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April 2021



Ofsted Parents Annual Survey 2021

Parents' awareness and perceptions of Ofsted



Background and method

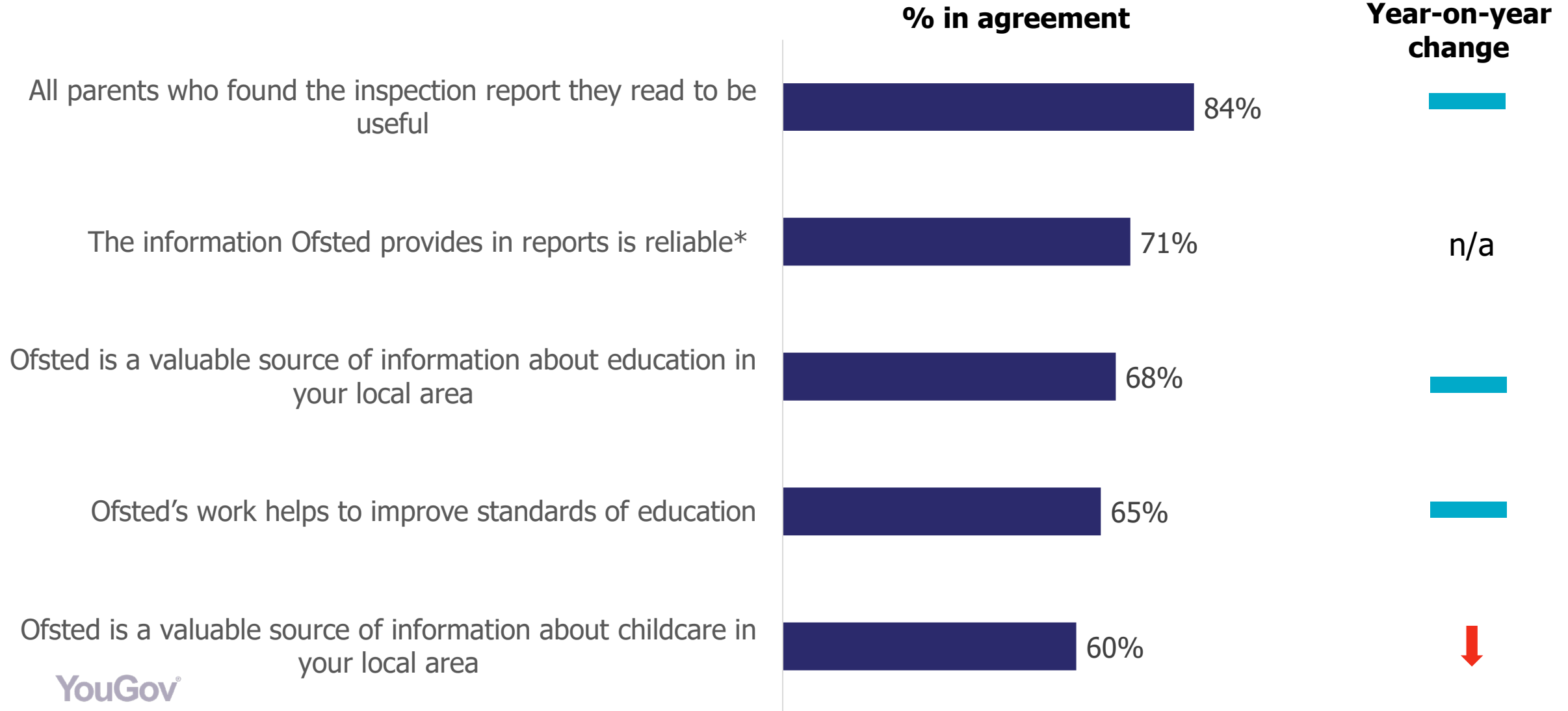
Method

- The objective of this study was to provide Ofsted with robust and timely evidence from parents to inform the development of the organisation's strategy and priorities.
- An online survey was developed in conjunction with Ofsted and was carried out among parents between 9th and 26th March 2021.
- The total number of respondents was 1,018 parents; 916 with a school-age child and 102 with a pre-school-age child attending childcare.
- The figures have been weighted and are representative of all parents in England by family type, age of family reference person, social grade and region.
- Throughout the report, net figures are shown and they may be slightly different to the raw data shown in charts due to rounding.
- This is the sixth year that this research with parents has been carried out by Ofsted. Any statistically significant changes between waves will be identified with  and .

Key findings

Summary of key measures

↑ Increase
— No change
↓ Decrease



*wording on reliability changed in 2021, therefore, comparing is not advised.

Awareness and perceptions of Ofsted

1. Awareness of Ofsted remains high among parents, with 59% reporting they know at least a fair amount.
2. Seven in ten (71%) parents feel Ofsted reports are a reliable source of information.
3. The majority (60%) agree that Ofsted provides a valuable measure of childcare, however, this has declined since 2020 (65%).
4. Agreement that Ofsted is a valuable source of information on education and works to improve education has remained stable since 2016.
5. It remains that one third of parents agree Ofsted acts independently of the government.

Choosing a provider

1. As seen previously, the majority of respondents report that they would use in-person or virtual visits as a source of information when deciding on a childcare provider, school or college.
2. Parents of school-age children are more likely to rely on past experience and school or local authority websites when making a decision, compared with those of pre-school children.
3. Proximity of the provider is the decisive factor in the final choice for both parents of school-age and pre-school children. This is followed by ethos and Ofsted judgement.
4. Compared with parents of pre-school children, parents of school-age children are more likely to report that breadth of subjects is also a decisive factor.

Ofsted ratings and inspection reports

1. Overall, most parents remain aware of the Ofsted rating of their child's school or childcare provider, although awareness has declined among parents of school-age children.
2. Overall, seven in ten parents have read an Ofsted report at some point. For parents of pre-school-age children, this was most likely to help them choose a provider of childcare or school, and for parents with school-age children, this was to check in and see how the school was doing.
3. The large majority (84%) of parents found the report they read useful; this increases to 87% among parents of pre-school children.
4. Eight in ten (80%) felt the report they read portrayed an accurate picture of the school or provider.

Obtaining and sharing parents' views

1. Close to a fifth (18%) of parents report that they had the opportunity to, and did, contribute during the last inspection. This increases to 30% when looking specifically at those who reported that their school was inspected within the last two years.
2. Comparatively, 15% report that they did have the opportunity to feedback but they did not and 18% report they did not have any opportunity at all.
3. A quarter (26%) of parents report that they have completed a Parent View survey, either at the time of inspection (18%) or outside of the inspection (8%).
4. Parents of secondary school children are more likely than those of primary school children to report completing a Parent View survey at any time (32% vs 24% respectively).
5. Just under half (45%) of all parents report that they have not completed a Parent View survey and three in ten (29%) state they do not know what a Parent View survey is.

Curriculum

1. Three quarters (76%) of parents report being well informed of their child's curriculum. This is most commonly cited by parents of primary school children (79%), compared with 72% of secondary school children.
2. Just under half (47%) of parents now feel that the school places an equal focus on both good results and the content of learning.
3. There has been a significant decline this year in the belief that their child's school places greater focus on getting good results rather than the content of learning (23% in 2020 to 18% in 2021).
4. A majority of parents feel that the school that their child attends covers the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) sufficiently, with 78% agreeing that English is well covered.
5. Parents with primary-age children are less likely to feel that science is sufficiently covered than those with secondary-age children. This is the only 'core' subject that has this differentiation.

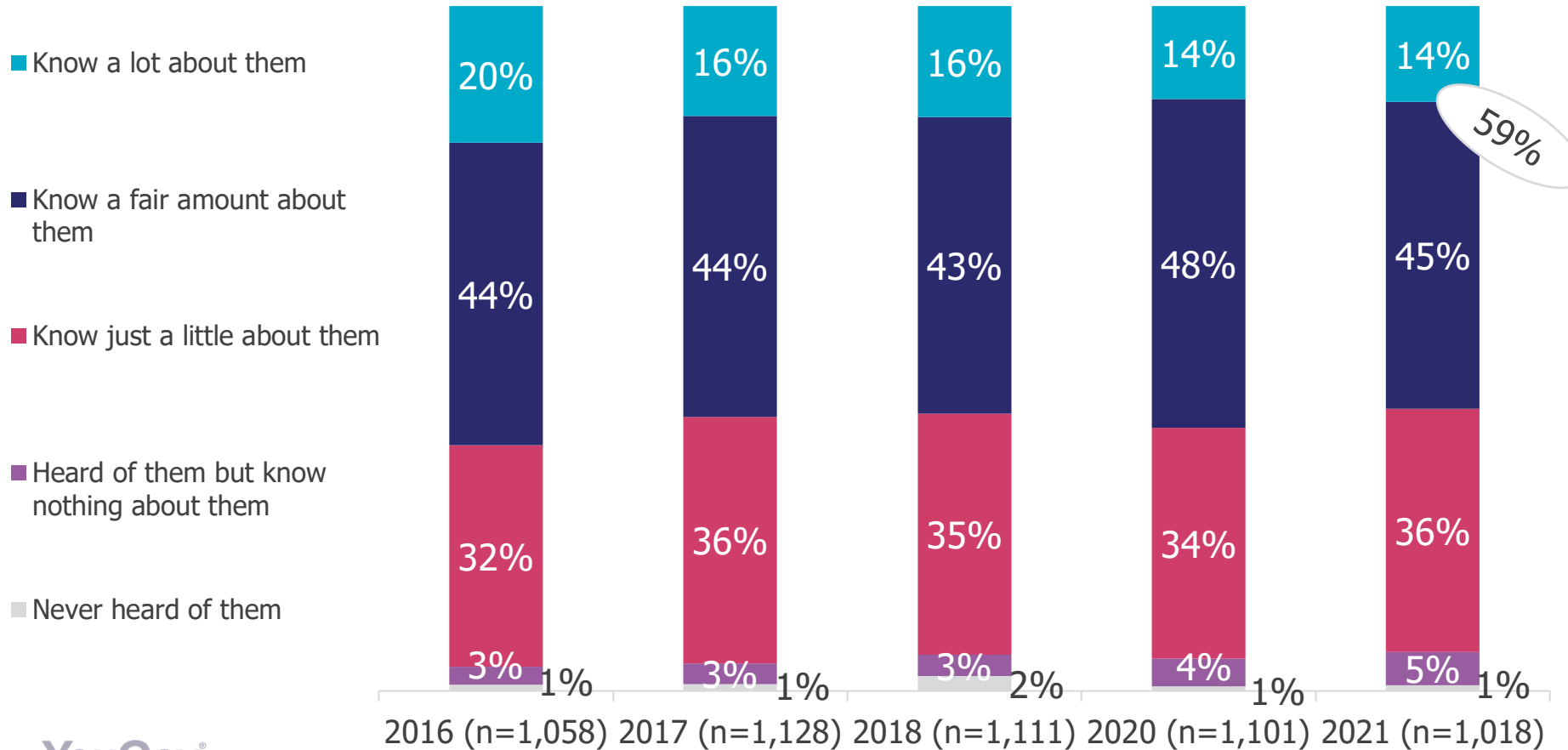
COVID-19 (coronavirus)

1. The large majority of parents think that their child's school handled COVID-19 well (87%).
2. Likewise, seven in ten (69%) report receiving guidance or training to help support remote learning. This is significantly higher among those who have children in primary school (74%) compared with secondary school (63%)
3. Two thirds of parents report being concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their child's learning loss (67%). This is followed by concern over mental health (65%) and physical health (45%).

