



Pearson

# Assessments Attitudes of UK Teachers & Parents

A report prepared by  
BritainThinks

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Image by Lucy Vigrass



# Background and methodology

BritainThinks conducted an online survey of 506 respondents between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016, breaking down as:

## 256 Parents

- All with children aged 4-18
- With a spread of those with primary and secondary school children
- Good mix of genders and regional spread across England



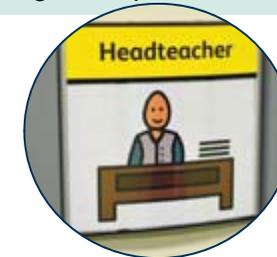
## 200 Teachers

- All engaged in teaching full-time (i.e. no TAs or student teachers)
- Equally split across primary and secondary school education
- Good regional spread across England



## 50 Head teachers

- All employed at head teacher / deputy head teacher / principal level
- Equally split across primary and secondary school education
- Good regional spread across England

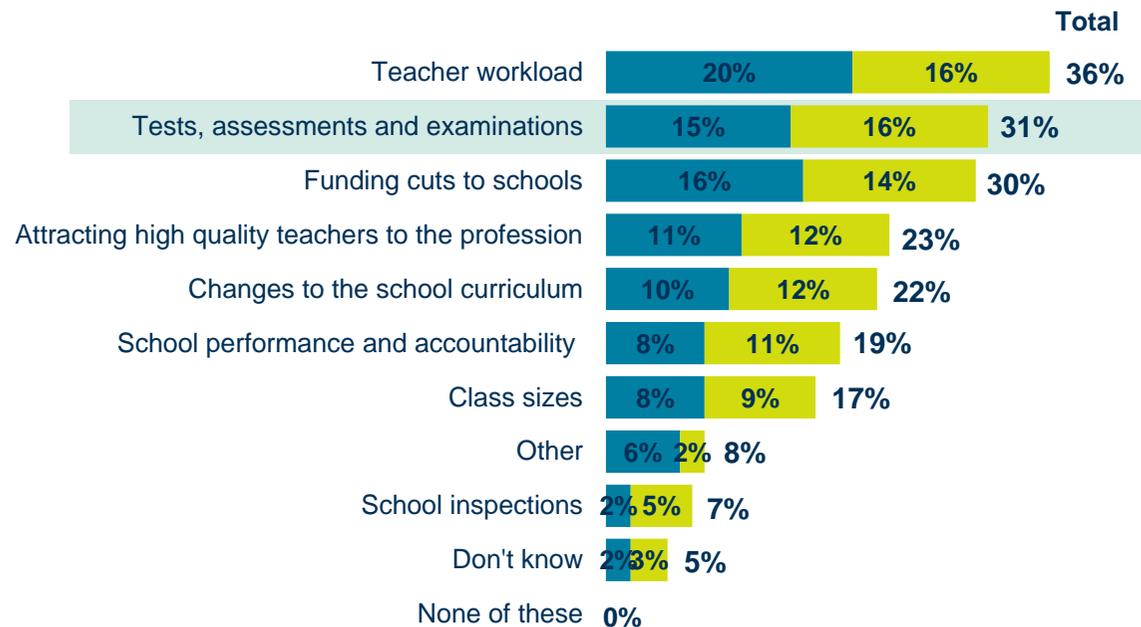


# Summary of background attitudes

- 1** Assessments, testing and examinations are perceived to be one of the top issues facing the education sector. This concern is shared by parents and teachers alike.
- 2** Spontaneous associations with testing and assessments are much more likely to be negative than positive, with both teachers and parents associating assessments strongly with 'stress' and 'pressure'.
- 3** When asked what are the specific issues with testing and assessments, teachers in particular describe concern about the 'culture' of testing and assessments having a negative impact on teachers and students. Parents are less likely than teachers to identify this challenge.
- 4** Evaluation of teacher performance being too closely tied to tests and assessments is not teachers' most front of mind concern when they think about tests and assessments. However, when asked outright, there is very strong agreement among teachers that the evaluation of teacher performance is too closely tied to tests and assessments.

