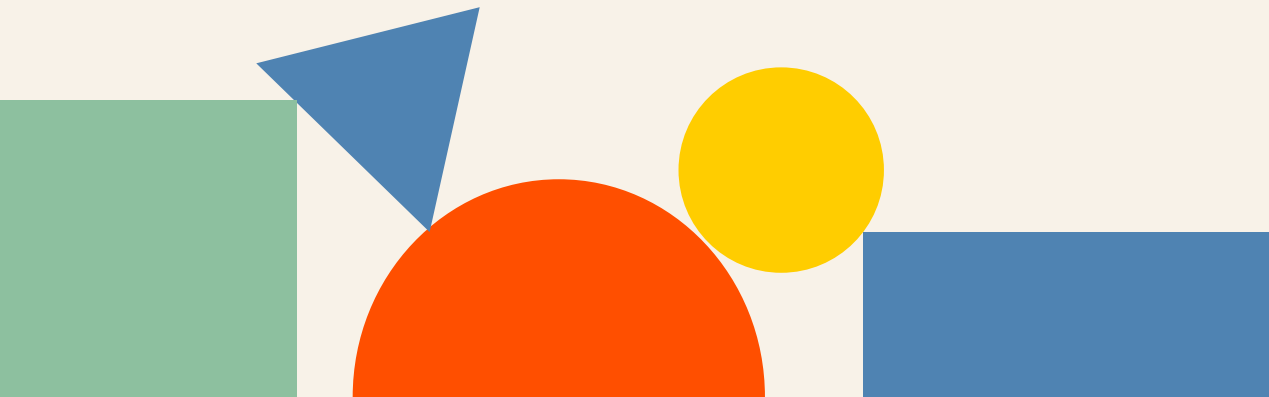


# **THE AUSTRALIAN EARLY LEARNING MONITOR**

August 2022



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

# KEY FINDINGS

1. Most Australians continue to recognise the importance of play-based learning and acknowledge that children who attend childcare or preschool will have more opportunities for play-based learning than those who don't.
2. Parents with children that attend (or used to attend) childcare continue to believe that the cost of early childhood education (ECE) has risen substantially over the last three years.
3. Regardless of whether respondents have children, most Australians continue to believe many parents do not send their children to childcare or early learning due to the cost.
4. A clear majority continue to believe that cheaper childcare would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole.
5. Three-quarters of Australians support the introduction of a universal high-quality early learning system (up 3% from 2021), and most continue to think such a system would be good for the education system, the Australian economy and social equality.
6. Over half the respondents (up 4% from 2021), indicate they are more likely to vote for a political party that is committed to introducing a universal high-quality early learning and childcare system – among parents of children attending centre-based care, this percentage is close to three-quarters.
7. In 2022, close to two-thirds of Australians support primary and secondary carers sharing government funded Paid Parental Leave by taking 10 weeks each (rather than the current payments of 18 weeks for primary carers and 2 weeks for secondary carers), while over half believe the government Paid Parental Leave should be increased (8 out of 10 parents of children under school age believe there should be an increase).
8. There is strong agreement among Australians in recognising the importance of interacting with peers of different backgrounds and needs to childrens' development. Just over half agree that it is unreasonable to expect every childcare service or preschool to cater for all disabilities or special needs children.

# METHODOLOGY

	2021	2022
<b>Fieldwork:</b>	22 April – 7 May	29 June – 12 July
<b>Nationally representative sample:</b>	<b>n=4786</b>	<b>n=4527</b>
<b>Maximum margin of error at a 95% confidence level</b>	Full sample ±1.4% Half sample ±2.0%	Full sample ±1.5% Half sample ±2.1%
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Essential Research	

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

The 2022 quantitative poll of a representative sample of the general public assessed any changes from 2021 in Australians' views, attitudes and experiences of the early learning and childcare system in Australia, and what they expect of the government's role in facilitating a universal early learning system. The 2022 poll was similar to the 2021 poll, though it included some new content.

In 2022, the online survey was hosted by Dynata and took approximately 15 minutes to complete, while in 2021, the survey was hosted by Qualtrics.

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

Some figures in this report will not total 100% due to rounding. Full methodology can be found [here](#). A full summary of results can be found [here](#).



Australian  
Polling Council  
Quality Mark

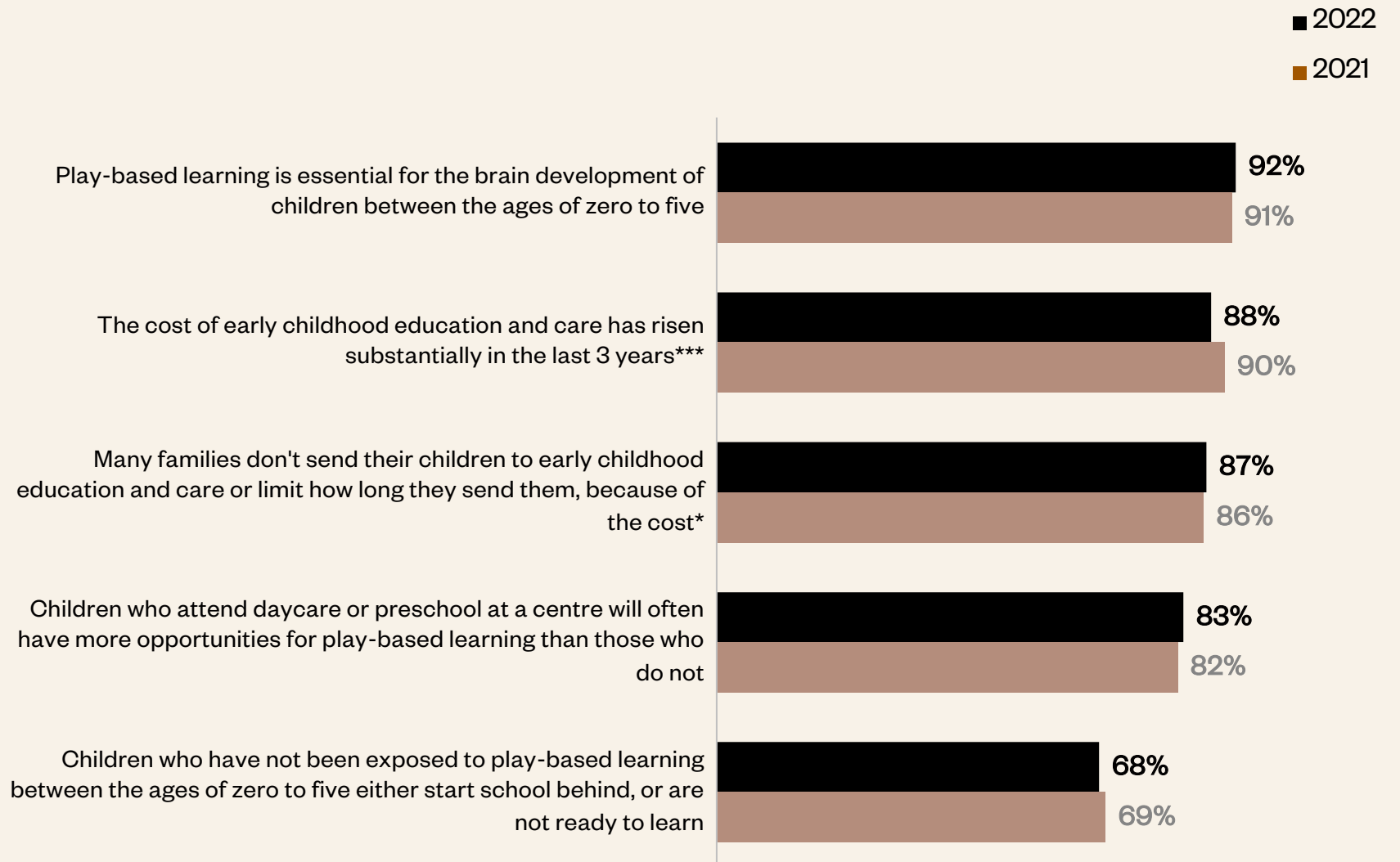
# **CURRENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS**



# UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING

Percent responded “definitely” or “probably” true

The **vast majority** of Australians recognise that **play-based learning is essential for brain development**. This is consistent with our 2021 findings.



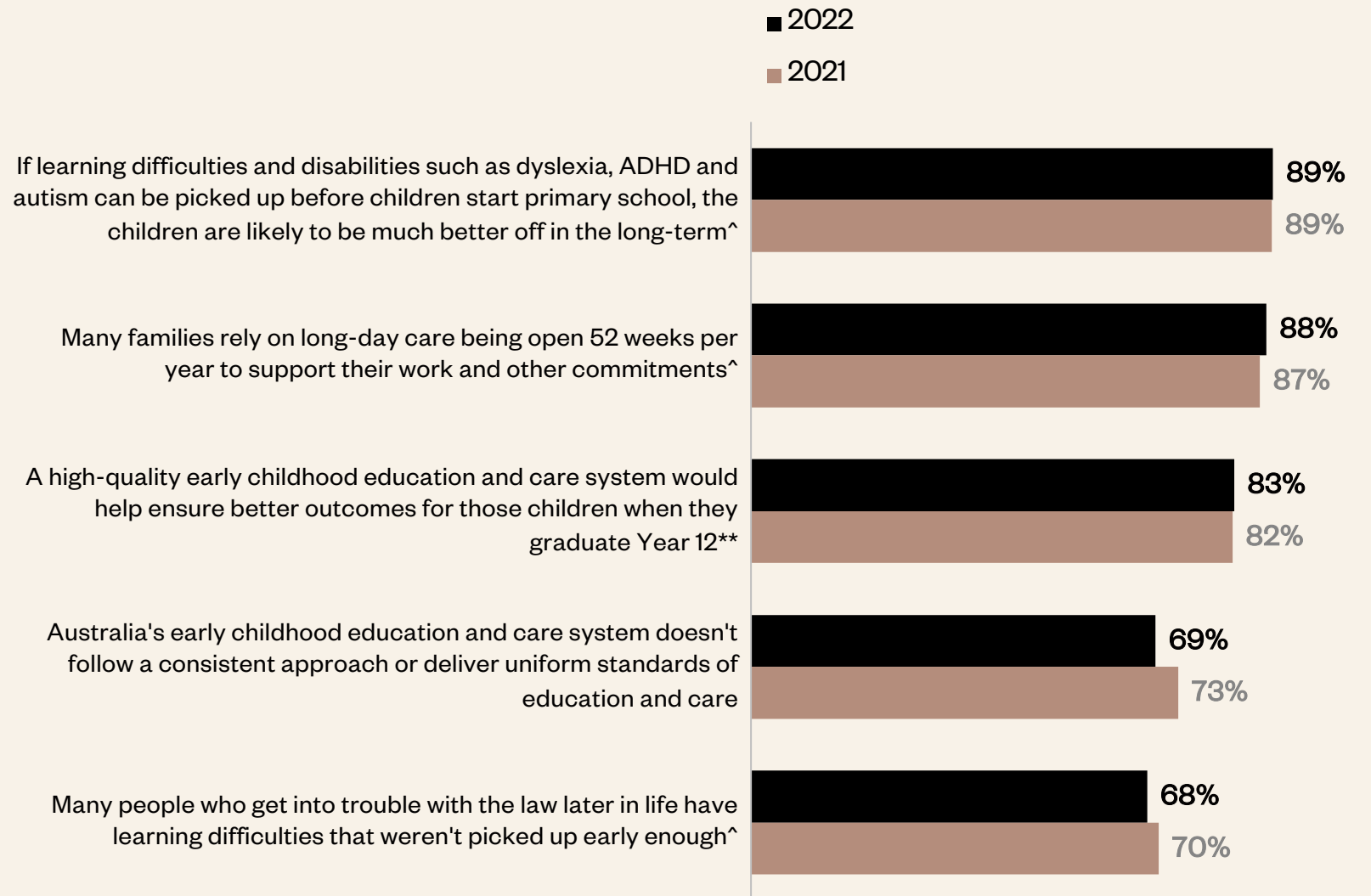
Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

	2021, n=	2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527
*In 2021 only shown to half sample	2390	4527
***Only shown to parents with a child that attends/attended childcare	918	844

# UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING

Percent responded “definitely” or “probably” true

Compared to 2021, **slightly fewer** respondents believe that **Australia’s ECE system is inconsistent in its approach.**



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.

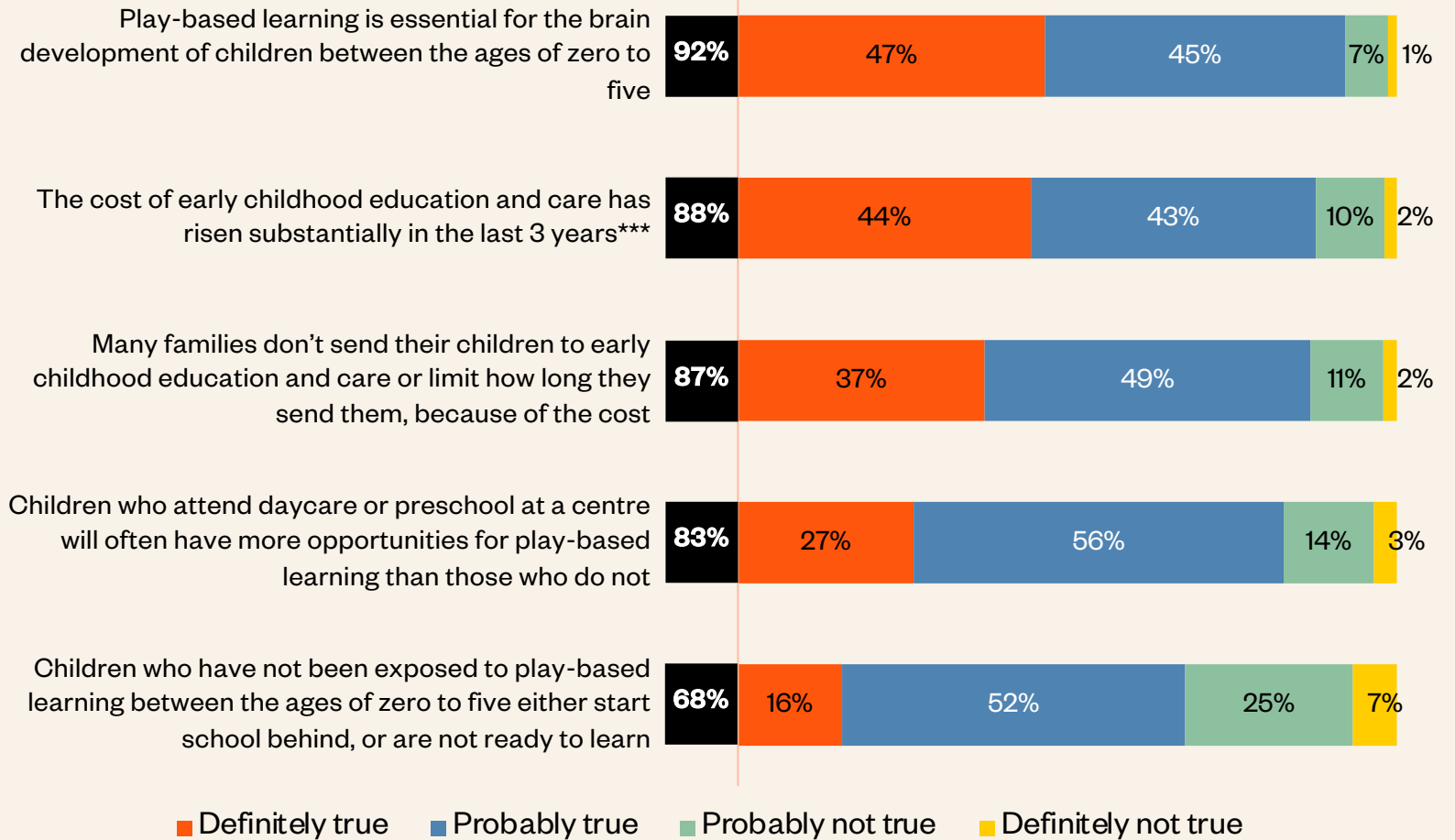
	2021, n=	2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527
<sup>^</sup> Only shown to half sample	2396 or 2390	2263 or 2264
<sup>**</sup> In 2022 only shown to half sample	4786	2264

# UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING

2022 findings

The vast majority of Australians recognise that play-based learning is essential to childrens' brain development.

