



The Education Survey 2017

Educating the International Community of the Netherlands



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Introduction

ICAP Amsterdam was founded to build a bridge between the city's international community and government and civic organisations.

In particular, ICAP has established an independent forum which represents and reflects the views of the international community on issues which have an impact on the city's attractiveness as a place to live in and do business.

As part of this, IN Amsterdam commissioned ICAP to carry out a survey to assess the experiences of the international community with regard to education.

Background

Amsterdam is a popular place to live – among Dutch nationals as well as internationals - and this is putting tremendous pressure on the supply of international education

Indeed, the shortage of places at private, international schools is so acute that it may begin to impact on the city's attractiveness as a place to do business. The Dutch government has recently allocated an extra €10.7m to ease the pressure on international schools and create 1,500 new places.

ICAP Amsterdam set out to find out more about the experiences of the city's international community in terms of primary and secondary education, using both anecdotal and empirical evidence.

The aim of the research is threefold:

- To find out more about the problems in finding a suitable school facing newly-arrived internationals and parents with young children.
- To determine how current strategies and policy initiatives are being received
- To make recommendations about future strategy and initiatives which could ease the problems experienced by internationals

In The Press

The Netherlands slips in global ranking of best country for expats

Expats shun Amsterdam due to housing and school shortages

Dutch to invest €10.7m in international school places

Amsterdam schools could do more to embrace bilingualism: survey

<http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/12/the-netherlands-slips-in-global-ranking-of-best-countries-for-expats/>

<http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/09/expats-shun-amsterdam-due-to-housing-and-education/>

<http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/03/dutch-to-invest-e10-7m-in-boosting-international-school-places/>

<http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/06/amsterdam-schools-could-do-more-to-embrace-bilingualism-survey/>

Methodology

The research was commissioned to find out more about how Amsterdam's international community organise their children's primary and secondary education.

The aim was to produce relevant statistics and a wealth of actual experiences which city officials can use to remove or reduce bottlenecks, manage expectations and shape education policy in the future.

To this end, we approached over 30 groups, websites and other organisations with strong links to the international community and asked them to circulate the survey's website link.

The groups were approached by email at the start of the survey and sent a reminder 10 days later.

A number of organisations were also approached personally by ICAP board members.

Methodology (cont.)

Questionnaire

The survey was based on multiple choice, sliding scale and open questions.

In total, nearly 700 people responded to the survey, 292 of whom are resident in the Amsterdam region. More than 100 people living in Amsterdam answered the open questions, resulting in a wealth of personal experiences.*

The questions were drawn up by ICAP Amsterdam with input from officials at IN Amsterdam and previous surveys carried out by the city into education.

The questionnaires were completed on a voluntary basis without incentives

*We have not attempted to define 'international community'. Instead the survey was promoted via websites and organisations which focus on 'expats' or have a large number of foreign employees.

Key findings

Just 14% of Amsterdam respondents said their children's school fees were completely paid by their employer. 72% got no help at all.

Only 20% of parents are happy with their children traveling more than five kilometres to school. 56% said closeness to home was an important factor in finding a school.

Just 16% of Amsterdam respondents said their children are attending a private, international school. 21% are attending state-supported international schools such as AICS and 56% are in the Dutch school system

Parents feel Dutch schools can do more to attract new arrivals, particularly by providing more information in English.

70% are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their children's education.

About the Respondents

In this section we look at the demographics of the survey respondents.

