

You Know Anot?

- A monthly update on Singaporean attitudes •

Private Tuition in Singapore: A Whitepaper Release

A Whitepaper published by **Blackbox Research Pte Ltd**



add 82 Telok Ayer Street
#02-01/02/05/06
Far East Square
Singapore 048467

tel +65 6323 1351

fax +65 6323 1321

e social@blackbox.com.sg

w www.blackbox.com.sg

tw [@BlackboxR](https://twitter.com/BlackboxR)

fb www.facebook.com/blackboxresearch

linkedin www.linkedin.com/company/blackbox-research

About the You Know Anot monthly sentiment meter

Every month, Blackbox interviews more than 700 Singaporeans over the age of 18. The survey is conducted online. Results are weighted to reflect current national demographics (Citizens/PRs only).

About the Company

Blackbox is a leading independent research company based in Singapore. The company conducts both consumer and stakeholder research and specialises in looking at community issues and trends.

Private Tuition in Singapore

Executive Summary

Ask the average Singaporean student about their schedule, and there is a high chance that they would tell you that they have weekly tuition or enrichment classes to attend. It is so common for students to juggle these extra classes along with their school workload that Singapore has been dubbed the “Tuition Nation”¹. Even Prime Minister Lee recently commented that tuition has become a “minor national obsession”².

Singaporean parents are certainly opening their wallets at a manic rate. Spending on tuition doubled in ten years to a whopping S\$820 million in 2008¹. These programmes are believed to help slow learners and support high achievers, and are seen by many Asian parents as a constructive way for their children to spend their time³.

So how deeply Singaporeans have caught onto this tuition trend? Are parents really so preoccupied with tuition for their kids?

In this study on local private tuition perceptions, our findings show:

- **80% of Singaporeans believe that tuition is beneficial to children’s education, especially average students**
- **For Singaporeans with kids currently enrolled in tuition, 1 in 2 spend more than \$500 a month per child**
- **Almost 1 in 3 Singaporeans (23%) think kids should start tuition in pre-school, before they begin formal education**
- **Two-thirds or 67% of Singaporeans currently have or have previously enrolled their children in tuition**
- **46% of Singaporeans think tuition is necessary for kids to stay competitive with their peers**

References

¹ Tuition Nation. [Accessed 14 Sep 2012]

<http://www.asiaone.com/print/News/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/Story/A1Story20120304-331546.html>

² Yale-NUS ‘the right way forward’. [Accessed 12 July 2012]

<http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC120707-000052/Yale-NUS-the-right-way-forward--PM-Lee>

³ Asia spending billions on tutors: study. [Accessed 12 July 2012]

<http://ph.news.yahoo.com/asia-spending-billions-tutors-study-223633801.html>

Fieldwork notes:

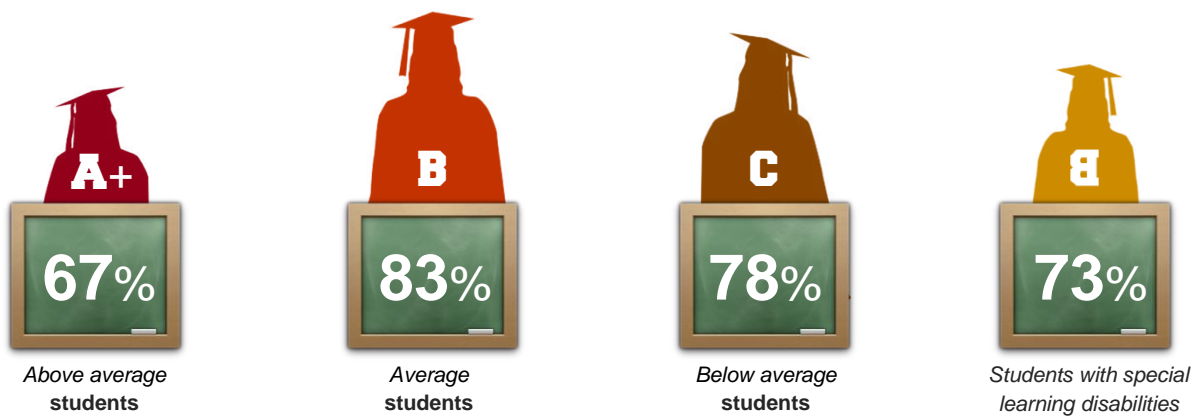
Fieldwork was carried out online amongst 955 Singaporeans over the age of 18 during April 2012 in our monthly sentiment meter omnibus survey. Data is weighted for representativeness according to national population proportions.

Do Singaporeans really think tuition helps?



of Singaporeans think that tuition and enrichment programmes help children to do better in their education – it is no wonder that so many parents are hoping to groom their children to their fullest potential by sending them for these programmes!

