



connect

Connect Parent/Carer Survey Report:
Activities, Clubs and Childcare
(Before/After School and School
Holidays)



About Connect

- Independent membership organisation and charity for parents and parent groups in Scotland for over 75 years
- Offers a range of services including support and advice to parent groups and parents
- Works with school communities and education staff
- Regularly surveys parents/carers on different issues
- Seeks to promote positive relationships and communication between all involved in education and learning

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Connect is a trading name of Scottish Parent Teacher Council Registered Company SC151086 and Scottish Charity SC019168



About This Survey

Ran from **30 April to 1 June 2026**, with **219** responses from **24** local authorities across Scotland

Age/stage of children of respondents (they could select multiple options if they had more than one child)

- 0 to 2 years **9% (19)**
- Early years (3 to 5 years) **16% (35)**
- P1 to P3 **61% (132)**
- P4 to P7 **58% (126)**
- S1 to S4 **28% (61)**
- S5 to S6 **6% (12)**
- 18 or over **5% (11)**

Key Findings

- **Parents and carers surveyed use a mix of formal and informal childcare**, with 60% using formal childcare and 40% using informal childcare
- **Only 41% reported their childcare met their needs all or most of the time**, but this is higher for urban families (54%) when compared to rural families (18%). A nearly equal proportion (42%) of parents reported that their childcare meets their needs only somewhat or not at all
- **Parents and carers most commonly need childcare due to work**, but creating opportunities for their children is also cited as a reason
- After school activity clubs are the most commonly utilised form of childcare and **most reported using a mix of different forms of childcare** at different times
- **Affordability, location and convenience are key deciding factors in choice, while availability and cost are barriers to using childcare**. Parents mention the need for childcare that works around their working hours, and childcare that fits the need of their child as other barriers to use
- Very few parents (7%) mentioned that they had the opportunity to influence childcare provision in their area
- Those who provided descriptions of the childcare they wanted reported that they would use after school activities, breakfast clubs and holiday childcare if these were available
- For those who use formal childcare, **private providers are most commonly used both in term time and during school holidays**
- **Costs for childcare vary greatly**, both during term time and in school holidays

Calls for Action

Scottish Government

- **National strategy on provision of school age childcare:** A review of the School Age Childcare Delivery Framework is needed, revisiting the priorities and progress on these with a focus on more immediate improvements to the childcare system
- **Equity of access to childcare:** Families in rural areas have less access to childcare that works for them than those in urban areas. The Scottish Government should allocate funding accordingly to provide all parents and carers with the support they need, regardless of where they live
- **Provision of wraparound care:** Many rely on a patchwork of childcare due to a lack of wraparound care that covers working hours – extended hours of support must be made available for parents and carers who need it
- **Acknowledge the role of informal childcare:** Informal childcare, often provided by friends or family, should be acknowledged and supported – either by increasing formal provision to relieve the pressure, or through greater flexible working for those with caring responsibilities

Calls for Action

Scottish Government

- **Affordability and quality assurance:** Childcare costs vary greatly throughout the country and should be standardised with maximum costs enforced across private and public providers, with quality as a priority
- **Further research into informal childcare:** There is a need to understand families' widespread use of informal childcare at a national level, and to better understand how lack of childcare affects rural families, those on lower incomes, and parents of children with disabilities or additional support needs

Local Authorities

- **Consultation to assess local need:** Parents must be consulted on the childcare that is needed in their area, in order to provide appropriate support for local families
- **Equity of access to activities and affordability:** Specific activity clubs run from schools are in high demand, and community resources could be channelled into this. This could be done as part of providing a lasting legacy for Scotland's 'Summer of Sport'

Demographics

How many children do you have? (219 answered)

- 1 child **23% (50)**
- 2 children **55% (120)**
- 3 children **17% (37)**
- 4 children **5% (10)**
- 5 children **0% (1)**
- 6 or more **0% (1)**

Does one or more of your children have additional support needs? (219 answered)

- Yes **19% (41)**
- No **77% (169)**
- Don't know **3% (7)**
- Prefer not to say **1% (2)**

Please describe your household if you wish to. (218 answered, 1 skipped)

- My household has two or more adults in it **83% (180)**
- My household is a single parent household **16% (34)**
- Other (please describe your household) **1% (2)**
- Prefer not to say **1% (2)**

Demographics

What is your ethnicity? (218 answered, 1 skipped)

- White / White British **93% (202)**
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British **1% (2)**
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups **2% (4)**
- Other ethnic group (please specify) **1% (3)**
- Prefer not to answer **3% (7)**

Which best describes the area where you live? (216 answered, 3 skipped)

- Urban **63% (135)**
- Rural **38% (81)**

Please describe your status/situation by selecting one of the options below. (219 answered)

- I work full time **38% (83)**
- I work full time from home **4% (8)**
- I work part time **35% (77)**
- I work part time from home **5% (11)**
- My usual role is as the main carer for my child/children; I do not have paid employment **8% (17)**
- I am self-employed/have my own business **6% (14)**
- I am unemployed **1% (2)**
- Other (please specify) **2% (5)**
- Prefer not to say **1% (2)**

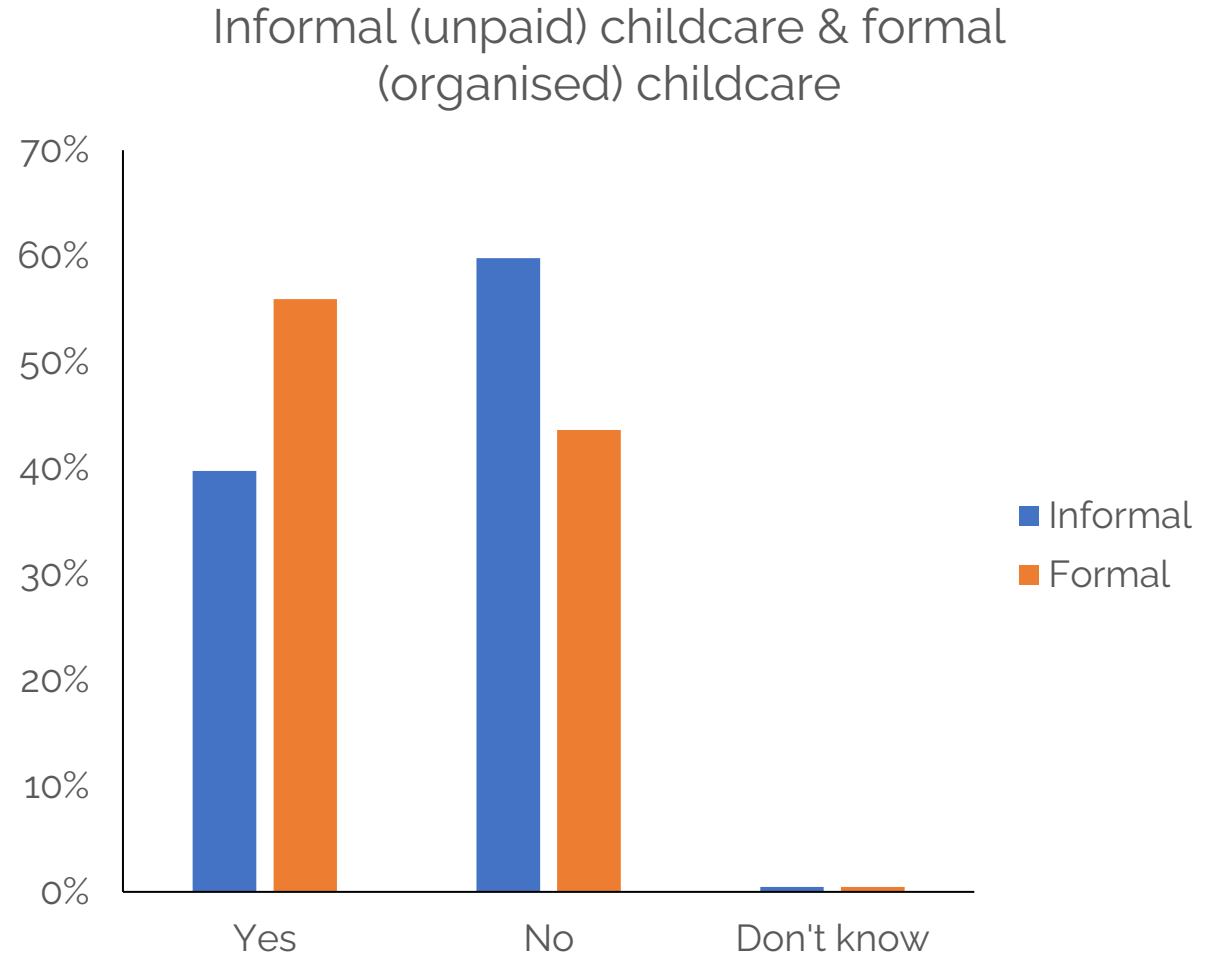
Use of out of school childcare

Do you have informal (unpaid) help with childcare (ie from friends or family)? (219 answered)

- Yes **40% (87)**
- No **60% (131)**
- Don't know **0% (1)**

Does your family use formal (organised) out of school childcare (eg breakfast, after school, holiday or holiday activity clubs)? (218 answered)