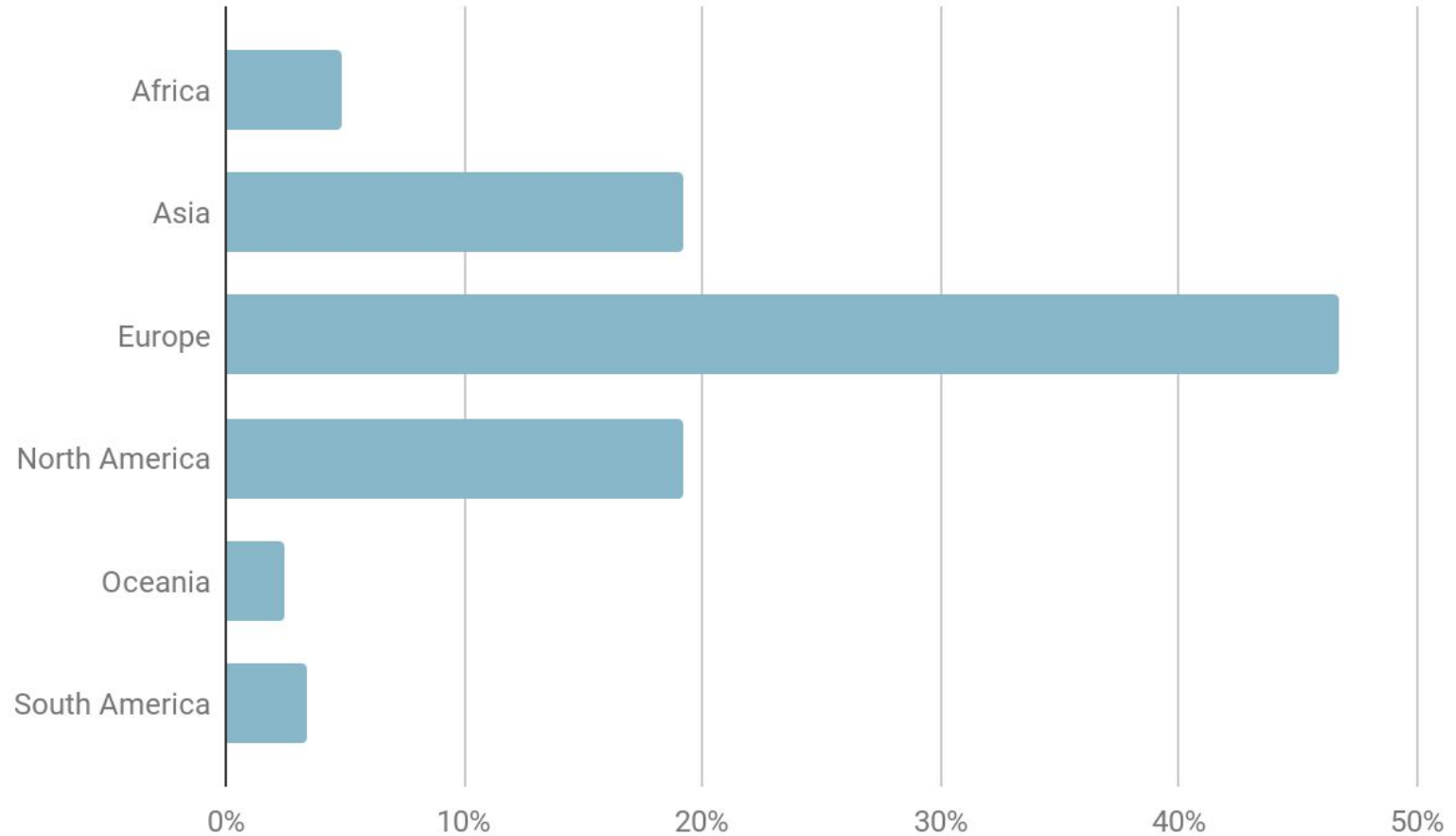
Main points

In total, 684 people filled in the survey of whom 291 lived in Amsterdam itself

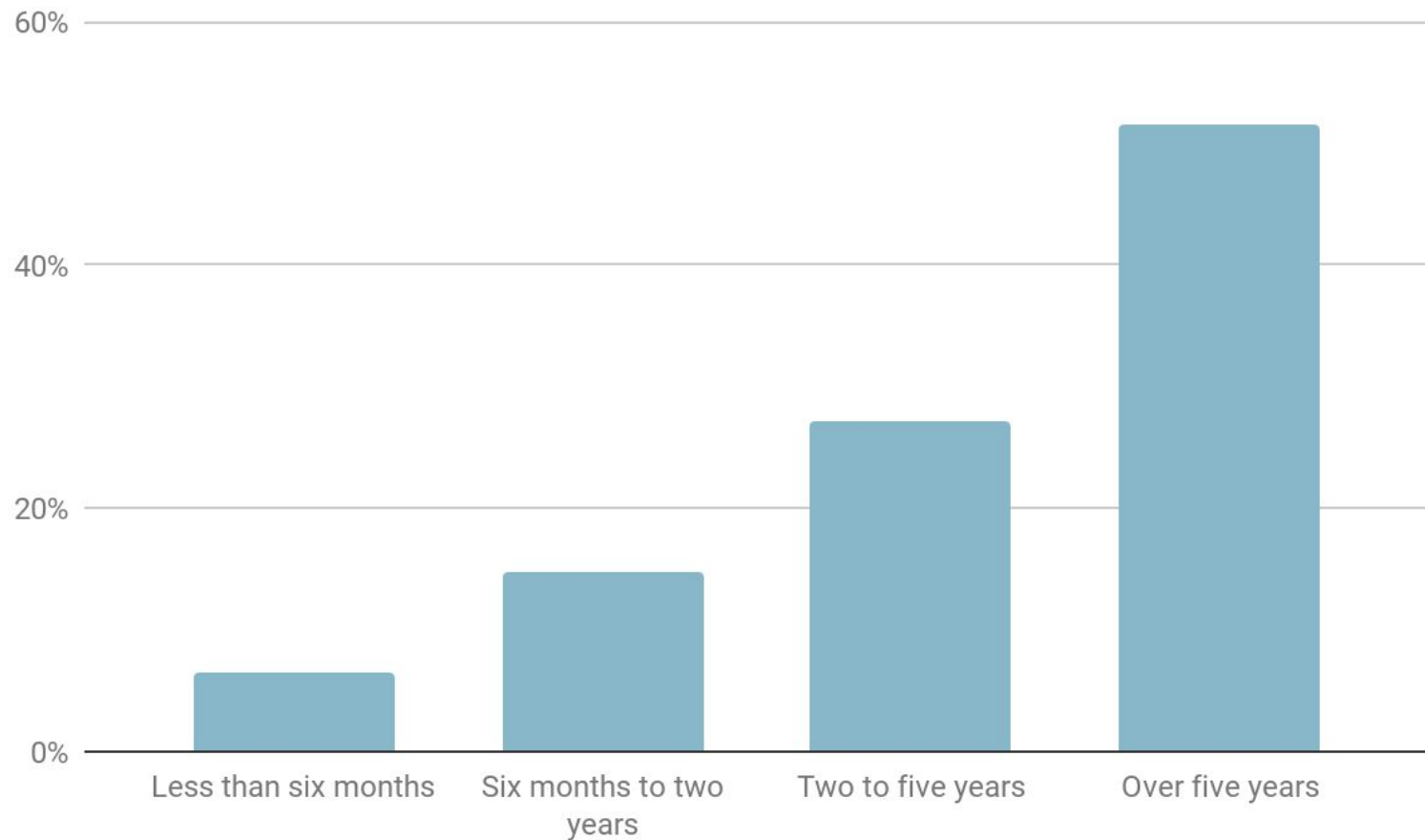
Of the Amsterdam respondents:

- 22% have been in the Netherlands for less than two years while 52% have lived in the city for over five years.
- 6% will stay in Amsterdam for another year, 20% will stay up to five years and 74% will live in Amsterdam for at least five more years.
- 35% have at least one pre-school child, 74% have children at primary school and 19% have children at secondary school
- The largest population group – 47% come from Europe, with 19% from both Asia and North America.

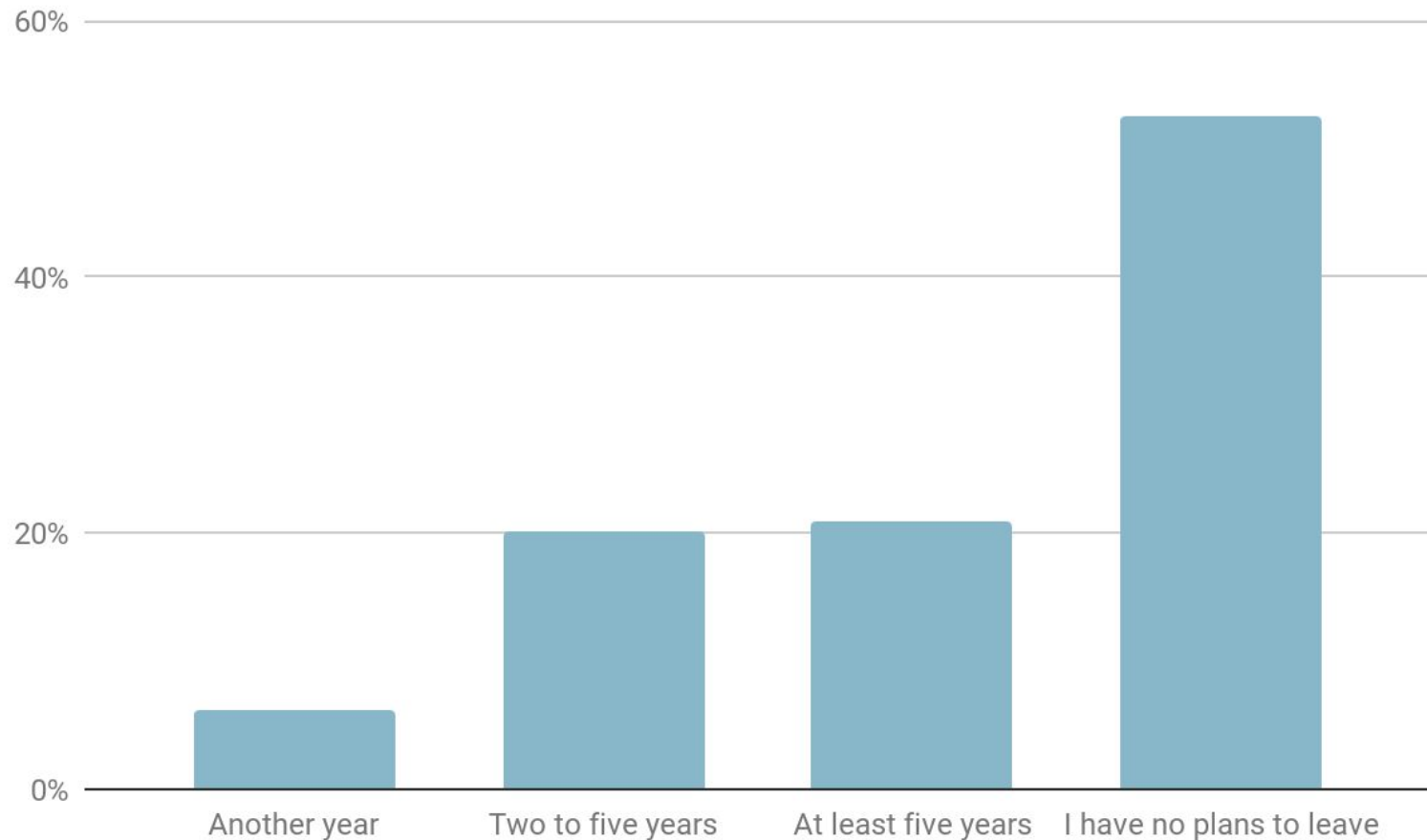
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?



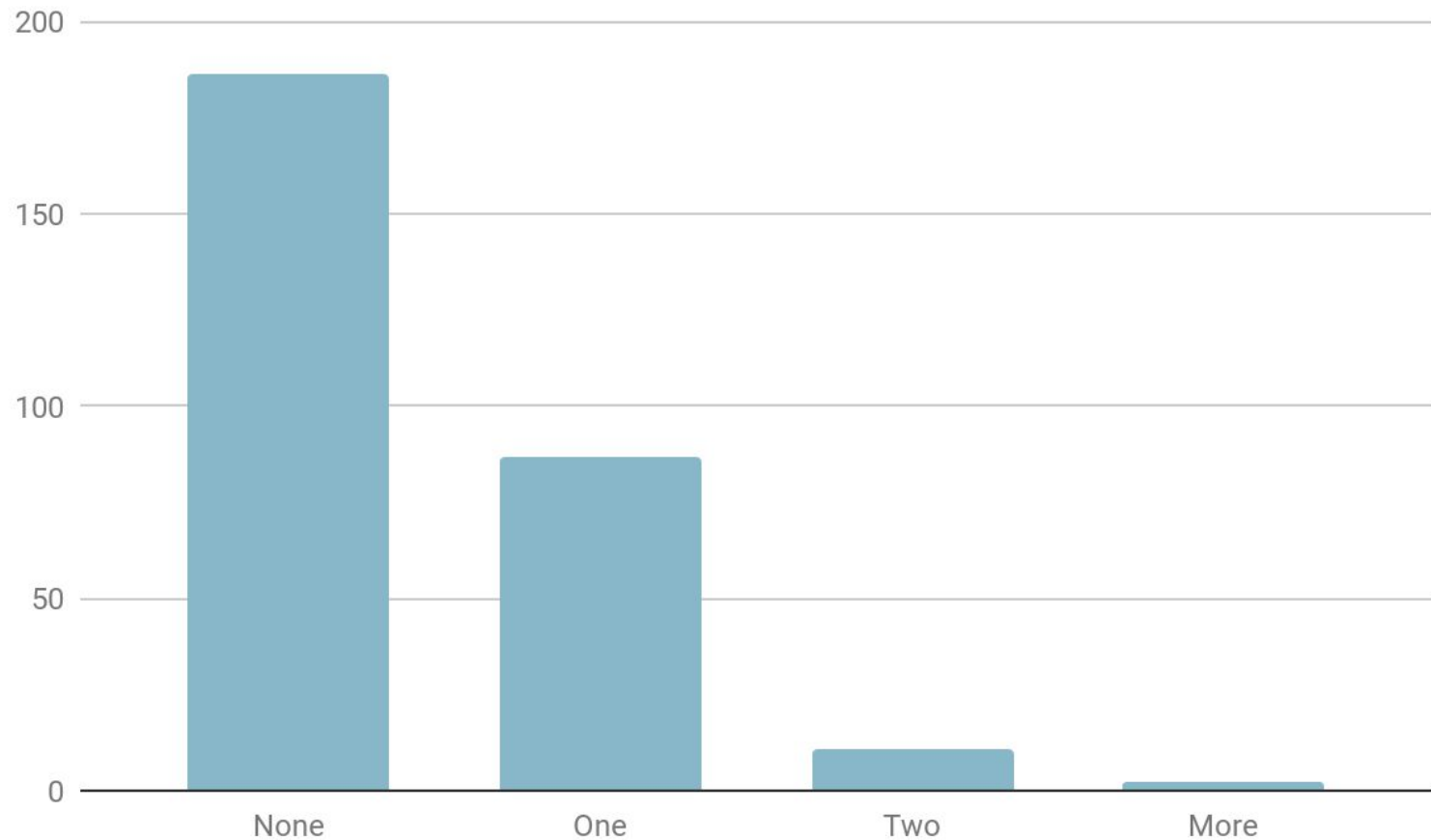
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE NETHERLANDS?



