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Northern Ireland
**Statistics &
Research**
Agency

OMNIBUS SURVEY

Education Module

April 2011

Background to the Omnibus Survey

The Omnibus Survey is carried out on a quarterly basis by the Central Survey Unit (NISRA). It is designed to provide a snapshot of the behaviour, lifestyle and views of a representative sample of the population. Core questions are asked during each survey, including individual characteristics and circumstances such as gender and age, allowing analysis by a range of factors. The other questions are modules which are commissioned by clients, seeking information on specific issues, for example education.

Sample

The sample for the April survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency. This is the most up-to-date list of private addresses. A total of 2,200 addresses were selected for interview, of which 1,929 were eligible for inclusion in the sample. One person over 16 years old was selected to complete the survey in each household. A total of 1,115 interviews were achieved between 1st April and 7th May 2011, giving a response rate of 58%.

Education Module

This paper outlines the main findings from the Education module of the Omnibus Survey. Twenty three questions were asked of the public, primarily to ascertain the attitudes and perceptions of people in relation to education, as well as to find out about their own experiences or those of their children. This is the fourth consecutive year in which the module has been undertaken.

ALL RESPONDENTS

Do you agree or disagree that:

Children in NI get a good education

With a decrease of 1% compared to 2010, a total of 88% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that children at school here get a good education – the majority agreed (57%) while a further 31% strongly agreed. The same proportion (89%) of females and males either agreed or strongly agreed. Respondents in older age groups were slightly more likely to either agree or strongly agree. There was little variation in terms of religion. In total, only 3% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 1 Do you agree or disagree that NI children get a good education?

Response	% of respondents			
	2008	2009	2010	2011
Strongly agree	35	32	34	31
Agree	57	57	55	57
Neither agree or disagree	5	7	7	7
Disagree	2	3	3	3
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Don't know	1	1	1	1

Staying on at school is important if you want to get a good job

In total, 84% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that staying on at school is important if you want to get a good job, while 6% disagreed. The proportion of responses has been very similar across each of the years that the survey has been conducted. The largest response difference this year was an increase in the proportion of respondents strongly agreeing rather than just agreeing.

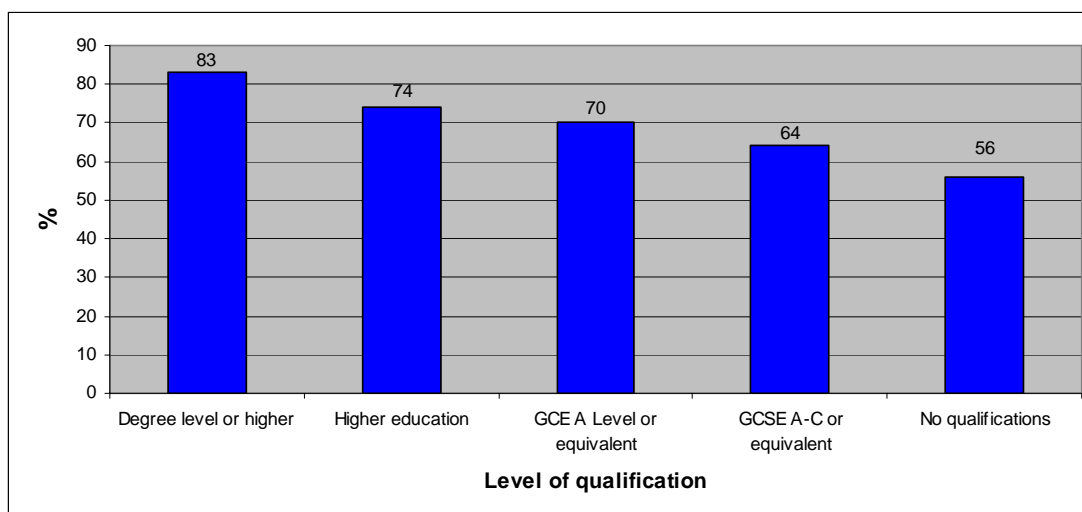
Table 2 Do you agree that staying on at school is important if you want to get a good job?

