

Understanding public attitudes towards early childhood

Challenges facing parents and the support they need

April 2025



ROYAL FOUNDATION
Centre for
Early Childhood

Methodology

- Ipsos interviewed 5,353 adults aged 16+ across the UK through the online Ipsos i-Say panel from the 7- 21 May 2024. This included boosts in Scotland (500), Wales (500) and Northern Ireland (300).
- From these responses, we present nationally representative results from interviews with the **general population based on 4,673 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 and age within region, working status and ethnicity. Boosts were weighted to make the sample nationally representative.
- Separately, we present results from interviews with **parents of children aged 0-5 based on 1,230 interviews**. This includes 550 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 third wave of the Annual Perceptions Survey. Where appropriate, we have shown differences compared to the 2023 survey which followed a similar methodology.

Background to the 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 two previous studies about early childhood which the Royal Foundation and Ipsos ran in [2022](#) and [2023](#).

We identified core trackers questions from these waves 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 to be generated from the research.



Challenges facing parents and the support they need

Key findings

1.

In line with last year, “costs” are seen as the biggest issue facing parents and carers aged 0-5. Concern about the cost of living / poverty has increased 4ppts among parents of children aged 0-5 (now at 24%).

Awareness of the challenges facing parents is increasing though, with the proportion answering ‘don’t know’ falling since last year among both parents of children aged 0-5 and all adults.

2.

The public’s top concerns for children aged 0-5 continue to be issues relating to bonding and spending time with parents. This is alongside worries about the cost of living and its impact.

A lack of time to spend with their children is cited as the third most pressing issue for parents of children aged 0-5. Figures for 2024 remain broadly in line with 2023.

Key findings

3.

The belief that there is not enough help and support for parents, carers and children during the early years remains high at 56%.

However, concern has fallen slightly among parents of children aged 0-5, from 69% to 65%, suggesting greater access to and use of help.

The main reason people don't personally provide support to parents is because they don't feel as if they have a close enough relationship with a baby, child or parent.

4.

In line with last year, the public's understanding of how communities play a role in supporting children and parents is mixed.

Parents with children aged 0-5 tend to believe that everyone in society shares the responsibility for supporting young children and families. However, those without children in this age group are more likely to disagree.

5.

People feel that there is more support for parents during pregnancy than any time after the child is born, and that support declines as the child ages.

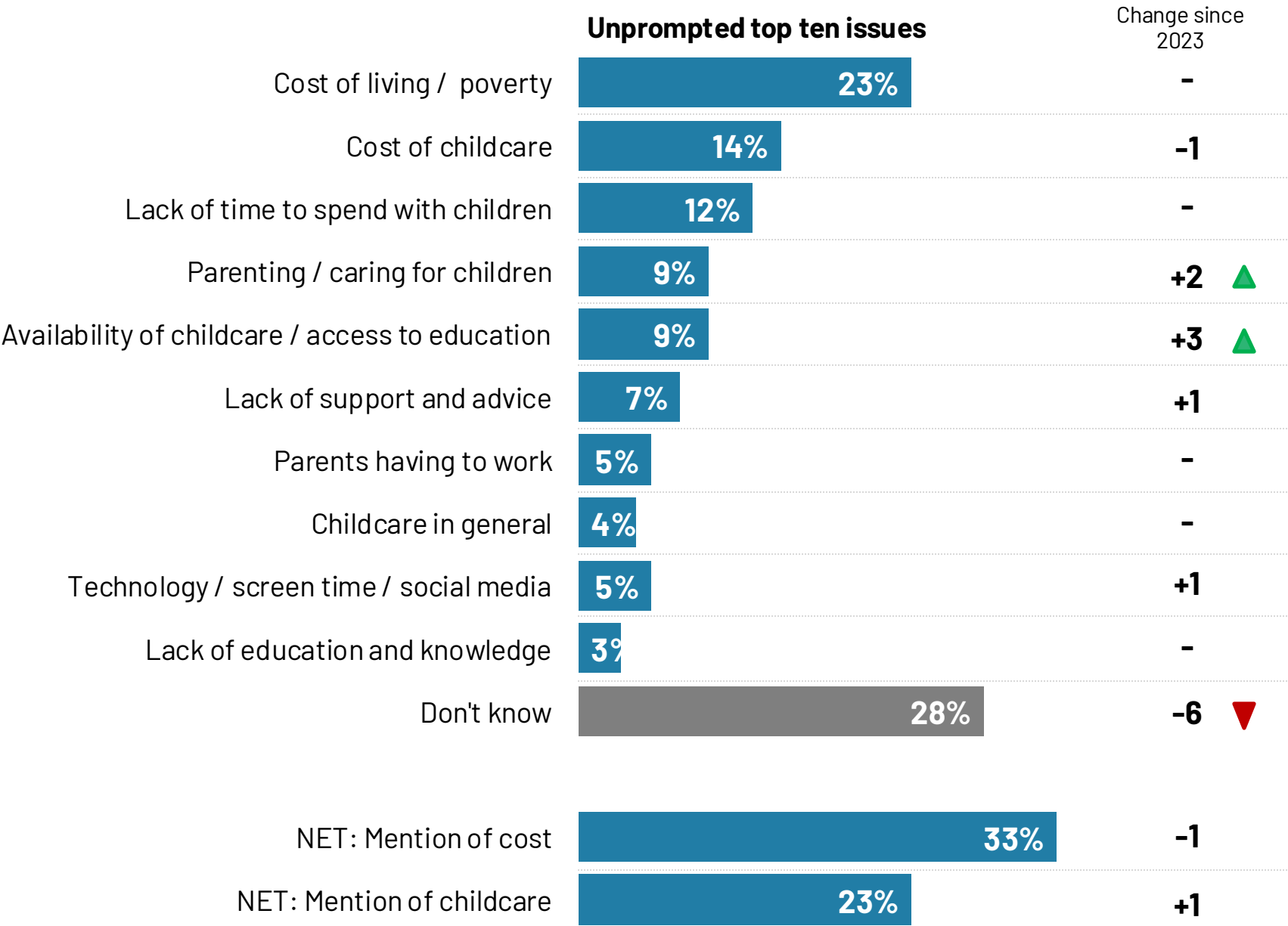
Both parents and wider society feel that the most helpful support for parents of 0-5s is emotional support and helping with childcare.

Family members and the NHS website remain the top sources of support and advice for social and emotional development. People continue to seek advice on a range of topics, with all subjects seeing a significant increase since last year.

A third of the public mention “costs” as the biggest issue facing parents and carers of those aged 0-5, followed by almost one in four saying childcare. Awareness is increasing, with a fall in the proportion saying they “don’t know”.