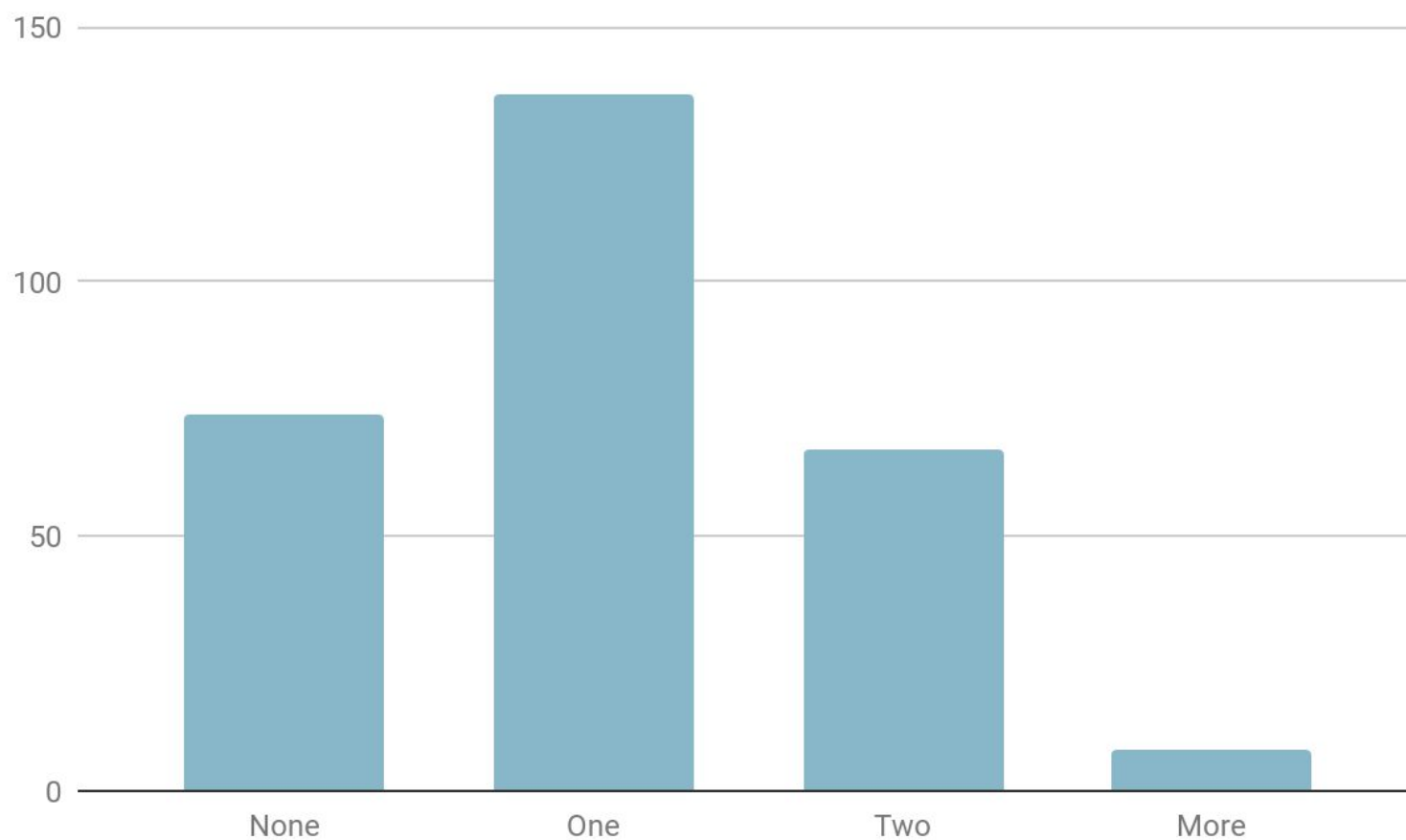
HOW LONG ARE YOU PLANNING TO STAY IN THE NETHERLANDS?



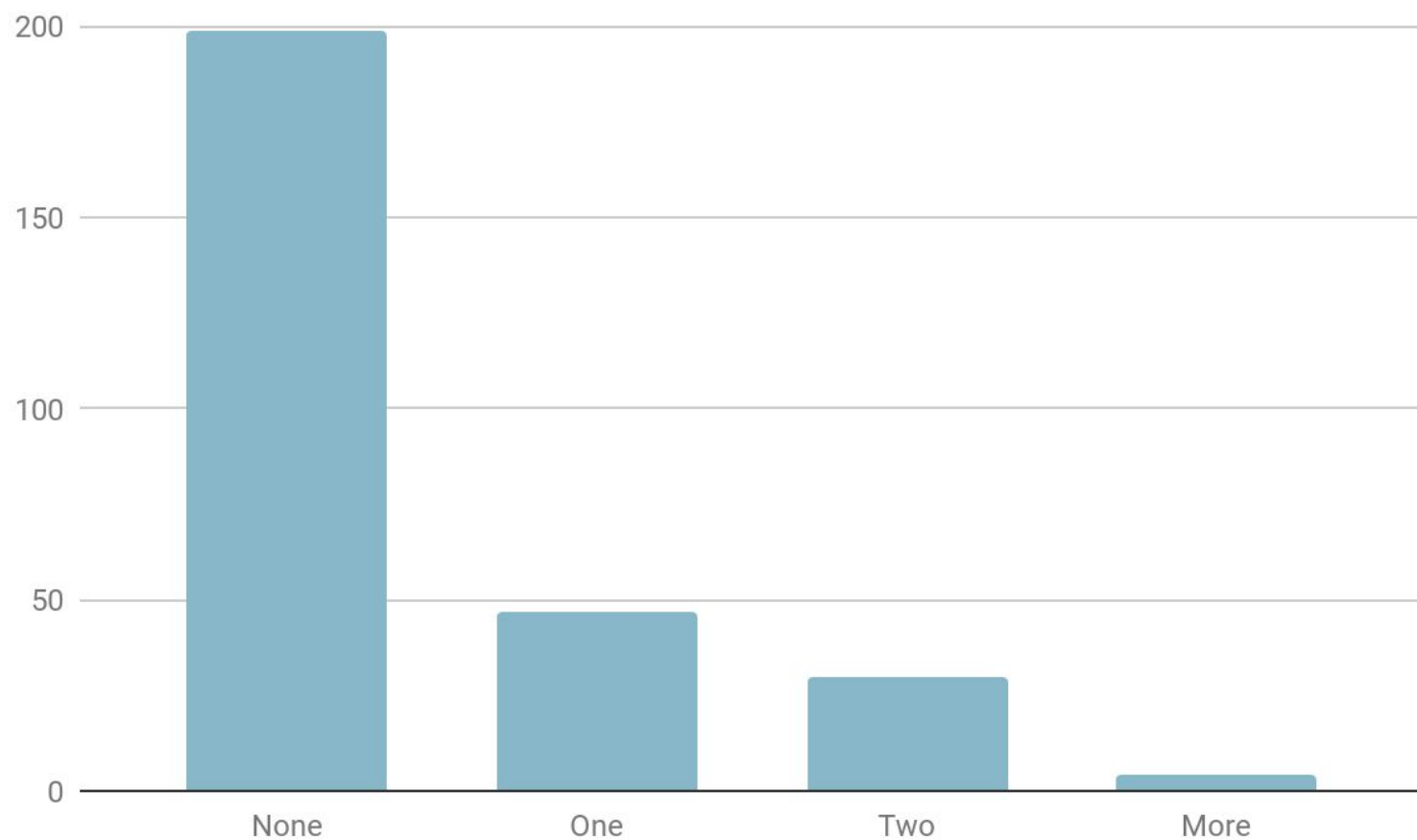
HOW MANY PRESCHOOL (YOUNGER THAN 4 YEARS OLD) CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?



