



Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Language Launchpad Online Survey

February 2025





Background and Objectives

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Northern Ireland (RCSLT NI) wished to conduct an online survey amongst a range of stakeholders to provide an insight into the current challenges and opportunities around Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

RCSLT NI launched a report in April 2024 on speech, language and communication needs in the Early Years, highlighting the importance of early intervention within the crucial early years of a child's life. This follow-up research will help inform future planning on SLCN in babies, children and young people in Northern Ireland; supporting parents and children, including those with special educational needs. The findings will help to address some of the issues raised, starting with the early years.



Methodology

The project was conducted via an online survey facilitated by FN Research. FN Research designed the questionnaire based on input from RCSLT NI.

RCSLT NI provided the respondents contacts through a series of their established networks. FN Research hosted the survey, analysed the data, and reported on the findings

The following audiences were included:

- Section A – Parents/Carers
- Section B - Practitioners
- Section C – Health, Social Care and Medical Professionals
- Section D - Speech and Language Therapists

Additional information

- The questionnaire was around 10 - 15 minutes in duration.
- Fieldwork took place from 10th December 2024 to 6th January 2025
- Number of respondents (N) = 1089 surveys in total were completed.
- It was conducted NI-wide; a questionnaire link was provided to RCSLT NI, who passed it on to a series of their networks and contacts.

All activities within the project were conducted within the MRS Code of Conduct and guidelines.



Section A: Parents / Carers

N = 473

Strategic Takeaways and Ways Forward

Strategic Takeaways

Speech, Language and Communication Development



- Almost half of parents expressed concern about their child's speech, language, and communication development.
- The majority were worried about one child, but over a third had concerns for two or more children.
- The top 3 parental concerns were autism (51%), speech sound disorders (29%), and spoken language difficulties (31%).
- While 59% of children received health and social care trust speech and language therapy and 16% received private speech and language therapy support, **17% had children on waiting lists for health and social care trust speech and language therapy and 13% for private speech and language therapy.**
- 40% viewed the waiting time for professional help as a major barrier affecting the speech, language and communication development of children.

Impact of speech, language and communication needs on daily life



- Parents stated that it made it hard for their children to **be understood, meet their developmental milestones and make friends.**
- **87% said their child's education had been affected, and 80% believed it affected their child's emotional well-being.**
- **Parents** were also concerned with **socialising, play skills, and friendships.**
- Overall, **36% of parents had children who participated in sports clubs; however, that dropped to only 24% amongst those with speech, language and communication concerns.**
- Many parents stated that a **lack of inclusive activities or trained staff** was a barrier for them.
- Parents wanted more training for extracurricular staff, to help children with communication needs; with **23% asking for specific communication training, 19% wanting general advice/training, and 11% for Makaton/signing instruction.**

Strategic Takeaways

Support and Training



- **70% of parents were not aware of available training**
- Many were **unsure where to look for training**; some found timings and childcare constraints challenging.
- Despite this, **45% of parents had attended speech, language and communication related training**, with Makaton and health and social care trust parent training being the most common.

Schools and Care Settings



- **Only 59% of parents with concerns felt their child's education/care setting adequately supported speech, language and communication development.**
- Just over half believed their child's needs were properly understood in these settings.

Ways Forward



Expand Early Identification and Screening

- Have more **formal screening procedures in early years and pre-school** to detect problems sooner.
- **To upskill health visitors and primary school educators to identify** early signs.



Improve Parental Awareness and Access to Training

- **Co-produce collaborative approaches to raise awareness of speech, language and communication development** and the support services available.
- **Create flexible, on-demand programmes and training** to help parents fit learning into their daily lives such as at home or at work.



Equip Schools and Extracurricular Providers

- Give **training for teachers, SENCos, and after-school activity leaders** to better support speech, language and communication needs in their role.
- Encourage more **inclusive after-school and extracurricular activities**.



Develop Community-Based speech, language and communication support programmes

- Enhance **structured parent-child connections to provide a continuous support system focusing on speech and language development**.

Key Insights from the Research

Background



473 parents completed the survey.

Respondents were spread across all Trust areas and Council areas

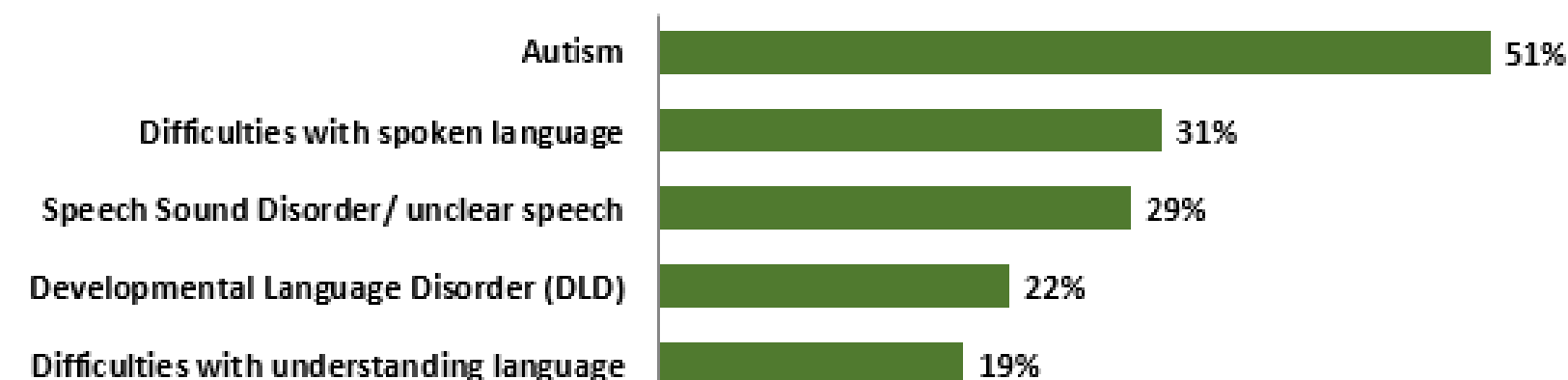
- 11% were bilingual (9% of those with concerns)
- 2% multilingual (2% of those with concerns)
- 4% currently attend Sure Start (5% of those with concerns)

Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Development

The key things considered to be part of a child's SLC development were

	All parents	Those with SLC concerns
Understanding words	79%	76%
Having conversations	76%	73%
Understanding sentences	69%	69%
Speech sounds	66%	74%
Ability to mix with others	63%	61%

Key presenting concerns for parents



45% were worried about their children's speech, language and communication development

Of those

- 65% were worried about 1 child
 - 35% were concerned about 2+ children
- 26% were worried about 3-4 year olds
- 34% were worried about P1/P2

The biggest areas of concern specifically regarding their children's SLC

Speech sounds	63%
Social interaction	53%
Attention listening skills	51%
Spoken language	46%

Who they raised concerns with



- Health Visitor – 61%
- Primary school teacher – 54%
- Pre-school teacher – 48%
- SENCo -44%

Speech, Language and Communication Development (Cont.)

	Referred to Trust for assessment	Known to service
Autism	29%	27%
ADHD	15%	9%
Child Development Clinic	13%	27%
Education Authority Education Psychology Service	10%	50%



Receiving intervention from a speech and language therapist (SLT) or on waiting list

- 59% currently under care
- 17% on waiting list
- 16% under private SLT
- 13% on waiting list for private SLT

	AGREEMENT All parents	AGREEMENT Parents with concerns	DISAGREEMENT Parents with concerns
My children understand me	89%	78%	9%
I can work out what my children are trying to tell me	84%	70%	12%
They are meeting their developmental milestones	68%	37%	47%
I am well supported by family and friends	75%	65%	17%
My children can make friends	71%	46%	31%
I can manage my children’s behaviour	76%	58%	16%
I know what stage of development my children should be at	76%	70%	11%
I can manage appointments and family life in relation to my children	61%	66%	14%
I know where to access support and training	51%	44%	28%
The time taken to be seen by relevant professionals has impacted SLC development	40%	65%	11%
I feel supported by professionals	42%	33%	35%
I feel my mental health has been impacted by children’s difficulties	33%	65%	18%
My children have been seen by professionals in timely manner	31%	24%	57%

- 50% of children were in primary school (45% of those with speech, language and communication need concerns)
- 22% were in after-school activities (14% with speech, language and communication needs)

	AGREEMENT All parents	AGREEMENT Parents with concerns
Care/education setting support speech, language and communication development of children	72%	59%
They understood children’s speech, language and communication needs	73%	56%
Care/education provided activities to support their children.	N/A	53%

After School / Extracurricular Activities



- 36% participated in sports club/activity coaching in the last 6 months (24% of those with concerns)
- 33% participated in after school activities delivered in school (24% of those with concerns)
- 29% participated in summer schemes (27% of those with concerns)

25% didn't participate in any activities (34% amongst those with concerns)



Of those parents worried about their children's speech, language and communication needs they wanted training for staff in extracurricular activities/clubs on the following

- 23% on supporting communication
- 19% on general advice/training
- 11% on Makaton/signing training



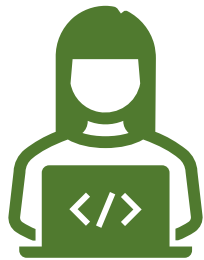
Of those who had concerns, and their children participated in activities

- 93% agreed the clubs had a good understanding of their speech, language and communication needs
- 32% thought providers could support the speech, language and communication needs appropriately

19% preferred not to send their children to extracurricular activities

14% believed there were no extracurricular activities/clubs in their area

Training



- 45% of parents had attended speech, language and communication training themselves, either
- Parent training provided by HSCT (43%)
 - Makaton training (40%)



Main barriers to taking part in training

- Were not aware of any available training (70%)
- Don't know where to look (34%)
- Unsuitable timing (21%)
- Childcare issues (21%)

Additional parental training that would help

General advice	15%
Use of phonics	6%
Speech training	5%
Knowledge of developmental milestones	5%

Other areas parents stated they needed support in regarding their children’s speech, language and communication

Social communication	53%
Speech sound disorder	43%
Understanding language	34%
Spoken language	34%

In addition, parents wanted

- Access to speech, language and communication needs/developmental programmes – 70%
- Better links/access to speech and language therapy – 63%
- Access to education services supporting speech, language and communication needs – 59%

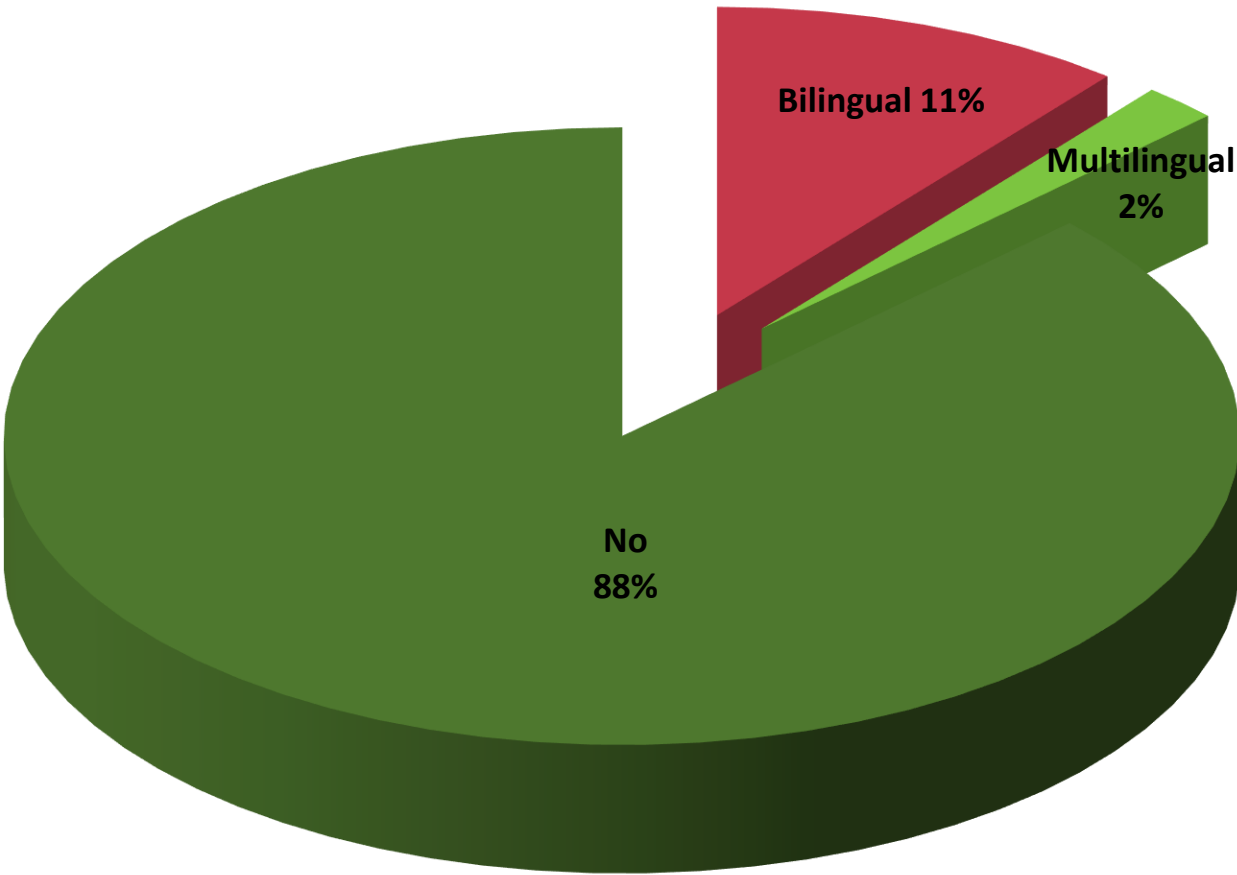
Of those worried about their children’s speech, language and communication needs, the following % suggested it had an impact on:



- 87% on their education
- 86% on their socialising
- 84% on their friendships
- 80% on their emotional health and well-being
- 81% on their behaviour
- 74% on their play skills

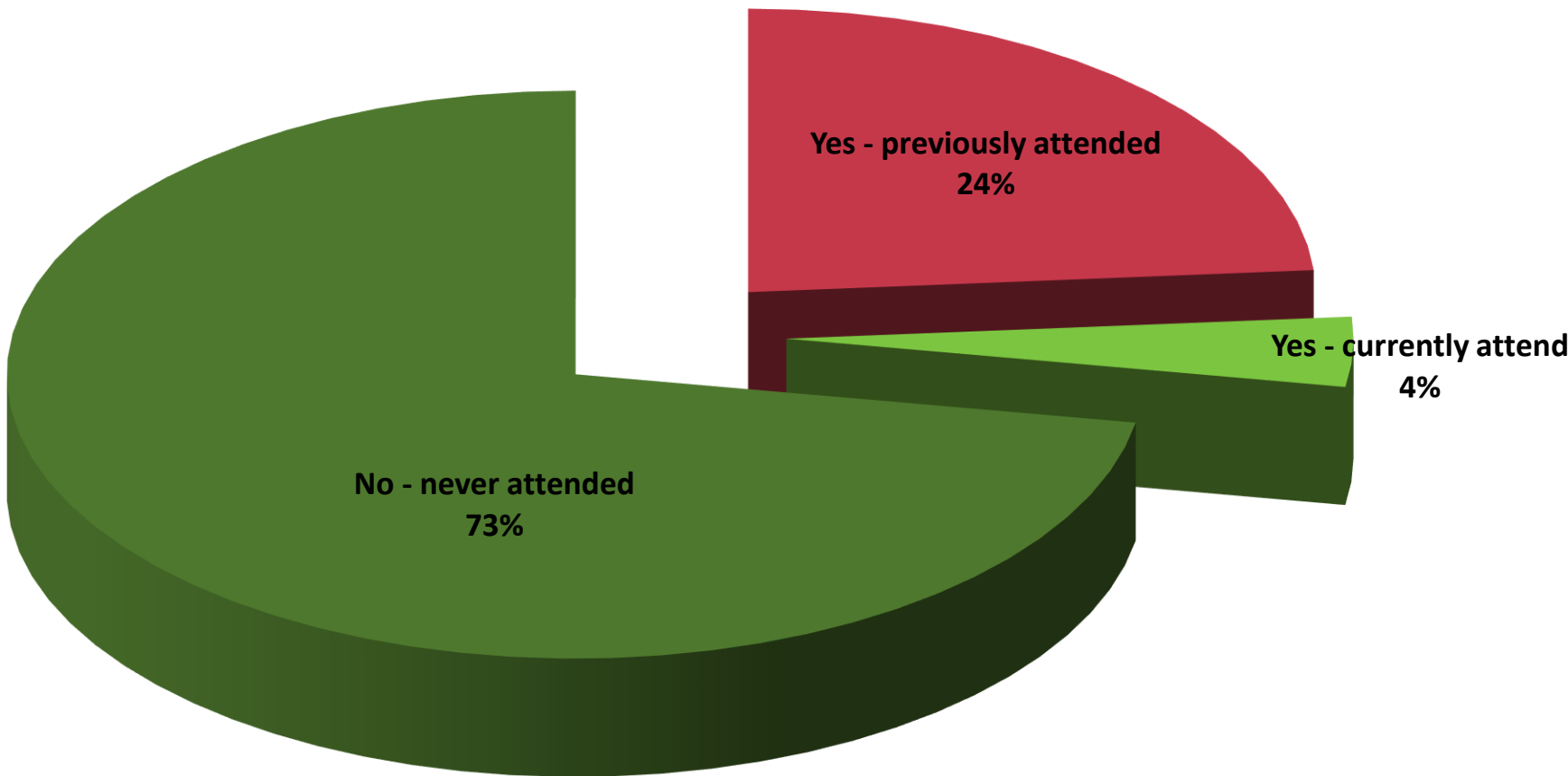
Full Charted Insights

3. Is anyone in your immediate family bilingual or multilingual?



	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 473	N=212	N=244	N=74	N=124	N=44
Yes -Bilingual (2 languages)	9%	13%	7%	9%	9%
Yes - Multilingual (3+ languages)	2%	3%	3%	1%	5%
No	90%	86%	91%	90%	86%

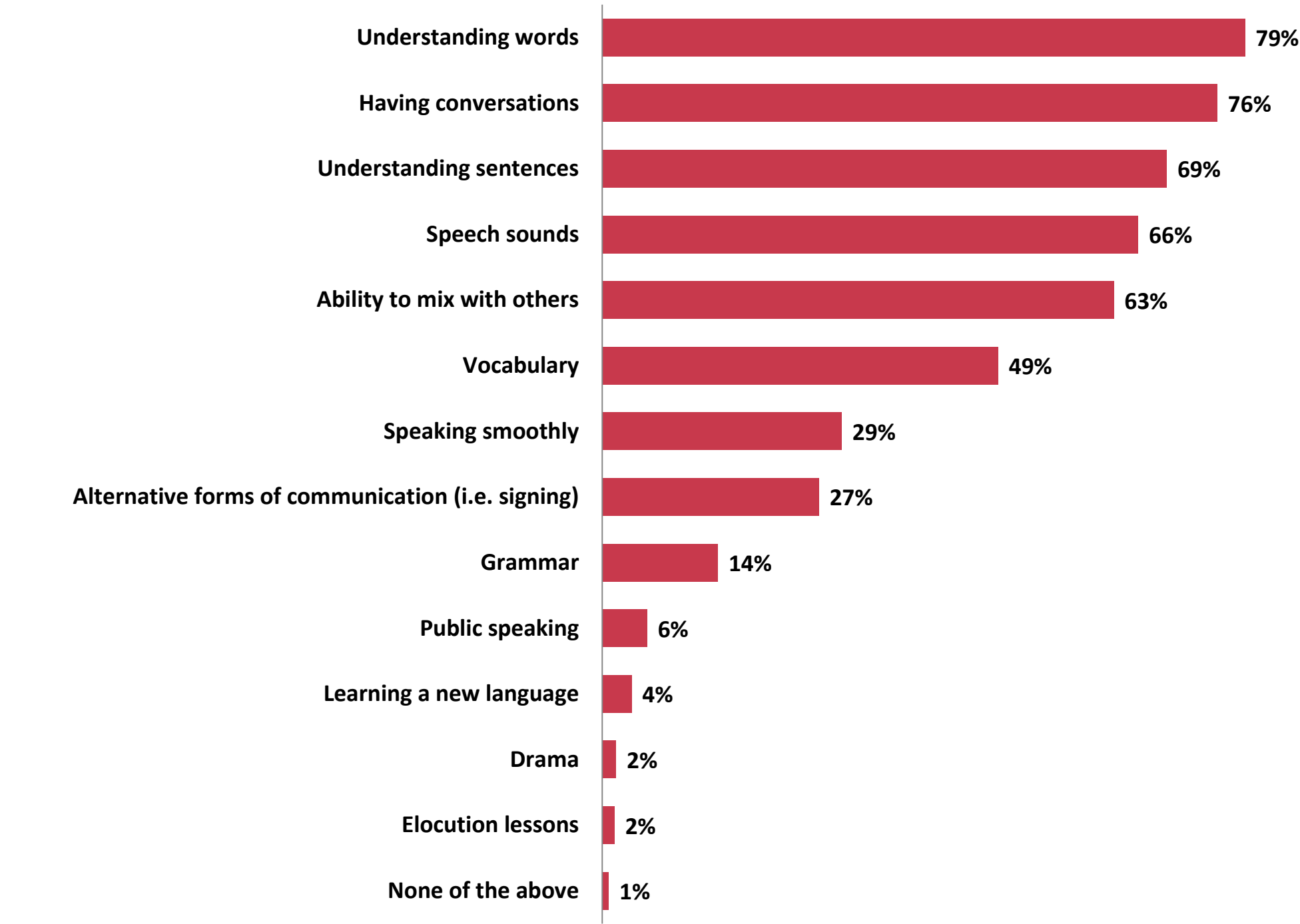
4. Has your child/children previously or currently attended Sure Start?



	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 473	N=212	N=244	N=74	N=124	N=44
Yes – previously attended	28%	22%	30%	25%	32%
Yes – currently attend	5%	3%	8%	6%	-
No – never attended	68%	76%	65%	71%	68%

Speech, Language and Communication Development

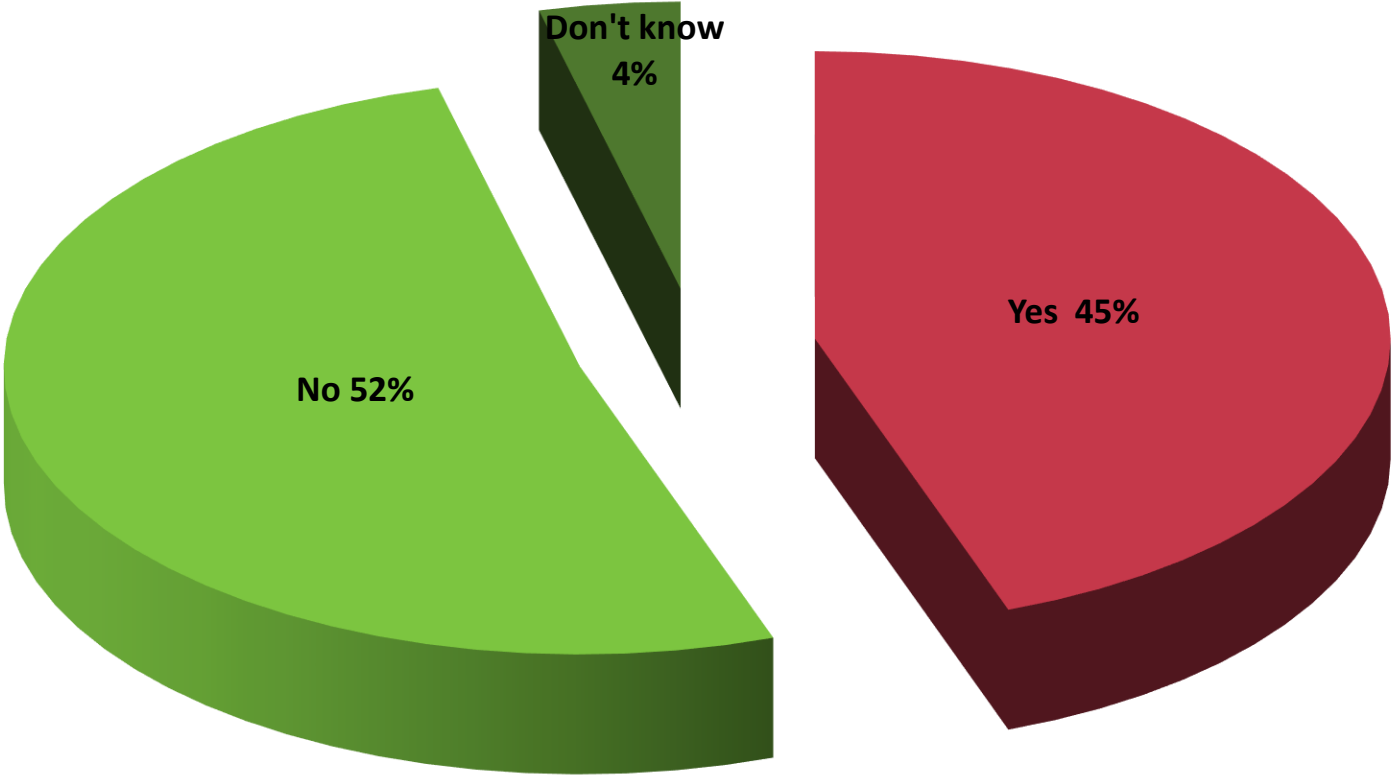
5. Please select the top 5 things you would consider to be part of a child’s speech, language and communication development?



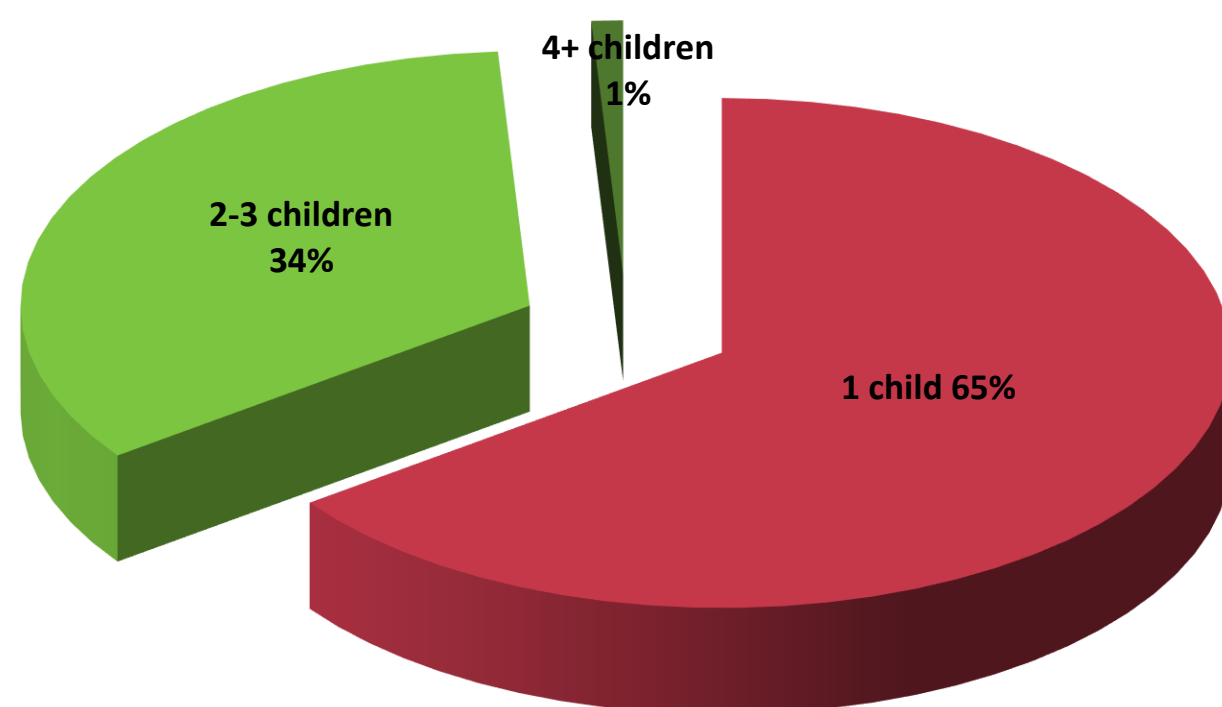
base: all respondents N=473

	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 473	N=212	N=244	N=74	N=124	N=44
Understanding words	76%	81%	81%	78%	66%
Having conversations	73%	78%	66%	71%	89%
Understanding sentences	69%	71%	72%	69%	66%
Speech sounds	74%	59%	72%	73%	75%
Ability to mix with others	61%	66%	57%	61%	68%
Vocabulary	45%	53%	41%	51%	36%
Speaking smoothly	29%	29%	23%	34%	25%
Alternative forms of communication	33%	22%	41%	29%	36%
Grammar	11%	16%	10%	10%	16%
Public speaking	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Learning a new language	1%	6%	1%	-	-
Drama	1%	3%	3%	1%	-
Elocution lessons	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%

6. Are you worried about your child(ren)'s speech, language and communication development?

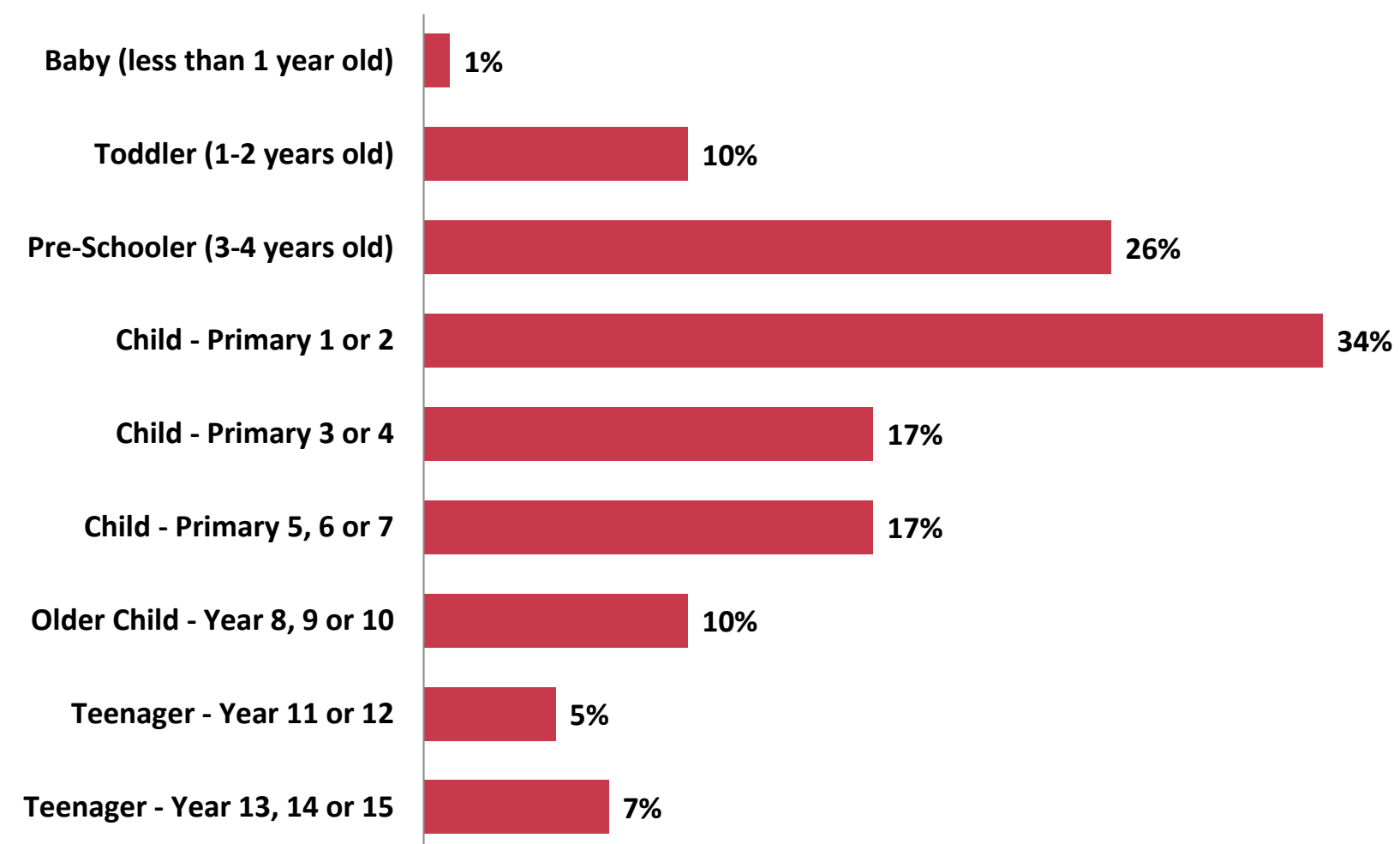


7. How many children in your family do you believe have speech, language and communication needs?



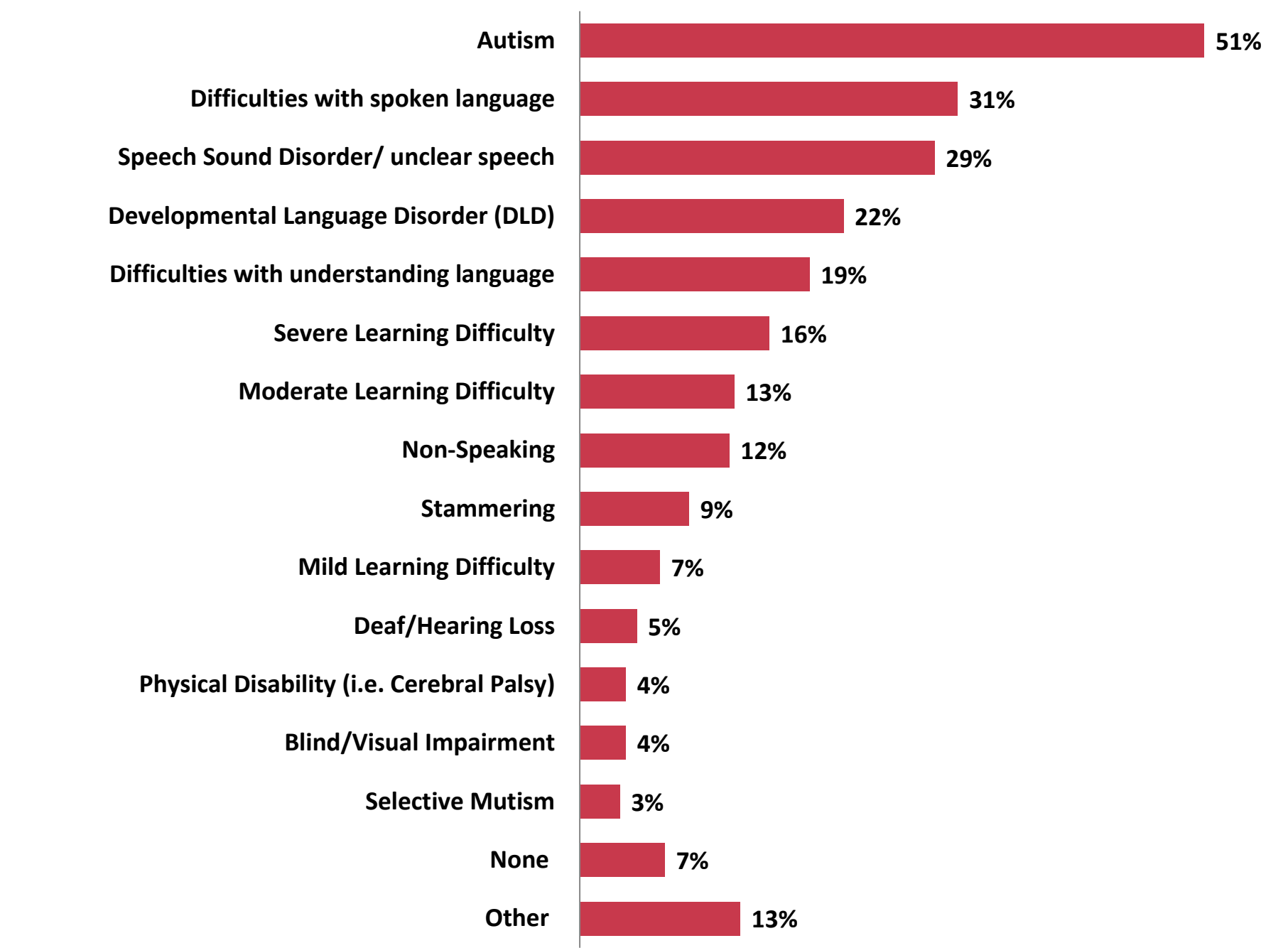
base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212

8. How old is the child(ren) that you have concerns about?



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212

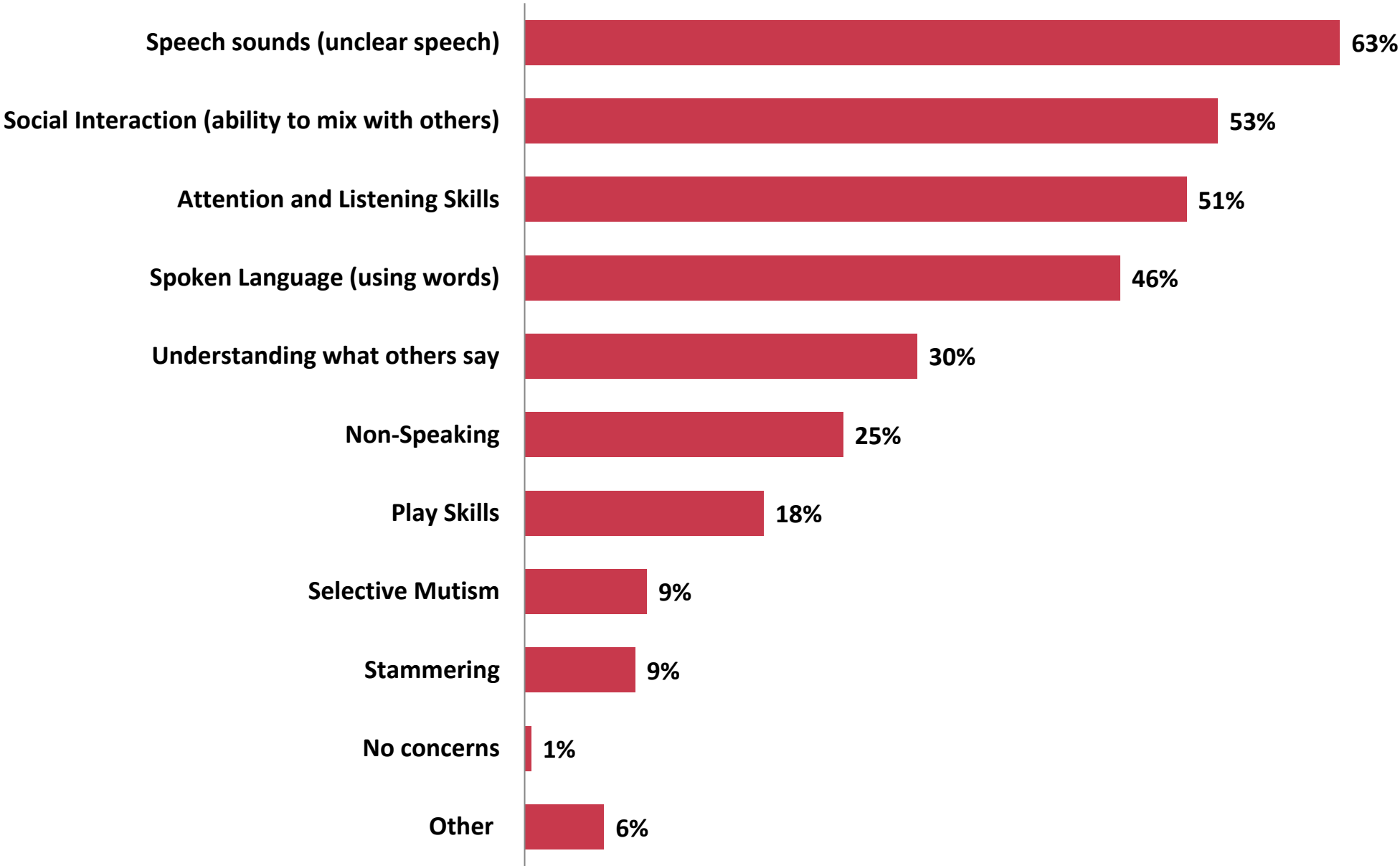
9. Does the child(ren) you have concerns about present with or possibly present with any of the following?



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)’s SLC development N=212

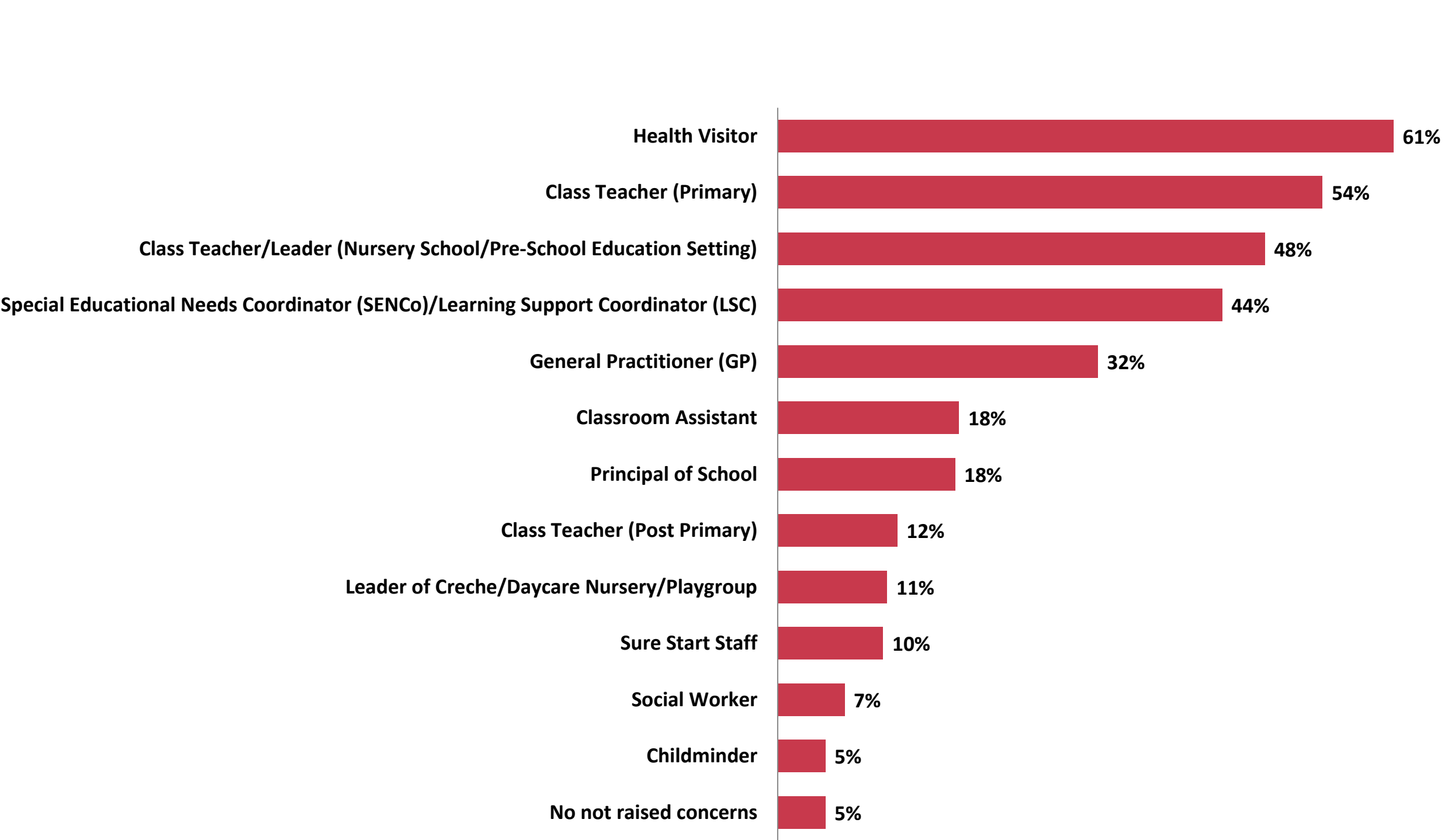
	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Autism	51%	54%	61%
Difficulties with spoken language	37%	27%	34%
Speech Sound Disorder/ unclear speech	27%	31%	36%
Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)	27%	23%	16%
Difficulties with understanding language	20%	19%	25%
Severe Learning Difficulty	11%	18%	21%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	10%	13%	21%
Non-Speaking	16%	12%	11%
Stammering	10%	9%	9%
Mild Learning Difficulty	5%	8%	7%
Deaf/Hearing Loss	5%	4%	5%
Physical Disability	1%	3%	9%
Blind/Visual Impairment	-	4%	7%
Selective Mutism	1%	3%	7%
Other	12%	11%	11%

10. Which, if any, of the following areas of your child(ren)’s speech, language and communication are you concerned about?



