



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HOME EDUCATION UNIT

PARENT WITH CHILD/REN REGISTERED FOR HOME EDUCATION
RESEARCH INSIGHT REPORT | NOVEMBER 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most families that chose to respond to the survey invitation are currently registered (98%) and many have one or two school-aged kids. The majority of families choose to home educate all of their school-aged children, with the remainder opting for a mixed approach between home education and traditional school.

When it comes to understanding why families choose to home educate, almost all believe home education provides a better learning environment for their child/ren.

For many, this is about being able to provide more personal, individual learning at their child's pace. Other factors, such as greater flexibility, more or better learning opportunities, their children coping better, or being able to provide better quality education experiences, also feature highly as reasons to home educate.

Looking beyond this overarching belief that the home learning environment is better, **the top reasons to home educate can often depend on the child or the beliefs held by the family.**

The initial education preference of the parent or guardian is a key differentiating factor on why they choose to home educate. These preferences are likely influenced by their educational philosophy and potentially dictate whether their child/ren will attend a traditional school or not (as well as how many of their other children are home educated).

While there is overlap, there are two overarching segments that are evident:

- **Child-led reasons beyond their control:** Those choosing to home educate due to a child's disability or health issue, or because of concern about negative influences on their child
- **Family-led reasons within their control:** Those who choose to home educate due to education philosophy or faith.

Overall, 2 in 3 families indicate their child has a health issue or disability. This high incidence, along with feedback from families, suggests this is an important consideration when opting to home educate. Many of those in this situation were not initially open to home education, but feel it something that became necessary for their child/ren. Here, families typically believe their child copes better in the home environment and their learning style is better suited to instruction at home.

Families supporting a child with a health issue or disability are more likely to adopt a mixed approach between home education and traditional school in order to use what suits each child best.

Where children do not have a health issue or disability, families are more motivated by the flexibility of home education.

Interestingly, those choosing to home educate due to education philosophy or faith typically do not consider this to be their main reason. Instead, it comes back to the broader benefit of the learning environment.

Stakeholder observations around the different types of home education parents reflect similar trends as noted by families.

Stakeholders are seeing increases in parents who weren't aware of home education, or had limited knowledge, but have since discovered it.

Word of mouth from other home educators, home education organisations / support groups and **social media** (especially among those supporting a child with a health issue or disability) are the most common information sources.

Going forward, many families plan to continue with home education and then continue onto tertiary education.

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The Research

This report is underpinned by research involving **565 parents or guardians registered (or previously registered) for home education** in Queensland. Further feedback is included from stakeholder groups.

OBJECTIVE:

The overarching objective is to help understand future demand for home education registration and the associated resourcing of home education registration services provided by the Department of Education.

METHOD:

An email invitation was sent by the Department of Education to all parents currently registered (6,016 at time of send) with the Home Education Unit (HEU). A letter containing the survey link was also posted to those without an email address (59 at time of post). Families were invited to participate between 6 and 19 October 2022.

In-depth interviews with the following four stakeholder groups were conducted by phone or Microsoft Teams:

- Wirraglen
- Home Education Association (QLD)
- Home Educational Association (National)
- Australian Christian Home Schooling (ACHS).

REPORT INTERPRETATION:

Results are shown at an overall level with statistically significant differences between groups shown where applicable. Significant differences between groups are indicated by the following:

GREEN figures are significantly greater than **RED** figures

GREEN **ORANGE** and **RED** figures are significantly different from each other

Qualitative results from stakeholder interviews have been summarised into key themes and supported by verbatims attributed to the different stakeholder organisations. Due to the nature of qualitative research, no quantification of results is undertaken however the order of themes is designed to reflect the extent of mention for each theme.



PROFILE OF FAMILIES HOME EDUCATING

Families opting to home educate typically choose this approach for all school-aged children – with some clear exceptions

Parents and guardians who choose to home educate typically have one to two school-aged children. The majority (75%) choose to home educate all children with the remainder opting for mix approaches between home education and traditional schooling.

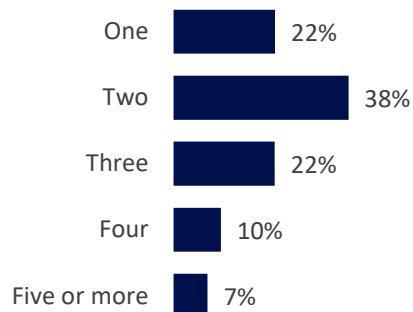
Two-thirds (61%) are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. This high incidence, along with feedback from families, suggests this is an important consideration when opting to home educate. Many of those in this situation were not initially open to home education, but feel it something that became necessary for their child/ren.



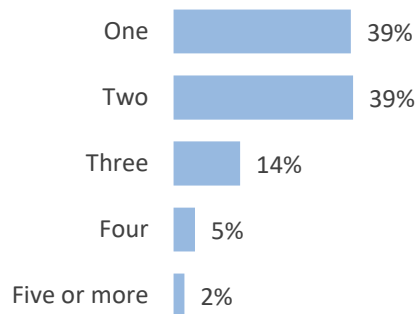
Number of Children

Most families who home educate have between one and three children, with one or two of school-age. Two in five children who are home educated are between five and eleven years old.

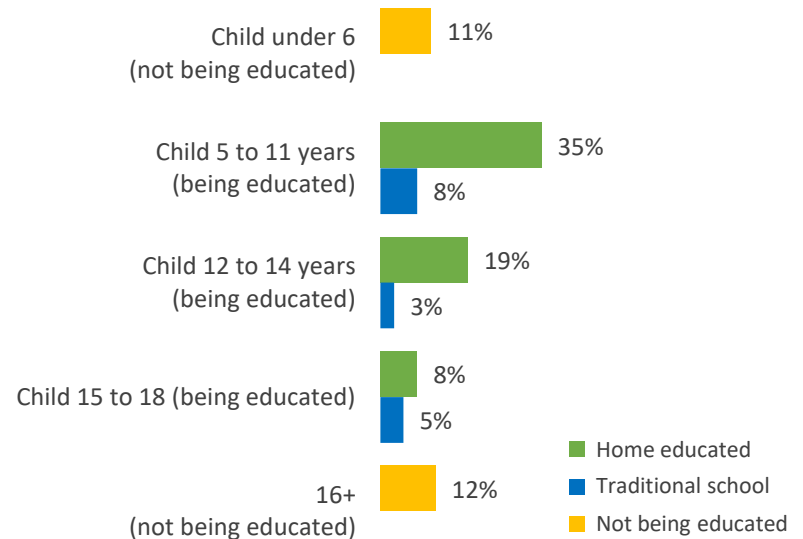
NUMBER OF CHILDREN



NUMBER OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN



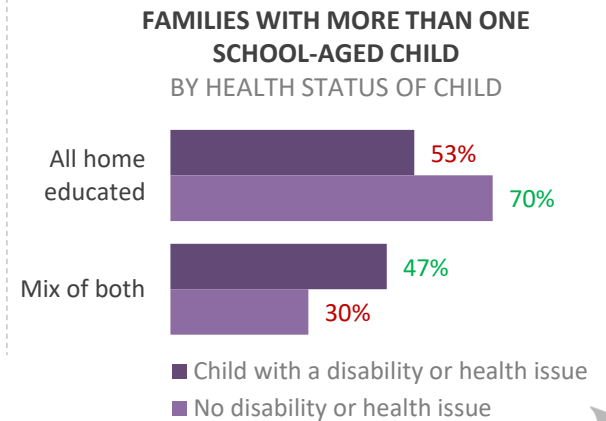
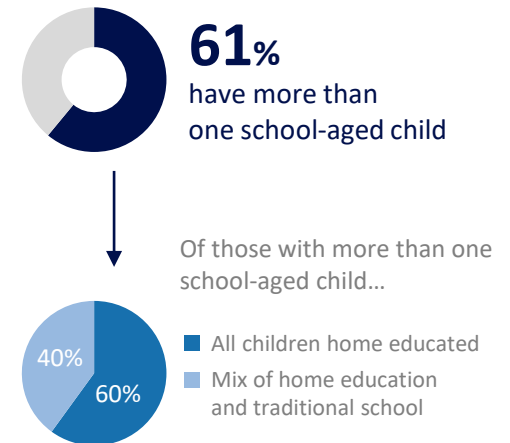
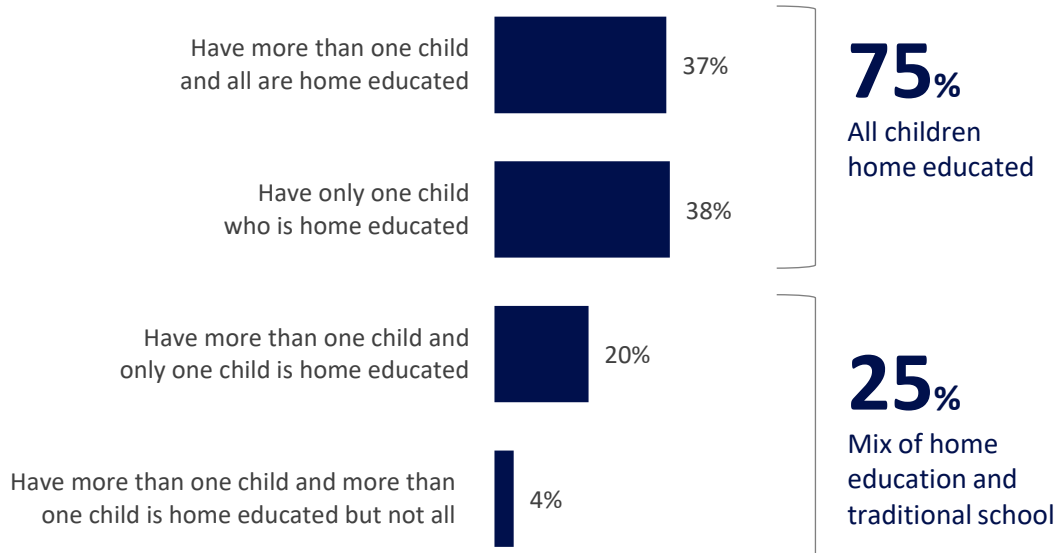
AGE OF CHILDREN



Number of Children Home Educated

Of those families with more than one school-aged child, two in five opt for a mix approach between home education and traditional schooling. Families with multiple school-aged children, who are supporting a child with a health issue or disability are more likely to adopt a mixed approach between home education and traditional school in order to use what suits each child best.

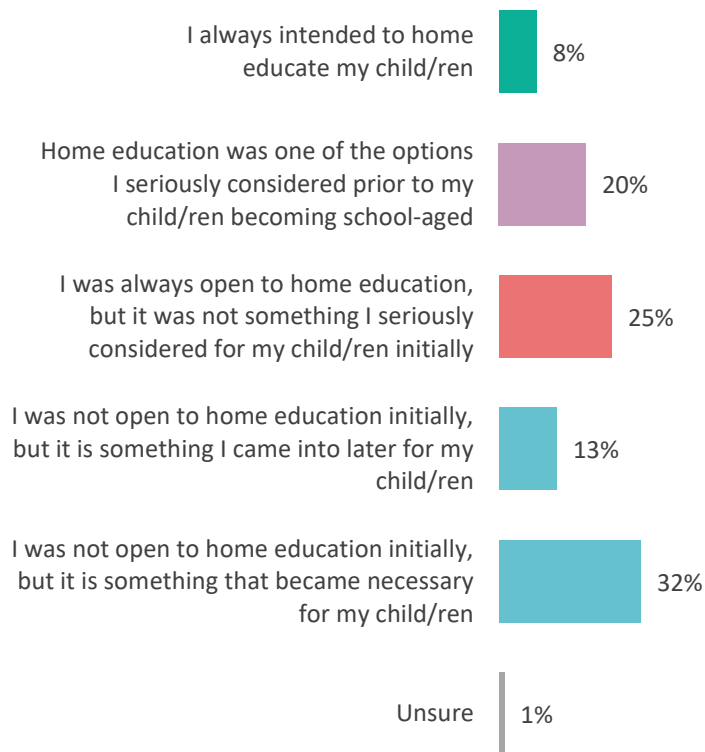
NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING HOME EDUCATED



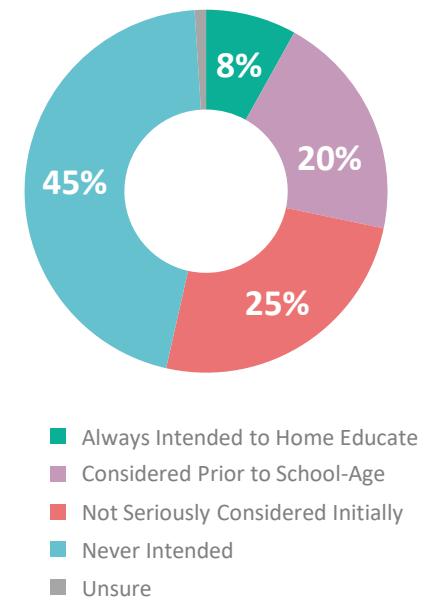
Stance Towards Home Education

Just under half of families opting to home educate were not open to this approach initially – many feel it is something that became necessary for their child/ren. A further 45% were open to the idea of home education prior to their children becoming school-age. Only 1 in 10 always intended to home educate their children.

