

### Introduction

This research examines the types of extracurricular activities (ECAs) that are most in demand among local schools and families, as well as the perceived logistical, cultural, and structural barriers to implementing ECAs in schools in Oxfordshire. This study enhances our understanding of the demand and supply-side factors that impact the operation of ECAs and the variety of those on offer in an Oxford-specific context, where a literature gap exists. Substantial inequalities are prevalent in Oxfordshire schools, with the area facing some of the lowest literacy rates in the country despite having the presence of the world-leading University of Oxford. This research allows us to address the attainment gap, a focus on Oxfordshire regions, enabling us to make highly specific and relevant recommendations for future outreach efforts.



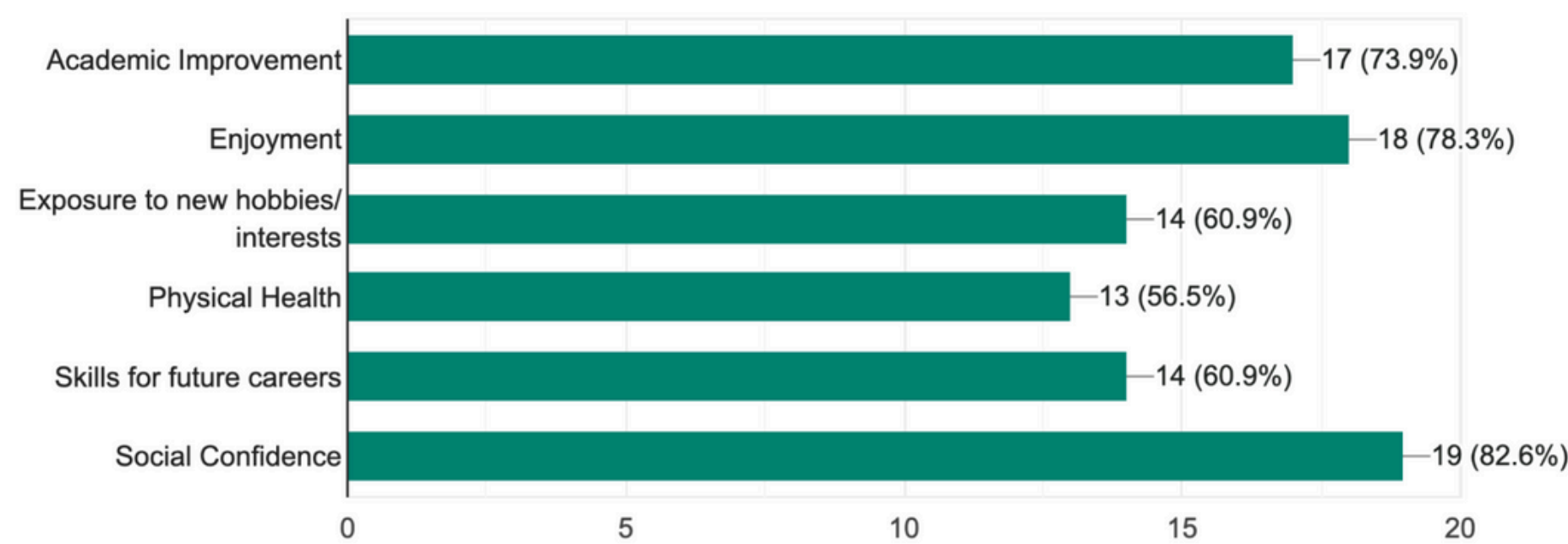
### Methodology

We used a mixed-methods design to examine demand and supply of extracurricular activities (ECAs) in Oxford schools.

