Fifth Meeting of the Technical Co-operation Group (TCG 5):

Results of the Consultation on Recommendations on Definitions, Methodology and Formulation of Questions for Global Indicator 4.5.2

Introduction

Following the fifth meeting of the Technical Co-operation Group (TCG), a consultation on recommendations on definitions, methodology and formulation of questions for global indicator 4.5.2 was carried out. The consultation covered the definitions and methodology, the survey questions that can be included in national or cross-national surveys or assessments, the alternative wording for the proposed new definition of indicator 4.5.2, and the opt-out process.

The consultation was answered by 9 respondents, representing 9 different organizations. Most of the answers came in support of the proposed recommendations.

SDG indicator 4.5.2:

> *'Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction'*

Part 1. Definitions and methodology
Alignment with indicative strategy to foster bi- and multilingual education

Participants were asked whether the definitions and metadata for indicator 4.5.2 should be adjusted to make explicit reference to bi- and multilingual education (recommended option) or they should be kept simple and not address explicitly multi-language settings. The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are presented in the table below:

	Explicit reference	*No reference*
Advantages	1. An adjustment strengthens the accordance with UNESCO Resolution 30C/12 2. An adjustment improves the awareness that education systems need to address the needs of multilingual environments	1. Simple definitions make it easier to adjust calculation methods to available data sources
Disadvantages	1. Complex multi-language situations are difficult to address in data collections 2. The interpretation of data addressing the needs of multilingual environments is more complex	1. Simple definitions can hide progress when more than one language is used in instruction 2. There is a risk that implementation of policies fostering use of multiple languages of instruction are not reflected in indicators and interpretation

The results came in favor of explicit reference to bi- and multilingual education as a first option:

29%

71%

■ Explicit reference   ■ No reference
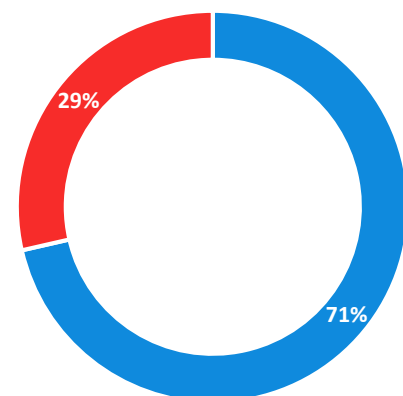
Should community languages be considered?

Participants were asked whether community languages should be considered where the explanation of "home or first language(s)" should be as open as possible, or the definition of children's language be narrowed down to the commonly used in existing surveys and reference to the "language of local community" be removed from the metadata (recommended option). The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are presented in the table below:

	Narrowed definition	Open definition
Advantages	1. Very few data sources refer to languages of the community; narrowing the definition contributes to harmonization of surveys 2. A narrow definition avoids ambiguities, when different languages are spoken at home and on the streets	1. A wide and open definition could open the data collection for more different data sources
Disadvantages	1. If definitions are narrow, potential future data sources could be excluded from collection and calculation and eventually reduce coverage of the indicator	1. The interpretation of the indicator is less clear, if community languages are interpreted as synonymous to home languages 2. There is no indication that children benefit from use of local languages if they are not their home language

The results came in favor of narrowing down the definition of children's languages to concepts commonly used in existing surveys as a first option:

14%

86%
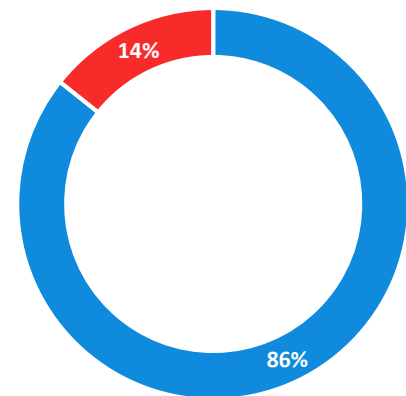
- Narrowed definition - Open definition

Should "home language(s)" and "first language(s)" be used interchangeably?

