

# Understanding public attitudes to early childhood

A report produced by Ipsos on behalf of the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood

January 2023

  
ROYAL FOUNDATION  
Centre for  
Early Childhood



# Contents

1

## Overview

Slide 3

2

## Perceived importance of Early Years

Slide 9

3

## Knowledge of early childhood development

Slide 18

4

## Motivations for greater investment in early years Slide 31

5

## Help, support, capability and barriers Slide 38

# 1. Overview



# Background and objectives

The Centre for Early Childhood was established within The Royal Foundation in June 2021 to drive awareness and action on the extraordinary impact of the early years. In support of this mission, The Centre commissioned Ipsos to conduct research into public perceptions and knowledge of the early years. The research builds on the growing body of evidence already established by The Centre, including an initial assessment of public opinion in [State of Nation Survey from 2020](#).

The specific objectives of this research were to:

1. Provide a baseline level of understanding of perceived importance of early years, which can be tracked over time
2. Help inform the development of future activity that seeks to help raise the importance of the early years, by identifying levels of awareness, key gaps in knowledge, any strong associations with early years, and differences by key subgroups

The findings will be used to help monitor progress against The Centre's core mission, and to inform future research and campaign activity.

# Methodology

- Ipsos interviewed 4,682 adults aged 16+ across the UK through the online Ipsos i-Say panel from the 21<sup>st</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022.
- From these responses, we present nationally representative results from interviews with the **general population based on 4,002 interviews**. This includes grandparents, adults with no children, and those saying they are likely to have children in the near future. Data were weighted by gender, age, region, working status and ethnicity.
- Separately, we present results from interviews with **parents of children aged 0-5 based on 1,114 interviews**. This includes 434 parents of children aged 0-5 from the general population sample, and a boost of a further 680 interviews. Data were weighted by gender, age and ethnicity.
- As this is a sample of the population, all results are subject to a ‘margin of error’, which means small differences may not be statistically significant. Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” categories.
- Please note, for the purpose of this study, the ‘early years’ or ‘early childhood’ was defined within the survey as: **“the period between the start of pregnancy and the age of 5”**



# Key findings – 1

## Awareness of importance of early years

- 1. The early years are seen as important, but not uniquely so.** Although the vast majority of the public already buy into the importance of the early years, they are less likely to see the period of ‘pregnancy to age 5’ as the most important stage of child development. This suggests there is a significant undertaking to demonstrate relative importance and the unique role of the early years compared to other stages of child development.
- 2. There is a strong mandate for greater action.** There is broad consensus that the early years should be more of a priority, even among groups who are less likely to say the early years are the most important, and notwithstanding the broader challenges facing the UK today.

## Knowledge of early years

- 3. Self-reported levels of awareness and knowledge of child development during the early years is mixed.** Though most report having a great deal/fair amount of knowledge of how children develop in their early childhood, 36% report knowing just a little or nothing. Knowledge and awareness is typically lower among men, those in more deprived areas and younger adults or those without children
- 4. Ability to describe the concept of social and emotional development is mixed.** Though most say they are aware and confident of how to help children develop, a significant minority struggle to accurately describe ‘social and emotional development’. Social and emotional development is most commonly described as ability to express or manage feelings; or ability to interact, socialise and form relationships with others.

# Key findings – 2

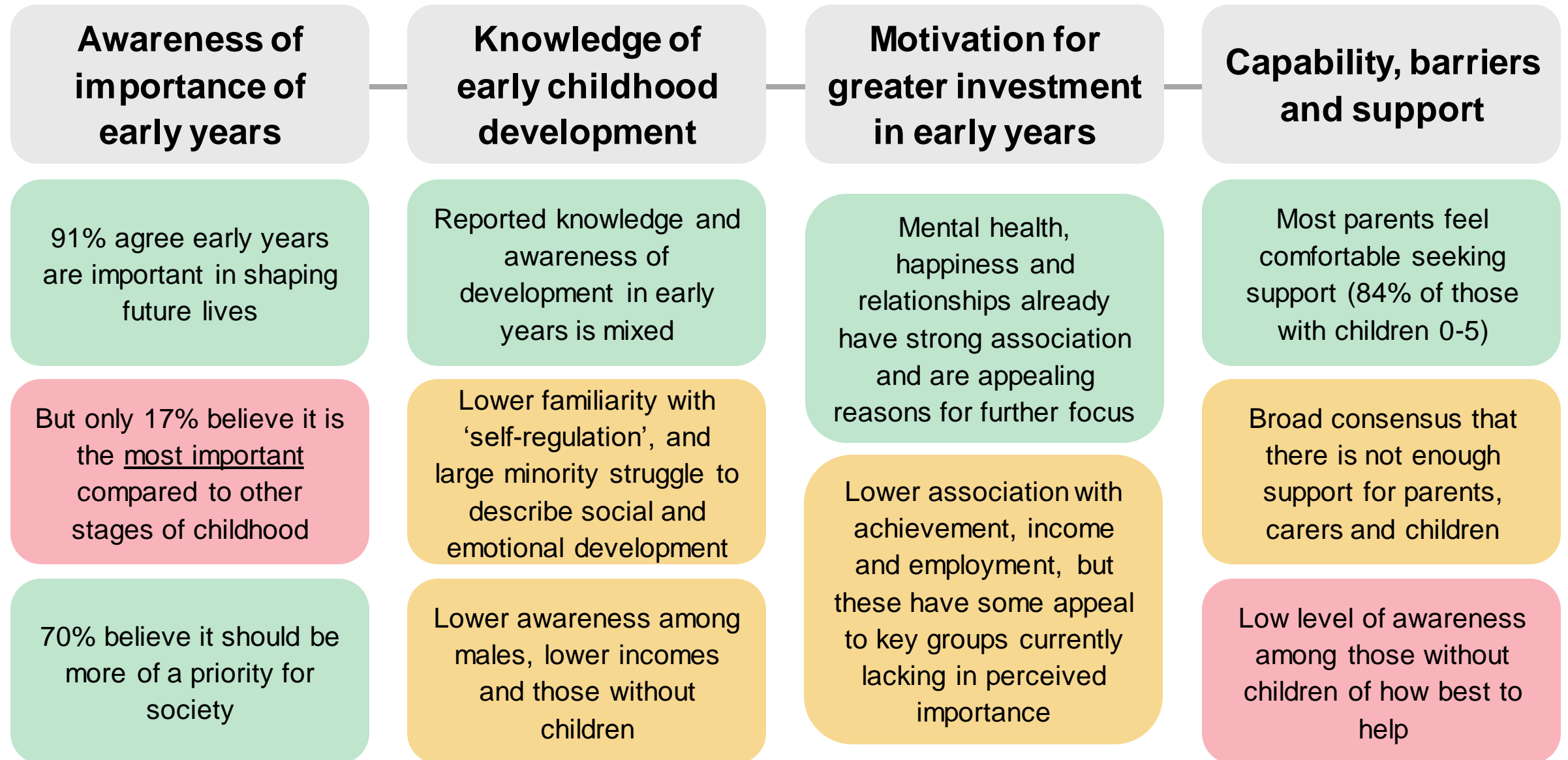
## Motivation for greater investment

- 5. Mental health, happiness and fairness are the three most appealing reasons for increasing investment in the early years.** This is likely in part due to overwhelming perception that development during the early years has the biggest impact on future adult mental health and happiness.
- 6. There is lower awareness of the impact early years can have on employment, income and academic achievement.** Though economic narratives are not as popular, there is some additional interest among key groups who place less importance on the early years. There may be an opportunity to build a better link to this narrative and help stress the relative importance of early years compared to school years.

## Capability, barriers and support

- 7. Most people think more needs to be done to support parents with their children's development during the early years.** However, when prompted, few parents are able to name specific current barriers to seeking help and support for their children's development. There may be an opportunity to raise further awareness of access to support.
- 8. Though most parents of children aged 0-5 have sought some form of help and support, they are more likely to seek help for physical wellbeing, rather than social and emotional development.** Parents of children aged 0-5 draw on a wide range of formal and informal sources of support for help with social and emotional development – family and friends networks are crucial, as are NHS website, GPs and Health visitors.

# Overview of public attitudes and awareness of early years





## 2. Perceived importance of early years



# Key findings

1.

**The early years are seen as important, but not uniquely so.**

The vast majority of the public agree that the early years are important in shaping a person's future life (91%). Two in three (66%) agreed they were *very* important.

However, only 17% identify the period of 'pregnancy to age 5' as the most important stage of child development.

2.

**Perceived importance varies across groups.**

Parents and Grandparents of children 0-5 are most likely to believe that early childhood is the most important stage of a child's life.

Conversely, younger adults without children, males, and people from ethnic minority groups are all less likely to believe this is the case.

3.

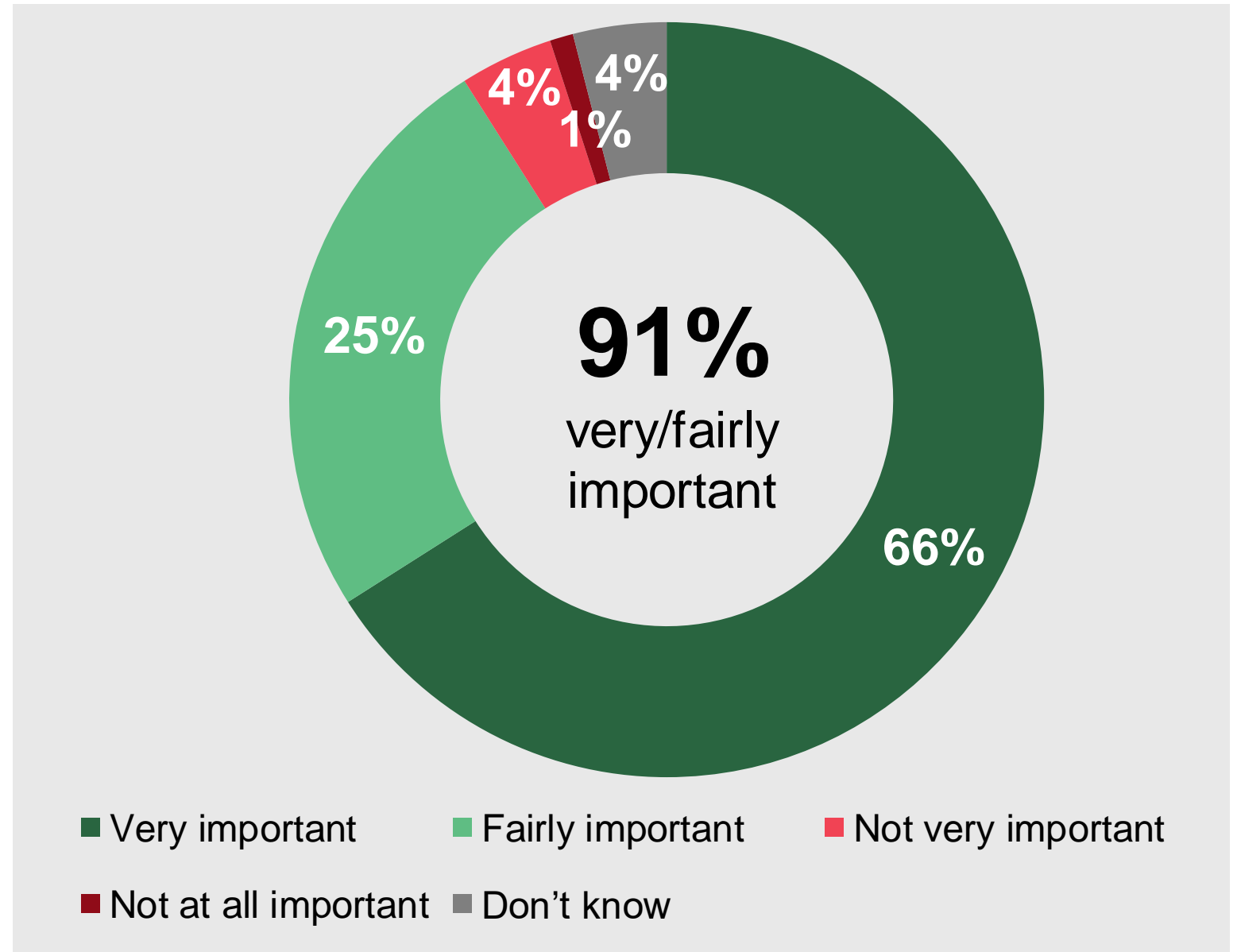
**There is clear appetite for greater action.**

Seven in ten believe that early childhood should be a greater priority for society (70%).

This call for greater action is universal across groups, even among groups who are less likely to say the early years are the most important, and notwithstanding the broader challenges facing the UK today.

