

Parent Polling Report

April 2024



Methodology

Background:

The Children's Food Campaign, Sustain commissioned Savanta to conduct a quantitative study to determine the top policies that would enhance healthy eating opportunities for children, with the aim of uncovering the barriers faced by parents and what policies would have support from parents

Method:

The data collection process was designed to ensure a nationally representative sample. This included quotas on socio-economic groups, region and age of child. Once the data was collected further weighting was applied to gender and socio-economic groups to reflect the views of the entire population

- 10-minute online survey
- Nationally representative poll
- Sample of 2,039 parents of children aged 0-18
- Fieldwork conducted January 2nd - January 11th

Key Findings



Key Findings

Parents are very concerned about what their children are eating and the affordability of healthy food. Parents would like more support from the government in the future.

1

Parents are concerned about the cost of living and the affordability of healthy food. It is a challenge to ensure their children are eating healthily, especially those with younger children.

2

Parents prioritise the eating habits of their children and what they eat in school is a big part of this. Many parents are sending their children to school with packed lunches, even in primary school children, where infants having access to free school meals.

3

There is strong support for improving the school meal system, including auto-enrollment and expansion of free school meals. Parents also support measures to improve the quality of school meals.

4

Parents are worried about the influence advertising has on their children. They support policies that restrict advertising of unhealthy foods and drinks.

5

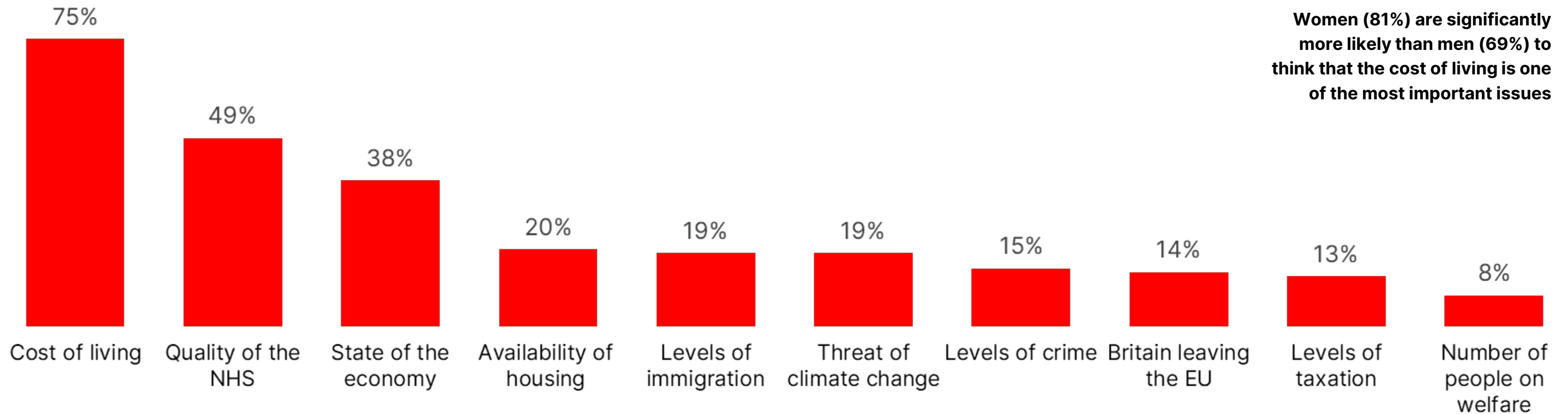
Parents support many of the healthy eating policies that a government could implement. The number one priority for all parents across all demographics is broadening healthy school meals to all children. Banning the sale of high caffeine energy drinks to children is parents second highest priority.

What are parents concerned about?



Cost of living is the foremost concern among parents, with 3 in 4 (75%) naming it as one of their top three issues

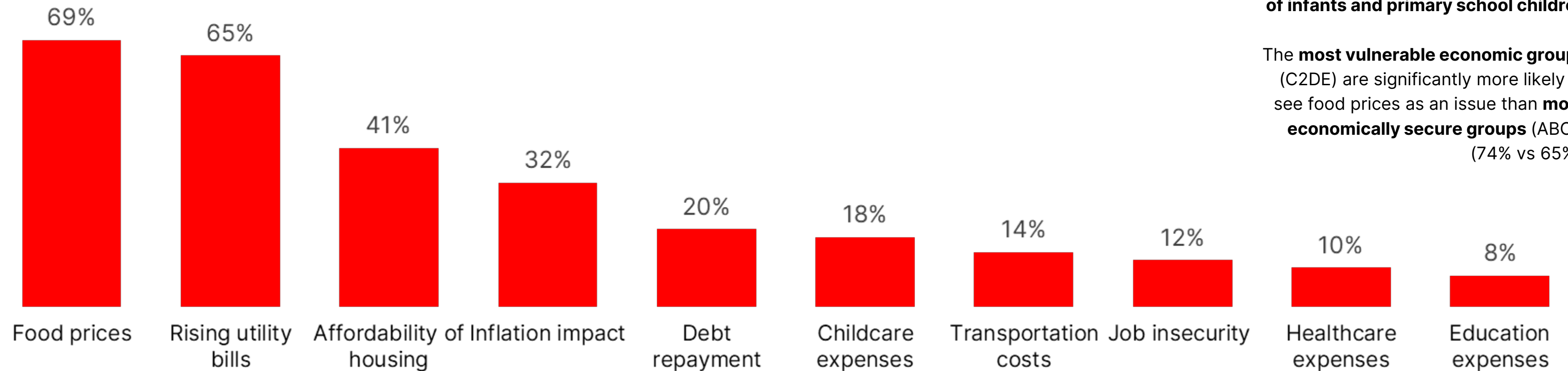
Cited as one of three most important issues facing the country - (%)



Q1. What do you think are the THREE most important issues facing the country today? Base: All respondents (2039)

Food prices are the biggest cost of living concern for parents (69%), followed by rising utility bills (65%)

Cited as one of three biggest cost of living concerns (%)



Parents with **secondary school-aged children** are significantly more likely to view food prices (73% vs. 65%, 67%) and rising utility bills (70% vs. 60%, 64%) as significant issues, compared to **parents of infants and primary school children**

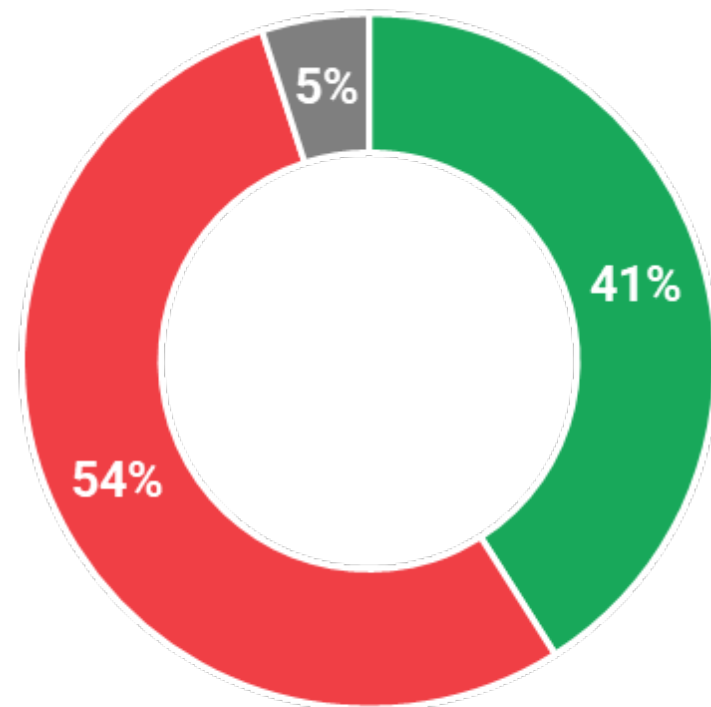
The **most vulnerable economic groups** (C2DE) are significantly more likely to see food prices as an issue than **more economically secure groups** (ABC1) (74% vs 65%).

Q2. Thinking about the cost of living right now, what are your top THREE biggest concerns as a parent?

