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Northern Ireland
**Statistics &
Research**
Agency

OMNIBUS SURVEY

Education Module

September 2008

Background to the Omnibus Survey

The Omnibus Survey is carried out on a quarterly basis by 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 September survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency, the most up-to-date list of private addresses. A total of 2,200 addresses were selected for interview, of which 1,956 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 1,213 interviews were achieved between 1st and 30th September 2008, giving a response rate of 62%.

Education Module

This paper outlines the main findings from the first Education module of the Omnibus Survey. Twenty one 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. It is anticipated that the module will be repeated regularly to produce a time series of comparable information.

ALL RESPONDENTS

Do you agree or disagree that:

Children in NI get a good education

In total, 92% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that children at school here get a good education – the majority agreed (57%) while a further 35% strongly agreed. Those in older age groups were more likely to strongly agree with the statement – 43% of 50-64 year olds compared with 25% of 16-24 year olds. However, in terms of overall percentage that either agreed or strongly agreed, there was little variation between age groups, gender and religion. In total, only 2% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

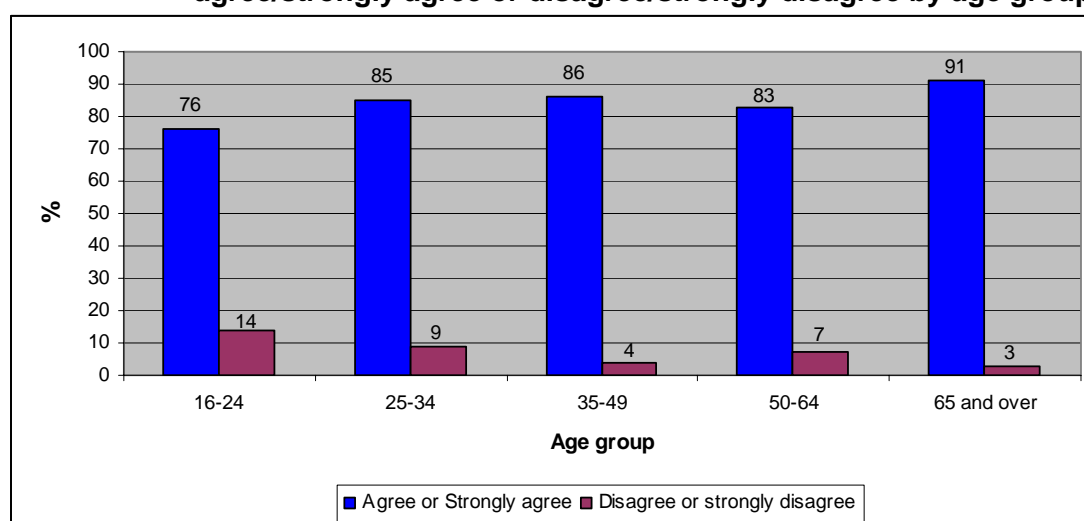
Table 1 Do you agree that NI children get a good education?

Response	% of respondents
Strongly agree	35
Agree	57
Neither agree or disagree	5
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	0
Don't know	1

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

Over four-fifths (84%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that staying on at school is important if you want to get a good job. People in urban areas were more likely to strongly agree (48%) with this than people in rural areas (39%), however in terms of overall percentage that either agreed or strongly agreed, there was little difference. Respondents in younger age groups were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with this statement than those in older age groups – 14% aged 16-24 years compared with 3% aged 65 and over (Chart 1).

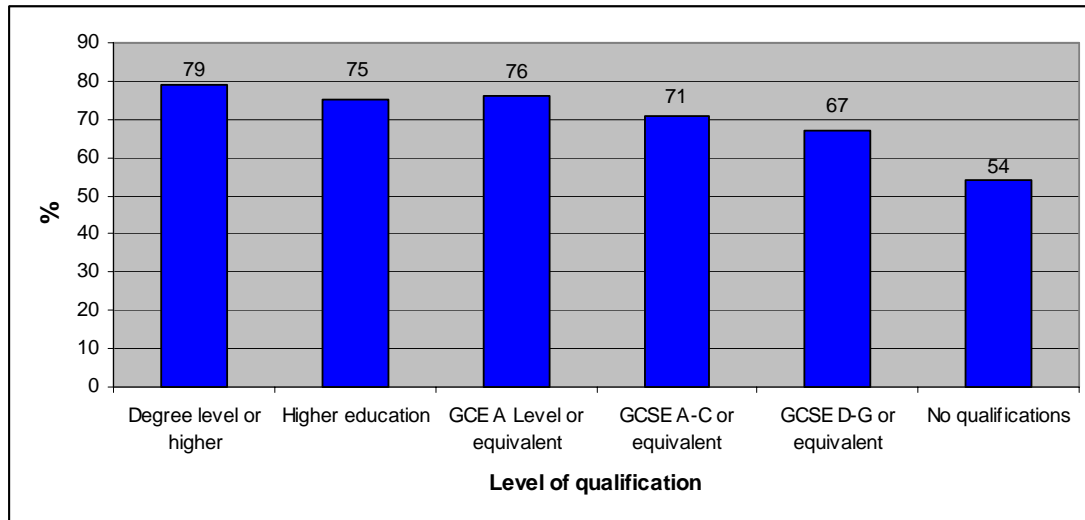
Chart 1 'Staying on at school is important if you want to get a good job' – agree/strongly agree or disagree/strongly disagree by age group



I enjoyed my time at school

Overall, 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed their time at school, with females more likely to report this than males (74% 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 – 79% compared with 54% (Chart 2).

