

The Trauma of TAGs... plus holidays abroad, libraries and exam reform

1. Teacher Assessed Grades

We are now amid the last scramble to get TAG evidence to the exam board. Soon, the dust will clear and everyone will be left to deal with their battle wounds and the piles of life chores put to one side to ensure it could all happen.

For some of you, the fact it is over will feel great. For others, it will be the start of worrying. Did you do everything right? Were you as fair as other schools? And so on.

Looking at the data, it looks as if the vast majority of TAGs were arrived at by using assessments under exam conditions. However, a small minority also used other options such as open book assessments (especially English teachers), homeworks, and exams for which pupils had prior access to questions.

Given that teachers could choose multiple options below, it's likely that in most cases an exam plus other materials were taken into consideration. For example, an exam plus a homework or a rehearsed assessment could be used to ensure a pupil wasn't marked down for missing a specific task.

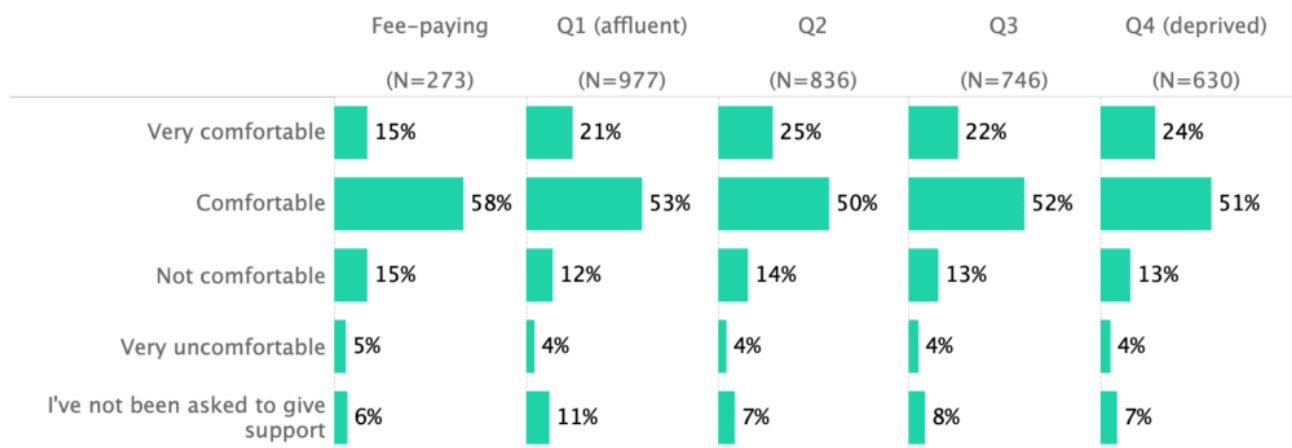
Are any of the following things true about the holistic assessment used for TAGs for students you teach?

	English (N=838)	Maths (N=764)	Science (N=828)	Humanities (N=879)	Languages (N=241)	Arts incl D&T (N=225)	Other incl PE (N=210)
Exam conditions assessment	96%	95%	95%	95%	96%	77%	95%
Sat same paper multiple times	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Homework	7%	7%	4%	9%	9%	14%	11%
Open book assessment	19%	8%	5%	12%	16%	13%	12%
A rehearsed assessment	8%	4%	2%	6%	8%	12%	6%
Prior access to mark schemes	13%	3%	6%	8%	11%	15%	8%
Prior access to questions	20%	7%	11%	10%	16%	13%	10%
None of these	2%	4%	3%	4%	2%	16%	3%

Question answered by 4,002 teachers on 11/06/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

In the past, when looking at SATs in primary schools, we've picked up pressures on teachers to 'game' tests by providing extra support to certain students. For TAGs, most secondary teachers said they were comfortable with the amount of support they were providing. However, 20% of private school teachers and around 17% of state school teachers said they were uncomfortable with what they had been asked to do.

How comfortable have you been with support that you have been asked to give to students during the TAGs process?



