

---

Citation:

Ensaff, H and Mahoney, K (2014) The Packed Lunch Project: Parent Survey. Project Report. Leeds Beckett University.

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/19/>

Document Version:

Monograph (Other)

---

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on [openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

# The PACKED LUNCH Project

## PARENT SURVEY



LEEDS  
BECKETT  
UNIVERSITY

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the parents who participated and gave their time and thoughts. We would also like to thank the schools, Local Authorities, organisations and parents who supported us in publicising our survey. This survey was funded by Leeds Metropolitan University.

## CONTENTS

The Packed Lunch Project	1
The Survey	1
Key Points	2
Packed Lunches – Key Factors	4
Packed Lunches – Contents	5
Packed Lunches – Costs and Child Involvement	11
School Policies around Packed Lunches	12
Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)	14



*This report outlines the data collected from an online survey of parents, conducted as part of a research study: The Packed Lunch Project.*

## The Packed Lunch Project

The Packed Lunch Project revolves around parents' preference for providing packed lunches for their children in primary schools. Our study aims to gain an insight into parents' viewpoints in order to inform our knowledge and understanding of this key aspect of child nutrition. As part of this study we designed an online survey; the data collected is summarised in this report.

## The Survey

The survey was conducted to explore parents' motivations for sending their children to primary school with a packed lunch, as well as an exploration of what parents choose to include. Our survey was in four main parts: Packed Lunches; Your Child's Most Recent Packed Lunch; Packed Lunches and You; and Packed Lunches and your Child's School. We asked parents for their views on packed lunches, why they chose to send their children to school with a packed lunch or otherwise, what they chose to include in their child's most recent packed lunch, and how they chose the foods they included. Other questions related to the Universal Infant Free School Meals initiative and packed lunch policies at schools.

The online survey was open during May and June 2014, and 1291 parents took part from across England.

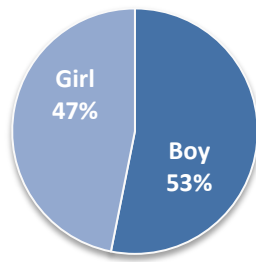
For all data provided, the question is listed along with the percentage of responses, as well as the total number of respondents; this varied as the survey routed participants at points depending upon their response to certain key questions, and not all participants answered all questions asked.

## Key points

- The survey was conducted during May and June 2014, and over 1000 parents with children attending primary schools in England participated.
- Parents were asked about packed lunches including details of the contents of their child's most recent packed lunch, as well as how they chose what to put in them.
- Sandwiches were the mainstay in the majority of lunchboxes (88%). The mean number of fillings in a sandwich was 2.2 and the most popular fillings (excluding margarine / butter) were ham (44%), cheese (26%) and cucumber (20%). The majority of parents (92%) included a piece of fruit in their child's lunch box, with grapes (39%) and apples (34%) being the most popular. Nearly half of parents (47%) also reported including a vegetable / salad snack. Most parents (70%) included a yogurt / fromage frais item with the most popular choice being pouches of fromage frais or yogurt, e.g. Frubes and Tubes. Cheese snacks were also included in more than a third of lunches with Babybel (15%) and Cheestrings (12%) being the most popular. More than half of parents reported that their child's packed lunch contained a savoury snack, with potato crisps (19%) and potato starch snacks e.g. Hula Hoops, (12%) accounting for most of these. Six out of 10 parents included a confectionery / sweet / biscuit; a chocolate covered biscuit bar e.g. KitKat was the most popular (14%), followed by cereal bars (11%) and cake (10%). The overwhelming majority of parents included a drink; the most common drink was tap water (38%), followed by diluted squash (27%).
- On average, parents estimated spending £1.42 on a packed lunch for their child.
- Of parents who sent their children to school with a packed lunch, most did so for 5 days a week, whilst almost a quarter did so for only 2, 3 or 4 days. Parents reported that a key factor for the variation was the school menu for that day.
- More than 70% of parents were aware of a policy around packed lunches at their child's school. Of these, 77% were in favour of the policy. Of those parents who were not aware of, or did not have a policy around packed lunches at their child's school, only 47% were in favour of packed lunch policies.
- 83% of parents knew about the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) initiative (which came into effect in September). For parents with children affected by the UIFSM, 47% said that they intended to take up the offer fully, whilst an additional 23% said they would for some days of the week.
- Parents felt that the most important reasons for sending their children to primary school with a packed lunch revolved around providing a healthy and high quality lunch, as well as ensuring that their child had enough to eat and knowing how much was actually eaten.
- In selecting what to put into packed lunches, parents considered the freshness and taste of the food and drink, as well as whether their child liked the items. Parents felt that they understood about healthy eating and a balanced diet, and reported being happy with the content of the packed lunch that they provided.
- It is important to note that the survey was conducted online and participants selected themselves to take part. Generalising to the wider population may be limited and should be carefully considered.