Awareness and perceptions of Ofsted

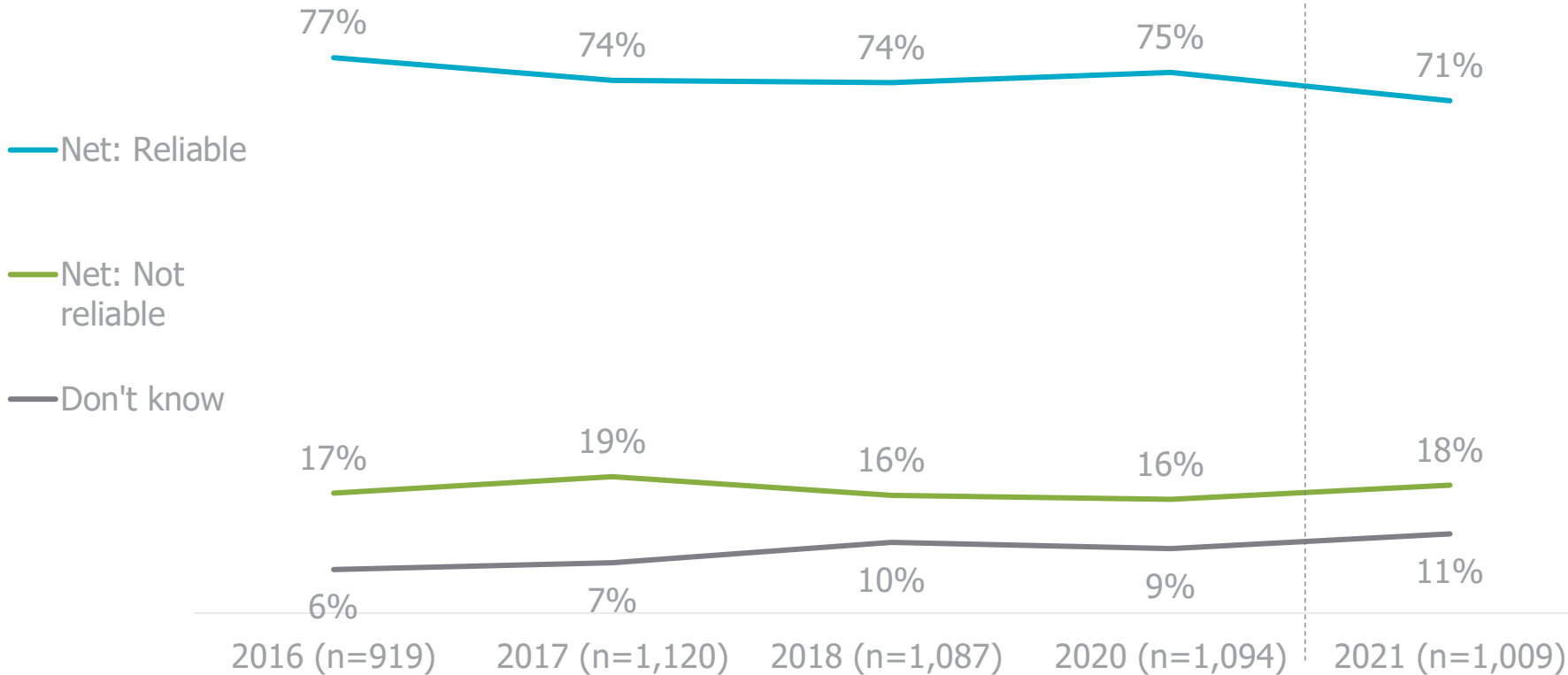
Awareness of Ofsted remains very high, with over nine in ten (94%) reporting they know at least a little about them. Of those aware, the majority report knowing a fair amount or a lot (59%).

Knowledge of Ofsted



Seven in ten parents in England believe that the information in Ofsted reports is reliable; this increases among those who said they have read a report (78%).

Reliability of information



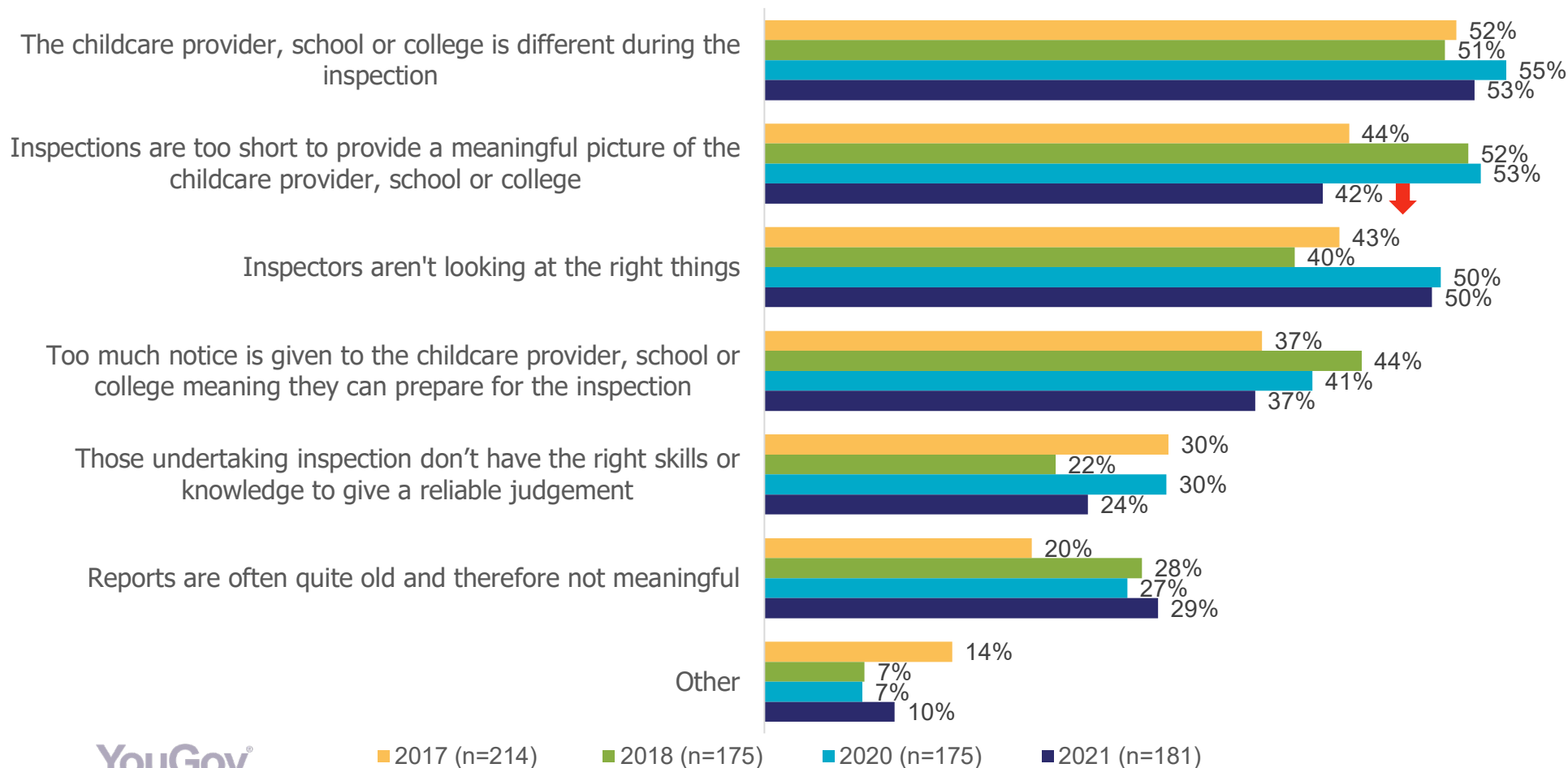
Parents who have read an Ofsted report are much more likely to feel that the information Ofsted provides in reports is reliable than those who have not read a report (78% vs 57%).

The proportion who agree it is reliable increases among those who are aware of their child's setting's last inspection grade. Three quarters (76%) of this audience state this, compared with just under half (48%) of those who don't know.

Note: question text* changed in 2021, caution is advised when comparing.

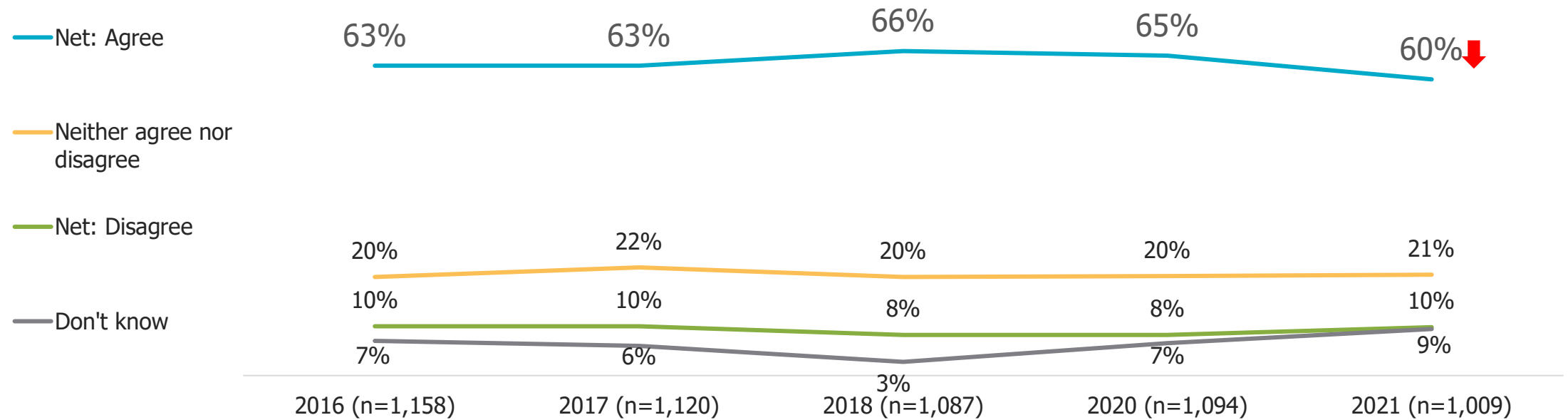
Of those who do feel that the information in Ofsted reports is unreliable, the most cited reasons for this are that the provider is different during Ofsted inspections and that inspections are too short to be meaningful, although the latter has declined since last year.

Reasons for unreliability



Three in five parents agree that Ofsted is a valuable source of information about childcare locally, a decline since last year.

Ofsted is a valuable source of information about childcare in your local area



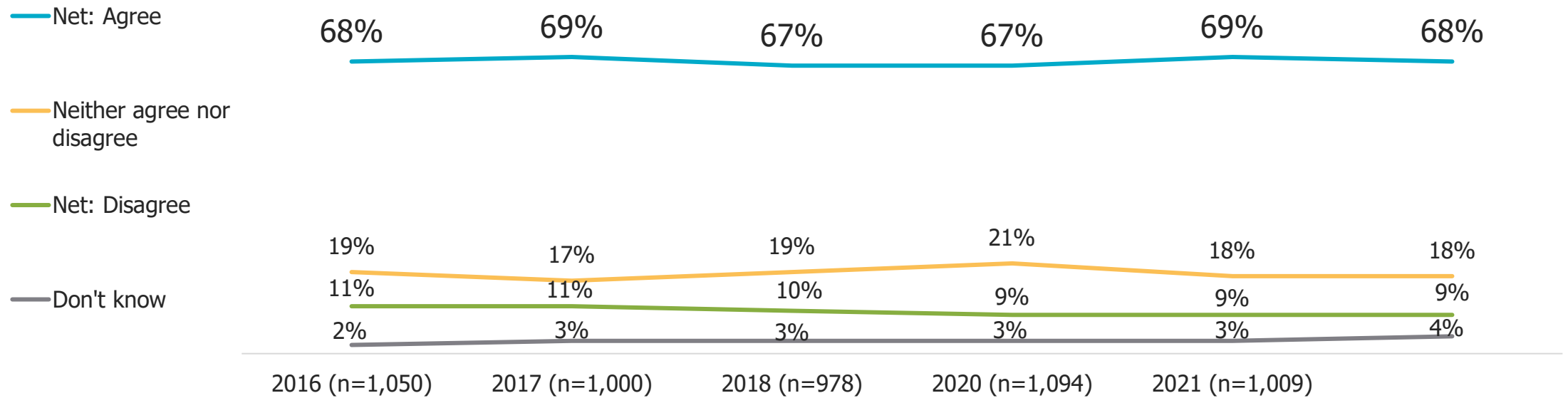
Parents of children in nursery are most likely to agree with this statement (74%), compared with 59% of those with school-age children. While this is most likely as a result of school children's parents' lack of knowledge on this, as their levels of disagreement are similar, parents of school children have seen a significant decline in agreement since 2020 (64%).

Possibly linked to this, parents aged 18–34 are most likely to agree with this statement, with seven in ten (69%) agreeing, compared with six in ten (58%) of those aged 35+. As previously, parents aged 35 and over also experienced a significant decline in agreement since 2020 (64%).

Comparably, agreement that Ofsted is a valuable source of information on education remains unchanged since 2016, at seven out of ten parents.



Ofsted is a valuable source of information about education in your local area



Although there is no difference in agreement, parents with children at secondary school are more likely to disagree (12%), compared with those who have children in primary school (8%).

Parents of nursery-age children are most likely to agree with this statement (78%), compared with just over two thirds of those with school-age children (67%).

