

Out of school, out of pocket

How much do parents spend on extra-curricular activities?

May 2019

gkp

Contents

Introduction	3	Why do parents pay for extra-curricular activity?	13
Respondent profile	4	Do parents believe parenting is more competitive now?.....	14
Summary of findings.....	5	Are parents worried about pressurising children to succeed?..	16
How much is spent on out-of-school activities?.....	6	Do parents feel children take their efforts for granted?.....	17
What types of activity do parents pay for?.....	7	How much do parents think they have wasted?	18
How much do parents spend on extra tuition?.....	8	Conclusions.....	19
How much time is spent ferrying children around?	10		
What sacrifices have parents made?	12		

Introduction

Asked if they agree that parenting is more competitive now than it used to be, nine in ten parents in our survey say they believe that it is. Most readers probably wouldn't find that surprising. After all, the days when parents, especially fathers, left children to their own devices for most of the time are long gone.

Children's lives are now timetabled, structured and planned in a way most of our parents and grandparents would find utterly baffling. Parents probably feel they have little choice. Society today is so competitive, so relentless that we are forever being reminded that we must give our children every opportunity to acquire a new skill or remedy a disadvantage if we can.

So it's sobering, and somewhat comforting, to learn that the number one reason why parents expend so much money and time on out-of-school activities is that children enjoy them. To be sure, ambition and future success are also significant motivations, but it's heartening to learn that parents agree to pay for those extra guitar and dancing lessons not principally because they think their children will land a better job, or to impress the neighbours, but because they want to indulge simple childish pleasure.

That indulgence isn't cheap. On average parents spend more than £1,500 a year – and three hours a week – on their children's out-of-school activities. Two-thirds of that spending is on activities that can be loosely termed 'non-academic' – sports, music and drama – rather than on extra tuition, which again suggests that parents are interested in giving their children an 'education' in the broadest sense rather than merely helping them to improve their school grades. Whether that is because they no longer believe schools are in a position to do so is, however, a moot point.



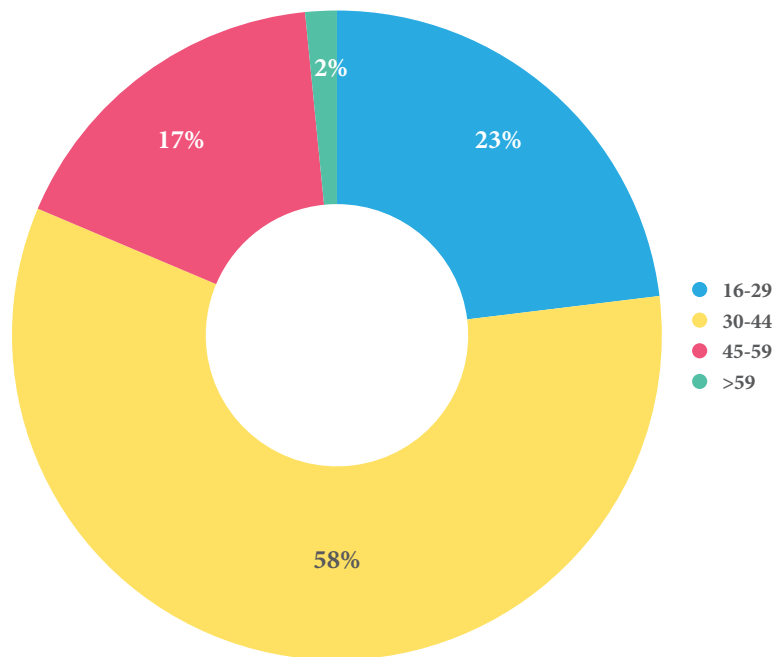
Mark Cooper

Director,
Gerard Kelly & Partners

Respondent profile

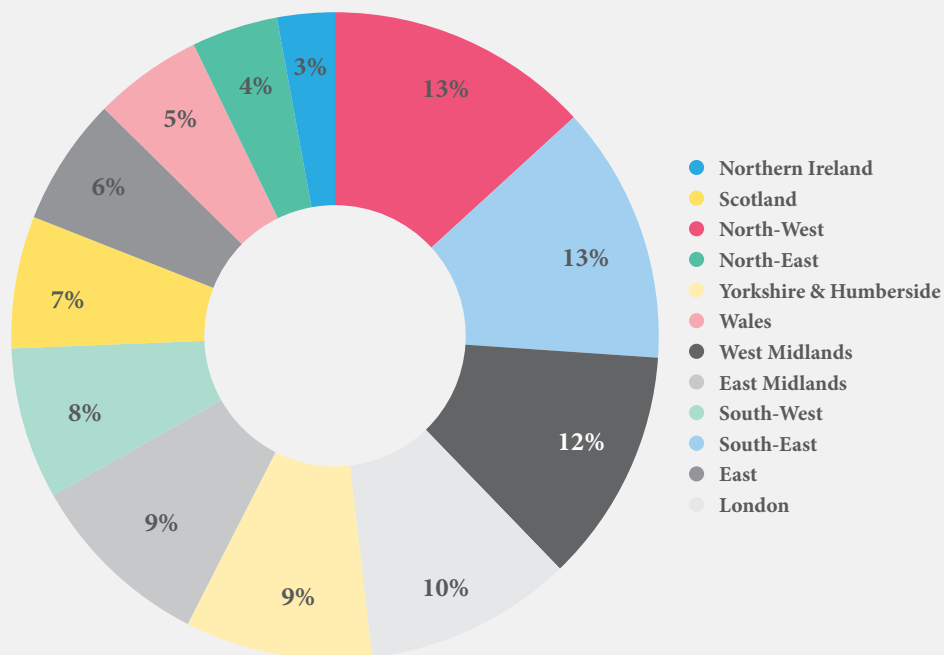
- We polled over 1,500 parents across the UK*
- Most were under 45 (58% were 30-44; 23% 16-29; 19% over 45)
- Three-quarters were married or in a partnership (55% and 20%); only a fifth (19%) were single – a breakdown that broadly reflects national averages
- Parents in all regions of the UK responded. (In the graphs cities rather than regions are used - respondents were asked to name the nearest big city to their home.)

Age - How old are you?



*The research was conducted on behalf of GKP by Ginger Research.

Regions - Where do you live?



