



**FUTURE FWD**  
ENABLING NEXTGEN



Survey 2023 -  
unique insights into our  
future-readiness



MARKET RESEARCH | DATA INSIGHTS | BUSINESS STRATEGY



# Are young adults appropriately prepared for the world of tomorrow?

At MTM, our expertise is in using data-driven insights to support evidence-led decision-making. Working with FutureFWD to build on last year's survey, we evolved the platform to understand the perceptions around the requirements of an education from both parents and, new for this year, business owners.

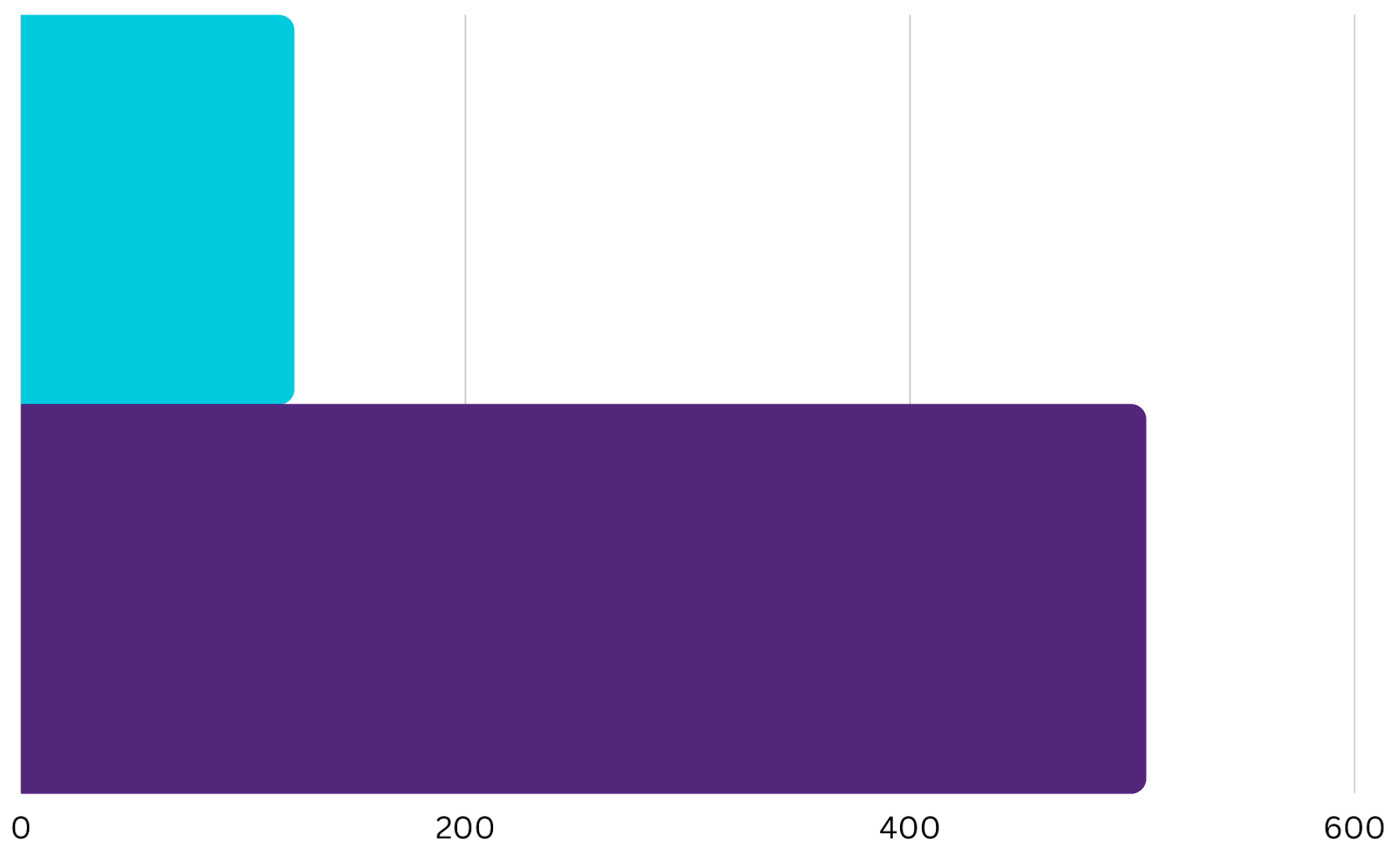
We asked them:

- What an education for young people should contain
- Who was responsible for the education in each area
- What employers are looking for in young adults
- The relevance of attainment levels
- Whether young people leave school appropriately prepared for the future

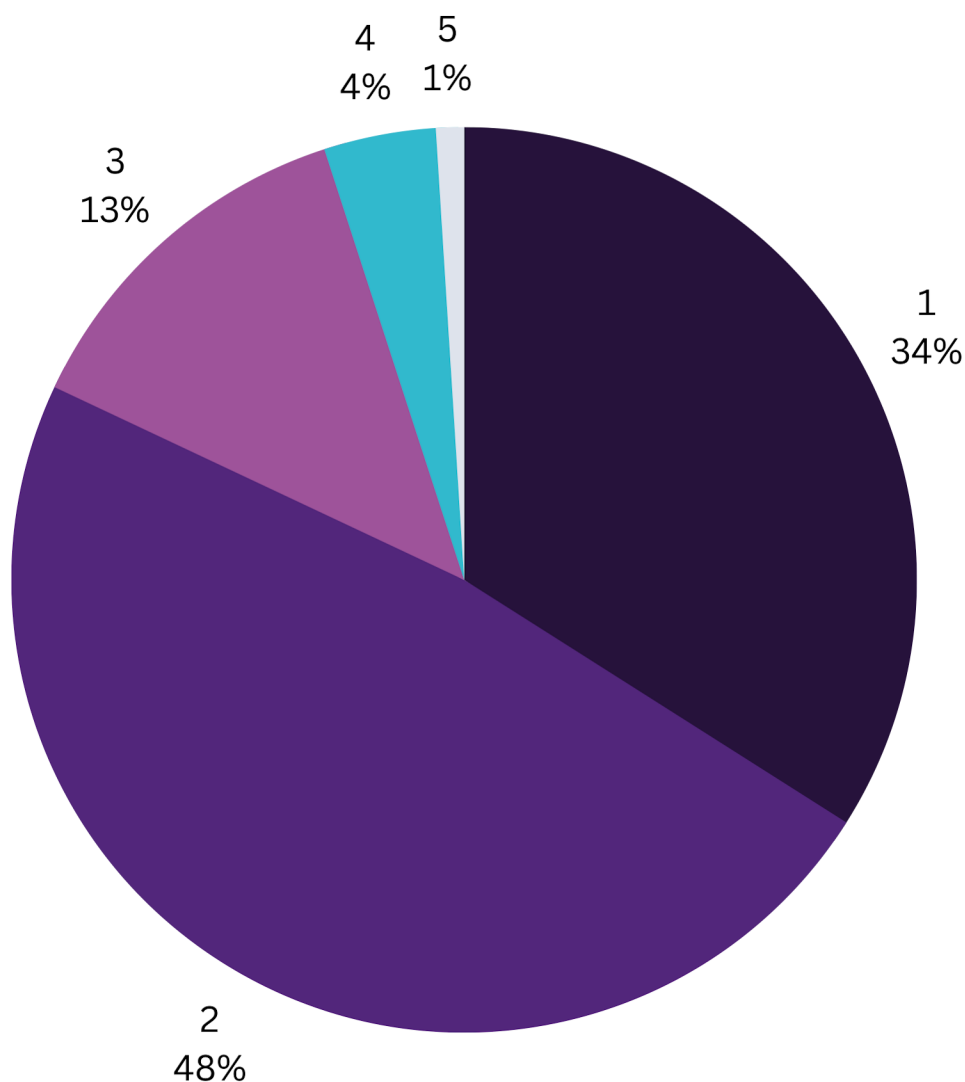
Our panel included families from throughout the UK of all income levels with children aged 18 and under. A number of business leaders also had children (and visa versa), and these contributors were then given the opportunity to complete both sections.

We hope you find these outcomes as interesting as we do!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Leggett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



We targeted responses from 500 parents and 100 business owners. We received responses from 506 parents and 123 business owners, a more positive response than we had expected.

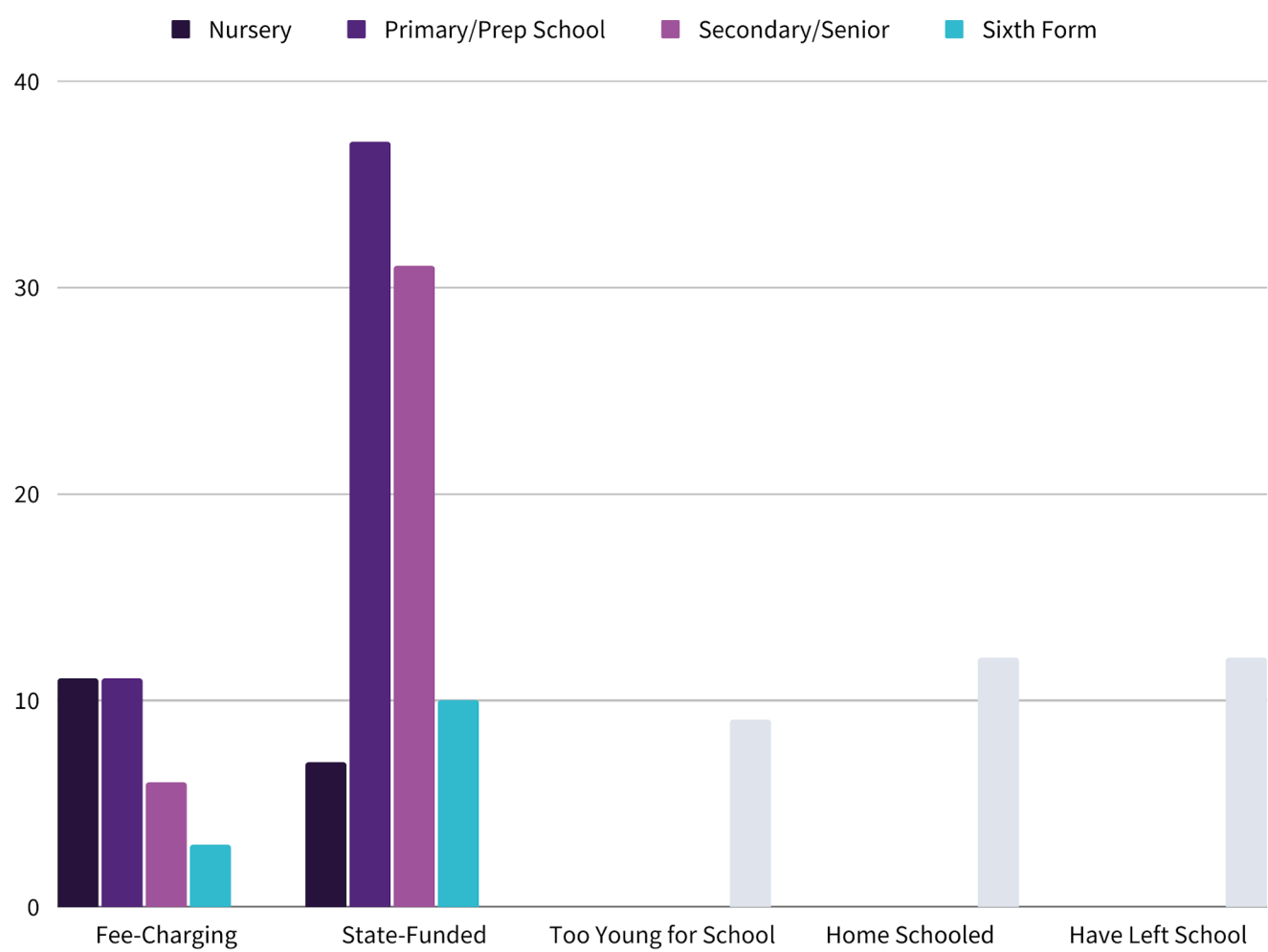


We asked families how many children they had.

