

# Research with Parents of Children with Smartphone Access

An Amárach Survey

Briefing Report

September 2023

*Issued 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023*





➤ Approach	3
➤ Sample	4
➤ Headlines	5
➤ Main findings	
– Smartphone access/ownership	8
– First smartphone purchase drivers	11
– Usage – apps/platforms	20
– Usage – circumstances	21
– Daily internet access	30
– Supervision	40
– Parental concerns	42
– Parental knowledge of child’s experiences	47
– Monitoring solutions	52



## Methodology

Online survey  
Questionnaire designed in collaboration with  
Cilter.ie and Drury



## Field work dates

13- 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023



## Sample

A nationally representative sample\* of 900 parents  
of children aged 5 to 17 with smartphone access.  
Parents aged 18+. Republic of Ireland

*\* Nat. Rep. by family unit (age of oldest child), household composition  
(couple or lone parent) & region – ref CSO 2022*



## Margin of Error

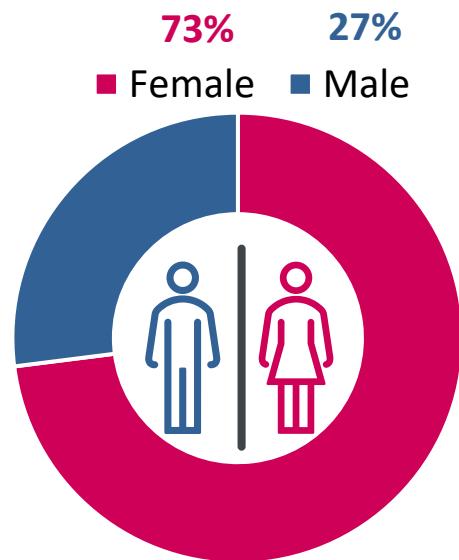
±3.1% at 95% confidence interval

The margin of error indicates the percentage points the  
results may differ from the overall population.

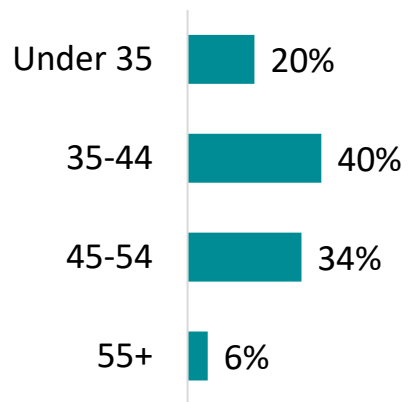
*Margin of error changes according to the size of sample, the size of the population and to  
the observed percentage in question.*



