

# UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO THE EARLY YEARS

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# A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

## 5 INTERLINKED WORKSTREAMS

**5** BIG QUESTIONS

**OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH**

**EXPLANATORY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

**NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE FACE-TO-FACE SURVEY**

**ONLINE SURVEY OF PARENTS**

Public conversation on early years using a consultation methodology  
**435,141 responses**

Ethnographic research with 12 families

40 in-depth interviews with survey respondents and online community

c.3,700 interviews inclusive of a sample boost of parents of a 0-5 year old

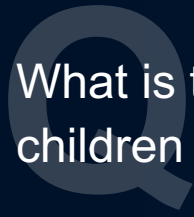
1,000 interviews with parents of a 0-5 year old to explore impact of COVID-19

# PARENTS IN THE UK ASPIRE FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY



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What is the most important factor in children growing up to be happy adults?

**60%**  
**THINK CHILDREN'S MENTAL  
AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IS THE  
BIGGEST CONTRIBUTOR TO  
THEIR FUTURE HAPPINESS**

Base: All UK adults providing an answer (445,416)

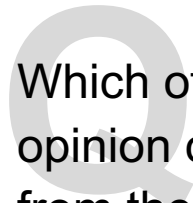


A close-up photograph of a newborn baby wrapped in a pink, textured blanket. A hand is visible holding the blanket. The baby's face is partially visible in the upper right corner, and their arm is extended towards the center. The background is dark and out of focus.

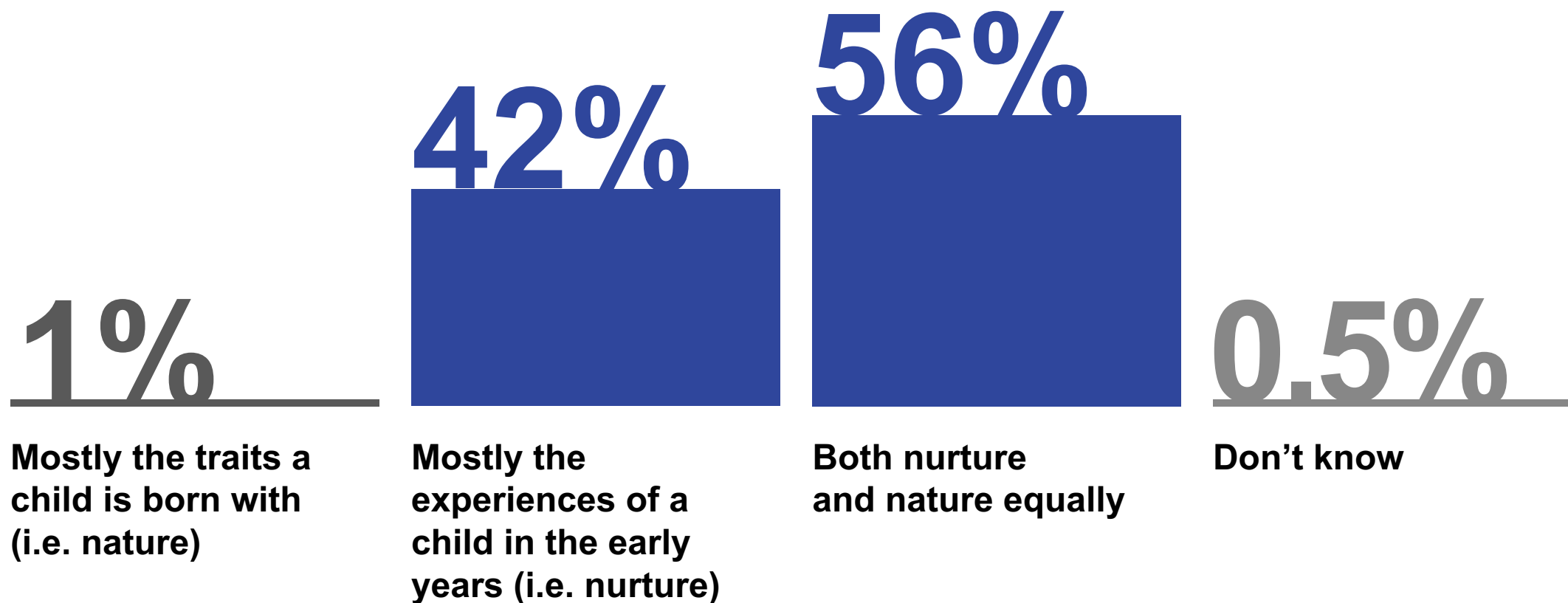
**PEOPLE  
OVERWHELMINGLY  
BELIEVE THAT A  
CHILD'S FUTURE IS  
NOT PRE-DETERMINED  
AT BIRTH**

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Which of the following is closest to your opinion of what influences how children develop from the start of pregnancy to age 5?