PREFERENCE TOWARDS HOME EDUCATION

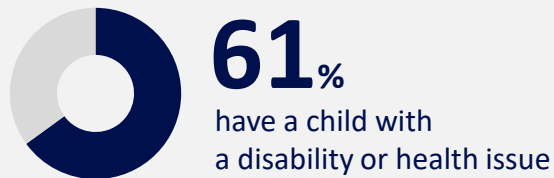


SEGMENTS IDENTIFIED

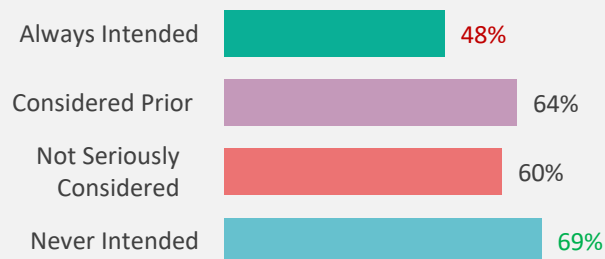


Children with a Disability or Health Issue

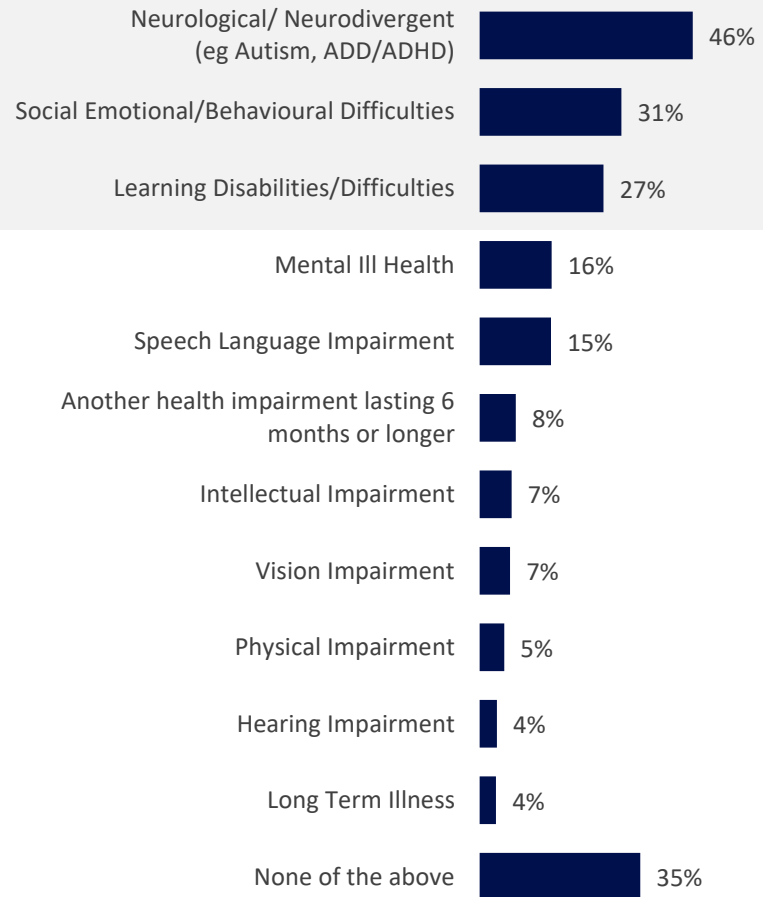
Two-thirds are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. This disability or health issue has either been diagnosed by a professional or is suspected by the parents. The most common disability or health issue includes neurodevelopmental disorders, social emotional or behavioural difficulties, and learning difficulties.



CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUE BY SEGMENTS



CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUE



Base: All respondents (n=565, Always Intended n=48, Considered Prior n=111, Not Seriously Considered n=144, Never Intended n=255)

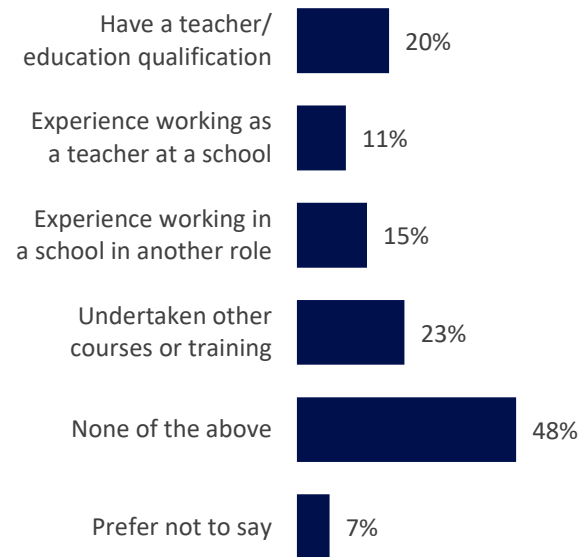
DR5. Has a health or education professional told you, or you suspect, that the child you home educate / 10 most recently home educated / considering home educating has any of the following conditions?



Qualifications to Assist Education

Just under half of parents and guardians who are home educating have relevant training or experience to assist in home education. One in five have teacher education qualifications.

EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS



REASONS FOR HOME EDUCATION

An overarching belief shared by most home educators is the idea that home education provides a better learning environment for their child/ren

When it comes to the main reason to home educate, this can however depend on the child or the beliefs held by the family. While there is overlap, there are two overarching segments that are evident:

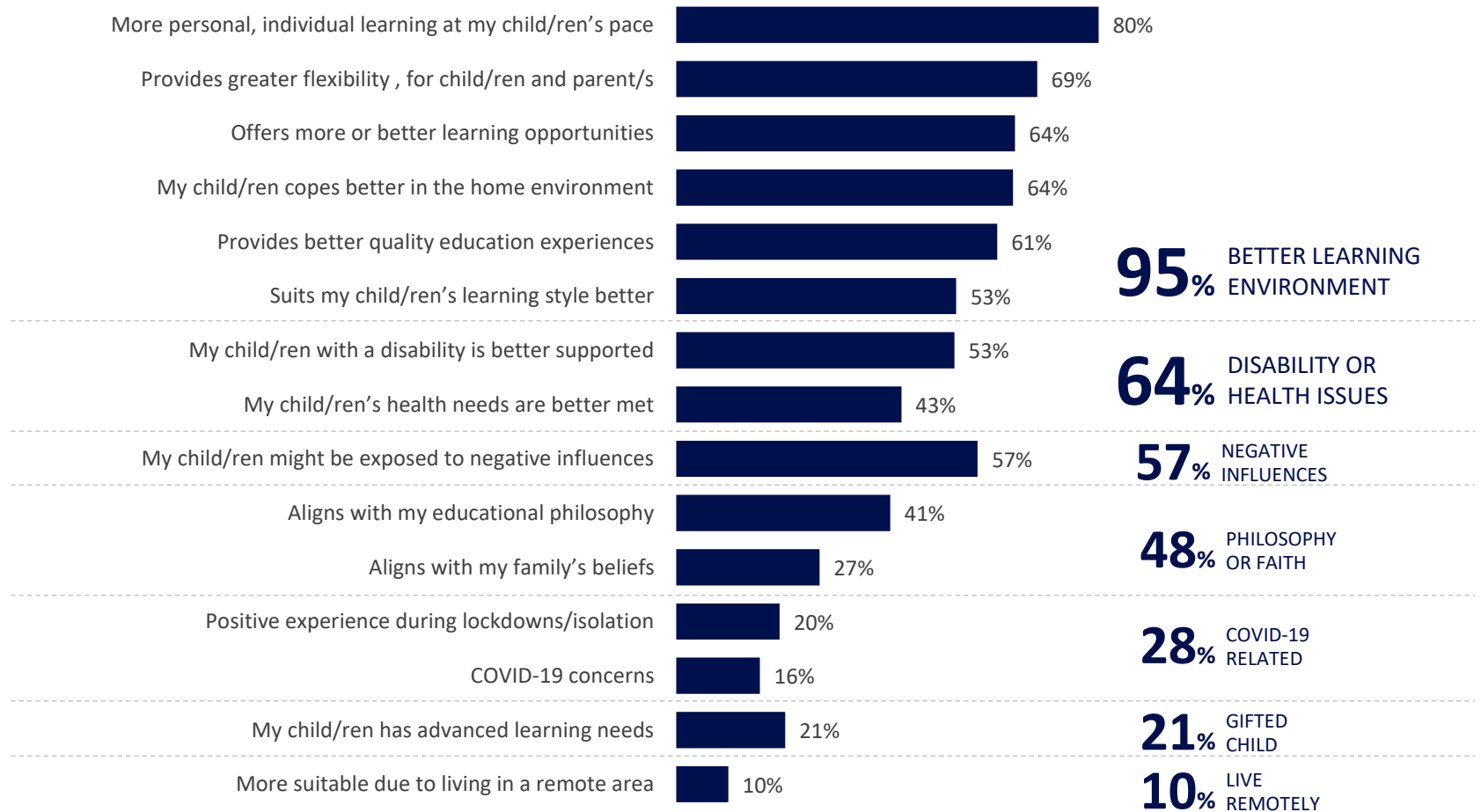
- **Child-led reasons beyond their control:** Those choosing to home educate due to a disability or health issue, or because of concern about negative influences on their child. These child-led reasons tend to outweigh other perceived benefits (such as the learning environment)
- **Family-led reasons within their control:** Those who choose to home educate due to education philosophy or faith. In this case, where disability or a health issue isn't a concern, families predominantly home educate due to the learning environment; but it is clear education philosophy or faith also plays a role.

Other factors, such as COVID-19, gifted children and regional considerations also influence this decision to a lesser extent.



Reasons for Home Educating

Overall, a common reason for home educating includes the child being able to learn at their own pace with a flexible curriculum that meets their needs. Many children who are home educated have a disability or health issue, and it is believed they cope better in the home environment. It is also felt that home education prevents children from being exposed to negative influences, such as bullying.

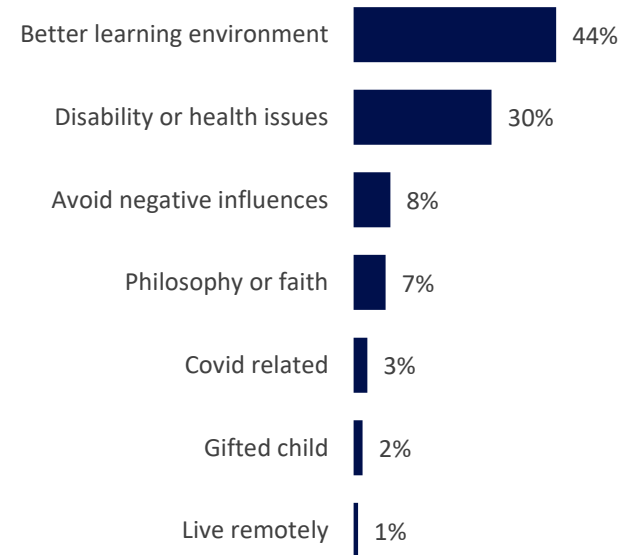


Main Reason for Home Education

After prompting, families typically consider the learning environment or the health of their child as the two main reasons for choosing home education.

Interestingly, those motivated by philosophy or faith reasons tend to not choose this as their main reason for home education. Instead, the belief that home education is a better learning environment holds greater influence overall.

MAIN REASON FOR CHOOSING HOME EDUCATION

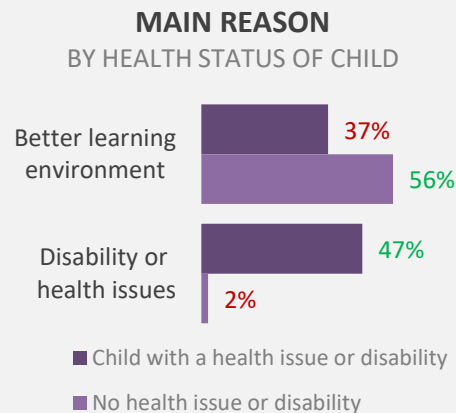


The Impact of Child's Health

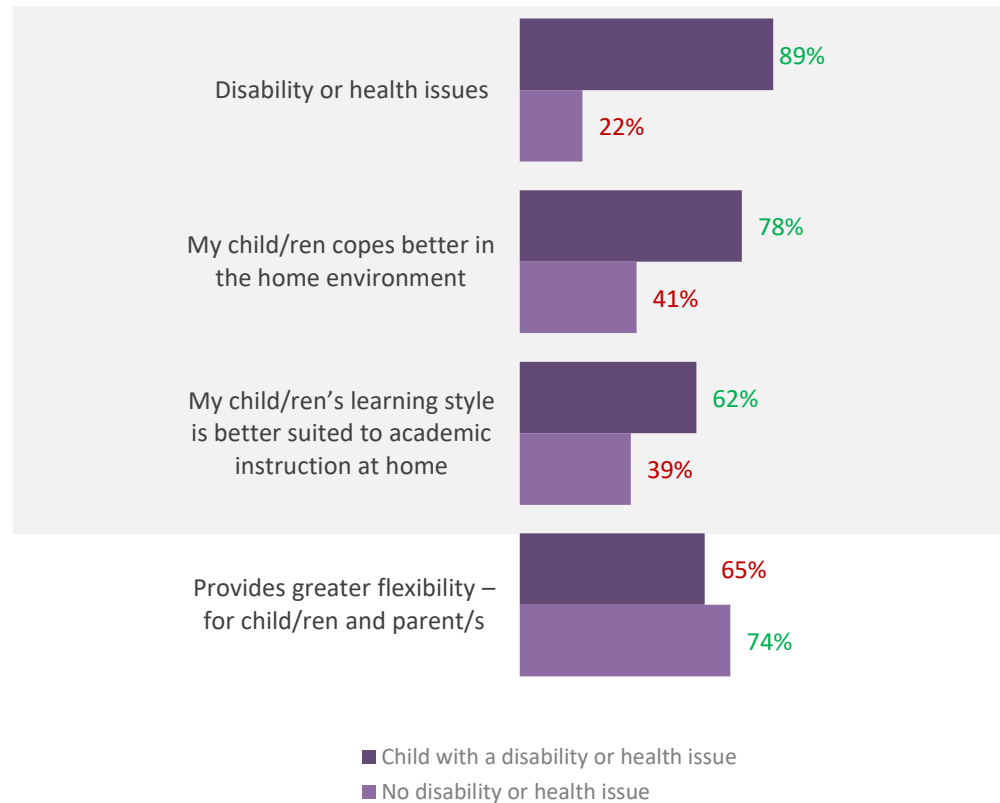
Regardless of preferences or rationale, almost all families believe home education provides a better learning environment for their child/ren.

This however has a different meaning to different families depending on whether their child has a disability or health issue. These families typically believe their child copes better in the home environment or their learning style is better suited to instruction at home.

Where children do not have a disability or health issue, families are more motivated by the flexibility of home education. Feedback suggests home education allows the flexibility to align education with their beliefs.



REASONS FOR CHOOSING HOME EDUCATION BY HEALTH STATUS OF CHILD



Base: All respondents (n=565, Child with a disability or health issue n=346, No disability or health issue n=196)

DR2A. Which of the following best reflects your reasoning for choosing home education registration?

