

Parents and Carers Voice Research 2023/24

Key Findings Briefing Paper

SDS Evaluation and Research Team

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Background

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency. As the provider of Scotland's Career Service, SDS supports customers to develop the skills and habits they need to make decisions about learning and work. SDS's strategic plan (2022-27) sets out our goal of ensuring that young people have improved participation in the labour market, smoother post-school transitions and are equipped with the skills they need, at every stage of their lives, to have rewarding careers¹. We know from our previous research with young people²³ that parents and carers are a key influencer on the decisions and choices young people make about their education and career.

It is therefore essential for SDS to fully understand the experiences of parents and carers when supporting their children in making decisions about their future careers. The findings of the research are used to inform our Parents Strategy and continuous improvement of Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services for parents and carers across Scotland.

Parents and Carers Voice 2023/24 Research

Parents and carers are a key influencer of young people's career and education choices. As such, SDS seeks feedback from this important group on SDS services, perceptions and attitudes towards work-based learning and other routes, and knowledge of careers and career conversations with their child through the research, which supports SDS to:

- inform the way SDS communicates with parents to advise them of service offers;
- develop resources/information to enable parents to support young people in their career choices;
- increase SDS understanding of parents' awareness and confidence in understanding the full range of post-school pathways and options open to young people.

¹ [Skills Development Scotland Strategic Plan 2022-27 – Skills for a Changing World, 2022](#)

² [Skills Development Scotland – Young People in Scotland Research 2022/23](#)

³ [Skills Development Scotland – Young People's Career Ambitions Research 2022](#)

Approach

An online questionnaire was designed in-house by the SDS Evaluation & Research and National CIAG teams. SDS Careers Advisers used their connections with secondary schools to encourage them to distribute the survey to parents by email, school social media and school apps. This was the most successful route to recruiting parents and carers to take part in the research. Other methods of distribution were also used, such as placing the survey link on SDS websites, the SDS Teacher's newsletter, sharing the survey link on SDS social media channels, by QR code and sending the survey link directly to parents and carers following SDS webinars. The fieldwork was carried out between 6th November 2023 and 31st May 2024, during which time 4,113 responses were received.

Areas covered

The research questions were developed by SDS in collaboration with a project steering and reference group. The research covered the following areas:

- Awareness and use of SDS services
- Satisfaction with SDS services used
- Awareness and perceptions of apprenticeships
- Confidence in having career conversations and perceived influence
- Preferred sources of information

About this report

This report summarises the key findings from the Parents and Carers Voice Research 2023/24. The term 'parents' may be used interchangeably with 'parents and carers' throughout this report to refer to all parents, carers and guardians who participated in the research. If you have any queries about this research, please contact SDS's Evaluation and Research Team at:-

Evaluation&research@sds.co.uk

Profile of parents and carers

Most respondents who took part in the survey were a 'parent' of a child. 1% of respondents were grandparents, 0.7% were carers, and 0.6% were guardians. Respondents were disproportionately female. The sample for ethnicity broadly matches the ethnicity profile of Scotland as a whole.