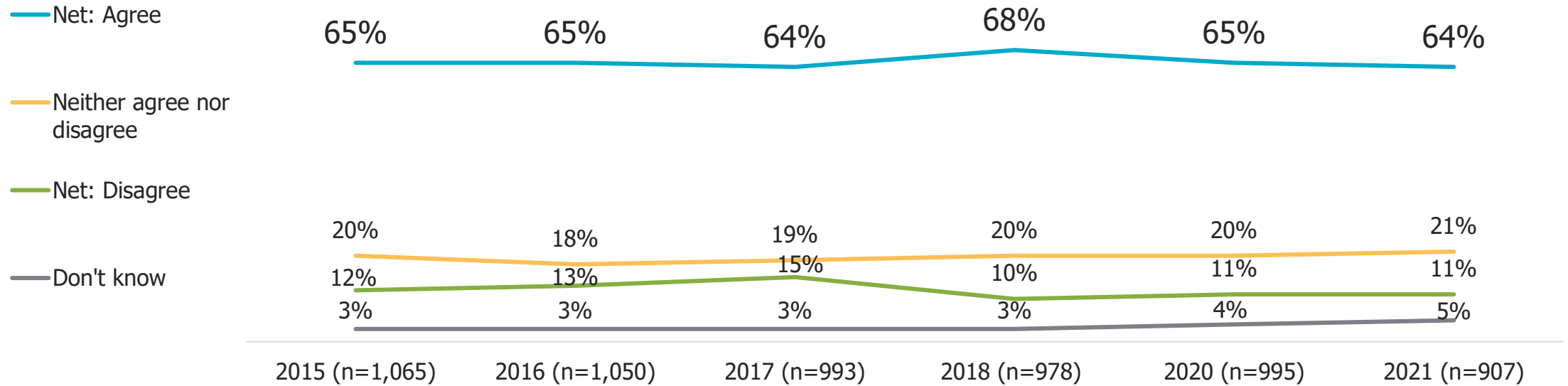


Q23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Base: parents of a school-age child who have heard of Ofsted.)

Likewise, agreement that Ofsted's work helps to improve standards of education is level at just under two thirds (64%).



Ofsted's work helps to improve standards of education



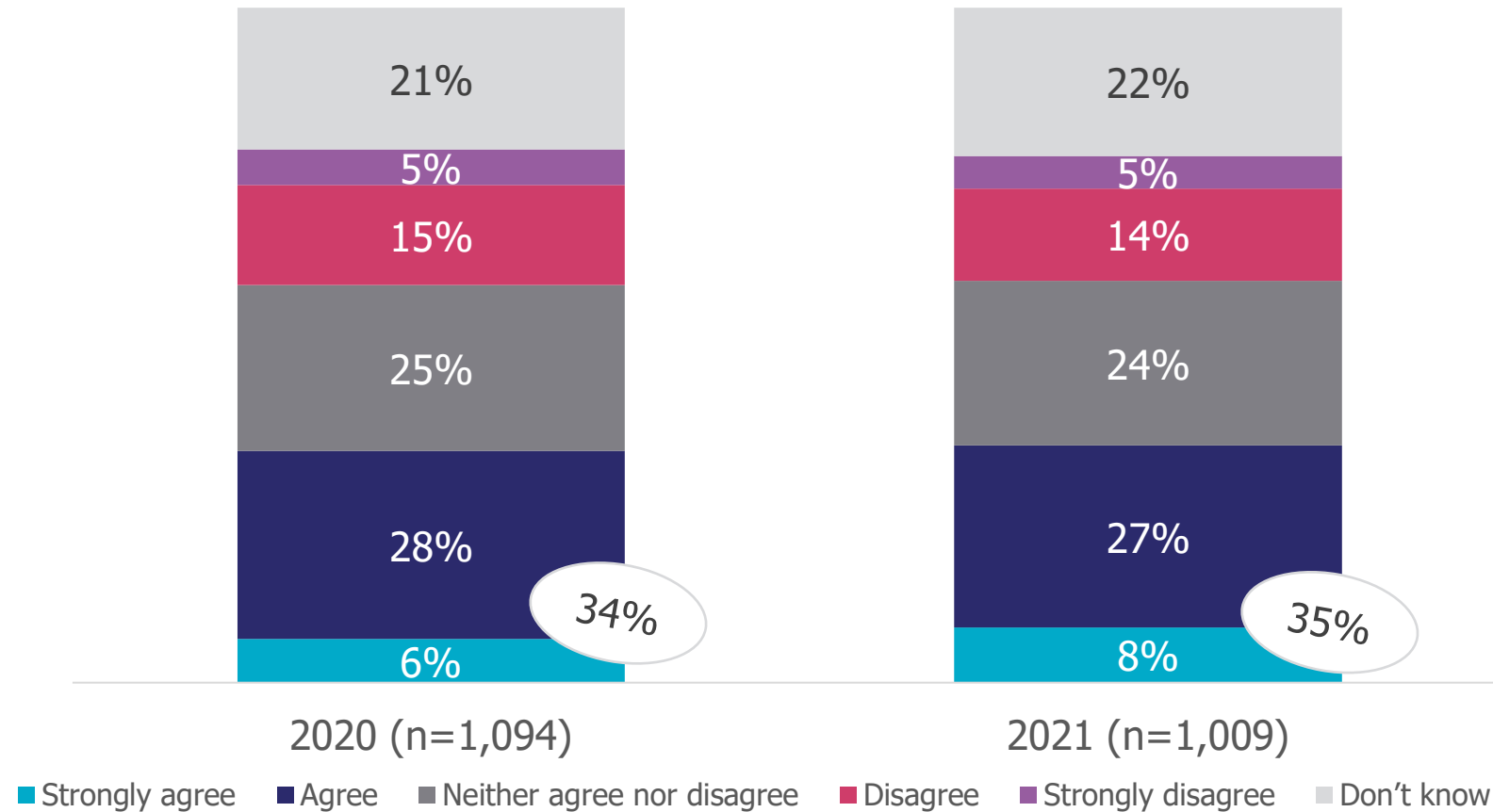
Those who are aware of their child's school's Ofsted rating are most likely to agree with this statement. Of this audience, two thirds (67%) agree, compared with just under half (48%) of those who are not aware of the rating.

Those whose child attends school in London are most likely to agree (73%), while those in the North West (57%) are least likely to.



Agreement that Ofsted acts independently of the government is stable year on year, with just over a third agreeing (35%). Those who report they know more about Ofsted are more likely to agree than those who reporting knowing little or nothing.

Ofsted acts independently of government

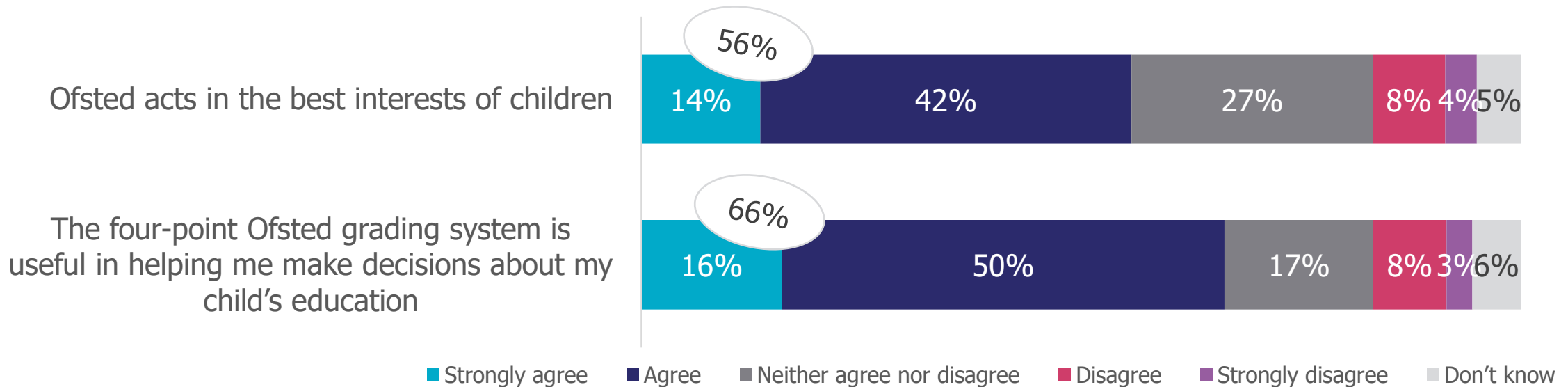


Those who report they know either a fair amount or a lot about Ofsted are more likely to agree that Ofsted acts independently of the government, compared with those who report they know just a little or know nothing (39% vs 29%).

Parents are favourable towards the four-point grading system, with two thirds (66%) agreeing it helps them to make decisions about their child's education. Over half (56%) believe Ofsted acts in the best interests of children.

Agreement on Ofsted

2021 = 1,009

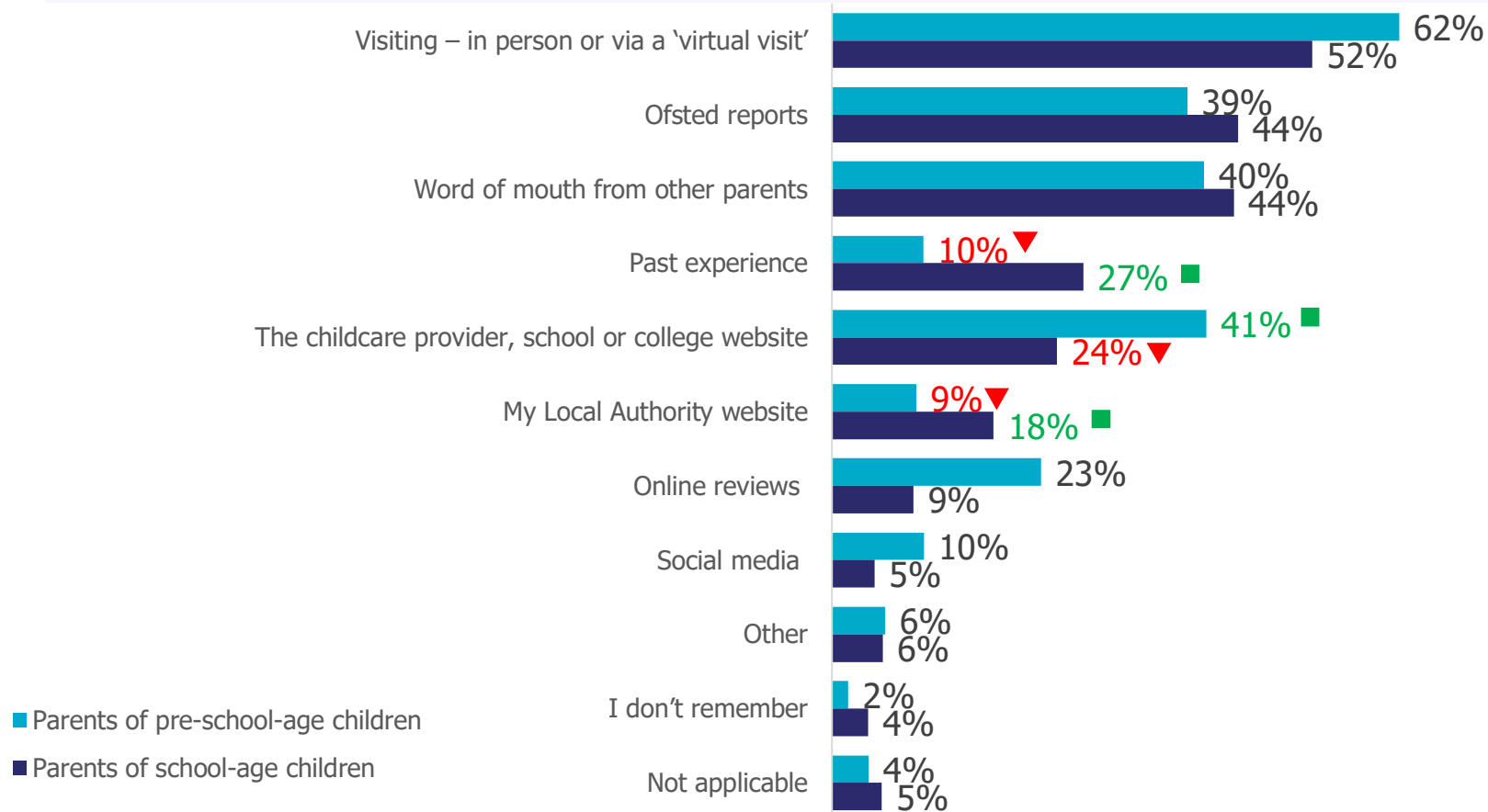


Those who have read an Ofsted report (72%) are more likely to agree that Ofsted's grading system is useful in helping make decisions about their child's education, compared with 54% of those who have not.

Choosing a provider

For parents of both nursery and school-age children, visiting is their main source of information about whether a provider would be right for their child. Parents of school age children are more likely to rely on past experience and local authority websites.