Question answered by 3,890 teachers on 11/06/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

One notable difference, was the higher rate at which private school teachers had taken homework into consideration for TAGs, as opposed to those in the state sector. Nonetheless, teachers in private schools were also most likely to say their pupils sat assessments under exam conditions.

In the end, the exam boards are going to have a difficult job trying to work out whether the data is fair or not. But it certainly looks as if a great deal of thought has gone into making sure the process has been as rigorous as possible on the side of the schools.

Are any of the following things true about the holistic assessment used for TAGs for students you teach?

	Fee-paying (N=281)	Q1 (affluent) (N=1,006)	Q2 (N=859)	Q3 (N=775)	Q4 (deprived) (N=654)
Exam conditions assessment	98%	94%	93%	94%	93%
Sat same paper multiple times	4%	3%	2%	3%	4%
Homework	14%	5%	7%	7%	7%
Open book assessment	15%	8%	11%	11%	12%
A rehearsed assessment	4%	3%	5%	5%	10%
Prior access to mark schemes	11%	7%	8%	8%	7%
Prior access to questions	16%	11%	11%	10%	14%
None of these	1%	3%	6%	4%	4%

Question answered by 4,022 teachers on 11/06/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

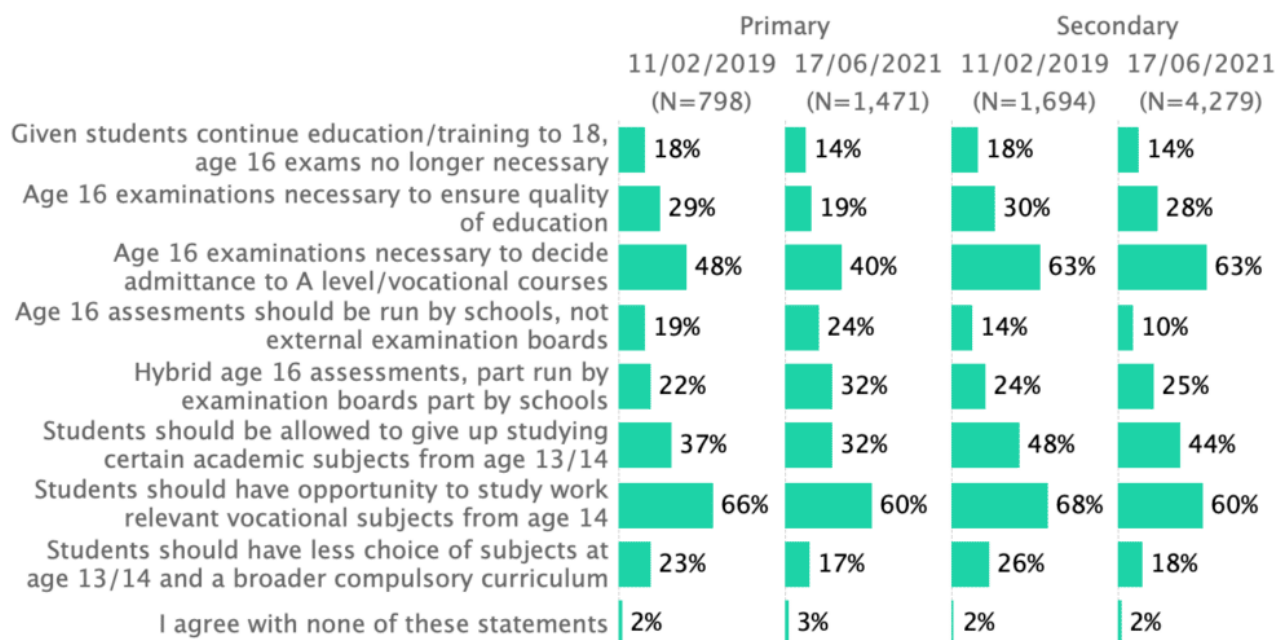
Have TAGs improved the appetite for exams?

Given all the work for TAGs, has it changed sentiment towards exams? Perhaps in their favour?

Not really! Back in 2019 we asked about a range of options for reforming exams – and things haven't changed since then as much as you might expect. In fact, among primary teachers there is less appetite for exams. (Maybe because they've appreciated not having to run SATs and haven't had to deal with TAGs!)