Response	% of respondents			
	2008	2009	2010	2011
Strongly agree	45	46	46	49
Agree	39	38	39	35
Neither agree or disagree	8	10	9	10
Disagree	6	5	6	6
Strongly disagree	1	1	0	0
Don't know	0	0	0	0

I enjoyed my time at school

Overall, 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed their time at school, with females more likely to report this than males (71% and 62% respectively). Those educated to degree level or higher were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they enjoyed their time at school than respondents with no qualifications – 83% compared with 56% (Chart 1). These patterns were similar to those emerging from the previous surveys.

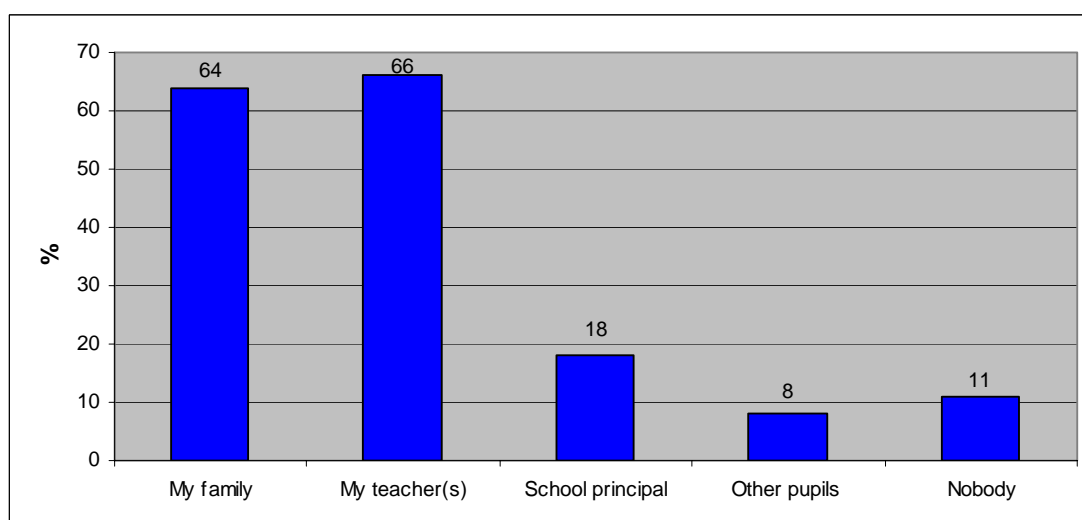
Chart 1 'I enjoyed my time at school' – agree/strongly agree by respondent's level of qualification



Thinking about your own school experience, which, if any, of the following people encouraged you to do well

Similar proportions of respondents reported that their family and their teachers encouraged them to do well at school (64% and 66% respectively). These were also the two main influences emerging from previous surveys. The school principal was another reported influence, however 11% said that nobody influenced them (Chart 2). People with no qualifications were most likely to say that nobody encouraged them to do well at school (22%), as were people aged 65 years and over (20%). This compares with 2% of those educated to degree level or higher and 2% of 16-24 year olds¹.

Chart 2 Which of the following people encouraged you to do well at school?