	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Speech sounds (unclear speech)	69%	67%	55%
Social Interaction (ability to mix with others)	55%	51%	64%
Attention and Listening Skills	50%	52%	55%
Spoken Language (using words)	53%	42%	41%
Understanding what others say	31%	23%	46%
Non-Speaking	38%	23%	18%
Play Skills	23%	19%	14%
Selective Mutism	7%	10%	14%
Stammering	10%	9%	7%
No concerns	1%	-	-
Other	1%	6%	14%

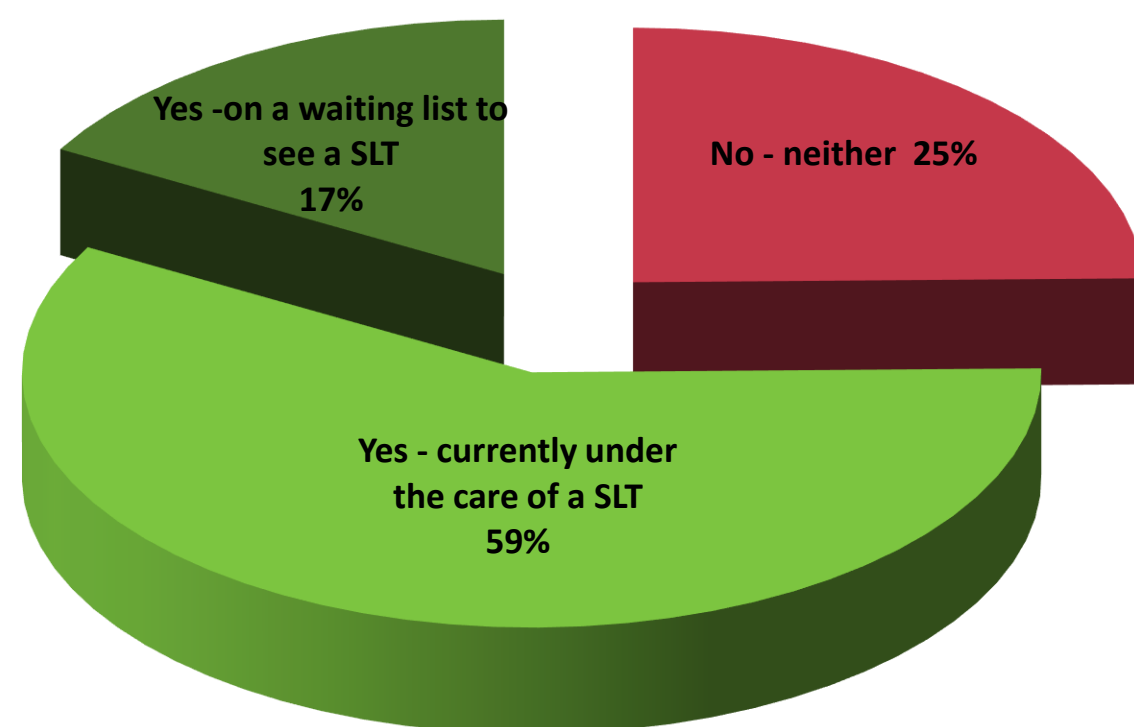
11. Have you raised concerns about your child(ren)’s speech, language and communication needs with any of the following professionals?



	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Health Visitor	81%	59%	39%
Class Teacher (Primary)	20%	72%	64%
Class Teacher / Leader (Nursery School / Pre-School Education Setting)	60%	48%	43%
Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)/Learning Support Coordinator (LSC)	27%	48%	71%
General Practitioner (GP)	28%	27%	50%
Classroom Assistant	8%	22%	23%
Principal of School	10%	19%	30%
Class Teacher (Post Primary)	3%	5%	48%
Leader of Creche/Daycare Nursery/ Playgroup	18%	10%	5%
Sure Start Staff	16%	8%	9%
Social Worker	3%	5%	14%
Childminder	5%	4%	2%
No not raised concerns	3%	4%	7%

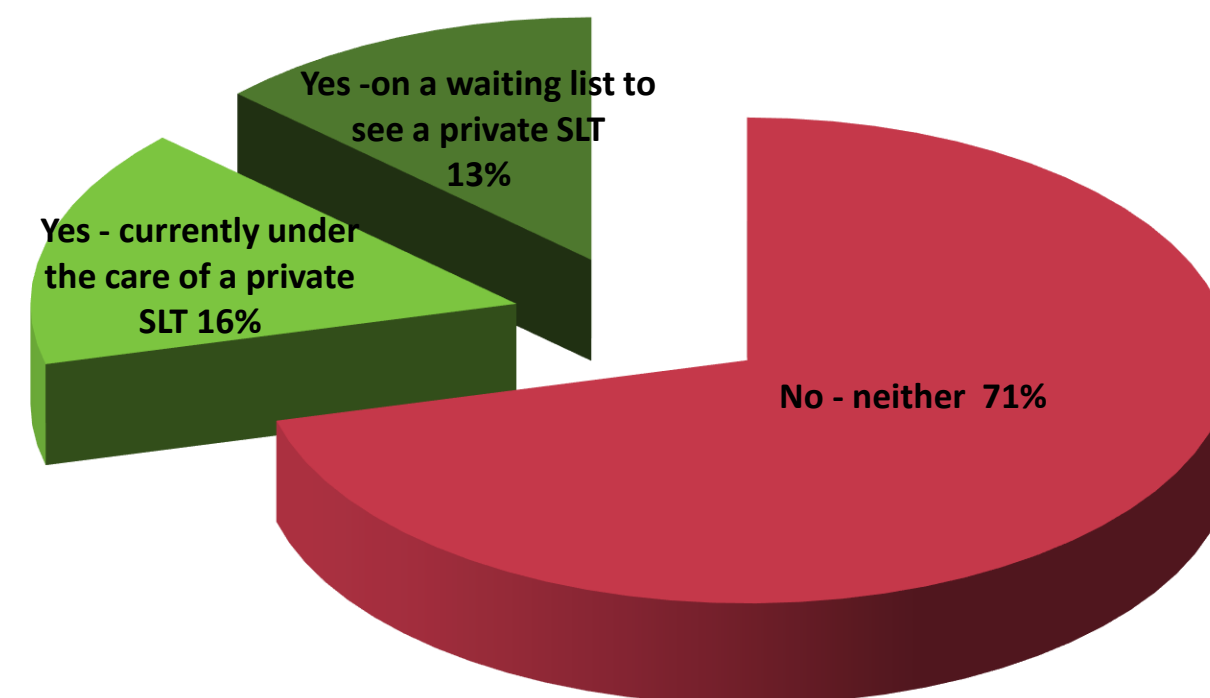
base: all respondents worried about child(ren)’s SLC development N=212

12. Is your child(ren) receiving intervention from a Speech and Language Therapist or on a waiting list to see a Health and Social Care Trust Speech and Language Therapist (SLT)?



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212

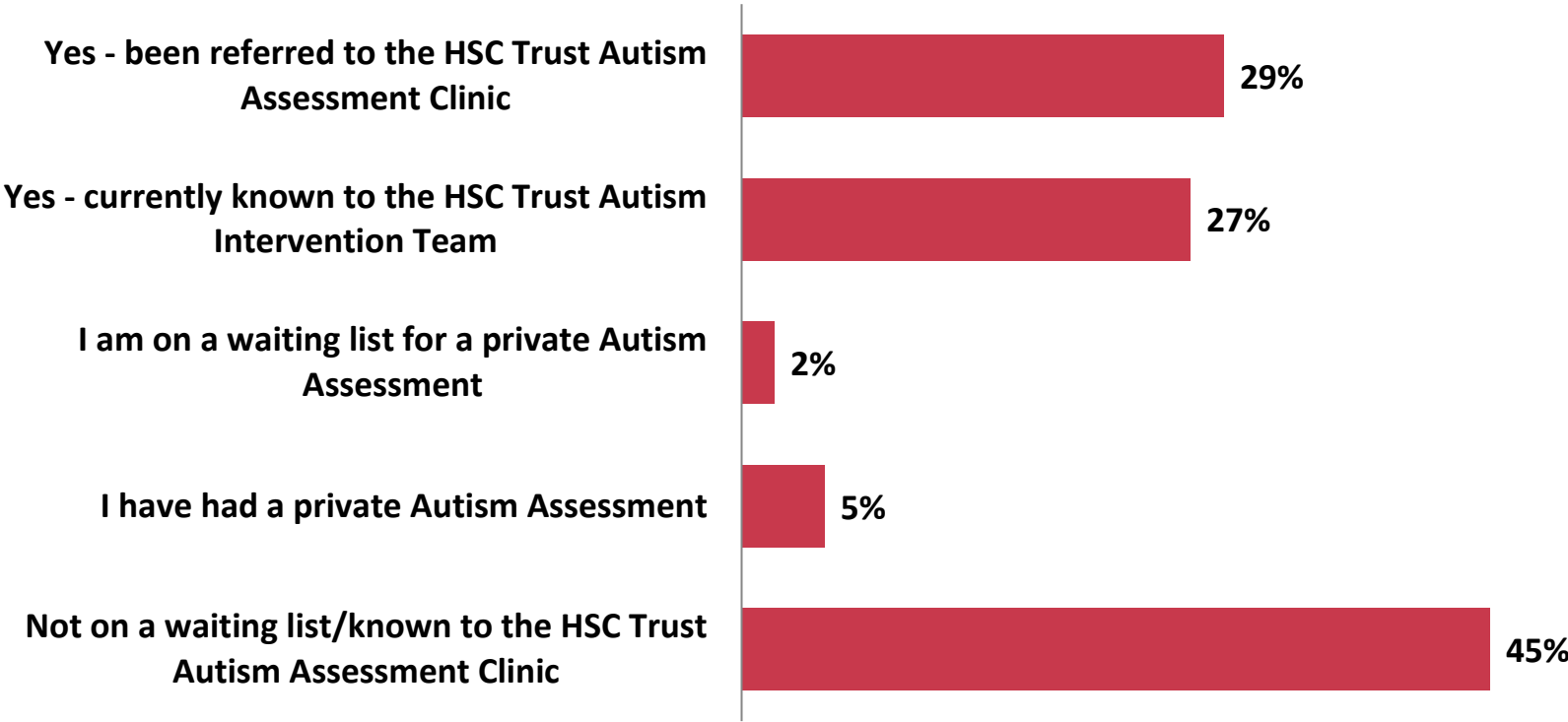
13. Have you ever accessed or looked into getting help from a private Speech and Language Therapist (SLT)?



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212

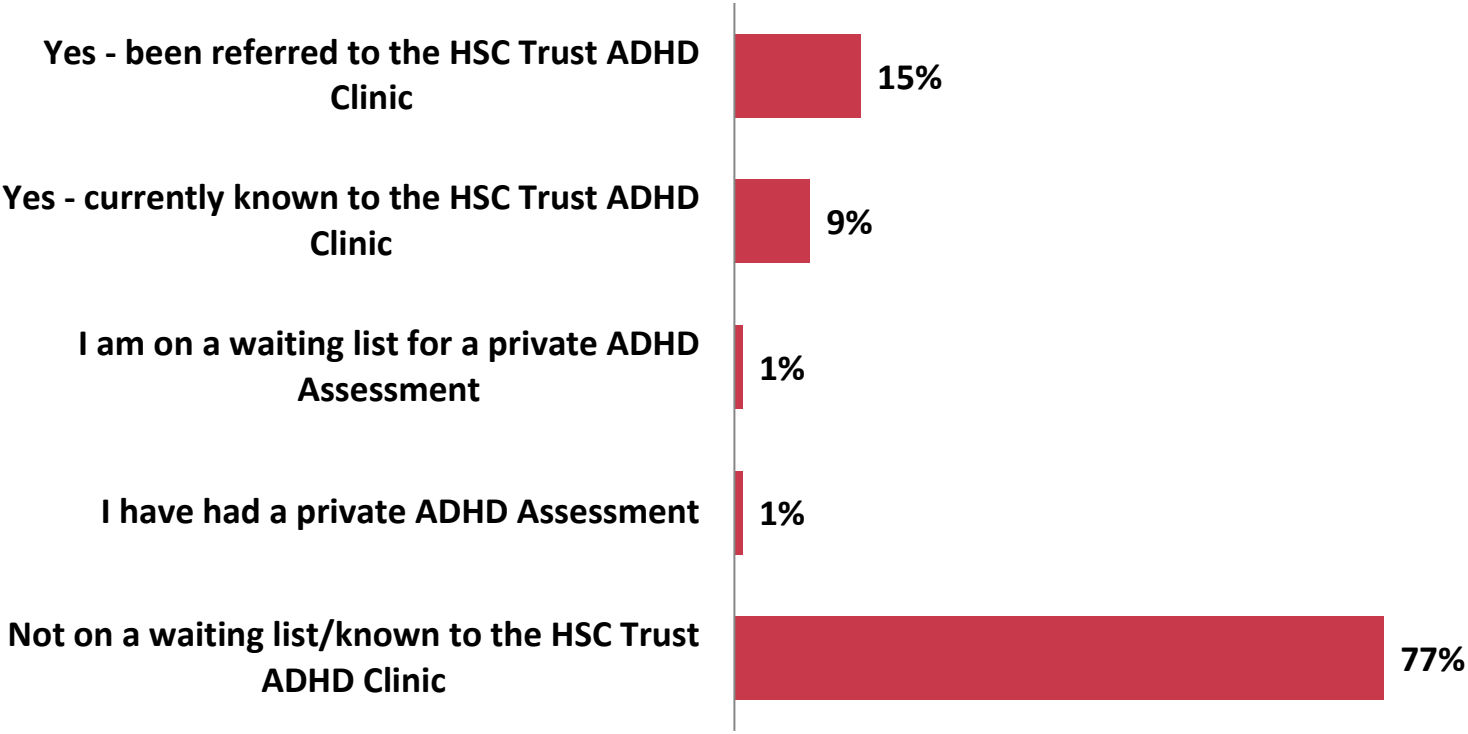
14. Which, if any, of the following apply to your child(ren)?

14a. Autism Assessment Clinic



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)’s SLC development N=212

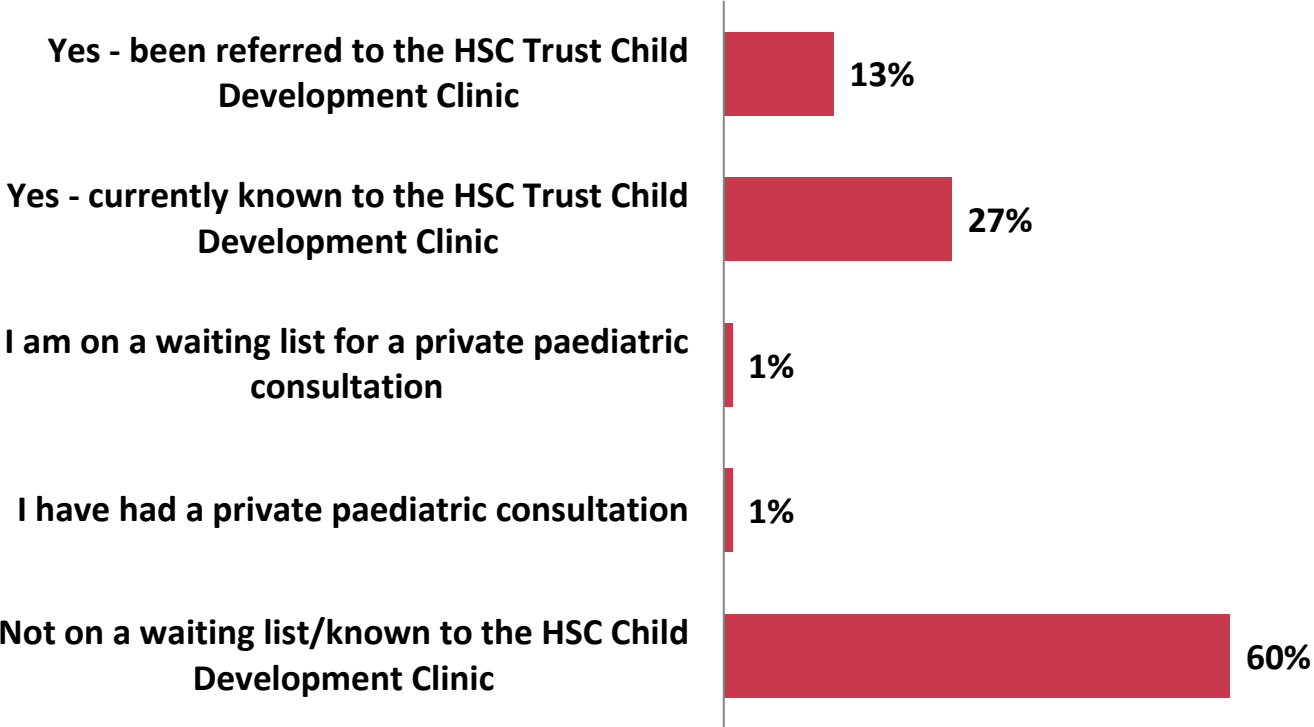
14b. ADHD Clinic



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)’s SLC development N=212

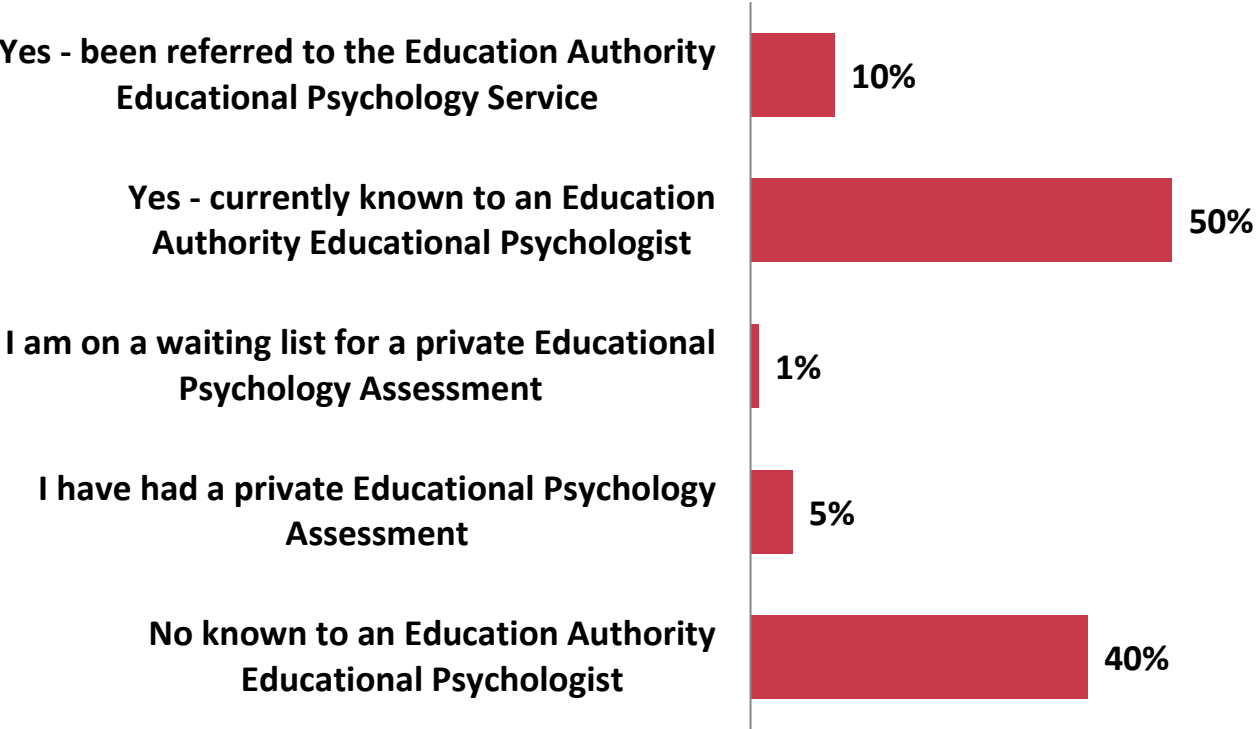
14. Which, if any, of the following apply to your child(ren)? (Cont.)

14c. Child Development Clinic



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212

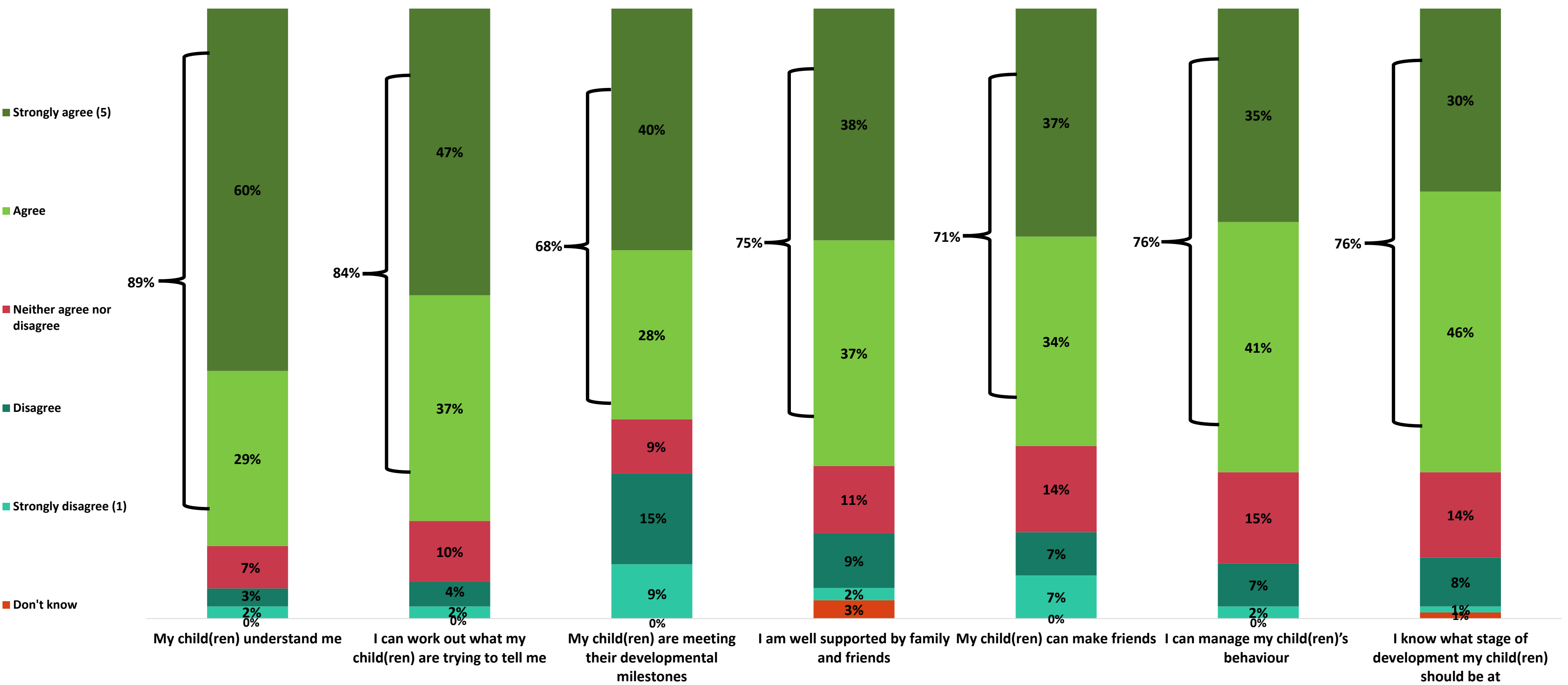
14d. Educational Psychologist



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212

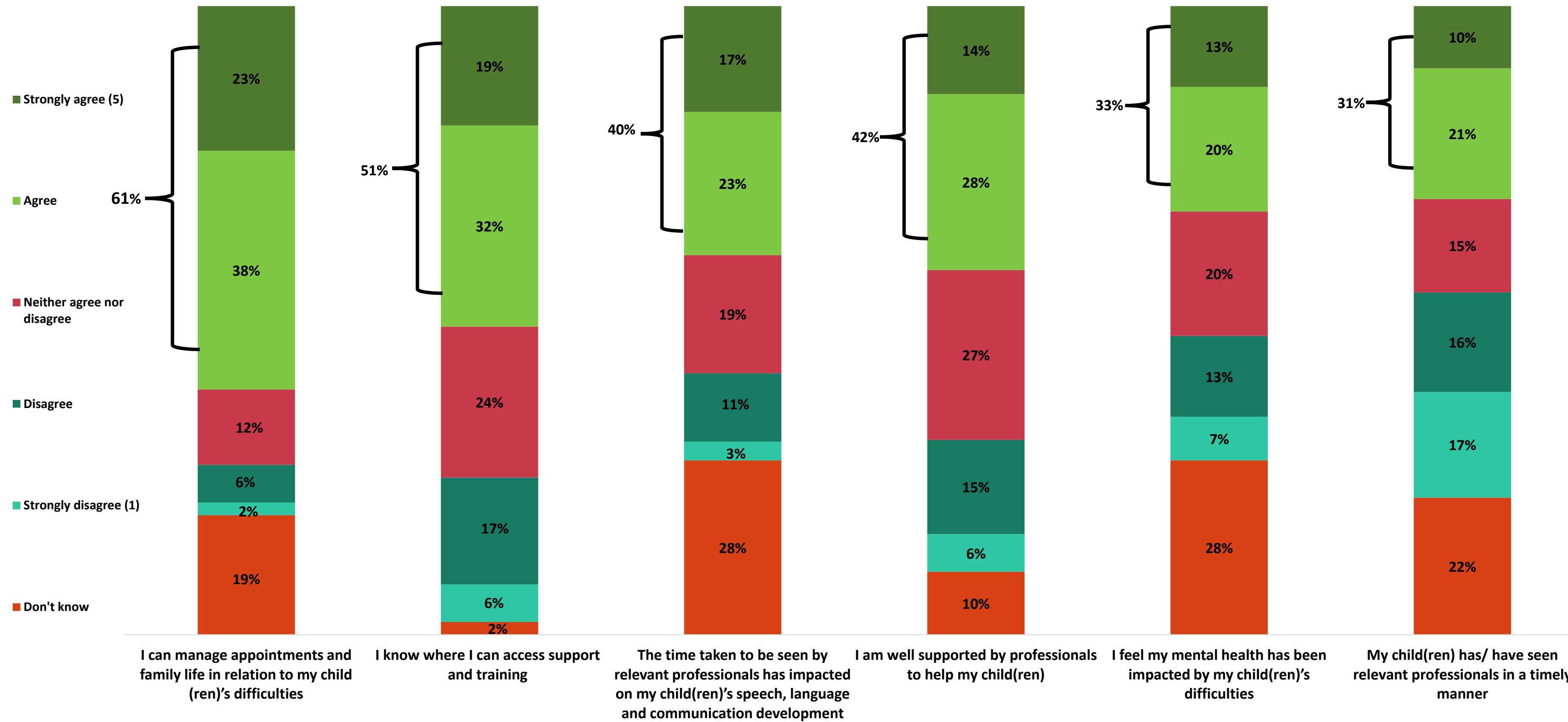
Your Child(ren)'s Daily Life

15. How much do you agree or disagree regarding the overall speech, language and communication development of your child(ren)?



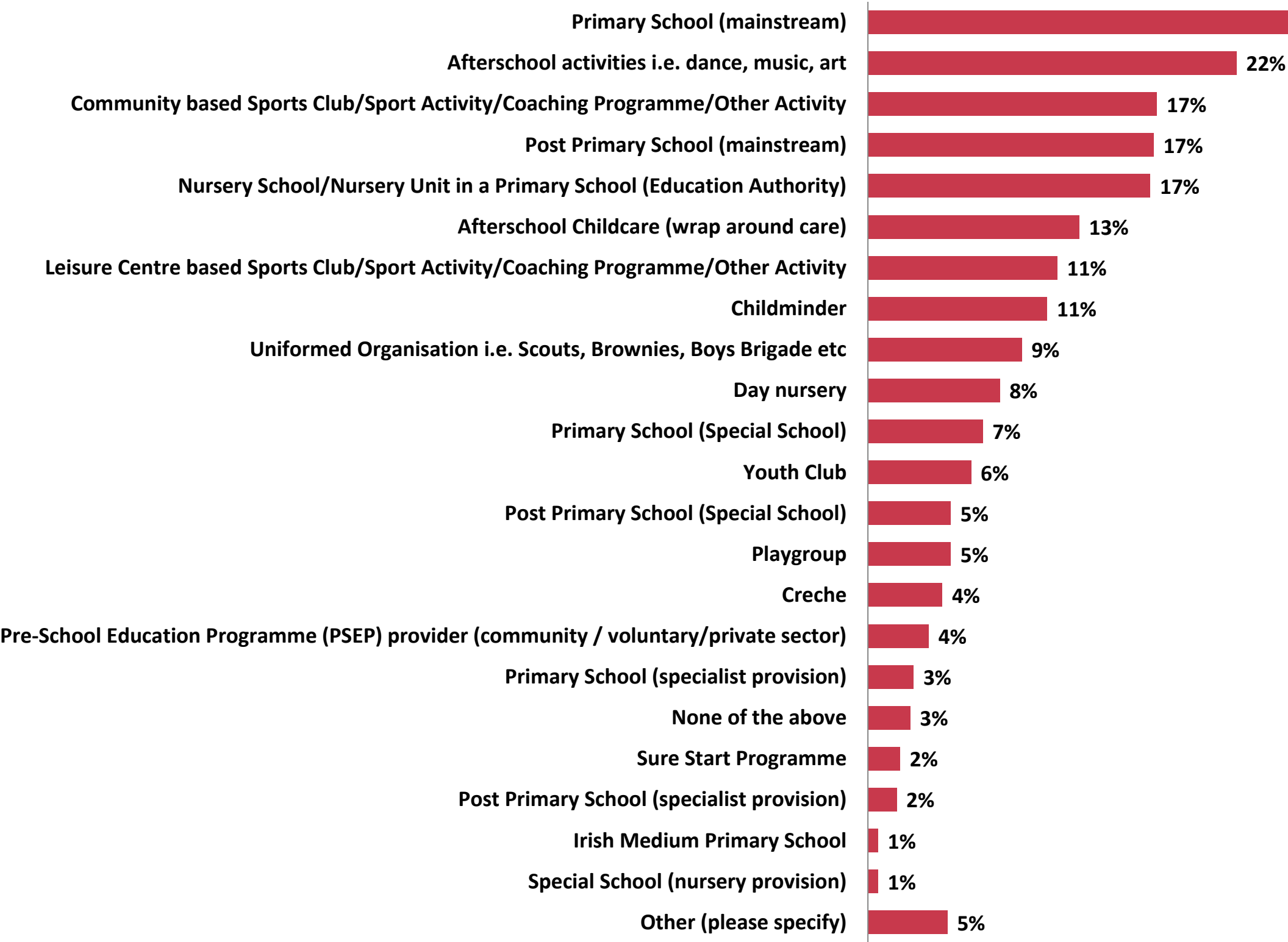
base : all respondents N=473

15. How much do you agree or disagree regarding the overall speech, language and communication development of your child(ren)? (Cont.)



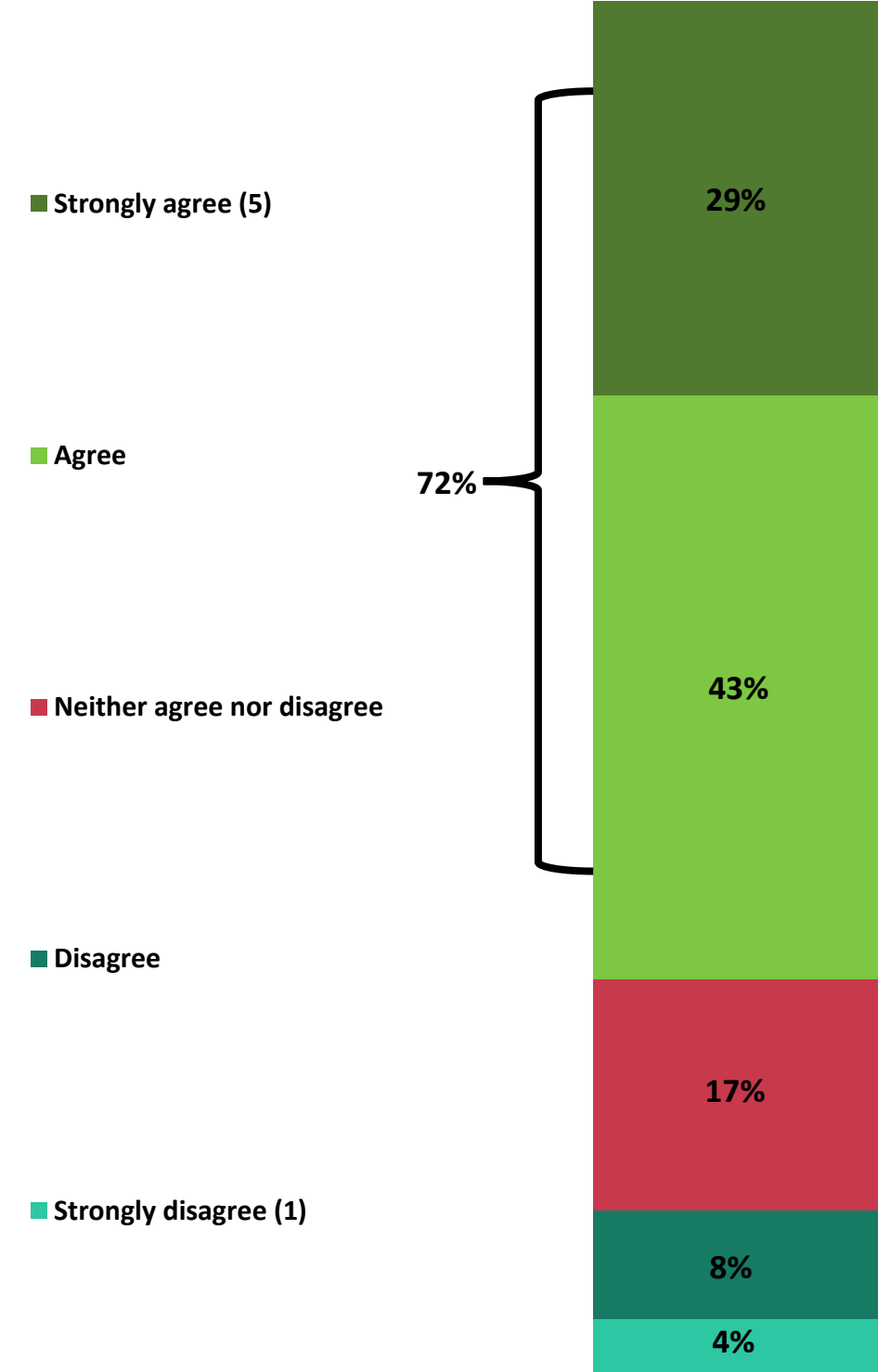
base : all respondents N=473

16. Which, if any, of the following settings is your child(ren) currently attending?



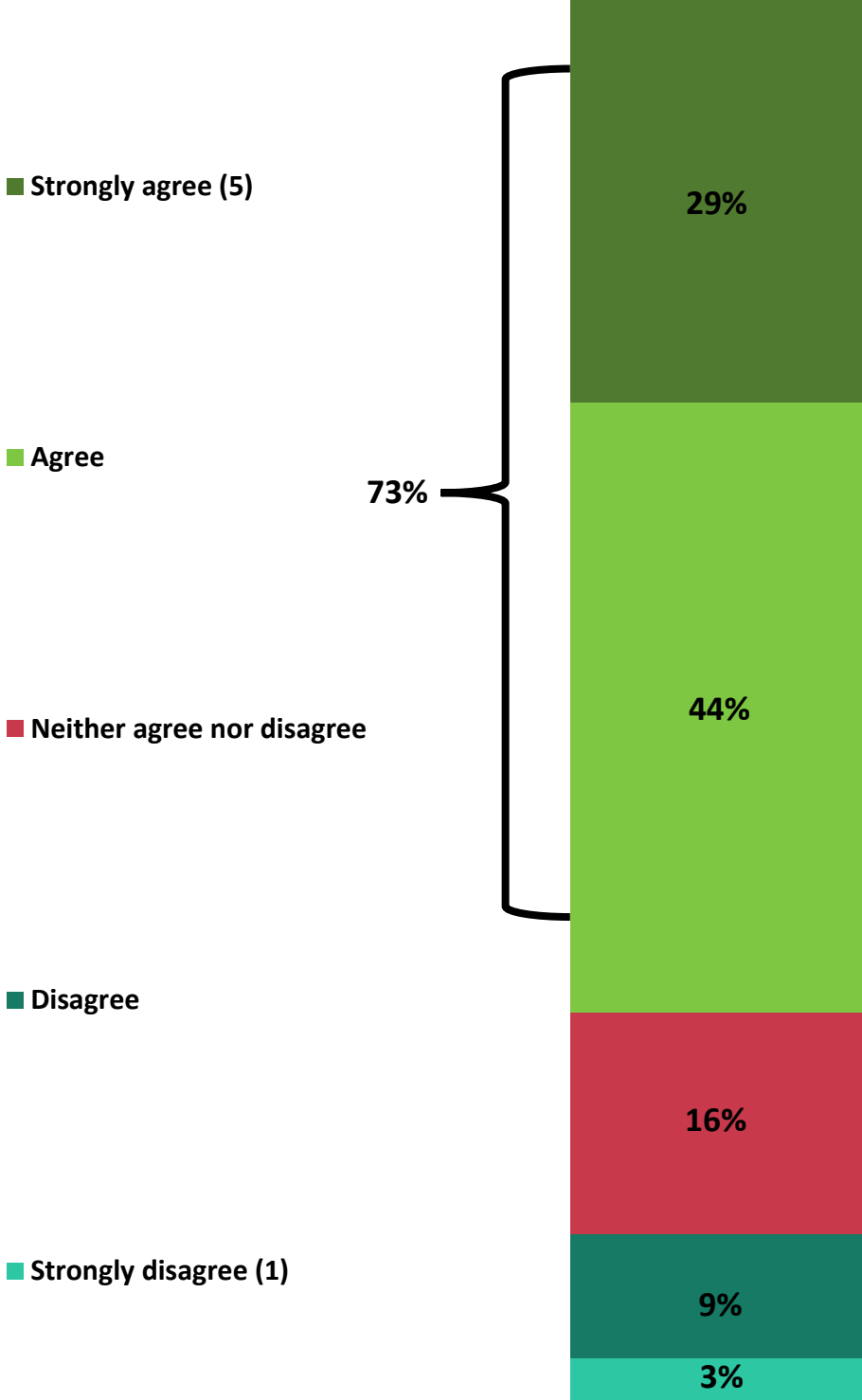
		Concerns about SLC development	
		Total	No
Primary School (mainstream)	50%	45%	57%
Afterschool activities i.e. dance, music, art	22%	14%	30%
Community based Sports Club/Sport Activity/Coaching Programme/Other Activity	17%	14%	21%
Post Primary School (mainstream)	17%	8%	24%
Nursery School/Nursery Unit in a Primary School (Education Authority)	17%	14%	19%
Afterschool Childcare (wrap around care)	13%	11%	15%
Leisure Centre based Sports Club/Sport Activity/Coaching Programme/Other Activity	11%	8%	15%
Childminder	11%	10%	10%

17. Do you feel the main care/education setting your child(ren) attend, supports the SLC development of all children?



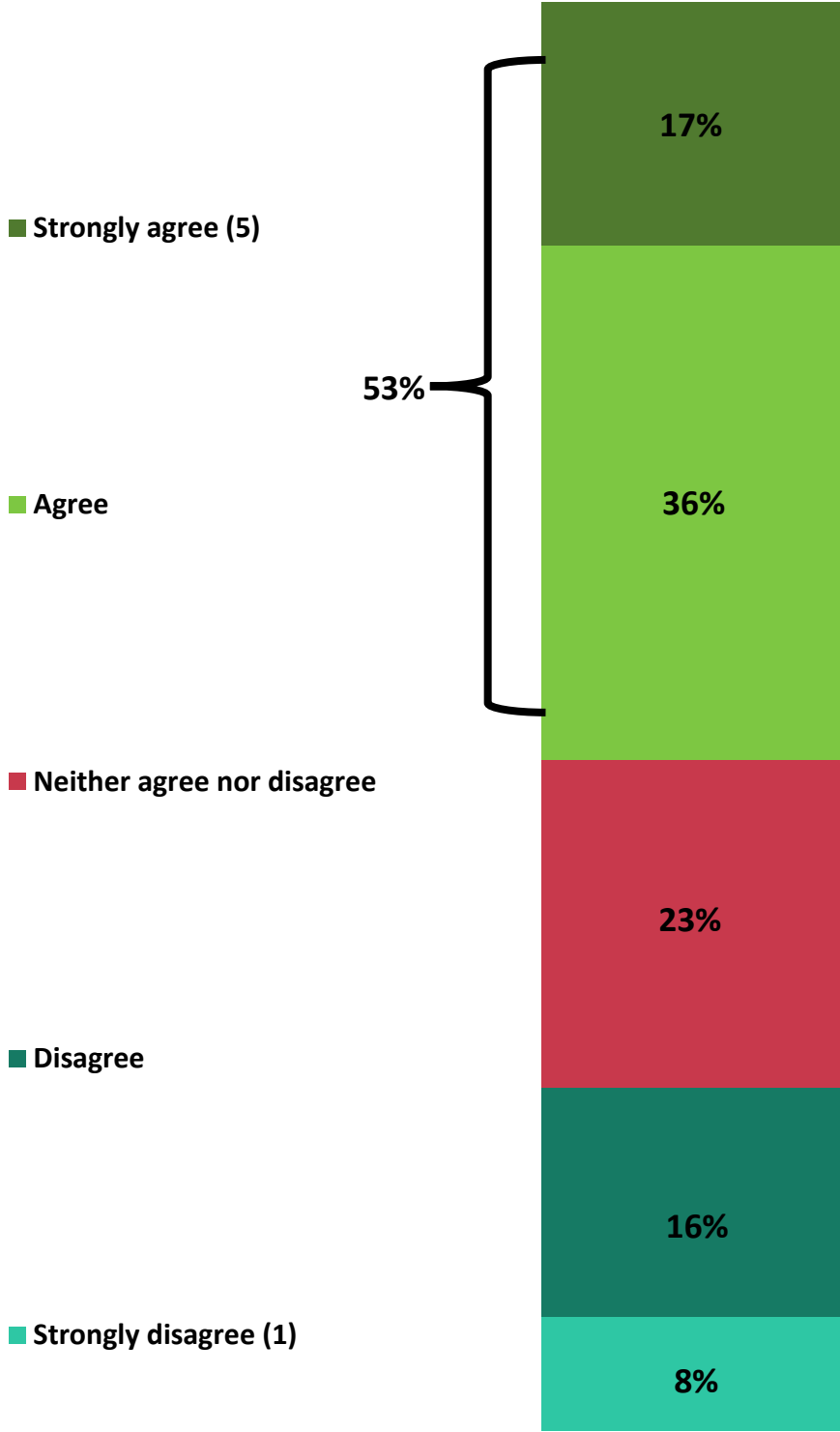
	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
N = 473	N=212	N=244
Strongly agree	21%	37%
Agree	38%	47%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%	12%
Disagree	12%	4%
Strongly disagree	8%	0%

18. Do you feel the main care/education setting understand your child(ren)'s SLC needs?



	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
N = 473	N=212	N=244
Strongly agree	18%	39%
Agree	38%	48%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%	10%
Disagree	17%	3%
Strongly disagree	6%	0%

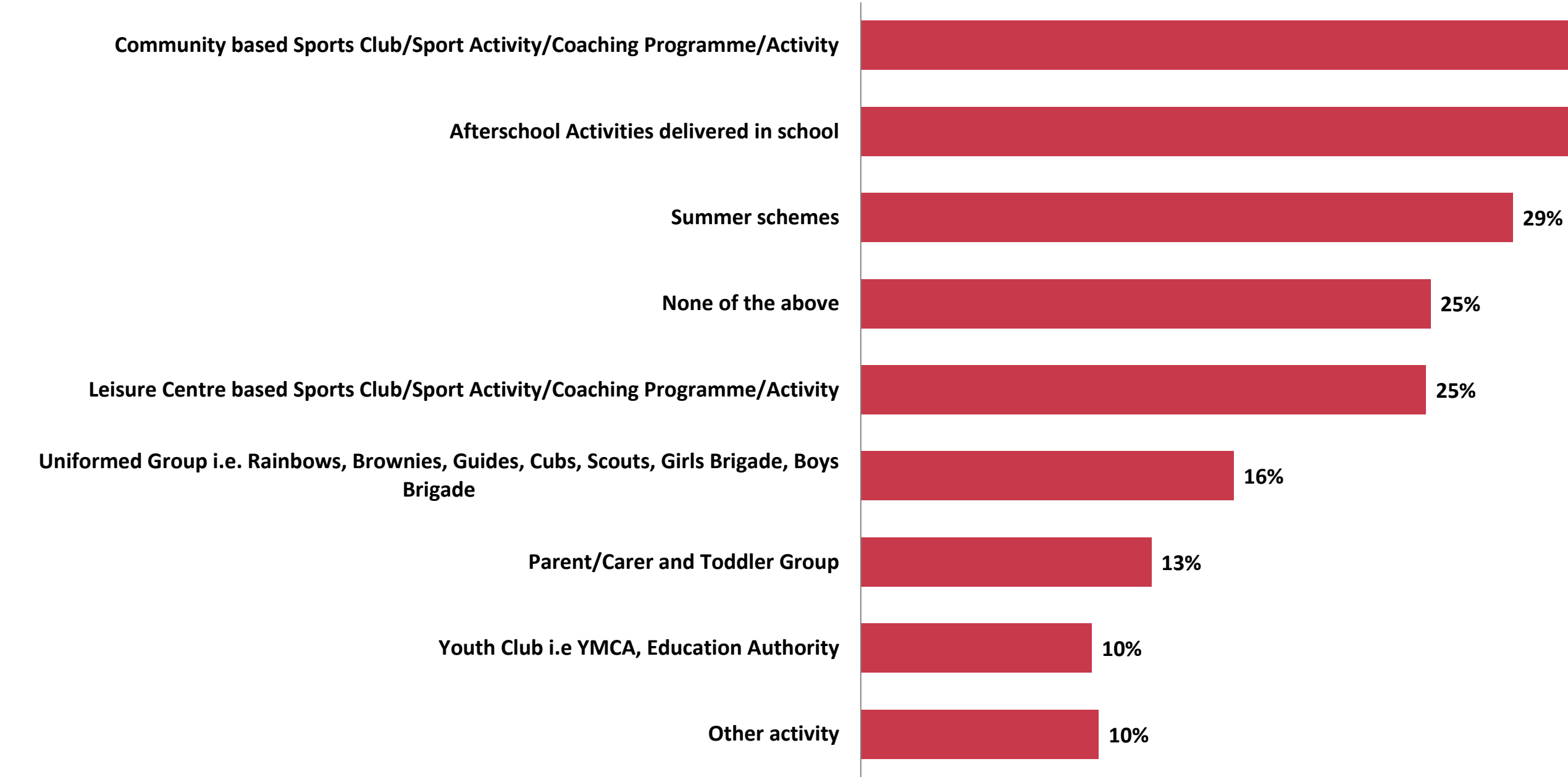
19. Do the main care/education setting provide activities and strategies to support your child(ren) with their specific SLC needs?



