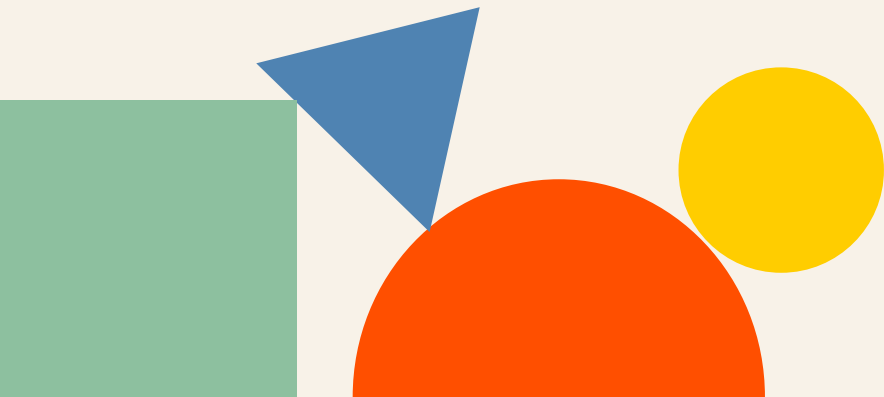


# PARENTS SURVEY: HOW CHILDCARE COSTS AFFECT PARENT CHOICES

October 2023



**TheParentHood**

# KEY FINDINGS

## BACKGROUND

This report outlines selected findings from a larger poll amongst Australian parents of under 6-year-olds.

It focuses primarily on questions from the survey exploring the relationship between costs and parent choices, especially in terms of using centre-based care. Later questions also look at how childcare commitments (including the need to pay for centre-based care) have affected careers.

## COSTS OF CENTRE-BASED CARE

1. Most people who don't use centre-based care say that one of the reasons for this is that it is too expensive.
2. Only 3 in 10 parents who do use centre-based care say that the costs are easily manageable.
3. Childcare costs are particularly concerning for those who report being under financial pressure more generally.

## IMPACT OF CHILDCARE COSTS ON WORK

4. 6 in 10 parents say that they or their partner would work different hours if childcare wasn't so expensive
5. The vast majority (85%) believe that the cost of living means families don't have a choice and both parents need to work. 90% of those feeling financial pressure believe that this is the case.

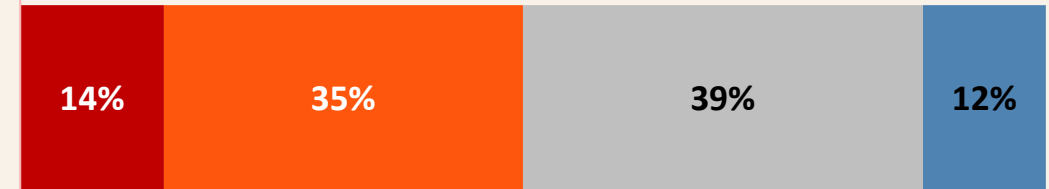
COSTS ARE A KEY  
BARRIER TO USING  
CENTRE-BASED CARE



# PARENTS OF UNDER 6S ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE TO REPORT FEELING UNDER FINANCIAL PRESSURE

- 62% of parents with children under the age of 6 say they are struggling financially – compared to 51% of all Australians who agree with this proposition.

All Australians (Essential Report, Sept 27-  
Oct 1 2023)



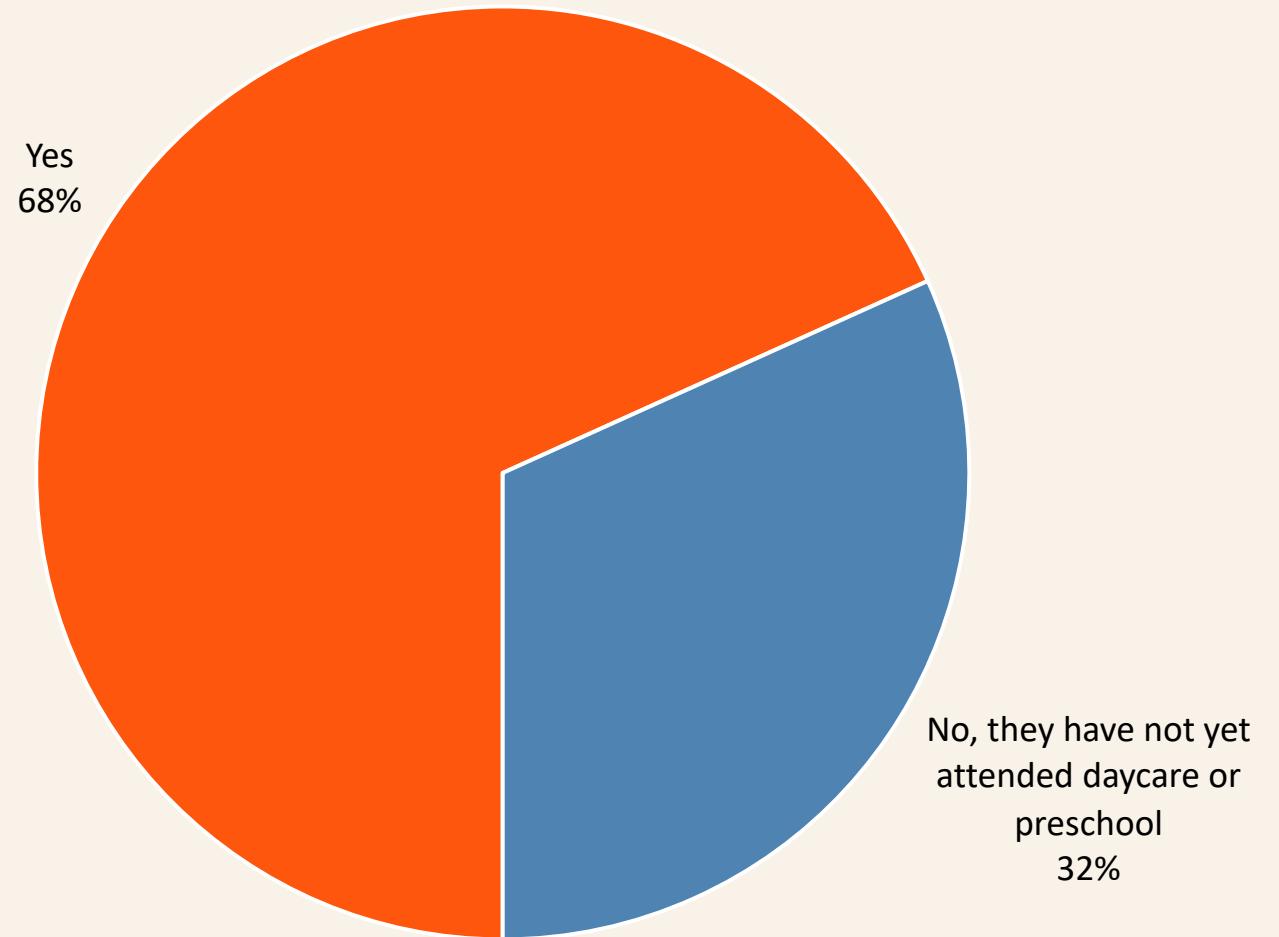
Parents of 0-6 year olds (this survey)



