

Key insights from nationwide poll of parents



Image credit: SDI Productions

Methodology

Sustain's Children's Food Campaign commissioned data, market research and advisory company Savanta to undertake national polling of parents with children under 18.

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 was conducted January 2-11 2024

Savanta is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

Total = 2,039

Sample Breakdown

Gender	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
Male	439	995	49%
Female	1596	1040	51%

Age	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
18 - 24	113	110	5%
25 - 34	616	543	27%
35 - 44	789	749	37%
45 - 54	422	479	23%
55 - 64	80	133	6%
65+	19	26	1%

Age of Children	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
0 - 3 years	624	553	27%
4 - 7 years	688	678	33%
8 - 10 years	627	618	30%
11 - 15 years	790	839	41%
16 - 18 years	469	482	24%
19 and over	186	186	9%

Region	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
Northern Ireland	40	42	2%
Scotland	155	162	8%
North-West	244	247	12%
North-East	91	103	5%
Yorkshire & Humber	181	182	9%
Wales	97	98	5%
West Midlands	203	204	10%
East Midlands	163	151	7%
South-West	161	151	7%
South-East	302	281	14%
East of England	163	171	8%
London	238	246	12%
Other	1	1	*%

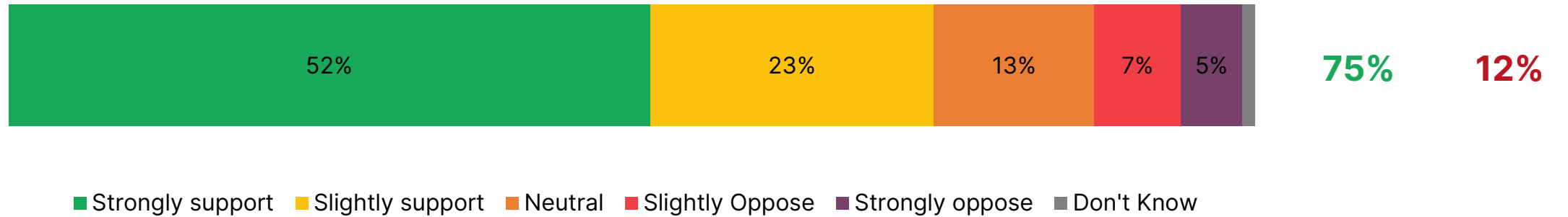
Income	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
Less than £20,000	331	298	15%
£20,000 - £29,999	383	378	19%
£30,000 - £39,999	333	334	16%
£40,000 - £49,999	288	293	14%
£50,000 - £59,999	197	214	10%
£60,000 - £69,999	135	143	7%
£70,000 - £79,999	130	132	6%
£80,000 or more	160	186	9%
Prefer not to say	82	61	3%

Ethnicity	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
White	1763	1756	86%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	60	51	2%
Asian or Asian British	132	139	7%
Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	69	84	4%
Another ethnic group	11	7	*%

Social Grade	Count	Count (weighted)	Percentage
ABC1	1178	1120	55%
C2DE	861	919	45%

75% of parents would support the **immediate expansion** of **free school meals** to **all children of all ages**, from nursery to sixth form, regardless of background

