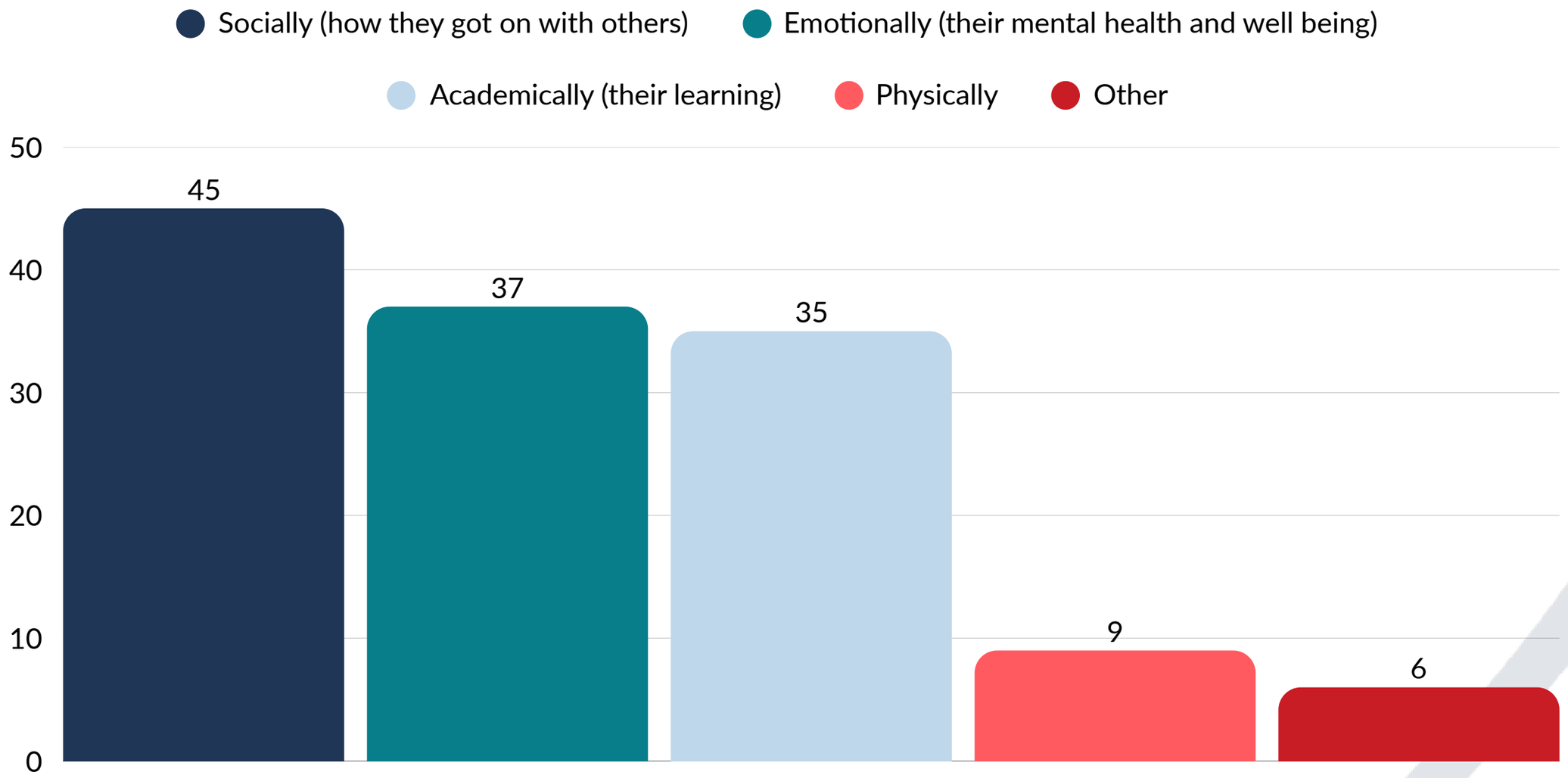


(Figure 2)

To what extent did the school closures affect your child?

COVID-19

When parents were asked how school closures affected their child, parents most commonly selected social, emotional, and academic impacts. Physical effects and other types of impact were mentioned less frequently (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3)

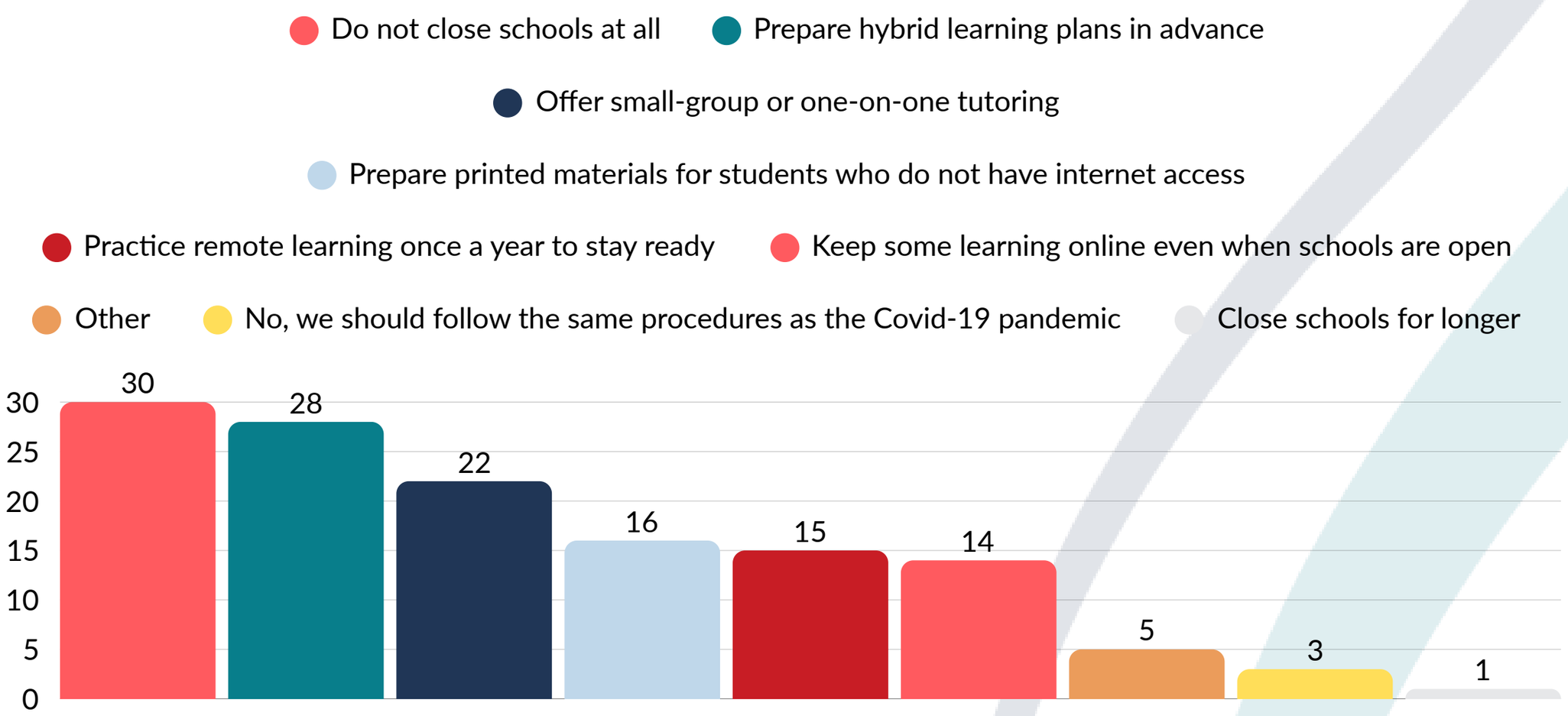
How did the school closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

Parents shared further insights into how school closures affected their children. One parent described mixed effects, saying that while closures had some academic benefits, their child faced lasting difficulties and did not return to school because of mental health challenges. Another parent had the opposite experience, noting that their child had struggled in the school environment but found remote learning more suitable. A different parent felt the closures limited their child's personal development, as they missed out on important transition year activities.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



When parents were asked what should be done differently if a similar event occurred in the future, they suggested a range of approaches. The most common suggestion was not to close schools at all. Many also said it would help to have hybrid learning plans ready in advance and to offer small-group or one-to-one tutoring. Others recommended giving printed materials to students without internet access and practising remote learning once a year to stay prepared. A smaller number thought some learning should stay online even when schools are open. Few parents felt we should do the same as during the Covid-19 pandemic or close schools for longer (see Figure 4).



(Figure 4)

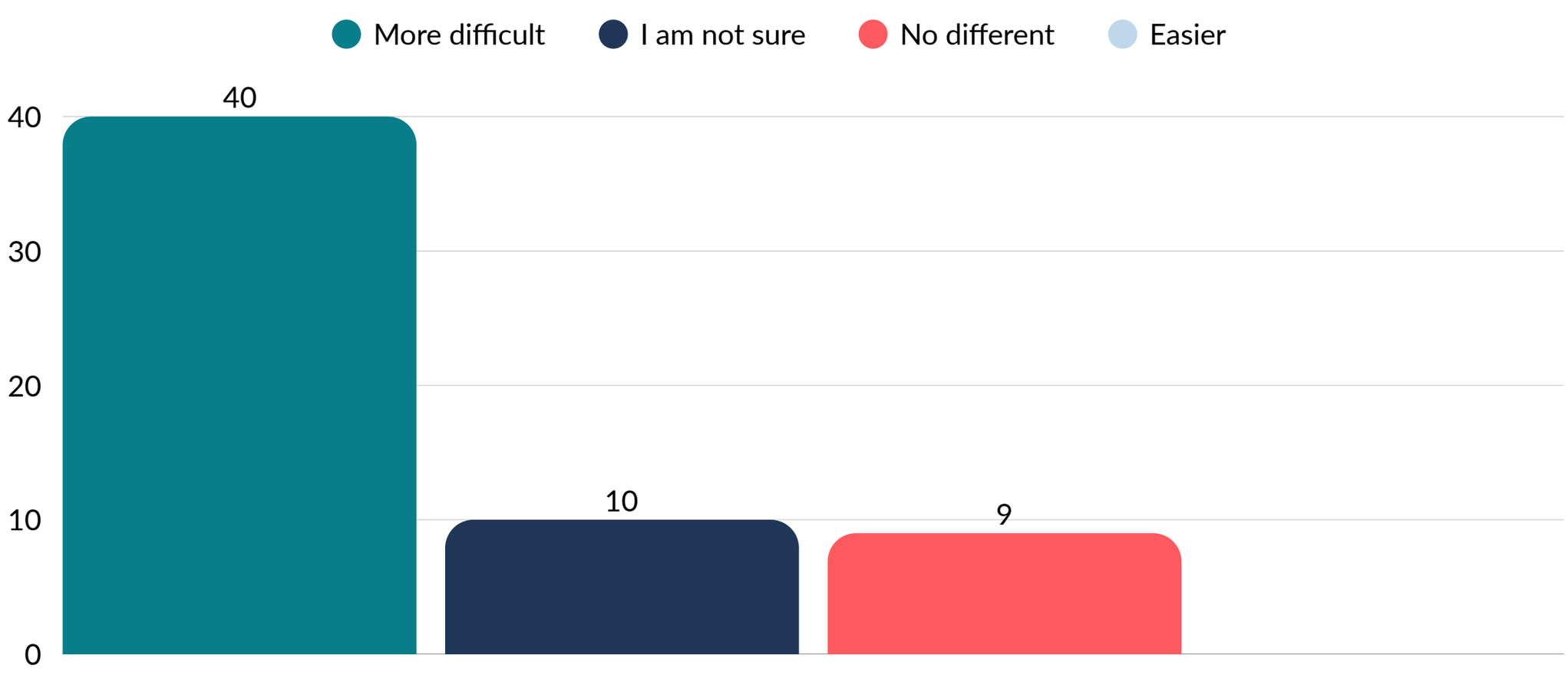
If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)

Parents who chose ‘Other’ shared a range of thoughtful suggestions. Some said that online learning had worked really well for certain children and should remain an option, especially in schools that already use iPads or similar technology. They felt it was important to make sure all children had properly covered the curriculum after the disruption. Parents also suggested that teachers should have access to a collection of good examples and techniques for teaching, and that this should be included in teacher training. However, they also pointed out that not every family has access to good internet, so any future plans for online learning need to take this into account.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



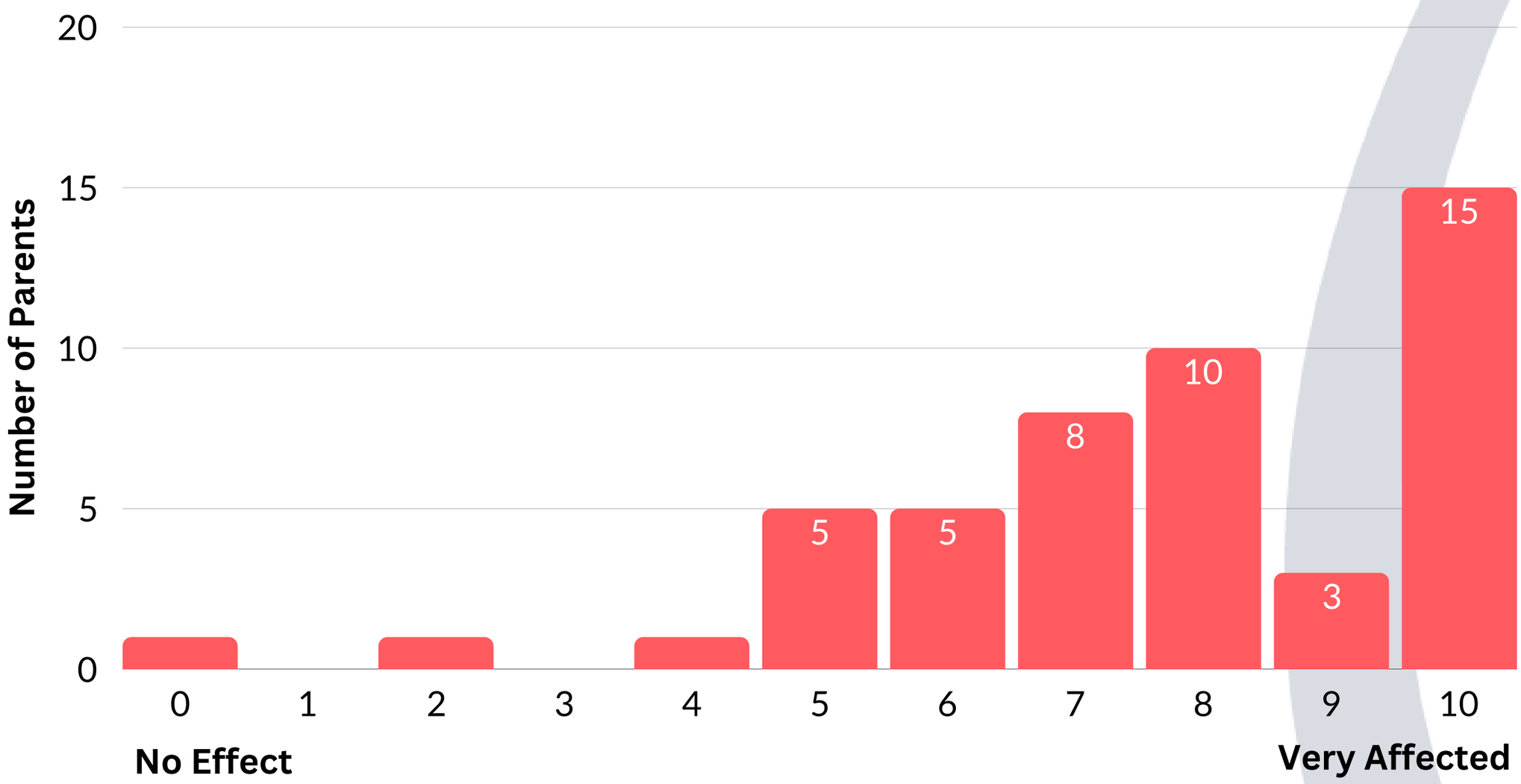
When parents were asked whether school closures made it more difficult for their child to move to the next stage in their educational journey, the majority of parents said the transition was more difficult. The remaining parents said that they were unsure or the closures made no difference (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)

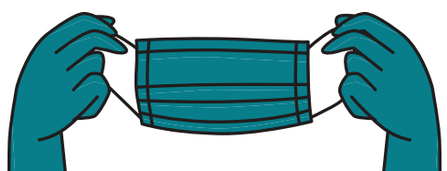
A transition is when a child moves from one school setting to another. Do you think school closures made your child's transition?

Parents were asked to to rate the impact of school closures on their child's transition between school settings. The majority gave a high rating (7–10), indicating a strong effect. A smaller group gave a moderate score (4–6), and the few parents rated the effect as low (0–3) (see Figure 6).

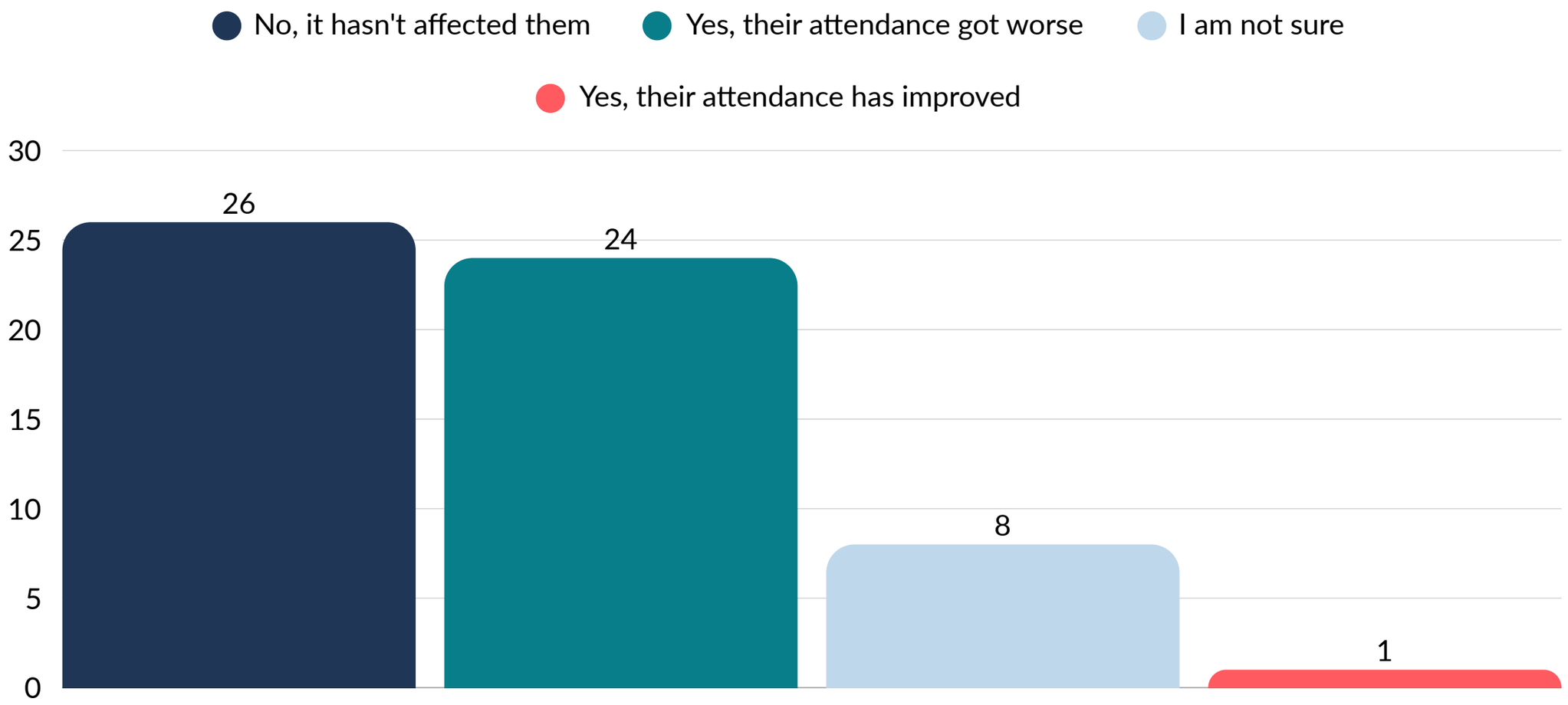


(Figure 6)

To what extent do you think school closures affected your child's transition?



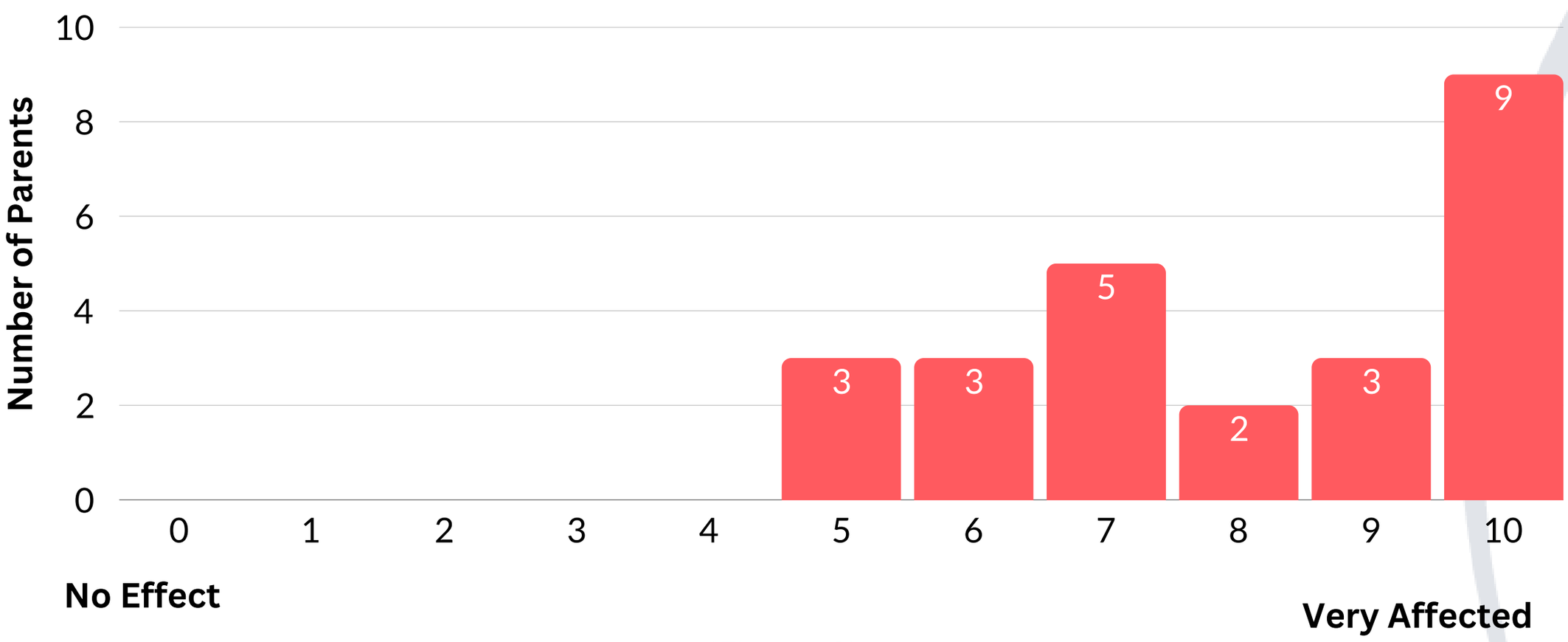
When parents were asked whether their child's current school attendance had been affected by COVID-19 closures, most parents said it had not. A number of parents reported a decline in attendance, while others said they were unsure or saw improvements (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

Do you think your child's current attendance at school is affected by school closures during COVID-19?

Parents were asked to rate the extent of COVID-19 school closures on their child's current attendance. The majority of parents gave mid-range ratings (8–10), indicating a moderate effect. A smaller number of parents gave high ratings (5–7) (see Figure 8).

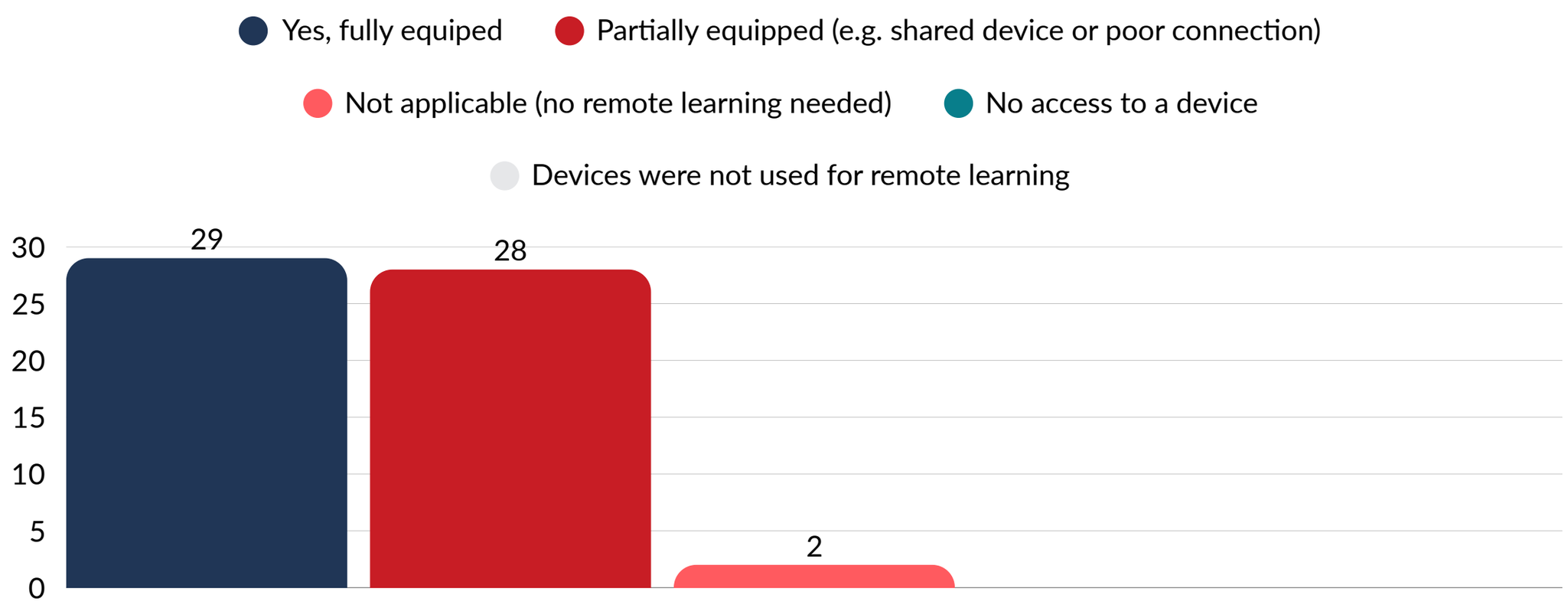


(Figure 8)

To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during Covid-19?



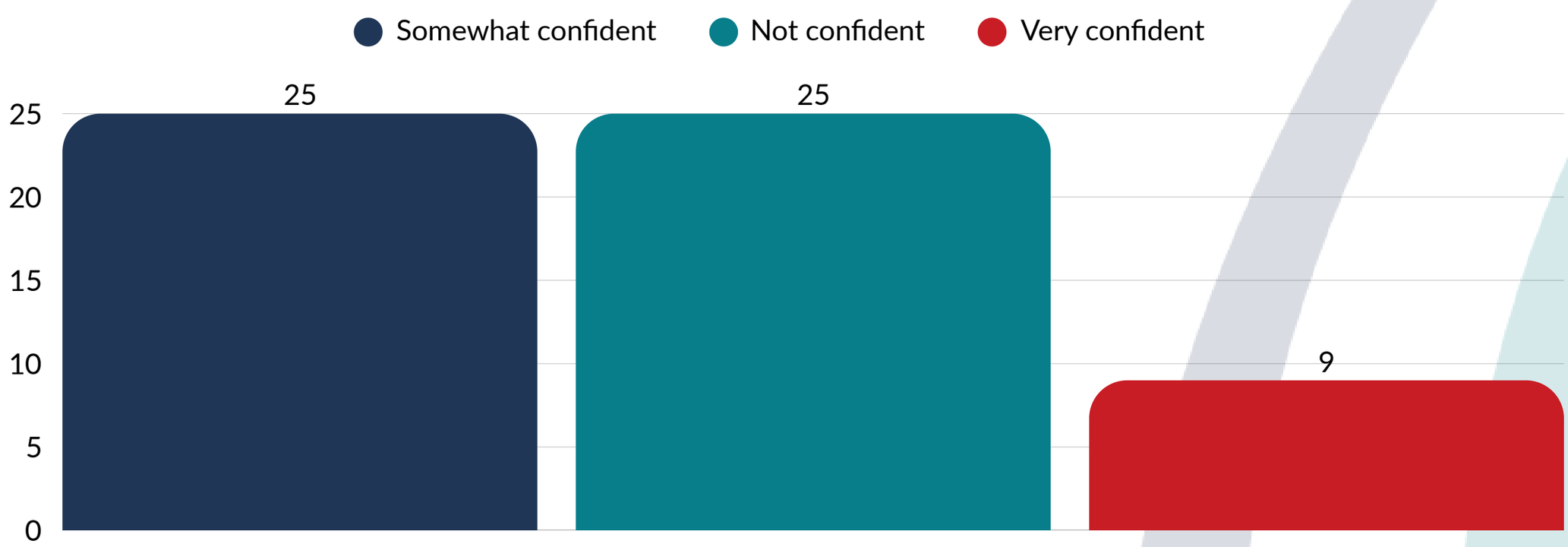
When parents were asked whether their child had access to a device and internet for remote learning, most said their child was either fully or partially equipped. A small number reported no devices were used for remote learning (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)

When schools were closed during COVID-19, did your child have access to a device and internet for remote learning (if applicable)?

When parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning at home during school closures, most said they were either somewhat confident or not confident. A smaller number said they felt very confident (see Figure 10).

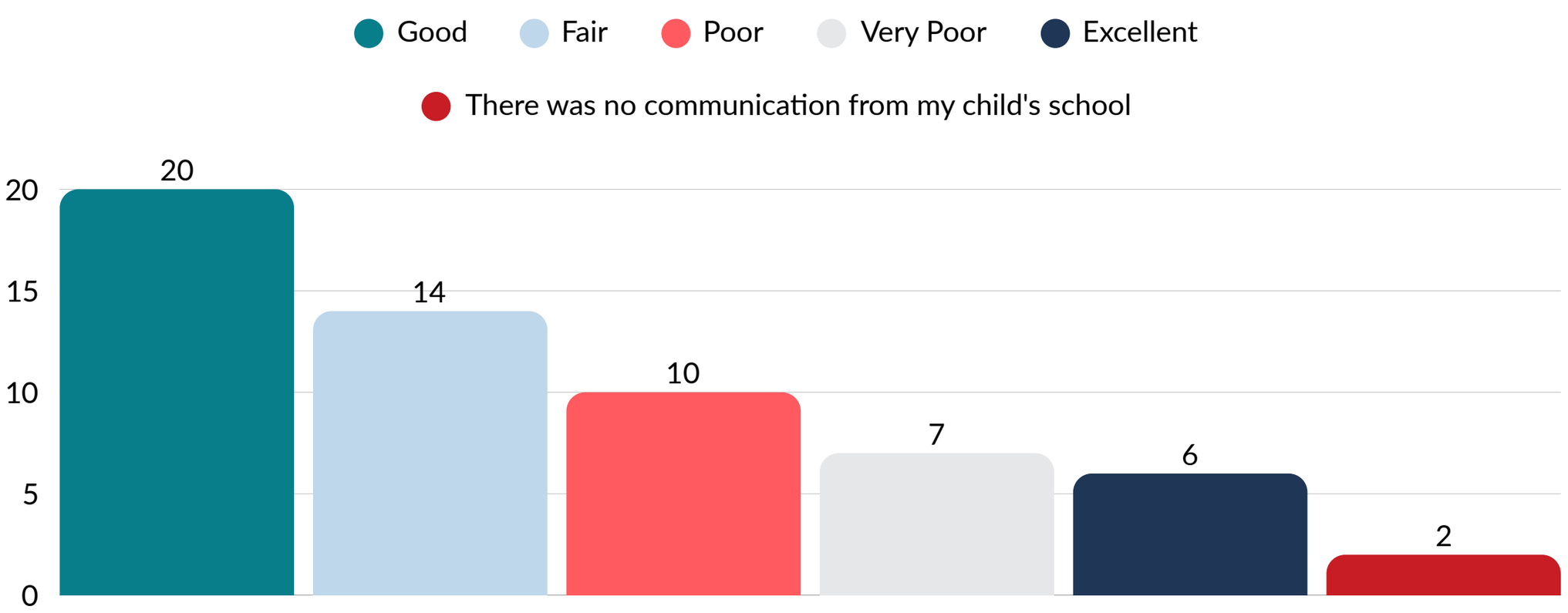


(Figure 10)

How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?

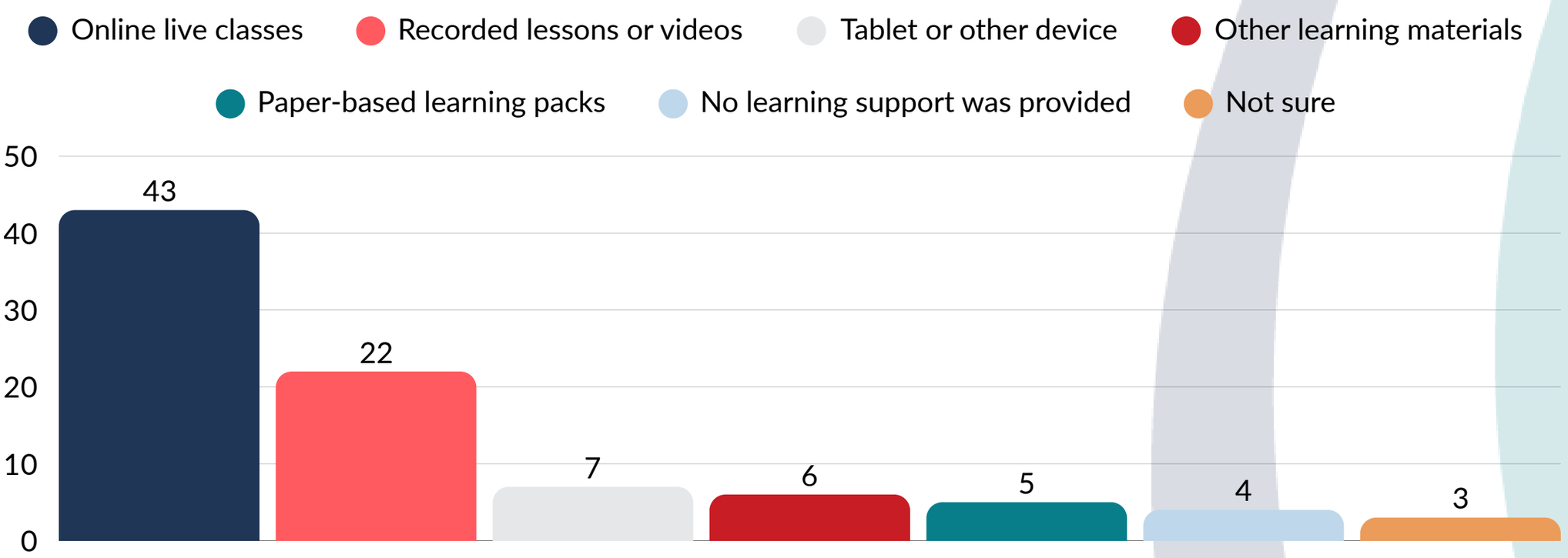


When parents were asked to rate communication from their child's school during closures, most parents rated it as good or fair. Smaller number of parents rated it as poor, very poor, or excellent with a few saying there was no communication at all (see Figure 11).



(Figure 11)
How would you rate the communication from your child's school during school closures?

When parents were asked what kind of learning materials or support their child received during school closures, the most common response was online live classes. Many also mentioned recorded lessons or videos. Tablets or other devices were used by some children, and a few parents said their child received other learning materials or paper-based packs. A small number said no learning support was provided, and a few were unsure what was given (see Figure 12).

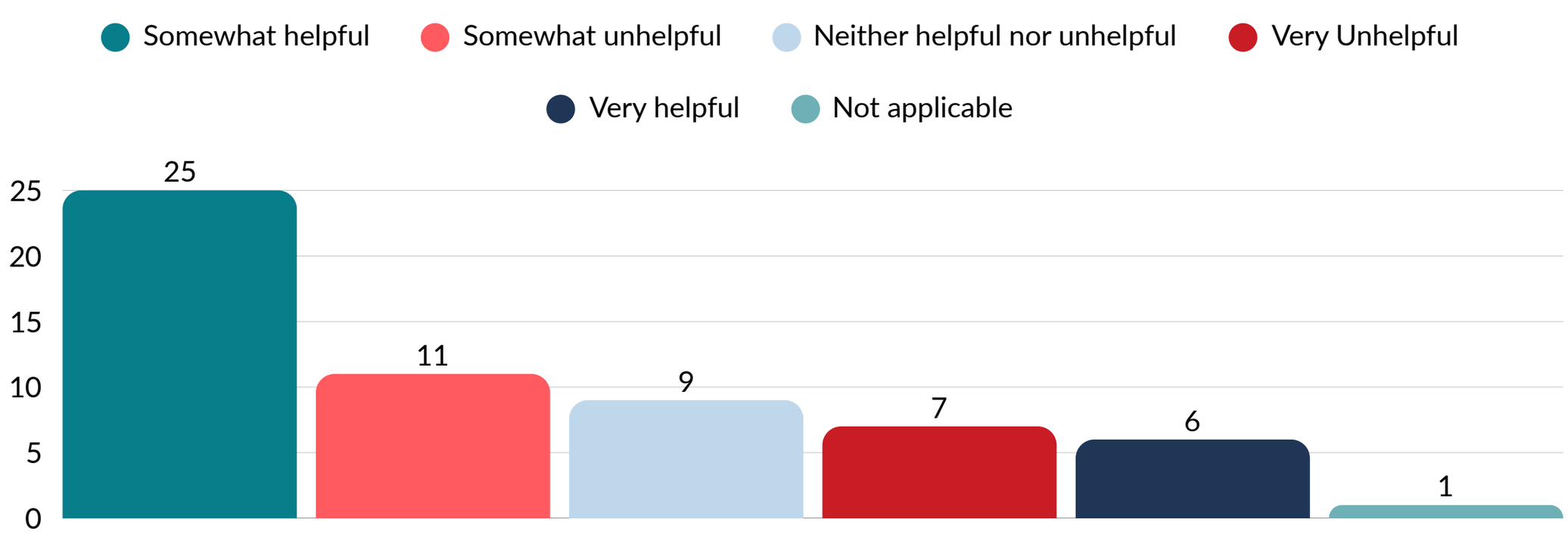


(Figure 12)

What type of learning materials or support was provided during closures? (Select all that apply)

LOCKDOWN

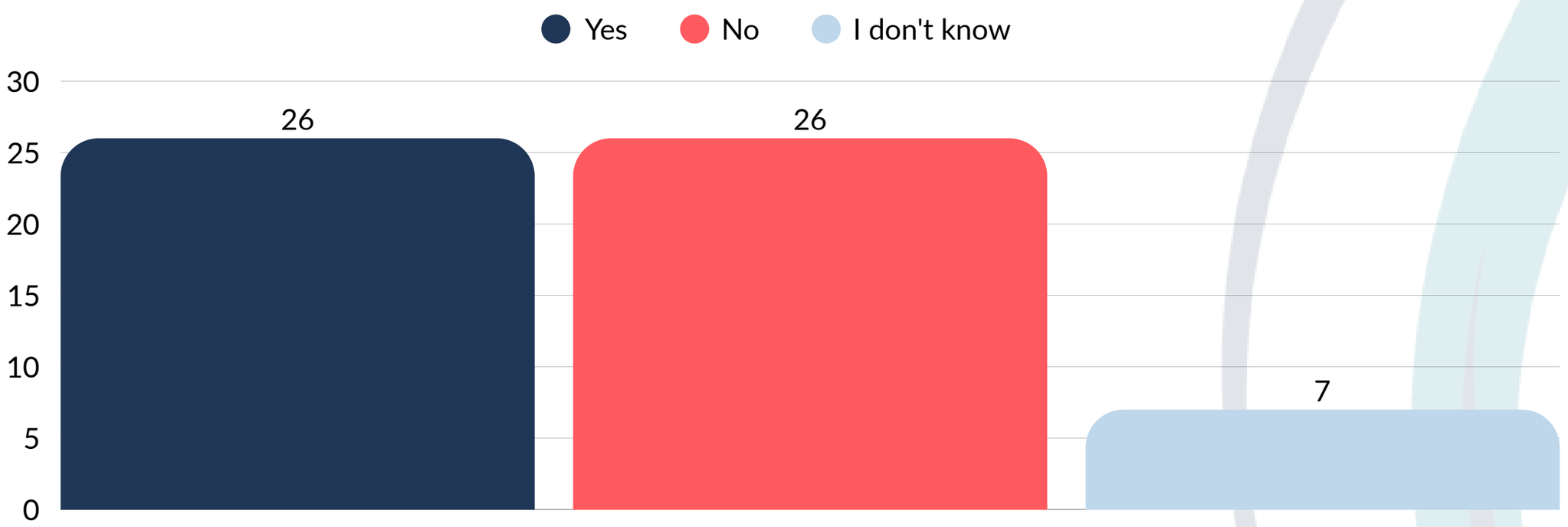
When parents were asked how helpful their child found the materials and support provided during school closures, most said they were somewhat helpful. Others felt they were either somewhat unhelpful or neither helpful nor unhelpful. A smaller number described the materials as very helpful or very unhelpful. Only one parent said the materials were not applicable to their child (see Figure 13).



(Figure 13)

How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?

Parents were asked whether they believed the government made the right decision about mask use in schools during COVID-19. Responses were evenly split between those who agreed and those who disagreed. A smaller number of parents said they did not know (see Figure 14).



(Figure 14)

During COVID-19 there was a requirement to wear masks in schools some of the time. Do you think the government made the correct decision regarding the use of masks in schools during COVID-19?



Parents who selected ‘Other’ shared a wide range of views shaped by their children’s experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many felt that post-primary schools were unprepared for online learning, and noted that years later some teachers still do not use platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Parents emphasised that all teachers should be equipped and expected to use digital tools to ensure continuity in the event of future disruptions. Several described masks in classrooms as uncomfortable and distracting, particularly for younger students and those with skin sensitivities or additional needs. Cold classrooms—with windows open, heating switched off, and restrictions on wearing jackets—were also said to affect concentration and learning.

