

THRIVE BY FIVE WA

STATEWIDE SURVEY

RESEARCH FINDINGS

April 2009

Presented by

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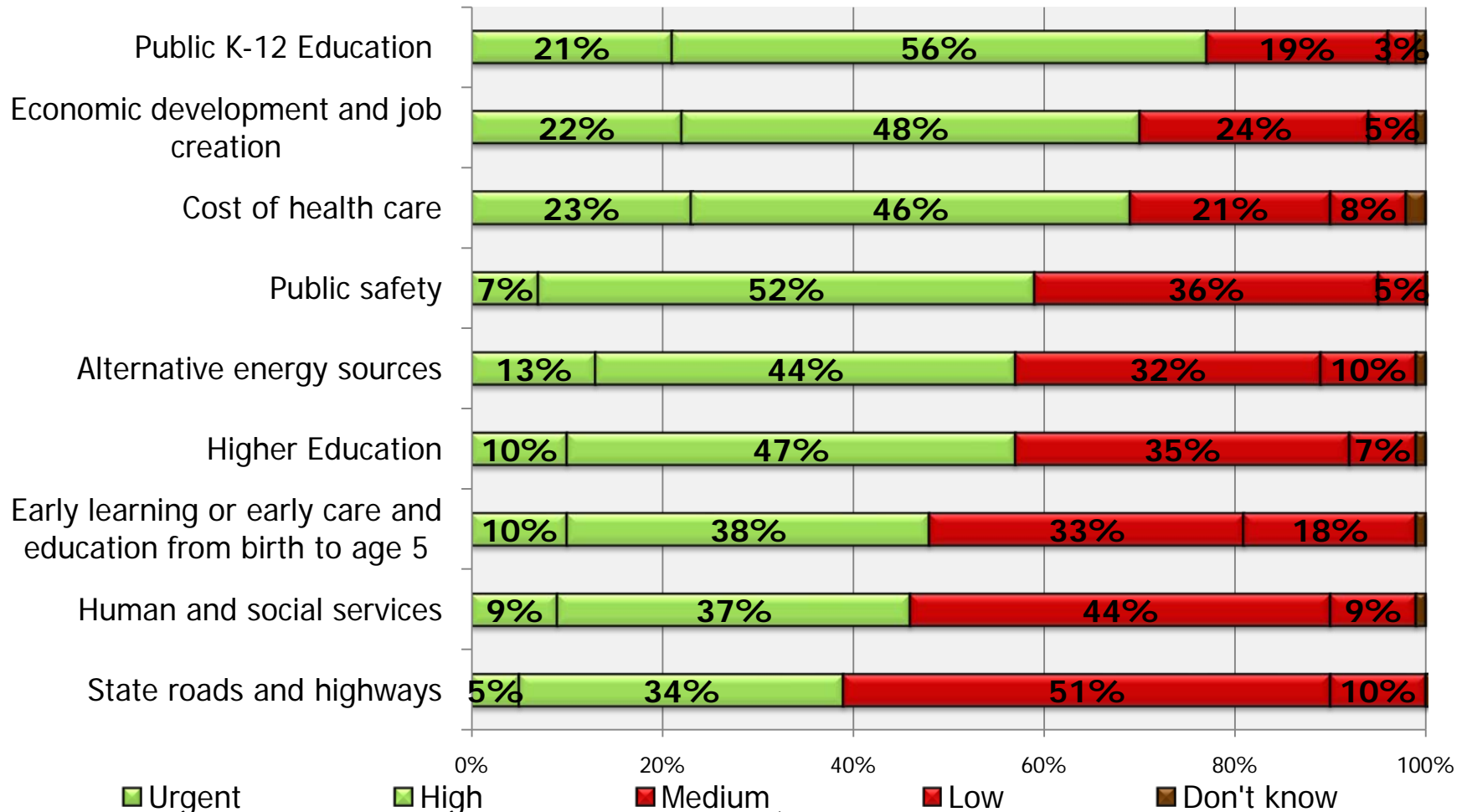
Objectives:

- ❖ Gauge voter attitudes about early learning in Washington to assist with program development and evaluation, fundraising, and communications including government relations
- ❖ Provide a baseline to determine changes in attitudes over time

- ❖ Conducted 500 interviews with registered voters in the state of Washington between March 27–April 2, 2009
- ❖ Margin of error: +/- 4.4%

General Priorities

For each item I read, please tell me what priority Washington state should give to it considering the condition of the economy generally, and that the private, public, and non-profit sectors have limited financial resources?



Reasons to Support Early Learning

Why Washington Should Assure Every Child Has Positive Early Learning Opportunities from Birth to Age 5 (Open)

Response Category	Percentage
Important/crucial time of life	26%
Create foundation/ensure a better future for all children	25%
Parent's responsibility/not state's responsibility	13%
Every child should/would receive a quality education	7%
Will better prepare children to succeed in a globalized world	5%
Provide equality/all parents not able to provide early learning to children	2%
More funding	2%
All other responses	1% or less
Nothing comes to mind	7%
Don't know	6%

Reasons to Support Early Learning

"Those are really the key years of a child's life." (Female, Western Washington, Republican, 35-44)

"Early childhood learning opportunities (such as Head Start) greatly influence future success in school." (Female, Eastern Washington, Independent, 18-24).

"The earliest impression you have on a person's life has a greatest impact." (Male, Eastern Washington, Independent, 45-54).

