

Difficult decisions in difficult times

Survey outcomes

COBIS Bursars, Business Managers
and HR Staff Conference

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Wednesday February 3rd, 2021



The survey and what we wanted to find out

A short survey was sent to delegates attending the conference

There were 5 sections:

- A. School profile:** size and age range
- B. Budgeting for 2021 – 2:** has the process been harder than usual?
- C. Staffing plan for 2021 – 2:** how difficult has this been to put together?
- D. Responding to the pandemic:** what has affected you and how?
- E. Decisions made in 2020 – 21:** did it get easier? What were the hardest & best decisions?

There were 35 responses – a small sample, but we think the replies reflect a fair range of action and decision making during 2020.

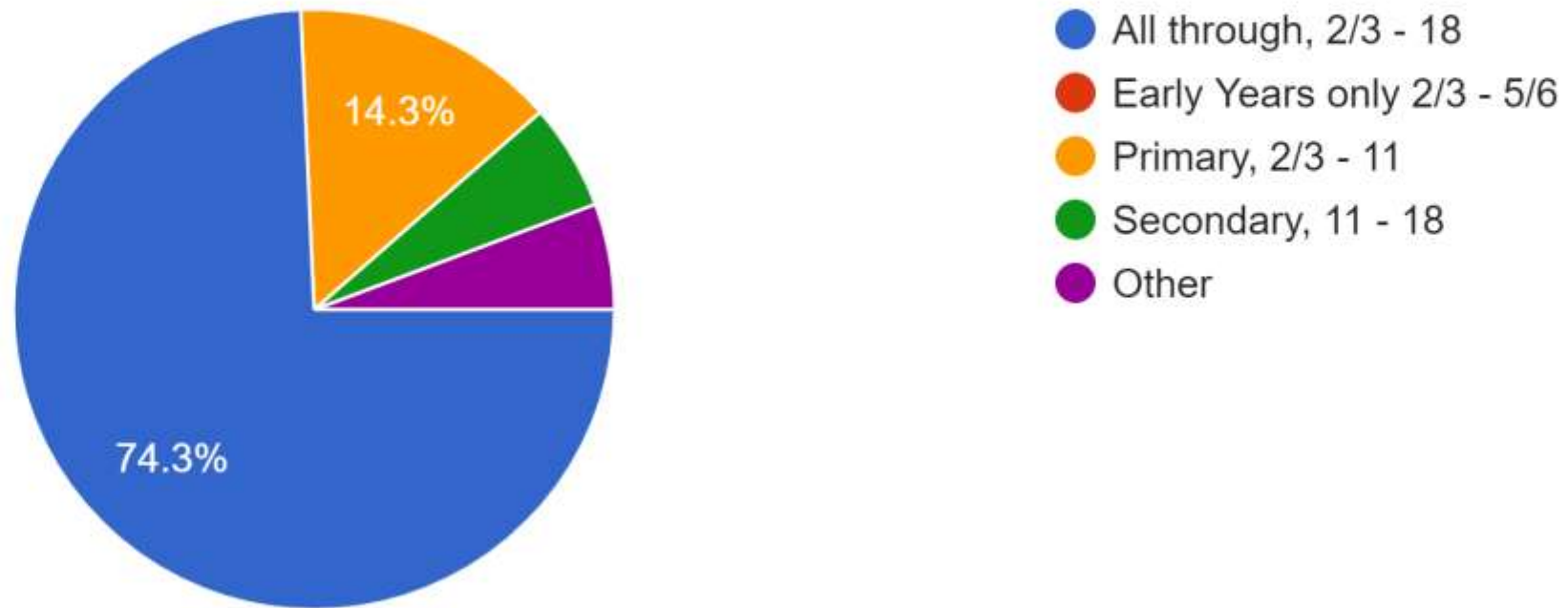
Section A

SCHOOL PROFILE

School age range

A1. What is the age range of your school?

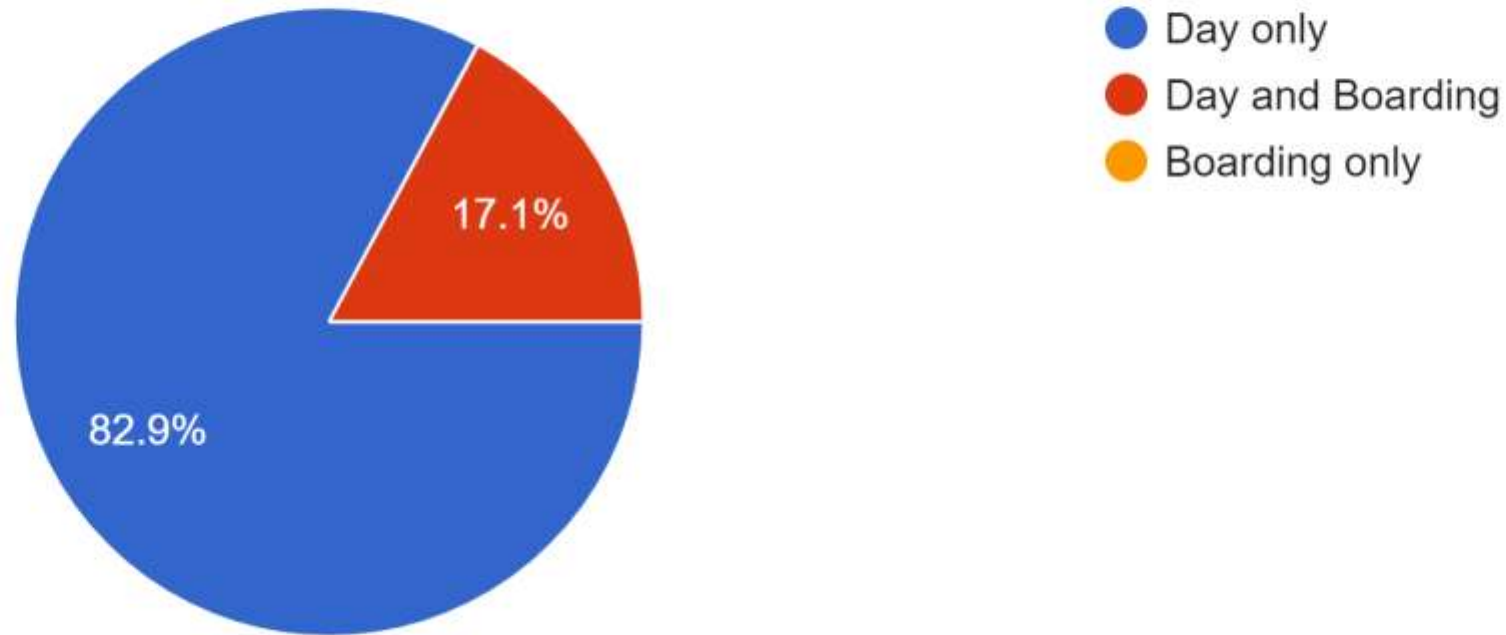
35 responses



Day, boarding or day & boarding?

A2. Day or boarding?