- Yes **56% (122)**
- No **44% (95)**
- Don't know **0% (1)**

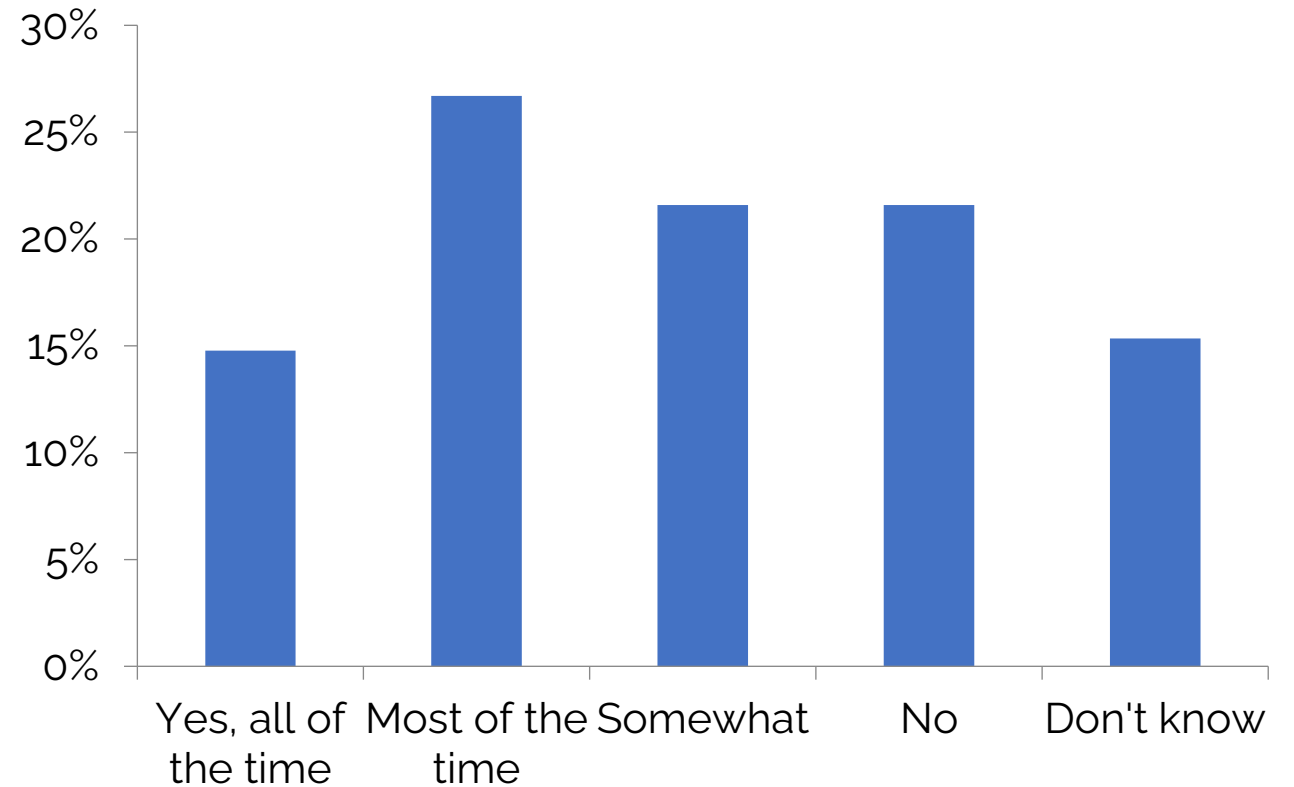


Meeting family needs

If you currently use out of school childcare, does this meet your family's needs? (176 answered, 43 skipped)

- Yes, all of the time **15% (26)**
- Most of the time **27% (47)**
- Somewhat **22% (38)**
- No **22% (38)**
- Don't know **15% (27)**

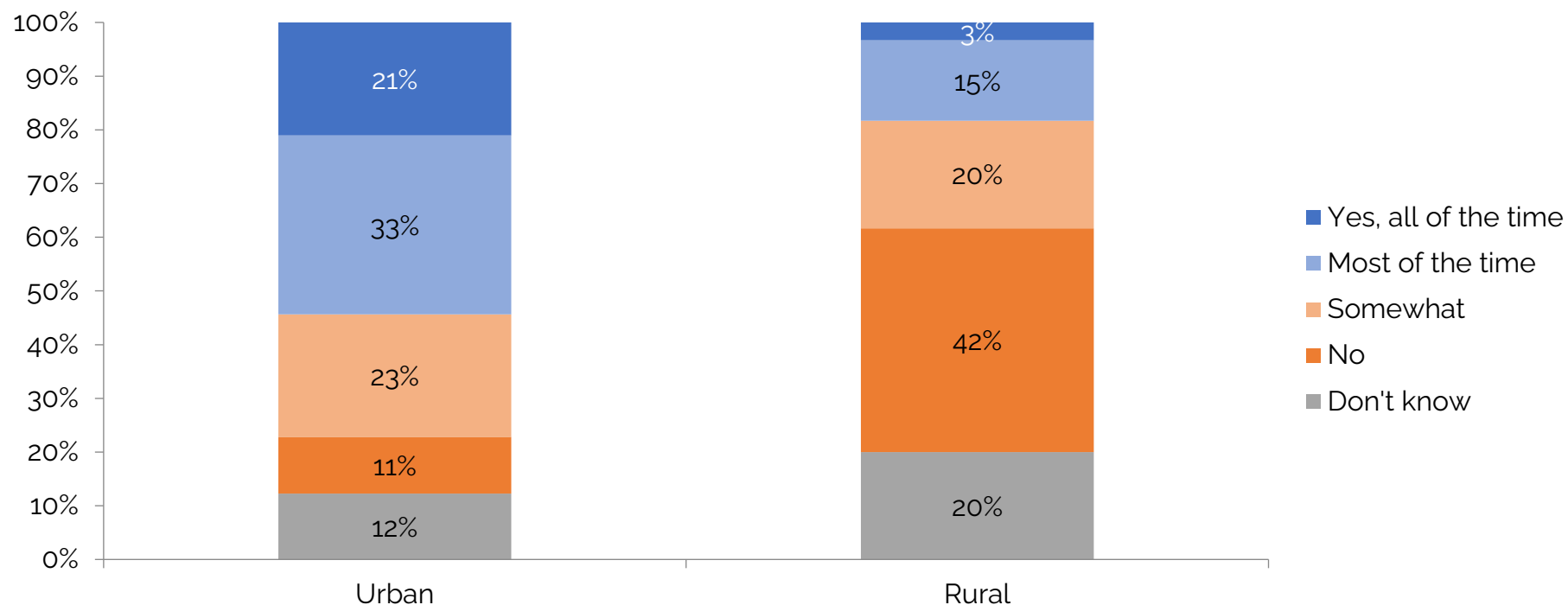
If you currently use out of school childcare, does this meet your family's needs?



Meeting family needs – rural and urban differences

If you currently use out of school childcare, does this meet your family's needs? (114 in urban areas answered, 60 in rural areas answered, 42 skipped)

If you currently use out of school childcare, does this meet your family's needs?

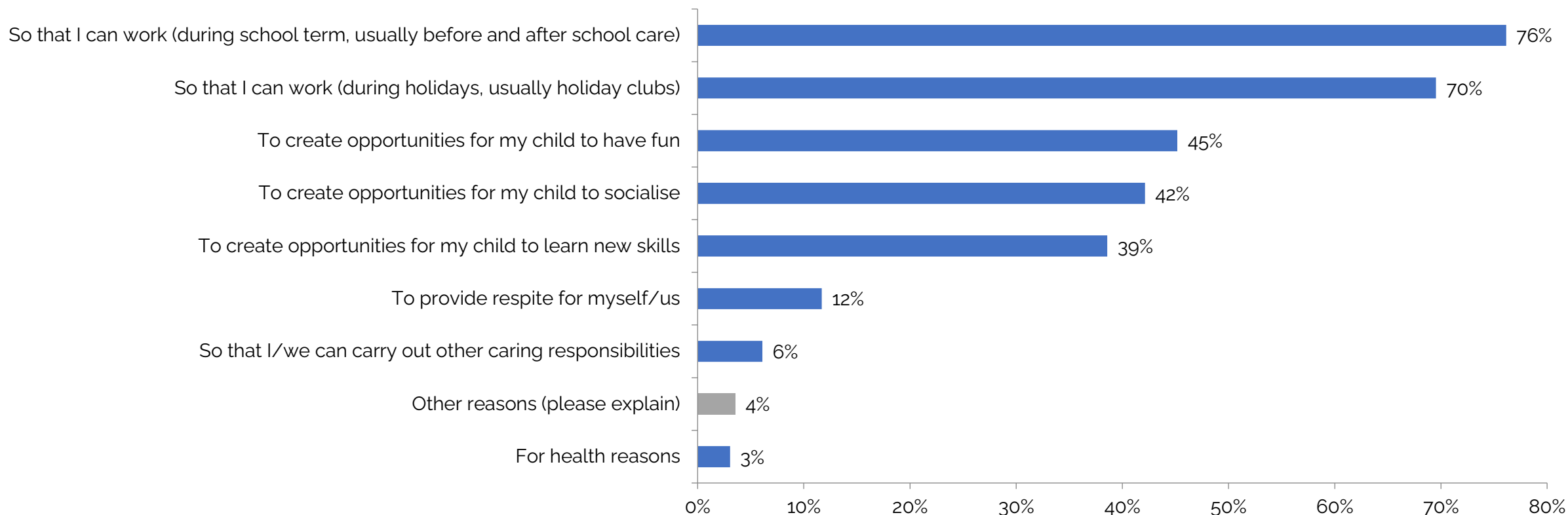


Out of school childcare is less likely to meet the needs of family in rural areas