Figure 1: Profile of parents and carers

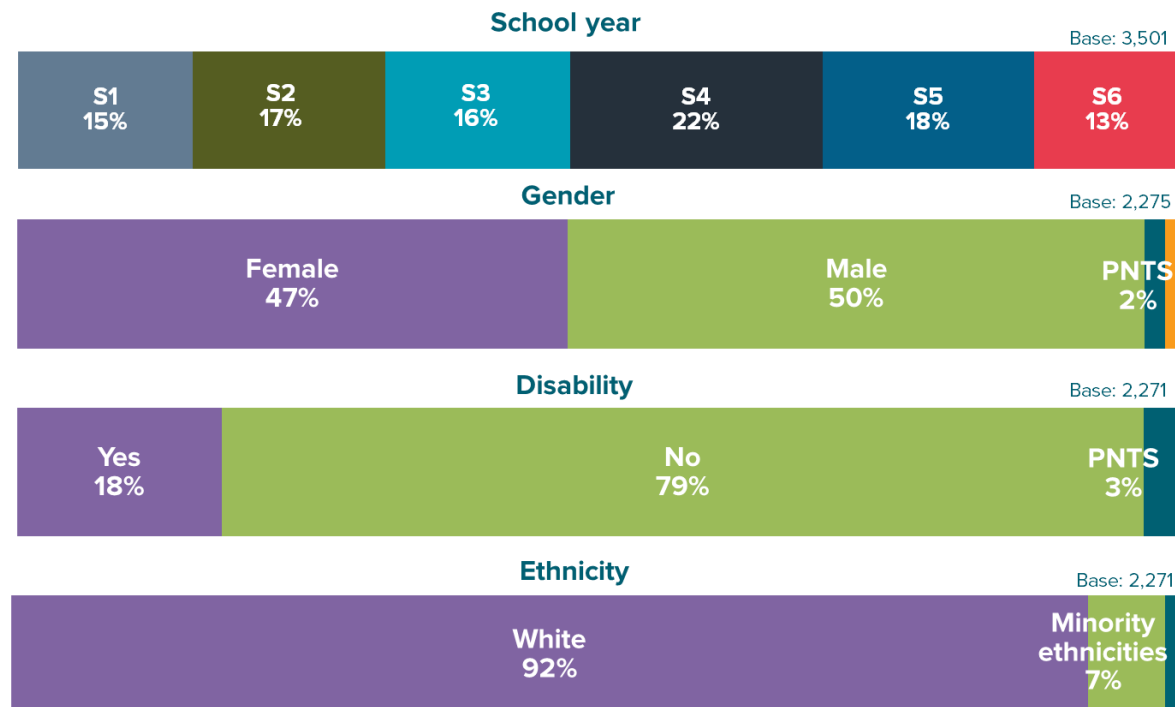


N.B. The demographic questions were optional and asked at the end of the survey resulting in smaller base numbers

Profile of child

The parents and carers survey covered pupils from S1 – S6. Male and female children were almost evenly distributed, with a slightly higher percentage of male children. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds and with a disability were also represented.

Figure 2: Profile of children

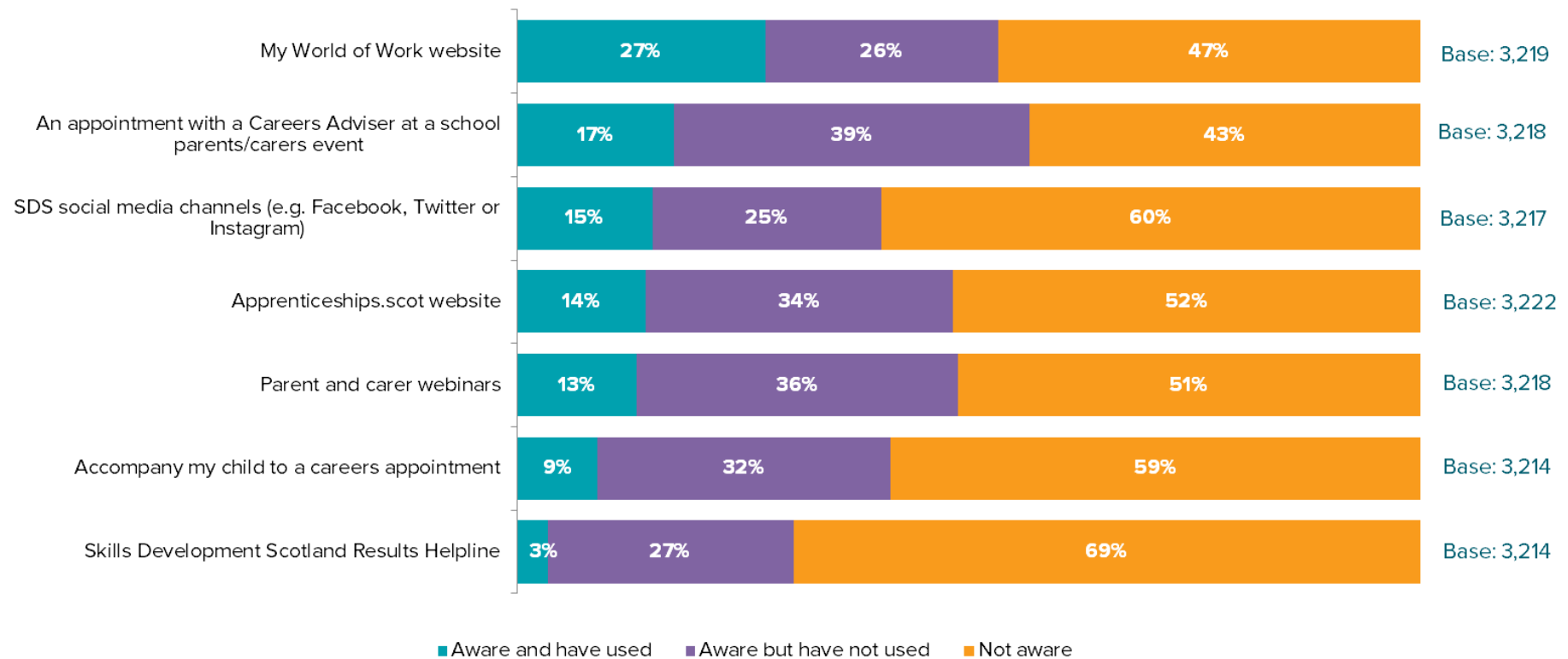


N.B. Parents and carers were asked to give feedback on their oldest secondary school age child

Awareness and use of SDS services

Parents and carers have varying levels of awareness of SDS services available to them. They are most aware of the My World of Work website and an appointment with a Careers Adviser at a school.