HOW MANY OF YOUR CHILDREN ARE AGED 4-11?



HOW MANY OF YOUR CHILDREN ARE AGED 12-18?



The School Experience

In this section we look in more detail at the educational needs and wants of Amsterdam's international community.

Key Findings

56% of parents said their children were in the Dutch school system, 16% were at a private international school and 21% at a state-supported international school.

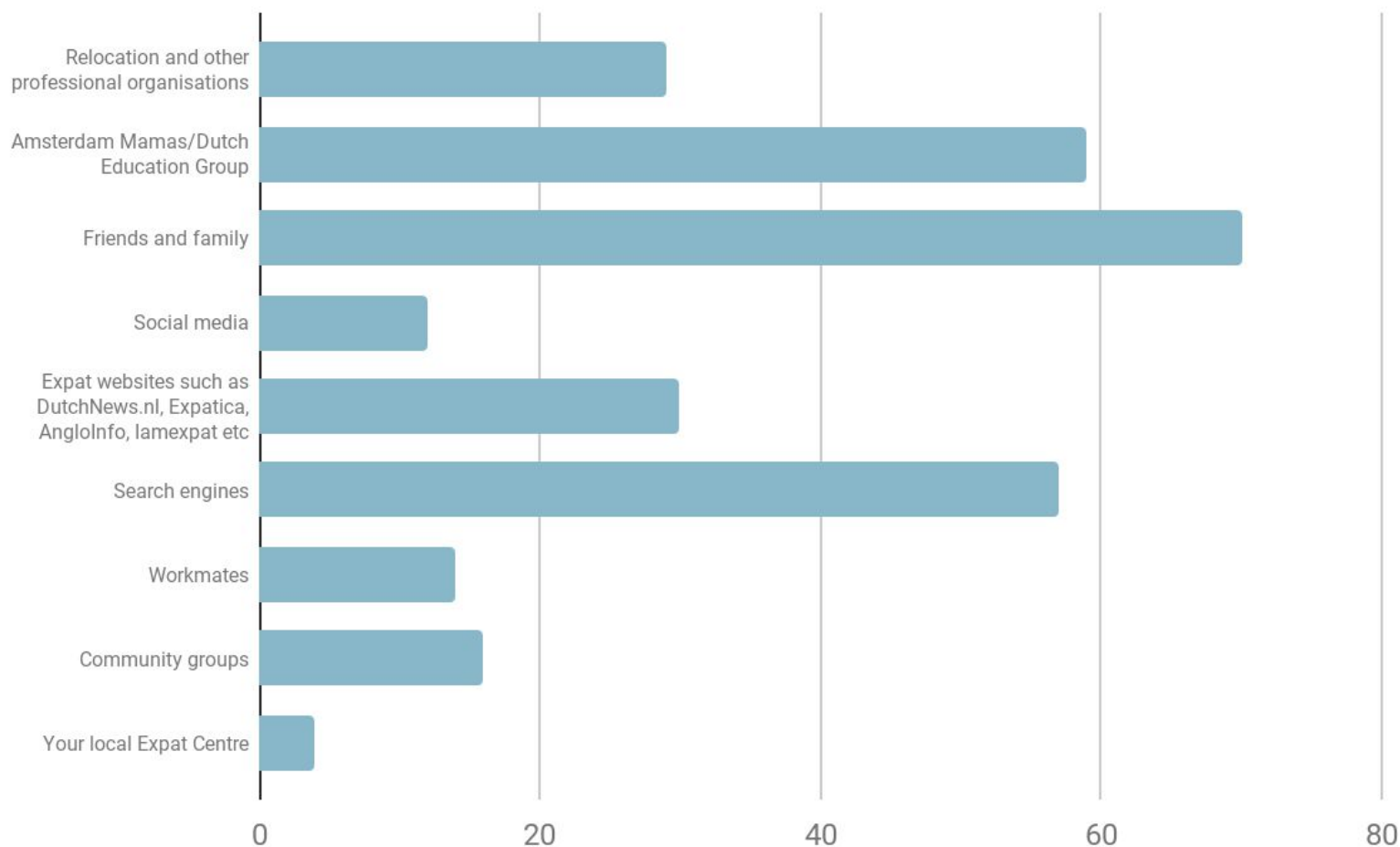
Closeness to home was the most important factor in choosing a school, followed by the international atmosphere.

7% of respondents said their employer paid for the school fees, 14% got some help and 72% got no help at all. 8% made other arrangements.

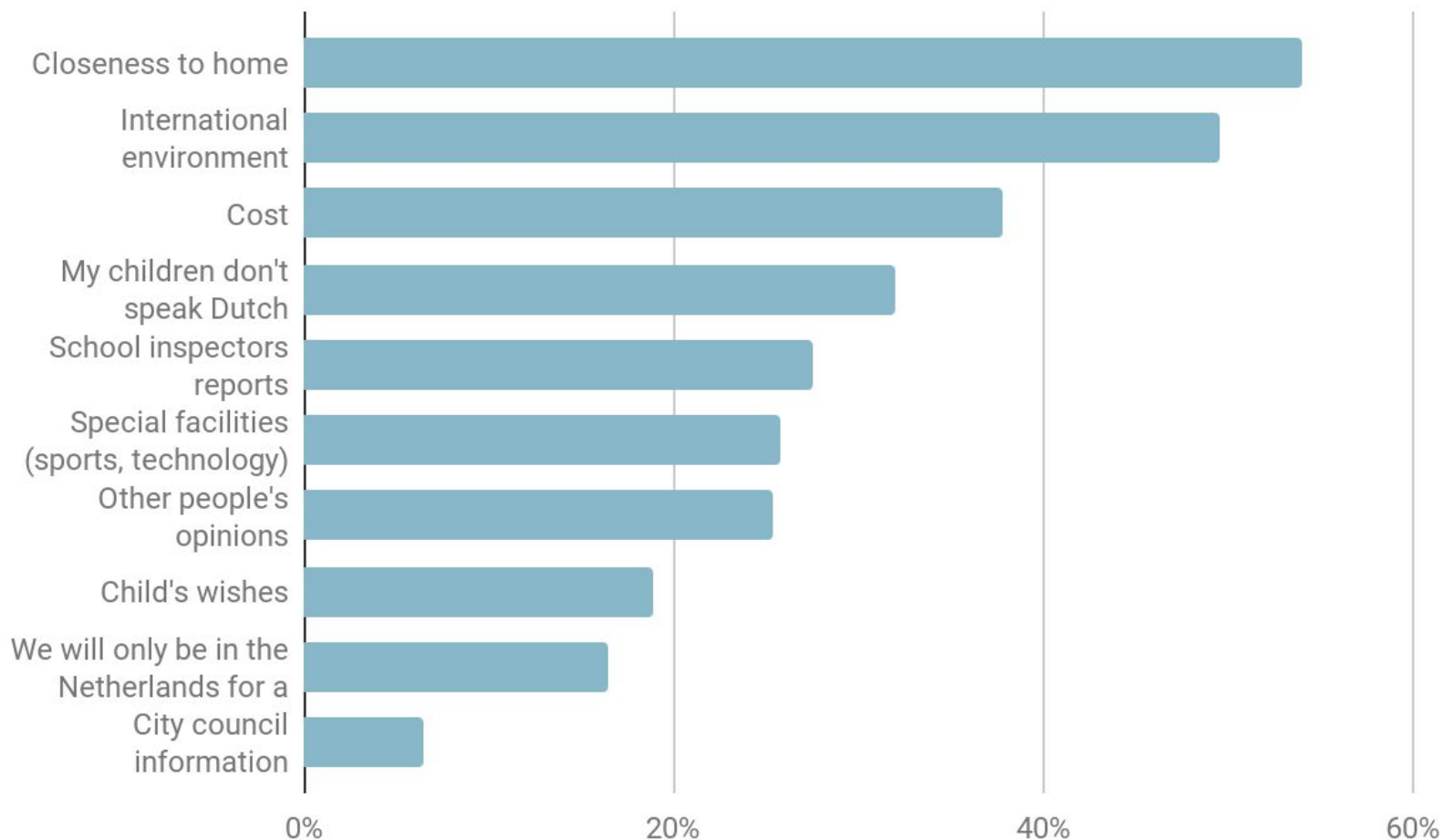
38% of Amsterdam parents said the cost of education played a part in determining their choice of school. Not speaking Dutch was considered a problem by 32%.