## Total 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.

2022, n=

All respondents 4527

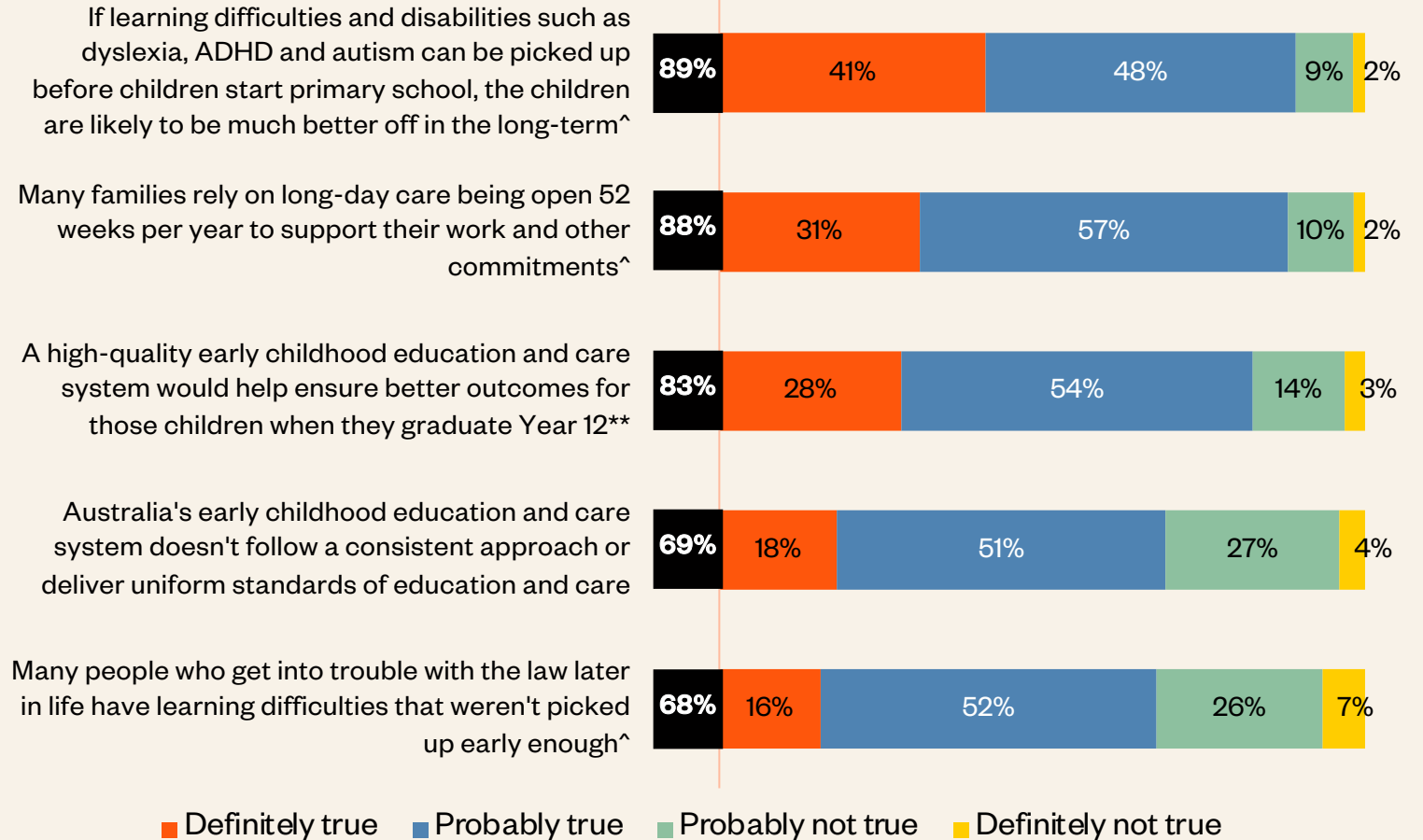
\*\*\*Only shown to parents with a child that attends/attended childcare 844

# UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING

2022 findings

Most Australians see the value of identifying learning difficulties prior to starting school.

## Total True



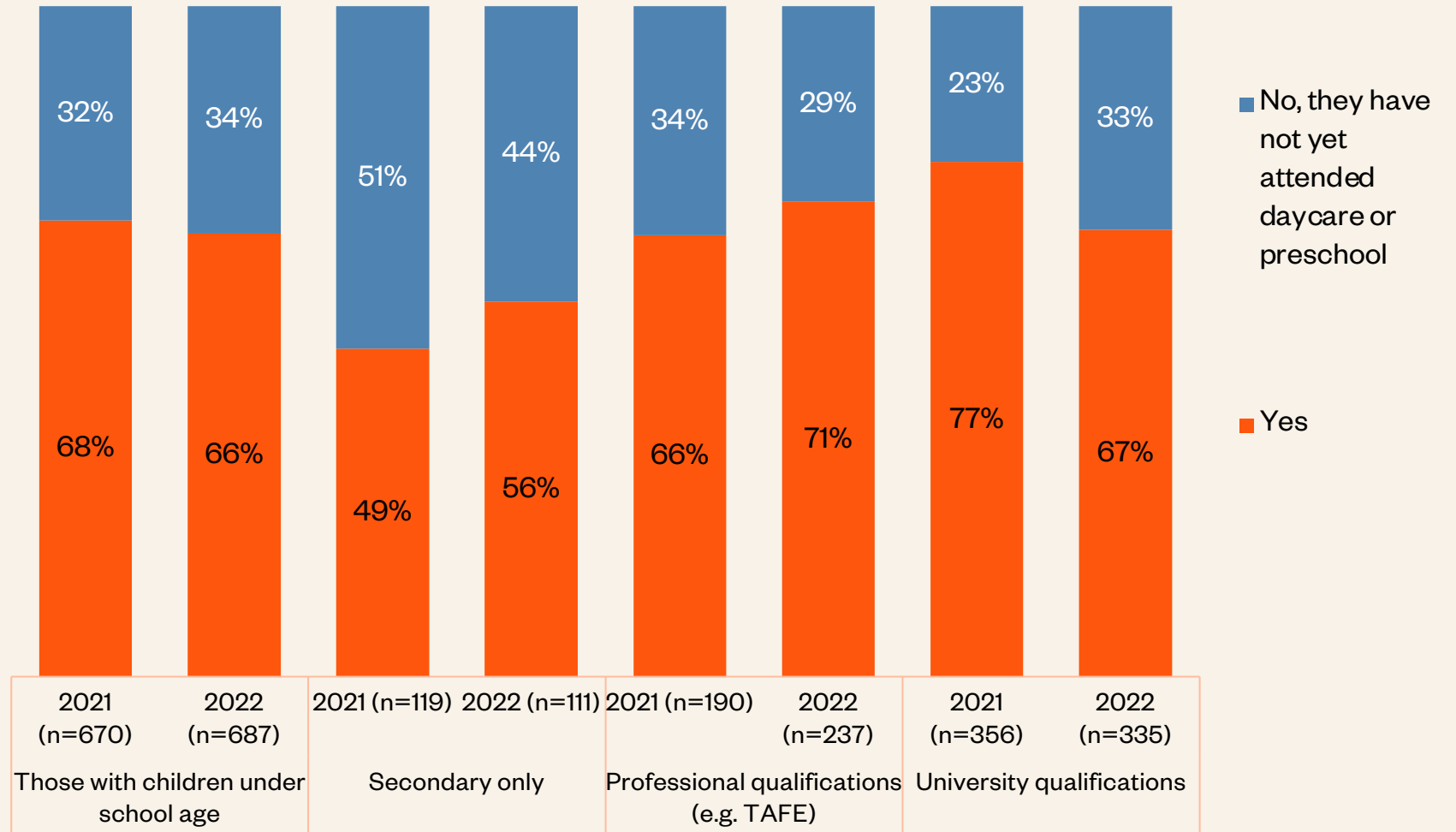
Q. For each of the following statements about early childhood education and care, please indicate if you think they are definitely true, probably true, probably not true or definitely not true.

	2022, n=
All respondents	4527
^Only shown to half sample	2263 or 2264
**In 2022 only shown to half sample	2263 or 2264



# WHO HAS CHILDREN IN ECE?

Parents with post-secondary school qualifications are **more likely** to say their child is in childcare compared to who do not.



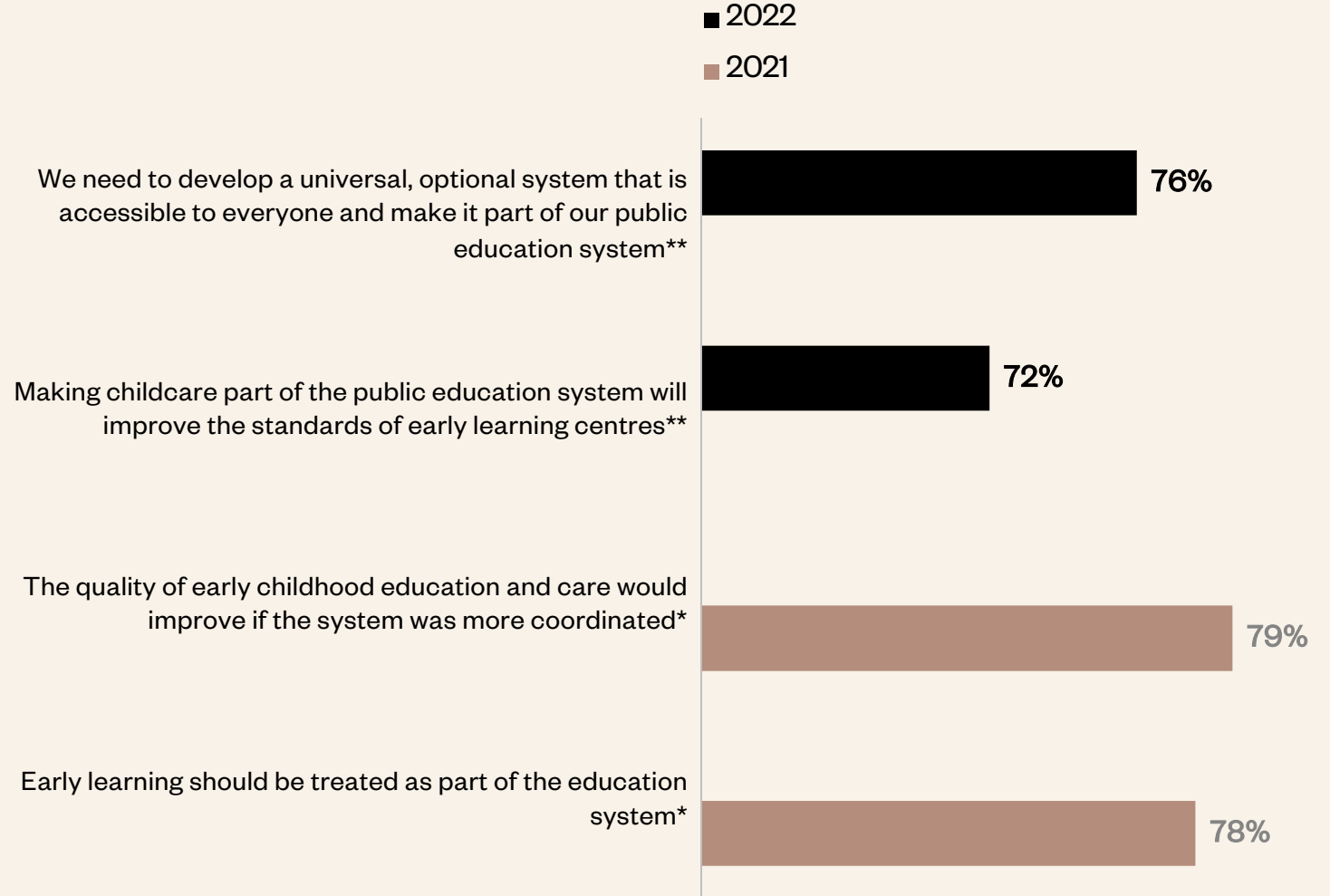
Q. Different names for early learning centres are used in different states and territories. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'centre-based childcare or preschool' refers to any formal early learning & care provided for children under school age through a centre. Does your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

Parents with at least one child under school age      2021, n= 670      2022, n= 687

# INTEGRATING ECE WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION

Percent responded “strongly” or “somewhat” agree

Most respondents continue to agree that we should develop a **universal, optional system** that is part of the education system and that an integrated system would **improve standards** of early learning centres.



