

WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study 13th Annual Survey Annual Report | 2024-25



Background

The WISERD Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS) is an annual longitudinal study to chart the progress of children and young people growing up in Wales. Each year, we follow at least three cohorts from schools across Wales and ask questions about their experiences of school and their perspectives on national and international issues.

Here, we provide a summary of key findings from the 2024-25 school year's survey with numbers rounded to the nearest whole percentage. Summaries of results for all of our questions from each year of the survey (2012 onwards) are available on the [WISERD Data Portal](https://dataportal.wiserd.ac.uk) (dataportal.wiserd.ac.uk).

Project Team

Dr Rhian Barrance (Director)
Dr Mark Connolly (Interim Director)
Dr Laura Arman (Research Associate)
Professor Chris Taylor (Advisor)
Zoe Rozelaar (Administrator)

Data Team

Sam Morgan (Senior Data Technician)

Contents

Demographics	3
Trust and support	5
Curriculum and Classes	7
Absences and belonging	8
Values	11
Decisions at school	12
Multilingual Wales	13
Welsh language	14
AI and schools	15

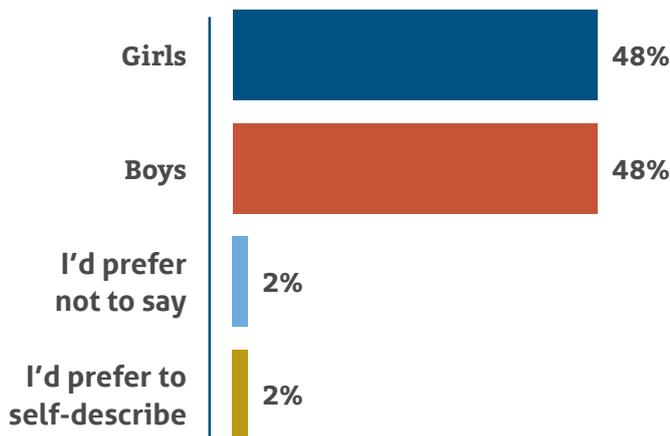
Demographics

In our 13th annual survey, we invited pupils from years 7, 9, 11 and 13 to take part and received responses from 1,810 pupils in total.

We work with schools on a voluntary basis and encourage participation from those who have previously participated, as much as possible, in order to retain pupils for longitudinal analysis. We aim to collect a sample from across Wales, with representation from differing socio-economic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.

Gender

We asked our participants 'What is your gender?' and allowed them to select one of four options, including one that allowed them to self-describe:



Disability

10% of our sample said that their day-to-day activities were limited "a little" by long-term health problems or disabilities and 2% said their day-to-day activities were limited "a lot", while 6% of our sample preferred not to answer the question.

Additional learning needs (ALN)

16% of this year's sample said that they have at some point received extra support at school with learning difficulties they have experienced. A further 19% responded that they were not sure whether they had or had not received extra support.

Free school meals (FSM)

25%

of our sample reported eligibility for free school meals.



Language medium

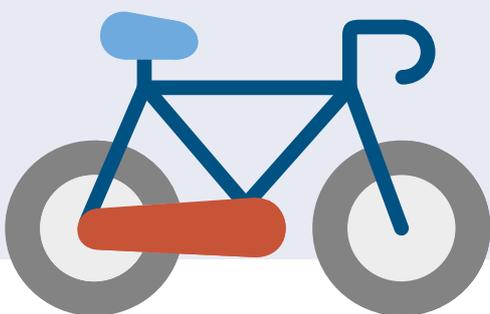
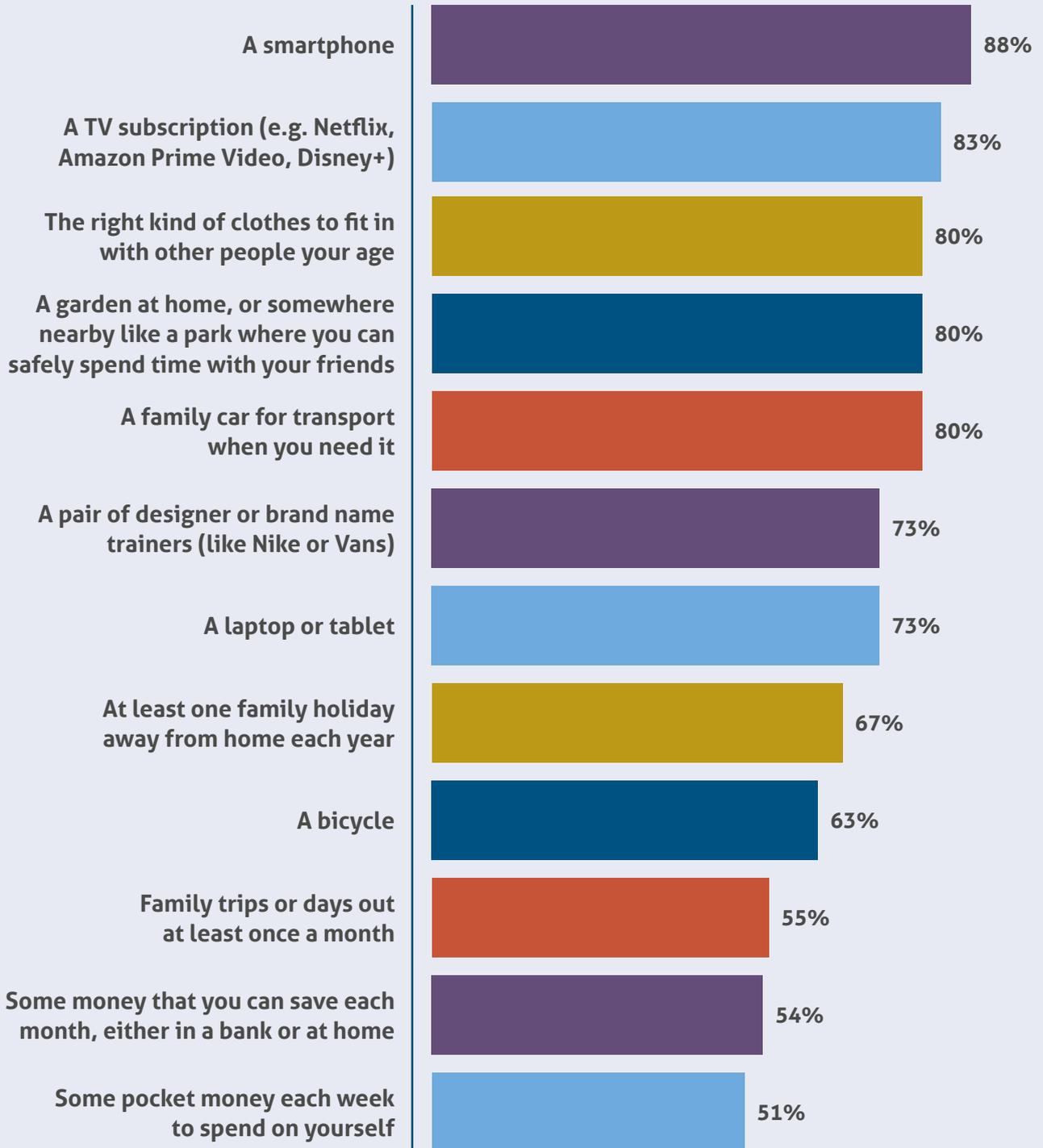
32%

of our participants attended Welsh-medium schools or bilingual-medium schools.