# Nine in ten (91%) recognise the importance of early childhood in shaping later life

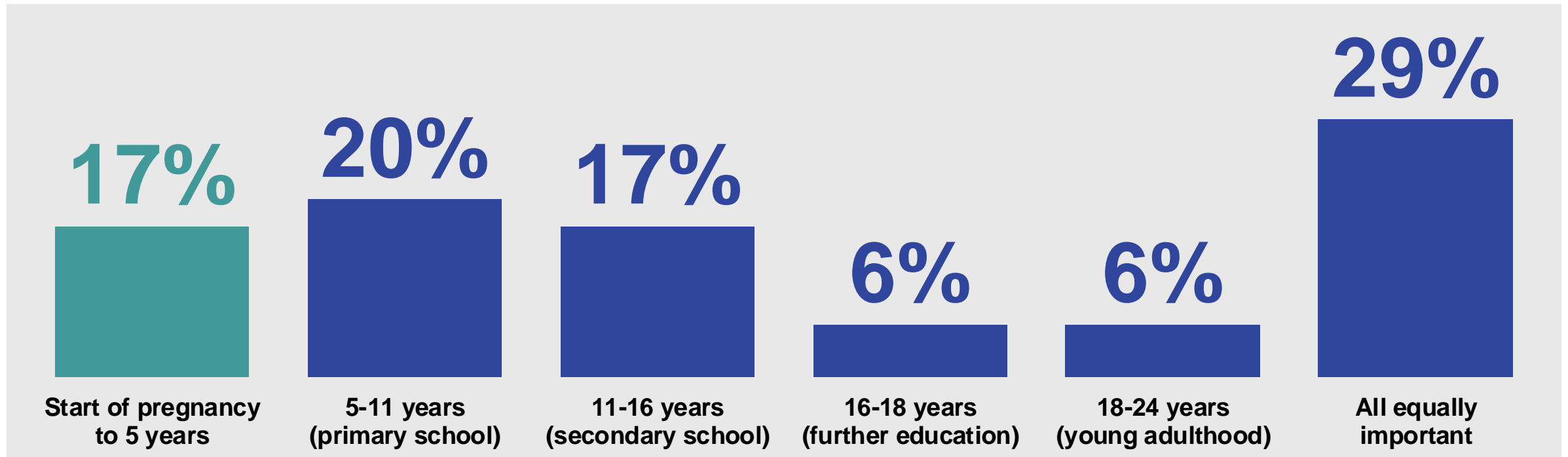
How important, if at all, do  
you feel the period of early  
childhood is in shaping a  
person's future life?



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

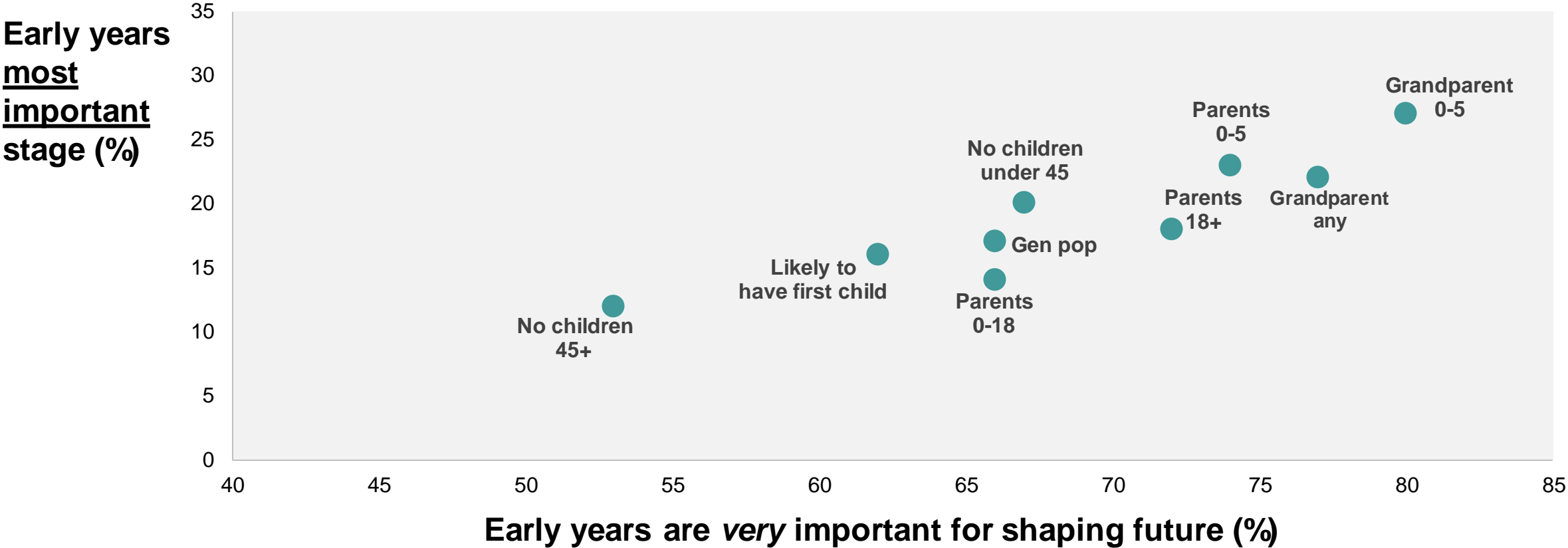
# However, there is relatively low recognition of the importance of early childhood compared with other life stages

Which period of a child and young person's life do you think is the most important for shaping their future lives?



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

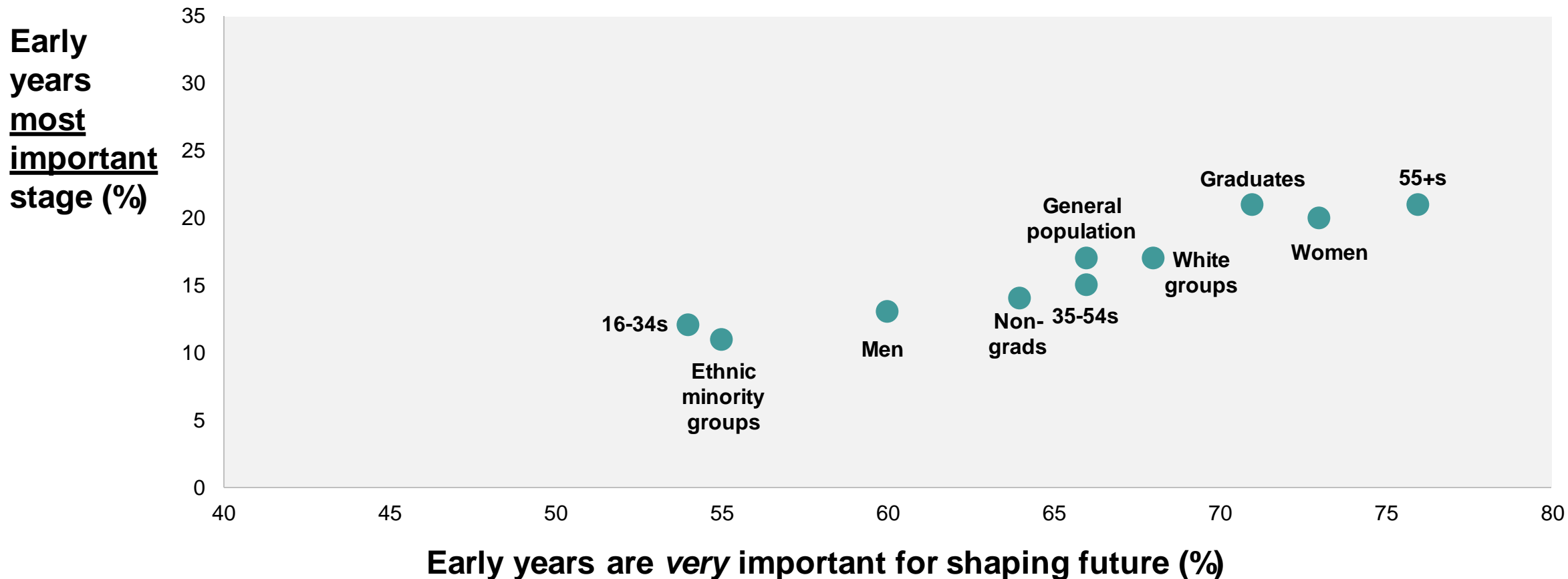
# Parents and grandparents of children 0-5 are the biggest advocates of the early years



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.  
Q: How important, if at all, do you feel the period of early childhood is in shaping a person's future life? (X-axis)  
Q: Which period of a child and young person's life do you think is the most important for shaping their future lives? (Y-axis)



# Males, younger age groups, and those from ethnic minority groups are less likely to believe the early years are important for shaping future lives



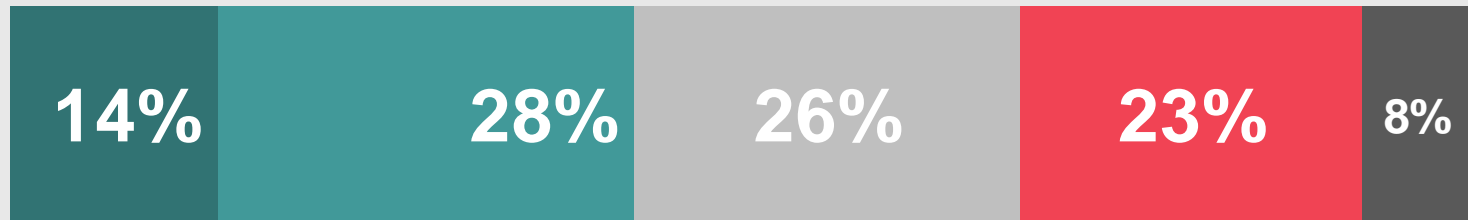
Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

Q: How important, if at all, do you feel the period of early childhood is in shaping a person's future life? (X-axis)

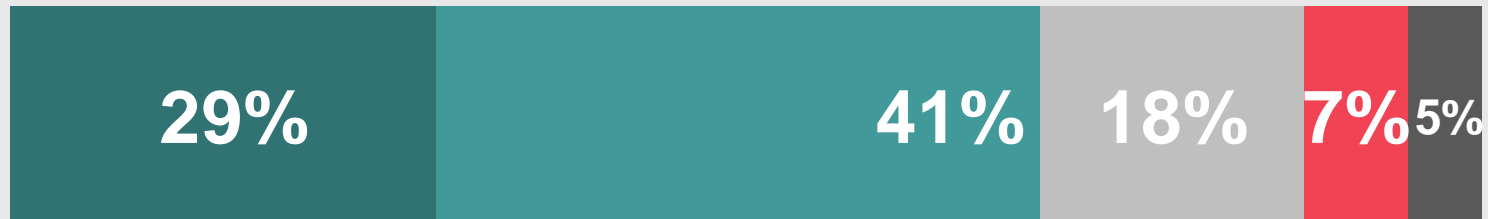
Q: Which period of a child and young person's life do you think is the most important for shaping their future lives? (Y-axis)

# There is clear appetite for a greater societal focus on early childhood

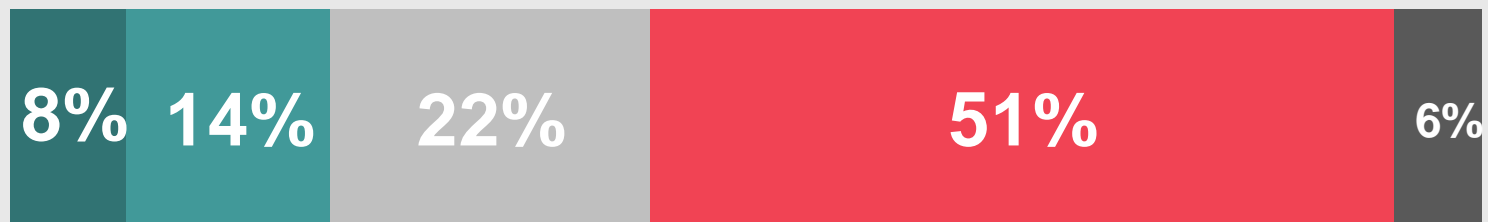
Strongly agree / Tend to agree / Neither / Disagree / Don't know



**43%** agree that early childhood is currently a top priority for society



**70%** agree that early childhood should be a greater priority for society



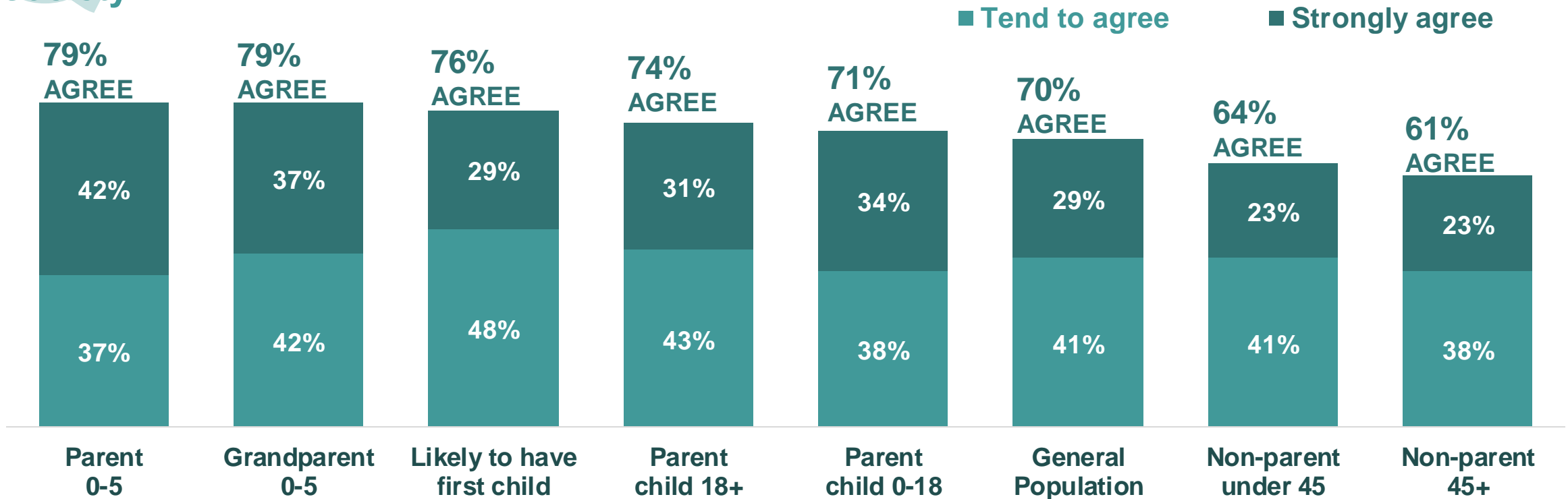
**22%** agree that early childhood should not be a priority given other problems UK society is facing

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements... 'The development of children in early childhood...'

