



# **THE AUSTRALIAN EARLY LEARNING MONITOR.**

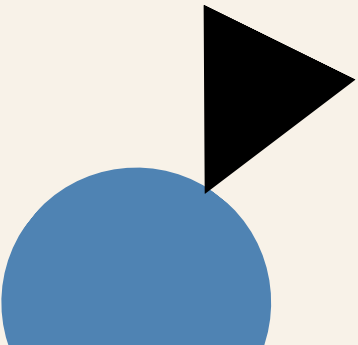
Centre-based daycare  
June 2021.



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

# KEY FINDINGS.

1. Generally, parents of children who are currently attending, or have attended, daycare are older and have higher household incomes; than parents whose children haven't attended daycare.
2. Parents who send or have sent children to daycare, also think more positively about the future especially their financial situation, long-term and short-term career prospects.
3. University educated parents are more likely to have a child in daycare, than parents with secondary school education or professional qualifications.
4. Choosing a daycare facility doesn't just come down to cost – it's a balance of competing needs and acceptable sacrifices for parents.
5. The main reason parents who aren't currently sending their child to daycare made this choice, is that they or their partner can provide care (42%), another one in five say it's too expensive (23%).
6. However, the vast majority of parents whose children under school age don't attend daycare, say their child is likely to attend before primary school (80%).
7. University educated parents who send their children to daycare, are more likely than parents with secondary school education or professional qualifications to say workforce participation is the main reason they send their child to day care (57% and 48% respectively).
8. Similarly, parents who have used daycare for their children are more likely to agree with statements about the family and career sacrifices they have made – than those whose children haven't experienced daycare.
9. As would be expected parents who have sent their child to daycare, are more likely to be aware of the impact of early learning, support a more cohesive system and agree that cheaper early childhood education and care would be better for the economy.
10. However, the majority of parents who haven't sent their children to daycare are still aware, engaged and supportive of the policy.



# METHODOLOGY.

**Fieldwork:** 22<sup>nd</sup> April – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021

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**Sample:**

Child attending centre-based daycare, n=455  
(MoE  $\pm$ 4.6%)

Child not attending centre-based daycare, n=215  
(MoE  $\pm$ 6.7%)

Parent of older children who used to attend  
daycare, n=463 (MoE  $\pm$ 4.6%)

Parent of older children who did not attend  
daycare, n=337 (MoE  $\pm$ 5.3%)

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**Prepared by:** Essential Research

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Our researchers are members of the Research Society. This research is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards.

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Australian  
Polling Council  
Quality Mark

The quantitative poll was developed to canvas a representative sample of the Australian public on their views, attitudes and experiences with the early learning and childcare system in Australia, and to understand their views on relevant issues related to family life, working life and society more broadly.

The national online survey was hosted by Qualtrics and took respondents approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Note that some questions were asked of only half the sample to maximise the number of questions without increasing respondent burden.

The maximum margins of error at a 95% confidence level for the full samples are shown in the left-hand table. For questions asked of half sample, maximum margin of error for any sub-sample is  $\pm$ 9.9%.

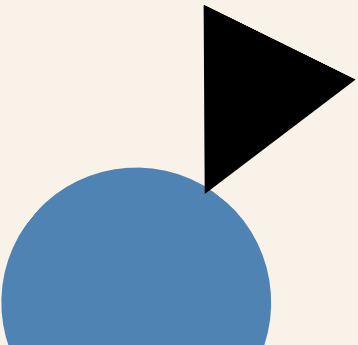
Some figures in this report will not total 100% due to rounding. Full methodology can be found [here](#). For more results from the Early Learning Monitor go to: <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/earlylearningmonitor/>

# PLEASE NOTE.

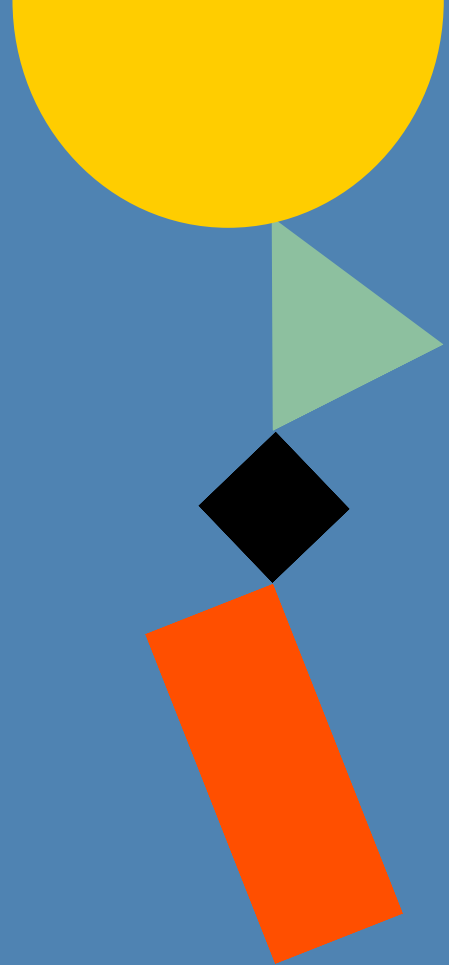
The “parent of older children who attended / did not attend daycare” demographic is made up of those who have dependent children in primary or secondary school, but none under school age. In that case, the relevant question asks whether any of their children attended centre-based daycare or preschool.

Many of the charts in this report compare “parents of a child in daycare” group with “parents of a child not in daycare”.

- For parents with one child under school age, we simply asked if that child was attending centre-based daycare or preschool.
- For parents with more than one child under school age, we first specified that they should answer questions for the child under school age who most recently had a birthday. They were then asked whether that child attended centre-based daycare or preschool.
- 28% of those who said that their preschool-aged child who most recently had a birthday did not attend centre-based daycare or preschool reported that they had more than one child under school age. There is no way of knowing whether those other children attended centre-based daycare – all the survey can tell us is whether the preschool child who most recently had a birthday attends.



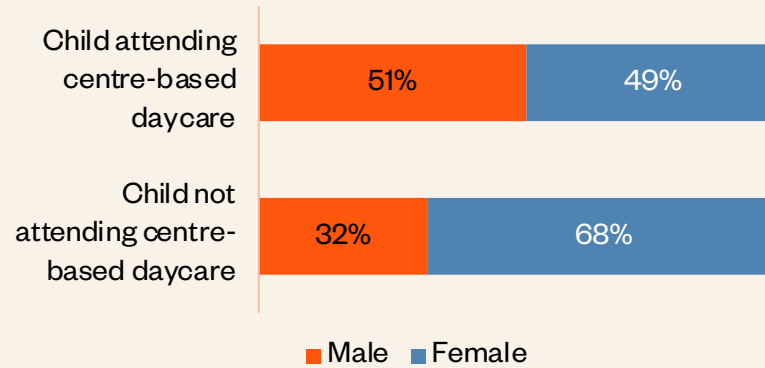
# PROFILE OF PARENTS.



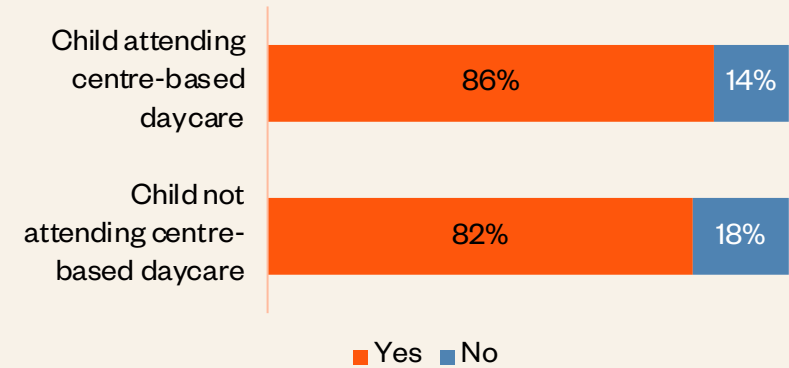
**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

**PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN DAYCARE TEND TO BE OLDER AND HAVE HIGHER INCOMES THAN THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE A CHILD IN DAYCARE.**

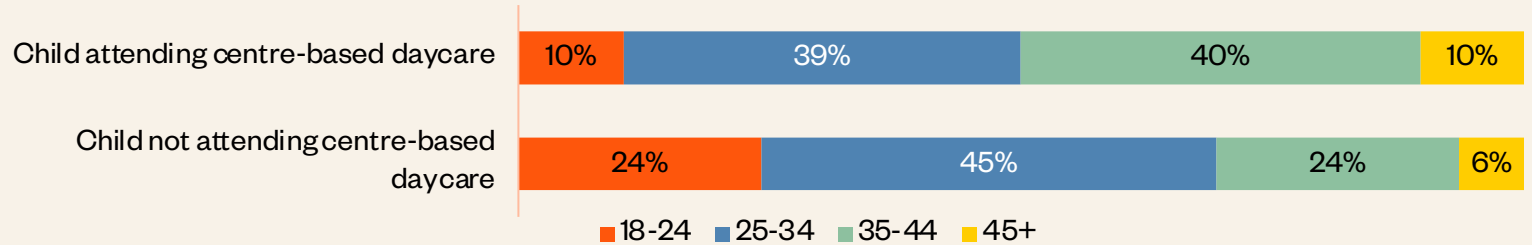
**Gender of parent**



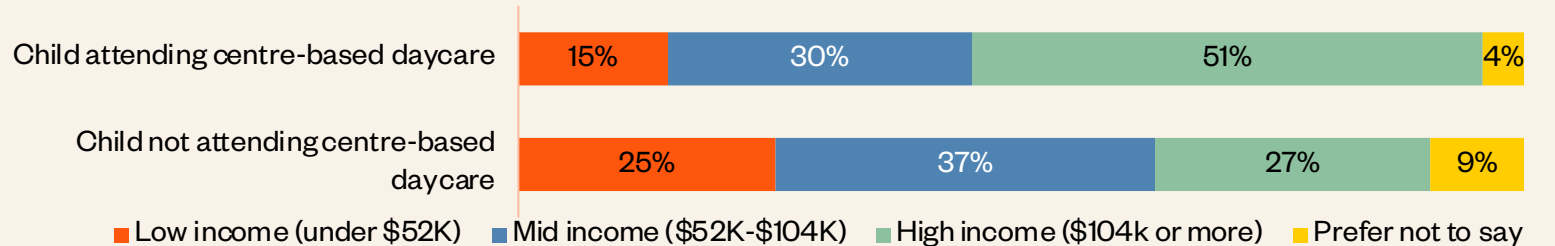
**Parent lives with partner/spouse**



**Parent age**



**Household income**

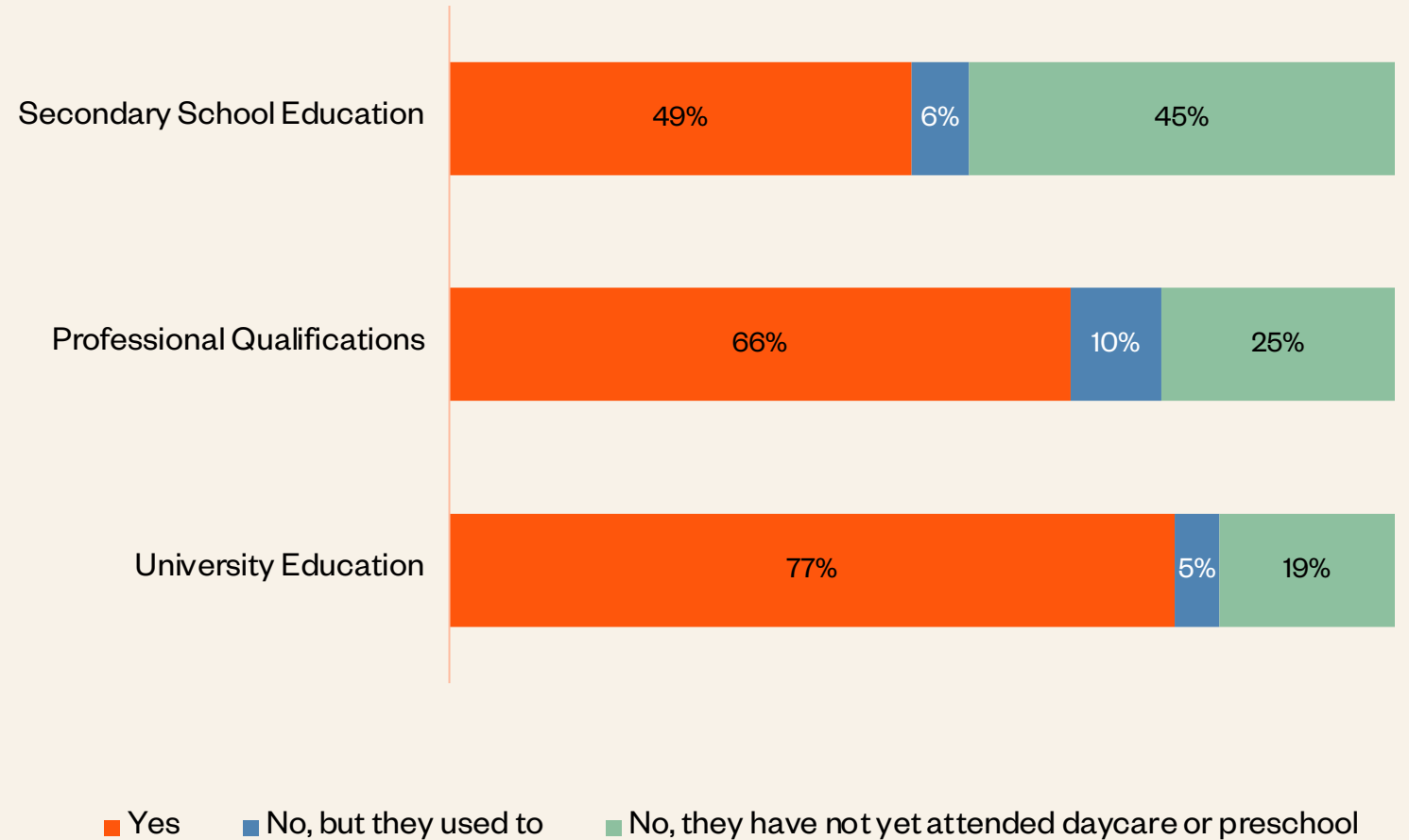


Q. Different names for early learning centres are used in different states and territories. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'centre-based daycare or preschool' refers to any formal early learning & care provided for children under school age through a centre. Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? If you have more than one child under school age, please answer for the child who most recently had a birthday.