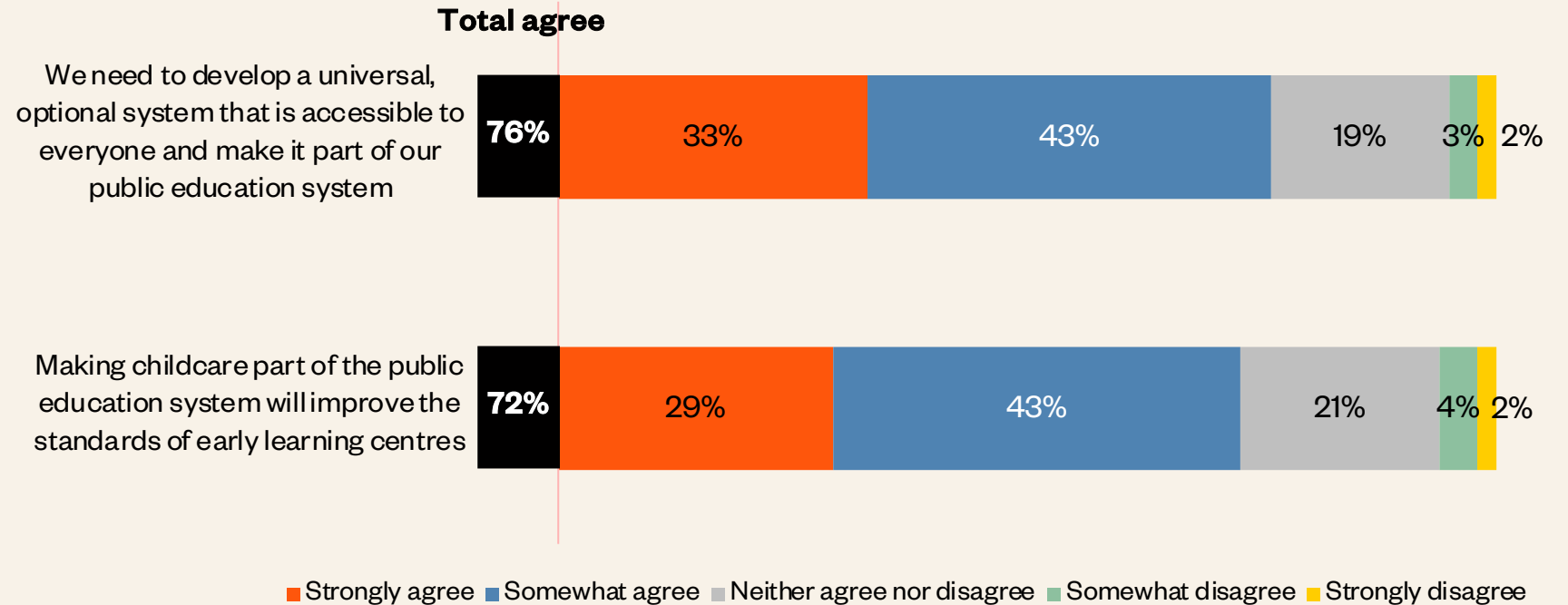
Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	2021, n=	2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527
*Included in 2021 survey	4786	4527
**Included in 2022 survey	4786	4527

# INTEGRATING ECE WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION

2022 findings

Most respondents agree that we should develop a universal, optional early learning system that is part of the public education system and that an integrated system will improve standards of early learning centres.



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

2022, n=

All respondents

4527

# WHAT WOULD HELP FAMILIES?

Percent responded “a lot” or “a fair amount”

The **vast majority** of parents with a child under school age say more **flexible working conditions, cheaper dentistry, and access to quality ECE** would help their families.



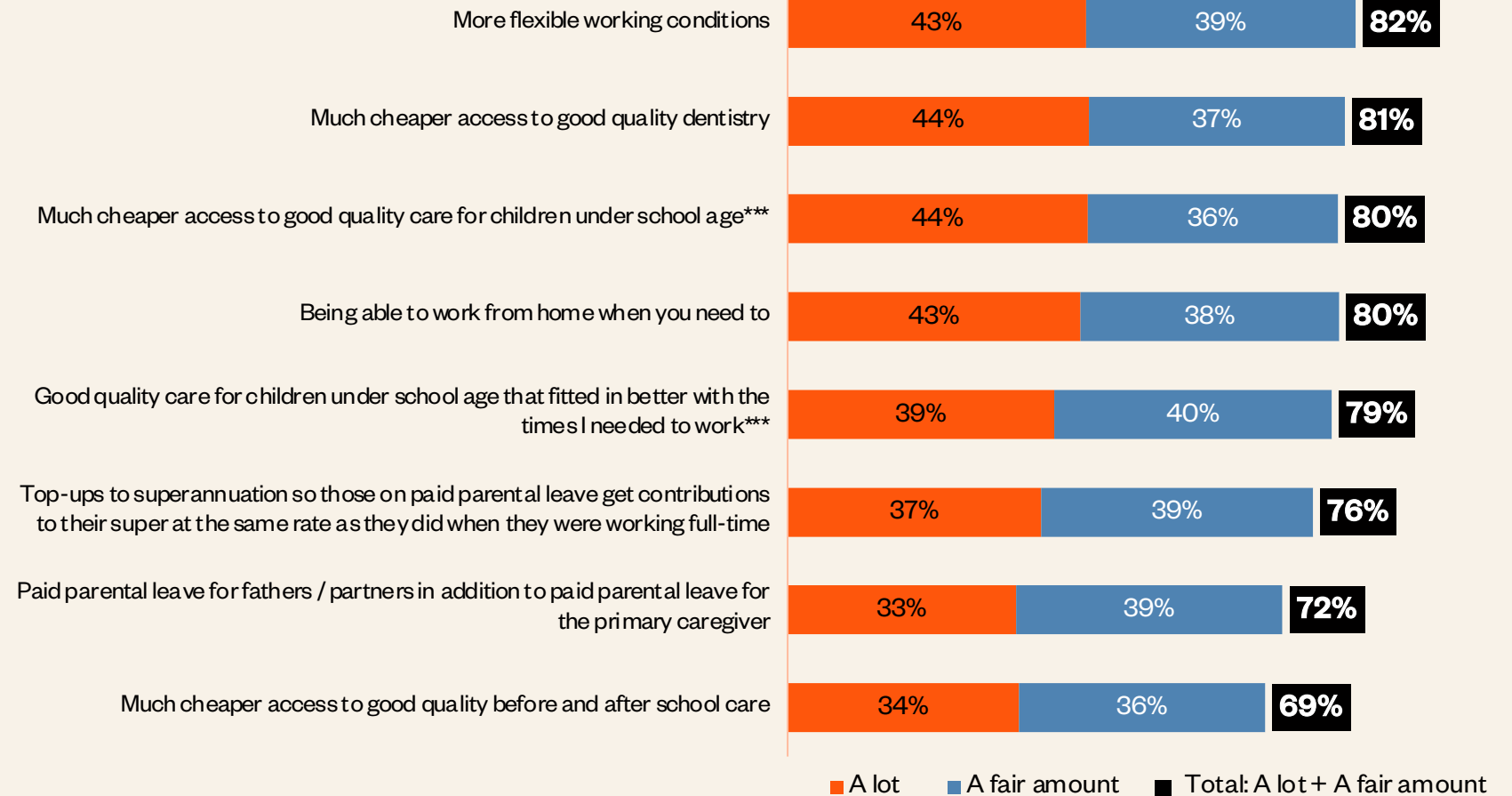
Q. How much would each of the following help you and your family, now or in the future?

	2021, n=	2022, n=
Those with dependent children	1519	1413
***Parents with at least one child under school age	670	687

# WHAT WOULD HELP FAMILIES?

2022 findings

The **vast majority** of parents with a child under school age say having **cheaper access to quality ECE** would help their families.



Q. How much would each of the following help you and your family, now or in the future?

	2022, n=
Those with dependent children	1413
***Parents with at least one child under school age	687

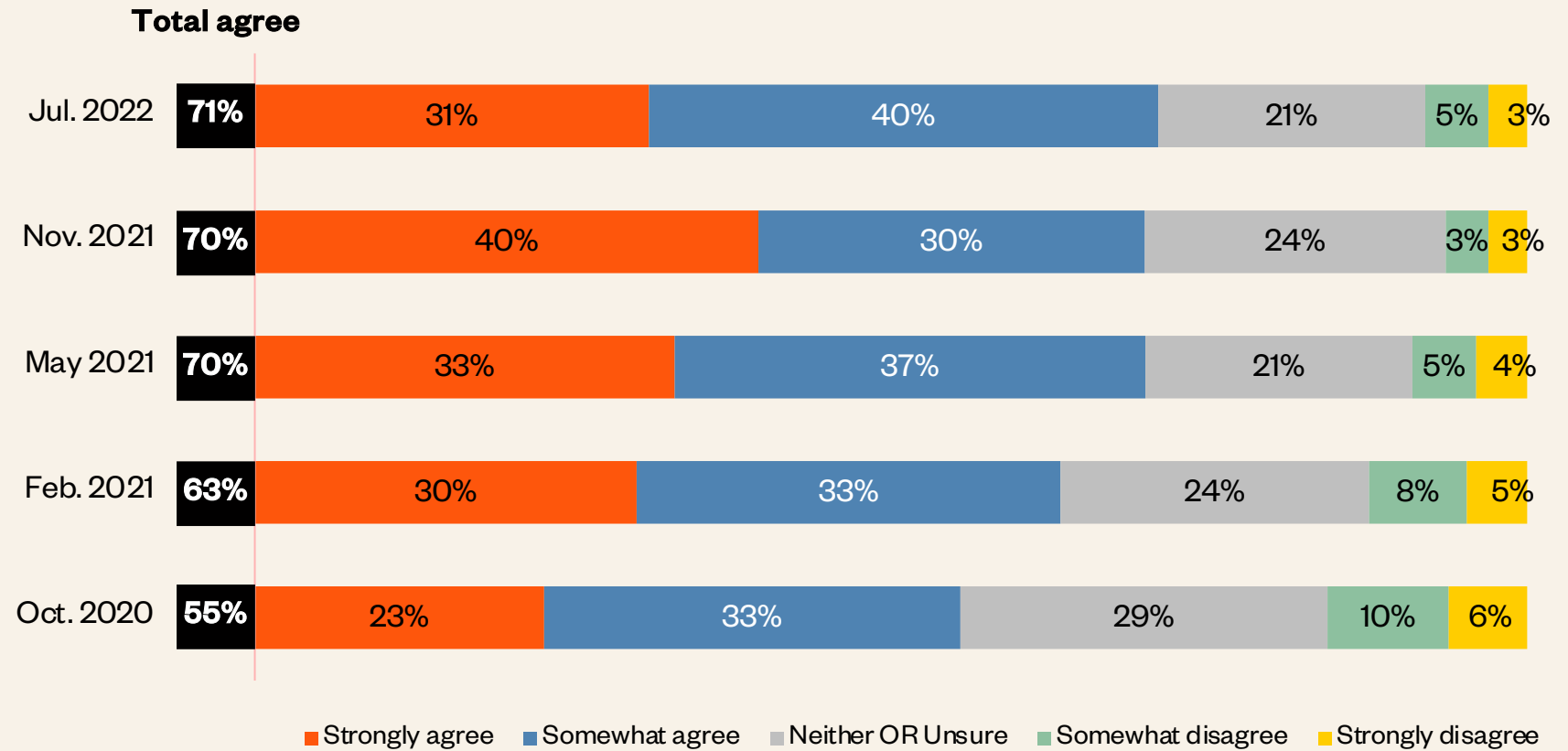
**TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL,  
HIGH-QUALITY EARLY  
LEARNING SYSTEM**



# WOULD CHEAPER ECE BE GOOD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY?

## 2022 findings

Over 70% of respondents agree that cheaper childcare would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole, up 16% from October 2020.



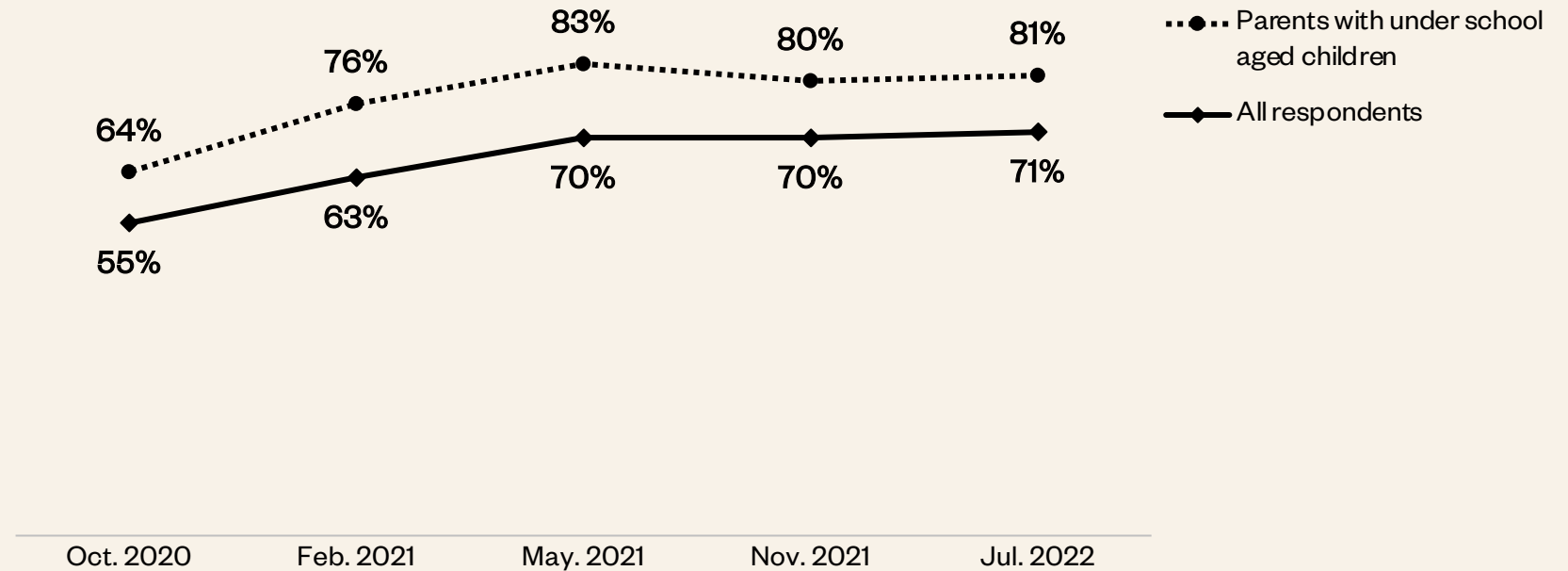
Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Oct. 2020, n=	Feb. 2021, n=	May 2021, n=	Nov. 2021, n=	Jul 2022, n=
All respondents	537	1074	4786	1094	4527

# WOULD CHEAPER ECE BE GOOD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY?

Percent “strongly” or “somewhat” agree

Over **two-thirds** agree that cheaper early childhood education would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole.