1. In this question, the total number of respondents aged 16-24 years old is less than 100.

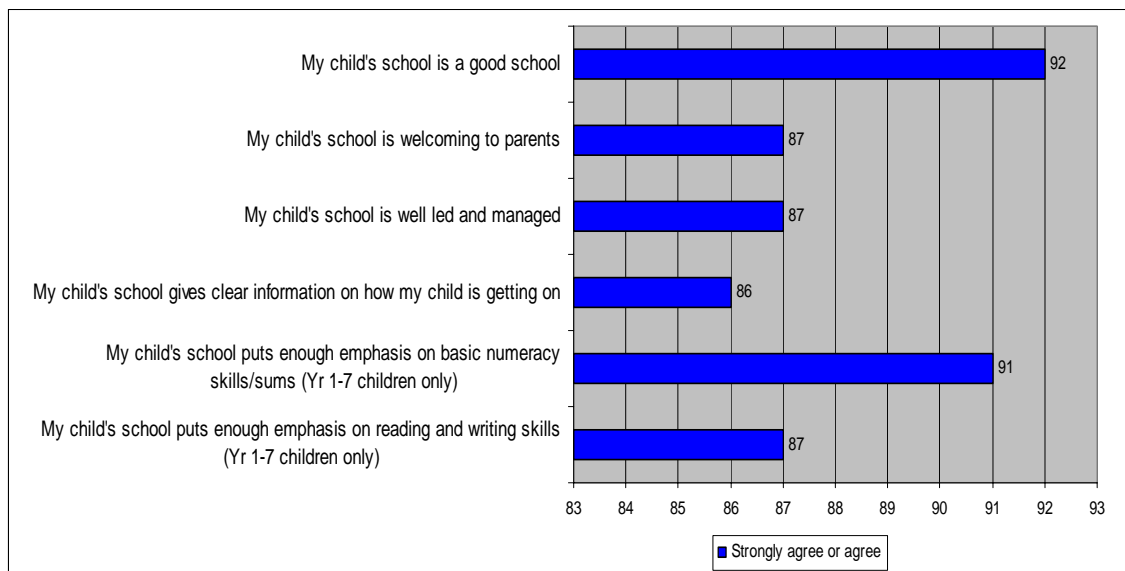
PARENT QUESTIONS

Of the 281 parents asked about their own child, 92% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their child's school is a good school. Only 2% of respondents disagreed. Just over two-fifths (42%) agreed that they find their child's school welcoming to parents and a further 45% strongly agreed – a total of 87%. Five per cent disagreed.

In total 87% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that their child's school is well led and managed. Eighty-six per cent of parents strongly agreed or agreed that their child's school gives clear information on how their child is getting on, while 5% of parents disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.

Of the 154 parents whose child was in Year 1 to 7, the majority strongly agreed or agreed that literacy skills and numeracy skills are given enough emphasis in their child's school – 87% and 91% respectively. Parents with children in this age group were also asked how often they had taken their child to the library in the last year and how often they read to their child. The results show that only 11% of parents take their child to the library at least once a week, whilst 44% go less than once a year or never. Sixty-five per cent of parents with children in this age group read to their children several times a week or every day, while 20% read to their child less than once every few months or never. The results suggest that, in general, parents from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to read to their children, 39% (21 out of 54) of parents whose status is manual/never worked² reported reading to their child less than once every few months or never, compared to 11% (10 out of 90) of parents whose status is non-manual³.

Chart 3 Parental views in relation to aspects of their child's school



2. Manual/Never Worked includes the socio-economic groups: Skilled Manual, Partly Skilled, Unskilled Manual and Never Worked.

3. Non-Manual includes the socio-economic groups: Professional, Managerial and Technical, Skilled Non-Manual

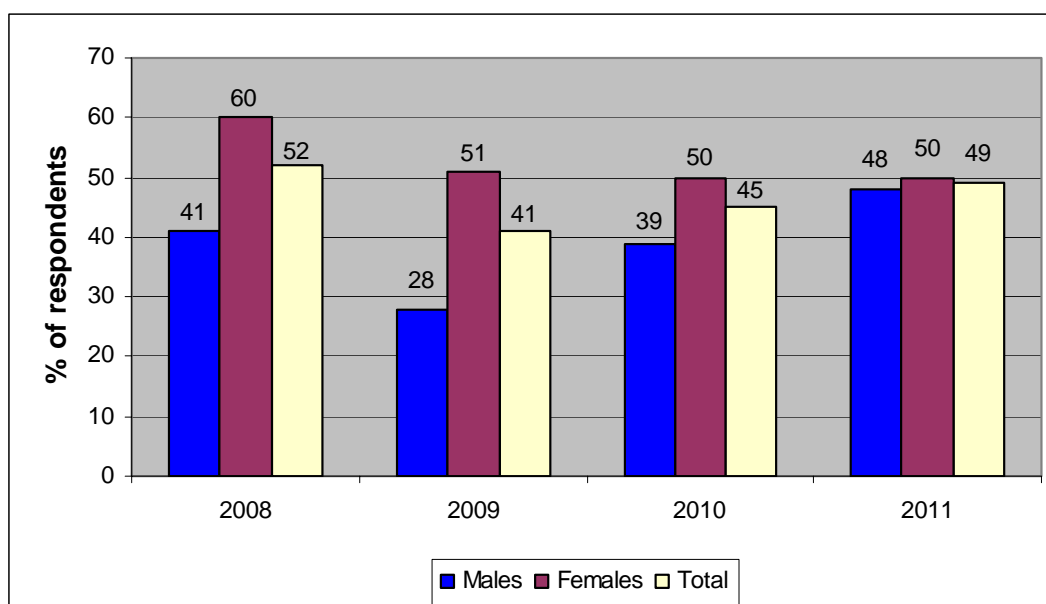
Of all parents interviewed, 96% felt that it was very important to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.