Reasons for out of school childcare

Thinking about why your family needs out of school childcare, please choose from the following reasons (you can select more than one). (197 answered, 22 skipped)

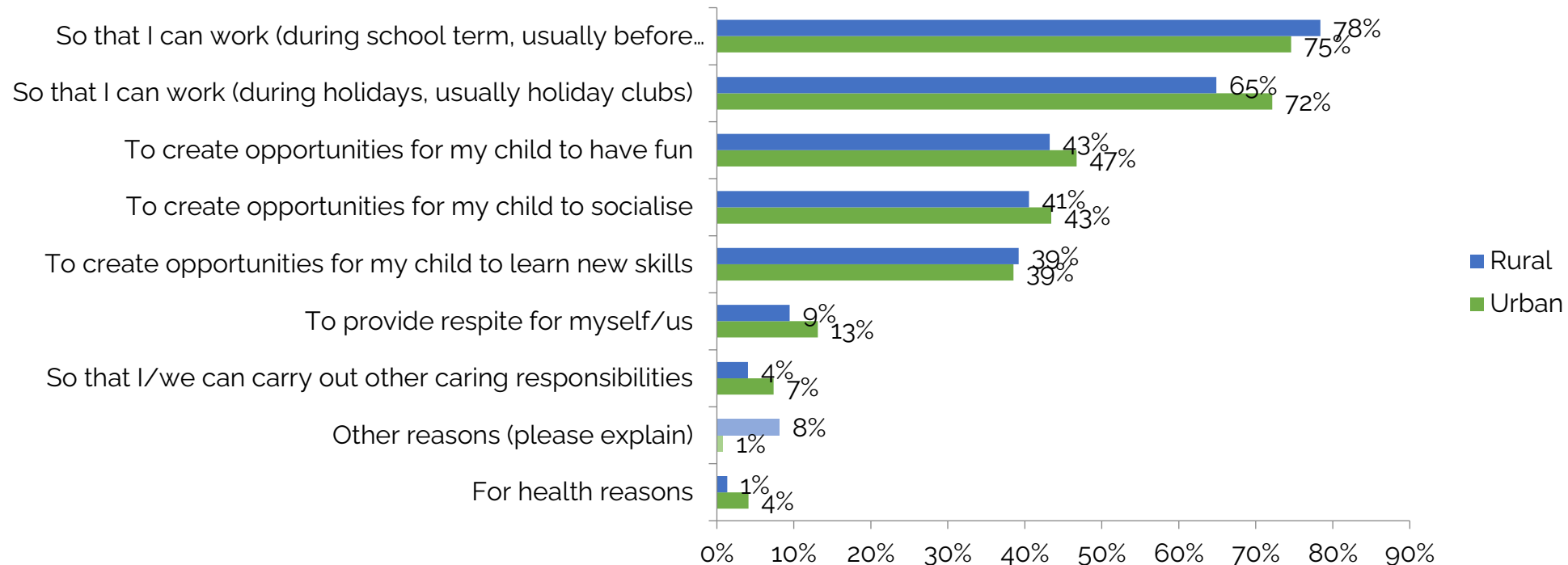
Thinking about why your family needs out of school childcare, please choose from the following reasons (you can select more than one).



Reasons for out of school childcare – rural and urban differences

Thinking about why your family needs out of school childcare, please choose from the following reasons (you can select more than one). (122 in urban areas answered, 74 in rural areas answered, 20 skipped)

Thinking about why your family needs out of school childcare, please choose from the following reasons (you can select more than one).



Reasons for out of school childcare are broadly similar for urban and rural parents and carers



Parent comments: Reasons for out of school childcare

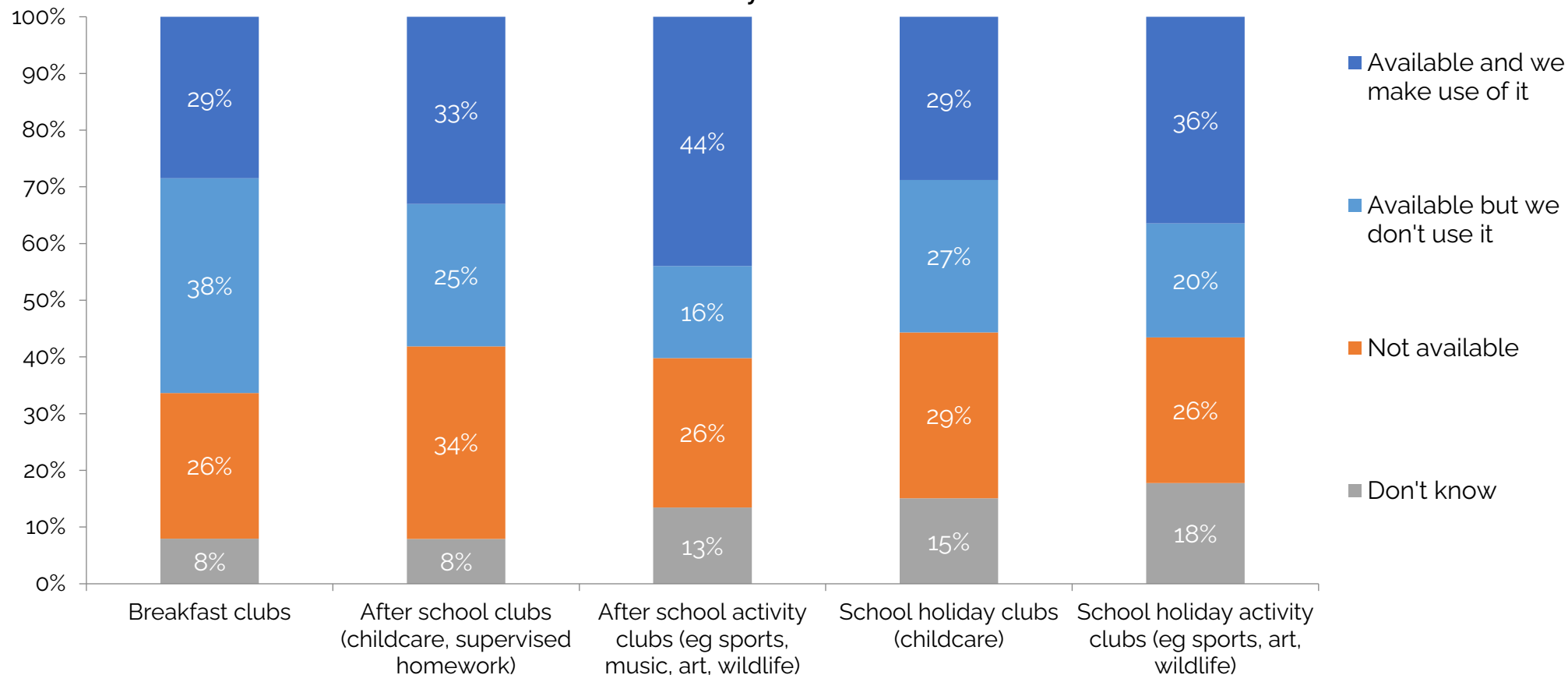
Thinking about why your family needs out of school childcare, please choose from the following reasons (you can select more than one). (7 answered other)

- To attend education
 - *'To allow me to attend classes at Uni'*
- Other family responsibilities
 - *'So that I can visit family in Edinburgh who live in a care home.'*
- Lack of availability
 - *'Very little available here'*

Reasons for out of school childcare

What type of formal provision is available in your area, and which types do you use? (218 answered, 1 skipped)

What type of formal provision is available in your area, and which types do you use?



