

TUTORING - THE NEW LANDSCAPE

Recent trends in private and school-based tutoring

Carl Cullinane and Rebecca Montacute

- March 2023





About the Sutton Trust

The Sutton Trust is a foundation which improves social mobility in the UK through evidence-based programmes, research and policy advocacy.

Copyright © 2023 Sutton Trust. All rights reserved. Please cite the Sutton Trust when using material from this research.

About the authors

Carl Cullinane is Director of Research & Policy at the Sutton Trust

Rebecca Montacute is Senior Research & Policy Manager at the Sutton Trust

This report includes data from the COSMO Longitudinal Study: <http://cosmostudy.uk>

COSMO

COVID Social Mobility
& Opportunities Study

Supported by



Partners



CENTRE FOR
LONGITUDINAL
STUDIES



Contents

Key Findings.....	3
Policy recommendations	5
Introduction.....	7
Data and methodology	9
Policy background.....	10
Private tutoring trends – secondary school pupils.....	15
In depth – who gets private tutoring?	18
Tutoring and the pandemic	24
Discussion	32

Key Findings

Secondary pupils - 11-16 year-olds

- 30% of young people aged 11-16 report ever having had private tutoring, up from 27% pre-pandemic, and the joint highest figure since the time series began in 2005, when it was 18%. 11% report receiving tutoring in the 2021/22 school year, and 12% in the previous year.
- Black and Asian pupils were more than twice as likely to have ever received private tutoring (50% and 55%), compared to White pupils (24%). 46% of pupils in London had received private tutoring, compared to 30% for England as a whole.
- 24% of young people report receiving tutoring from their school in the 2021/22 school year, up from 18% in the previous year. Most of this is in the form of small group tutoring (20% of pupils in 2021/22), compared to 7% one-to-one (with some pupils experiencing both).
- Pupils more likely to have received in-school tutoring include Year 11 pupils, Black pupils, London pupils, and those who felt that their progress was affected by the pandemic.
- 52% agreed that their progress in school suffered as a result of COVID-19. 76% of Year 11s compared to 34% in Year 7. 31% of Free School Meal (FSM) pupils strongly agreed that the pandemic affected their progress, compared to 21% overall.

Covid Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) Study cohort (Year 11 in 2020/21)

- COSMO allows an unprecedented insight into the use of private tuition in the latter stages of secondary school, for the cohort who were in Year 11 in 2020/21. Overall rates of tutoring in Year 10 and Year 11 are close to overall rates of tutoring in the Sutton Trust's ongoing time series: 11% in Year 10 (pre-pandemic), and 9% in the pandemic-disrupted Year 11, in 2020/21. However, the usual surge in tutoring during Year 11 did not occur for this cohort.
- 18% of all pupils undertook some private tutoring in Year 10 or 11, with wide inequalities in those who were taking it up. 32% of those in the top quarter of incomes had undertaken private tutoring compared to 13% in the bottom. The top quartile in particular is out on its own, with the second highest quartile at 18%.
- Tutoring is higher at grammar schools (23%) than independent schools (19%) or comprehensive schools (18%). There is substantial variation in the comprehensive sector: at the least deprived schools, rates were 31%, compared to 12% at the most deprived schools.
- Those in professional/managerial households (24%), were more likely than those in routine/manual households (11%). Those with a graduate parent were twice as likely to receive tutoring as those without (26% to 13%).
- There were also substantial differences by ethnicity. 33% of Black African pupils received tutoring, followed by Indian (32%) and Bangladeshi (32%). This is twice the rate among White pupils (16%). Among working class households only, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African pupils had the highest rates of private tutoring, more than 3 times higher than White pupils.

- London is substantially above other regions (27%) in private tutoring rates, compared to 12% in the North East. South East (19%) and East of England (18%) were the closest to rates in the capital. Tutoring is also associated with lower levels of neighbourhood deprivation. While cities had the highest tutoring rates, this was not substantially higher than rural areas.

National Tutoring Programme and school-based tutoring

- The establishment of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) in 2020 has had a substantial impact on the tutoring landscape. In early 2020, 10% of secondary school leaders reported that one-to-one and small group tuition was their priority for pupil premium spending that year. By 2022 this was 34%.
- Between November 2020 and October 2022 (from launch of the NTP up to the latest time period data is available for), there were 2,854,648 course starts by pupils.
- Early challenges with scaling delivery of tutoring rapidly during the height of the pandemic were partially addressed by a change in the delivery model in the second year of the NTP. While initially tutoring was sourced either through a list of quality approved suppliers, or through the appointment of 'academic mentors', from the second year schools were given the money directly to spend on tutoring. This has led to concerns about the quality of tutoring through this 'school-led' route.
- There have also been concerns about the targeting of the NTP, which in its first two years had a pupil premium eligibility rate of under 50%. In its second year a target rate of 65% had to be dropped.
- Nonetheless, data revealed here shows that school tutoring has had a significant impact on the distribution of tutoring. During the 2020/21 academic year 41% of year 11 pupils in state comprehensive schools reported being offered some type of tutoring by their school, with 28% taking it up. This compares to 9% undertaking private tutoring during this time.
- Across a variety of measures the pattern of school-based tutoring is the opposite of private tutoring. The most deprived schools have the lowest rates of private tutoring (19 percentage points lower than the least deprived), but the highest rates of school tutoring (13 percentage points higher than the least deprived). This also holds for household income, parental education as well as region. Areas such as the North East, East Midlands and Yorkshire which had among the lowest levels of private tutoring had among the highest levels of school tutoring.
- This has led to a significant levelling of the playing field in access to tutoring overall. Among the COSMO cohort, while private tutoring was 3.5 times more likely in higher and managerial households compared to routine and manual households, when looking at those who had any type of tutoring the gap narrows to just 1 percentage point. A similar pattern is seen looking at household income. A gap of almost 15 percentage points in private tutoring narrows to one of less than 3 percentage points in all tutoring.
- The potential of harnessing tutoring to narrow gaps is evident, however, discrepancies remain in access to one-to-one tutoring, and likely in access to the highest quality tutoring. Further evaluation is also needed. However, the National Tutoring Programme has demonstrated what could be achieved, and it is vital that going forward we don't revert to the pre-pandemic status quo of highly unequal access to tutoring.

Policy recommendations

For government

- 1) The National Tutoring Programme should be seen as a core part of the school system going forward, with delivery re-focused in the long term to tackle the attainment gap.** Tutoring has been an important part of government catch-up plans, with many pupils still in need of this important support. But government should also be looking seriously at the long-term future of the NTP, and the potential the programme has to open up access to tutoring. While the NTP has had many challenges, tutoring is a well-evidenced intervention, with significant potential to help close the attainment gap between poorer students and their better-off peers.
- 2) The NTP should be re-focused on disadvantaged students.** To tackle the attainment gap, the NTP needs to be more clearly targeted at disadvantaged pupils. This could be done by the use of stricter targets and incentives for uptake by students eligible for the pupil premium.
- 3) The school-led tuition arm of the NTP should be reformed to encourage best practice.** School-led tuition, with provision fully integrated into the existing curriculum, could provide high quality and effective tuition to students. But the current deployment of school-led tutors does not have adequate quality safeguards built in, and we do not yet know how effective this provision has been in schools. Full evaluation of this part of the NTP is due to be carried out, the findings of which should be studied carefully, with additional safeguards put in place to share and encourage best practice. Tutoring carried out in schools should be accountable to Ofsted as part of the inspectorate's overall assessment of a school's overall quality of teaching.
- 4) The Tuition Partners arm of the NTP should be re-invigorated, with a focus on quality provision and efforts to build the supply of high quality tutoring nationally – including in cold spot areas.** There remains an important role for central organisation in maintaining quality standards and actively building capacity in underserved areas. School-led tutoring won't be the right fit for all schools, and external tutoring organisations have years of expertise to draw on when delivering provision in schools. But these organisations do not have adequate reach across the country, with many areas outside of the South East of England underserved. The Tuition Partners arm of the NTP should work to develop this market, helping high quality providers to expand to underserved areas.
- 5) The planned cut to the NTP subsidy should be postponed, to give the tutoring more time to embed fully into the school system.** Due to the speed of scale-up required in response to the pandemic, the programme has had a rocky start, with many schools yet to be fully convinced of the value of additional tuition. There's a risk that without additional funding, rates of tuition in schools will fall sharply. In the immediate term, the government should postpone cutting the NTP subsidy, and give schools both longer to recover from the pandemic, and the NTP longer to establish itself in the school system as a long-term feature post-pandemic. Longer term, government should look at additional funding for tutoring, or ways to incentivise schools to use pupil premium funding to cover the cost of quality tuition.

For schools

- 1) Tutoring is most effective in smaller groups, which should be no larger than six to seven pupils.
- 2) Content should be linked to the wider curriculum and targeted to pupils' specific needs, with the use of assessment to aid targeting. Teaching staff and departmental leads should meet regularly with tutors, to discuss pupils' progress and ensure content is clearly linked to the curriculum.
- 3) A course should ideally be made up of frequent sessions of up to an hour, over a period of six to 12 weeks.
- 4) Tutoring should ideally take place outside of and alongside lessons, not within or instead of them. If tutoring does take place instead of classroom lessons, it should at least compensate for the time spent away from class.
- 5) Schools should look at providing additional training/professional development opportunities to staff working as tutors.

More detailed guidance on implementing tutoring in schools can be found in the following guide from the Education Endowment Foundation:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/making-a-difference-with-effective-tutoring>

Introduction

Private tutoring is an issue the Sutton Trust has been calling attention to for two decades. It acts as an extra layer of the education system, serving predominantly to reinforce the advantages of privilege. Over the years, Sutton Trust research has shown the growth of private tutoring, access to which is heavily skewed towards the wealthy.¹

For younger children, tutoring can help those in wealthier families to prepare for the 11 plus exam, helping to secure places in grammar schools. Later on, it helps to supplement teaching to improve the grades that pupils achieve at GCSE and A Level, facilitating their progression to academically competitive sixth forms, and later to their chosen university and course.

Huge sums of money are spent each year by parents on private tutoring, estimated as a £2 billion industry in 2016.² Evidence also shows that one-to-one and small group tuition are some of the most effective strategies for raising attainment. Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has shown that access to one-to-one tuition can help students make up to 5 months of additional progress,³ with group tuition having the potential to support students to make up to 4 months of progress.⁴ The [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#) also highlights that pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and low attainers are likely to obtain additional benefits.

This means that tutoring, if targeted at the right groups, has huge potential to support the most disadvantaged students, and to help to close the attainment gap between this group and their better off classmates. Because of this, the Sutton Trust has consistently called for greater access to tuition for those who could not otherwise afford it, to help to tackle the attainment gap.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the educational landscape, causing a huge amount of disruption to education, especially for the poorest pupils. Disadvantaged young people often lacked the devices, internet connection or quiet space needed to study at home. The effects of the pandemic are likely to be long-lasting, with evidence so far suggesting that poorer students have fallen even further behind their classmates following the crisis.⁵ These issues are being explored in depth through the COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) study, a major new longitudinal study of young people run as a collaboration between UCL and the Sutton Trust.⁶

Given the strong evidence behind the effectiveness of tutoring, it became a key focus of early government efforts to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on learning. In the summer of 2020, the government announced the creation of the National Tutoring Programme, a new initiative to make

¹ <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/private-tuition-polling-2019/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/private-tuition-polling-2018/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/extra-time-private-tuition/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/shadowschooling-private-tuition-social-mobility/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/private-tuition-polling-2015/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/parent-power/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/evidence-educational-support-outside-school/>
<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/mori-schools-omnibus-2005-wave-11/>

² <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/shadowschooling-private-tuition-social-mobility/>

³ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition#:~:text=Technical%20Appendix-.What%20is%20it%3F,a%20replacement%20for%20other%20lessons.>

⁴ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition>

⁵ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-covid-19-on-pupil-attainment>

<https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/sutton-trust-comment-on-new-key-stage-4-data/>

<https://cosmostudy.uk/publications/lockdown-learning>

⁶ COSMO is a collaboration between the UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities (CEPEO), the Sutton Trust, and the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, with fieldwork led by Kantar Public.

tutoring available to a wider range of young people through schools for the first time, with initial set-up supported by several charities, including the Sutton Trust.⁷ The programme was created with the explicit aim of helping students to catch-up post pandemic, particularly those from poorer households who had been the most impacted by the associated disruption. As an evidence-based policy intervention, it had every chance of success. However, in the years since, the programme has been heavily criticised, with questions as to whether it successfully reached and provided sufficient support for the young people who needed it, as well as providing schools with the support they needed to help pupils.⁸

This report looks in detail at this new landscape for tutoring, both private and school-based, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the latest data from the time series on tuition the Sutton Trust has carried out since 2005 via Ipsos' Young People Omnibus, together with data from the COSMO study, we are able to take the most detailed examination to date of who is receiving private tuition. This is accompanied by new data and policy analysis of school-led tuition both during and post pandemic. On the basis of that analysis, this report also looks at options for the future of the National Tutoring Programme, looking at how it can be re-focused to deliver for the most disadvantaged young people in future, both to help them catch-up post-pandemic, and to tackle the long-standing attainment gap.