# The call for greater action is universal across all groups, including those less likely to believe early years are most important...

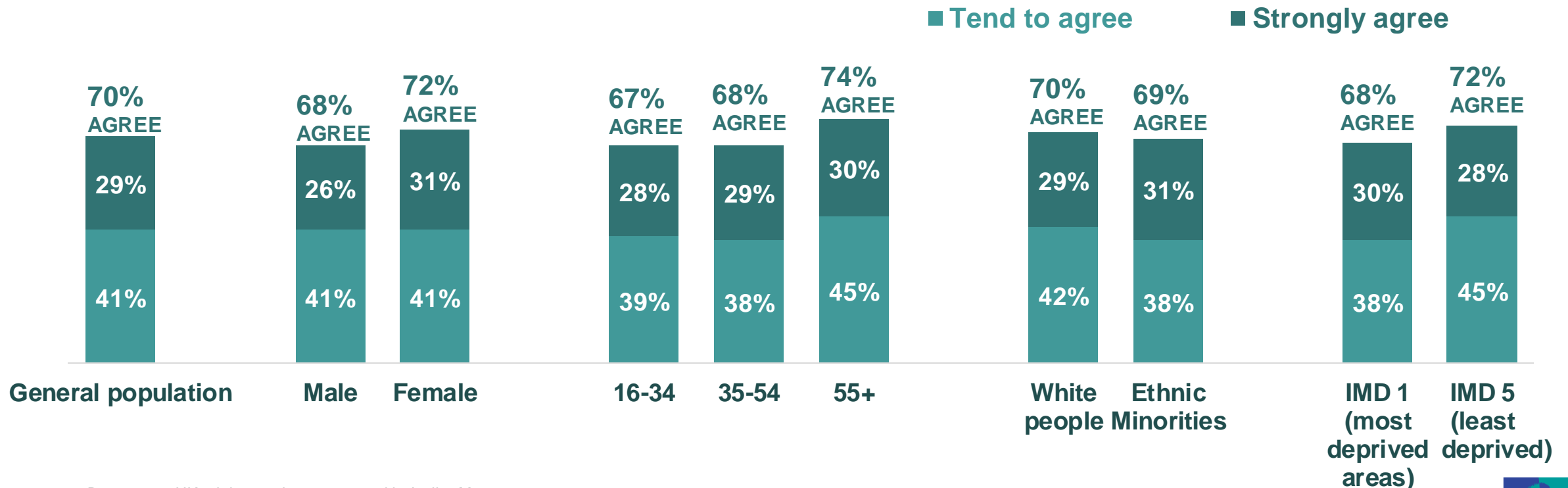
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements...?  
“The development of children in early childhood should be more of a priority for wider society”



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

... this also holds true by demographic groups, where biggest champions are females, those aged 55+ and from more affluent areas

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements...?  
“The development of children in early childhood should be more of a priority for wider society”



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

### 3. Knowledge of early childhood development





# Key findings

1.

**Self-reported levels of knowledge about development in the early years are mixed.**

Though 60% report having a great deal/fair amount of knowledge of how children develop in their early childhood, 36% report knowing just a little or nothing.

Around half (51%) say they have a great deal/fair amount of knowledge about 'social and emotional development' specifically.

Those without children, males, and those with lower incomes report lower levels of knowledge.

2.

**Depth of knowledge is also variable; a significant minority struggle to describe social and emotional development.**

Social and emotional development is most commonly described as ability to express or manage feelings; or ability to interact, socialise and form relationships with others.

However, a third (31%) of the public said they didn't know or were not sure how best to describe social and emotional development.

3.

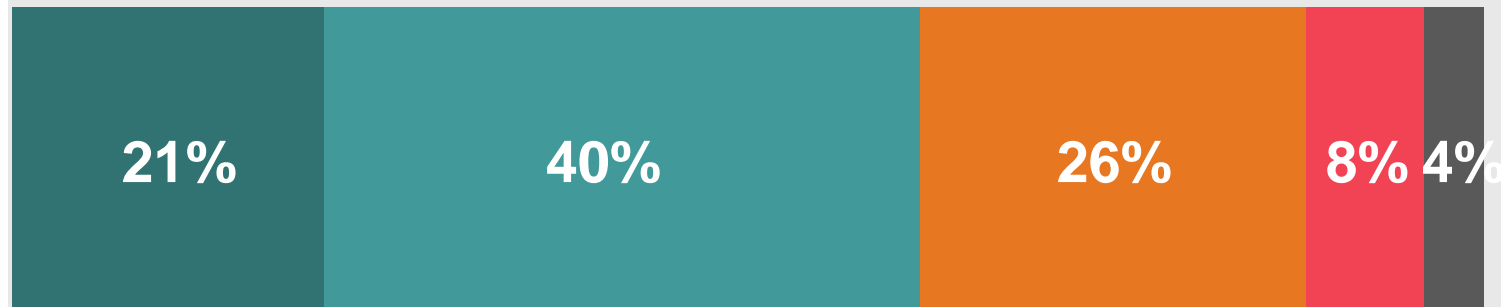
**Knowledge of how children develop is somewhat associated with the importance an individual places on the early years.**

However, this is a weak association, and the pattern is not replicated across all groups.

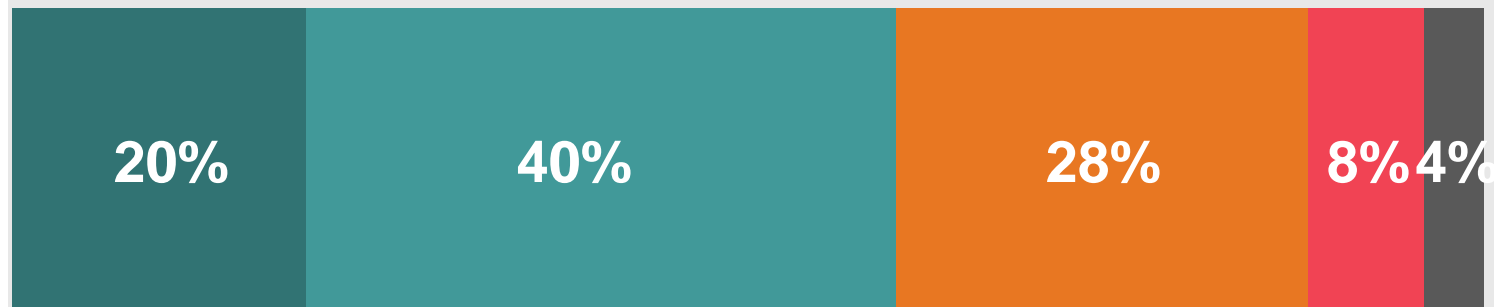
This suggests that any efforts to increase awareness need to do more than explain how children develop, but also convince individuals of the need for greater attention/action.

# Knowledge of the early years is mixed: though most say they know something about how children develop, 36% know just a little or nothing

I know a great deal / I know a fair amount / I know just a little /  
I don't know anything at all / Not sure Don't know



61% say they know a great deal or fair amount about **how a child's early experiences affect their later adult life**



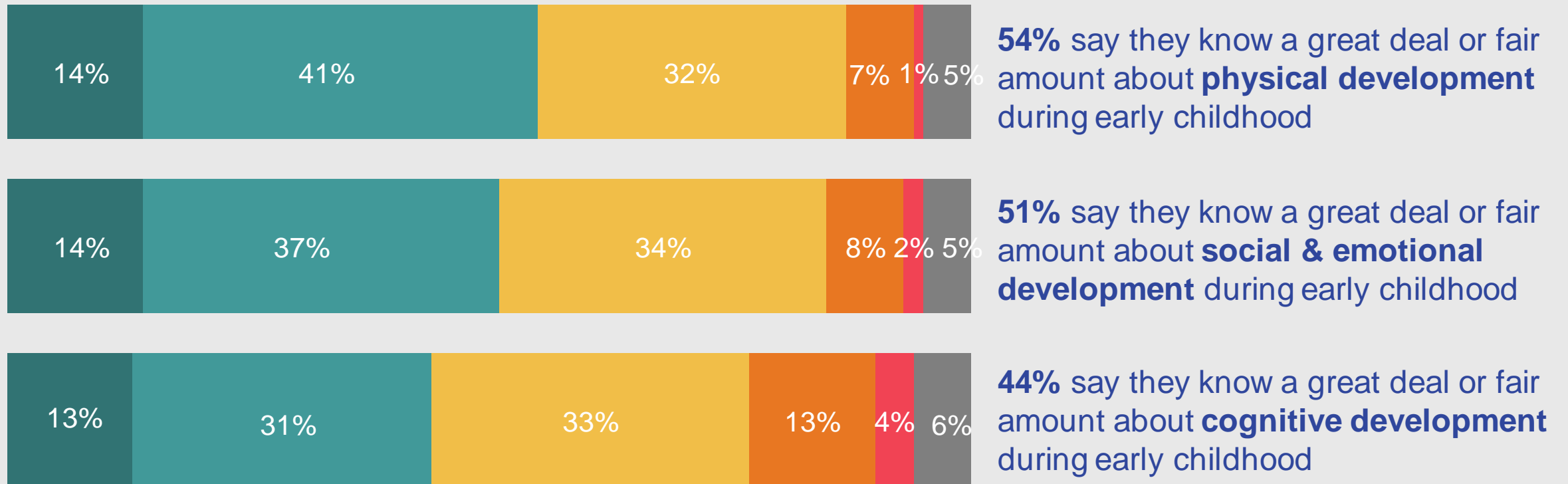
60% say they know a great deal or fair amount about **how children develop during their early childhood**

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

Q: How much, if anything, do you personally feel you know about each of the following?

# There is greater knowledge of physical development compared to social and emotional, and cognitive development

I know a great deal / I know a fair amount / I know just a little / I have heard of but know nothing / I have never heard of this phrase / Don't know



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

Q. How much, if anything, do you feel you know about each of the following areas of development during early childhood?

# Those without children are less knowledgeable about the early years – especially aged 45+

% Saying they know a great deal / fair amount about...	General Population	Parents of 0-5 year-olds	Parents 0-18 year-olds	Parents 18+	Likely to have first child	No children aged 45+	No children aged under 45	Grand-parent of 0-5 year old	Grand-parent any
... How children develop during early childhood	60%	79%	74%	73%	60%	31%	46%	75%	75%
... How a child's early experiences affect later adult life	61%	77%	73%	72%	64%	39%	51%	73%	73%
... Physical development during early childhood	54%	72%	66%	65%	54%	31%	41%	67%	66%
... Social and emotional development during early childhood	51%	68%	63%	59%	53%	26%	42%	64%	61%
... Cognitive development during early childhood	44%	60%	56%	52%	46%	22%	35%	53%	51%

Q: How much, if anything, do you personally feel you know about each of the following? (First two statements)

Q: How much, if anything, do you feel you know about each of the following areas of development during early childhood?

