

Understanding public attitudes towards early childhood

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

Fourth in a series of reports

November 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 fourth 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.



1

Issues facing parents and children in their early years



Key findings

1.

When asked for their unprompted opinion, the biggest issue perceived to be facing parents and carers of those aged 0-5 is the cost of living and raising children, mentioned by one in three (34%).

This is followed by childcare which is cited as a key challenge by 22%; this includes both cost and availability.

The public recognise that these issues are interrelated, explaining that the cost of living might require parents to work more, which in turn could require childcare and contribute to financial strains.

Parents of children aged 0-5 are more likely to mention a lack of support and advice (11%) compared to the average.

2.

Similarly, when asked about the issues facing children aged 0-5, the biggest challenges mentioned also include the cost of living and bonding with parents. Again, the public realise these issues link are linked. Where parents might be working increased hours during the cost of living, this might mean less time to bond with their children.

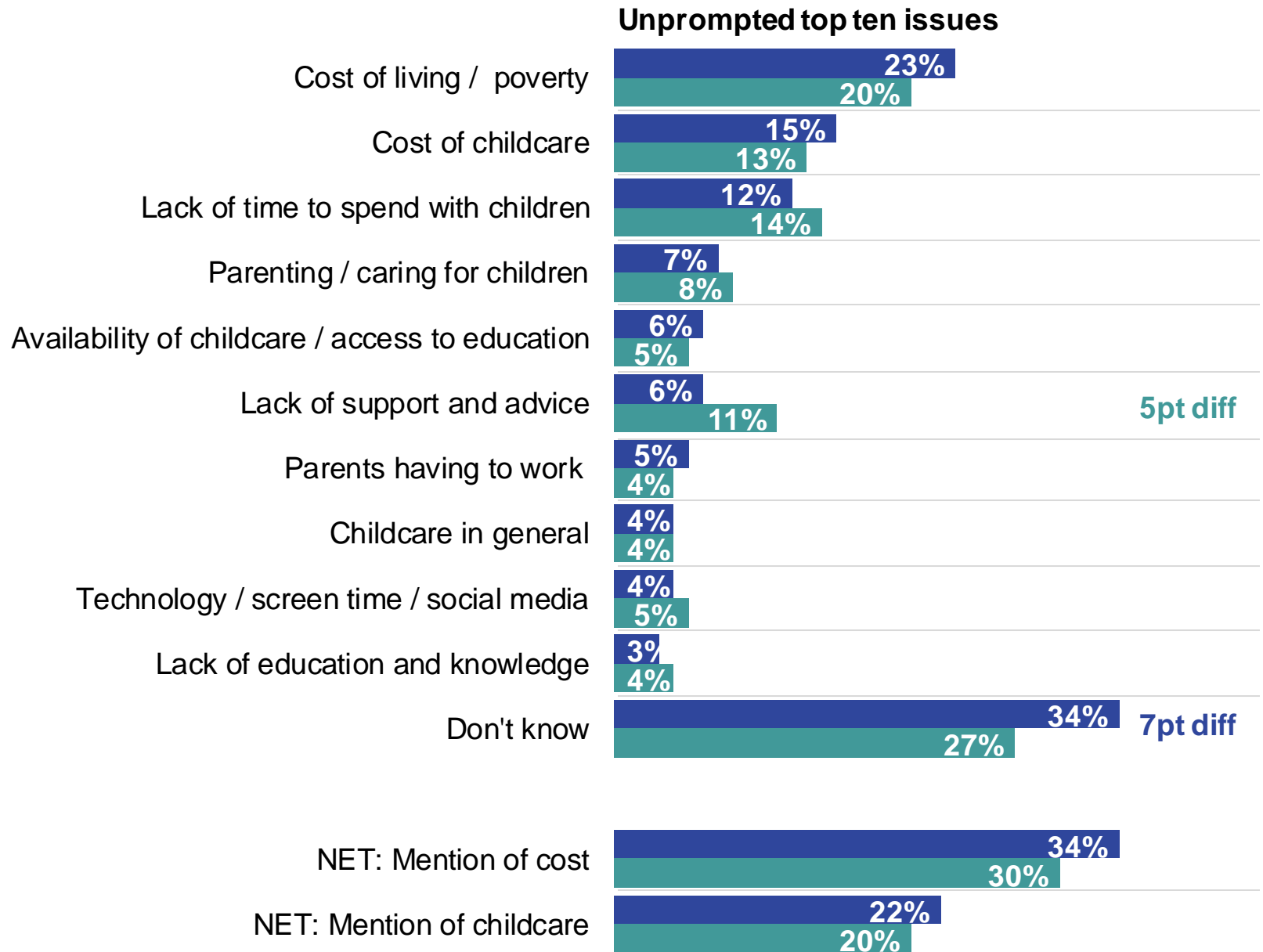
On average, parents of children aged 0-5 are more likely to mention childcare costs and their child's development and growth.

A third of people mention “cost” as the biggest issue facing parents and carers of those aged 0-5, followed by one in five mentioning childcare

In your opinion, what would you say are the biggest issues facing parents and carers of children aged 0-5 today?

General public

Parents 0-5



Base: 1,011 UK adults aged 16+ who are parents to a child aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2023. Only significant differences are highlighted with text

...and they also acknowledge the links between issues surrounding the cost of living and the expense of childcare.



