

Student Health and Wellbeing in Wales: Key  
findings from the 2021 School Health  
Research Network Primary School Student  
Health and Wellbeing Survey



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Elements of this report also draw upon secondary analysis of a 2019 survey funded by Cancer Research UK (C57590/A25754).

The work was also supported by DECIPHer, which is funded by Welsh Government through Health and Care Research Wales, and the Wolfson Centre for Young People’s Mental Health, established with a grant from the Wolfson Foundation.



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# Background

- The School Health Research Network (SHRN)<sup>1</sup> has developed an engaged model of research across all mainstream secondary schools in Wales, with schools as partners.
- This includes student and school-level surveys every two years, capturing a regular snapshot of 11 to 16 year olds' health behaviours and wellbeing.
- However, a focus solely on adolescence is too late for many young people, with our previous work for example showing that a substantial number of young people have clinically significant emotional difficulties by the time they finish primary school<sup>2</sup>.
- Expanding SHRN into primary schools offers an opportunity for joined up working across childhood and adolescence, and an avenue to better understand and support events such as transition to secondary school.
- In August 2020, the Welsh Government provided funding for work to develop a model for expansion of SHRN to primary schools and to evaluate a number of key feasibility related issues.
- This included a national survey of Year 6 pupils, with local authority booster samples, to enable reporting of pupil wellbeing data at school, local authority and national levels.
- Here, we present national data from 2021, with preliminary comparisons to a similar survey from 2019. The surveys used somewhat different methods, with changes made to enable the 2021 survey within COVID-19 social distancing measures (more detailed analyses of change over time are underway for journal articles and will be submitted for peer review in the coming months).

# Research design (1)

## Survey design

- Based on a review of existing measures within SHRN (and their suitability for primary school aged pupils), stakeholder feedback, a consultation with the young people's public involvement group ALPHA, and a review of other wellbeing measures used in UK primary school surveys a survey was developed.
- Where possible, to aid comparability with our secondary school survey, items were the same, or simplified versions of questions asked in the SHRN Student Health and Wellbeing Survey.<sup>3</sup>
- Some questions mirrored those used in a previous primary school survey by DECIPHer<sup>2</sup> in order to allow a comparison of responses gathered prior to and during the pandemic.

# Research design (2)

## Methods

- A bilingual 36-question online survey was developed
- Pupils in Year 6\* (aged 10-11) were invited to participate
- A research protocol was provided to each school to ensure consistent survey administration. The survey was overseen by teachers in a classroom setting
- Data collection took place between April and July in 2021 (postponed from the previous term following closure of schools to most pupils in December 2020)

## Consent

- Schools signed an agreement
- Parents were informed of the study and given the opportunity to opt their child out if they did not want them to participate
- Children provided assent, if they wished to participate

*\*In 27 schools with smaller or joint year groups, Year 5 pupils also participated but given the small non-representative sample (N=419) data are not included within this report.*

# Research design (3)

## Sampling

- Overall 224 schools were invited to take part in the survey, including:
  - 73 that had taken part in a similar survey in 2019 (plus one additional school to replace a school who declined immediately).
  - 150 from four case-study local authorities with sampling stratified by the proportion of children eligible for free school meals

## Response rates

- 118 schools initially agreed, but following school closure delays, and the rise of the Delta variant, some did not complete the survey within the allotted time
- Overall **76 schools** took part , from 19 out of 22 local authorities in Wales (**34%**)
  - School response rates are lower than previous surveys, which might cause some biases
- Pupil level response rates within participating schools were **80%** (vs 88% in 2019).
  - Median response rate was 88%, with the mean reduced by a small number of schools who achieved low rates.
- 71 schools completed the survey online and 5 in pen and paper format
- Fewer than 1% of parents opted their child out, while 14 pupils declined to participate in the survey
- **1863 Year 6 pupils** completed the survey

# Notes on reporting

- Missingness varied for individual survey items
- We are more confident in estimates with a lower level of missingness
- Base numbers are provided across items reported. A colour code denotes the level of missingness:
  - **Green** - less than 5% missing data
  - **Amber** - 5-10%
  - **Red** - >10%



# Sample demographics

## Free School Meal (FSM) tertiles:

- **Low:** fewer than 12% of pupils entitled to FSM
- **Medium:** between 12% -22% of pupils entitled to FSM
- **High:** More than 22% of pupils entitled to FSM

	% of pupils eligible for FSM		
	Low	Med	High
<b>Participating schools (N)</b>	27	24	25
<b>No response (N)</b>	38	53	35
<b>Declined/Withdrawn (N)</b>	8	6	7

*Note: One school did not have a FSM% available*

Weighting - weights were applied to correct for disproportionately sampled local authorities and variable response by local authority

\*FAS scores are the sum of 5 out of the 6 items used in secondary surveys. The 6th item (frequency of family holidays) was omitted as it was not completed by ~20% of pupils, while children who did complete it were several times less likely to report family holidays than in previous years, likely due to COVID-19. Unlike other FAS items, variation in this item was unrelated to FSM entitlement.

Participating Pupils		
		%
<b>Family Affluence Score*4</b>	Low	31
	Med	42
	High	27
<b>Gender</b>	Boy	47
	Girl	49
	Other gender identity	1
	Missing	2
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White British	84
	White non-British	6
	Other	10
<b>Live with..</b>	Both parents	68
	Step family	10
	Single mum	16
	Single dad	1

# Main findings from 2021

The following sections are reported:

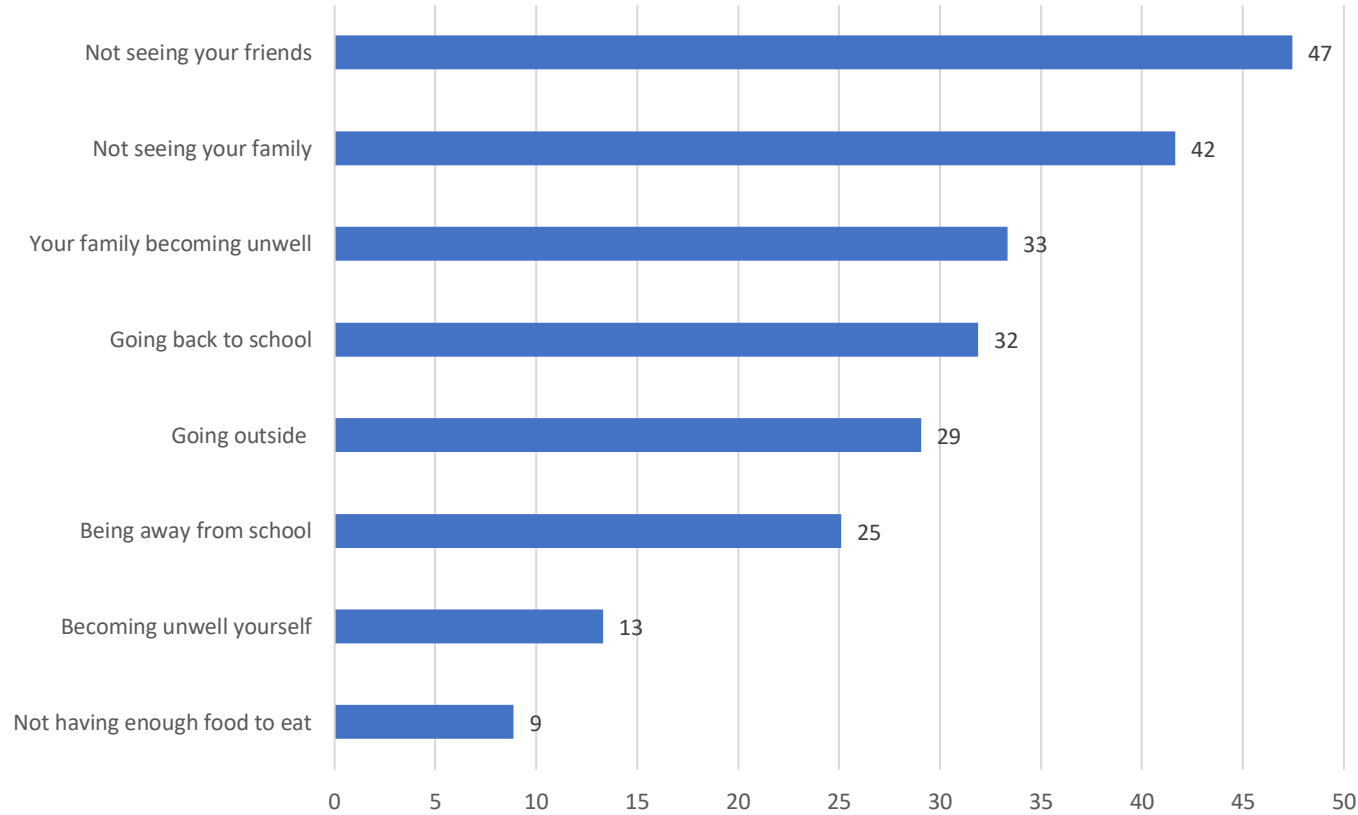
- 1) COVID-19 Worries
- 2) Mental health and wellbeing
- 3) Healthy eating and physical activity
- 4) School connectedness
- 5) School transition
- 6) Electronic devices (screen use)
- 7) Sleep
- 8) Household smoking
- 9) Comparisons of measures available from both 2019 and 2021

## Use of questions across SHRN surveys

Primary SHW survey	Secondary SHW survey <sup>3</sup>
Gender	✓ (modified version)
School year	✓
Age (month and year of birth)	✓
Ethnicity	✓ (longer version)
Family structure (i.e. who you live with)	✓ (longer version)
Main language spoken in home	✓
Parental education	
Parental employment	
Family Affluence Scale <sup>4</sup>	✓
Life satisfaction (Cantril Scale)	✓
Me and My Feelings Questionnaire (modified version; Deighton et al., 2013) <sup>5</sup>	
SHRN internalising symptoms	✓
Student life satisfaction scale (Huebner, 1991) <sup>6</sup>	
Covid worries	
Liking school	✓
Relationships with other pupils	✓
School involvement	✓
Relationships with school staff	✓
School transition (Rice et al., 2017, 2021) <sup>7,8</sup>	
Use of technology and social media	✓ (longer version)
Parental limits on electronic devices	
Smoking habits among family members	
Bedtime	✓
Fruit and vegetable consumption	✓
Physical activity	✓

# 1) COVID-19 WORRIES

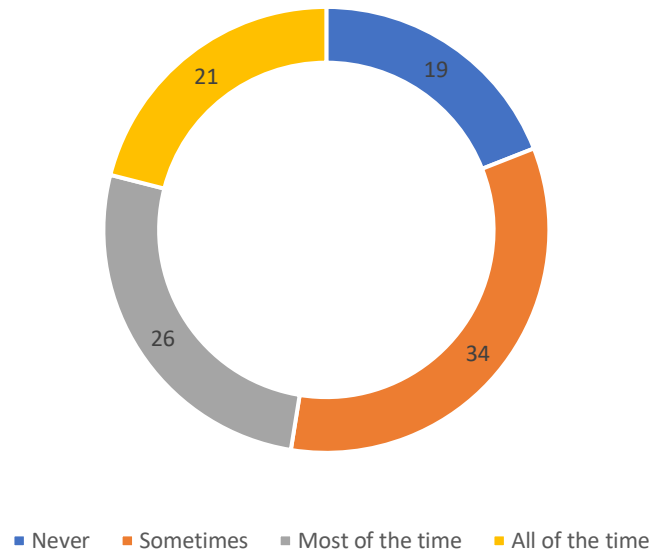
**Figure 1.1 Percentage who reported being worried about a range of issues during the pandemic most or all of the time (%)**



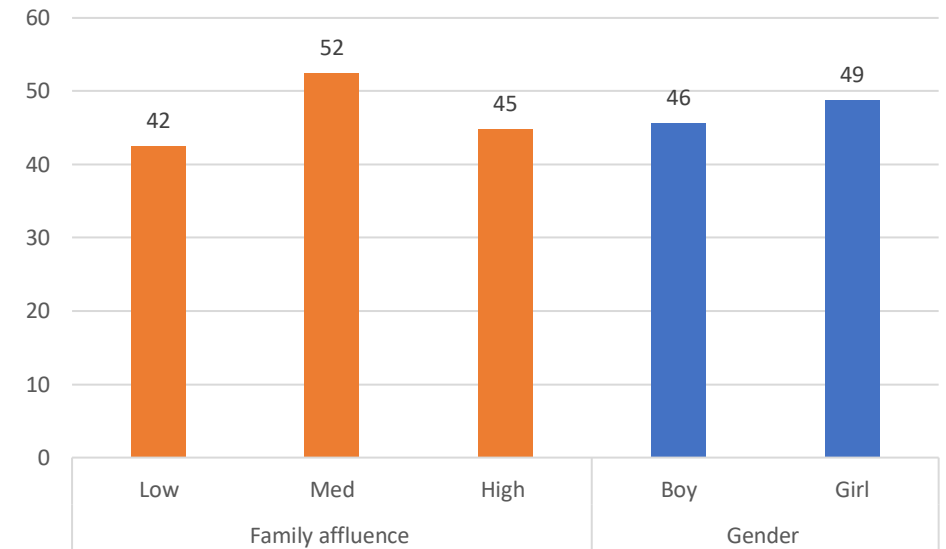
- Children’s top reported worries during the pandemic related to social relationships
- Approximately one in three reported persistent worries about their family becoming ill, going back to school or going outside
- One in 8 reported persistent worries about becoming unwell themselves
- One in 11 reported persistent worries about having enough to eat

*Base (variation per item): All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,769 to 1,809)*

**Figure 1.2 Percentage who reported feeling worried about not seeing their friends during the pandemic (%)**



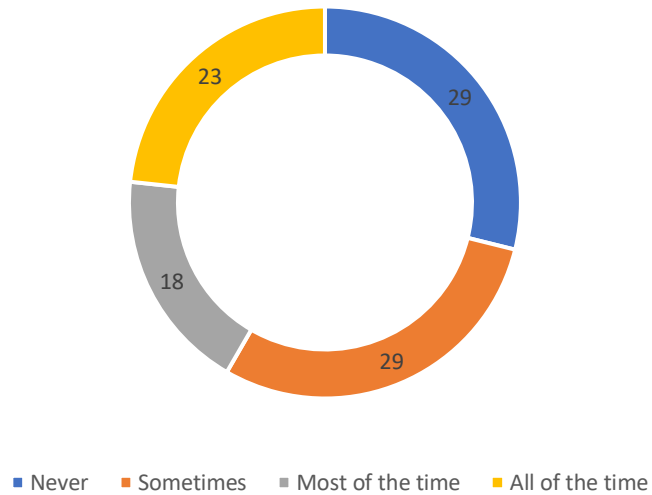
**Figure 1.3 Percentage who reported feeling worried about not seeing their friends during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**



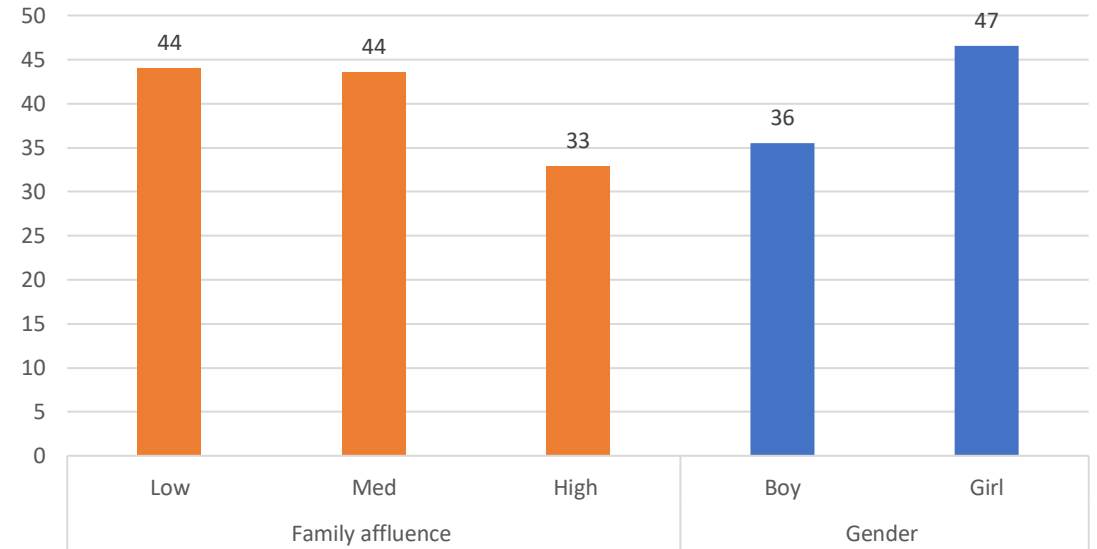
- 81% of children reported feeling worried about not seeing their friends at least some of the time, including 47% who reported worrying most or all of the time
- Girls were marginally more likely than boys to report being worried most or all of the time, with persistent worries most commonly reported among children from the medium family affluence group

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,809)*

**Figure 1.4 Percentage who reported feeling worried about not seeing their family during the pandemic (%)**



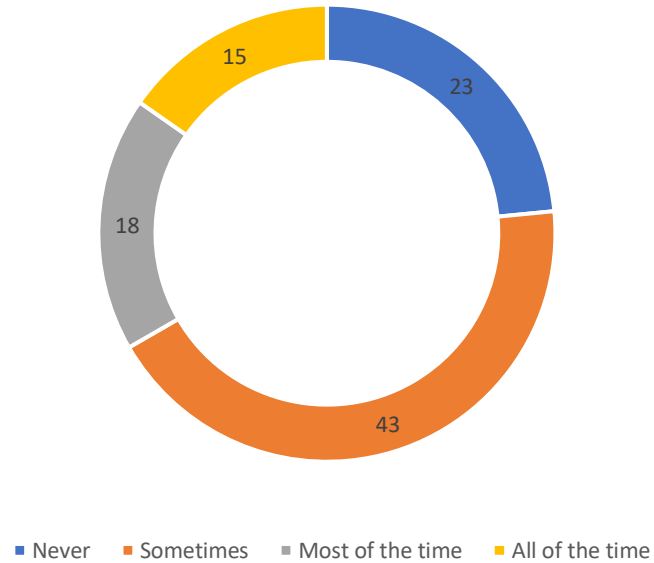
**Figure 1.5 Percentage who reported feeling worried about not seeing their family during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**



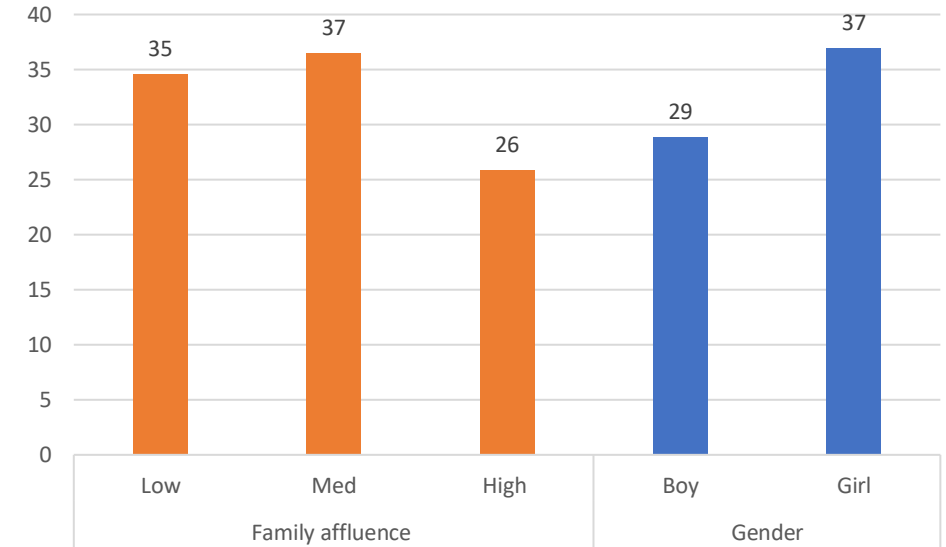
- 71% of children reported feeling worried about not seeing their family at least some of the time, including 42% who reported worry most or all of the time
- Girls were more likely than boys to report feeling worried most or all of the time, with persistent worries more commonly reported among children from low and medium affluence families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,802)*

**Figure 1.6 Percentage of children who reported feeling worried about their family becoming unwell during the pandemic (%)**



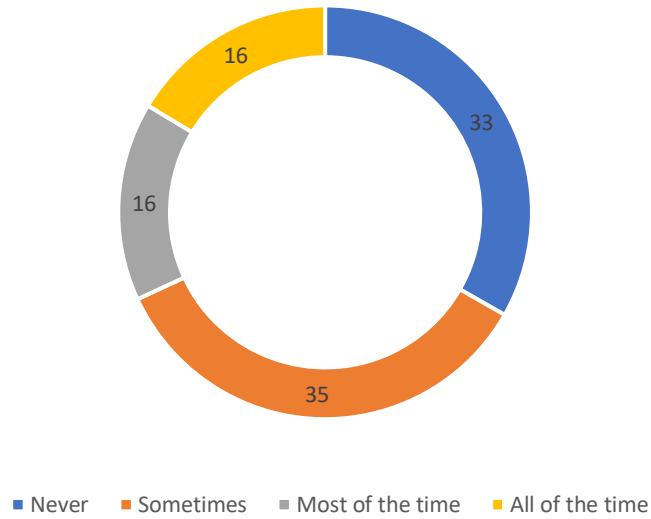
**Figure 1.7 Percentage who reported feeling worried about their family becoming unwell during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**



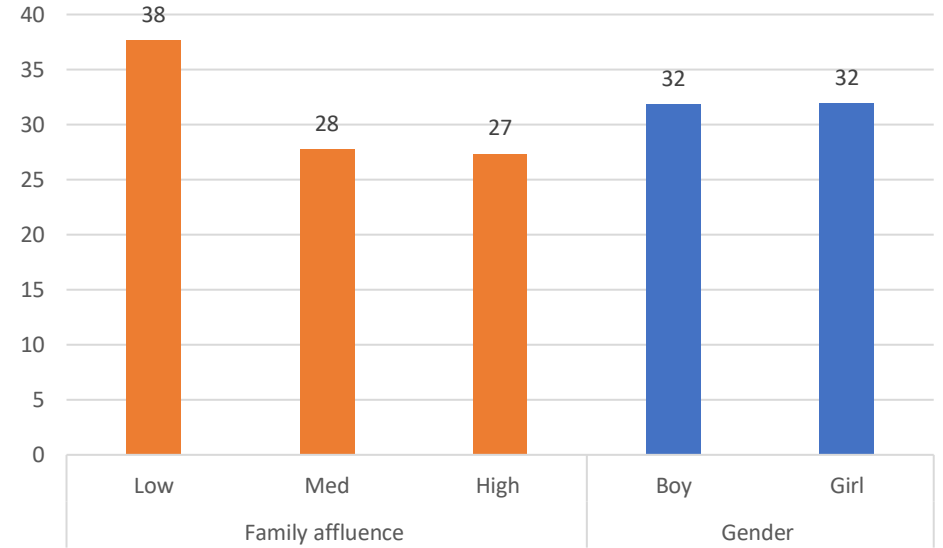
- 77% of children reported feeling worried about their family becoming unwell at least some of the time, including 33% all or most of the time
- Girls were more likely than boys to report being worried most or all of the time, with persistent worries more commonly reported among children from the lower and medium family affluence groups

