Reopening Schools in Scotland

Member Survey Results

August 2020

Background

On the 20th March 2020, all schools in Scotland were closed in order to tackle the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. To continue to deliver some education to the children of key workers, and to vulnerable children, school hubs opened with staff volunteering in significant numbers to support this function. Other teachers took on the role of providing remote teaching and learning, whilst working from home as part of the national lockdown.

As schools prepare to return to full-time face-to-face learning on the 11th August the EIS surveyed its members to find out if members feel safe enough to return to school, and what additional measures they might like in place to mitigate any perceived risks.

Methodology

The Reopening Schools in Scotland Survey was opened on Tuesday 4th August and closed on Monday 10th August. The survey has a total of 18 questions including an opening section of mandatory questions at the beginning to better understand who had responded.

In total 29,867 responses were gathered, with a return rate of almost 60%. This turnout shows more than half of all members eligible have completed the survey. The average response time to complete the survey was 9 minutes.

Eligible members were privately emailed a link to the survey. Prior to the survey going live to members, it was issued to a small test sample of members for peer review. As changes were made following this testing phase, all test responses were deleted prior to the survey going live, with all eligible members re-submitting their responses.

Only a handful of questions were mandatory. This allowed respondents to skip questions as they progressed throughout the survey. This was done to ensure that there was no false recording within the survey, to improve confidence in the results.

All figures within this report have been rounded to the nearest one decimal place, meaning that some questions may not have a total exacting 100%, with other questions within the survey allowing for multiple responses.

At the end of this survey there was an opportunity for members to highlight anything that they felt hadn't been addressed within the survey questions. A summary of these responses has been included within this report. Many of the issues raised require further consideration.

Margin of Error

Margin of error (also called confidence interval) indicates the level of certainty with which you can expect your survey results to reflect the views from the overall population. Surveying is always a balancing act where you use a smaller group (your survey respondents) to represent a much larger one (the target market or total population).

Margin of error is often used as a way of measuring how effective a survey is. The smaller the margin of error, the more confidence you may have in your results. The bigger the margin of error, the farther they can

stray from the views of the total population. One way in which to reduce the margin of error is to increase the sample size.

Using the full eligible membership as our baseline figure, the margin of error with our sample of 29,867 is less than one percent[1].
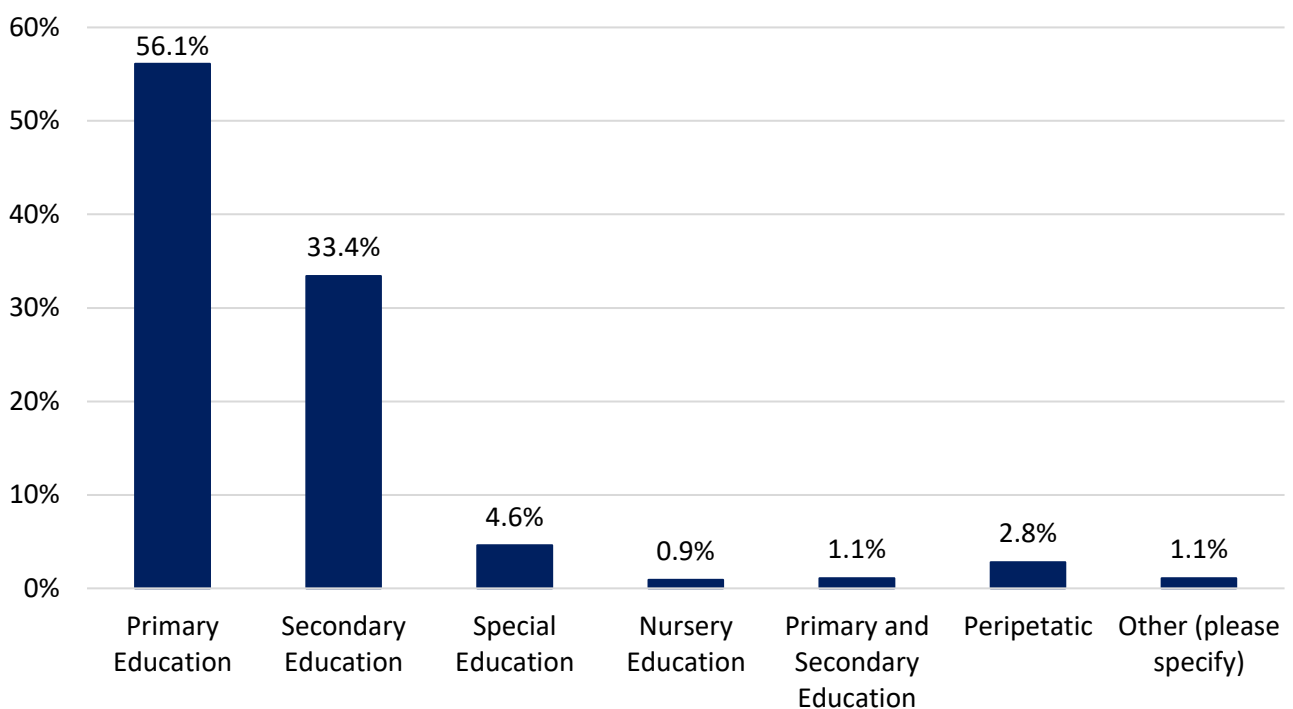
[1] Survey Monkey, Margin of Error Calculator https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/margin-of-error-calculator/?ut_source=mp&ut_source2=sample-size-calculator&ut_source3=inline&ut_ctatext=margin%2520of%2520error%2520calculator

About You

The first section of the survey asked respondents to fill in key details about themselves. The answers given in these opening sections give an indication of who our members are and what they teach. Whilst these answers provide insight into EIS teacher members when looked at on their own, they can also be analysed alongside other questions within this survey to provide information on how different sections of EIS membership responded to certain issues.

The following tables show the breakdown of members that have responded to these questions. Where relevant, responses have been disaggregated further within this report to show the concerns raised by specific groups or sectors.

