STUDY ON THE EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ACTION PLAN ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Supports for parents to raise healthy children

NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early, primary and post-primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school and has been extended to cover parents with children in early years in 2016 and in post-primary in 2022. NPC received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

NPC Vision

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

NPC Mission

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

NPC's Key Activities are:

- **Representing the parents' voice in all aspects of their children's education**
- **Advocacy**
- **Building participation**
- **Service delivery**

NPC Service Delivery

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

Helpline

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

Website

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding Early Years, primary, and post primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding education issues.

Introduction

The National Parents Council (NPC) are pleased to respond to the "Study on the evaluation of the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity".

To evaluate the progress achieved by Ireland in the key areas for action set out in the Action Plan during the period 2014 – 2020, NPC conducted a survey of parents of children in early years, primary and post primary schools. The survey was live from 30th July to 6th August and received a response rate of 146 parents.

We asked a series of questions based on the headings suggested in the study, namely:

- **Support a healthy start in life**
- **Promote healthier environments, especially in schools and pre-schools**
- **Make the healthy option the easier option**
- **Inform and empower families**
- **Encourage physical activity**

The responses are shared below, and we have made some recommendations at the end based on the views of these parents.

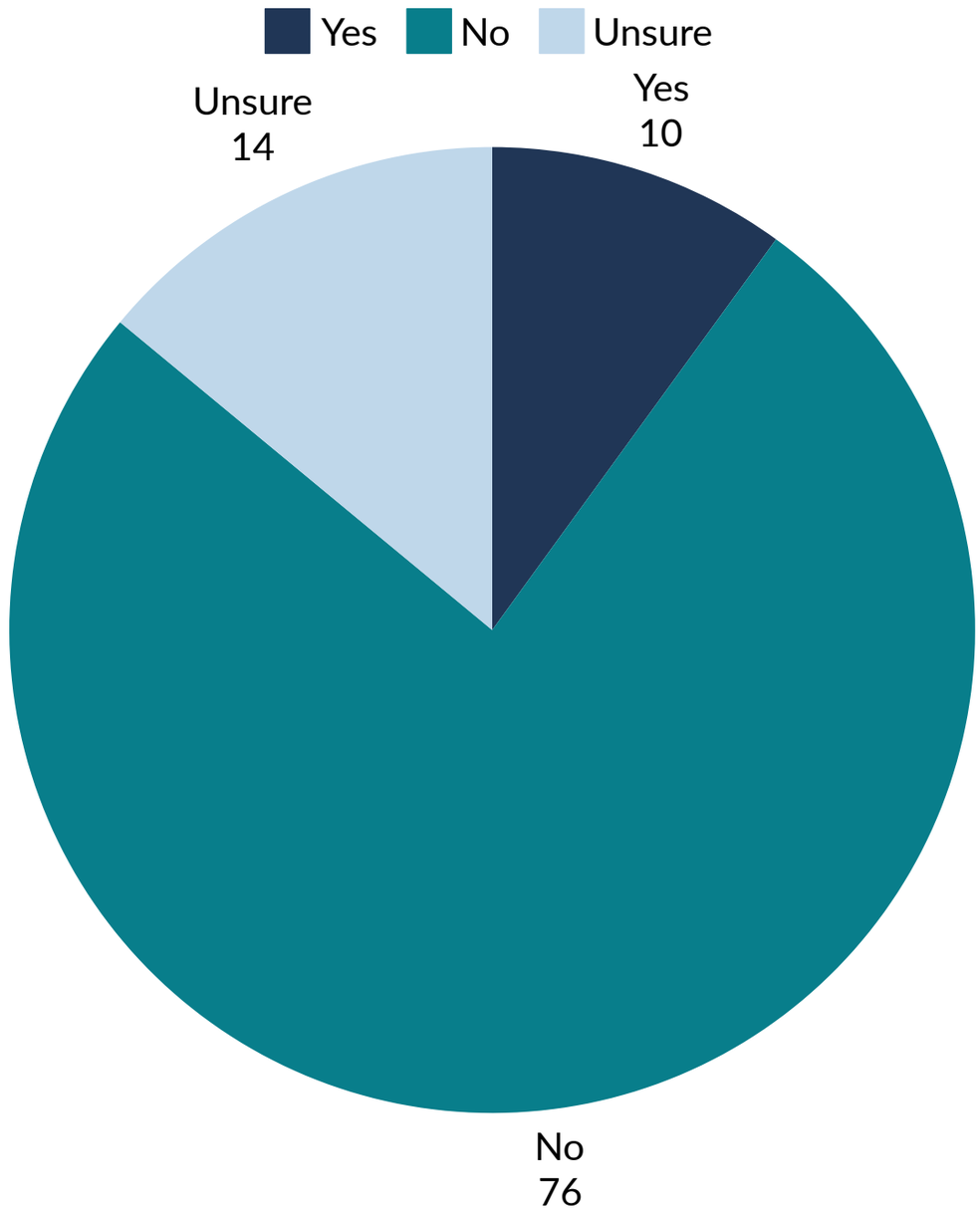
SECTION 1
SUPPORT A HEALTHY START IN LIFE

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Support a healthy start in life

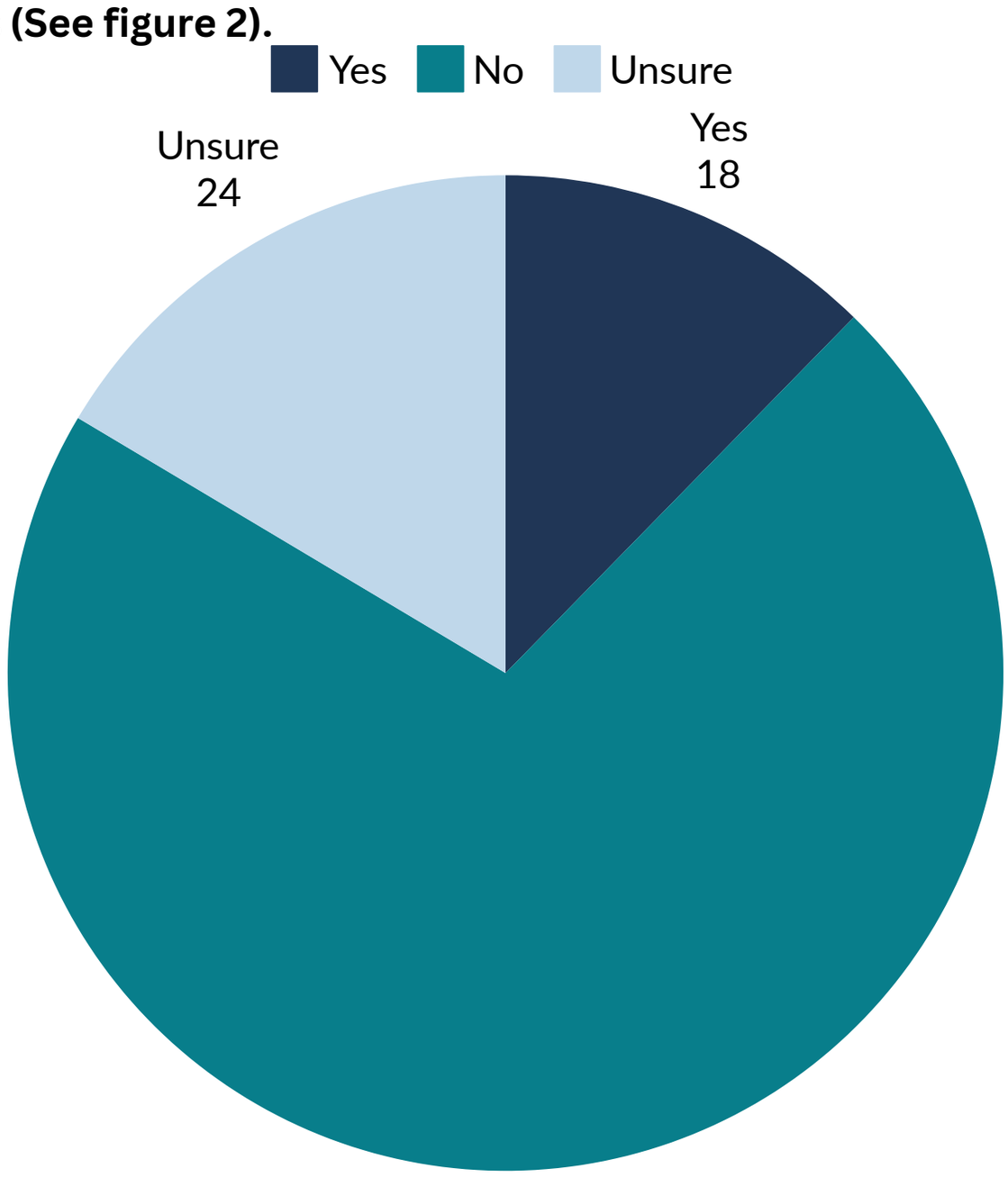
When asked if Irish government bodies do enough to support parents to be able to make healthy food choices for their children, almost all (76%) parents said no, a small number of parents (10%) said yes, and a similar number of parents (14%) were not sure (See figure 1).



(Figure 1)

1.Do you think that the Irish government does enough to support parents to be able to make healthy food choices for their children?

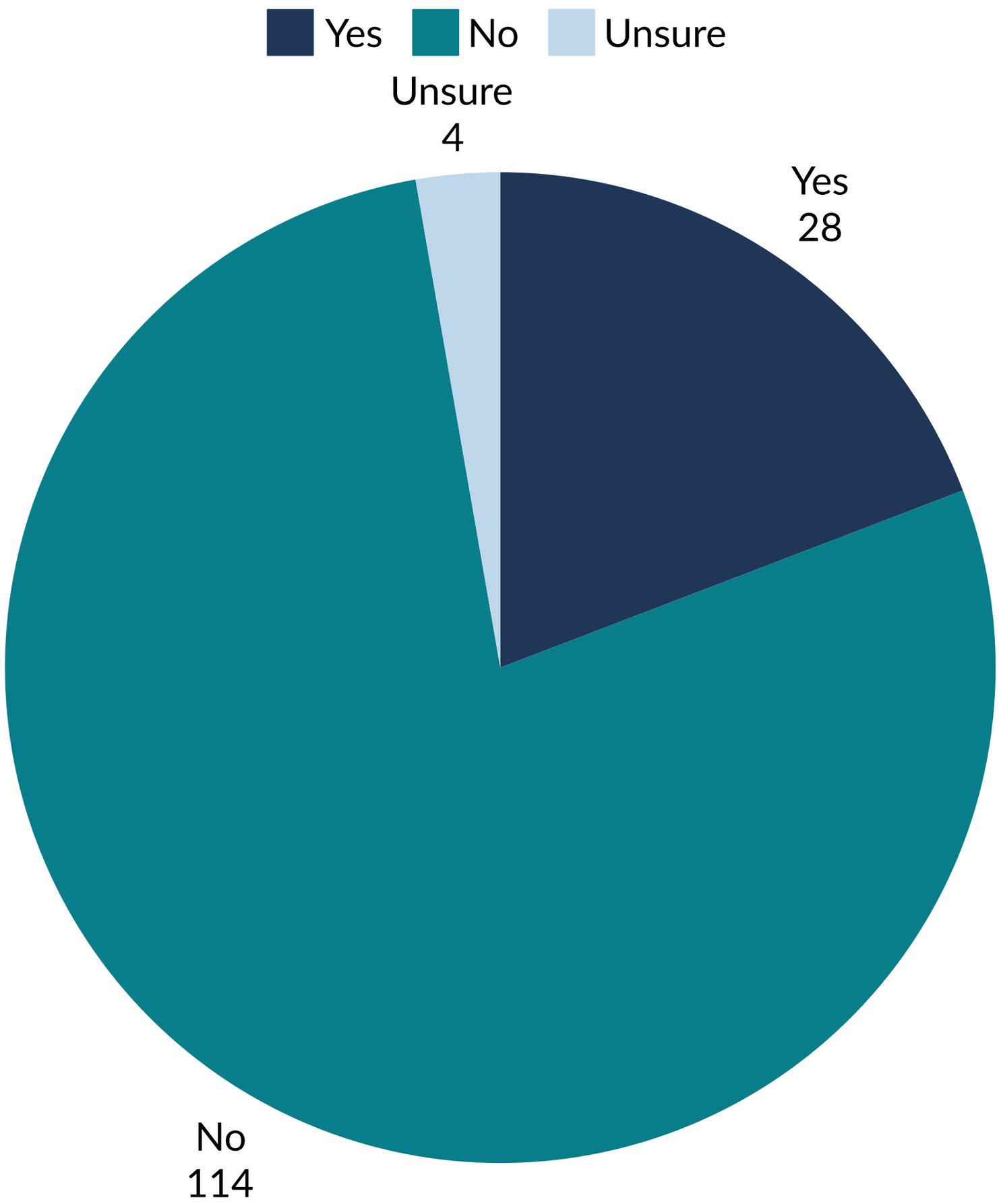
When asked if Irish government bodies do enough to support parents to encourage their children to be physically active, the majority of parents (71%) said No, a small number of parents (16%) were unsure, a few parents (12%) said yes (See figure 2).



(Figure 2)

2. Do you think Irish government bodies do enough to support parents to encourage their children to be physically active?

When asked if they have ever been told by a childcare professional (GP, public health nurse etc) about the risks of being overweight and obese, most parents (78%) said no, a small number (19%) said yes, and a few were unsure (3%) (See figure 3).