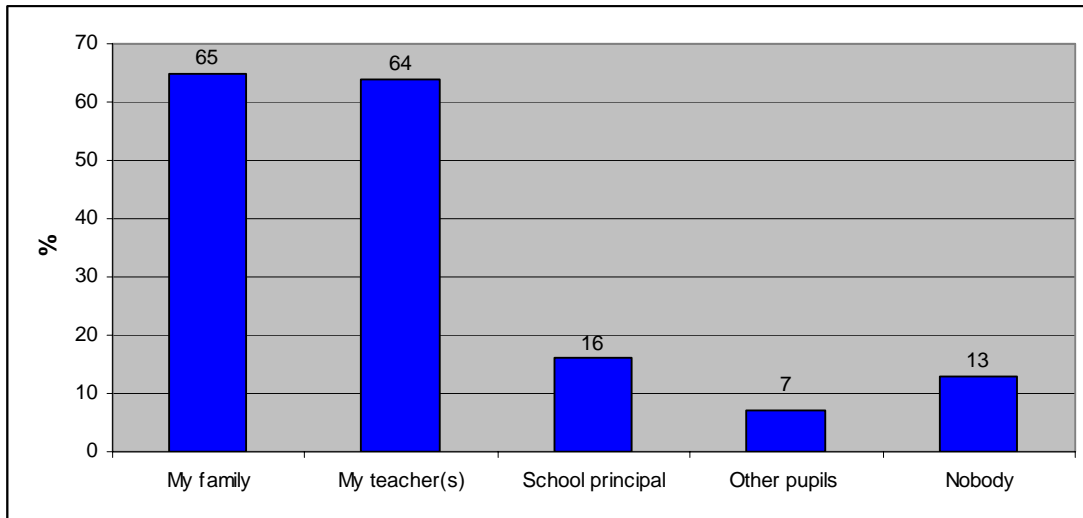
Chart 2 'I enjoyed my time at school' – agree/strongly agree or respondent's level of qualification



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

Of the 1,210 people who answered this question, 65% of respondents reported that their family encouraged them to do well at school, followed closely by their teacher (64%). The school principal and other pupils were other reported influences, with 13% saying that nobody influenced them (Chart 3). People aged 65 and over were most likely to say that nobody encouraged them to do well at school (23%), as were people with no qualifications (31%). This compares with 4% of 16-24 year olds and 3% of those educated to degree level or higher.

Chart 3 Which of the following people encouraged you to do well at school

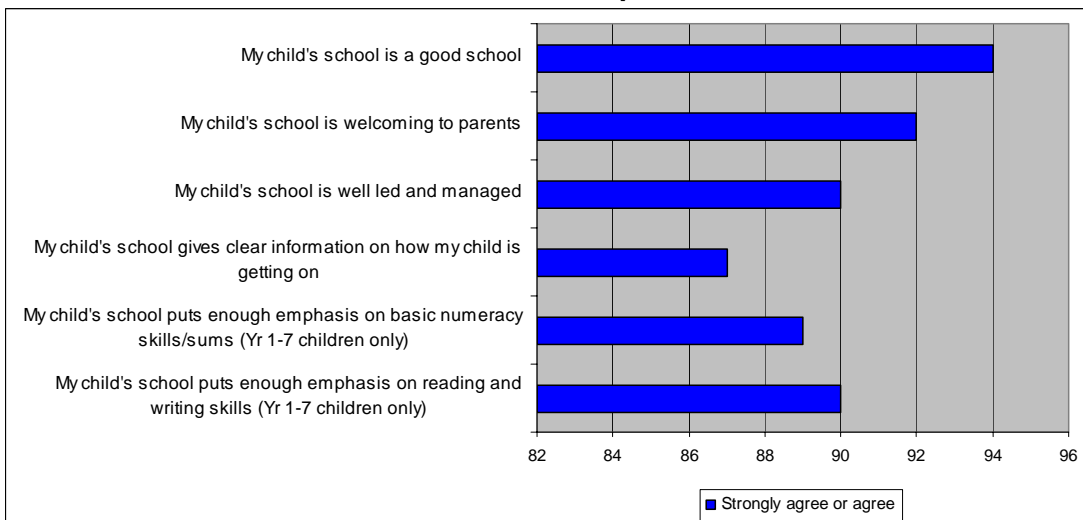


PARENT QUESTIONS

Of the 319 parents asked about their own child, 94% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their child’s school is a good school. Only 1% of respondents disagreed. Similarly, 46% of parents strongly agreed that they find their child’s school welcoming to parents and the same proportion reported that they agreed with the statement. Again, 1% disagreed that they find their child’s school welcoming to parents.

