Primary school parents in Singapore spend S$677 a month on tuition, up from S$318 in 2016, IPS finds

Description

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Parents of primary school children in Singapore now spend a mean of S$677 a month on tuition, up from S$318 in 2016, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) found in a study published on 25 September. Adjusted for inflation, the 2016 figure is S$386.

IPS Working Papers

PARENTS AND SCHOOLING IN SINGA
FINDINGS FROM THE 2026 SURVEY
SINGAPORE'S EDUCATION SYST

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IPS Working Papers No. 77 surveyed 1,500 parents of children in local primary schools between May and August 2026. Image: Institute of Policy Studies

The survey covered a nationally representative sample of 1,500 Singapore citizen and permanent resident parents with children in local primary schools. IPS Social Lab ran the fieldwork from May to August 2026 and compared selected results with its 2016 survey. The two rounds polled different parents, so they show a shift across the population rather than changes in the same households. The authors are Mathew Mathews, Melvin Tay and Teo Kay Key.

Median and enrichment spending

The median tuition spend was S$500 a month in 2026, against S$242 in 2016 in todayâ??s dollars.

Enrichment moved faster. Mean monthly spending rose to S$355 from S$125, or S$152 after inflation. The median went to S$260 from S$48 in todayâ??s dollars.

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Less homework, more classes

Mean weekly homework time fell to 4.3 hours from 6.46 hours. Tuition time rose slightly to 3.49 hours from 3.26, and enrichment rose to 2.32 hours from 1.49. Weekly tuition time also climbs with housing type, from 2.53 hours in HDB one- to three-room flats to 4.29 in condominiums and 5.01 in landed homes.

Parents are critical of the load. Some 89.8 per cent agreed that children in Singapore spend too much time on tuition and enrichment. Yet 70.2 per cent said they would spend more if they had the resources, and 51.9 per cent said they felt pressure because other parents were doing it. Most (84.9 per cent) see tuition as a way to give their child an edge in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE).

Stress rose as exam worries eased

Fewer parents now say the education system puts children under unnecessary stress: 68.7 per cent, down from 76.3 per cent in 2016. Parents themselves report more of it. The share who felt stressed about their childrenâ??s education at least once in the past year rose to 87.9 per cent from 73.1 per cent, and the share who argued with their spouse over it went to 59.7 per cent from 42.8 per cent.

IPS found the worry has shifted from tests and homework towards whether a child is reaching their potential or may fall behind in the long run.

Where parents stand on the PSLE

Most parents, 85.9 per cent, still see the PSLE as an important checkpoint. Nearly three in four (73.7 per cent) want some change to it. The most popular option, at 45.6 per cent, is making it less high-stakes. Only 19.4 per cent want it kept as it is, 12.4 per cent would push it to a later age and 10.3 per cent would scrap it.

On the scoring system brought in for the 2021 PSLE, 66.3 per cent of parents said Achievement Levels make it harder for their child to get into their school of choice.

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