# Tests, assessments and examinations are second most likely to be selected as one of the top issues facing the education sector

- Second to teacher workload (mentioned by 36% of respondents as one their top two issues for the sector)
- *Just* ahead of funding cuts to schools (mentioned by 30% of respondents as one of their top issues for the sector)



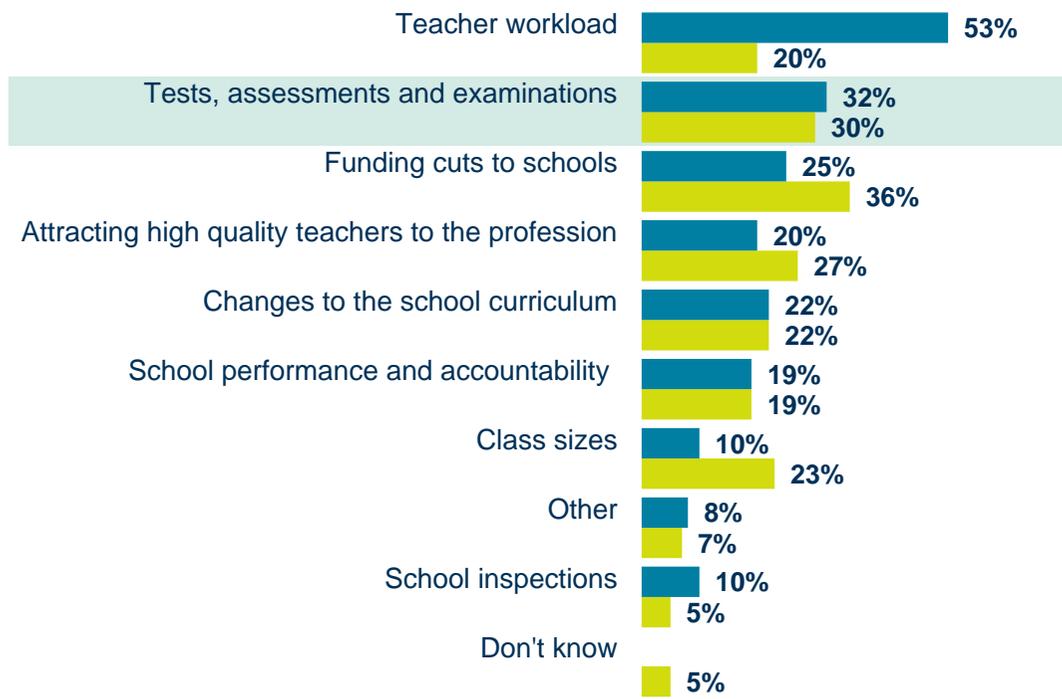
Percentage of Total Respondents Selecting Each Issue from a List

■ % Selected as a Primary Issue  
 ■ % Mentioning as a Secondary Issue

% in bold represents total mentioning as a Primary or Secondary Issue

# This concern is shared by both the teacher *and* parent audiences surveyed

- Teachers and parents are more or less equally likely to select tests, assessments and examinations as one of their top two issues for the sector
- In contrast, there are big divergences between teachers and parents in levels of concern about teacher workload, funding cuts and class sizes