Figure 3: Awareness and use of SDS services



Awareness and use of SDS services are broadly similar to last year, with small decreases for the My World of Work website and the SDS Results Helpline.

Figure 4: Tracking of awareness of SDS services

| | 2022/23 % Aware | 2023/24 % Aware | Difference |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| An appointment with a Careers Adviser at a school parents/carers event | 59% | 57% | -2% |
| My World of Work website | 60% | 53% | -7% |
| Parent and carer webinars | 52% | 49% | -3% |
| Apprenticeships.scot website | 52% | 48% | -4% |
| Accompany my child to a careers appointment | 42% | 41% | -1% |
| SDS social media channels (e.g. Facebook, Twitter or Instagram) | 42% | 40% | -2% |
| Skills Development Scotland Results Helpline | 37% | 31% | -6% |

Satisfaction with SDS services used

Those parents and carers who use SDS services rate them highly.

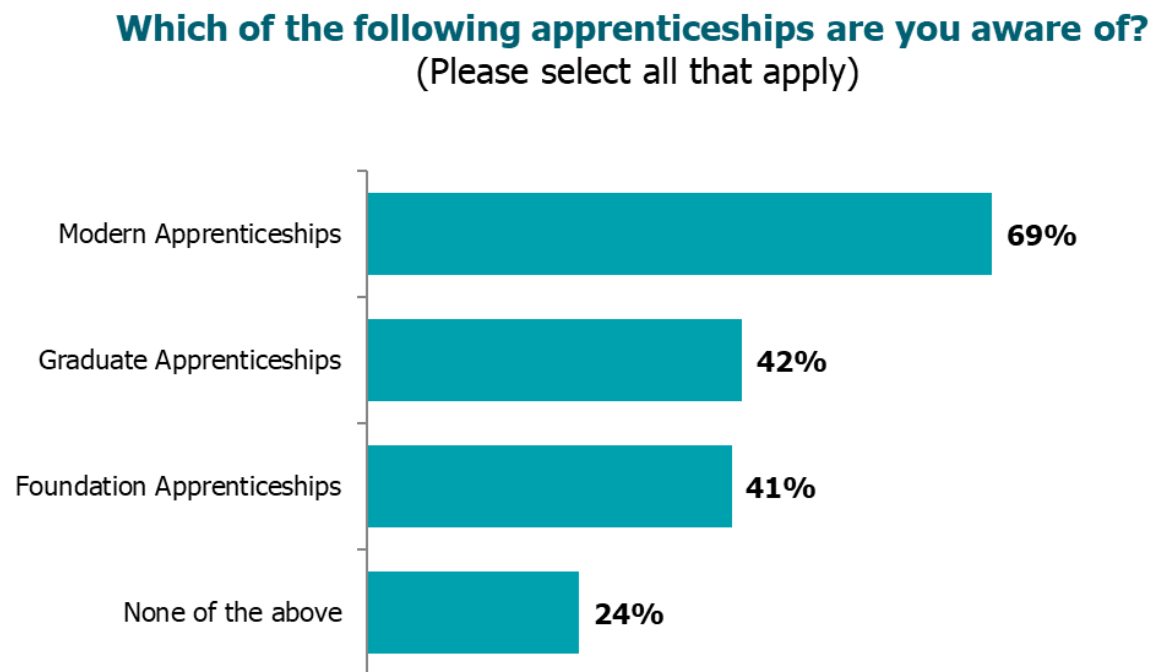
Figure 5: Satisfaction with SDS services used (mean point score on a 1-10 scale)



Awareness and perceptions of apprenticeships

Parents' and carers' awareness of apprenticeships is mixed. Modern Apprenticeships have the highest levels of awareness amongst parents, perhaps reflecting their longstanding nature, compared to the more recent introduction of Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships. Almost a quarter of parents have no awareness of any kind of apprenticeship.