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,771)*

**Figure 1.8 Percentage who reported feeling worried about going back to school during the pandemic (%)**



**Figure 1.9 Percentage who reported feeling worried about going back to school during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**

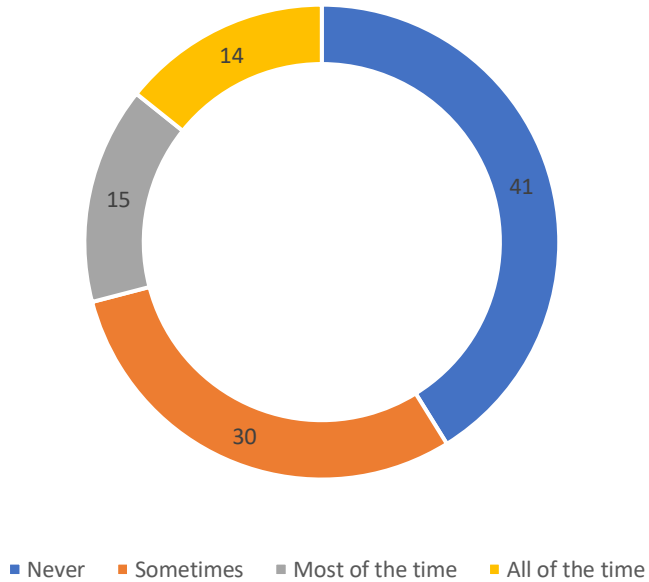


- 67% of children reported feeling worried about going back to school at least some of the time, including 32% who reported being worried most or all of the time
- Children from the least affluent families were most likely to report being worried most or all of the time about going back to school

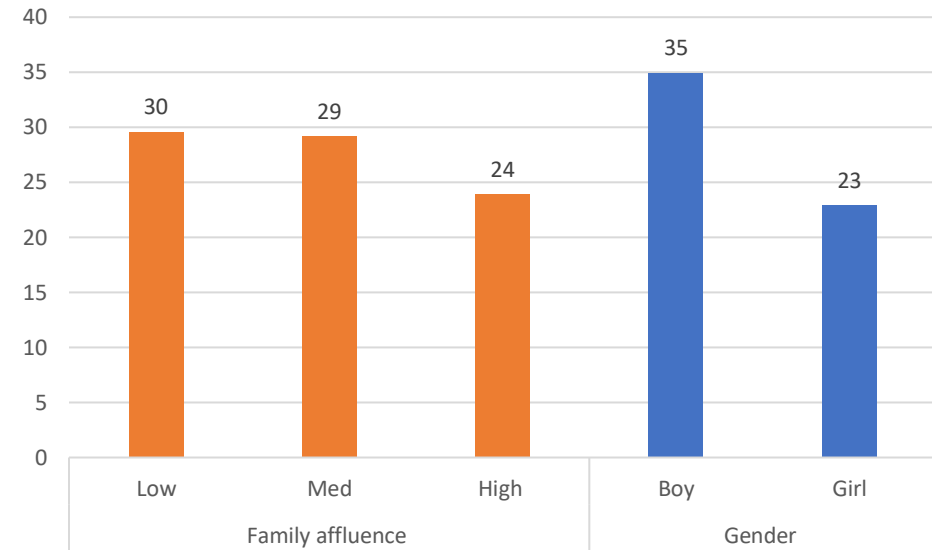
*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,784)*



**Figure 1.10 Percentage of children who reported feeling worried about going outside during the pandemic (%)**



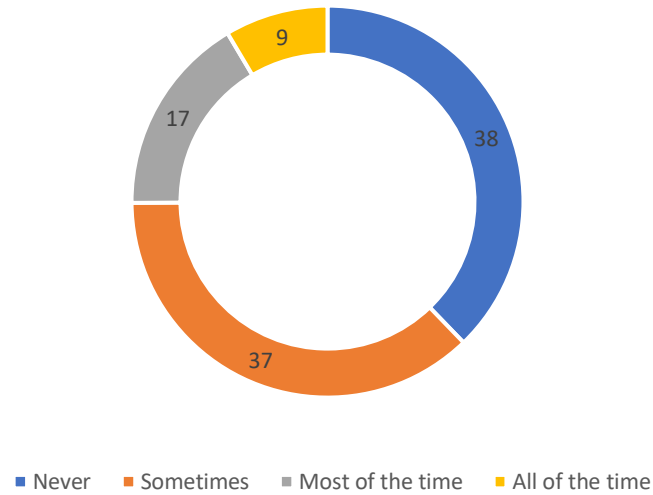
**Figure 1.11 Percentage who reported feeling worried about going outside during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**



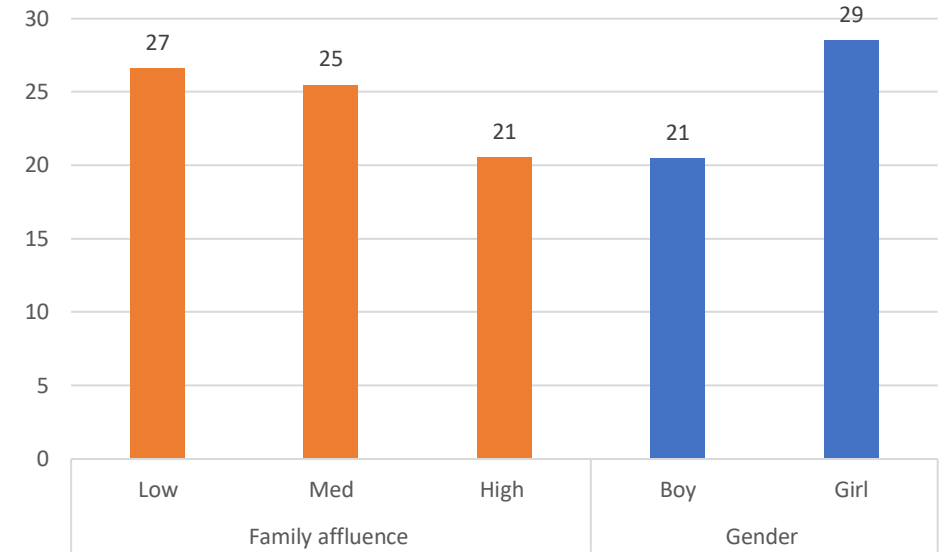
- 59% of children reported that they worried about going outside at least some of the time, including 29% who reported being worried most or all of the time
- Boys were more likely to report being worried about going outside most or all of the time, with persistent worries slightly more commonly reported among children from less affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,797)*

**Figure 1.12 Percentage of children who reported feeling worried about being away from school during the pandemic (%)**



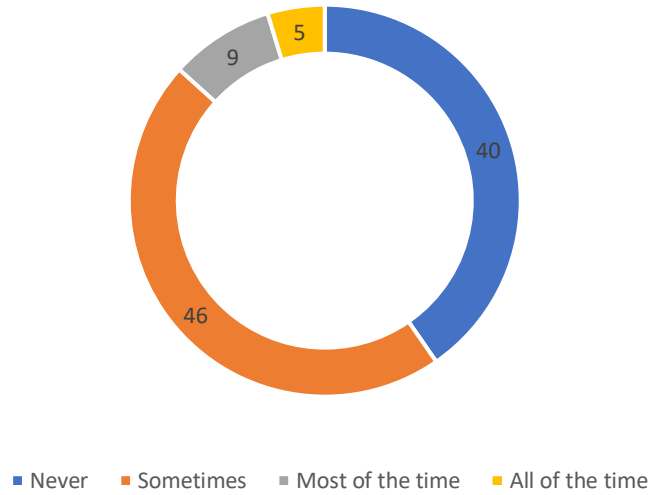
**Figure 1.13 Percentage of children who reported feeling worried about being away from school during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**



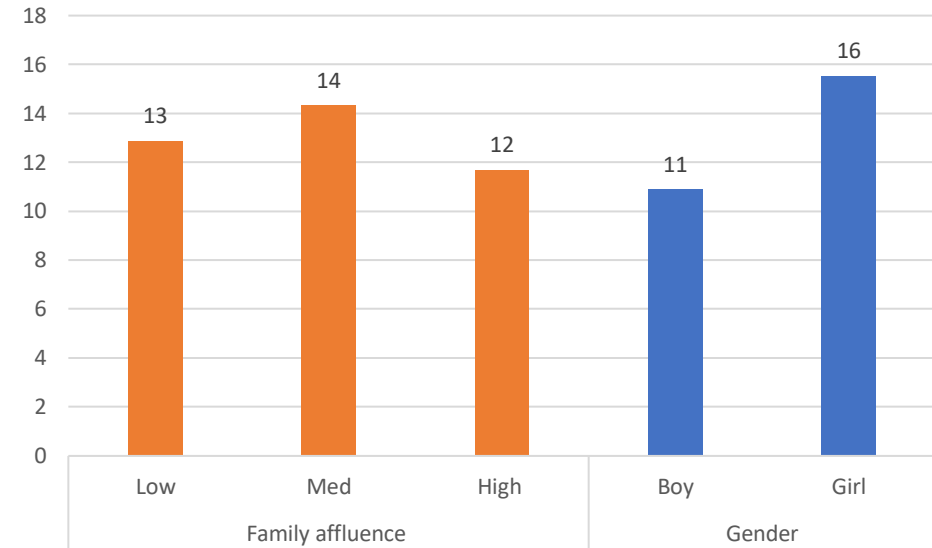
- 62% of children reported feeling worried about being away from school at least some of the time, including 25% who reported worry most or all of the time
- Girls were more likely than boys to report being worried most or all of the time, with persistent worries slightly more commonly reported among children from less affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,804)*

**Figure 1.14 Percentage of children who reported feeling worried about becoming unwell themselves during the pandemic (%)**



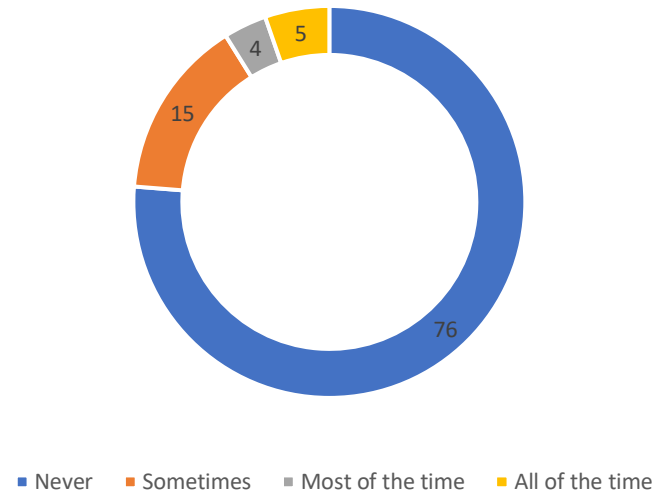
**Figure 1.15 Percentage who reported feeling worried about becoming unwell themselves during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**



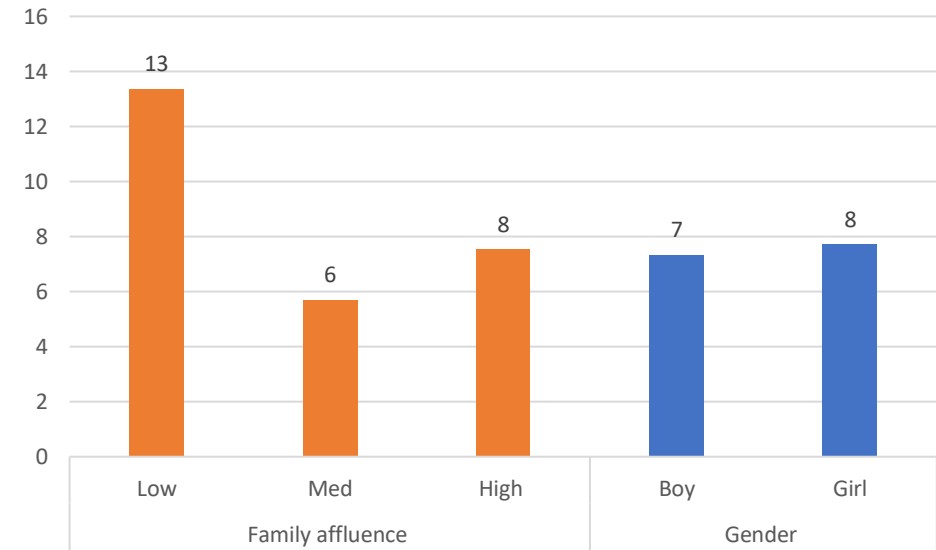
- 60% of children reported feeling worried about becoming unwell themselves at least some of the time, including 14% who reported worry most or all of the time
- Girls were more likely than boys to report being worried most or all of the time

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,769)*

**Figure 1.16 Percentage who reported feeling worried about not having enough food to eat (%)**



**Figure 1.17 Percentage who reported feeling worried about having enough food to eat during the pandemic most or all of the time, by gender and family affluence (%)**

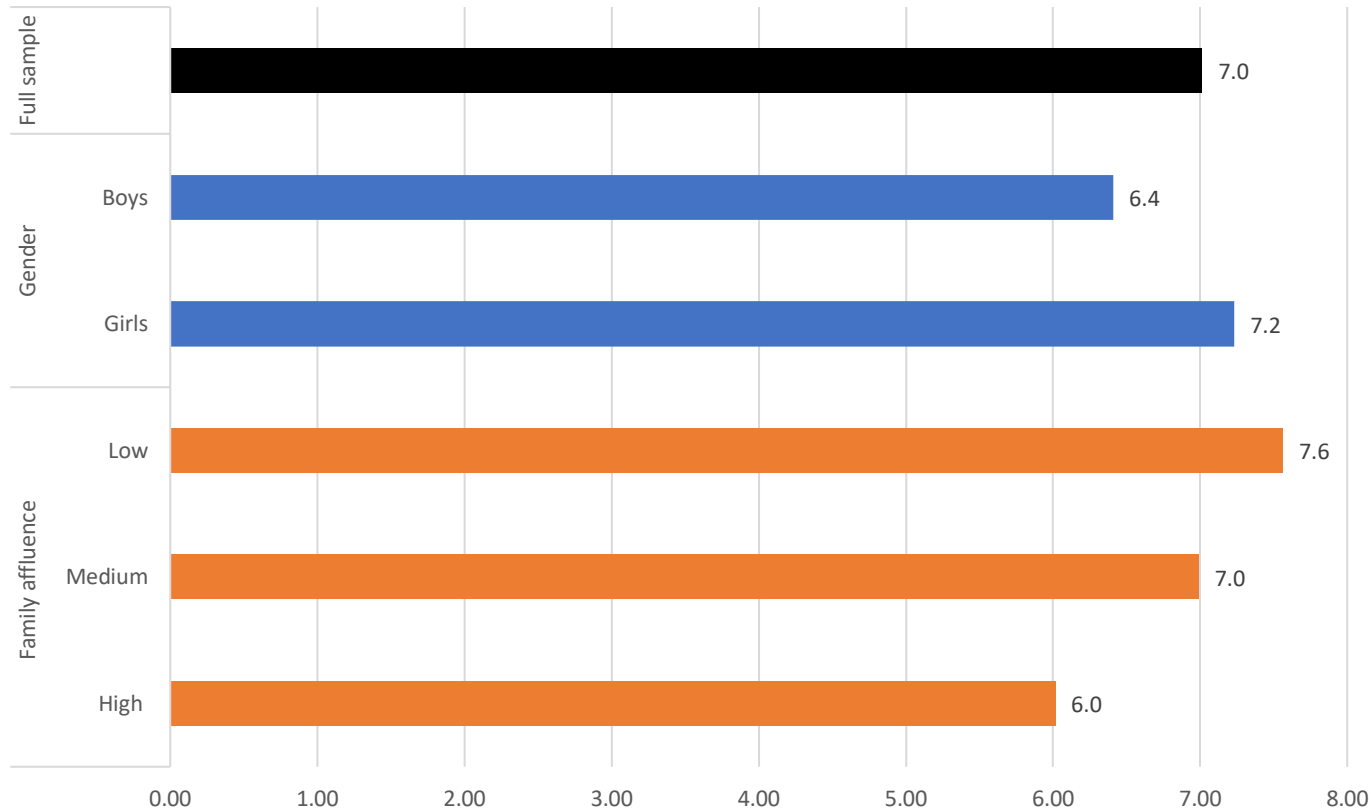


- 24% of children reported feeling worried about not having enough to eat at least some of the time, including 9% who reported worrying most or all of the time
- Children from the least affluent families were most likely to report feeling worried most or all of the time about not having enough to eat

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,780)*

## 2) MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**Figure 2.1 Mean emotional difficulties score on the Me and My Feelings Questionnaire<sup>5\*</sup>, overall and by gender and family affluence**

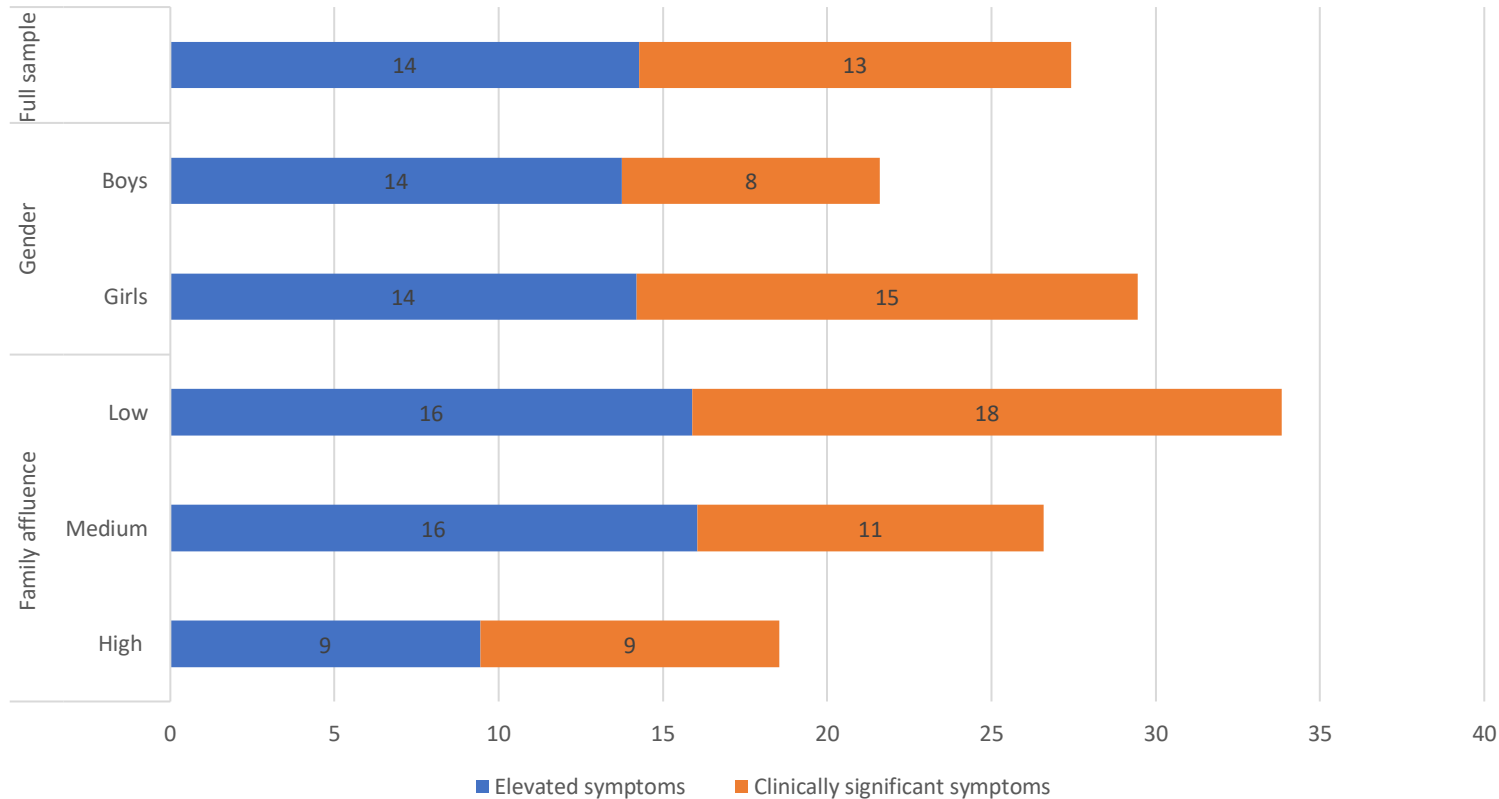


- A higher score on this scale (range=0-20) reflects higher emotional difficulties
- Girls had a higher average emotional difficulties score in comparison to boys (i.e. greater emotional difficulties)
- There was a clear socioeconomic gradient, with a higher mean score among students from less affluent families

*\*Scale scores are 'pro-rated' (i.e. based on the average of completed items) so long as >50% of individual items are completed. Only marginally different estimates were obtained where limited to 'complete cases' (mean=6.8)*

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,850)*

**Figure 2.2 Percentage who met the threshold for elevated or clinically significant emotional difficulties, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)<sup>5</sup>**

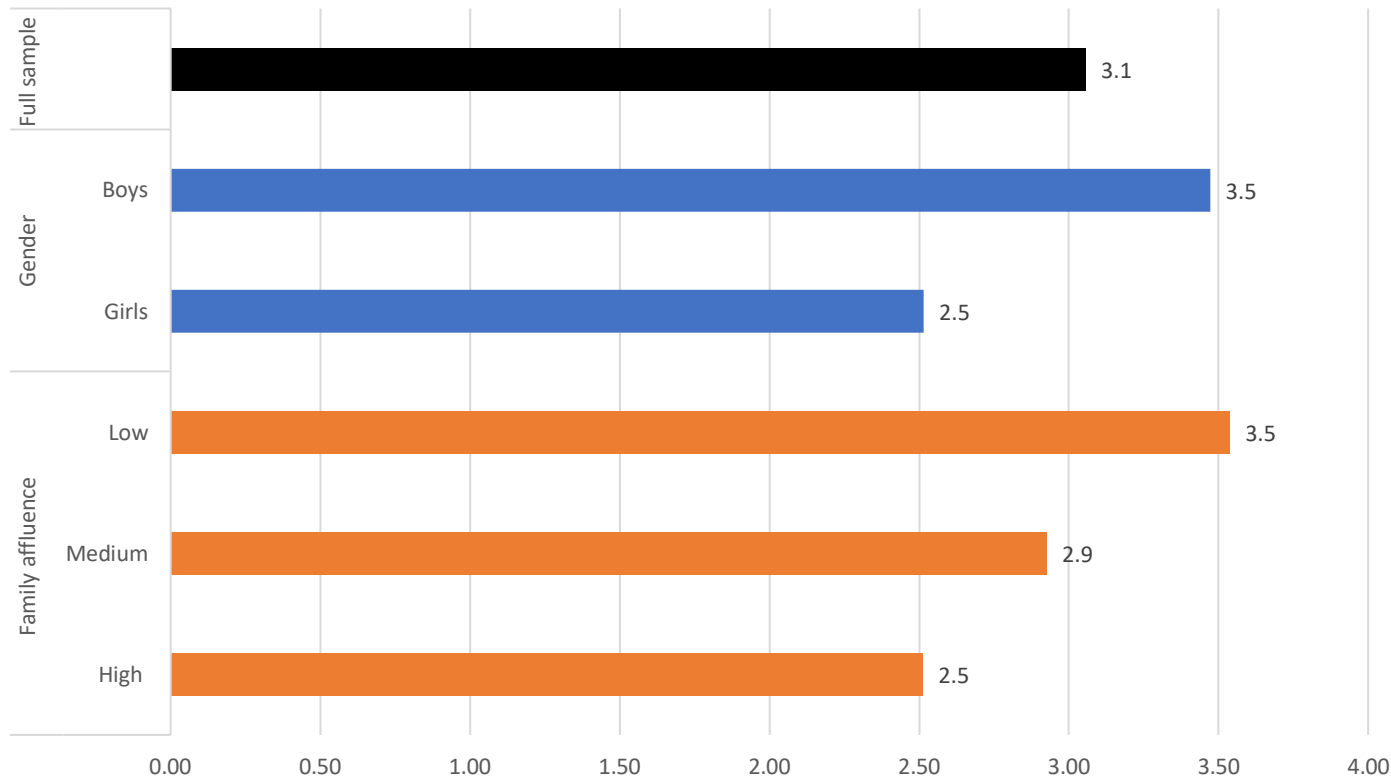


- Over a quarter of children reported elevated ( $\geq 10/20$ ) emotional difficulties, with 13% reporting clinically significant difficulties ( $\geq 12/20$ )\*
- More girls than boys reported significant emotional difficulties
- There was a clear social gradient, with children from the least affluent families most likely to report emotional difficulties.