"The U.S. continues to lose ground to other nations in terms of education, and I think that early learning opportunities are one way to improve that." (Male, King County, Independent, 18-24)

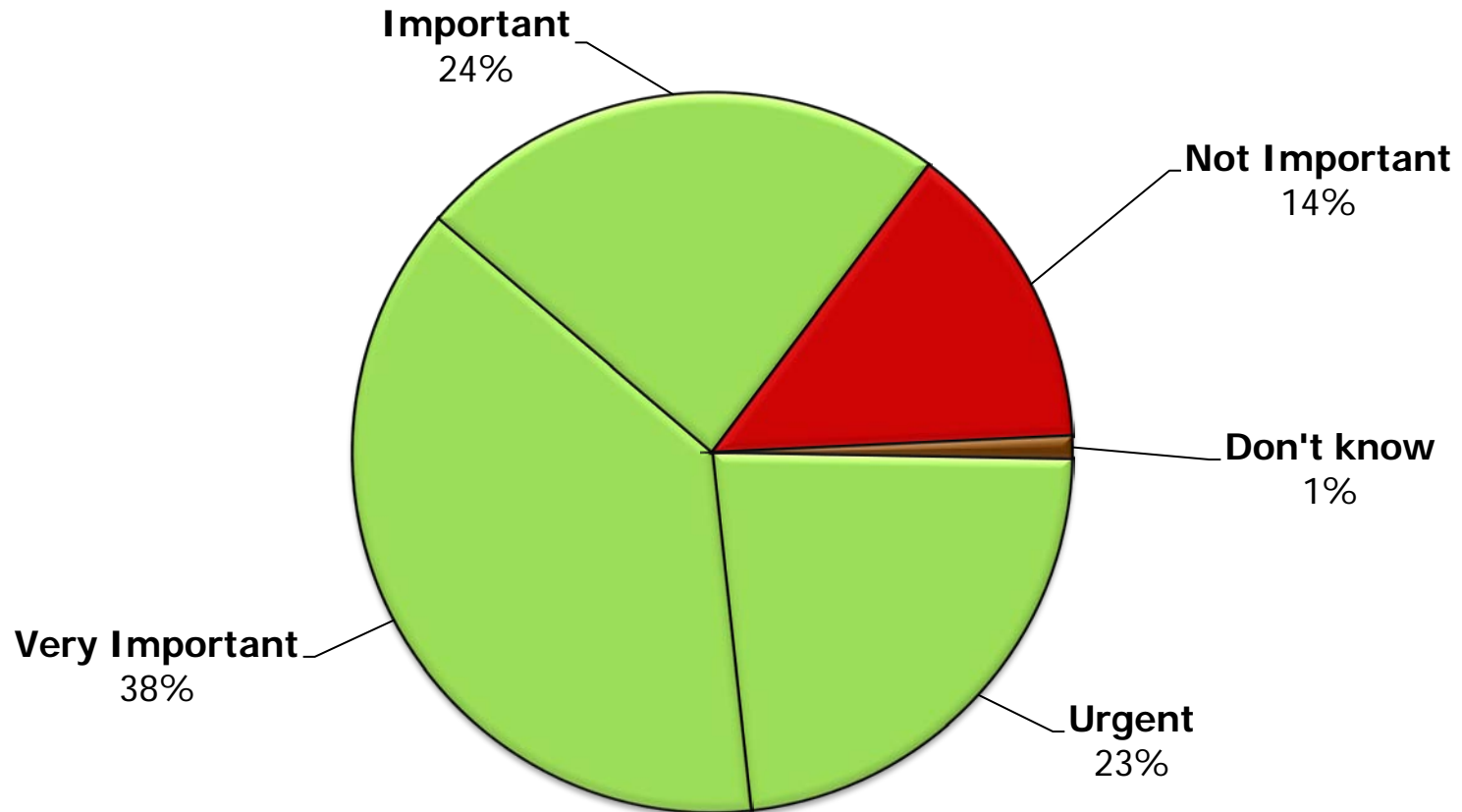
"Those are very formative years and a lot of information can get into those little heads at that age. We should be making the effort to build the foundation before it's too late." (Male, Western Washington, Democrat, 25-34)

"It would be better for the community in the long run that we have a good, educated population." (Female, King County, Democrat, 45-54)

"I don't agree with that [fund early learning]. I don't think the state should have to, that's what parents are for." (Female, Eastern Washington, Independent, 35-44)

Reasons to Support Early Learning

How important is it for Washington state to help make sure that all children get positive and quality early learning opportunities from birth to age 5, so they are ready to succeed in school and thrive in life?



Reasons to Support Early Learning

Rate the following reasons for why Washington state should support families and care providers with information and resources to help prepare children from birth to age 5 to succeed in school and thrive in life

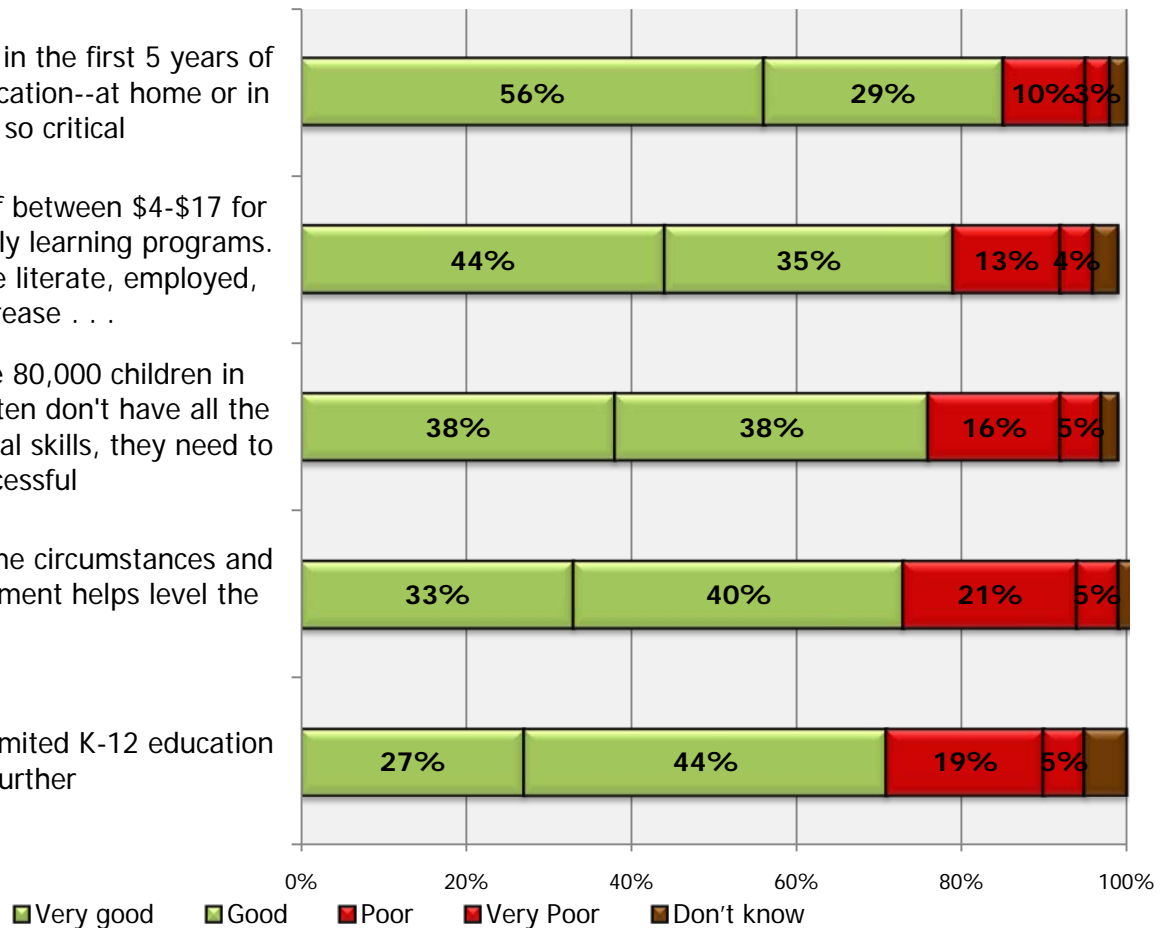
90% of brain development takes place in the first 5 years of life and that is why early care and education--at home or in a licensed care situation--is so critical

