

Parents and Carers Voice Research 2025

Key Findings Briefing Paper
Evaluation & Research Team

September 2025



Contents

Background	3
Parents and Carers Voice 2024/25 Research	4
Approach	4
Areas covered	4
About this report	5
Key messages	6
Profile of parents and carers	7
Profile of child	8
Awareness and use of SDS services	9
Awareness and perceptions of apprenticeships	11
Satisfaction with SDS services used	13
Confidence in career discussions	14
Influence	16
Considerations during career discussions	17
Sources of information on careers	18
Preferred communication channels	19

Background

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency. As the provider of Scotland's Career Service, SDS supports customers to develop the skills and habits they need to make decisions about learning and work. SDS's strategic plan (2022-27) sets out SDS's goal of ensuring that young people have improved participation in the labour market, smoother post-school transitions and are equipped with the skills they need, at every stage of their lives, to have rewarding careers¹. Previous research with young people^{2&3} demonstrates that parents and carers are a key influencer on the decisions and choices young people make about their education and career.

It is therefore essential for SDS to fully understand the experiences of parents and carers when supporting their children in making decisions about their future careers. The findings of the research are used to inform SDS's Parents Strategy and continuous improvement of Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services for parents and carers across Scotland.

¹ Skills Development Scotland Strategic Plan 2022-27 – Skills for a Changing World, 2022

² Skills Development Scotland – Pupil's Voice Research 2024

³ Skills Development Scotland – Young People's Career Ambitions Research 2025

Parents and Carers Voice 2024/25 Research

Parents and carers are a key influencer of young people's career and education choices. As such, SDS seeks feedback from this important group on SDS services, perceptions and attitudes towards work-based learning and other routes, and knowledge of careers and career conversations with their child through the research, which supports SDS to:

- Inform the way SDS communicates with parents to advise them of service offers;
- Develop resources / information to enable parents to support young people in their career choices;
- Increase SDS understanding of parents' awareness and confidence in understanding the full range of post-school pathways and options open to young people.

Approach

An online questionnaire was designed in-house by the SDS Evaluation & Research and National CIAG teams. SDS Careers Advisers used their connections with secondary schools to encourage them to distribute the questionnaire to parents using an anonymous email link. The link was promoted using school channels including school email, school social media and school apps.

The fieldwork was carried out between 5th November 2024 and 30th May 2025, during which time 4,689 responses were received.

Areas covered

The research questions were developed by SDS in collaboration with a project steering and reference group. The research covered the following areas:

- Awareness and use of SDS services
- Awareness and perceptions of apprenticeships

- Satisfaction with SDS services used
- Confidence in having career conversations and perceived influence
- Preferred sources of information

About this report

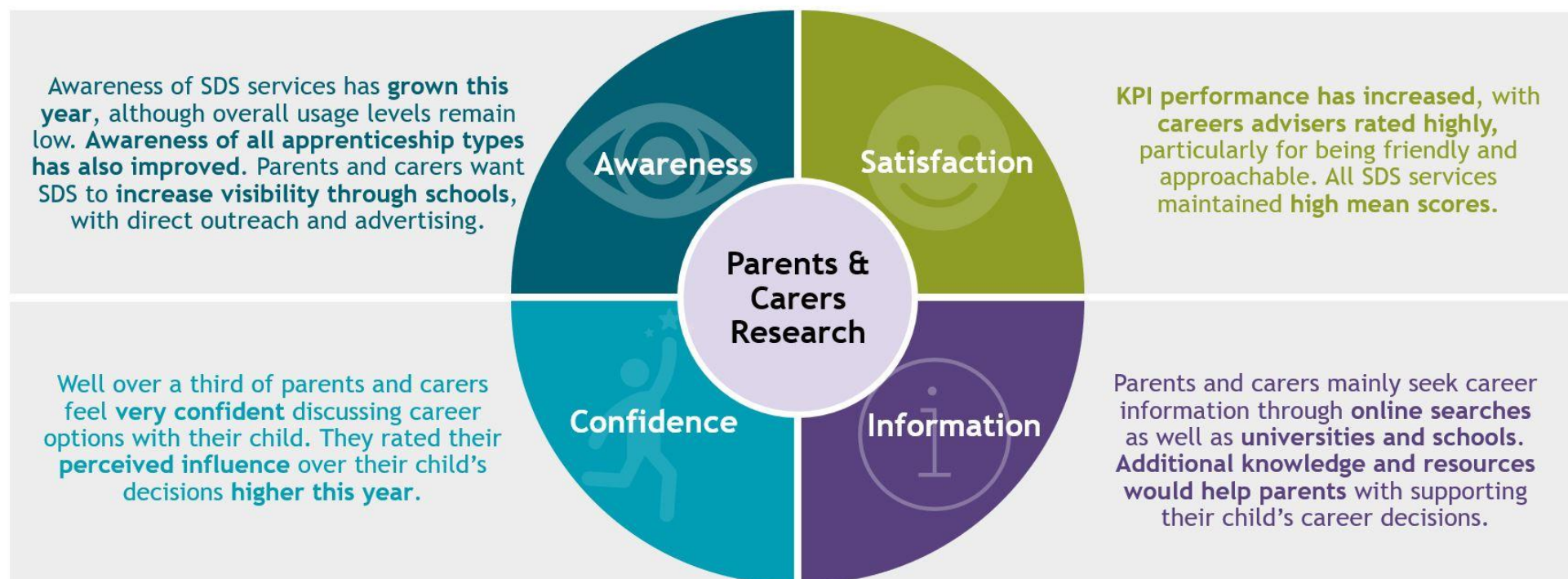
This report summarises the key findings from the Parents and Carers Voice Research 2024/25. The term 'parents' may be used interchangeably with 'parents and carers' throughout this report to refer to all parents, carers and guardians who participated in the research. If you have any queries about this research, please contact SDS's Evaluation and Research team at:-

Evaluation&Research@sds.co.uk

Key messages

The research saw an increase in respondents compared to last year, with the feedback providing a strong evidence base upon which to review SDS's offer to parents and carers, and how SDS can support parents' critical role as a key influencer in young people's career decisions.