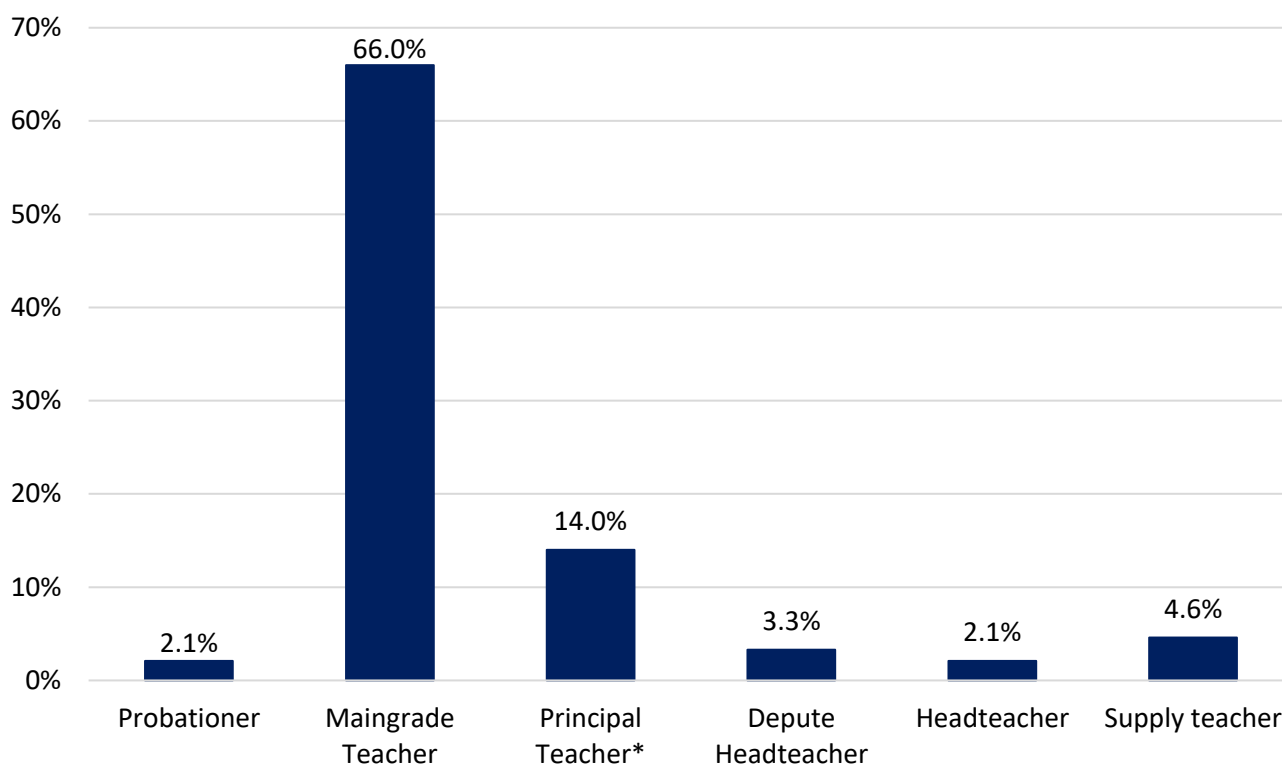**Figure 1: Question 1 – "I work in...." responses**

Total responses: 29,867

Members who indicated "other" as a response included Educational Psychologists, Education Officers and Supply Teachers. Those who indicated that they worked in Secondary Education were then asked to indicate what subject they taught from a long list of options, as shown in Appendix A. The full breakdown has not been included within this report. However, responses were gathered for each of the subjects listed, indicating that the views of secondary school teachers include those from a wide variety of subjects.

The next mandatory question then asked members what their substantive post was, from a range of options. Below shows the number of responses from key positions with the school but does not include the full list of responses to each of the options.

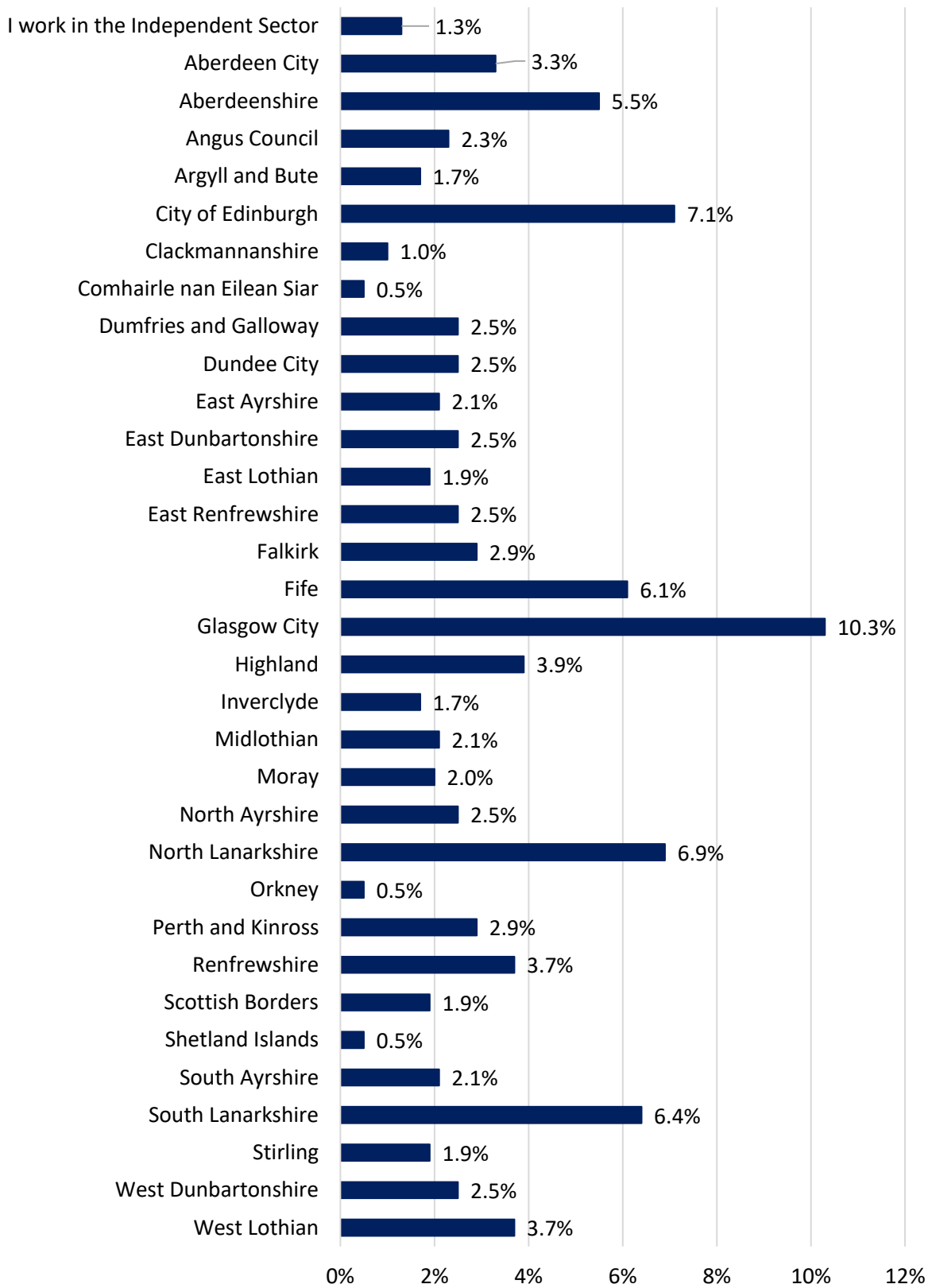**Figure 2: Question 3 – "What is your substantive post" responses[2]**

Total responses: 29,701

Members were then asked to detail which local authority area they worked in. As figure 3 shows, there has been a good return rate across all local authority areas, with all regions covered within this survey.

