

Public knowledge of the early years' workforce

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

June 2023

Second in a series of 2023 reports



ROYAL FOUNDATION
Centre for
Early Childhood



Methodology

- Ipsos interviewed 4,680 adults aged 16+ across the UK through the online Ipsos i-Say panel from the 19th April – 2nd May 2023.
- From these responses, we present nationally representative results from interviews with the **general population based on 4,000 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 1,011 interviews**. This includes 331 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”**.
- This is the second wave of the Annual Perceptions Survey. Where appropriate, we have shown differences compared to the 2022 survey which followed a similar methodology.

Background to research

The Centre for Early Childhood was established within The Royal Foundation in June 2021 to drive awareness and action on the extraordinary impact of early childhood. In support of this mission, The Centre commissioned Ipsos to conduct research into public perceptions and knowledge of the early years.

The research presented in this report builds upon a baseline understanding of the perceived importance of early childhood which The Royal Foundation and Ipsos established during an [initial wave of research conducted](#) in 2022.

We identified core trackers questions from that wave and repeated them this year to see how understanding has changed in the intervening period. Alongside these trackers, new questions were developed to explore key areas in more depth. This report is the second in a series being generated from the research.

During the period between these waves, the Royal Foundation launched their “[Shaping Us](#)” campaign, spearheaded by Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales, which aims to raise awareness of the critical importance of early childhood in shaping the adults we become.



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Knowledge of the early years' workforce



Key findings

1.

Beyond primary schools, public awareness of how key actors support early childhood is limited.

Around a third or fewer say they understand the role played by health visitors, midwives, informal activity groups or classes, school nurses or business and employers. This is lowest among non-parents.

Parents have a greater knowledge across all roles, as do women, younger people and ethnic minority groups. However, in each, sizeable proportions are still unsure.

2.

The majority (56%) of the public are unfamiliar with role played by Health Visitors.

They are most strongly associated with feeding support and health reviews, with lower awareness of aspects relating to mental health, relationships and child development.

This indicates a narrow understanding of what health visitors do, with a limited awareness of the breadth and complexity of their role.

While awareness of their role among parents of children 0-5 is greater, around two in five (39%) still say they only know just a little or nothing.

3.

Similarly, fewer than half (43%) are familiar with the role played by early education and childcare services.

These services are most commonly associated with offering a safe environment to play and learn, opportunities for children to socialise and childcare for working parents.

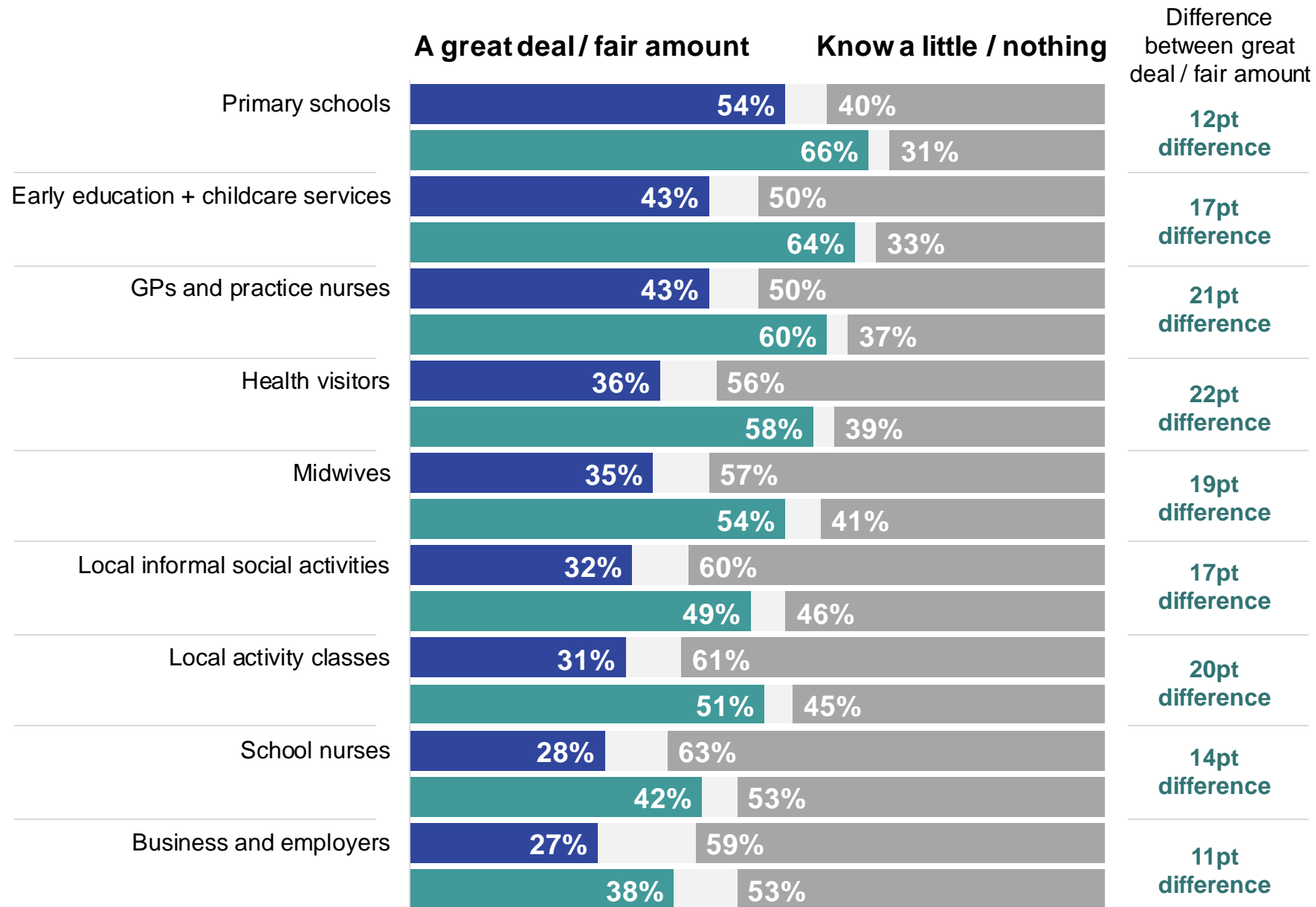
There is lower awareness of support for physical or social and emotional development, in comparison to communication, numeracy and reading.