Some parents expressed strong opposition to the government’s approach, describing it as a breach of rights and criticising the fear and pressure placed on children. Others felt that rules were unclear and inconsistently applied across schools, which created confusion and distress. The lack of reliable internet in rural areas was also highlighted as a major barrier to learning. Also, one parent reported serious social impacts during the pandemic, including instances where that parent believed student suicides were linked to the stress and uncertainty surrounding exams and prolonged isolation.

Parents also reflected on the emotional toll of mask-wearing and school closures. While some acknowledged that masks were necessary to protect others, many described them as isolating and harmful to children’s wellbeing. Starting secondary school during the pandemic was seen as particularly difficult, with calls for additional supports such as counselling, small group classes, and confidence-building workshops.

Several parents said their children struggled to make friends while wearing masks, and some even changed schools in order to reconnect with peers. Others reported that their children never saw their teachers’ faces, which they felt undermined communication and learning. Strong concerns were raised about how mask exemptions were handled, with some children—despite medical documentation—being denied access to school unless they complied.

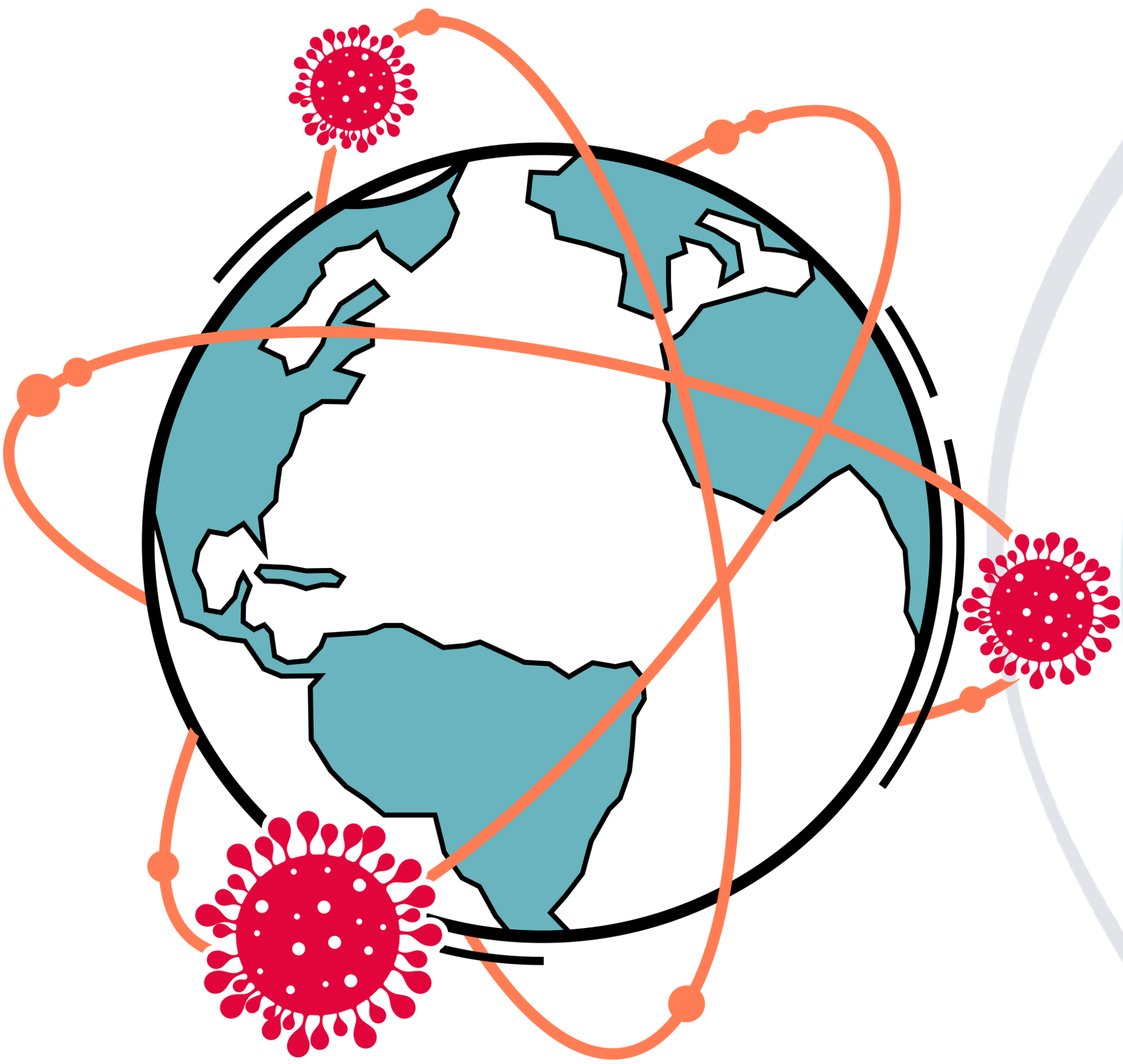
Parents also criticised the lack of consistency in school responses, with some principals saying they could not require teachers to deliver online lessons due to contractual restrictions. This led to frustration, particularly where students fell behind and the impact was reflected in their Leaving Certificate results.



Not all experiences were negative: some parents shared positive reflections on online learning, saying it reduced stress and suited their children well. However, others described serious impacts, including the development of issues and the absence of promised supports to help students catch up.

Overall, the feedback reflects a strong need for clearer policies, better support systems, and more inclusive approaches to future emergency planning.

* This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



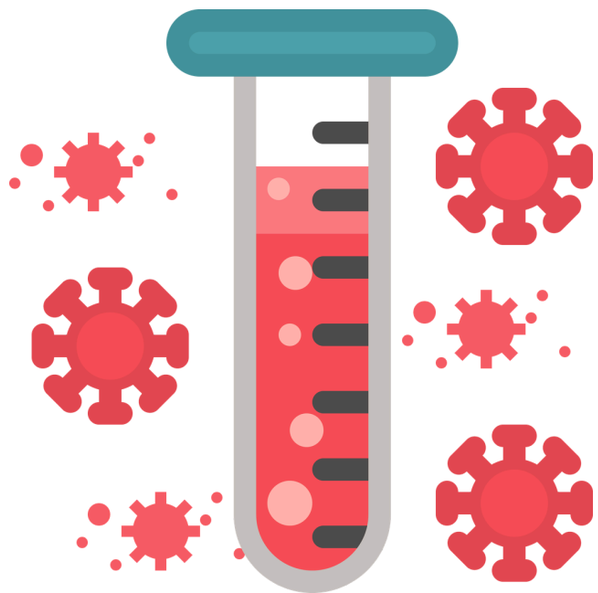
Suggestions and Open Space for Parents' Views

Parents offered a wide range of reflections on the government's handling of education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many acknowledged the unprecedented nature of the crisis and the difficulty of making decisions in real time. Some felt the government made the right choices under the circumstances, particularly in prioritising public health. A small number praised schools that adapted quickly and provided strong support, maintaining communication and structure that helped students feel secure.

However, the majority of responses conveyed concern, frustration, and disappointment. Parents described the experience as deeply stressful, particularly for families with children in key exam years. Many felt that Leaving Certificate students were not adequately supported and missed out on important milestones. In some cases, children disengaged from education altogether and never fully returned, leading to long-term impacts on academic progress, mental health, and social development. The transition into secondary school was also described as especially challenging, with some students struggling to settle and connect.

A recurring theme was the lack of consistency and planning across schools. While some schools offered structured online learning, others provided little more than worksheets or irregular contact. Parents called for a more coordinated national approach, with clear expectations, hybrid learning options, and stronger digital infrastructure. Several highlighted the need for live-streamed lessons, particularly in iPad-based schools, to support students unable to attend in person. Others emphasised that poor internet access in rural areas made remote learning nearly impossible for some families.

Parents also raised serious concerns about the emotional and social toll of restrictions. Many felt that an overemphasis on disease prevention came at the expense of children's wellbeing. They described isolation, missed opportunities in sport and social life, and a loss of confidence and connection. Some shared distressing accounts of school management enforcing distancing rules in ways they felt were excessive or harmful. Others spoke of the trauma of losing loved ones and the wider impact of grief and uncertainty on family life.



While a minority supported the government's cautious approach, most parents felt that children were not prioritised and that the long-term consequences were underestimated. Many called for more tailored support for students who fell behind, particularly those with additional needs or mental health challenges. Parents also urged the government to prioritise keeping schools open in any future crisis, supported by flexible learning models, improved communication, and stronger supports for families and frontline workers.

*This summary captures the key themes raised by parents; please refer to the appendix for full responses.

Section 4 Conclusion

The findings in this section show how strongly the pandemic affected children's education at post primary level. While some families managed well, many parents described long-term challenges, especially around children's mental health, loss of social connections, and keeping up with learning.

Parents also highlighted unequal access to technology and learning supports, with some children falling behind more than others. Those with special educational needs, disabilities, or neurodivergence were especially at risk, and their families reported higher levels of stress and regression. Views on measures such as masks and restrictions were mixed: some valued them for safety, while others felt they created extra barriers and anxiety for children.

Looking ahead, parents want schools and policymakers to be better prepared. They asked for clear and consistent communication, fairer support for vulnerable learners, and flexible systems such as hybrid learning that can be used when needed. Parents' experiences during COVID-19 offer important lessons to ensure that, in any future emergency, children's education, social development, and emotional health are protected.



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

SECTION 5

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION - SPECIAL SCHOOL

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes to children's education. Schools closed, learning moved online, and social rules affected families. To learn more about the longer-term effects, the National Parents Council (NPC) asked parents about their children’s experiences during and after the pandemic. The goal was to understand how students were affected in their learning, friendships, and feelings, and where more support may be needed.

Parents were invited to share their point of view through a consultation that included both structured and open-ended questions. This helped us understand, what problems they faced, and how well schools supported their learning. Parents also shared views on remote learning, school communication, and what should could be done differently if something like this happens again.

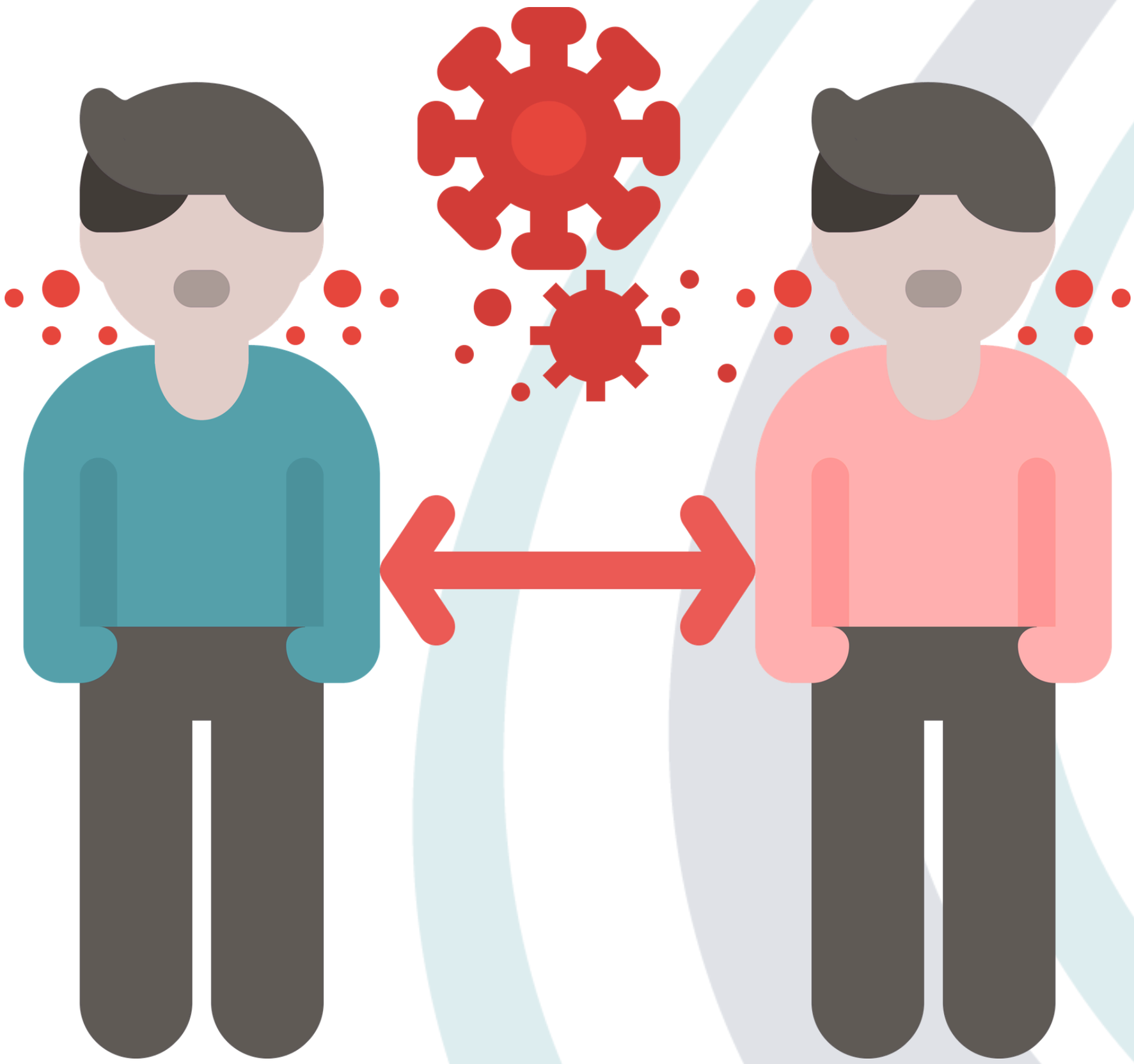
The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during June - August 2025. The survey was sent to the NPC data base of parents of children in special schools. The survey was open from 20th of June 2025 till the 15th of August 2025. During this time, a total of (13) parents completed the survey. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey will be shared in this section.



Surveys

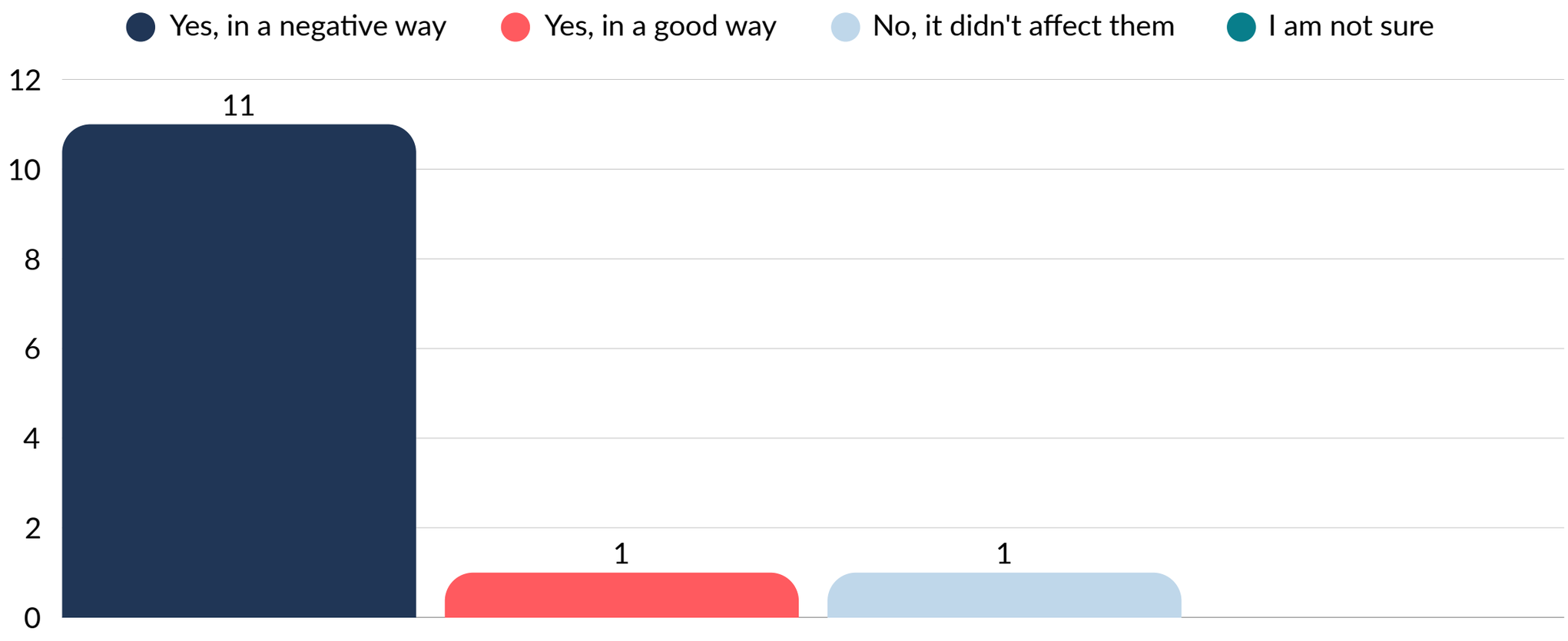
A survey titled Covid-19 was sent to parents to collect feedback. The survey asked a number of questions to find out how parents felt about their children's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and any current lasting effects.

It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This gave parents the opportunity to choose answers that suited their views and also share extra thoughts. Parents were also asked to think about how well schools supported their child's learning needs. The main results of the survey, including key points and parents' opinions, will be shared in this section.



Survey Findings

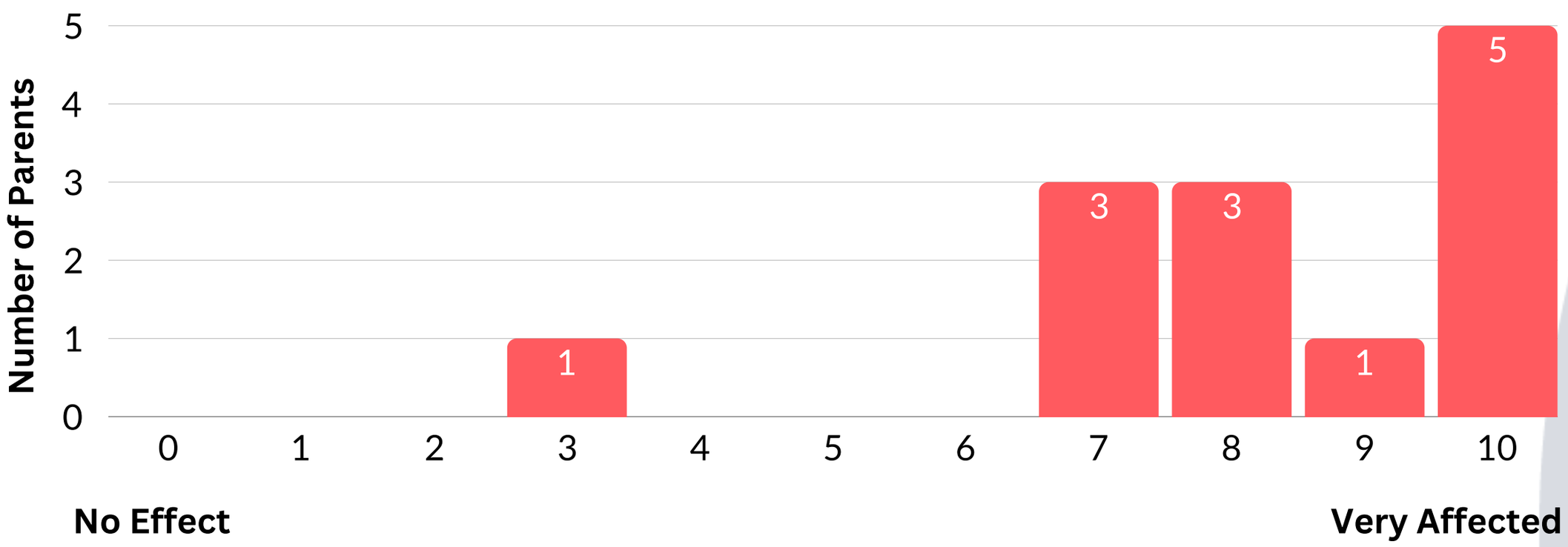
When asked whether school closures during the pandemic affected their child, the majority of parents reported a negative impact. One parents each selected a positive effect or no effect, while no parents were unsure (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Did school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affect your child?

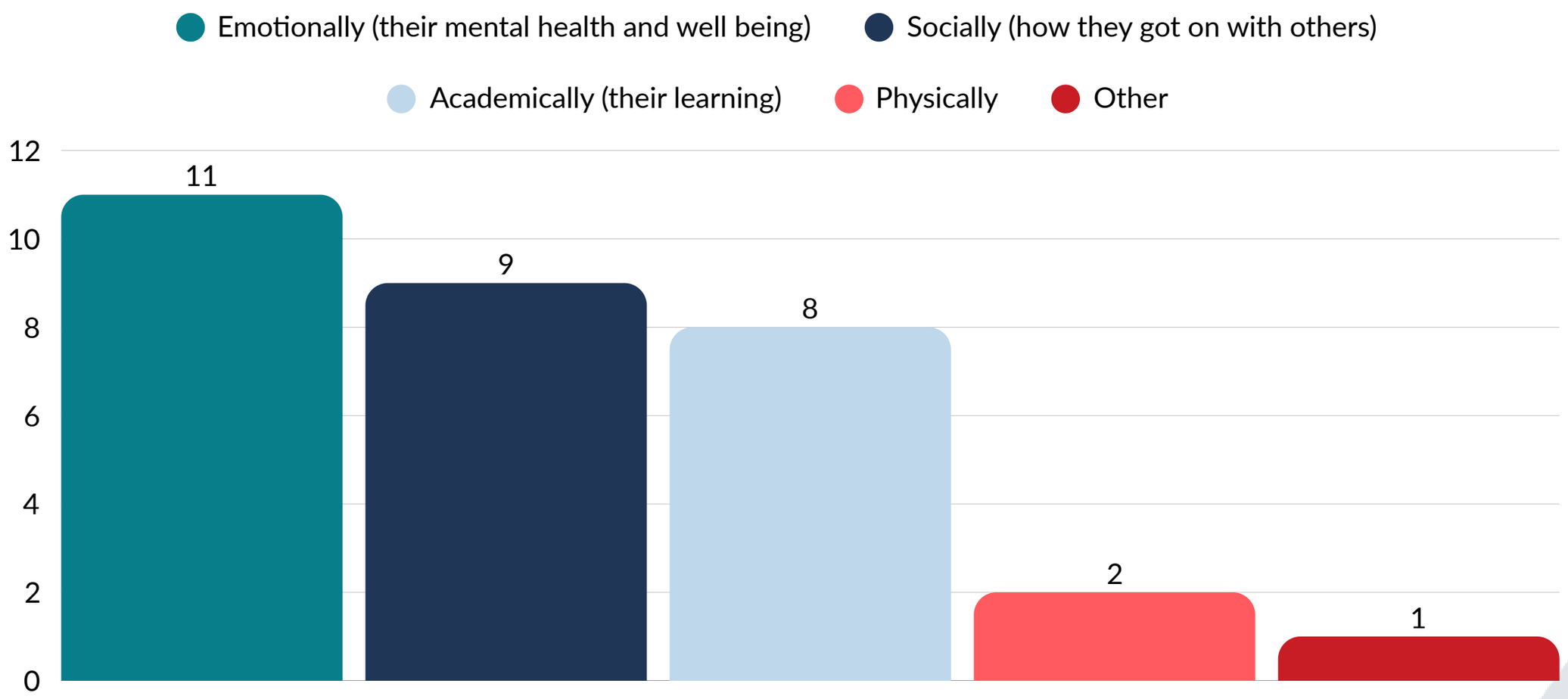
Parents were asked to rate the extent to which school closures affected their child. Most responses were between 7 and 10, indicating a strong impact. Just one parent reported a weak impact (between 0 and 3) (see Figure 2).



(Figure 2)

To what extent did the school closures affect your child?

When parents were asked how school closures affected their child, parents most commonly selected emotional, social, and academic impacts. Physical effects and other types of impact were mentioned less frequently (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3)

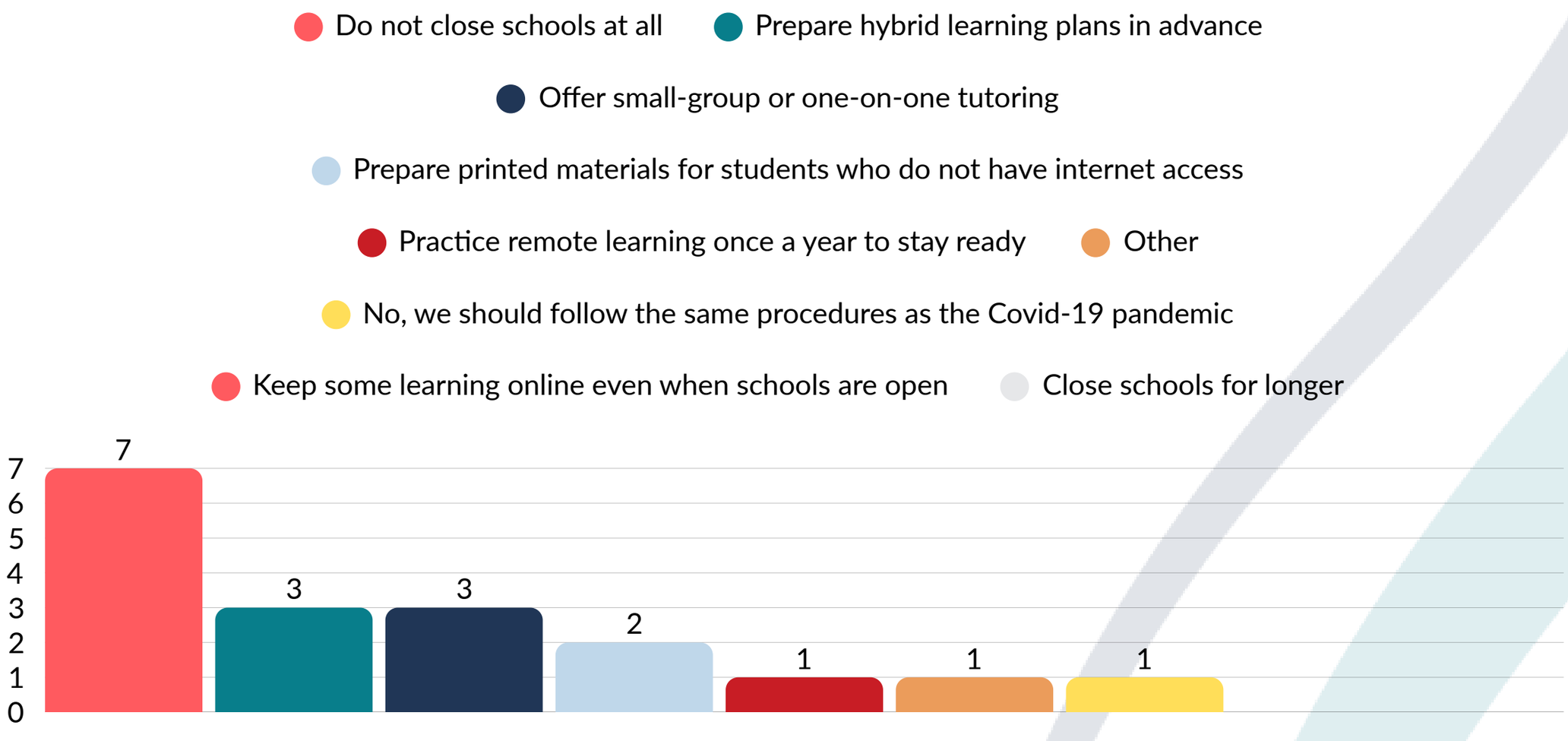
How did the school closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

One parent selected that their children was impacted in a way that was other to the options given within the survey. This parent noted behavioural impacts for their child, mentioning that they saw a “regression in behaviour” in them.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



When parents were asked what should be done differently if something like COVID-19 happened again, they suggested a variety of ideas. The most common answer was that schools should stay open and not close at all. Other suggestions included having hybrid learning plans ready in advance, providing small-group or one-to-one tutoring, and preparing printed materials for students who do not have internet access. A few parents chose practising remote learning once a year, following the same procedures as during COVID-19, or another option (see Figure 4).



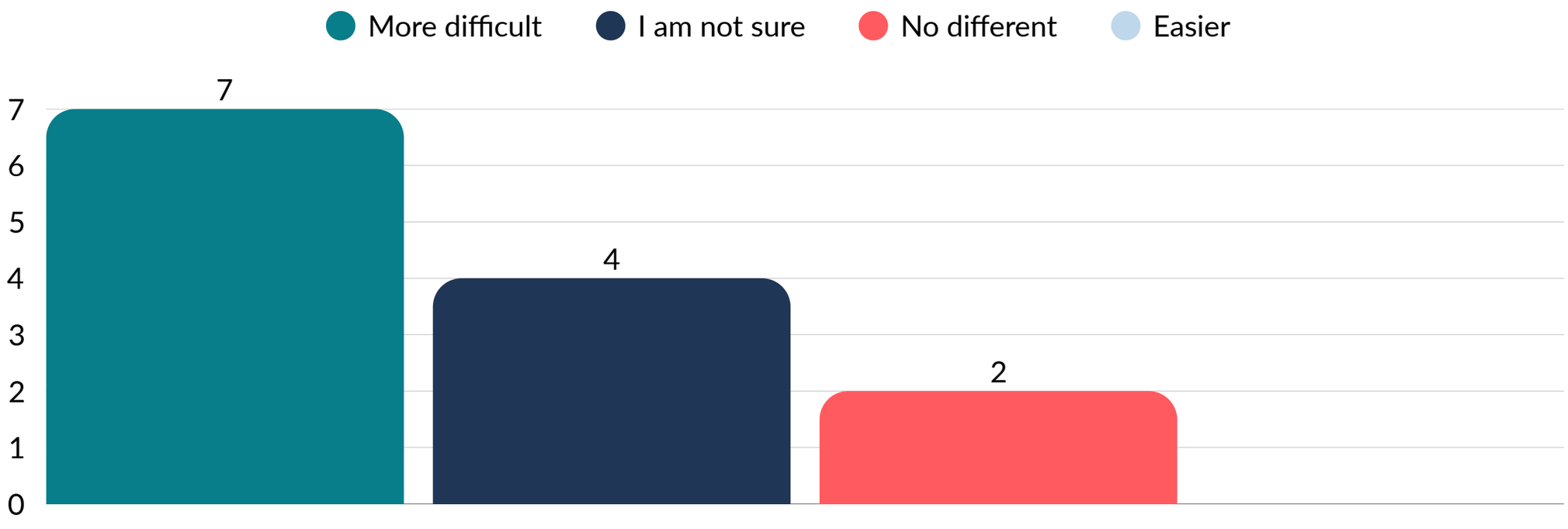
(Figure 4)

If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)

One parent mentioned that the main issue was the “stop/start” that occurred in terms of schools opening and closing over the period after the initial school closures. This parent also believed that time missed in school should have been made up for over the summer.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

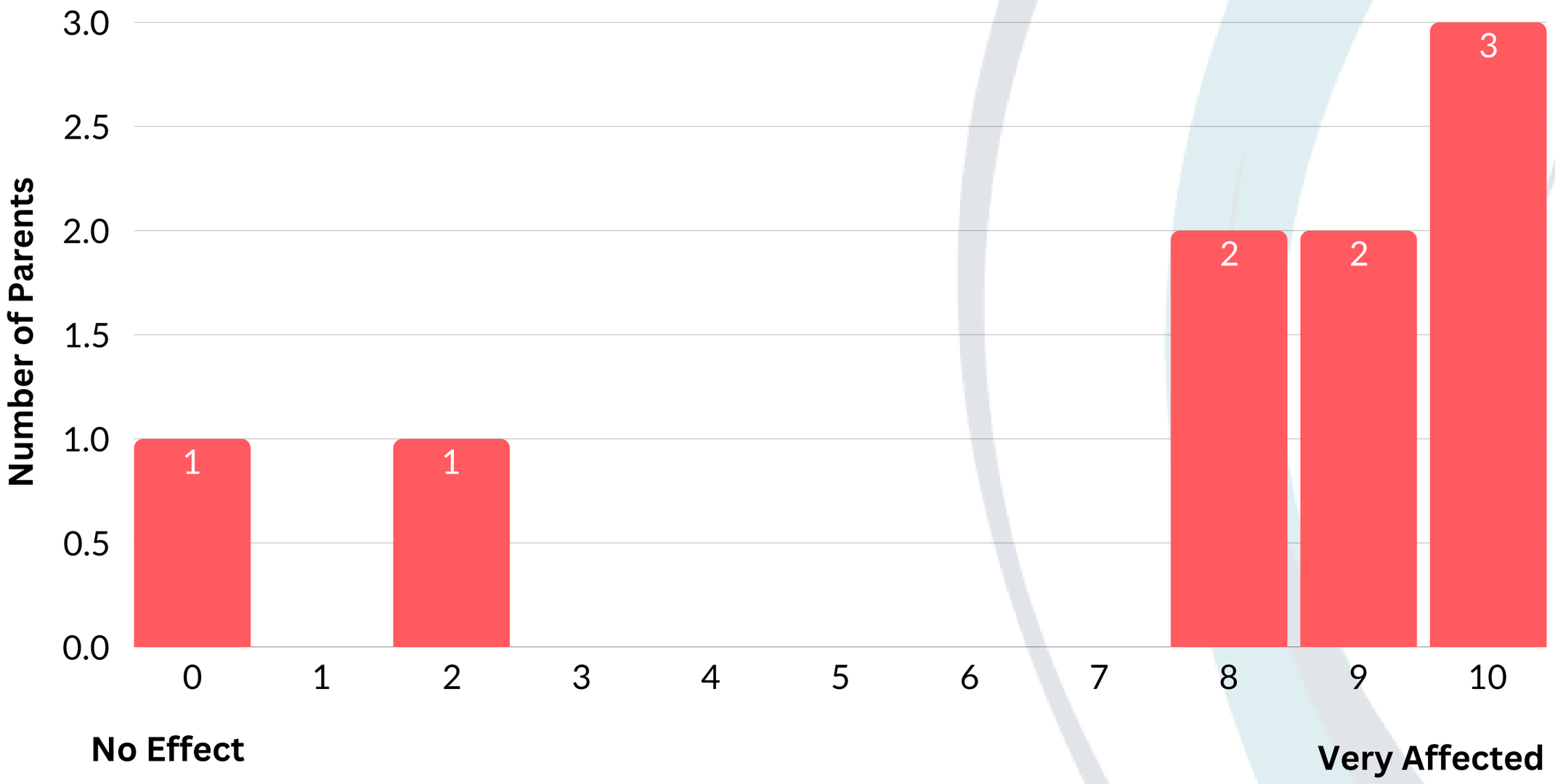
When parents were asked whether school closures made it more difficult for their child to move to the next stage in their educational journey, over half of parents said the transition was more difficult. The remaining parents said that they were unsure or that the closures made no difference - no parents felt that closures made the transition easier (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)

A transition is when a child moves from one school setting to another. Do you think school closures made your child's transition?

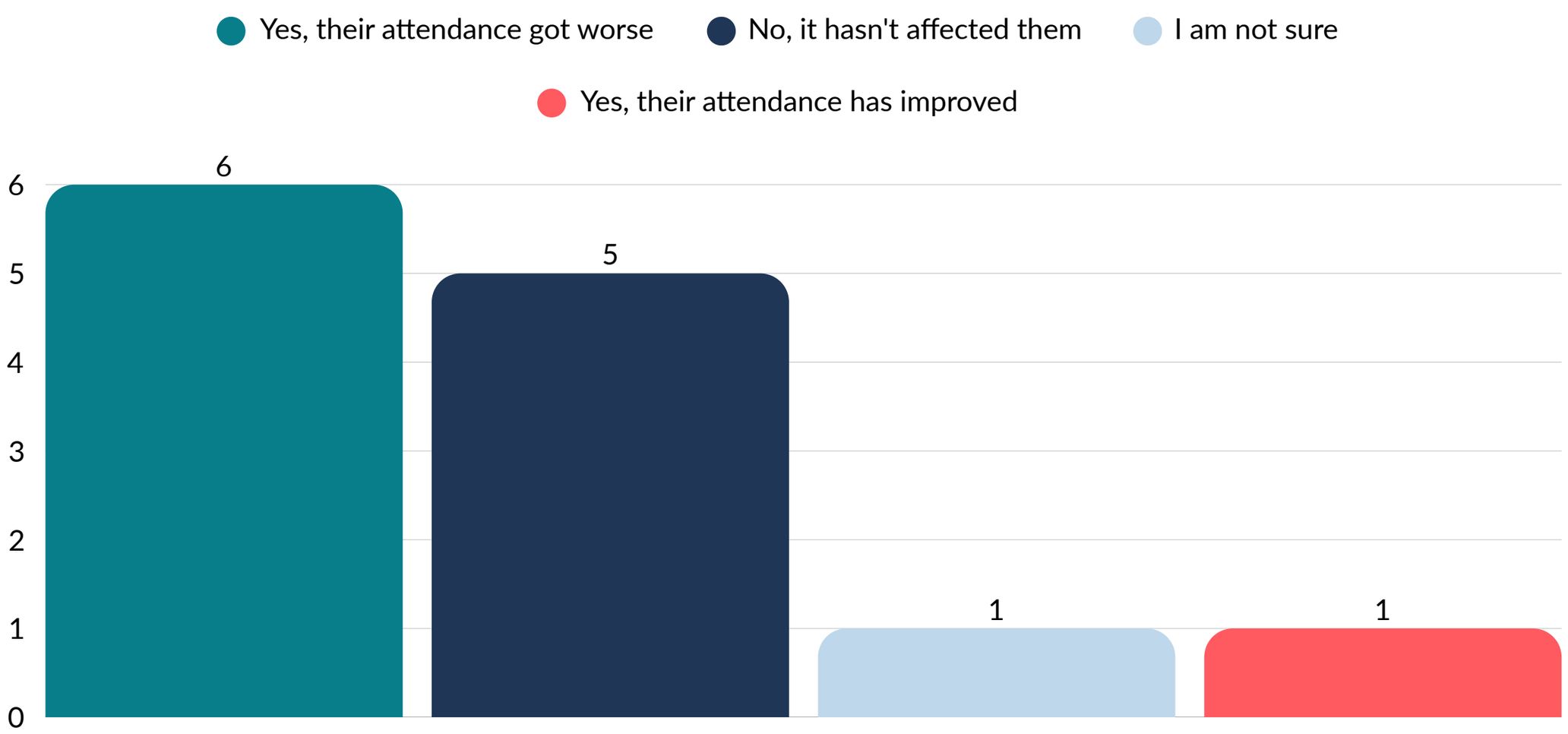
Parents were asked to to rate the impact of school closures on their child's transition between school settings. The majority gave a high rating (7–10), indicating a strong effect. A smaller group gave a low score (0–3) (see Figure 6).



(Figure 6)

To what extent do you think school closures affected your child's transition?

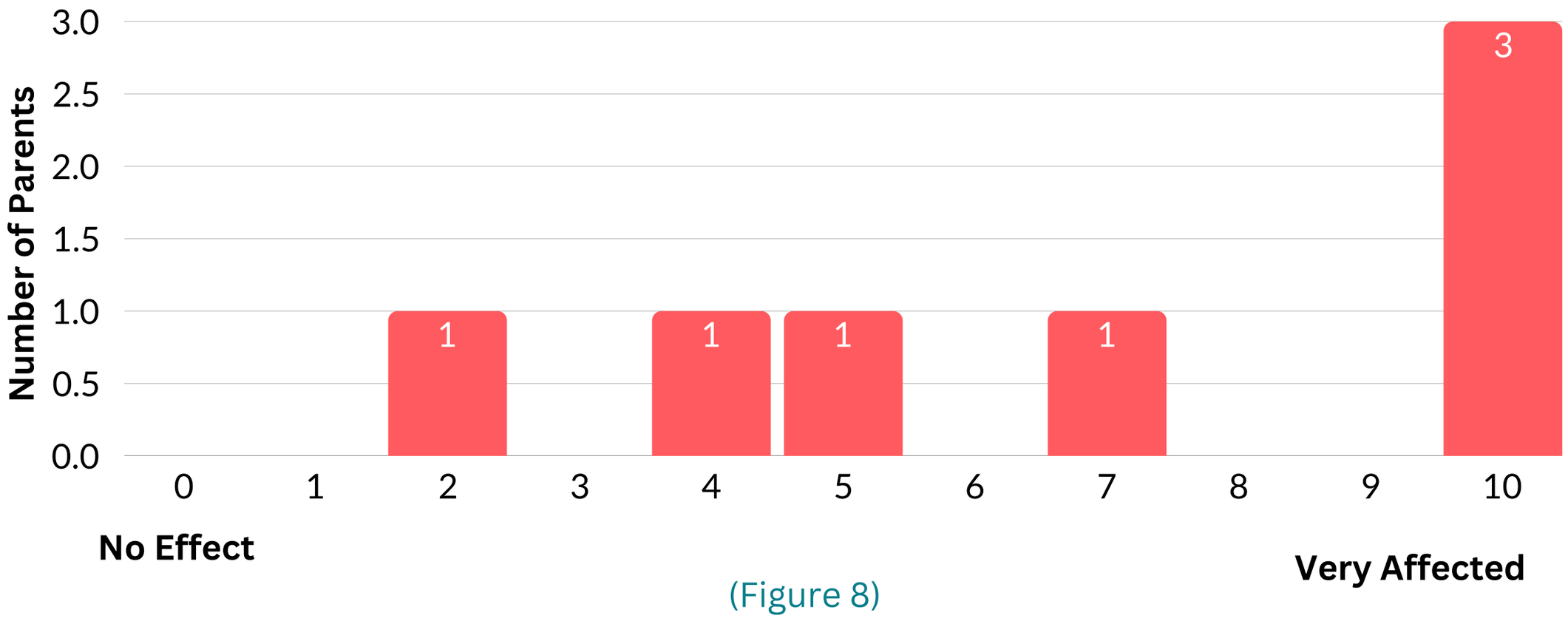
When parents were asked whether their child's current school attendance had been affected by COVID-19 closures, parents most commonly reported that it has gotten worse, closely followed by no reported change. One parent was unsure and one parents selected that their child's attendance had improved (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

Do you think your child's current attendance at school is affected by school closures during COVID-19?