Summary of findings

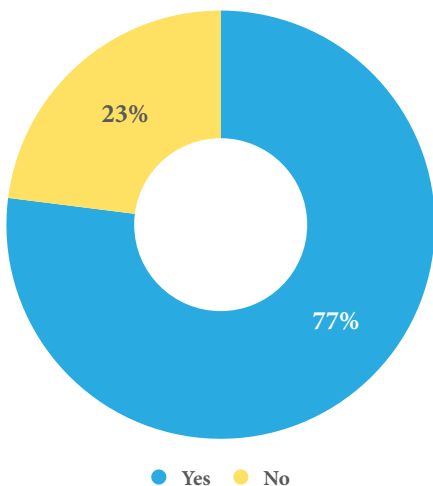
- For all the pressures on children to achieve and succeed, the main reason why parents say they pay for extra-curricular activities is because their children enjoy them. Future success and giving them new opportunities are strong motivations, but they appear to be secondary considerations for most parents
- Spending on 'non-academic' activities is approximately three times greater than that on additional tuition, which suggests parents value 'education' in the broadest sense, or perhaps feel that they cannot always rely on schools to provide the full range of activities they once did
- Almost nine in ten believe parenting is more competitive than it used to be
- But parents are evenly split over whether they think they are putting too much pressure on children to succeed – half think they are, half don't
- Swimming is the most popular – and expensive – extra-curricular activity, which is surprising as primary schools are required to provide lessons. Perhaps parents feel the early training in a skill that could save their child's life isn't sufficient
- Parents are willing to cut back on their own spending to pay for their children's extra-curricular activities and spend on average approximately three hours' a week ferrying them around to enable them to do so



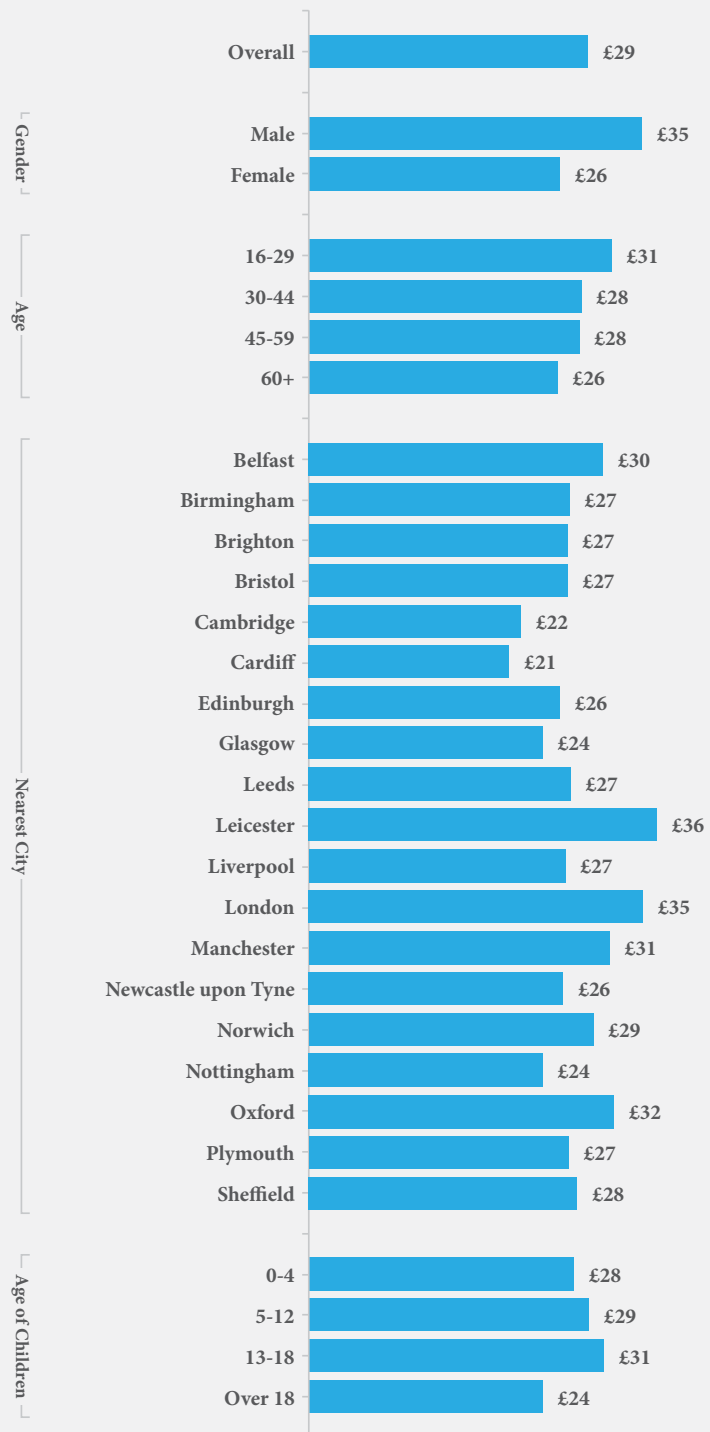
How much is spent on out-of-school activities?

- Three-quarters (77%) say they do spend money on extra-curricular activities, 23% don't
- On average, parents say their children do them three times a week
- Parents spend £29 weekly on average per child, over £1,500 a year, or more than £28,000 until they reach adulthood
- Leicester parents spend the most each week – £36 – followed by those in London (£35)
- Cardiff parents spend the least (£21), followed by those in Cambridge (£22)
- The cost doesn't vary much by age group. 13-18 year olds are the most expensive children (£31), followed by 5-12 year olds (£29) and under fives (£28)

Do you spend money on extra activities, after-school clubs or swimming/sports clubs?