The numbers aren't dramatically different at either time point but there does seem to be a gradual drift towards thinking that children should not be allowed to give up studying certain academic subjects at the end of Year 9. Is the government's EBacc promotion finally wearing everyone down?!

Which of the following statements do you agree with? Tick as many as apply.



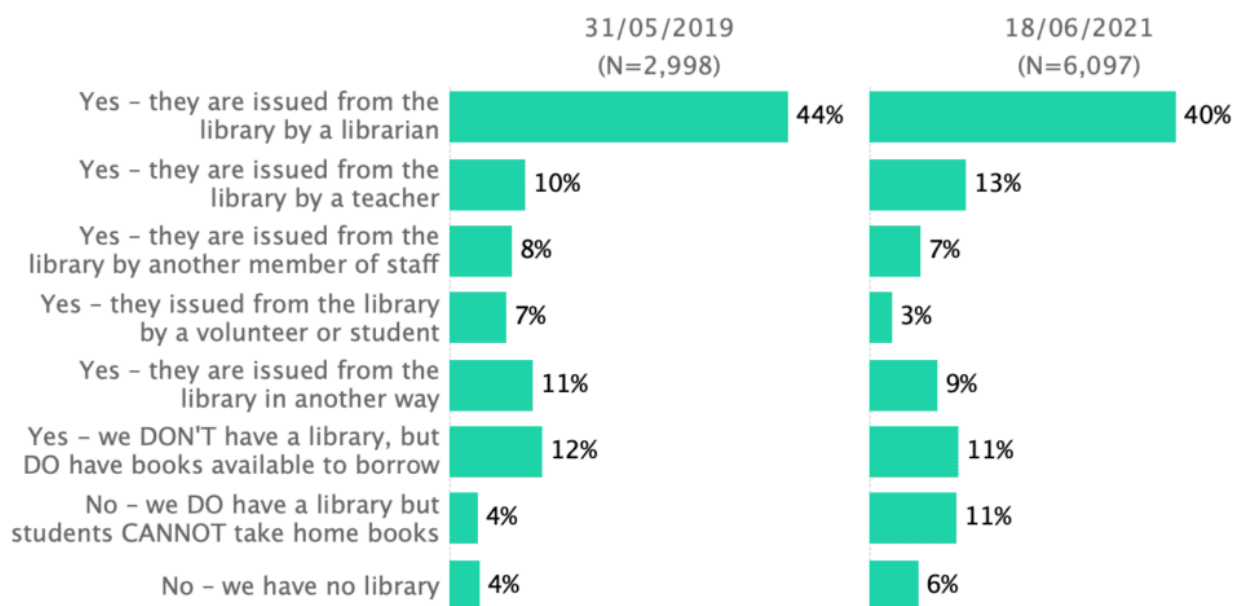
Ultimately, now is not a good time to make big decisions about the long future of exams and the curriculum. Over the pandemic we've seen opinions waxing and waning. It would, however, be good to have some timely clarity on exams next year!

2. The State of Libraries

One of the victims of the pandemic appears to be the school library. Prompted in 2019 to check on the state of libraries, after news articles said they were reducing in schools, it looks like things are now worse. Only 40% of schools have a library where a librarian issues books - dropping from 44% in 2019. The proportion of teachers saying they have a library but students CANNOT take books home has almost tripled, from 4% to 11%.

A slight bit of good news is that teachers are now slightly more likely to be issuing books than before. However, teachers are not as likely to have the time to do so at regular intervals. Overall, access to book lending seems to be on the decline.