Experts estimate an economic return of between \$4-\$17 for every dollar invested in high-quality early learning programs. By increasing likelihood children will be literate, employed, and college bound, we decrease . . .

Every year more than one-half of the 80,000 children in Washington state who enter kindergarten don't have all the skills, especially the social and emotional skills, they need to start school and be successful

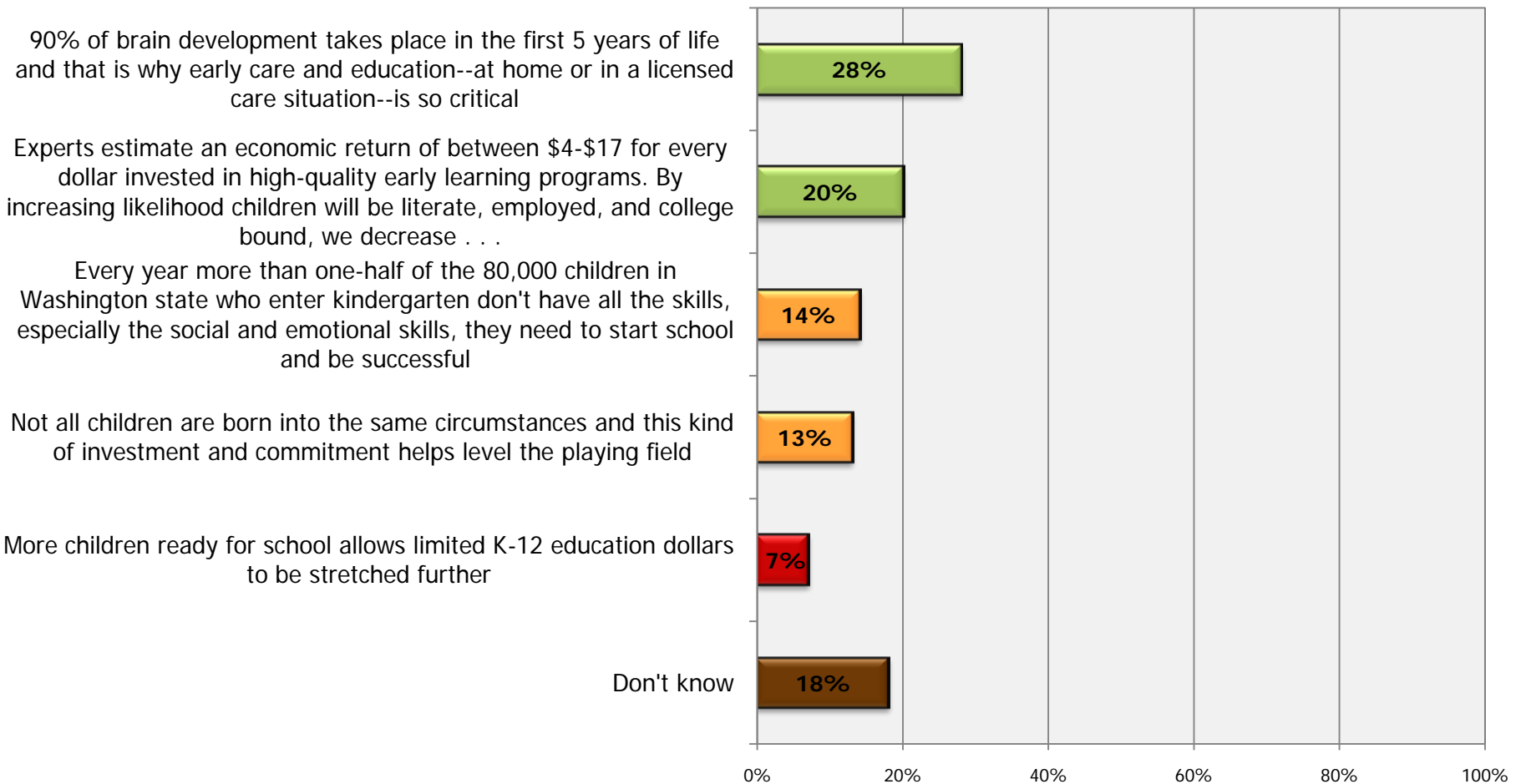
Not all children are born into the same circumstances and this kind of investment and commitment helps level the playing field

More children ready for school allows limited K-12 education dollars to be stretched further



