



National Association for the  
Education of Young Children



# **Growing the Demand for Quality: *Parents and Early Childhood Educators Talk About the Financing of Early Learning***

Key Findings from National Surveys  
of Parents and Educators

# NAEYC Strategic Priority: High Quality Early Learning

**GOAL:** Children birth through age 8 have equitable access to developmentally appropriate, high-quality early learning.

**DESIRED RESULT:** There is increased public demand for developmentally appropriate, high-quality early learning birth through age 8

**How do we ensure that parents and early childhood educators are on the same side of defining and demanding quality?**

# Primary Purposes of Surveys

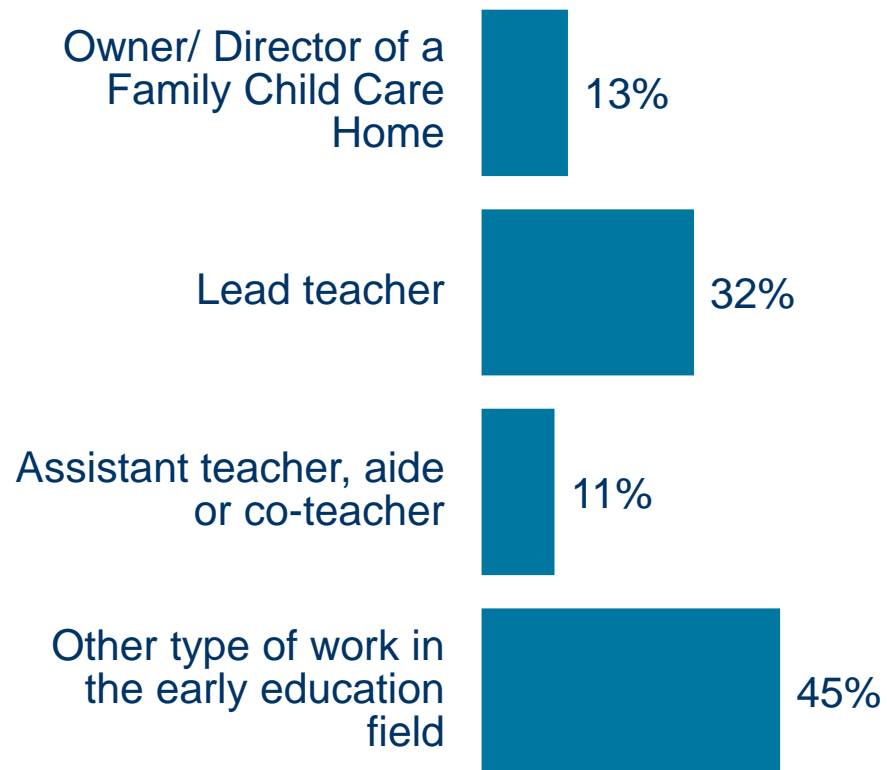
- Build on existing research to hone in on how parents and educators each recognize, describe, and make decisions about quality.
  - › Are there differences based on race, ethnicity, education of parents and socio-economic status?
- Get at the nexus between access, quality, and affordability
  - › Why, under what circumstances, and with what messaging and understanding might parents and educators prioritize quality?
- Understand what might motivate parents and educators to move from caring, recognizing, and knowing about quality to translating it into civic participation
  - › What is the role of parents' in driving a policy agenda for high-quality early learning?
  - › What mobilization tactics work? What types of messaging and tactics will help move awareness into action?

# Survey Methodologies

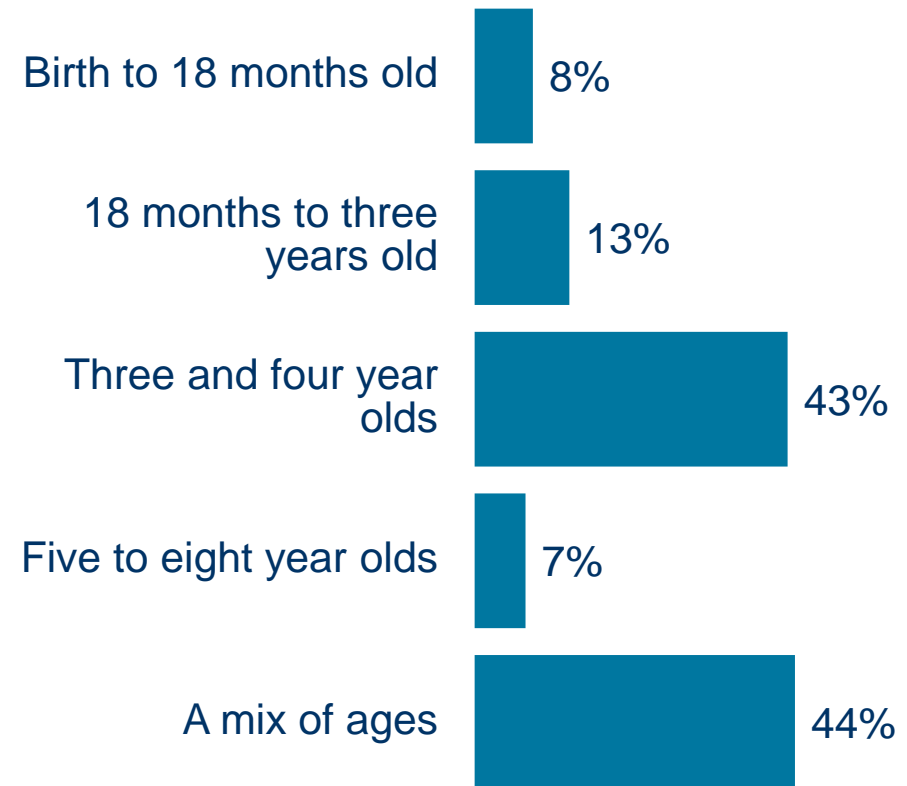
- **Educator Survey: Online survey of 1,654 NAEYC members who work as educators serving children from birth to age 8**
  - › Survey conducted February 15-27, 2017
  - › Demographics of survey respondents meant to broadly represent the NAEYC membership
  - › 75 percent of respondents have worked in ECE for more than ten years, and nearly half plan to remain in the field for another ten years or more
- **Parent Survey: Online survey of 1,202 parents of children up to age 16**
  - › Survey conducted October 17-24, 2016
  - › Demographic quotas set to reflect the diversity of American parents
- **Bipartisan research team of FM3 (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R)**
- **Funding generously provided by the Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation**

# Educator respondents reflected a mix of different jobs and serve a variety of age groups.

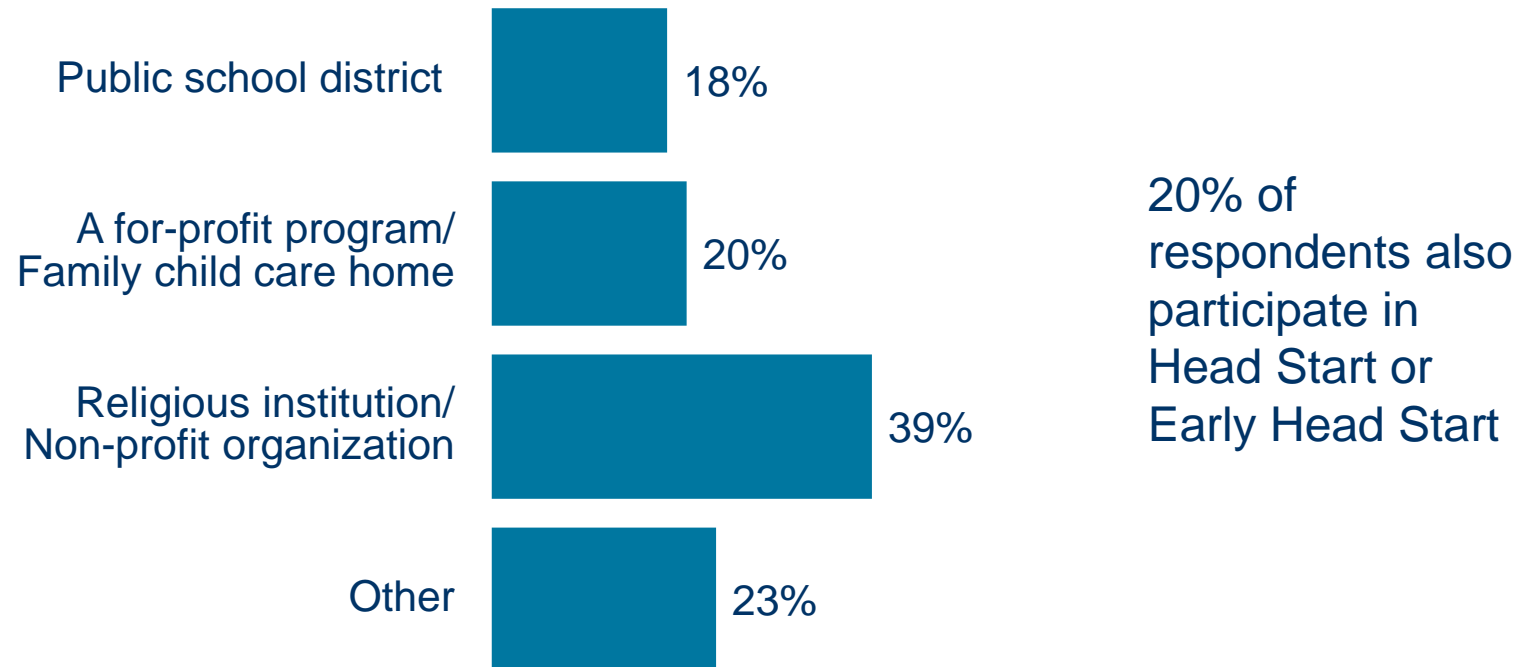
*What kind of job do you do at an early education program?*



*In your work as an early childhood educator, what age groups do you primarily serve?*  
*(Multiple Responses Accepted)*