50% of parents did not want their children travelling more than four kilometres to school. 30% said up to one kilometer was acceptable.

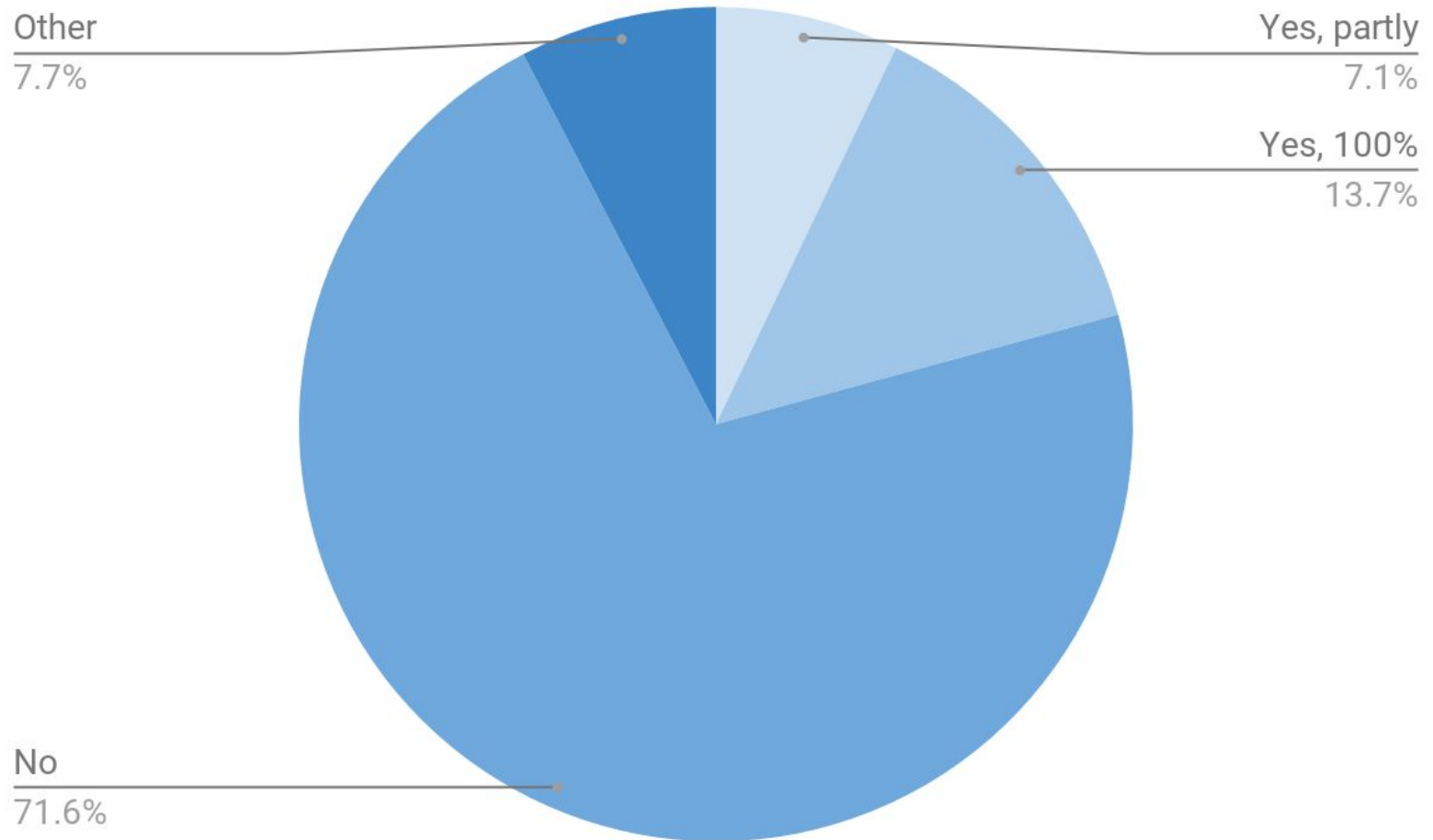
WHERE DID YOU RESEARCH MOST OF YOUR INFORMATION ABOUT THE DUTCH SCHOOL SYSTEM?



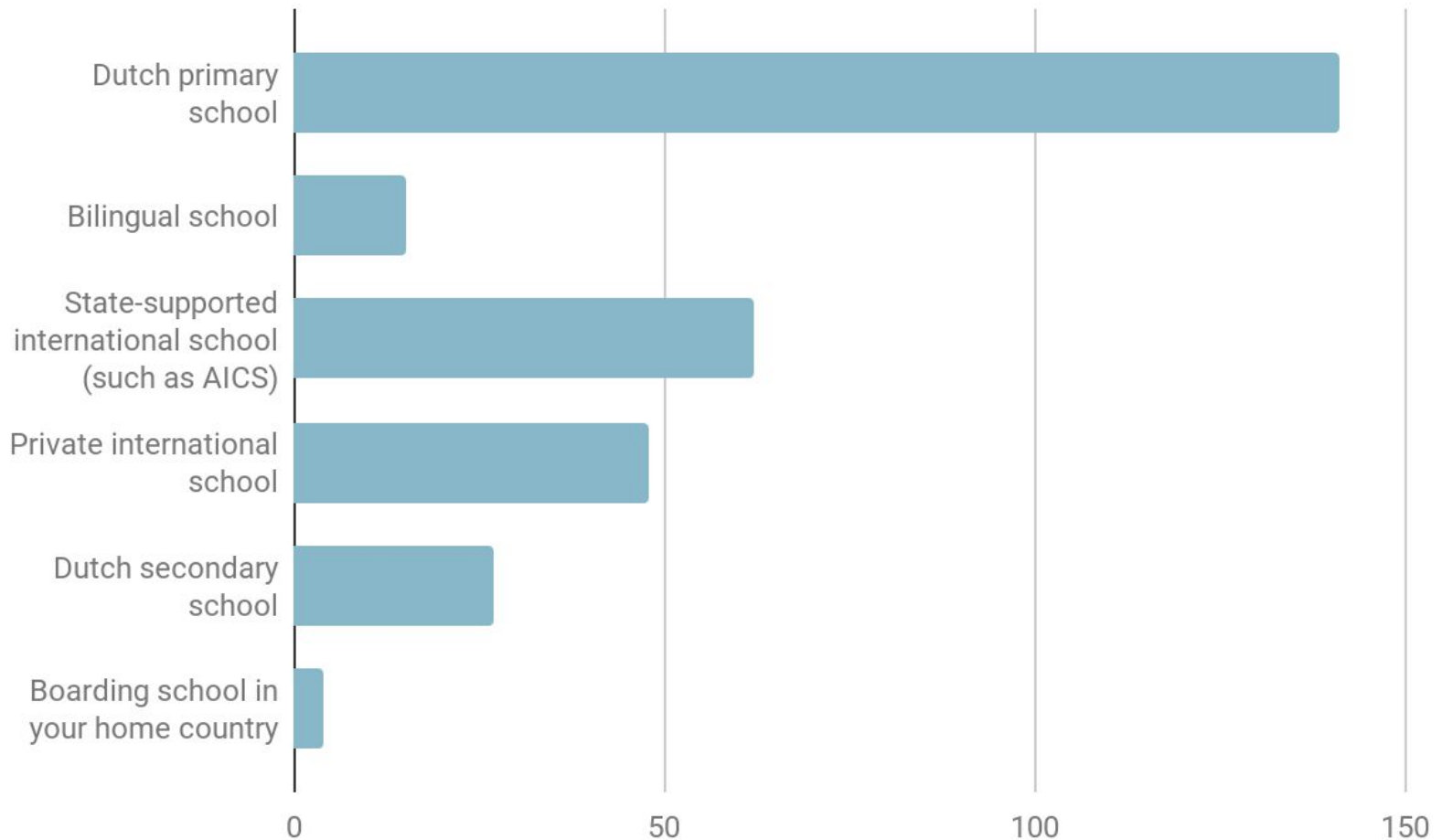
WHAT FACTORS PLAYED A ROLE IN YOUR CHOICE OF SCHOOL?