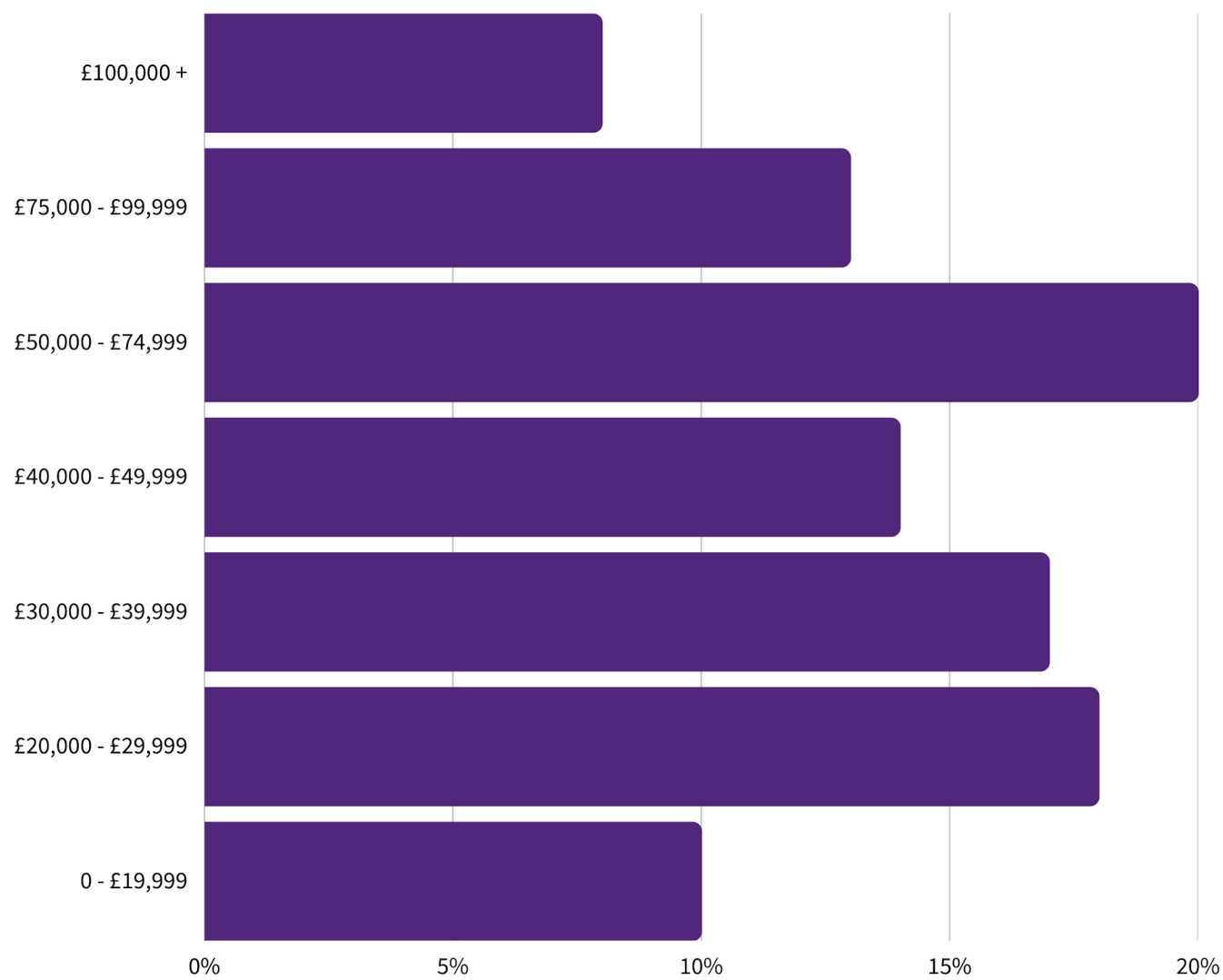
A third of families had one child whilst almost half had two. Less than 20% had three or more children.

The average family in this research had 1.9 children, slightly above the UK average of 1.8.





We then asked which educational settings they use for their children. Over a third (37%) stated they had children in state-funded primary schools whilst 31% used state-funded secondary schools. Fee-charging preparatory schools were used by 11% of families with a similar proportion using fee-charging nurseries. 3% of the sample stated their children were home schooled.



We then asked families their annual household income.

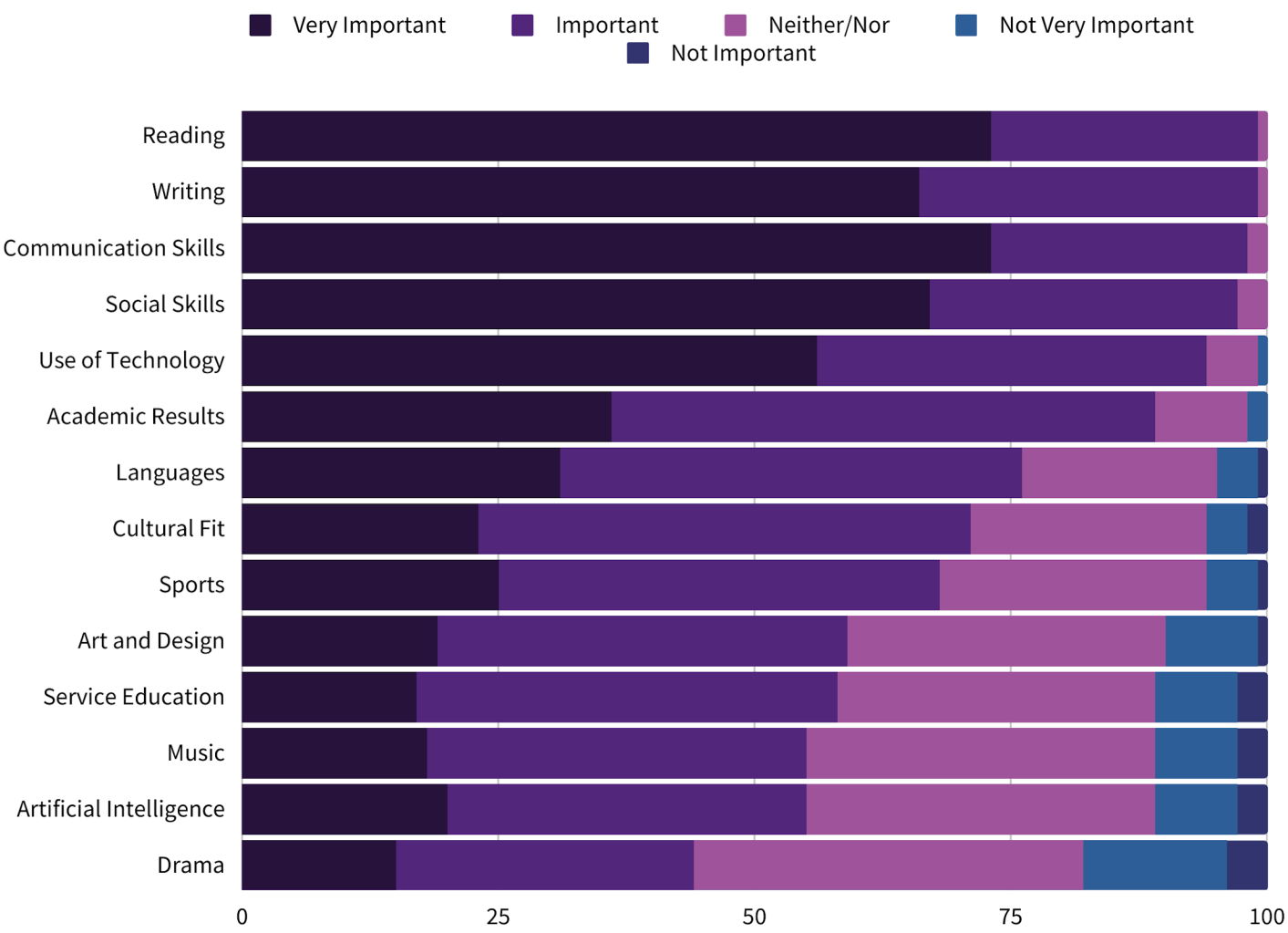
A fifth stated they had an annual household income of £50,000 - £74,999, whilst over a quarter had an income of less than £30,000.



In an open/free text question, we asked families what they felt schools should provide.

A safe and happy environment was frequently cited, with children able to make lifelong friendships.

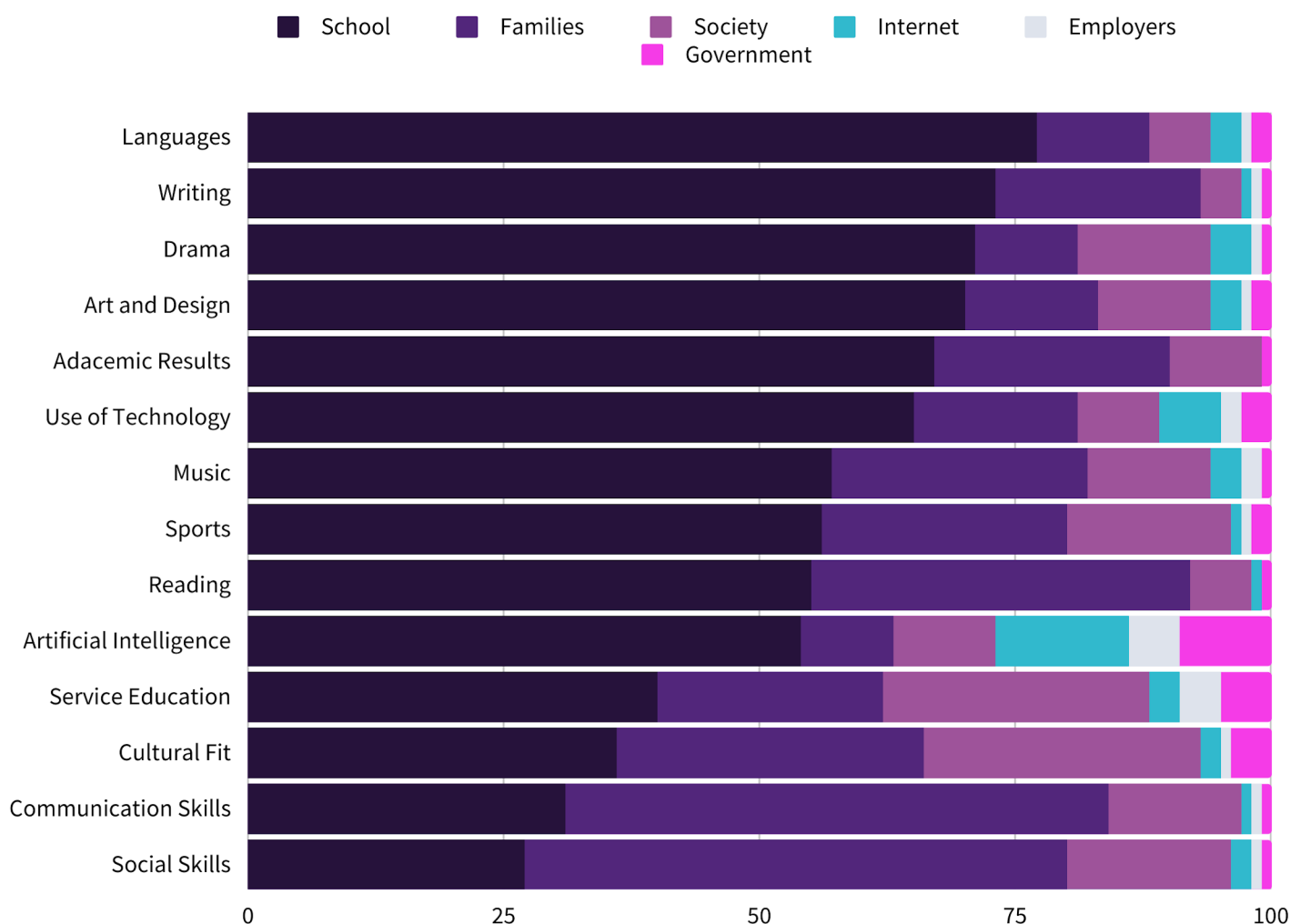
Whilst English, Maths, STEM and literacy were mentioned, families were more concerned about emotional strength, communication skills and soft skills such as confidence. Also cited were life skills include cooking and an ability to manage personal finances.