Participants were asked whether "home language(s)" and "first language(s)" should be used interchangeably or as options, and were given three choices:

1. Different terminology should not be portrayed as interchangeable but as options. One concept should be marked as preferred: "current language use of children at home";
   - The definition of 4.5.2 is shortened to use "home language"; "Mother tongue or first learned language" is mentioned in the metadata as an option (recommended option).
2. Different terminology should not be portrayed as interchangeable but as options. One concept should be marked as preferred: "mother tongue or first learned language";
   - The definition of 4.5.2 is shortened to use "Mother tongue or first learned language". "Current language use of children at home" is mentioned in the metadata as an option.
3. Keep the definition as it is without giving preference to one concept.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are presented in the table below:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Advantages	1. A recommendation for one concept as the preferred one could contribute to the harmonization of data sources 2. The term "home language" is most commonly used in existing surveys and should be preferred 3. A simple definition is easier to use in interpretation and written analysis of the results	1. A recommendation of one concept as the preferred one could contribute to the harmonization of data sources 2. A simple definition is easier to use in interpretation and written analysis of the results	1. The current definition is more flexible and does not prefer one of the two widely used concepts
Disadvantages	1. A recommendation of one of the two concepts would have a normative influence on surveys	1. A recommendation of one of the two concepts would have a normative influence on surveys	1. A definition with several options would not support gradual harmonization of data collection instruments

4

Participants were asked to rank the options in order of preference, and results came in favor of option 1, which was chosen as the first option for most participants.
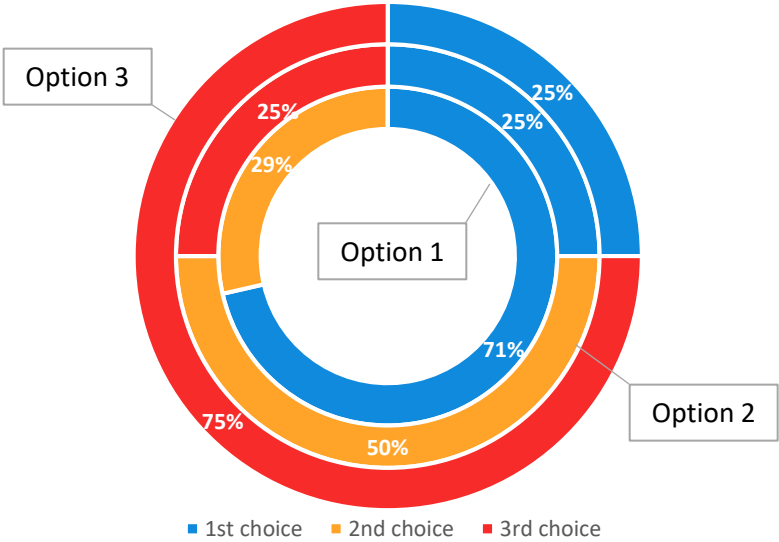
Class operationalization of "home language"

Participants were asked whether the definition of home language should make some reference to the frequency of language use, or no recommendation should be included in the metadata and the use of different data sources for the indicator should be kept flexible. Surveys recording the frequency of use of the language of instruction at home would provide the options "always", "almost always", in addition to "sometimes" and "never". The use of these four categories is recommended. The advantages and disadvantages of whether or not to refer to the language frequency are presented below:

	Reference to frequency	*No reference to frequency*
Advantages	1. Children in multilingual environments and migrant families use more than one language in their homes. No language in their home will be spoken more than "almost always" 2. A recommendation will contribute to harmonization of data sources	1. The current definition is more flexible and does not prefer one of the two widely used concepts
Disadvantages	1. International recommendations should not aim to interfere with the design of surveys 2. A recommendation reduces flexibility in the use of existing data	1. Multilingual environments may be poorly represented 2. Harmonization of data sources is not supported

Participants were asked to rank the options in order of preference, and results came in favor of reference to frequency of language use, which was chosen as the first option for most participants.

