

Understanding public attitudes towards early childhood

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

Third in a series of reports

July 2023



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 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 presented in this report builds upon a baseline understanding of the perceived importance of early years 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 around the role of wider society plays in supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood. This report is the third in a series being generated from the research.

During the period between these waves, the Royal Foundation launched their “[Shaping Us](#)” campaign, led by 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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The importance of wider society during early childhood



Key findings

1.

Two in three (67%) agree family and friends during their early childhood had a big impact in shaping who they are today, with the majority saying the same about wider society (55%).

When asked who specifically impacted them, the public are most likely to mention extended family, friends and teachers. These people often offered childcare support or encouraged them with education or to pursue passions.

Appreciation for the role wider played in shaping them is highest among higher earners, Londoners and young people.

2.

Public understanding of how local communities can support children or parents during early childhood varies, with half saying they know something about it and the other saying they do not (45% vs. 48%).

Knowledge is much higher among parents of children aged 0-5, where three in five (63%) say they know something. It is particularly high among parents planning to have another child (reaching 77%).

Awareness is also higher among younger people, ethnic minority groups, higher earners and those currently in work.

3.

Around one in four say they have made a positive difference for children in their local community (23%) in the past six months.

People who report taking action commonly describe supporting parents with childcare or supporting charities associated with young people.

Those most likely to report making a positive difference for children in their wider community, include younger people, ethnic minority groups and higher earners.

Two in three agree family and friends during their early childhood had a big impact in shaping who they are today, with the majority also saying the same about wider society



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Strongly agree Tend to agree Neither Tend to disagree Strongly disagree Don't know / N/A

The love and support I received from wider family and friends in early childhood has had a big impact in shaping who I am today

% Agree % Disagree



67% 10%

The love and support I received from people in wider society in early childhood has had a big impact in shaping who I am today



55% 16%

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

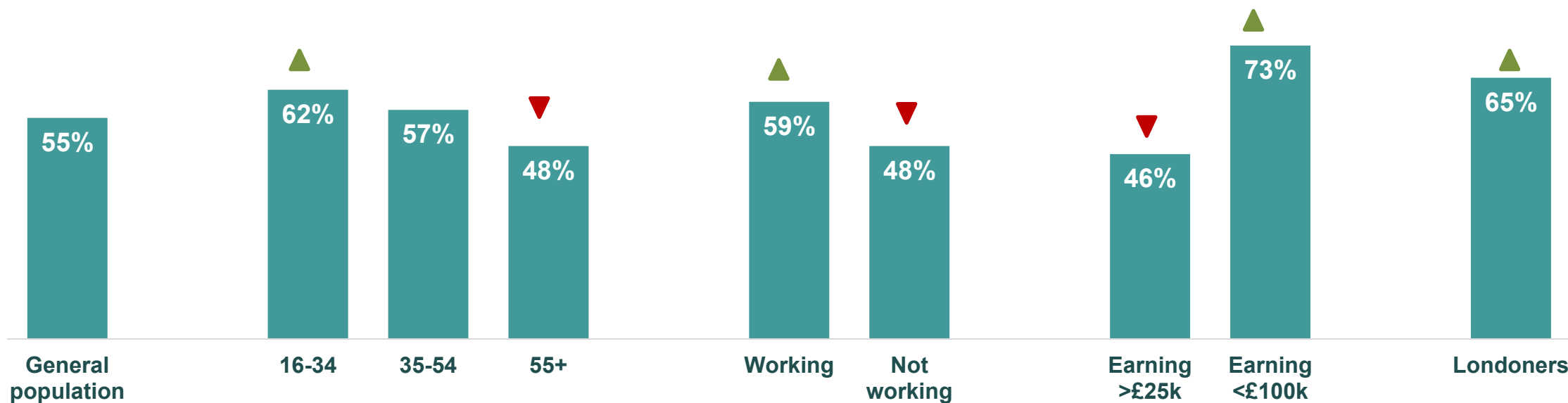


Appreciation for the role wider society played in shaping them is highest among higher earners, Londoners and younger people



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
The love and support I received from people in wider society in early childhood has had a big impact in shaping who I am today

% Agree



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

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than average, 95% CI

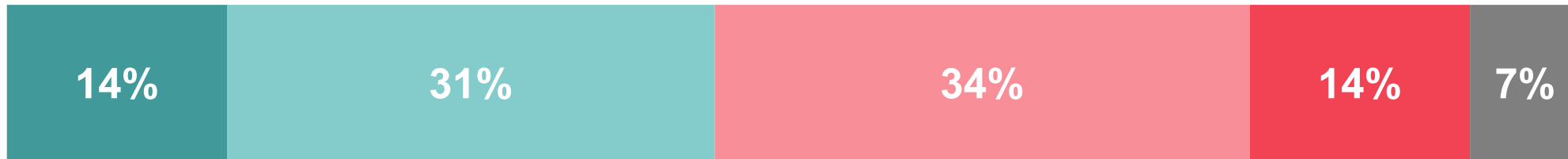
Public understanding of how local communities can support during early childhood is varied, but much higher among parents 0-5.