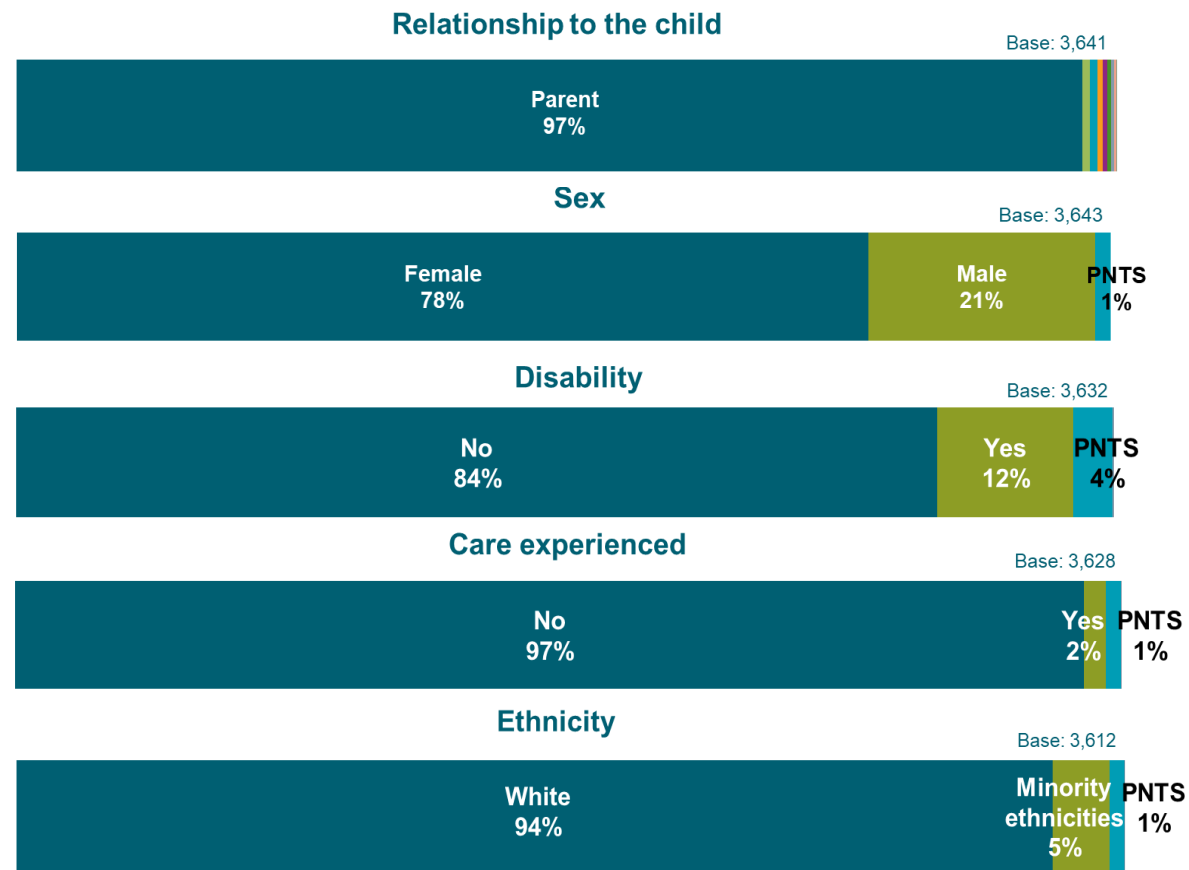
Figure 1: Key messages from the research



Profile of parents and carers

Most of the respondents who took part in the survey were a 'parent' of the child. 0.7% of respondents were carers, 0.7% were grandparents and 0.5% were guardians. A higher proportion of respondents were female. The sample for ethnicity matches the ethnicity profile of Scotland as a whole, with the disability sample slightly lower than the Scottish profile.