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455); Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215)

**PARENTS WITH A UNIVERSITY BACKGROUND ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THOSE WITH ONLY SECONDARY EDUCATION TO HAVE THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILD IN CENTRE-BASED DAYCARE.**

Attendance of centre-based daycare or preschool (%)

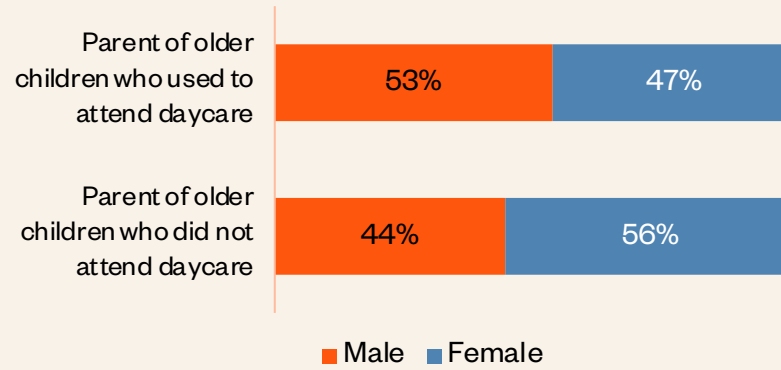


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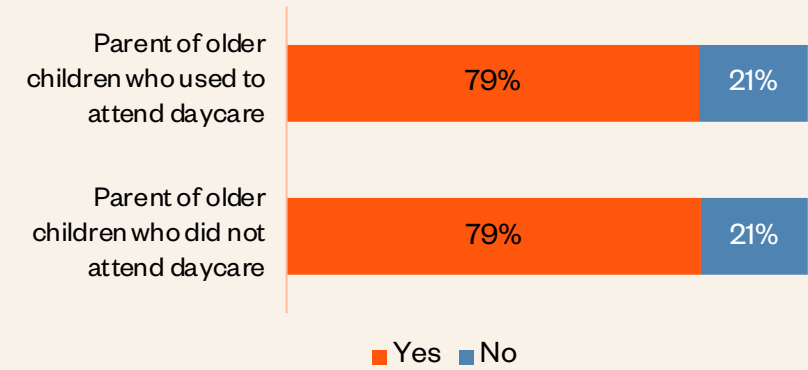
Base: Secondary School Education (n=119), Professional Qualifications (n=190), University Education (n=356)

**PARENTS OF OLDER CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED PRESCHOOL ARE SIMILARLY MORE LIKELY TO BE OLDER AND HAVE A HIGHER HOUSEHOLD INCOME.**

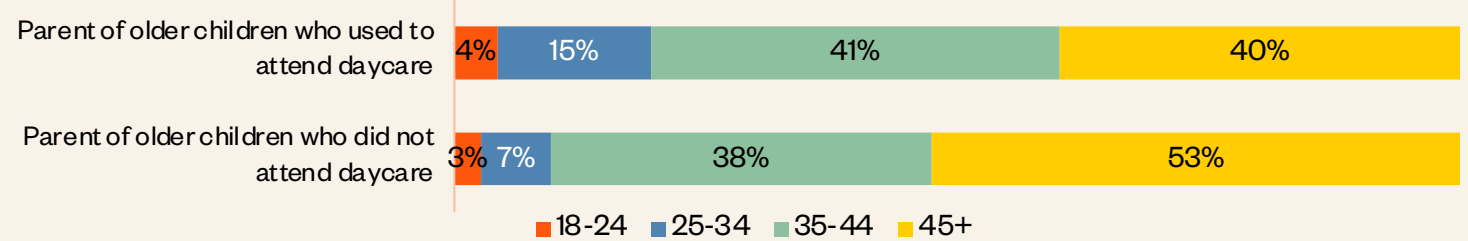
**Gender of parent**



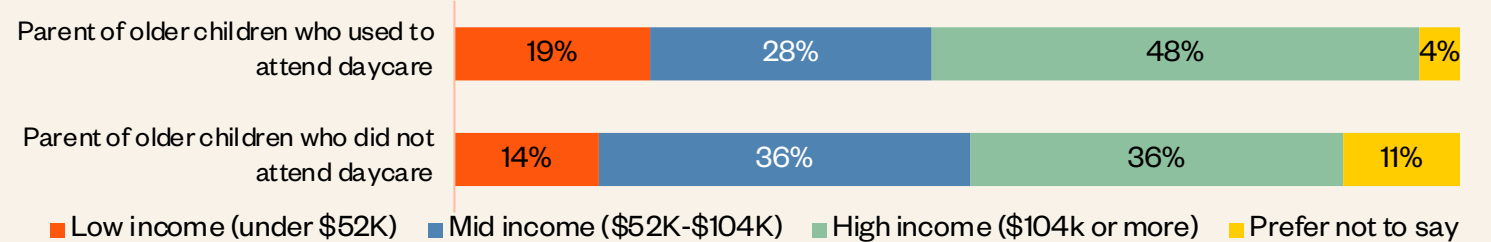
**Parent lives with partner/spouse**



**Parent age**



**Household income**

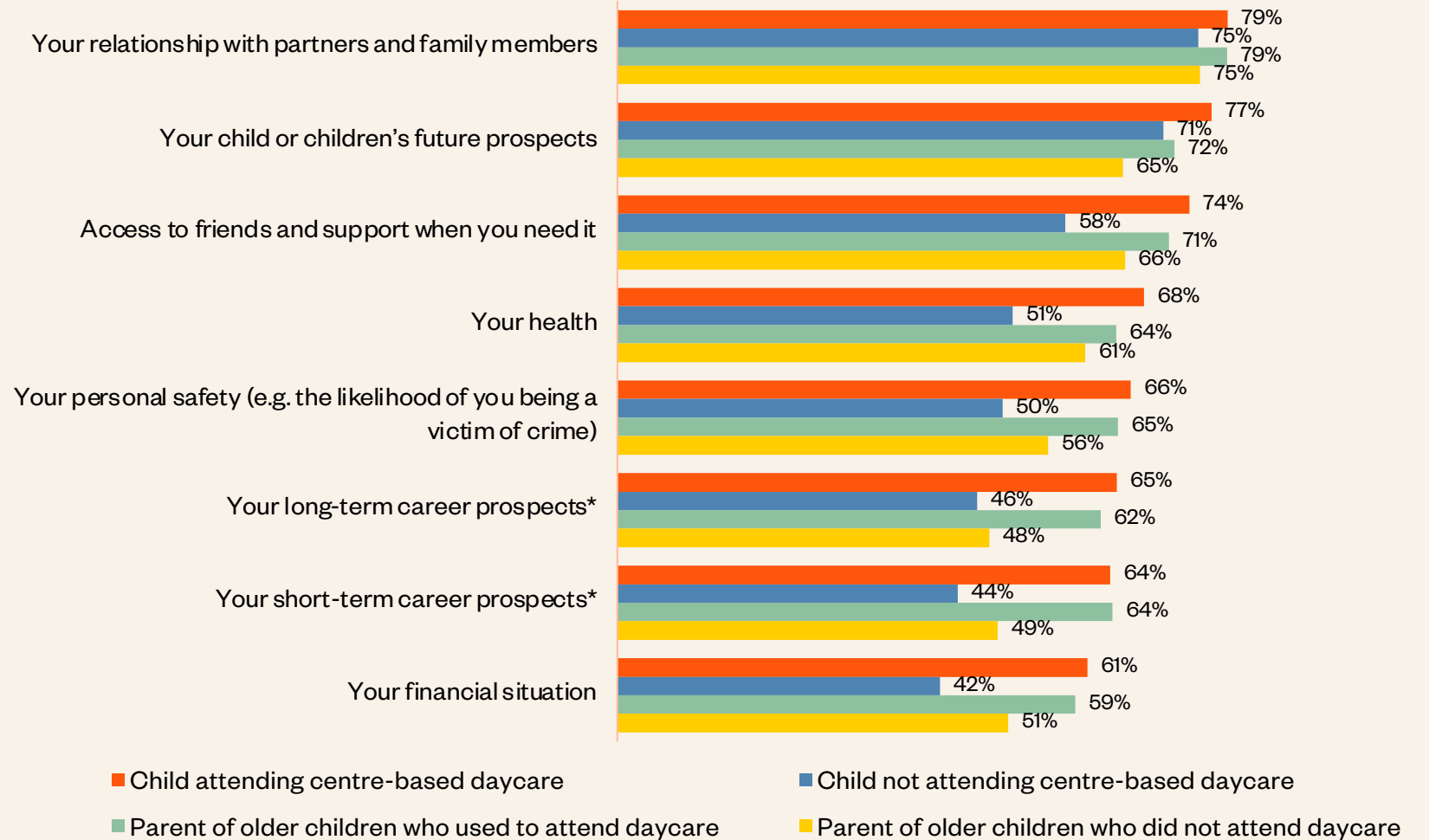


Base: Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)



**PARENTS OF CHILDREN CURRENTLY AT DAYCARE, OR WHO HAVE ATTENDED, OFTEN FEEL MORE POSITIVELY ABOUT THE FUTURE.**

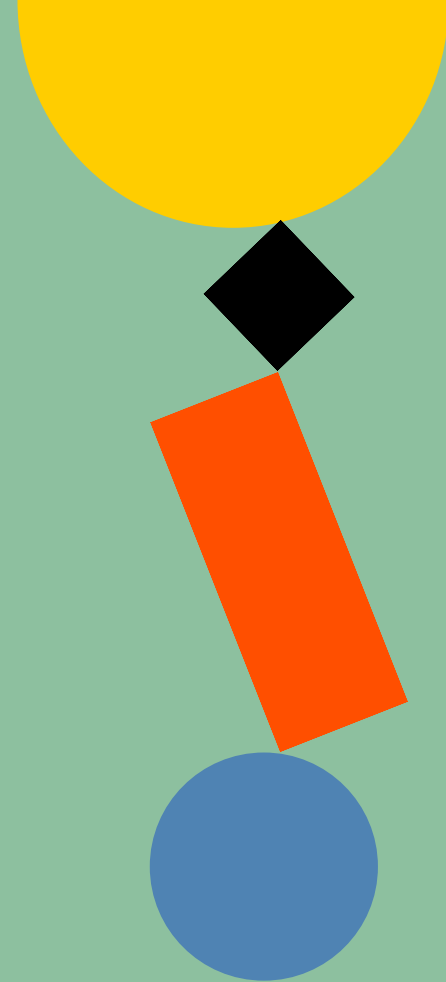
**Positive attitude towards aspects of life (% Very / Fairly positive)**



Q. How positive or negative do you feel about each of the following?  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455); Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

\*Only asked of respondents who aren't retired: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=454); Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=214), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=458), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=334)

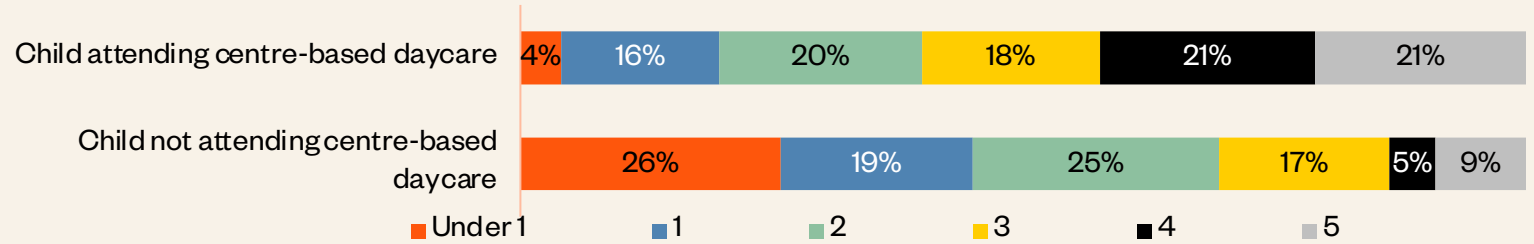
# CHOOSING A CENTRE-BASED DAYCARE.



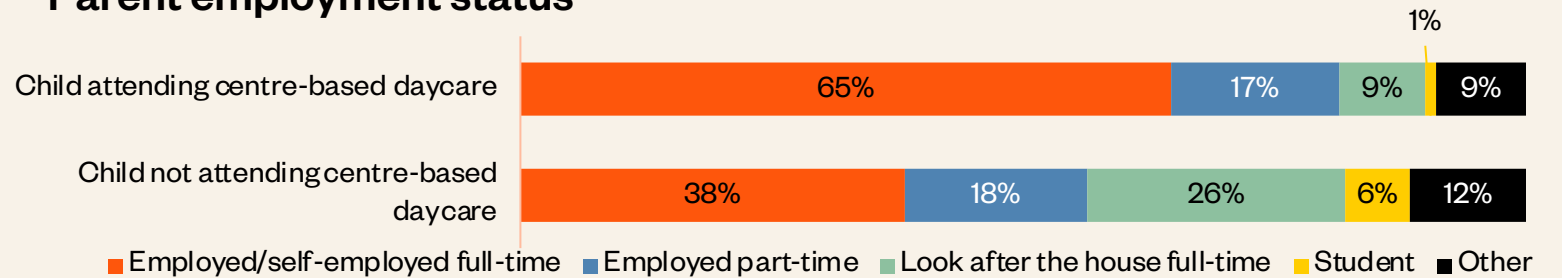
**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

**PARENTS WITH A CHILD AT CENTRE-BASED DAYCARE ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO REPORT THAT CHILD HAS A DISABILITY OR LEARNING DIFFICULTY, THAN PARENTS WHOSE CHILD DOESN'T ATTEND DAYCARE.**

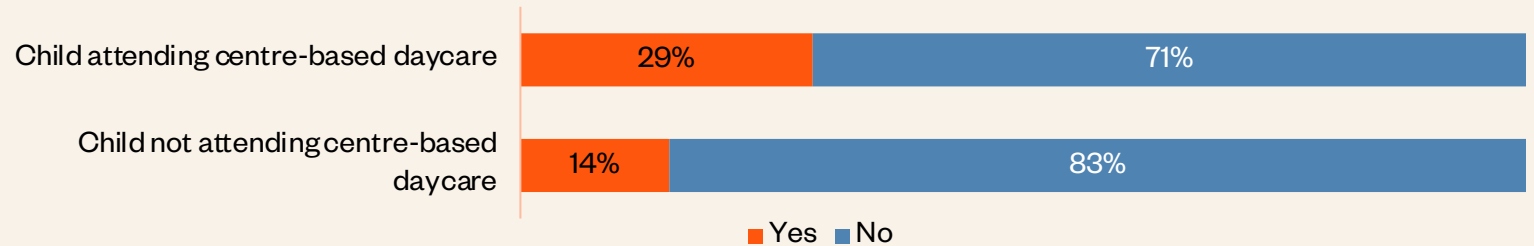
**Child's age**



**Parent employment status**



**Child in the family has disability**

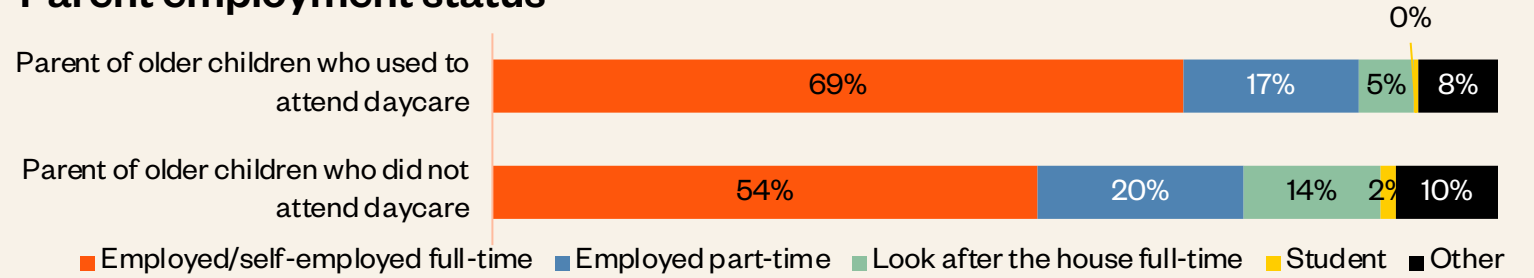


Q. Different names for early learning centres are used in different states and territories. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'centre-based daycare or preschool' refers to any formal early learning & care provided for children under school age through a centre. Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? If you have more than one child under school age, please answer for the child who most recently had a birthday.

