



ADVANCING BRITISH STANDARDS?

Exploring public attitudes
towards a baccalaureate-style
16-18 education system

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In partnership with

PUBLICFIRST 



About Edge

The world is changing fast and education needs to keep up. Edge is an independent, politically impartial education foundation. We want education to be relevant to the twenty-first century. We gather evidence through research and real world projects and partnerships and use this to lead the debate and influence policy and practice.

Edge believes all young people need to be equipped with the skills that today's global, digital economy demands, through a broad and balanced curriculum, high quality training, engaging real world learning and rich relationships between education and employers.

Visit www.edge.co.uk to find out more.

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INTRODUCTION

For the past twenty years, Edge has been calling for an education system that allows young people to develop knowledge and skills across a range of disciplines to best prepare them for life and work – a truly broad and balanced approach.

Our current 16-18 education system is narrow, with young people specialising earlier than our comparators. Whilst there are, in theory, many combinations of A Levels, students in England take an average of only 2.7 subjects. Moreover, the ongoing reforms to Level 2 and 3 qualifications risk entrenching a 'twin track' system, removing all-important opportunities for young people to study a blend of general, vocational and technical education.

In May 2023, Edge set out to explore different options for a broader, baccalaureate-style 16-18 education

system in England, and the difficult question of delivery, through our **Bacc to the Drawing Board** series.

The idea of a baccalaureate has been gaining steam in recent years across the sector, including from the House of Commons Education Select Committee, Andy Burnham with the 'MBacc' in Greater Manchester, and Professor Hayward's review of qualifications and assessment in Scotland. Most recently, the Prime Minister announced his intention to introduce the Advanced British Standard – a significant overhaul of the 16-18 qualifications landscape over the next decade.

In this report, we begin to examine the extent to which there is public appetite for such reform, the case for change, and drivers of support or opposition, by testing different elements of a baccalaureate.

POLLING AND PARTICIPANTS

In February 2024, the **Edge Foundation** enlisted the support of public opinion research and strategy consultancy **Public First** to conduct a nationally representative survey of more than 2,000 adults in England on the future of 16-18 education.

The poll was in field between 23rd and 28th February 2024 and captured the opinion of 2,007 adults (18+) covering London, the South East, South West, East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, North East and North West.

All results are weighted using iterative proportional fitting, or 'raking'. The results are weighted by interlocking age and gender, region and social grade to nationally representative proportions.

This report contains just a snapshot of the findings. If you want to delve a little deeper into the full poll tables, including cross-breaks, these will be made available on the **Edge** and **Public First** websites.

We want to offer our thanks to **Ben Murphy, Jess Lister** and **Will Yates** at **Public First** for their work on this piece of research.

A WORD ON TERMINOLOGY...

We asked close to 90 questions exploring the public's attitudes towards the education system, with a particular focus on the 16-18 stage. With terms in education often open to wide-ranging interpretation, where possible, we offered explanations to keep as tight a focus on the issues in question.

To find out more about the polling process, please visit the **Public First** website.

PUBLICFIRST 

FOREWORD BY ALICE BARNARD, CEO, EDGE FOUNDATION



In this milestone year, as Edge celebrates its 20th anniversary, we delve into public attitudes towards technical and vocational options in 16-18 education once again – and what a long way they've come.

The findings presented in this report, based on a survey of 2,000 adults across England, provide a compelling snapshot of public support for technical and vocational pathways, and the opportunities they bring to transform young people's life chances.

We also find significant appetite for policymakers to undertake substantial

16-18 reform, resembling something of a broader baccalaureate – one that offers all students the opportunity to study a blend of general, technical and vocational subjects, with applied numeracy and literacy skills, greater emphasis on life skills and work placements. No doubt the qualifications landscape is complicated, as our findings show, but preserving freedom of choice for young people is absolutely paramount to voters.

There are plenty of education polls, but what was quite remarkable in these findings was the consensus amongst the different voter and demographic groups we explored when it comes to the current state and future of 16-18 education – a key transition stage.

The widest divergences of opinion were amongst age groups, often with those adults closer to the education system (18- to 24-year-olds) having very different views about reform. Mapped against policy changes affecting education, these differences can help us identify shifts in opinion and behaviour and determine

what is, and will be, most important to voters. Though this survey focused purposely on adults, at Edge, we continue to seek the insightful views of those currently in the system, supporting the Youth Voice Census and consulting our Youth Network on key policy announcements and changes.

What became clear in our findings is just how far ahead public opinion is compared with policy debate and action on 16-18 education. The ABS is a significant starting point, and a sign of the times, but not necessarily a meaningful end to the twin track approach that holds us – young people, society and our economy – back currently.

These new findings underscore our commitment at Edge to reshape the education and training landscape, and we look forward to another next twenty years striving to make education relevant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2024, we surveyed over 2,000 adults across England to ask for their views on the education system, technical and vocational pathways, and what changes they want to see in the 16-18 stage. Here are just five of the key headlines:

1 Voters think the current education system is not fit for purpose. But more than that, they think we're not actually preparing young people for their futures any better than 20 years ago. In our survey, we found a majority of respondents think that the current education system prepares young people poorly for the future. **37%** thought a person leaving education today is worse prepared for the workplace than someone leaving 20 years ago (**1 in 10** say "much worse").

2 Respondents want schools and colleges to focus on developing *essential skills for life and work*, and *technical skills to prepare them for vocational pathways*. Among the general population, gaining life skills (e.g. household budgeting, cooking, etc.) was seen as the most important priority of the education system in England, ahead of being exposed to a variety of post-16 pathways, and well ahead of gaining in depth subject-specific knowledge. But large majorities think education should focus more on teaching young people skills that will be useful for the workplace (**88%**) and for everyday life (**90%**), and there's overwhelming support (**82%**) for encouraging more young people to explore technical or vocational options.

3 Technical and vocational pathways are popular – and perceived to be better preparation for life after school or college. But respondents feel they are not as respected as they *should be*. Despite vast majorities believing technical and vocational qualifications should be as respected as 'academic' ones (**81%**), **just under a third (32%)** of respondents agreed that they are in practice. The positive? Respect is on the up.

4 The Advanced British Standard is a popular proposal, in principle and in practice. **78%** of respondents said they would **support** a proposal to reform the education system in line with the ABS proposals, compared to just **10%** who would **oppose**. A large majority (**61%**) said they thought the Advanced British Standard would represent an improvement over the current system of 16-18 education. Even (some form of) maths to 18 proves popular, though there's a lot of work needed to bring younger voters on board.

5 Driving that support for the ABS is the proposal for majors and minors, allowing for breadth and the all-important ability to mix and match 'academic' and 'vocational' subjects. The popularity of this baccalaureate core of the ABS taps into a common finding throughout this polling; that choice is paramount. **57%** of respondents said that young people should have more choice than they currently do in what they do and study in 16-18 education, rising to nearly **4 in 5 (79%)** of those aged 18-24.

CHAPTER 1: READY OR NOT? PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

In the first chapter of this report, we explore the public's attitudes around what the 16-18 education system should prioritise, and how they think it squares up in practice.



PRIORITISING SKILLS FOR LIFE AND WORK

Less than a quarter (24%) of adults in England think the current education system prepares young people **well** for the workplace¹. But perhaps even more concerningly, **20 years on, we're not really in a better place** (Figure 1).

52%

think the education system prepares young people poorly for the workplace

Q. In your view, is someone leaving the education system today better or worse prepared for the workplace than someone leaving the education system 20 years ago?

- Much better prepared today than 20 years ago
- Somewhat better prepared today than 20 years ago
- no better or worse prepared
- Somewhat worse prepared today than 20 years ago
- Much worse prepared today than 20 years ago
- Don't know

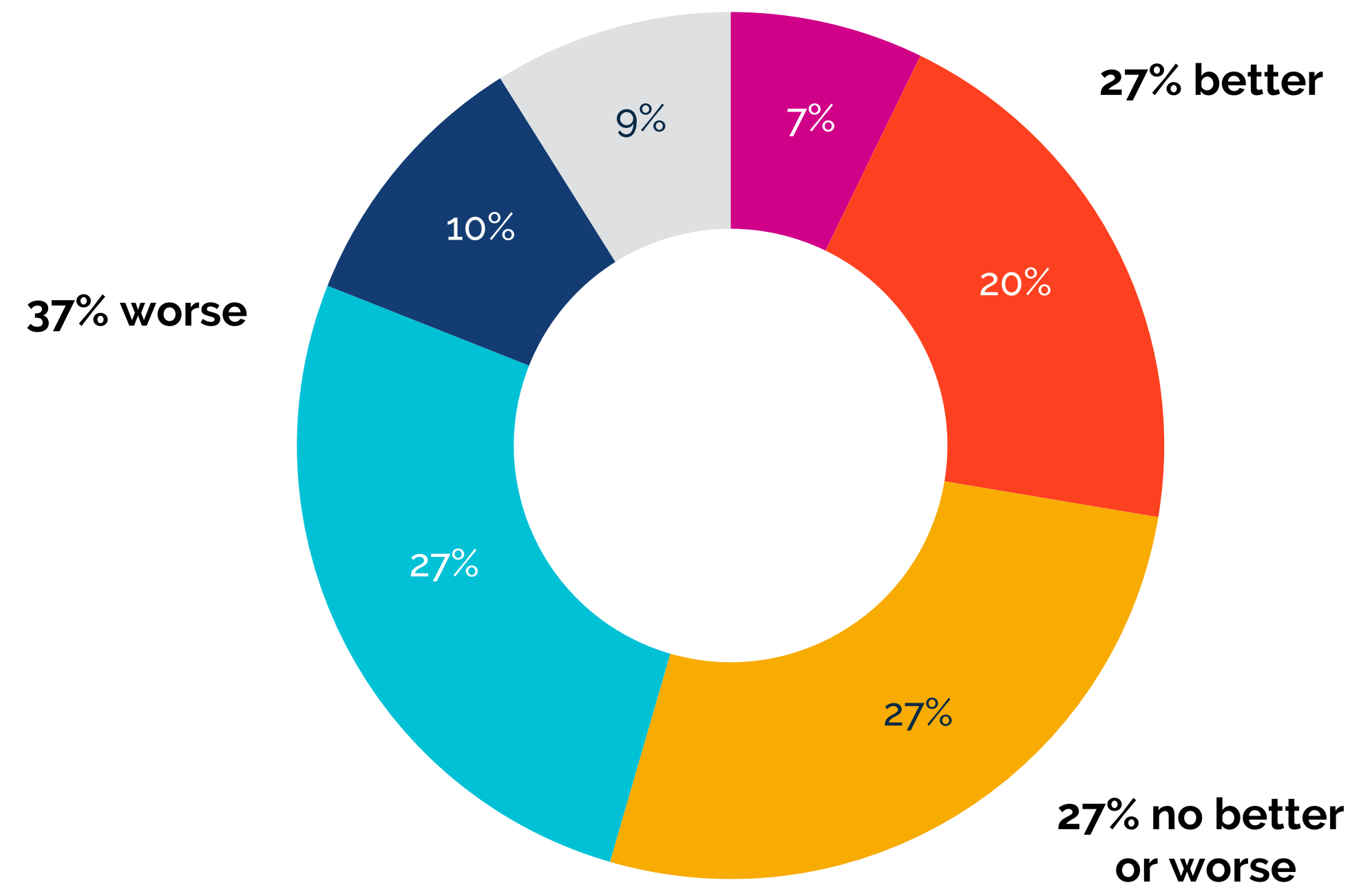
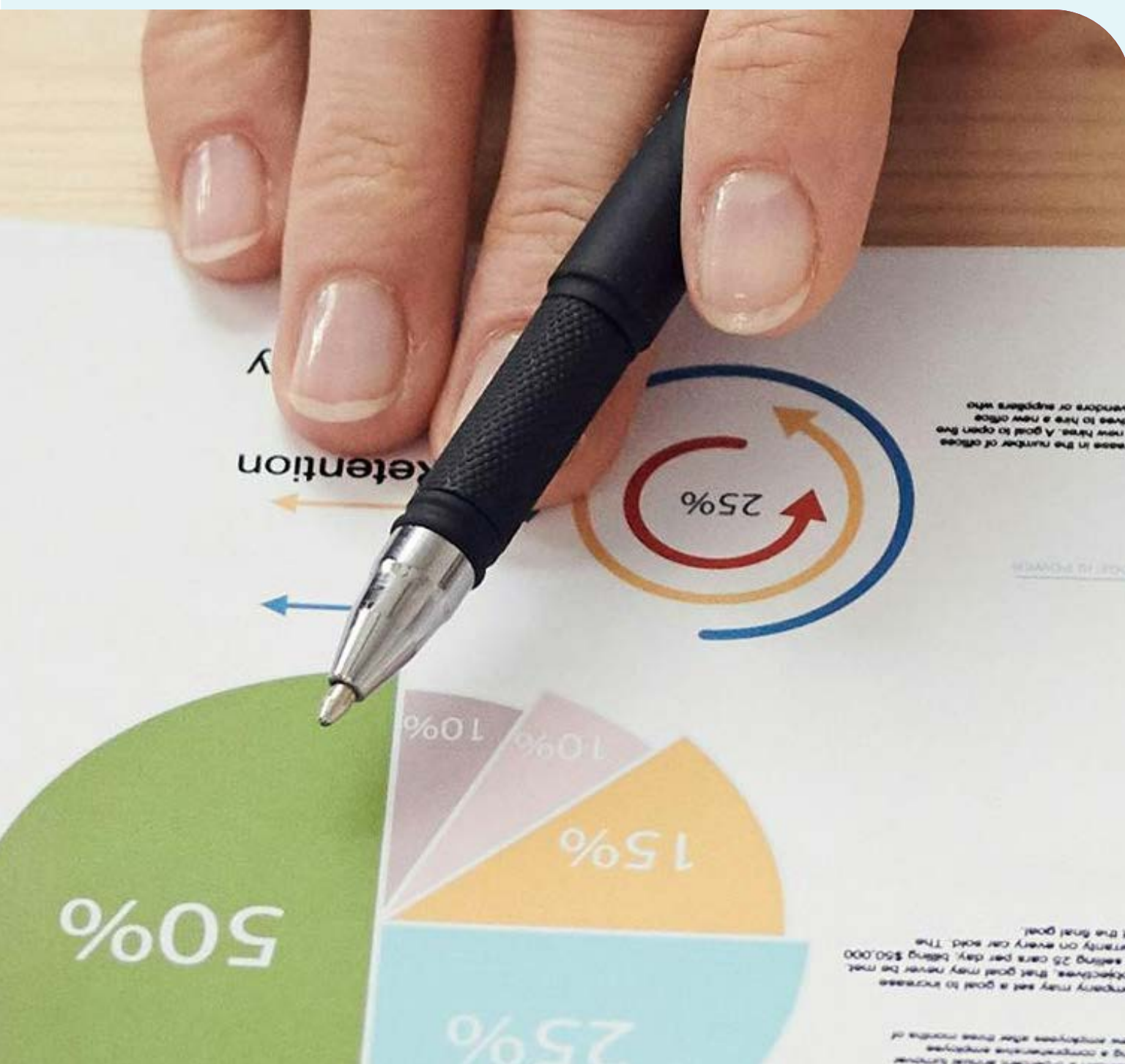


Figure 1 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 23]

When it comes to 16-18 education, equipping young people with **skills for life** – ranging from things like financial planning to managing diet – comes out as the top priority among respondents (**69%**), with **skills for the workplace** (e.g. people skills) closely behind (**68%**) (Figure 2). In practice, however, when asked what the education system currently prioritises, life skills plummet to the very bottom of the rankings (**13%**), and work-readiness also performs poorly (**17%**).