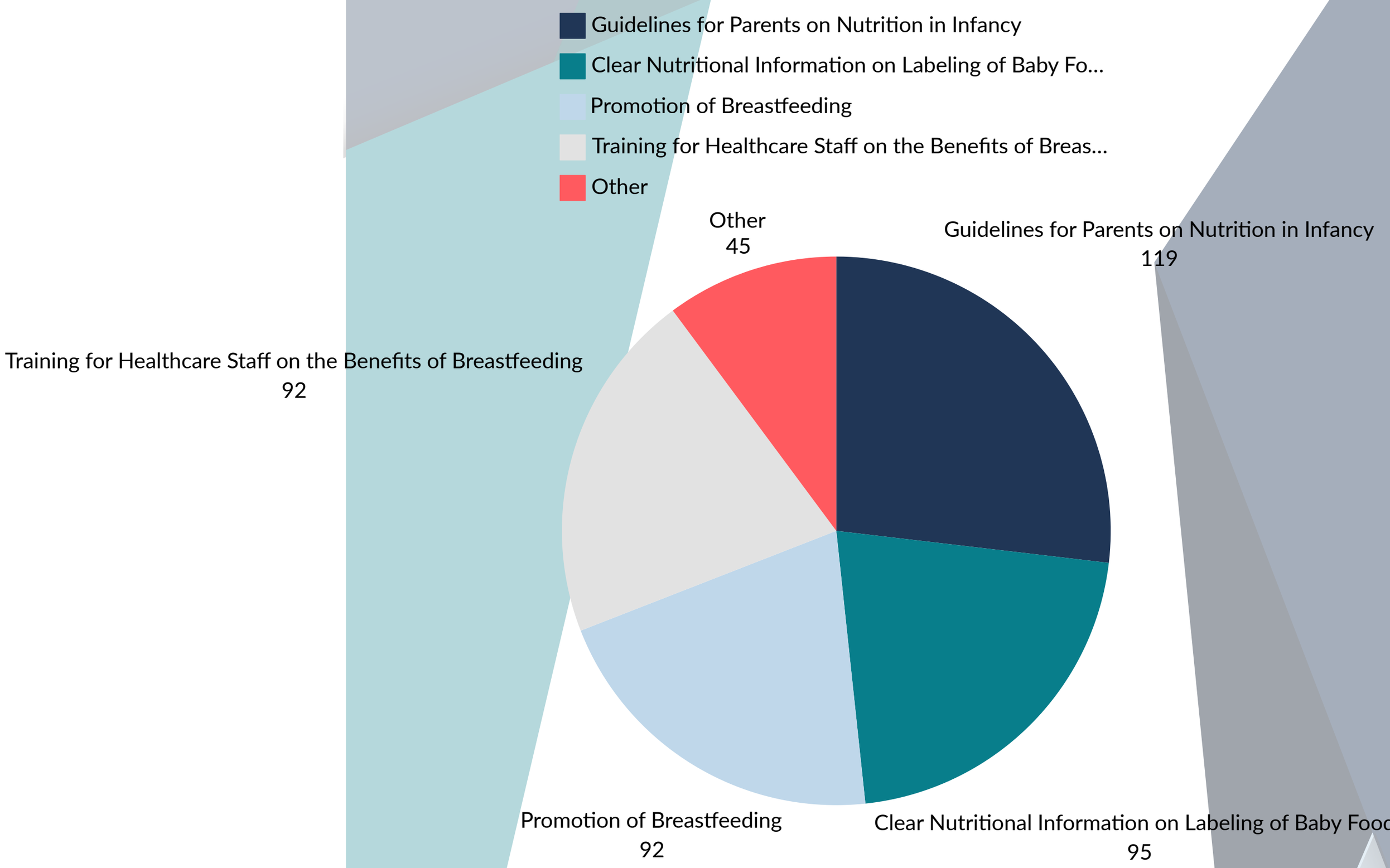


(Figure 3)

3. Have you ever been told by a childcare professional (GP, public health nurse etc) about the risks of being overweight and obese?

We asked parents about the most relevant challenges that they face in preventing obesity in childhood. They identified the cost and availability of healthy food, influence of peers, housing and lifestyle, control over diet, support for working families, nutritional knowledge and education, and concerns about weight and eating disorders as the main challenges.

To find out what type of support parents thought was needed during infancy to prevent childhood obesity, we gave parents a number of options. They had the opportunity to choose any forms of support that were important for them. Their answers were as follows: 119 parents identified guidelines for parents on nutrition in infancy as important, 95 parents identified clear nutritional information on labeling of baby foods as important, 92 parents identified promotion of breastfeeding as important, and the same number of parents identified training for healthcare staff on the benefits of breastfeeding as important (See figure 4).



(Figure 4)

As a parent, I believe that the following would support parents of babies to make healthy choices (tick all that apply)

Parents were also invited to make other suggestions as to how they could be supported to prevent obesity in infants. All these comments can be found in appendix 2 but there was a consensus that more support and information for breast feeding mothers was needed. Lactation consultants were particularly mentioned as a potential source of individual support.

Regarding weaning, again more information and support was called for with one parent commenting, we should support

“foods as suitable for the whole family, no need for ‘baby foods”

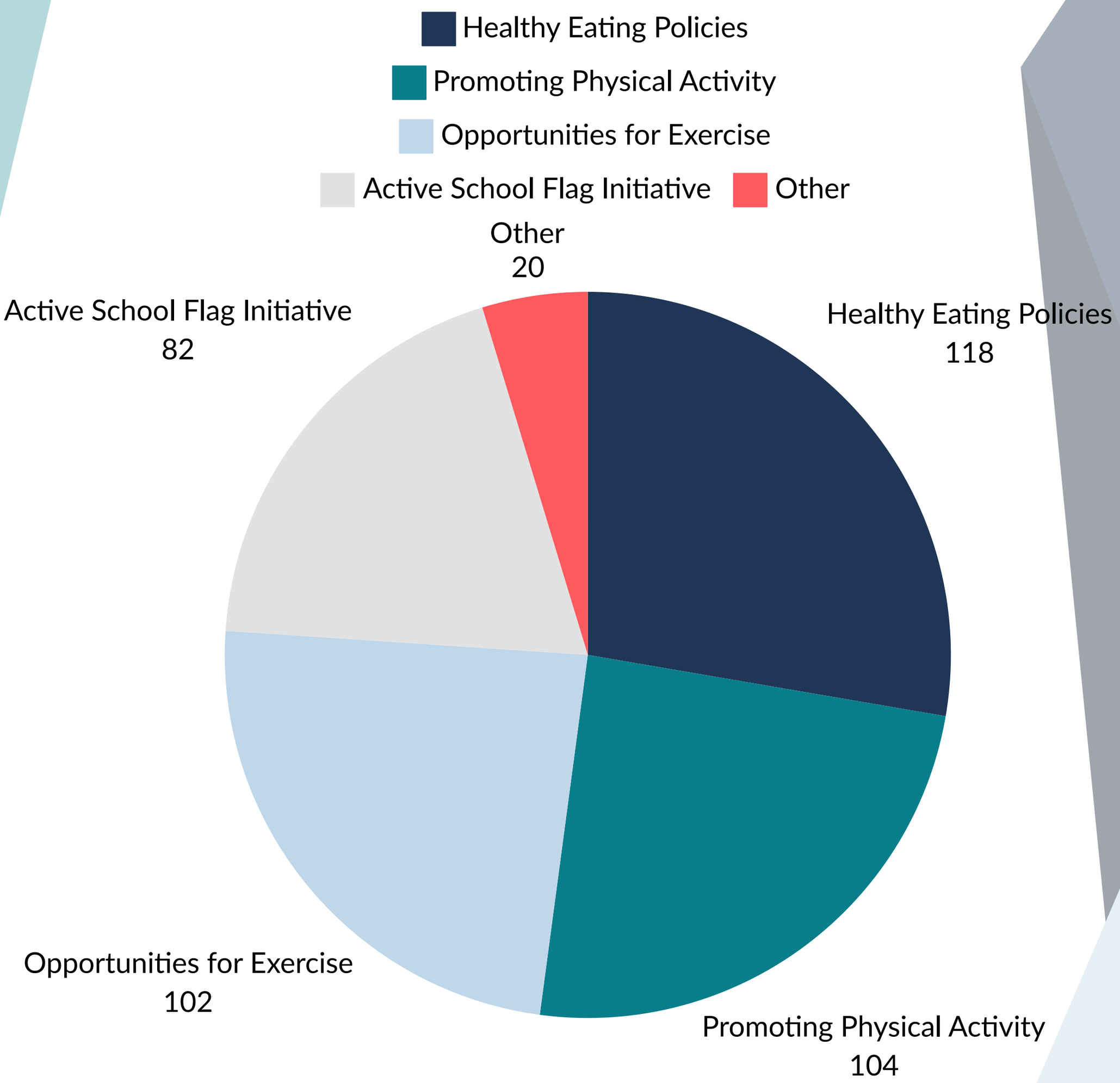
SECTION 2
PROMOTE HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN SCHOOLS AND PRE-SCHOOLS

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Promote healthier environments, especially in schools and pre-schools

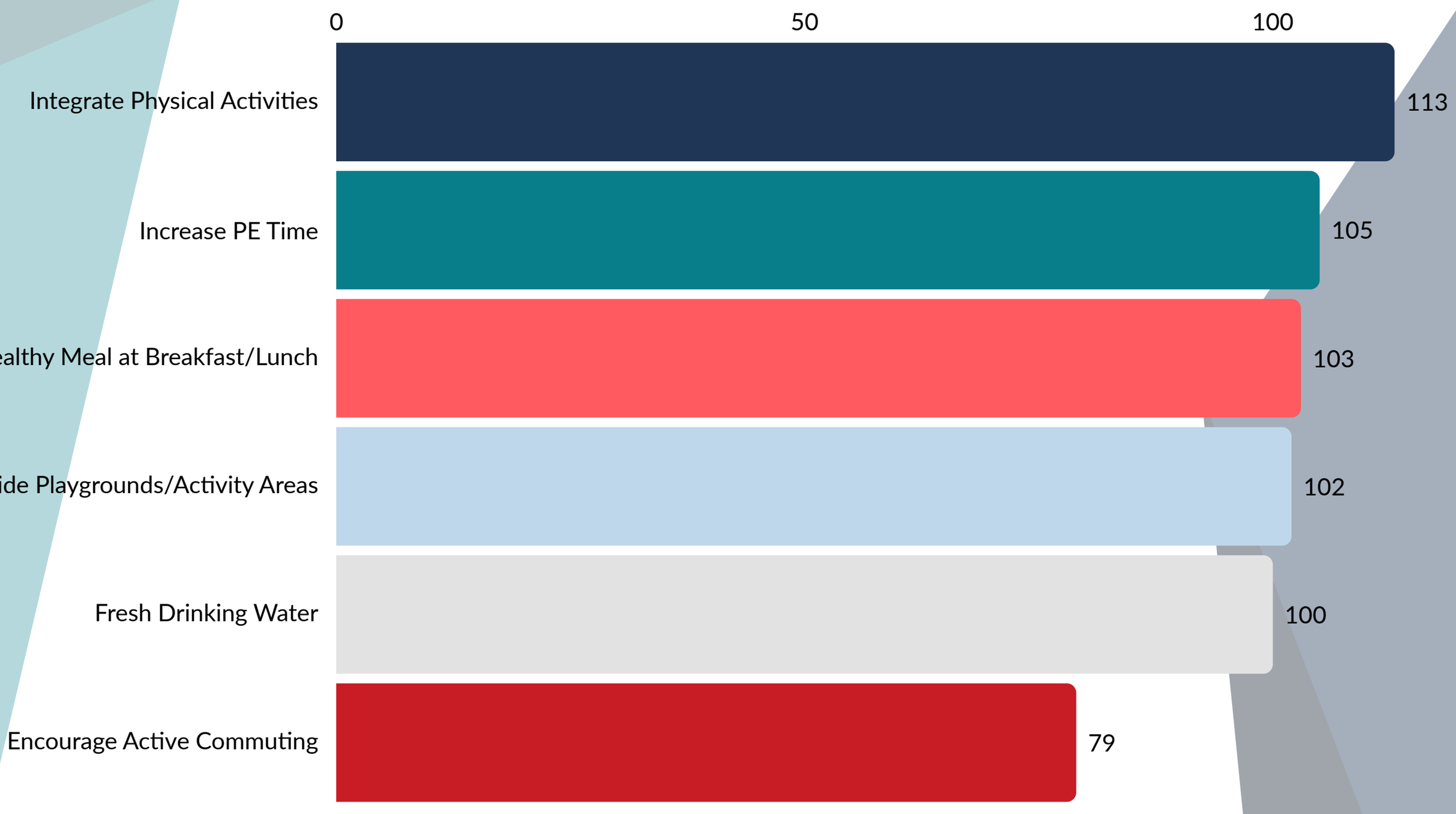
We asked parents what policies are in place in their children's school to support a healthy lifestyle. We gave them a number of options . They had the opportunity to tick any of those policies which they thought are helpful . Their answers were as follows: 118 parents identified healthy eating policies , 104 parents identified promoting physical activity (walk/ cycle to school etc) , 102 parents identified providing opportunities for exercise during the school day , and 82 parents identified participating in the active school flag initiative as important (See figure 5).



(Figure 5)

My child's school implements policies that promote a healthier school such as: (tick all that apply)

To find what schools could do better to encourage healthier lifestyles for children, we gave parents several options. They had the opportunity to tick any of the options provided. Their answers were as follows: 113 parents identified integrating physical activities into the curriculum , 105 parents felt increasing the amount of time spent on PE would be important, 102 parents believe providing a healthy meal at breakfast or lunch would help, the same number of parents identified providing playgrounds and other areas for physical activity, 100 parents identified providing fresh drinking water, and 79 parents identified encouraging active commuting to and from school (See figure 6).



(Figure 6)

What could schools do better to encourage healthier lifestyles for children? (tick all that apply)

Parents had lots of other suggestions of ways schools could promote healthier environments, and all of these have been recorded in appendix 3 and appendix 4.

There were many comments highlighting the inappropriate use of sweets as treats or rewards in schools. Parents felt that healthier options could be used instead.

There was also a strong view that schools could do more to encourage physical activity both in terms of lessons and free play time.

There was considerable concern as to the nutritional value of the free school meals that are provided in some schools in Ireland.