Base: All respondents (2039)

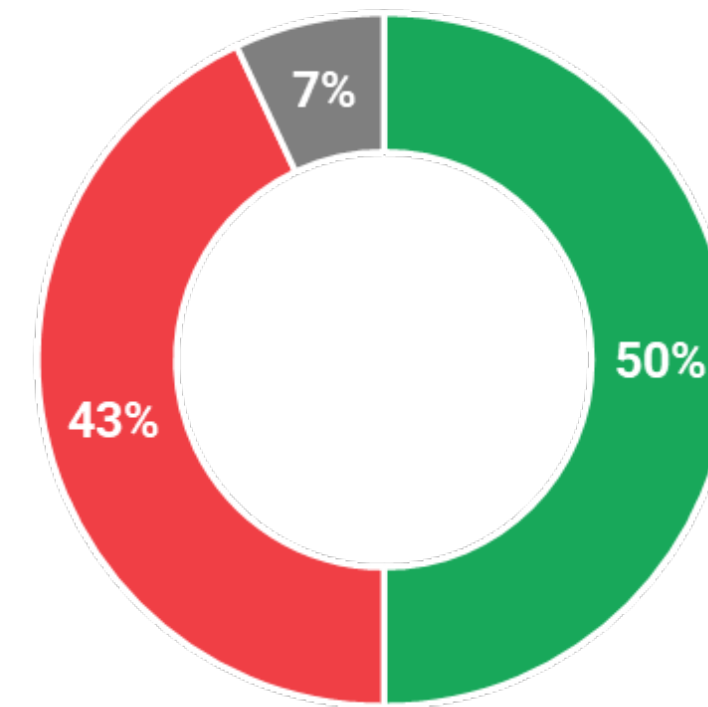
Parents do not feel that the government or businesses are doing enough to make healthy affordable food options available for families

'Government is doing enough to make healthy food affordable for families' – (%)



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

To what extent are food companies making healthy affordable food available for families— NET Agree/Disagree (%)

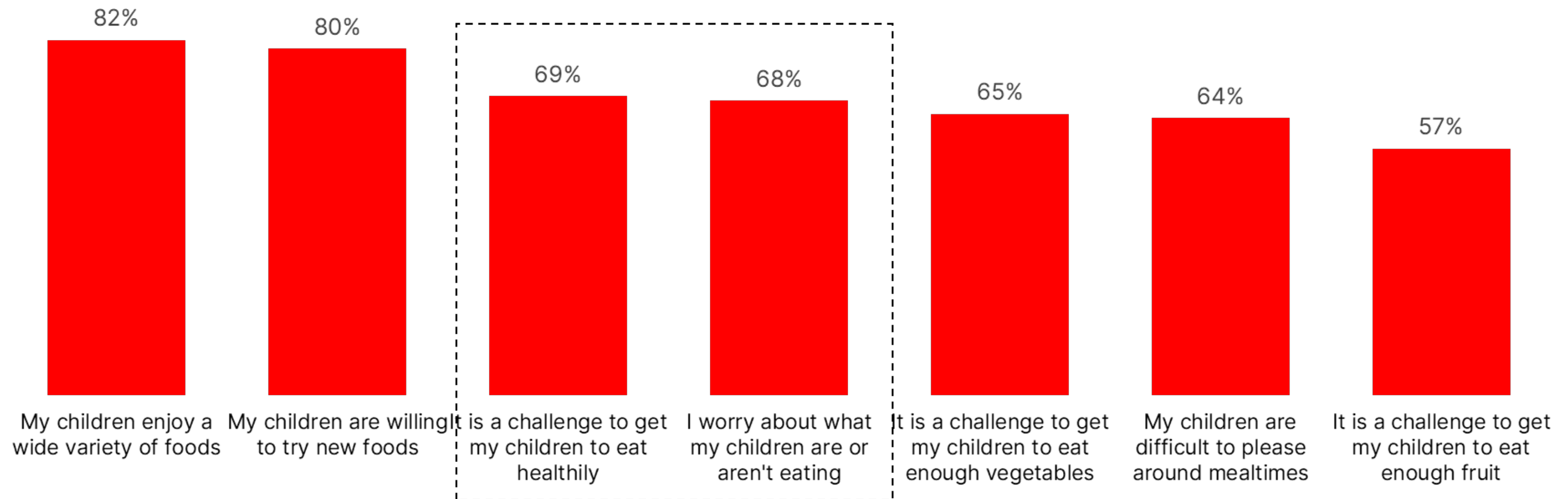


■ NET: Agree ■ NET: Disagree ■ Don't Know

Q6.2. Do you think the Government is doing enough to: Make healthy food more affordable for families /Q20. To what extent do you agree or disagree that food companies are doing enough to make healthier options available and affordable for families with children? Base: All respondents (2039)

7 in 10 parents are worried about what their children are eating (68%) and find it a challenge to get their children to eat healthily (69%)

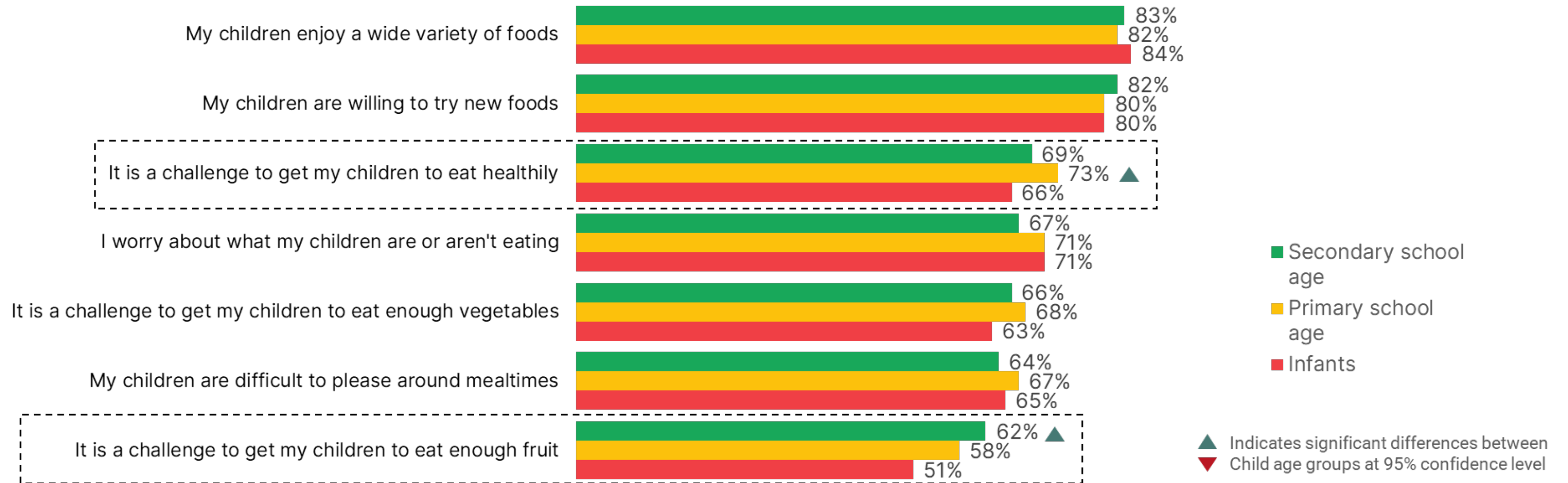
Childrens Eating Habits – True For at Least Some of Children (%)



Q4. Thinking about your own child/children, to what extent do the following apply? Base: All respondents (2039)

Parents of primary school children find it more challenging to get their children to eat healthily