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

Among general public



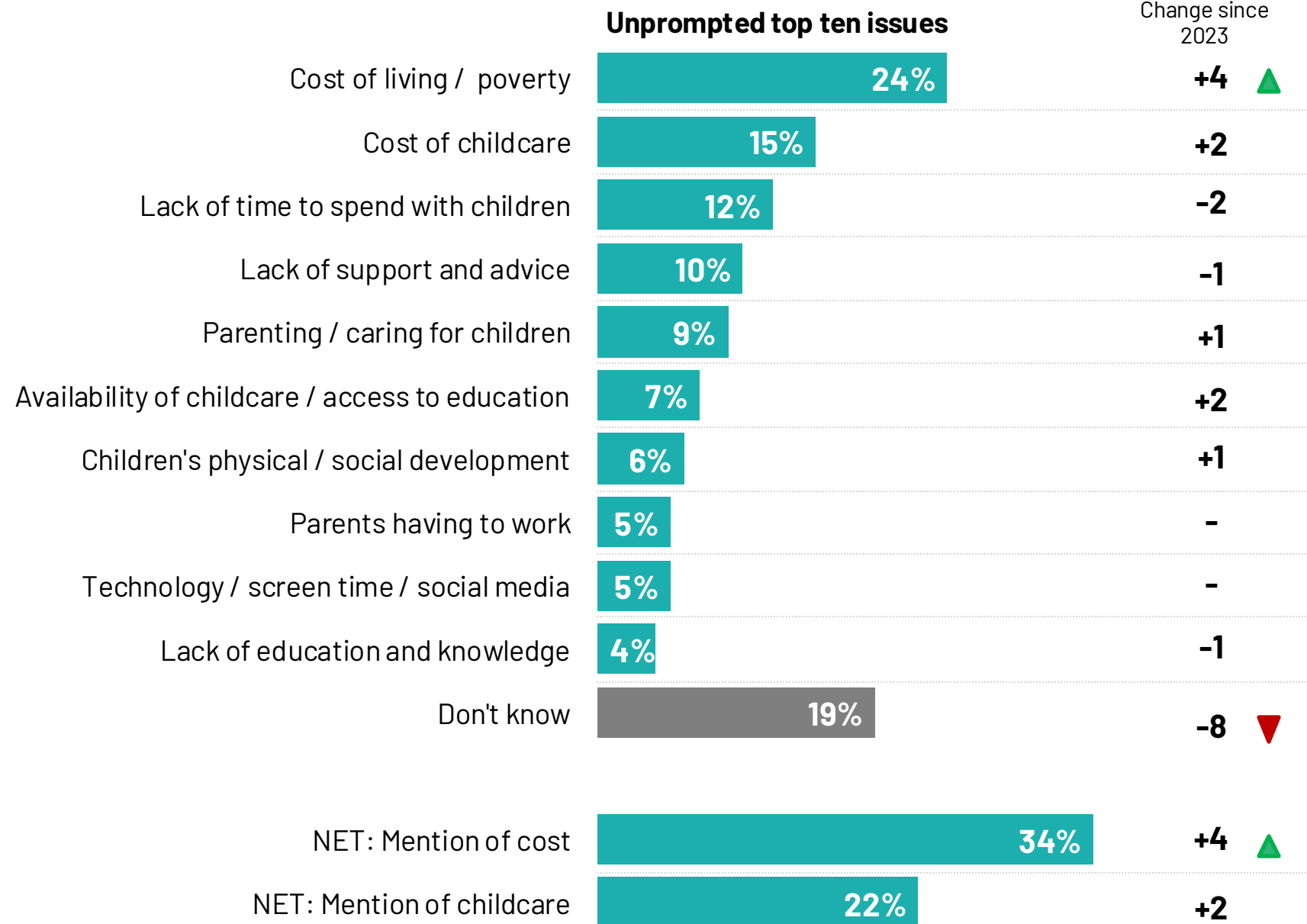
Base: 2,336 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in May 2024.



The top issues remain the same among parents of children 0-5, although the proportion mentioning the cost of living has now risen to nearer one in four.

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

Among parents of children aged 0-5



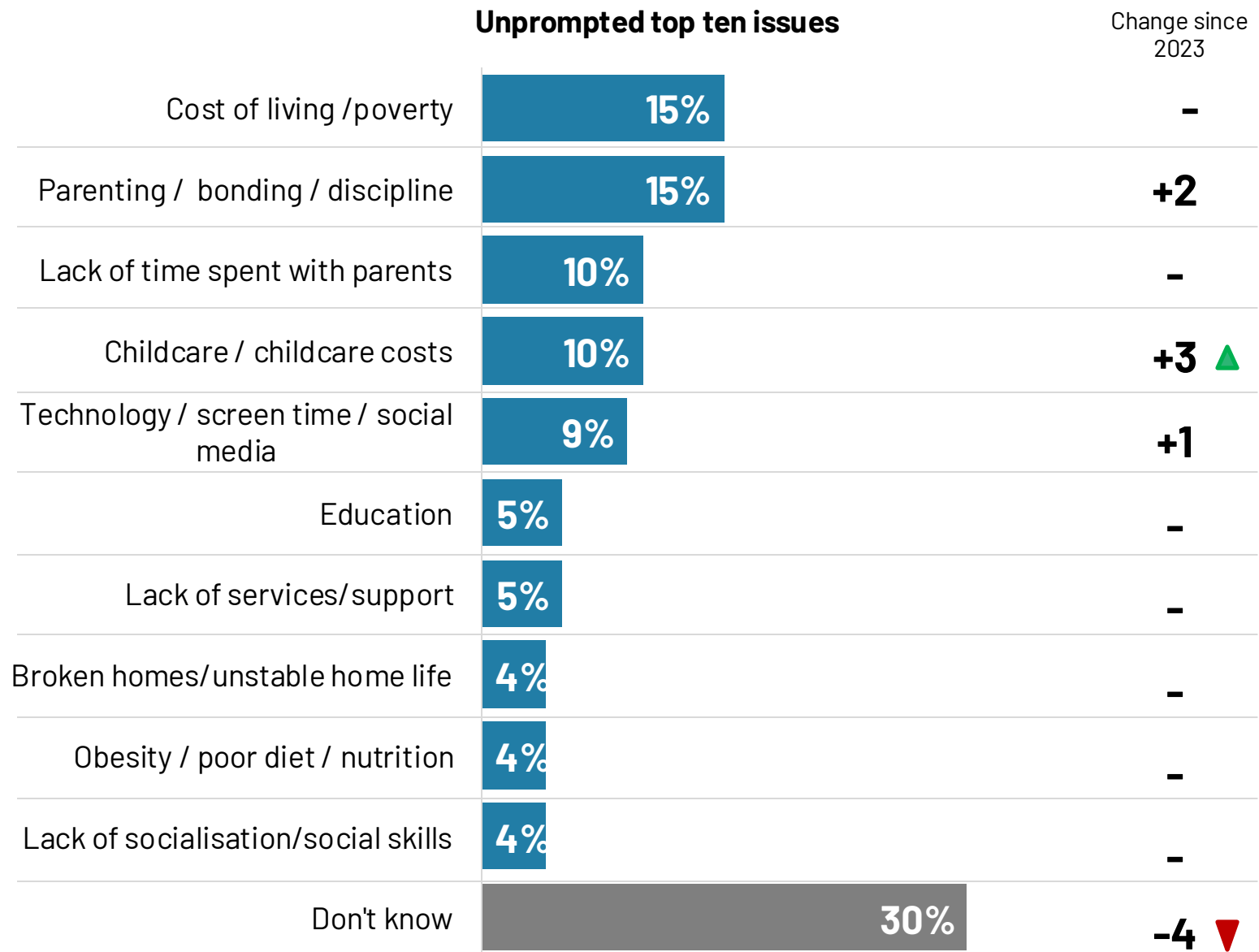
Base: 616 Parent of child aged 0-5, surveyed in May 2024.



Among the public, the cost of living and a lack of time spent bonding with parents are still the biggest issues perceived to be facing children aged 0-5. Three in ten did not know.