*\*Scale scores are 'pro-rated' so long as >50% of individual items are completed. Where limited to complete cases, 25% report elevated or clinically significant emotional difficulties*

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,850)*

**Figure 2.3 Mean behavioural difficulties score on the Me and My Feelings Questionnaire<sup>5</sup>, overall and by gender and family affluence**



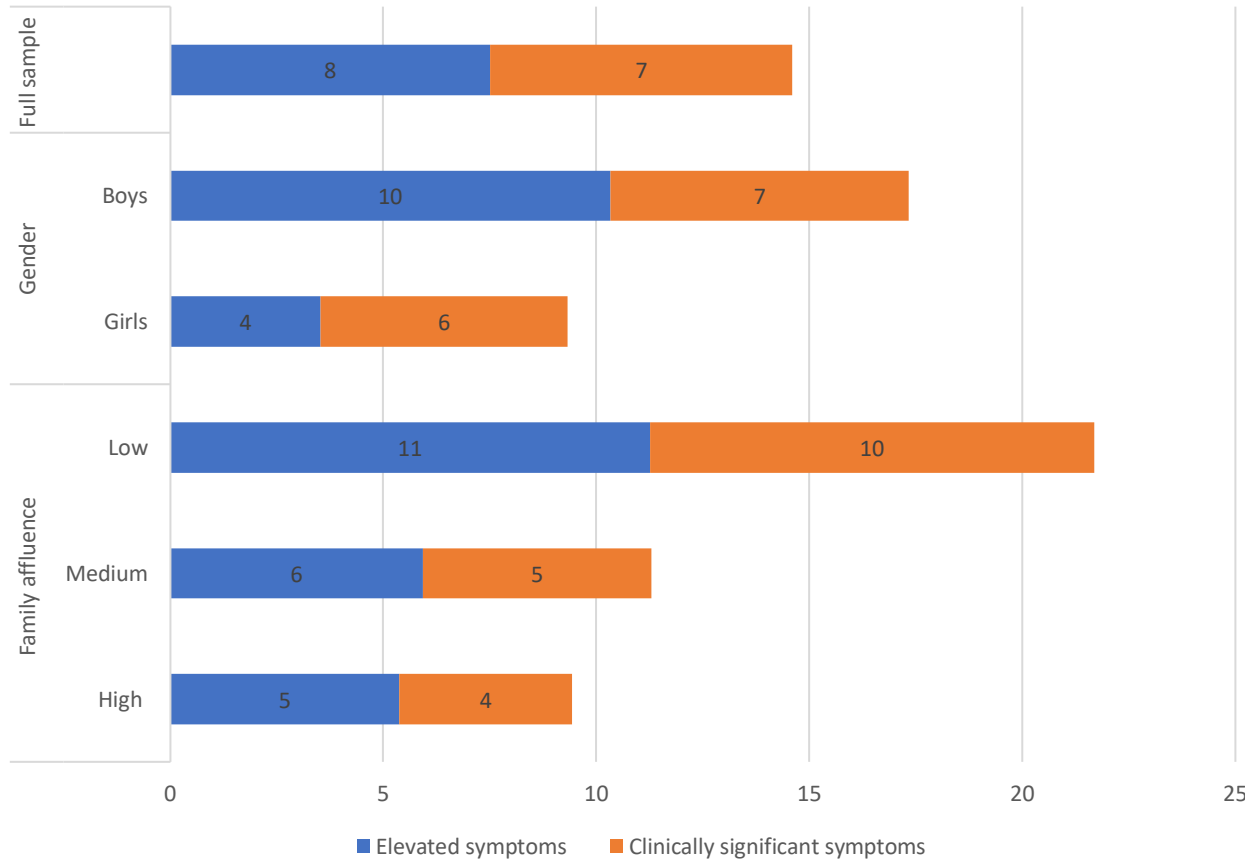
- A higher score on this scale (0-12) reflects higher behavioural difficulties
- Boys reported more behavioural difficulties on average in comparison to girls (i.e. greater behavioural difficulties)
- Children from the least affluent families reported the highest behavioural difficulties score, with those from the most affluent families reporting the lowest

*\*Scale scores are 'pro-rated' so long as >50% of individual items are completed. Similar estimates obtained where limited to 'complete cases' (full sample mean=3.0)*

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,838)*



**Figure 2.4 Percentage who met the threshold for elevated or clinically significant behavioural difficulties, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)<sup>5</sup>**

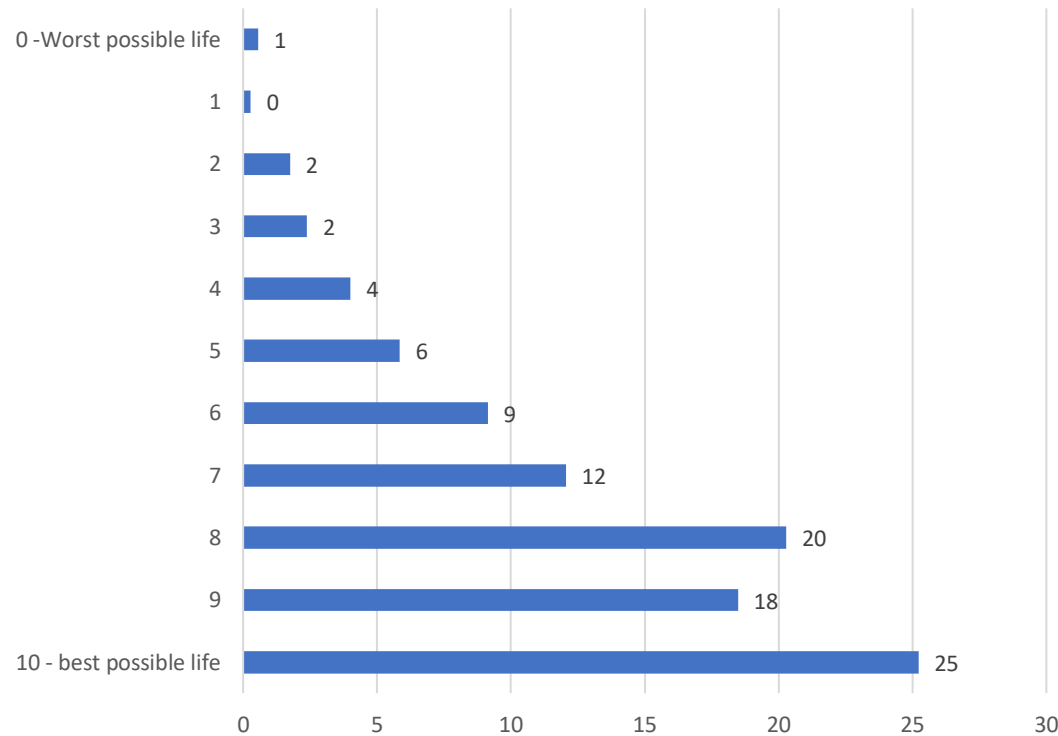


- 15% of children met the threshold for elevated (6/12) or clinically significant (>6/12) behavioural difficulties
- More boys reported elevated difficulties compared to girls
- Children from the least affluent families were most likely to report elevated behavioural difficulties

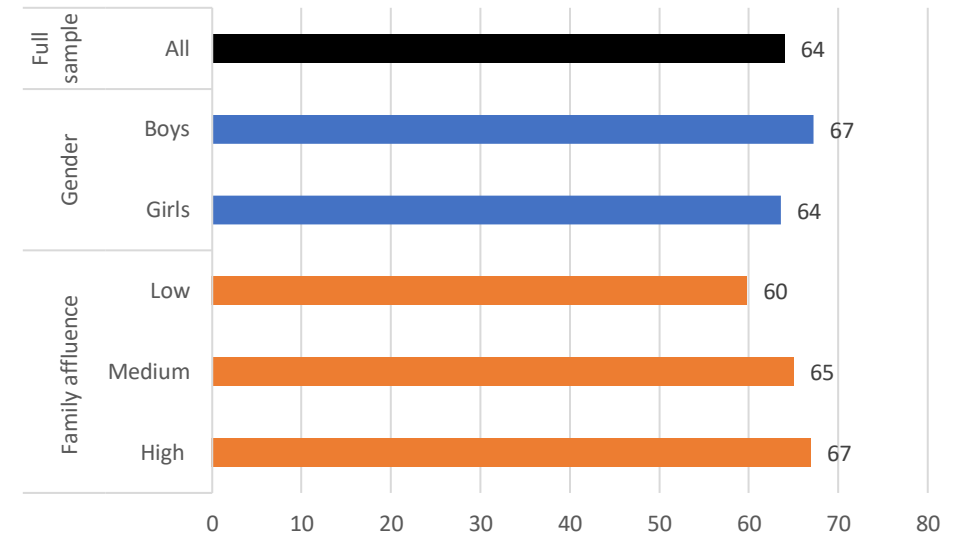
*\*Scale scores are 'pro-rated' so long as >50% of individual items are completed. Where limited to complete cases, 14% report elevated or clinically significant emotional difficulties*

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,838)*

**Figure 2.5 Life satisfaction scale (%)** <sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2.6 Percentage who rated their life satisfaction as 8 or more, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)** <sup>6</sup>

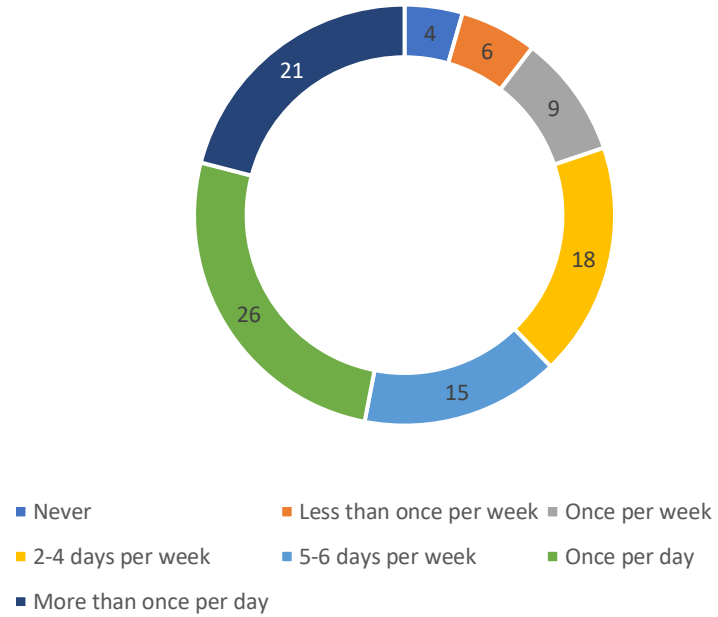


- 64% of children reported a high degree of life satisfaction (i.e.  $\geq 8/10$ ), with a slightly higher proportion of boys reporting high life satisfaction
- There is some evidence of a social gradient, with fewer children from less affluent families reporting high life satisfaction

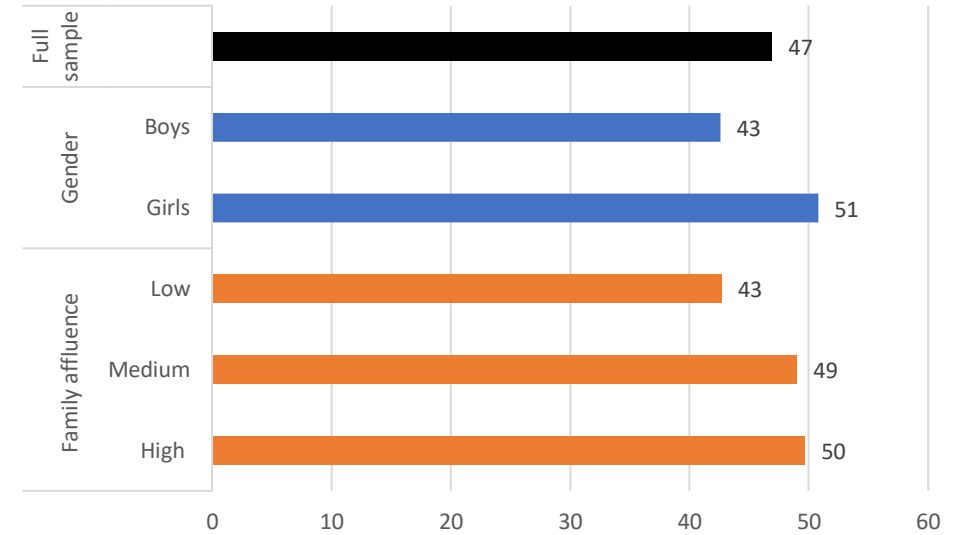
*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,770)*

### 3) HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**Figure 3.1 Frequency of fruit consumption (%)**



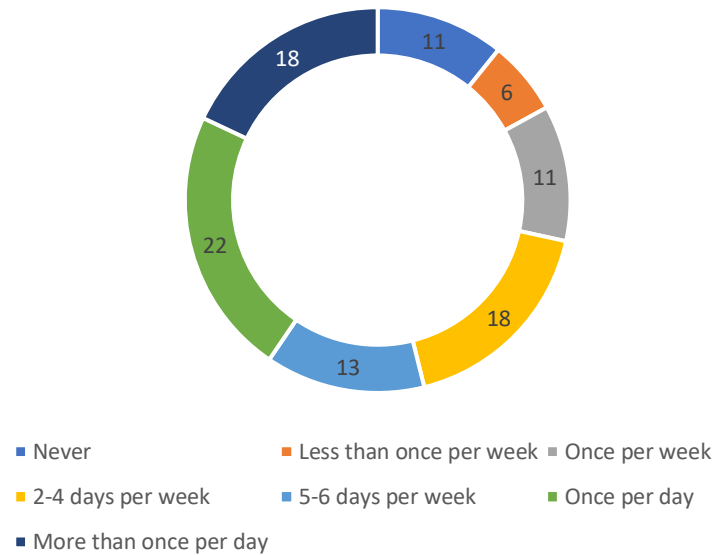
**Figure 3.2 Percentage who eat fruit at least daily, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



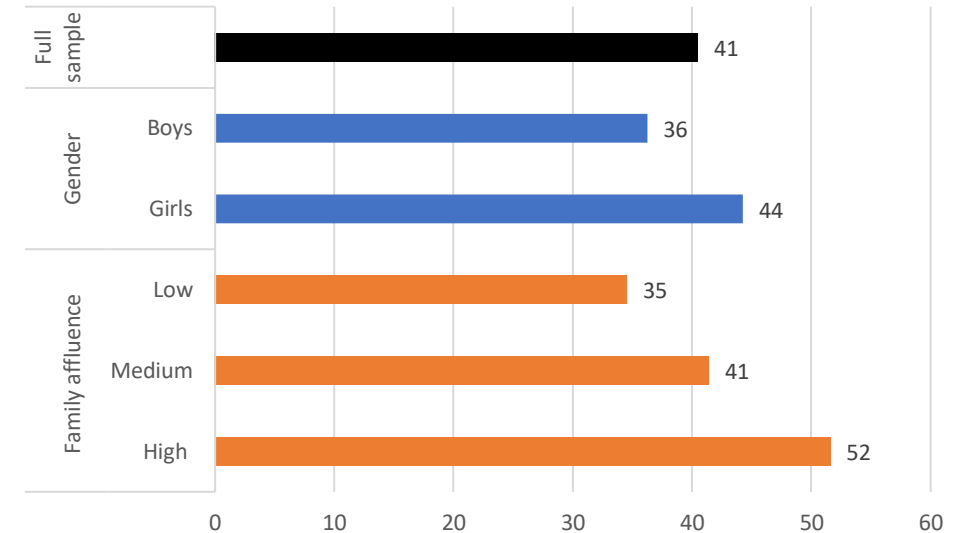
- 47% of children reported eating fruit at least once per day. Girls were more likely to report eating fruit daily than were boys
- 50% of children from more affluent families reported eating fruit daily, compared to 43% of children from the least affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,806)*

**Figure 3.3 Frequency of vegetable consumption (%)**



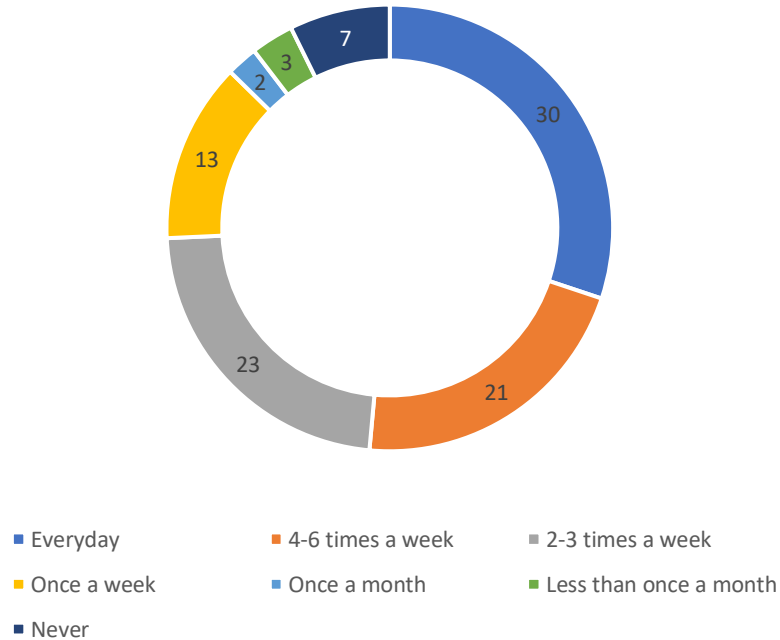
**Figure 3.4 Percentage who eat vegetables at least daily, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



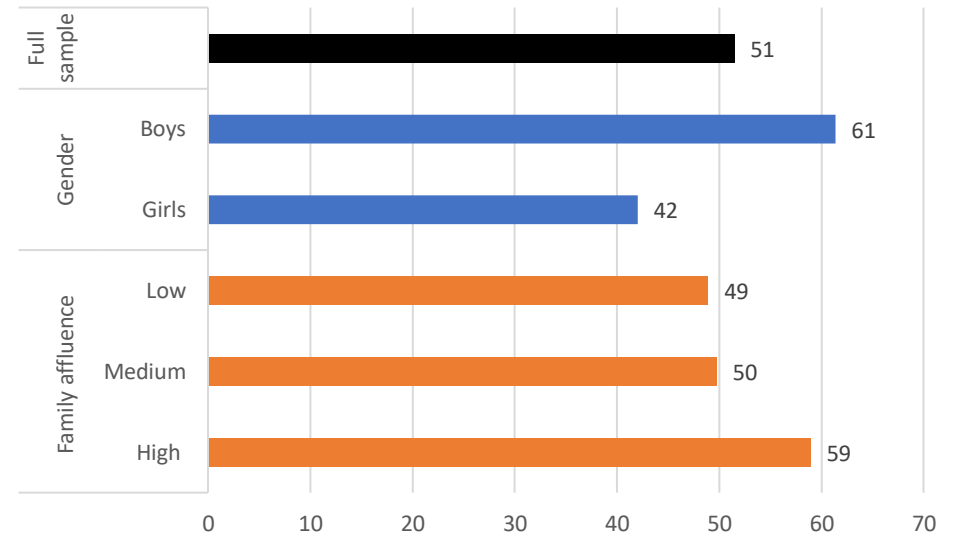
- 41% reported eating vegetables at least once per day. Girls were more likely to report eating vegetables daily than were boys
- 52% of children from the most affluent families reporting eating vegetables daily, compared to 35% from the least affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,793)*

**Figure 3.5 Percentage who reported exercising at least 4 times a week (%)**



**Figure 3.6 Percentage who reported exercising at least 4 times a week, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**