Figure 6: Awareness of apprenticeships



2023/24 base: 2,816

Most parents and carers would encourage their child to undertake an apprenticeship, if it suited their child's plans. Parents perceive apprenticeships as a **work-based learning approach**, which **provide valuable skills and experience, whilst providing a good career pathway.**

Parents who would discourage their child from undertaking an apprenticeship do so because it does not accord with their child's future plans or because the **parent has a preference that their child enters higher education.**

Figure 7: Parental encouragement

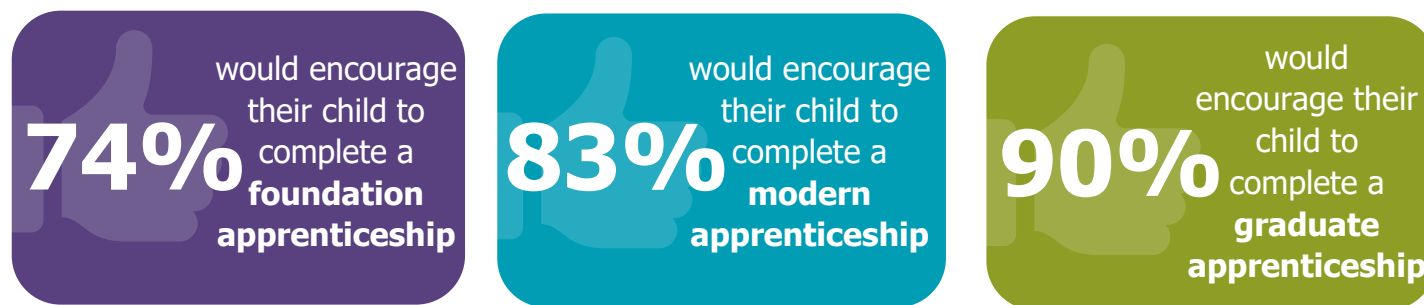


Figure 8: Reasons for encouragement/discouragement of apprenticeships



Why would you encourage your child to do an apprenticeship?

"Work-based learning gives hands on experience of the industry."

"Good introduction to real life and valuable skills learned."

"Good way into career."



Why would you discourage your child to do an apprenticeship?

"Child preference for more academic route and to have the university experience."

"Child is interested in a different career path. If this was something child wanted to do I would 100% encourage it."

"I would encourage my child to aim for Higher Education establishment e.g. University."

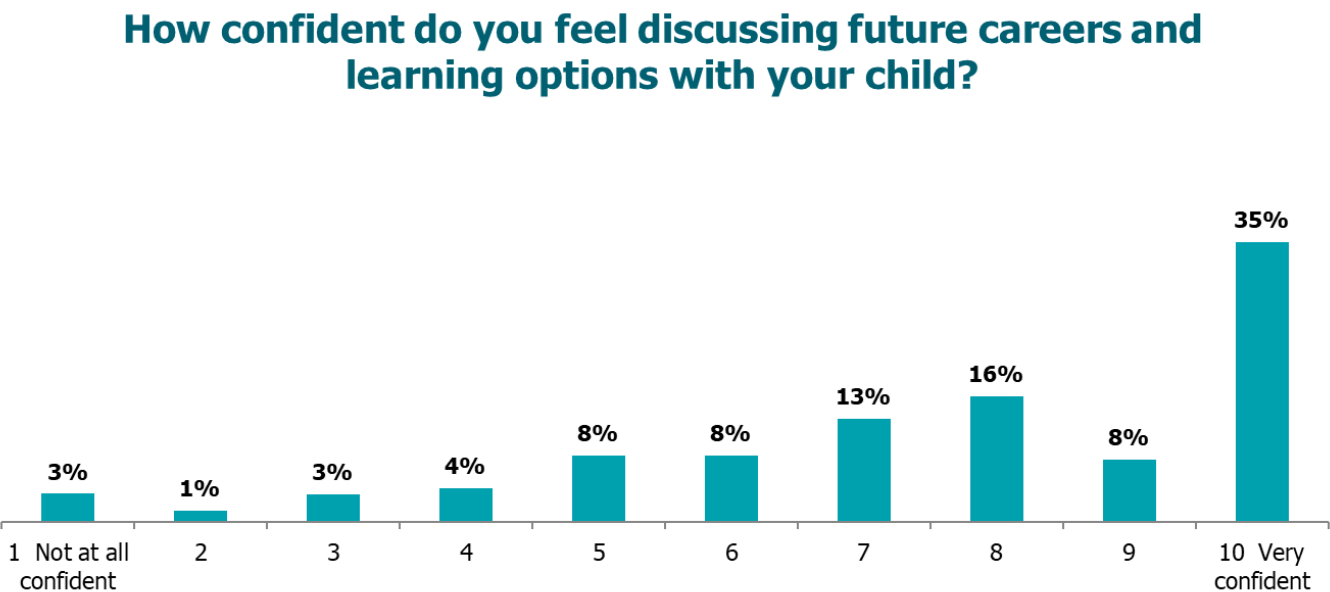
Confidence in career discussions

Almost three in every five parents are confident in discussing career and learning options with their child. For the rest, finding out about different learning routes and pathways, knowing where to find information and improving their knowledge of careers and learning options would improve their confidence.