⁷ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/300m-national-tutoring-programme-launched>

⁸ See for example <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/jan/11/national-tutoring-programme-has-failed-pupils-and-taxpayers-says-labour#:~:text=National%20tutoring%20programme%20has%20failed%20pupils%20and%20taxpayers%2C%20says%20Labour,-,This%20article%20is&text=Labour%20has%20accused%20the%20government's,up%20rates%20way%20below%20target.,https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/10/national-tutoring-scheme-failing-disadvantaged-pupils-say-mps> and <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/may/02/schools-urged-to-adopt-maligned-national-tutoring-programme>

Data and methodology

This report presents data from two main sources:

- 1.) The Ipsos Young People Omnibus, an annual survey of pupils aged 11-16 in state schools in England and Wales, in which the Trust first asked questions about private tutoring in 2005, and then annually since 2009. Fieldwork for the latest data, shown here for the first time, was collected from 2,394 pupils across 60 schools between 14th March and 1st July 2022, through an online questionnaire. Data are weighted by sex, age and region to be representative of the school population.
- 2.) The COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) Study, a national longitudinal cohort study of young people in England, focused on the cohort of pupils who were in Year 11 in 2020/21 and had their GCSE preparations severely disrupted and ultimately their exams cancelled. Data here is presented from Wave 1 of the study, conducted in the winter and spring of 2021/22.⁹

⁹ Anders, J., Calderwood, L., Crawford, C., Cullinane, C., Goodman, A., Macmillan, L., Patalay, P., Wyness, G. (2023). *COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities Study: Wave 1, 2021-2022*. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 9000, [DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-9000-2](https://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9000-2)

Policy background

Pre-pandemic access to tutoring

Previous Sutton Trust work has shown a growing demand for private tutoring since 2005, with wide inequalities in access between the poorest and richest students. Increased awareness of these disparities has led to a variety of interventions to widen access to tutoring to a broader range of young people. As well as the one-to-one and small group support offered by some schools, external organisations were also set up to help widen access. For example, the Tutor Trust was set up in Manchester in 2011 to provide tuition for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in the North of England, paying tutors for their time.¹⁰ Similarly, the charity Action Tutoring, set up in London in 2011, uses volunteers to provide tutors for state schools across England.¹¹ Some private tutoring organisations also offered free or reduced-priced hours for students who would otherwise be unable to afford tuition. However, while welcome, these isolated efforts were not of the scale needed to make a real difference to level up access to tutoring for disadvantaged young people.

Initial set up of the National Tutoring Programme

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) was set up as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Announced just months into the crisis in June 2020, the project was initially created and developed through a collaboration between the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the Sutton Trust, Impetus and Nesta¹² - with Teach First also joining at an early stage.¹³

At the outset, the purpose of the NTP was to support “the most disadvantaged young people”, giving them access to high-quality tutoring to “accelerate their academic progress” and “prevent the gap between them and their more affluent peers from widening”, as part of a programme of Covid catch-up support to help students most impacted by the pandemic.¹⁴

At initial set up, the NTP comprised of two parts:

Tuition Partners: Schools could access heavily subsidised tuition from a list of approved partners. The organisations approved were subject to quality and evaluation standards, to ensure quality control of tutors. In the first year of operation, this process was carried out by the EEF, with providers approved based on a set of safeguarding, evaluation and quality criteria.¹⁵ In the first year of operation, there were 33 tuition partner organisations delivering face to face and online provision.

Academic Mentors: Academic Mentors are trained graduates employed by schools to provide intensive catch-up support to their pupils. In the first year, academic mentors were provided by Teach First.

¹⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20200511022500/https://www.thetutortrust.org/our-story>

¹¹ <https://actiontutoring.org.uk/about-us/our-story-mission-values-disadvantaged-pupils-volunteers/>

¹² <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/national-tutoring-programme/>

¹³ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/teach-first-to-target-axed-trainees-for-new-catch-up-mentor-roles/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-covid-catch-up-plan-to-tackle-impact-of-lost-teaching-time>

¹⁵ <https://trust-journal.org.uk/past-editions/the-national-tutoring-programme-providing-a-sustained-and-flexible-source-of-support-to-schools/>

First year of the NTP: The Education Endowment Foundation and Teach First

Once the programme was given the go-ahead, the Department for Education asked the EEF and Teach First to run the NTP for the first year of its operation. The Sutton Trust, Impetus and Nesta were no longer directly involved with the programme from this point. Despite the programme's stated focus on the most disadvantaged young people, there was no target for pupil premium students in the NTP's first year, with schools able to decide which of their students would most benefit. The programme hit its target to enrol 250,000 pupils by the end of the year, although around 18% of those enrolled had not started their course of tuition at that point.¹⁶ However, many felt that the programme was not reaching pupils quickly enough, and schools reported issues with accessing tutoring in a form that suited their needs.¹⁷

As well as providing tuition directly, the EEF-run NTP also sought to expand the tutoring market to new areas. While many different tutoring organisations were available in some part of the country, notably in the South East, schools in the north and/or in rural areas could often find it difficult to access high quality provision. The EEF specifically stated that it wanted to tackle this issue with the NTP, with the organisation's CEO, Becky Francis, saying the NTP aimed to "inject some rigour and quality into a largely unregulated market. Although there are some excellent tutoring companies out there, not all have high standards, not all implement robust safeguarding practices, not all are cost effective and not all take the effort to train their staff or fit tuition into a school's curriculum."¹⁸

The NTP initially struggled to reach schools in all regions, with data released in March 2021 finding the programme was reaching at or near 100% of its target schools in some regions (100% in the South West and 96% in the South East), but far lower rates in other regions, reaching just 59% of schools in both Yorkshire and the Humber and in the North West, with concerns raised there were not enough providers in the north of England to provide tutoring.¹⁹ Despite the stated purpose of the programme, the first year of the NTP did not have a specific target for reaching pupil premium students, with the Sutton Trust estimating around 47% of those reached in the first year were eligible for PP.²⁰

In October 2022, the National Foundation for Educational Research released an independent evaluation of the first year of the NTP's operation (2020-2021), looking at both Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors.²¹ The evaluation's findings were as follows:

- Only 46% of the pupils selected for Tuition Partners in evaluation schools were eligible for pupil premium (PP), a low proportion compared to the proportion of students eligible for PP in those schools overall.
- The limited reach of the programme to pupil premium students made the impact on this group difficult for the researchers to determine. To try to get around that, the authors looked at a subset of schools who did select high proportions of pupil premium schools. In those schools, they did find a positive impact for Tuition Partners on both English and maths (equivalent to two months additional progress). However, as this analysis was based on only a subset of schools, they stress it should be treated with caution.

¹⁶ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/long-read-how-the-flagship-tutoring-programme-is-slowly-sinking/>

¹⁷ <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/support-for-childrens-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

¹⁸ <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/tutoring-will-ntp-help-students-catch>

¹⁹ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/data-reveals-scale-of-national-tutoring-programmes-northern-challenge/>

²⁰ See Table 1b

²¹ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/new-independent-evaluation-of-the-national-tutoring-programme-ntp>

- Most of the tuition taking place was happening during lesson time, with some school staff concerned about students falling behind due to missing lessons.
- Academic Mentors had similar issues, with only 49% of students receiving this support being eligible for pupil premium. Again, this made it difficult to determine the impact on this group of students.
- NFER recommended that more should be done to target the NTP at disadvantaged pupils.

However, the report authors noted that both delivery and evaluation of the NTP in this time period were done during extreme disruption, as the COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing, including further school closures and normal exam processes being suspended. They highlight that this wider context needed to be considered when making any assessment of the first year of the NTP's operations. The EEF also released its own reflections on Year 1 of the NTP, highlighting the tension between an evidenced-based programme design and the flexibility schools need to deliver an intervention, and the challenge of maintaining quality when scaling an intervention.²²

Second year of the NTP: Randstad

The contract for the second year of the NTP's operation was put out to tender by the Department for Education. The EEF and Teach First bid to run the NTP for a second year, but in June 2021 the government announced that a Dutch multinational human resources firm, Randstad, would deliver the NTP from September of that year for the next three years, with annual review points. The firm bid to run the programme at a much lower cost than the EEF, although its bid was rated lower on quality.²³

At the same time the government announced the contract had been won by Randstad, it also announced a major increase in courses being offered by the NTP, promising two million tutoring courses would be delivered in the next academic year, a huge increase on the 250,000 courses students were enrolled on in the previous year. Government also announced at this point that schools could start to source additional tutoring using locally-sourced tutors,²⁴ rather than being limited to provision via Tuition Partners.

Schools had reported they were struggling to access support through the NTP, pointing to the shortage of qualified tutors in parts of England, and school unions had requested money should instead go to schools directly to find their own tutors.²⁵ There was also increasing pressure to cover more pupils, as the impacts of the pandemic on learning continued to bite. Nonetheless, this was a fundamental shift in the delivery of the NTP, with the focus changing considerably from the quality of delivery (with tuition only available via specific partners who had met a number of quality criteria), to quantity.

This policy shift does appear to have helped to expand reach in the year Randstad ran the NTP, with over 2 million courses started over the course of the year, 81% of which were school-led.²⁶ However, little is known about the quality of this school-led provision. Schools are given support to find "high quality tutors" and school-led tutors are provided training (which is compulsory for any tutors who do not hold qualified teacher status). But the training is short, with the Department of Education

²² https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/NTP_Y1_resources/NTP_TP_Year_1_Reflections.pdf

²³ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/long-read-how-the-flagship-tutoring-programme-is-slowly-sinking/>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/huge-expansion-of-tutoring-in-next-step-of-education-recovery>

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/apr/29/schools-struggling-to-access-tutoring-programme-for-disadvantaged-children>

²⁶ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>

estimating it only takes approximately 11 hours to complete.²⁷ There are few safeguards that the tutoring being provided is of high quality.

NFER are currently completing an evaluation of Year 2 of the NTP,²⁸ results of which are not yet available. There has, however, been considerable criticism of Randstad's delivery. For example, Randstad initially had a target for 65% of the NTP's tuition to go to pupil premium students in Year 2, a target that it subsequently dropped resulting in criticism from several tutoring organisations,²⁹ and from MPs.³⁰ Ultimately, the government made use of the break clause in Randstad's contract to re-tender for Year 3 and 4 of the NTP, although the firm was not barred from re-bidding to run the programme.

Government plans for year three and beyond

With the departure of Randstad, the Department for Education announced that from September 2022, all tutoring funding would go directly to schools, based on how many students were eligible for the pupil premium.³¹ And while both Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors will still exist, schools will organise tutoring directly, with support and training provided by external organisations.³² Three separate small tenders were put out by the Department for training tutors (awarded to charity The Education Development Trust), quality assurance (awarded to education software provider Tribal Group PLC, who were subcontracted by Randstad to look at quality in Year 2), and recruiting and deploying academic mentors (awarded to consultancy firm Cognition Education).³³

Figures available for total courses started for each of the three years of the NTP's operation so far (the first full two years, and the most up to date numbers which are available for 2022/23) are shown in Tables 1a and 1b below.