	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Strongly agree	18%	15%	18%
Agree	38%	40%	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%	19%	16%
Disagree	12%	16%	23%
Strongly disagree	3%	10%	11%

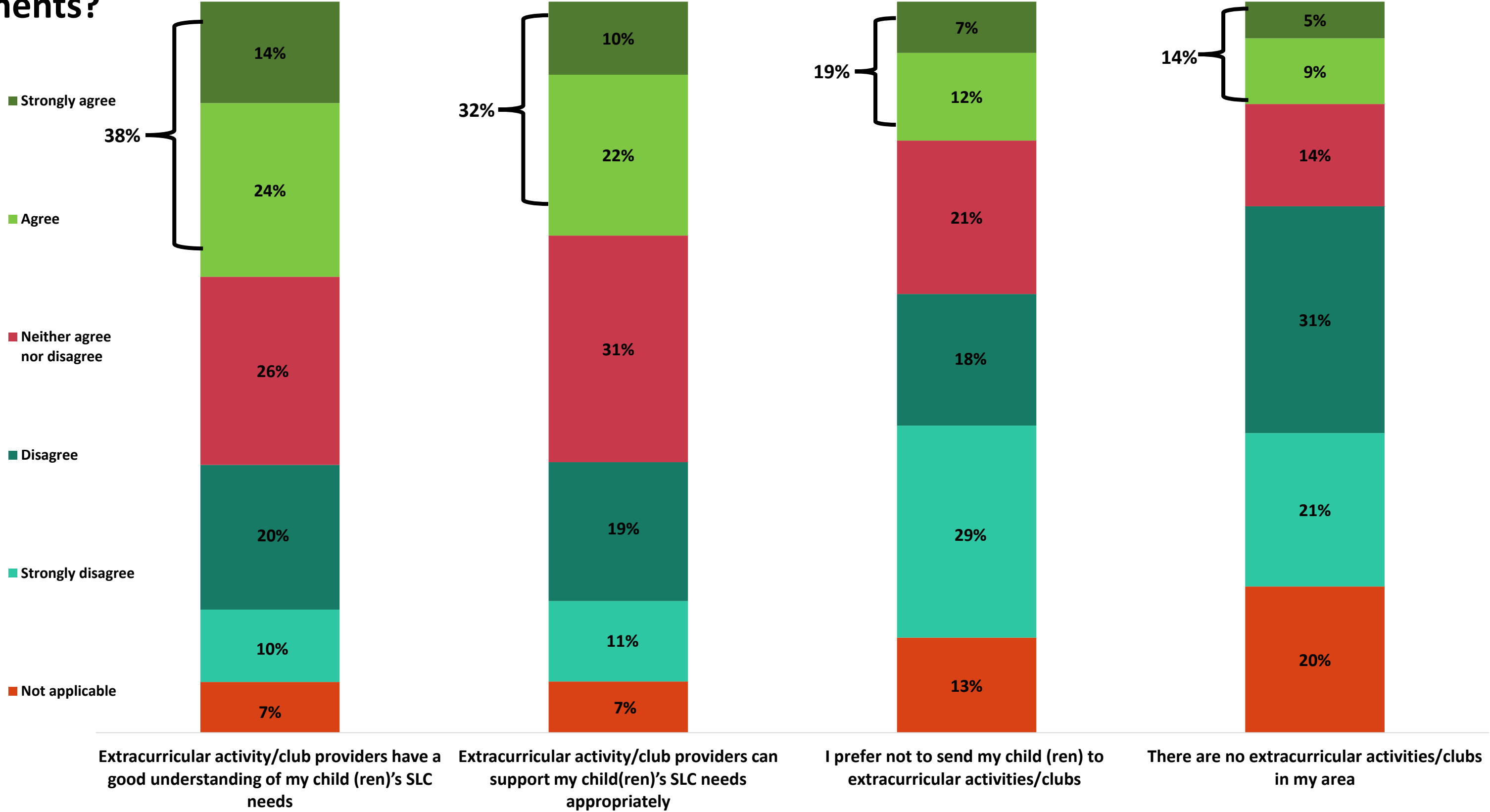
After School / Extracurricular Activities

20. In the past 6 months has your child(ren) participated in any of the following after school/extracurricular activities?



	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
Community based Sports Club/Sport Activity/Coaching Programme/Activity	24%	46%
Afterschool Activities delivered in school	24%	41%
Summer schemes	27%	30%
None of the above	34%	19%
Leisure Centre based Sports Club/Sport Activity/Coaching Programme/Activity	18%	31%
Uniformed Group i.e. Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Cubs, Scouts, Girls Brigade, Boys Brigade	11%	21%
Parent/Carer and Toddler Group	9%	14%
Other activity (Please specify)	10%	10%
Youth Club i.e. YMCA, Education Authority	6%	14%

21. In relation to extracurricular activities/clubs, which your child(ren) attend outside their main care/after school; how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development and child(ren) participated in activities N=137

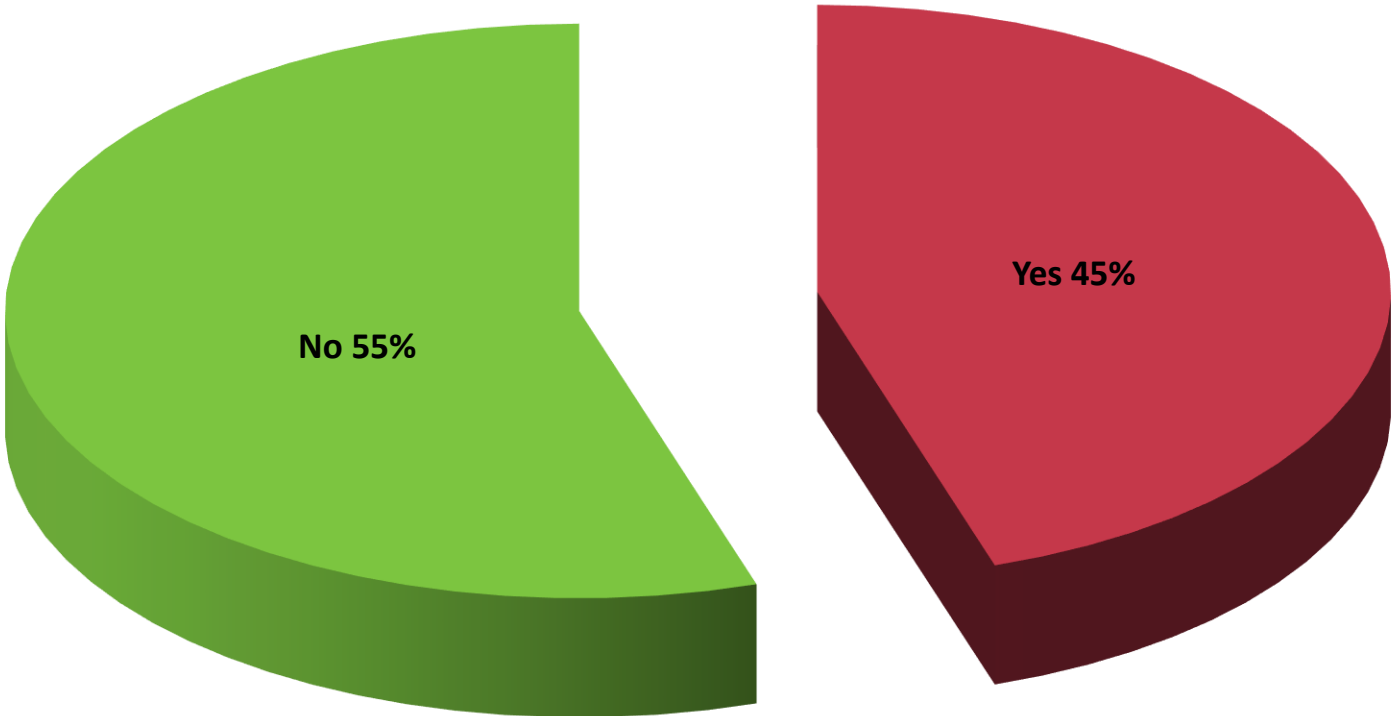
22. What specific training or support do you feel would help staff in extracurricular activities/clubs, education and private settings to understand and support your child(ren)’s speech, language and communication needs?

Total N =	205
Training on supporting communication (patience, giving child time to process etc.)	23%
General advice/basic training	19%
Makaton / signing	11%
Autism	8%
Speech training	7%
Non Speaking	7%
AAC/visuals	6%
SEN	6%
Staff training to promote inclusion	4%
Language training	3%
One to one sessions for child	3%
Selective mutism (Situational mutism)	3%
SLT training	2%
Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)	2%
Access to SLT	2%
Communication advice to give to club/ printables/ passport / visuals / steps to follow	2%
Gestalt Language Processing	2%

Total N =	205
Knowledge of developmental milestones	2%
Use of symbols/Picture Exchange System	2%
Speech delay	2%
Stammering	2%
Mental health	2%
Speech Sound Disorder	1%
PDA	1%
Deafness/hearing issues	1%
ADHD	1%
SLD	1%
Interacting with your child/playing	1%
Sensory	1%
None	2%
Don't know/not sure	12%
Other	15%
N/A	9%

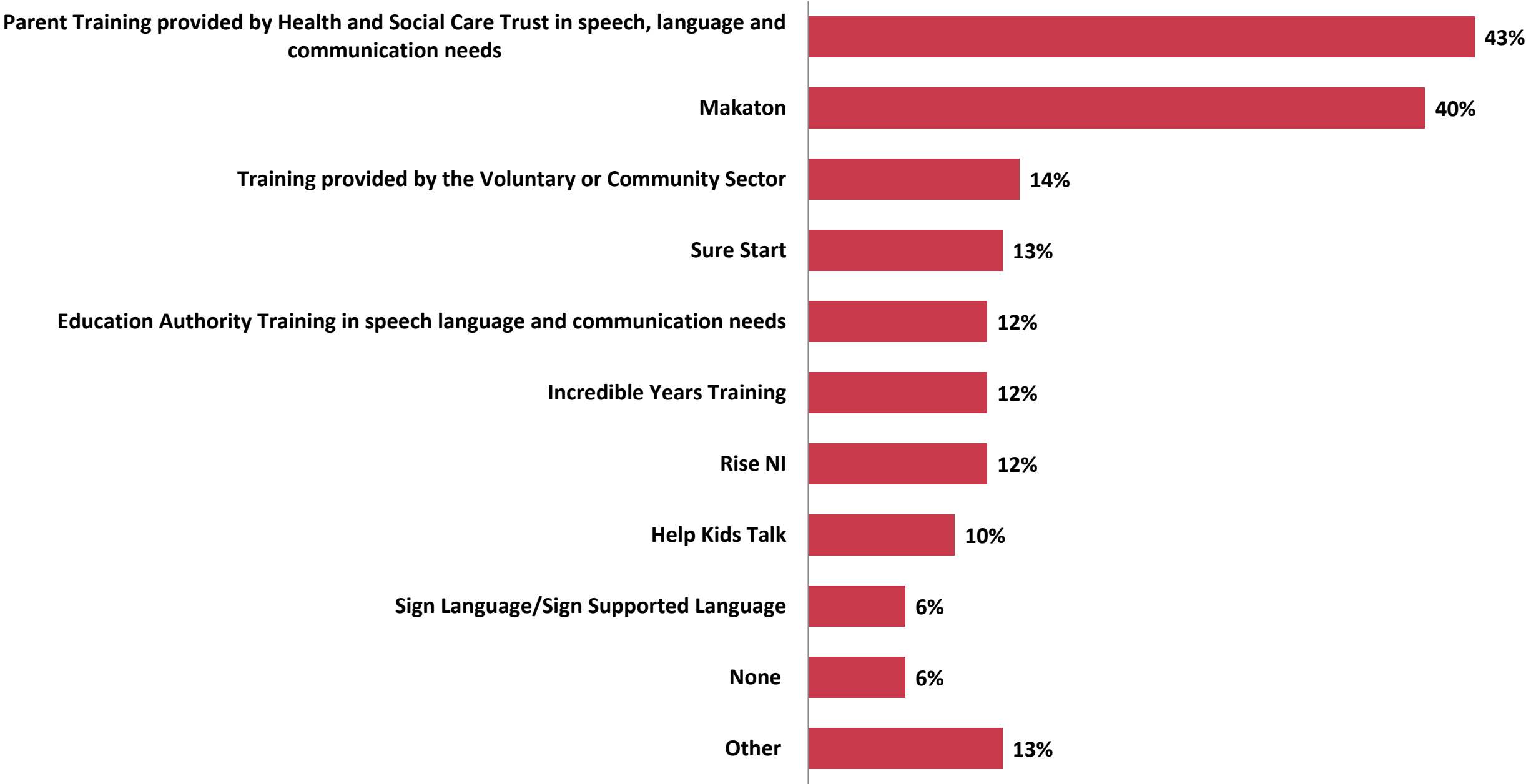
- Other included:
- More staff/**secure settings**
 - Additional funding for community sports
 - Better communication with parents/carers to understand child’s needs
 - More clubs/activities for children with learning difficulties
 - Neuro-affirming approach
 - Medical training

23. Have you ever attended any speech, language and communication needs training?



	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Yes	43%	40%	64%
No	57%	60%	36%

24. Which, if any, of the following speech, language and communication needs training have you attended?



25. Which, if any, of the following prevent you from taking part in speech, language and communication needs training?



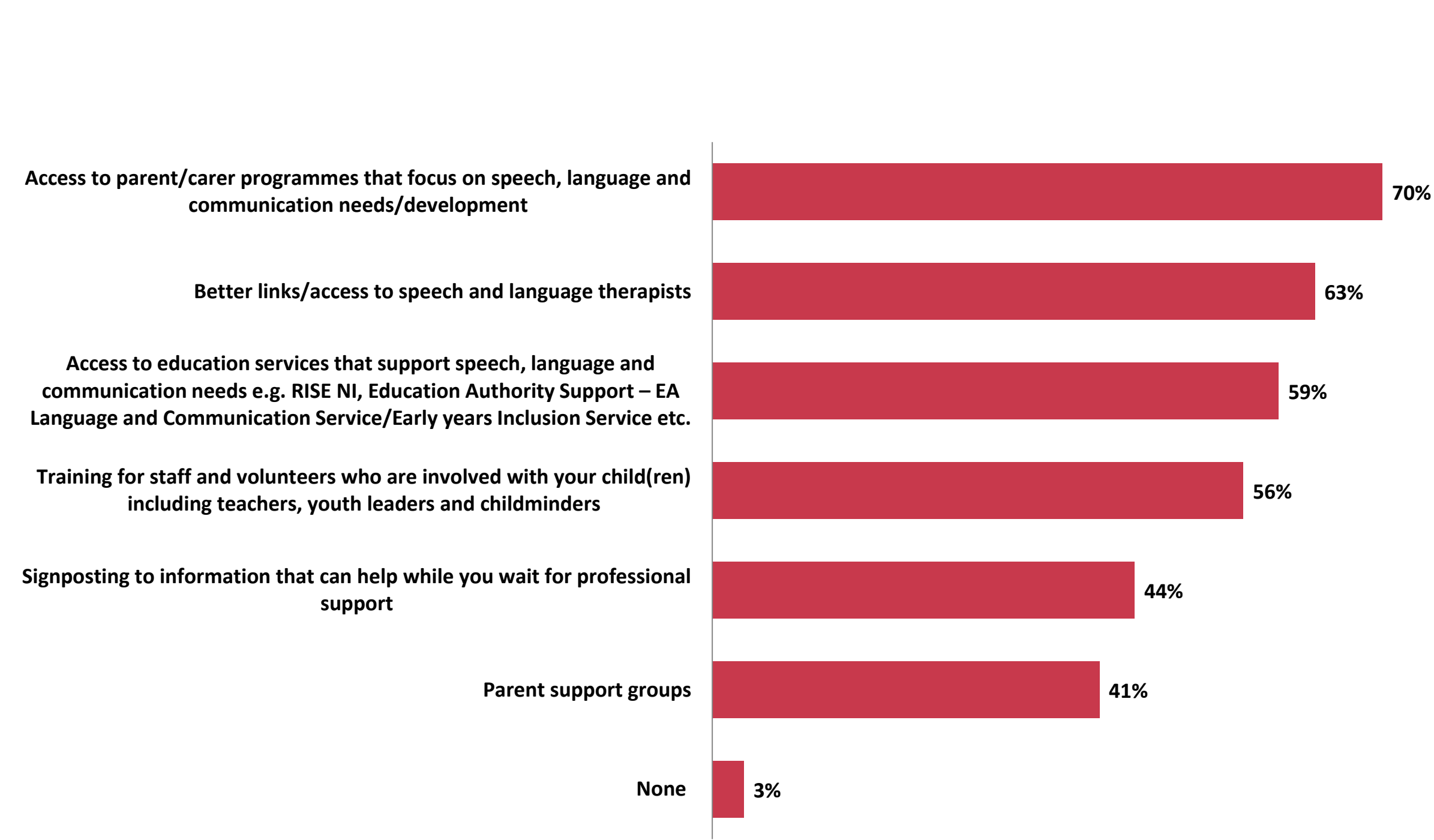
26. What specific additional training or information, if any, would help you to develop your child(ren)’s speech, language and communication?

Total N =	463
General advice/basic training	15%
Use of phonics/support for sound formation	6%
Speech training	5%
Knowledge of developmental milestones	5%
Training on supporting communication (patience, giving child time to process etc.)	4%
SLT training/advice	4%
Makaton / signing	3%
School to give more advice to home regarding strategies used	3%
Language training	2%
Augmentative and Alternative Communication/visuals	2%
Resources/ Communication advice - printables/ passport / visuals / steps to follow	2%
How to support reading	2%
Online resources/tools/programmes	2%
Autism	1%
Gestalt Language Processing	1%
Non-Speaking	1%
Stammering	1%
Interacting with your child/playing (specific toys and resources to boost SLC)	1%

Total N =	463
How to support with comprehension/conversation skills	1%
Language support for bilingual children	1%
None	15%
Don't know/not sure	12%
N/A	20%
Other	14%

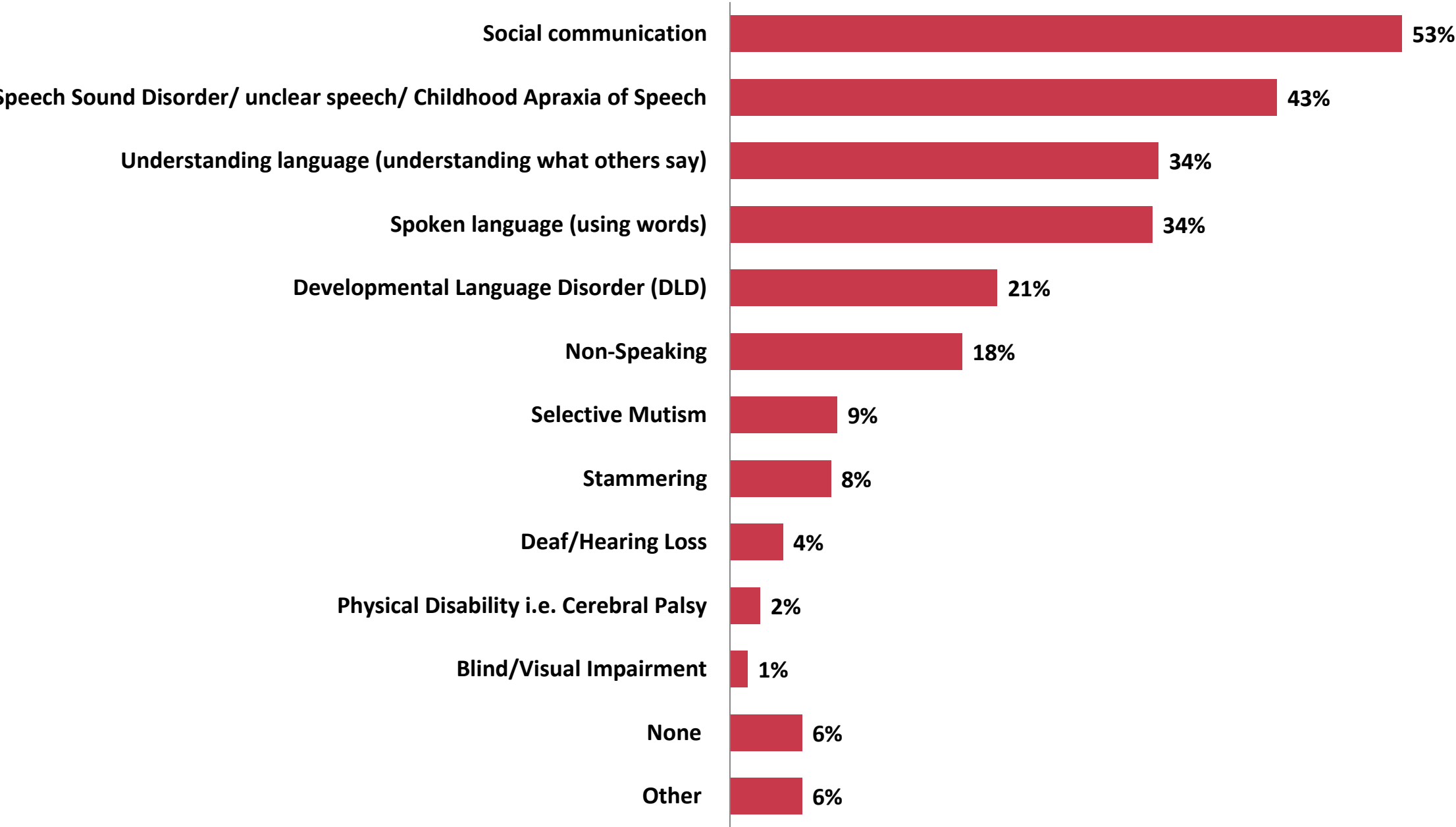
- Other included:
- Parent workshops/support groups
 - Neurodiversity training
 - S & L clubs/drama clubs
 - More SLT support/better access to SLT
 - Whole family approach to training
 - British Sign Language
 - Resources for selective mutism
 - Use of Talk Tools
 - Trauma training for professionals

27. Which, if any, of the following would help you?



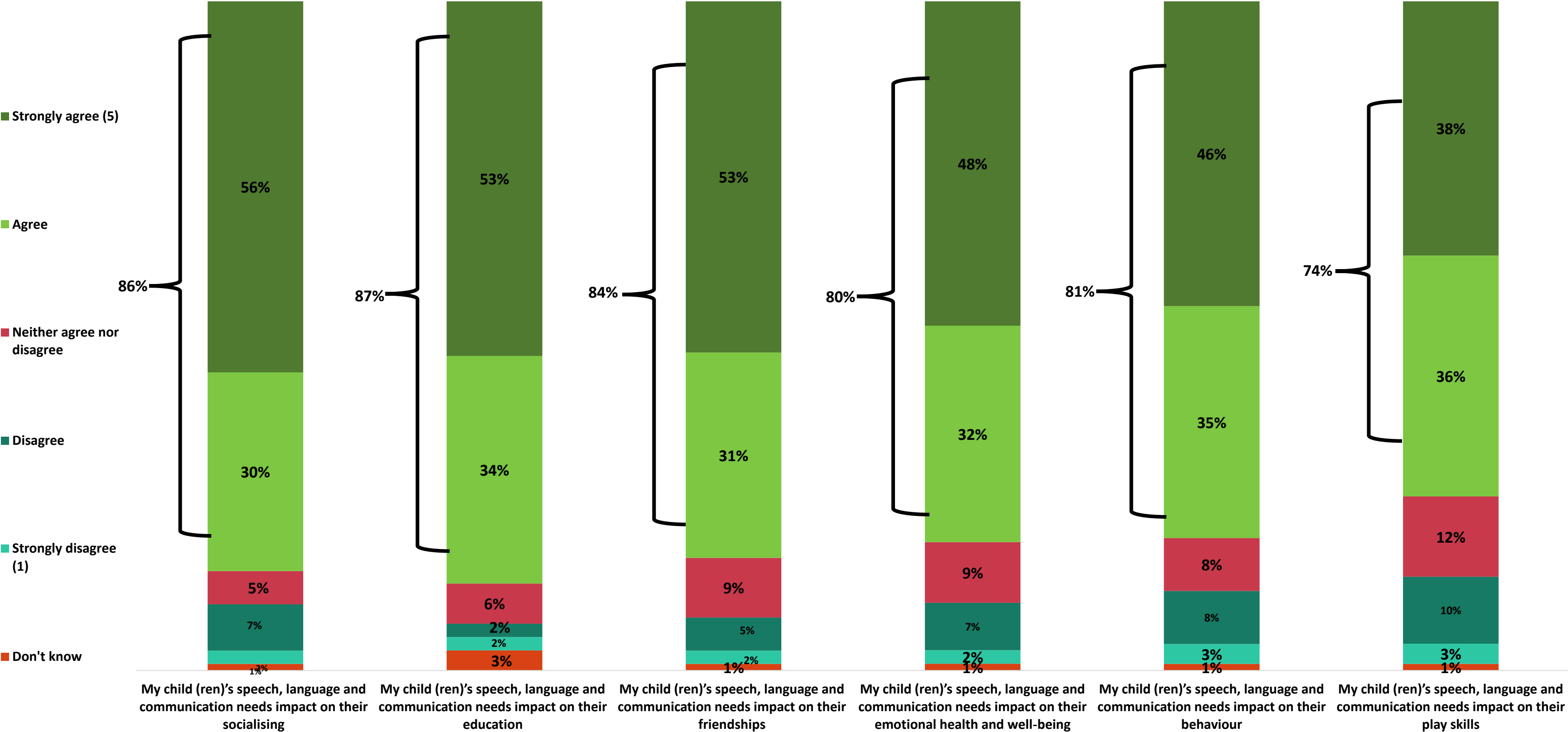
	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Access to parent/carers programmes that focus on speech, language and communication needs/development	74%	64%	77%
Better links/access to speech and language therapists	64%	68%	52%
Access to education services that support speech, language and communication needs e.g. RISE NI, Education Authority Support – EA Language and Communication Service/Early years Inclusion Service etc.	61%	65%	50%
Training for staff and volunteers who are involved with your child(ren) including teachers, youth leaders and childminders.	51%	54%	66%
Signposting to information that can help while you wait for professional support	51%	40%	46%
Parent support groups	47%	35%	48%
None	4%	2%	5%

28. Which, if any, of the following specific topics/areas do you feel you need support with in relation to your child(ren)’s speech, language and communication needs?



	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 212	N=74	N=124	N=44
Social communication	55%	48%	66%
Speech Sound Disorder/ unclear speech/ Childhood Apraxia of Speech	46%	45%	41%
Understanding language (understanding what others say)	38%	28%	48%
Spoken language (using words)	34%	30%	36%
Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)	22%	23%	16%
Non-Speaking	27%	19%	14%
Selective Mutism	7%	8%	16%
Stammering	10%	7%	9%
Deaf/Hearing Loss	5%	3%	5%
Physical Disability i.e. Cerebral Palsy	1%	2%	7%
Blind/Visual Impairment	-	2%	2%
None	5%	6%	7%
Other	4%	7%	5%

29. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

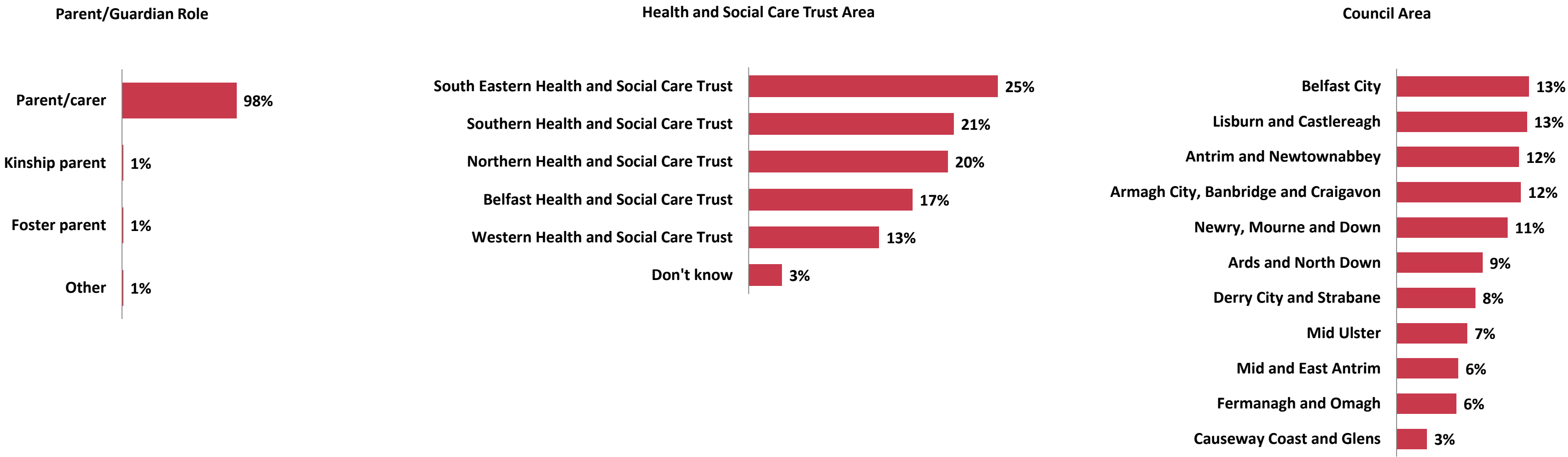


base: all respondents worried about child(ren)'s SLC development N=212



Classification

Classification





Section B: Practitioners

N = 487

Strategic Takeaways and Ways Forward

Strategic Takeaways

Background



- The majority of respondents were working in early education, with **30% being primary school teachers, 12% nursery teachers, and 11% playgroup leaders**. Other roles include early years practitioners (9%) and childminders (8%).
- The respondents were spread across **Health and Social Care Trust and Council areas**, bringing various experiences and insights. The **majority (73%) had 11+ years of experience**.
- **60% of these settings had bilingual children, and 9% had multilingual children**. In contrast, **34% of respondents had no bilingual children in their settings**.
 - **Among those concerned about speech, language and communication needs, the number of bilingual and multilingual children was slightly higher**, suggesting potential language development challenges in diverse linguistic settings.

Speech, Language and Communication Development



- The **top five aspects** considered crucial for speech, language and communication development included **understanding words (86%), speech sounds (80%), having conversations (74%), understanding sentences (76%), and the ability to mix with others (66%)**.
- **88% of respondents had concerns about speech and language development of children in their settings, with 91% reporting an increase in speech, language and communication needs over the past five years**. Additionally, **89% had noticed a rise in the complexity of these needs**.
- When looking at the prevalence of concerns, **52% of respondents stated that up to 20% of children in their care had speech, language and communication needs; at the other end of the scale, 5% said that over 80% of children were affected**.
- Children with speech, language and communication needs participated in extracurricular activities, the most common being **sports and fitness (28%), drama and arts (19%), and uniformed groups (16%)**. However, participation was low in some structured programmes, such as **youth organisations (3%) and summer schemes (10%)**.
- **50% of all respondents had accessed or looked into private speech and language therapy in their setting**.

Strategic Takeaways

Children's Daily Life



- **72% of respondents felt supported by their senior leadership teams, and 66% knew where to access training and resources. However, only 42% felt well supported by professionals when helping children with speech, language and communication needs.**
- **64% of respondents felt that managing speech, language and communication needs affected their ability to perform their role fully; worryingly, 29% reported that dealing with these needs had impacted their mental health.**
- **Despite these challenges, 84% stated most children understand them, 79% feel they can manage behaviour, and 76% believe they can interpret what children are trying to communicate.**
- **However, only 15% reported that relevant professionals see children with speech, language and communication needs in a timely manner, indicating significant delays in accessing specialist support.**

Your Role



- **71% were confident in their understanding of specific speech, language and communication needs.**
- **60% were confident in supporting specific speech, language and communication development of all children.**
- **72% felt they were able to provide activities and strategies to support children with speech, language and communication needs.**
- **Time (80%), resources (71%), and funding (62%) were the main elements cited as impacting their ability to provide activities or strategies.**
- **Only 22% believed that parents were empowered to support their children's speech, language and needs, and 20% believed parents had a good understanding of speech, language and communication needs.**

Strategic Takeaways



Support and Training

- **63% of respondents had participated in speech, language and communication training**, mainly RISE (27%), Makaton (20%) and Elklan (18%).
- **Future training/ information** on the following would be helpful for these respondents: **training on supporting communication (17%), SLT training (17%),** and detailed training on **speech and language strategies**.
- **Access to speech, language, communication and development programmes (63%), better links to speech and language therapists, and training for staff and volunteers involved with the children (66%)** would also be advantageous.
- The **main areas for more information** and advice included **Speech Sound Disorder (70%), Social Communication (62%) and Developmental Language Disorder (57%)**
- Many respondents faced significant barriers in accessing further learning opportunities including **lack of awareness of available training (69%), not knowing where to find training (35%), budget constraints (34%), and time limitations (28%)**. Additionally, **27% found training schedules unsuitable, and 20% considered them too expensive**.
- There was **near-universal agreement that speech, language and communication needs had a profound impact on children's education, emotional well-being, friendships, behaviour and play skills**.

Ways Forward



Enhance professional support

- More **specialist training and direct collaboration with speech therapists** are needed to manage rising speech, language and communication need concerns.



Improve early intervention strategies

- Need to focus on **identifying and addressing speech, language and communication needs sooner** to prevent long-term developmental gaps.



Increase accessibility to training

- **Flexible, low-cost, and time-efficient training** should be a priority to help educators better support children with speech, language and communication needs.



Engage parents more effectively

- **Parent training workshops and informational resources** should be implemented to boost their confidence in supporting children with speech, language and communication needs.

Key Insights from the Research

Background Information on Respondents

Background

487 respondents completed the survey.

Respondents were spread across all Trust areas and Council areas

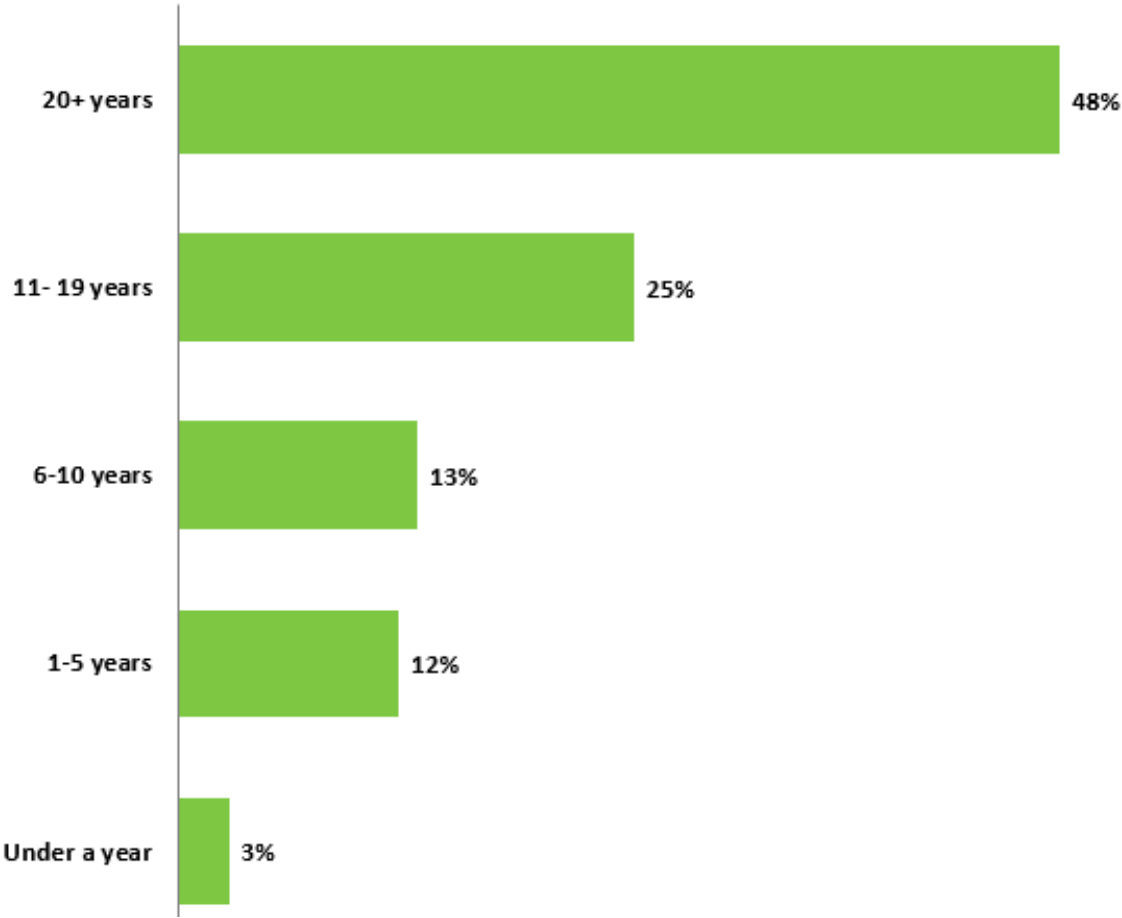


- 30% - Primary School teacher
- 12% - Nursery Teacher
- 11% - Playgroup leader
- 9% - Early Years Practitioner
- 8% - Child Minder

Bilingual children in setting

	% overall	% Amongst those with concerns
No	34%	31%
Bilingual	60%	64%
Multilingual	9%	9%

Length of time worked in sector



Speech, Language and Communication Development

The key things considered to be part of a child's speech, language and communication development were

	All respondents
Understanding words	86%
Speech sounds	80%
Having conversations	74%
Understanding sentences	76%
Ability to mix with others	66%

Key areas of speech, language and communication most concerned about



88% were worried about children's speech, language and communication development

50% had looked into private speech and language therapy for their setting.

Those with speech, language and communication needs participating in extracurricular activities

External sports/ fitness	28%
After schools' activities	19%
uniformed group	16%
Summer schemes	10%
Paret Toddler group	9%
Youth organisations	3%

Which professionals have you linked with for speech, language and communication needs in last 5 years



- 91% stated the number presenting with speech, language and communication needs increased in the past 5 years
- 89% stated the complexity of needs had increased over the past 5 years

Children’s Daily Life

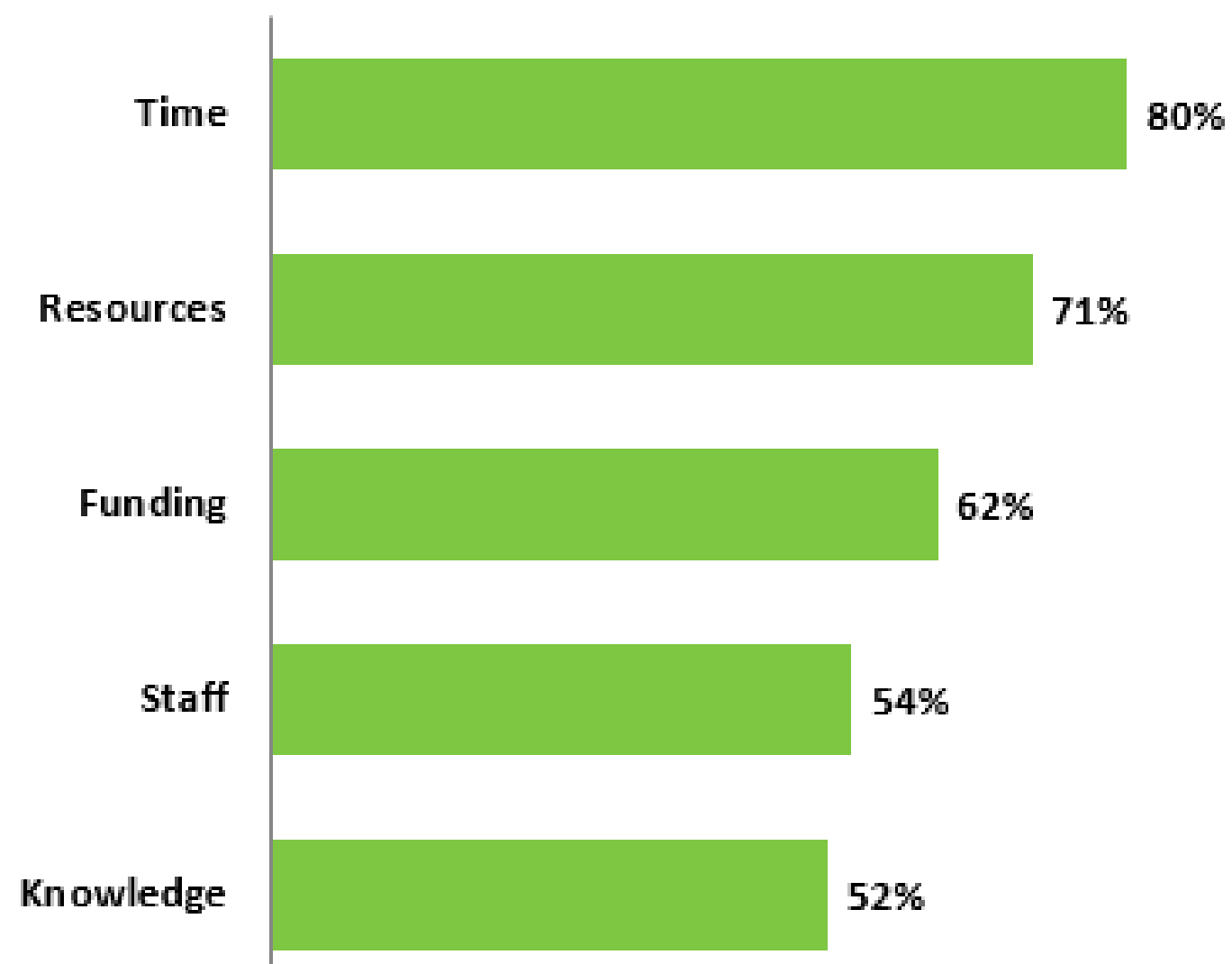
Audience B

	AGREEMENT All respondents
I feel well supported by senior leadership team	72%
I know where to access support and training go	66%
Supporting speech, language and communication needs can impact on my ability to fully carry out my role	64%
I feel I can mange /adapt my workload	49%
I feel I am well supported by professionals to help children	42%
My mental health has been impacted by managing SLCN	29%

Most or all of the children	All Respondents
Understand me	84%
I am able to manage the children’s behaviour	79%
I am able to work out what the children are trying to tell me	76%
The children make/ maintain friends	62%
Children are meeting their milestones	57%
Children are ready to engage in activities offered	42%
children are seen by relevant professionals in a timely manner	15%

Your Role

- 71% were confident in understanding specific speech, language and communication needs
- 60% were confident in supporting specific speech, language and communication development
- 72% were able to provide activities and strategies to support speech, language and communication needs



- 22% believed parent felt empowered to support their children with speech, language and communication needs.
- 20% believed parents and a good understanding of speech, language and communication needs.

Support and Training

63% had taken part in speech, language and communication needs training

Training already received

RISE NI	27%
Makaton	20%
Elklan	18%
Hanen	15%
WellComm training	11%
SLT training	10%
EA training	10%



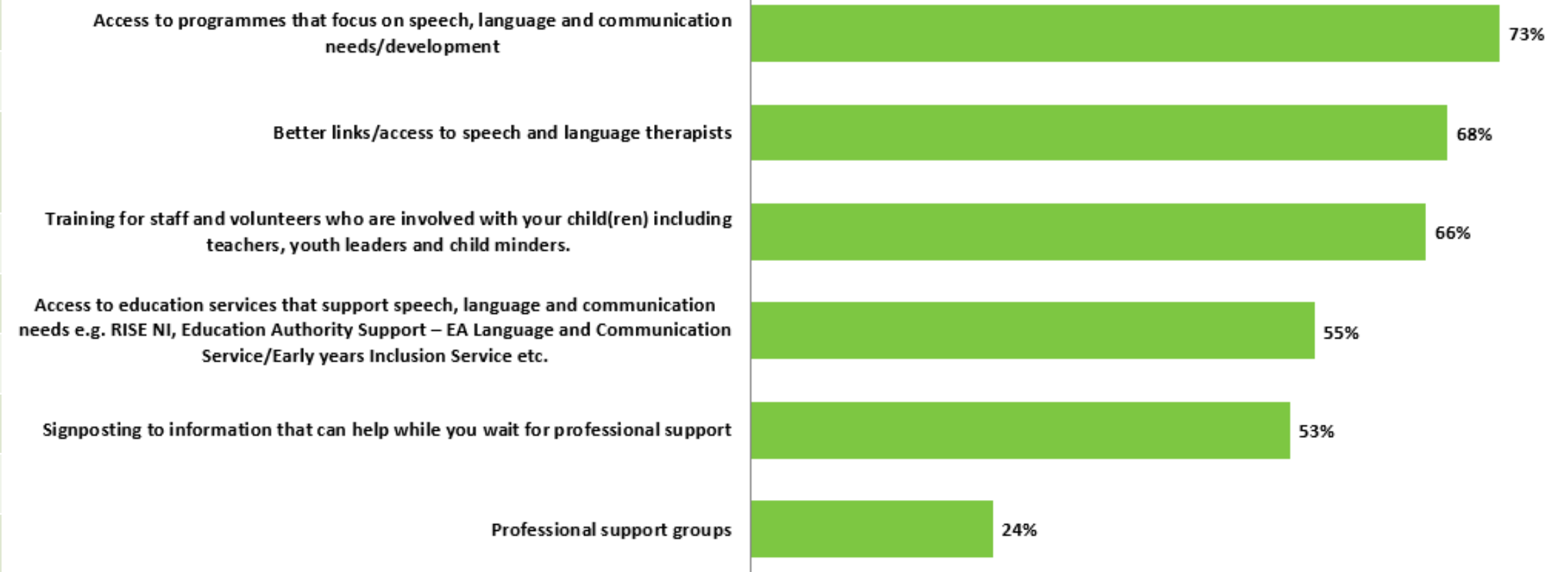
Near universal agreement that speech, language and communication needs impacts children's education, emotional health and well-being, behaviour, friendships, ability to socialise and their play skills.