We then listed a collection of factors an education provides and asked families to rate how important they felt each was.

Reading, Writing, Communication and Social Skills were considered important by almost all families, followed by being able to use technology. This was followed by Academic Results.

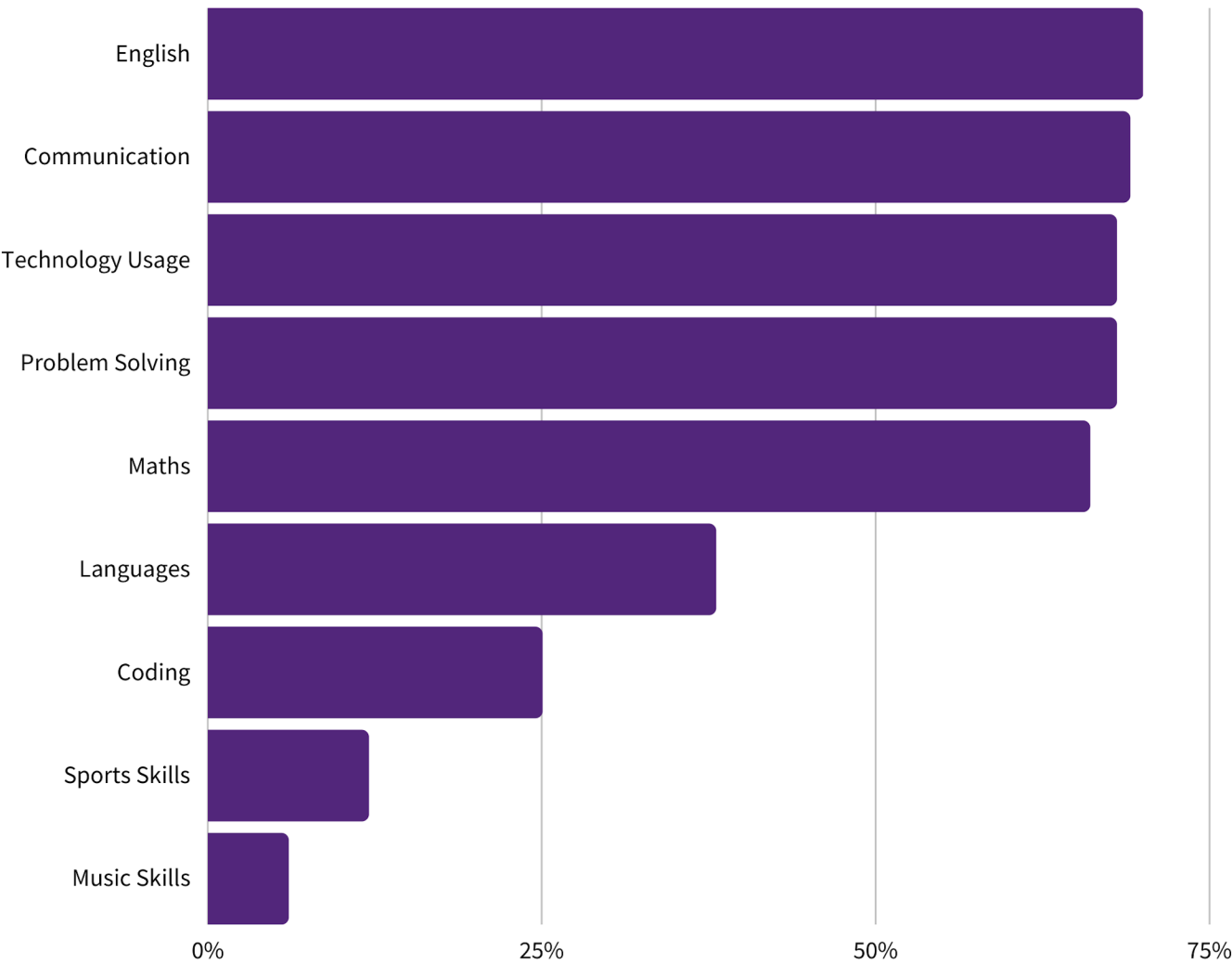
Drama, AI, Music, Volunteering and Art and Design were seen as less important, only a very small proportion of families considered each to be unimportant.



Once we had asked which factors were important we asked who should be responsible for education in those areas.

Schools were considered to be primarily responsible for the majority of areas, with Families responsible for Social Skills and Communication Skills.

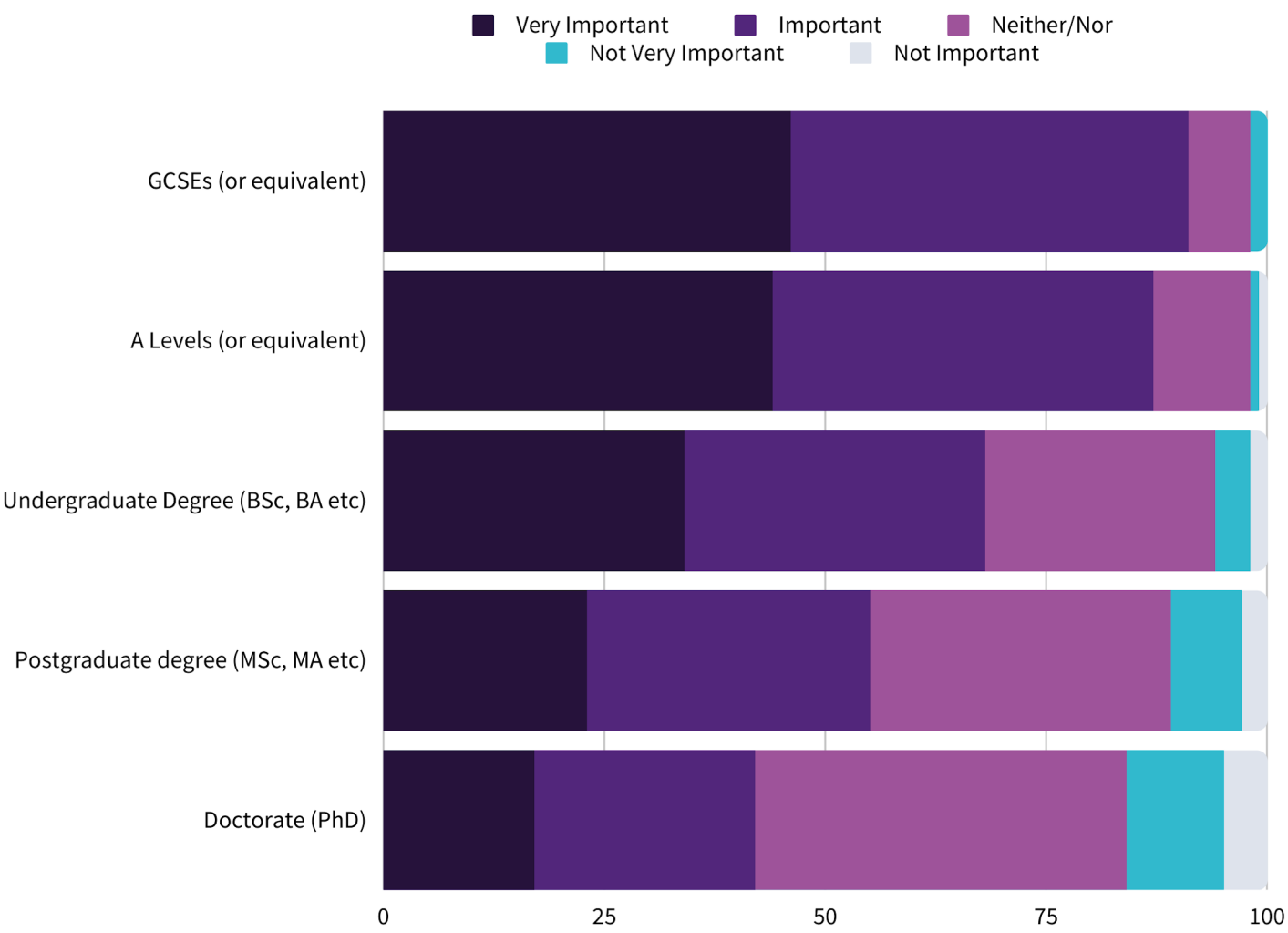
Society had a role to play also, primarily in supporting Cultural Fit and Volunteering.



We then asked families which areas of the curriculum they would like to see enhanced.

Teaching of English was seen as a key area for 70% of respondents, with Communication, Technology Usage, and Problem Solving close behind.

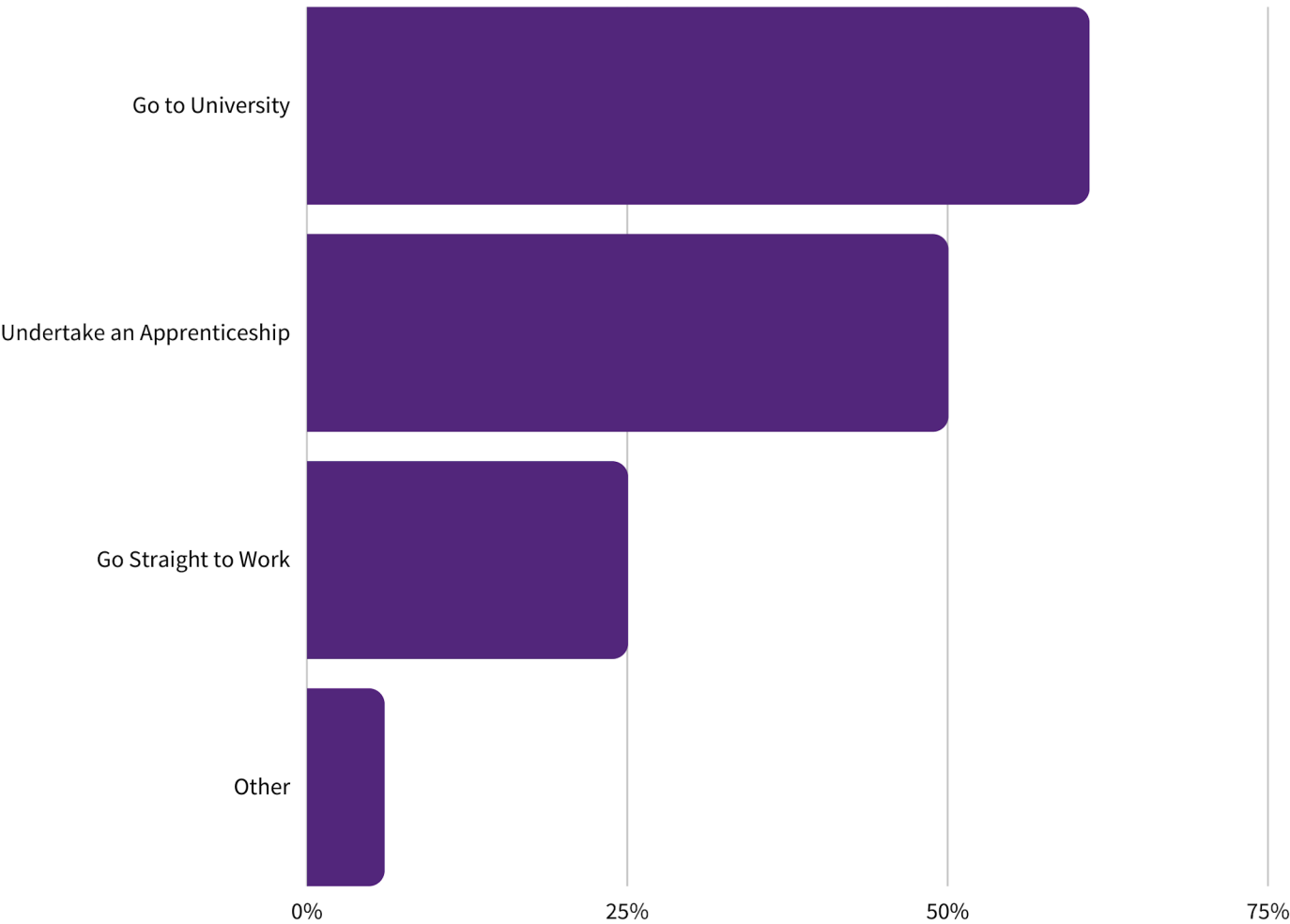
Languages and Coding were seen as relatively less required.