Table 1a: Available data on number of NTP courses started per year in each strand.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (latest figures to date)
NTP overall	310,717¹	2,144,992⁴	398,939¹
Tuition Partners	232,892 ²	238,247 ⁴	Figure not released
Academic Mentors	103,862 ^{3*}	164,957 ⁴	Figure not released
School-led		1,741,788 ⁴	Figure not released

1 Data from - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2022-23>

2 Data from - <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/press-releases/nfer-publishes-national-tutoring-programme-202021-evaluation-findings/>

3 Data from - <https://d2tic4wwo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/projects/Evaluation-Report-Y11-impact-evaluation-AM.pdf?v=1676558894>

* Note – figure is estimate only (up to February 2021). Note also the discrepancy between overall NTP numbers from

²⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069886/Updated_School-Led_Tutoring_Guidance_.pdf

²⁸ <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief/>

²⁹ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/randstad-failure-blamed-for-ditched-national-tutoring-programme-target/>

³⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/10/national-tutoring-scheme-failing-disadvantaged-pupils-say-mps>

³¹ <https://www.nasuwf.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-advice/covid-19-advice-england/national-tutoring-programme.html#:~:text=for%202022%2F2023-,Funding,Pupil%20Premium%20per%20eligible%20pupil.>

³² <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/tutor-cash-will-go-straight-to-schools-as-randstad-axed/>

³³ <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/e6805fc8-b9cb-4171-92de-669cab1af0f1?origin=SearchResults&p=1> , <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/878f993d-c71d-4a16-8138-36148d788803?origin=SearchResults&p=1> and <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/ca35ebc8-2e17-4fc4-986f-0286400481b2?origin=SearchResults&p=1> and <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/national-tutoring-programme-ntp-contractors-randstad/>

subsequent DfE data and the sum of the numbers reported for Partners and Mentors.

4 Data from - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>

Table 1b: Available data on the percentage of students starting courses who are disadvantaged (measured by Ever 6 FSM)

	2020/21	2021/22
NTP overall	47%¹	47%⁴
Tuition Partners	46% ²	51% ⁴
Academic Mentors	49% ^{3*}	48% ⁴
School-led		47% ⁴

1 Sutton Trust estimate based on available data

2 Data from - <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/press-releases/nfer-publishes-national-tutoring-programme-202021-evaluation-findings/>

3 Data from - <https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/projects/Evaluation-Report-Y11-impact-evaluation-AM.pdf?v=1676558894>

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole percent

4 Data from - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>

The Department is also reducing the amount of funding available to schools for the NTP. During the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years, schools received a 75% subsidy for tuition.³⁴ In 2022/23, this had already been reduced to 60%, and is due to be reduced much further, to just 25% in 2023/24.³⁵

A survey of 11,000 school leaders in England released by the National Association of Head Teachers in November 2022 found a third of heads plan to reduce the number of children receiving tutoring support through the NTP in 2023/24 amid wider funding pressures.³⁶

The next section of this report looks at access to private tuition, both before and during the pandemic, before looking in detail at access to tuition provision provided by schools as part of catch-up efforts.

³⁴ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/national-tutoring-programme-ntp-tuition-partners> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-led-tutoring-conditions-of-grant/school-led-tutoring-conditions-of-grant>

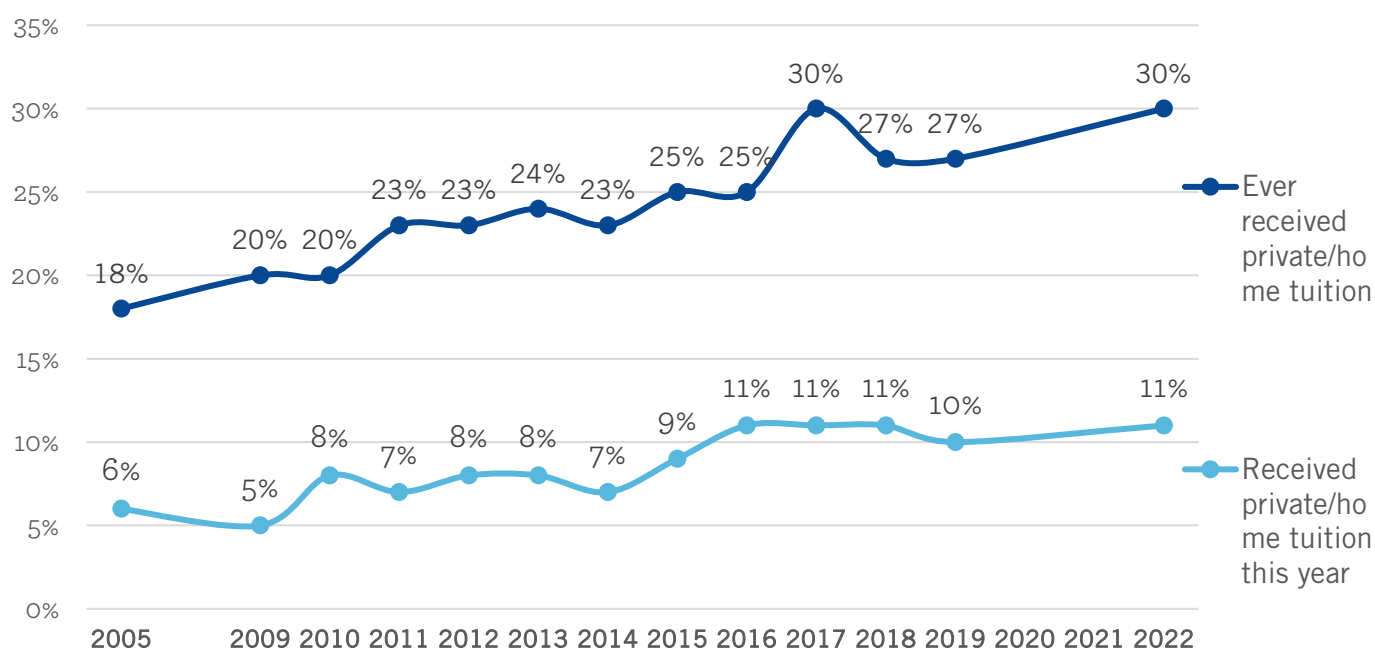
³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-2022-to-2023/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-2022-to-2023>

³⁶ <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/1893/Majority-of-schools-looking-at-redundancies-due-to-funding-crisis-largest-survey-of-school-leaders-shows>

Private tutoring trends – secondary school pupils

The Sutton Trust has been monitoring private tuition for almost twenty years, with the first survey conducted by Ipsos in 2005.³⁷ In that first year, 6% of pupils in state schools aged 11-16 reported having had private tuition in the current academic year, with 18% reporting they had ever had tuition. Both of these figures have steadily crept up over time, reaching 11% reporting private tuition in the current year and 30% ever having had tuition. In seventeen years this is an almost twofold increase. The figure of 30% having ever had private tutoring has never been higher, and is up from 27% pre-pandemic in 2019.

Figure 1. Private tutoring over time



Source: Ipsos Young People Omnibus

Girls were more likely than boys to have ever received tutoring (32% compared to 29%). 21% of those in the 'worst off' homes had tutoring, compared to 35% in the 'best off' homes.³⁸ This figure is also the highest in recent years for these households. 46% of pupils in London had tutoring, compared to 30% elsewhere in England, and 21% in Wales, with North East the lowest at 16%. Black and Asian pupils were more than twice as likely to have ever received private tutoring (50% and 55%), compared to White pupils (24%).

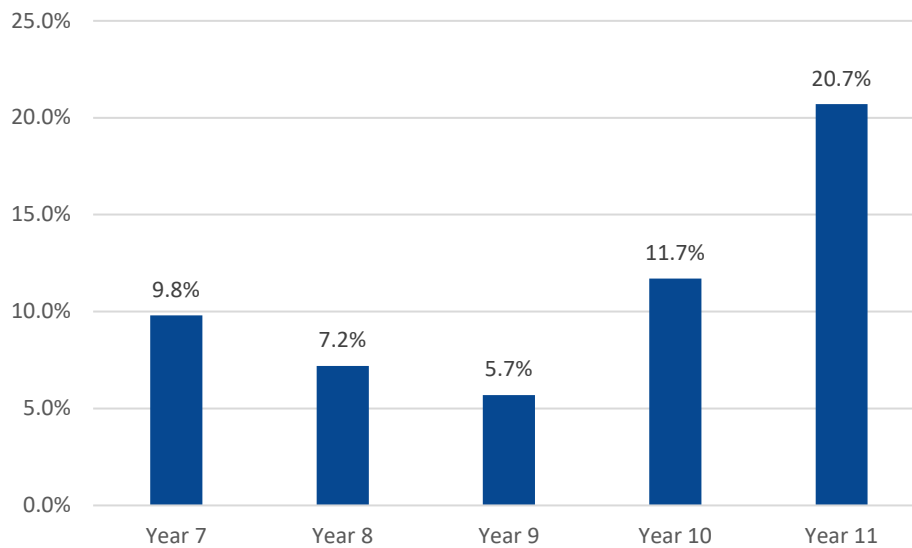
11% of young people reported receiving private tutoring in the 2021/22 school year, compared to 12% in 2020/21. Figure 2 shows the proportion of those reporting tutoring in the current school year by year group. Around 10% of Year 7s report undertaking private tutoring, perhaps indicating those receiving support for the transition to secondary school. This figure then drops to 6% in Year 9, before increasing significantly in Year 10 (12%) and Year 11 (21%) as pupils get closer to their GCSE exams. 19% of Year 7s report having tutoring the year previous, which is likely to include those receiving

³⁷ <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/mori-schools-omnibus-2005-wave-11/>

³⁸ Self-report of young person on a 10 point scale between 'best-off' and 'worst-off', grouped into three categories.

tutoring for the 11 plus exam. 27% of those who had received private tutoring reported that it was for a school entrance exam.

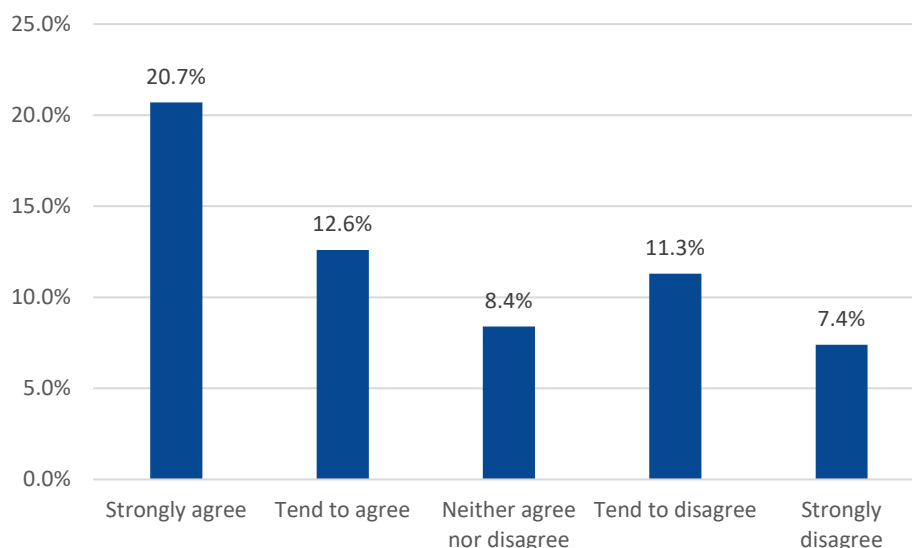
Figure 2. Tutoring in the current year, by school year group



Source: Ipsos Young People Omnibus

Those who felt that their progress in school had suffered as a result of the pandemic were more likely to receive private tutoring. 17% of those who strongly agreed with this statement had tutoring in the current year, compared to 8% of those who strongly disagreed. Similarly, 21% of those who strongly felt that they had fallen behind their classmates as a result of the pandemic had private tutoring, compared to 7% who strongly disagreed with this.