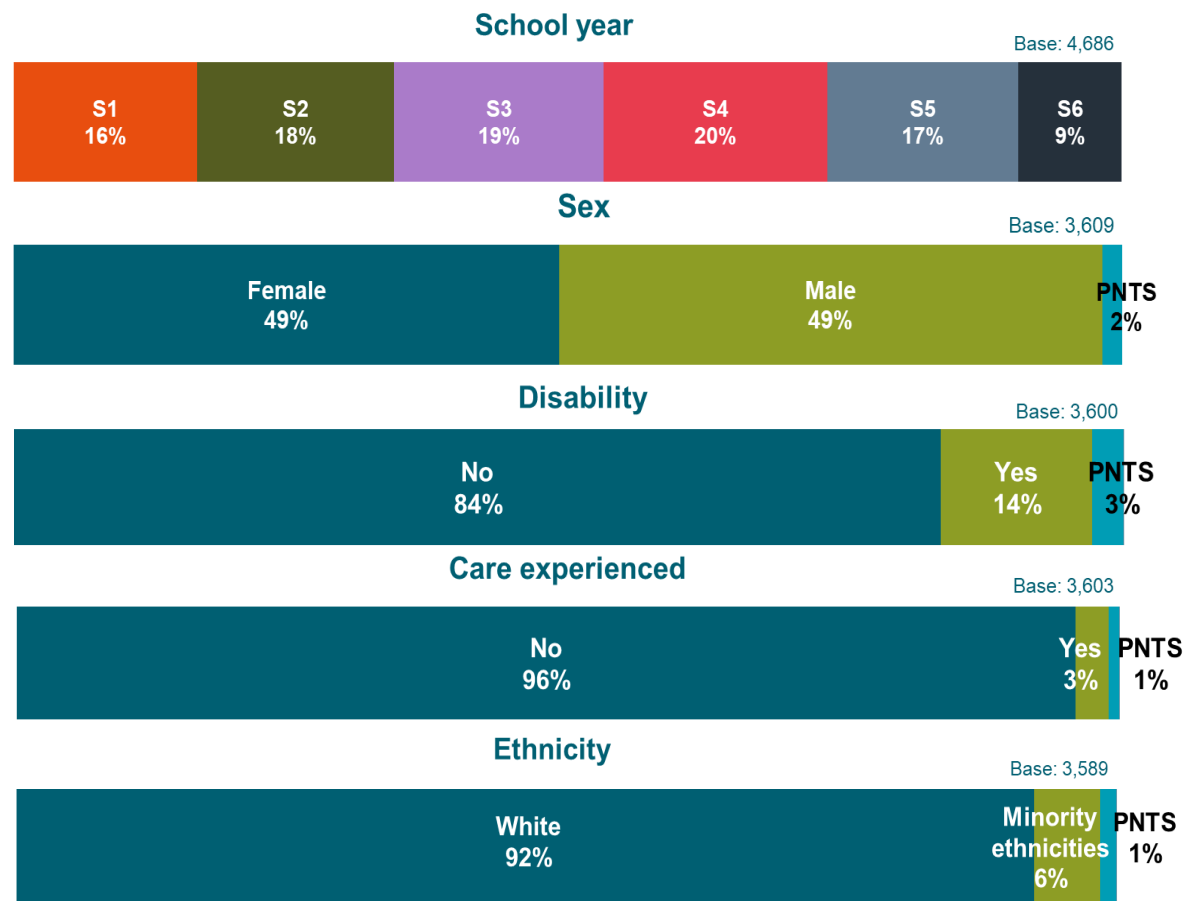
Figure 2: Profile of parents and carers



Profile of child

The parents and carers survey covered pupils from S1 – S6, with an even distribution across the year groups. Male and female children were represented equally. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds and with a disability were also represented. This year a new question about care was asked of both parents and children, showing that 2% of adults and 3% of children were care experienced.