■ Comfortable ■ Secure ■ Struggling a bit ■ In serious difficulty

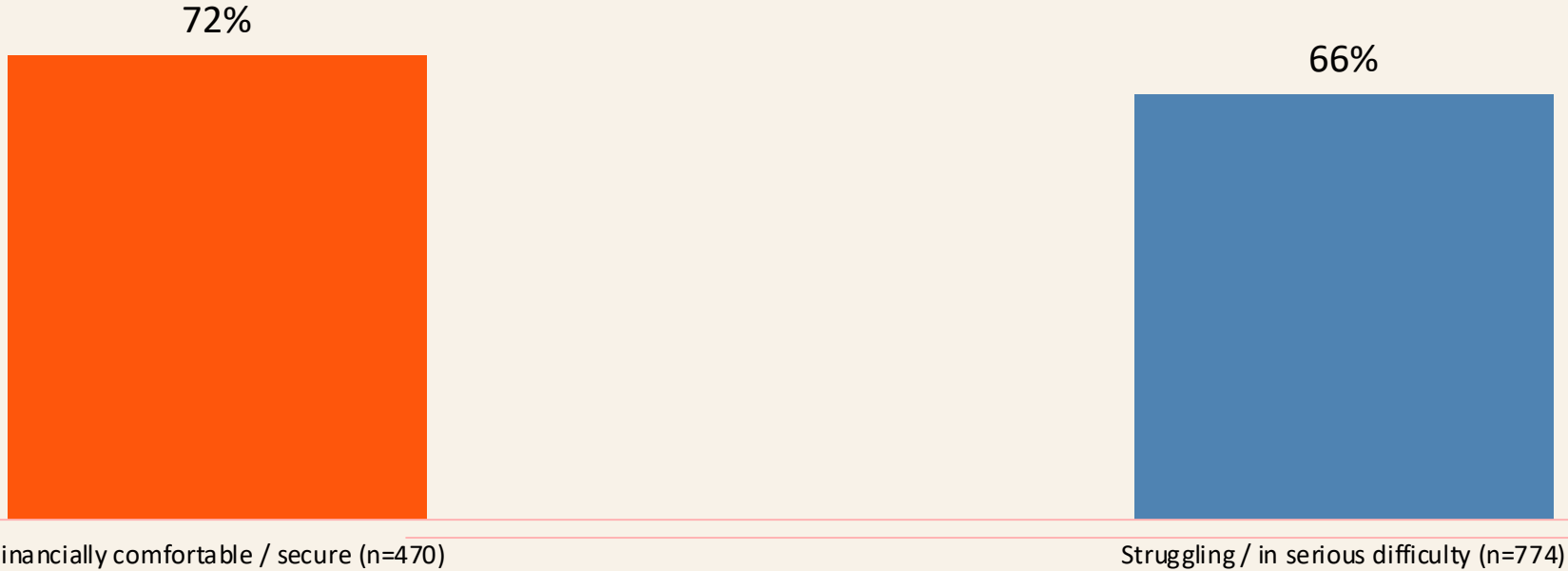
Q Which of the following best describes how you feel about your current financial circumstances?  
Essential Report base: All Australians aged 18+ n=1125  
Parents survey base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

# 68% OF PARENTS HAVE THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN ATTEND DAYCARE



Q Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? / Does the child who most recently had a birthday regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool?  
Base: All parents of preschool aged children n=1244