Figure 3. Tutoring in the current year, by whether pupil felt they had fallen behind classmates

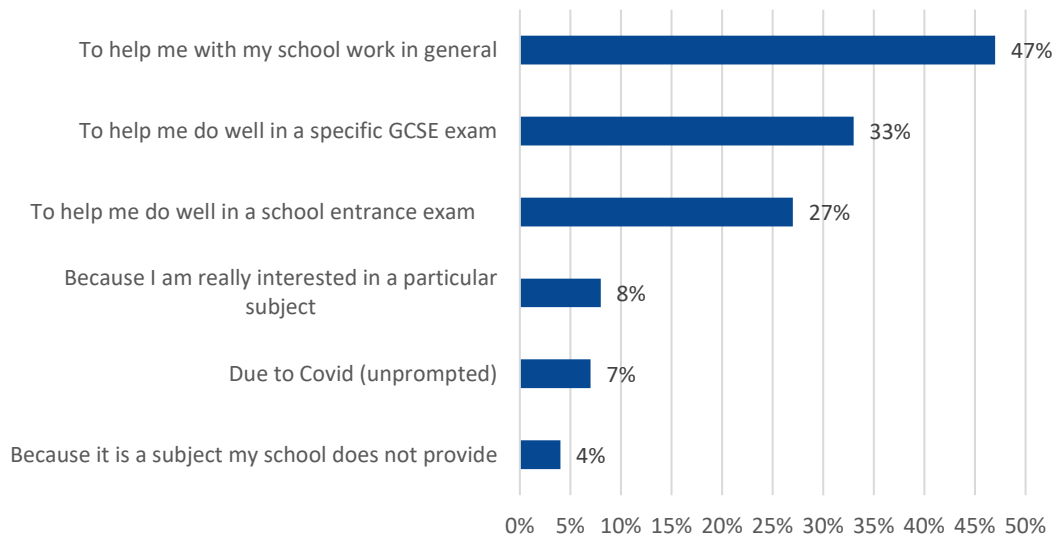


Source: Ipsos Young People Omnibus

Figure 4 shows the reasons given by pupils for the tutoring they received. Helping with school work in general was the most common reason, followed by help needed to do well in a specific GCSE exam. A

substantial proportion reported they had received tutoring for a school entrance exam, including the 11 plus. While these categories have been broadly stable over time in the time series, there has been a decline in pupils receiving tutoring because they are really interested in a particular subject. This year, 7% also mentioned the impact of COVID-19 unprompted.

Figure 4. Reasons for private tutoring

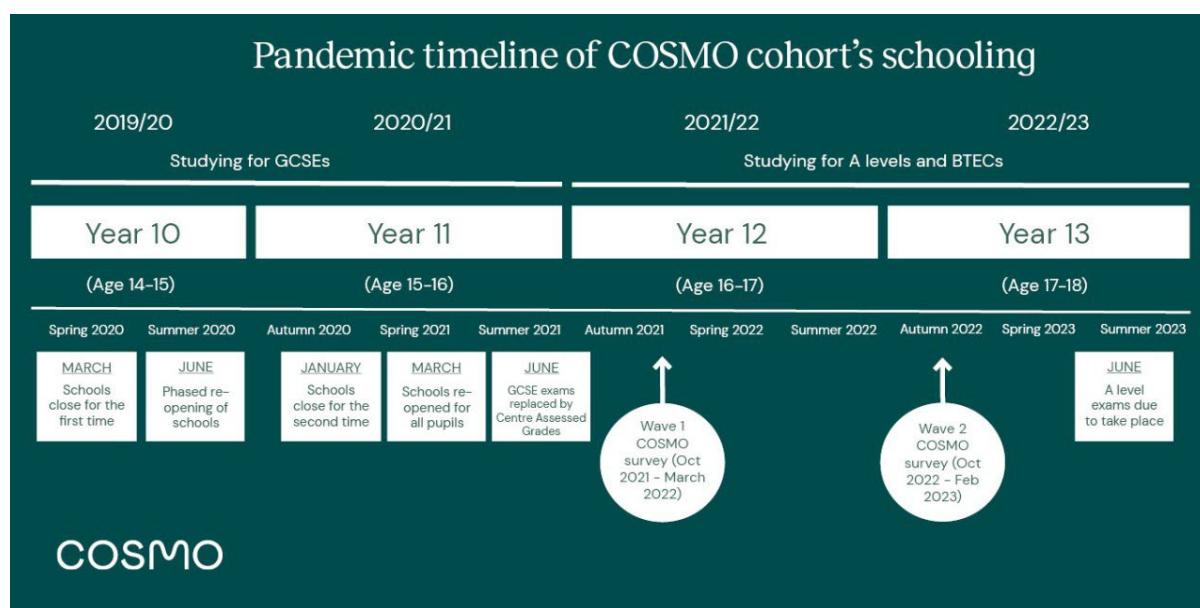


Source: Ipsos Young People Omnibus

In depth – who gets private tutoring?

The [COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities \(COSMO\) Study](#) provides a unique insight into patterns of private tutoring. COSMO is a new national longitudinal cohort study looking at young people in England, focusing on educational inequalities and the short, medium and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on life chances. It recruited a nationally representative sample of around 13,000 young people who were in Year 11 in 2020/21, a group that was particularly impacted by pandemic disruption. Young people and their parents were interviewed online and face-to-face between October 2021 and April 2022. Wave 1 findings from the study, led by the Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities (CEPEO) at UCL, and the Sutton Trust, were published in Autumn 2022.³⁹

Figure 5. Timeline of COSMO cohort



The study includes several questions on the uptake of private tutoring before and during the pandemic period. While the Ipsos Young People Omnibus data is based on the responses of children, COSMO data on tutoring is based on the reports of parents. This is likely to lead to differences, particularly in the understanding of the younger pupils within the Omnibus survey of the nature of private tuition. It should also be highlighted that the COSMO study focuses on one school year group, whereas the YPO includes pupils from Year 7 to Year 11. COSMO, however, provides a much larger sample (almost 13,000, compared to around 2,500 in the Omnibus), as well as a much richer and robust set of background characteristics, allowing a much greater understanding of differences between sub-groups of the population.

Nonetheless, overall rates of tutoring reported in COSMO are similar to those reported in the YPO, with some differences. Tutoring in Year 10 (2019/20) before the pandemic – 11% of pupils - is close to that of Year 10s in YPO. However, in the year following the onset of the pandemic (Year 11), private tutoring rates dropped slightly to 10%, which contrasts with the pattern shown in the YPO each year, showing a spike in tutoring among Year 11s. This could be for a number of reasons, including the cancellation of GCSE exams, the availability of tutors during the peak of the pandemic, as well as

³⁹ <https://cosmostudy.uk/publications>

family worries about face-to-face tutoring and the virus. More details on the patterns of tutoring during the pandemic are included in the following section.

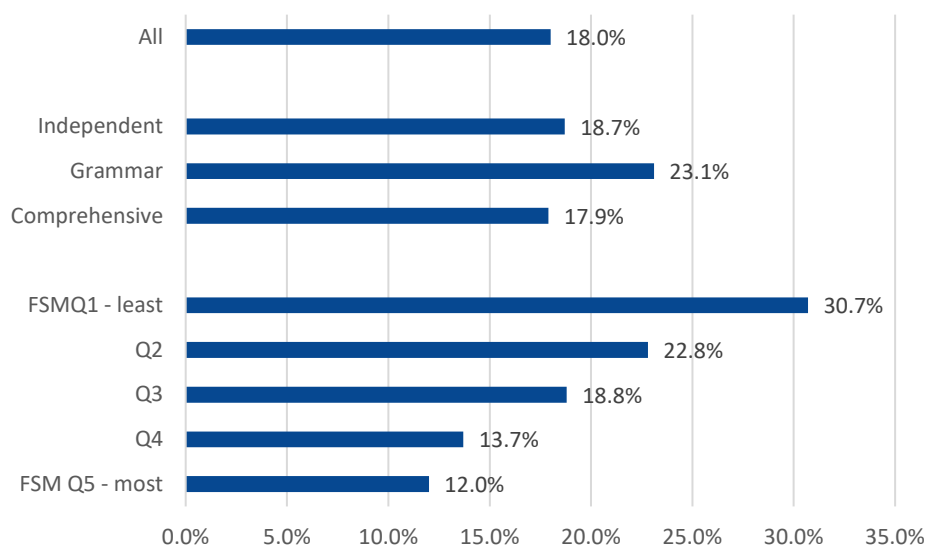
Characteristics of those receiving private tutoring

Overall, 18% of all pupils undertook some private tutoring in Year 10 or 11. This section looks in detail at which groups were able to undertake private tutoring, including the characteristics of the young person themselves, their parents, their school, and where they live. It shows substantial inequalities in access to private tutoring, in greater resolution than previously.

School characteristics

Figure 6 shows tutoring rates among different school types. Those at grammar schools were most likely to receive tutoring (23%). Many independent school pupils also received private tutoring, over and above the resources provided by the private school sector (19%). While the overall figure for comprehensive schools is 18%, this hides enormous disparities within the sector. At the least deprived comprehensive schools (by rates of Free School Meal eligibility), rates of private tutoring were 31%, compared to 12% at the most deprived schools.

Figure 6. Received private tutoring in year 10 or 11, by school characteristics



Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Household characteristics

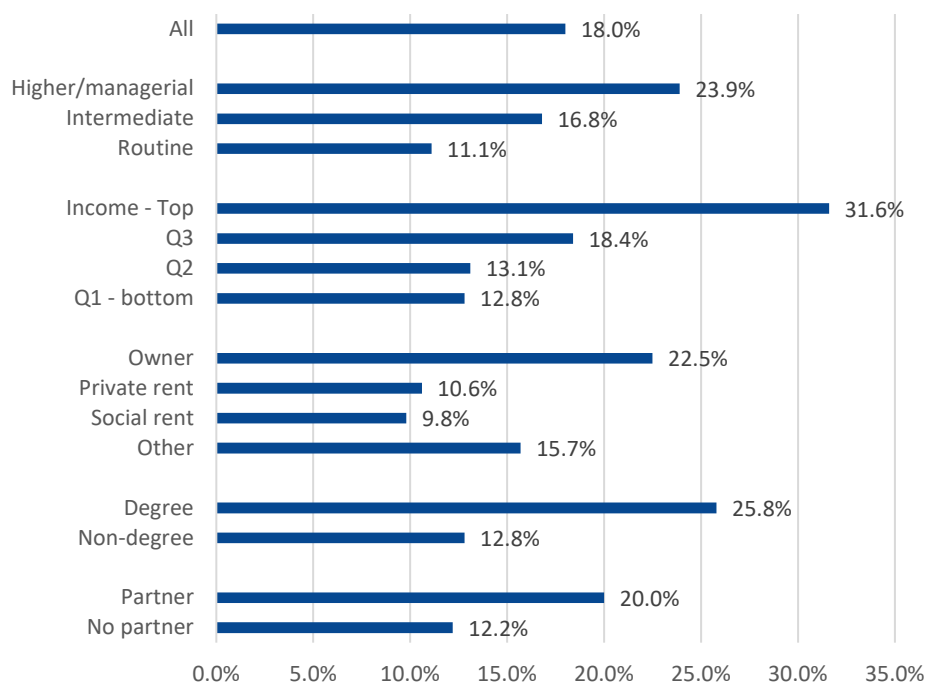
Looking at household characteristics, in particular measures of socio-economic background, there are significant disparities, as you would expect (Figure 7), the most obvious of which is income. Those in the top quartile of household incomes had, by a distance, the highest rates of tutoring, at 32%, with a significant gap even to the second highest quartile (18%). This is in the main driven by extremely high rates among the top rung of incomes (net household income of £75,000 or more), of 35%. This

contrasts with less than 13% of those in the bottom quartile of income paying for private tutoring. Though this figure is likely to be inflated by some well-off households who report low or no income.⁴⁰

Looking at social class, as defined by the NS-SEC three category classification, 24% of those in professional and managerial households received tutoring, compared to 17% of those households with intermediate occupations, and 11% of those with routine and manual occupations (including those who never worked).