Go to for information on the provider

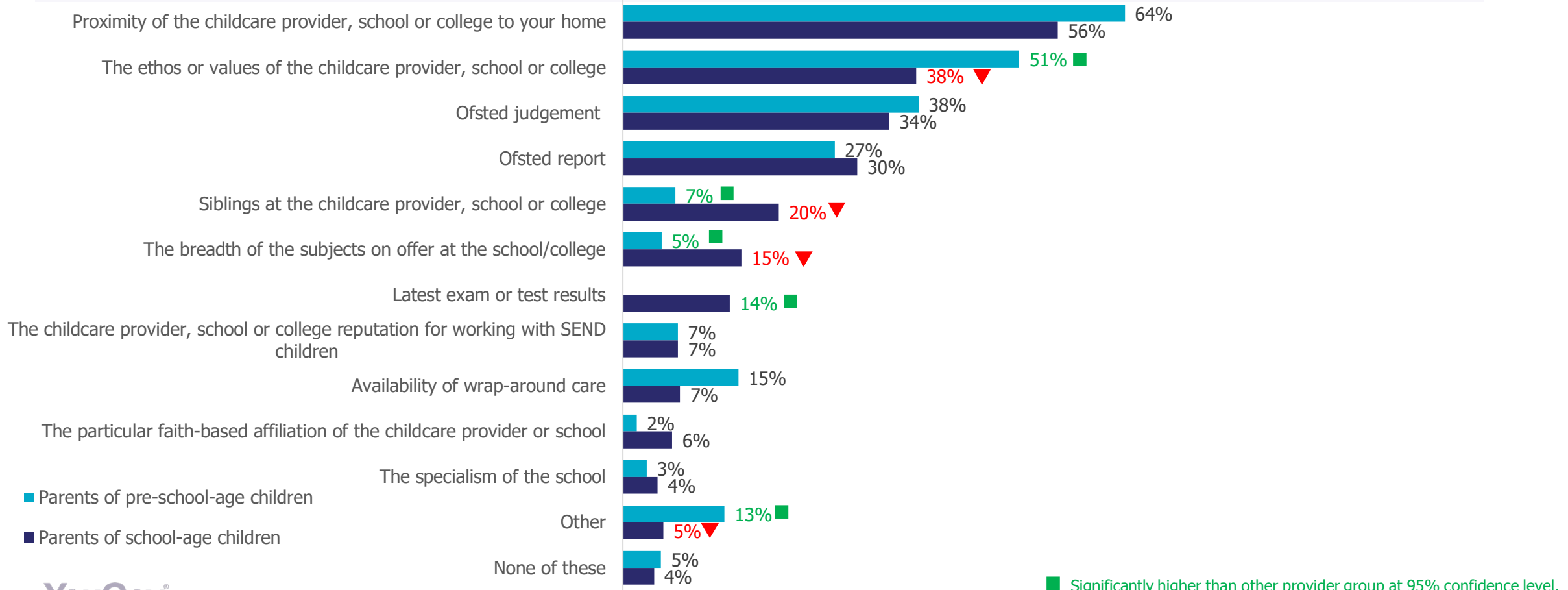


■ Significantly higher than other provider group at 95% confidence level.

▼ Significantly lower than other provider group at 95% confidence level.

Proximity of the provider is the decisive factor in the final choice, followed by the provider's ethos and the Ofsted judgement. While ethos is most important for pre-school parents, parents of school-age children are more likely to cite latest exam or test results or breadth of subjects.

Decisive factor for parents' choice of provider

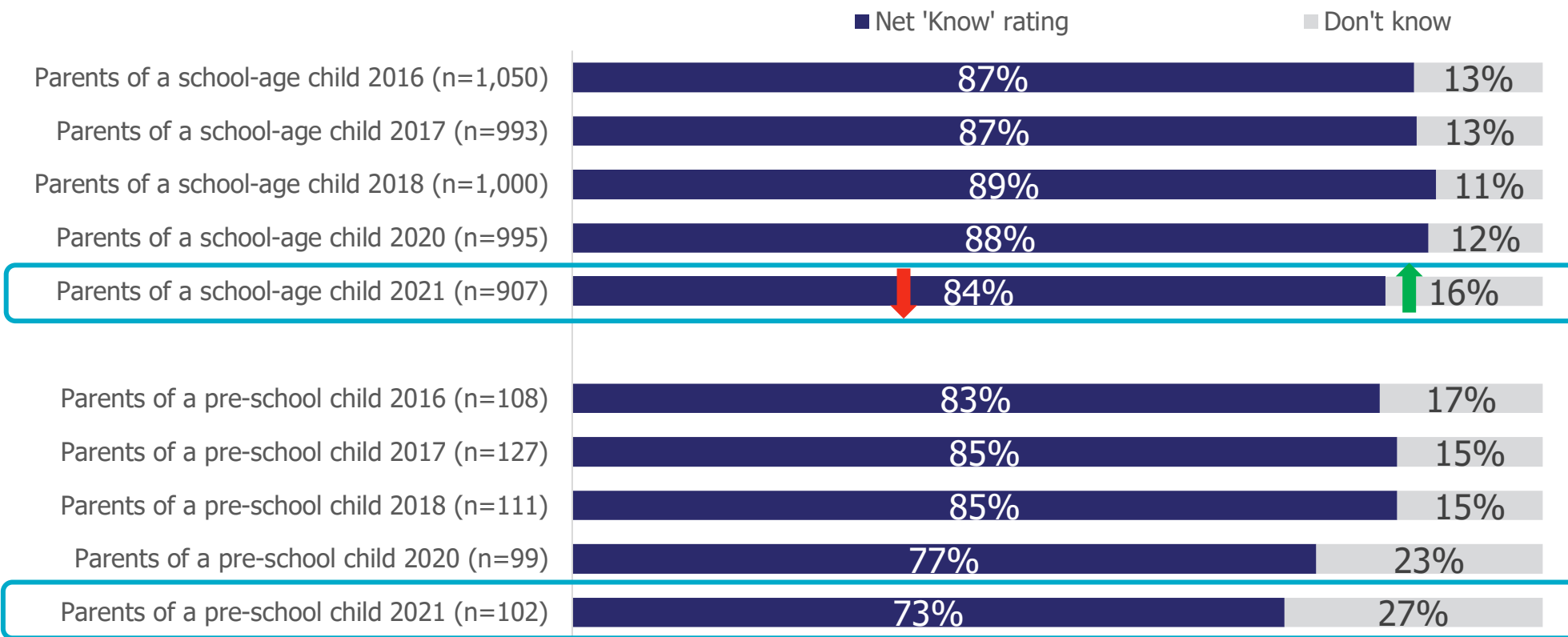


Ofsted ratings and inspection reports

Overall, 84% of all parents of school-age children are aware of Ofsted's rating at their last inspection, a decline since last year, while awareness among pre-school parents is stable.



Awareness of Ofsted grade



This decline in recall for parents of school-age children could be as a result of the suspension of standard inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

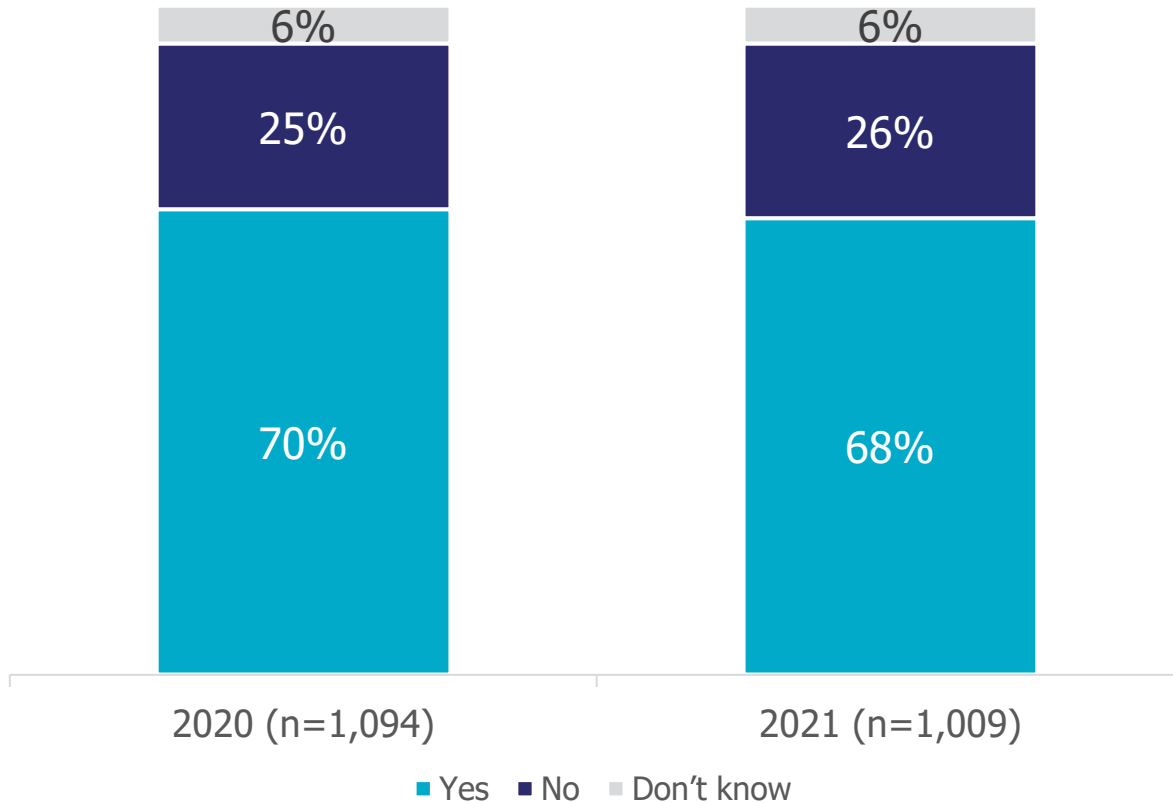
Parents of school-age children are more likely than pre-school-age children to be aware of the Ofsted rating at the last inspection.



Q6. What grade was your child's childcare provider, school or college given at the last inspection? (Base: all parents who have heard of Ofsted.)

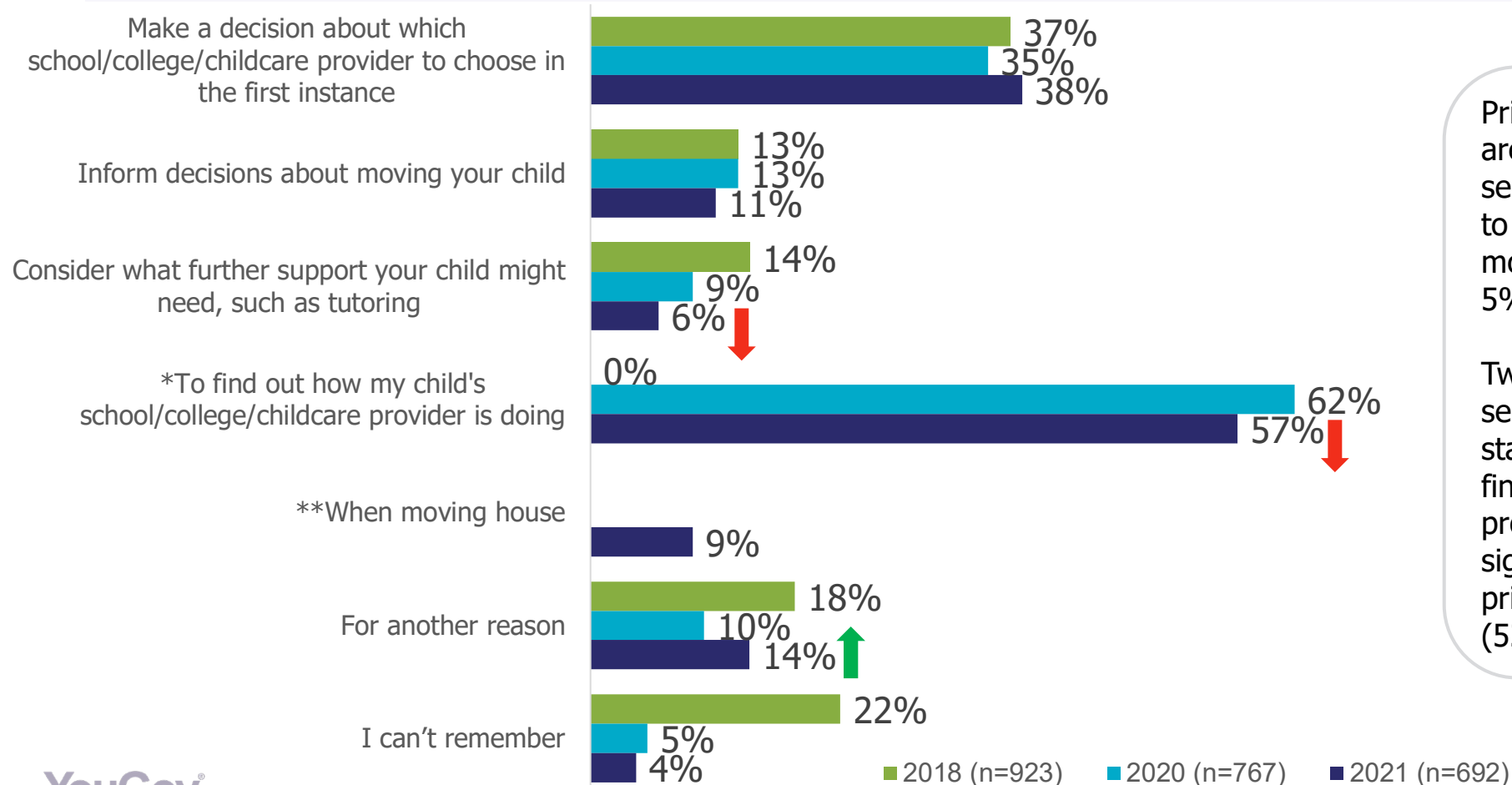
Similar to last year, 68% of parents state they have read an Ofsted report at some point.