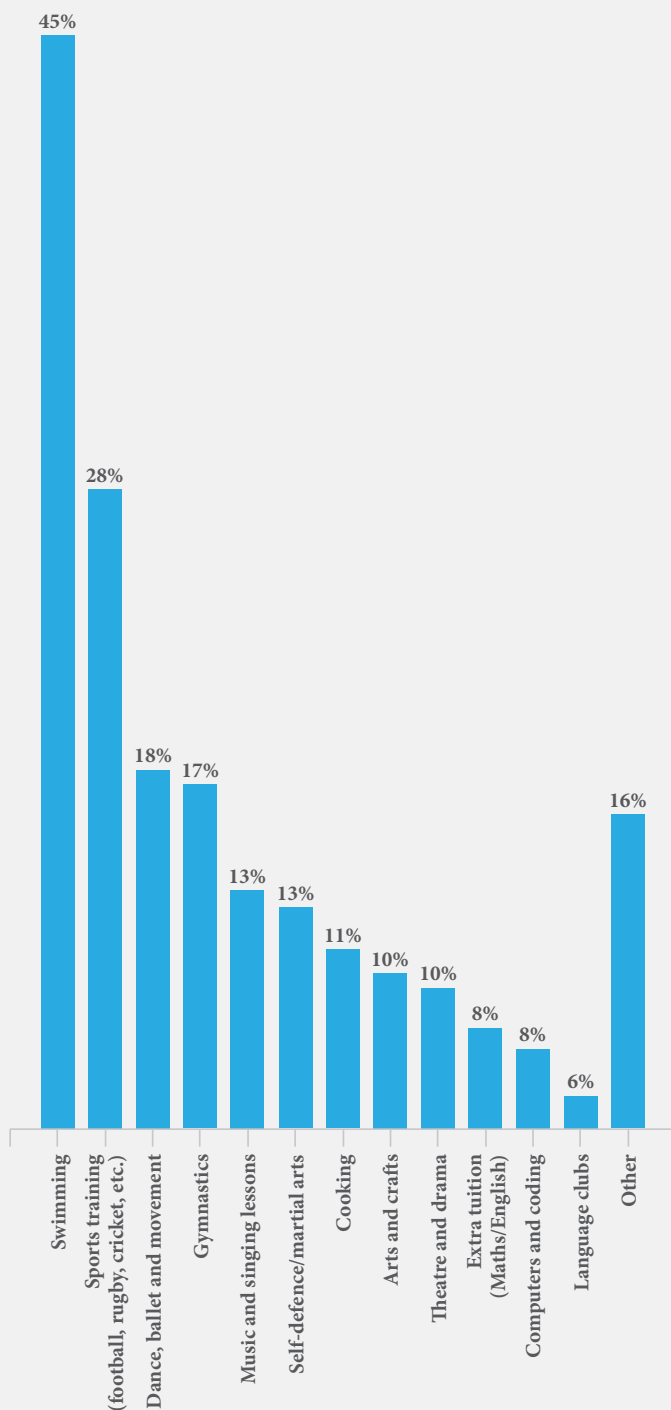
How much do you spend a week on extra activities for each child?*



*Amounts are rounded.

What types of activity do parents pay for?

Which of the following outside-school or extra school activities does your children take part in?

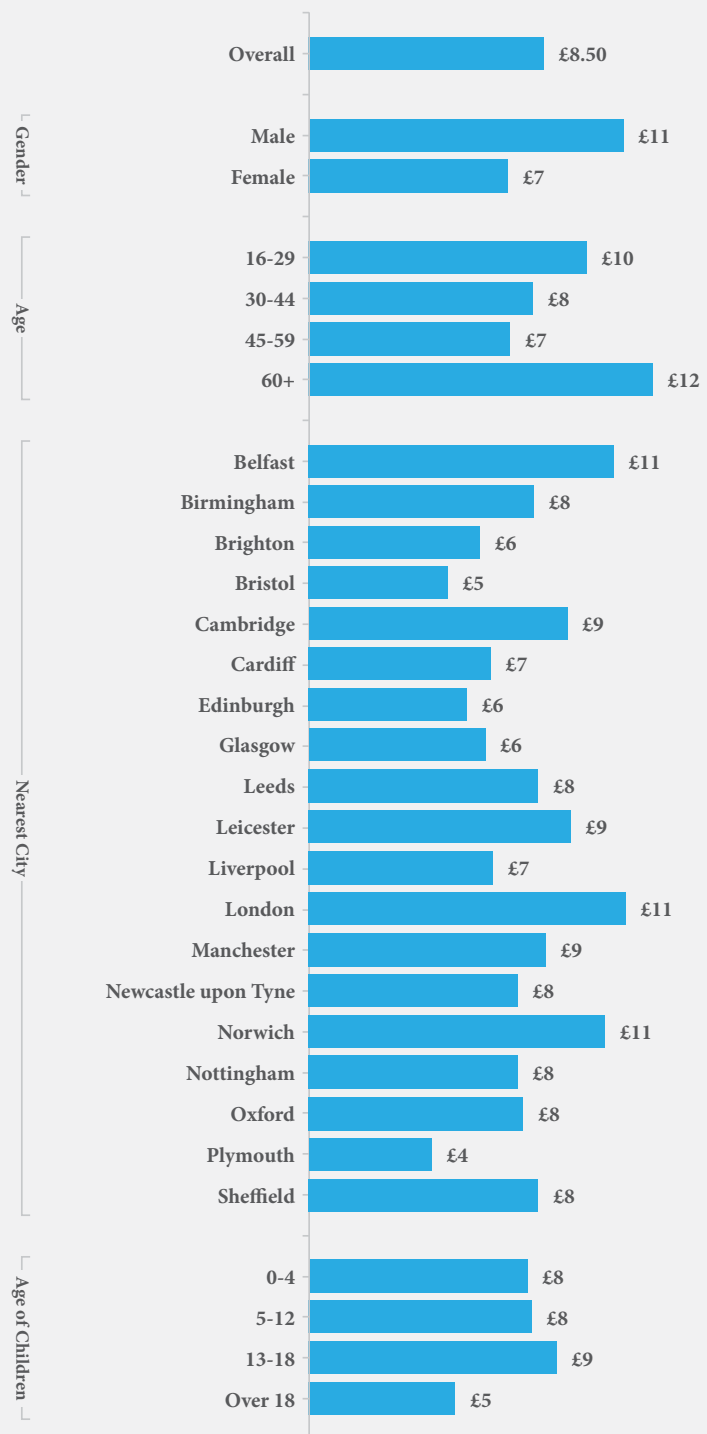


- Swimming is the most popular (45%), followed by sports training (28%), dance and ballet (18%), gymnastics (17%) and music and singing lessons and martial arts (13% apiece)
- The most popular activity is also the most expensive – swimming costs parents on average £6.40 weekly, followed by sports training (£5.40) and dance (£4.10)
- Leicester parents spend an astonishing £9 weekly on swimming for their children. Parents in Edinburgh and Newcastle spend the least - £4 weekly
- Bristol and Leicester parents spend on average £7 on sports training compared to only £3 in Brighton
- Dance is expensive in Cambridge – where parents shell out £6 on average – but parents in Plymouth only pay £2
- Leicester tops the spend on drama – at £5; whereas parents in Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Liverpool only spend £2 weekly

How much do parents spend on extra tuition?