There are also associations with the education of parents, with 26% of those with a graduate parent receiving tutoring, twice as many as those without a graduate parent (13%). Pupils in houses with a co-habiting partner were also more likely to receive tutoring (20%), compared to those living with a single parent (12%).

Figure 7. Received private tutoring in year 10 or 11, by household characteristics



Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Pupil characteristics

Looking at characteristics of the pupils themselves, girls were more likely than boys to receive private tutoring (19% compared to 17%). This is consistent with patterns among 11-16 year-olds in general.

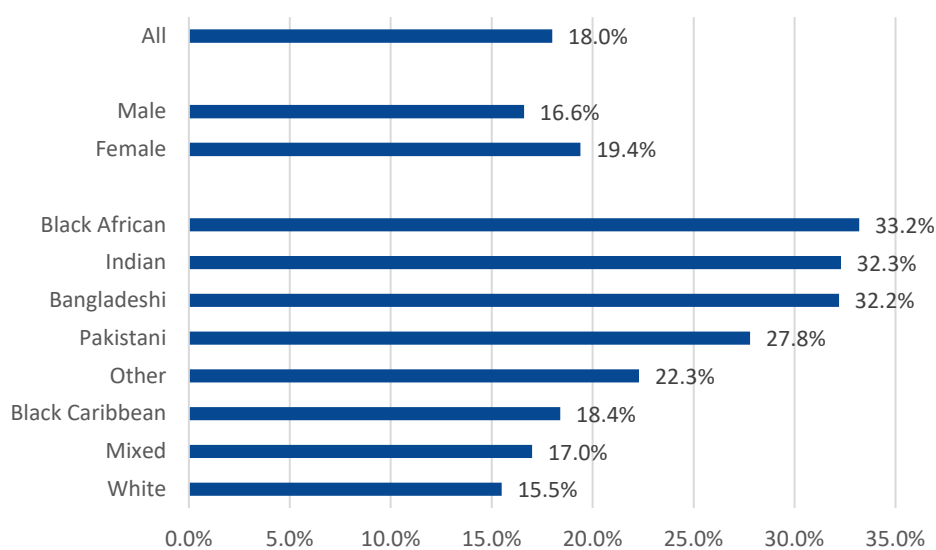
There are particularly stark patterns by ethnicity and race. While previous data from the Young People Omnibus has pointed to broad patterns, the sample size of COSMO, as well as 'sample boosts' for ethnic minority groups, means that these can be examined in greater detail. Black African pupils were

⁴⁰ This phenomenon is seen across a wide variety of datasets:
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/eoj.12334>

the most likely to have received tutoring, at 33%, followed by Indian (32%) and Bangladeshi (32%) pupils. This is twice the rate among White pupils (16%), who had the lowest rates of tutoring. Black Caribbean pupils were just slightly more likely than White pupils to receive tutoring (18%). As seen in many educational contexts, there are substantial differences between Black pupils from an African background and from a Caribbean background.⁴¹ This in part reflects the different make-up of the two communities, particularly in terms of recent immigration. Two thirds (66%) of parents of Black Caribbean pupils in the COSMO study were born in the UK, compared to 14% of Black African. The latter also reported higher levels of parental education and slightly higher incomes.

Pupils with a parent not born in the UK were more likely to be tutored than those born in the UK (24% compared to 16%), potentially reflecting the educational attitudes of recent immigrant groups.⁴²

Figure 8. Received private tutoring in year 10 or 11, by pupil characteristics



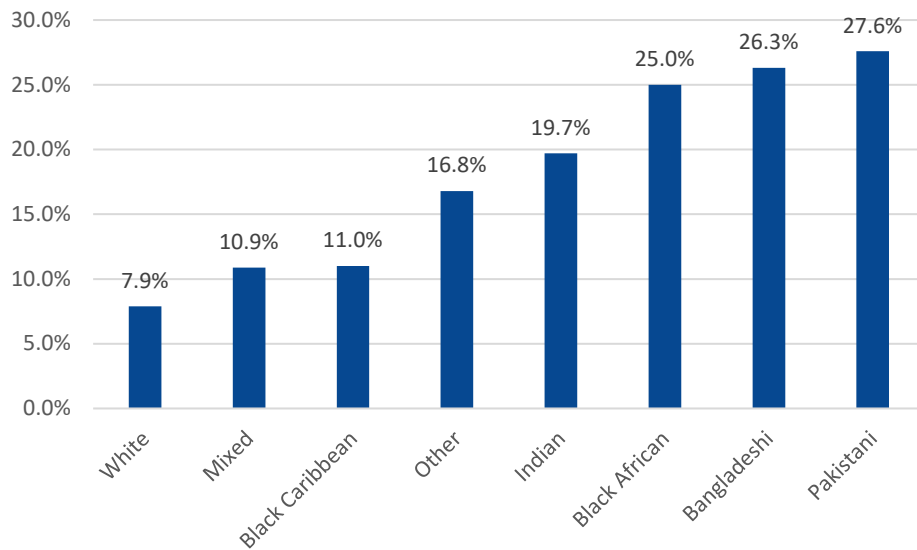
Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Race and ethnicity of course intersect with poverty and social class. Looking at tutoring rates within working class households only shows even larger disparities. Working class Pakistani (28%) and Bangladeshi (26%) students have the highest rates of tutoring, closely followed by Black African (25%), with White working class pupils lowest, at 8%. Looking at the likelihood of receiving private tutoring in a regression analysis with a wide range of individual, parental and geographical control variables, including income and social class, underlines this. Controlling for other factors, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African pupils have odds of being tutored between 4 and 5 times higher than White pupils. Whereas high rates of tutoring among Indian pupils are to a greater degree explained by relatively higher levels of affluence.

⁴¹ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9023/CBP-9023.pdf>

⁴² <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48603046>

Figure 9. Rates of private tutoring in Year 10 or 11 by ethnicity, within working class households

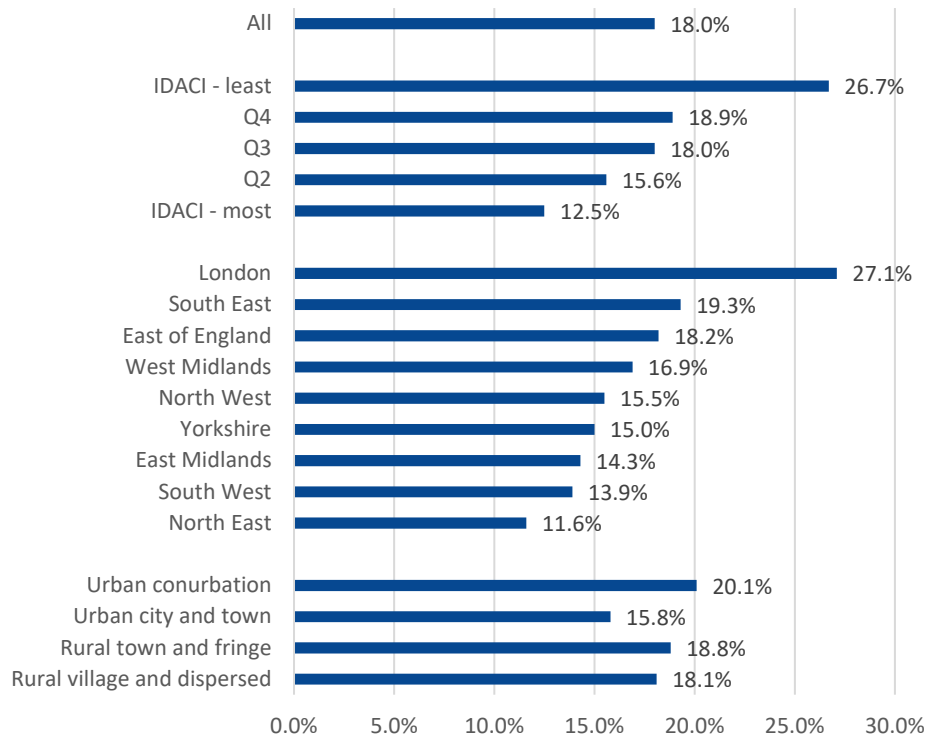


Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Geographical characteristics

Looking at the geographical distribution of private tutoring, London is substantially ahead of other regions (27%) in tutoring rates, compared to under 12% in the North East. Again, this is consistent with evidence from the YPO. As you would expect, rates were highest in the least deprived areas, measured by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). There were not substantial differences, however, in the patterns by urban/rural status. Urban conurbations (big cities) had slightly higher rates of tutoring, ahead of rural towns and their hinterlands. Small cities and large towns had the lowest rates.

Figure 10. Received private tutoring in year 10 or 11, by geographical characteristics



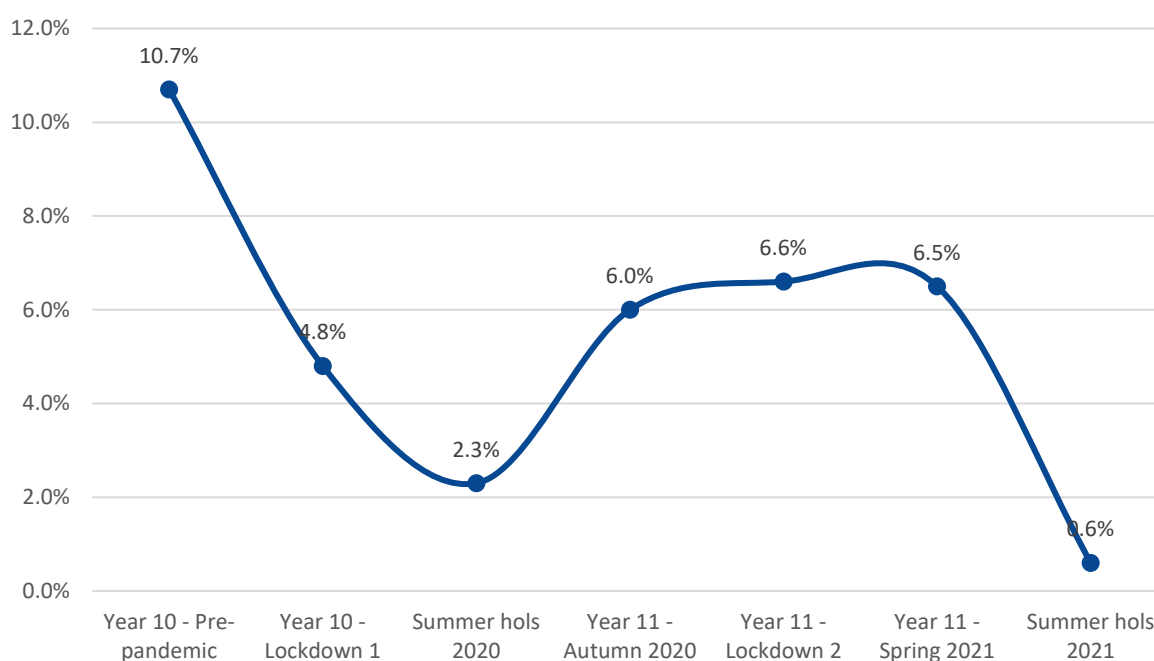
Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Tutoring and the pandemic

Private tutoring

Figure 11 shows how patterns of private tutoring fluctuated during the pandemic period for the COSMO cohort. Overall, rates of tutoring dropped slightly, from around 11% in Year 10 pre-pandemic, to around 10% from March 2020 to the end of Year 11. Less than 5% received tutoring during the first lockdown period, which dropped further during summer 2020. This rose again to between 6% and 7% during all three terms of Year 11, including the second lockdown period. Data from the Young People Omnibus suggests that ordinarily there would have been a substantial increase in private tutoring during Year 11, however this did not occur for this cohort, for a variety of reasons, likely including the cancellation of exams, as well as lockdown restrictions on mixing.

