

STUDY OF PARENTS' AND KEY INFORMANTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISTANCE LEARNING AND SCHOOL REOPENING

September 2020

This opinion poll in Montenegro was conducted by IPSOS and supported by British Embassy Podgorica and by [UNICEF Montenegro](#)



British Embassy
Podgorica



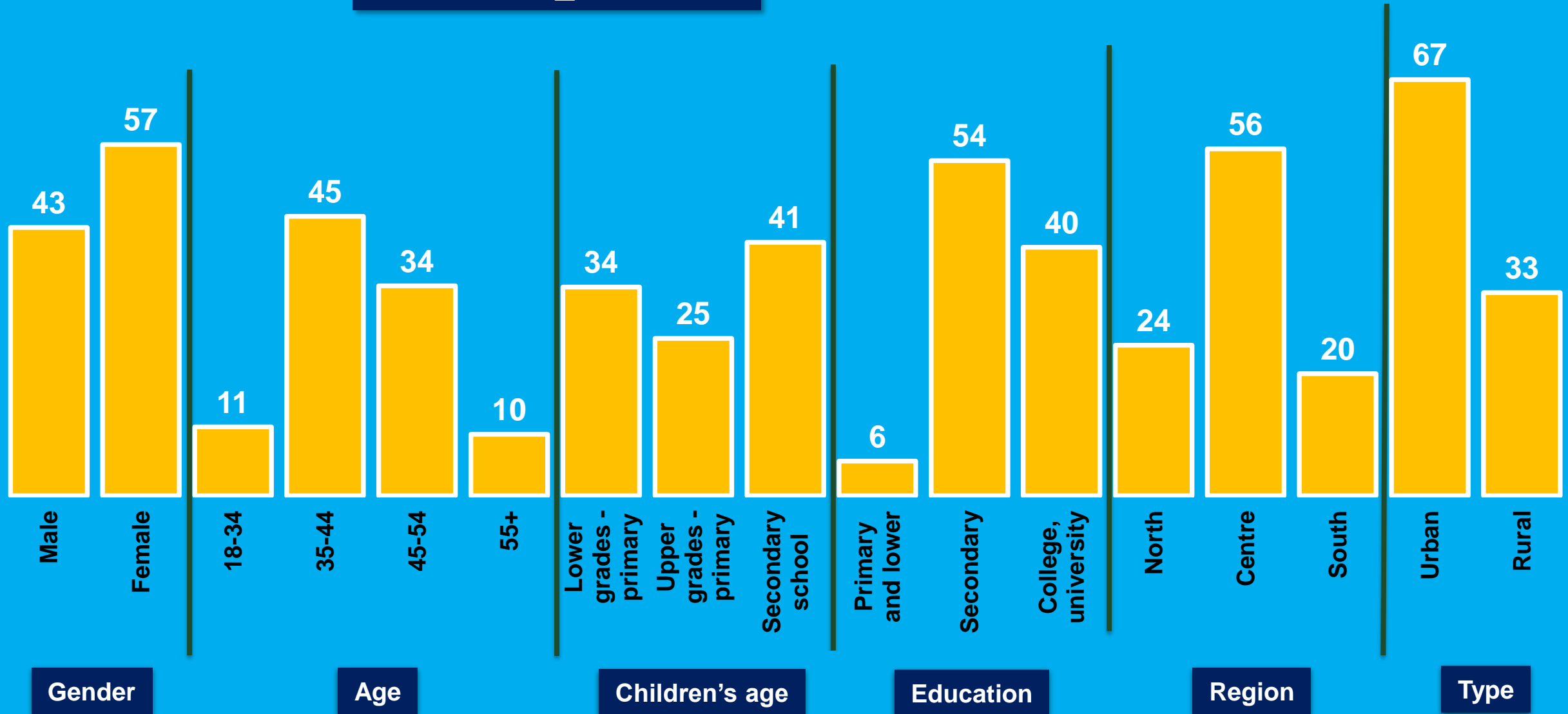
METHODOLOGY

Realization:	Field research conducted in the period 2–6 September 2020
Sample frame:	Population of parents or guardians of school-age children in Montenegro
Sample size:	1,037 respondents
Type of sample:	One-stage representative stratified sample Respondents within a household
Type of study:	Combination of telephone and online study with an approx. 20-minute questionnaire
Location:	23 municipalities in Montenegro – urban, suburban and rural
Post-stratification:	By region, age
Error:	±1.57% for the occurrences with an expected incidence of 5% ±3.10% for the occurrences with an expected incidence of 25% ±3.59% for the occurrences with an expected incidence of 50% (<i>marginal error</i>)

SAMPLE

SEPTEMBER 2020

N = XXX Σ = 100%

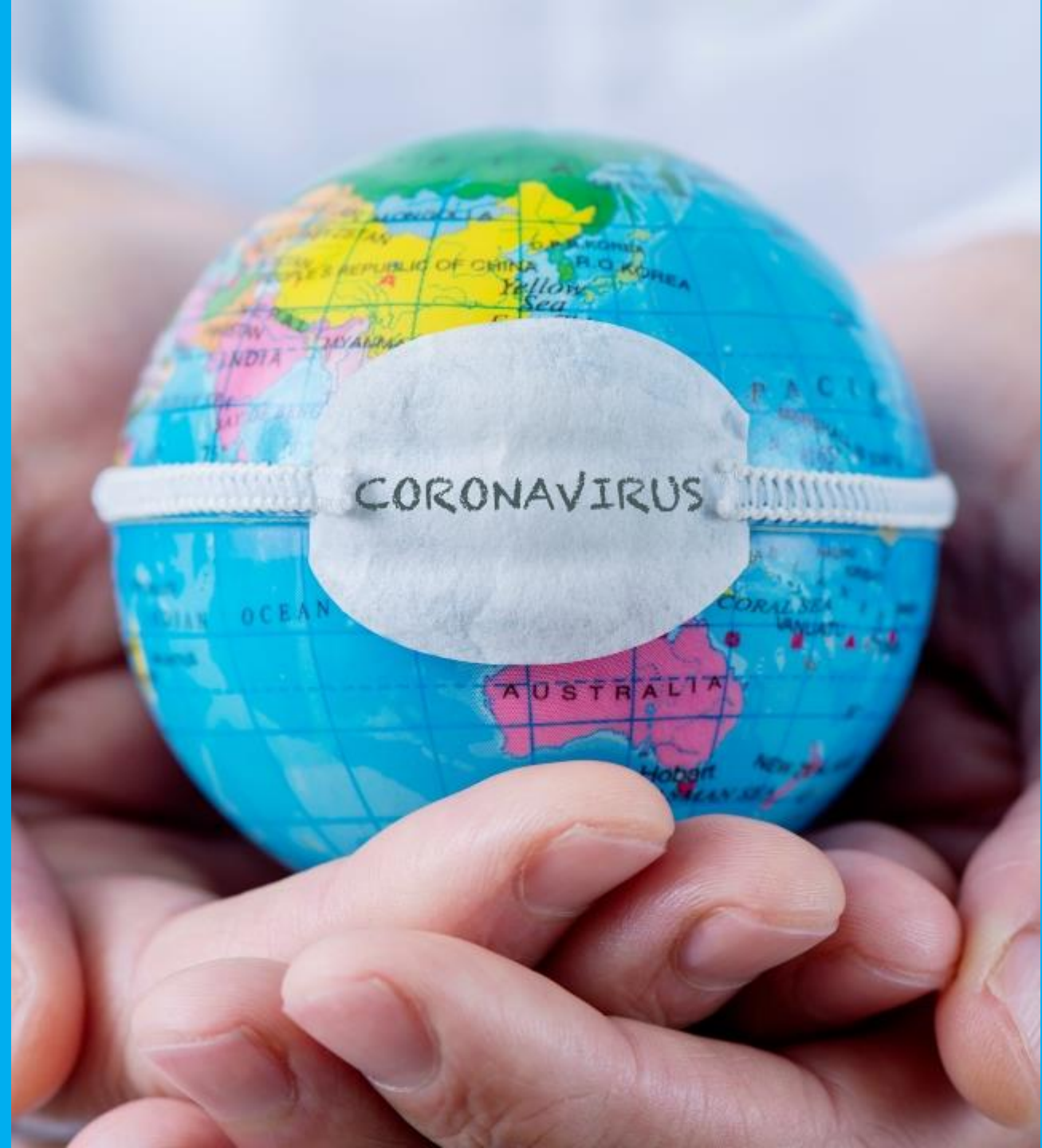


Base: Total target population, N=804

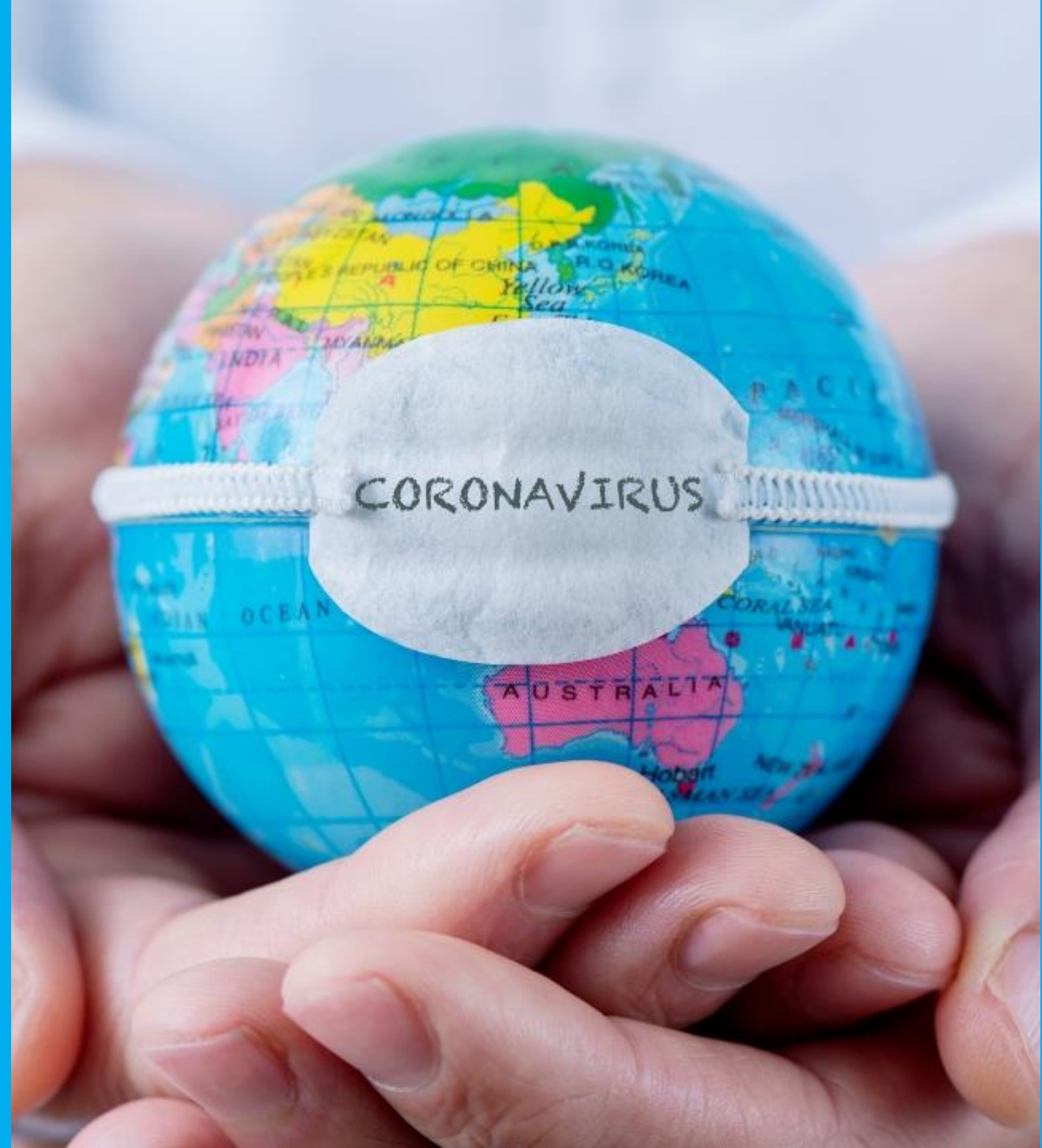
METHODOLOGY – qualitative study

- **The qualitative part of the study included:**
 - **Three online focus group discussions with parents of school-age children: primary school lower and higher grades, and secondary school**
 - Participants were parents of both genders, of different educational profiles and professions, and from all three regions of Montenegro
 - **Six in-depth interviews with parents:**
 - Two interviews with parents of children with special educational needs
 - Two interviews with Roma parents
 - Two interviews with parents of children from socially vulnerable categories
 - **Three in-depth interviews with key informants:**
 - One interview with a representative of the Trade Union of Education of Montenegro
 - One interview with a representative of the NGO “Pedagoški centar”
 - One interview with a representative of the NGO “Parents”

RESULTS



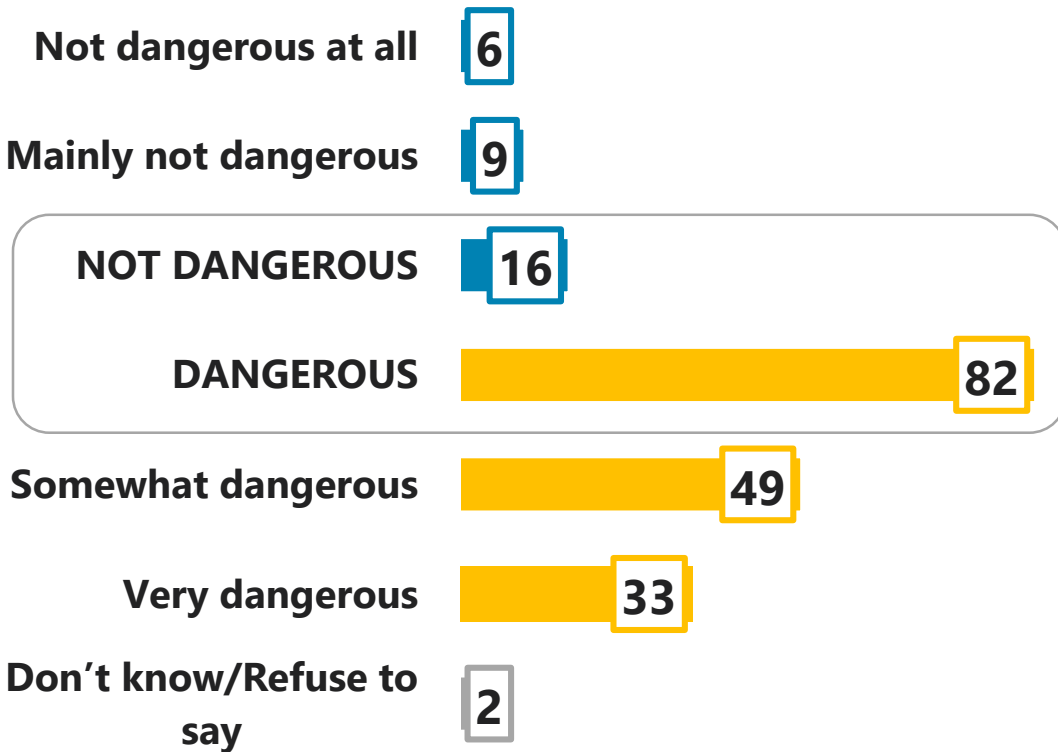
INFORMATION ABOUT CORONAVIRUS – PERCEPTION OF THE RISKS AND SERIOUSNESS



DANGER OF CORONAVIRUS

More than four-fifths of the interviewed parents agree that coronavirus is dangerous, and one-third that it is very dangerous.

Data in %



Parents of children of different ages

Lower grades of primary school



Upper grades of primary school



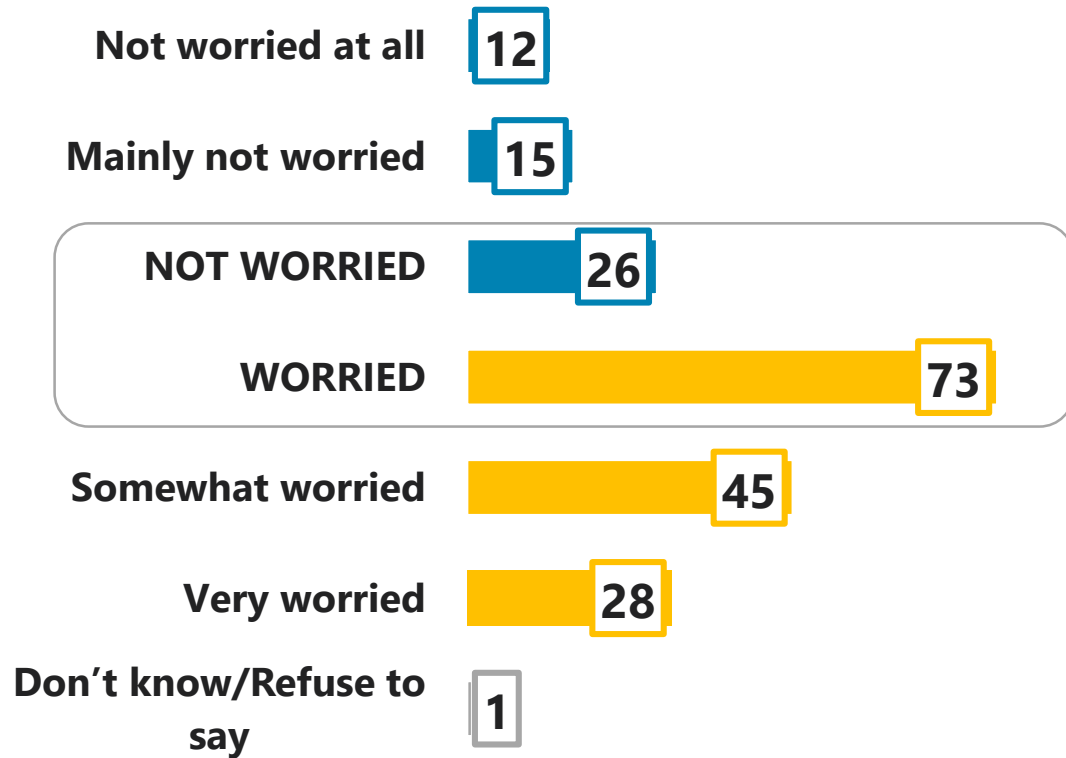
Secondary school



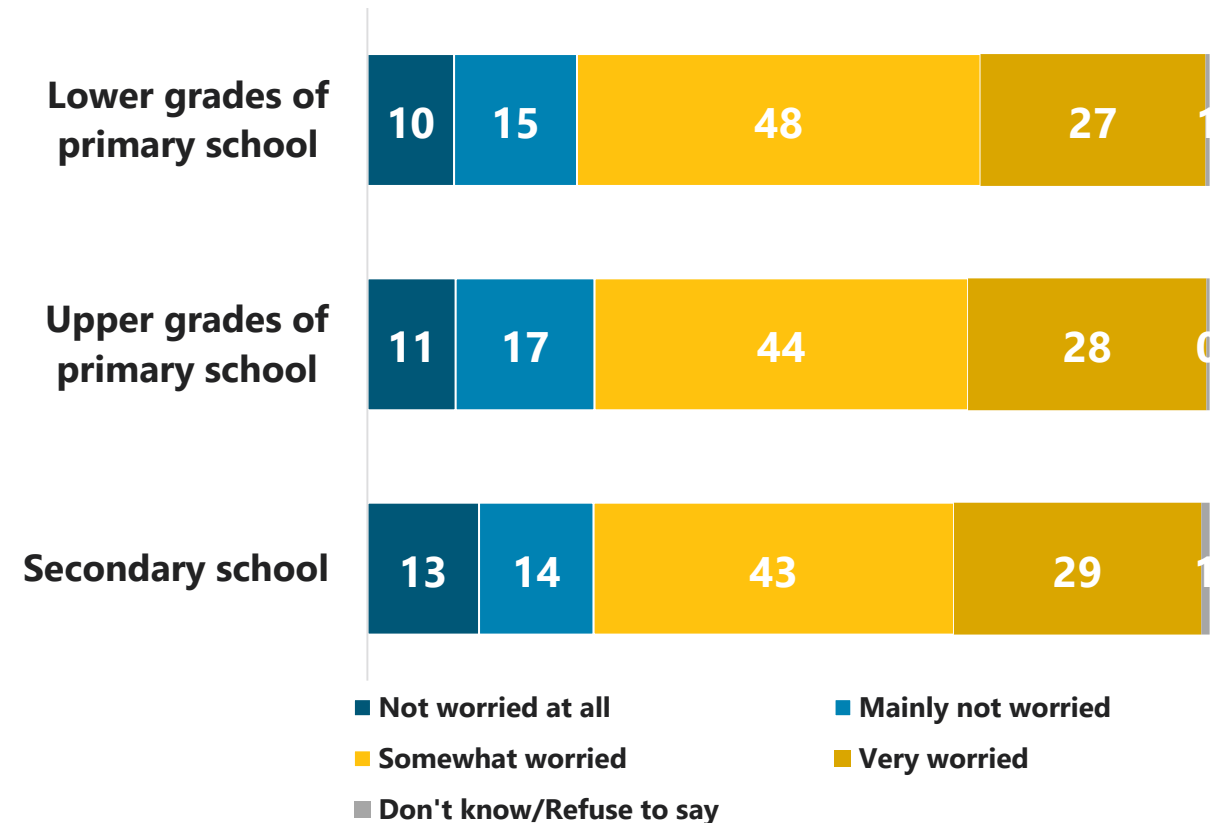
CONCERN ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

Seven out of 10 parents are concerned that they or their dear ones might get infected with coronavirus. On the other hand, one-quarter have no such fear.

Data in %



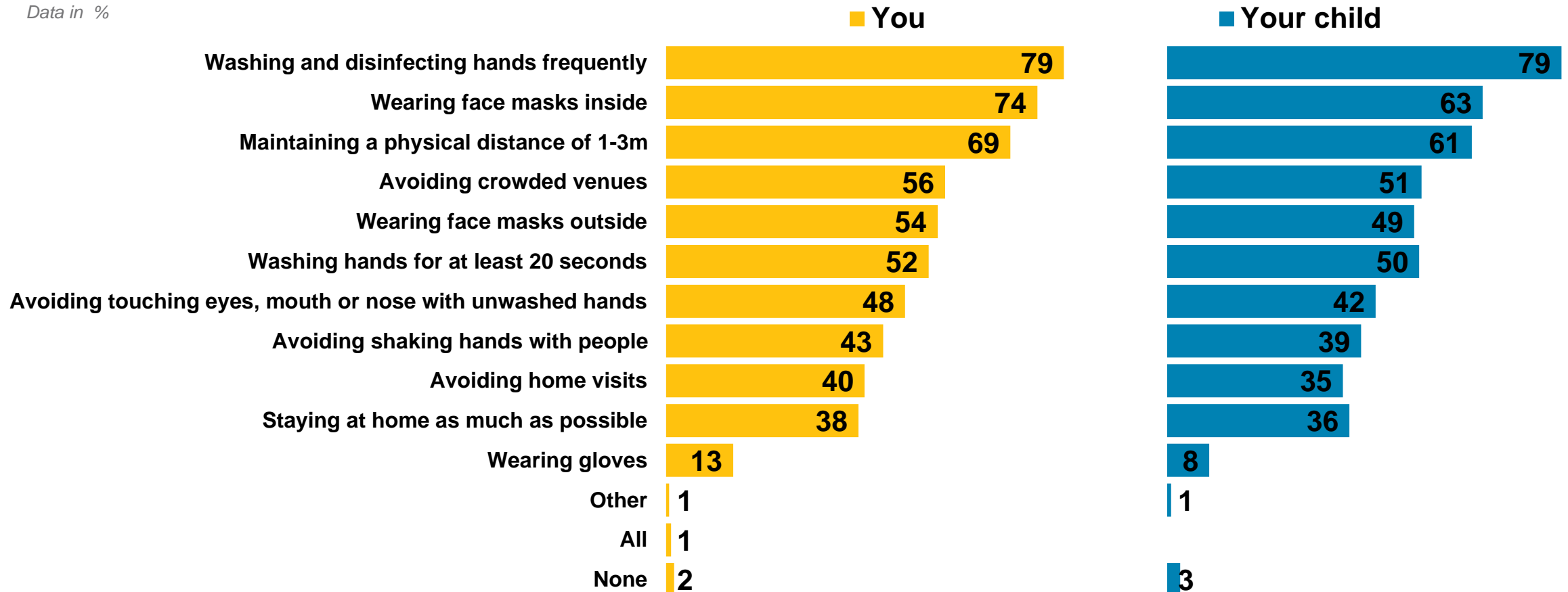
Parents of children of different ages



IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

The great majority of parents (80%) confirm that both they and their children wash and disinfect their hands frequently and that this is the measure that they implement most. This is followed by wearing masks indoors and keeping the suggested distance. However, these types of prevention are a lot more common among adults than among children.

Data in %



Which of the following measures are you implementing as protection from coronavirus?

Multiple answers

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Which of the following measures are you implementing to protect your child from coronavirus?