Q. What do you think the education system **should** prioritise and what do they **currently** prioritise?

■ Which, if any, of the following do you think **should be aims** of education for young people aged 16 to 18? Please select all that apply.

■ And which of those same aims of education do you think the **current** education system **prioritises**? Please select all that apply.

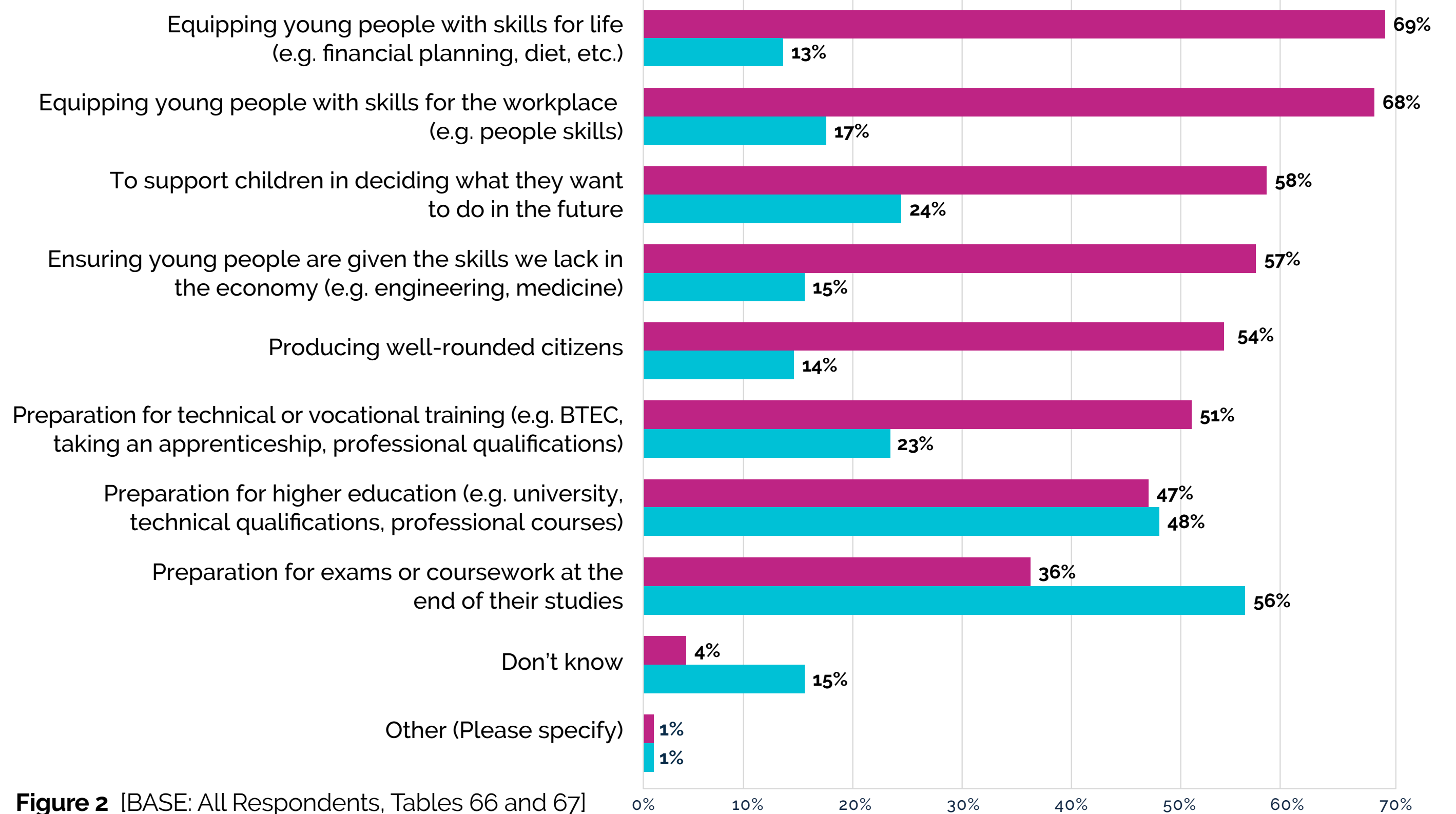


Figure 2 [BASE: All Respondents, Tables 66 and 67]

SO, HOW CAN WE BETTER PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LIFE AFTER SCHOOL OR COLLEGE?

There is strong feeling that the balance of the school day is currently tipped too far towards summative exam preparation. Indeed, **nearly half (48%)** told us explicitly they think too much time at school is spent preparing for exams, and this rockets up to **more than two-thirds (67%)** amongst respondents who have most recently been through the system, aged 18 to 24².

Instead, what's clear from these findings is that voters of all parties want to see teaching time used effectively for both the acquisition of knowledge and the development of essential skills needed for qualifications, life and work.

90%

think that schools should focus more on developing young people's skills that will be useful for everyday life

88%

think that schools should focus more on developing young people's skills that will be useful for the workplace

79%

think that schools should focus more on developing both knowledge and skills useful for young people's qualifications

Delving deeper into the public's priorities for education more generally, we find that **gaining life skills** (e.g. household budgeting, cooking, etc.) was **14 percentage points** more likely to be selected as the most important priority of the education system in England, than the 'least important' – **citizenship education** (Figure 3) (although it's worth noting that 18–24-year-olds were far more likely to find citizenship education important).

This was closely followed by young people being **exposed to a variety of different training or education pathways** (e.g. apprenticeships, universities, etc.) (+13%) and emphasis on more applied, real-world learning that **relates subjects or topics to the workplace** (+9%) – something Edge's **Deeper Learning UK Network** member schools and colleges have pioneered for some time now.

Q. Of the following aspects of the education system in England, which do you think is the most important, and which do you think is the least important?

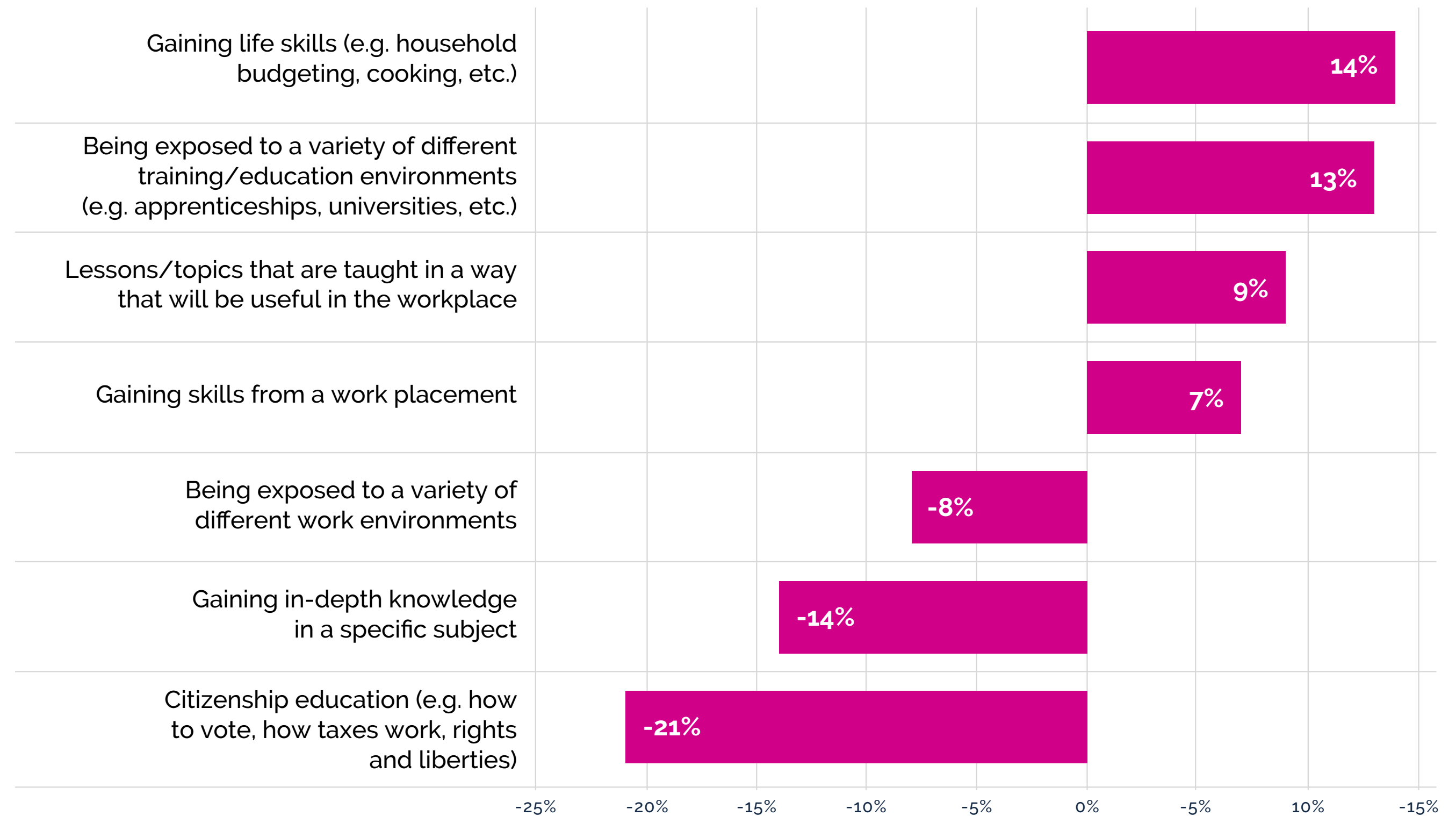


Figure 3 [BASE: All Respondents]

Gaining skills from a **work placement** proved popular too (+9%). When we tested this as a compulsory element of education, **84%** of respondents said they would support work experience being mandatory for young people aged 16-18³.



33%

felt the optimum would be a **two-week in-person placement** (though **30%** said five weeks – just short of the length of a T Level industry placement).

37%

of all respondents felt they would like to see **ongoing employer mentoring** on useful skills (e.g. interview preparation).

28%

of adults support **project-based learning**, whereby a student is required to deliver a specific project for or with support from an employer⁴.

Exposure to these different working environments must be coupled with more careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). **86%** of those surveyed want to see schools give young people more guidance on their future careers⁵.

CHAPTER 2:

VOCATION, VOCATION, VOCATION

In the second chapter of this report, we explore the public's perception of vocational pathways – how well we are preparing young people for technical and vocational qualifications like apprenticeships, and how well these pathways prepare young people for their futures.



HOW WELL IS EDUCATION PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR DIFFERENT PATHWAYS?

The pathway through GCSEs, A Levels and university is clear and well-trodden. **A majority (51%)** reported that schools and colleges prepare young people well, either 'somewhat' or 'very', for university. Meanwhile, **not even a third (32%)** of respondents could say the same about technical and vocational pathways, such as an apprenticeship (Figure 4).

64%
of adults felt that schools don't encourage enough young people to take vocational or technical pathways, such as apprenticeships, BTECs or T-Level courses.

Q. How well or poorly do you think schools and colleges in the UK prepare young people for the following?

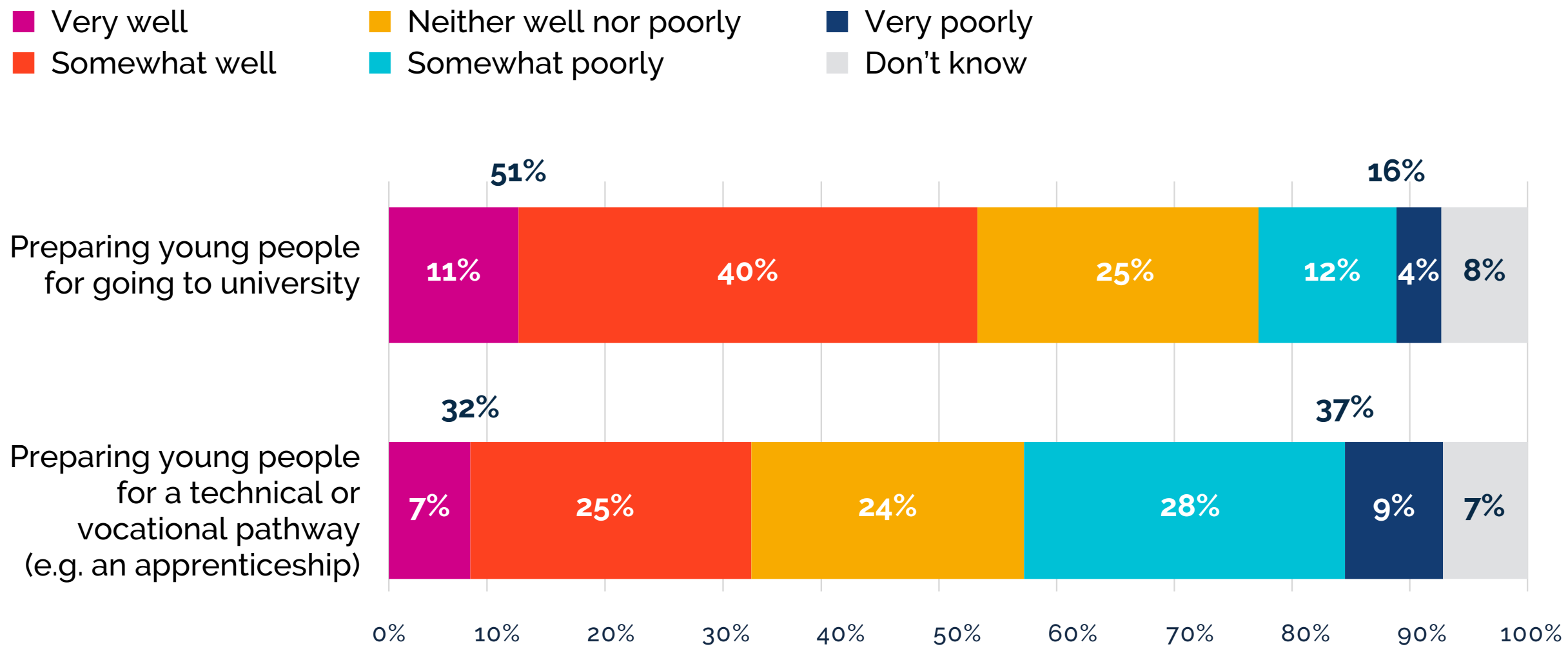


Figure 4 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 14]

This matters because a massive **82%** in total said they feel more young people *should* be encouraged to explore technical or vocational options in their education⁶. Across every social grade, there is a sense that more could be done (Figure 5).