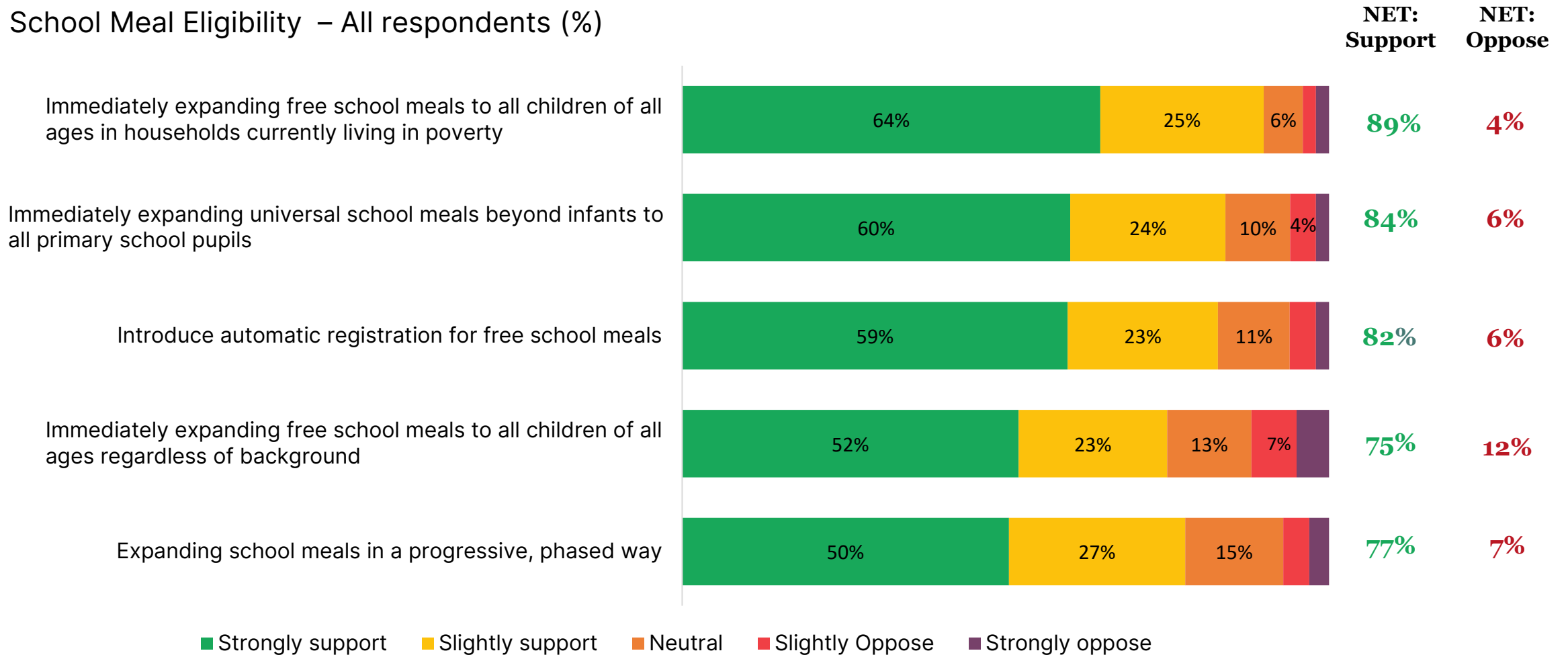
% of parents supporting this policy



Q12. To what extent would you support or oppose the following changes to eligibility for free school meals across the whole of the UK? Immediately expanding free school meals to all children of all ages in households currently living in poverty