In your opinion, what would you say are the biggest issues facing parents and carers of children aged 0-5 today?

“ **Cost of living and having to work extra, lack of enough childcare or cost of childcare centres.** ” South East, Female, 18-34.

“ **If both parents work, childcare is very important, but also very expensive.** ” North England, Male, 55+

“ **The cost of childcare. The economy, worrying about food, fuel and clothing prices. Being able to adequately provide for them.** ” North England, Male, 35-54.

“ **Childcare. It’s really tough to work and also be there for children. With rising costs, more parents will struggle staying home.** ” Wales, Female, 35-54.

Q: In your opinion, what would you say are the biggest issues facing parents and carers of children aged 0-5 today?

Top Word Count: ‘Cost’ 421 mentions, ‘Work’ 344, ‘Time’ 223, ‘Living’ 211, ‘Support’ 209, ‘Don’t know’ 679

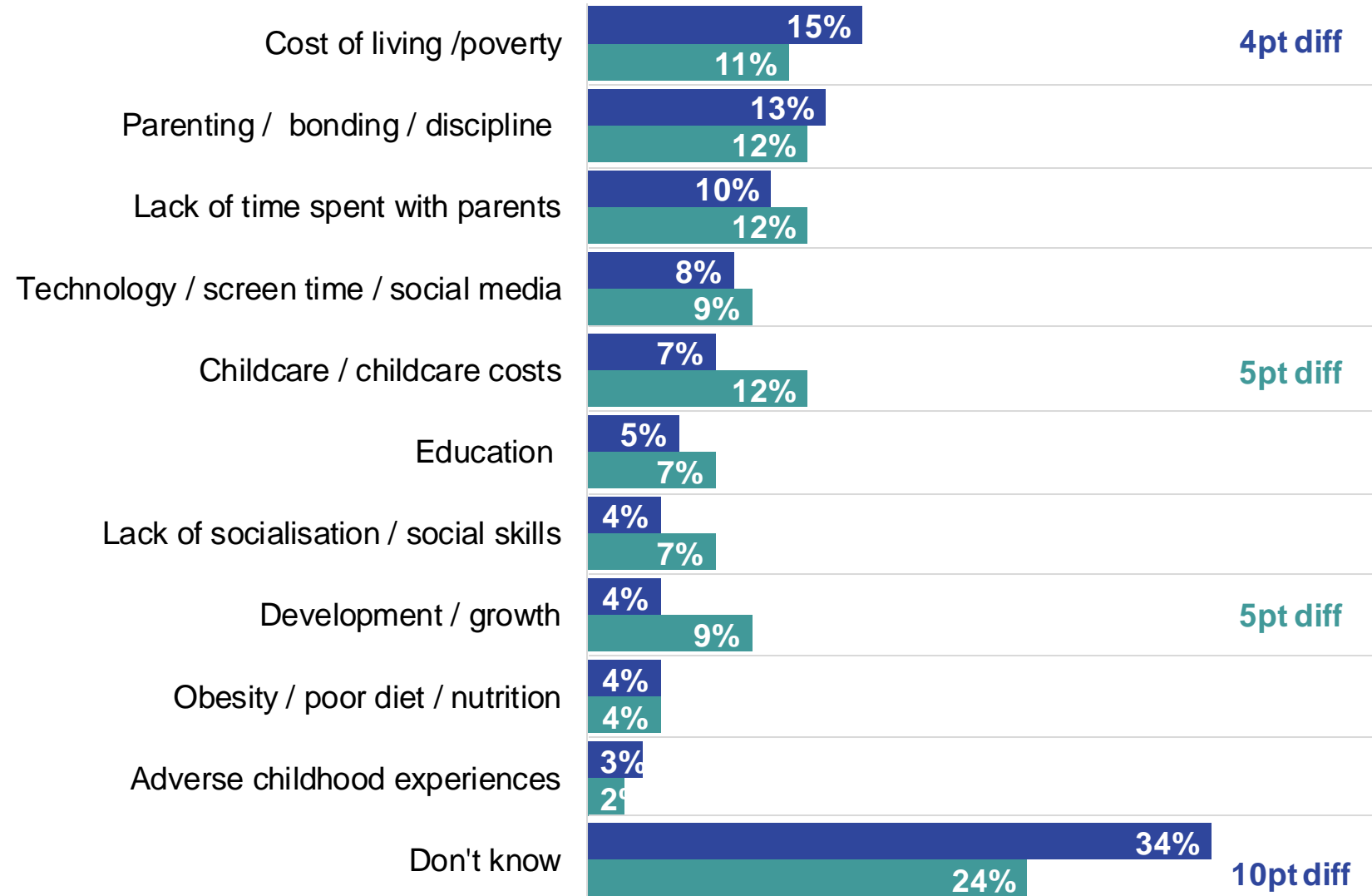
The cost of living and lack of time spent with parents are seen as the biggest issues facing children aged 0-5. Parents of this age group are more likely on average to mention childcare and their development.

In your opinion, what would you say are the biggest issues facing children aged 0-5 today?

General public

Parents 0-5

Unprompted top ten issues



Base: 1,011 UK adults aged 16+ who are parents to a child aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2023. Only significant differences are highlighted with text



Contact

kelly.beaver@ipsos.com

steven.ginnis@ipsos.com

cameron.garrett@ipsos.com

matthew.holdsworth@ipsos.com

GAME CHANGERS