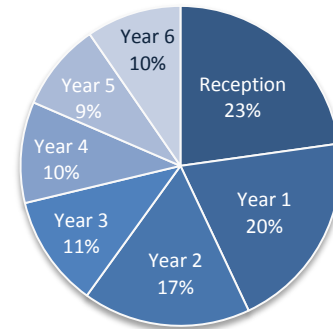
## Your child's gender:

Respondents: 1291 parents



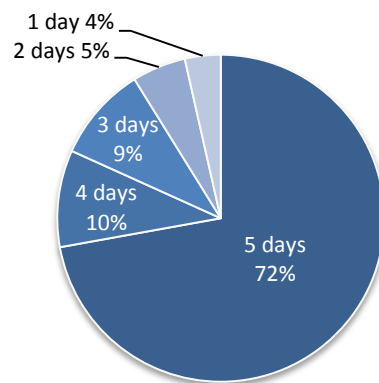
## Your child's year group:

Respondents: 1291 parents



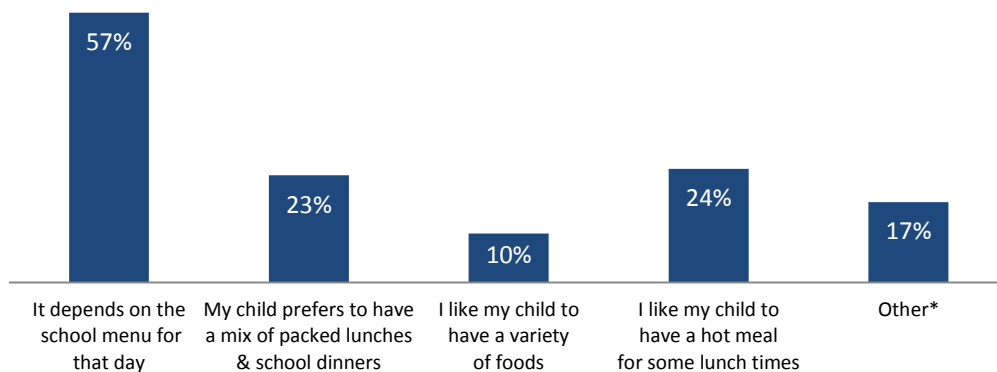
## During an average week, on how many days does your child take a packed lunch to school?

Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Why does your child have a packed lunch on some days and a school dinner on other days? (Please tick any that apply)

Respondents: 299 parents providing a packed lunch on 1 – 4 days during an average week

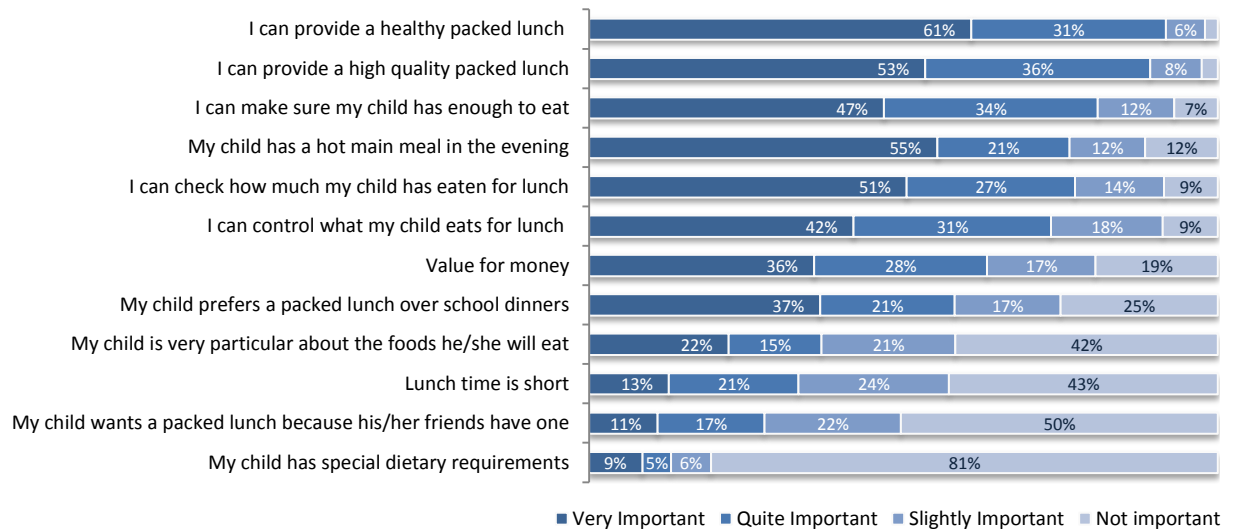


\* 'other' reasons included after school activities & cost

# Packed Lunches – Key Factors

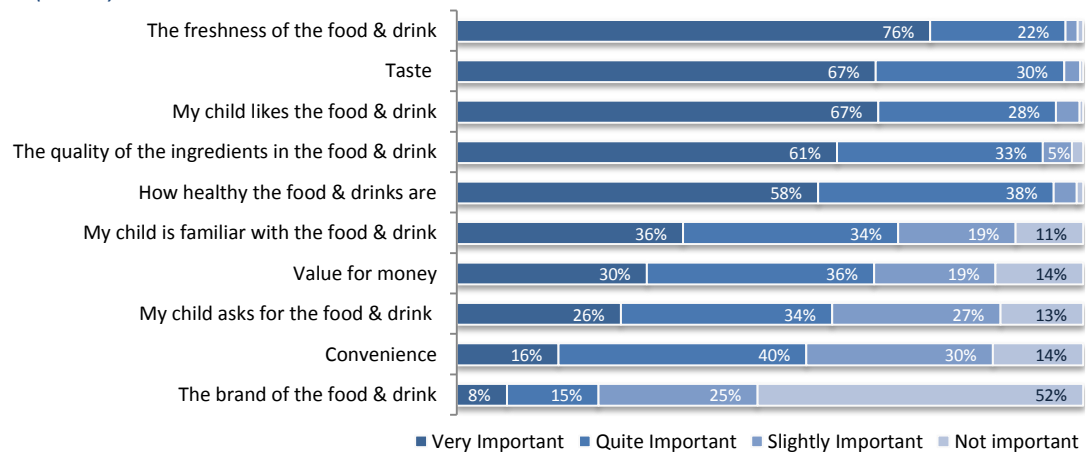
## Why does your child take a packed lunch to school?