We asked families how important they considered a range of attainment levels.

Almost all rated GCSEs as important, followed closely by A Levels.

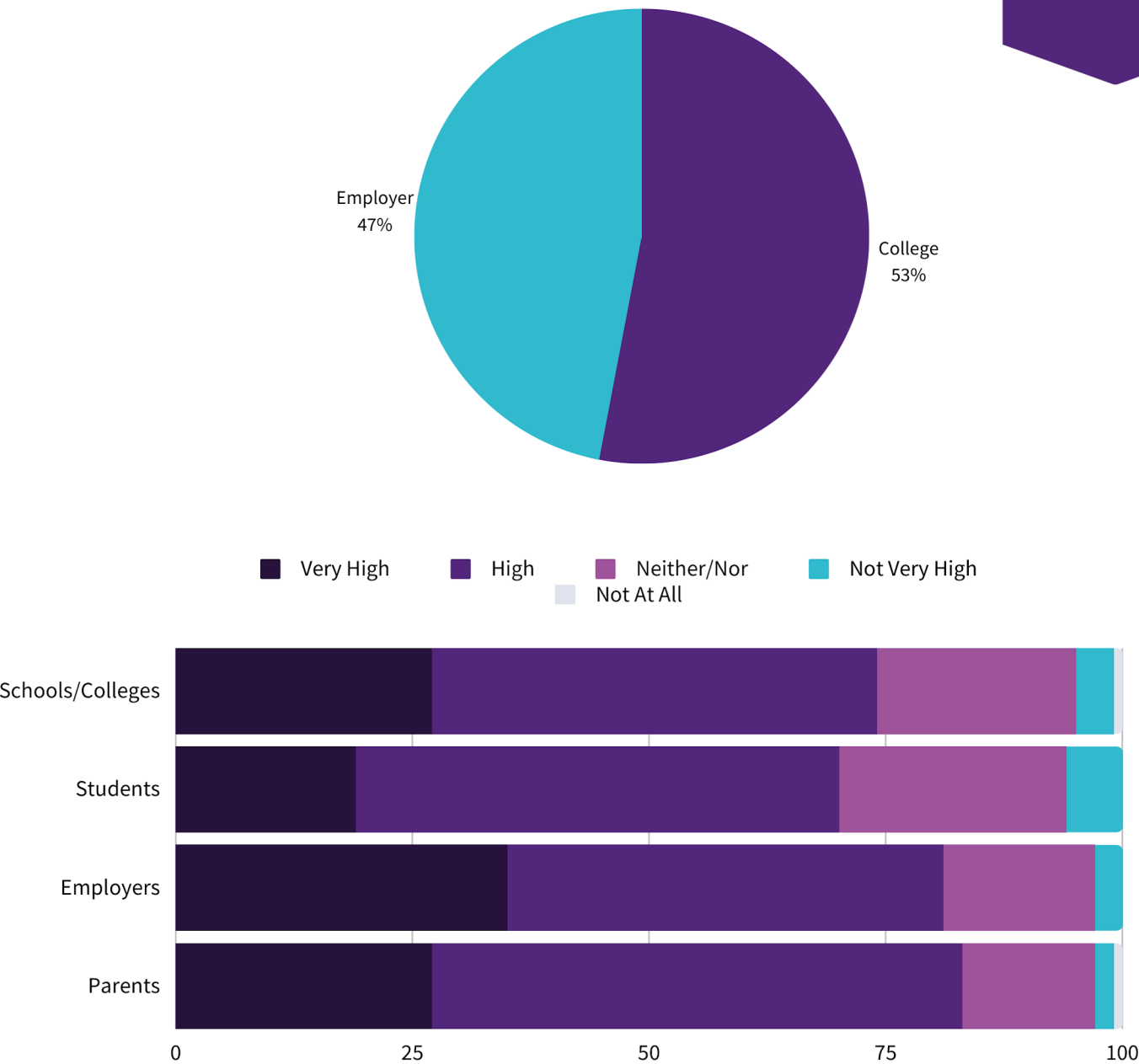
Doctorates were considered relatively less important, with only a small proportion considering them unimportant.



We then asked what they hoped would be their child’s next step.

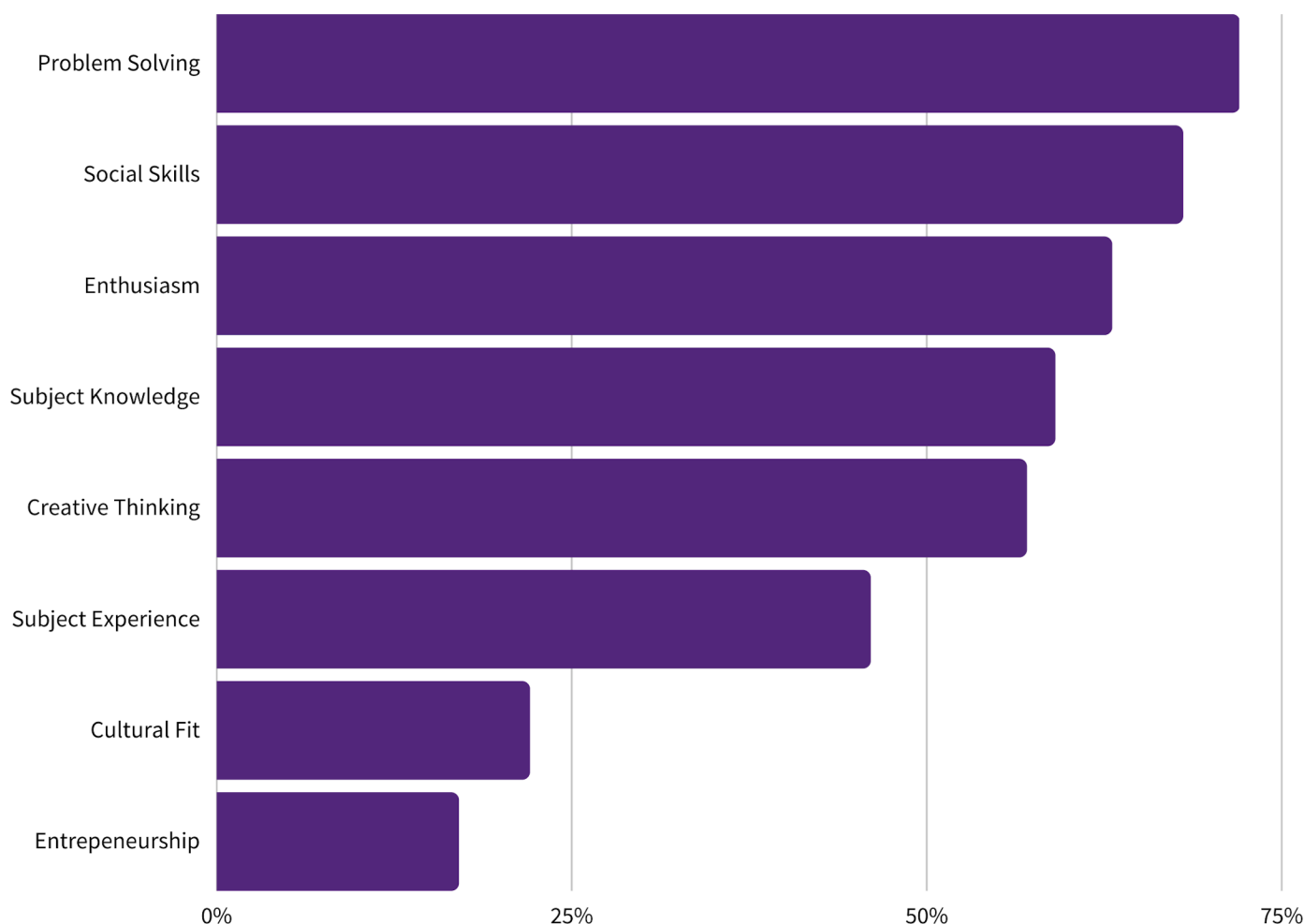
Almost a third hoped their child would go to University whilst half were happy to consider apprenticeships.





We asked those who were considering apprenticeships who they felt they should lead the course, and how valued apprenticeships were.

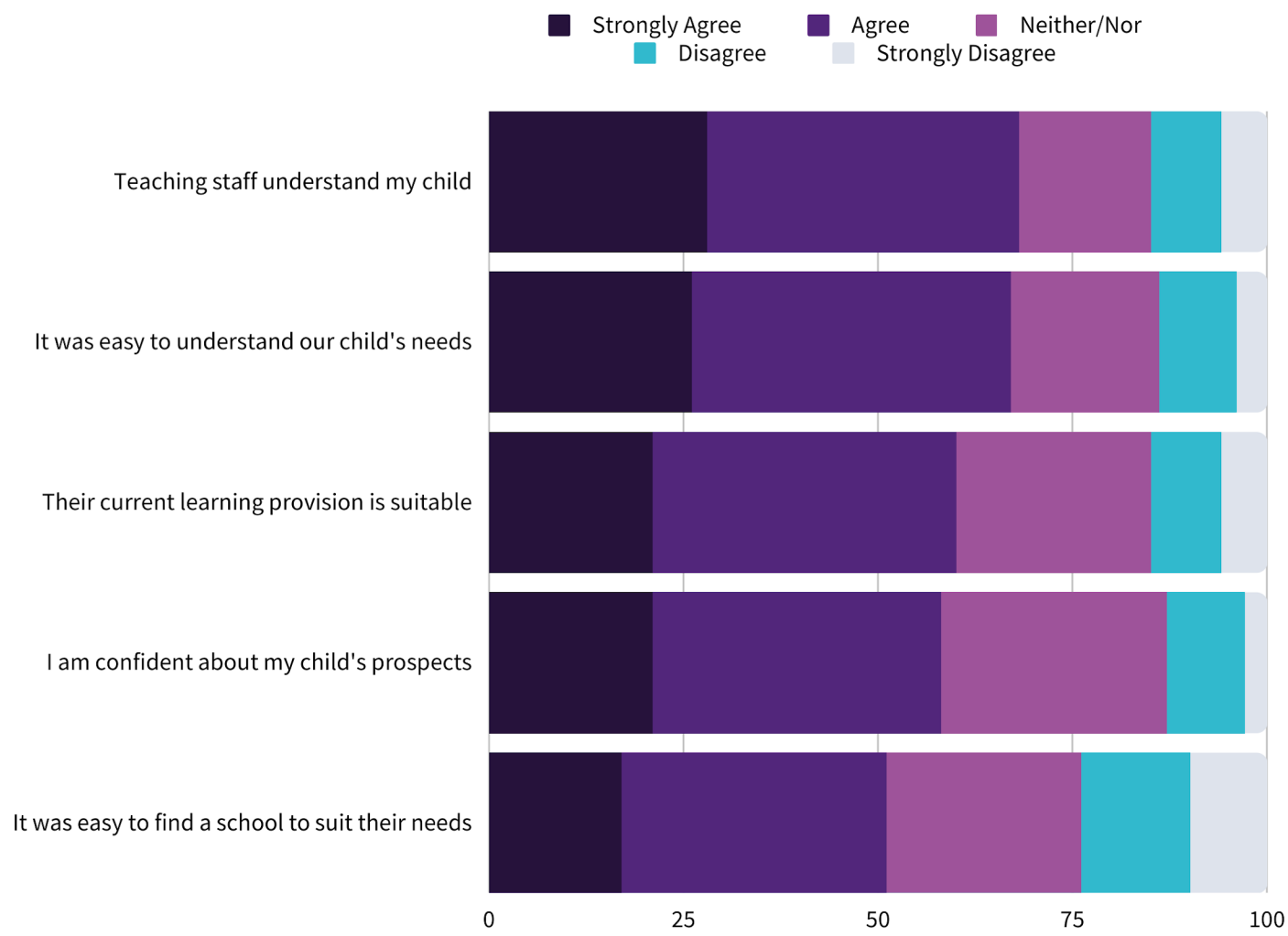
There was limited consensus on who should lead an apprenticeship with a slightly larger proportion suggesting a College should lead it. Whilst around 85% of employers and parents were considered to value apprenticeships, it was perceived that less value was placed on them by Colleges and Students.