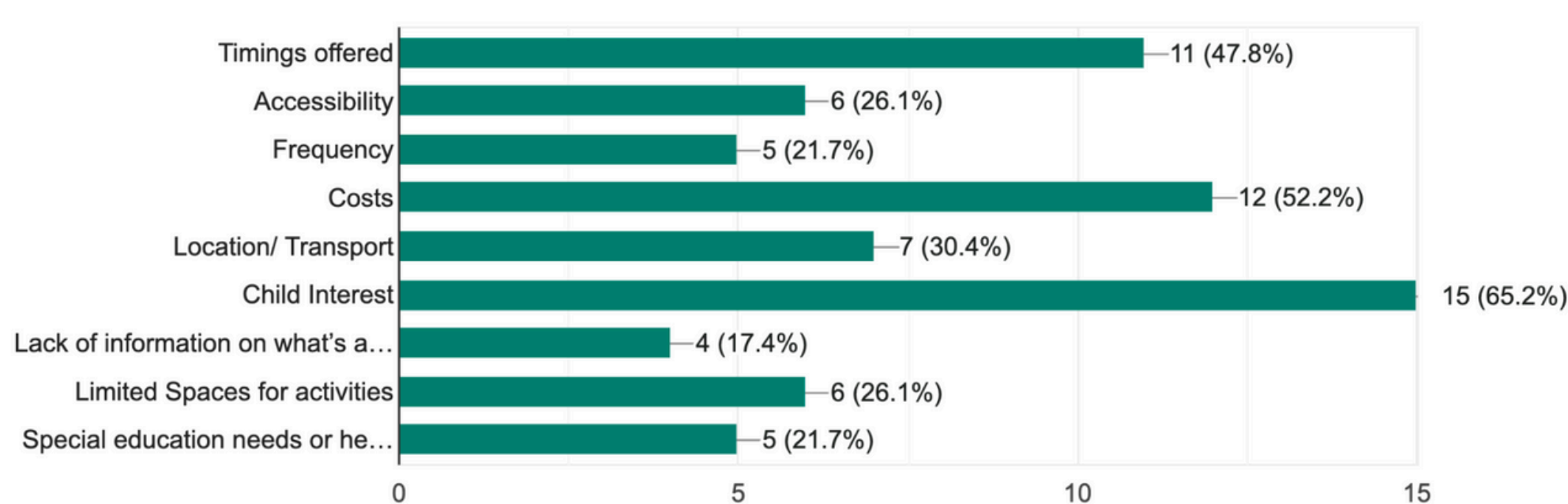
- State schools within a 10-mile radius of Oxford were identified via **council and Ofsted metadata**; headteachers were contacted directly and a convenience sample was recruited.
- **Semi-structured interviews** (online/in person) were conducted with five staff across primary, secondary and special-needs settings, including one headteacher.
- Consent and data security followed university ethics; two researchers led interviews and maintained field notes. In parallel, an **online survey** (short-answer, Likert and open-ended items) was distributed to parents via participating schools, yielding 23 responses focused on perceived quality/quantity of ECAs, participation, barriers and student interest; schools also received their own aggregated results.
- **Interview audio was transcribed** and thematically analysed in **NVivo** following Braun & Clarke's framework, with quotes/word clouds used to illustrate themes.
- Survey data were explored in **Excel**, with descriptive patterns, Pearson correlations and simple regressions; open-ended responses were thematically coded to triangulate with interview findings.