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[2] Within the survey there was a breakdown of options for Principal Teachers: Principal teacher (subject) Principal teacher (Pastoral Care), Principal teacher (Faculty), Principal teacher (Curricular), Principal teacher (Primary), Principal teacher (Additional Support for Learning). For ease of reporting, and to ensure that individual members could not be identified, these categories have been combined under the "Principal Teacher" heading in figure 2.
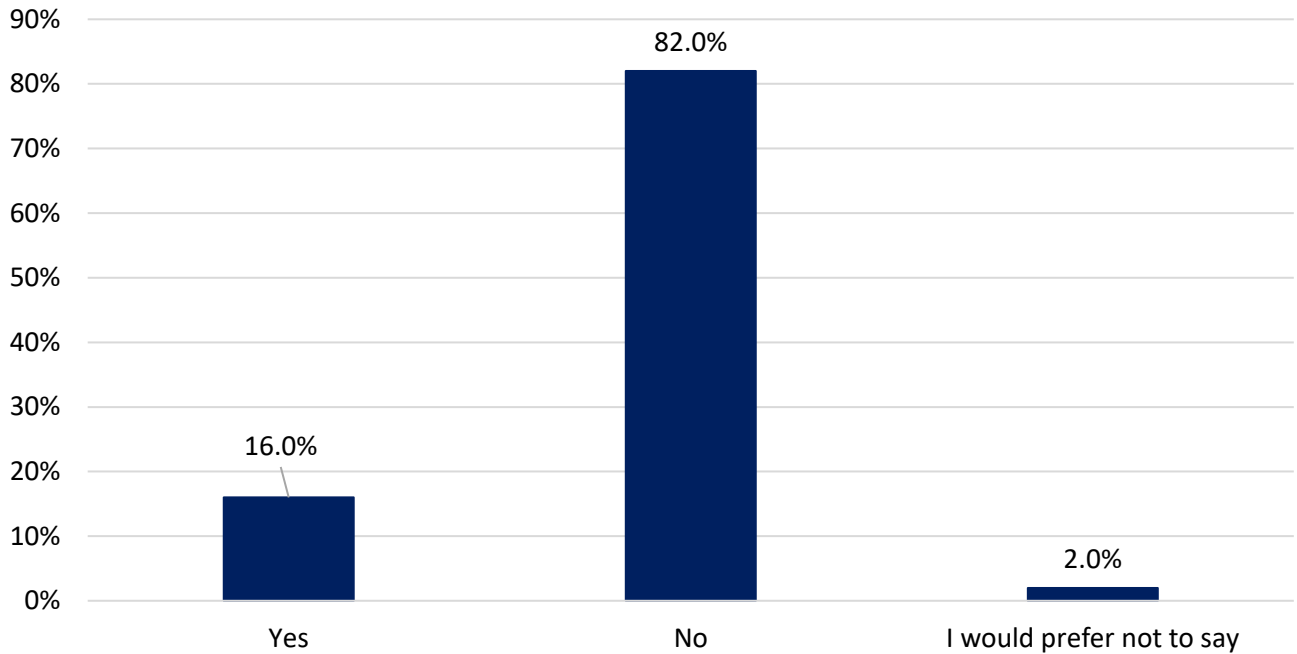
Figure 3: Question 4 – "Which local authority area do you work in? (tick more than one if applicable)"

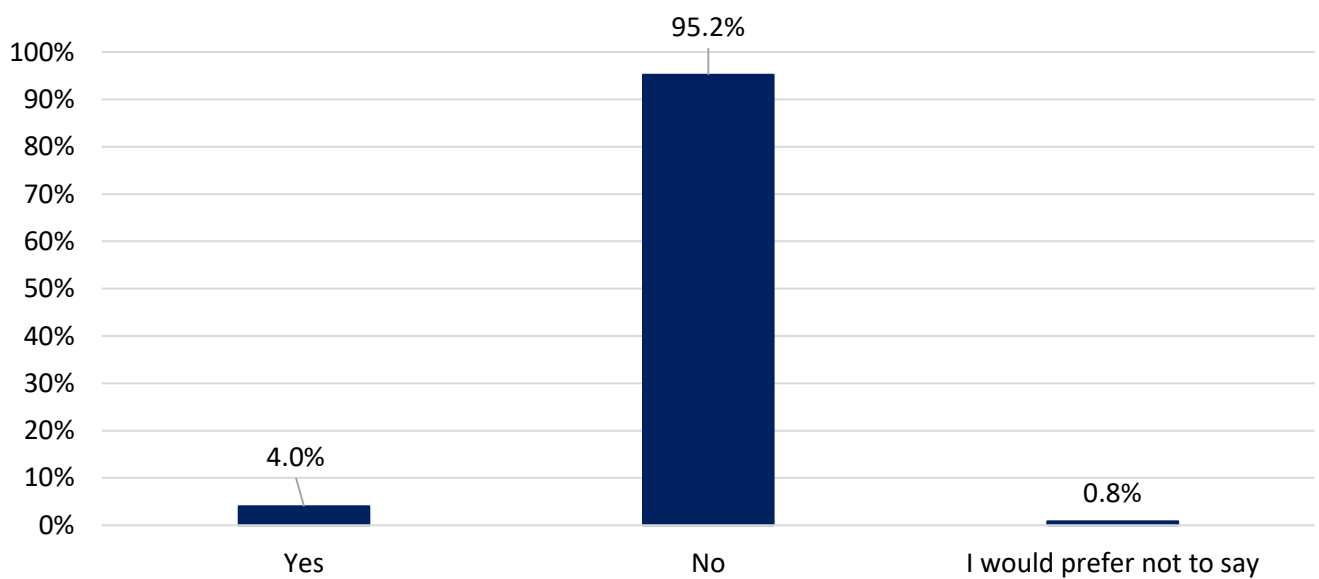| Local Authority Area	Percentage
I work in the Independent Sector	1.3%
Aberdeen City	3.3%
Aberdeenshire	5.5%
Angus Council	2.3%
Argyll and Bute	1.7%
City of Edinburgh	7.1%
Clackmannanshire	1.0%
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	0.5%
Dumfries and Galloway	2.5%
Dundee City	2.5%
East Ayrshire	2.1%
East Dunbartonshire	2.5%
East Lothian	1.9%
East Renfrewshire	2.5%
Falkirk	2.9%
Fife	6.1%
Glasgow City	10.3%
Highland	3.9%
Inverclyde	1.7%
Midlothian	2.1%
Moray	2.0%
North Ayrshire	2.5%
North Lanarkshire	6.9%
Orkney	0.5%
Perth and Kinross	2.9%
Renfrewshire	3.7%
Scottish Borders	1.9%
Shetland Islands	0.5%
South Ayrshire	2.1%
South Lanarkshire	6.4%
Stirling	1.9%
West Dunbartonshire	2.5%
West Lothian	3.7%

Total responses: 29,609

The final 3 mandatory questions asked members if they were deemed to be in an "at risk" category, if they had previously been shielding or if they identified as BAME. Figures 4, 5 and 6 below show their responses.

