GoStudent Future of Education Report *2026*



GoStudent

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Images in this report have been made with AI

A note from Felix Ohswald
CEO and co-founder of GoStudent



Today's young people face a world changing more rapidly than any previous generation, with AI sparking both transformation in industry and fears over its social impact. Generation Alpha are the first AI-native generation, and they are growing up in a world where **technology has never been more controversial.**

So it's perhaps inspiring to find from our annual multi-country survey for our Future of Education Report that today's Generation Alpha are refreshingly optimistic. Contrary to many depictions of young people in the media, **today's youth also believe that hard work pays off.**

But today's young people are growing up in the shadow of changing attitudes to technology. **Almost three-quarters of parents of 16-year-olds worry about the impact of screen time on their young people,** while a majority of parents (52%) support outright bans on smartphones in school, and restrictions on social media access, something that mirrors policy changes in countries across the continent. The EU's recent KIDS Act is the most recent example, proposing stricter, phased restrictions on young people's access to social media platforms.

Children are keen to learn about AI – and eager for more AI provision in schools, this is a generation marching boldly into the future.

"Generation Alpha are ready to take on a changing world."

But for these young people about to take their first steps into a rapidly changing world, there is also concern that the education system is not changing fast enough. **Almost half of children have still never been taught to use AI tools, and both parents and teachers fear governments are not doing enough to support AI in education.**

So what will the school of tomorrow look like, and how will it produce students ready to grapple with a world changing faster than ever?

Teachers, parents and students hope for change, with many disappointed with the way traditional subjects are taught, and hopeful for a curriculum that drives practical subjects such as AI use, or financial planning.

The need for change is clear in this year's PISA results. In both Germany and Austria, maths and reading performance fell again, where **scores in both subjects have now reached their lowest levels since PISA began.**

Perhaps the biggest cause for celebration is that despite the recent results, the skill that young people singled out as the most important for tomorrow's world – problem-solving. **Generation Alpha are ready to take on a changing world.**

Research Methodology

The GoStudent Future of Education Report 2026 presents insights from 3,001 parents, and their 3,001 children, aged 8 to 16 at the time of the survey. The perspectives of 300 teachers of children aged 8 to 16 are also included.

Conducted in partnership with Censuswide, our research spanned six European countries: Austria, Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

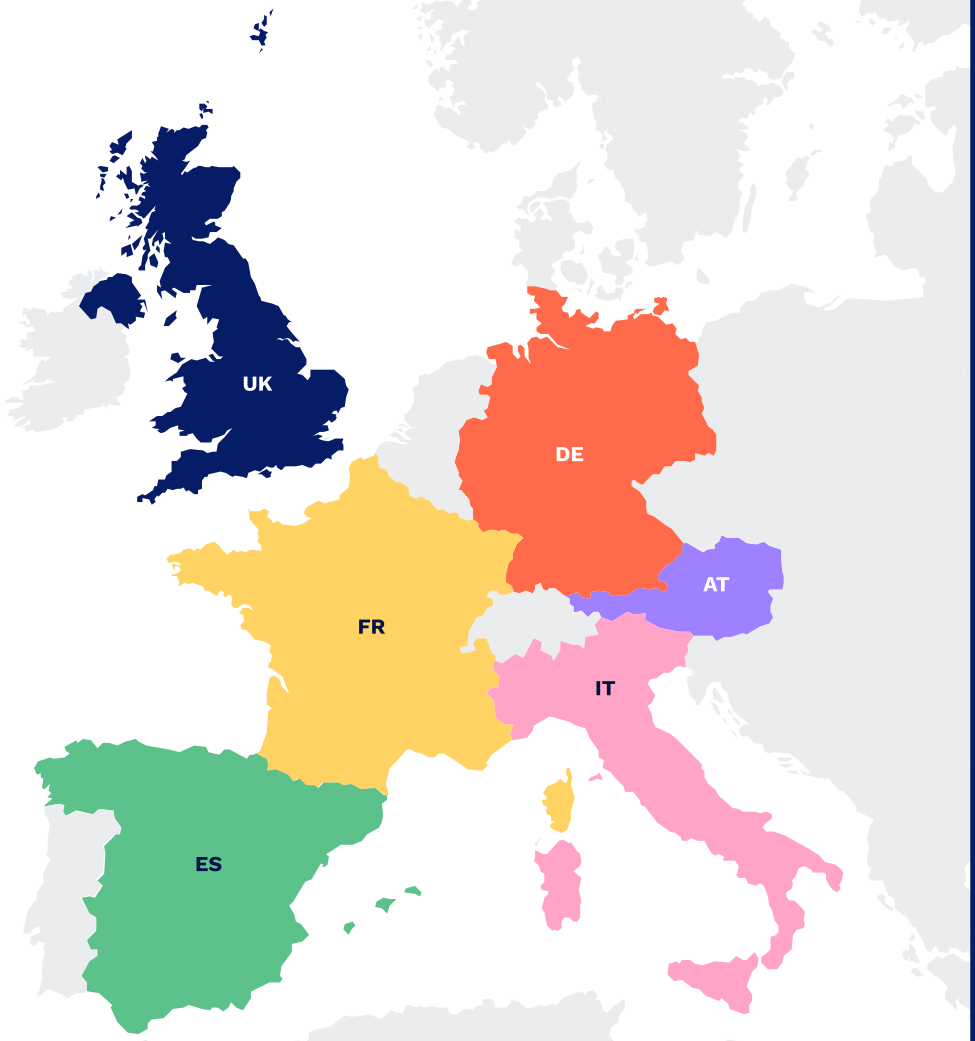
The online surveys were conducted between 26th June and 13th July 2026 (parents and children), and the 6th July and 23rd July 2026 (teachers).

Our samples included:

- A mix of age and gender for both parents, children and teachers.
- A mix of teachers at state and private schools.

Censuswide is a member of the Market Research Society (MRS) and the British Polling Council (BPC), and a signatory of the Global Data Quality Pledge.

Censuswide adhere's to the MRS Code of Conduct and ESOMAR principles.



Legend

Total
3,001 parents / guardians
3,001 children
300 teachers

Austria
500 parents / guardians
500 children
50 teachers

Germany
501 parents / guardians
501 children
50 teachers

Spain
500 parents / guardians
500 children
50 teachers

France
500 parents / guardians
500 children
50 teachers

Italy
500 parents / guardians
500 children
50 teachers

United Kingdom
500 parents / guardians
500 children
50 teachers

CHAPTER 1

Generation Alpha



CHAPTER 1 · GENERATION ALPHA

Who are Generation Alpha, really?

Generation Alpha are the first generation born entirely in the 21st century, born from 2010 to 2025. They are already the largest demographic generation in human history, believed to number around two billion people. Generation Alpha are mostly the children of Millennials and Generation X, and stand out as more 'digitally native' than any previous generation, with the first Alphas having arrived alongside the iPad and Instagram. **Their responses offer insights into this still-young generation - with 50% prioritising personal wellbeing and mental health** over academic achievement[1] and 50% saying they would rather have a job they love than one that pays well.[2]

EXPERT VIEW

It is important to understand what young people feel they would have to give up to become adults. A teenager can be proud of a parent's career and, at the same time, feel they wouldn't want that kind of life for themselves. We may find they have big ambitions, but fear having to sacrifice too much of themselves to achieve them.

GIUSEPPE LAVENIA
Psychologist and Lecturer in Work and Organisational Psychology
at Marche Polytechnic University, IT



A generation redefining their priorities

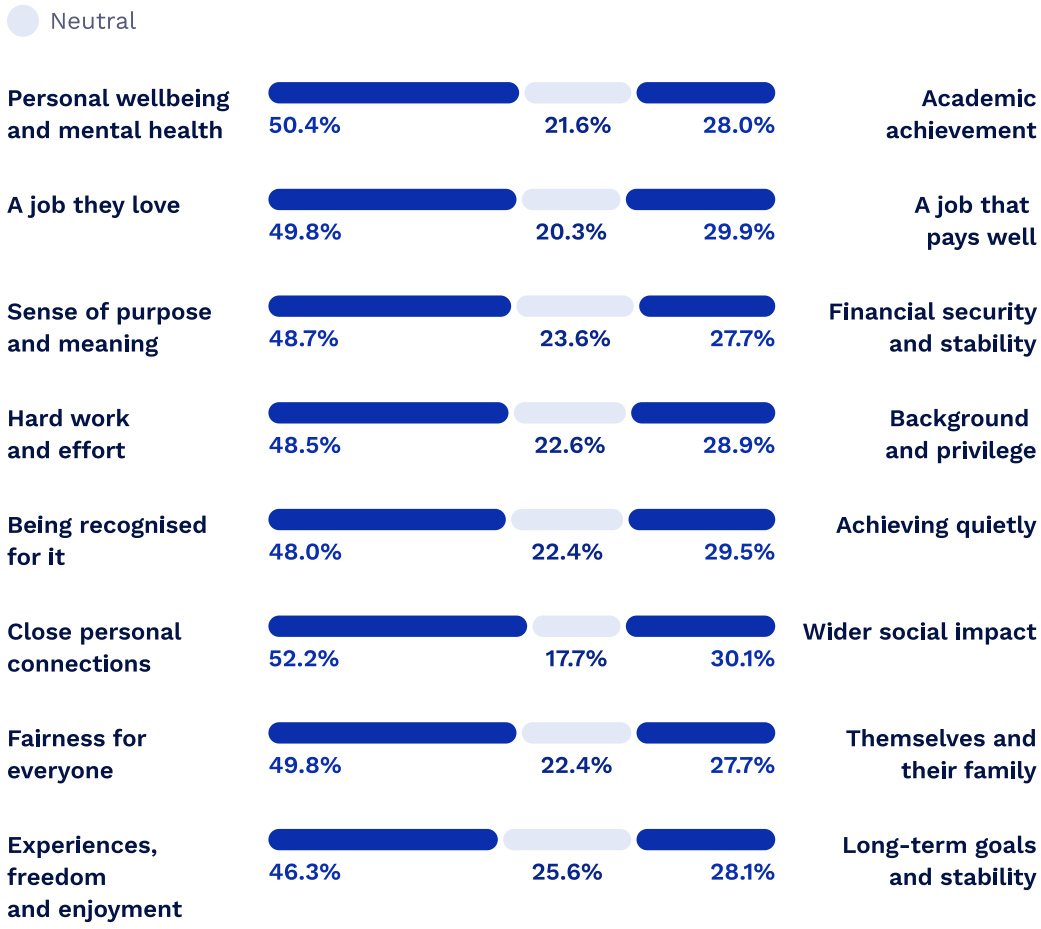
Generation Alpha have been influenced by the online world unlike any previous generations, with their formative years shaped by screen-heavy pandemic lockdowns and the culture of online platforms such as Roblox and Minecraft. For a generation that has grown up with uncertainty (from the knock-on effects of the financial crisis to the cost-of-living crisis), **Generation Alpha tend to prioritise experiences over long-term goals and stability (46%)[3] and value fairness for everyone (50%) over focusing on themselves or their family (28%).[4]**

EXPERT VIEW

To invest in a long-term plan, you need to feel that your efforts can, at least in part, influence what happens. If that trust is weak, the present starts to matter more than the future. Their concern for fairness, on the other hand, gives schools a strong starting point for everyday teaching.

GIUSEPPE LAVENIA
Psychologist and Lecturer in Work and Organisational Psychology at Marche Polytechnic University, IT

THE EIGHT TRADE-OFFS[5]

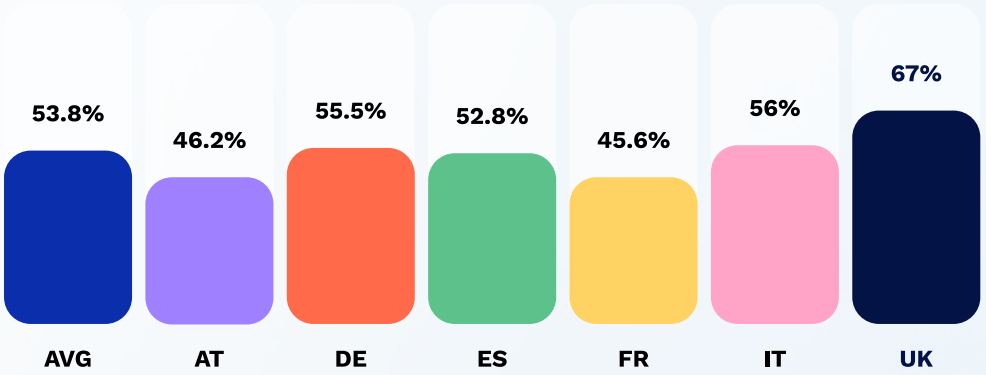


Uncertainty reigns for young people - but so does optimism

What is the predominant emotion among young people in Europe in 2026? The answer is simple - 'uncertainty'. **When asked about their future outlook, just under a third of those surveyed (29%) said they felt uncertain, compared to a mere 21% who said they feel excited and optimistic.** As always, there are wide regional variations, with the UK a leader in optimism, with 31% optimistic, compared to 20% uncertain. But this does not tell the whole story. Combining two statistics for 'excited and optimistic' and 'mostly positive with some anxiety', it's clear that **more than half of European youngsters are looking forward to a bright future, albeit with some reservations** (and in the cheerful United Kingdom, it's closer to two-thirds...)[6]

HOW OPTIMISTIC ARE YOUNG PEOPLE?