Figure 9: Mean point score for confidence



Figure 10: Distribution of confidence scores

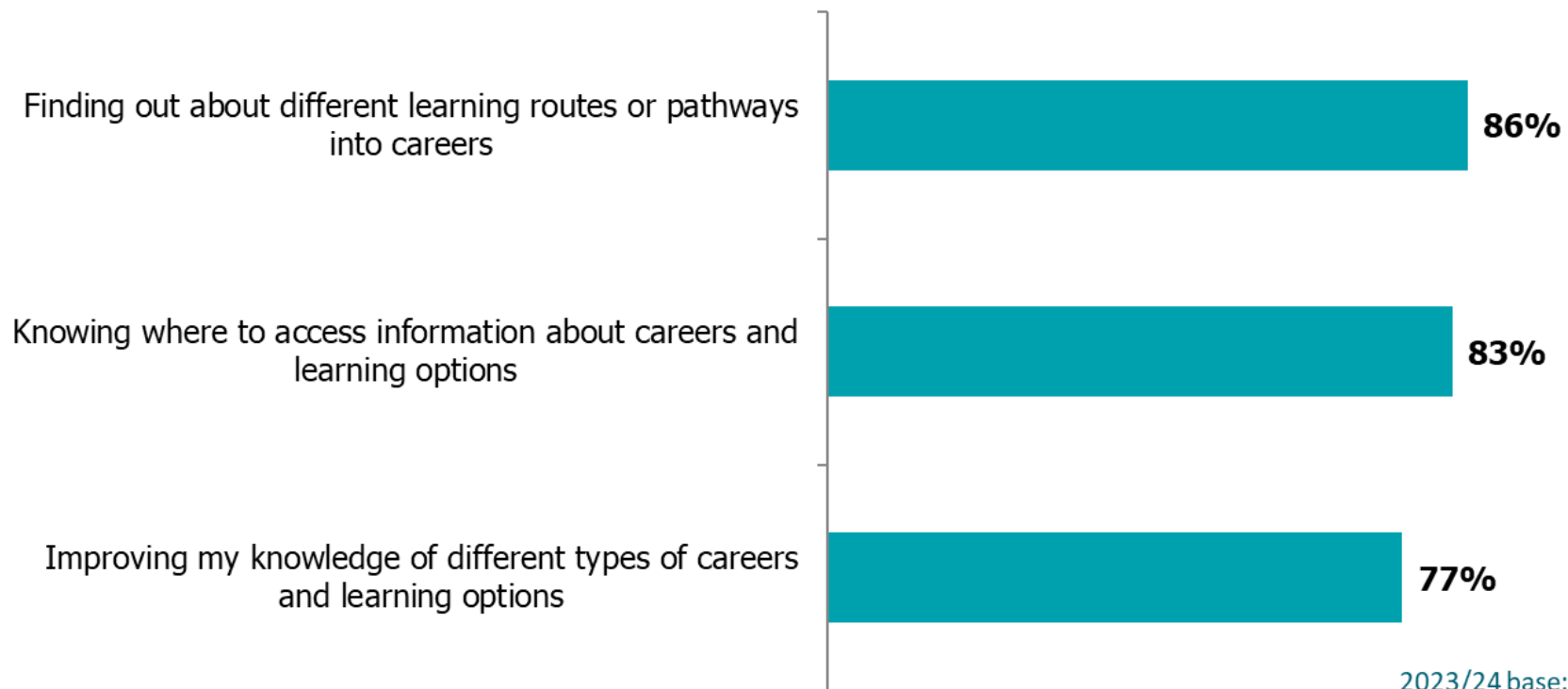


2023/24 base: 2,413

Figure 11: Improving confidence

What would make you feel more confident when discussing future careers and learning options with your child?