Support and Training (Cont.)

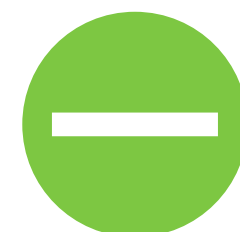
Specific training and information would help you

Training on supporting communications	17%
SLT training / support	17%
Specific/detailed training on speech, language acquisition	12%
Makaton Training	9%
Resources	7%
SLT assigned to school/ nursery	6%
Interacting with child/ playing games etc	6%
Speech sounds	6%
Signposting information	6%

Best Support to help with speech, language and communication needs



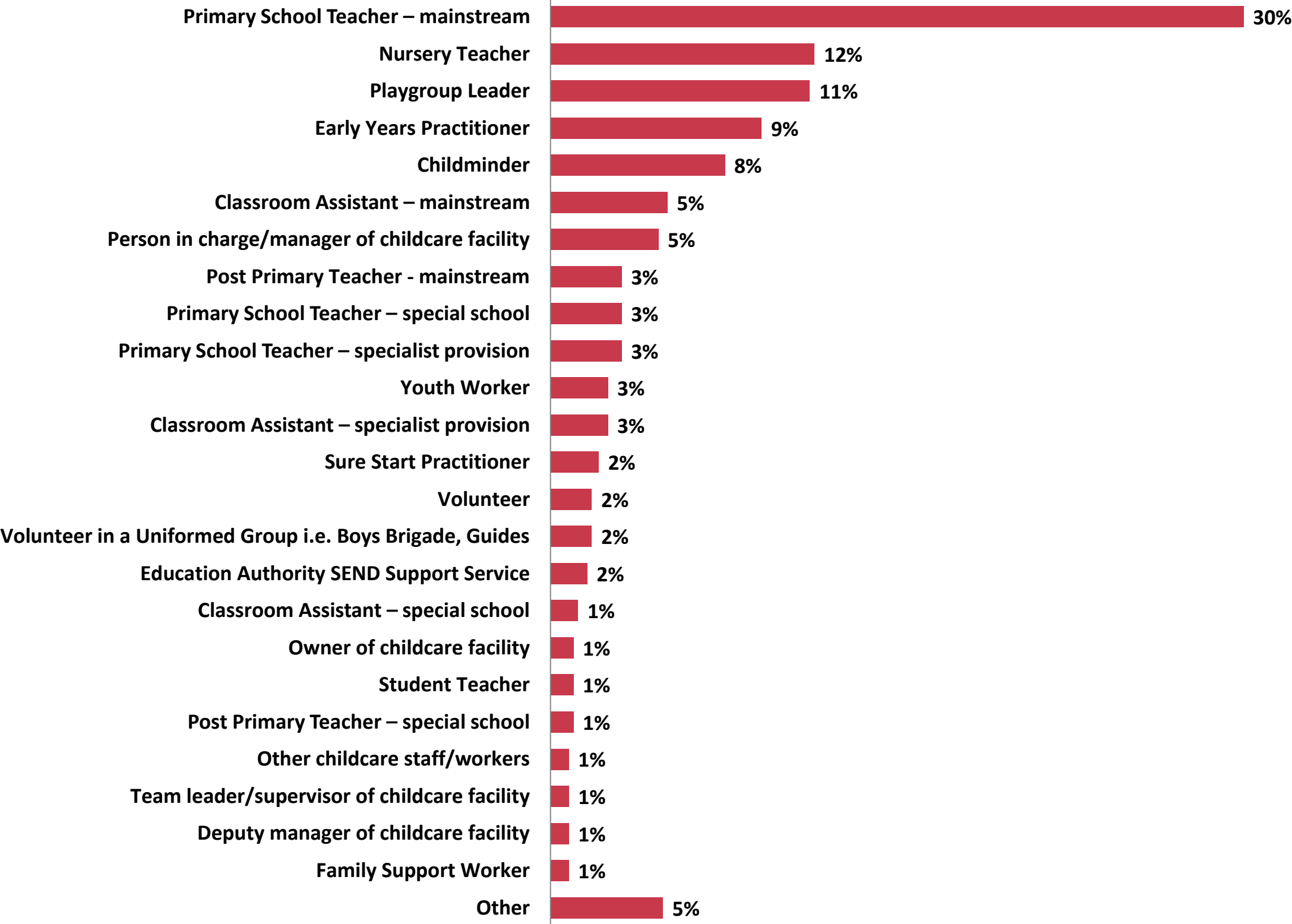
Main barriers to taking part in training



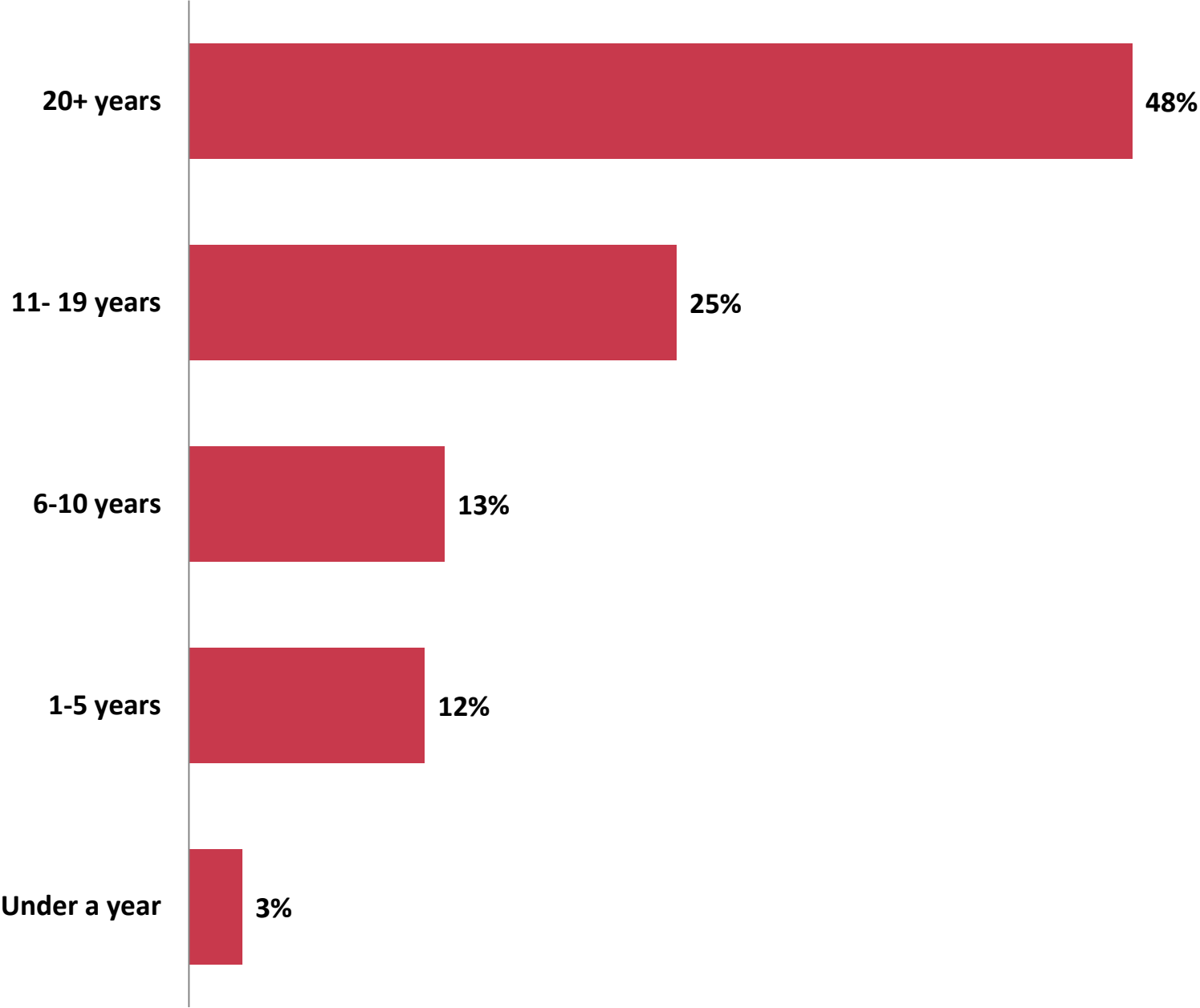
- 69% - not aware of any training available
- 35% - don't know where to look for training
- 34% - don't have budget for this
- 28% - time/ life too busy
- 27% - unsuitable timings
- 20% - too expensive

Full Charted Insights

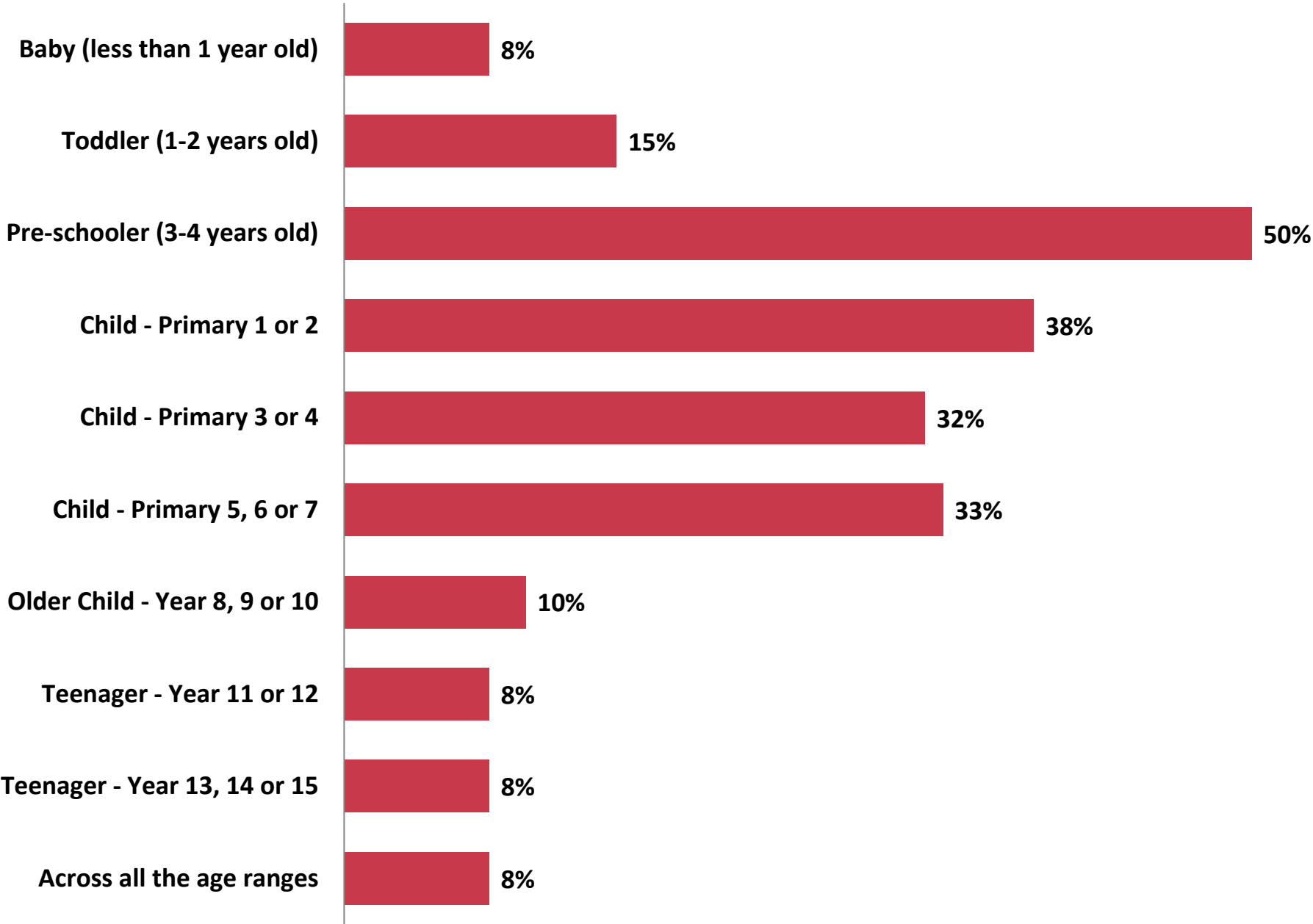
4a. Which of the following best describes your work role?



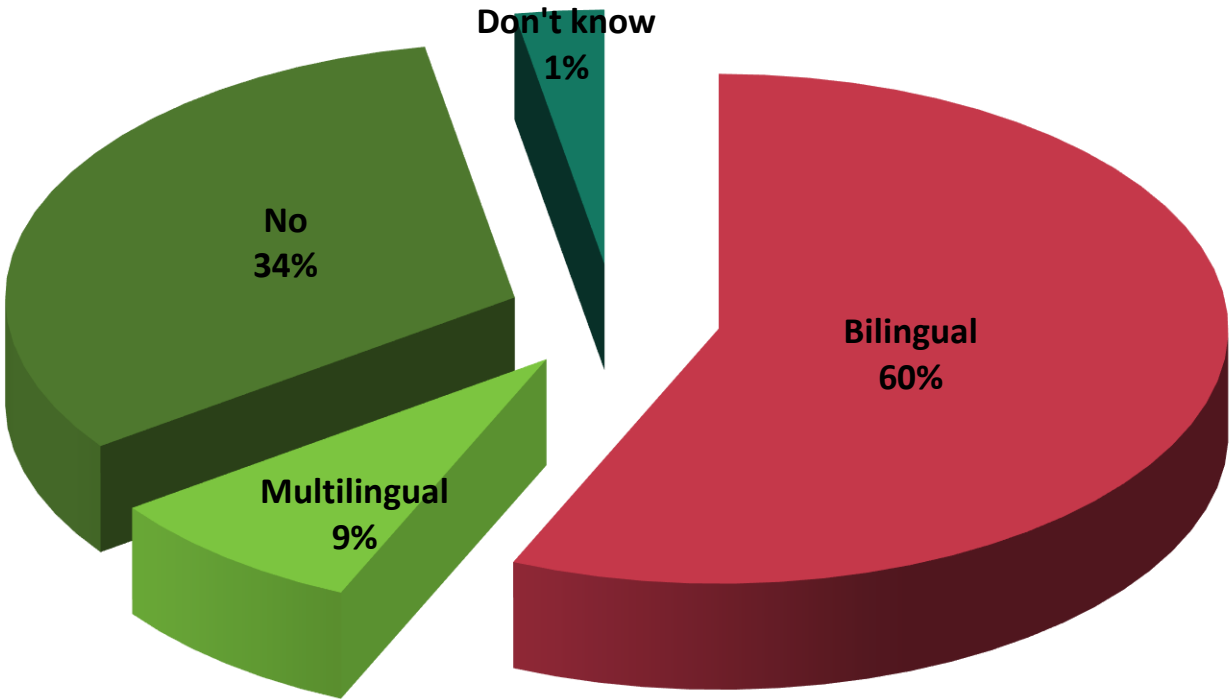
4b. How long have you worked in this sector?



5. What is the age range of the children who are in your setting?



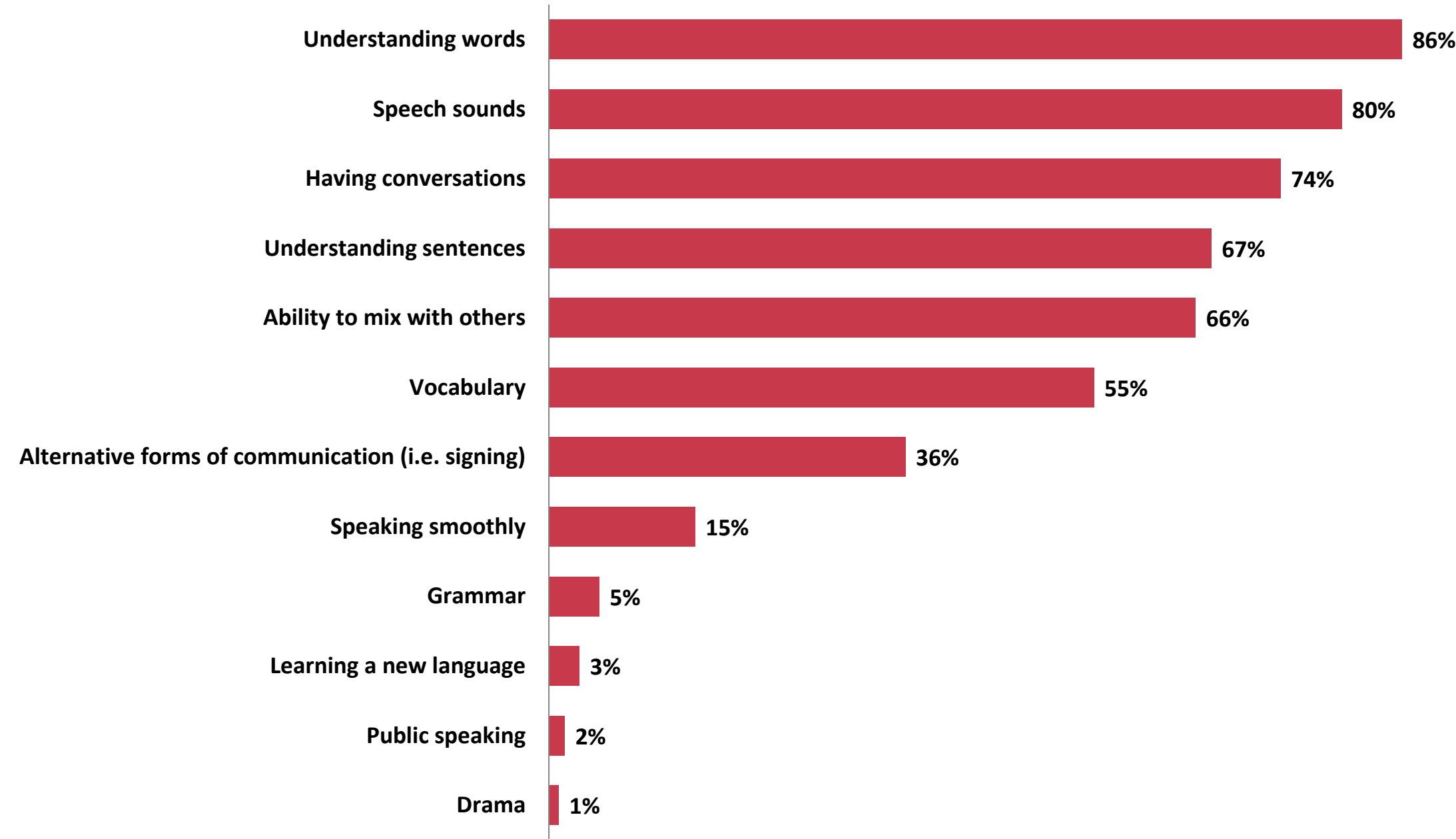
6. Are any of the children in your setting bilingual or multilingual?



	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 487	426	50	211	186	29
Bilingual (2 languages)	64%	28%	63%	63%	72%
Multilingual (3+ languages)	9%	4%	10%	7%	24%
No	31%	64%	33%	32%	10%
Don't know	2%	4%	2%	2%	7%

Speech, Language and Communication Development

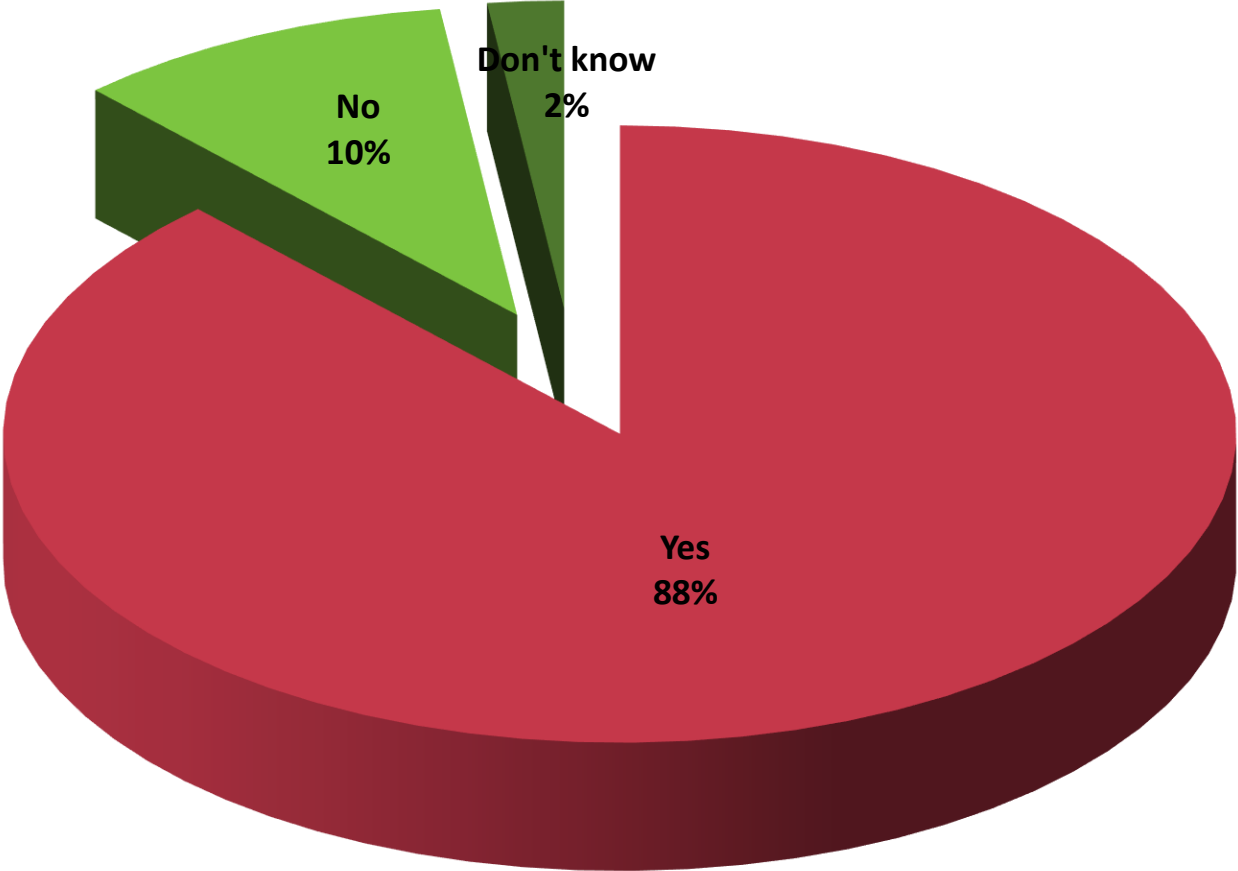
7. Please select the top 5 things you would consider to be part of a child’s speech, language and communication development?



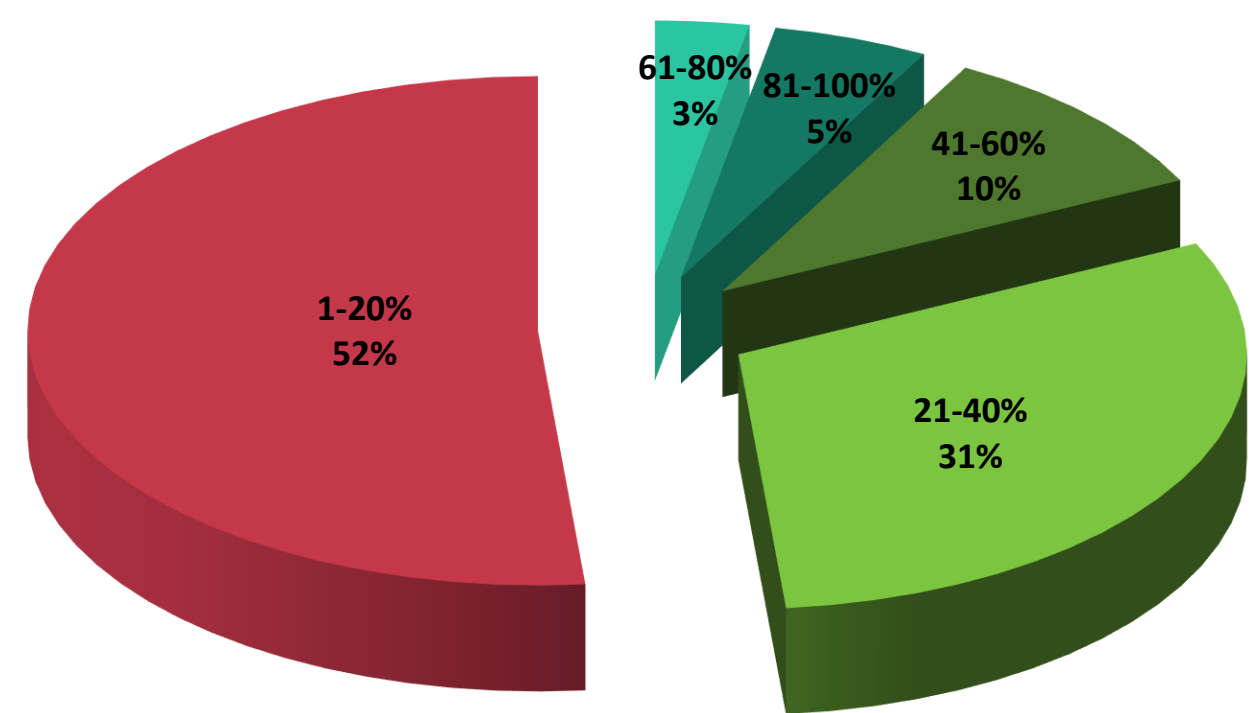
base: all respondents N=487

	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 487	426	50	211	186	29
Understanding words	87%	80%	90%	87%	72%
Speech sounds	82%	74%	83%	83%	62%
Having conversations	74%	70%	66%	82%	83%
Understanding sentences	68%	56%	65%	74%	55%
Ability to mix with others	64%	74%	69%	56%	79%
Vocabulary	57%	46%	57%	59%	38%
Alternative forms of communication	36%	34%	43%	27%	45%
Speaking smoothly	14%	24%	9%	17%	28%
Grammar	5%	10%	3%	5%	10%
Learning a new language	3%	6%	4%	-	14%
Public speaking	1%	6%	-	1%	7%
Drama	0%	2%	1%	1%	-

8. Do you have concerns about the speech and language development of any of the children in your settings?



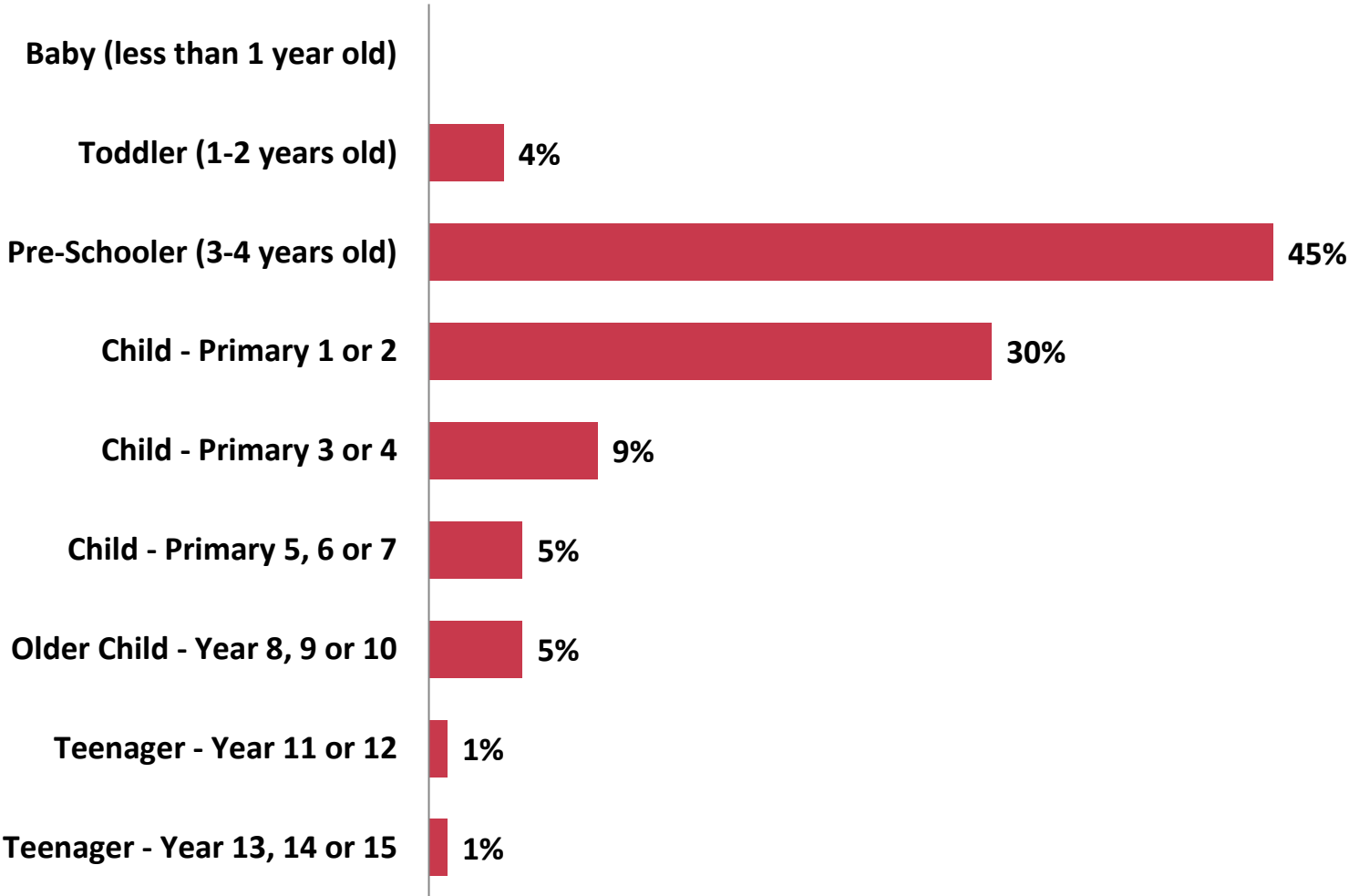
9. What is the percentage of children in your care who you have concerns about regarding their speech, language and communication needs ?



base: all respondents with concerns about child(ren)'s SLC development N=426

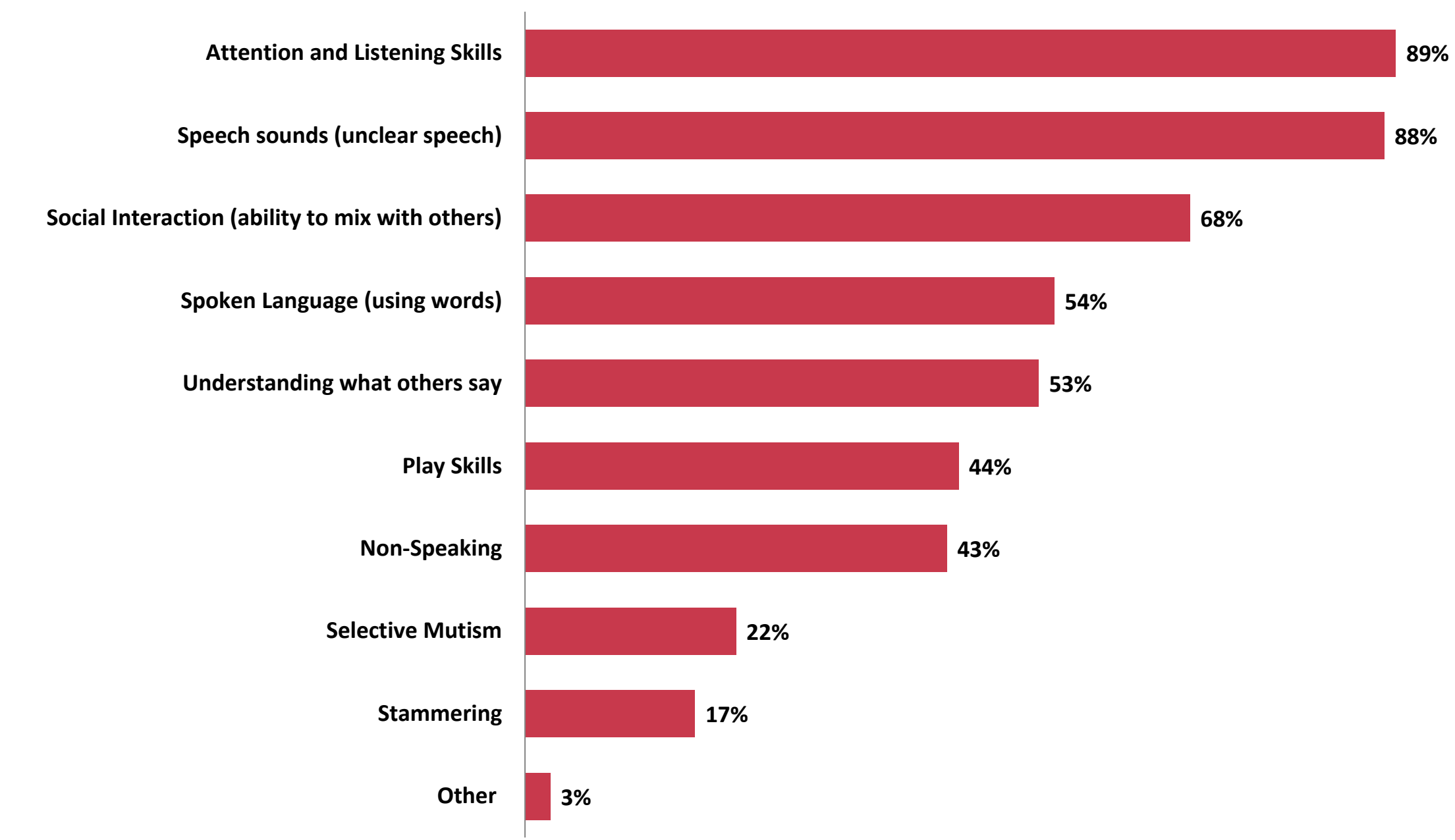
	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 426	211	186	29
1-20% of children	43%	60%	62%
21-40% of children	37%	24%	24%
41-60% of children	15%	6%	7%
61-80% of children	3%	3%	-
81-100% of children	2%	7%	7%

10. How old are the majority of the children that you have concerns about?



base: all respondents with concerns about child(ren)'s SLC development N=426

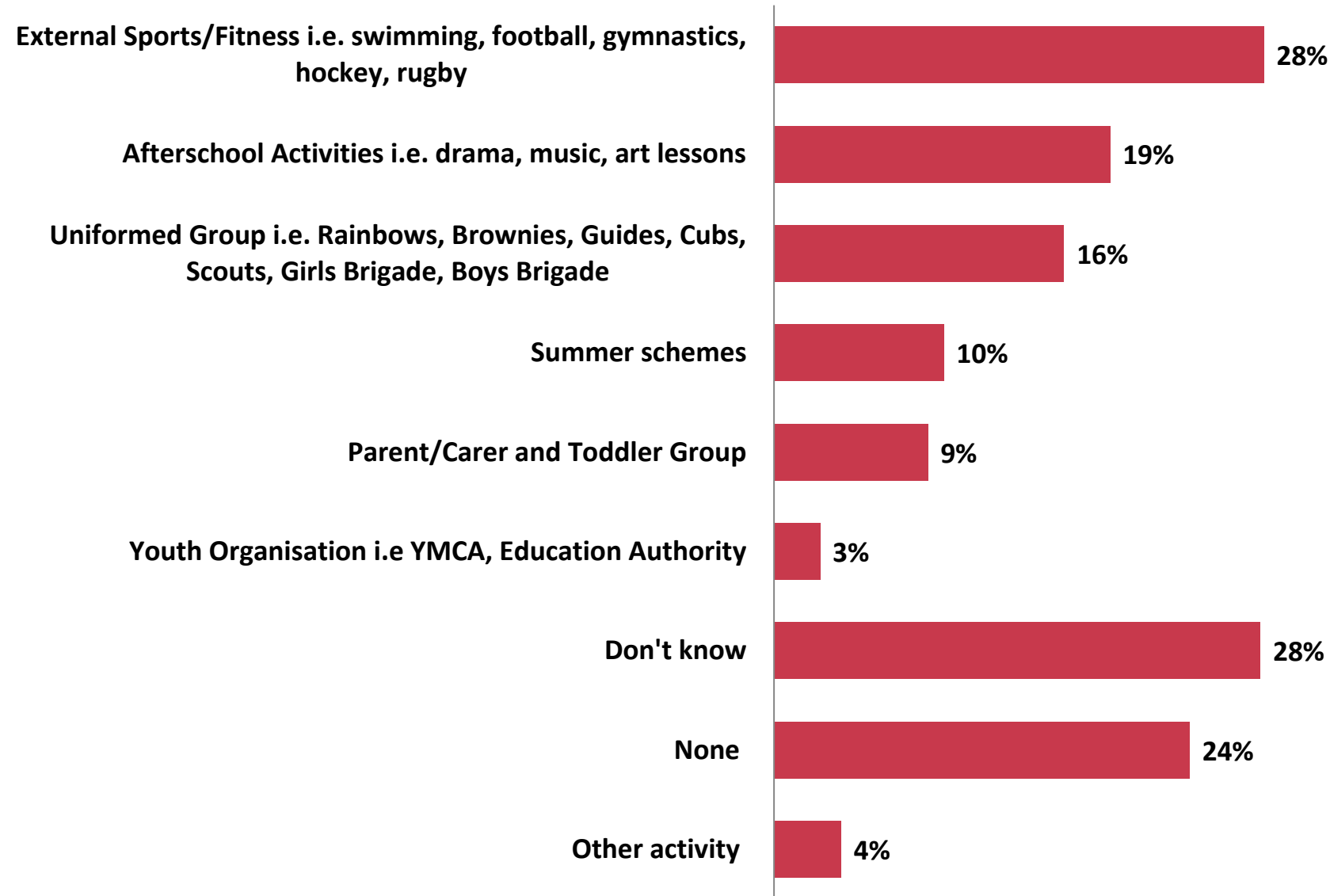
11. Which of the following areas of speech, language and communication are you concerned about when considering the children in you setting?



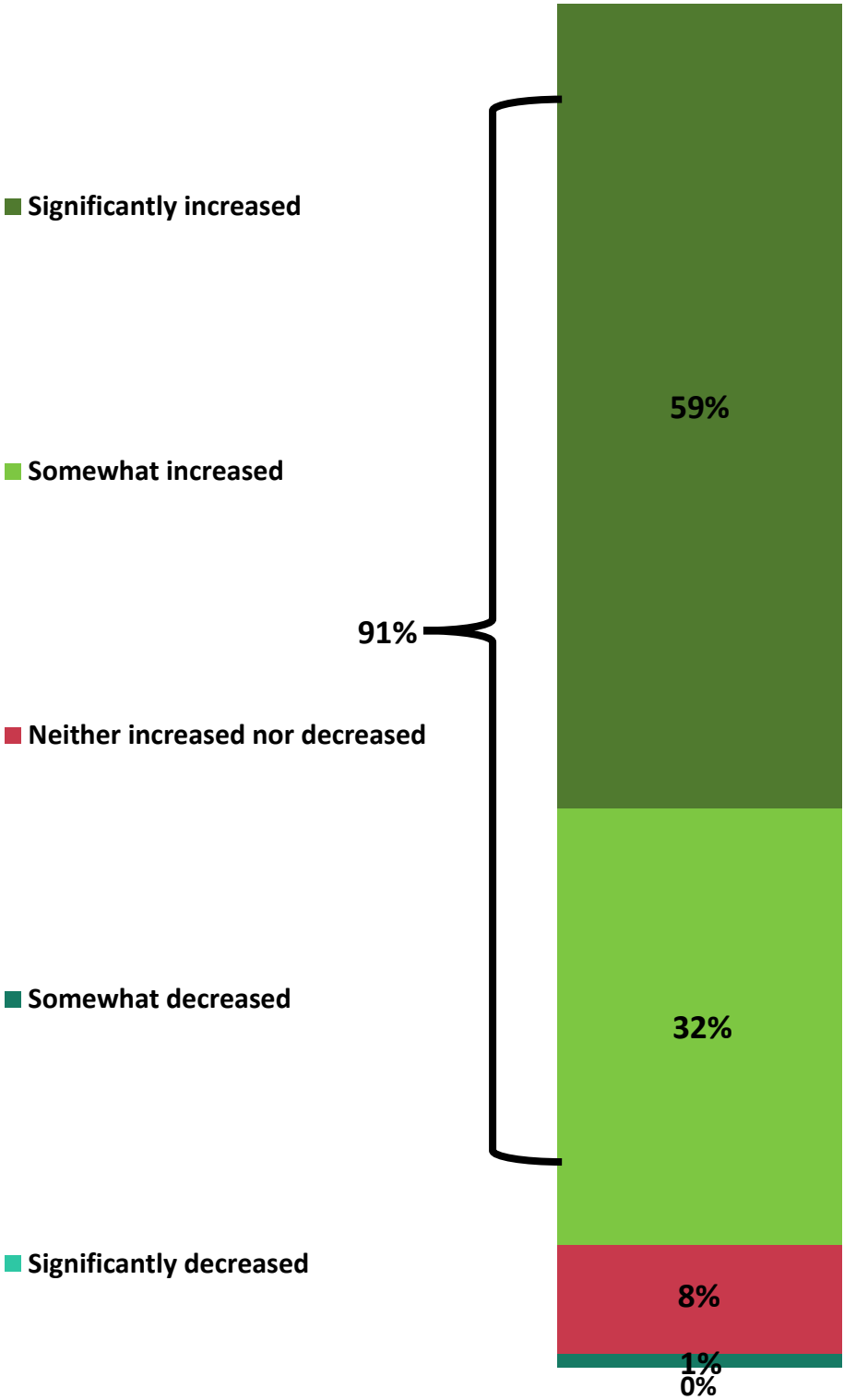
	Age group		
	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 426	211	186	29
Attention and Listening Skills	91%	89%	76%
Speech sounds (unclear speech)	88%	92%	62%
Social Interaction (ability to mix with others)	69%	66%	79%
Spoken Language (using words)	59%	50%	48%
Understanding what others say	60%	46%	38%
Play Skills	57%	35%	14%
Non-Speaking	60%	27%	28%
Selective Mutism	21%	19%	38%
Stammering	17%	17%	21%
Other	2%	3%	7%

base: all respondents with concerns about child(ren)'s SLC development N=426

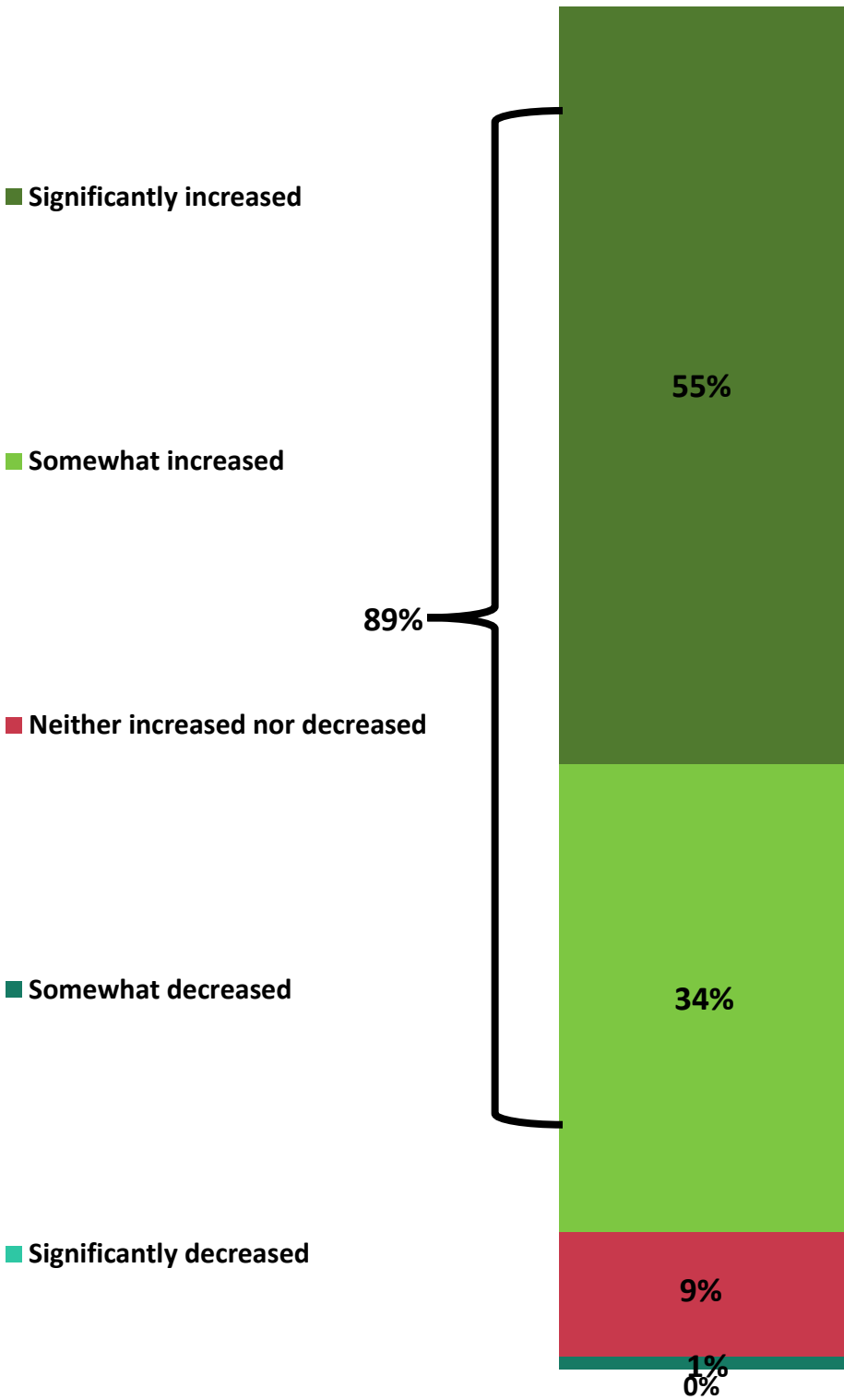
12. To the best of your knowledge do the children in your care/class with speech, language and communication needs participate in any of the following after school activities/ groups?