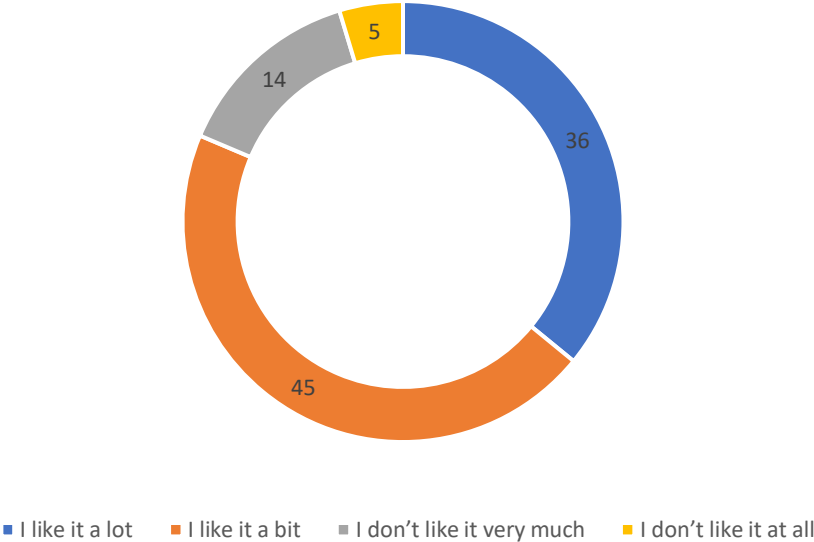


- 51% of children reported exercising in their free time (so much that they get out of breath and sweat) 4 times or more a week, with substantially higher reports among boys
- Children from more affluent families were more likely to report exercise 4 or more times a week

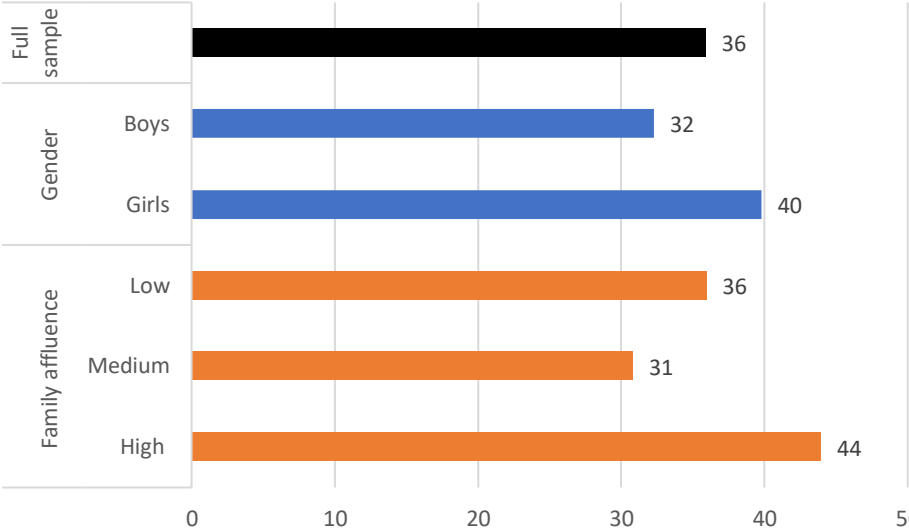
*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,713)*

## 4) SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

**Figure 4.1 Feelings about school (%)**



**Figure 4.2 Percentage who like school a lot, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**

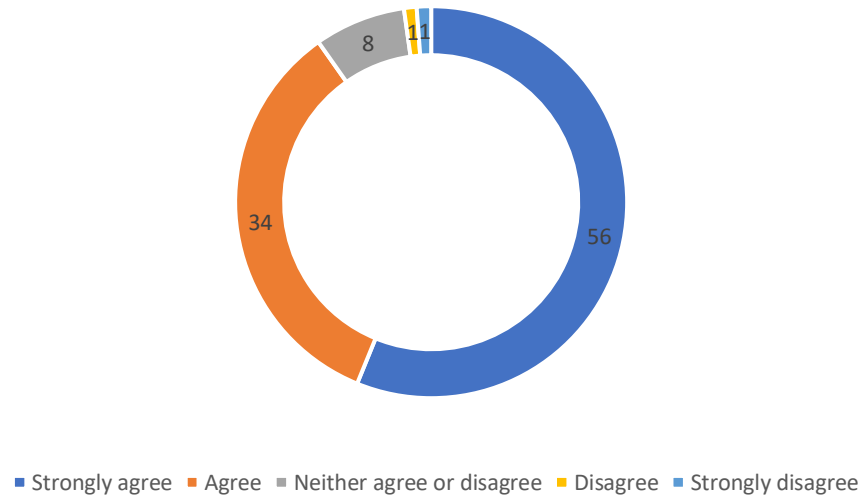


- 81% of children reported liking school at least a bit, and 36% reported liking school a lot.
- Girls and children from more affluent families were more likely to report that they liked school a lot

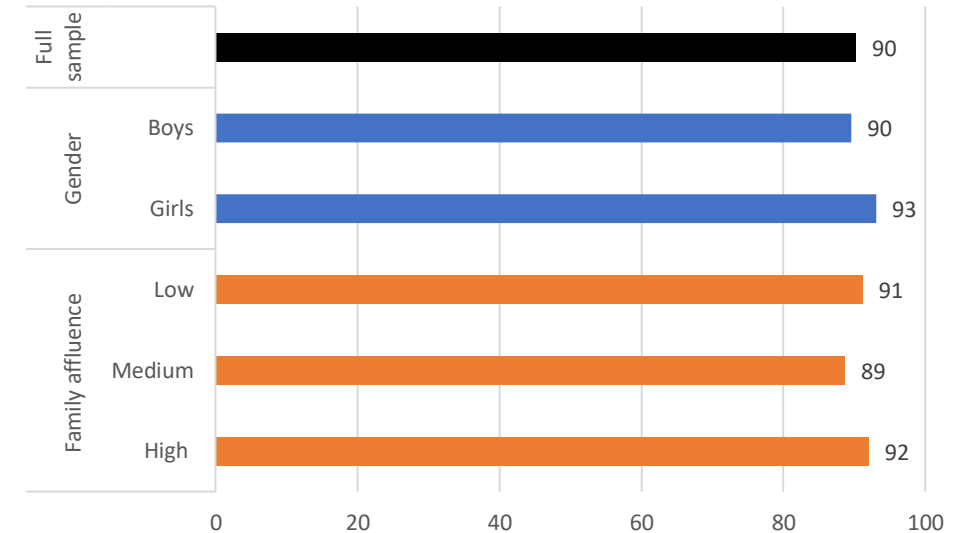
*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,808)*



**Figure 4.3 Feel that teachers care about them as a person (%)**



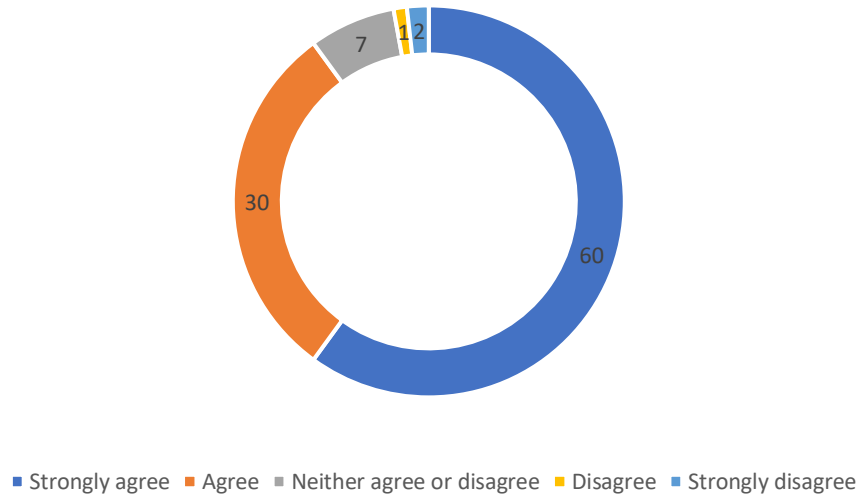
**Figure 4.4 Percentage who agree that their teachers care about them as a person, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



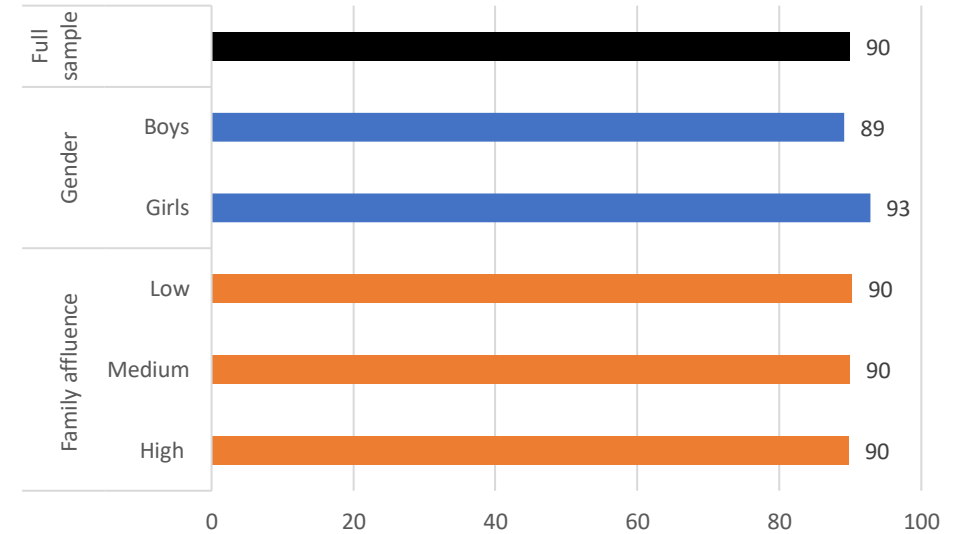
- 90% of children agreed that their teachers cared about them, with girls slightly more likely than boys to report that teachers cared about them
- Similar reports were found between family affluence groups

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,794)*

**Figure 4.5 Feel that teachers accept them as they are (%)**



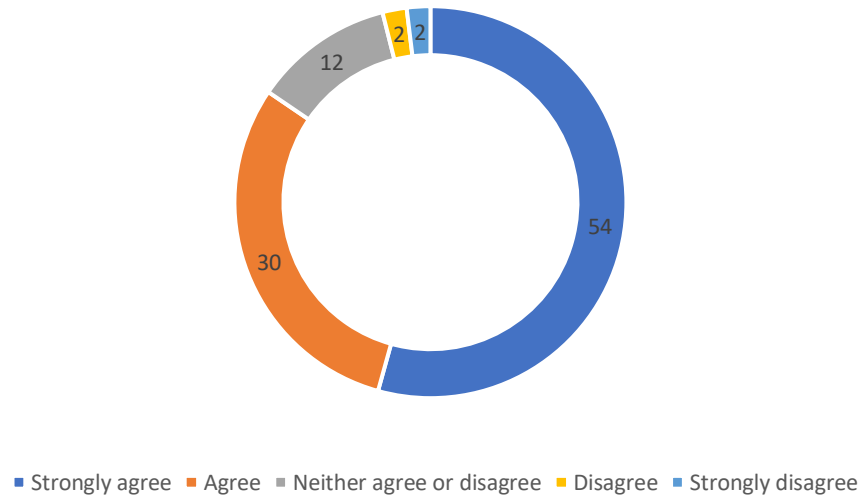
**Figure 4.6 Percentage who agree that teachers accept them as they are, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



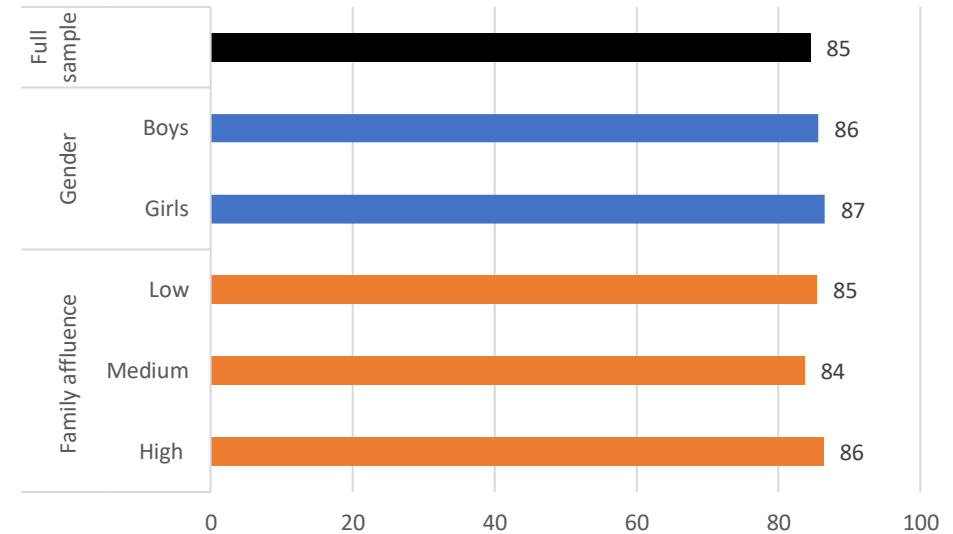
- 90% of children agreed that teachers accept them as they are, with girls slightly more likely than boys to report feeling accepted by teachers
- Differences between family affluence groups were small

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,795)*

**Figure 4.7 Trust teachers (%)**



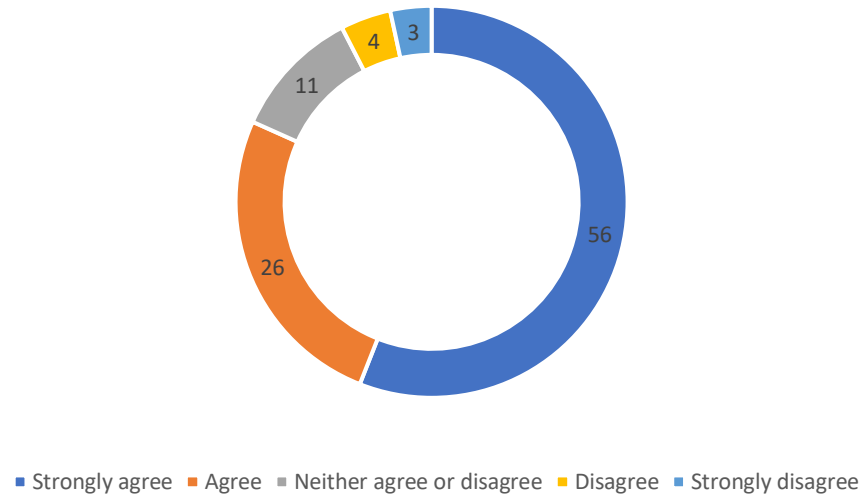
**Figure 4.8 Percentage who agree that they trust their teachers, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



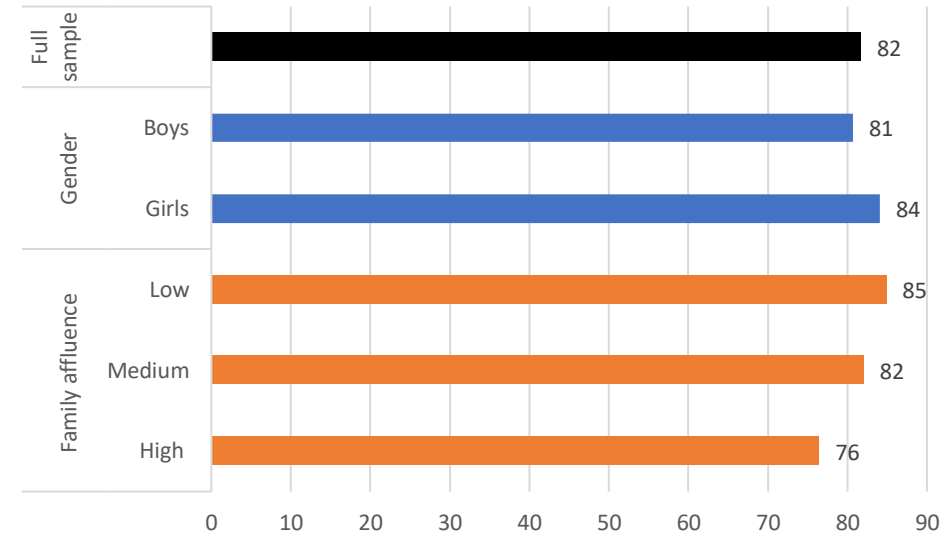
- 85% of children agreed that they trust their teachers
- Differences by gender and socioeconomic status were small

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,799)*

**Figure 4.9 Member of staff to confide in (%)**



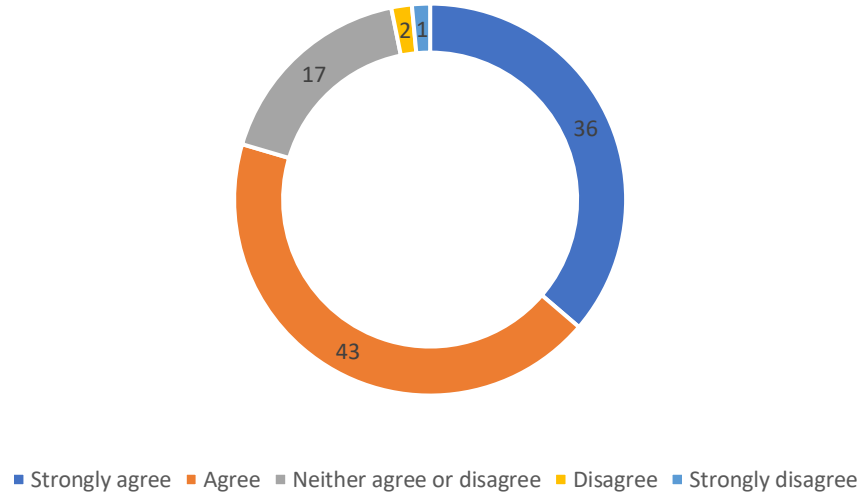
**Figure 4.10 Percentage who agree that there is at least one adult at school they can confide in, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



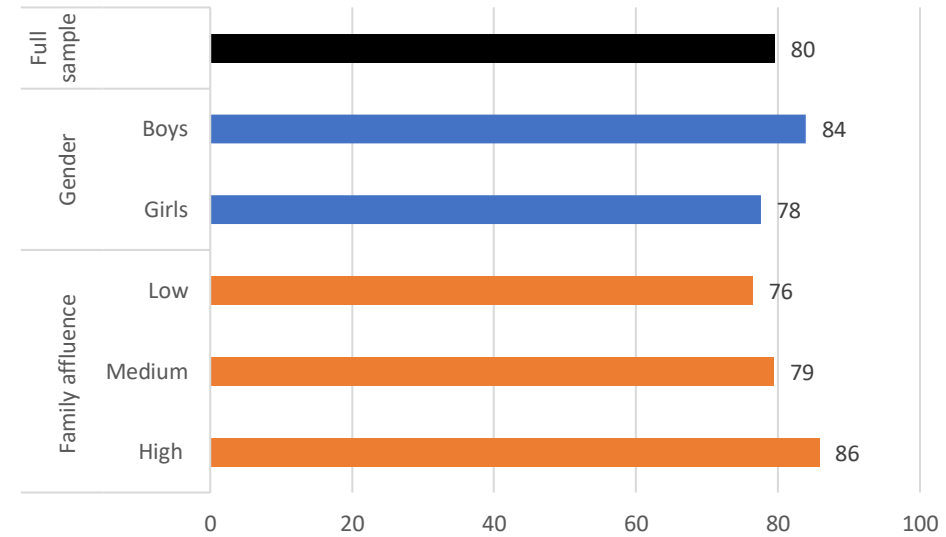
- 82% of children agreed that there is at least one adult in school they can talk to about things that worry them, with girls slightly more likely than boys to report this
- Children from less affluent families were slightly more likely to report having an adult they could talk to than those from more affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,752)*

**Figure 4.11 Pupils enjoy being together (%)**



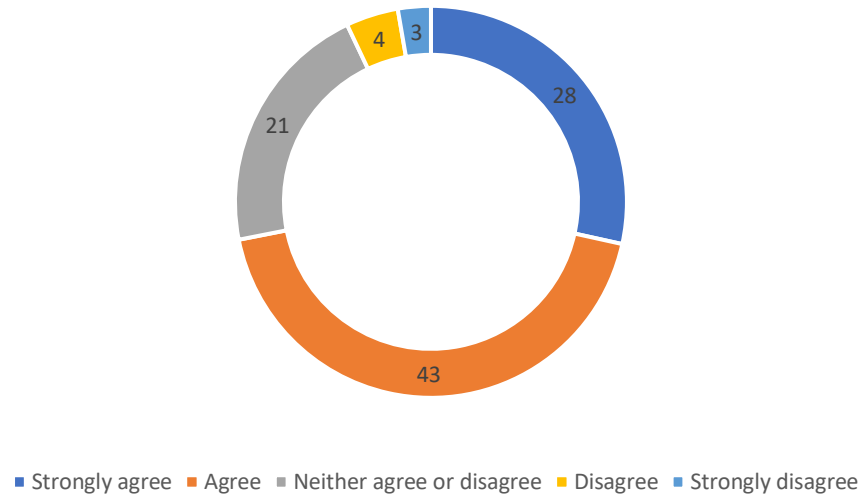
**Figure 4.12 Percentage who agree or strongly agree that pupils enjoy being together, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



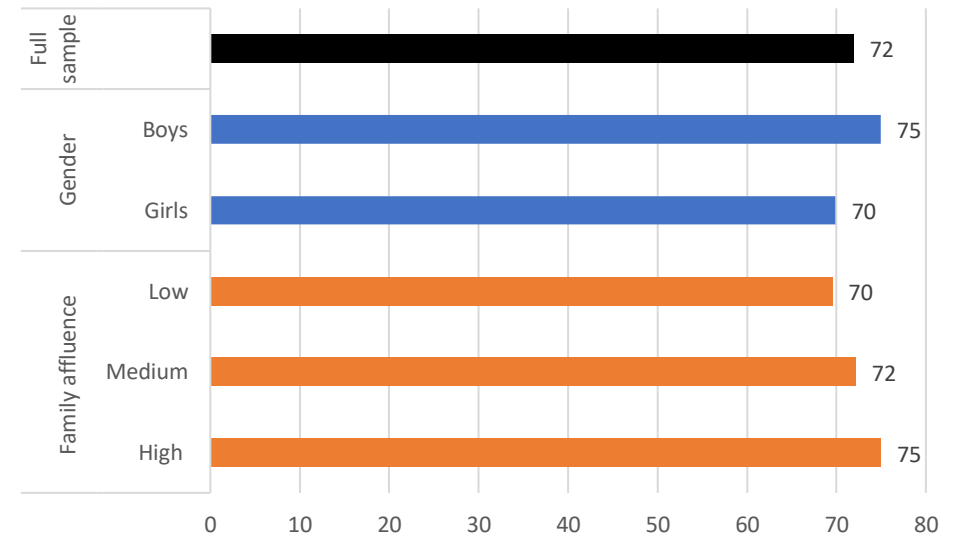
- 80% of children reported that pupils in their school enjoy being together
- Boys and children from more affluent families were more likely to report that pupils at their school enjoy being together