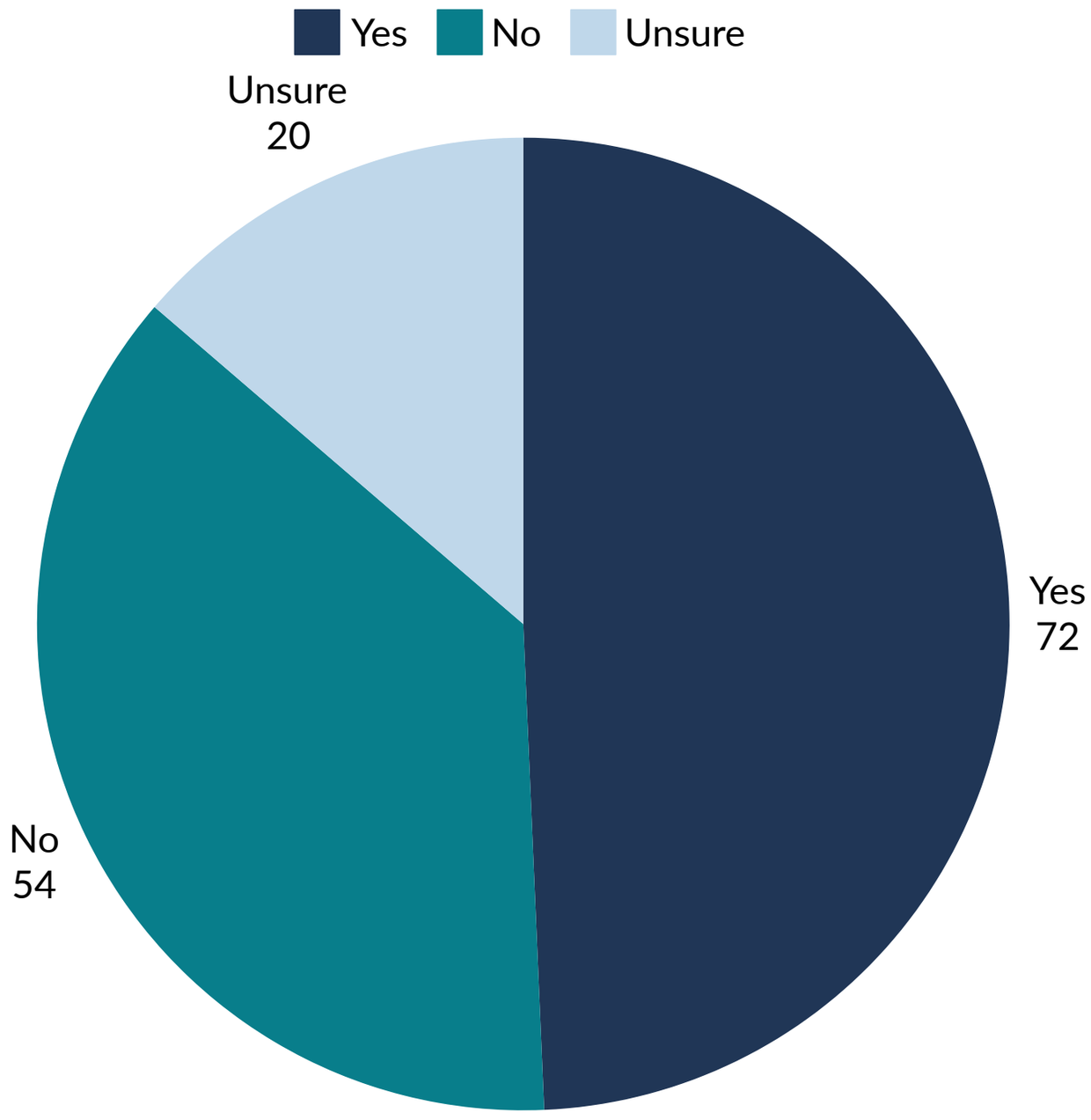
SECTION 3
MAKE THE HEALTHY OPTION THE EASIER OPTION

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Make the healthy option the easier option

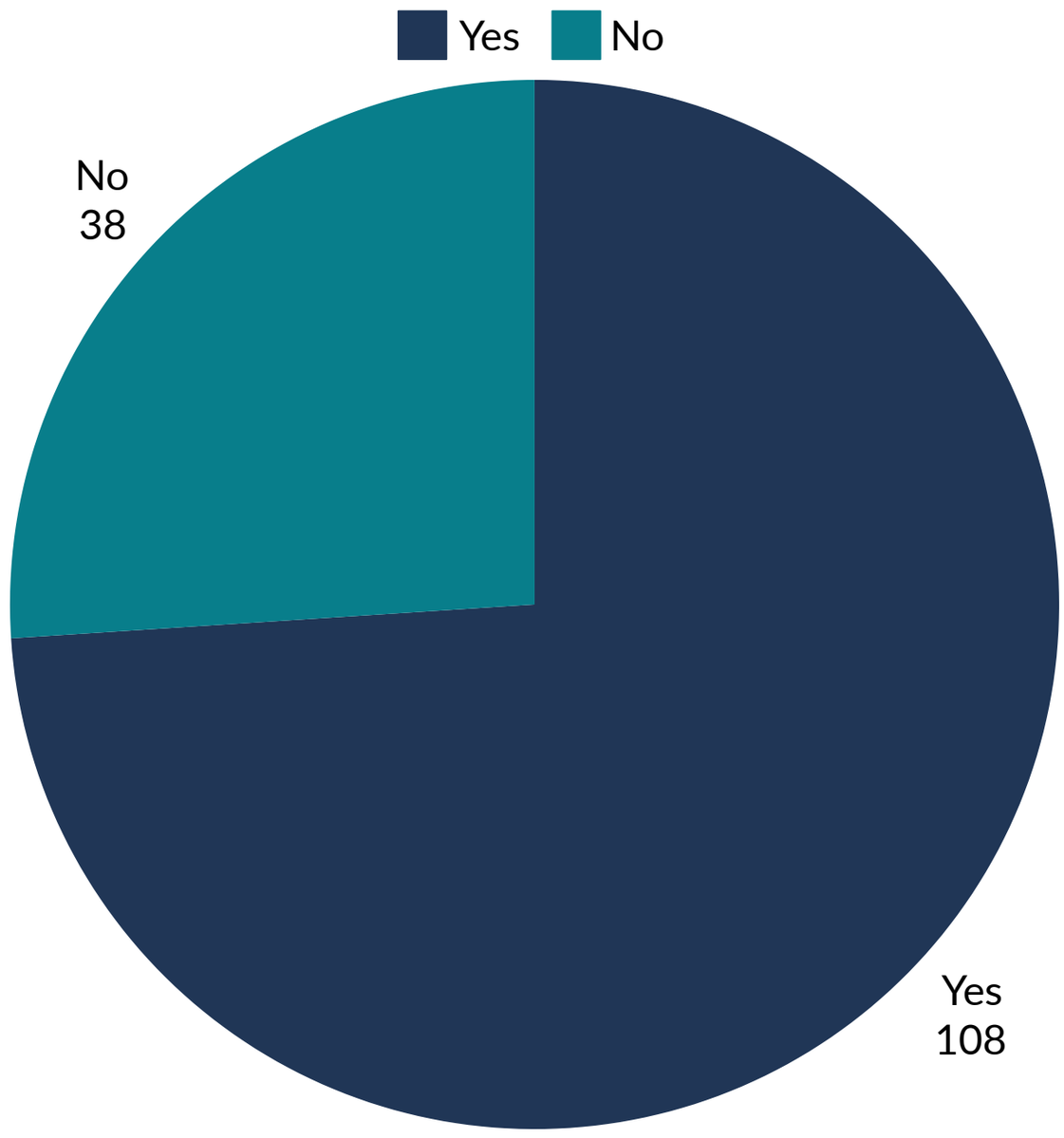
When shopping at the supermarket, parents were asked if they find the nutritional characteristics of food easy to understand , 72 said yes, 54 said no, and 20 parents were unsure (See figure 7).



(Figure 7)

When shopping, I find labelling makes it easy to understand which foods are healthier than others.

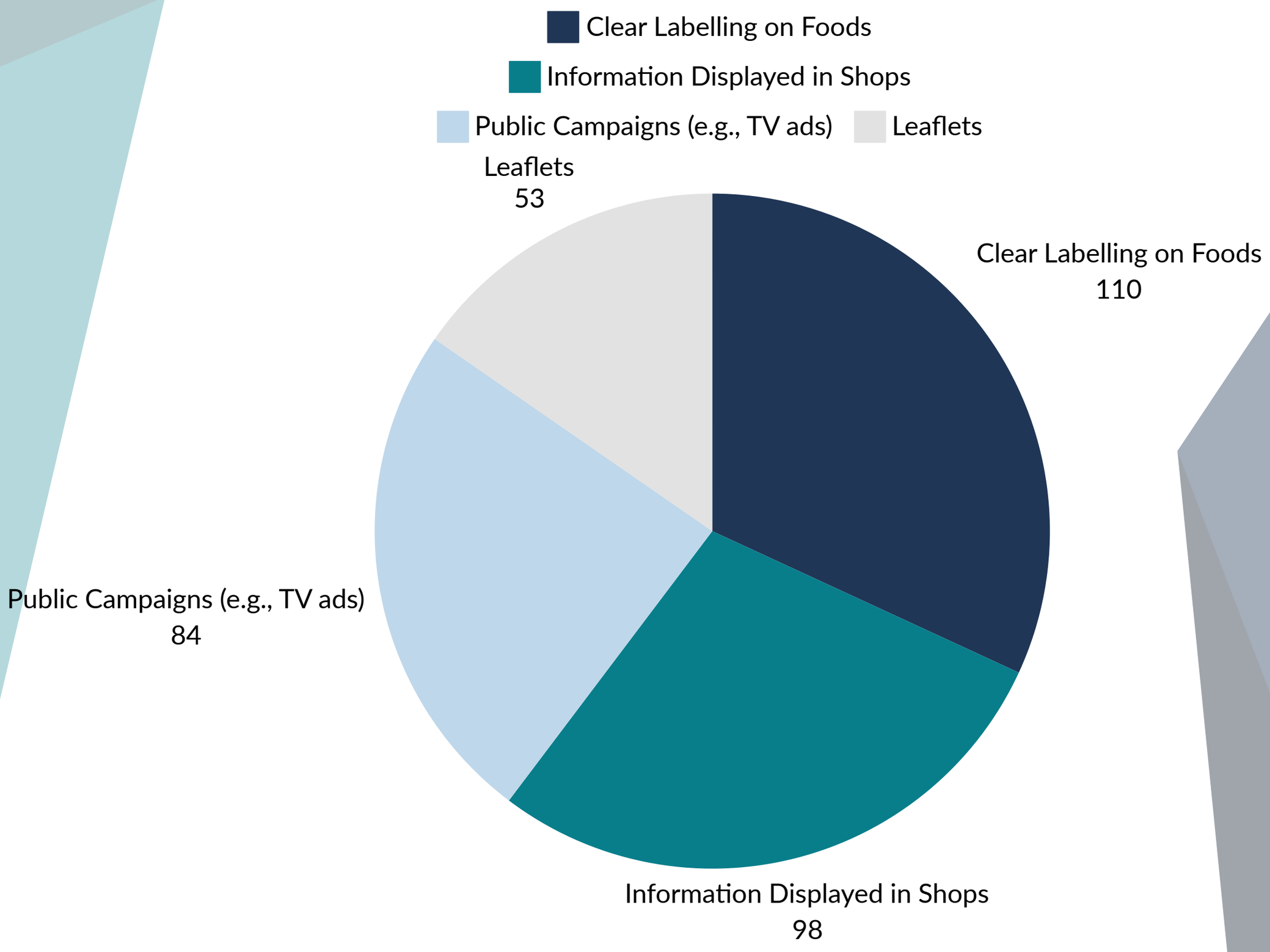
When asked if they usually check nutritional information (on the back of the pack or the front of the pack), 108 said yes and 38 said no (See figure 8).



(Figure 8)

When shopping, I usually check nutritional information (on the back of the pack or the front of the pack)

In order to find how they can be better supported in making healthy food choices for their family, we gave parents a number of options. They had the opportunity to tick any of the options provided. Their answers were as follows: 110 parents identified clear labeling on foods, 98 parents identified information displayed in shops regarding healthy eating options, 84 parents identified public campaigns to raise awareness of healthy eating options such as TV ads, 53 parents identified leaflets highlighting healthy eating options (See figure 9).



(Figure 9)

What supports would help you make healthier choices for your family?

Advertising and promotion of healthy options along with a limit on the availability of unhealthy options was highlighted by parents as other supports for them. (As before all comments are available, please see appendix 5.)

SECTION 4
INFORM AND EMPOWER FAMILIES

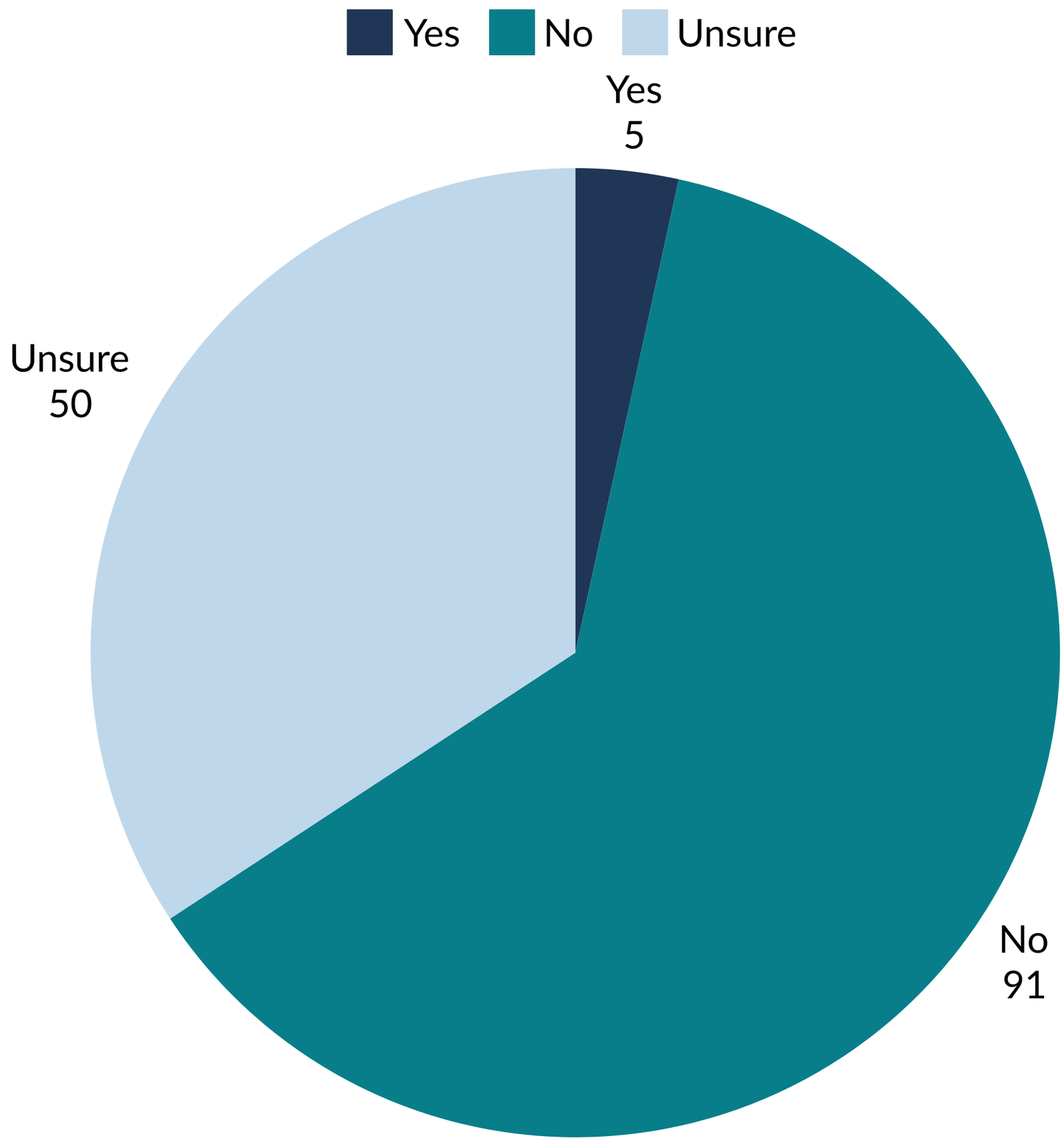
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Inform and empower families

National Parents Council has informed parents of the benefits of physical exercise and nutrition for many years through our training sessions for parents. These sessions are delivered in person in schools and online to groups of parents of children in early years and primary school settings. During covid, we produced several supports around nutrition and exercise, which we shared with parents who have subscribed to our mailing list and via our website. This support is still available on our website. We have also produced leaflets on supporting your child's mental health and well being for parents of children in early years and primary schools which include guidance on nutrition and physical activity. These can be found on our website and hard copies can be made available to schools and parents as requested.