- On average, parents spend almost a third of the total out-of-school spend on extra tuition – £8.50 weekly
- This ranges from a high of £11 weekly in London, Belfast and Norwich to only £4 in Plymouth
- There is little variation by age, with 13-18 year olds receiving £9 worth of tuition weekly – and those under 12, even the under fives, receiving £8 worth a week

On average how much do you spend on extra tuition per child each week?*



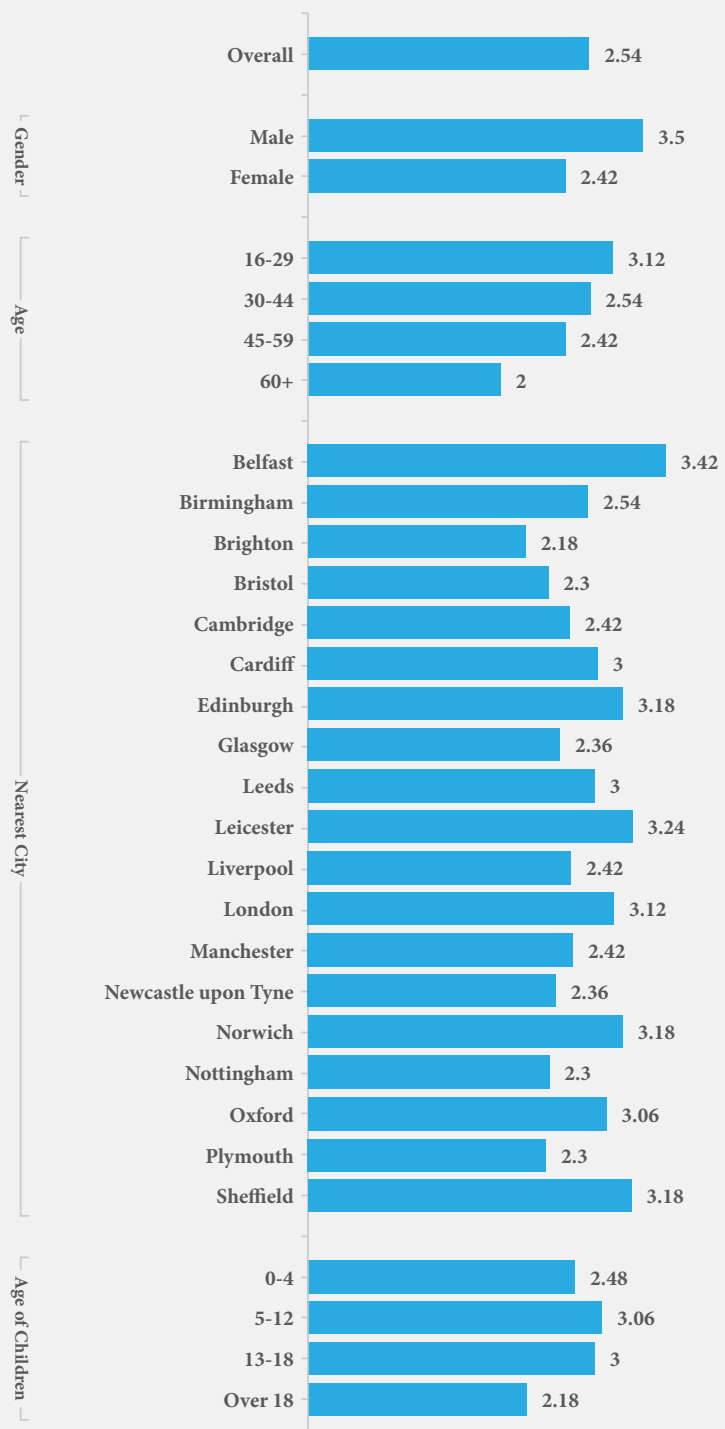
* Amounts are rounded.



How much time is spent ferrying children around?

- On average nationally, parents spend just under three hours weekly (two hours and 54 minutes)
- Parents in Belfast spend nearer four hours (three hours and 42 minutes), followed by Leicester (three hours and 24 minutes), Norwich and Edinburgh (three hours and 18 minutes) and London (three hours and 12 minutes)
- Parents in Bristol, Nottingham and Plymouth get away with two and half hours and those in Brighton two hours and 18 minutes
- Parents whose children do activities at the weekend get up on average by 8am to ferry them around

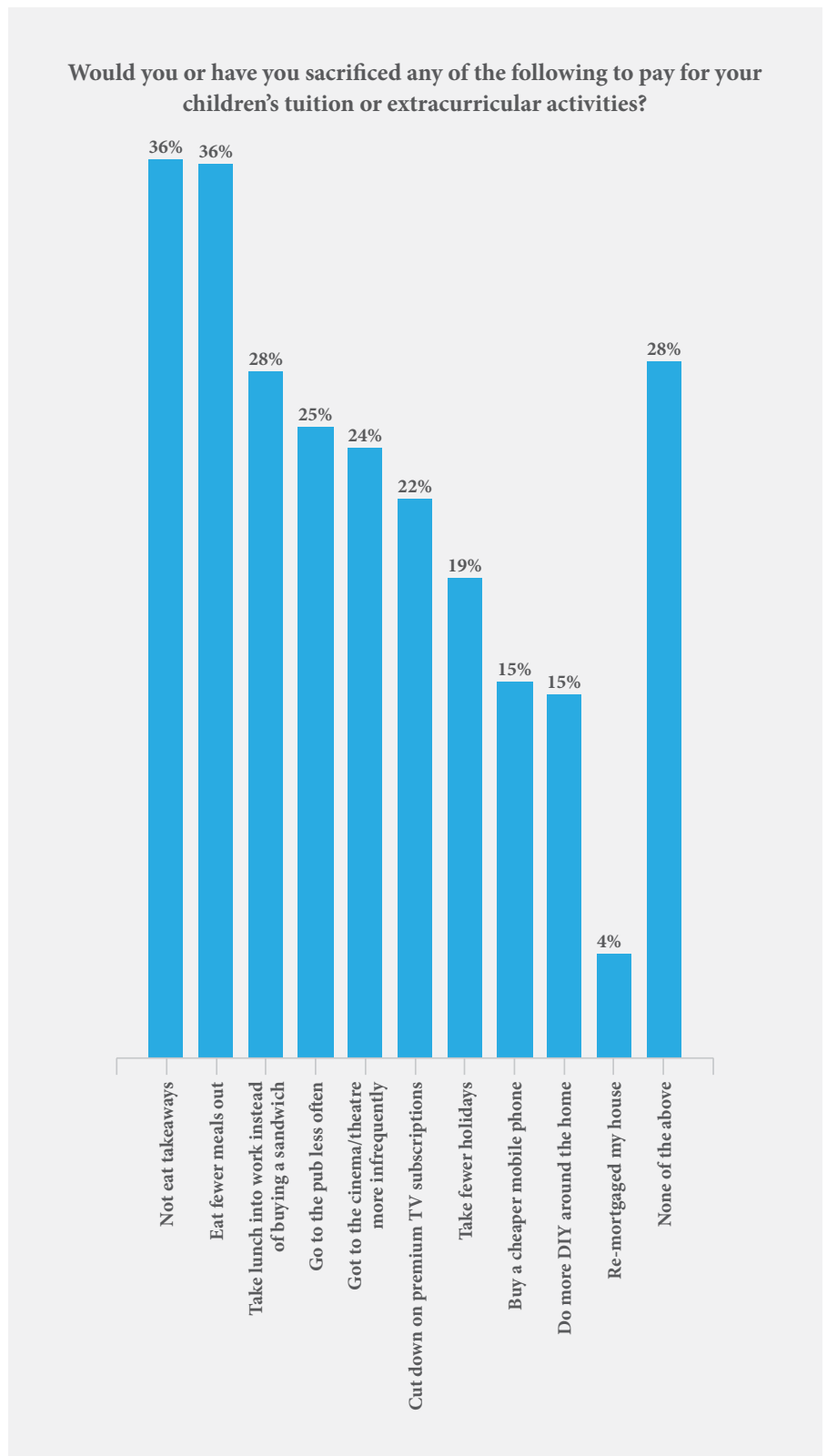
On average how long (in hours and minutes) do you spend ferrying your children around to clubs and activities each week? (Include waiting times and traffic jams as well)