(Last three statements)

Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 79%) and the lowest (dark red 22%) figures between subgroups

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# All groups have less awareness of cognitive development; awareness overall is lower among men and lower earners

% Saying they know a great deal/fair amount about...	General Pop	Males	Female	16-34 year olds	35-54 year olds	55+ year olds	White groups	Ethnic minority groups	Earns up to £24,999	Earns £25-54,999	Earns £55,000+	IMD 1 most deprived	IMD 5 least deprived
... How children develop during early childhood	60%	53%	67%	60%	59%	61%	60%	64%	58%	62%	64%	63%	61%
... How a child's early experiences affect later adult life	61%	56%	67%	63%	60%	62%	61%	67%	60%	63%	65%	62%	62%
... Physical development during early childhood	54%	50%	58%	54%	53%	55%	54%	63%	50%	56%	64%	53%	55%
... Social and emotional development during early childhood	51%	43%	58%	51%	51%	50%	50%	57%	47%	53%	56%	50%	49%
... Cognitive development during early childhood	44%	39%	49%	45%	45%	42%	44%	46%	39%	46%	52%	42%	44%

Q: How much, if anything, do you personally feel you know about each of the following? (First two statements)

Q: How much, if anything, do you feel you know about each of the following areas of development during early childhood? (Last three statements)

Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 67%) and the lowest (dark red 39%) figures between subgroups

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

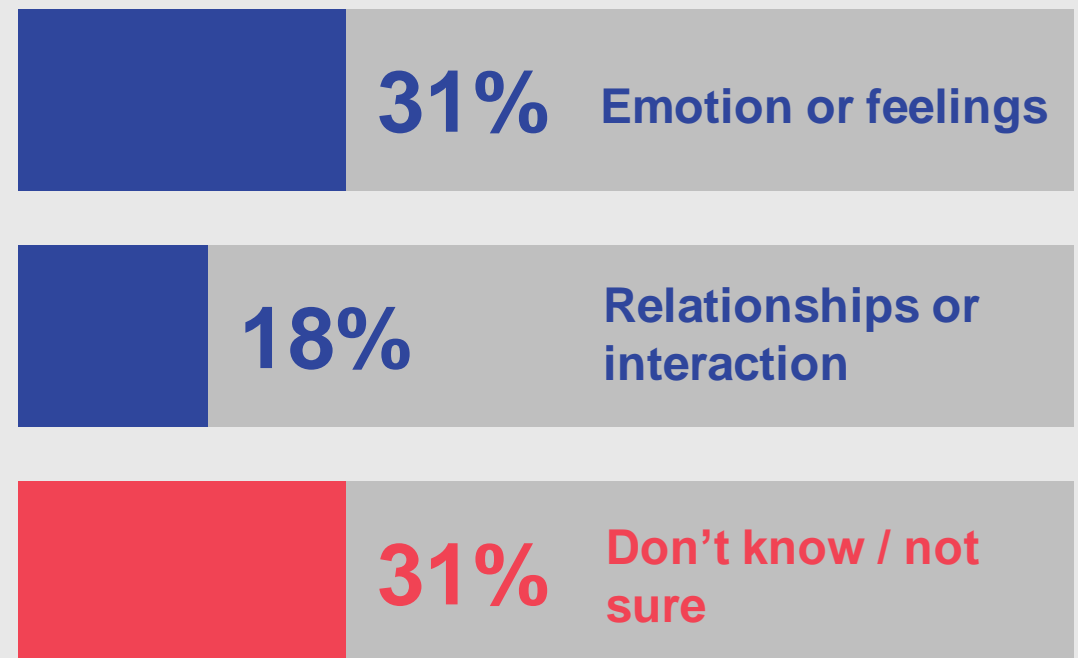


# When asked, the public's ability to describe 'social and emotional development' is mixed

- Most (69%) are able to articulate at least one aspect of social and emotional development
- Most commonly described as ability to express or manage feelings; or ability to interact, socialise and form relationships with others
- A third (31%) say they don't know or are not sure – compared to just 15% who said they didn't know / knew nothing when asked how much they knew in an earlier 'closed' question.
- 28% of parents of children aged 0-5 say they don't know, rising to 40% among those with no children aged under 45.

In your own words, what does the term 'social and emotional development' mean to you?

% mentions



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Public most likely to associate social and emotional development as ability to build relationships with others and manage emotions

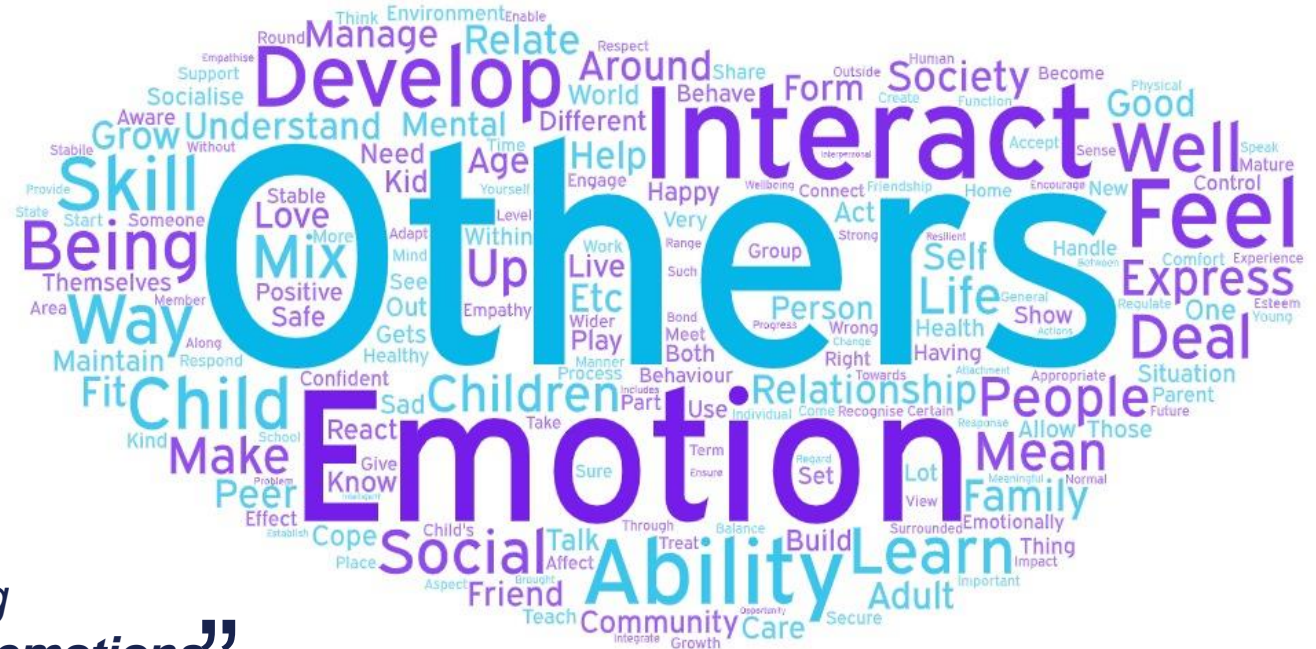
**Q** In your own words, what does the term ‘social and emotional development’ mean to you?

“ Childs' ability to develop **relationships** and how they **interact** with others as well as how they express and articulate their **emotions**. ”

“ Being able to **make friends**, sharing and being **open** about their **feelings/emotions** ”

“ A child being able to **get on** with other children and people and to be able to **manage**, **control** and **express** their **emotions** ”

“ Being able to **regulate** your own **emotions** having **empathy** with others **recognising** other people's **emotions** ”



Q: In your own words, what does the term ‘social and emotional development’ mean to you?

Top Word Count: ‘Others’ 995 mentions; ‘Emotion’ 926, ‘Interact’ 871, ‘Develop’ 792, ‘Ability’ 693, ‘People’ 593, ‘Feel’ 588, ‘Child’ 584, ‘Social’ 552, ‘Children’ 535 ‘Relationships’ 492

# Also common to view social and emotional development as ability to adapt to people and situations, and to build resilience

Beyond managing emotions and building relationships, other associations include: developing confidence, resilience, empathy; ability to feel comfortable, mix, socialise, relate, understand, communicate well; behaving appropriately; becoming well rounded, and being happy and having positive mental health

“How children are integrated into the family and wider society, adopting the **norms of acceptable behaviour**. Developing **emotional resilience** in the day to day aspects of life.”

“Feeling **happy, well adjusted** and **confident** as a person ”

“The child's ability to **relate to others** and the **environment** around them. It's the development of **empathy** and **positive self esteem** and an idea of **socially acceptable behaviour**. ”

“Helping to create a **well rounded person** who is capable of **integrating** and **fitting into society** and **being happy** with themselves ”

“**Mixing** with others and being able to **deal** with **setbacks**.”

“It means how a child grows and develops **coping strategies**, **understanding** of people, positive **mental health**, **interaction** with people and the building blocks to becoming a **strong, well rounded** and **emotionally secure** adult.”

Q: In your own words, what does the term 'social and emotional development' mean to you?

Top Word Count: 'Others' 995 mentions; 'Emotion' 926, 'Interact' 871, 'Develop' 792, 'Ability' 693, 'People' 593, 'Feel' 588, 'Child' 584, 'Social' 552, 'Children' 535 'Relationships' 492

# Broad consensus that social and emotional development is determined more by relationships and environment, than genes

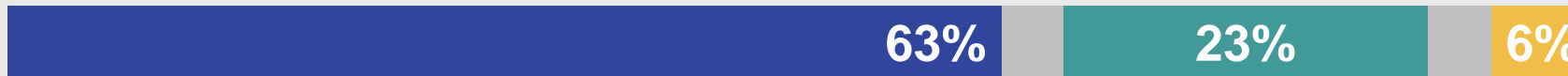
For each of the following areas of development in early childhood, would you say they are mostly determined by the genes a child is born with, or by their relationships, environments and experiences as they grow up, or determined fairly equally by both?

Is mostly determined by a child's relationships, environments and experiences as they grow up

Is determined fairly equally by both a child's genes and their experiences as they grow up

Is mostly determined by the genes a child was born with

## Social and emotional development



## Cognitive development



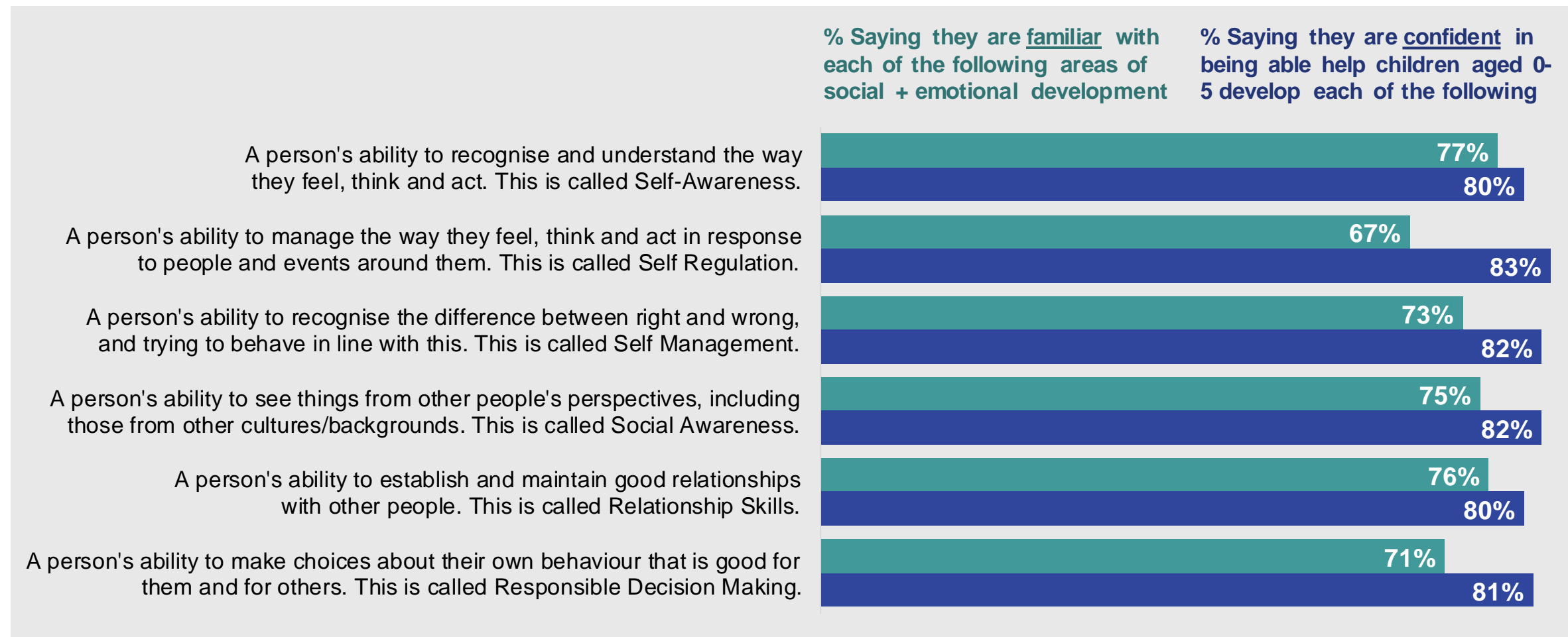
## Physical development



- Those without children are more likely to say 'don't know' (12%-14%)
- Those likely to have their first (11%) or another child (17%) place greater emphasis on role of genes in determining social and emotional development

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Most say they are familiar with aspects of social & emotional development and confident in helping children develop these



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

Q: How familiar, if at all, are you with each of the following areas of social and emotional development?  
 Q: How confident, or not, do you personally feel in being able to help children aged 0-5 develop each of the following social and emotional skills?