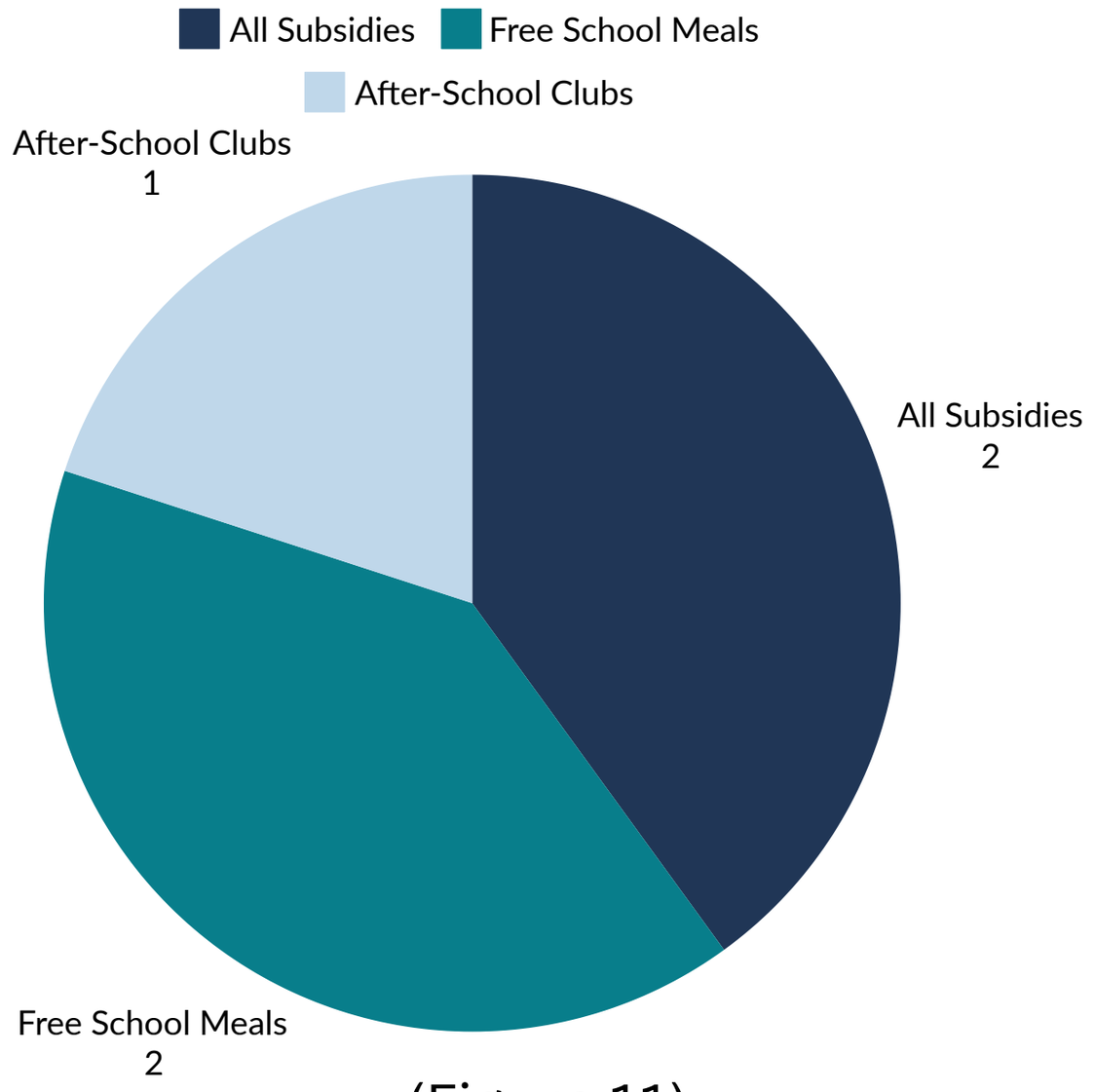
When asked if families who have financial struggles and other hardships, are adequately informed of the subsidies they could get as a support to a healthier lifestyle, 5 parents said yes, 91 parents said no, and 50 parents were unsure (See figure 10).



(Figure 10)

In your view, are families who have financial struggles and other hardships aware of any subsidies they could get as a support to a healthier lifestyle?

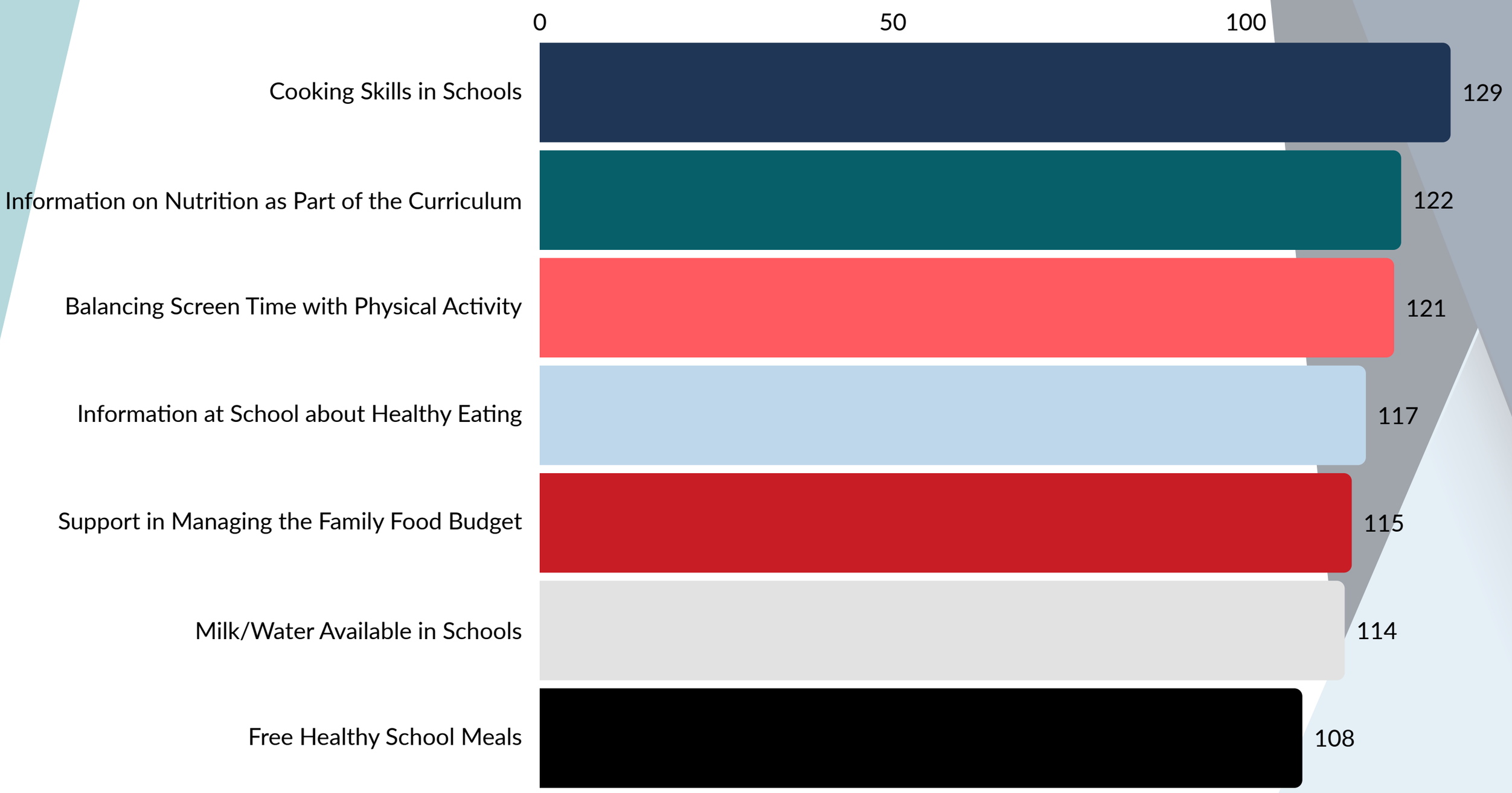
In order to find which specific subsidies are useful, we gave those 5 parents who answered yes, a number of options. Their answers were as follows. 2 parents found all the subsidies useful, 2 parents particularly chose free school meals, and 1 parent found after-school clubs useful (See figure 11).



(Figure 11)

Which of these supports do you think are useful (Tick all that apply)?

When asked which main topics to support and empower parents they would like to see addressed, 129 parents identified cooking skills in schools, 122 parents identified information on nutrition as part of the curriculum, 121 parents identified information on how to balance screen time with physical activity, 117 identified information at school about healthy eating, 115 parents identified support in managing the family food budget, 114 identified milk/water available in schools, and 108 parents identified free healthy school meals (See figure 12).



(Figure 12)

With regard to informing and empowering families about the risks of childhood obesity, I find these areas important (Tick all that apply)

As before, parents were given the option to include other supports to help fight childhood obesity. All comments can be found in appendix 7. The main areas suggested were around education for parents, financial support to encourage a healthier lifestyle and a consensus as to what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

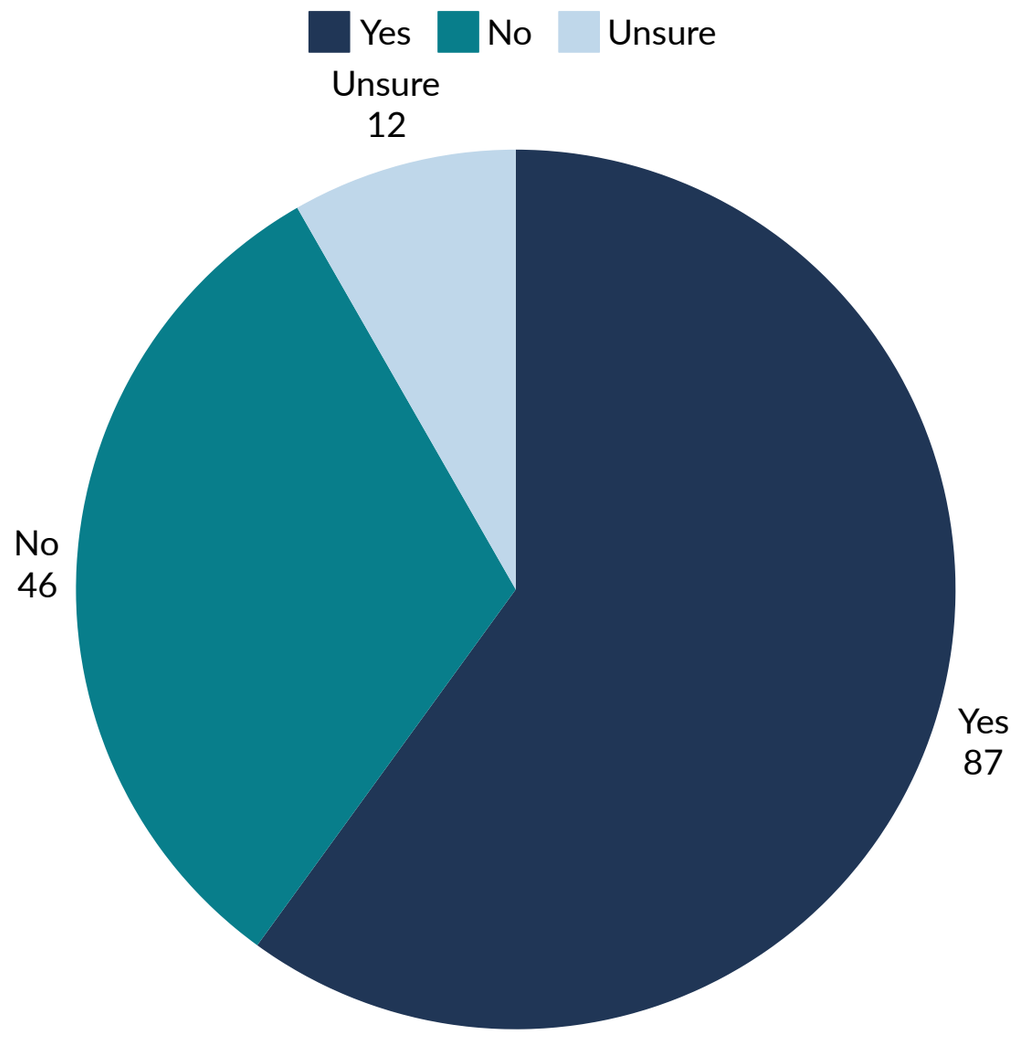
SECTION 5
ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Encourage physical activity