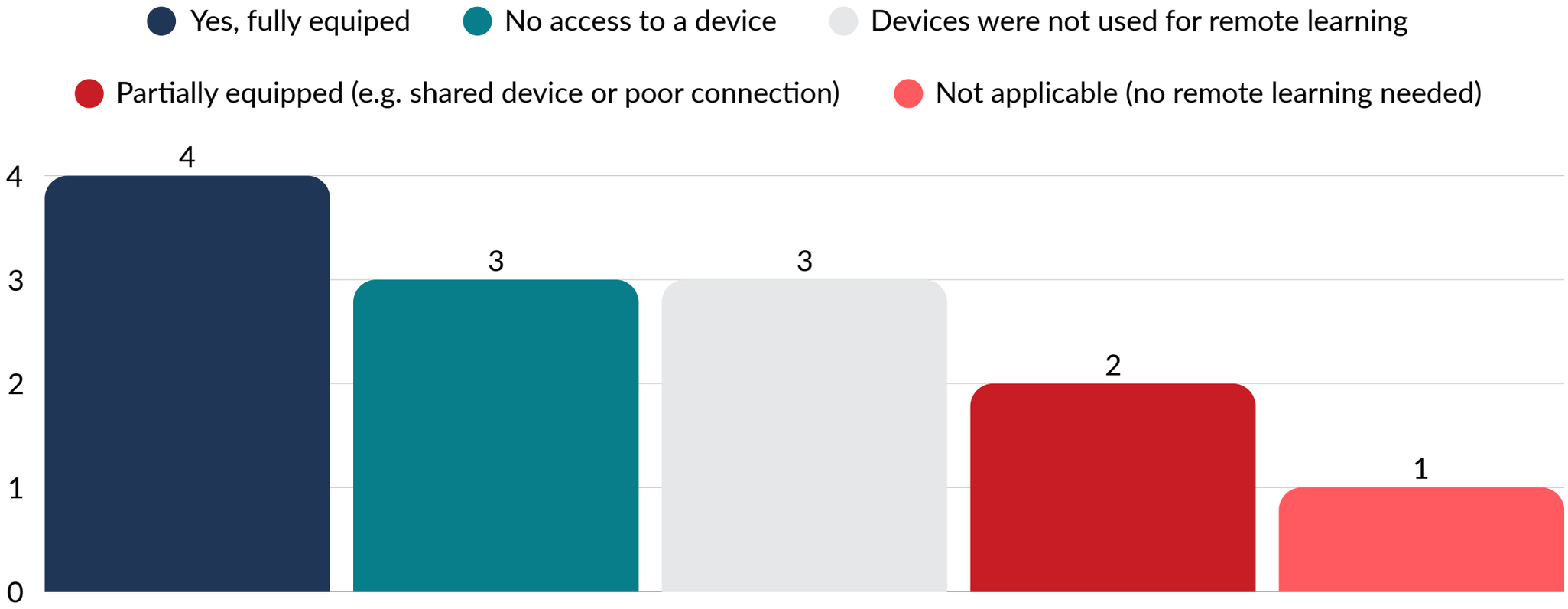
Parents were asked to rate the extent of COVID-19 school closures on their child's current attendance. The majority of parents gave upper-range ratings (7–10), indicating a high effect. A smaller number of parents gave moderate ratings (4-6), and just one parent gave a low score (0–3) (see Figure 8).



(Figure 8)

To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during Covid-19?

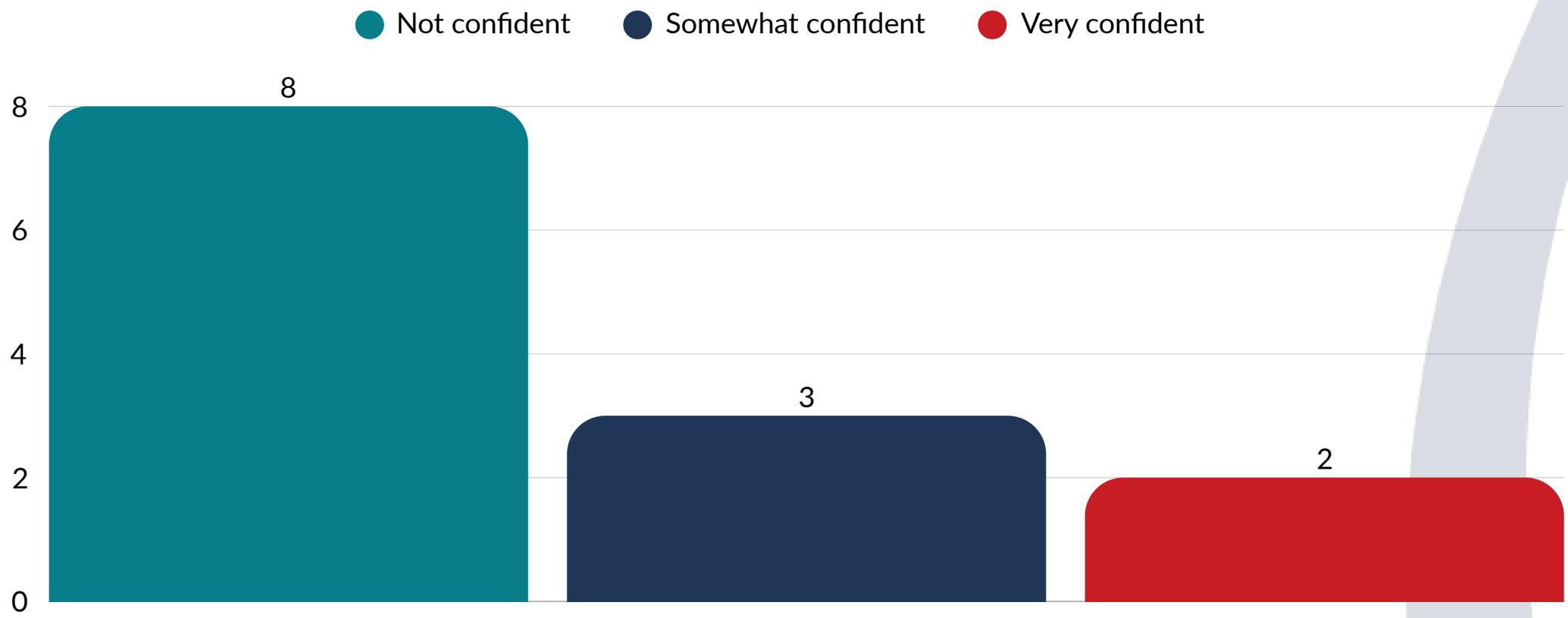
When parents were asked whether their child had access to a device and internet for remote learning, the most common response was that their child was fully equipped. Smaller numbers said their child had no access to a device, that devices were not used for learning, or that they were only partially equipped. One parent said remote learning was not needed (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)

When schools were closed during COVID-19, did your child have access to a device and internet for remote learning (if applicable)?

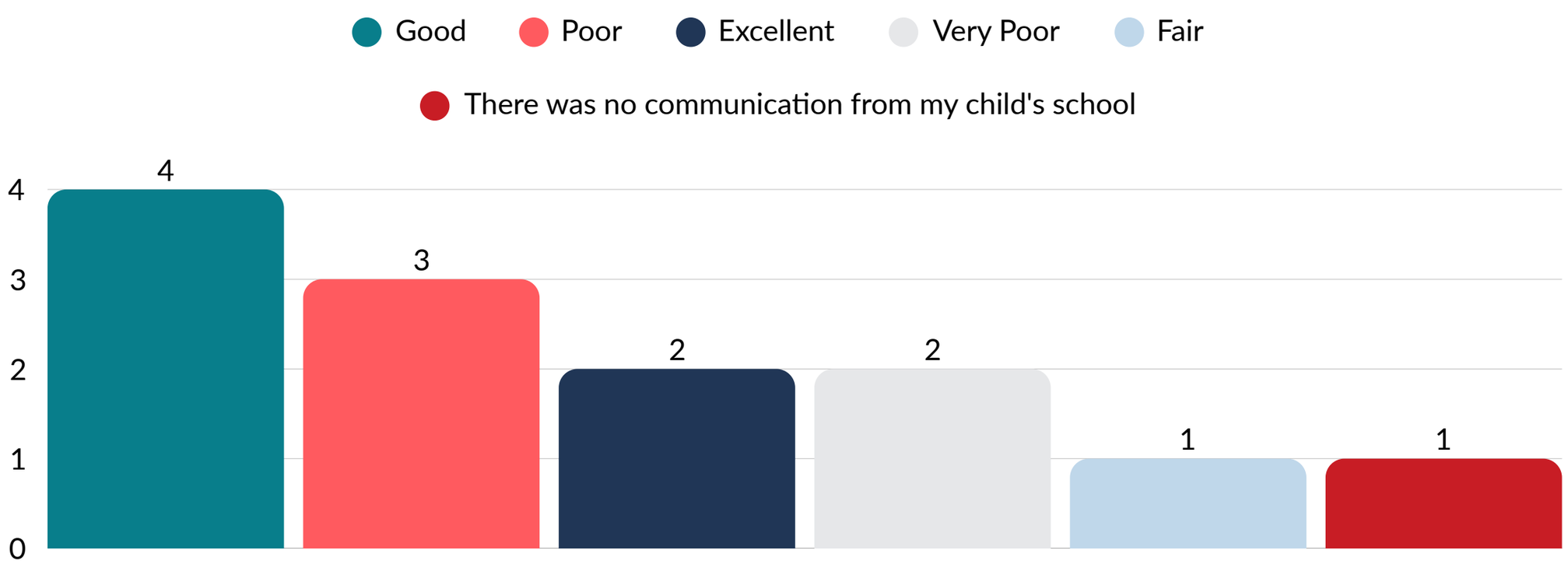
When parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning at home during school closures, the majority of parents said they were not confident. A smaller number of parents reported feeling either somewhat confident or very confident (see Figure 10).



(Figure 10)

How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?

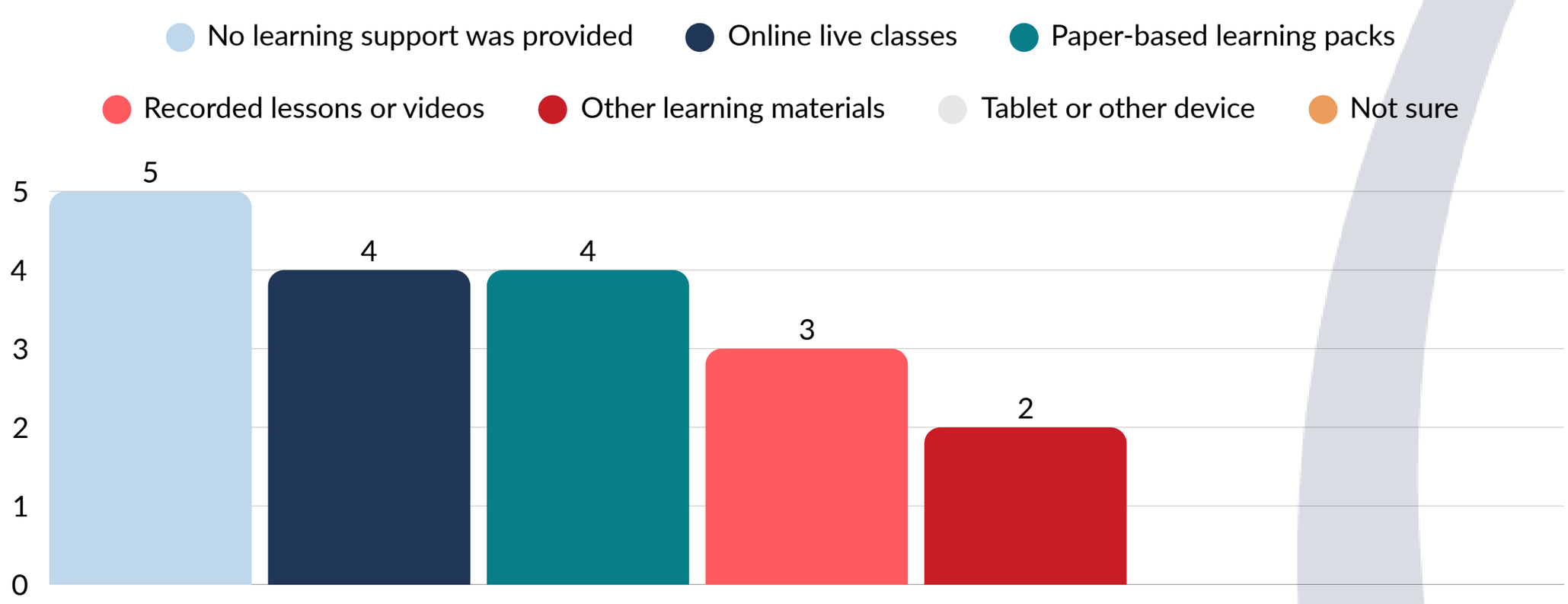
When parents were asked to rate communication from their child's school during closures, the most common response was that communication was good, followed by poor. Smaller numbers of parents rated it as excellent or very poor, and just one parent each said that communication was fair or there was no communication at all (see Figure 11).



(Figure 11)

How would you rate the communication from your child's school during school closures?

When parents were asked what kind of learning materials or support their child received during school closures, the most common response was that no learning support was provided. Online live classes and paper-based materials were also mentioned, followed by recorded lessons. A few parents referred to other types of learning materials. No parents said their child received a tablet or device, and none were unsure about what was provided (see Figure 12).

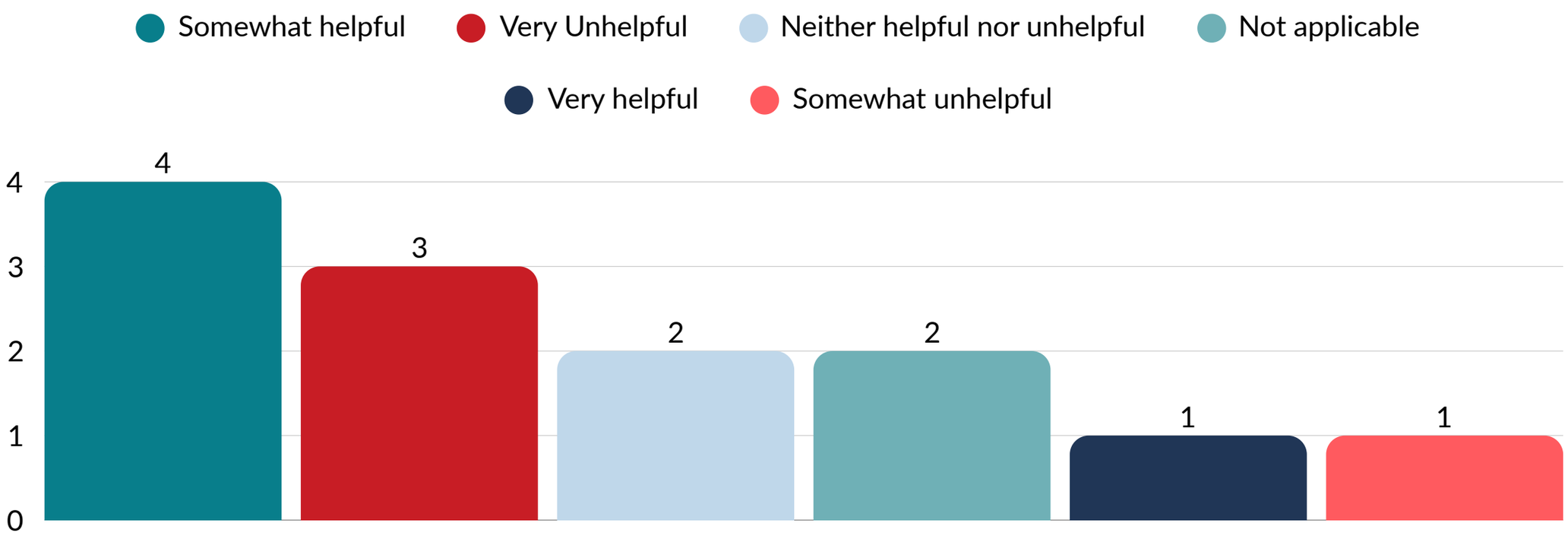


(Figure 12)

What type of learning materials or support was provided during closures? (Select all that apply)



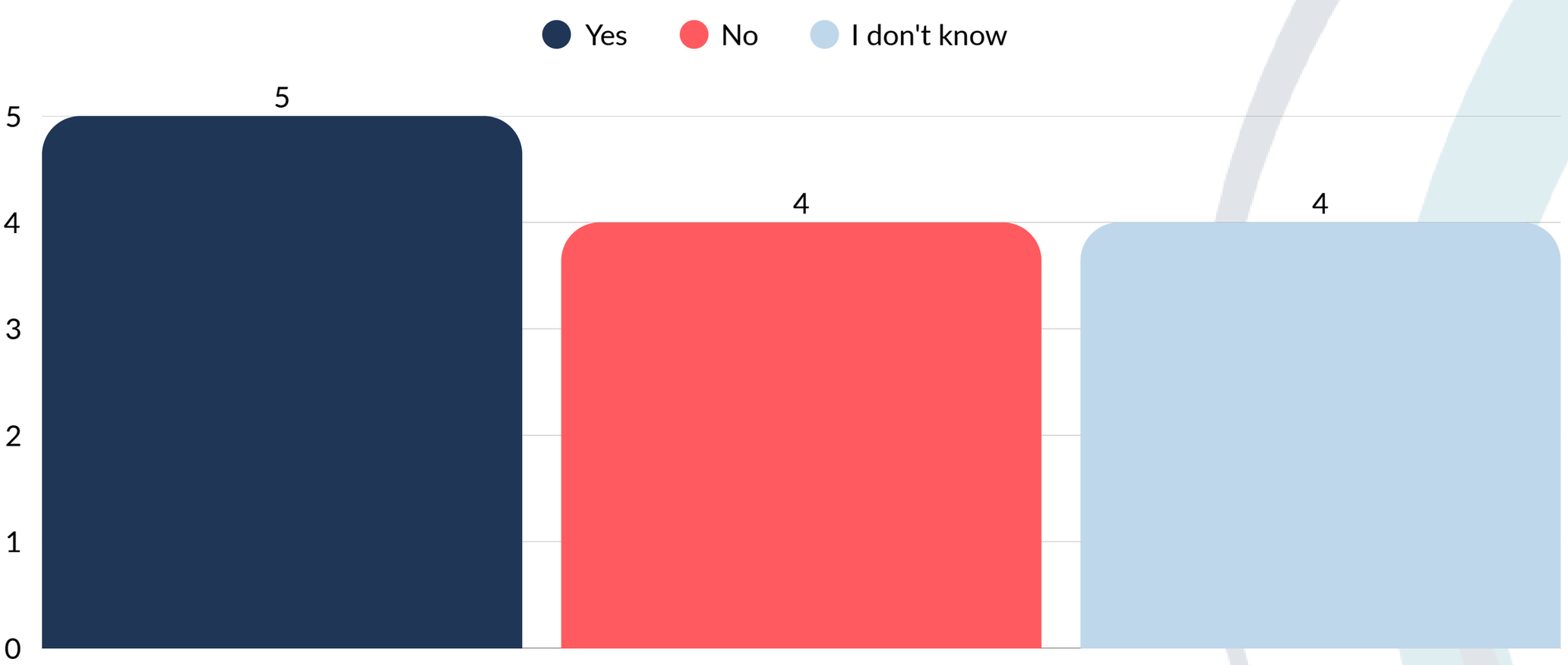
When parents were asked how helpful their child found the materials and support provided during closures, the most common response was that they were somewhat helpful. Multiple parents also felt it was neutral, very unhelpful, or not applicable. Just one parent each viewed them as very helpful and somewhat unhelpful (see Figure 13).



(Figure 13)

How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?

Parents were asked whether they believed the government made the right decision regarding mask use in schools during COVID-19. Responses were divided, with slightly more agreeing with the decision than disagreeing. Others were unsure (see Figure 14).



(Figure 14)

During COVID-19 there was a requirement to wear masks in schools some of the time. Do you think the government made the correct decision regarding the use of masks in schools during COVID-19?

Following parents' responses on whether the government made the right decision about mask use in schools during COVID-19, they were invited to explain their views in more detail. Several parents said there should have been different rules for children in special schools. They pointed out that masks were especially difficult for children with sensory issues or language delays. One parent suggested that only staff in special schools should have worn masks, while another felt that teachers in special schools should have received the COVID-19 vaccine earlier.

Other parents were more critical of masks. One said they were completely unnecessary and made it harder for children to learn and interact with others. In contrast, another parent strongly supported masks, especially in special schools where more vulnerable children attend.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



Suggestions and Open Space for Parents' Views

The COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruption to schools everywhere. In Ireland, parents of children in special schools were strongly affected by government decisions on school closures, online learning, and educational support. Their responses show a mix of understanding and frustration, and a clear call for better planning for the future.

Impact of School Closures on Children in Special Schools

Many parents were very concerned about the negative effects of school closures on their children's learning, development, and wellbeing. Children in special schools often rely on routine, structure, and face-to-face support. Losing these suddenly caused serious setbacks for some children.

Parents described a wide range of impacts, including more anxiety, behavioural problems, and emotional distress. For some children, these changes led to long-term difficulties. Others were able to recover after schools reopened, but it took a lot of effort.

Parents also felt that online learning was not suitable for children with complex needs. Many said that learning at home could not replace the structured, individual support they get in school. Some parents reported feeling isolated and unsupported during this period.

Mixed Views on Government Response

Parents had different opinions about how the government handled education during the pandemic. Some understood that the situation was unprecedented and decisions were made under pressure. They felt early actions were aimed at protecting public health.

Other parents were unhappy, especially with the long periods of school closures and what they saw as a lack of careful planning. They felt that while early closures might have been needed, later closures could have been handled better, particularly for children in special schools.

Concerns About Fairness

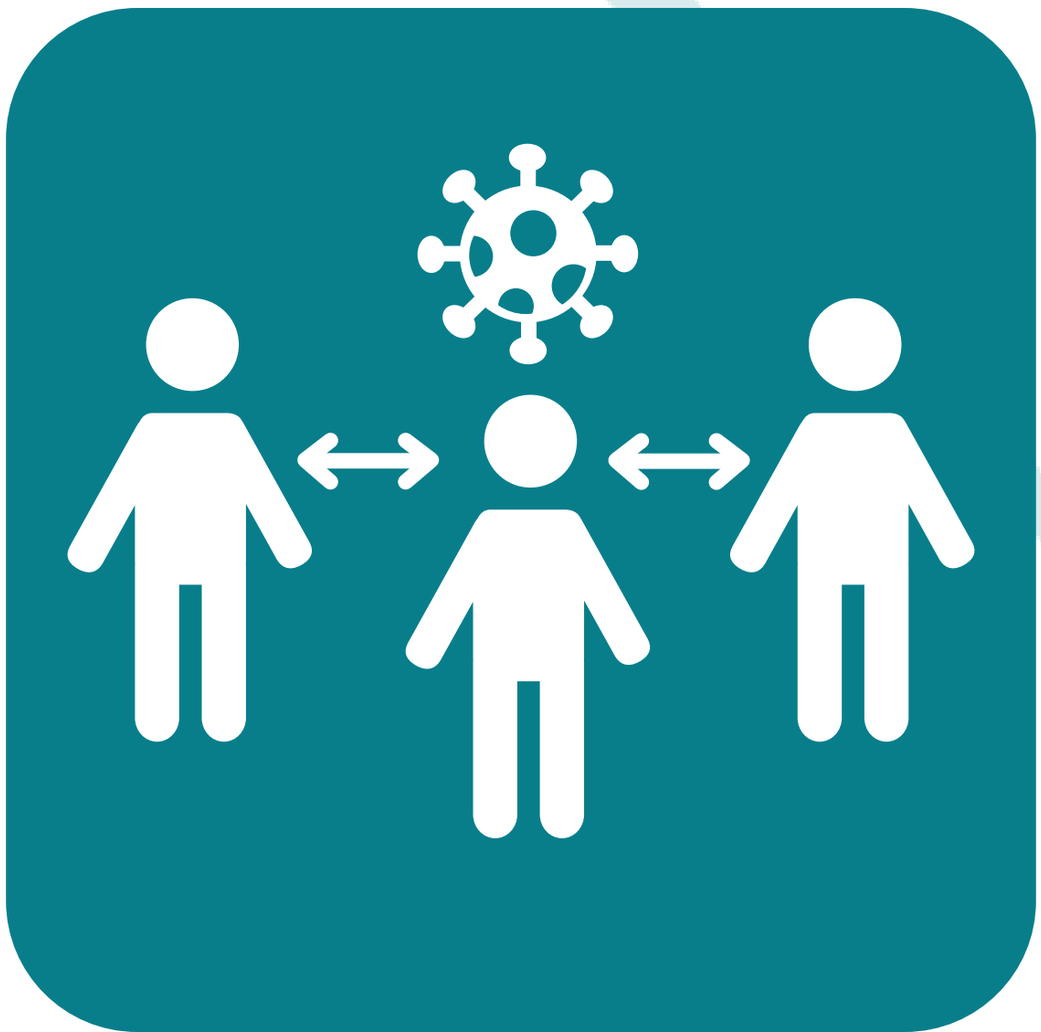
Some parents felt special schools were treated unfairly compared to mainstream schools. For example, students in mainstream schools could sometimes finish their education at 19, but students in special schools had to leave at 18. This seemed unfair, especially since children in special schools lost a lot of learning time during closures.

Support for Children and Families

Parents also said there was not enough support for children and families during and after closures. Some felt that counselling or family support services could have helped reduce the stress and impact of isolation. The lack of these resources left families feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.

Many parents thought the government should have planned a clear way to help children catch up once schools reopened. Some felt their children were permanently behind in their learning. A few suggested that an extra year of school could have helped make up for the lost time.

*This summary captures the key themes raised by parents; please refer to the appendix for full responses.



Section 5 Conclusion

The findings in this section show how strongly the pandemic affected the education, friendships, and wellbeing of children in special schools. While some families managed well, many parents described long-term challenges, especially around children's mental health, loss of social connections, and keeping up with learning.

Parents also highlighted unequal access to technology and learning supports, with some children falling behind more than others. Those with special educational needs, disabilities, or neurodivergence were especially at risk, and their families reported higher levels of stress and regression. Views on measures such as masks and restrictions were mixed: some valued them for safety, while others felt they created extra barriers and anxiety for children.

Looking ahead, parents want schools and policymakers to be better prepared. They asked for clear and consistent communication, fairer support for vulnerable learners, and flexible systems such as hybrid learning that can be used when needed. Parents' experiences during COVID-19 offer important lessons to ensure that, in any future emergency, children's education, social development, and emotional health are protected.



NPC
SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

SECTION 6

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION - SPECIAL CLASS IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes to children's education. Schools closed, learning moved online, and social rules affected families. To learn more about the longer-term effects, the National Parents Council (NPC) asked parents about their children’s experiences during and after the pandemic. The goal was to understand how students were affected in their learning, friendships, and feelings, and where more support may be needed.

Parents were invited to share their point of view through a consultation that included both structured and open-ended questions. This helped us understand what problems they faced, and how well schools supported their learning. Parents also shared views on remote learning, school communication, and what should could be done differently if something like this happens again.

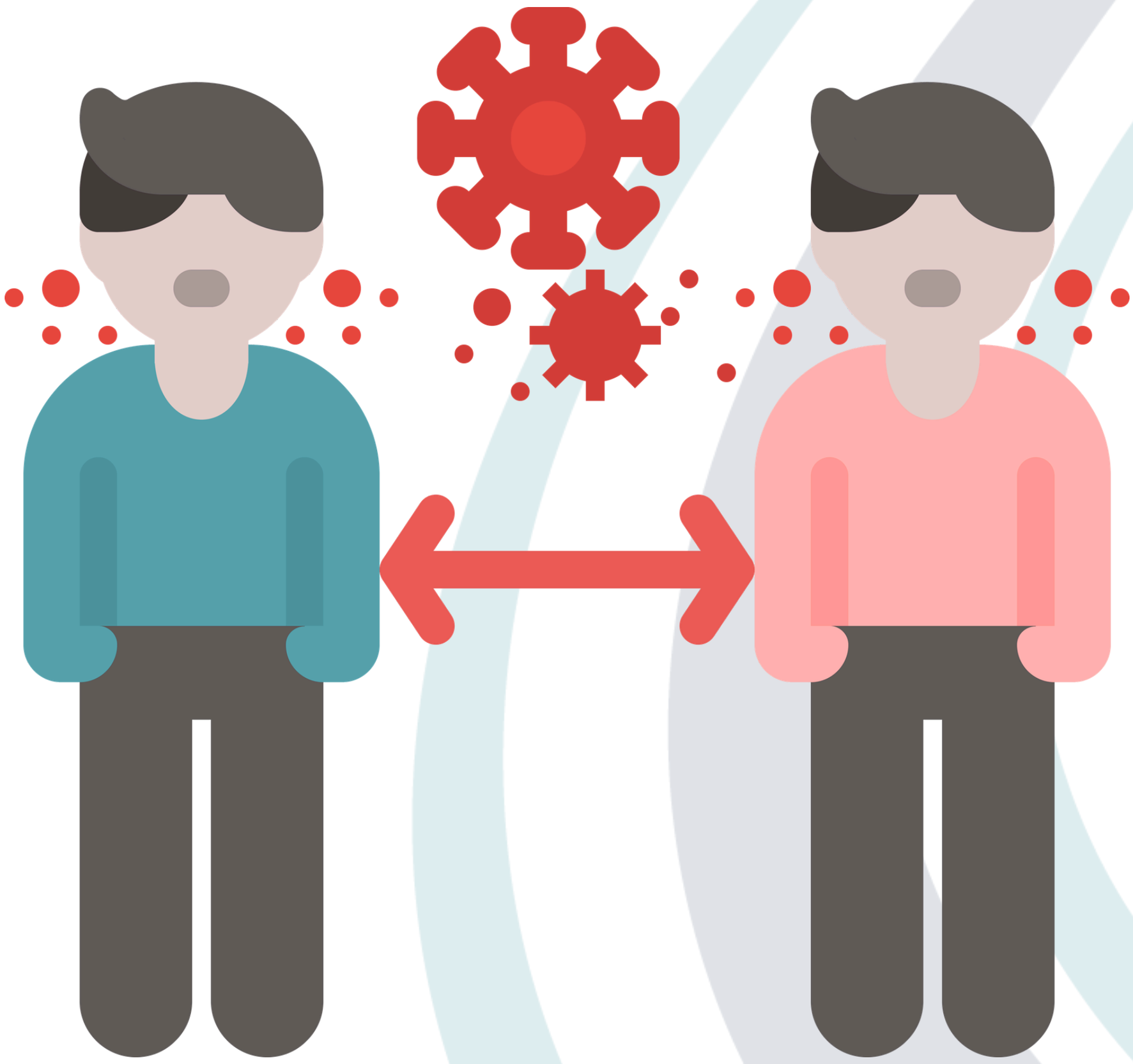
The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during June - August 2025. The survey was sent to the NPC data base of parents of children in special classes in mainstream schools. The survey was open from 20th of June 2025 till the 15th of August 2025. During this time, a total of (14) parents completed the survey. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey will be shared in this section.



Surveys

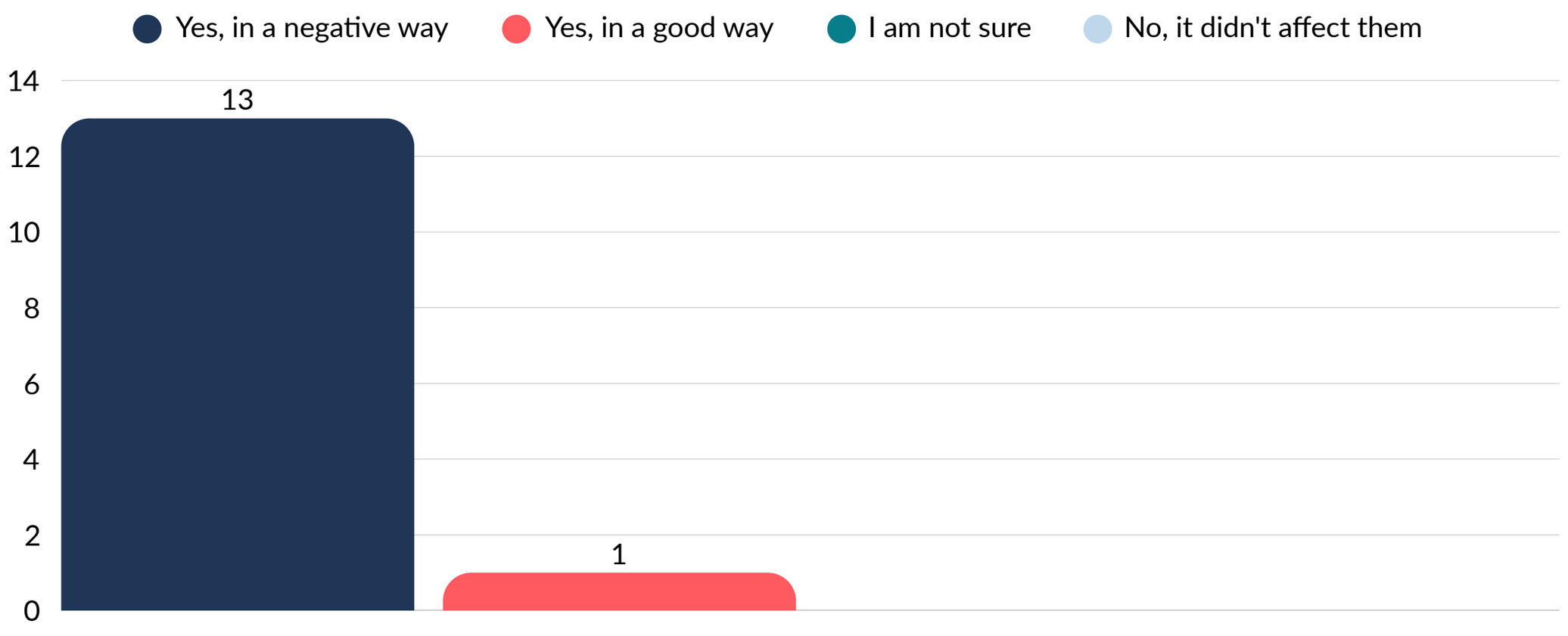
A survey titled Covid-19 was sent to parents to collect feedback. The survey asked a number of questions to find out how parents felt about their children's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and any current lasting effects.

It included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This gave parents the opportunity to choose answers that suited their views and also share extra thoughts. Parents were also asked to think about how well schools supported their child's learning needs. The main results of the survey, including key points and parents' opinions, will be shared in this section.



Survey Findings

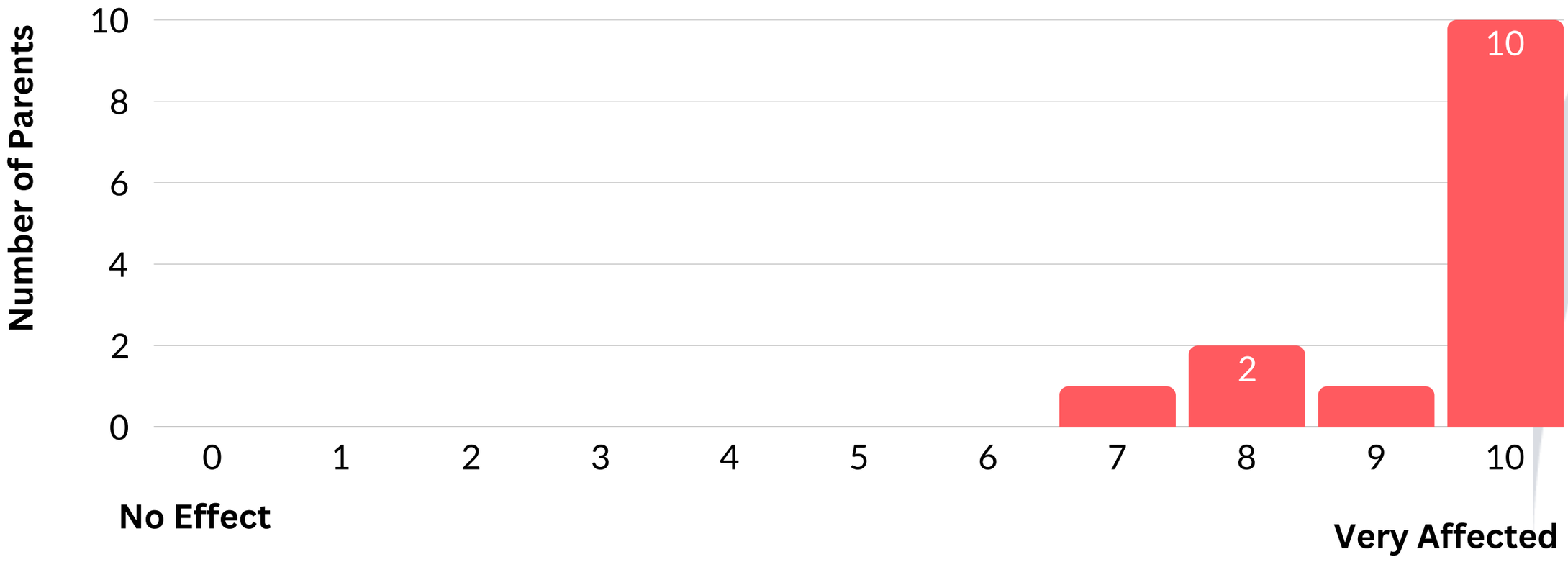
When asked whether school closures during the pandemic affected their child, the majority of parents reported a negative impact. One parent said the closures were beneficial for their child (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Did school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affect your child?

Parents were asked to rate the extent to which school closures affected their child. All responses were between 7 and 10, indicating a consistently strong impact. (see Figure 2).

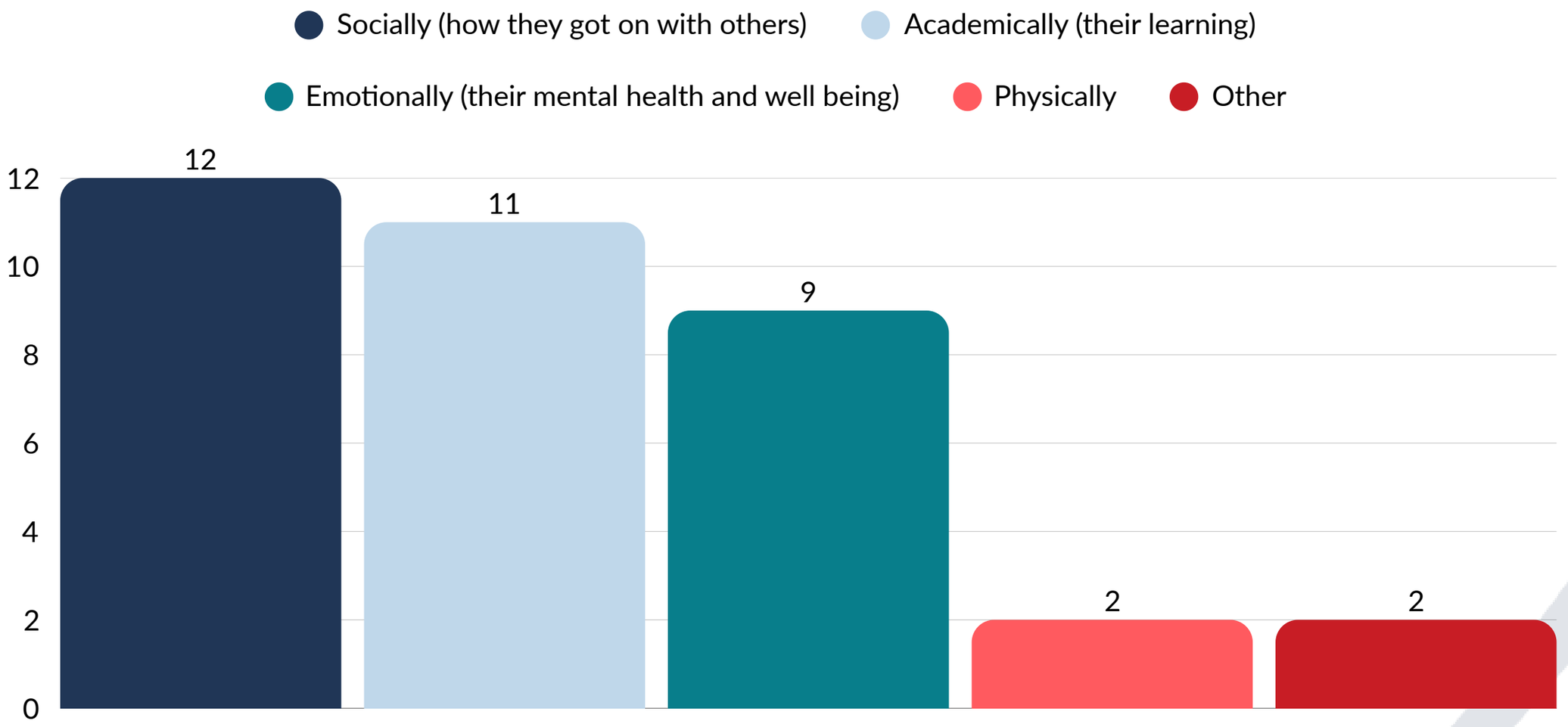


(Figure 2)

To what extent did the school closures affect your child?



When parents were asked how school closures affected their child, parents most commonly selected social, academic, and emotional impacts. Physical effects and other types of impact were mentioned less frequently (see Figure 3).



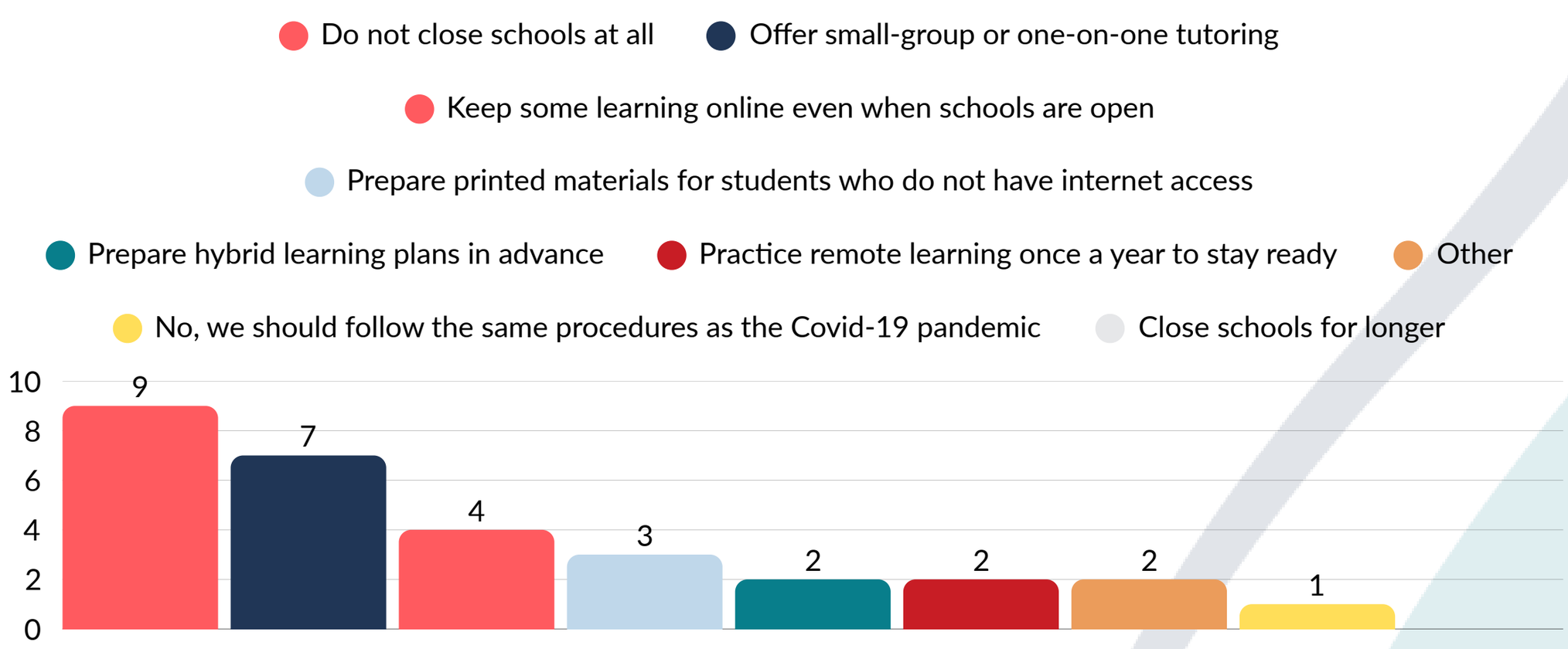
(Figure 3)

How did the school closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

Some parents shared different ways that school closures affected their children. One parent said their child found it hard to cope without the usual school routine and really missed spending time with other kids. Another parent explained that the closures made their child's OCD behaviours worse.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

When parents were asked what should be done differently if a similar event happened again, the most popular suggestions were to avoid closing schools and to offer small-group or one-to-one tutoring. Some parents also recommended keeping some learning online even when schools are open, providing printed materials for students without internet access, and preparing hybrid learning plans in advance. A few suggested practising remote learning once a year or had other ideas. Only one parent felt the same approach used during the Covid-19 pandemic should be followed, and no one supported longer school closures (see Figure 4).