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,794)*

**Figure 4.13 Most pupils are kind and helpful (%)**



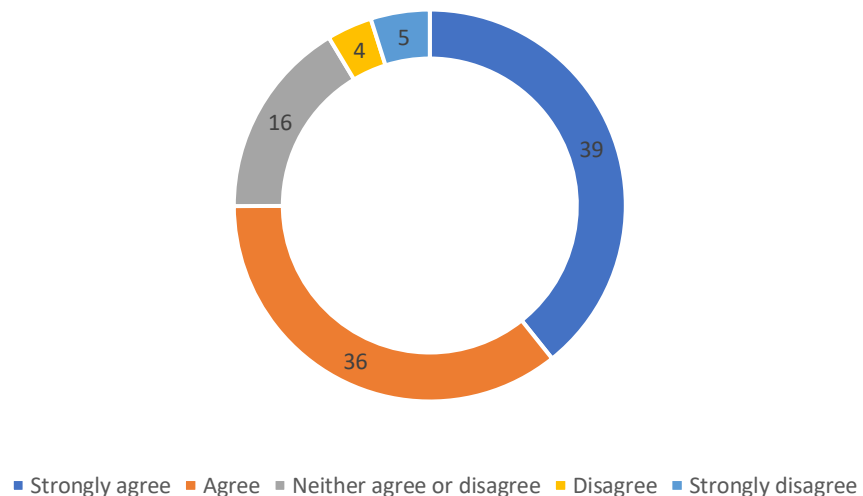
**Figure 4.14 Percentage who agree or strongly agree that most pupils are kind and helpful, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



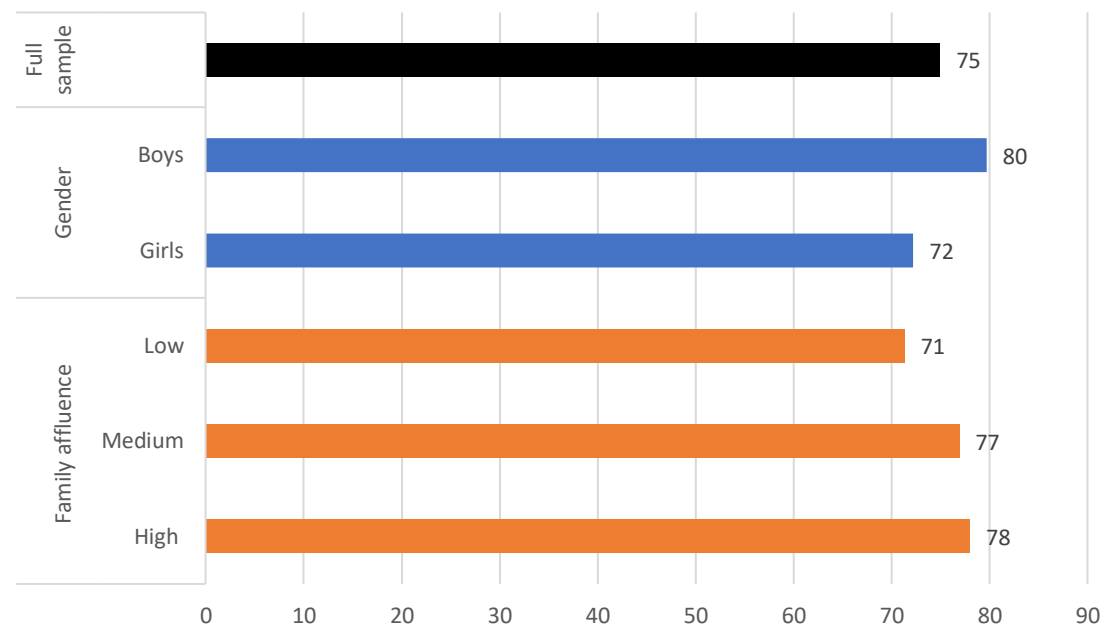
- 72% of children reported that most pupils at their school are kind and helpful. Boys were more likely to agree than girls
- Children from more affluent families were slightly more likely to agree that pupils were kind and helpful

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,810)*

**Figure 4.15 Most pupils accept me as I am (%)**



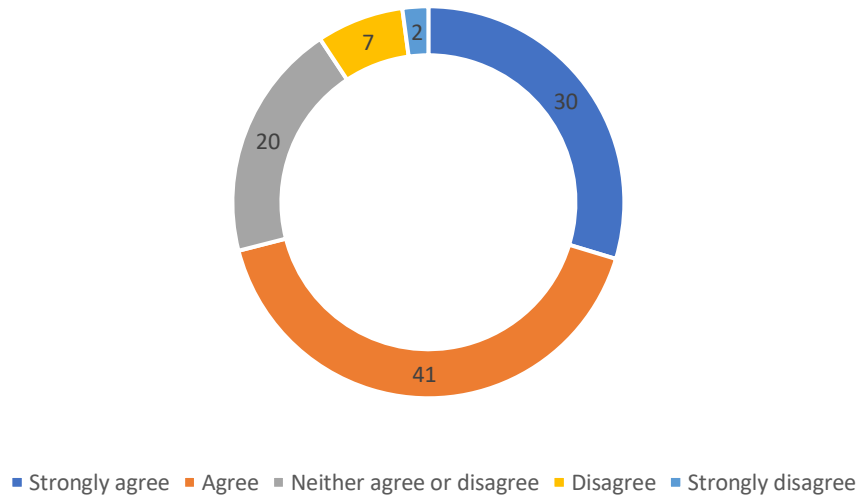
**Figure 4.16 Percentage who agree or strongly agree that most pupils accept them as they are, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



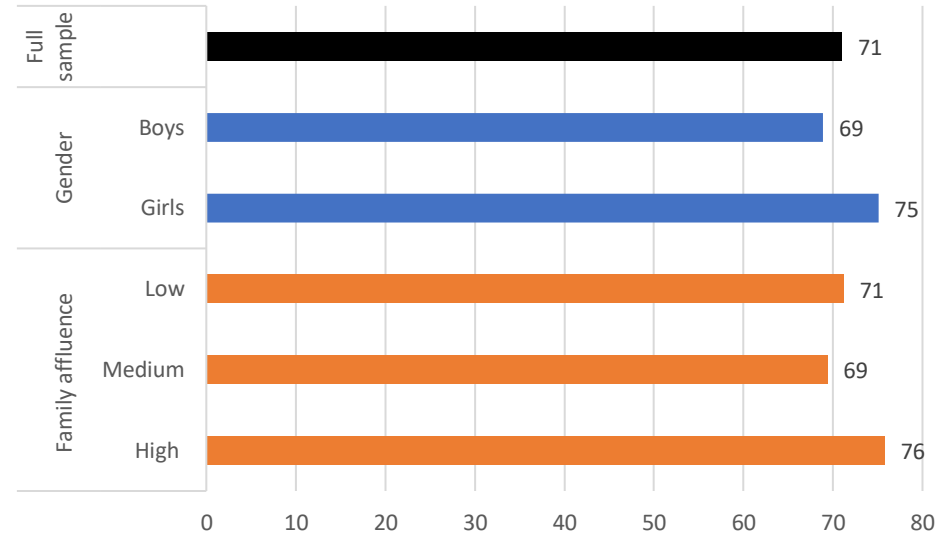
- 75% of children agreed that most pupils accept them as they are
- Boys and children from more affluent families were most likely to agree that pupils accept them as they are

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,744)*

**Figure 4.17 Students have a say in planning and organising school activities and events (%)**



**Figure 4.18 Percentage who agree that students have a say in planning and organising school activities and events, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**

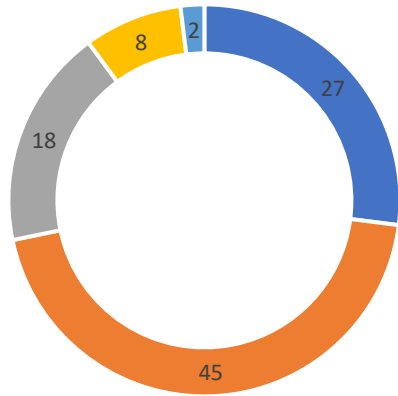


- 71% of children agreed students have a say in planning school activities
- Girls and children from more affluent families were slightly more likely to report that students have a say in planning activities

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,721)*

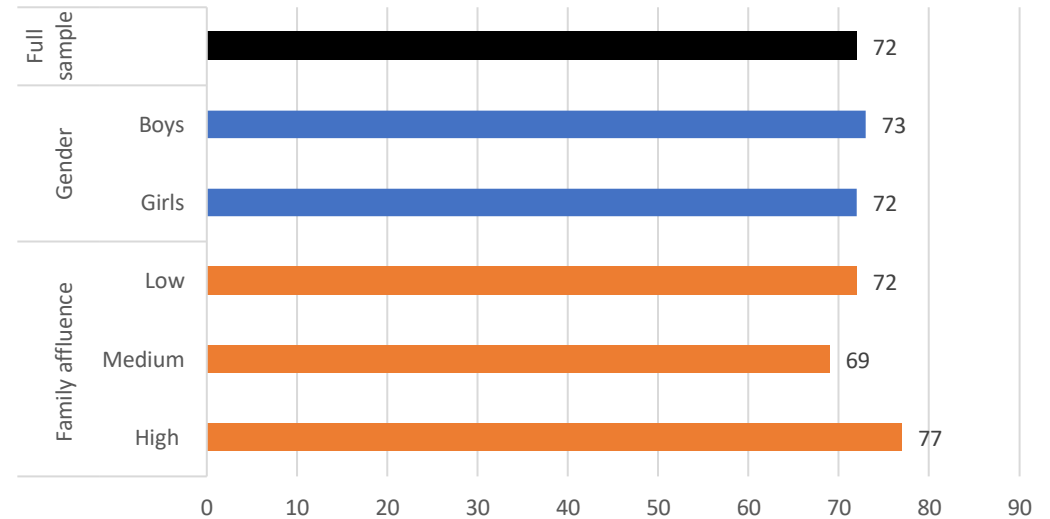


**Figure 4.19 Students have a lot of chances to help decide and plan school projects (%)**



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

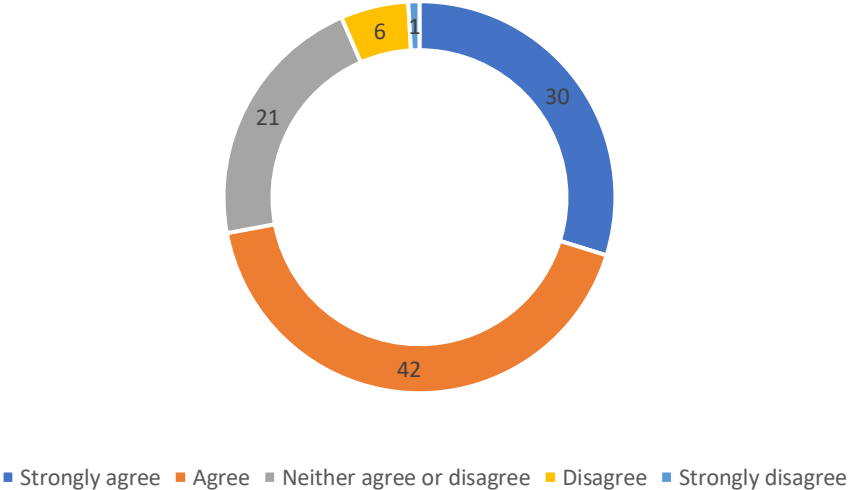
**Figure 4.20 Percentage who agree that students have a lot of chances to help decide and plan school projects, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



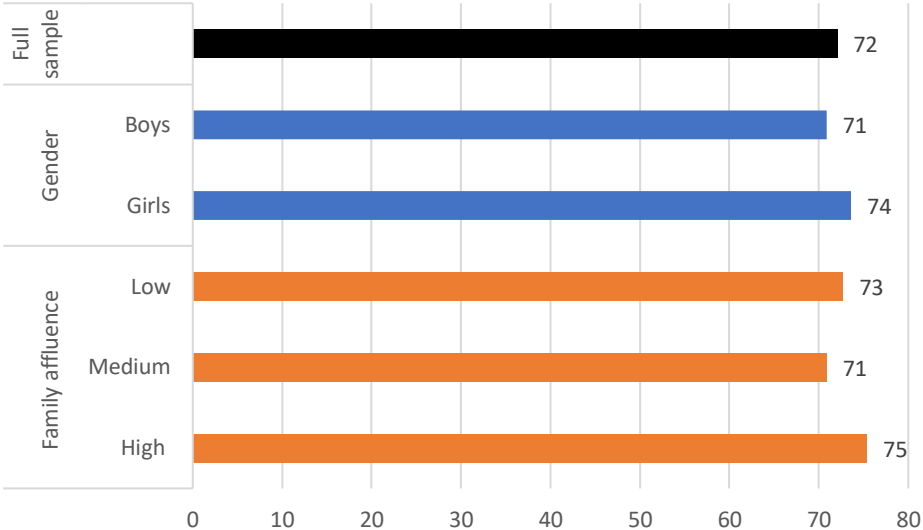
- 72% of children agreed students have a chance to help plan school projects
- Children from more affluent families were slightly more likely to agree that students have a chance to help plan school projects

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,750)*

**Figure 4.21 Students' ideas are treated seriously at school (%)**



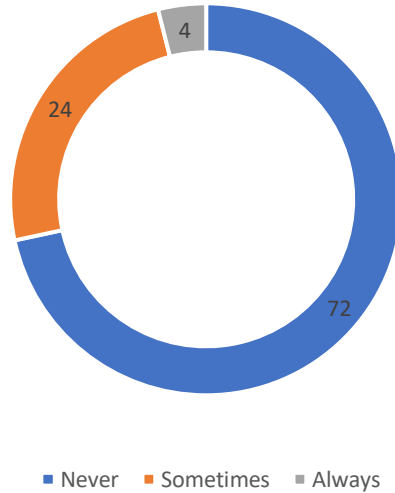
**Figure 4.22 Percentage who agree that students' ideas are treated seriously at school, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



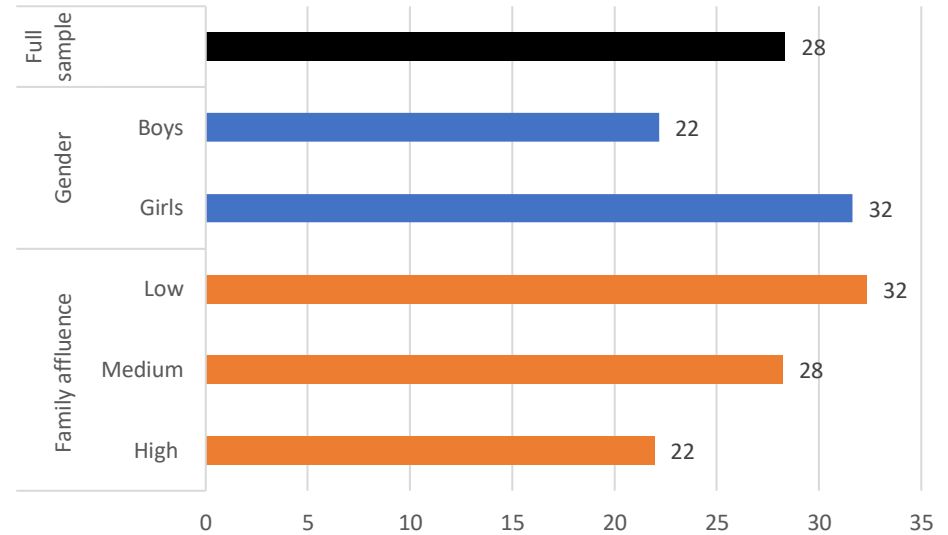
- 72% of children agreed that pupils' ideas are treated seriously in their school
- Girls and children from more affluent families were slightly more likely to agree that pupils' ideas are treated seriously

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,747)*

**Figure 4.23 Percentage who feel bullied by others (%)**



**Figure 4.24 Percentage feeling bullied by others, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**

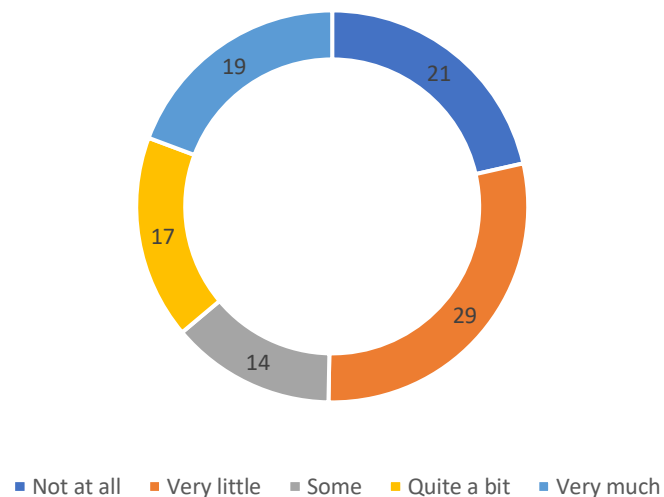


- 28% of children reported feeling bullied by others at least some of the time
- Girls and children from the least affluent families were most likely to report feeling bullied

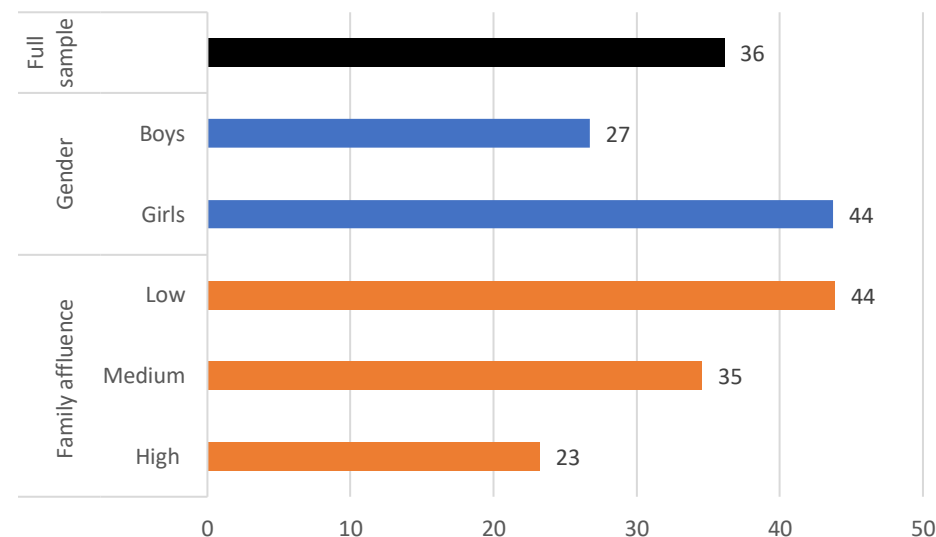
*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,765)*

## 5) SCHOOL TRANSITION

**Figure 5.1 Worried about the transition to secondary school (%)**<sup>7,8</sup>



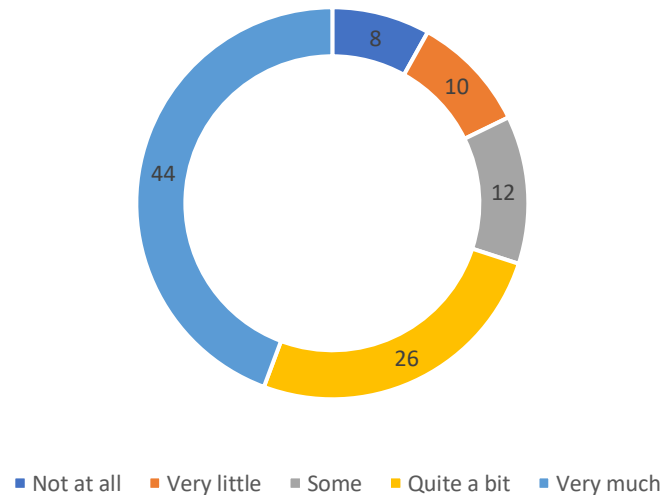
**Figure 5.2 Percentage quite or very worried about the transition to secondary school, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**<sup>7,8</sup>



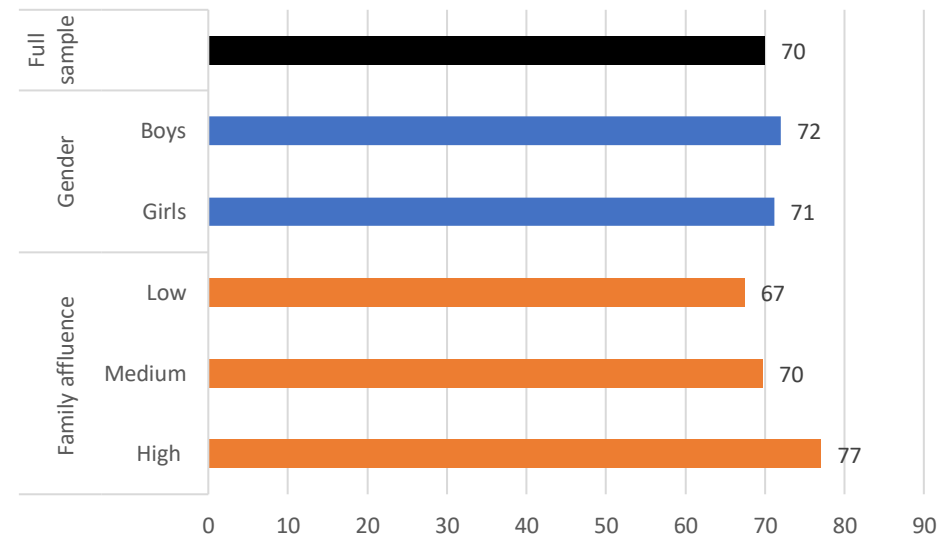
- Half of children reported feeling worried about school transition at least to some extent, with 36% reporting being worried quite a bit or very much
- Girls were more likely than boys to report feeling worried about transition. There was a clear social gradient, with reports of worry highest among children from the least affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,833)*

**Figure 5.3 Looking forward to the transition to secondary school (%)<sup>7,8</sup>**



**Figure 5.4 Percentage looking forward to the transition to secondary school, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)<sup>7,8</sup>**