We asked families what skills they thought employers looked for.

Almost three quarters felt employers required Problem Solving Skills, with a third suggesting Social Skills and Enthusiasm.

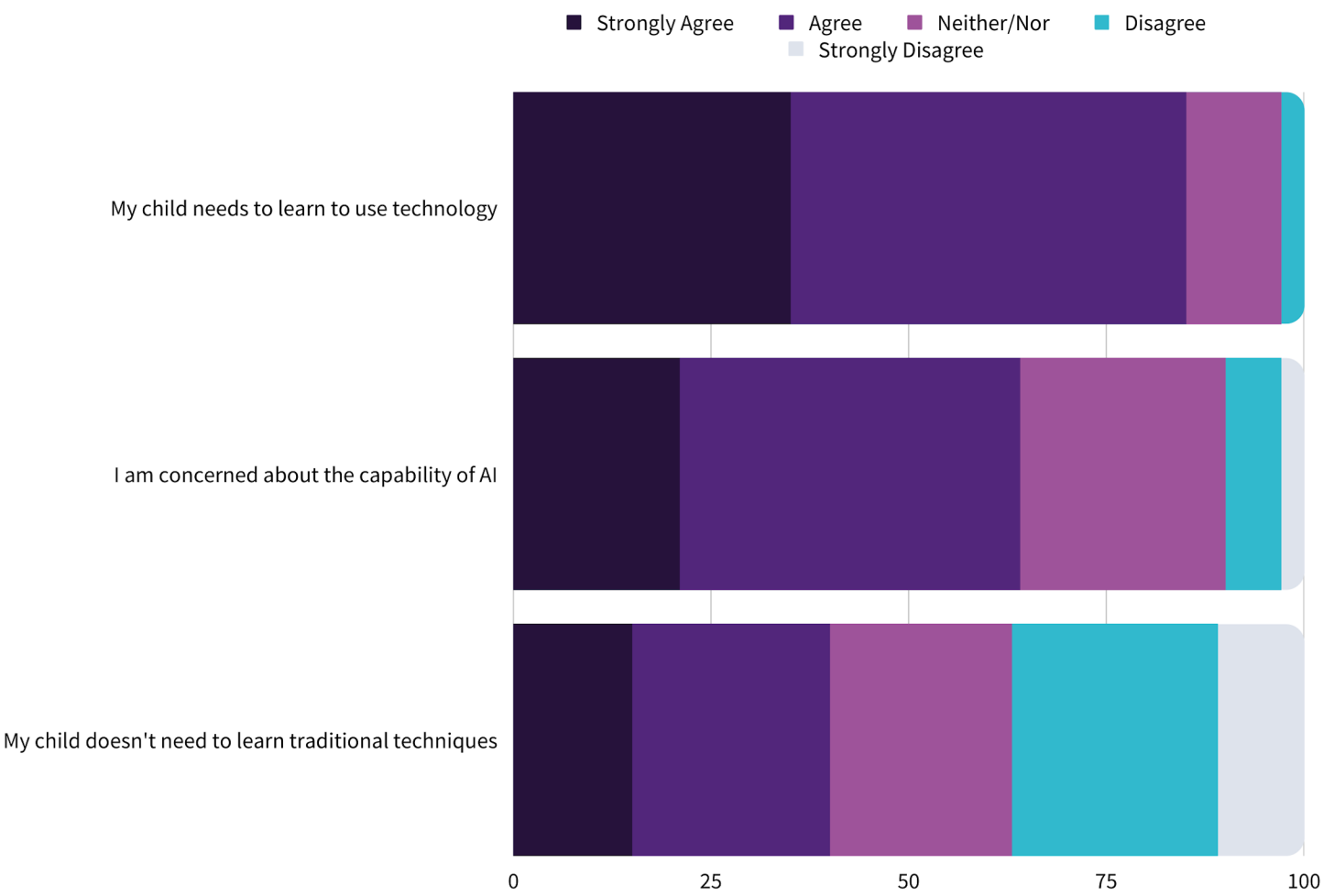
Over half suggested Subject Knowledge and Creative Thinking, with Entrepreneurship and Cultural Fit relatively less considered.



A quarter of families in this research stated they had a child with SEN requirements. We asked them their opinions of the education they receive.

Over two thirds of families felt teaching staff understood their children, with a similar proportion stating it was easy to understand their needs.

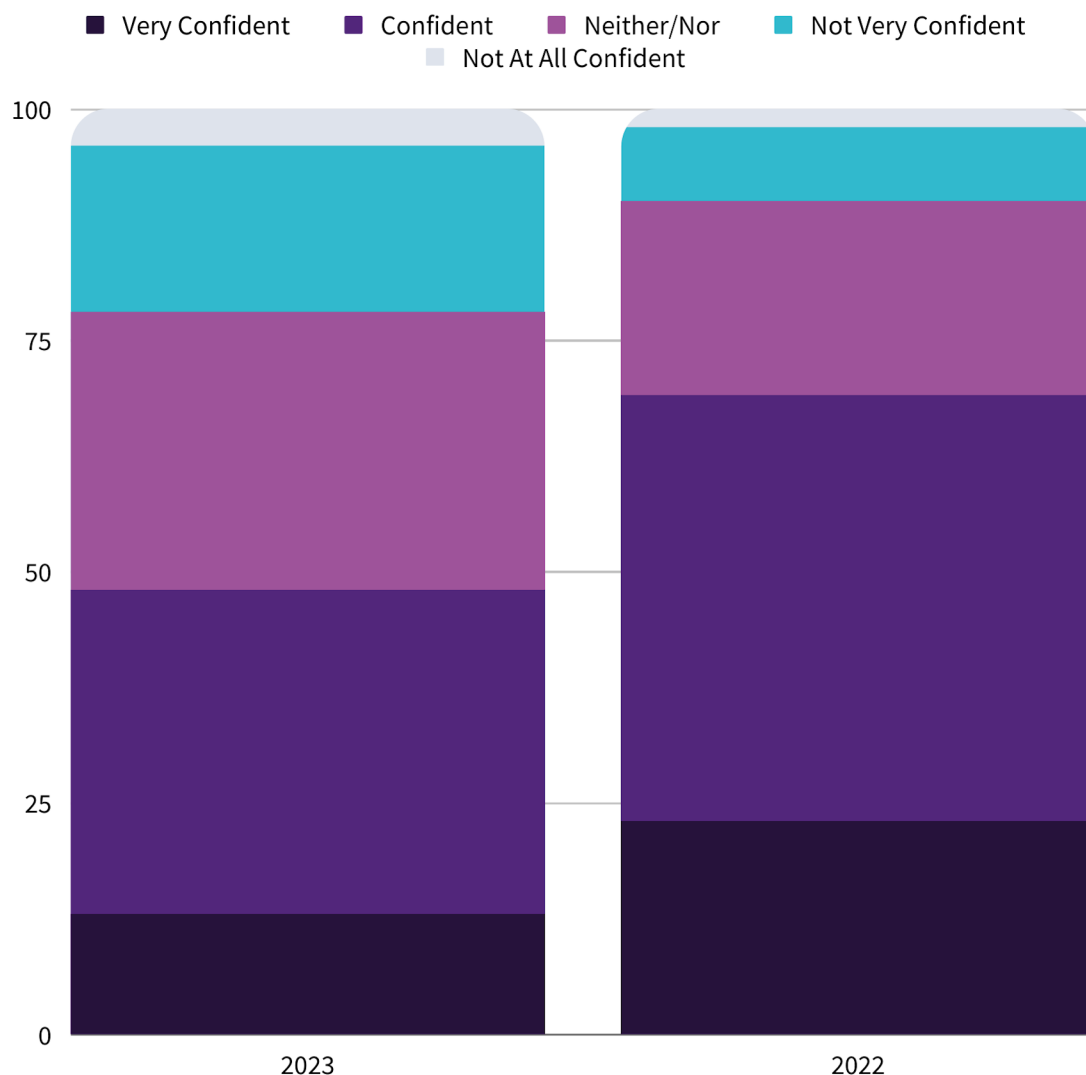
When asked how easy it was to find an appropriate school to meet their needs, only half agreed it was.



Artificial Intelligence is a key topic in education currently. We asked families a little about their knowledge of AI.

Almost all families agreed their child needs to learn how to use modern technology. However, two thirds were concerned about its capability.

When asked if technology could replace traditional education techniques, families had mixed perceptions.