Read an Ofsted report



Parents are most likely to use a report to find out how their child's provider is doing (57%), although this has declined since last year.

Reasons for reading report

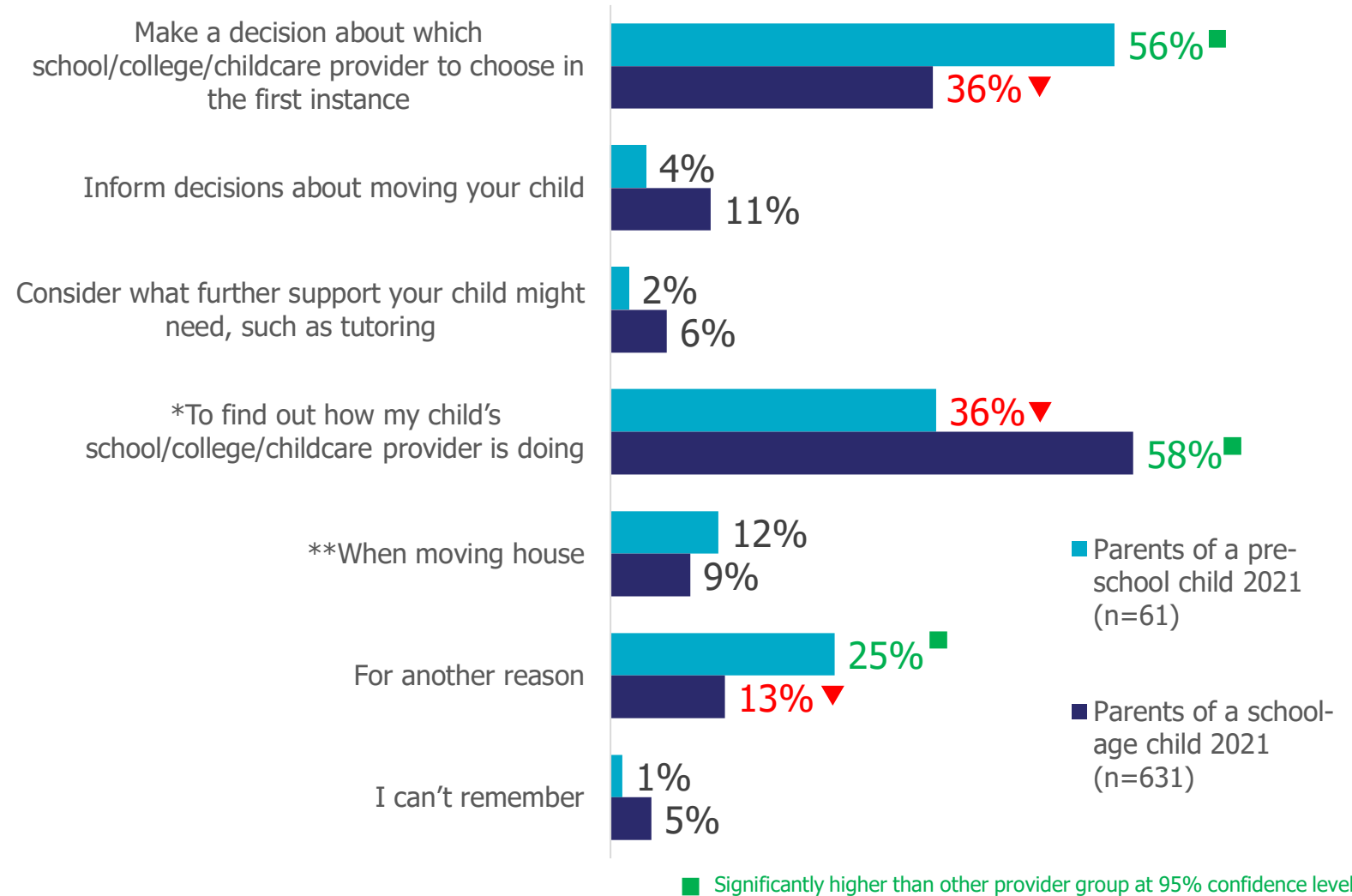


Primary school parents are more likely than secondary school parents to report reading it when moving house (13% vs 5%).

Two thirds (65%) of secondary school parents state they read reports to find out how their child's provider is doing. This is significantly higher than primary school parents (52%).

Parents of school-aged children were most likely to have read an Ofsted report to see how the school is doing, while parents of younger children are more likely to have read a report to decide on the provider initially.

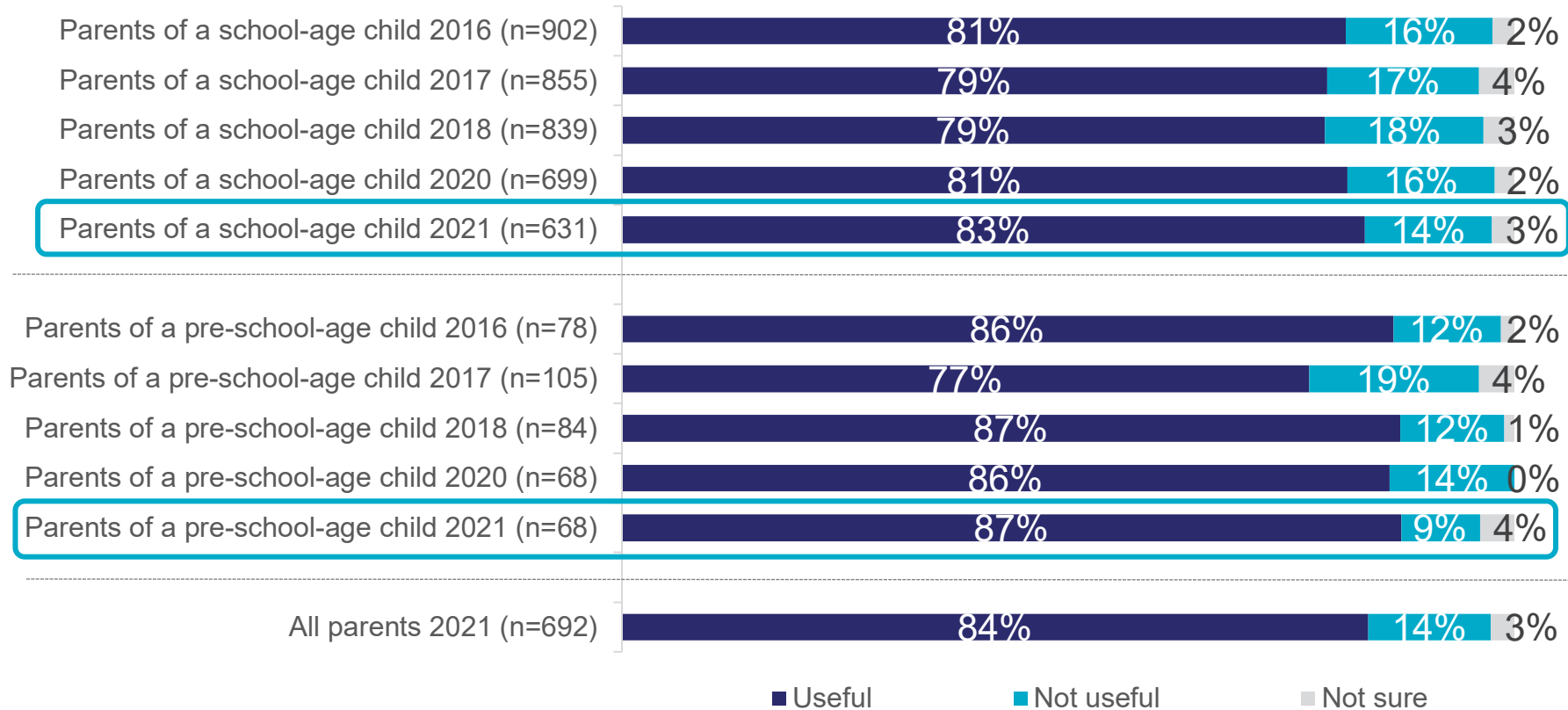
Reasons for reading report: school-age vs pre-school-age



Q11. If you have read an Ofsted inspection report, what did you use the report for? (Base: parents who have read an Ofsted report)
 *Asked for the first time in 2020. **Asked for the first time in 2021.

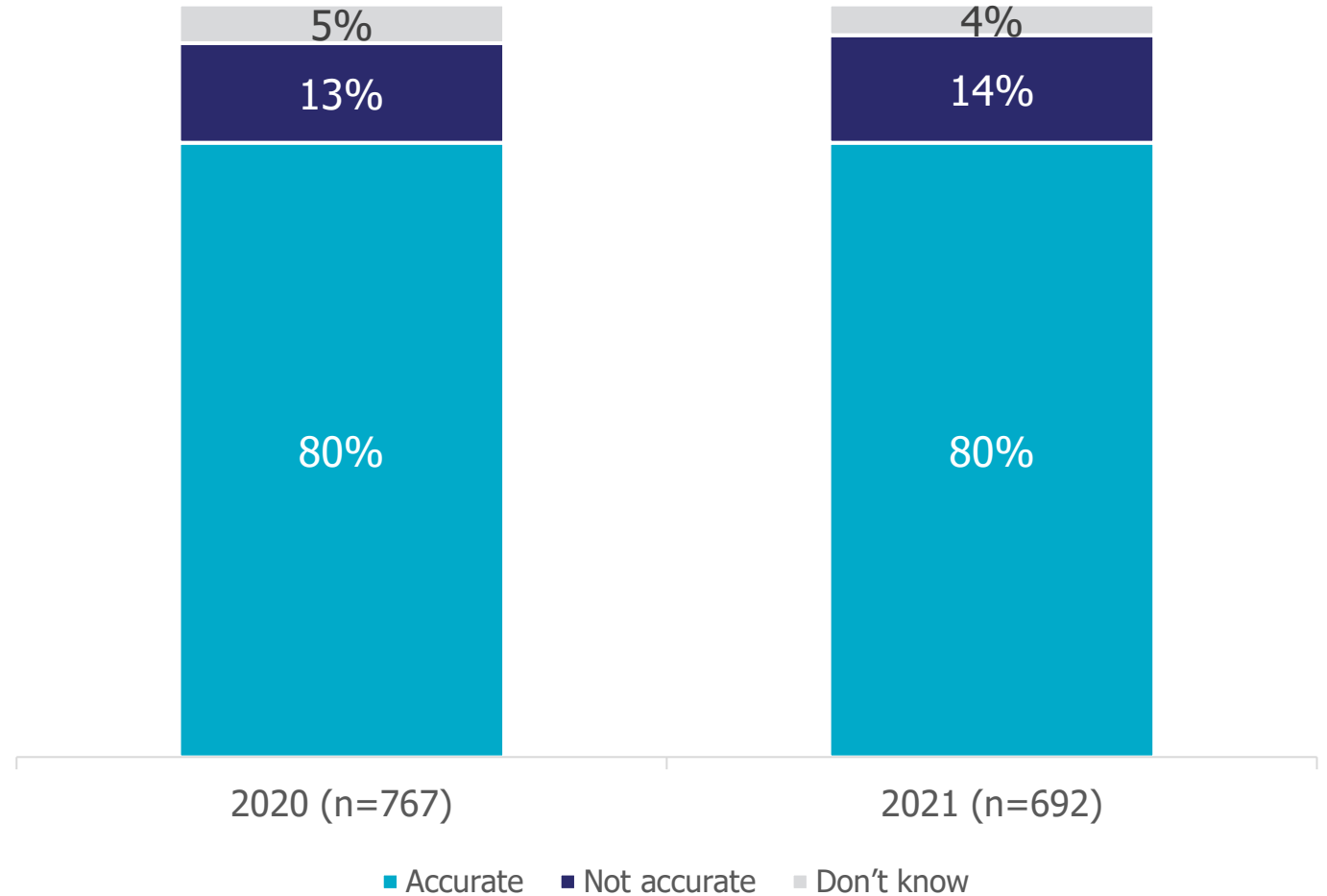
With minimal change year on year, 83% of parents with school-age children and 87% of parents with pre-school-age children found the Ofsted report they read useful.