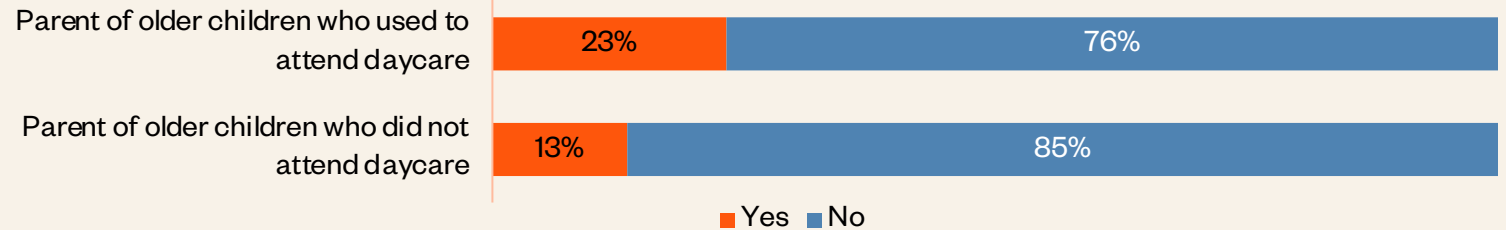
Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455); Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215)

**OLDER PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED DAYCARE IN THE PAST, ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE WORKING OR HAVE A CHILD IN THE FAMILY WITH A DISABILITY.**

**Parent employment status**



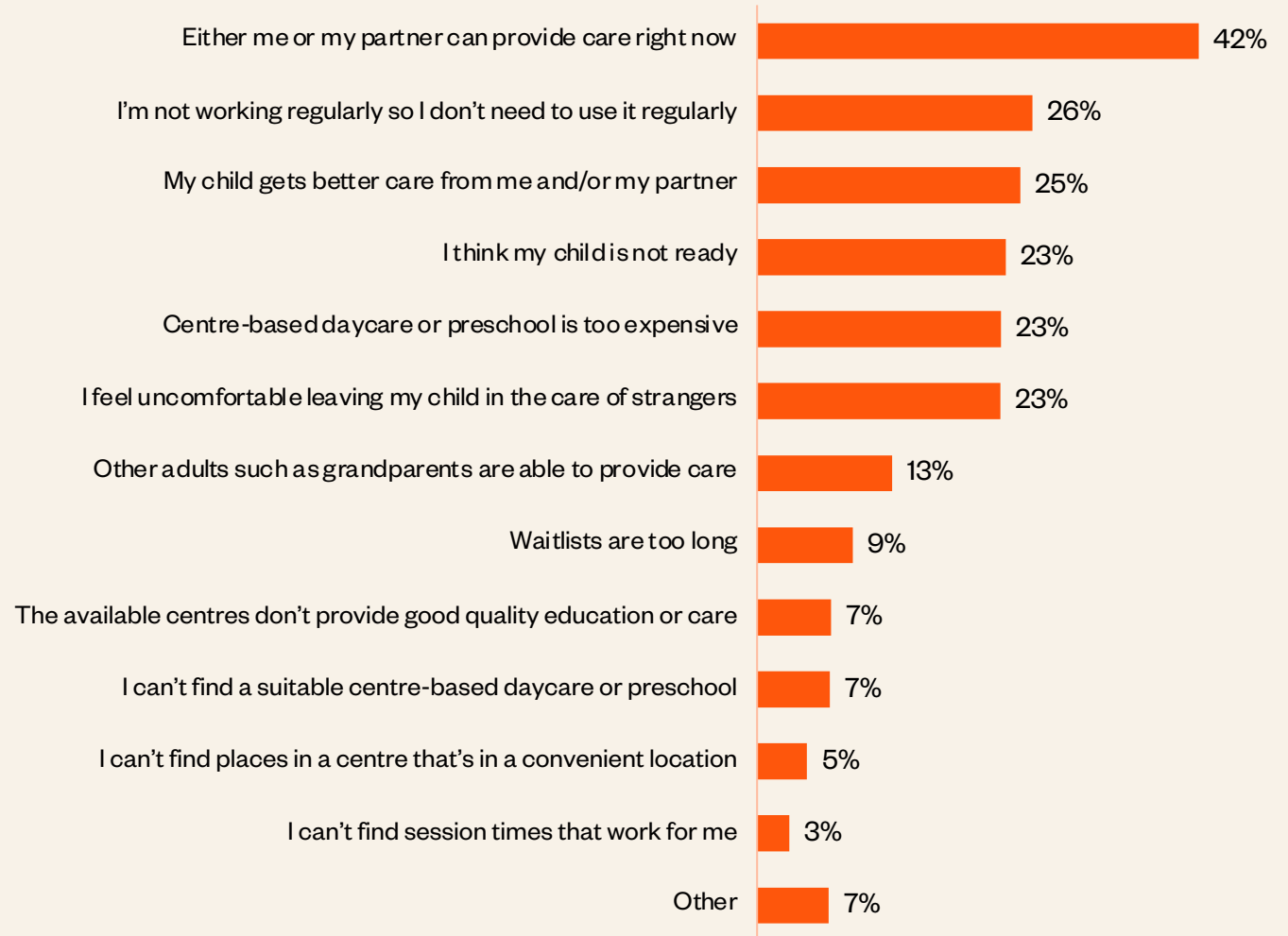
**Child in the family has disability**



Base: Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**2 IN 5 PARENTS WHOSE CHILD DOESN'T CURRENTLY ATTEND DAYCARE CHOOSE TO PROVIDE CARE AT HOME - A FURTHER 1 IN 5 SAY DAYCARE IS TOO EXPENSIVE.**

### Main reasons given for not attending preschool (%)

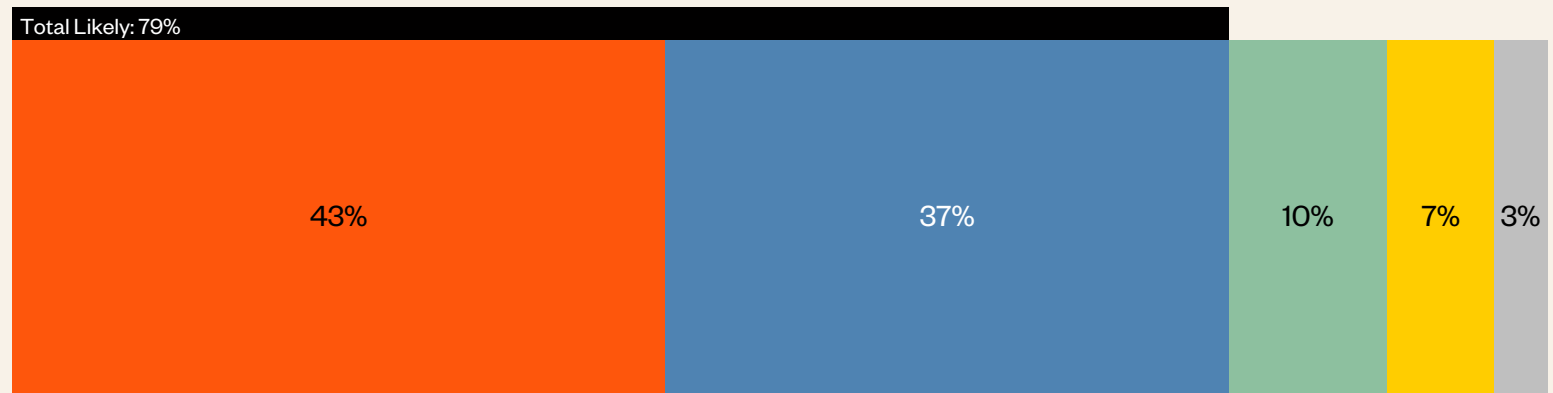


Q. What are the main reasons why your child does not regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? Please select all that apply.

Base: Parents with at least one child under school age and child does not attend daycare/preschool, n=215

**4 IN 5 PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO AREN'T CURRENTLY ATTENDING A CENTRE-BASED DAYCARE, SAY IT'S LIKELY THEY WILL ATTEND BEFORE STARTING PRIMARY SCHOOL.**

Likelihood of attending centre-based daycare or preschool before starting primary school (%)

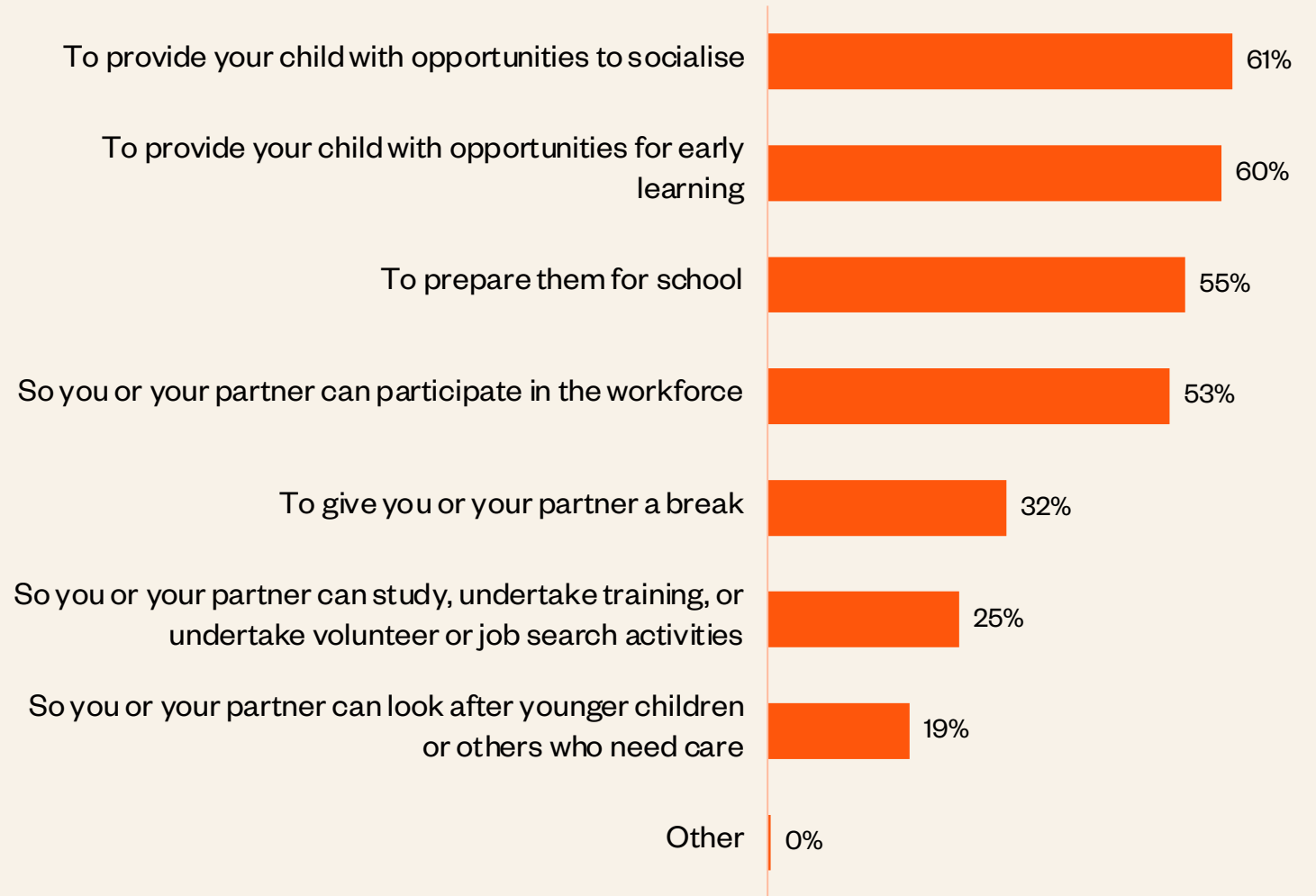


Very likely Fairly likely Not that likely Not likely at all Unsure

Q. How likely is it that this child will attend centre-based daycare or preschool before they start primary school?  
Base: Parents with at least one child under school age and child does not attend daycare/preschool, n=215

**EARLY LEARNING AND  
SOCIALISING  
OPPORTUNITIES ARE THE  
MAIN REASONS PARENTS  
SEND THEIR CHILD TO  
CENTRE-BASED DAYCARE.**

**Main reasons given for attending preschool (%)**

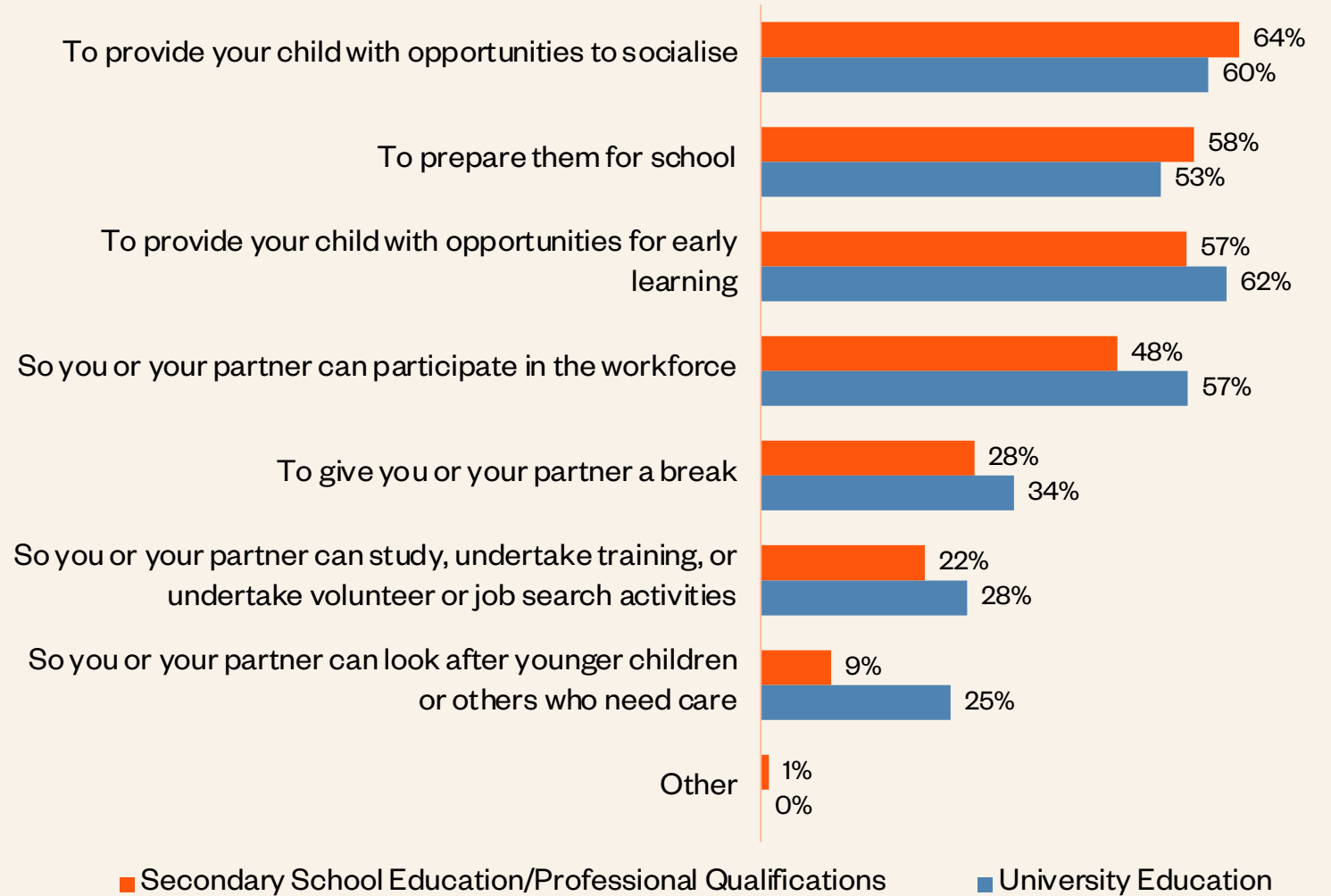


Q. What are the main reasons why your child regularly attends centre-based daycare or preschool? Please select all that apply.