Urban respondents are more likely to use all forms of childcare provision compared to rural respondents

Parent comments: Types of formal provision

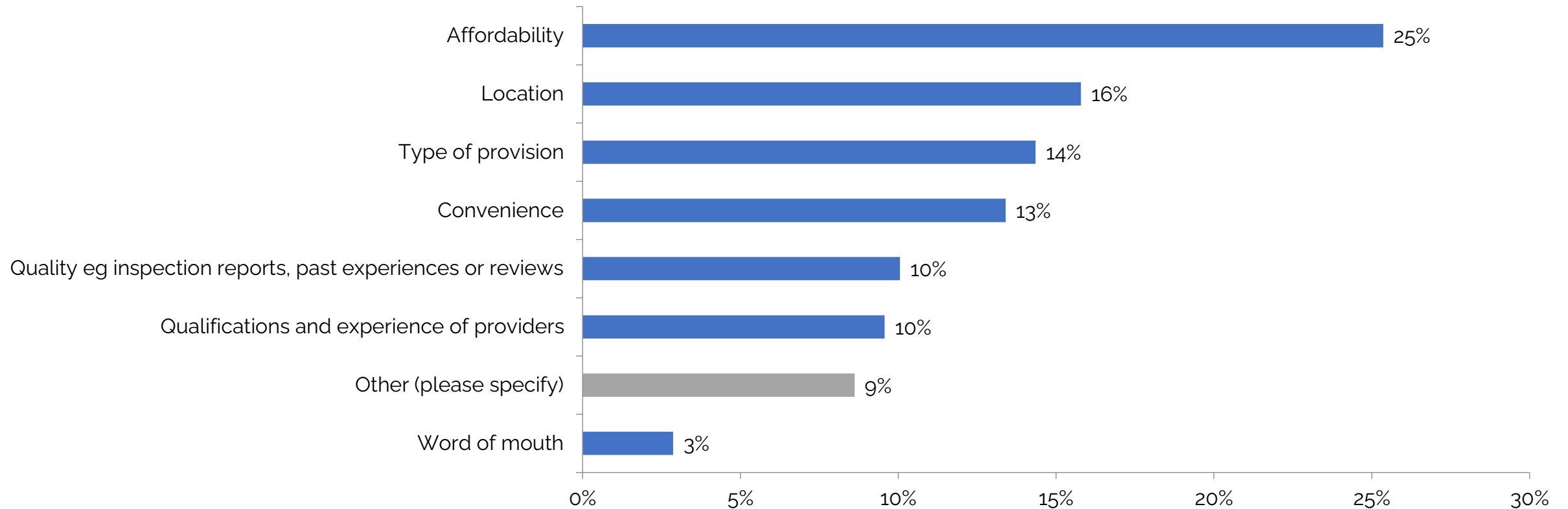
What type of formal provision is available in your area, and which types do you use? (19 answered other)

- *'We do a mix of things, sometimes private sports clubs eg tennis & sometimes formal semi-school organised clubs eg Feis (GME).'*
- *'We have had to pay our way thru childcare and still there is no full offering of wraparound care. East Neuk childcare outside school does not exist.'*
- *'Our school offers almost no activity clubs at any time. Midlothian Council offer very limited clubs via Active Schools, but the numbers are limited and the times are unhelpful for working parents (e.g. summer holiday clubs that only run for two hours per day).'*
- *'Some after school sports available but for short blocks only and they finish too early to be useful for working parents.'*
- *'There are some provisions, such as a school breakfast club and after school art club, however, these need parental attendance for nursery age children.'*
- *'Community centre in Mastrick provide play scheme in the holiday'*
- *'No, there is nothing for children at our school. No help for parents. We all have to take it in turns to help each other.'*
- *'We only have access to Edinburgh councils disability holiday hub'*

Key factor in childcare choice

**What is the most important factor that goes into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses?
(Select only your top priority) (209 answered, 10 skipped)**

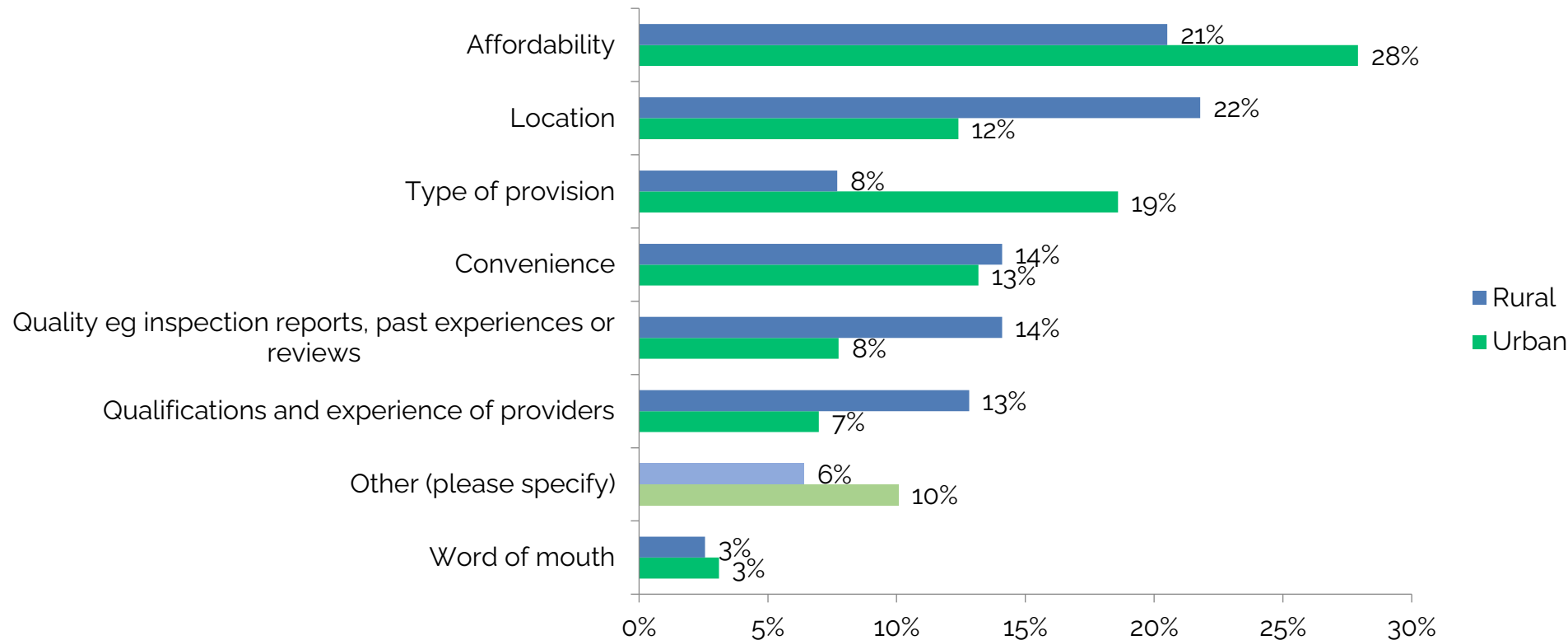
What is the most important factor that goes into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (Select only your top priority)



Key factor in childcare choice – rural and urban differences

**What is the most important factor that goes into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses?
(Select only your top priority) (129 in urban areas answered, 78 in rural areas answered, 9 skipped)**

What is the most important factor that goes into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (Select only your top priority)



Urban respondents are more likely to choose according to affordability, while rural respondents are more likely to choose according to location

Parent comments: Key factor in childcare choice

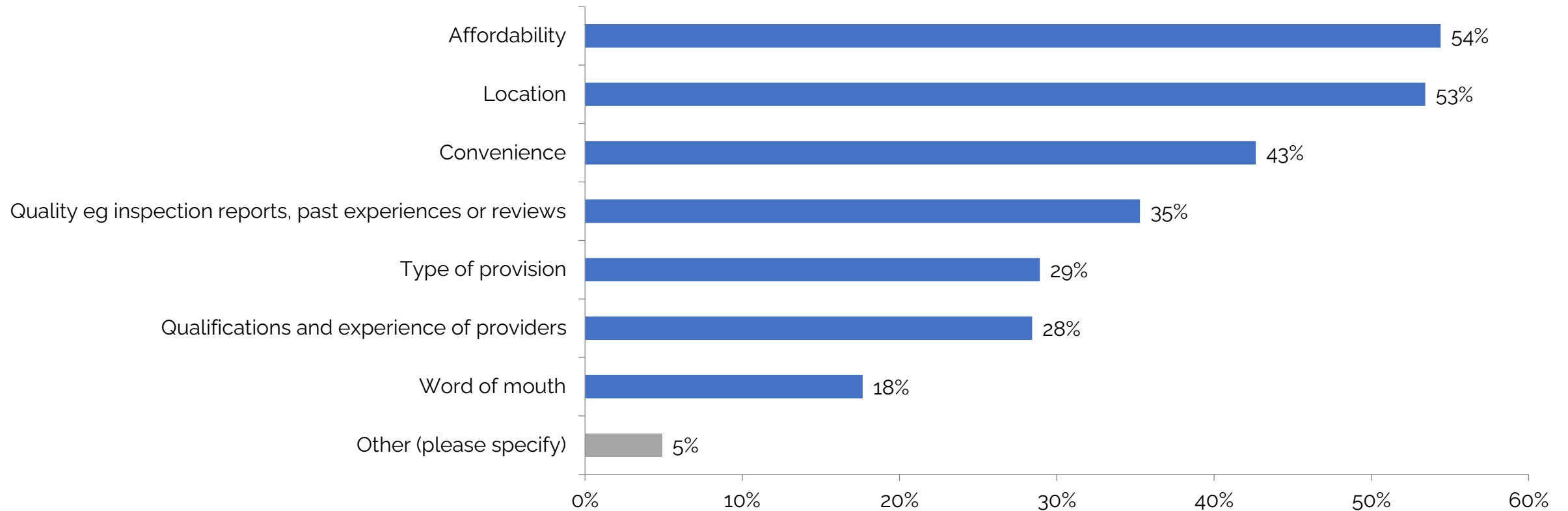
What is the most important factor that goes into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (Select only your top priority) (18 answered other)

- Able to cover working hours
 - *'Hours offered (needs to cover the full office day) and can provide care for preschool to P5 children'*
 - *'Wrap around care - that doesn't close at 5.30 - need till 6pm if traffic is bad!'*
 - *'Unfortunately hours as we start work at 8.15am'*
- Child happiness
 - *'My children liking the club'*
 - *'Meets my child's needs. The only one she does is an hour, in school, immediately at the end of the school day. She can't manage anything else as yet.'*
 - *'Safety of my child from assault and racist verbal abuse'*