Parents overwhelmingly support expansion of school meals entitlement

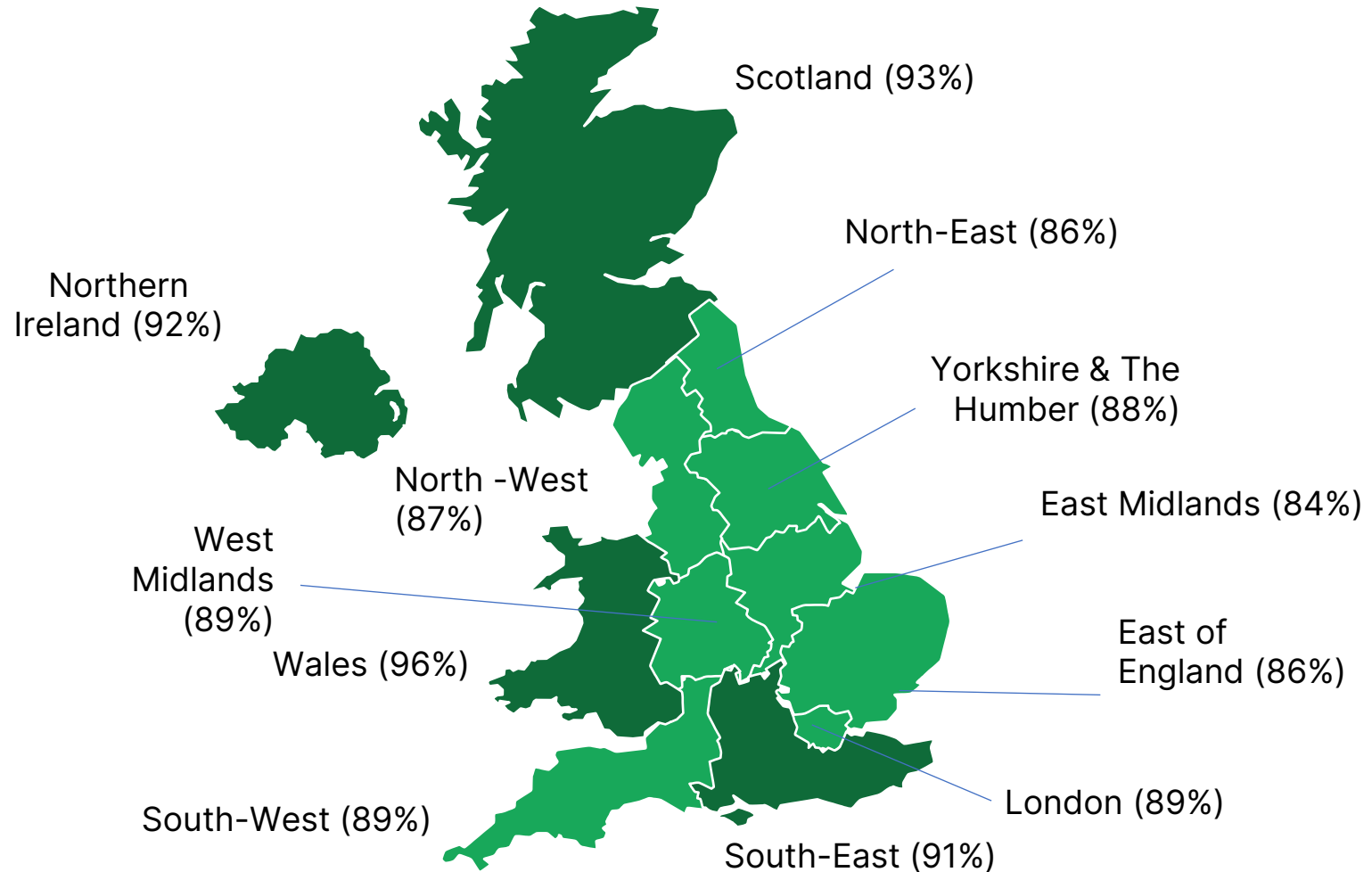
School Meal Eligibility – All respondents (%)



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

9 in 10 parents support the **immediate expansion** of universal school meals to **all** households currently **living in poverty** however support is stronger in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the South-East