DR2B. Which of these would you say is the main reason for choosing home education registration?

DEEP DIVE INTO REASONS

Child's Health Needs

Among those with a child with a disability or health issue, there are four key themes mentioned as reasons for home education:

- The need to **support the needs** of their child
- Finding a solution that aligns with their **child's abilities**
- Highlighting the **struggles** their child may have (either with their condition or in terms of school work)
- Ensuring a **suitable environment** for their child (this can include managing sensory issues, but also finding an environment that works well for their child – especially in terms of mental health).

While the children referred to in this research cover a wide variety of health issues, anxiety of the child in particular is called out by parents as something they needed to consider when it comes to their child's education (and the environment where it is conducted).

"I have found homeschooling has decreased their anxiety, allowed them to regain their enjoyment of learning." NEVER INTENDED

"He desperately needed the one-on-one support to aid his learning... So we decided to buy a curriculum and teach him at home. He's flourished since then." NEVER INTENDED

"My daughter was struggling with high levels of anxiety while at school which was limiting her classroom participation and affecting her physically causing her to lose confidence and further withdraw." NEVER INTENDED

"My child has autism with a demand avoidant profile and can not be catered for in mainstream or special education units according to all the schools we have spoken to." NEVER INTENDED

"For my child who is currently homeschooling, the reason was that she was struggling to keep up academically in the classroom, and was having a lot of social issues, school avoidance, extreme anxiety and meltdowns etc... Choosing to homeschool works well for us because my daughter requires one on one support for emotional regulation and learning." NEVER INTENDED



Education Environment Reasons

Among those mainly home educating due to the better learning environment, there are four key themes mentioned:

- The need to **support the needs** of their child
- Providing education that can be **tailored** and **pursue certain interests**
- **Suiting their family** and allowing time to be spent together
- Ensuring a **nurturing environment** for their child (this can include avoiding negative influences – real or perceived).

“I felt that home education would allow her to pursue her studies at a deeper level suited to her capabilities. She was also missing home life getting to know her new baby sibling.” CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE

“Mainstream school not able to provide the challenges my gifted child required to stay focused and engaged.” NEVER INTENDED

“I wanted to have more time and memories with my children. I wanted to know my children were not subject to bullying, abuse, or mental health issues.” CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE

“To give him opportunities to pursue his interests and future career at a younger age.” NEVER INTENDED

“So that he can learn at his own pace, and I can tailor a educational program that is suited to his personal interests.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“I value time with my child. I believe children thrive when they are given the time and space to learn at their own pace and in the security of their own family units.” ALWAYS INTENDED

“They have achieved excellent education at home because I can taper it to meet their individual needs and mode of learning. It unites us as a family unit, there is no peer pressure, or disobedience or lack of respect...” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY



Avoidance Reasons

Among those mainly home educating to avoid negative influences, many express **concerns around bullying**, either perceived or from experience.

In this situation, it is often about placing the child in the safer home environment, either long-term or as a short-term solution while different schools are explored.

“My son is a beautiful soul and very smart... He is also a shy and anxious boy and I simply didn't want him around mean kids.”

CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE

“My son was expelled from high school for vaping/vape related reasons. There were no positions available to him for distance education as they were at capacity, so I decided to home school him for the last 1/2 of year 9. I did not want to send him to another high school as he would likely fall into similar friendship groups & peer pressure situations & wind up in the same trouble.” NEVER INTENDED

“Moving from a much loved Sunshine Coast state school to a small rural school was a culture shock. Kids were rougher and language was far worse... He became the target of much of the bad behaviour... and thus my child found himself surrounded with rough, uncaring children. My child needed guidance as to how to avoid these situations. My child also came to need a different circle of peers to interact with... My son is now building strong relationships within the community of home educators.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

Belief Reasons

Among those mainly home educating due to their educational philosophy or beliefs, there are three key themes mentioned:

- The desire to **support the needs** of their child, particularly in terms of following the lead of their child
- Providing education that **aligns with their values** on how a child should learn, which tends to vary for each family:
 - Those looking for less structure
 - Those looking for a holistic approach to learning
 - Those following their faith
- Allowing **greater connection** with the family unit.

“To provide a stable education environment. To educate within a framework of my values...To teach my children to think rather than accept indoctrination. To enable them to pursue their interests more deeply. To relieve them of the burden of constant peer pressure.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“I felt like God was asking me to home educate [CHILD] from beginning to end. His older siblings started at a state school but when [CHILD] was kindergarten age I felt to start home education for all of them for one year, as a trial. We all enjoyed the experience so much that we have continued.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“Maintain family closeness and connection... I want my children to be well rounded (physical, emotional, spiritual and cognitive)...”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“I think that home ed enables the child to follow their own interests. We do not follow structured curriculums, but utilise a natural child led learning style of home schooling, unschooling. I do not like the formal structure of schools... I think structured sitting time for children inhibits their natural enthusiasm and curiosity. I think testing and assessments do not suit some children. I like the flexibility of not being tied to Monday to Friday learning, bedtimes, school lunches etc. We can be more fluid with our daily life. I love the flow of life.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY



COVID-19 as an Initial Catalyst

Stakeholder feedback suggests COVID-19 may have initially been the catalyst for home education; and as a result, provided greater awareness and exposure to families of the possibilities of this education approach.

Feedback from families mentioning COVID-19 as one of their reasons supports this view with some suggesting COVID-19 was a catalyst that encouraged the shift to home education.

“COVID was my initial prompt however after seeing my child empty books from school and the lack of work he did say mainstream school I decided to look into homeschooling. My child has a drive to learn and was coming home from mainstream school and researching anything he would find of interest.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“During COVID after not being school for 1st half of year children were working well at home.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“Because they did so well at home during COVID and it was very obviously good for them and their self esteem.”
NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“We had a taste of it over COVID lockdown and loved it. We love the freedom and flexibility of it and spending more time together as a family.” CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE



COVID-19 as the Main Reason

Around 3 in 10 mention the impact of Covid-19 as one of their reasons for pursuing home education. However, **very few feel this is their main reason for home education.**

Among those mainly home educating due to COVID-19 mention:

- Issues around anxiety about the virus – either within the family or from the child
- Need to protect immuno-compromised family members
- Anti-Government sentiment towards management of COVID-19, vaccination mandates and lockdowns.

“Covid and forced vaccination was the tipping point – children were getting pressured significantly by peers to get vaccinated, led to bullying.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic & the related fact that the Queensland Education Department hasn't taken any measures to reduce transmission e.g. preventative RATs, HEPA filters, CO2 monitors, etc.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“We decided to home educate our 6 year old (prep) level son this and next year (and possibly beyond) to keep us safe as a family during the Covid 19 Pandemic. This is the sole reason. We have vulnerable family members and deemed it too high risk to send our son to a school and into a room full of unmasked children where the vaccination take up in the 5+ age group is very low and many of the preppies in his class would be too young to be able to get vaccinated. Our son participated in our local state schools' 'pre prep' program last year when Covid numbers were low. He thrived and we were excited about sending him to mainstream school this year then whammo, the borders opened, Covid was everywhere and our lives – including education plans changed overnight.” NEVER INTENDED



REASONS BY SEGMENT

The initial education preference of the parent or guardian is a key differentiating factor on why they choose to home educate

These preferences are likely influenced by their educational philosophy and potentially dictate whether their child/ren will attend a traditional school or not (as well as how many of their children are home educated).



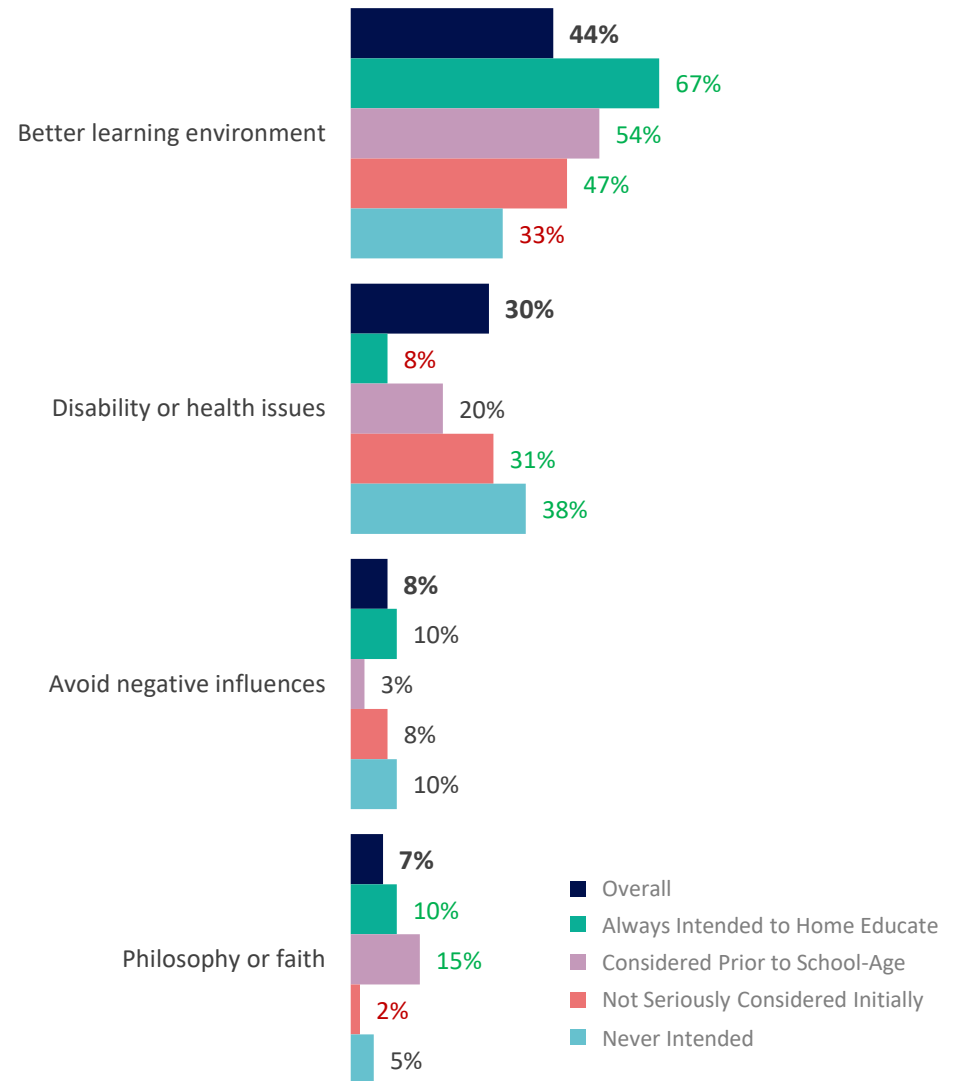
Understanding Reasons by Education Stance

The initial education preference of the parent or guardian is a key differentiating factor on why they choose to home educate.

Those who *Always Intended* or were at least open to the idea of home education are more likely to choose to do so to seek a better learning environment. These segments are also more likely to be influenced by education philosophy or faith.

Those who *Never Intended* or did *Not Seriously Consider Initially* are swayed by disability or health issues of their child.

MAIN REASON FOR CHOOSING HOME EDUCATION BY SEGMENTS

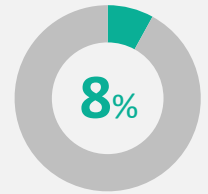


Base: All respondents (n=565, Always Intended n=48, Considered Prior n=111, Not Seriously Considered n=144, Never Intended n=255)

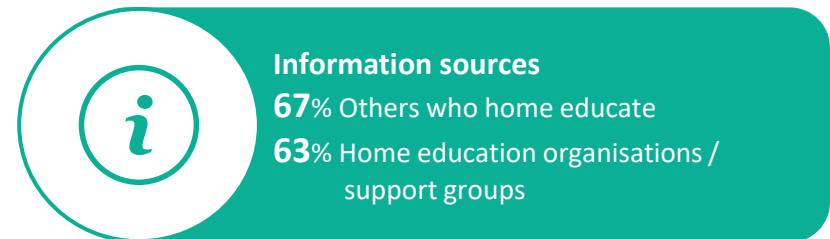
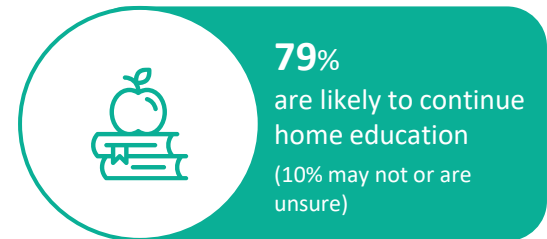
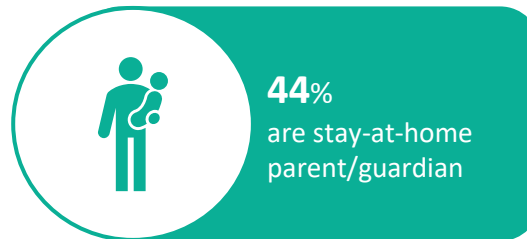
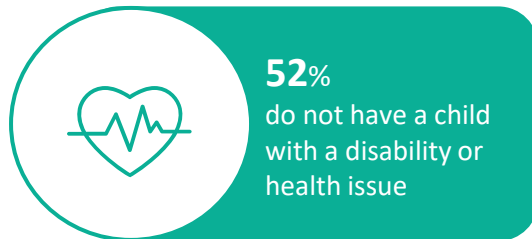
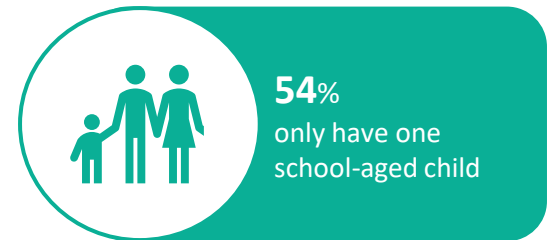
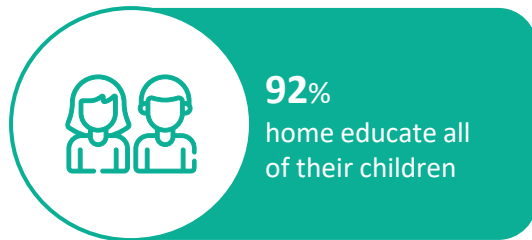
DR2B. Which of these would you say is the main reason for choosing home education registration?