Su'mae?

Shwmae?

Here is a list of things some young people your age have. Please tell us which ones you have



Trust and support

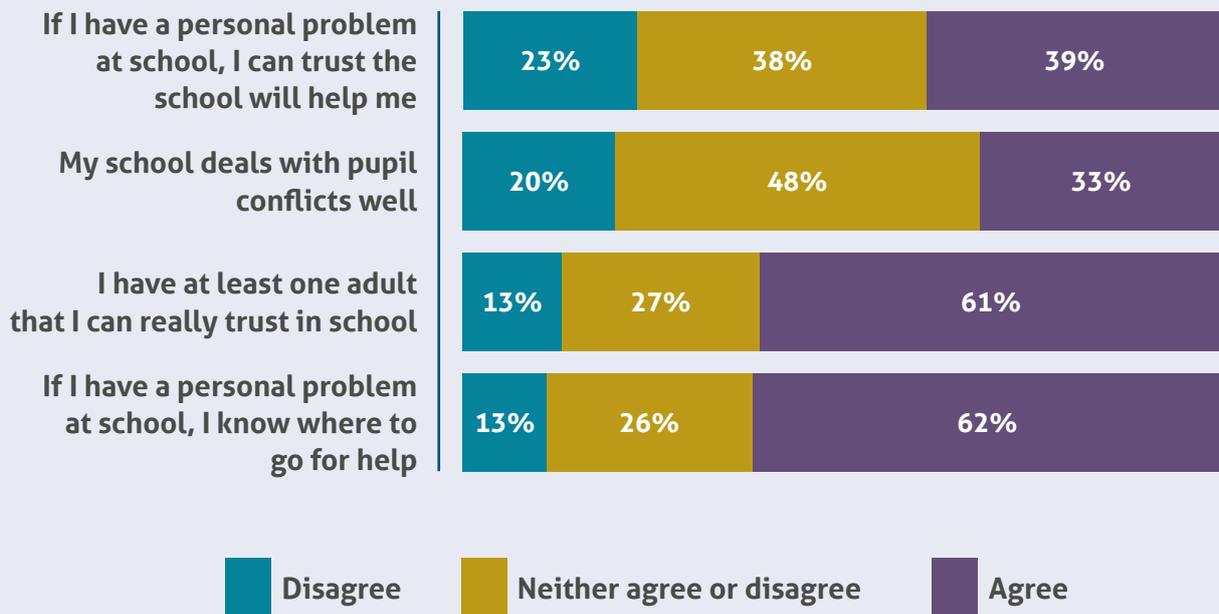
We asked how well-supported the pupils feel at school and whether they have positive views of their teachers.

This year, the majority of pupils (61-62%) knew that they could trust an adult at school and knew where to go for help with any personal problems. However, 13% said they did not have an adult at school they could trust and 13% reported that they did not know where to go for help.

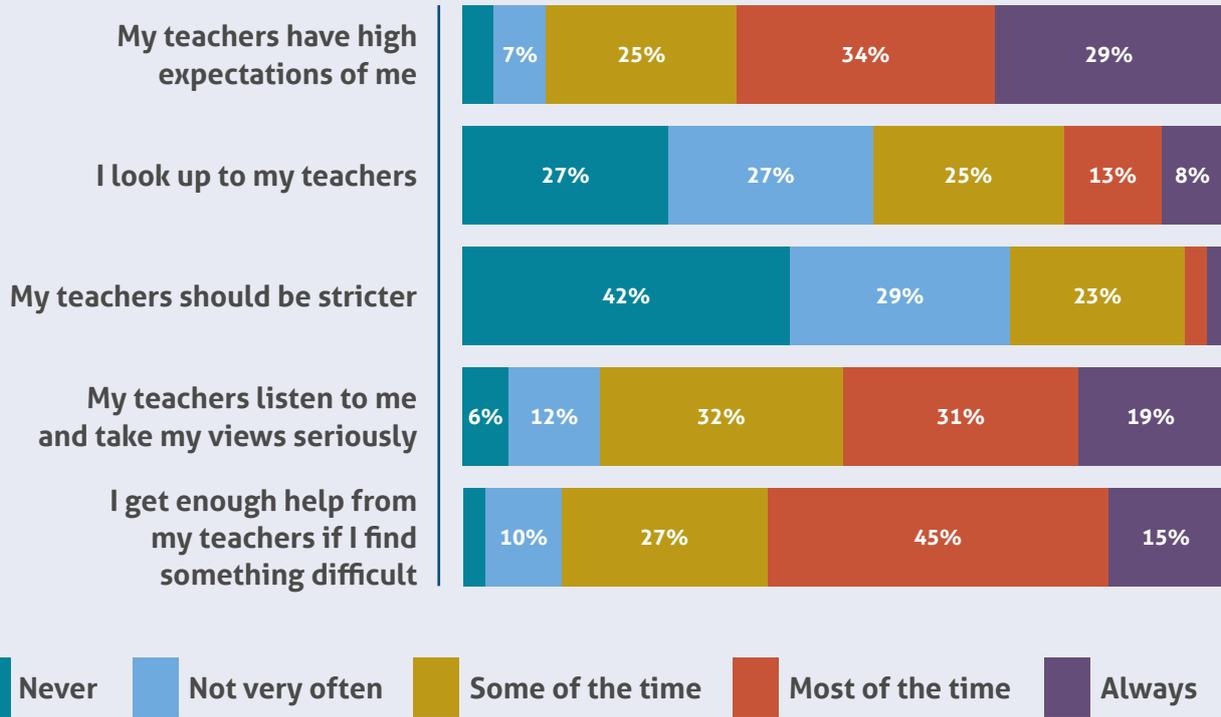
When asked whether they could trust that the school would help them with their personal problems, there was less agreement amongst pupils, with 40% agreeing and 23% disagreeing.



Finding support at school



About your school...



Just 15% of pupils in our sample felt that they “always” get enough help from their teachers when they find something difficult, but a further 45% said that they get help “most of the time”. Over a quarter said they only get the help they need “some of the time”, while the remaining 13% felt they do not get the help they need very often, with a few reporting “never”.