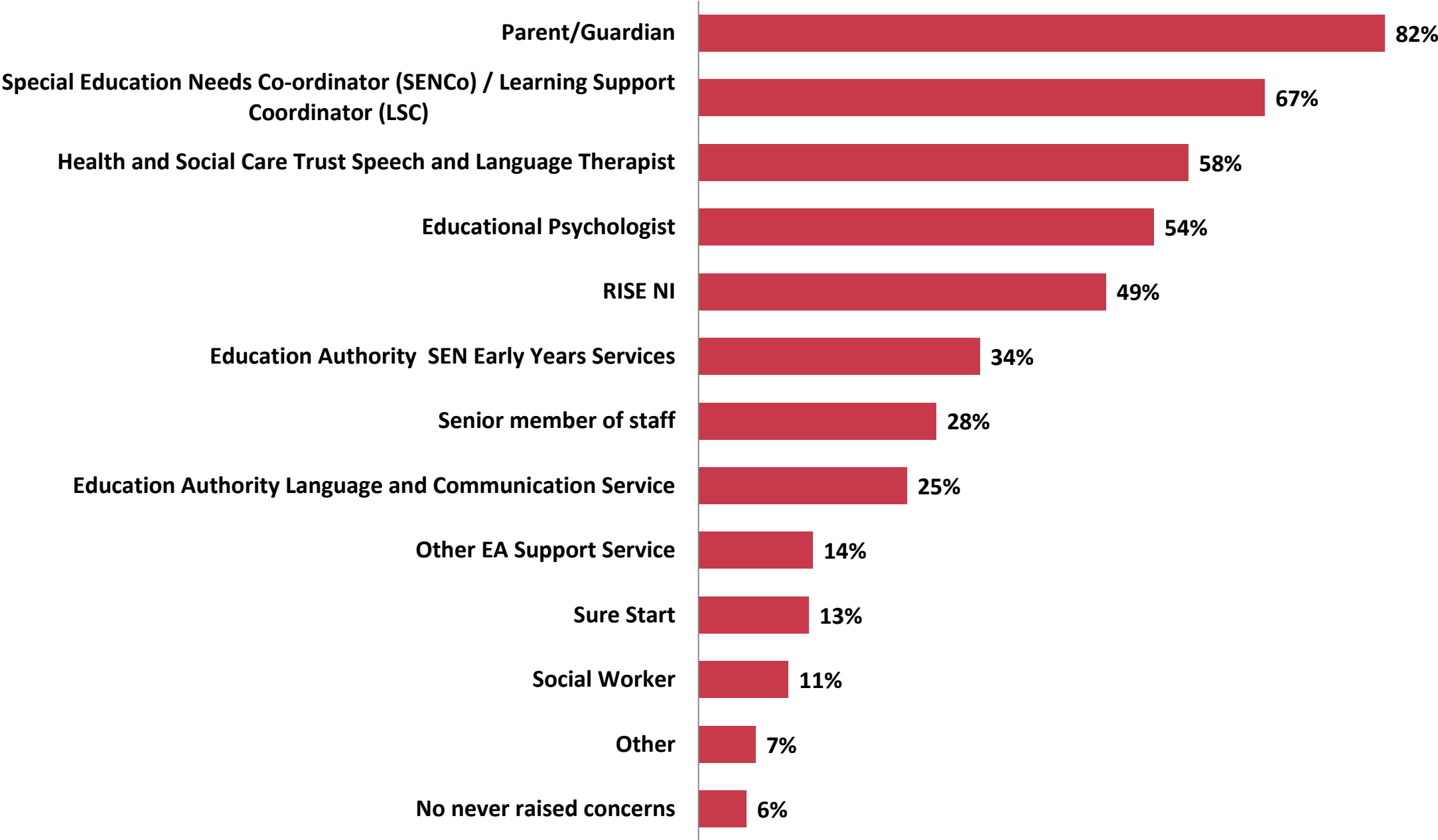
13. Have the number of children presenting with speech, language and communication needs increased, stayed the same or decreased in the past 5 years?



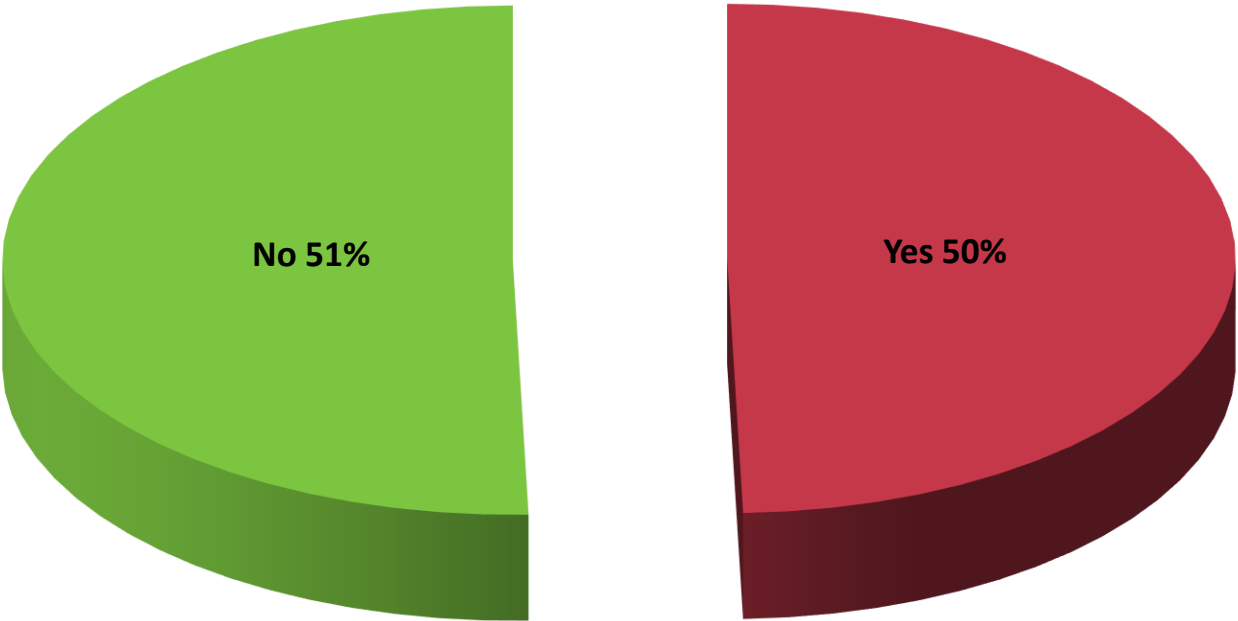
14. Has the overall complexity of children’s speech, language and communication needs increased, stayed the same or decreased over the past 5 years?



15. Which of the following professionals/people have you linked with regarding children with speech, language and communication needs in your setting in the past 5 years?



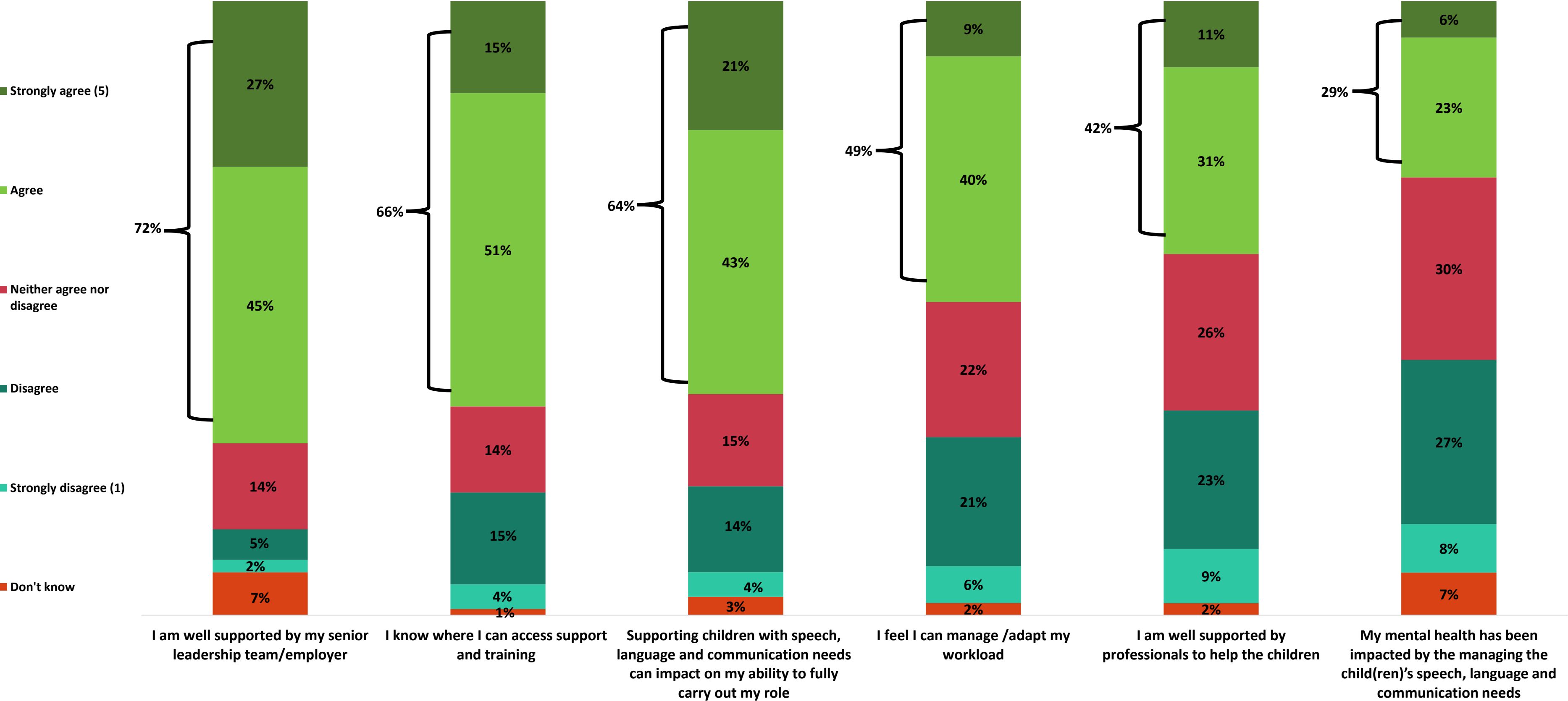
16. Have you ever accessed or looked into private speech and language therapy for your setting?



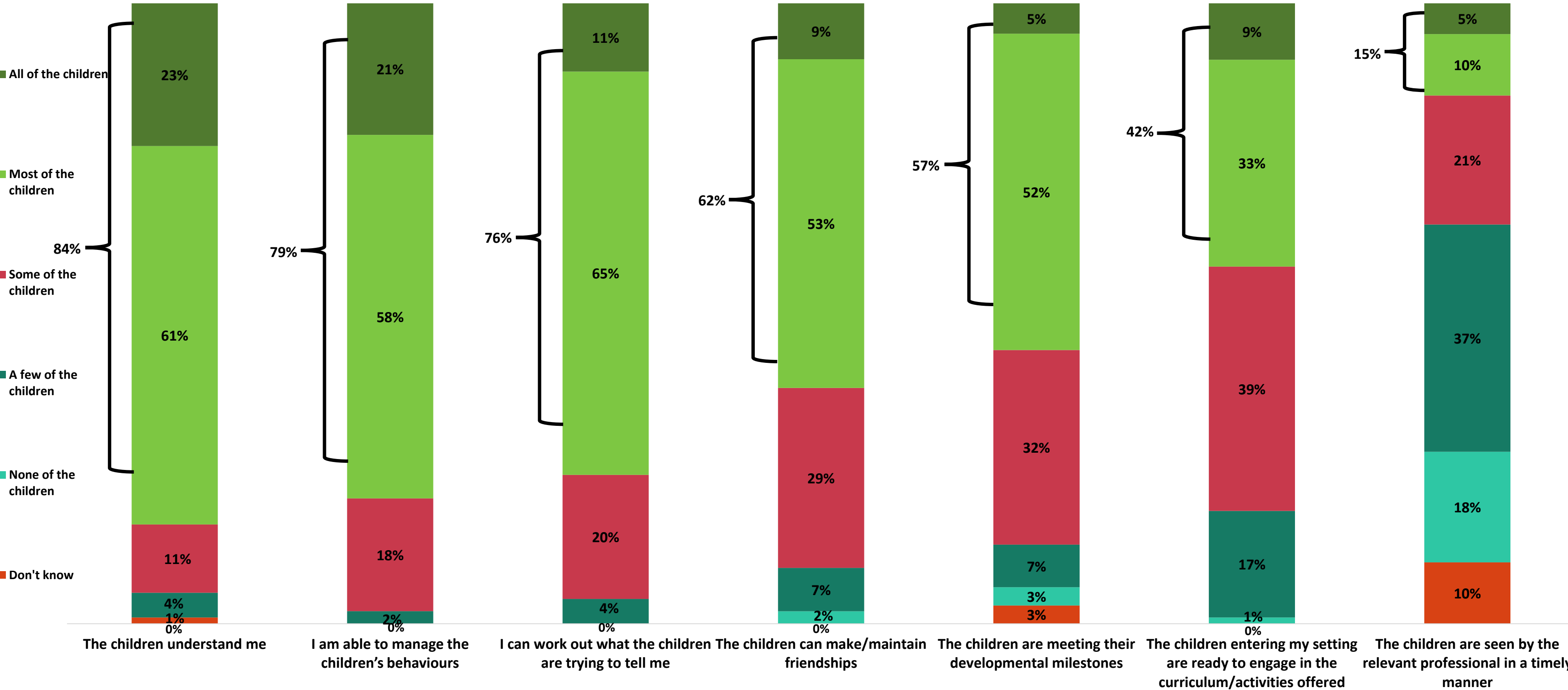
	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 487	426	50	211	186	29
Yes	54%	18%	55%	56%	41%
No	46%	82%	46%	44%	59%

The Child(ren)'s Daily Life

18a. How much do you agree or disagree regarding the overall speech, language and communication needs of the children in your setting?

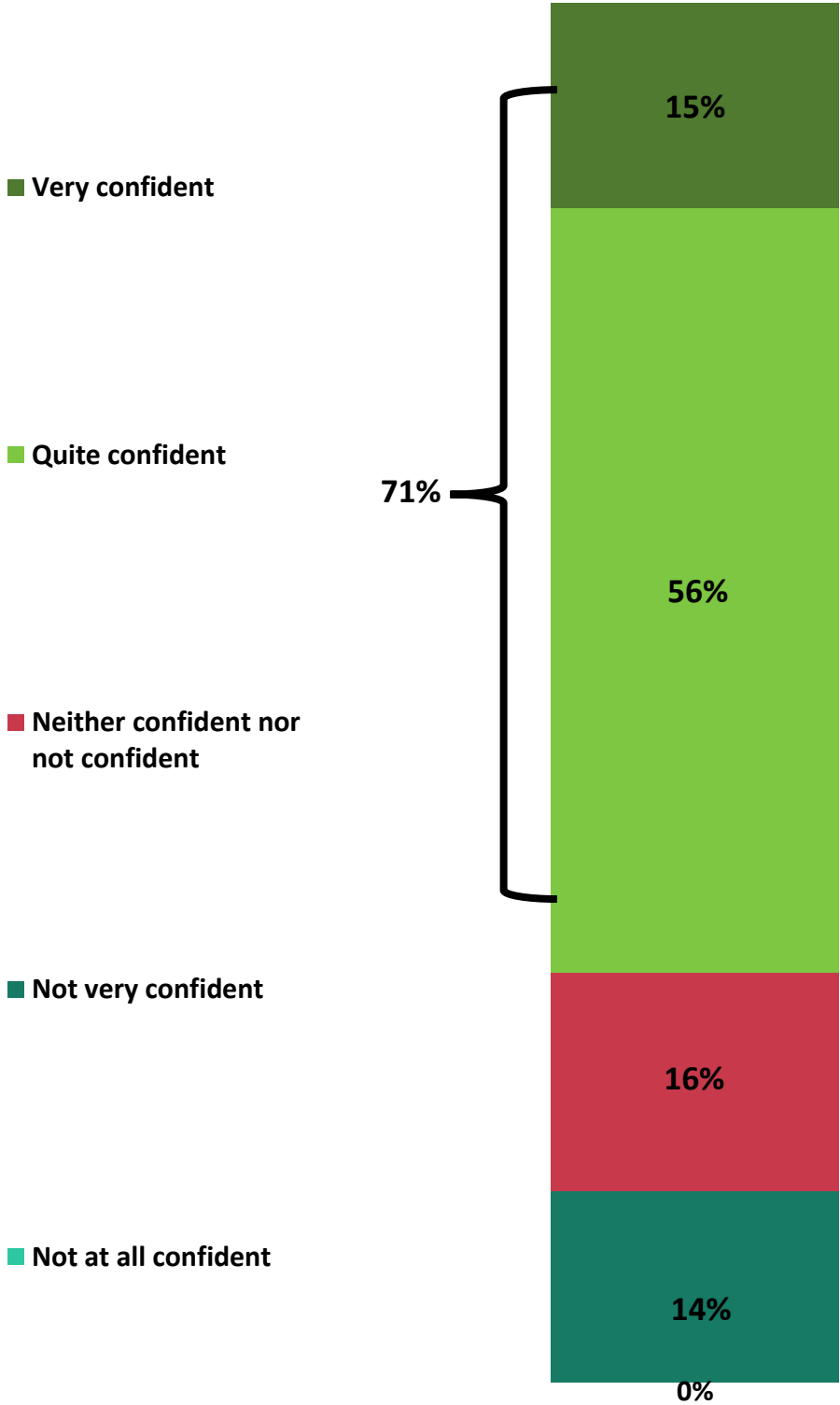


18b. How many children in your setting do each of the following statements apply to?



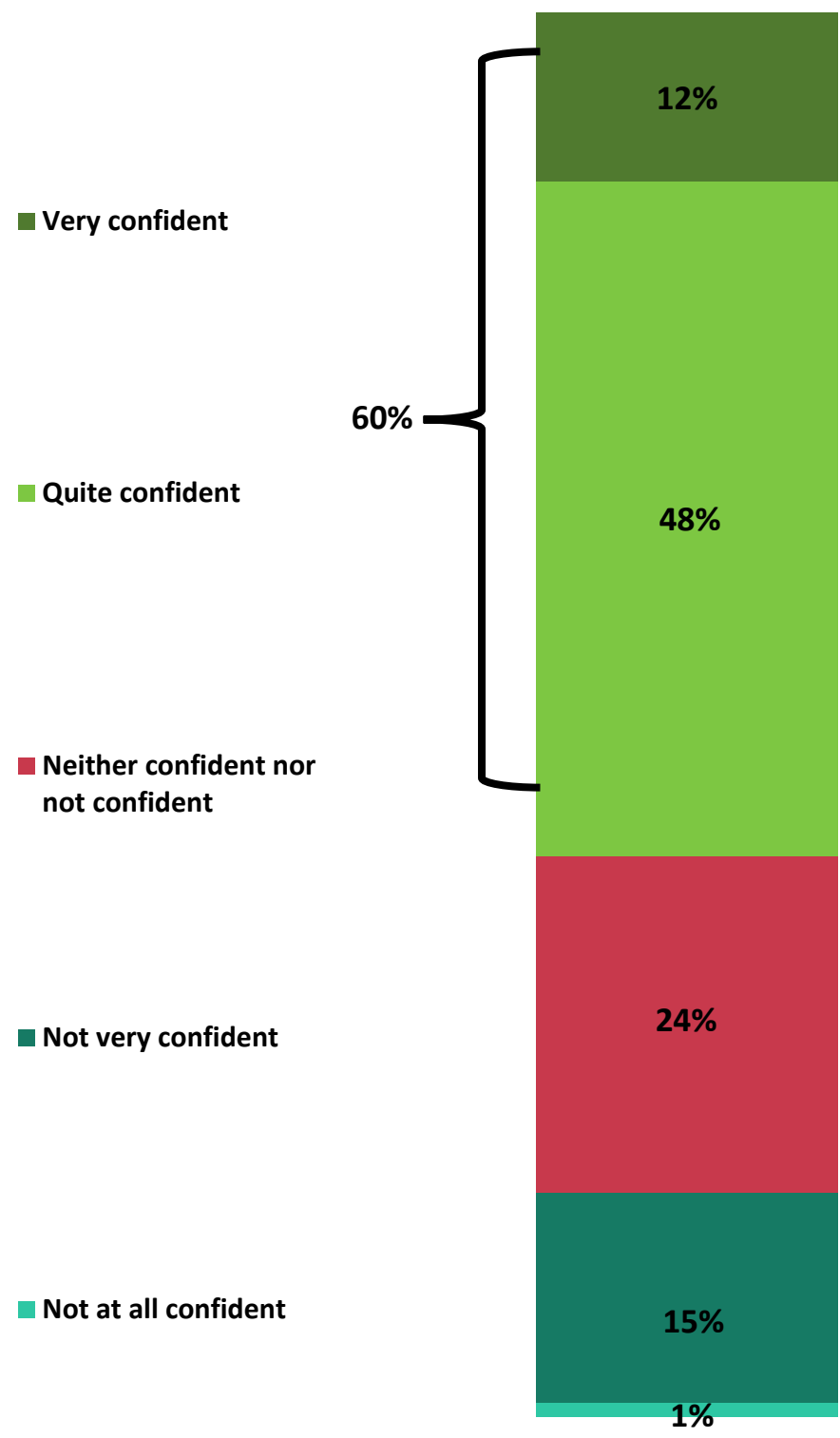
Your Role

19. How confident or not are you in understanding the specific speech, language and communication needs of the children?



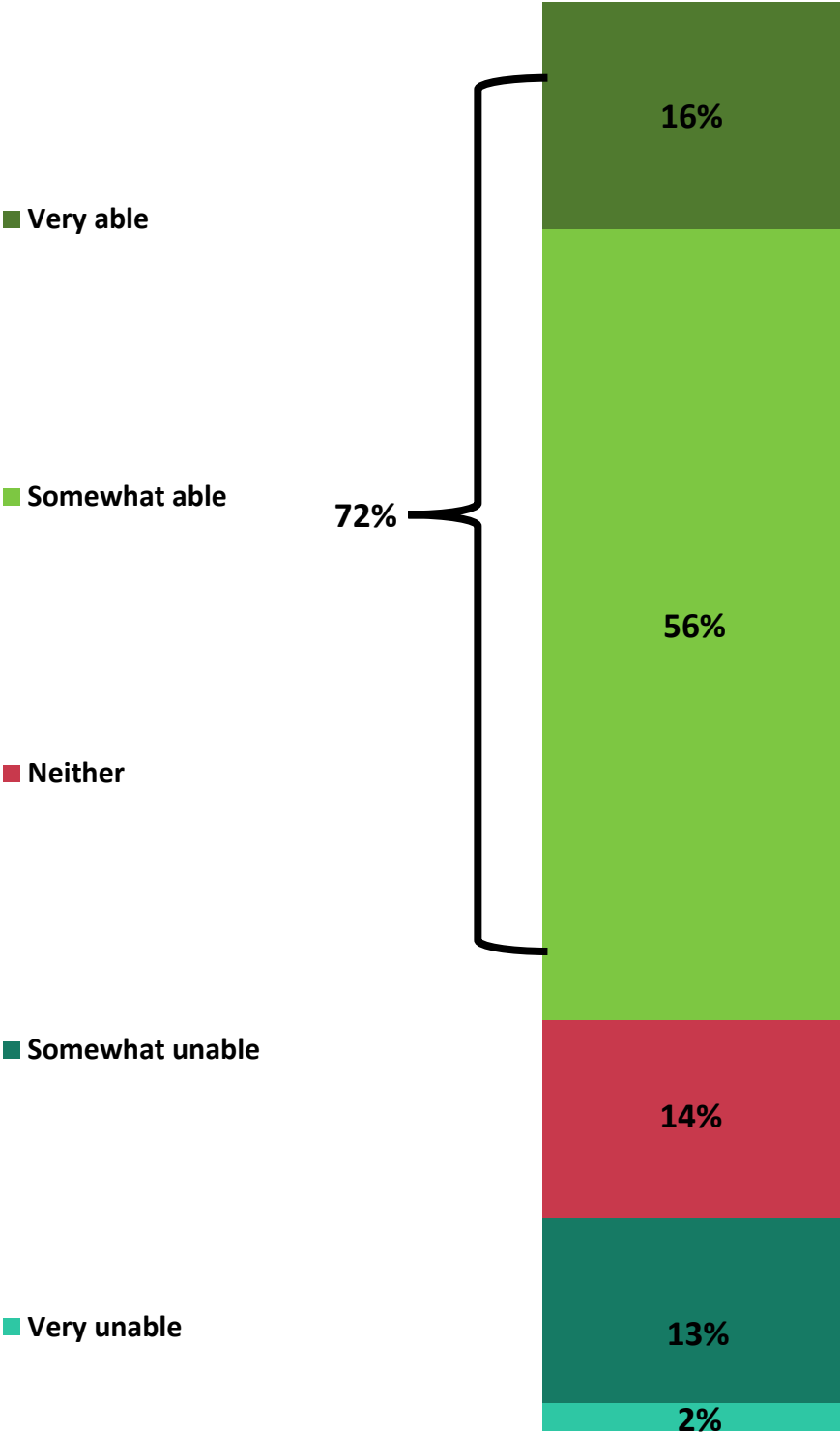
	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
N = 487	426	50
Very confident	13%	34%
Fairly confident	56%	52%
Neither	16%	8%
Not very confident	15%	6%
Not at all confident	1%	0%

20. How confident or not are you in supporting the specific speech, language and communication development of all children?



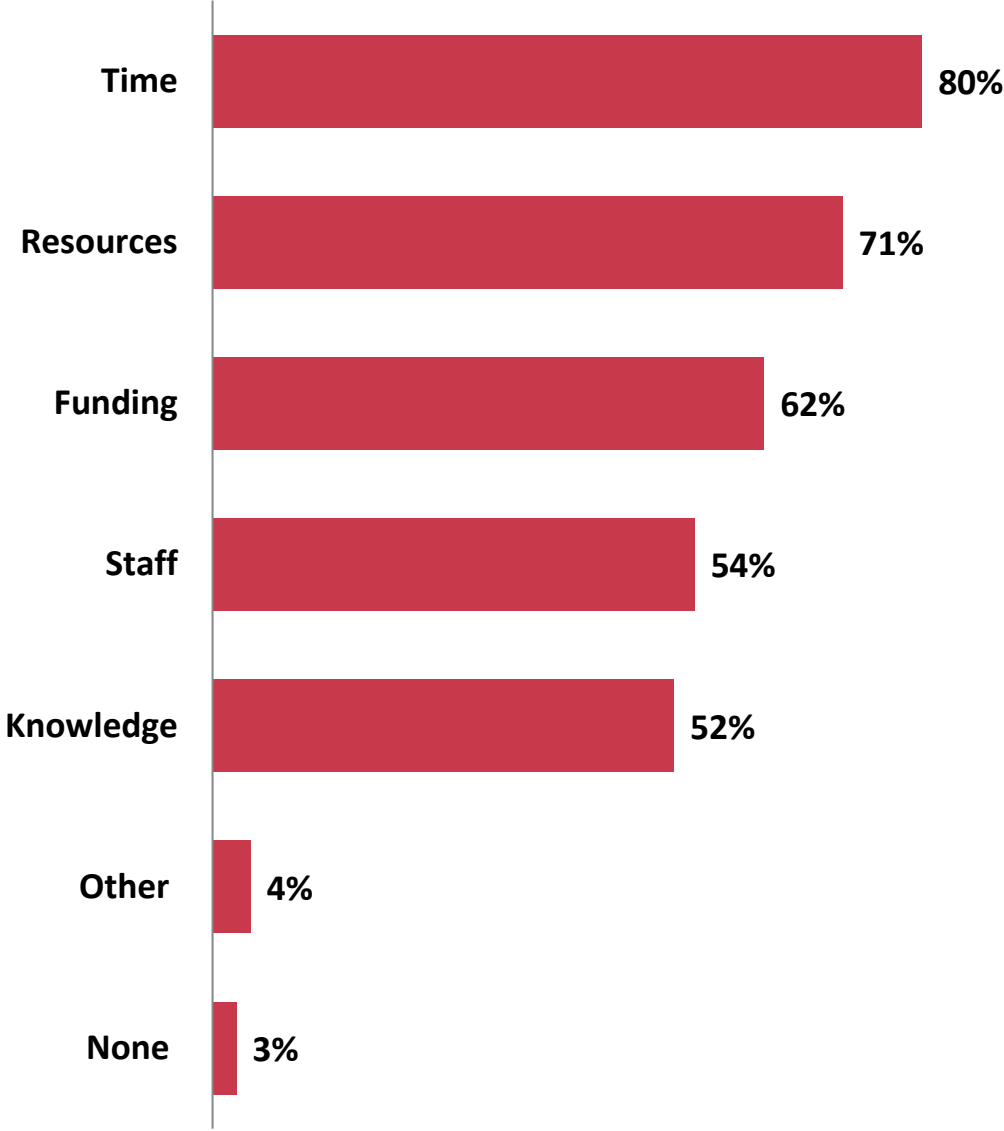
	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
N = 487	426	50
Very confident	10%	34%
Fairly confident	48%	48%
Neither	25%	4%
Not very confident	16%	14%
Not at all confident	1%	0%

21a. How able or not are you in providing activities and strategies to support the children with their specific speech, language and communication needs?



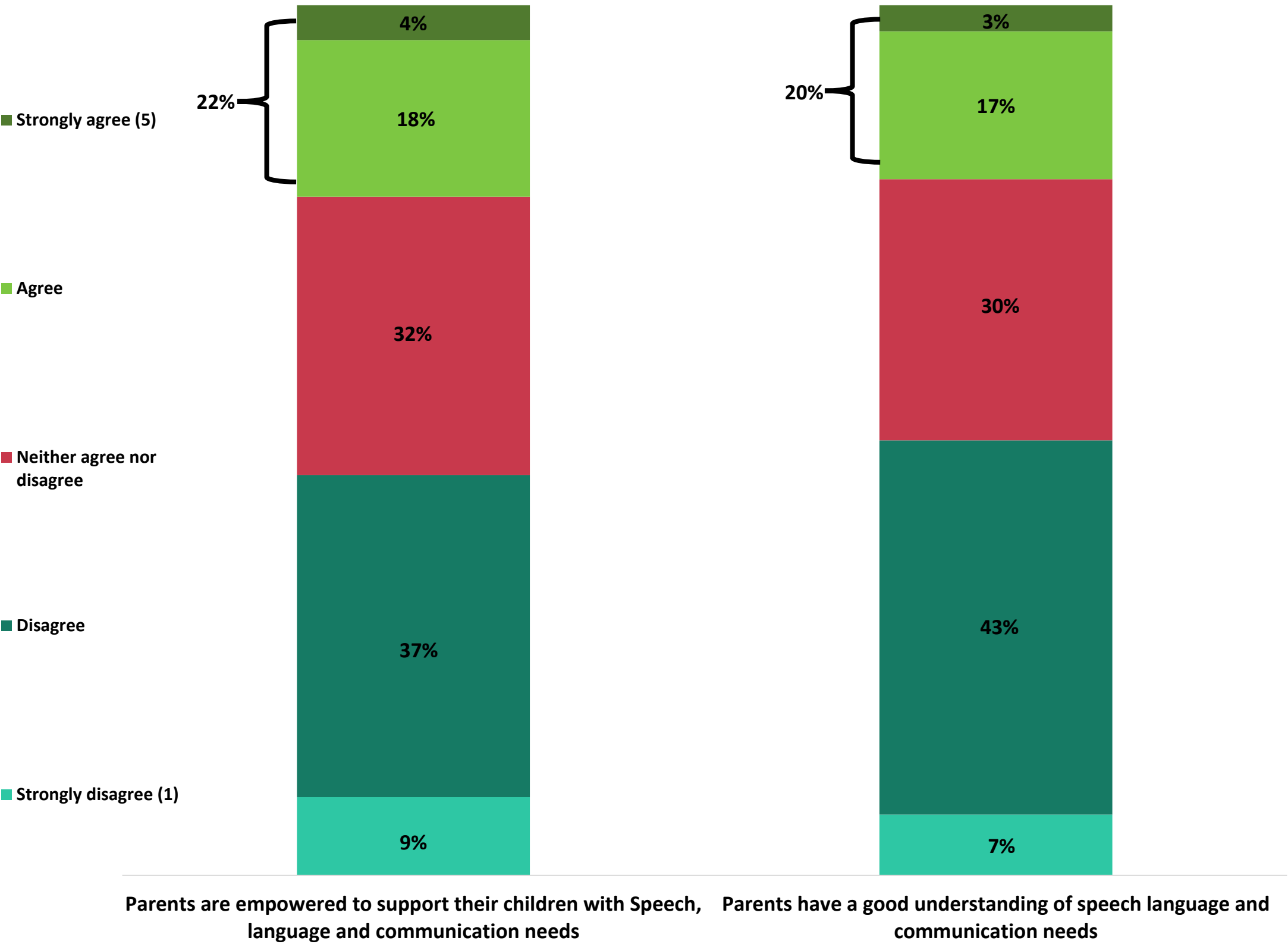
	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
N = 487	426	50
Very able	14%	30%
Somewhat able	57%	48%
Neither	13%	16%
Somewhat unable	14%	6%
Very unable	2%	0%

21b. Which, if any, of the following, impact on your ability to provide the appropriate activities or strategies



	Concerns about SLC development	
	Yes	No
N = 487	426	50
Time	82%	58%
Resources	74%	44%
Funding	66%	28%
Staff	59%	14%
Knowledge	51%	50%
Other	5%	4%
None	1%	14%

22. When thinking about parents you liaise with, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Support and Training

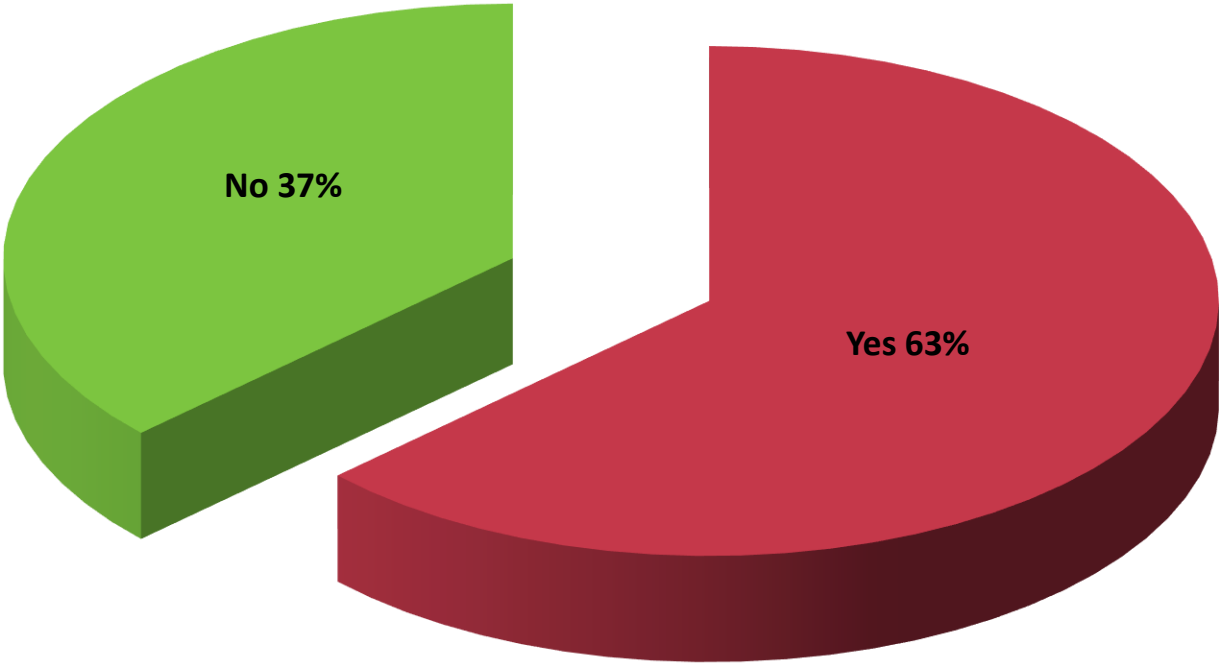
23. What specific training or information would help you support children with speech, language and communication needs in your setting?

Total N =	485
Training on supporting communication and how to support according to age	17%
SLT training / support	17%
Specific/ detailed training on speech, language acquisition & specific strategies	12%
Makaton / signing	9%
Resources - Communication advice / printables/ passport / visuals / steps to follow / photos of daily routine / toolkit	7%
SLT assigned to school/nursery for support	6%
Interacting with child/ playing games / activities to promote SLC according to ages / environmental	6%
Speech Sounds	6%
Signposting info – flow chart who to speak to/ refer to / advice to give parents /clarity of roles	6%
Speech training	5%
RISE	5%
Language training	4%
How to discuss concerns or share sensitive info with parents / how to support parents / 2-way communication between prof and parents re SLCN	4%
Developmental milestones (when to be concerned and seek help)	3%
Autism	3%
WellComm training	3%
Elklan	3%

Total N =	485
Support for pupils/parents whose main language is not English (EAL)	3%
Gestalt Language Processing	2%
Hanen	2%
Non-Speaking	2%
Special Education Needs	2%
SLTs communication with school/ professionals on what they are working on	1%
Stammering	1%
Attention and listening resource	1%
Selective mutism (situational mutism)	1%
Speech delay	1%
Help Kids Talk	1%
AAC / visuals	1%
Early Talk Boost / Talk Boost	1%
Deafness/hearing issues	1%
Don't know/not sure	4%
None	3%
Other	19%

- Other included:
- How to identify SLC issues/early intervention
 - EA specialists/support
 - Need more time/staff/funding

24. Have you engaged in any speech, language and communication training?



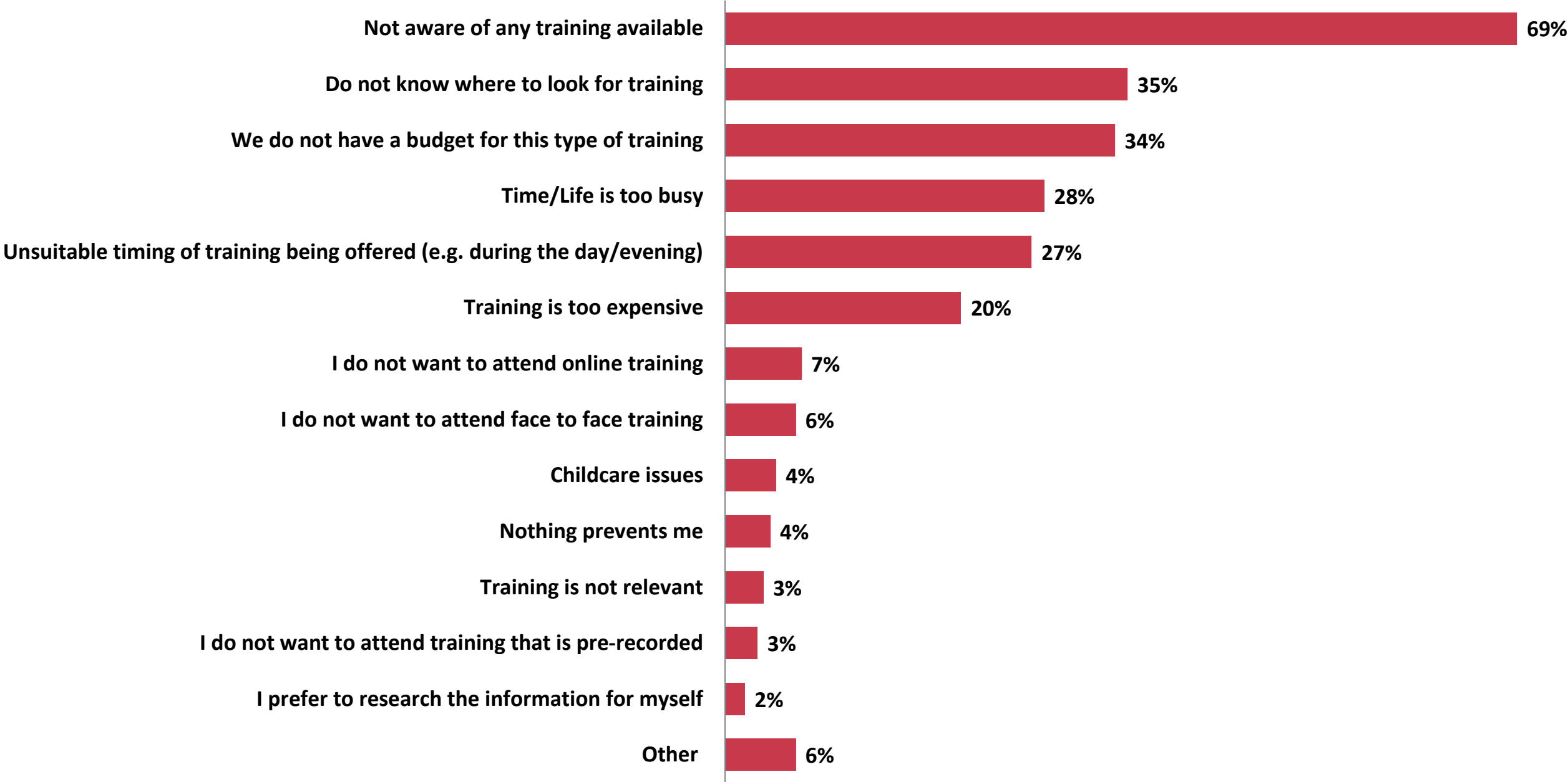
	Concerns about SLC development		Age group		
	Yes	No	Early Years	Primary	Post Primary
N = 487	426	50	211	186	29
Yes	67%	36%	82%	55%	41%
No	33%	64%	19%	45%	59%

25. Please detail training you have received

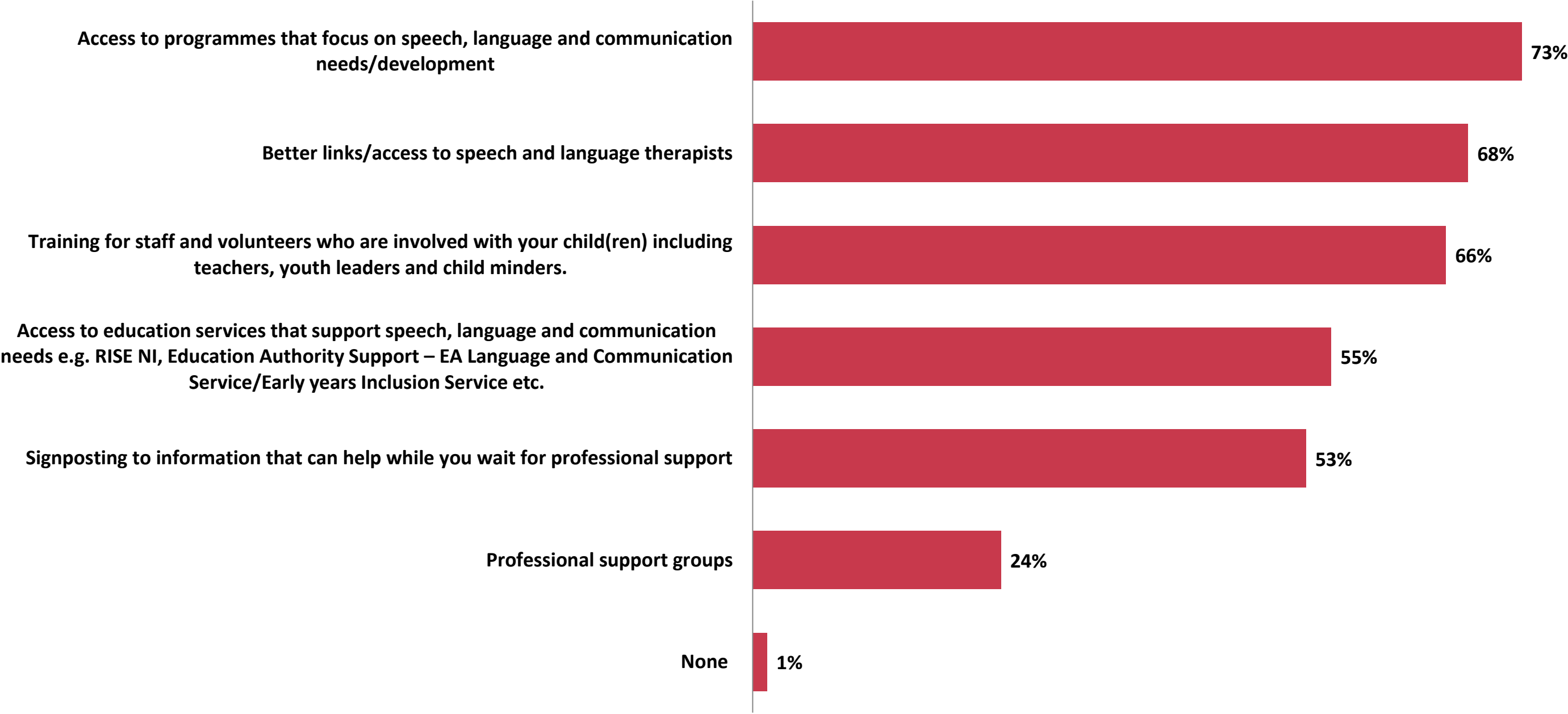
Total N =	304
RISE	27%
Makaton / signing	20%
Elklan	18%
Hanen	15%
WellComm training	11%
SLT training	10%
EA training	10%
Basic communication training/general advice	9%
Early Talk Boost / Talk Boost	8%
Help Kids Talk	8%
Early years language and communication training	6%
Receptive and expressive language	5%
Autism Training (including Attention Autism)	4%
Teacher Talk (Hanen)	4%
Use of symbols/Picture Exchange Communication System	4%
Intensive Interaction	4%
Speech and Language UK (formerly ICAN)	3%
SENEYIS	3%

Total N =	304
Gestalt Language Processing	3%
Inhouse/in school training/SENCO	3%
Child learning/development (speech and language)	2%
Developmental Language Disorder	2%
COMET	2%
Phonics	2%
Selective mutism (Situational mutism)	2%
Small Talk NI	2%
SEN	2%
BSL	2%
Solihull	1%
Pixon	1%
SLC training	1%
Autism Advisory and Intervention Service	1%
Early years inclusion service (EANI)	1%
Communication boards	1%
Let’s Talk	1%
Other	18%

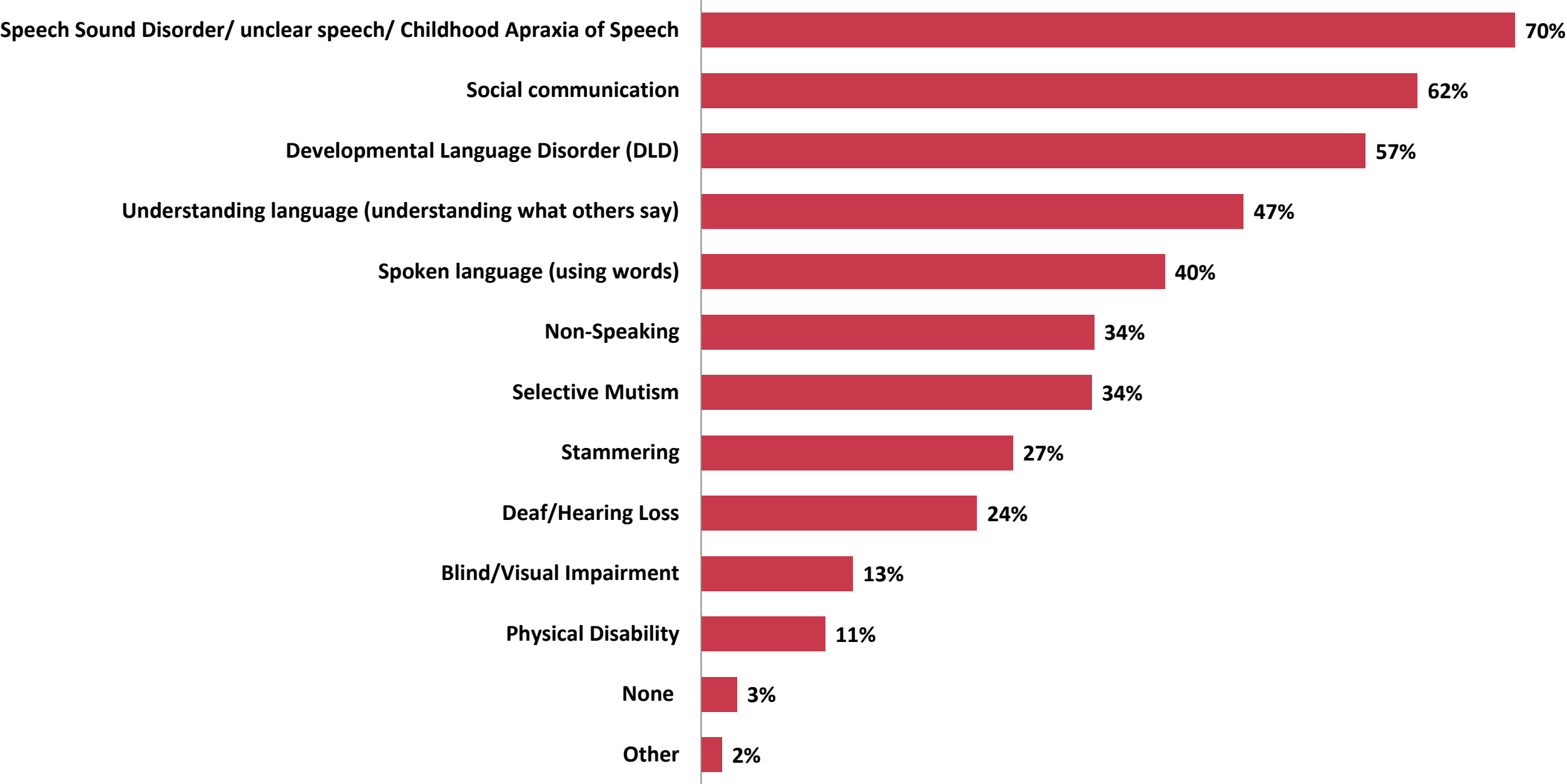
26. Which, if any, of the following prevent you from taking part in speech, language and communication needs training?