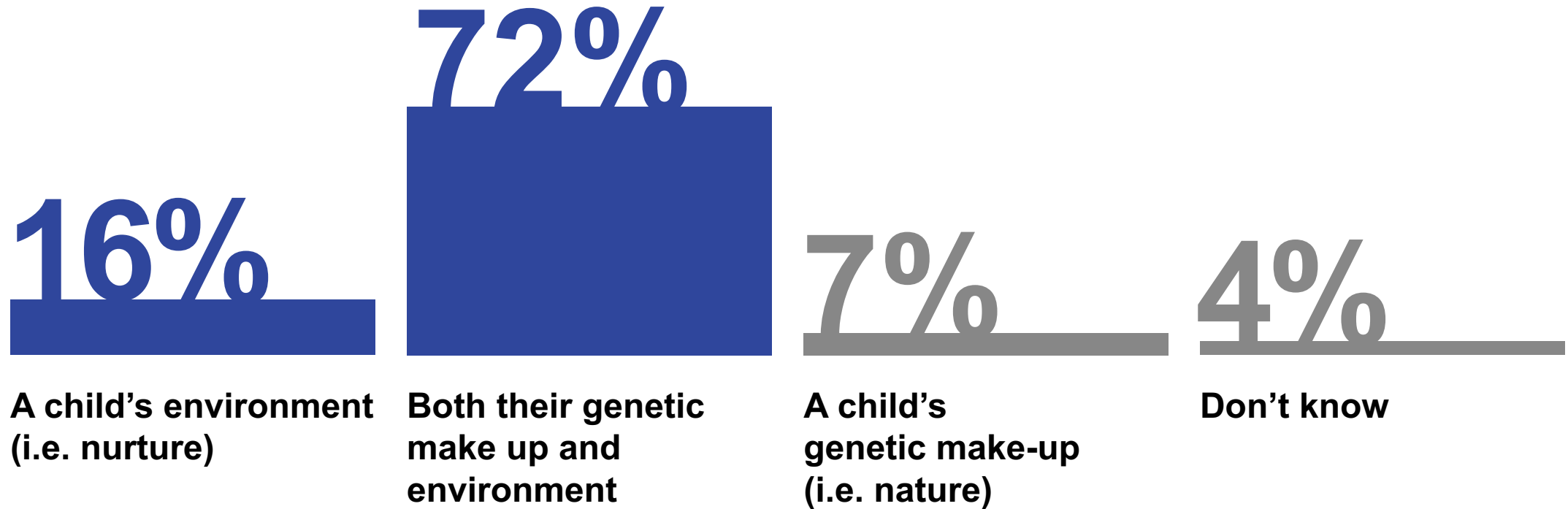


Base: All UK adults providing an answer (436,620)

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# AND PARENTS RECOGNISE THAT NURTURE IS AS IMPORTANT AS NATURE

Q Which of the following is closest to your opinion of what influences how children develop from the start of pregnancy to age 5?



Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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**HOWEVER  
MOST PEOPLE  
DO NOT  
UNDERSTAND  
THE SPECIFIC  
IMPORTANCE  
OF THE EARLY  
YEARS**

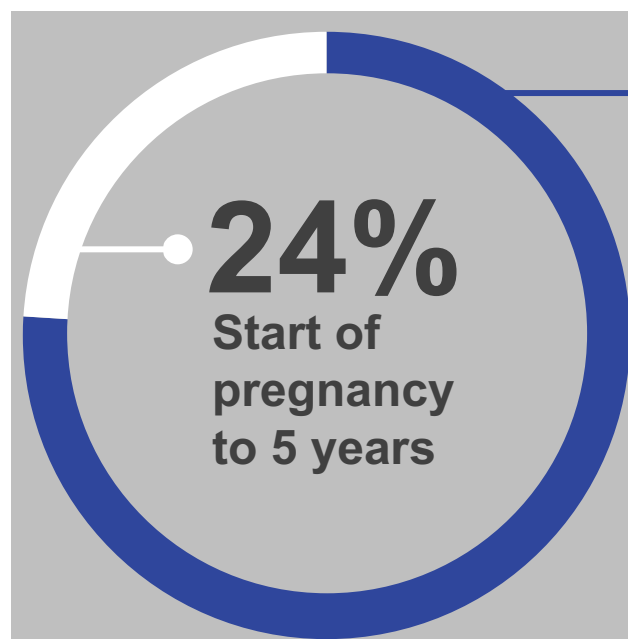


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Which period of a child and young person's life do you think is the most important for health and happiness in adulthood?



**76%**  
**ARE NOT AWARE  
THAT THE FIRST FIVE  
YEARS ARE MOST  
IMPORTANT FOR  
HEALTH AND HAPPINESS  
IN ADULTHOOD**

Q  
At what age do you think a child's brain and mind is developing the fastest?

64%

THINK THAT THE BRAIN  
DEVELOPS FASTEST FROM  
**CONCEPTION TO AGE 2**



87%

THINK THE BRAIN  
DEVELOPS FASTEST FROM  
**CONCEPTION TO AGE 5**

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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**THE REALITY  
OF LIFE  
MAKES IT  
HARD FOR  
PARENTS TO  
PRIORITISE  
THEIR  
WELLBEING**



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# PEOPLE AGREE THAT THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PARENTS AND CARERS HAS A GREAT IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILD(REN)

Q How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?:  
The mental health and wellbeing of parents and carers has a great impact on the development of their child(ren)



Base: All UK adults providing an answer (438,458)