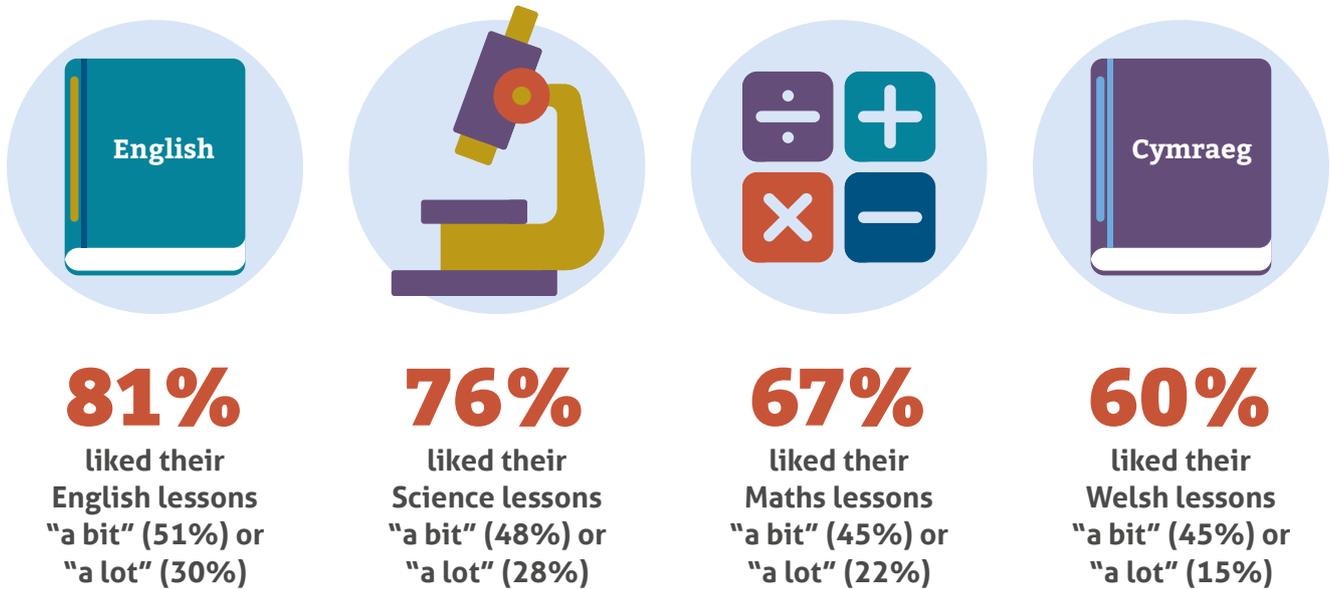
Over half of our pupils reported “never” or “not very often” looking up to their teachers (27% for both responses). The majority of pupils said that teachers should “never” (42%) or “not very often” (30%) be stricter.

32% of pupils felt that “some of the time”, the teachers listen to them as an individual and take their views seriously. Almost half felt listened to and taken seriously “most of the time” or “always”.

Over half the pupils in our sample (63%) thought that teachers had high expectations “most of the time” or “always”, with a quarter feeling the same “some of the time”. However, the majority of the remaining 13% of pupils who infrequently or “never” thought that the teachers had high expectations of them were the same pupils who reported not getting enough help (either “not very often” or “never” getting enough help).

Curriculum and Classes

Over 60% of pupils in our sample liked their core subjects to some extent.

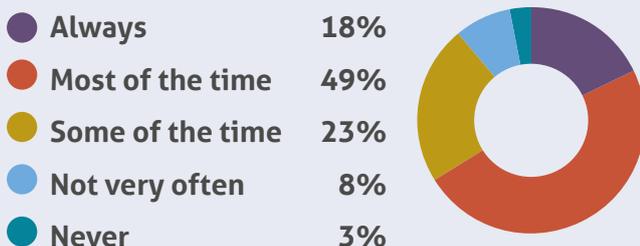


English was the most popular subject, with only 18% of pupils not liking the subject at all. This holds true for both bilingual or Welsh-medium schools (which are grouped together in our results) and for English schools.

Welsh as a subject, however, was more popular than Maths in bilingual/Welsh-medium schools, with 36% not liking Maths at all and 30% disliking Welsh. 20% of pupils at bilingual/Welsh-medium schools liked Welsh "a lot" and 50% liked it "a bit", whereas the proportion who liked Welsh "a lot" at English-medium schools was as low as 13% with 45% responding "not at all".

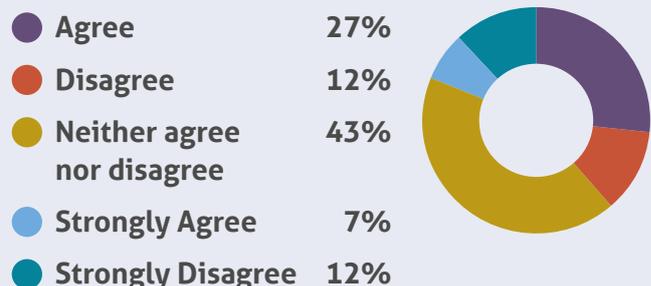
I understand my lessons

When asked whether, generally, they understand their lessons, just under half of pupils reported that they understand "most of the time". 18% "always" understand and, on the other end of the scale, 3% report that they "never" understand.



I enjoy my lessons

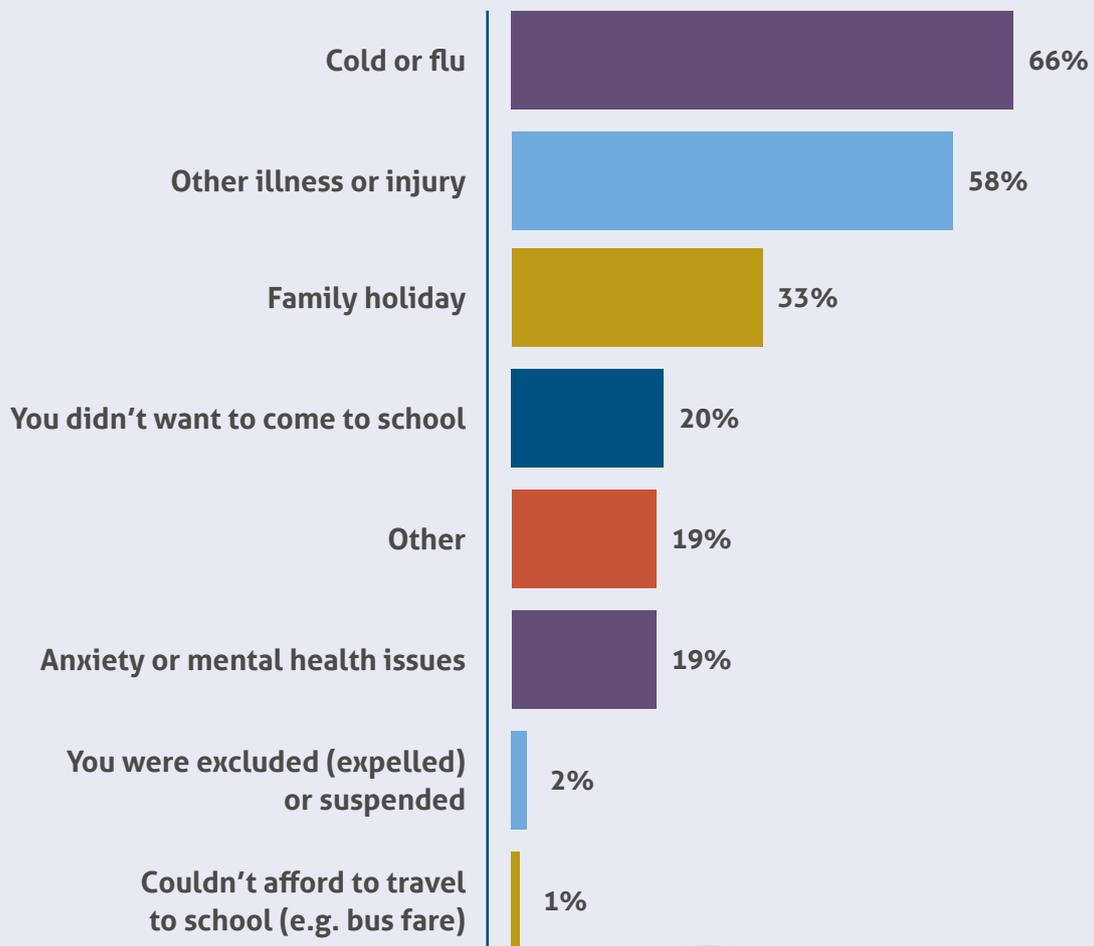
When we asked the pupils about their enjoyment of lessons, the largest group (43%) chose to respond "neither agree nor disagree" to the statement "I enjoy my lessons". 34% agreed with the statement and 24% disagreed.