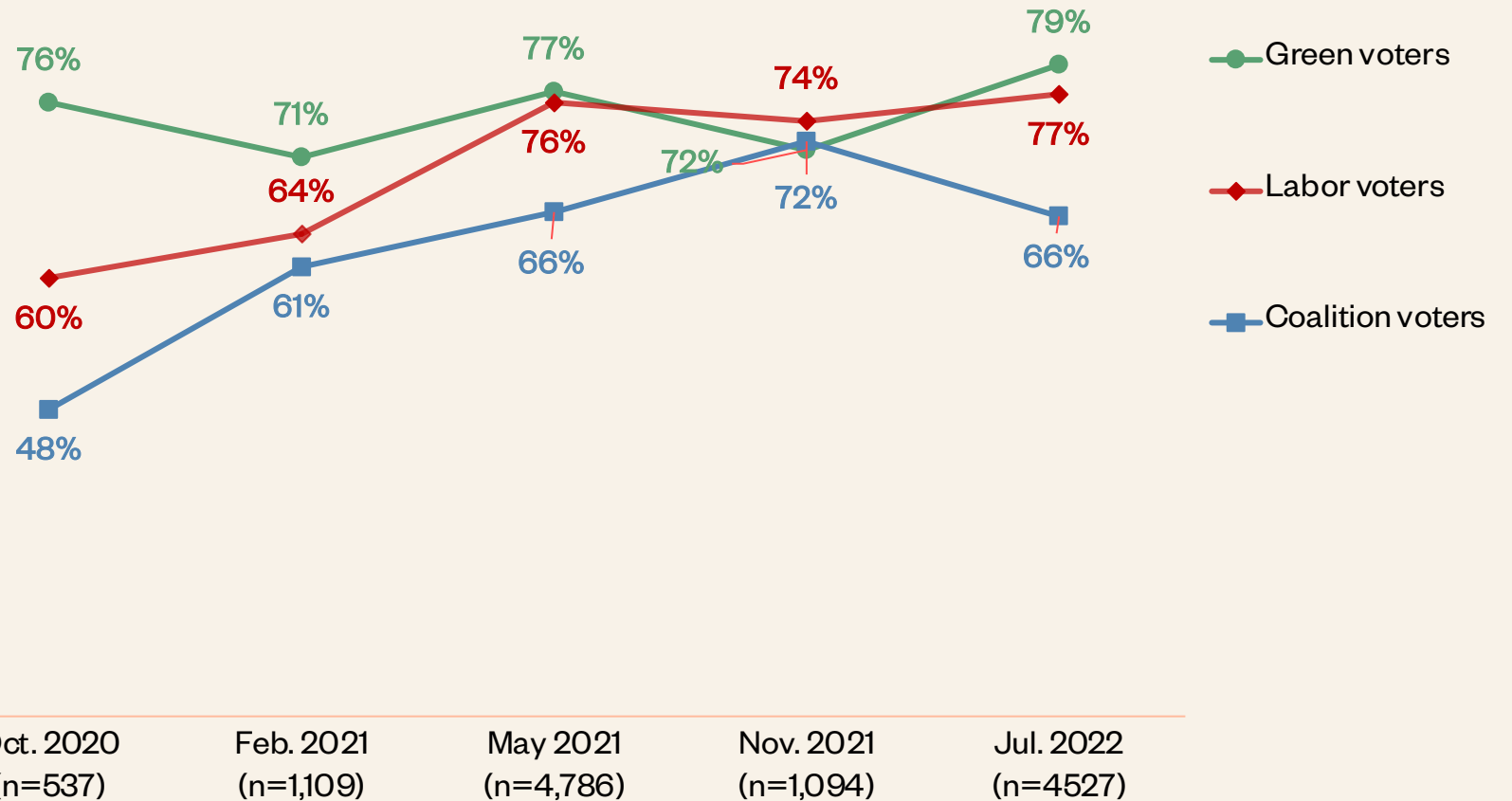
	Oct. 2020	Feb. 2021	May. 2021	Nov. 2021	Jul. 2022
All respondents	537	1074	4786	1094	4527
Parents of at least one child under school age	52	113	670	133	687

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



# WOULD CHEAPER ECE BE GOOD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY?

Agreement among coalition voters has increased considerably over the life of the campaign.



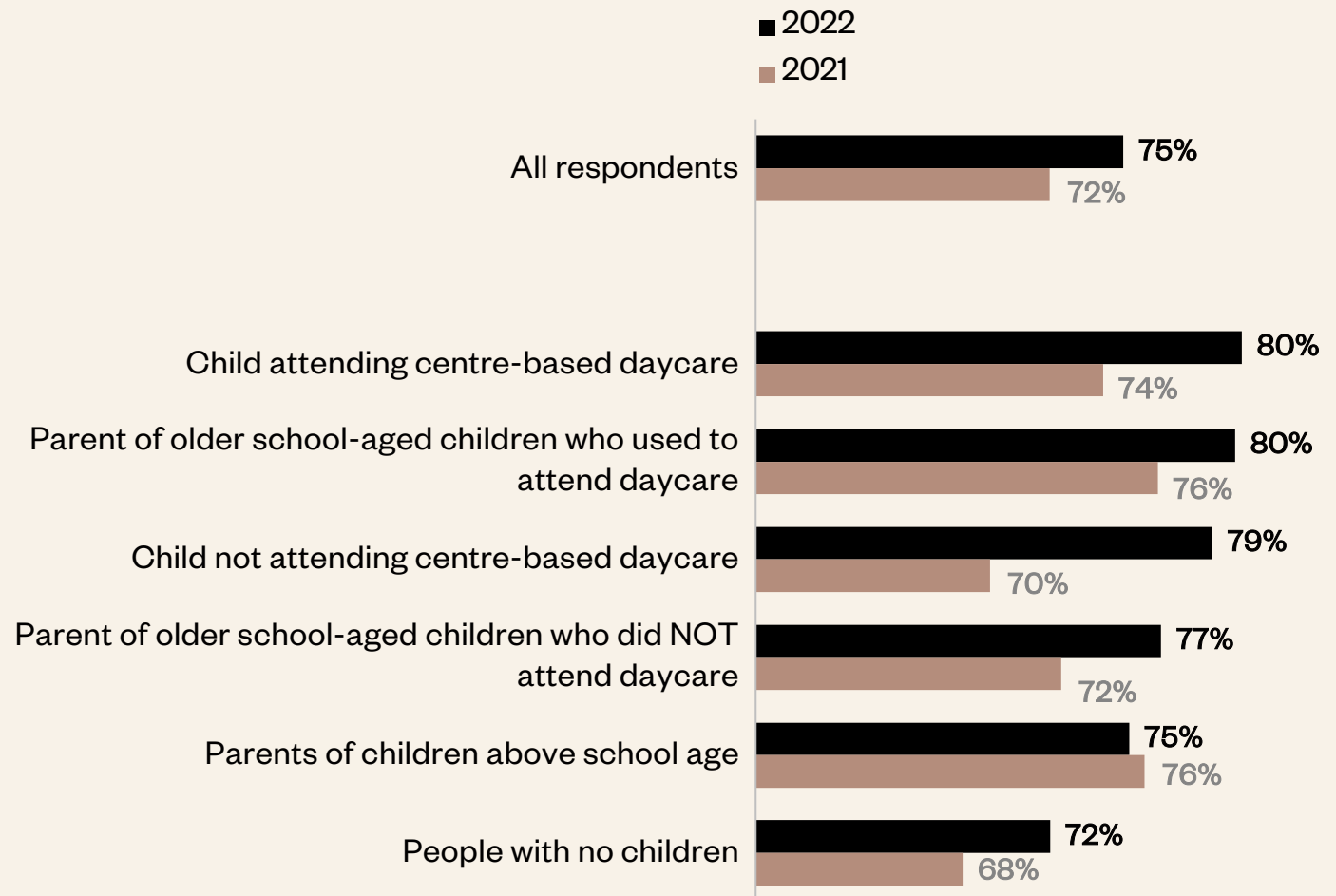
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Cheaper early childhood education and care would be very good for the Australian economy as a whole.

	2021, n=	2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527
Respondents who declared their vote	Different bases for each party for over the years	

# SUPPORT FOR A UNIVERSAL ECE SYSTEM

Percent “strongly” or “somewhat” support

Across **most groups**, there is an **increase in support** for a universal ECE system.



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.

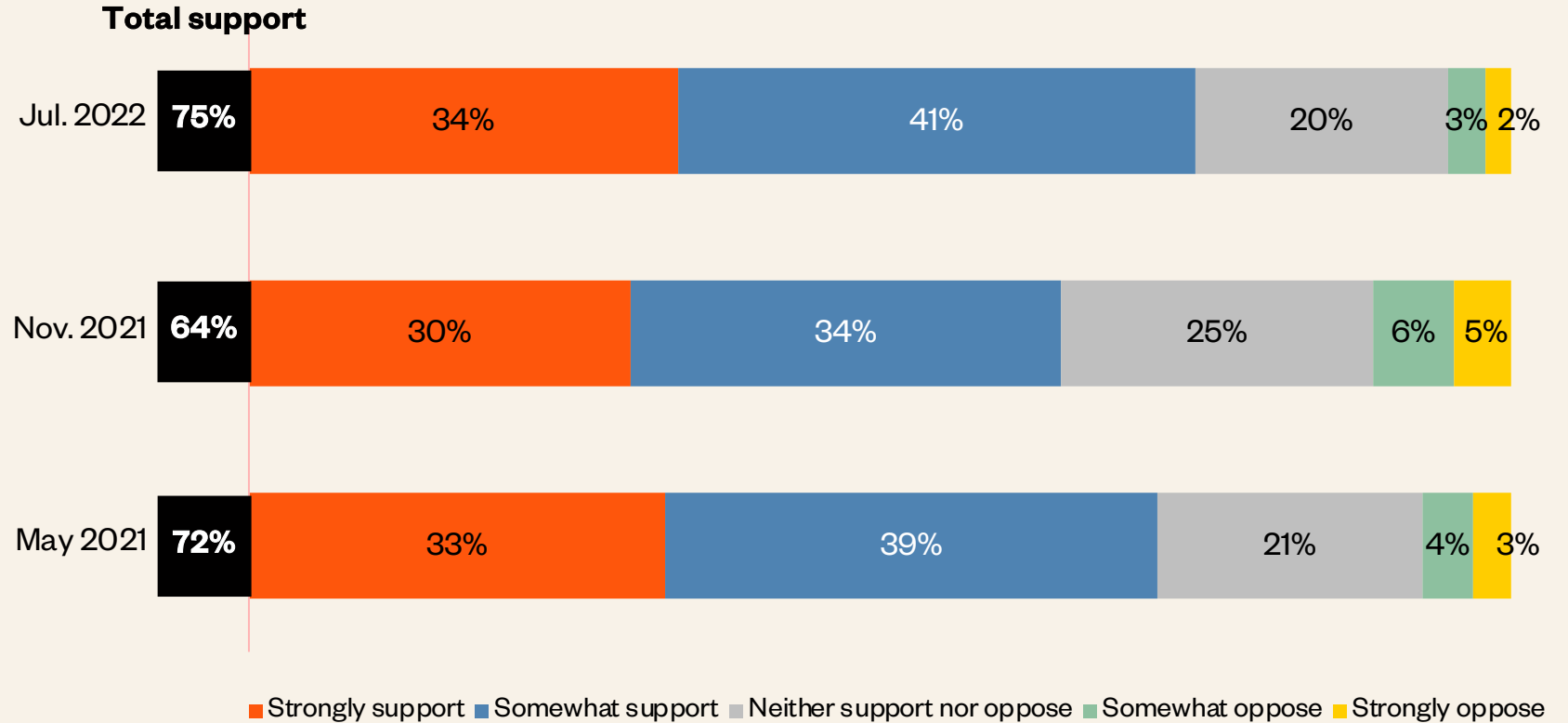
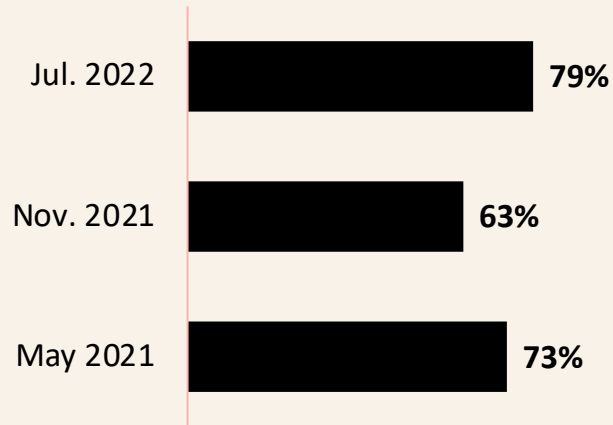
Q. How strongly do you support or oppose introducing a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system along those lines?

	All respondents	Child attending centre-base childcare	Parent of older school-aged children who used to attend childcare	Child not attending centre-based childcare	Parent of older school-aged children who did NOT attend childcare	Parents of children above school age	People with no children
2021	4786	455	463	215	337	1416	1900
2022	4527	454	390	233	288	1331	1831

# SUPPORT FOR A UNIVERSAL ECE SYSTEM

Three-quarters of Australians now support a universal high-quality early learning system.