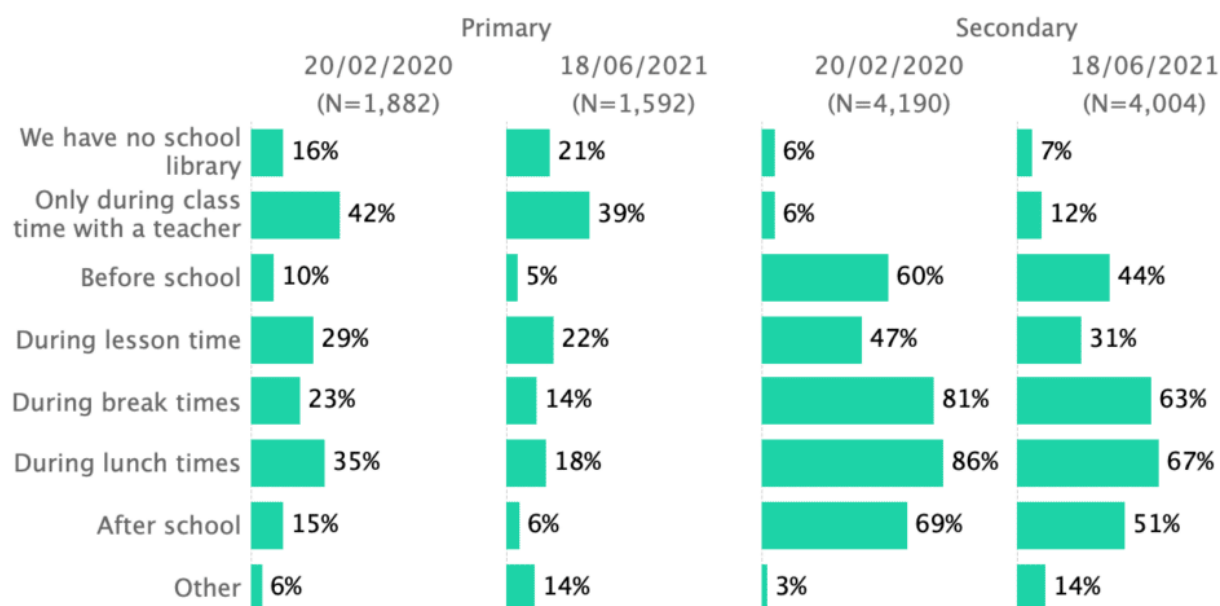
Can students at your school freely borrow books of their choice to take home and use?



To further check on this, we actually asked in February 2020 – just a few weeks before the pandemic – when your school libraries were open. As you can see: the difference between then and now is quite stark. Many fewer schools have library access at usual times now, compared to then. Staggered starts, ends, and lunches simply make it more difficult.

A hat tip to the 14% of schools who have created some other arrangements to help students borrow. We'd love to know how you are managing this; we've seen a few suggestions that schools are operating a digital borrowing scheme – please do let us know on social media or by sending a message via Contact Us in the app. We're always interested to share new solutions.

When is your school library open to students who wish to look at and borrow books? Tick any that apply.