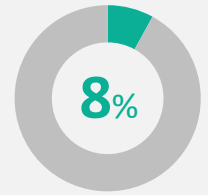
Always Intended to Home Educate (1)



Families in this segment are avid home educators. Most of their children receive their education at home. Very few have attended a traditional school and are not likely to in the future. This segment is not new to home education. Half of the families in this segment have one school-aged child. This makes it easier to provide individualised education that caters to the needs and interests of that child. Children in this segment are the least likely to have a disability or health issues compared to the other segments.



Always Intended to Home Educate (2)



Most of the reasons to home educate for this segment are around an attraction to home education. The educational philosophy of this segment do not align with traditional schooling and many feel they can better educate their children and better prepare them for the future. Home education also prevents their child/ren from being exposed to negative influences.



MORE PERSONAL & FLEXIBLE LEARNING

- 94% Allows for more personal learning
- 88% Provides greater flexibility
- 73% Offers learning opportunities
- 73% Provides better quality education



BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- 69% Copes better in the home environment
- 63% Learning style is better suited to academic instruction at home



SUITS EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY & BELIEFS

- 71% Aligns with my educational philosophy
- 50% Aligns with my family's beliefs



PREVENTION OF EXPOSURE TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

- 69% Child/ren might be exposed to negative influences

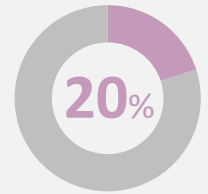
"I chose to home educate to bring the opportunity for my child to express and learn critical thinking. To learn a diverse range of subjects and to be able to delve deeply into subjects that are of great interest and topical. For my child to be able to be creative and a free thinker. To be able to pursue interests with passion and freedom without restrictions and constraints."

"As parents we can better meet the individual learning needs of our child. We have an unschooling philosophy, doing life is learning. We facilitate our child's self-directed learning. Children have a natural desire to learn, which, if nurtured, allows them to flourish."

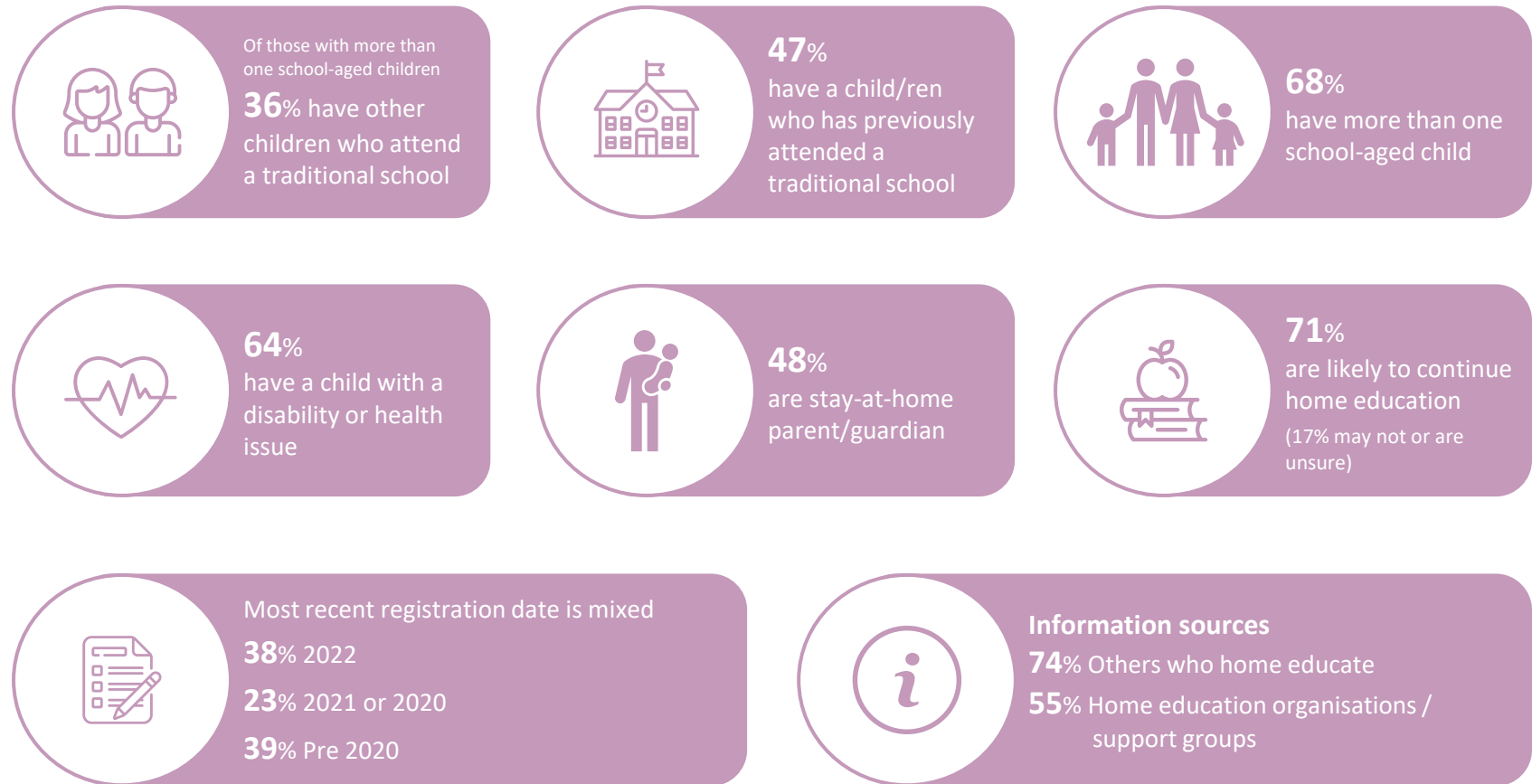
"One on one attention and tailored learning style. Flexibility and availability to live and learn whilst living. Being exposed to and socialising with people of all ages rather than the artificial group of children all the one age. Being involved and aware of my children's learning."



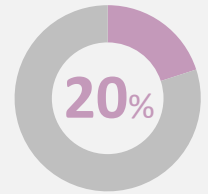
Considered Prior to School-Age (1)



Families in this segment are less avid about home education than the *Always Intended* group. However, they are not new to the idea and see the merits in it. Families in this segment are likely to have two or more school-aged children, some of whom have previously attended a traditional school and some who still do. The children who are home educated are likely to continue to receive their education at home. Two-thirds of these families are home educating a child with a disability or health issue.



Considered Prior to School-Age (2)



The reasons for this segment to home educate include a variety of factors depending on if the child initially went to a traditional school. For those who have not previously sent their child/ren to school, home education is about designing a tailored learning experience that caters to their child's needs and interests. For those who previously sent their child/ren to school, home education is a reaction to an issue, such as their child's inability to keep up or due to bullying.



MORE PERSONAL & FLEXIBLE LEARNING

- 86% Allows for more personal learning
- 78% Provides greater flexibility
- 74% Offers learning opportunities
- 73% Provides better quality education



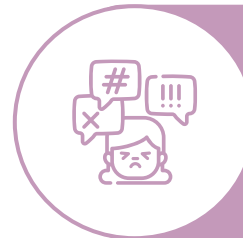
BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- 63% Copes better in the home environment
- 60% Learning style is better suited to academic instruction at home



CHILD WITH DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUES

- 52% Child/ren has a disability, development delay, social emotional/behavioural difficulty, mental health condition, or specific learning needs



MIX OF PREVENTION AND REACTION TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

- 57% Child/ren might be/were exposed to negative influences

"To encourage a love of learning and provide each child with learning opportunities specific to their gifts and abilities. To create flexibility in our family life schedule. To enjoy learning together as a family. To enable one on one learning opportunities. To facilitate real life learning opportunities. To foster the ability to make a valuable contribution to society"

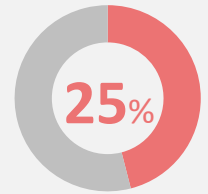
"Physically bullied at school, found being in a big school (number wise) overwhelming."

"We wanted to provide a more hands on and play based learning with much more emphasis on physical education. Being active, making healthy food choices, learning resilience and positive self-talk. The kids had lost their love of learning and needed to feel some control and choice over what and how they learnt."

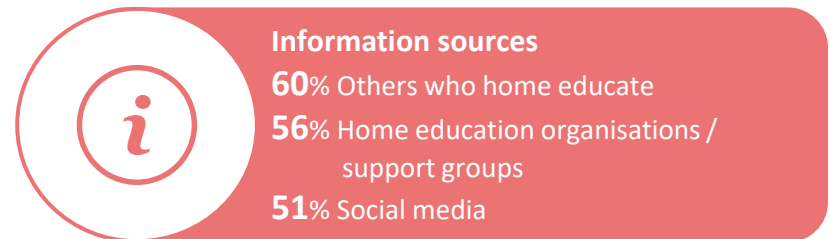
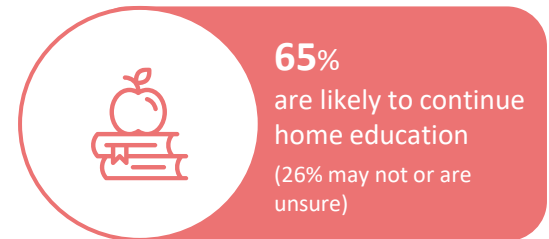
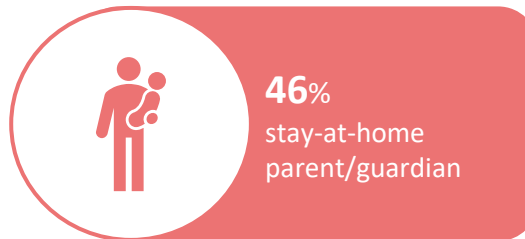
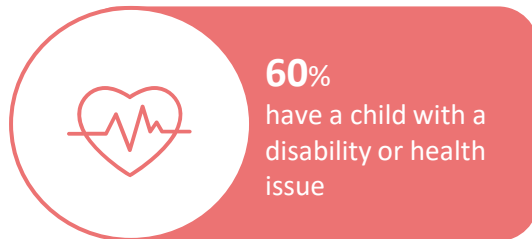
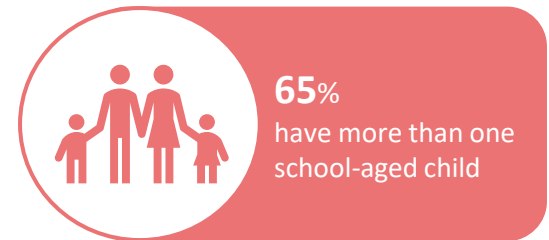
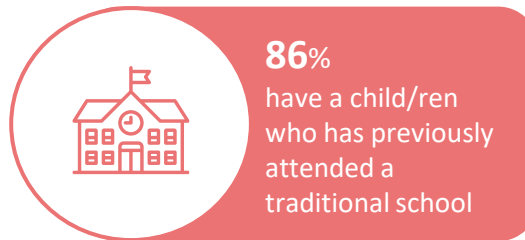
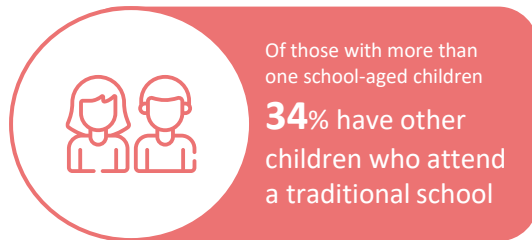
"Only my eldest child fitted mainstream schooling. The youngest two struggled and were getting further and further behind."



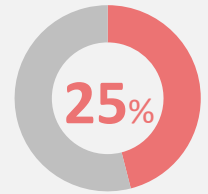
Not Seriously Considered Initially (1)



Most children in this segment have previously attended a traditional school, and home education is a reaction to an issue or situation that occurred during that time. As a result, families in the segment may have children being both home educated and attending traditional school (depending on how many children the issue applies to). Two-thirds of this segment are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. Home education may not be the permanent solution for some in this segment. Factors such as the need for social interaction, the parent's employment situation and the possibility of changing schools will play a role in the outcome.



Not Seriously Considered Initially (2)



Reasons for this segment to home educate include avoidance factors where home education is a reaction to an issue from school, such as the child falling behind or bullying. Home education provides these child/ren with a more flexible and personal learning experience. As many children in this segment have a disability, one-on-one learning suits them better. Home education also protects these children from bullying they may have suffered at school.



MORE PERSONAL & FLEXIBLE LEARNING

86% Allows for more personal learning
74% Provides greater flexibility



BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

64% Copes better in the home environment



CHILD WITH DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUES

49% Child/ren has a disability
41% Child/ren has health needs



REACTION TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

65% Child/ren might be/were exposed to negative influences

"My child thrives in a home learning environment. One-on-one teaching suits my child best as I can focus on the subjects that needs attention and we can also focus on strengths."

"My oldest also suffered from anxiety and we decided this would be the best option for her. My son also struggled because he is very interest driven and schools can't provide that for him."

"First child was not learning at age-appropriate level was well behind and was struggling, he needed one-on-one help with his education tailored to his needs and interests."