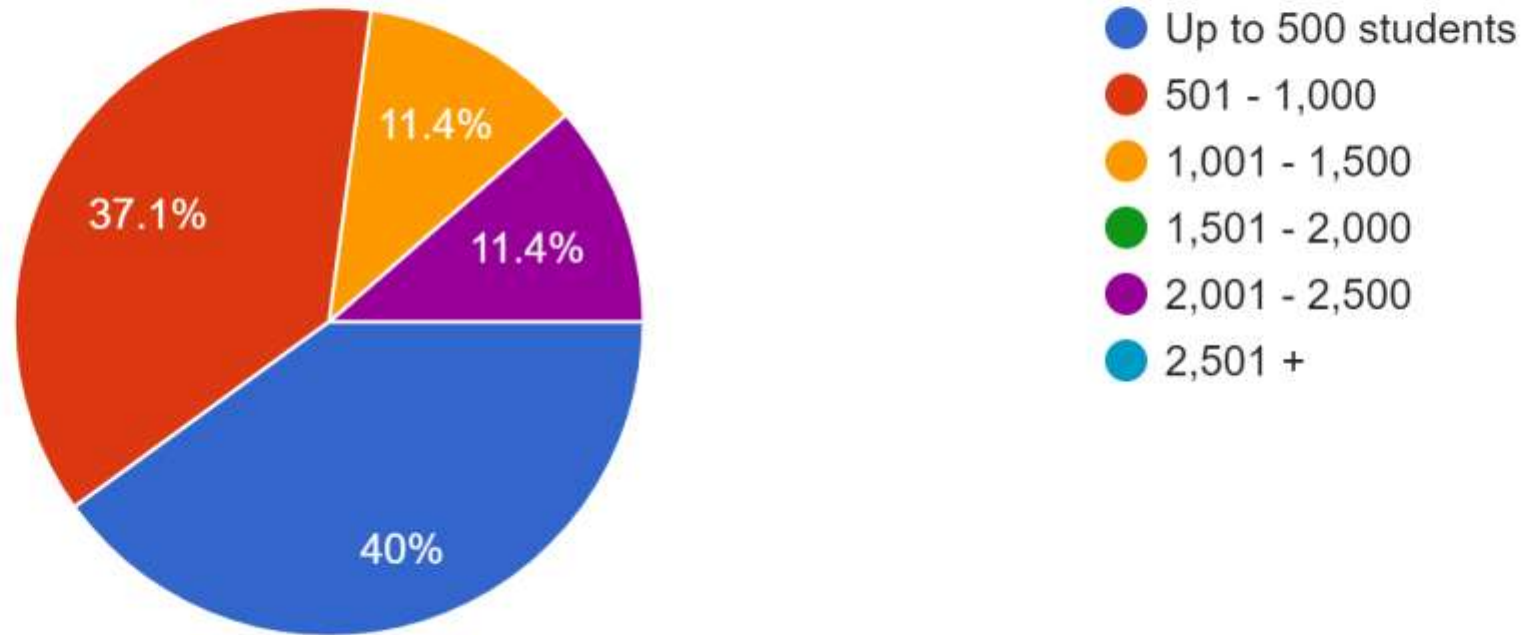
35 responses



Size of the school

A3. School size

35 responses



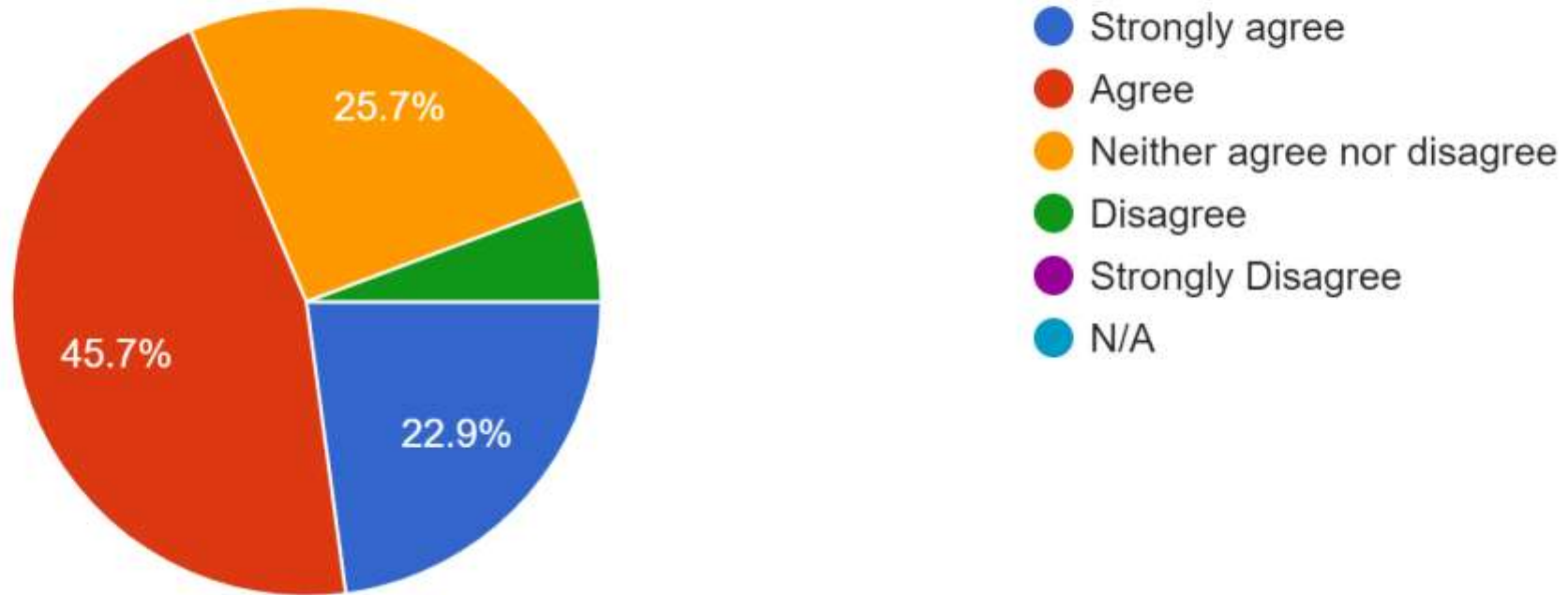
Section B

BUDGETING FOR 2021 - 22

Effect of the pandemic on school finances

B1. The pandemic has had a negative effect on school finances

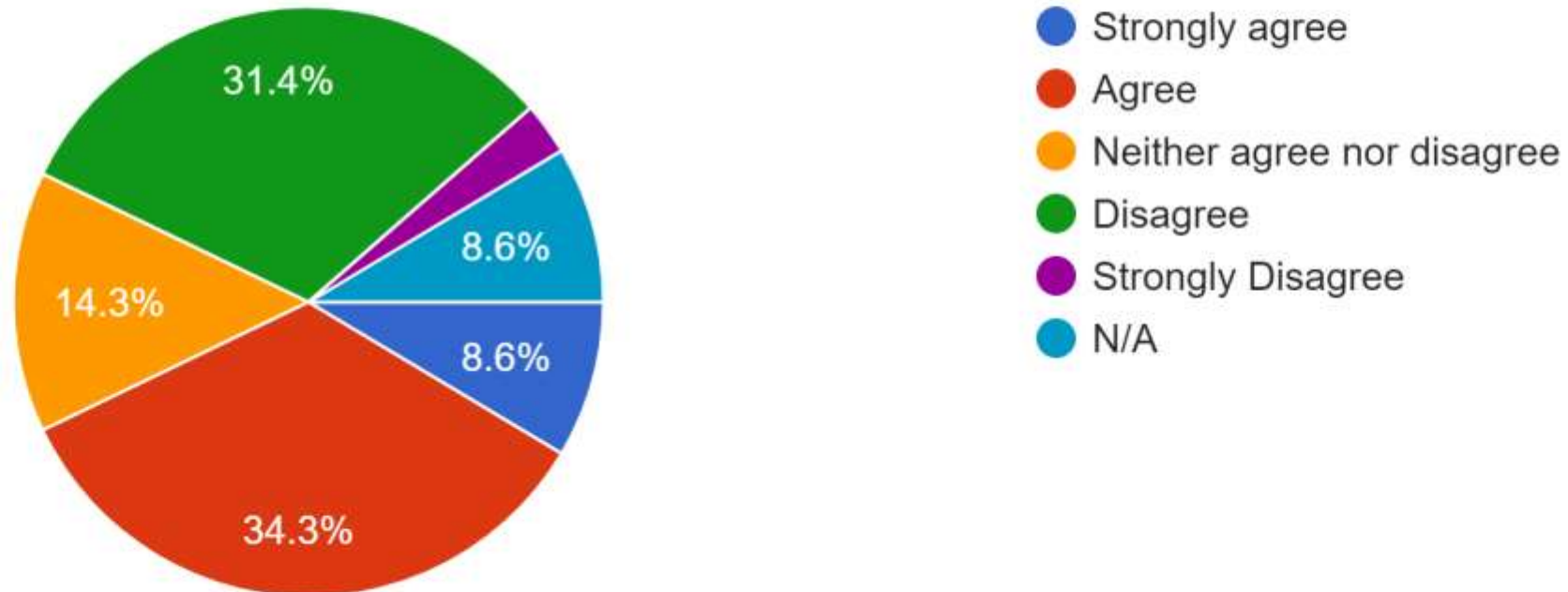
35 responses



Existence and use of reserve fund

B2. We have been able to call on a reserve fund in 2020 -21 to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