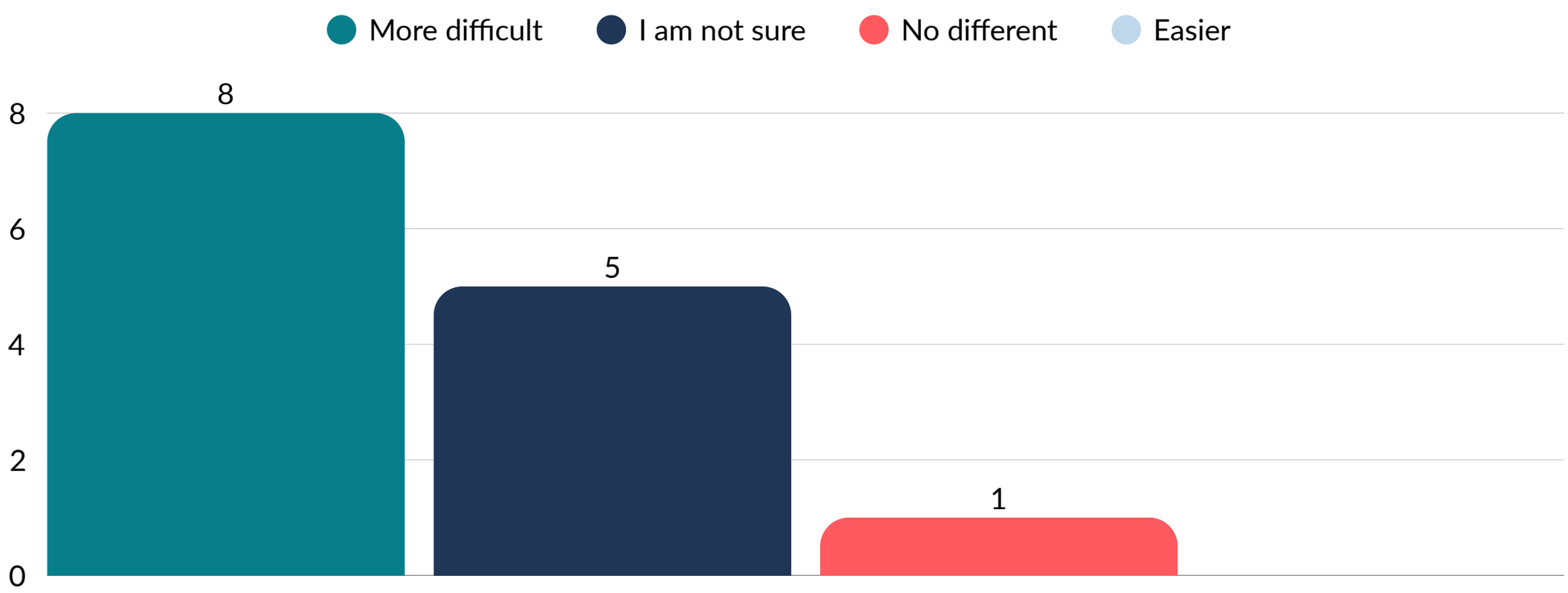
(Figure 4)

If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)

Parents of children in special classes said that more tailored supports would be helpful. One parent felt strongly that schools should stay open for children with additional needs. Another suggested that special arrangements should be made for children who cannot take part in online learning.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

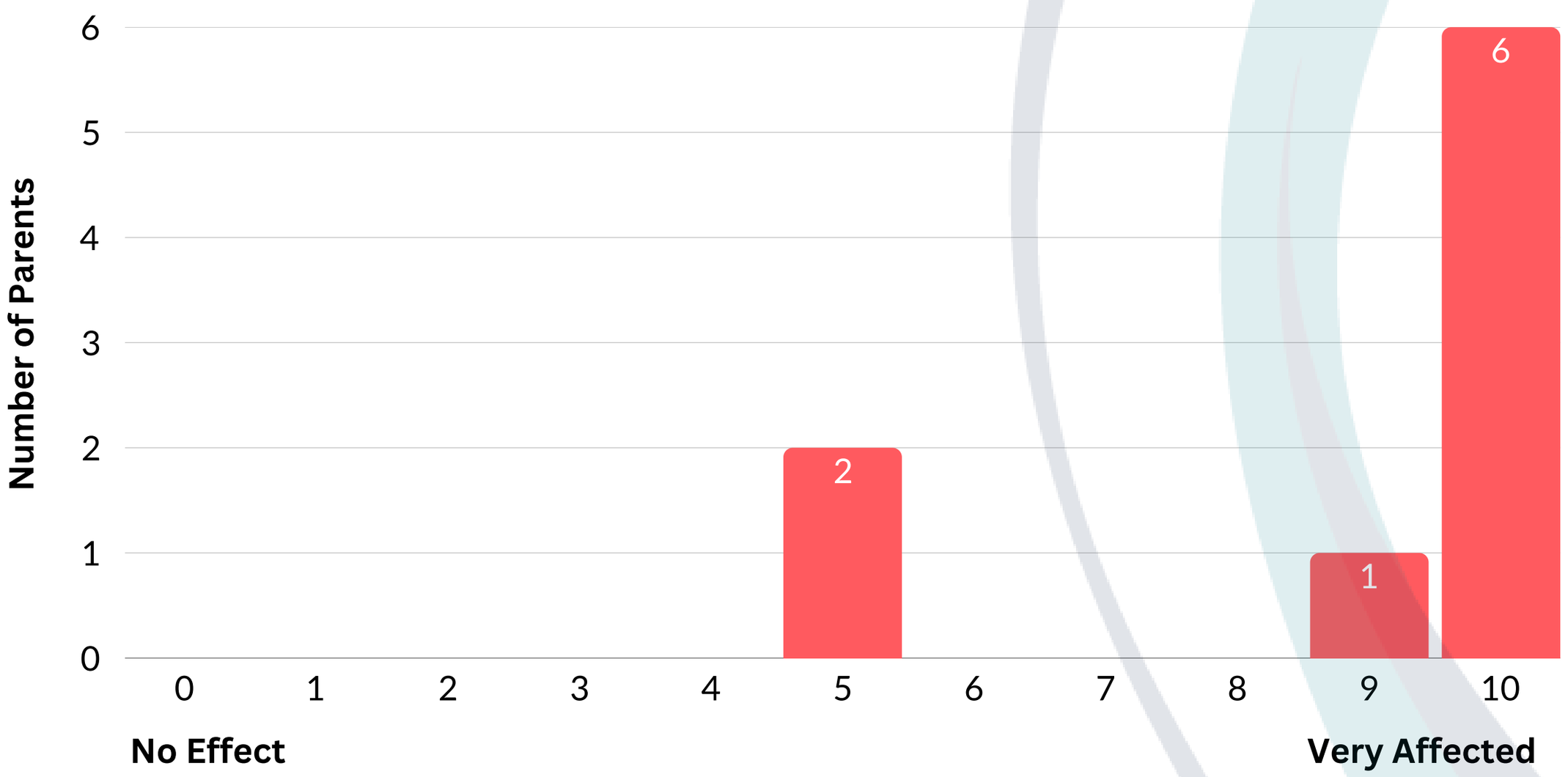
When parents were asked whether school closures made it more difficult for their child to move to the next stage in their educational journey, over half of parents said the transition was more difficult. Most of the remaining parents said that they were unsure, while just one said the closures made no difference. No parents reported that closures made the transition easier (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)

A transition is when a child moves from one school setting to another. Do you think school closures made your child's transition?

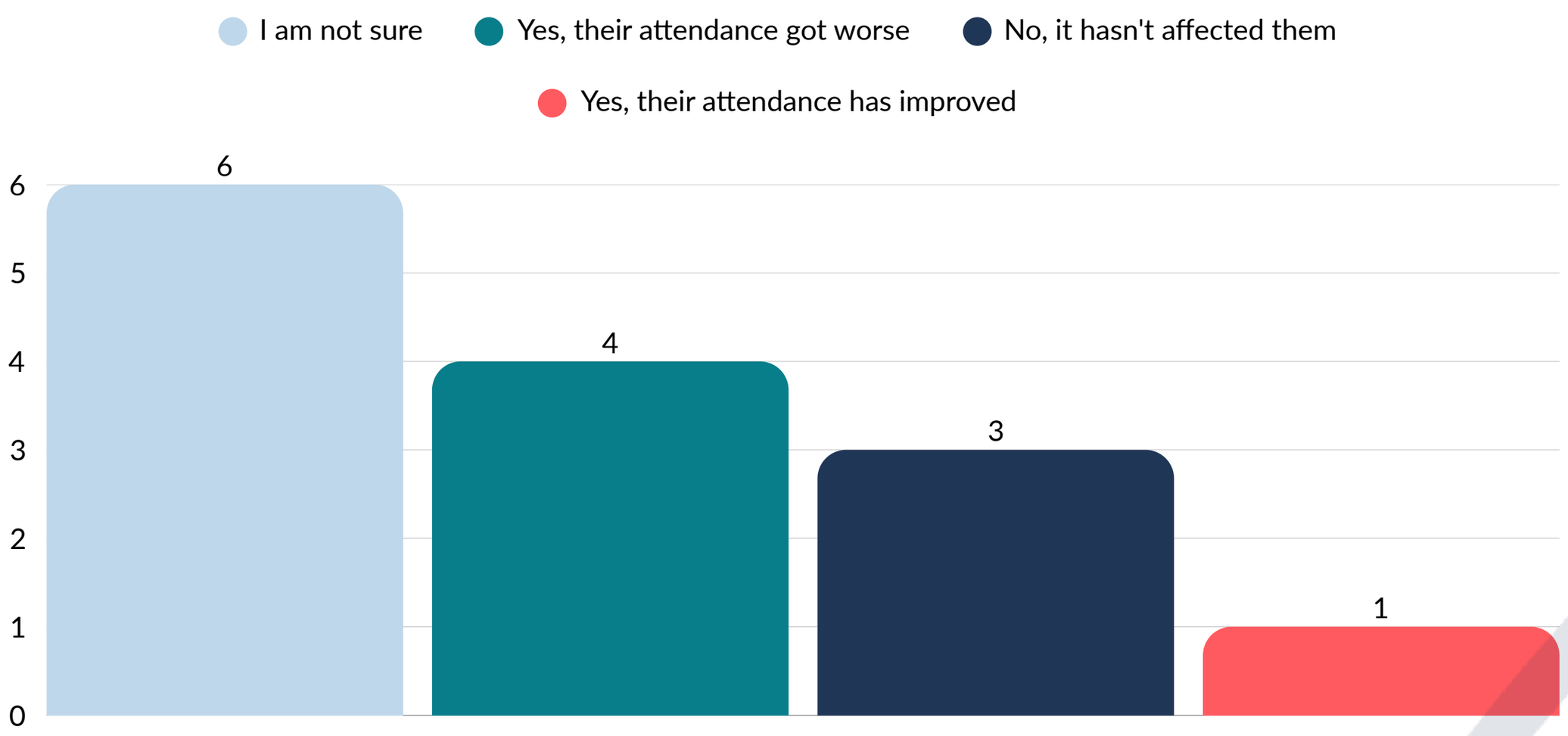
Parents were asked to to rate the impact of school closures on their child's transition between school settings. The majority gave a high rating (7–10), indicating a strong effect. Two parents gave a moderate score (4–6), while no parents rated the effect as low (0–3) (see Figure 6).



(Figure 6)

To what extent do you think school closures affected your child's transition?

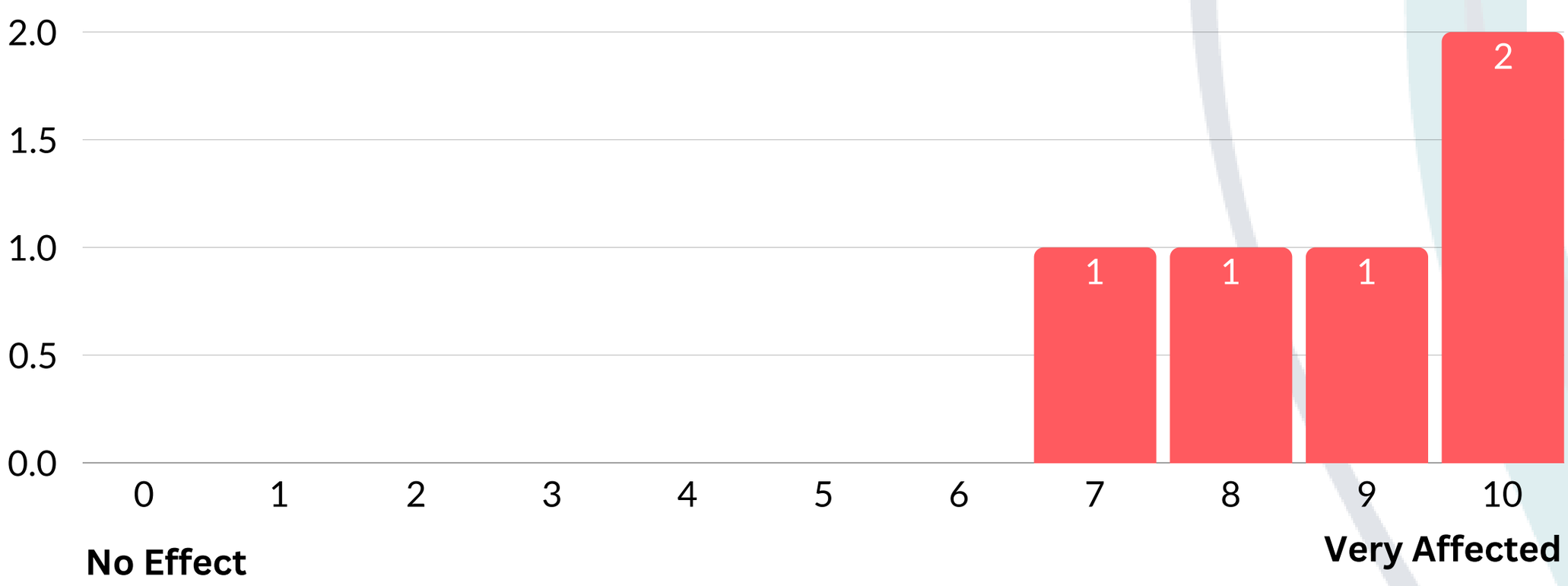
When parents were asked whether their child's current school attendance had been affected by COVID-19 closures, most parents were unsure. Some parents reported attendance being declining or unaffected, while just one parent reported seeing improvements (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

Do you think your child's current attendance at school is affected by school closures during COVID-19?

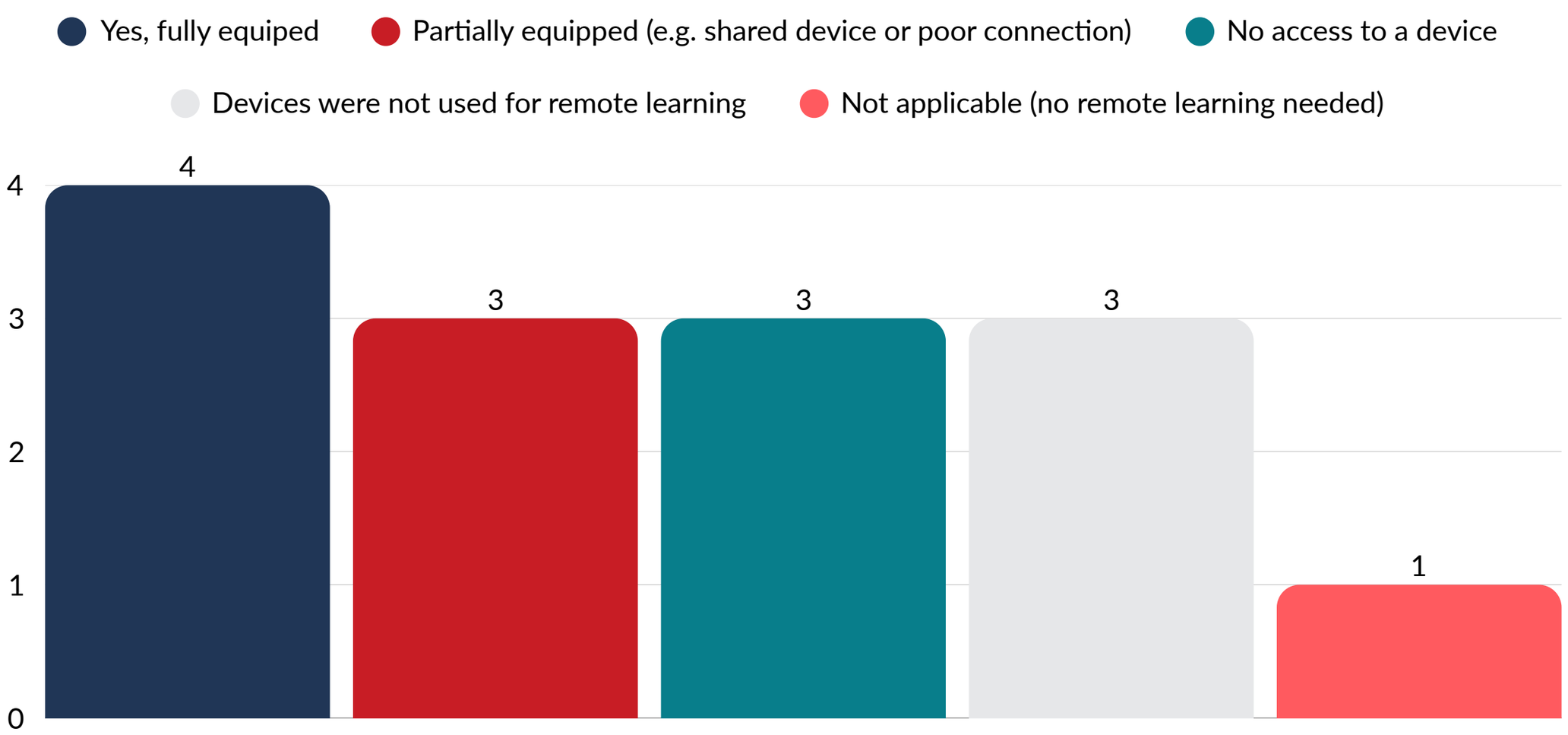
Parents were asked to rate the extent of COVID-19 school closures on their child's current attendance. All parents gave high-range ratings (7–10), indicating a strong effect (see Figure 8).



(Figure 8)

To what extent has your child's current attendance at school been affected by school closures during Covid-19?

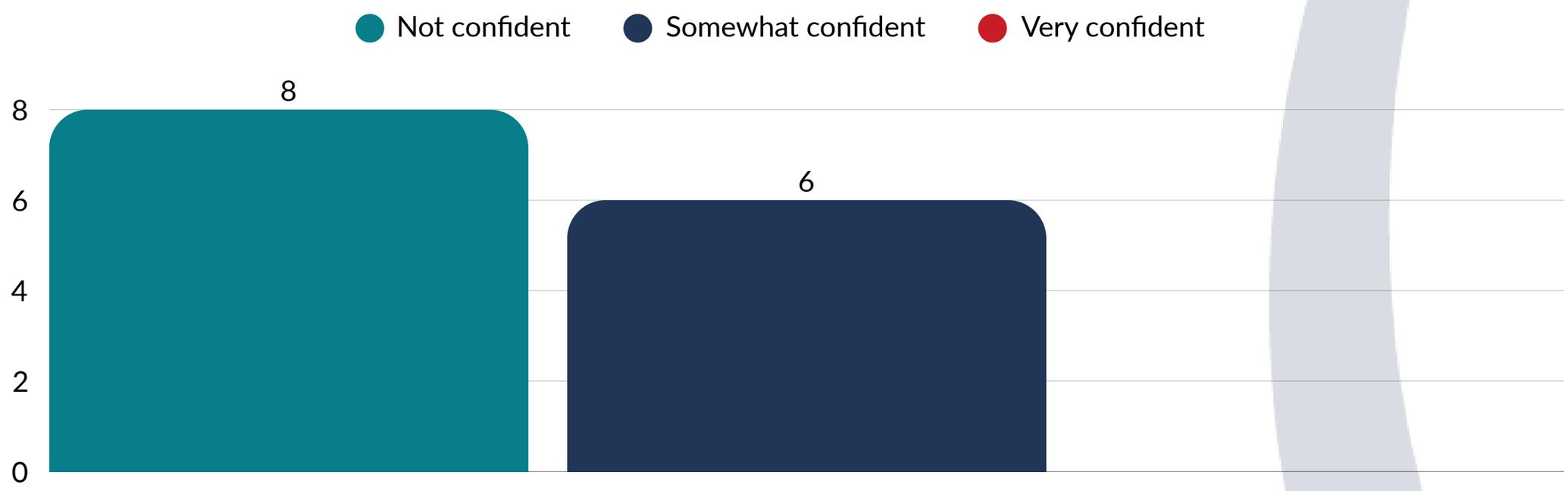
When parents were asked whether their child had access to a device and internet for remote learning, half said their child was either fully or partially equipped. A few parents said their child had no access to a device or that devices were not used for remote learning. One parent said remote learning was not needed (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)

When schools were closed during COVID-19, did your child have access to a device and internet for remote learning (if applicable)?

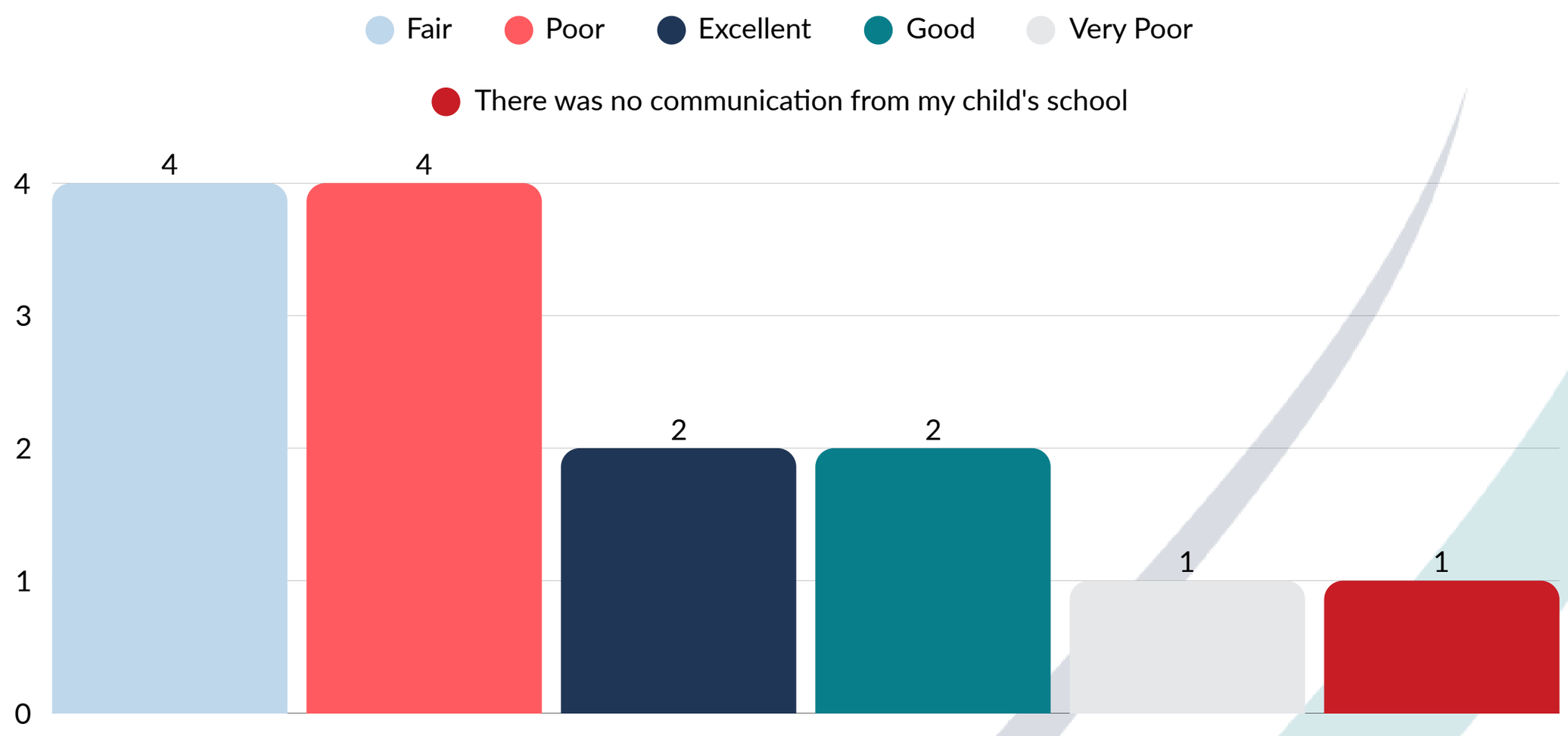
When parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning at home during school closures, the majority of parents said they were not confident. The remaining parents reported feeling somewhat confident, while no parents felt very confident (see Figure 10).



(Figure 10)

How confident did you feel supporting your child's learning at home?

When parents were asked to rate communication from their child's school during closures, most parents rated it as fair or poor. A smaller number of parents rated it as excellent or good, while one rated it as very poor and one reported that there was no communication from their child's school (see Figure 11).

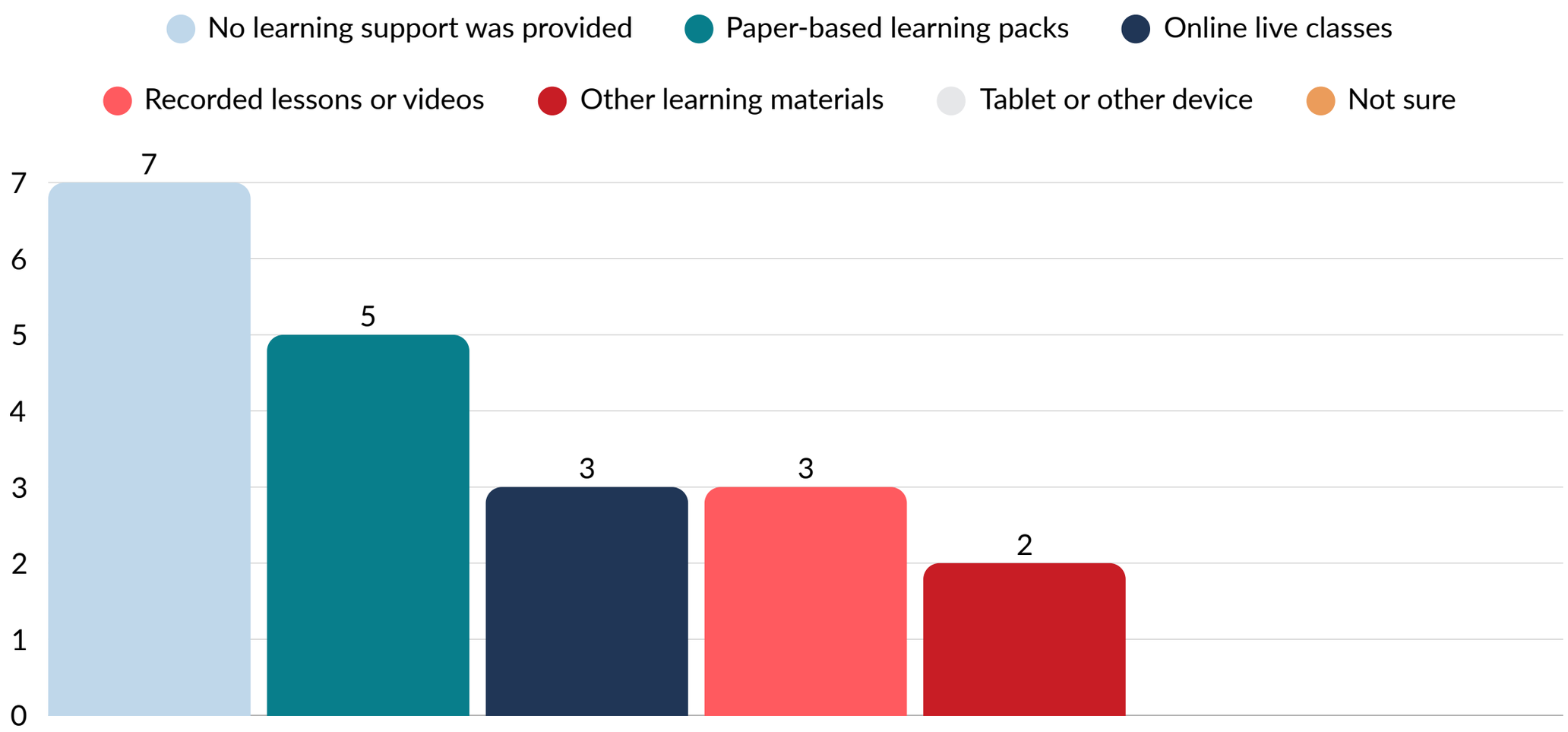


(Figure 11)

How would you rate the communication from your child's school during school closures?

When parents were asked what kind of learning materials or support their child received during school closures, the most common response was no learning support, followed by paper-based learning packs. Online live classes and recorded lessons were also somewhat commonly used. Few parents mentioned other types of learning materials, while no parents were unsure or reported receiving a tablet or other device (see Figure 12).

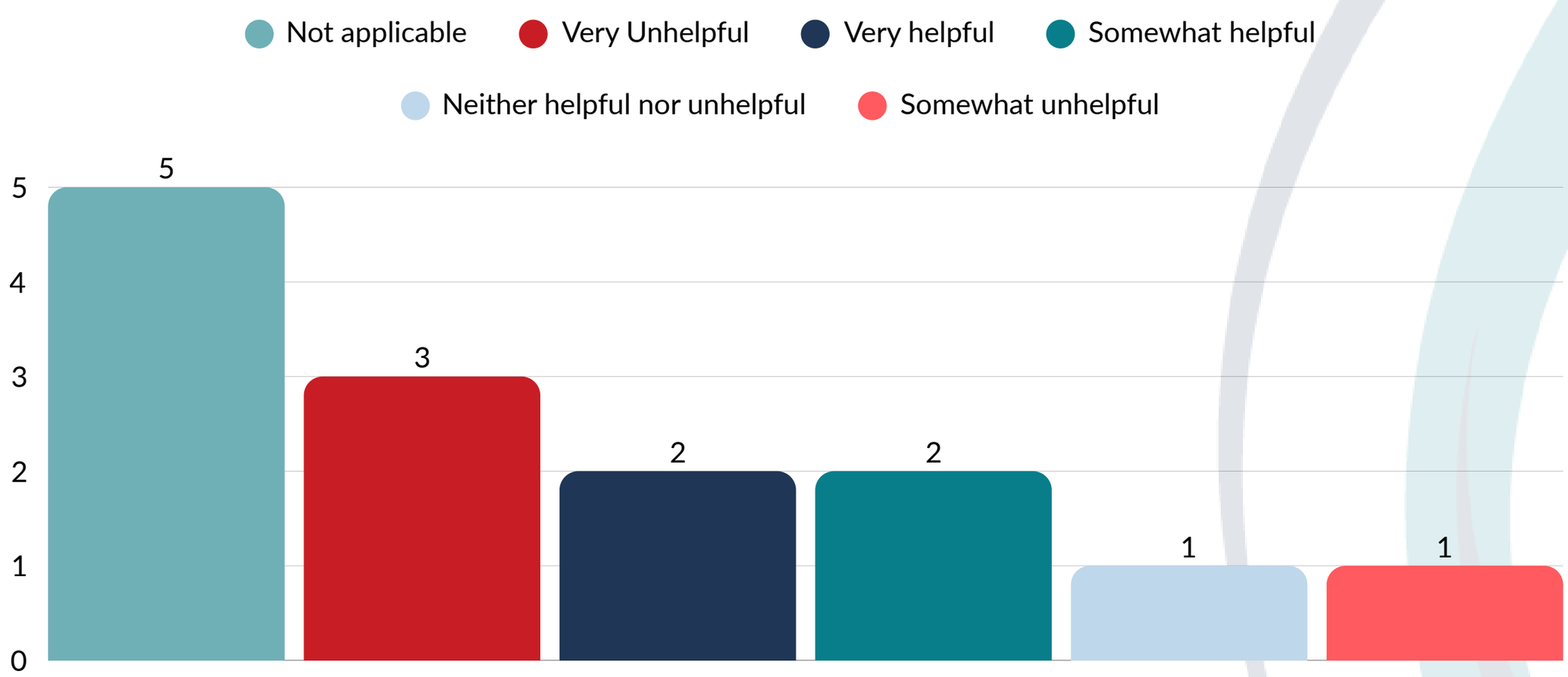




(Figure 12)

What type of learning materials or support was provided during closures? (Select all that apply)

When parents were asked how helpful their child found the materials and support provided during closures, the most common response was that this was not applicable to their child, this was followed by parents reporting that it was very unhelpful. Some parents felt that the materials their child received was very or somewhat helpful. Few parents described the support they received as neutral or somewhat unhelpful (see Figure 13).

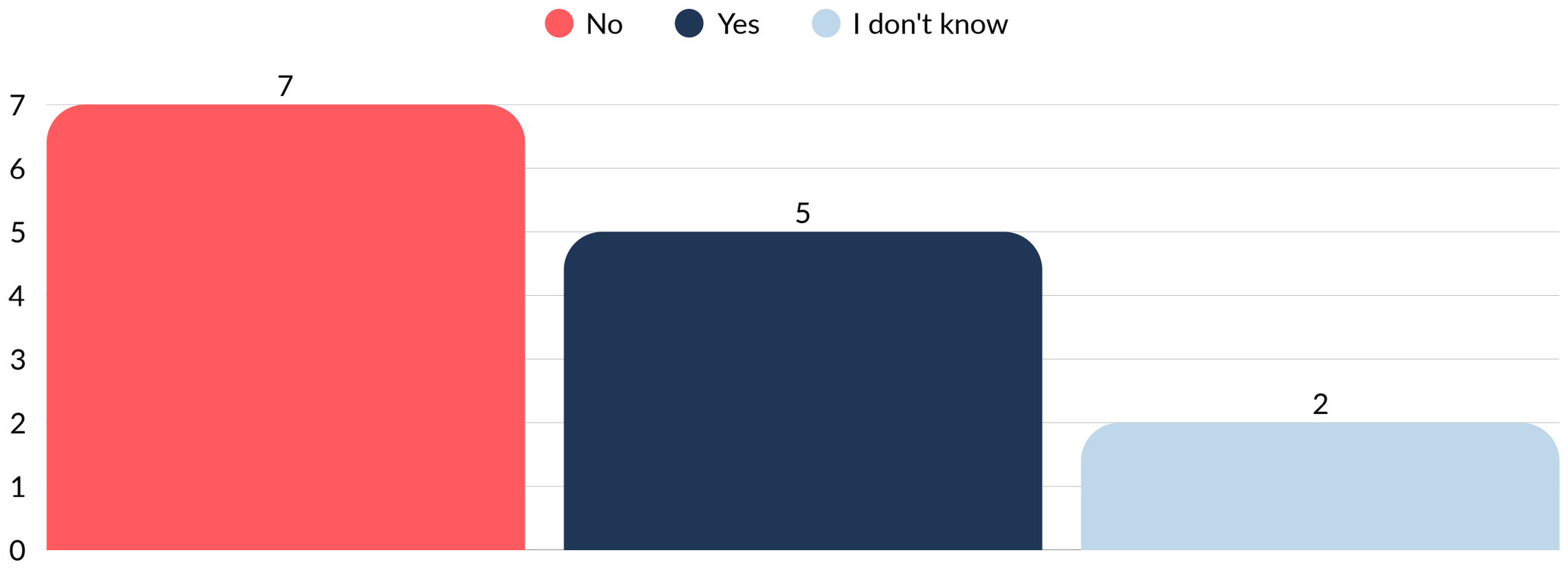


(Figure 13)

How helpful did your child find the materials and support provided?



Parents were asked whether they believed the government made the right decision regarding mask use in schools during COVID-19. Responses were divided, with slightly more disagreeing with the decision than agreeing. Others were unsure (see Figure 14).



(Figure 14)

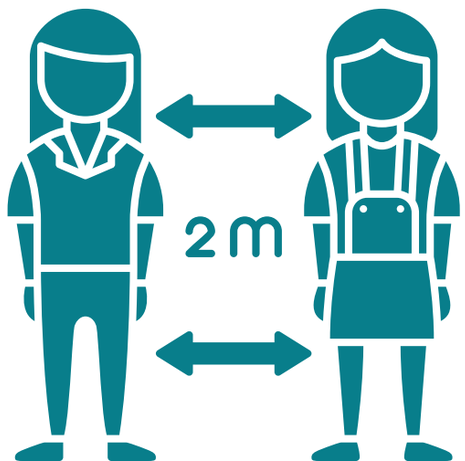
During COVID-19 there was a requirement to wear masks in schools some of the time. Do you think the government made the correct decision regarding the use of masks in schools during COVID-19?

When asked whether the government made the right decision about masks in schools, parents of children in special classes shared a range of views shaped by their children's needs, how schools responded, and the wider situation.

Many parents were critical. They felt that masks and school closures made existing challenges worse, leaving their children excluded or without proper support. Parents also felt schools were not ready to meet the needs of children in special classes during the pandemic.

Some questioned whether masks were really necessary and whether the government had properly weighed the risks and benefits for children with additional needs. They expressed frustration that the policy was too rigid and lacked flexibility for these children.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



Suggestions and Open Space for Parents' Views

The COVID-19 pandemic caused huge disruption to schools everywhere. In Ireland, parents of children in special classes were hit especially hard by government decisions about school closures, online learning, and support. Their comments show a mix of understanding and frustration, and a strong call to make sure this does not happen again.

Feeling Forgotten

Many parents said they felt abandoned or ignored during the pandemic. They believed their children were overlooked when decisions were made and left without the help they needed. Some felt their child's education was not prioritised, and that the extra needs of children in special classes were not taken into account.

While some parents recognised that schools did their best under difficult circumstances, many felt that children in special education were treated as less important during the pandemic.

Strong Opposition to School Closures for Special Classes

Parents were very unhappy about the closures of special classes. Many said that closing schools caused more harm than good. They suggested that special measures should have been put in place so children could continue attending in person safely. Some parents thought smaller class sizes or better planning could have allowed schools to stay open. Parents felt that not considering these options caused preventable problems for their children.

Inappropriateness and Ineffectiveness of Remote Learning

Most parents agreed that online learning did not work well for children with special needs. Many children were unable to focus or take part properly using online platforms. Parents described difficulties such as confusion with technology, lack of engagement, and emotional stress from learning at home.

Parents said remote learning was stressful and upsetting for both children and families. Some reported that their children became more frustrated, had more emotional outbursts, and lost their usual routines. Families often felt isolated and unsupported.



Long-Term Emotional, Social, and Family Effects

Many parents said that school closures caused long-lasting emotional and social problems. Some reported that even five years later, their families were still feeling the effects. Children lost connections with friends and now struggle to make new social relationships.

The stress affected the whole family. Parents described lasting effects on their own mental health and on family relationships. Many families said they are still trying to rebuild routines and recover from the emotional impact of closures. This shows that the effects of school closures went far beyond education, leaving lasting scars.

Loss of Support Services

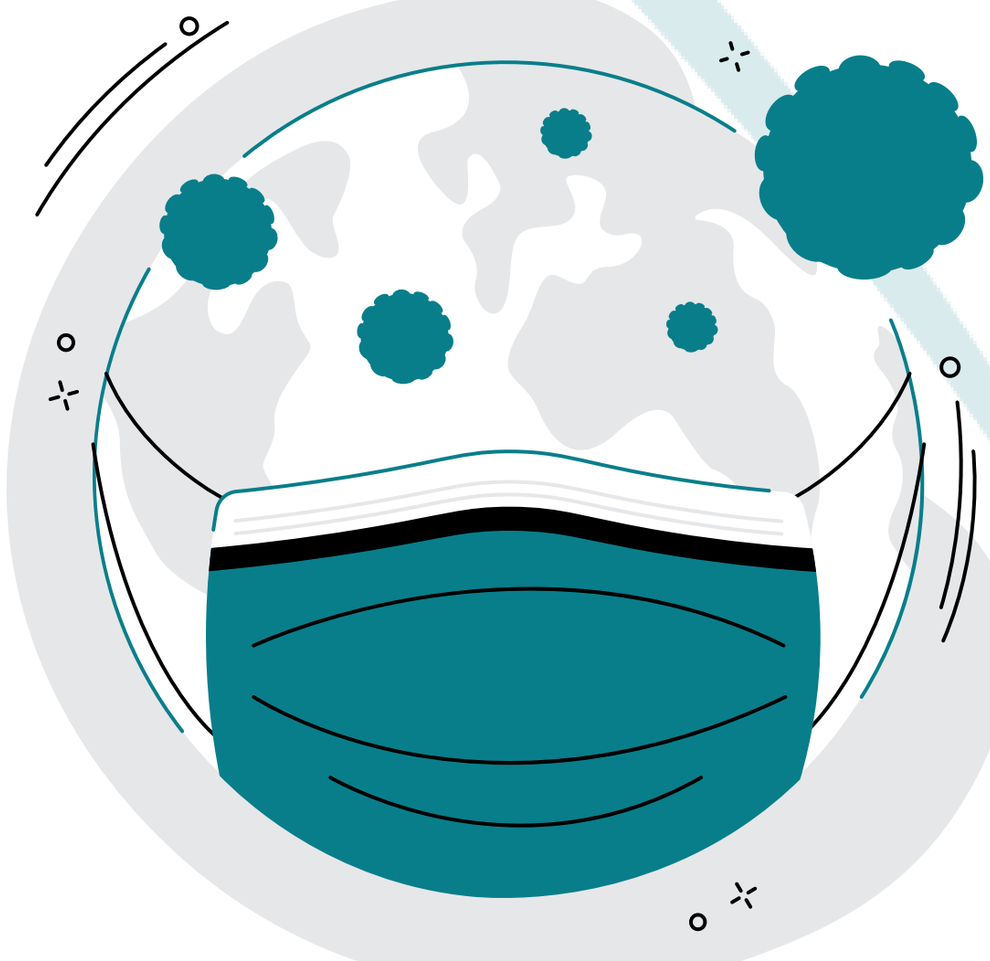
Parents also mentioned losing key support services during the pandemic, such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and counselling. Children who relied on these services fell behind, both academically and developmentally.