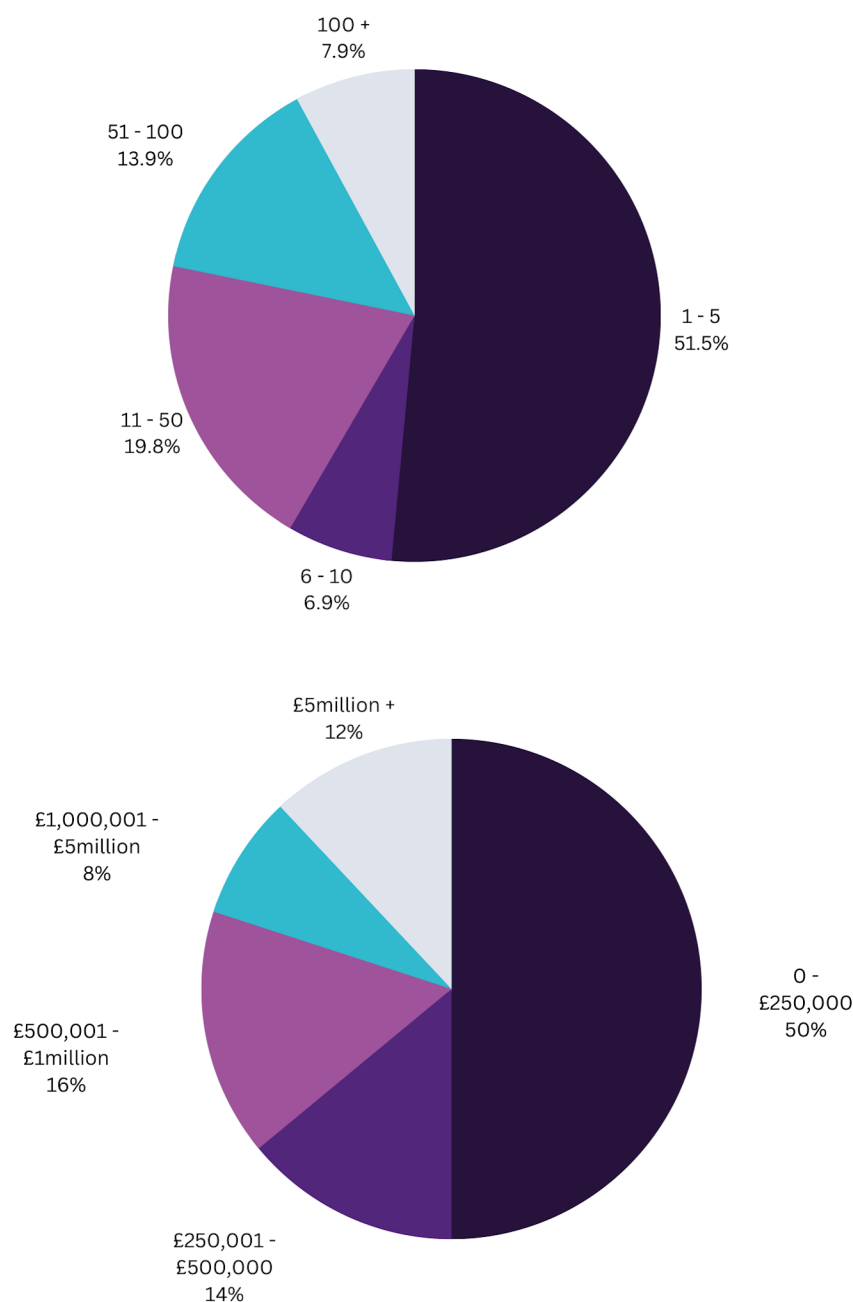


We completed the survey by asking families how confident that they were that their child was appropriately prepared for the future.

Just under half (48%) of families felt their child was appropriately prepared compared to 22% who were not confident.

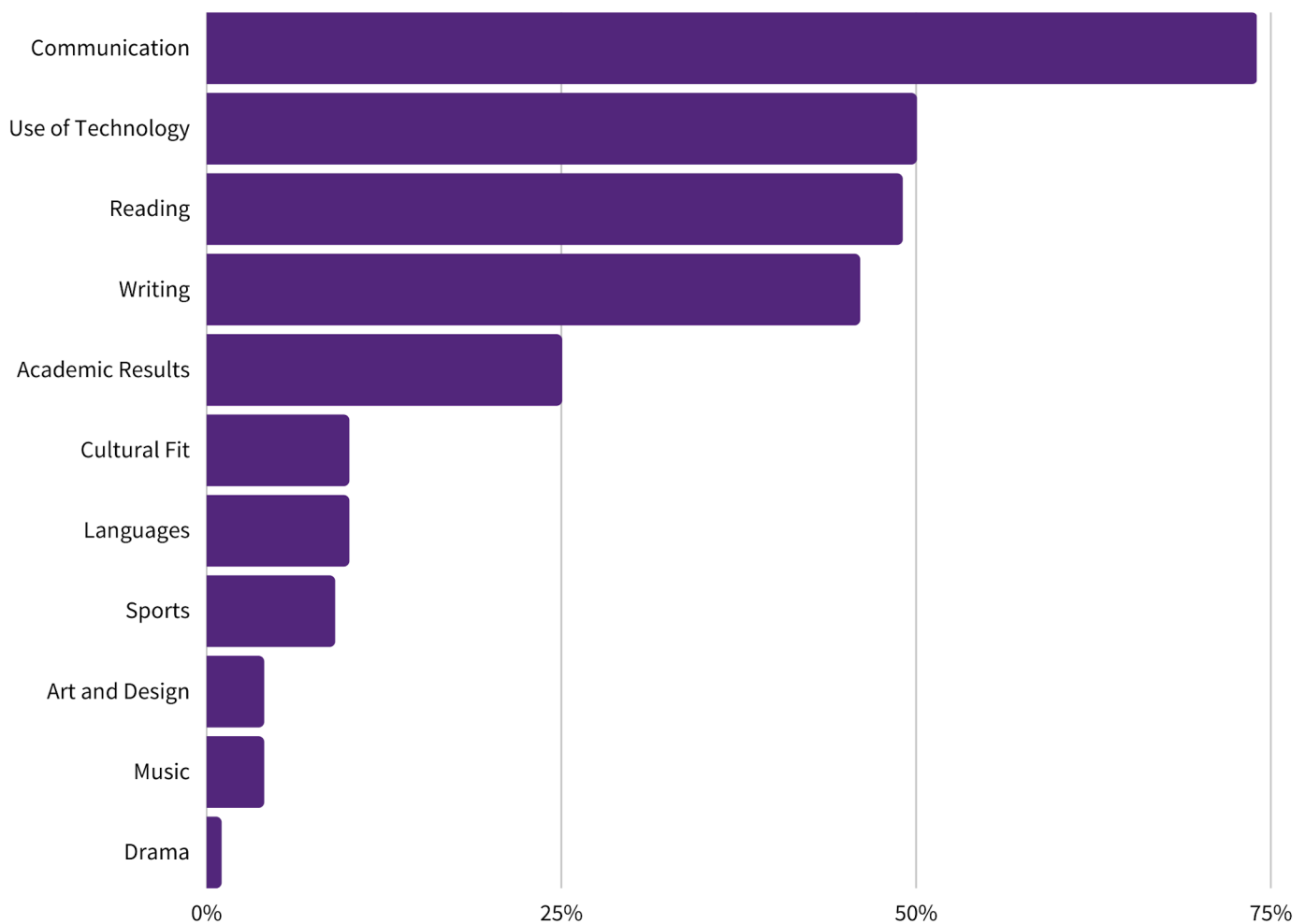
Comparing this with 2022 shows significantly smaller proportion of families were confident in 2023 than in 2022.

## Staff employed



We asked business how many staff they employed and their annual turnover.

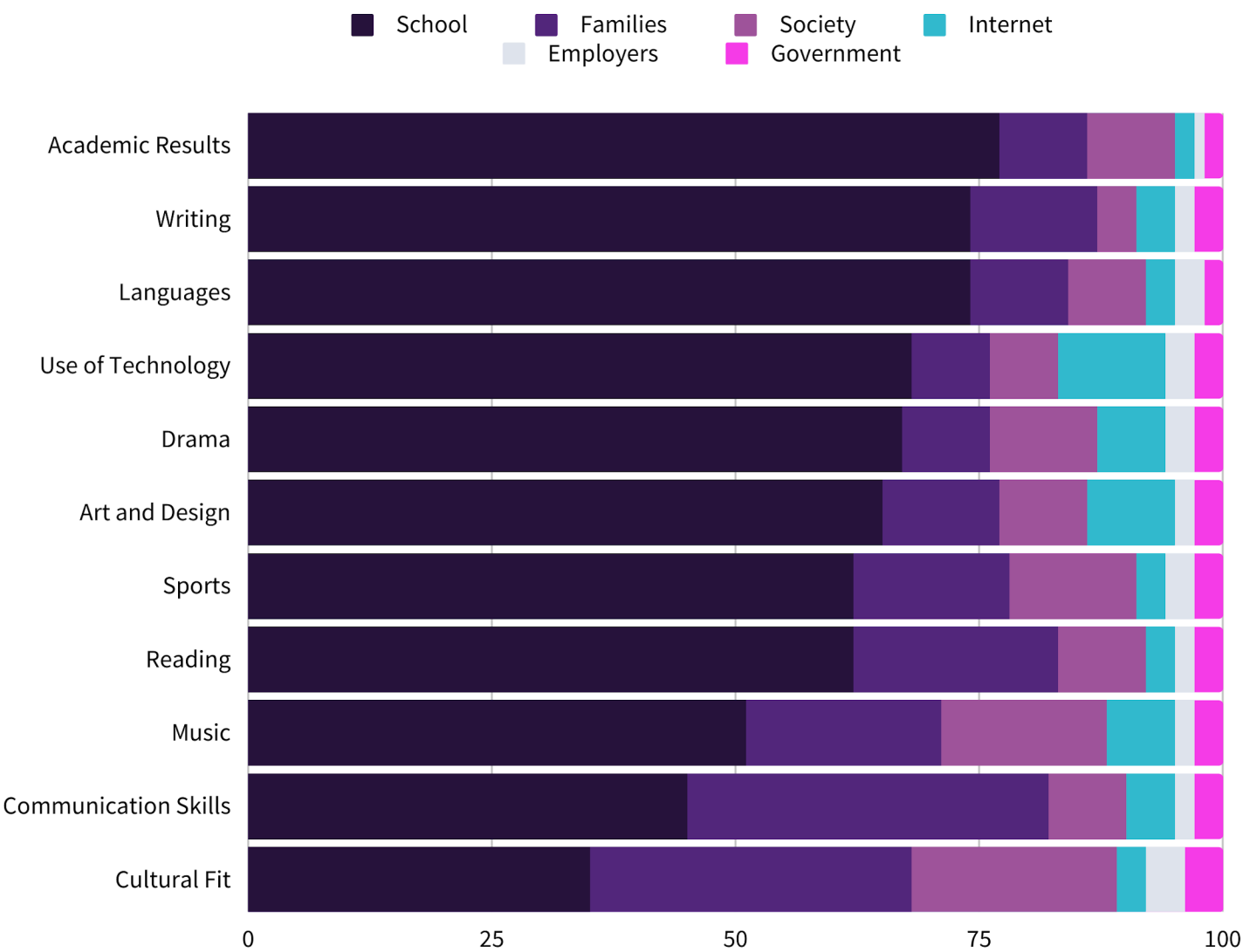
Perhaps unsurprisingly the two correlated reasonable closely, with half having a turnover of less than £250,000 and employing five or less staff. Over a third of respondents employed 11 or more staff and had an annual turnover of more than £500,000.



We started by asked business owners which skills they felt schools should focus on.

Communication Skills were considered the most important skill by almost three quarters of respondents, with half suggesting Use of Technology, Reading and Writing.