Beyond primary schools the public have limited awareness of how key actors support early childhood. Understanding is higher among parents 0-5, though sizeable proportions are still unsure.

How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the role each of the following play in supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood?

General public

Parents 0-5



Base: 4,000 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2023. Only significant differences are highlighted with text.



Knowledge of key actors is consistently higher among parents in general, and lowest among non-parents, particularly those aged 45+

% Saying they know a great deal / fair amount	General Population	Parents of 0-5 year-olds	Parents of 0-18 year-olds	Parents of 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
Primary schools	54%	66%	69%	62%	53%	33%	42%	59%	60%
Early education and childcare services	43%	64%	63%	51%	36%	20%	30%	49%	49%
GPs and practice nurses	43%	60%	59%	50%	39%	26%	31%	46%	49%
Health visitors	36%	58%	56%	45%	28%	16%	20%	39%	42%
Midwives	35%	54%	53%	41%	32%	17%	23%	36%	38%
Informal social activities	32%	49%	50%	40%	26%	15%	20%	34%	35%
Local activity classes	31%	51%	50%	34%	32%	13%	24%	28%	29%
School nurses	28%	42%	46%	33%	28%	13%	20%	27%	28%
Business and employers	27%	38%	43%	30%	23%	15%	19%	22%	24%

Q: How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the role each of the following play in supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood?
 Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 69%) and the lowest (dark red 13%) figures between subgroups

Awareness of the impact different actors have also tends to be higher among women, younger people and ethnic minority groups.

% Saying they know a great deal / fair amount	General Population	Males	Female	16-34 year olds	35-54 year olds	55+ year olds	White groups	Ethnic minority groups	IMD1 (most deprived)	IMD5 (least deprived)
Primary schools	54%	50%	58%	51%	56%	54%	55%	55%	52%	57%
Early education and childcare services	43%	37%	48%	43%	47%	40%	43%	51%	41%	44%
GPs and practice nurses	43%	40%	46%	45%	44%	41%	43%	49%	46%	40%
Health visitors	36%	30%	41%	35%	39%	33%	36%	38%	39%	46%
Midwives	35%	31%	38%	37%	36%	31%	34%	40%	33%	33%
Informal social activities	32%	29%	36%	35%	35%	29%	32%	40%	34%	31%
Local activity classes	31%	29%	33%	38%	34%	23%	30%	38%	34%	28%
School nurses	28%	27%	30%	33%	32%	22%	28%	37%	30%	25%
Business and employers	27%	29%	24%	32%	30%	20%	26%	34%	29%	24%