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

Among general public



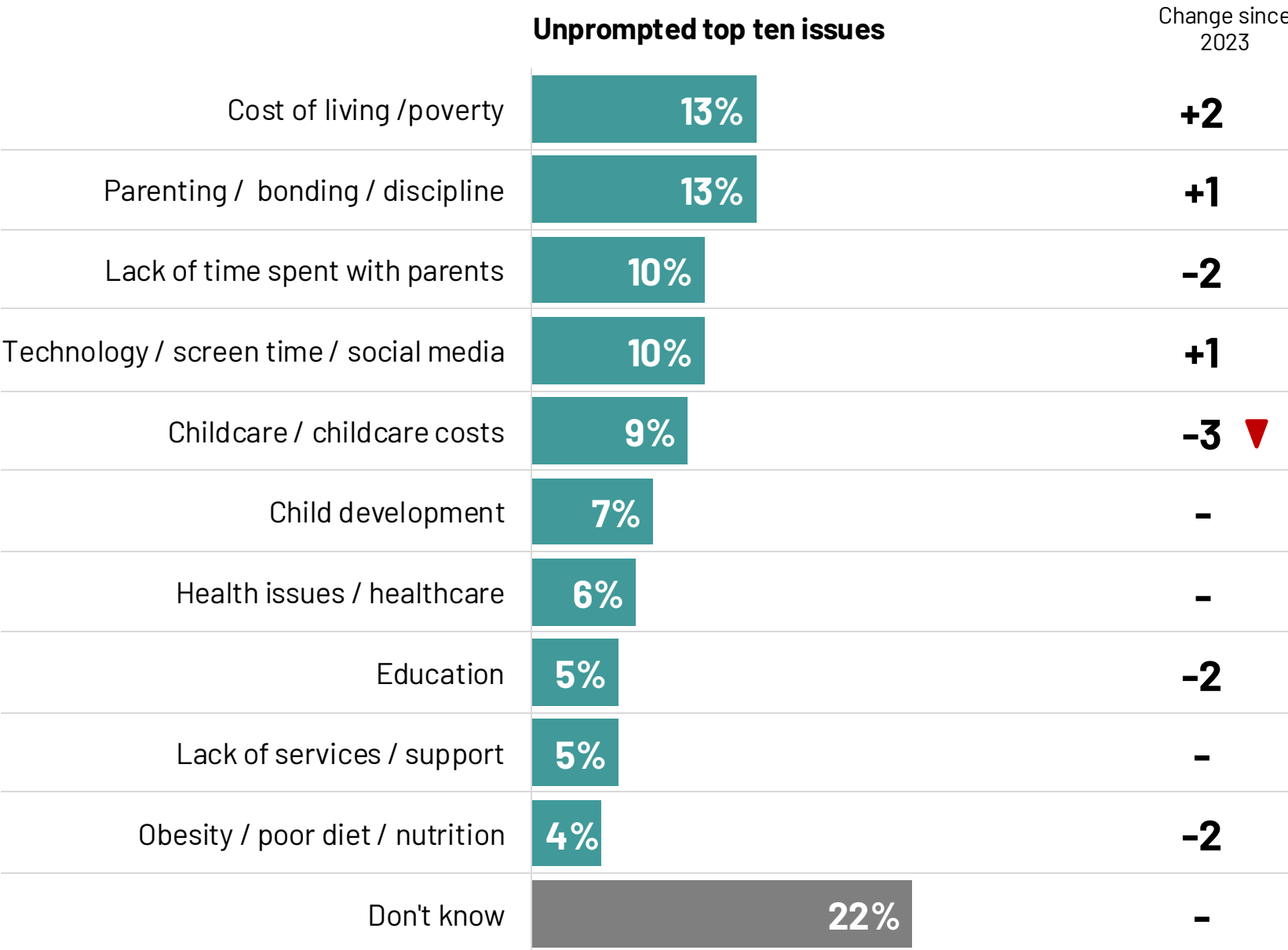
Base: 2,337 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in May 2024.



Parents of children aged 0-5 also identify the cost of living and a lack of time spent with parents as the biggest issues facing this age group. They are also more likely on average to mention child development.

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

Among parents of children aged 0-5



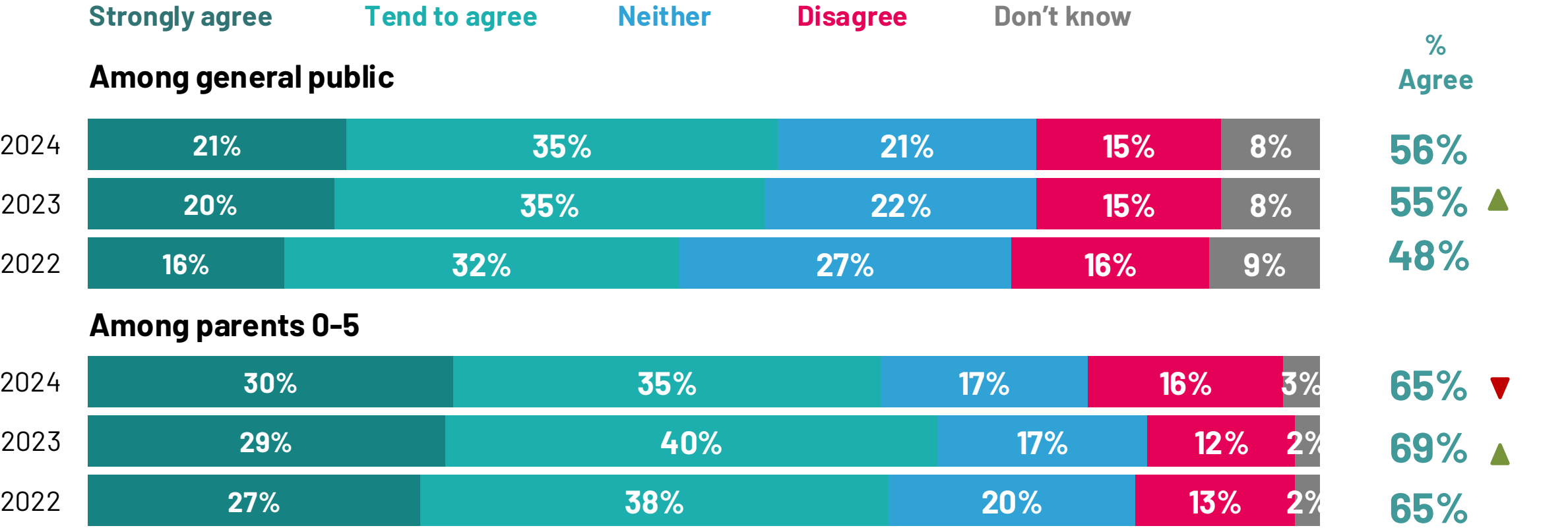
Base: 614 Parent of child aged 0-5, surveyed in May 2024.



The majority agree there is not enough support to help children develop during their early childhood, though this has fallen among parents of children aged 0-5

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

There is not enough support for parents, carers and children to help children develop in their early childhood



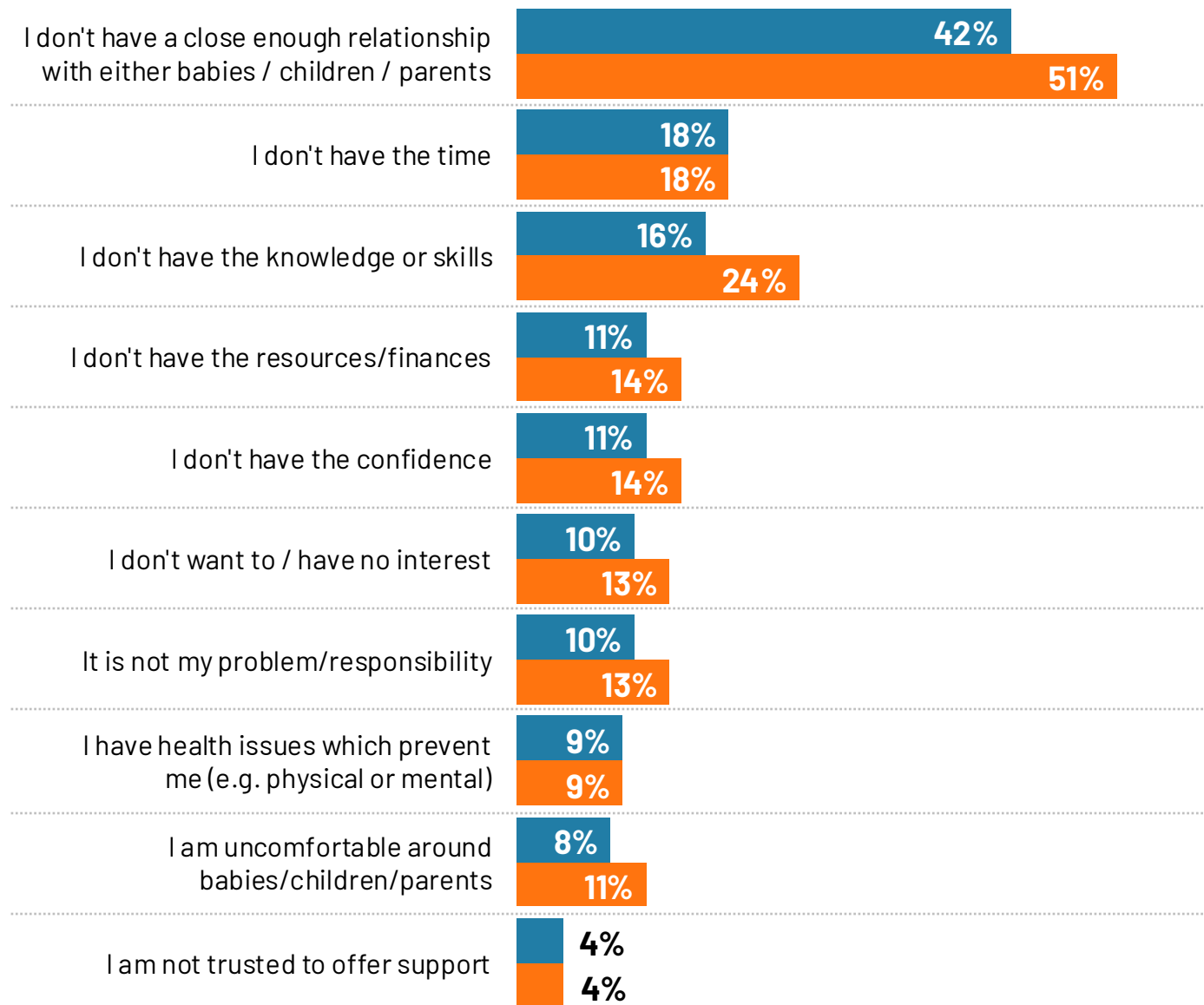
Base: 4,673 UK adults aged 16+ and 1,230 Parents of child aged 0-5, surveyed in May 2024.