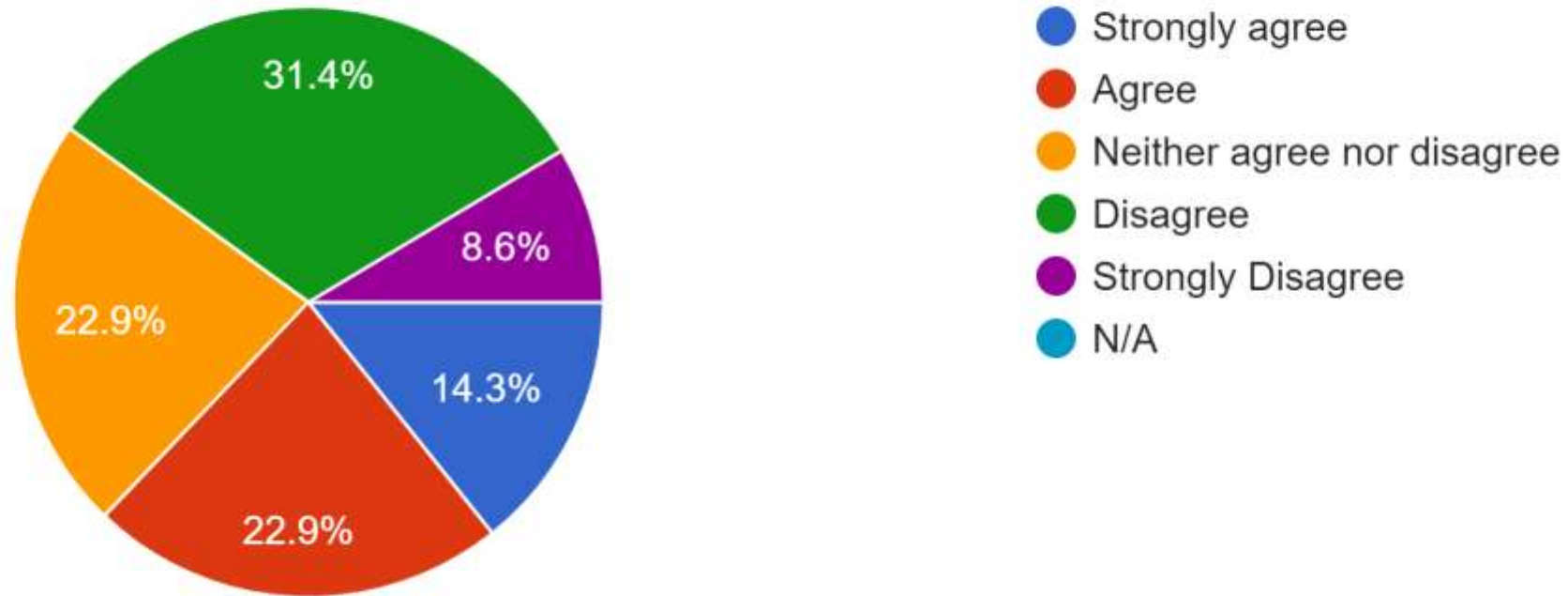
35 responses



Enrolment predictions for 2021 – 22

B3. We are expecting enrolment to fall in 2021 -22

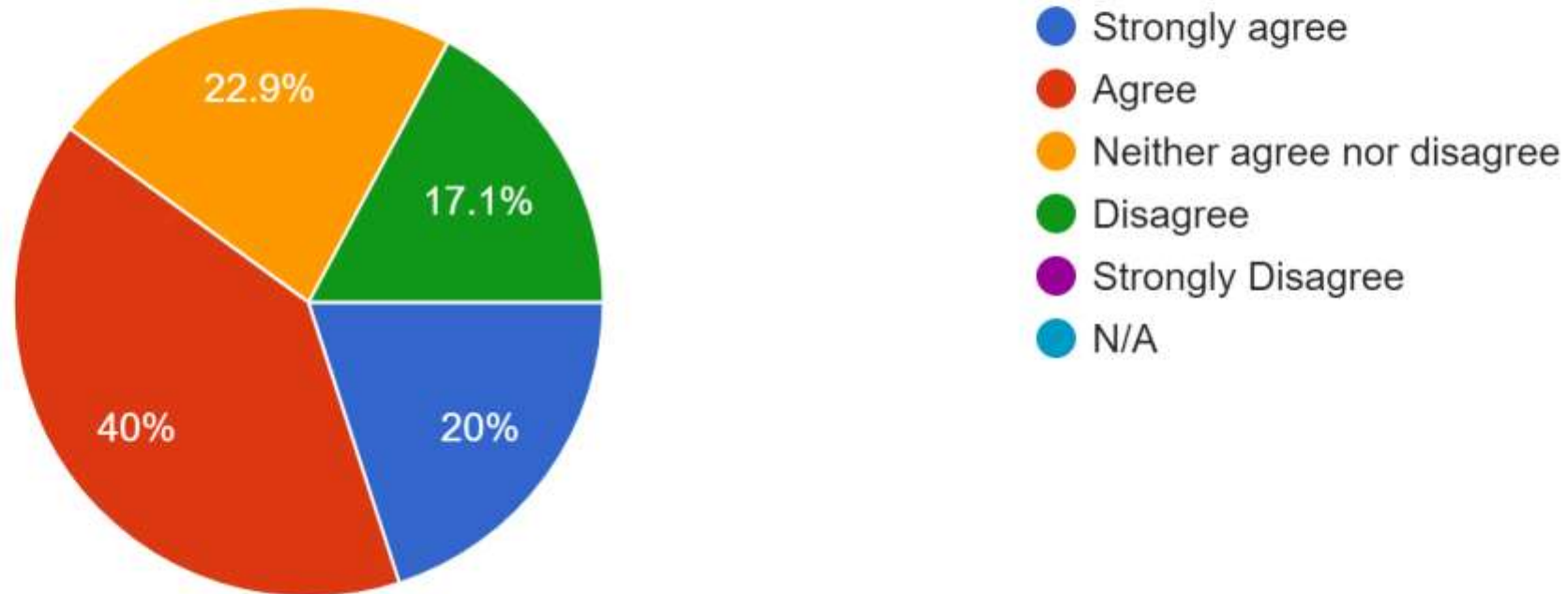
35 responses



Budgeting for 2021 - 22

B4. Setting our budgets for 2021 -22 is proving to be more difficult than usual.

35 responses



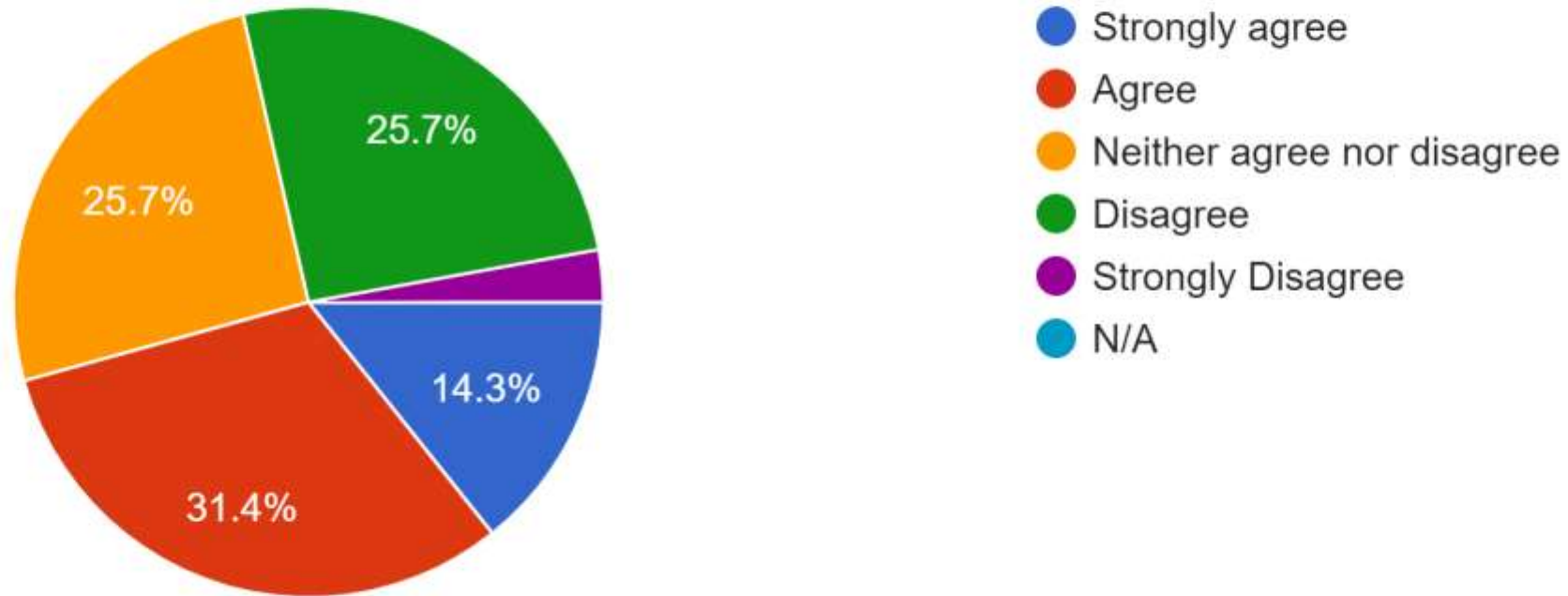
Section C

STAFFING PLAN 2021 - 2022

Staffing calculations for 2021 - 22

C1. Staffing calculations for next year are proving more difficult than usual.