'Excited and optimistic' + 'mostly positive with some anxiety', combined



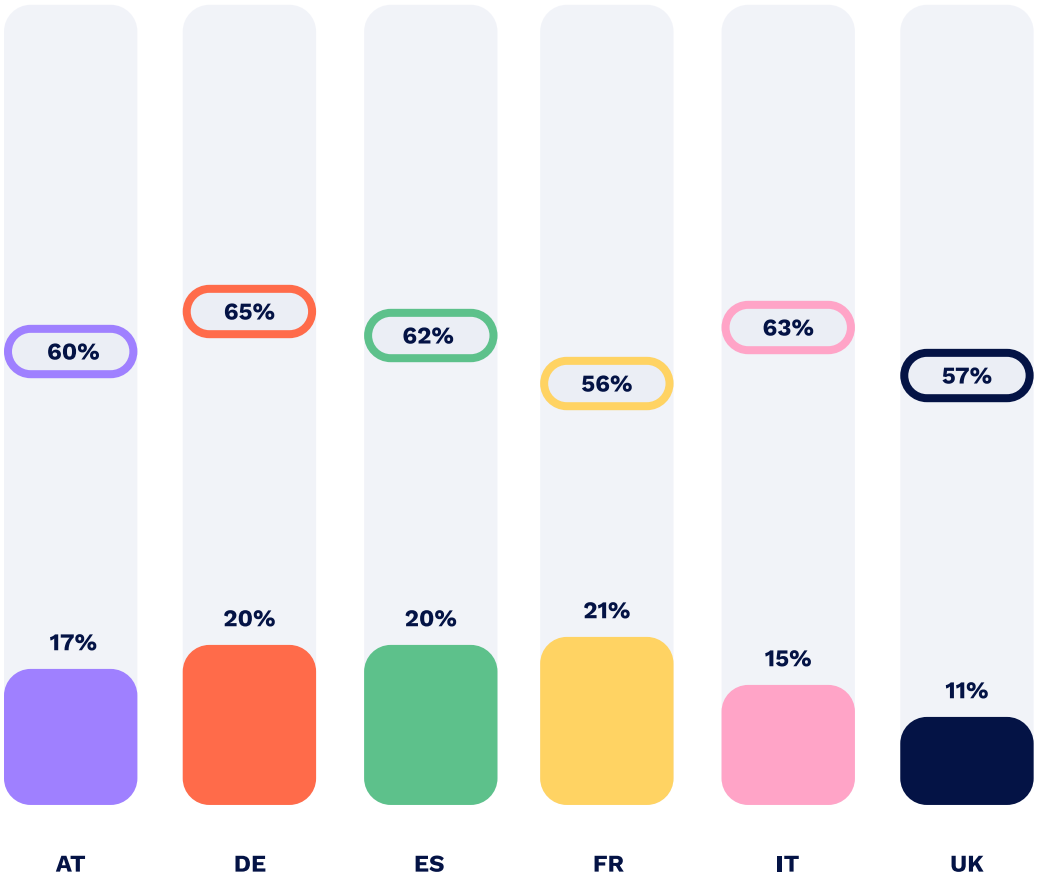


Parents have had enough of screen time

Most parents across Europe now worry that their children are spending too much time on screens - and **their greatest fear is that hours spent on devices leads to reduced physical activity.** With two-fifths of young people spending between three and four hours per day on devices, according to last year's research, **60% of parents now believe that their children spend too much time on devices every day.**[7] The reasons parents cite for their belief that their children's consumption is too much span a wide spectrum, with 33% saying it leads to less physical activity (up from 30% in the previous year's survey) and time spent outdoors, 26% saying it curbs their attention span - with anxiety around attention span rising from 20% in 2025 to 26% this year - and 25% saying that devices lead to less family time.[8]

HOW WORRIED ARE PARENTS ABOUT SCREEN TIME

Solid: children with 'far too much' screen time. Ring: parents worried overall



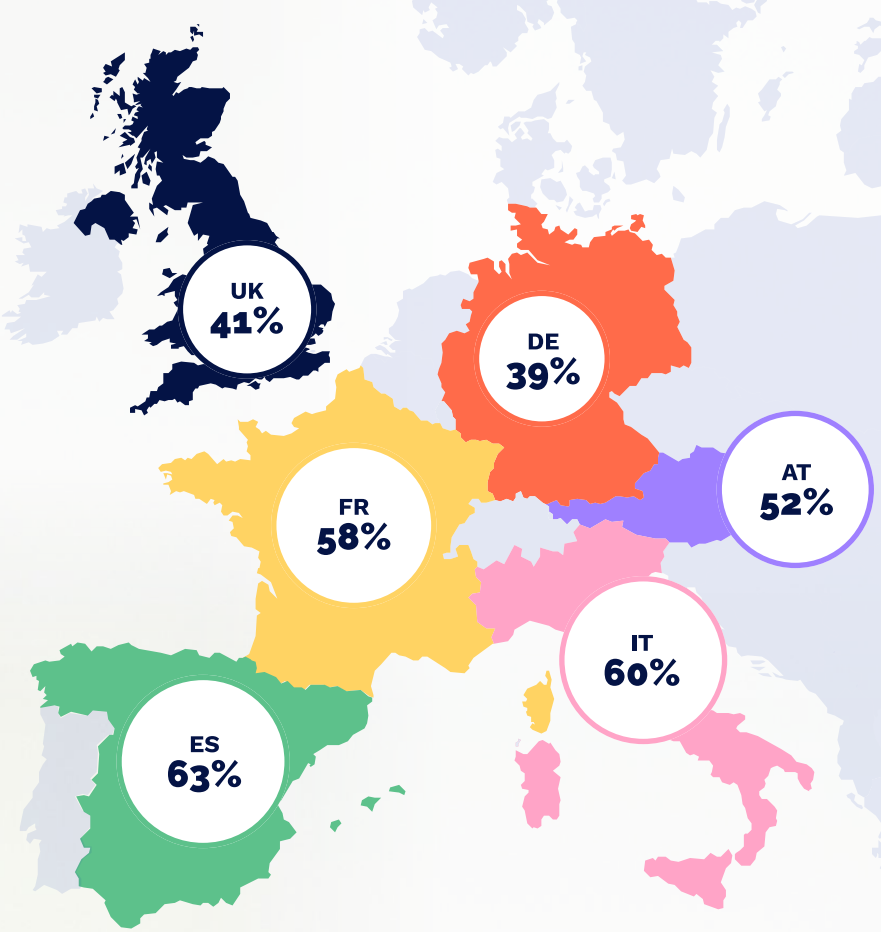


AS CHILDREN AGE, PARENT SCREEN-TIME CONCERNS RISE

% of parents that say their child spends too much time on screens, by age of child

Europe is split on outright smartphone bans in schools

A wave of smartphone restrictions is sweeping schools across Europe. France extended its ban on mobile phone use to all schools, including lycées, from September 2026, while Italy has also introduced nationwide restrictions. In England, new statutory guidance from September 2026 requires schools to prohibit mobile phone use throughout the school day. With groups such as Smartphone Free Childhood and Adolescència Lliure de Mòbils springing up across Europe, it's perhaps no surprise that **52% of parents support an outright ban on smartphones in school** - although opinions vary widely by territory across Europe, with opinions often seeming to reflect the legal status of smartphones in different countries. In Italy, for example, where a smartphone ban applies during lessons, 60% of parents say that smartphones should not be allowed in school, while in Germany, where rules are decided at the state level and vary between recommendations and outright bans, just 39% of parents say that smartphones should not be allowed in school.[9]





COUNTRIES WHERE PARENTS SUPPORT OUTRIGHT BANS

% of parents who say smartphones should not be allowed in school

Legal status of smartphones in schools

- **AT** National ban up to Grade 8
- **DE** Reg. bans and guidance
- **ES** Regional bans
- **FR** National ban
- **IT** National ban
- **UK** National guidance

AI is an emotional support tool for children (but parents don't know)

Children are increasingly turning to chatbots as emotional support tools, but are doing so without alerting parents or educators. Such behaviour carries serious risks, with organisations such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) warning that **the tendency for AI bots to agree with people poses risks to young people using them for mental health counselling**, and tech experts warning of the risks of addiction. The research found that 50% of students reported using AI for personal problems or for emotional support in the past month - but just 28% of parents are aware that students are using AI for such purposes at all. In Germany, for example, 59% of students say they use AI for personal problems, while just 34% of parents are aware of this.[10]

STUDENTS USING AI THIS WAY — AND PARENTS WHO KNOW

50%

of students used AI for personal problems in the past month

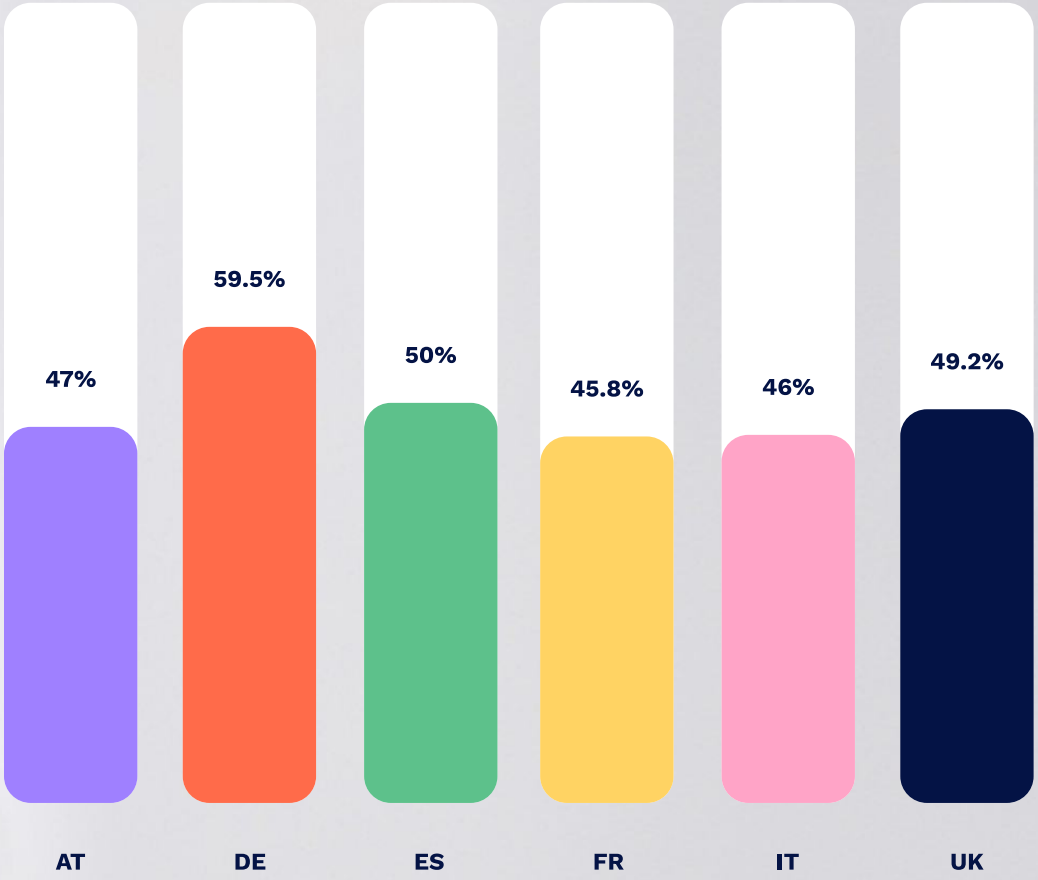
28%

of parents are aware they are doing so



USE OF AI FOR PERSONAL PROBLEMS

% of students, in the past month



Children trust their parents more than search and social media

It's become common to criticise younger generations for their superficial absorption of digital entertainment and 'living' in online worlds - but our insights make it clear that **young people maintain a sharp distinction between digital consumption and trust.** Teenagers might spend much of their time on TikTok and Instagram, but their trust in digital platforms (even Google search) remains abysmally low compared to the trust they place in parents and friends. More than half of young people trust parents (51%) to verify information, with Google at just 15% and AI trailing far, far behind at 10%. Sadly for teachers, they rank alongside artificial intelligence at 10% (although slightly ahead of social media at 4%).[11]

WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE PUT THEIR TRUST

67%
choose a human source

30%
choose a technology source



Children are getting worse at concentrating (it's changing rapidly)

Children's concentration is dropping rapidly, with measurable differences between today and even five years ago. Issues around concentration span were highlighted during the pandemic, but **it seems that the ability to concentrate has worsened rapidly in the years 2021 to 2026,** with almost two-thirds of teachers saying that classes in 2026 are worse at concentrating than the classes they taught five years ago.[12]



STU SAYS

Distraction's in the classroom, it's an age-old problem. GoStudent's digital classroom GoClass is designed to keep students actively involved in the lesson. Making lessons more interactive helps hold students' attention rather than compete for it.