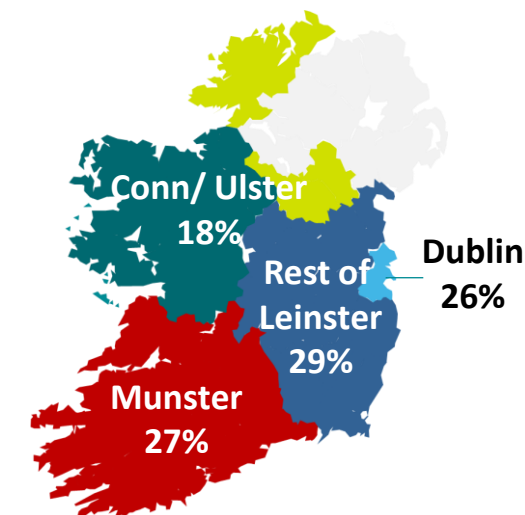
### Parent Gender



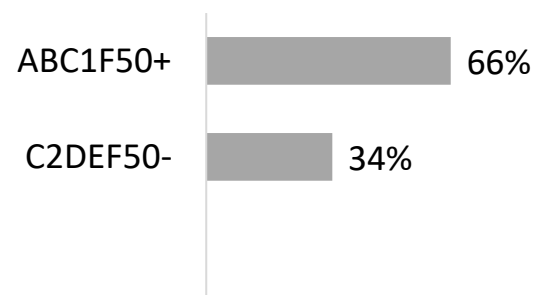
### Parent Age



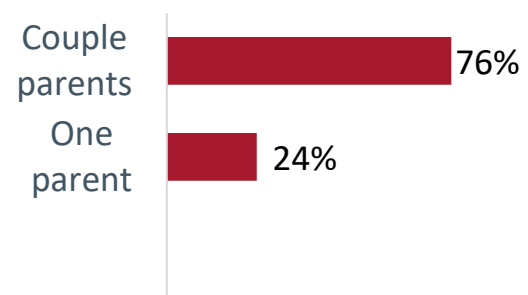
### Region\*



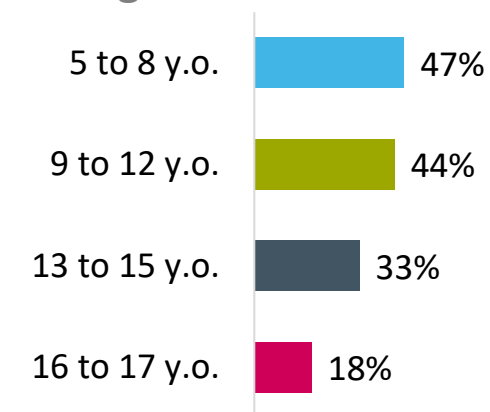
### Household Social Class



### Household Composition\*



### Ages of children\*



\* Nat. Rep. by family unit (age of oldest child), household composition (couple or lone parent) & region – ref CSO 2022



## **Smartphone access/ownership**

- Over 70% of 5 to 8 year olds (Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> Class children) have access to a smartphone, with around one quarter having their own smartphone.
- 8 in 10 (81%) of children aged 12 have their own smartphone as they move into post primary school.
- Between 97% to 100% of teens aged 13+ have their own smartphone.

## **Reasons driving smartphone purchase for children**

- Social media access featured among reasons children got their first smartphone for 57% or more of children aged 10+.
- Communicating with friends / peers featured as a reason to get their first smartphone for at least 8 in 10 children aged 11+ .

## **Phone usage – platforms & apps**

- The top apps and platforms parents say their children access are:
  - You Tube 83%.
  - WhatsApp 59%, rising to 9 in 10 children aged 13+.
  - Search engines e.g. Google 56%, rising to 64% of 9-12 year olds and 75%+ 13 years and older.
  - TikTok 49%, rising to three quarters of children aged 13+.
  - Snapchat 48%, rising to 81% of 13-15s and 85% of 16/17 year olds.
  - Instagram 28%, up to 70% among 16-17s.
  - Facebook Messenger 12%.
- For those children who have supervised internet access, their usage of apps such as TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram is lower compared to those children who are unsupervised.



## **Phone usage – rules and guidance**

- 45% of children aged 10 can use their smartphone in their bedrooms, rising to over 85% of children aged 11+.
- 35% of children aged 13 can always or sometimes use their phone at night, 66% of 14 year olds, and three quarters of 16-17 year olds.
- Less than half (47%) of 13 years old hand over their phone before they go to bed.
- Nearly half of 11 year olds (46%), 57% of 12 year olds, 69% of 13 year olds and 79% of 14/15 year olds access social media on their phones.

## **Phone usage – time spent online & supervision**

- Children spend considerably more time online as they get older, whilst levels of supervision reduce.
- Internet access supervision reduces with age and is lower during weekends and holiday times. Supervision levels for children aged 11+ decline considerably. 80% of parents of children aged 11 with smartphones say their child's internet access is only sometimes or never supervised.

## **Parental concerns**

- Parents top concerns with regard to their children's smartphone usage are:
  - Cyberbullying.
  - Risk of receiving or accessing disturbing or harmful content in relation to self-harming, suicidal ideation, mental ill health.
  - Risk of online grooming.
  - Risk of accessing pornography.
- There are higher proportions of parents scoring '10 - extremely concerned' amongst those whose children's online activity is supervised for: cyberbullying, risk of online grooming, Risk of receiving or accessing disturbing or harmful content.



- Around one quarter of all parents were either unsure or said their child had seen explicit images others had shared or received or accessed/been exposed to pornography.
- One fifth (21%) of all parents of children aged 5-17 said their child has been purposely excluded from a group chat or online event.
- 18% said their child had been called offensive names.
- A significant minority of parents couldn't be sure whether or not their child had experienced cyberbullying, harmful content or explicit images.
- 15% of parents said they had suspicions that their child may be experiencing such circumstances online but had been or felt unable to deal with it. 20% of parents who do not supervise children's internet access, have had suspicions their child may have experienced one or more of these circumstances vs. 14% who supervise.
- 31% said their child had spoken about friend or others aged 5-17 who have experienced these circumstances online or on their phone.
- 16% of parents had been so concerned about their child's experiences online that they felt they should mention it to other parents, teachers or the Gardaí.