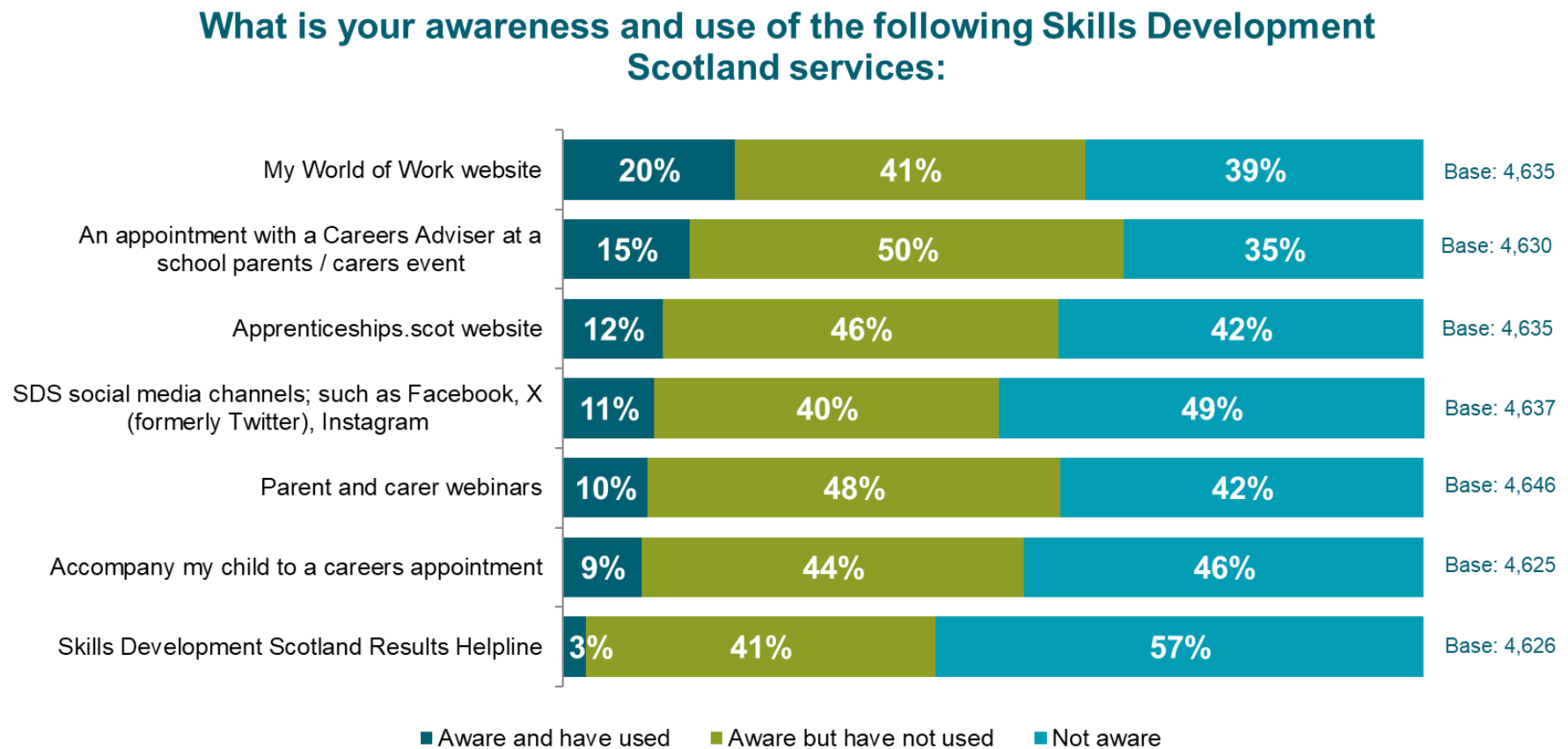
Figure 3: Profile of children



Awareness and use of SDS services

There are varying levels of awareness with regards to SDS services; usage itself is relatively low. Parents and carers are most aware of an appointment with a Careers Adviser at school. The My World of Work website is used most by parents.

Figure 4: Awareness and use of SDS services



Awareness has increased compared to previous years. The largest increase has been in awareness to attend an appointment with their child and the results helpline.

Figure 5: Tracking awareness of SDS services

	2023/24 % Aware	2024/25 % Aware	Difference
An appointment with a Careers Adviser at a school parents / carers event	57%	65%	8%
My World of Work website	53%	61%	8%
Parent and carer webinars	49%	58%	9%
Apprenticeships.scot website	48%	58%	10%
Accompany my child to a careers appointment	41%	54%	13%
SDS social media channels; such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram	40%	51%	11%
Skills Development Scotland Results Helpline	31%	43%	12%

Awareness and perceptions of apprenticeships

Apprenticeship awareness has increased across all types, with parents and carers valuing them as a meaningful way for young people to learn and gain experience. Modern apprenticeships remain the most recognised, reflecting their longstanding presence, though nearly one in five parents are unaware of any of the apprenticeship options.

Figure 6: Awareness of apprenticeships

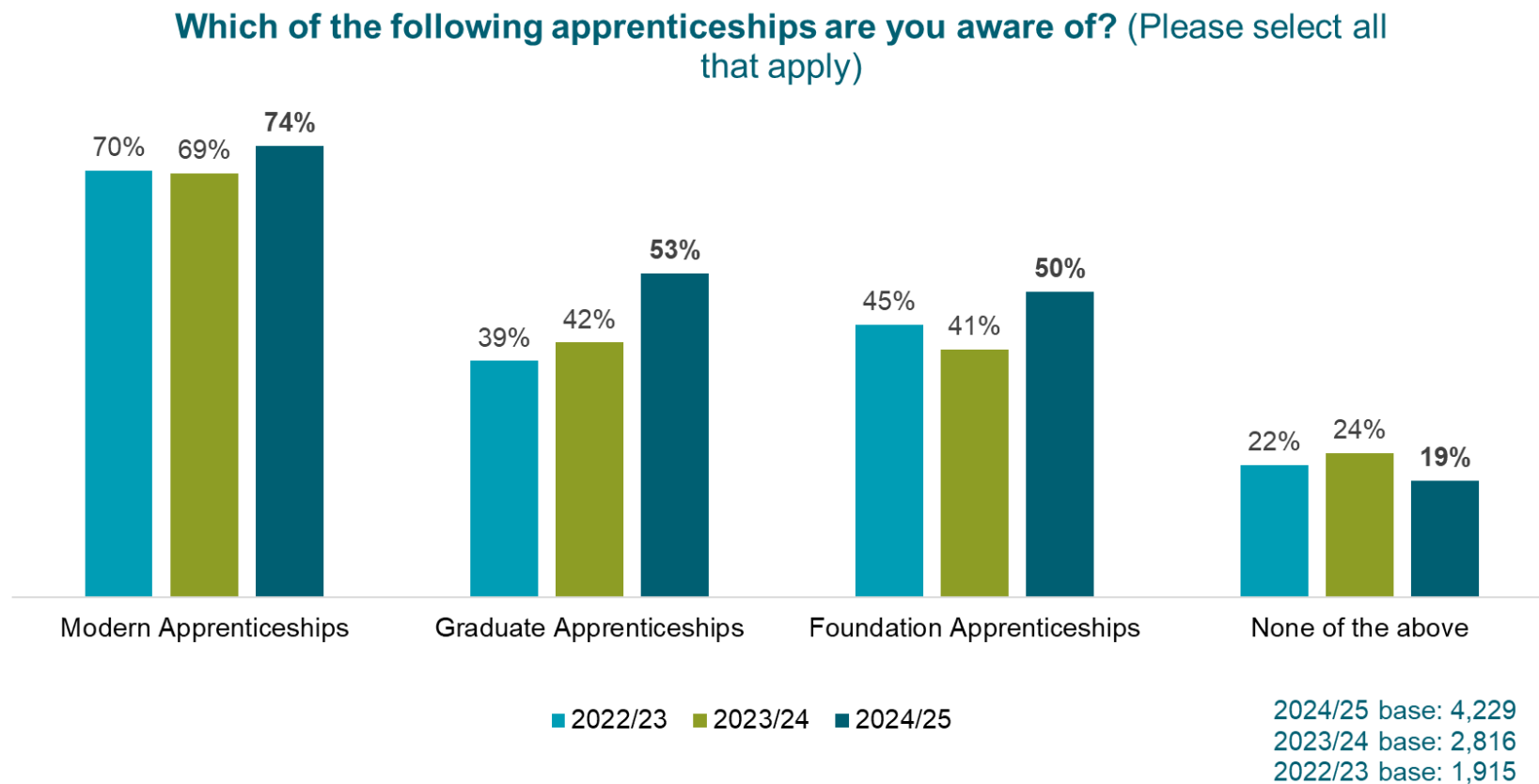
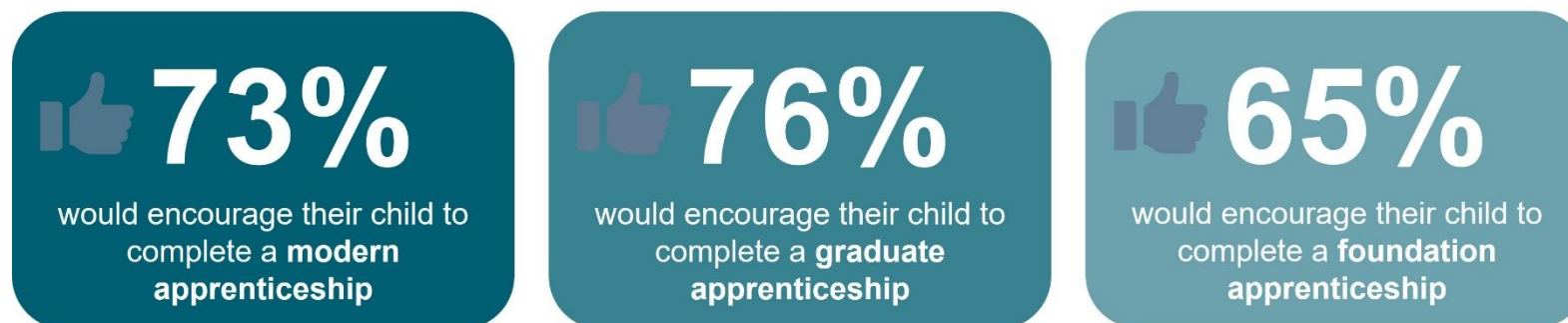