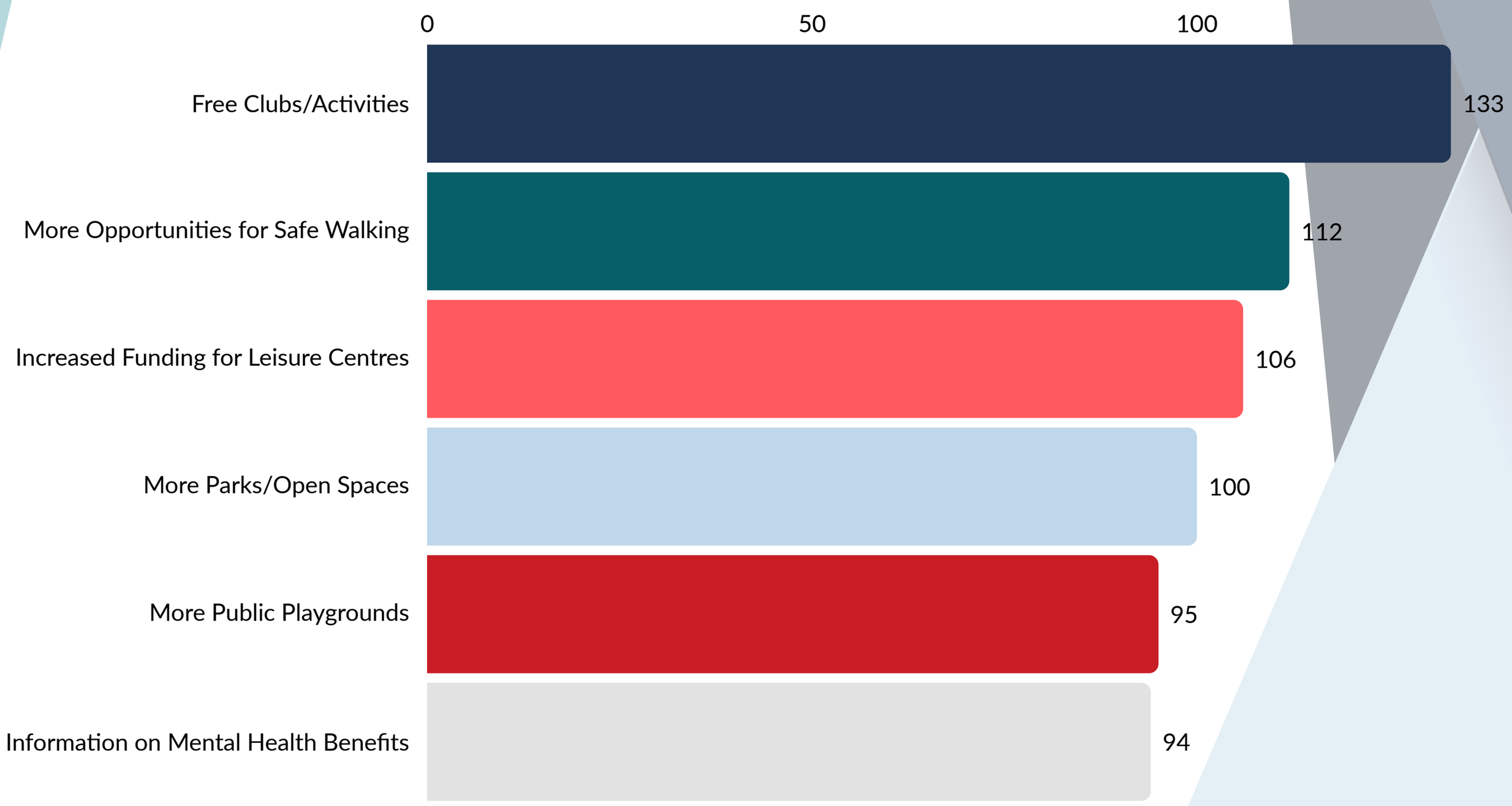
When asked if it is easy for families to incorporate physical activity into children's routines, 87 parents said yes, 46 said no, and 12 were unsure (See figure 13).



(Figure 13)

I find it easy to include physical activity into my child's routines

In order to find what supports parents may need from the Government of Ireland to encourage their children to be more physically active, we gave parents a number of options. They had the opportunity to tick any of the options provided. Parents' answers were as follows: 133 parents identified availability of free clubs/ activities for children across Ireland, 112 parents identified more opportunities for walking safely (foot paths, lighting etc), 106 parents identified increased funding for public leisure centres, 100 parents identified more parks and open spaces, 95 parents identified more public playgrounds, and 94 parents identified information on the positive effects of exercise on mental health (See figure 14).



(Figure 14)

What supports do you think the government in Ireland should put in place to help you encourage your children to be more physically active? (Tick all that apply)

Recommendations:

From the results of this survey, it would appear that the Irish government has more work to do in supporting parents to choose healthy options and avoid obesity in children.

Parents of infants are asking for more support around breastfeeding and education around healthy options for babies and young children.

Schools could do more to encourage children to be active. They could also refrain from using sweets as rewards. The nutritional value of free school meals should also be considered.

The government could provide subsidies for healthier food options and more affordable access to sports facilities, especially for parents facing social and economic barriers.

Parents also suggested other recommendations as follows:

- **Support for full-time working parents who are unable to manage children's sport activities.**
- **Addressing screen time as an obstacle to cultivating healthy lifestyles among children.**
- **Addressing the difficulty in finding suitable camps and sports activities for children with additional needs.**
- **Providing access to sports facilities in rural areas.**
- **Imposing government restrictions on unhealthy food advertising and promotions.**

The full list of comments from parents can be found in appendix 8

Supports for parents to raise healthy children

Appendix 1

What challenges do you think parents face in raising healthy children?

1. Quality of food provided in childcare and in school. Packaged food culture.
   No facilities for sports or lack of adequate timetables. How can full time workers bring their children to practice sports at 2 or 3 pm?
2. Sugar and treats are everywhere and are linked to sports and occasions. It is very hard to limit the intake of sugar in children.
3. Too much added sugar, poor choice in healthy cheap food.
   Easy to buy cheap unhealthy food- nuggets, pizza etc
   Convience over health
   Snacks every in shops in all aisles special offers etc
   Portion size too big
   No concept of Correct portions
4. Activities are so expensive
5. Cost of healthy foods. And screen time
6. Processed food is cheaper and more available than healthy food
7. Shops selling sweet rubbish... Sugarfree drinks are not what they seem...
8. Supports
9. Lack of sports facilities for a wide range of sports - eg swimming pools. Most facilities available are for team sports. Some schools have hardly any space for promoting active play. Insurance limitations are a big issue too.
10. The price of fruit and vegetables in comparison to sweets
11. Cost of healthy food options and extra curricular sports activities
12. Autistic children with arfid and absolutely no support
13. Prices of Healthy options. The price of quick, unhealthy foods is so much cheaper if your struggling
14. Parents not promoting a healthy lifestyle at home themselves
15. Costs of extra curricular activities is unaffordable
16. There should be proper programs or events to teach/inform/free class or 2 for parents about how to raise healthy children
17. Too many sugar/sweetener products available
18. Typical hard for full time working parents to fully have time to create extracurricular activities like sports
19. Higher price for healthy snacks and organic products.
    Less time to focus on longer term measures due to everyday demands in bringing up children
20. Temptation of unhealthy food/snacks in supermarkets; grandparents feeling like it’;s their right to give 'treats' every day and not understanding healthy eating (or moreso not understanding the risks of unhealthy eating); other families allowing certain unhealthy foods and not wanting to feel like depriving own children; children build up a taste for some unhealthy/processed foods when at grandparents or friends’; houses
21. Easy availability of fatty foods and frozen foods...not enough activities indoors to play during winter months
22. learning good habits and educating on food rather than amplifying stigmas and misconception about body sizes vs. actual health.
23. Finance
    Social media
    Mobile phone use
24. Sweets at Eye level and drinks
25. Lack of PE in schools
26. Lack of time for family due to economic pressure on parents to provide for their children
27. The cost of healthy food
28. Constant advertising/promotion of unhealthy food to children (and the wider population) is widespread and pervasive. Supermarkets and retail settings are heaving with offers for unhealthy food and drinks. Trying to raise healthy children in the face of that is almost impossible.

29. Junk food is cheaper than fruit , veg.
    Car / vehicle traffic is prioritised above active transport. I would not be able to cycle or walk to most local amenities with my children because of the way the cycle lanes and walking paths are set up, mingling pedestrians with traffic.
30. Advertising needs to be reduced and not targeted at kids so much.
    Follow on milk and formula advertising needs to be banned.
    Breastfeeding support needs huge investment.
31. Knowing how to cook healthy meals for their kids, cost,
32. Constantly surrounded by advertisements for unhealthy food and catchy jingles for fast food delivery. Packaging not clear enough of some foods they should all have the colour coding so you can make easier choices. Far too much sugar being used in products.
33. School should be more interactive and active the primary curriculum is very flexible. Children could be engaged in further movement combined learning. Society is increasingly becoming sedentary due to technological advices. Every time I send my child to an activity it is at least 10 euro per hour. GAA is cheap but not all children are suited to this competitive environment (from day one). For context, we live on a busy road with no front or backgarden so free play has to be done in local parks.
34. Good nutritious food, typically fresh fruit and vegetables, including protein as fresh meat tend to be a lot more expensive than the highly processed less nutritious alternatives. This makes picking those items easier for parents who are struggling to feed families.
35. Availability and low cost of junk food.
36. Lack of information. Not having enough time to cook healthy meals from scratch. Not being able to afford organic and healthier options. Being tired and overwhelmed.
37. The foundation of a good education but also the fact that all the carers , including teachers do not communicate the right information to the children from an early age! Children are fed with sweets at school from preschool so children get used to eat sweets everyday, also the food served in day care isn't good quality , it's always pasta or mask with low quality meat and rarely vegetables... there is a serious lack of understanding and education among the childcare professions in the west of Ireland , the wrong ideas are communicated to the children and as parents it makes our job even more difficult because we need to fight the system.
38. Cost of living. Good food is expensive
39. Entry fees and waiting lists to clubs for physical literacy skills.
    Lack of presence and awareness for celebrating healthy eating, over unhealthy choices
40. Peer pressure.
41. Not enough sporting facilities, eg swimming pools. Not enough support for healthy school meals. Minimal support of breastfeeding in maternity hospitals due to under resourcing though staff do their best
42. Fruit is very expensive to buy, a small pack of strawberries with about 12 strawberries in it costs 2.69 in the cheapest stores, blueberries cost 1.99 for about 2 servings in it, if you have a family of 4/5 the cost of trying to get in daily intake of fruit becomes very expensive on its own
43. Budget. Time to cook. More information easy to read and understand. Parenting guidelines to help children like healthy food.
44. Time (if working full time)
    Cost (activities are expensive and should be subsidised so they're more accessible and affordable for all families)
    Activities like swimming or gymnastics hve long waiting lists so some kids never get to even try those activities growing up
45. Technology dependency and laziness.
46. Cost of living crisis affects ability to make healthy food choices.
    HSE breastfeeding promotion is suboptimal. Maternity hospitals need more lactation consultants. Publin health nurses need more support
47. Both parents work, kids involved in activities and busy lifestyles that unhealthier quick convenient foods are being chosen. Parents give kids money to buy school lunches in mornings and kids make terrible decisions
48. Having too much and easy access to Processed food and Convenience food.
    Parents not being thought what is best for our children and how to reduce fake foods.
    Parents not knowing what to cook or having time
49. Treats are so cheap compared to berries/healthy options
50. Children are more influenced by their peers
    Children are judged by their peers if they have a different opinion

51. Lack of family friendly housing, Apartment living encourages sedentry lifestyle of kids. If your in the mid bracket you are working hard to pay for life and childcare but don't have capacity to lead by example with kids on food and exercise. and because they are in childcare you don't have full control or knowledge of what they are eating daily. Or you can't afford the childcare so kids are left to screen time and eating because you are working and in fear of losing your income. If there was more support for working families.
52. There is so much junk food available and very little places where to eat healthy foods.
53. It's quite simple, you eat real food and you won't get fat. The way our grandparents used to eat. Now real food is more expensive than junk. The EU approves toxic chemicals in food to be eaten by us so the food giants can more profit. Farm to table is best but they would like to get rid of farms
54. Time pressure, cost of food, cost of childcare, childcare food options once there, meals for schools... some crap being sent out there. Basic nutritional knowledge.. teach home ecc in all schools to all kids.
55. Not enough knowledge food options
56. Too much choice of unhealthy foods
    Healthy foods being expensive
57. Enough parks and outdoor spaces
    More tv ads needed on healthy eating, choices etc
    More choice in restaurants for children
58. Fast food is too easy an option. Only a small number of creches have their own kitchens, most depend on parents preparing meals for kids (so the lunch is a dew hours/days old when served or is store bought = never fresh). Then primary schools are no better, if not worse as peer pressure to eat shite mounts
59. I think we are too focused on weight. I am as concerned about my daughters developing an eating disorder and being underweight as I am about them being overweight. Social media is a huge challenge for parents and the lack of regulation there. Childrens food options almost everyone are just greasy cooked chips and nuggets. This includes in sports facilities.
60. Healthy food is expensive. Supermarkets have too many cheap junk food items on sale. Junk food is cheaper most times than healthy.
61. 1. For working parents who utilize childcare options, healthy food options can be limited.
    2. Food provided to schools (while it is a great initiative) could be revised with more healthier options.
    3. Affordable & availability to fresh grown food options not widely available.
62. Pester Power, constant availability of sweets in school and from other children, peers on screens
63. Local parks have cafes beside the playgrounds making it hard to avoid using them. Schools / teachers now give out sweets and chocolate at end of every term, different school fund raising days, Christmas, Easter etc. Many after school activities including Sports (football , tennis) give sweets/chocolate at end of each term whereas instead a football or player cards could be given, tennis ball etc. if your kid is involved in various activities outside of school they all add up.
64. Lack of support. As a parent of an autistic daughter with a very limited diet due to sensory sensitivities, there is just no support. Been told by the public dietitian that she is not fussy and to lower my expectations whereas i feel like they are on the floor.
65. Costs a lot more to do a grocery shop with healthy options, lack of advertising to excite children about nutritious food (vs sweets, fast food etc)
66. Children who are picky eaters and how to get them out of this bad habit. I have a 10 year old and a 6 year old and they are both very picky. My 6 year old will not eat any fruit and I have no idea how to help them.
67. Children with disabilities generally excluded from initiatives
68. Time constraints -
69. Lunchbox peer pressure.
    Cost of outdoor activities e.g Gaa. Registration fee for u12 is too high
70. Processed food is cheaper thsn healthy fresh or organic food
71. Marketing increasingly sedentary lives childcare with limited outdoor space
    girls in particular stopping sport
72. Longer working hours means less time to prepare healthy meals.
    Convenience food can be cheaper than fresh, balanced meals.
    A mentality of treating our kids with food, be it McDonalds or sweets. When both parents work and commute long hours outside the home on top of convenience foods there is a want to treat/spoil kids when spending family time together and very often treat=food.
73. Cost of buying healthier ingredients, finding time to meal prep and plan, ease of availability of pre made and takeaway options