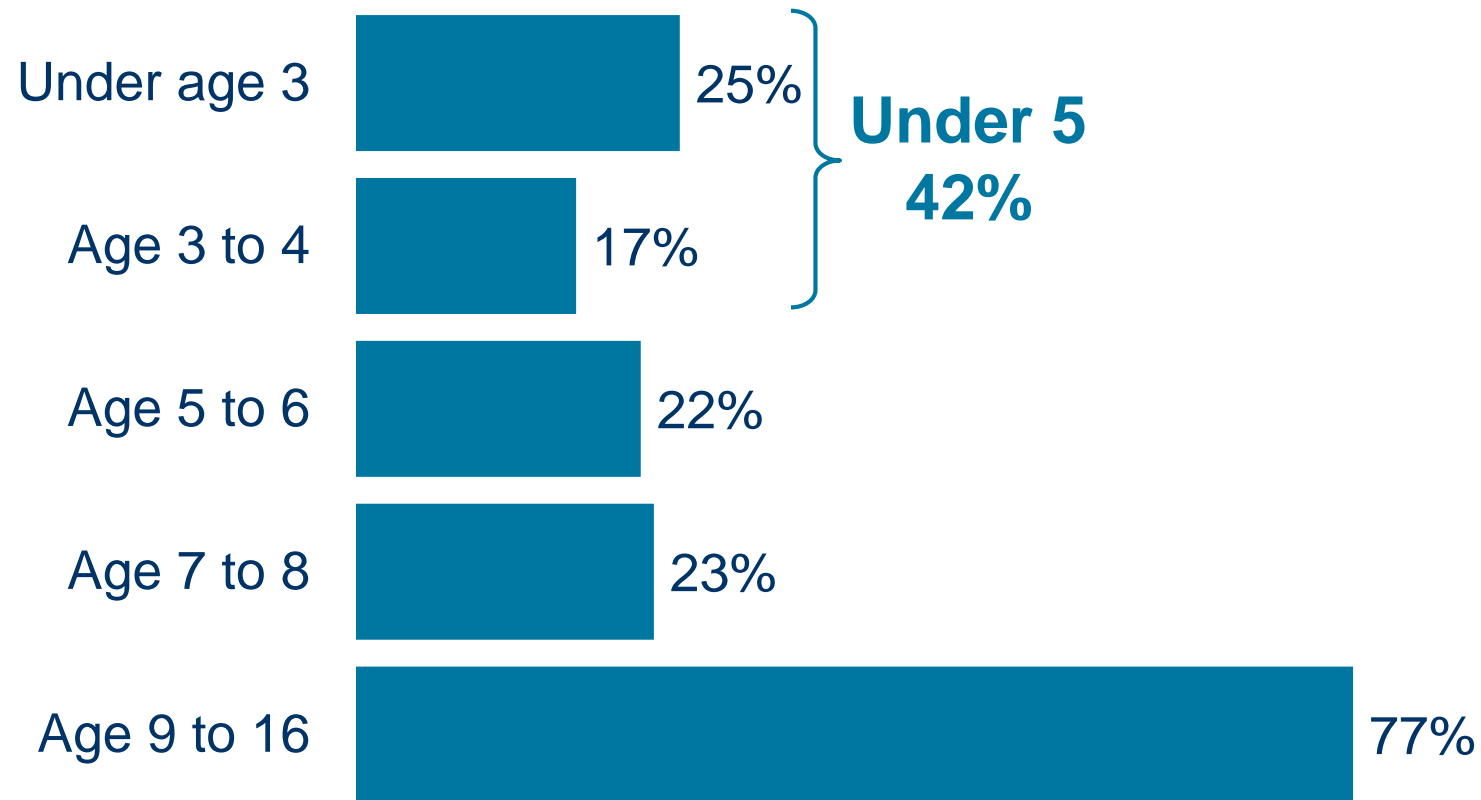
# More than 80% of respondents work in settings outside of the public schools.



Q6: In your role as an early educator, are you employed by a public school district, a family child care home or other for-profit program, or a religious institution or other non-profit organization? Q7: Does the early education program at which you work now participate in the Head Start and/or Early Head Start programs?

# How Do Parents Access Early Childhood Education?

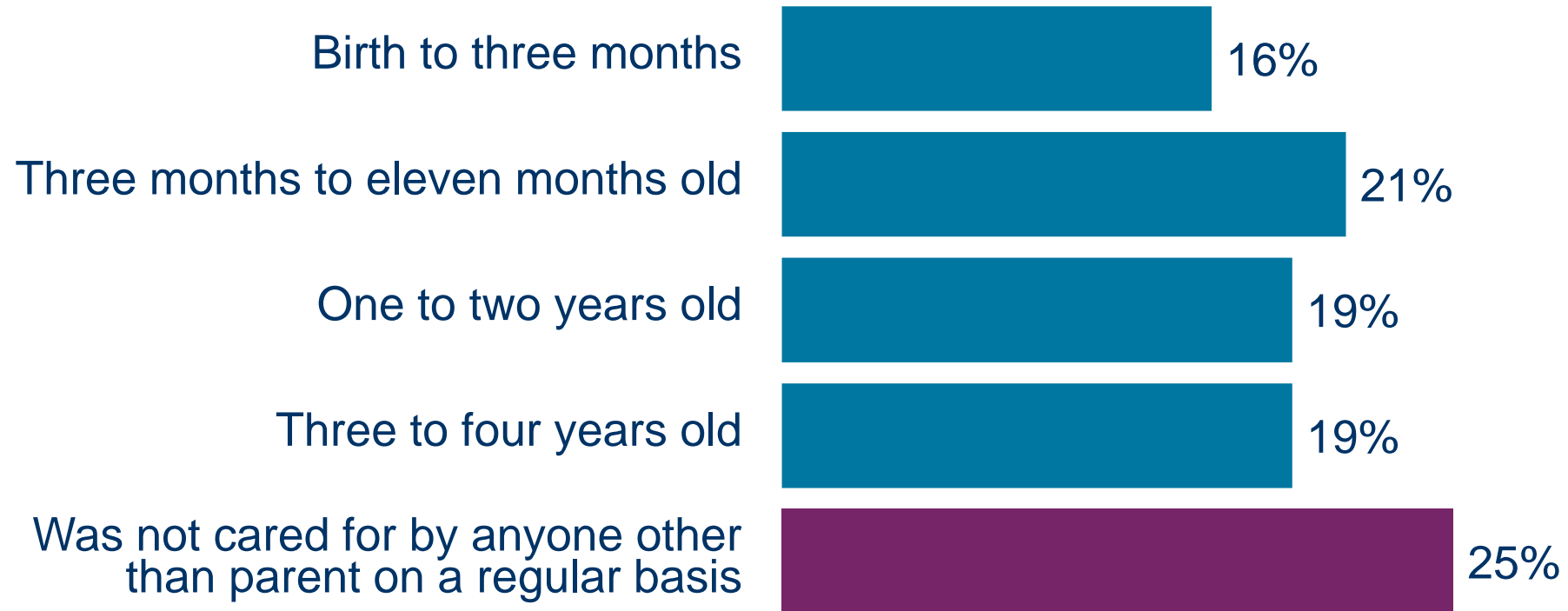
# Four-in-ten parents currently have a child under the age of five in their household.



Q3. Please indicate how many children you have living at home with you in each of the following age groups?



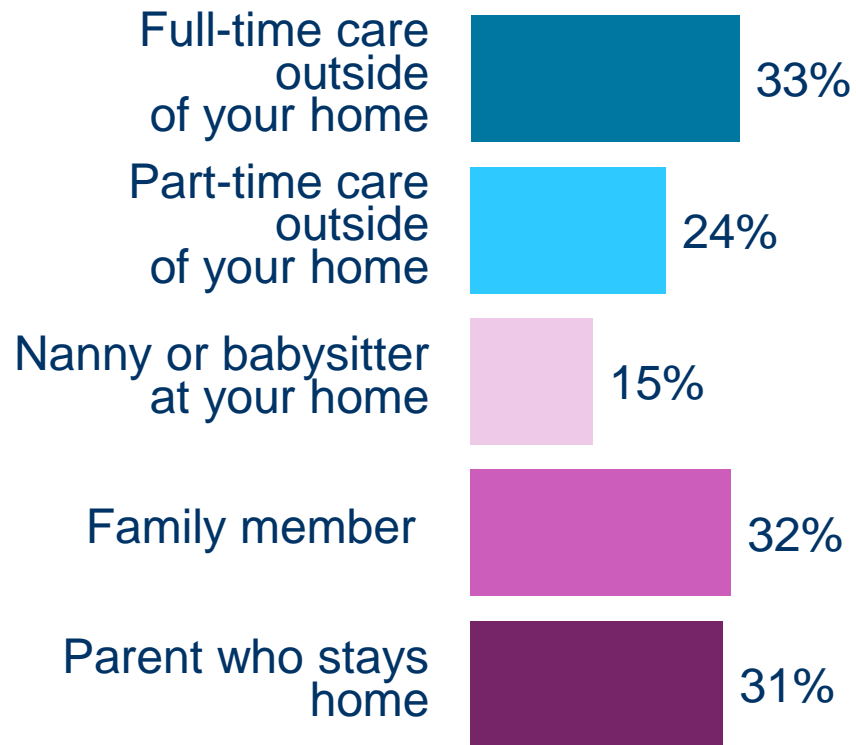
# Three-quarters of children had regular care from someone other than a parent before kindergarten; of those, half began before the child was one year old.



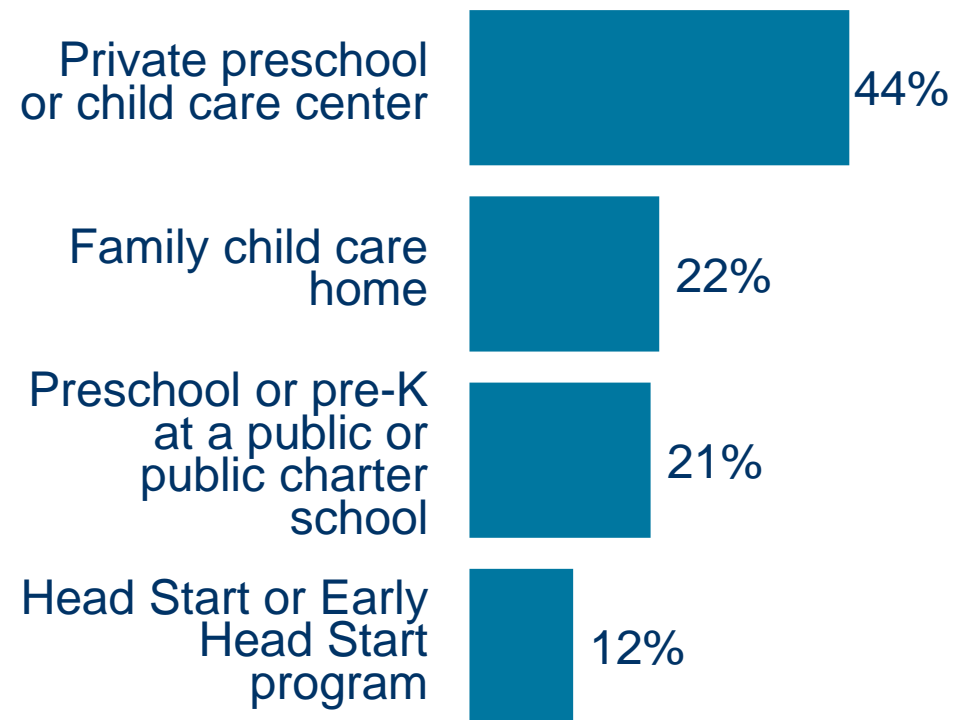
Q13/Q14: Thinking of your oldest child, what was the earliest age before kindergarten or elementary school that he/she was first cared for by someone other than a parent on a regular basis?

# More than half of children were cared for outside of their home – and nearly half of those attended a private ECE program.