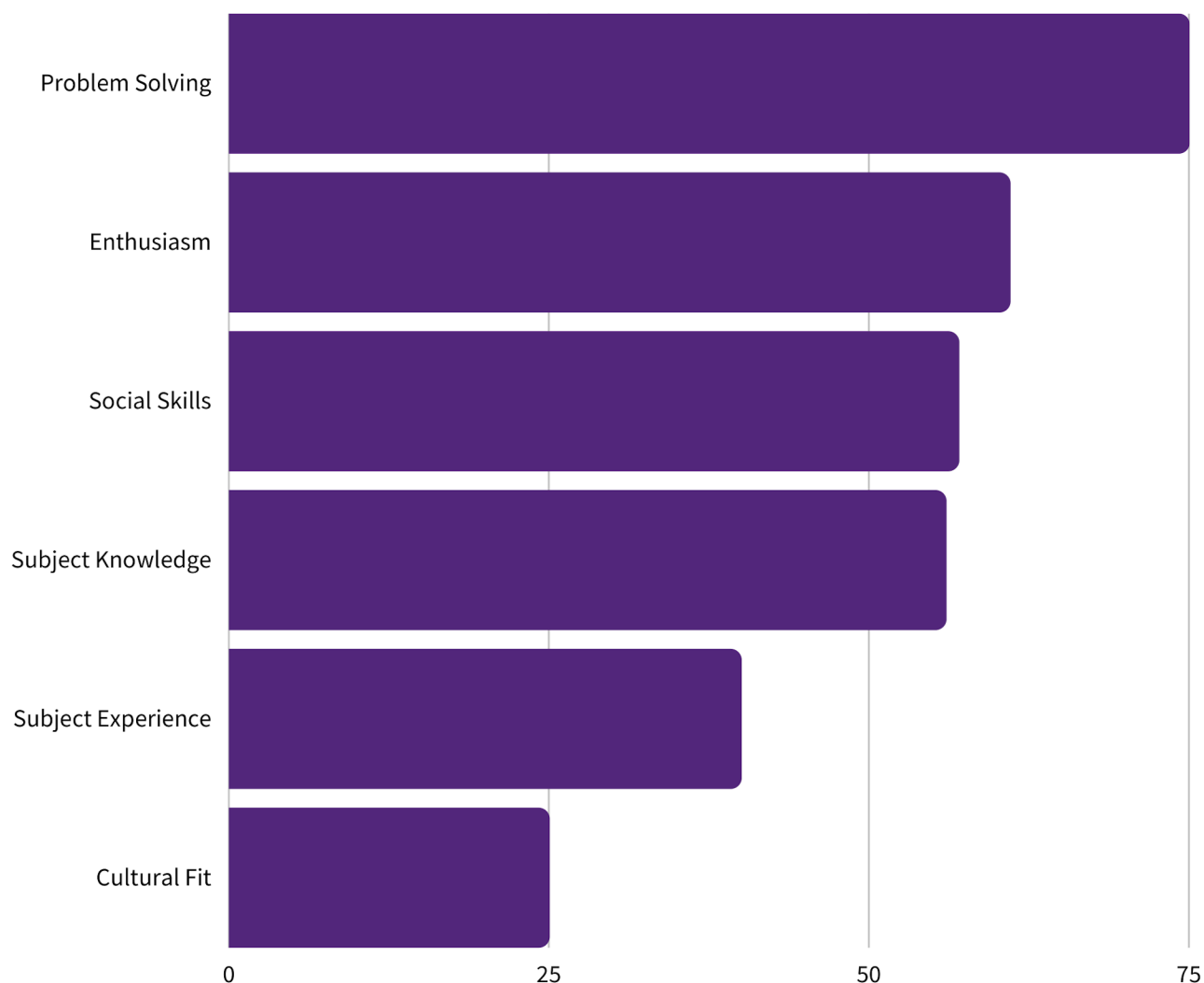
Academic Results were considered important by a quarter.



As with parents we asked who should be responsible for the education in each of these areas.

Schools were considered primarily responsible for the education in all areas. However, families played a significant roles in Communication and Cultural Fit, whilst society was also considered to have a supporting role in Cultural Fit and Music.

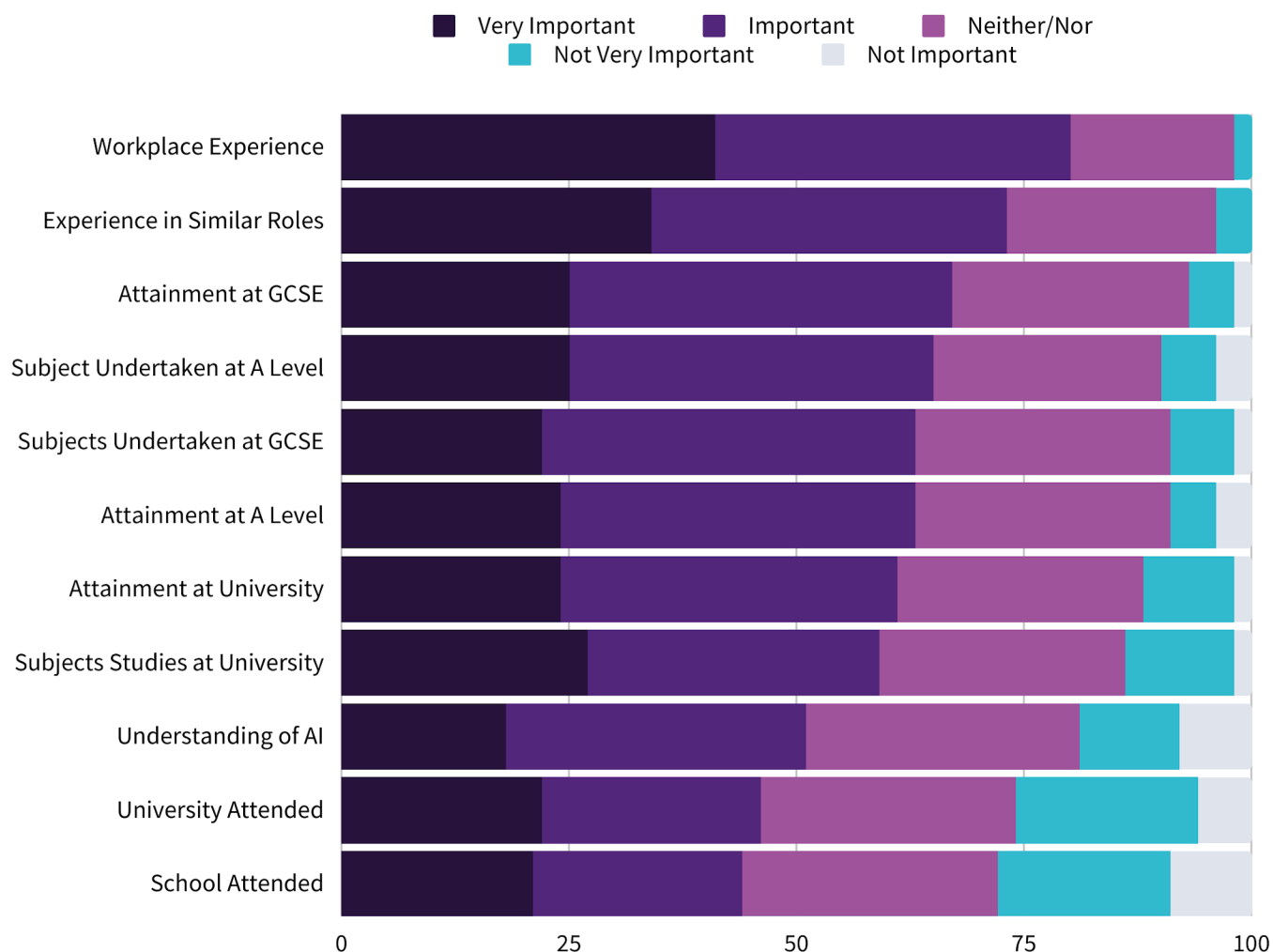




We then asked what skills business leaders required in new staff.

Three quarters felt Problem Solving was a key skill they required, followed by Enthusiasm, Social Skills and Subject Knowledge.

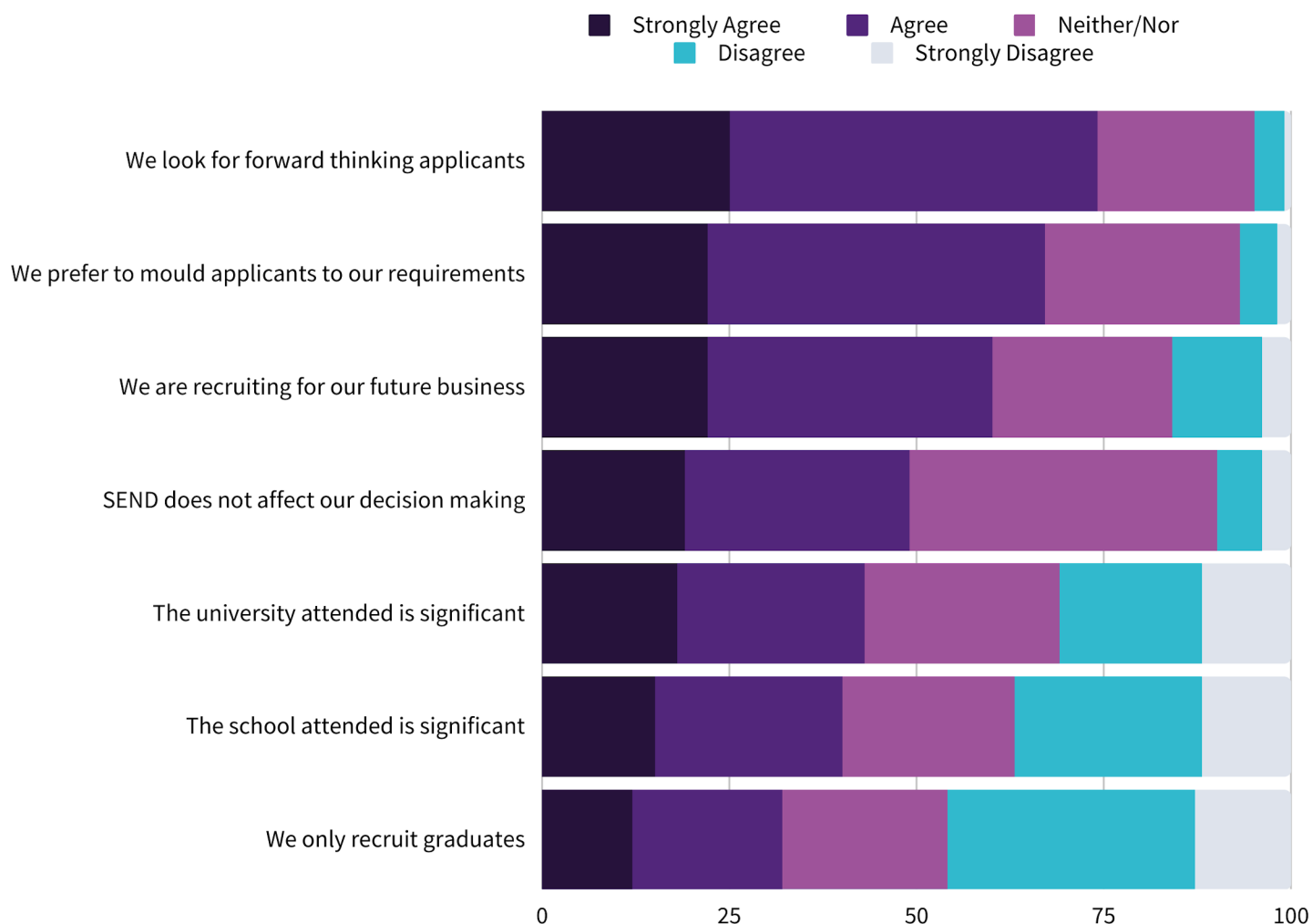
Cultural Fit was considered relatively less important.



We followed this by asking how important they consider education outcomes when they recruit new staff.

Over 80% of respondents considered Experience in the Workplace to be important, whilst three quarters highlighted experience in similar roles.