74. The lack of available ultra processed free foods in Ireland.
    The increasing cost of healthy, organic foods.
    The vast amount of pesticides and insecticides used in farming.
    The lack of education regarding these matters. The lack of support for breastfeeding mothers.
    The difficulty in accessing health services for children.
75. Outside influences, time
76. Advertising everywhere for fast food and fizzy drinks
77. People's lack of knowledge exposes kids to a unhealthy habits when socialising. Personally, socialising makes my parenting away harder when my kids see what others eat, drink and play with (screens)
78. time, busy lifestyles. It takes time and planning to eat well. Fast food everywhere, hot counters, sugary treats at tills
79. Snacks from too many sources
80. Ultra processed foods are everywhere. By the check out at the shops in every garage.
    Difficult to get fresh food in some areas. Kids get "treats" from everyone all the time.
    Halloween, Christmas and Easter are a nightmare in this country.
81. Organised camps, classes and activities that children participate in always have treats as an incentive to participate. Birthday parties are full of unhealthy options with unlimited access and then party bags being sent home full of more treats. Family such as grandparents not respecting parents choices. Children getting rewarded with treats. Parents not being educated about making healthy choices. Portion sizes not appropriate for ages. Restaurants serve the same kids portions sizes regardless of age. No education for children. Gaa underage groups introduce treats and then hire in nutrionists to push healthy eating for the older kids and adult groups. School dinners have been introduced, which means kids are eating dinners earlier and more likely to be eating a second dinner that evening. School dinners usually have sauces and difficult to get a plain meat dinner. GP's, pharmacies and nurses handing out lollipops to kids.
82. Access to sporting facilities and activities at low or no cost. Access to healthy food options.
83. Not enough time together to be active, not enough money to afford healthy foods
84. Lack of knowledge about what is going into the foods purchased in the shops, e.g. the milupa flavoured porridges for weaning babies are FULL of sugar, but I was feeding my child this for a few months before anyone pointed this out. That level of sugar should not be allowed in baby food. Time to prepare healthy meals for children can be very difficult. Coaching on batch cooking, meal prep in advance of time and cooking meals in slow cookers, for example, would be incredibly helpful to parents. I have done elements of this over time and it is a life saver but even with the amount of effort and research I put into this, I still don't feel I understand it enough to utilise it to the best of my abilities.
85. There is a general lack of awareness among some parents about the importance of encouraging a healthy lifestyle both in terms of physical activity/love of sports and healthy eating. I believe some parents don't understand the lifestyle habits in childhood, over which parents have full control, can lead to difficulty in adulthood. I think some parents do not appreciate the impact of an unhealthy lifestyle in childhood can last for rest of a persons adultlife.
86. The cost of shopping for healthy food. The foods that are unhealthy are always the cheapest and are the ones on offer.
87. Fussy eaters
88. Personally, I find encouraging veggies the most difficult. Food dudes in school, was a huge hit in our school - I wish it was run every year
89. Time to prepare meals when late home from work. Tired from working so less motivated to cook from fresh ingredients. Cost of healthy food.
90. Widespread use of high sugar treats at every turn including at school, sporting activities and in extended family life. There is a general culture of extensive over eating
91. The cost of fresh food is very high and processed foods are often much cheaper.
92. The fact that both parents are required to work in order to put a roof over their family's heads. This means families are time poor and creches generally feed the children.
93. Sweets in shops, cost of activities, advertising.
94. Too much sweet stuff in shops and supermarkets.
    Healthy food is more expensive than processed foods.
95. Lack of healthy snacks marketed as treats. Treats are always full of sugar.
96. The speed of life and the need to have 2 incomes to survive in a household is pushing the reliance on convenience food in a big way. It is difficult to make consistently good choices when under stress. Physical activity can be as simple as walking home from school but that's dependent on an adult being available while kids are young. We are a rushed society and that's a problem

97. Parents do not have enough support in dealing with many issues that arise within their community and also within the family environment. Raising children is difficult enough, raising ‘healthy ‘ children is not so much to do with the choices parents make in feeding their children, rather the concern needs to be centred around what feeds the emotional world of the adult? Support that …….. and the inner needs of the child will be automatically fed with unconditional love.
98. That's the government responsibility to provide healthy food for children at school. At home they might not have options to eat healthy food or any food at all. Government is responsible for the quality of education. In my son’s school PE lessons often were cancelled and parents needed to take kids to their jobs after school, so kids didn't have where and when to run. There should be professional teachers for PE, not the class teachers who already have enough work. Prohibit "no run politics at schools. Falling is a part of life, children should be allowed to run, Make afterschools available. Children shouldnt stay at parents jobs sitting quietly in their tablets.
99. Cost of healthy food
100. Healthy eating costs more when grocery shopping, this is relevant for many families in lower income bracket.
101. Too much access to high sugar and high fat snacks and treats.
High costs of joining sports clubs.
Not enough access to non mainstream sports in schools or local communities.
102. Too much choice. Peer pressure. Food layed out to catch the eye of the children
103. Too much emphasis placed on size and weight of children - my youngest is 12 and was diagnosed with anoxeria when she was 11. I would have deemed her to be a healthy child, however, she clearly is not. Need to be careful what we deem as healthy and let children know that a little of something is not bad for you the same way alot of exercise is not good for you if your intake of food and drink is not sufficient for the exercise being conducted.
104. Marketing of unhealthy treats. Portion sizes no relative to age. Unhealthy cookbooks. Parents not knowing amount or frequency of giving treats. When visiting treats are usually given to children. Birthday parties provide huge amounts of treats and children now go many parties. Treat bags being sent home. Play dates at friends houses always result in treats.
105. Social media is very difficult. Influcers advertising high energy drinks etc. These should be banned for children like cigarettes Also kids wanting to spent time playing video games or watch things on mobile phones. Kids have phones too young. Phones should be banned in schools
106. The amount of sweets/crisps at the tills is ridiculous just at a childs eye level
107. Busy lives - work & pressure with after school activities; stress and worry around raising a child with learning difficulties will impact time and decisions for the whole family;
108. The food we are being offered in the shops at lower prices. Parents are trying to work on tight budgets but that means compromising on their food choices for their families.
109. Information and education on foods
110. The lack of money with the rise in the cost of living people don’;t have enough money to buy the right food
111. Prices for healthy food is much more expensive. Snack options available anywhere you go with kids is always unhealthy foods i.e. parties, sporting events, days outs. There isn't a choice to be healthy unless you have the time to prepare and bring your own which is easier said then done.
112. The availability of UPF
Lack of PE classes in schools
Poor infrastructure making cycling and walking to school dangerous
Uneducated parents
113. PE in schools is not enough
114. The challenge of getting time. Not having enough time when both parents working to pay for everything
115. The main problem is that urban environments do not have recreational facilities for children. There isn’t enough playgrounds, playing fields, or other places for children to get physically fit. This is particularly having an impact on children who are not interested in football.
116. I think Healthy foods tend to be more expensive for one, the shelf life of fresh produce is less, so trips to shops etc have to be more frequent. It is a life style choice for parents to help their kids to choose healthy into teens & adult life.
117. Cost of groceries

118. Lack of education regarding nuitrition; placing of sugar heavy foods & processed food in supermarkets; minimal sport in primary school- if we didnt have GAA many sports would only be available to those with an existing family involvement or those who put children on wait-list before they are born.
119. Smartphones and sugar consumption
120. The cost of healthy foods is higher than highly processed foods; where hot foods are provided in schools, they are not great and most do not have vegetables included as standard.
121. I find our kids are very picky and often unwilling to try new foods. My husband and I try to be adventurous in our palette but it’s difficult.
122. Extra large packets share bags are not shared schoolstalking about treat day Friday. Should be no treats at school each parent should have control of when is treat day it is very difficult when treats are sweets not pens stickers etc
123. Time - convenience foods seem to overpower the home cooked staple meal due to work commitments, commuting etc.
    Price of fruit and veg seem to be rising constantly.
    The sitting down at the table for meals' seem to be a thong of the past.
    Treats are a daily item now as opposed to a treat once a week.
124. Grocery stores are lined with junk food. Especially chocolate promotions in every single aisle of the shop during festive periods which never seem to end. It is difficult to resist the constant temptation of treats in your face and in our childrens faces.
    Schools, despite having healthy eating policies, give children sweets, pancakes on pancake Tues etc. I appreciate the sentiment and teachers are doing their best to make school a fun and engaging place to be but it sometimes can be a lot. For example, my eldest daughter had her first taste of chocolate from our Creche and not from me. Baking is an important skill to learn but children never bake a healthy treat at school, it’s always chocolate or cake related.
    Kids birthday venues only serve junk food. There is no healthy option given to children.
    The cost of sports can be a lot when you have more than one child. So paying for swimming lessons plus one or two sports can be a lot, especially now with all costs increasing.
125. The highly visible nature and ease of purchase of sugary sweets and treats/ highly processed foods in shops and convenience stores make it too easy all the time for parents and teens to choose unhealthy foods.
126. Too sedentary lifestyle. Schools need to look at teaching approaches that expect children to sit at desk for hours.
    Every event,sxhool reward, party involves sugary treats.
    Promote .more chores for kids rather than sitting around.
127. Most kids go from school to the afterschool services, where only sandwiches are provided, and therefore their only chance to have a properly cooked meal is in the evening.
128. Cost of fruit and vegetables
    Availability of easy to reach snacks
    Adverts
129. The huge issue of access to phones at too early an age, no proper regulation /safeguarding of our children with regard to social media! Content online is disturbing & society is at a crossroad. Trying to rear healthy children in body and mind is a challenge without the support of society at large! Governments need to take more action.
130. We are bombarded with treats every shop we go to. Granny's , grandad etc insist on bringing treats on every visit. Its so hard to stop this. Even within my marage its hard to be on the same page when it comes to healthy food for our kids . My kids go to youth clubs and a lot of nights eat pizzas or ice cream. And often come home with sweets. The teachers in the schools give them sweets on Fridays. Its hard to watch.
131. bombarded by advertisements (online, tv, billboards, etc.) for unhealthy snacks and fizzy drinks
    these unhealthy snacks and drinks are far too accessible and often placed on low shelves or in child’s eye line
132. Influenced by adds and social media. Stigmatising obesity and lack of access to fitness
133. Lack of time to cook, and resources to purchase healthy options, wide availability of junk food without restrictions for kids to buy.
134. Sedentary lifestyles and a lack of education around healthy foods, cooking ; nutrients for many families. Unfortunately it is cheaper to purchase overprocessed food than fresh ingredients.
135. Time. Trying to manage work and life
136. Time pressure if both working....and prolific placing of processed foods and snacks in nearly every shop in Ireland

137. Cost of living - quality and healthy food cost a lot. Not all schools provide a free school lunch.
138. Good food is expensive and limited time for cooking.
139. Mobile phones
140. Missing creche places
141. junk food is everywhere, completely normalised at all kids events. Impossible to avoid. Even teachers give sweets as rewards in schools. From as early as 3 the kids have cake etc every time there's a birthday in pre-school.

Appendix 2

As a parent, I believe that the following would support parents of babies to make healthy choices.

1. Use of social networks to spread how fashion is to breastfed
2. Supporting parents of Autistic children either ARFID
3. Letting mothers decide for themselves
4. Training/guidelines for grandparents on nutrition in infancy
5. Upto date training some advice is not up to date and misleading. Leading to confused parents.
6. Guidelines on good nutrition for a mother who is breastfeeding
7. Provide more support to mothers on learning how to breastfeed.
8. Guidelines for child care professions and also no sweets should be allowed at school or day care!

9. More support for mothers when learning to breastfeed.
10. Increase child benefit for single parent families so we can afford healthier foods for kids And correct formula because not everyone wants, has the time or is able to breastfeed
11. More support for mothers of new babies ie provision of lactation consultants.
12. Breast fed 4 kids but tyrannical breast is beast so called experts do a lot of damage. Mum support networks the only way
13. Healthy meals provided by childcare institutions
14. More actual breastfeeding supports
15. Honest discussion with parents about overfeeding and obesity, making it compulsory to for Health Nurses and GPs to inform parents when their children are overweight and provide support to parents to reverse the problem
16. I do think there's a lot of emphasis on breastfeeding which is great. The challenges start with small children.
17. Support with picky eaters. Guidelines are all well and good but how do you implement them.
18. Mothers should be encouraged to do what works best for them and their baby and not pressured or made guilty to breastfeed
19. Funded breastfeeding support - lacation consultant, it s all very well promoting breast feeding but women need practical help when it's difficult
20. Promoting normal, homemade foods as suitable for the whole family, no need for 'baby foods'
21. Healthy school lunches
22. Very difficult to find a baby or infant cookbook or receipes online that promotes health eating that does not contain sugar and salt in some form as part of the receipes even for home-made food. More emphasis on receipes that have no sugar and salt
23. Help with breastfeeding like experienced doula
24. It is important that while healthcare staff are trained to understand all of the benefits of breastfeeding, they should provide the benefits of both breast and bottle feeding in advance of the birth of the baby to have sufficient time to look into it. And the benefits of breastfeeding are not just nutritional, it also includes milk on supply wherever/whenever, so logistically it is preferential. It does however tie you to a baby so doing a blended feeding routine would be even more beneficial again.
25. Parents need to be taught how to cook healthy food from scratch and to understand the dangers of convenience high or ultra processed foods. The loss of Home Economics as a subject in schools has an impact on many areas including how to cook and budget accordingly.

26. More free online resources re proper nutrition in the weaning/ first foods context.
27. Remove tax from fruit and veg
28. Promote real food instead of jars.
29. Start physical activities early in childhood
30. Support from a lactation consultant at key times in early breastfeeding when difficulties often occur. LC makes a huge difference to success
31. No judgement. Unconditional Love.
32. A very clear message put across to new mums in the hospital on the healthy diet for mums if breastfeeding and then in turn the children.
33. Online videos on nutrition and meal prep instead of printed materials would help
34. Information and education on the benifits of eating whole organic foods
35. Training to healthcare staff on how to breast feed and to be able to help new mum with this
36. Kids don't need to be breast fed to be healthy, it puts pressure on parents that can't breast feed.