Other factors in childcare choice

What other factors go into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (You can select more than one) (204 answered, 15 skipped)

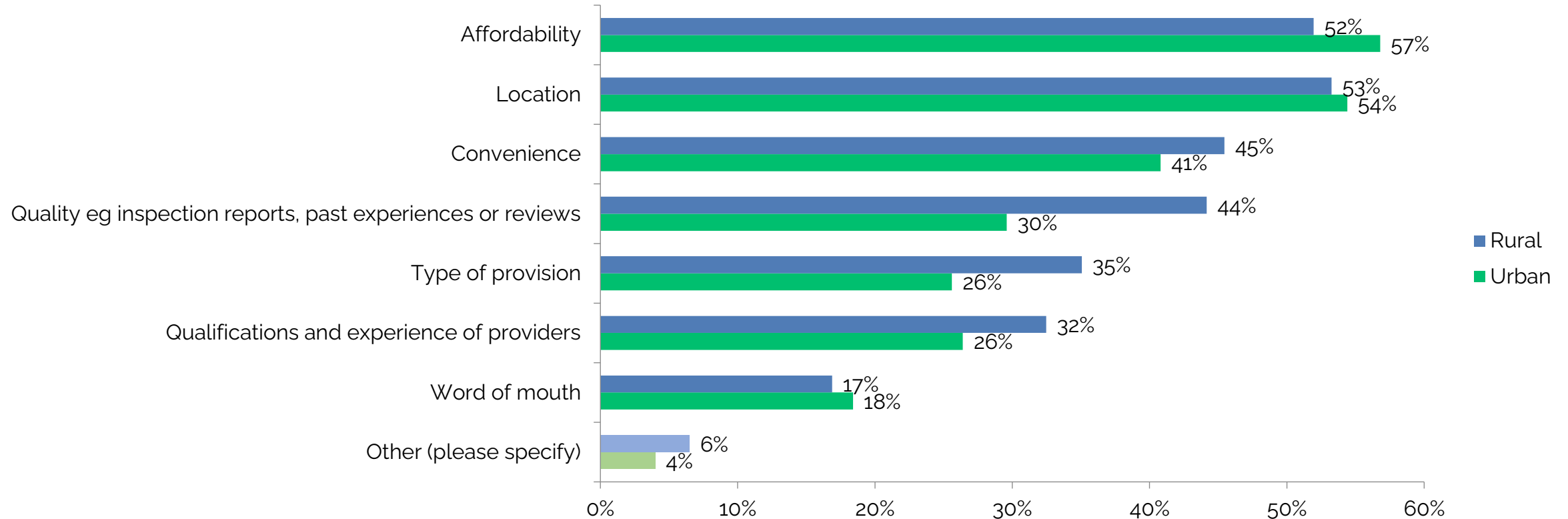
What other factors go into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (You can select more than one)



Other factors childcare choice – rural and urban differences

What other factors go into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (You can select more than one) (125 in urban areas answered, 77 in rural areas answered, 14 skipped)

What other factors go into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses?
(You can select more than one)





Parent comments: Key factor in childcare choice

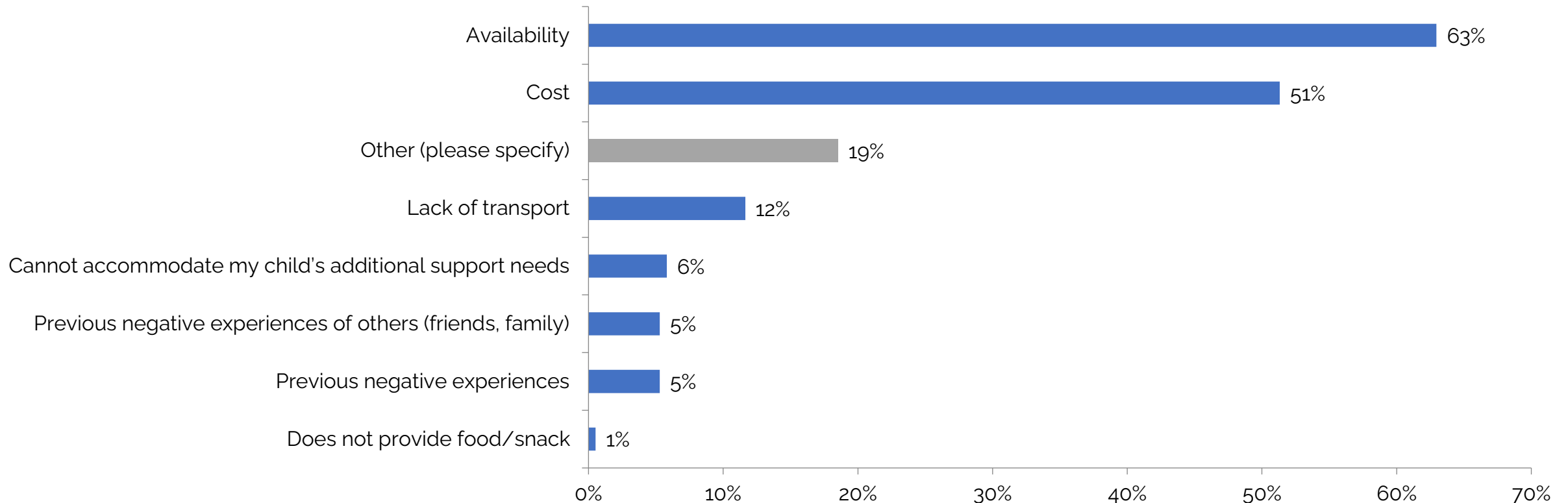
What other factors go into choosing the out of school childcare your family uses? (You can select more than one) (15 answered other)

- Type of club
 - *'Theme. It's a music club. Very little else would motivate my child to be away from home without me for longer than is absolutely necessary.'*
- Child happiness
 - *'Child's friends also attend.'*
- Flexible hours
 - *'Duration of clubs ie require 8-6'*

Barriers to childcare

What are the barriers to using out of school childcare, if any? (You can select more than one) (189 answered, 30 skipped)

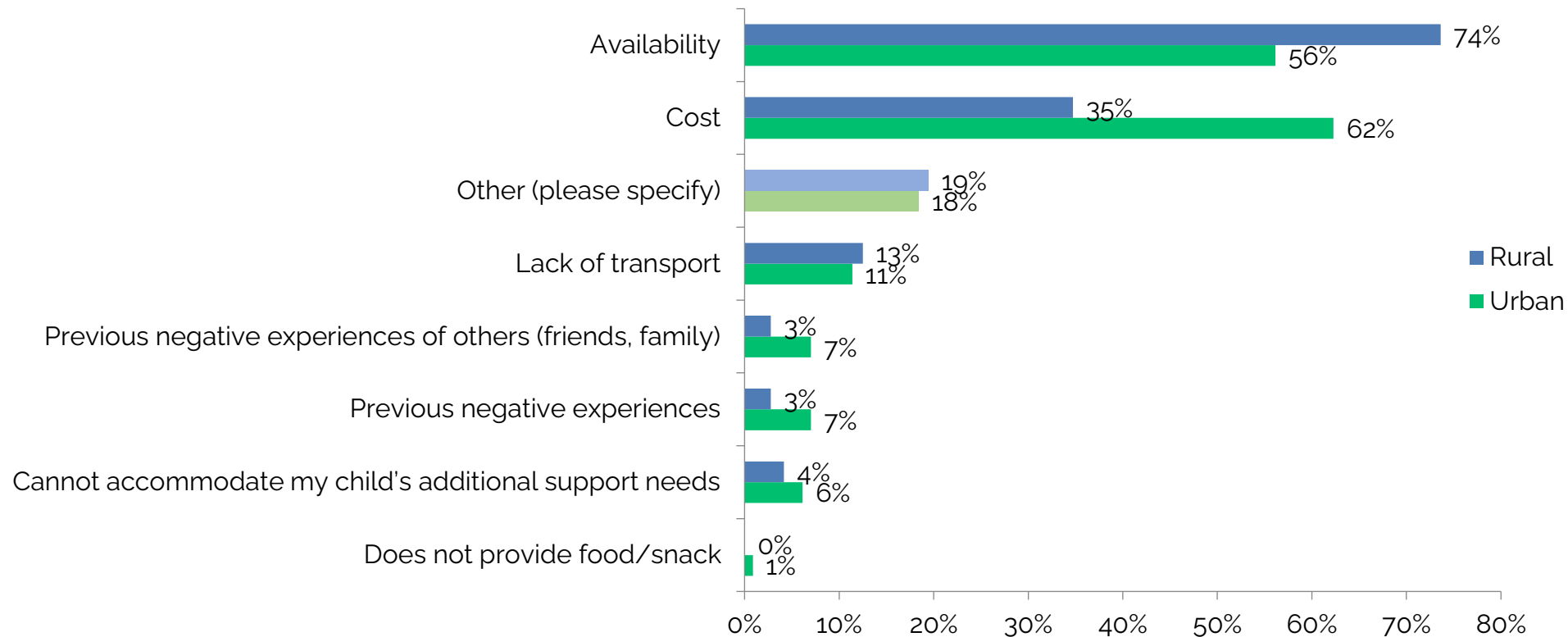
What are the barriers to using out of school childcare, if any? (You can select more than one)