*What types of child care arrangements do/did you have for your child/children under age five?*



*What type of care do/did you have for your child? (Among Those Cared for Outside Home)*



# How Educators and Parents Think About Quality

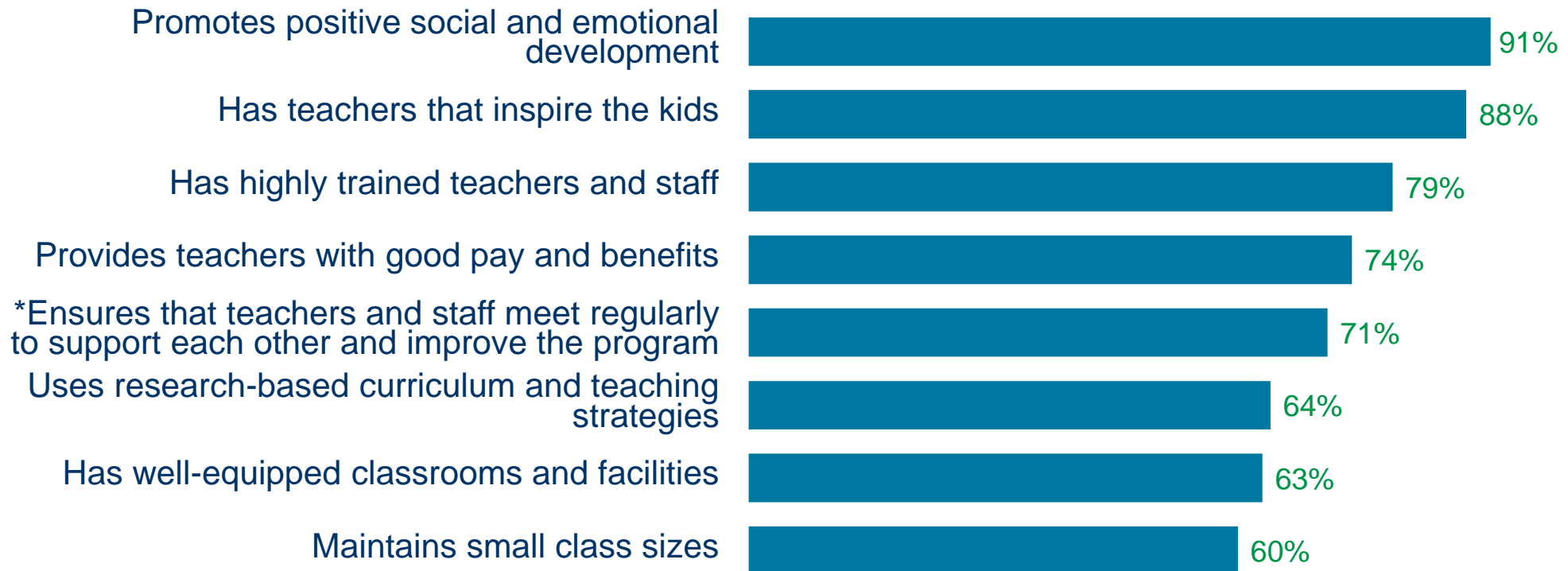
# Quality teachers and staff are the primary element that educators believe makes a program high quality.

*In a few of your own words, what do you think makes an early learning program high quality?  
(Open-Ended; Categories of Responses with 3% and Above Shown)*

What do you think makes an early learning program high quality?	%
Qualified/Experienced teachers/staff	38%
Family engagement and interaction with parents	23%
Caring/nurturing environment	20%
Quality of Curriculum/Structure	15%
Developmentally appropriate curriculum	13%
Healthy/safe environment	12%
Relationships/Interactions with Children	12%
Love to teach/Passion/Dedication	11%
Professional development/Training/Up to date	9%
Supportive staff and Workplace culture	9%
Learning through play	8%

# There is a high degree of unanimity among educators about what defines quality early learning.

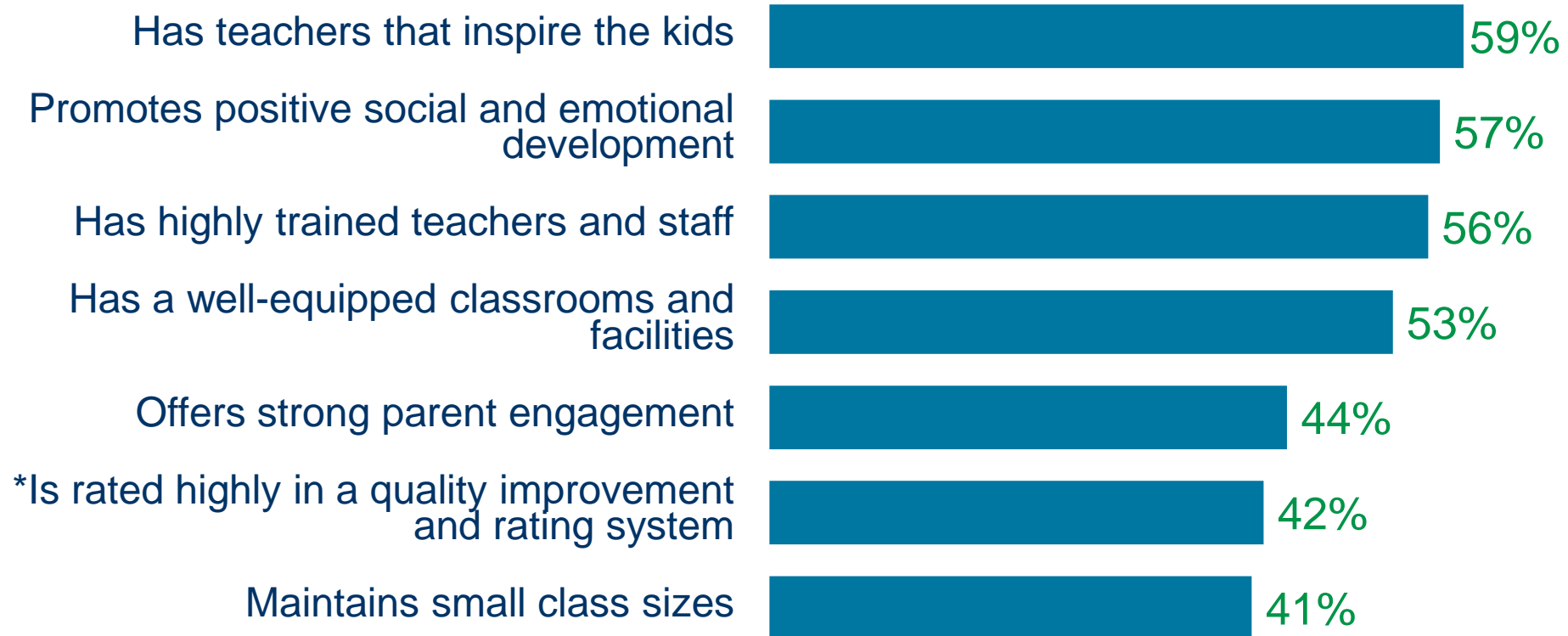
(% Extremely Important)



Q12. More specifically, here is a list of elements of an early learning program. For each, please indicate how important you think it is for the quality of that program: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. \*Split Sample

# Parents share similar definitions of quality, focusing on teachers and positive social-emotional development.

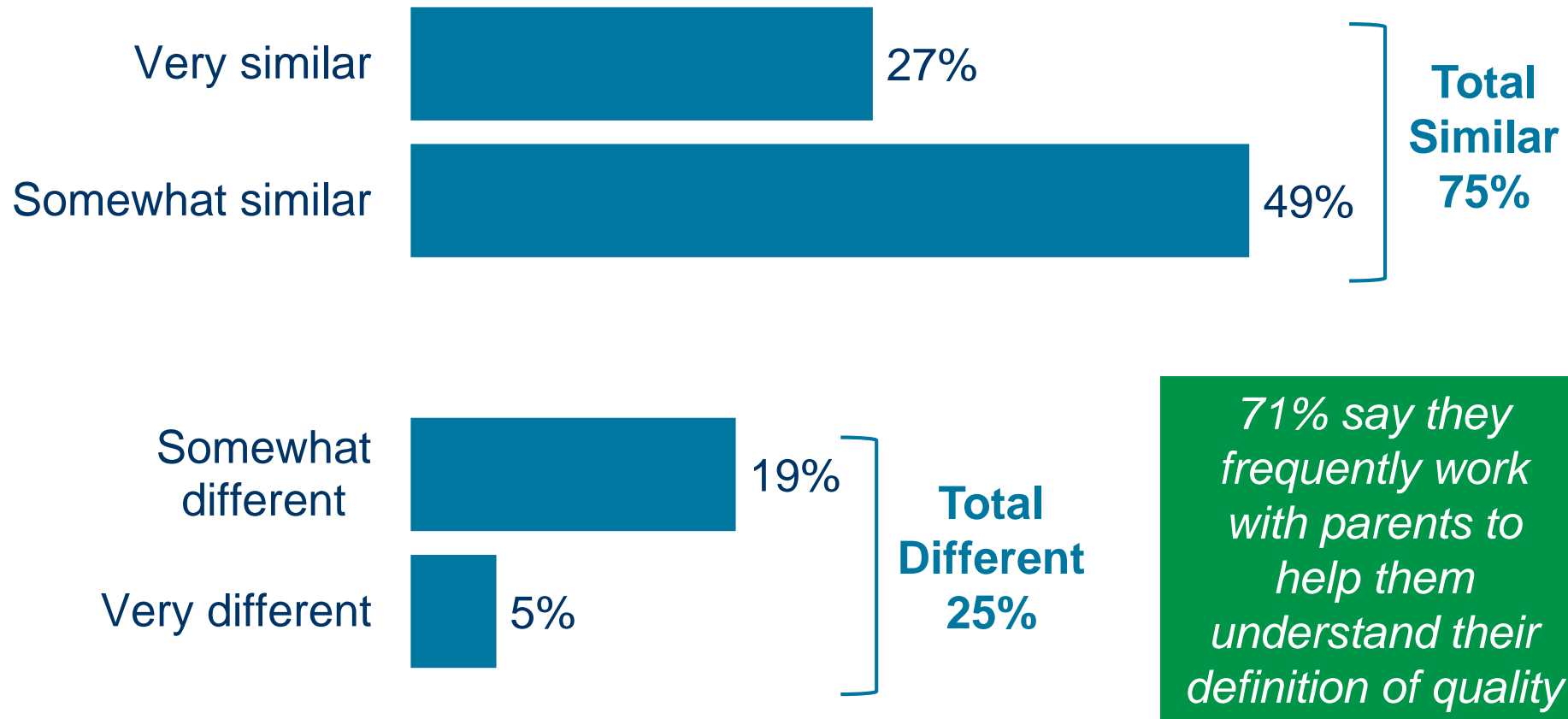
(% Extremely Important)



Q32. Here is a list of elements of an early learning program. For each, please indicate how important you think it is for the quality of that program: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. \*Split Sample

# Educators mostly believe that parents define quality similarly to the way they do.

Q16. Do you think that you and the parents you serve have similar or different definitions of quality early learning?