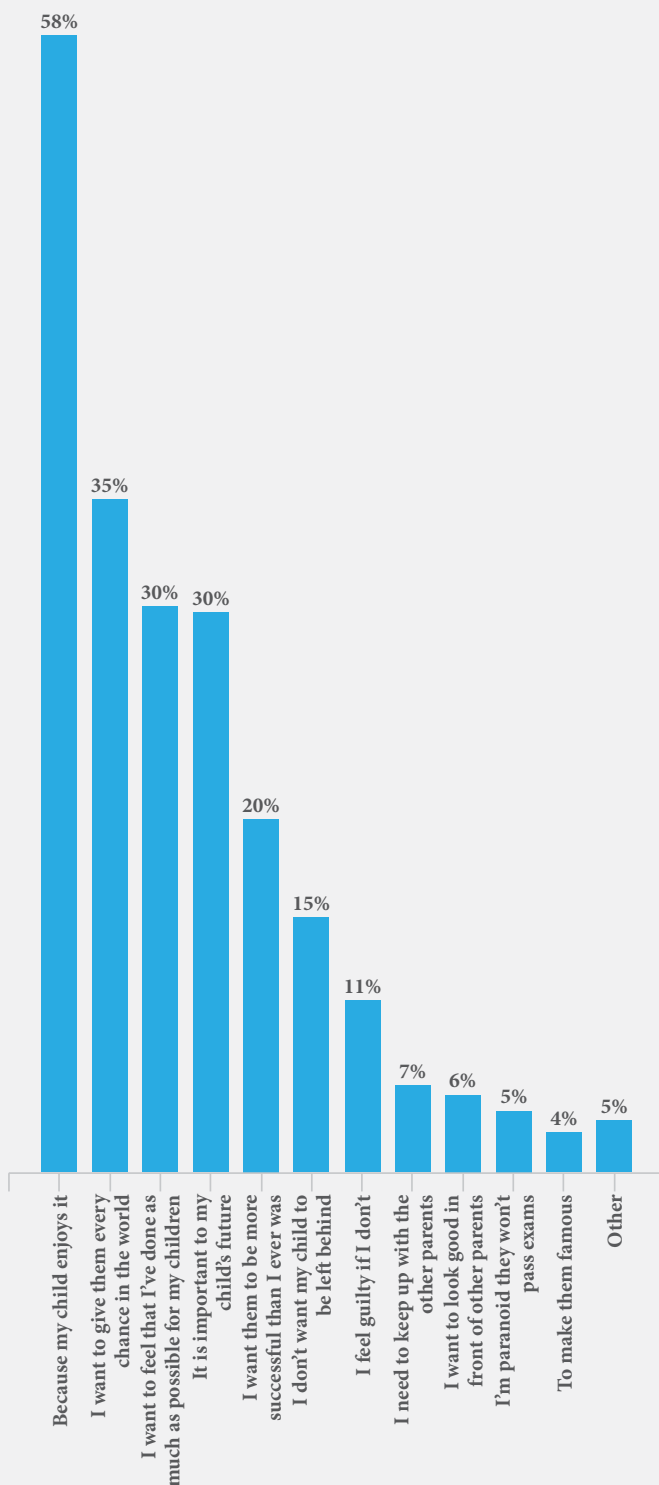
What sacrifices have parents made?

- Over a third of parents (36%) say they have eaten fewer meals out or cut down on takeaways
- Almost three in ten (28%) have economised by bringing lunch into work and a quarter by going to the pub (25%) or cinema (24%) less often, and over a fifth by cutting a TV subscription service (22%)
- Fathers are more likely to have sacrificed pub visits (31% versus 23% for mothers) and done more DIY around the home rather than get someone in (20% versus 12% for mothers)
- Mothers are more likely to have forgone a takeaway (38% versus 31% for fathers)



Why do parents pay for extra-curricular activity?

If your children do extracurricular activities, why is it?

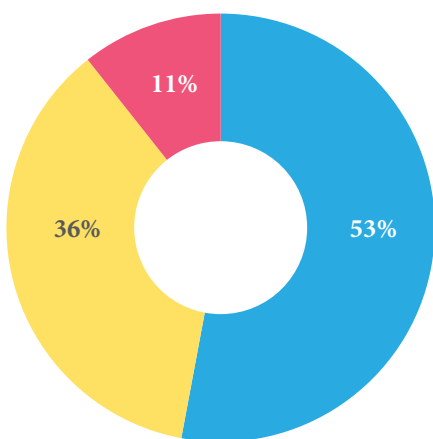


- Enjoyment rather than ambition seems to be the prime motivation. Almost three-fifths of parents (58%) say they pay for these activities because their children enjoy them
- Although large proportions also cite future prospects. Over a third say they want to give them every chance in the world (35%), or say they want to feel that they have done as much as possible for their children (30%), or that it's important to their child's future (30%)
- Only a fifth (20%) of parents say the reason they pay for out-of-school activities is because they want their children to be more successful than they were
- Very few (7%) say they do it because they feel the need to keep up with other parents – though twice as many fathers say that as mothers (10% versus 5%)

Do parents believe parenting is more competitive now?

