



**FUTURE FWD**  
ENABLING NEXTGEN



# **Survey 2024: 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, business owners and, new for this year, recent education leavers.

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 vice versa), and these contributors were then given the opportunity to complete both sections.

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

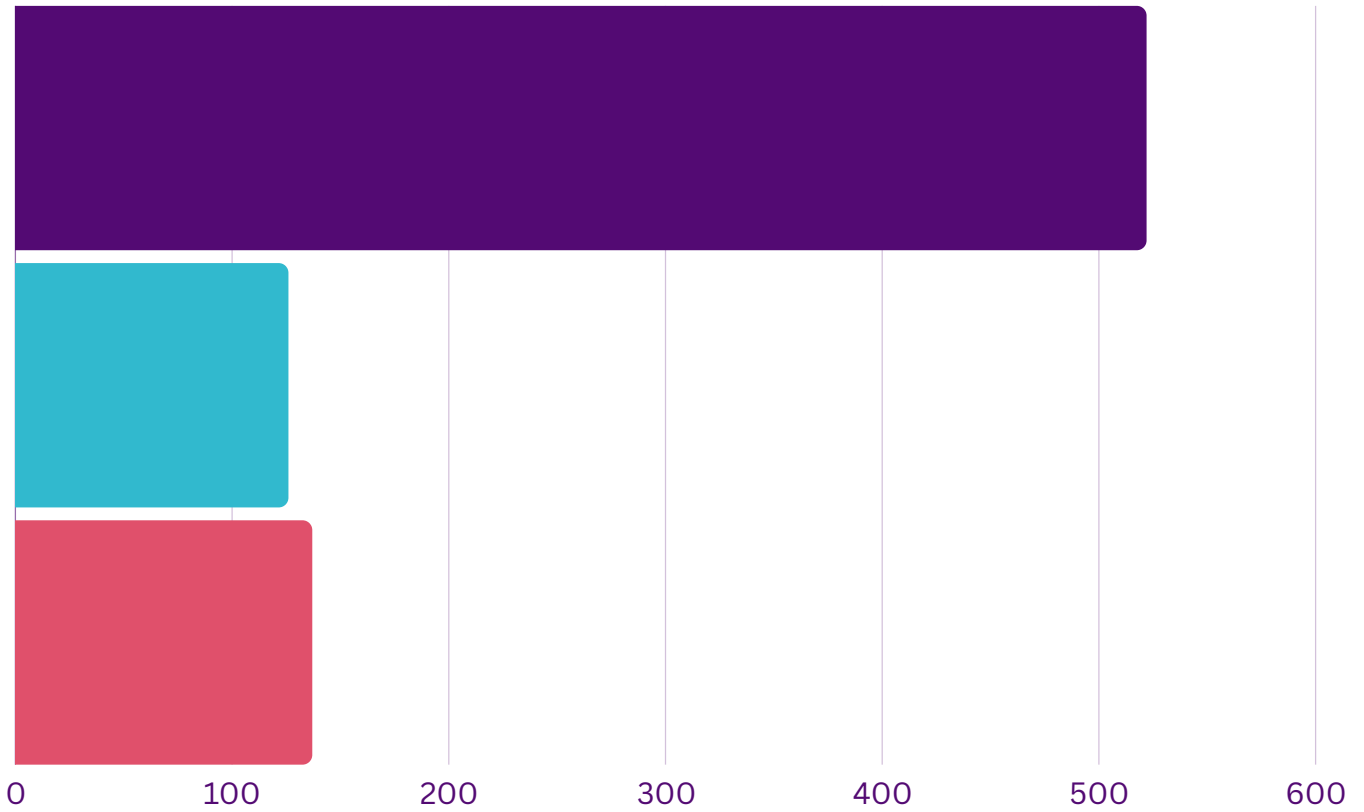
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Leggett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## THE RESPONDENTS

18 - 25

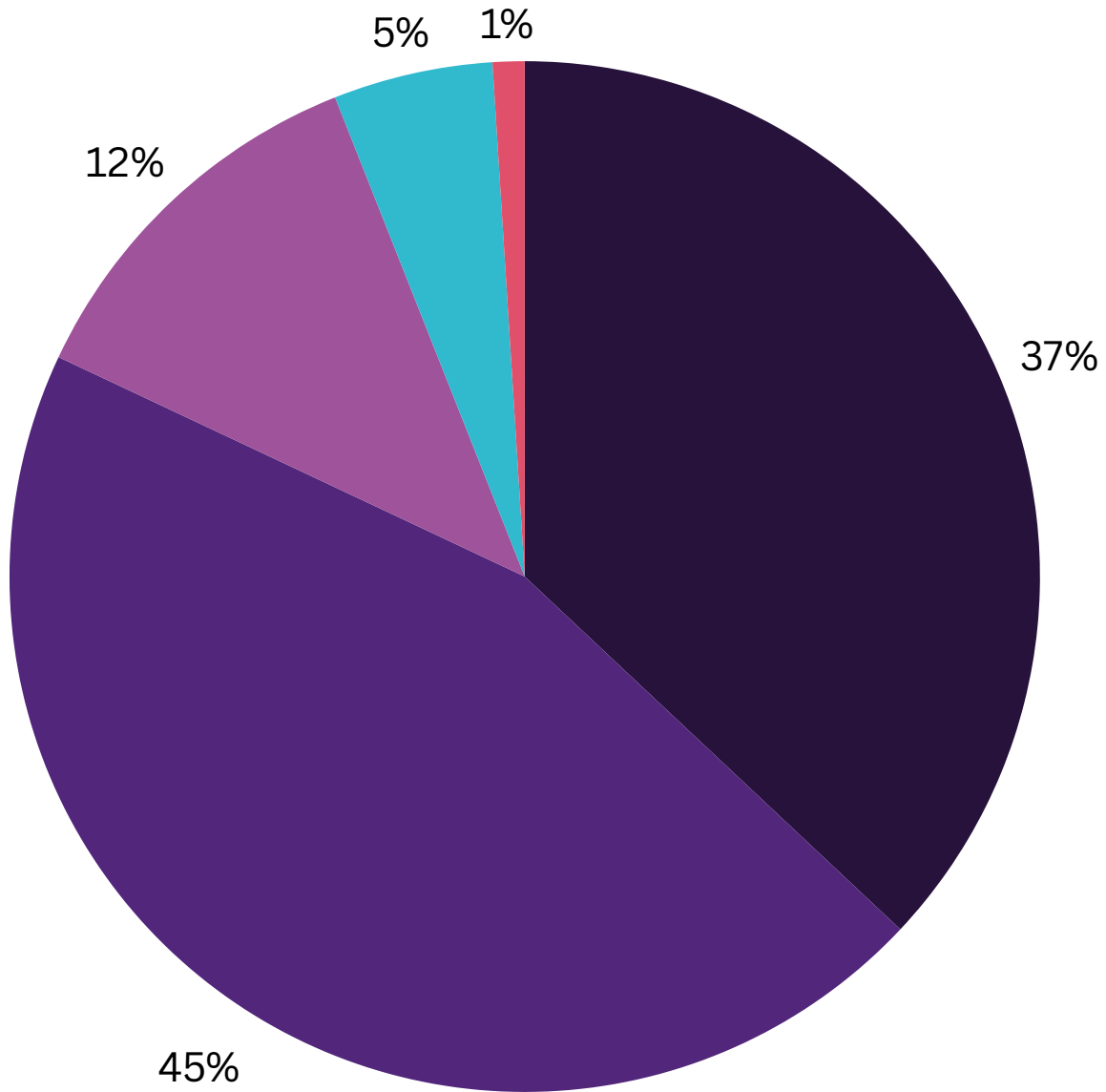
Business

Parents



We targeted responses from 500 parents 100 business owners, and 100 recent education leavers.

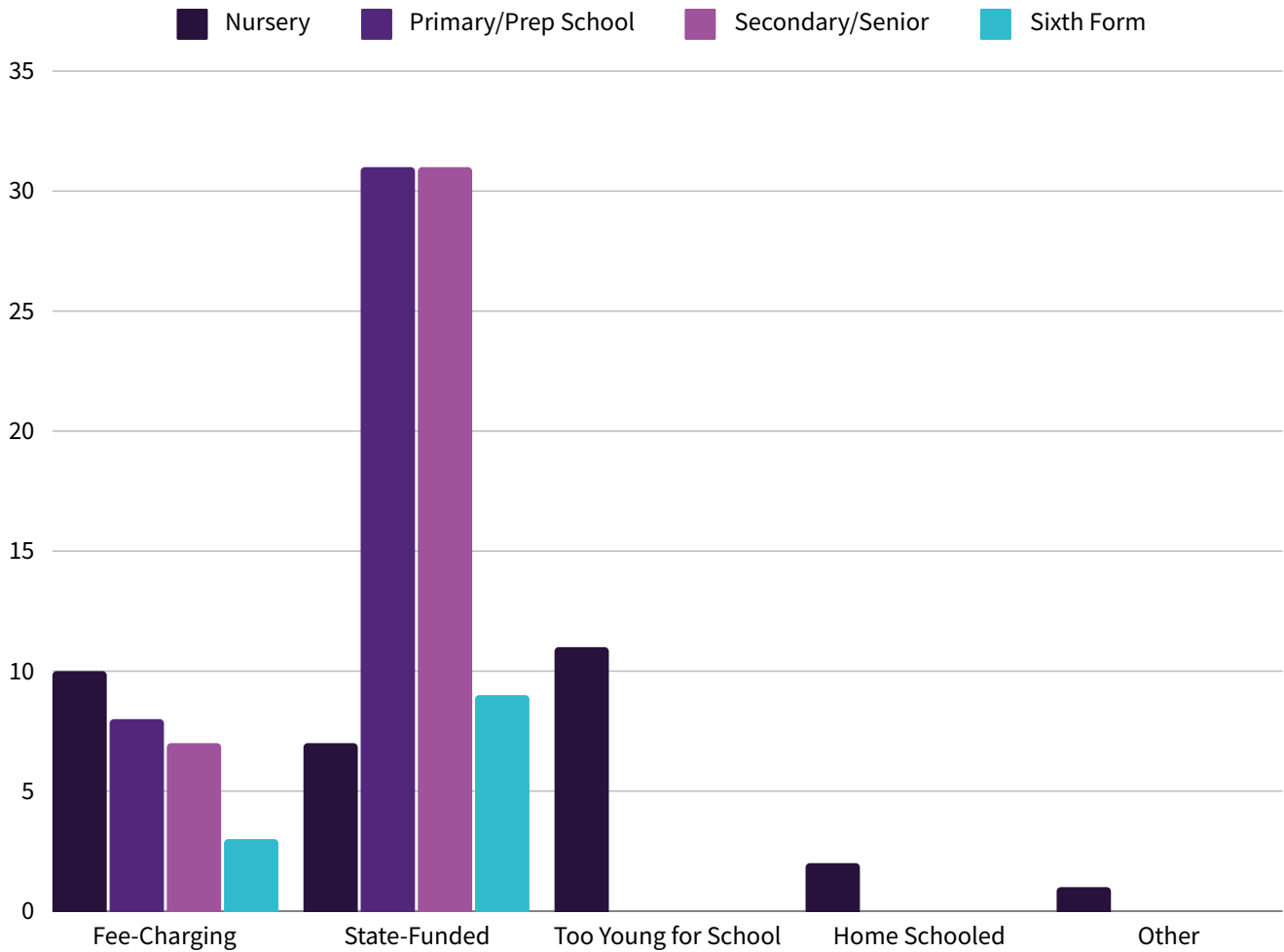
We received responses from 522 parents, 126 business owners and 137 recent education leavers.



We started by asking parents how many children they had.

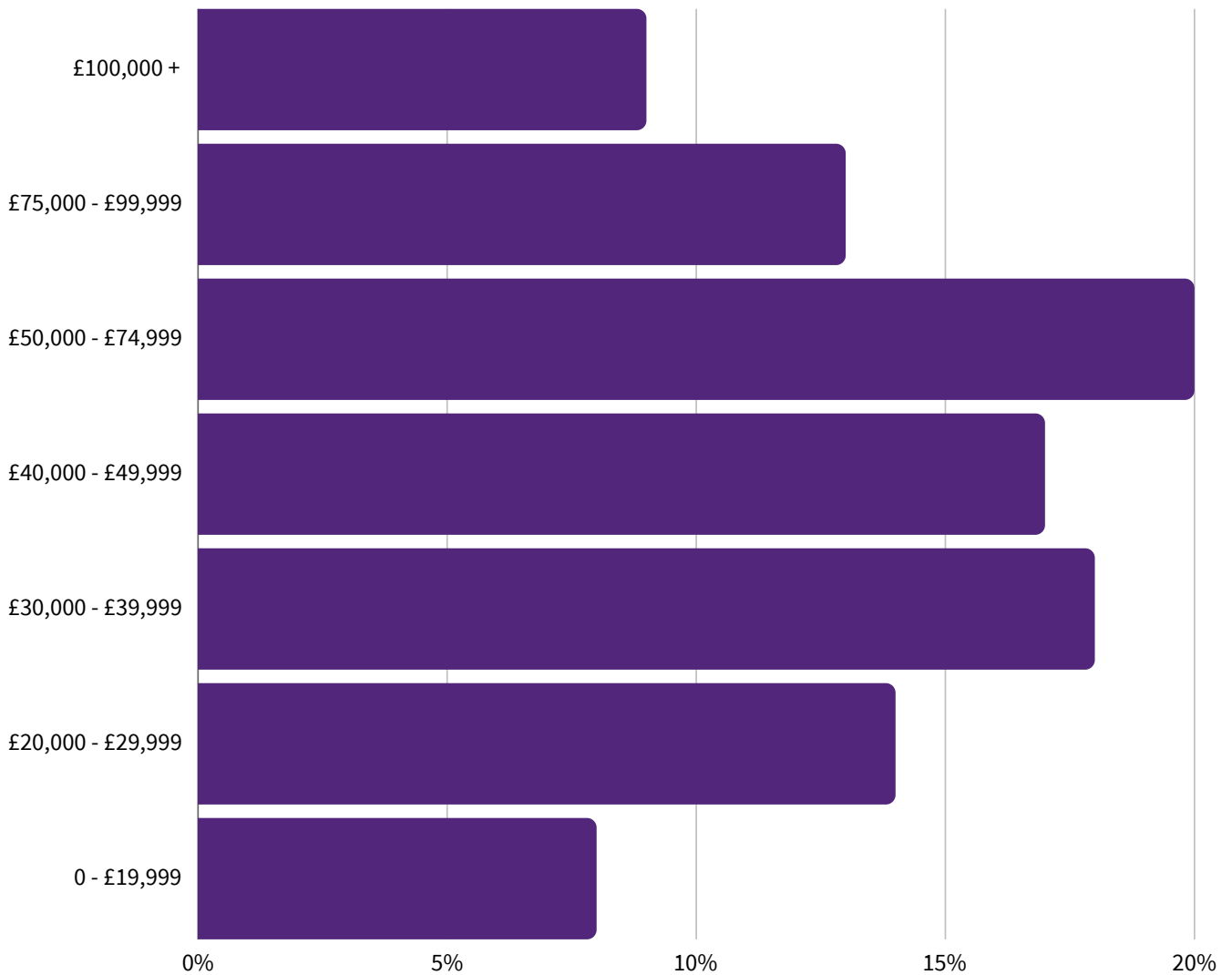
Just over a third have one child (37%), whilst just under half (45%) have two children. 6% of respondents have 4 or more children.