40%

43%

57%

60%

No reference to frequency

Reference to frequency

■ 1st choice   ■ 2nd choice
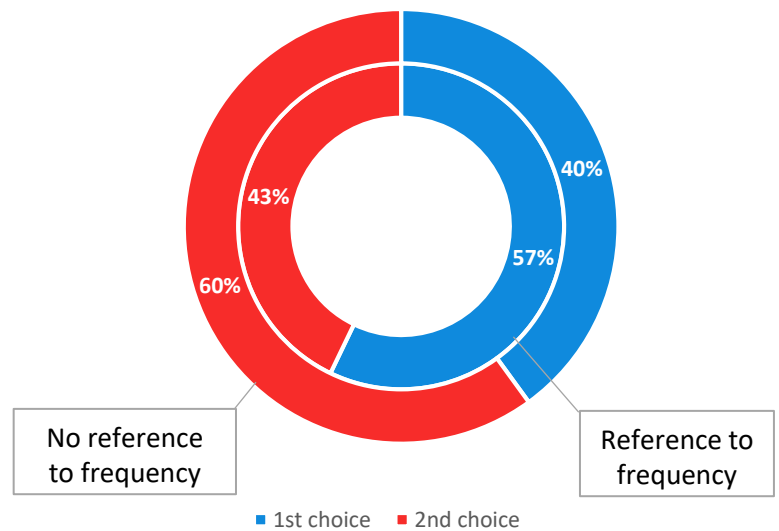
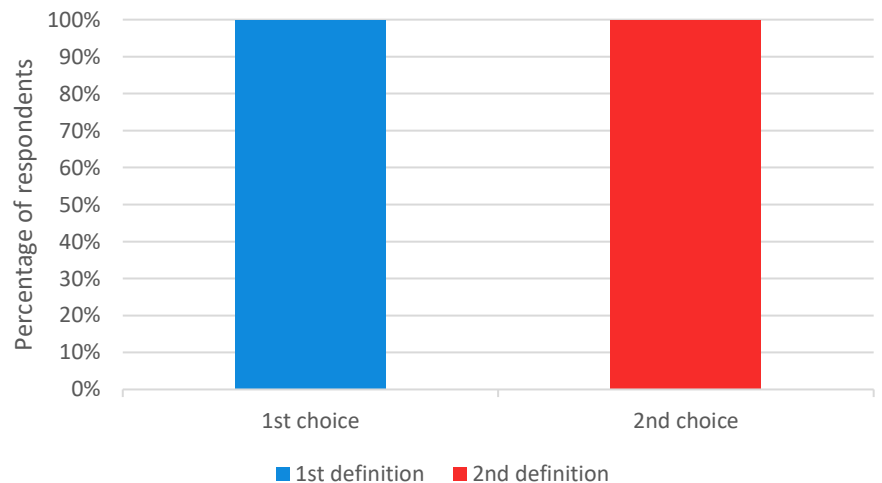## Definition of language of instruction

Participants were asked how 'language of instruction' should be defined and were given two options:

1. "Language of instruction" should be defined as "language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system". Languages used only in language subjects, including mother tongue reading/writing are not languages of instruction, when not used to teach other content/subjects (recommended option).
2. "Language of instruction" should also include languages taught in school, including those used in special mother-tongue lessons.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the definitions are presented below:

	Definition 1	Definition 2
Advantages	1. This definition focuses on instruction and not on language learning; a language of instruction is one that is used *for* teaching through this language and not just teaching *of* this language	1. This definition would capture most variations in language policies
Disadvantages	1. Current data sources are not capturing more than one language of instruction; the definition would not fit most data	1. The definition would be too inclusive and portrait short use of home language as sufficient

Participants were asked to rank the options in order of preference, and results came unanimously in support of limiting the definition of "language of instruction" to "language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system" as a first option.

## Language(s) of instruction in bi- or multilingual settings

Participants were asked whether the wording of the indicator should reflect the possibility of multilingual settings or not. They were given two options for the wording of the indicator:

1. The definition of indicator 4.5.2 should be clarified: "the percentage of students in primary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction".
   - In the metadata for indicator 4.5.2 "language of instruction" should be replaced by "language*(s)* of instruction" (recommended option).
2. The wording of the indicator should be kept as "Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction".

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the indicator wordings are presented below:

	Option 1	*Option 2*
Advantages	1. This wording captures every situation in which children are taught through a language they are familiar with; this is independent of how many languages are spoken at home or how many languages are used as language of instruction	1. This wording is closer to the wording used in many international data sources
Disadvantages	1. Current data sources are not capturing more than one language of instruction; the definition would not fit most data	1. This wording is rooted in the idea of monolingual settings, i.e. use of one single language of instruction 2. The indicator is less clear when children have more than one home language

Results came favoring a change in the wording of the indicator to reflect the possibility of multilingual settings.

33%
67%
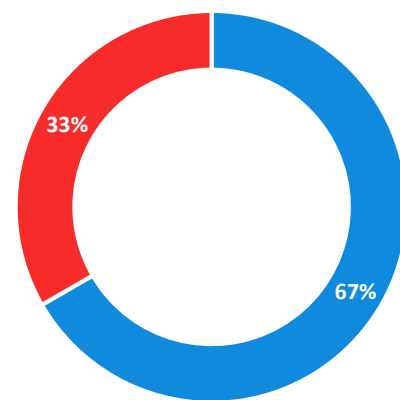
■ Option 1 ■ Option 2

## Transitional multilingual education - detail in reporting

Participants were asked about the level of detail in reporting. In other words, whether reporting should be aware of transitional multilingual education with a planned transition from one language of instruction to another or the detail in reporting should be kept low. They were given two options:

1. Reporting for indicator 4.5.2 should be done for the complete level, and separately for early grades (ideally grades 1 to 3) and grades towards the end of primary education to better reflect the situation in systems with transitional multilingual education (recommended option).
2. The indicator is intended for primary education and should be reported without further detail.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are presented below:

	Option 1	Option 2
Advantages	1. Many countries have language policies in education that include a transition of languages from early to higher grades; disaggregation by grade levels or stages of education would reflect such policies 2. The importance of early grade education would be reflected	1. For countries that have a high percentage of children instructed in their home language(s) in early grades, the indicator would hide successful language policies
Disadvantages	1. Reporting becomes more complex	1. The indicator would hide important differences between countries in the way instruction in home languages is implemented

Results were in favor of better reflecting the situation in systems with transitional multilingual education.
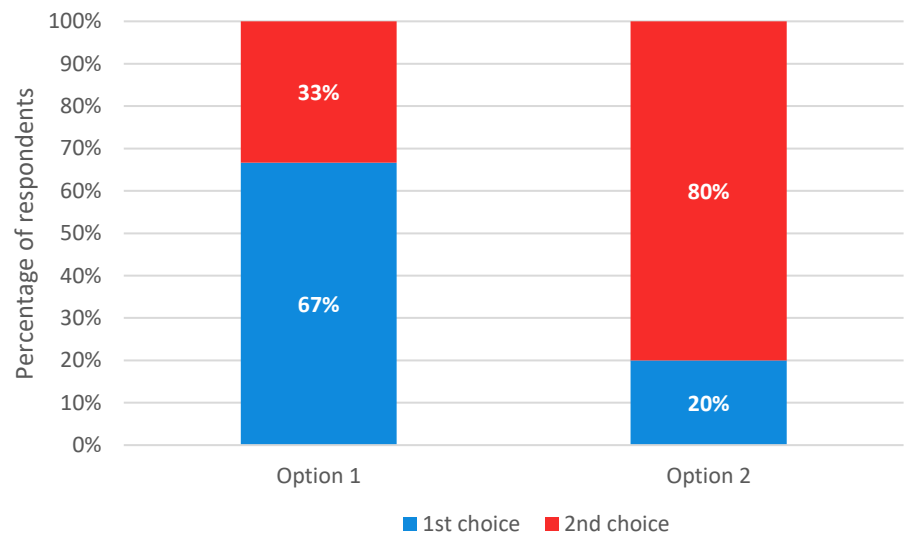
## Language of test as a substitute

Participants were asked whether "language of test" is a substitute for "language of instruction". They were given two options:

1. Data based on the concept "language of test" should be excluded if a student's home language is used as language of instruction in other subjects but not in the test.
    - To generalize from data on "language of test" to indicator 4.5.2 on "language of instruction" is to be avoided (recommended option).
2. "Language of test" can be a sufficient substitute for "language of instruction" in all or almost all surveys.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are presented below:

	Option 1	Option 2
Advantages	1. Systems with more than one language of instruction would be well represented independent of the tested language	1. Data from existing surveys, such as PIRLS/TIMSS can be easily used
Disadvantages	1. A strong limitation would mean that data from many international surveys cannot be used for reporting	1. Information would be dependent on the subject in focus of student achievement surveys 2. The share of children not instructed in their home language could be overestimated in several countries

Results came in favor of not using the two terms interchangeably.
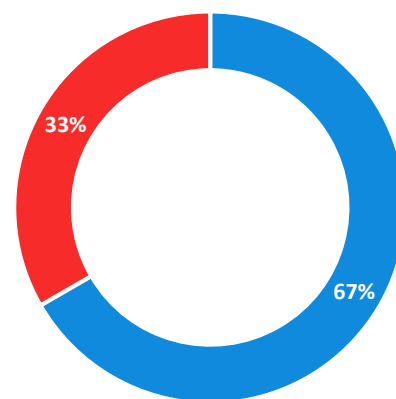
■ Option 1   ■ Option 2

## Future development of assessment surveys

Participants were asked whether or not they think "language of instruction" should be a question on school surveys, in addition to "language of test". They were given two options:

1. In the future, assessment surveys should add questions on language(s) of instruction as an optional question to be used in multi-language systems (recommended option).
2. School surveys should not ask for language of instruction in addition to language of test.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are presented below:

	Option 1	*Option 2*
Advantages	1. Data sources would be harmonized and school surveys would be more comparable with household surveys 2. Systems with more than one language of instruction would be well represented, independent of the tested language	1. Surveys can be shorter 2. PIRLS/TIMSS and similar surveys can be used without change for indicator 4.5.2
Disadvantages	1. Surveys would need to have longer questionnaires	1. The language(s) of instruction of students may remain unknown if they are different from the language of the test

Results came in favor of adding a question on the "language of instruction".