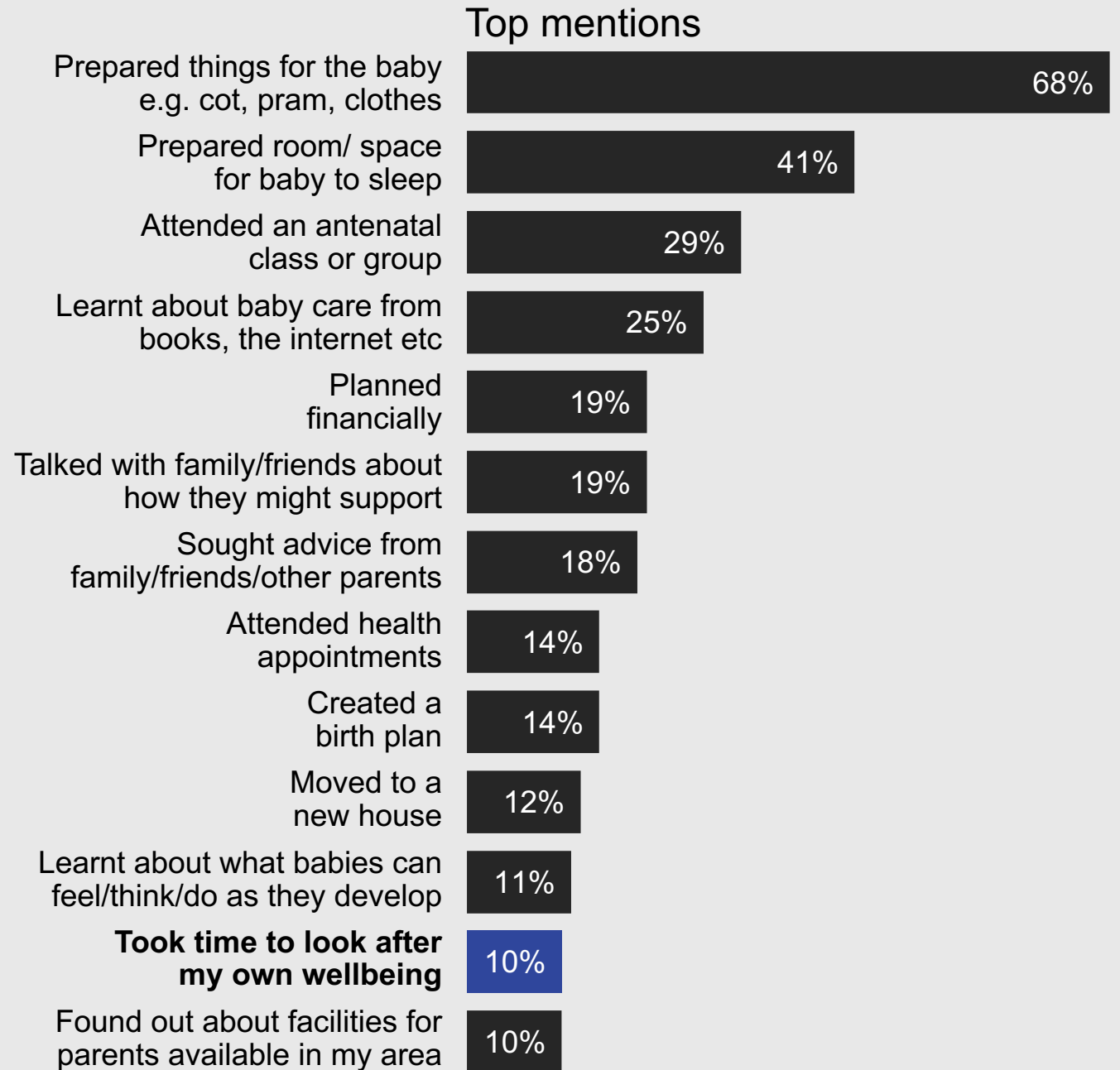
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# NEW PARENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO MENTION PRIORITISING PRACTICAL MATTERS OVER THEIR WELLBEING

When you were expecting your child/first child, what did you do to prepare for their arrival both practically and mentally?

Base: Parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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Q What long-term impact, if any, do you think the last six months will have on your mental wellbeing?

**37%**  
**THINK THE PANDEMIC  
WILL HAVE A NEGATIVE  
LONG-TERM IMPACT ON  
THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING**

Base: COVID-19 impact survey, October 2020, all parents of a 0-5 year old (1,000)

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**FEELING  
JUDGED BY  
OTHERS CAN  
MAKE A BAD  
SITUATION  
WORSE**



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Q  
As a parent, how often, if at all,  
do you feel judged by others?

**70%**  
**OF PARENTS OF 0-5s**  
**FEEL JUDGED**  
**BY OTHERS**

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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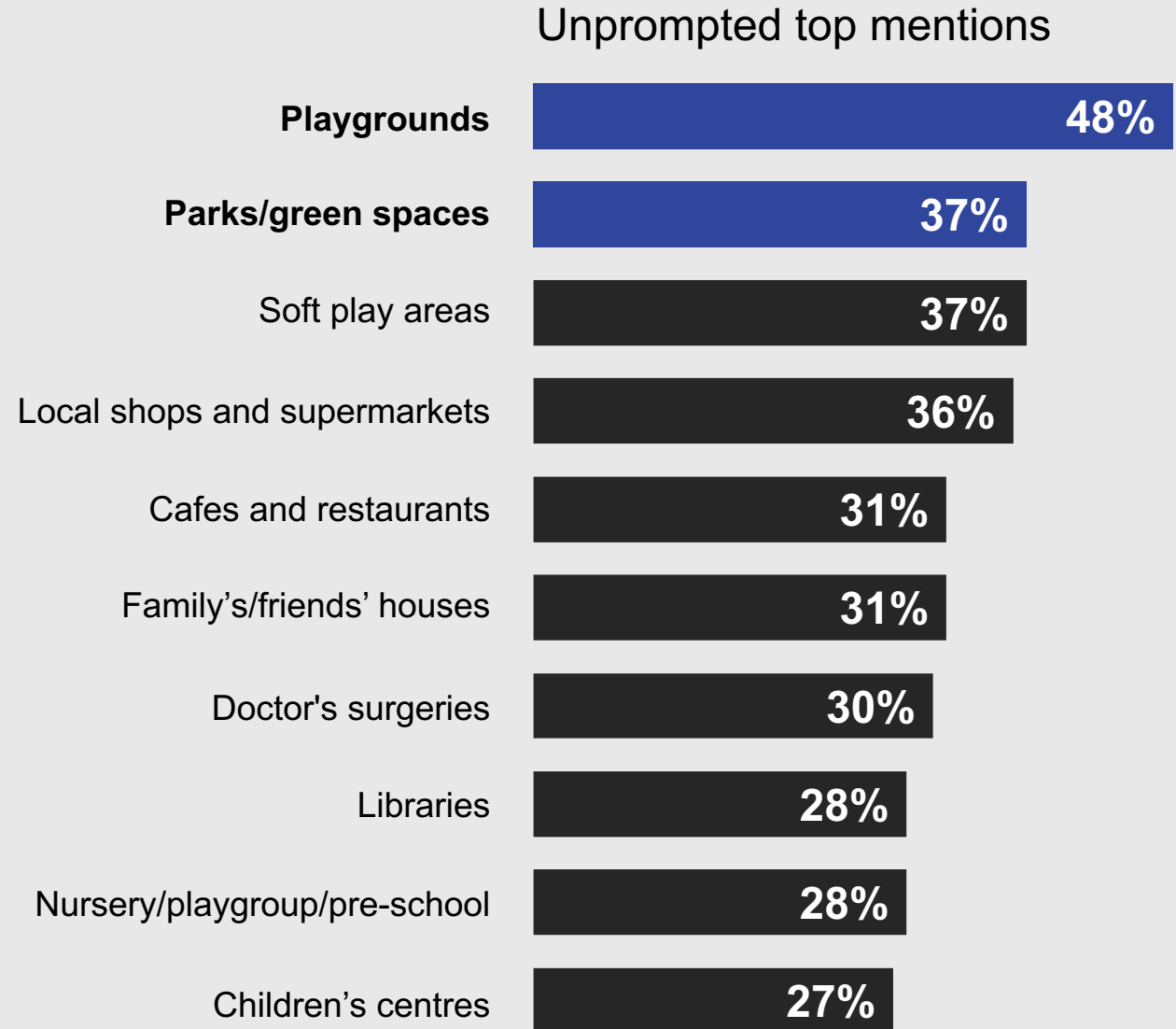


# PARENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO MENTION FEELING WELCOME IN PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS

Thinking about your local area, which places, if any, do you feel welcome or comfortable with your child?

Base: Natrep study Dec 2019 – Jan 2020, parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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Q And what impact, if any, does feeling judged as a parent have on you?

**48%**  
**OF PARENTS WHO FEEL  
JUDGED SAY THAT IT HAS  
AN IMPACT ON THEM**

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old who feel judged (718)

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# IT TAKES AN EMOTIONAL TOLL ...

Q And what impact, if any, does feeling judged as a parent have on you?



Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old who says that feeling judged has an impact on them (421)

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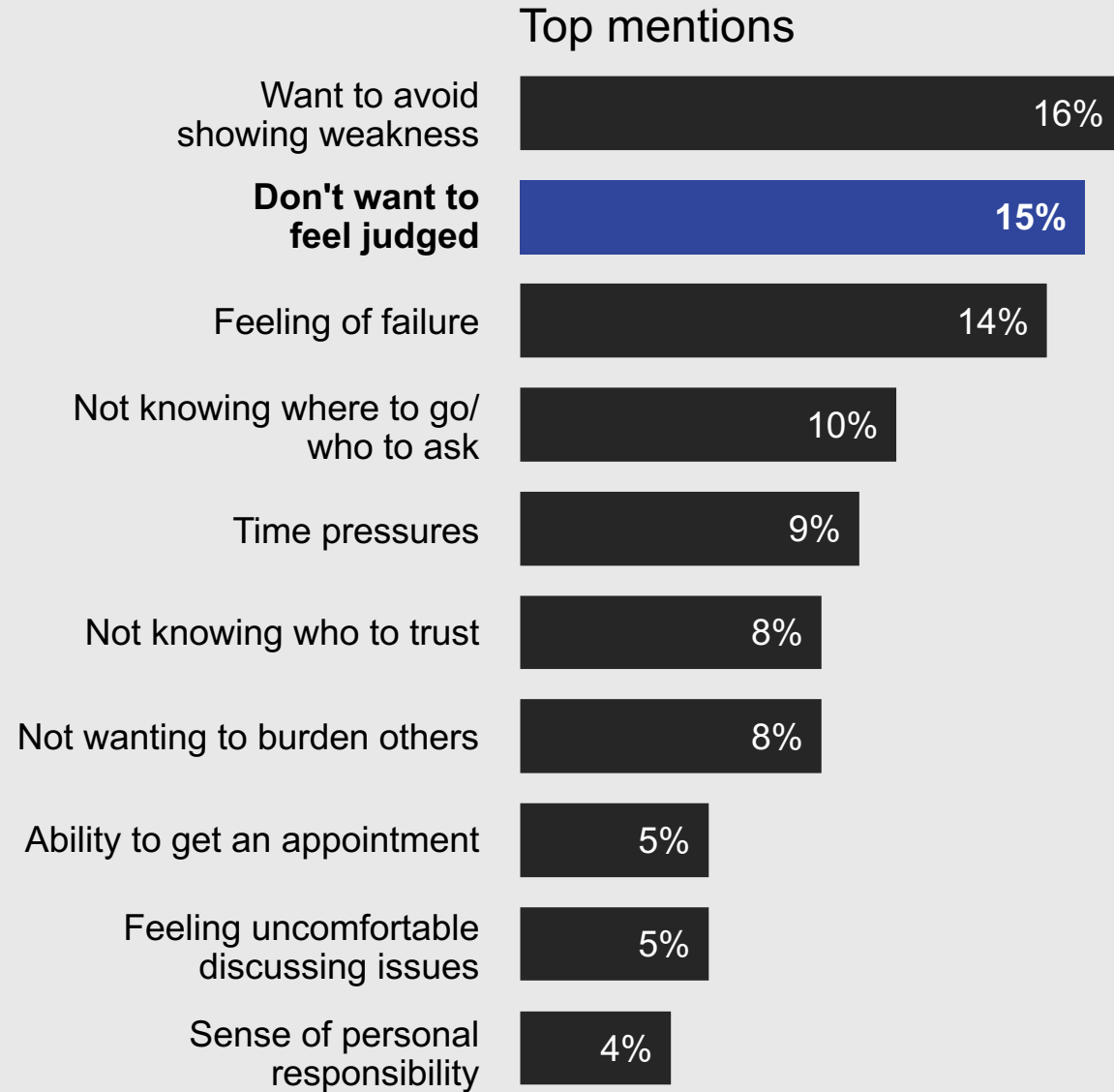


# FEAR OF FEELING JUDGED MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR PARENTS TO ASK FOR HELP OR SUPPORT FOR THEIR CHILD

Q What, if anything, makes it difficult for you to ask for help or support for your child?