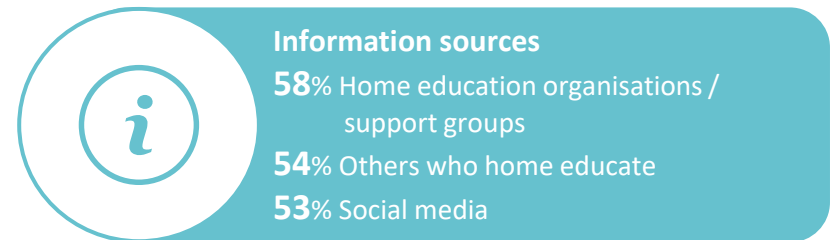
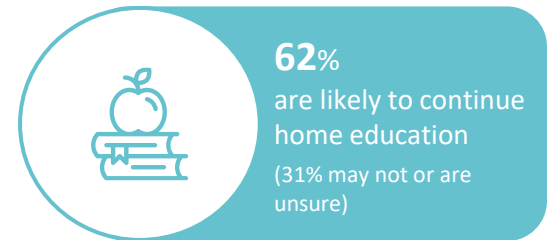
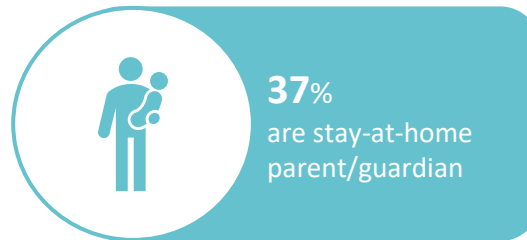
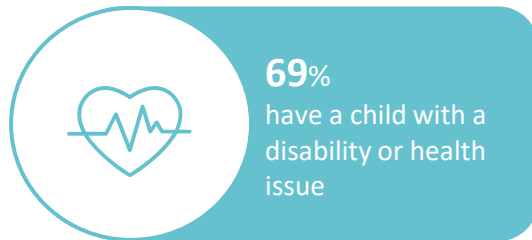
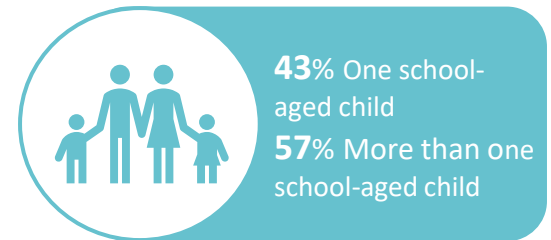
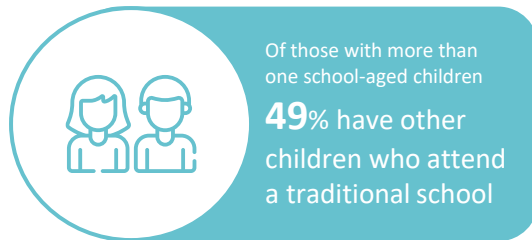
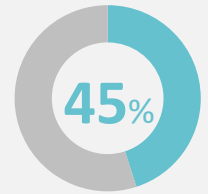
"Because they did so well at home during COVID and it was very obviously good for them and their self-esteem."

"We chose home education to get away from bullying, provide a safe environment to learn and not be constantly worried about peers."



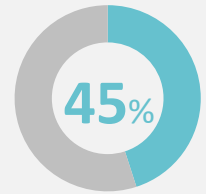
Never Intended (1)

Most children in this segment have previously attended a traditional school, and home education is a reaction to an issue or situation that occurred during that time. As a result, families in the segment may have children being both home educated and attending traditional school (depending on how many children the issue applies to). Two-thirds of this segment are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. Home education may not be the permanent solution for some in this segment. Factors such as the need for social interaction, the parent's employment situation and the possibility of changing schools will play a role in the outcome.



Never Intended (2)

Most of the reasons for this segment are related to supporting the health and disability needs of their child. It can also include a reaction to an issue or situation at school. This may include the child being unable to keep up, seeking a more suitable learning environment, or the child experiencing bullying. As many of the children in this segment have a disability, home education provides them with one-on-one learning at their own pace.



MORE PERSONAL, INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

72% Allows for more personal, individual learning at my child/ren's pace



BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

65% Copes better in the home environment



CHILD WITH DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUES

56% Child/ren has a disability
49% Child/ren has health needs



REACTION TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

52% Child/ren might be/were exposed to negative influences

"I have found homeschooling has decreased their anxiety, allowed them to regain their enjoyment of learning."

"He desperately needed the one-on-one support to aid his learning... So we decided to buy a curriculum and teach him at home. He's flourished since then."

"My daughter was struggling with high levels of anxiety while at school which was limiting her classroom participation and affecting her physically causing her to lose confidence and further withdraw."

"My child was being severely bullied at the high school he was attending... I had to pull him out before it destroyed my child completely."



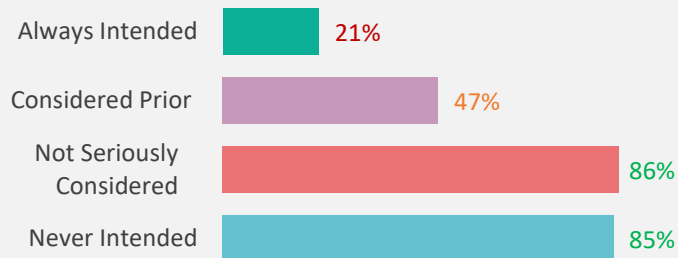
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Previous Education

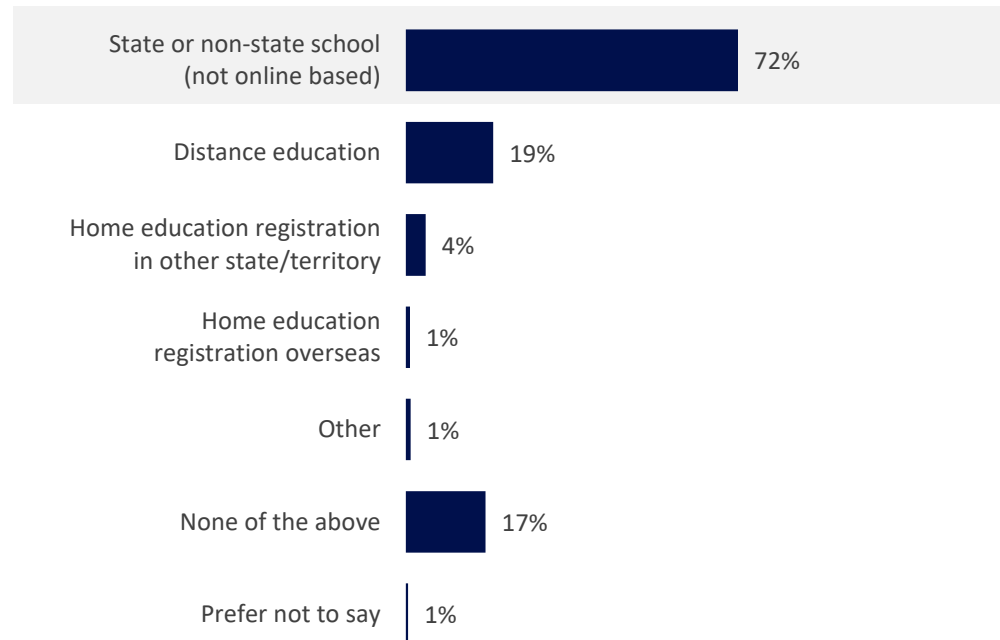
Most children who are home educated have previously attended a traditional school.

Families in this situation are more likely to have registered for home education in the past 3 years.

PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED TRADITIONAL SCHOOL BY SEGMENTS



PREVIOUS EDUCATION BEFORE HOME EDUCATION



Base: Currently registered (n=553, Always Intended n=48, Considered Prior n=109, Not Seriously Considered n=143, Never Intended n=247) S7. Has your child who is currently registered for home education in Queensland previously participated in any of the following education options?



Negative Influences at School

One of the reasons contributing to families choosing home education is around negative influences. For the vast majority, families refer to bullying (either fear of occurring or previous experience).

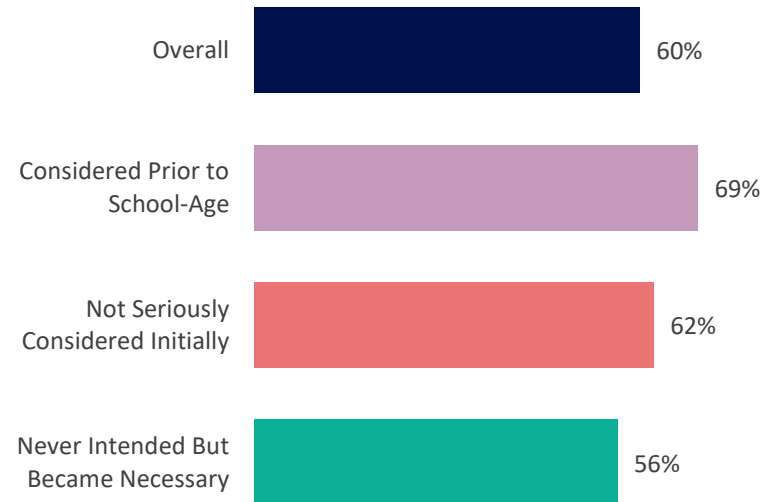
In cases where a child is faced with these negative influences, families feel their child needs greater support and that they are best to remove their child from the situation. For some, this is a short-term solution while they explore options for another school.

“Child had bullying issues at school which led to extreme anxiety.”

“Bullying at school caused extreme social anxiety.”

EXPOSED TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

BY PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED SCHOOL



*Always Intended is not shown as base is too small



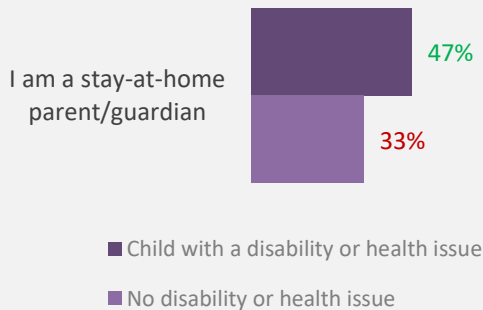
Factors Relating to Parent/Guardian

Many of those who home educate are either a stay-at-home parent/guardian, have a flexible working arrangement or work from home. This allows them the time needed to educate their child/ren.

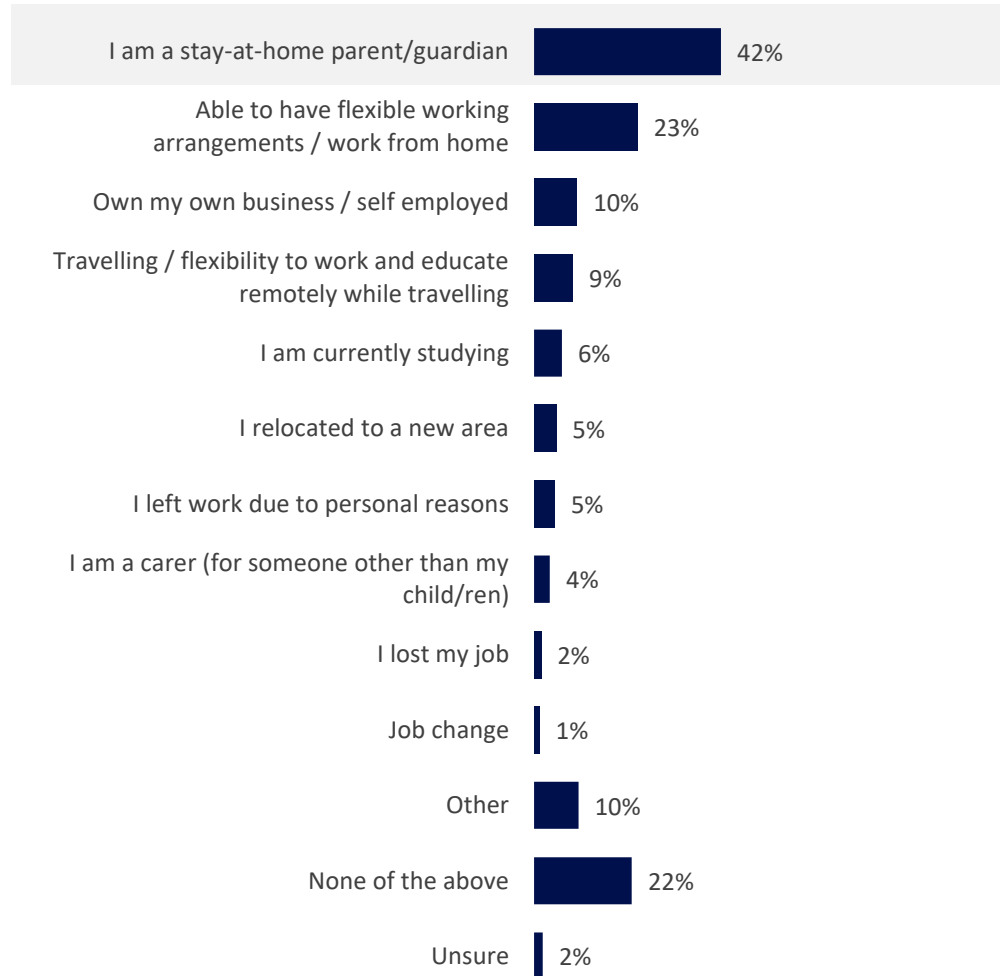
Those who have a child with a disability or health issue are more likely to be a stay-at-home parent/guardian.

There are no significant differences between the segments.

FACTORS IMPACTING DECISION TO HOME EDUCATE BY HEALTH STATUS OF CHILD



OTHER FACTORS IMPACTING DECISION TO HOME EDUCATE



Base: All respondents (n=565, Child with a disability or health issue n=346, No disability or health issue n=196) DR6. Were there any other factors relating to you as the parent/guardian that influences your decision to home educate?

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS INTO REASONS

Supporting the Needs of the Child

Stakeholders agree there has been an increase in parents who are leaving the school system as it is not adequately meeting the needs of their child for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Neurodiversity of the child
- Anxiety and mental health factors
- Bullying or other anti-social behaviour.

Stakeholders acknowledge that school is fine for the majority of children but there has been a shift in the willingness of parents to prioritise their child's needs and overall happiness, potentially more so than in the previous decades. This was noted as a general societal shift.

This shift of focus is therefore seen to enable parents to make decisions for their child without the pressure to be 'normal' which was to have their child attend school.