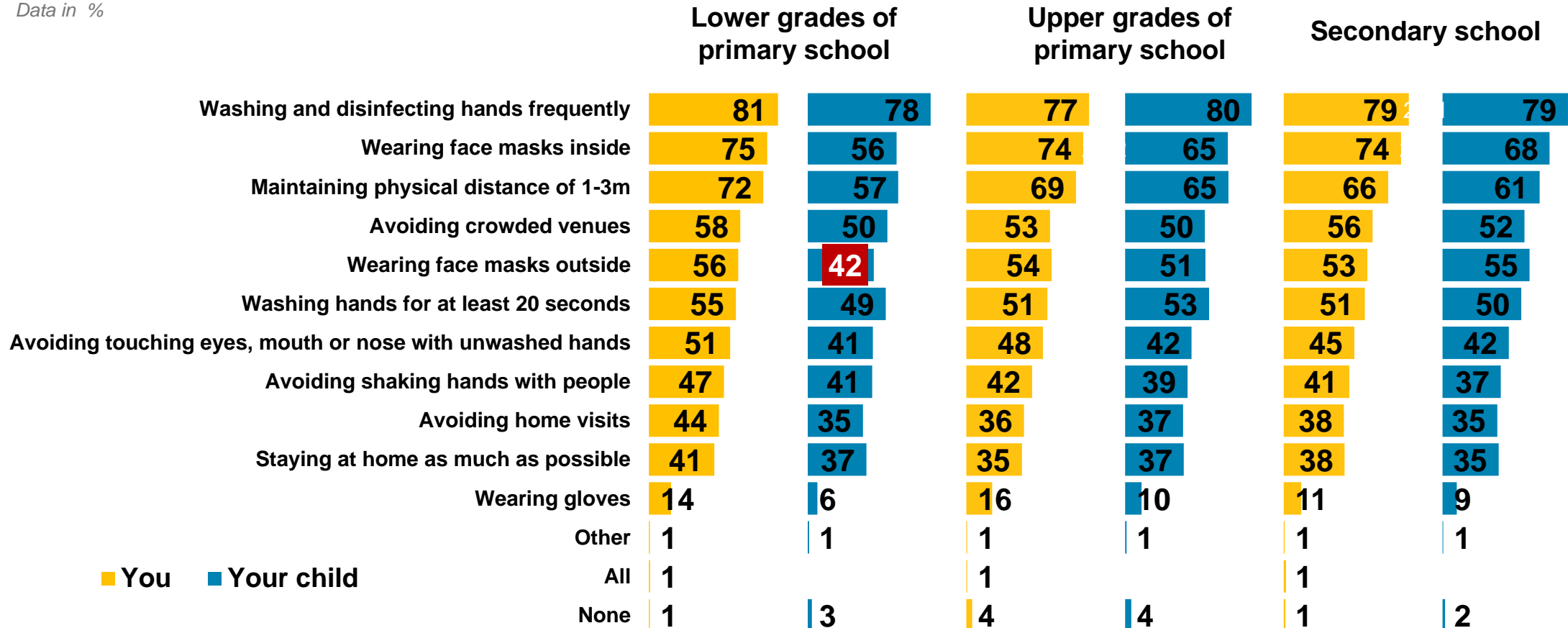
Asking him/her or making him/her adhere to the following: Multiple answers

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES AGAINST CORONAVIRUS AND CHILD'S AGE

Regardless of the child's age, washing and disinfecting hands is convincingly the most often implemented measure of protection. Wearing face masks inside comes in second, while social distancing is in third place. Compared to other parents, the parents of the youngest pupils (grades 1–5 of primary school) insist on face masks outside less frequently.

Data in %



Which of the following measures are you implementing as protection from coronavirus? Multiple answers
 Which of the following measures are you implementing to protect your child from coronavirus?
 Asking him/her or making him/her adhere to the following? Multiple answers; Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population.

Qualitative part of the study reveals parents' strong concern

- The parents covered by the qualitative part of the study **still perceive the risk of coronavirus as substantial**. According to them, **opening up Montenegro's borders is particularly dangerous**, since it means a considerable inflow of foreign citizens. Another difficult aspect is **the beginning of the school year and the virus season**, so the majority of parents expect a **significant number of the infected, while some even think that the situation will be worse than in the first wave**.
- Accordingly, **parents report that some of the recommended preventive measures are still being implemented in their households** – frequent washing of hands, more frequent disinfecting of rooms and clothes, wearing masks in indoor public places, as well as avoiding personal contact. At the same time, **they also state that they are more relaxed than before**, so parents and children meet with other people, don't wear gloves and, since it's summer, spend a lot less time at home.
- However, **parents share that they cannot watch over their children continuously in terms of the extent to which they implement preventive measures outside of home, particularly when the children are with their peers**. The parents of secondary school pupils are more **skeptical** about how much their children respect the measures, **but they all agree that children will be more likely to implement preventive measures if they are constantly reminded of how grave the virus is and how they should behave**.
- As for the **special categories of households, the parents of children with special needs are more likely to report that they are still implementing protective measures** because of their children's health, while **Roma parents are very afraid of getting infected because they doubt that they will be given adequate medical treatment**.

QUOTES

I seem more relaxed as time goes by. It was new at first, but we are used to this situation now, it has become everyday. – *Mother of a child with special educational needs*

This is all a bit illogical and I don't trust anyone. Our schools are closed and our borders are open, it's pointless, I don't know whom to trust. – *Parent of a secondary school pupil*

Although we are still implementing protective measures, we are a lot more relaxed. We are healthy, the children are healthy, it's normal for us to be relaxed, this is not a normal situation and it can't last, we can't be isolated forever. – *Parent from a socio-economically vulnerable population category*

To be honest, I don't think that this virus exists at all. It's just a virus like any other, like during the 'flu' season. It's a problem for me to wear a mask because it's unpleasant and it suffocates me. So I wear one only when I have to, and so do my children. – *Parent from a socio-economically vulnerable population category*

Of course the situation is more stable than in March. We wear masks only when we have to, when we go shopping, go to the bank... We see other people and that's it. – *Parents of a primary school child (higher grade)*

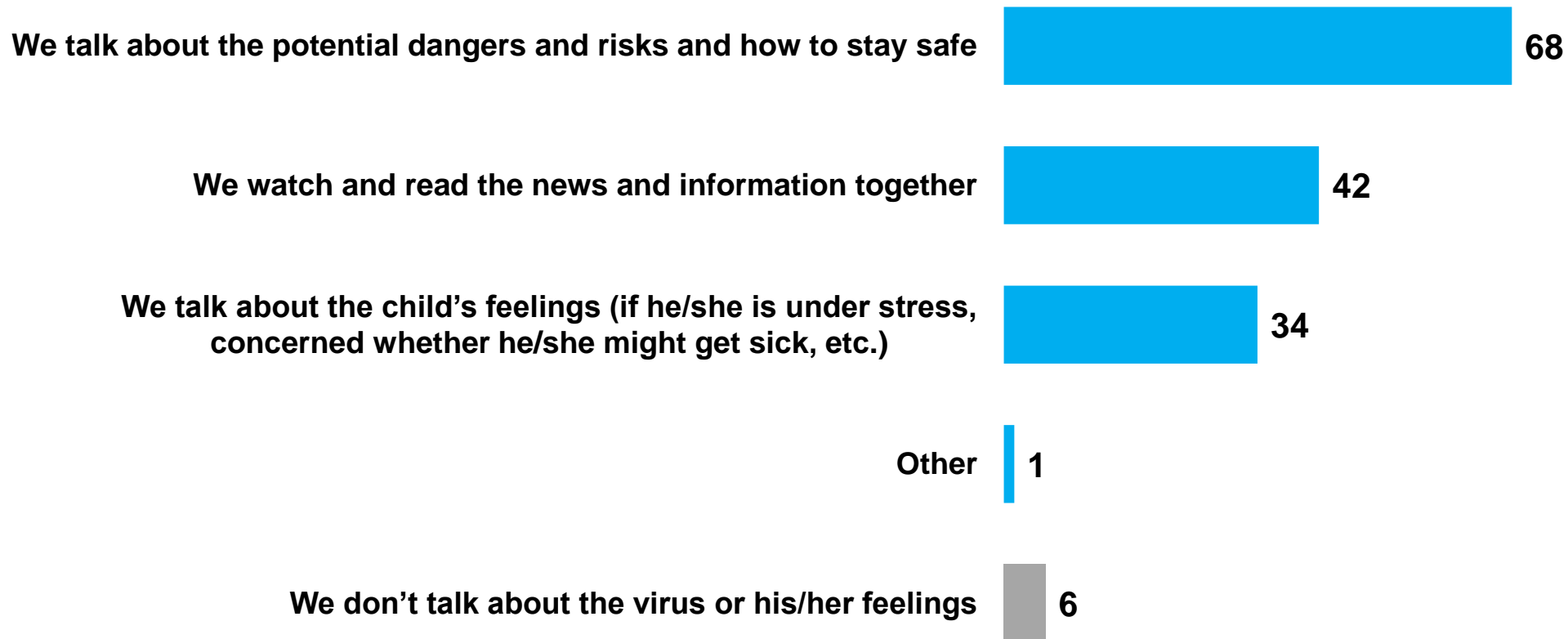
I expect the number of infected to grow. The days will get colder, that's when viruses flourish, we know what happens every year even without coronavirus. We'll see what happens, but I'm not optimistic. – *Parent of a primary school child (lower grade)*

We are waiting for the second wave; the media says that there will be one and that the situation might be worse than now. We are being careful and that's all, what else can we do. – *Roma parent*

SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT CORONAVIRUS WITH ONE'S CHILD

About two-thirds of parents are talking to their children about coronavirus dangers and about how to stay safe; two-fifths are getting informed together by watching and reading the news, and one-third are talking to their children about their feelings during the epidemic.

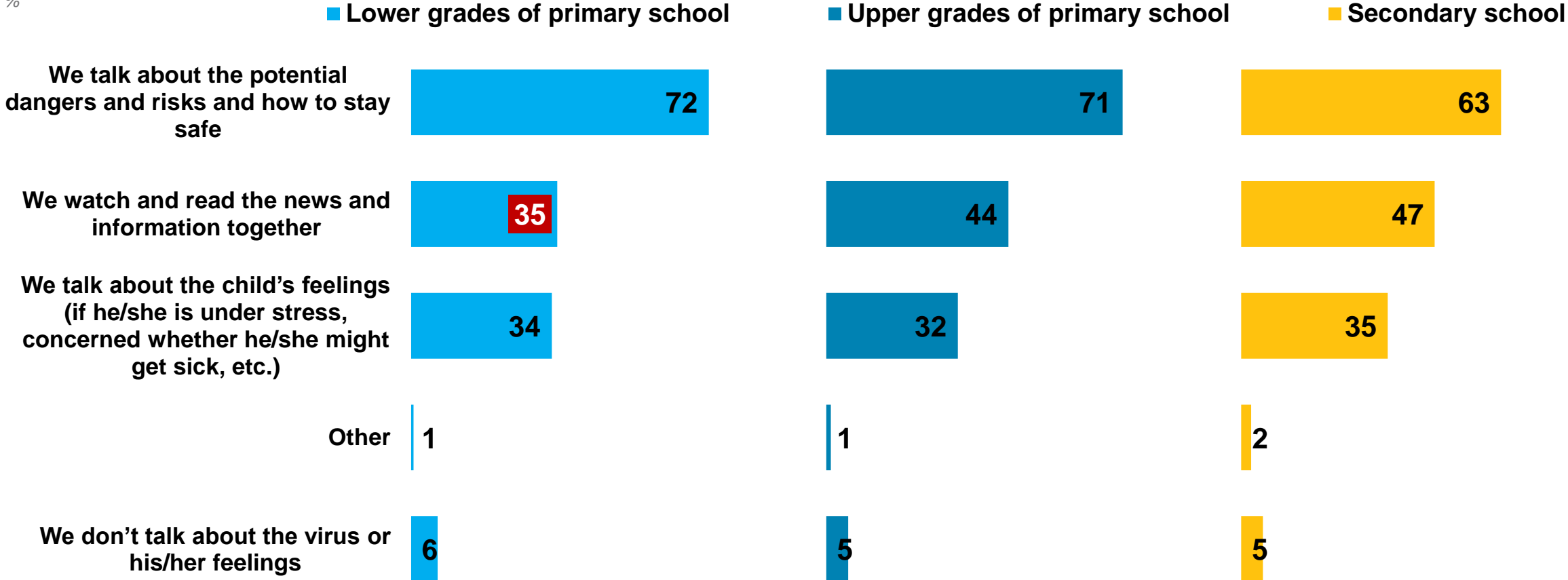
Data in %



SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT CORONAVIRUS AND CHILD'S AGE

Results suggest that 70% of primary school children are talking to their parents about the potential risks of coronavirus and adequate protective measures. This share is smaller among secondary school pupils, but it is still quite large (63%). Quite expectedly, children in the lower primary school grades are a lot less likely to follow the news about the pandemic.

Data in %



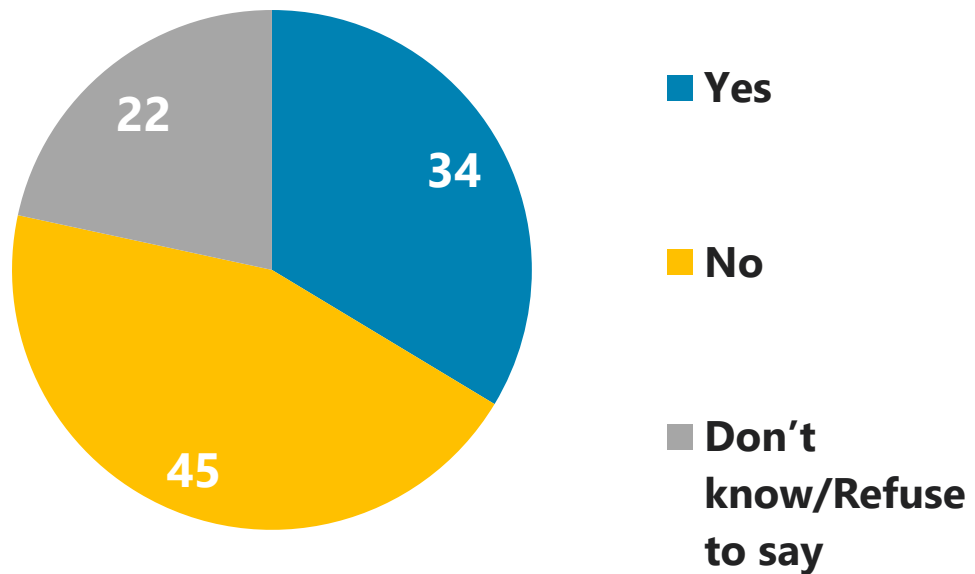
How do you share information about coronavirus with your child?; Multiple answers
 Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population.

VACCINATION AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

Parents don't have a uniform opinion about potential vaccination against coronavirus. However, those who would refuse to be vaccinated currently prevail (45%). One-third would accept it and about one-fifth are reserved.

Data in %



Parents of children of different ages

Lower grades of primary school



Upper grades of primary school



Secondary school



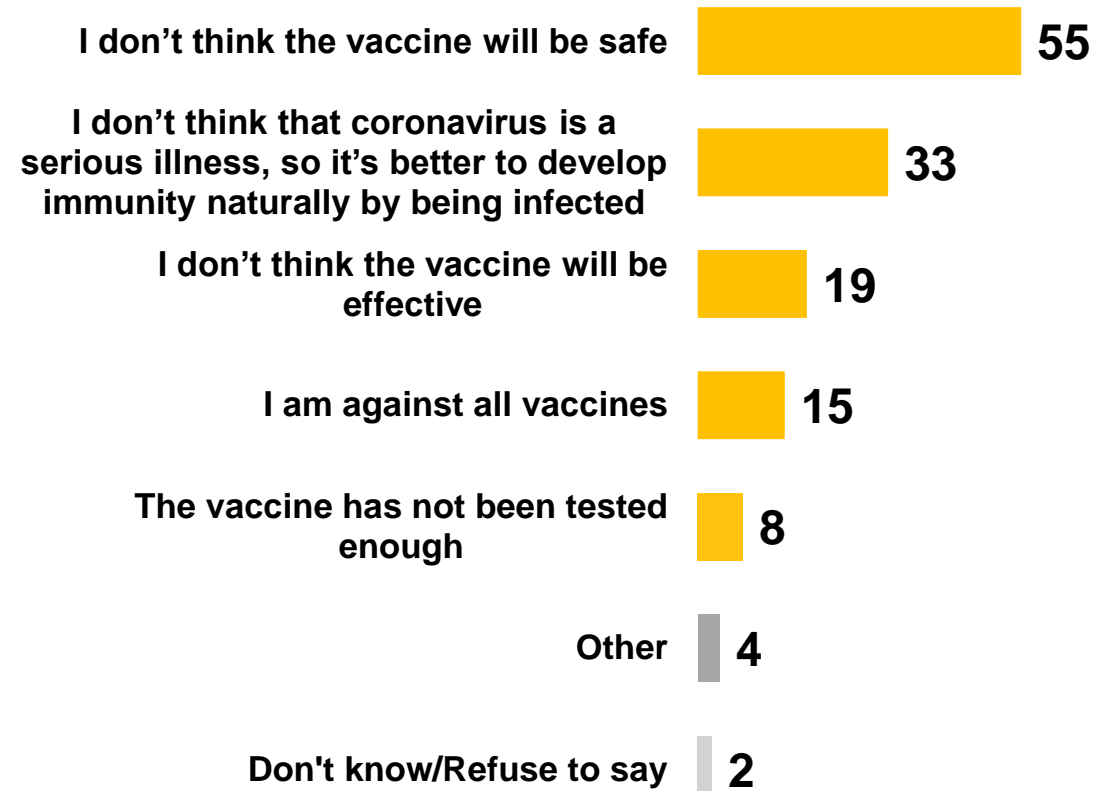
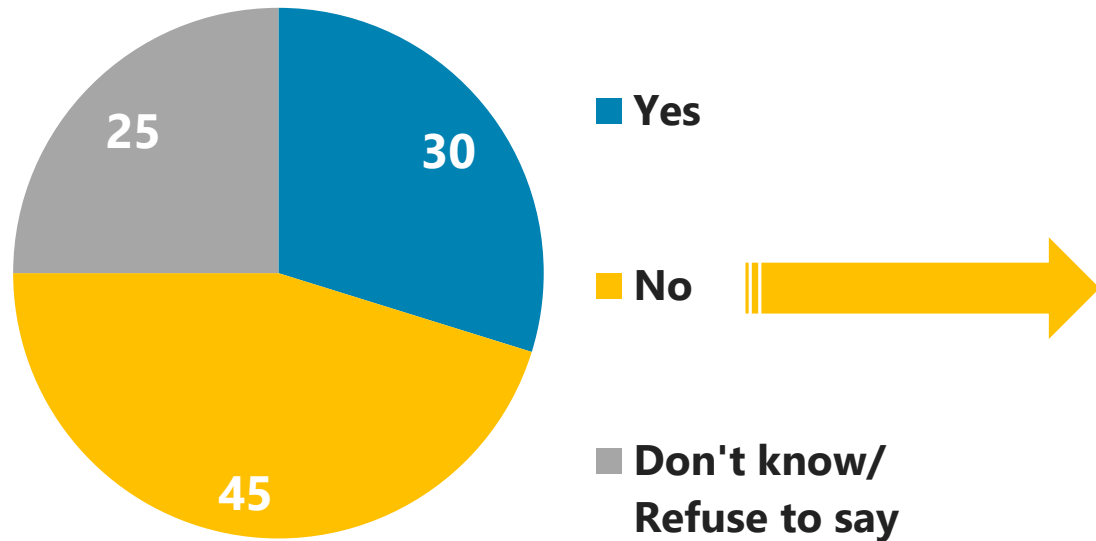
If a vaccine against coronavirus were available, would you get vaccinated?

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN AND REASONS AGAINST

Three out of 10 parents would have their child vaccinated; one-quarter are not sure, and again those who would not accept vaccination prevail (45%). For more than half of them the reason is suspicion regarding vaccine safety, one-third believe in creating natural immunity, and one-fifth are skeptical about its effectiveness. In addition, a relatively high percentage of parents state that they are against vaccination in general (15%).

Data in %



If a vaccine against coronavirus were available, would you have your child vaccinated?

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

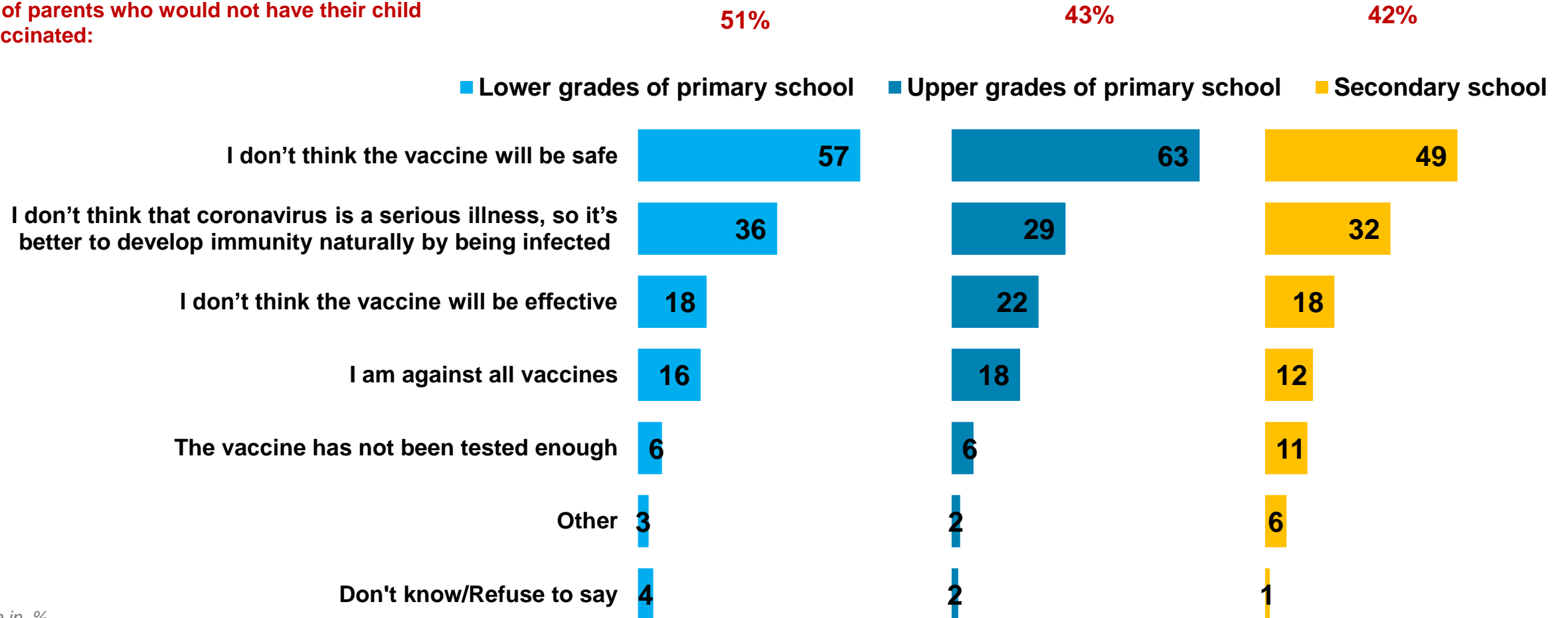
Why wouldn't you have your child vaccinated?; Multiple answers

Base: Those who would not vaccinate their children, N=469

THE REASONS AGAINST VACCINATION AND CHILD'S AGE

Regardless of the child's age, suspicion about vaccine safety is the most common reason by far among parents who wouldn't have their child vaccinated. Many also believe that collective immunity will be created and many have no confidence in vaccine effectiveness.