How important (or not) are these reasons?

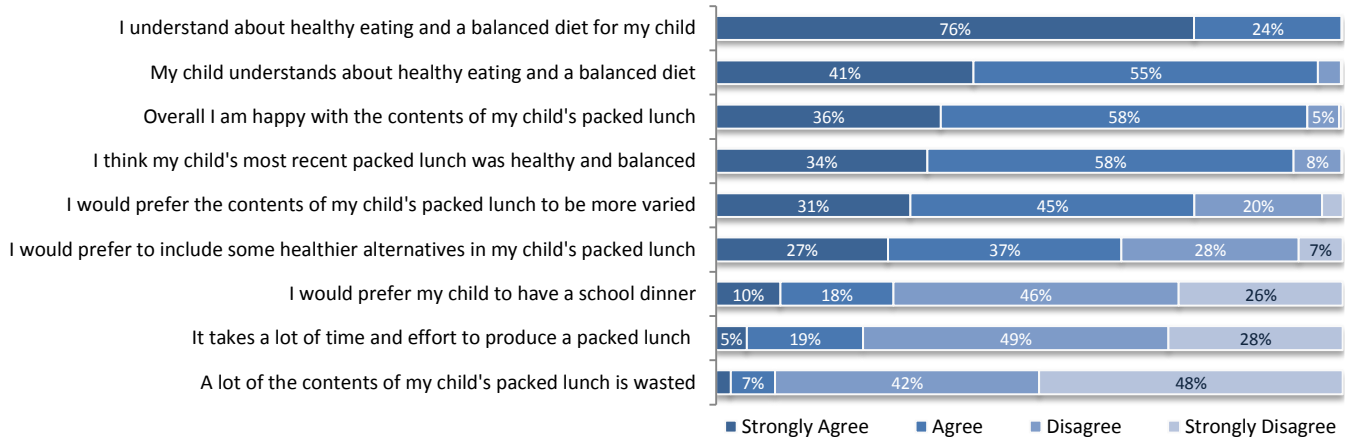


## Choosing which food & drink to put into your child's packed lunch:

How important (or not) are these reasons?



## Packed lunches: parents' perspectives

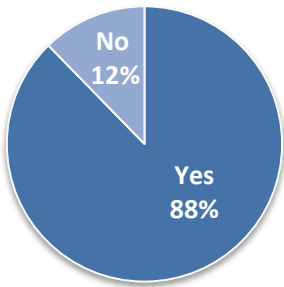


Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch

# Packed Lunches – Contents

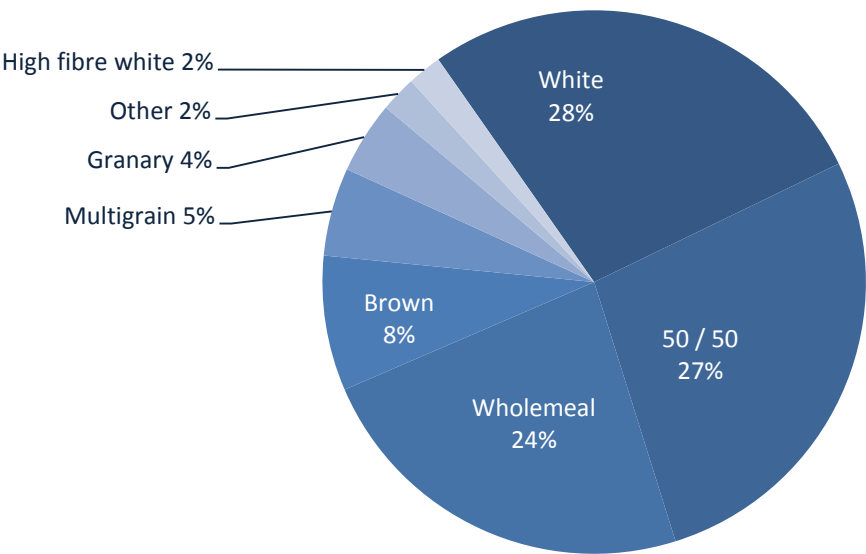
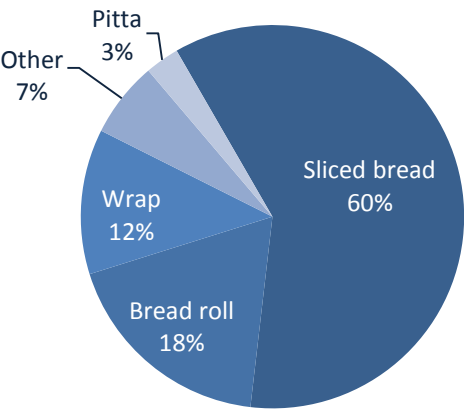
## Did your child’s most recent packed lunch contain a sandwich?