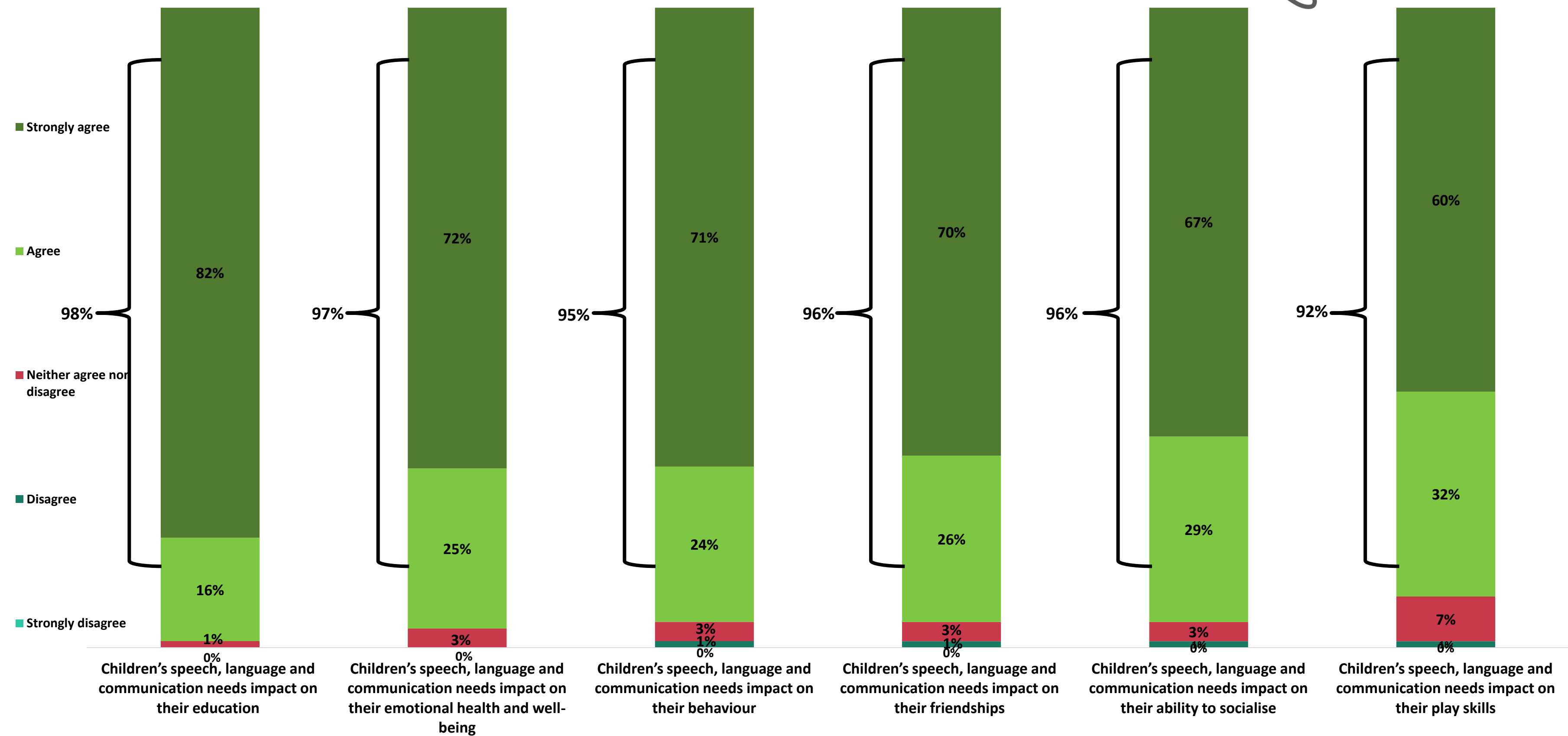
27. What would best support you to help children with speech, language and communication needs in your setting?



28. Which of the following areas of speech, language and communication would you like to have more information, tips and advice about?



29. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

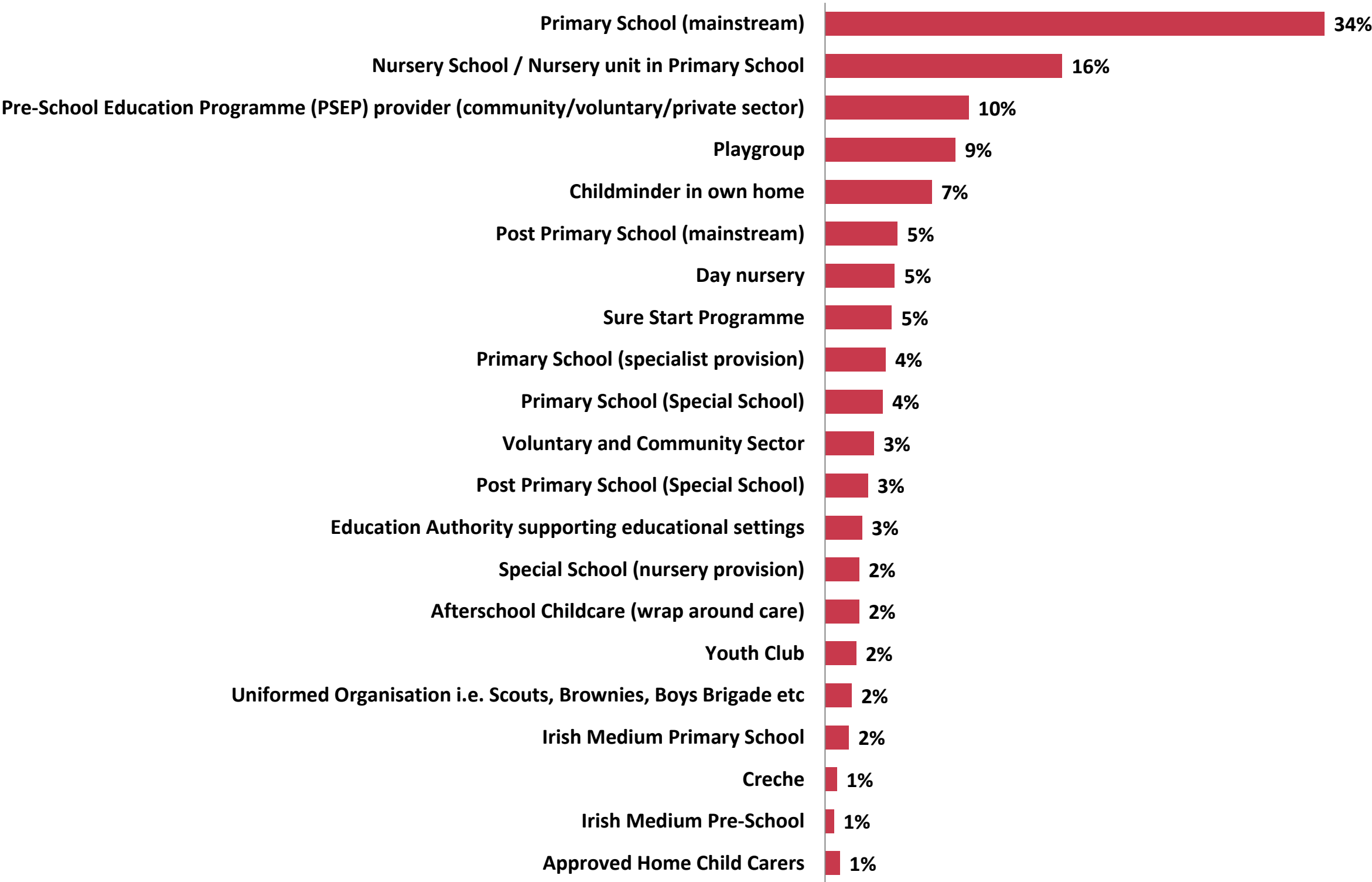




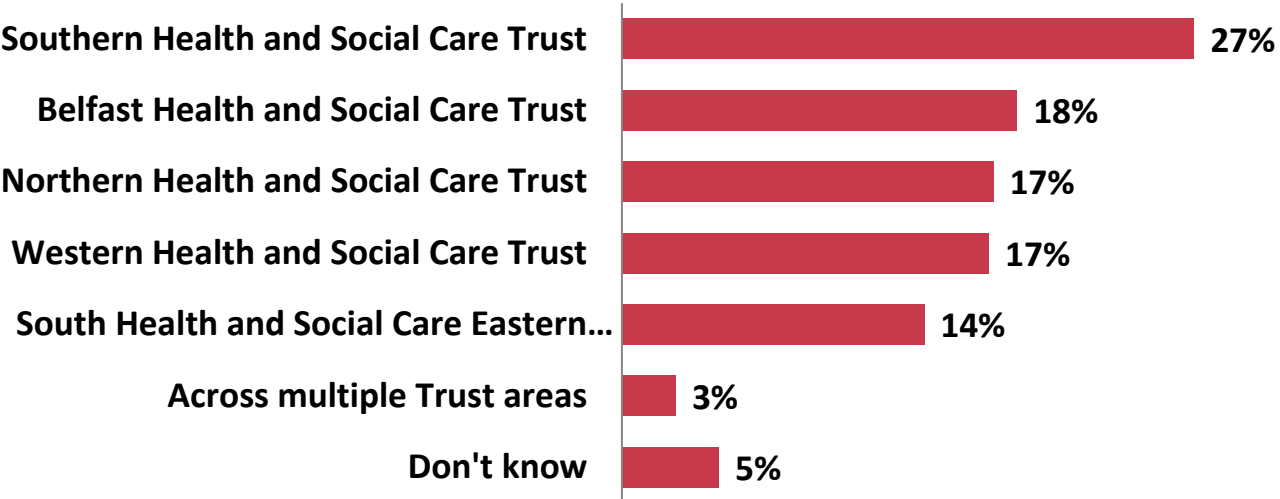
Classification

Classification

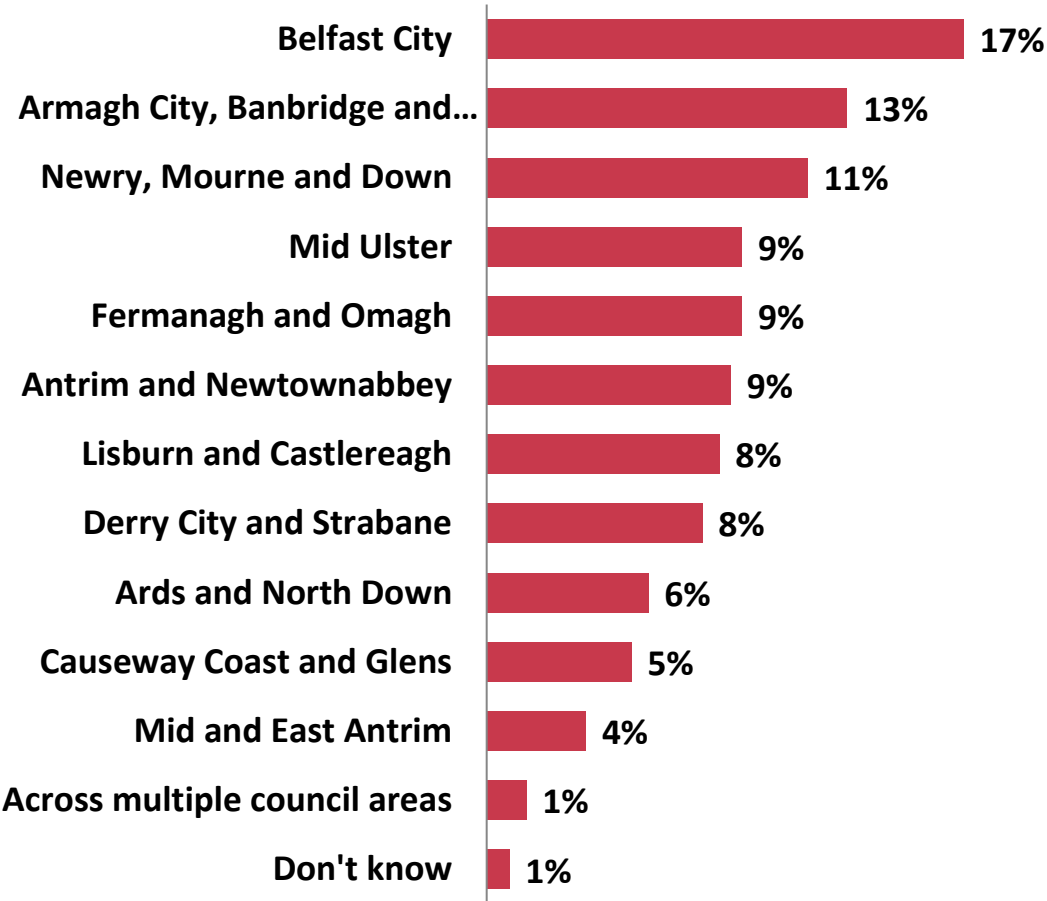
Professional Work Setting



Health and Social Care Trust Area



Council Area





Section C: Health, Social Care and Medical Professionals

N = 55

Strategic Takeaways and Ways Forward

Strategic Takeaways

Background Information



- The survey respondents primarily worked in **primary care (31%)**, followed by **secondary care (24%)** and the **voluntary/community sector (18%)**. Other sectors included **Sure Start (11%)**, education, and social care (6%). N=55 completed the survey.
- In terms of roles, the largest group was **nurses (31%)**, while **doctors and allied health professionals made up 13%**. **Support workers (11%)** and **social workers (5%)** were also represented, with **27% categorized as 'Other'**.
- Regarding experience, **29% had over 20 years of service** and **22% had 11-19 years**, while a significant **24% had 1-5 years** and another **24% had 6-10 years**. Only **2% were in their first year**.
- For **Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) needs**, the majority of affected individuals were **aged 3-4 years (84%)**, followed by **1-2 years (53%)**, and **9% under a year**.

Speech, Language and Communication Development



- Respondents identified **speech sounds (89%)** and **understanding words (87%)** as the most critical aspects of a child's Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) development, followed by **understanding sentences (75%)**, **having conversations (73%)**, and **ability to mix with others (66%)**.
- Key concerns in children's SLC development within their settings included **speech sound difficulties (78%)**, **non-speaking (75%)**, **attention and listening skills (73%)**, **social interaction challenges (69%)**, and **spoken language difficulties (62%)**.
- Furthermore, in the past 5 years
 - 76% suggested the number of children with SLC needs increased
 - 73% suggested the severity of those needs increased
 - 86% suggested the complexity of those needs increased

Strategic Takeaways

Children's Daily Life



- The majority of respondents felt confident in their interactions with children, with **66% believing that all or most children could understand them** and **64% feeling able to manage behaviour effectively**.
- Additionally, **53% felt they could interpret what children were communicating**, while **47% believed most children were meeting developmental milestones**. However, only **19% felt that all or most children were seen by a professional in a timely manner**.
- The biggest concern highlighted was **the lack of timely professional support**, with **37% stating that few or none of the children were seen in a timely manner**. Additionally, **11% expressed concern that only a few children were meeting their developmental milestones**.



Support and Training

- Only **51% of respondents had received any training** in Children's Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) needs.
- The most common training areas were **General speech, language and communication training (25%)**, **Hanen (25%)**, **Makaton (14%)**, **Elklan (14%)**, and **Autism training (14%)**.
- There was a strong demand for further training, with **70% believing additional training would be beneficial**.
- Key future training needs included **general advice (31%)**, **how to support parents (24%)**, and **understanding developmental milestones (15%)**.
- There was universal agreement that **speech, language and communication needs impact on children's health and well-being, education, behaviour, friendships, and social skills**, with **85% stating it also affects therapy skills**.

Ways Forward



Strengthen Training and Professional Development

- There is a need for increased access to **speech, language and communication specific training**, especially in light of the perceived increased numbers of children presenting with speech, language and communication needs, alongside an increase in the complexity and severity of those needs.
- Particularly **training programs** covering
 - **General speech, language and communication support strategies**
 - **Guidance on supporting parents**
 - **Developmental milestones awareness**



Improve Early Identification and Timely Access to Professional Support

- Address concerns around **delayed professional intervention**.



Enhance Support for speech, language and communication development in Educational and Social Settings

- Develop targeted interventions to **address key concerns**, including:
 - **Speech sound difficulties**
 - **Non-speaking**
 - **Attention and listening skills**
 - **Social interaction challenges**
 - **Spoken language difficulties**



Ensure Holistic Support for Children's Development

- Ensure that it is known that **speech, language and communication needs impacts not only health and well-being, but also education, behaviour, friendships, social and play skills.**

Key Insights from the Research

N=55 completed the survey.

Settings



- Just under a third (31%) of respondents worked in primary care.
- 24% in secondary care.
- 18% in the Voluntary and Community sector.
- 11% worked in Sure Start.
- 6% worked in education, other social care or ‘other’.

Position



- 31% were nurses
- 13% Doctors or Allied Health Professionals
- 11% Support Workers
- 5% Social Workers
- 27% ‘Other’

Length of Service

Length of service	%
Under a year	2%
1-5 years	24%
6-10 years	24%
11-19 years	22%
20+ years	29%

Many had long service experience.

Ages of those presenting with SLC Needs


Age of child	%
Under a year	9%
1-2 years	53%
3-4 years	84%

Speech, Language and Communication Development

The key things considered to be part of a child's SLC development were

	%
Speech sounds	89%
Understanding words	87%
Understanding sentences	75%
Having conversations	73%
Ability to mix with others	66%

The key areas of concern with children in their setting were



	%
Speech sounds	78%
Non-speaking	75%
Attention and listening skills	73%
Social interaction	69%
Spoken language	62%

Children's' Daily Life



Positively

- 66% believed all or most of the children could understand them.
- 64% believed they were able to manage all or most of the children's behaviour.
- 53% suggested they could work out what all or most of the children were telling them.
- 47% believed that most of the children were meeting their developmental milestones.
- 19% suggested that all or most of the children were seen by a professional in a timely manner.

The biggest area of concern



- 37% believed that only a few or none of the children were seen by a professional in a timely manner.
- 11% also suggested that only a few of the children were meeting their developmental milestones.

Furthermore, in the past 5 years

- 76% suggested the number of children with SLC needs increased
- 73% suggested the severity of those needs increased
- 86% suggested the complexity of those needs increased

Support and Training

Only half (51%) had received any training in children's speech, language and communication needs.

Key areas of specific training already received focused on

	%
General SLC training	25%
Hanen	25%
Makaton	14%
Elklan	14%
Autism training	14%

70% believed training in children's speech, language and communication needs would be beneficial.

Key areas of future training to support children with speech, language and communication needs were suggested as

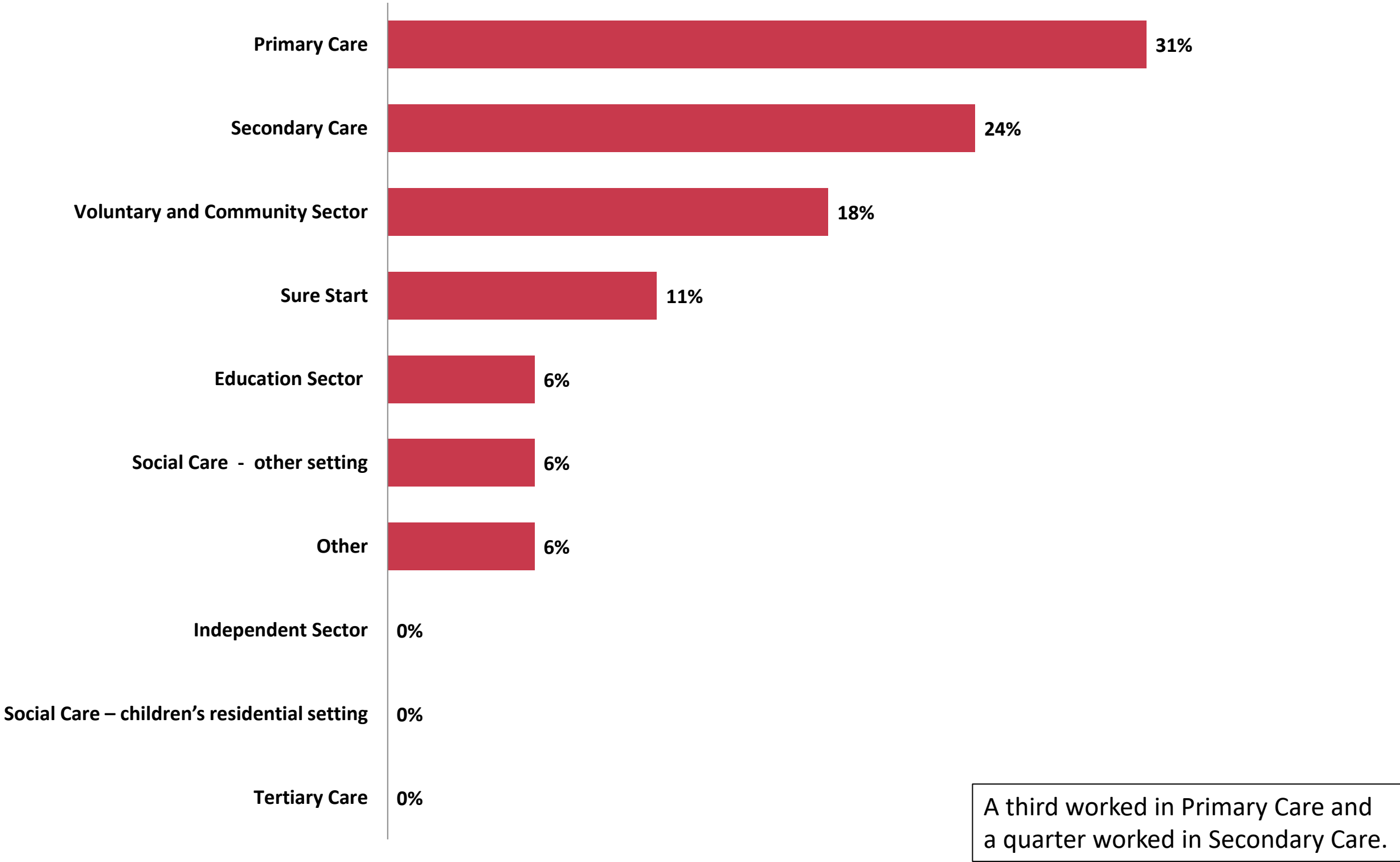
	%
General advice/training	31%
How to support parents	24%
Milestones	15%



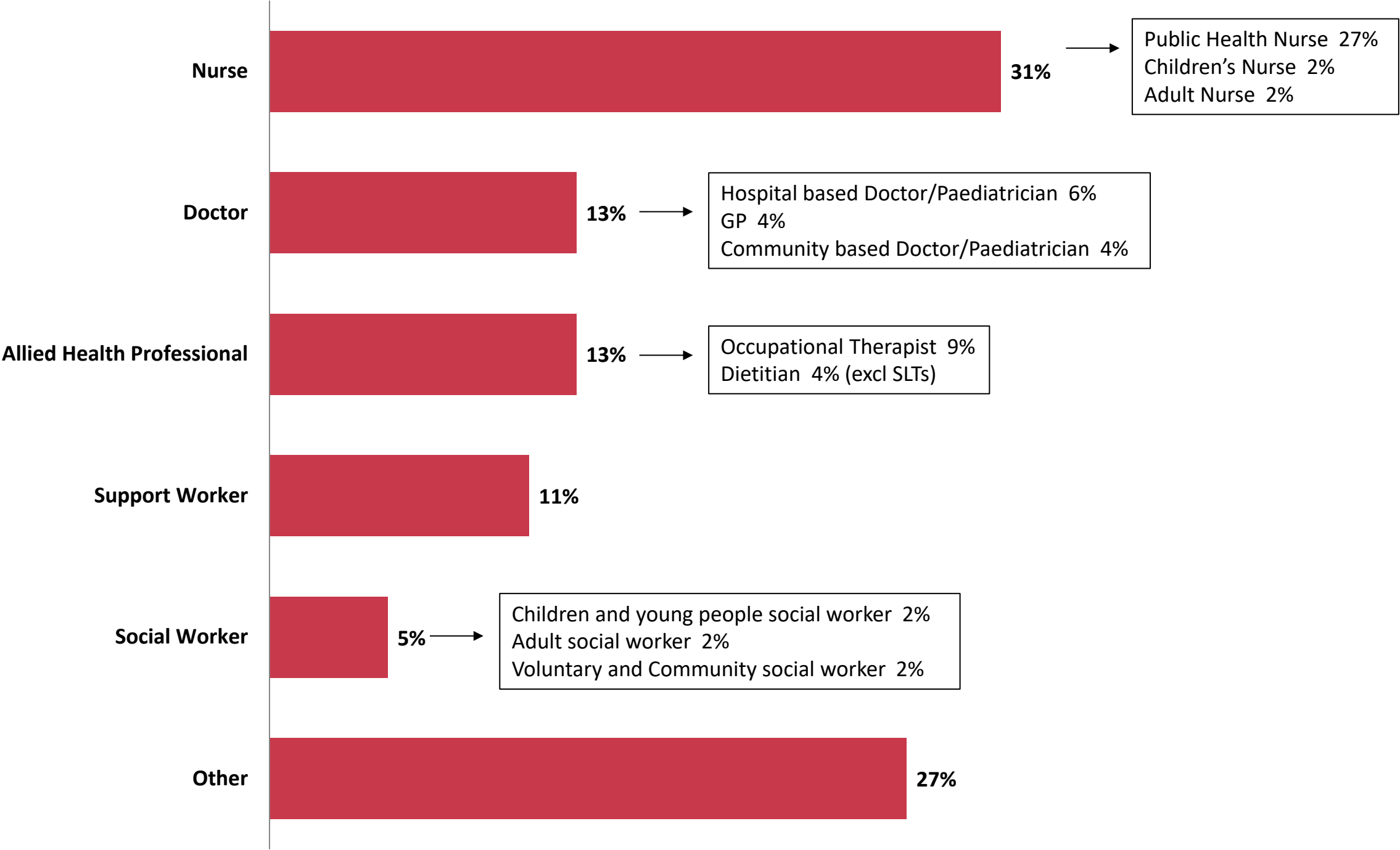
There was universal agreement that children's speech, language and communication needs impacted on their health and well-being, education, behaviour, friendships, and their ability to socialise. 85% suggested it also acted on their play skills.

Full Charted Insights

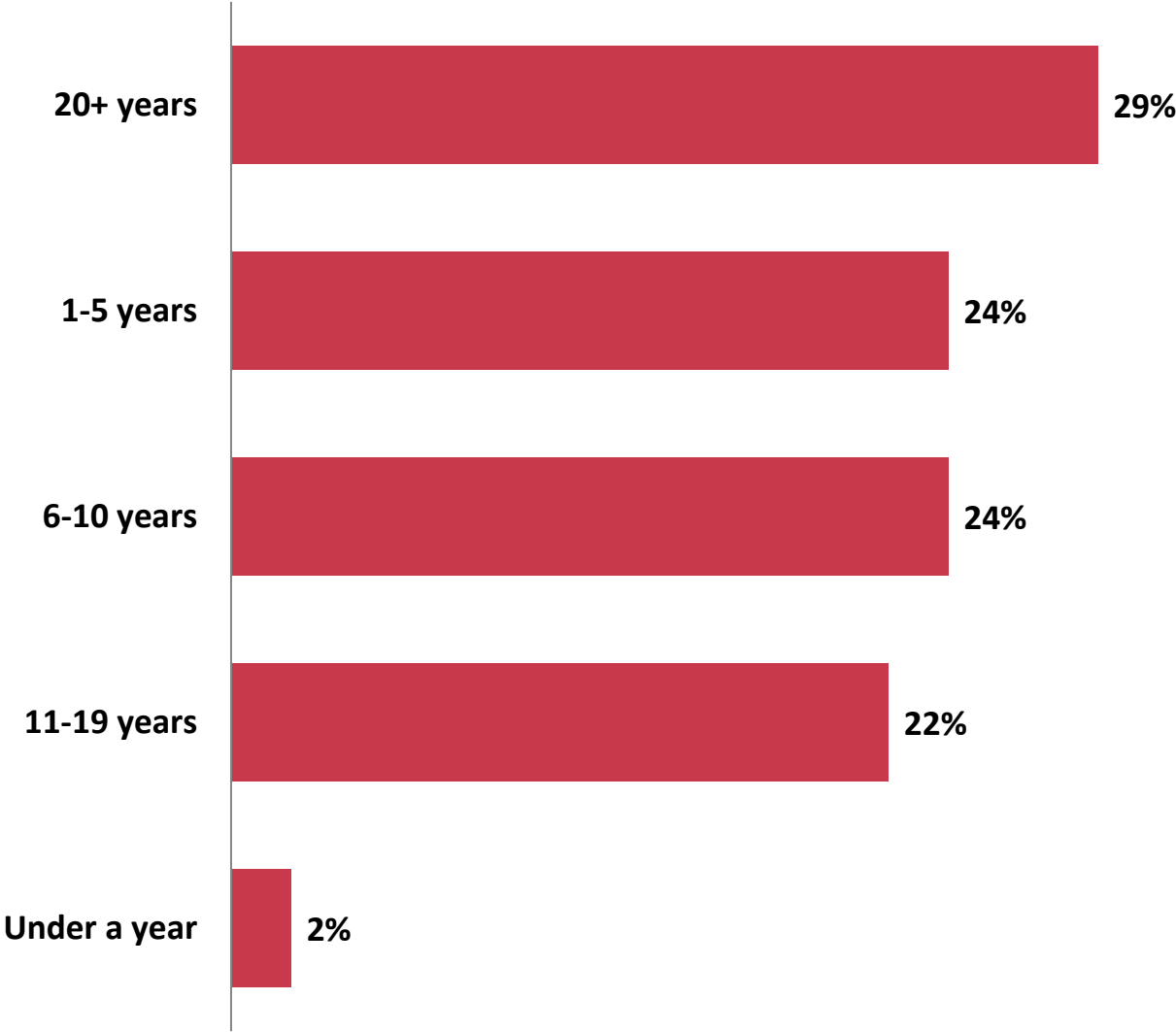
3. In which of the following settings do you work?



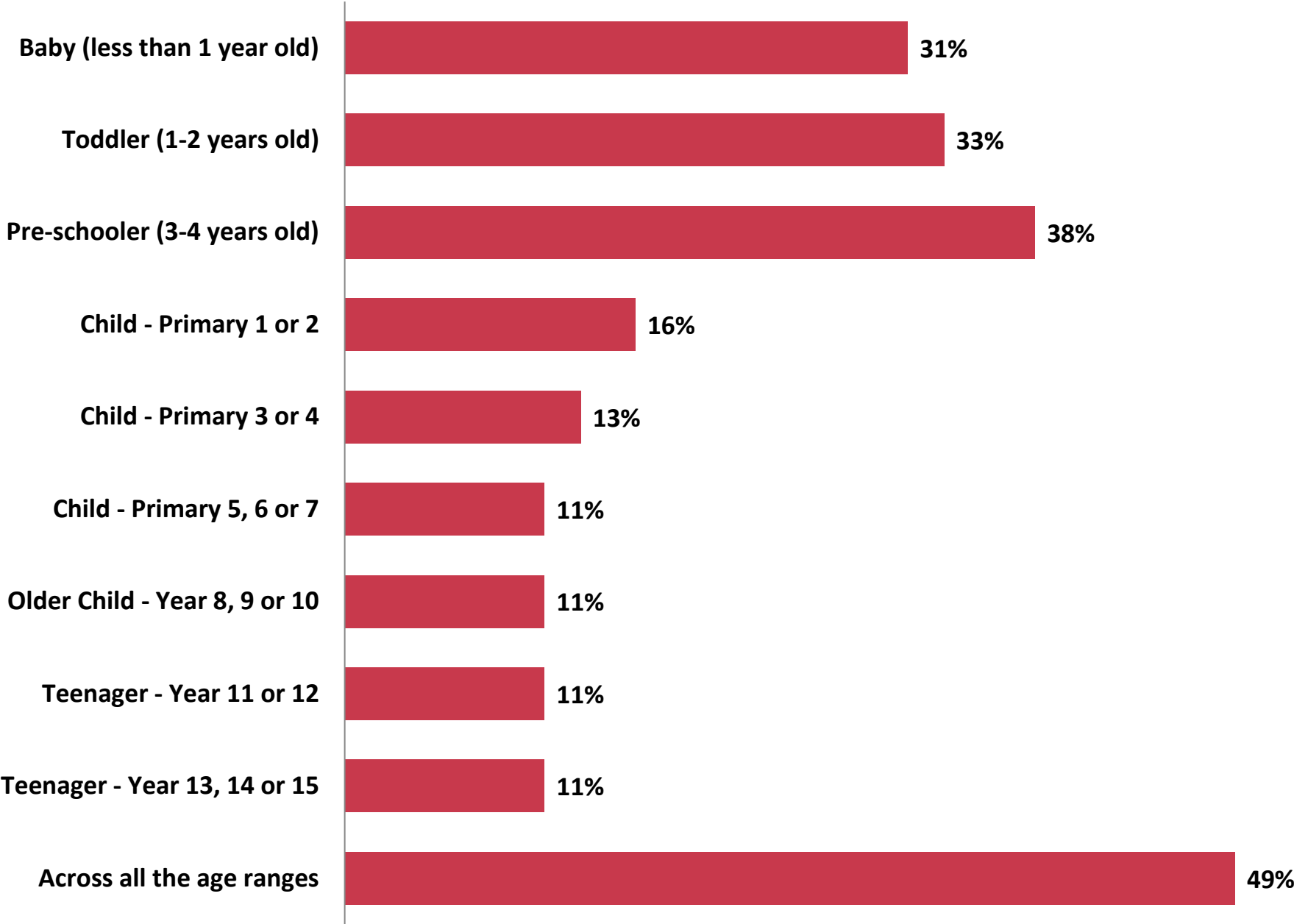
4. Which of the following best describes your position?



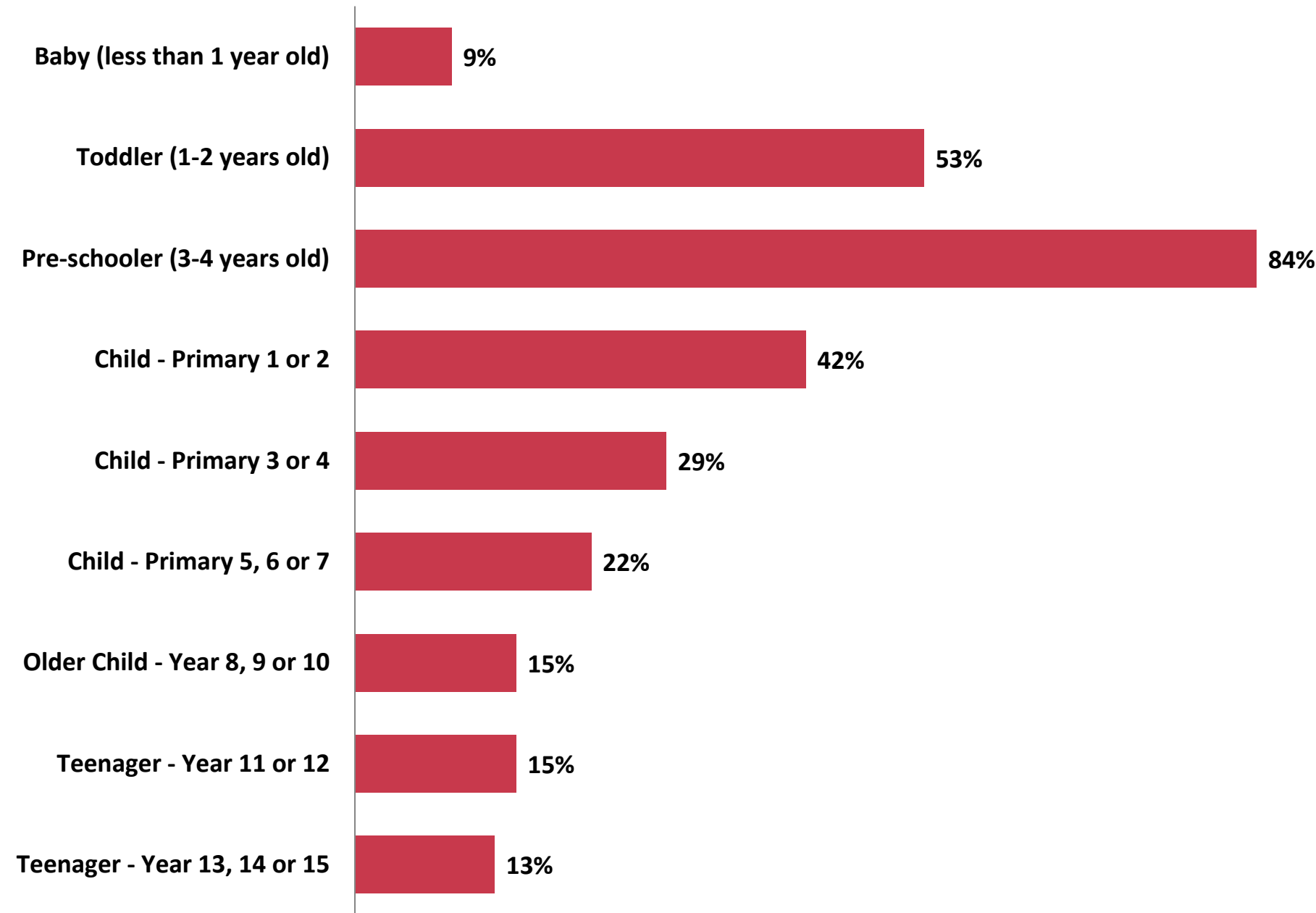
5. How long have you worked in this sector?



6a. What is the age range of the children who are in your setting?

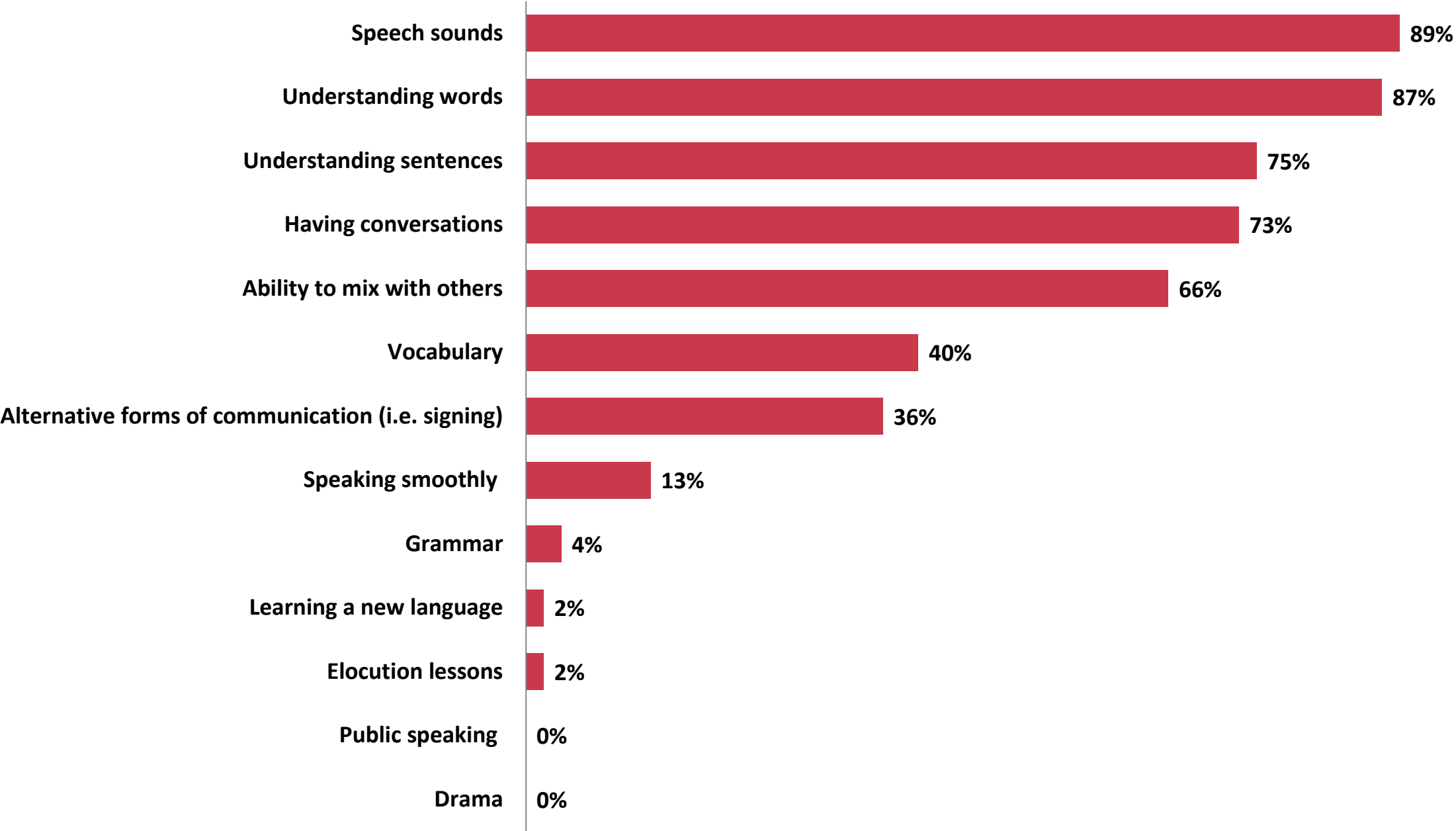


6b. What is the age ranges are the majority of the children who present with speech, language and communication needs in your setting?