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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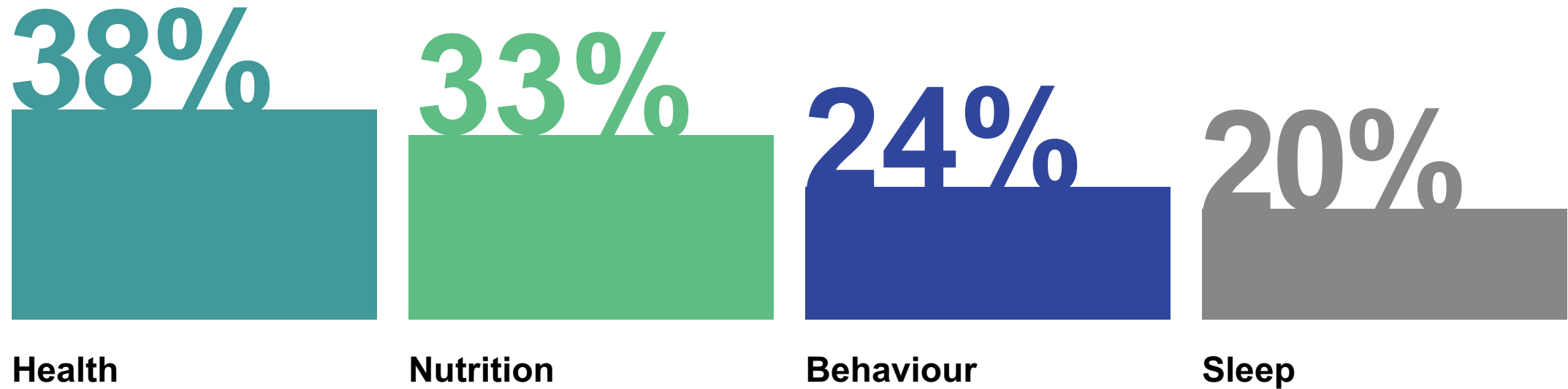


# FRIENDS AND FAMILY PROVIDE KEY SOURCES OF TRUSTED SUPPORT



# PARENTS WANT HELP AND SUPPORT WITH A RANGE OF ISSUES TO ENSURE THEIR CHILD IS HEALTHY AND HAPPY

Q What things do you think parents might need support with to ensure that their child aged 0-5 is healthy and happy?



Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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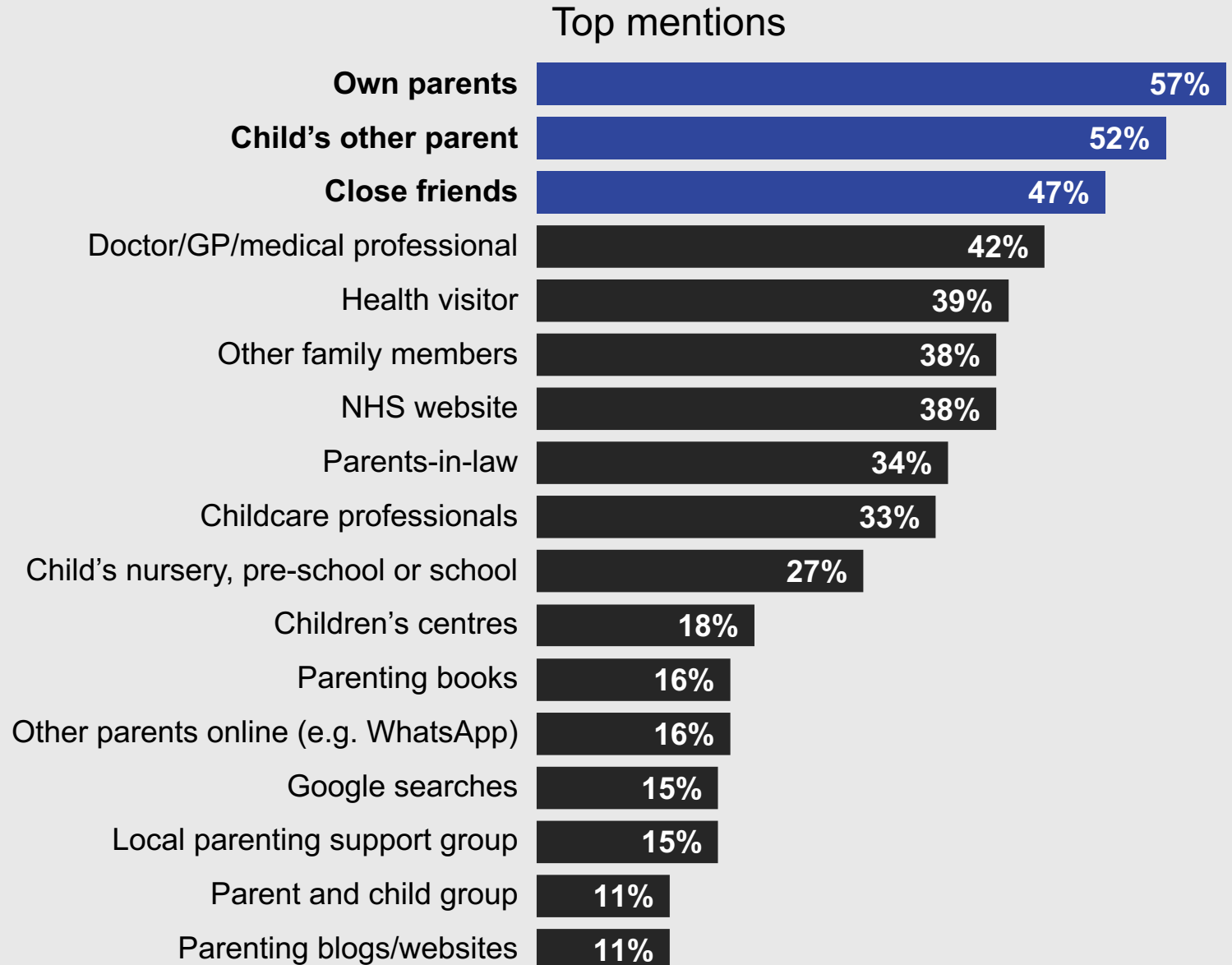
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# PARENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO MENTION FRIENDS AND FAMILY AS TRUSTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Where would you turn for information you can trust about bringing up your child/children?



Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)

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Q Overall, how many family, friends and other parents, who you can turn to for help and support if needed, do you have within the local area or within easy reach?

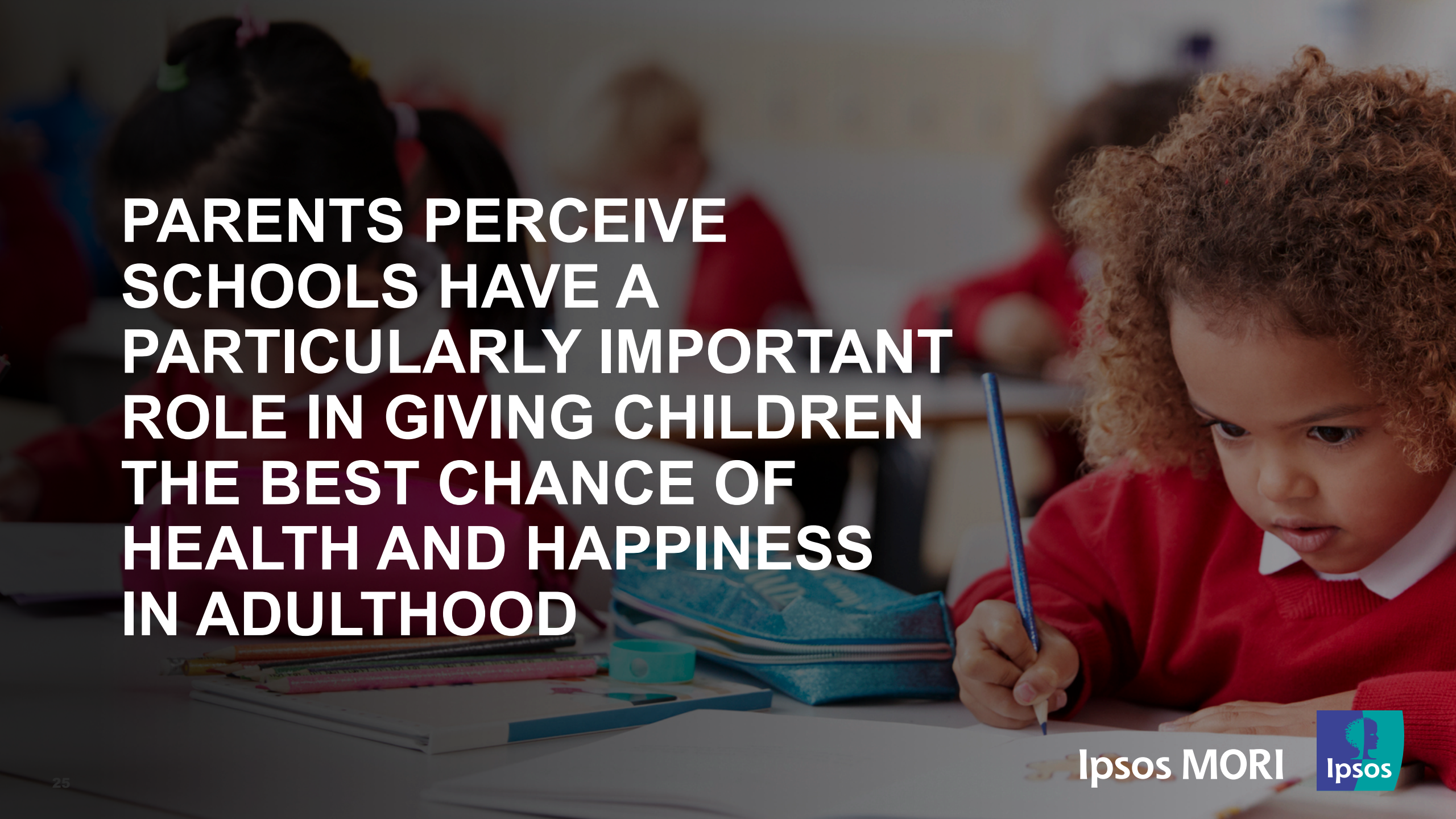
**18%**  
**HAVE 2 OR FEWER PEOPLE  
LOCALLY TO TURN TO FOR  
HELP AND SUPPORT**

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019).