Figure 11. Rates of private tutoring during the pandemic period

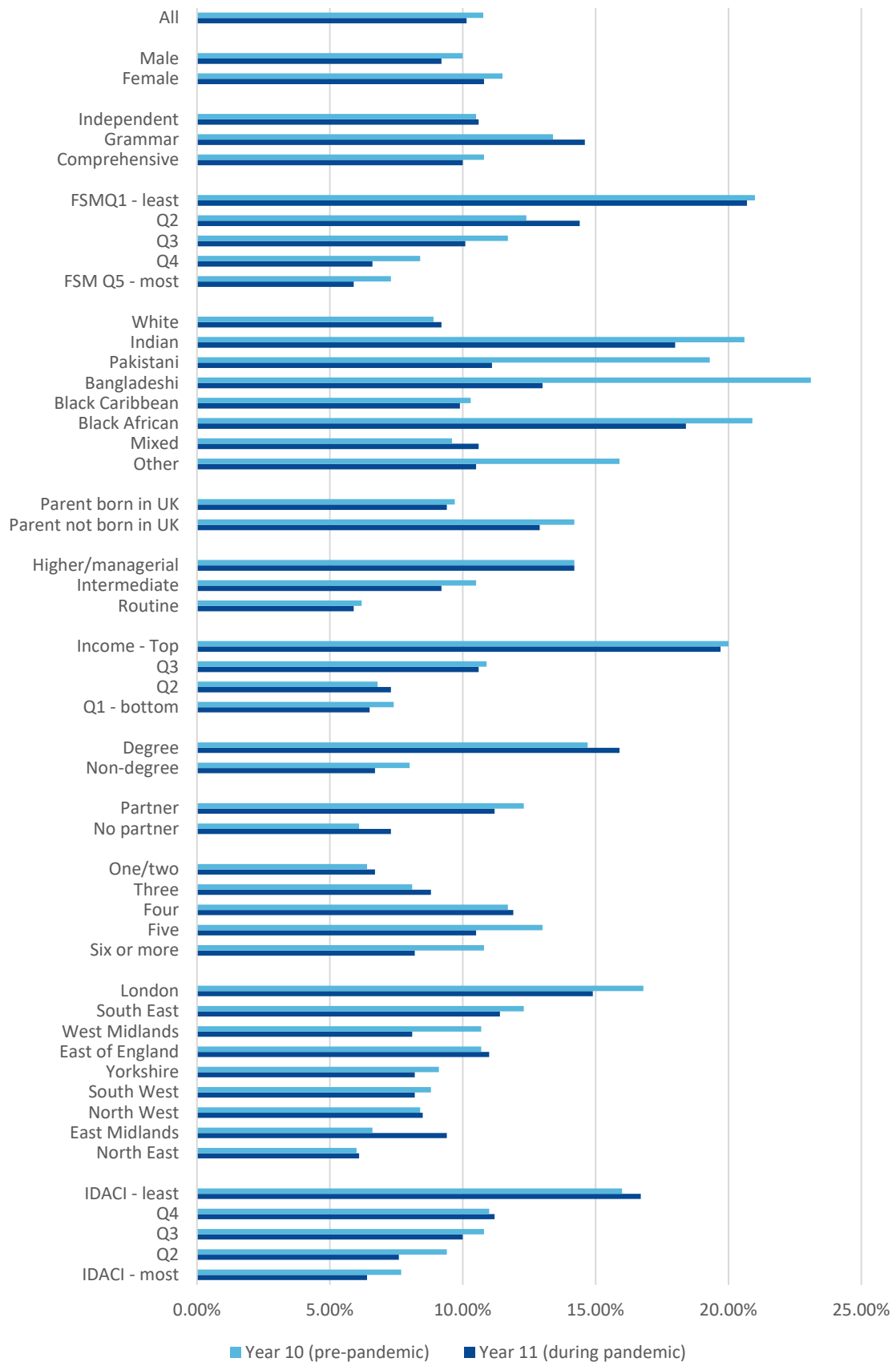


Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

While overall levels of tutoring remained similar across pre-pandemic Year 10 and the pandemic period, this hides significant churn in who was undertaking tutoring during those periods. Over two thirds of those who undertook tutoring during the pandemic had not done so in Year 10.

Figure 12 shows in detail which groups undertook private tutoring in the two periods. In general, socio-economic gaps in tutoring opened slightly after the beginning of the pandemic, with lower socio-economic groups more likely to see falls in tutoring rates across a variety of measures. There were also particularly significant declines in private tutoring undertaken by Pakistani and Bangladeshi children, with rates almost halving between Year 10 and 11. Rates also declined in larger households (five and six and above), compared to smaller households.

Figure 12. Private tutoring undertaken before and during the pandemic



Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

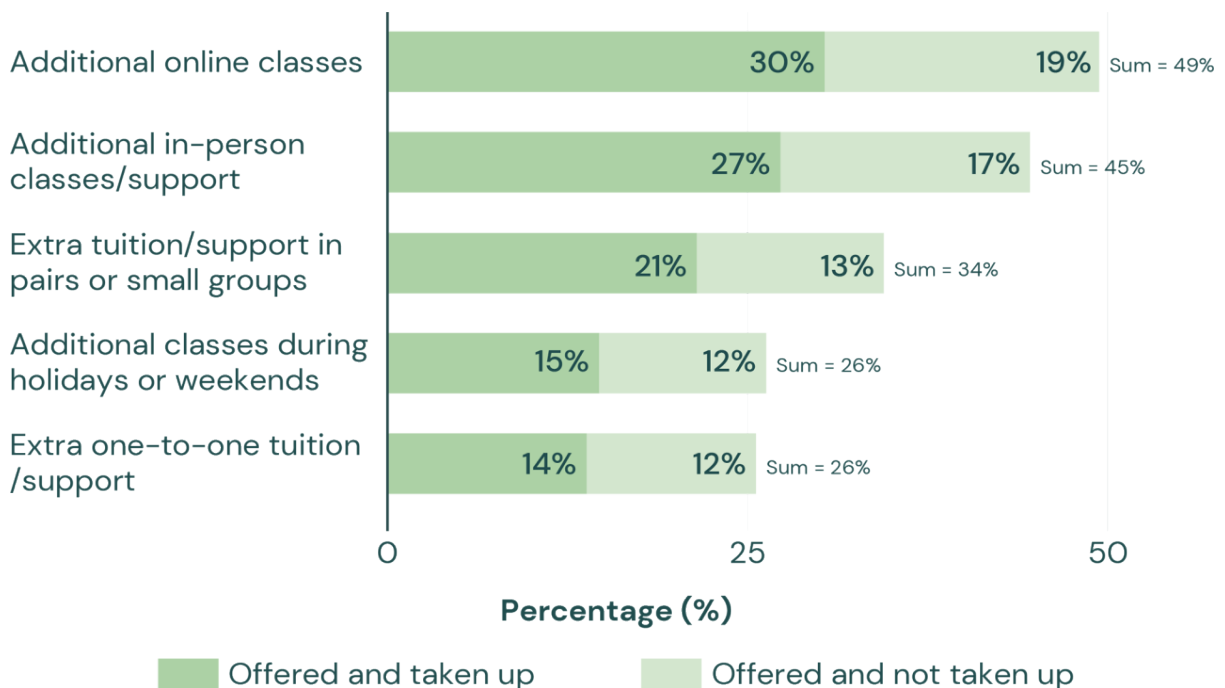
School-based tutoring

The National Tutoring Programme saw a significant expansion of school-based tutoring during the pandemic period, though many schools had been using tutoring interventions previously. In early 2020 before the pandemic, 10% of secondary school leaders reported that one-to-one and small group tuition was their priority for pupil premium spending that year.⁴³ By 2022 this was 34%.⁴⁴ It should be noted that not all school-based tutoring is provided or funded through the NTP, though clearly it has played a significant role in that growth.

COSMO data also provides a detailed insight into pupil take-up of catch-up tutoring since the outset of the pandemic, as outlined in the briefing on [Education recovery and catch-up](#).⁴⁵ During the 2020/21 academic year, 41% of year 11 pupils in state comprehensive schools reported being offered some type of tutoring by their school, with 28% taking it up. This is significantly above the rate of private tutoring during this period.

This was the third most common form of catch-up support provided by comprehensive schools, behind additional online classes and additional in-person classes. Small group tuition was the most common form of tutoring provided, available to 34% and taken up by 21% of pupils, with one-to-one tuition on offer to 26% and taken up by 14%.

Figure 13. Catch-up activities offered and taken up by students in state comprehensive schools



Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Despite the scale of the roll-out of tutoring in the state sector, the 41% of those in comprehensives who reported having been offered tutoring by their school was lower than the 52% of students in independent schools who had been offered it (with the figure of 36% in state grammars). However,

⁴³ <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/pupil-premium-2021/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/school-funding-and-pupil-premium-2022/>

⁴⁵ <https://cosmostudy.uk/publications/education-recovery-and-catch-up>

those in independent schools were least likely to have actually taken that tutoring up – 23% in independent schools, compared to 28% in comprehensive and 16% in grammar schools.

Within the state sector, students in the most deprived comprehensives were the most likely to have been offered tuition, at 48%, compared to those in the least deprived, at 39%. Rates of participation were also higher in the most deprived schools, at 35%, compared to 23% in the least.

Students in state comprehensives who strongly felt they had fallen behind their classmates due to the pandemic were no more likely to report being offered tuition than those who strongly believed they had not done so, but were more likely to have taken it up (30% for those who strongly believed they had fallen behind, vs 23% who strongly believed they had not).

Figure 14 shows in detail which groups received in-school tutoring, in comparison with the pattern of those who received private tutoring. Demographic patterns are substantially different between the two types, with in many cases school tutoring the precise opposite of private tutoring.

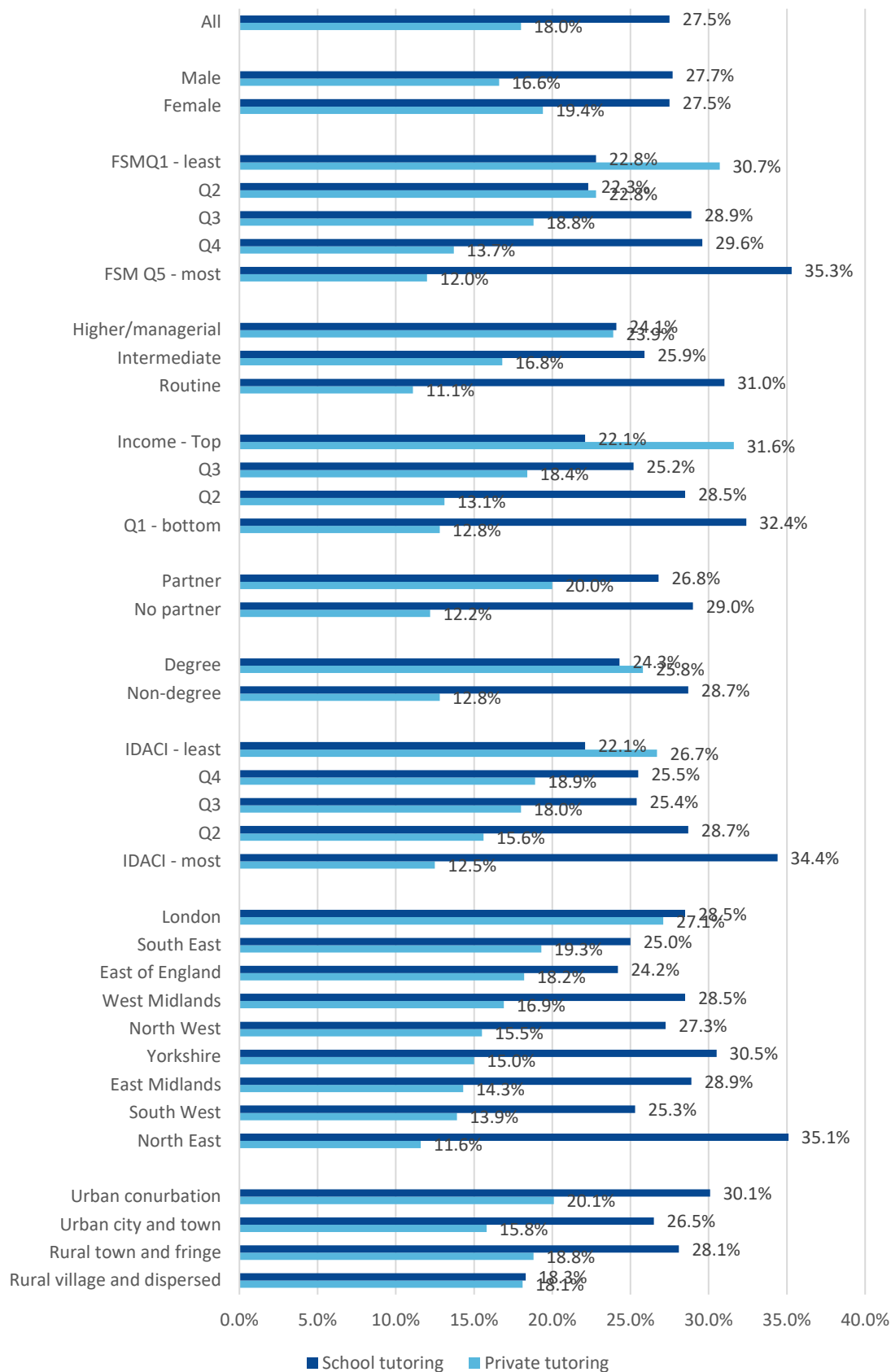
While 12% of those in the most disadvantaged comprehensive schools received private tutoring, the lowest rate, this rises to 35% receiving school tutoring, the highest, and substantially higher than the most advantaged schools (23%).