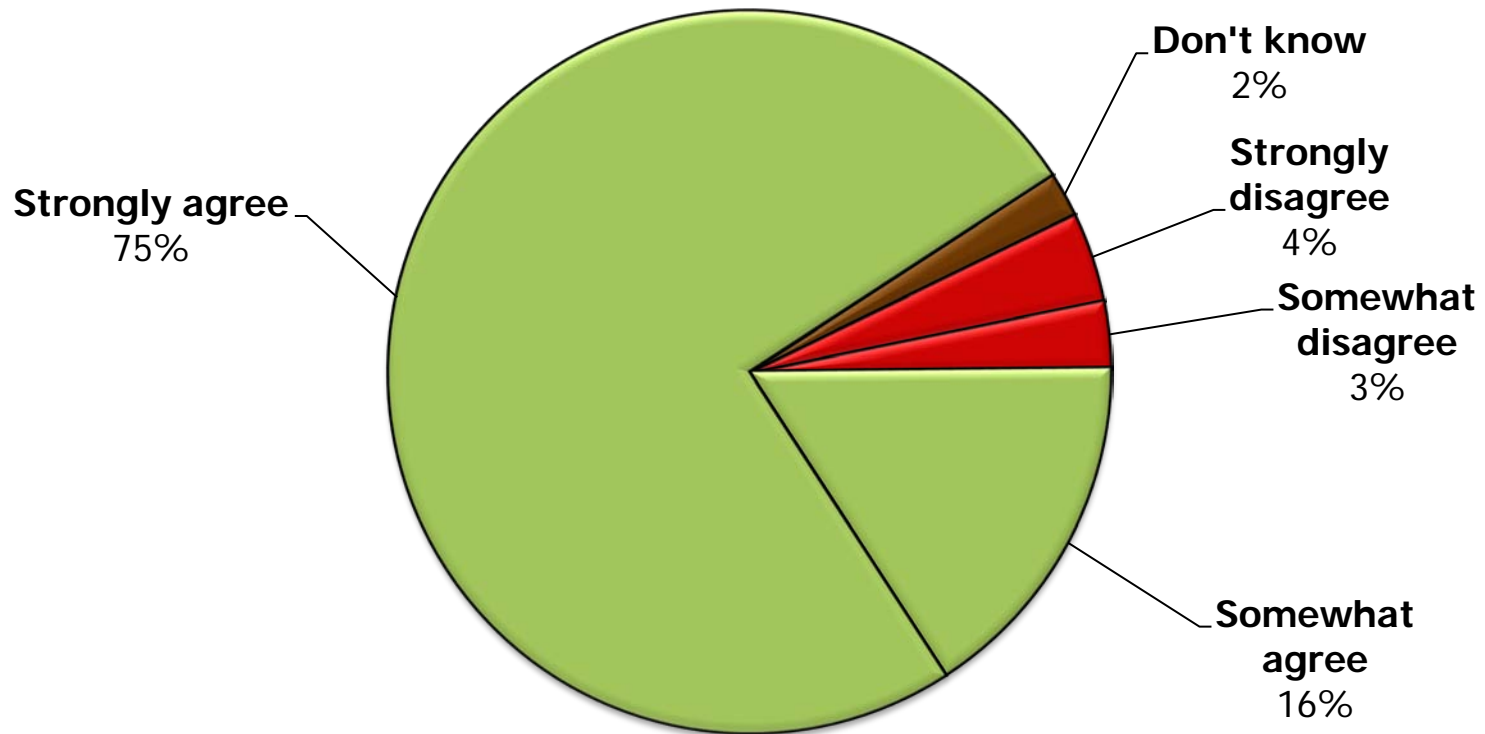
Reasons to Support Early Learning

Which reason is the best one for why Washington state should support families and care providers with information and resources to help prepare children from birth to age 5 to succeed in school and thrive in life?



Reasons to Support Early Learning

Do you disagree or agree that the first five years of a child's life have a significant impact on their ability to succeed in school and life?



Reasons to Support Early Learning

What final comments do you have about the importance of Washington state assuring that all children have positive early learning opportunities from birth to age 5? (Open)

Response	Percentage
High priority/essential/important	21%
State should provide funding for early learning	16%
Parent's responsibility/not state's responsibility	9%
Children are our future	6%
Children should begin education at an early age	6%
Provide foundation to ensure a better future	6%
More funding is needed-general	4%
Parents should be educated	4%
State has other priorities	4%
Equality/not all parents able to provide early learning opportunities to children	4%
State should be involved	4%
All other responses	3% or less
Nothing	26%
Don't know	12%

Reasons to Support Early Learning

"All kids should be able to get it, regardless of economic background." (Female, Eastern Washington, Democrat, 35-44).