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



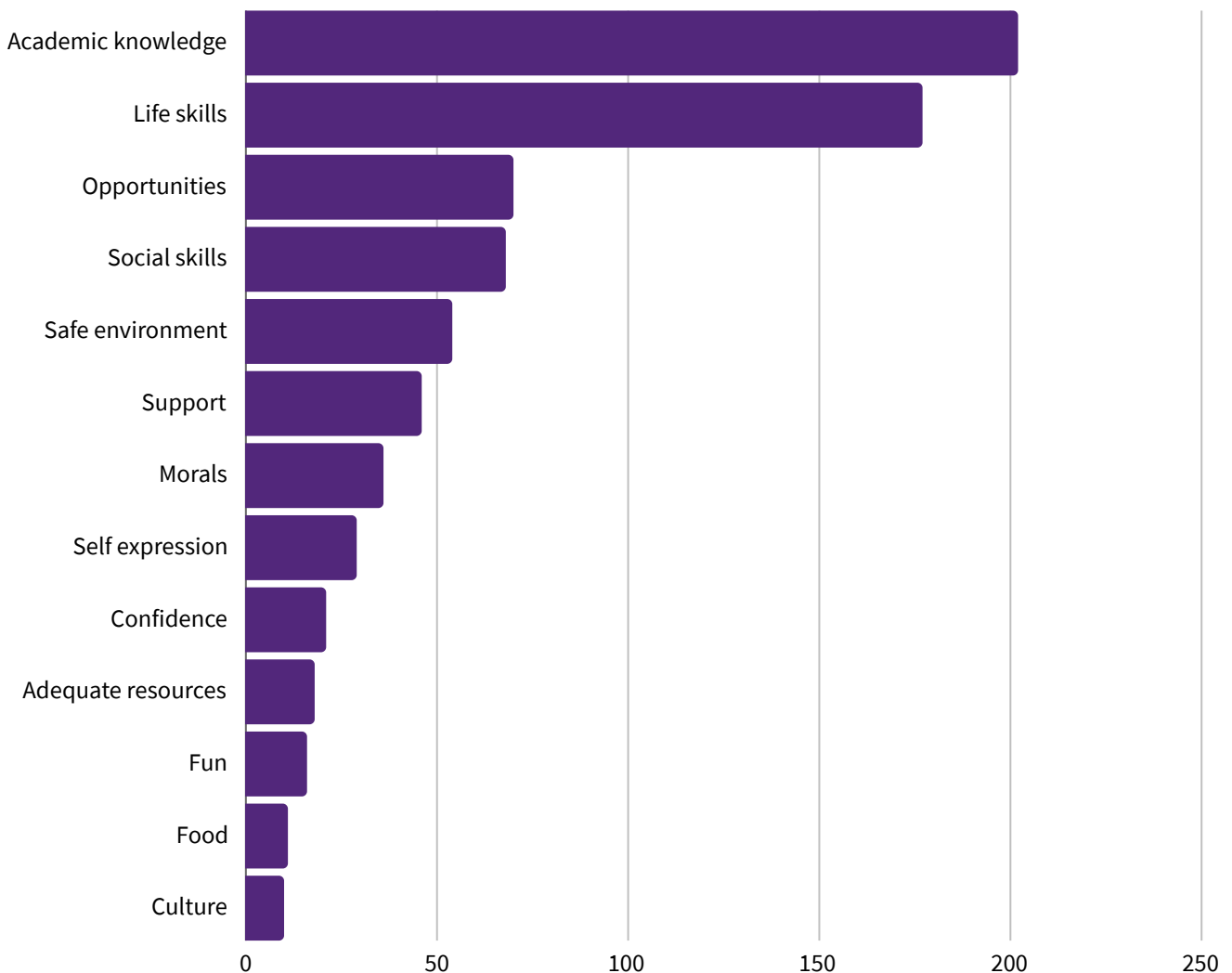
When asked which educational settings they use for their children, just under a third (31%) said that they had children in state-funded primary schools, whilst a further 31% used state-funded secondary schools. 11% stated that their children were not school age, while 10% had children in a fee-charging nursery.

Overall, just under three quarters (73%) of the school-aged children attend a state funded school, whilst 25% attend a fee-charging school.



This was followed by asking families their annual household income.

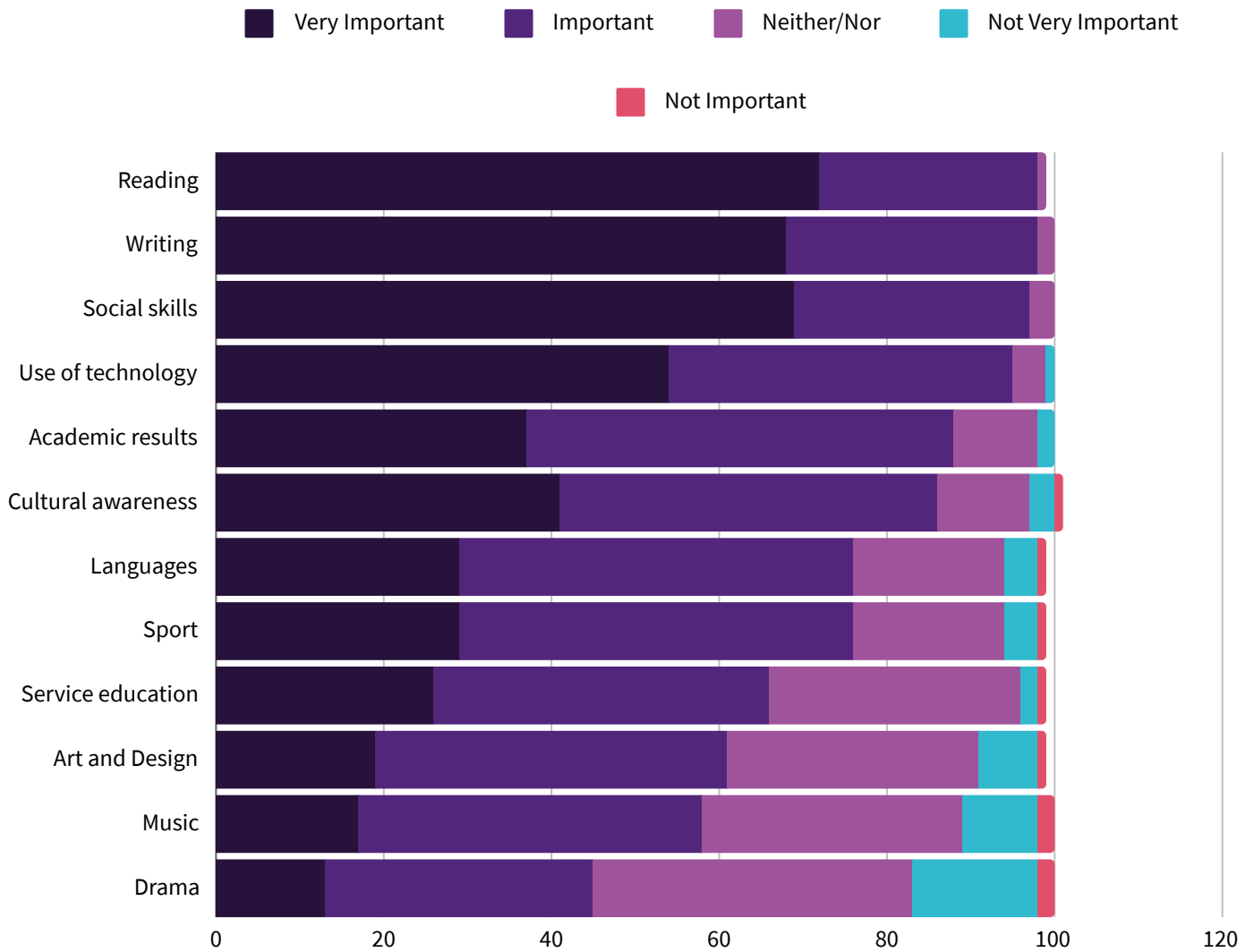
A fifth (20%) stated they had an annual household income of £50,000 - £74,999, while 18% have an income of £30,000-£39,000.



We then asked families what they felt schools should provide in an open/free text question.

The most commonly mentioned response was academic knowledge, followed by life skills and opportunities.

Social skills, and a safe environment were also each mentioned by over 50 respondents.

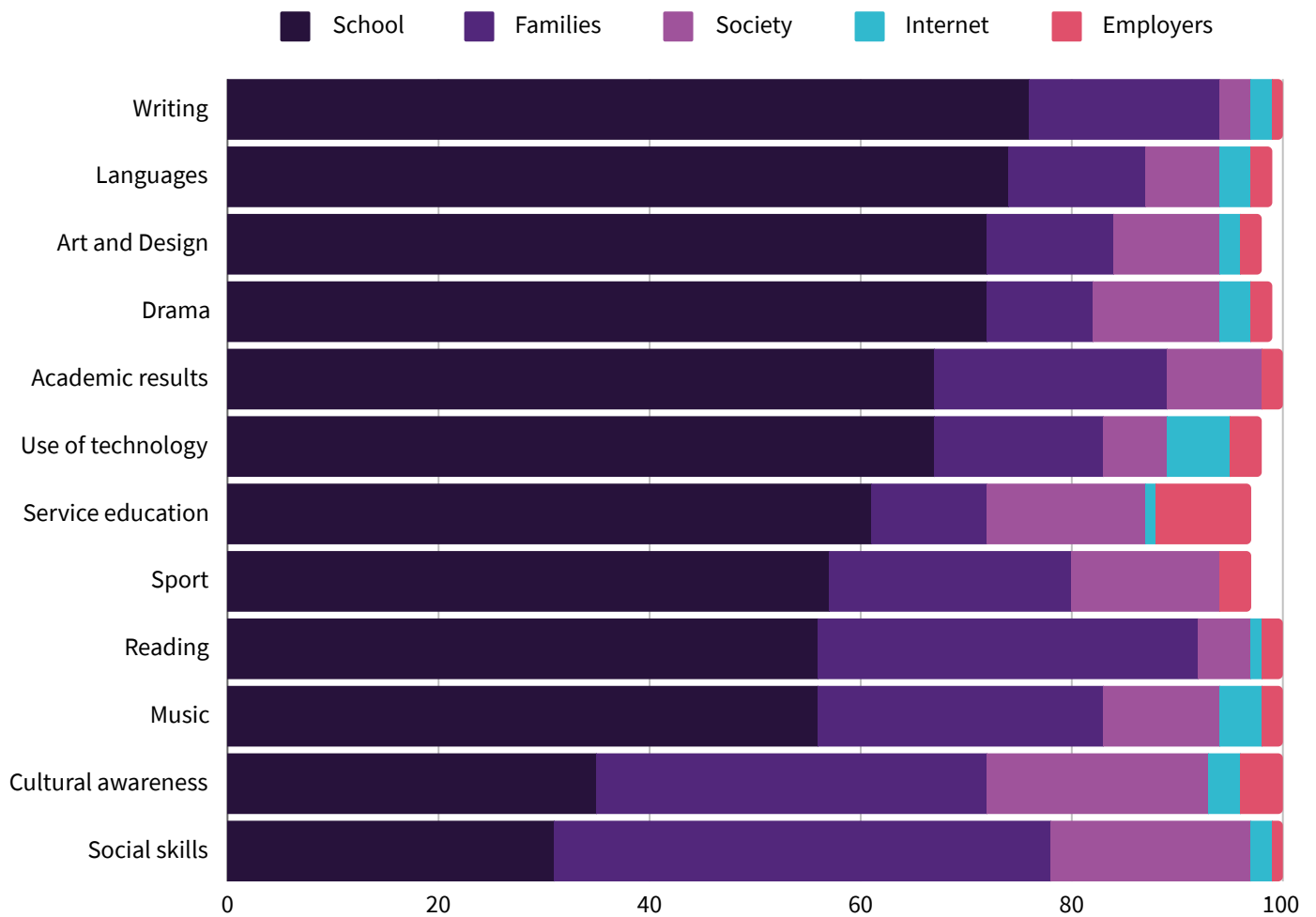


Families were then asked to rate how important they felt different elements of an education are.

The skills considered to be important to the highest proportions of parents were reading, writing, and social skills, followed by the use of technology, and academic results.

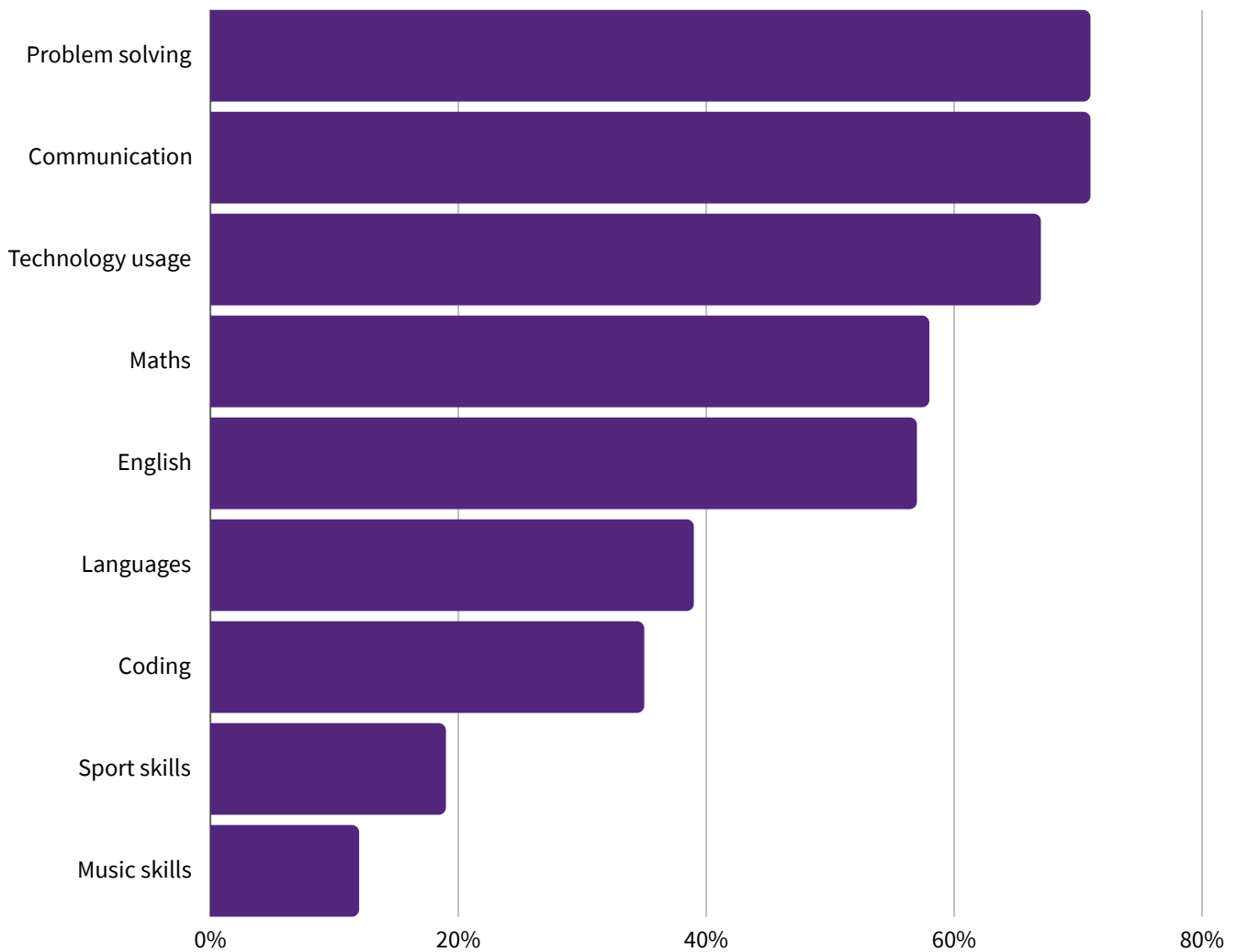
Drama, music, art and design and service education were seen as important by the lowest proportions of parents.