# Educators say that parents' biggest misperception about quality early learning is too much focus on academics.

*In your mind, what are parents' biggest misperceptions about what contributes to high-quality early learning?  
(Open-Ended; Categories of Responses with 2% and Above Shown)*

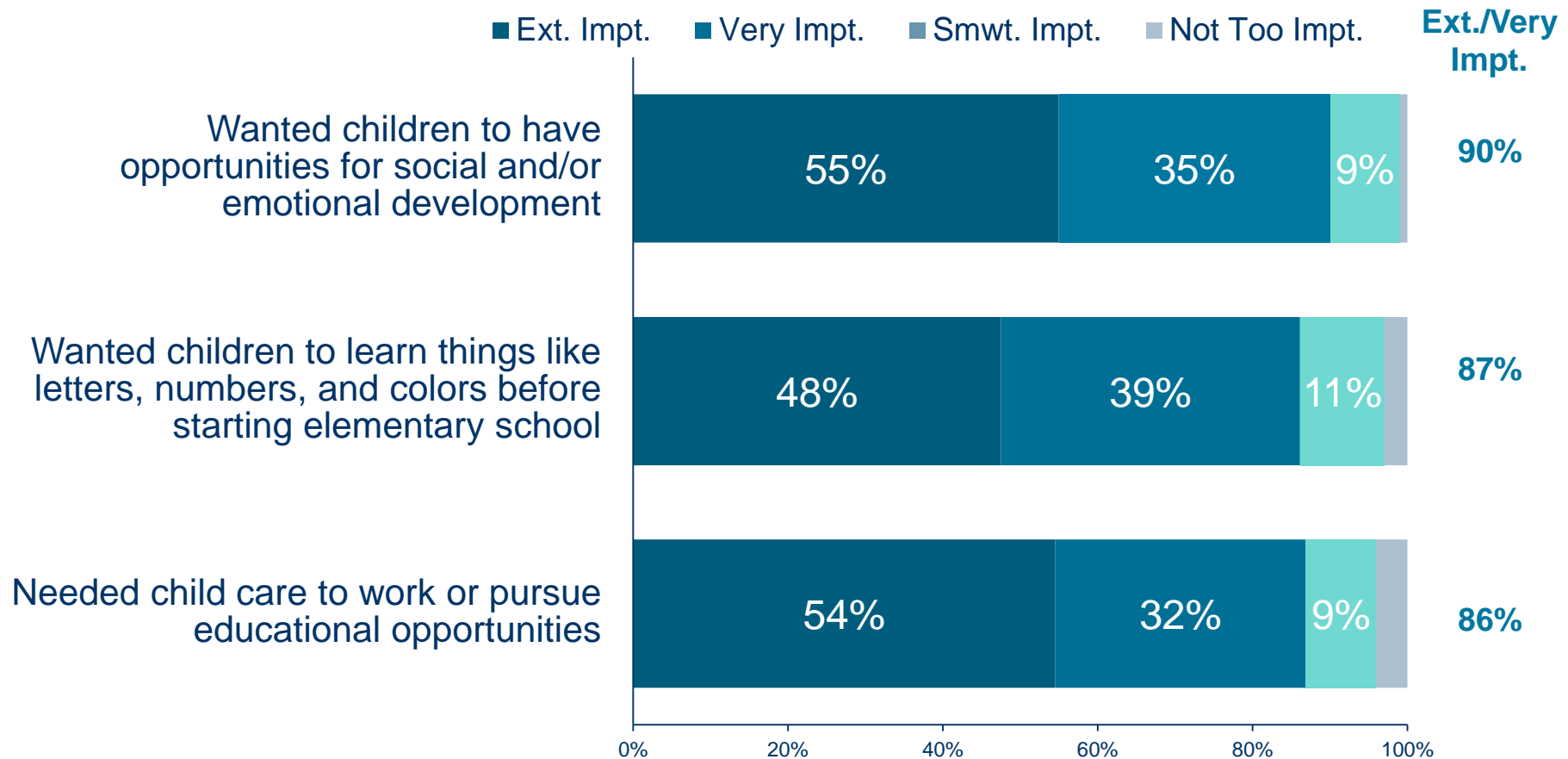
<b>Parents' Biggest Misperceptions</b>	<b>%</b>
Overemphasis on academics	28%
Importance of play-based learning	17%
Misunderstand age/developmentally appropriate practices	15%
Cost is most important factor	10%
Want to see worksheets/homework/art projects	9%
Importance of social/emotional development	8%
Preschool is a babysitting service	8%



# **How Educators and Parents Choose an Early Learning Program**

# At nearly equal levels, parents who chose to have their children in early learning programs wanted children to develop socially and academically, and to work or go to school.

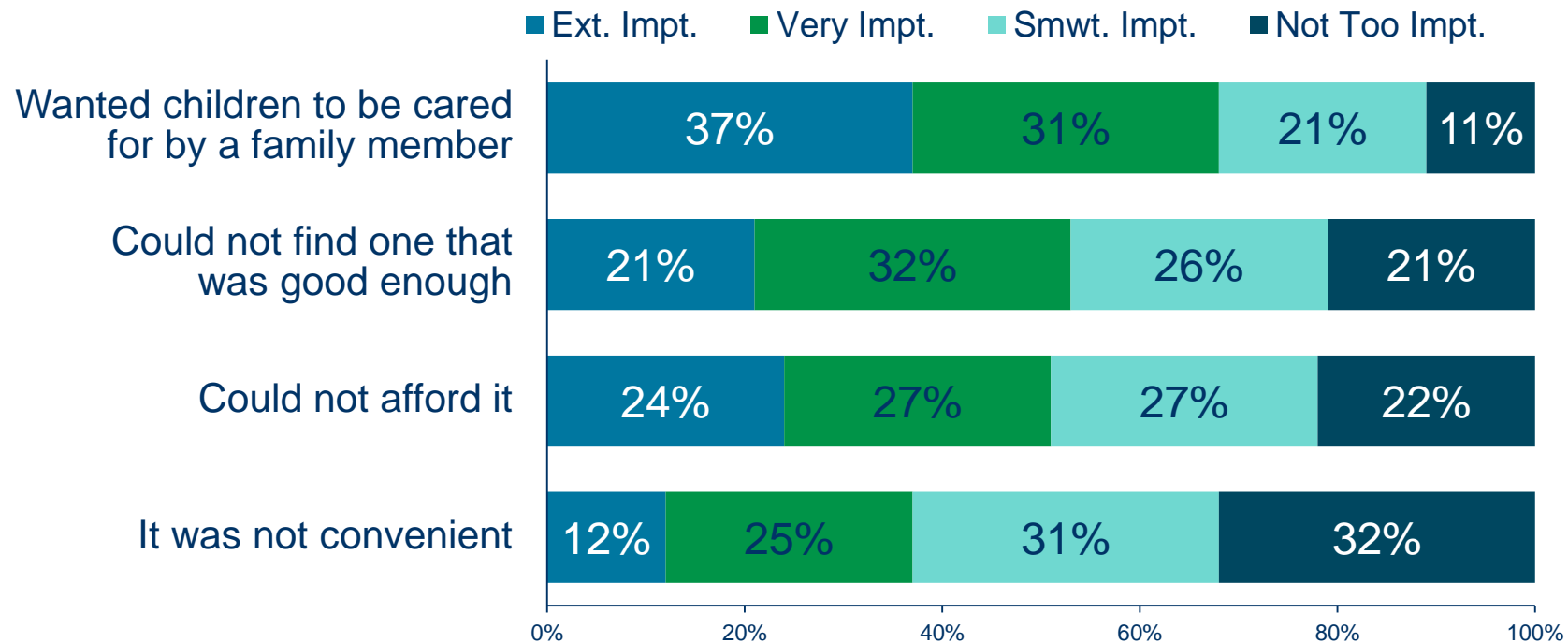
(Among Those Who Have Children Currently or Formerly in Out-of-Home Care)



Q20: Here are some reasons why parents choose to have their children in an early learning program. Please indicate how important that reason was for you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. N=630

# Of parents whose children do not attend ECE programs, more than half point to quality, affordability, and convenience as barriers.

( Among Those with No Children in Out-of-Home Care )

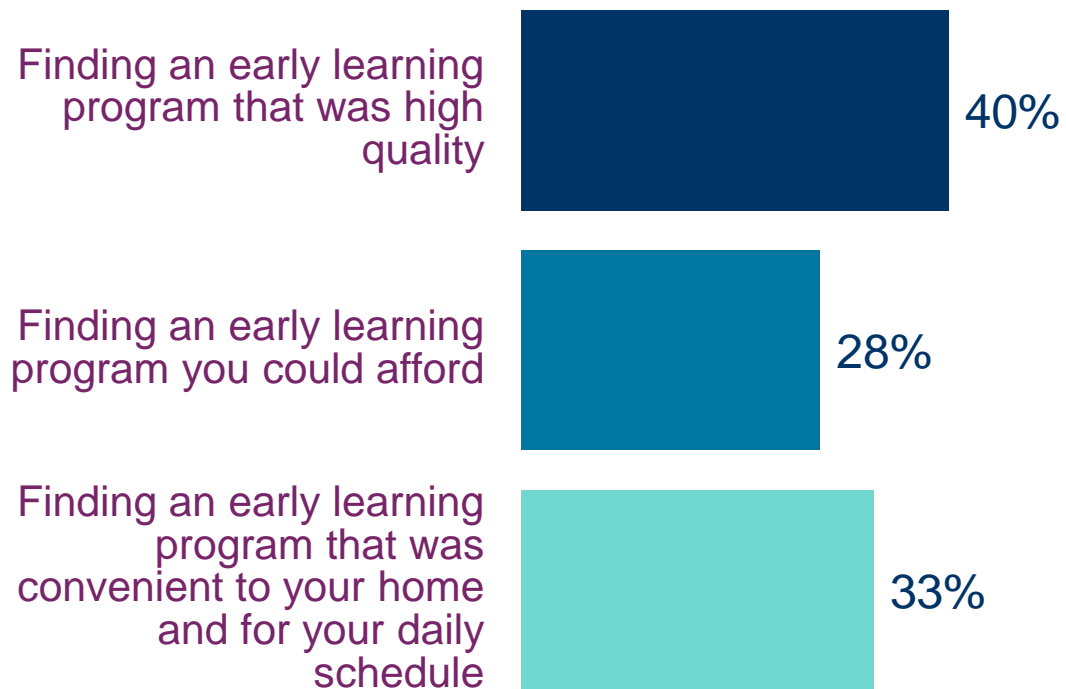


Choosing to have children home with family was the top reason across income levels, age and gender, although it was significantly more important to men under 50 than women under 50.