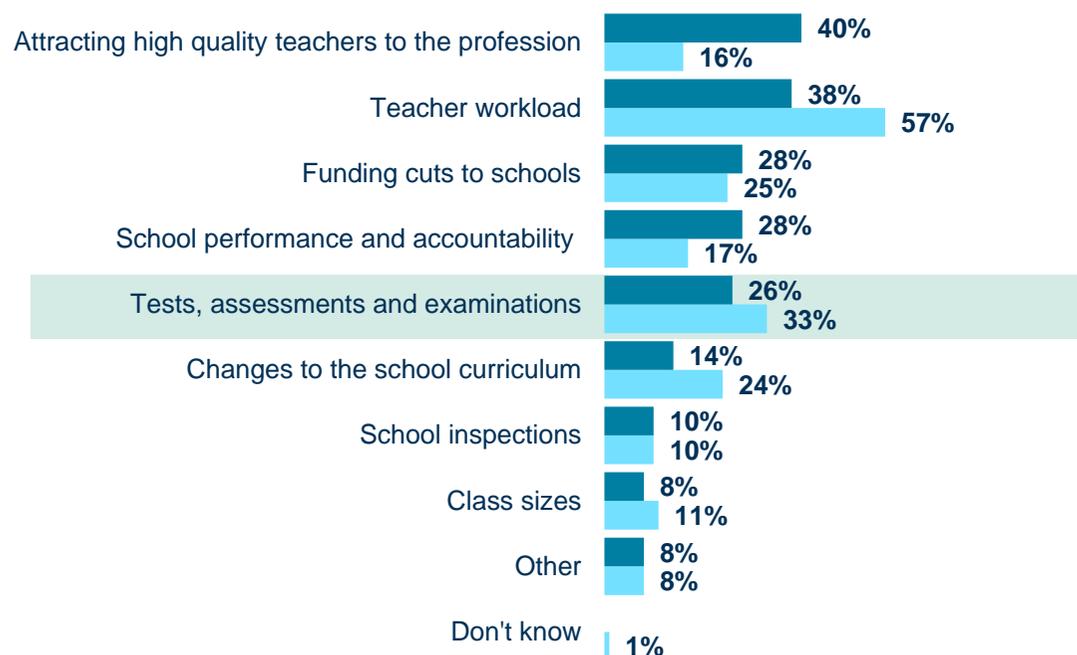


Teacher Responses vs Parent Responses

■ % of Teachers Selecting as a Primary or Secondary Issue  
■ % of Parents Selecting as a Primary or Secondary Issue

# But head teachers are slightly less likely than teachers overall to select tests, assessments and examinations as one of their top issues

- A quarter of head teachers surveyed select tests, assessments and examinations as one of their top two issues for the education sector
- However, head teachers are more likely to prioritise school performance and accountability as an issue for the sector



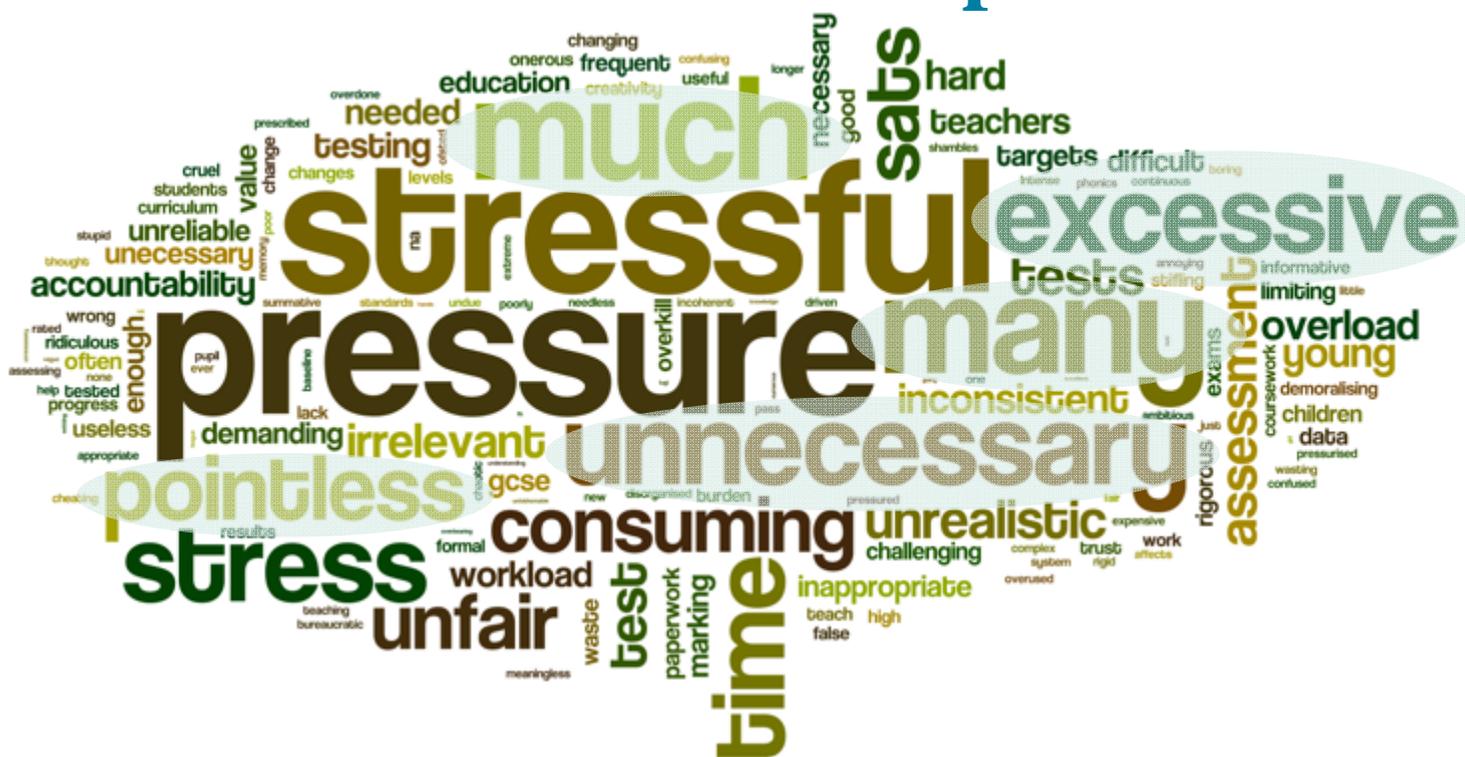
Head Teacher responses vs Non-Head Teacher Responses