% of parents who would not have their child vaccinated:



Data in %

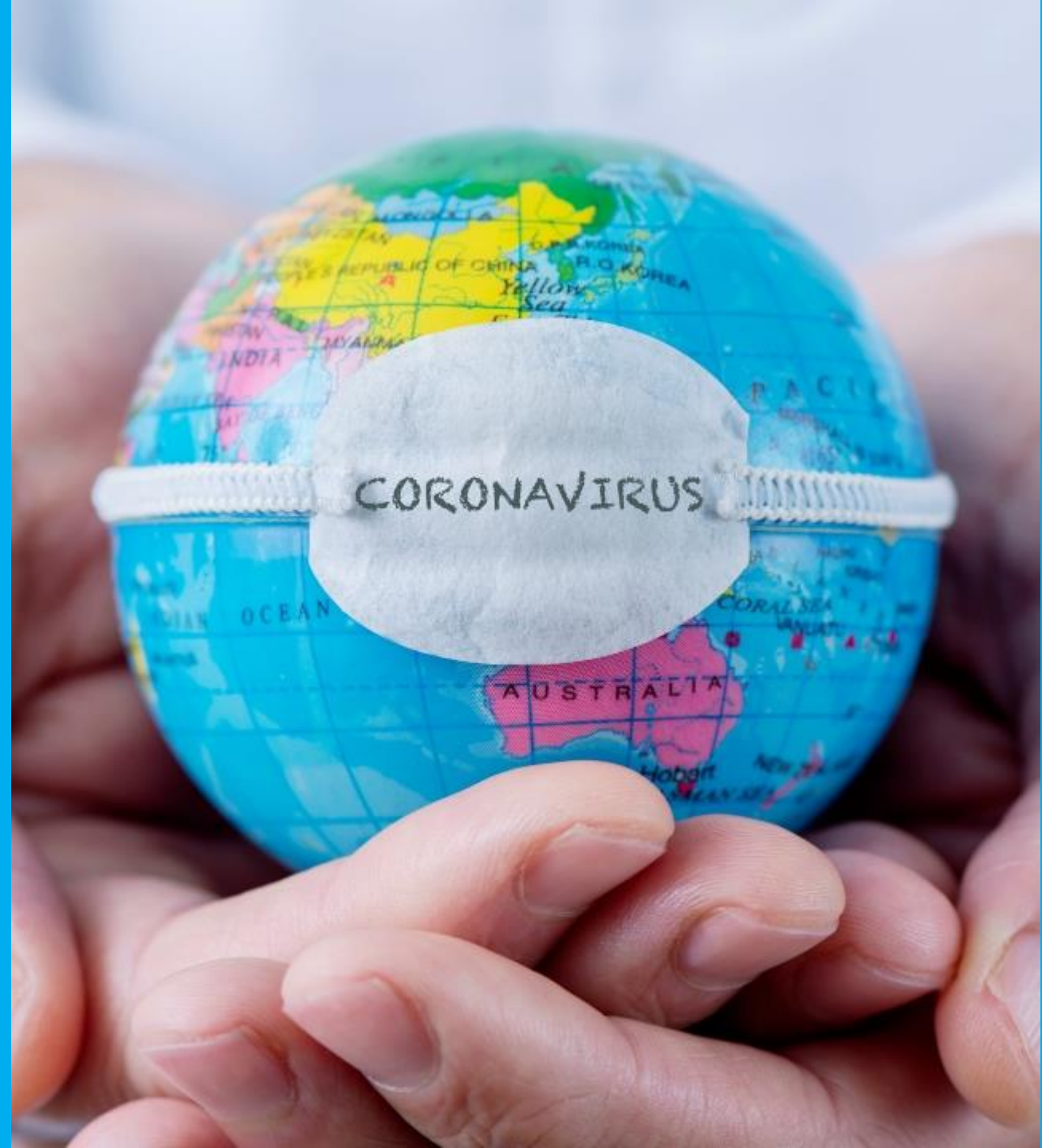
Why wouldn't you have your child vaccinated?; Multiple answers

Base: Those who wouldn't vaccinate their children, N=469

The qualitative part of the study does not register a uniform attitude towards vaccination either

- **A vaccine** against coronavirus makes many interviewed **parents suspicious**. They mainly have no confidence in one and they believe that **a trustworthy vaccine requires a lot of time** and a lot of tests.
- Another **element** in creating confidence in a vaccine is the fact that the virus doesn't affect everyone equally, so it is **not perceived equally seriously by all parents**.
- In addition, **while some of the parents who support vaccination** would accept being vaccinated **themselves, they wouldn't accept it for their children, since children are less likely to get infected and their symptoms are milder**.
- **Unanimously the most positive attitude towards the vaccine is registered among parents of children with special educational needs and Roma parents, while all parents expect this vaccine to be mandatory eventually**.
- Those who oppose vaccination cannot say how they will react if the vaccine is made mandatory, but such a mandatory status anyway would strengthen their refusal to accept it.
- **Key informants** have **positive expectations from the vaccine** and they believe that this is the only way to get the epidemiological situation under control and to restore the previous social functioning.

DISTANCE LEARNING – ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES

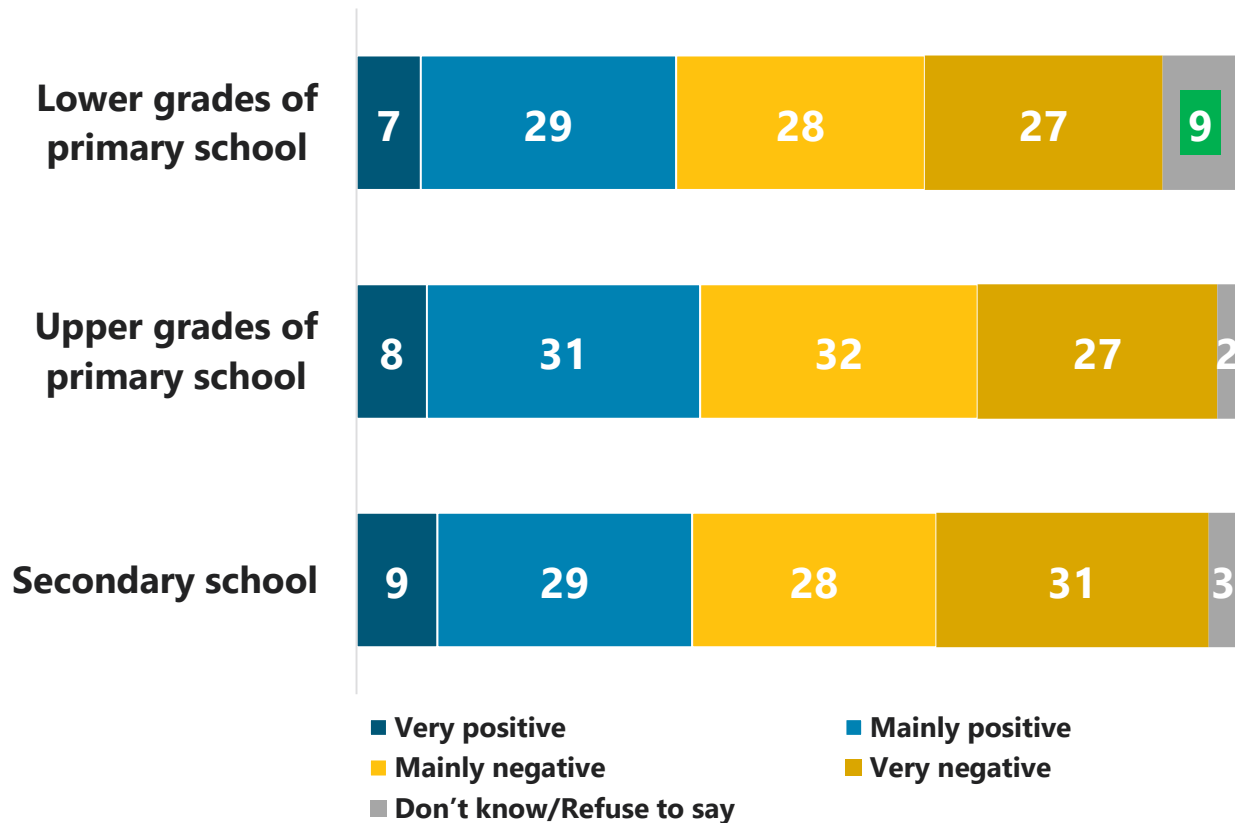
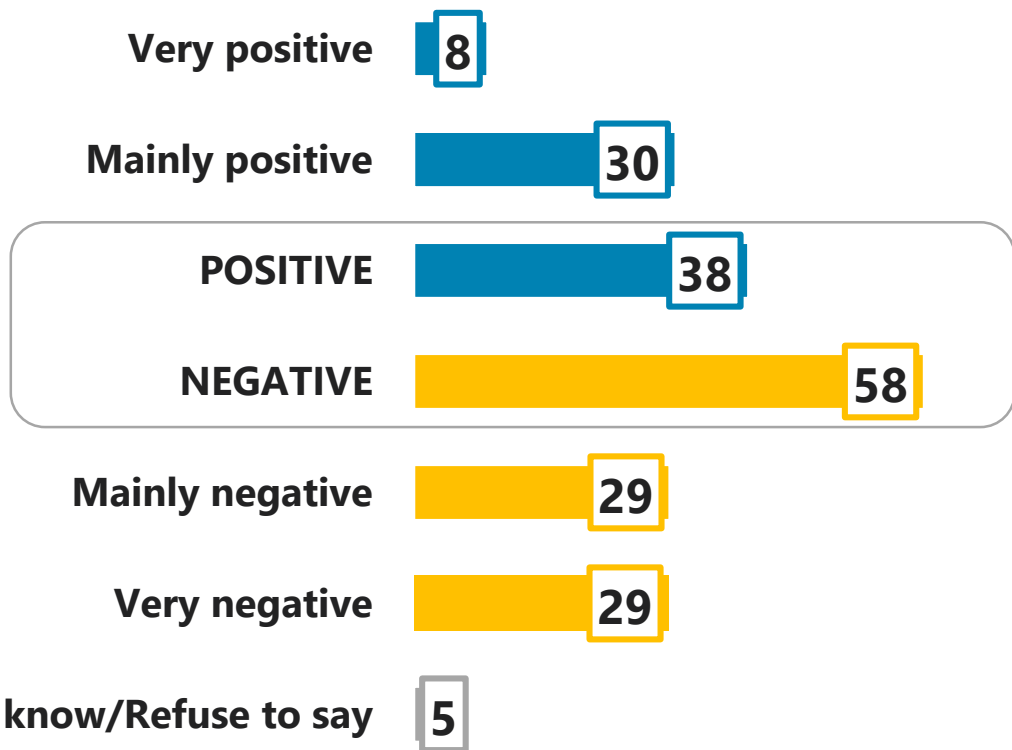


GENERAL OPINIONS ABOUT DISTANCE LEARNING

The parents of school-age children in Montenegro have a prevailing negative opinion about distance learning – almost three-fifths of those interviewed share this attitude. On the other hand, approximately two out of five parents perceive this learning model positively.

Data in %

Parents of children of different ages



Based on your experience from past school year, what is your overall experience with distance learning (online and TV contents, communication with teachers by telephone or the internet)?

Base: Total target population. N=1,037

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population

THE REASONS FOR NEGATIVE OPINIONS ABOUT DISTANCE LEARNING

Almost three-quarters of parents who don't support distance learning say that their child is losing motivation and work habits in that way. So, almost 60% believe that their child is growing distant from peers, and more than half claim that the quality of education is lower than with traditional methods.

Data in %



Why do you think so?; Multiple answers;

Base: Those who have NEGATIVE experiences of distance learning, N=596

THE REASONS FOR NEGATIVE OPINIONS AND CHILD'S AGE

Irrespective of the child's age, parents agree that distance learning is primarily resulting in slackening – children's motivation and work habits are threatened. Children are also becoming distant from their peers (in primary school especially) and the education is of lower quality than with traditional teaching. Parents of secondary school pupils, who usually don't need assistance with learning, are a lot less likely to say that they cannot help their children learn as teachers can.

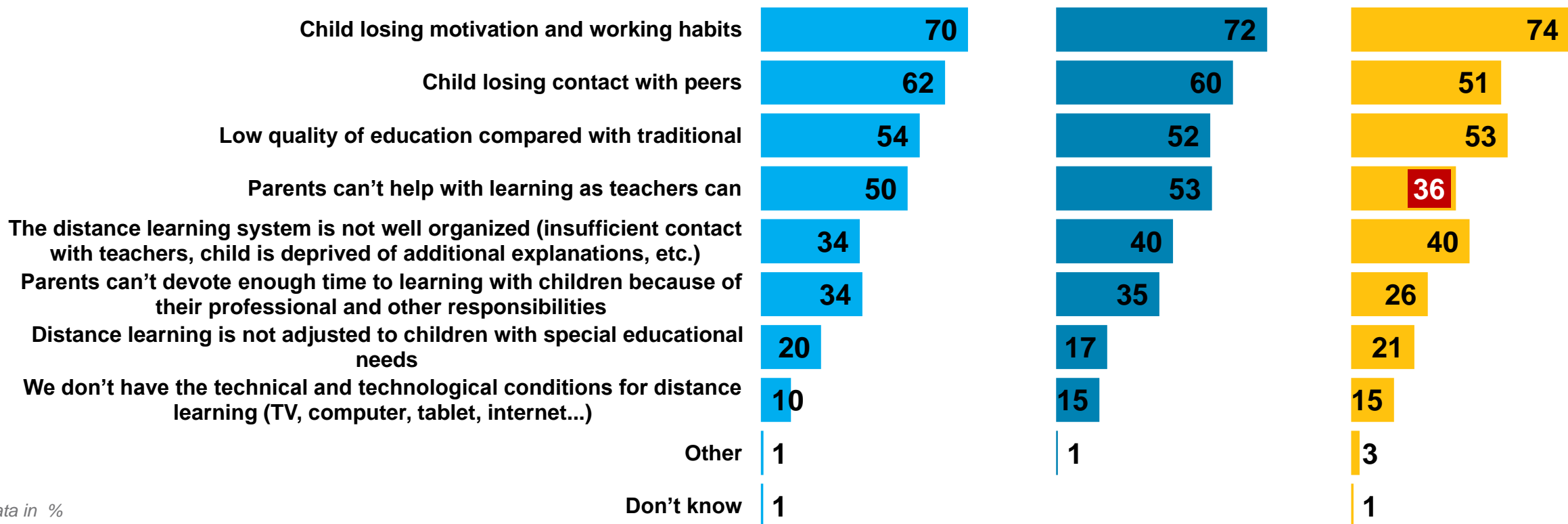
% of parents with negative opinions:

55%

59%

59%

■ Lower grades of primary school ■ Upper grades of primary school ■ Secondary school



Data in %

Why do you think so?; Multiple answers;

Base: Those who have NEGATIVE experiences of distance learning , N=596

Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population

Past parents' experience with distance learning is evaluated with a medium grade

- The majority of parents from the general population state that they are **moderately satisfied with the past distance learning cycle**. What they value most are **teachers' initiative and commitment, as well as quick organization of work**.
- **Negatives** mainly refer to the **quality of knowledge**, or **biased grading of pupils**. Many parents agree that children learned a **minimum of the stipulated curriculum**, and that the **grades were a lot higher than deserved**.
- On the other hand, **parents with smaller incomes and Roma parents are less satisfied with the organization of distance learning**, primarily because **not enough attention was paid to whether these families had the conditions to organize distance learning**.
- **Parents of children with special needs share a different kind of dissatisfaction** – they claim that there was **no support in regard to special materials adapted to their children's needs, and no support from other professionals** – personal assistants, speech therapists or psychologists.
- However, overall, **parents are rather satisfied with the frequency of communication with teachers during distance learning and they say that this support was actually crucial to the process**. The **parents of younger children and Roma parents are more likely to mention this support**.

- **Quick organization**
- **Teachers' commitment**
- **Frequency of communicating with teachers**
- **Ease of learning**
- **Greater involvement of parents in the child's learning process (lower grades)**

- **Quality of education (inadequate giving of grades)**
- **Generalization – the attitude that all children have equal possibilities to organize distance learning**
- **No prepared printed materials**
- **Using different platforms**
- **Lack of support of other professionals**

Evaluation of different aspects of distance learning – parents

- **Organization by the school** – this process is evaluated mainly positively, especially the speed of teachers' adaptation. The decision to switch to distance learning at the beginning of the epidemic is generally considered a good one and this is perceived as one of the key moments for keeping the epidemiological situation under control.
- **Preparation and teachers' readiness to work this way** – although teachers' attitudes towards pupils are evaluated positively, some parents are not sure how well-prepared teachers were for the process. They particularly criticize teachers for using different platforms. The parents of younger children, but also Roma parents, report that situations when children had to change learning platforms aggravated the process of adaptation to distance learning heavily.
- **Children's reduced motivation** – although not all parents mention this problem, those who do say that the majority of children, especially younger ones, found it hard to understand how it was organized and to learn. The key moment for reduced motivation was when it was announced that the grading criteria would be much more lenient than usual. Many parents say that this affected children's motivation to study and do homework because they "knew in advance" their grades, regardless of the efforts invested.
- **Organization in the households and technical conditions** – some groups of parents were not satisfied with this segment – parents of children with special needs, Roma parents, as well as parents from socio-economically vulnerable population categories. Namely, not all parents from all categories had the conditions for the adequate organization of learning (no internet or TV). In these cases, the parents asked for help – they either sent their children to learn at their neighbours' or relatives' house or to families with adequate conditions (Roma parents) or they tried to organize support on their own (with printed materials). On the other hand, a majority of parents had problems with household organization, especially those who had to work regularly. Again they relied on the support of other family members (younger children), while older children usually had no help, and they were left to cope on their own.

Evaluation of different aspects of distance learning – parents

- **Changes to children's psychosocial functioning** – all parents say that distance learning was a burden for their children, especially because of lack of socialization with peers. Children were mainly slightly more anxious during lockdown, while parents did not mention other problems.
- **Changes to children's health status** – some parents noticed that their children were gaining weight in this period. However, almost all parents say that they would be worried about this aspect if distance learning was applied again, especially the parents of children who practice sports.
- **A decrease in the general quality of education** – all parents agree that **children's knowledge with distance learning is a lot weaker than with traditional teaching**. They particularly underline **the grading system and lack of its monitoring**.
- **The system's focus on special, sensitive groups of children** – parents again agree that the previous organization of distance learning wasn't focused enough on these categories of children. So, parents from **socio-economically vulnerable groups and Roma parents expected schools to focus on them and provide the necessary conditions where they were not available**. In addition, the parents of children with special educational needs state that **they lacked support and equipment to work from home, and that schools did not address these issues**.

QUOTES

I highly respect the teachers' efforts. Especially older teachers for whom it was very hard to adapt. But the school year ended the way it did. – *Parent of a secondary school pupil*

Our teacher was really dedicated. Continuous communication with us, with the children, adaptation to the new system... – *Parent of a primary school child (lower grades)*

We, as parents, are absolutely satisfied. Those who are not, are not used to working with children. I am very satisfied with the way everything was organized. – *Parent of a child with special educational needs.*

To be honest, I don't believe in that coronavirus at all. To me, it's a virus like any other, like when it's the 'flu' season. It's a big problem for me to wear a mask because I don't like it and I don't feel comfortable. For that reason, I wear it only when I have to, and it's similar with my children. – *Parent from a socio-economically vulnerable population category*

The teacher gave her best, but nothing can replace a school desk. – *Parent of a primary school child (higher grades)*

We were given a mobile phone, the school called us and asked if we needed anything, we said what we needed and they gave it to us. This facilitated the process a lot. – *Roma parent*

I am not really satisfied as a parent. The teacher did send all the material regularly, but we parents had to hurry, print the materials, and the photocopiers didn't work all the time. Children also need other professionals, and there were none. These children can't be expected to sit home alone without anyone's support. – *Parent of a child with special educational needs*

Our child is a good pupil, but he became indifferent, unmotivated. We had to work a lot with him and make him learn; we were a lot more involved than usual. It was very strenuous. – *Parent from a socio-economically vulnerable population category*

The grading system was the key problem. Children are very smart when it comes to using technologies, so they can easily copy from others or find ways to get good grades without much work. – *Parent of a primary school child (lower grades)*

Evaluation of different aspects of distance learning – key informants

- **The key informants agree with parents to a great extent in regard to the speed of organizing the distance learning process.** According to them, **the training that teachers had in distance learning did not quite cover all the challenges they faced**, but their response, largely based on personal initiative and motivation, was adequate.
- **At the same time, the key informants state that there was no multidisciplinary collaboration** – representatives of the NGO sector expected more extensive engagement, especially in working with the parents of children from vulnerable categories. They say that **the focus was placed on realization, and not so much on the quality of the process**, which means that **the system was mainly targeting the general population and much less children from vulnerable categories.** This refers to the **technical equipment available to these families necessary for distance learning, and also additional assistance in organizing the process where difficulties were encountered.**
- **In addition, the system of grading was also criticized to a great extent** – according to the key informants, distance learning requires changes to the aspects that are graded. One of the key informants mentions the significance of **formative grading** required by distance learning, as opposed to **summative**, which is used in the regular system. **Therefore, they think that each future form of learning should include this segment of grading as well, in order to get a more realistic picture of the knowledge and skills that pupils acquire in the process.**

QUOTES

It's good how quickly and well-organized the whole system was from the very beginning. About 200 teachers worked day and night and the Public [TV] Service reacted really well by giving them channels, because not everyone had the possibility to use the internet for learning. On the other hand, there were obviously gaps in the case of marginalized groups. So, children with special educational needs and Roma children were left to their parents completely. It's easy to communicate via Viber, but what if it's not possible? – *Key informant*

Attitudes have changed a lot since the beginning. The first reaction, quick reaction, was really excellent, great engagement of teachers, closing down schools for safety reasons, everything seemed very well organized and prepared. On the other hand, as time went by, it became obvious that there was no collaboration, no long-term planning, and no good communication with parents, who are absolutely unprepared for the new school year and they don't know what to expect. – *Key informant*

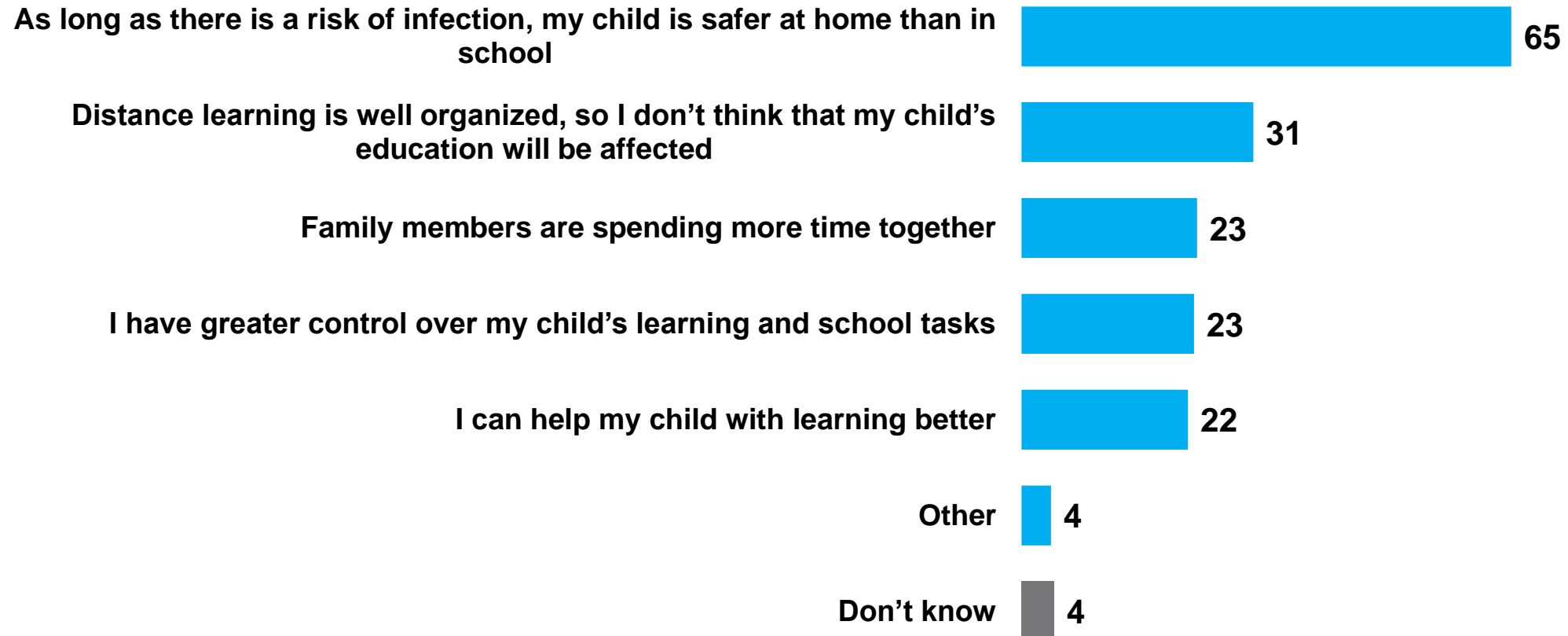
I would grade the first cycle 3 [out of 5]. The continuity of teaching was preserved, intensive work was going on with children, new materials appeared, children developed new skills. However, teachers were neither trained nor prepared enough. If the work method is changed, the grading method must also be changed. Our system is used to summative grading, and online learning also requires formative grading – not only to evaluate the amount of knowledge, but also its implementation, resourcefulness, other skills, which we still don't know how to measure. – *Key informant*

The Ministry of Education runs the entire educational system formally. When we had the outbreak, they were working on their own. When the school year ended, they persuaded the public that they had a detailed plan for September, so now they have moved the beginning of school year to October. There has been no communication between the Ministry and stakeholders since June. Children are not prepared, parents are not prepared. I expected more engagement from NGOs, who would help with preparing materials, guidelines, training, anything that could help parents, but it didn't happen. – *Key informant*

Technical challenges remained unresolved in many families, since Viber was the dominant means of communication. Also, the system was absolutely unadjusted to children with special educational needs. These children have special curricula, a personal assistant, and they had none of it. The worst thing is that the decision makers had enough time to be prepared, to collaborate and make plans for all scenarios, but they simply didn't. – *Key informant*

THE REASONS FOR POSITIVE OPINIONS ABOUT DISTANCE LEARNING

Parents who share a positive opinion about distance learning are most likely to say that it is safer for children to stay at home (65%). Almost one-third think that the distance learning system is adequately organized and that it is ensuring good education, and more than 20% of parents talk about advantages such as: the whole family being together; better monitoring of children; and the possibility to help them with learning more.



Why do you think so?