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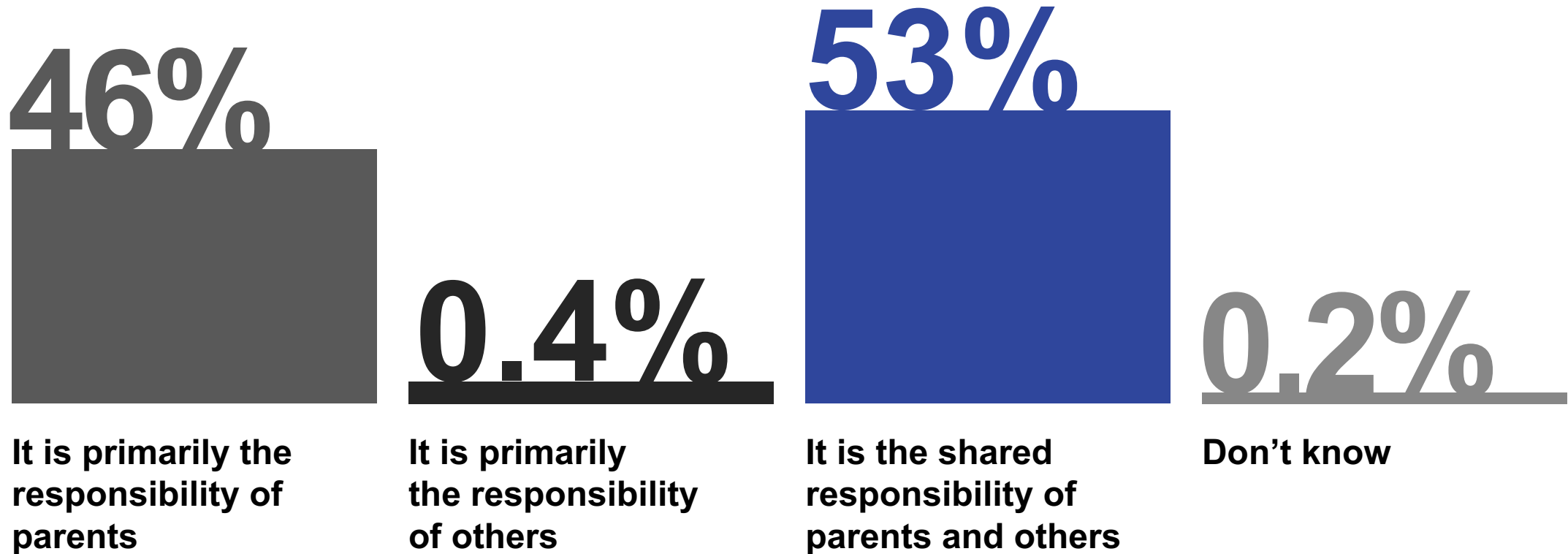


**PARENTS PERCEIVE  
SCHOOLS HAVE A  
PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT  
ROLE IN GIVING CHILDREN  
THE BEST CHANCE OF  
HEALTH AND HAPPINESS  
IN ADULTHOOD**

# WE ASKED EVERYONE IN THE 5 BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT VIEWS ON RESPONSIBILITY



Which of these statements is closest to your opinion? It is primarily the responsibility of **parents/others**/shared responsibility of **parents and others** to give children aged 0-5 the best chance of health and happiness.



Base: All UK adults providing an answer (439,974)

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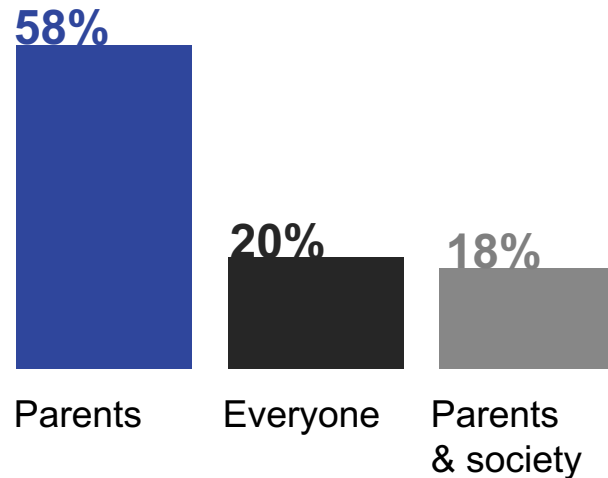
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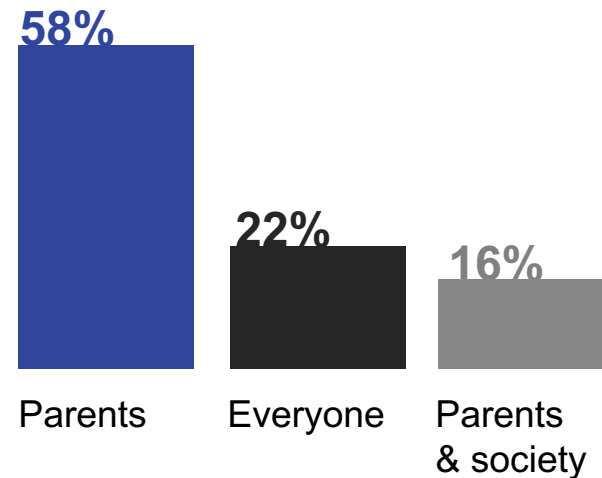
# PARENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IS PURELY THEIRS

Which of these statements is closest to your opinion? It is mostly the responsibility of **parents** to give/**everyone** in society to give/**parents and society** are equally responsible for giving children aged 0-5 the best chance of health and happiness

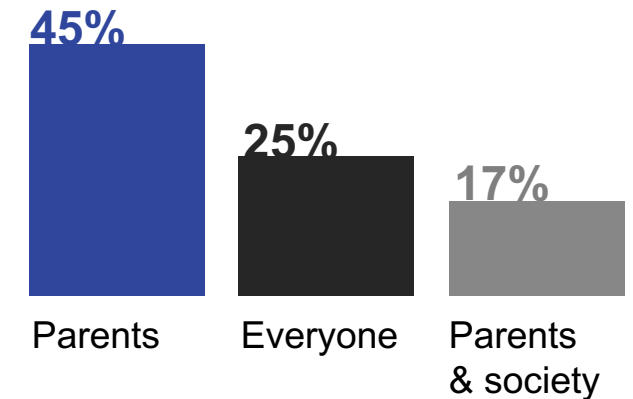
## Parents of 0-5s



## Other parents



## Non-parents



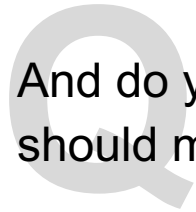
Base: All non-parents (1,414), parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019), parents of a 6-17 year old (788)