"People who leave are not coming to home education as much as leaving school. An awful lot of them have children with special needs more so than you would find in the general population. These needs are not being met or feel they are not being met. I am not criticising school; school was never designed to cater for 100% of children – no organisation ever could." Wirraglen

"A lot of times it is around disability and mental health and their needs just not being met in the school system. Some are really struggling and many families became aware of the situation during COVID as there was such an emphasis on education and parents became more involved, so even in places without any lockdowns, people started to notice what was going on with their kids and had choices." HEA

"Our research into families who have chosen home schooling shows that there are significant "push factors" in the school environments that motivate parents to remove their children from school. These push factors essentially relate to the needs of the child. They include: (i) concerns over the poor quality of education in schools, (ii) a marked disrespect for parent values in the school environment, (iii) distractions in the classroom due to unacceptable behaviours by some students, (iv) overcrowded classrooms, (v) boredom in classes, (vi) children disengaged from learning, (vii) uncontrolled bullying in schools creating anxiety, stress and school refusal in their children, (viii) anti-social behaviour and (ix) negative peer pressure in schools. On the positive side these parents state that home schooling allows for the individual needs of the child to be addressed. For example, home schooling is flexible enough to meet the needs of academically gifted children and the needs of talented children who participate in elite sports or the performance arts. That flexibility also suits many children who have (i) educational, (ii) psychological, (iii) physical and (iv) health learning challenges, which cannot be met in traditional schooling." ACHS



Impact of COVID-19

The result of COVID-19 was noted as being a catalyst for interest in home education, for a range of reasons including:

- Lockdowns exposing parents to the curriculum (which was often viewed negatively e.g. 'is this what they are learning?') as well as experiencing first-hand the struggles or performance of the child in their learning.
- Lockdowns raising awareness generally of home education as an option
- Protecting the health of the child and/or family members from COVID-19 even in periods without lockdowns by home educating
- Remote working and more flexible work arrangements enabling parents to home educate
- Anti-Government sentiment towards interventions such as lockdowns, isolation rules, and vaccinations (this was a minority view noted, and more prevalent among those with a stronger philosophical view towards home education).

Overwhelmingly, the observation among stakeholders was that exposure to home education during this period resulted in exposure to the benefits of home education and therefore a desire to continue even after school returns were possible.

"COVID's government-mandated "learning-at-home" requirements meant their children were required to be learning in the family home. This often enabled parents to discover just how little their children had been learning whilst attending school. It also revealed that their children often had significant "gaps" in their education in terms of their knowledge and skills. Many parents became convinced during COVID lockdowns that they could do better with their children's education than traditional schooling was doing, thus they commenced home schooling. Further, they discovered that if their children were being home educated, they would not miss out any more of their learning experiences, in the event of more government-mandated school lockdowns and learning-at-home requirements." ACHS

"During COVID my wife worked for HEA and parents were felt to be 'forced to home school' but now the kids are happier than they were at school so are doing better. So multiplier effect, but now COVID is gone it will be interesting to see what happens. With the movement towards more people wanting to work from home, we are increasingly looking at an environment to support home education." Wirraglen

"Several families expressed a lack of trust in the government's ability to provide a high-quality education and to keep their children safe in terms of bullying in schools. Parents also expressed concern over the imposition of government-mandated COVID requirements, such as mask-wearing, school exclusions, and the possibility of vaccination onto their children if they remained at school. Home schooling provided a better option in terms of a quality education and child safety." ACHS

"More what has gone on is: people have either tasted the home education lifestyle and said there are benefits to this and we're not going back or they've seen things that have been a little confronting for them and said we need to do a rethink on education." HEA Qld



Groups Observed

Stakeholder observations around the different types of home education parents reflect similar trends as noted by parents.

IDEOLOGY EXISTS BUT IS NOT THE MAIN OR GROWING AUDIENCE

Home Education for ideological reasons (e.g. faith, educational philosophy) is still present, however stakeholders believe this audience is relatively small and static in terms of scope and represents a minority of parents.

Increasingly, stakeholders are seeing parents who weren't aware of home education, or had limited knowledge about it, but discovered home education as a result of the reasons identified earlier. This is particularly the case for those feeling the school system doesn't meet their child's needs, and experiencing the benefits of home education firsthand during COVID-19.

The key benefits noted include:

- Less stress for the child (and therefore the family)
- More tailored learning solutions
- More one-on-one time for better learning outcomes
- Better connection / relationship between the parent and child
- Greater flexibility in what and how learning occurs, and to fit in with other family commitments.

"When I started, the majority would have been for ideological reasons, so whether philosophy of education, or around their personal views, politically, religiously, whatever. Those people still exist now. But we're seeing an increasing number who started out their kids in school and for whatever reason have made the decision to remove them from school and educate at home. Often it's been around areas of, broadly, physical and mental health (bullying, kids exhibiting signs of anxiety, school refusal). Sometimes parents just don't like who their child is becoming – possibly negative influence of peers - so that has been a trend." ." HEA Qld

"Back in 2004 when I started, most were doing it [home education] as first choice - people who had a philosophical reason of one type or another - and what we see now and nationally is that more than half, we think, of all home educators are people for whom school is the first choice. So overwhelmingly people are coming to home education when school fails their kids." HEA

"Home educating parents stated that the family's home environment and their local communities provided many "pull factors" that made home schooling attractive. They stated that the family home and surrounding locality was a far better setting for teaching and learning. It allowed for one-on-one learning. The home provided flexibility of time and for selection of curriculum and allowed the children to follow their personal interests. It provided a context that was safe, caring, less stressful and it aligned with family routines. Home educating parents stressed that they required their children's education to align with their values and philosophies. They also indicated that their children's nurture, development and education was their responsibility. It was not the responsibility of government." ACHS

"So it usually isn't a gallop into home ed it is a reluctant move into home education. But a consistent comment we have had over 15 years so we now anticipate it, is remove the child from school, wait for the 1 month and then have another look and invariably the parents will say 'gee the stresses on the family have just gone away'. Not only the child, the siblings and parents have all been able to relax and they find that the biggest benefit for them. Home education isn't necessarily relaxing but the families we work with that is a very common comment. If you are removing your child from a very stressful situation into a less stressful environment, it will have that effect." Wirraglen

"Parents say after a year of home education are like 'wow, the improvement in their relationship with her two young daughters is just amazing'. They come to love the relationship with the child." Wirraglen

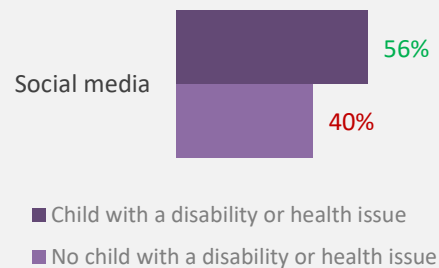
INFORMATION SEEKING

Information Sources

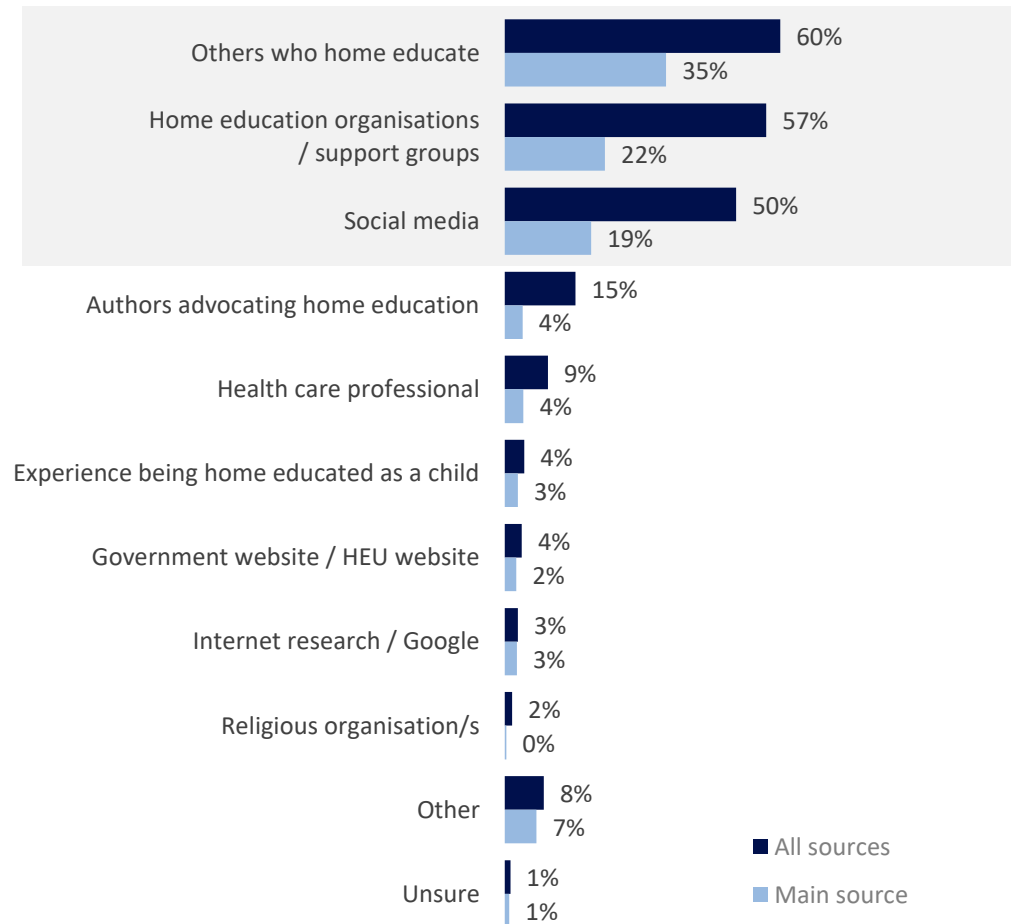
The most common information sources include other home educators, home education organisations / support groups and social media.

Interestingly, social media is more likely to be an information source for those who have a child with a disability or health issue. It is one of the key information sources for those in the *Not Seriously Considered* and the *Never Intended* segments.

**INFORMATION SOURCES
BY HEALTH STATUS OF CHILD**



SOURCES OF INFORMATION OR ADVICE



Base: All respondents (n=565 , Child with a disability or health issue n=346, No disability or health issue n=196) DM1. When deciding to home educate, where did you find information or advice to help in making your decision? DM2. Which of these would you say had the greatest influence on your decision to home educate?

Stakeholder Insights Information Seeking (1)

Stakeholders observe that information seeking evolves over the course of the home education journey.

INITIALLY NEW PARENTS SEEK UNDERSTANDING BUT ALSO REASSURANCE

Stakeholders feel those considering or are new to home education typically seek information via internet searching, use of associations (like HEA), and the Queensland Government. Much of what is being sought is about how home education works and what is legally required, registration requirements and assistance transitioning from school, as well as reassurance that as a parent they know what is involved and have the ability to actually do a good job home educating their child.

ONCE ESTABLISHED, INFORMATION IS MORE SPECIFIC BUT ONGOING SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Parents have specific information needs particularly around reporting requirements, curriculum, resources, and general support.

“They often want to know their legal obligations so actively trying to do what is required by the law. They are unclear about what that is and the steps involved. The other thing they want help with is ‘how do I actually do this?’.” HEA

“There is a lot of internet used these days, sites about home education or Facebook groups etc. Once people have found a group of people in the home education community, they will be the people they will mostly turn to for support and advice.” HEA Qld

“Parents found out about home schooling by various means. Most just initially Googled “home schooling” or “home education” and a wealth of information then comes up about home schooling such as the ACHS or the HEA etc. Others have observed their friends who are home schooling and have seen the positive results and decided that they wanted those outcomes for their own families. They also were able to connect with other home-schooling families and home schooling social and educational groups. This gave further information and support to home educating families” ACHS



Stakeholder Insights Information Seeking (2)

FINDING A 'COMMUNITY' OF SIMILAR-MINDED HOME EDUCATORS IS COMMON

There is a noted reliance among home educators to access communities of other parents; whether digitally or in person.

The use of Facebook groups is common for sharing ideas, asking and answering questions and organising group activities. Other platforms are also used for younger parents.

What stakeholders also note is that the growing interest in home education has made it more mainstream than it has been viewed in the past, meaning home educated parents feel they are part of a sizeable community of accepted parents rather than part of an ostracised minority.

"Suddenly if you do home educate you are no longer isolated as you would have been 20 years ago. There is a community there for them. There could easily be 18,000 home educating (9,000 registered and the others not). When you get up to 18,000 [home educated] / 800,000 children [total school-aged children in Queensland] – when you get up to those numbers suddenly you become a not abnormal group and you have more... people who say 'oh you're home schooling and they are no longer threatened by it'. As it becomes more accepted then more and more people will come to it." Wirraglen

"Facebook is probably a key one; loads of groups and people go to the internet to find that information. The internet, Facebook more specifically. That is changing as the next generation starts to have kids and become home educators and Facebook is not as popular with the younger people, it is all other Reddit, Telegram, all new social media platforms." HEA



FUTURE INTENTIONS

Stakeholder Insights

Future Intentions (1)

Stakeholders feel there is a mix of intentions among home educating parents.

While there will always be a primary group of parents who intend to home educate for the long-term, the intentions of others are mixed.

INTENTIONS DON'T ALWAYS EQUAL REALITY

The main view held among stakeholders is that the group of parents who intend to home educate for a specific period (e.g. to sort out a specific issue for their child or to catch them up) ultimately will fall into two categories:

1. Those who do return to school – which may or may not lead to a return to home education if it doesn't work out
2. Enjoy home education and the difference it makes and decide to continue.

“I think with most parents who pull kids out of school in crisis because school isn't working and feel they have no other choices, I think the vast majority intend to fix their child and send them back, but I suspect that same cohort of people don't send them back. They discover 1) it takes a long time to fix your child and 2) life changes for the better so dramatically so parents and children both don't want to go back.” HEA

“ACHS has assisted many families that have children who have fallen between the educational cracks. These children may not be able to read or to write at their grade-age appropriate level. We also have discouraged and disengaged teenagers who need to regain a love of learning and self-confidence as they enter adulthood. They may stay in home schooling for a year or two until they regain their academic skills and or confidence. Others stay for the long term from Prep to Year 12. It all depends on the needs of the child.” ACHS



Stakeholder Insights

Future Intentions (2)

PATHWAYS TO TERTIARY OPTIONS ARE NOT CONSIDERED A REASON TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

Pathways to tertiary education options for home educated children are felt to be extensive and not a limiting factor.

HOME EDUCATION REGISTRATION IS LIKELY TO REMAIN STRONG

Stakeholders generally feel home education has not yet peaked and are unclear whether levels will return to pre COVID-19 levels. Given the stated reasons, changes in remote working and household flexibility, and becoming increasingly accepted with known benefits, home education is expected to remain a viable choice for parents.