The main reason cited for not providing support is that people don't feel they have a close enough relationship to parents and their children. Non-parents are more likely to mention not having the knowledge or skills.

Q Which of the following, if any, would you say prevents you from personally offering support to these groups?

General public

Non-parents



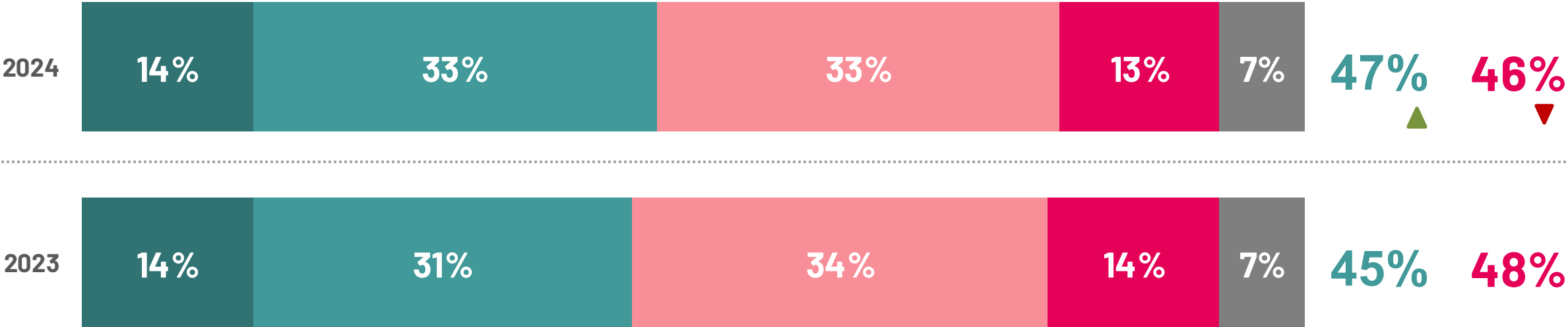
Base: 1,236 UK adults aged 16+ who interact with but don't offer much support to pregnant people / babies / children / parents, surveyed in May 2024.

Public understanding of how local communities can support children, parents and carers during early childhood remains mixed, but is slightly higher than last year

Q 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

% Great deal / fair amount % Just a little / nothing



Base: 4,673 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in May 2024.
* 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 of children aged 0-5 are more likely to think society has a collective responsibility when raising children, whereas the wider public lean towards saying it's the parents' responsibility

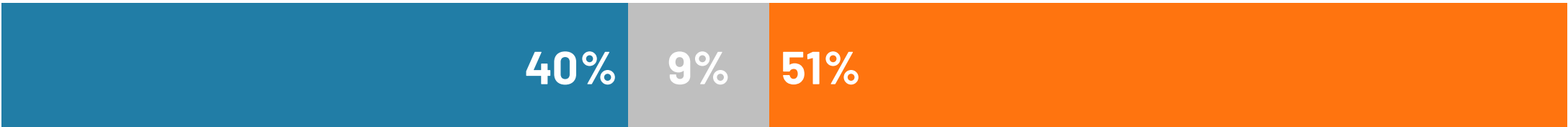
Q People have different views about who is responsible for supporting children and families during their early childhood. Please select the one which comes closest to your ideal.

Ensuring every child has access to the positive relationships, care and education they need to lead a healthy and fulfilling life should be the collective responsibility of everyone in society

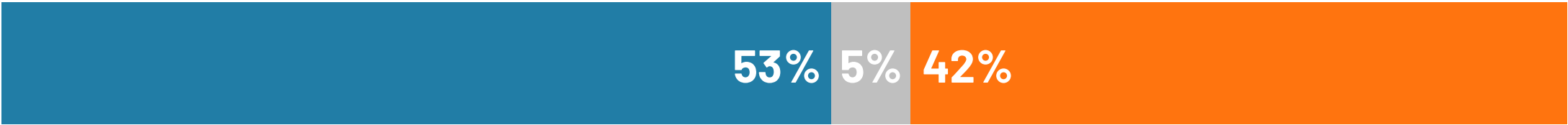
No opinion / don't know

Ensuring every child has access to the positive relationships, care and education they need to lead a healthy and fulfilling life should be mostly the responsibility of parents and carers

Among general public



Among parents of children aged 0-5



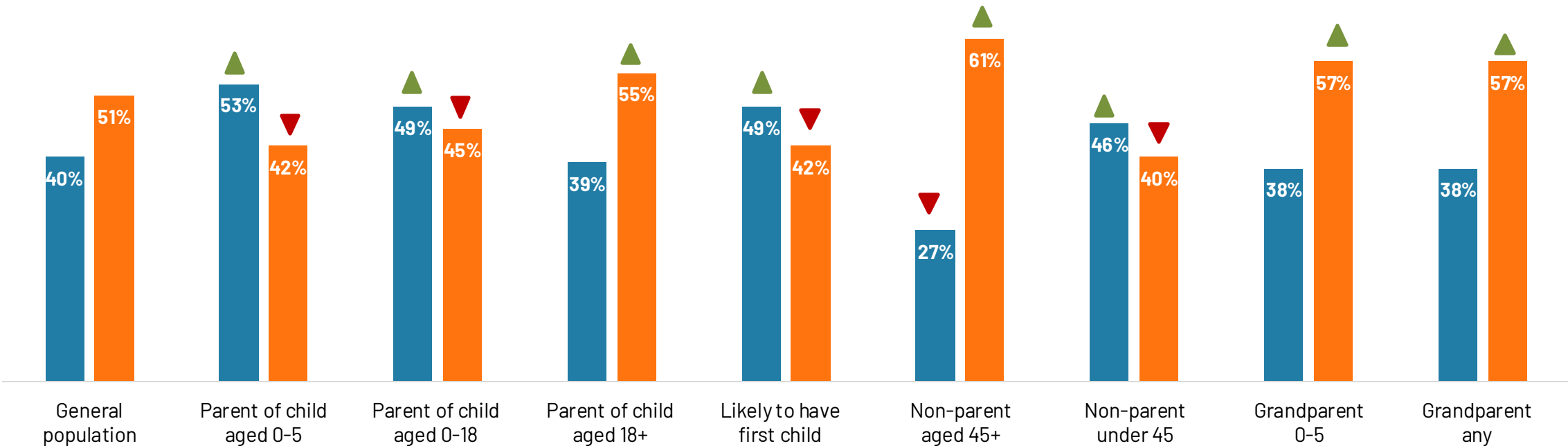
Base(general public): 4,673 UK adults aged 16+, Base (parents of children aged 0-5): 1230 surveyed in May 2024

Parents of children aged 18+, non-parents and grandparents tend to agree that the responsibility for raising children should mostly be with parents and carers

Q People have different views about who is responsible for supporting children and families during their early childhood. Please select the one which comes closest to your ideal.