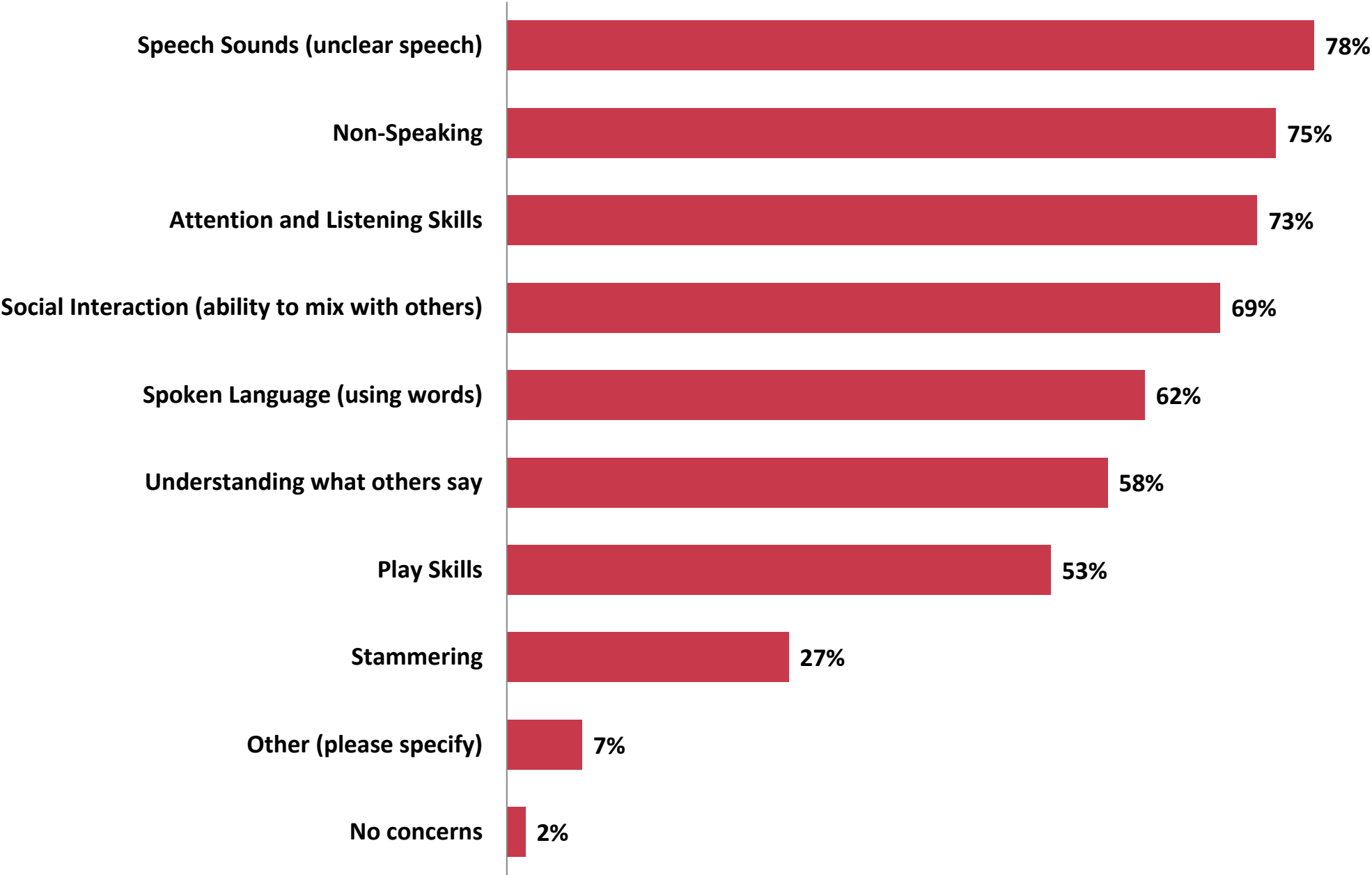


Speech, Language and Communication Development

7. Please select the top 5 things you would consider to be part of a child’s speech, language and communication development?

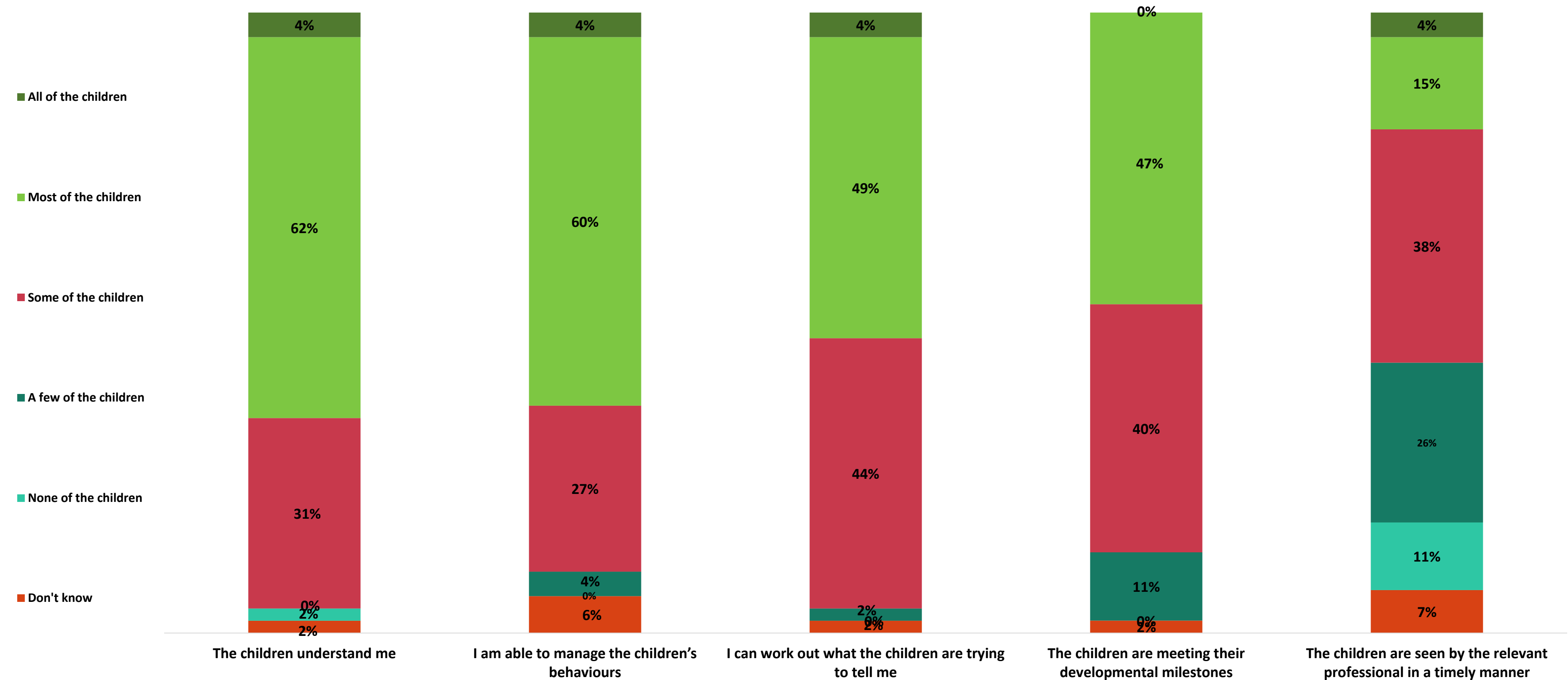


8. Which of the following areas of speech, language and communication are you concerned about when considering the children in you setting?

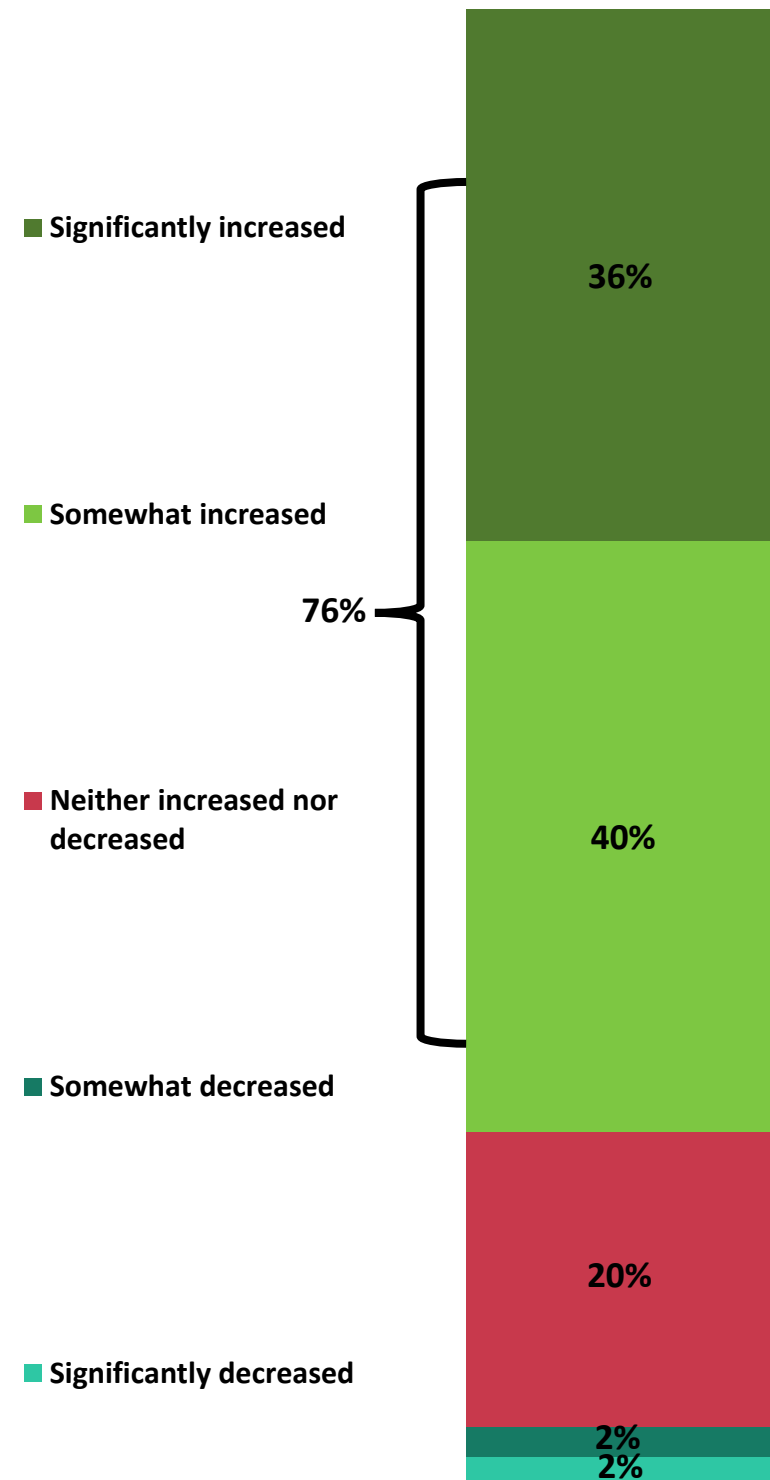


The Child(ren)'s Daily Life

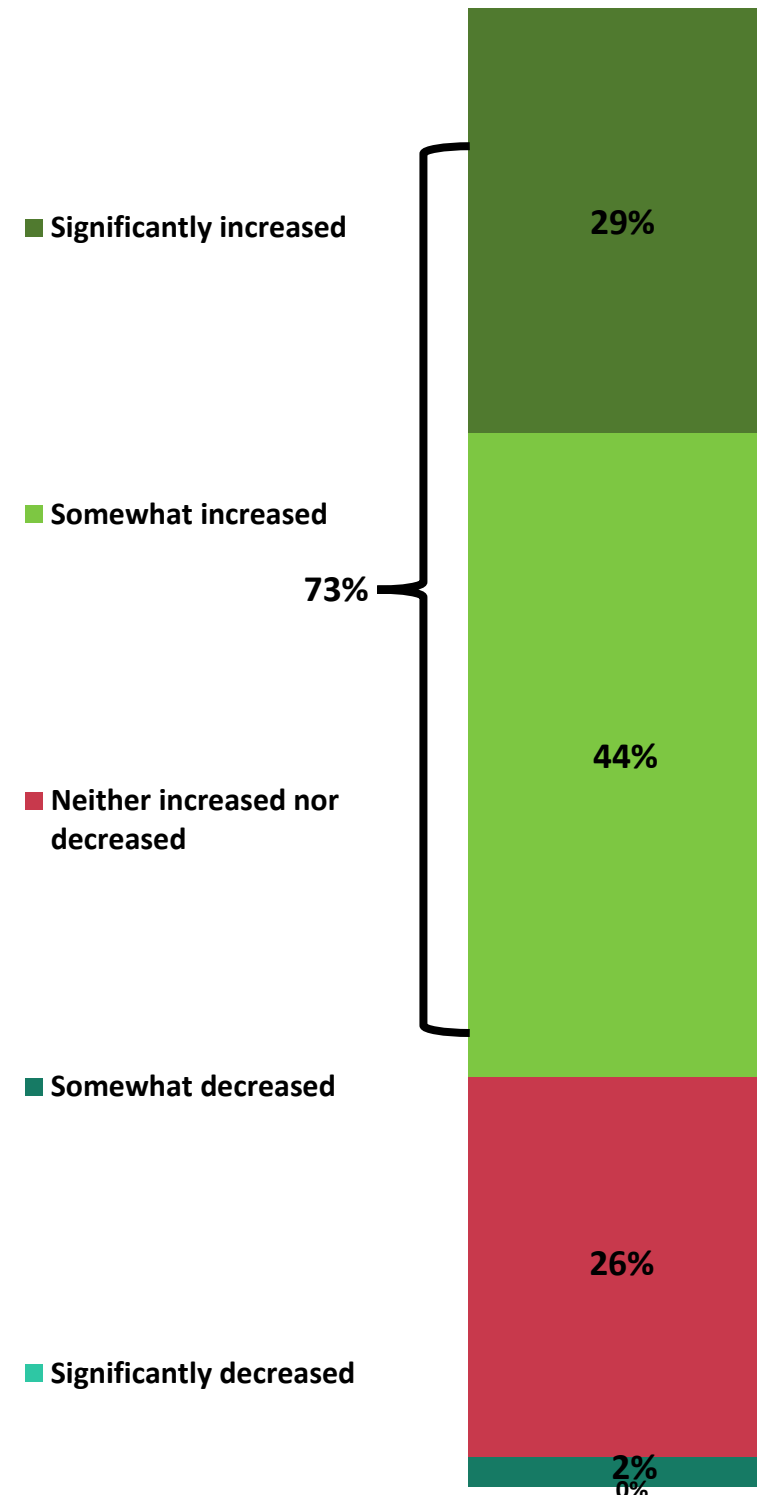
9. How many children in your role do each of the following statements apply to?



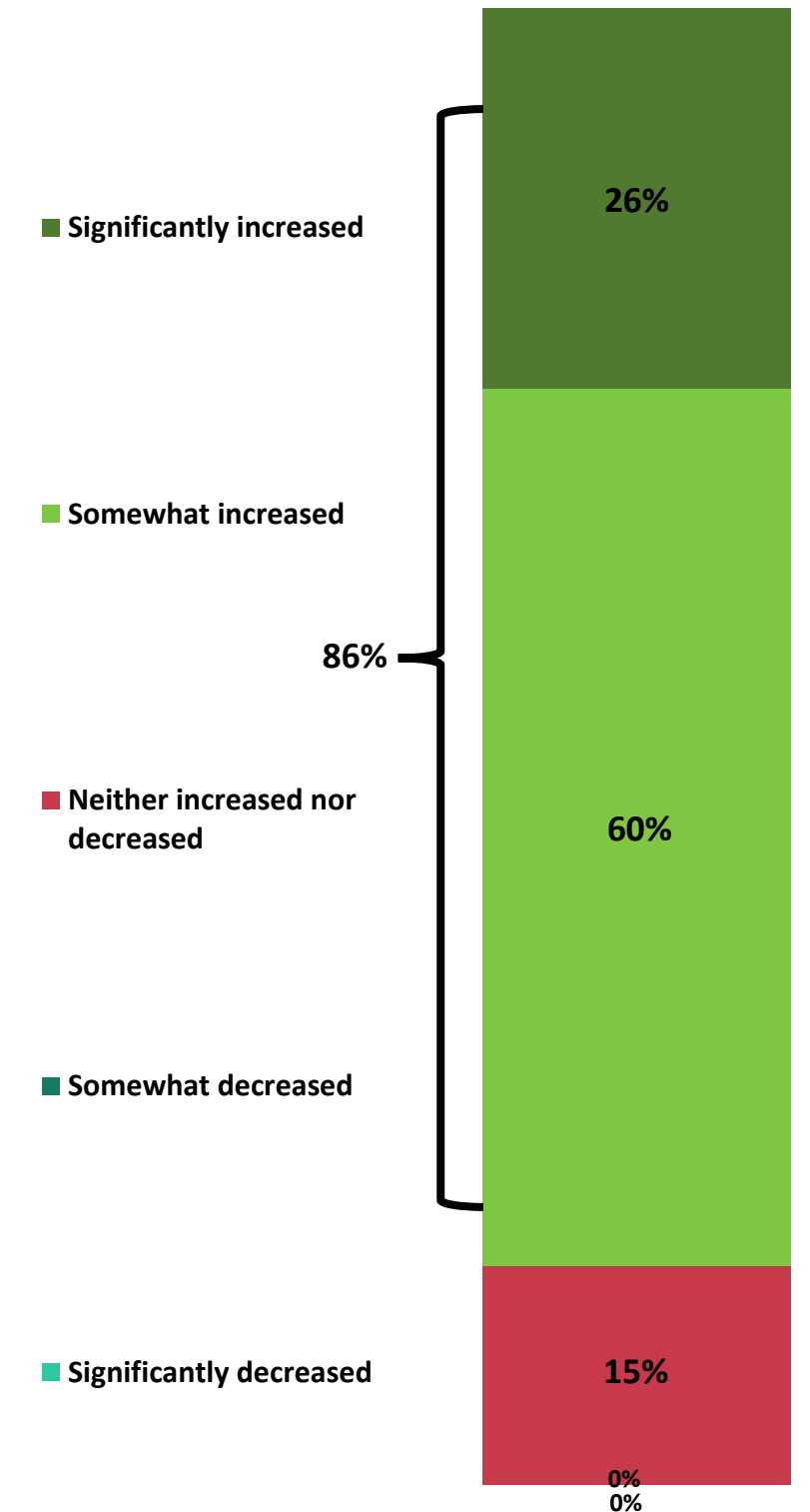
10. Have the number of children presenting with SLC needs increased, stayed the same or decreased in the past 5 years?



11. Has the overall severity of children's SLC needs increased, stayed the same or decreased over the past 5 years?

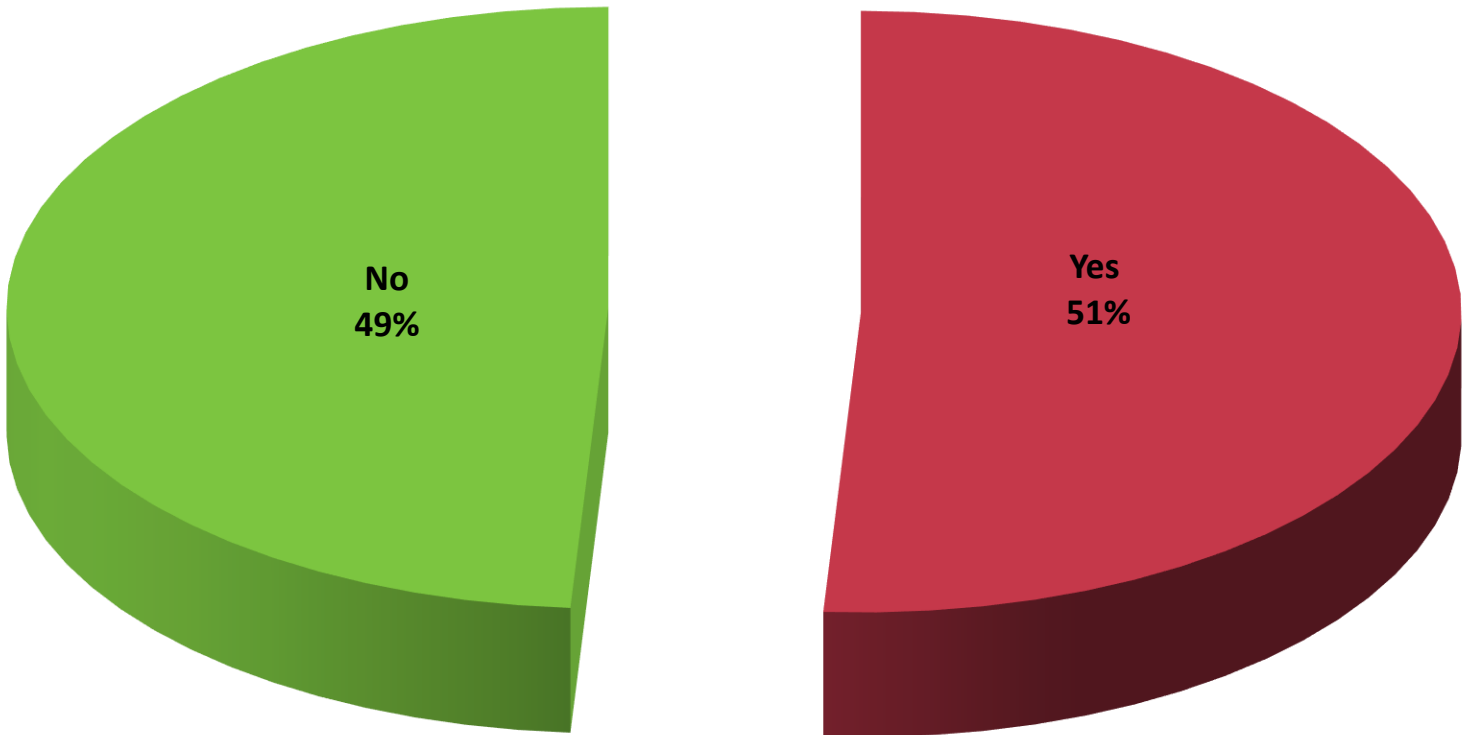


12. Has the overall complexity of children's SLC needs increased, stayed the same or decreased over the past 5 years?



Support and Training

13a. Have you received training in children’s speech and language and communication needs?

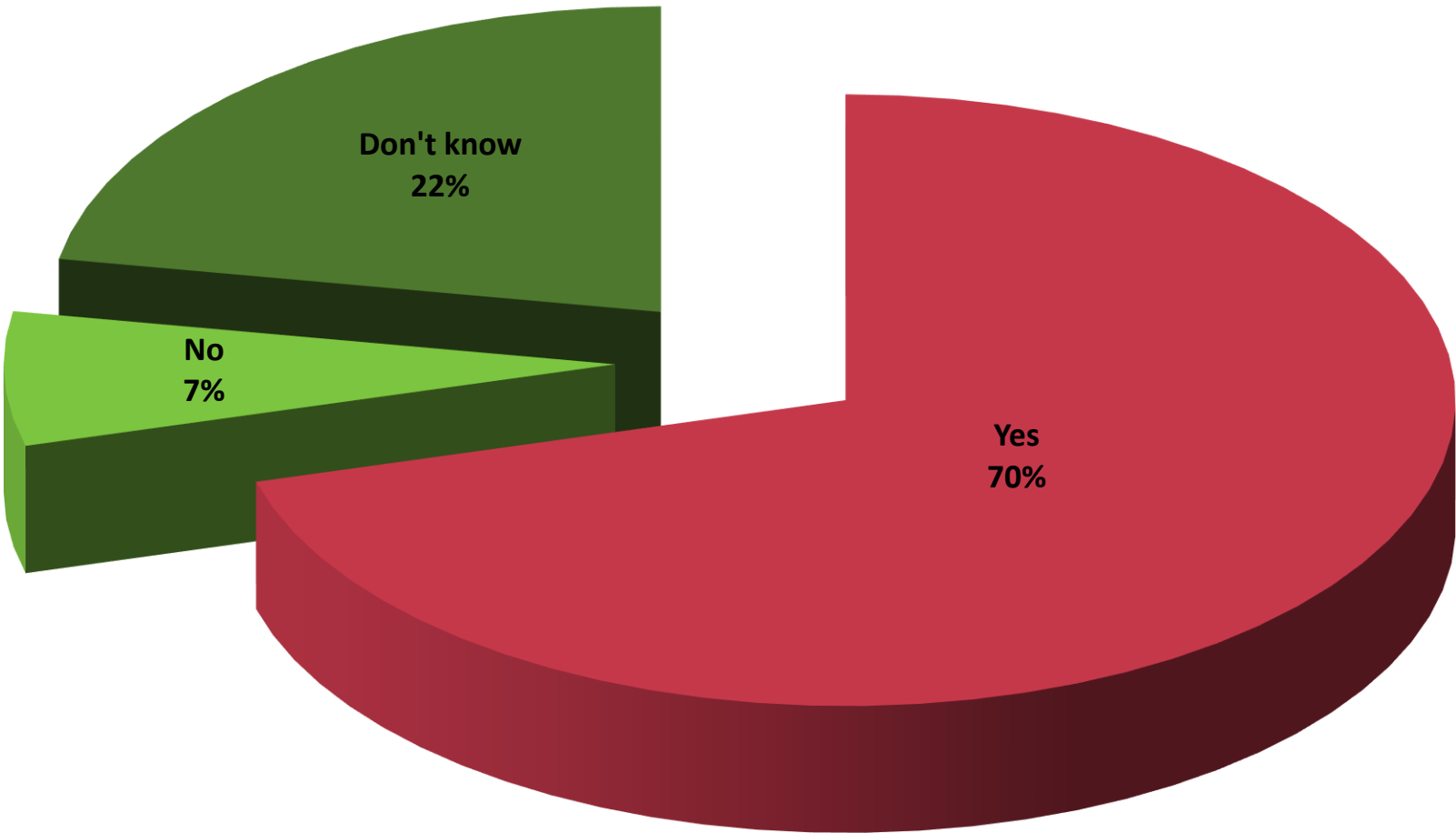


13b. What specific training have you received regarding child(ren)’s speech, language and communication needs?

Total N =	28
General SLC training	25%
Hanen	25%
Makaton	14%
Elklan	14%
Autism training	14%
As part of course/diploma/degree (Early Childhood Studies/Child Development/Paediatric training)	14%
Speech developmental milestones	11%
As part of Health Visitor training	11%
RISE	4%
Sure Start SLT training	4%
AAC	4%
Let's Talk	4%
BSL	4%
Gestalt Language Processing	4%
Solihull	4%
Help Kids Talk	4%
Other	14%

Other included: In house / informal training

13c. Would training in children’s speech and language and communication needs be beneficial?



base: all respondents who had not received training N=27

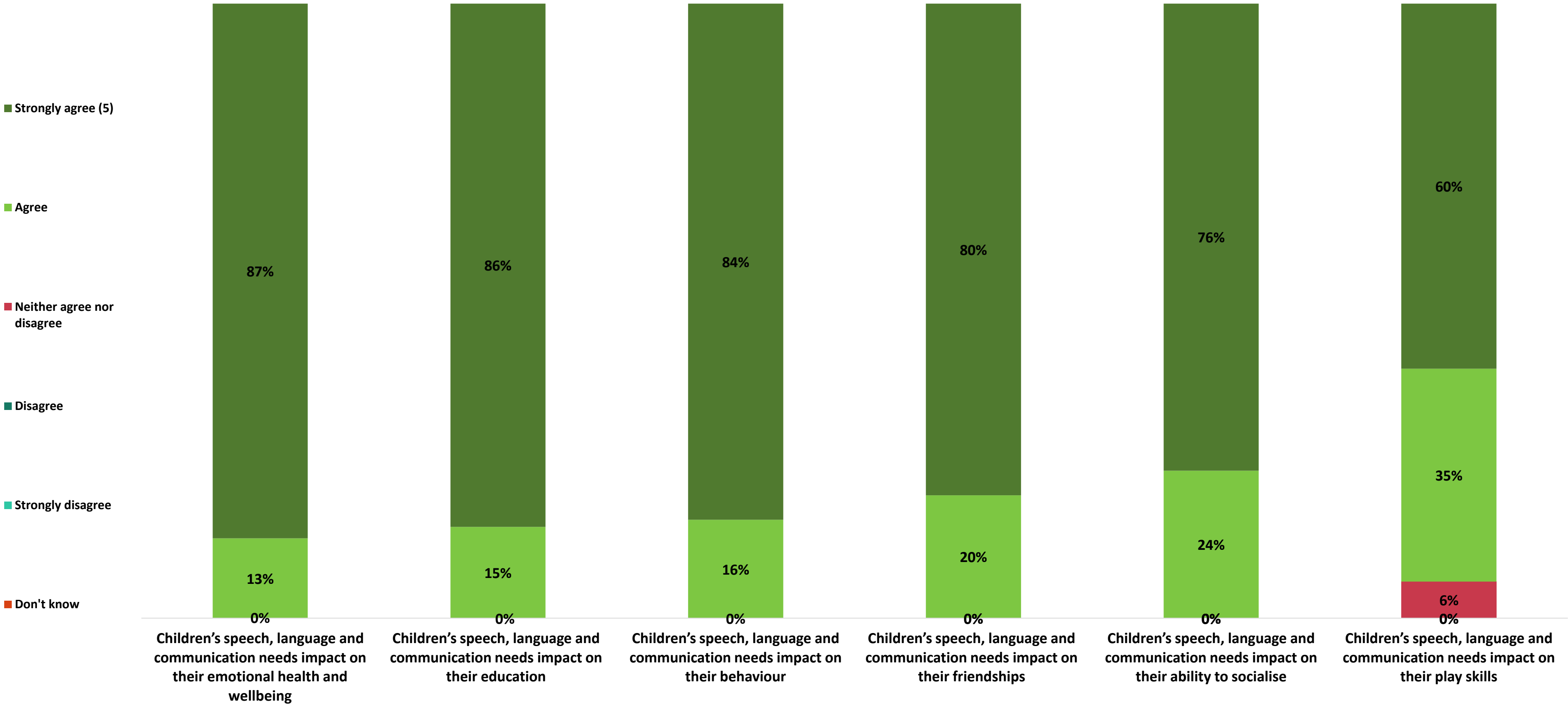
14. What specific training or information would help you support children with speech, language and communication needs in your setting?

Total N =	55
General advice / training on supporting communication e.g. giving time/ having patience etc.	31%
How to support parents (including while they wait for professional input)	24%
Milestones	15%
Detailed/ specific training – nothing generic	15%
Parental training	11%
Resources /Communication advice / printables/ passport / visuals / steps to follow	9%
Nursery/ play group need SLCN training	6%
Maketon/signing	6%
Nonspeaking	4%
AAC/Visuals	2%
SEN	2%
Hanen	2%
Not sure	6%
Nothing	2%
Other	27%
N/A	2%

Other included:

- Training updates
- Better access to SLT support

15. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the overall speech, language and communication needs of the children in your setting?

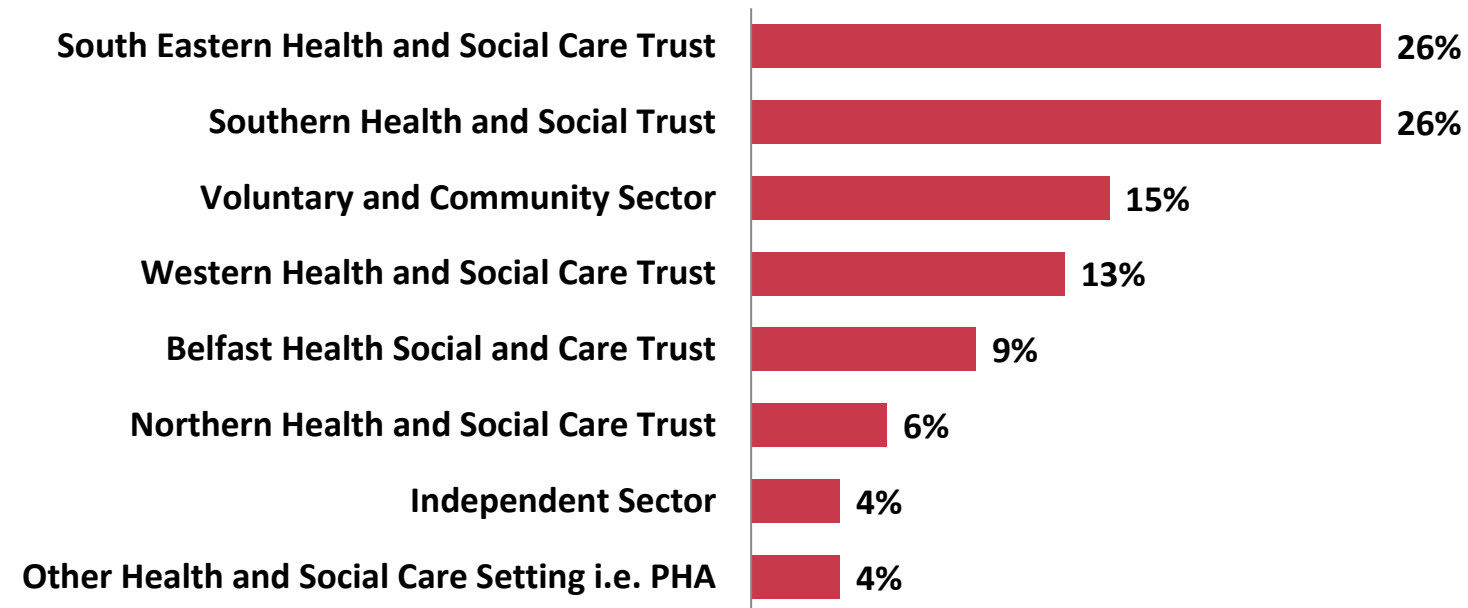




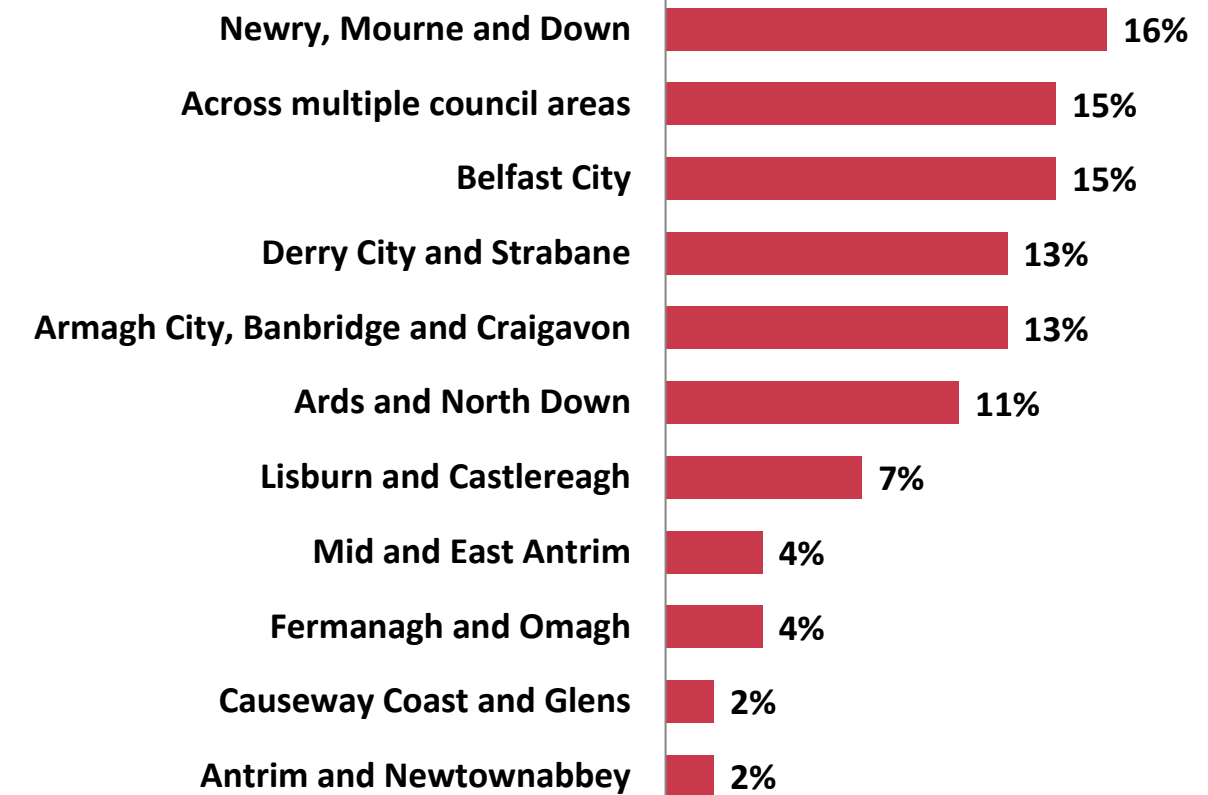
Classification

Classification

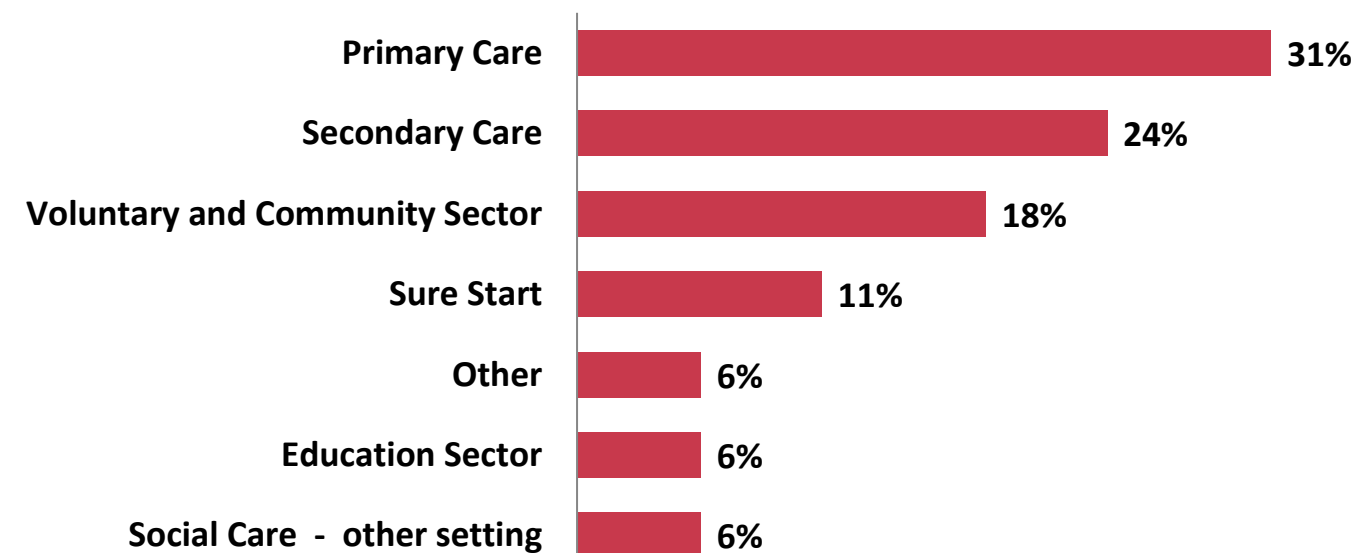
Health and Social Care Trust Area



Council Area



Settings





Section D: Speech and Language Therapists

N=74

Strategic Takeaways and Ways Forward

Strategic Takeaways

Workforce Distribution



The largest number (32%) of professionals worked in community-based Health and Social Care Trusts, followed by schools and Sure Start (15%), RISE NI (12%), and independent practice (11%). N=74 completed the survey.

Rising concerns in speech, language and communication development



- **Increasing Demand & Complexity:** 96% of participants observed an increase in children with speech, language and communication needs over the past five years, with 98% noting rising severity and complexity.
- **Age Groups Most Affected:** The majority of affected children were aged 1-4 years, with the highest prevalence in the 3-4-year age bracket (84%).
- **Key Areas of Concern:** Attention and listening skills (74%), receptive language (73%), social interaction (69%), and expressive language (66%) were the top challenges. Nearly all respondents agreed that SLCN had an adverse impact on children's education, friendships, emotional well-being, behaviour, and social skills.

Support and Training



- **Universal Training:** There was an overwhelming consensus (100%) that parents need speech, language and communication training, while 99% believe all adults working with children should also receive it.
- **Key Training Areas for Professionals:** Advice (60%), language development (23%), and speech sound guidance (20%) were the most wanted bite-sized sessions.
- **Key Training Areas for Parents:** Advice (64%), play-based strategies (35%), milestones (24%) and Speech Sound Advice (23%) were deemed the most important for this audience.
- **Specialised Training Needs:** Interest in Gestalt Language Processing (29%), AAC (9%), how to support parents (7%) and a joined-up health-education approach (6%) suggested a demand for more targeted interventions.

Ways Forward



Workforce Training & Development

- **Mandatory speech, language and communication training should be considered** for all professionals working with children.
- Offer **bitesize training** on advice, language development, and speech sounds.
- Encourage **inter-sector collaboration** between health and education to ensure both are working towards the same goal.



Early Identification & Intervention

- Focus interventions for **1-4 year olds**.



Parent Empowerment & Training

- Offer general **speech, language and communication training** for parents, focusing on **advice, play, milestones, and speech sounds**.



Address Key speech, language and communication challenges

- Areas of focus are **attention, receptive language, and social interaction**.

Key Insights from the Research

Background Information on Respondents

N=74 completed the survey.