TEACHERS SEEING CONCENTRATION GET WORSE

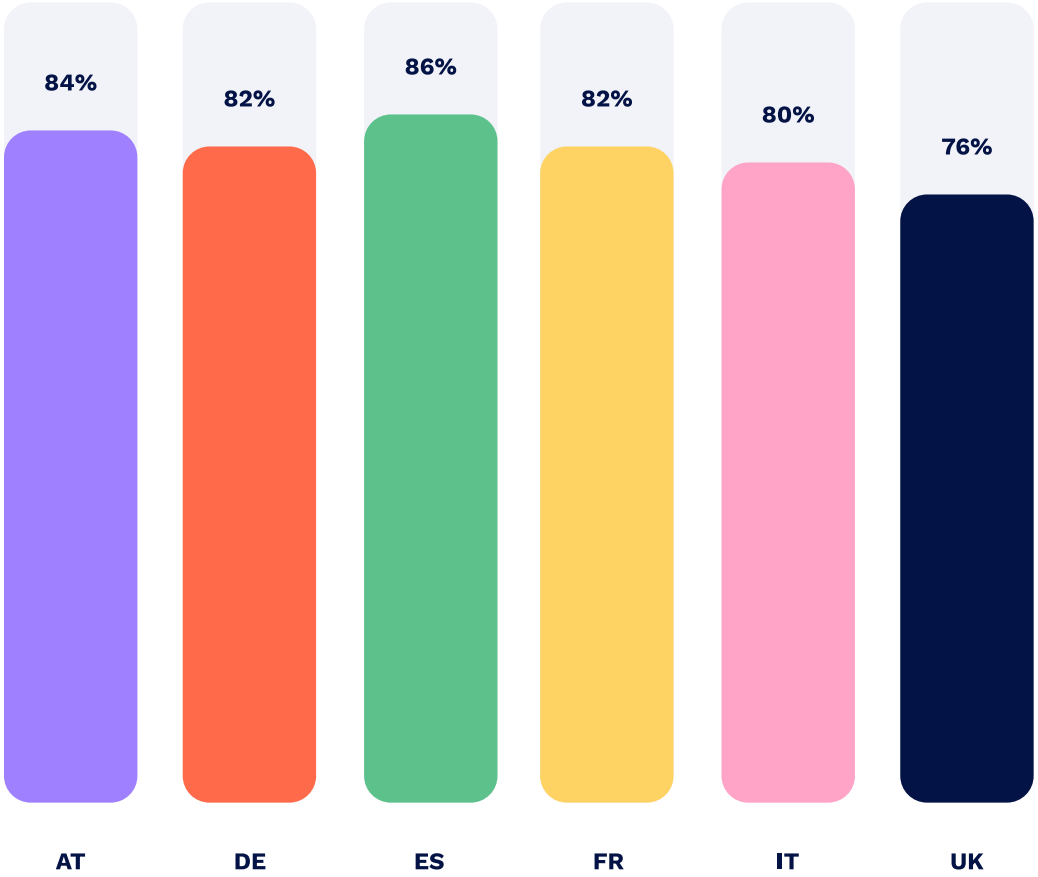
Total teachers who have seen concentration get worse (in circle), with tints for significantly worse (solid) and somewhat worse (tint)

Teachers back social media restrictions for children

Teachers across Europe overwhelmingly back social media restrictions for children as a way to protect them effectively online. The past few years have seen controversial cases such as the Algos Victima case in France, alleging social media companies lure children into algorithm 'loops' where they were repeatedly fed dangerous content on subjects such as suicide and self harm. **Such cases have been followed by EU-wide moves to restrict young teens' access to social media and restrict manipulative design patterns,** along with other local moves to restrict access - with teachers in every country surveyed backing social media restrictions overwhelmingly, at an overall level of 82%.[14]

WHICH COUNTRIES SUPPORT RESTRICTIONS

% of teachers backing social media restrictions

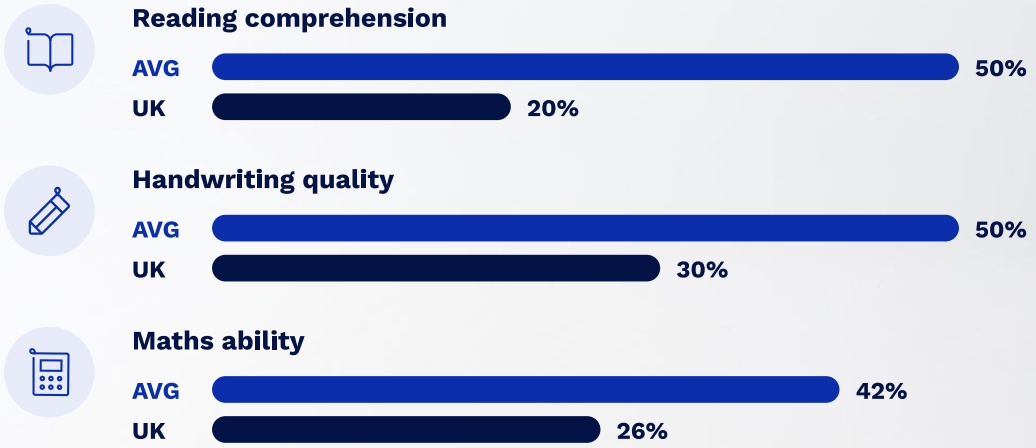


Children are getting worse at reading, handwriting and maths

Teachers' assessment of the change in pupils' reading, writing and maths abilities in the past five years makes for dismal reading - with **almost half of teachers suggesting that these abilities have worsened among their students in today's screen-first world.** Half of teachers say that reading comprehension[15] and handwriting[16] have become worse, and 42%[17] say that maths ability has declined. Interestingly, among European territories, the UK stands out as a relatively positive outlier, with just 20% of teachers saying reading has become worse, 30% saying handwriting has become worse and 26% maths. This divide is mirrored in the most recent OECD Programme for International Student Assessment research which found an unprecedented drop in performance this year, leading to the lowest average ever recorded - but which also found that students in the UK scored above the average.

WHAT TEACHERS SAY HAS GOTTEN WORSE

% of teachers · six-market average vs UK



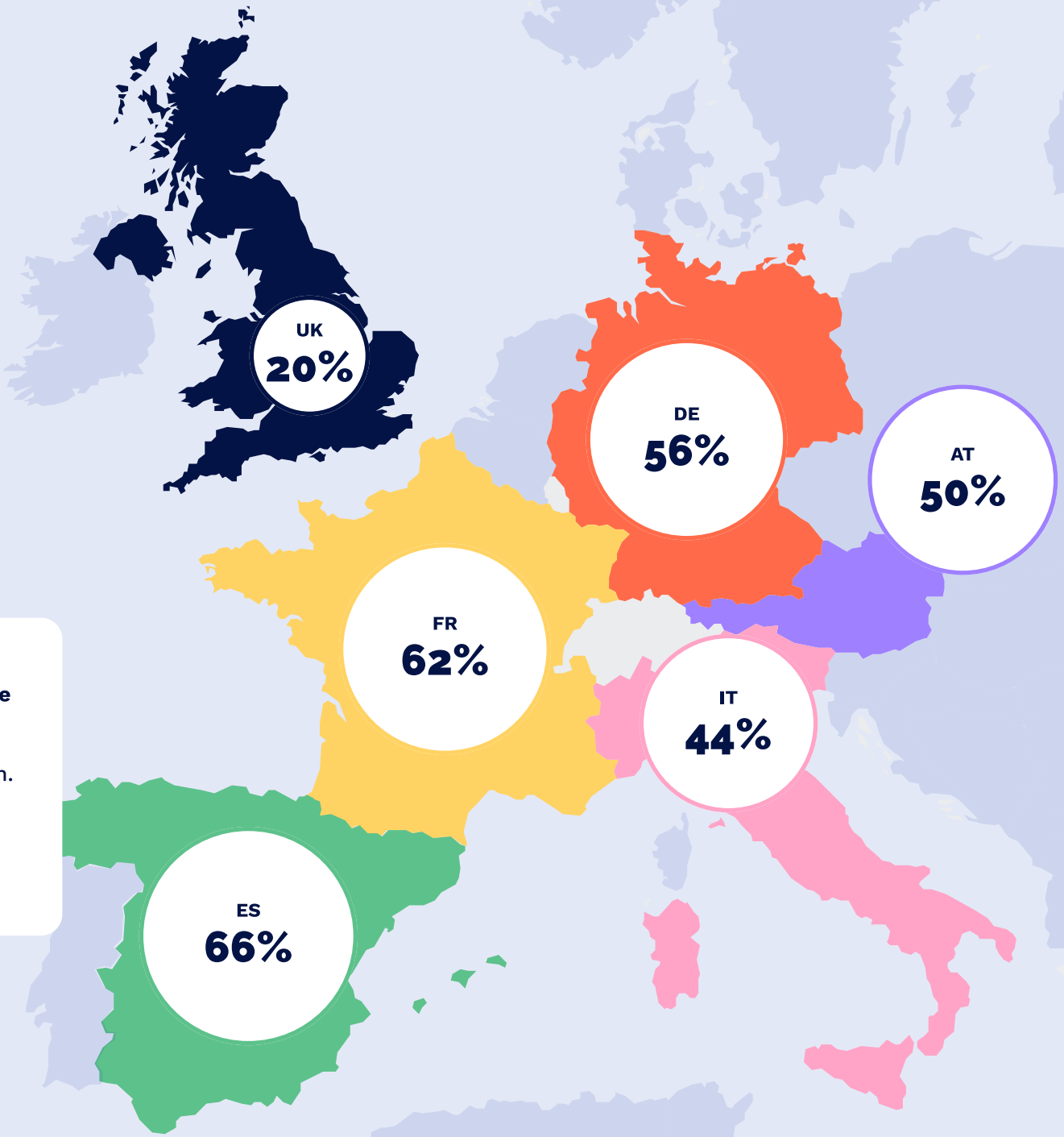
Teachers in the UK are 16–30 points less likely than the six-market average to report a decline.



WHERE READING HAS GOTTEN WORSE

% of teachers saying reading comprehension has worsened. Colour identifies the market; circle size carries the value.

The decline is most widely reported across southern and central Europe. The UK sits apart from the rest of the panel.





STU SAYS

Extra support doesn't have to mean failure

Tutoring is sometimes seen as a sign that something is going wrong in the classroom. In reality, we find it can work alongside schools to reinforce learning and build confidence.

Students are more confident than parents when it comes to deepfakes

Young people face a strange divide when it comes to AI-created fake content (such as 'deepfake' videos) online. As digital natives, young people are far more likely to encounter such faked content, but **parents fear that they cannot identify ‘fake information’ online.** The research showed that 54% of students are confident they can identify a deepfaked image or video, while just 42% of parents believe their child can identify a deepfake. Even with legislation such as the EU AI Act moving to mandate clear labelling and watermarking of AI-generated content, the online world remains a Wild West where AI-generated and faked content is becoming a fact of everyday life - and the ability of digital natives to ‘sense’ fakery will become ever more important.[18]





Could you spot a deepfake?

54% of students say they could.

42% of parents say their child could.

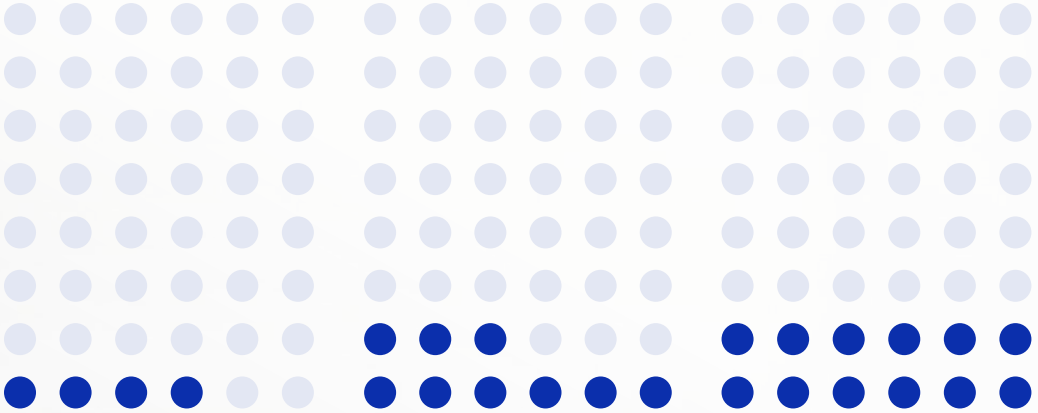
Confidence is not the same as accuracy.

Students are less anxious about AI than either teachers or parents

Are young people moving beyond being 'digital natives' to become 'AI natives' - unfazed and unruffled by the technology, and less alarmed than older people about risks such as job losses and misinformation? With AI having proven applications in education in terms of lightening teacher workloads, **it's perhaps surprising that out of teachers, parents and students, teachers are the most likely to see the technology as a risk (25%), while one in five parents (19%) see AI as a risk - compared to a mere eight per cent of students.** Perhaps for teachers, fears around AI-generated responses to homework exercises (see page 23), shape their views of the technology.[19]

WHO SEES AI AS A RISK?

Roughly how many in each group describe AI as a risk



STUDENTS	PARENTS	TEACHERS
1 in 12	**1 in 5**	**1 in 4**
8%	19%	25%



Students still believe hard work pays off

It's customary for older generations to see the young as lazy, entitled and obsessed with TikTok. **But today's students still believe hard work pays.** A large majority (77%) of today's students believe that if you work hard, you can succeed regardless of your background[20] - although there are interesting national variations around how much young people believe in meritocracy.