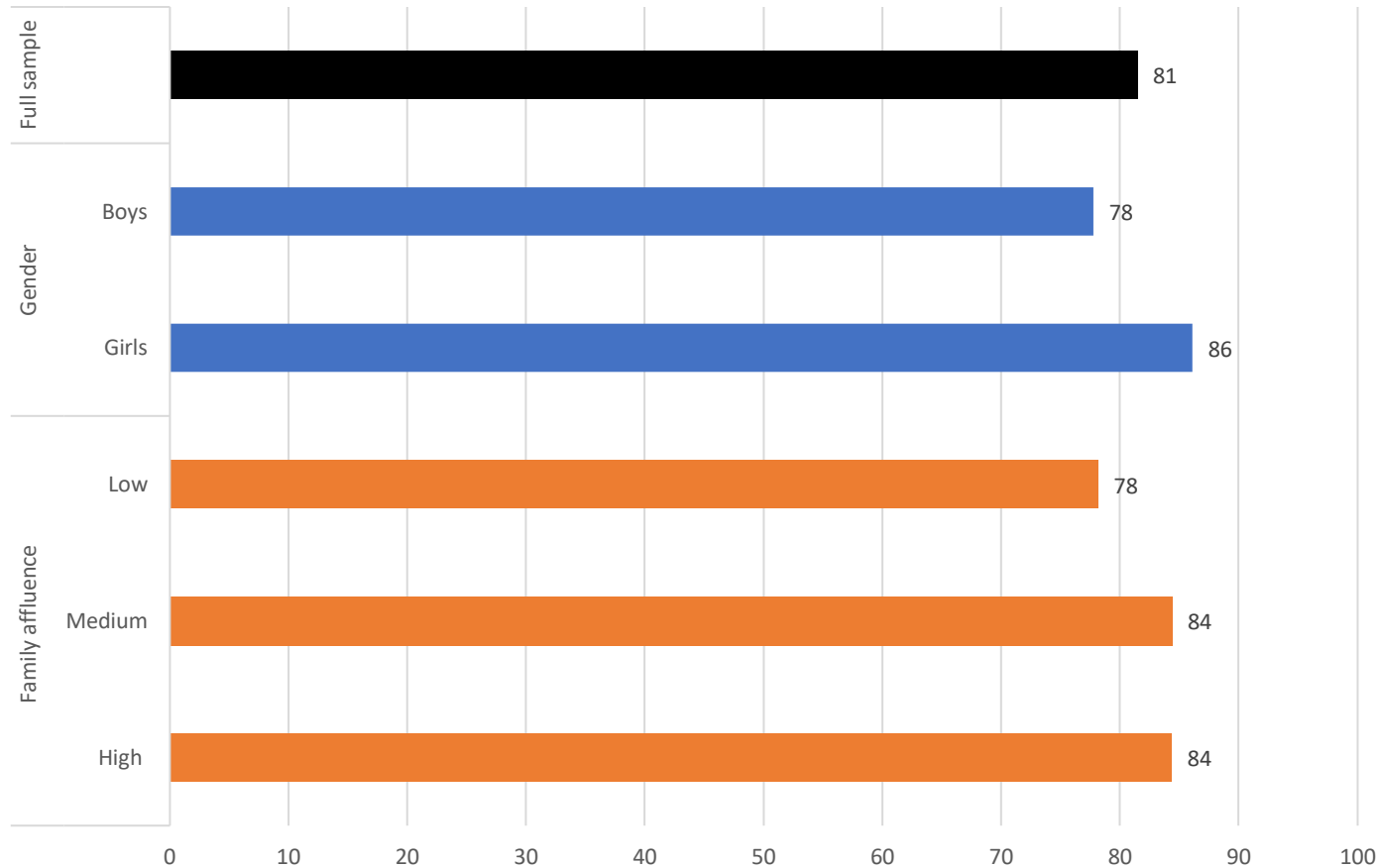


- More than two-thirds of children reported looking forward to transition quite a bit or very much
- There was some evidence of social gradient, but this was less clear than for worries about transition

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,838)*

## 6) ELECTRONIC DEVICES (SCREEN USE)

**Figure 6.1 Percentage who reported owning a smartphone (%)**

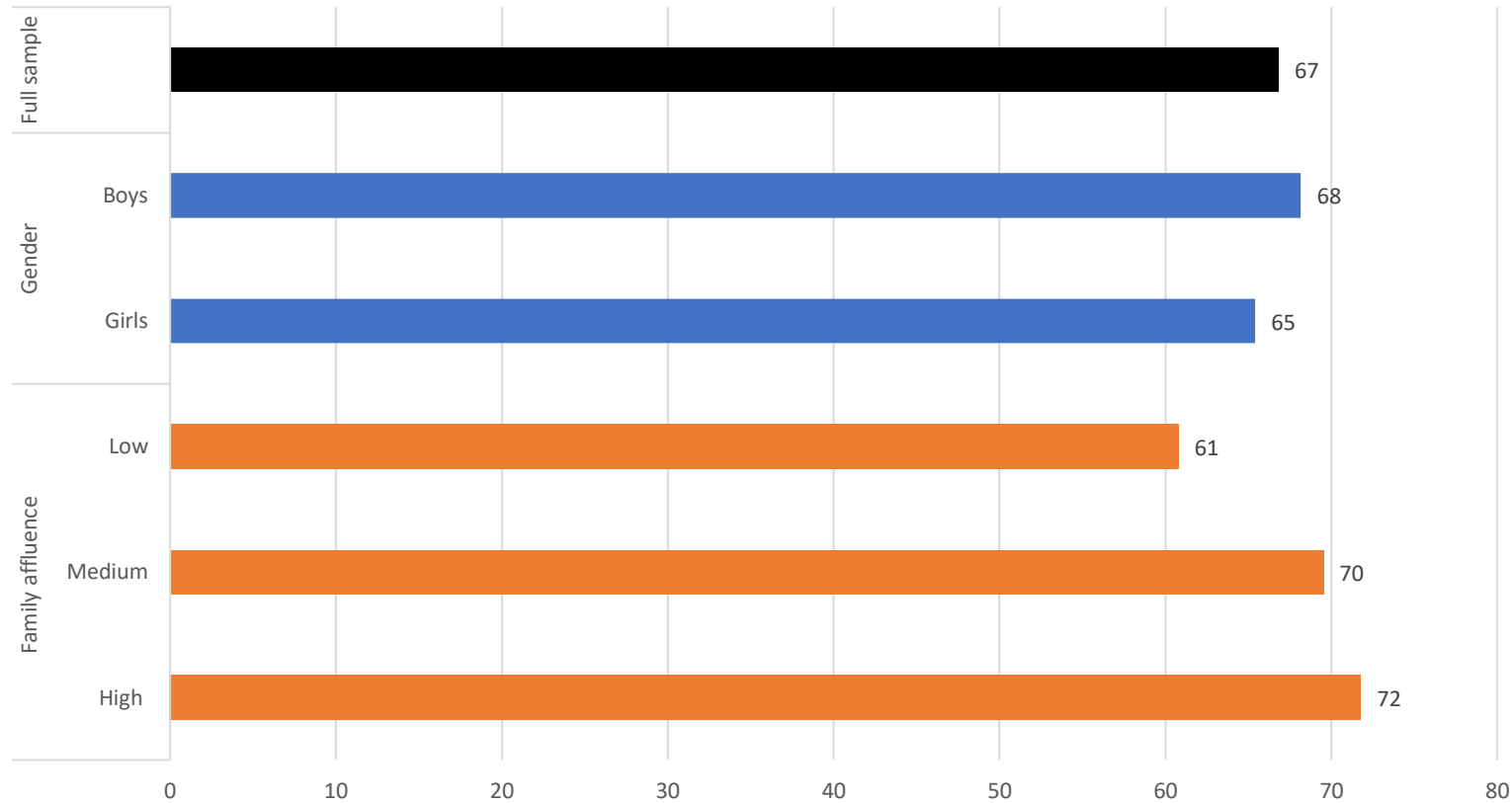


- Most children reported owning a smartphone with more girls than boys reporting owning a smartphone
- Reported smartphone ownership was slightly higher among children from medium or high affluence families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,863)*



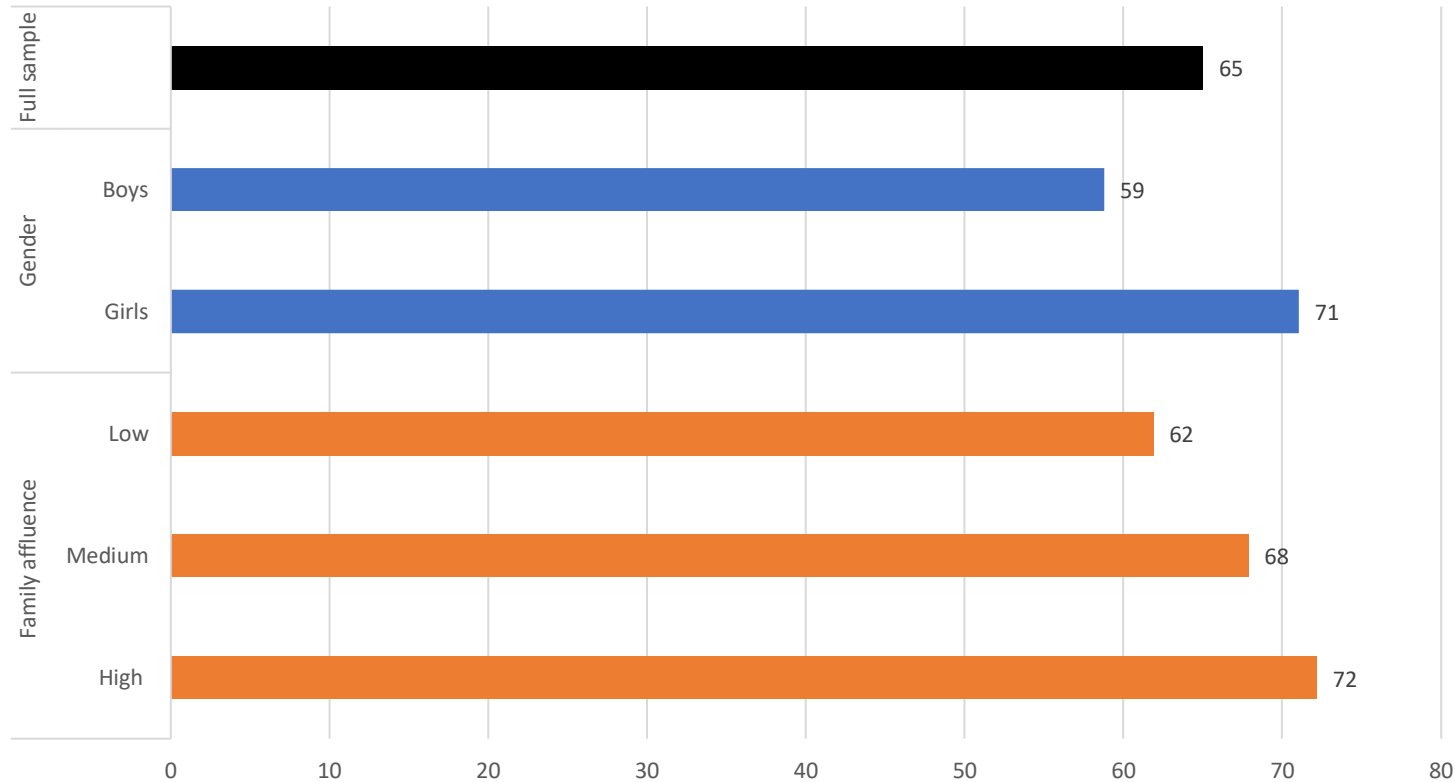
**Figure 6.2 Percentage who reported with their own computer or laptop (%)**



- Two thirds of children reported owning their own computer or laptop
- Ownership was highest among children from more affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,863)*

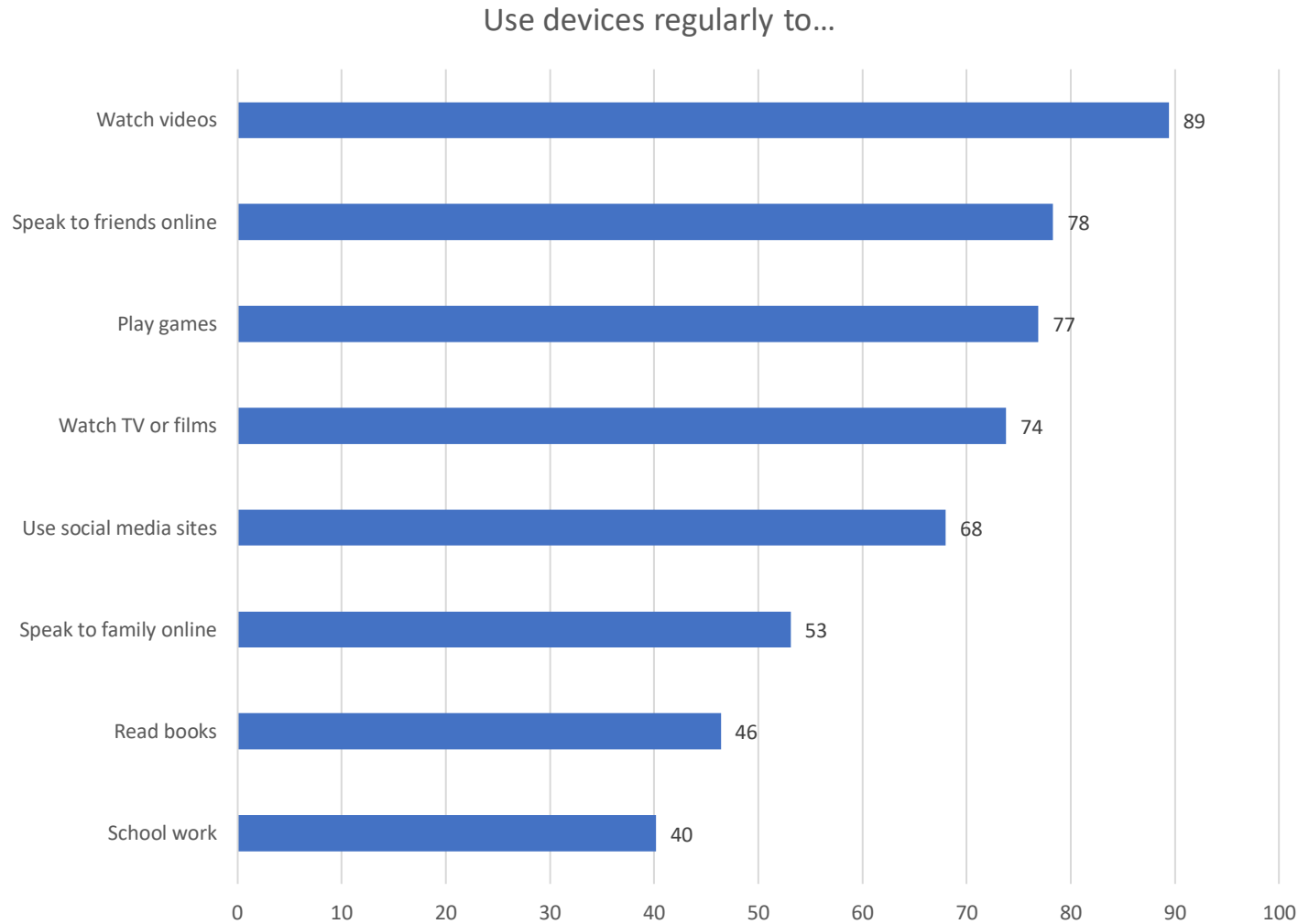
**Figure 6.3 Percentage who report owning a tablet (%)**



- Almost two thirds of children reported owning a tablet, with girls more likely than boys to report owning a tablet
- There was some evidence of a social gradient, with children from more affluent families more likely to report owning a tablet

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,863)*

**Figure 6.4 Regular use of electronic devices (%)**

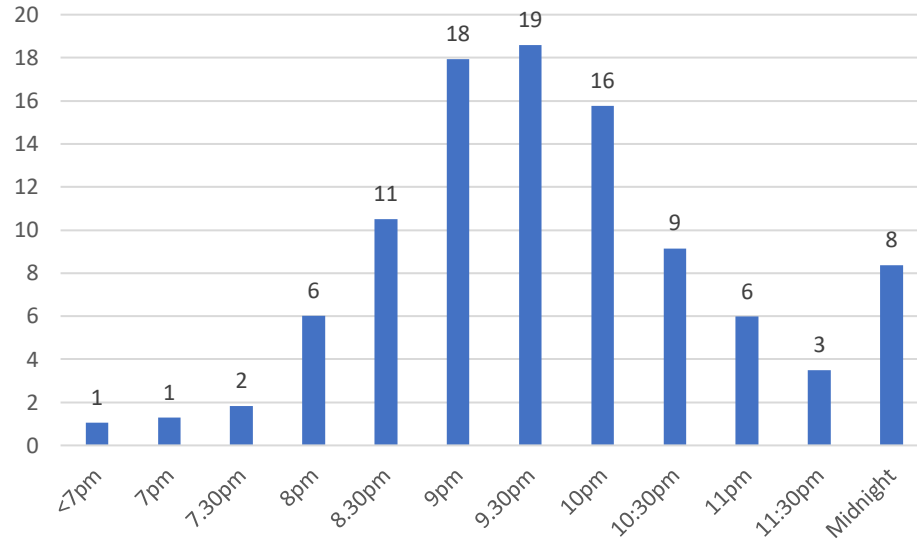


- Children most commonly reported using devices for entertainment and social connectedness
- Regular use for educational purposes was somewhat less frequently reported

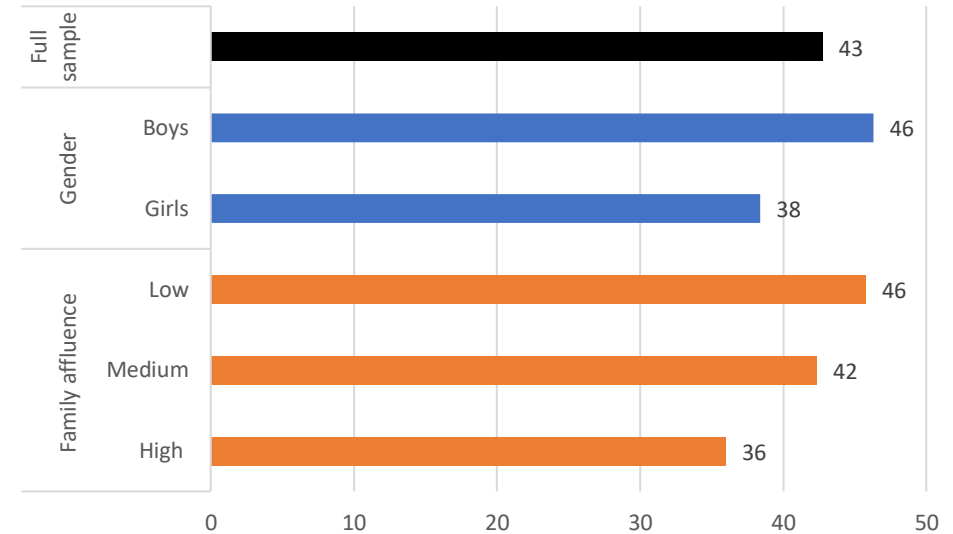
*Base (variation per item): All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,656 to 1,823)*

7) SLEEP

**Figure 7.1 Bedtime (%)**



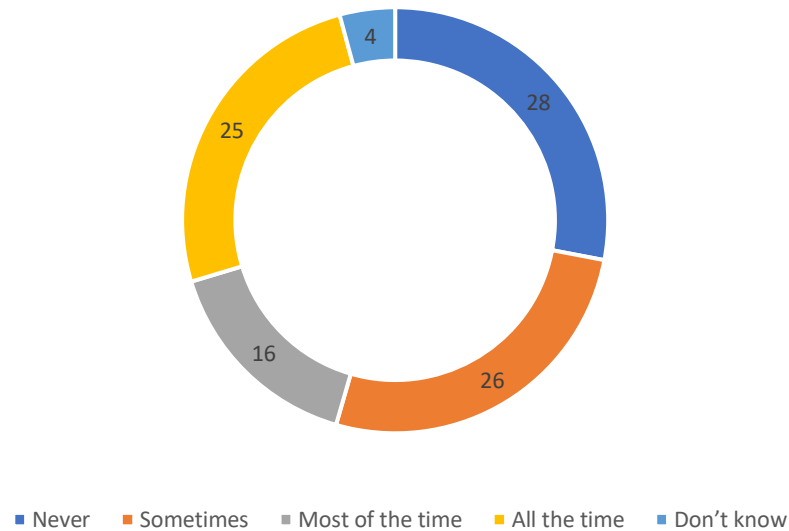
**Figure 7.2 Percentage that report a bedtime of 10pm or later, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



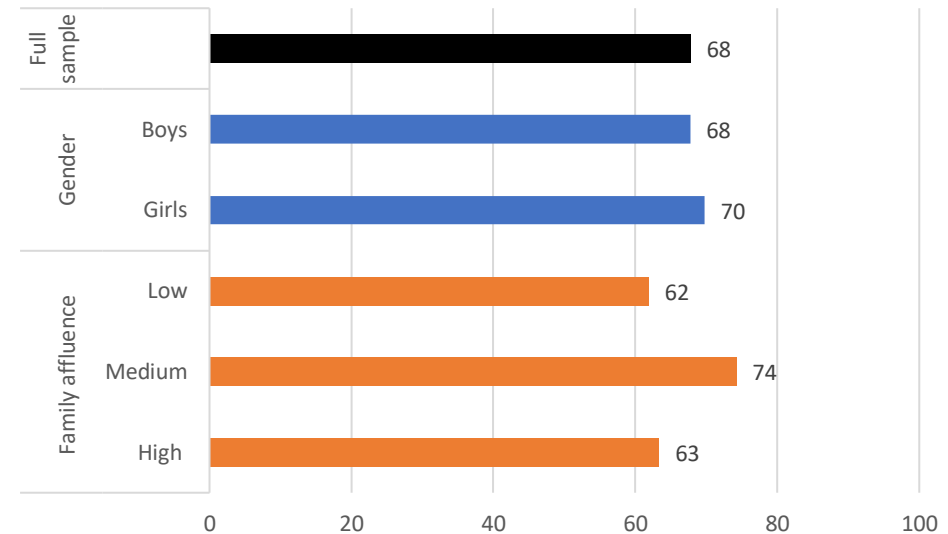
- 79% of children reported a bedtime of 9pm or later with 43% reporting a bedtime of 10pm or later
- More boys than girls, and more children from less affluent families, reported a later bedtime