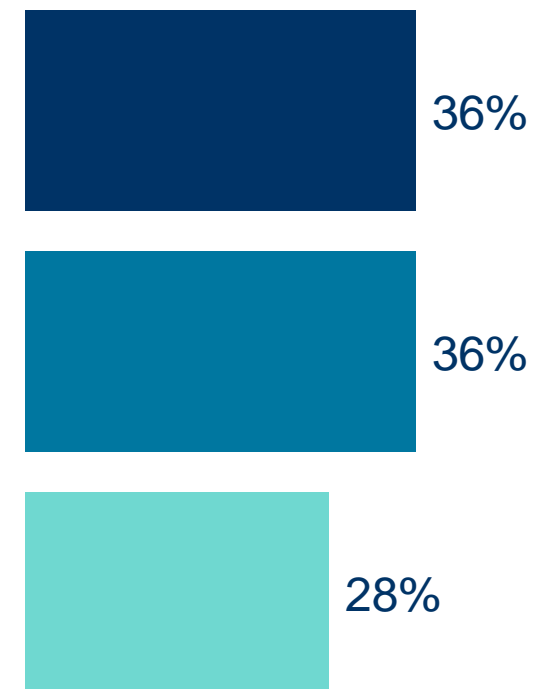
Q21: Here are some reasons why parents choose not to have their children in an early learning program. Please indicate how important that reason was for you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important N=572

# Parents are split on the most important aspects of choosing a program – and which are hardest to find.

*There are many considerations for families when they choose an early learning arrangement outside of the home. Of the following three, which was most important for you?*

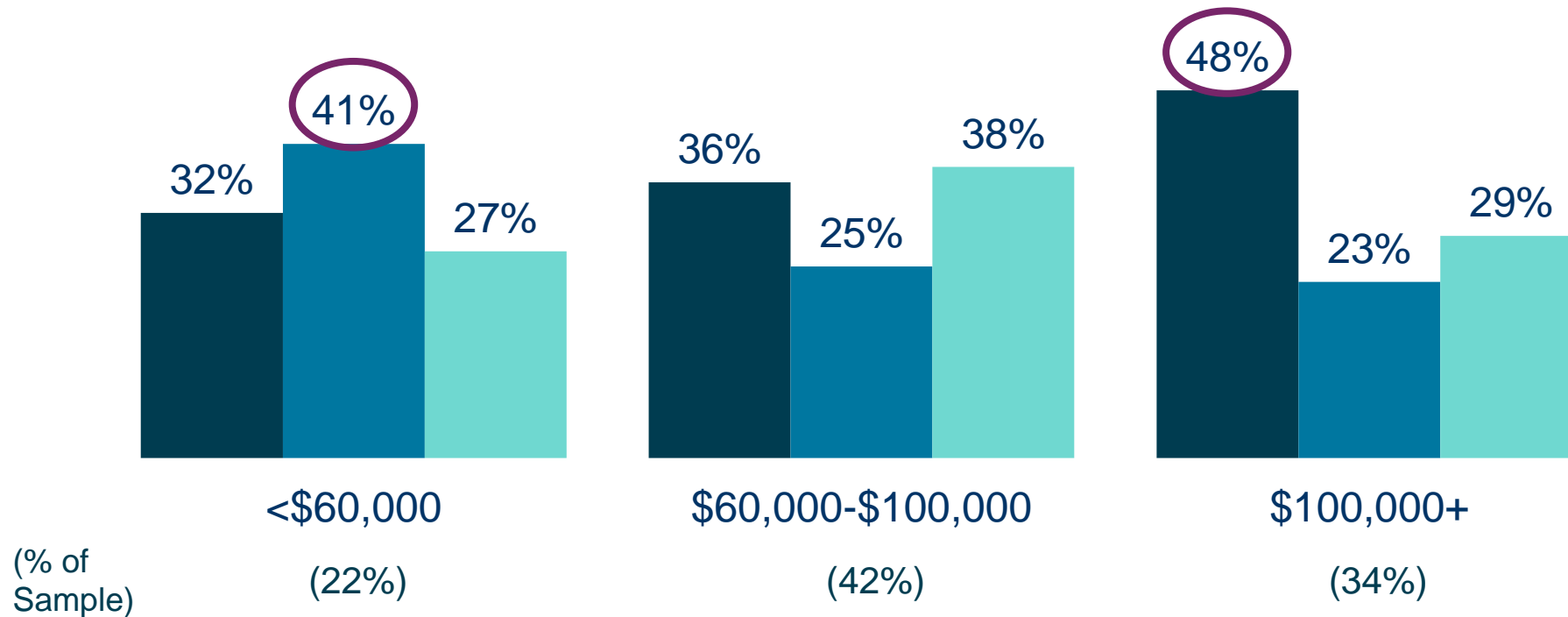


*Thinking of the same three considerations, which was hardest for you to find?*



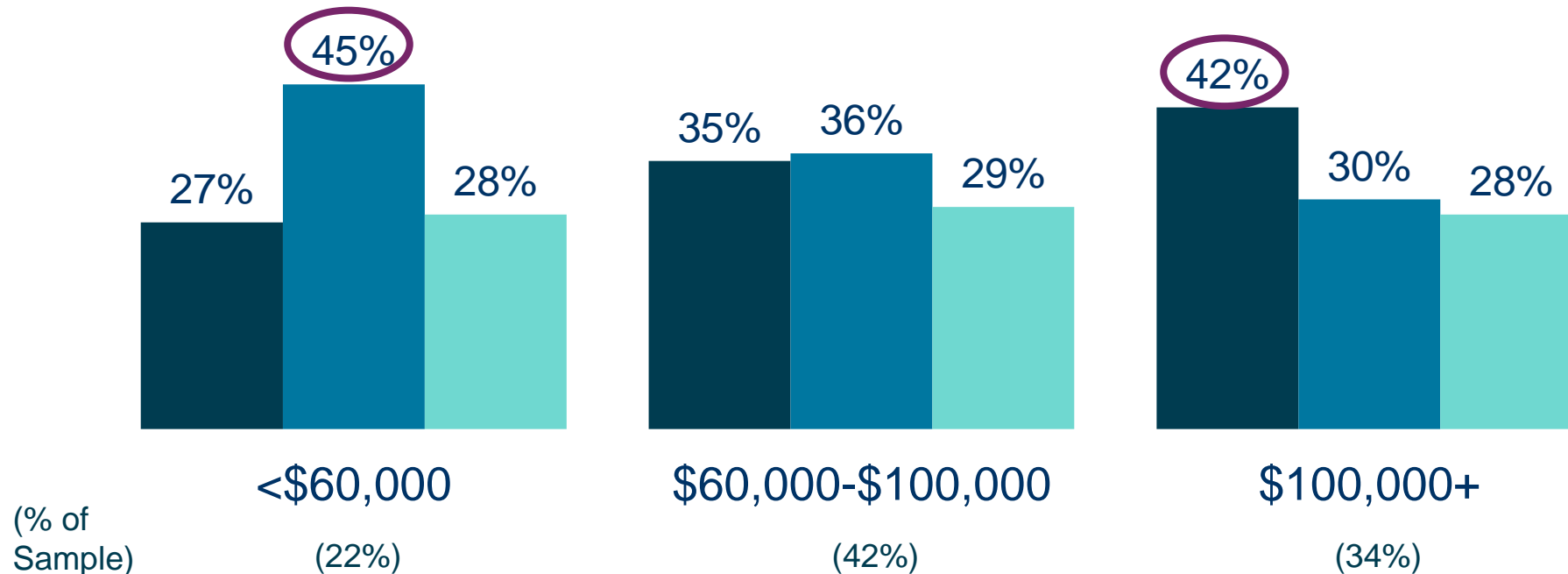
# Quality is more *important* to more affluent parents, and affordability to less affluent ones...

- Finding an early learning program that was high quality
- Finding an early learning program you could afford
- Finding an early learning program that was convenient to your home and for your daily schedule



# ...and parents at each income level found it *hardest* to find the trait they valued most.

- Finding an early learning program that was high quality
- Finding an early learning program you could afford
- Finding an early learning program that was convenient to your home and for your daily schedule



## Safety and social/emotional development are high priorities for parents and educators in distinguishing between programs.

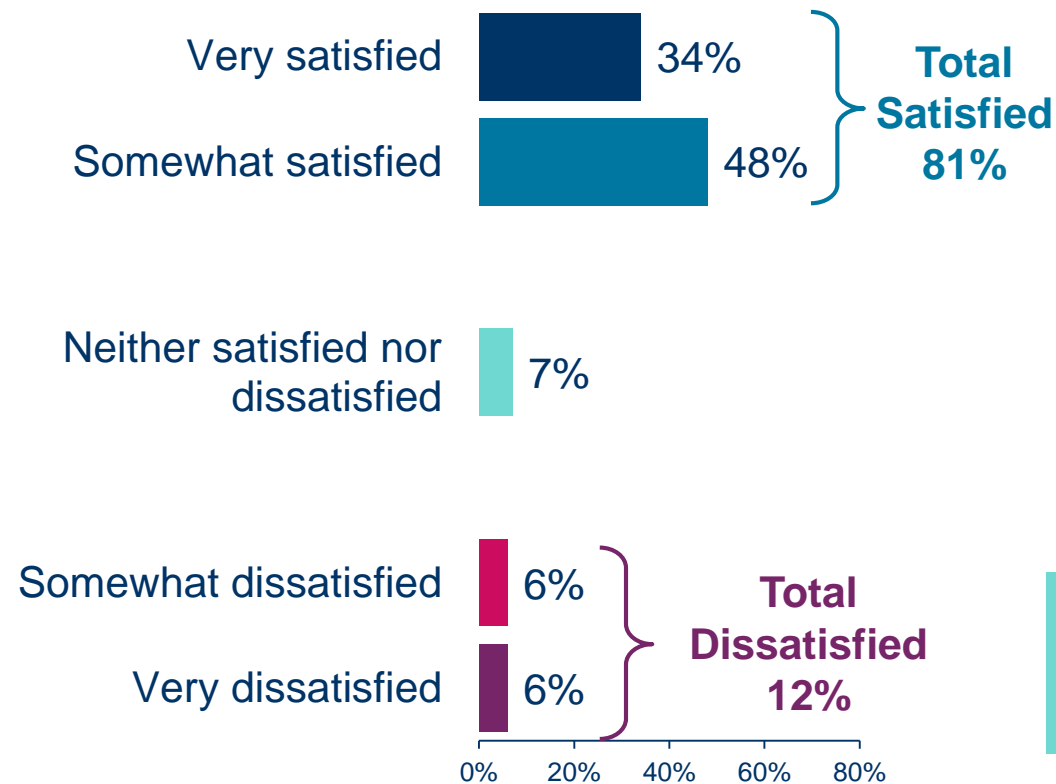
(% Extremely Important)

Factor	Educators	Parents
Is safe	94%	73%
Promotes positive social and emotional development	92%	53%
The classroom environment has a good feel	84%	--
Deals appropriately with children who have behavioral problems	77%	46%
Allows staff time for professional development and personal growth	74%	--
Has teachers who meet state and local standards	68%	52%
Has teachers who are well-compensated	68%	34%
Emphasizes language and literacy	66%	42%
Has teachers & staff that share and/or are sensitive to your culture or language	66%	35%
Has a low student-to-teacher ratio	65%	42%
Uses research-based curriculum and teaching strategies	64%	37%
Has a good reputation or reviews	63%	54%
Has teachers & staff with degrees in child development and/or ECE	58%	45%

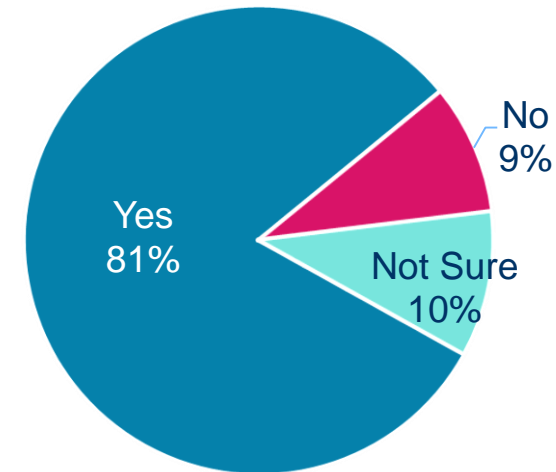
Q22 (2016 Parent Survey). Here is a list of different factors that some parents consider when choosing an early learning program for their child. In general, in choosing an early learning program for a child under age five, please indicate how important each of these factors would be to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. Split Sample

# 8-in-10 parents said they were satisfied with their children's early learning program and would pick it again.

How satisfied are you with the early learning arrangement you **have/had** for your children who **receive/received** child care outside the home?