Over 90% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that their child’s school is well led and managed. Eighty-seven per cent of parents questioned either strongly agreed or agreed that their child’s school gives clear information on how their child is getting on, while 5% of parents disagreed. Of the 198 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 – 90% and 89% respectively.

Chart 4 Parental views in relation to aspects of their child’s school



Almost all parents interviewed (96%) felt that it was very important to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time. This proportion is the same as that reported by research in England in 2007.¹ A higher proportion of NI parents (83%) felt that it was very important to help their child with homework than in England (73%).¹ A further 15% of NI parents considered it to be quite important to help their child with homework.

Around one fifth of parents (19%) reported that they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time, for example, for a family break or holiday. This figure was higher in England where 48% of parents reported that they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time.¹ In NI, 60% would not be happy to do so and the remainder felt that it depended on the circumstances.

Parental Involvement

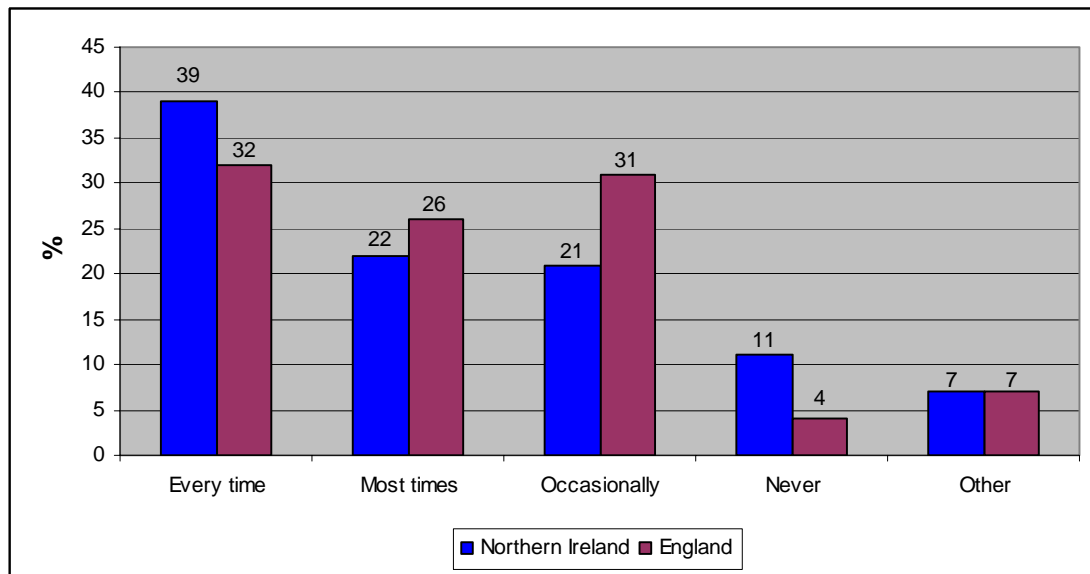
Over half of parents (52%) feel very involved in their child's school life, while a further 38% feel fairly involved. These figures compare closely to England, where 51% of parents felt very involved in their child's school life and a further 41% felt fairly involved.¹ As in England,¹ females here were more likely to report that they feel very involved than males (60% compared with 41%). Parents reported different types of involvement in their child's school, for example, parent teacher meetings (81%); parent teacher association (16%); helping out with school clubs (8%). Sixteen per cent of parents reported none of these involvements with the school.

Table 2 Type of parental involvement in their child's school

Activity	% of respondents
Attending parent teacher meetings	81
Helping out in the classroom	2
Helping out with dinner duties/school trips and so on	6
Helping out with school clubs	8
Getting involved with the Parent Teacher Association	16
None of these	16

When asked how often they helped their child with their homework, almost two-fifths of parents (39%) said every time; 22% most times and 11% never. Chart 4 shows how this compares with England in 2007.¹

Chart 5 How often do you help your child with their homework? NI responses compared to England.



Thirty-six per cent of parents reported that they are always confident in helping their children with their homework, with a similar proportion (40%) feeling confident most of the time (33% and 44% respectively in England).¹ Four per cent were never confident and a further 3% said it depends what it is, compared with 1% in both categories in England.¹

References:

1. Peters M, Seeds K, Goldstein A, and Coleman N. (2008) Parental Involvement in Children’s Education 2007. Research report. DCSF RR034.

Further enquiries

Requests for further information should be addressed to:-

Oonagh Cunning
 Statistics and Research Branch
 Department of Education
 Rathgael House
 Balloo Road
 BANGOR
 Co. Down
 BT19 7PR
 Telephone (028) 9127 9438
 e-mail: oonagh.cunning@deni.gov.uk