Respondents: 1073 parents providing a packed lunch



## What bread was used in the sandwich?

Respondents: 939 parents providing a sandwich in their child’s most recent packed lunch

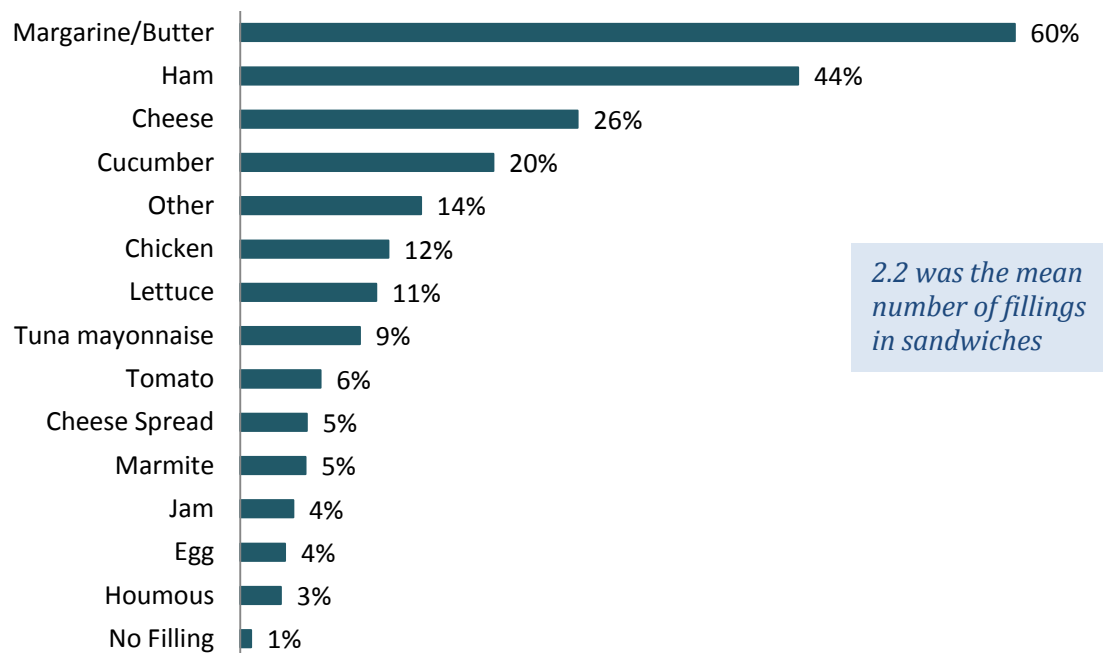




## What was the filling in the sandwich?

*(Please tick any that apply, e.g. if it was a cheese and tomato sandwich in buttered bread please tick cheese and tick tomato and tick margarine/butter)*

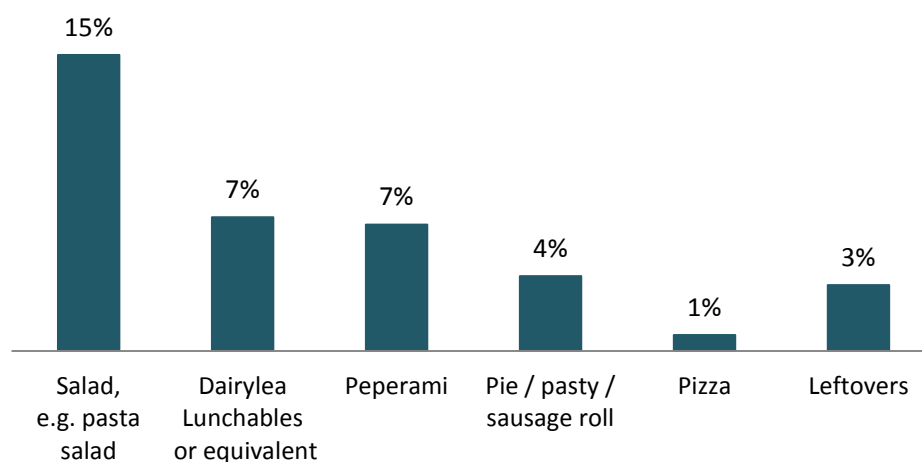
Respondents: 935 parents providing a sandwich in their child's most recent packed lunch



## Did your child's lunch contain any of the following?

*(Please tick any that apply)*

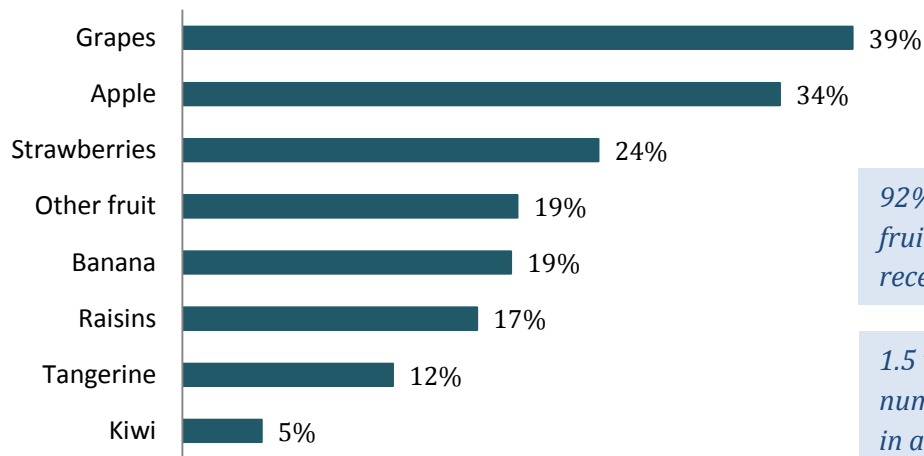
Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following fruit?