## **Monitoring & solutions**

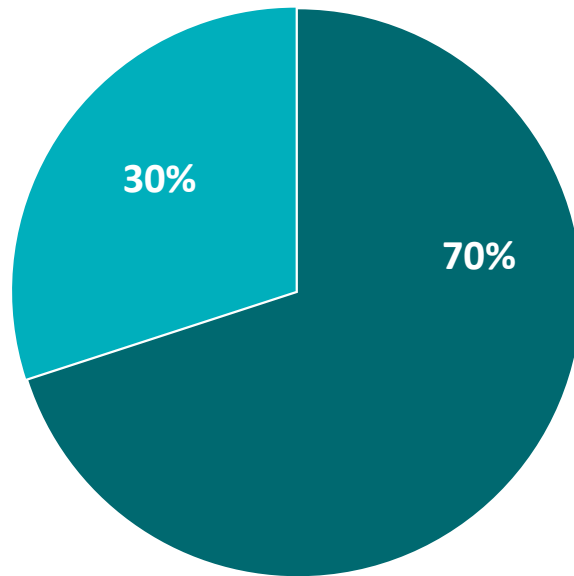
- Whilst half of all parents claimed to be satisfied with the current solutions to monitoring their child's online activities and interactions, half were neutral, unsure or dissatisfied.
- When the proposed Cilter solution was described, 8 in 10 parents were interested, 62% very interested. Interest was especially high among parents of children aged 5 to 12.
- In two thirds of families (68%) the mother is the person in a family most involved / the decision maker when it comes to online child-protection / technical solutions to devices. In 25% of families, it is the father.
- Fathers are slightly more likely to be the decision maker than mothers where there are children aged 16-17. In some cases (3% 16-17s and 2% 13-15s) it is the child themselves.



# Child/children aged 5-17 years old – approach to smartphone access.

(BASE : All respondents -900)

(i.e. Parents of children with smartphone access)



■ Yes – their own smartphone

■ Yes – via someone else

	Age of child (All children)			
	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old
<i>n=</i>	425	392	300	164
Yes, their own smartphone	48%	78%	99%	98%
Yes, via someone else	52%	22%	1%	2%

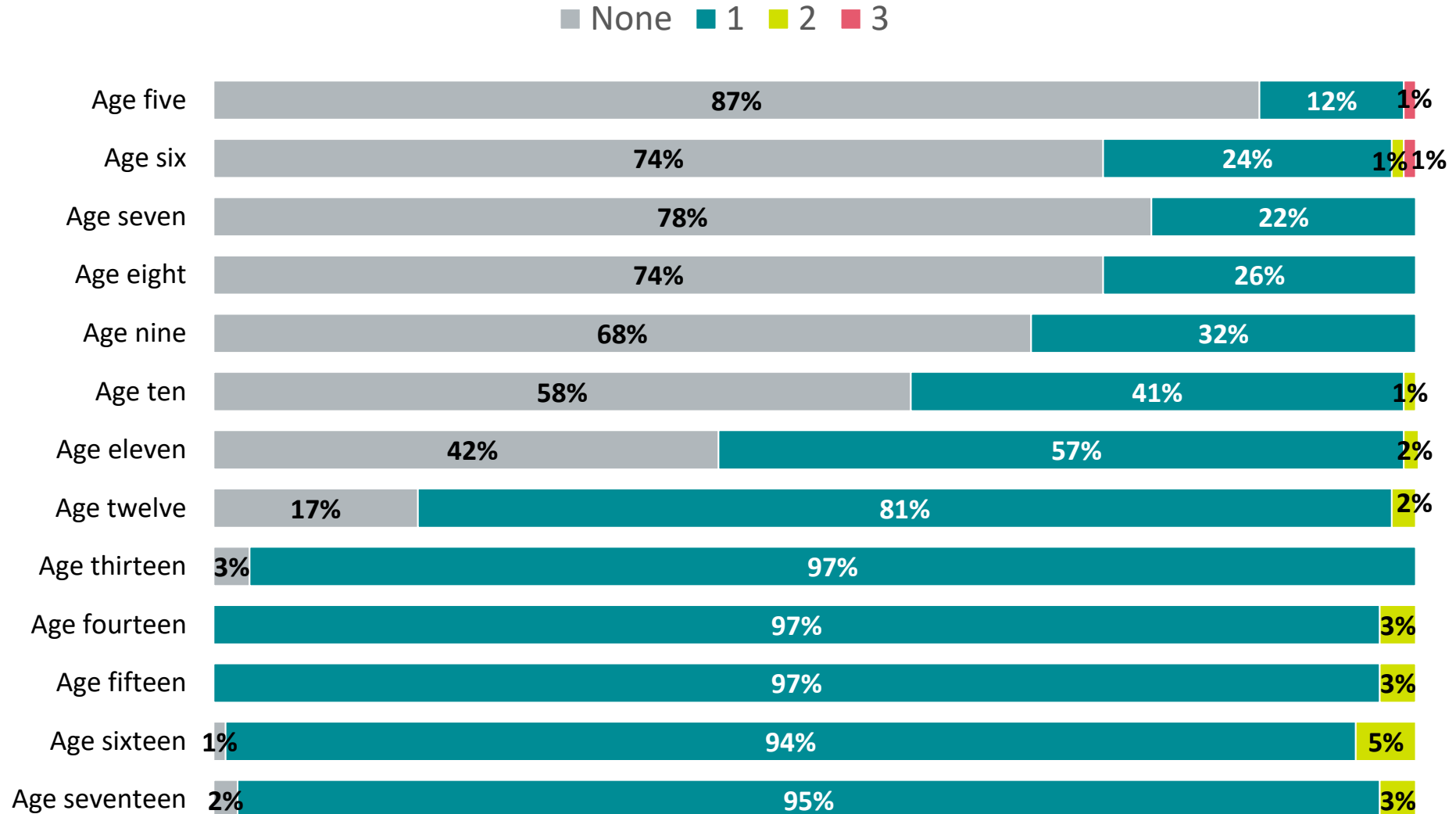
Q1b. How child / children aged 5-17 have access to a Smartphone  
e.g., iPhone or Android equivalent with potential for online access (whether or not they currently access the internet)