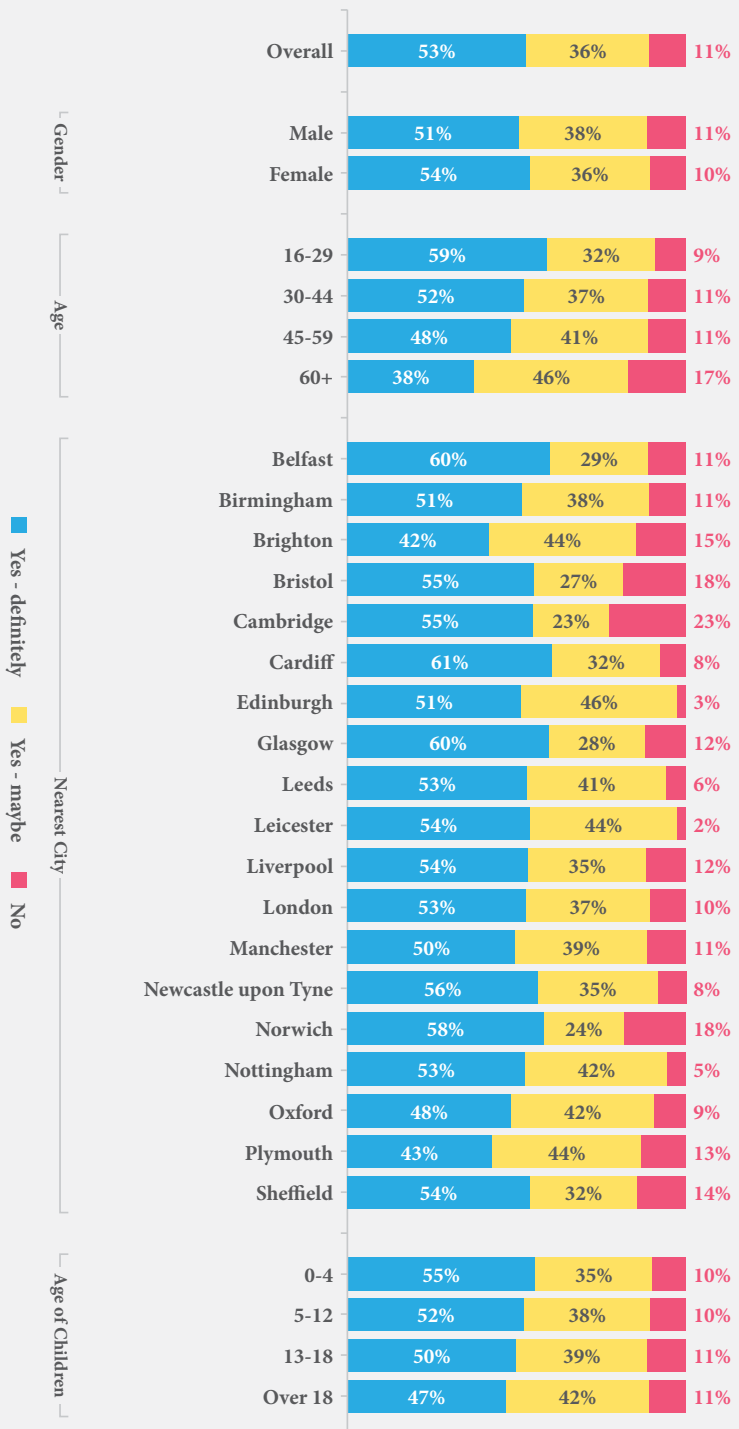
- Almost nine in ten parents (89%) think that is the case, with over half (53%) saying definitely and an additional third (36%) believing that may be the case
- Only a tenth (11%) don't think that is so
- There is little gender variation but some regional differences. Parents in Edinburgh and Leicester feel there is probably or definitely a lot more pressure today with very few saying there isn't (3%). While parents in Cambridge are a bit less worried; over a fifth of them (23%) say parenting isn't more competitive today, double the national average

Do you believe parenting is more competitive now in terms of children's achievements than it ever was when you were younger?



● Yes - definitely ● Yes - maybe ● No

Do you believe parenting is more competitive now in terms of children's achievements than it ever was when you were younger?



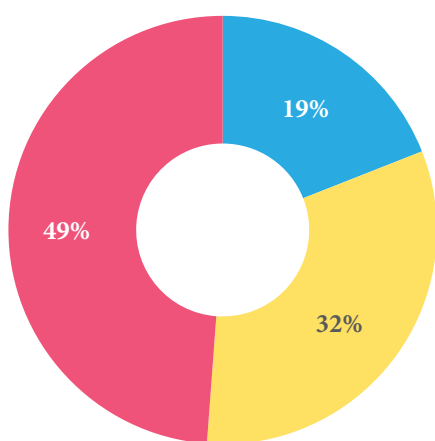
*Rounding means not all figures = 100%.



Are parents worried about pressurising children to succeed?

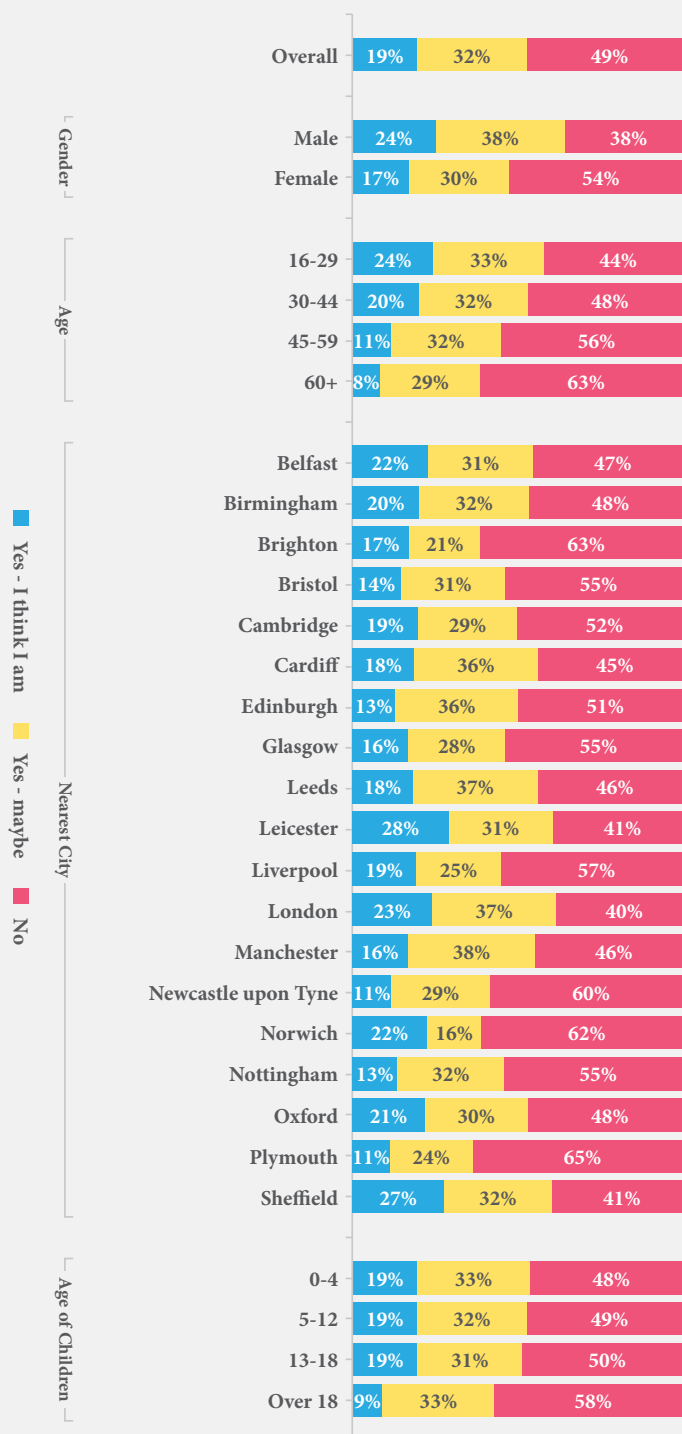
- Parents are almost equally split – half (49%) say they are not, but a third (32%) think they may be putting too much pressure on their children and a further fifth (19%) definitely think they are
- Fathers are more worried than mothers, only 38% say they are not putting too much pressure on their children compared to 54% of mothers. And a quarter of fathers (25%) say they definitely are compared to well under a fifth of mothers (17%)
- There are some regional differences, with parents in London and Leicester more concerned about pressurising their children (60% and 59% respectively are concerned), compared to those in Norwich and Brighton (38% in each say they are concerned) and Plymouth, where only 35% are