■ % of Head Teachers Selecting as a Primary or Secondary Issue  
■ % of Non-Head Teachers Selecting as a Primary or Secondary Issue





# Teachers only are also most likely to associate assessments with stress and pressure



- But teachers are more likely than parents alone to focus on the *number* of assessments compared to parents, and the value of those assessments
  - With associations including '(too) much', '(too) many' and 'excessive' growing in prominence
  - As do associations including 'unnecessary' and 'pointless'
  - A small proportion of teachers mention 'targets' spontaneously when thinking about assessments

# When asked about specific issues related to testing, respondents are most concerned that tests ‘do not reflect students’ achievements’

- The ‘impact of the culture of testing on the quality of teaching’ is second most likely to be selected as the top issue related to assessments (with 38% of all respondents selecting it as among their top two issues)
- The ‘use of tests and assessments to evaluate teacher performance’ is, comparatively, less likely to be mentioned (at 21%)



Percentage of Total Respondents Selecting Each Issue

■ % Selecting as a Primary Issue  
 ■ % Selecting as a Secondary Issue

% in bold represents total mentioning as a Primary or Secondary Issue

# Teachers are much more likely than parents to be concerned about the impact of the ‘culture’ of testing on the quality of teaching

- The impact of this growing ‘culture’ of testing is more likely to be selected by teachers as the top specific issue relating to assessments (56%)
- Teachers are, unsurprisingly, also much more likely than parents to be concerned about the use of testing to evaluate teacher performance
  - This option is the third most likely to be selected from the list by teachers