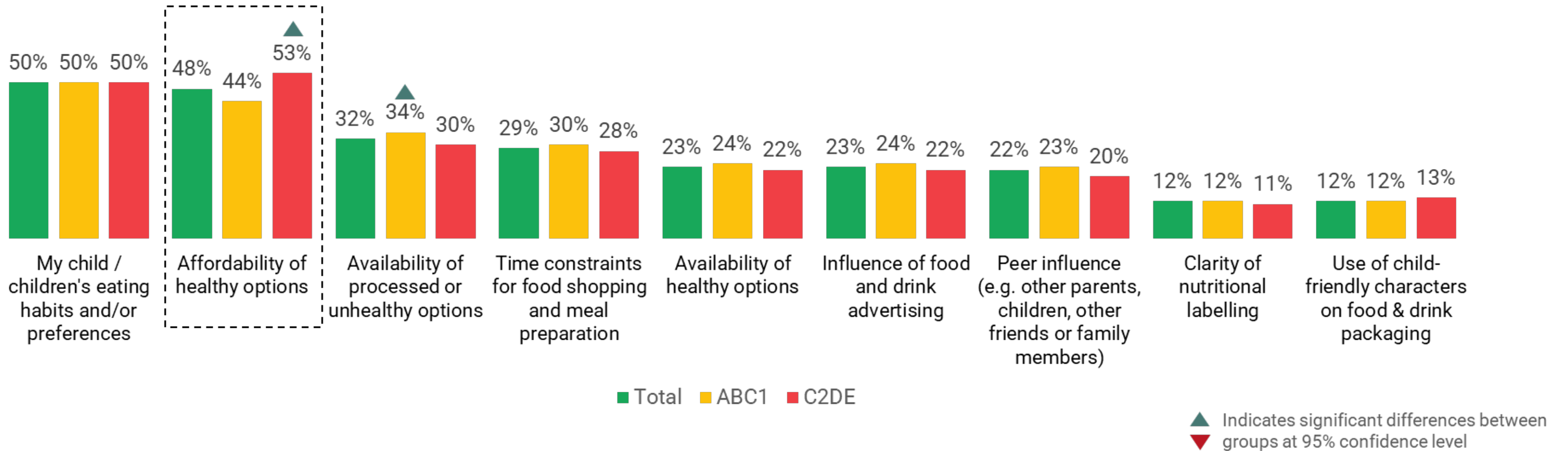
Childrens Eating Habits (True for at least some children – Age of child (%))



Q4. Thinking about your own child/children, to what extent do the following apply? Base: All respondents (2039), Infants (553), Primary age children (1100), High school age children (1094)

Children's eating preferences (50%) and affordability (48%) are key challenges for parents, the latter is even more of a challenge for the most vulnerable socio-economic groups (53%)

Healthy Eating Challenges – All respondents (%)



Q5. As a parent, what are the THREE biggest challenges in getting your child / children to eat healthily?

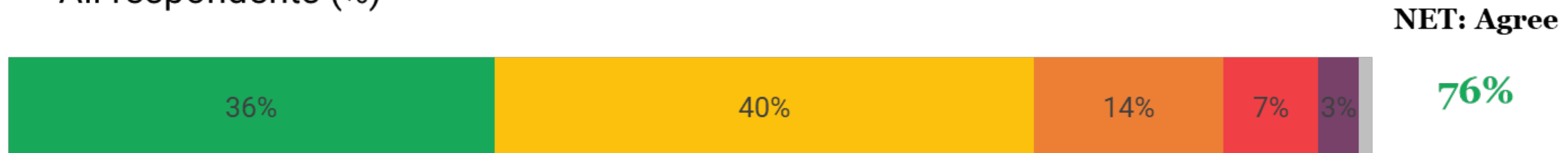
Base: All respondents (2039)

9 in 10 (88%) parents say that their child eating healthily is a priority, but 8 in 10 (76%) think it is becoming more difficult to ensure their children do this

'My child eating healthy is a priority for me' – All respondents (%)



'It is getting more difficult for parents to ensure their children eat healthy' – All respondents (%)



■ Strongly agree ■ Slightly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

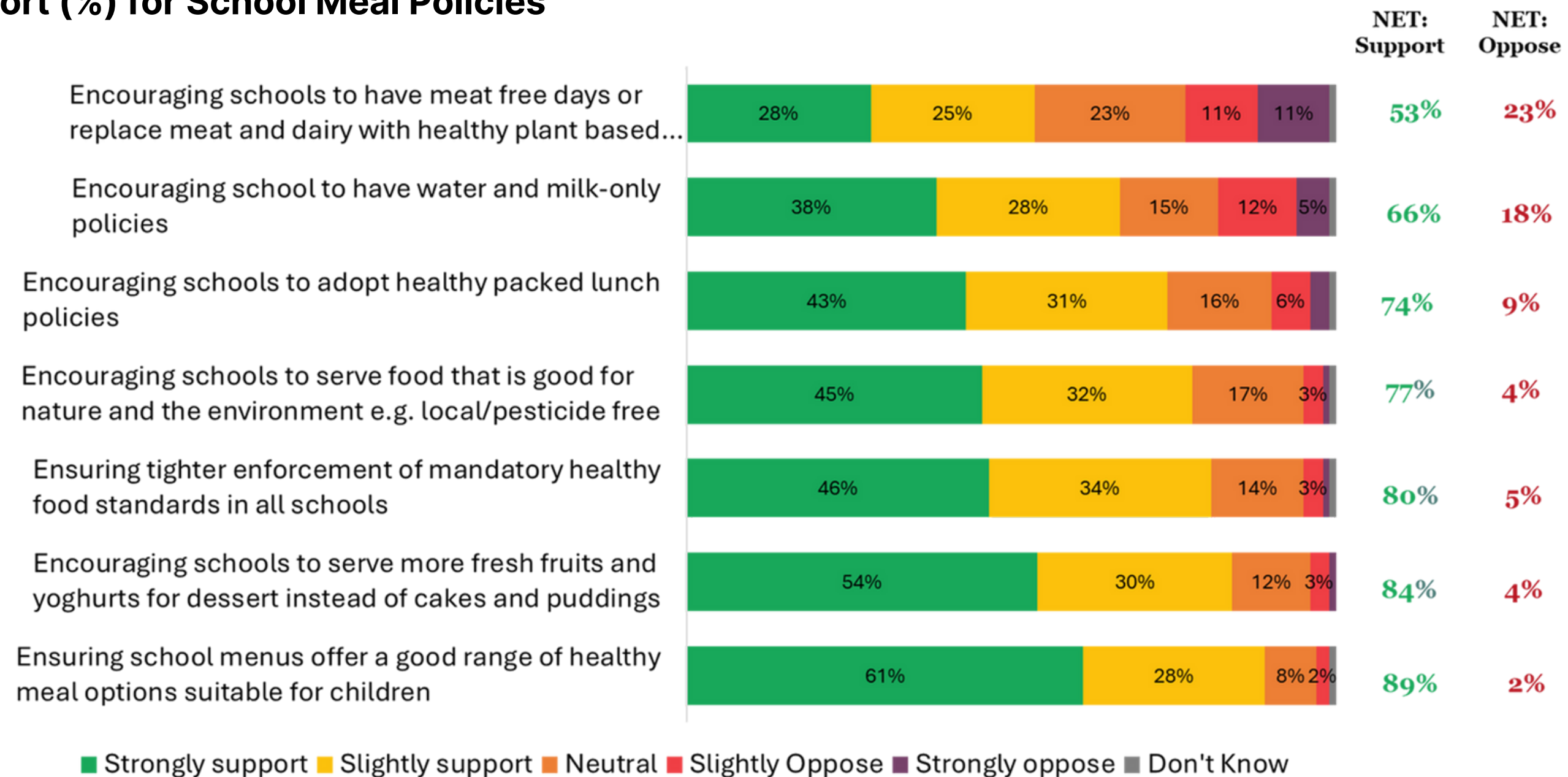
Q3. SUMMARY: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ? Base: All respondents (2039)

How do parents feel about school meals?