Some parents suggested that these services could have been provided online in some way. Without this support, children not only missed school learning but also lost important help for their overall development.

Concerns About Government Decisions

Some parents questioned the government's rules during COVID-19. They felt the restrictions were too harsh or unnecessary. Many thought that decisions were made too quickly and without enough consideration for children in special education.

*This summary captures the key themes raised by parents; please refer to the appendix for full responses.



Section 6 Conclusion

The findings in this section show how strongly the pandemic affected children in special classes. While the challenges of this period were widely felt, many parents of children in special classes appeared to have a heightened sense of being overlooked in government decisions surrounding school closures, remote learning, and access to support.

Parents highlighted particular frustration with the closure of special classes and the shift to online learning, which most parents said did not work for their child. Parents described the experience as isolating and distressing, and their children as struggling both emotionally and academically. The loss of support services, such as therapy and counselling, was described as causing further setbacks.

Looking ahead, parents want schools and policymakers to be better prepared. They asked for clear and consistent communication, fairer support for vulnerable learners, and flexible systems such as hybrid learning that can be used when needed. Parents' experiences during COVID-19 offer important lessons to ensure that, in any future emergency, children's education, social development, and emotional health are protected.

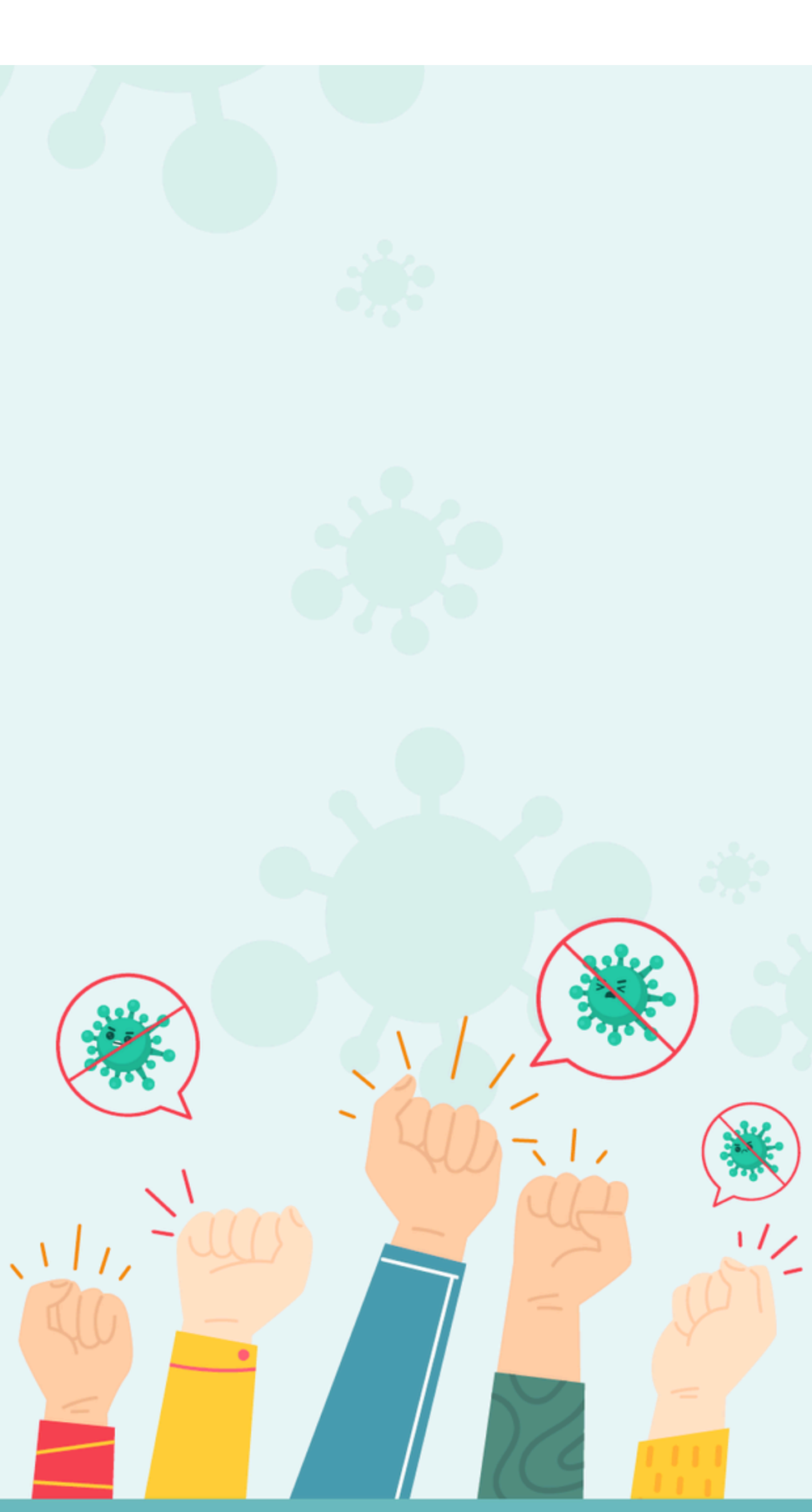


Report Conclusion

The findings in this report show how strongly the pandemic affected children's education, friendships, and wellbeing. While some families managed well, many parents described long-term challenges, especially around children's mental health, loss of social connections, and keeping up with learning.

Parents also highlighted unequal access to technology and learning supports, with some children falling behind more than others. Those with special educational needs, disabilities, or neurodivergence were especially at risk, and their families reported higher levels of stress and regression. Views on measures such as masks and restrictions were mixed: some valued them for safety, while others felt they created extra barriers and anxiety for children.

Looking ahead, parents want schools and policymakers to be better prepared. They asked for clear and consistent communication, fairer support for vulnerable learners, and flexible systems such as hybrid learning that can be used when needed. Parents' experiences during COVID-19 offer important lessons to ensure that, in any future emergency, children's education, social development, and emotional health are protected.





Appendix

Q4. How did the school closures affect your child, did it affect them? (select as many as you need)

1.We did our best to meet these needs at home with the help of the school
2.She’s only in playschool 2023
3.Not at all
4.His handwriting and it's still an issue
5.Was going into secondary school
6.It gave them a break from a curriculum that can be quite mundane and doesn't reflect the reality the live in.
7.Bored
8.N/A
9.Idiotic questions
10. My daughter was in a special class in a mainstream school. She very much missed seeing other children and the routine of going to school.
11. School refusal. Still has fears/ afraid of social interaction
12. It took longer to get her diagnosed with Dyslexia
13. They missed their friends
14. During the first lock down, the weather was nice. We live in the estate and there were kids around so they rode bikes and scooters around. We socialised with the neighbours and got to know them. We brought chairs out, placing them in a circle with a distance between them. We had kids' birthday party when the restrictions eased. So from that perspective, no, my son was not particularly affected. Also his baby sister was born 2 weeks before the 1st lockdown.
15. Disconnected from school
16. Routine of homework v academic ability
17. Missed their peers
18. My child has difficulty with spelling now which was never an issue before.
19. School refusal know
20. First communion preparation
21. No real affect,
22. They were in Junior Infants for the first closure so got none of that lovely end of year experience in their first year of formal education.
23. N/A
24. NA
25. Delayed starting primary school by a year
26. None
27. Speech
28. Toyoungforschool
29. It disrupted the adjustment to life outside the home.
30. He is a good student but he didn't have a great teacher and all the school activity was over in1 hour. He was very lonely and bored when he could not play outside with his friends and we couldn't go anywhere. I had to leave my job to spend time and do activities with him

31. Dint affect them
32. Just missed the routine
33. It was Junior Infants so it was OK as it was all new
34. Both parents had to work through the closures - luckily our minder continued to work, but it would have been preferable to have had the kids among more peers
35. It didn't but there was no online learning from our school, it was homework only and I thought that was a poor effort
36. My daughter loved it because she struggles in social situations. The school environment did not work for her.
37. They missed seeing their friends
38. Scared of people in masks, people keeping distance, constant hand washing, no closeness or affection
39. N/A
40. n/a
41. Some, positively as they had quality time with family & siblings
42. Developmental wise as undiagnosed ND issues were compounded by this as the struggles became more profound and the gap widened between my child and same aged peers
43. Not really affected
44. Didn't seem to affect her
45. Health and psychology way better
46. Didn't affect them
47. Very young so the socialisation and learning
48. Assessment became impossible... without teacher interaction and intervention we missed out on identifying problems areas. Socialising and communication became a huge issue. The schools basically cut off parents and parental interaction. It was very frustrating
49. Both my husband and I worked all through covid, it meant we struggled to do the academic work with our 2 children which greatly affected their ability to keep up with peers whose parents were able to dedicate time to complete all school work tasked to them.
50. Settling into the school environment
51. All
52. They were not affected socially as he had access to switch games on line & that kept him in touch with friends, academically he had great work and input from his teacher
53. It was positive academically but my child did not return to face to face education afterwards. Struggled to much with mental health.
54. They become very ocd and made me touch everything anyone else touched
55. My daughter was being bullied ar school si covid gave her a break from that
56. It gave them the space and freedom to be themselves without the pressures of school. They are both autistic and found the school environment overwhelming.
57. Regression in behaviour

57. Regression in behaviour
58. No effect - quieter pace of life suited them.
59. No effect
60. not at all
61. Socially missed out as we do not live near other children.
62. Was in Junior Infants so we had got to know other parents prior to shutdown. My child became a great reader as ee had lots of time to learn to read and had her elder sibling's books to read
63. Spiritually - we had time to share our faith as a family
64. my children were in early years and it gave them time out to be more independent, in their thinking and in their play and valuable bonding time with family with busy lives.
65. Opportunities were limited for personal development such as TY activities

Q5. If there was another pandemic or similar event, should we do differently with regard to education? (Select all that apply)

1.Provision required for children who are not able to online learning
2.Let the schools do what they can. Trust that they have the children's development in mind.
3.Provide education for children whose parents are front line workers
4.Small groups in person at regular intervals to include outdoor activities, socialisation and revision of key concepts
5.Kill elderly with midozolam
6.Do online live learning for about 3 hours each day with the teacher and classmates.
7.teacher interaction. zero contact from teacher just assigned work
8.The learning was mostly on parents and not teachers. We were getting information what child have to do, and we were asked to check/upload materials. No explanation how to do work at home.
9.Ideally keep schools open v bad for kids where parents unable to help
10. Honestly, keep it the same but better preparation. Obviously this was scary for so many people and being a teacher early years educator doesn't spare you from those fears.... but it would be an idea to have things in place for students, teachers and parents, in the event of anything like that again
11. Follow the same procedures re school closures etc, but with additional planning as selected
12. There needs to be a consistent plan. Some schools did online classes others expected parents to do all the teaching but not all parents were off. Interaction was very important for the kids and the lack of it set them back significantly
13. It really depended on the teacher. I think if they could have done some lessons online every day. A lot of the time they were just given work to do with maybe interaction with teacher only once a week
14. Hepa filters in classrooms
15. I'm not sure but something should be done differently for people with learning difficulties
16. Online teaching with teachers doing their jobs
17. Parent teacher meeting 2-3 times a year. Once a year in the middle year sometimes is too late,
18. Ridiculous that our school simply sent out 1 email with a week with a list of work for parents to complete with their children - unacceptable
19. Be very clear on the virulence and risk- completely disproportionate responss
20. This would very much depend what the event was. It was not possible to manage distancing or other measures in a school in the early days of covid, so closing schools and offering only remote learning was a reasonable strategy. If the next pandemic does not require droplet precautions then it would not make sense to close schools. But policies should be prepared in advance so that teachers and principals are prepared - not lesson plans as that's not realistic.

21. All classes to be repeated the following year
22. It depends on the disease at the time.
23. Reduced school hours, open them 2 days a week & do online 3 days a week perhaps
24. Absolutely should NEVER have made children wear masks!
25. Nor everyone has access to good internet coverage.
26. IT WAS A BIG SCAM
27. NEVER EVER CLOSE THE SCHOOLS, MASK OR MAKE TEACHERS OR PUPILS TO TAKE VACCINES THAT WERE NOT TESTED.
28. Only home schooling for exam years
29. Ensure when normality resumes that material has been covered properly for all children
30. Consider how children with parents as healthcare workers managed / homework was not a priority if you were a frontline worker working long hours most days
31. Toyoung
32. Have a plan with parents and offer some tech supports to those that wouldn't be as tech savvy as some
33. Also monitor the times each teacher is spending online and the plans they are offering to them. It was really appealing the whole setting. We ended up changing school because of it at the end of it.
34. I dont know -
35. All good plans. I think ideally preparedness for a range of responses would be preferable given the range of kids' needs and if possible situations. Perhaps smartest and most efficient might be to have the Department of Education work on a menu of responses, available for schools to deploy quickly and flexibly?
36. Ireland’s response re children with additional needs was very poorly informed- other countries saw the importance of getting these children back to school- Ireland didn’t- it took a potential court case to get movement on this
37. Classes should be held online for full school hours. Workers in other areas completely switched to remote, there is no reason school cannot be held online also. Too much dependancy on parents. The stress for parents trying to work and also do schoolwork with children was extremely challenging and not fair for either the parent or child.
38. We should have learnt that online worked really well for some students.
39. Follow public health advice regarding what is safe for children
40. More support to adapting to classroom on return to school
41. Standardise the learning in all schools - we attended a school that stopped all teaching during the first lockdown. Zero contact and zero effort to facilitate any support to children. We moved in 2020 to a new school (in large part due to their terrible support) and the new school had exceptional supports and plans in place, prioritising the children and ensuring social and mental well being thru zoom lessons and planned activities.

42. Keep children connected it doesn’t need to be an hour of teaching online and list of work to do it needs to be more chatting more storytelling more interaction under supervision for children a social environment that thay have every day is taken away and they find it hard readjusting to the group setting
43. More standardised or national approach
44. Schools remained fully closed for too ong, partial opening or on a rota should have been tried. When schools closed teaching stopped in real terms - assigning homework is not teaching.
45. Improve communication plans for engagement with parents
46. Provide better support for those that need it full stop
47. I also have a neurotypical child and can understand that schools might need some form of closure but I don’t believe schools should have closed for children with additional needs.
48. Homework should be online as much as possible.
49. Give more guidance to schools on zoom sessions
50. Knowing what we know now about Covid, and now that adult school staff have access to vaccines, closures should not be necessary. But before vaccinations, and while we did not understand the lesser impact of Covid on children, it made sense to close schools at least for some / most children. what was badly exposed was the absence of any other services for children (therapeutic supports, school meals, etc) and how much we over-rely on our schools for all children's services.
51. Covid highlighted how some ‘old school teachers’ hadn’t a clue how to use any IT at all. These are ‘turn the next page in the book’ teachers. There should be compulsory CPD in IT and associated areas so teachers are forced to keep up. The next area obviously being AI. DOE needs to try to get ahead of this as already there is lag and many free courses are voluntary meaning some teachers can opt out.
52. There was too much focus on the virus and so much fear around the possibility of dying. Children were in fear of theirs and their families lives. One day its safe to go to school then its not, then it is again. Kids can't handle that. They can't rationalise like adults can
53. Don't insist on children in pods indoors and outdoors.
54. All the teachers need to be consistent in delivering the pre-set plan.
55. Have a support hub for parents and children especially for access to age appropriate videos to help understanding and where everyone can connect.
56. School closures may be appropriate depending on the specific contagion and then learning can be online in short sessions.If schools remain open then to Install air filtration systems in every classroom and keep all windows and doors open and look at possibility of conducting learning outdoors (a covered pergola type structure)
57. School work for exam years only, reading with summaries for all other years. Primary children should just have play & reading

58. We can not say that schools won’t ever be closed again but the response was so damaging to students that we should learn something from it. One of my greatest concerns was why wasn’t small group learning offered— no offer from schools to tutor small classes online or in person- this would have kept kids academically but maybe socially also.
59. Dont know
60. No online learning for early education nor primary
61. Include PE in the remote learning. Use outdoor spaces for safe group learning.
62. It depends on the situation. During Covid-19 it became clear that school closures did not save a lot of people, but damaged children in many ways.
63. It was a disaster for kids that struggle with dyslexia,ADHD etc.mind you the whole education system let's them down
64. Remote learning for children with dyslexia and other issues was not supported.
65. How students engage with online will always depend on parent’s availability and interest to support/ engage within
66. prioritise the youngest children and the exam years for in person contact
67. Re imagine what the core curriculum- lots more active learning opportunities beyond the bare notion of core being English and Maths
68. Online options should always be available for children particularly in ipad schools where it can be streamed from the classroom very easily.
69. Avoid screen time. Use printed material and one to one online tutoring/check-in every day
70. Education doesn't only happen in schools. Learning happens every day. Most of my children's learning happens online through Google and YouTube. They research things they actually want to learn.
71. The stop/start due to COVID during the 12 months afterwards was the main issue, also the time schools were fully closed should have been caught up during summer
72. Academically she improved as she got 1:1 support from mother who was not working
73. Have more outdoor learning
74. Provide a level of consistency for children, especially autistic children that need such consistency desperately. Sudden closure of schools without warning or preparation was disastrous.
75. one to one is not practical but small groups perhaps
76. Make parents aware of the benchmarks and equip them to help their children remain at their level or even advance while at home.
77. as we everything one size doesn't fit all but some form of hybrid solutions would be required.
78. A repository of best practice examples and techniques should be created for teachers to draw on when needed. This should be covered in teacher training

Q16. Would you like to give us some more details?

1.The schools worked very hard during Covid 19 to help and to follow all guidelines
2.Definitely heightened kids anxiety wearing masks
3.I refused to send my child in wearing a mask. I don't feel that masks are hygienic for children or practical when they are at a young learning learning phonics, learning social skills and learning emotions and facial expressions.
4.Teacher visits to back garden wet the only time child engaged in learning
5.It felt like the right choice to protect the rest of the family too.
6.I understand that it was something that no one could have predicted would happen. I am lucky that I could provide the time for my child to continue to progress academically and she became stronger and more able with the one on one attention.
I'm aware that many couldn't do what I could as they were working full time and it must have been very difficult for them.
7.It was awful closing schools down when other things still went on. It showed that the world doesn’t care if
You miss school and that still affects children
8.There was no consideration given to kids that have sensory issues
9.My child had no difficulty wearing his mask in school but he was in the minority.
10. My child was very distressed when made to wear one. It added to her anxiety around the whole covid situation
11. My son was in juniors when the pandemic hit and my daughter was in the later half of playschool and due to start junior infants in the September. They are both ASD level1 in mainstream school as they do not have learning difficulties, the lack of structure and the lack of social interaction with their peers affected them an awful lot. I still think it affects them to this day. My daughter is also dyspraxic and has PDA and maybe nothing to do with the pandemic (perhaps just our school) but this means at times it has been very difficult for me to be her teacher and it is better for her to be taught by a professional as she gets annoyed with me.
12. More focus is needed on mental health upon return to school after a pandemic and more support for parents while supporting home schooling during pandemic. Also longer and more structured online classes not just 30/ 6 minutes per day.
13. The masks were awful for kids and teachers. Rooms were not suitable nor was circulation of air.
14. Children are staying at school for at least 5/6 h .
As an adult i find it difficult to weat a mask for some many hour so this is incredible hard for a child regardless of their age.

15. School sent homework lists by school app, these were not use friendly as tended to be a word doc which I had to copy/edit and break down for my children to understand. I think there was 2 online checkins/ class online offered during all of shut downs. Homework was sent on a Sunday night/monday morning which did not give me time to break it down. When I asked if it could be sent on a friday for following week so I had weekend to prepare, I was told teachers were entiltled to a break to.
Schools should have been kept open for kids of parents who were classed as essential and frontline workers. Any person with children that i know, that had to work during covid school closures from burnout and or ill mental health at some point.
16. During the first lockdown my child's teacher used the closer as an excuse to have a holiday she didn't contact the kids and when she did it was just to give homework which she never corrected it was so bad I found it hard to get my child to do the work as they said "what the point she not even correcting it". When I asked her about the answer to some of the math she just sent me the link to the correction book and told me to check the answer myself. Also she got fed up of sending on pages number for homework she told them to write random essays and we know she never read them.
17. My son had two parents who were healthcare workers and who worked throughout the pandemic with little childcare support. There was no childcare or educational support provided and we later found out he is severely dyslexic and has SPD. We should have been prioritised as we could not provide home education as we had to work.
18. My son missed out on his final months of Montessori. He started Jr Infants in Sept 2020. There was very little provided by the school. He have a great teacher when in school. There was very little interaction on a day to day basis and no worksheets/ books provided. He also has ADHD and sensory issues. He really regressed during school closures and still struggles socially. We had done a lot of work with this in Montessori and at home. This obviously became nearly impossible to do at home. I was expected to have a lot of materials on hand during covid for things like Aisteor and art. Some.worksheets were emailed. I had to buy a laptop and a printer. He had to share the laptop withbhos older sister as she was in Secondary school so that took presedent unfortunatley. It cost me a fortune getting things delivered to the house to try and support him during Covid. Which was really difficult as my workplace was closed and I was only getting €350 a week. It would be good if it happened again to have access to possible borrowing necessary electronics.
19. Re q11 above each of my children had two 40 min lessons per week.
20. I think masks were a good idea but would it be better if it happens again to have some sort of filter system in operation in class rooms. Very hard for children to wear masks all day
21. When they are all together outside I dont see the point of wearing them indoors. They also are not very healthy for children to be wearing them
22. I don't think it slowed the transfer. It just made the children more anxious.

23. Primary school children are learning to develop their vocabulary and read
24. No
25. Children should not have been in masks. On reflection, schools should not have closed, especially the 2nd time.
26. It was universally acknowledged by that point that children were not at risk from Covid. It has since been proven by the gold standard Cochrane report that masks do not prevent infection or transmission. The government issued the mask mandate for children about a month before the vaccine became available for children to encourage uptake which is reprehensible. Wearing a mask for long periods actually traps bacteria between the mouth and the mask.
27. The first week the ban was lifted my daughter caught covid from a fellow student and spread it to our family.
28. My child's experience during Covid was not good at all and the negative and unnecessary affect continues to this day. He was frightened unnecessarily and his social interactions were deeply stunted
29. Covid was killing people at the outset. Proper masks should have been worn
30. Masks are only hygienic when trained in their use. Children are not as most adults weren't. I witnessed people removing them to scratch their noses or faces and simply pop them back on with the same hand. Masks are for clinical settings or very serious viruses. We now live with covid and this was always going to be the case just like the flu etc. There was mass panic that was not warranted. People overreacted.
31. Masks made no difference at his,age.
32. Our school provides very very little support we got a list of work to be completed with little to no guidance. One of my children who has learning support basically got links to mindfulness and other completely not school related work. Also recorded him reading abc was often not listened to our commented on. For a child whom already struggled academically it really set him back. As parents we would be very practice and don’t several webinars etc to try assist him ourselves as best we could as no professionals whom both were in jobs fully throughout Covid.
33. My child suffers with asthma found wearing mask very difficult
34. in my opinion, it is not the pandemic itself that affects children negatively, but rather the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. The damage is greater than we could have anticipated
35. Wearing masks increased my child's fear and anxiety and hindered her interaction with her peers. Keeping symptomatic children at home and good hand hygiene should have been enough. Very little thought was given to the impact of measures on children
36. Surgical masks??!! For a virus. prof Cahill was also correct stating IQ would drop. This is a whitewash of fire and ignorant policies and hysteria. Ventilators kill COVID patients. Masks do shag all and still no worthwhile advice to public. Nine euro meals anyone. Corruption, and this survey is crooked nonsense too.

37. My school thankfully didn’t enforce masks in school. I would not have had my kids wear them. They didn’t even work in preventing the spread. The whole thing was handled so badly and our children have suffered the consequences. They were pushed aside and everything they knew changed over night. It has severely affected mental health and social skills.
38. Poorly handling of the situation by government, creating panic and no support
39. Anyone with symptoms were staying at home. Children were the least affected by COVID, yet emotionally and psychologically were so badly affected.And we still seeing the effects...young children crippled with social anxiety and constantly in "flight or fight mode" There was even " smile clinics" set up afterwards 😢 ...Noone will ever be the same again...some children never got to say goodbye to those they loved most and the effects of that will never be erased.
40. The closure of school during the pandemic was helpful for my son specially for his mental and emotional well-being his teachers used to tease him and being an introvert this used to upset him so much he didn't want to go in the morning he unfortunately had to spend the next year with the same teachers due to the pandemic once they resumed after he couldn't wait to see the back of them.
41. Should have invested in more outdoor learning spaces instead of mask-wearing for the children.
42. we received an email once a week with work to do. no guidance on it and often mistakes in the work asked to do.
43. My autistic daughter was forced to wear a mask even she was exempt by the doctor or she would have been denied access to school. Children in post primary school were made to were them all the time, not "some of the time" stated above
44. My children were in junior & senior infants, they needed to see facial expressions. It was scary enough for them. My youngest is now going in to 5th and still struggles socially.
45. It was very difficult for young children not to be able to see each others faces and read facial expressions..
46. Overall negative impact on the child- more nervous of groups more insular and generally unhappy
47. Masks were essential to stop speadof covid virus. Wearing madks Protected everyone
48. My child hate wearing a mask. He is sensitive to things around his face. It was a battle to get him to go to school each day. He had frequent stomach aches(from nervousness I think)
49. Children were unfairly treated, condemned as carriers with little regard for the ling lasting effects of school closures on their learning, social, emotional & mental health. Their education & well being shouldn't have been sacrificed.

50. For children, masks were scary not to mention the nsture of a child meant they would fidget with them, making the maks more of a hindrance and a hugher chance of spreadingbacteria.... I am not an anti mask / anti vaxxer, I'm very pro both ..
51. No masks should have been used, hard for children to learn with mask
52. I felt the children should not have been required to wear masks all day. It should have been optional
53. It helped prevent the spread of Covid, encouraged people to be more mindful of others.
54. So unfair on small kids
55. It is inappropriate to expect a child to wear a mask for a long period of time
56. Starting primary school during the early days of the pandemic was very hard. Child had limited exposure to a normal school environment and how learning works in primary school. Although very willing to help with schoolwork at home, both parents also has jobs and other children to care for
57. I don't think children should have been asked to wear masks. 9 years and over. The pandemic was a traumatic experience for children I disagreed with them wearmasks as I think it added to their distress.
58. The separation and isolation for kids has long term impacts esp on their emotional development
59. The closure of schools and extreme panic messaging had a sever effect on children's security.
It lead to anxiety and worry about returning to school.
There were long periods of good weather during lockdowns. The schools could easily have stayed open with appropriate distancing in class.
The biggest risk was public transport so it was perfectly possible to keep school open.
60. It’s difficult to know if wearing masks affected the children. It didn’t seem to affect my children but then I wasn’t in the room so I’m not sure if they were even wearing them correctly. Also when Covid got into a classroom it went through them all so the wearing of masks probably didn’t help. I imagine there may have been school refusers because they didn’t want to wear masks
61. My child had a teacher return from maternity leave in January to begin homeschooling junior infants who she never even saw. It simply couldn't work.
62. No
63. It is preferable for them to be in class with a mask than not be in class
64. Youngest child was in 1st class I think socially it affected her as she would t be great at it now also learning as myself and her father were essential workers it was a nightmare were she missed out on class time with a teacher
65. Yes, masks for children in the older classes protected vulnerable students who otherwise would have had to stay home.

66. Children struggled having mask on for long periods of time it was alot to expect of children and more rest /outside play with breaks from masks should have happened
67. I would like to bring up a separate issue. I want to say that my twins were born just before the lock down. They missed out on bonding with relatives and I still have a major problem with trying to get them toilet trained. I have 3 young children under 5 at the time of Covid and it was extremely difficult. Please send a survey on how we coped raising babies during covid with no help.
68. No school communication and then virtually blamed me for my child being behind after 2 months out of schol
69. It was an unusual event so was hard to know what to do for best
70. I am a teacher and at the time of the pandemic I was teaching senior infants. My fiest child had just started junior infants so I was fully equipped to teach him myself therefore I do not think educationally he was badly impacted. Socially I think he was impacted as he missed his friends. On the other hand it was a wonderful opportunity for us to be together more as a family and our kids definitely benefited from having both parents at home with them to support them emotionally. Of my child had been in an older class or secondary school I wouldn't have found it as easy to support them educationally.
71. It's important for children to get able to engage with their peers and teachers face to face to help them develop emotionally and socially and psychologically especially for children with additional needs.
72. I have 2 sons, the ‘education’ provided by the school was appalling. No resources, teachers were unavailable. Closing the schools the way they did was a huge mistake and will have an impact for years.
73. Maybe to use UV lamp in the school classes to use during pandemic (or even higher peak of sickness in winter). Mandatory ventilation of classes during the break.
74. Kids had no understanding to keep the masks on and to leave them alone and not keep touching them.
75. My child missed out on a vital part of his education during covid,learning to read. The school was very slow to implement anything for support and I planned lots of it myself. I contacted the principle and he was very dismissive. Other schools in the are were quick to offer support but not his one. Very disappointing
76. My daughter has a weak chest & missed the least amount of school when mask wearing & hand sanitising was taking place in school. When it stopped she was sick with her chest again.
77. My son is going into Leaving Cert in September. I feel he missed getting a good foundation in Maths. He had very little Maths classes in 1st year. They were off from Xmas to Easter. I think the teacher was concentrating on getting the exam students ready. He was excellent at Maths in Primary school and now struggles with them.

78. I'm not sure as my son was still young (Jr/Sr & 1st year). He never had to wear a mask to school.
79. Our school, Delgany national school - ridiculous approach where the only support from teachers was 1 email per week with a very long list of expected work to complete. Sometimes our teachers shared videos with the students - of themselves playing golf and having barbeques. You could not make it up! Unbelievable that working parents had to teach their children during this time, while teachers enjoyed every more time off work. I volutneered to train the school in how to use Zoom and was told it would not be appropriate for children. Meantime other schools had online learning organised withing a couple of days - some private schools did not even miss one day!
80. My child did well during home schooling we covered a lot more than the usual curriculum and he still socialise through technology with his friends family and as a family we got to spend more quality time together.
81. We had 1 hour per week of zoom for the children just for a chat. Totally insufficient. Needed a daily zoom to remain connected. Needed to do some class work over zoom.
82. It was so restrictive and uncomfortable to wear all day, my kids couldn’t wear them and stopped after a while but we’re not looked on favourably for this. They had had covid already
83. The information at the time was used to assess risks and make de idioms about reopening schools. Can’t blame anyone now when everyone made an effort to keep things going.
84. They were kids this disease was going to spread. They have no idea the affect masks and all that craic had on the kids mentally
85. I think they made the right decision initially but should have been quicker to remove them when we realised how with kids it wasn't really helping as hey don't wear them well
86. Infants classes were only grasping writing and reading - our child struggled despite our best efforts; there was a worksheet with little guidance. To be fair to the teachers it felt like every school was left to do its own thing rather than having a state wide approach with resources and training provided to them. In my work we had been planning once we were aware of the possibility of closure and had over 2,000 trainers trained up on zoom and their materials altered to work in zoom rather than in person. The teachers / schools were not set up for success.
87. Some parents chose to put children in the class at risk by not allowing their child to wear a mask - schools should have been stricter and had the authority to remove those children from mainstream classes
88. Totally inappropriate- masks are for tasks. Ridiculous to mandate mask wearing all day as it was ineffectual and this waa not ebola, it was known in May 2020 what the risk profile was- older, comorbidities. Masks blocked essential expressions for proper communication. Kids cannot properly adhere to mask wearing- many adults cant and the waste was enormous, pointless and we did not comply
89. Masks did help stop the spread and the children felt safe
90. Can't be enforced by young kids or additional needs

91. I think the wearing of masks should have been the choice of each individual and encouraged if one had cold or flu symptoms. I think it was detrimental to the social and learning environment for children and increased their anxiety
92. It shouldn't have been a requirement to wear masks but a personal choice, it negatively impacted the social, emotional and learning of students
93. Too much pressure was put on children and parents .Tea hing your own child is completely different to teaching a child in a school setting. If this was ever to happen again parents should have more atonemy over how they want the child to learn at home, if this is something theyfeel they can do and based on their circumstance. A more flexible multi faceted approach would suit more children.
94. My sons preschool was small, the staff not recently trained, unfortunately they were particularly inept and I'll equipped in dealing with any change from their norm. They had no interest in keeping the preschool open or entering a dialogue with parents. At times covid seemed to be a good excuse for them not to do anything at all.
95. Affected social skills
96. Extremely difficult to do homeschooling with our boy with both parents working. Study did not come easily to him & we all found it difficult with school loading on more work. Lots of arguments & not good for any of us emotionally & also affected physical health. Boy transitioned from creche to primary school & didn't know any of his classmates, while most others did. With covid closing schools, it made it more difficult for him to break into social circles & he was excluded for 1st 2 years of school.
97. Homeschooling was a torturous task. The expectation from school during the second school closure to have work uploaded by a certain time was so stressful. 2 children in the house with one shared device.
98. Breathing was difficult, they were too hot, some wore them some did not. They were a waste of time as it made no difference in any case it seems. Random selection and those that got covid were fine. It just created fear
99. It was extremely difficult for children to wear masks. The way they were blamed as carriers was awful
100.My child has sensory issues and has issues with anything on his face the requirement to wear a mask in school was extremely distressing to him even though he was in bubble group in his class in school.
101.Accepting everybody did what they thought was best at the time - 5 years later covid cant be blamed for everything especially social/behavioural skills
102.My kids studied more during remote classes times.
103.Some children found it very hard to wear the masks all day during school hours,it can be very overwhelming and can feel claustrophobic while wearing them
104.Mask wear was challenging but necessary.

105.Young kids are not used to computers and seeing their friends online did only show them what they are currently missing out on. My son after the first session did not want to attend anymore as it made him very said.
You also can't expect the parents to support learning when they are already double stretched already as having to care for very young children.
Anxiety was at a peak and it deprived the kids of social contact.
My second child was at the 18 month mark sseeking for play along possibilities.He is suffering of severe anxiety now.
106.Our school provided daily short online lessons for small groups and sent some online worksheets and pages in school books for child to work with. The teacher left voice messages for our son when she had received pics of his completed work. It gave a structure to the day and maintained contact with Irish as he attends a gaelscoil. He was in Junior infants at the time. As time went on maybe a 2nd daily/every other day interaction would have helped but in general we thought the school did a good job in what was a totally new situation. We also had a son in ECCE pre-school and the dropped work sheets and activities on our door step....not as formally organised as the school but that was probably more suitable fir a pre-school situation
107.I had 3 children in different levels of school during COVID 19. My daughter started first year wearing a mask and it was terrible. Masks contributed to delayed socialization and fear of others.
108.Children didn’t like wearing masks and were uncomfortable and couldn’t breathe. Unfair on them.
109.There were several days of lost primary education and opportunity at school.These students are at post primarylevel, although the plan is to bring state exam results back to normal pre covid levels, there is no account taken of the months of lost education at primary level for them.
110.I had children in both primary and post primary during Covid. The experience varied massively between the two schools. Primary was excellent while the post primary was very poor. Like everything with education in Ireland, your educational experience will vary hugely from school to school pending on senior management and staff in each school. Some schools are very child focused and some are not. Some schools adhere to government and DES guidelines & policy and some don’t.
111.The virus was still relevant and there were still people getting seriously ill.
112.At the start of the pandemic children were classed as 'super spreaders' and more likely to pick up and pass on the virus. That turned out to be incorrect and maybe some decisions were based on inaccurate or wrong information.
113.I feel that the schools are impacted still by the lack of support put in place for children after Covid. A lot more children need learning support than before Covid and there is very little support for these. Schools don’t have the resources to cope with the demand.

114.My childrens education levels did not suffer from the school closures, however, that was due to me being a stay at home mother who had the time and skills to follow their curriculum. This was not true for most families. The closures did have an impact on their return to school. As their classmates had fallen behind, it seemed like the following couple of years was a catch up exercise. This affected my oldest child in particular, as he started the junior cycle and resulted in poorer overall results as estimated by his teachers because he "switched off" during those catch up years.
115.My child was junior and senior infants. They received one or two hours a week online classes. It has not affected her learning too much but it has had a hugely significant negative effect on her socially. She has never been able to make friends or fit in with her class. Overall her class have not bonded well. Nobody was prepared for the pandemic, which is understandable.
116.My child wears glasses and spent all of class time with fogged glasses. She had difficulty seeing the board and lost concentration as she was spening her time cleaning her glasses. Closing schools was a bad idea. Online learning is not suitable for all kids. The first lockdown was fun because we got a weekly email with fun and interesting learning activites. The second lockdown, the online learning was boring and difficult to manage long online lessons when you have multiple kids in the house. My kids won't be doing online learning in the future and certainly will not wear a mask.
117.As they felt uncomfortable
118.I am happy the government prioritised keeping my child safe.
119.My child had an immunocompromised child in his class and the entire school community made it a priority to keep her safe. The children learned a lot about empathy and social responsibility. I'm more than happy about how it was handled.
120.I had 2 children in primary school. One had very little usefulcontact with their teacher and there was practically no learning. My second child in the same school had a full day of work and online classes each day and it proved to be far too much. A balance between different teaching styles was needed.
121.I think it affected children socially especially neurodiverse children who struggle to read facial expressions
122.No
123.Children needed more psycho- social support during closures. This aspect was ignored by the government and schools. E.g. children's news, stories from other children around the county.
124.Masks on Young children in school was unfair ahd infective
125.Post primary kids were able to manage this
126.I do not think the masks on primary school children were effective as they were generally worn poorly and the hated them

127.Our school was simply superb in getting organised. Initially books all arranged for collection and work assigned by email and photographed back. Then online came with class in the morning assigning work and a follow up class later to correct and review. We are the only school that I'm aware of where support classes continued and these were very helpful from a wellbeing perspective. The structure th at this provided was extremely important to underpin the routine which I sought to create in our home. Sometimes we joined the online classes from outside locations within the limits to create a sense of adventure é.g. By a local stream with calming water. I also invested huge amount of time in finding other items of interest é.g. Museums and galleries around the world that provided online access; webcams of the Irish coast when we couldn't travel; etc

128.At the time we all didn't know much about covid 19 so the precautions taken were appropriate.My children enjoyed the time at home.We took the opportunity to explore locally and observe the increased wildlife. We had more home time so we cooked and gardened and played. It was a happy and healthy time for us. The RTE home school hub was brilliant, especially during the first lockdown when the schools were less prepared for home schooling.

129.The online learning provided by my children's school was extremely limited and very poor. It felt as if they were doing the bare minimum and only did so when they had to. One of my neighbours is a primary school teacher and it disgusted me to see her relaxing in her garden all day long while I tried to teach 3 children (2 with additional needs) while I was working from home in a responsible job severely impacted by covid.

The schools also could have changed mid term break dates and summer holidays breaks to allow for more teaching time when it was safe to do so but this was refused.

I feel that one of my children's additional needs were missed during this time. She was really struggling during this time and found things much harder when she returned to school. This was always put down to missing out during covid however I eventually had to get her privately assessed and diagnosed as school wouldn't do NEPS assessment by the time she reached 5th class as they said it was too late- they prioritised younger children.

130.School closures were horrific. My children had no desire to learn from me, this is despite us being a fortunate family with good education and a comfortable standard of living. I can't imagine how it impacted children in a more challenging setting.

131.It was unique and unprecedented so I think the decision to wear masks was correct at the time. I don't think it should necessarily be done again though.

132.The COVID policy response fundamentally affected for the worse the life course of 2 of my 3 children. One changed from a happy, outgoing, socially confident young man with a large friend circle, into a quiet withdrawn individual, who to this day hasn't still recovered the sense of fun and has hugely reduced his face to face friend group and now spends vastly more time online and alone. My youngest child has dyslexia and home schooling obliterated her academic prospects. In the weeks before the first lockdown, we had just taken her out of school to go on a specialized education Programme, the Davis method and it had transformed her approach to reading, maths and school. Then the lockdown was imposed and it, and online learning, obliterated that progress.We would find her crying under her desk during online lessons, cradling her head in her hands, saying "Dad I can't do this, this is too hard...I can't learn, I'm stupid..." The Davis method has transformed her, turning her from someone who avoided reading, to we'd find her reading a book in her room before bed. Her school was trying to support her, and then with lockdown that support became impossible, and she regressed so much, and if anything, she has a lower sense of self worth and of her academic potential than ever before, despite being an intelligent child, who just happens to have a dyslexic brain that processes information in a different way to the way it's delivered in school. It's a constant struggle to this day to keep her engaged in school. I'm a scientist, I read academic literature as part of my job. I cannot fathom how policy makers turned every principle of evidence informed decision making on its head. I am staggered at how they displayed every known cognitive and logical fallacy in the book and applied them to their thinking, and refused to listen to anyone pointing out the errors in their thinking. I could mention the friends of my son who withdrew from school altogether, the daughter of another friend who ballooned with obesity changing from an athletic child, to a morbidly obese one as the fear based messaging about being "vectors of disease' and "don't kill granny" absolutely destroyed her confidence. I still see occasional, obviously anxious children outdoors wearing masks, despite 20 plus years of Cochrane and systematic literature reviews saying the don't work in clinical settings, never mind community and outdoor ones. And I can't believe how much our medical and policy making establishment has let down some of our most vulnerable children in the way the set theatre based policy that they thought appealed to the 'right-thinking' crowd, rather than anything that stood up to recognized evidence evaluation techniques and principles.

133.Children were unable to breath, and were distracted by masks. It made it difficult to understand their teachers and children lost development of reading facial expressions and picking up social cues.