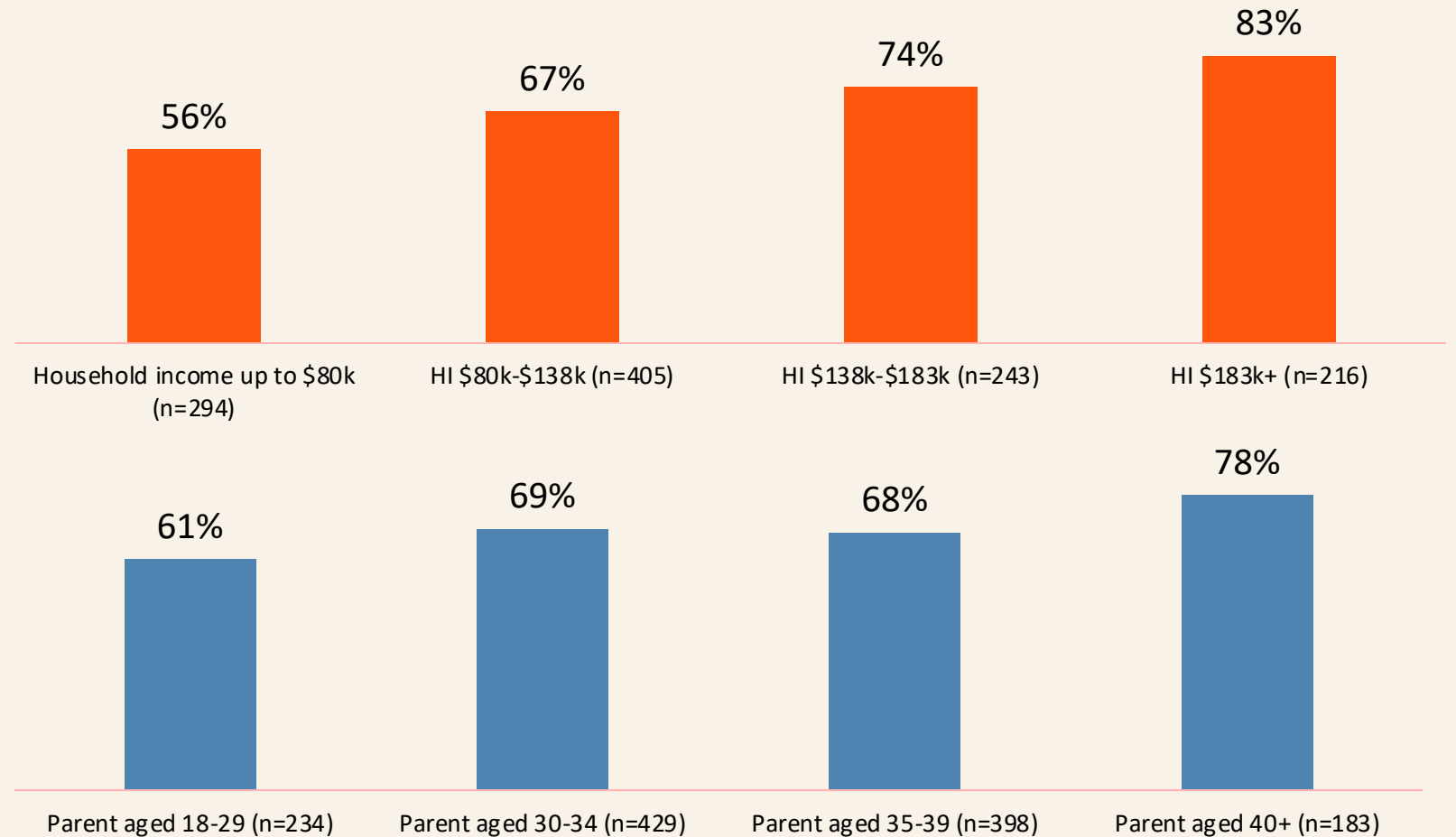
# BUT PEOPLE FACING FINANCIAL PRESSURE ARE LESS LIKELY TO USE CENTRE-BASED CARE



Q Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? / Does the child who most recently had a birthday regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool?  
Base: All parents of preschool aged children n=1244

# THERE IS A CLEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD INCOME & PROPENSITY TO USE CENTRE-BASED CARE

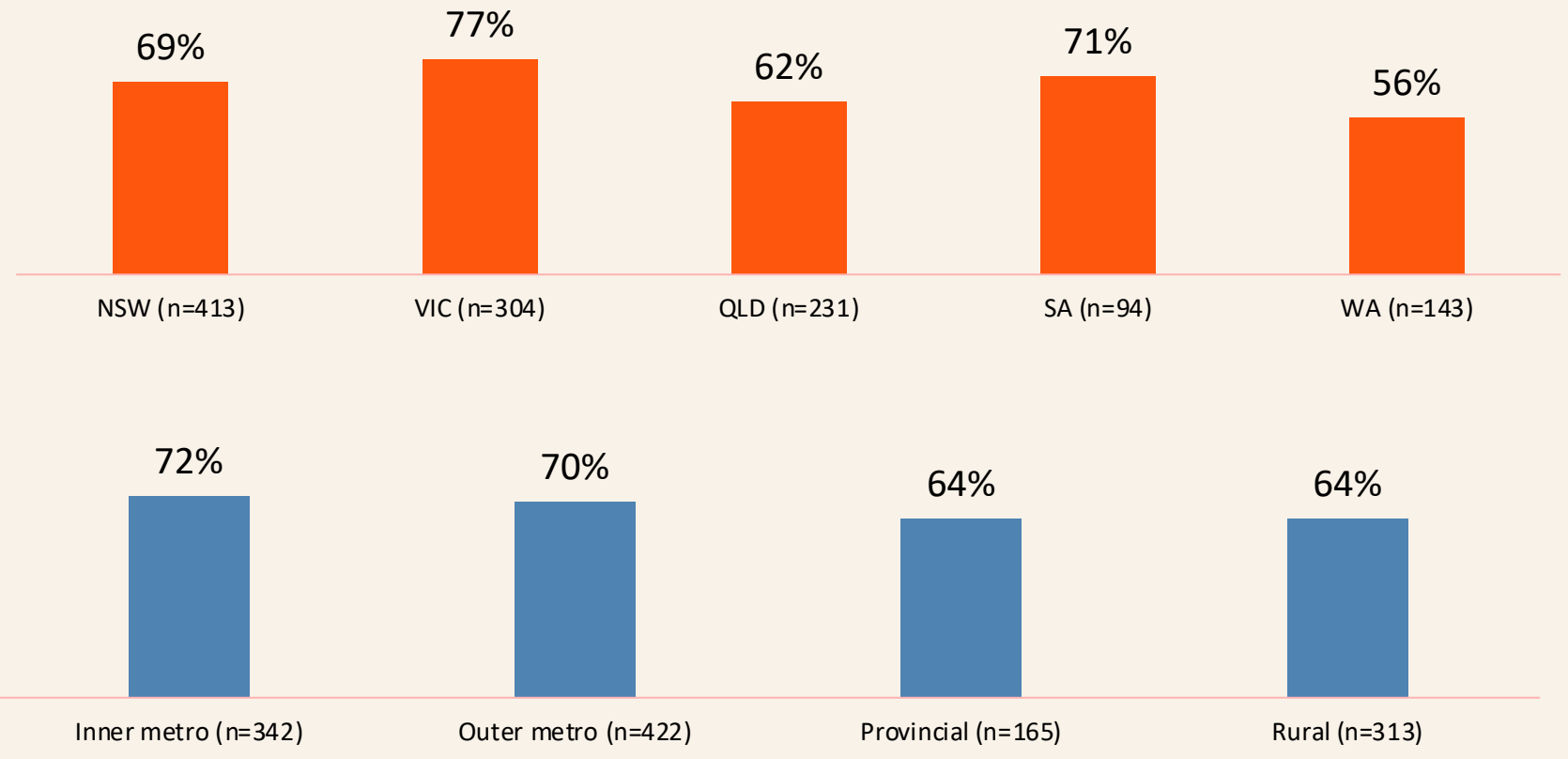
Parents aged 40+ are also more likely than parents aged 18-29 to have their child in centre-based care.