While professional and managerial class households are 13 percentage points more likely to pay for tutoring than working class households, they are 7 percentage points less likely to have received in school tutoring. Those in the top quartile of incomes are, by a distance, most likely to pay for tutoring, however they are least likely to receive school-based tutoring, with the bottom quartile most likely to receive it.

Similar patterns, whereby the groups least likely to receive private tutoring are the most likely to receive school tutoring, are also seen by housing tenure, single parent versus cohabiting households, deprivation of the local area and education level of parents.

There is also a more regionally equitable distribution of school-based tutoring. While the North East has the lowest level of private tutoring, it reports the highest level of school based tutoring. Though London has high rates of both types of tutoring.

Figure 14: Patterns of tutoring provided by schools, compared to private tutoring



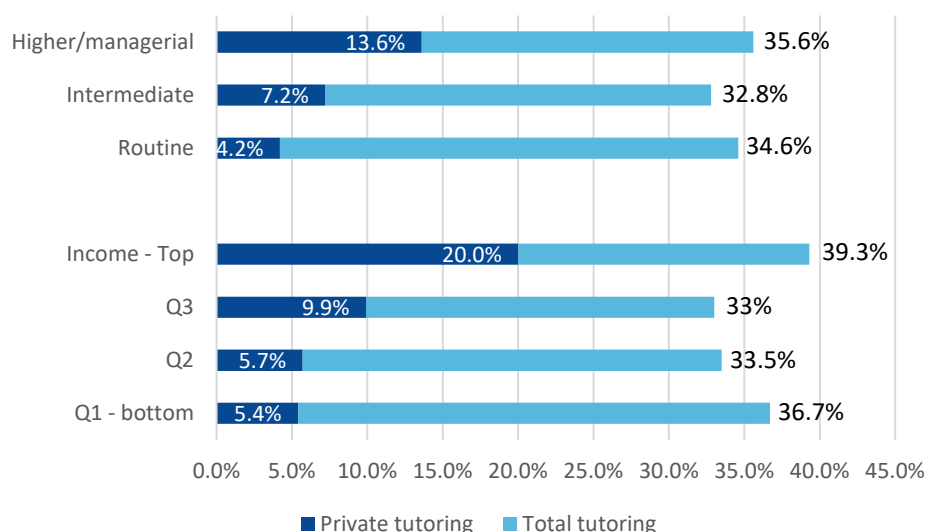
Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Despite the struggles of the NTP to reach more disadvantaged pupils, this data clearly shows that the overall pattern of school-based tutoring is pointing in the right direction and is not merely serving to exacerbate existing gaps.

This is emphasised by Figure 15, showing that the volume of school-based tutoring is contributing to a levelling of the playing field. While private tutoring was 3.5 times more likely in higher and managerial households compared to routine and manual households, when looking at those who had any type of tutoring, the gap narrows to just 1 percentage point. A similar pattern is seen looking at household income. A gap of almost 15 percentage points in private tutoring narrows to less than 3 percentage points in all tutoring.

This of course doesn't mean that access to tutoring is equal. Much of school tutoring is small group, whereas private tutoring is mostly one-to-one. Looking at one-to-one tutoring only, there is still a 4 percentage point gap by social class (26% v 22%) and a 5 percentage point gap between the highest and lowest incomes (32% v 27%). There is also an open question on quality, particularly in terms of the nature of school-led tutoring through the National Tutoring Programme. Private tutoring is not necessarily of high quality,⁴⁶ but it seems likely that the greater the financial resources, the greater the ability to obtain the best tutors.

Figure 15. Patterns of private tutoring and total tutoring (school or private) during Year 11

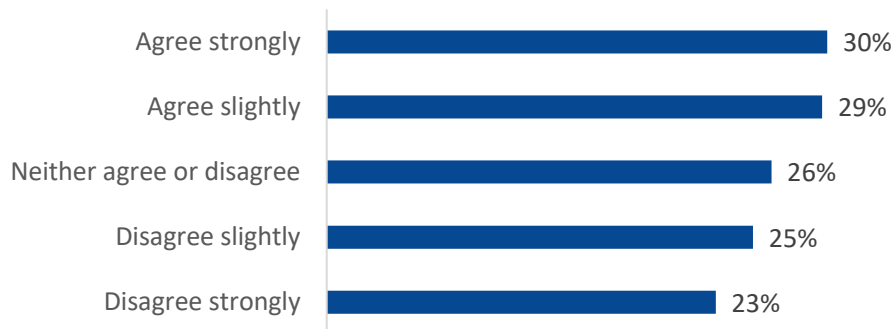


Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

Looking at student self-perceptions and the targeting of school-based tutoring, students in state comprehensives who strongly felt they had fallen behind their classmates due to the pandemic were no more likely to report being offered tuition than those who strongly believed they had not done so, but were more likely to have taken it up (30% for those who strongly believed they had fallen behind, vs 23% who strongly believed they had not).

⁴⁶ Evidence on the effectiveness of private tutoring is summarised here: https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Shadow-Schooling-formatted-report_FINAL.pdf

Figure 16: Received tutoring from school (offered and taken up) by whether students felt they had fallen behind their classmates due to the pandemic - state comprehensives only



Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

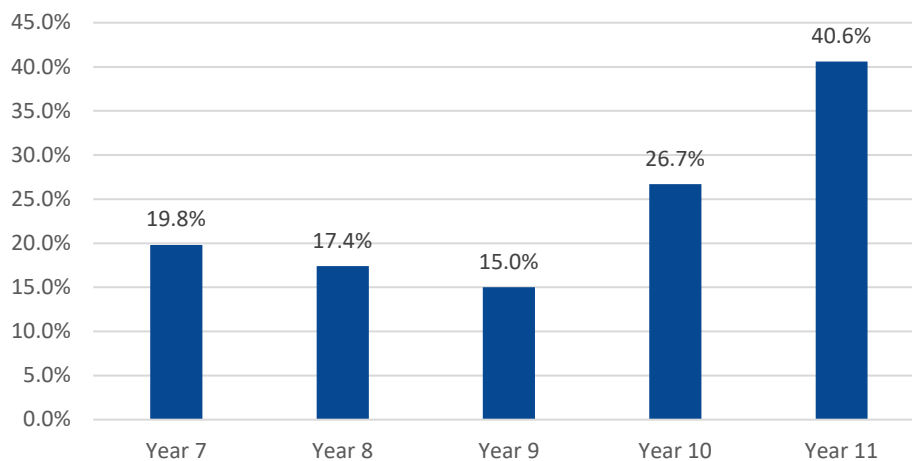
Young People Omnibus – secondary pupils

This data is also reflected in the Young People Omnibus, looking at a wider range of year groups, and including the 2021/22 school year. 24% of young people report receiving tutoring from their school in the 2021/22 school year, almost double the number receiving private tutoring. This was up from 18% in 2020/21. Most of this tutoring was in pairs or small groups (20%), with 7% receiving one-to-one sessions (and some receiving both). Private tutoring is more likely to come in the form of one-to-one sessions.

In 2021/22, pupils more likely to have received in-school tutoring, include Year 11 pupils, Black pupils, London students, those who felt they were not doing well in school, and those who felt that their progress was affected by the pandemic. 34% of those in the worst-off households received school tutoring, compared to 22% in the most well-off.

Figure 17 shows a similar pattern to private tutoring in the distribution of tutoring across year groups in 2021/22, showing a big spike for Year 11s once again, with pandemic restrictions removed and exams restored for this cohort.

Figure 17. School based tutoring by year group, 2021/22 school year



Source: Ipsos Young People Omnibus

Together, these figures suggest that provision of school-based tutoring has considerably expanded the reach and diversity of those receiving tuition, compared to who has received private tutoring from their families. However, the rates of provision in independent schools show the scale of the problem in attempting to level the tutoring playing field. And despite the positive patterns in the distribution of school-based tutoring in the state sector, it remains that a minority of the most deprived and most affected groups have received tutoring, showing there is still significant work to be done in reaching all students who could benefit from it.

Post-pandemic perceptions on catch up

Overall, 52% of 11-16 year olds agreed that their progress in school suffered as a result of COVID-19. 76% of Year 11s agreed their progress had suffered, compared to 34% in Year 7. 69% of those from 'worst off' households, compared to 50% in the 'best off' households. 31% of FSM pupils strongly agreed that the pandemic affected their progress, compared to 21% overall.

26% of young people felt that they had fallen behind their classmates, most likely among those in single parent households (34%), those in London (36%), and those from 'worse off' families (46% compared to 22% from 'better off' families). While 44% of young people agreed that they had been able to catch up since the pandemic, the subjective perceptions of young people ultimately underline the patterns in attainment data that have emerged, from the COSMO study to official DfE data on widening attainment gaps at Key Stages 2, 4 and 5.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment/2021-22>
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance-revised/2021-22>
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2021-22>

Discussion

Sutton Trust research on tutoring has consistently highlighted the steady increase in rates of private tuition, with data here giving the clearest picture yet on access, with disparities across both socio-economic and regional divides. Private tuition, on top of a pupil's standard schooling, creates a two-tier system, even within the state sector- with wealthier families able to pay to secure their children advantages.

Before the pandemic, schools, charities and tutoring organisations had made efforts to expand provision to disadvantaged young people who would not otherwise have access to tutoring, given the extensive evidence that tuition could be a powerful tool to help to close the attainment gap. However, before the crisis, efforts had been relatively limited in scope, with no national plan or programme to increase access.

The tutoring landscape completely changed with the pandemic and associated school closures, and the subsequent creation of the National Tutoring Programme. The NTP's primary focus on targeting the most disadvantaged young people to help them to catch-up with learning they had lost during the pandemic was key, particularly in light of the growing evidence that disadvantaged pupils were the most heavily impacted by pandemic disruption to their educations.⁴⁸

Tutoring as an intervention is well-evidenced as a means to help children who have fallen behind, and the programme came at a time of national crisis, with considerable financial backing and ambition from government. However, setting the programme up at speed during the pandemic, and attempting to provide tuition both at scale and at high quality (given the widespread and urgent need for help) has led to major issues in delivery.