And the public have good reasons they want to end this discrepancy...



**Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?:
Schools don't encourage enough people to take vocational or technical pathways, such as apprenticeships, BTECs or T-Level courses**

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

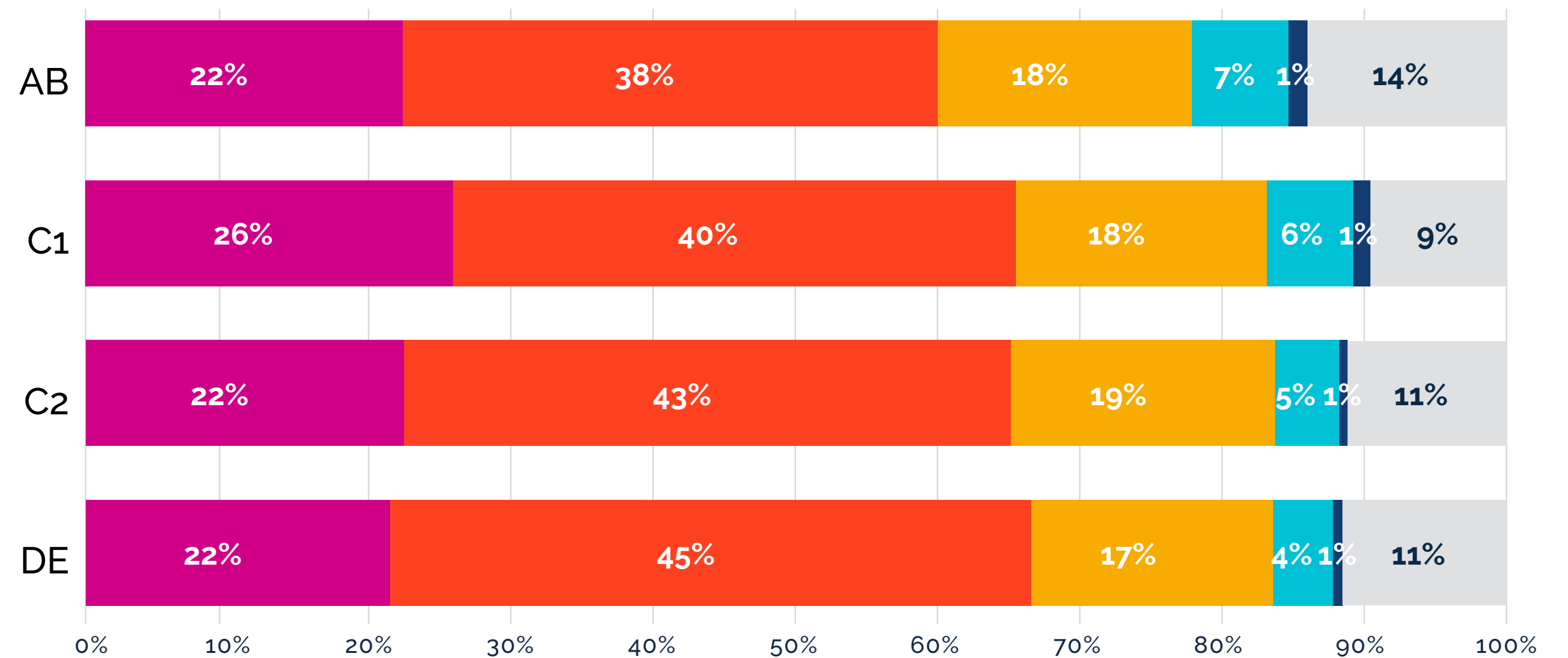


Figure 5 [BASE: All Respondents, By Social Grade, Table 51]

HOW WELL DO DIFFERENT PATHWAYS PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THEIR NEXT STEPS?

As Figure 6 shows, for the most part, in 16-18 education, it is felt that both vocational (e.g. BTECs, T-Levels, or taking an apprenticeship) and 'academic' qualifications (e.g. A-Levels) are equally good as each other in terms of preparing young people for their next steps. But, as the purple line illustrates, there is also a sense that vocational pathways actually outperform 'academic' ones in each of these categories. Some of these results could be expected, such as better preparation for more technical or skilled jobs, but others, like preparation for jobs of the future, the job application process and life skills are, arguably, more telling.

Q. Do you think that more 'academic' education pathways (e.g. A-Levels) or more 'technical' and 'vocational' education pathways (e.g. BTECs, T-Levels, or taking an apprenticeship) better prepare young people for the following?

- Academic pathways are better at preparing young people for this
- Technical/Vocational pathways are better at preparing
- Both are as good as each other
- Neither are good at this
- Don't know

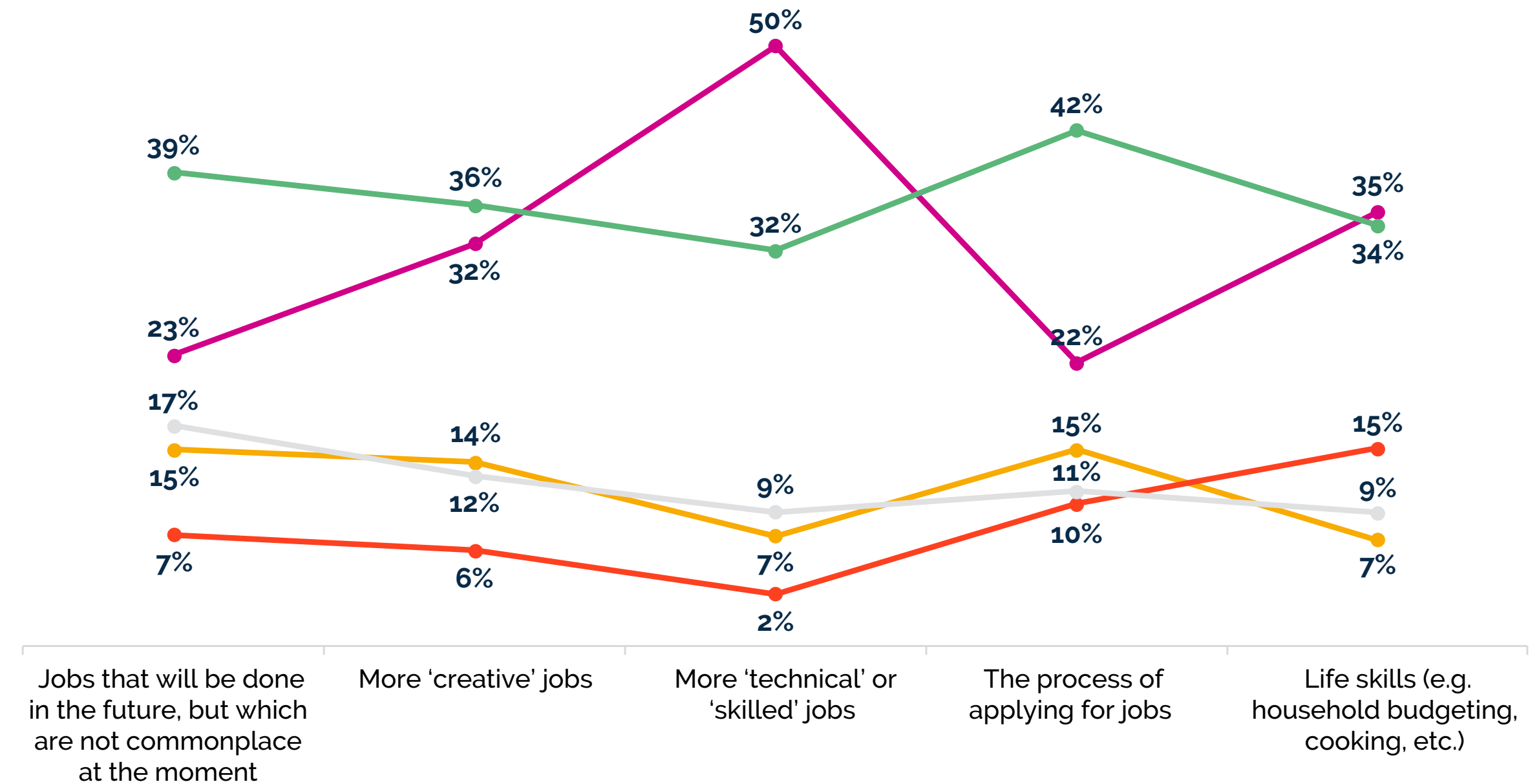


Figure 6 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 54]

WHO'S MORE LIKELY TO...

We asked who is more likely to be a higher earner, to have more success in their career, to have a higher level of satisfaction later in life, and better life chances. Across every category, the majority view is that both 'academic' and technical and vocational pathways are deemed equally as effective as one another (Figure 7). Though, clearly, there is work to be done to evidence the earning potential of graduates vs. apprentices.

	Be a higher earner	Have more success in their career	Have a higher level of satisfaction later in life	Have better life chances
A young person taking an academic pathway	31%	16%	14%	20%
A young person taking a technical or vocational pathway	18%	23%	23%	23%
Both are as effective as each other at this	36%	44%	42%	41%
N/A - The pathway a young person chooses makes no difference to this	5%	7%	10%	7%
Don't know	10%	10%	11%	9%

Figure 7 [BASE: All Respondents, Tables 60, 61, 62 and 63]



PARITY OF ESTEEM: CHANGING ATTITUDES?

These perceptions translated into considerable support for vocational and technical qualifications amongst respondents when asked about what they would want *their own child** to study at 16. Positively, there is just a 7 percentage point difference between A Levels and Apprenticeships, and BTECs and NVQs also perform very well (Figure 8).

33% of adults surveyed reported support for their child studying towards the International Baccalaureate (IB).

We explore attitudes around a baccalaureate-style 16-18 system further in the next chapter.

* Those respondents who do not have a child or children, were asked to respond as if they have one.

Q. Which, if any, of the following qualifications would you be interested in your child taking aged 16-18?

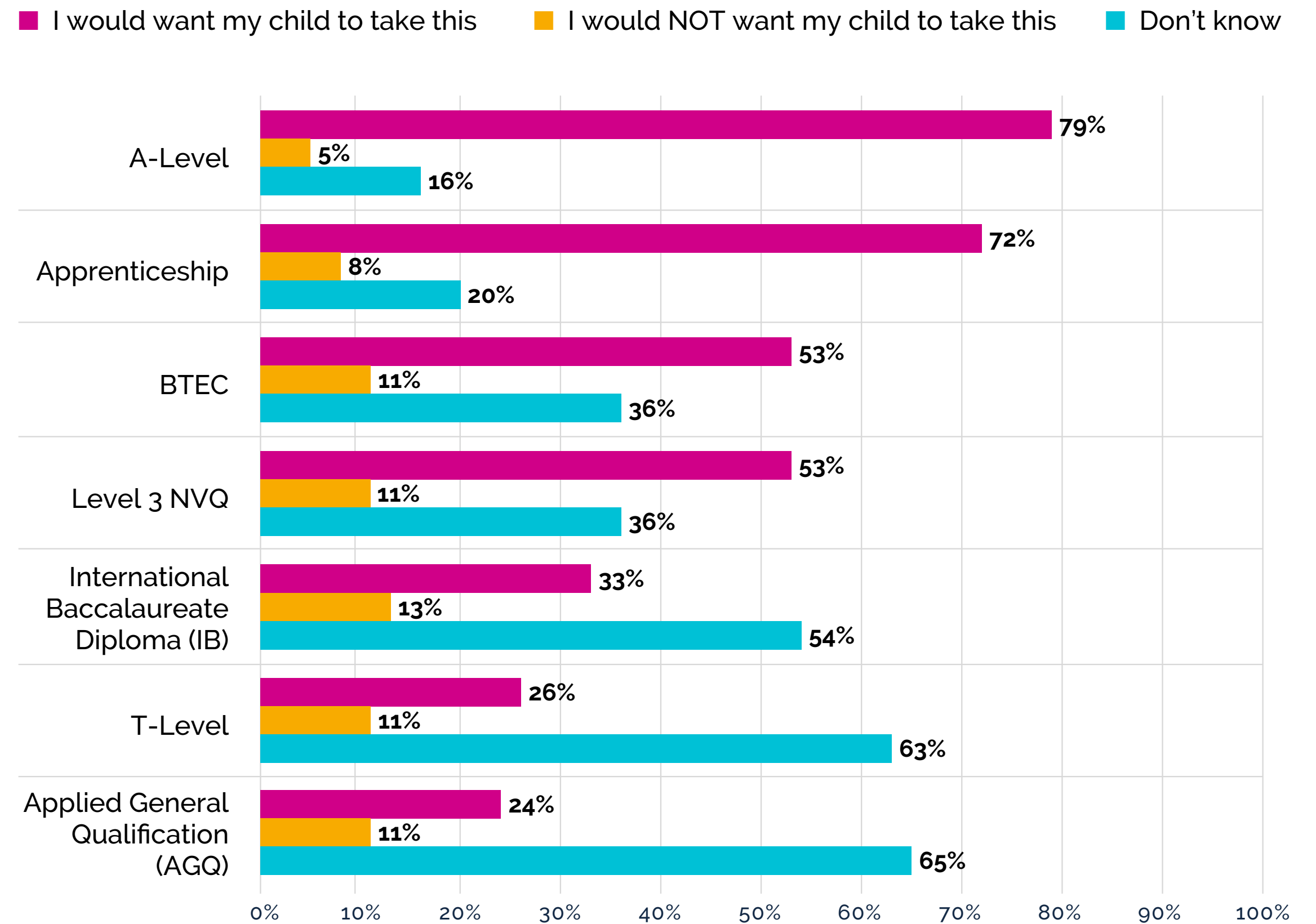


Figure 8 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 39]

Notably, there is a considerable uncertainty around T Levels, which may be explained by their relative newness to the 16-18 offer. But our findings more generally hinted at the complexity of the 16-18 qualifications landscape – **32%** reported they had heard of a 'B Level' (a fake qualification we made up for the purposes of this poll), though, at least, just **9%** said they could explain what a 'B Level' is⁷.

And awareness of some technical qualifications needs to be improved (Figure 9).