Ensuring school meals offer a range of healthy options is the biggest concern for parents, followed by encouraging schools to serve fruits and yoghurts for dessert

Support (%) for School Meal Policies

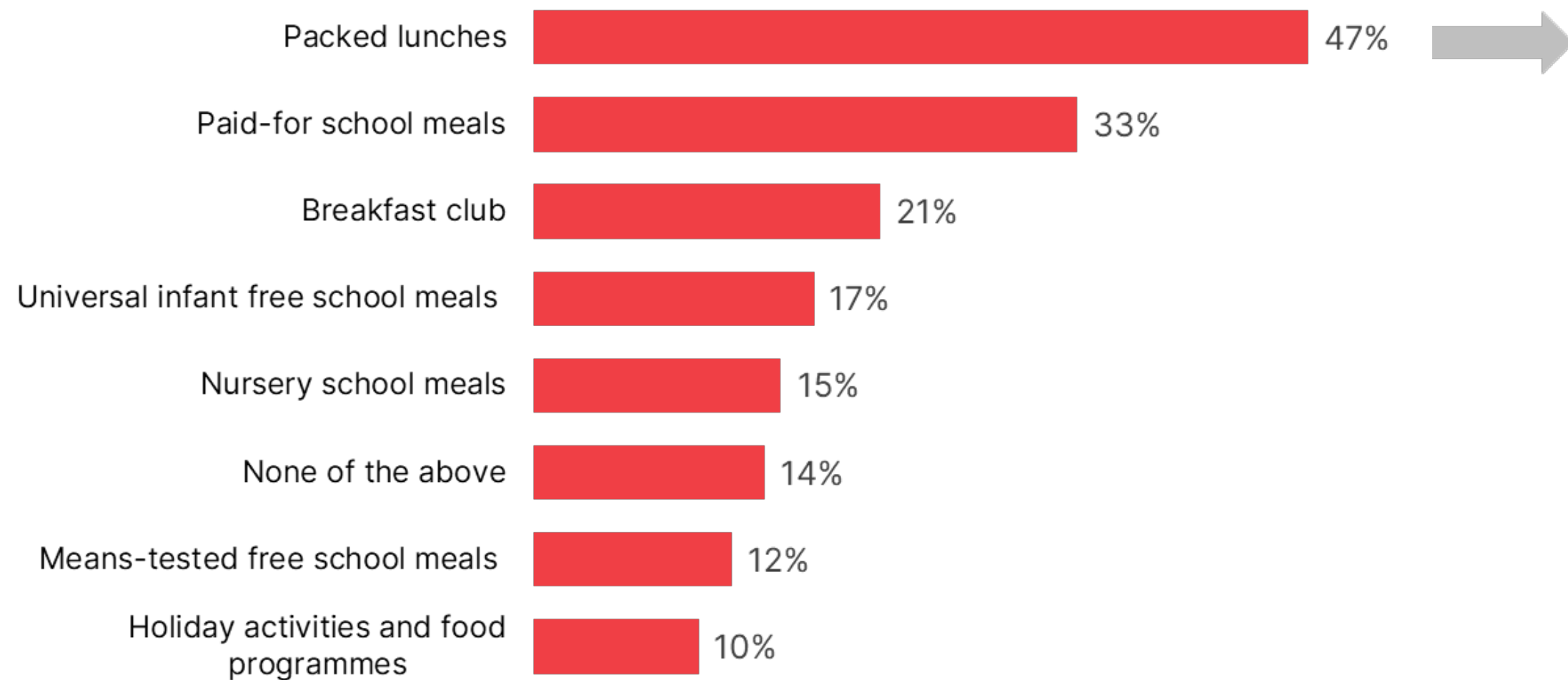


Encouraging schools to have meat free days is significantly more likely to be supported by ABC1 (58%) compared to C2DE (48%)

Q10. To what extent do you support or oppose the following ideas to make school food better and healthier for children? Base: All respondents (2039)

Packed lunches are a popular school lunch option. More than 1/2 primary school children take a packed lunch despite infants being able to eat a free school meal

Participation among parent's children of lunch types (%)



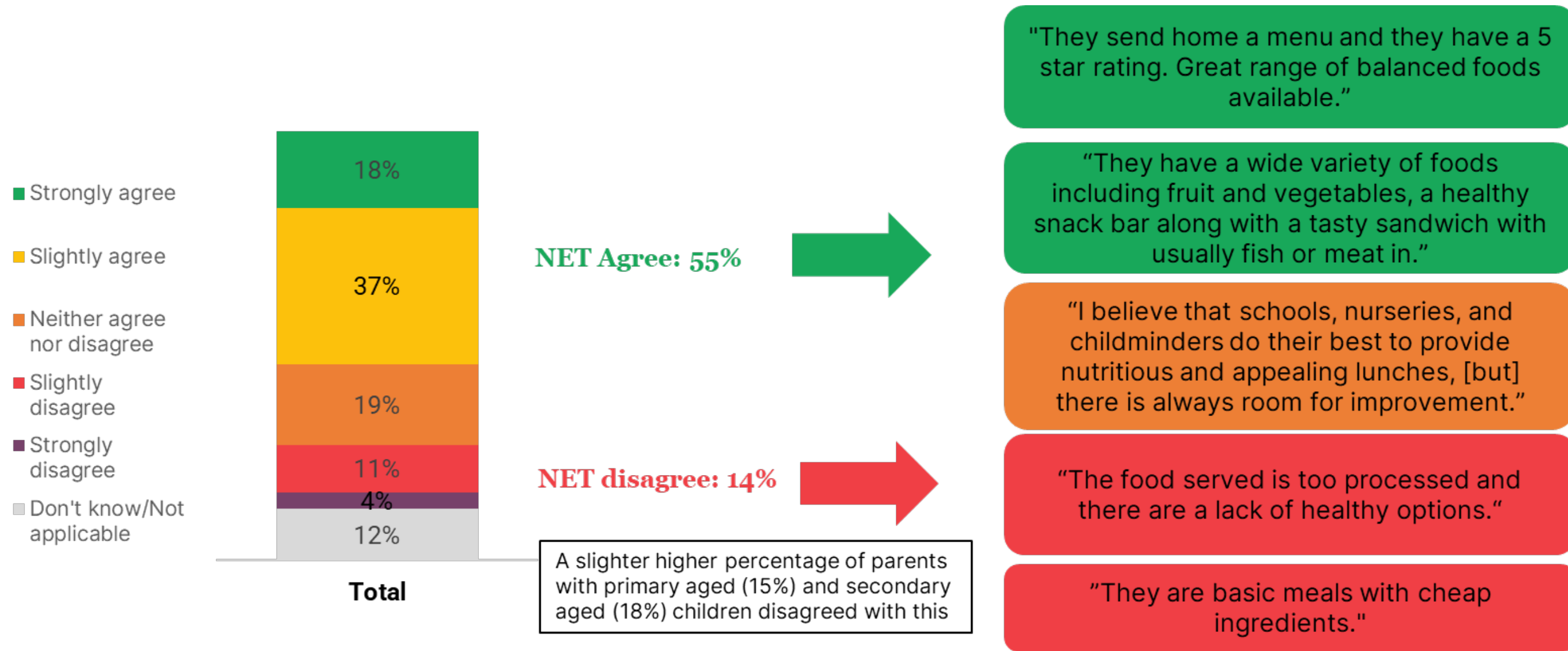
Primary school children (54%) are significantly more likely to have packed lunches, compared to children in the early years (35%) and secondary school age children (49%)

Primary school children are also more likely to participate in breakfast club (40% vs 28% vs 35%)

Q7. Thinking about what your own child/children eat at school, nursery or with childminders, which of the following, if any, do they participate in? Base: All respondents (2039)

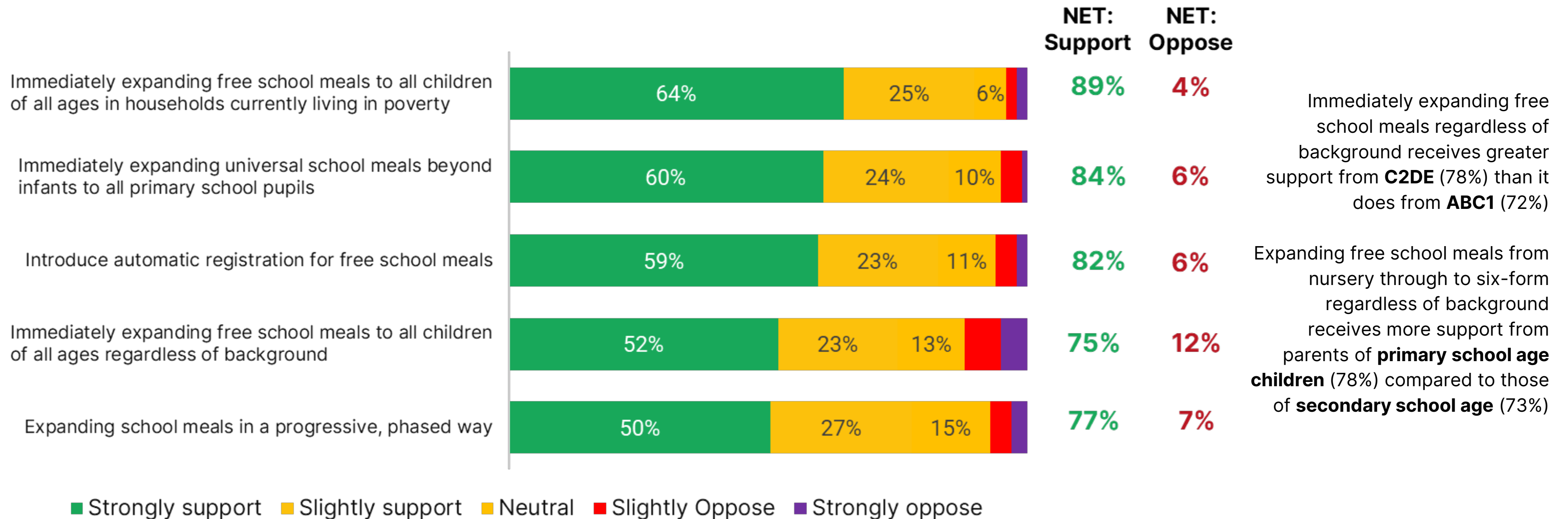
Just over 1/2 parents perceive their children's school meals to be nutritious. Those that disagree are more likely to be parents of secondary aged school children