In France, for example, 81% agree that success is possible due to hard work - compared to a mere 69% in Italy. **Adults tend to think that children are more sceptical about the benefits of hard work,** with just 42% of parents believing that young people believe in the benefits of hard work and 41% of teachers.[21]



WHERE STUDENTS BELIEVE HARD WORK PAYS OFF

% of students agreeing success is possible through hard work

AVG	AT	DE	ES	FR	IT	UK
77.0%	75.6%	78.9%	77.0%	81.4%	69.0%	77.9%
Average across six markets	−1.4 pts vs AVG	+1.9 pts vs AVG	±0.0 pts vs AVG	+4.4 pts vs AVG	−8.0 pts vs AVG	+0.9 pts vs AVG

CHAPTER 2

Who's really in charge of AI in education?



AI is moving faster than parents can keep up

Parents' assessment of their own competence in guiding children's AI use has declined. **Just half of parents (50%) now say they feel confident in supervising their children's AI use at home –** a significant drop from 61% in the previous year's report, likely due to the growing complexity of AI tools.[22] Many already know what that looks like in practice: **62% of parents say their child has submitted AI-generated content as their own work.**[23]



For many students, **AI has already become part of the homework routine.** Two-thirds (68%) of students who use AI for schoolwork admit they have submitted AI-generated content as their own work, rising to 75% in Germany and 73% in the UK.[24]

WHERE STUDENTS ADMIT HANDING IN AI WORK AS THEIR OWN

% of students who use AI for schoolwork



Teacher AI training has surged in just one year

There is better news among teachers. **Although two out of five (39%) of teachers have still received no formal training on using AI tools in the classroom,** this is improving rapidly, and compares to 75% just a year ago.[25] It's clear that educational establishments across Europe have mobilised en masse to give teachers the guidance they need on using AI tools, with **71% of teachers now saying they feel confident in guiding children on safe and effective AI use,** although this has remained static since last year.[26]

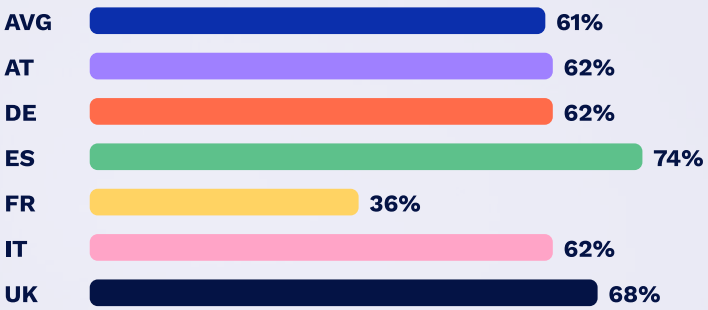
THE LESSONS TEACHERS ARE GIVING[27]

% of teachers teaching each topic



WHERE TEACHERS HAVE RECEIVED FORMAL AI TRAINING

% of teachers who have received formal AI training





Four in ten students receive no formal AI education in the classroom

With the EU AI Act, educational bodies have to ensure staff have a reasonable level of AI literacy, and other moves such as the UNESCO AI Competency Frameworks are helping to drive moves towards AI education in the classroom. **So far, European schools are still lagging behind,** with 43% of students saying they have never been formally taught how to use AI tools in school.[28] Just 20% say they have had a structured AI lesson – and 13% of teachers say they currently teach nothing about AI.[29]

Perhaps unsurprisingly given this background, **parents across Europe are disappointed in how AI is being taught –** with 51% saying schools are not responding well to AI becoming part of everyday life (ranging from 30% in the UK up to 60% in Austria).[30]

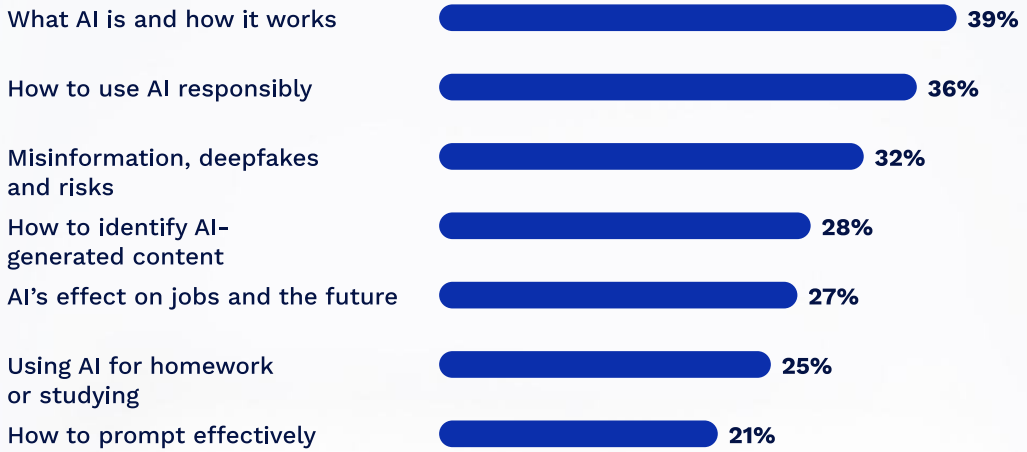


STU SAYS

Turning every lesson into something students can revisit. Students can't always remember everything from a lesson. GoStudent's AI Lesson Summaries capture the key topics, giving students a clear recap which reinforces learning.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEARNING[31]

% of students formally taught each topic





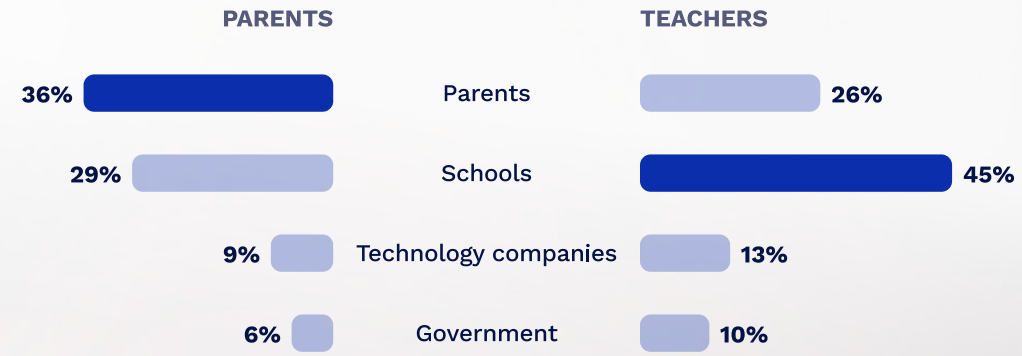
Teachers and parents both believe THEY should lead on AI

There's a stark divide between educators and parents when it comes to who they believe should take the lead on educating children on AI. **Each group is most likely to see itself as responsible,** with 36% of parents saying they should be primarily responsible for teaching responsible AI use (compared to 29% for schools), while 45% of teachers say schools should be responsible, and just 26% say parents should be.

There is a clear national divide on this, perhaps reflecting different teaching regimes and approaches to technologies. Almost half of German teachers (48%) believe that parents should take responsibility, and almost half of German parents (47%) agree with the teachers. In the UK, by contrast, both groups (parents and teachers) believe that schools should take responsibility.[32]

WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE

% of parents and % of teachers naming each group



Highlighted: each group most often names itself.



People don't trust governments to set school rules on AI

Across Europe, there is a large gap between broader, high-level strategies on AI (in legislation such as the EU AI Act) and a lack of close guidance and operational rules for schools – **different territories tend to have broad ethical frameworks or guidelines, rather than actionable rules.** This is reflected in broad distrust – with just 37% of parents surveyed believing that their government is doing enough to set rules on AI for schools, and 25% of teachers.

There are wide levels of regional variation, with just one in ten teachers in Austria (where assessment adaptation is left to individual schools) believing enough is being done, along with 24% of parents. In the UK, where the Department of Education was among the first to issue practical sector statements on generative AI, both parents (53%) and teachers (38%) are a great deal more likely to agree that the government is doing enough.[33]

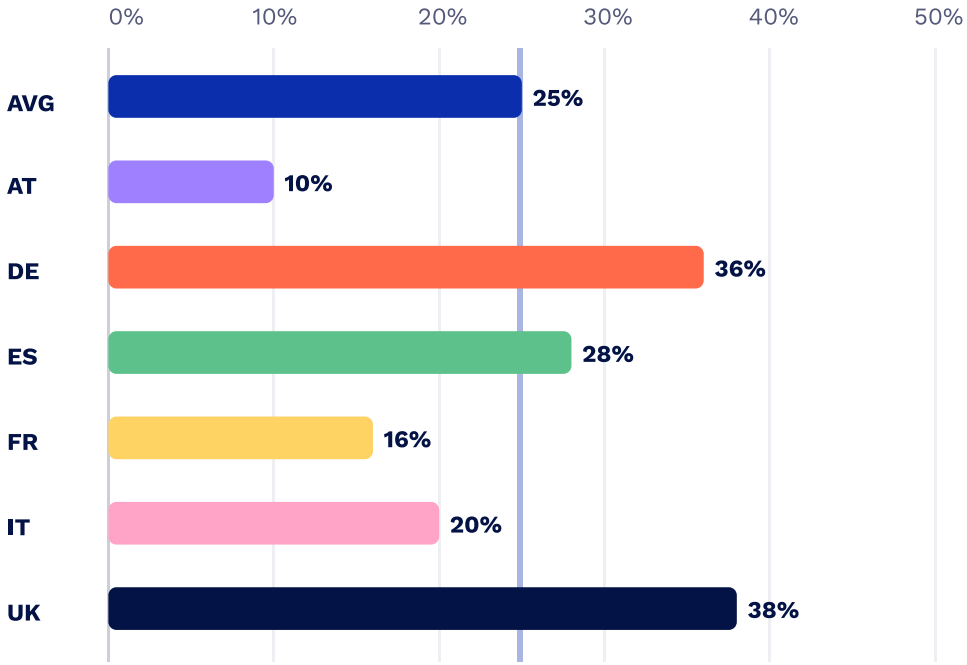
IS GOVERNMENT DOING ENOUGH?

37%
of parents say yes

25%
of teachers say yes

WHERE TEACHERS THINK ENOUGH RULES ARE BEING SET

% of teachers who say government is doing enough to set AI rules for schools



AI can help children with additional learning needs

Studies have shown that multimodal AI and Large Language Models can act as 'equalisers' for neurodivergent young people, helping those with ADHD, for example, by breaking open-ended and complex assignments down into shorter, clearer tasks - and **teachers across Europe agree that AI tools can meaningfully support students with special learning needs such as dyslexia and ADHD.**[34]

There is some variation by territory, with teachers in Austria most sceptical about the technology (40%) and those in the UK most optimistic (66%). This finding highlights an important disjunction between teachers' views on AI more generally and targeted learning applications - just 12% of teachers believe AI is a genuine learning tool overall, and 25% see it as a risk to independent thinking, while more than half believe it can offer meaningful support to pupils with additional learning needs.[35]

EXPERT VIEW

AI may help make learning more accessible, but inclusion is about more than access to information. Relationships, belonging and understanding individual learners remain fundamental, and technology should strengthen rather than displace those aspects of education.

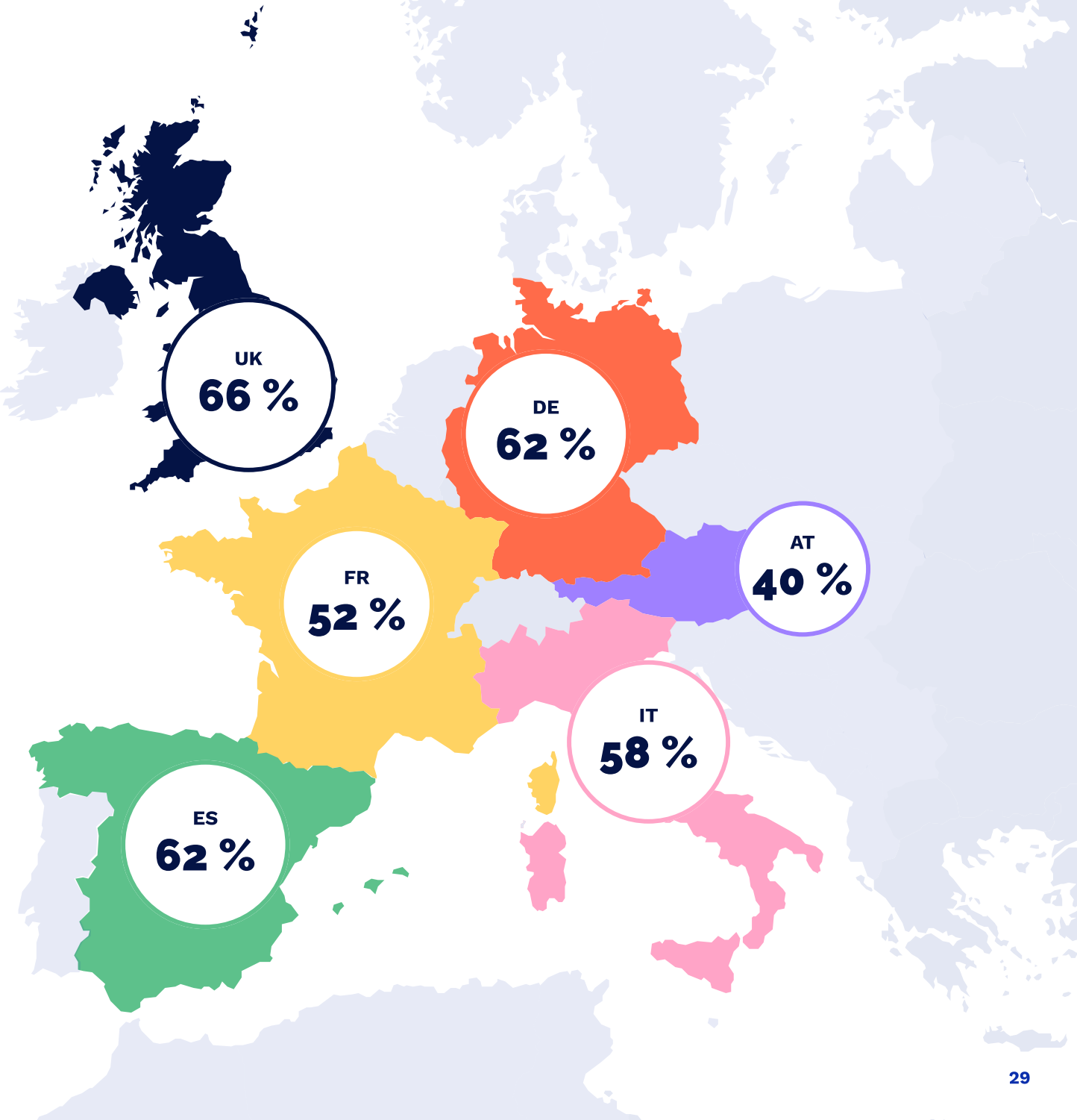
MARK AVERY
Senior Lecturer in Education at UWE Bristol



WHERE TEACHERS THINK AI CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

% of teachers who think AI can help children with additional learning needs

Circle area shows the share of teachers.