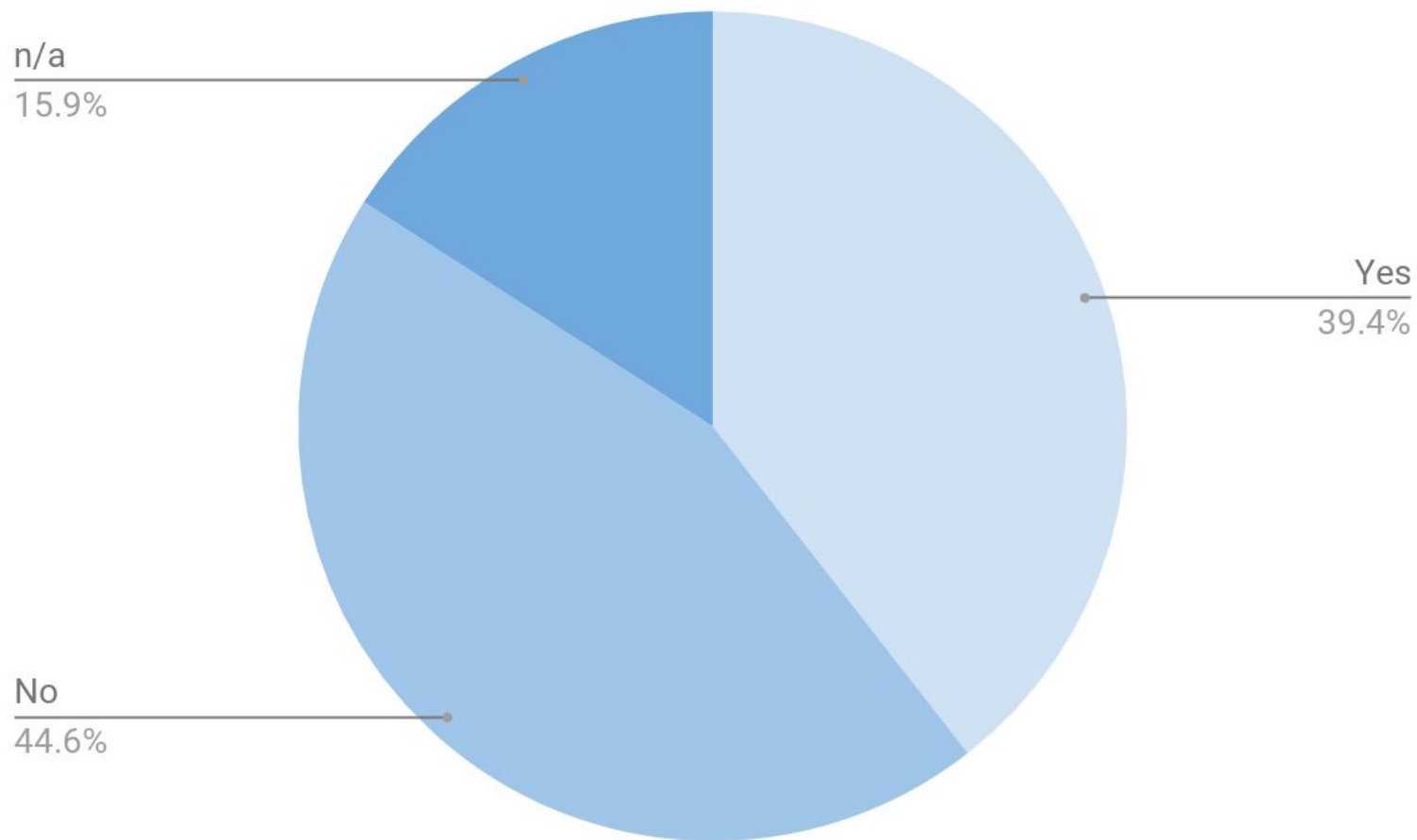
DOES YOUR EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTE TO THE COST OF YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOLING?



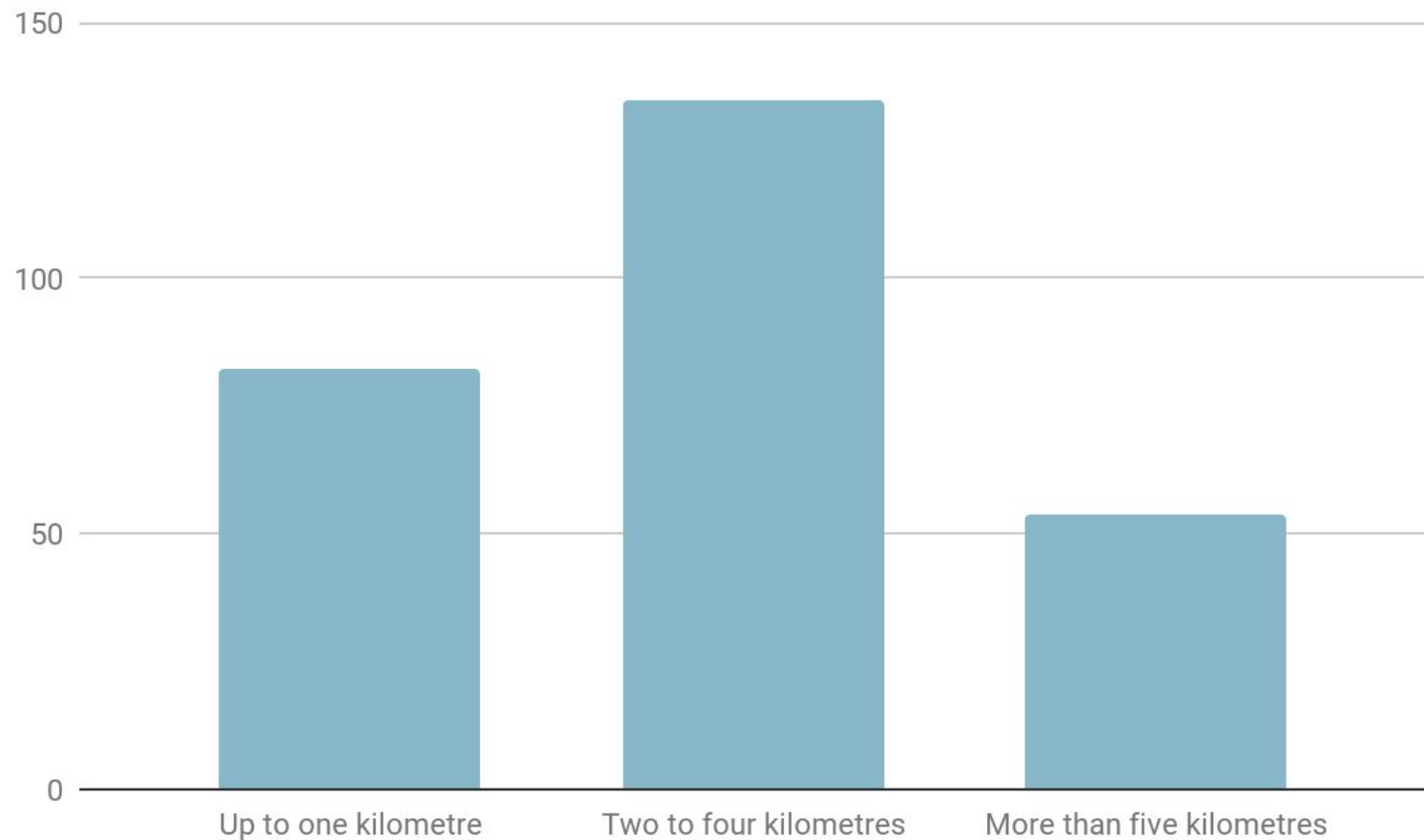
WHAT SORT OF SCHOOL DO YOUR CHILDREN ATTEND?



DID THE AVAILABILITY OF AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AFFECT YOUR DECISION ABOUT WHERE TO LIVE?