# Number of children in family with a smartphone by age ranges.

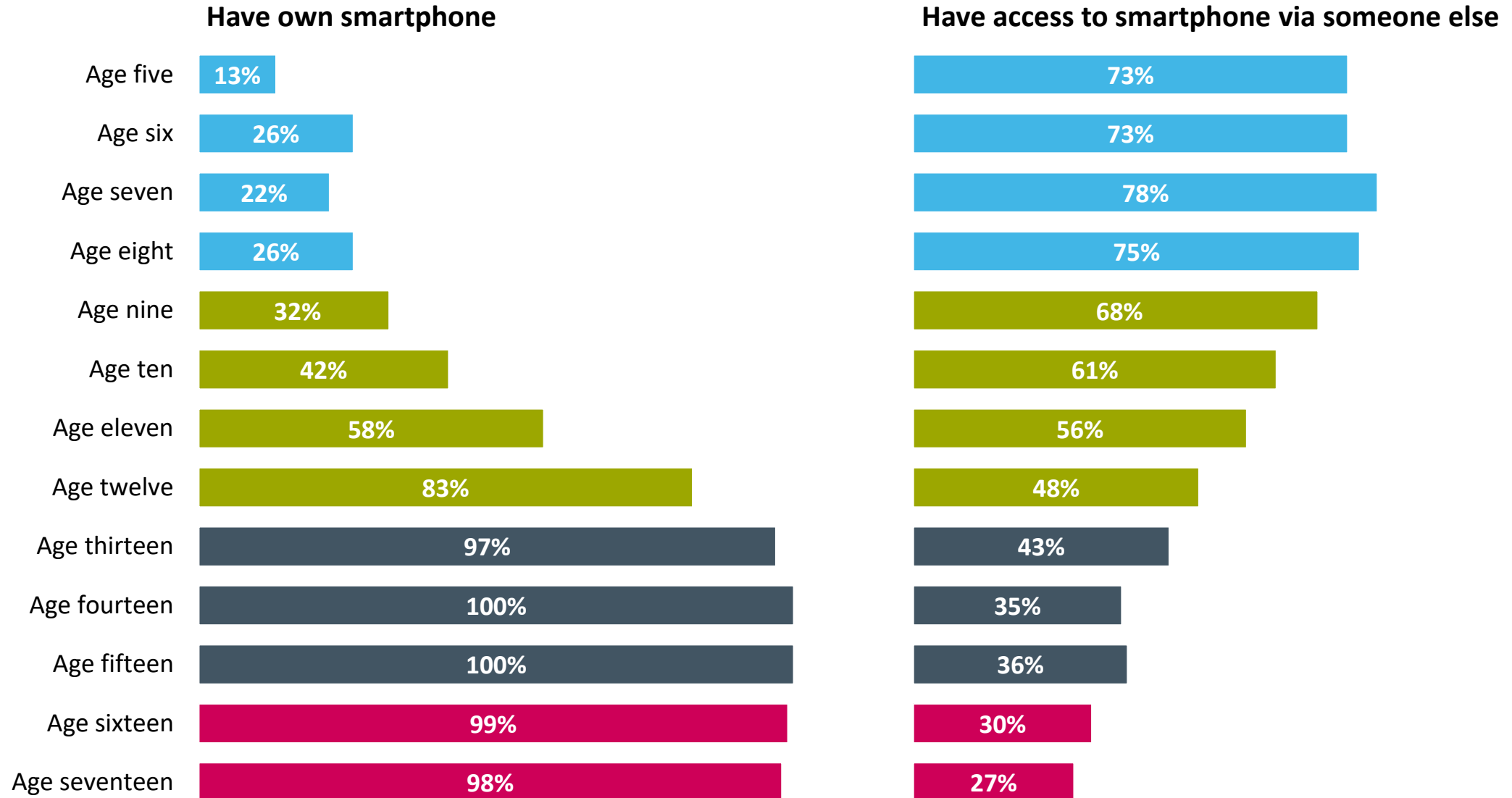
(BASE : All respondents -900)





# Smartphone access by age.

(BASE : All respondents -900)



Q3. Does your child or how many children aged ... have their own smartphone?  
Q3b. Does your child/how many children aged (Q2a) have access to a smartphone via someone else?