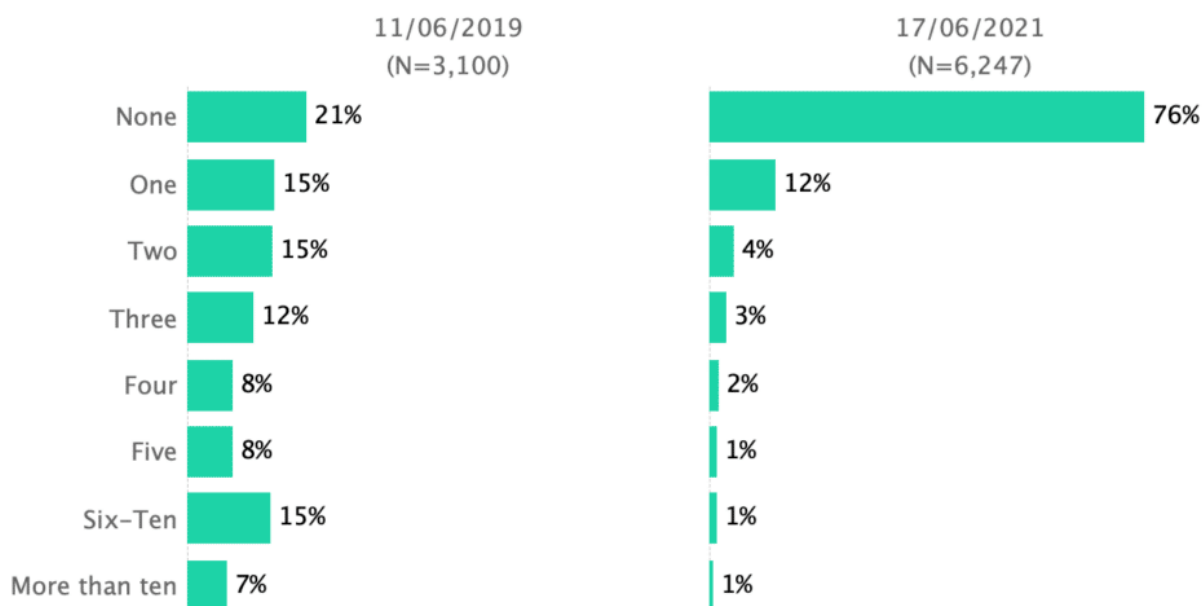


3. School Trips

In retrospect, one of the funniest things about Teacher Tapp in the run-up to the pandemic is that our questions focused on school trips. That was the thing keeping us all awake! Should the ski trip go ahead? If we cancelled the Year 6 trip now could we get the deposit back? Little did we know!

Older and more pandemic-weary, school trips are no longer top of our agenda, but the past year really has taken an axe to trips as a learning opportunity. In a normal year only 1 in 5 of you doesn't go on any trips. This year it will be 3 in 4. ■■

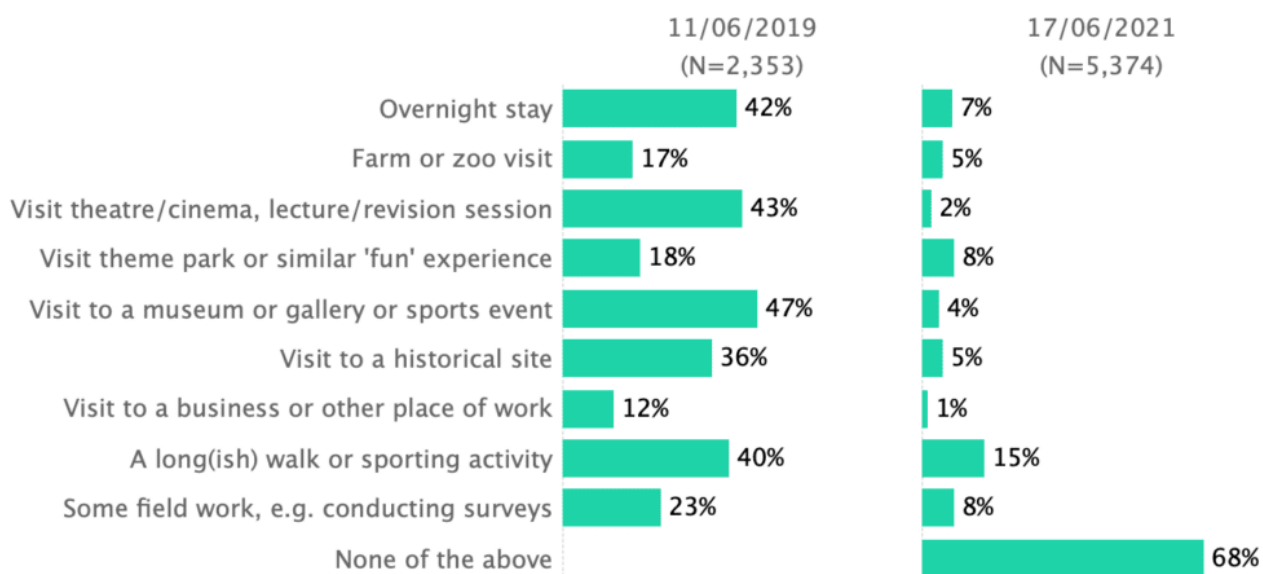
How many days in total will you have been out on school trips this academic year (count a half-day as one day and include weekend days!)?



Private school teachers have fared better, with around 60% of primary and 40% of secondary teachers managing to get out on a trip. Although the graph below shows that most of these have been either a sporting activity or, you guessed it, a long walk!