Ofsted report is useful



Four in five parents who read a report felt it portrayed an accurate picture of the school or childcare provider; 13% felt it was not accurate.

Accuracy of Ofsted report for school or childcare provider

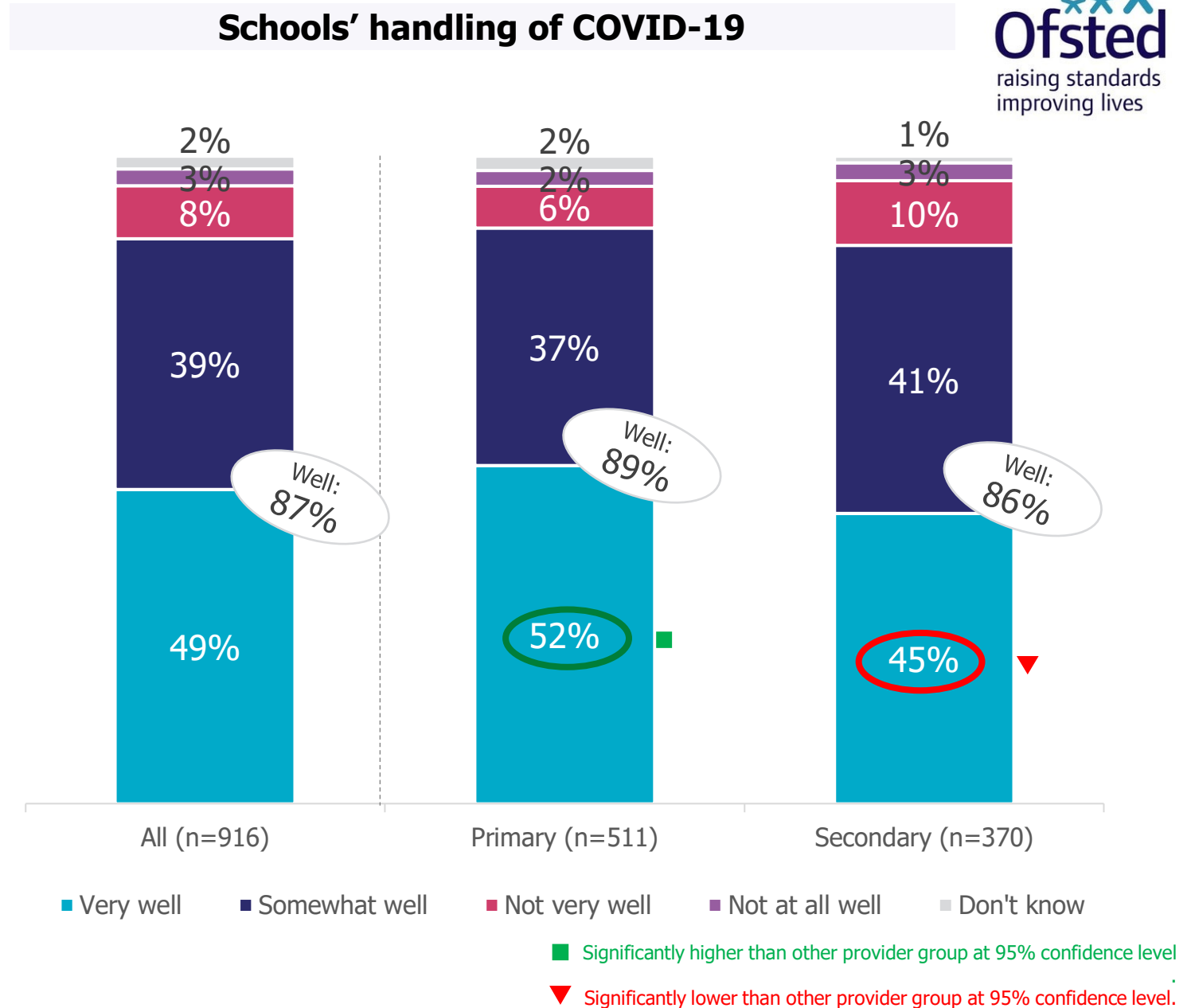


Q12a. After reading the report, to what extent, if at all, do you feel that it portrayed an accurate picture of the school, college or childcare provider? (Base: all parents who have read an Ofsted report.)

Impact of COVID-19

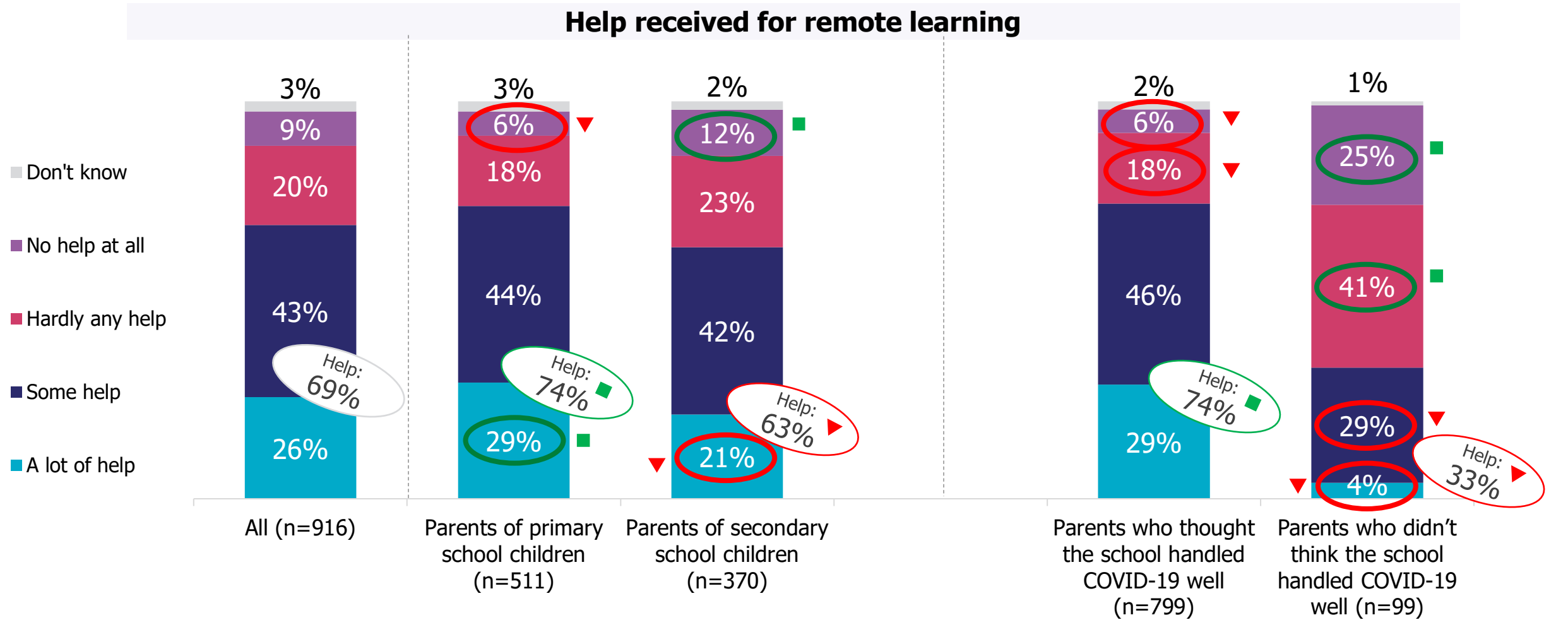
Close to nine in ten parents believe their child's school has handled COVID-19 well.

Those who report they are well informed about what their children are learning are most likely to say the school has handled COVID-19 well (93%) compared with 70% who don't feel well informed.



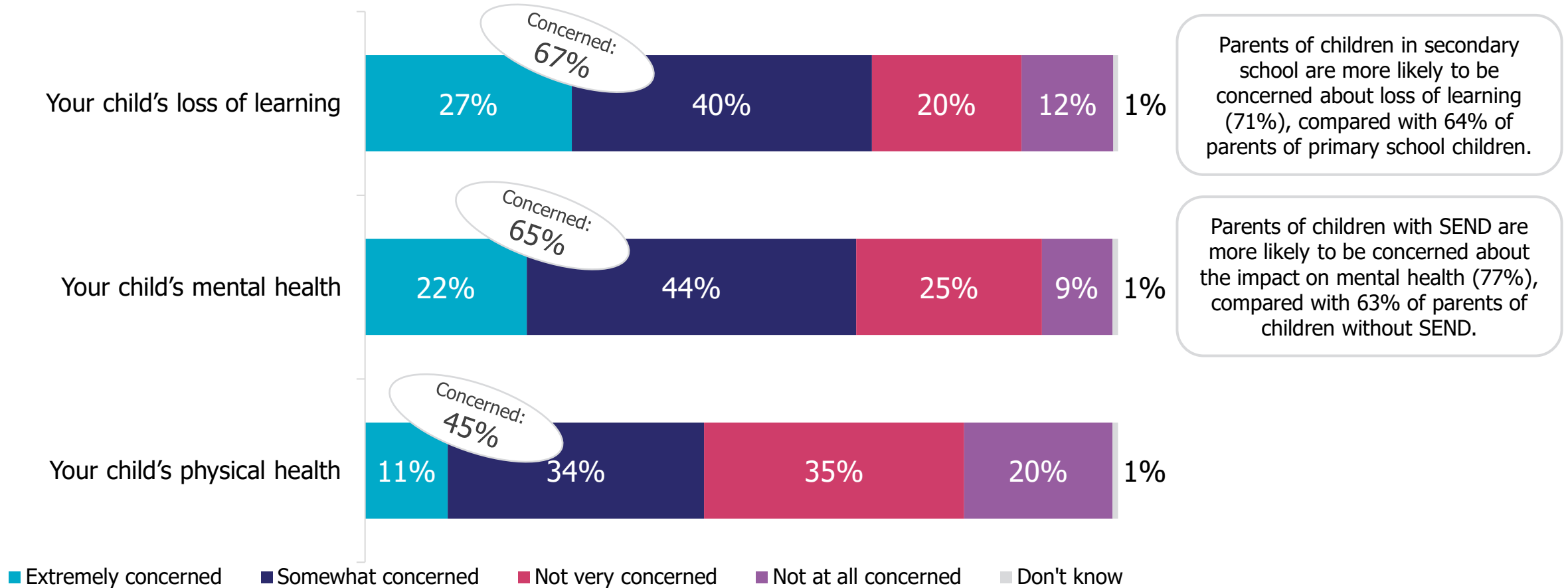
COVID1. How well do you think your child's school handled the COVID-19 crisis? (Base: all parents of school children (n=916).)

Two thirds report having received guidance or training to help with remote learning from their child's school, with parents of primary school children most likely to state this.



Close to two thirds report concern over the impact of COVID-19 on their child's loss of learning and their mental health.