17%

83%
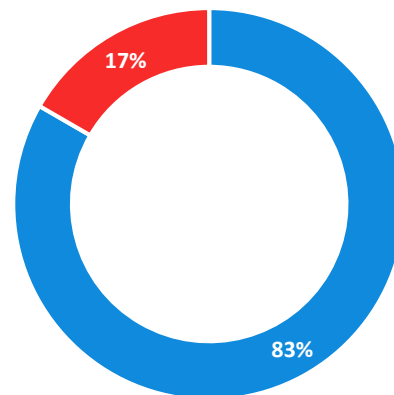
■ Option 1   ■ Option 2

National estimates from student achievement studies

Participants were asked about using national estimates from student achievement studies, in the event that data are not available. They were given three options:

1. School surveys that are samples from single grades (e.g. TIMSS/PIRLS or SACMEQ) should not be generalized to represent all primary-level students in systems with transitional multilingual education policies.
   - Data from such surveys should not be used to estimate indicator 4.5.2 for total primary education. For systems without changes in the language of instruction from lower to upper grades, estimates for total primary education based on data for a single grade might be acceptable (recommended option).
2. School surveys that are samples from single grades (e.g. TIMSS/PIRLS or SACMEQ) should not be generalized to represent all primary-level students.
3. If no better data are available, school surveys that are samples from single grades (e.g. TIMSS/PIRLS or SACMEQ) should be generalized to represent total primary education.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Advantages	1. Countries having different languages of instruction in early and later grades will be reflected correctly 2. Coverage of countries with similar use of language of instruction in all grades will be maximized	1. Data quality for all countries will be improved by not imputing data on young students from older cohorts (or vice versa)	1. Country coverage in reporting the indicator will be maximized
Disadvantages	1. The coverage of countries in international reporting will be reduced	1. The coverage of countries in international reporting will be drastically reduced	1. Quality of global and national estimates will be low

The results came in favor of the second option as a first choice, followed by the first and third options.
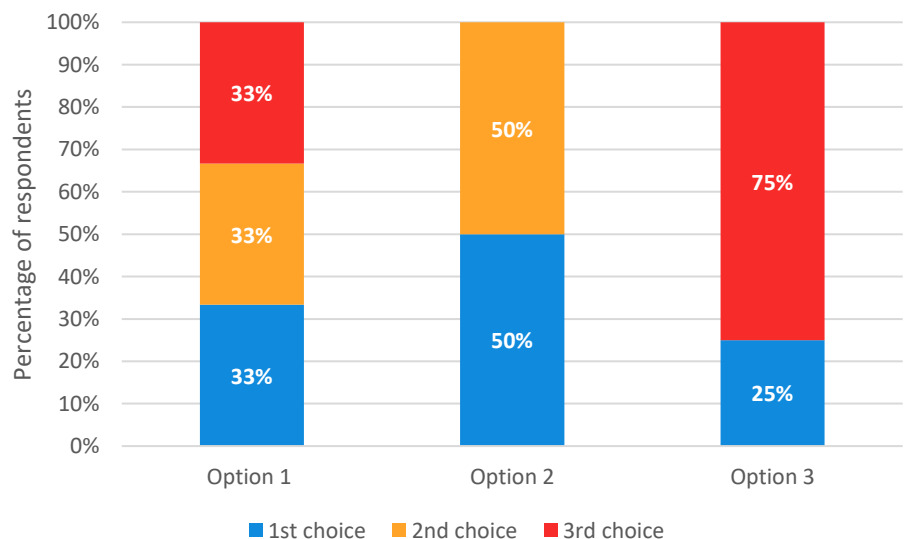
Part 2. Survey questions that can be included in national or cross-national surveys or assessments

Data collection on languages of instruction

Participants were asked whether the respondents should be asked about the language of instruction in general or for each of the subjects. They were given two options:

1. What language is used for i) … mathematics instruction, ii) … reading instruction, iii) … general conversation? [LSMS]
2. What language do your teachers use most of the time when teaching you in class? [MICS6, FL9, SERCE]