Absences and belonging

In addition to school absences due to cold and flu symptoms or other non-specified illnesses and injuries, our findings suggest that poor mental health impacts attendance significantly, with 19% of pupils stating that this was the reason they were absent from school during this school year.

During this school year, have you been absent for any of the following reasons?

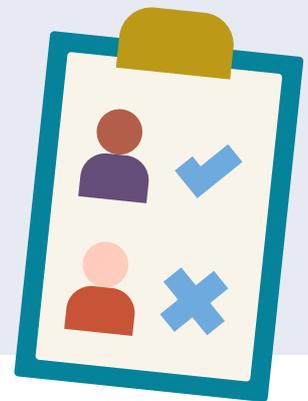
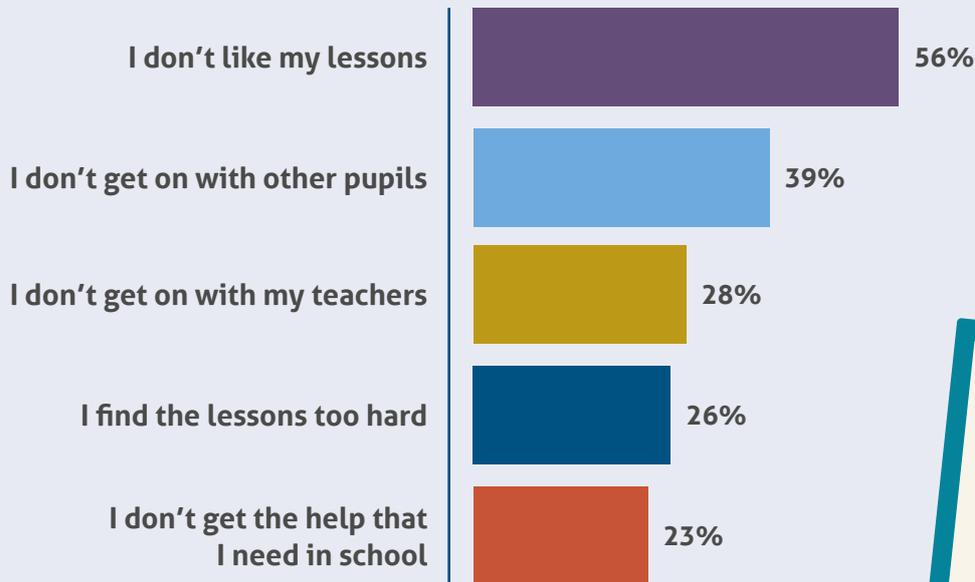


A third of pupils in our sample missed school because of a family holiday



Enjoyment of lessons and feelings of safety and belonging at school may also impact attendance. 32% of pupils in our survey responded that they had missed school for some of the following reasons:

Have you ever missed school for any of the following reasons?



The most frequent response was that the pupil did not enjoy their lessons and, as stated earlier (see page 7), almost a quarter of pupils report **not enjoying their lessons**.

The second most frequent reason selected was that the pupil missed school because they “do not get on with other pupils” and we know from a previous question that only a third of pupils felt that their school consistently deals with **pupil conflict** well (see graph on page 5).

We find similar links with other questions:

<p>Not getting on with teachers</p>		<p>according to 18% of pupils, My teachers listen to me and take my views seriously “not very often” and “never” (see page 6)</p>
<p>Finding lessons too hard</p>		<p>12% of pupils responding to I understand my lessons said “not very often” or “never” (see page 7)</p>
<p>Not getting help in school</p>		<p>13% said “never” or “not very often” in response to I get enough help from my teachers if I find something difficult (see page 6)</p>

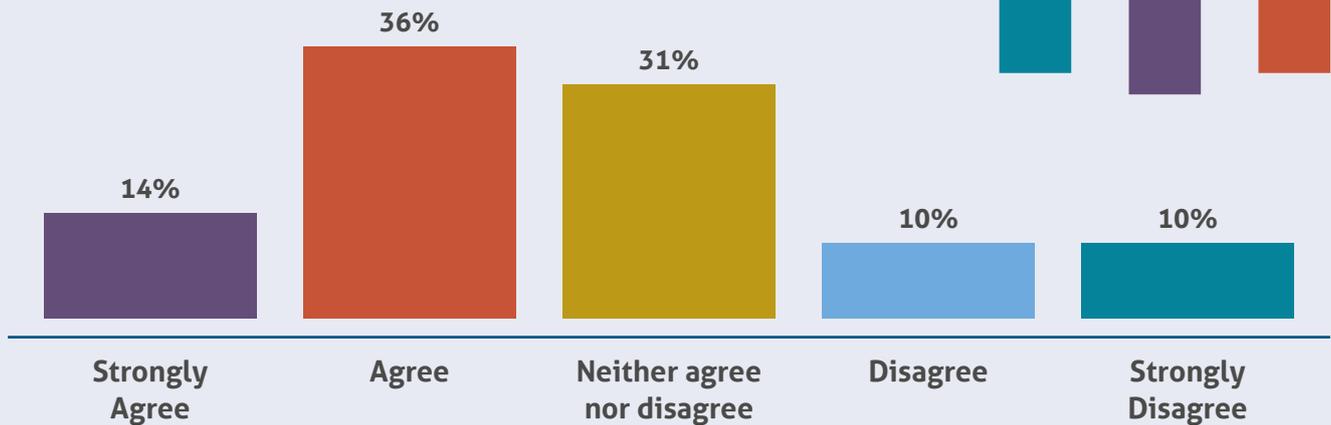
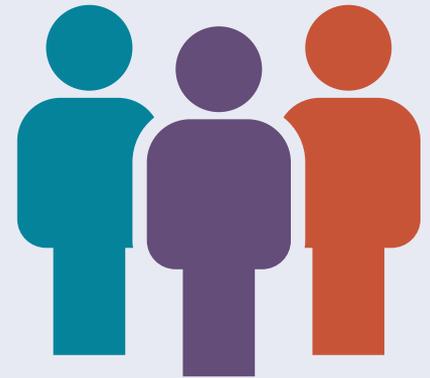


Safe at school

Overall, pupils feel safe at school, however, 11% of pupils said they “disagree” or “strongly disagree” when asked whether they feel safe at school. A further 27% could “neither agree nor disagree” with the statement.