Base: Parents with at least one child under school age and child attends daycare/preschool, n=455

**ALTHOUGH BENEFITS TO THE CHILD ARE IMPORTANT FOR THOSE WITH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, THEY ARE ALSO RELATIVELY LIKELY TO SAY THAT THEIR CHILD GOES TO DAYCARE TO ALLOW WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION.**

**Main reasons given for attending preschool (%)**

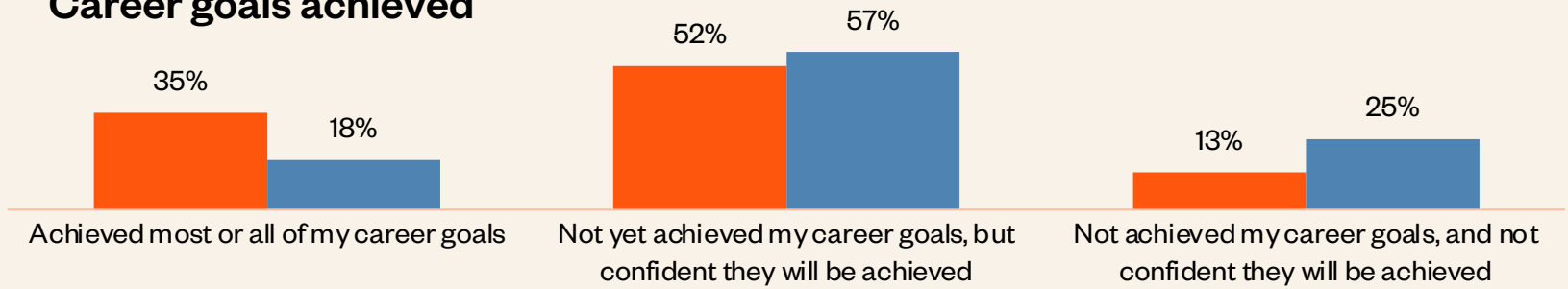


Q. What are the main reasons why your child regularly attends centre-based daycare or preschool? Please select all that apply.  
 Base Parents with at least one child under school age and child attends daycare/preschool: Secondary School Education/Professional Qualifications (n=185), University Education (n=269)

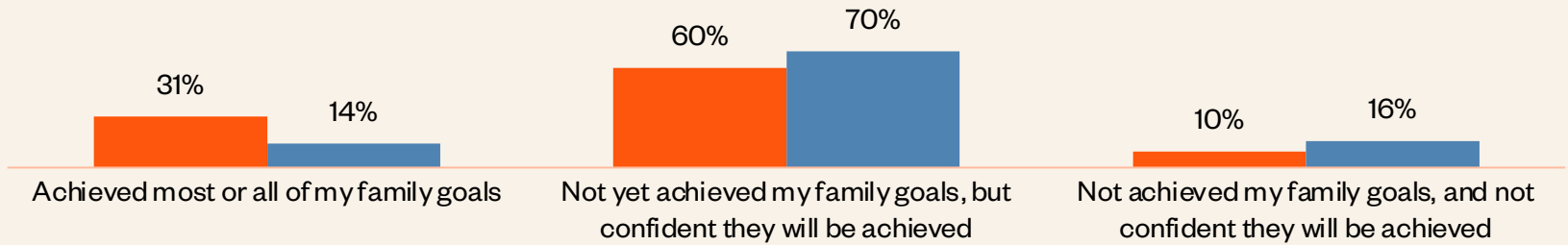


**PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN DAYCARE ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY'VE ACHIEVED THEIR CAREER AND FAMILY GOALS.**

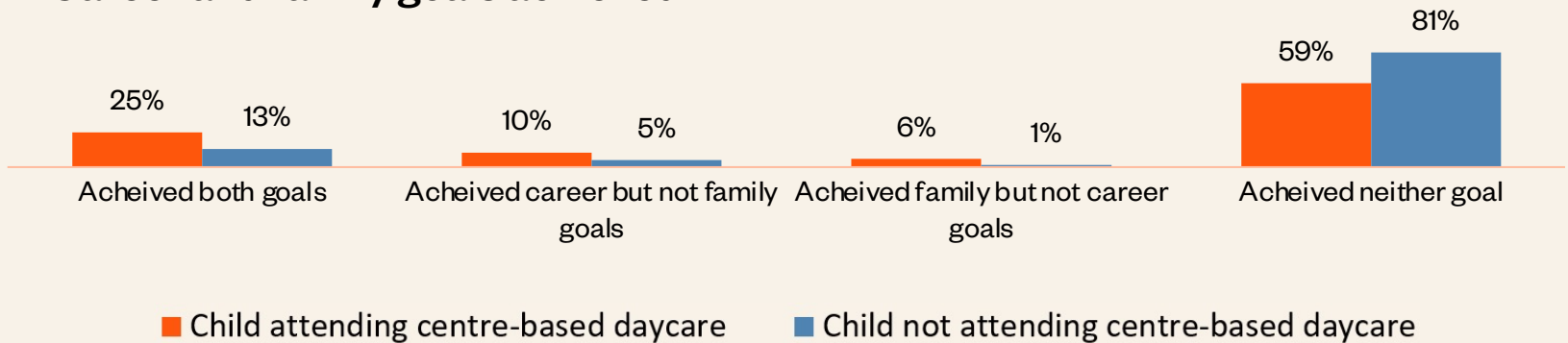
**Career goals achieved**



**Family goals achieved**



**Career and family goals achieved**

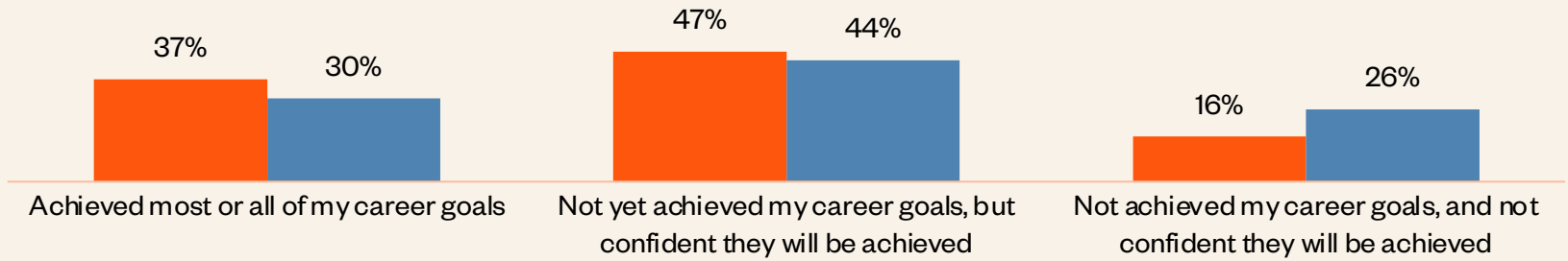


Q. Which of the following best applies to you?

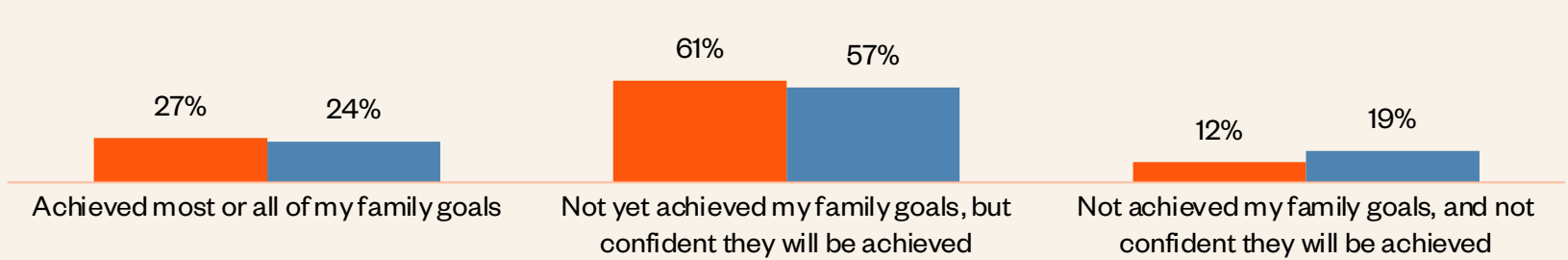
Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455); Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215)

**THESE DIFFERENCES PERSIST WHEN THE CHILDREN ARE OLDER, SUGGESTING THAT THIS ISN'T DUE TO THE CHILDREN'S AGE, BUT EITHER THE AMBITIONS OF THE PARENTS OR THE IMPACT OF DAYCARE.**

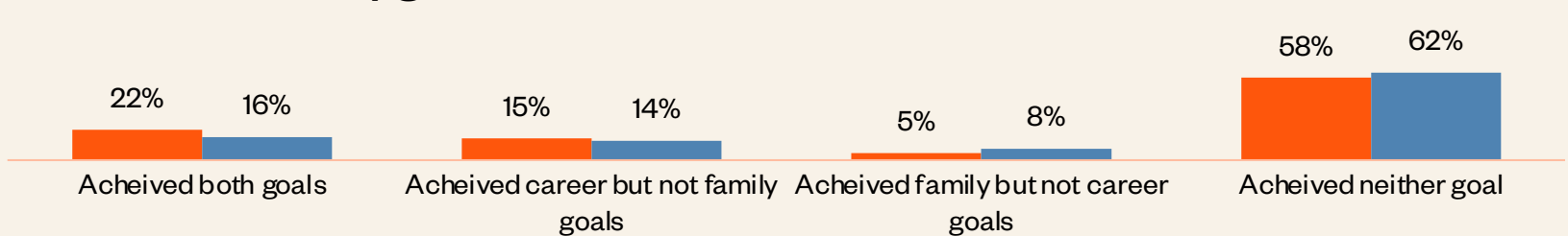
### Career goals achieved



### Family goals achieved



### Career and family goals achieved



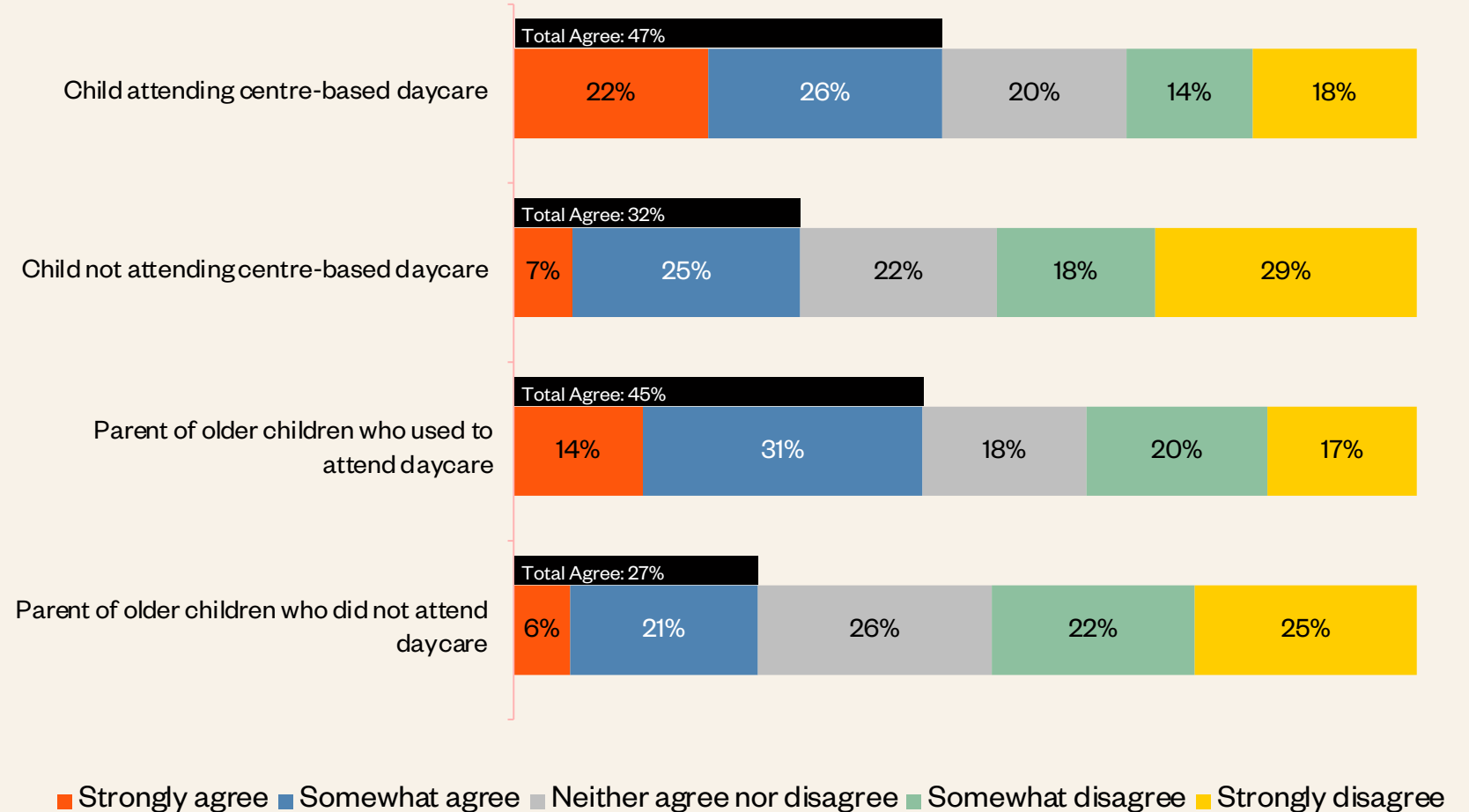
■ Parent of older children who used to attend daycare ■ Parent of older children who did not attend daycare

Q. Which of the following best applies to you?

Base: Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463); Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**CLOSE TO HALF OF PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE ATTENDED (OR ARE ATTENDING) CHILDCARE, AGREE THEY HELD OFF OR HAD FEWER CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE CAREER IMPACTS.**

Agreement that they chose to have children later and / or to have fewer children because I worried about the impact on my career (%)