Parents with under school aged children – Total support:



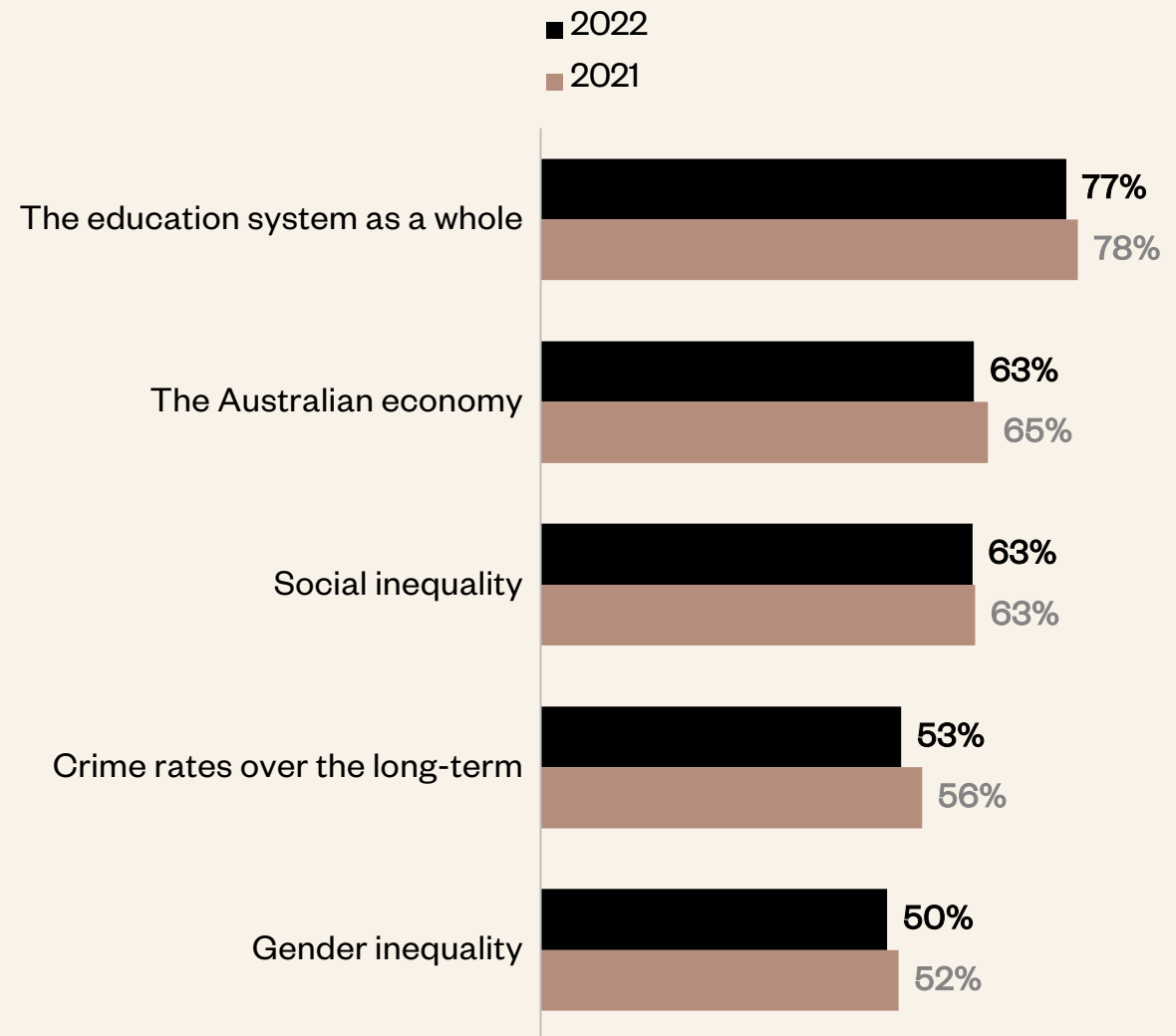
Q. For the purpose of the next few questions, please assume that 'a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system' would be one that was connected to the primary and secondary education system with a standard set of teaching priorities based around play-based learning. The system would 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?

	May 2021, n=	Nov. 2021, n=	Jul. 2022, n=
All respondents	4786	1094	4527
Parents with under school aged children	670	133	687

# EFFECTS OF UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY ECE

Percent responded ECE would make subjects “a lot better” or a “little better”

As in 2021, **most** think a **universal early learning system** would be good for the education system, the economy and reducing social inequality.



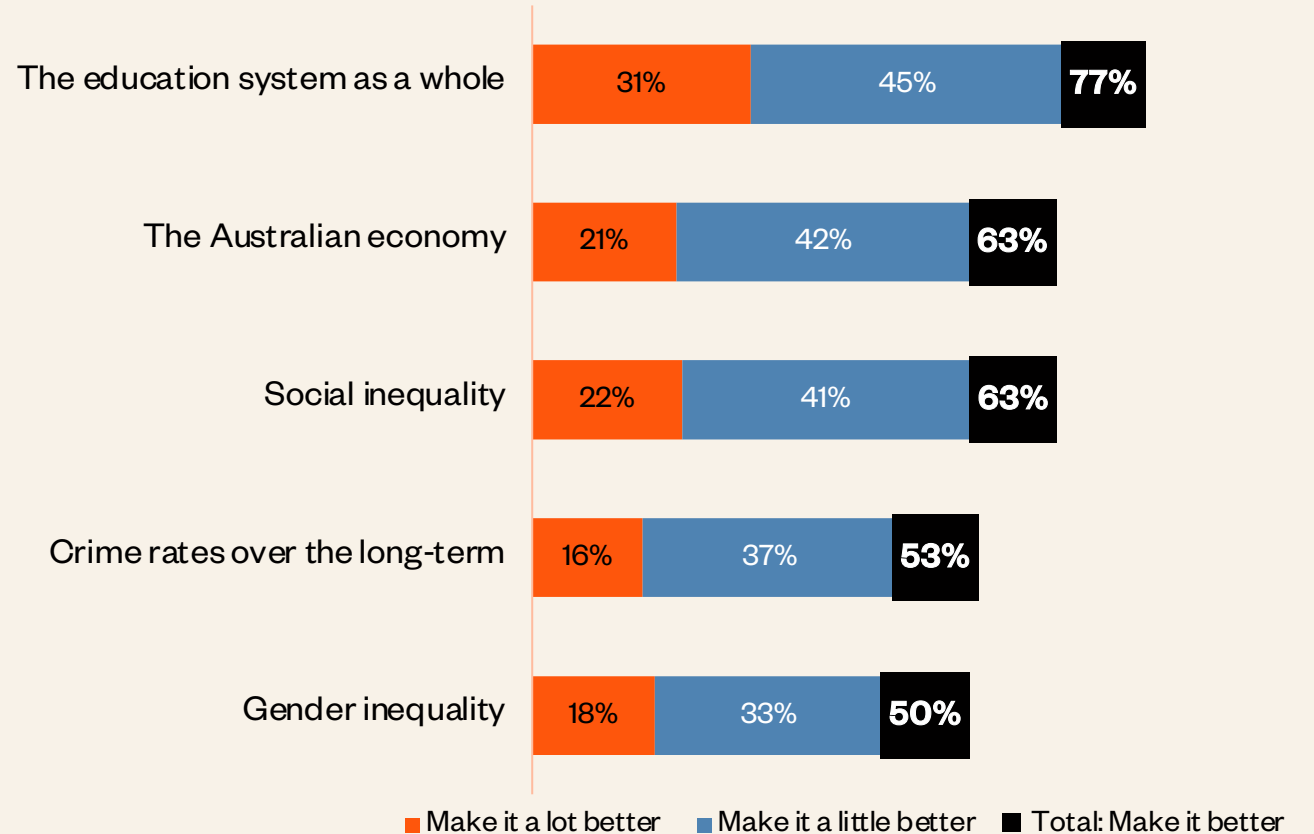
Q. If there was a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how do you think it would affect each of the following?

	2021, n=	2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527

# EFFECTS OF UNIVERSAL HIGH-QUALITY ECE

2022 findings

**Most** think a **universal early learning system** would be good for the education system, the economy and reducing social inequality.

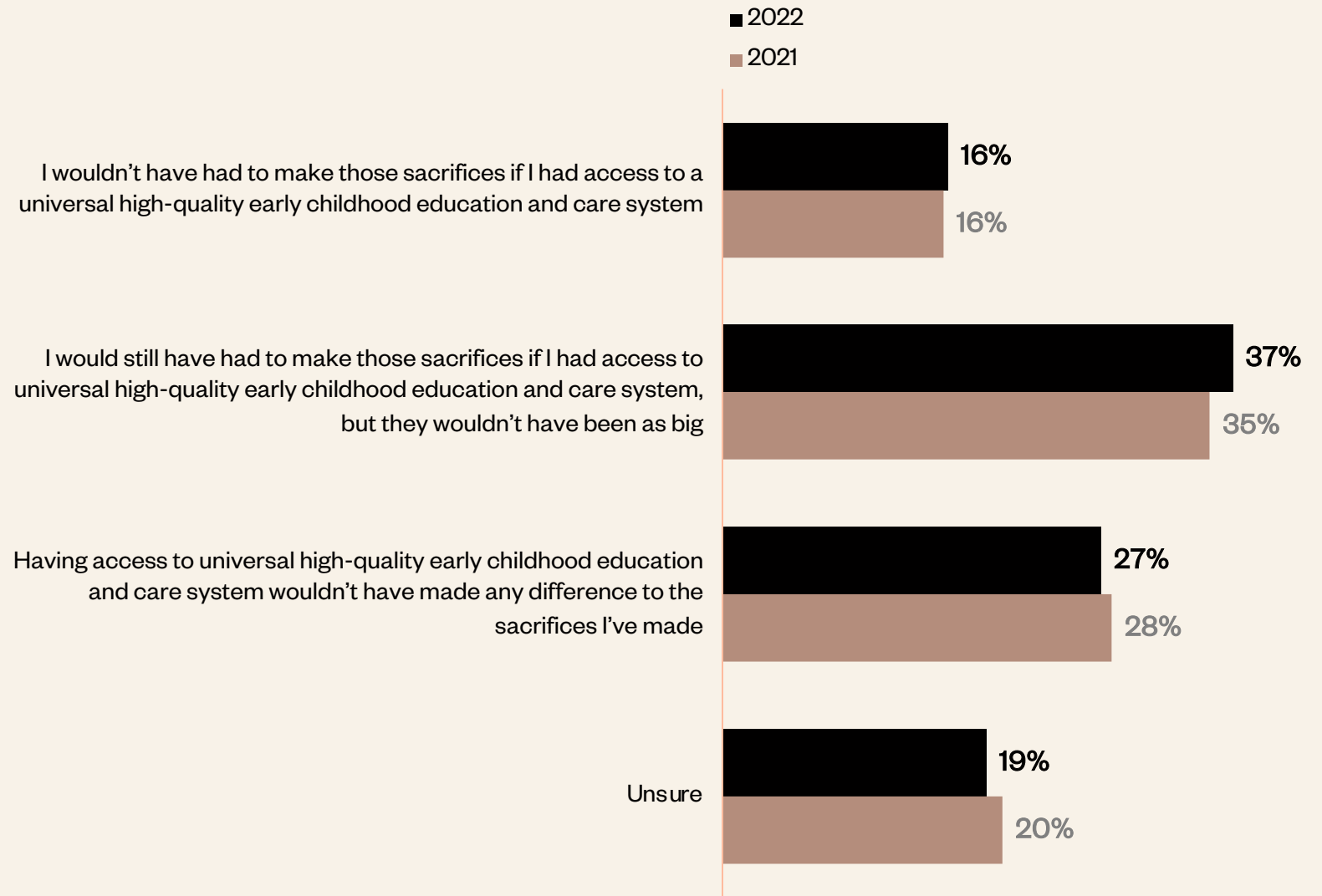


Q. If there was a universal high-quality early childhood education and care system, how do you think it would affect each of the following?

2022, n=  
All respondents 4527

# CAREER AND FAMILY SACRIFICES

The 2022 results are in line with 2021: **half** those who have made career or family sacrifices say a **universal early learning system** would have reduced those sacrifices.



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?

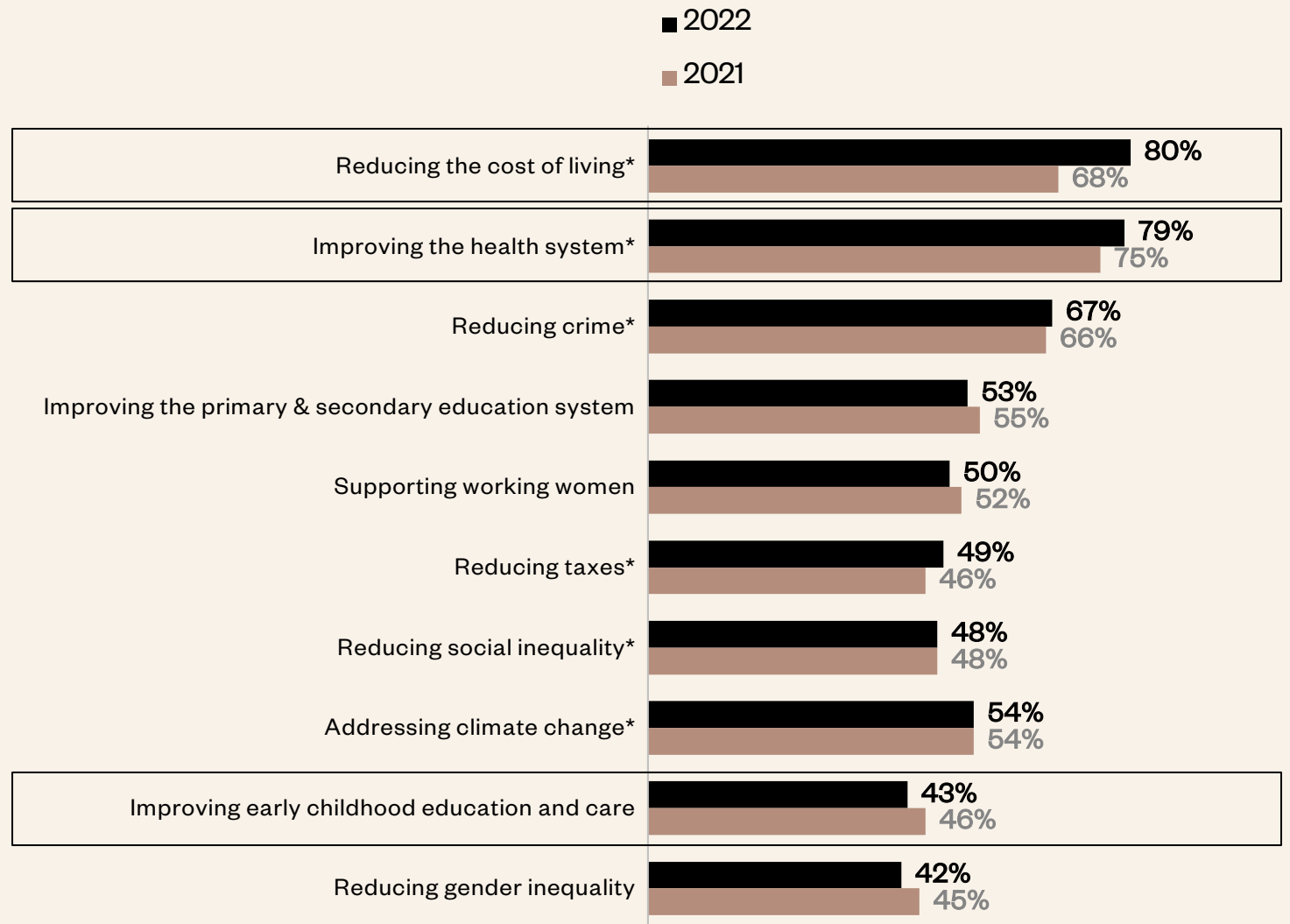
	2021, n=	2022, n=
Respondents who strongly/somewhat agree that they have made career or family sacrifices	2987	2887

# VOTING INTENTION AND COST OF LIVING

Percent responded “extremely” or “very” important

In 2022, significantly more Australians say reducing the cost of living and improving the health system is important to their vote.