Concern of COVID-19's impact

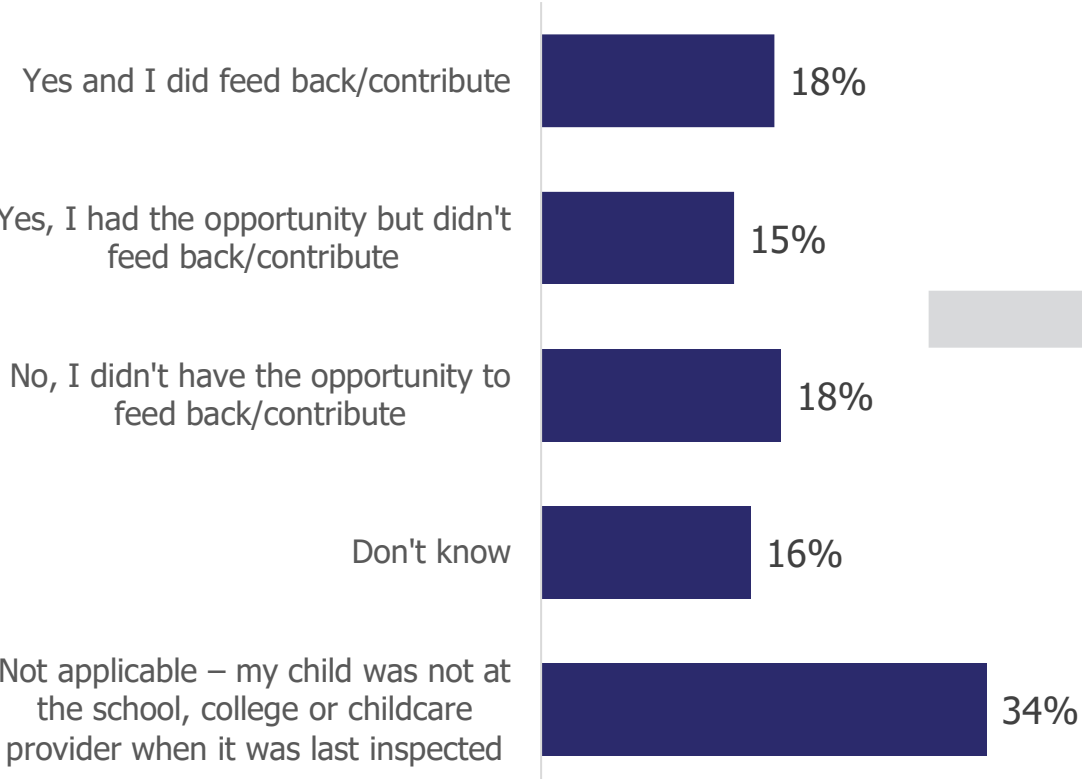


Obtaining and sharing parents' views

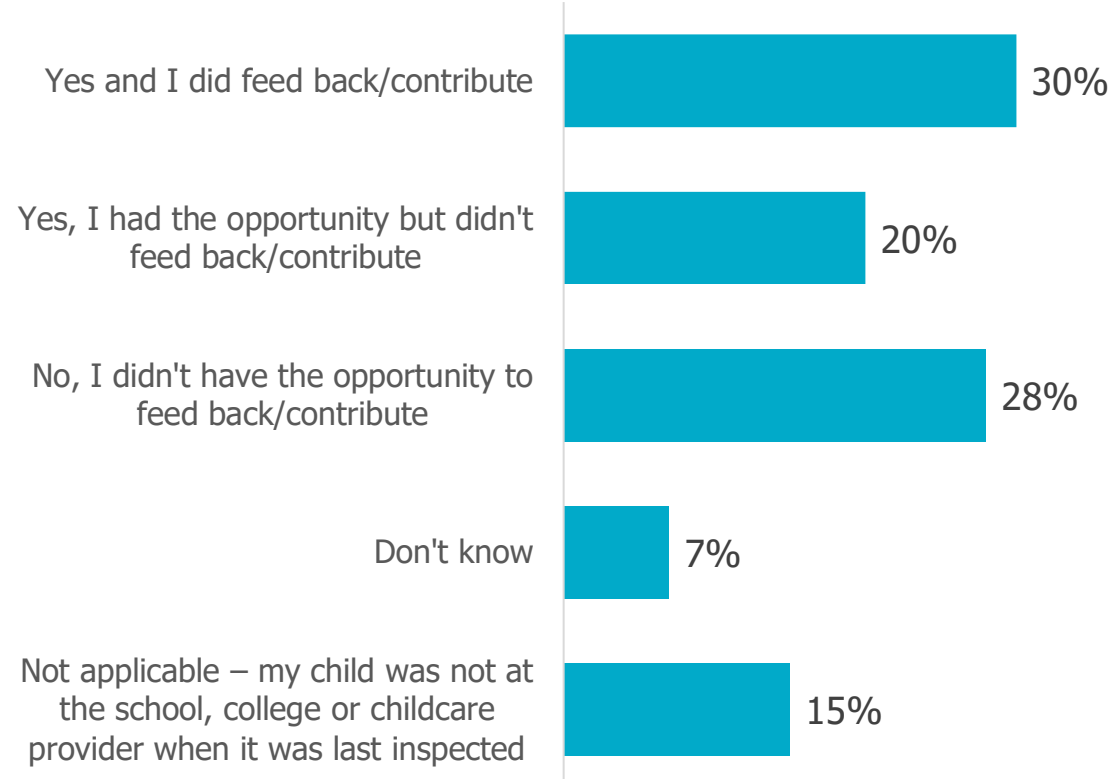
A fifth of parents who had a child in the school at the most recent inspection felt they did not get a chance to contribute feedback.



Chance to contribute during last inspection



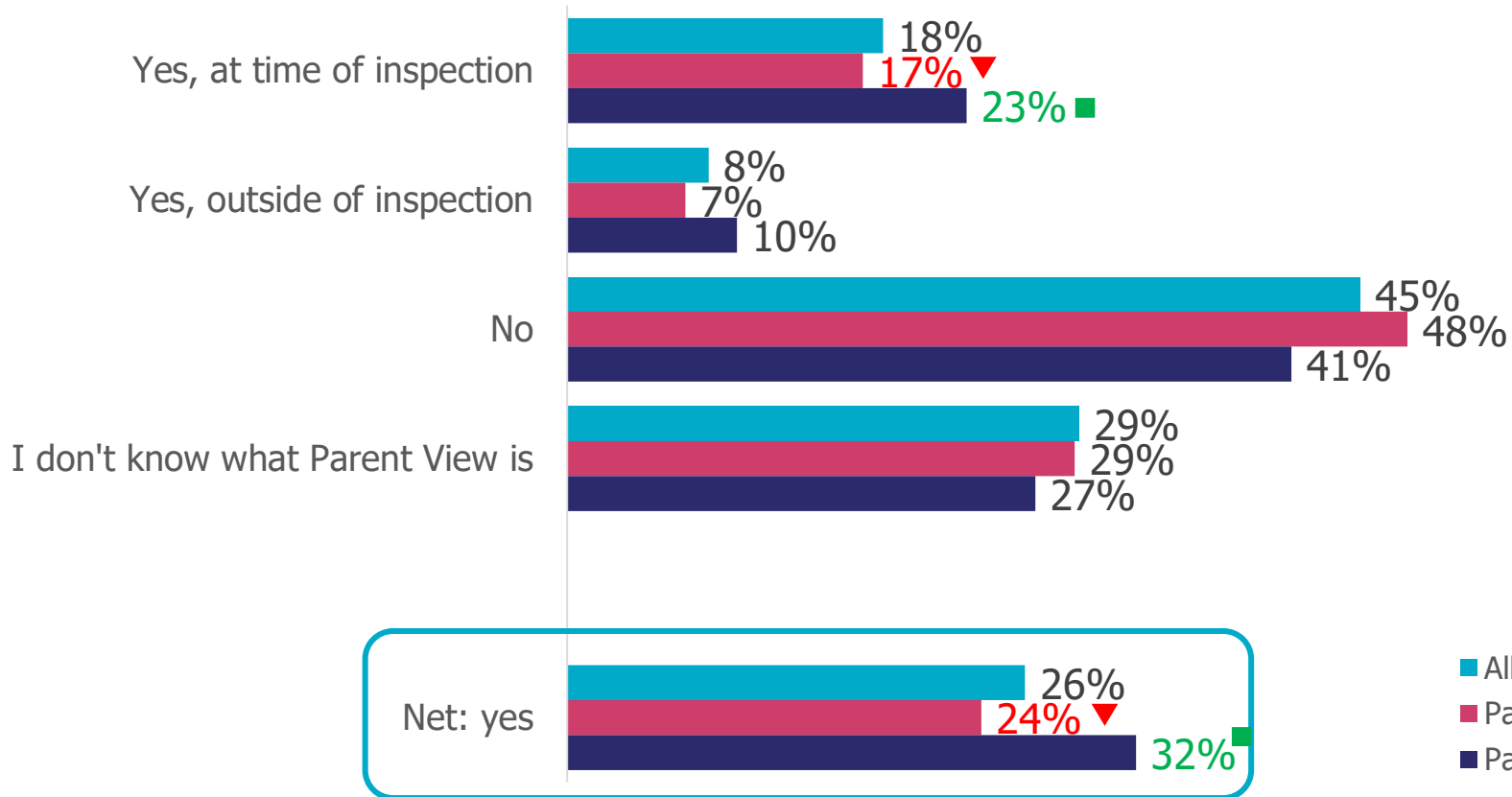
Chance to contribute during last inspection (school inspected within last two years)



A3_2020. When your child's school was last inspected, did you, as a parent, get a chance to feed back or contribute? (Base: those who had a child at the school when it was last inspected and all parents who have heard of Ofsted (n=1,009; if school was inspected within last two years n=277).)

Overall, a quarter (26%) of parents have completed a Parent View survey. Most are parents of secondary-school-age children.

Completed a Parent View survey



Most likely to complete Parent View:

Parents of children with SEND are more likely than parents of children without SEND (45% vs 24%).

Parents who have read an Ofsted report are more likely than parents who haven't (33% vs 10%).

Parents who are aware of the setting's last inspection grade are more likely than those who aren't (30% vs 8%).

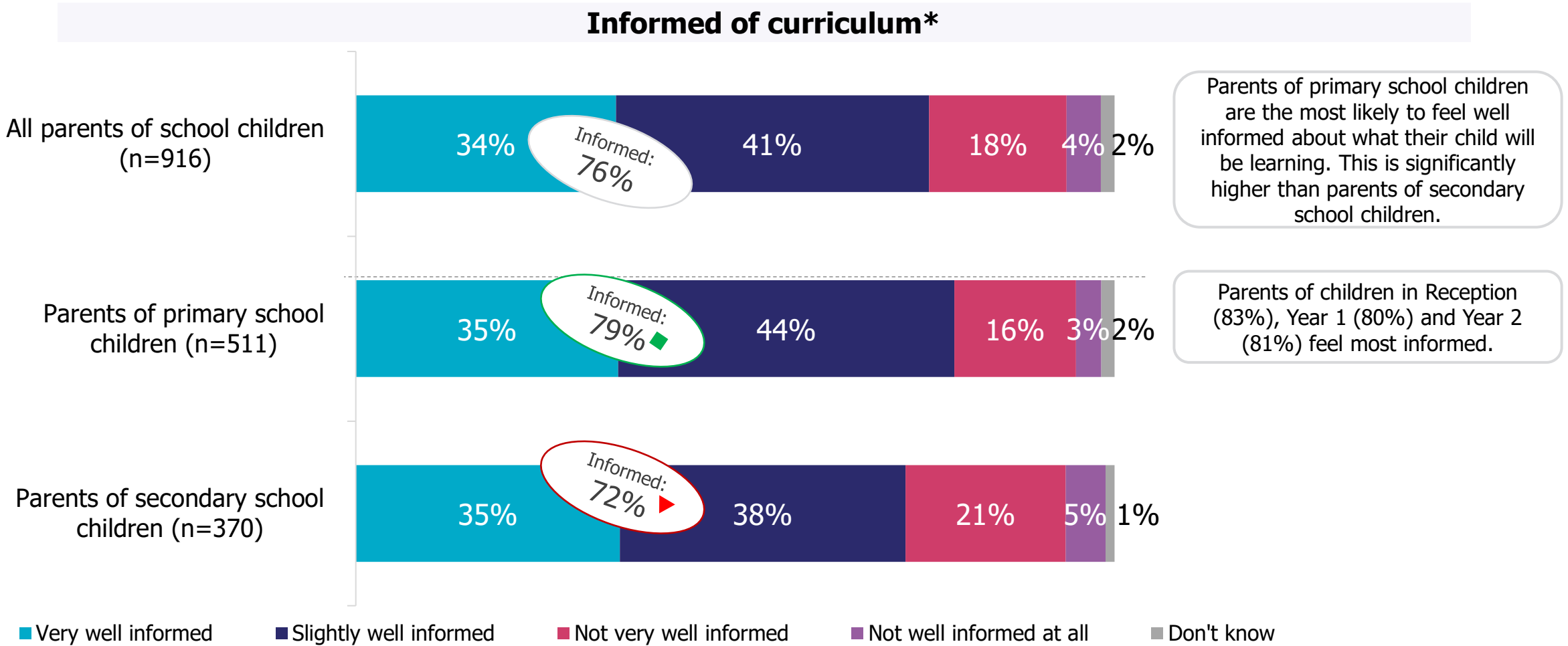
- All aware of Ofsted (n=1,009)
- Parents of primary school children 2021 (n=504)
- Parents of secondary school children 2021 (n=369)

■ Significantly higher than other provider group at 95% confidence level.