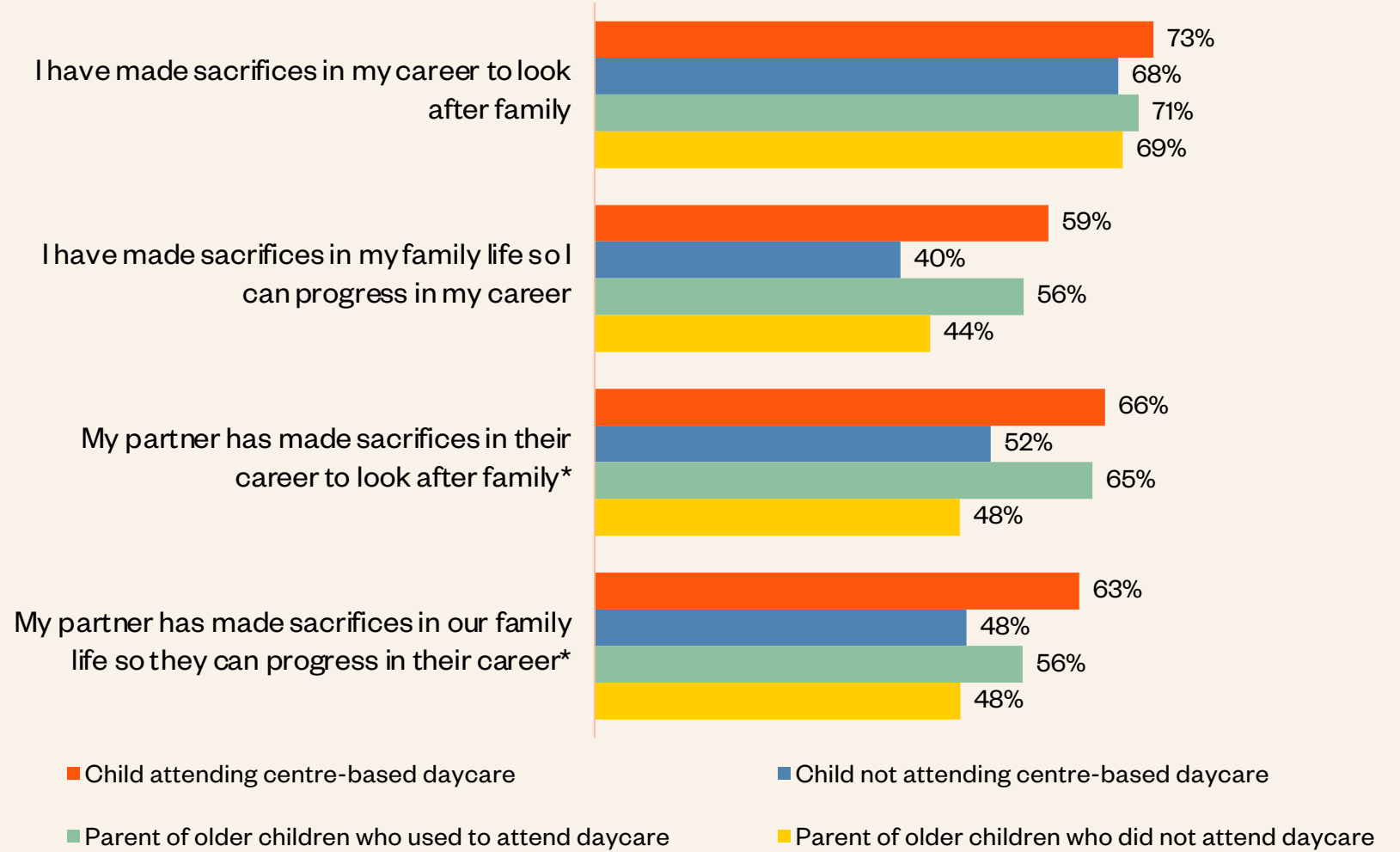


Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE OR DID ATTEND DAYCARE ARE MORE AWARE OF THE SACRIFICES THEY, OR THEIR PARTNER, HAS MADE FOR THEIR FAMILY AND/OR CAREER.**

**Agreement with statements around family vs career sacrifices (% Strongly / Somewhat agree)**

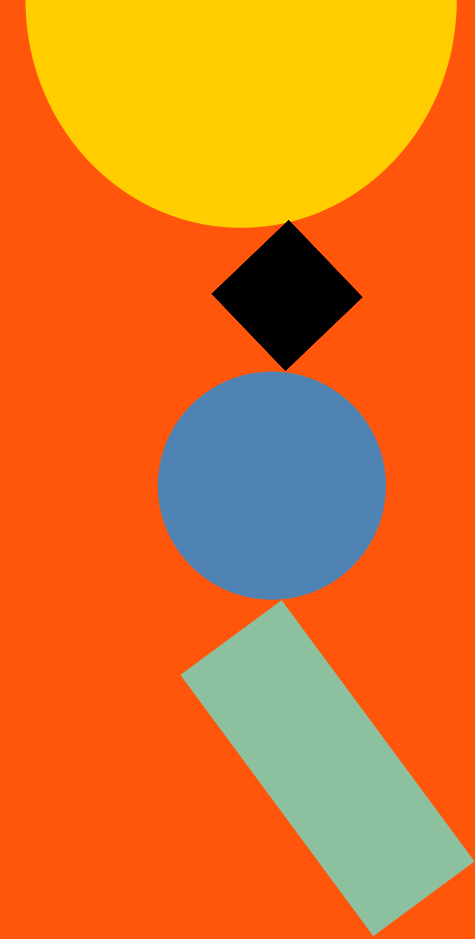


Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

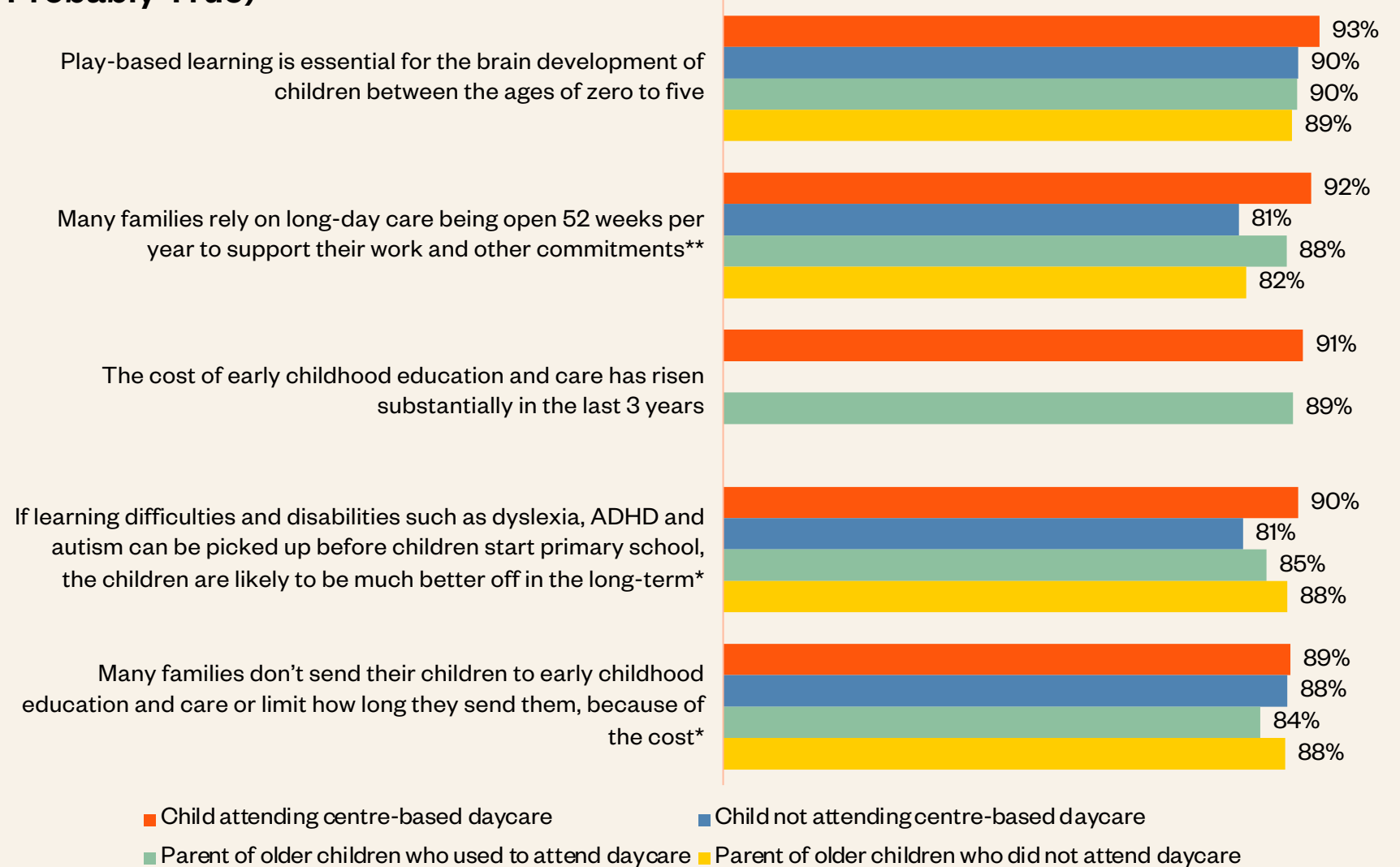
\*Only shown to participants with a partner: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=391), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=176), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=365), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=269)

# **CURRENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS.**



**THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARENTS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR CHILD'S DAYCARE ATTENDANCE, UNDERSTAND THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF EARLY LEARNING.**

**Understanding of the impact of early learning (% Definitely / Probably True)**



Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

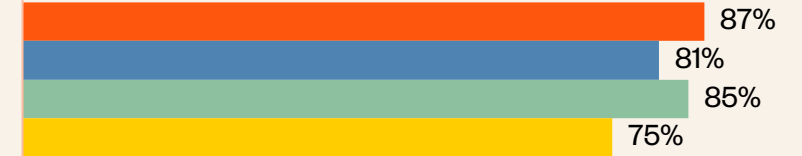
\*Only shown to half sample: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=232), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=116), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=229), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=166)

\*\*Only shown to half sample: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=223), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=99), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=234), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=171)

**HOWEVER, PARENTS WHO DON'T HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH DAYCARE ARE LESS LIKELY TO BELIEVE THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF EARLY LEARNING, THAN THOSE WITH CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED DAYCARE.**

Understanding of the impact of early learning (% Definitely / Probably True)

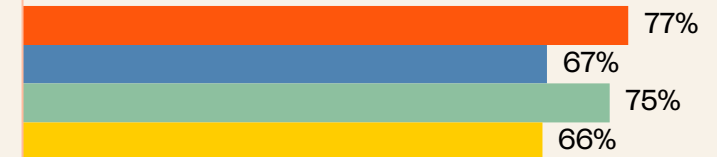
A high-quality early childhood education and care system would help ensure better outcomes for those children when they graduate Year 12



Children who attend daycare or preschool at a centre will often have more opportunities for play-based learning than those who do not



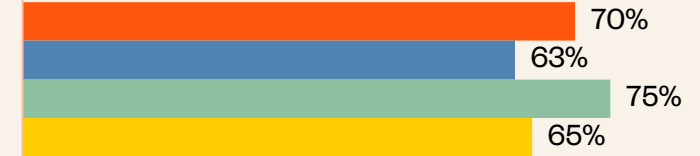
Children who have not been exposed to play-based learning between the ages of zero to five either start school behind, or are not ready to learn



Australia's early childhood education and care system doesn't follow a consistent approach or deliver uniform standards of education and care



Many people who get into trouble with the law later in life have learning difficulties that weren't picked up early enough\*\*

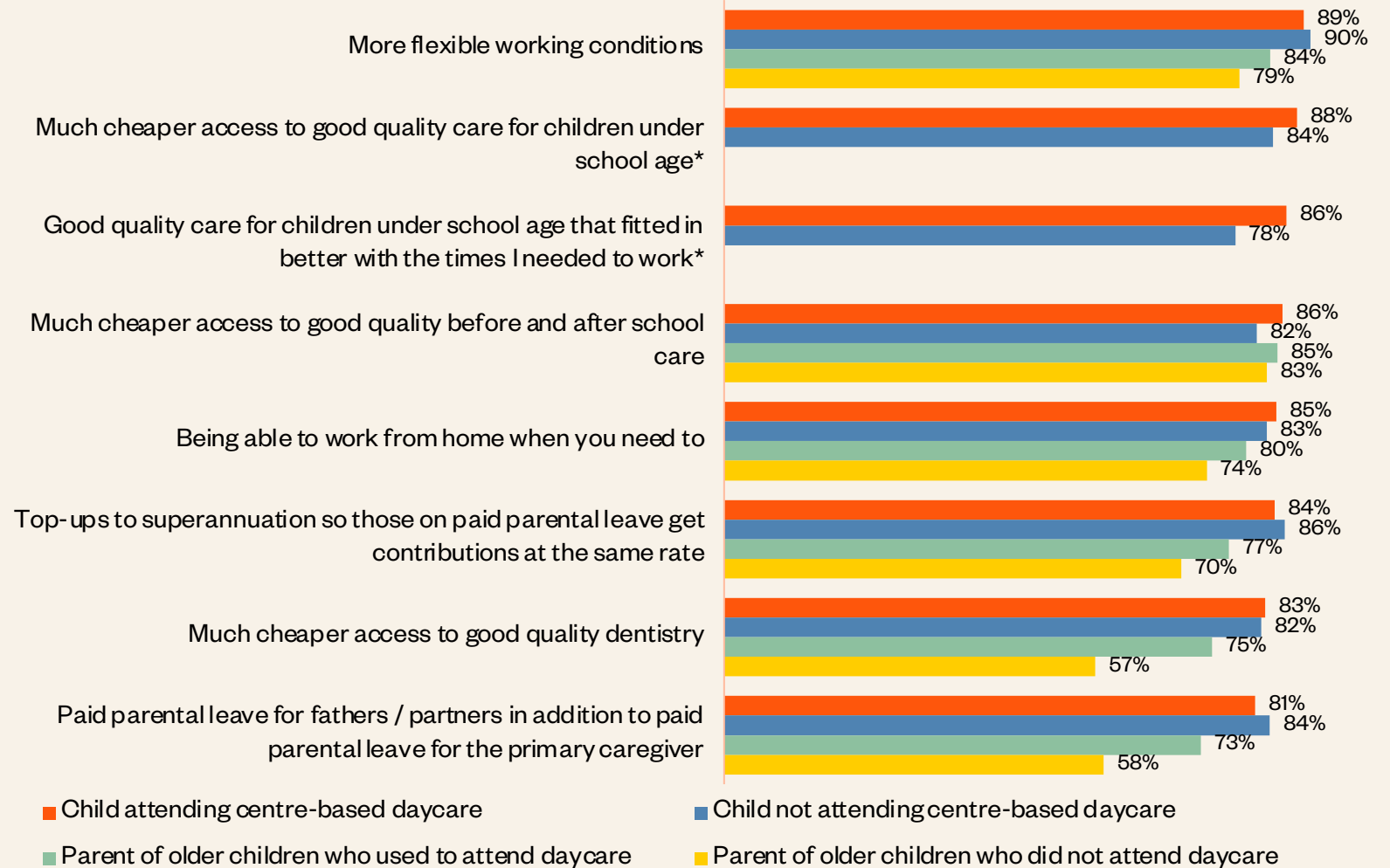


■ Child attending centre-based daycare     
 ■ Child not attending centre-based daycare  
■ Parent of older children who used to attend daycare     
 ■ Parent of older children who did not attend daycare

Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)  
 \*\*Only shown to half sample: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=223), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=99), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=234), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=171)

**THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN UNDER SCHOOL AGE SAY THAT CHEAPER ACCESS TO GOOD QUALITY CARE FOR THOSE CHILDREN WOULD HELP THEIR FAMILIES.**