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

Know a great deal A fair amount Just a little Nothing at all Don't know

Among general public



% Great deal / fair amount

45%

% Just a little / nothing

48%

Among parents 0-5



63%

34%

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

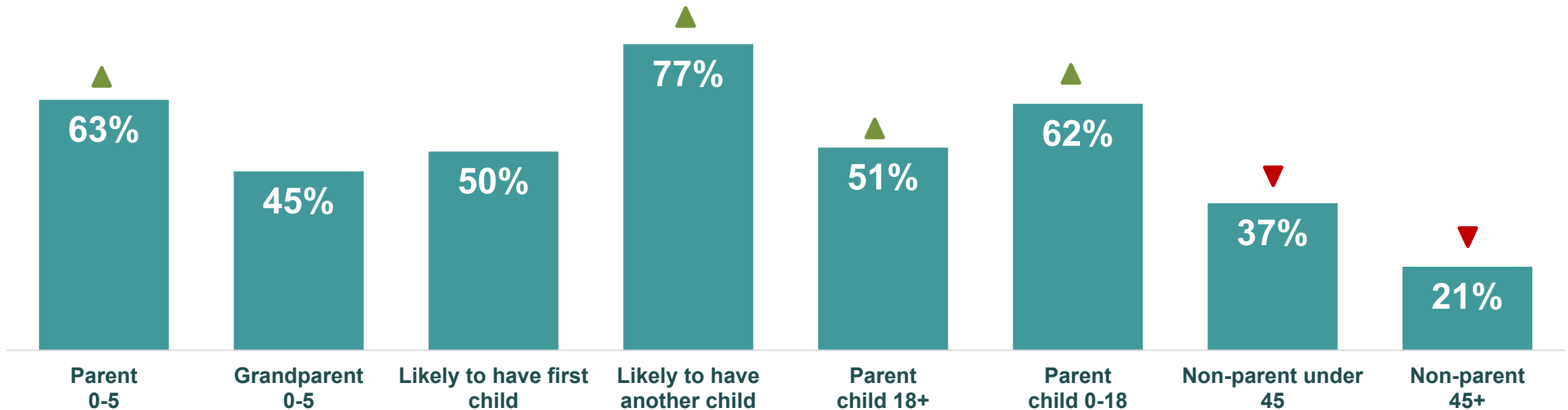
* This question was part of a battery asking the public how much they know about the role of different parts of society play during early childhood.

Parents are more likely to know how local communities can support during early childhood, while understanding is much lower among non-parents...



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

% Saying they know a great deal / fair amount



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

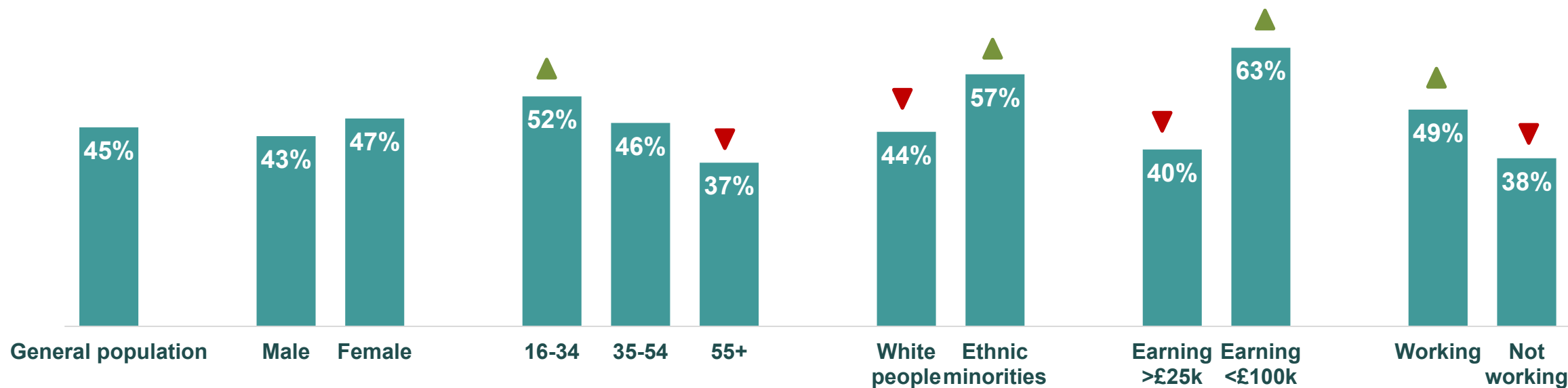
▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than average, 95% CI

... and understanding is similarly higher among younger people, higher earners, ethnic minority groups and those currently in work