A sense of belonging

We asked pupils to respond to the statement “I feel like I belong at school” and the majority (36%) were able to agree, however, almost as many were not able to agree or disagree and 20% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Values

We asked pupils to reflect on what they feel their school values and respects in its school community.

85%

felt that disabled pupils are valued and respected.

80%

agreed that all pupils are valued and respected, whether their families are rich or poor.

83%

felt that pupils with additional learning needs are valued and respected.

71%

agreed that their school values and respects lesbian, gay or bisexual pupils.

81%

agreed that pupils of all ethnic backgrounds are valued and respected.

69%

"agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that their school values and respects trans or non-binary pupils.

On the whole, pupils' attitudes were positive, however our findings do suggest that pupils perceive a difference in how girls and boys are valued...

The statement with the lowest percentage of pupils in agreement (62%) was "Boys and girls are valued and respected equally". This statement also had the lowest proportion of pupils selecting "agree" (41%) and more pupils choosing "somewhat agree" (21%).

A further 20% chose "neither agree nor disagree". "Somewhat disagree" was at 8% and 10% chose "disagree". This 10% was primarily driven by boys with double the proportion of boys than girls indicating that they disagreed that boys and girls are treated equally.



Decisions at school

Consistently across year groups, the decisions pupils make on subject choice at school are based on how good they were at a particular subject with 64% highlighting this as a deciding factor. Only a small number (15%) were influenced by the choices of their friends.

However, even in the early stages of their education, pupils are making choices relating to their **future career**, with 62% indicating that their subject choices were informed by their desired career trajectory.

Parents also influence decisions for 35% of pupils, while teachers seemingly have much less influence, with only 16% indicating that their teachers influenced their subject choice.

These results were consistent across year groups with little variation between Years 9 and 11, and no perceptible difference based on the assumed acquisition of further vocational awareness.

Where there was a slight difference was in the influence of parents, which resulted in a higher percentage in Year 11 than Year 9, perhaps due to parents' increased engagement at this stage.

The largest difference by year group is due to the narrowing of curricula, with 22% of Year 11s indicating that a **subject's availability** at their school or in their area influenced their choice, while only 11% of pupils were influenced by this in Year 9.



Multilingual Wales

This year, we asked whether pupils spoke languages other than English or Welsh at home and found that 43% do.

While this is likely due to the relatively urban sample demographics mentioned at the beginning of this report, these responses did come from over half of our schools. When asked which languages were spoken in their homes, answers covered languages from all over Eurasia and some of Africa.

We also wanted to know whether pupils in schools across Wales feel that their plurilingual skills are valued.

We asked whether the pupils who speak languages other than English or Welsh at home feel that anyone has ever judged them for speaking that language at school. 15% said "yes" and 9% "preferred not to say", with those responses coming from just two of the schools in our survey. It should be noted that these schools also had high response rates in general.

Pupils from households where a language other than English or Welsh was spoken were most confident in their abilities to learn a new language (27% were "very confident"; 56% "somewhat confident" and 17% "not confident at all").

Pupils from homes where some speak other languages were the next most confident (21% were "very confident"; 58% "somewhat confident" and 22% "not confident at all") with pupils from homes where no language other than English or Welsh was spoken being least confident (15% were "very confident"; 48% "somewhat confident" and 37% "not confident at all").



Hallo



Hola



Bonjour



Cześć

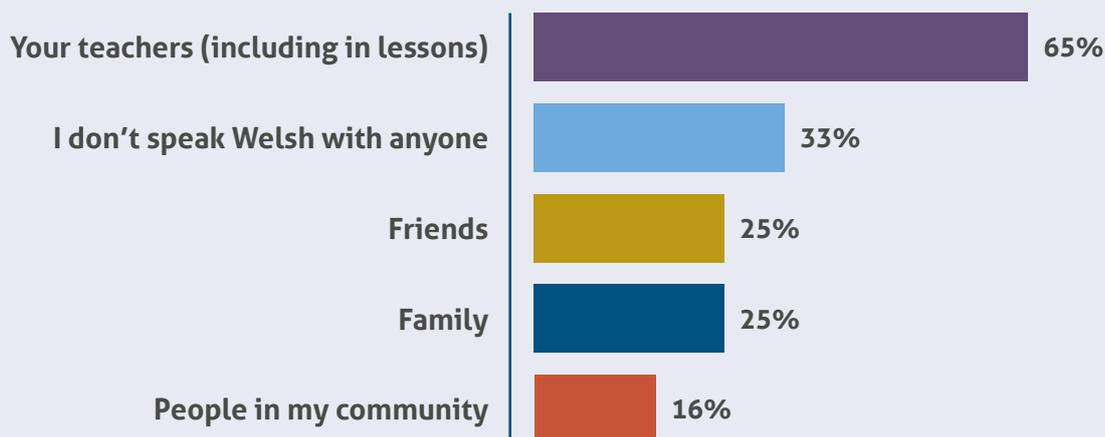


Ciao

Welsh language

65% of pupils stated that they speak Welsh with their teachers.

Do you ever speak Welsh with...?