While the first year had a higher focus on quality and wider development of the tuition market, it did not deliver tutoring at the scale required by the impacts of the pandemic. But while the second year reached a much larger number of pupils (after a significant push from government), it has done so by moving to a model of largely school-led tutoring, with little known on the quality or impact of this model.

Despite those challenges, the NTP has had real successes. A large proportion of schools (87%) used the NTP in 2021/22, with 44% having used it so far this academic year,⁴⁹ and almost 3 million pupils have started a course since its inception. Arguably, given the scale of the crisis and the need to get support to students quickly, it is understandable that the government has had such a focus on scale. It is also clear from the data published here that access to tutoring has been widened to many groups that would not have had it previously.

Nonetheless, the NTP has faced challenges around effective targeting. While the initially stated purpose of the programme was to target disadvantaged students, Year 1 had no explicit targeting for this group, and the initial target set in Year 2 was subsequently dropped, with both years criticised for not reaching a high enough proportion of disadvantaged students. In the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, while better targeting would have been ideal, a wider approach allowing for larger scale delivery may ultimately have led to a larger number of disadvantaged students being reached by the

⁴⁸ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment/2021-22>
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance-revised/2021-22>
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2021-22>

⁴⁹ <https://www.tribalgroupp.com/become-an-ntp-tuition-partner-0> and <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme>

programme. Currently, schools are advised but not required to prioritise their pupil premium cohort for the NTP, although funding allocations are determined based on the number of PP students within a school.⁵⁰ Going forward, both to continue to aid with catch-up efforts, and to tackle the longstanding attainment gap, the NTP should be refocused towards disadvantaged students, with stricter targets and incentives for uptake by students eligible for the pupil premium in future.

What next for the NTP

While in the midst of the pandemic, a focus on speed and scale was understandable, as we move forward, it is crucial the NTP re-focuses on quality of provision, as well as targeting. Catch-up support is still needed by many students, but we now have a chance to reflect on the programme so far, both to improve it for those students, and to think seriously about the NTP's future. Given the longstanding disparities in access to tuition shown here, and the strength of evidence of tutoring as an intervention, there is a clear need for a national programme like the NTP to support schools in accessing and providing tuition to pupils. And while the NTP has had a considerable amount of negative press, it is vital that challenges in implementation during the pandemic do not derail the need for a national programme for tuition in schools long term. While the move to school-led provision delivered at greater scale in the short term, the initial rationale for a national programme to enforce quality standards, provide ring-fenced funding, as well as helping to build capacity in underserved areas, still stands.

The quality of provision since the pivot to school-led tutoring remains unclear. Indeed, a recent evaluation by Ofsted in 63 schools found that while tutoring was strong in over half the schools they visited, in a sizable proportion (10 of the 63) tutoring was haphazard and poorly planned.⁵¹ It does not appear that there are currently adequate safeguards to ensure best practice, which would mean having sessions outside of lessons, clear links to the curriculum, and maximum group sizes of around six to seven pupils.⁵² There is clearly a need for additional checks and balances on how schools are using the funding, ideally making any tutoring carried out in schools accountable to Ofsted as a part of the inspectorate's overall assessment of a school's quality of teaching. While Ofsted does consider whether deployment of tutors supports the aims of the school curriculum, it does not currently make any wider judgement on the quality of tuition being offered.⁵³

NFER are due to carry out an evaluation of the second year of the NTP, which includes examining the impact of the programme by delivery route (whether Tuition Partners, Academic Mentors or School-led).⁵⁴ Findings of this evaluation will help in making a full assessment of the role of school-led tuition going forward. This delivery model does have the opportunity to be hugely successful if done well, with clear links to the curriculum and regular meetings between tutors and teachers within relevant departments to plan content across delivery models – running tutoring within a school itself can make this integration simpler and means that tutors rooted within a school can get to know their pupils better. But tutoring being school-led will not in and of itself ensure high quality, and the system needs to be adapted to develop and then encourage best practice.

⁵⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-2022-to-2023/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-2022-to-2023>

⁵¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-tutoring-in-schools-and-16-to-19-providers/independent-review-of-tutoring-in-schools-phase-1-findings>

⁵² <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/making-a-difference-with-effective-tutoring>

⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook#evaluating-the-quality-of-education-1>

⁵⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1113456/NTP_Year_2_evaluation_Study_Plan.pdf

School-led tutoring also may not be the right fit for all schools, and external organisations such as the Tutor Trust and Action Tutoring have had over a decade of successful delivery, bringing external expertise on tutoring into schools and working successfully alongside school staff. This has been continued through the Tuition Partners arm of the NTP, with many schools who have used external tutoring organisations seeing the benefits this can give their pupils.⁵⁵ But these organisations are not evenly spread across the country, with areas outside the South East, and especially those in rural or more remote areas, less likely to have access. Work is still needed to the wider tutoring market, to help to expand the highest quality provision and give access to all schools. The Tuition Partners arm of the NTP should be fully re-established, with work re-started to identify the highest quality provision and encourage growth of these organisations to improve what is available in the tuition market long term.

The NTP has had a rocky journey so far, with no shortage of negative media attention, and the risk that many schools may not be fully convinced of the value of tutoring given the performance of the programme to date – although it should be noted that most schools with direct experience of using the NTP were satisfied with the programme overall.⁵⁶

The government plans to reduce the subsidy for the NTP next year to just 25% of the cost of tuition, down from 60% this year. This is a huge point of risk for the NTP, as even schools with positive experiences of the programme may not continue to use it given other funding pressures. Indeed, a recent survey found one third of head teachers say they are likely to cut the number of children receiving tutoring next year due to wider funding concerns.⁵⁷ And a recent report from the National Audit Office on the NTP warned that with schools now being expected to make up more of the funding themselves, there are issues with the long-term sustainability of tutoring in the school system without additional investment, given wider pressure on school budgets.⁵⁸ In the immediate term, the government should postpone any cut to the subsidy, and give schools both longer to recover from the pandemic, and the NTP longer to establish itself in the school system as a long-term feature post-pandemic. Longer term, government should look at additional funding for tutoring, or ways to incentivise schools to use pupil premium funding to cover the cost of high-quality tuition.

“We simply can’t afford a return to the pre-COVID status quo where tutoring was largely the preserve of families with the most financial resources.”

The recent history of tuition is one of exacerbating inequalities. But the changes seen since 2020 point to the possibilities of harnessing tutoring to address those inequalities. The data in this report demonstrates that access to tutoring, when considering both school and private, is now much closer to a level playing field. However, we are far from a position where every pupil who needs tutoring has access to it. About 60% of FSM-eligible pupils report not receiving tutoring, and more than half of pupils who feel they have fallen behind their classmates. The nature of tutoring received also remains very different between the richest and poorest families.

Nonetheless, while far from perfect, the National Tutoring Programme has shown what can be done through government action to make tutoring more accessible. Learnings from the last few years need to be taken forward, with a re-focused mission for the NTP post-pandemic, to further open up access to

⁵⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-tutoring-in-schools-and-16-to-19-providers/independent-review-of-tutoring-in-schools-phase-1-findings>

⁵⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1113355/National_Tutoring_Programme_year_2_-_implementation_and_process_evaluation_-_research_report.pdf

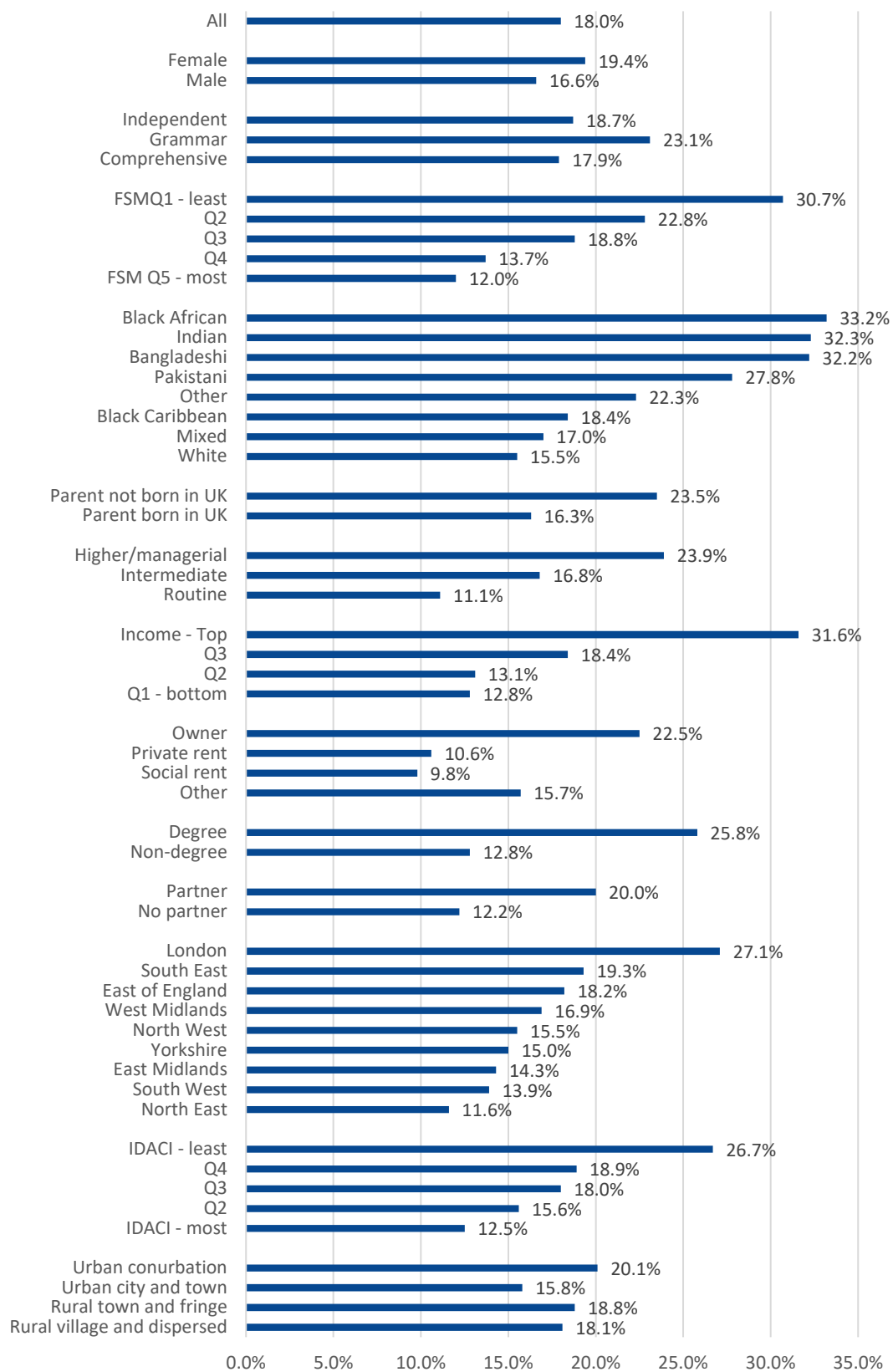
⁵⁷ <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/1893/Majority-of-schools-looking-at-redundancies-due-to-funding-crisis-largest-survey-of-school-leaders-shows>

⁵⁸ [https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/education-recovery-in-schools-in-england/#:~:text=the%20National%20Tutoring%20Programme%20\(NTP,for%20schools%20during%202020%2F21](https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/education-recovery-in-schools-in-england/#:~:text=the%20National%20Tutoring%20Programme%20(NTP,for%20schools%20during%202020%2F21)

tutoring to the disadvantaged young people who need it most, both in terms of catch-up, but also in terms of the well-established (and now increasing) attainment gap. We simply can't afford a return to the pre-COVID status quo where tutoring was largely the preserve of families with the most financial resources.

Appendix A

Figure A1. Received private tutoring in Year 10 or Year 11 by demographic characteristics



Source: COSMO longitudinal study – Wave 1

The Sutton Trust
9th Floor
Millbank Tower
21-24 Millbank
London, SW1P 4QP

T: 020 7802 1660

F: 020 7802 1661

W: www.suttontrust.com

Twitter: [@suttontrust](https://twitter.com/suttontrust)