32%

of adults reported that they had heard of a fake qualification we called a 'B Level'

Q. To what extent are you familiar with the following qualifications that young people can take in England?

■ Percentage responding 'I have not heard of this'

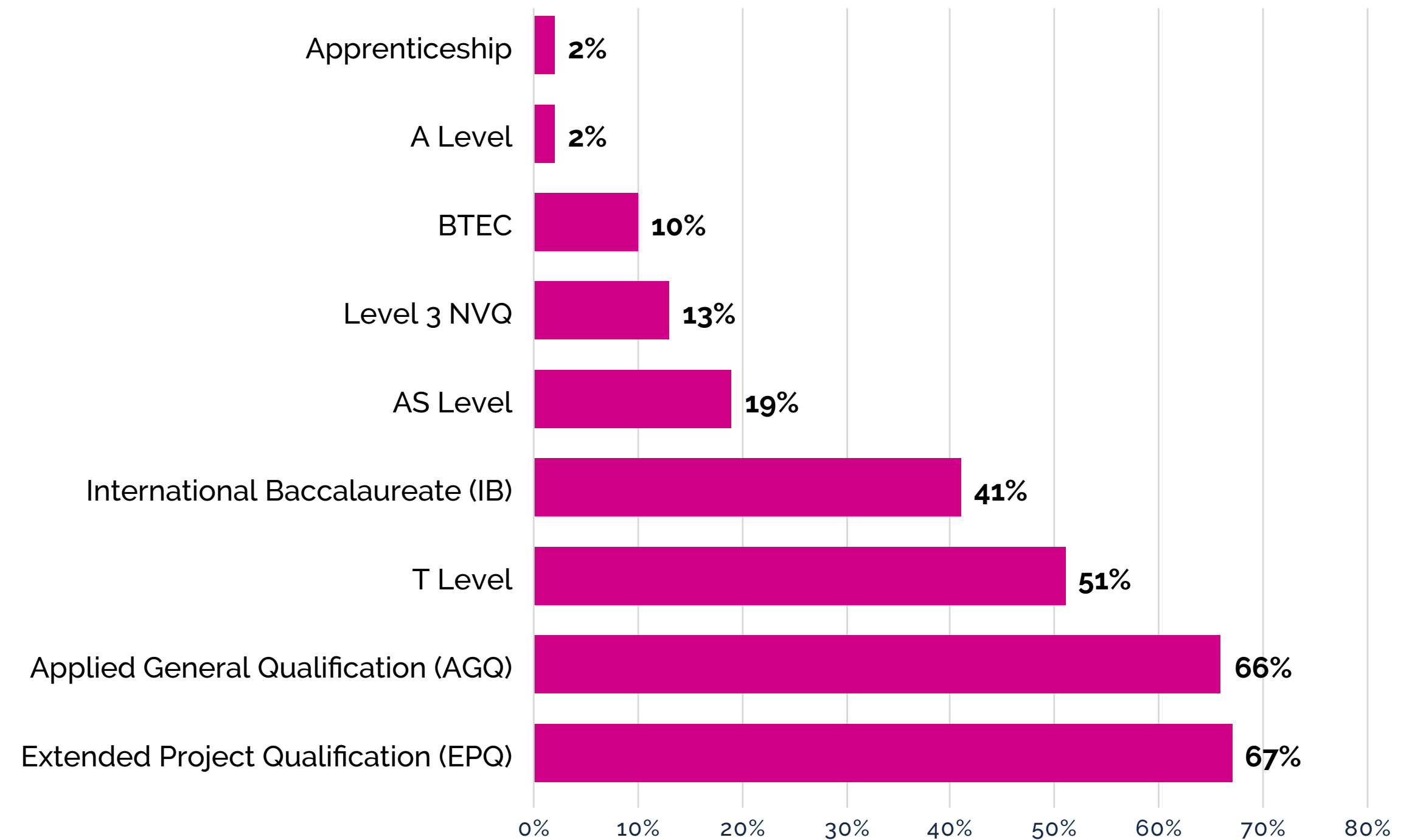


Figure 9 [BASE: All Respondents, Have Not Heard Of..., Table 27]

81%

of respondents across every major demographic group studied think that technical or vocational qualifications should be as respected as 'academic' ones, just **under a third (32%)** agreed that they are in practice, with a similar proportion (36%) actively disagreeing.

But, respect is on the up.

Firstly, younger respondents were more likely to say technical or vocational qualifications are already as respected as 'academic' ones than older respondents, pointing to an age trend (Figure 10).

Secondly, **53%** said that attitudes towards people taking a technical or vocational pathway in school have become more positive over the last 10 years, rising to **62%** of 18-to 24-year-olds⁸.

Q. Are technical and vocational qualifications currently as respected as academic qualifications?

■ Total Agree ■ Total Disagree ■ Don't know

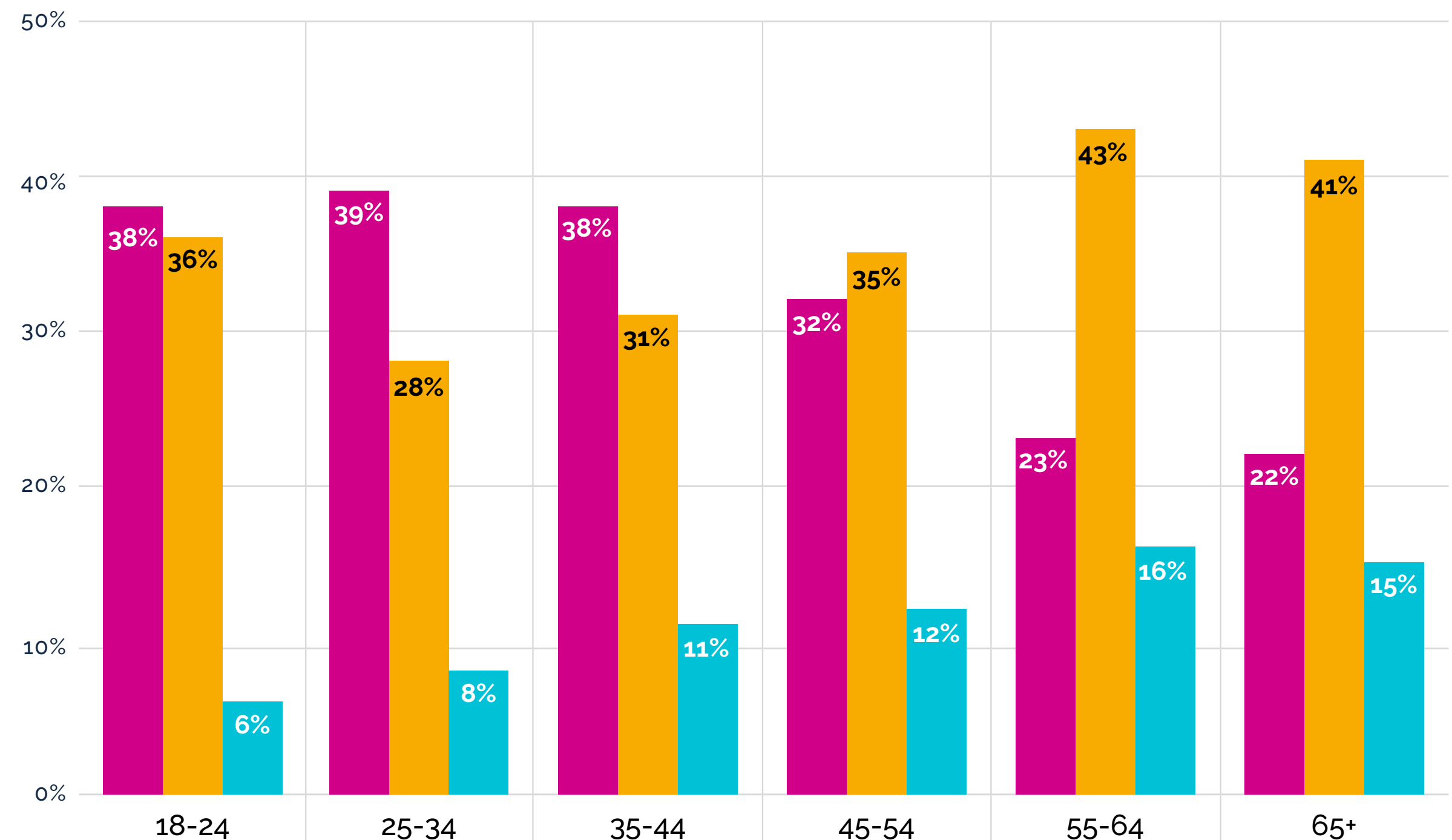


Figure 10 [BASE: All Respondents, By Age Group, Table 52]

CHAPTER 3: ADVANCING BRITISH STANDARDS IN 16-18 EDUCATION?

In this final chapter of this report, we build on Edge's **Bacc to the Drawing Board series** and look at reforming 16-18 education system, testing attitudes towards different components of a baccalaureate. We then measure up the recent proposals for an Advanced British Standard against public opinion.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS

A common critique of the English 16-18 education system is the early specialisation or narrowing of *what* young people study after 16, which brings into question the age at which young people make decisions about their post-16 options, and the breadth of the offer available to them. But what do the public think? And why?

58%

of adults surveyed felt 16 is the right age for young people to choose an education route. Though, **nearly a quarter** of all adults and **38%** of 18- to 24-year-olds think 16 is too early.



Of those who felt 16 was too early (Figure 11):

- **Nearly three-quarters (74%)** express concerns about the **clarity** with which young people are taking those decisions. This ties into the earlier finding in Chapter 1 that more than **4 in 5** respondents (**86%**) want to see schools give young people more guidance on their future.
- Over **a third (34%)** think there are **not enough options** available to young people at 16. This demands further exploration but would need to be carefully balanced so as not to further complicate the 16-18 qualifications landscape, illustrated in Chapter 2.
- Concerningly, younger age groups were slightly more likely to report that “choosing a pathway locks young people into a specific life path” – **over half (51%)** of those aged 18 to 24. This could indicate the perceived magnitude of such a decision at 16, or over-specialisation at this stage. We know from our regular **Skills Shortages Bulletins** just how important it is, and will continue to be, to enable people to upskill and retrain and transition between different career paths as the labour market changes.

Q. You said you thought 16 was too young for young people to choose an education route. Why is this?

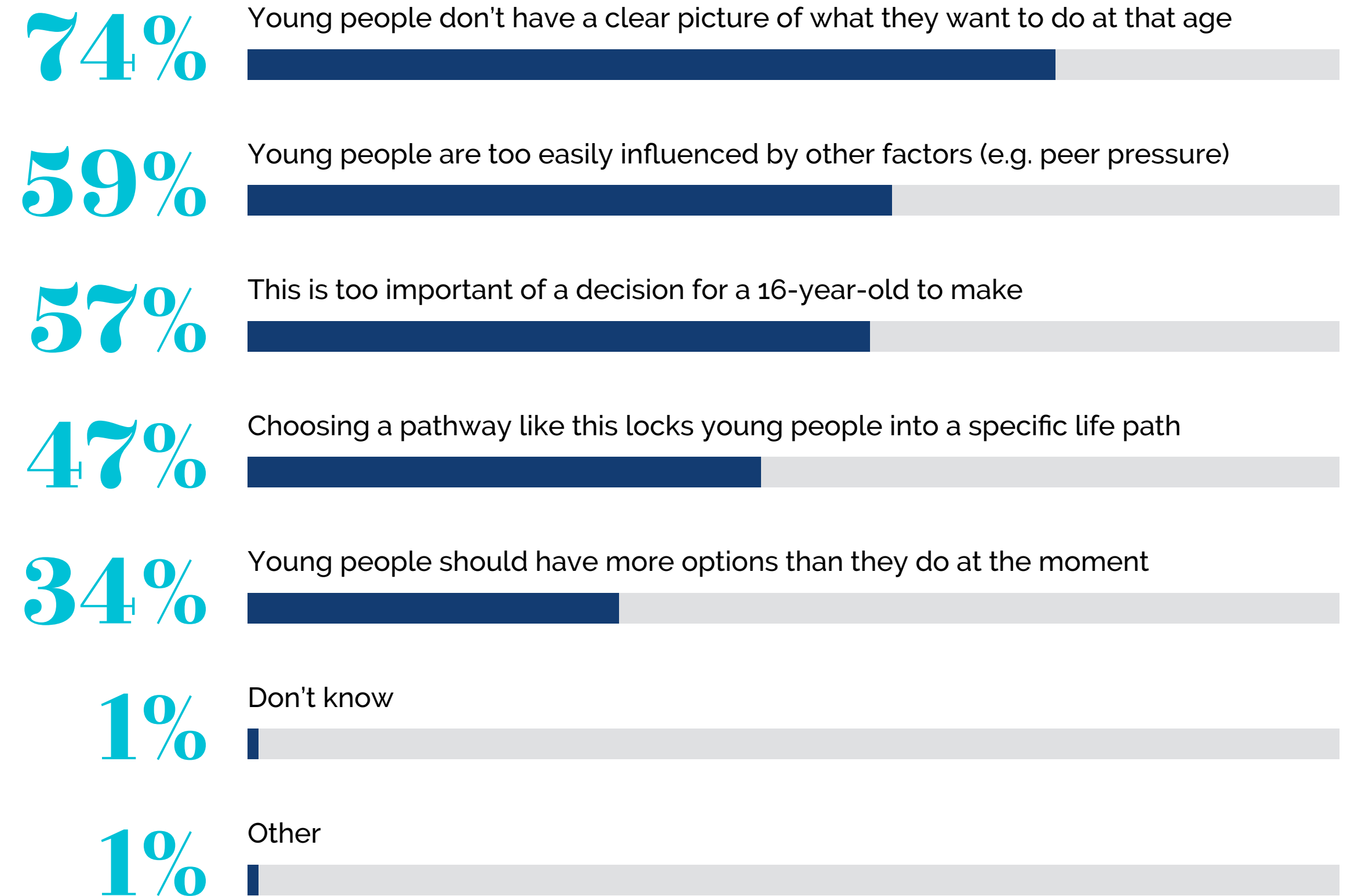


Figure 11 [BASE: Think 16 is too early to choose education pathway, Table 70]

Keeping options open: Breadth or depth?

Without majorly increasing teaching hours in 16-18 education, something's got to give – the breadth of subjects studied or the depth of learning. But the public are **split** on whether breadth or depth is better for young people (Figure 12).