Figure 4: Question 5 – "Are you in one of the "at risk" categories for Covid-19? (For example, those who are pregnant, those over the age of 70, have an underlying health condition, or undergoing treatments that may put them at higher risk)"
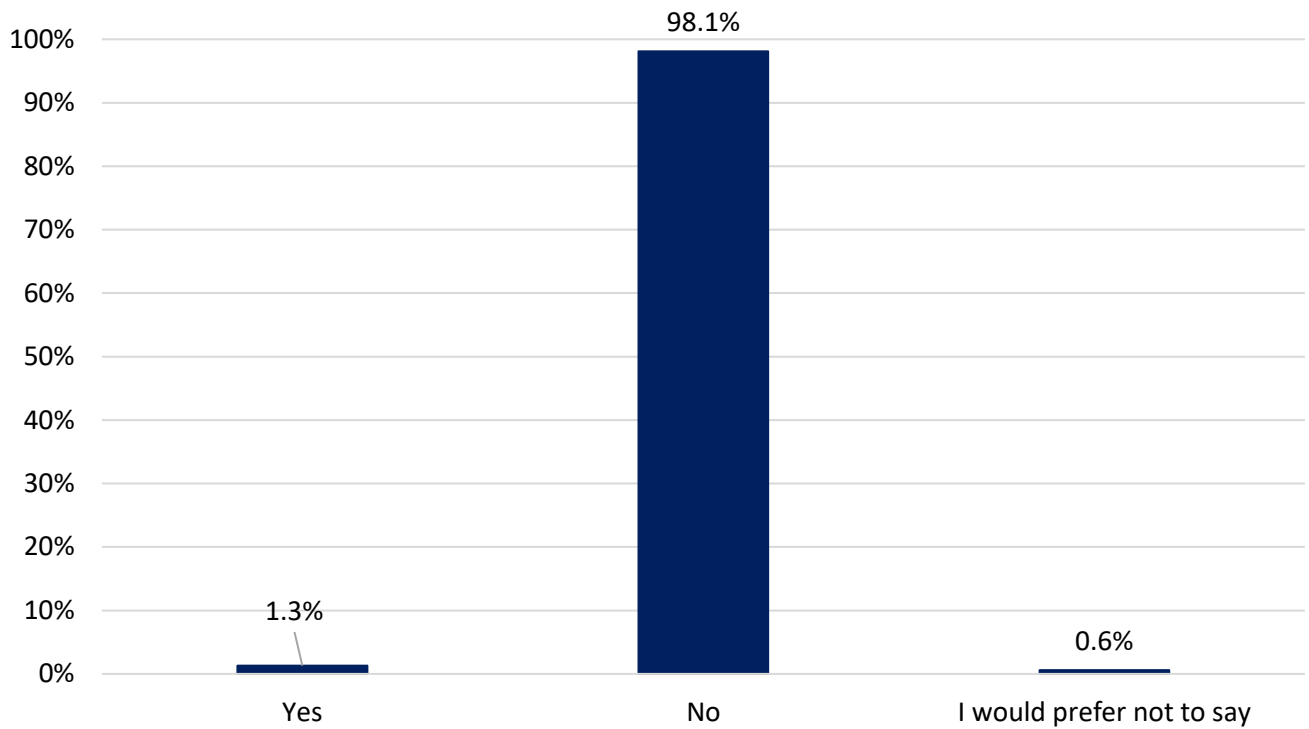

Total responses: 29,543

Figure 5: Question 6 – "Were you in a "shielding" category prior to the 1st August?" responses

Total responses: 29,543

Figure 6: Question 7 – "Do you identify as Black, Asian or belonging to a minority ethnic group (BAME)?" responses

Total responses: 29,543

The next question asked members how confident they were that each of the EIS conditions on school return would be met. Figure 7 below shows member responses.

Figure 7: Question 8 – "The EIS has articulated a strong set of conditions to be met before schools can reopen:

1. "Established capacity to "test, trace and isolate"

2. "Significant operational changes in place to ensure implementation of all health guidelines e.g. effective social distancing, enhanced hygiene routines, and ongoing risk assessments in place

3. "Transparent and shared evidence that the spread of infection is under control and that schools and educational establishments are safe places to work
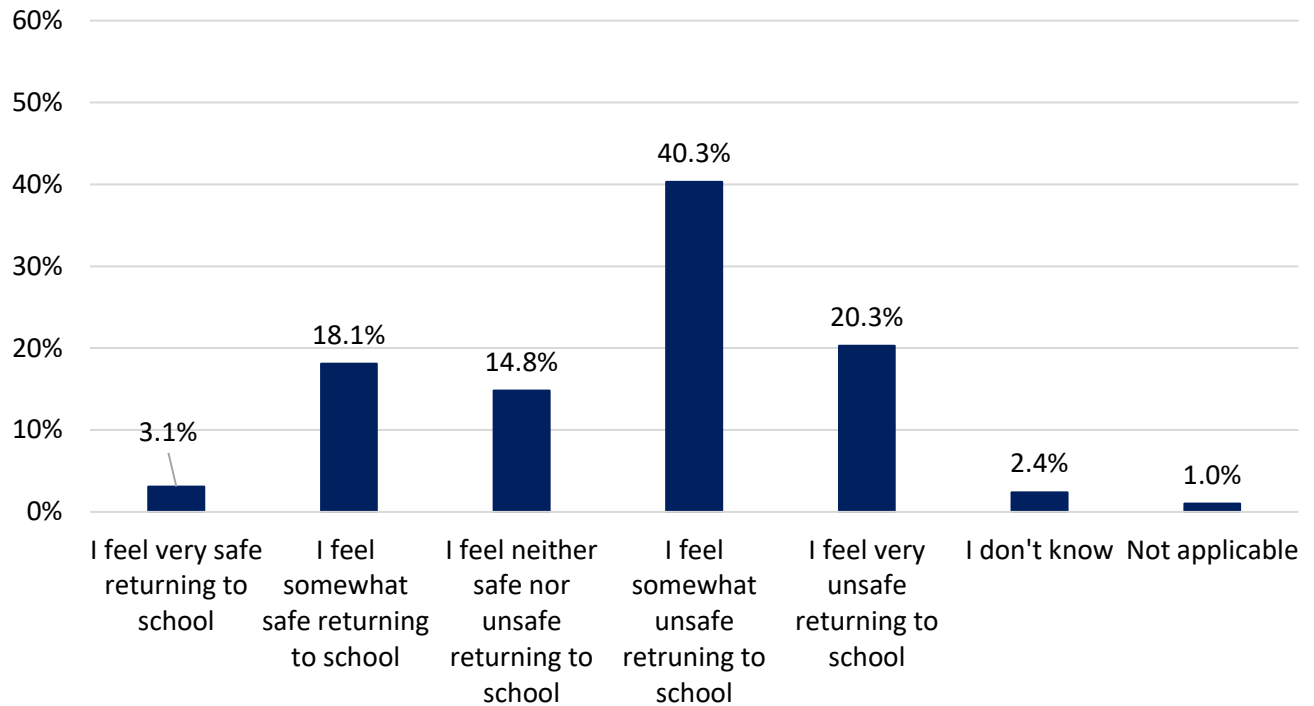
How confident are you that these measures will be in place for your return to school?" responses

	I feel very confident this will be in place	I feel somewhat confident this will be in place	I feel neither confident or not that this will be in place	I feel somewhat not confident that this will be in place	I feel very not confident that this will be in place	I don't know/ not applicable
1. Established capacity to "test, trace and isolate"	4.6%	22.7%	16.5%	25.2%	27.5%	3.5%
2. Significant operational changes in place to ensure implementation of all health guidelines e.g. effective social distancing, enhanced hygiene routines, and ongoing risk assessments in place	6.5%	25.3%	12.1%	25.5%	28.9%	1.7%
3. Transparent and shared evidence that the spread of infection is under control and that schools and educational establishments are safe places to work	3.4%	17.0%	18.6%	28.2%	30.7%	2.1%