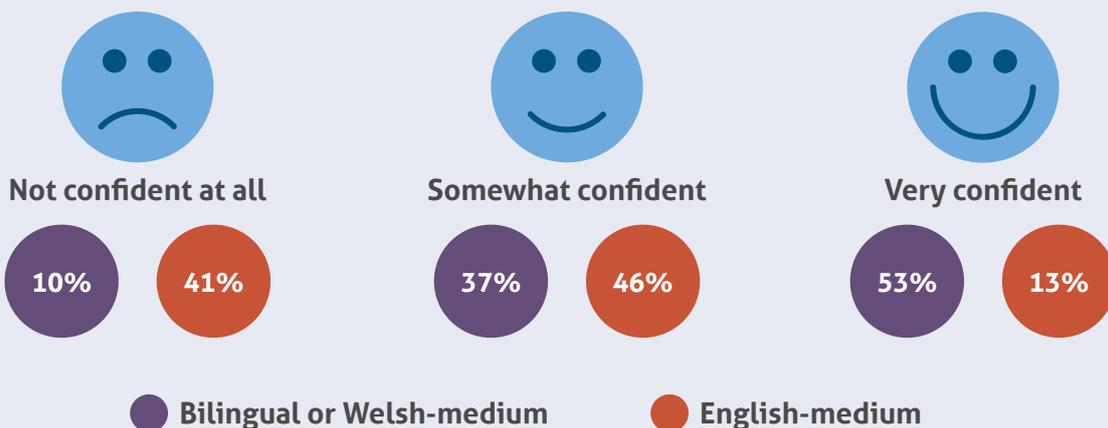
The 65% of pupils who speak Welsh with their teachers include:

- 92% of pupils from homes where everyone speaks Welsh
- 79% from homes where some members speak Welsh
- 72% of pupils who have family members outside their homes who speak Welsh
- 49% of pupils with no Welsh speakers at home or in their broader family

51% of pupils with no Welsh speakers even in their broader family did not tick the box for "do you ever speak Welsh with: teachers".

Similarly, pupils from this background were more likely to attend English-medium schools (65% v. 10% in bilingual/Welsh-medium schools). When asked how confident they feel about certain skills, pupils at English-medium schools were less confident at speaking Welsh, though just under half reported that they are "somewhat confident" (46%).

How confident do you feel in your skills in the following... Speaking Welsh

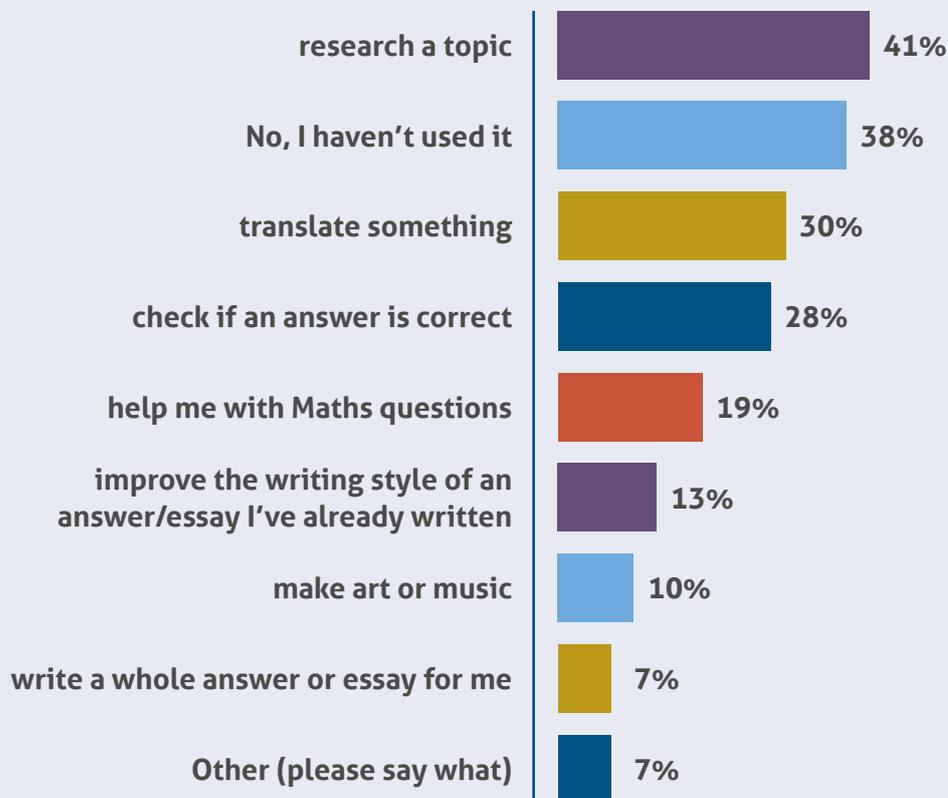


AI and schools

This year's survey featured a section dedicated to understanding pupils' attitudes towards and usage of generative 'artificial intelligence' (GenAI), particularly regarding the use of GenAI for schoolwork.

Have you ever used Generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT or Gemini) to help with schoolwork? (Please tick all the ways you've used it below).

I've used Generative AI to...

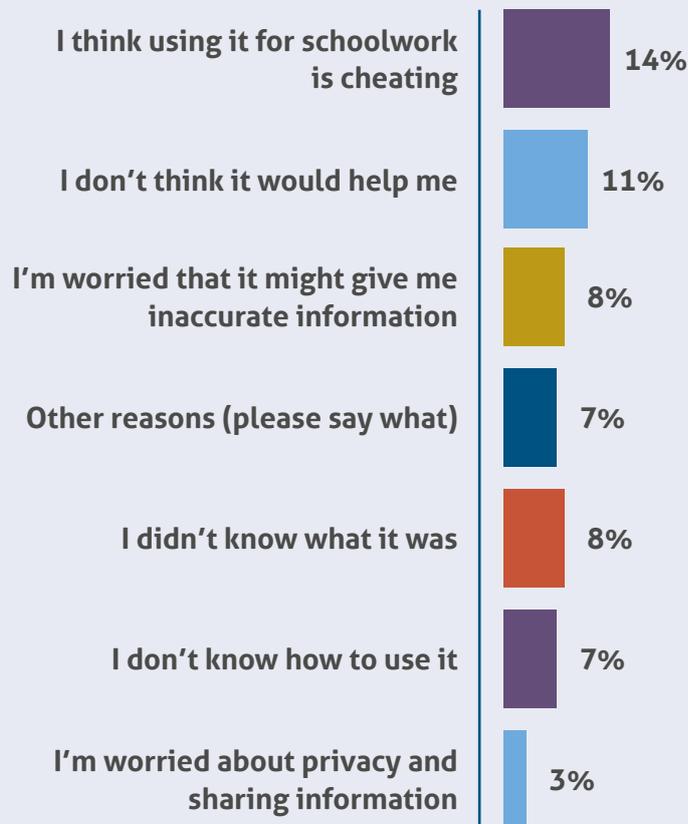


Overall, 62% of pupils in the survey had used GenAI to help with their schoolwork.

The most common uses for GenAI were general research and for translation.

By subject, GenAI tools were most popularly used for Maths with over a quarter (26%) having used GenAI to help with Maths followed by English then Welsh (17% and 14% respectively).

Why haven't you used Generative AI for your schoolwork?