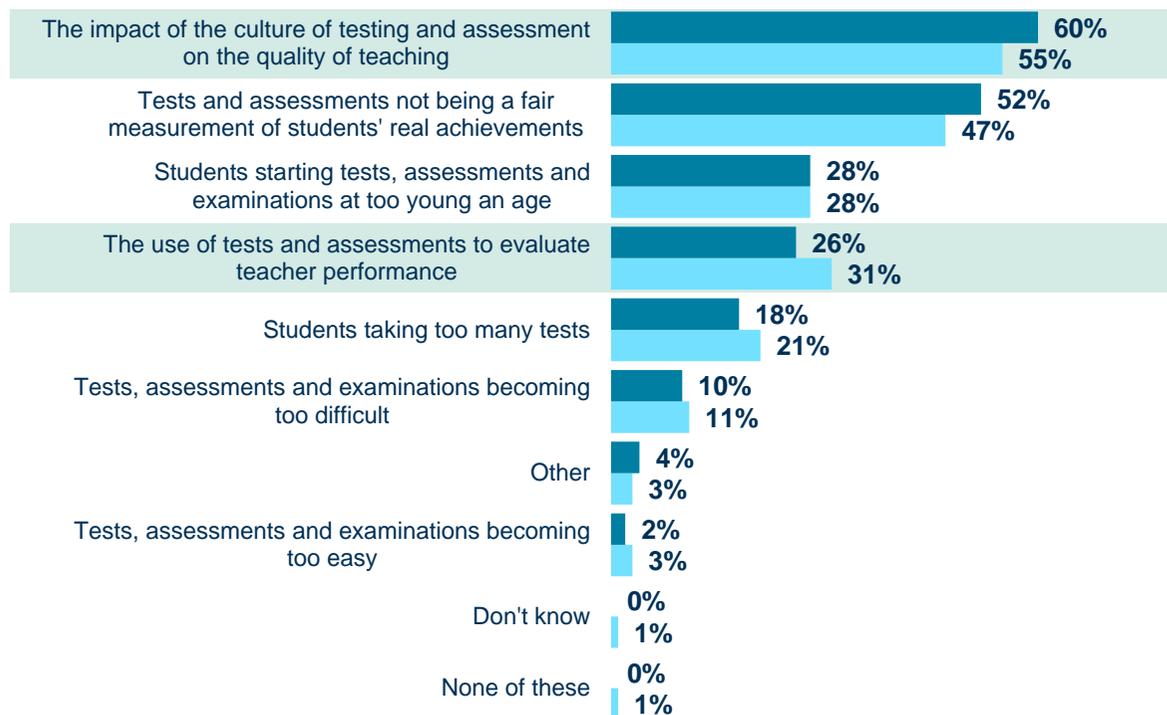


Teacher Responses vs Parent Responses

■ % of Teachers Selecting as a Primary or Secondary Issue  
■ % of Parents Selecting as a Primary or Secondary Issue

# This finding is consistent across the head teacher and wider teacher sample

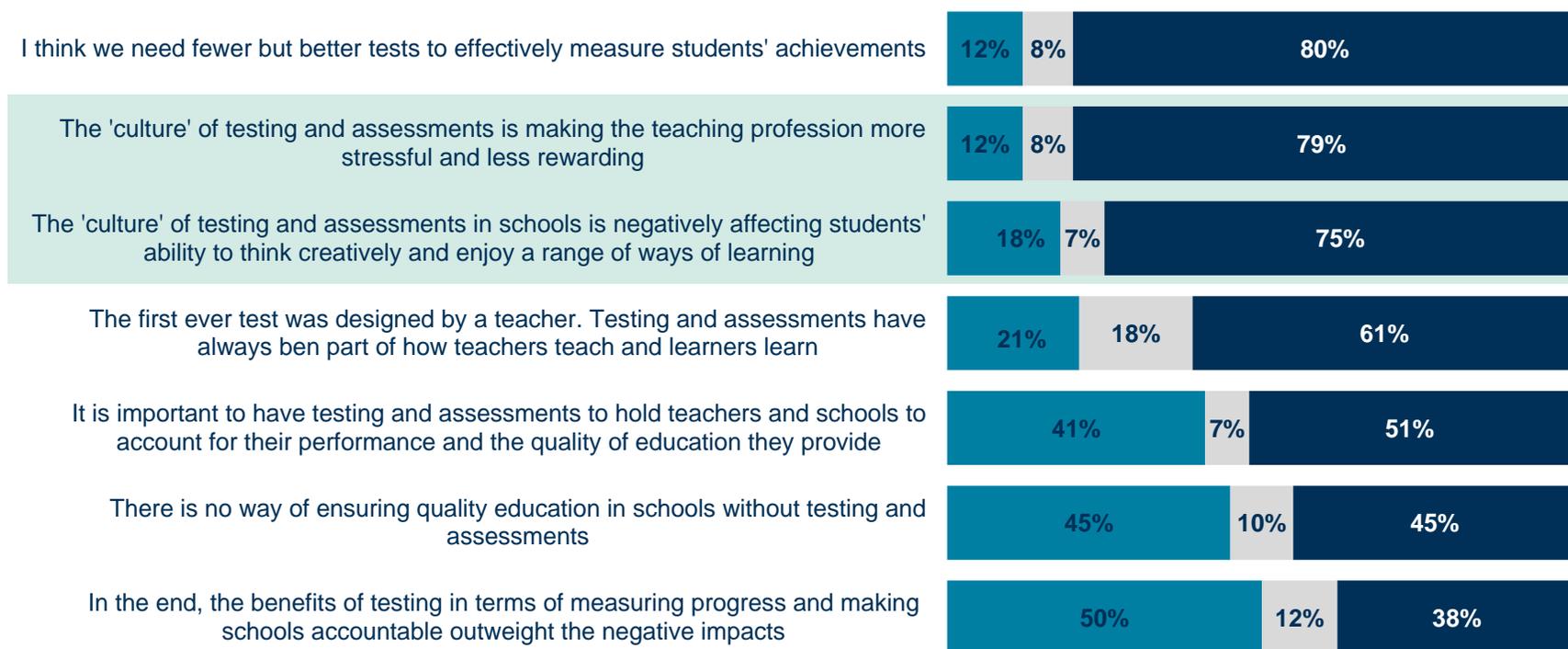
- Within the teacher sample, secondary school teachers are slightly more likely than primary school teachers to select ‘the impact of the culture of testing and assessment on the quality of teaching’ as the top issue related to assessments (60% compared to 52%)
- Secondary teachers are also more likely than primary school teachers to select ‘the use of tests and assessments to evaluate teacher performance as the top testing-related issue (34% vs 26%)