Once we had asked which factors were important, we asked who should be responsible for providing that education.

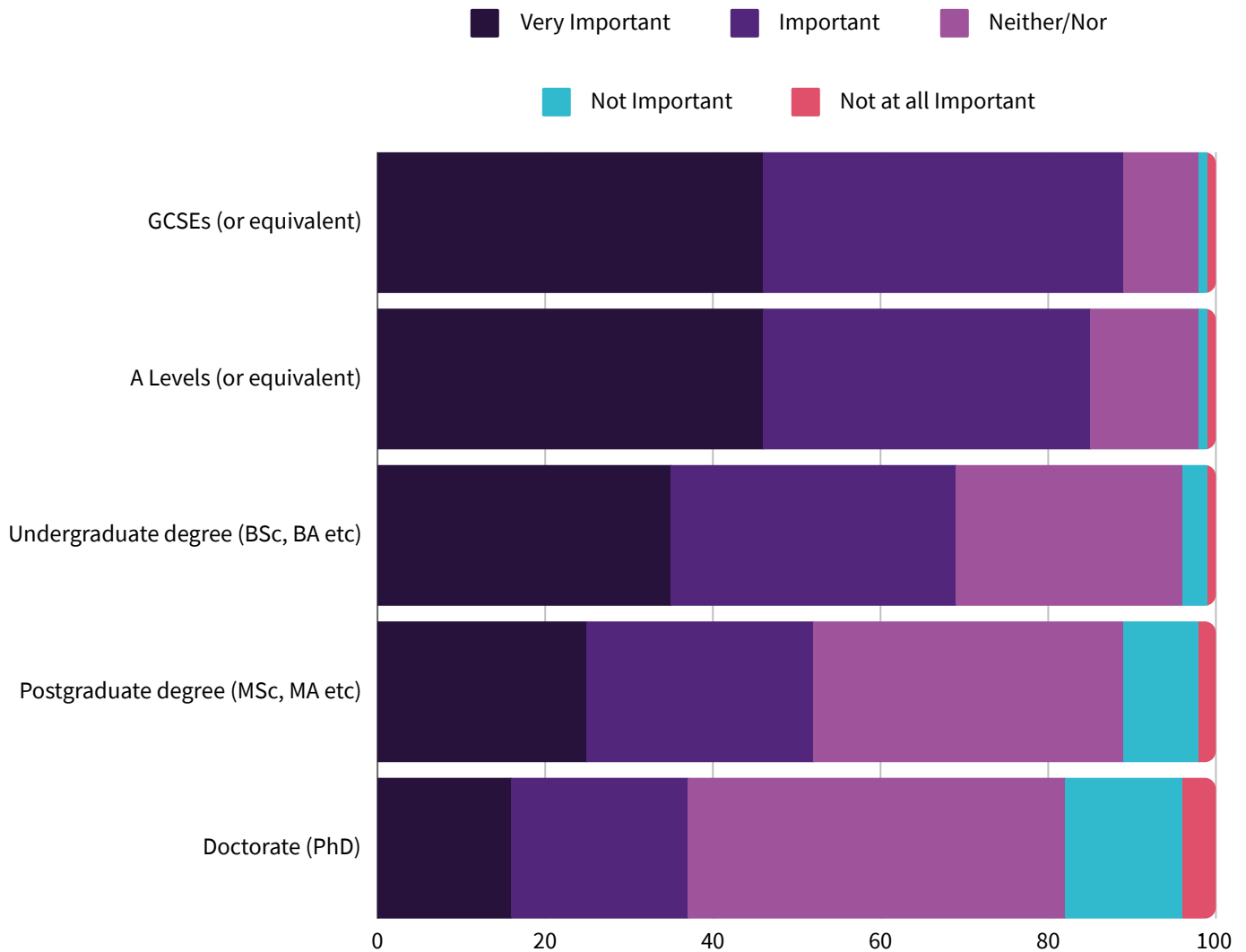
Schools were considered to be primarily responsible for the majority of areas. However, many considered families to be responsible for social skills (47%) and cultural awareness (37%).



When asked about which areas families would like to see enhanced, problem solving and communication were considered key areas, by just under three quarters of respondents (71%).

Technology usage, maths and English were also considered important by over half of respondents (67%, 58%, and 57%, respectively)

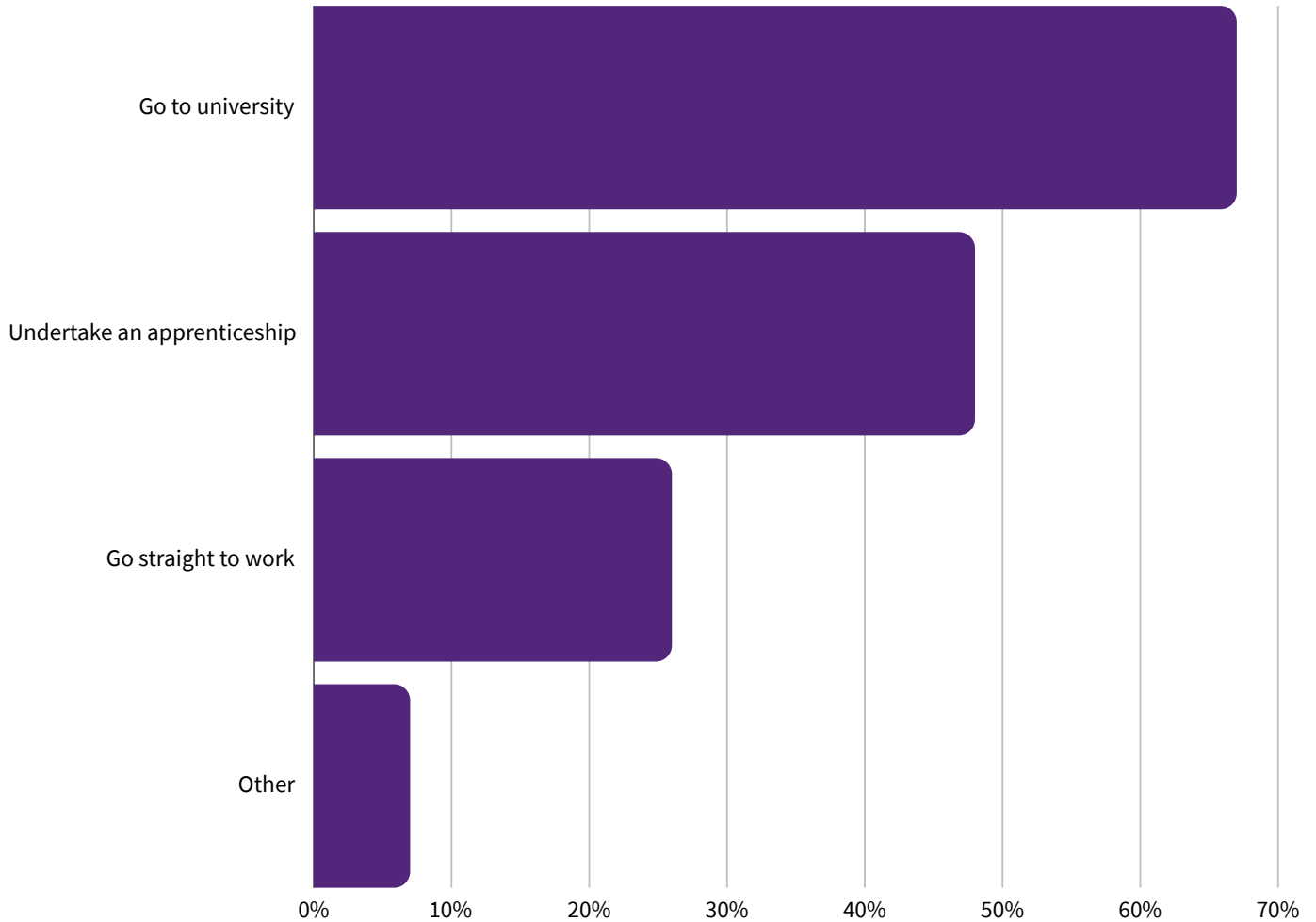
Music and sport skills were seen as relatively less important to enhance.



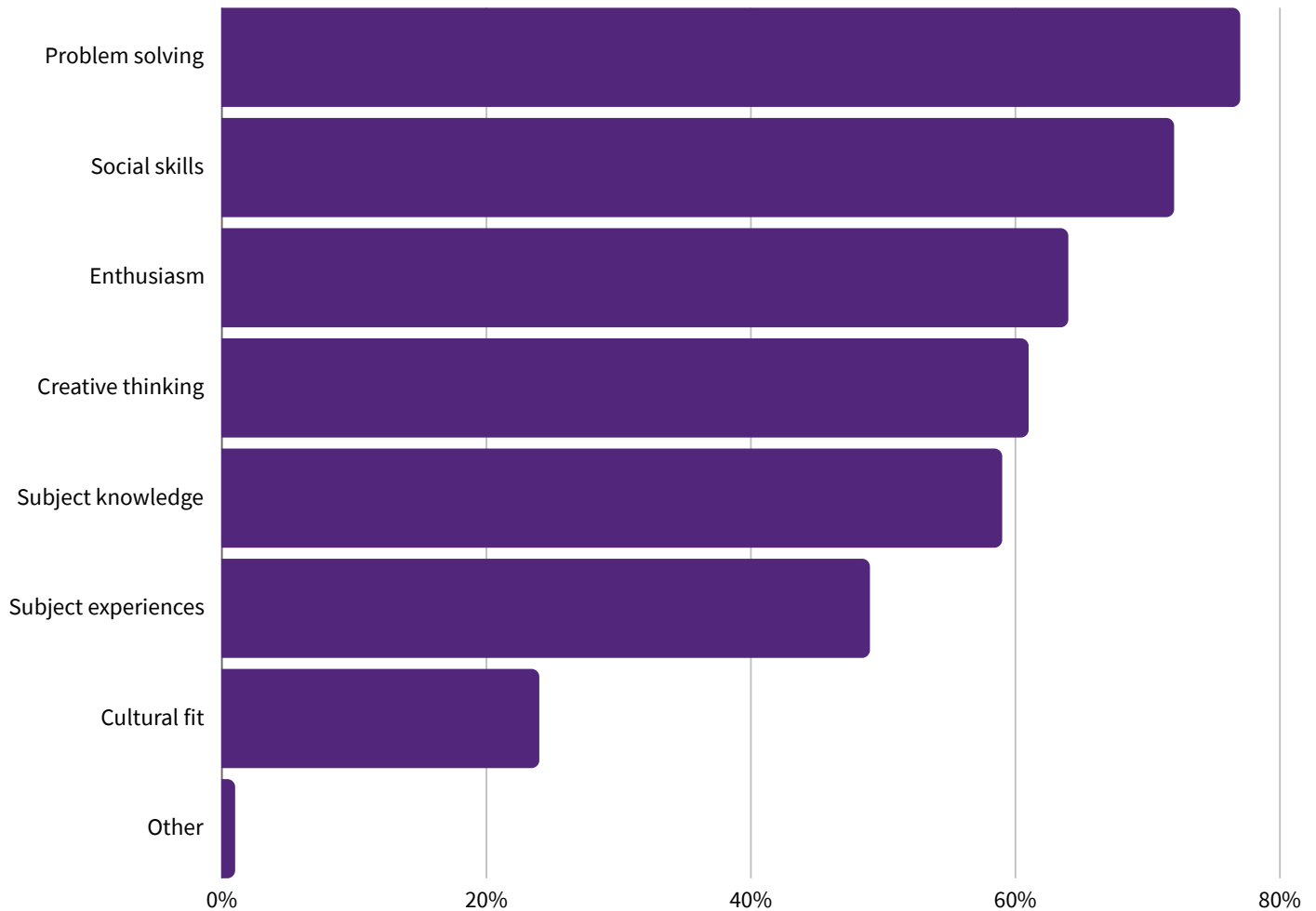
Families were then asked how important they consider a range of attainment levels.

Almost all families (89%) considered GCSEs to be important, followed by A Levels, with 84% of families considering them important.

Just over a third (37%) of families considered a Doctorate to be important, while just under a fifth (48%) said it to not be important.



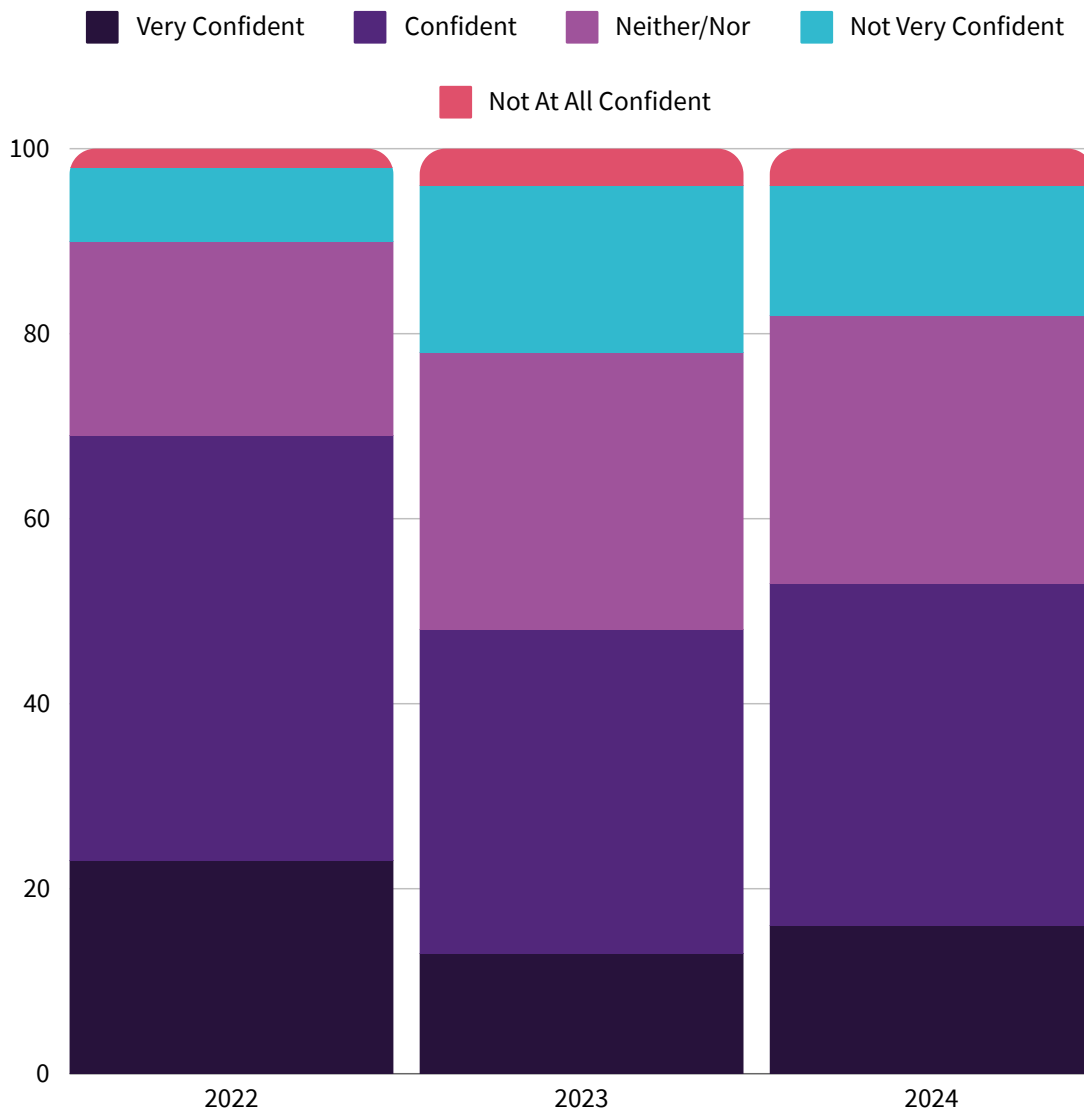
When asked about what they hoped their child’s next steps would be, two thirds (67%) of respondents said they hope they would go to University, whilst a just under half (48%) considered apprenticeships.