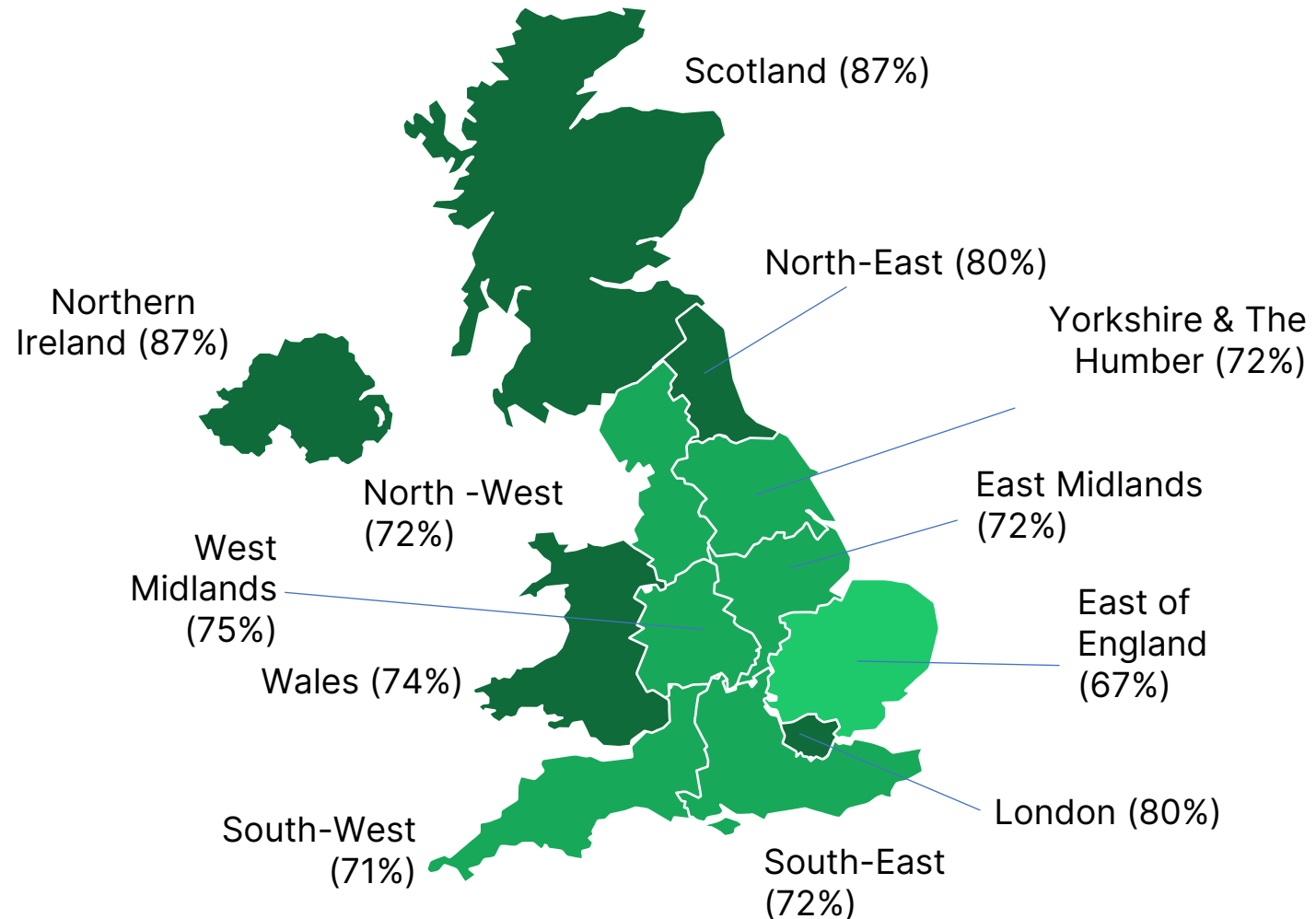
Support for immediately expanding free school meals to all households currently living in poverty – By region (%)



Q12. 1. To what extent would you support or oppose the following changes to eligibility for free school meals across the whole of the UK?: Immediately expanding free school meals to all children of all ages in households currently living in poverty

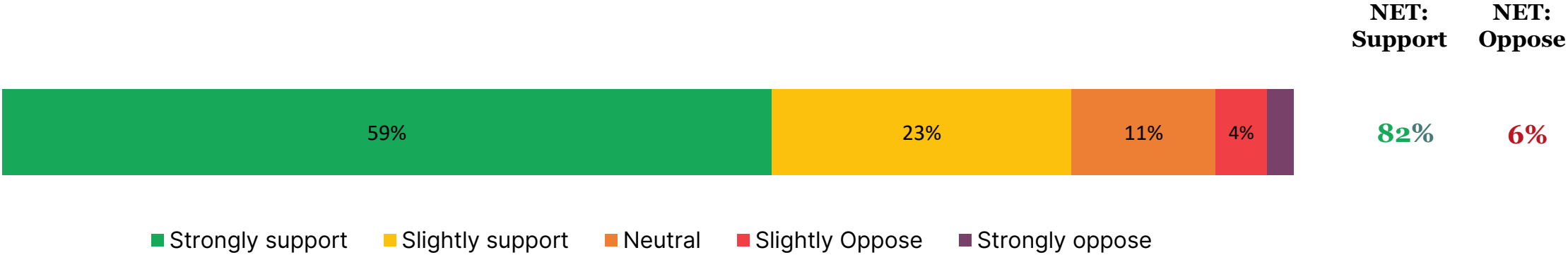
Three quarters of all parents (75%) support the immediate expansion of universal school meals to all children of all ages. Support is highest in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the North-East and London

Support for immediately expanding free school meals to all children of all ages, from nursery to sixth form regardless of background – By region (%)