# However, again, those without children are less familiar

% Saying they are familiar with each of the areas of social and emotional development...	General Population	Parents of 0-5 year- olds	Parents 0-18 year- olds	Parents 18+	Likely to have first child	No children aged 45+	No children aged under 45	Grand- parent of 0-5 year old	Grand- parent any
A person's ability to recognise and understand the way they feel, think and act. This is called <b>Self-Awareness</b> .	77%	86%	80%	80%	77%	69%	71%	85%	83%
A person's ability to manage the way they feel, think and act in response to people and events around them. This is called <b>Self Regulation</b> .	67%	79%	75%	69%	73%	54%	66%	72%	68%
A person's ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong, and trying to behave in line with this. This is called <b>Self Management</b> .	73%	85%	78%	77%	75%	63%	67%	81%	80%
A person's ability to see things from other people's perspectives, including those from other cultures/backgrounds. This is called <b>Social Awareness</b> .	75%	84%	79%	68%	76%	67%	69%	81%	80%
A person's ability to establish and maintain good relationships with other people. This is called <b>Relationship Skills</b> .	76%	85%	80%	80%	81%	67%	71%	83%	83%
A person's ability to make choices about their own behaviour that is good for them and for others. This is called <b>Responsible Decision Making</b> .	71%	84%	78%	74%	76%	60%	67%	76%	75%

Q: How familiar, if at all, are you with each of the following areas of social and emotional development?

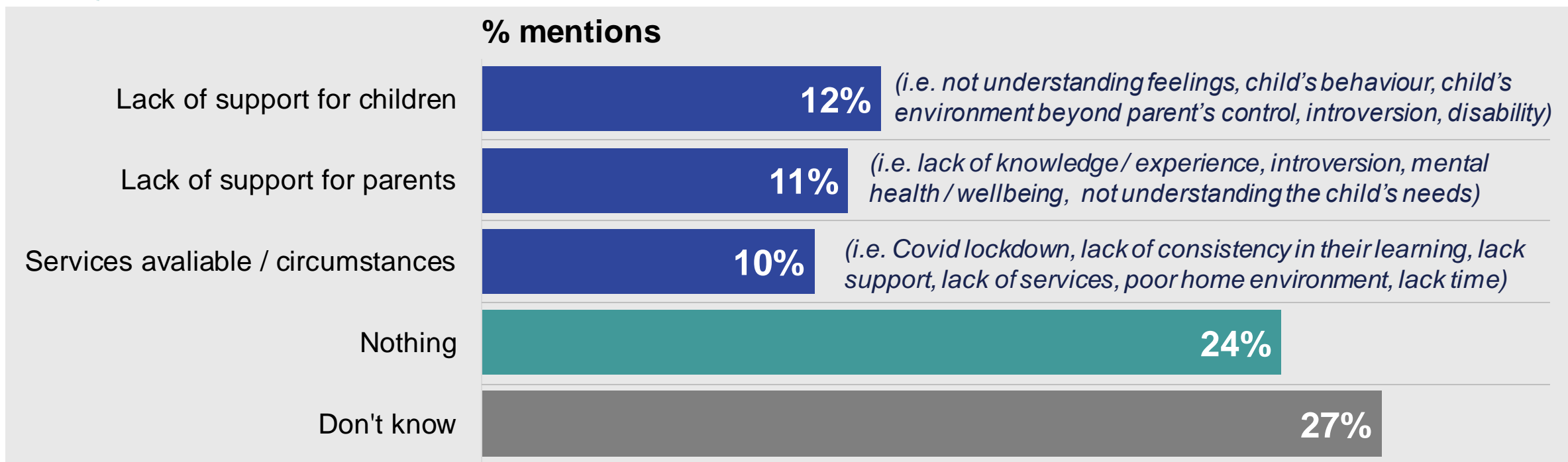
Q: How confident, or not, do you personally feel in being able to help children aged 0-5 develop each of the following social and emotional skills?

Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 86%) and the lowest (dark red 54%) figures between subgroups

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Nearly three in ten parents of 0-5 year olds “don’t know” potential barriers they could face in helping children develop their skills

What, if anything, makes it difficult for you to help your child(ren) develop their social and emotional skills?

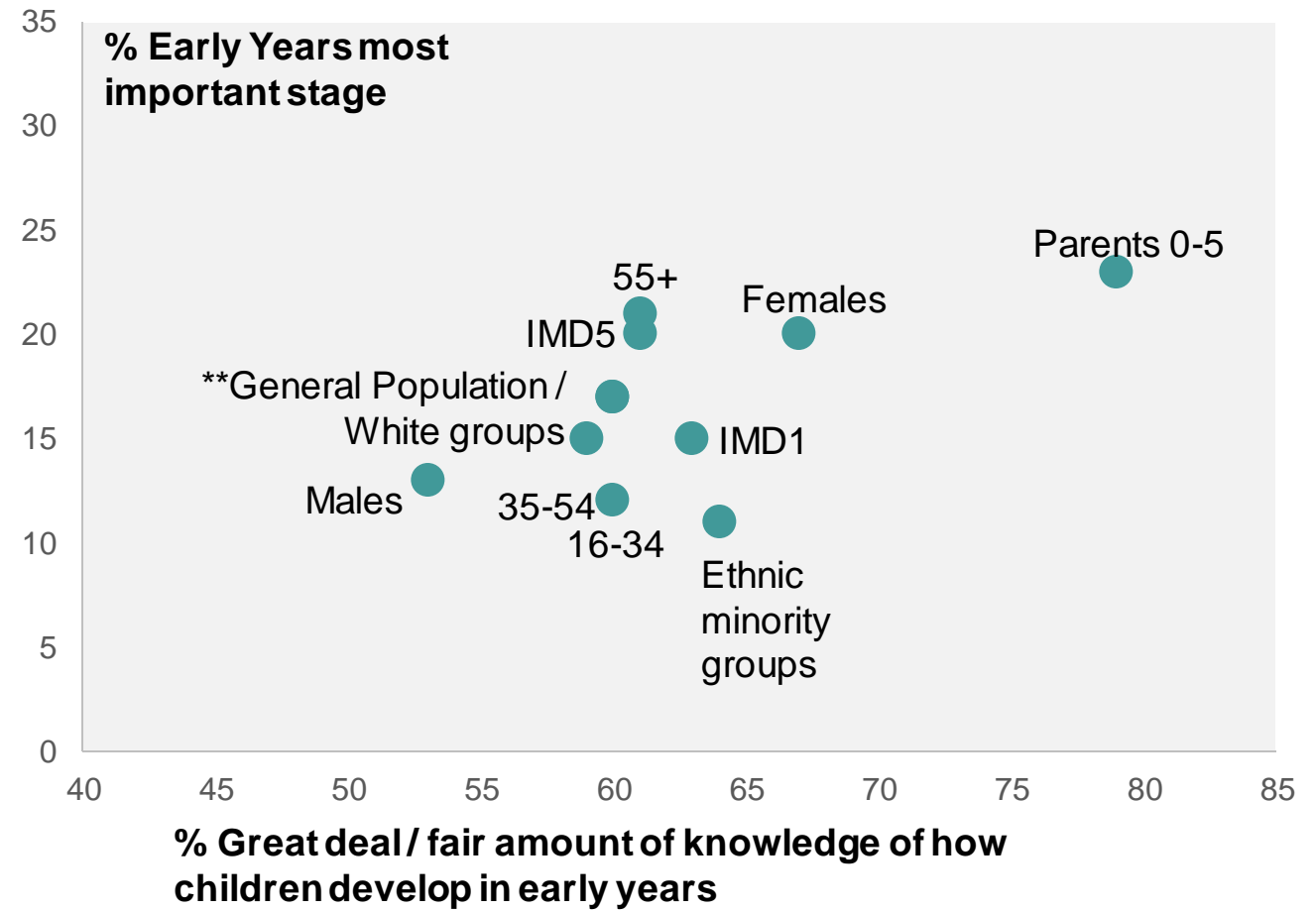


Data coded from open ended responses.

Base: 1,114 UK parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Knowledge of child development does have some impact on perceived importance – but this should not be overstated

- Those who have higher levels of knowledge about how children develop in early years, and of social and emotional development are more likely to say that the early years are the most important stage of child development.\*
- However, although this relationship holds true for gender (where females are more knowledgeable and place greater importance on early years), this is not the case for age, ethnicity or level of deprivation.
- Older people, those from white groups and from more affluent areas are more likely to say the early years are the most important, but are no more knowledgeable about how children develop



\*% who say 0-5 is most important stage:

Great deal/fair amount of knowledge of development in early childhood 18% vs 15% little or no knowledge

Great deal/fair amount of knowledge of social and emotional development 20% vs 14% with little or no knowledge

\*\* Gen Population 60% vs 17%, and those from white groups also 60% vs 17%

## 4. Motivation for greater investment in early years



# Key findings

1.

**There is a strong perceived association between the early years and future mental health, relationships and happiness.**

These associations exist among all groups, but are strongest among females, older people, and those from more affluent areas.

2.

**There is lower awareness of the impact of early years on employment, income and academic achievement.**

There is additional interest in academic achievement among males and employment among younger adults, and people from ethnic minority groups.

Notably, these groups are among the least likely to say the early years are important overall. This suggests an opportunity for this narrative to be used in building awareness.

3.

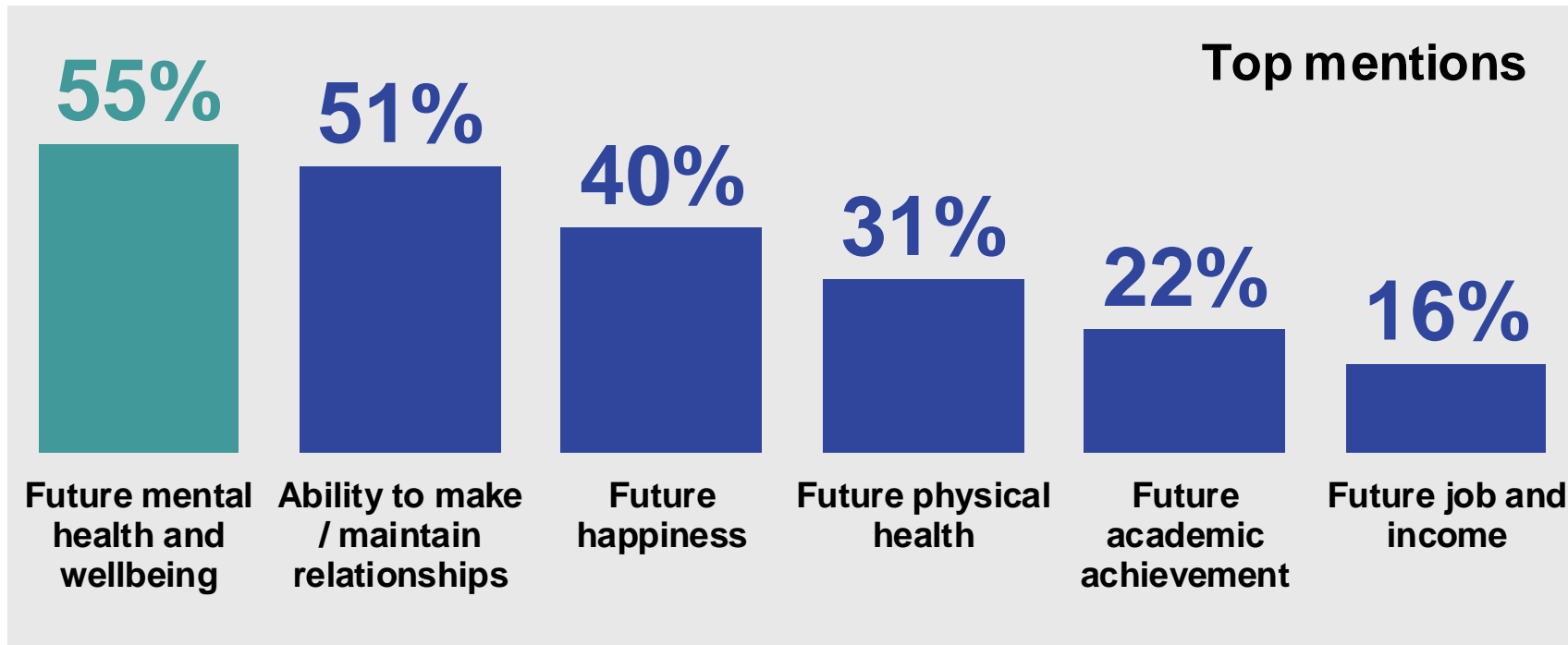
**Mental health, happiness and fairness are the three most appealing reasons for increasing investment in the early years.**

These are universally popular. They work best among the biggest advocates of the early years, but are also appealing to those who are currently less likely to believe early years are the most important stage of child development.