(Please select all that apply)



2023/24 base: 478

Influence

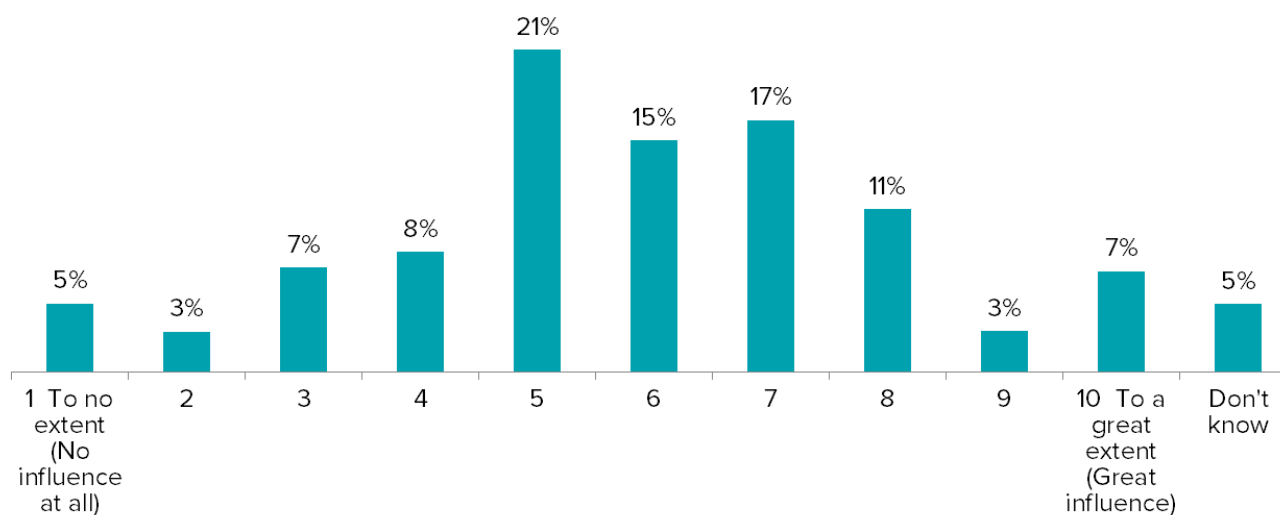
Many parents do not see themselves as a key influencer on their child's career plans. This is in direct opposition to previous SDS research with young people,^{4,5} where **who say that their parents are a key influencer on their career plans.**

Figure 12: Mean point score for influence



Figure 13: Distribution of influence scores

To what extent do you feel that you influence your child's choices about their career and learning options?



2023/24 base: 2,312

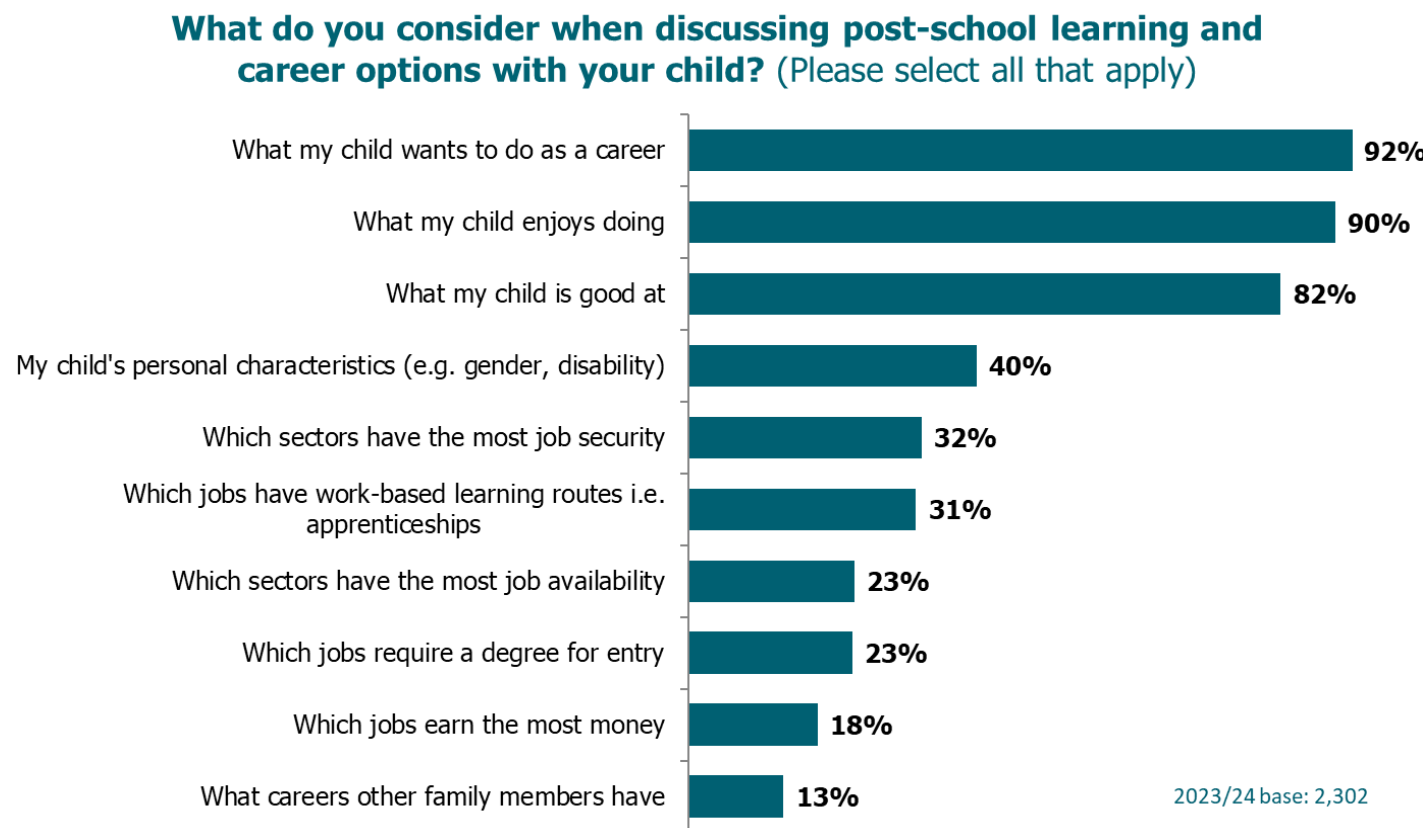
⁴ Young Peoples Career Ambitions Research: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2023/june/what-drives-young-people-s-career-ambitions/>