Q Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? / Does the child who most recently had a birthday regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool?  
Base: All parents of preschool aged children n=1244

# THE PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS ACCESSING CENTRE-BASED CARE ALSO VARIES GREATLY DEPENDING ON THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Parents in Queensland, Western Australia and living in provincial / rural areas are clearly less likely to use centre-based daycare.

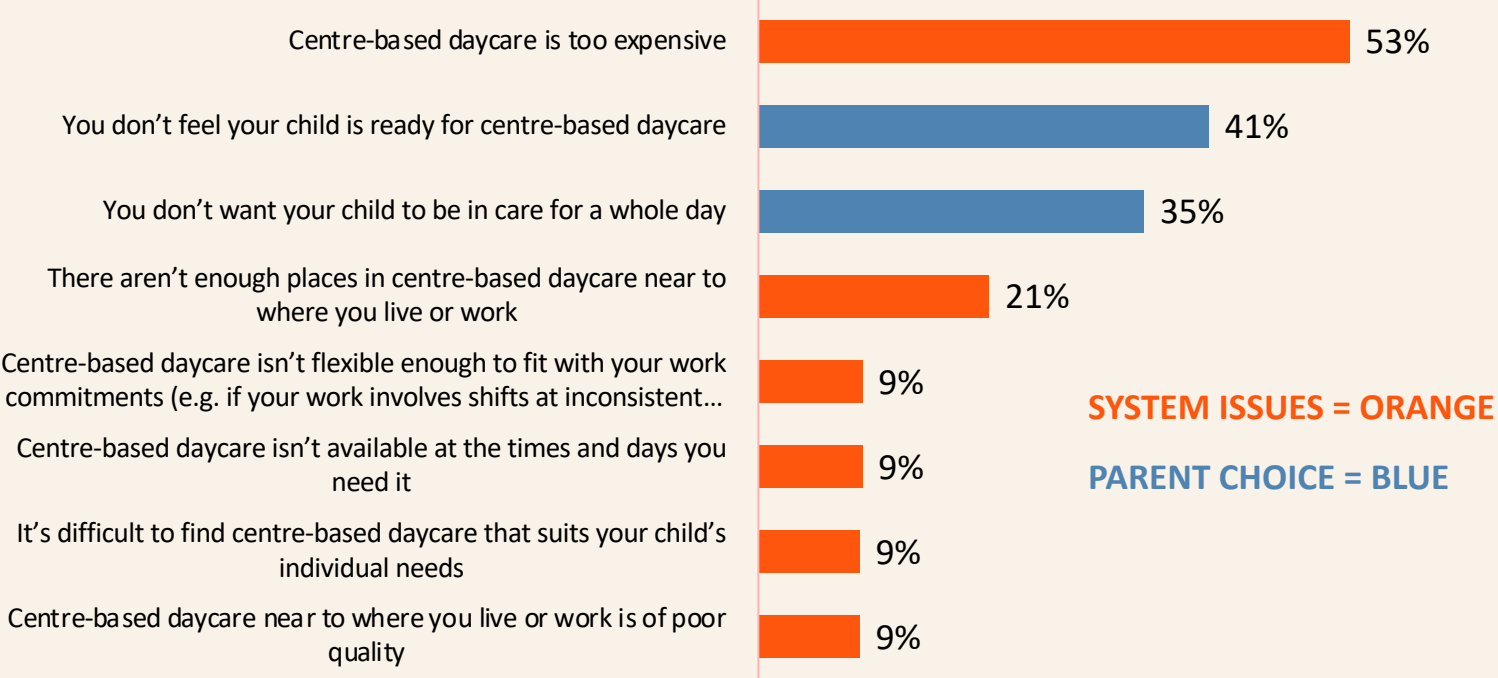


Q Does your child regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool? / Does the child who most recently had a birthday regularly attend centre-based daycare or preschool?  
Base: All parents of preschool aged children n=1244



# MOST PEOPLE WHO DON'T USE CENTRE-BASED CARE SAY THAT COST IS A KEY BARRIER

In addition to that, there are other substantial barriers relating to the system, such as availability of places and flexibility of access.



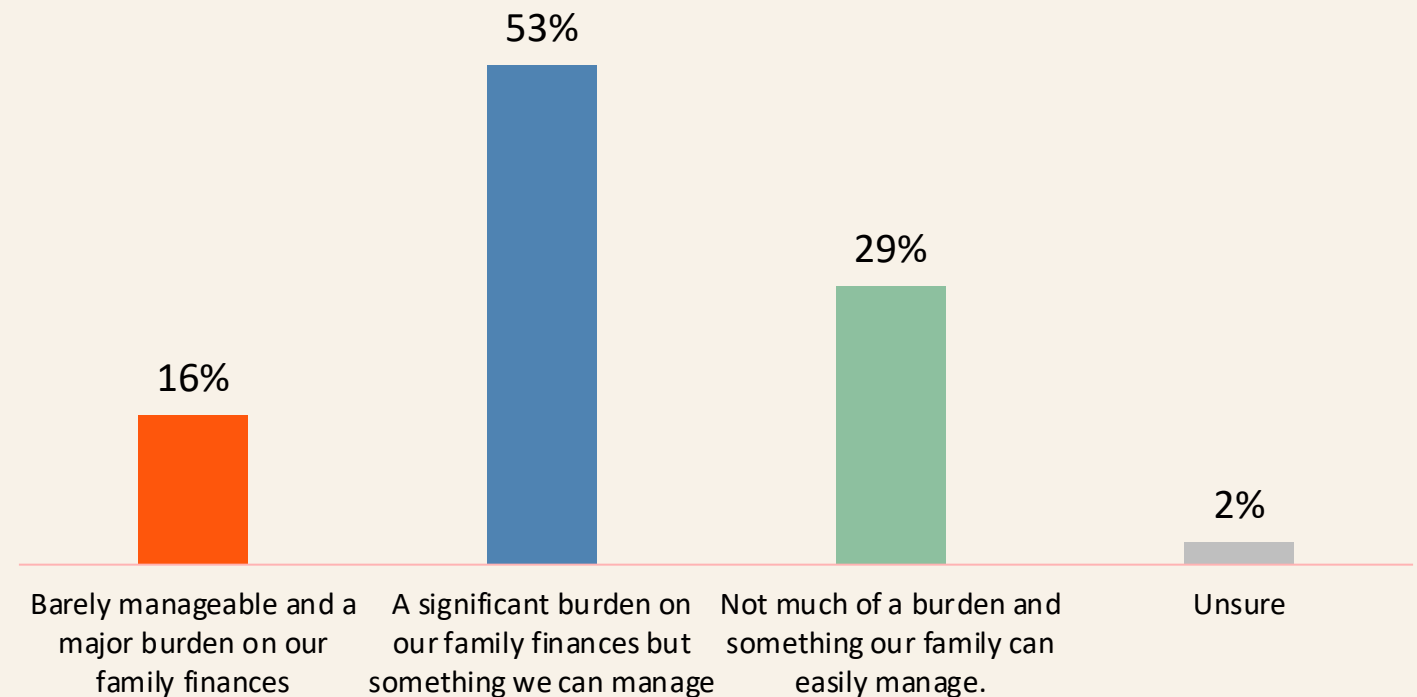
*Other reasons: Prefer to look after child myself / Prefer child(ren) at home / Home school other children (3%), Child too young (3%), Lack of trust in childcare centres (2%), Daycare can be a breeding ground for illnesses (2%), Child will attend once I am no longer on maternity leave / Child on waiting list / Enrolled but not yet started (2%), Have plenty of family help (1%), Child unable to be vaccinated / Immune compromised + Child has special needs (1%), Having twins makes it difficult (1%)*