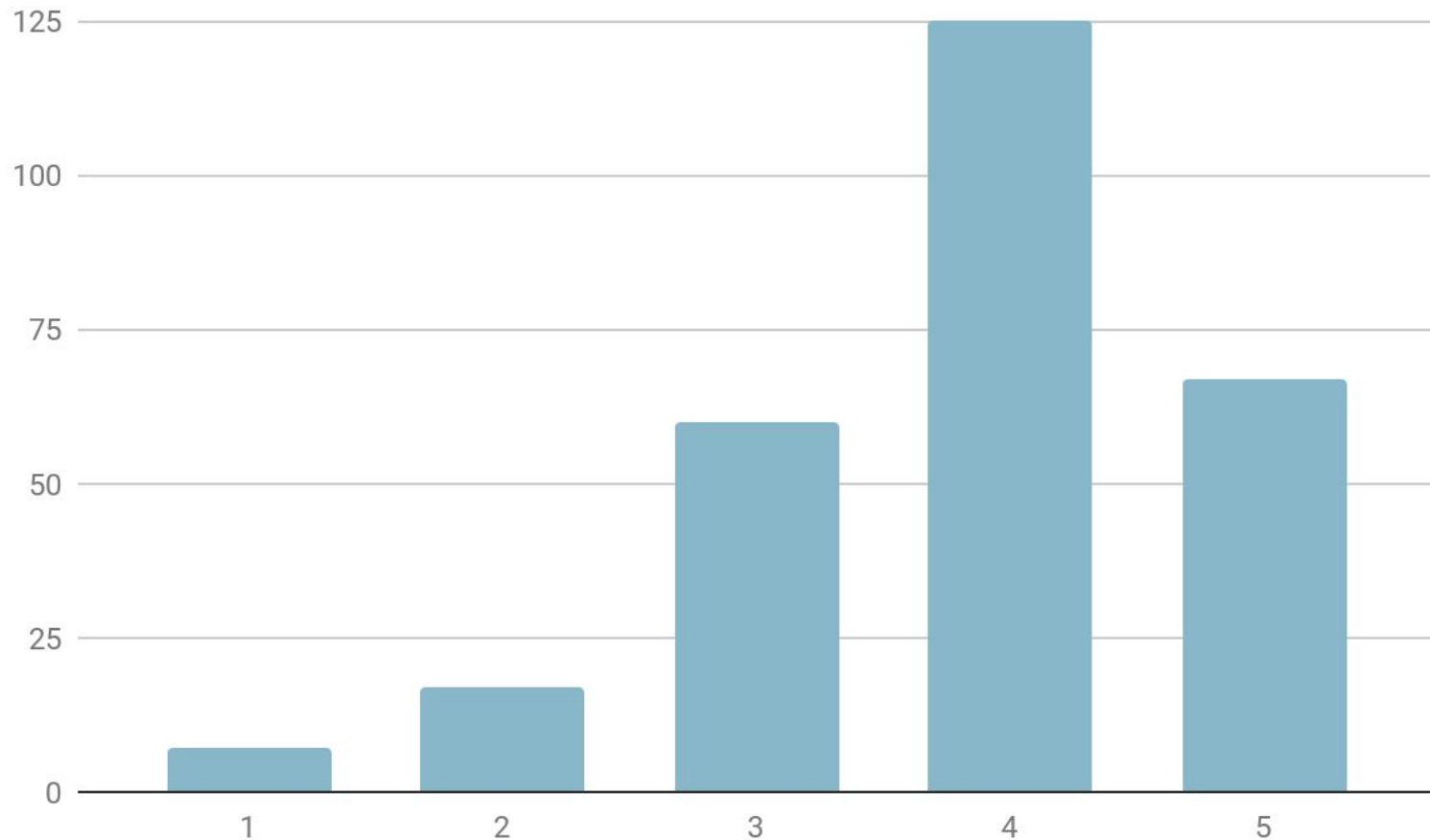


HOW FAR ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR CHILD TRAVELING TO ATTEND SCHOOL?



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION?

(1 not satisfied to 5, very satisfied)



International schools in the Amsterdam region, what parents say

Many parents in Amsterdam commented on the cost and the quality of international education in the city.

- 'My children are at a state-supported international school. I am disappointed that no foreign languages are offered and the school gym is not used more for after school activities'
- 'I'd love state subsidized schools to be open to all nationalities.'
- 'A city like Amsterdam needs more affordable international schools'
- 'ISA is very expensive unless an employer pays the fee. AICS is more reasonable but is a very poorly run school... a completely new school needs to be developed'

New Arrivals

Parents were asked what they felt Dutch schools could do to make it easier for them to use the local education system. Several key themes emerged.

1. More Information in English

Many parents suggested that individual schools could do more to provide information to parents in English, including important updates.

- 'Have some information in English, making it easy to involve the family'
- 'Provide information in English. Google Translate only helps so much'
- 'Websites in English would make it easier for parents to understand how the school works and to communicate with them'
- 'Have a dedicated teacher or staff member for expats'

2. More Recognition of the Particular Needs of New Arrivals

- 'Have language classes in the same school. We have to travel long distances twice a week for classes.'
- 'Offer integration classes for both children and parents'
- 'Offer better language support to bilingual children'
- 'Be flexible with rules. International families have different diets and holidays'

3. Older new arrivals present a particular problem

- 'My 12-year-old daughter is the most worrying one as she has no Dutch... the only option is an international school but they are either full or expensive'
- 'Children over the age of 12 face huge difficulties in reaching Havo and VWO level and lose years with unmotivated classmates'
- 'The system introduces selection at a very early age (12) on the basis of their maths and language skills. This can heavily impact on the future career prospects of multilingual children.'
- 'There need to be more options for international pupils who don't speak Dutch as they approach high school age.'
- 'The international school fees are way too high for families moving to the Netherlands'

Dealing with Dutch schools

Parents were asked about their experiences of sending an international child to a Dutch school.

1. A large proportion of the respondents are happy with the Dutch system.
 - ‘My children speak Dutch fluently now, after one year, so I don’t know what to suggest. We are completely satisfied’
 - ‘Dutch schools are free and the quality is excellent. So many international families too (in Amsterdam Oud Zuid)’
 - ‘I worry sometimes that my kids are behind their peers in the UK. Then I look at the Pisa* results and stop worrying. They enjoy school too and that is important’

*Pisa - Programme for International Student Assessment

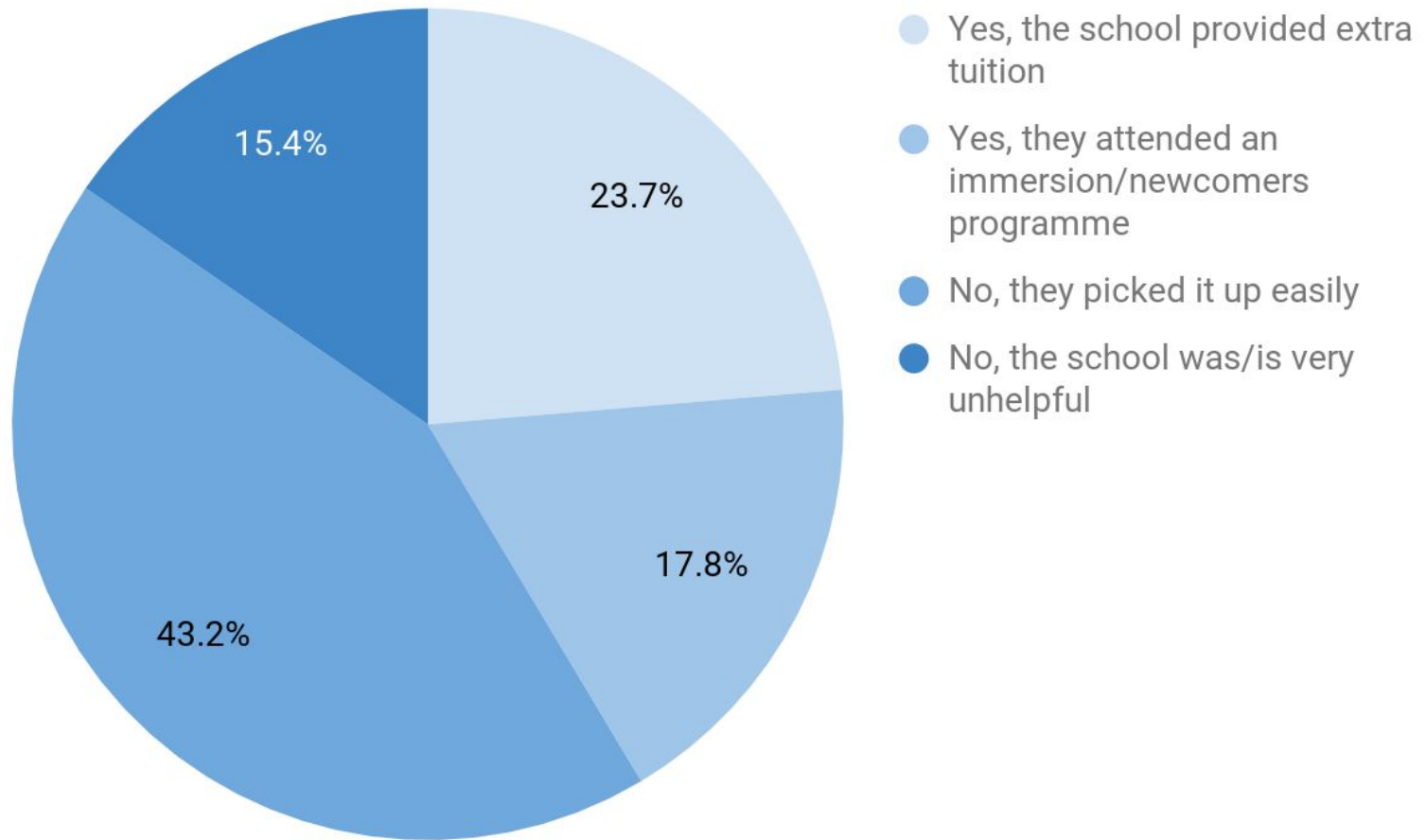
2. Some parents were concerned about the Dutch streaming system and class sizes.