Ensuring every child has access to the positive relationships, care and education they need to lead a healthy and fulfilling life should be the collective responsibility of everyone in society

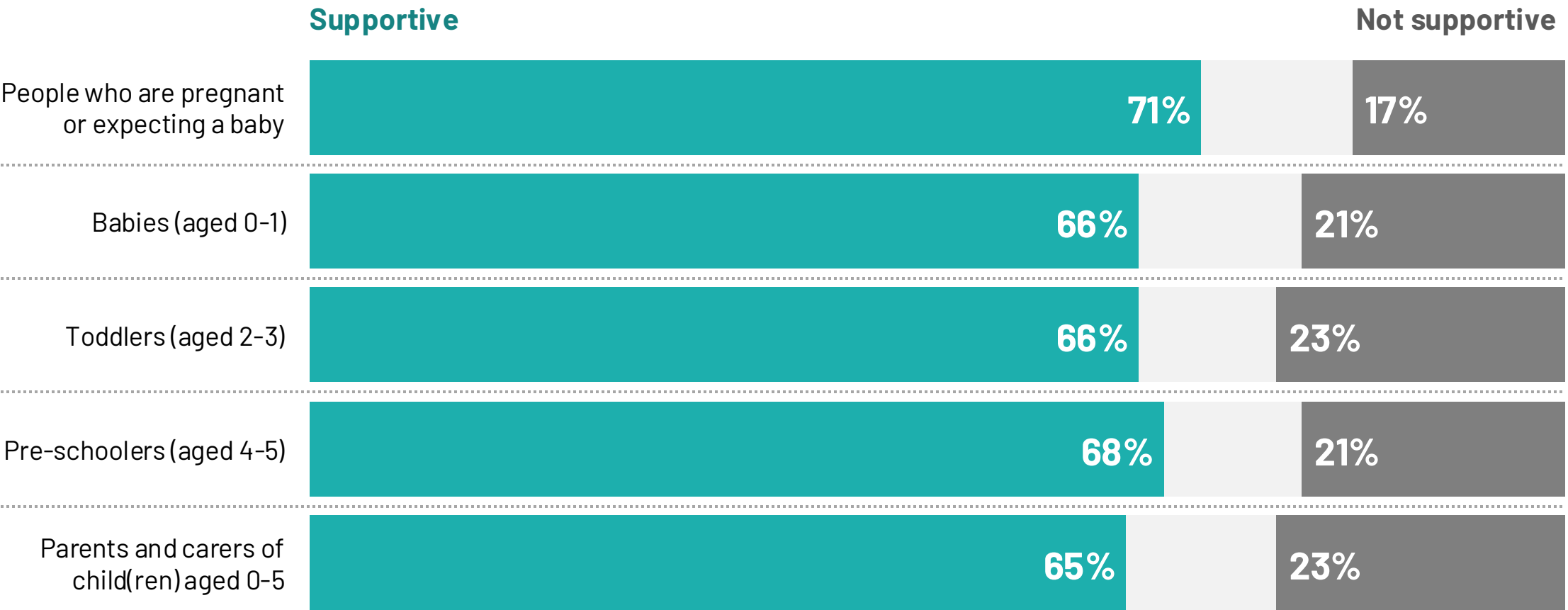
Ensuring every child has access to the positive relationships, care and education they need to lead a healthy and fulfilling life should be mostly the responsibility of parents and carers



Base: 4,673 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in May 2024.

The public tend to think society is broadly supportive of parents and children during the early years, although support is perceived as strongest during pregnancy

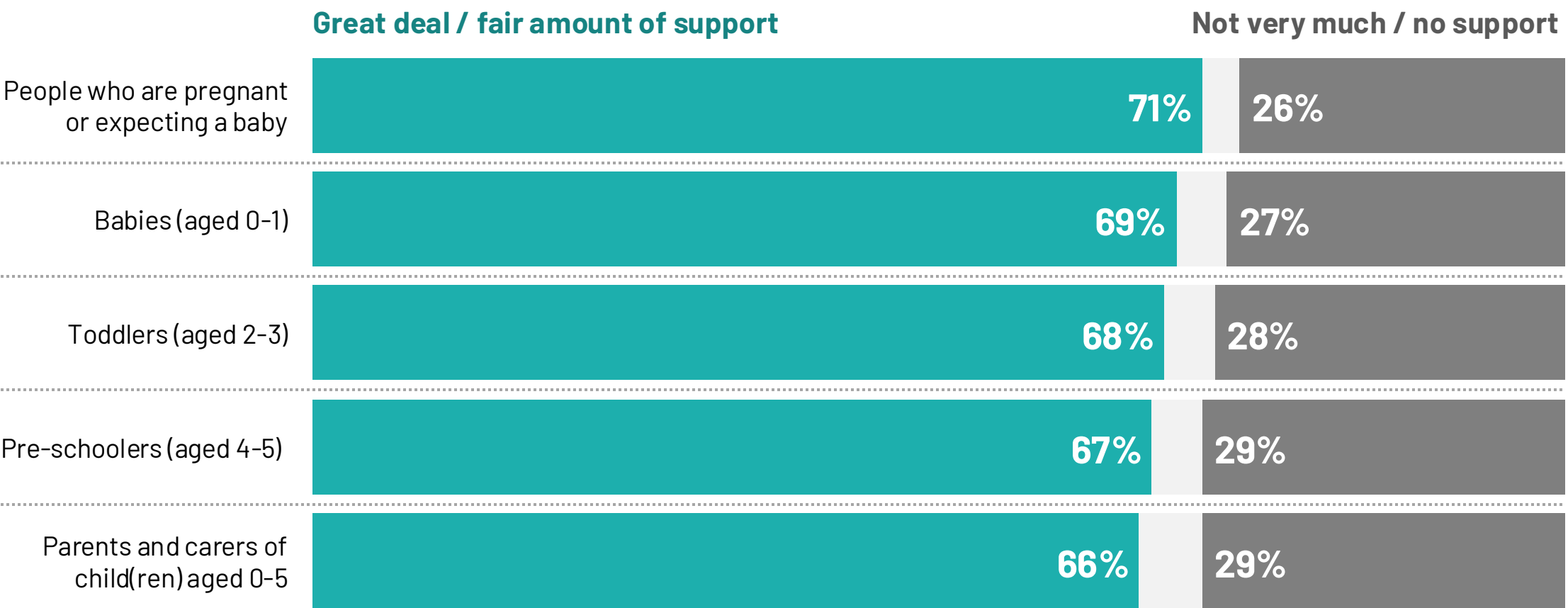
Q Generally speaking, how supportive, if at all, do you think society is to each of the following? By supportive we mean made to feel welcome everywhere, inside and outside the home.



Base: 4,673 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in May 2024.