(Please tick any that apply)

Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



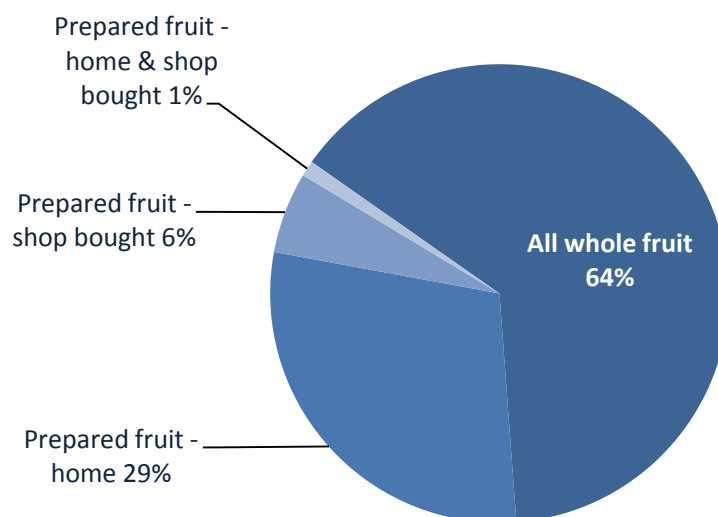
*92% of parents included fruit in their child's most recent packed lunch*

*1.5 was the mean number of different fruit in a packed lunch*

'other fruit' as provided by parents included blueberries (4%), melon (2%) & pineapple (2%)

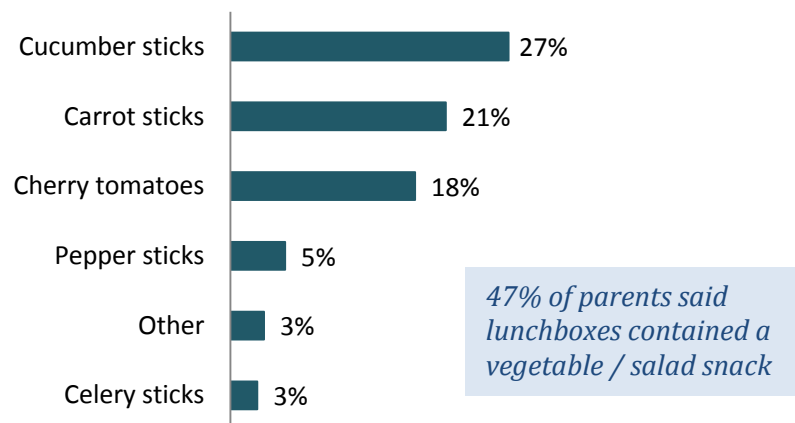
## Was any of the fruit prepared? e.g. slices of fruit or a fruit bag

Respondents: 908 parents providing fruit in their child's most recent packed lunch



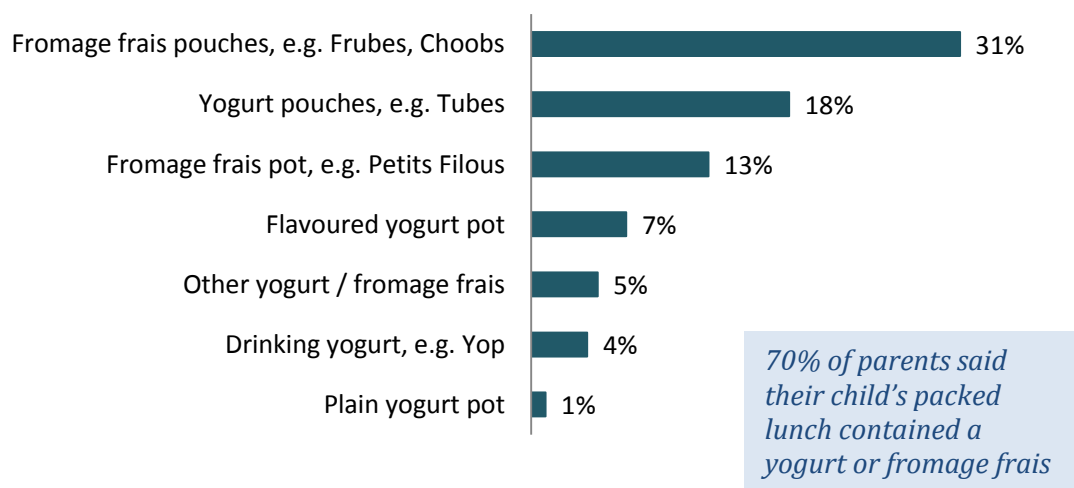
## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following vegetable / salad snacks? *(Please tick any that apply)*

Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following yogurt / fromage frais items? *(Please tick any that apply)*

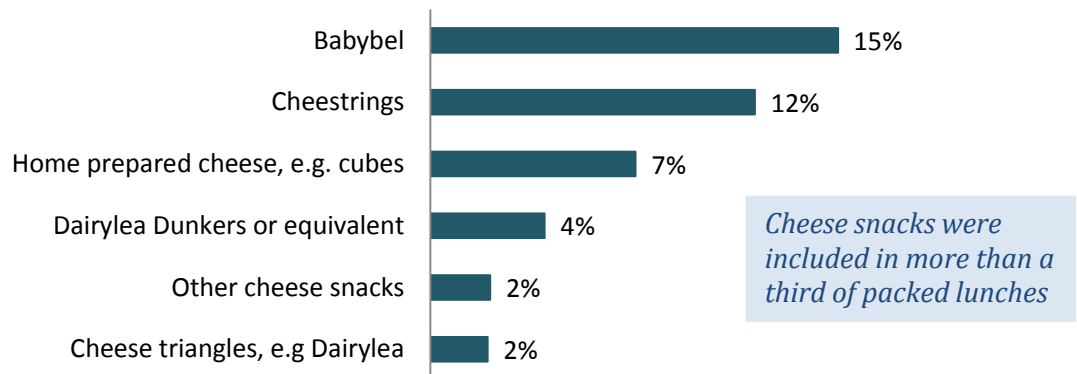
Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following cheese snacks?