Around four in ten say improving early childhood education is an extremely or very important issue to their vote.



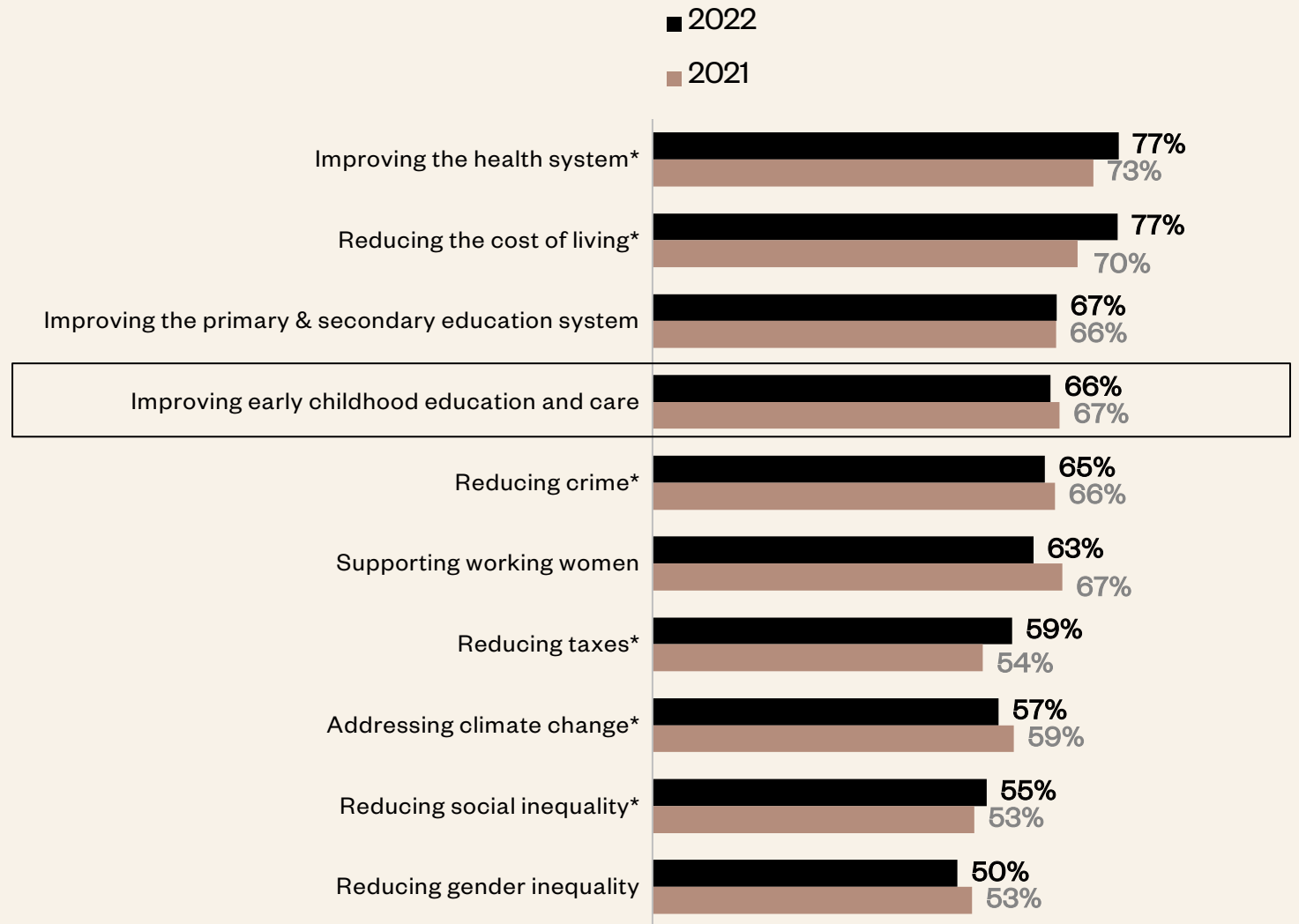
Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?  
 [7-POINT SCALE: Extremely important, Very important, Fairly important, Neutral, Not that important, Not important, Not important at all]

	2021, n=	2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527
*Only shown to half sample	2390 or 2396	2263 or 2264

# ECE AND VOTING INTENTION

Percent responded “extremely” or “very” important

As in 2021, **two-thirds of parents** of children under school age say **improving early learning** is extremely or very important to their vote.



Q. How important are each of the following issues when it comes to voting at federal elections?  
 [7-POINT SCALE: Extremely important, Very important, Fairly important, Neutral, Not that important, Not important, Not important at all]

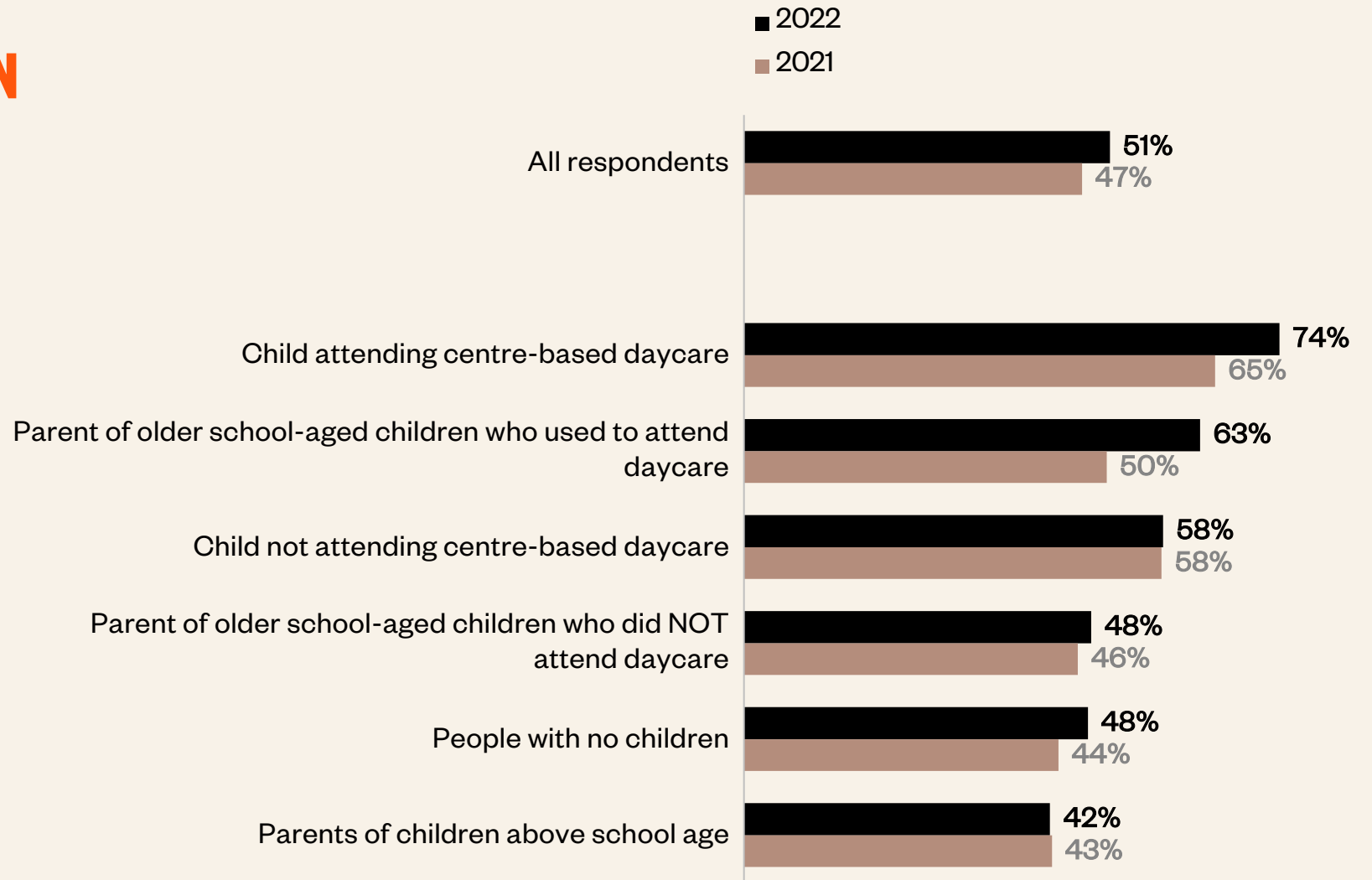
	2021, n=	2022, n=
Parents of at least one child under school age	670	687
*Only shown to half sample	322 or 348	342 or 345



# EFFECTS OF UNIVERSAL ECE ON VOTING INTENTION

Percent “a lot” or “a little” more likely to vote for party

There has been a **significant increase** in the percentage of those who **are likely to vote for a party** that introduces a universal high-quality ECE system.



Q. If a political 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?

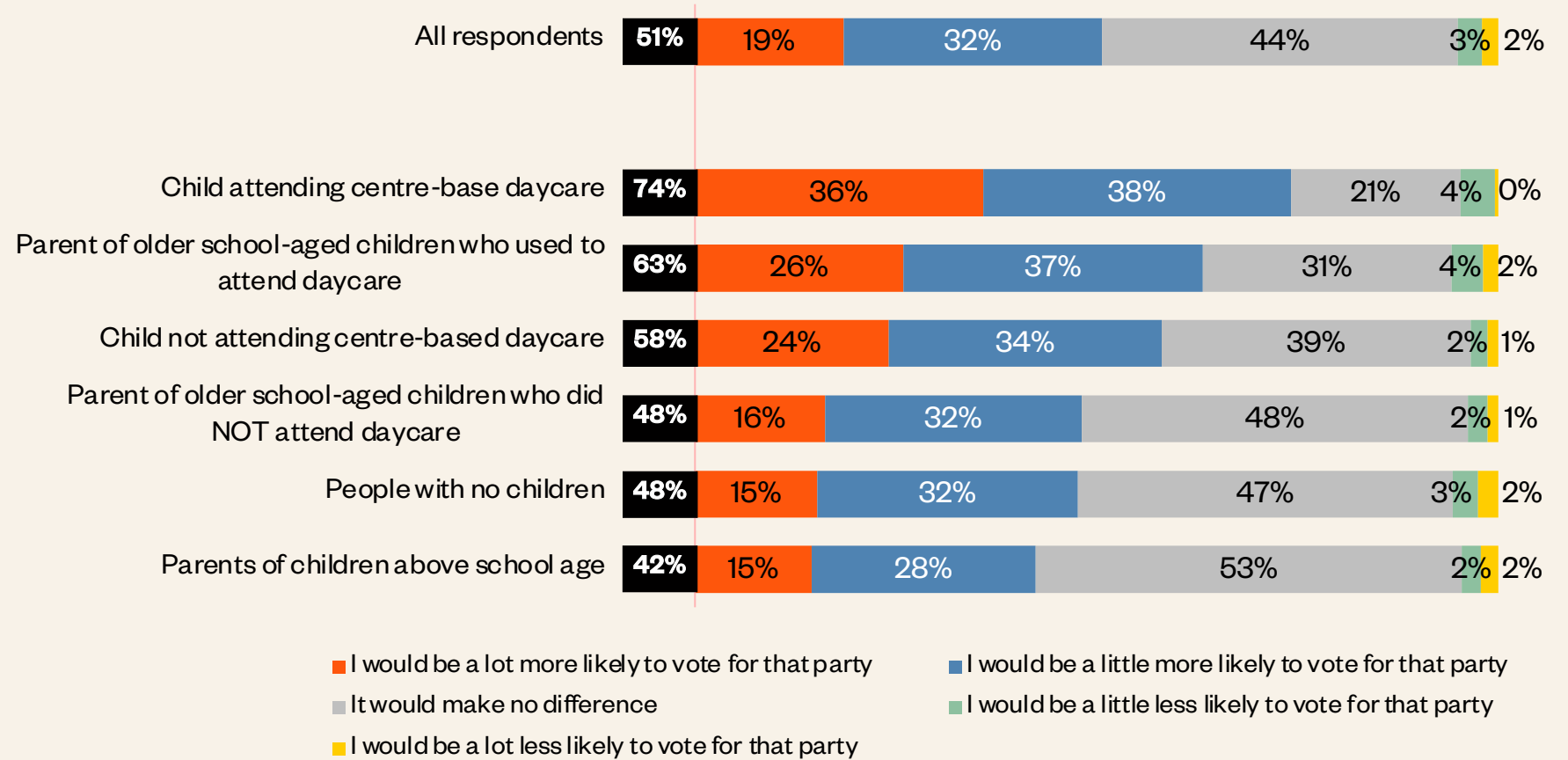
	All respondents	Child attending centre-base childcare	Parent of older school-aged children who used to attend childcare	Child not attending centre-based childcare	Parent of older school-aged children who did NOT attend childcare	Parents of children above school age	People with no children
2021	4786	455	463	215	337	1416	1900
2022	4527	454	390	233	288	1331	1831

# EFFECTS OF UNIVERSAL ECE ON VOTING INTENTION

2022 findings

Two-thirds of parents of children in childcare say a universal policy would make them more likely to vote for a party.