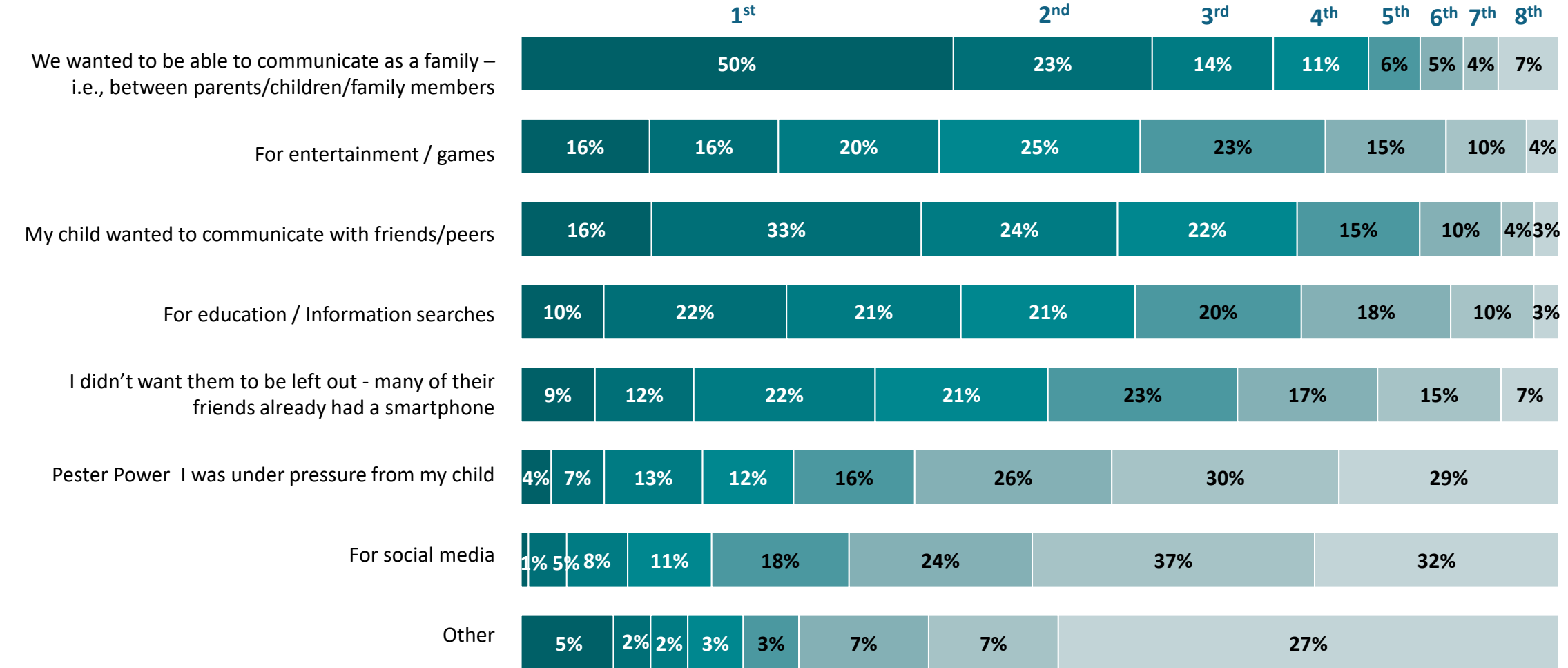
NB: Some children have both their own smartphone AND access via someone else



# Overall, communicating with family is a primary reason for first smartphone purchase, followed closely by communicating with friends/peers. Other important drivers are education, entertainment and ‘pester power’.