Figure 7: Parental encouragement of apprenticeships



Parents and carers who support apprenticeships see them as valuable learning opportunities, offering practical experience, qualifications, and the opportunity to earn while learning. Apprenticeships are also viewed as strong routes into employment, with clear progression and career prospects. Parents who discourage apprenticeships do so because their child wants to pursue further or higher education, or because apprenticeships don't align with their child's career goals, skills or ambitions.

Figure 8: Reasons for encouragement / discouragement of apprenticeships



Satisfaction with SDS services used

Parents and carers who used SDS services were satisfied and rated them highly.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with SDS services used (mean point score on a 1–10 point scale)



Confidence in career discussions

Over half of parents and carers reported high confidence (rating 8 to 10) in discussing career and learning options with their child. Those seeking to improve their confidence expressed a need for more information from SDS on learning pathways and a broader knowledge base on skills for life and work.

Figure 10: Mean point score for confidence



Figure 11: Distribution of confidence scores

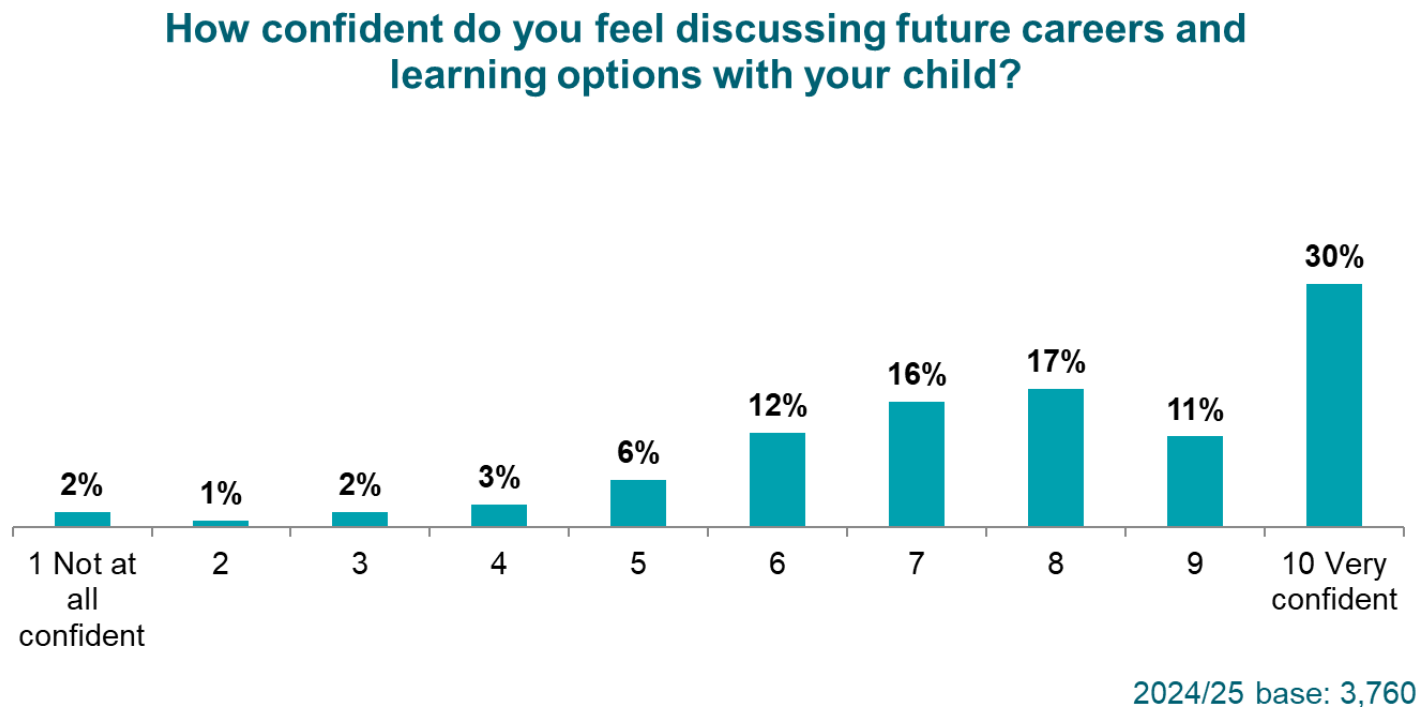
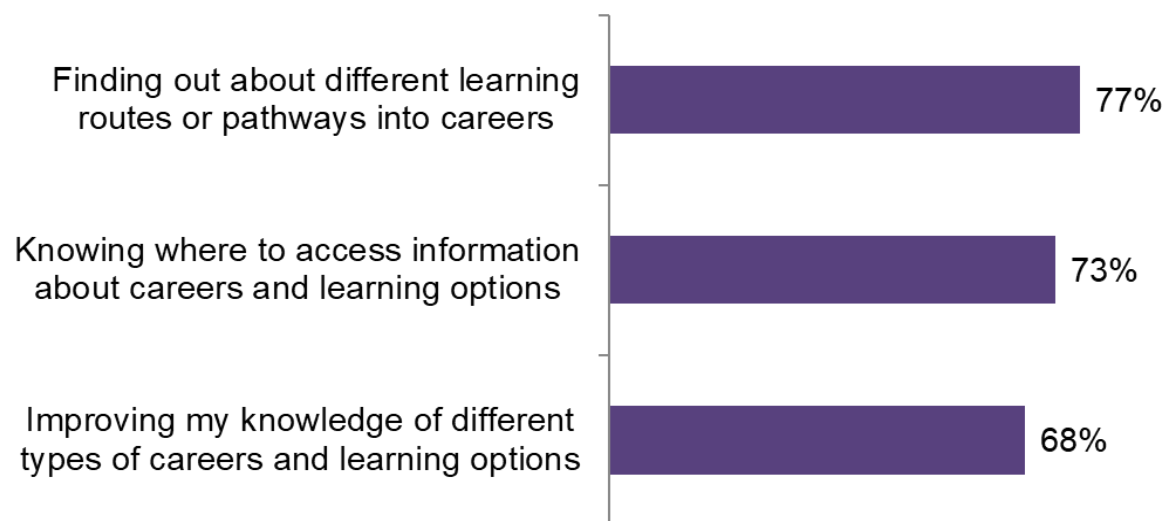