Having experienced the program, if you were in position to pick another early learning program, would you pick the same one again?

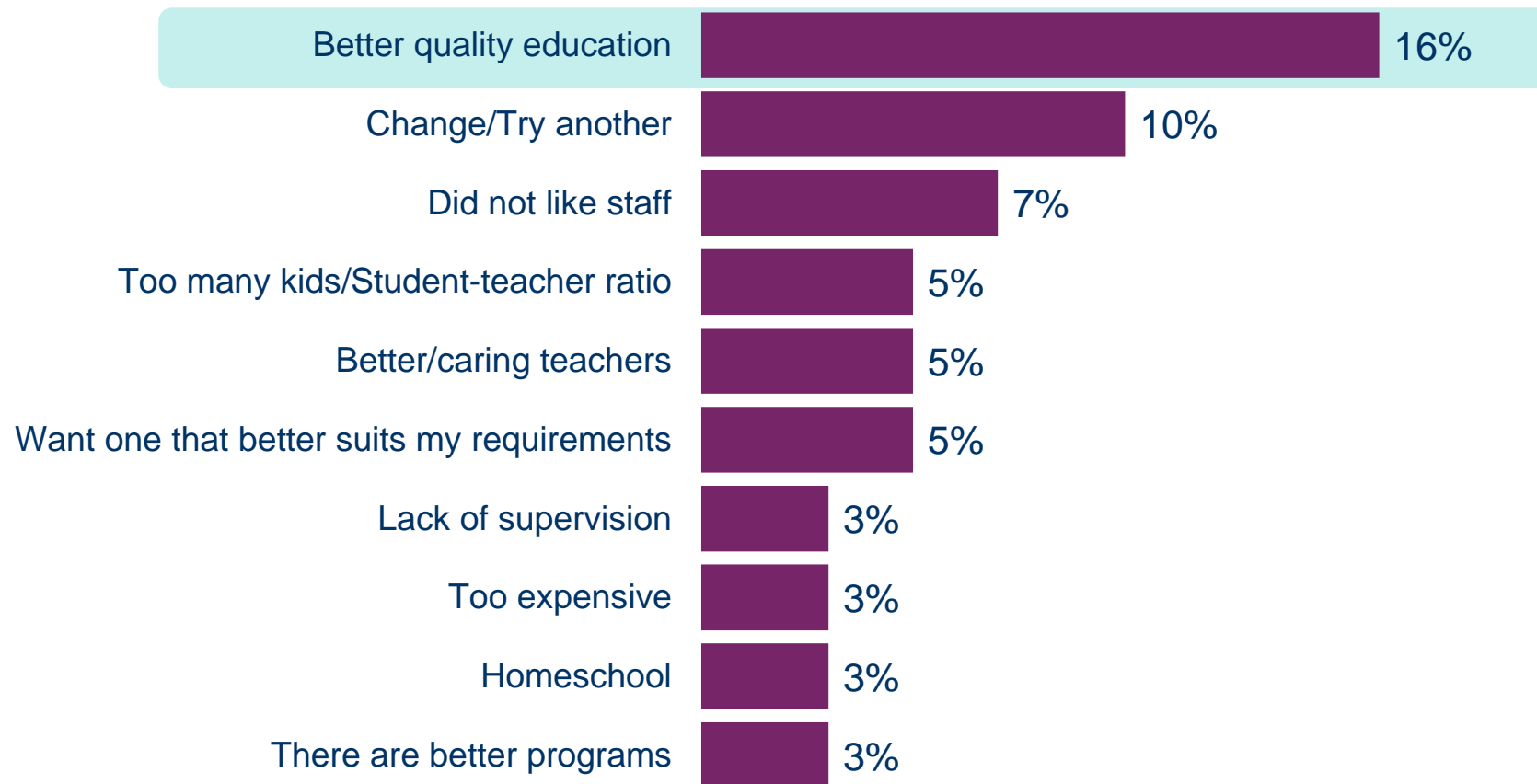


Even 73% of those who are dissatisfied would choose it again – maybe due to lack of options.



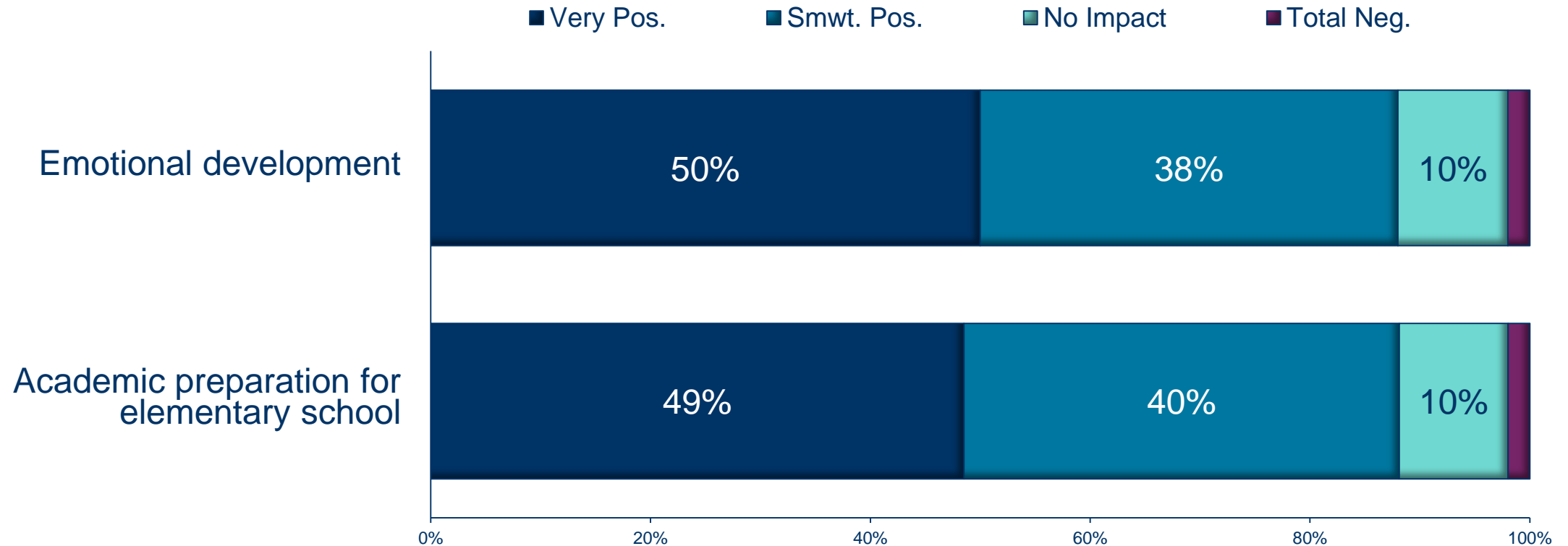
# Of those who would not pick the same program, wanting more quality was the top reason.

*In a few of your own words, why would you not pick the same program?*



# Regardless of their choices, parents overwhelmingly say that early learning had a positive impact on their children's emotional development and academic preparation.

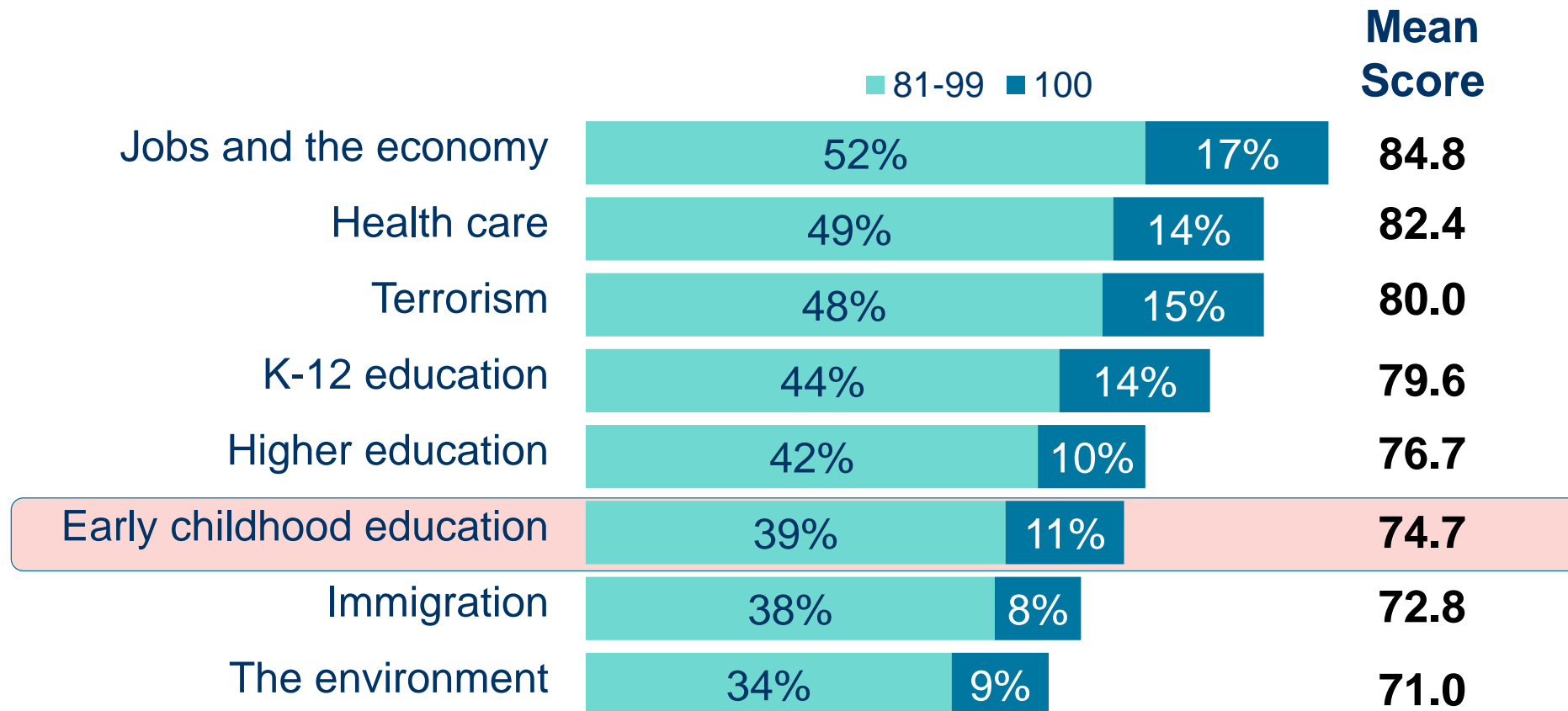
*(Among Those with Children Ages Five or Over)*