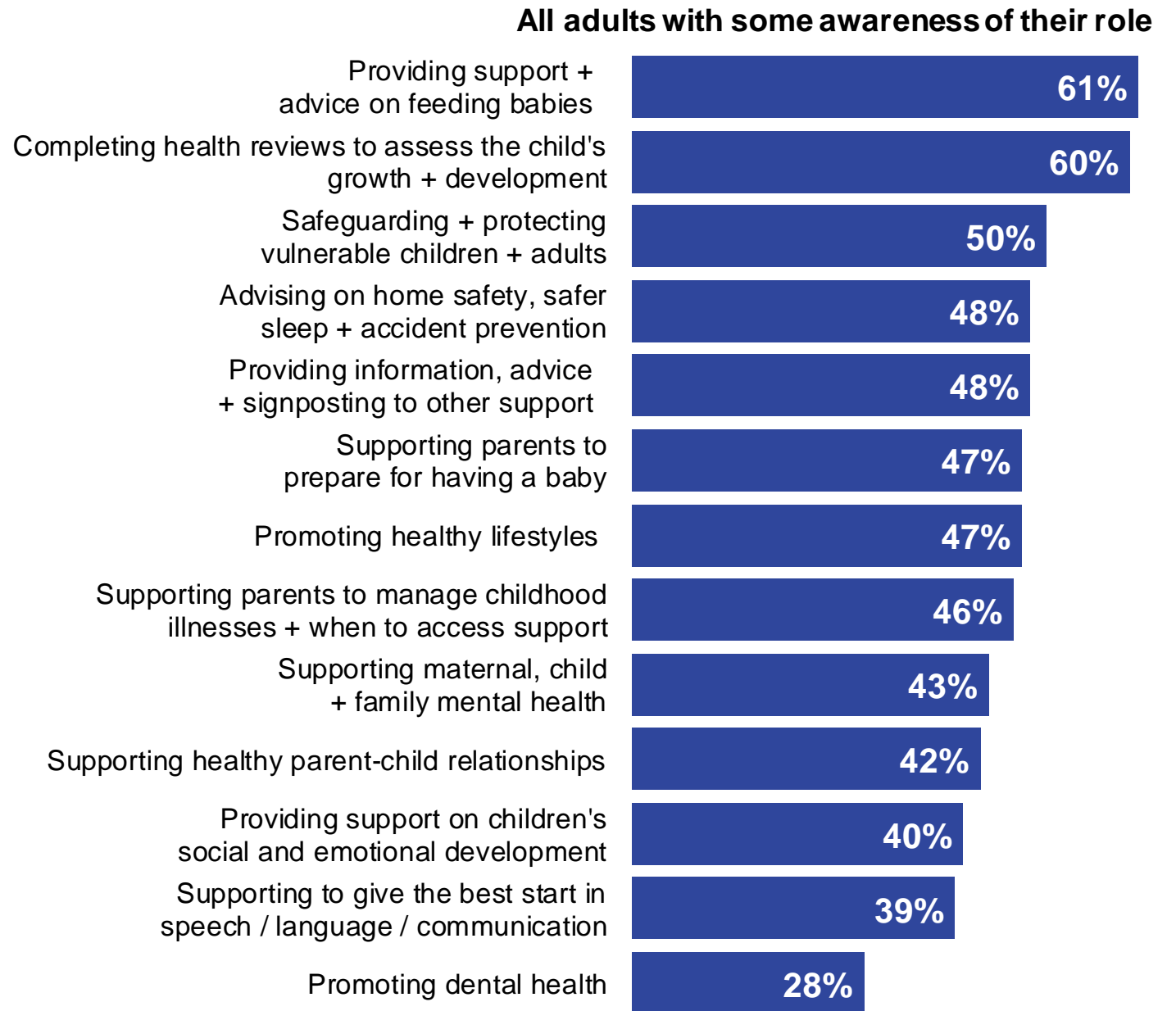
Q: How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the role each of the following play in supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood?
 Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 58%) and the lowest (dark red 20%) figures between subgroups

Base: 4,000 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2023.

The majority of the public are unfamiliar with the role played by Health Visitors. Among those with some stated awareness, they are most strongly associated with feeding support and health reviews.

Health visitors are specialist nurses or midwives who support all families from pregnancy to starting school. They do home visits as well as providing support in the community and at health clinics.