**What would help respondents and their families  
(% A lot /A fair amount)**

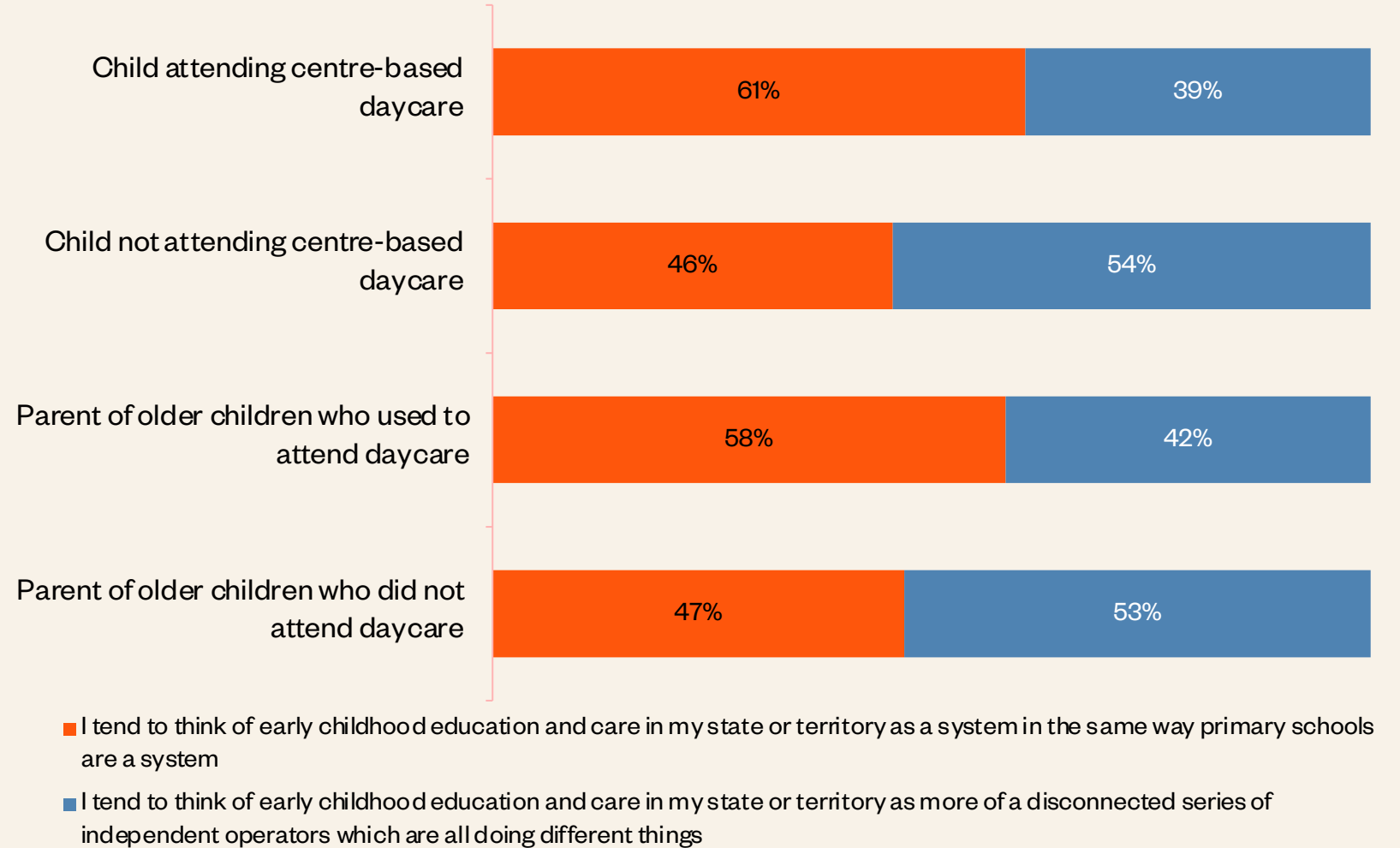


Q. How much would each of the following help you and your family, now or in the future?  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)  
 \*Only shown to participants whose child with the last birthday, is under school age.



**THOSE WITH DIRECT  
EXPERIENCE OF DAYCARE  
ARE MORE LIKELY TO THINK  
OF IT AS A SYSTEM.**

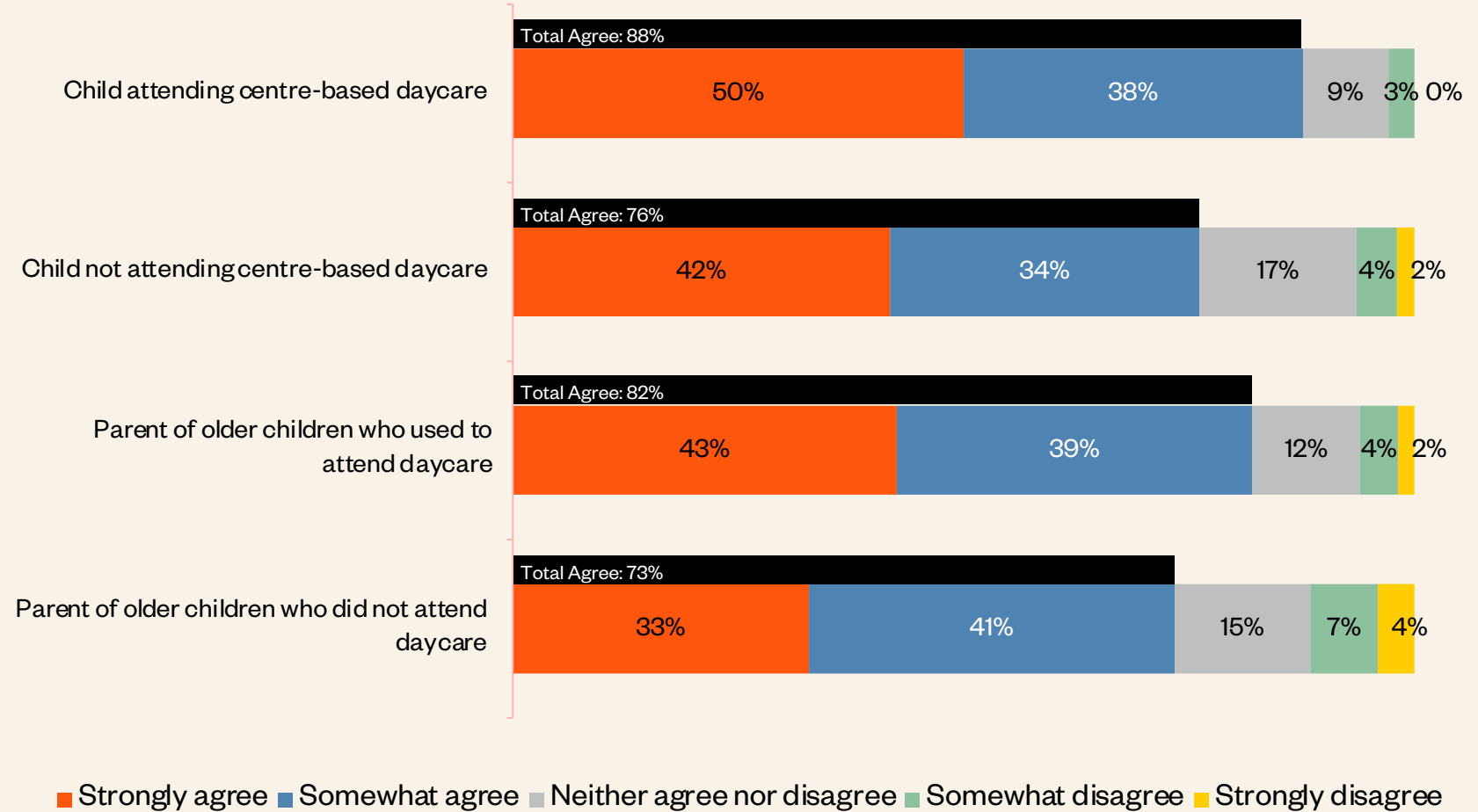
## Views of the early childhood education and care system (%)



Q. Which of the following most applies to you?  
Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**SUPPORT FOR MAKING  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION AND CARE  
PART OF THE EDUCATION  
SYSTEM IS SOLID ACROSS  
THE BOARD.**

**Agreement that early learning should be treated as part of the education system (%)**

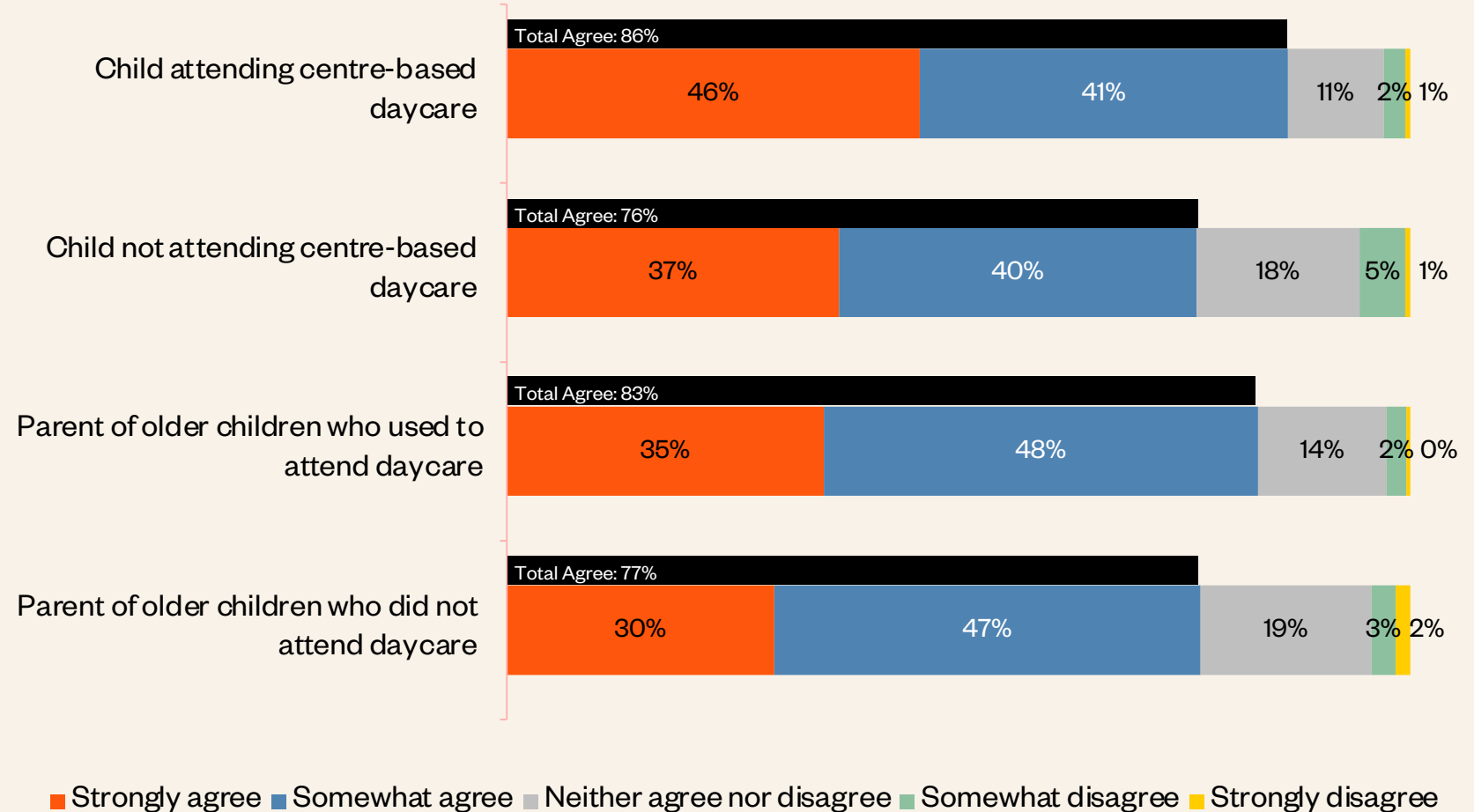


Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**THERE IS LIKEWISE  
WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR  
A MORE COORDINATED  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

**Agreement that the quality of early childhood education and care would improve if the system was more coordinated (%)**