We asked families what skills they thought employers looked for.

Just under two thirds (61%) of respondents considered problem solving while 58% considered social skills to be skills that employers look for.

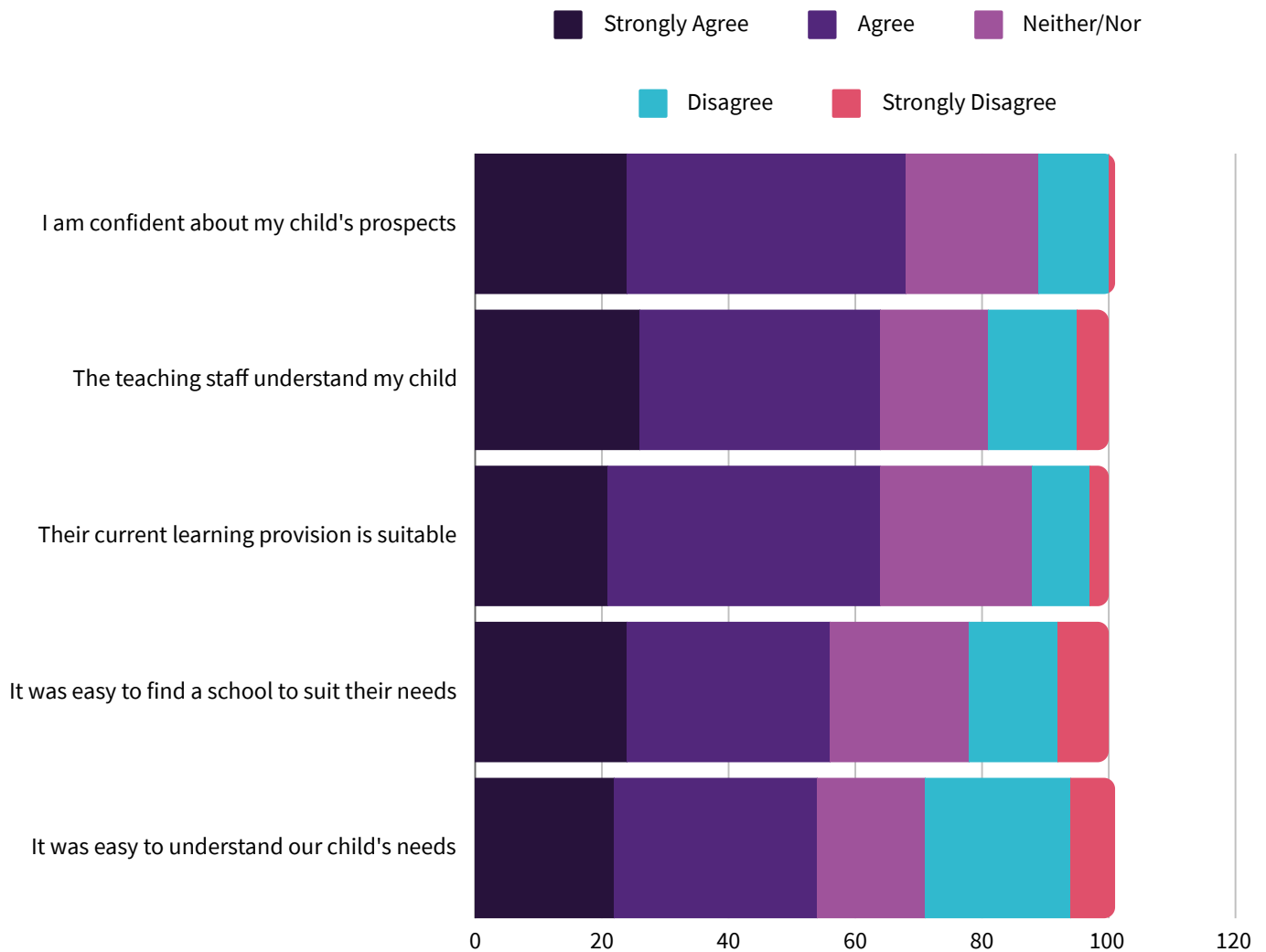
Fewer families considered cultural fit (19%) and subject experiences (40%).



We then asked families how confident they felt that their child was appropriately prepared for the working world.

Just over half (53%) of families were confident that their child was prepared for the future, while nearly a fifth (18%) were not confident.

In comparison to 2022, a smaller proportion of families are confident that their child is prepared. However, in comparison to 2023, this proportion has increased.

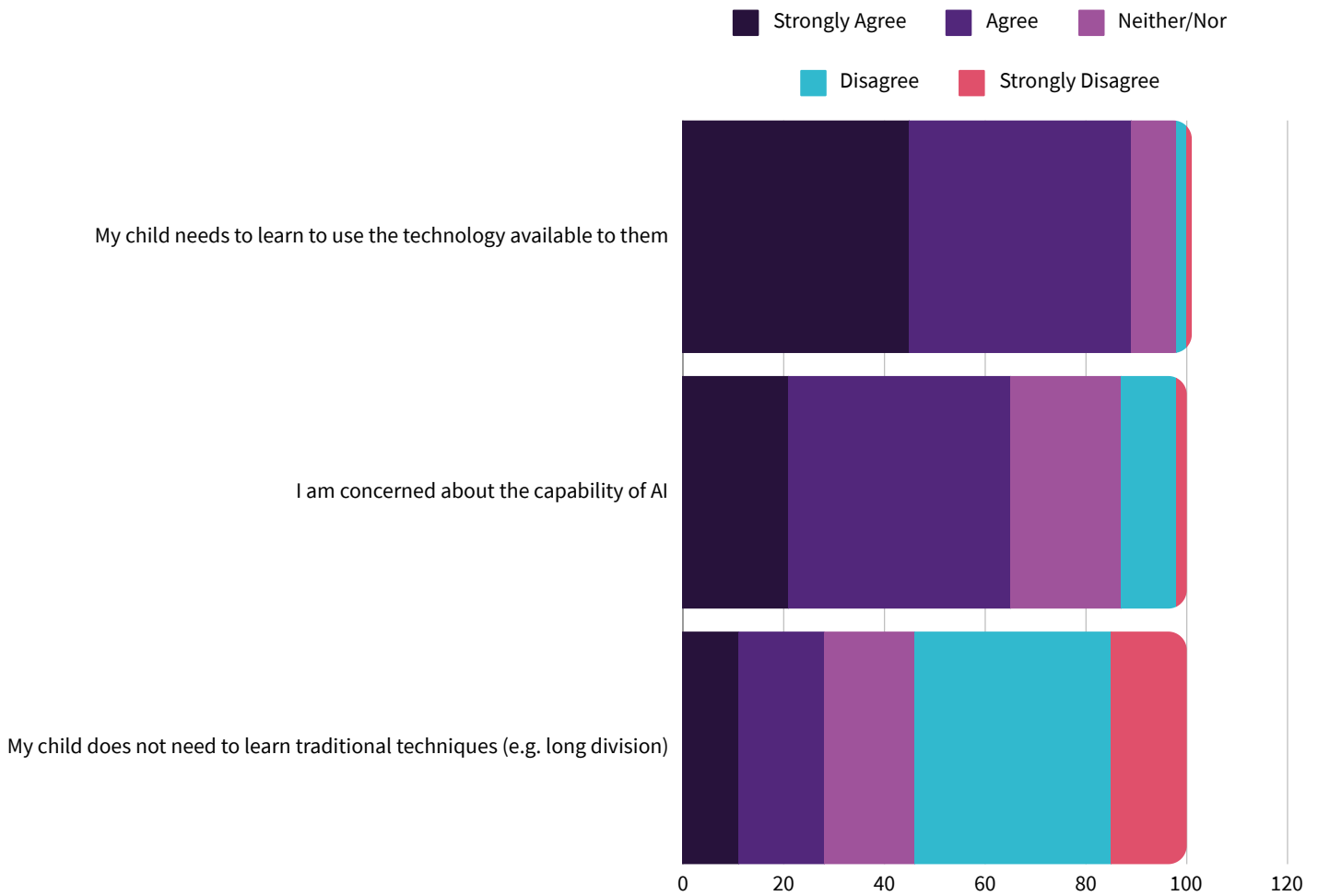


When asked whether their children have Special Education Needs (SEND), **17%** of families said they did.

We then asked them their opinions of the education they receive.

Just over two thirds (67%) of families were confident about their child’s prospects, while 64% feel that the teaching staff understand their children.

Just under a third (30%) of respondents felt it was not easy to understand their child's needs, and over a fifth (22%) did not find it easy to find a school to suit their needs.



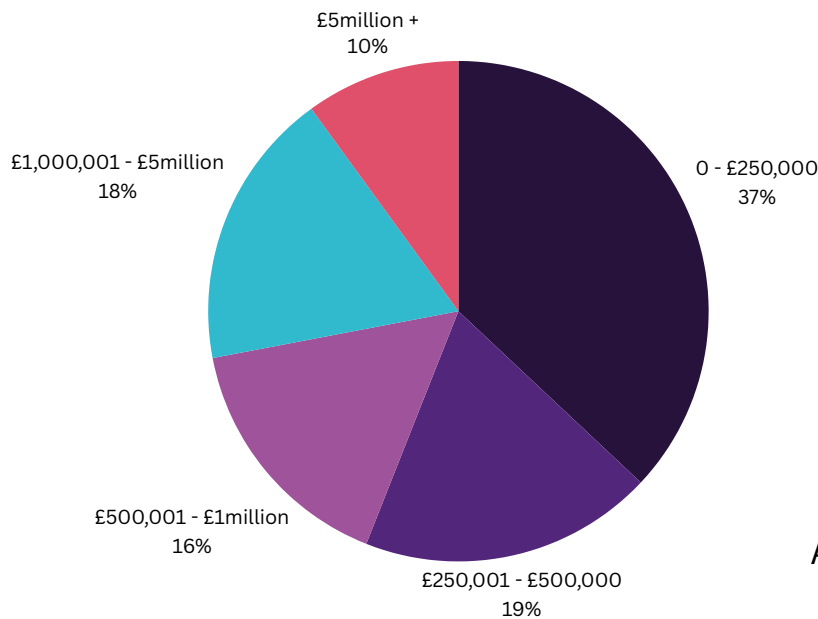
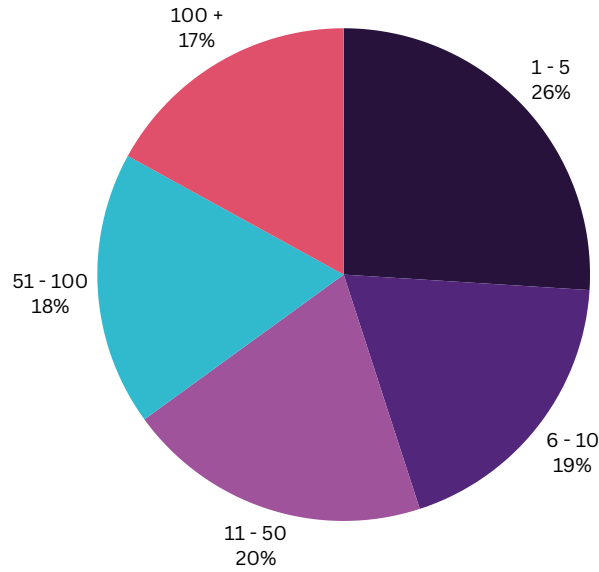
Artificial Intelligence is a key topic in education currently. We asked families a little about their knowledge of AI.

89% of respondents feel their child needs to learn to use technology. However, just under two thirds (65%) are concerned about the capability of AI.

When asked whether their child needs to learn traditional education techniques, families had mixed perceptions, with over half feeling that their child needs to learn traditional techniques.