## Total more likely to vote



Q. If a political 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?

	All respondents	Child attending centre-base childcare	Parent of older school-aged children who used to attend childcare	Child not attending centre-based childcare	Parent of older school-aged children who did NOT attend childcare	Parents of children above school age	People with no children
2021	4786	455	463	215	337	1416	1900
2022	4527	454	390	233	288	1331	1831

# EFFECTS OF UNIVERSAL EARLY EDUCATION ON VOTING INTENTION

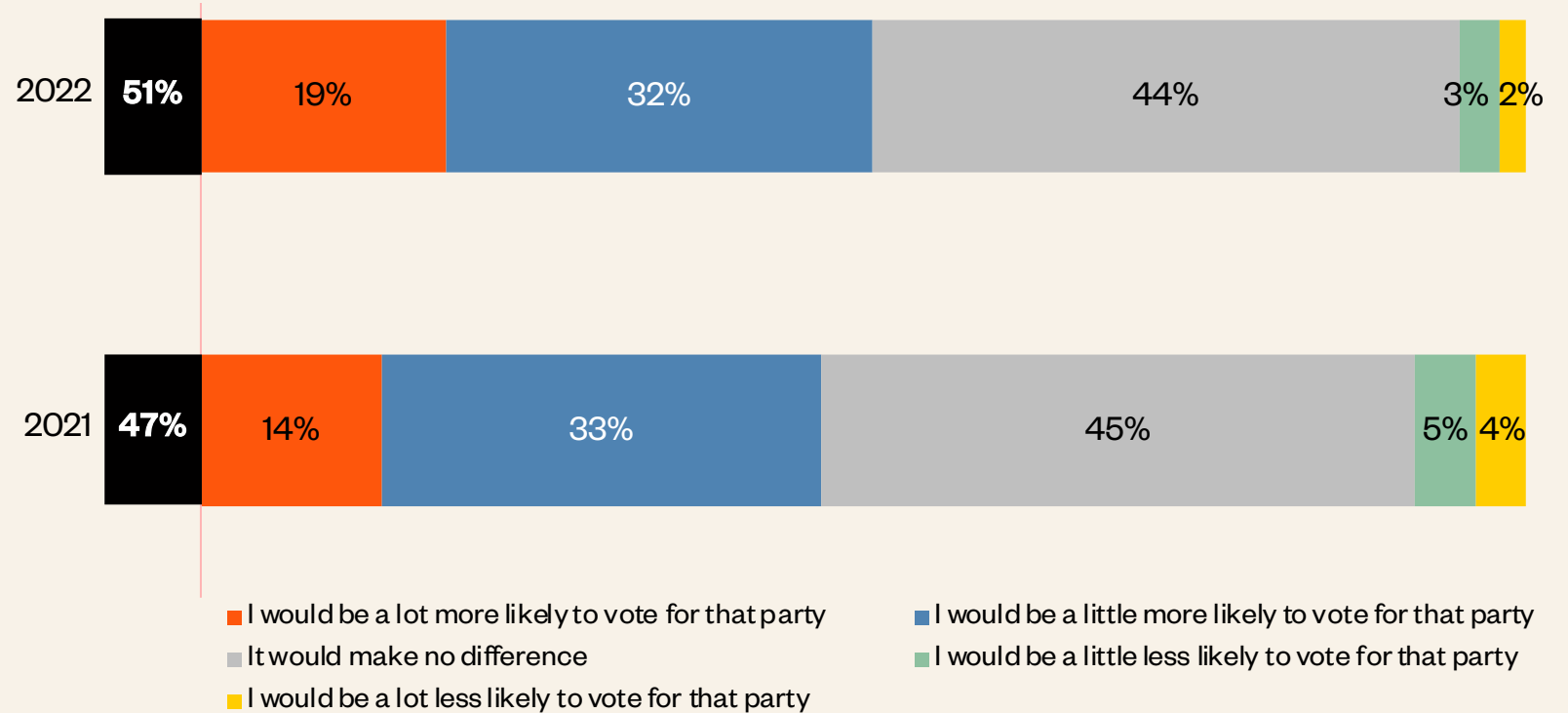
## 2022 findings

A universal early learning system appears **more likely** to attract votes than to put voters off.

Parents with under school aged children – Total support:



### Total more likely to vote



Q. If a political 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?

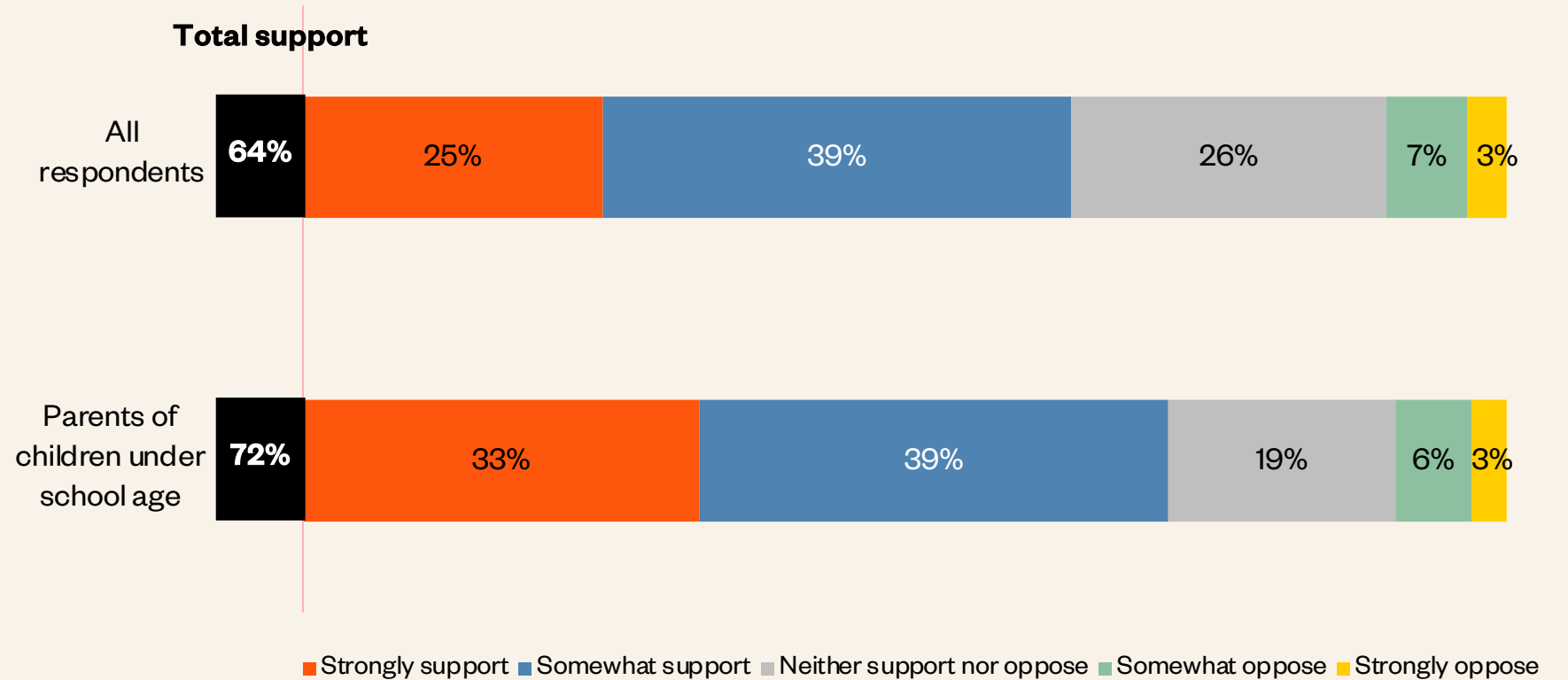
	May 2021, n=	Jul. 2022, n=
All respondents	4786	4527
Parents with under school aged children	670	687

# **NEW QUESTIONS 2022**



# PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

There is **strong support** for carers for **sharing paid parental leave** among all respondents, even those without children under school age.



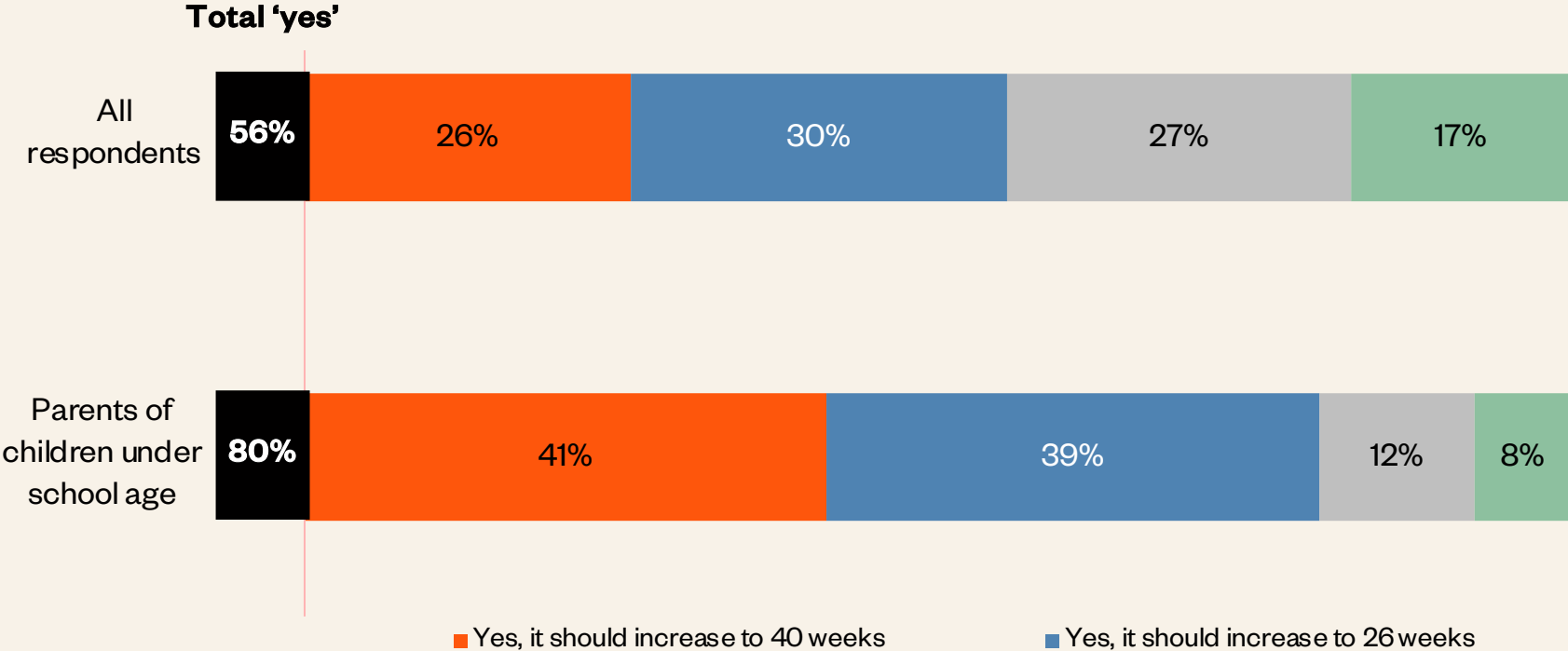
Q. Currently, the government Parental Leave Pay conditions are set for primary carers of newborns to receive up to 18 weeks payment, while secondary carers receive 2 weeks payment. Parental Leave Pay is set to National Minimum Wage. To what extent would you support or oppose changing this so primary and secondary carers can share the payments between them (e.g. both carers could take 10 weeks each)?

	Jul. 2022, n=
All respondents	4527
Parents with under school aged children	687

# PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

Just over half of Australians believe government paid parental leave should be increased.

Most parents of children under school age believe it should be increased.



Q. Do you think the government Parental Leave Pay should be increased for carers to take time from work to look after their newborn (total time shared between primary and secondary carers)?

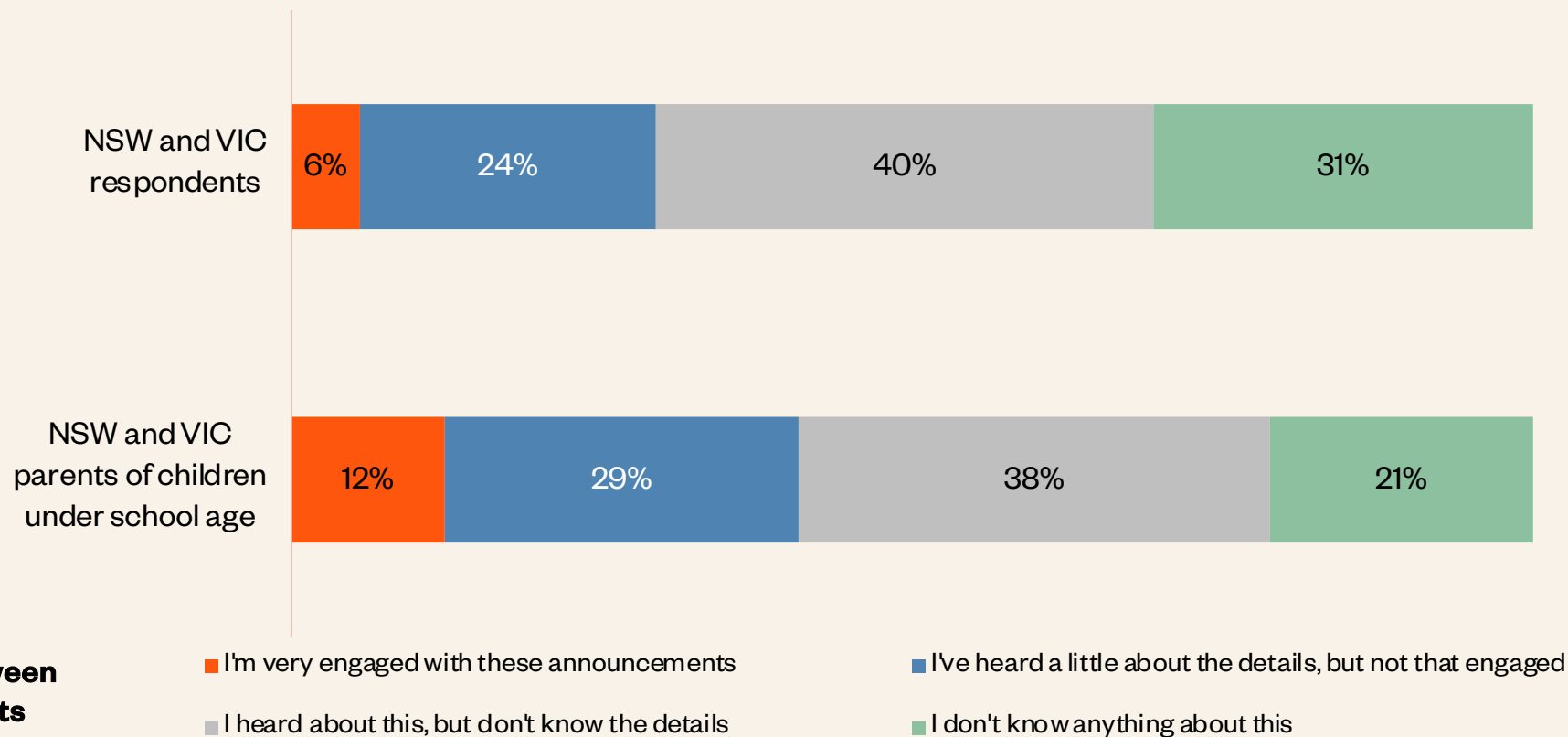
Jul. 2022, n=  
All respondents 4527  
Parents with under school aged children 687

# AWARENESS OF REFORMS

In Victoria and NSW

Awareness of recently announced state-based reforms is **low** among respondents from NSW and Victoria.