Total responses: 28,756

Members were then asked how safe they felt returning to school after lockdown. Figure 8 shows all responses, and figure 9 shows disaggregated data from those who were shielding, those in an at risk category and those who identify as BAME.
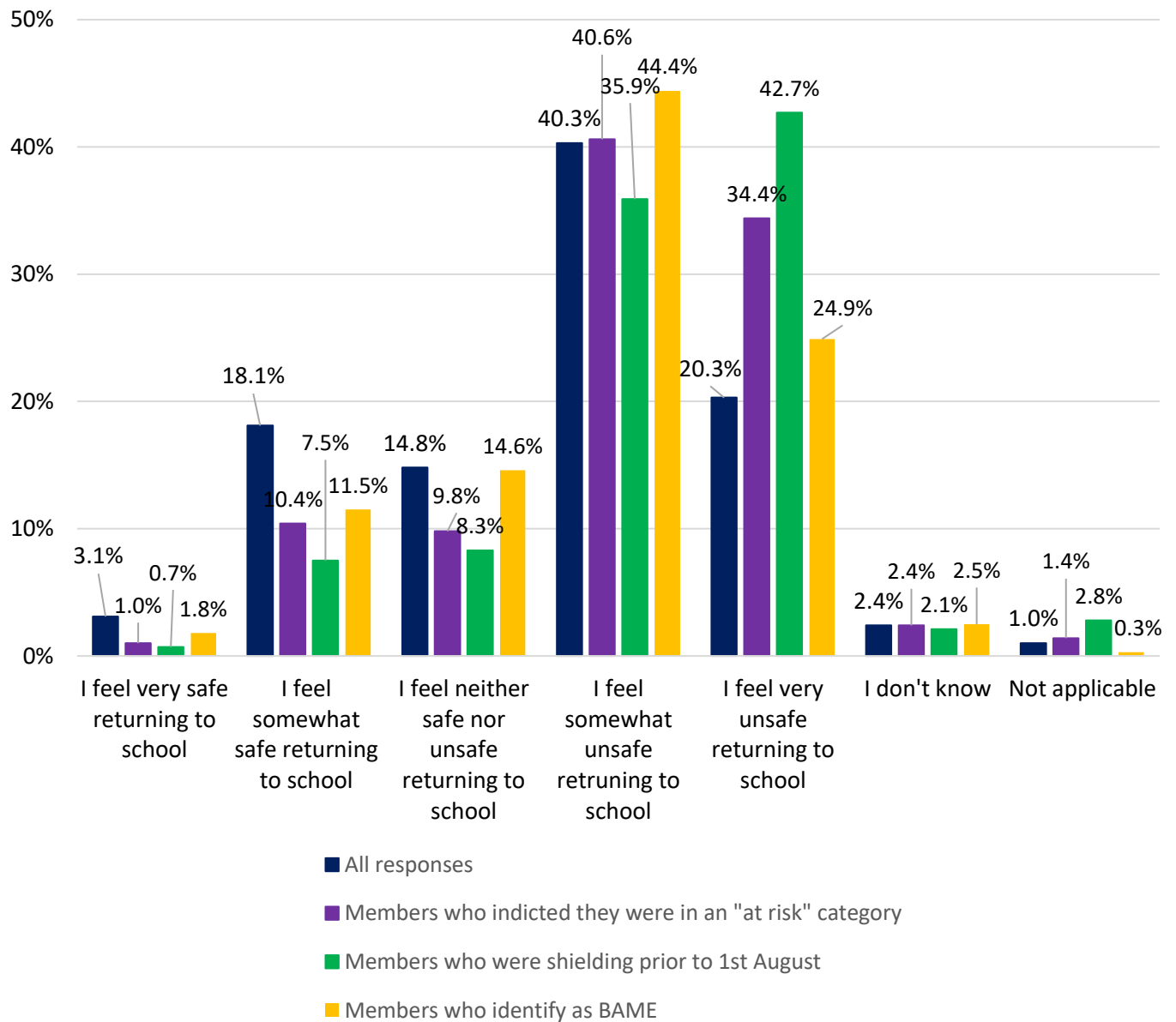
Figure 8: Question 9 – "Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about returning to school on 11th August?" responses
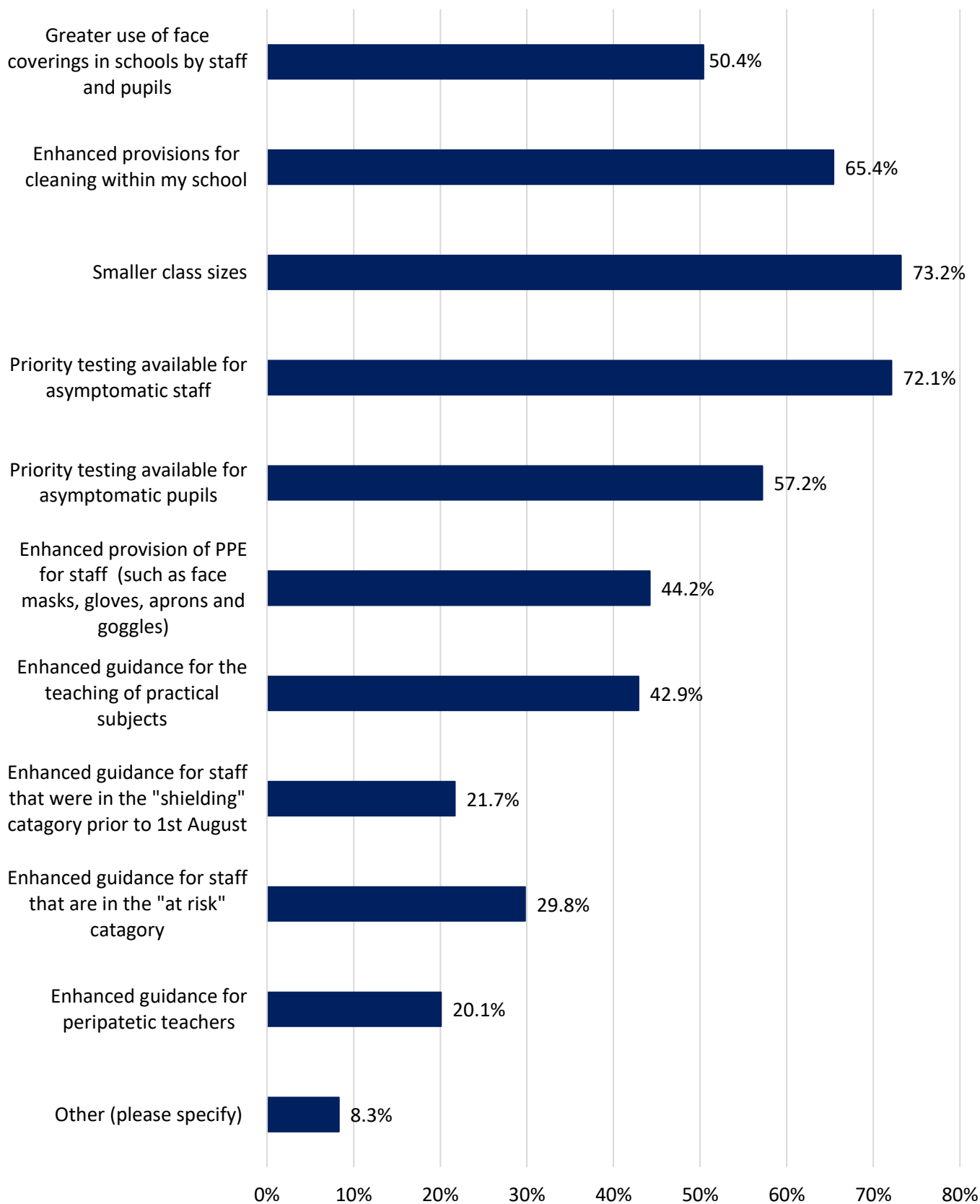

Total responses: 28,526

As figure 9 shows below, members who are more at risk should they catch Covid-19 are more likely to say they feel unsafe about returning to school in comparison with the findings from all respondents. This highlights the need for special care to be taken to support these staff members on their return.