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,774)*

**Figure 7.3 Parental limits on using electronic devices before bedtime (%)**



**Figure 7.4 Parental limits on using electronic devices before bedtime (%)**

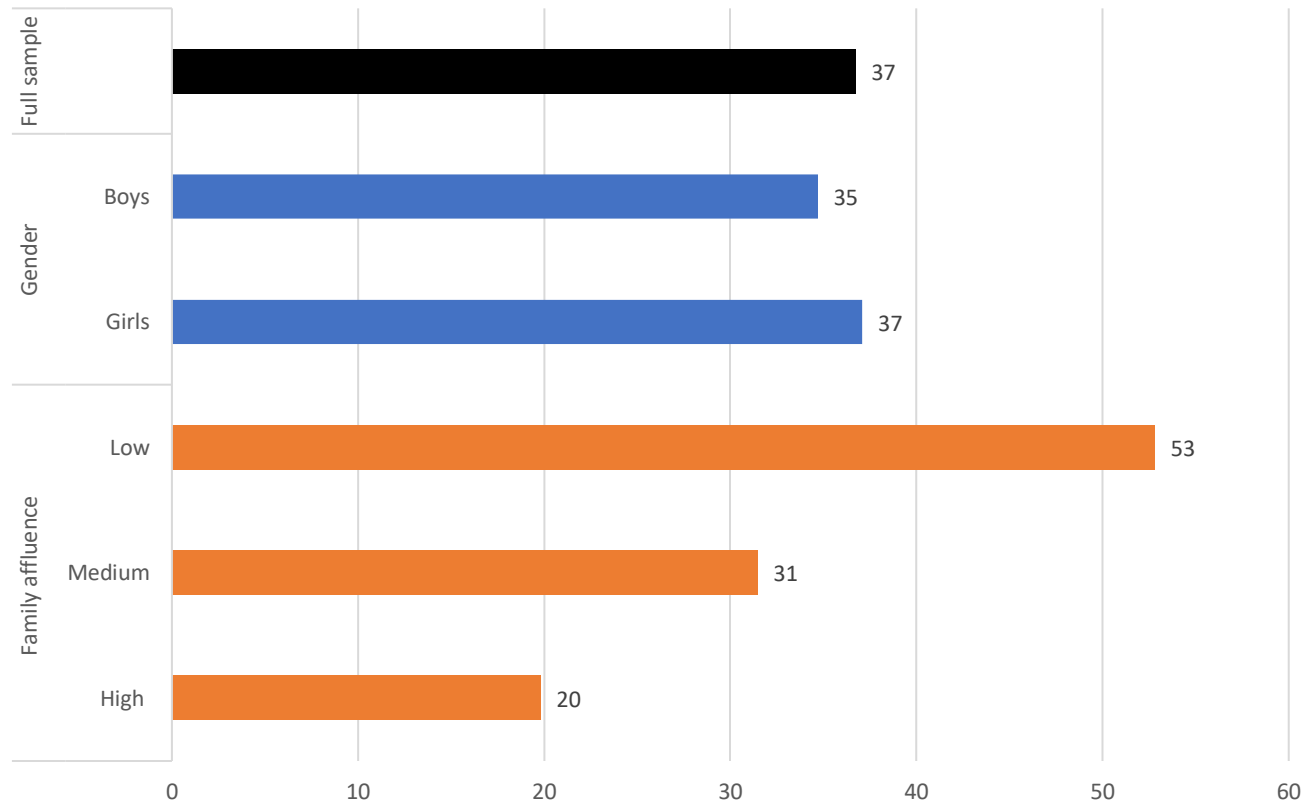


- More than two thirds of children (68%) reported that a parent limits their use of electronic devices before bedtime
- There was little gender difference. Children in the medium affluence group were most likely to report that parents limited screen use before bedtime

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,756)*

## 8) HOUSEHOLD SMOKING

**Figure 8.1 Percentage that have a parent figure who smokes, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**

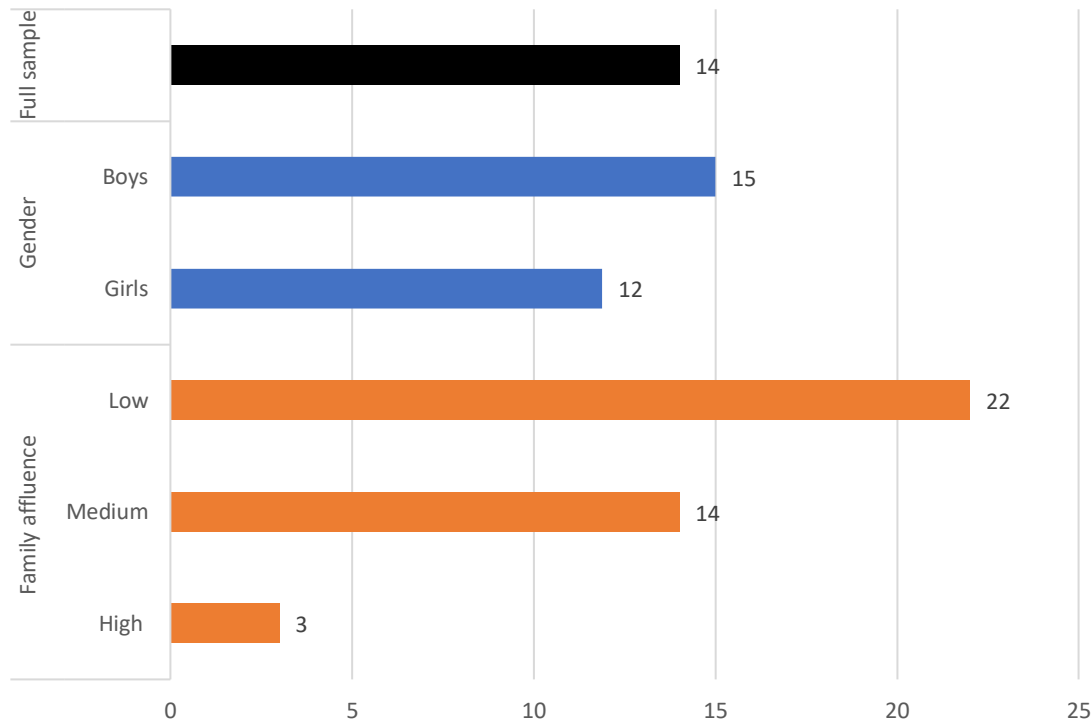


- 37% of children report having a parent figure who smokes
- More than twice as many children from less affluent families reported having a parent figure smoked compared to children from the most affluent families

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,772)*



**Figure 8.2 Percentage that have a parent who smokes in the family home, overall and by gender and family affluence (%)**



- 14% of children reported that a parent figure smokes in their home
- There was a strong social gradient in reports of parental smoking in the home

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 1,771)*

# Summary of findings – child health and wellbeing in 2021

- Children's most commonly reported worries about COVID-19 related to social relationships, followed by worries about a family member becoming ill. Some worries tended to be slightly more common among children from poorer families.
- Almost 1 in 7 children reported clinically significant emotional difficulties, while approximately 1 in 14 reported clinically significant behavioural difficulties. Many more reported elevated but sub-clinical difficulties. Almost two-thirds gave a score of 8 out of 10 or higher for how satisfied they were with their life. Mental health symptoms tended to be more common, and life satisfaction lower, among children from less affluent families.
- Fewer than half of children reported eating fruits or eating vegetables daily, with approximately half reporting exercising in their free time at least 4 times a week. Girls and children from more affluent families reported more fruit and vegetable consumption, while boys and children from more affluent families reported more exercise.
- Most children rated their relationships with school staff positively, with most also positive about pupil relationships within school and pupil involvement in school life.
- Most Year 6 children were looking forward to transition to secondary school. Feeling worried about transition to secondary school was strongly patterned by socioeconomic status, with more children from less affluent reporting they felt worried.
- Most children reported owning a number of electronic devices, used mostly for entertainment and social connectedness, but also for education purposes. Ownership of devices tended to be more common in more affluent families.
- Most children reported a bedtime between 9 and 10pm, with boys and children from less affluent families more likely to report a later bedtime.
- Just over a third of pupils reported that a parent figure smokes, with 1 in 8 reporting that a parent figure smokes in their home; both parental smoking and parental smoking in the home are less common in more affluent families.

## 9) Preliminary analyses of CHETS 2019 and SHRN 2021 data

# Methods and caveats

- This section provides preliminary comparisons of a number of outcomes measured in 2021 with a previous similar survey in 2019
  - More detailed analyses of change over time overall and by subgroups is underway
  - There are some key differences in methods to consider when interpreting comparisons
- 2019 survey (Moore et al. 2021, CRUK funding)
  - Researcher supervised pen and paper survey
  - Nationally representative sample of 73 schools
  - Sample size 2,218
  - School response rate 37%; eligible pupils within schools who participated 88%
  - Data collection from Feb to June 2019
- 2021 survey – some differences in mode, sampling and time of year
  - Mode - mostly electronic, teacher led survey.
  - Sampling - boost sampling in a number of local authorities
  - Time of year – April to July 2021

# Considering implications of changes in method, when comparing across survey years

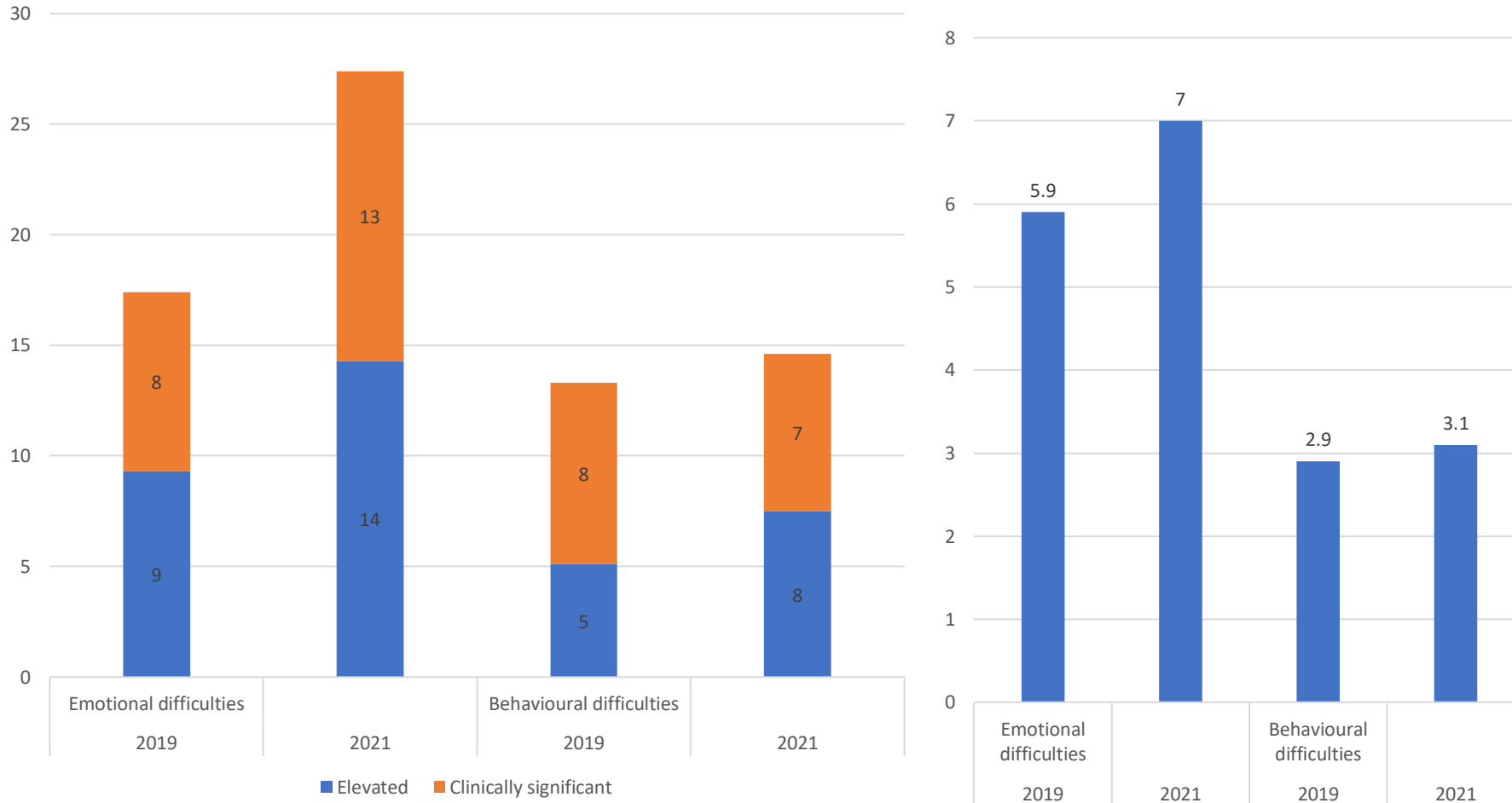
- The switch from pen and paper and teacher led survey
  - Many social surveys are moving to online modes. Survey mode effects tend to be small<sup>9</sup> and may diminish when a method is no longer 'novel'<sup>10</sup>. The survey occurred after a year in which online working had become the norm, which may have mitigated this.
  - It is possible that the survey being *teacher* rather than *researcher* led may impact how some pupils respond, due to pre-existing relationships with teachers.
- Time of year
  - The 2021 survey was slightly later in the year. Mental health outcomes may be seasonal and measuring these closer to summer in 2021 might underestimate differences between surveys. Feelings about transition to secondary school may change as this nears
  - We found no correlation between date of interview and mental health scale scores, indicating these estimates remained stable through the survey period.
  - But we found a small correlation between date of survey and looking forward to transition ( $r=0.15$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) which supports a hypothesis that these do become more positive as the transition nears - this might explain why feelings about transition were marginally more positive in 2021 than in 2019 (see Figure 9.6).
- Sampling differences may have impacted differences between survey years
  - We address this issue using a sensitivity analysis which harmonises the sample by restricting comparisons to 31 schools who participated at both time points (slide 71)
  - This sub-sample is not nationally representative and is smaller and less precise, so absolute estimates change slightly
  - But where *differences* or *similarities* between survey years remain consistent, this increases confidence that these are not simply due to sampling differences. Overall, this analysis is highly comparable to our main analysis.

# Comparability of samples on key demographics

		2019	2021
Family Affluence Scale - category	Low affluence	35	31
	Medium affluence	40	42
	High affluence	25	27
Gender	Boy	50	47
	Girl	50	49
	Other gender identity	<1%	2
	missing	<1%	1
Live with..	Both parents	67%	68%
	Step family	9%	10%
	Single mum	16%	16%
	Single dad	1%	1%

- Overall good comparability by demographics (gender, SES and living arrangements)
- Weighting was used to account for variability in sampling and response by local authority

**Figure 9.1 Percentage scoring above threshold for elevated or clinically significant emotional and behavioural difficulties (left) and scale means (right) in 2019 and 2021<sup>5</sup>**

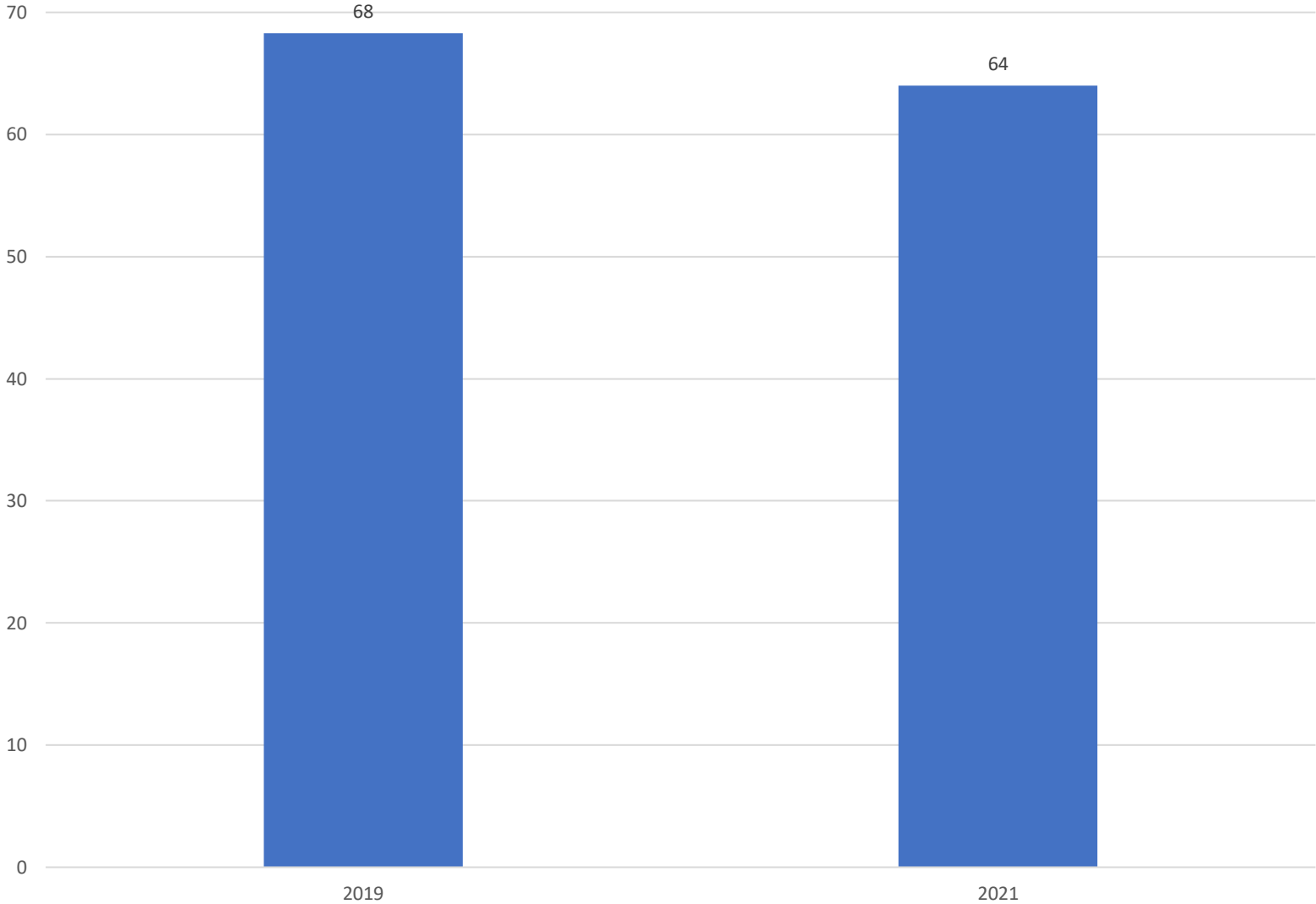


Large increases in clinically significant emotional difficulties. Clear increase in 'average scores' for emotional difficulties.

Slight increase in 'borderline' behavioural difficulties, but small reduction in clinically significant difficulties, and little change in average behavioural difficulties score

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who answered (N = 3,943 emotional difficulties/3,928 behavioural difficulties). \*Scale scores are 'pro-rated' so long as >50% of individual items are completed. Differences in analysis restricted to complete cases was similar.*

**Figure 9.2 Percentage scoring above 7 on Cantrill ladder life satisfaction measure in 2019 and 2021**

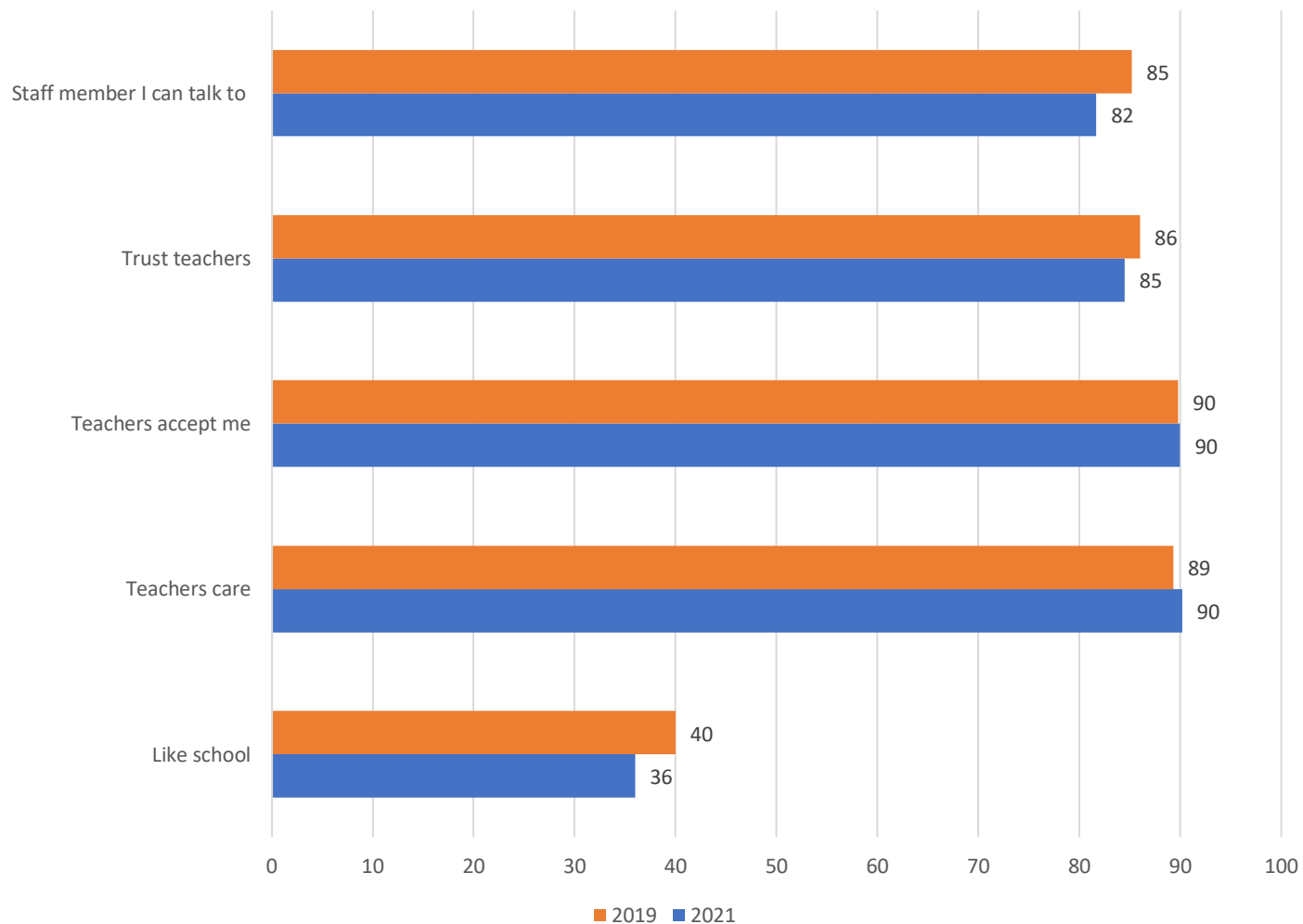


- Most reported a high degree of life satisfaction in both surveys
- But, 2021 estimates appear slightly lower than in 2019