- 'Dutch education is good for an average pupil but really poor for highly-motivated, well-organised clever children'
- 'I don't like the way students are labeled and tracked. It is nearly impossible for them to move up [a stream] once they have a label'
- 'Tests are taken too seriously and there is too much emphasis on a perfect grip on the language'
- 'Teaching copperplate handwriting to six-year-olds is ridiculous in this internet age'
- 'My four-year-old is in a class of 30 and it will be even bigger by the end of the school year'

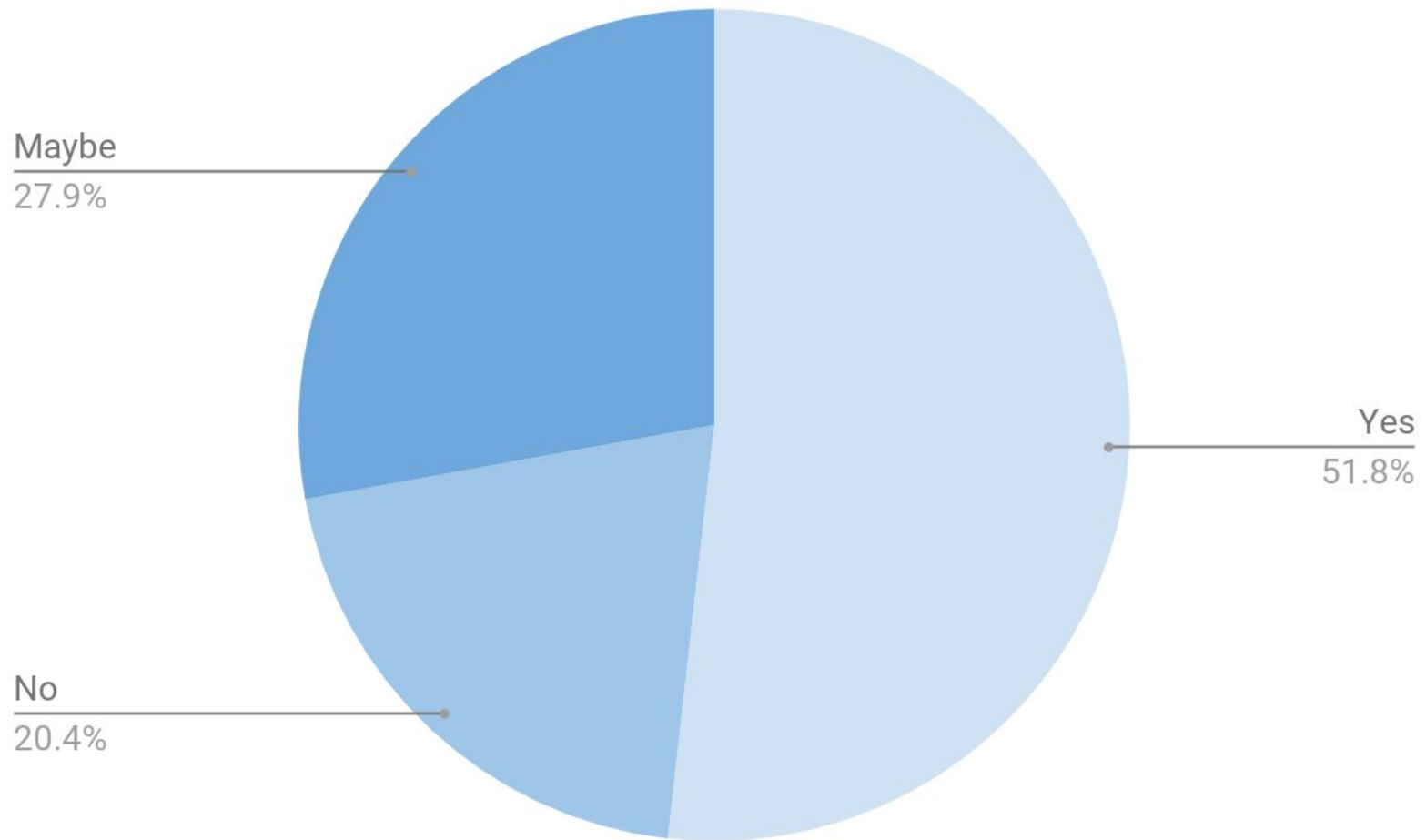
3. Several parents also referred to a lack of awareness about racism.

- 'There is a real need to stop segregation of children in schools (black versus white). It is extremely damaging to society'
- 'Not all teachers treat non-Dutch children equally. We had a very big problem in groups 1 and 2'
- 'Schools should stop considering bilingual kids as disabled'
- 'Schools should stop telling parents to speak to their children in Dutch'

IF YOUR CHILD ATTENDED A DUTCH SCHOOL, DID THEY GET EXTRA HELP IN LEARNING DUTCH?



WOULD YOU BE MORE WILLING TO PLACE
YOUR CHILD IN A DUTCH SCHOOL IF THEY
PLACED MORE EMPHASIS ON ENGLISH?



Amsterdam versus the Netherlands

In this section, we summarise the experiences of internationals who live in Amsterdam compared with those in the Netherlands at large.

This is of particular relevance to the city's reputation as a good business location within the Netherlands itself and in how the city profiles itself abroad.

Key Findings

Help with fees

Private international schools are expensive. School fees in Amsterdam range from €15,000 to over €25,000 per year.

While 21% of parents in Amsterdam had their school fees fully or partially paid, in The Hague, half of parents got some or 100% help with school fees.

However, of the 61 parents in our survey who said they only expected to spend another year in the Netherlands, 30 did have financial help with their school fees. This shows that expats on short-term assignments in the Netherlands are more likely to be able to make use of international schools.

Distance to school

Parents outside Amsterdam are more willing to let their children travel longer distances to school. 25% would accept a journey of more than five kilometres, compared with 20% of Amsterdam parents.

Type of education

Parents in Amsterdam were more likely to have children at a Dutch primary school and less likely to have children at an international school than the total sample.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

- Only a quarter of Amsterdam's international parents get any financial help from their employer to pay for education for their children
- Location is key. Closeness to home is more important than cost in deciding where a child should go to school.
- Many people want to send their children to a Dutch school and well over half of families will be in the Netherlands for at least five years.
- Parents are largely satisfied with the quality of their children's education, no matter what the school type.
- The position of new children nearing secondary school age is a particular problem in Amsterdam, given the lack of affordable international school places.

Recommendations

- Encourage the setting up of more, low-fee state-supported international schools.
- Improve provision of general information in English about the Dutch school system, including the number of different types of schools available and the high quality delivered by the Dutch education system.
- Develop a network of flagship Amsterdam state schools which are happy to help new arrivals settle in and make funding available for the production of websites, school brochures etc in English.
- Do more to help new parents understand what is expected of them at Dutch schools – for example, highlight the fact that parents are expected to provide food for parties and accompany school trips.
- Recognise that new arrivals approaching secondary school age with no Dutch will be at a disadvantage in the Dutch system and develop a safety net for them.
- Encourage more Amsterdam primary schools to begin teaching languages, such as English, at a very early age. Increase support for bilingual children

About Stichting ICAP

ICAP is an initiative put together by four long-standing members of the international community to act as an independent bridge between the international community itself and government and civic organisations.

In particular, we aim to establish an independent forum which represents and reflects the views of the international community on issues which have an impact on the city's attractiveness as a place to live in and do business.

The city regularly scores very highly in international comparisons – facts which officials are keen to promote whenever possible. However, these glowing reports do not always reflect the reality on the ground. And Amsterdam lacks a broad framework for communicating with and receiving input/feedback from the international community and assessing its diverse needs and concerns. ICAP aims to change this.

www.icapnl.com