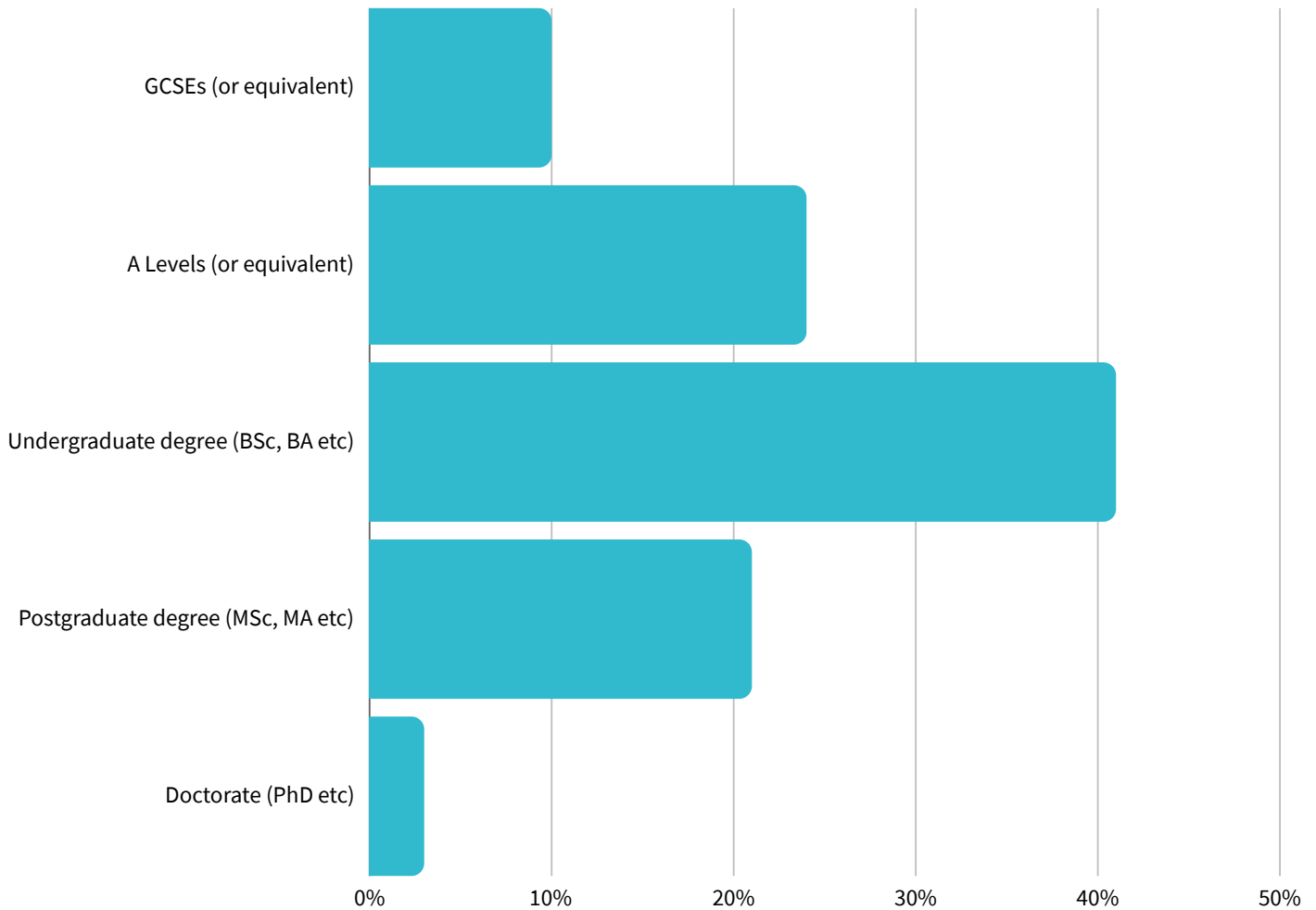
Staff employed



Annual turnover

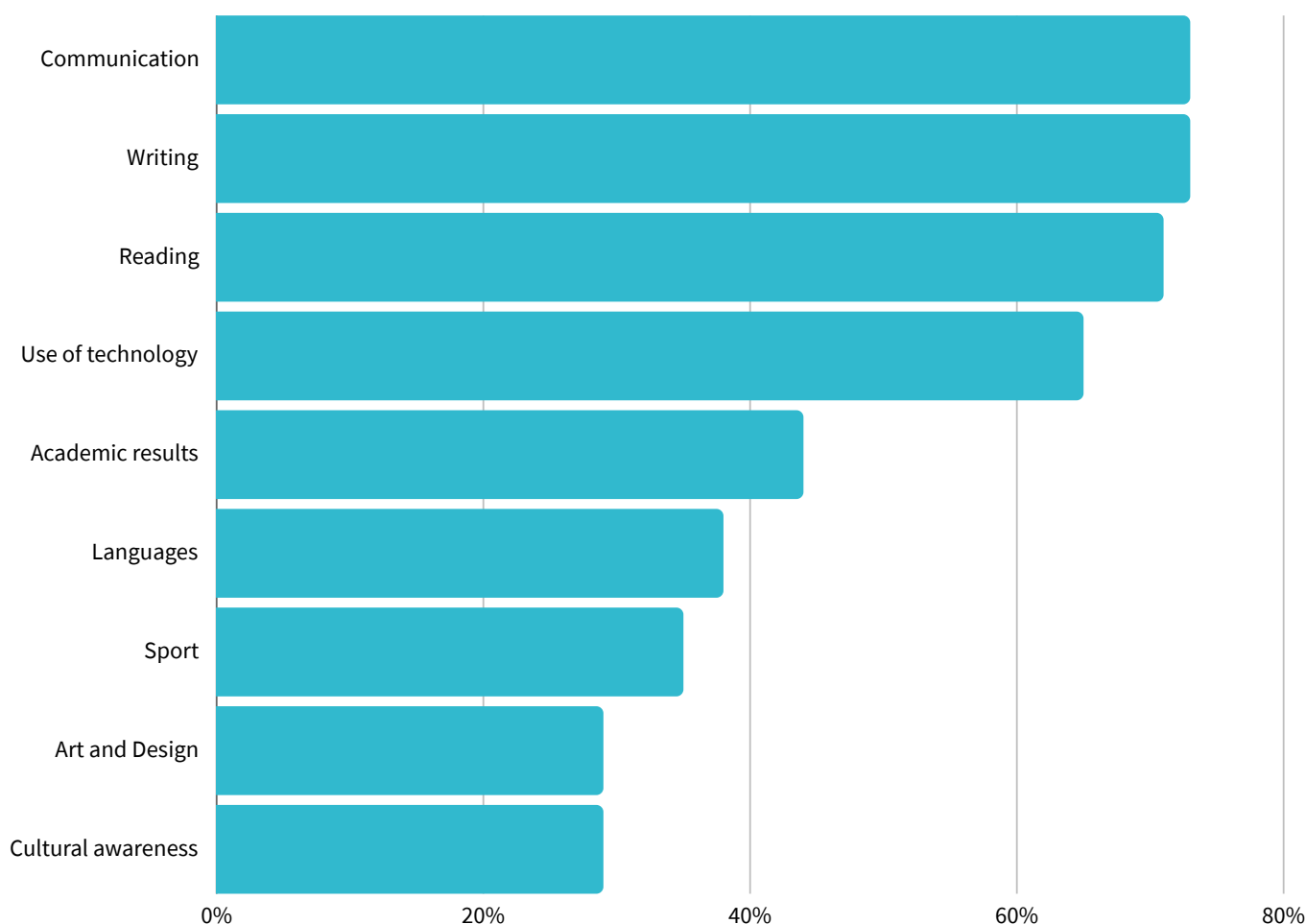
For those who stated that they were an employer, we asked how many Staff they employed and their annual turnover.

Just under half (45%) of respondents said that they employ 10 or less staff, while just over a third (37%) have an annual turnover of £0-250,000.



We then asked what their highest level of education is, where two fifths (41%) stated that they have an undergraduate degree.

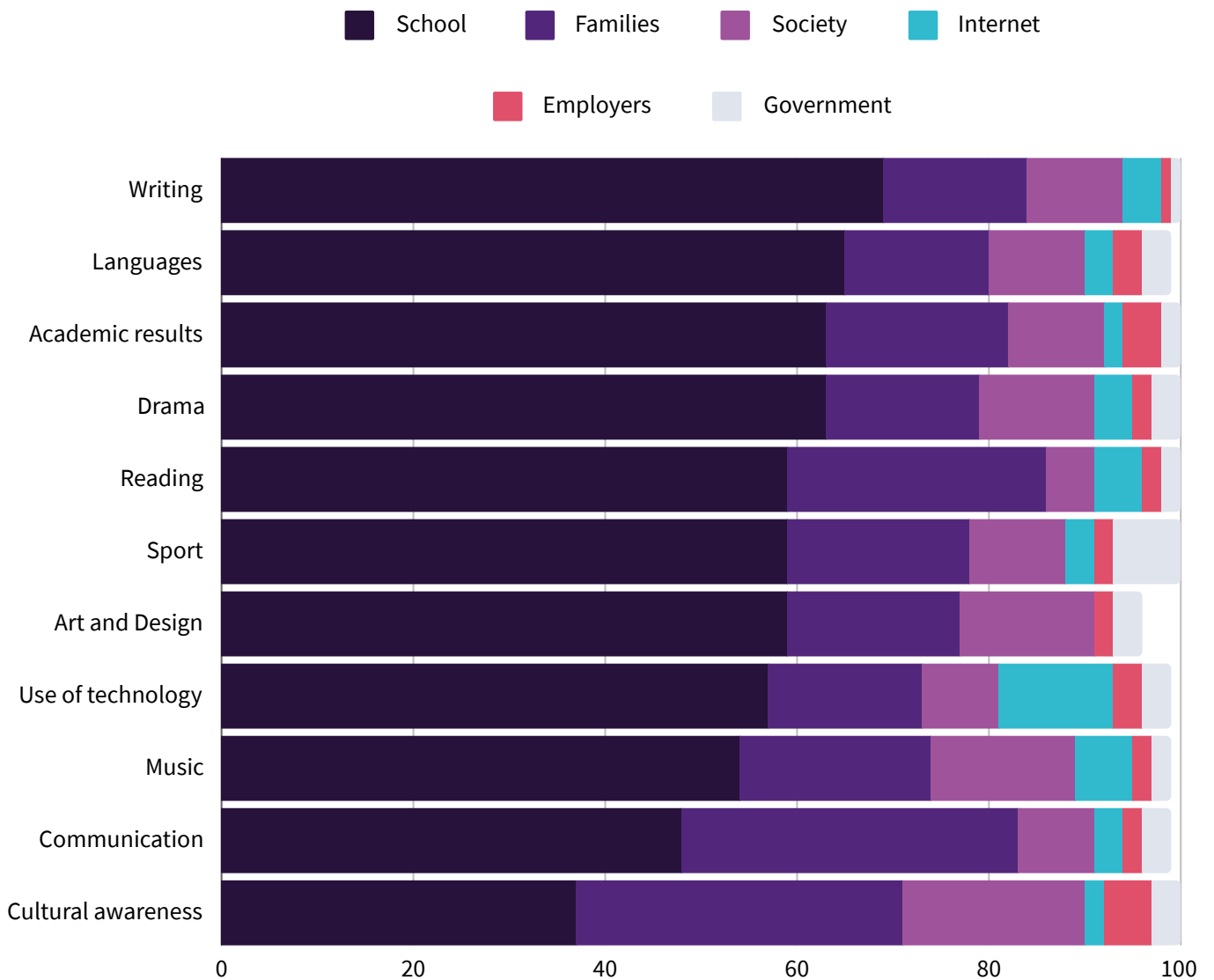
Just under a quarter have A Levels (24%) or a postgraduate degree (21%).



We then asked what skills they think schools should focus on.

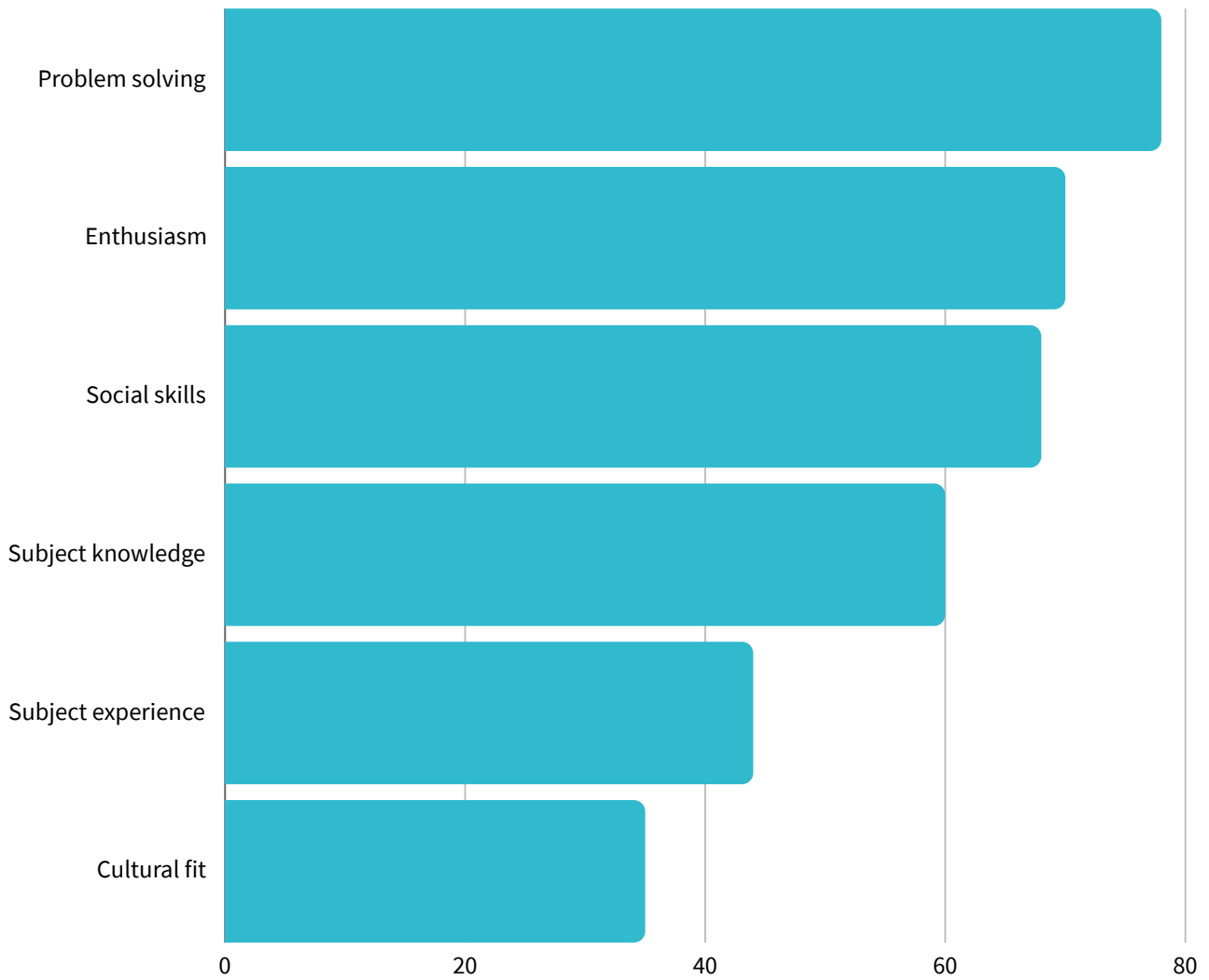
In the unprompted responses, there was 124 replies, with STEM, problem solving and social skills being the most commonly cited responses.

As we can see in the figure, when prompted, over two thirds of the 124 respondents said that communication (73%), writing (73%), and reading (71%) are skills that schools should focus on.



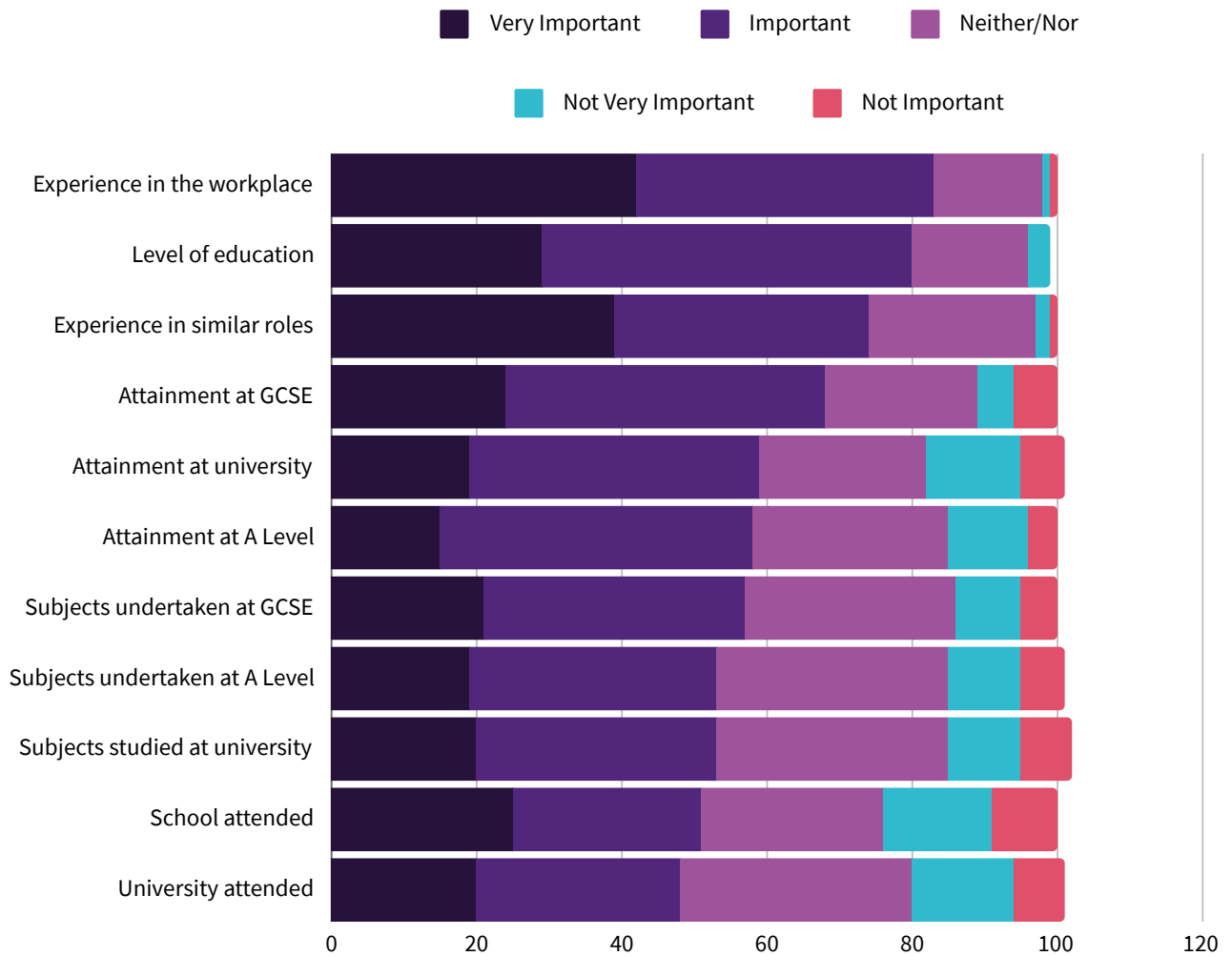
As with parents we asked who should be responsible for the education in each of these areas.