Q. Thinking about education for young people aged 16-18, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- It is better for students to study a small number of subjects, so that they become specialists in their field
- It is better for students to study a larger number of subjects, so they have a breadth of knowledge and greater levels of choice for what to do after leaving school
- Don't know

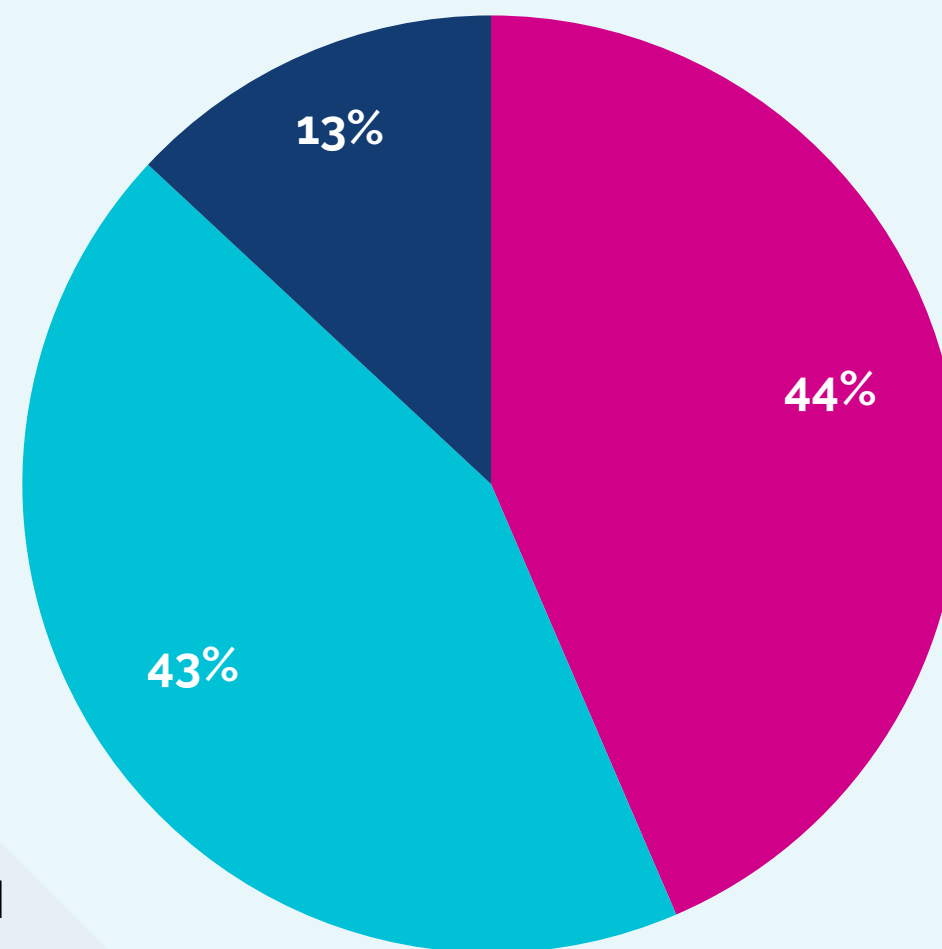


Figure 12 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 68]

What is clear, however, is the strength of feeling amongst respondents that 'academic' and technical and vocational subjects should not be siloed at 16. The ability to **mix and match** these different options into a blended pathway that is tailored to a young person's interests is highly important (Figure 13).

Q. Currently, young people in England are required to choose whether to take a more academic or technical (vocational) route for their education aged 16-18. Which of the following comes closest to your view?

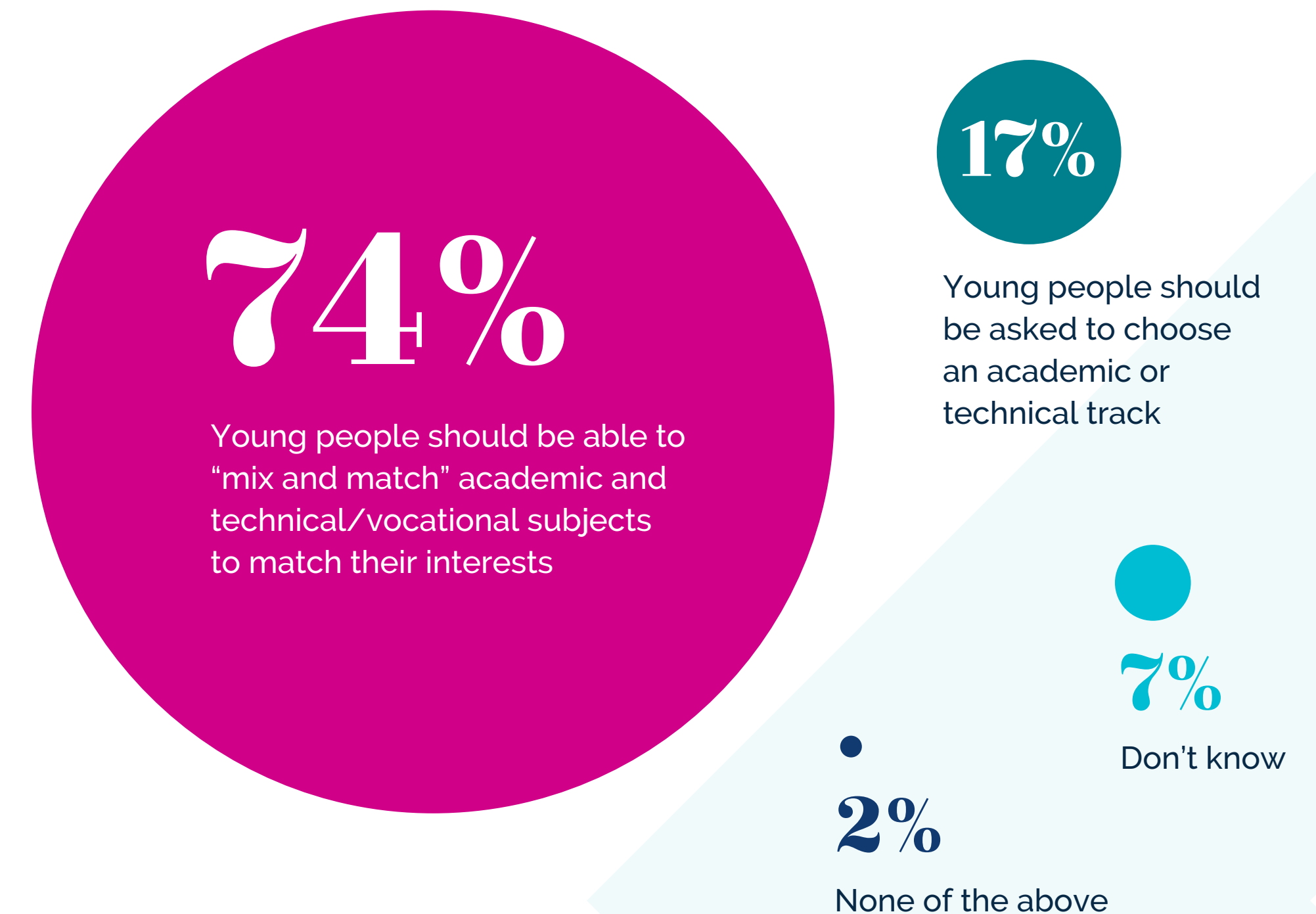


Figure 13 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 71]

There are some very powerful findings here: (Figure 14)

- Top of the rankings is the belief that this mix and match would give young people **a broader range of skills (67%)** and **better prepare young people for the workforce**. As Chapter 1 sets out, we know how important wider essential and technical skills development is perceived to be, and that we have a way to go to transform how skills for life and work are developed through education. It is notable that a blended 'academic', technical and vocational 16-18 offer is perceived to be a potential solution to this challenge.
- **More than half (53%)** respondents reported that studying 'academic', technical vocational options at 16 would be more interesting and engaging for students. This requires further research, but is an interesting key point in the wider context of an attendance crisis and increasing proportions of NEET young people.
- This blended approach is also perceived to be part of the solution in terms of wanting more young people to participate in technical and vocational education – the reasons for which are explored in Chapter 2. **Over a third (37%)** think this would encourage greater participation.

Q. Why should students mix and match 'academic' and technical subjects in 16-18 education?

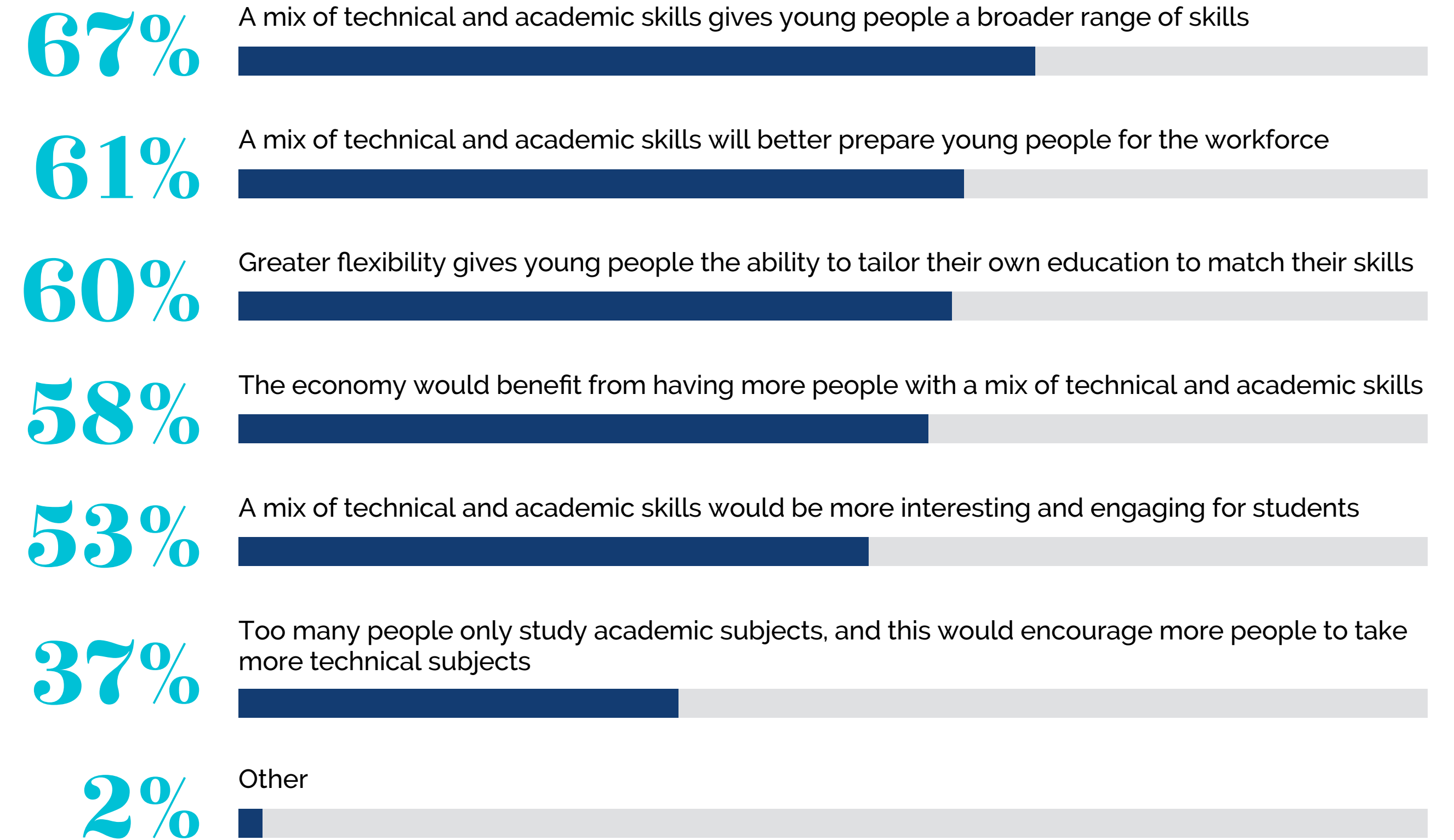
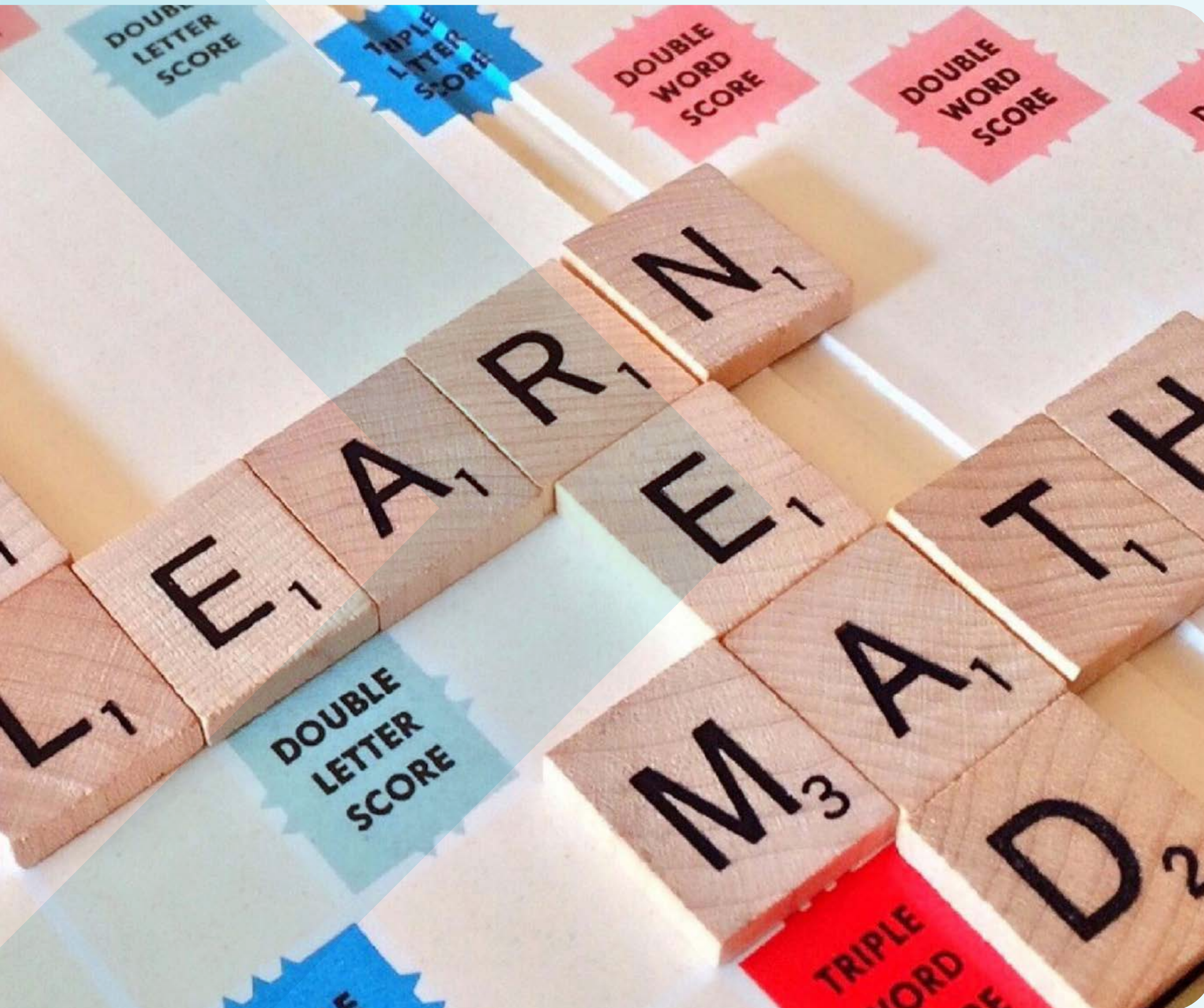


Figure 14 IBASE: Think young people should be able to mix and match academic and vocational subjects, Table 72]



ADVANCING BRITISH STANDARDS IN 16-18 EDUCATION?