Q Which of the following are reasons why you do not use centre-based daycare or preschool? Multiple response permitted.  
Base: Parents whose children don't access centre-based care n=395

# 7 IN 10 PARENTS WHO DO USE CENTRE-BASED CARE SAY THE COST IS A BURDEN ON THEIR FAMILY FINANCES

There is a strong relationship between financial security and how much of a burden childcare costs are.

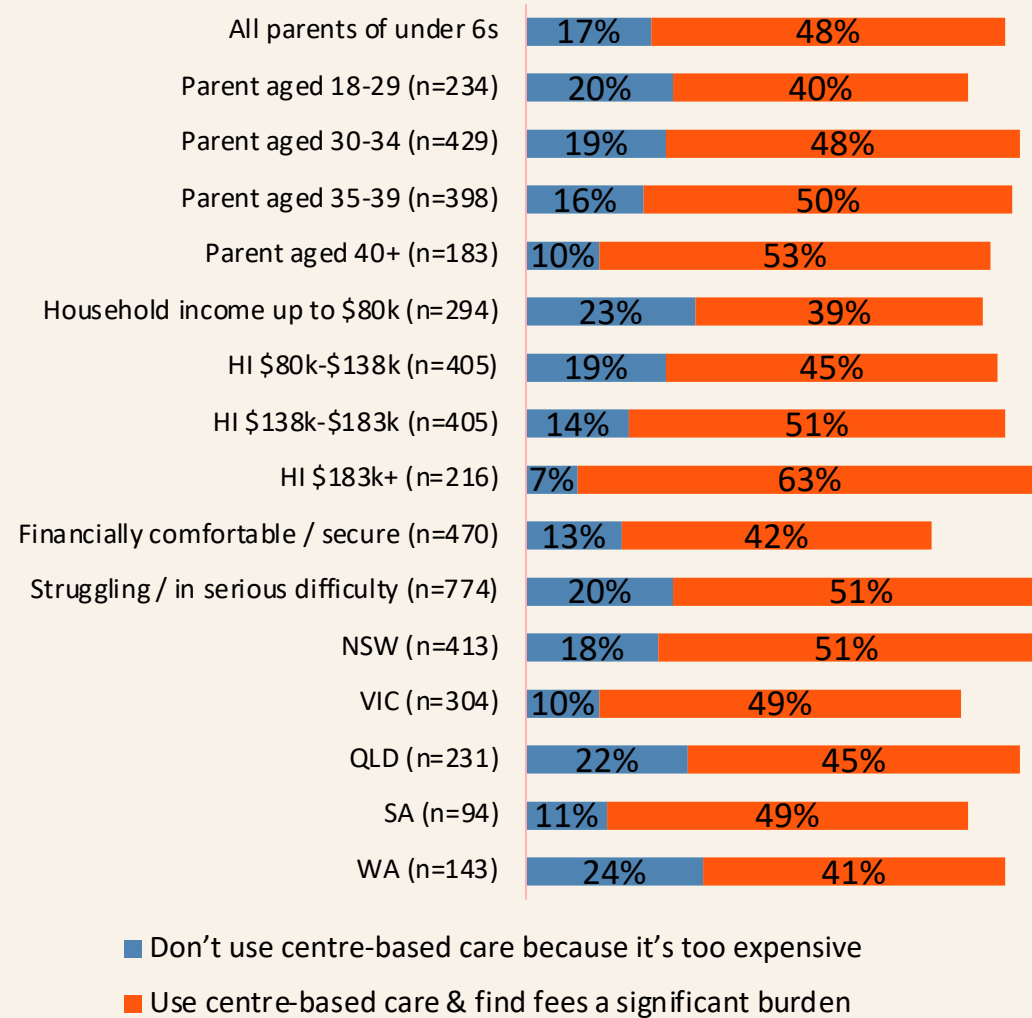
Among those who indicate that they are financially secure, 42% think the fees are 'not much of a burden', among those struggling, 62% think the fees are 'a significant burden', and among those in serious difficulty, 42% think the fees are 'barely manageable'.



Q Which of the following best describes the fees you pay to your [MAIN] provider?  
Base: Parents whose children access centre-based care n=849

TWO THIRDS OF PARENTS EITHER DON'T USE CENTRE-BASED CARE BECAUSE IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE, OR USE IT BUT SEE IT AS A SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL BURDEN

## PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONDENTS

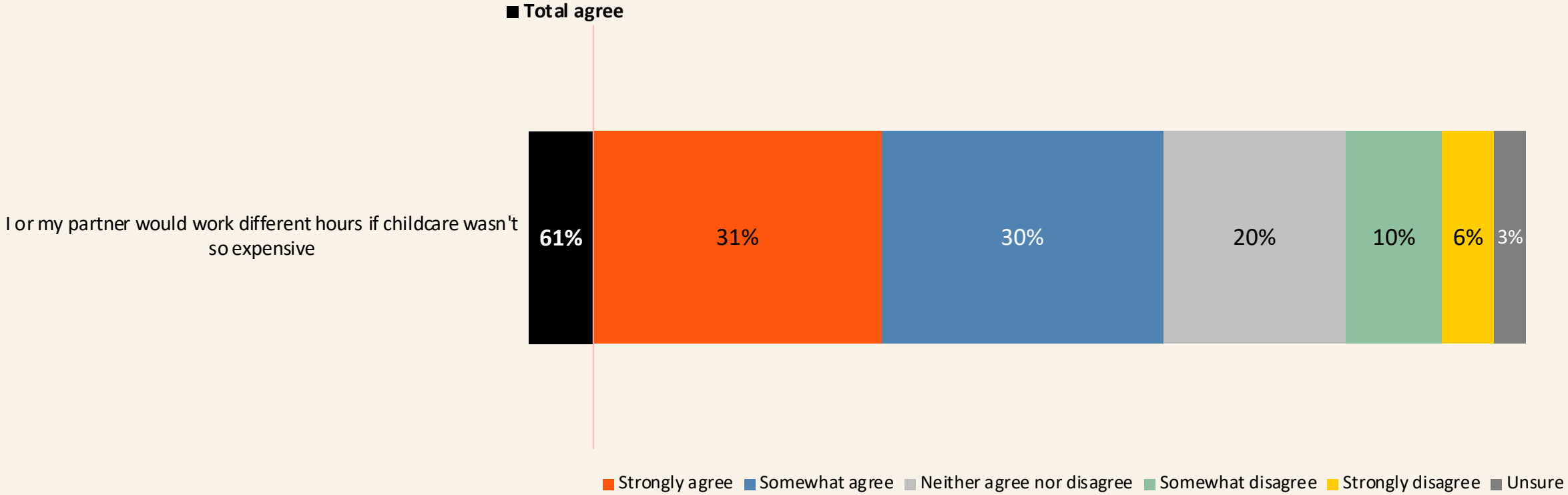


IF DO NOT USE CENTRE-BASED CARE Q Which of the following are reasons why you do not use centre-based daycare or preschool?  
 IF USE CENTRE-BASED CARE Q Which of the following best describes the fees you pay to your [MAIN] provider? – 'barely manageable' + significant burden

# CHILDCARE COSTS ARE AFFECTING WORK DECISIONS



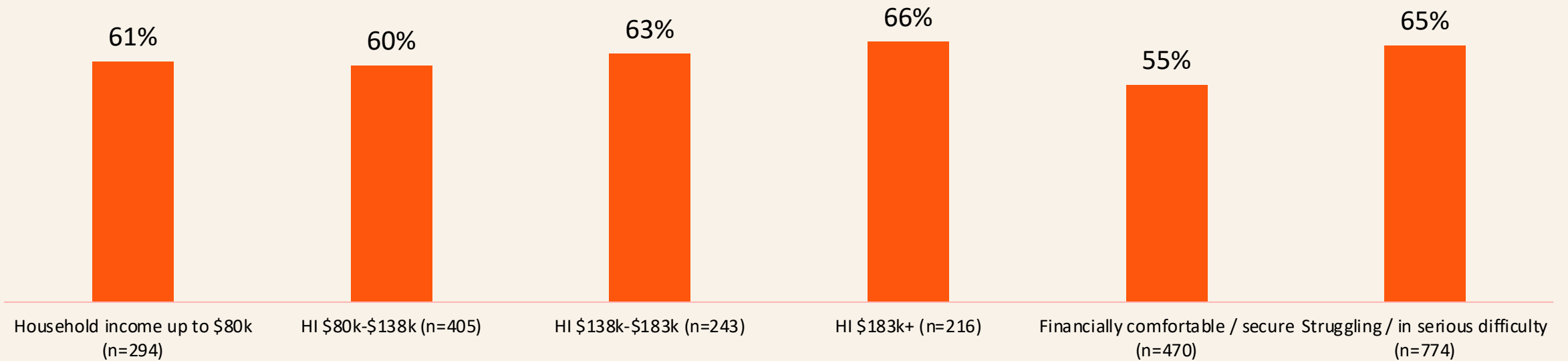
# MOST PARENTS SAY THEY WOULD WORK DIFFERENT HOURS IF CHILDCARE WASN'T SO EXPENSIVE



Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

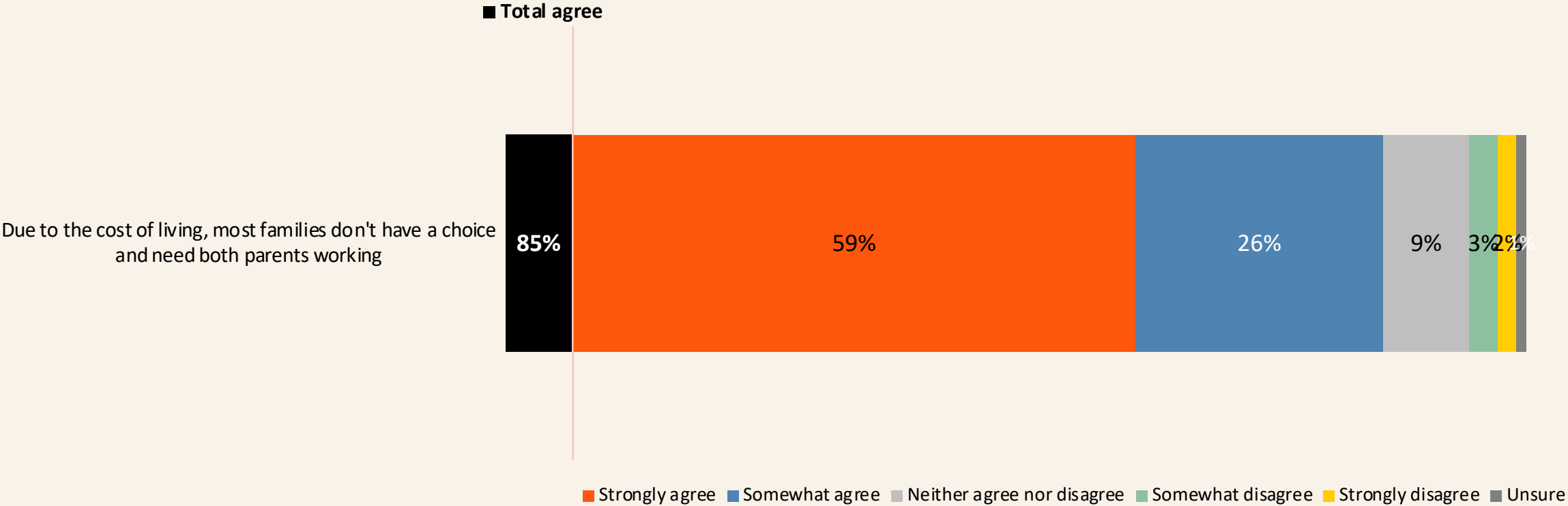
# THOSE FACING FINANCIAL PRESSURE ARE PARTICULARLY LIKELY TO AGREE WITH THIS

“I or my partner would work different hours if childcare wasn’t so expensive”  
– Percentage who agree



Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

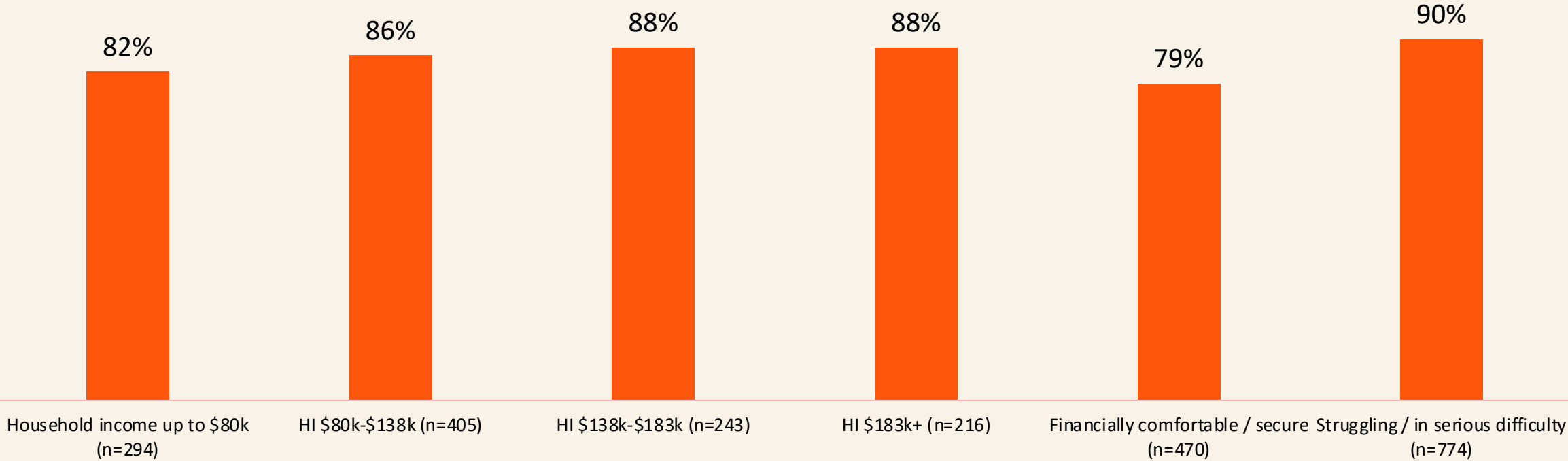
# THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARENTS BELIEVE MOST FAMILIES NEED BOTH PARENTS TO BE WORKING



Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

# 90% OF THOSE FACING FINANCIAL PRESSURE ARE PARTICULARLY LIKELY TO AGREE WITH THIS

“Due to the cost of living, most families don't have a choice and need both parents working” –  
Percentage who agree



Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

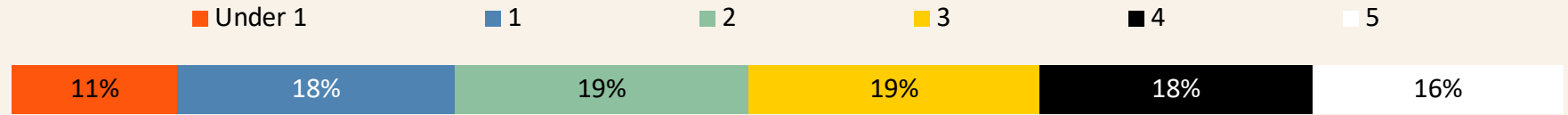


# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



# SAMPLE PROFILE (CHILDREN)

How old is that child? [As you have two or more children under the age of 6, for the following questions, please answer for your child under the age of 6 who most recently had a birthday]



How many children do you have: under the age of 6 who are **NOT** attending primary school?



How many children do you have: under the age of 6 who are attending primary school?



How many children do you have: aged 7-12?