# There is high recognition of how early childhood affects mental health in later life; relationships a close second

Which of the following, if any, do you personally think are likely to be the **MOST** affected by a child's development during their early childhood? Please select up to three



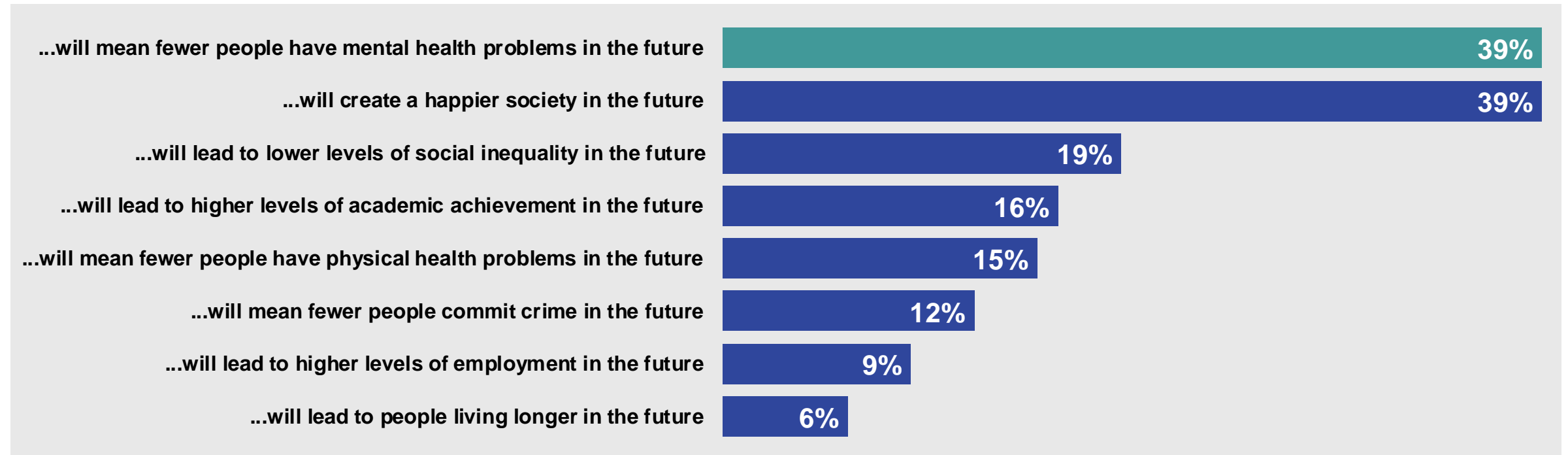
- These affiliations are popular among all groups, but strongest among females, older people, and those from more affluent areas
- Future academic achievement is closer association for males
- Future job and income is closer association for males and younger people

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.



# Mental health appeals as an important reason for focus on early childhood

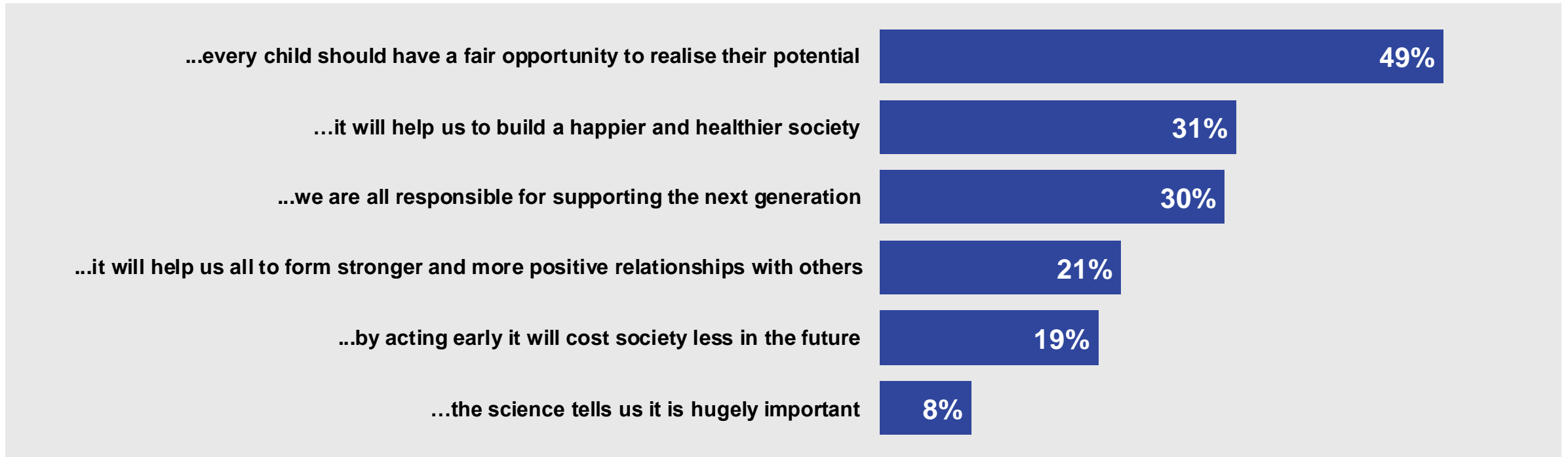
I'm going to show you a list of things some people say are important reasons for investing in early childhood. Which, if any, of the following statements **MOST** appeal to you?



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Perceived fairness in helping everyone reach their potential is also important

I'm going to show you a list of reasons why some people say it's important to invest in the early years of childhood. Which, if any, of the following statements **MOST** appeals to you?



Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# At first look, those who are most in favour of messages on mental health and equal opportunities are those who already say the early years are important...

I'm going to show you a list of things some people say are important reasons for investing in early childhood / a list of reasons why some people say it's important to invest in the early years of childhood. Which, if any, of the following statements **MOST** appeal to you?

Which, if any, of the following statements MOST appeals to you? ...	General Population	Men	Women	18-34-year-olds	35-54-year-olds	55+ year olds	White groups	Ethnic Minority groups	Graduates	Non-graduates	Earning up to £24,999	£25-54,999	£55,000 and above	IMD1	IMD5
...Will mean fewer people have mental health problems in the future	39%	33%	44%	33%	39%	43%	40%	33%	43%	36%	38%	39%	41%	36%	44%
...Every child should have a fair opportunity to realise their potential	49%	44%	55%	38%	46%	61%	51%	37%	52%	48%	48%	52%	46%	43%	55%

Boxes are highlighted **green** to illustrate a score significantly higher than general population average

# ...however, these are top 2 reasons across all groups, with some additional interest in academic achievement and employment

Q: Which, if any, of the following statements MOST appeals to you? ...	Rank (%)						
	General population	Parents of children 0-5	Grandparents 0-5	Those without children*	Men*	16-34*	Ethnic minority groups*
... will mean fewer people have mental health problems in the future	<b>=1 (39%)</b>	<b>2 (37%)</b>	<b>2 (45%) ^</b>	<b>1 (38%)</b>	<b>2 (33%)</b>	<b>1 (33%)</b>	<b>1 (33%)</b>
... will create a happier society in the future	<b>=1 (39%)</b>	<b>1 (40%)</b>	<b>1 (50%) ^</b>	<b>2 (36%)</b>	<b>1 (34%)</b>	<b>2 (32%)</b>	<b>2 (32%)</b>
...will lead to lower levels of social inequality in the future	<b>2 (19%)</b>	<b>3 (19%)</b>	<b>3 (20%)</b>	<b>3 (18%)</b>	<b>4 (18%)</b>	<b>4 (17%)</b>	<b>=3 (19%)</b>
...will lead to higher levels of academic achievement in the future	<b>3 (16%)</b>	<b>4 (17%)</b>	<b>5 (15%)</b>	<b>=4 (14%)</b>	<b>3 (19%) ^</b>	<b>3 (19%)</b>	<b>=3 (19%)</b>
...will mean fewer people have physical health problems in the future	<b>4 (15%)</b>	<b>=5 (14%)</b>	<b>4 (16%)</b>	<b>=4 (14%)</b>	<b>5 (15%)</b>	<b>=5 (14%)</b>	<b>=5 (13%)</b>
...will mean fewer people commit crime in the future	<b>5 (12%)</b>			<b>5 (12%)</b>			<b>4 (15%)</b>
...will lead to higher levels of employment in the future		<b>=5 (14%) ^</b>				<b>5 (14%) ^</b>	<b>=5 (13%) ^</b>

## Top ranking statement

^ illustrates score significantly higher than general population average

\* All groups who are less likely to say early years most important stage of child development

## 5. Help, support, capabilities and barriers





# Key findings

1.

**Most people think more needs to be done to support parents with their children's development during the early years; however, few are able to articulate what support is needed.**

In particular parents from ethnic minority groups and parents facing financial challenges feel the need for more support.

However, few parents reported any existing barriers to seeking help and support for their children's social and emotional development. Two in five (40%) report that there are no barriers to support, and one in five say they do not need any support (20%).

2.

**There is little support being sought for social and emotional development.**

Overall, the majority of parents of 0-5s (85%) have sought information, support or advice when it comes to bringing up their children.

However, parents are more likely to seek information on topics relating to physical wellbeing than social (23%) or emotional (21%) development.

3.

**Parents of children aged 0-5 seek advice on social and emotional development from a wide range of sources.**

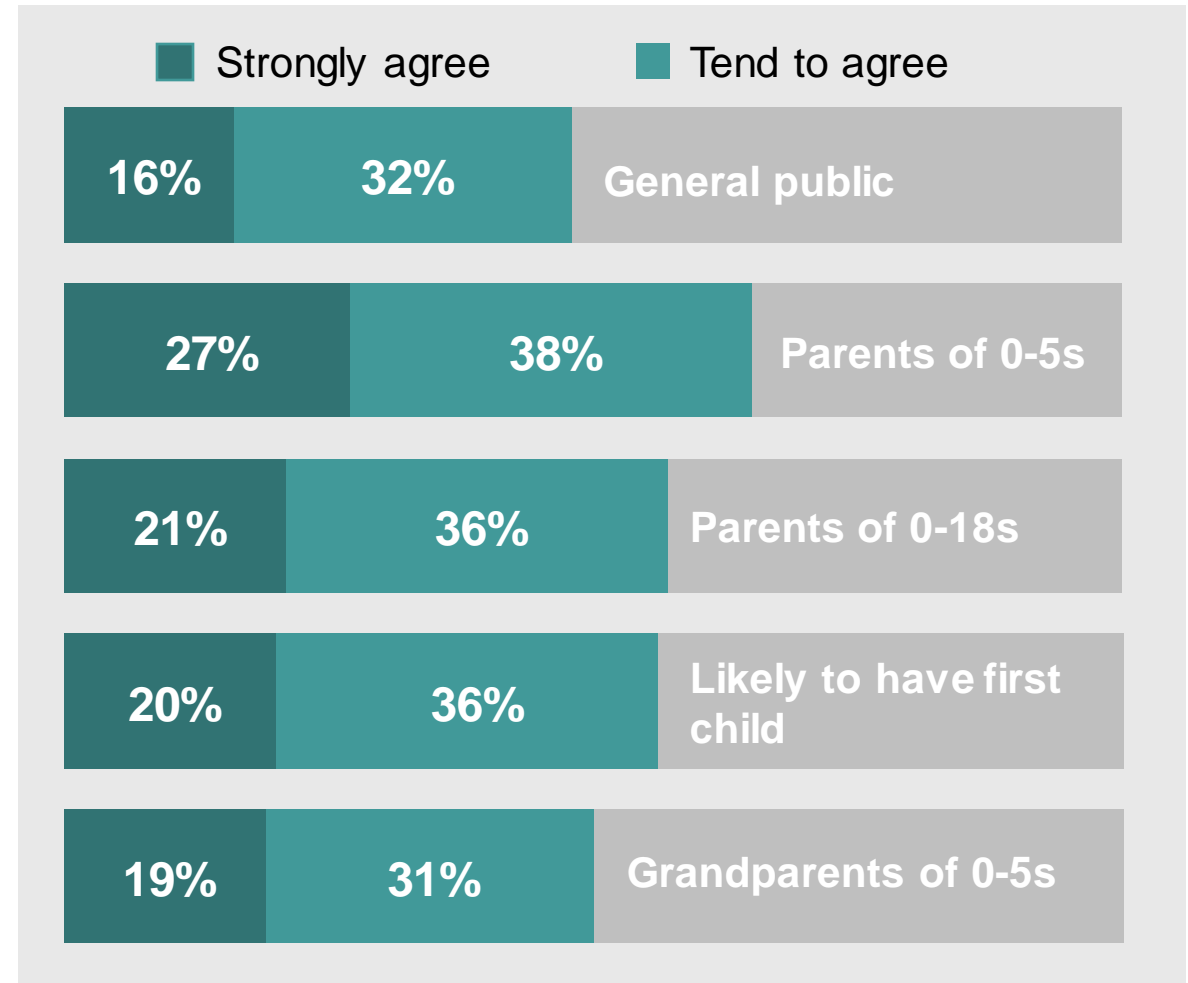
Many parents report seeking advice and support from family (39%) and friends (35%).