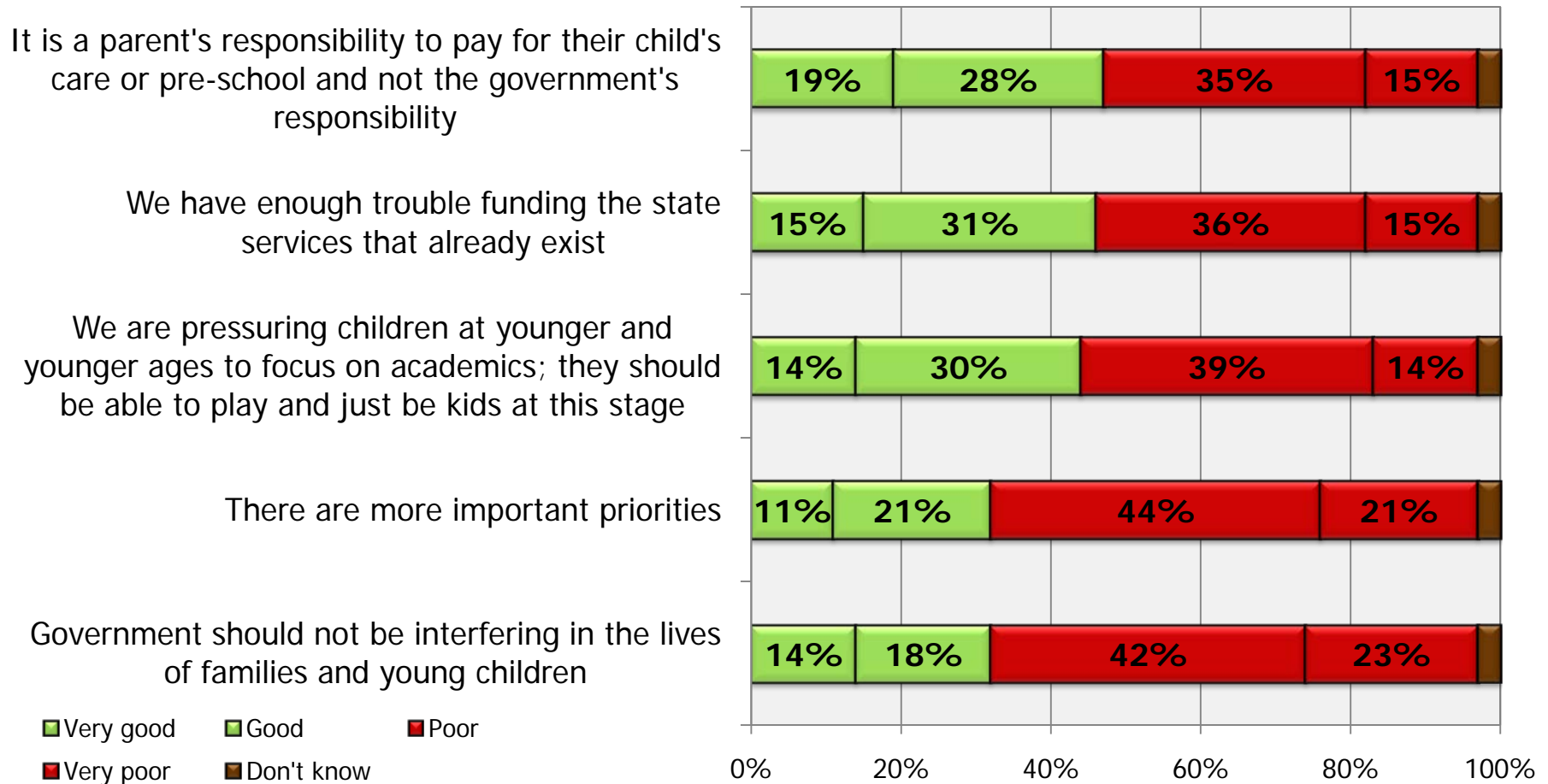
"It's just so crucial that these children are taught early, so they're able to transition into typical classroom development and it costs less state dollars." (Female, Eastern Washington, Republican, 35-44).

"People should get off the phobia of paying taxes to better the education of our future, children)." (Male, King County, Democrat, 55-64).

"I don't feel it's the states or federal governments' responsibility, it's the parents. But unfortunately, not all parents take that to heart." (Female, King County, unidentified party affiliation, 55-64).

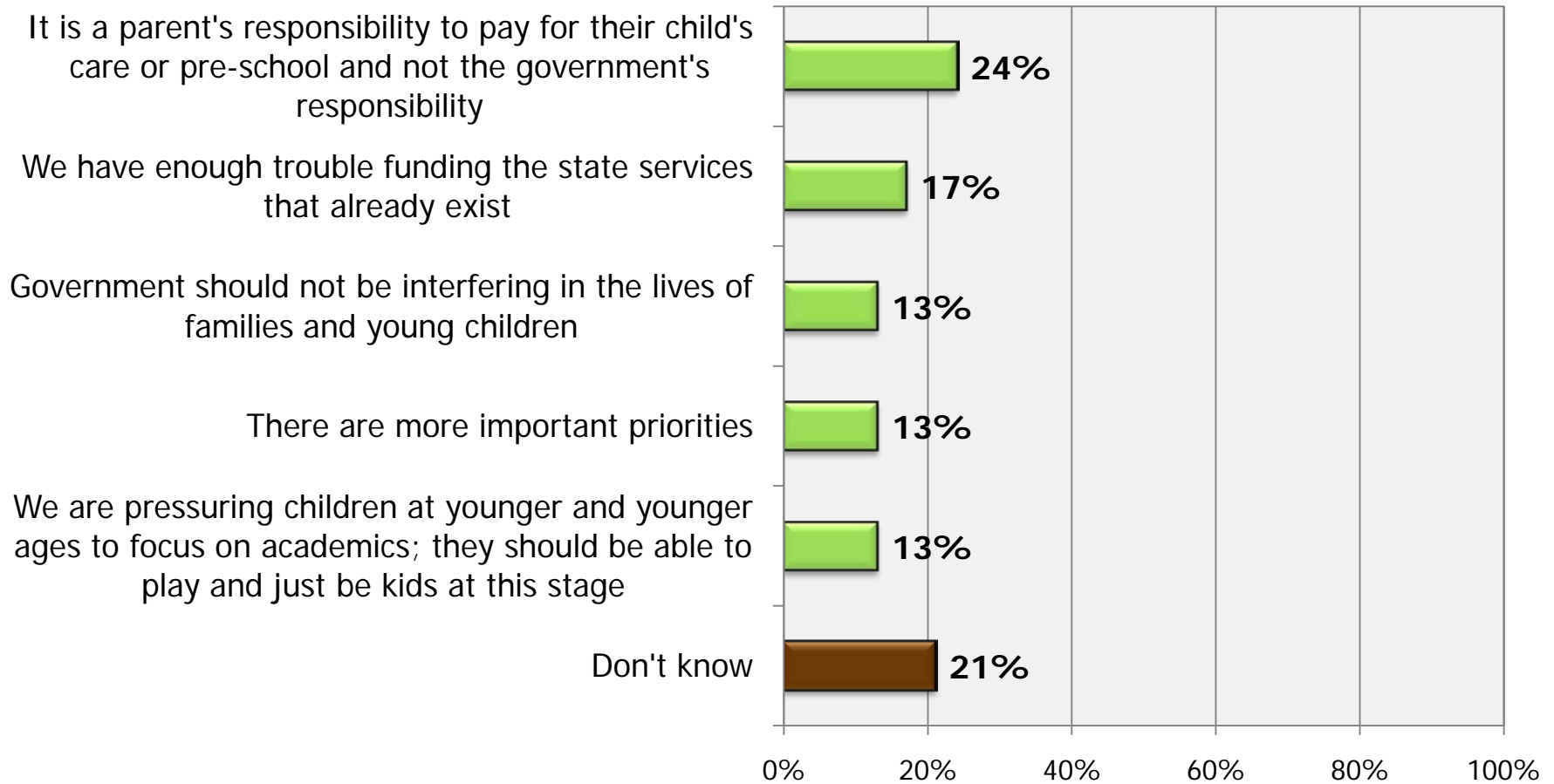
Reasons to Oppose Early Learning

Rate the following reasons for why Washington state should NOT support families and care providers with information and resources to help prepare children from birth to age 5 to succeed and thrive in life?