⁵ Young People in Scotland Research: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2023/september/what-influences-young-people-s-future-plans/>

Considerations during career discussions

Parents and carers are most likely to consider their child's **ambitions, interests and strengths** when discussing careers with their child. What the child wants to do as a career is the top answer.

Figure 14: Considerations during career discussions

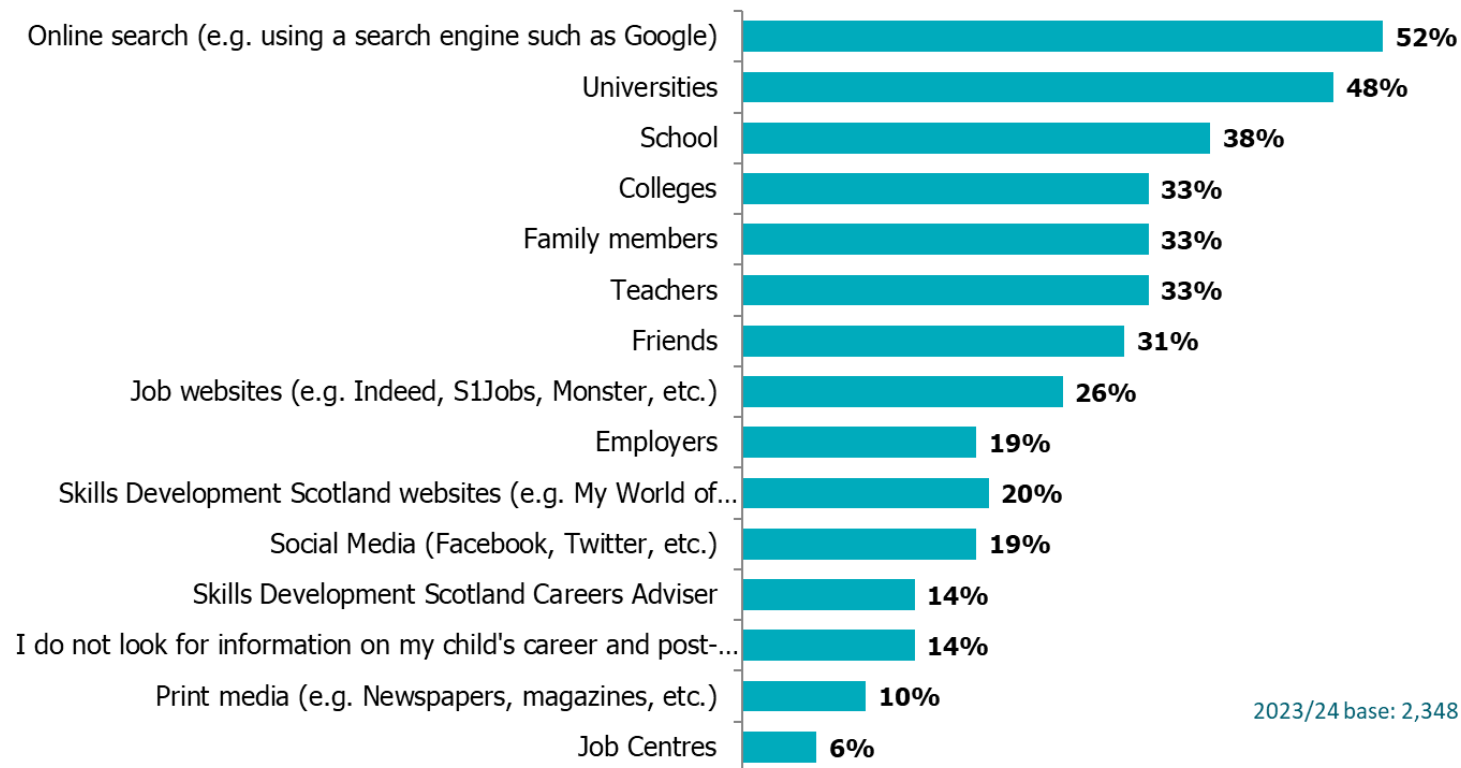


Sources of information on careers

Parents use a **wide variety of sources** when looking for information on their child's career and learning options. They are most likely to use **online searches and universities**. Many also use **colleges, teachers, family members and friends**. Parents are least likely to use job centres or print media as a source of information.