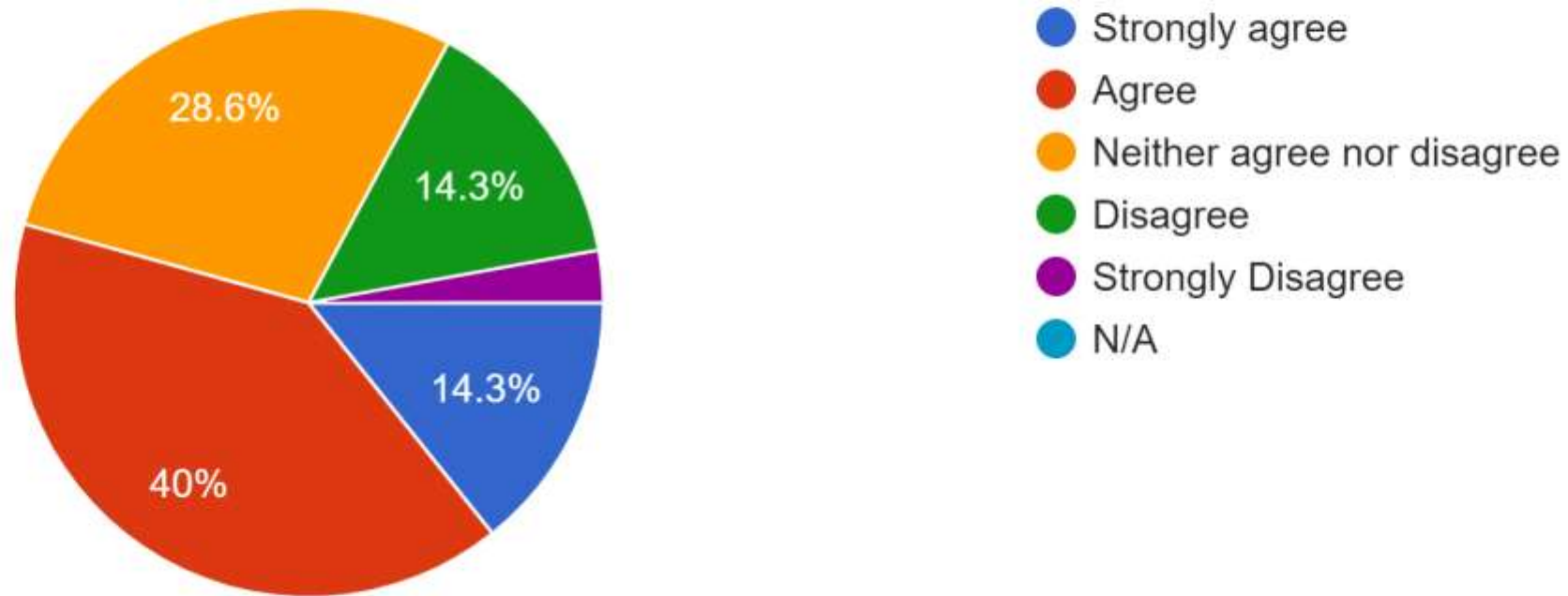
35 responses



Staff recruitment for 2021 - 22

C2. Staff recruitment for 2021 - 22 is going to be more challenging than usual.

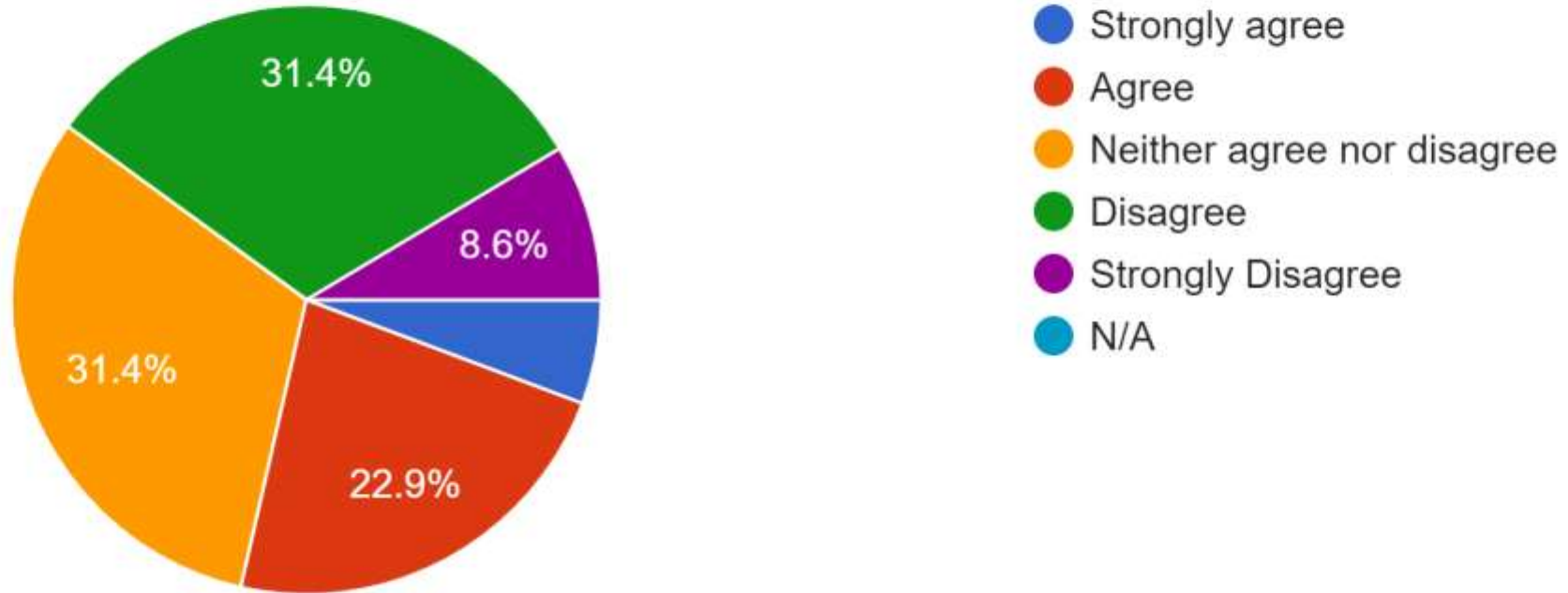
35 responses



Staffing cuts for 2021 – 22?