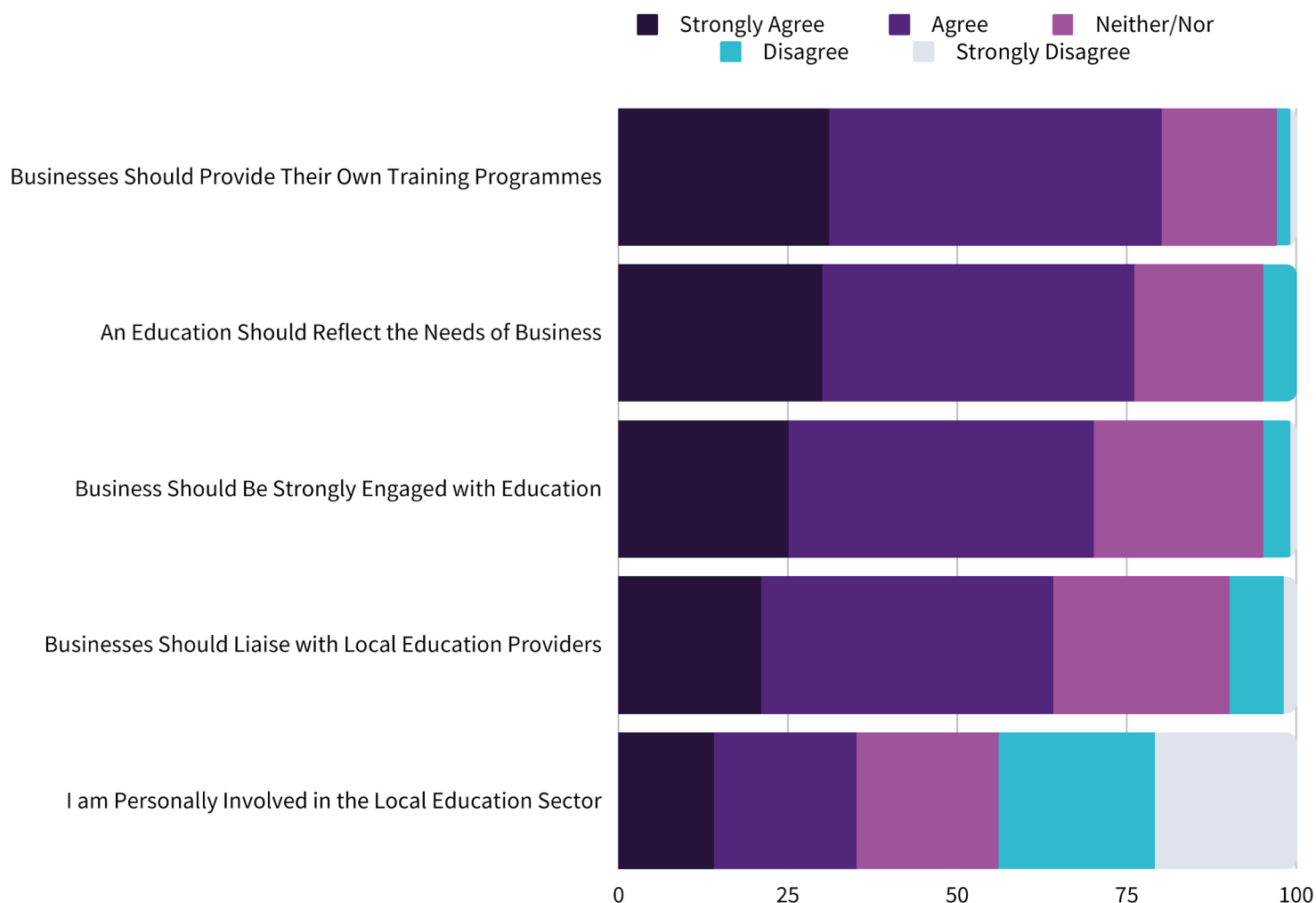
Attainment at GCSE was considered important by two thirds, followed by Subjects undertaken and A Level and GCSE. Attainment at A Level was considered slightly less important than the subjects chosen.



We asked business leaders their preferences for new employees.

Almost three quarters were looking for forward thinking applicants, whilst over a third prefer to mould applicants to their requirements.

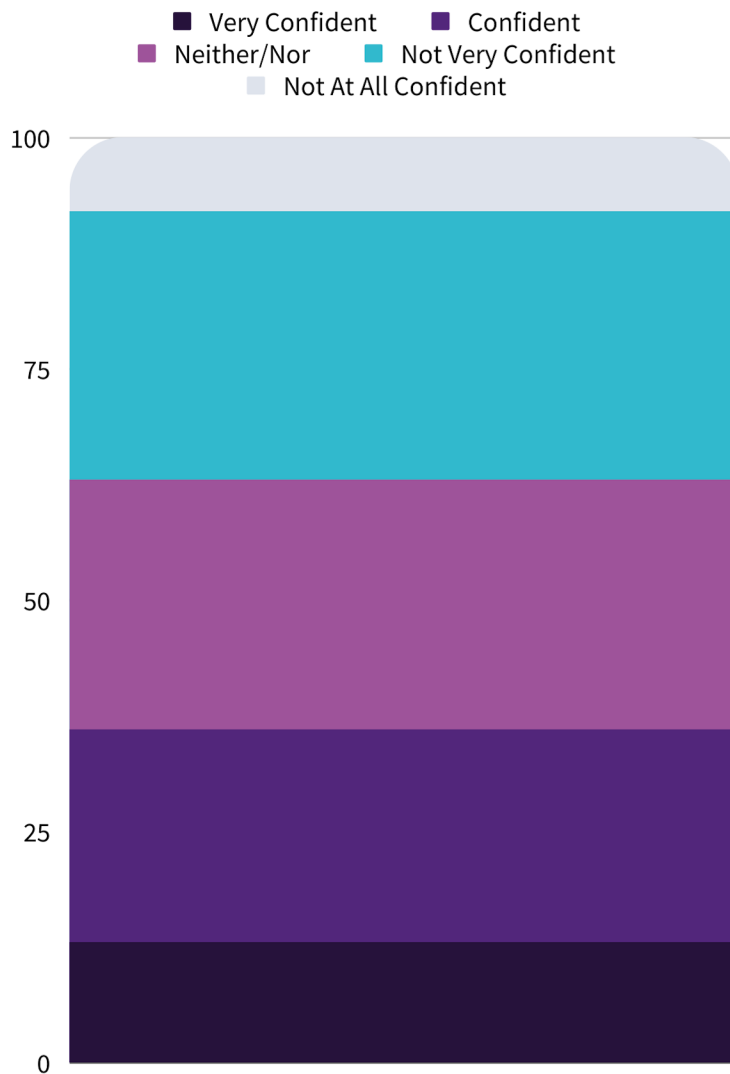
Whilst the University attended was significant to 45%, there were mixed perceptions on recruiting graduates with almost half stating they disagreed that they only recruit graduates.



We asked businesses how engaged they were in the education sector within their region.

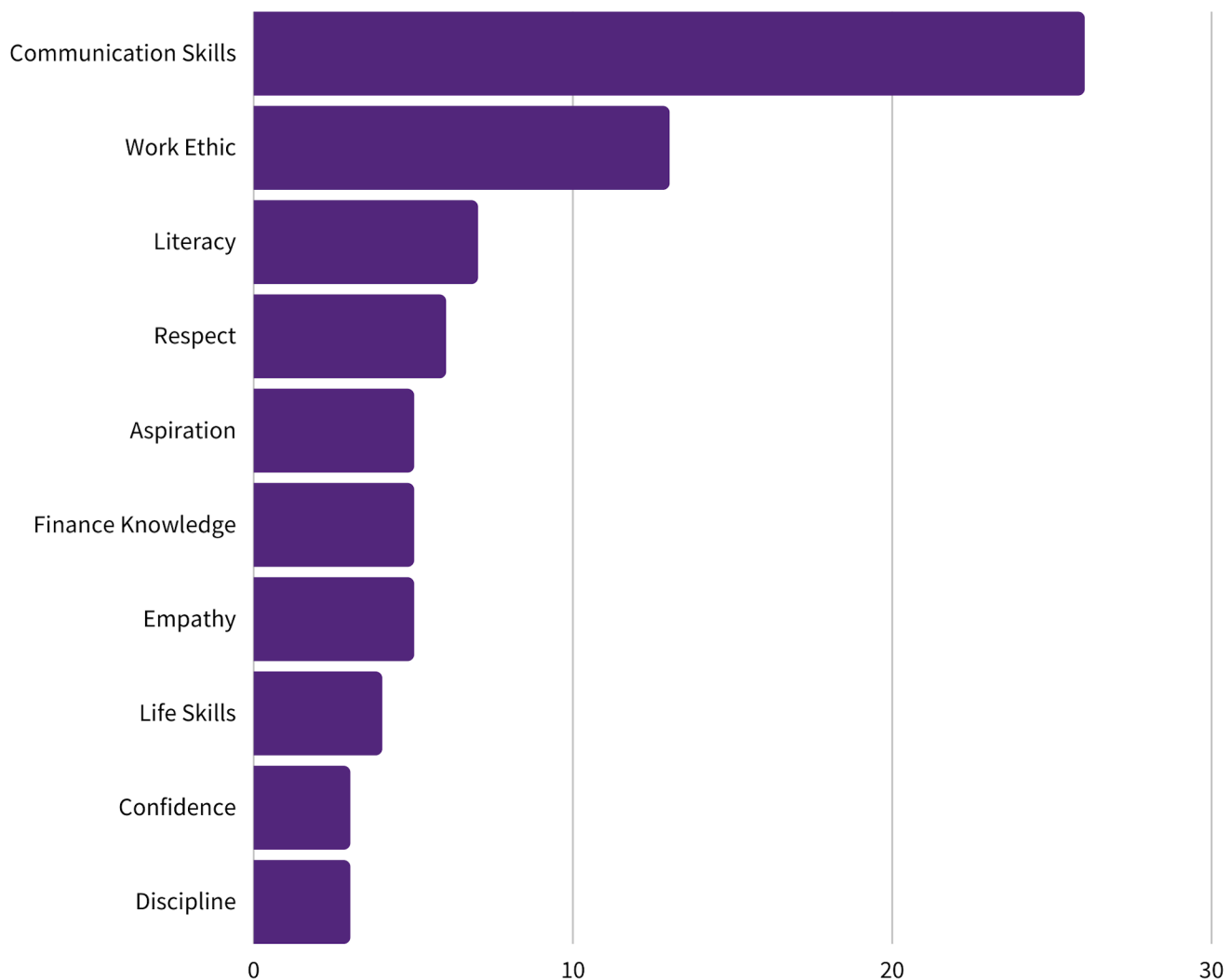
Over 80% agreed that businesses should provide their own training programmes, whilst three quarters felt education should reflect the needs of businesses.

Respondents were also positive the businesses and education providers should liaise regularly, but almost half stated they currently were not actively engaged in the education sector personally.



We asked how confident they were that young people were appropriately prepared for the world of the future.

Just over a third of respondents felt children were prepared, a smaller proportion than parents.



We finished the survey with a free text question asking the primary skill they think new employees are missing.

Almost a quarter (26 individuals) stated new staff are lacking in Communication Skills. This was followed by a perceived lack of Work Ethic.

‘Academic’ areas were rarely cited, with a focus on emotional skills, life skills and respect for others.

# MTM Consulting Survey Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to understand parental confidence in whether the current education system prepared their children for the future. Included in this was the needs of business leaders and whether these were met. On the basis of this research we have reached the following conclusions:

- **Communication/soft skills** – Throughout this research families highlighted children require communication skills, along with soft skills such as emotional strength. Business leaders agreed, suggesting communication skills were the primary area new employees' struggle. However, it was widely felt families should teach these skills to children. This suggests the weak point within the education system is families and their understanding of their role within it, or how they should deliver these skills to children.
- **Work experience** – When asked how businesses rank applicants, experience in the workplace was considered more important than academic attainment. Businesses also stated they should have a closer relationship with education. As such, closer integration through enhanced work experience would support both increase employability and dialogue between education and business.
- **Confidence in preparation** - The research shows a significant decline over the last 12 months in parental confidence regarding their children's preparedness for the future. Under half of families now feel that schools are adequately equipping their children, marking a considerable drop from the previous year's 69%. This lack of faith is further exemplified by business leaders, with only slightly over a third expressing confidence in the preparedness of graduates. These concerning figures highlight the real necessity for collaboration between schools and business leaders to effectively prepare the younger generation for the challenges and opportunities of the future.
- **Diversity** - Both parents and business leaders have placed lower emphasis on cultural fit as important. This trend is perhaps unsurprising, considering the growing recognition that excessive emphasis on cultural fit can hinder diversity and limit the range of perspectives within organisations.