Q12. 3. To what extent would you support or oppose the following changes to eligibility for free school meals across the whole of the UK?: Immediately expanding free school meals to all children of all ages, from nursery to sixth form, regardless of background

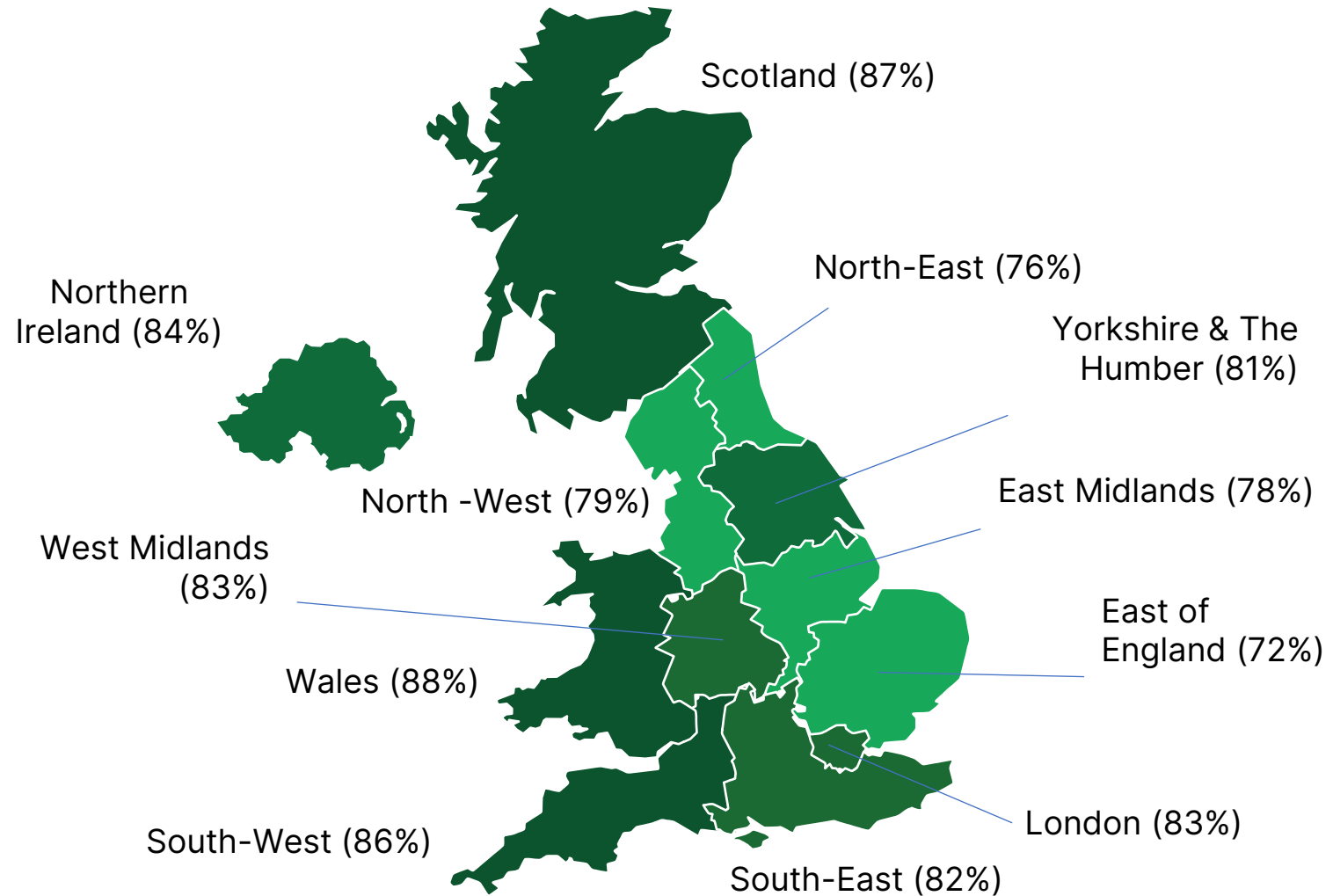
8 in 10 parents support the **automatic registration for free school meals** across the whole of the UK for all pupils who are entitled. At present, parents and schools have to manage application processes, and 11% of entitled pupils are not registered.