134.There was no risk benefit analyst for mask wearing - made mandatory regardless with almost no notice - refused to accept medical exemptions - disregarded the difficulties children had with face coverings instead used it to police them constantly through out the day with reprimands and punishments or threats of punishment for not wearing correctly etc caused huge distress and anxiety at a time that was already filled with anxiety and uncertainty. There was never a need or justification for masks and yet it was introduced anyhow with no concern for the detrimental impact and consequences it would and did have.

135.I don't think it was very necessary for children to wear masks in school.
136.The government HSE told so many lies. Tried to scare the hell out of families
137.Child do not wear PPE in the correct manner so I am unsure as to any benefit but I could see the intention behind them also
138.Rules and guidelines were not clear, schools differed with the implementation of Covid procedures. Siblings were sent home, even if they were not in direct contact with a Covid confirmed case.
No/poor internet in rural areas caused serious issues regarding access to academic classes and support.
The social impact was immense, we lost three student friends to suicide during Covid 19 and as a direct cause of the uncertainty attached to Leaving Cert and social life, it was beyond horrific. Direction, planning and a clear guideline regarding what the emergency response is, instead of waiting for a government minister to make her mind up regarding sitting exams, truly unforgivable.
Then dealing with the fallout from predictive grades (which included results from junior cert exams) which cause a performing leaving cert student hard working student to end up with over a 120 point discrepancy from his teachers predictions, resulting in him getting no CAO offer.
139.WE KNOW FROM ALL THE WORLDWIDE DATA AND PROF DENIS RANCOURTS PAPERS OUR OWN EU DATA AND IRISH DATA THAT ABSOLUTELY NO PANDEMIC OCCURED !! YOU ARE ALL ACCOUNTABLE FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY!
140.THE scamdemic affected everyone's mental health and masks, vaccines,tests, yellow brainwashing stickers to condition people to conform to authority. WE WILL NOT DO THIS AGAIN - EVER.
141.It was weird & worrying for all of them
142.Online Live Lessons were very effective but was very limited. Would have more structured lessons with timelines.
143.When children went back to school, I feel there was not enough effort put in to making sure material (supposed to be covered during school closure) was actually covered properly. It should all be revised again.
144.Now I’d say no wearing of mask as I believe it restricted breathing for children. My child complied at the time
145.There were no coping skills thaught to the children. My daughter was terrified she thought we were going to die because of stupid things the teacher said when they broke up. I'm in healthcare and she was afraid I in particular was going to die. I had to change my job. She was so stressed we ended up in A&E in xxx several times. We were not given advice or any plan to cope and there were no services available to help here. Many kids took advantage of the disturbance to bully when the children went back and some of the teachers did too. We did our best paid huge money for counselling but still have an anxious school hating teenager.

146.My child was predominantly affected negatively by the lack of social interaction with her peers. She was in playschool at the time and I found when she got to primary school she had really missed out on the social development that normally happens at a playschool level. It was tough for her.
147.The difference between schools was stark, my own school provided online lessons each day with work corrected and returned daily, online check ins and assemblies but my child's school provided worksheets emailed out that needed to be printed, were never corrected and therefore no motivation for my child to complete the work
148.At times I do think it was necessary in terms of public health. However it was difficult for some children and young people to adjust and to read communication signals, and very challenging for teachers. In addition, for those transitioning to secondary, to start this change masked was emotionally and socially really hard.
149.I think the age guidance was good
150.My kids were sick with COVID, but it affected them very little as the sickness every time was less than minor cold. I am thinking that masks worn for prolonged times would effect their well being more negatively then the COVID itself especially for children with breathing difficulties.
151.I don't think masks help that much with the spread of disease among children.
152.My son had to wear a mask starting first year in secondary school. Making friends was made much much harder by wearing a mask. He did not make any friends and was miserable. He had to change schools in order to be with old primary school friends.
153.Masks were essential for the prevention of spread of disease albeit not loved by most.
154.I think that if children had symptoms then wear a mask but otherwise no.
155.Teachers can't teach with their face covered!
156.I don't feel masks were effective. Students weren't wearing them properly and it became an issue trying to police it daily.
157.my child was only in junior Infants and his teacher done the best she could with them and as full time working parents it was very hard to do school and work full time with a new born too and this affected him as he fell behind. I think the junior infant classes were the worst affected during covid 19
158.It was another social barrier for children and not a realistic expectation for most children to feel comfortable wearing masks for the day.
I did it myself on occasion when at the workplace and found it very difficult from a health and communication point of view.
I can't imagine what it was like to get a teacher to teach a class and for children to cope in these settings.
I think reduced numbers in each class at greater distances from each other for shorter periods each day bringing group 1 then group 2 and possibly group 3 in each day for 1.5 hours.
159.No

160.This was the only guidance at the time as no research but I would not recommend it now
161.I think masks for children was a pointless exercise
162.As a parent who was working remotely during the pandemic I found it very hard as I was trying to keep my child in a rotune and it was impossible his teacher only did 1 online live class a week and sent out recorded videos every day of what they were to do for that day so while trying to support my child with their work that I knew nothing about and trying to teach myself also so i could help them it was crazy. So maybe a resource pack for emergency should be at hand do parents can be able to support the children like the teachers do.
163.It is hard to know the impact Covid 19 had on children but, such a long period of isolation definitely had some effect on their behavior, development and feeling unsafe in the world.
164.I felt masks were unnecessary and hightened childrens anxiety around covid. I refused to send my child to school in a mask.
165.No
166.Children were made to feel like they were contaminated and cause of the spread. They were looked down upon. They had no routine or structure, no academic support or follow up when school reopened they are in secondary school and still struggling
167.Wearing masks caused anxiety in children. Closing schools and excessive schoolwork caused anxiety in children and stress for parents/guardian's.
168.The use of masks was not properly adhered by many people/students/children to so transmission of infection most likely took place anyway.
A mask presents a barrier in/to communication which, during a particularly tough and scary time, is not necessary nor beneficial, in my opinion.
169.The closure of schools was disruptive to learning and friendships.
170.My child was distressed wearing a mask and seeing others wear them. Friends children who started secondary found mask wearing caused difficulty making friends
171.I think the importance of hand hygiene and have dedicated eating areas would help
172.This was not something that could be enforced by the schools and placed a considerable strain on teachers to implement. This caused communication issues and added another barrier for children when they returned to school
173.The masks made communication difficult especially when a child had hearing difficulties
174.It wasn't explained properly to kids or parents regarding masks. The information was very scarce from the relevant authorities
175.None
176.Wearing a mask was worse thing for kids that are so young especially primary. Some felt stressed and panic having to wear them all day ok school! Me as a parent who only lip read found it very difficult I can imagine a young child at school with mask.

177.Special education can never close again, the damage to the children was immense
178.I think the secondary schools did a marvellous job. The primary schools didn't do much and I was disappointed with them
179.It was a difficult time for everyone. Small classes at different times may have worked
180.Children in primary school wearing masks was unsuitable.
181.Masks although uncomfortable protected my kids and brought me peace of mind.
182.I can understand teachers needed to protect themselves and their families but it was tough on kids not seeing their faces
183.I think the school did as much as they possibly could given the unknowns at the time and I would expect them to have improved supports based on the learning from Covid 19.
184.There was ireversible damage done to children during lockdowns, time they will never get back again, we are still dealing with school refusal 5 years later with a child who was in Junior Infants for the first lock down.
185.Post Primary schools were not prepared for online learning and even now 5 years later only some teachers use Teams, others don't use it at all, all teachers should be using teams now as a means to keep things moving technology wise so that if there are any reasons to close schools again its easily picked up online.
186.There's no way my non verbal autistic son, with mod id, would have worn a mask
187.Masks affected kids with masks as you couldn’t see the facial expressions from other kids how they were feeling. Socially an mentally affecting them daily.
188.Starting secondary school during the pandemic was a disaster for my daughter. I would love if they could be provided with counselling, grinds, extra small group classes, confidence workshops as a result.
189.Junior years should have more support during closures or some form of revision support to ensure foundations for English and maths were fully established. Parents were having to teach some items not covered before as part of home schooling.
190.My son had just started in junior infants then the following March school closed due to covid .When he returned he went into first class
I just feel he most out on the two most important years of school.I would of loved if the government decided to keep all kids back a year.
He has just finished 4th class. He struggles with structuring sentences and reading comprehension extracting info from a passage and answering the questions on sentence format .

191.Child was in autism special class, going online meant I could see how she was being taught and how the school were not following the SSP or giving accomodations for her speech disorder (over relying on oral language online). We also found out that the entire school had been using Microsoft TEAMS and the autism class was not, when it would have been perfect for some autistic students. She was doing the Level 2 Junior Cycle and we could pinpoint that she was not being taught correctly and that some of her teachers were not assessing her. This development was hugely beneficial to her for her time in her senior cycle
192.Children in special schools often have language delay and read lips along with processing the verbal. Masks made this impossible
193.I think that COVID negatively impacted my child's education and ability to socialise.As a child with dyslexia, the on line interaction was unsatisfactory from a teaching perspective. I appreciate that the teachers and the school did their best, but they were not prepared for such an event from a teaching style/method and a technology perspective. I feel that my child is still playing catch up.
194.SENT teachers should have been vaccinated as soon as HSE staff
195.My son was in second and then 3rd when masks came in. A 9 year old is capable but I think wearing a mask all day is horrible. When covid hit the classroom it made no difference
196.My child has learning disabilities and is neurodivergent so she doesn't learn the way i know how to teach
197.Our school was terrible, the online platform was only used for teachers to set work and the expectation was that parents taught the children ourselves and children completed homework, the teachers did not do any actual teaching. Do I think this affected my children, a hundred percent cent I do and I'm still very upset at the school for the approach they took as it messed up a number of years schooling for my children.
198.My son started junior infants in 2020. He is heading into 4th in September. The level of education he received due to covid restrictions is a lot poorer than what my itgef son received in primary school pre covid.He is way behind and it's due to all the covid restrictions. He didn't see out playschool. Spent most of juniors at home, seniors restrictions still in place. And they have just been on the wrong foot since
199.At the time we just didn't know, so it was right to follow precautions, though it seems that kids were actually at ours risk of sharing COVID.
200.Our son was unable to wear a mask.
201.The affect on additional needs children during the pandemic has still not been acknowledged. We botched it and have not owned up to it
202.For extremely vulnerable medically complex children like my son it was a very scary time and even now we have to keep him home if there are others sick in school. Some parents have no regard for other children or staff and continue to send in their children when they are sick.
203.Children should not have had to wear masks at all. Schools should not have closed

204.The wearing of masks affected confidence and they were hiding behind them.
205.School issued a sheet of homework, we had to print everything off, complete it and upload it onto an app. The kids managed but I struggled to teach Irish and I hope they didn't have an impact on them
206.Preventing the spread of covid 19 was critical to controlling it. While less children were very sick, the older people in their families were very vulnerable so masks to prevent the spread were essential. Children in Asia wear masks regularly without issue.
207.Facial expressions are very important for learning , wearing masks impacted this.
208.Masks were important in my opinion to help stop transmission and keep schools open.
209.Honestly we enjoyed online learning. My child transitioned to secondary school in 2020. She really enjoyed the online learning schedule. It took her stressers away. We wish there was an online option for learning. My child never returned to education.
210.My child was exempt as they have an intellectual disability but I am glad that everyone around them were keeping them safe
211.The school in question did not cater to my child's learning at all.
She was a fast learner, ahead of the class across all subjects. The homework was for example 1 to 10 in irish while doing jumping Jack's. She was in 5th class!!! She learnt nothing. I asked for a book list so I could go ahead at home. I was told just because my child was bright, I shouldn't be complaining! I only asked for some appropriate learning material to match her ability as they would have done with her if she were in school as normal.
The school had a book rental scheme and wouldn't let them have a single book. They acted so defensive and did want to tell me the books they were using. The Principal rang me and argued with me. They lied and said thd booklist was on the website and it wasn't!
My child is now behind in her studies. She lost all confidence as she was so shy already! She is going into 5th year now and I'm very worried about her. She seems to be in a steep decline since covid! She did the assessment for CTYI when she was small and was part of that programme and took part in many courses there but as I mentioned, she's shy and still is nervous to speak out and do presentations etc.
I had another child in post primary. They used Google classroom and live online classes. This was a more successful platform.
The primary used seesaw. It was a disaster!
My child used to teach her classmates how to do the homework for the week. She used to get it all done in two hours and learned nothing new as it was stuff they had already done. They didn't move forward in the curriculum so when she started post primary, she was way behind kids from other schools. She's still struggling to catch up and feels she's stupid!
I honestly don't know what to do!

212.Sen was a disgrace. We had no education from the school in 2020. In 2021 a half hour per day. I taught the children at home myself. They git on really well out of school and highlighted several issues that were clearly wrong in school. They thrived and we have since left the school.
213.I think that the government did the best they could with the public health and WHO advice at the time. This was a global pandemic, with dreadful outcomes for so many, we were so lucky in Ireland
214.It was the best advice at the time
215.There was evidence from early on to show the type of masks used were ineffective. There have been studies since showing the cons outweighed the pros and thats excluding the mental impact on well being associated with wearing them. I think common sense should have prevailed and as studies were released and evidence provided the mask decision especially for kids should have been reversed.
216.There was no evidence for such mandates
217.Mask make it harder for kids to communicate in school. Better off closing
218.Absolutely ridiculous policy and actually detrimental to health.
219."No child (under 18) should be made to cover their face against their will. It was absolutely cruel and damaging. I am a secondary school teacher and I am still seeing the affects on children from the fear mongering, the lack of connection and the disruption to their education.
220.I am grateful you are doing this survey and I would hope in the future you, as our representatives would be much more vocal and active in protecting our precious children's education and enjoyment of childhood.
221.As a mother to a pre-school child at the time I found the masks mandates potentially very damaging for speech development. "
222.Restrictions were over the top. Caused too much fear in children
223.My son missed a lot of school because of the mask. My doctor gave him an exemption letter but the school insisted. My son was in 6th year preparing for his leaving certificate. He also was masked during these exams. I sent multiple studies and information on the harms of the masks to the principal and the Board of Manegment, which were all ignored.
224.No
225.I am aware that we were in a privileged position in comparison to others. I was in a position to be able to help my children progress school work & we had access to devices. While I am aware masks had their downside, they were needed to protect vulnerable members of school communities and their families.
226.Masks were completey unnecessary for children and were clearly brought in to convince the children to get he vaccine. There were no masks for children until the childrens vaccine was becoming ready.Mask wearing impeeded learning, communication, connection, relationships, trust, safety, and made the children doubt and be fearful of eachother, an absolute disgrace.
227.The masks in general don't necessarily stop the transmission of respiratory diseases and the children should have never had to go through that trauma as it affected them mentally, I strongly believe

228.No
229.Regardless of some children's lack of access, all kids should not be disadvantaged, and the govt should establish a set of guidelines on how to prepare and respond to future closures, which are almost guaranteed to happen. Standardising the experience will ensure no kids are disadvantaged based on their individual school response, and ensure, particularly for those only children who in my case had no other contact with a school friend for 259 days, are not socially isolated because of poor school management.
230.The wearing of masks or visors weren't al all bad during the pandemic, they did help protect the children and those who were vulnerable. During closures many teachers and parent learnt Lámh so we could continue to communicate with others.
231.Putting masks on my nerodivergent children in school caused extreme anxiety and thinking they would get sick led to extreme anxiety
232.My child has down syndrome and was starting in junior infants it didn't cater for any transition support
233.I worked full time nurse in surgery so nobody available home school my kids..
234.Kids found it extremely hard to concentrate on work from school during covid .upon returning to school my then 8 yr old found it extremely hard and confusing to see teachers wearing masks
235.Keeping masks away from the younger children was the right call as they were unable to manage correct mask hygiene and would have been more risky, but I think utilising masks amongst the older children/teenagers was the right decision too, although I'm sure it made things more difficult in some ways.
236.My child went back to school and was unable to touch door handle, unable to share, afraid to have any contact with peers. She struggled to be beside ill classmates.
237.It didn't help children who couldn't see the teachers faces . Found hard to breath
238.Covid caused mayhem regarding schools .parents had the teach and work remotely full time with no support on how to homeschool. There needs to better guidelines and support to parents we are not teachers we did not learn the same way as our children.
239.I think young children shouldn't have been required to wear masks during the school day.Restricted ability to speak, understand what others were saying, recognise facial signals, etc.
240.My son has a severe ID and ASD. The closure of schools had a profound affect on crucial years of his development. The slow and staggered reopening further compounded this. It is my belief that special schools are an essential service and should not have been closed at all.

241.As the mother of two autistic children in mainstream classes, I feel my childrens future was ignored. That at a vital time in their development there was no school, members of the CDNT were redeployed, so no support there. I saw huge regression in their social skills. I saw a total lack of concern for children in general and children with additional needs specifically. I am so angry with the government for closing the schools, they should have been left open for children with additional needs and for the children of our front line workers. Even the idea of pods isolated my children from kids they had connections with.
242.I have 2 kids, 1 was in their second year of preschool in the 1st lockdown and then went into primary school, he got support in primary school and I found the teacher amazing!
My little girl was in her 1st year of preschool during the 1st lockdown, it affected her so much, she went backwards socially
She was just starting to get used to other children apart her brother when lockdown happened.
243.Very difficult to close schools when both parents are healthcare workers. Should have kept schools open for our children as it caused a great deal of stress trying to take leave to care for children during the pandemic when healthcare employers dont care about your home circumstances.
244.In smaller schools there should of been different rules and children aloud into school it is understandable in larger school where they don't have room
245.Windows and doors kept open kids were frozen despite coats on
246.Q7 above is too restrictive in terms of what options were available in some cases. Schools, specifically teachers, were allowed to be too closeted relative to other workplaces and workforces. There was a minimum of "change" relative to other workplaces.
247.Difficult for social interaction, especially for children. Difficult to read boy language.
248.While I understand compliance with masks wearing, especially in children, is difficult, I do think by as many people wearing them as possible it helped lessen the spread.
249.The open window policy meant the children were freezing cold in school. The mask policy also was particularly hard especially on the very young children.
250.My son is autistic and he would find it difficult to socialise with his peers on a normal day so covid really affected his social skills and how to interact with his peers. He still struggles with it.
251.One of my children had only started in junior infants when COVID hit. She had an issue with any type of battery/electrically operated equipment. Her school was offering online classes which was great of the school. However my child would panic and start crying everytime we logged on. The school sent work for her to do but she was even more isolated from the rest of the class as she did not want to log on. She's now going into 5th class and we still feel she's playing catch up as the rest of her class are always just a little bit ahead of her.

252.The disparity between what each school/teacher did in terms of online learning/classroom teaching highlighted the need for backup plans to remote learning are required for any future events. It was up to the teachers whether they supported online classes or not. While I understand the difficultly in managing a class remotely, I feel that there should be clear guidances issued to school. Fee paying primary/junior schools continued with online learning during Covid.
253.The wearing of masks inside the classrooms was so hard on the children , also with windows open, no heating and children not allowed to wear their school jacket (teachers wrapped up with scarfs and long jackets) effected their learning , as my children were so cold, they couldn't concentrate.

The masks also caused acne on their skin and was difficult to wear all day for 1st year !
254.Is hard to weigh up the balance of protection with young kids having to have their face covered all day.
255.The pandemic impacted my son with regard to his additional needs being recognised and supported in the education system. A delayed assessment lead to a disaster in jnr infants resulting in a school move.He is afraid of school now and even though we moved school and he has supports his anxiety around school is still there. If the cdnt was correctly resourced with and OT etc. and was able to visit children in schools post pandemic and help parents during the pandemic I believe the shut down wouldn't have had a big impact. It has taken 5 years to recieve brief ot and 1 speech and lanuange visit. Therefore it falls on the school to help support him and me in his development. With schools closed there was nothing
256.I feel that learning during COVID was a waste of time especially for secondary school as there were no live feeds from the school all through Teams
257.Blended learning should be the norm. Extra materials for parents should be provided to help with learning.
258.Masks were an effective and cheap method to disrupt transmission of the virus. Mandatory mask wearing in schools and at large was the correct decision to make and a logical one at that, it's a pity that so much misinformation and paranoia abounded regarding mask wearing in Irish society - but this is the result of scientific illiteracy in my opinion. Teach more science in primary schools please!
259.On line learning consisted of 30 mins "daily" check it...it was appauling
260.I would have preferred if my childrens school had used features like Google Meet for online classes, they are neither a Google Workspace school or Microsoft and I think every school should be one and that this should be enforced.
261.We received a list of tasks or curriculum areas to cover during the week and then there was a half hour live session with the teacher who just spoke to the children about their week. No learning was provided and some children were quite disruptive during that session.

262.Wearing masks at school didn't bother my children however I am not in a position to know how effective they were. If science says they should be worn I'm happy to go with that.
263.Remote learning not suitable for my child with additional needs. Cannot understand how the most vulnerable of our society were forgotten about. I'm a hospital worker and my husband and I were trying to juggle everything. We had very little sleep as the lack of stimulation led to our son's sleep being severely affected. It was an absolute nightmare and playgrounds closed were also a huge factor
264.No
265.The mask mandate was over the top and very distressing for some children, one of my children among them. The hysteria from the principal was absolutely unwarranted when my children among had difficulty wearing the mask. It was I believe ultimately unnecessary and has been shown not to protect against transmission anyway. Plus my children subsequently went on to contract Covid at least 5 times with no adverse effects. I feel the mask mandate was ridiculous and should never happen again.
266.Weaeing a mask in school affected my child's speech development and confidence
267.No
268.I honestly think if there were adequate staff in the nursing homes all those poor people would not of died at the beginning of Covid. I think there wouldn't of been the tough restrictions if the nursing home crisis were handled properly. The schools suffered and everyone suffered.
Also my children are still not fully toilet trained because I was looking after my other child during lockdown. It is a nightmare.
Also the child care facilities or creches were not equipped. Dunnes Stores gave their staff a massive pay rise for working through Covid. The nurses , doctors and creches should of got this upfront and not to wait until after to get the payment. At that not everyone got that bonus.
I appreciate this opportunity to express my opinion on Covid restrictions.
269.Children should not have been wearing masks at all. If anything, children wearing masks increased the chance of spreading infection as they constantly touch their masks with their hands and then touch other things, therefore spreading moisture from their mouth and nose to other surfaces.
270.Children should not have been made wear masks
271.My child reading improved as he got to concentrate on that but he struggled with making connections with his peers
272.My daughter doesn't seem to have had any ill effects from an educational point of view . Her school value kindness and foster a lovely atmosphere in the classroom which I think made it easy for the kids to bond during and after the pandemic
273.Wearing marks had a huge impact on how students communicated during and after the pandemic
274.Junior infants, our child felt the mask was a barrier between her and her teacher/school staff. Slowed down learning and hindered relationship building.

275.There needs to be a ficus in equipping parents not just equipping schools as many parents were juggling work
The solution to covid or another pandemic learning should not all be about devices and technology it should be about parents having time and being equipped through physical as k resources and online resources and also not just copying what is done in a class room but using the opportunity fur children to learn new and different things that it is more possible to learn in a home setting
276.Hopefully wearing masks during Covid-19 were helpful, honestly I am not sure about that as many people reused them and I guess that wasn’t good, plus it wasn’t easy to find them and quite expensive once you got them.
Thank you.
277.I think if a child or a student has a cold, flu or any type of virus they should wear a mask, if not no need to wear a mask.
278.We are well educated and I am a secondary school teacher, so in theory we would be confident to support our child's learning, but:
1.We are not primary schools teachers, and do not have the knowledge, skill and expertise to guide their learning.
2.Most primary school learning is social, and cannot be fully engaged in by a child at home alone (even with live online engagement, which our child welcomed in terms of social contact, but I think was ineffective in terms of any possible teaching / learning use)
3.We were both working full-time, so our child was on their own for most of the day. A primary-age child needs an adult available to support them, and this was not possible for us, or for their teacher, who had their own children at home, as well as a class of 29 to support.
One of the best tools the school used was 'Seesaw' - this enabled our child to get individual responses and feedback on their work from their teacher, which they appreciated more that anything that was possible in the zoom 'classes', and which was useful in supporting their learning during the period of closure.
279.Masks did damage to children’s physical and mental health and the mask mandate had no scientific basis.
280.This is a difficult question to answer. I'm caught between thoughts. Students were wearing masks incorrectly.
It stopped students making friends moving into secondary school
Masks were important as they curtailed the spread of Covid, however. It's hard to know what is right.
281.For children masks can be intense and scary. Children should not have to wear masks

282.Some teachers developed an OCD level of unhealthy obsession with masks barely giving my child or his classmates time to eat lunch with the mask off. Warned to keep hands off mask. Despite wearing masks and having air purifiers in each classroom they insisted on windows and doors being left open so children were freezing.
Same for sanitising which also deeply affected my two children. Over washing of hands and sanitising to the point of one child developing eczema. His own skin friendly personal sanitiser was not allowed to be brought in!!!
There was an over emphasis on getting work covered with no regard whatsoever for helping the children keep some level of interaction between each other going. Masks were a huge physical barrier. This was the environment for my boy aged 10yrs at the time who has additional needs and his older sister. With the benefit of hindsight I should have kept him at home altogether. It did huge damage to him developmentally. Also his older sister lost a lot of interpersonal, social skills and confidence.
283.My older child (age went back into 4th class & re-adjusted quiet well) my younger daughter went back into 2nd class & got alopecia within a week of returning to school (we eventually found out it was a result of her fear of contracting Covid & passing it on to her Gran) We decided to wear masks going back to school, my daughters were the only kids wearing them in the classroom after about a week. I was disappointed, but, I then had to convince my kids it was ok to NOT wear a mask as they were the only kids in the class not wearing one. We then had to stop visiting Gran & they did indeed get Covid within about 3/4 weeks!
284.The fact when in school children were sent home initially when Covid was in the class and laterally at their table was very disruptive.
My child missed 2 rounds of 2 weeks in school schooling when this happened even though they did not have Covid. This should have been better managed.
285.It was arbitrarily applied with children in 3rd class and above selected for mask wearing. Children were made to wear masks while adults in teaching and management positions did not. It made a mockery of the whole requirement. Children aged 9/10 were too young to be made wear masks all day. Furthermore there was no requirement to ensure masks were changed frequently to ensure their continued effectiveness.
286.School looks the same before during and after. Teachers when they reopened treated children like carriers. But had no problem mixing themselves.
Teachers way over reacted and their FEAR did not thing to reassure children.
Teachers behaved very badly in our school
287.Schools should have been considered exempt from closures like healthcare etc. Education and Social Connection are paramount for children's development. My daughter's school did not provide any support whatsoever. There was radio silence. The lack of consistency between schools was appalling.
288.I appreciate Government organising vaccines for school kids, vaccination teMs were very good with children.

289.Concentrating on air cleansing, is the way forward
290.Masks allowed vulnerable persons to attend school and it also brought home more awareness that we are all different with different needs
291.Child was in montessori at beginning of covid, but all the absences due to minor cold symptoms (any symptoms and child had to stay home for 10 days, later reduced to 5 days) have resulted in child always wanting to stay home now. It has been on going for years and I feel the multiple absences of a few years ago set the foundation for this habit.
292.My child transitioned into most primary at the beginning of covid. He was impacted hugely during school closures and he developed a psychological disorder. Very poor support from school during this time. He missed 3 months of school and no assistance to catch up despite many promises. Did his leaving cert this year and his academia, emotional and social maturity is poor. Very disappointed in the lack of supports
293.I don’t think masks were helpful in a school situation. Made communication and reading expressions more difficult. I’m not confident the mask offset transmission enough in this setting to justify
294.Mask wearing wasn’t evident in my school. Only about 2 students out of a class of 30 wore masks daily and so unless it is required by the Government and school that all children must wear a mask, when it is optional, very few will want to wear one. Friends with children in school in Spain and France told me their children had no problem wearing masks as everyone in their school was required to. In my child’s classroom, Covid ran rampant and resulted in 9 students out of 30 showing up for school at a particular time. If schools were to remain open in any future pandemic, the focus should be on preventing children catching the virus by investing in excellent ventilation and airflow in classrooms, investing in outdoor classrooms, smaller class sizes and any other measure including mask wearing to protect the future health of our children. I have spoken with parents whose child unfortunately developed Long Covid and was too sick to learn so missed out on more school education than when schools were formally closed. They also could not socialise with friends or continue with their sports. To be able to enjoy good mental health, socialising with friends and participate in education, good health is a prerequisite.
295.I believe the wearing of masks upon the return to school was unnecessary. When teachers wore masks the children found it very difficult to hear and understand the teachers - especially in the teaching of Irish. The children who had exemptions and did not have to wear a mask were less sick than the children who wore masks.
In addition having the windows open and not allowing the children to wear coats etc was torture
296.Single child family. Child was in Junior Infants so we didn't have much of a frame of reference. My child had very little interest in doing "school work" with me and we really struggled with completion of the actual work. But we very happily did plenty of active learning through other activities, I was just lucky it was only Junior Infant level
297.Alot of schoolrefusal after covid due to anxiety.

298.Yes, I think that masks made total sense in schools as it lowered dramatically the chance of spreading the virus.
299.Evidence suggests the pandemic was over dramatised, hence the response followed on this path
300.A lot of people didn't follow through so I think the government's decision was irrelevant.
301.That was part of the trauma for primary school children imo
302.School work was provided via an app. Wasn't always clear as app was on a phone and that made it difficult to see all the details. It was up to parents to educate using the material provided by the school but no other support was provided, online class etc. Very difficult when working full time form home and having to be a teacher as well.
303.N/A
304.Children were not comfortable wearing masks and younger children did not understand why their teachers had masks on, it was frightening for them. I also feel that sitting in a classroom for 7 hours a day breathing back in your their own air was unhealthy.
305.My child had only just started creche when they closed. We were fortunate to have grandparents in our 'bubble' so Covid hugely strengthened the bond between my child and her grandparents. She spent a lot of time outdoors in nature. Before schools reopened my child was able to attend a childminder, with other kids there too. And then in September 21 she started pre school
306.I feel that Covid was an unexpected event that no-one was ready for but going forward we should learn from it. My child had on link in video call every fortnight. There was no learning materials and i believe that their academic learning has been fully effected.
307.They did their best. It is very hard to please everyone. I was reassured by the closure of schools and businesses. I wanted to keep my parents safe. I do recognise that people suffered with their mental health, but I strongly believe it gave them little choice but to face their demons head on. They were always there, but life is dull of distractions. Better to face the trauma and take the time to give it the attention it needs. Lockdown was a good opportunity to do this. A lot of people didnt have the tools though, so it was a dark time.
308.The ‘classes’ that were provided were very poor. Some teachers could not work the technology- basic Zoom- others tried and that was fine but none were very good unfortunately.
As a worker who worked in online group sessions, I feel the attempts by the teachers as a whole were disappointing- something I am sure they would be disappointed to hear but we do have to speak the truth. They were not in any way ready technology wise- and while no one was at that time, I feel our school did not manage the transition to online well at all.
Work was sent out through a platform for the parents to do with kids- similar to homework only- no classes, no small group work.
V damaging to the kids.
As a school we had asked for small group work classes so kids would get at least half an hour a day but this was refused numerous times.

309.Makes no sense to have half the primary school population (under 3rd class) not wearing masks but older children had to labelling them like they were a higher risk.It was deemed ok to remove the masks for eating, PE and playing musical instruments, but not sitting in the classroom learning. Children are not able to wear them properly anyway and its very uncomfortable for them to have to do for the whole school day. Children starting secondary school having to wear masks had a big negative impact as it was difficult for children to get to know each other - they were a barrier, The masks also became a safety blanket for some, and caused anxiety for some kids when they were no longer mandatory to wear.

310.I enjoyed the time at home with my kids they were both pre schoolers and we concentrated on playing which I thought was important for them then and we didn’t have to rush anywhere in the morning. I’m not sure how it impacted them. My older daughter has has a good time in school and likes to be there on time every day my younger one hates going to school and also struggled going to playschool sometimes but I’m not sure if any of it it related to covid.

311.Probably did help stop spread germs etc but it probably created fear too

312.I dont know only because my child did not like the mask therefore it was a lot of work for the school and to the bus escort

313.As a working single parent, in front line healthcare profession, I went to work. It was difficult to support my children's learning online. I could not understand why Ireland did not follow the UKs example and provide schooling for children of those parents involved in providing front line services. I complained to my school about my children's teacher response to requests for flexibility, and who lacked any empathy for my situation.

314.Children found them hard to wear, made them more self conscious and fearful. Adults had difficulty wearing them correctly and we expected children to.

315.My child was in their second year of ECCE in March 2020 then commenced junior infant that September. Their literacy level was certainly impacted. Teacher sent multiple activities through seesaw which to be honest were unhelpful and were not appropriate for their stage of learning- more geared toward first class. Caused stress in the home and feelings of inadequacy as a parent

316.Helped keep germs away from each other.

317.I think my child suffered badly in lesson when schools reopened. Teacher behind a screen, very little 1:1. She needs support in her learning and Differentiation but this wasn't available. I don't blame the teacher- she had an ill relative and was nervous of bringing home sickness. However my daughter was a full year regaining some confidence again.

318.Children didn’t wear them properly. Were not protecting them or the teachers.

319.Mask mandates were difficult if you had a primary school child or a child with special learning needs.
And it allowed secondary students to comply shut down.

320.they should have had air filters/air con

321.Important to remember that some children in classrooms have compromised immune systems and are vulnerable to illness, also many children would have vulnerable family members at home.
322.I do not agree that "shared device" equates to being "partially equipped". My 2 primary school children at that time shared my laptop & phone for their school work and I think they were well equipped as they only needed it for less than an a few hours each a day and were well able to accomplish what they needed to. Too much is spent in giving children devices but not enough social presence.
323.For our family we were very happy not getting work for a 4 year old. I would not have wanted it.
We were happy with reading and a little maths work that we got from our other child in primary.
Mom and Dad were working through the pandemic in this house so it would have put huge pressure on our family if there was too much school work to do at home
324.As a family we bonded and the school curriculum helped my child focus on her development better than when she was in a class room.
325.I am a primary school teacher, so I was able to teach my children. I thought the endless worksheets sent by their school were a waste of time.
326.The government did their best, my issue does not relate to during covid as they could only work with what the experts told them. My issue is that after covid there should have been extra supports for managing the effects of the total removal from society. Teaching the children in school to BE together again, and to safely socialise as the restrictions were being lifted and indeed as we've moved into no restrictions, should have been a priority. There has been no building of relationships in school since returning, so the kids that actually stuck to the required restrictions have been isolated even further. That has had more of an effect than school closers. The children look to teachers to promote what's safe and I really believe the education system dropped the ball here.
327.No need for masks in school.
328.There was no daily school support. On a Monday morning my son was given a long list of school work and homework to be completed for the week. It was overwhelming. I was his teacher at home. His school teacher did NOTHING. There was no social support either from the school. Children were isolated from each other. This was totally unacceptable and was completely unnecessary. Masks do not work either and I refused to mask my primary aged kids.
329.First closer sudden no school books, second time could pick up books so make it easier for both kids and parents..
330.The whole question (like many others) became politicized unfortunately. From decades of medical knowledge and experience it should have been clear that mask, especially these kind of unserious masks, especially worn by children the way they wore them, was totally unhelpful, if not counterproductive. Nevertheless it did have many undeniable negative side-effects on the wellbeing (and even health) of children.

331.I found that my children had difficulty rengaging with their friends as their friends had made new friends with the classmates that lived in within their 5km.There was also difficulty with other children and there was some bullying issues with other children.
332.Deaf and hard of hearing children were not able to hear teachers, equipment such as Roger FM was suspended, children were discriminated against.
333.Its harder for some children to wear masks. But it was the right call. I think we did the right thing at the time with what we knew. Hindsight is now a gift we have to prepare for future issues.
334.My son didn't like to wear mask or see teachers wear masks he found it extremely difficult
335.It is never appropriate for children to wear masks in schools or any other setting
336.My children did not need to wear they were too young
337.I have no issue with a child wearing a mask when required as long as it is not all the time.Our school only focused on projects and english and maths. The one area that caused the biggest problem is that the teacher/principal did not take into account that parents were working from home and meeting their specified deadlines for projects etc was very difficult. Children got the work done but our principal would ring you if you were late submitting things, even when you may be online working in meetings etc and did not take any of this into account. She had no idea the difficulty that getting this done on top of working 40 hrs, keeping a house, cooking cleaning etc and then teaching and scanning work and assisting children with projects and filming projects, scanning etc and then submiting all this but SEVERE UNDUE STRESS on parents and families.
338.My child became anxious with the whole situation and unfortunately that has effected him in his day to day life at school
339.Our school provided limited online lessons which where hard to manage as the device we had was shared between siblings. Also with parents working online there was not enough support for us as parents to complete the courses and be the teacher. There were packs given out weekly but not everyone could access all the time. We found we could not work and support our children's education as we would like to with primary school level. Our children where not literate enough to support online Lear and even when the schools reopened the they had closed ranks on the parents. We ended up moving to a different school
340.My daughter was outside the age range
Think it should have applied to secondary but not primary age.

341.As stated above my children's academic ability was affected due to the fact both my husband and I worked each day. My husband worked 2 hrs away from home which meant my children were travelling to work with me each day and staying in my car as I went to check in with families (i work in family support) I felt I was supporting other children and my own were suffering. Unfortunately some children i worked with had no device, no communication in paler form from schools and no way to check in with an adult if home life became hard on them. We as a nation were not prepared. My Internet coverage was bad, if we were at home we struggled to connect and once we were on the road for me to work there was no connection to link in online. By the time we got home in the evening, my children just wanted to move and get out and be children having been on the road all day. So as a result school work at that point was put on the back foot. We gave most Saturdays and Sundays trying to catch up but we're always behind as we had missed the deadline for work to be submitted and in return then received little or no feedback from teachers for the work they had done. This became very frustrating on us all as a family and it turned my son who was 3rd class off doing work at all. It was a very difficult time.
342.Mask wearing around children created a lot of fear and anxiety. It also made reading social cues and facial expressions impossible which are vitally important communication skills.
343.Week work sent to parents email extra work downloaded drive, children had their books at home and followed the school schedule parents sent answers to check .
More work for parents I think live classes would have been more useful. Especially forthe correction any child didn't understand or got it wrong just moved to next week's work.
Some children finish 6th class march 2020 next time back at school was secondary adjust to new school friends extra classes then close again Christmas back to online.
These children harder hit.
344.They split the classes which didn’t help socially or emotionally. As a nation we were more worried about the disease and not the effects on young people
345.They were totally ineffective on pointless and they just promoted fear and division
346.I think wearing masks should have been made compulsory upto the point that we are advised medically unnecessary. Pity teachers didn't enforce it. Central Governement could have trained teachers regarding how to manage this.
347.I think there are definitely issues surrounding Covid and educational development. Reading and writing in particular. Students who’s missed the start of reading writing program at primary level are definitely behind on their reading ages, combined with this is a lack of interest in reading because of phones/tablets. Reading needs to be given for HW, even 10 min. My Child will read for homework but not for fun. Which is an issue for developing his language skills and writing skills.

348.That teachers should have provide 3 hours teaching online to there classes. Children would have been in contact with people outside of family and had a structure routine.
349.There would have been worse absences had that not been enforced
350.It was imperative to stem the spread of the virus
351.Our school provided an online list of tasks to be carried out each day, like a homework list, which included pictures, videos, songs, extracts from text books. I would have liked if it had been possible to also do some amount of actual online teaching by the teacher.
352.Our national schools provided a very bad service and our children were deeply affected by the very sudden loss of their teacher and school environment. To this day this affects them badly in terms of their socialising and mental wellbeing.
353.The age differentiation made sense. My older child wasn't too bothered about the mask but my younger two would have found it much more difficult. I had 3 kids in 3 different schools during Covid. My montessori age child found her teachers wearing the masks very upsetting, she was trying to read their expressions via their eyes and said a teacher she had previously loved had "very cross eyes" which made her get upset at school much more easily.
354.30 links to use from published studies and resources that show the risks from masks and that they offer NO protection
355.I think it was harder for children with additional learning needs such as my child who is visually impaired. We never heard from their Visually impaired visiting teacher.
356.Child was in 3rd class when she went back that was too young to have to wear a mask - she was only 8
357.The government's use of schools far over reached their rights...absolute breach of human rights.Freezing classroom, daily fear mongering, inhumane muzzling of. Children, brainwashing propaganda and coercing others to take untested vaccines will never be okay by me.
358.Did the masks actually stop the spread? Children got covid in school anyway and faced the possibility of not understanding what the teacher was saying because they couldn't see their face and also the children were uncomfortable.
359.My child now feels a bit claustrophobic at times...she was never like that pre mask wearing.
360.Teachers used covid closures for extra time off. No input for learning. No support.
361.Those who decided to put masks on healthy children in schools have a lot to answer for.
362.Forcing kids to wear a mask ,not good very ,very bad Forcing people to take vaccines of death and sickness Very,very bad
363.Overall I guess no one knew what was going to happen so everyone did what they could im lucky we live in an affluent area but felt for less privileged

364.I'd prefer if the children, or any of us, didn't have to wear masks but with a new disease and so many unknowns it was the best of a bad situation to attend school in person but nave the hygiene measures in place
365.I feel the wearing of masks negatively impacted children's learning of language. And also the unnecessary fear placed upon children.