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

% Saying they know a great deal / fair amount



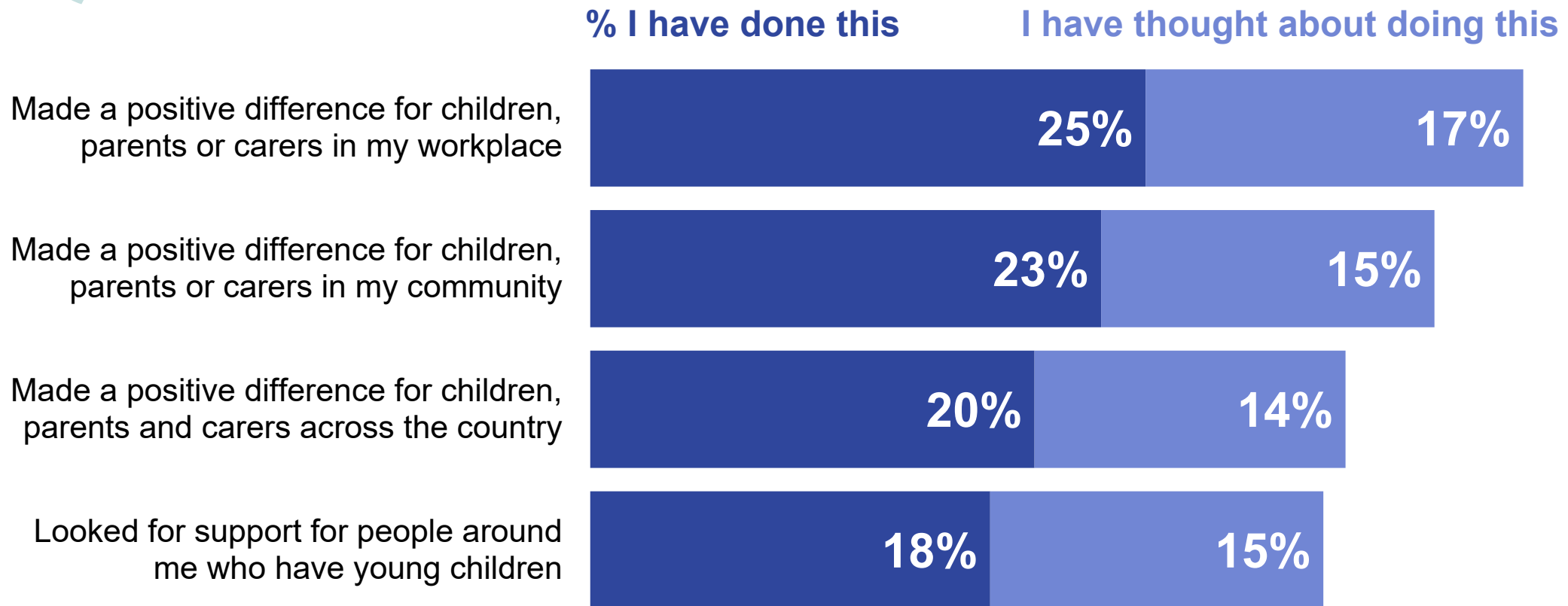
Base: 4,000 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in April – May 2023.

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than average, 95% CI

Around one in five say they have made a positive difference for children in their wider community in the past six months



Thinking about supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood, which of the following actions, if any, have you personally taken in the past six months?



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

Parents are far more likely to say they've helped children in their wider community, while particularly older non-parents are less likely to have

% They have done each of the following	General Population	Parents 0-5 year-olds	Dads 0-5	Mums 0-5	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
Made a positive difference for children, parents or carers in my workplace	25%	34%	32%	37%	38%	29%	27%	8%	20%	20%	24%
Made a positive difference for children, parents or carers in my community	23%	36%	33%	40%	38%	24%	26%	9%	20%	22%	23%
Made a positive difference for children, parents and carers across the country	20%	32%	31%	34%	33%	21%	25%	8%	18%	15%	17%
Looked for support for people around me who have young children	18%	37%	35%	39%	32%	19%	23%	4%	17%	17%	18%

Q: Thinking about supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood, which of the following actions, if any, have you personally taken in the past six months?
 Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 40%) and the lowest (dark red 4%) figures between subgroups

Younger people, ethnic minorities and higher earners are more likely to say they've made an impact on their wider community

% They have done each of the following	Gen pop	Males	Female	16-34 year olds	35-54 year olds	55+ year olds	White groups	Ethnic minority groups	Working	Not working	<25k per year	>£100k per year
Made a positive difference for children, parents or carers in my workplace	25%	25%	26%	34%	24%	14%	25%	28%	25%	-	22%	40%
Made a positive difference for children, parents or carers in my community	23%	21%	25%	30%	25%	16%	23%	28%	27%	17%	19%	35%
Made a positive difference for children, parents and carers across the country	20%	18%	21%	29%	21%	12%	19%	28%	25%	11%	17%	39%
Looked for support for people around me who have young children	18%	17%	19%	28%	18%	10%	17%	27%	21%	12%	16%	33%

Q: Thinking about supporting children, parents and carers during early childhood, which of the following actions, if any, have you personally taken in the past six months?
 Colour coding used to illustrate difference between the highest (dark green 40%) and the lowest (dark red 10%) figures between subgroups

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GAME CHANGERS