Similarly, people say that they provide the most support during pregnancy, and the level of support drops gradually as the child gets older

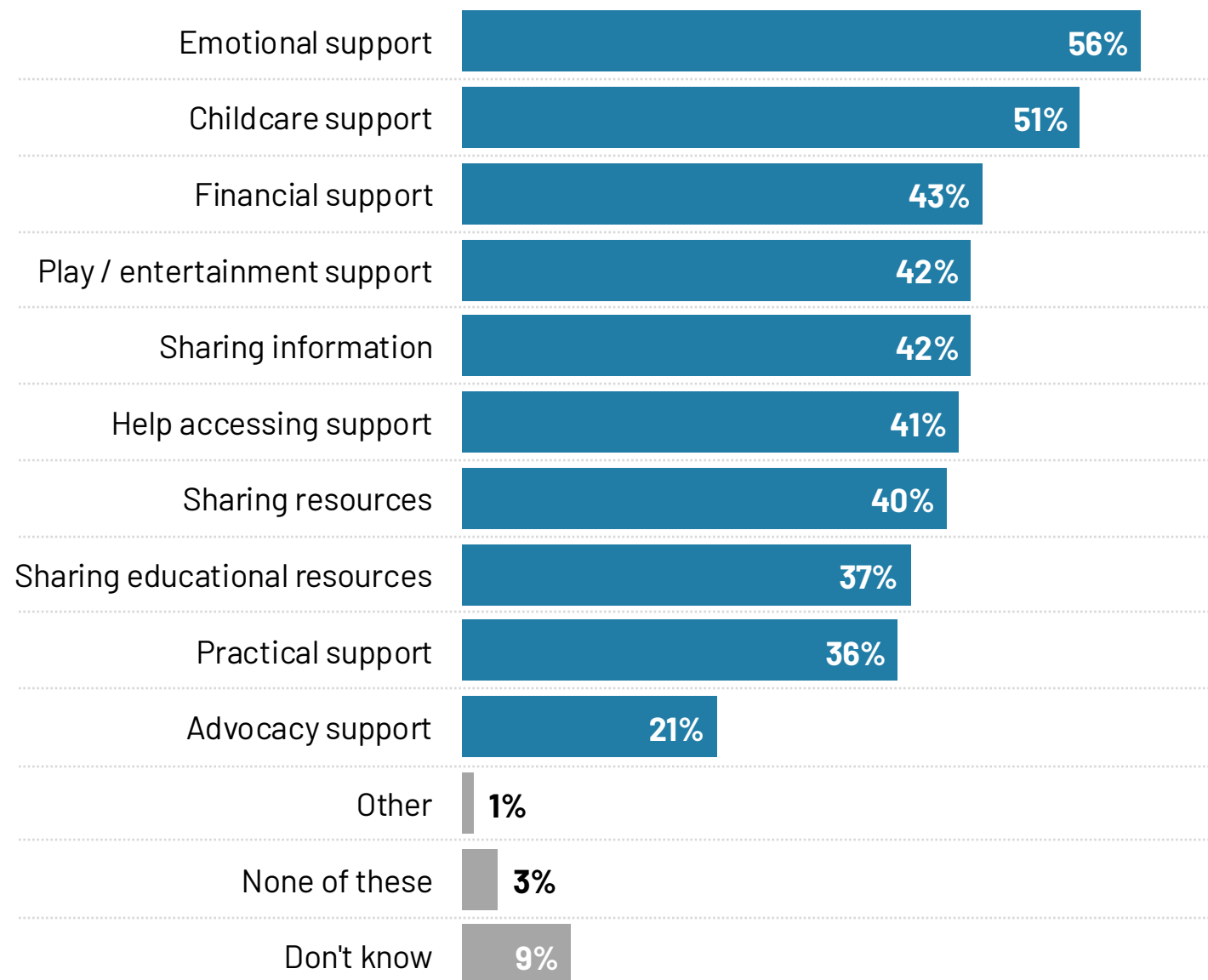
Q Generally speaking, how much support, if any, would you say you personally offer to each of the following in your day-to-day life (outside of work)? Among those who interact with each on a monthly basis



Base: 4673 UK adults aged 16+ broken down here by those who interact on at least a monthly basis with each surveyed in May 2024.

Emotional and childcare support are identified by the public as the most helpful forms of support to offer parents of children in early childhood

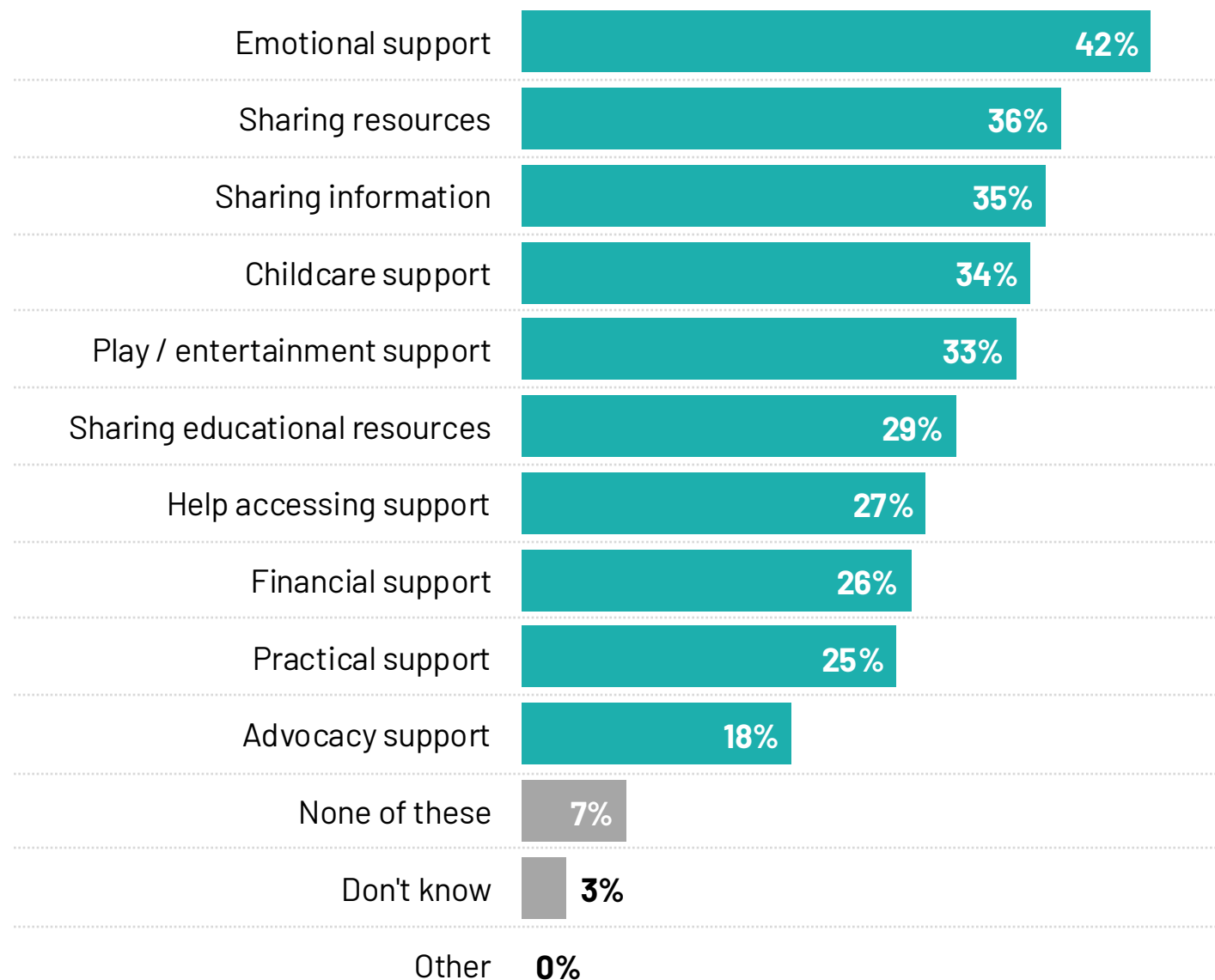
Q Which of the following, if any, do you think would be the MOST helpful ways of offering support to parents of child(ren) in early childhood? This could be support from acquaintances, friends, family or paid support from professionals.



Base: 4,673 UK adults aged 16+, surveyed in May 2024.

... and parents of children in early childhood agree that emotional support would be the most important, followed by sharing resources and information

Q Which of the following, if any, do you think would be the MOST helpful ways of offering support to parents of child(ren) in early childhood? This could be support from acquaintances, friends, family or paid support from professionals.