▼ Significantly lower than other provider group at 95% confidence level.

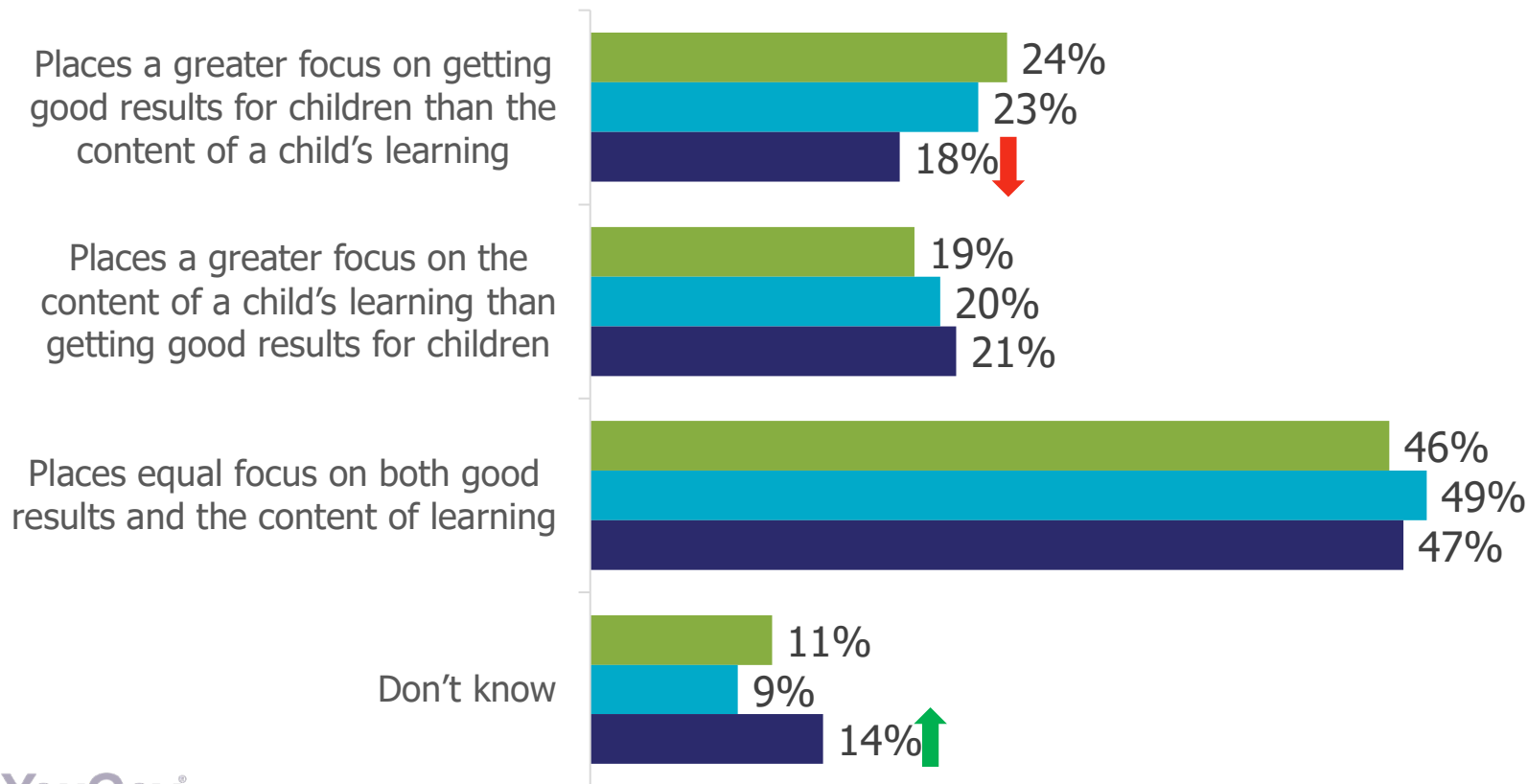
Perceptions towards the curriculum

Three quarters of parents feel they have been well informed about their child's curriculum.



Parents remain most likely to feel that the school places an equal focus on both results and learning. The belief that there is a greater focus on getting good grades has declined since last year.

Opinion of content of child's learning



Parents of secondary school children are more likely to report the focus is on getting good results rather than the content of learning (23%) compared with 18% of parents of primary school children (15%).

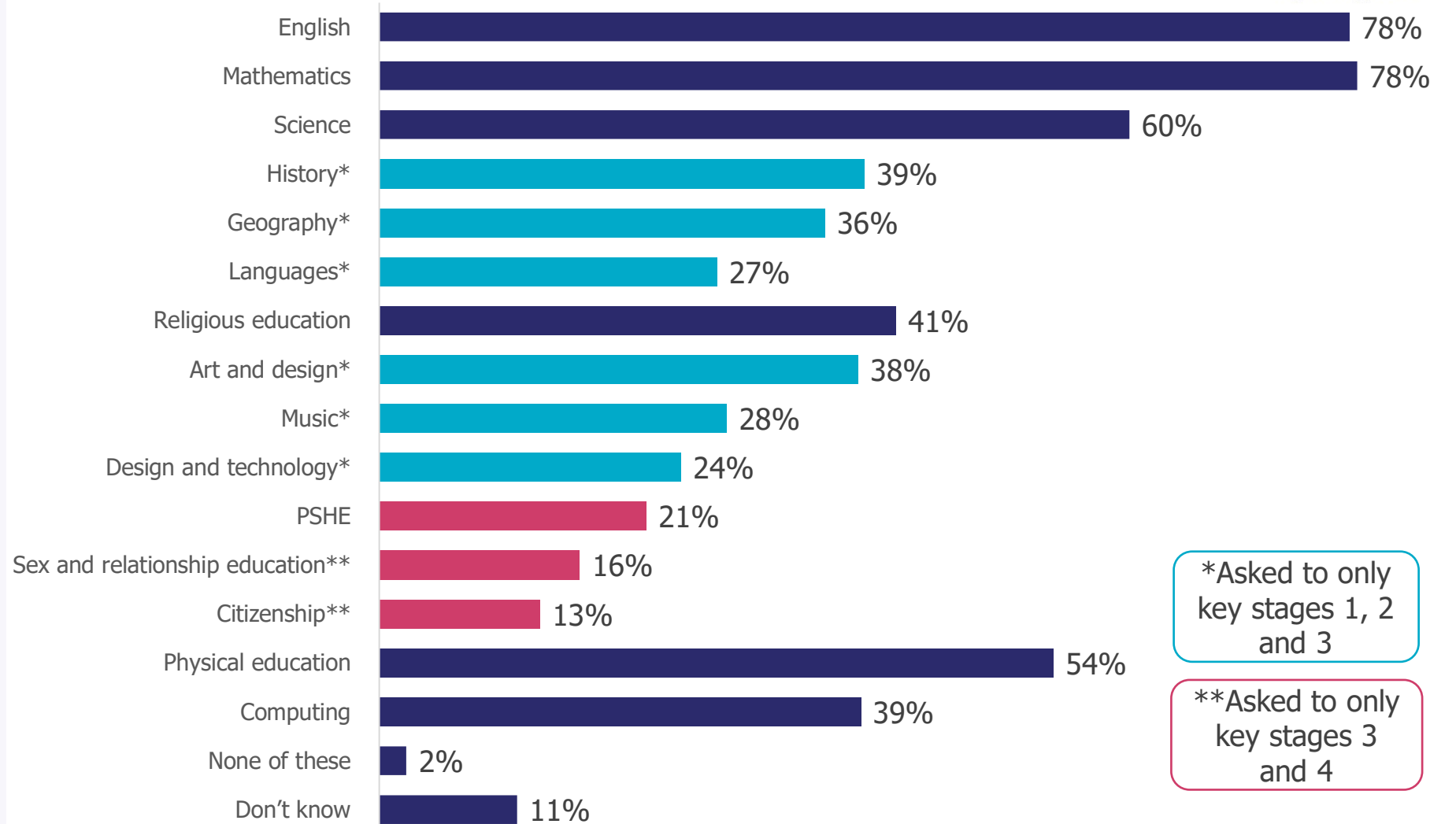
Comparatively, a quarter (25%) of primary school parents think there is a greater focus on the content of the learning. This is significantly higher than secondary school parents (15%).

Parents who previously said they are well informed are the most likely to report that the school places an equal focus on results and content (54%). Comparatively, significantly less (28%) of those who didn't feel informed report this.

■ 2018 (n=1,000)
 ■ 2020 (n=1,002)
 ■ 2021 (n=916)

Parents are most likely to feel 'core' subjects of mathematics and English are well covered. However, comparatively, science sees lower levels of agreement.

Covering of subjects



*Asked to only key stages 1, 2 and 3

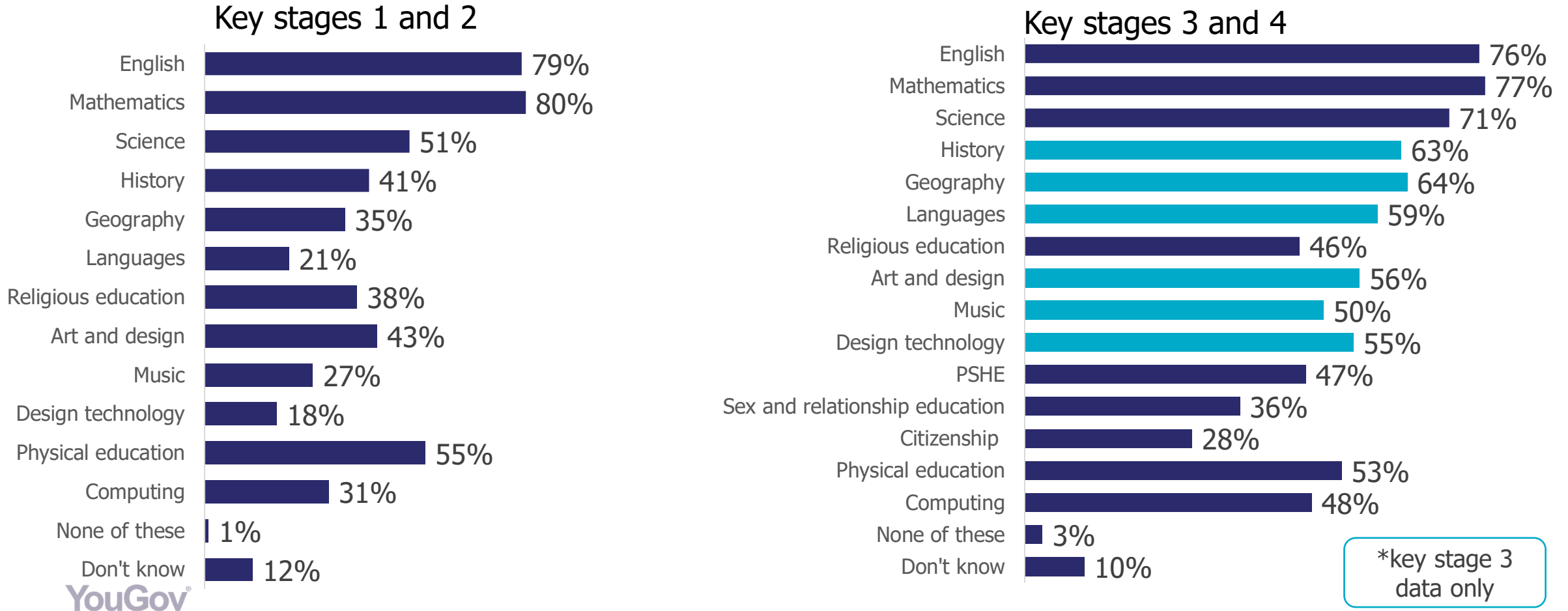
**Asked to only key stages 3 and 4

QC4a_rb/2/3. Which, if any, of the following main subject areas do you feel that your child's education sufficiently covers? Please select all that apply. (Base: all parents of school children (n=916).)

*Caution advised when analysing subjects that were not shown to all – overall percentages will be lower for those that were not asked to the whole sample due to averaging. For a breakdown by key stage, please use the next slide.

A similar story can be seen when looking at key stage. Parents of key stage 3 and 4 pupils more commonly report science as being sufficiently covered compared with parents of key stage 1 and 2 pupils.

Covering of subjects by key stage



QC4a_rb/2/3. Which, if any, of the following main subject areas do you feel that your child's education sufficiently covers? Please select all that apply. (Base: all parents of school children (key stage 1 and 2 n=533; key stage 3 n=228; key stage 4 n=155).)

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