Barriers to childcare – rural and urban differences

What are the barriers to using out of school childcare, if any? (You can select more than one) (114 in urban areas answered, 72 in rural areas answered, 30 skipped)

What are the barriers to using out of school childcare, if any? (You can select more than one)



Availability is more of a barrier for respondents in rural areas, compared to respondents in urban areas

Parent comments: Other factors in childcare choice

What are the barriers to using out of school childcare, if any? (35 answered other)

- Flexible hours
 - *'Lack of flexibility for those who works different shifts/days but on a fixed pattern'*
 - *'Start and finish in the middle of full time employment working hours'*
 - *'Holiday clubs tend to open later than breakfast club which makes it difficult for getting to work on time as I work in hospital as a nurse so can't change my hours so easily'*
- Meet the needs of the child
 - *'My children don't like going to it.'*
 - *'Suitable for my autistic child'*
 - *'Insufficient hours and do not take high school children'*
- Sport focus
 - *'The topic, there is one close and affordable, but is focus on sport, and they don't want it. My kids would prefer with a focus on outdoor/nature and they are expensive'*

Parent comments: Desired childcare

Thinking about out of school childcare you cannot currently access, what type of childcare would you use if it was available to you? (125 answered, 95 skipped)

- Afterschool club **(49)**
- Breakfast club/ morning **(30)**
- Activities **(29)**
- Holiday clubs **(28)**
- Wraparound care **(15)**
- Affordable **(9)**
- Homework club **(7)**
- Younger children **(6)**
- ASN **(6)**
- Options for older children **(5)**
- Misc. **(5)**
- Don't know **(5)**
- More time for family **(2)**

Parent comments: Desired childcare

Thinking about out of school childcare you cannot currently access, what type of childcare would you use if it was available to you? (125 answered, 95 skipped)

- Afterschool clubs
 - *'I would make use of after school clubs during the week as it would reduce the burden on my parents (in their mid 60s) or would reduced the amount of flexi I need to work after they go to bed because I've needed to log off at 3pm'*
- Breakfast clubs
 - *'Breakfast club if provided at our local school. (It is provided at a nearby school in the same cluster, but a) not for nursery age and b) then needs a parent to drive child back to their own school, so doesn't help me to work.)'*
- Specific activity groups
 - *'I would like after school care that incorporates activities/skills and also supports children with homework. I would like holiday clubs that actually run during working hours (not just 10-3) and that include a range of activities.'*
- Holiday childcare
 - *'Play schemes for kids during the school holidays that don't cost the earth'*
- Wraparound care
 - *'Any suitable childcare for children from preschool to P5 which covers proper wraparound care - minimum 8am-5pm'*
- Affordable childcare
 - *'As we have no nurseries in our area, affordable childcare. More access to after school sports clubs. After school and nursery childcare.'*

Input into local childcare provision

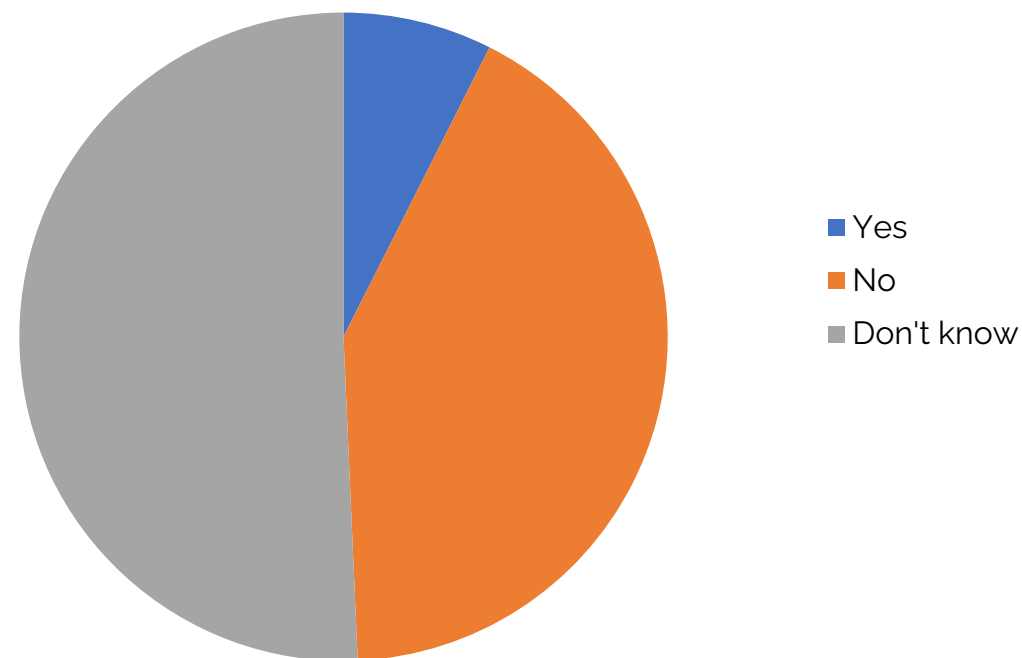
Are there opportunities for parents to have input into what provision is available locally eg survey from your local authority? If yes, please give details in the comment box. (215 answered, 4 skipped)

- Yes **7% (16)**
- No **42% (90)**
- Don't know **51% (109)**

Those answering yes:

- *'There was a Local Place Plan that recently reviewed feelings on after-school provision and identified it was something strongly desired in the area.'*

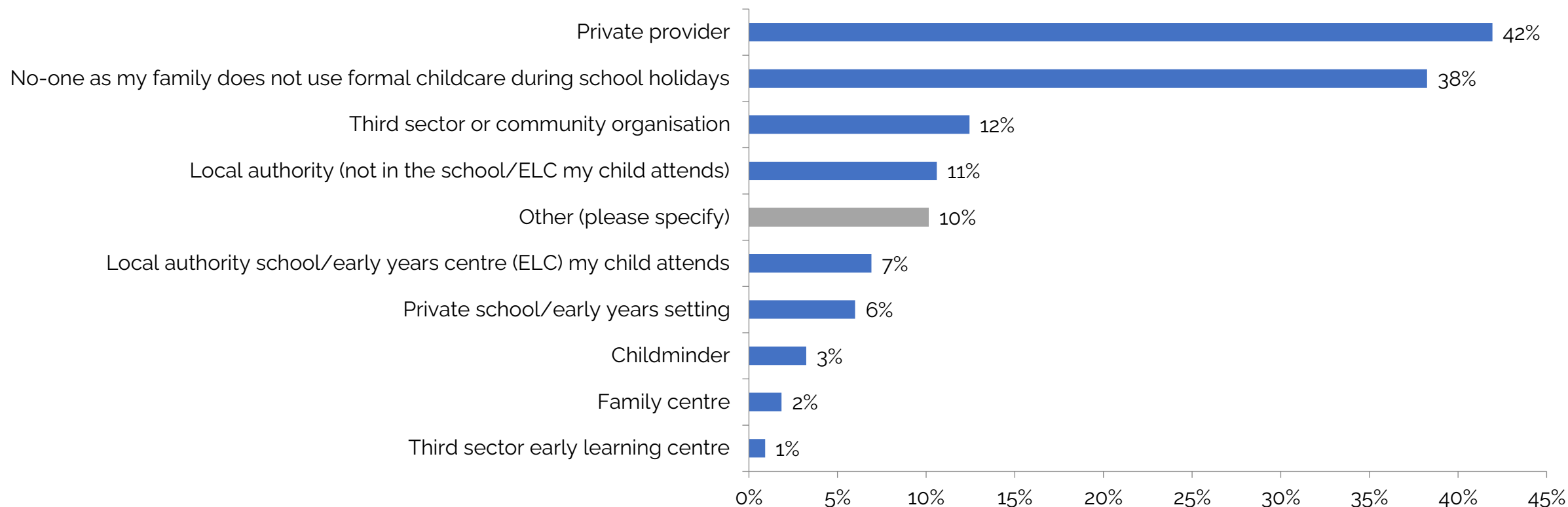
Are there opportunities for parents to have input into what provision is available locally eg survey from your local authority? If yes, please give details in the comment box.