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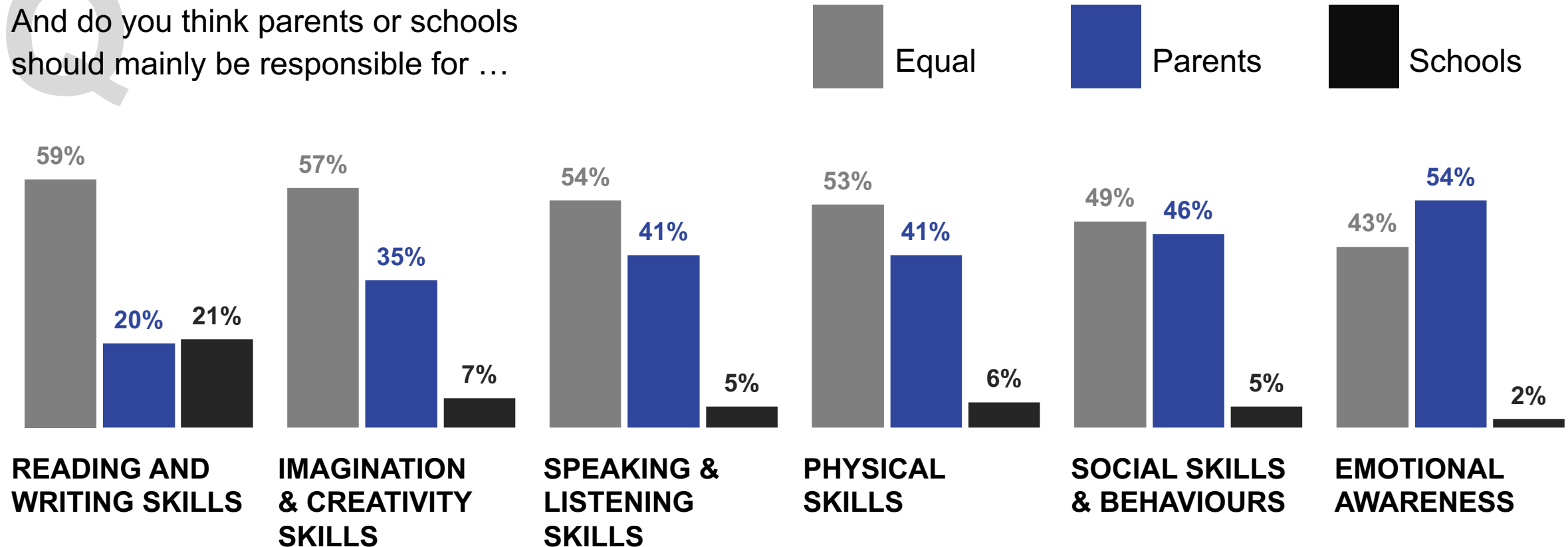
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# BUT INTERESTINGLY WHEN WE ASK PARENTS ABOUT SCHOOLS AND RESPONSIBILITY, THINGS EQUALISE



And do you think parents or schools should mainly be responsible for ...



Base: All parents of a 0–5 year old (1,019)

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A healthcare worker, likely a nurse or doctor, is wearing a white lab coat, a light blue surgical mask, and a clear face shield. She is looking down at a baby being held by a parent. The parent is smiling and looking at the baby. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a metal fence.

**COVID-19 HAS MADE  
LIFE MUCH TOUGHER  
FOR PARENTS OF  
OUR UNDER 5S**

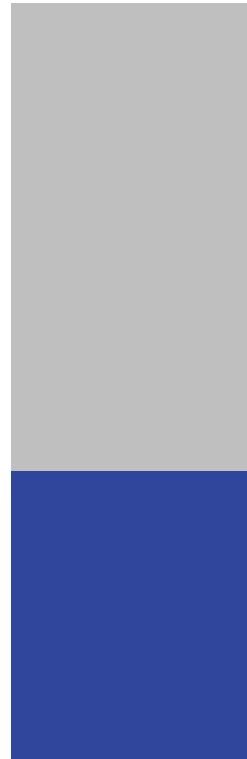
# LONELINESS HAS INCREASED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Q How often do you feel lonely

38%

REPORTED FEELING LONELY  
BEFORE THE  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019), Dec 2019 – Jan 2020



63%

REPORTED FEELING LONELY  
AFTER THE FIRST  
LOCKDOWN IN THE UK

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,000), October 2020



Q Overall, how comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel seeking help or support for...? How you're feeling.

**34%**  
**FELT UNCOMFORTABLE ASKING  
FOR HELP WITH HOW THEY'RE  
FEELING, COMPARED WITH JUST  
18% BEFORE THE PANDEMIC**

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019), Dec 2019 – Jan 2020  
All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,000), October 2020.

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# MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE BECOME MORE SUPPORTIVE DURING THE PANDEMIC, ALTHOUGH THIS EXPERIENCE HAS NOT BEEN UNIVERSAL

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local community has become more supportive over the last six months?

**52%**  
% AGREE LEAST  
DEPRIVED AREAS



OVERALL



**33%**  
% AGREE MOST  
DEPRIVED AREAS

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old in England (732)

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# THREE KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM THIS RESEARCH

1

## PROMOTE EVIDENCE

The importance of promoting the education and dissemination of evidence on the primacy of the early years to the whole of society

2

## PROVIDE SUPPORT

The need to provide more support to parents to protect their wellbeing

3

## ENCOURAGING SOCIETY

Encouraging society as a whole to be more supportive of parents, carers and families in the early years

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# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS ...



Kindred<sup>2</sup>