SIX-MARKET AVERAGE

57%

of teachers on average think AI can make a difference – from 40% in Austria to 66% in the UK

How teachers are really using AI

The vast majority of teachers (86%) already actively use AI tools in their professional work, with just **14% saying they do not use it at all.** Most pedagogical AI use is for 'back office' tasks such as preparation, admin and lesson planning. 'Student-facing' tasks such as feedback and marking remain human-dominated (just 12% use AI for marking and a similarly low 17% use AI to write feedback).

The concentration of AI use in lesson preparation and other planning-related tasks mirrors concerns in legislation, with **the EU AI Act classifying AI systems used to assess learning outcomes or student performance as 'high risk'.** In the UK, the Department of Education has launched pilots to train AI models on lesson materials with a goal of cutting resource drafting and teacher administration time.[36]

AI IN THE STAFFROOM

86%

of teachers use AI in their professional work

12%

use AI for marking or grading

EXPERT VIEW

When we automate the creation of teaching materials, we need to ask what might be lost alongside the time saved. A teacher's choices, examples and even their idiosyncrasies can be what makes a resource meaningful to a particular group of learners, and what they connect to.

MARK AVERY
Senior Lecturer in Education at UWE Bristol



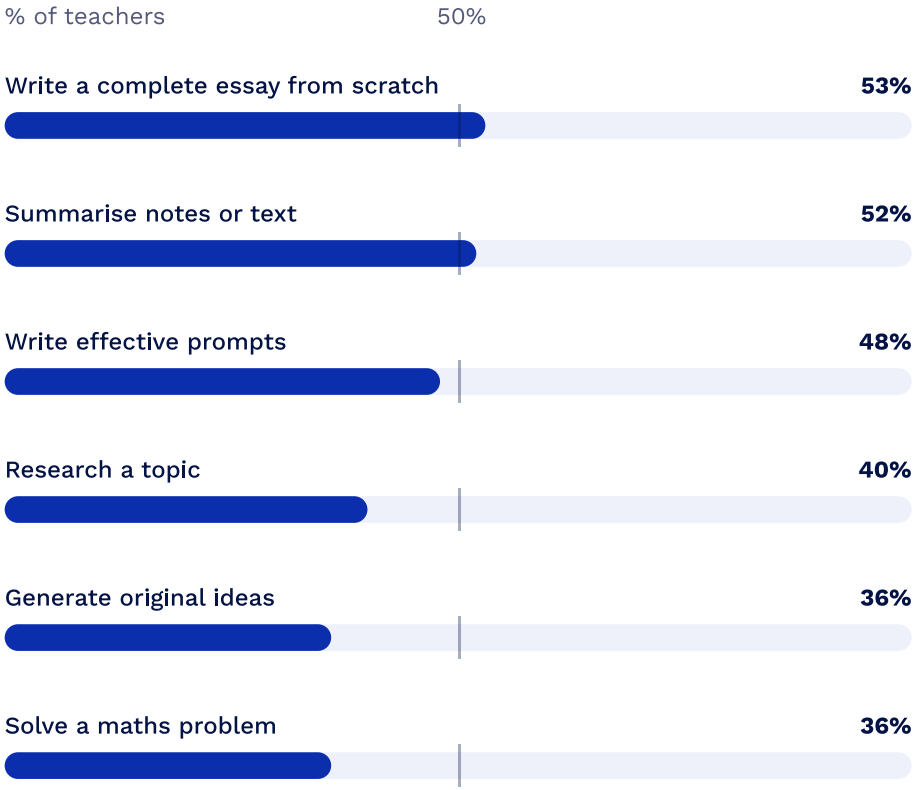
AI usage from both sides of the classroom

Half of teachers (51%) already use AI to create various classroom materials, yet teachers are more confident in students using AI to produce finished work than applying it critically.

WHAT TEACHERS USE AI FOR



WHERE TEACHERS THINK STUDENTS RELY ON AI[37]



Teachers remain divided on AI with rules too unclear

Teachers are torn between two viewpoints on AI - aware that the technology is useful for helping with administrative tasks, but also fearful over its impact on students' ability to engage with reading and analysis. The survey found that 25% of teachers see AI largely as 'a risk', but no single view formed a majority.[38]

Teachers are also frustrated by the lack of clarity of government messaging on AI, with just 31% saying that the current rules and regulations around AI use in schools are clear.[39] With tools such as AI checkers still fundamentally unreliable and prone to false positives, teachers are left bearing the brunt of potential parental disputes, without enough clear guidance on where to draw lines.



STU SAYS

Using AI to reinforce learning, not distract

GoStudent's AI Magic Quizzes create questions from lesson transcripts, helping students test understanding, reinforce key concepts and spot where they need more support, using AI to strengthen and reinforce learning beyond the lesson.



CHAPTER 3

The School of the Future



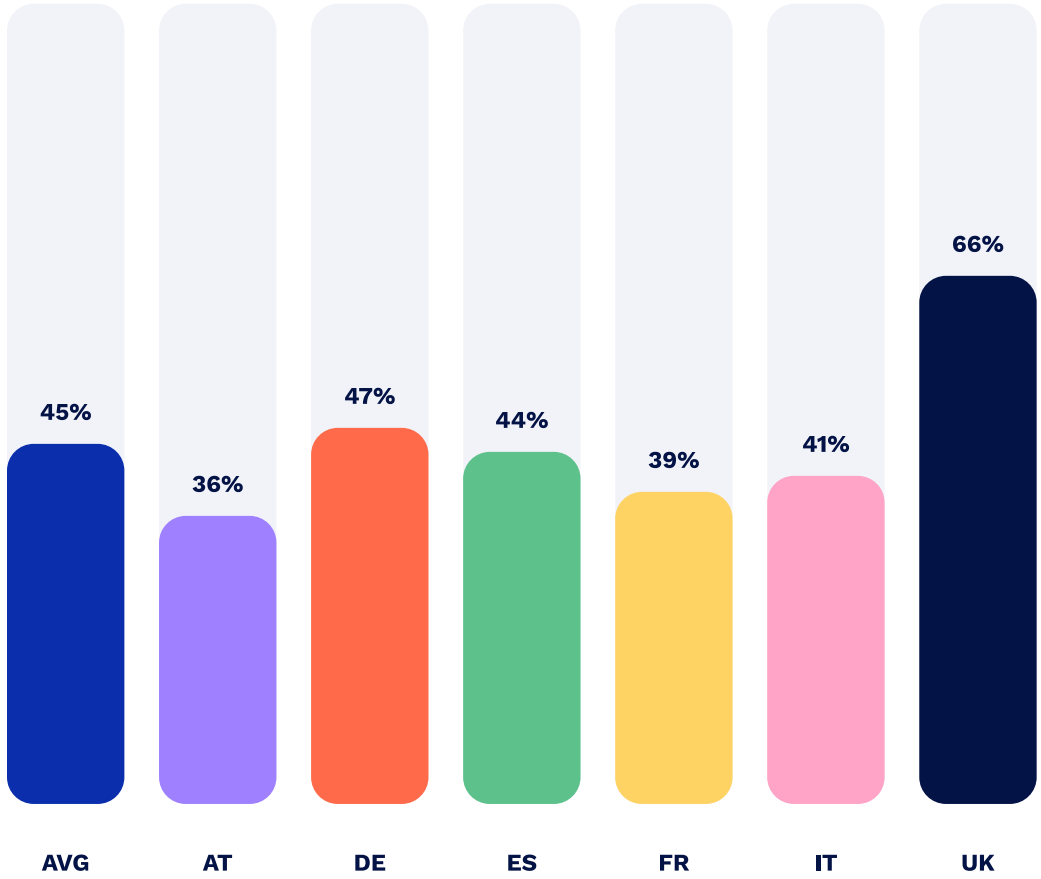
Both parents and teachers fear school leaves children unprepared for life

Both parents and teachers fear that children are left unprepared for life outside the classroom – although paradoxically, almost three-quarters of parents (70%) also say they are satisfied with the education their children are receiving.[40] This seeming disjunction perhaps reflects dissatisfaction with the 'exam factory' approach of education systems across Europe, which focuses on standardised testing, with less time allocated for subjects such as financial literacy or career mentoring.

Overall, 26% of parents think that children are not prepared for life outside school, along with 36% of teachers – with just 45% of parents saying they believe their children are prepared for life outside school. However, just 9% of parents say they are dissatisfied with the education their child is receiving.[41]

WHERE PARENTS THINK SCHOOLS PREPARE CHILDREN FOR LIFE

% of parents who say school prepares their child for life outside school



Is school preparing them for life?

70% of parents are satisfied with their child's education

45% say it prepares their child for life

36% of teachers say children are not prepared

Satisfaction is not the same as readiness.



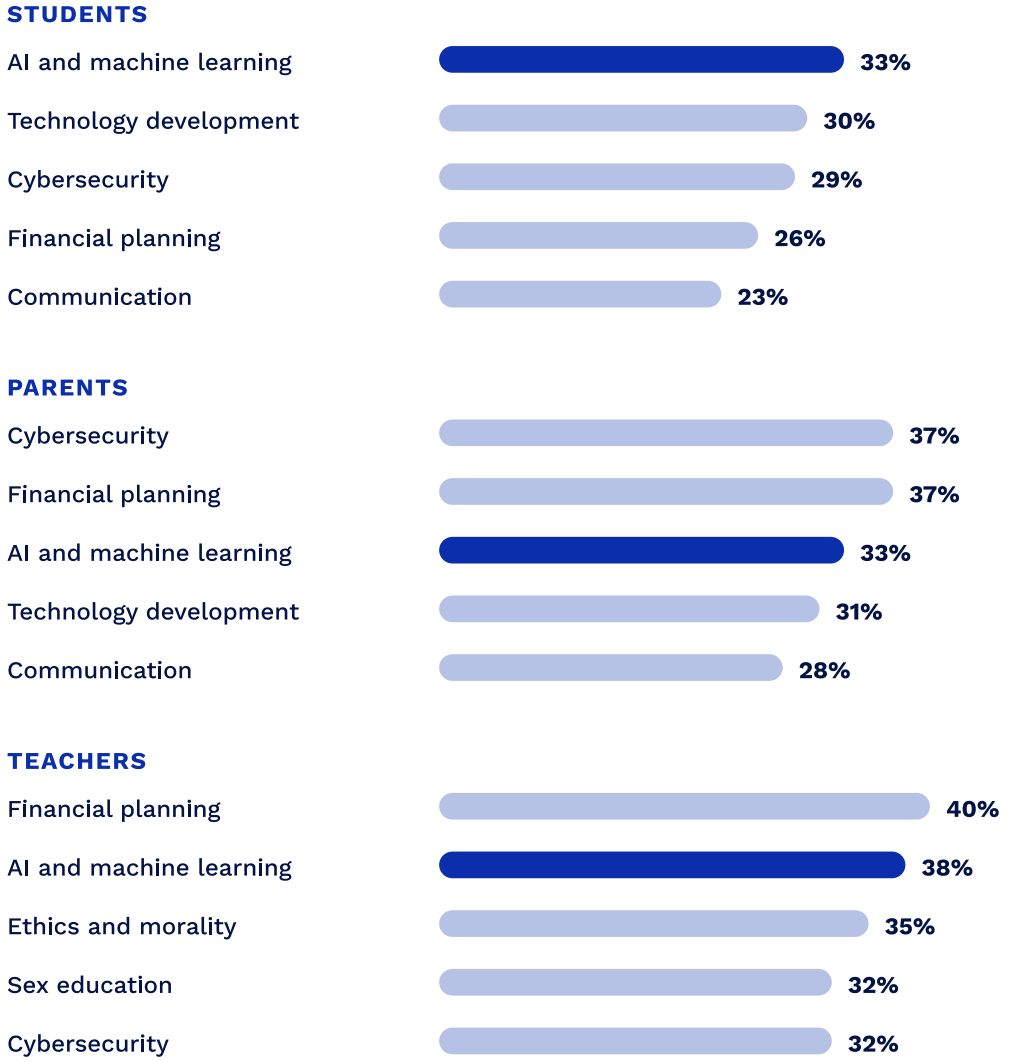
Students want to learn AI – but parents and teachers disagree