A reminder of the Department for Education's proposals...

1. Every young person will study some form of English and maths until the age of 18.
2. Students will study a minimum of five subjects.
3. They will choose a combination of bigger and smaller subjects – called majors and minors.
4. Students will receive more teaching hours.
5. They can choose between mainly technical or academic study, or a combination of both.

For a fuller explanation of the plans, the ABS consultation document contains the most up-to-date public information at the time of writing, [here](#).

MATHS TO 18

Support for (some form of) maths to 18 is very high across all demographics. But the form of that maths paramount.

83% of those surveyed offered support for 'numeracy skills' to 18, and this polled well across different demographics (Figure 15). Those who left school with GCSEs/Level 2 qualifications, support this just as strongly as those with a university degree (1 percentage point higher, in fact – 84% and 83%).

Writing and digital skills and health and fitness to 18 also prove popular, to slightly lesser extents.



Q. Do you think each of the following skill areas should or should not be mandatory for young people to develop through a formal qualification route aged 16-18?

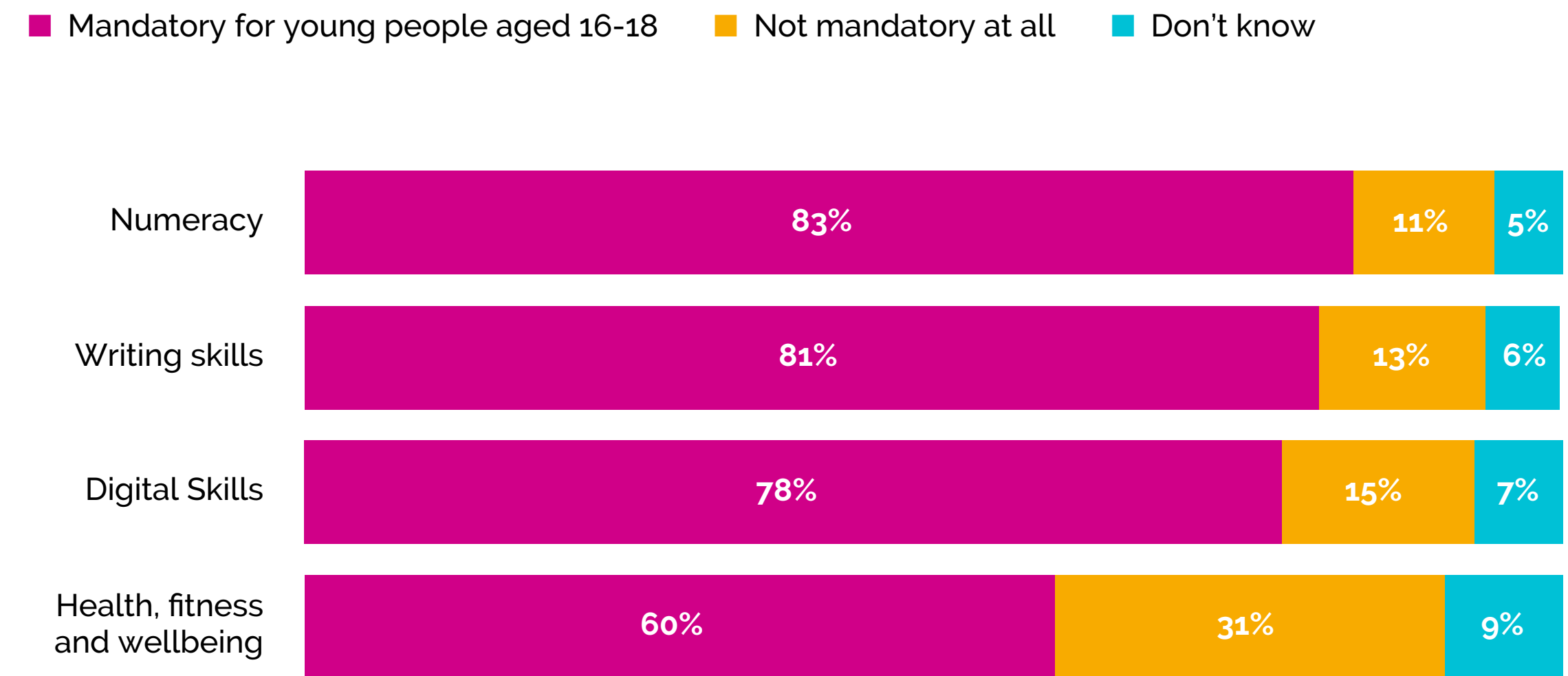
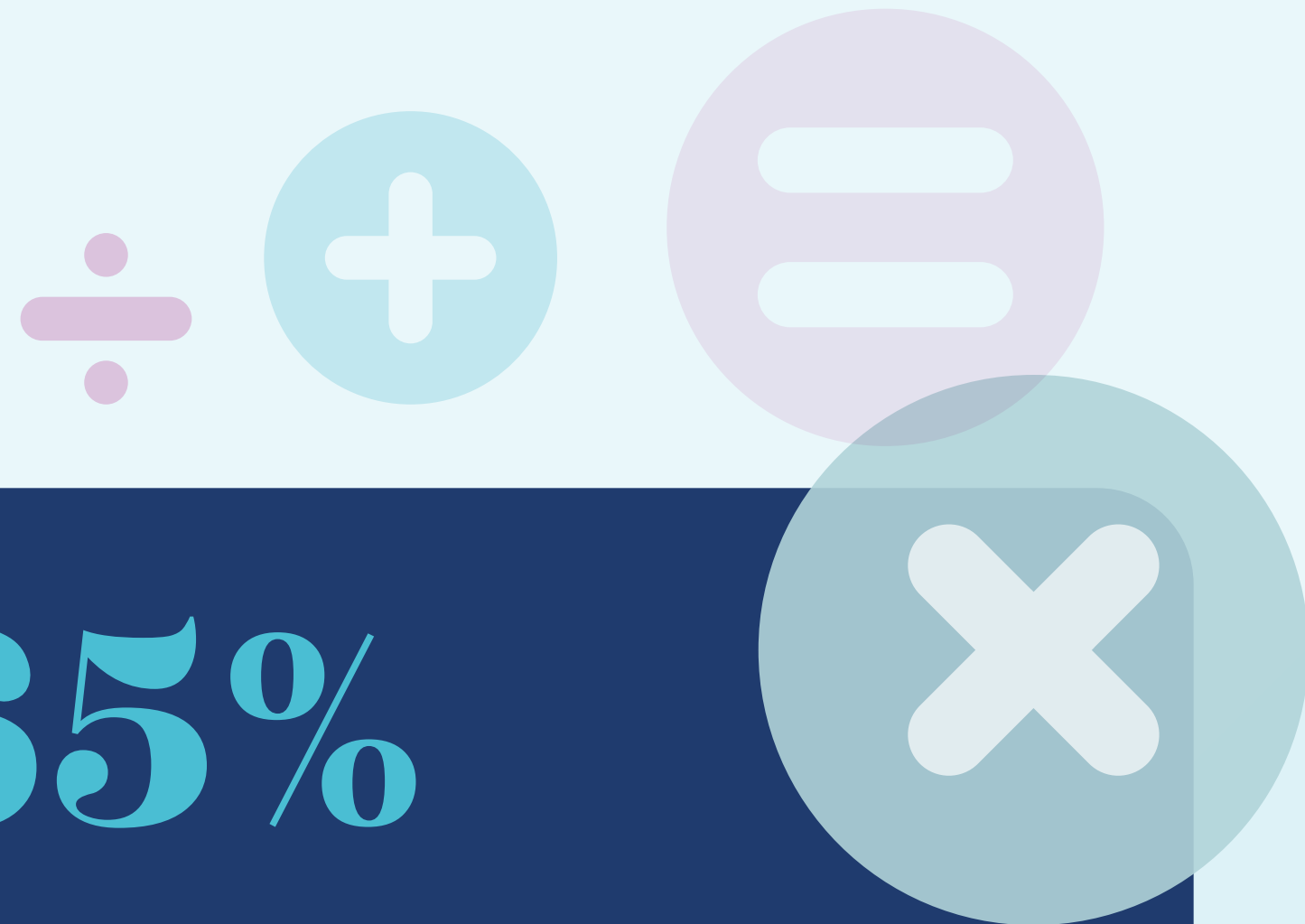


Figure 15 [BASE: All Respondents, Table 73]

Support for maths to 18 drops slightly – though remains very high – once it's the offer is reframed as 'some form of mathematics' (and a Government proposal).

Support for this proposal drops among 18–24-year-olds (**55%**), rising to **69%** among 65+ year olds. Younger respondents are also more likely to be actively opposed to the proposals (33%) than any other major demographic group we studied (Figure 16).



65%

(Nearly two-thirds) of all respondents support requiring students to study some form of mathematic until the age of 18. **18%** oppose.

Q. Recently the government has proposed requiring students to study some form of mathematics until the age of 18. To what extent do you support or oppose this proposal?

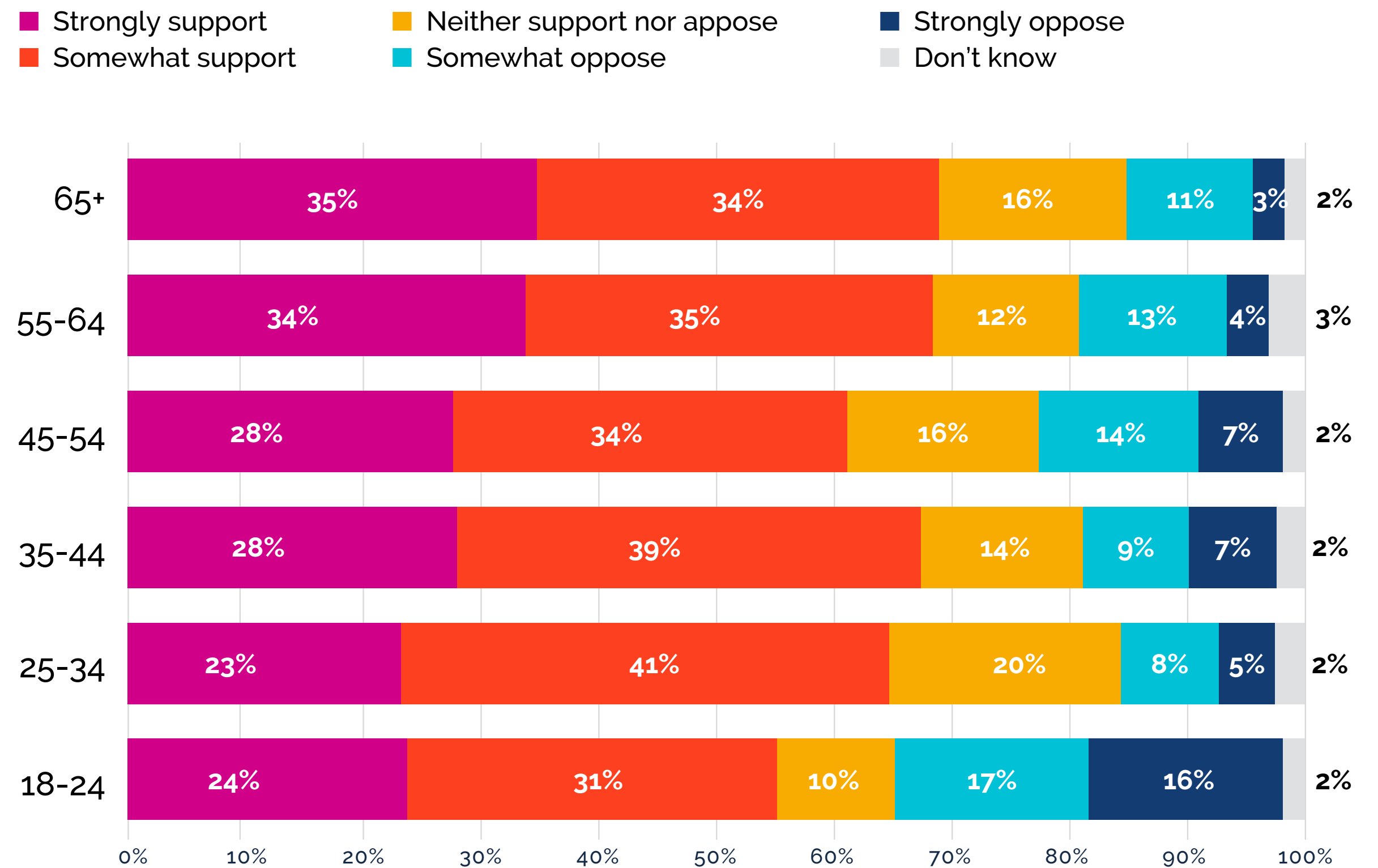


Figure 16 [BASE: All Respondents, By Age Group, Table 78]

Driving that support for maths to 18 is a majority belief that this presents an opportunity to **improve young people's financial literacy (69%)** – and **life skills** more generally (**44%**) – and the **growing importance** of having good maths skills for life and work (**66%**) (Figure 17). The findings across our exploration of public attitudes towards maths to 18 would indicate support for a form of mathematics most closely resembling the intentions of the Department for Education's plans for 'applied' minors in maths as part of the ABS.

The plans are not without some concern, of course.

The **accessibility and inclusivity** of the form of maths to 18 will be integral. Of the adults surveyed with reservations, **3 in 5** indicated concern that some students might be forced to study a subject they aren't skilled at.

Freedom of choice for young people over what they study was also cited as a reason for **56%** of those who opposed the plans. And **2 in 5** (**41%**) of this group also expressed concern around **diverting funding and resources from other subjects**, indicating the importance of a truly broad and balanced 16-18 curriculum.