Museums, galleries, theatres and have taken a particular battering (not least because many closed over the past year). Field work and visiting businesses has also been very difficult - leaving pupils without vital experiences for subjects such as geography and business studies.

Which of the following will you have personally done on a school trip this academic year (please include all remaining trips this school year in your answer)?

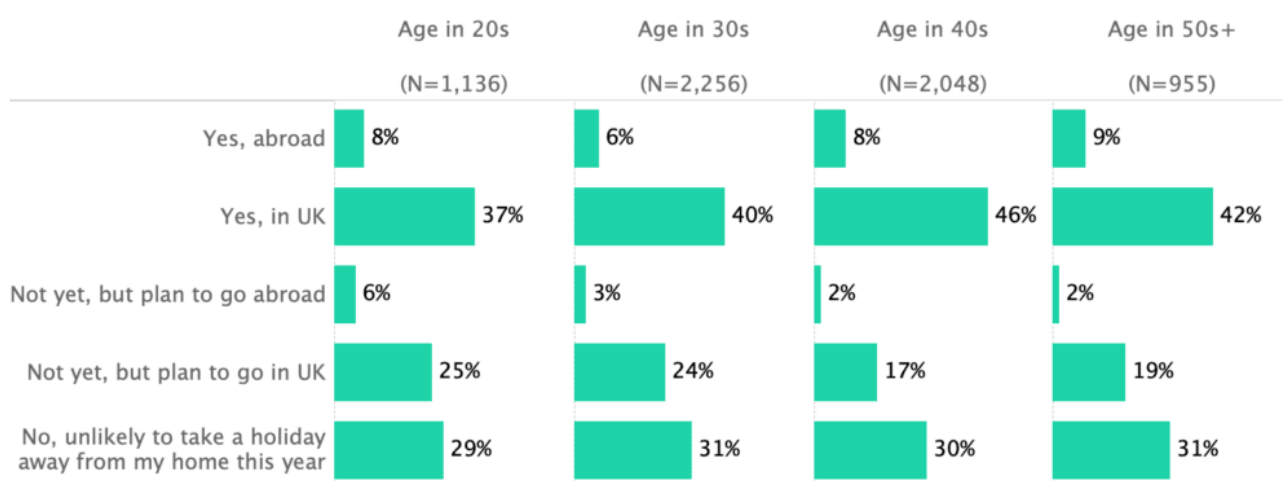


Fingers crossed that things start to look a bit better by summer 2022.

4. Holiday

Finally, how are holidays this year looking? In a normal year around 50% of teachers go on holiday abroad, especially those in their 20s. This year, almost no one is planning to go abroad – again! It's slightly up on last year's 7%... but things aren't looking good for airlines. On the other hand, if you've a caravan, you can probably make a sweet amount renting it out this summer!

Have you booked a summer holiday yet?



Question answered by 6,404 teachers on 15/06/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Call out for Primary colleagues

■ At Teacher Tapp we are really interested in the views from primary teachers and we'd love to grow the number of you who use the app. If *you* know a primary colleague who you think would enjoy the daily insights that give an accurate picture of how thousands of colleagues are thinking please share Teacher Tapp with them! teachertapp.com/get-the-app.

■ If you've got any question suggestions then you can Contact Us via the menu in the app or send us a tweet [@TeacherTapp](https://twitter.com/TeacherTapp).

■ We love sharing daily reads with you all on and we're always on the look out for ones we've not featured. It's really easy if you'd like to make a suggestion to do so [here](#).

■ And if you'd like a pack of posters/coasters to display in your school, to tell people about Teacher Tapp, then please fill in the form [here!](#)

Finally, we know you love the daily read, so here are the ones from last week

The most popular tip was: [Rosenshine and why teacher effectiveness research still makes sense but isn't the full story](#)

And here's the rest of them for reference

- [My favourite CPD question for weaving teaching concepts and strategies together](#)
- [Improving CPD series](#)
- [Picturebook biographies: the power of a story](#)
- [Parent Ping on School Reports](#)
- [Teaching on Outschool](#)