The reasons non-users gave for not using the technology

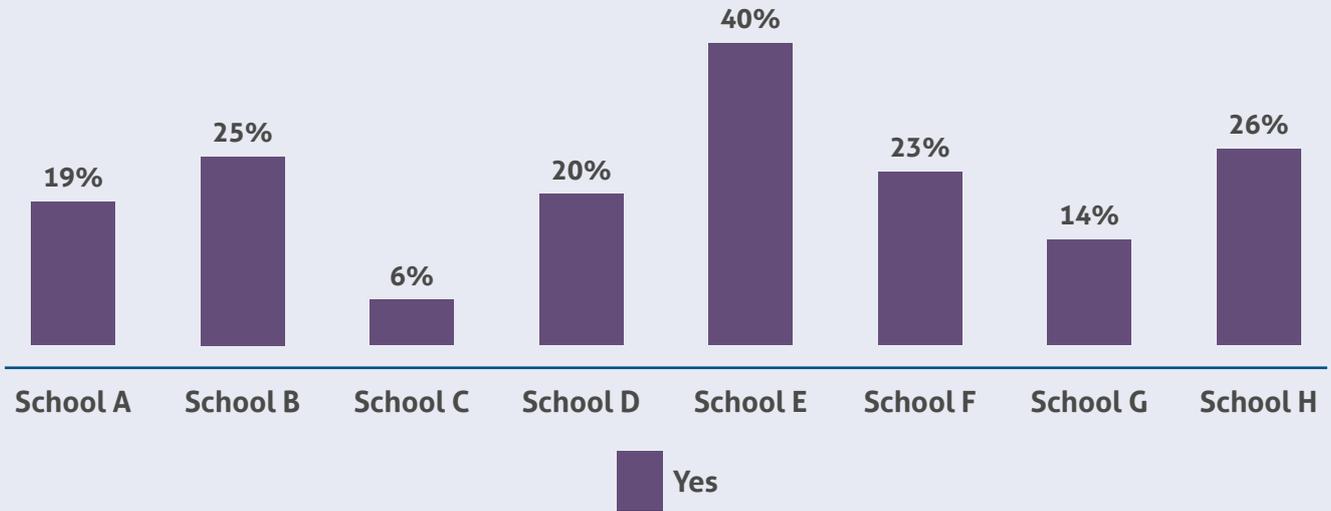
The 38% of non-users from the previous graph gave us their reasons for not using the technology.

The most significant reason given for this was the belief that using GenAI was cheating, with 11% doubting that it would help and 8% worried about the accuracy of the information being provided.

The open responses of non-users ranged from apathy – “I don't care about it” – to hostility, with responses such as “I hate AI” or “I don't need it, I'm smart”, or recognition that the use of AI is banned in their school.

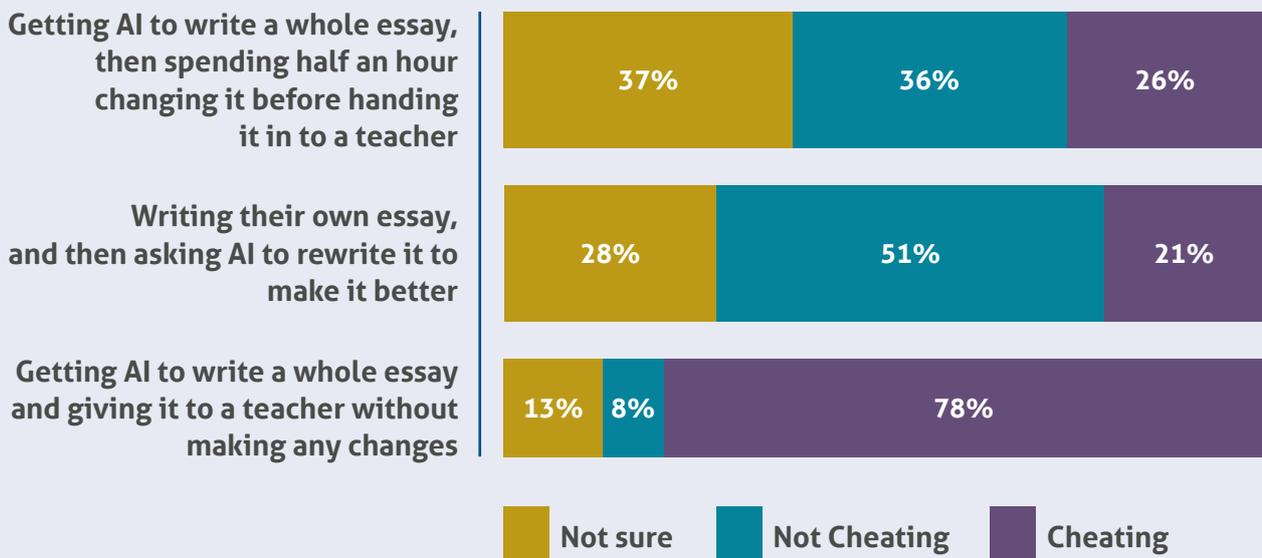


Has your school or teacher talked about whether using Generative AI for homework is allowed?



There was consistency across schools in relation to teachers advising pupils on AI with just school C being a slight outlier.

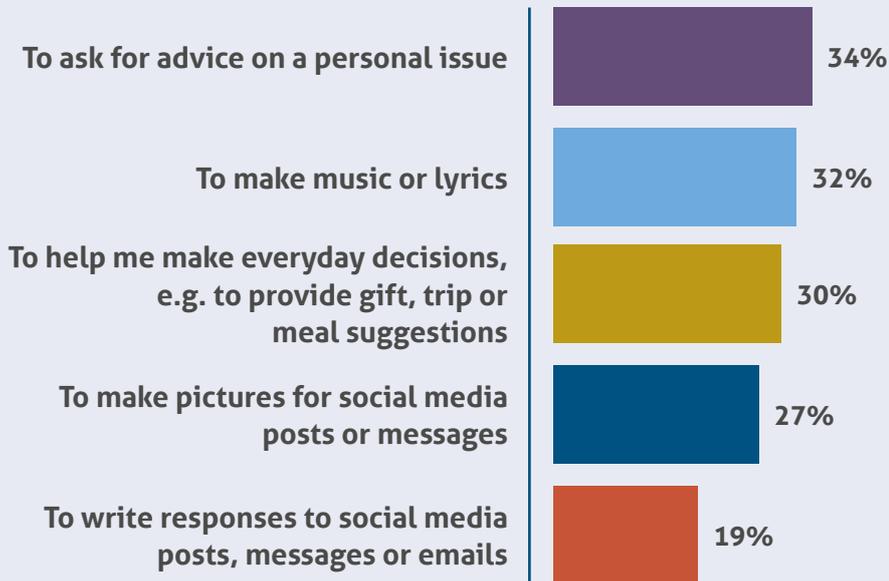
Do you think it is or isn't cheating for pupils to use Generative AI in the following ways?



In relation to pupils' awareness of the ethical use of AI, we asked how they might use the technology while writing essays.