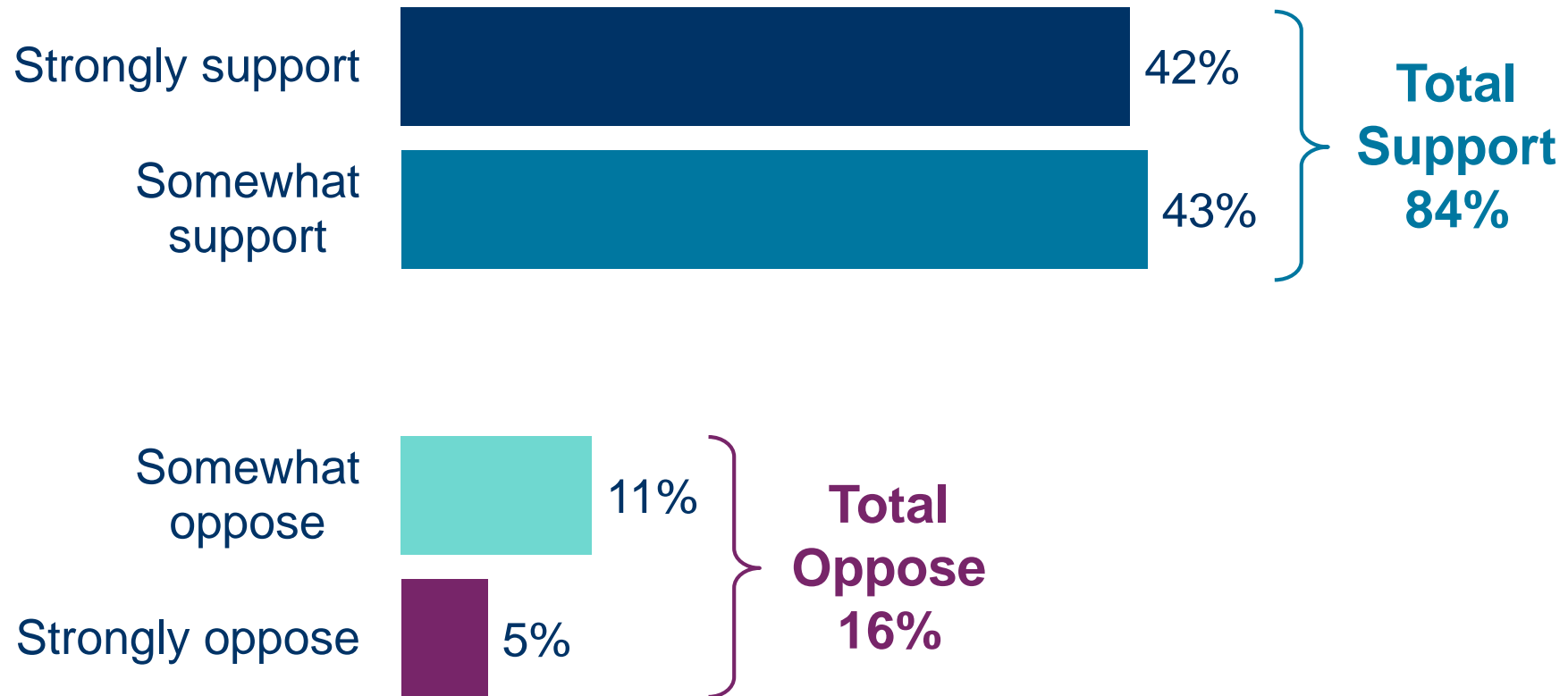
# Early Learning Funding and Advocacy

# Parents placed ECE in the middle of the pack of issues of importance for Presidential candidates.

*There are several issues that could be important to voters when they decide which Presidential candidate to support. Please rate how important a candidate's position on that issue is when you are deciding whether to support them. We will use a 0-100 scale, where 0 means the issue is not at all important to you and 100 means it is extremely important.*



# Parents overwhelmingly support increasing public funding for quality ECE.



Q33. Would you support or oppose increasing public funding for ensuring access to quality early childhood education for all children?

# Parents and educators believe in shared responsibility for ensuring funding to make high-quality ECE available to all children.

*(One of the Most Responsible)*

Individuals/Organizations	Parents	Educators
State government	32%	56%
Federal government	32%	54%
Local governments	29%	43%
School districts	30%	35%
<b>Parents</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Employers	17%	23%
Taxpayers generally	18%	22%
Religious institutions and non-profit organizations	17%	11%

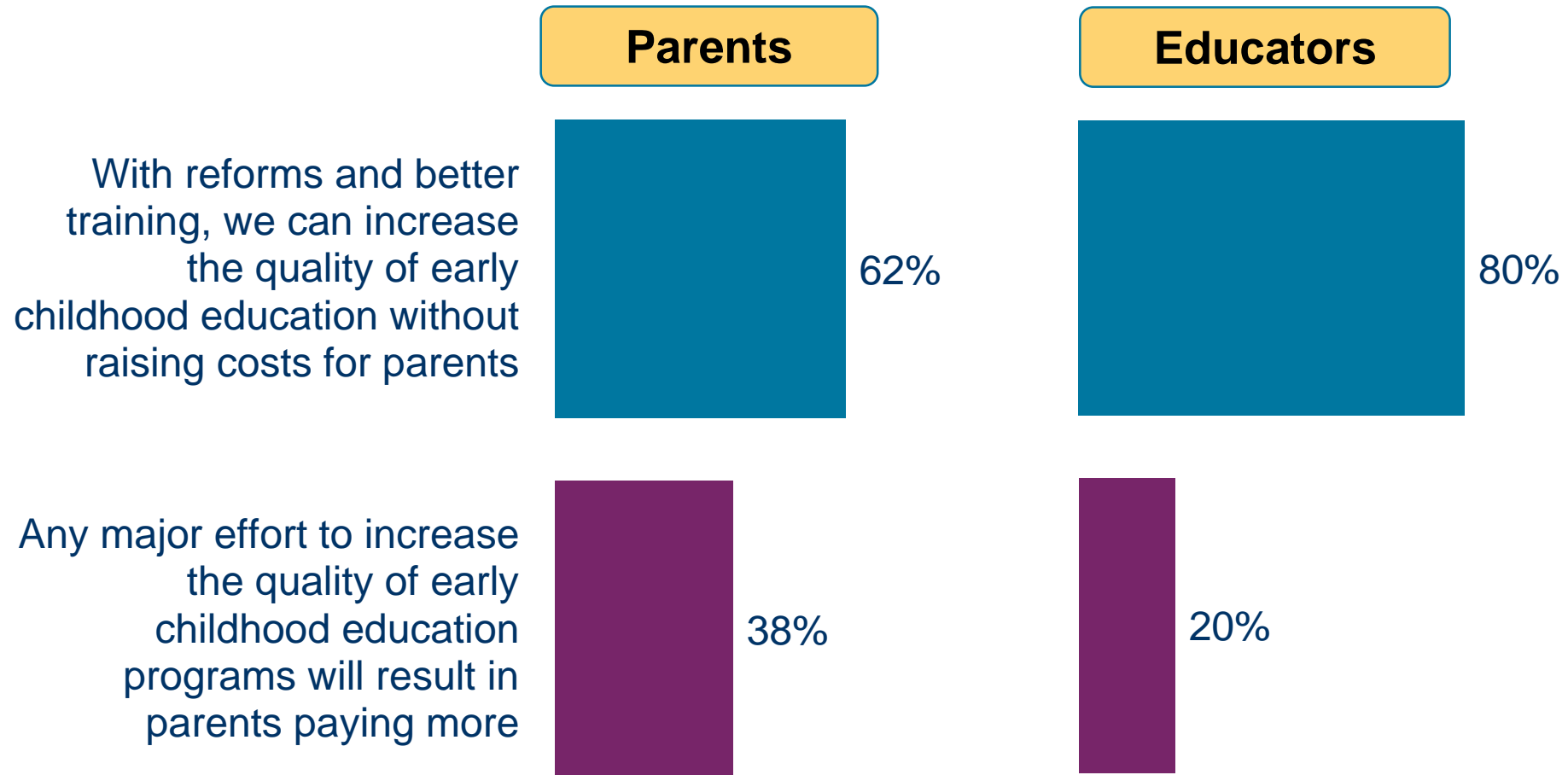
Q34. Here is a list of individuals and organizations that could be responsible for ensuring there is funding to make high-quality early childhood education available to all children. Please tell me how responsible you think that individual or organization should be for helping to provide such funding: one of the most responsible, very responsible, somewhat responsible or not responsible.

Political ideology yields different perspectives on the role of government, but *not* on the role of parents. Approximately 40% of conservative, moderate, *and* liberal parents believe they should be one of the most responsible for funding early childhood education, with a shared role for local, state, and federal government.

*% Viewing Each as One of the Most Responsible for Funding ECE*

Individuals/Organizations	Parents	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Parents	43%	43%	42%	45%
State government	32%	39%	34%	21%
Federal government	32%	40%	32%	24%
School districts	30%	35%	30%	25%
Local governments	29%	36%	29%	20%
Taxpayers generally	18%	28%	14%	13%
Employers	17%	26%	13%	12%
Religious institutions and non-profit organizations	17%	26%	12%	14%

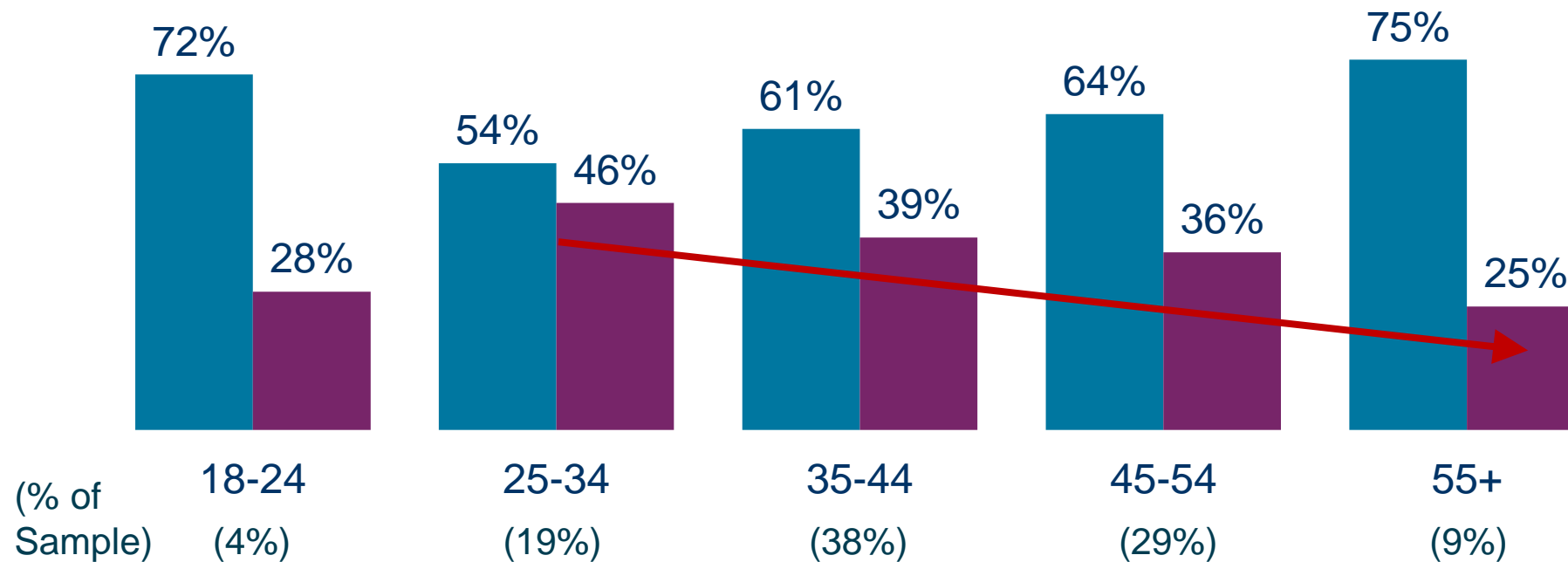
# Educators are more confident than parents that quality can be improved without increased costs.