For students facing a working world where AI plays an increasingly important role, **AI is the single subject they most want to see added to the curriculum** (33%), followed by technology development including virtual reality (30%) – a statistic that's remained stable since last year, when 37% of children picked AI and machine learning.[42] But while young people focus on acquiring the skills they need to navigate a rapidly changing world, **parents and teachers focus more on providing young people with the skills they need to stay safe and be self-sufficient.**

For parents, cybersecurity is the top subject they wish to see added to the curriculum at 37% (staying stable since last year at 42%), followed very closely by financial planning.[43] For teachers, financial planning is ahead, at 40%. **Both groups, however, recognise the growing importance of AI, with 33% of parents and 38% of teachers respectively suggesting it should be added to curriculums.**[44]

WHAT EACH GROUP WANTS ADDED TO THE CURRICULUM

Top five subjects, % choosing each · AI highlighted



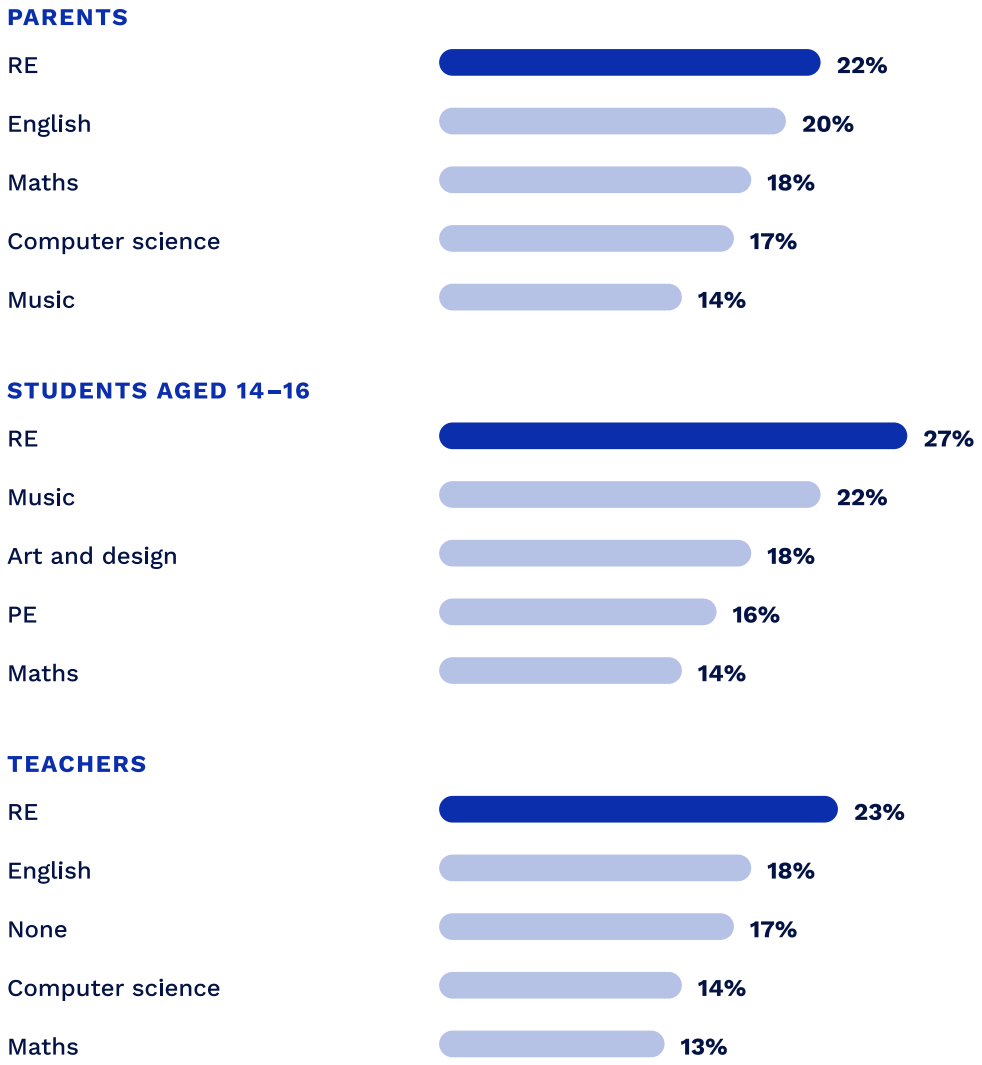
Parents think Maths and English are no longer fit for purpose

Perhaps surprisingly, two subjects which feature highly in parents' and teachers' choices for subjects to be dropped are English and Maths, with English ranking at 20% for parents and 18% for teachers, and **parents saying Maths is no longer fit for purpose (18%)**[45] **–** perhaps reflecting broader disputes over how the subjects are taught, with frustration over 'old style' courses involving literature and mathematics courses which teach algebra rather than data analysis or financial topics. **Interestingly, English remains a popular choice to get rid of even where it's taught as a foreign language – 27% among Italian parents, 27% among French parents and 20% of parents in Spain.** Among teachers, the perception that computer science is not fit for purpose has fallen from 22% to 14% since last year.[46]

With young people (and even young parents) increasingly likely to describe themselves as having 'no religion', and battles over religious and secular education raging in multiple European countries, religious education tops charts of subjects which should be removed from the curriculum for parents (22%), teachers (23%) and students (27%).[47]

THE SUBJECTS NO ONE WANTS TO LEARN

Top five subjects seen as no longer fit for purpose, % · RE highlighted



Critical thinking is the most important skill for the future

Both parents and teachers agree that critical thinking will be the most valuable skill in the future (a change since last year, when problem-solving was seen as most important), mirroring the conclusions of reports such as the OECD's Digital Education Outlook, which warns that conversational AI and similar technologies foster an 'illusion of confidence' among students. **The ability to differentiate between misinformation, hallucinations, facts and reality will be an increasingly important skill,** teachers (43%) and parents (36%) both believe.[48]

Students tend to disagree, ranking problem solving the highest (26%), followed by communication (23%) and creativity (21%).[49] Both parents and teachers rank problem solving in second place (parents at 34% and teachers at 26%).

EXPERT VIEW

With AI capable of providing detailed solutions almost instantly, it's increasingly tempting for students to focus on obtaining the correct answer rather than understanding how to reach it. Being able to solve a problem independently, even if it takes longer or involves mistakes, is an essential part of developing genuine understanding.

DR JOSEPH KFOURY
Senior Lecturer in Chemical Engineering and Tutor at GoStudent



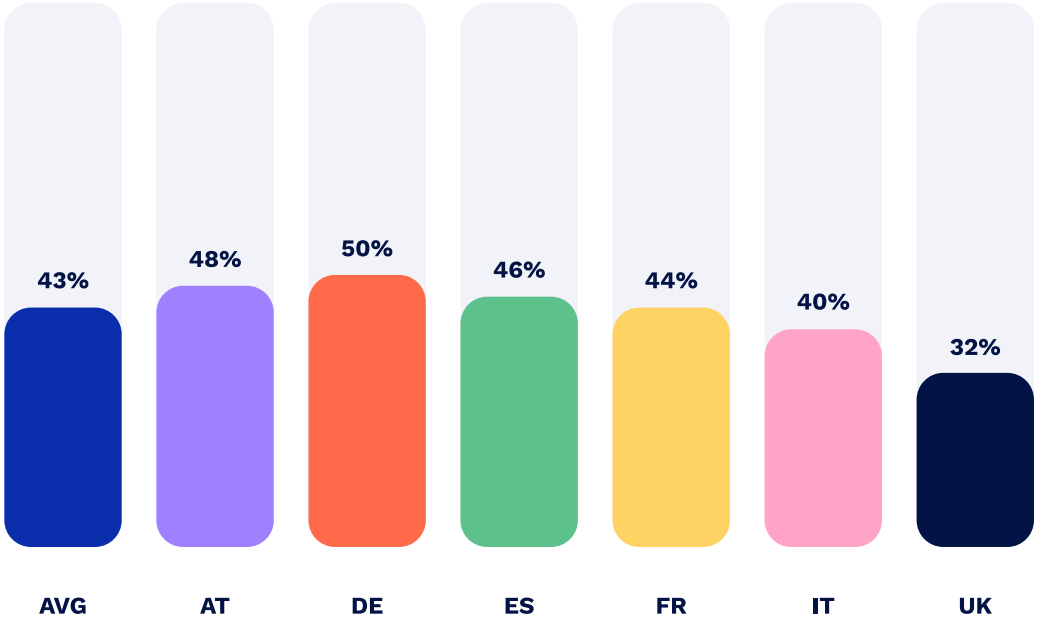
STU SAYS

Building skills to prepare children for real life

Across our tuition centres in Europe, students can explore practical, future-focused courses, from science labs and financial literacy to LEGO robotics. These hands-on experiences build new skills, confidence and interests beyond the traditional classroom.

WHERE CRITICAL THINKING REIGNS

% of teachers ranking critical thinking the most valuable future skill



Dealing with misinformation is a new job for teachers

It's perhaps no surprise that dealing with misinformation is becoming like a second job for teachers – with **almost half (45%) of teachers now helping students deal with misinformation and fake content online.** That reflects broader social trends: three-quarters of young Europeans report weekly exposure to disinformation, according to the EU Youth Survey, while multiple research studies show that young people are regularly exposed to harmful online bullying. This is reflected in official guidelines such as the European Commission's 'Guidelines for Teachers to Foster Digital Literacy and Tackle Disinformation' and the UK's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

A knock-on effect of this (and perhaps of our increasingly isolated online world) is that **teachers are also spending more time looking after young people's mental health – with 44% saying they spend time supporting student mental health and wellbeing, and a further third (36%) saying they spend time addressing issues around online safety and cyberbullying.**[50]



Most teachers now say their main job is to mentor wellbeing

The importance of mentoring as a part of the job as teachers has grown to the point where it far overshadows the traditional role of teachers in actually teaching their subject. **Teachers now say their main role should be guiding students as people (62%), compared to just 21% who believe subject teaching should be their main role.**[51] Post-pandemic mental health remains a concern for young people across Europe, prompting initiatives such as Austria's Gesund aus der Krise. Surveys including the WHO's Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study suggest adolescent mental health has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. The result is a dramatic rise in mental health issues in the classroom – **76% say they see more mental health issues in the classroom than five years ago, peaking at 96% in Germany.**[52]

In response, teachers hope that AI can support them with the admin side of teaching, such as lesson planning (33%) and reports and timetabling (39%), or creating classroom materials such as worksheets and quizzes (42%).[53] Reassuringly, just 1% believe that AI can entirely replace the role of teachers – compared to 10% last year.[54]

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE TEACHER

62%

say their main role is guiding students as people

21%

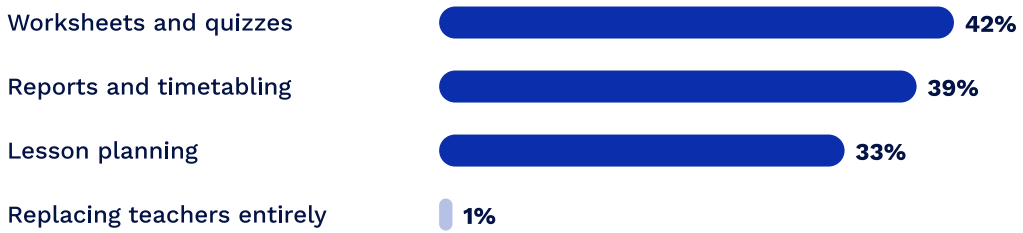
say it is teaching their subject

76%

see more mental-health issues than five years ago

WHERE TEACHERS WANT AI'S HELP

% of teachers · the share who think AI could replace them shown faded





Teacher or mentor?

62% of teachers say their main role is guiding students as people.

21% say it is teaching their subject.

Just 1% think AI could replace them.

Oral presentations and projects now seen as better than exams

Oral presentations or ‘viva’-type examinations are now seen as the best-in-class form of assessment (44%), allowing teachers to see in real time how young people have truly grasped the subject. Traditional timed exams now sit behind long-form projects (assessments stretching over several weeks), rated as most effective by 38% of teachers, compared to 36% for written, timed exams.[55]

This mirrors legislative pushes such as England’s Curriculum and Assessment Review, which integrated an Oracy Framework into school standards, placing speaking and listening on an equal footing with reading and writing. **With continental education systems often having used oral examinations at higher levels, the arrival of generative AI is forcing the hands of educators –** it might be easy to use ChatGPT to fake a five-page essay, but students facing spontaneous follow-up questions have to be able to understand their subjects.

EXPERT VIEW

An assessment that's more resistant to AI isn't necessarily a better assessment. Its validity, accessibility and fairness to learners matter just as much as academic integrity.