Holiday time childcare providers

Who provides the out of school childcare that you use during school holidays? (You can select more than one) (217 answered, 2 skipped)

Who provides the out of school childcare that you use during school holidays? (You can select more than one)



Parent comments: Holiday time childcare providers

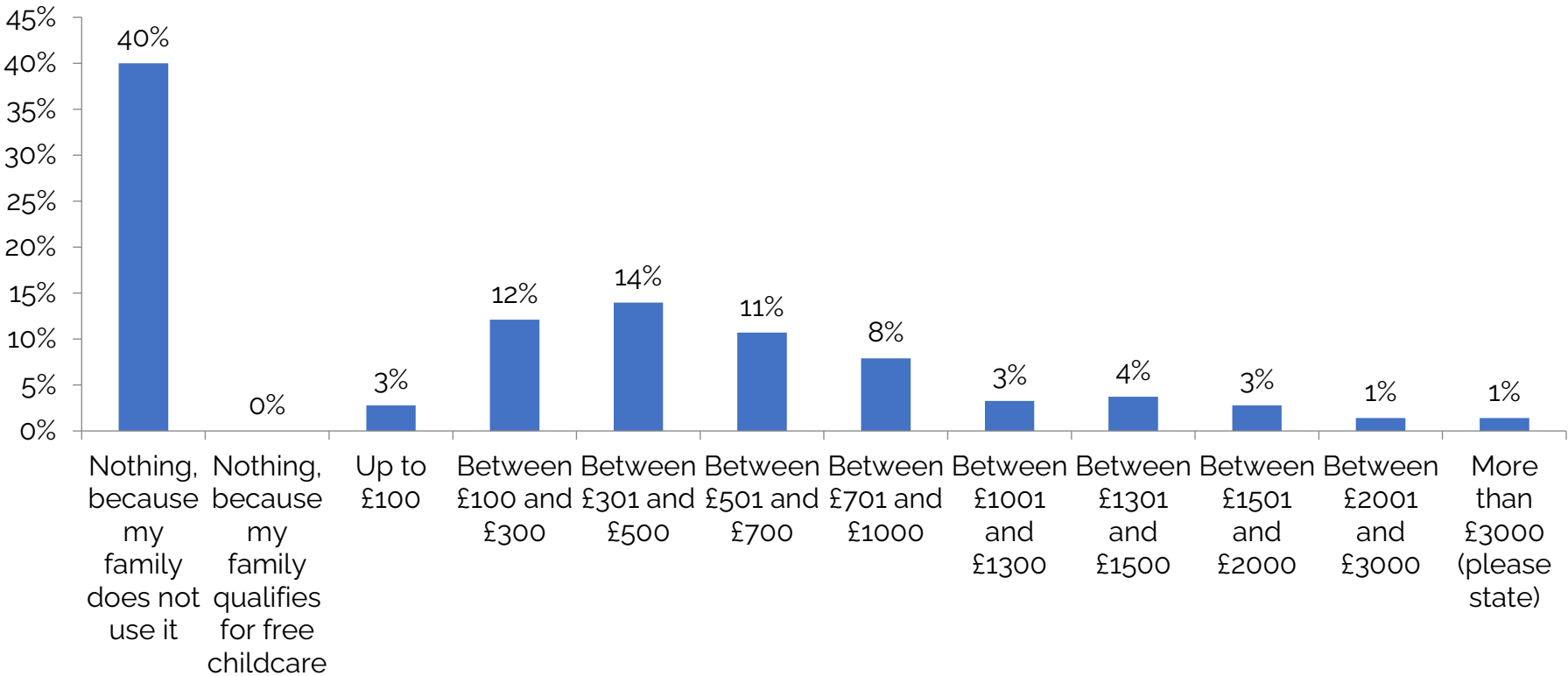
Who provides the out of school childcare that you use during school holidays? (You can select more than one) (22 answered other)

- Sports provision
 - *'My children attend Judo camps etc. but not actual childcare provisions'*
 - *'Local Sports Centre as part of the local Recreational Trust'*
- Support from individuals
 - *'As family we need to coordinate working from home/office between us as parents, where we can't, we ask friends to take care of them'*
 - *'Babysitter - local university student'*
 - *'Family members help when they can if not I use my work holidays or sick days available'*
 - *'We have always managed with family support or one person working from home. Childcare is in very short supply here.'*
- Specialised provision
 - *'My autistic son have 3 day in summer holidays ASN play'*

School holiday childcare costs

In total, how much do you generally spend on out of school childcare during school holidays for your children per year? (215 answered, 4 skipped)

In total, how much do you generally spend on out of school childcare during school holidays for your children per year?



74%
of those who
used out of
school childcare
spent between
£100 and £1,000

Subsidised out of school holiday childcare

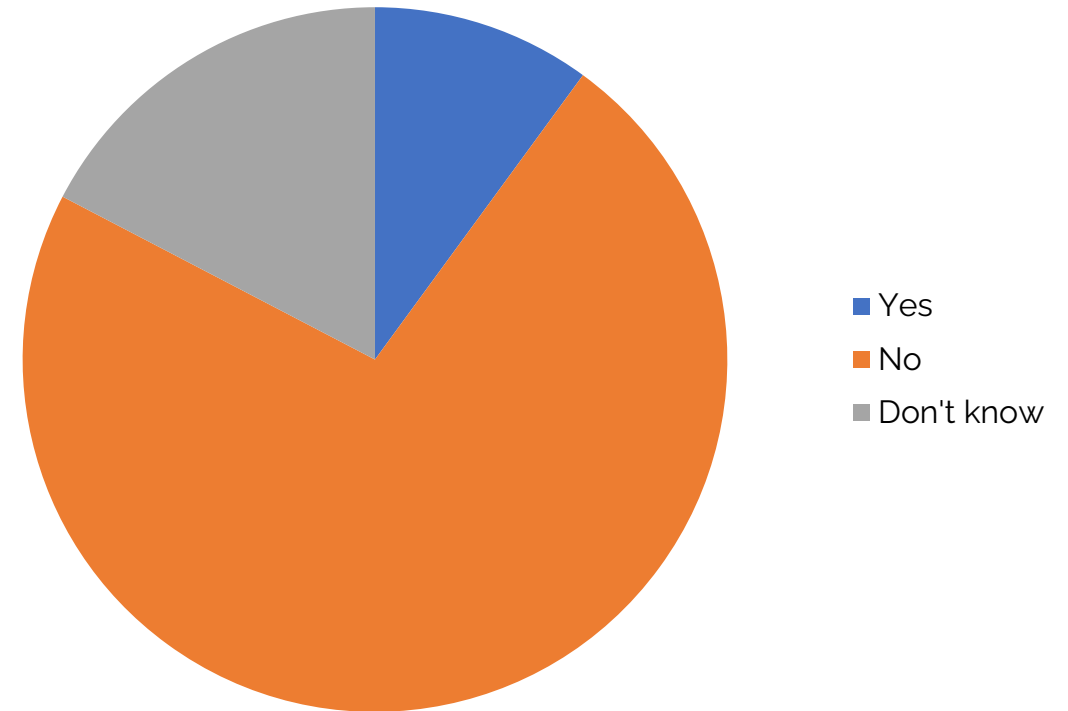
Are you aware of any free or subsidised out of school childcare, lunch/play schemes or activities provided by your local authority in the school holidays? (219 answered)

- Yes **10% (22)**
- No **73% (159)**
- Don't know **17% (38)**

If yes, please describe (12 answered):

- *'Local charities provide outdoor activities and sometimes free lunches.'*
- *'Hours are very short and unsuitable to cover any working hours - usually only 2hr sessions'*
- *'1 week sports activities in summer hols. But 9:30-3 so not suitable'*

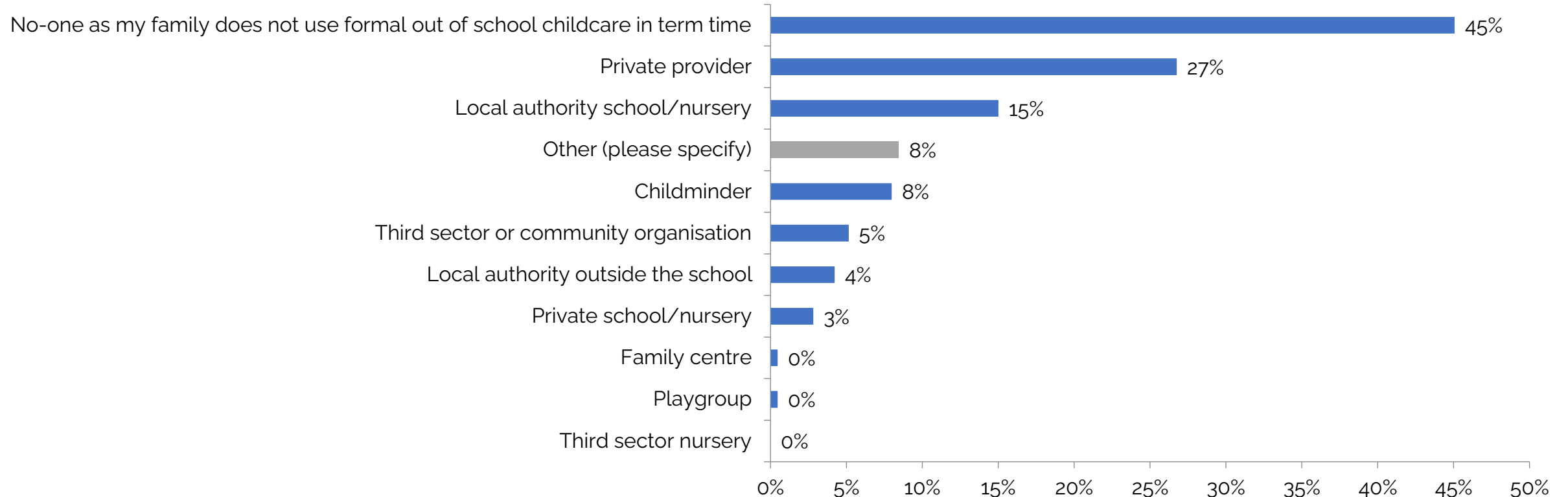
Are you aware of any free or subsidised out of school childcare, lunch/play schemes or activities provided by your local authority in the school holidays?