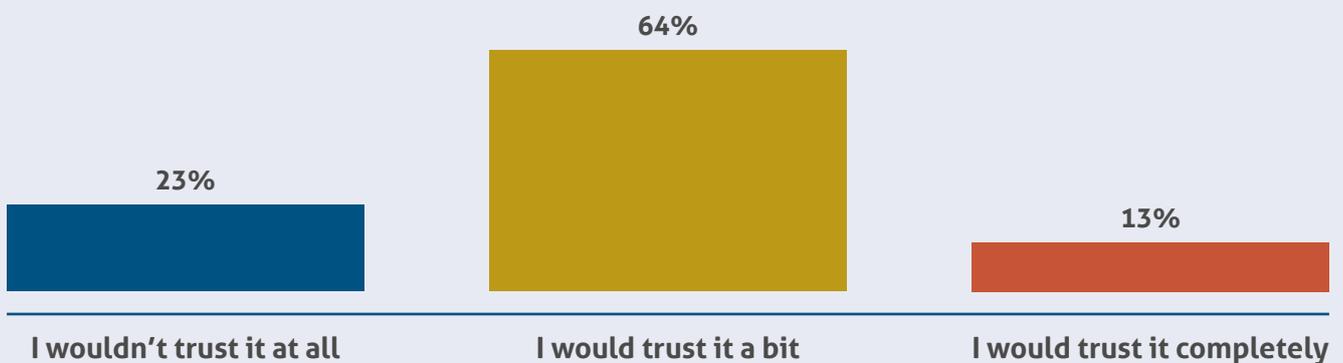
78% were aware that getting AI to write an essay and then hand it in to a teacher was a form of cheating. 26% believed that getting AI to write an essay and then spending half an hour editing was unethical and over 50% believed that using AI to improve what they had written was not cheating.

Have you ever used Generative AI for any of the following?



Recent concerns regarding the prevalence of young people’s use of AI chatbots for personal advice were reflected in our data, with 34% of pupils indicating that they have used AI for advice relating to personal issues. The other main use of AI amongst our pupils was to create music or lyrics (32%).

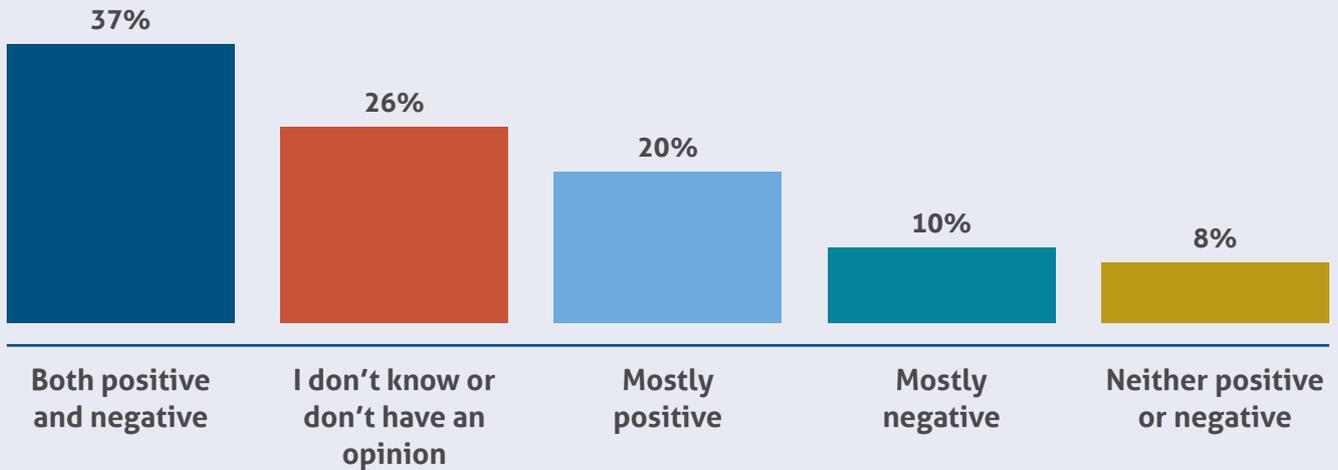
Some people use Generative AI to ask for advice on personal issues. How much would you trust the advice a Generative AI chatbot (e.g. ChatGPT) gave you?



We asked pupils whether they use AI for personal advice.

Even for those who had not used the tools in this way, pupils indicated a high level of trust in the advice that AI would provide, with 13% trusting AI “completely” and 64% trusting AI “a bit”.

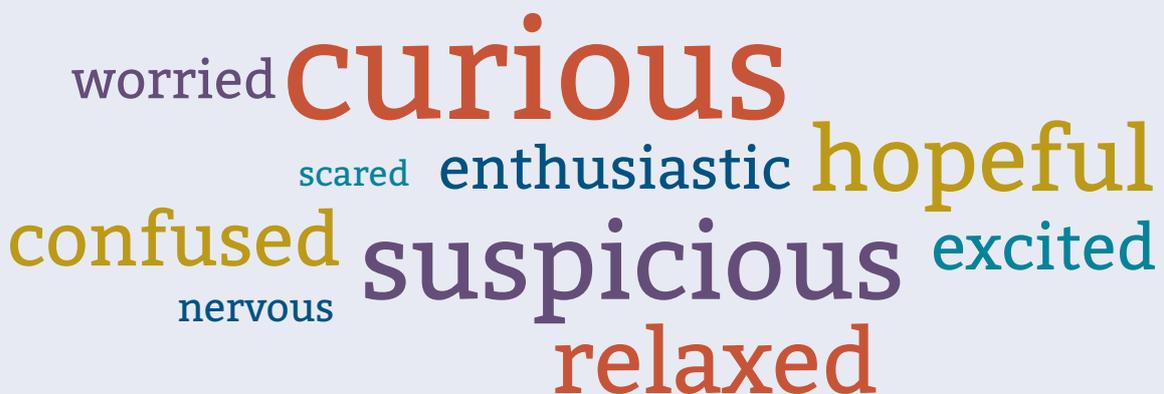
Do you think Generative AI will have a positive or negative impact on your life in the next 10 years?



Pupils provided a mixed response in relation to whether AI had a positive or negative impact on their lives, however their responses leaned towards the positive, with twice as many pupils (20% as opposed to 10%) indicating that the technology will have a positive impact.



Please choose three words below that best describe your thoughts and feelings about Generative AI?



This leaning towards a more positive view of AI technology was reflected in pupils' choices of words to describe their attitude towards AI.

The least frequent choices were "worried", "scared", and "nervous", though 42% of pupils chose "suspicious". The main response from our pupils was that they were "curious" (60%) about what AI could do.

Funding

The WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS) is based at Cardiff University and is funded by the Welsh Government.

About us

The Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD) is a national, interdisciplinary, social science research institute. We have been designated by the Welsh Government as a national research centre.



wiserd.ac.uk



[@wiserd-research.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/wiserd-research.bsky.social)



[@wiserdnews](https://www.instagram.com/wiserdnews)



[@WISERD](https://www.facebook.com/WISERD)



[@WISERD](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wiserd)

How to get involved

If you work at a school and would like to participate in the WMCS, please get in touch: WMCS@cardiff.ac.uk

WISERD works in partnership with a wide range of different organisations. If you would like to find out more about our research, are interested in working with us on a joint event or would like to co-produce a piece of research, please get in touch.