37. Please back off on the breast feeding overload & focus on what young children and teenager's need
38. Support in breastfeeding inside and outside of hospitals.
39. Teaching women how to breasfeed as part of ante natal.classes, having better breastfeeding support in the hospital or a breastfeeding class. I intended on breastfeeding but hadn't a clue what I was doing. My mother never breastfed so I had no real support. The midwives were too busy to be able.to help me.
40. Not enough supports in maternity hospitals..I couldn't access a lactation nurse for days despite requesting one...under resourced at pivotal times as that's when the process of breastfeeding starts, it's too late when you get a visit from the health nurse at home. Funding /investment and a commitment to promote breastfeeding
41. Clear, concise, 5 important guidelines for every new parent to know.
42. Guide how to go from infants to next stages without introducing sugars in food
43. Little menus and cooking booklets encouraging parents to batch cook & avoid processed ingredients.
44. I tried to breastfeed and couldn't produce milk. Not much advice apart from GP PHN.
45. Classes for pregnant women

Appendix 3

My child's school implements policies that promote a healthier school others:

1. Should be more time in the school day for physical activity, more play based learning and more outdoors
2. No initiative are in place in relation to eating also my day care do not provide any summer camps that promotes physical activities.
3. My school gives endless treats to kids for achievement
4. Have a policy but not implemented stringently
5. The school will provide meals on site from September
6. There seem to be a lot of access to sweets in my child's school. I feel that schools should have a compulsory no sweets or softdrinks policy. Teach children to celebrate with healthy snacks instead of sweets and soft drinks
7. Less opportunities for special class in all of the above
8. PE twice a week is not enough. Some classes don't even get that much. Teacher need more training in fun physical activities
9. There are after school activities which promote sports.
10. Run the school walking bus regularly
11. Annual school walk and sports days for all to make activity fun along with the competitive sports
12. The school needs professional PE teachers and allow kids to run
13. Free hour
14. Introduced a number of sports outside the traditional team sports for better inclusion
15. My kids school opt to do these things once a term! Its not ongoing. I wud definitely love to see more movement breaks and little exercise breaks daily.
16. The above are promoted during certain weeks of the year but it seems it's more of a box ticking exercise than genuine policy
17. Opportunity for exercise isn't sport - its walking & running around the block; team sport needs to be part of primary school education
18. They try raw food for a week once a year - sometimes it was not even fresh. It actually promotes just a bad experience and the message that eating healthy is a burden

19. No sweets in lunchboxes policy
20. Exercise sometimes, not always - teachers not fit themselves.

Appendix 4

What could schools do better to encourage healthier lifestyles for children? Other:

1. Fresh drinking water.. That doesn’t taste like chlorine...
2. Make Home Economics compulsory at post primary level and healthy eating modules delivered by qualified individuals in primary school
3. Support Autistic children with ARFID by not demonising snack foods
4. Schools can't magically build playgrounds, they have to be resourced properly by the government to provide opportunities and resources. Curriculum to way too overloaded to cover everything. Pare it back and get rid of religious indoctrination during school hours.
5. Free after school activities/ sports
6. All snacks, lunches & milk should be provided in all schools
7. provide food education - how to grow food, prepare healthy meals..etc
8. Not give sweet treats as rewards
9. The key is “healthy”. The hot school lunches have almost no veg and are nutritionally very poor.
10. I grew up in a country with compulsory afternoon sports for all children throughout school. This is sorely lacking in Europe.
11. Eduction again is the key , we need to make sure the school and daycare share the same interest and don’t feed the children with sweets! It’s a constant battle for the parents! Also all school should have a cantine for thr children to offer healthy meals like it’s done in all the other europeen countries
12. Focus on nutrition, well-being and importance of exercise and mental health. Show them how good affects their lives and provide kids with other ways of coping so they don’t turn to food in difficult times as a comfort
13. Reassess what’s coming in in the school hot food menu. Continue to teach children about healthy foods. Give them smoothies to make themself. Make “fake away” bake with clean ingredients
14. More veg options with lunches. Making sure follow through happens on not allowing sweets with lunch as some parents ignore and this makes it tougher because you don’t
15. Food provided by school is not healthy. Having chicken everyday or plain pasta, plain rice options is not ideal. There is no variety in food. No salads, no fresh fish etc
16. Breakfast the key
17. Currently free meals are not what I would consider healthy. I would not serve them to my children at home.
18. Regarding providing a healthy breakfast/lunch, this would depend on the reliability of the supplier as to how healthy it really is.
19. Equal opportunity for all children to access the above
20. Active commuting should come along with safety paths
21. Portion sizes for dinners should be dependent on age of child. Educate parents especially on birthday parties. Teachers when they have treat days provide unlimited access to treats and some of the treats are extremely unhealthy such as sugar coated sweets. Selection boxes have been given to each child at Christmas, organised by the parents council, my child came home with 6 bars in junior infants!
22. I was in my 30s before I truly understood the benefits of fruit and veg. And I only gained an understanding of it then by attending slimming world. Surely this knowledge is something we can teach in schools at an earlier age. Maybe through some age appropriate cooking lessons each month once children start Primary School. I still need to appreciate that certain veg can taste horrible when cooked one way but I really enjoy it when cooked other ways. Kids definitely need to learn this instead of having a blanket ban on veg because they didn’t like it that one time.
23. I think there isn’t enough time given to PE. It should be more than once or twice a week. Ideally at primary it should be every day. But there’s isn’t enough time in the day to provide for this and in some schools not enough space.
24. Provide fresh foods, NOT packaged, just fresh.
25. Limit written homework and give active homework

26. Provide opportunities for better communication skills between parents and teachers. Emotional support for teachers around understanding the labelling of children s behaviours. All behaviour makes sense and communicates an unspoken language.
27. Available afterschool for kids to be taught how to play outdoors
28. Free hot meals are being introduced in our school but we have to pay for a cold menu. So our kids can have free ciabatta but have to pay for a sandwich with less calories. Some hot food provided by school are not healthy e.g. healthy spice bag 3.82g of salt per 100g and Bean chilli 23.73g of sugar per 100g. Kids will usually always choose the unhealthy options.
29. The local school has already implemented the list above.
30. Several short movement breaks throughout the day to break up the day and refresh the mind
31. Provide education on the risks and health issues when been overweight and eating an unhealthy diet.
32. Educate parents
33. Teach children about nuitrition - instead of rewarding with sugar based food (sweets/choc/bakie sales), change this up & get away from traditional 'treat' culture
34. Provide fruit and vegetables for lunch or break times, and allow sufficient break time durations for kids to eat.
35. Increase the variety of sports encourage non gaa sports too not enough in school opportunities for gymnastics yoga etc using facilities near by
36. The school relies too much on outdoor spaces, that are unavailable most of the time due to the bad weather
37. Most kids will naturally be active aþ lunch time. Teachers or assistants could lead the less active kids in some gentle fun activity.
38. Create links to local sports clubs, be it GAA, athletics, soccer. Kids would be more likely to engage if introduced via school.
39. stop offering sweets as rewards, ensure kids get exercise even if raining

Appendix 5

What supports would help you make healthier choices for your family? Other:

1. Availability of healthy food at reasonable prices
2. Limit promotion of sugary/ fatty foods for kids.
3. Support Autistic children with ARFID
4. We are aware if all of the above
5. Nutrition/cooking education as early as pre school (without focusing on weight)
6. More active campaigns at schools and camps promoting active eating and healthy foods

7. a nutritionist
8. Restrictions on in-store promotion of unhealthy foods and drinks
9. Tax breaks or subsidies on ‘clean’ foods (I.e. foods close to their natural form)
10. A ban on all the sweet at till areas, it is nearly impossible to bring children through a convenience shop
11. Clearly labeling the processed food level on the packaging. More public campaigns to raise awareness of unhealthy eating options. You don't see adverts promoting breathing healthy air - you see them highlighting the effects of smoking. This should be treated in the same regard.
12. Reducing the unhealthy options
13. More education and clear communication from child care professionals and teachers
14. Reducing the unhealthy options
15. An app for children to be able to scan barcodes on the phone during food shopping. With a simplified health scale For each food they scan. Not to demonise good but to just make them aware and understand in a simplified way how healthy a product is
16. Healthy recipe suggestions
17. Radio ads. Phone ads. Both parents educated.
18. Move treats away from tills
19. Any thing that promotes healthy eating as normal to children so it’s not about healthy eating just eating
20. I am already aware of what is unhealthy.
21. No one watches tv adds anymore!

22. Actually explain what “healthy” means. There is too much information. Is it low cal, high protein, unprocessed. What does healthy mean?
23. Labeling high sugar foods as “Fat Free” should be banned. Sweetners should also be much more highly controlled
24. Healthy eating posters displayed in local supermarkets, in parks aimed at children
25. Promotion of free apps such as Yuka that help with understanding the ingredients and offering better choices
26. Working with schools on programmes in the school with the children to support them to try new foods or to try healthy foods.
27. Therapies to address sensory eating and food restrictions. Not guilting parents into o feed their child food they will not eat. Stop blaming parents of disabled or medicated children
28. No one reads leaflets. Don’t waste taxpayers money on this!
29. Foods labelled as ultra processed or ultra processed free.
30. Kids should not be allowed to bring unhealthy snacks to school
31. In Spain there is a letter rating on the food packages (a,b,c,d,e)
32. It’s simple if you can’t make it yourself in the kitchen and has an ingredient list full of chemicals it’s not good for you.
33. Education of children and adults and parents. GP’s and schools reinforcing the message for healthy eating in homes. Education of portion sizes, how often treats should be given and how often etc
34. Affordable fruit and veg
35. If foods had a VERY clear breakdown of the ingredients by Carbs, proteins and Fruit/veg which was regulated
36. I think easily available recipes using whole unprocessed foods provided at supermarkets may encourage parents to try to make healthier choices.
37. Clear labelling of foods with their nutritional benefits -including vegetables. On the shelf if packaging free

38. Pre packed healthy food options for lunch and snacks
39. We are in an information overload society. I’d like subsidies on local grown produce such as grass fed beef and lamb, fullfat raw milk products, free range eggs and Irish grown vegetables. No Subsidising of highly processed foods, including grains and sugary foods.
40. Get rid of labelling.
41. less emphasis on food pyramid - not being used as originally intended - speak with specialised bodies ie. Lynn Dara
42. I believe food companies cud easily manipulate marketing of their unhealthy products so I just believe in supporting local home grown/made foods, markets, shops.. buy organic whole foods, not supermarket processed rubbish
43. The supermarkets do not focus on healthy eating. When queing for till in any shop there isnt an option to pick up some fruit instead its all sweets. Queing for the till is an perfect area to have healty options and visual information available its probably the only time some parents have to read about health risks and better options when queing. Eg Tayto have a big mascot for their crisps, why isnt there something like this for fruit and veg.
44. Information not just for parents but for children and young adults.
45. Advertising aimed at children/teenagers needs to have some balance wrt sugar drinks & junk food
46. Isolate chocolate/sweet shelves to a specific aisle. Take them out of fresh food aisles
47. Drastically reduce the amount of unhealthy foods which are allowed to be placed near the entrance or at check outs in shops/ convenience store/ petrol stations etc.ods that are allowed
48. Teaching people to cook,bring food back to first principles.Promote healthy snacks as alternative to processed snacks.Ensure meal programmes involve minimum of processing of food. s
49. The guidelines are outdated and should consider ultraprocessed food. Reading that crisps counts s 1 of the 5 veggies a day is disgraceful.
50. Cost
51. Sweets and treats at the counters should not be allowed.
52. Tv and youtube adds clearly stressing the importance of healthy eating.
53. More places where healthy food has reasonable price
54. It’s confusing, such as salt could be listed as sodium, etc making it hard to fully understand all the ingredients without some kind of training.
55. Milk everywhere - we a lactose intolerant family.
56. Some labels don’t state all the harmful and allergy warnings.
57. placement of junk food away from the cashier area, no vending machines in schools, less easy availability of processed food

Appendix 6

Which of these supports do you think are useful? Other:

1. All the above
2. All the above

Appendix 7

With regard to informing and empowering families about the risks of childhood obesity, I find these areas important. Other:

1. Advertising and promotion of unhealthy foods to be prohibited/ limited as we do with alcohol and cigarettes
2. Information for parents as they provide the meals
3. Support Autistic children with ARFID
4. Cooking in school is not going to happen as schools don’t have the facilities.
5. Include the grandparents in training/guidance/information provision
6. not SHAMING larger kids and assuming their nutrition needs to be fixed. it’s not always the full picture
7. Clear information on the calorie, sugar, fat content in the food that is fed to children routinely. Pizza, nuggets, etc
8. Healthy foods are way more expensive
9. More veg offered in free meals
10. Grow your own initiatives
11. Again we need to stop obsessing on weight. I think this does more damage than good. We know BMI is totally flawed yet we still focus on it too much. I tell my children they want to be strong and have energy. The size of someones body is not the only determinent of health
12. Warning family about the dangers of sweeteners
13. Milk should be available for all primary school students and even secondary
14. Supporting children with disabilities and who or taking medications that promote weight gain
15. Tv adverts, marketing and online platforms should have more focus on healthy eating and benefits of exercising. More discussions by expects warning parents about the risks and consequences of making unhealthy choices.
16. There is a belief among some families that healthy eating is costly. This is due in part to the lack of cooking skills and lack of time. Parents can be better served if cooking and budgeting were part of the normal school curriculum from Primary and Post Primary level.
17. Adults must be careful not to make children feel guilty or shamed in the foods they choose or their carers choose for them. Especially children who have food sensitivities or sensory processing challanges.
18. Cooking classes for parents in schools
19. Practical cooking skills rather than plastic packages of pre-prepared food and meals would make a longer term impact. Understanding the basics of what's in a food allows you to make a better choice so nutrition basics would be useful education.
20. Childhood obesity can be supported more by listening, understanding and creating safe spaces for the individual to verbalise what is happening for them in their world.
21. Playgrounds for children of different ages, free afterschools for kids to learn outdoor games when parents work, professional PE teachers
22. too much emphasis on obesity - young children can get consumed by this
23. Often times receipes and cooking introduce high sugar and salts in food. For kids they are often given treats not appropriate for their age. One time my child decorated cup cakes in school and came home with 3 having had alwready eaten some in school. Why kids didn't decorate smaller sized buns and not be given smaller sized buns I,m not quite sure
24. Im a single mum of 3 and i know nothing about any help for my family with regards to food and choices
25. Easy and cost effective healthy recipes, not just on a leaflet but on line step by step on how to do.
26. School meals need to have certain options avaliable once a week

27. I find free school lunches has a greater problem of food waste and nutritional value is questionable. It is being rolled out way too fast wadting huge amounts of moneywithout looking at other options or better ways to improve children's diets.

28. Change food dudes programme, sending macerated and sweaty fruit and veg in plastic bags to s hooks is putting children off fresh fruit and veg
29. It's a whole community approach..the answer can't always be the schools. It's upskilling parents, businesses on promoting healthy choices!
30. All good, I think its important to sit down with diatitions doctors and the top people in this field to first of all draw a clear picture of what a healthy diet is. Concenis is crucial . Doctors generally endorse a balanced diet and ther training is based on what I would consider to be out of date info. For example colesterol got a bad rep for blocking actuaries, the top heart surgens today would say otherwise.
31. Food should be enjoyed, ir is important to incorporate healthy options as normal and enjoyable.
32. Alternatives for children with intolerance and food allergies or special diet.
33. Everybody knows what they SHOULD be doing, they don't need more information on this. They just need to make it easier and cheaper to do.

Appendix 8

Is there anything else you would like to add?