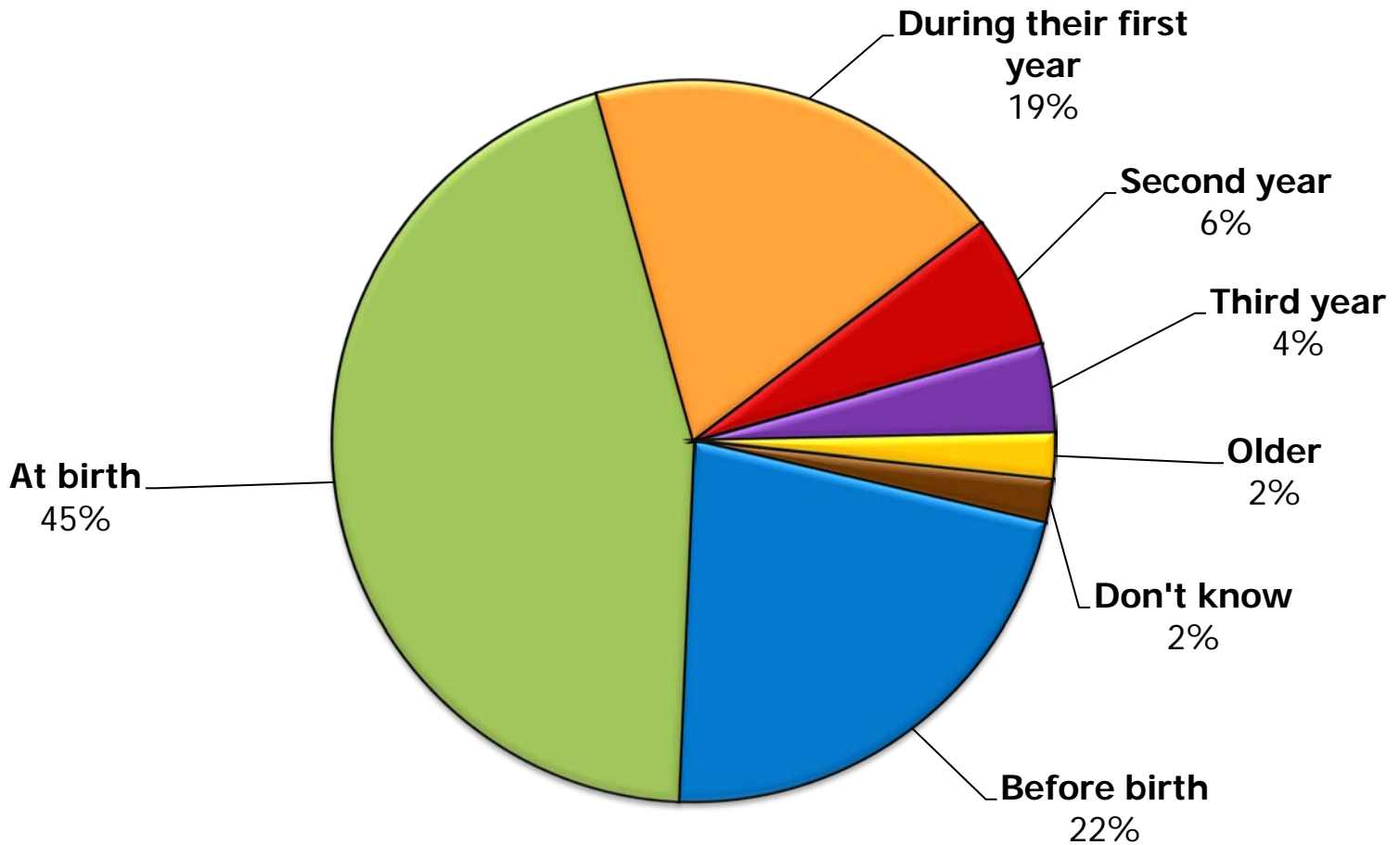
Reasons to Oppose Early Learning

Which reason would you say is the best one for why Washington state should NOT support families and care providers with information and resources to help prepare children from birth to age 5 to succeed in school and thrive in life?