Before this survey, which of the following aspects of their role, if any, were you already aware of?

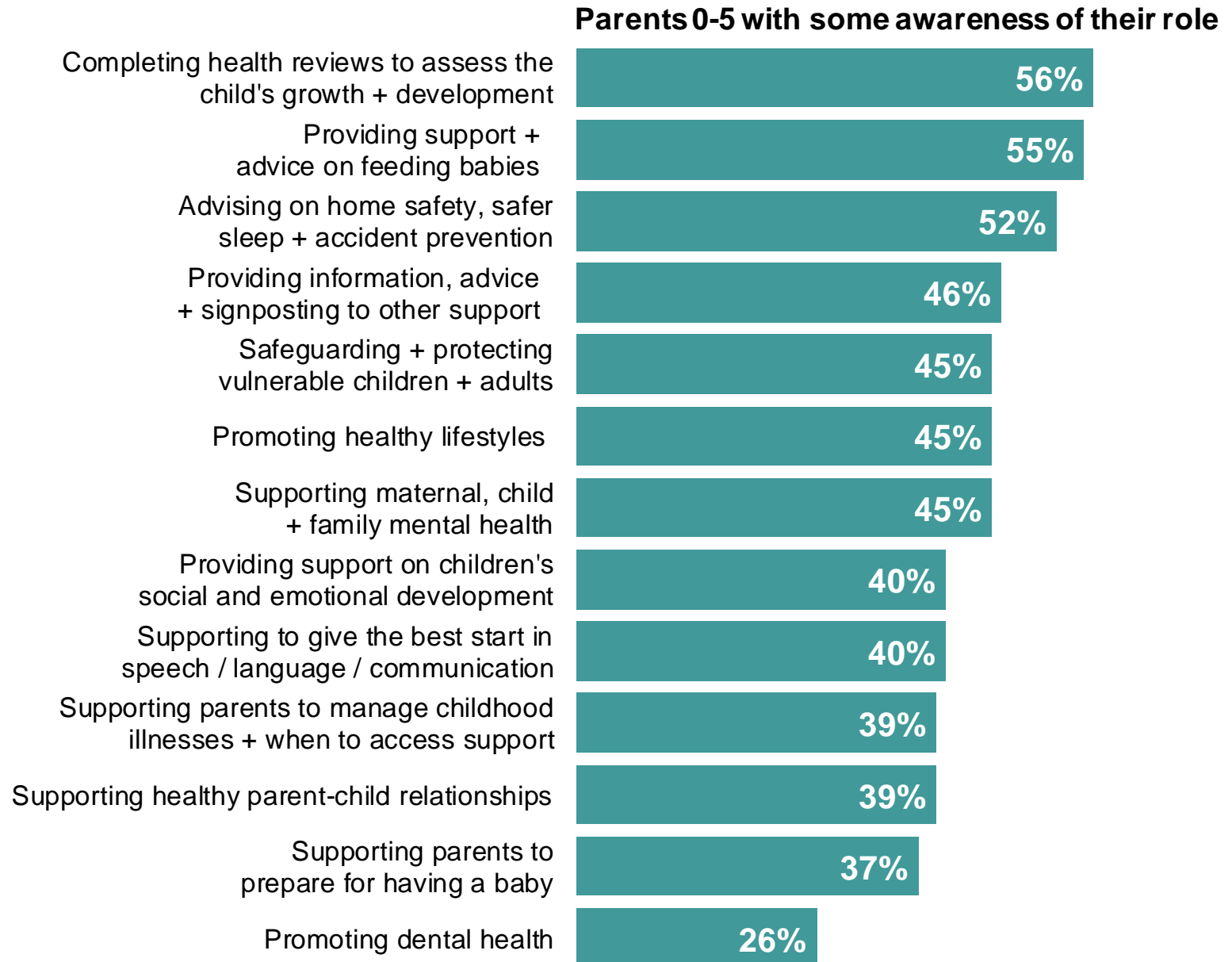


Base: 3,081 UK adults aged 16+ who said they know something about the role of health visitors during early childhood, surveyed in April – May 2023. Only significant differences are highlighted with text.

... and the same is true when looking at associations made by parents of those aged 0-5

Health visitors are specialist nurses or midwives who support all families from pregnancy to starting school. They do home visits as well as providing support in the community and at health clinics.

Before this survey, which of the following aspects of their role, if any, were you already aware of?