Figure 12: Improving confidence

**What would make you feel more confident when
discussing future careers and learning options
with your child?**
(Please select all that apply)



2024/25 base: 483

Influence

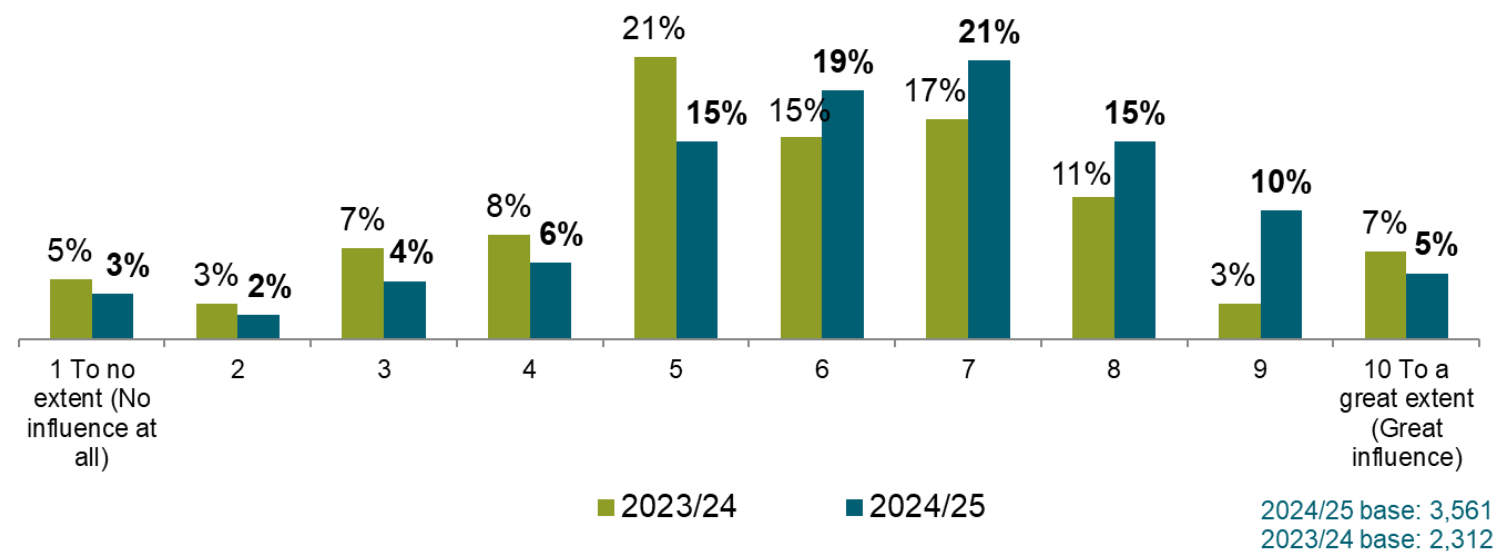
A higher percentage of parents this year in comparison to the year before are acknowledging the influence they have on their child's choices. This is consistent with our young people's research where parents are seen as the biggest influence^{4&5}. The overall mean score for influence remains nearer the lower end of the 10-point scale.