Multiple answers;

Base: Those who have POSITIVE experiences of distance learning; N = 201

THE REASONS FOR POSITIVE OPINIONS ABOUT DISTANCE LEARNING AND CHILD'S AGE

Again parents agree about the key reasons for their opinion regardless of their child's age. So all three categories of parents single out that their child is safer at home than in school. This is followed by the belief that the system is well-organized and that their child's education will not be affected. Quite expectedly, parents of secondary school children are a lot less likely to mention helping their children with learning as an advantage of this model.

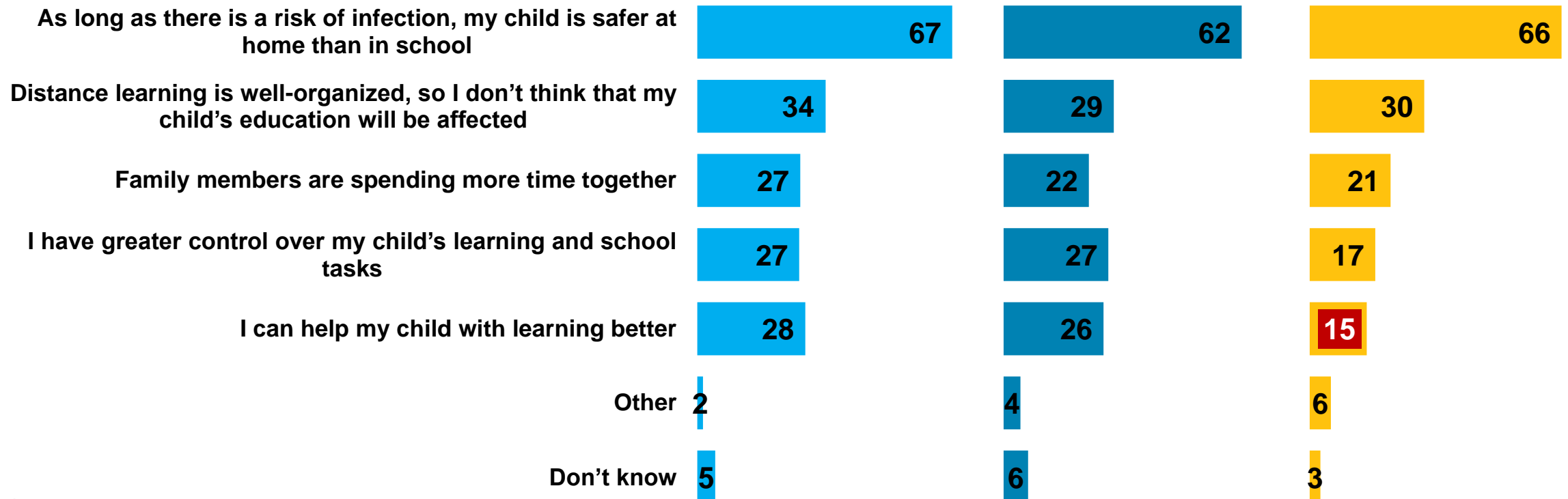
% of parents with a positive opinion:

36%

39%

38%

■ Lower grades of primary school ■ Upper grades of primary school ■ Secondary school



Data in %

Why do you think so?

Multiple answers;

Base: Those who have POSITIVE experiences of distance learning, N=391

Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population.

Evaluation of support – parents

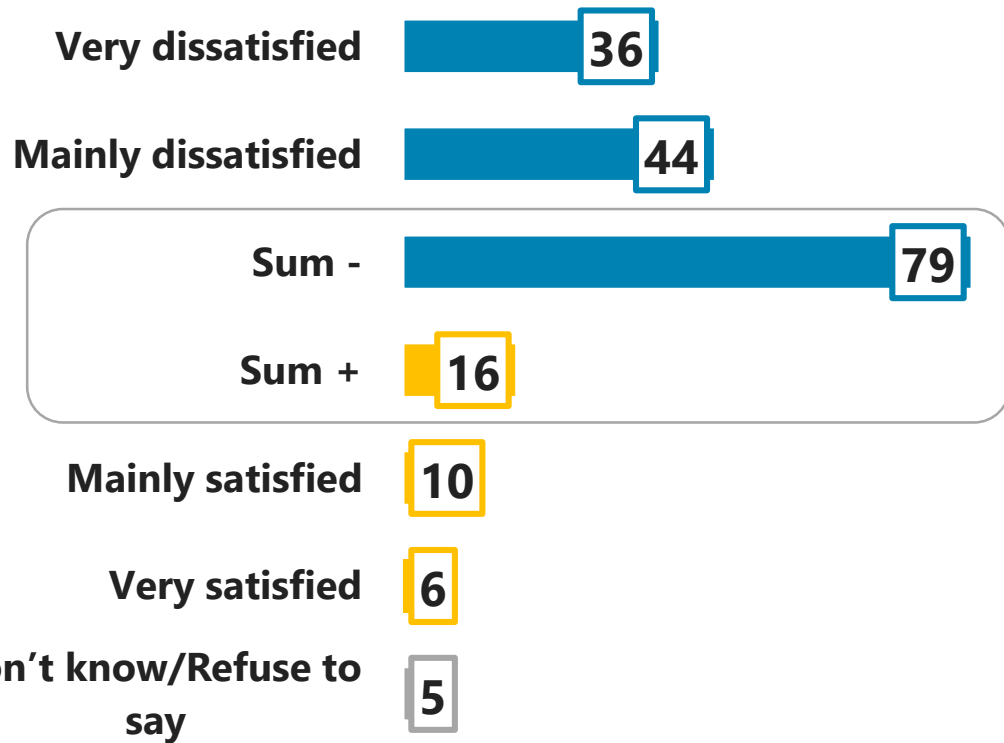
- Besides **direct communication** with teachers, which is evaluated very **positively**, **teachers' attitudes and tolerance at the beginning of the process are also valued highly**. So, participants say how teachers extended the homework deadlines or sent extra instructions for homework, in order to give children and parents enough time to get used to the new system.
- However, **not all parents are satisfied with the provided materials** – parents of younger children say that the amount of materials to be printed was large, which was quite hard to do, especially during the lockdown. Parents expected schools to prepare these materials and distribute them to everyone, especially to the financially vulnerable.
- On the other hand, **all parents state that there was no support from other professionals**. They generally think that there was more of a need to engage psychologists and pedagogues during the distance learning process and that their support was important. The parents of children with special needs underline the importance of this assistance even more. Due to the situation, one child had no speech therapy for months and the school didn't provide an alternative solution.
- In addition, **parents are also somewhat dissatisfied because they had no training in distance learning**. This is registered more among Roma families, where it happened that their illiteracy was a barrier to them helping their children learn.
- Finally, as regards providing the **concrete resources** necessary for distance learning, parents notice that **these were missing to a great extent**. So, only one Roma family was given a mobile phone for the child by the school, while other groups of parents deny having any support available. Of course, this type of support is considered more than necessary in order to ensure equal access to education for all children.

SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL SUPPORT IN DISTANCE LEARNING

As many as 80% of the parents are satisfied with the support their children and they got from the school in distance learning during the past school year.

Data in %

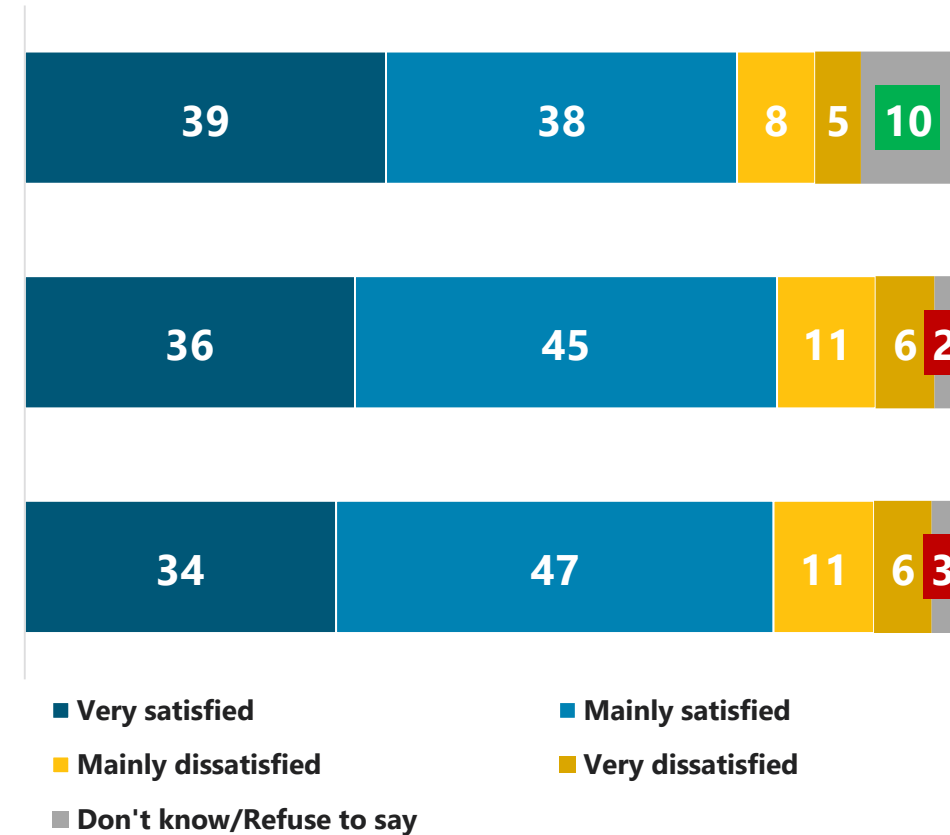
Parents of children of different ages



Lower grades of primary school

Upper grades of primary school

Secondary school



How satisfied were you with the support provided to children and parents by your child's school during distance learning periods?

Base: Total target population N=1,037

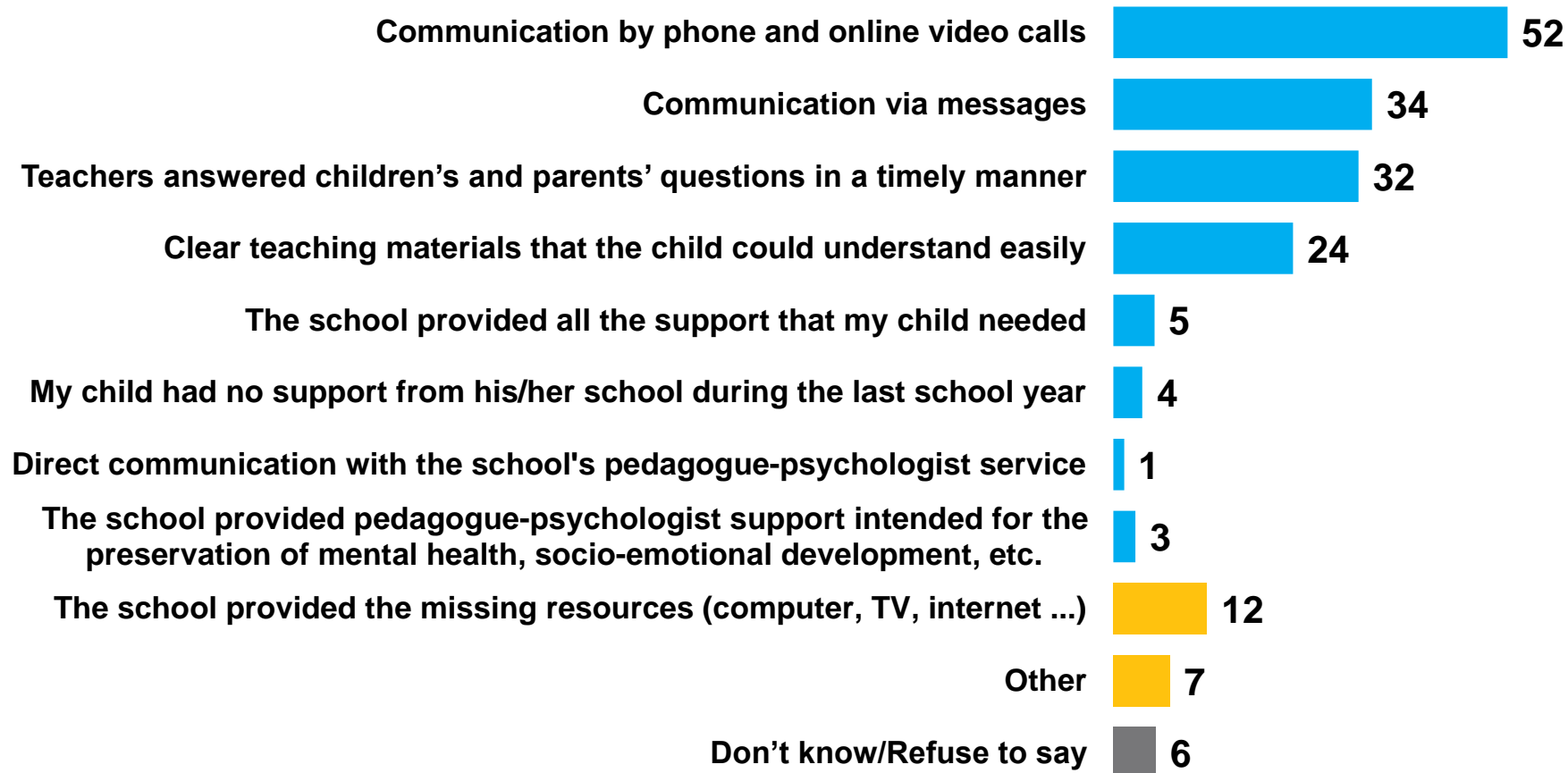
Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population

Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population

TYPES OF SCHOOL SUPPORT IN DISTANCE LEARNING

More than half of the parents single out teachers with whom they communicated via telephone or online video calls. One-third mention support via messages, but also that teachers responded to children and parents in a timely manner. And while 12% believe that the school gave all the needed support, 7% disagree, saying that the school didn't help their children with distance learning at all.

Data in %



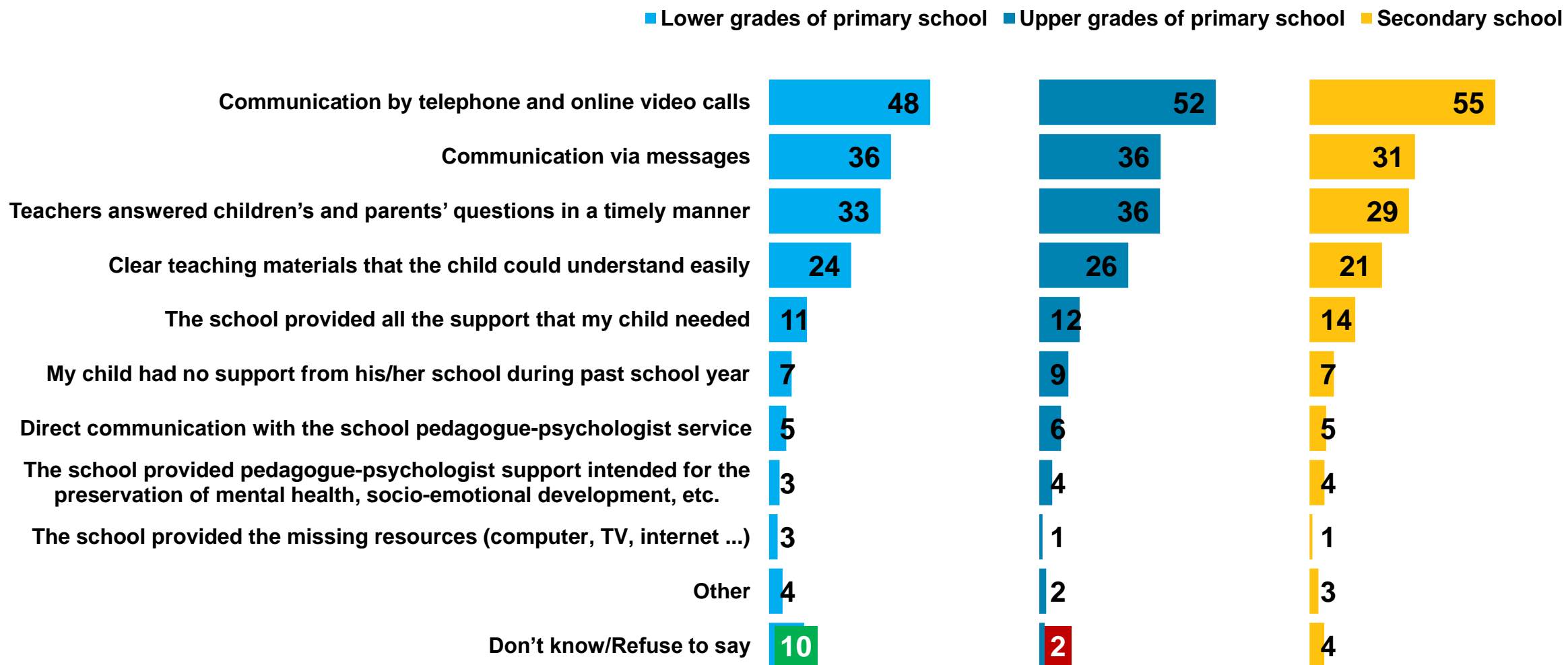
What kind of support did your child get for distance learning?

Multiple answers; Base: Total target population, N=1,037

TYPES OF SCHOOL SUPPORT AND CHILD'S AGE

Regardless of the child's age, parents seem to associate support in distance learning primarily with good and timely communication with teachers.

Data in %



What kind of support did your child receive for distance learning?
Multiple answers; Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population

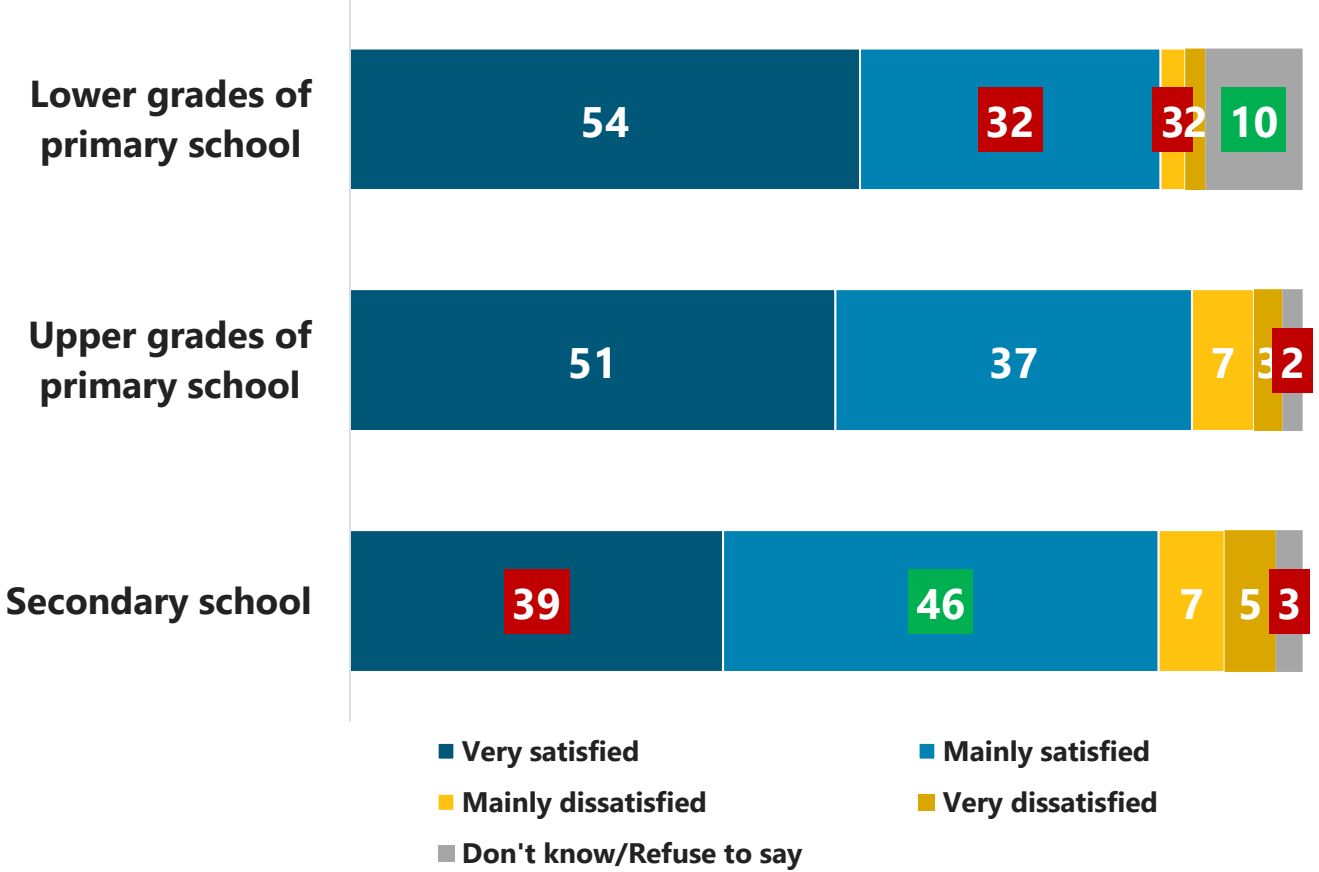
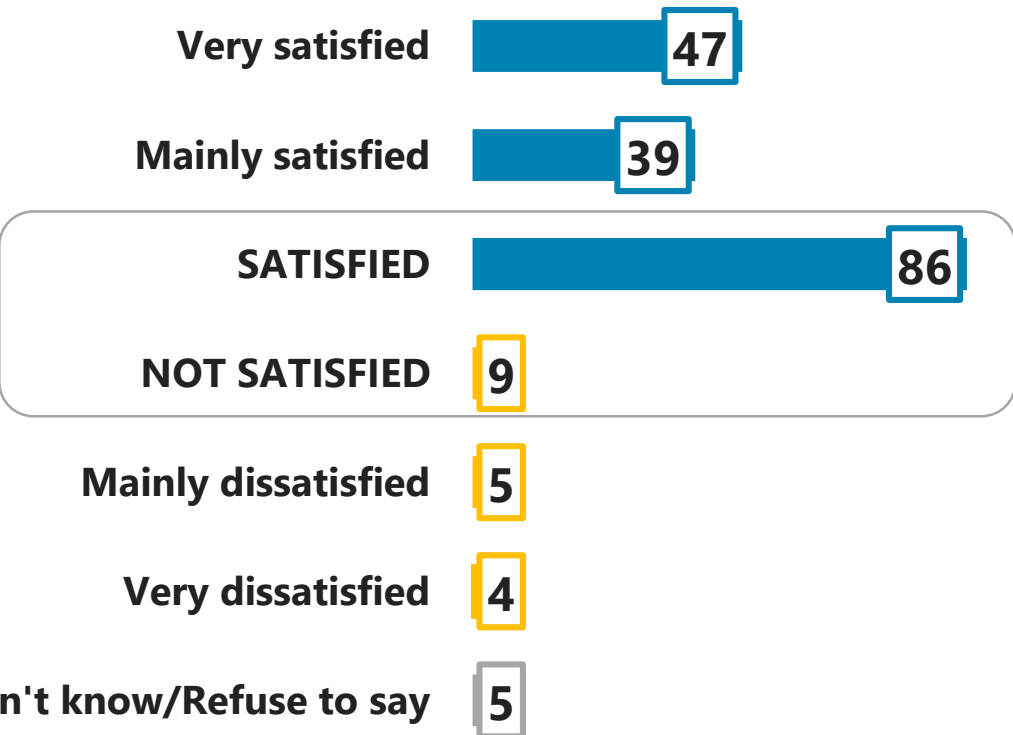
Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population

SATISFACTION WITH COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

The great majority of parents are satisfied with the communication and collaboration with teachers during the distance learning period (86%). Observing the parents of children of different ages, we see that the parents of primary school children are somewhat more satisfied, but there are generally no considerable differences.