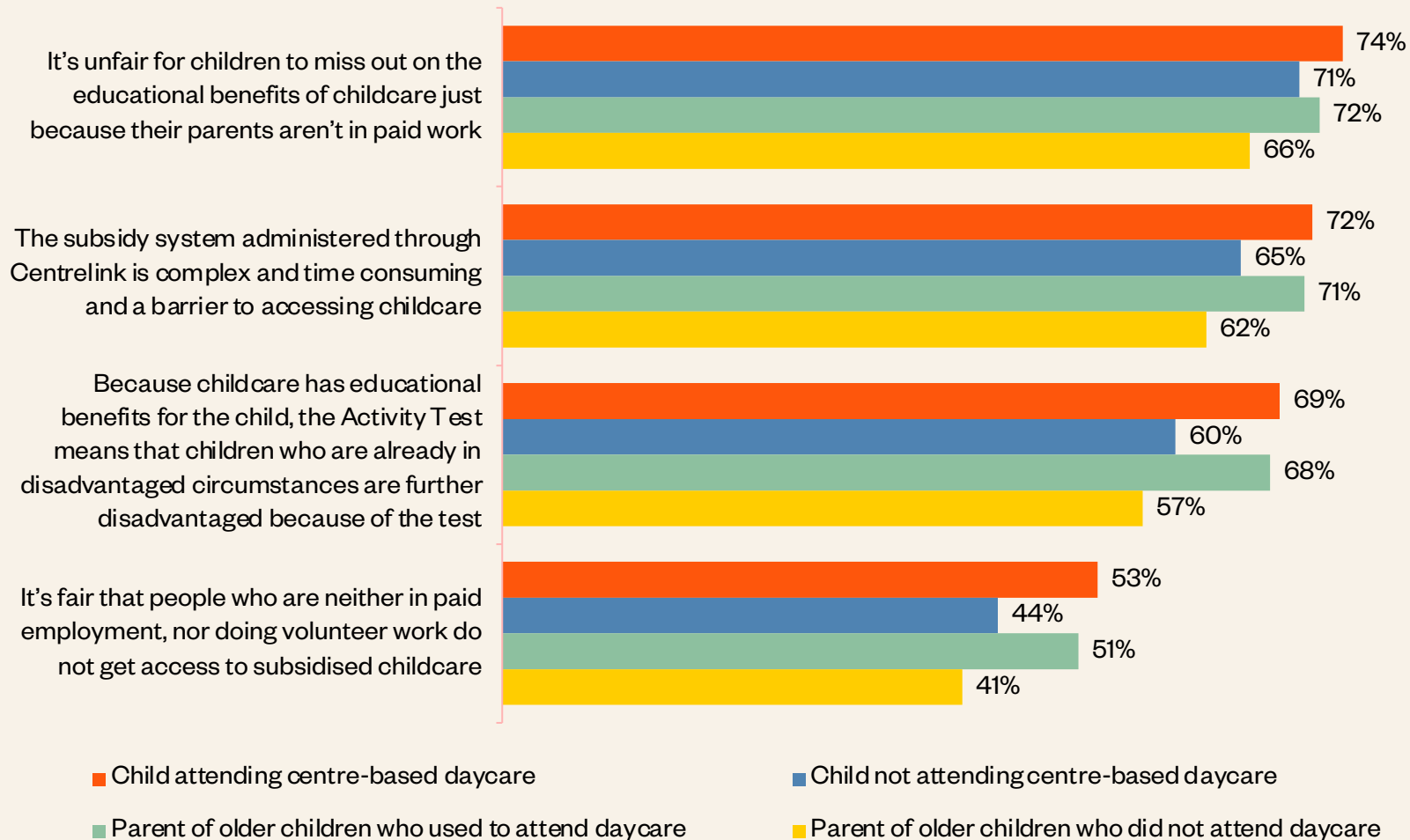


Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

# PARENTS WHO CURRENTLY OR IN THE PAST, HAVE A CHILD IN DAYCARE

## ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE ACTIVITY TEST EXACERBATES DISADVANTAGE.

### Agreement with statements about the Activity Test (Strongly / Somewhat agree %)

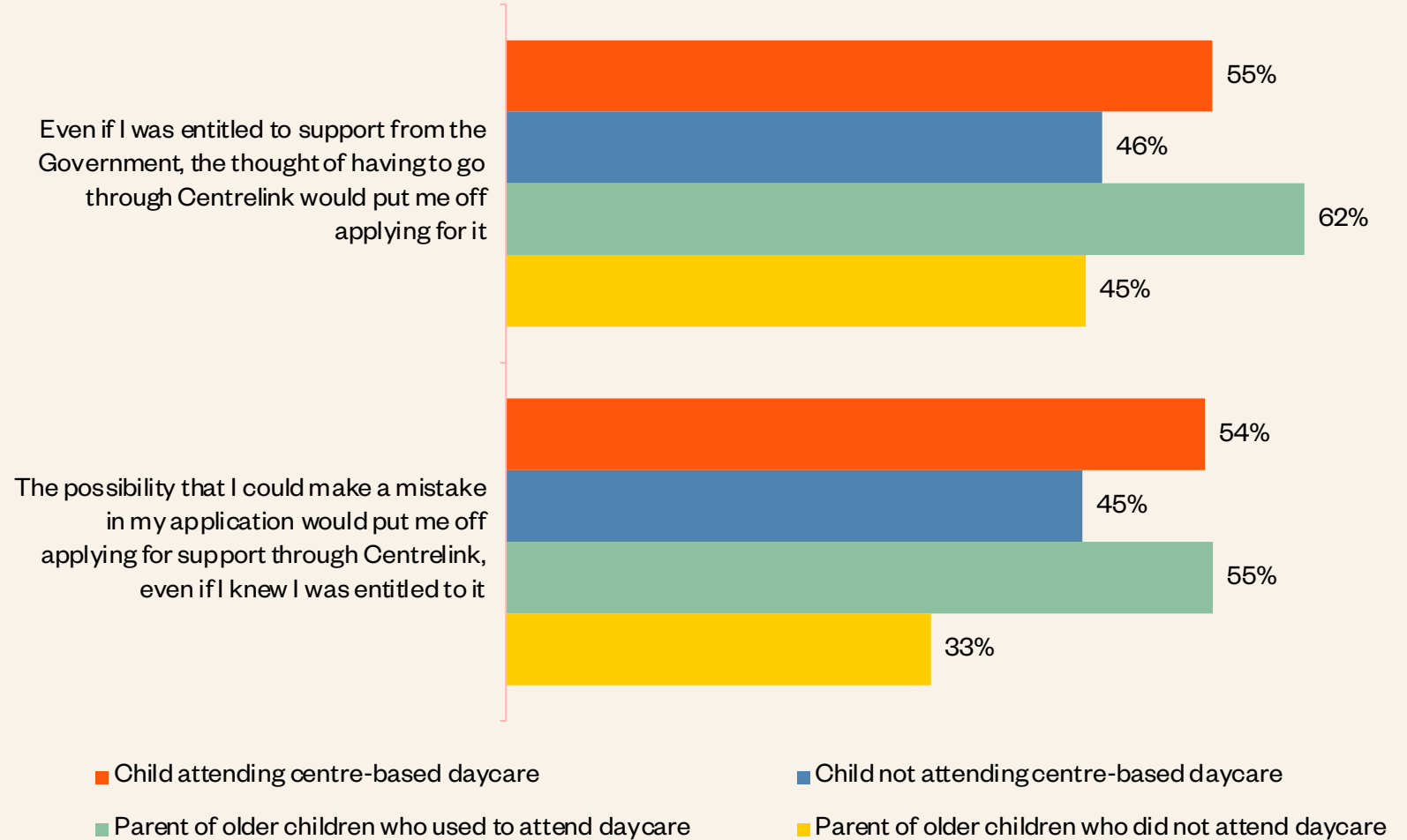


Q. As you may be aware, the childcare subsidy is administered through Centrelink, and is subject to an Activity Test. The Activity Test means that the number of hours of subsidised childcare parents can get depends on the number of hours they or their partner are in paid employment, study, training or doing volunteer work. Although families with incomes below \$69,390 are exempt from the Activity Test, the Activity Test means that families with incomes above \$69,390 can't get access to subsidised childcare if one of the parents is not in paid employment, study, training or doing volunteer work. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**THOSE WHO HAVE USED DAYCARE ARE MORE RESISTANT TO THE IDEA OF GOING THROUGH CENTRELINK AND MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE RISKS OF MAKING MISTAKES WHEN INTERACTING WITH CENTRELINK.**

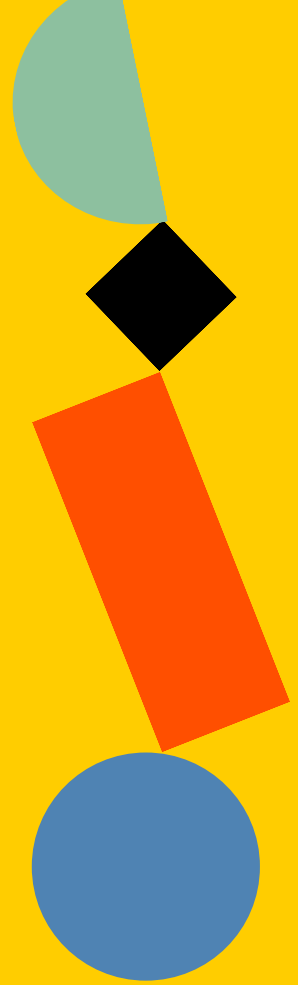
**Agreement with statements about government support and Centrelink  
(Strongly / Somewhat agree %)**



Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

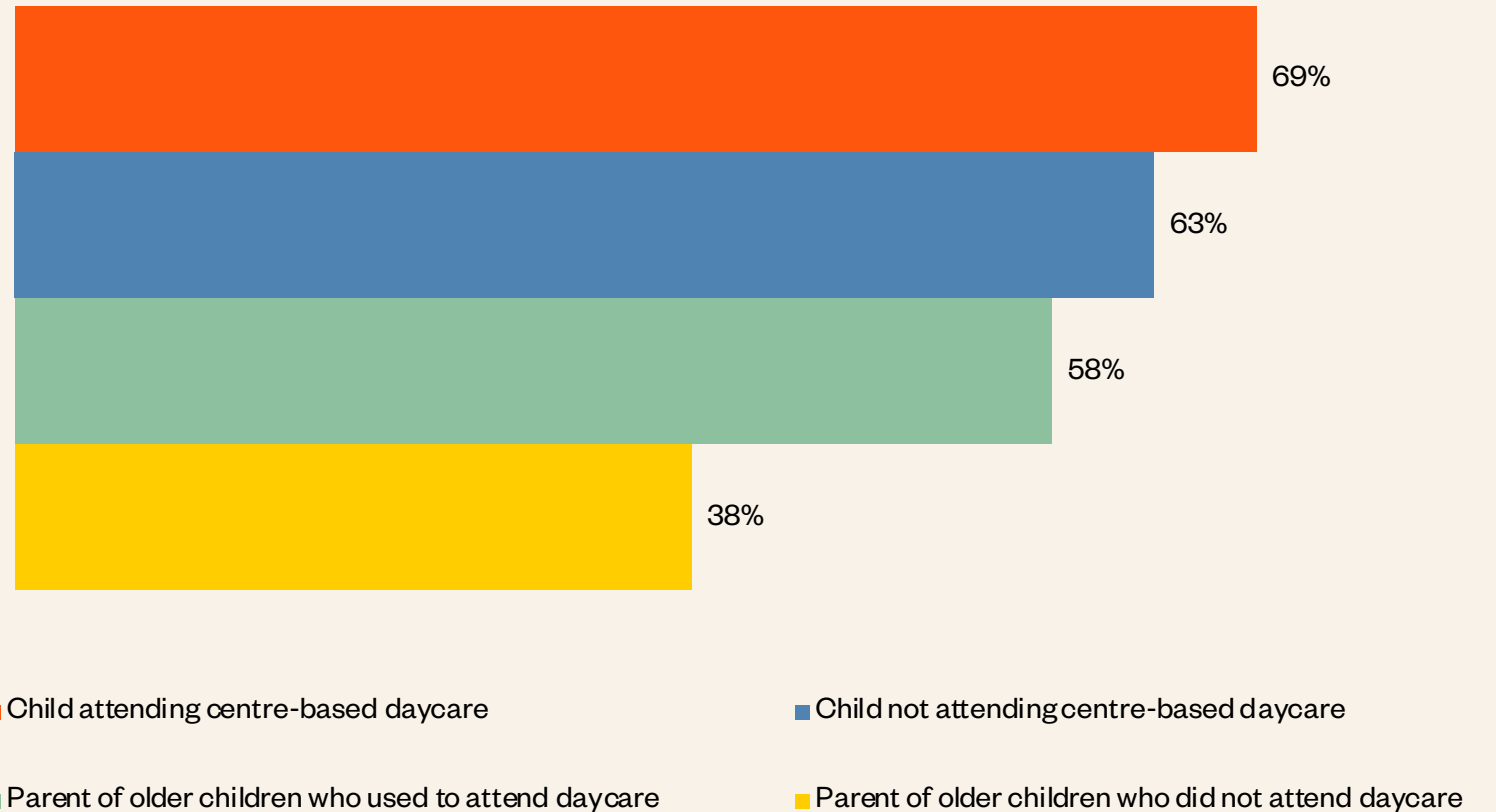
Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL,  
HIGH-QUALITY EARLY  
LEARNING SYSTEM.**



**CHILDCARE IS VERY RELEVANT AS AN ISSUE TO THOSE WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THEY CURRENTLY ATTEND CENTRE-BASED CARE.**

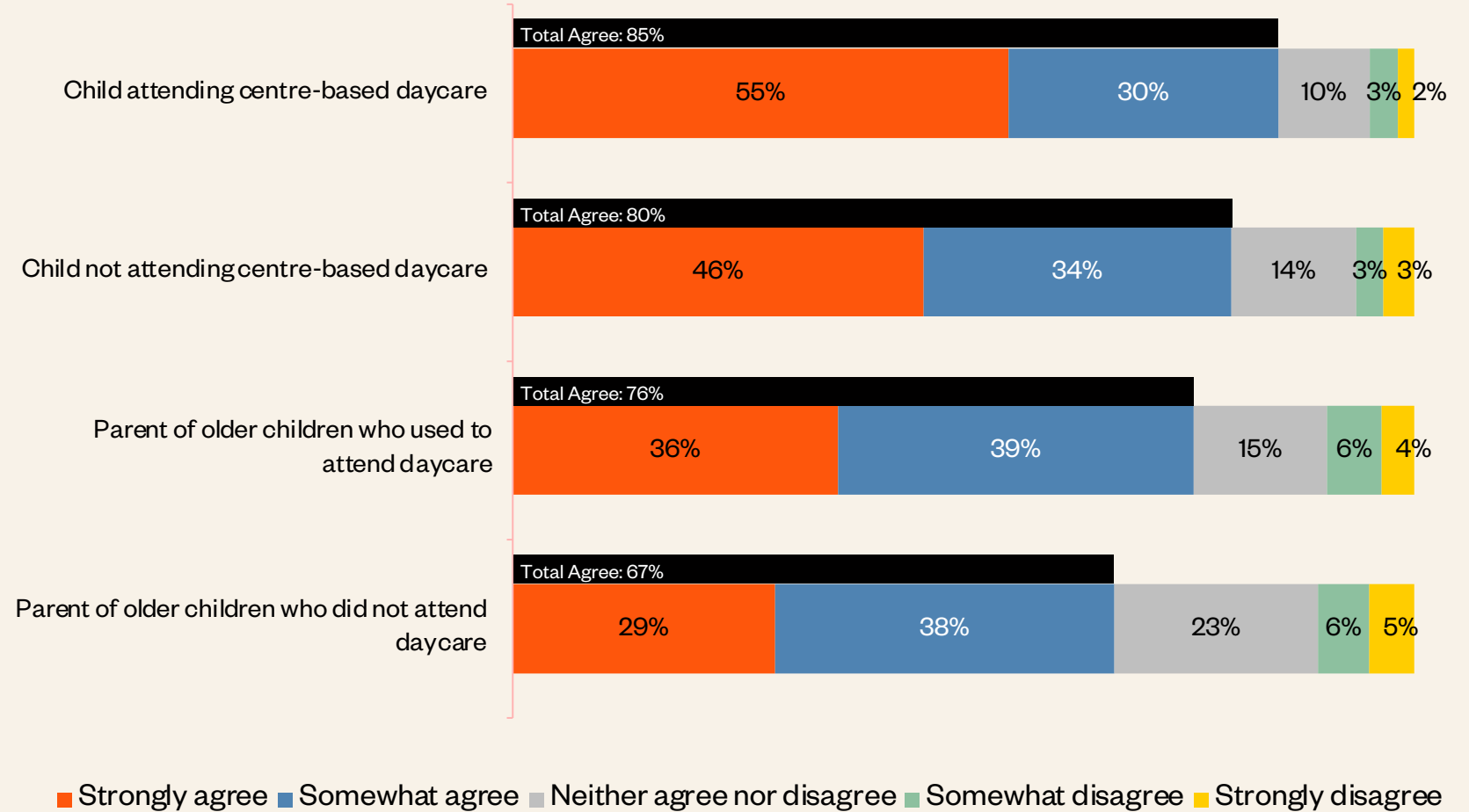
Importance of improving early childhood education and care when voting at federal elections (% Extremely/very important)



Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?  
Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**THOSE WHOSE CHILDREN  
HAVE NOT ATTENDED  
DAYCARE STILL SAY THAT  
CHEAPER CHILDCARE  
WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE  
ECONOMY.**

**Agreement that cheaper early childhood education and care would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole (%)**