C3. Staffing cuts are inevitable for 2021 - 22

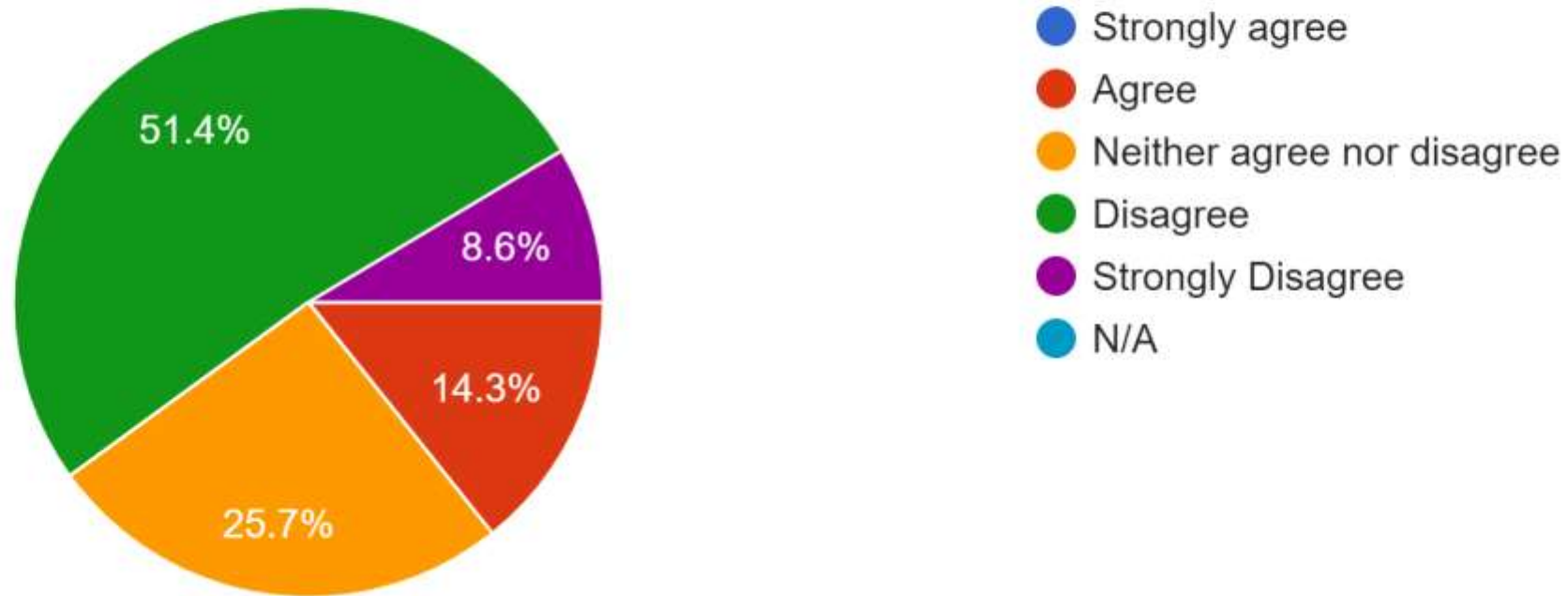
35 responses



Replacing overseas with local staff

C4, We will be replacing overseas hired staff with locally hired staff in 2021 - 22

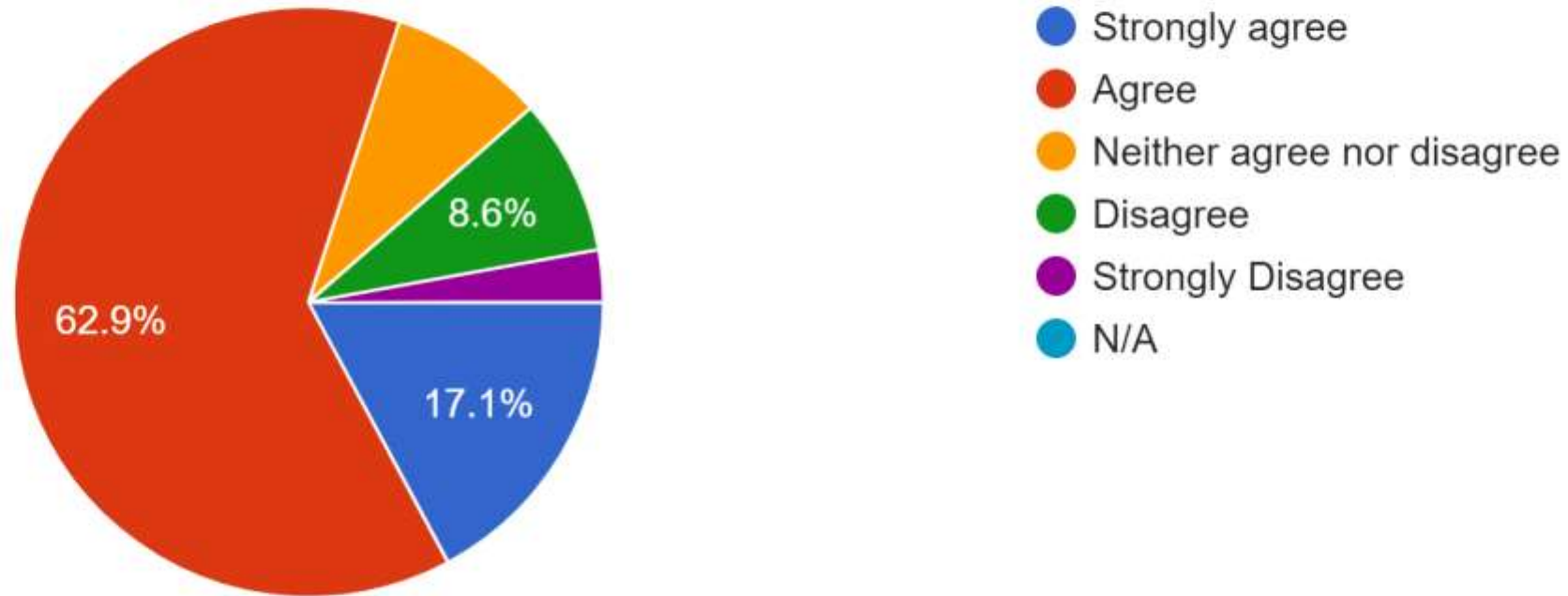
35 responses



Avoiding involuntary redundancies

C5. We have been able to plan our staffing for 2021 - 22 without involuntary redundancies.