Be honest, do you ever worry that you may be putting your children under too much pressure to achieve?



● Yes - I think I am ● Yes - maybe ● No

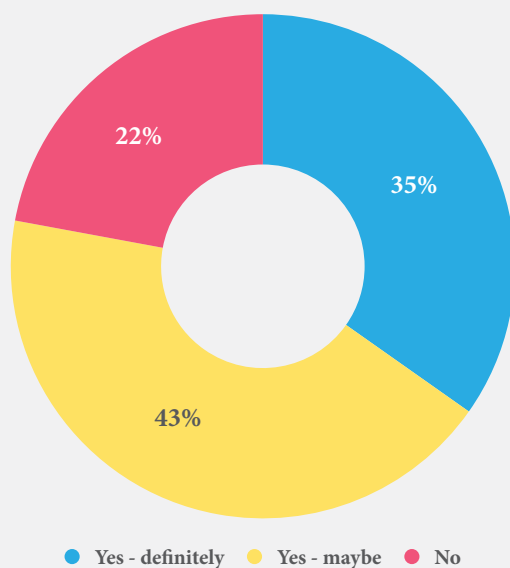
Be honest, do you ever worry that you may be putting your children under too much pressure to achieve?



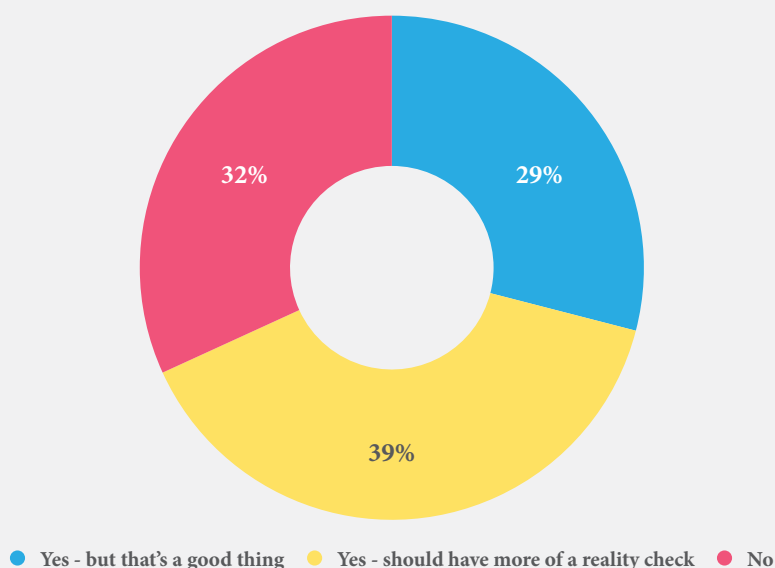
*Rounding means not all figures = 100%.

Do parents feel children take their efforts for granted?

Do you ever feel your children take for granted everything you do for them?



Do you think your children live in a bubble, with no sense of what it was like growing up when you were young?