Data in %

Parents of children of different ages



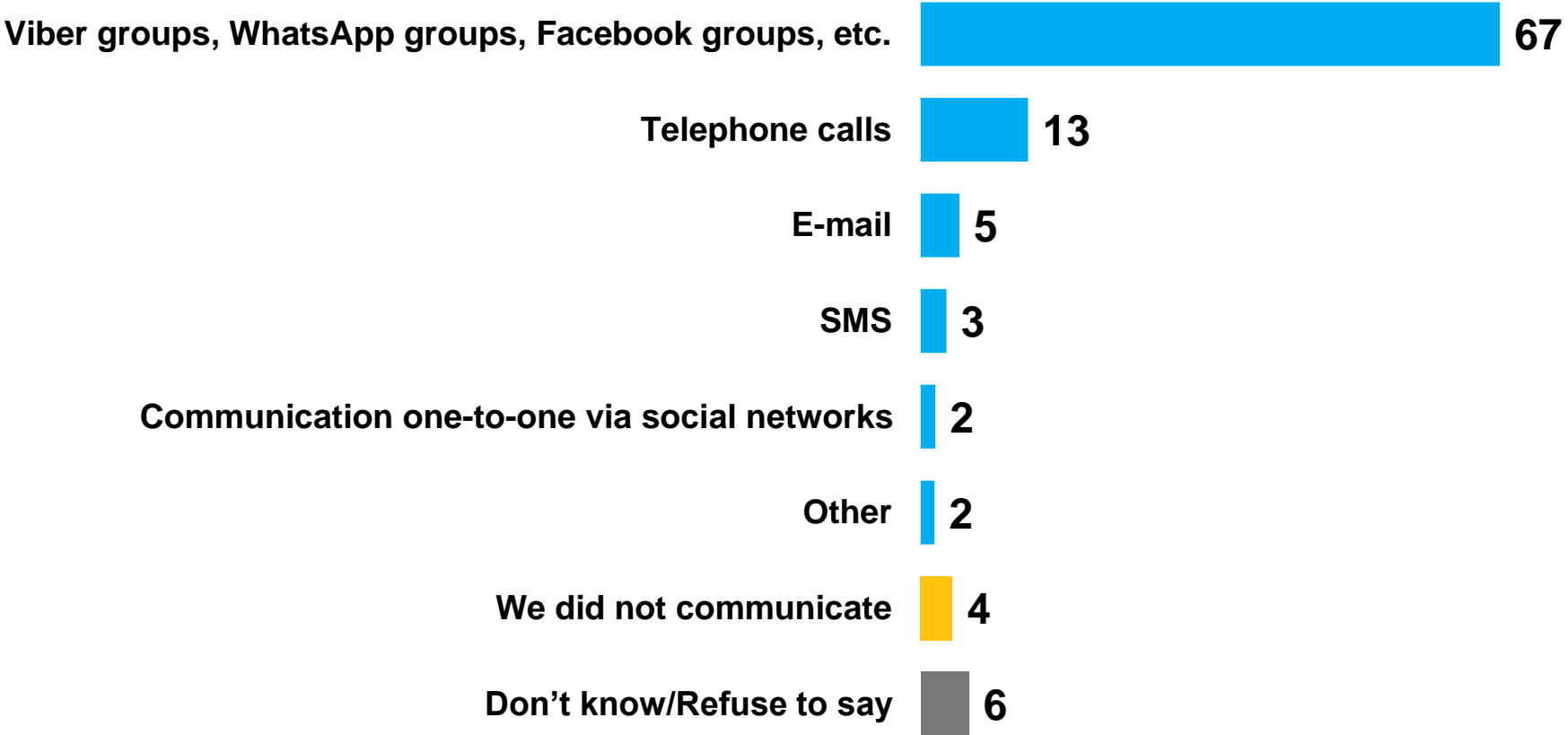
How satisfied were you with the communication with teachers during the distance learning period?
 Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population
 Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population

MOST COMMON METHODS OF COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

The most common method of communication between teachers and parents, by far, was via groups on various communicational platforms or social networks (67%). Telephone calls (13%), e-mails (5%) and other methods of communication lag far behind.

Data in %



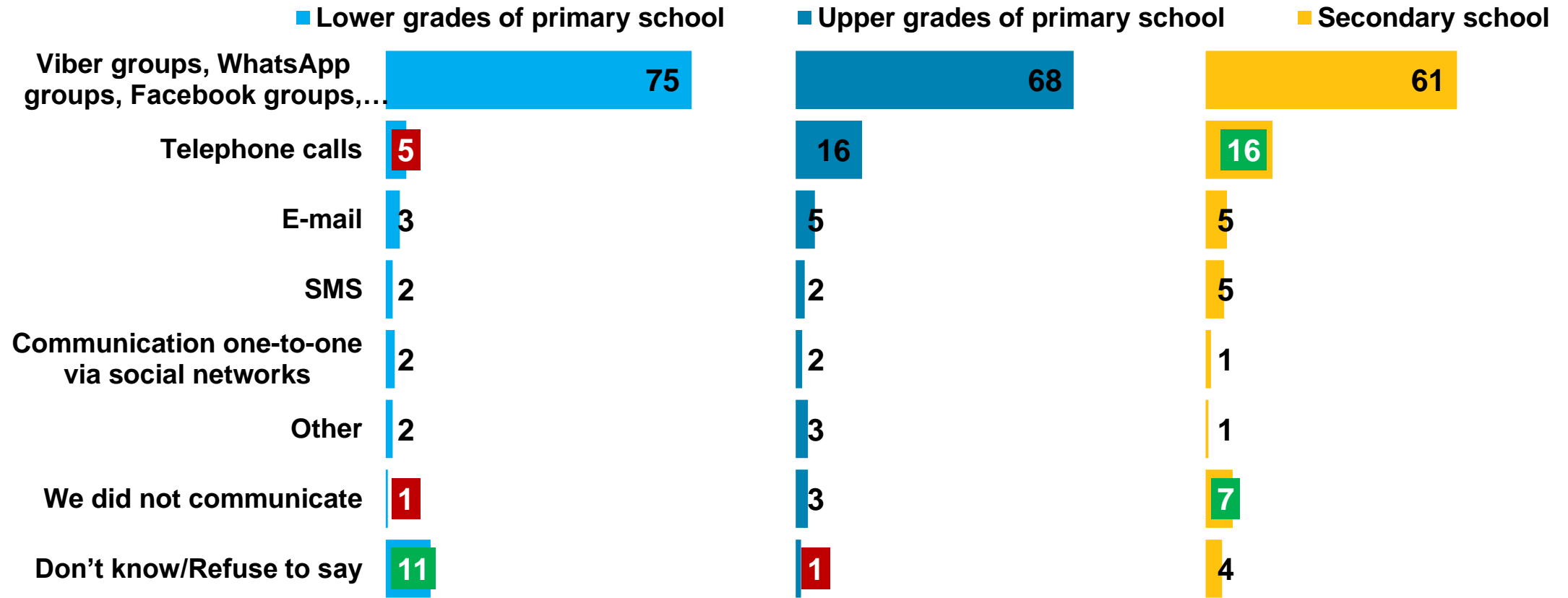
How did you usually communicate with teachers during distance learning?

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

MOST COMMON METHODS OF COMMUNICATION AND CHILD'S AGE

Viber, WhatsApp or Facebook groups are most popular and probably the most practical methods of communication with the school, irrespective of the child's age. The parents of the youngest pupils were less likely to communicate with teachers via telephone, while the parents of secondary school pupils were more likely than average not to communicate with the school at all.

Data in %

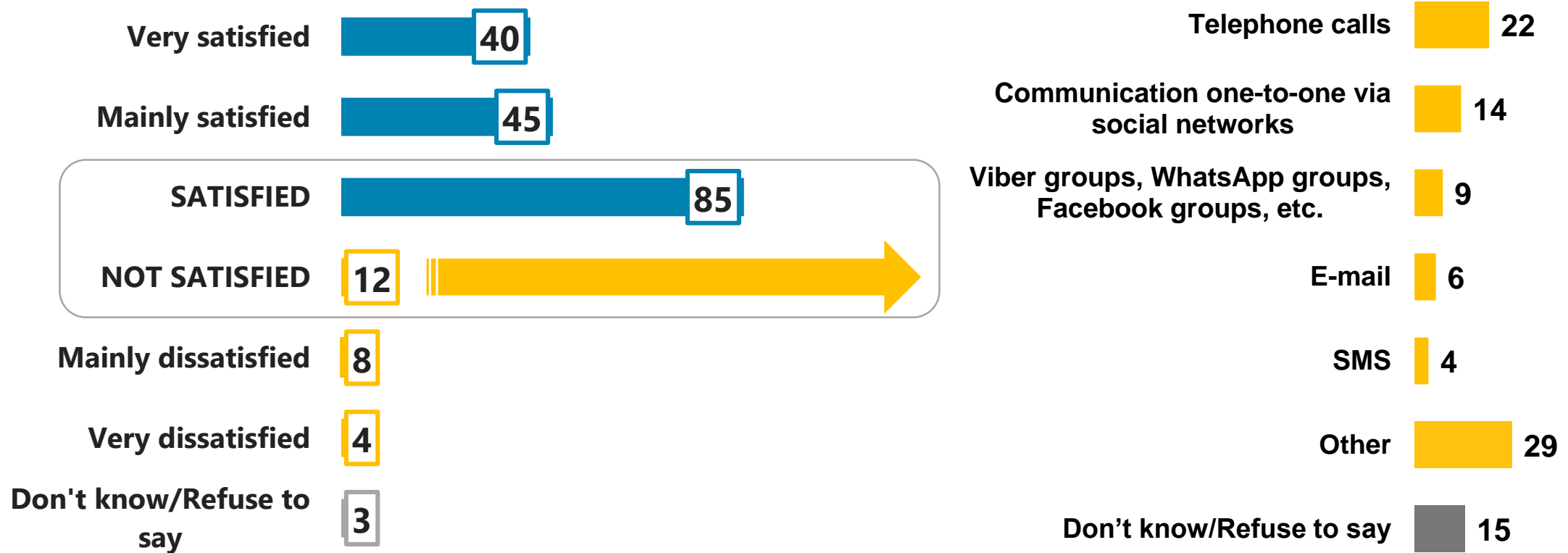


Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population
Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population

SATISFACTION WITH THE MOST COMMON METHOD AND ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

As many as 85% of parents are satisfied with the most frequently used method of communication with the school during the distance learning period. Those who are not believe that telephone calls and communication one-to-one on social networks would have been more adequate.

Data in %



How satisfied were you with this method of communication?

Base: Those who stated how they communicate with teachers during distance learning, N=979

Which method of communication suits you best?

Base: Those who are dissatisfied with the way they communicate, N=116

ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION AND CHILD'S AGE

Parents who are not satisfied with the method of communication with the school would, regardless of the child's age, primarily opt for telephone calls. In fact, the majority in all three categories did not specify any method of communication as the best.

% of parents who are not satisfied with the channel of communication

12%

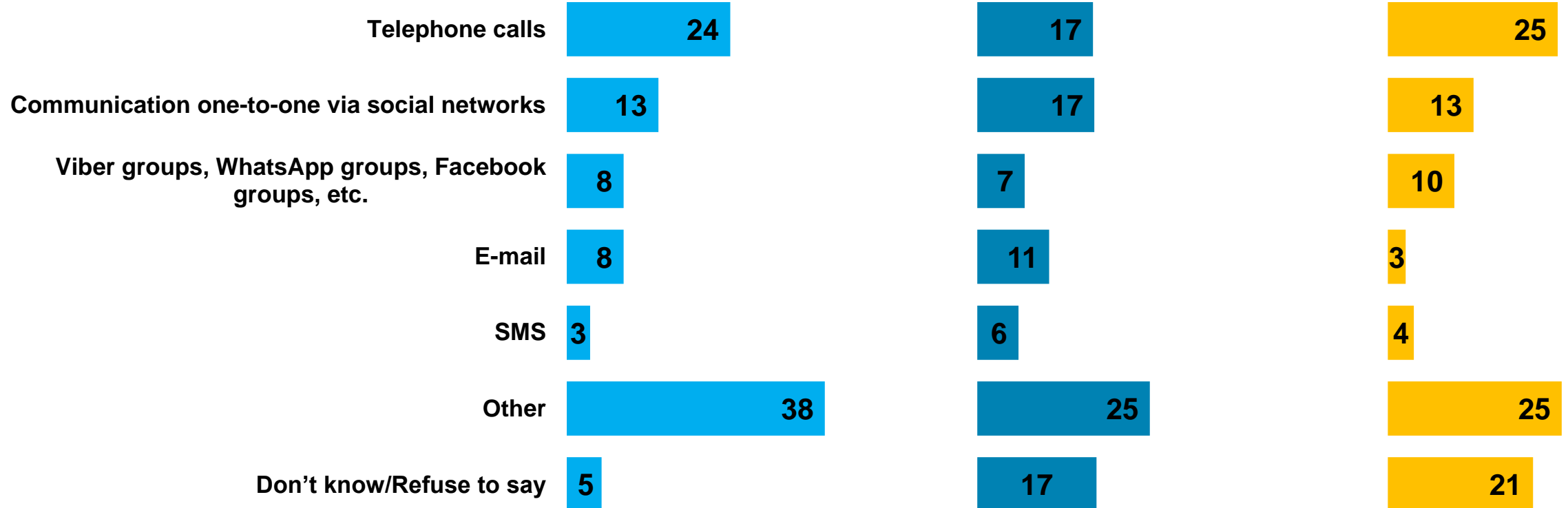
12%

12%

■ Lower grades of primary school

■ Upper grades of primary school

■ Secondary school



Data in %

Which method of communication suits you best?

Base: Those who are dissatisfied with the way they communicate, N=116

Communication with teachers – parents and key informants

- The qualitative survey results also suggest that **teachers and parents mainly communicated via telephone calls or messages. In addition, Viber groups are singled out as being very important, since teachers used them for direct communication with parents and children.** The key informants confirm that this type of communication was the most widespread, but they also say that there was not enough support for children who did not have the necessary technical possibilities. There is also a question of how much these families were excluded from daily and fast Viber communication.
- The majority of **parents** are very **satisfied with the frequency of communication with teachers**, and especially the experiences of the parents of younger children suggest that the teachers were not focused on educational goals only, but that they also supported the parents a lot.
- However, **key informants** say that, regardless of the teachers' commitment, this was a very **difficult experience for them.** Simultaneous and frequent communication with both parents and children often resulted in teachers working overtime and becoming exhausted, and there is a question of whether the public recognizes and values their efforts at all.

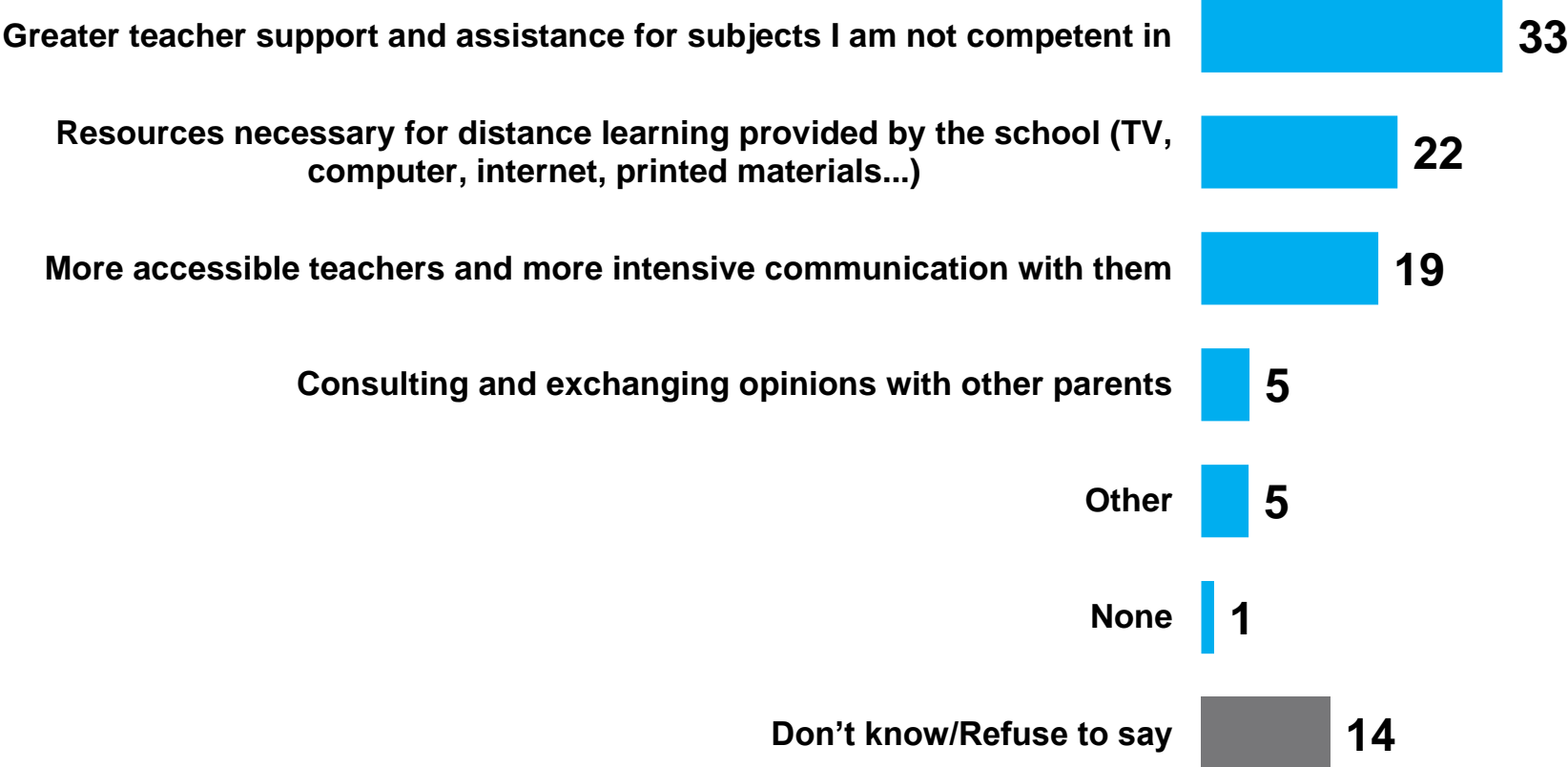
Can you imagine what it's like for one teacher to communicate with 14, 15 Viber groups a day? All day long, different children, different parents, different topics. And it doesn't include all the children because not all of them have internet access. It's exhausting. – *Key informant*

Since we have no internet access at home, my teacher called me on the telephone. Maybe it could have been more frequent, because I can't write, I can't help my child much, but I believe that she did what she could. – *Roma parent*

FACILITATING THE DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM

It can be said that parents do not have a uniform opinion about the options that would facilitate distance learning. However, the biggest group of them (33%) agree that this would be greater assistance from teachers with subjects they are not skilled in. One-fifth would welcome assistance from schools with the missing resources, or teachers being more accessible and communicating more extensively.

Data in %

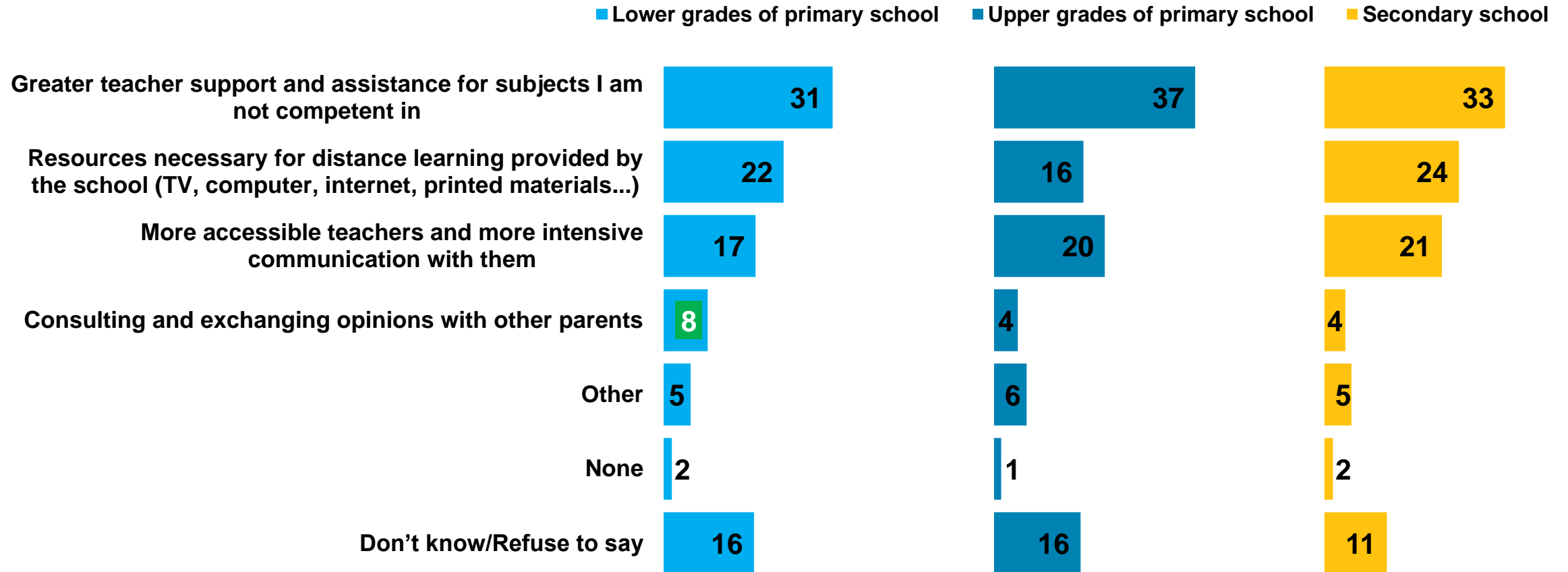


What would facilitate distance learning for you as a parent?
Base: Total target population, N=1,037

FACILITATING THE DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM AND CHILD'S AGE

Except that parents of younger children are more likely to state that they would like to exchange opinions with other parents, there are no significant differences between the parents of children of different ages in regard to the methods that could facilitate distance learning.

Data in %



What would facilitate distance learning for you as a parent?

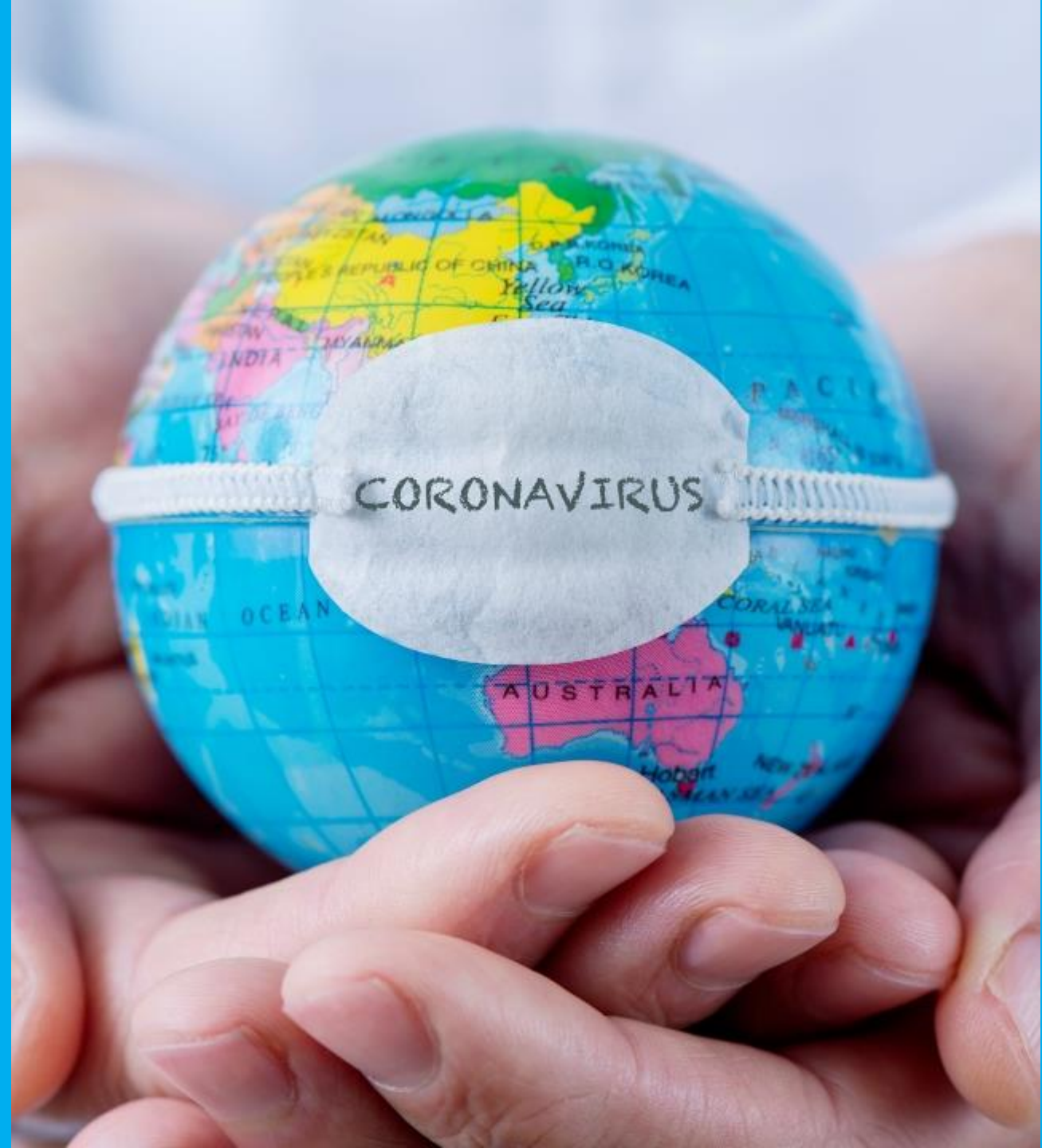
Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population

Necessary support

- **Greater support from teachers in subjects that parents are not skilled in** – this type of assistance is considered necessary, especially in the case of parents with lower education, who cannot help their children with school tasks. An alternative to this option might be supplementary classes for the children who need them. On the other hand, key informants say that it is very hard to organize these classes because of the number of classes that teachers have. A potential here is assistance from the NGO sector.
- **Assistance in providing resources** – both parents and key informants identify this step as one of the crucial ones for potential future distance learning. In addition, not only is the school considered responsible here, but also local communities and the state.
- **More accessible teachers and more intensive communication with them** – given that parents are very satisfied with this aspect, all they are asking for is to keep communication as extensive as it was if distance learning became active again. It would be very useful for higher grades for each teacher to establish a weekly period when parents can communicate with them – an example of virtual parent–teacher meetings. On the other hand, according to key informants, teachers were greatly burdened by overtime work during the distance learning period, so this segment requires detailed planning.
- **Consultations and exchanging opinions with parents** – namely, many of the interviewed parents feel the need for this aspect. Parents would be interested in virtual parent–teacher meetings or meetings of parents. On the other hand, NGO representatives state that they are not sure how interested parents would be in any training focused on them. Namely, according to them, distance learning means that parents become highly responsible for the educational process, so any additional engagement would be potentially counterproductive.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

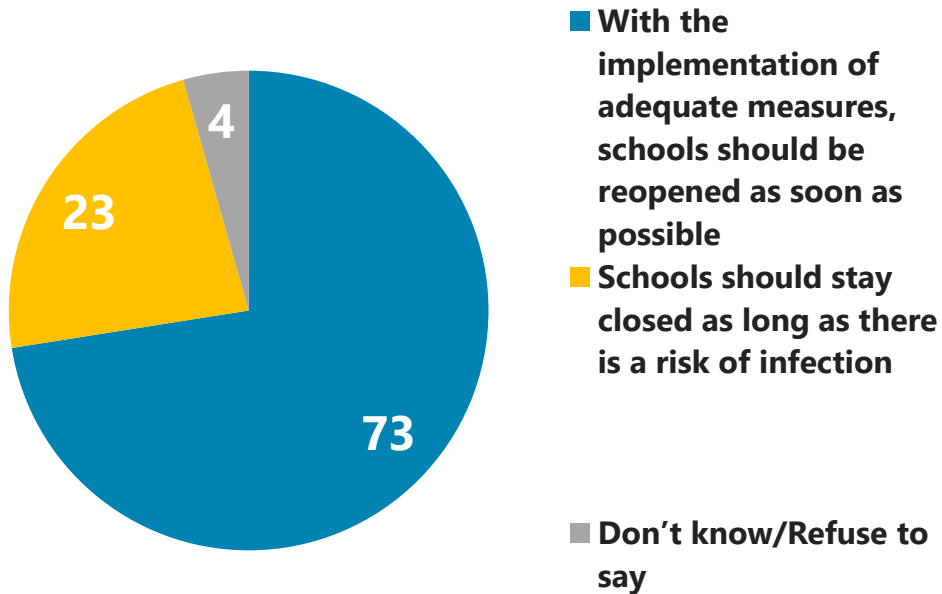


REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

Almost three-quarters of parents agree that schools need to be reopened as soon as possible, with the implementation of adequate preventive measures. Somewhat less than one-quarter disagree.