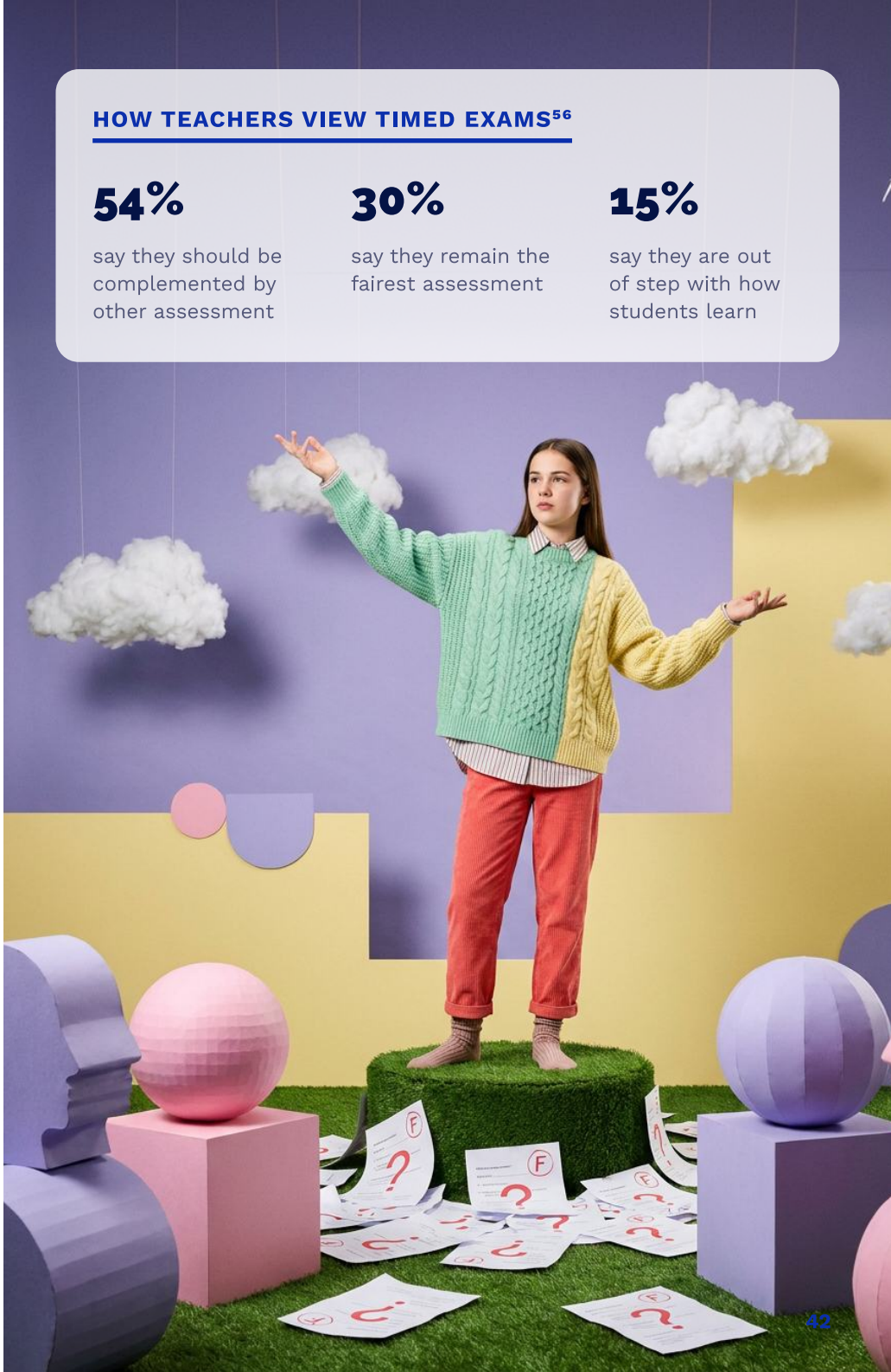
MARK AVERY
Senior Lecturer in Education at UWE Bristol

HOW TEACHERS VIEW TIMED EXAMS[56]

54%
say they should be complemented by other assessment

30%
say they remain the fairest assessment

15%
say they are out of step with how students learn



Teachers face rising friction with parents over grades and discipline

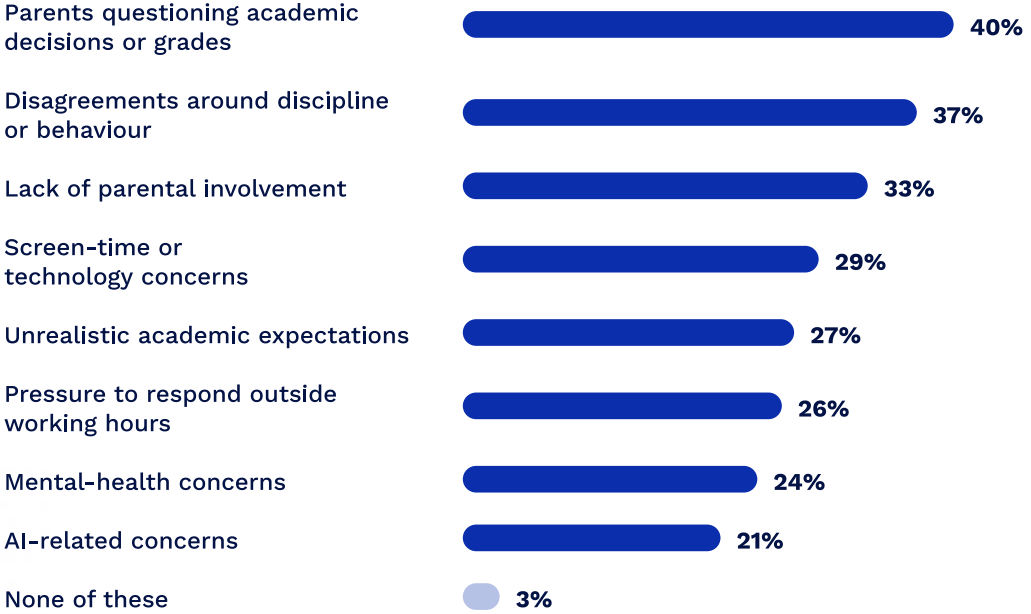
Teachers in classrooms across Europe are facing a fractured social contract where parents no longer see them as undisputed arbiters of the classroom, with **40% of teachers now saying parents questioning academic decisions or grades is among the challenges that have increased the most,** and 37% citing disagreements around discipline or behaviour.[57]

Headmasters blame factors such as parent WhatsApp groups for creating digital 'echo chambers'. In the UK, schools have been forced to enlist law firms, and **parents have even been banned from school grounds over comments made in WhatsApp groups.** Spain's largest teachers' union ANPE singled out parental WhatsApp groups as an escalating source of psychological harassment and intimidation, and cases have reached the Italian supreme court.



THE CHALLENGES TEACHERS FACE

% of teachers citing each as having increased the most

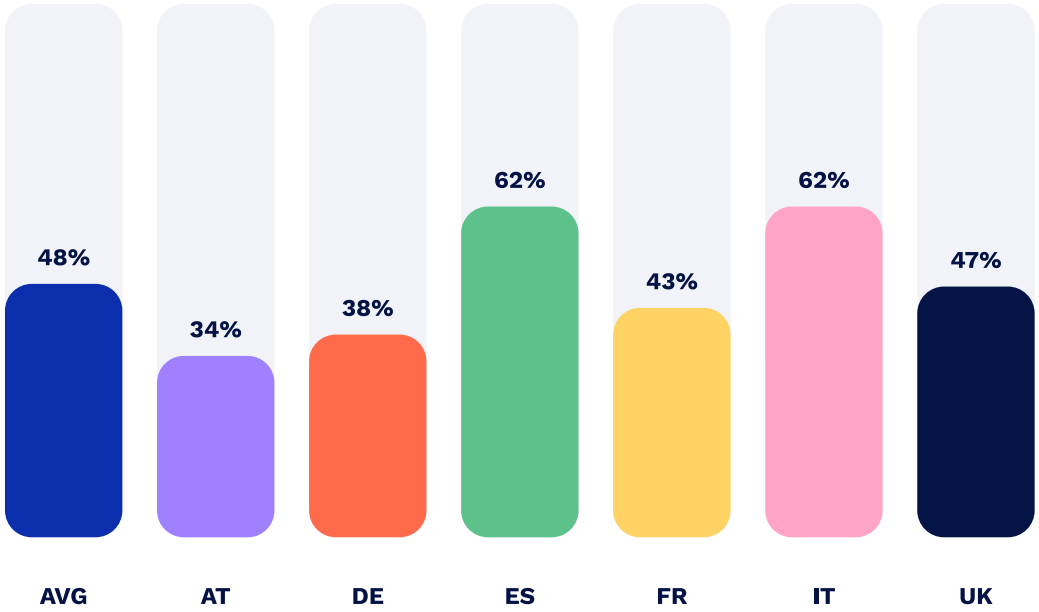


The countries moving beyond university as a road to the workplace

When it comes to routes from school to the workplace, Europe is a divided continent: while **48%[58] of parents still view university as the 'best' choice for their children**, national priorities vary widely across the continent. In the DACH region in particular, apprenticeships rival or beat higher education (42%[59] choose apprenticeships in Austria, for example, compared to 34% for university). This is enshrined in systems such as the Duale Ausbildung in Germany and Austria – with **recent vocational qualification graduates frequently seeing employment rates of over 90%, according to European Commission statistics.** This is in stark contrast to Southern Europe – for example, just 15% of Spanish parents put apprenticeships first.

WHERE UNIVERSITY IS FIRST CHOICE

% of parents who see university as the best route for their child





University or apprenticeship?

AVG

48%

of parents still see university as the best route.

AT

42%

of Austrian parents choose apprenticeships.

ES

15%

of Spanish parents put apprenticeships first.

The future of education is bright

With the sector facing challenges, doubt and scepticism, it's clear, though, that there is a huge appetite for change - something that teachers, parents and pupils are surprisingly united on. **The schools that grow and triumph in step with the future will be those with the will and imagination to take pupils beyond the standardised 'exam factory' approach,** and towards a more fluid curriculum delivering the skills students need to thrive in a fast-evolving future. Students will leave school equipped with a 'nose' for detecting misinformation and education in practical subjects such as personal finance - along with the AI skills to succeed in job roles that do not even exist today.

To thrive in this future, parents and educators must have the flexibility to think outside rigid, decades-old curriculums and outside the traditional role of teachers - with teachers taking on a new role as mentor, as AI-enhanced education tools supporting children in and out of the classroom. But while the school of the future might be different to what we see today - with exams and essays changing to fit young people's needs, and technology's role shifting - **the enthusiasm for learning and teaching has never been higher.** In education, tomorrow will be a brighter day.



WRITTEN BY

Rob Waugh

Writer and educational journalist

Rob Waugh is the report editor at GoStudent, where he produces the annual Future of Education report. He is a veteran technology journalist who has written for the world's leading tech and science publications over 25 years. For this report, he draws on GoStudent's survey of parents and pupils across six European markets to imagine what the school of the future could look like.

EXPERT VIEWS

Meet the experts

Mark Avery

Senior Lecturer in Education at UWE Bristol

Mark Avery is a senior lecturer in education at UWE Bristol and co-leads the School of Education and Childhood's work on AI in education. His research critically examines the implications of generative AI for teaching, learning and assessment, with particular attention to how AI-generated guidance acquires credibility and authority, and what this means for teachers' professional judgement and agency.

Dr Joseph Kfoury

Senior Lecturer in Chemical Engineering, GoStudent Tutor and winner of GoStudent's 2026 Team Choice Award

Dr Joseph Kfoury holds a PhD in Chemical, Biological and Environmental Engineering and is a senior lecturer in chemical engineering. His educational interests include personalised learning, innovative teaching methods and the use of emerging technologies in education.

Giuseppe Lavenia

Psychologist and Lecturer in Work and Organisational Psychology at Marche Polytechnic University, Italy

Giuseppe Lavenia is a psychologist, psychotherapist and lecturer at the Marche Polytechnic University. He is President of the Order of Psychologists of the Marche Region and founder of the Italian Association for Technological Addictions, Gambling and Cyberbullying (Di.Te.), where he currently serves as Honorary President and Scientific Director.

For many years, he has specialised in the study and treatment of behavioural addictions, with a particular focus on digital addiction, adolescent mental health, changing emotional relationships, and the impact of technology on the psychological development of children and young people. Through his research and public engagement, he encourages a more informed dialogue between generations, families, schools and wider society.

APPENDIX

Endnotes

All 2026 figures come from two GoStudent surveys in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK: 3,001 parents and their children aged 8 to 16 (fieldwork 26 June to 13 July 2026) and 300 teachers of children aged 8 to 16 (fieldwork 6 to 23 July 2026). Figures for 2025 come from the GoStudent Future of Education Report 2025. Question numbers refer to the 2026 data tables: A1 = parents, A2 = children, B = teachers. Bases are unweighted. Figures in the report are rounded to whole numbers.

CHAPTER 1 · GENERATION ALPHA

1 A2.Q29. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale feels more true to you personally. Pair cited: “Personal wellbeing and mental health (A) – Academic achievement and grades (B)”. Children aged 14–16 n=1,110. Net: “Lean towards A” combines “Strongly agree with A” and “Lean toward A”; “Lean towards B” combines “Strongly agree with B” and “Lean toward B”.