“Some kids do go back to high school for QCE, not many though. There are so many alternate tertiary pathways available to students so the vast majority take another route.” HEA

“For a long time, people would home school as long as they could but would have children that they wanted to get to uni and it felt too hard to know the pathway to do that if they were home educating, and I think there are now more pathways, and they are better known. This is keeping more people in the system who would head on to tertiary study. They tended to be the ones who went back to a school previously.” HEA Qld

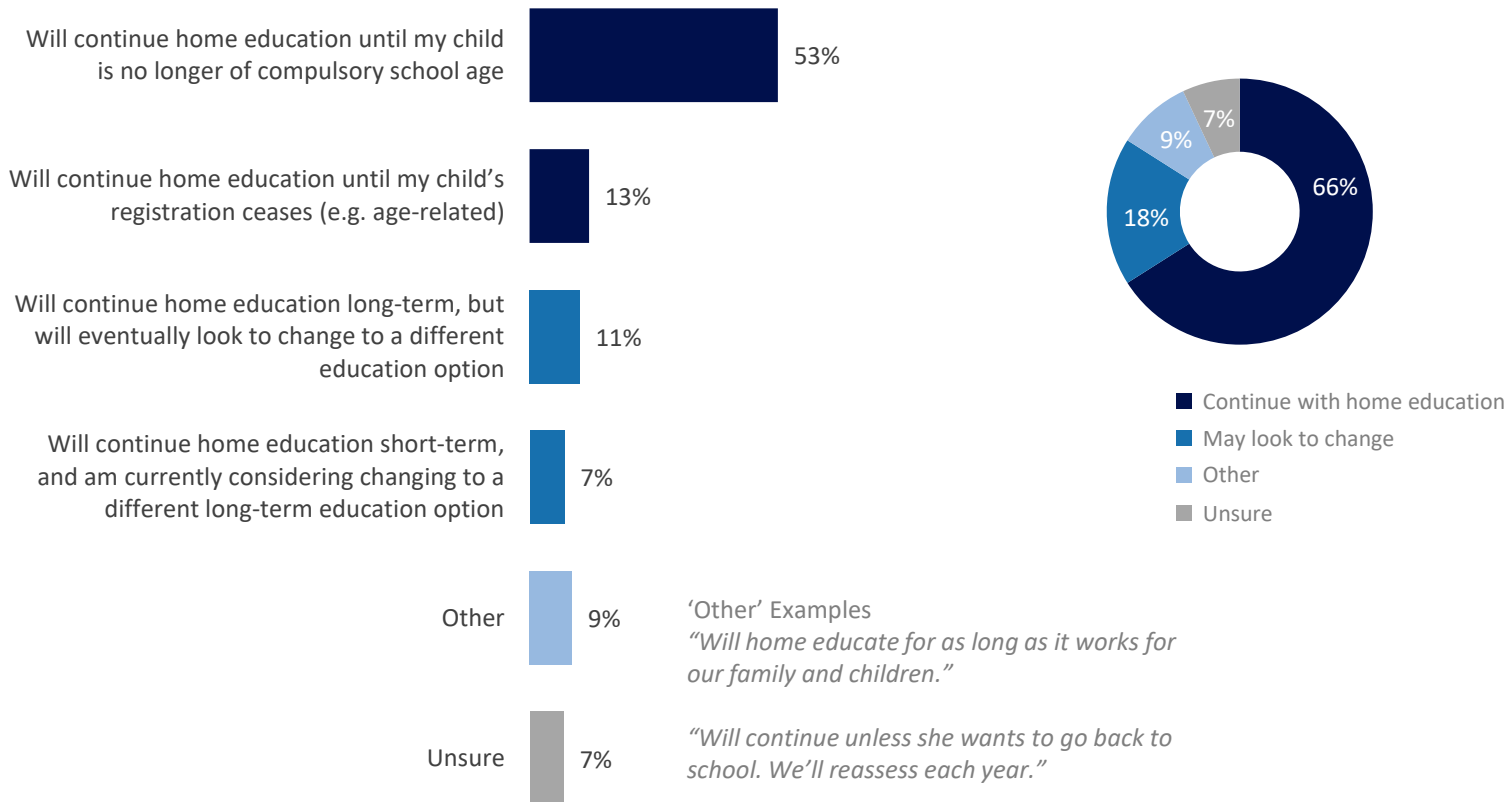
“I don’t believe home education has reached its peak yet, but there will be a peak, as the majority do like school and school does suit the majority of children.” Wirraglen



Future Intentions Regarding Registration

Two-thirds of those who are home educating intend to continue. The other third may or may not continue depending on how the child takes to home education and if they have a desire to return to traditional school.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

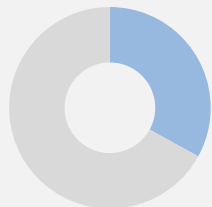


The Impact of Recency on Future Intentions

Parents who registered their child/ren prior to COVID-19 are more likely to continue with home education for the long-term (or until registration ceases). A similar picture is evident among those registering a new child during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, there is significantly greater hesitancy to continue.

Those registering a new child this year are the least likely to continue with home education (albeit, around half plan to continue). This is likely a mix of factors – such as teething issues for those new to home education, or those looking for a short term solution between schools.

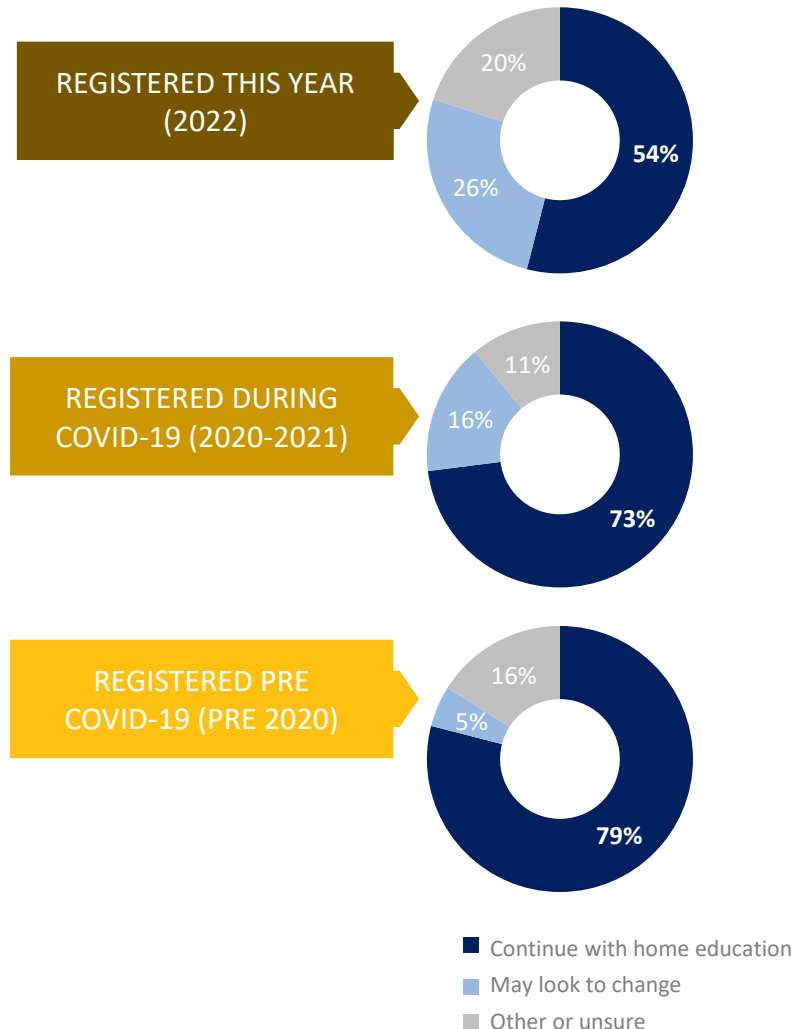
Stakeholder feedback suggests there is typically a cohort who will return to traditional schools after “trying it out”.



33%

of those who mainly choose to home educate to avoid negative influences may look to change

FUTURE INTENTIONS BY MOST RECENT REGISTRATION

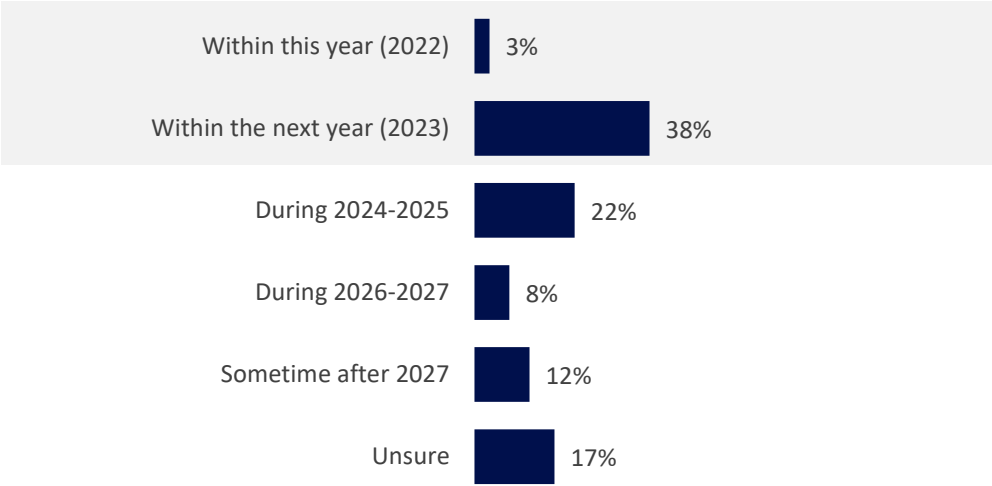


Base: Currently registered (n=553, 2022 n=260, 2020-2021 n=153, Pre 2020 n=132)
 F1. For the remainder of your child’s education, which of the following best applies when it comes to your intentions regarding home education registration?

Timing of Education Change

Of those likely to cease home education, many are considering doing so next year or in the following two years.

TIMING OF CHANGE FROM HOME EDUCATION



Base: Likely to switch from home education (n=92)
F2. You mentioned you might change your child’s education option, when are you thinking about doing so?



After Registration Ceases

When home education registration ceases, just over 1 in 3 parents/guardians plan for their child to continue onto tertiary education.

Just under 1 in 5 plan for their child to shift to a school.

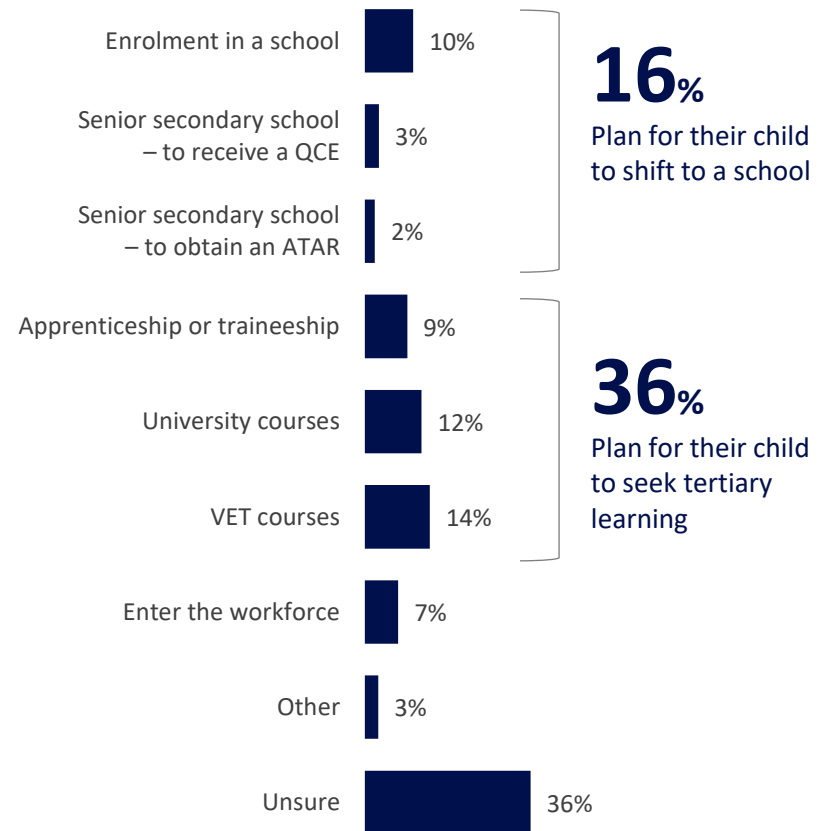
Some parents/guardians are unsure what their child is likely to do as they are still young.

EXAMPLES OF FAMILIES UNSURE:

“This child is still in primary school. There could be many options available to her when the time comes, and we are open to any that will meet her individual needs at the time.”

“They are in primary school. We will take it one year at a time.”

FUTURE PLANS WHEN REGISTRATION CEASE



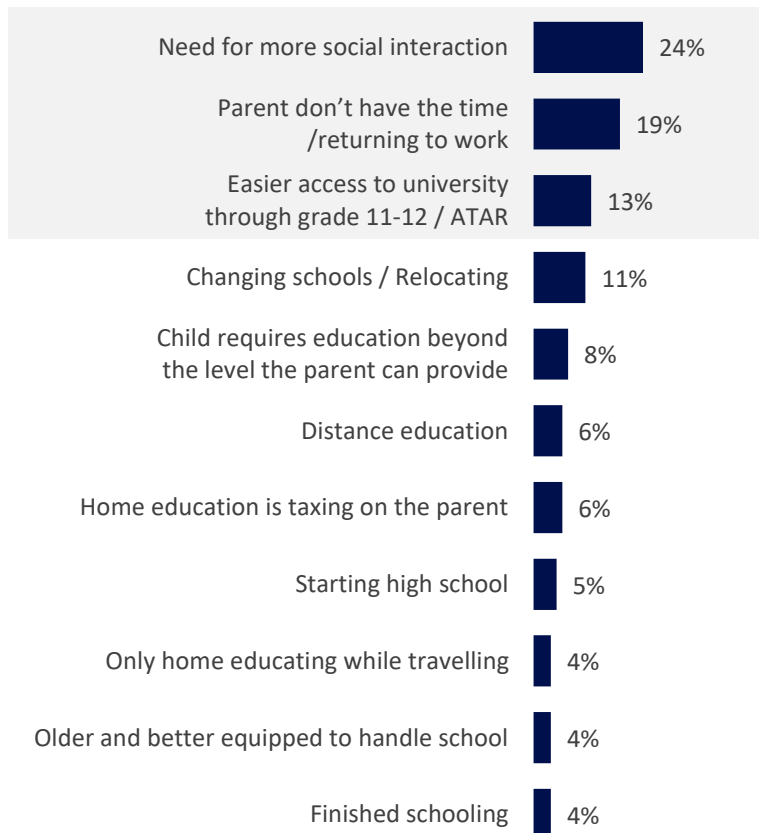
Base: Currently registered (n=553)

F3. After your child's home education registration ceases, for whatever reason, which of the following, is your child next likely to pursue?