Many Children and adults are incapable of safely wearing masks, touching masks with unclean hands. It is safer not to wear a mask than wear it incorrectly.
366.My child was in 5th & 6th class, he was not affected as his teacher was proactive & interested, it was not the same across the school & it was not implemented or driven from management compared with direct communication received from my other sons school.
367.Yes,
We have to look after all our community and protect others. It should now be common practice to pop on a mask if you feel unwell with flu, pneumonia etc ..
368.Important to enable schools to reopen and protection vulnerable children and staff and to allow students with vulnerable family members to attend school with lessened risk
369.I'm not against how the govt handled covid. My child who was ending Naoinra and starting Junior Infants during the lockdowns and is now in 3rd Class has never caught up with her phonics as the school failed to teach them during covid, or support us in teaching them, and didn't do anything to help when they went back to school, the Snr Infant teacher simply moved along with the programme like they had fully completed JI, and the school did nothing to help - ie kept the class size huge (31/2 in a Gaelscoil) and didn't revise the single phonics. I had to move both of my children to different schools last year to try save the older ones education, and I have had to start teaching her Toe by Toe myself to catch up with her peers.
370.Both my children have learning difficulties,they found Covid extremely difficult,all be I understood why online classes would have been better. More interaction and in regular times too.To keep routine.
371.My child learnt more while in their home environment, it had a positive affect on my child, and would hope into the future that it could at least be hybrid learning to be an option, particularly for asd children, it would be extremely beneficial for the child .
372.My children wouldn't wear mask due to sensory issues but I understand that staff around would need to.
373.There should have been no masks for children. Adults don’t use them properly so kids definitely can’t.
374.Children are sensory seekers they like see what's going on the mask made children not know if a person was frowning or was happy yhey seen the same facial appearance the whole time - also any child who couldn't wear a mask felt like they had too. If a child knows how to cover there mouth and blow there noise they know social norms my child with special needs did not and my child with special needs who is moderate definitely didn't

375.In my opinion, I think if the teachers were happy enough to come back to school then they should not have had to wear masks. My child (like many others) missed his last part of preschool and started J.I. after a massive gap of isolation and no interaction. To which he and his classmates had to go into an unfamiliar setting, again after isolating for months, and then expect to settle in a new classroom with strangers whom could they could not even see their faces. To the teachers credit, most of them did a fantastic job during this time but I really feel like the masks could have been taken away at that stage to lessen the anxiety all round.
376.Mask have proved not to be efficient and some studies shows it is contreproductive for childrens health
377.The school had 1 hour of interaction with the children every week. There were no classes. It was a group call where the teachers would say hello, catch up with the children & sing songs. As the children didnt have any structure it was tough to get them to sit down to do school work. They knew teachers weren't correcting work & they felt strongly about doing the work they should do in school at home. We did keep up with spelling, reading & maths but not other subjects.
378.One child was in Senior Infants and got very good support. Our daughter was in 2nd class and required learning support. She only got one X 30 online class per day of normal class and very little learning support. Both her and my son's online classes clashed so she had to use my mobile and they had to read out loud.
379.Every school was different instead of a unified approach. I had feedback from other parents who's children had a lot of support and interaction with teacher and pupils.
380.children missed out an that in class experience for a long period of time but what also happened was that children transitioned out of primary to secondary school that were due neps assessments or things weren't picked up on due to no interaction other than online
381.Web-based curriculum resources and the establishment of links between teachers and students and parents during school closures, so as to better establish the comprehensiveness of education.
382.I feel that children who’s parents had to work during Covid we’re at a complete disadvantage to those who’s parents who did not have to work. During Covid I had to work full time plus lots of additional hours and my husband was not confident to do schoolwork as he has a low level of education. Both these two things combined left my children disadvantaged during the pandemic. I’m sure my house was not the only house with similar issues
383.Not applicable
384.Very un supportive lack of interaction school closed and that was that
385.My son not able to wear a mask
386.Stop the spreadsome kids did not wear them
387.I had 2 children in primary school. It wasn’t until the online class that the teacher saw how distracted my child was and as a result referral was sent to educational psychologist. My other child was In juniors and her foundation was poor as a result of Covid 19 and she need help for 2 years post same

388.I was lucky for the first lock down as I was furloughed . So I could dedicate myself to home schooling. Other lockdowns were more difficult as I had to work.and my parents had to get involved the days I worked.
They weren't as tech savy as me and my daughter was too young to do herself . Still in Senior infants into first class.
389.While I am very aware children who are immunocompromised have a much more difficult time, masks and children do not go together in a school setting.
390.No
391.Yes masks are essential, less infection and kids learnt how to curtail infection, kids that are immune suppressed better proected
392.Attitudes of some staff re ppe had a negative impact on my child with additional needs and I felt that some exploited the pandemic to try and ensure he stayed home at times when the school was open but measures in place. Some traumatic experiences occurred which i will never forget.
393.Children wearing masks in a school setting while trying to learn is not fair . Fine to wear them transitioning from one room or in packed halls but unfair while on beaks or socialising
394.Primary age children need to learn in a classroom setting with other children, even if that is with a small group like homeschooling. They are not as capable of independent learning in the same way as older Secondary age children. The remote format of learning is not really suited for children of this age.
395.Wearing masks in school impacted children socially and academically.
396.We had to start as safe as possible
397.The mask was required to prevent the spread of the virus
398.It certainly helped infection control but affected interaction.
399.If students are required to be in school, in close confines and children being children will be physically close to each other the the negatives of masks outweigh the positives. Especially for neurodivergent young people where masks can make communication difficult, make teachers look different which can be very off-putting for ND kids.
400.Masks made an uncomfortable environment even worse. Teachers wearing masks made it even more difficult for autistic child to 'read' teachers mood - was even more afraid of them than before.
401.Children should never be forced to wear masks. It caused a lot of emotional and physical issues, including bullying and eczema. It's very unhealthy for young children to breathe in a sweaty mask all day, more sickness due to it
402.No
403.Masks cause unnecessary discomfort to children, some cause rashes on those with skin sensitivity
404.It helped children get back to school & socialise. It was based on limited but best available consensus at time
405.Please send more written and speaking work specifically in irish language students are lagging.thanks

406.Once it became apparent there was a low risk for kids we should not have traded their futures to protect adults. The effect on my child has been catastrophic in terms of learning and development. She crashed out of secondary school. Self harm, no friends, education failure.
407.Kids and tea hers struggled with masks, kids with glasses especially as they fogged up their glasses
408.The government tried to gaslight us into believing that covid did not spread in schools. How ridiculous. And these "pods" and "bubbles" and contact tracing were also stupid. Do they think we're idiots. Everything spreads like wildfire in schools so why not covid?????
409.Mask wearing probably the most difficult aspect for students and teachers...hard to know if it really reduced the spread of infection.
410.My son lost most of 5th and 6th class, he has since been diagnosed with anxiety and asd. The primary school had little or no structure to learning during this time and the lack of social interaction made my son struggle.
411.My child started junior infants in Sept 2020
412.Mask wearing for individuals in schools was ridiculous. It had a negative impact on children's mental health. It did not stop the spread of covid in classrooms.
413.It has affected all my kids in different ways
414.More access to online classes now, this is still having a negative effect on lots of children
415.It was completely unknown and therefore govt had to go with the WHO guidelines, so of course they made the right call, there'd have been uproar if they went against the guidelines.
416.No
417.Our child has special needs - DCD, dyslexia, sensory processing difficulties and autism.There was no support in terms of her special needs. I felt failed by the school in that regard. I am not a teacher so I just did my best. My 1:1 helped her advance academically but I pushed her too hard and in hindsight she shutdown. She needed other special supports e.g. to learn to write etc. Socially she struggled more post pandemic. The class teacher spoke. There were few videos as I reckon she was camera shy. They needed to see her more for normality.
418.My child was at a great age. She had settled into school, had siblings to play with and other than Covid tests and isolation within home due to them, she wasn't negatively impacted.
419.Neither of my children are able to attend school now, due to poor mental health. Both had access to online zoom classes during Covid, but this is no longer available now.
420.Government made the correct decision. Wearing mask was important for schools to stay open.
421.Our school gave absolutely no work or support of any form to students during covid lockdowns. Once weekly zoom group chats with the teachers, if even that, were all they got.
422.I didn't agree with masking school children. They hated them and would remove if the teacher left class.

423.I think by and large good decisions were made. I am appalled by the ongoing lack of attention to clean air in schools. There would have been no or minimal need for masking if air filters had been used. It still would be of tremendous benefit and should be a “do now” no brainer of an idea for our children and teachers health.
424.Masking had a detriment affect on my children, International evidence proved they didnt work but the goverment did it anyway. I remember when the masking was taken away - there were kids in my girls classes who couldnt show their faces for weeks. My kids never saw what their teachers looked like for such a long time.
425.Keeping schools open and wearing masks would have been better than sudden closures. My child was never required to wear a mask as he was 5 in 2020, I think it was 2nd class and up or something that had to wear masks. Despite sensory processing disorder, he happily wore a mask anyway, as he understood the importance of not spreading germs. He wanted his class to stay virus free and open. As he just said to me when I asked about wearing masks in school - child had to learn to wear masks anyway.
426.Illnesses spread quicker in school environments.
427.My son is autistic, undiagnosed at the time, but receiving SEN & SNA support from his school. He actually found homeschooling less exhausting and he is very smart so he could zoom through some of the previous recorded lessons where he felt the teacher was over explaining or giving extra examples he didnt require. He could complete his work quickly as opposed to the long day of schooling to learn the same amount of information and he was in an environment which suited him better from sensory point of view. He did find it difficult to maintain friendships whilst not physically in school as he struggles with conversations/ small talk and could only communicate with friends by phone/ video calls. Overall he was very happy at home being homeschooling and spending time with his family. School lessons also concentrated on alot more creative activities like art which he loves. His SNA rang him for a chat weekly but I think maybe the SEN teachers could have arranged small groups for helping the kids to keep in touch with peers socially and give additional support with lessons such as reading where required. The SEN teacher did email regularly to help him with his identified area of Need which was fine/ gross motor skills support and gave additional activities to support those needs.
428.During Covid 19 we had children in Primary and Post Primary school. It was very difficult for children to interact as they were not seeing one another and some our children lost touch with that and found that somewhat difficult on return.With practical subjects and say writing skills again it was difficult. We very much enjoyed 'Lockdown' as a family, we done so many things at home and really enjoyed our time together very very much however coming out of 'lockdown' was more difficult for us.
429.Though government and media clinged to the mask narrative after the initial change, it turned out to be not useful stopping the spread. The quality and discipline how children were wearing the masks made them useless or even counterproductive.

430.Social skills were affected. My child aged 11 finds crowds & crowded rooms uncomfortable
431.facial expressions are so important for children in a learning environment. It would be better to be able to improve outdoor facilities where possible so classes could take place outdoors with more ventillation.
432. I am an educator myself, so I was able to cope just fine, but I recognise that our situation was a little unique. I am an immigrant and we come from a climate of excellent teacher-parent partnership and collaboration.
To my disappointment, our school was totally unequipped to communicate with parents as this line of communication was non-existent prior to the pandemic. I would suggest a move to encourage school administrators to ensure that there is a working means of connecting with parents digitally and that parents have access to the child's coverage of the curriculum so that if necessary, we can step in and do our part, not only if there were another pandemic (God forbid) but even in the case of serious illness or necessary, unexpected travel throughout the school year.

The school closures gave my child an opportunity to reset. He was struggling at school socially due to relentless, unaddressed bullying and racial slurs and experienced terrible anxiety that was not being well-handled by the school administration.
Through the closures, we had an opportunity to take a breather from the school environment and work through his anxiety and ability to self-regulate.
433.Teachers and students being forced to wear masks seriously impacted their teaching and learning abilities
434.I think Covid affected children in different ways, some parents were at home and very available to their children. Others had to continue to WFH or outside the home and it added extra stress and pressure to the families, these families often had no backup except for screen time and had little support. Or little consideration was given for living condition eg apartment living v country living. A hybrid model small class numbers should possibly have been considered earlier
435.I think children with additional needs were adversely affected during school closures. Also school attendances have struggled to return to normal since. I work in a school setting.
436.I don’t feel the masks were suitable for school children. Wearing them was distracting and uncomfortable. They affected communication with teachers and peers and so negatively impacted learning and social development
437.The principal of my children's school said that his ""hands were tied"" in relation to what he could ask teachers to do during the pandemic.Parents were looking for more online teaching and he literally said he ""couldn't make them do it because of their contracts"".
Frankly, we found this astonishing that teachers would not want to teach online and ensure that the students were still learning and not falling behind. Some students have never caught up and it is now reflected in their leaving cert results. Very disappointing outcome.
I know how different online teaching is to in-person teaching but Principals need to motivate their staff to do better.

Q17. Is there anything you want to add regarding the government decisions with regard to education during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. I was in America for the first year of the pandemic where they opened bars before schools. I think the Irish approach was excellent and child centred
2. Some very good decisions were made for the safety & welfare of the children & their families
3. It definitely heightened kids anxiety wearing masks.
4. Children have suffered so much. They lost so much out of 2 school years with closures and then the year they went back was all about getting them used to interacting again. All together 3 school years were disrupted and not following the normal education you would expect. My children are now 4th and 6th class. So many if their peers are way behind academically, way behind in social skills, needing play therapy and are very cautious with other people.

Covid was never a real danger to the majority of children. In the UK they were kept open for essential workers children, although without the curriculum being taught ad there was no major outbreaks or health issues from that. Our kids have been dealt a real disservice.

5. No. They were following the protocol of what every country was doing.
6. There was a lack of evidence and children were scape goated from the beginning
7. My autistic son was in first class when COVID hit. The time at home allowed me to reiterate his learning and give 1:1 focused lessons. It definitely helped his progress.
8. The Department of Education should have had a more definitive role in supporting schools. Principals and teachers learned how to cope from each other which is not good enough.
9. Would have preferred to see schools remain open, one of my children has ongoing anxiety and social anxiety as a result of school the closures, along with lack of confidence.
10. Other sectors of society had to go to work so why did education which is support be extremely important fall to people who were not trained to do the job i.e. parents.
11. Schools should close only minimally if possible and supports for parents to home school. Online classes should be longer and more structured with more academic work
12. Staying home was not done right yet no other professional was asked to be in a room with 30 other households for hours at a time. Teachers were not even prioritised for vaccination. I'm not surprised so many have left the profession.
13. I believe most of children had a great regress both educational and personal.

The need to attend the school and keep their rutine going.

14. As a household where both parents work in essential services, school closures had a massive impact on our household, was not always possible to swap shifts so we could work opposite, when able to work remote, also had to try get school work completed, entertain them and supervise. We eventually had to get help from elderly grandparents which meant putting additional measures in place so the kids were outside as much as possible. Our Savings were wiped out during Covid due to extra costs which we have not been able to build back up due to sustained increases in cost of living
15. It was unprecedented times but there has to be an acknowledgement of the delay on learning it has caused.
16. Learning for dyslexia children was horrifying during covid
17. Make sure the teacher are equipped with the proper tools to carry out online classrooms
18. They should have provided education/childcare for front line workers
19. More access to.learning materials and maybe an electronics library to borrow laptop printers etc. And maybe a payment for necessary paraphernalia like art supplies etc. And also now that most schools provide hot lunches a payment or a food parcel would be good. Even if not for everyone but definitely families in need.
20. There was no catch up learning for the list 2 year academic years. My children need extra help with maths and Irish and I now have to pay for grinds. Online learning forced devices onto my children when we were screen free at home.
21. It negatively impacted my the junior and senior infant children
22. Children with special needs were abandoned during this pandemic.
23. Proper educational plan in place in schools. Some teachers did once a week. Some were just to say hello. It is probably now we are seeing the impacts of covid on learning with 5th and 6th class children
24. No
25. In my school, the children had 30mins a week of online teacher training during COVID. They did get plenty of work and the teachers replied quickly but it was dreadful the way the schools were shut.
26. Schools should never have closed. Many countries kept them open and nothing happened. It should never happen again. Ever.
27. Education provision seemed to be dependent on individual schools and teachers when schools were closed. Government needs to put in place common protocols and requirements for schools to follow for future closures and fund it appropriately.
28. Yes I am very angry about the governments decision during the pandemic. It was deeply unnecessary caused long lasting harm that cannot be undone. I believe they deeply scarred a generation of children their ill thought out decisions and that they have no idea what the consequences will be long-term
29. All schools should have had to be either online classes or recorded videos. Paper packs or work lists were not sufficient

30. Vaccine passports were ridiculous. The message that once you had proof of vaccination you were allowed out to eat etc was horrific. This gave people a license to spread covid as was proved repeatedly vaccines did not stop the spread. Since then we have seen multiple deaths directly related to the experimental vaccines but very few are panicking about that. It felt more like a test for control and I am a pro vaccine person. To administer something to the masses without proper lengthy testing has consequences, those of which we will continue to see for years to come. The Government harmed more people than they saved. They destroyed people's mental health and ruined people's business because they were lost. Their poor decisions has cost people and some continue to pay the price.
31. Do not close schools again, ever!!!!
32. There needs to be better planning in terms of what schools provide proper online classes and without a doubt more needs to be done for children with additional educational needs.
33. It was clear that little if any risk planning had gone into measures to deal with school closures. Working parents shouldered an unbelievable burden for the first year, forced to work at home, supervise and educate children with no resources and support and care for elderly family members. The response from our school was almost non existent. Many of the teachers seemed to think they were on a paid holiday because the building wasn't open while the rest of us got to grips quickly with online meetings and remote working. I lost a huge amount of respect for the profession during covid because of the neglect of duty
34. As above.
35. Disaster on all accounts
36. Wisdom in hindsight is always a great thing...but the severity of the measures taken needs to be a lesson learned by all. The fear of the unknown was traumatic. While we cannot predict the future and what it may hold, I stronglyrecommend wellbeing and emotional regulation be taught and tailored to the ages of our young people and involve parents and caregivers too. The fallout of these measures will remain with us forever. In this uncertain world, resilience and therapeutic measures must be included in early education right up to college level.
37. Nope it was warranted
38. My child has special needs and I feel like we were just left to cope. I don’t blame the school as there is very little that they could do with her remotely.
39. Should have regulated the quality of learning provided by the schools.
40. Cruelty against children. My daughter refused going back to school as her principal was threatening the students to call authorities on them if they will not keep apart also outdoor. She had a 2 m ruler she kept measuring the distance with all the time. The management of the school was using ' government's guidelines ' as an excuse for their horrendous actions. This is only one of many more wrongdoings.

41. My children were lucky I was at home and am academically strong. Not all children had the support at joke. In the long term, school closures have been extremely detrimental to the majority of kids. My eldest didn't sit his junior cert, had TY in his bedroom and panicked for his leaving cert as teachers were still absent a lot 3 years on.
42. V difficult time for all right decisions made based on data available my children had their books from school which was essential and also were used to doing daily homework which was essential from them and us as parents cannot underestimate the value of daily homework and it's routine this made transition to home schooling smooth.
43. There should have been more support for parents home schooling, teachers having a half hour zoom call didn't suffice!!
44. The government did the best that could be expected in a unique event
45. Weekly list of work/ once a week 1 hr online wasn't enough contact in my opinion for kids in primary school. Daily check ins were necessary. Kids fell behind, so I'll interaction was affected. Theur confidence was shattered. They are stil affected by it. Their writing is unbelievable (bad) their reading poor, spelling is atrocious. Ie present 1st years in schools especially.
46. Science knew after the first lockdown that kids were not badly affected by covid 19. The decision to have another lockdown in January 2021 because adults had to have their Christmas was completely unacceptable. The second lockdown was much harder and completely unnecessary. That one did the most damage. My children’s immune systems from not mixing that winter were completely gone. So that winter in 2022 and 2023 they lost a lot of days to sickness.
47. I think they made the right choice in scary times. I had a neurodivergent 5 year old, neurodivergent 18 month old and a baby who was born the DAY our schools closed..... it was scary and Impossible for us all. Our teachers were amazing, and scared..... many with underlying conditions etc themselves.... or loved ones with underlying conditions. They were navigating this chaos blind... through nobodies fault. They should be applauded in my opinion
48. While this survey is in relation to the children the effects on adults having to homeschool during this time was horrendous. I had started a new job prior to the COVID 19 lockdown and when the lockdown happened I was unable work and homeschool at the same time it was impossible, I ended up having breakdown trying to keep up with both and in the end had to quit my job.
49. A more unified approach may help ie a recommendation of same approach for allschools to be implemented, all schools should connect with pupils, it was inconsistent during the pandemic in the past where some schools connected with pupils and others did not offer this, we need to learn from this
50. Education was not prioritized as it should have been and children were forgotten about with little concern given to the negative long term effects of school closures

51. I think they made the best decisions they could in the moment in a novel and evolving global healthcare situation
52. No I think the government did what they could with the knowledge they had. The pandemic was a new experience. Lessons learned from that experience should support in creating policies and guidelines for future pandemics so we are more prepared.
53. Just what I said above any plan B needs to be consistent across all schools/classes. We didn't even have consistency within the school it was all teacher dependent some were great others were terrible
54. online classes should have been maintained also for primary school instead of expecting parents to do the teacher's job, while also working from home, it was disgraceful to put that burden on parents.
55. The decisions were made to buy time until vaccinations were available however they were became too extreme and influenced by bad science and got ever more extreme as thry progressed. Honestly the numbers in existing official statistics at both the European and global level regarding total COVID-19-associated and excess overall mortality rates suggest that Sweden was less affected than most comparable countries and thry did not close schools. A panic mode existed where anyone not complying with the most extreme measures was made a pariah. Measures were needed, we all followed them such as distancing and closure of hospitality but closing schools did for more harm than good.
56. I definitely think the teachers should have been interacting more. Once a week was not good enough. In saying that my children in primary school did seem to get all their work done
57. I had a child in first year, junior cert and leaving cert so it was pretty stressful. School handled it very well but I feel for the leaving cert child as they had no right of passage. My first year child has just completed leaving cert and their first full year as a group was junior cert.
58. The Irish language has been severely affected. There was much more focus on English and mathematics. My 5th class child has an Irish level of around 2nd class.
59. There was no consistent approach across all the schools. There were very few online classes with the teacher. Lots of assignments were posted and parents were expected to do them with the children which was completely impossible while trying to work full time and take care of younger children as well. There’s also a lot of resistance from the children to do the work at home. If there were practice sessions so the children know what the expectations are it would be helpful.

60. The Government was not supportive enough of teachers initially. I say that as someone who is not a teacher but have close friends who are. Social distancing in schools was very difficult and there was no mask mandate or hepa air filters. Some teachers were very anxious about bringing covid home to their families as a result. I think it has had a lasting impact for some. School closures were not ideal but the lesser of two evils if it curbed the spread before vaccines became available. The “meaningful Christmas” allowing parties of 6 from different households to mix costed a lot more lives unnecessarily and was a huge mistake in hindsight.
61. When they went back to school.. windows were wide open and children were freezing. They were not allowed to wear coats. It was inhumane. Alot of things were allowed for one school but not another.
62. For people with learning difficulties there should be a different way to go because alot of the time they need one on one learning
63. No
64. Still seeing backlog of CDNT and long wait times for services.
We need more spaces for special education students.
65. No
66. I think the government did they best they could with the knowledge they had at the time.
67. It was extremely difficult for children with intellectual and physical disabilities and with autism when the schools were closed. Children with disabilities especially autism need routine and continuity, so when the schools closed it was very challenging for the children and their parents and carers to support them in the absence of any face to face educational supports. I found it very difficult to understand why the Vitners Federation were able to campaign to the government to reopen pubs before the schools, while parents and families were struggling trying to support their children with disabilities by themselves at home.
68. It was a difficult time and decisions were made in haste. The lessons should be that distance learning in small humans does not work, asking parents to not only do their own jobs but also teach does not work. Teachers are ‘key workers’ and should the same happen again teachers need to keep teaching
69. Maybe the introduction of the basics of elementary hygiene into the educational curriculum, as practice shows that not all adults follow the rules of hygiene, in which case how will children know about it. In older classes grades, the introduction of the subject of the basics of life safety, as an example of what any person needs to know about various hormonal diseases, how to behave and protect yourself, how to make a face mask yourself, and so on.
70. A plan needs to be in place in case something like this happened again. Have material ready to go. Find out if children have devices at home to use
71. No
72. No

73. Opening restaurants and pubs during one Christmas only to put the restrictions back in was a foolish idea. We had very long lockdowns with opening the country in-between. It was a bit confusing. It must've been hard for older kids, especially secondary school students.
74. The asymmetric risk resulted in quick decisions to close the schools with no regard to the long term consequences, it was badly handled.
75. Enforce remote reaching for teachers during pandemics. There is a reason why everybody refers to this time as 'home schooling', its because the parents were the teachers.
76. I feel that the government needs to have a back up plan for the future for a pandemic. Also allowing children in to school where family members had covid in a home was a silly view in my eyes it put other children and their families at risk.
77. Schools closed for too long. Mental health & attendance for many young people I know was & since been affected. Keeping schools going somehow would have kept their world ‘normal’ especially for children in challenging home environments.
78. Have a common approach. Some schools did loads and ours did very little to help and support learning. It was so difficult for parents that had to work at home and no school
Support and trying to keep up with their education.
79. Special classes opened and this was hugely important for pupils and families, extending outdoor learning and the quality of online learning may help in future scenarios. More investment in educational TV programmes linked to the curriculum may be helpful.
80. Way too strict
81. As above - the Department of Education appeared to move too slow: most organisations have contingency plans; create centralised resources to train and share and move at speed. The department didn’t move at speed!
82. Damaging to many children in many ways. Thank God we got through fairly ok, but I investigated homeschooling and would make that decision if madness prevails ever again. Children are not Vectors for illness, they are deserving of better care to be the better next generation. It is the adults responsibility to protect kids and promote their development, not isolate amd diminish their opportunities
83. More investment needed in school ICT and teacher training
Up to the govt to prepare the schools and teachers -
84. I believe it put parents under terrible pressure to homeschool their children while trying to work from home themselves. It increased anxiety levels & put children under more stress.
85. We were all learning this new of life. now we have to learn from that and have better protocols.
86. I think that children should have continued attending school and that those who are vulnerable eg immunocompromised should have had the ootion of remote learning .

87. I think the government decisions were not based on science but an irrational reaction that affected our children's education well beyond the timeline that the restrictions were imposed. The Swedish response was a good example of managing the Covid outbreaks.
88. It should have a proper plan in place that is child centred and is similar in all schools where possible.
89. Prioritise education & keep schools open. Education should be priority.
If schools are closed, there so be no remote learning. Too much of a strain, especially on working parents, who were already pushed to max. Above a certain age, Masks should be worn.
90. The unknown and stress it caused with vague instructions to schools and parents when opening up again was very stressful.
91. Stagger days in school with less students and hybrid learning. Maintaining social connections in primary is importance. 1.5 years out of school affects kids socially when just before transitioning.
92. I didn’t honestly know
93. Need to be more prepared and have educational staff prepared and trained to provide educational needs as another type of pandemic could happen again as the teachers where not prepared during pandemic and put under huge pressure to provide online teaching for one hour a day which wasn't enough. The children education suffered and children mental health suffered as well during pandemic. No one was prepared for pandemic but now is time to have some form of plan in place in case another pandemic happens.
94. I think the schools were closed for too long during the pandemic and it has affected some children socially and mentally since. My daughter used to love school and would hardly ever miss a day, after the pandemic , there has been alot of school avoidance.
95. The pressure on leaving cert students this year wasn't supported and they were covid kids. Learning has changed and studying for exams has changed. Student burn out evident and not addressed enough.
96. Nice to think of the elderly, but they have lived their lives, they are old enough to make their decisions about the risk impact. To deprive the very young of social contac had massive impact in our house.
97. Given the evolving situation and the lack of knowledge regarding the spread and risk of covid I think decisions were made in the right way - taking the current state of the evidence into account and with a view to protecting everyone. I think the decisions were as right as they could be. School closures are obviously negative and may have had a lasting impact but sometimes you are choosing the least bad option and given what we know now about the rates of illness and death caused by covid overall I think it was managed about as well as it could have been. My children were also very young during the strictest lockdowns so they were less aware and I wasn't expecting communication from creche/preschool

98. Every effort should be made to maintain contact with school for full class lessons, small group and individual learning whther solely online or safely in person. Clarity around timings.....teachers can't be available 24-7 but parents often couldn't always get school work done within school hours as they had their own work to contend with. Some reasonable flexibility needed from both ends.
99. Some of these prompts don't apply to my kids who have three different experiences at three different levels of school and different experiences during the two big lockdowns. Our primary school just emailed lists of work during the first lockdown and during the second they were slightly more engaged with seesaw but no online classes and minimal contact from the school. Schools have no accountability they do what they want. One of my children has lingering anxiety from his COVID experience. He was 5 at the start of COVID and he is anxious and prefers to stay home and avoid activities that could potentially beuncomfortable. We have had to work with him to decrease his hand washing and to feel safe in his world.
100. YouTube learning channel would have been better, with the curriculum available there for children to watch and learn from, means more children would have access to this channel rather than lots of different platforms/content. Just have it there in general for children/parents to be able to refer to if children are struggling at school with something, that they can refer to from home, in their own time, and from a platform that children are comfortable with and always access.
101. It felt like every school fended for themselves.
102. The switch to online and homelearning should have been immediate. Work should have been prepared and offeredby teachers who were on fullsalary. Those lost days of Education were never made up. Just a small amount of essentialwork was done, but hours of other Education subjects and experiences were ignored and lost forever.
103. No
104. It is impossible to work full time and home school children at the same time.There seemed to be little to no allowance for working parents.
105. It’s more the lack of support for children who need learning support after the pandemic. The system is completely overwhelmed with the demand and I don’t see anything from the government to address this

106. Considering the unforeseen nature of the pandemic, it was understandable that the government and schools were ill prepared for the closures. I do feel that teachers did adapt rapidly to the situation and did their best in difficult circumstances. However, plans should be put in place now to minimise the negative impact on children's education by preparing schools and teachers with equipment, resources and curriculum that can be employed in an online or hybrid setting. Those students who don't have acces to technology, could be given access toschools or public facilities such as libraries, community centres etc within social distancing guidelines.There was plenty of room for improvement as to what was demanded from students during COVID which was little to nothing. The children adapted far faster to the technology than the adults and more could have been asked from them. Self study and presenting their work online is something that could be incorporated now.And further training for teachers to handle these processes.
107. I think the decisions made were as good as they could be in the circumstances, but I think more needs to be done now to identify ongoing issues for those age groups affected and try to repair the damage as it manifests now.
108. Lots of bad decisions made. My kids will never go through that again.
109. Very hard for parents to teach children as there not teachers children that were in 5th and 6th class suffered as they didn't get much of a chance towards moving on hopefully the education system will have fairness to our leaving cert students up to 2028 children should have been rewarded with some kind of voucher as they missed out academically and socially some children were able to learn as I know my girl had no problem but it was a nightmare for my chap children differ it was a tough time for teachers and parents
110. The second closure should have happened sooner.
111. Putting the pupils into pods on the reopening of schools didnt help especially for children going from primary school into secondary school
112. The teachers who faired better online were the ones who could connect with the children individually engaging them throughout the lesson.One hour a day for primary school was enough online
113. No
114. Teachers didn't do enough with learning packs. Didn't make life easy for the parents. Recorded lessons needed (to bring structure and formality) recorded videos would be amazing if this happened again.
115. Schools were closed for too long. Very little support from the primary school to support the children's learning.
116. While the right thing to do, based on the text messages, the challenge of taking on educating children appeared to fall primarily on mothers. There was an enormous effort required and it was simply assumed that mná na hÉireann would deliver, it was taken for granted and it was never recognised. Many also had to meet employer expectations to deliver and coach staff through the period too.

117. I think that parents should not send sick children into school generally. The few parents who send their children into school ill infect many others, which ends up with parents taking days off work to look after them and children losing school time. Teachers should have the right to send a child straight home again when it is sent to school ill. None of my family were ill at all during either lockdown - it was fantastic.
I thoroughly enjoyed lockdown. It was great family time and a great chance to try home schooling. We had fun setting up the challenges sent by the teacher. There was time to learn by doing 'home' things (cooking etc).I don't feel my children were impacted negatively at all.
118. The government let children down during covid by not ensuring that schools provided effective teaching. Furthermore they didn't do anything to make up for the fact that children missed out on access to additional support or NEPS assessments during this time.
119. Social anxiety & lack of confidence are still very prevelant in covid kids
120. Never do it again.
121. No
122. The othering and demonisation of anyone who questioned policy, or who displayed any critical thinking whatever was a sad reflection on our so called education system, where conformity to dominant orthodoxy was given a higher pedastol than actually thinking for yourself, evaluating pros and cons, and putting your education to some practical use. What ultimately are you trying to teach children? To think for themselves as autonomous adults with free will? Or to churn out unthinking robots who just do what they're told and don't upset the apple cart? What's the point of an education if you can't make up your own mind?
123. None of this was handled well or responsibly. The horrific handling was a detriment to children and we are still dealing with the repercussion.Children now struggle with anxiety attending school and miss so many extra days. They were isolated for years. This is a travesty.
124. Handled appallingly with no concern for childrens welfare and the horrific impact it had on them across the board in all aspects. It was cruel and unnecessary. They were subjected to so much ill treatment in order to access their right to education. Deplorable. Over reaction without any substantial or real evidence or risk benefit. The freezing cold classrooms were beyond cruel too and again totally unnecessary.
125. I think it was an over reaction and schools should have remained open.
126. If school is to reopen after an event like this then I think it's unsuitable to extend precautions within the school environment as that creates fear and anxiety and I believe was not effective as children can not adhere to social distancing or proper mask wearing

127. Do they have a plan in place for the future. We still have very poor internet services, phone reception etc, why hasn’t this been improved. Social and sporting activities are very important for students, these should at all costs be prioritised My teenager missed out on very important life experiences as he lost two years of his teenage life experience. He experienced isolation from his peers, He missed out on massive sports opportunities here in Ireland and abroad as did his other siblings. My family saw the worst of Covid when the lost friends and family to side effects of Covid and Covid itself. They and we were robbed of precious time (through restricted travel bans and lock downs) with aging loved ones, family, friends and neighbours. Education is not just academic it’s social, sporting and life.
128. AS ABOVE WE WILL HOLD ALL ACCOUNTABLE FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY FOR THE LIES ! ESPECIALLY EXCESS DEATHS FROM THE BIOWEAPON INJECTION THAT PEOPLE WERE COERCED TO TAKE !
129. CHILDREN WERE TRAUMATISED. MASKS AND LIES..NEVER EVER AGAIN WILL WE DO THIS - SPLITTING FAMILIES AND FRIENDS DOWN THE MIDDLE FOR A HEAD COLD ...
130. Some mothers (me) are not cut out for home schooling, I turned into a nightmare mum where there were daily arguments about the home schooling. It wasn't worth the fights or the upset. I think primary school children should not have to be home schooled for such an event. Exam years only.
131. N/A
132. A plan should have been made regarding supporting children's mental health and for getting them back into school.
133. Decisions were made in a changing environment. It wasn't easy and was ad hoc. I'd hope that the knowledge gained from handling Covid 19 would inform the future better and that schools would feel better equipped to handle it.
134. I feel the impact of school closures had a huge negative impact on children's social and emotional well being, as well as young children's speech and language development.
135. The Government did what they thought was right at the time, unfortunately the closures were too long and the impact huge for some children.
136. Children with additional needs were at risk. In addition, the anxiety caused for many children has not been adequately supported or addressed since then.
137. More notice of changes would’ve been better. It was very stressful with the constant changing
138. Government actions during COVID effectively ignored children's education needs and caused long term educational damage.
139. I think closing the schools for as long as they did was a really bad idea for everyone involved, children, parents, teachers. It was a really bad decision and is still having a lasting effect.

140. Too much emphasis on disease prevention to the detriment of children's mental, social and educational well-being.
141. Everyone did the best they could in a difficult unknown situation
142. no. definitely agreed with the school closures
143. Schools need more funding especially those that are from disadvantaged areas. Many children did not and still do not have access to devices. This played a major role in students falling behind as they could not take part in online learning.
144. As per my previous suggestions. It would have been beneficial for children to have been thought in smaller groups for shorter periods each day when the Viruse concerns reduced at times during the pandemic and there was more reduced variances and aggression in the viruset o keep some level of normality there for them.
145. No
146. Do not close schools it had huge impact on children / parents and wider society - all key workers had to work, other solutions need to be explored!!
147. Schools closed for too long, no need for the wearing of masks, too conservative approach taken for long period
148. Home schooling was harder on parents than kids- trying to schedule 3 kids in 3different schools & keep on top of things.
149. My son's problem was frustration at doing the on line classes.
He doesn't have any issues with his classes or education.
He just found home schooling really tough.
He is normally very good natured but while we were isolating in COVID he found it hard. He just slotted back into school when he was allowed to go back and he was happy.
150. Teachers should of returned to school earlier,Im a public servant and I was working still in public from day one,husband garda and he was too,we didn't have luxury of being there fully to be able to carry out a full educator role while working,teachers i knew were enjoying their family life at home while children went on to suffer,effected emotional intelligence,speech,delayed access to services, more requirements for occupational therapy that dosent exist.
151. I struggled with home schooling but I don’t think my children were affected
152. Make sure nothing like this happens ever again.
153. Resources for the teachers to give to parents/Caregivers with just the basics
154. Learning should never stop, be prepared for the worst
155. In my opinion, whether it was a good or bad experience depended on the individual teachers effort more than the whole schooling system approach. I think it would be best to have a standardized protocol in place for situation and unexpected circumstances such as Covid19.

156. No
157. All classes should be recorded so they are available at a time when parents are available to support and supervise children
158. Deciding how the next pandemic will be treated seems ridiculous before one knows the nature of the pandemic.
159. I think decisions were made as best they could during an unprecedented time.
Closures of schools should be prevented, if possible, going forward. It takes children and parents out of the "norm" when so much work is performed online across the world. I really think that the learning should be of having a training/teaching plan should 'lockdown' ever arise again.
160. The "cures" offered for Covid were draconian, totalitarian and ineffective.
Voices of reason and caution were ignored in favour of powerful lobbying that controlled unwittingly politicians.
161. My child has educational needs and accesses SET support. This was completely abandoned during covid-SET seemed to be used to cover sick leave. The online classes were inaccessible to my child. Both I and my husband work in public sector health services- both of us were expected to work while also minding/teaching our son- as my husband works in a hospital this fell to me to work from home and teach/childmind.in the end it was impossible and I had to take a period of sick leave- my employer tried to be supportive but my husbands was not and had no regard whatsoever for us both being health workers. Teachers are public servants too and the level of work some dud and support provided was ridiculous- children with SET needs really lost out and were left behind. Im still furious and upset about it now 5 years later
162. There was no learning support provision for students who required additional support nor was there a facility to identify who required assessment for additional support or diagnosis. While this was partly understandable at the time there was no consideration given to catching up on this afterwards. There should be a policy/ expectation across all schools that educational needs are provided for. There was discrepancies between class groups as well as schools
163. There should have been clearer information from the Government.
164. Should have had more online classes
165. My daughters standard of maths was very poor
166. They need to set up live tutors and more support for the kids..
167. They shouldn't have closed special Ed twice or even once
168. I believe the government made the right decision considering the circumstances.It highlighted the fact that parents use schools as a babysitting service and that might be one if the main reasons people were annoyed that they were closed.

169. There needs to be a plan for further events like this. If there is snow and schools are closed there should be hybrid learning and days made up if there is no school. It should be an ongoing thing. Not just once off. Technology is the way forward, we need to start using it.
170. I feel that those that were not too badly sick with Covid created the most fuss about restrictions and made life very difficult for the Government who were just trying to protect us from ourselves. I think they did a marvellous job in a very difficult situation. People suffered but at least they are alive to complain about it. It was not an easy time for any of us but some preferred to direct their anger at the very people who were trying to save us all.
171. I think we all did the best we could at the time of unknown
172. In think the government did the best they could given the uncertainty of Covid 19. I would expect there were some lessons learned that will improve things if there was a future incident
173. I feel they didn't consider the implications to children aside from the medical side of things. They could have easily split classes into smaller groups and had one group in each day to maintain contact with the school environment, what they could have done as a small group once a week even would have helped stop a lot of the negative side effects to lockdowns.
174. The Government haven't yet made any extra help available to kids who were affected by closures, I have 1 LC child who was in 1st year for the 1st lockdown and all kids in her year are a further behind academically than those older than them, with a child who's in 2nd year in college who was in 3rd year for 1st lock down, I see a big difference between between both groups that will never be able to closed again.
175. No thought about different abilities
176. No
177. Everyone did their best. It would be great if there was a more individualised plan in place for another. A plan for primary schools different to the plan for secondary schools etc.
178. I think survival skills for all types of disruptions should be taught in school. We need to think about planning for extended power outages as well as pandemics
179. I think maybe the government could of decided to keep some children back .My son started in junior infants and by the time the pandemic was over he went into first class .It's now I'm beginning to notice how much he is struggling in school.
180. No, more school decisions. Don't feel Irish was prioritised because felt couldn't be taught remote but all my kids fell way behind and noticeable now struggling in secondary school
181. Why didn't they supply the schools with air filters?

182. Autistic Children with cooccurring intellectual disabilities rely on school for routine and some times school is their only other accessible setting outside of the home. My child regressed into crisis and had to be started on medication to relieve his meltdowns and anxiety. Once school returned to normal he bounced back.
183. I think the government needs to ensure that teachers are trained in on line and in person teaching skills so that children don't loose out during periods when school is interrupted. I appreciate that teachers were trying to juggle home and work demands, but so were parents upon whom many of the teaching and guiding responsibilities were placed
184. My daughter changed for ever - during lock down
185. We weren't ready. Even now his first class teacher says we thought we'd be back after Easter. We need to be able to switch easier.
186. Don't forget the children with hidden disabilities..they need different teaching
187. The government should have made sure teachers were actually still teaching during the pandemic.
188. No. Sure no one really knew what to do. We just got through it thankfully. But that cjvid generate of children are definitely on a back foot. We are considering home tuition ontop of school tuition to help our son
189. Special provision should be made for AEN student to keep schools open especially those in special schools and classes. It had a huge affect on a number of our children and has had a lasting affect also.
190. Huge improvement and increase in awareness needed regarding additional needs children
191. I think the govt should be given credit for being cautious. It was a scary time which nobody had any experience of.
192. Schools should have remained open
193. Don't frighten people which increases anxiety levels
194. Have some standard of hybrid as I know some school did offer online support
195. One to two classes a week online were a disaster for my child during covid.I had two children in post primary that were also badly effected, same as above
196. Different schools had different responses, hence some children in different areas got more attention, some got less. I have heard about schools where the children attended live on-line lessons. That would have been very helpful. I have three children, one was in secondary, two were in primary. I am only answering about the primary school children here. Our school sent out work on a Monday morning. I, the parent corrected the work, if I did not stand over the children, it did not get done. At the end of each term there was a social zoom call. I think the teachers should have made an effort to have had an academic session with each child individually once every two weeks. In general if children were not reachable on zoom, they could have phoned the parent. A certain amount of online lessons should be benchmarked for primary classes.

197. I had 3 children in school during this time. One in juniors, one in 6th class and one in 6th year. All milestone classes. I also work in a school myself so I was also doing zooms. I think going forward there should be better information for schools so children can take home all their books in the event of closures. My 6th year was the only one told to take everything, just in case. I know it was probably difficult to predict how long schools would be closed for but at least if they had their books it would have been helpful. It was a strange time for everyone, we were all just doing our best trying to get through it.
198. My child never returned properly to education. Why can't iPad schools stream live lessons from the classroom to allow children to learn from home. If the iPad faces the teachers face and white board only. My child would have been successful in school. Unfortunately my child did not complete junior cert or leaving cert. Please please offer children that cannot make it in face to face school other learning options.
199. When school closed everything my child knew just disappeared. They have additional needs and I feel the school didn’t know how to support them while the rest of the class were receiving online classes and resources
200. I understand it was new to everyone and unexpected but there was not much structure to tge guidance as per the teaching and schools seemed to just choose themselves which platform they used and teachers were left to select whatever they found online themselves instead of simply doing online classes and reading from the books they had on the curriculum.
I did see that some schools were doing this but the one my daughter was in did not. Maybe it varied from teacher to teacher I don't know!
I just don't think there was any excuse for what happened with my experience anyway! It was a complete disgrace and there are no consessions in exams anymore or evaluations carried out on spacific year groups to see in general how it affected the different age groups!
201. Sen should remain open. There is no reason why a teacher can't take a child for an hour a day 121 and do their work. There 6 in the class.
Sen teachers did nothing during covid.
202. Schools were closed for too long. Teachers should have dedicated much more time to supervising the children's homework and providing more communication and feedback.
203. This pandemic was a first for many of us, and hopefully we won't have another for a very very long time. The World Health organisation guided our public health response. This is best practice. It is not for the parents council or any of us to decide what is best because we don't like something. The decisions taken were to protect the vulnerable in our society and community. I am glad we were spared enormous death rate like other countries. Our children were kept safe, at home. When the time came, they returned to school. We were lucky this virus didn't affect children badly.
Should we face a pandemic again, I would hope the parents council acknowledge the best practice guidelines from public health and WHO experts.