(Please tick any that apply)

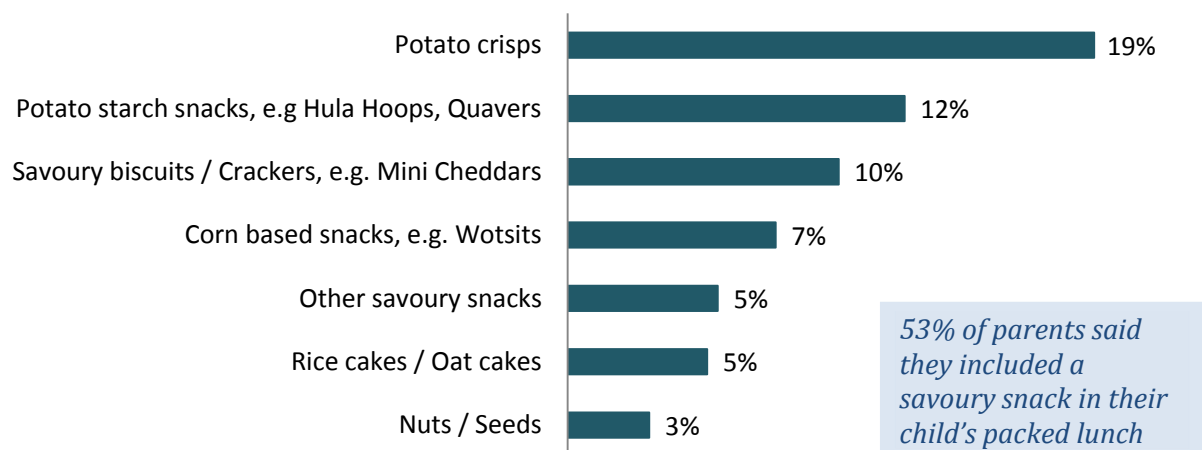
Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following savoury snacks?

(Please tick any that apply)

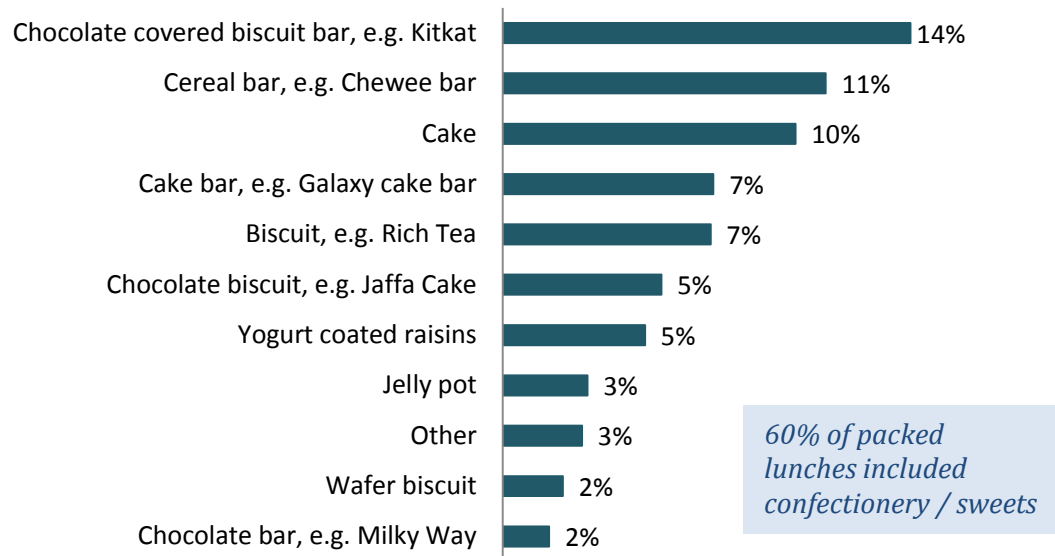
Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following confectionery / sweets?

(Please tick any that apply)

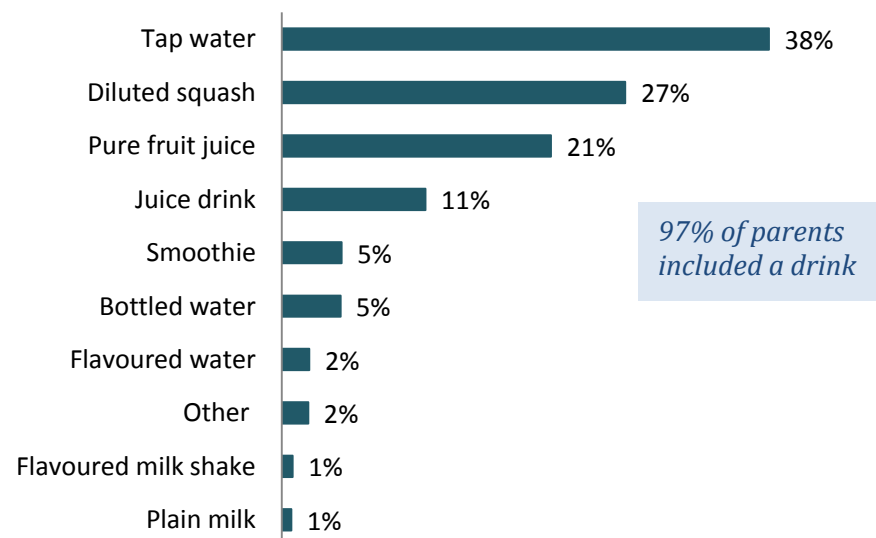
Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Did your child's packed lunch contain any of the following drinks?