Data in %

Parents of children of different ages



Lower grades of primary school



Upper grades of primary school



Secondary school

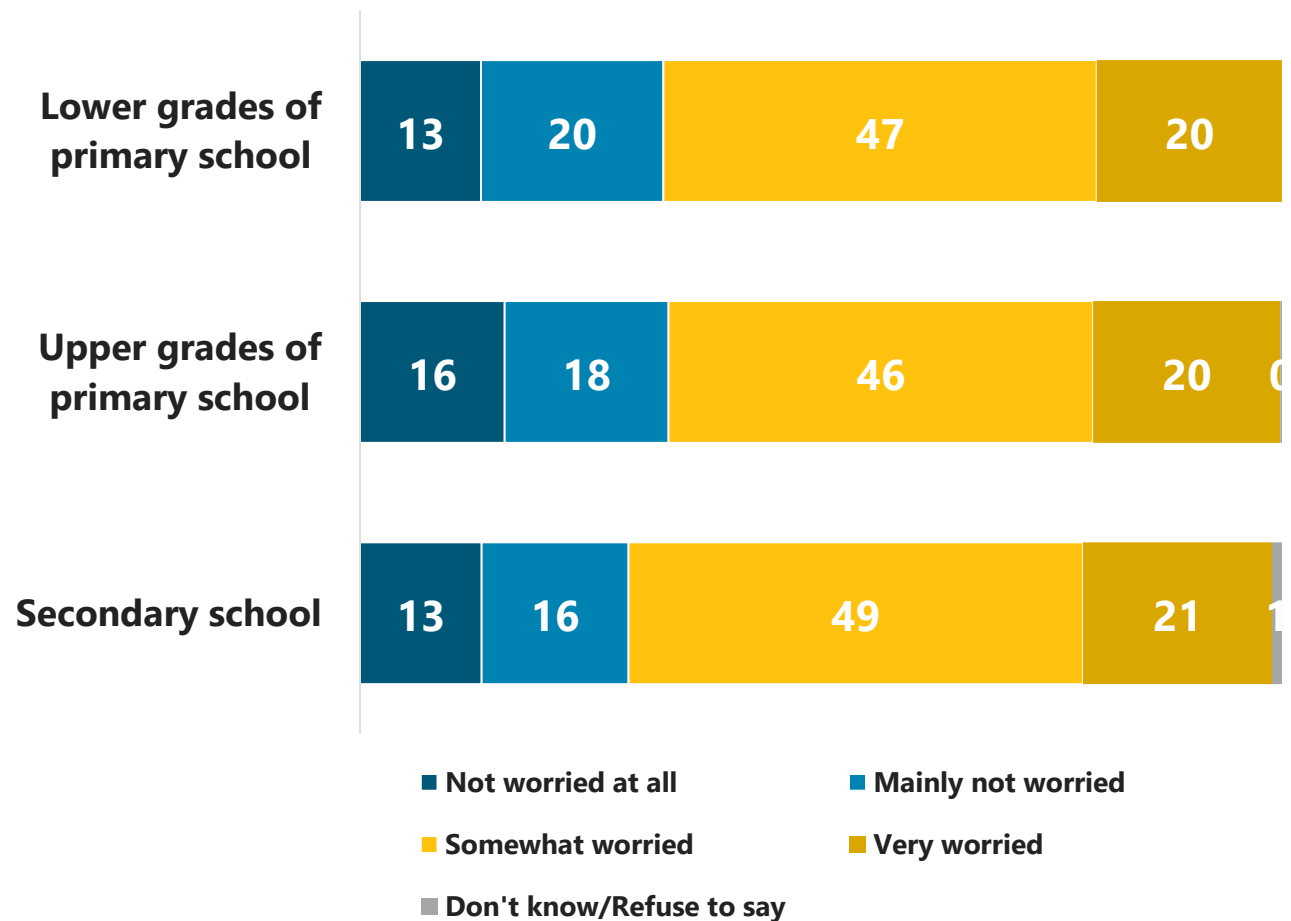
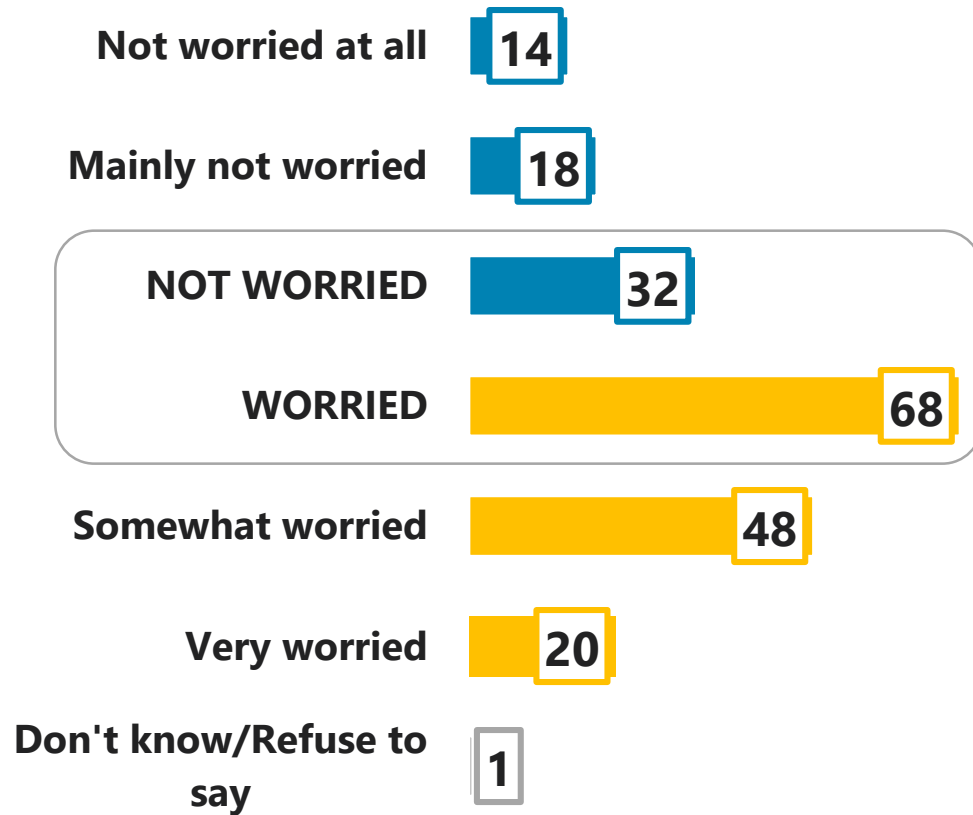


CONCERN ABOUT THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

Although they support the reopening of schools, two-thirds of parents are worried about the start of the school year with the traditional system.

Data in %

Parents of children of different ages

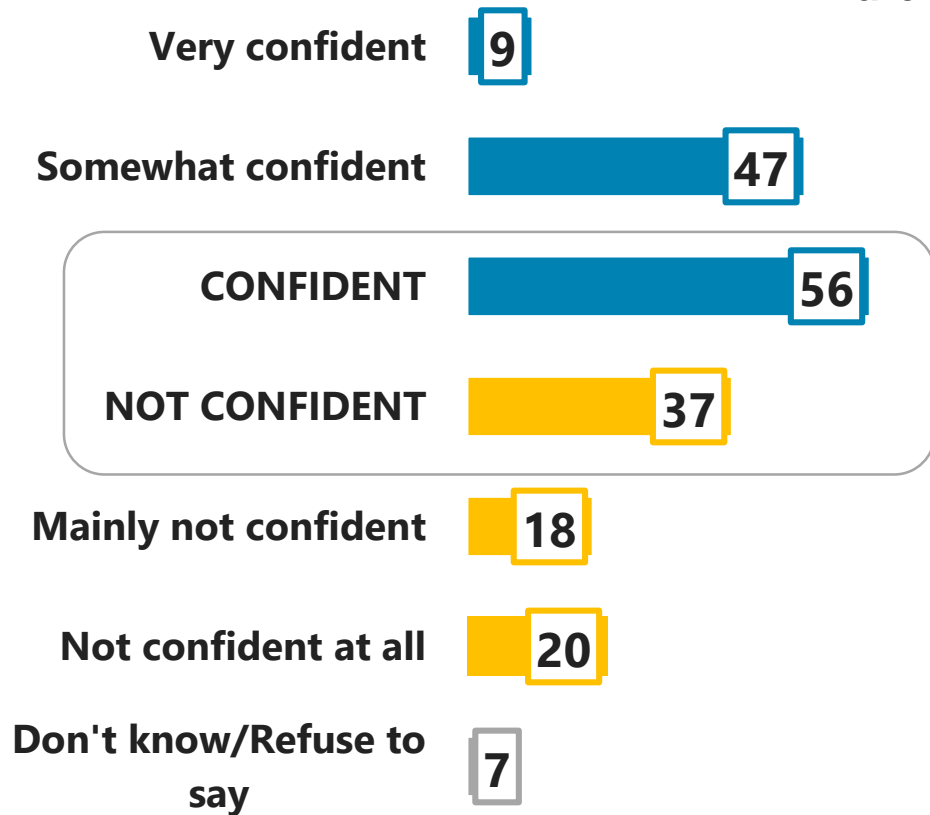


CONFIDENCE IN SCHOOLS' READINESS FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Given that almost 60% of the responses are affirmative, it may be concluded that parents' concern is somewhat alleviated by the belief that schools will be ready for their pupils in these changed conditions. However, the number of parents who are not so sure of this is not negligible (37%).

Data in %

Parents of children of different ages



Lower grades of primary school



Upper grades of primary school



Secondary school



Based on what you have seen, read or heard, how confident are you that schools are prepared well enough to successfully fight coronavirus?

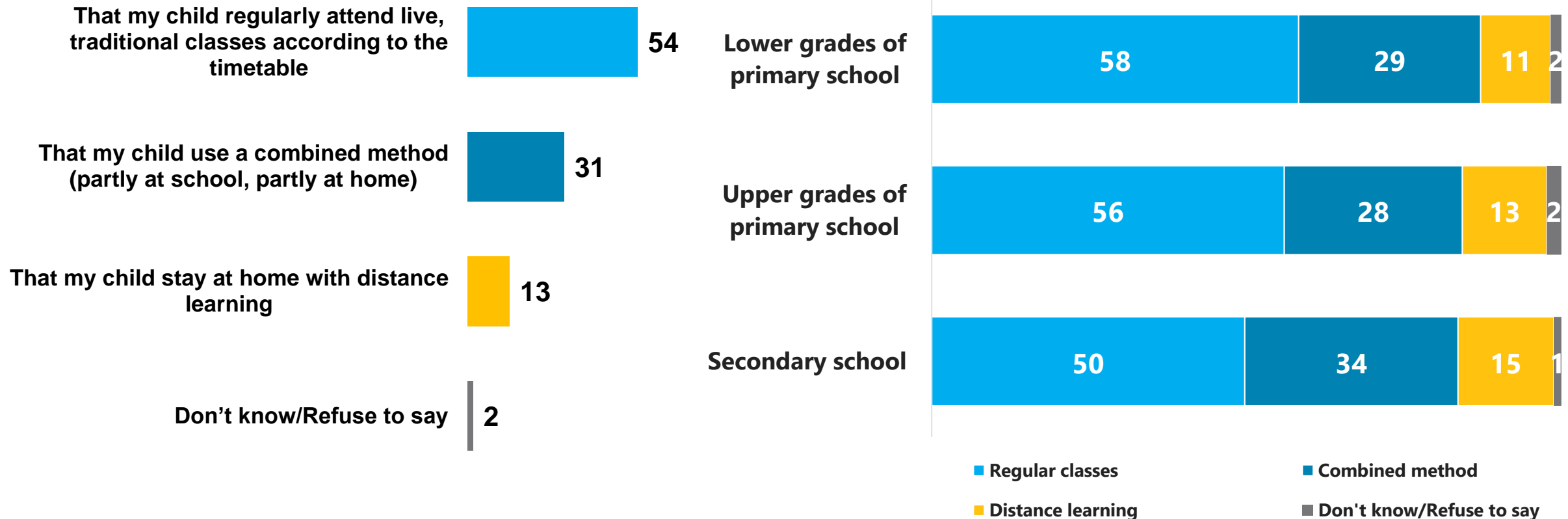
Base: Total target population. N=1,037

PREFERRED FORM OF LEARNING

Regardless of fear, parents again confirm that they would like their children to return to school – more than half would opt for the traditional learning method. Almost one-third would choose a combined method, and 13% would stick with distance learning.

Data in %

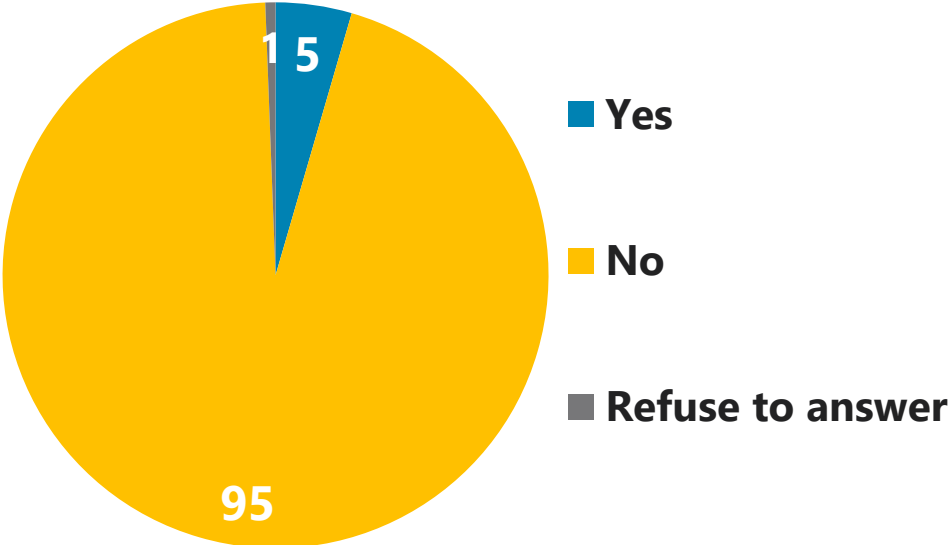
Parents of children of different ages



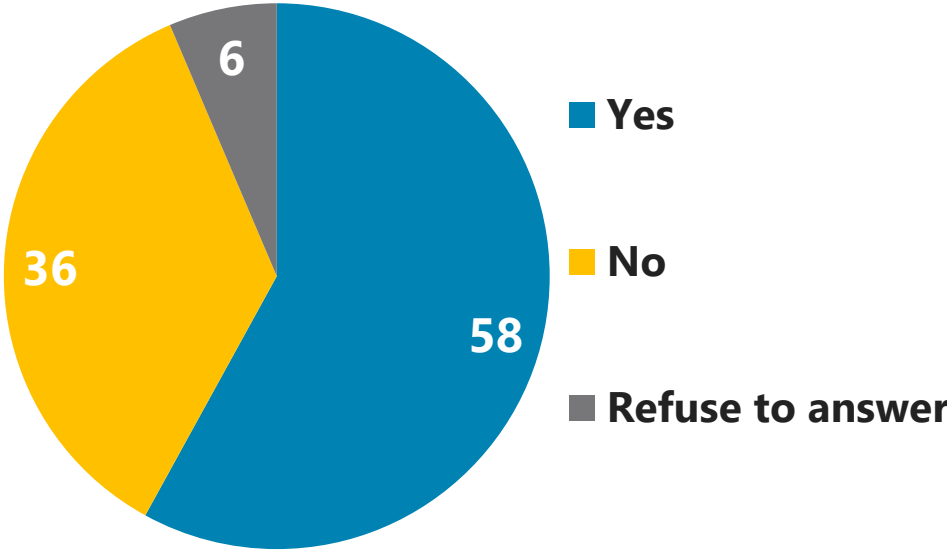
INCLUDING PARENTS IN DECISION MAKING

Only 5% of parents confirm that their child’s school asked them about returning to the regular system. On the other hand, almost 60% believe that parents are entitled to decide which type of system their children should use.

Data in %



Were you asked by your child’s school whether you supported opening of schools or not?
Base: Total target population, N=1,037



Do you think that parents should decide whether their children would go to school or continue with distance learning or not?
Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Parents' attitude towards the reopening of schools

- The majority of parents support the reopening of schools and organization of regular teaching. The main reasons for their attitude are: **regular teaching, higher quality of education, socialization, personal interaction with teachers, but also facilitated organization in households.** Namely, all regularly employed parents found it hard to organize the process, and the consequences were the hardest for parents of lower socio-economic status, parents of several children, as well as Roma parents. It happened to them that a lack of space was a problem, which disturbed the dynamics of daily family functioning.
- **On the other hand, Roma parents and parents of children with special needs are not so sure that schools should be reopened.** They fear infection, and especially the parents of children with special needs say that they would like to be able to choose whether their children go to school or not, but only if they are provided with enough resources and support for distance learning.
- In addition, the decision to **postpone the beginning of the school year until 1 October** is perceived **very negatively.** Parents see this decision partly as political, because of the parliamentary elections, and partly as a consequence of the inadequate readiness of the educational system due to the shortage of concrete plans and curricula for the next school year.
- **All parents state that neither they nor their children were asked for any suggestions of theirs** about organizing classes, but they say that their children are missing regular classes, primarily because of socializing with peers.
- As for different models, **the majority of parents do not approve of the combined method** – they believe that it does not protect children, that it does not enable continuity of teaching and that it may even create confusion among younger children.

Key informants' attitude towards the reopening of schools

- In general, **key informants agree that going back to school is necessary in order to preserve the high quality of education.** All the interviewed key informants are very dissatisfied with the decision to postpone the beginning of the school year, and they also see this decision as political.
- In addition, it is highly criticized that there was the impression that **no concrete strategy was developed** during the summer holidays and that the Ministry of Education did not communicate the steps transparently or invite other organizations and relevant agencies to collaborate.
- Key informants underline that a considerable portion of their suggestions for organizing distance learning were not accepted, and that they expected to be involved in the planning process for the next school year.
- Anyway, one of the key arguments against distance learning is the previously addressed problem of **technical incapacity, but also the issue of insufficient support for parents, especially in marginalized groups.**
- As for the combined model, although key informants believe that it may somewhat contribute to controlling the epidemiological situation, it still does not address the **issue of organization, especially organization by employed parents, for whom it is difficult to find time to supervise and support their children in learning.**

QUOTES

We know that the Ministry of Education conducted a big survey on 10,000 households about online teaching. We don't have the results, no one told us anything about that, it's pointless. – *Key informant*

Children should go back to school. For socialization, above all. It's possible with good organization. It will be easier for them to study when they spend time with their friends, and not being at home all the time. – *Parent of a primary school child (lower grades)*

Combined is not possible – either they all to go to school with good protection or no one does. The children won't be protected with the combined model. – *Roma parent*

Technical equipment is a big problem. I have no data about how many households have no internet access, but there is no initiative to solve this issue in the near future. When we informed the Ministry about this, they said that classes were available on TV, but it's simply not enough – interaction is necessary, and it requires the internet. – *Key informant*

I can't find a logical explanation for them postponing the school year, while there are political and other gatherings outside. If the situation is really so bad, let all children not go to school for a year. It's better than this online organization. It will be very confusing if they go to school for a week and then stay a week at home, not to mention how much they will learn that way. – *Parent of a primary school child (higher grades)*

If it is going to be online, OK, we'll do it. But I fear that continuity will be lost, work habits, everything is a lot better in school, better controlled. – *Parent of a child from a socio-economically vulnerable population category*

We weren't explained why the beginning was postponed by a month. All the responsibility is on the parents and children, and they are made helpless. – *Key informant*

I will really panic if they don't go back to school. Nothing can substitute a teacher, fresh air, friends... – *Parent of a primary school child (higher grades)*

Start with yourself. Just imagine yourself going to work one week and then staying home the next. There are no work habits there. Let them go to school every day, smaller groups, shorter classes, but to maintain continuity. – *Parent of a secondary school pupil*

Attitudes of **key informants** towards the current organization of classes from 1 October

The **key informants' reactions about the organization of classes from 1 October are mainly negative**. They all agree that this decision was made in a less-than-transparent way and without consulting the stakeholders. The main objections to the organization are:

- **Generalization** – some key informants state that the teaching organization plans should have been made locally and adapted to municipalities and school capacities. They believe that the Ministry of Education should have given general recommendations, while the organization itself should vary from school to school. This would ensure greater engagement of schools, but also of children and parents, so that the process would be organized in a more transparent way.
- **A non-transparent process for marginalized groups** – key informants believe that none of the problems of marginalized groups that arose in the first cycle of distance learning were addressed with the current organization. There is still no clear plan on how to ensure equal quality of education to children who have no technical capacities to take part in distance learning, or how to provide direct communication and support for them.
- **Insufficient support for parents and households** – it is again unclear whether and in what way support would be guaranteed to parents who have no possibilities or time to be involved in their children's educational process.
- **Absence of a plan** – the current work organization is perceived as a response to the current epidemiological situation, while there is no plan for an improved or worsened situation. This creates the impression that the decision about organizing classes was made hastily, without consulting other stakeholders, which creates an additional lack of confidence in the plan.