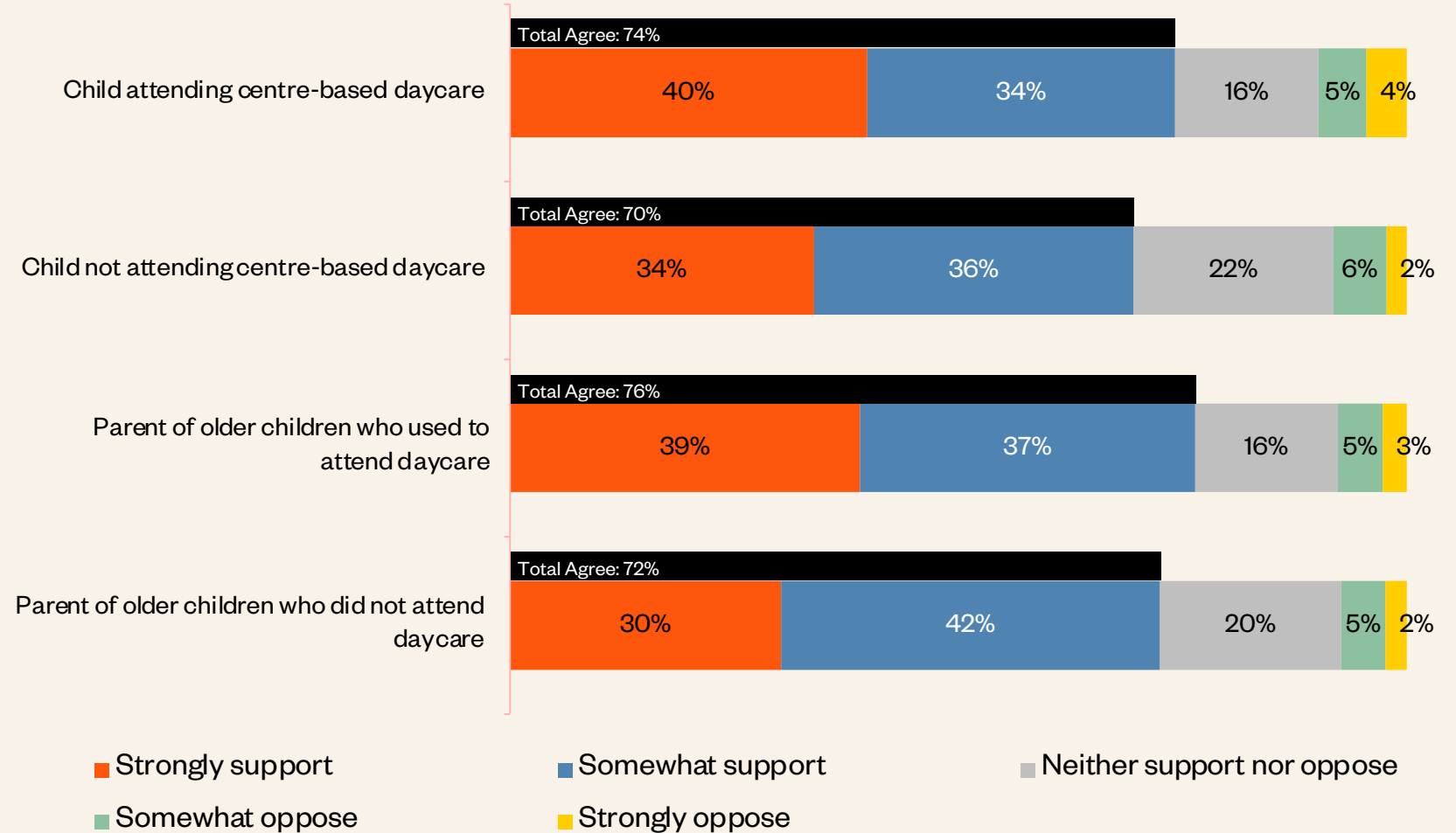
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)



**SUPPORT FOR A UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SYSTEM IS STRONG REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE PARTICIPANT'S CHILDREN HAVE EXPERIENCED DAYCARE.**

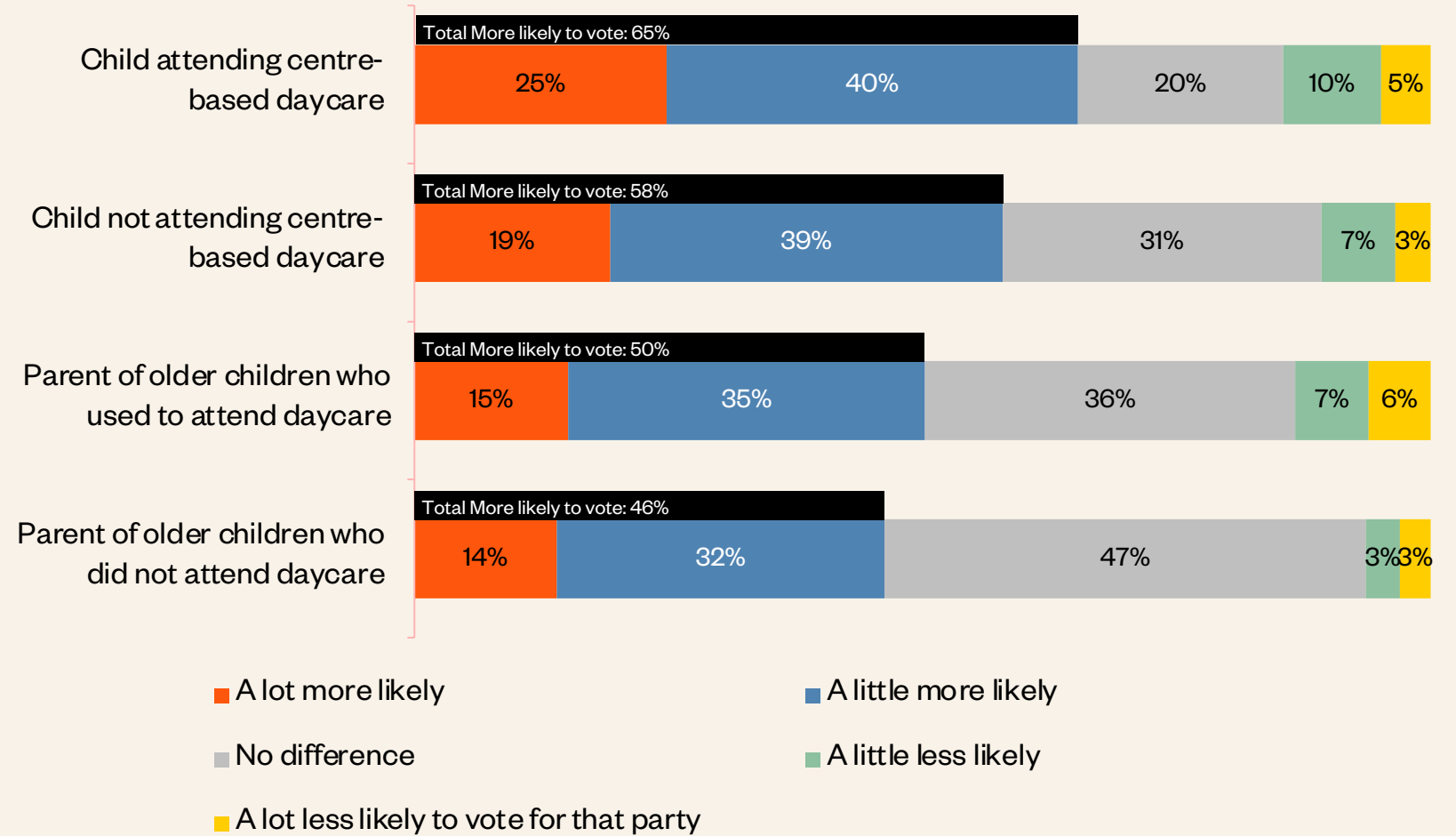
Support for a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (%)



Q. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system' would be one that was connected to the primary and secondary education system with a standard set of teaching priorities based around play-based learning. The system would be available at low or minimal cost to anyone who wants to use it, but using it would not be compulsory. How strongly do you support or oppose introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system along those lines?  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**TWO-THIRDS OF THOSE WITH A CHILD IN DAY CARE SAY THEY WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A PARTY THAT INTRODUCED UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE.**

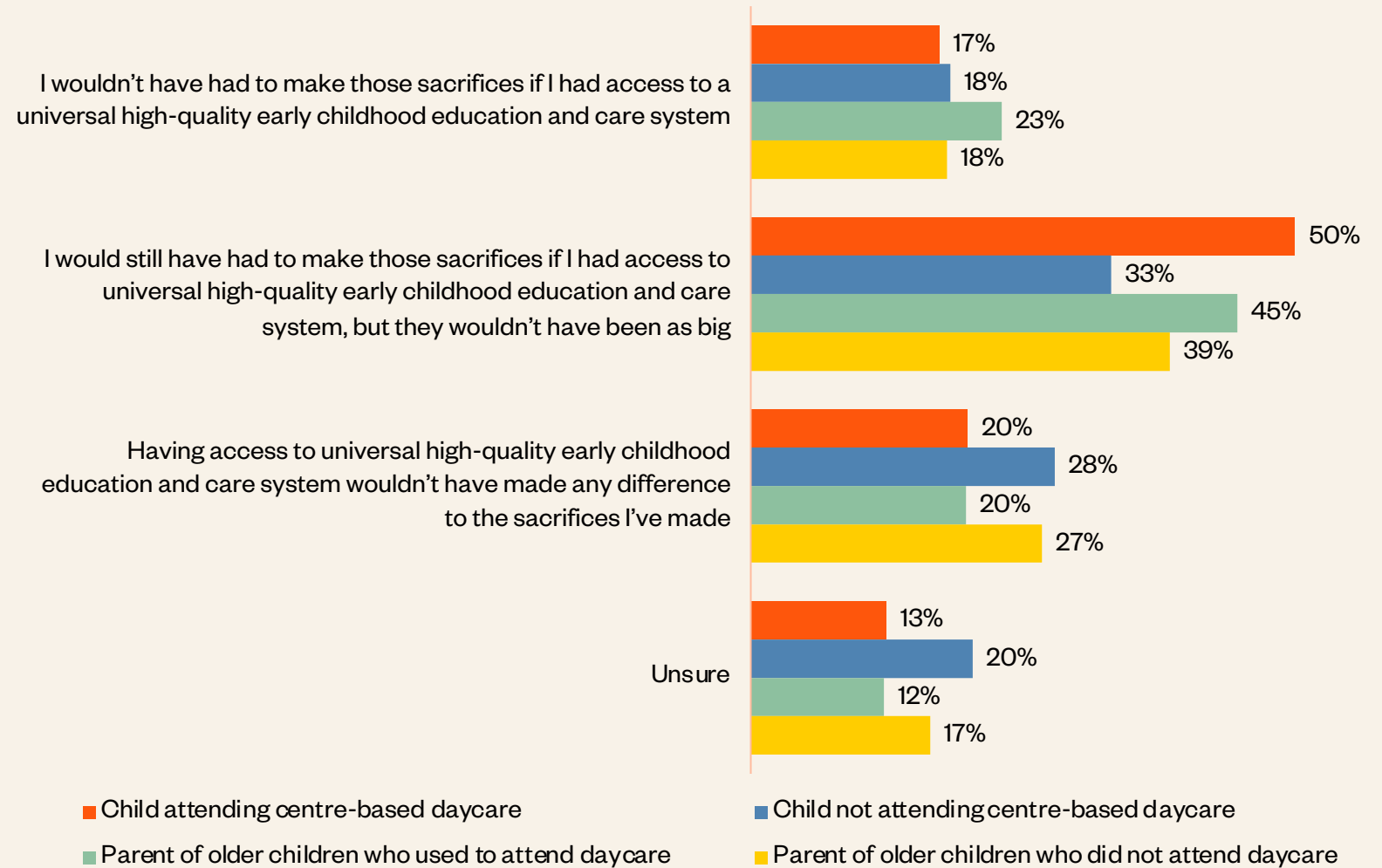
**Influence of a universal ECE and care policy on voting intention (%)**



Q. If a party committed to introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how would that affect your likelihood of voting for that party?  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**THE IMPACT OF CAREER OR FAMILY SACRIFICES IS MORE ON THOSE WITH DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF DAYCARE - SUPPORTING THE VIEW THAT CHOOSING DAYCARE ISN'T JUST ABOUT COST.**

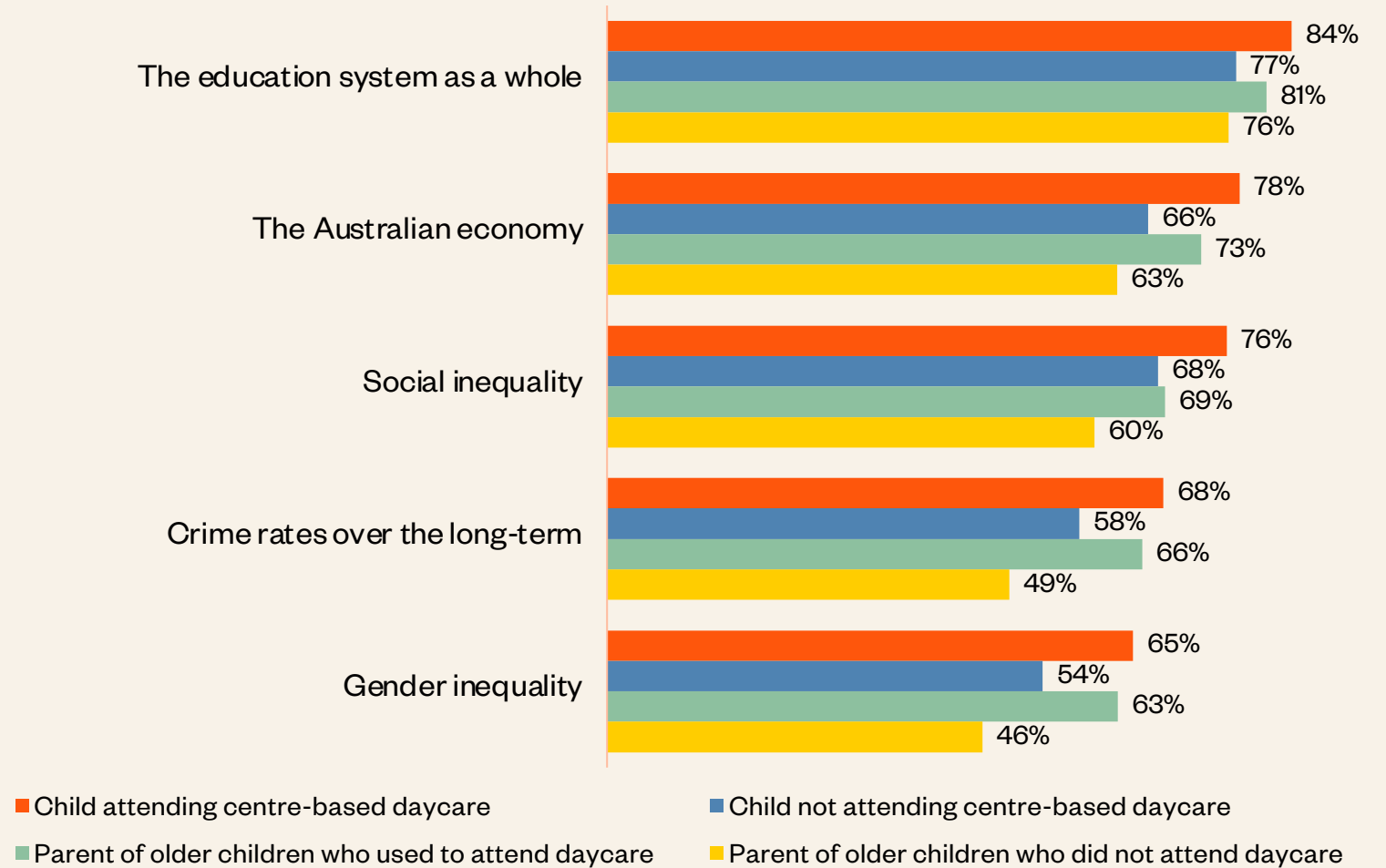
**Views towards career/family sacrifices made (%)**



Q. You said earlier that you had made sacrifices in your career for your family or in your family life for your career. Which of the following do you think would have applied to you had you access to a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system?  
 Base Participants who strongly/somewhat agree that they have made career or family sacrifices: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)

**PARTICIPANTS SEE CLEAR BENEFITS TO THIS POLICY, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE ECONOMY AS A WHOLE.**

**Effect of universal high-quality early childhood education and care system (% Make it a lot/a little better)**



Q. If there was a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how do you think it would affect each of the following?  
 Base: Child attending centre-based daycare (n=455), Child not attending centre-based daycare (n=215), Parent of older children who used to attend daycare (n=463), Parent of older children who did not attend daycare (n=337)