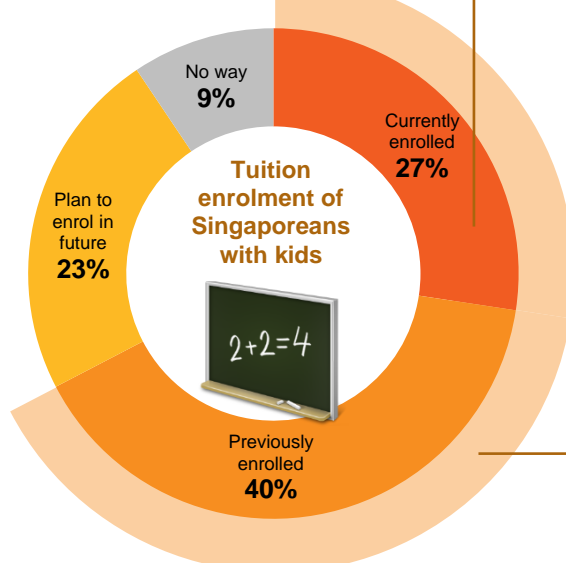
Who does tuition help?



There is strong belief that the average student will benefit from having tuition and enrichment programmes. Tuition is least viewed as beneficial for above average students.

Enrolment of kids in Tuition & Enrichment Programmes

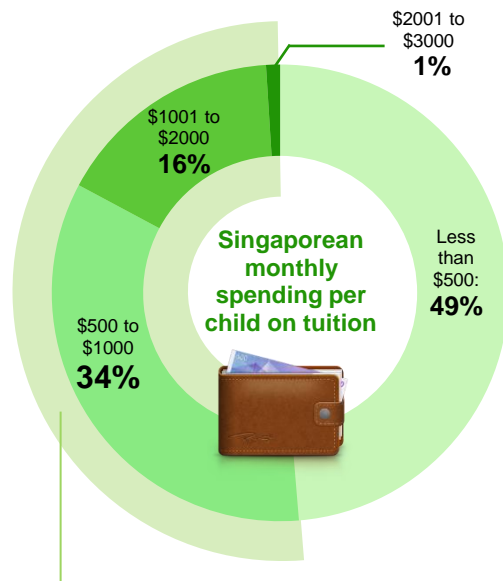
Only **20%** in the lowest monthly household income bracket (\$4k and below) have kids currently enrolled in tuition, indicating tuition may be less accessible for those without the means



Given the tuition trend, it is little surprise that about **two thirds (67%) of Singaporeans with kids have enrolled their children in tuition at some point in time**. 23% of Singaporeans have the future intention to do so. Only 9% of Singaporeans are averse to having their children in such programmes.

67% or **two-thirds of Singaporeans with kids** have enrolled their children in tuition at some point

How much are Singaporean parents putting their money on tuition*?



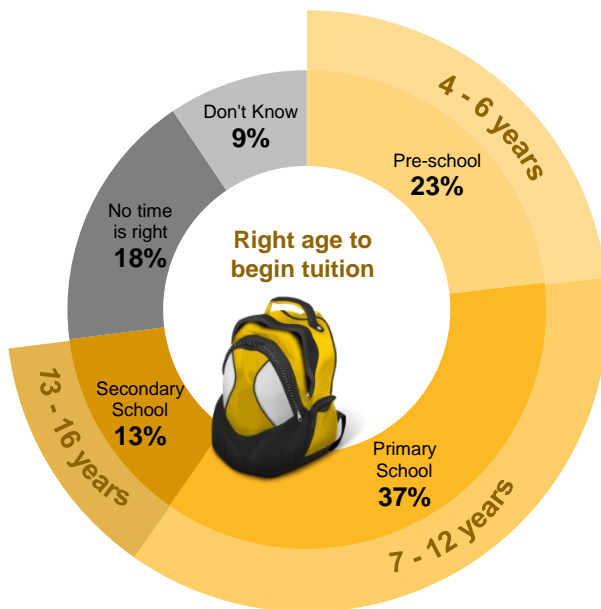
51% or 1 in 2 Singaporeans with kids enrolled in tuition spend more than \$500 a month per child

With so much importance placed on tuition and enrichment efforts, we wondered how much Singaporeans with children spend on school programs. Our findings show that **over half of Singaporeans with kids currently enrolled in tuition* (51%) spend more than \$500 a month per child.**

In the 2008 Household Expenditure Survey¹, monthly tuition expenditure was much lower for the lower income versus the higher income, indicating some relation between tuition and financial means.

(*Base: Parents who currently have kids enrolled in tuition)

How old should tuition tots be?



When do Singaporeans think is the right time to start a child in tuition or enrichment programmes? Most people would not be surprised that 37% of Singaporeans think kids should start in primary school.

However, we found that almost **1 in 3 Singaporeans (23%) think kids should start tuition in pre-school - even before they begin compulsory primary school education.**

This is in line with a recent news story that there is a growing trend of kids attending 2 schools at kindergarten age² – all strong indications that there is increasing systemic pressure on young children from an early age.