Figure 9: Question 9 – "Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about returning to school on 11th August?" disaggregated responses

Members were then asked what further guidance or support they would like to be added to the Scottish Government planning ahead of the schools' return in order to make them feel safer. Figure 10 below shows these responses in more detail.

Figure 10: Question 10 – "What, if any, of the following would you like added to the Scottish Government guidance in order to make you feel safer returning to school on 11th August?" responses
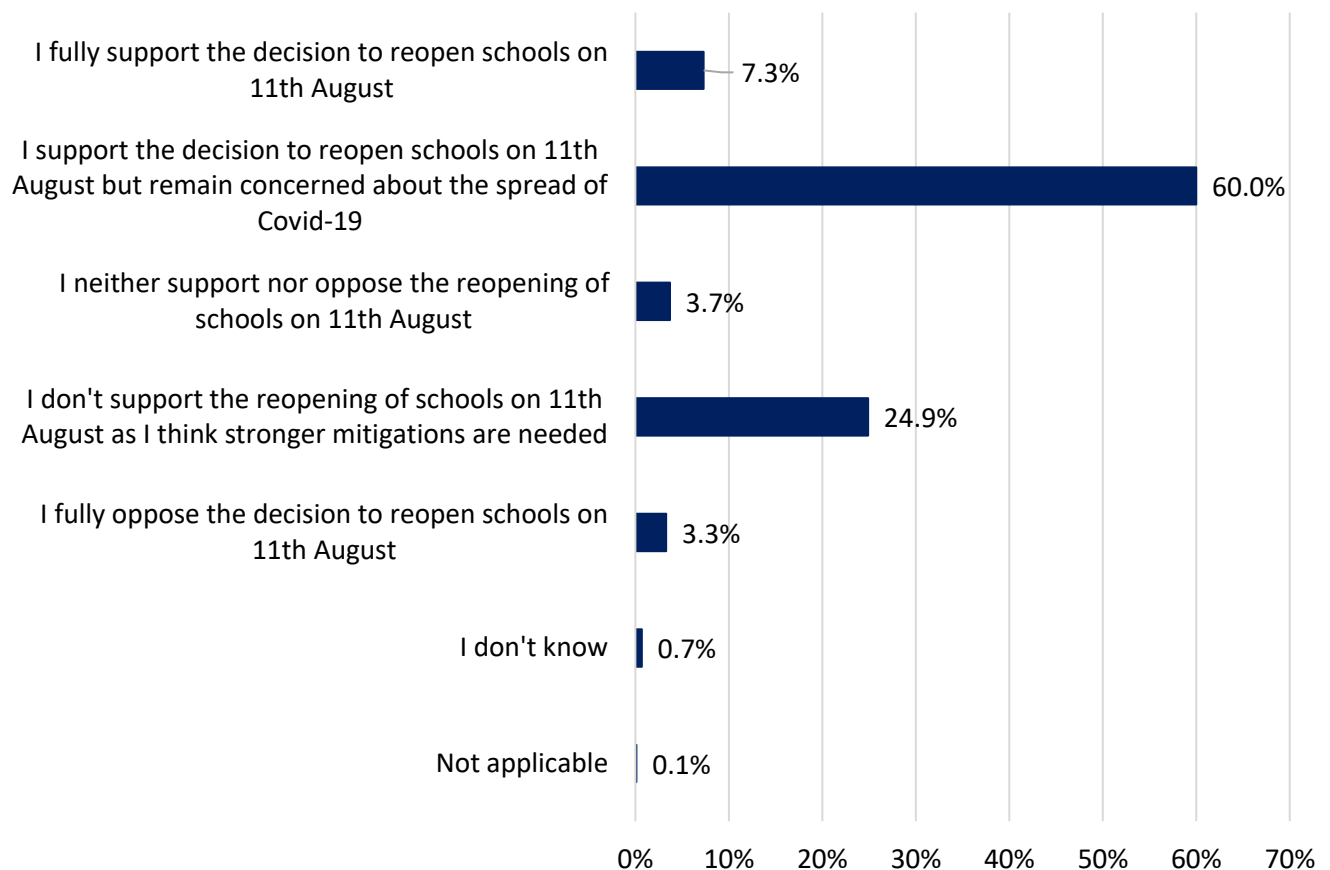
Category	Percentage
Greater use of face coverings in schools by staff and pupils	50.4%
Enhanced provisions for cleaning within my school	65.4%
Smaller class sizes	73.2%
Priority testing available for asymptomatic staff	72.1%
Priority testing available for asymptomatic pupils	57.2%
Enhanced provision of PPE for staff (such as face masks, gloves, aprons and goggles)	44.2%
Enhanced guidance for the teaching of practical subjects	42.9%
Enhanced guidance for staff that were in the "shielding" catagory prior to 1st August	21.7%
Enhanced guidance for staff that are in the "at risk" catagory	29.8%
Enhanced guidance for peripatetic teachers	20.1%
Other (please specify)	8.3%

Total responses: 28,301

Members who indicated "other" as a response highlighted a number of further measures that they would like to be in place including regular staff testing, social distancing amongst older pupils whilst in school and extended assessments of the ventilation within classrooms.

Many highlighted that there was insufficient support being offered to staff who had a member of their household who had been shielding prior to the 1st August. There were also numerous comments from members who did not think there were enough provisions in place, or guidance available to support ASN pupils safely.
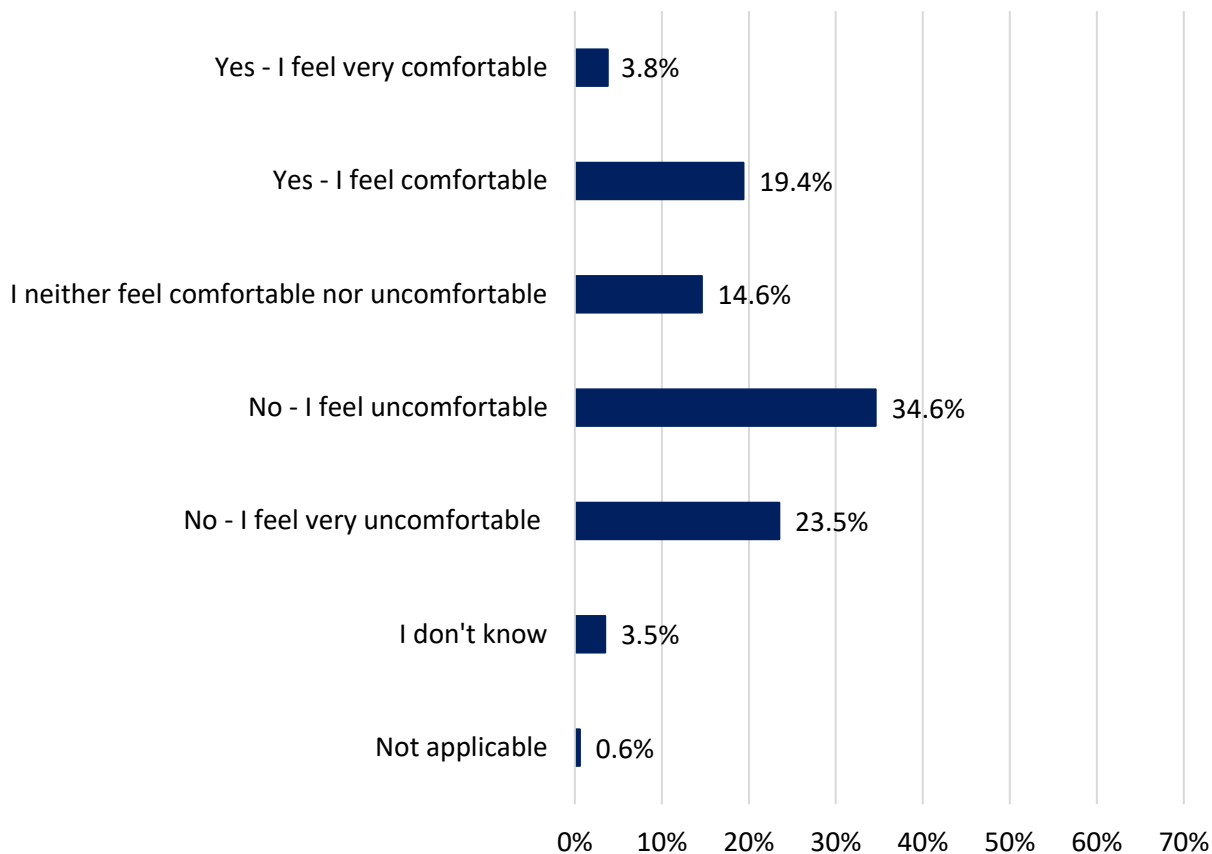
Figures 11 and 12 show the responses to whether they support the decision to return to school on 11th August, and how comfortable they feel teaching whilst pupils don't have to socially distance in the classroom. From these responses it shows that many teachers do support the return to school, but the relaxing of social distancing for pupils remains a key concern.