Reason For Ceasing Home Education

Reasons for ceasing home education include the need for more social interaction, the parent/guardian having to work and traditional schooling being the easiest pathway to university.

REASON FOR OPTING TO MOVE AWAY FROM HOME EDUCATION



"My son works better in social situations where he has classmates and has to keep up with them."

"My child is missing the social interaction and working from home I don't have the time to take him to lots of events."

"The children miss the daily social interaction with their friends, and I am looking to going back to work full time."

"It is by need that we homeschool, but I would like to return to work and have them attend school in some capacity."

"If we can find a school that is flexible enough to suit our child, I would appreciate being able to return to my previous work, which I have had to stop while home schooling my children."

"I would like my child to go to university if they want, and it is most straightforward for them to do the last years at school."

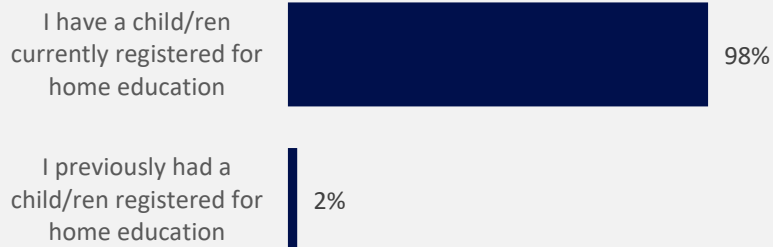
"Child wants to go to university, so we need to have her finish year 11 and 12 at school."



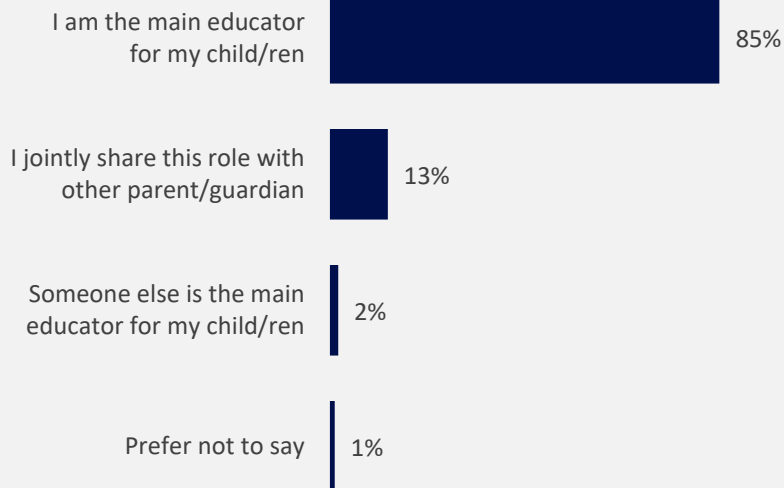
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Background

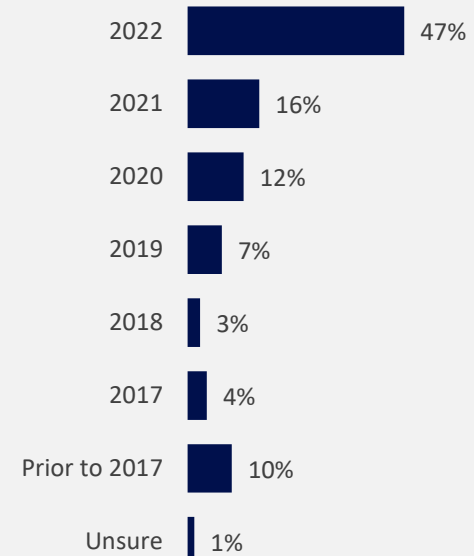
INTEREST IN SURVEY



ROLE IN HOME EDUCATING CHILD/REN

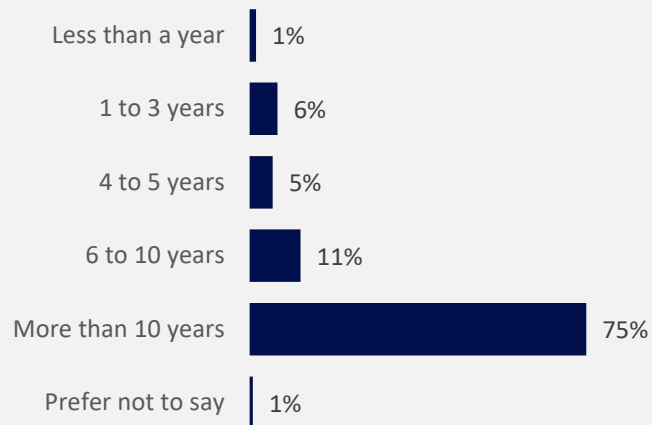


YEAR OF MOST RECENT REGISTRATION



Family Demographics

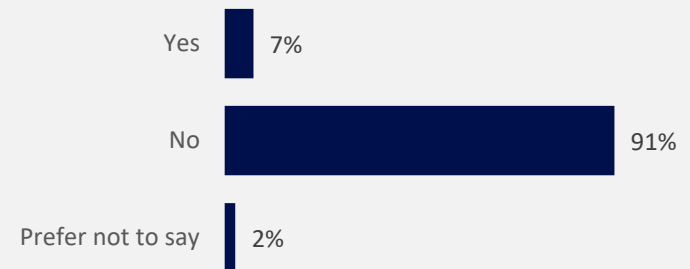
TIME LIVING IN QUEENSLAND



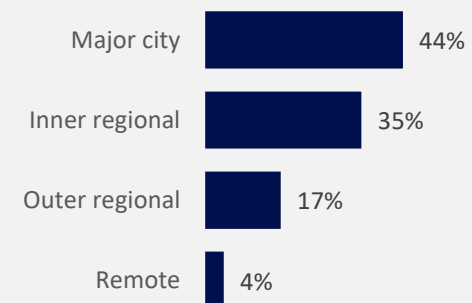
QUEENSLAND LOCATION



NOMADIC LIFESTYLE OR TRAVELLING FAMILY

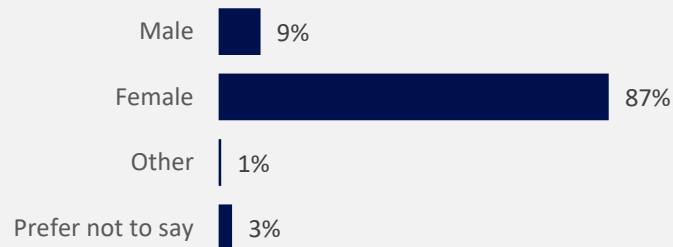


REMOTENESS AREA

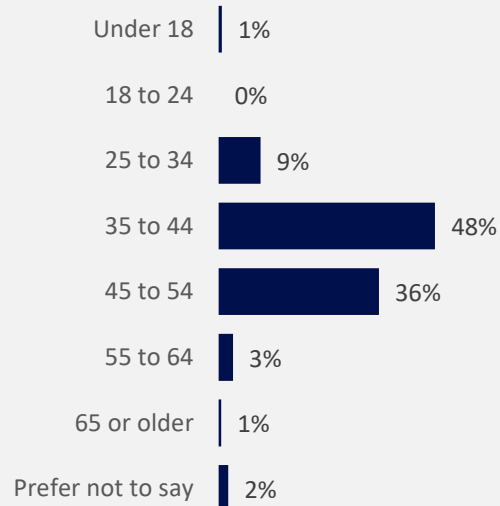


Participant Demographics (1)

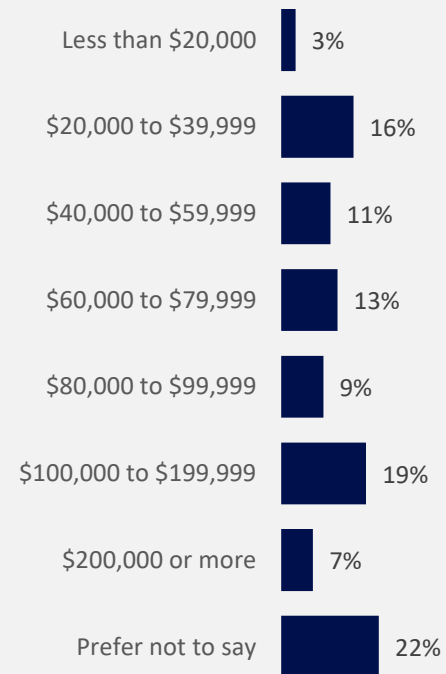
GENDER



AGE GROUP

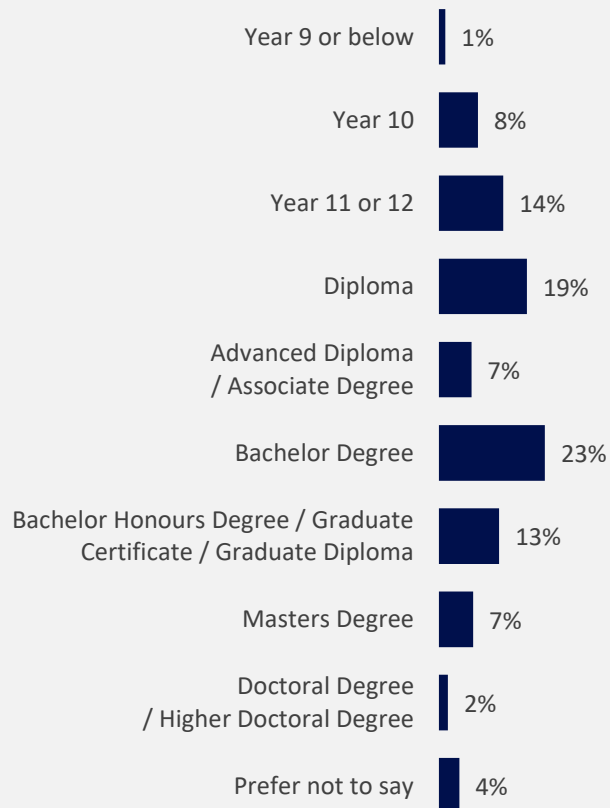


HOUSEHOLD INCOME

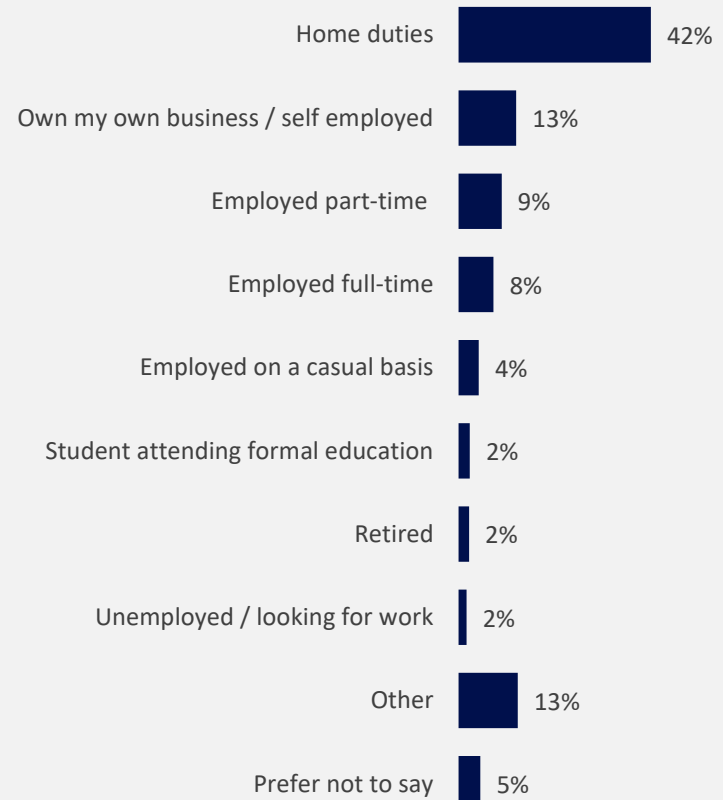


Participant Demographics (2)

EDUCATION LEVEL OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

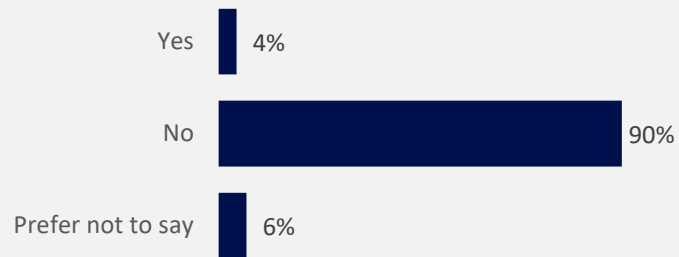


EMPLOYMENT OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

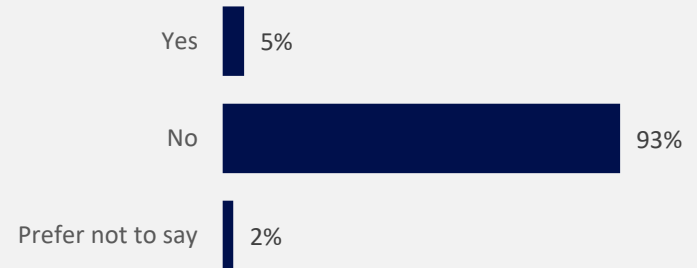


Participant Demographics (3)

IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER



SPEAK LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH





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