¹ Report on the Household Expenditure Survey, page 78. [Accessed 12 July 2012]

<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/hhld/hes2007.pdf>

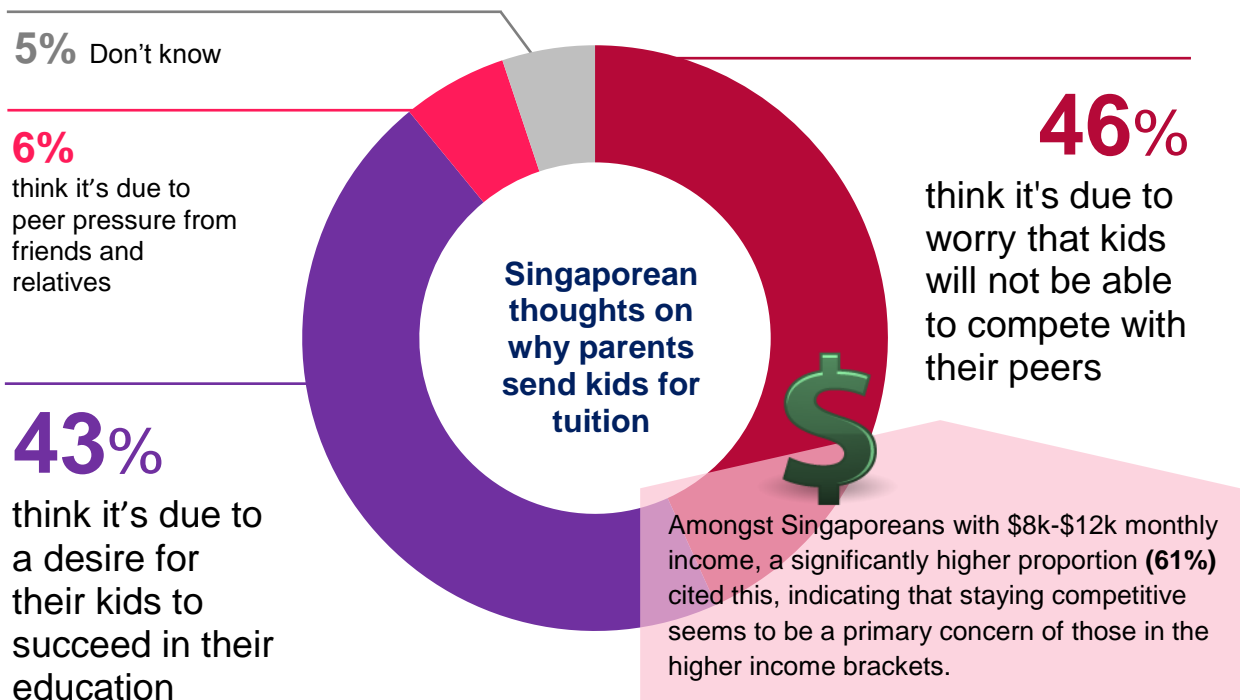
² 1st to prep classes, then to Primary 1. [Accessed 12 July 2012]

http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Singapore/Story/STIStory_793766.html

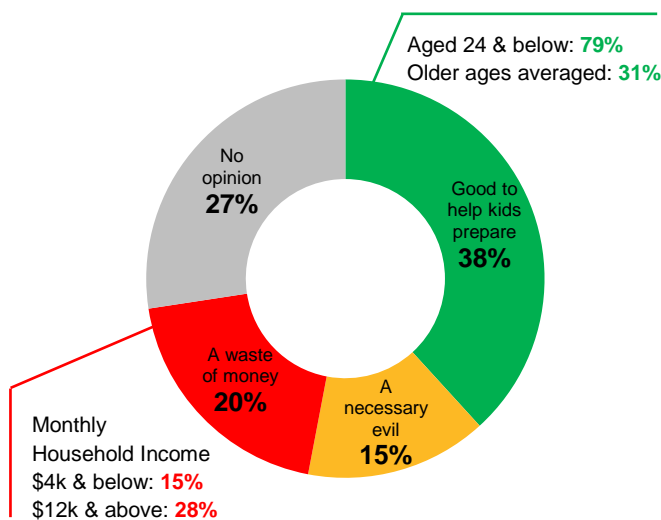
Why this “minor national obsession” with tuition?

We asked Singaporeans why they think kids go for tuition, and found two major reasons.

Firstly, we found that **46% think it's due to a need to stay competitive with peers** – which may be an indicator that the famous Singaporean fear of losing out, or *kiasu*-ism, is playing a role in the red-hot tuition scene. The second reason is slightly more reassuring in that **43% think it's because parents want their kids to succeed in their education** – indicating a more child-centred focus.



Perception of Preparatory Classes for the Gifted Education Programme (GEP)



Some private tuition centres offer classes to prepare children for the Gifted Education Programme (GEP). There is a general mixed view on the necessity of these GEP preparatory classes – **38% of Singaporeans support having these classes** and, on the other extreme, **20% feel that they are a waste of money.**

If you would like to know more about the study and its findings, please contact the **Blackbox Digital Research Team** at social@blackbox.com.sg.