QUOTES

The key problem is that we don't know who made the decisions to organize classes in this way and whom they consulted. Parents are confused, teachers are confused, and worst of all pupils are not participating at all. They made this decision without professional consensus. – *Key informant*

A general model for all schools is not good. Measures should be adapted to each school individually. Some schools have a lot of space and they could have worked without any problems. – *Key informant*

It is hard to do parent training. Now they will have to pay for additional classes, then their personal engagement, and it's a huge responsibility. – *Key informant*

The educational system is hyper-centralized. The Ministry should have let schools organize something. It is not the same when a school has 1,800 pupils as when it has fewer. Schools should have made their own action plans. – *Key informant*

Parents should have a major role in organizing. They should be asked whether they can organize distance learning and how households will be organized. We don't have a choice now, we have to do this, and parents are being held most responsible. – *Key informant*

School plans and calendar are not adjusted to 1 October. We have many working Saturdays, and that's not acceptable for teachers. – *Key informant*

Four months were enough to prepare everything. We sacrificed the children. Actually, they didn't want to move the date of graduation, and then they did nothing for four months. They haven't put out the fire, they were only playing around with everything. – *Key informant*

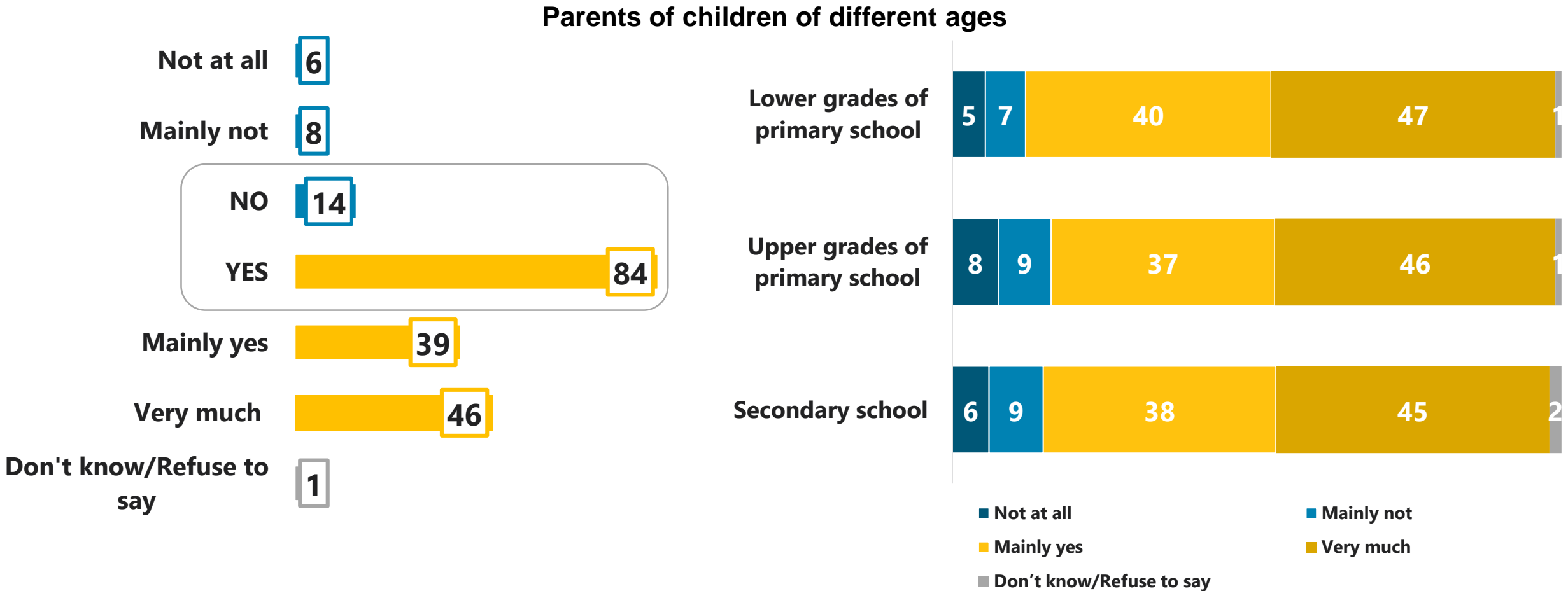
Masks should be taken off during classes if distance is respected. Members of marginalized groups should be given masks. There is also no plan if the epidemiological situation gets better or worse – *Key informant*

The Ministry should have created special recommendations based on the NKT's suggestions. In this way measures have only been shared, and schools and teachers are the only ones responsible. – *Key informant*

INFLUENCE OF INTERRUPTED CLASSICAL TEACHING ON CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Regardless of their attitude towards the reopening of schools, eight out of 10 parents confirm that several months without live teaching may have negative consequences on children's development and learning. Moreover, almost a half claim that these consequences may even be very negative.

Data in %



Regardless of your opinion about the reopening of schools, how negative do you think the influence of interrupted live teaching may be on your child's development and learning?

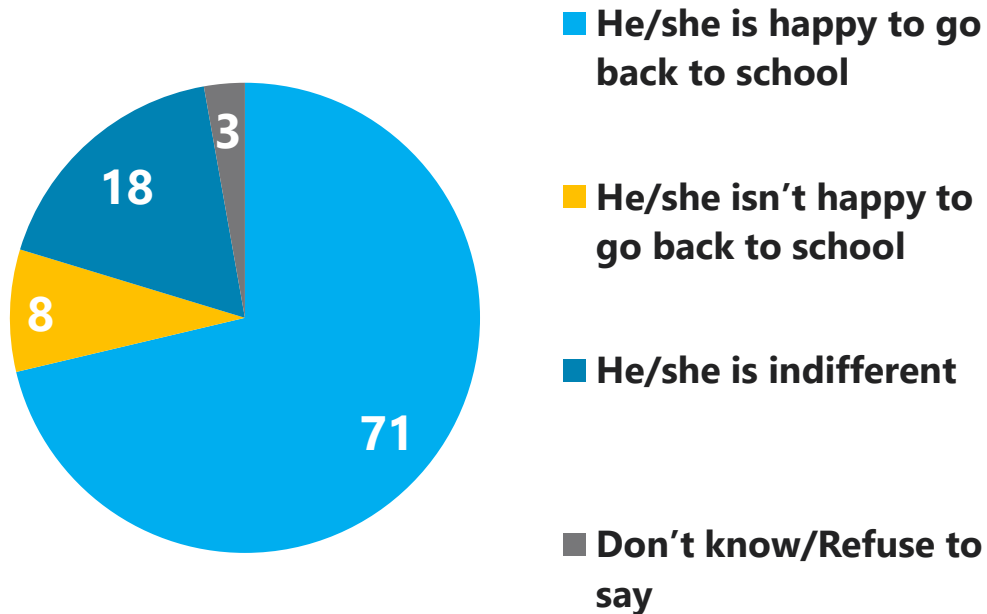
Base: Total target population. N=1,037

CHILD'S FEELINGS ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

70% of parents believe that their children are happy to go to school again. Somewhat less than one-fifth think that their children are indifferent, and only 8% that they are not happy about it. Quite expectedly, the parents of secondary school pupils are a lot more likely to state that their children are indifferent.

Data in %

Parents of children of different ages



Lower grades of primary school



Upper grades of primary school



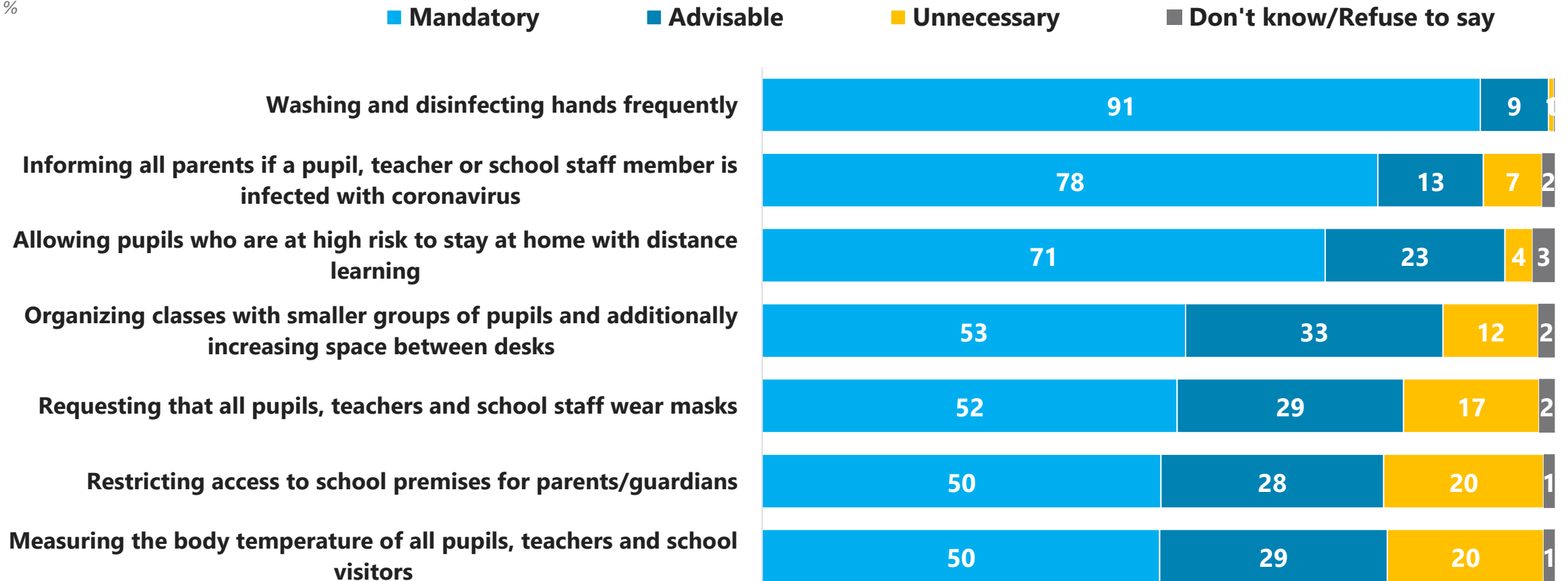
Secondary education



ASSESSMENT OF PREVENTION IMPLEMENTED BY SCHOOLS

Given that washing and sanitizing hands is a measure that both parents and children implement most, it is not surprising that nine out of 10 parents believe that this is something that schools must do. The majority of parents also agree that it is necessary to notify them if the virus appears in their school (78%), and that children at special risk should be allowed to continue with distance learning (71%). Overall, at least half of parents assess all the listed measures as compulsory.

Data in %



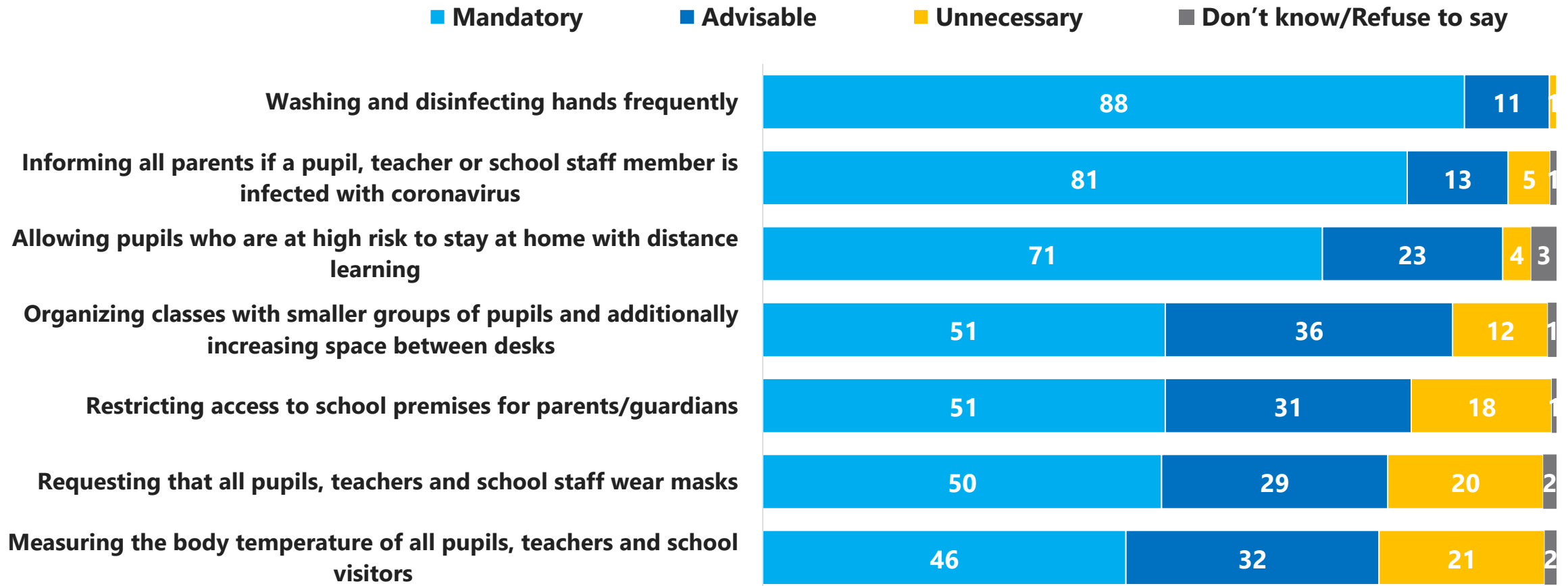
Which of the following preventive school measures do you consider mandatory, advisable or unnecessary?

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

ASSESSMENT OF PREVENTION BY PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN LOWER GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parents of children in lower grades of primary school

Data in %



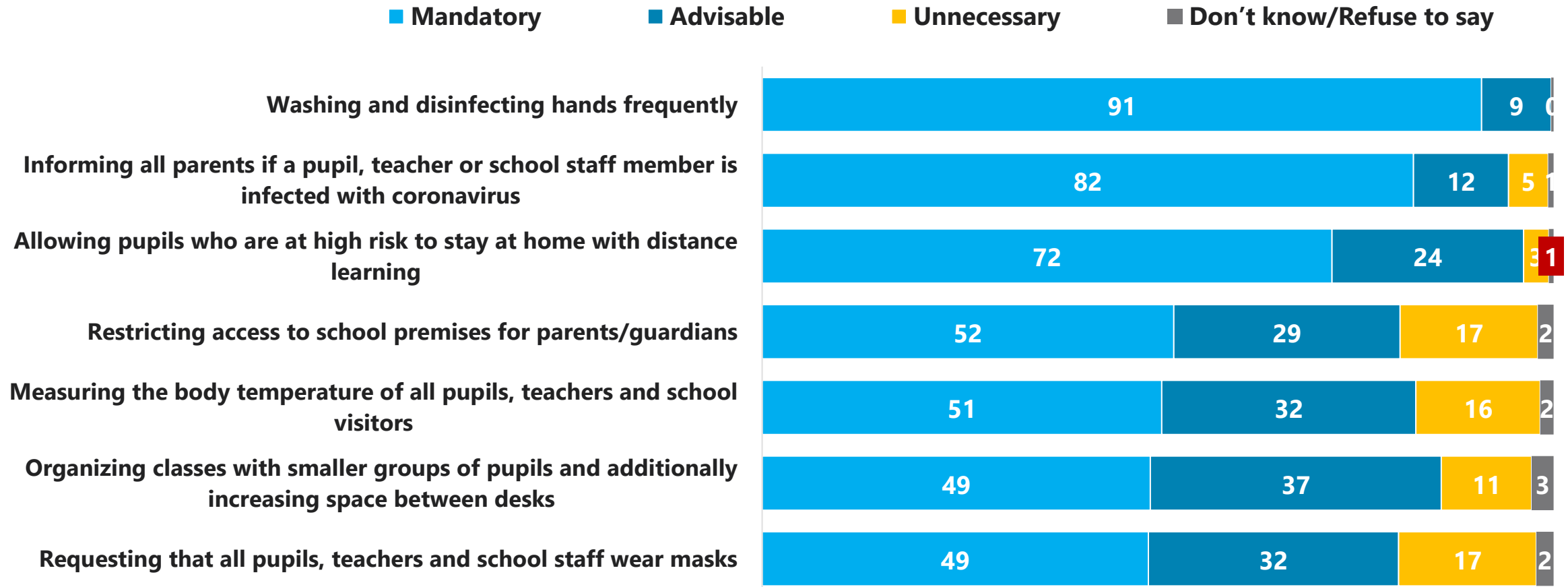
Which of the following preventive school measures do you consider mandatory, advisable or unnecessary?

Base: Parents of lower grades primary school children, N=349

ASSESSMENT OF PREVENTION BY PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN HIGHER GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parents of children in higher grades of primary school

Data in %



Which of the following preventive school measures do you consider mandatory, advisable or unnecessary?

Base: Parents of upper grades primary school children, N=263

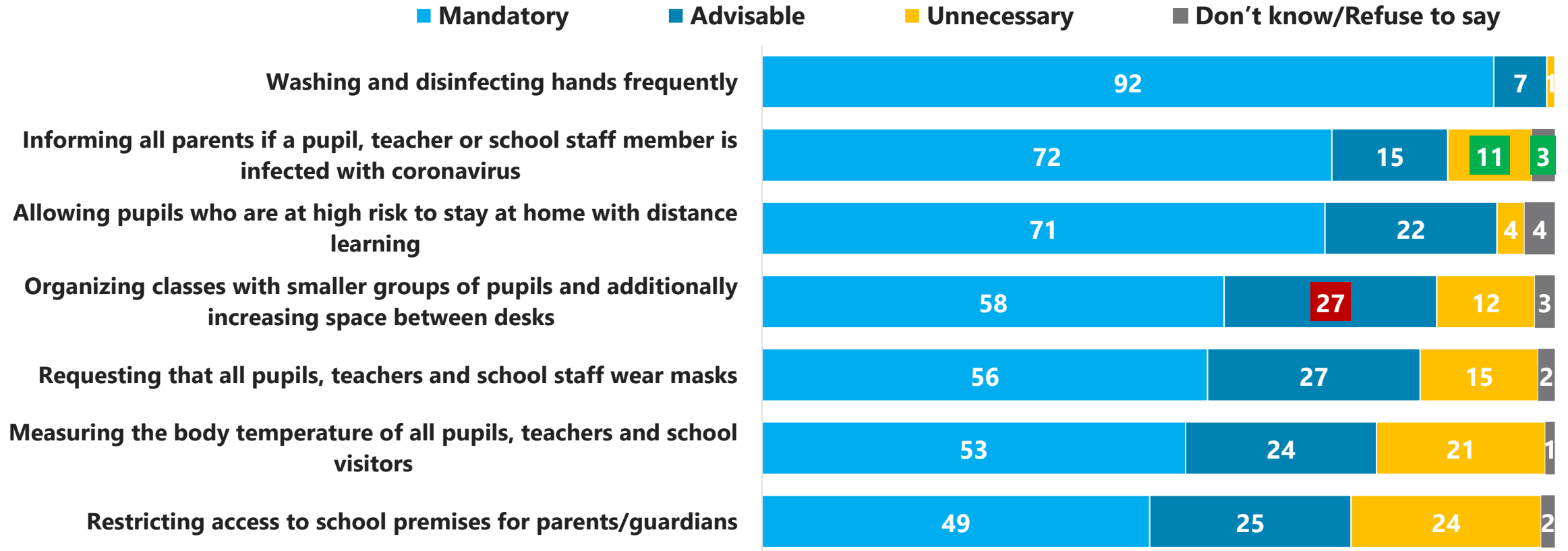
Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population.

ASSESSMENT OF PREVENTION BY PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The parents of secondary school pupils are more likely than others to say that it is necessary to inform others if the virus appears in their school. In addition, they are less likely to think that it would be advisable to reduce the number of pupils per class.

Parents of children in secondary school

Data in %



Which of the following preventive school measures do you consider mandatory, advisable or unnecessary?

Base: Parents of secondary school children, N=425

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population

Significantly less, statistically, than in the total population

Parents' attitudes towards potential protective measures in schools (1)

- **Frequent washing and sanitizing hands** – all parents agree about this measure and they expect schools to be fully equipped with disinfectants. In addition, they mention the need for occasional disinfection of all the school premises and to notify parents about that. Parents believe that this measure is easy to implement and that it is easy to ensure adherence to these measures.
- **All pupils, teachers and staff must wear masks** – although the majority of parents agree that this measure is compulsory, schools are also considered responsible. So, schools are expected to offer extra masks to those who forget them or lose/damage them during classes (lower grades especially). In addition, some expect the schools to donate masks and other protective accessories to marginalized pupils. One of the parents who was against this measure was a mother of a child with autism, who says that wearing a mask is a huge problem for her child – the child may be disturbed, cannot recognize other people, etc. This parent also said that there were appeals to let these children wear visors, and not masks, but that this was rejected by the relevant authorities. Also some parents say that there is no need to wear masks inside if the distance between children is adequate, especially if classes are organized outside. Parents are also suspicious about how possible it is to control implementation of this measure, especially during breaks or when children are eating, so there is no optimistic assessment of full adherence to this measure.
- **Allow at-risk pupils to continue with distance learning** – parents mainly agree. One parent of a child with special needs will actually insist on this if regular teaching is restored. However, schools must be careful to provide an absolutely equal quality of education to all children. This primarily refers to providing all necessary materials and support.
- **Organizing classes with smaller groups and rearranging desks** – parents support this measure as well and they believe that it will be easy to implement.

Parents' attitudes towards potential protective measures in schools (2)

- **Measuring the body temperature of all pupils, teachers and visitors** – parents do not have a uniform attitude towards this measure. They mainly expect this measure to be hard to implement, requiring a lot of time and resources. Besides this, some parents say that contactless thermometers are largely unreliable, which means that implementation of this measure does not guarantee children's safety. They also think that temperature is not a crucial symptom that differentiates coronavirus from other diseases, so having a fever does not automatically mean having the virus, which might result in stigmatizing someone or spreading panic.
- **Restricted access for parents/visitors** – parents are more likely to agree to this measure being implemented if children go back to school. Namely, since previous experience indicates that adults are at a much higher risk than children, this measure is supported. Of course, the exception would be children who need to be accompanied or some special situations, when everyone who enters the school would be expected to respect all the measures of protection.
- **Notifying all parents if pupils, teachers or members of school staff are infected** – parents do not have a uniform opinion about this measure. While some parents see this measure as a sign of good school organization and transparency and support this measure strongly, other parents believe that it would result in potential stigmatization of the infected, but also in spreading panic, so some parents would probably not allow their children to go to school. It is also registered that this measure is a greater security factor for Roma parents and parents from marginalized groups.
- However, how realistic it is to organize teaching with these measures, as well as how possible it is to control their absolute implementation, remains an open issue for many parents. They primarily say that not all schools have enough capacity to organize classes in smaller groups (schools in the central region), and it is also quite unclear whether all schools would focus on marginalized groups.

QUOTES

I don't like the idea of notifying everyone if someone is infected. It's not necessary, they are children, someone might be stigmatized for that, no one can be blamed for getting ill.
– *Parent of a primary school child (higher grades)*

There is no need to measure children's temperature when they enter school. These devices are unreliable, they are broken easily, and it would take a lot of time. I hope parents won't let their children go to school if they have a fever.
– *Parent of a secondary school pupil*

Teachers asked for visors to be worn and not masks, but this was rejected. I think it's a big problem to maintain distancing and explain to the children why. They are children, they are used to being in groups, being close with others, it's hard to control.
– *Parent of a child with special educational needs*

Although it may create panic, I think that it's good to know how many are infected and who is infected. There might be a weekly school report about that, it is some kind of security after all.
– *Parent of a primary school child (lower grades)*

All measures can be respected during classes. But after that, during breaks, in the toilet - hardly. They are adults - 17, 18 years old - they should know how to behave, and it's all a matter of upbringing.
– *Parent of a secondary school pupil*

It's fine to measure their temperature. The whole world does it, it's not a problem. It is a lot harder to control younger children when it comes to wearing masks or washing their hands.
– *Parent of a child with special educational needs*

I think it's possible to work in small groups. The whole world works like that, so can we. And not only schools, but companies as well. This measure gives good results, and the system keeps on operating, so I support it.
– *Parent of a primary school child (lower grades)*

It's easy with older children, they understand, they will implement the measures. As for younger children, I don't think it's possible; someone has to keep going after them, telling them to wear masks, keep their distance...
– *Roma parent*

It is unhealthy to keep a mask on all day. If distancing is maintained, why should they wear masks all the time?
– *Parent of a child from socio-economically vulnerable category*

Key informants' attitudes regarding potential protective measures in schools

- **Frequent washing and sanitizing hands** – this measure is considered compulsory and it is impossible to organize classes without its implementation.
- **All pupils, teacher and staff must wear masks** – some agree with this measure, but not all. They mention the example from Serbia when children exchanged their masks, which indicates how hard it is to control implementation of this measure. Besides this, similarly to the parents, key informants recommend and expect masks to be provided for vulnerable households.
- **Allow at-risk pupils to continue with distance learning** – some agree with this measure, but also some key informants say that, in case of the combined model or a worsened epidemiological situation in general, parents should be allowed to choose whether their child goes to school or stays at home with distance learning.
- **Organizing classes with smaller groups and rearranging desks** – this measure is also taken as an imperative, but they generally fear its implementation. Key informants say that many schools in Montenegro have a lot of pupils and that it would be very challenging for them to implement this measure.
- **Measuring the body temperature of all pupils, teachers and visitors** – the key informants do not have a uniform opinion about whether this measure should be compulsory or not. While it would guarantee timely elimination of potential infection in school, on the other hand, some believe that this would be hard to implement and that it would create an extra burden for school, while positive results would not be guaranteed.

Key informants' attitudes regarding potential protective measures in schools

- **Restricted access for parents/visitors** – key informants believe that this measure is easy to implement and they generally support it.
- **Notifying all parents if pupils, teachers or members of school staff are infected** – similarly to the parents, key informants are not unanimous here. Some say that this is a good way to inform and isolate, in a timely manner, all those who have been in contact with the infected, while others believe that this measure would surely create panic and unease among children and parents.
- The key informants generally believe that these measures can largely be implemented in school, but they also state that planning any measures, either for regular school or distance learning, needs to be adapted to each school individually:
 - Some key informants believe that examples of good practice can be implemented in Montenegro. An appropriate example is adjusting protective measures in schools to the proportion of the infected out of the total population. So, if the number of infected were to grow, the number of children in schools would be reduced, groups would be smaller and classes shorter, while the situation would become closer to normal with a decrease in the number of infected.
 - Others believe that distance learning requires equal access. That all children in Montenegro who are in the same grade should have the same teacher for the same subject, and then other teachers should provide supplementary work, extra explanations, etc.
 - Finally, some key informants believe that organizing teaching, either regular or distance, should be decided about at the level of the local community. Due to school capacities to organize teaching under specific conditions, and parents' available resources to organize learning at home, it is important to plan this process together with municipality representatives and individual schools in these municipalities. According to them, if the organization does not become local, it is generalized, so this excludes considerable share of families that cannot fit into the standard expectations.