Figure 11: Question 11 – "The Scottish Government has decided that given the current suppression of the virus in Scotland and the importance of school to children's well-being, that schools should fully reopen from August 11th. On balance, what is your view of this?" responses

Total responses: 28,553

Figure 12: Question 12 – "The scientific evidence and advice given to the Scottish Government on transmission of the virus amongst school age children has led to the decision that no physical distancing amongst pupils is required. Do you feel comfortable teaching without social distancing between pupils?" responses

Total responses: 28,462

When asked who they thought should be required to socially distance in schools, there was considerable variation across the educational levels as detailed in figure 13.

Figure 13: Question 13 – "Who do you think should be required to socially distance whilst at school?

(The current guidance states: "2m physical distancing should be maintained between adults and adults, and adults and children/young people who are not from the same household, wherever possible.")"
responses

	All pupils and staff (apart from those with exemptions)	All Staff, but not pupils (this is the current guidance)	All Staff, and encouraged with pupils in classrooms	I don't think there should be any social distancing in schools	I don't know/not applicable
In Primary Schools....	27.2%	24.0%	32.6%	4.8%	114%
In Secondary Schools (S1 -S3)...	46.0%	11.7%	26.2%	2.4%	13.7%
In Secondary Schools (S4 - S6)...	61.1%	5.7%	17.2%	2.2%	13.8%
In Special Schools...	25.0%	13.2%	17.5%	6.0%	38.3%

Total responses: 28,354

Further to this, members were then asked to say how confident they were that certain aspects of the Scottish Government Guidance would be maintained upon their return to school. Figure 14 details member responses.

Figure 14: Question 14 – "Within the Scottish Government Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020 there are several key health and safety measures that must be in place to support the safe return to school. How confident are you that each of these measures can be implemented in your school?" responses

	I feel very confident that this can be maintained	I feel somewhat confident that this can be maintained	I feel neither confident nor unconfident about this	I feel somewhat unconfident that this can be maintained	I feel very unconfident that this can be maintained	I don't know/ not applicable
Schools are encouraged to maintain children and young people in consistent groups throughout the school day wherever possible.	4.6%	27.3%	9.5%	29.3%	28.0%	1.3%
2m physical distancing should be maintained between adults and adults, and adults and children/young people who are not from the same household, wherever possible.	1.0%	9.9%	6.6%	33.5%	48.4%	0.6%
As a precautionary approach, secondary schools should encourage distancing where possible between young people, particularly in the senior phase.	0.7%	7.6%	7.0%	25.6%	39.3%	19.8%
Measures to allow pupils and staff time to clean their hands with soap and warm, running water or sanitiser, when they arrive at school, return from breaks, change rooms and before and after eating.	10.5%	35.3%	9.8%	23.9%	19.7%	0.8%
Provision of adequate hand-washing or sanitising facilities throughout the school estate.	9.9%	34.9%	10.9%	23.7%	19.4%	1.2%
Arrangements to support young children and those with complex needs who may need assistance.	3.5%	19.0%	15.3%	25.1%	23.3%	13.8%
Keep windows/doors open to aid ventilation.	13.0%	34.6%	10.7%	21.0%	19.9%	0.8%
Risk assessments should be undertaken and/or updated prior to return. There should be consultation with all union/professional association representatives.	13.5%	36.8%	17.2%	16.8%	13.1%	2.6%
There should be risk assessments for vulnerable groups, e.g. older staff, disabled staff, pregnant women, new mothers, and BAME staff, as well as individual children and young people identified as at greater risk.	11.3%	35.0%	17.5%	18.2%	13.1%	4.8%

Total responses: 27,993

When asked who should wear face coverings in schools, members indicated that they had different expectations for each stage of education. Figure 15 shows their responses in more detail.

Figure 15: Question 15 – "The current guidance on the use of face coverings in schools states:

- "Face coverings should not be required for most children (other than those clinically advised to wear one)
- "Where adults cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more), face coverings should be worn
- "Anyone wishing to wear a face covering in school should be allowed to do so
- "Should the prevalence of the virus in the population start rising, nationally or in parts of Scotland, schools may wish to encourage the wearing of face coverings, especially among adults and older young people in secondary schools
- "The impact of wearing a face covering for learners with additional support needs including any level of hearing loss, or for learners who are acquiring English and rely on visual cues, should be carefully considered"
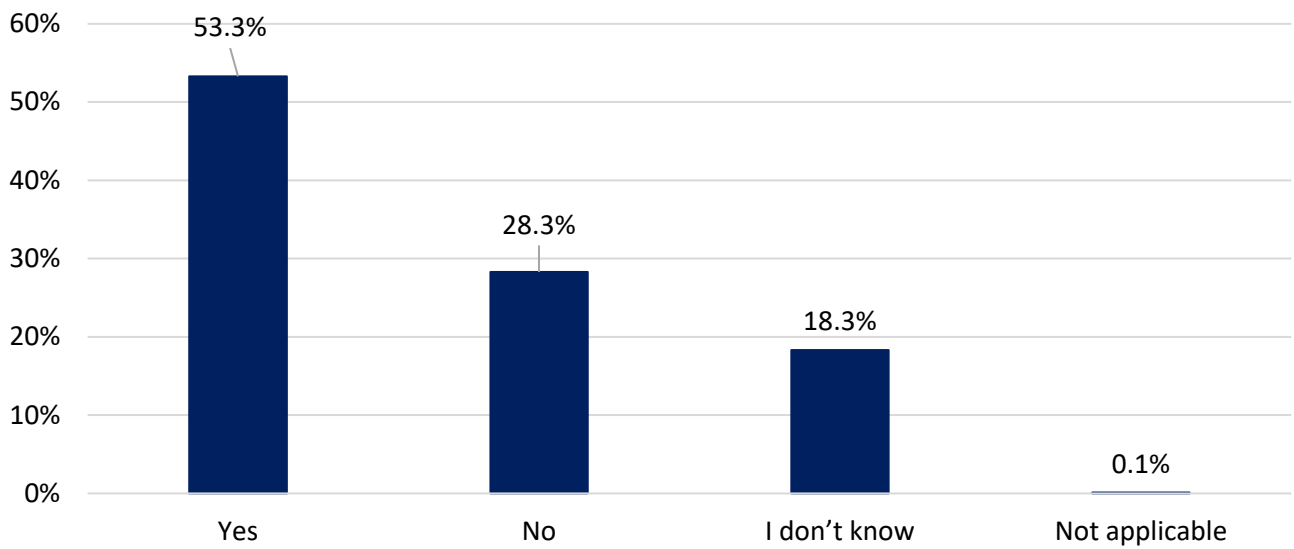
In addition to these guidelines where else do you think face coverings should be used by staff and pupils?"
responses