(Please tick any that apply)

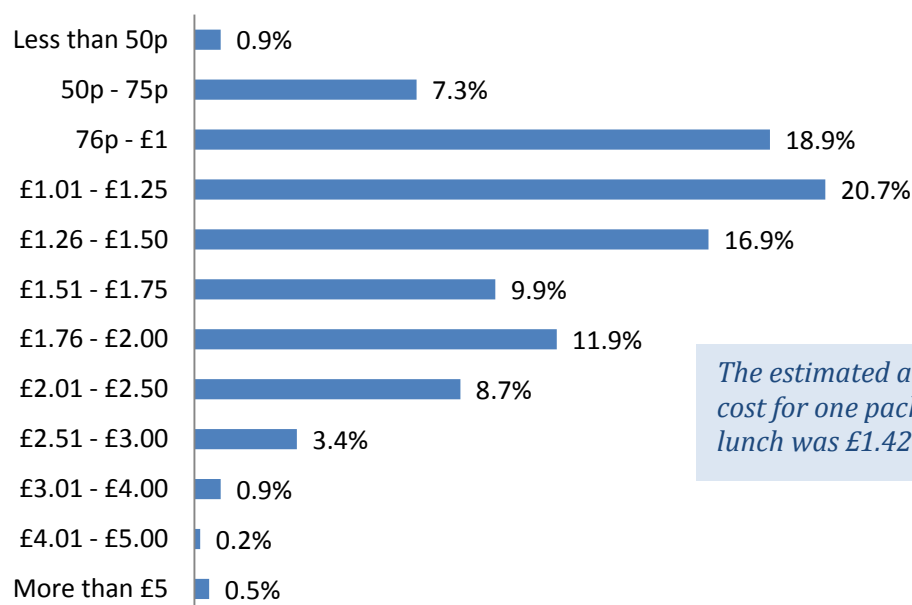
Respondents: 1074 parents providing a packed lunch



## Packed Lunches – costs and child involvement

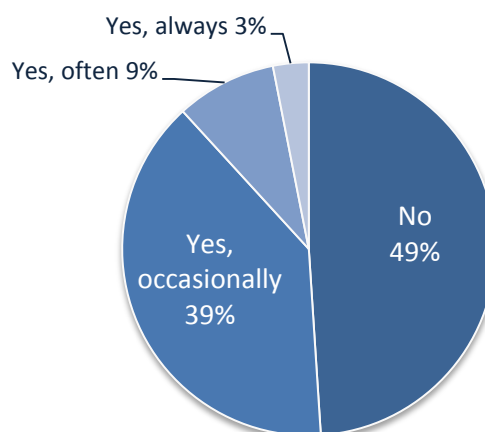
### On average, how much would you estimate it costs you to provide one packed lunch for your child?

Respondents: 1043 parents providing a packed lunch



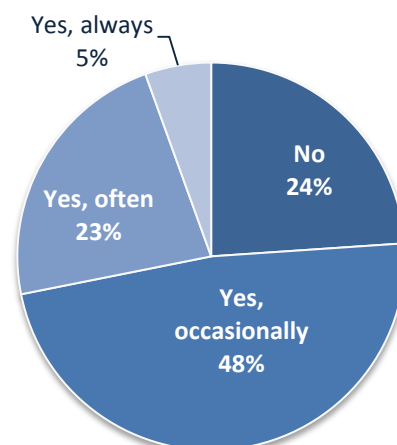
### Does your child help to prepare his / her packed lunch?

Respondents: 1068 parents providing a packed lunch



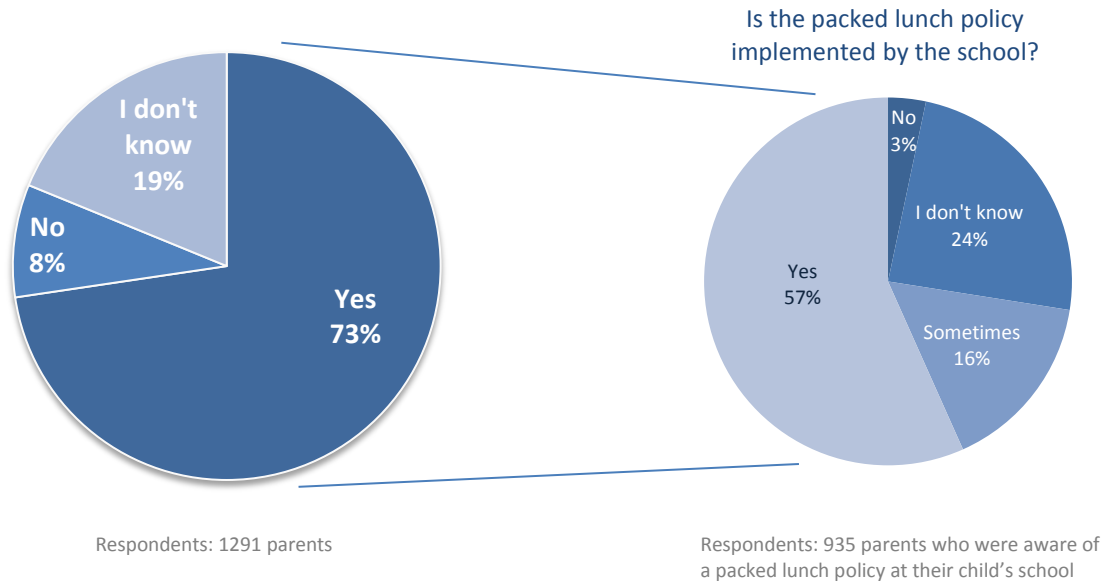
### When shopping, does your child help choose the items for his / her packed lunch?