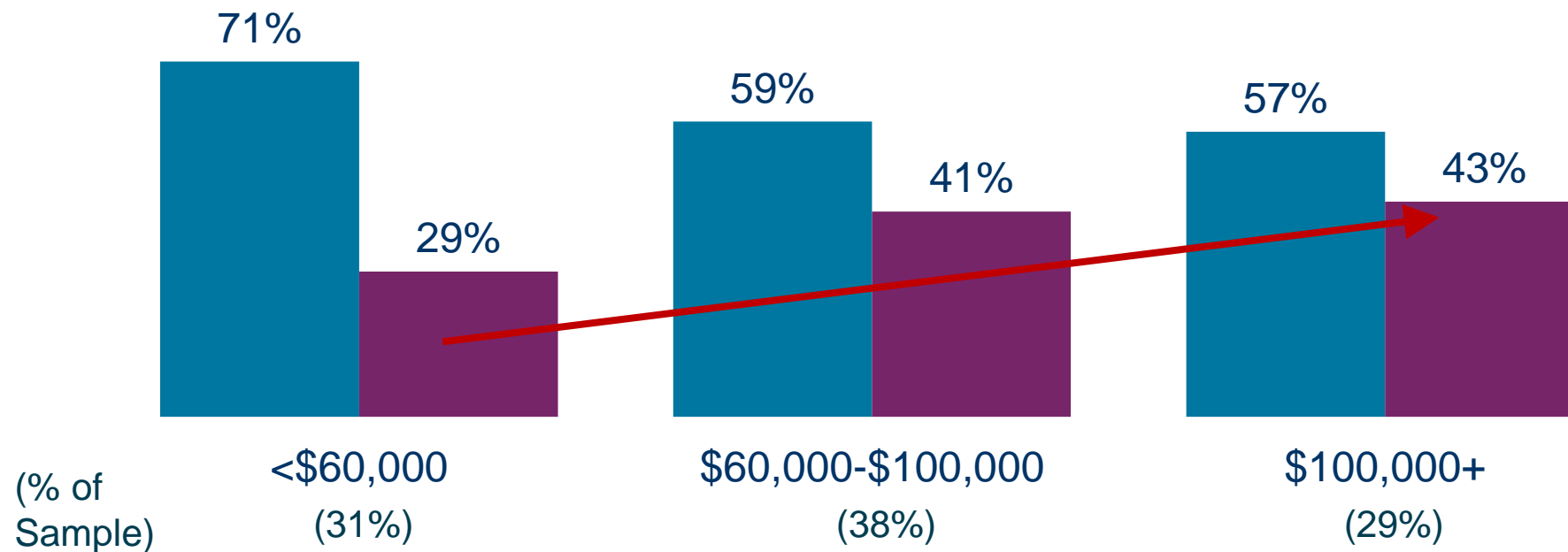
# A belief that ECE improvements will cost parents more declines with age...

- With reforms and better training, we can increase the quality of early childhood education without raising costs for parents
- Any major effort to increase the quality of early childhood education programs will result in parents paying more



# ...and rises with income.


- With reforms and better training, we can increase the quality of early childhood education without raising costs for parents
- Any major effort to increase the quality of early childhood education programs will result in parents paying more



# Educators overwhelmingly believe that teacher compensation is critical for quality improvement.

Q21. Which of the following statements comes closer to your opinion?

Any major effort to increase the quality of early childhood education programs will fail unless early educators receive increased salaries and benefits

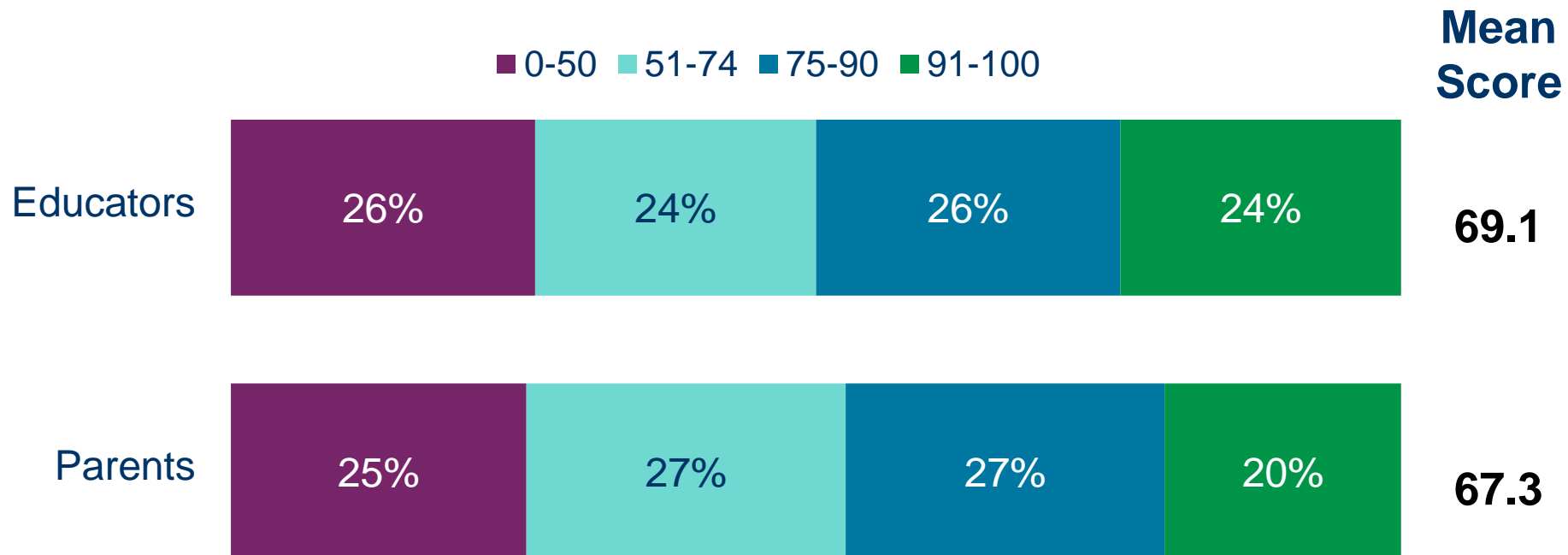


Statement	Percentage
Any major effort to increase the quality of early childhood education programs will fail unless early educators receive increased salaries and benefits	81%
With reforms and better training, we can increase the quality of early childhood education without increasing salaries and benefits for early educators	19%

With reforms and better training, we can increase the quality of early childhood education without increasing salaries and benefits for early educators

# Educators and parents are both willing to advocate for ECE.

*Some people say that the only way to expand access to high-quality early childhood programs is for parents to be involved in the political process and advocate for it. Please indicate how interested you might be in getting more personally involved in advocating for increased access to high-quality early childhood education. Please use a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you have no interest at all and 100 means you are extremely interested, with 50 being neutral.*



# Educator Subgroup Distinctions on Willingness to Advocate for Early Learning

- Among educators, the groups most willing to advocate include:
  - › African-Americans and Latinos
  - › Strong liberals/Democrats
  - › Under age 40
  - › Income below \$60,000
- There are large differences by ideology (mean score for “very liberal” is 79 compared to 55 for “very conservative”).
- Small differences by tenure in ECE, job type, ages served, and program type

# Educators are almost universally willing to cast a pro-ECE vote or talk to friends about early learning.

(% Very Willing)

Action	Educators	Parents
^Voting for a candidate or ballot measure who supported early childhood education	82%	47%
^Talking to friends and family about supporting early childhood education	72%	43%
Buying something where some of the money goes to supporting early childhood education	63%	44%
Wearing a t-shirt or bracelet with a slogan supporting early childhood education	63%	40%
Signing an online petition	57%	44%
^Sending an email or other communication to a public figure or organization	52%	36%
Sharing, re-sharing, or clicking “like” on an article or image on Facebook, or another online platform	51%	40%

Q23. Please indicate how willing you would be to take each of the following actions to help to advocate for increased access to high-quality early childhood education in your community. ^Not Part of Split Sample

# The strongest messages to encourage educator advocacy focus on the importance of the profession.

Messages	Very Convincing
<b>(GROWING IMPORTANCE)</b> The awareness of the importance of early childhood education is growing every day. More people are recognizing that we must do more to support babies, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Early educators must take that message to policy makers and make sure that early learning programs have the funding and support they need.	<b>47%</b>
<b>(POWERFUL VOICE)</b> If early educators speak up, people will listen. 88% of U.S. voters say that early childhood educators are important contributors to their community. As the experts on early learning, educators should use their powerful voice to fight for policy changes to make quality early learning available for all children.	<b>40%</b>

Q24. Here are a series of statements from people who are urging early educators to get more personally involved in advocating for increased access to high-quality early learning programs. Please indicate whether you find it very convincing as a reason to get more involved in advocating for early learning, somewhat convincing, or not convincing.

# A message around increased compensation in isolation is less compelling.

Messages	Very Convincing
<b>(DON'T WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE)</b> For decades, early childhood educators have known that they should be compensated more fairly and that more should be done to improve the availability of quality early learning programs. But far too often, educators look for someone else to carry that message to policy makers. Early educators cannot wait any longer. It is time for them to speak up and fight for what they know is right.	<b>37%</b>
<b>(QUALITY)</b> Despite the work of educators and others, the quality of early learning programs in America is simply not what it needs to be. Educators need to push policy makers to provide more funding to improve the quality and help programs reach their potential.	<b>34%</b>
<b>(COMPENSATION)</b> The only way early educators will ever receive fair compensation is by advocating to local, state and federal elected officials who control how much funding goes to early learning programs. If educators do more to demand funding for early learning, it will move the system towards getting them the salaries and benefits they deserve.	<b>28%</b>

Q24. Here are a series of statements from people who are urging early educators to get more personally involved in advocating for increased access to high-quality early learning programs. Please indicate whether you find it very convincing as a reason to get more involved in advocating for early learning, somewhat convincing, or not convincing.



## For More Information, Contact:

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