Almost one-quarter (23%) of parents reported that they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time, for example, for a family break or holiday. Over half (56%) of the parents questioned would not be happy to do so and the remainder felt that it depended on the circumstances.

Parental Involvement

Forty-nine per cent of parents felt very involved in their child's school life, with a further 39% feeling fairly involved. A similar proportion of females and males reported that they feel very involved in their child's school life (50% compared with 48%).

Chart 4 % of parents who feel very involved with their child's school life by gender



Parents reported different types of involvement in their child's school, for example, attending parent teacher meetings (85%); involvement with the parent teacher association (12%); helping out with school clubs (6%). Thirteen per cent of parents reported none of these involvements with the school.

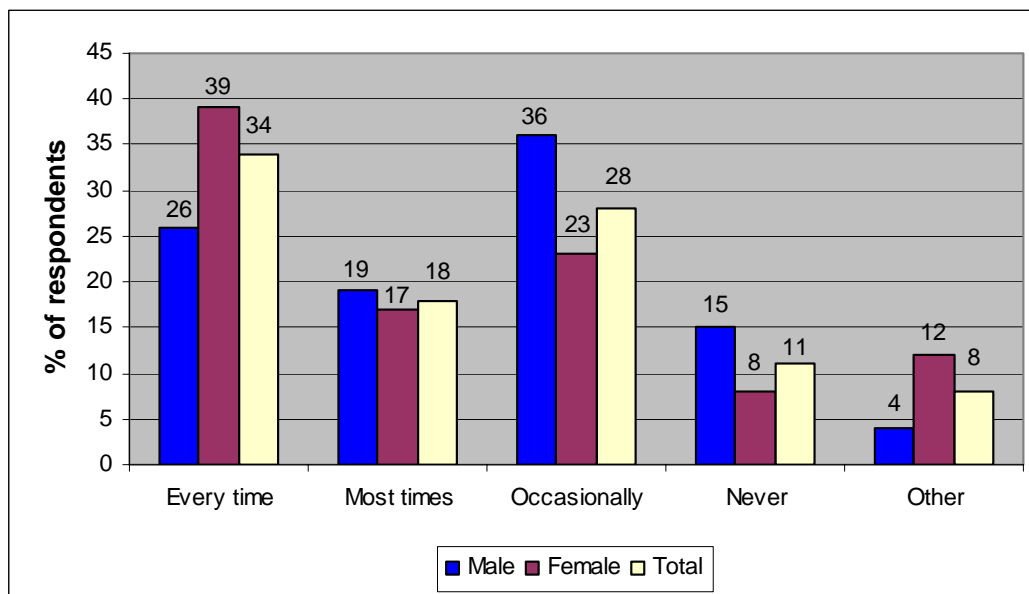
Table 3 Type of parental involvement in their child's school

Activity	% of respondents
Attending parent teacher meetings	85
Helping out in the classroom	4
Helping out with dinner duties/school trips and so on	9
Helping out with school clubs	6
Getting involved with the Parent Teacher Association	12
None of these	13

A total of 99% of parents felt that it was important to help their child with schoolwork. Eighty-five per cent felt that it was very important and a further 14% of parents considered it to be quite important to help their child with schoolwork.

When asked how often they helped their child with their homework, one-third (34%) said every time and slightly over one quarter (28%) did so occasionally. Eighteen per cent said most times and 11% never. Females were more likely to help every time than males (39% and 26% respectively). Chart 5 shows how often parents help with homework by gender.

Chart 5 How often do you help your child with their homework? ¹



¹ Other includes: Doesn't get homework, (SPONTANEOUS) Depends what it is, (SPONTANEOUS) When the child asks for help, Don't know.

Only 29% of parents reported that they were always confident in helping their children with their homework, a decrease on the 36% who reported this in 2010, 7% were never confident.

Further enquiries

Requests for further information should be addressed to:-

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