It is **slightly higher** among parents of children under school age.



**No marked difference between NSW and VIC respondents**

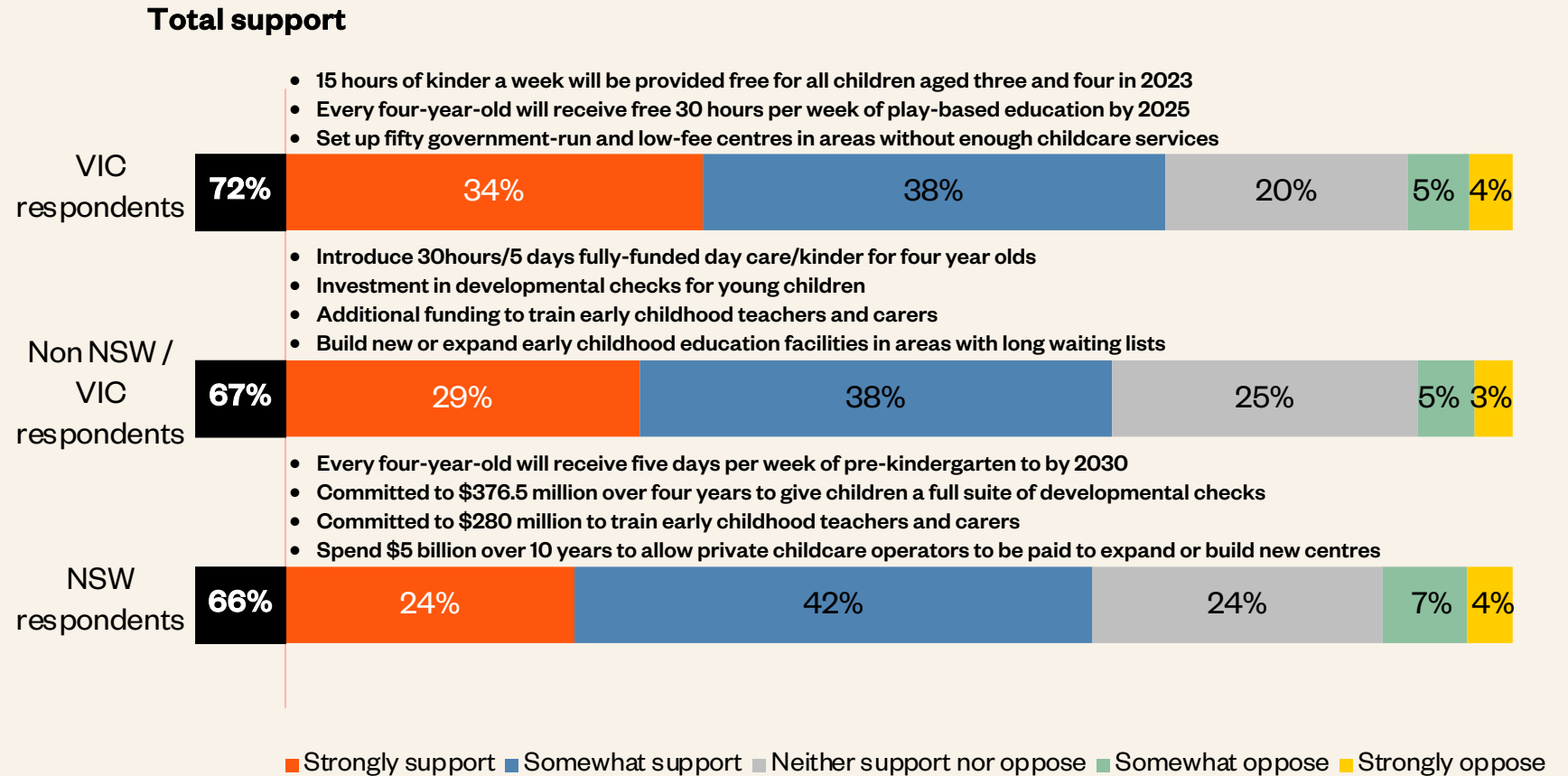
Q. How closely have you followed the recent news of reforms to access and funding of early childhood education in your state?

	Jul. 2022, n=
NSW or VIC respondents	2594
Parents with under school aged children	422

# SUPPORT FOR REFORMS BY STATE

In Victoria and NSW

Support for reforms is **stronger** among respondents from **Victoria.**



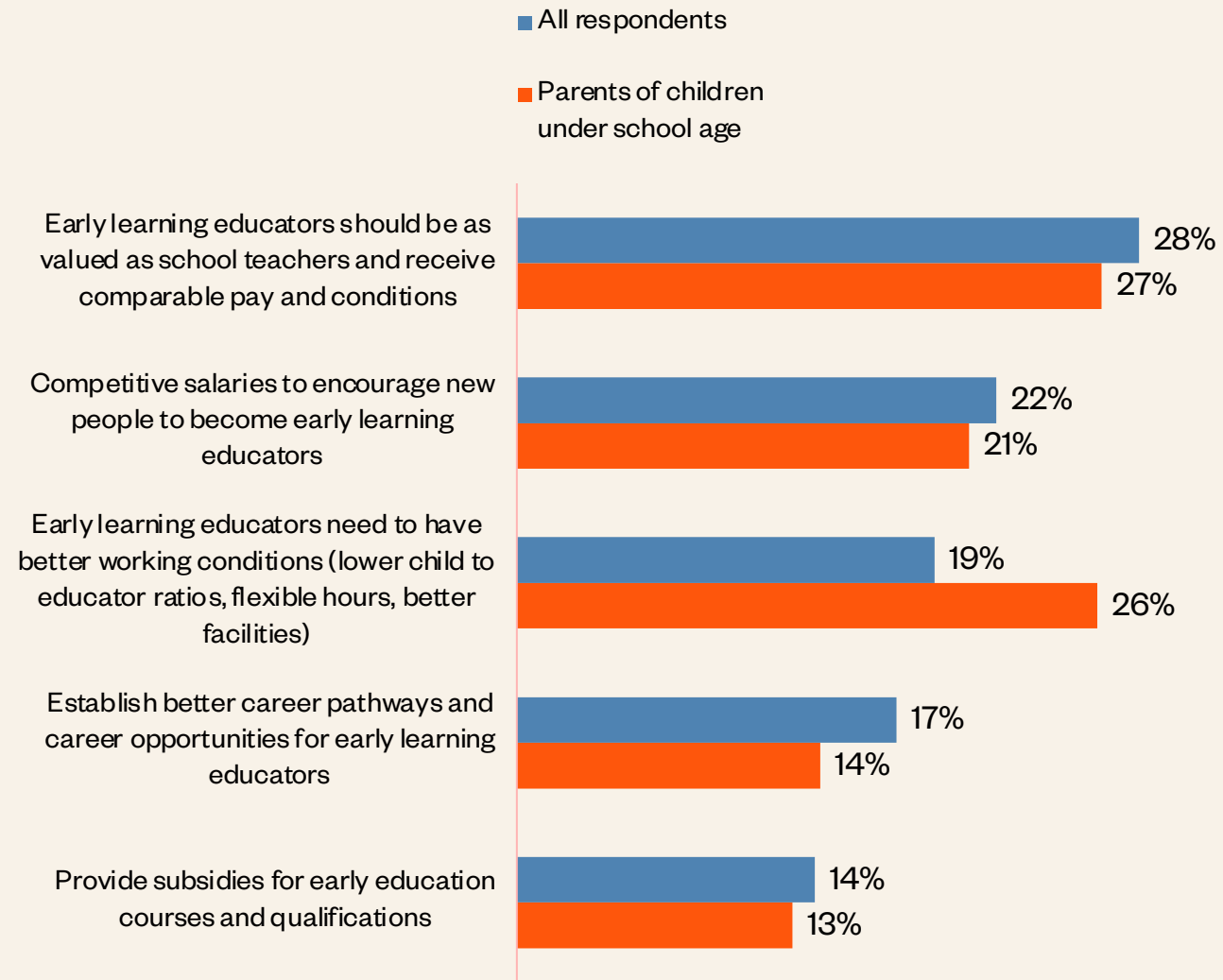
Initial part of the question for NSW and VIC was the same, while the question for non-NSW / VIC respondents differed.

Question	Response	Jul. 2022, n=
Q. The state government has recently made an announcement to reform access and funding of early childhood education. These include..... To what extent do you support or oppose these proposed reforms?	VIC respondents	1135
	NSW respondents	1459
Q. The New South Wales and Victorian state governments have recently made announcement reforming early childhood education in their states. These reforms include	Non-VIC / NSW respondents	1933



# ECE EDUCATOR WORKING CONDITIONS

Over **one in four** believe early childhood educators **should be as highly valued as school teachers**.



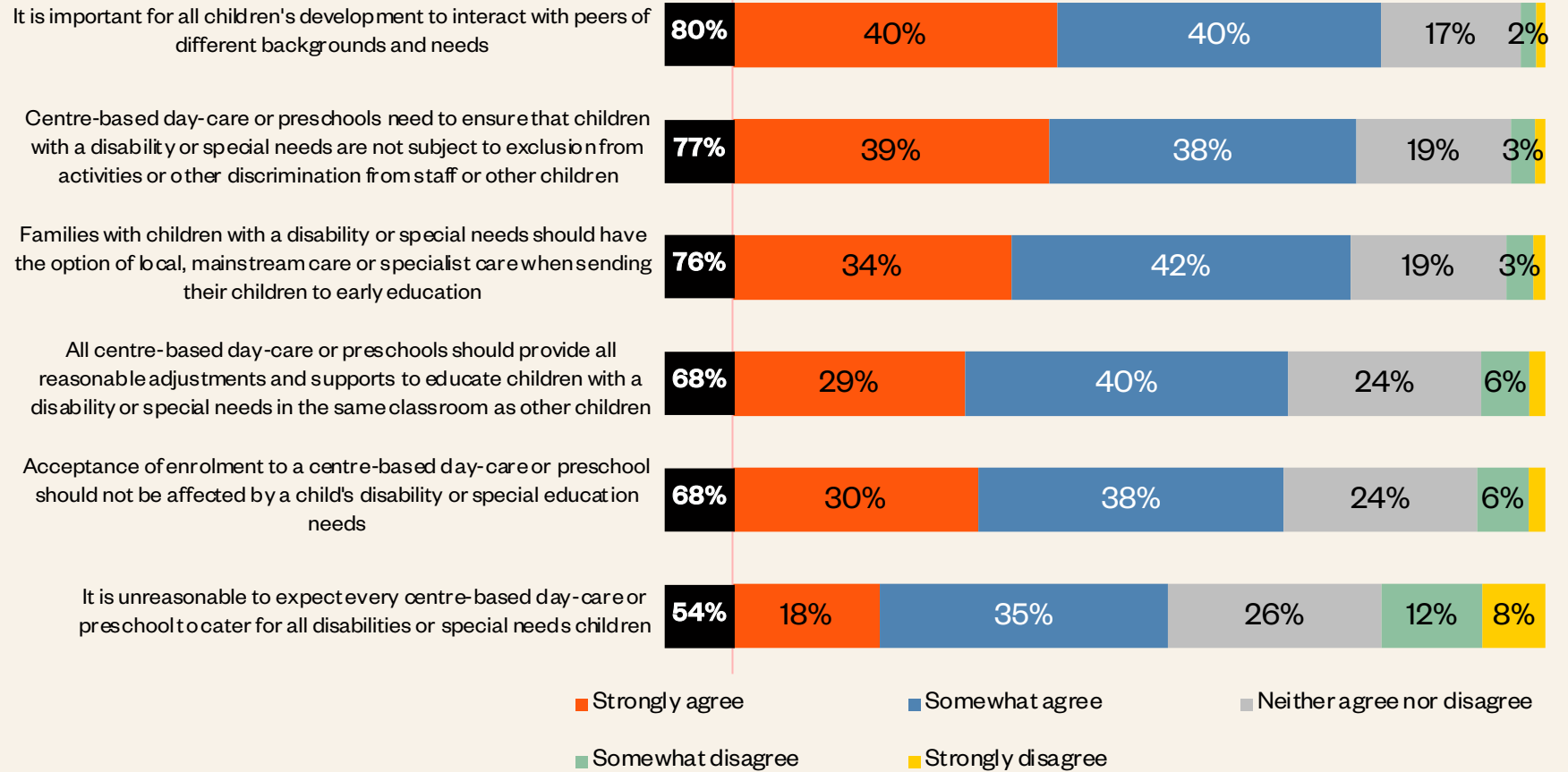
Q. It has been argued that to continue to deliver high-quality care for pre-school children, the sector needs to recruit and retain more skilled, qualified educators. Of the following, which do you think would be priority for governments to grow the number of early educators working in centre-based day-care or preschool?

	Jul. 2022, n=
All respondents	4527
Parents with under school aged children	687

# ECE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

There is **wide agreement** with statements relating to the importance of education options for preschool children with disability or special needs.

## Total agree



Q. Finally, to what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the education of preschool children with disability or special needs (e.g., autism, global developmental delay or cerebral palsy)?

	Jul. 2022, n=
All respondents	4527