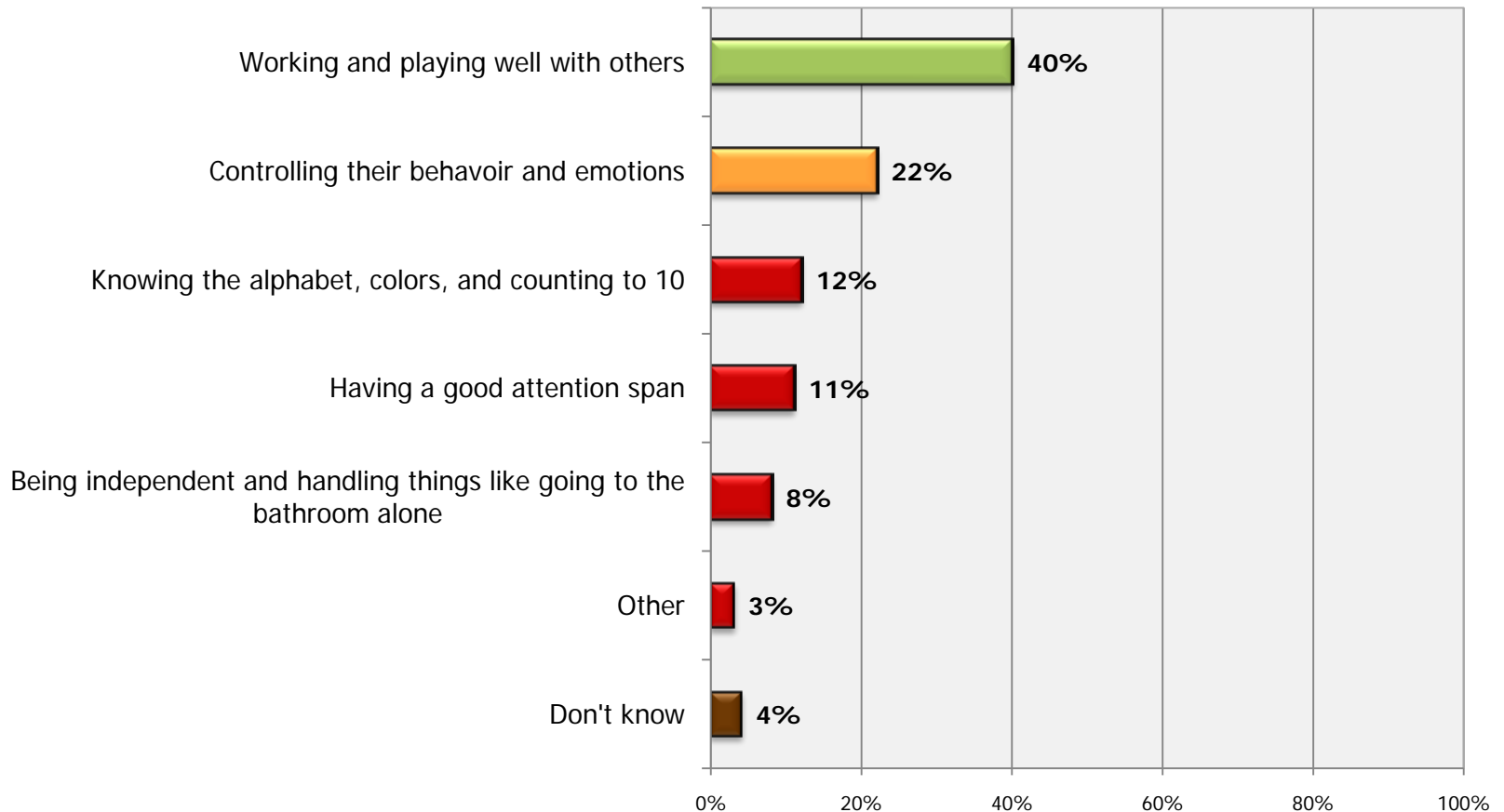
Early Learning Program Development

At what age do you think children begin learning?



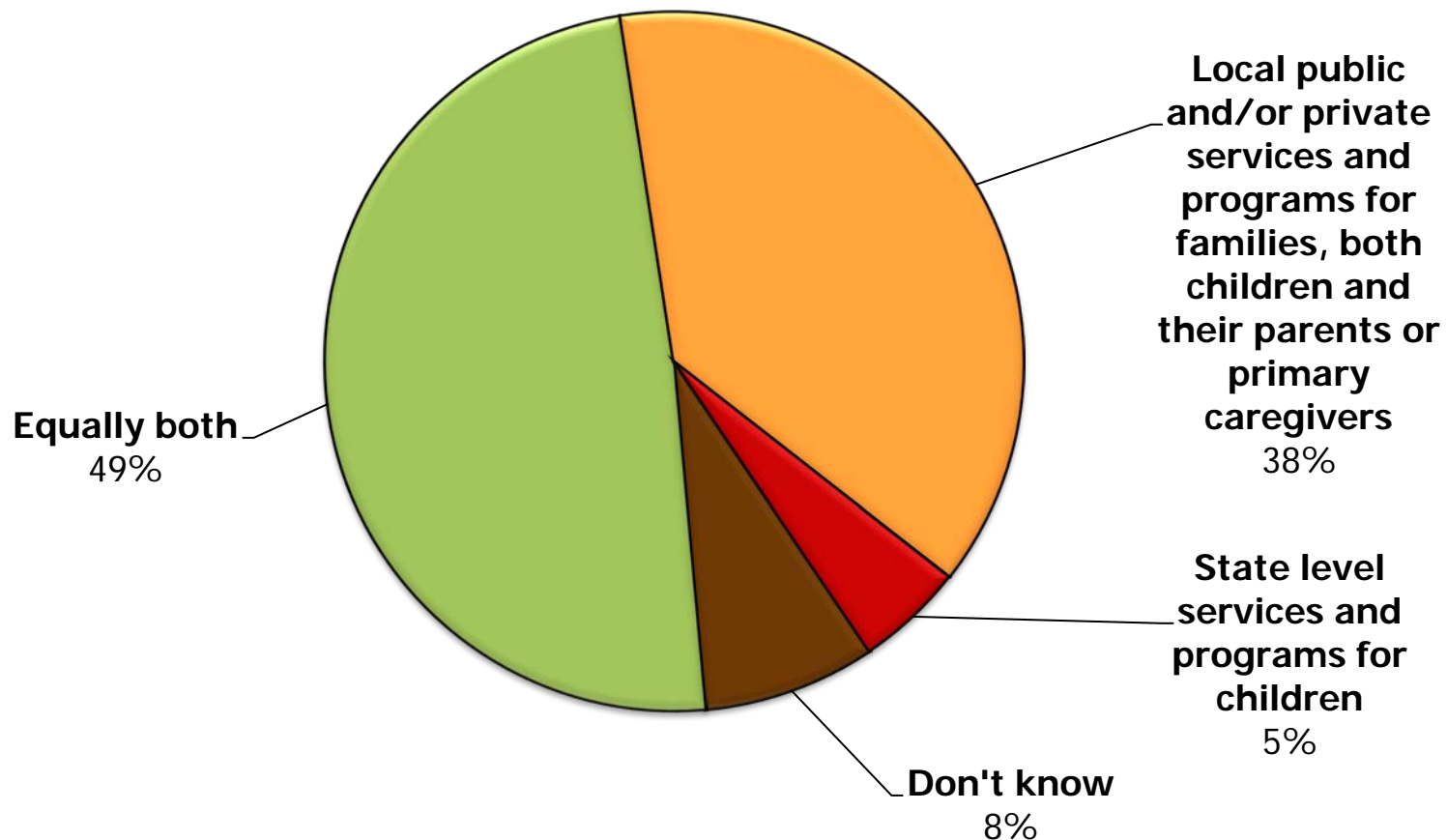
Early Learning Program Development

What do you think is the most important skill children should have in order to thrive once they start school?