Term time childcare providers

Who provides the out of school childcare that you use during term time? (You can select more than one) (213 answered, 6 skipped)

Who provides the out of school childcare that you use during term time? (You can select more than one)





Parent comments: Term time childcare providers

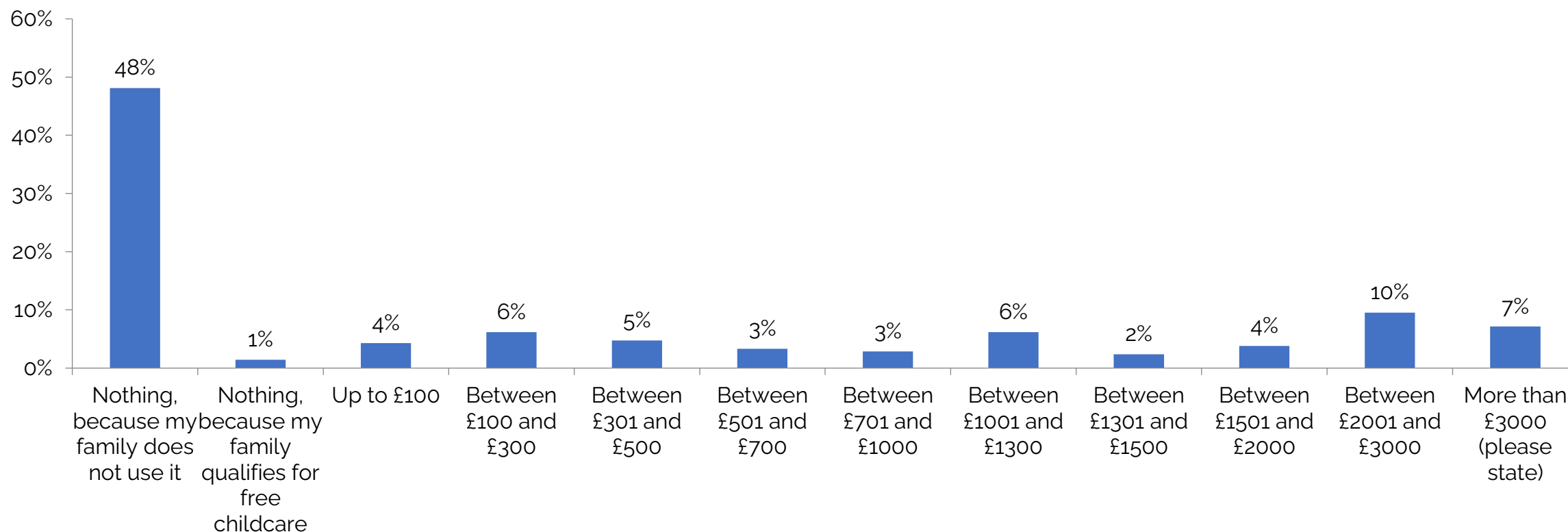
Who provides the out of school childcare that you use during term time? (You can select more than one) (18 answered other)

- Support from individuals
 - *'Family group'*
 - *'Family and friends'*
- Sports
 - *'Sports club'*
- No childcare available
 - *'We have no after school care provision in our area.'*
 - *'There is none provided here'*
 - *'None available'*
- Other provider
 - *'Charity run organisation'*
 - *'Church'*

Term time childcare costs

In total how much do you generally spend on out of school childcare during term time for your child(ren) per year? (210 answered, 9 skipped)

In total how much do you generally spend on out of school childcare during term time for your child(ren) per year?



Subsidised out of school term time childcare

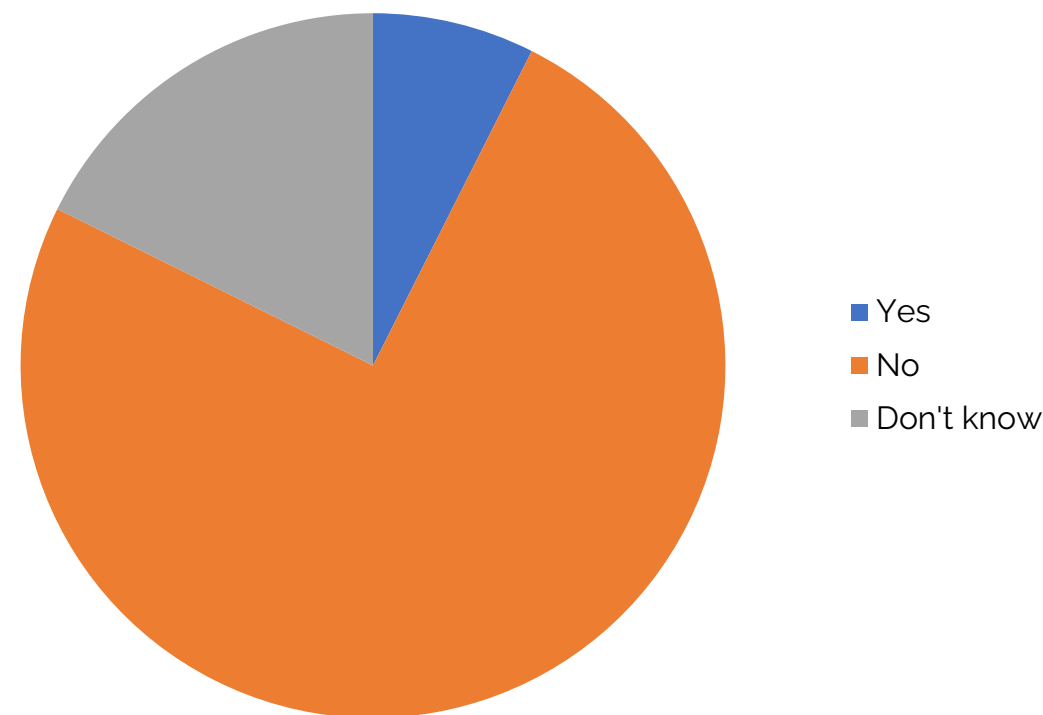
Are you aware of any free or subsidised out of school childcare or activities provided by your local authority during term time? (215 answered, 4 skipped)

- Yes **7% (16)**
- No **75% (161)**
- Don't know **18% (38)**

If yes, please describe (8 answered):

- *'Some sports clubs run for short blocks'*
- *'I am aware of some active school clubs but are really difficult to get in to and are typically only on for under 1 hour'*
- *'Occasionally but usually for those on low incomes'*

Are you aware of any free or subsidised out of school childcare or activities provided by your local authority during term time?



Parent comments: Final comments

Do you have any other comments you would like to make on out of school childcare provision in general? (82 answered, 137 skipped)

- No/not enough suitable care available **(26)**
- Work patterns/impact on work **(18)**
- Cost **(17)**
- Differences across locations **(13)**
- Rural **(13)**
- Wish for specific type **(10)**
- ASN **(6)**
- Transport **(6)**
- Misc. **(6)**
- Describing issues effecting delivery of provision **(5)**
- Depending on informal care **(5)**
- Role of local authority **(4)**
- Lack of/need for flexibility **(3)**
- Waiting lists **(3)**
- Concerns about provision/providers **(3)**
- Different age/stage of children **(2)**
- Consulting with parents **(2)**
- Describing what they currently use **(2)**
- Comment from service provider **(1)**

Parent comments: Final comments

Do you have any other comments you would like to make on out of school childcare provision in general? (82 answered, 137 skipped)

- No suitable care available
 - *'There is currently no suitable out of school childcare available for primary age children in this area. If there was I would use it.'*
 - *'The area I live in lacks a serious level of any kind of wrap around care. There is no after school club and no breakfast club for kids of nursery age. This is a serious issue for parents in this area'*
- Impact on work
 - *'Too restrictive - we would use a combination of BC and ASC but due to work patterns, we wouldn't need the same day(s) each week. No flexibility from Fife Council and don't want to pay for something that is not being used.'*
- Cost
 - *'It's far to expensive for us to use everyday of the holidays'*
- Difference across locations
 - *'There seems to be a massive difference in provision across the city. I am not in an area considered as 'deprived' therefore there are not many activities. However, as a disabled parent it is hard for me to travel across the city to take my kids to a club. The cost is another barrier.'*

Parent comments: Final comments

Do you have any other comments you would like to make on out of school childcare provision in general? (82 answered, 137 skipped)

- Rural areas
 - *'It would be great if rural school had better access to out of school care available, seeing as people draw to rural areas to live for quality of life, yet can only work hours within the school timeframe of 9-3, when average working day is 9-5.'*
- ASN provision
 - *'Children with complex ASN, especially those aged 6+, are woefully underserved at present. It makes it very difficult for parent/carers to even get a change of scene, meet with other adults etc.'*
- Transport
 - *'We don't use it because having children across stages means I cannot get them all to and from different locations at the same time.'*
- Depending on informal care
 - *'We are so poorly served in our area (Anstruther). There is no after school provision anywhere in this area, and so I end up having to juggle work and rely on ageing grandparents. It can be very stressful.'*
- Waiting lists
 - *'Provision is available but there are huge (years long) waiting lists for spaces at after school clubs.'*



We are very grateful to all the parents and carers who took part in this survey

Please contact us by email at info@connect.scot for more information about this survey

Connect

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