### Aspirations and Barriers

#### What do you hope your child will gain from ECA participation?

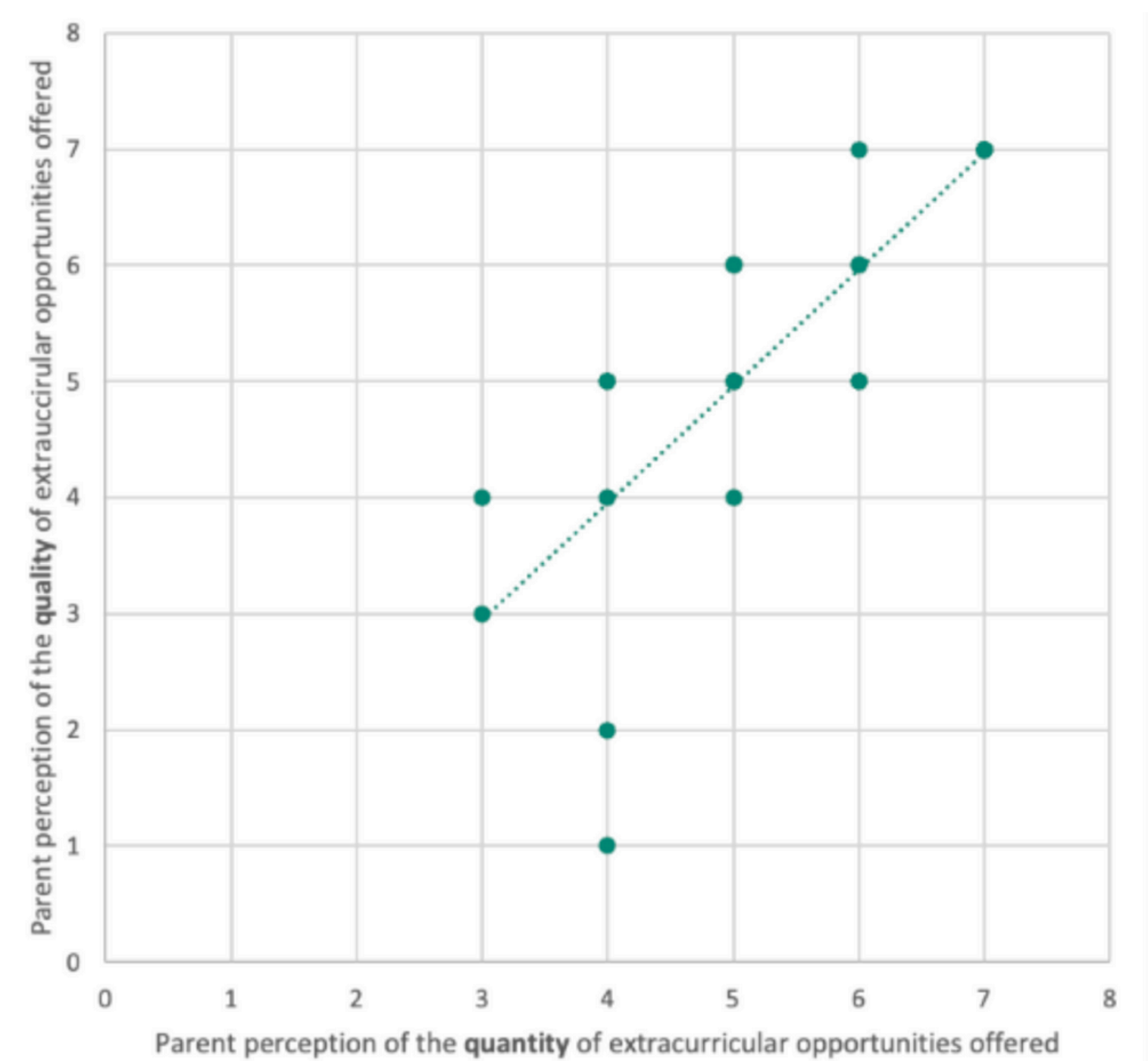


#### What factors affect your child's ECA participation?



### Quantity vs Quality Perception

#### Correlation between the parent's perception of ECA quantity and their perception of ECA quality



### Results and Discussion

- **Determinants of participation:** ECA participation is shaped by the interplay of student interest, parental support, and institutional capacity.
- **Motivations:** Parents and schools agreed on benefits: **social confidence**, **enjoyment**, and **academic improvement**; schools placed greater emphasis on **exposure to new interests** and **cultural capital**.
- **Predictors & engagement:** **Student interest** was the strongest predictor of participation; continued involvement was linked to a **stronger sense of belonging**.
- **Shared barriers** (primary & secondary): **Costs**, **timing/scheduling**, and **limited spaces** in high-demand clubs.
- **Equity constraints:** **SEND** and **health needs** further restricted opportunities, especially in **sports**.
- **Provision constraints** (staff-reported): **Limited time/motivation**, **facilities**, and **funding**.
- **Quantitative evidence:** Parents' perceived **quantity** and **quality** of provision **correlated strongly** ( $r = 0.77, p < 0.01$ ).

### Recommendations

- **Expand access to reduce inequalities:** offer low/no-cost clubs, increase places in high-demand activities, and enable shared use of facilities.
- **Strengthen student voice:** formalise mechanisms to capture demands; encourage student-led initiatives.
- **Community Action:** Universities and local authorities can support schools with facilities, transport, and student volunteers; target interventions towards disadvantaged areas.

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### References