	It should be mandatory in classrooms	It should be encouraged in classrooms	It should neither be encouraged or discouraged in classrooms	It should be discouraged in classrooms	They should not be worn in classrooms	No need for further guidance	I don't know/ not applicable
In Primary Schools....	18.9%	27.2%	17.6%	2.4%	10.4%	7.5%	16.0%
In Secondary Schools (S1 -S3)...	31.5%	26.5%	11.3%	1.5%	5.1%	4.3%	19.8%
In Secondary Schools (S4 - S6)...	41.2%	22.0%	8.3%	1.1%	4.3%	3.5%	19.6%
In Special Schools...	12.1%	18.6%	11.4%	1.8%	8.5%	3.9%	43.7%

Total responses: 27,744

Members were then asked if face coverings should be mandatory for all staff working in schools (apart from those who are exempt). More than half of respondents said they should be, as shown in figure 16.
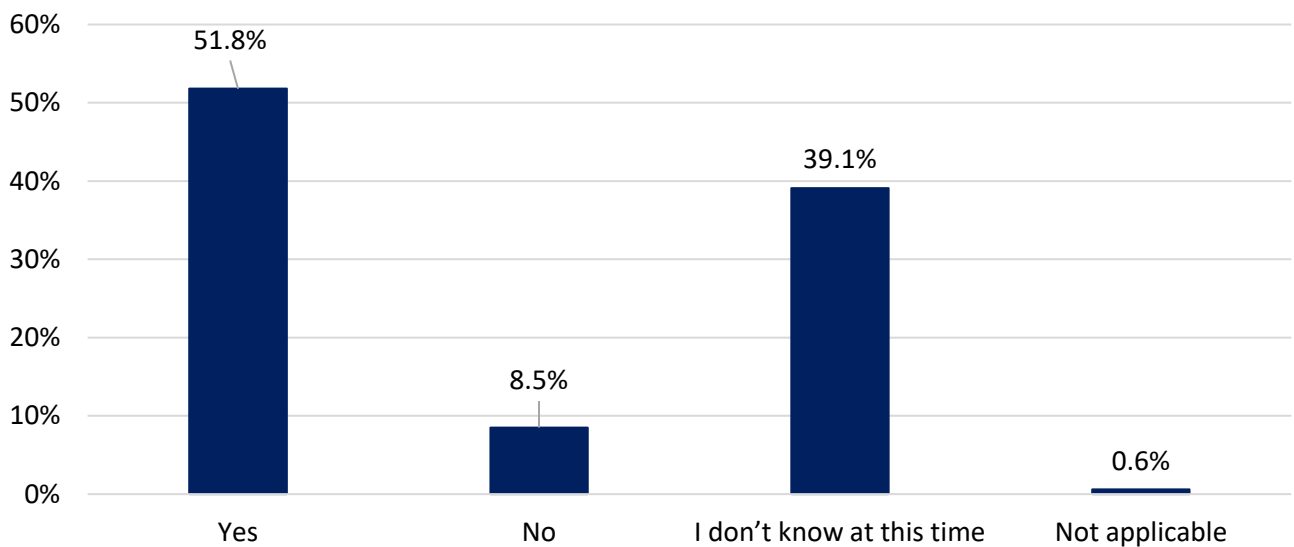
Figure 16: Question 16 – "Do you think face coverings should be mandatory for all staff working in schools? (apart from those exempt under Scottish Government guidance)" responses:

Total responses: 27,713

Finally, members were asked if they would support industrial action, up to and including strike action, if the EIS were to log a grievance over the implementation of guidelines at a local authority or school level. Figure 17 below shows member responses.

Figure 17: Question 17 – "In the event that a disagreement arises in a local authority or a school over the safe implementation of the Guidelines, the EIS would register a grievance and then potentially move to dispute. In such a scenario would you be willing to take industrial action, up to and including strike action, to resolve the matter?" responses

Total responses: 27,747

Finally, members were given the opportunity to leave additional comments on anything that they wanted to raise with the EIS. This comments section elicited over 9,000 further comments about their concerns over the Scottish Government guidance, the suppression of the virus in Scotland and their own personal circumstances that put them more at risk. Below is a small sample of member feedback.

- "I am currently feeling very uneasy about the return to school. Our authority isdiscussing arrangements with parents regarding return procedures prior to engaging with staff about the form school will take."
- "Children's dancing is not allowed to start back until September - and not as normal. Children's football has just been given permission to start back, but with many different restrictions about the number of players allowed on the pitch - this will continue for the foreseeable future. 22 children not allowed on a football pitch outside. However, in a few days, there will 34 people inside in 1 room. Unbelievable."
- "Thank you, I think everyone is desperate to get back but there is so little in the way of how this is achieved safely that it leaves a lot of unanswered questions/therefore concerns."
- "I hope that ALL local authorities take the necessary steps to ensure safety for all and that the union is swift to intervene when needed. Already I can see differences between authorities which is unacceptable in this current climate."
- "As a Home Economics teacher, I have received no information about how we will deliver a practical subject. During my career of 36 years, I have never had adequate ventilation, despite frequent request. With 10 ovens on it is extremely hot. I am very concerned about physical distancing whilst delivering our curriculum."
- "My main concern with returning to school is not the virus itself but the mental wellbeing of the many already vulnerable children and the knock-on effect that this will have on behaviour. Significant numbers of children (and adults in dealing with it) were struggling with behaviour before the virus and now it is going to be even worse. I am really concerned about supporting those children as well as all the other children who are anxious about returning."
- "Teachers are key workers so all should be tested before returning to work. The key worker who delivered my new washing machine said he gets tested weekly (and he is not working with large groups of children). I believe the school classes should be phased back into school not all return at once and if and when outbreaks occur we return to working from home."
- "I understand the importance of getting pupils back to school, however, I feel the Scottish Government have made the decision and then found the means to do so when it should be the other way around. I work in a school where we have difficulty enforcing basic rules such as going to/staying in class. I do not feel confident that pupils will respect social distancing from staff or wash/sanitise their hands/work stations when asked to do so."
- "I'm concerned over areas such as PE changing rooms where if an incident occurs, it's impossible to keep a 2m distance from pupils due to the size of the changing room. I'm also concerned about my daily contact with senior pupils who are young adults."
- "I am extremely concerned about the lack of time we have had to put appropriate measures in place. I fell that we are being sacrificed to make a political and economic point with little regard for our well-being - or the wellbeing of the children."
- "Everyone in secondary should be wearing face coverings. The stats show infections in young people are increasing because pubs etc are open. It is only a matter of time before schools are at risk with young people infected."

Further Information

For more information on any of the themes within this report please contact:

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