However, there is also a clear role for the red book. Almost two in three (62%) used it a great deal or a fair amount, with 20% using it as a source of information on social and emotional development.

# Most think more needs to be done to support parents and children during the early years

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is not enough support for parents, carers and children to help children develop in their early childhood?

- Half the public (48%) agree there's not enough support to help children develop in early childhood. Women (50%) and 16-34 year olds (54%) are particularly likely to call for additional support.
- This rises among parents of 0-5s (65%), parents of 0-18s (58%), and those with no children but planning to have their first (56%).
- The strongest calls for support are seen from those who already understand the importance of the early years. For example, those who already feel knowledgeable about early childhood (54%) and those who agree with collective responsibility (59%).



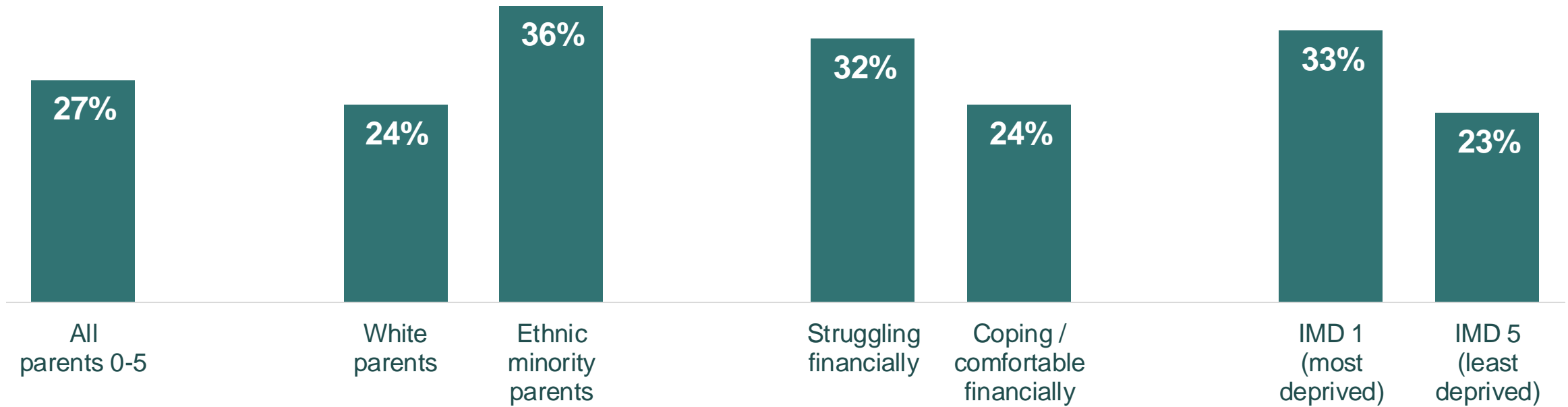
Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.



# Among parents, the need for more support is felt most acutely by ethnic minority parents and those living in more deprived areas

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is not enough support for parents, carers and children to help children develop in their early childhood?

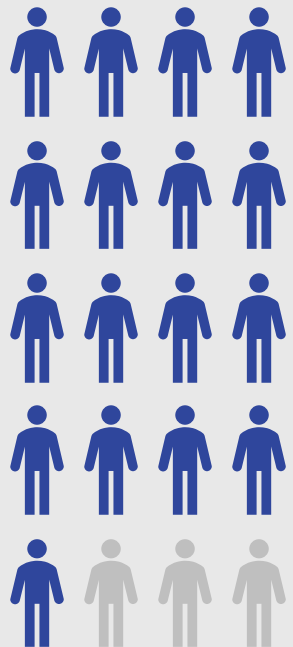
% Strongly agree



Base: 1,114 UK parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Though most parents of 0-5s have sought advice and support, few seek support on emotional or social development

**Q** In the last year, what types of information, support or advice, if any, have you sought for bringing up children?



**85%**

sought **any**  
information  
and advice



**23%**

sought  
information on  
**emotional**  
development



**21%**

sought  
information on  
**social**  
development

Base: 1,114 UK parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# And parents with low household incomes, and grandparents are less likely to seek support

**In the last year, what types of information, support or advice, if any, have you sought for bringing up children?**

- Overall, the majority of parents of 0-5s (85%) have sought information, support or advice.
- However, non-working parents (79%) and those with an annual income of less than £25,000 (79%) are less likely to have sought advice.
- Parents of 0-5s who already feel knowledgeable about early childhood (87%) and who view early childhood as an important period (90%) are particularly likely to have sought advice.
- Only one in three grandparents of 0-5s (32%) have sought advice within the last year.

## % sought any information and advice

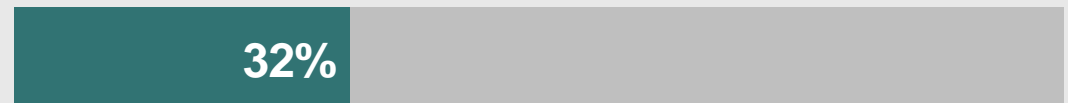
### Parents of 0-5s



### Parents of 0-18s



### Grandparents of 0-5s

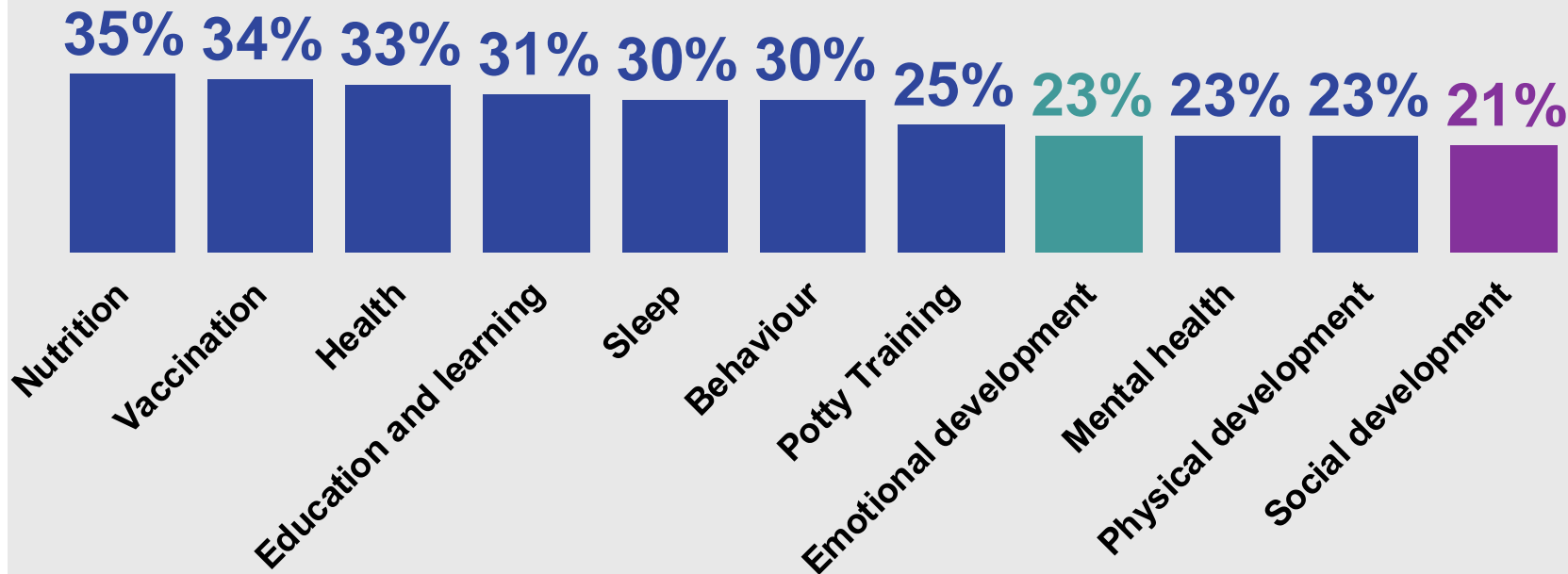


Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Parents are more likely to seek information on topics relating to physical wellbeing than social or emotional development

In the last year, what types of information, support or advice, if any, have you sought for bringing up children?

## Top mentions

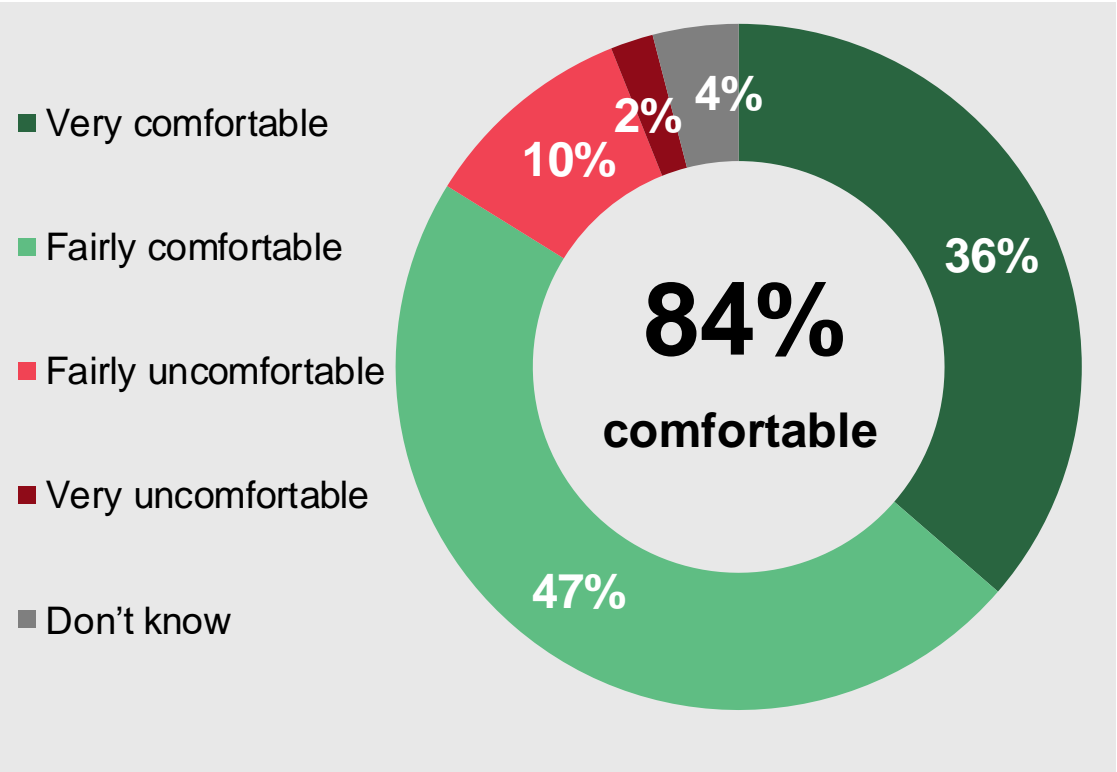


Base: All parents of children aged 0-5 (1,114), surveyed in April – May 2022

- Parents of 0-5s who are more knowledgeable about social and emotional development are more likely to seek support on it (38% compared with 24% who are not knowledgeable).
- This highlights the importance of creating a basic awareness of social and emotional development among parents.