'Do lunch school lunches seem nutritious & appealing?' - (%)



Q8. Thinking about the lunches served in your child / children's school, nursery or with childminders, to what extent do you agree or disagree that they seem nutritious and appealing for your child / children? / You said you [pipe answer to Q8] that the lunches served in your child / children's school, nursery or with childminders are nutritious and appealing. Why is that? Base: All respondents (2039)

Support for expanding school meals is strong across all options, with greatest support (89%) for providing free school meals to all children in poverty



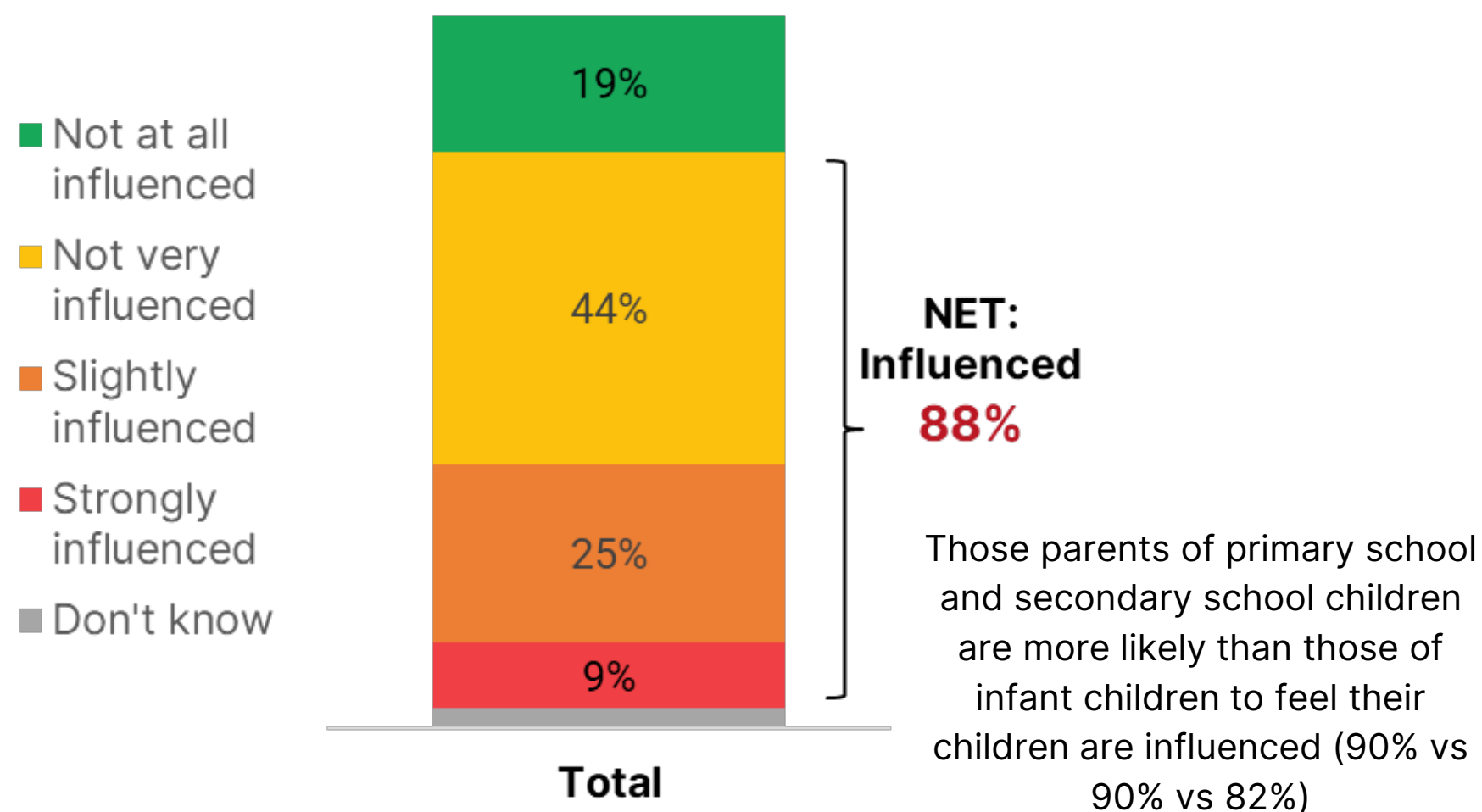
Q12. To what extent would you support or oppose the following changes to eligibility for free school meals across the whole of the UK? Base: Supports free school meals (1908)

Parents' views of food advertisement and packaging

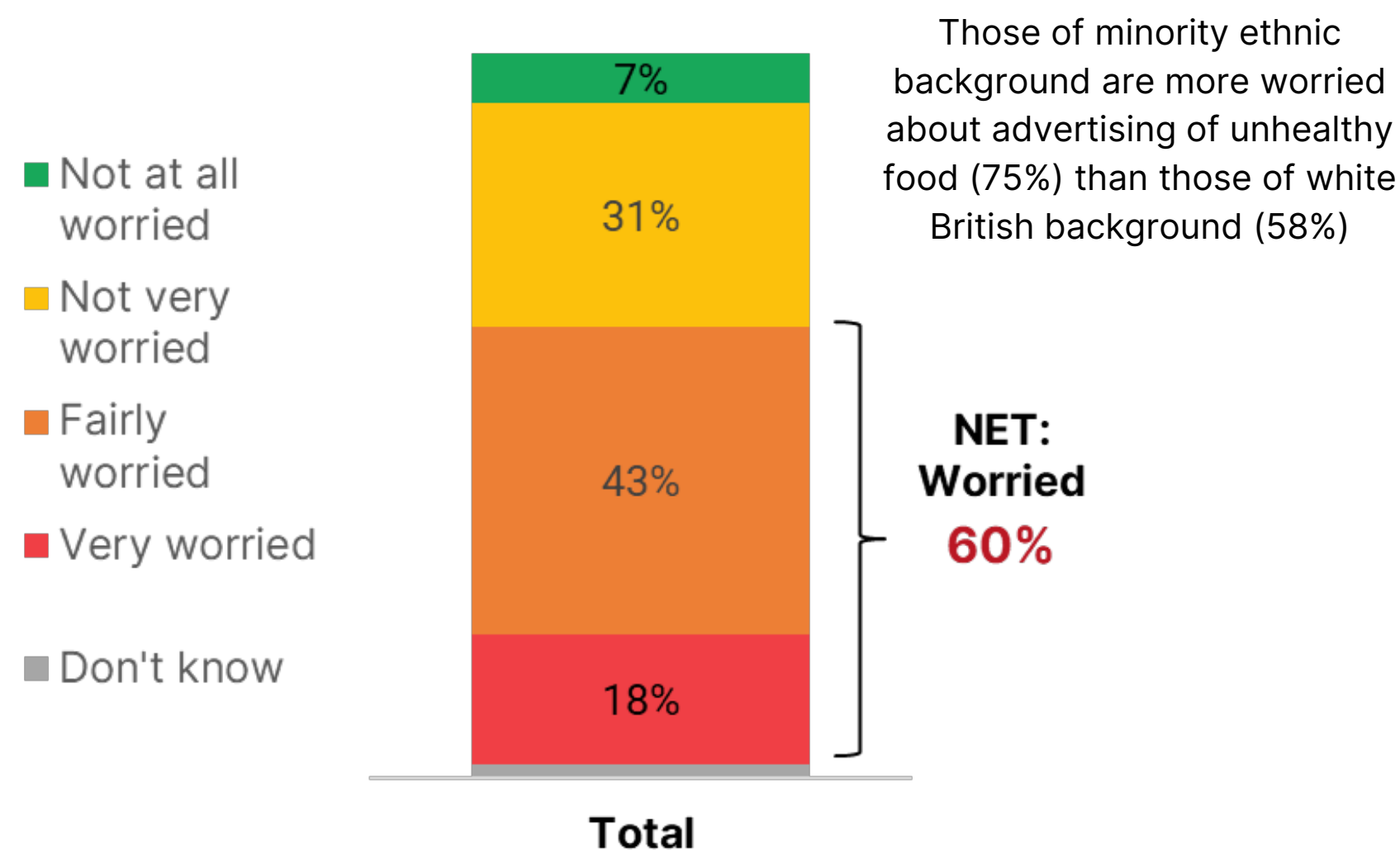


9 in 10 (88%) parents believe their children are influenced by unhealthy food adverts.
3 in 5 (60%) are worried about the number of adverts their children are exposed to.