35 responses



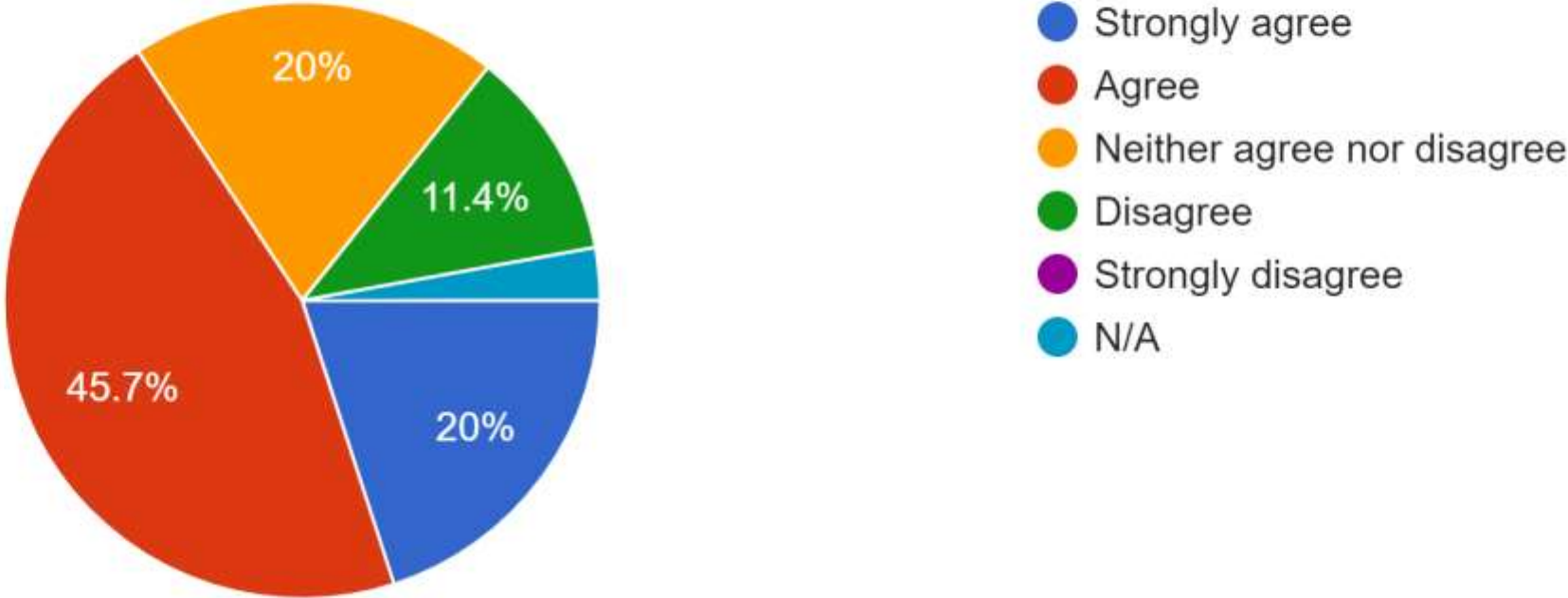
Section D

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Staff burnout

D1. We are worried about staff burnout as a result of online teaching

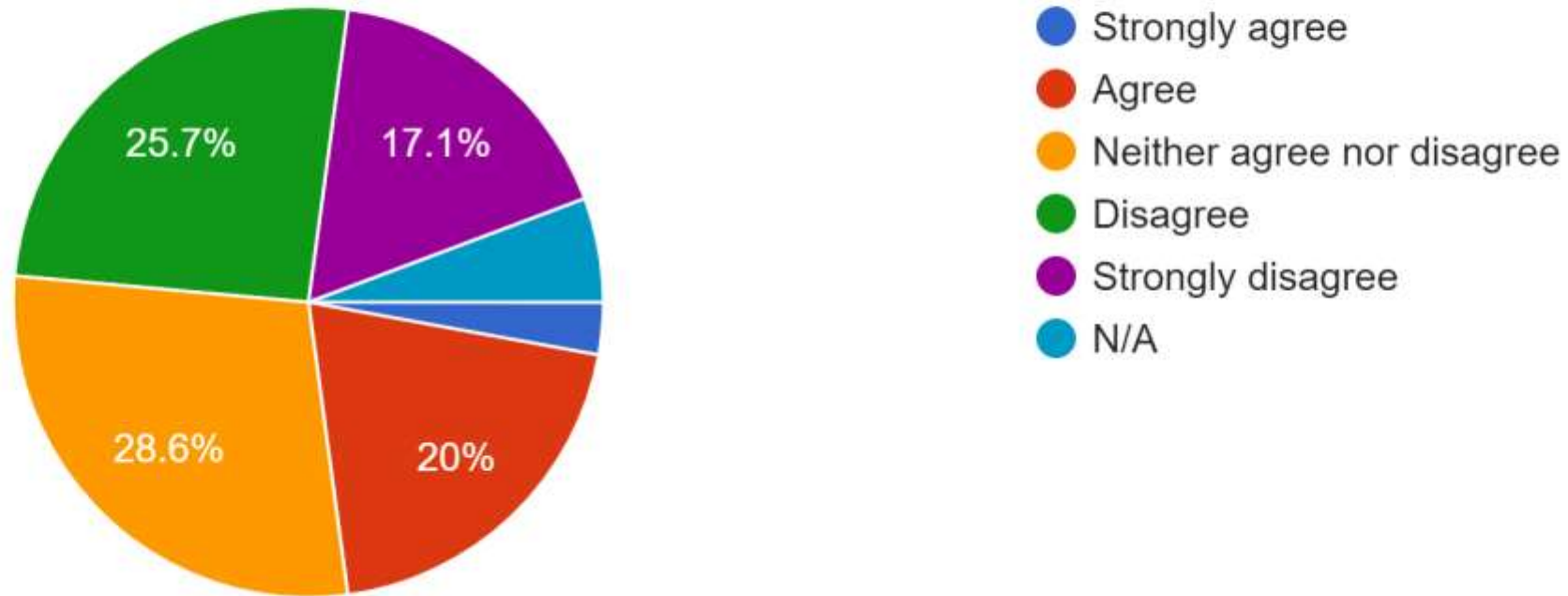
35 responses



'Stranded' staff

D2. Staff 'stranded' overseas have caused problems for our teaching programme in 2020 - 21.

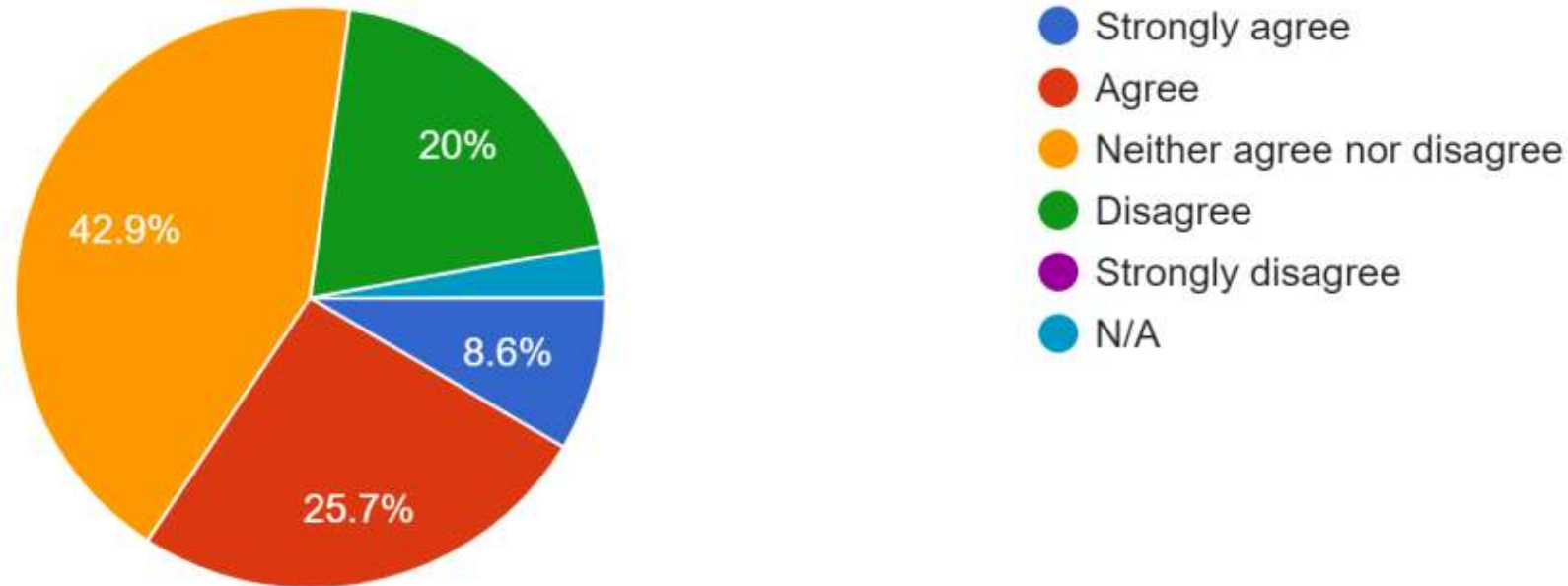
35 responses



The effect of government rules and guidelines

D3. Changing government rules or guidelines to deal with the pandemic have caused us major problems.

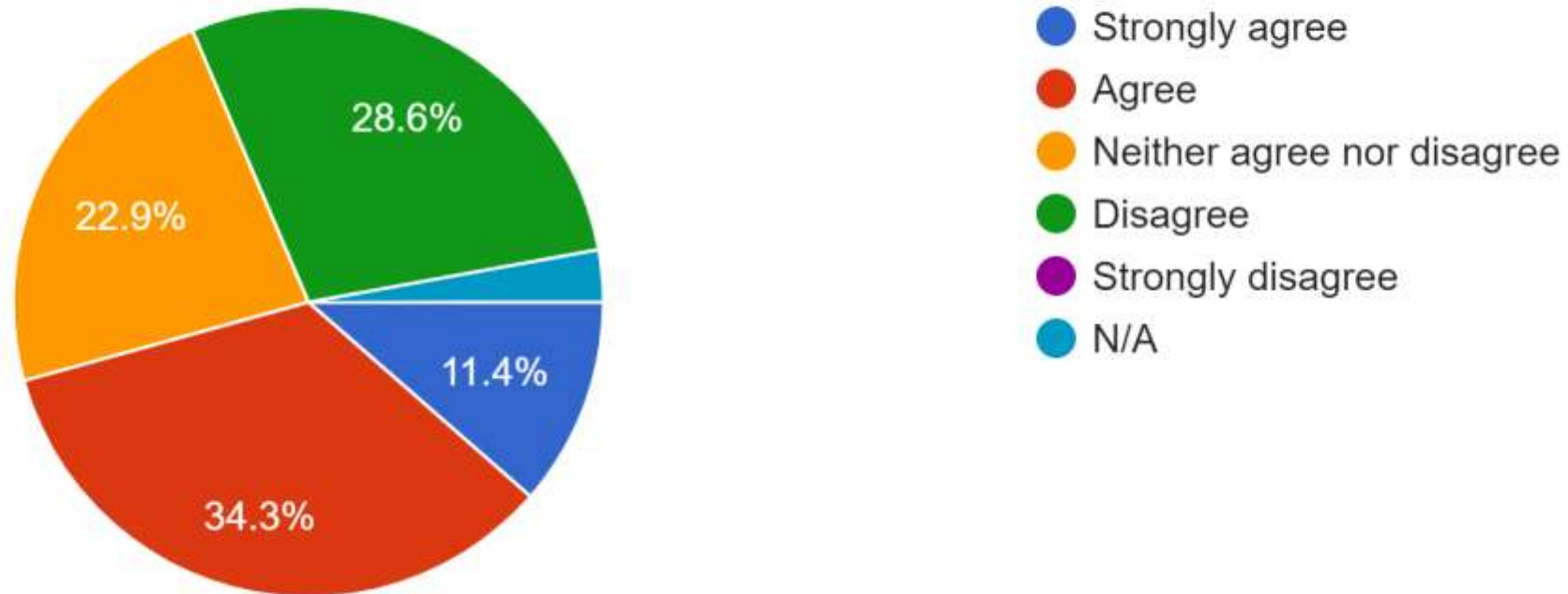
35 responses



Interacting with parents

D4. Interacting with parents has been more difficult in 2020 - 21 than usual.