# While most parents are comfortable seeking advice on social and emotional development, this is not universal

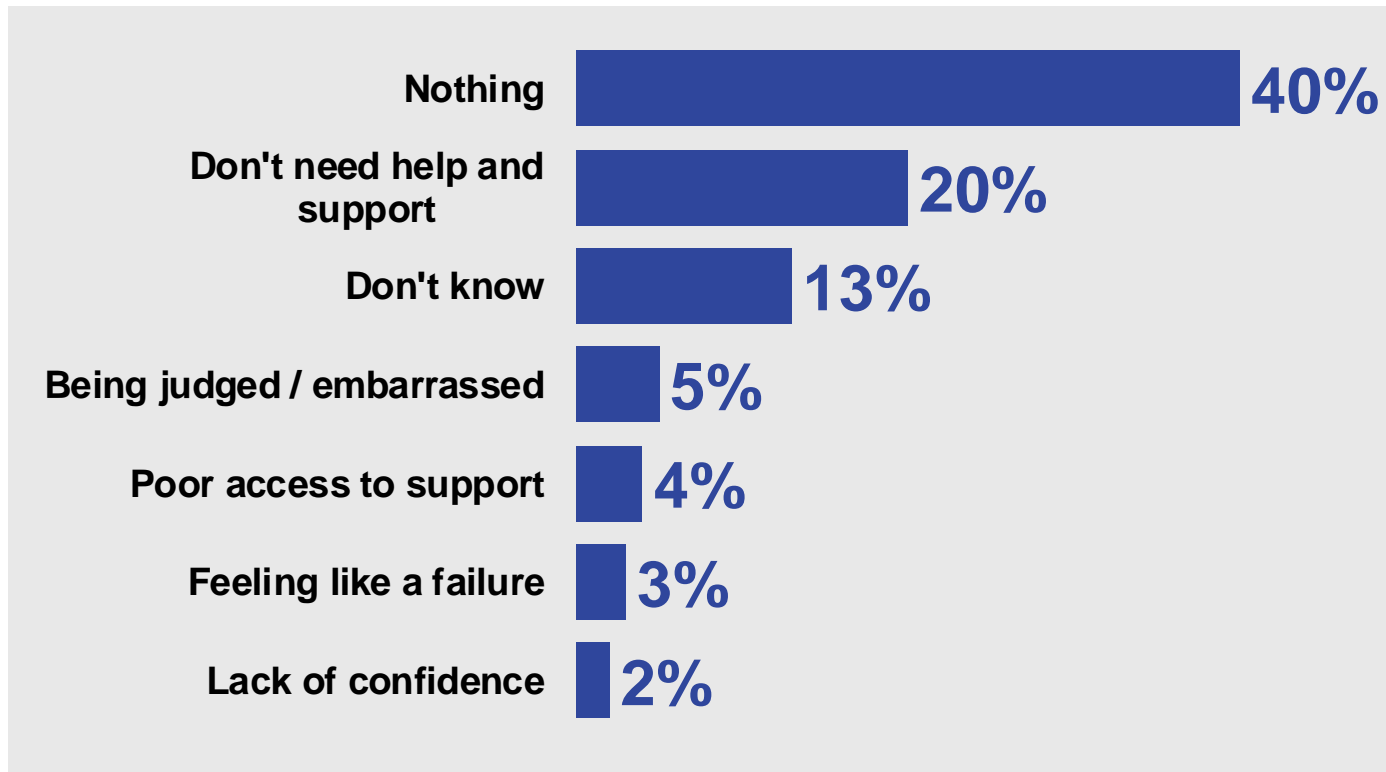
Overall, how comfortable or uncomfortable would you personally feel seeking help or support for a child’s social and emotional development?



Base: All parents of children aged 0-5 (1,114), surveyed in April – May 2022

# Few parents can pinpoint existing barriers to seeking help and support for their children

Q And what, if anything, makes it difficult for you to ask for help or support for your children?



- Although the majority (65%) of parents of 0-5s agreed that more support was needed, few are able to identify current barriers to accessing support.
- Three in five parents (60%) report that there are no barriers to support (40%) or that they do not need any support (20%).
- Where barriers are mentioned, these often relate to parents' own confidence levels.

Base: All parents of children aged 0-5 (1,114), surveyed in April – May 2022

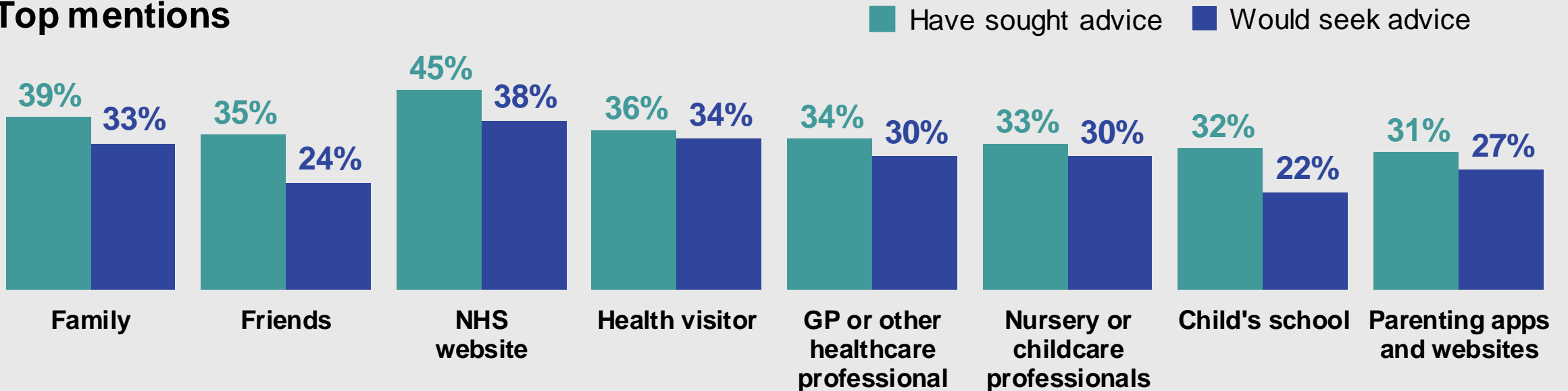


# Parents of 0-5s seek advice on social and emotional development from a wide range of formal and informal sources

**Q** In the last year, where have you sought information, support or advice about children's social or emotional development?

**Q** If you personally wanted to know more about social and emotional development during early childhood, where, if anywhere, would you seek information, support or advice?

## Top mentions



Base: 377 parents of children aged 0-5 who sought advice on social and emotional skills, surveyed in April – May 2022.

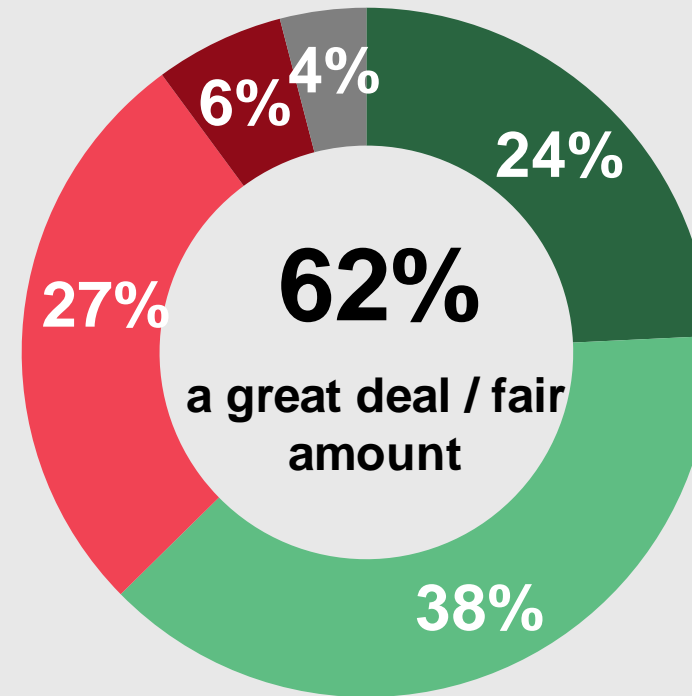
Base: 1,114 parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2022.

**And the red book  
still acts as an  
important source of  
information for many  
parents**

**Including 20% who  
use it as a source of  
information on  
social and emotional  
development**



**How much, if at all, did you use the red book as a source of information on your child's development?**



■ A great deal

■ A fair amount

■ Not very much

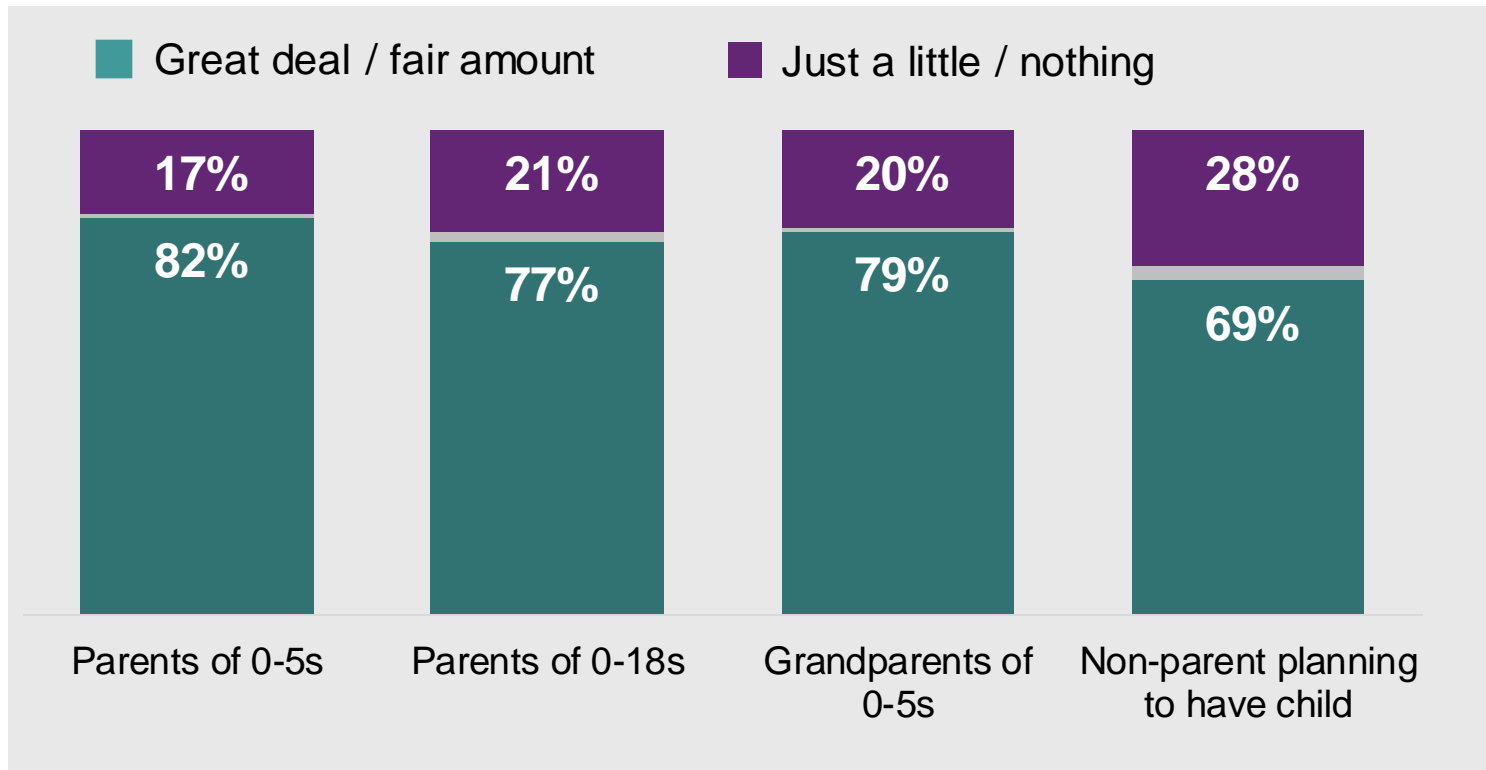
■ Not at all

■ Don't know

Base: All parents of children aged 0-5 (1,114), surveyed in April – May 2022

# Parents and grandparents recognise a clear role for parents, family and friends in child development

How much, if anything, do you personally feel you know about how parents, carers, family and friends can help a child develop during their early childhood?



- Most parents of 0-5s (82%), parents of 0-18s (77%) and grandparents of 0-5s (79%) understand how child development can be supported.
- Parents of 0-5s who are knowledgeable about early childhood (93%) are particularly likely to say they know a great deal or fair amount
- A relatively high proportion (28%) of those without children who say they are likely to have a child in the next five years know little or nothing about how parents, family and friends can support development.

Base: 1,114 UK parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Quality time and a safe home are seen as the most important factors supporting development

Overall, what do you personally think are the MOST important things that parents, carers, family and friends can do for children aged 0-5 to help them develop during their early childhood?



**Grandparents are particularly likely to mention quality time (55%) and a safe home (48%).**

**Parents of 0-5s are particularly likely to mention helping children to manage and express how they feel (21%).**

Base: 4,002 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2022.

# Contact

[kelly.beaver@ipsos.com](mailto:kelly.beaver@ipsos.com)

[steven.ginnis@ipsos.com](mailto:steven.ginnis@ipsos.com)

[sylvie.hobden@ipsos.com](mailto:sylvie.hobden@ipsos.com)

[cameron.garrett@ipsos.com](mailto:cameron.garrett@ipsos.com)

**GAME CHANGERS**