(BASE : Parents of children with their own smartphone -635)

All parents of children with own smartphone



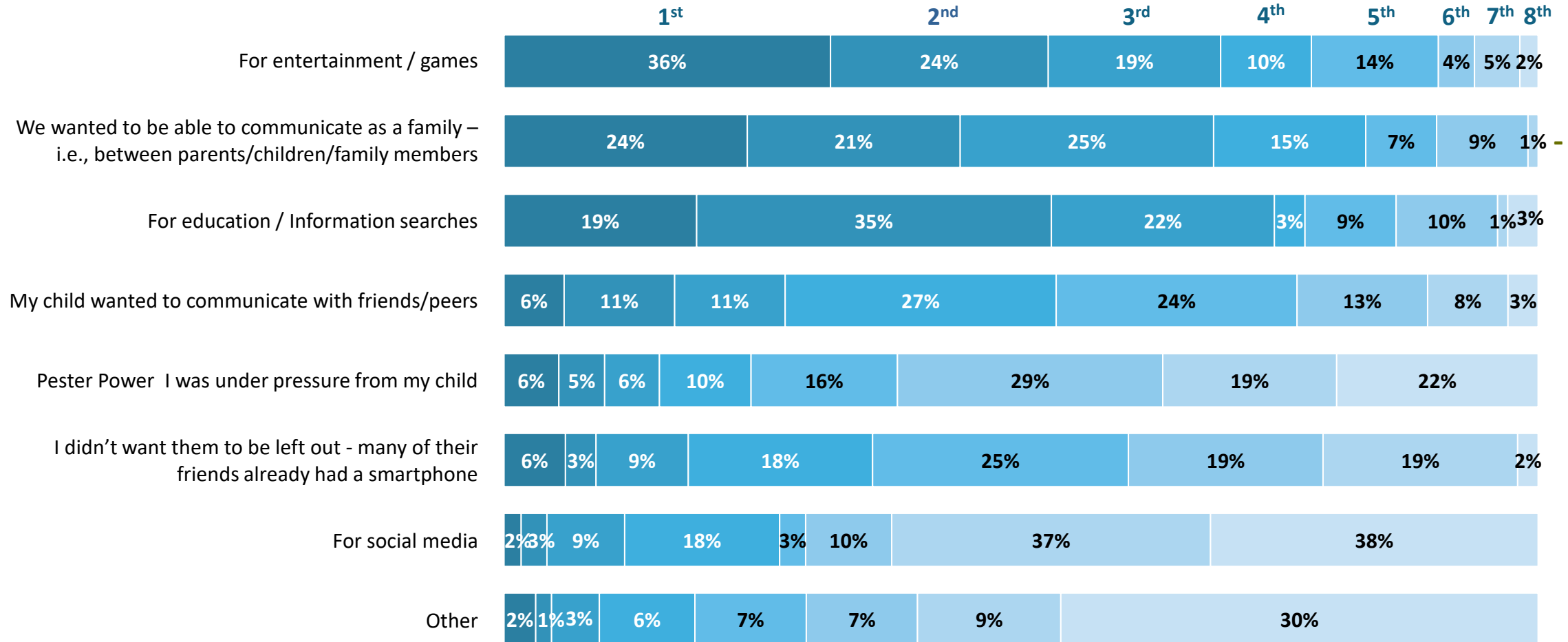
Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone. Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone? Where 1 = main driver in the reason to get a smartphone and 8 = lowest driver in the reason to get a smartphone.



# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making?

(BASE : Parents of children aged 5-8 with their own smartphone -104)