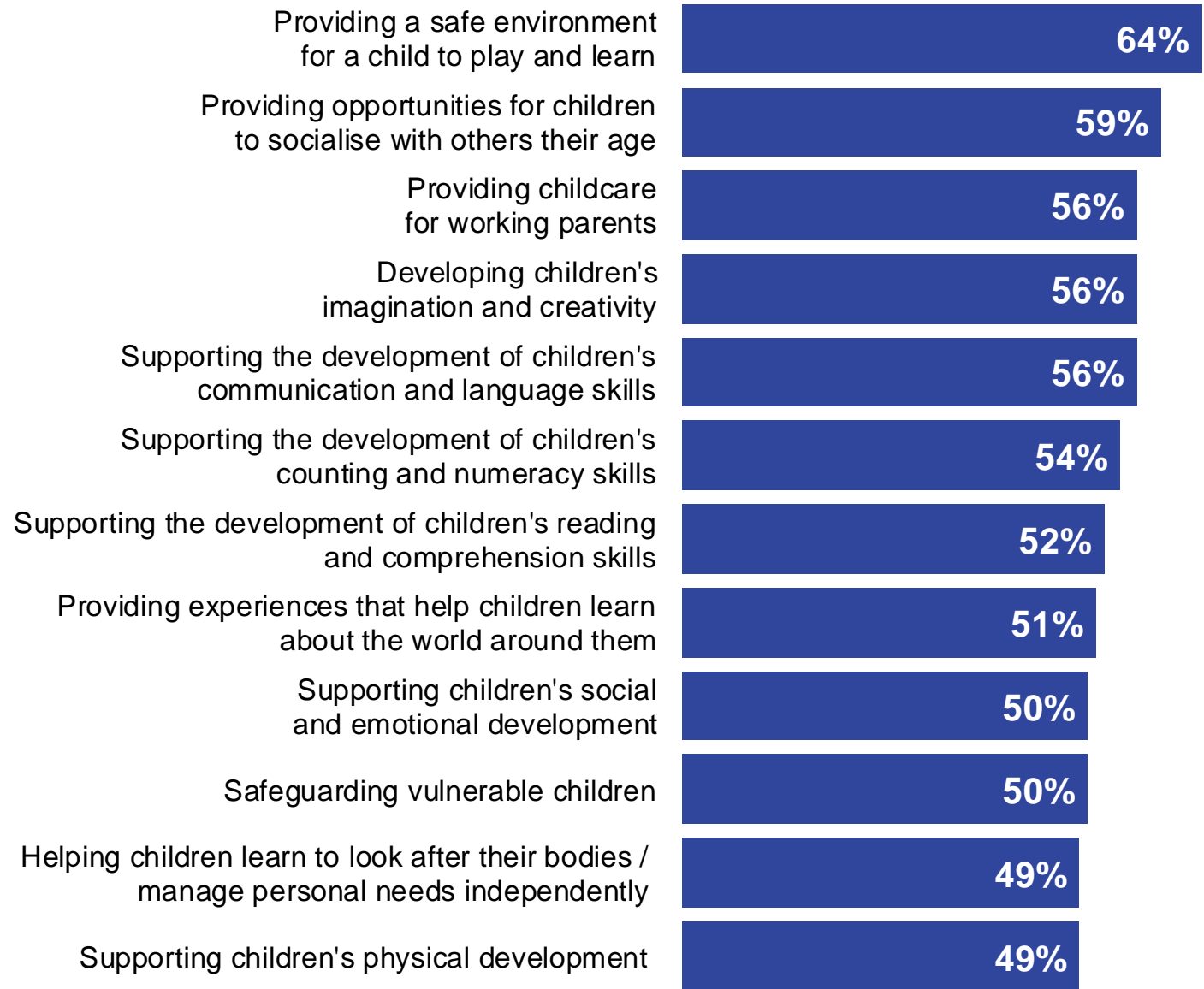
Base: 915 UK adults aged 16+ who are parents to a child aged 0-5 and said they know something about the role of health visitors during early childhood, surveyed in April – May 2023.

For Early Education and Childcare Services, the public are most familiar with their role in providing a safe environment, opportunities to socialise and providing childcare for working parents. Lower awareness of support with physical or social and emotional development compared to communication and numeracy.

Early education and childcare services include nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, who provide childhood care for babies and children during early

Before this survey, which of the following aspects of their role, if any, were you already aware of?