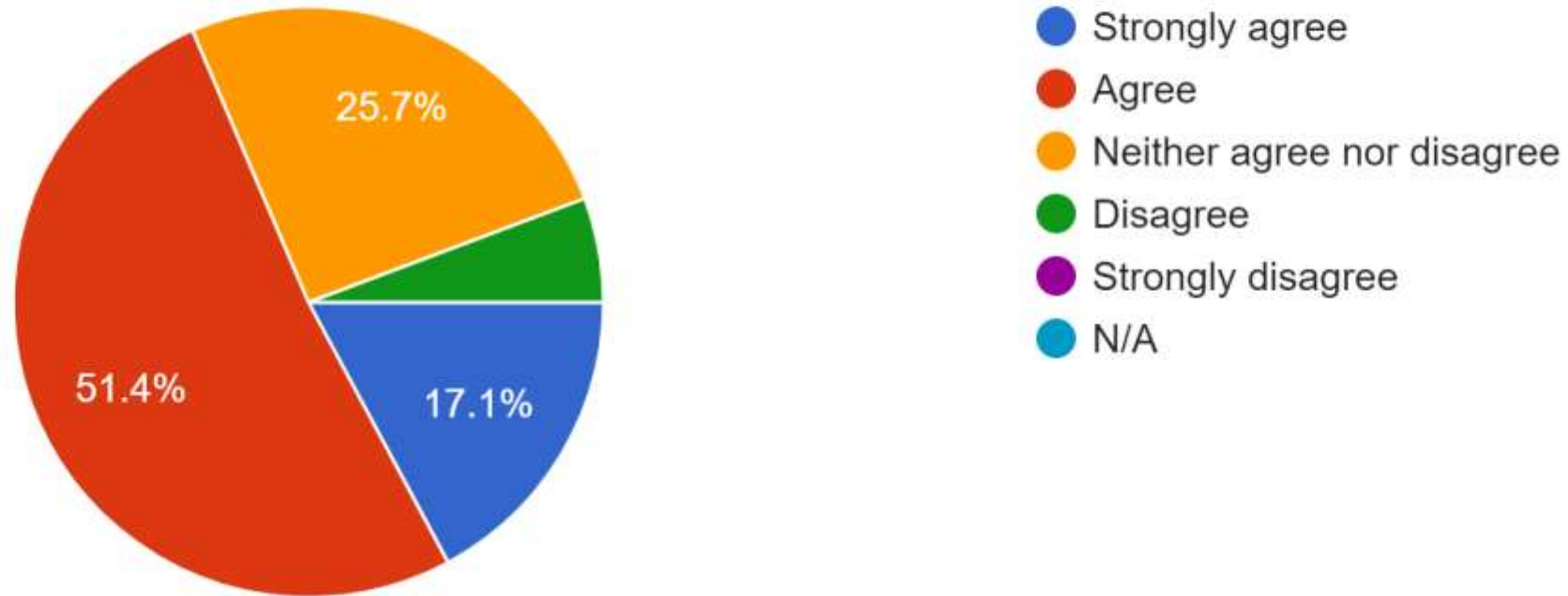
35 responses



Confidence for 2020 - 21

D5, We are confident that 2021 - 22 is going to be a better year for us than 2020 - 21.

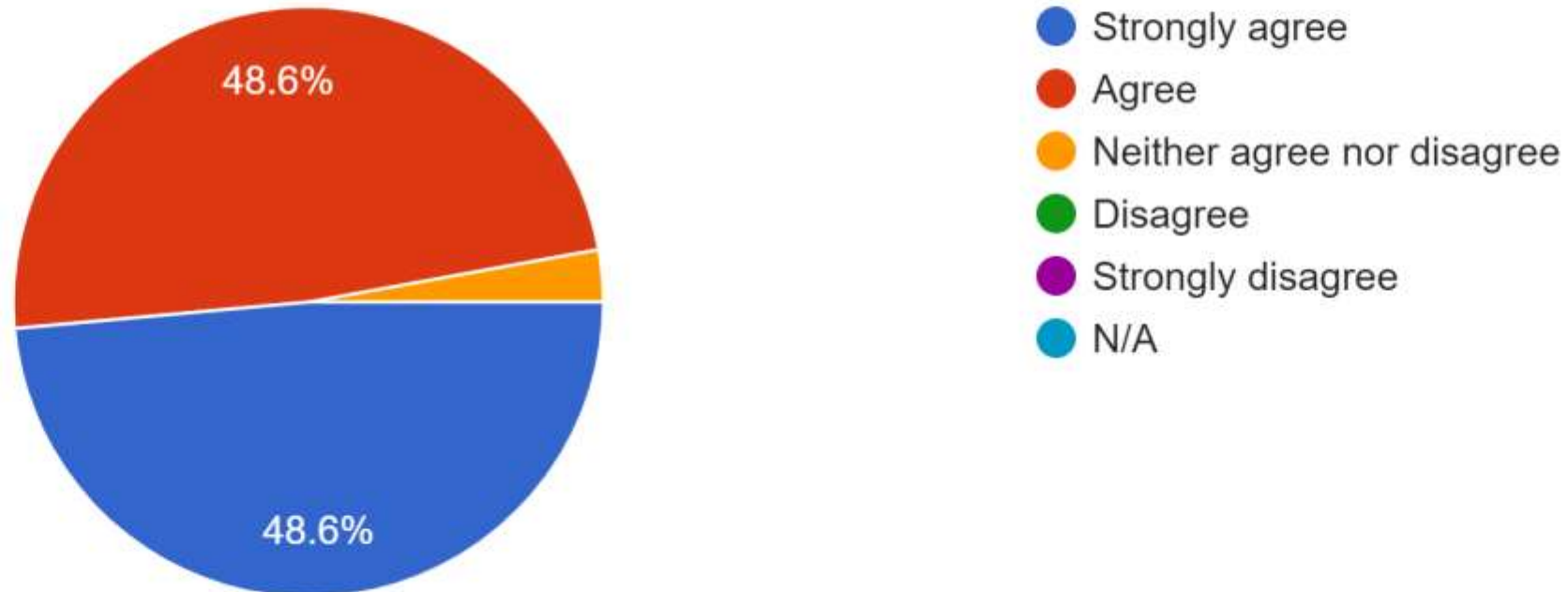
35 responses



Remaining true to the school's ethos

D6. We are confident that we can adapt to changing circumstances while remaining true to the school's ethos and mission.