Perceived influence of unhealthy food & drink advertising on children – All respondents (%)



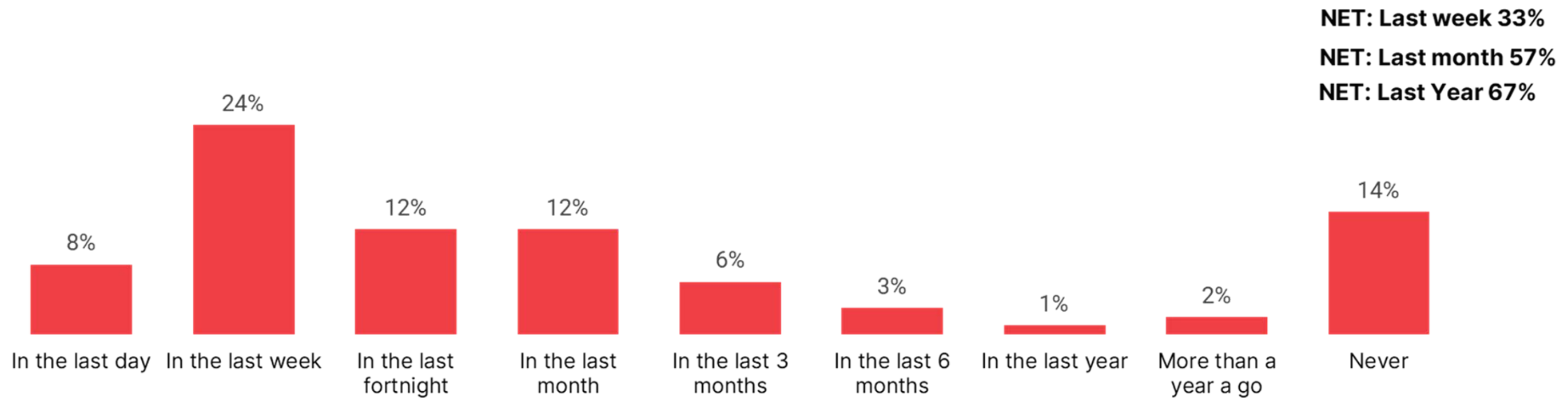
'Worried about advertising of unhealthy foods/drink' – All respondents (%)



Q13. How worried are you, if at all, about the amount of advertising for unhealthy food and drink that children are exposed to? Base: All respondents (2039), Minority ethnic background (281), White (1756) / Q14. As a parent, to what extent would you say your child / any of your children are influenced by food and drink advertising? Base: All respondents (2039)

Half of parents have heard their child/ren mention a food/drink item after seeing an advert in the last month and 1 in 3 within the last week.

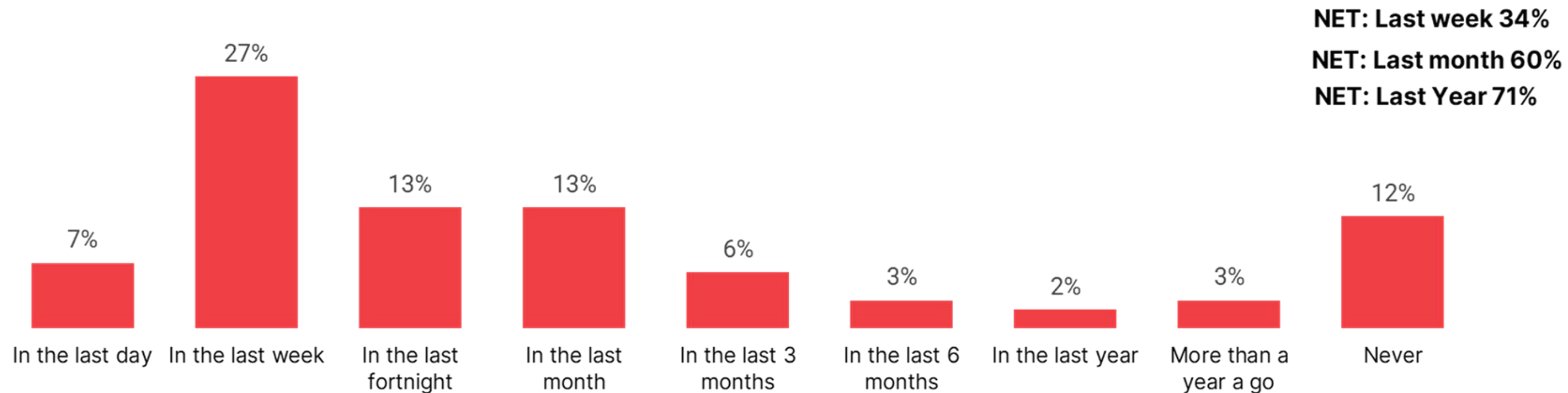
Child mentioned a food/drink advert they seen– All respondents (%)



Q15. When was the last time you heard your child / any of your children talk about a food or drink advert that they'd seen? Base: All respondents (2039)

Half of parents reported their child/ren asking to buy a food/drink item after seeing an advert in the last month and 1 in 3 within the last week

Child asked to buy food/drink item seen in advert– All respondents (%)



Whilst **1 in 3 parents** reported that their child had asked them to buy a food/drink item after seeing an advert in the last week this was even higher, **1 in 2**, amongst **minority ethnic background**

Q16. When was the last time your child / any of your children asked you to buy a food or drink product based on something they'd seen advertised? Base: All respondents (2039), Minority ethnic background (281), White (1756)

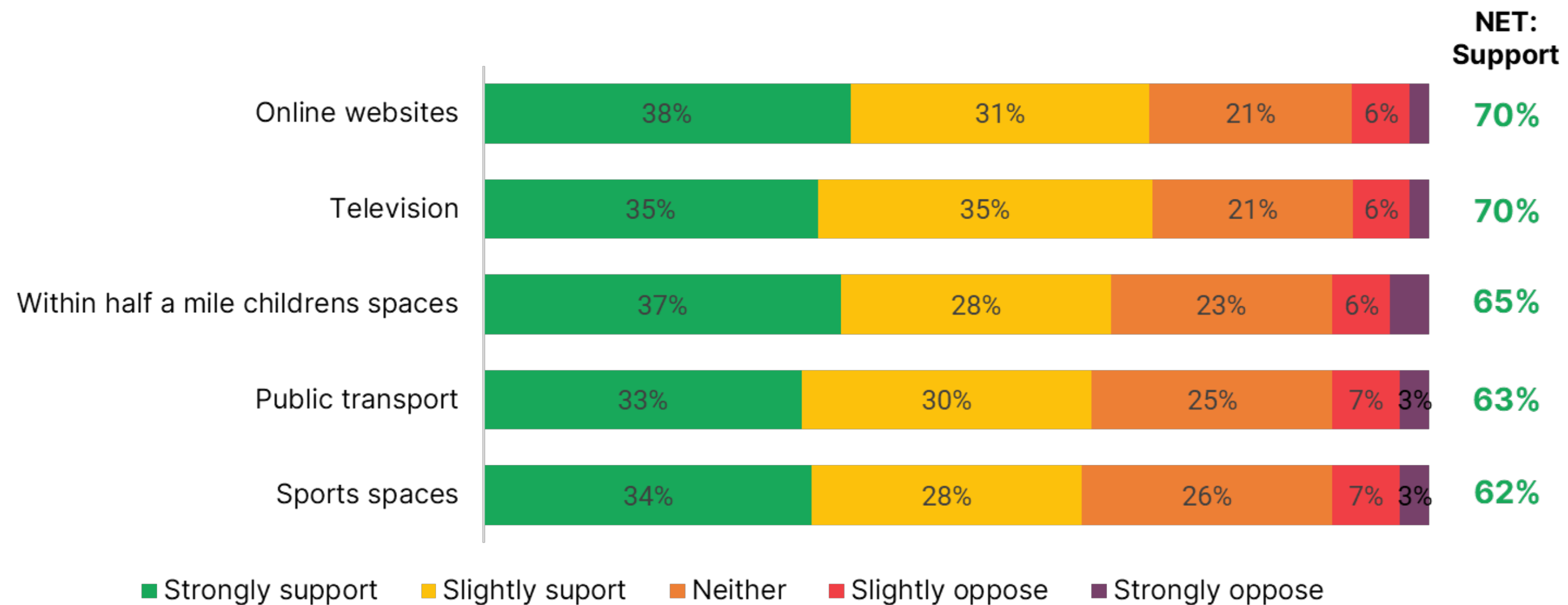
Only 4 in 10 parents (38%) think the Government is doing enough to protect children from unhealthy food advertising/marketing