Q. What is driving the support for maths to 18?

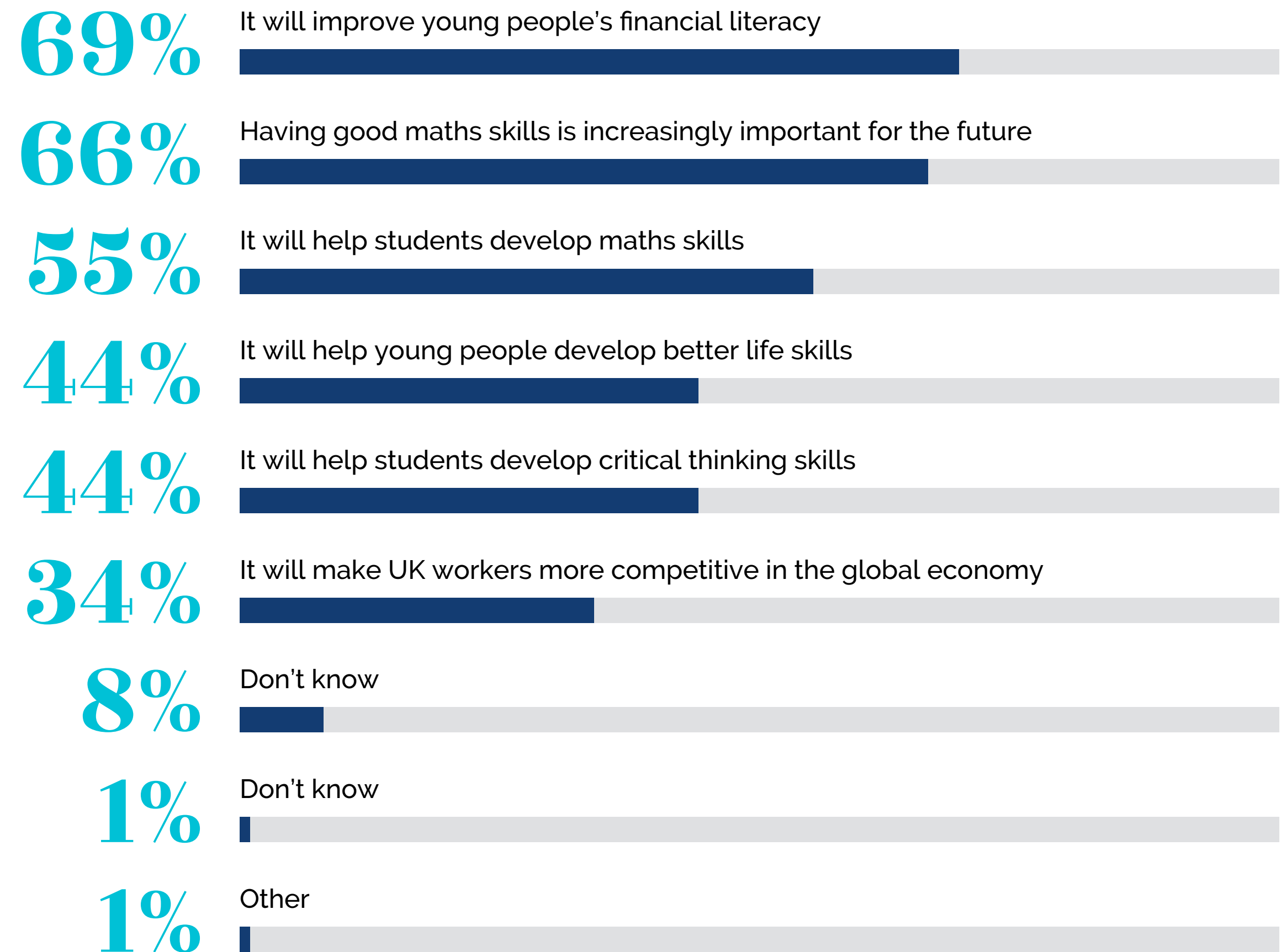


Figure 17 [BASE: Support maths to 18, Table 79]

MAJORS AND MINORS

Studying more subjects as 'majors' and 'minors' proves popular across different demographics (Figure 18 and 19). Respondents were told, in line with the Department's plans, that major subjects would be studied in more depth, and take up more time, whilst minor subjects would be studied in less depth, and take up less of the learners' time. **78%** of all respondents support the idea of replacing A Levels with majors and minors, whilst just **1 in 10 (10%)** oppose¹⁰.



Support and opposition for 'major' and 'minor' subjects

■ Don't know ■ Oppose (Total) ■ Support (Total)

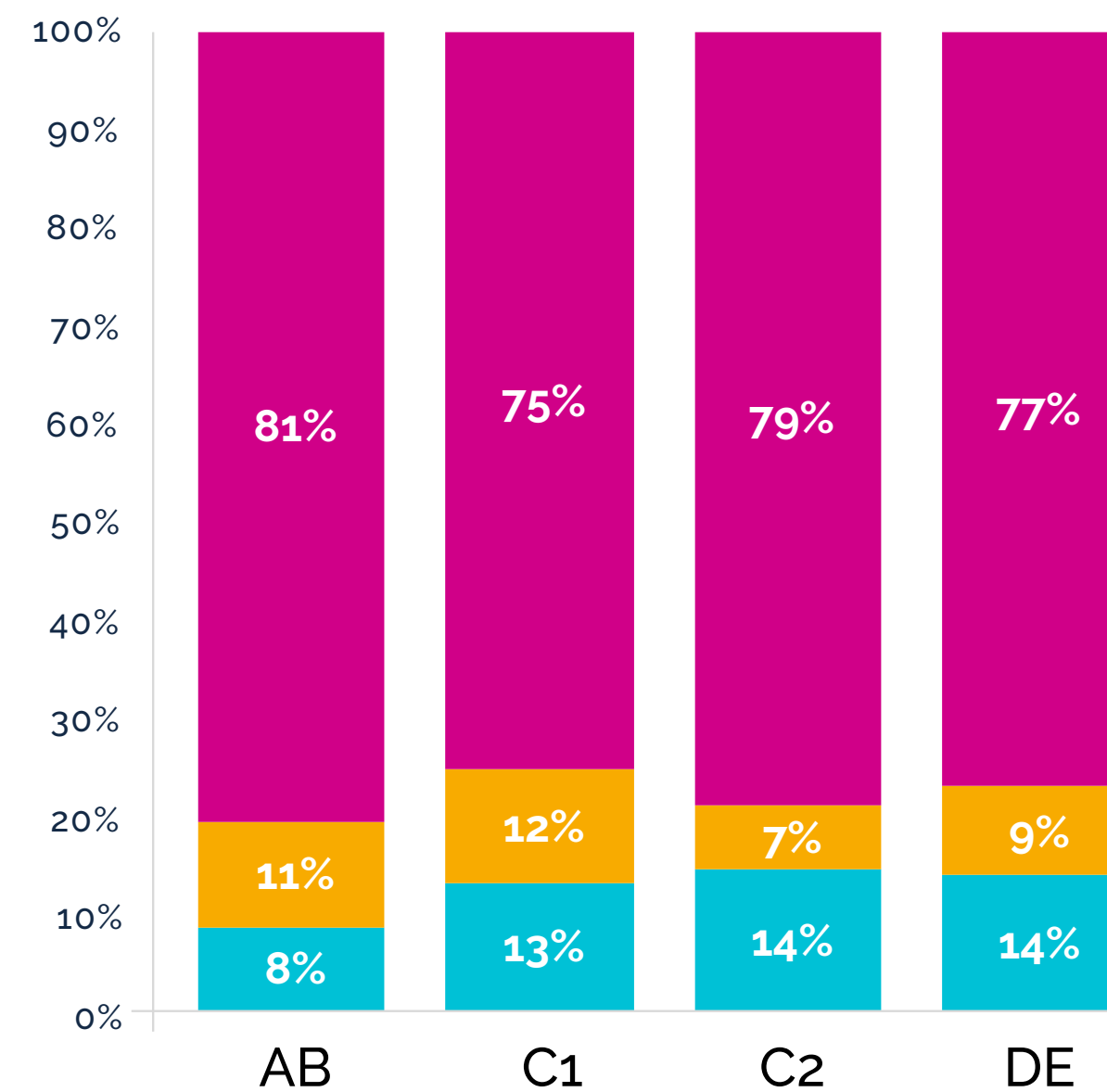


Figure 18 [BASE: All Respondents, By Social Grade, Table 83]

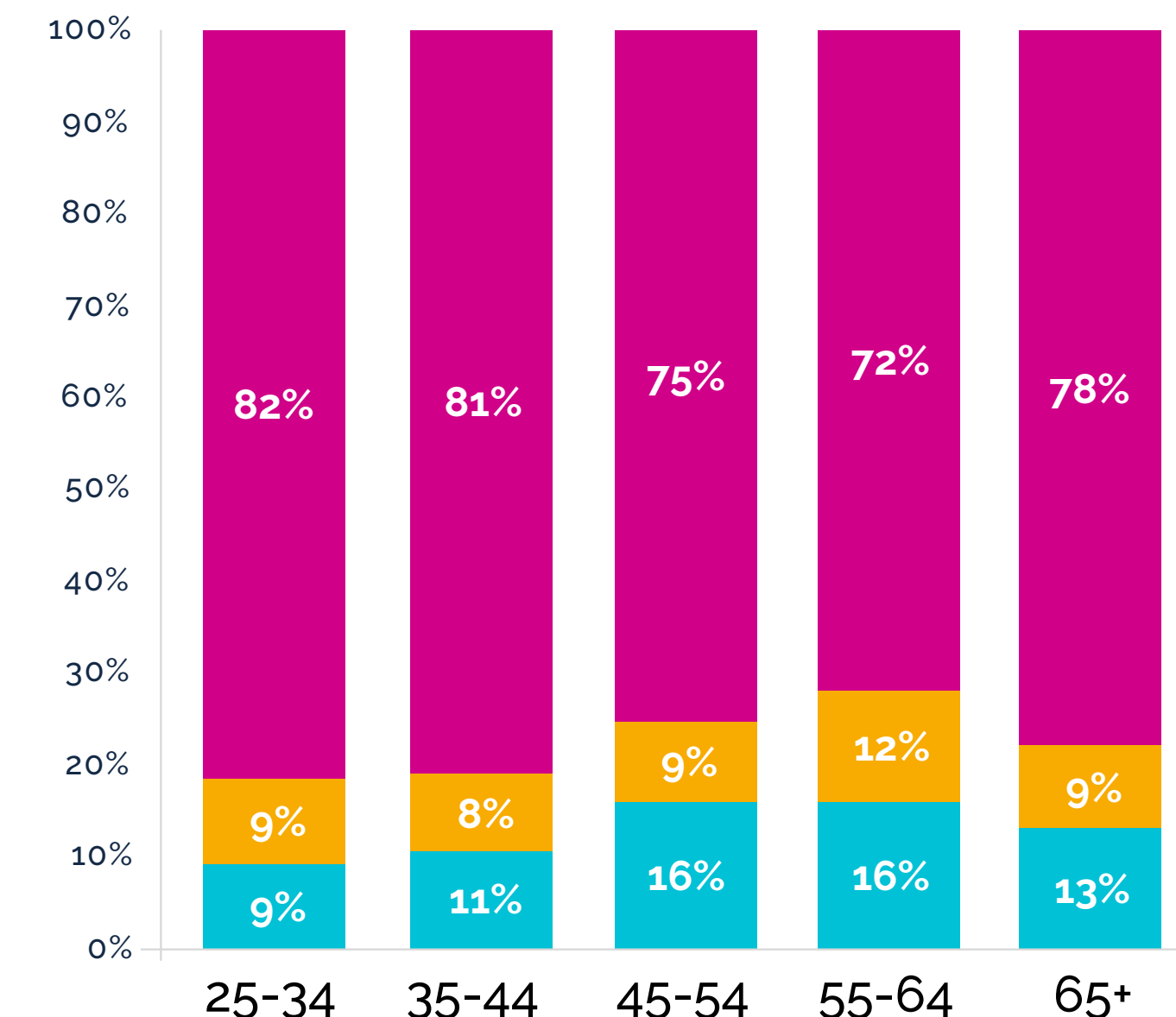


Figure 19 [BASE: All Respondents, By Age Group, Table 83]

When we tested the different options for 16-18 reform, a system that allowed students to study a **combination of major and minor subjects** was the most likely to drive support for this proposal (selected **45%** of the time it was presented to respondents). This was followed by:

- Students would study a **smaller number of major subjects** (selected **38%** of the time it was presented to respondents).
- Students would study a **larger number of minor subjects** (selected **33%** of the time it was presented to respondents).

Again, indicating a divergence of public opinion over breadth vs. depth.

When we explore *why* there is such strong support for majors and minors, we come back to the importance of **keeping options** open for young people and **choice**, as well as that all-important ability to **mix and match** 'academic', technical and vocational subjects (Figure 20).

Q You said you would support a proposal to introduce major and minor subjects to 16-18 education. Why is this?