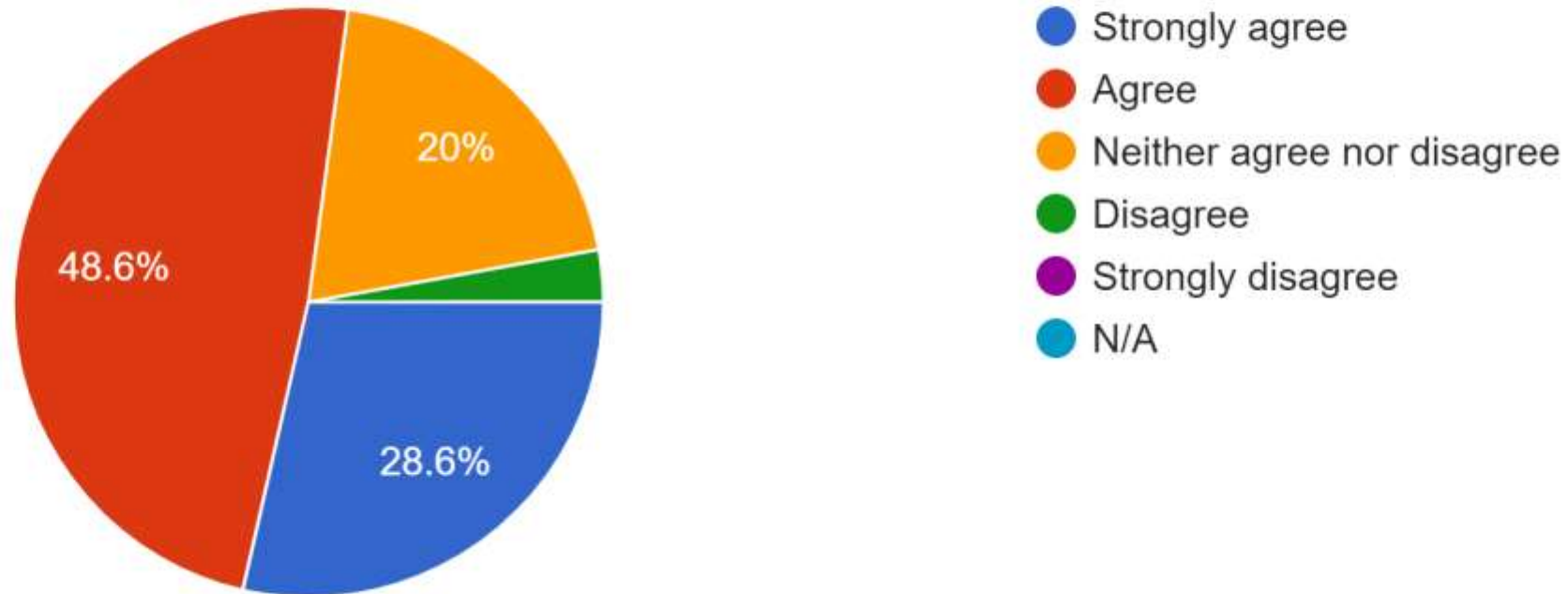
35 responses



Light at the end of the tunnel?

D7. Overall, we see light at the end of the tunnel.

35 responses



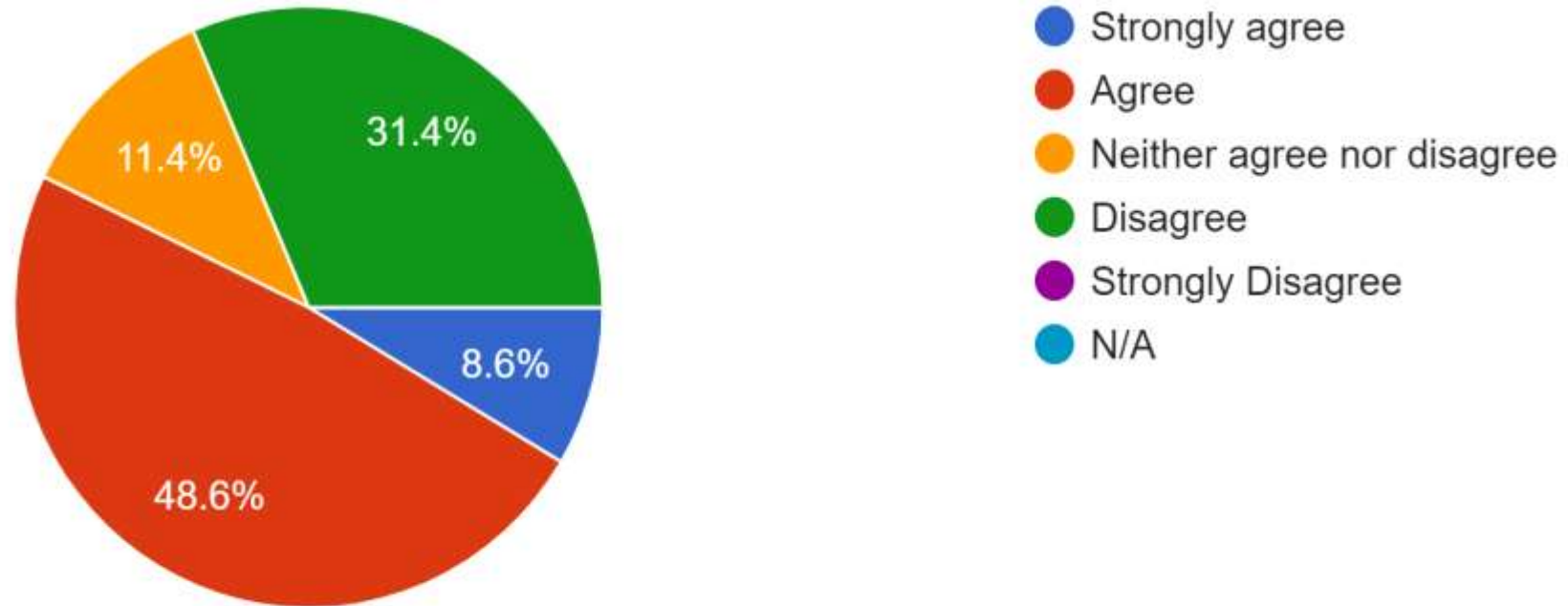
Section E

DECISION MAKING IN 2020

Did decision-making become easier?

E1. Decision making became easier as the year went by.

35 responses



Most difficult decisions – Finance and HR

- Whether to put certain staff on furlough in order to save money
- Allowing new hires to commence work whilst still overseas
- Having to make the decision of whether we should to cut on salaries or not / let go of staff or not and the impact these decisions would have on the school
- Asking the staff to give up their holidays (which caused some financial loss due to the extra payment) to provide extra lessons for the students to catch up more with the school program.
- Cutting staff salaries by 20% the week before 20-21 Term 1 began, in response to a 30% loss of students the week prior to that
- Staff renewal of contracts
- Having special budget for addressing pandemic issues and having had to cut staff salary to remain afloat especially between April and August 2020

Most difficult decisions – community

- How to manage parents on campus
- To part with some families whose children have been with us for a few years due to financial difficulties caused by the pandemic measures
- Share some of the school funds with the parents in order to share the burden of the financial impact that this crisis had on us all
- Whether to give a discount on school fees
- Rebates to fees
- Parental demands over school fees reduction

Most difficult decisions – operations and provision

- How best to move to remote learning and how to make sure students have the right materials
- To run the school as normal on site and assuring the parents for the same. This is going well so far
- Keeping the school open
- Whether to switch to online learning
- Online learning for small children
- When and how to reopen
- A reduction in student learning experiences offsite and internationally
- Who to tell when COVID cases appear. How to deal with confidentiality needs vs right to information
- Suspend boarding services
- Cancel all the End of Year tests and allow all the students to move forward - without being completely sure of their level.

Best decisions – finance, HR & community

Finance and HR

- Pay all staff salaries
- Hiring substitute teachers on daily payment
- Hire supplementary staff to cover for sick teachers and work hard to support the more needy students
- Relying on the expertise of our financial advisors and reducing expenses and identifying ways to secure funds very early in the pandemic

Community

- To increase the amount of short term financial support offered to families in need
- Being able to gain parents' confidence in sending their children to school with top notch safety measures of international standards

Best decisions – operations and provision

- Updating the technology infrastructure of the school
- To be calm and going through the instructions provided by the education ministry office and not making the decisions based on other schools and community decisions
- very simple - providing younger children with printed work packs rather than assume everyone owns a printer at short notice - others didn't !
- The best decision was to keep the school as open as we could and for as much as we could to make sure that the students are following the program, the parents are satisfied with the provided services, the staff is being supported by the management. And it's great that everyone was working as one team towards the same goals!
- Half a day online learning then ad hoc activities for the afternoon
- To implement a lot of technology for educational purposes
- Following local government guidelines to resist pressure from stakeholders

Best decisions – operations and provision (cont.)

- Rapid move to online remote teaching
- Close earlier for Christmas
- Lobbying for education and schools to be treated differently Get FS1 students in school full time
- Timetabling our online work for the students
- Employing technology to aid teaching and learning
- To implement a high quality distance learning program
- reducing the number of students in the classrooms and breaking them into bubbles to eliminate the spread of COVID-19, all while maintaining social distancing
- Collaborate with other schools
- Having each class and year group in a separate bubble
- Installing thermal cameras / insisting children and staff with any kind of symptoms stay at home
- To open

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