Schools were considered primarily responsible for the education in all areas. However, over a third of respondents feel that families are responsible for teaching cultural awareness (34%) and communication (35%).



When asked what skills they look for when employing new staff, over three quarters (78%) said problem solving, while 70% said enthusiasm.

These were followed by social skills (68%) and subject knowledge (60%).

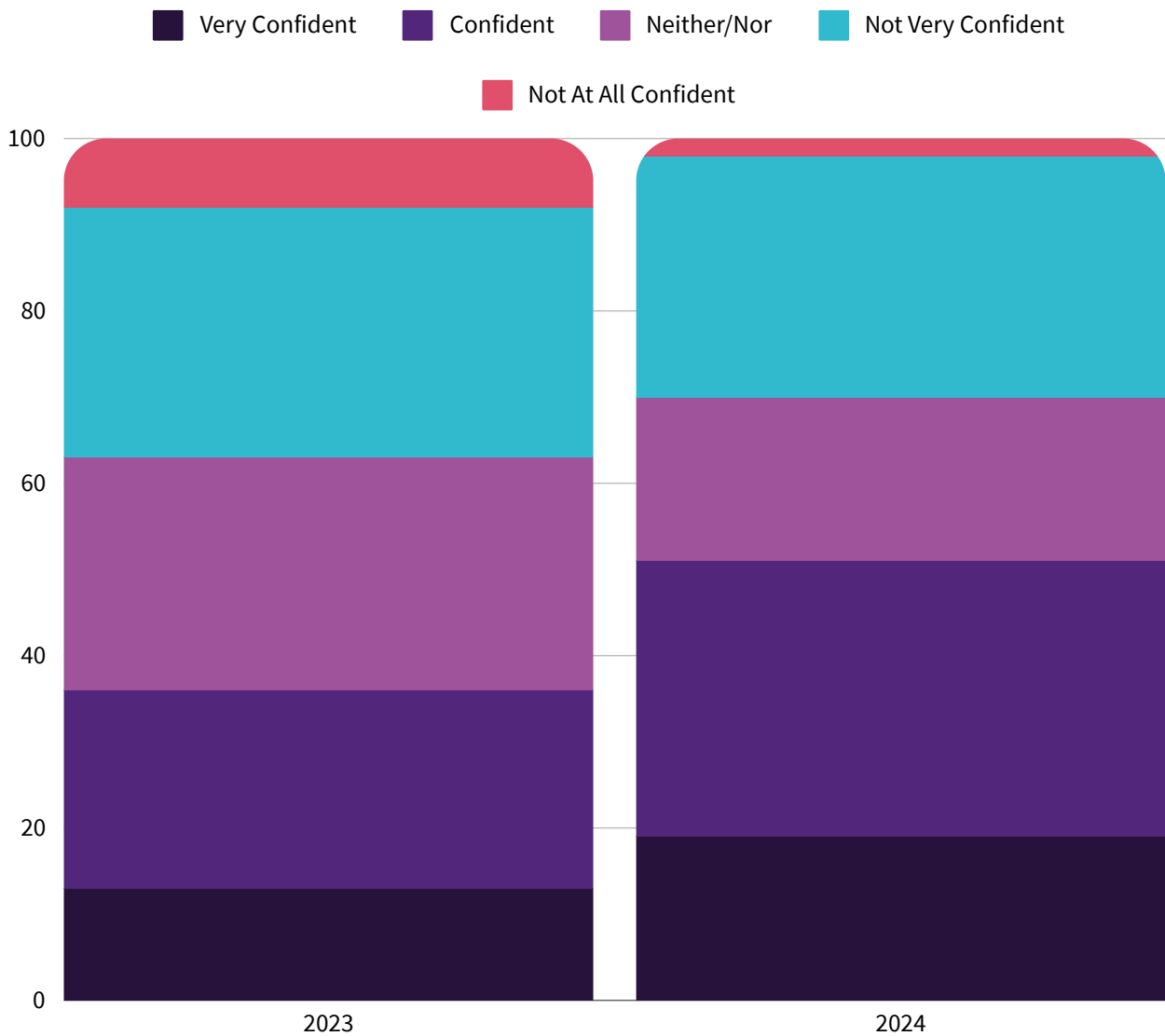


We then asked how important they consider education outcomes when recruiting new staff.

Over 80% of respondents considered experience in the workplace (83%) and level of education (80%) to be important.

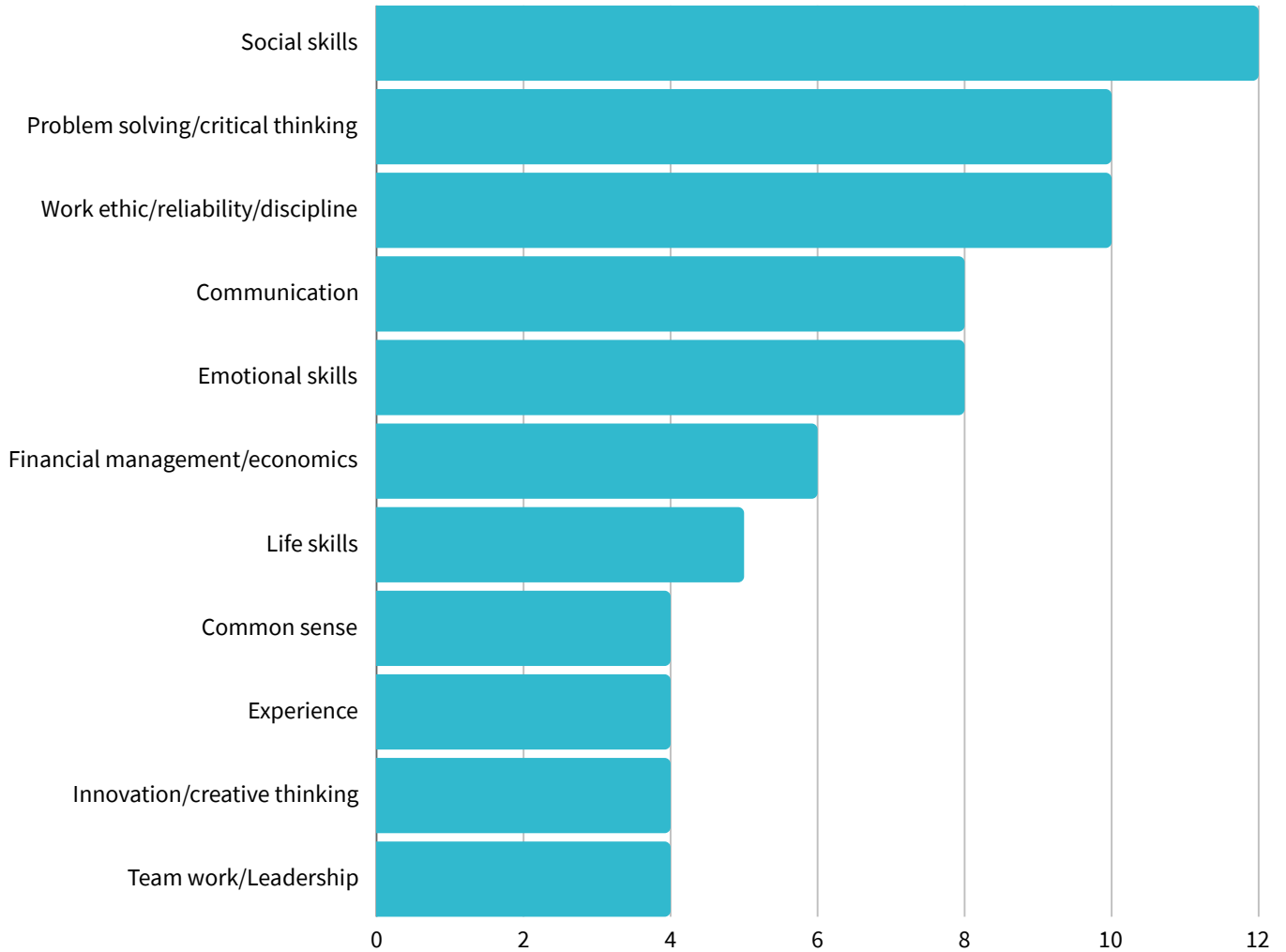
Just under three quarters (74%) of respondents considered experience in similar roles to be important.

Attainment at GCSE (68%) was important to a higher proportion of respondents than the attainment at university (59%) or A Level (59%).



When asked how confident they were that young people were appropriately prepared for the world of the future, just over half (51%) said that they were confident.

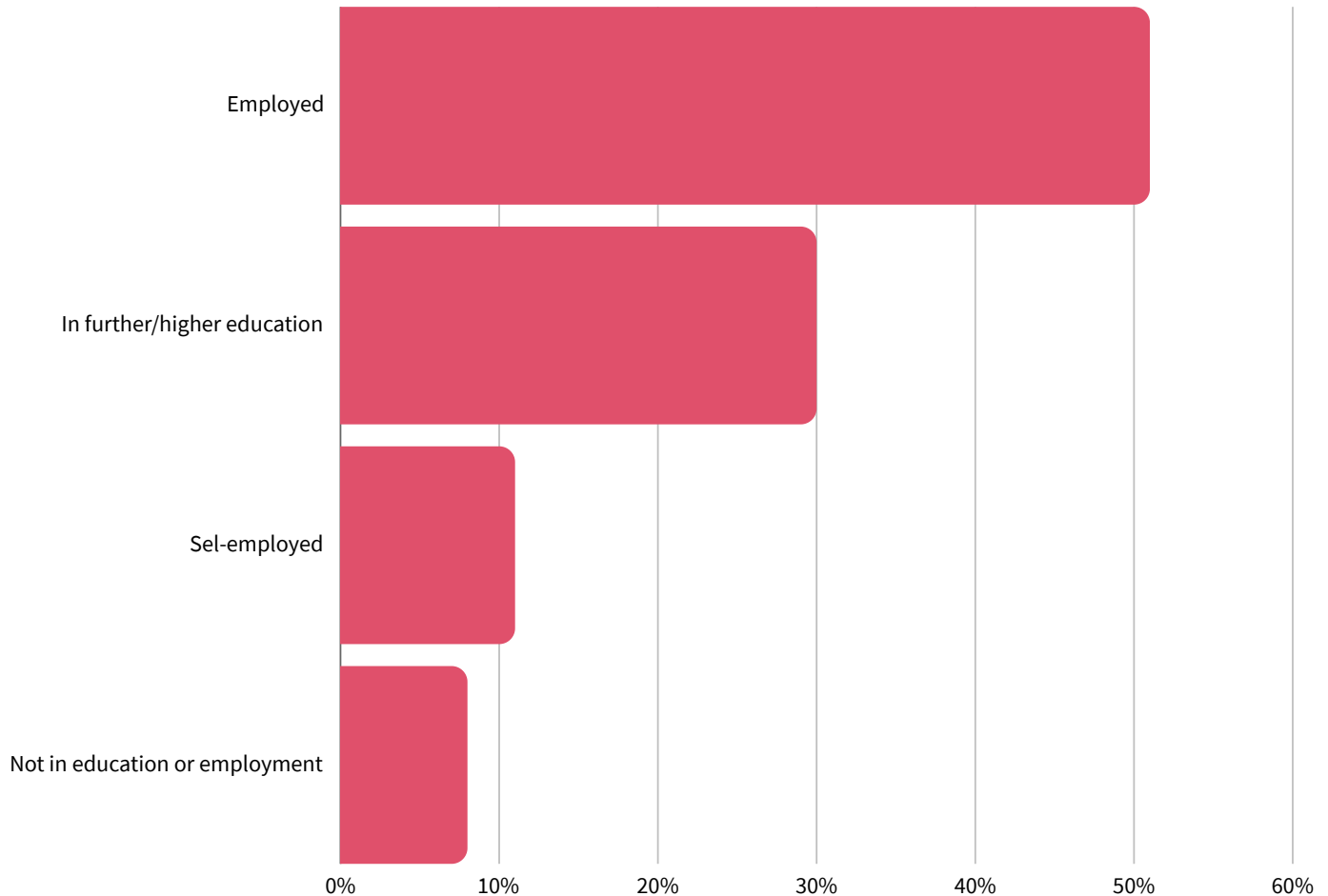
This is a higher proportion than in 2023 (36%), and similar to the proportion of parents who were confident this year (53%).



We then asked what key skill they think new employees are missing, with a free text question.

Respondents most commonly mentioned that they feel that social skills are missing, followed by problem solving and work ethic/discipline.

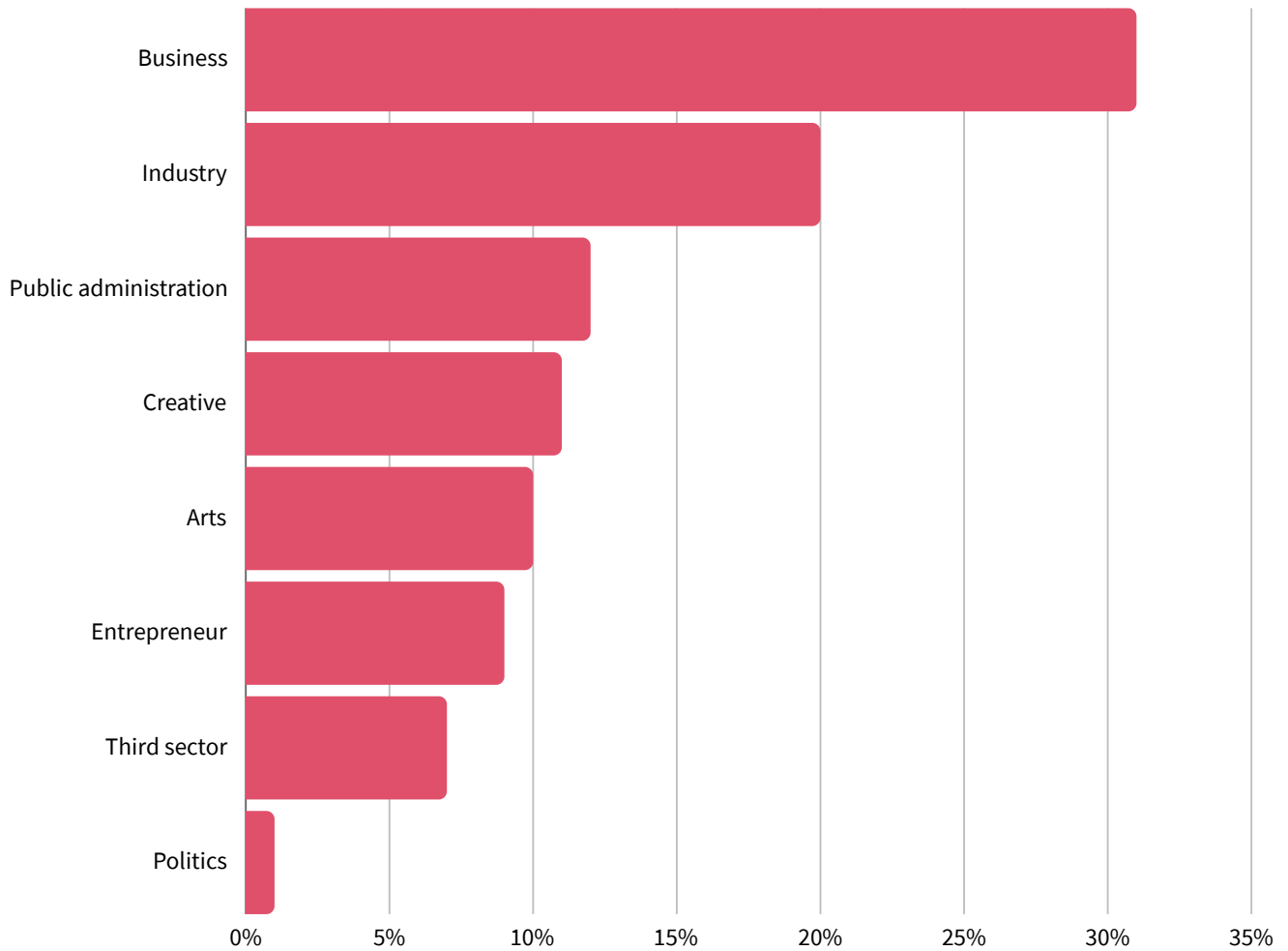




We asked those who were 18-25 about their employment status.