Figure 13: Mean point score for influence



Figure 14: Distribution of influence scores

To what extent do you feel that you influence your child's choices about their career and learning options?



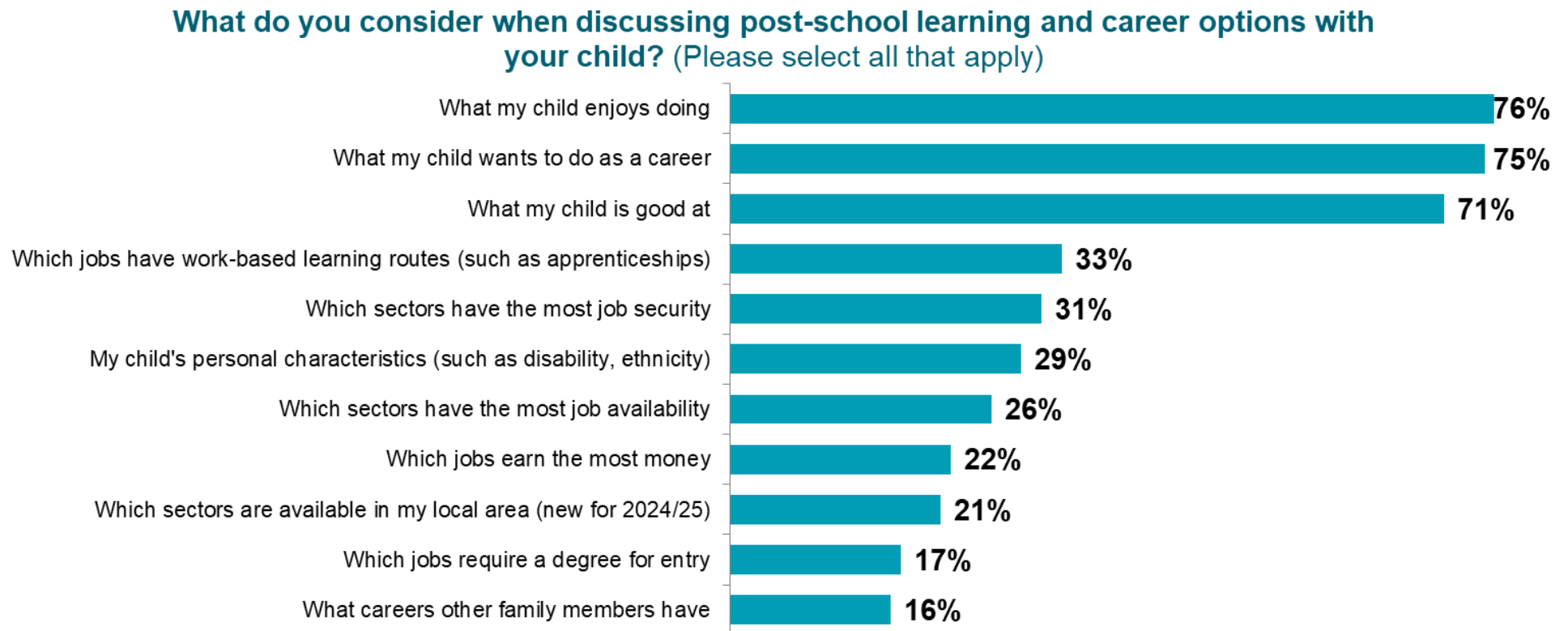
⁴ Skills Development Scotland – Pupil's Voice Research 2024

⁵ Skills Development Scotland – Young People's Career Ambitions Research 2025

Considerations during career discussions

Parents and carers are most likely to consider their child's enjoyment, their ambitions and strengths when it comes to discussing careers with their child.