1. Difficulty of managing sports activities for children and being a full-time worker.
2. Good diet is really important. Not possible to counteract poor quality food with exercise.
3. Healthy food should be cheaper than processed food.
4. Kids are obsessed with screens once they hit 10...we have to follow the nordic style of balancing this with eating and exercise.
5. Kids are loading up on sugary / sugar free calorie and caffeine loaded drinks at breaks and early mornings... This must be managed by laws/strict guidelines better.Most parents don't know how unhealthy they are!
6. Swimming facilities are essential for safety and for activities. More facilities for lifelong sports needed not just team sports. PE at school should be multiple sessions per week to promote the habit of daily exercise.
7. Lack of awareness around ARFID and lunch box policing un schools is discriminatory against children with ARFID and Autistic Children.
8. Supports for children with additional needs to be able to participate in sports and activities. I struggled this year to find camps to accommodate an asd diagnosed child.
9. More programs, leaflets, free books to encourage parents and kids to eat healthy and exercise more regularly.
10. Infrastructure is needed outside of the cities.
11. All of the above essentially discounted clubs
12. Grandparents are key to helping sustain healthy eating/snacking habits once baby is weaned. Parents (mothers especially) can be subjected to a lot of eye rolling when trying to communicate to grandparents and other care givers that your child e.g. doesn't eat sugar or salt. If grandparents were only visited on occasion like once or twice a year treats from grandparents would be okay. But when they live in close proximity it can become an issue. Guidelines on sugar/salt levels should be publically communicated in national media and not just directed at parents (e.g. recent guidance on ,slushies was hopefully heard by some grandparents!)
13. More indoor play areas funded by the government so that children can be more active during winter months.
14. More parks to walk and cycle safely in smaller towns.

15. No More segregated cycle lanes would have a huge impact on physical activity for children, and as a result adults too.

16. I find that things, especially food items are labelled or considered “healthy” without being fact checked. This needs a system-wide approach; restricting food & drink advertising to children (online , offline); tackling unhealthy food promotions in retail and non-retail settings (vending machines everywhere); better local planning to limit fast-food outlets in disadvantaged areas; banning public transport from being branded with unhealthy food & drink brands (Luas fully branded by Lucozade or KFC); incentives for small food businesses to offer healthier products & meals; subsidies for disadvantaged families on healthier food options when shopping; local authorities not accepting sponsorship from energy drink brands (Red Bull Cliff Diving).
17. The hot school lunches are a disaster. They’re nutritionally poor and not filling so my children are eating that plus their normal dinner now.
18. The school has a healthy eating policy, but the lunch provider has treat options available for children to choose like Rice Krispie squares and Oreos. This leaves parents in an impossible position.
19. There’s only so much the school can do in terms of increasing PE time. What’s happening is that they are not covering the curriculum in school, so a lot of homework is being sent home to catch up. This steals time where my children should be out playing. Abolish homework at primary level.
20. I have my children in 2 local sports clubs. The local soccer club is struggling to secure access to a local Astro pitch so a lot of the time, there are no soccer matches locally and we have to drive to a different pitch.
21. Parents are doing their best but lack of awareness about the impact of fast food and processed food means parents myself included aren’t always aware of potential damage we could be doing.
22. The government should try banning highly processed food that we know is making people sick, or at least tax it like cigarettes to send out a clear message, this is bad!
23. Cooking classes for parents, and not just parents from deprived areas, all of us. Could they be in schools in the evenings?
24. As mentioned in a previous comment, after-school sports/activities could go a long way to encourage and reinforce the importance of physical exercise. I doubt that would go down well with the teachers though, as they would need to lead them.
25. Make gyms and swimming pools cheaper for adults. Safety always.
26. To help those children & families with disabilities that struggle with weight & muscle deficiency, most exercises are aimed at those with no mobility issues.
27. Normalise exercise, parents should lead by example. Have a good routine for the week regarding dinner, exercise and equivalent sleep.
28. Help kids make the connection with good food and mental health/ exercise through a new curriculum.
29. Also let’s not demonise and restrict certain food groups as this can lead to eating disorders. Raise kids to enjoy everything in small portions and to make conscious food choices.
30. I am so happy to take place in this survey and to know that there are changes being made.

31. We have gone to the doctor to look for help but just sent away with a leaflet. It’s really hard to manage when working full time and with apartment living. You do your best but it’s not good enough.its an impossible cycle.

32. The government recently launched a free lunch scheme. Turns out the lunches are full of seed oils and basically not nutritious at all. The usual optics. I won’t be feeding the government’s free junk food to my kids.
33. GAA rules in May small rural areas.. if you’re not in then your options to engage in other reasonably priced activities are very limited. We are lucky in that our kids seem to enjoy it, are encouraged, supported and chaperoned to the local GAA pitch. Many are not.local IPAs centre kids completely neglected bar school tranining and the camogie club getting them sponsored hurls. Big issue down the line. These kids need to be included by athletics clubs etc.
34. Encourage Children to join lots of activities give freebies. Encourage parents of additional needs to get help with sensory taste buds to eat healthy foods. Schools should be able to facilitate sensory taste buds for each additional needs child. Inclusion is the key.
35. No homework so children have more time outdoors.. A tv/youtube/ticktok channel for kids with cooking classes by peers from all over Ireland (and abroad too) to foster awareness and culture around table habits and what it means to eat together - food is not just nutrition, it's a social culture. No screens while eating! We are humans and we share meals with other humans, in schools and at home.

36. It costs us thousands per year for our 3 children to learn to swim, be part of their local football club and to do dancing class. This is so prohibitive for families. We need to look at ways of funding life skills like swimming and we need many more swimming pools. We just dont have the facilities here.
37. More time in schools should be given to physical activities (more movement breaks during the day). Also like the option of teaching children how to cook healthy foods (particularly breakfast , lunch options).
38. I have 4 children, when my youngest was a baby she was overweight. I did not realise this until I was looking back at photos years later but no health professional ever mentioned it or gave me information about nutrition. I had no idea how much I should be feeding her and did not give her treats so the weight was caused by too much food for her age.
39. it's more dangerous today for kids in their communities trying to play in their locality due to heavier traffic and lack of respect for users of public footpaths and for traffic rules.
40. Make communities safer- make the footpaths and roads safer so cyclists will use the roads and cycle lanes instead of footpaths.
41. enforcement and penalties for e-scooters and e-bicycles using footpaths and penalties for users of cycle lane/roads breaking red traffic lights at pedestrian crossings. Traffic police or police visibility needed in local communities. More support for neurodivergent kids (and parents.
42. Children with disabilities are constantly excluded from activities and clubs, open parks are not safe for many of these children. As more activities and parental options are given to parents of typically developing kids the bigger the gap in opportunities becomes. Parents often have to pay extra if they have a child who can attend but requires 1-1 support, when this can be accommodated. These situations mostly can not be accommodated. Schools are not bridging the gap, charge extra for swimming for special classes, run swimming during summer provision when not all attend, don't bring special classes to sporting events, segregate from rest of school sports if part of a mainstream etc.
43. Ultra processed foods being cheap and readily available everywhere are adding to the obesity problem globally. Decreasing advertising of these foods, increasing taxes on these while subsidising healthy alternatives and highlighting the damages these foods have on our bodies might go some way to insuring healthier alternatives are chosen more readily. Also given the fact that ultra processed foods are designed to be over eaten, curbing these would go a long way in reducing obesity levels.

44. Introduction of the use of mandatory play equipment and making available during break times. Schools to allow children play soccer etc during school breaks - large play areas available but insurance cited as reason kids can't play soccer on them only grass when it is dry which mean only a few weeks in the year. Encourage walking/cycling/scooting to school and ensure provision of safe routes to and from schools to allow for same.
45. A ban on Advertising calorific fast food around children.
46. Having food ratings on food packaging like crisps, nuts, biscuits etc really is helpful when deciding what to get. More pe in school that is fun.
47. Training in correct coaching for all coaches for u18 to encourage retention. Food treats banned from organised classes, camp and afterschool activities.
48. I think state sponsored afterschool activities which encourage an active healthy lifestyle would have a significant impact on the wellbeing of children over all. Many afterschool activities are costly and some families simply cannot afford the expense. If such activities are group activities and available to all children, they can also foster a sense of co-operation, responsibility and participation which in turn can have a positive impact on the wider community. Particularly in those areas where parents are less likely to be encouraging of their children's education.
49. As a family we struggle with money. We have one worker and one on invalidity pension. Our children are so active but to keep them fed they are often not getting the most nutritional food. It's heartbreaking and kills me with guilt to think I can't feed my children right. There are no supports in place to help me and that needs to change.
50. Healthier food options can Expensive this is hard on some families. From working in supermarkets in saw that family in less well of areas bought more processed foods spending a lot while in super markets in more affluent areas people bought more fresh foods buying more and spending less. Perhaps more education and help should be available for families on cooking cheap nutritious foods on a budget.
51. Children with ASD can have additional food needs and thats not addressed.
52. Remember to include children with disabilities and their carers in plans. They are too often forgotten.

53. Traffic calming and ramps on every road with houses facing the road so children can freely cross to visit their friends.
54. More information on the risks of screen time and computer games.
55. Healthy eating starts in the home. Educating parents from the birth of their children.
56. Although my school has a healthy eating policy it is not enforced. This makes explaining to my child very hard why they should eat healthy when others don't. The free hot lunch scheme is flawed as a child can still choose portions that are too big or repeat food choices and therefore not have balanced diet. Also in my school too many children opt out of physical activity instead of the activity being adapted to their fitness level.
57. Well-meaning initiatives such as Food Dudes and hot school lunches can have unintended consequences. The message that food arrives in front of you pre-prepared in a plastic package is very bad. Wholefood and basic cooking skills should be most familiar not the delivery of plastic packages. Which is most likely followed by a lesson on waste- incongruity jumps out. School could introduce the basics and encourage parents to make time to cook up and wat together.
58. Encouraging the adults, teachers, parents and any adult who is in the child s world to be more active, more aware of and conscious of how difficult life is for many children in this world. The government could fund ways to implement new ways of opening up spaces for adults to talk, live, learn about their own lived experiences of what it is like for them in this world. Free counselling and courses for all communities.
59. Definitely, Ireland needs more playgrounds, free clubs/ activities for children, more parks and open spaces for workouts and ball games for kids and adults too. And wee need more

spaces for kids to play when the weather is cold and raining. Wee need more swimming pools. The community gym was closed year ago, the pool wasn't built years ago. The nearest is not reachable, because there is no reliable public transport. we gave up swimming lessons. That's the shame for the country like Ireland. Quality education (and PE as a very important part of that kind of education) for children must be government's priority.
60. Building housing estates with open green spaces that are actually appropriate and suitable for children to play on. I live in a fairly new development (built 7 yrs ago), our estate green was built on a hill with uneven ground and lots of houses backing onto green. My 3 energetic boys are unable to play football on this green. Councils need to step up here when giving planning permission for developments.
61. More emphasis should be placed on childrens healthy mind rather than how their look is perceived not only by themselves but others. If a child is not mentally healthy their physical health will suffer. Phone should be banned in all primary schools.
62. High energy drinks should be banned for children.
63. School meals must be healthy. I worry about rollout of school dinners nationally. It was unnecessary and should have been targeted to schools in need. Government must ensure these are healthy meals.
64. Government should mandate classes on food and cooking.More public swimming pools.
65. I think that the focus on activities/clubs for children should also include parents as a more inclusive family approach to promote family health.
66. Nutrition and food should be incorporated as part of school curriculum. Children should learn the importance of nutritional value in food as well as the risks of unhealthy food from an early age and in a way that is simple and natural or them to comprehend and not in a scare factor way when it is too late.
67. Definitely every town needs a community centre and clubs available for a small fee but not 10-15/child.
68. It would be great if there was more public health centres and pools.
69. More can be done in this area. When you pick up a leaflet on healthy options the WHY sometimes is not clear. Why chose healthy options and the risk if you do not choose healthy options. Drop into any petrol station for a hot snack and their is no option but to pick up something unhealthy, can these shops Please elimate the fast food options and provide tasty healthy options.
70. In the UK every area has a leisure center but we don't have these in Ireland. It would be great if we did. If not full leisure centers then better access to swimming pools, and not privately run pools but publicly run.
71. Education on nuitrition and taking part in actual sport eg athletics, rounders etc. needs to be introduced in primary school. Patent involvement is key, just as it is with regular homework. The lack of Swimming lessons in this country is absolutely ridiculous. I think we really need all schools to foster the banning of smartphones until secondary school.

72. Yes, Swimming pools in every county and every town/village.
73. There seems to be a drive to build houses but not include infrastructure such as playgrounds, green areas, skate parks and activity areas required for our children to develop. We will wonder in 10 years time why there is a problem with childhood obesity. All activities cost money and everyone doesn't have lots of spare cash. PE time seems to be cut if there is overbooking of yard space.
74. Communities have to come to gether to get on the same page fruit not jellies should be given at halftime to get energy levels up adults think to get children on board buy sweets and lots of them the sheer frequency and size of goody bags pizza nights soft drinks the list is endless
75. No Public swimming pools needed. Outdoor facilities to work with Irish weather. Programme to engage children with nature, farms so they can see where food comes from

and can e physically active at same time. The activities are very competition-focused, which can inhibit some introverted kids. Free food or vouchers for fruit and vegetables
76. I honestly feel phones are a huge factor in all this! The amount of treats, fizzy drinks on display in every shop to sell is also a factor! Fridges full of every fizzy drinks under the sun and they label them as energy drinks! Again bring in some professionals with some creative people and come up with something big national,fun, centred arround games and sports .promoting teams, individuals and competitiveness. I think when you discourage competitiveness you are asking for trouble. Its unnatural. Baring in mind the computer games companies are spending millions developing addictive games to keep kids at home on their buts. What are these games ? Why are they so addictive . Could they be simulated or improved in real life. I.R.L as the kids say.
77. In school - primary - I think PE should be thought as separate subject by professionals and classes should obligatory for all kids.
78. I believe every community should have sports facilities, ie pitches, running tracks, pools that can be cheaply accessed by people of any age. My area has no pool, athletics, tennis courts etc available. It is GAA or soccer. Somewhat limiting.
79. Unfortunately sport clubs and leisure centres has to increase membership fees due to rising costs. If you don't live in Dublin or in Northern Ireland and don't own a car it is hard to get to matches as a player - terrible infracture in the Irish Republic.
80. Better Irish public infracture for non car drivers to get to sport matches and venues. There needs to be more non-competitive sport options. Many kids don't excel at team sports and there are little other options in small towns and villages. Definitely safe cycle paths/walk ways and parks would be great so that older children can go places safely while parents are working etc.