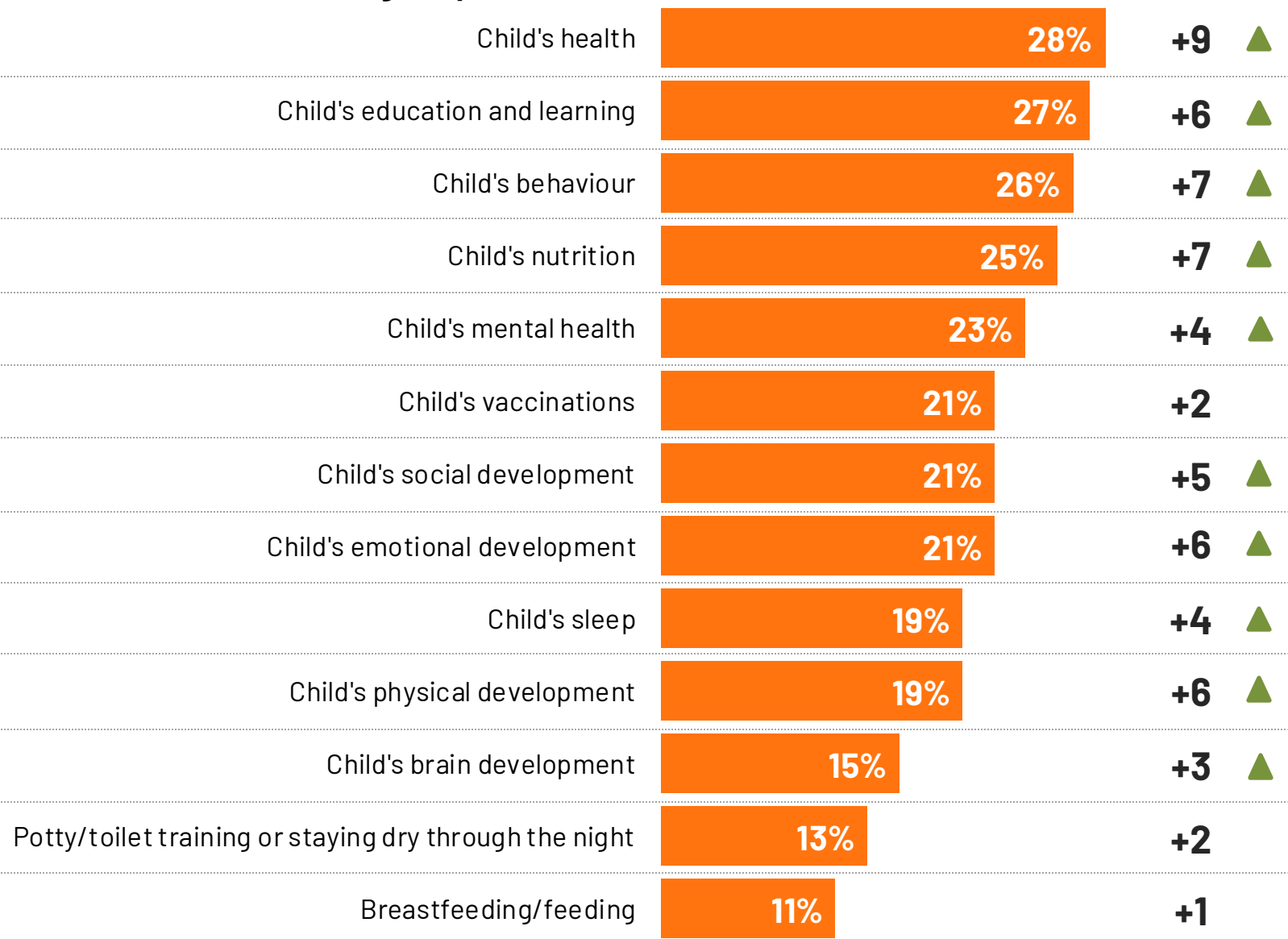


Base: 550 Parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in May 2024.

Parents or grandparents have most commonly sought support for children's health and education, followed by a range of other reasons – nearly all of which have increased since last year

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

Parents of children 0-18 and grandparents

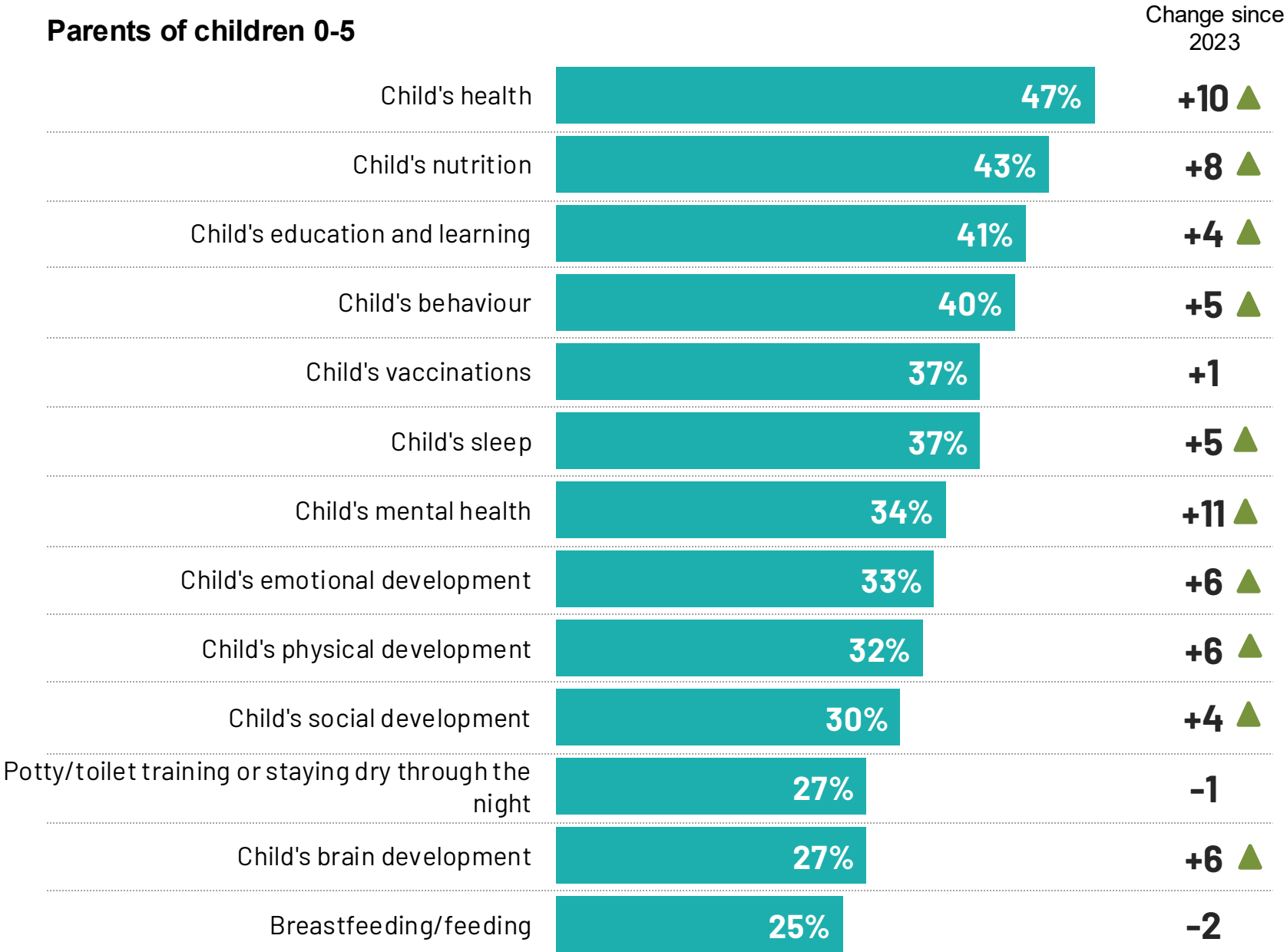


▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower change, 95% CI

Parents of children aged 0-5 are more likely to have sought advice on a variety of topics – with an increase in the range of information sought

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

Parents of children 0-5



▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower change, 95% CI

Base: 1,230 UK adults aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-18, surveyed in May 2024.