Figure 15: Considerations during career discussions

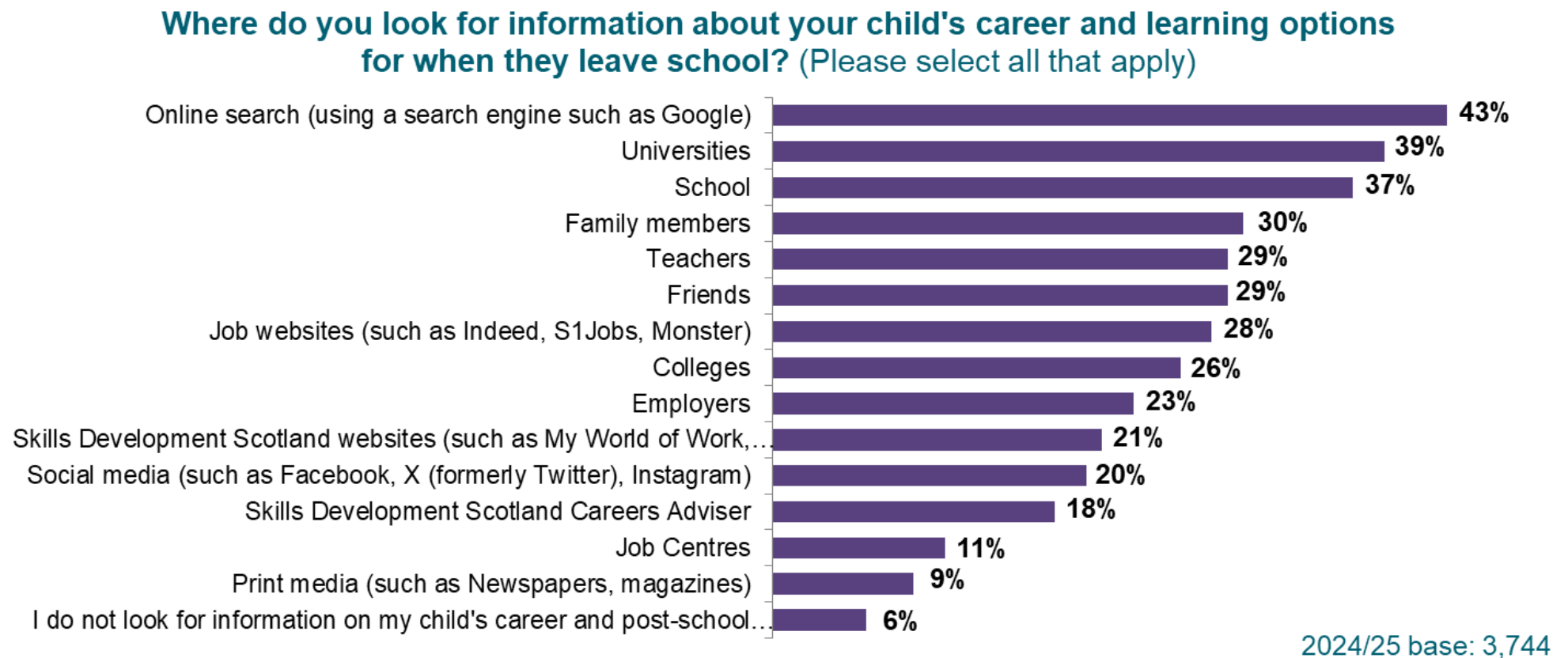


2024/25 base: 3,698

Sources of information on careers

Parents and carers access a wide range of sources for career and learning information, with online search being the most used. Educational institutions (particularly universities and schools) were also key sources. Family, teachers, and friends were also cited, while job centres and print media were the least frequently consulted.

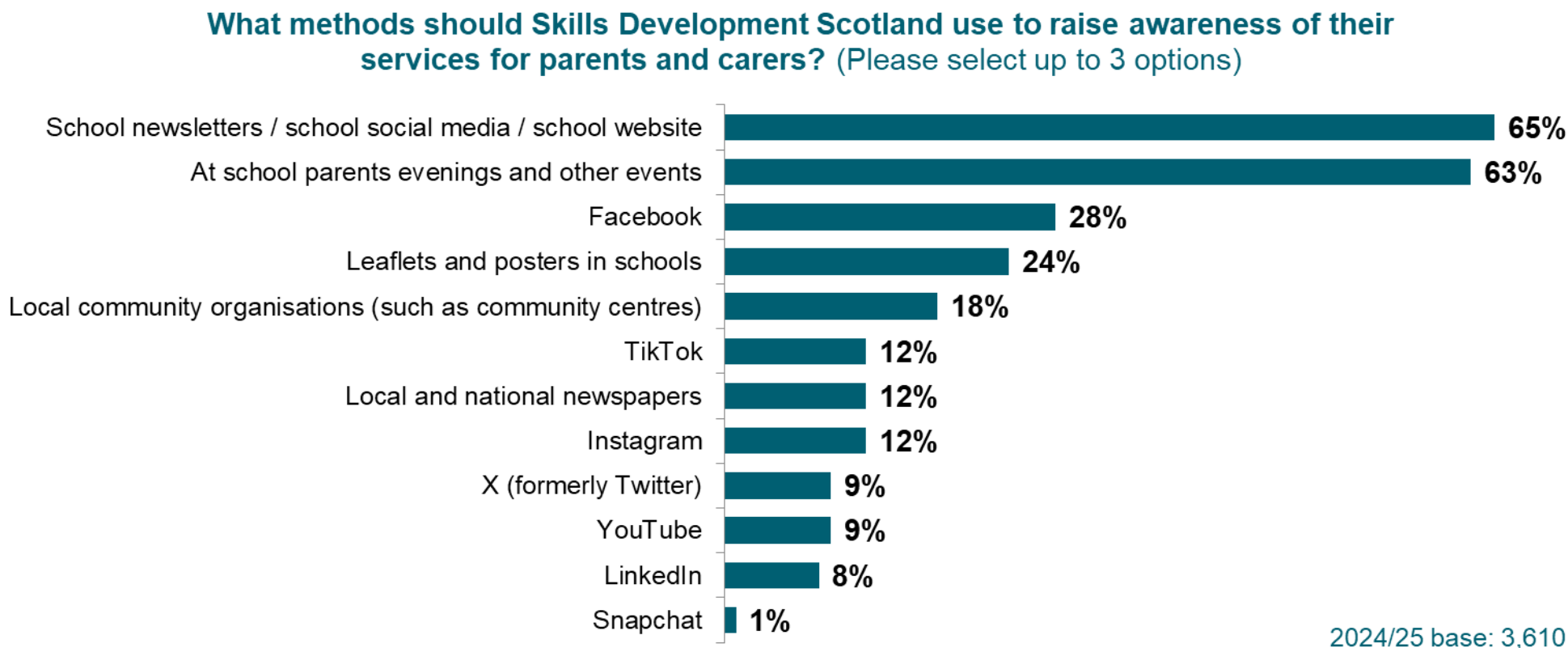
Figure 16: Sources of information on careers and learning options



Preferred communication channels

Parents and carers want to hear about SDS services primarily through existing school channels. School newsletters, school social media and the school website were seen as the most important methods to raise awareness, followed closely by parents' evenings and other events. Around a quarter of parents and carers would like to hear about SDS services through Facebook and via leaflets and posters in schools.

Figure 17: Preferred methods of communication for raising awareness of SDS services



Skills Development Scotland

Monteith House
11 George Square
Glasgow G2 1DY

www.sds.co.uk