Q6.4. Do you think the Government is doing enough to: Protect children from junk food advertising / marketing?

Parents are supportive of policies restricting advertisements of unhealthy food, with greatest support for restrictions online

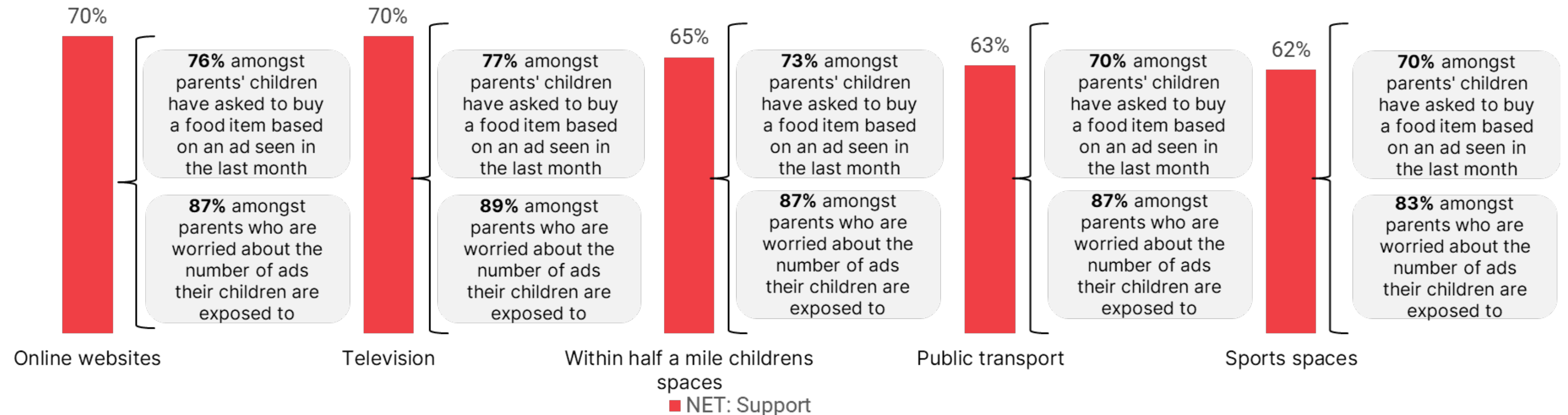
Support for regulations restricting advertising of unhealthy food/drink – All respondents (%)



Q17. To what extent would you support or oppose the government restricting advertising of unhealthy food in the following places? Base: All respondents (2039)

There is greater support for advertising restrictions amongst parents who are worried about advertising and whose children have asked them to buy a product based on an advert they'd seen

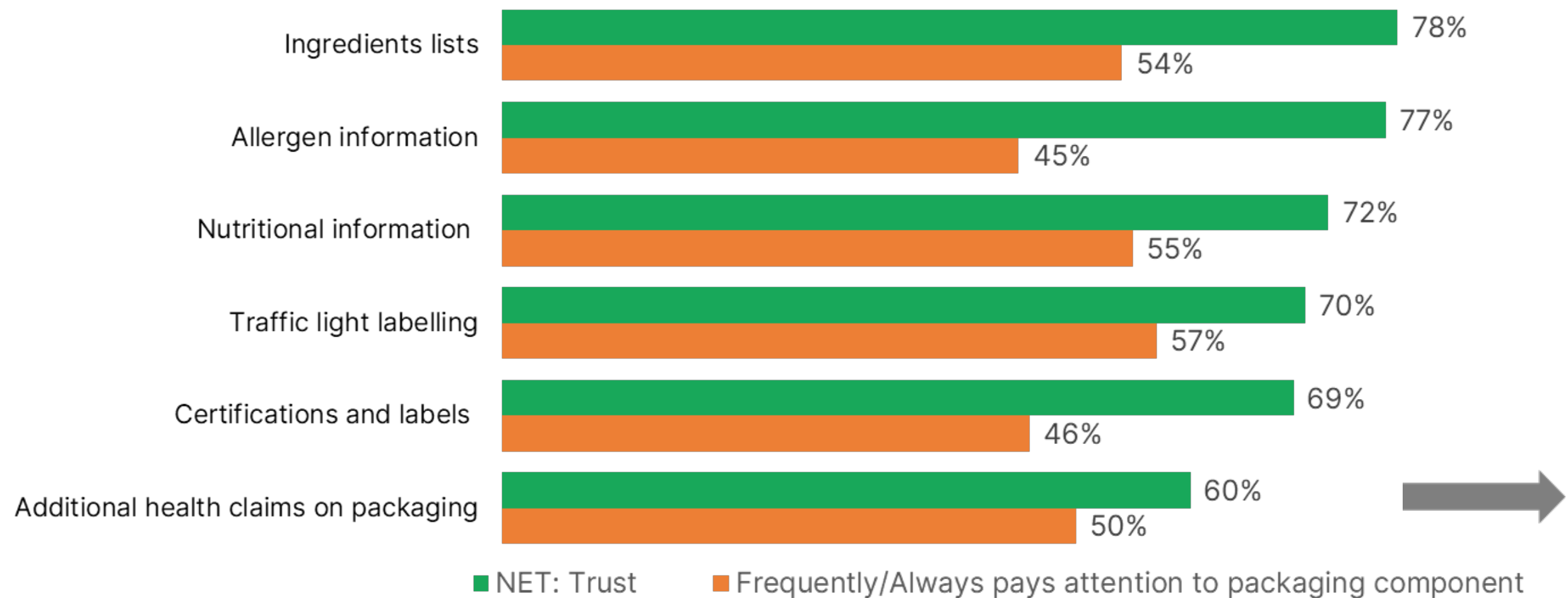
Support for regulations restricting advertising of unhealthy food/drink – NET support (%)



Q17. To what extent would you support or oppose the government restricting advertising of unhealthy food in the following places? Base: All respondents (2039), Worried about advertising (349), Asked to buy food/drink item based on advertisement seen (1172)

Parents pay attention to packaging information and over 3 in 5 trust the information provided

Packaging labelling – Level of trust vs Frequency paid attention to (%)



Parents of **Secondary school age children** are significantly less likely to pay attention to most packaging components including **traffic light labelling** (53%, -5%), **healthy claims** (46%, -5%), and **certifications** (41%, -7%)