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 3,819)*



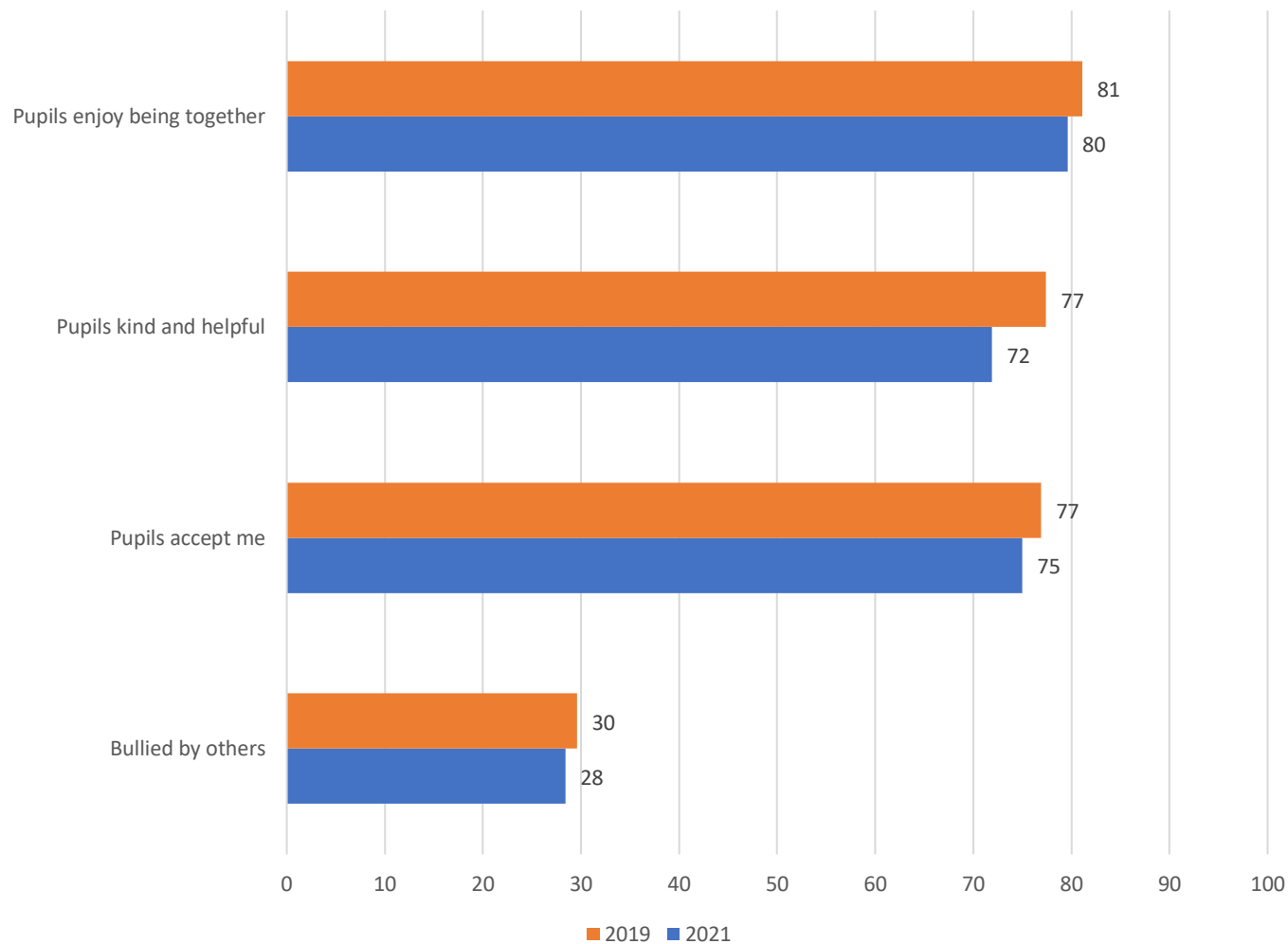
**Figure 9.3 Percentage reporting agreement with each statement on quality of relationships with teachers, and liking school, in 2019 and 2021**



- A large majority agreed with each statement on relationships with teachers
- No consistent pattern in marginal changes between surveys
- The percentage saying they like school ‘a lot’ drops slightly from 40 to 36 (although 81% in both surveys liked school at least a bit)

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (Ns range from 3,700 to 3,792)*

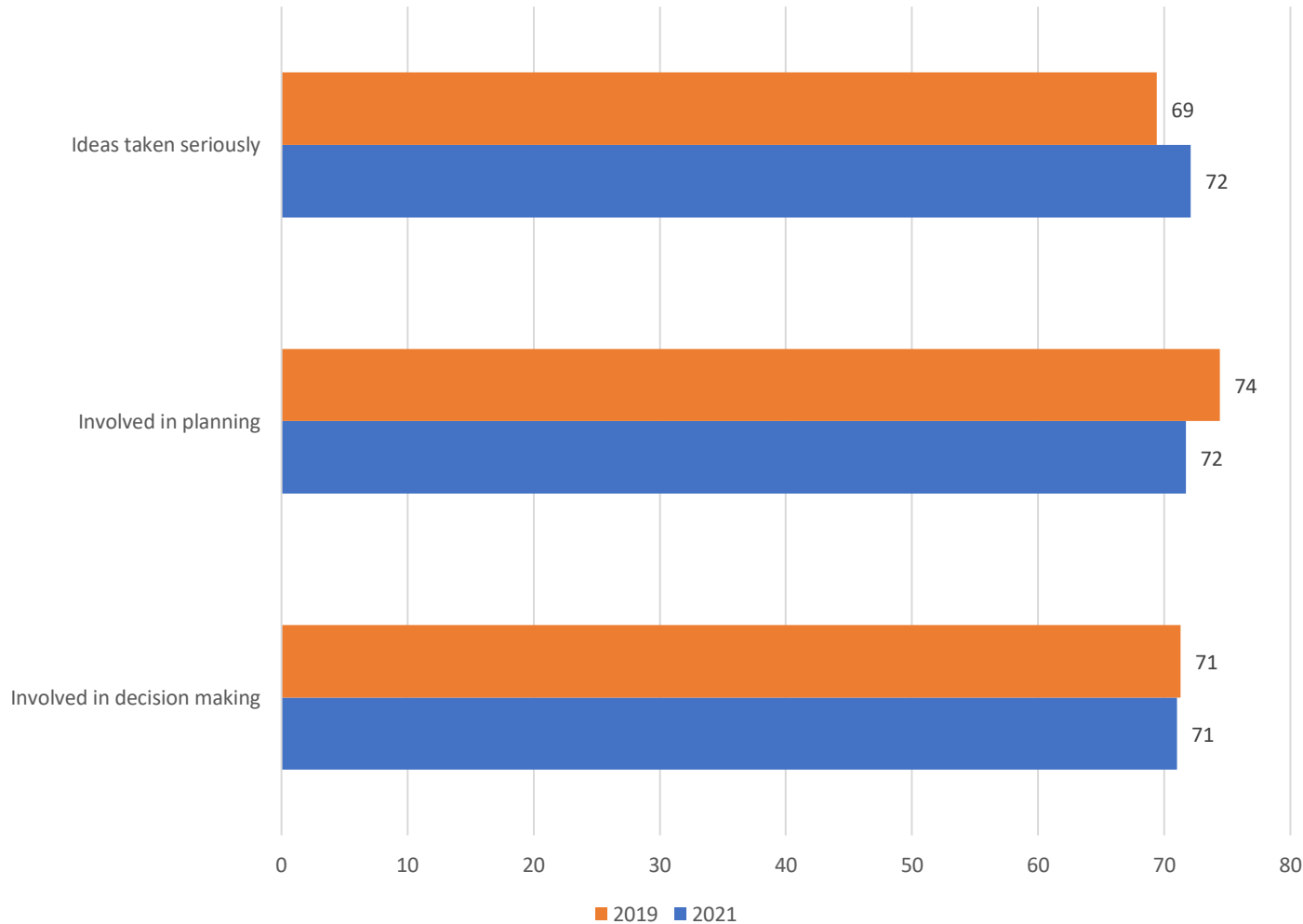
**Figure 9.4 Percentage reporting agreement with each statement on pupil relationships in school in 2019 and 2021**



- Most pupils agreed with each statement on pupil relationships in school
- Slight tendency toward slightly lower estimates in 2021 for some items
- However, marginally fewer reported feeling bullied by others in 2021

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (Ns range from 3,647 to 3,804)*

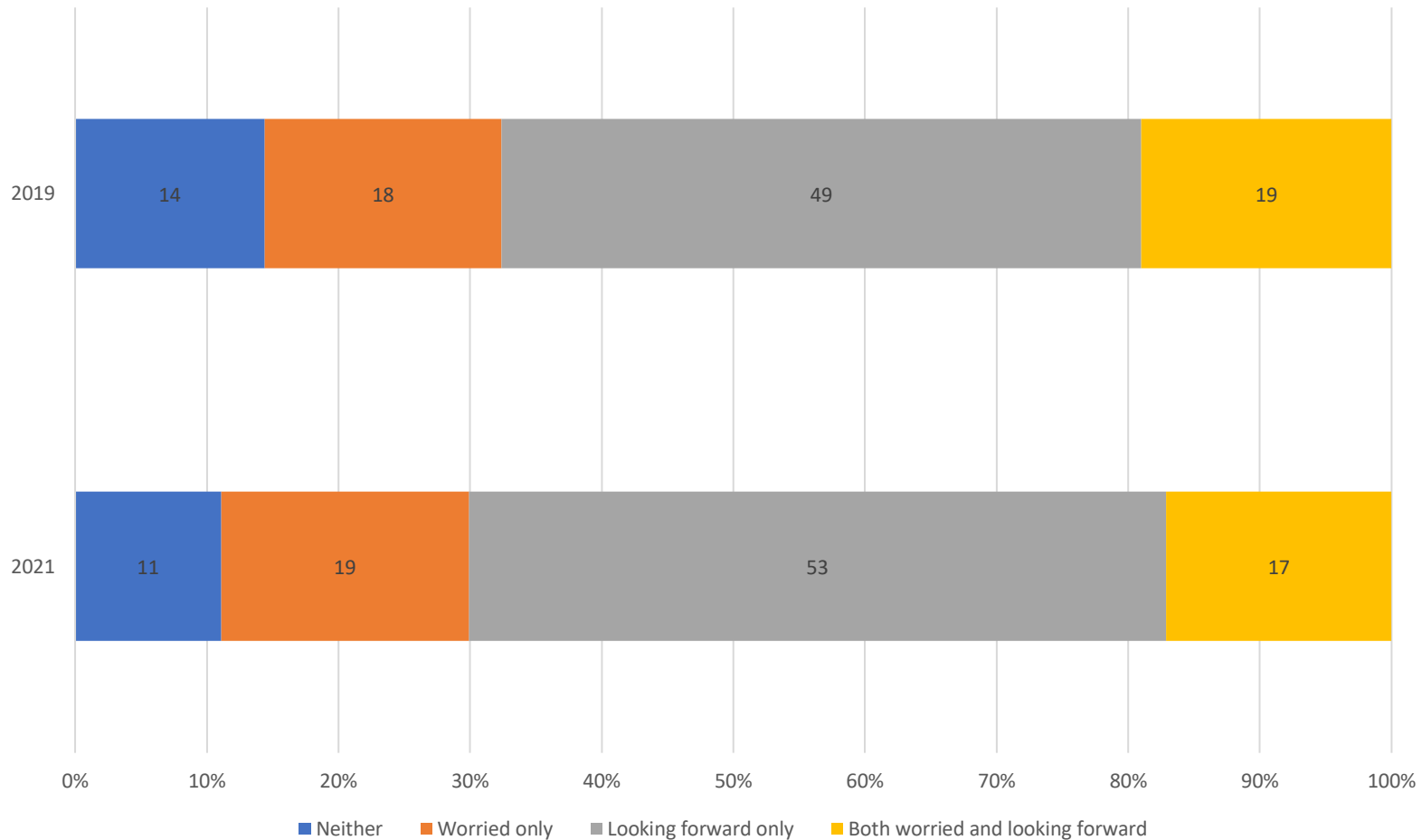
**Figure 9.5 Percentage reporting agreement with each statement on involvement in school life in 2019 and 2021**



- Agreement with pupil voice statements were similar across surveys
- No consistent pattern in small differences between time points
- Slightly more in 2021 report perceiving that pupils' ideas taken seriously
- Slightly fewer report involvement in planning and decision making

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (Ns range from 3,678 to 3,731)*

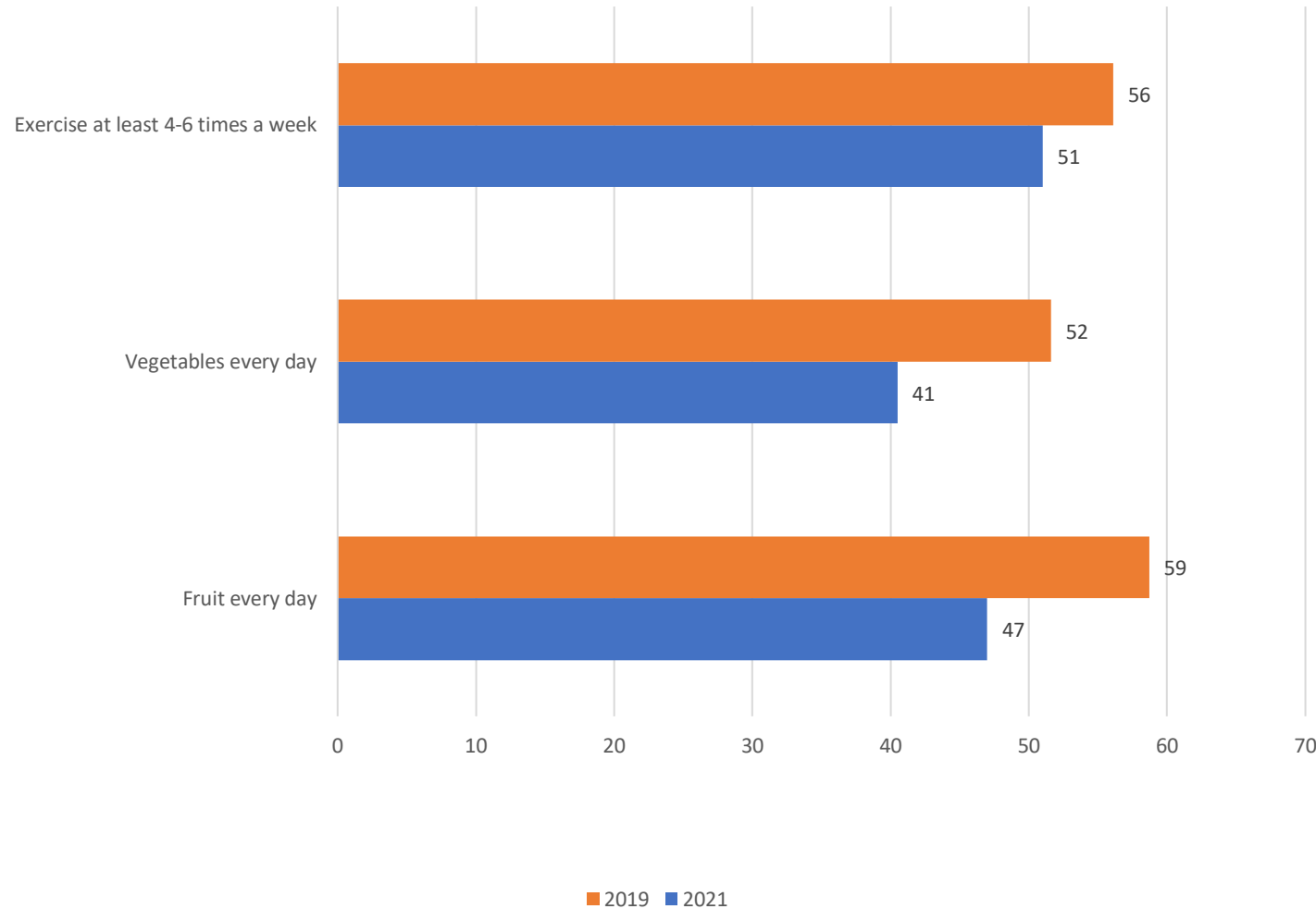
**Figure 9.6 Percentage reporting looking forward to transition to secondary school, worrying about transition, both or neither, in 2019 and 2021**



- Most children reported looking forward to transition to secondary school
- A slightly higher percentage reported looking forward to transition, without also reporting being worried about it, in 2021 than in 2019
- Slightly fewer reported that they were neither worried about or looking forward to transition in 2021

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 3,900)*

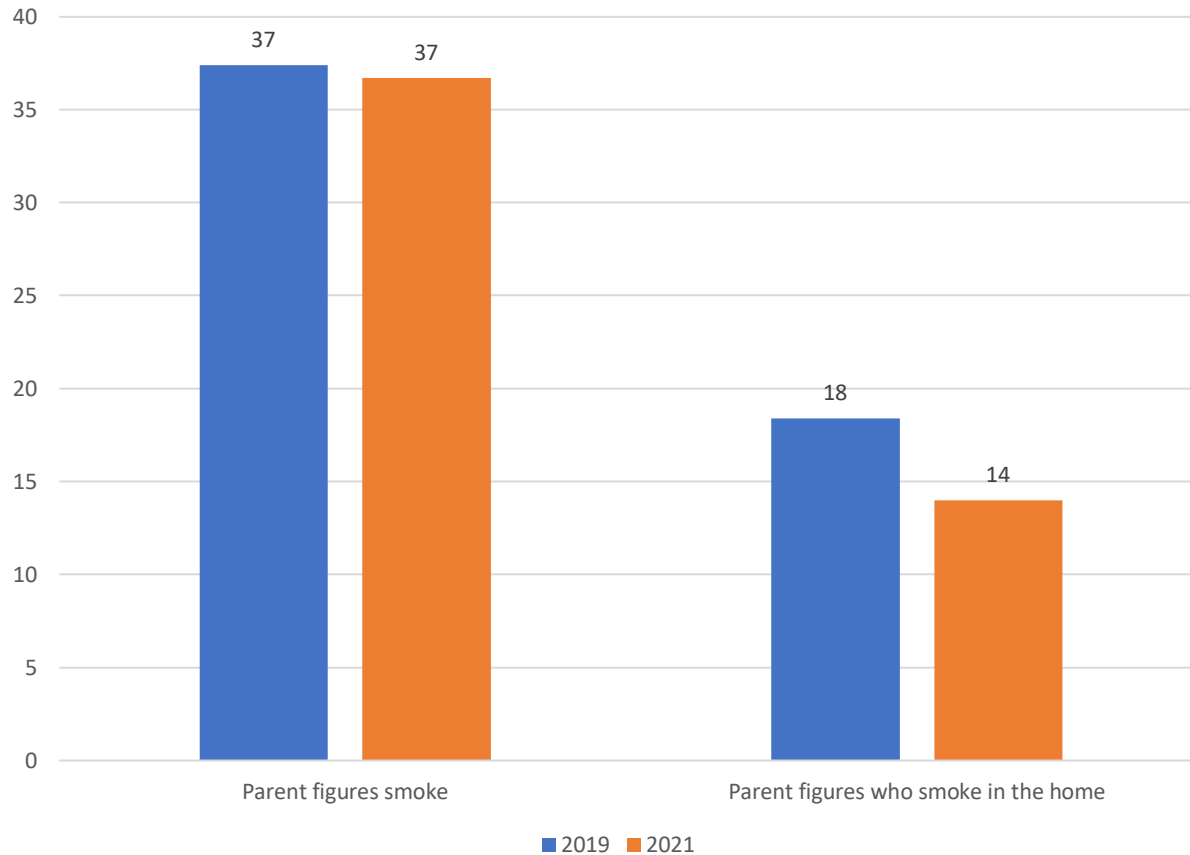
**Figure 9.7 Percentage reporting exercise at least 4 times per week, and eating fruit or vegetables daily, in 2019 and 2021**



- For diet and exercise, 2021 estimates are consistently less healthy than 2019
- The percentage of children reporting eating fruit and vegetables daily, and exercise at least 4 times a week in their free time fall
- These items had a relatively high degree of missingness

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 3,594 to 3,680)*

**Figure 9.8 Percentage reporting that parent figures smoke, or smoke in the home, in 2019 and 2021**



- There was little change in the percentage who said their parents smoke
- But there is some evidence of a reduction in children's reports that parents smoke *inside their home*

*Base: All respondents in year 6 who gave an answer (N = 3,831; parental smoking to 3,840; smoking in the home. Parent assumed not to smoke in the home if item unanswered but earlier response indicates parent does not smoke)*

# Sensitivity analysis

- Sensitivity analysis was limited to schools (n=31 schools from 18 local authorities) who participated in both surveys (n=1645)
- There is high consistency with the whole sample analysis
  - Marked increase in emotional difficulties (from 18% to 27% elevated or clinically significant), but not behavioural difficulties (14% to 13%)
  - Small decrease in life satisfaction
  - Most school connectedness estimates similar across timepoints, with some slightly more positive in 2019 and others vice versa
  - Fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise are lower in 2021, as in the main analysis
  - A slightly higher number of pupils in 2021 are either worried or looking forward to transition, with slightly fewer saying neither
- One discrepancy is a small potential decline in parental smoking which was not evident in the main analysis
  - Smoking *in the home* appears to fall by a similar amount as the main analysis

		2019	2021
Emotional difficulties	Elevated	10	16
	Clinically significant	8	11
Behavioural difficulties	Elevated	5	6
	Clinically significant	9	7
Life satisfaction	>7/10	68	65
Teacher care	Agree	89	91
Teacher accept	Agree	90	91
Teacher trust	Agree	86	83
Adult can confide in	Agree	87	83
Pupils enjoy being together			
	Agree	81	79
Pupils kind and helpful	Agree	79	73
Pupils accept me	Agree	78	75
Like school	A lot	41	37
Bullied by others	At least sometimes	31	29
Pupils involved in activities	Agree	73	71
Pupils involved in planning	Agree	76	72
Pupils ideas taken seriously			
	Agree	72	73
Fruit	Daily	57	49
Vegetables	Daily	50	42
	At least 4 times a week		
Exercise		54	48
School transition	Neither	15	11
	Worried	16	19
	Looking forward	50	52
Parent smokes			
	Both	18	18
Parent smokes	Yes	37	33
Parent smokes in home	Yes	18	13

# Summary findings – comparison to 2019 data

- These data indicate that just over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic
  - There was a notable increase in the proportion of children reporting elevated or clinically significant emotional difficulties since COVID-19.
  - Estimates of the proportion with elevated or clinically significant behavioural difficulties however differ little across the 2019 and 2021 surveys.
  - Life satisfaction appears marginally lower in our 2021 survey than in 2019
  - Children's diet and exercise behaviours were less healthy in 2021 than in our 2019 survey, suggestive of a decline in health behaviours.
  - Most children remain positive about relationships with teachers and pupils in the school environment, with little evidence of change in school connectedness
  - Most also reported looking forward to transition, despite this cohort having missed a substantial proportion of face-to-face teaching in Key Stage 2.
  - The percentage of children whose parents smoke remained stable, but our 2021 estimates of the percentage who say parents smoke in their home is lower than in 2019



# References

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