Respondents: 1070 parents providing a packed lunch



# School Policies around Packed Lunches

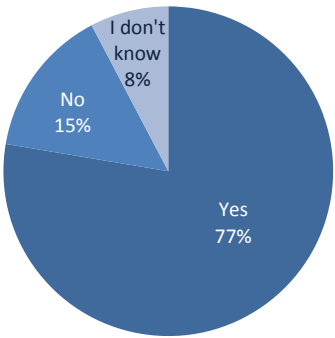
Does your child's school have a 'packed lunch policy' that discourages or bans certain foods and drinks?



Parents aware of a packed lunch policy at their child's school:

**Are you in favour of the packed lunch policy?**

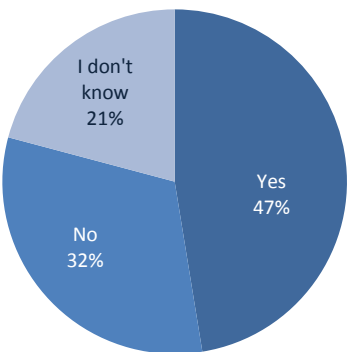
Respondents: 935 parents who were aware of a packed lunch policy at their child's school



Remaining parents:

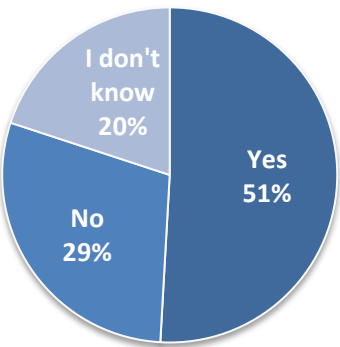
**Are you in favour of a packed lunch policy?**

Respondents: 350 parents who were not aware of or did not have a packed lunch policy at their child's school



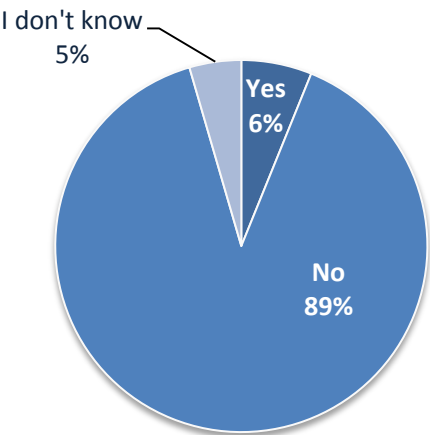
**At your child's school, can children bringing in a packed lunch eat with children having school dinners?**

Respondents: 1283 parents



**Do you think schools should be able to ban packed lunches so that all children must have a school meal?**

Respondents: 1288 parents

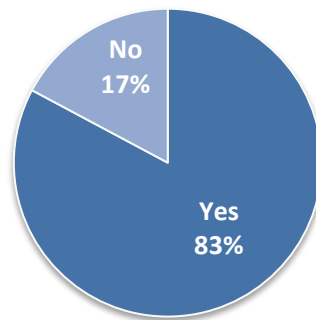




# Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

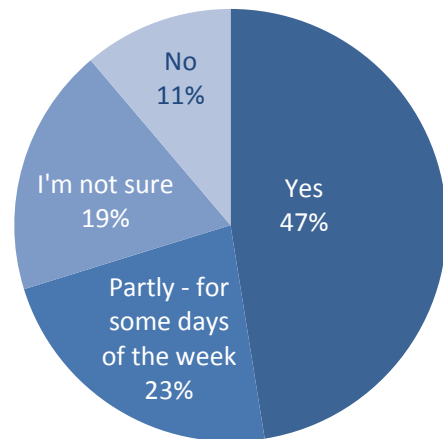
**Did you know that from September 2014 all children in England in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will be offered a free school lunch?**

Respondents: 1285 parents



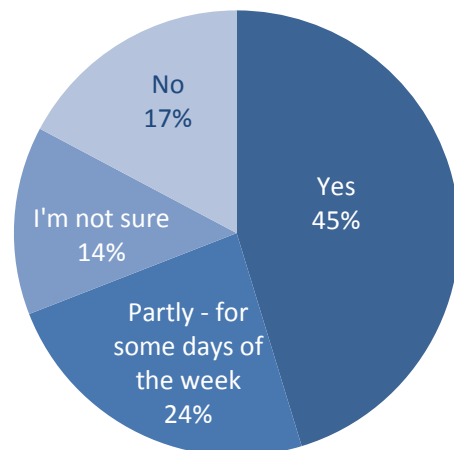
*Parents with children affected by UIFSM:*  
**Will you be taking up the offer of a free school lunch?**

Respondents: 554 parents with children affected by UIFSM



*Parents with children not affected by UIFSM:*  
**If your child were offered a free school lunch, would you take up the offer?**

Respondents: 731 parents with children not affected by UIFSM





The brands in the image and text are for illustrative purposes only;  
inclusion does not imply endorsement of the brand owners by the authors.

**October 2014**

**For more information contact:**

H.Ensaff, Research Fellow, School of Health and Wellbeing, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, LS1 3HE

Email: [h.ensaff@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:h.ensaff@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

---