Q12.5 To what extent would you support or oppose the following changes to eligibility for free school meals across the whole of the UK? Introduce automatic registration of free school meals, so eligible families do not need to additionally apply to receive them.

8 in 10 parents support the introduction of **automatic registration** for free school meals. Support is slightly highest in Scotland, Wales and the South-West

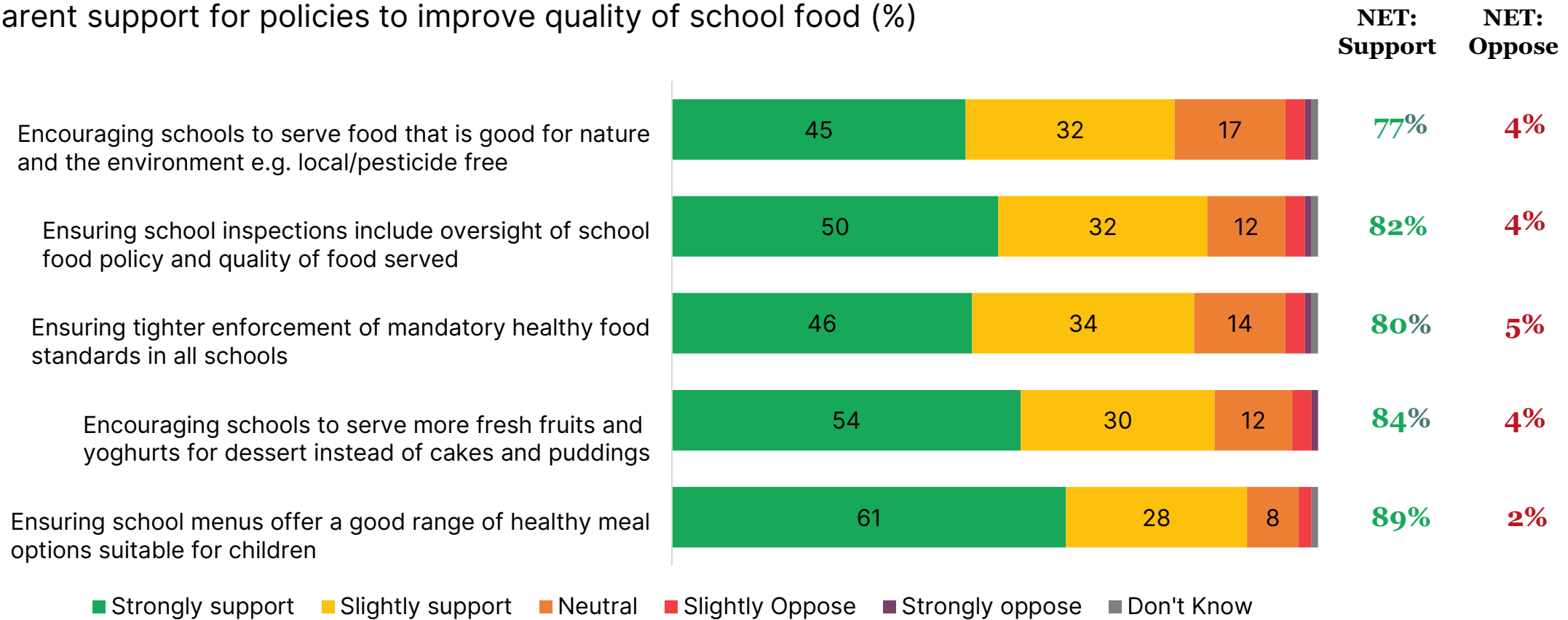
Support for introducing automatic registration for free school meals - by region (%)



Q12. 2. To what extent would you support or oppose the following changes to eligibility for free school meals across the whole of the UK?: Introduce automatic registration for free school meals, so eligible families do not need to additionally apply to receive them

On **quality of school meals**, ensuring healthy options for children is top priority for parents. Very high level of support for healthier dessert options, nature-friendly food plus tighter inspection and enforcement of standards.

Parent support for policies to improve quality of school food (%)



Q10. To what extent do you support or oppose the following ideas to make school food better and healthier for children?