204. I feel right decisions were made given the risks
205. I feel the value of class based peer interactions were heavily underestimated. Again we were quite slow comparably with other countries on rolling back restrictions too.
206. Such powers should never have been available to any government
207. I think it is good to close schools if it will impact reduce the spread of illness during a pandemic
208. As a Nurse unable to take ANY leave it was extremely difficult as schools were completely closured adding to the huge stress of seeking additional childcare. Healthcare workers require support, when therd is NO OPTION to stay at home
209. More support required from schools, pre schools & creche
210. Every single thing they did was wrong.
211. It was a time that was unprecedented and the school dealt with the situation great considering the little time to plan. The biggest problem was settling back into school after restrictions were lifted. There should have been more support as adjusting back to classroom and school hours was difficult.
212. It was cruel beyond words for not only children but also the parents and teachers. It damaged development, relationships, mental well-being and all aspects of life. It was a completely unnecessary measure. There was censorship of common sense and it created a very dangerous split in society. The affects of their damaging policy is still evident today.
213. It suited some, not everyone. It only suited self directed students that were focused.
It caused great stress on parents trying to get their children to learn through online.
214. They failed our youth at every age and stage. I work in the early years sector and I have seen first hand the negative effects.. all measures based on fear and misguided science, many such as Luke O Neill that profited from the pandemic.
215. I have absolutely no trust in the government. And I and my family will only ever vote for independents.
216. Special schools should not be closed
217. There should be an emergency plan / policy drawn up for schools to follow in the case of such an eventuality.
218. The whole approach to the pandemic was fear based and the act of scaring the shit out of people had no limits. Since the 'pandemic' the death rate per year has doubled and not a word about it. It was a pandemic of fear and the govenrnment followed orders from those whose agenda was to control and push the vaccine. I wish more actual information about what really happened across the world in terms of overall mortality numbers was released so the scam of the 'pandemic' was clear to everyone. We need to ask why is that reflective assessment not happening, why are people not being told?
219. Keeping children apart while playtime outside caused great anxiety in my child

220. The whole thing was done wrongly, they should have never closed everything for a virus that has 99% survival rate
221. Some class years were better looked after than others. People not having to do a cba or exam and then the next years who also experienced a gap in education expected to do them.
222. No
223. The govt absolutely did the right thing, the hard and unpopular thing for some, and I thank them for acting with the safety of our children and vulnerable adults at home in mind.
224. A plan an equal plan to follow by all schools some schools got 1 hour a day some pupils got one on one hour a week & some pupils never got a question answered. The teachers should have been available during school hours at all times yes they may have also had to become the main carer at home but during school hours a messaging service should have been always available. Our children rely on school routine and teachers sometimes know our children better as they can often spend more time with them especially in working family homes children rely on routine, they had to adjust to a lot and the main person who teaches them was not always reachable, I think children felt very alone & very at blame as they were hearing they carry it don't come into contact with older people they became more fearful. Returning to school was not easy for a lot of children and they became more isolated.
225. In my opinion Covid closures provided an insight for parents to see how their children's academic performance was, some parents chose not to engage with their children's learning and others did, for some parents like myself whose child was recently diagnosed at the time with dyslexia, it gave us the opportunity to learn more and to support the teachers and our children. However I would be open to SETs or people like myself to be available to support other children online in the future with reading maths and spelling on a volunteer basis or something on par with summer provision.
226. They robbed my daughter of important social skills to help her transition to secondary school to this day she still has anxiety and putting it in the news day and night caused my daughter worry
227. Ring fence special classes schools
228. Awful for frontliners. No support at all.
229. It is right to err on the side of caution, particularly for children who have immunosuppressive illnesses or family members with immunosuppressive illnesses.
230. I understand decisions were made based on best information available at the time. However, I don't see any circumstances whereby those same decisions should be made if there were another pandemic. There was damage done that will take years to reverse. My child was at a relatively 'good' age at the time of the pandemic in that he wasn't starting school, was well settled in and had well developed social skills. However, he is an only child and the lack of school and ability to interact with friends is cruel for children.

231. Yes, I think that closing schools has had an effect on teachers attitudes towards their own attendance. I've noticed increasing staff absence, it feels like any excuse will do to shut the school down or have a late opening. I believe that COVID planted this attitude.
232. The government got it wrong. My children were never considered in the decision making process.
233. Facilitate parents who work in frontline medicine.
234. They branded everyone with the same rule regardless of the impact on children as they all have different needs
235. Nowhere above does it describe the importance of providing teachers with the resources to provide education online in the event of a school closure as before. This was not provided. It also assumes that schools and parents had the hardware and connectivity required to provide it. It's also already outdated to reflect on it and technology has moved and will moved on at a massive rate e.g. AI so that the past experience has less relevance and keeping current or future ready is where we should be looking. Questions should be asked about how are our schools being supported and prepared to teach if such a situation arises in the future.
236. Need better support from school. Had 1 weekly lesson for one child nothing got my other child
237. Schools were allowed to be closed for too long, that is fully closed. Rosters\rotas for partial opening should have been in place including Saturdays. Leaving Certificate grade inflation should have been eased sooner. Also, the initial Calculated Grades formulae should have included school historical data rather than not to mitigate the now legacy inflation
238. Online and hybrid learning do not suit my children's learning styles. The schools we know were not equipped for the pandemic, however I do think smaller classes and social distancing could have been organised.
239. Children were deprived of social interaction. Online meetings didn't suit my child, it's not the same as face to face interaction and was intimidating for children who are socially conscious or shy
240. I think they did a good job. It was a learning for everyone
241. Children in primary school have no experience at all with learning through a laptop so it was all new for my child and a massive lot of pressure on the parents, I think there should be one class every week taught through the laptop In some way so that they have some experience of anything like this happens again, where it is very different for children in Post Primary they have alot more knowledge about it.
242. Better supports need to be in place to help parents whose child may not be able to log on to online stuff be it for my reasons or financial etc
243. Long term impacts on social development / anxiety in children / broken school years - outdoor learning might have been considered

244. Covid in a school setting was like having another full time job, the paper work that was involved was appalling, cabinets full of paper work regarding pod seating / close contact etc... was way too much on top of a full time job for a school secretary, not to mention the principals work involved. Working Christmas day , reporting to parents that their child was a close contact of covid case.
Ordering PPE supplies and reopening the schools, the safety of all staff and students caused a huge amount of stress.
I hope we are never in a situation like this again.
245. I think the government acted in a way that at the time was in the populations best interest. We didnt have a system set up for home learning and online learning which made it difficult. Also unfortunatelysom preschools and schools dont have good communication and connections with childrens home life. I think post pandemic supports for schools. Cdnts and education supports would have really helped. Also alternative school options post pandemic like hybrid learning.
246. No
247. Blended learning shpuld be the norm. Schools should have been utilised more. Classes should have taken place at different times throughout the day.
248. I strongly believe that the government made the best decisions they could, given the information they had at the time, to protect the most vulnerable in our society during the pandemic. While schools were disrupted, and this undeniably effected children negatively, the alternative would have been to expose too many unvaccinated children to a potentially dangerous virus.
249. Children and their general needs were massively sidelined in the response to the pandemic and parents felt abandoned. Schools have to take responsibility for emergency planning for future possible closures/emergency measures. We got almost no support from the school. When I emailed the principal asking what areas we should focus on for a 1st class child she sent me a link to the entire first class curriculum. If I pulled a stunt like that in my job I would be sacked. Parents were desperate for support and were treated as an inconvenience. I lost all faith in teaching staff because of their response to the pandemic.
250. Yes this policy has been a direct contributer to my chil no longer attending school even though they are under 15
251. As above
252. There should have been clear areas that needed to be covered for each year group and paper based sheets provided for all children regardless of devices available. Young children needed to learn how to write as well as learn and online was not conducive to this. Teachers should have had to provide two online sessions per day with children on what they then had to do on their own with worksheets. The UK schools managed this much better than Ireland. My childrens education was definitely affected by this time as both parents had fun time jobs to juggle as well as teaching our children. It was the most stressful and difficult times for our entire family.

253. School was very slow to start remote learning, assuming because it was new. Quicker start and more online classes would be better
254. As above
255. No
256. I feel overall there was mass hysteria over what proved to be for most people a bad flu-like disease. The measures taken re schools set children back immensely in many ways, and the impact will be felt for years to come. My children were impacted socially, one was treated very negatively because she had difficulty wearing a mask at school, and many children suffered academically - I was lucky that I was not working and was able to home educate my children but many families were not in that position. I hope lessons have been learned from all of this, and that it will never be repeated again.
257. They did their best, but I wish my child had a more normal transition from ECCE into primary school. It was a very hard time - as a nurse working during the pandemic, I found it very difficult to manage homeschooling
258. No
259. I put this in the box above.
260. The rte ran a learn show but it was only for young kids. Maybe doing something for older kids would be good. Parents need a plan from teachers on how to help at home.
261. I think it taught us that the academic side of education works very well online, however children need to socialise and engage in social learning experiences. If a pandemic happened again blended learning would work better for children and they should never have to carry guilt of playing with other children again!! Fresh air is a healthy environment for close contact and play and children should never be denied this right to play again!!!
262. If childcare was made to stay open for essentially workers then so should schools have!
263. My child's school used Aladdin to communicate homework style work. There were no lessons. There was no videos explaining how anything was done or moving along with learning. It was very much self directed or parent lead. If the child didn't want to engage, then there was no push from the school. In our house, we tried to keep a level of "normality" by dedicated 2 to 3 hours each morning doing school work. The work was uploaded but not corrected or very little feedback. It was more "ah well done for doing something". My child struggled with the lack of structure, missing teacher led lessons and really missed the classroom environment.
264. The government didn't consider basic things - such as what was "essential" eg children's clothes/shoes were not available for sale, and it was really hard for families where they were not able to access things online. This was mirrored with education - what do you do if the family don't have a tablet/internet access etc. It was painfully obvious that the decision makers had never had full time caring roles for children, nor did they consult with those who did, before decisions were made. Very poor.

265. More support for parents to help their child with the remote learning
266. It left children feeling they were the spreaders and not wanted outside the house. Schools should never of been closed. Children have fallen behind
267. COVID was a brand new experience for all, but it should prompt govt and education department to plan ahead in case of another event.
268. Small group settings might have be an idea (in or offline) ie pods
Less scary information for children and for teachers to communicate to children making things more fun for them if social aswell as tracing resources
269. Too long was the closure.
270. Children shouldn’t have to wear masks
271. Not sure
272. I think given the information and resources that were available at each stage, the right decisions were made. It is understandable that schools were closed for some time, especially given the lack of knoweldge initially, and the high risks before vaccination. Although my child's development, relationships and learning were affected, so were everyone's around the world, and we were not as negatively affected as some children and families. I would like to see better social services and therapeutic supports for children who need them - pandemic or no pandemic!
273. School and college closures were draconian and unnecessary and did severe damage to children and students’ formative years.
274. Students in first year lost out in the basics of many subject areas.
275. It was hard as we as parents had to go to work
276. The government should have exercised some common sense with regard to school attendance. While I understand that there is a small portion of the population that would abuse the situation and some children may have fallen through the cracks in poor home situations the vast majority of parents know their own child best. To say my son’s experience of being in school with a mask on and an out of control teacher was hellish is putting it mildly. The only reason I sent them both back was for social reasons but they had one hand tied behind their back all the time.
277. There was too much reported on the media. There was no protection of children in what they were hearing. Kids were encouraged to write to the CMO for God's sake. They knew too much and it terrified them. As a result my son didn't make it inside the classroom for 4 full years and is still getting treatment to help him. This involves medication and intensive psychotherapy.
278. It was all such an un-precedented event that I can not honestly blame the schools for their shortcomings. BUT, it has come to fruition this year, my primary child has always received 10’s in her STEN scores, this year (as I believe it all ‘went back to normal’) she got 1 or 2 points lower, it should have been a more gradual return to normal. My daughter that is about to go into 3rd year is so anxious and nervous about the parers ‘going back to normal’ You should bring back one subject at a time, give the kids a chance

279. All schools seemed to differ in response. A more central advice would be better.
My child on the first closure had very little interaction with their teacher. Second closure was better.
My child has suffered with their learner especially with maths. They are now in secondary and this is very evident.
280. There was not enough done for children in the provision of educational support for children learning remotely. Parents only had workbooks to use and no teaching materials provided so there was little insight into what was being “taught”. As it stood, it was more task completion in terms of completing workbooks rather than any lesson taught.
281. We were delighted the schools closed as our children thrived at home and we realised how incompetent their teachers were. We eventually left the school
282. There should be access to devices for all children if schools close due to weather or Covid. Online teaching should be for a minimum of 2 hours a day
283. More support should have been provided for children at risk. For example, additional meals, books, resources. I am in education and we still see the effects of this today. Moreover, the standards of writing, reading and communication are still lower than they were before Covid. Additional supports should have been provided to bring children up to speed when they went back to education.
284. Covid 19 was an unprecedented event. Govt, health care professionals etc had very little knowledge about the illness. Got offered statistics on daily basis which was good to know impact of pandemic on all walks of life, not just education.
Some schools offered live session and some offered pre-,recorded videos, depends on what resources school had. All schools managed it very well, despite shortage of staff.
I appreciate the way teaching staff dealt with pandemic.
285. Occupational Therapy & Speech Language Therapy should be available online at the time.
Counselling & Pyschotherapy along with OT & SLT should be available online for teachers, parents and teachers
286. Have friends that had more than 1 child in school who were also trying to work from home and found it very hard and distressing as children wanted to get their daily homework etc completed as early as possible, maybe a grant for extra laptop/ computer would come in handy if schools should close again.
287. More paper based learning materials sent home would have been good as child was in Jr Inf. Also some more group based online ice-breakers and ganes would have been good as my child got very anxious returning after the breaks as he had forgotten his classmates.
288. Child was negatively affected in regards emotional and behavioural development. He still struggles in these areas.

289. In my own experience I feel my child was very isolated and became very down and missed her classmates. I think an interactive portal would really help support the children and help them connect more. More age appropriate material should be made available.
290. I think the government made sound decisions based on the information they had as the situation unfolded. I was a healthcare worker and worked extra time during the pandemic. In the UK, children of essential workers still went to school. I was unable to support my children's learning. Also my husband was an essential worker. It was a very difficult time
291. have a nationwide remote learning capability and standardize this across schools and train teachers on how to teach remotely as part of the teacher training programs
292. Invest in schools to give them the technology and staff to conduct learning online for all schools in Ireland. I heard some schools had the technology to allow the teacher to continue normal teaching in the classroom setting and made available to students by online realtime video.
293. It was all unnecessary stress closing schools. Then when the schools reopened all the children had to use the hand sanitiser multiple times a day which lead to very dry skin and dermatitis - no matter how may times I asked that she use soap instead of sanitiser this was not heeded. And then the lunch tasted like sanitiser - I assume ingesting sanitiser every day is not healthy.
294. My 4th class son had a class online every morning for 30 minutes which really set him up for the day as he got to see his friends and they played games with the teacher, then she taught them something and set the work for the day. It meant that he just went straight to do the work she set for him and he was finished in 2 hours so had the rest of the day free.
My senior infants son only had one online class a week which was nice and he enjoyed, but I think he should have had one every day as well.
We were lucky that the creche took our children 3 days a week the second time the schools closed so at least the children had some sort of social life then.
I don't think the schools should have closed as it affected kids socially more than any other way, in my opinion. I think that the use of masks would have been sufficient at that time...even if the schools just opened for 2 hours every day to give the kids a routine and the chance to see their friends.
If not possible, then all children should have had the opportunity to have an online lesson every day to at least see their friends and teacher regularly.
295. Social interactions need to be upheld, mental health is more important than grades
296. Also at some stage excluding / discriminating children from preschool or creche based on if they're parents were "essential workers" was hurtful. My youngest child missed out on her 2nd year of preschool completely because her parents "weren't essential". All children should have the same right to education.

297. I went from a loving mum to a military at home tutor - I opted out for the 2nd lock down and it was the best decision I made. Primary school children just need play tasks and reading to keep them going. Exam year students need all the support.
298. N/A
299. There a so many lasting effects children now have - emotional, social and psychological due to decisions made. It wasn't natural to be out of school for so long and parents were not equipped to teach their Children so I believe my children's education suffered due to this especially my youngest who was in Senior Infants at the time.
300. I am aware of older children who greatly missed out when schools closed.....from an academic, social and wellbeing point of view. While I wasn't directly affected, I would not like to see a return to school closures, mostly from the wellbeing point of view.
If schools must close, having tutors available for specific children and having materials/handouts available for handout/collection (along with school lunches?) may help alleviate some of the issues
301. A plan should be in place for all schools to have online classes available for all children.
302. Again, they did the best they could in an unprecedented time
303. The school response was very varied, both across schools and indeed within schools. Some teachers did online classes- some just did not even try. For parents it was extremely frustrating to see your child struggle with missing friends and then the teachers not even attempt to try small online groups to allow friends to learn together
304. The decision to keep children out of school went on too long - it put huge pressure on working parents who were trying to work from home in a very stressful situation while trying to assist young children attend and participate in online classes. The rules around wearing of masks in primary school was contradictory and ineffective.
305. It didn’t really apply to me as we were in playschool and we just played at home. I think they got enough socialisation in between the lock downs.
306. Difficult to ask child to do school work in a home environment when they are very young eg junior & senior infants - home is there home and a school setting is a more learning environment.
307. Although it was important to close the school but the isolation , remote learning affected the kids and parent I think should there be COVID-19 again there should be counselling available as well if anyone need it
308. Please provide single working parents with more support regarding childcare. Please provise the children of front line workers with in person schooling as was done in the UK.
309. Covid had a massive impact on confidence and social skills! At primary level it would have been helpful to make small teams to work on projects
310. Left children far behind academically. Catching up was challenging for them. Relying on an uninterrupted internet access and even access due to financial circumstances wasn't possible for some homes. This needs to be addressed for future possibilities

311. Support teachers. They were scapegoated horribly.
312. we got 40 mins a day of online classes a day from the school - about 20 mins was calling the roll - I educated my child (and several others) myself during this time - we had a period of about 3 years with more than 5 different teachers per year for the classs over the covid periods
313. Publishing companies receive a substantial amount of money from education and I think it is their duty to partake in preparing some online platforms to assist schools with remote learning.
314. I think they made decisions that they had to, with what info they had. Urgent health & safety issues trumps day to day education. I dont know how much of a role the government had with my school but the school was brilliant and the teachers made learning even at home so much fun.
315. Limit online work. No online work for early education or primary. Encouragement of reading and maths and maybe textbook work/worksheets
316. Education needs to be more a priority and teachers should be paid more and principals should get more training because sometimes that level of responsibility can get to their heads from what we have seen in the Irish school system.
317. Schools were closed for too long and could have re-opened sooner, at least partial re-opening with fewer pupils in per day to allow for distancing. Physical education could have taken place outdoors.
318. Next time, stick to the basics. Free writing stories, and maybe creating their own questions would have been more beneficial to a child than reading text that had no value anymore. Their world was turned upside down and we should have used that as a way to teach and help them make sense of it rather than this one size fits all system that we currently have. Our system needs to breath and grow with our children and always try to find ways to inspire our future teachers, leaders and parents. They lost precious Time. They should have been taking steps to help them settle in with their peer groups again.
319. They made wrong choices with regard to everything regarding covid. Sweden has proven this. Japan has been at the fore front of uncovering the covid lies. School should never be locked down in the future.
320. It is always very sad, when scientific learning and processes are influenced and distorted by factors and decisions of political, psychological nature.
321. Overall it was a positive decision by the government at the time to protect children. I think there should have been some services put in the school to help kids reintegrate as they found it difficult with the social side. And as they had both physically and emotionally developed during this time and were approaching puberty, it was very emotional time for them trying to find their place in the class as the dynamics had changed. They also found it difficult to talk and communicate with other person outside school as at that time it was thought kids were super spreads of the virus.
322. The government response to Covid 19 was an abuse especially to children and there was no form of reparation after

323. I think next time we dont close schools at all. Make pods in each class. Maybe 5 pods. And each day a different pod goes into school with normal lessons & breaks. For social and emotional wellbeing. The other 4 days not in school should be lessons where children can log in at home for online lessons. We cant do that complete isolation again.
324. I feel my child totally missed out on his last year in primary school and his ability to make friends was affected.he lost confidence and became a much quieter boy.
325. Schools should never have been closed, there was no consideration given at the time to the knock on consequences of closing schools and it was a complete over reaction. Closure of schools was far more damaging to children and society than the covid19 virus was.
326. yes, just that schools should take into account that each family is different with different set ups, so that as long as children are completing the work and getting it submitted, it should be extremely flexible and work with parents schedules not the teachers schedule. They can still correct it etc during their working day, not asking them to work outside their weekly hours but they must remember a lot of parents were working 40 hours on top of doing all this extra School stuff and doing their regular house keeping in a very stressful time.
327. No
328. It was as a difficult time with limited understanding of a disease. It was individual schools and their differences in implementations of government programs that caused the issues. Each school seemed to be left to their own devices so there was no consistency in service. As parents we would see some schools where better equipped to handle the online transition, we did not have one of those schools
329. My child is now heading into 6thclass and she still hasn't caught up on the missed time and is behind previous years. I think this needs to be recognised more. I think when they returned to in person there should have been a program but in place to catch them up
Maybe one lesson per day and they would have caught up quick.
330. As above
331. More supports available to children following return to school, more access to SEN support in school, more access to assessments and appointments for physio, ot etc. Every school should have dedicated access to mental health supports like in school counselling for children and staff.
332. The schools put a lot of pressure on parents who were trying to teach their children at home. As parents we where both working from home and we were late will one of the online assignments and we got a call from the Principle asking why.
It was disgraceful.
333. New to everyone, learn from it more laptop available for students, better WiFi for everyone and more live online classes/ rather than list of work to do
334. We made lots of mistakes but we knew no different. But there wasn’t much help for the young students

335. It was an appalling decision it adds to mental stress and loneliness of a developing child
336. Support schools centrally and give training and more guidance so that schools are consistent in approach.
337. We could only do our best at the time. What is a huge impact on learning is the availability of space, time and parental engagement at home. I don't know how we could manage that if a similar situation was to arise again.
338. Schools were not ready to deal with it, therefore the full curriculum was not covered
339. Hand sanitizer should still be funded and used in schools to help reduce the spread of other illnesses being spread through schools.
340. It was a horrible scary situation and I knew people who died. Keeping everyone safe, the virus contained and people alive was the most important thing and I think everyone did their best.
341. They did not take into account the psychological effects on young children transitioning from primary to secondary school and not having the opportunity to meet new classmates and form friendships
342. I appreciate that decisions needed to be made quickly, and needed to be clear, and I felt that they were. However, I felt disconcerted by a lack of debate on the pros and cons, and the lack of dissent. Politicians and scientists on the media all seemed to tow the government line, which would have been fine if the decisions where obvious, but there were few skeptics or doubters, which made me skeptical about some of the seemingly arbitrary (e.g. wearing face masks) or evidence-less (e.g. MRNA vaccines) decisions.
343. My children were very young. I think that it showed them that school isn't important. That attendance is voluntary. It affected their learning and also socially. I found one daughter became quite anxious whereas she was fine pre pandemic. A 6 year old can't be expected to learn from the screen.
344. Do not change school settings

345. I have found it much harder to convince my children that school is mandatory since COVID. My oldest found it very difficult from a social perspective to settle in to a new school that he joined 6 months before Covid and there has been a lot of anxiety and school avoidance since then. During the pandemic I personally experienced and heard plenty examples of older people recoiling from and being quite rude to young kids (even in outdoor settings like the park) when it was initially thought that children were super spreaders. I think we did children a major disservice by closing schools and locking them up - children need to learn, socialise, move and play. My kids were lucky that they have a garden, pets and siblings. I can't imagine how people managed in apartments/only children. And trying to work and home school children was a major source of stress for many parents of young kids, affecting their relationships with their children in a very negative way and with their spouse/co-parent. In addition, in relation to education specifically - I had 3 kids in different schools during Covid - the Montessori school was fantastic with activities/online sessions within days. My middle child's primary school was not great - took a lot longer to get going with online offering and much less engaging, he ended up doing the montessori classes most days. My oldest's (private) school was superb - had online classes going from the Tuesday after the schools shut in mid-March 2020 and at least 4 hours a day through out all the closures. They also installed 2 or 3 new pref-fab classrooms at v short notice to facilitate smaller class sizes and social distancing when the schools re-opened after the summer of 2020. An extremely different experience and I would hope that the schools would be more prepared and nimble in their approach if we ever found ourselves in this situation again.
346. Maintain at least some contact hours with professionals.
347. Do not close schools. The affects from the last closures are immeasurable. My children are not where they should be academically. My eldest is going into secondary and his written work is not good. I also feel teachers are afraid to put kids under pressure at all since Covid and therefore don’t challenge them at all
348. Unfair that some schools provided online learning and others did not. I am a teacher myself and spent hours preparing work, correcting work and doing lives yet my daughter’s school did not do that it was just so page such and such of a textbook which was really not acceptable. Teachers should have been docked pay if they weren’t doing their job properly, I had to fill the gaps with what wasn’t done in my child’s school during Covid as well as teach my own class in a different school.
349. They should be sacked and jailed
350. N/A
351. It was strange times, the pressure was on everybody to adapt but parents are not equipped to become teachers overnight. I struggled a LOT, I couldn't understand a lot of what I was supposed to teach my children. Also, im a stay at home mum and I struggled with time, I dread to think how people that were still working managed to cope.
352. Don't let it happen again. Be more prepared. Organised. Supportive. More connection.

353. When parents engage with the education system, it is essential for them to place their trust in the various institutions that support it, including government bodies and health and education departments. Unfortunately, many children have been instilled with feelings of fear and isolation, especially during challenging times. This environment can lead to serious consequences for their emotional and mental well-being, making them feel disconnected from their peers and support systems. As such, prioritizing education is crucial—not just for academic achievement, but for nurturing safe and supportive environments where children can thrive socially and emotionally. Investing in education should always be viewed as a fundamental responsibility of the community and policymakers alike.on, especially during challenging times. This environment can lead to serious consequences for their emotional and mental well-being, making them feel disconnected from their peers and support systems. As such, prioritizing education is crucial—not just for academic achievement, but for nurturing safe and supportive environments where children can thrive socially and emotionally. Investing in education should always be viewed as a fundamental responsibility of the community and policymakers alike. The public should always be involved in all major decisions that affect our children

354. I 100% believe the greatest effecting people was social for my oldest it has left a lasting effect in him he lost social skills and left him anxious an issue we are still going through. We could read books do online work but you can't replicate the social side of education which I consider equally important as academics

355. Hindsight is great and maybe different decisions could have been made at different times, but at the time when these decisions were made I felt they were for the best

356. The children were not given sufficient work. It won't help them further down the line.

357. Why did they stick to the set schedule? When summer time came schools should have been opened - the shambolic attempt at in line delivery meant months of missed school time - instead of actually closing schools and reopening when safe. Beyond frustrating level of work expected of parents- still burnt out and angry from the expectation of work and demands of home school with little to no support from school.

358. I think they did what was necessary, but the dept of ed should be better equipped or have a plan to direct schools should something like this happen again.

359. I think they were the right decisions but I wish the online option stayed. My child left primary school March 2020&entered secondary school August 2020. She attended an iPad school. She didn't attend education after 2nd year. Her mental health has been too bad. Continuing live streaming from the classroom would would have been greatly appreciated over the years. There should definitely be more online options.

360. More timely communication re state exams. It is an opportunity for schools to provide hybrid options for children who find it challenging to attend mainstream school environments

361. We should be better equipped for online classes, particularly for working parents. And also match the phased return to work with re-opening of childcare facilities. I work a public sector role and when creches opened 2 weeks after the return to office, I was suddenly told to take unpaid leave for the days I couldn't attend the office within those first 2 weeks before creche's opened. I should have been able to escalate that, when after 3 months of working well from home, an SEO could dictate that situation outside of local arrangement with my line manager
362. My sons special school treated the kids like leppers when they got back, they were afraid to teach them and it took a long time for them You settle, we are still trying to relearn lost skills. They also get kicked out at 18, they should have the option of another year to make up for time lost during the pa demi, they need it more than most kids. My daughter will be 19 leaving school, she has no learning difficulties and attends mainstream, why can't kids in special schools be afforded the same luxury ???
363. Closures were fine for kids with all the tech at home but for children without access, they were relying on old phones or parents phones. You can’t get an education that way.
364. It all happened too fast signs went up that you weren't allowed on the beach so yiu weren't allowed in school or to walk on the beach children were terrified and they adapted there own methods to survive and know as your trying to take these methods away as you can't go on touching everything or ocd behaviours it's increasing there anxieties and leading to more outbursts - of class numbers were small to begin with in special schools and asd classes children could go to school - all that would have to happen is the buses that bring them would have to be organised that the ones in class a go together ones in class b and for a few months having longer drips home no one would mind if the children still got to go to school and have a small bit
Of normality the summer is hard Covid was extremely hard and the effects are only coming to light now
365. I now wonder why the schools weren’t allowed to remain open as an essential service at that time. It is so often highlighted how important school attendance is, yet they were closed down in this time without hesitation. In my opinion, what happened during Covid was a massive ‘test-run’ to see how far the government could go with certain restrictions and rules put in place for the public. Considering some members of the government could not even follow those rules themselves, it was ridiculous some of the things that were pushed on to us at that time.
366. No
367. Use a standardised system for on-line learning eg Google Classroom and make sure everyone knows how to use it beforehand - students, teachers and parents.
The Educate Together had the students submit their homework online which was very handy as they didn't have to bring in copybooks to school or bring them back home which felt much more sanitary

368. Never, ever close classes again. It didn't suit anyone. Kids need to be with their friends in a classroom setting to learn.
369. No help or supports given to children with limited or no technical devices.
No communication with parents only from teacher to child
370. I feel government and school felt that parents were equipped to stand in during this time which wasn’t the case in my house. It had a negative affect on our relationship trying to show a struggling child how do do school work by someone who was not trained how to teach
371. Not applicable
372. It could have supported a more one to one tuition even if was on shorter days the most vulnerable children and their families were forgotten a whole part of their development was lost 😞
373. All schools closed
Parents still expected to WFH
Impossible with a special needs child at home
People with additional needs ignored and forgotten about.
Government paid people €310 a week .... What about carers .?? Offered nothing as usual no breaks, no school no respite
374. Not every one is great online
375. The schools had right structure. Online classes weren’t successful in our school. Classes sometimes only lasted 10 mins.
Dep of ed need to ensure there is a policy in place to ensure that the curriculum can be though with support. It felt like the teacher were out of there depth. We had one device and there was no communication between teachers with relation of sibling sharing devices
376. In fairness I was fully on board with Government response. This was all new and I was the one thing I could fully say that it was handled very well..
Especially in relation to a lot of other countries that got it so wrong to begin with
377. 5 years later my family is still feeling the effects. We continue to be completely isolated from community. We had no one during Covid lockdowns. We lost friendships. We made no new friends. My child has zero friends and zero homes to visit. His routine in lockdown became very rigid due to the 5km restrictions and he continues to only like the same few places. The mental health of both parents was severely impacted by this isolation and continues to be. We are still traumatised.
378. See previous statement
379. Yes, it showed up teachers who didn't have learning plans and poor delivery skills
380. The introduction of Easter provision and then summer provision for children with Down Syndrome and other additional needs was very welcome and we appreciated it very much during the Pandemic. The fact it was optional for key workers such as SNAs was wrong.

381. I can’t imagine the reality for some children from disadvantaged communities or maybe difficult or neglectful living situations (abuse, crowded, poor living conditions) missing out on school and the consistency it provides . Not everyone has a warm loving home with internet connection and parents available
382. The government tried to make the best decision in a complex situation. Hindsight is clear as always. Unfortunately, the measures in place may not have been the best for children and young people as they need each other to learn and socialise. Many missed key moments of being a young person. Realistically, we may never know the full impact on their mental welbeing for many years.
383. They didn't prioritize education at all. They seemed to think it was ok to just close schools with no thought of how it may affect the students education and social
Development. It was very short sighted and was a knee jerk reaction.
384. It was an unprecedented event but it would have been helpful if the parents were sent the learning materials before the school closure
385. They were doing their best in unprecedented circumstances. Covid highlighted the fact that some kids thrived at home and that education doesn't only happen in schools. Covid forced people to think outside the box and do things differently. We need a more flexible education system to accommodate those who cannot learn in a school setting.
386. Seems like they have no idea what actually goes on in schools and whay young people actually need.
387. Online learning should always be an option for any child who is struggling to attend school in person.
388. Kids in junior infants should not have been split up in pods and forced to only mix with their small pods and using sanitizer every five minutes.. Seriously messed up and had long lasting bad effects on their mental health. No children should be forced to wear masks in school.
389. No
390. It should have been online based eg. zoom or some form of video classroom. Due to covid 19 my son became very withdrawn from school,didn't want to attend as a result his attendance became bad. Had to involve meitheal ect. Hoping this coming school year will be better
391. There should be proper guidelines in place for schools, not ad hoc and it seemed to depend on the teacher whether you got online videos and help and guidance.
392. If online learning was an acceptable option during Covid, why has a similar option never been made available to children who cannot attend school for serious reasons since Covid? My daughter missed 2 years of school due to mental health issues but an online option was deemed impossible due to 'privacy issues'. It would have made a huge difference for her if this had been available.

393. Please improve the teaching and learning method of Irish language and other subjects like science, history, geography, general knowledge too. More home work should be given to students so that they utilize there time effectively. Thanks
394. 90% would have done the same thing if I were in charge. We were dealing with an unknown rapidly spreading virus. However the 2/3rd waves should have been dealt with differently and the combined amount of time the school was closed it was more than an academic year was lost without any kind of catching up planned. The state owes my child an addiction year of education and it's so critical for all children but even more so for those with complex needs.
395. The Govt praise themselves on how they managed covid. They policed normal people doing normal things. They set people against each other and made sure they would be publicly shamed 'for not protecting others'. Kids suffered because of government policy. There was no logic to their planning. Dissenters were labeled tinfoil hat brigades etc. Our kids suffered so selfish older people who had already lived their lives could enjoy more years. Shocking. Remember the €10 meal that was going to protect us from covid in the pub? The meaningful Christmas? Criminal stuff.
396. They should have been kept home longer, schools should have had better online lessons, teachers should have been able to put on a online lesson every day for an hour. The use of devices was extreamly poor and it was a time when kids should have learned to type at the very least.
397. They should have never closed playgrounds and sport facilities. They wanted us to believe that covid could spread outside in fresh air but not in a classroom..... oh please.....
398. The media was very negative towards teachers. Schools were doing their best in extreme circumstances. Classrooms were too small to comfortably meet the requirements of having tables 1 metre apart - a ridiculous idea considering everyone was breathing the same air. Smaller class sizes will help if there is a future pandemic.
399. Monitor schools to ensure they are studying the curriculum and making contact with all pupils in group and one to one settings
400. Had to take health of entire population into account before vaccine was available. Was always ridiculous to say that students did not act as vectors for disease
401. Leaving cert should have went ahead

402. During covid school closures, it became glaringly obvious that our teachers are propping up and filling the gaps where Therapeutic community services such as OT, SLT, Psychology are supposed to be supporting. Community services such as these are non-existent and teachers go over and above their training to help the children they see everyday. Teachers are not trained OT/SLT/Psychology etc. Yet they try their best to give students what they need. The Government needs to invest in these Therapeutic services as community services in Primary Care/CDNT etc are at crisis point.
Our school went above and beyond for my children during lockdown. However, look at how the Minister for Education, the media and the public at large treated teachers during this time. It was appalling. Many young teachers are leaving the country since then.
Why is the National Parents Council not taking the Government's to task on its inability to sort out the Community Therapeutic services children with additional needs require on a daily basis?
403. Well done
404. Very poorly handled
405. Possibly more recorded classes , I think generally Irish throughout English speaking schools is not good enough and all schools should be doing the Drumcondra tests in Irish also to understand our children's levels, it is a leaving cert subject and kids are not getting a good enough education in it. Parents are not fluent enough so more help through Irish in a pandemic, perhaps TG4 could host classes which would be accessible to all.
406. None
407. I very much feel everyone's experiences varied substantially depending on the principals.
The government did their best. I was happy with their response
408. No, happy with their response.
In future, more could have to be done to reduce false information spreading online
409. Calling children vectors was certainly unhelpful. I am glad my kids were young, I can see the mental health impact now play out in my nephews who were young teens at the time and kept away from the friends. Their social skills and resilience are very poor.
But the communication on return to primary was the main shambles and still is. Children are now out of school for every sniffle or cold as government never made it clear - and still hasn't - that its not necessary to keep a child with a mild virus home. so now parents feel they have to keep a child home for every cough or sniffle - or the school sends them home. Then there is a big deal made out of poor attendance. its exhausting. Humans get virus's, we are supposed to. Covid was different as the entire human race had no immunity built up - but that crisis has passed now so can we please go back to accepting that colds and flu's are just part of being a human and no big deal (for most). I genuinely believe that there needs to be a clear campaign of information around this by the government.

410. Online options were available then.....they should be available now.
411. When I compare with my own country, I am thankful that I was in Ireland in Covid times. The schools remained open.
412. Schools should not have been closed. When the hysteria died down, they should have been reopened as soon as possible. Untold damage was done, needlessly, to so many children, with untold effects even now.
413. Huge impact on the social and emotional development of teenagers they missed a key “growing up block” my eldest never sat his junior cert no practice in setting a state exam which had a massive impact on his leaving cert year!
414. Never close the schools. It was very hard on parents working at home and also trying to juggle kids remote learning, not much education was learnt during closure.
415. Assumptions here that everyone was sitting at home and ready to assist their kids. I was a key worker and did not have that luxury. My Gaelscoil kid was online with his Brazilian childminder and I can’t say a huge amount was learned but I see no lasting impact
416. What the government did to our children could not have been more harmful. My children were basically out of education for all the school closures. My children left primary school in March 2020 and never returned. The affect socially has been dramatic. Covid was of no threat to healthy children, the government ignored it and the teacher unions jumped on the bandwagon and shouted about masking and social distancing when Sweden was a test case and never closed down schools so the government knew this and went along with the playbook. The governments decisions during covid are shameful.
417. Keeping schools open is essential to the development of children. Prior to the lockdowns I had no issue with school refusal. School refusal is something I deal with constantly now. The government made staying at home the norm in the mind of my child. However strongly my husband and I press the importance of school attendance and take a no nonsense approach to 'let's just go to school ', the government decisions has had a side effect of saying otherwise. I believe it is of utmost importance that such decisions are not taken in the future. Children like mine, an autistic child in a main stream class, must have the routine of continuing to attend school. Precautions such as masks and open windows can be accommodated far easier than years of fighting poor decisions later.
418. I think the government acted correctly in the absence of widespread vaccination.
419. I think they did the right thing closing the schools. I made the decision to continue homeschooling for a short period until I was satisfied it was safe to return to the classroom once we were all vaccinated etc. My son didnt require a mask on return to school but the older kids did. I'm not sure how effective masks on kids are, I'm glad he didnt require one as he would have found it difficult to wear it and it would have impacted negatively on his concentration on lessons and caused him stress.

420. We understand that difficult decisions had to be made at the time and its so hard to know how to find a better way. Practical subjects suffered. However I know through many other families that children are struggling with Mental Health, I am grateful we are doing alright at the moment but we try to make time to talk but we did find it very difficult coming out of lockdown and we still have a good bit to go but conversation and communication is key along with giving children time. I think children today put alot of pressure on each other in fact they can be very cruel, also like every occupation not every teacher is suited to their post, some teachers were fantastic and still are but others were not. Perhaps smaller classes and listening to children as they can become very anxious around certain other children and if they are not comfortable in class they won't learn.
421. The lockdown and school closures created long lasting impact on student education and mental health, which was not factored in the decision making.
422. Totally disregard parents working in front line jobs. Found juggling childcare & education impossible whilst working in the HSE. Life went on for hospital workers while the country came to a standstill.
423. I think everyone was scrambling to do what they could and schools were under intense pressure. Teachers are parents also so that was very difficult for them to balance. While parents input is very important - this is a great opportunity to look at how we can include more out of the classroom - or rigid sitting at their desk - learning environments for kids - and schools must be the ones to lead those ideas in terms of what is achieveable and not.
424. I think school closures were necessary, especially in the early stages when so little was known of the virus and its virulence. We as a family appreciated the RTE home-school programme as it provided a fun, engaging way of staying on track for the little ones, particularly at the start when we had no school books.
One thing that could have been introduced would have been mobile libraries. My children had a low threshold of tolerance for online learning. They were fine with audiobooks, but I would have loved for there to be options for them to continue receiving library books, either through a click and collect scenario, or better still, if they could visit a mobile library. To me, this is just as much fun as a trip out to the ice-cream truck.
425. Decisions made by the government around schools will seriously impact those children for years to come when the risk to healthy (no underlying conditions) adults and children was very low
426. I think decision were made and after they were made no one re-evaluated the bigger picture on how children or society might be affected. These questions should have been asked in the immediate weeks when in person education was removed from children
427. I think every effort needs to be made to keep schools open when making future decisions.

428. The indecision about holding junior cert exams in 2021 until the very last minute, was supremely unfair to this cohort who had already been badly impacted by remote “learning”. I think allowing each school/teacher to do their own thing was a mistake - some strong guidelines were needed based on the available research on remote learning. It was unrealistic to expect children to cope with a 6 hour day on Zoom.
429. We should have been wearing masks from the start.
We shouldn't have closed for so long.
430. Prosecute government lists and shove this bullshit whitewash up your backside. mNRA shots and COVID passports... Vile tyrants fooling a dumb population. You're a dickhead too for even taking part.
431. Never shit down schools again if my children were older I would've been furious
432. Our school (Bayside NS school) did absolutely NOTHING. If I can understand that they were unprepared for the first lockdown it's shocking they did nothing during the second one. The teacher was sending HW on Mondays for the week. Student were sending them back on Fridays. Never ever they got corrected. I deliberately left some errors in a Maths HW to see if it will get corrected. I believe the teacher didn't bother reading them.
I've contacted the school headmaster asking for remote teaching for the whole class and she came up with so many excuse for not doing it that i gave up.
At the end of this, I made my daughter repeat 5th class in a private school.