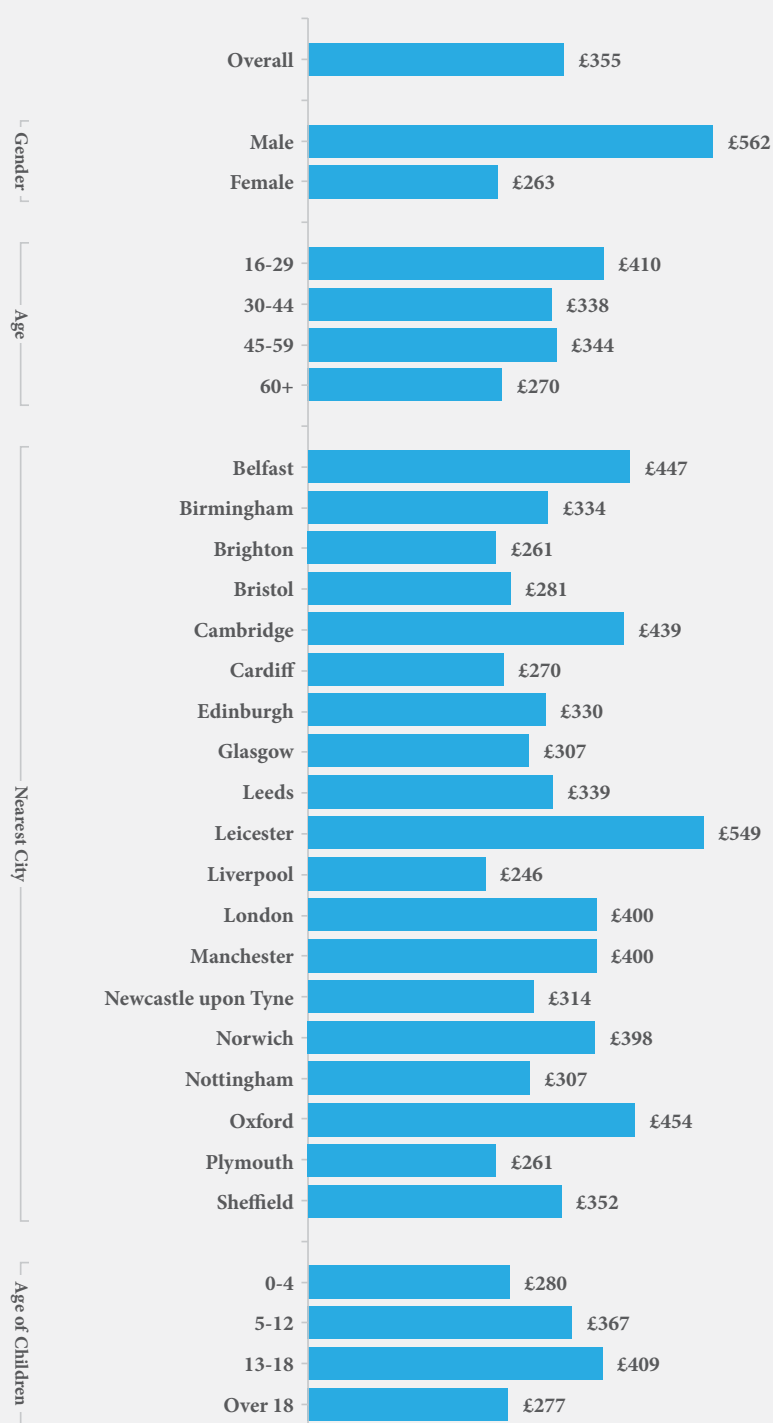


- Most parents feel they do – 35% say definitely and 43% probably. Only a fifth (22%) say they do not. There is little gender or regional variation, although parents in Liverpool are a little more generous – 30% of them say their children don't take their efforts for granted, while parents in Oxford are harshest – 88% say they do
- When parents were asked if they thought their children lived in a bubble, responses were almost evenly divided. A third (32%) didn't think they did, and those parents who did were split between those who didn't want their children to know what it was like when they were growing up (29%) and those who wanted them to have more of a reality check (39%)
- Parents in Edinburgh and Oxford were particularly keen on giving their children a reality check (49% and 51% respectively), while parents in Brighton were those most inclined to say their children didn't live in a bubble (48%)

How much do parents think they have wasted?

- Nationally, parents think they have wasted £355 on average on clubs, equipment, outfits and so on that didn't get used
- Fathers say they have wasted the most – more than twice as much as mothers, £562 versus £263
- Leicester tops the wasteful charts – parents there say they have said goodbye to £549, followed by those in Oxford (£454), Belfast (£447) and Cambridge (£439)
- Parents in Liverpool (£246), Brighton and Plymouth (£261 in both) have the fewest regrets

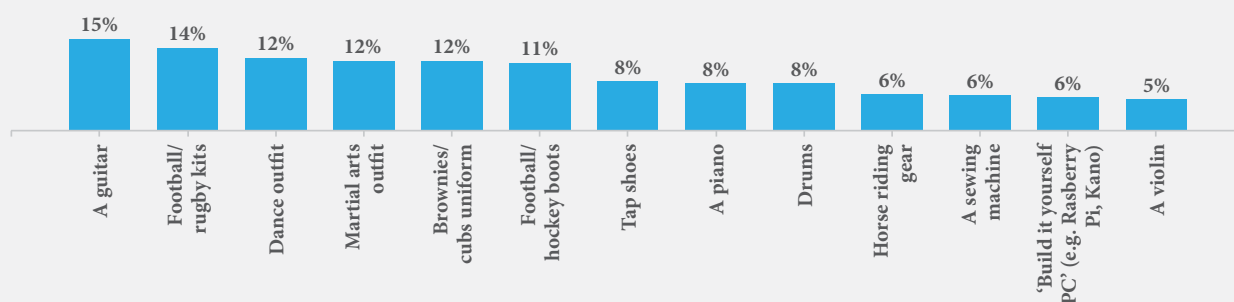
How much do you think you have wasted on clubs, equipment, outfits, costumes and instruments which didn't get used in the end?



Conclusions

1. Parents naturally want their children to have every advantage to be able to get on in life – but they are even more inclined to pay for out-of-school activities because youngsters enjoy them. ‘Tiger-mother’ parenting may be a niche pursuit in the UK
2. An overwhelming majority, however, feel that parenting is more stressful than it used to be, which has implications for what can be asked of them. Does this account, for instance, for the popularity of ‘shop and drop’ tuition centres that dovetail with household schedules rather than complicating them?
3. ‘Non-academic’ spend is approximately three times that of outlay on extra tuition. Parents clearly think ‘education in the round’ is a desirable thing. It suggests they value the character-building traits – teamwork, resilience, commitment, self-expression and discipline – extra-curricular activities instil. But has this feeling been heightened by schools’ obsessive focus on passing exams?
4. It may also reflect a desire by parents to wean children off mobile devices and reduce screen time. The overwhelming majority of out-of-school activities paid for by parents involve physical or mental skills that do not require children to be online
5. These pastimes also keep children busy and away from home, which reduces the ‘idle time battleground’ when exasperated parents are constantly fighting to limit bored children’s exposure to Netflix, YouTube or PlayStation
6. And they tend to be inherently ‘de-stressing’ – showing children how to switch off and wind down after the rigours of the school day
7. The amount parents are prepared to pay doesn’t seem to vary much by age. Children cost more as they get older – but not as much as might be expected
8. Gender differences aren’t that stark, though fathers tend to simultaneously worry that they are putting too much pressure on children and wasting far too much money
9. For those organisations offering tuition or related services, it might be advisable to emphasise the life skills inherent in additional learning as well as the prospect of passing the next exam
10. Conversely, those organisations offering ‘non-academic’ activities should stress the inherent ‘fun with a purpose’ – that not only will children enjoy them but also benefit from character-forming habits that they will profit from later in life

Which of the below have you bought your children, only for them to give up because they didn’t like it?



Gerard Kelly & Partners is a public relations and communications consultancy specialising in the education sector.

We help organisations deliver their message and enhance their reputation among families, students and their teachers. Our services include sector intelligence, communications consultancy and media and project management. Our clients range from tutor franchises to sports bodies, from school suppliers to ed-tech providers, and companies looking to promote their apprenticeship offer.

Our knowledge of the education sector is second to none, our contacts are excellent, and we're never afraid to help our clients to think bigger and go further.

For an in-confidence conversation about how Gerard Kelly & Partners can help deliver your communications objectives and drive sales, please contact mark.cooper@gkandpartners.com

Gerard Kelly & Partners
Henry Wood House
2 Riding House Street
London W1W 7FA

t: 020 3763 2703

e: hello@gkandpartners.com

The logo for Gerard Kelly & Partners (gkp) is located in the bottom right corner. It consists of the lowercase letters 'gkp' in a white, serif font, set against a blue background that features a white grid pattern. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a tennis court, showing green grass, a white and blue striped fence, and a blue tiled area.