All adults with some awareness of their role



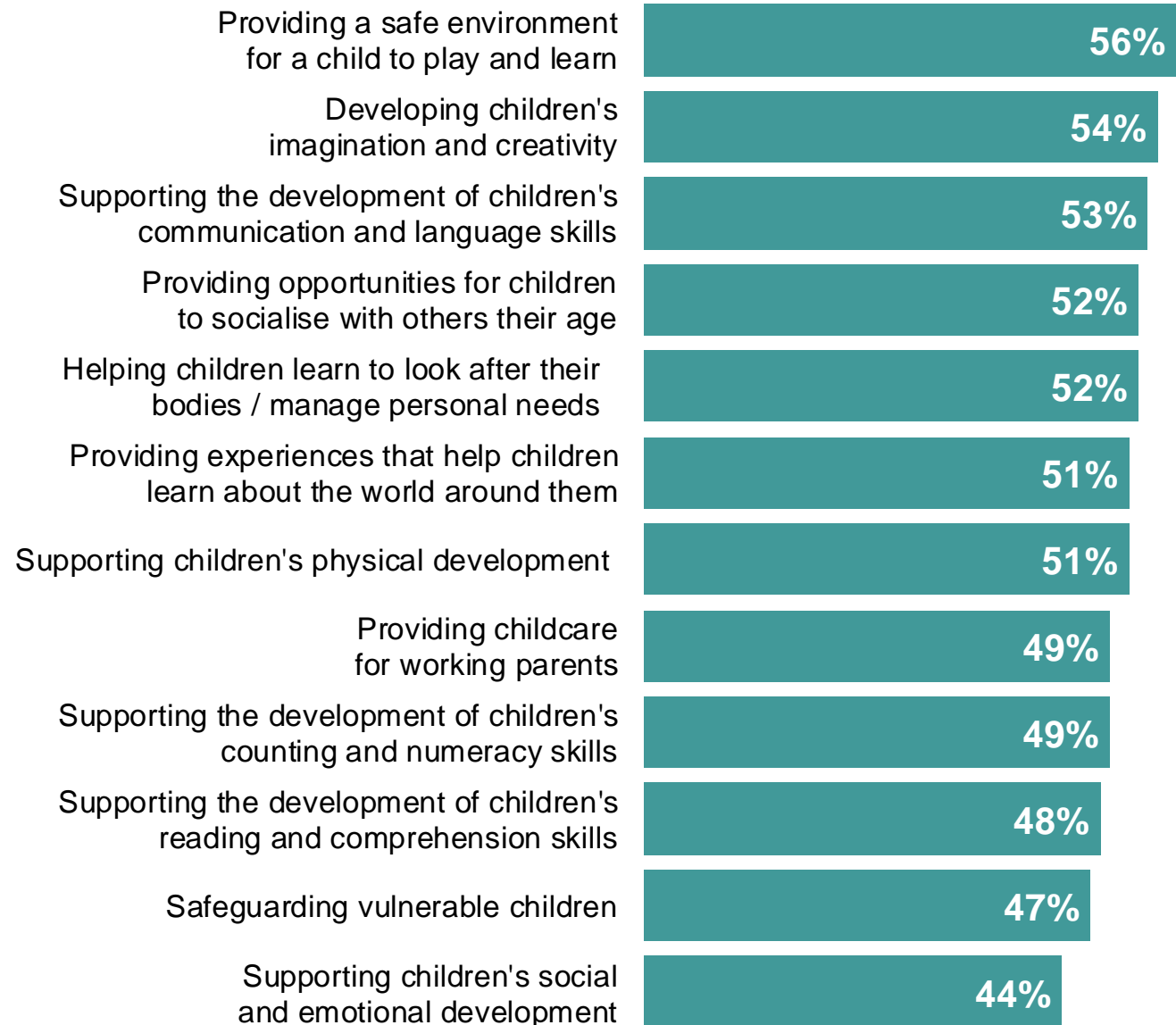
Base: 3,257 UK adults aged 16+ who said they knew something about the role of early education and childcare services during early childhood, surveyed in April – May 2023..

... with the understanding of their role being similar among parents of children aged 0-5.

Early education and childcare services include nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, who provide care for babies and children during early childhood.

Before this survey, which of the following aspects of their role, if any, were you already aware of?

Parents 0-5 with some awareness of their role



Base: 923 UK adults aged 16+ with who are parents of a child aged 0-5 and said they knew something about the role of early education and childcare services during early childhood, surveyed in April – May 2023.

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GAME CHANGERS