Figure 15: Sources of information on careers and learning options

Where do you look for information about your child's career and learning options for when they leave school? (Please select all that apply)



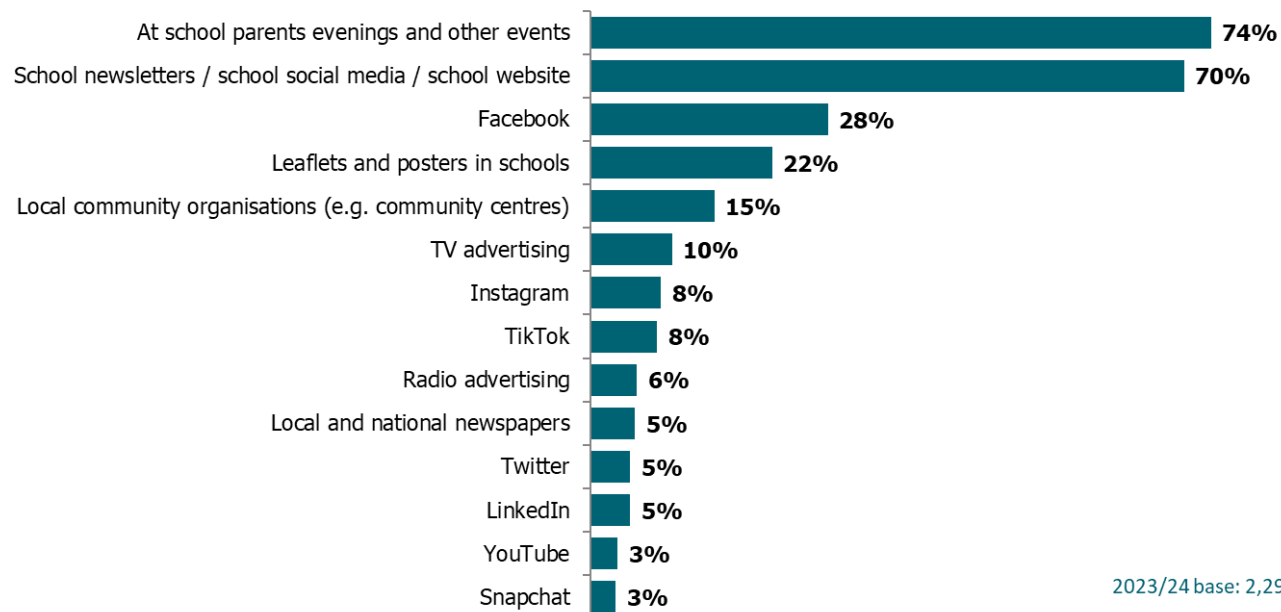
Preferred communication channels

Parents want to hear about SDS services primarily through schools – at parents’ evenings and events, school newsletters, school social media and school websites. Posters and leaflets in schools would also be welcomed. Parents would also like to **hear about SDS services through social media**, principally Facebook.

Figure 16: Preferred methods of communication for raising awareness of SDS services

What methods should SDS use to raise awareness of their services for parents?

(Please select up to 3 options)



2023/24 base: 2,290

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