2 A2.Q29. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale feels more true to you personally. Pair cited: “A job I love (A) – A job that pays well (B)”. Children aged 14–16 n=1,110. Net: “Lean towards A” combines “Strongly agree with A” and “Lean toward A”; “Lean towards B” combines “Strongly agree with B” and “Lean toward B”.

3 A2.Q29. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale feels more true to you personally. Pair cited: “Living for experiences (fun, freedom, pleasure) (A) – Living for long-term goals and stability (B)”. Children aged 14–16 n=1,110. Net: “Lean towards A” combines “Strongly agree with A” and “Lean toward A”; “Lean towards B” combines “Strongly agree with B” and “Lean toward B”.

4 A2.Q29. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale feels more true to you personally. Pair cited: “Caring what is fair for everyone (A) – Focusing on what is best for me and my family (B)”. Children aged 14–16 n=1,110. Net: “Lean towards A” combines “Strongly agree with A” and “Lean toward A”; “Lean towards B” combines “Strongly agree with B” and “Lean toward B”.

5 A2.Q29. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale feels more true to you personally. All eight pairs shown. Children aged 14–16 n=1,110. Net: “Lean towards A” combines “Strongly agree with A” and “Lean toward A”; “Lean towards B” combines “Strongly agree with B” and “Lean toward B”.

6 A2.Q28. When you think about your future, what best describes how you feel? Children n=3,001. Net: figures for optimism combine “Excited and optimistic” and “Mostly positive but with some anxiety”.

7 2025 Report, Q19 (parents). How much time does your child spend on their digital devices (such as smartphone, laptop/computer/tablet) in a typical day? If you don't know for sure, give your best estimate. Parents whose child has access to a smartphone, tablet or laptop n=5,780. A1.Q4. How would you describe the amount of time your child spends on screens outside of school? Parents n=3,001. Net: “Too much” combines “Far too much” and “Slightly too much”. The “far too much” figures are the single code.

8 A1.Q3. What, if anything, do you believe your child's screen time at home is directly causing the most? (Select up to 3) Parents n=3,001. 2025 Report, Q21 (parents). Thinking about the amount of time your child spends on their smartphone, laptop/computer or tablet. How, if at all, does it impact them? (Select up to 3) Parents whose child has access to a smartphone, tablet or laptop n=5,780.

9 A1.Q9. Do you think smartphones should be allowed in school? Parents n=3,001.

APPENDIX

10 A2.Q34. In the past month, how often, if ever, have you used an AI tool to talk through a personal problem or get emotional support, not for schoolwork? Children n=3,001. A1.Q17. As far as you are aware, has your child ever used an AI tool for emotional support or personal advice? Parents n=3,001. Net: use in the past month combines all frequencies from “Every day” to “Once a month”. “At least weekly” combines “Every day”, “4-6 days a week”, “2-3 days a week” and “Once a week”. “Daily or almost daily” combines “Every day” and “4-6 days a week”. “Have not used it this way” combines both “Never” codes.

11 A2.Q31. If you needed to check a piece of information, what would you trust the most? Children n=3,001. Net: “a human source” combines “A parent”, “A teacher” and “A friend”; “tech” combines “A search engine such as Google”, “An AI tool” and “Social media”.

12 B.Q3. Compared to students you taught five years ago, how has their ability to concentrate in class changed, if at all? Teachers n=300. Net: “Worse” combines “Significantly worse than before” and “Somewhat worse than before”; “Better” combines “Significantly better than before” and “Somewhat better than before”.

13 A1.Q2. In your experience, what do you consider the biggest challenges for children in school today, if anything? (Select up to 3) Parents n=3,001.

14 B.Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Statement cited: “I think restricting access to social media is an effective way to protect children online.” Teachers n=300. Net: “Agree” combines “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”.

15 B.Q8. Compared to students five years ago, how have the following changed? Item cited: “Reading comprehension”. Teachers n=300. Net: “Worsened” combines “Worsened significantly” and “Worsened somewhat”.

16 B.Q8. Compared to students five years ago, how have the following changed? Item cited: “Handwriting quality”. Teachers n=300. Net: “Worsened” combines “Worsened significantly” and “Worsened somewhat”.

17 B.Q8. Compared to students five years ago, how have the following changed? Item cited: “Basic maths ability”. Teachers n=300. Net: “Worsened” combines “Worsened significantly” and “Worsened somewhat”.

18 A2.Q36. On a scale of 1–5, how confident or not confident are you that you can identify a deepfake image or video? Children n=3,001. A1.Q8. On a scale of 1–5, how confident or not confident are you that your child can identify a deepfake image or video? Parents n=3,001. Net: “Confident” combines “1 = Completely confident” and “2 = Somewhat confident”.

19 B.Q18. Overall, which of the following best describes how you see AI when it comes to your students' education? Teachers n=300. A1.Q15. Overall, which of the following, if any, best describes how you see AI when it comes to your child's education? Parents n=3,001. A2.Q43. Overall, which of the following, if any, best describes how you see AI when it comes to your own education? Children aged 14–16 n=1,110.

20 A2.Q27. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Statement cited: “If you work hard, you can succeed regardless of your background.” Children aged 14–16 n=1,110. Net: “Agree” combines “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”.

21 A1.Q1. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale you think today's children are closer to. Pair cited: “Hard work and effort (A) – Background and privilege matter more than effort (B)”. Parents n=3,001. B.Q1. For each pair below, indicate which end of the scale you think today's students are closer to. Pair cited: “Hard work and effort (A) – Background and privilege matter more than effort (B)”. Teachers n=300. Net: figures combine “Strongly agree with A” and “Lean toward A”.

CHAPTER 2 · AI IN EDUCATION

22 A1.Q10. How confident or not confident do you feel to guide your child's use of AI at home? Parents n=3,001. 2025 Report, Q14 (parents). How confident would you feel teaching your child how to develop the AI skills they need to be future ready? Parents n=5,859. Net: 2026 “Confident” combines “Very confident” and “Quite confident”.

APPENDIX

23 A1.Q7. As far as you are aware, how often, if ever, does your child submit AI-generated content as their own work? Parents whose child uses AI tools for schoolwork n=2,307. Net: “has submitted” combines all frequencies from “Every day” to “Less than once a year” (excludes “Never” and “Unsure”).

24 A2.Q33. How often, if ever, do you submit AI-generated content as your own work? Children who use AI tools for schoolwork n=2,293. Net: “has submitted” combines all frequencies from “Every day” to “Less than once a year” (excludes “Never” and “Unsure”).

25 B.Q12. Have you received any formal training on how to use AI tools in the classroom? Teachers n=300. 2025 Report, Q16 (teachers). Are you receiving training via your school in teaching the AI skills your students need to be future ready? Teachers n=300. Net: “No formal training” combines “No, but I would like to receive training” and “No, and I do not feel I need it”. Country figures for training received combine “Yes, as part of my school's professional development programme” and “Yes, but I sought it out independently”.

26 B.Q14. How confident, if at all, do you feel to guide your students in the safe and effective use of AI? Teachers n=300. 2025 Report, Q14 (teachers). How confident are you in your ability to teach your students the AI skills they need to be future ready? Teachers n=300. Net: “Confident” combines “Very confident” and “Somewhat confident”.

27 B.Q13. What do you currently teach students about AI? (Select all that apply) Teachers n=300.

28 A2.Q40. Have you ever been formally taught how to use AI tools as part of your school lessons? Children n=3,001.

29 B.Q13. What do you currently teach students about AI? (Select all that apply) Teachers n=300.

30 A1.Q14. How well or not well do you think schools are responding to AI becoming part of everyday life? Parents n=3,001. Net: “Not well” combines “Not very well” and “Not at all well”.

31 A2.Q41. Which of the following have you been taught about AI at school, if any? (Select all that apply) Children who have been formally taught how to use AI tools at school n=1,606.

32 A1.Q12. Who, if anyone, do you think should be primarily responsible for teaching children to use AI responsibly? Parents n=3,001. B.Q16. Who do you think should be primarily responsible for teaching children to use AI responsibly? Teachers n=300.

33 A1.Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the government is doing enough to set clear rules for how AI is used in schools? Parents n=3,001. B.Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Statement cited: “I think the government is doing enough to set clear rules for how AI is used in schools.” Teachers n=300. Net: “Agree” combines “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”.

34 B.Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Statement cited: “AI tools could meaningfully support students with special learning needs such as dyslexia or ADHD.” Teachers n=300. Net: “Agree” combines “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”.

35 B.Q18. Overall, which of the following best describes how you see AI when it comes to your students' education? Teachers n=300.

36 B.Q19. What do you currently use AI tools for in your own professional work? (Select all that apply) Teachers n=300. Net: “use AI” covers all teachers who did not select “I do not currently use AI tools” (any professional use).

37 B.Q18. Overall, which of the following best describes how you see AI when it comes to your students' education? Teachers n=300.

38 B.Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Statement cited: “The current rules and recommendations around AI use in schools are clear.” Teachers n=300. Net: “Agree” combines “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”.

39 B.Q6. How confident are you that the majority of your students could complete each of the following without using AI? All six items shown. Teachers n=300. Net: “Not confident” combines “Not too confident” and “Not at all confident”.

CHAPTER 3 · THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

40 A1.Q18. Overall, how satisfied or not satisfied are you with the education your child is currently receiving? Parents n=3,001. Net: “Satisfied” combines “Very satisfied” and “Quite satisfied”; “Dissatisfied” combines “Quite dissatisfied” and “Very dissatisfied”.

APPENDIX

41 A1.Q20. Based on what your child is learning today, how prepared or not prepared do you feel they are for life after school? Parents n=3,001. B.Q20. Based on what students are learning today, how prepared do you feel the majority of them are for life after school? Teachers n=300. Net: “Prepared” combines “Very prepared” and “Quite prepared”; “Not prepared” combines “Not very prepared” and “Not at all prepared”.

42 A2.Q48. Which, if any, subjects do you think should be integrated into the curriculum to prepare you for the future and the world of work? (Select up to 5) Children n=3,001. 2025 Report, Q9_CHILD (children). And, which, if any, of the below subjects do you think you need to be ready for the world of work? (Select up to 5) Children n=5,859.

43 A1.Q22. Which, if any, subjects do you think should be integrated into the curriculum to prepare your child for the future and the world of work? (Select up to 5) Parents n=3,001. 2025 Report, Q10 (parents). Which, if any, of the below subjects do you think should be integrated into the curriculum to prepare your child for the future and the world of work? (Select up to 5) Parents n=5,859.

44 B.Q22. Which, if any, subjects do you think should be integrated into the curriculum to prepare students for the future and the world of work? (Select up to 5) Teachers n=300.

45 A1.Q21. Think about what your child needs to learn to be ready for the future and the world of work. Which subjects do you think are no longer fit for purpose, if any? (Select up to 3) Parents n=3,001. B.Q21. Think about what your students need to learn to be ready for the future and the world of work. Which subjects do you think are no longer fit for purpose, if any? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300.

46 2025 Report, Q7.A (teachers). Think about what your students need to learn to be ready for the future and the world of work. Which of the following subjects do you think are taught in a way that is no longer fit for purpose? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300.

47 A2.Q47. Which subjects, if any, do you think you don't need to learn to be prepared for the future? (Select up to 3) Children aged 14–16 n=1,110.

48 A1.Q26. What soft skills, if any, do you think will be most important for your child in the future with the prevalence of AI? (Select up to 5) Parents n=3,001. B.Q23. What soft skills, if any, do you think will be most important for children in the future with the prevalence of AI? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300. 2025 Report, Q11 (parents). What soft skills do you think will be more important for your child in the future with the prevalence of AI? (Select up to 5) Parents who think soft skills will become more important n=3,041. 2025 Report, Q10 (teachers). What soft skills do you think will be more important for your students in the future with the prevalence of AI? (Select up to 5) Teachers who think soft skills will become more important n=155.

49 A2.Q49. “Soft skills” are the abilities that help you work well with others and handle different situations. What soft skills, if any, do you think will be most important for you in the future? (Select up to 3) Children n=3,001.

50 B.Q25. What do you now find yourself doing as part of your role that was not expected of teachers five years ago? (Select all that apply) Teachers n=300.

51 B.Q24. When you think about what a teacher should mainly do, which of these comes closest to your view? Teachers n=300.

52 B.Q32. Do you see more mental health issues in the classroom now compared to five years ago? Teachers n=300.

53 B.Q27. Which aspects of a teacher's role do you think could realistically be taken over by AI within the next ten years? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300.

54 2025 Report, Q5 (teachers). What role do you think AI will play in education for students in the future? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300.

55 B.Q30. Which types of assessment do you believe to be most effective? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300.

56 B.Q28. Are traditional timed exams still fit for purpose? Teachers n=300.

57 B.Q26. Which of the following challenges have increased most in your interactions with parents? (Select up to 3) Teachers n=300.

APPENDIX

58 A1.Q24. Please rank the following in order of preference for your own child's future, starting with your first choice. Item cited: “University degree”. Parents with a preference n=2,545.

59 A1.Q24. Please rank the following in order of preference for your own child's future, starting with your first choice. Item cited: “Apprenticeship or vocational training”. Parents with a preference n=2,545.