The most popular sources for seeking advice about children's social or emotional development are family members and the NHS website

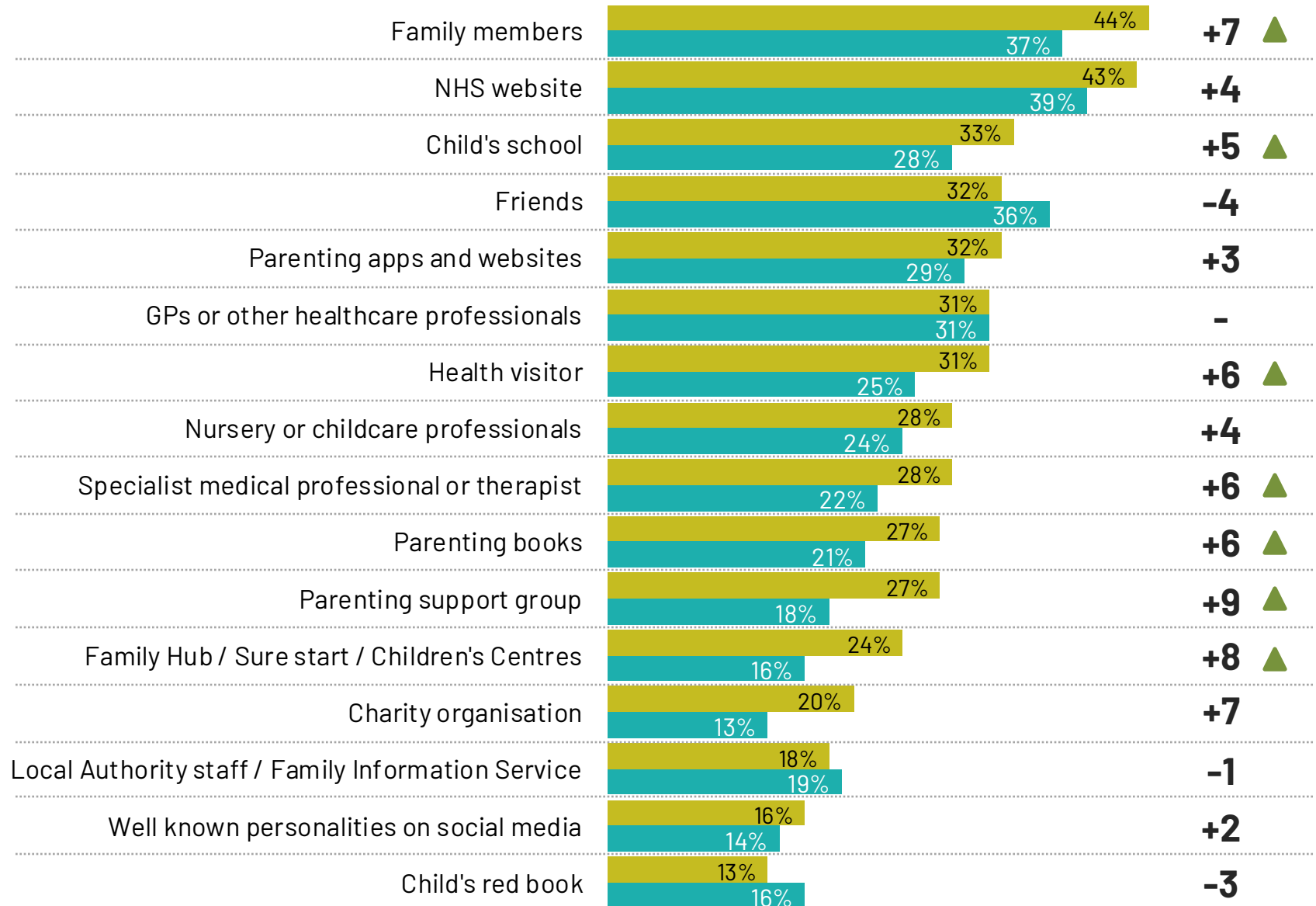
Q In the last year, where have you sought information, support or advice about children's social or emotional development?

2024

2023

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower change based on previous year, 95% CI

Parents of children 0-18 and grandparents



Base: 680 UK adults aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-18 and grandparents and looked for sought advice on social and emotional skills, surveyed in May 2024.

Sources are similar for parents of children aged 0-5, where there has been an uptick in the proportion using parenting apps and children's centres

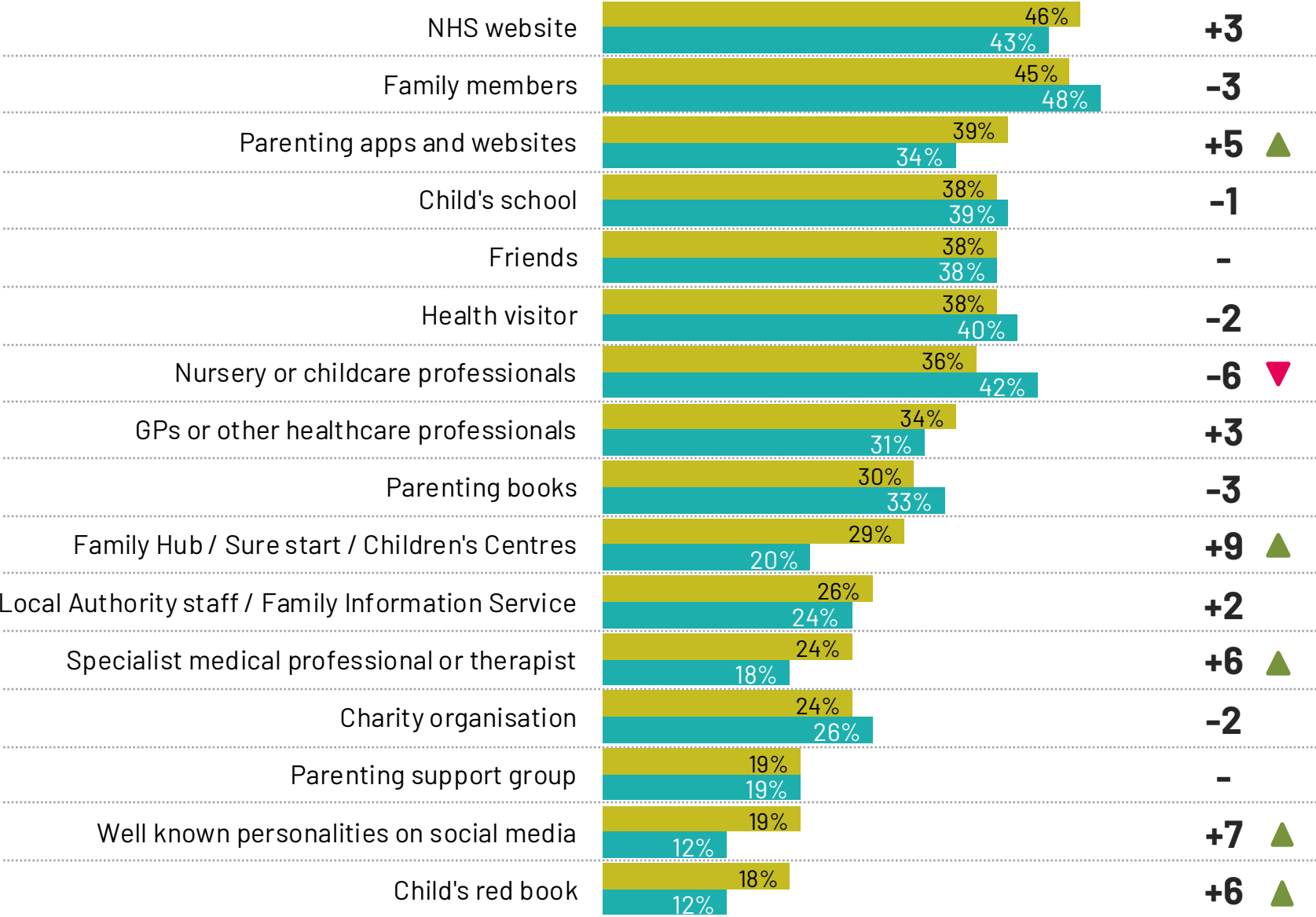
Q In the last year, where have you sought information, support or advice about children's social or emotional development ?

2024

2023

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower change based on previous year, 95% CI

Parents of children 0-5



Base: 578 UK adults aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-5 and looked for sought advice on social and emotional skills, surveyed in May 2024.



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This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252.



The Royal Foundation Annual Perceptions Survey 2024

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