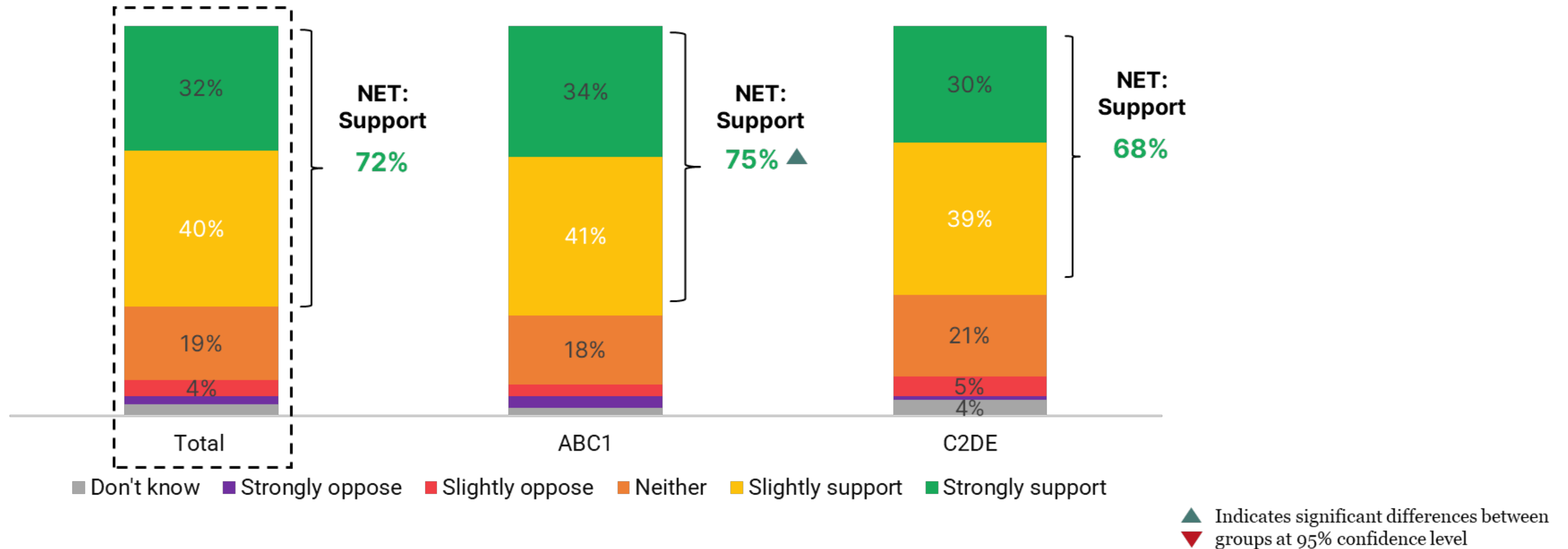
Parents are only slightly less likely to trust health claims on packaging than they are other aspects

Q18. SUMMARY: Thinking about food and drink packaging, how much attention do you typically pay to the following packaging components? / Q19. SUMMARY: To what extent do you trust the following information on food and drink packaging on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'completely trust' and 5 being 'do not trust at all'? Base: All Respondents (2039)

7 in 10 (72%) support measures that would restrict salt, sugar and fat content.

Support is higher among ABC1's (75%) compared to C2DE (68%)

Support for restricting Salt, Sugar & Fat Content – All respondents (%)



Q21. To what extent do you support or oppose the Government introducing further measures or legislation requiring food companies to reduce salt, sugar and/or saturated fat from products? Base: All respondents (2039)

What support do parents give to government policies?



At least half of parents support all listed policy ideas. Support is greatest for expanding access to healthy meals at schools and expanding funding for voucher schemes

Government Policies – NET Support (%)



Q23. There will be a General Election in 2024 and a new Government. To what extent would you support or oppose the following policy ideas being included in any new Government children's health strategy.

Base: All respondents (2039)

For the top 5 supported policies, there is consistent support across demographics

Top 5 Future Government Policies – NET support (%)

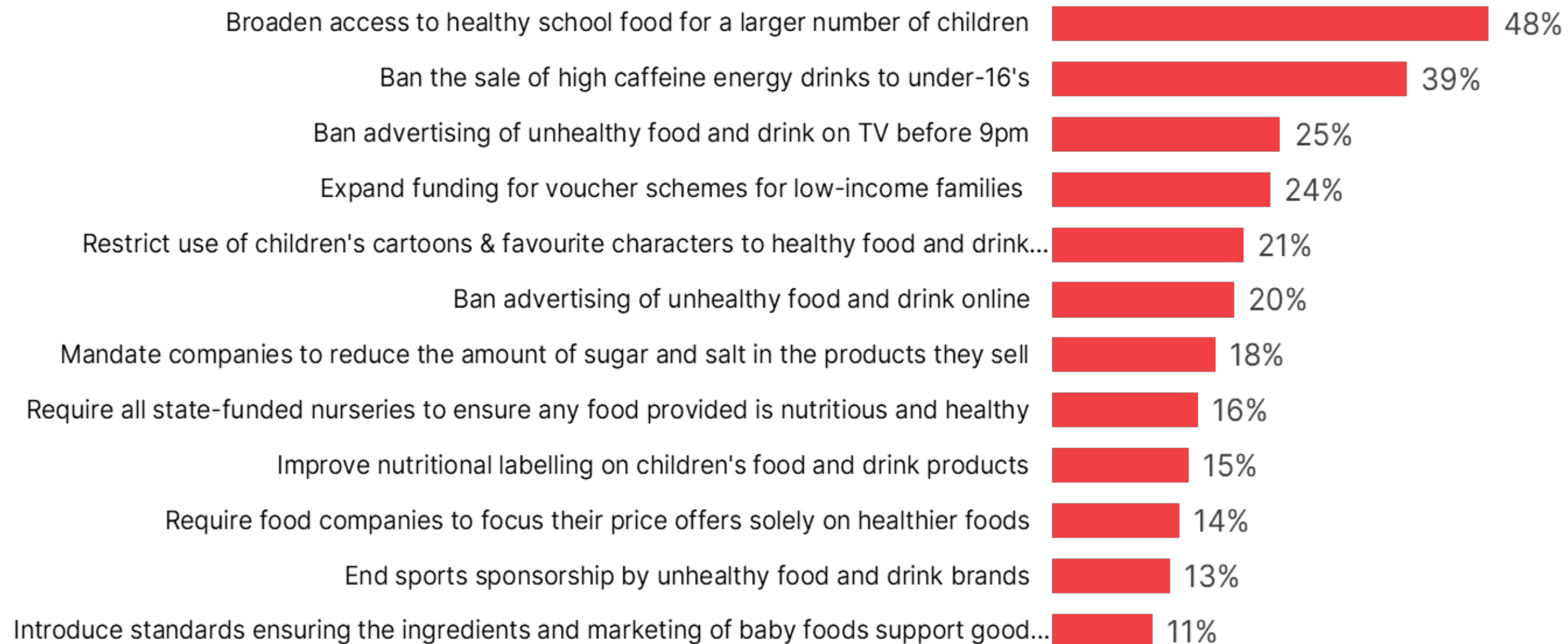
	All	Male	Female	ABC1	C2DE	White	Minority Ethnic
1 Broaden access to healthy school food for a larger number of children	86%	85%	88%	87%	86%	86%	86%
2 Expand funding for voucher schemes for low-income families	80%	77%	82%	78%	81%	80%	79%
3 Require state-funded nurseries to ensure food provided is nutritious and healthy	80%	79%	82%	81%	80%	80%	81%
4 Ban the sale of high caffeine energy drinks to under-16's	80%	77%	84%	81%	80%	81%	75%
5 Improve nutritional labelling on children's food and drink products	79%	79%	80%	80%	79%	79%	80%

Q23. There will be a General Election in 2024 and a new Government. To what extent would you support or oppose the following policy ideas being included in any new Government children's health strategy.

Base: All respondents (2039)

When parents selected their top 3 policies we see a change in priority - broadening access to healthy school meals is still number 1 but banning the sale of high caffeine energy drinks and advertising before 9pm become key policies

Top Three Government Policies – NET Support (%)



Q24. And which THREE policies would you most like to see, that you believe would best support parents to encourage their children to eat healthy food? Base: All respondents (2039)

Acknowledgements

Savanta:

Savanta assisted with survey design, data collection and analysis and data visualisations. Savanta is a data, market research and advisory company. We inform and inspire our clients through powerful data, empowering technology and high-impact consulting. Savanta is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

Impact on **Urban Health**

This work was funded by Impact on Urban Health. Impact on Urban Health are committed to achieving health equity by helping urban areas become healthier places to live.

**For further information about the
Children's Food Campaign please visit**

www.childrensfood.org.uk