Results came favoring the first option, where the language of instruction is identified for each of the subjects.
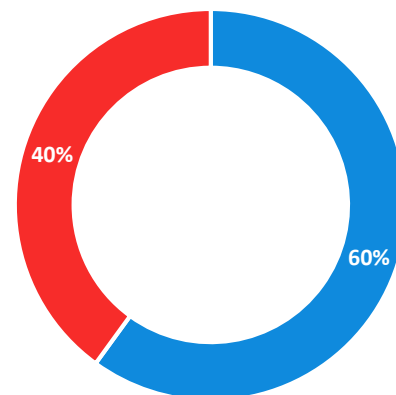

■ Option 1   ■ Option 2

Data collection on a student's (or child's) home language

Participants were asked about the wording of the question on the home language, and were given the following options from existing surveys:

1. How often do you speak […] (i.e. the language of test or the language of instruction) at home? [PIRLS 2011, TIMSS 2015]
2. Which language do you speak most of the time at home? [MICS6, FL7]
3. What language do you speak at home most of the time? [PISA 2015, ST022]
4. What language do you speak most often at home? [EGRA]

The results came in favor of the third option, which is the question used by PISA 2015.
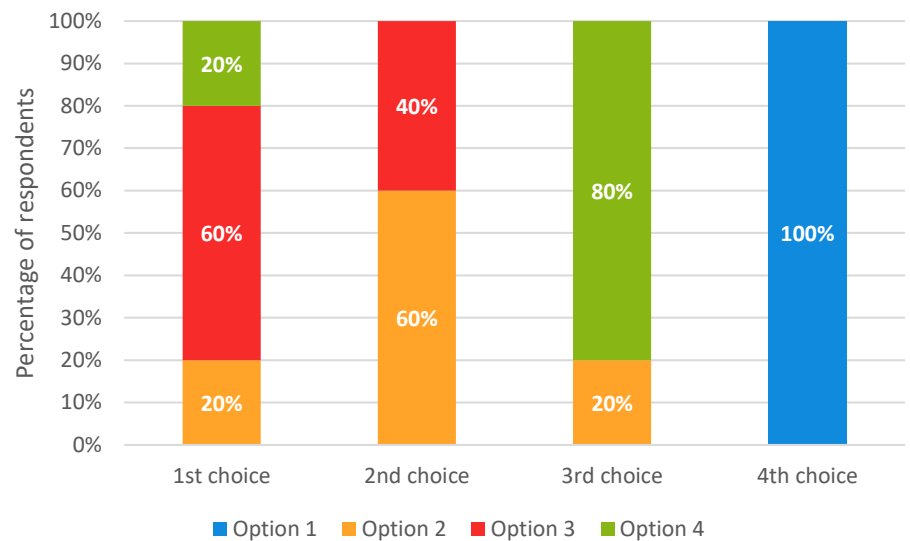
Part 3. Alternative wording for the proposed definition of indicator 4.5.2

The **current definition** for indicator 4.5.2 is the "Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction".

The **recommended definition** is the "Percentage of students in primary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction".

Participants were asked whether or not they agree with the recommended definition.
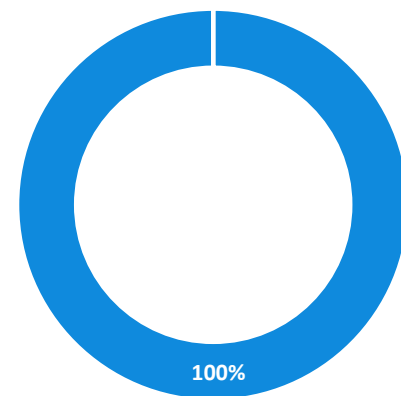
Results came in favor of the recommended definition.

14%

86%
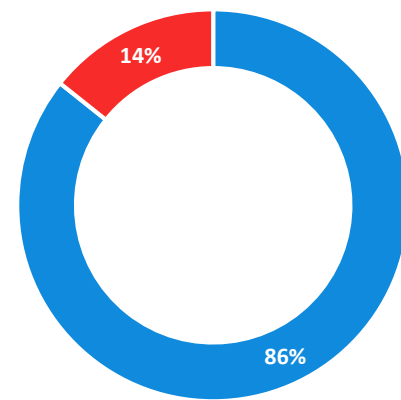
■ Yes ■ No

Part 4. Opt-out process

Participants were asked whether countries should be allowed to opt out of reporting for indicator 4.5.2.

Results came unanimously in support of the opt-out option.

100%

■ Yes ■ No