Just over half (51%) stated that they were employed, with a further 11% stating they were self-employed.

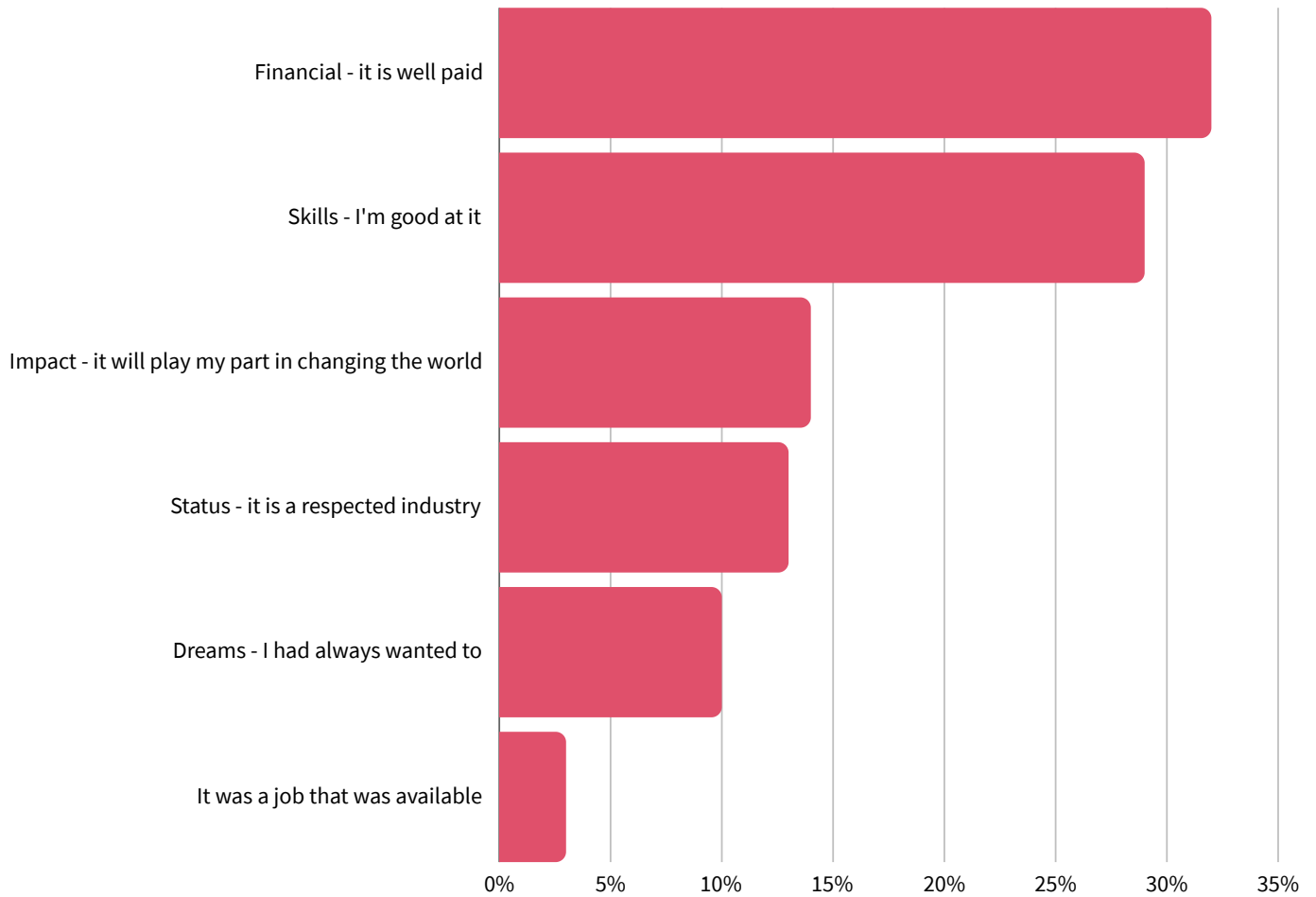
Of the 84 people who were employed or self-employed, three quarters (75%) said that they chose their current job as is in line with their career aspirations, with 25% took the income as they needed an income.



We then asked about the area of their chosen career.

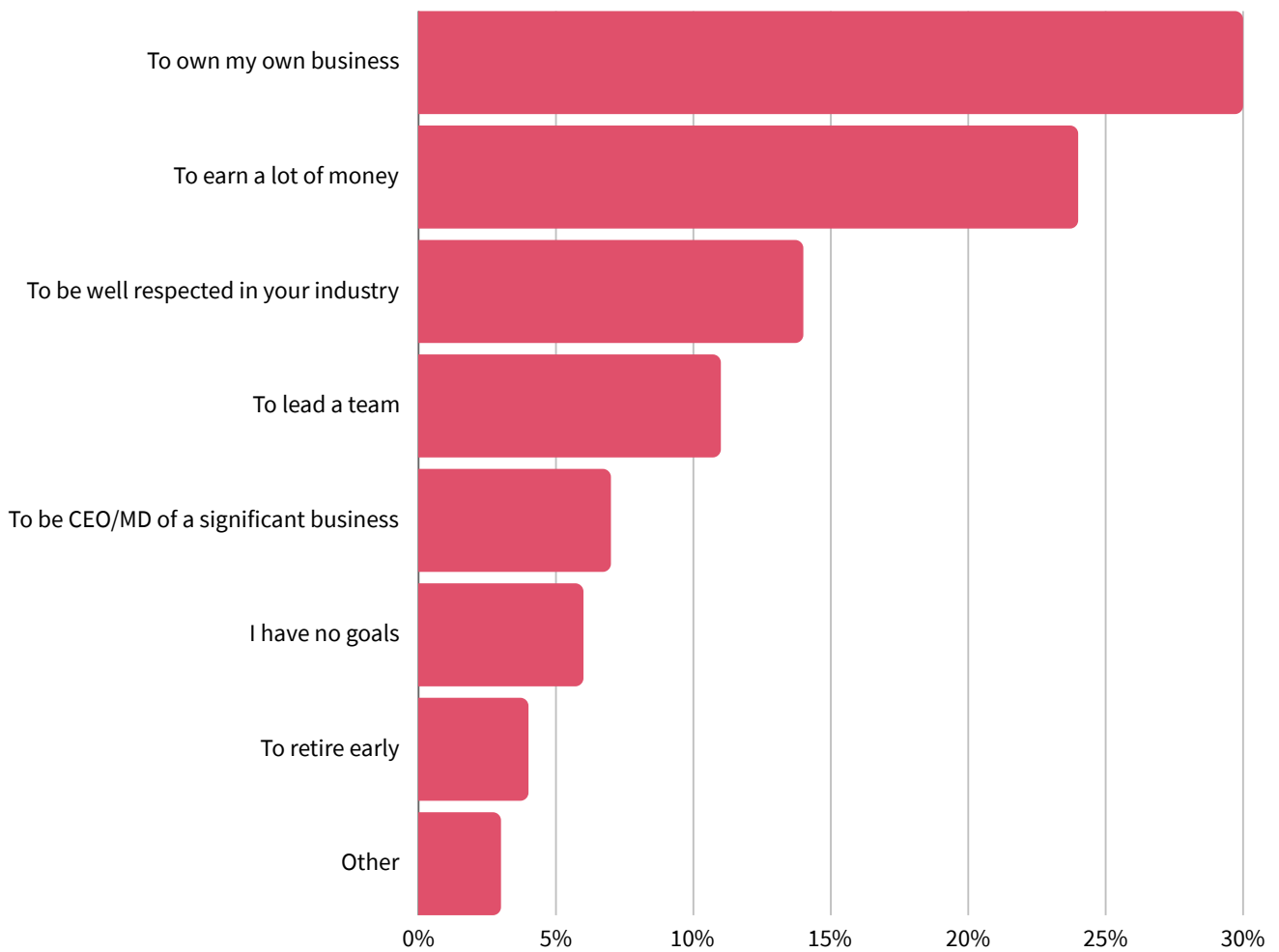
Just under a third (31%) said their chosen career was in business, whilst a fifth (20%) said it was in industry.

Only 1% of respondents have chosen politics.



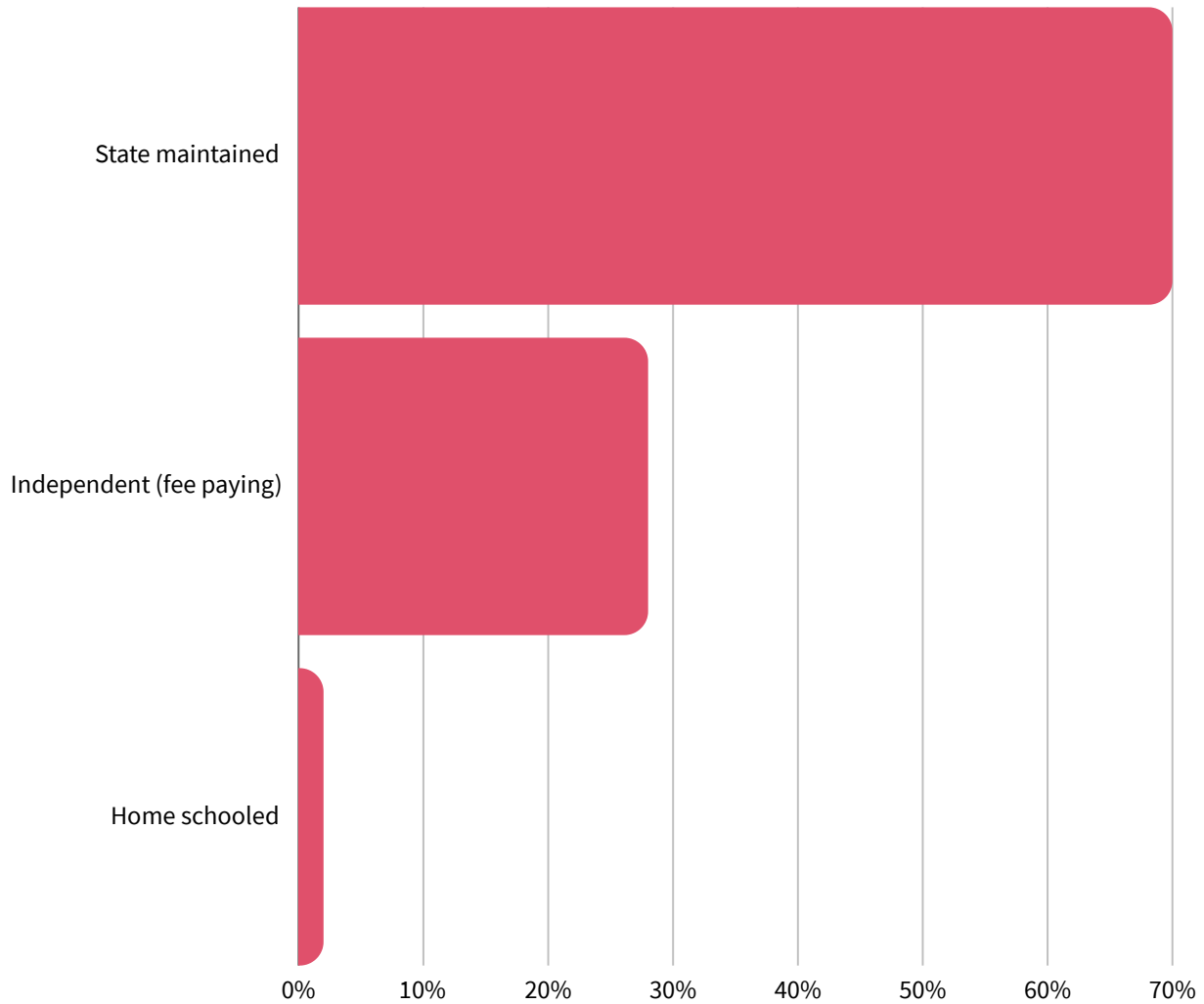
When asked what their motivation for choosing their career was, just under a third (32%) said it was financial.

This was followed by 29% of respondents who said their choice was motivated by their skills.

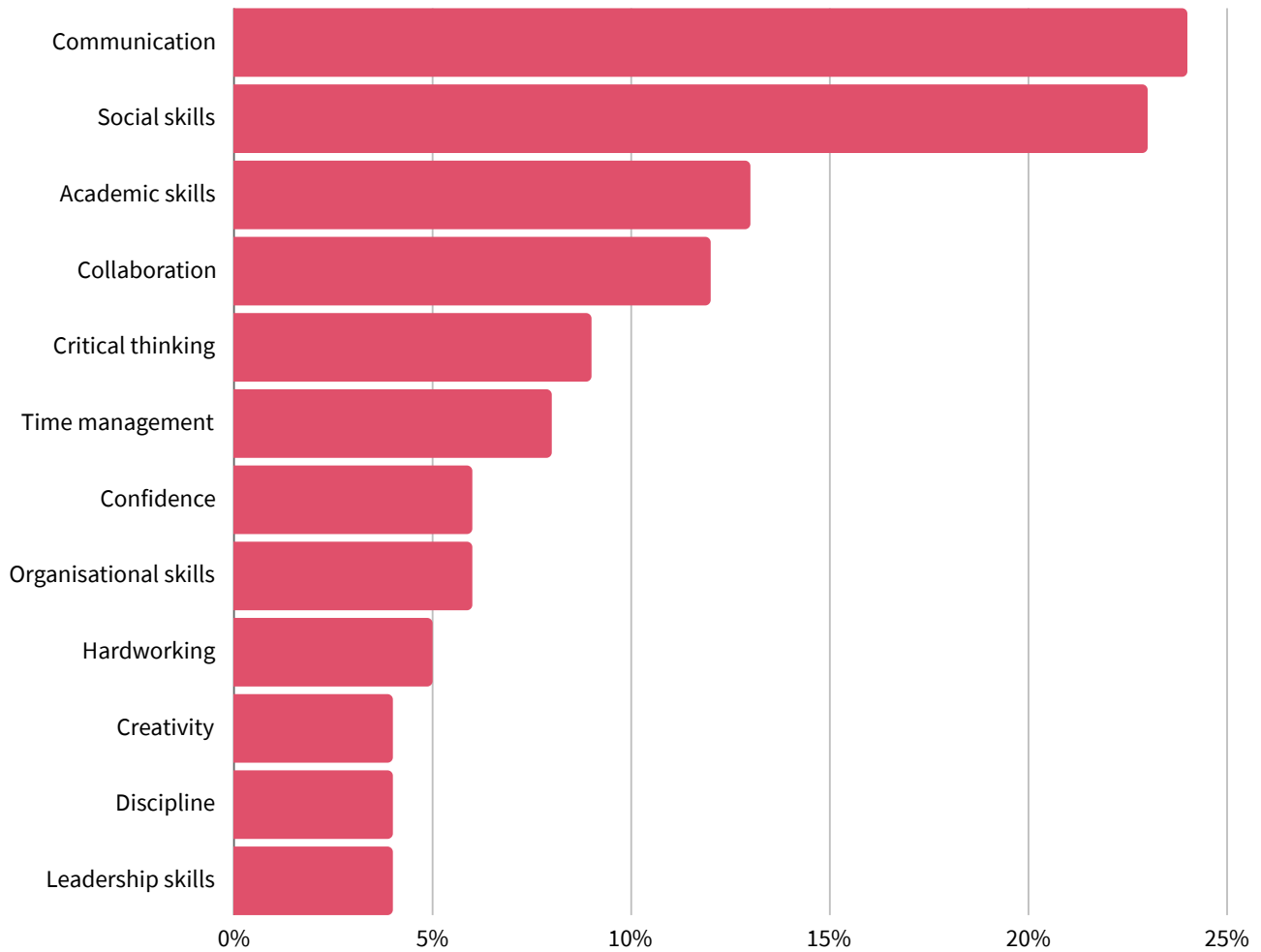


We then asked what their career goals were.