QUOTES

Measuring temperature is silly. Maybe the child got sick the night before, went to bed with wet hair, got a fever in the morning. So what, are we going to stigmatize him and say that it's corona? – *Key informant*

I don't know how distancing between children in school can be guaranteed and what it actually means. My child has 10 friends and they go to school together every day, so how can they not be allowed to be close while in school. It's impossible. And we have seen what happened in Serbia when children exchanged masks, how hard it is to control each measure. – *Key informant*

Austria is a good example, they opened schools and created four scenarios. Protective measures depend on the epidemiological situation. Also Sweden. Schools work with small groups, some teachers have only 10 pupils and everything is normal and regular. – *Key informant*

Teaching should continue, groups should be smaller, teachers should work in shifts and that's it. If there are not enough staff members, hire new ones, there are so many unemployed people. Everything can be organized with enough personnel. – *Key informant*

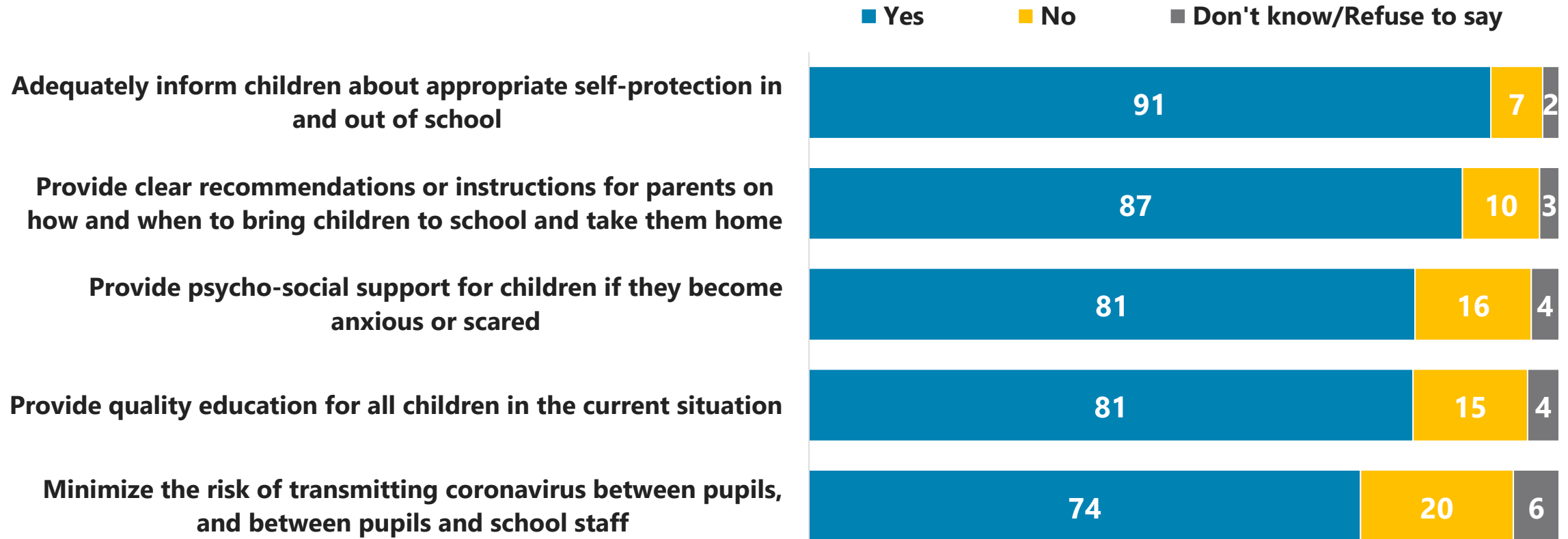
Our schools are overcrowded, especially in the central region. The premises are small, it is questionable if they can organize teaching. There should be smaller groups, we have seen that in the world. – *Key informant*

All these are measures provided by the NKT. But these measures don't cover the importance of education, only health issues. There is no multidisciplinary collaboration, health is the most important thing, but no one was included who would think about the way to incorporate education into all these health recommendations. I am very disappointed with this lack of organization. – *Key informant*

SCHOOLS' CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES

The majority of parents confirm that they have confidence that their child's school would successfully implement all the stipulated measures against coronavirus. Thus 90% believe that children and parents would be adequately informed about the virus and about the pandemic procedures. In addition, 80% believe that the school should provide adequate education, but also emotional and psychosocial support to children. Finally, three-quarters do not doubt that everything will be done to reduce the risk of infection to minimum.

Data in %



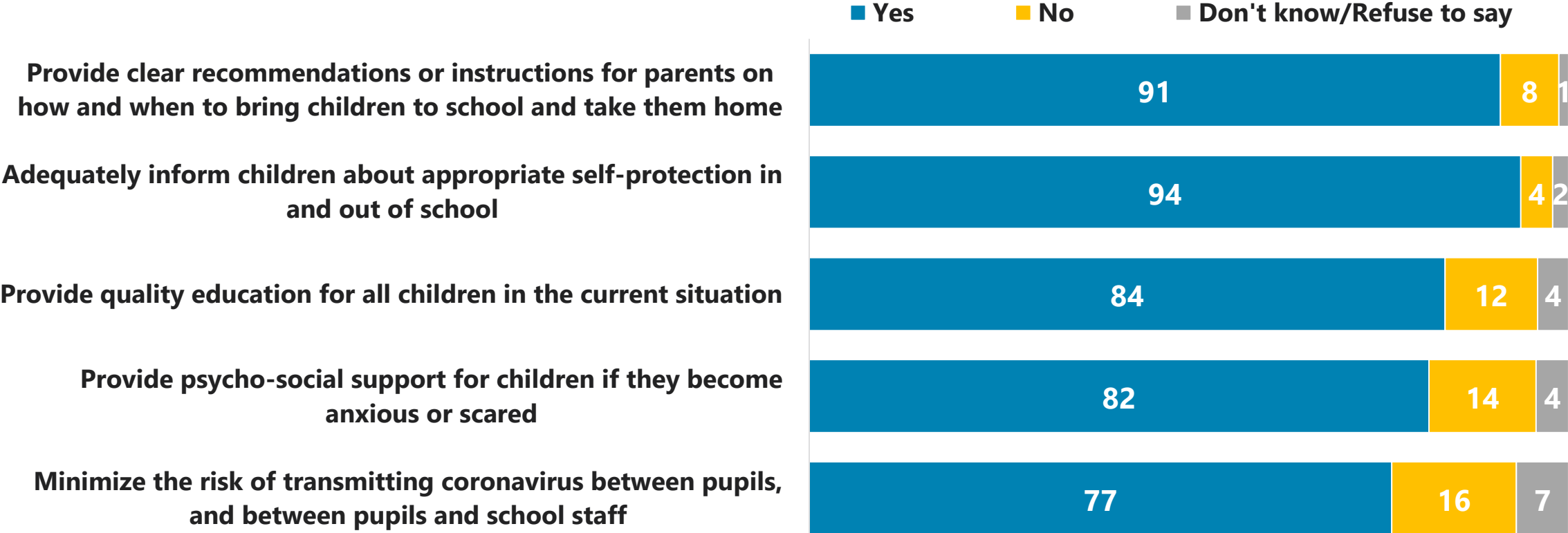
Do you think that the school is capable of doing the following?

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

SCHOOLS' CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES

Data in %

Parents of children in lower grades of primary school



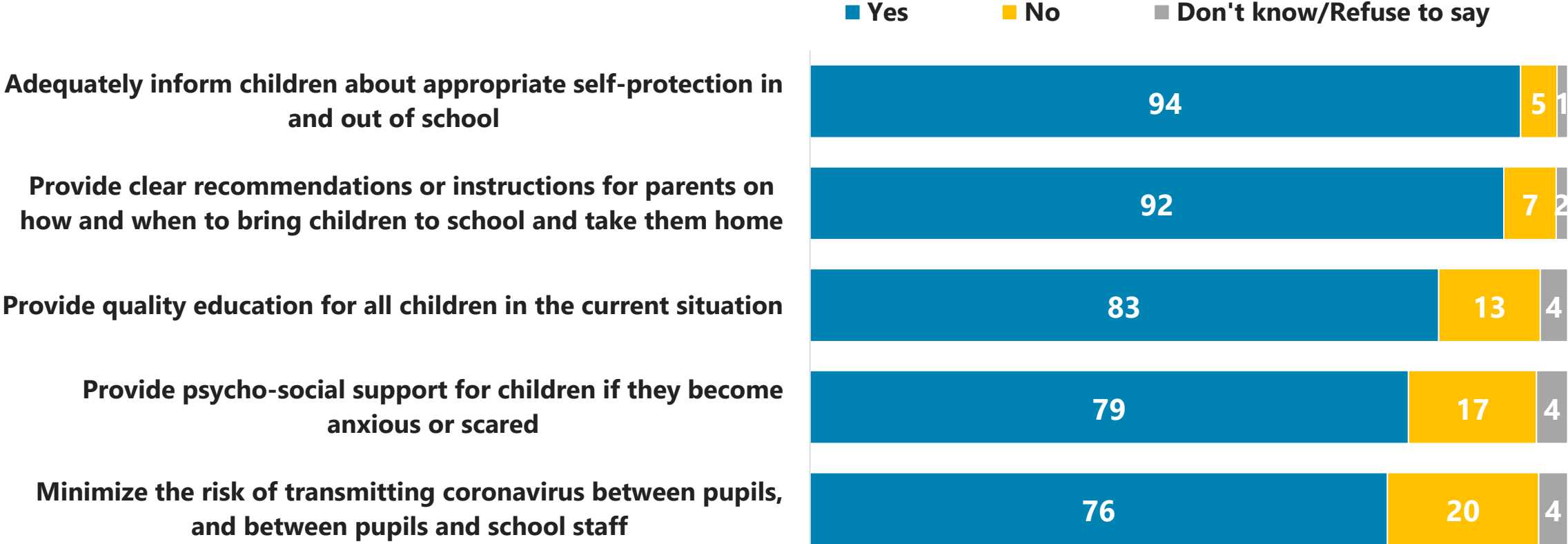
Do you think that the school is capable of doing the following?

Base: Parents of lower-grade primary school children, N=349

SCHOOLS' CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES

Data in %

Parents of children in higher grades of primary school



Do you think that the school is capable of doing the following?

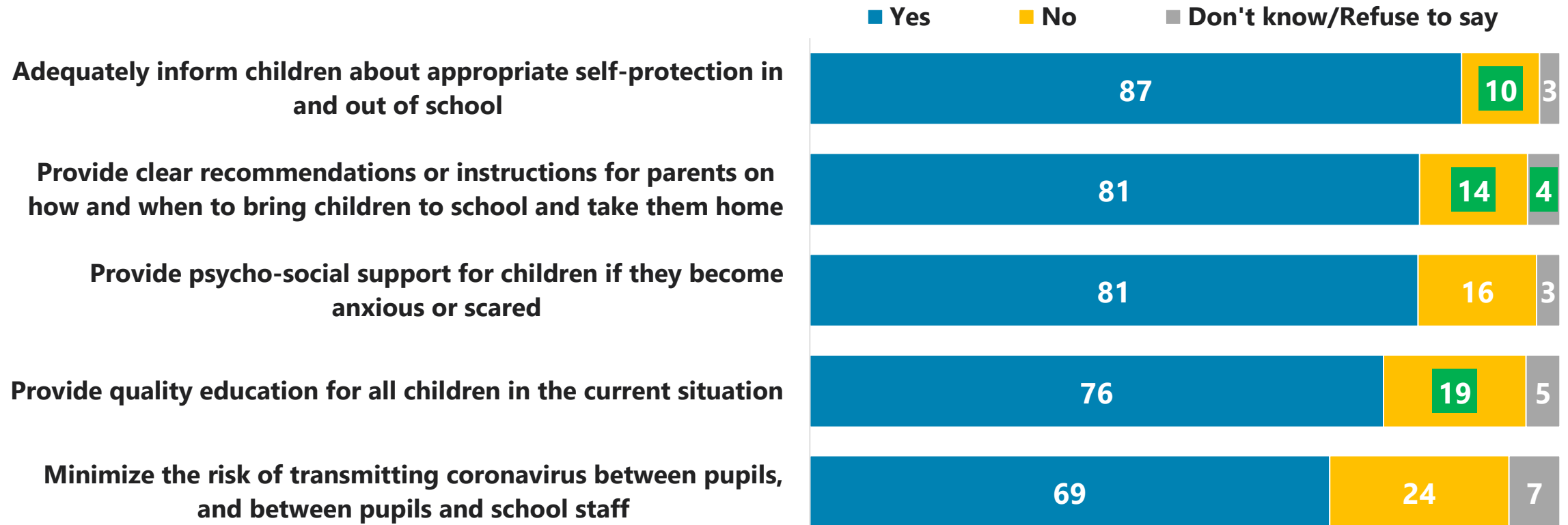
Base: Parents of upper-grade primary school children, N=263

SCHOOLS' CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES

Compared with others, parents of secondary school pupils are considerably more skeptical that the school would be able to adequately inform children and parents about the virus and the stipulated rules, as well as that the preferred quality of education would be maintained. However, this group of parents is also dominated by those who have confidence in schools and the educational system.

Data in %

Parents of secondary school children



Do you think that the school is capable of doing the following?

Base: Parents of secondary school children, N=425

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population.

Parents' and key informants' attitudes regarding schools' ability to implement measures in regular teaching

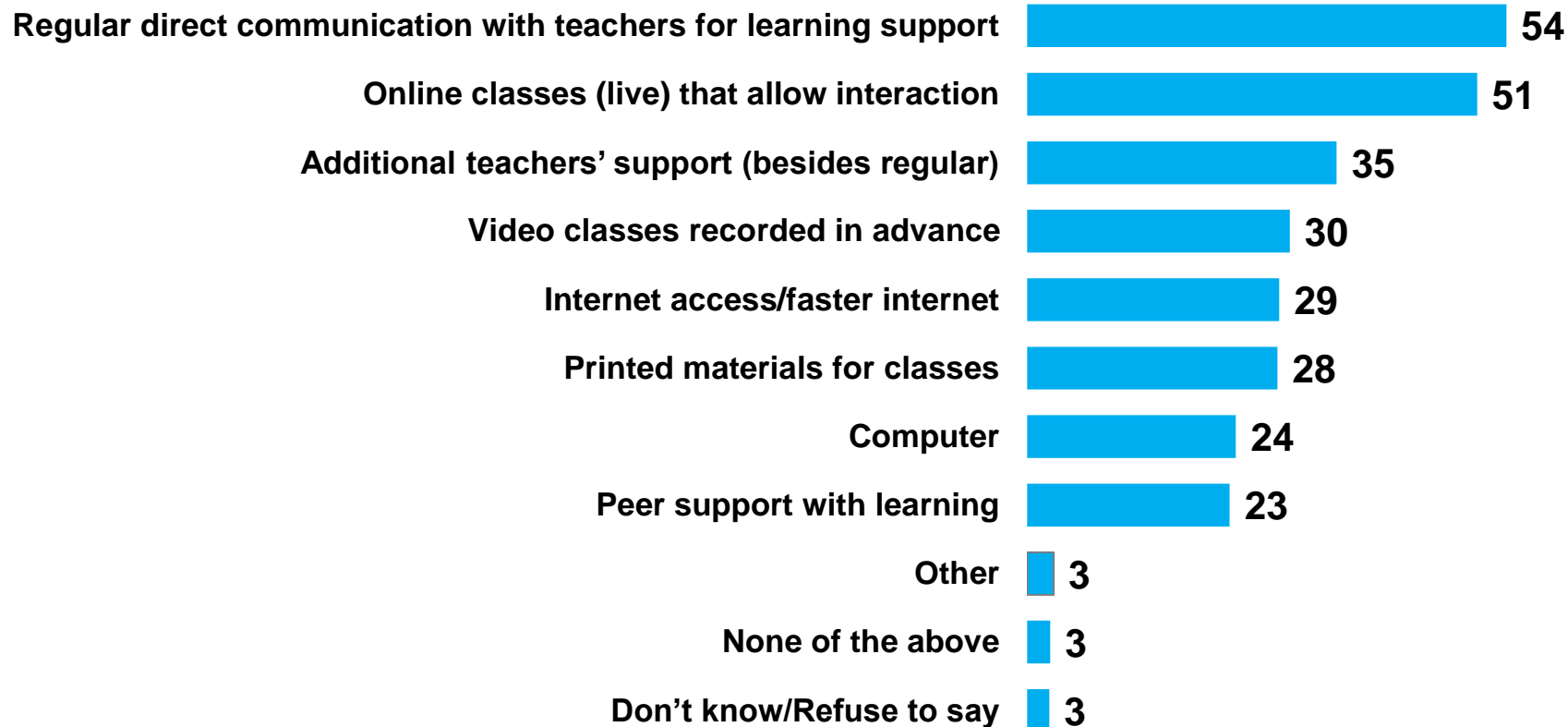
Parents believe that schools are more-or-less able to protect children from coronavirus, and to inform them about the virus. However, as for other types of support, parents are a lot more skeptical:

- **Advising or instructing parents about picking their children up from school** would be mainly done by teachers of lower grades only, while others would rely on the stipulated school measures.
- **Providing emotional and psycho-social support to children if they are afraid or worried** – this aspect seems to be quite challenging in terms of the extent to which schools would focus on it. As parents already said, if the fact that there was no support from psychologists and pedagogues in the first wave is taken into account, not a lot is expected to have changed in the new school year, regardless of the implemented model. In addition, key informants state that a general shortcoming of the educational system in Montenegro is that it is still mainly focused on learning, while a lot less attention is paid to children's general welfare. So, they agree that psychologists and pedagogues would react in special cases only, while there would be no concrete plan for providing this kind of support.
- **Providing high quality education for all children in the given circumstances** – neither parents nor key informants are very convinced about the quality of education during the epidemic. They agree that regular teaching can mainly guarantee high-quality education, while all modifications involve a decrease in the quality. Again, they stress the importance of providing an equal quality of education for marginalized groups of children as well, which was not done, as key informants say, even before the epidemic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING DISTANCE LEARNING

More than half of parents believe that for more successful implementation of distance learning it is crucial to have regular and direct communication with teachers. If we add the one-third of those who insist on additional teacher support, it is clear that traditional teaching adapted to the new circumstances has primacy over new technology. However, half of parents welcome the combining of these two models in the form of live online classes, which would enable interaction between teachers and pupils.

Data in %



If distance learning continues partly or fully, which of the following would help your child stay tuned and learn more effectively?; Multiple answers

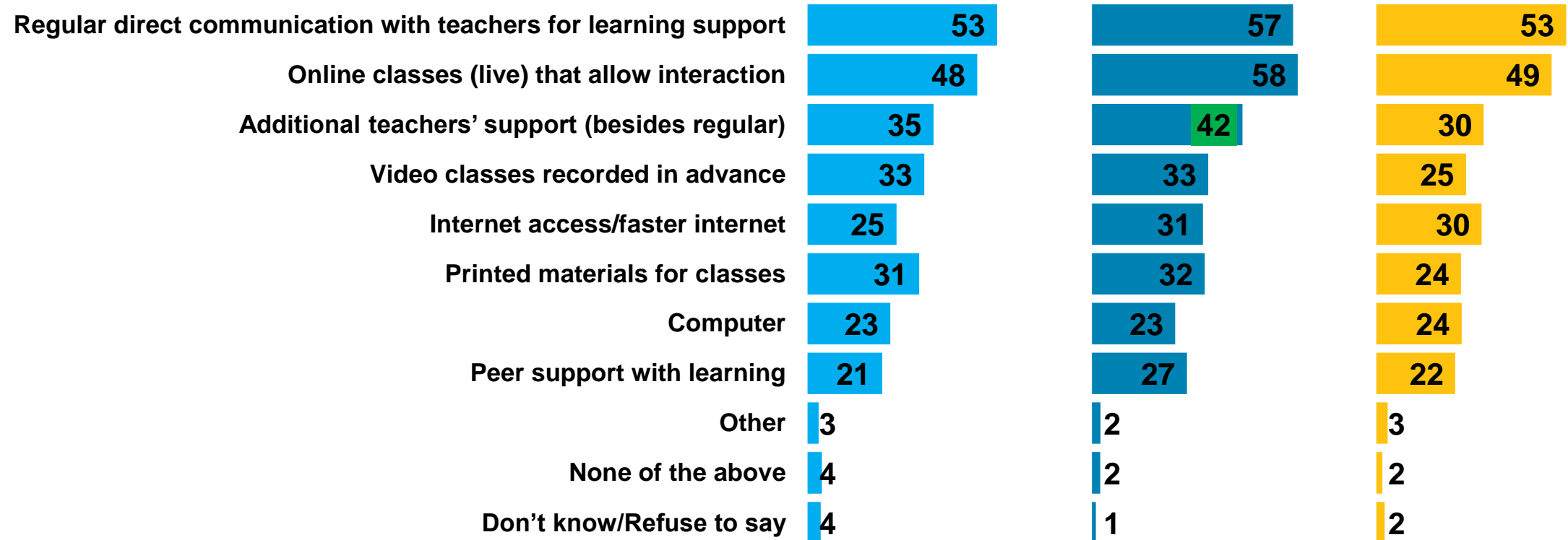
Base: Total target population, N=1,037

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING DISTANCE LEARNING AND CHILD'S AGE

The child's age does not have much influence on parents' opinions of the possibilities of improving distance learning. So, all parents agree that intensive communication with teachers, together with using the advantages of new technologies, is a winning combination. The parents of pupils of higher primary school grades additionally underline the need for extra teacher support.

Data in %

■ Lower grades of primary school ■ Upper grades of primary school ■ Secondary school



If distance learning continues partly or fully, which of the following would help your child stay tuned and learn more effectively?;

Multiple answers

Base: Total target population, N=1,037

Significantly more, statistically, than in the total population.

What would facilitate distance learning for parents – the attitudes of parents and key informants

- **Regular direct communication with teachers for support with learning** – this is a highly valued aspect and parents are satisfied with it. It is relevant to underline that intensive communication with parents from marginalized groups is also necessary.
- **Online classes that enable interaction** – parents react to such classes very positively. Some parents say that their children have already had this experience with some teachers, that children are more involved during such classes and that they are more motivated to work.
- **Video classes prepared in advance** – the majority of parents see no benefits in this step and they believe that it would be more relevant if the classes were available for longer, so that children could re-watch something they didn't understand or found hard to understand.
- **Internet access/faster internet, providing computers** – all parents agree that this is necessary because it would guarantee full outreach.
- **Printing materials** – given that this was identified as a relevant problem in the previous cycle of distance learning, if this is applied for another cycle, schools are expected to be responsible for providing printed material for all children, especially marginalized groups.
- **Teachers'/peers' support** – the importance of teachers' engagement in supplementary classes is obvious, as well as the importance of peers who might educate other pupils via interactive platforms.

What would facilitate distance learning for parents – the attitudes of parents and key informants

- **Special support for marginalized groups** – except for providing technical conditions where needed, there is a consensus that marginalized children need to be provided with extra support in different aspects: from disinfectants to learning aids and materials, but also supplementary classes if needed. In addition, children with special educational needs should have the support of personal assistants, but also other professionals who contribute to the child's education.
- **Special training for parents** – given that parents vary in terms of their understanding of learning platforms, it is necessary to provide training for parents who do not feel competent enough for this step.
- **Greater support in technical skills** – the key informants believe that not all teachers are equally digitally literate, so they need to be provided with additional training in this field.
- **Psycho-emotional support** – it is believed that this type of support to teachers was missing in the first wave of the epidemic. Regardless of how teaching will be organized, it is believed that this kind of support for teachers is crucial for maintaining a high quality of education.
- **Support for organization** – given that teachers were working overtime due to continuous communication with children and parents, it is believed that teachers need additional support in this aspect.
- **Working with children with special educational needs** – the special educational process of these children requires additional teachers' efforts in adapting the curricula to them. In this regard, assistance in adapting these plans to working from home, as well as involving personal assistants in working with children with special educational needs, are certainly steps that would facilitate teachers' work.

QUOTES

Teachers need support with how to design teaching in these circumstances. Corona requires changes to the paradigm. If the topic in biology is corona, teaching should be organized outside, pupils should be motivated to create something, make videos, do presentations. All this enables us to change the educational system, so we should use it. – *Key informant*

It would be good if the school could organize supplementary classes. The children are growing, they need more help than I can give. – *Roma parent*

We have no capacity, we are having to borrow devices. It would be good if the school could give us what we don't have. I can't buy everything that my children need. – *Parent from a socio-economically vulnerable population category*

It is necessary to engage NGOs to help parents, children and teachers. Health guidelines should be created, NGOs' recommendations should be listened to on how to motivate children, we should all work together. – *Key informant*

Teachers were not trained enough, they weren't ready for this. They reacted in a great way, but there are still knowledge gaps that need to be filled. From using the internet, to distance teaching and grading, which is most important. – *Key informant*

It is important for my child to see his teacher to whom he is very attached. So he needs classes that enable interaction with her, online classes, but with her, not a stranger. – *Parent of a child with special educational needs*

Teachers are under pressure. Parents are under pressure. Psychologists should talk to everyone, provide support, educate, help. Grading is a big issue; grades were given based on the teachers' impressions of the pupils in the first semester. All this should be thought about. – *Key informant*

Children need supplementary classes, and the school should provide these classes. It doesn't matter if the teachers are the same or not, it is important for the children to be able to say that they don't understand something and that they have someone to help them. – *Parent of a primary school child (higher grades)*

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