Main Role



- 32% worked in Health and Social Care Trust Community Based
 - 15% in Schools team or Sure Start
 - 12% in RISE NI
 - 11% in Independent Practice
 - 5% in Child Development Team
 - 1% in Cochlear Implant Team / Hearing Team
- (8% worked in 'Other')

Ages of those presenting with SLC Needs

Age of child	%
Under a year	4%
1-2 years	38%
3-4 years	84%

Speech, Language and Communication Development



- 96% suggested the number of children with SLC needs increased
- 98% suggested the severity of those needs increased
- 98% suggested the complexity of those needs increased

Key areas of concern

	%
Attention and listening Skills	74%
Receptive language	73%
Social interaction	69%
Expressive language	66%
Non-speaking	57%

There was near universal agreement that overall SLC needs impacted on Children's education, friendships, emotional health and well-being, behaviour and ability to socialise. 88% also agreed that it impacted on their play skills

Support and Training

100% felt there was a need for universal training in SLC needs from parents

99% felt there was a need for universal training in SLC needs for adults working with children

The key areas for Bitesize sessions for professionals were

	%
Advice	60%
Language development	23%
Speech sound advice	20%
Milestones	15%
Using visuals	15%
Neurodiversity	14%
General building blocks of language	14%
Comprehensive language levels	12%
Gesalt Language Processing	12%
Attention and listening	11%

The key areas For Bitesize session for parents were

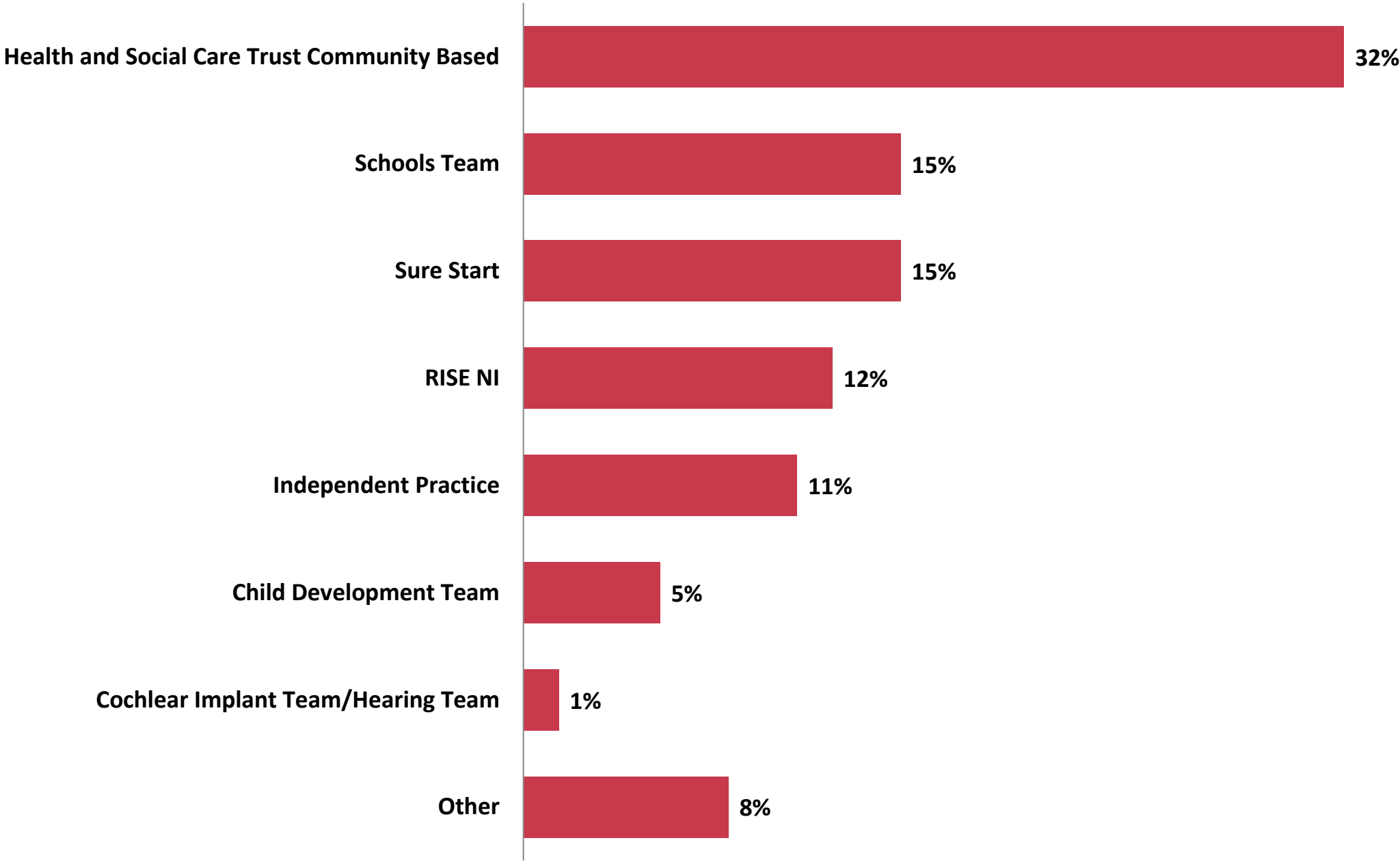
	%
Advice	64%
Play	35%
Milestones	24%
Speech sound modelling	23%
Language development	20%

The key areas for personal training considered useful were

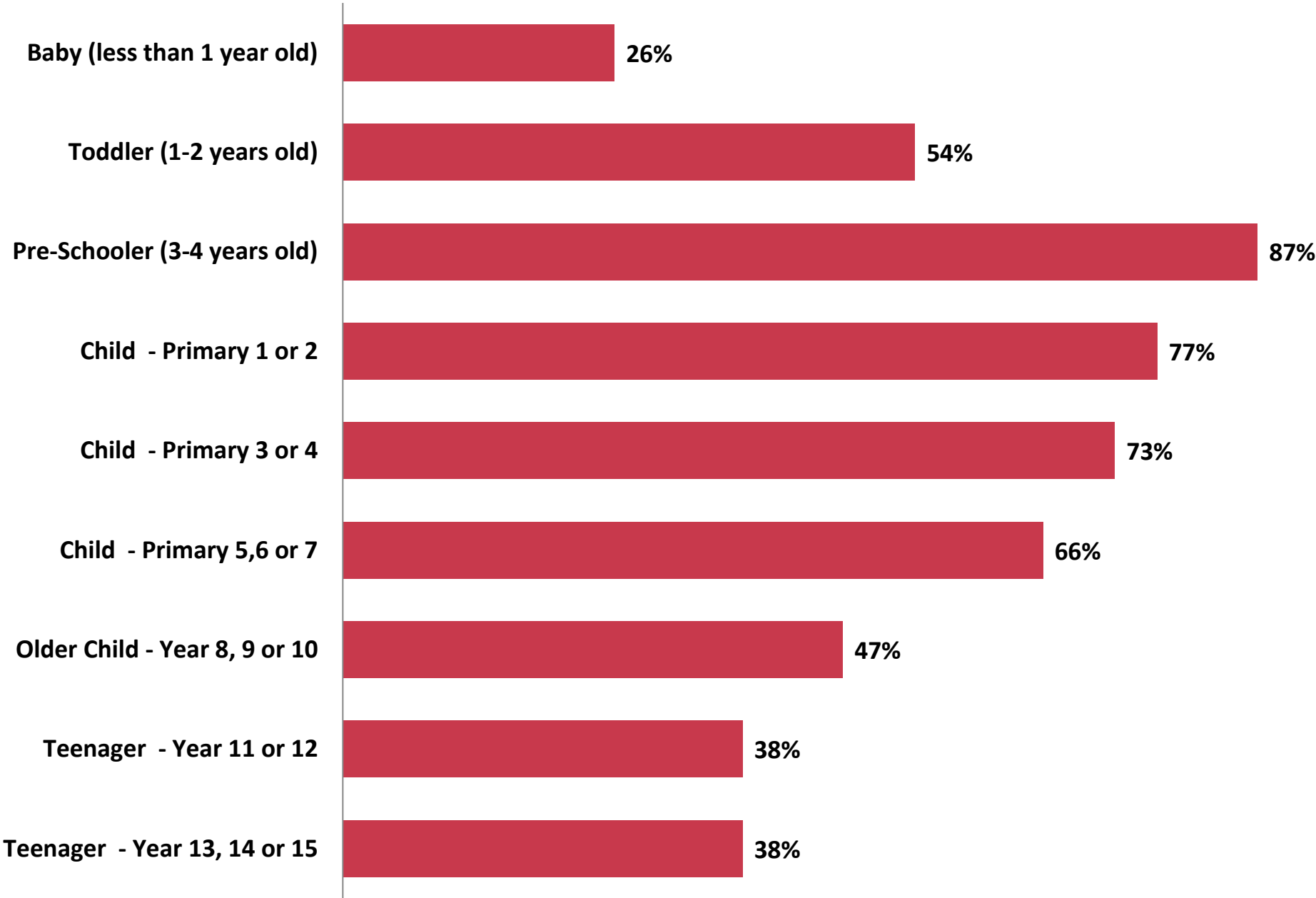
	%
Gestalt Language Processing	29%
AAC	9%
How to support/coach parents	7%
Joined up approach for health professionals and schools to support speech, language and communication needs	6%
Developmental Language Disorder	6%
Neurodiversity	6%
Sensory processing and behaviour	6%

Full Charted Insights

2. Which of the following best describes your main role?

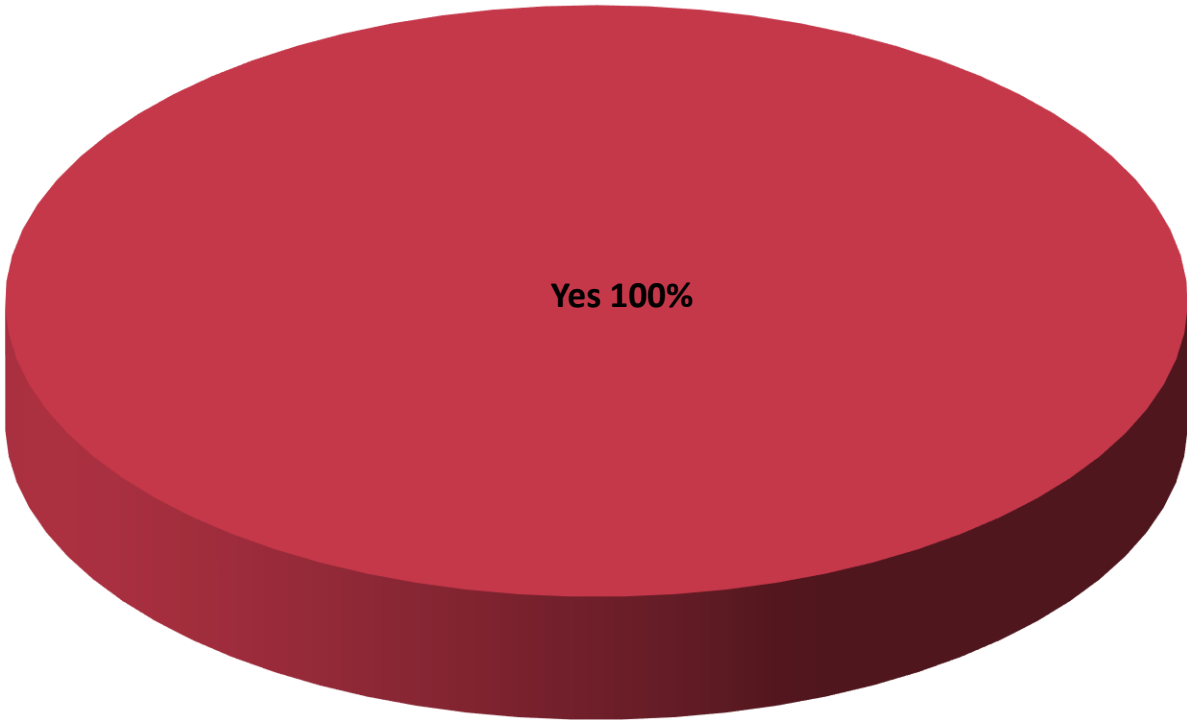


4. What is the age range of the children who you see in your setting?

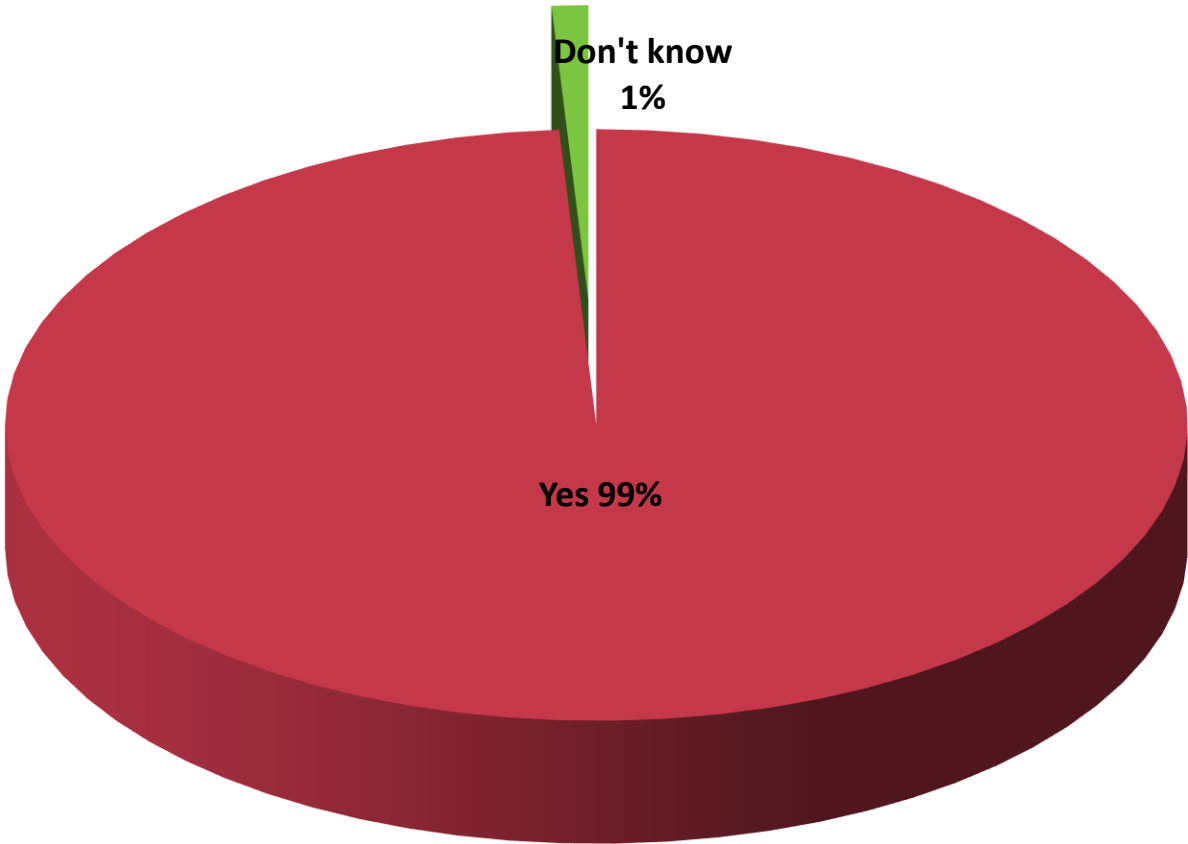


Speech, Language and Communication Development

5. Do you feel there is a need for universal training in speech and language and communication needs for parents?



6. Do you feel there is a need for universal training in speech and language and communication needs for adults working with children in a range of settings?



7. If there was an opportunity to develop and produce universal/targeted ‘bitesize sessions’ and resources for parents, what topic areas do you feel would be most beneficial for parents?

Total N =	74
Advice - How to promote lang dev from antenatal and beyond/simplify lang/ comments versus questions / joining in with child led play / limiting screen time /importance of early intervention / strategies to support at home and other general advice inc adapting your own skills to facilitate lang development / myth busting	64%
Play - Benefits of child led play/ Speech sounds through play/ modelling -including how to play and joining in / neurodivergent play – video needed! Difference between typically developing vs not	35%
Milestones – how and when to refer/ signposting to other services and advice – universal versus more targeted	24%
Speech Sound advice, modelling, phonological awareness	23%
Language development	20%
Attention and listening	18%
What is communication? General building blocks of language / brain development / impacts	15%
Child-parent interaction	15%
Comprehension lang levels – understanding and following instructions	11%
Gestalt Language Processing	11%
Neurodiversity	10%
Phonological awareness activities	8%
Nursery rhymes / singing/ reading	8%
AAC	8%
Autism	7%
Breakdown of most common disorders/ SLCN	7%
Routine	7%
Intensive Interaction	7%

Total N =	74
Using visuals	5%
Nonspeaking advice	5%
BLANK levels	4%
Sign/ gesture /Makaton	4%
Stammering	4%
DLD	4%
Regulation – calm for play and learning – input with OT to design	4%
Sure Start resources cover a lot of the early years advice e.g. Connect with Me/ Building Blocks, attention and listening	4%
Develop narrative/ story telling	3%
Additional needs/ Special Education Needs	3%
Selective mutism (Situational mutism)	3%
Communication friendly environment inc alternative ways to do show and tell	1%
Emotional language – happy/sad	1%
Understanding of the role of a speech and language therapist	1%
Bilingual language development	1%
Auditory memory	1%
Other	3%

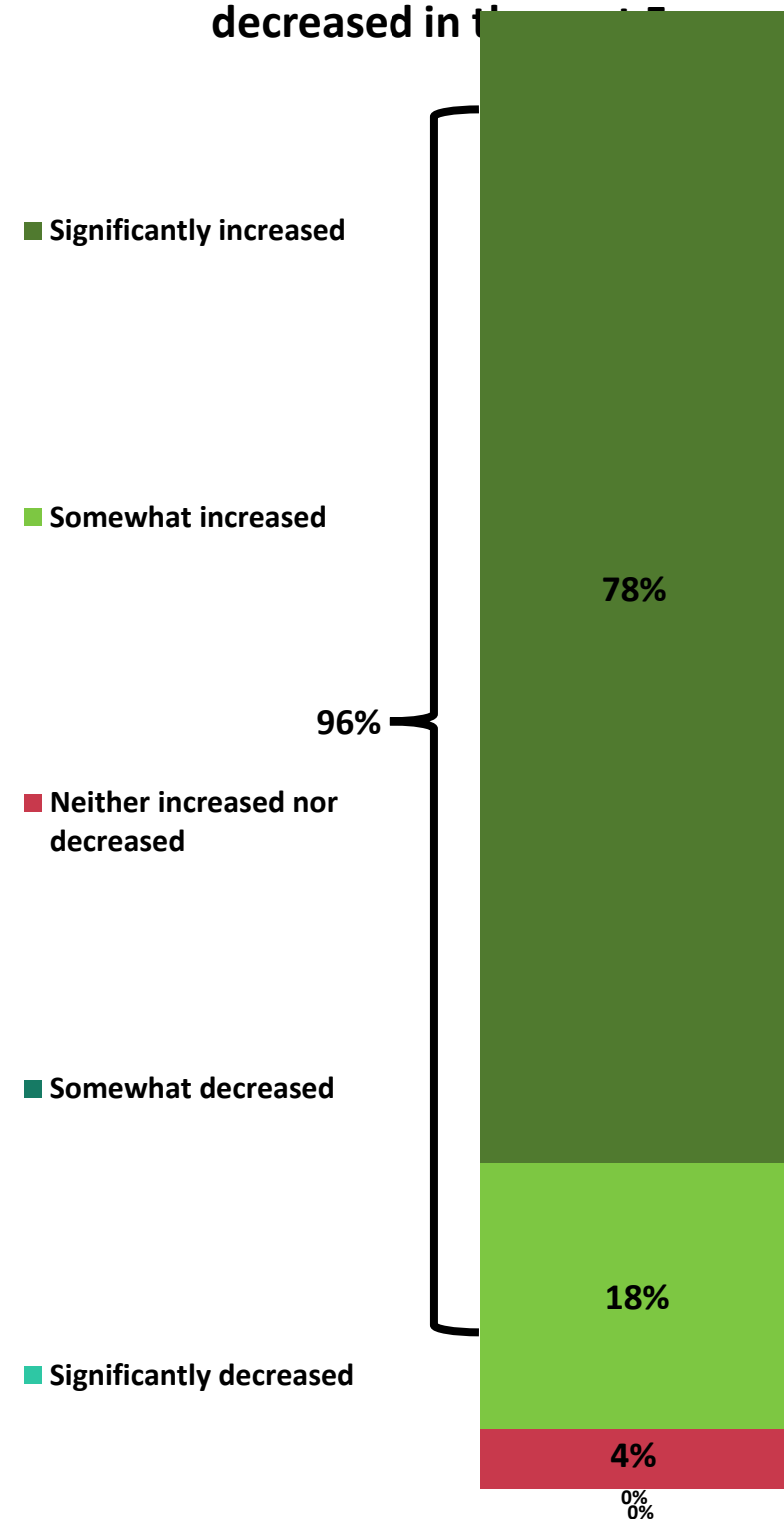
8. If there was an opportunity to develop and produce universal/targeted ‘bitesize sessions’ and resources for professionals (e.g., teachers, childminders, youth workers etc., what topic areas do you feel would be most beneficial?

Total N =	74
Advice - How to promote lang dev from antenatal and beyond/simplify lang/ comments versus questions / joining in with child led play / limiting screen time /importance of early intervention / strategies to support at home and other general advice inc adapting your own skills to facilitate lang development / myth busting	60%
Language development	23%
Speech Sound advice, modelling, PA	20%
Milestones – how and when to refer/ signposting to other services and advice – universal versus more targeted	15%
Using visuals	15%
Neurodiversity	14%
What is communication? General building blocks of language / brain development / impacts	14%
Comprehension lang levels – understanding and following instructions	12%
Gestalt LP	12%
Attention and listening	11%
Play - Benefits of child led play/ Speech sounds through play/ modelling -including how to play and joining in / neurodivergent play – video needed! Difference between typically developing vs not	10%
Communication friendly environment inc alternative ways to do show and tell	10%
Autism	8%
AAC	8%
Regulation – calm for play and learning – input with OT to design	8%
Breakdown of most common disorders/ SLCN	7%
Intensive Interaction	7%
DLD	7%

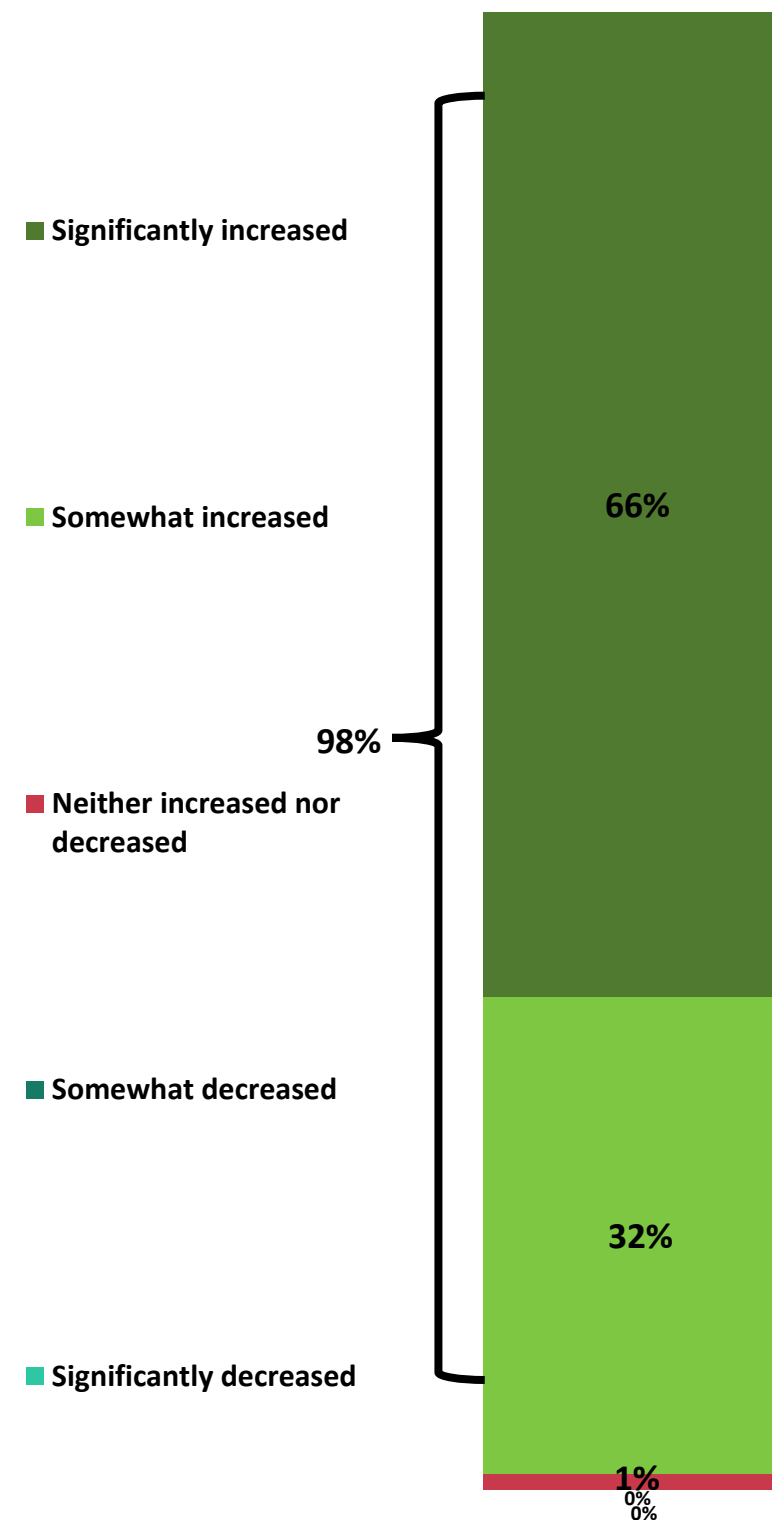
Total N =	74
BLANK levels	5%
Routine	5%
Sign/ gesture /Makaton	5%
Additional needs/ SEN	5%
Phonological awareness activities	4%
Child-parent interaction	4%
Stammering	4%
Nonspeaking advice	4%
Auditory memory	4%
Develop narrative/ story telling	3%
Emotional lang – happy/sad	3%
What is an SLT	3%
Nursery rhymes / singing/ reading	3%
Bilingual language development	3%
LD	3%
Impact of SLCN on MH	1%
Down Syndrome	1%
Deaf	1%
Behaviour and link to language	1%
Other	12%

The Child(ren)'s Daily Life

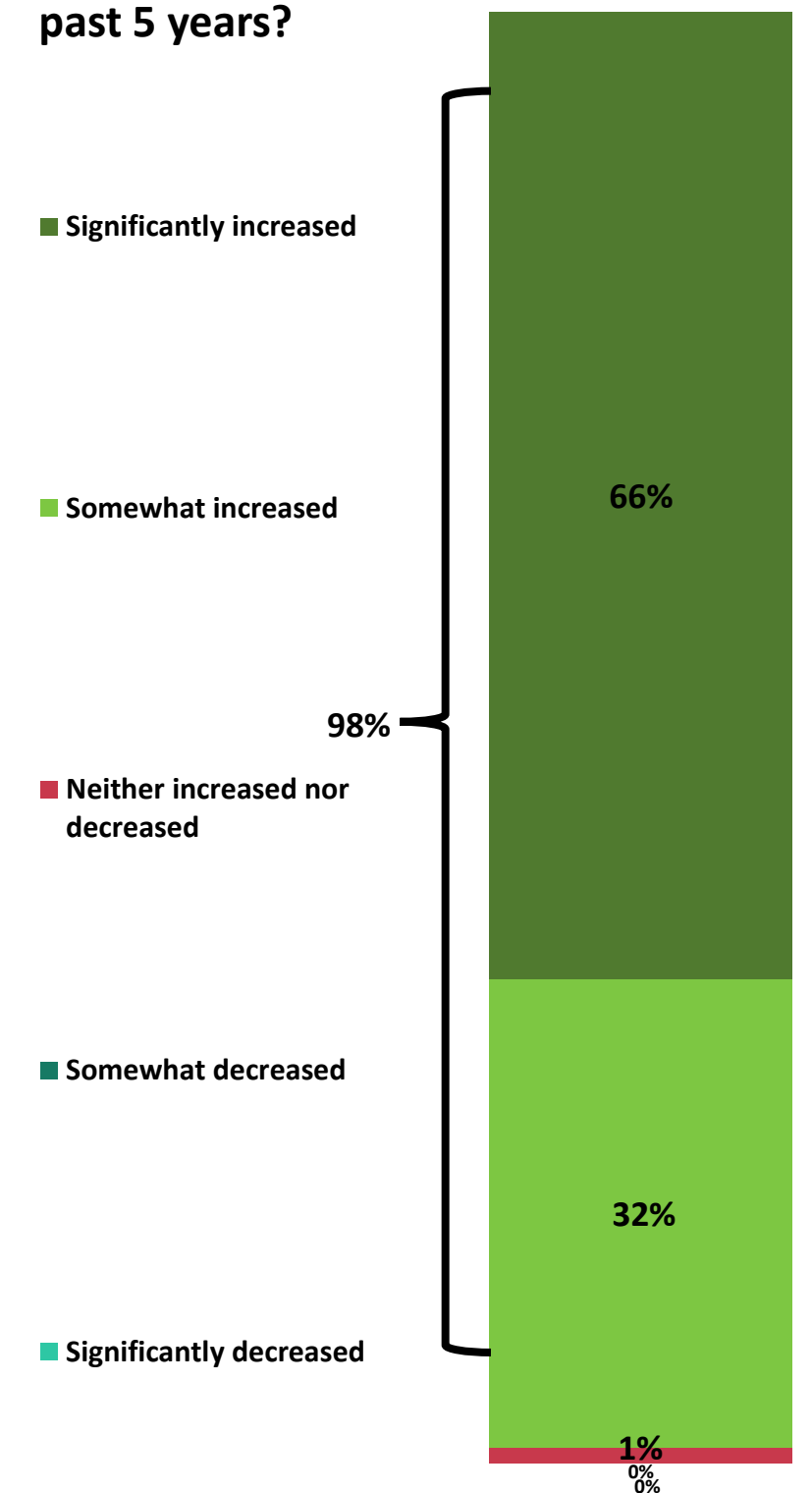
9. Have the number of children presenting with speech, language and communication needs increased, stayed the same or decreased in the past 5 years?



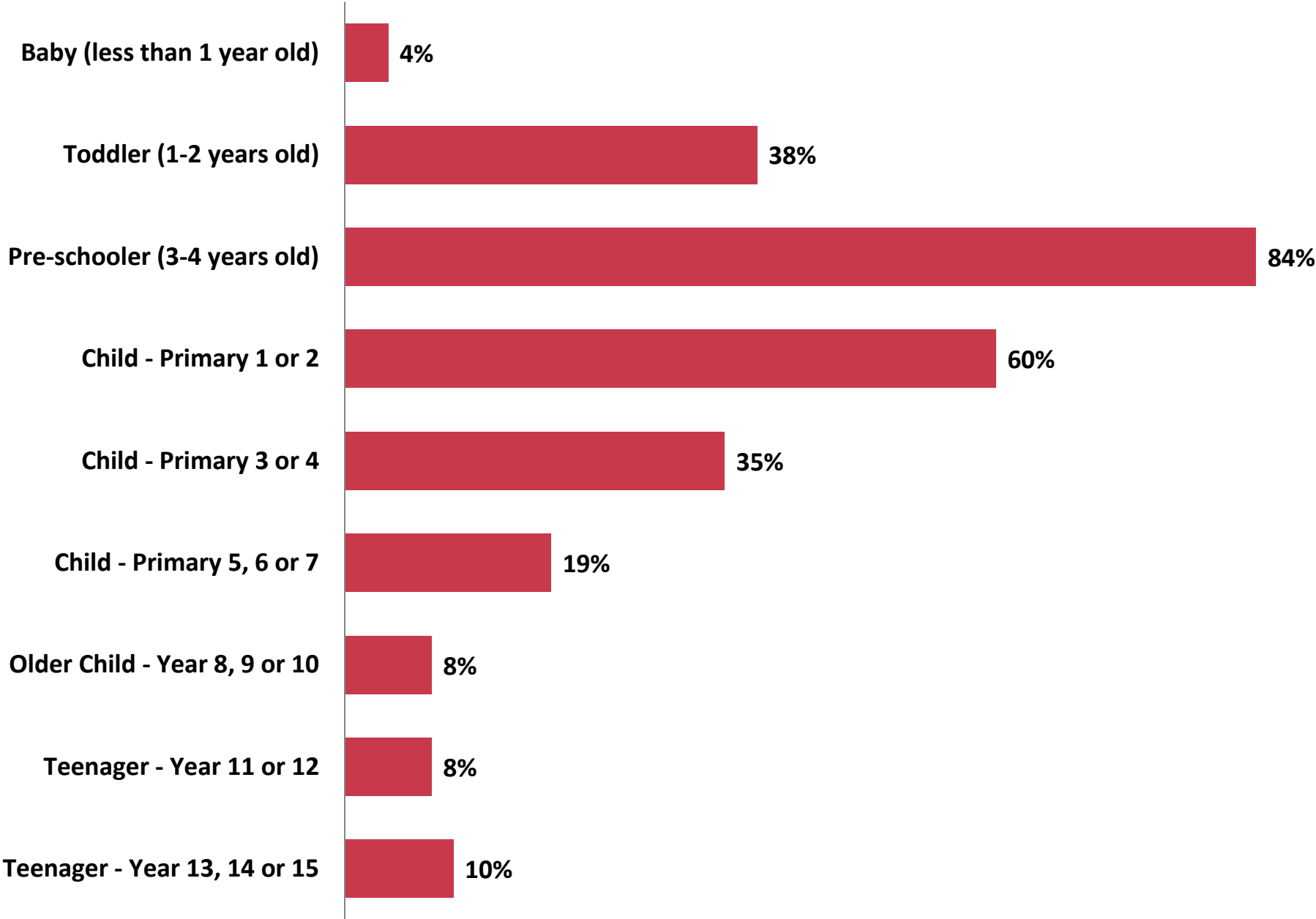
10. Has the overall severity of children's speech, language and communication needs increased, stayed the same or decreased over the past 5 years?



11. Has the overall complexity of children's speech, language and communication needs increased, stayed the same or decreased over the past 5 years?

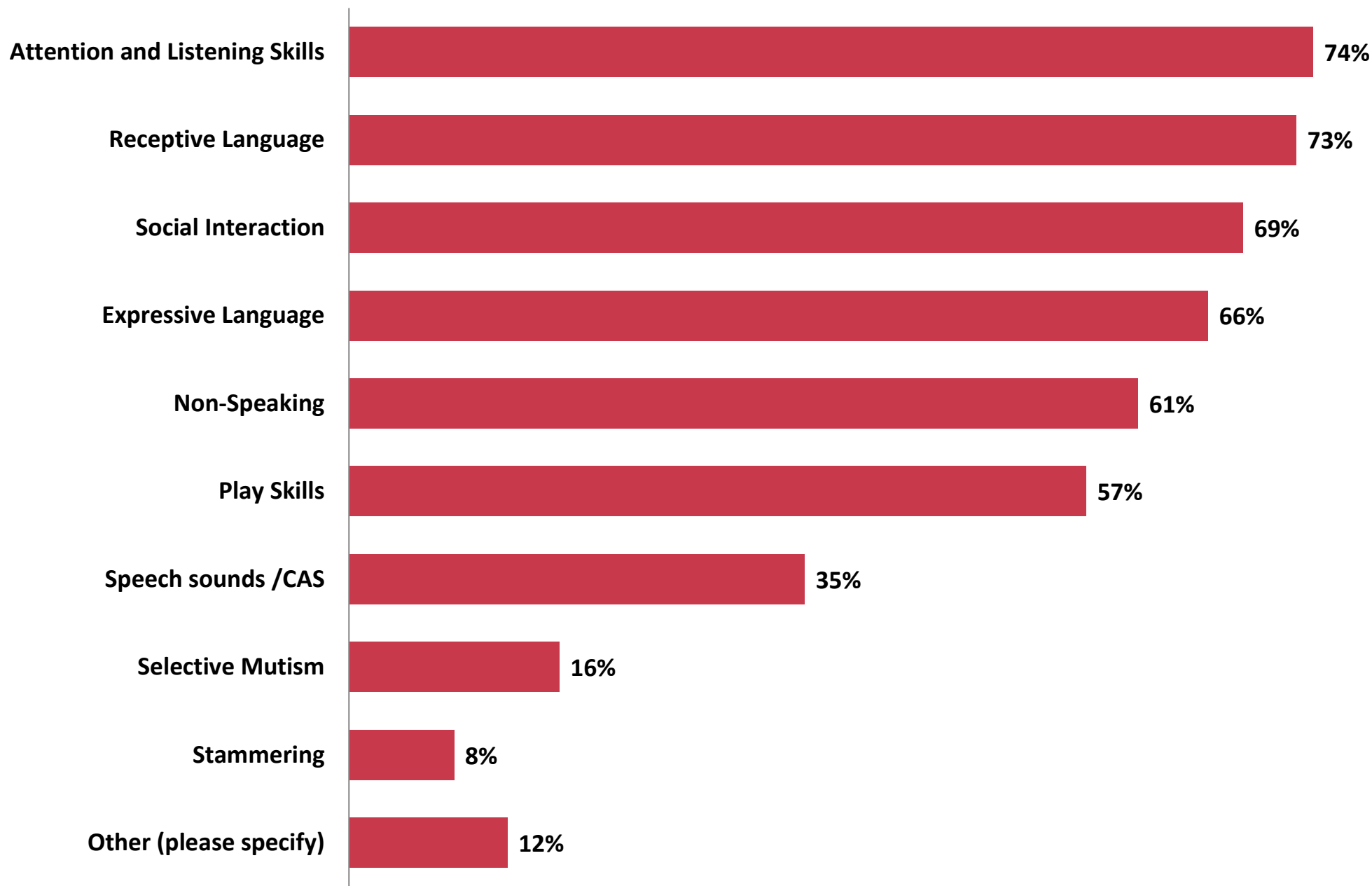


12. What age ranges are the majority of children who present with speech, language and communication needs in your setting?

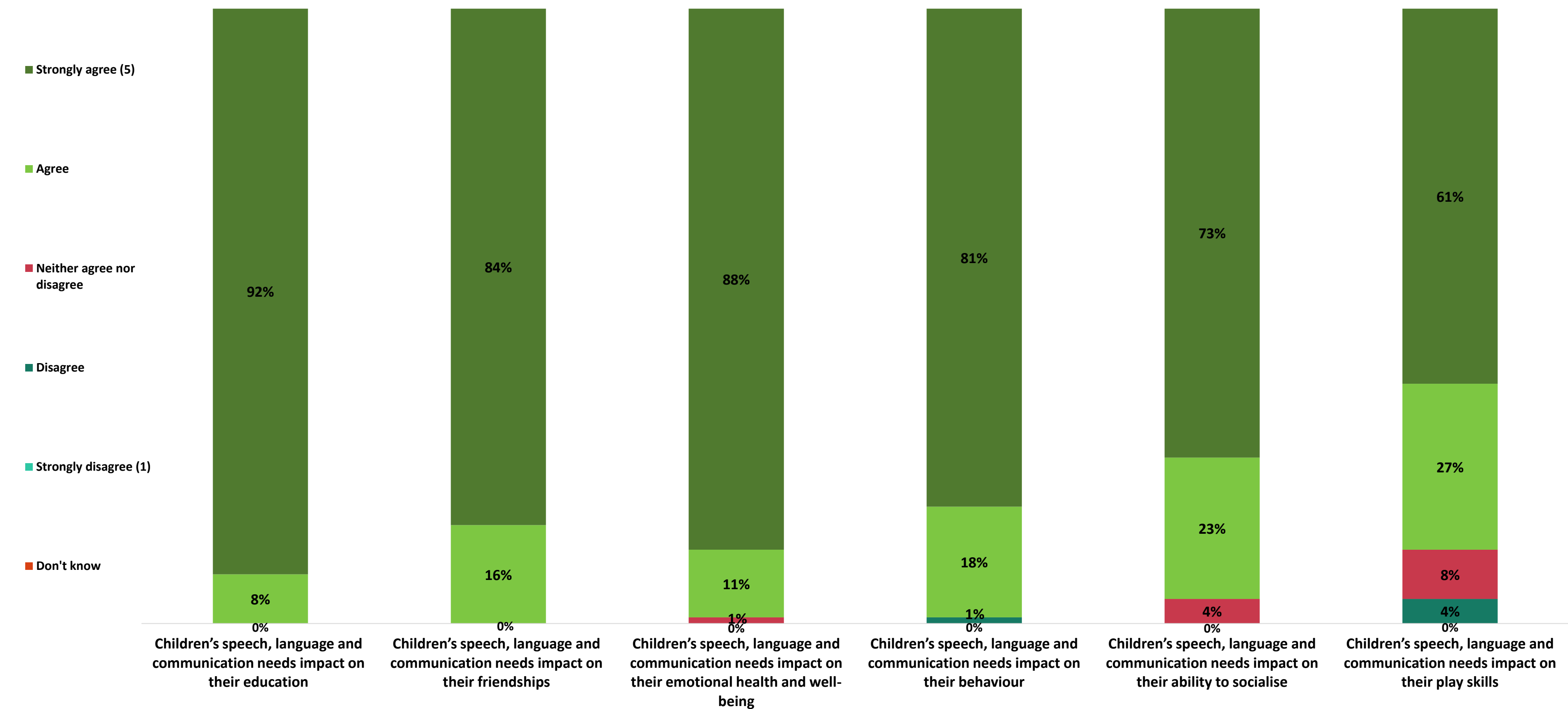


Support and Training

13. Which, if any, of the following areas are you most concerned about in relation to children’s speech, language and communication development?



14. How much do you agree or disagree regarding the overall speech, language and communication needs of the children in your setting?



15. What specific training would be useful to enhance your clinical skills/practice?

Total N =	70
Gestalt Language Processing	29%
AAC	9%
How to support/coach parents	7%
Need joined up approach for health professionals and schools to support SLCN	6%
Developmental Language Disorder	6%
Neurodiversity	6%
Sensory processing and behaviour	6%
Intensive interaction	4%
Autism	4%
Speech Sound Disorder	4%
Mental health	4%
Attention autism	3%
Makaton	3%
Early years support	3%
Visuals	3%
Selective mutism (Situational mutism)	3%
How to support social communication	3%
Relevant research	3%
Childhood Apraxia of Speech	1%
British Sign Language	1%
Not sure	10%
None	4%
Other	29%
N/A	3%

- Other included:
- More time/funding to train staff and parents
 - More staff
 - Rotations across different services to increase experience
 - Counselling skills/CBT/NLP
 - Trauma informed training
 - Training in NI Primary curriculum/Early Years



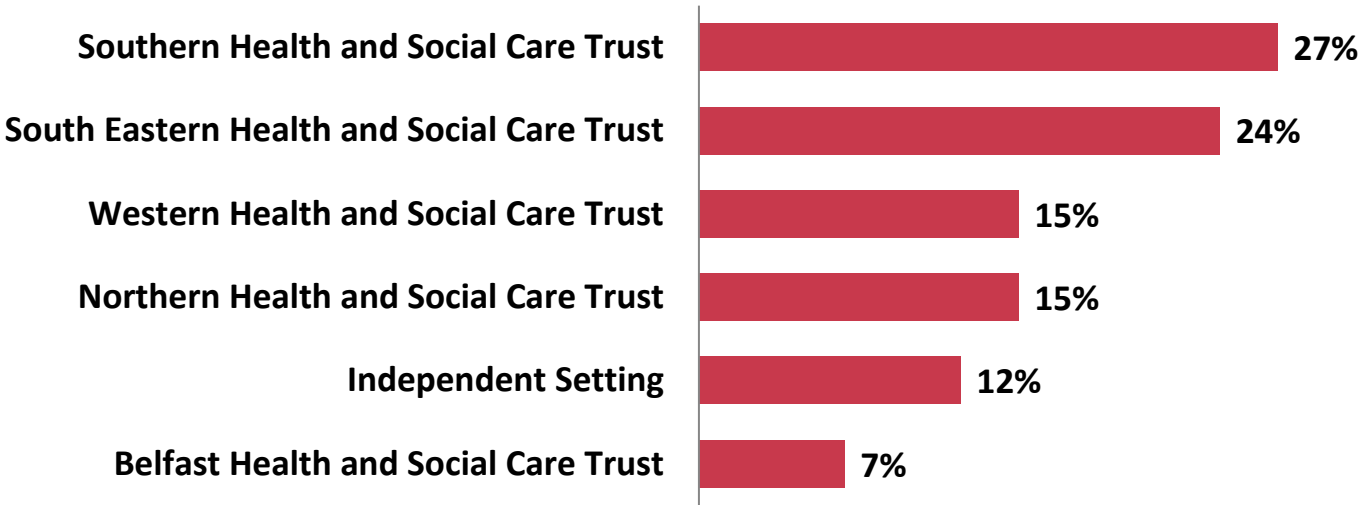
Classification

Classification

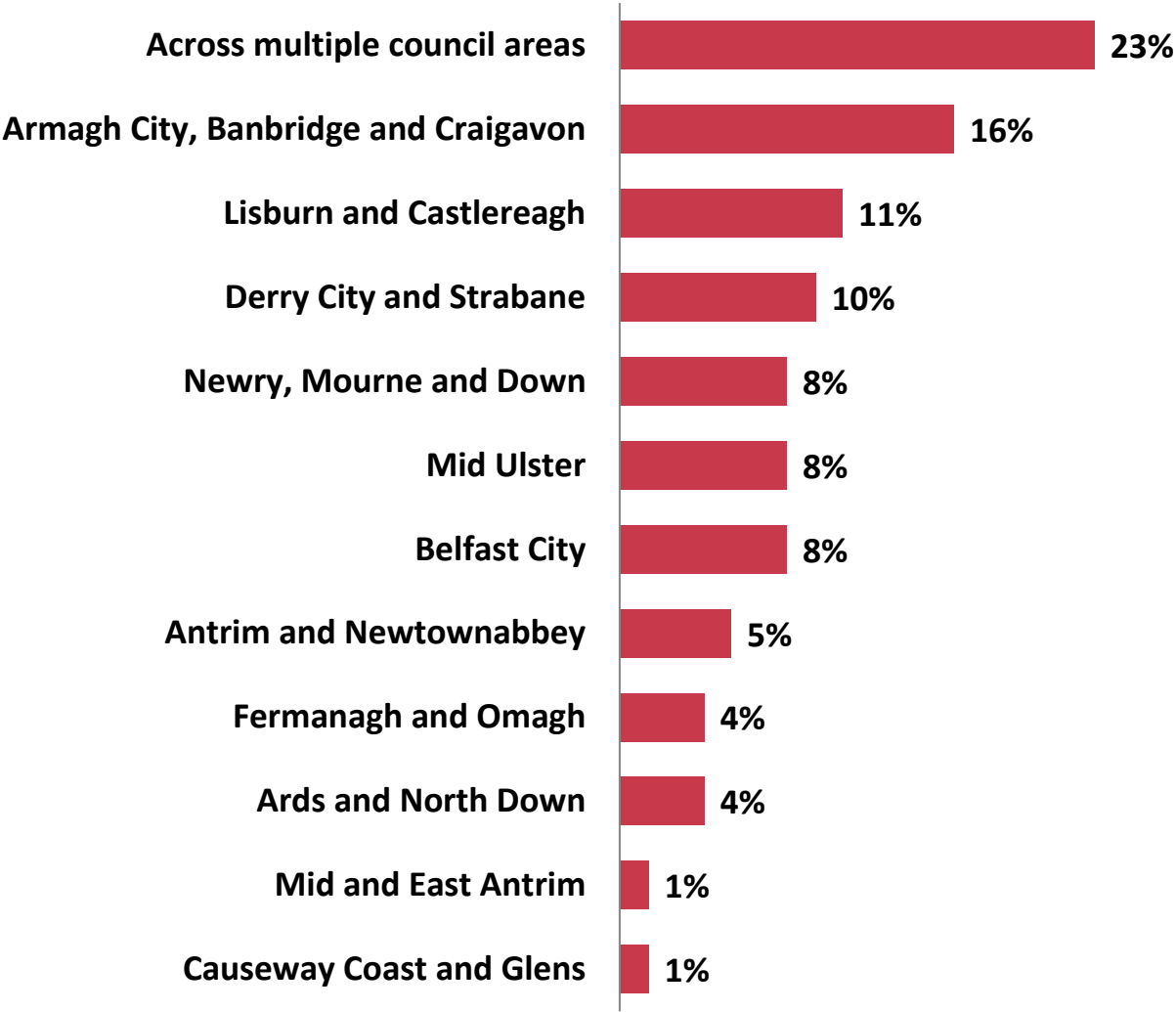
Audience D



Health and Social Care Trust Area



Council Area





Thank you!

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When it comes to market research, we provide quality, fast, reliable results that tell a clear story.