Just under a third (30%) of respondents would like to own their own business, while just under a quarter (24%) aim to earn a lot of money.

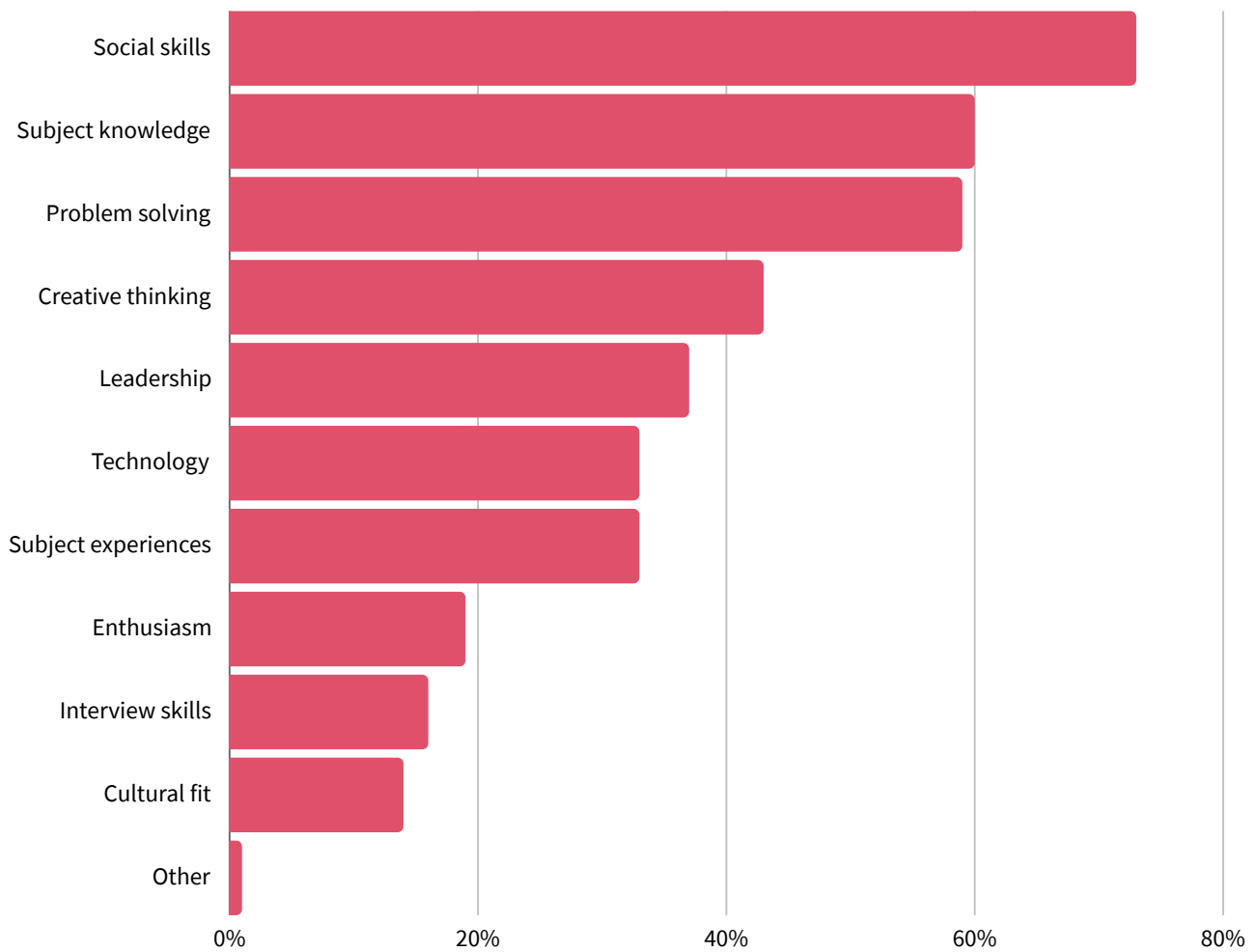


When asked what type of school they attended, 70% stated a state-maintained school, whilst just over a quarter (28%) attended an Independent (fee-charging) School.



We then asked what they think their most valuable skill is that they learnt at school.

24 individuals mentioned communication, whilst 23 mentioned social skills.

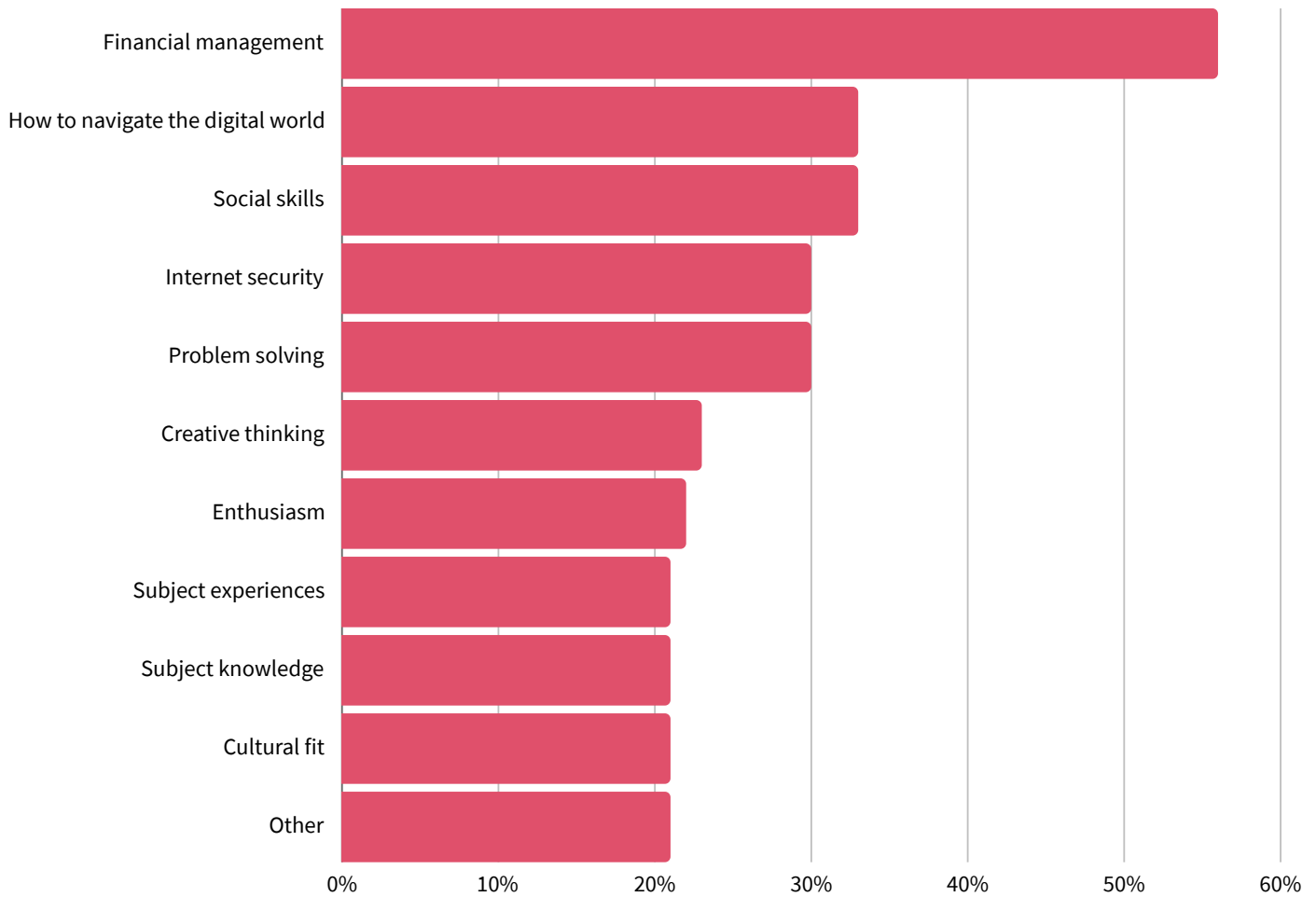


When asked what skills they felt school had provided them with, just under three quarters of respondents (73%) said social skills.

60% said subject knowledge, while 59% said problem solving.

Less than a fifth of respondents felt school provided them with enthusiasm (19%), interview skills (16%) or cultural fit (14%).

One respondent felt the school “really didn’t” provide them with any of the listed skills.

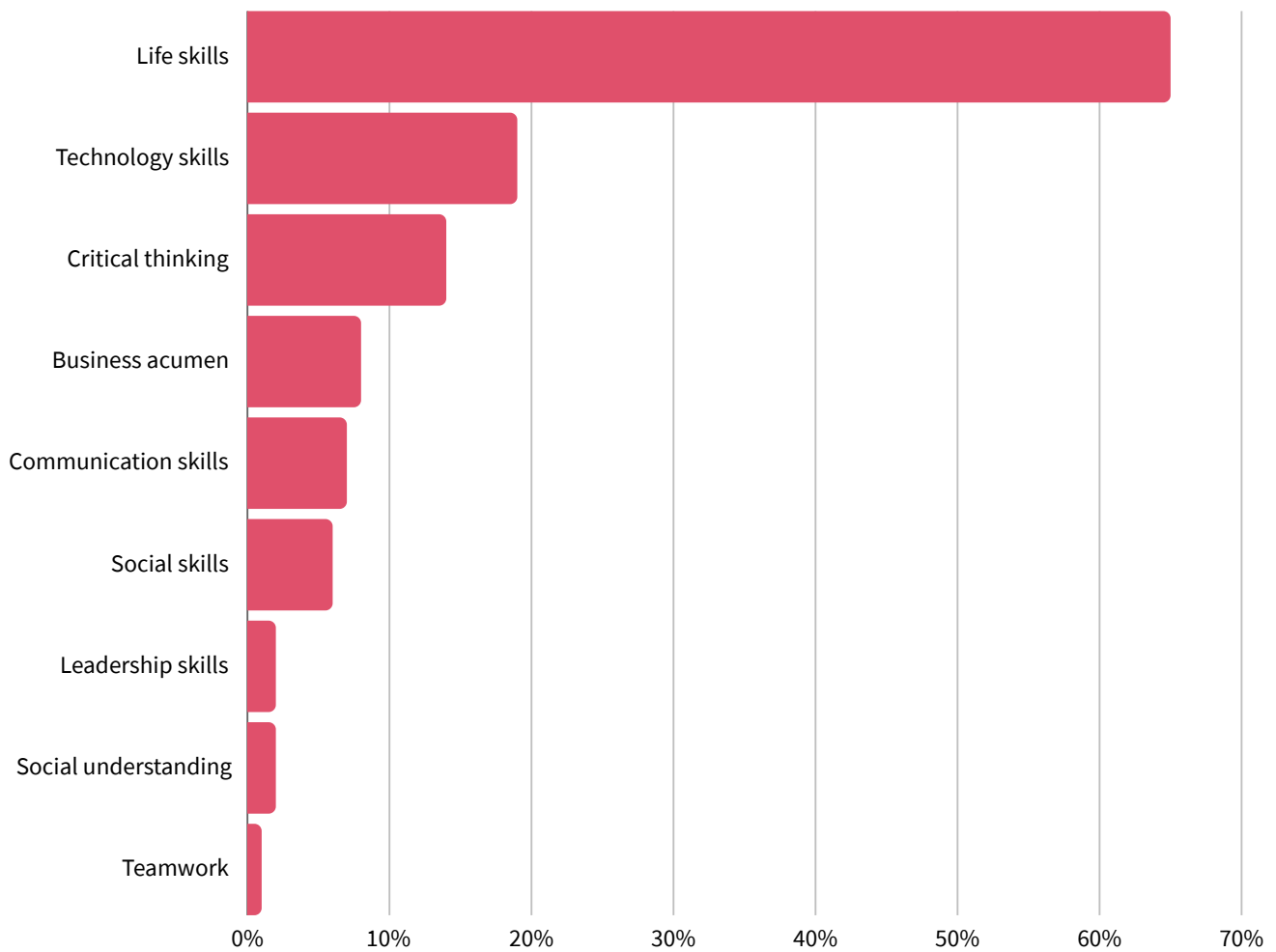


We then asked which skills they wished that they had learnt more about.

Over half (56%) said financial management, with a third saying that they wished they had learnt how to navigate the digital world (33%) and social skills (33%).

Just over a fifth (21%) said cultural fit, subject knowledge, and subject experiences.





We finished the survey with a free text question asking what they think schools should teach to prepare children for the workplace of tomorrow.

The most highly mentioned topic was life skills, which was mentioned by just under half of the respondents (65 individuals).

This was followed by technology skills and critical thinking.

## THE FINDINGS - ANY OTHER COMMENTS

18 - 25

Business

Parents

Schools and councils need to focus on accommodating SEN children! My child is very bright, but they won't allow him to stay in a mainstream primary school because he struggles with change!

The opportunity for the new comers to practice their skills and knowledge is quite limited.

I believe it's important for traditional curriculums to be followed but things like AI (as spoken about) I feel should be incorporated into it, I'm worried about my lack of education on the subject and what that entails.

I think we concentrate too much in academic success in England I think other countries that have focused on a much broader range of academic and practical skills have served their young people much better where learning the skills of a plumber, carpenter or mechanic for example is not judged as inferior.

Schools and job seekers should focus on skills like critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Families do play a big role in how children end up in society, but I believe schools can do more.

Sadly kids have no respect today, and no work ethic.

We need to focus less on exams and more on skills.

Vocational skills should be a mandatory subject.

Schools and job seekers should focus on skills like critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Education is basic need for children these days they can't do anything without this.

Apprenticeship should be included in the school curriculum.

Families do play a big role in how children end up in society, but I believe schools can do more.

We concluded the survey by asking if they had any other comments. 57 comments praised the survey, while 31 respondents left a positive sentiment.

The remaining 42 comments were about a range of topics.

# 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.

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