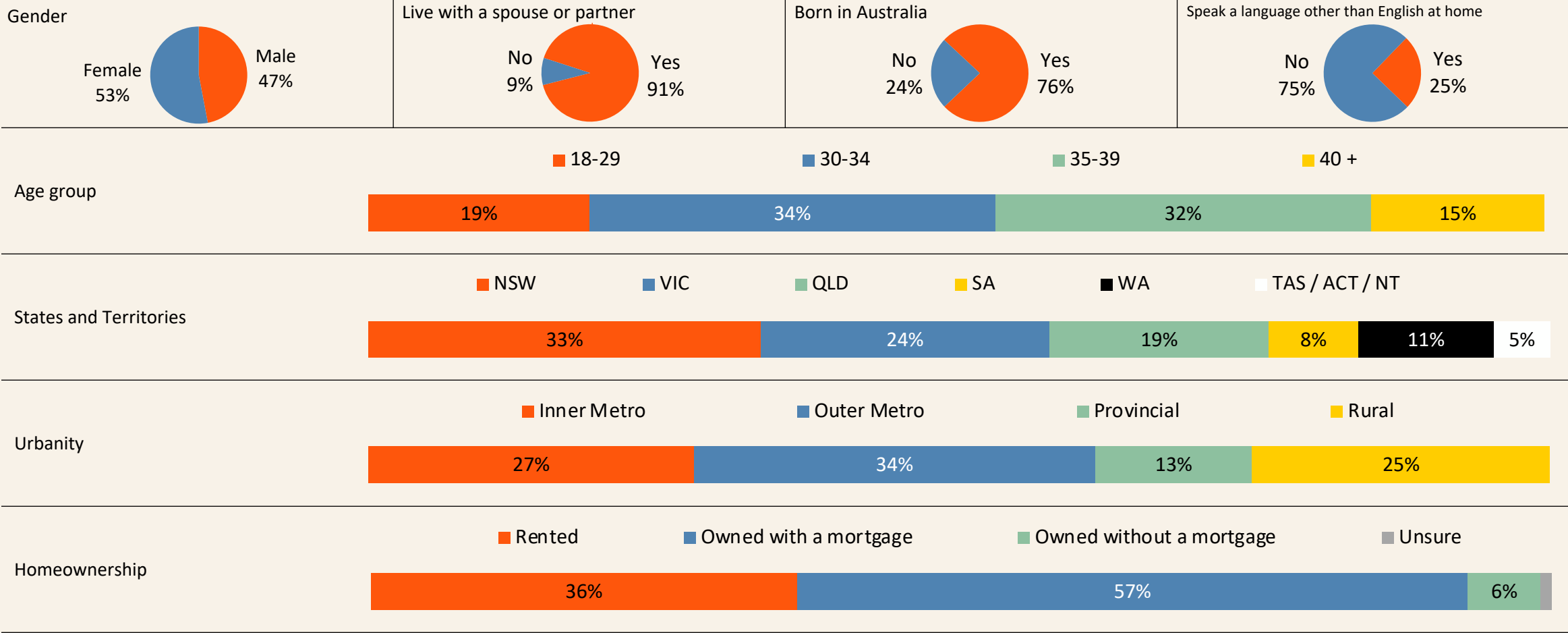


How many children do you have: aged 13-17?



Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

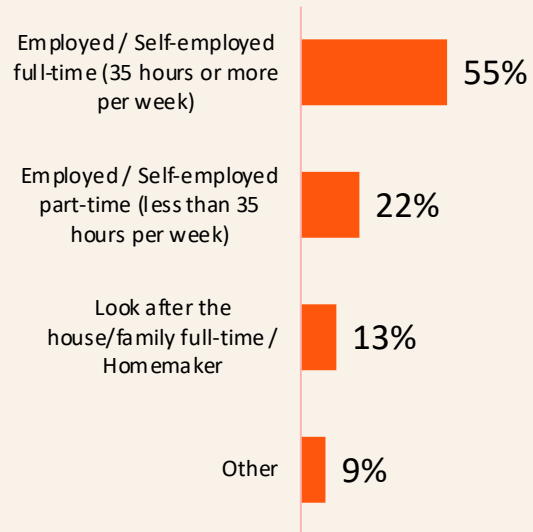
# SAMPLE PROFILE (RESPONDENTS)



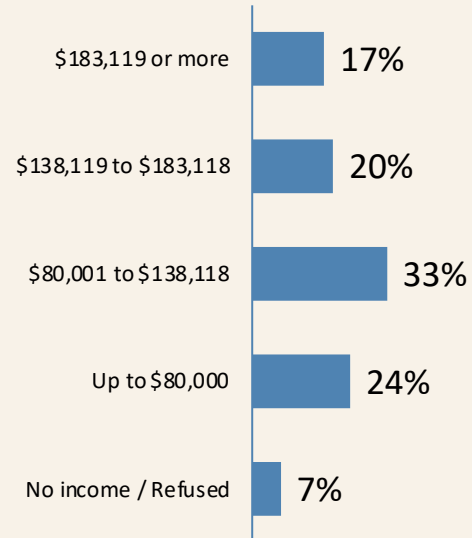
Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

# SAMPLE PROFILE (RESPONDENTS)

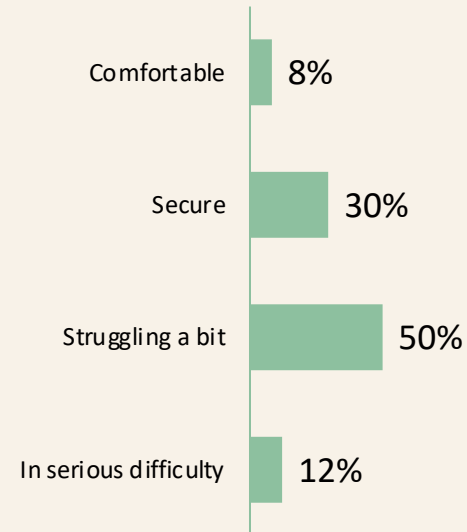
## Employment status



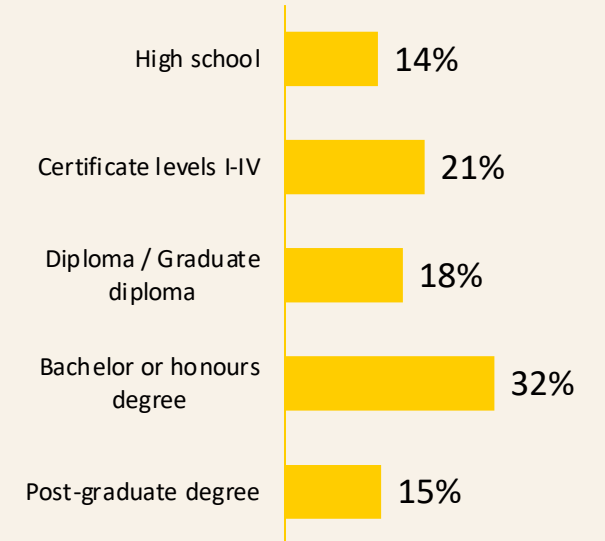
## Annual household income



## Financial situation\*



## Highest education



\*Descriptions:

Comfortable. I don't have to worry about paying bills, I have savings and enough to buy luxuries  
Secure. I'm able to pay bills and usually have money spare for savings or buying luxuries  
Struggling a bit. I have to watch the budget to make sure there's enough money for all the bills  
In serious difficulty. Being able to pay all the bills is a regular concern

Base: All parents of preschool children n=1244

# METHODOLOGY

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**Fieldwork:** 22-29 September 2023

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**Nationally representative sample of parents with children aged under 6:** n=1244

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**Maximum margin of error at a 95% confidence level** +2.8%

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**Prepared by:** Essential Research

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

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This poll surveyed n=1244 parents of under 6s. Quotas and weights were used to ensure that the sample was as representative as possible of all Australian parents of under 6s.

RIM and cell weighting is applied to the data using information sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The factors used in the weighting are age, gender, location and previous vote (May 2022 Federal Election).

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