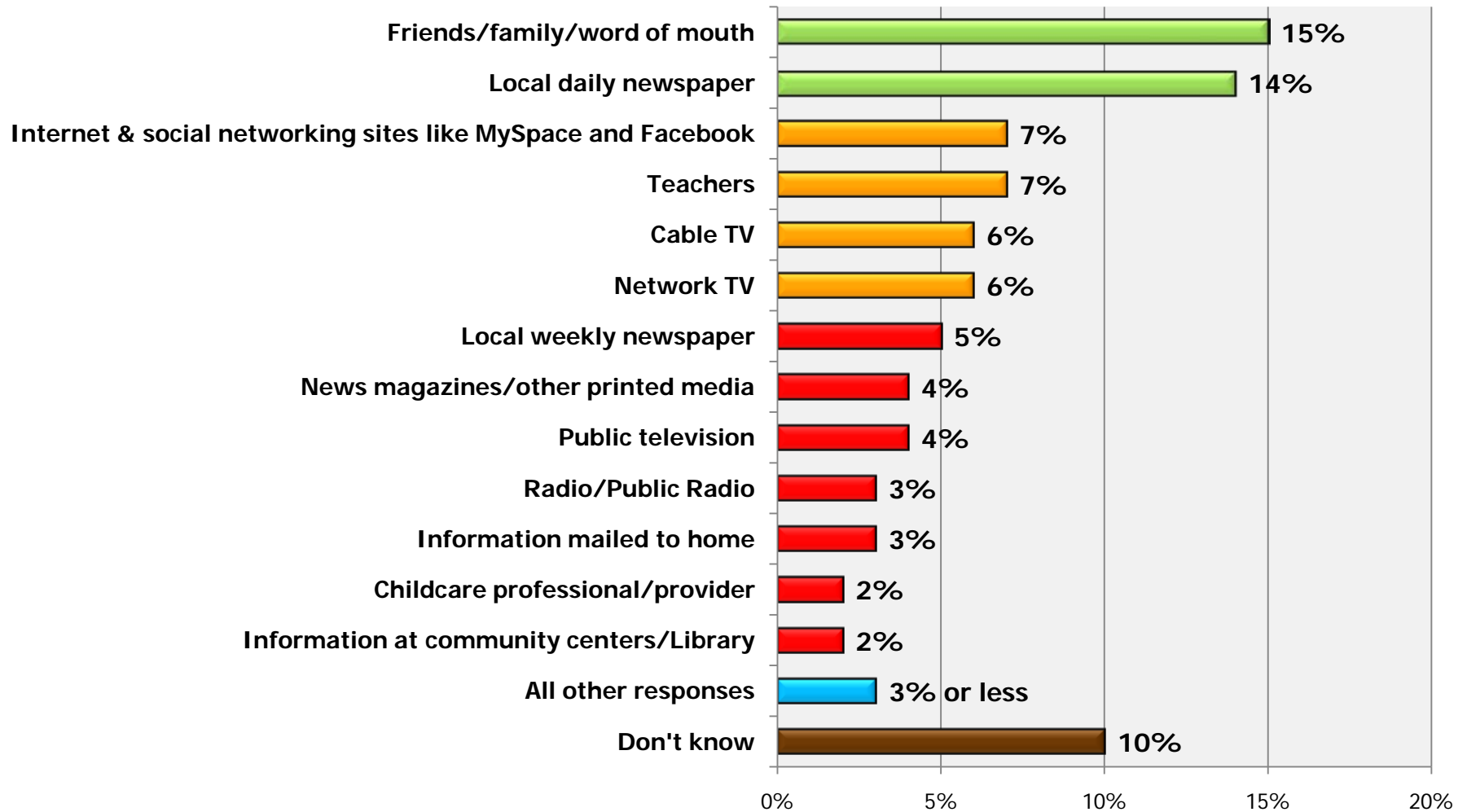


Early Learning Program Development

What would make the biggest difference in helping ensure all Washington children have positive early learning experience?



What is your biggest source of information about issues like early learning in Washington state? (Open)



Observations & Conclusions

Seven in ten of voters found public K-12 education, the economy, and the cost of healthcare as the top three urgent or high priorities facing the state.

Slightly under one-half of all voters found early learning an urgent or high priority, however majorities of Democrats, liberals, and those with kids under the age of 6 found it an urgent or high priority.

While not a top priority facing the state, majorities of voters thought early learning was urgent or important and agreed that the first 5 years of life had a significant impact on children.

All reasons why the state of Washington should support early learning were thought to be good or very good reasons by a majority of voters, with “90% of brain development taking place in the first 5 years of life” and “the economic return of \$4-\$17 for every dollar invested in high quality learning” at the top.

Majorities of subgroups less likely to support early learning thought “90% of brain development taking place in the first 5 years of life” as the best reason Washington state should support early learning.

No reason for why the state should not support early learning was thought as very good or good by a majority of all voters, however, majorities of Republicans and conservatives found the arguments that “early learning is a parents’ responsibility” and “the state is having enough trouble funding other issues” as good or very good reasons.

A plurality of voters thought funding early learning should be done equally through local public and private and state programs and services. Less than one in ten thought it should be done solely through state level services and programs for children.

A high plurality of voters thought children begin learning at birth, followed by before birth and the first year of life.

Voters thought the most important skill children should have before entering school was the ability to play and work well with others, followed by controlling their behavior and emotions.

There was no consensus as to the best way for organizations like Thrive by Five Washington to give them information about early learning.

The top communication method was TV followed by local daily newspapers, information mailed to their homes, and radio.