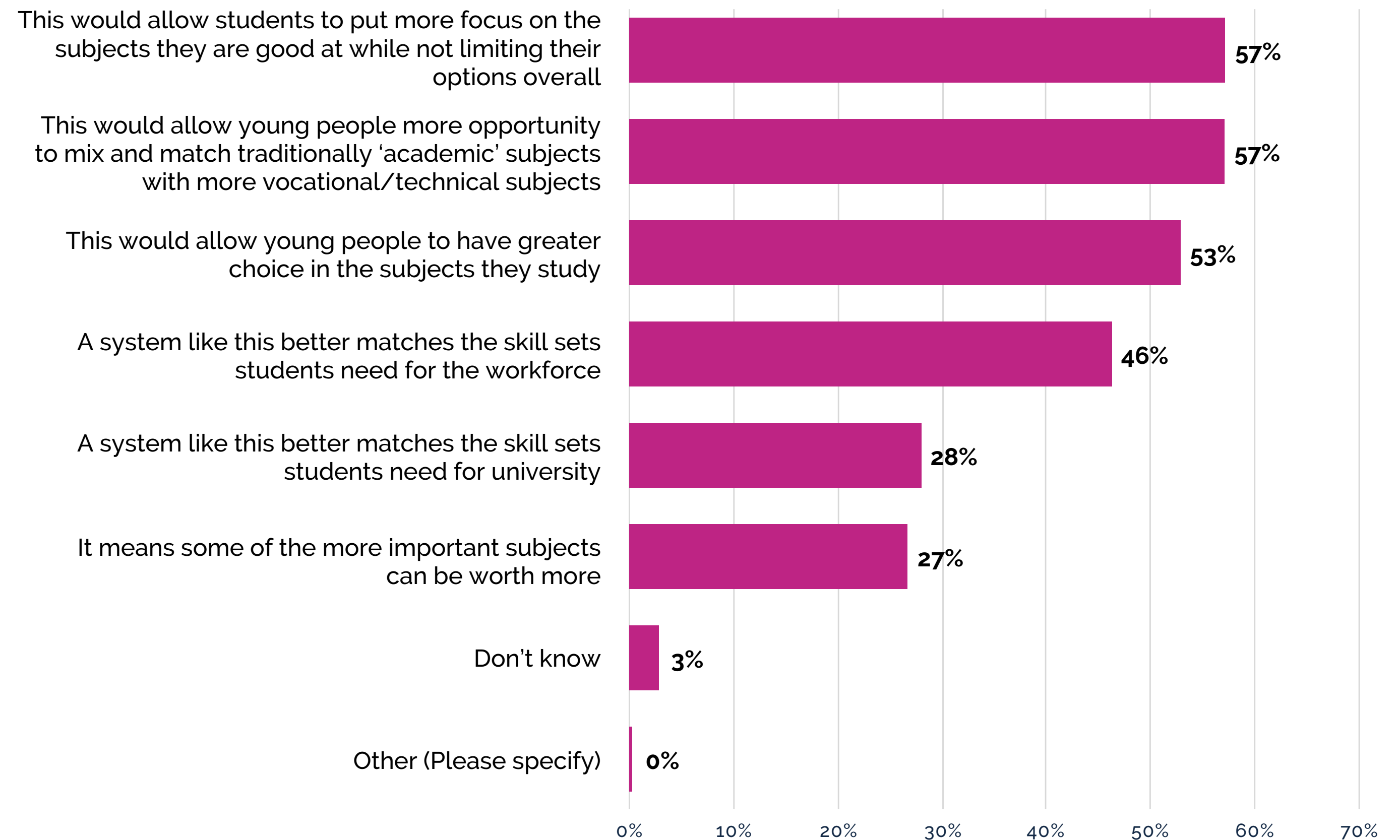
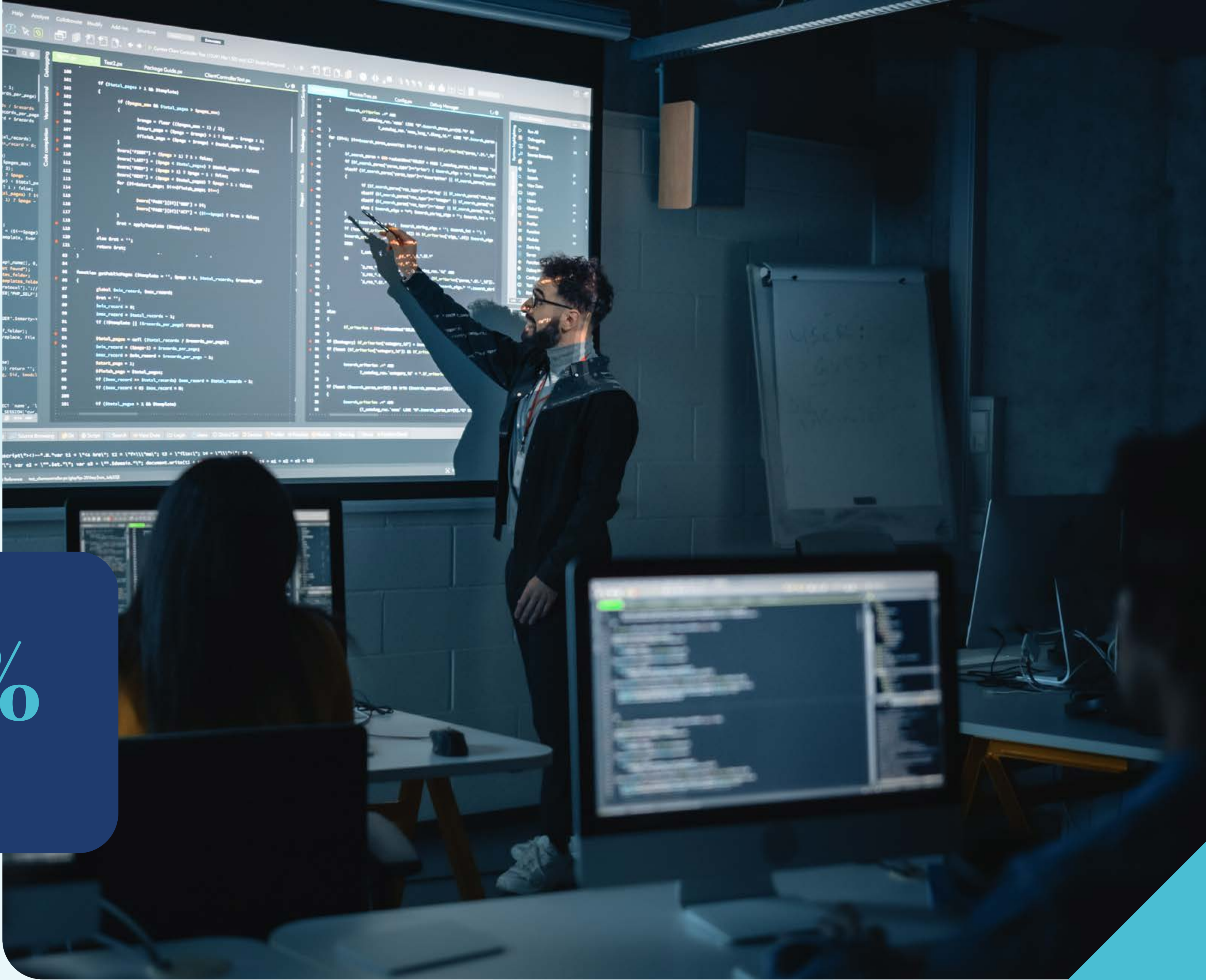


Figure 20 [BASE: Support ABS, Table 86]

INCREASED TEACHING TIME

Under a baccalaureate offer such as the ABS, teaching time would need to increase to allow timetable space for the broader number of subjects studied. In total, three-quarters (**75%**) of respondents said they would support students receiving more classroom teaching hours. Just **14%** opposed.¹²



CONCLUSION

A baccalaureate-style 16-18 education system is a popular proposal, in principle and in practice (Figure 21, page 34).

68%

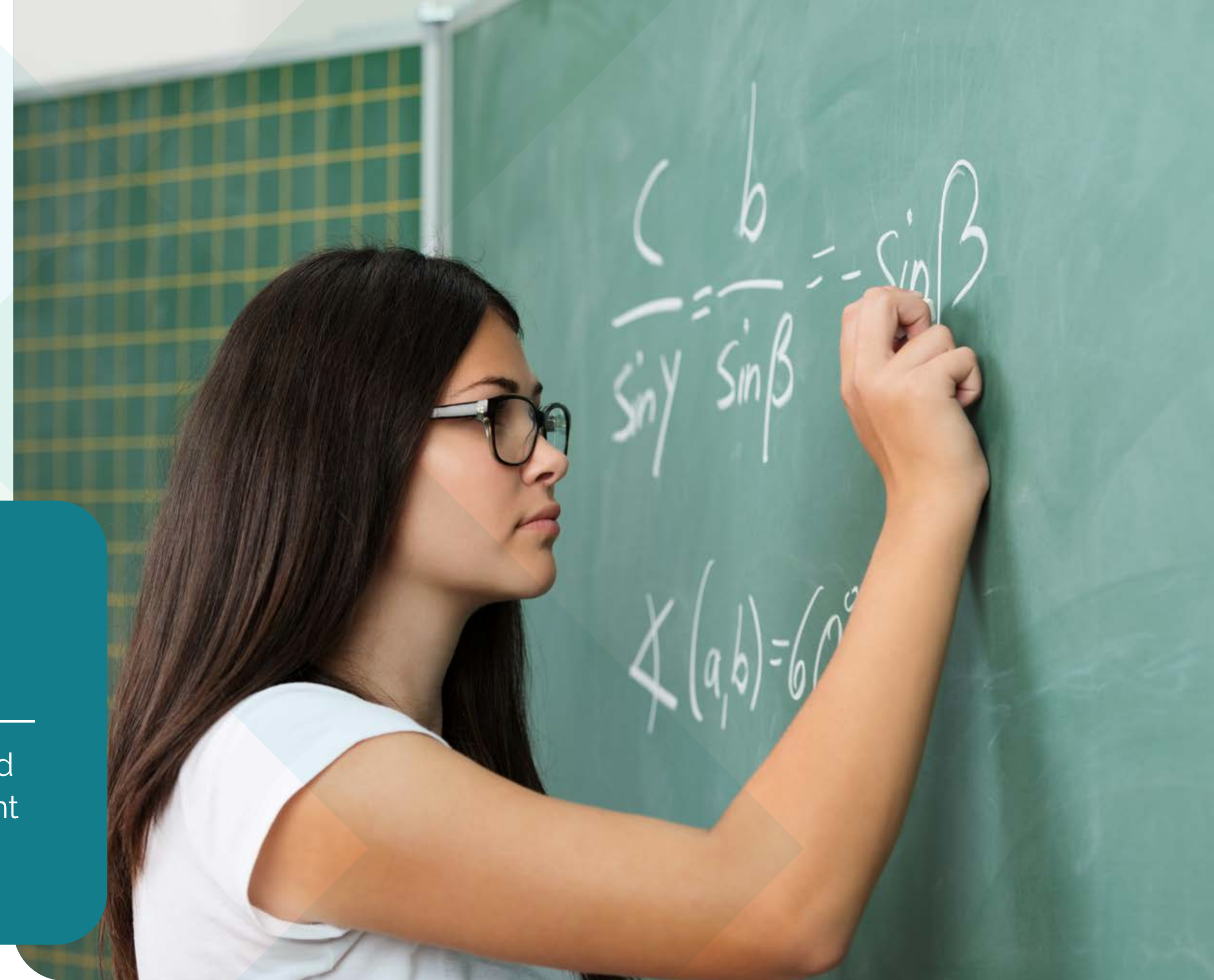
of respondents said they would **support** a proposal to reform the education system in line with the ABS proposals. Just 6% oppose¹³.

61%

said they thought the Advanced British Standard would represent an **improvement** on the current system of 16-18 education¹⁴.

We presented respondents with a range of different proposals to reform 16-18 education, and what we find is that they are most likely to select proposals that resemble the ABS, regardless of respondents' voting intention at the next general election. These include allowing students to study a combination of major and minor subjects, some mandatory subjects (ideally going beyond just maths as a required subject), but crucially, they would not force students to choose between a vocational or academic pathway at 16.

At Edge, we have some concerns that the 'ABS' and the 'ABS – occupational' route as proposed in the Government's consultation, does little to remove the existing twin track of 'academic' vs. 'technical and vocational' options. Whether or not the proposals will be delivered in practice remains to be seen, but we would encourage policymakers to ensure a blended offer is available to all young people so as not to close off their options too soon.



As we saw in Chapter 2, respondents across England were also supportive of work placements playing a role in 16-18 education, with support peaking for placements between 2-5 weeks long. The availability of meaningful work placements, of course, presents a significant challenge – but perhaps one worth any party seeking to resolve in collaboration with schools, colleges and employers.

In summary, it is clear from the findings presented in Chapter 1 that the members of the public we surveyed want schools and colleges to better prepare young people for their next steps. Chapter 2's findings demonstrate the public confidence in technical and vocational qualifications in doing just that. But the current 'twin track' offer in 16-18 isn't giving every young person that opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in life and work. We see that brought out in the overwhelming support for reform in Chapter 3, with the option for young people to study a blend of academic, technical and vocational subjects at 16 driving that groundswell of opinion.

68%

support the proposal

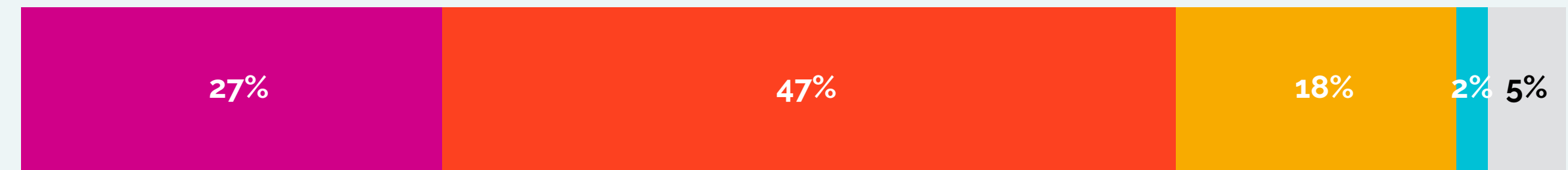
6%

oppose the proposal

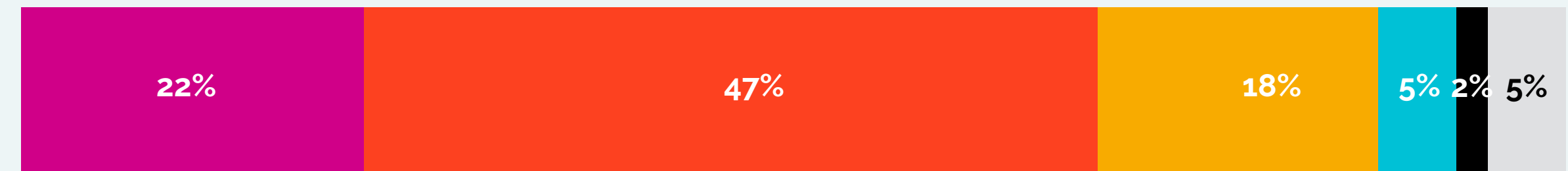
Q To what extent do you support or oppose this proposal?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor support
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know

Conservative



Labour



Liberal Democrats

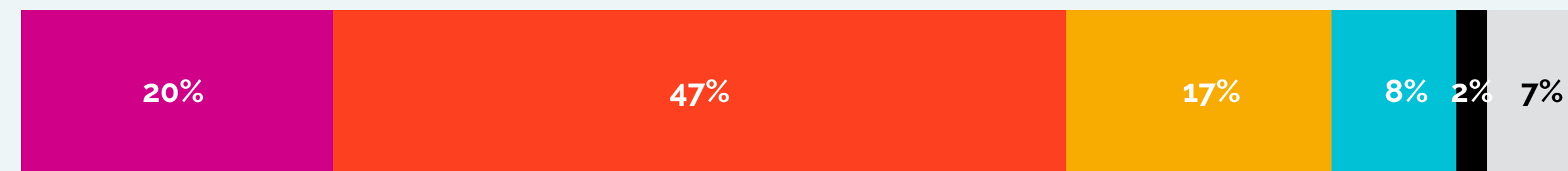


Figure 21 [BASE: All Respondents, By Voting Intention, Table 8g]

ANNEX

Throughout this report, we have referenced the corresponding question in the poll tables, so that readers can easily explore the data and crossbreaks in more detail. The full poll tables are available on the Edge and Public First websites.

¹Table 9

²Table 5

³Table 81

⁴Table 82

⁵Table 6

⁶Table 7

⁷Table 27

⁸Table 65

⁹Table 78

¹⁰Table 88

¹¹Table 83

¹²Table 84

¹³Table 89

¹⁴Table 90





To find out more about the findings contained in this report or to discuss Edge's policy work in more detail, please contact:

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