Head Teacher responses vs Non-Head Teacher Responses

■ % of Head Teachers Mentioning it as a Primary or Secondary Issue  
■ % of Non-head Teachers Mentioning it as a Primary or Secondary Issue

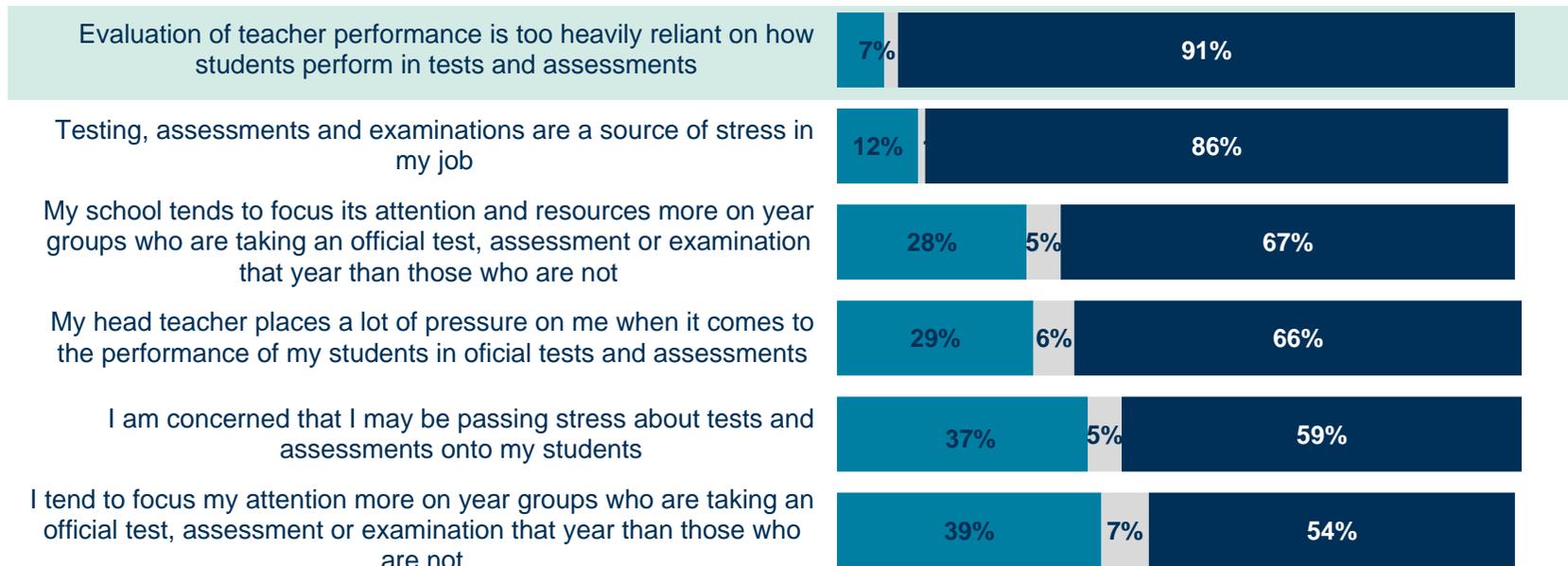
# There is strong agreement among both parents and teachers that the ‘culture of testing’ is having a negative impact on teachers and students



Percentage of Respondents Who Agree, Disagree, or Don't Know



# And (at 9 in 10) the vast majority of teachers say that their evaluation is too dependent on students' test results



- While a significant proportion *disagree* that this is the case (37%), almost 3 in 5 teachers say that they are concerned that they may be passing stress about tests and assessments onto their students

Percentage of Respondents Who Agree, Disagree, or Don't Know