## Age 5-8 years with own smartphone



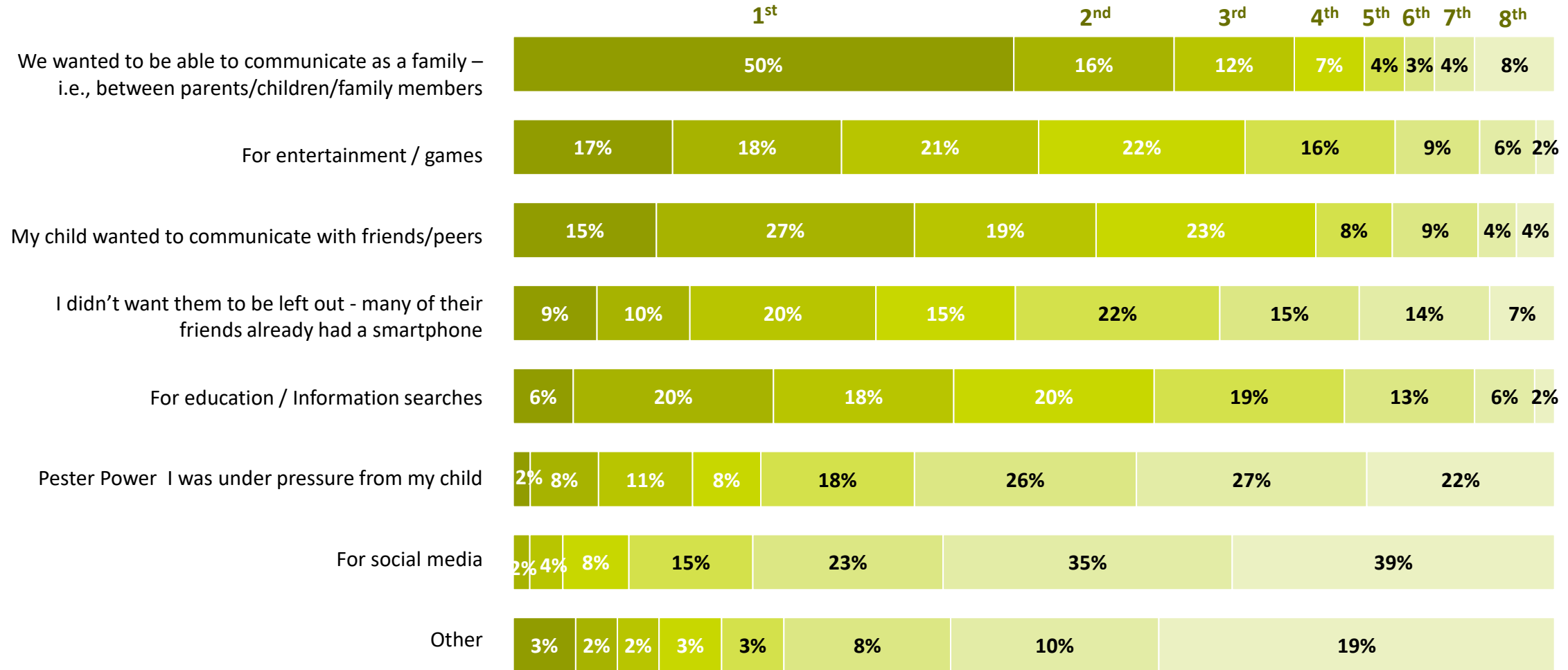
Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone. Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone? Where 1 = main driver in the reason to get a smartphone and 8 = lowest driver in the reason to get a smartphone.



# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making?

(BASE : Parents of children aged 9-12 with their own smartphone -241)

## Age 9-12 years with own smartphone



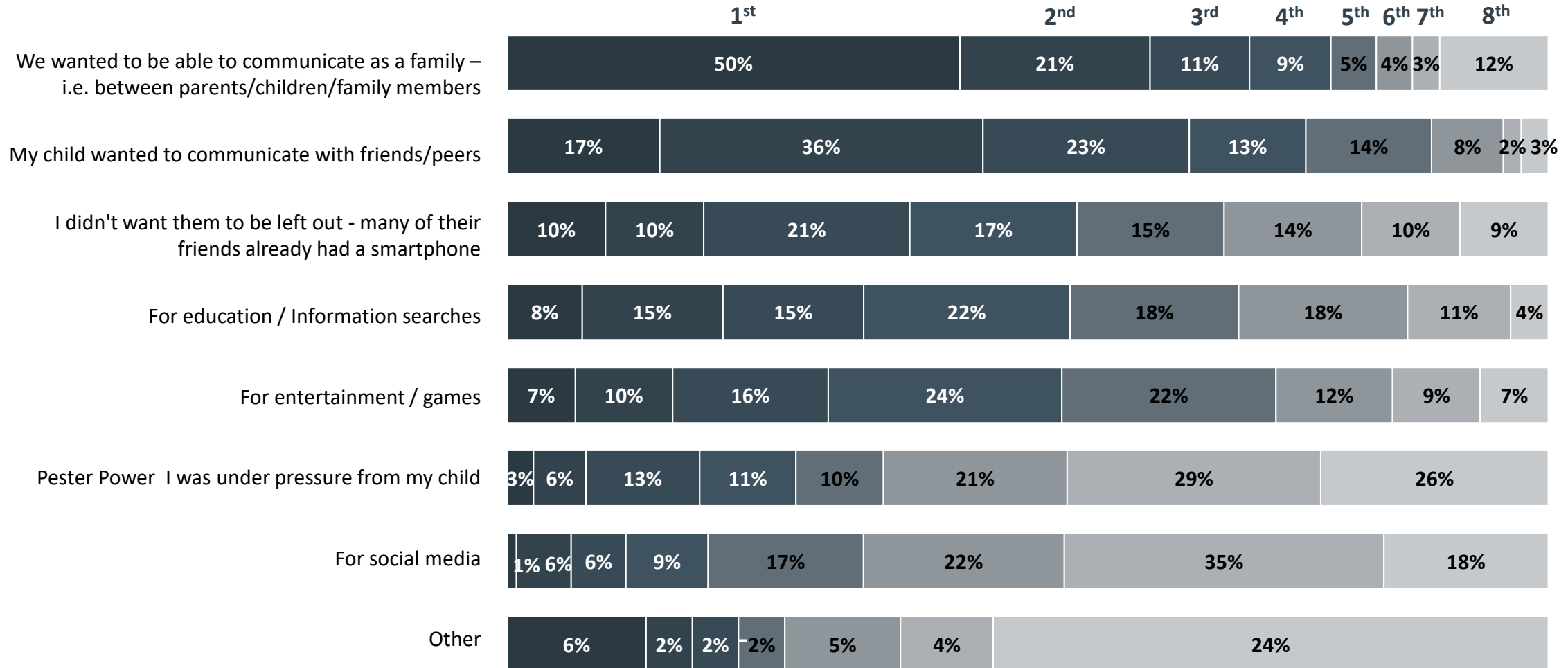
Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone. Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone? Where 1 = main driver in the reason to get a smartphone and 8 = lowest driver in the reason to get a smartphone.



# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making?

(BASE : Parents of children aged 13-15 with their own smartphone -298)

## Age 13-15 years with own smartphone



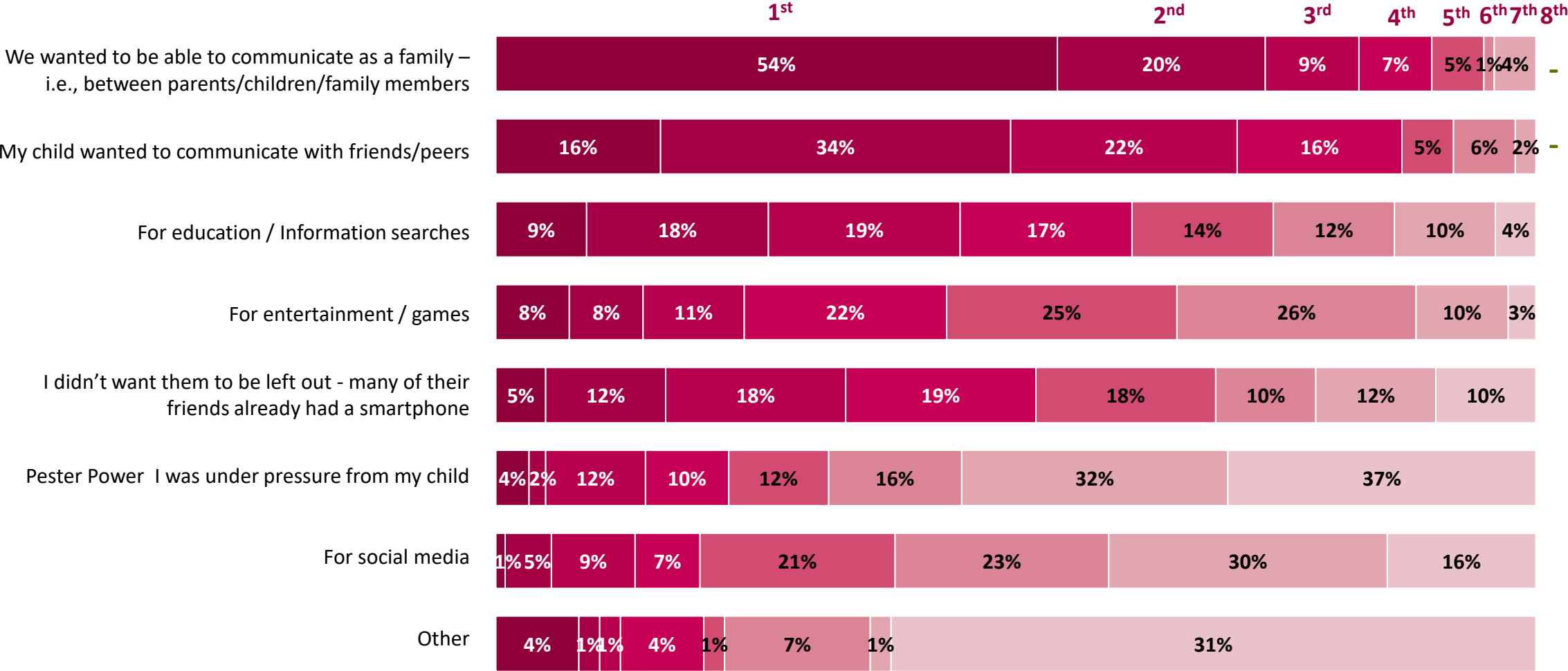
Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone. Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone? Where 1 = main driver in the reason to get a smartphone and 8 = lowest driver in the reason to get a smartphone.



# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making?

(BASE : Parents of children aged 16-17 with their own smartphone -162)

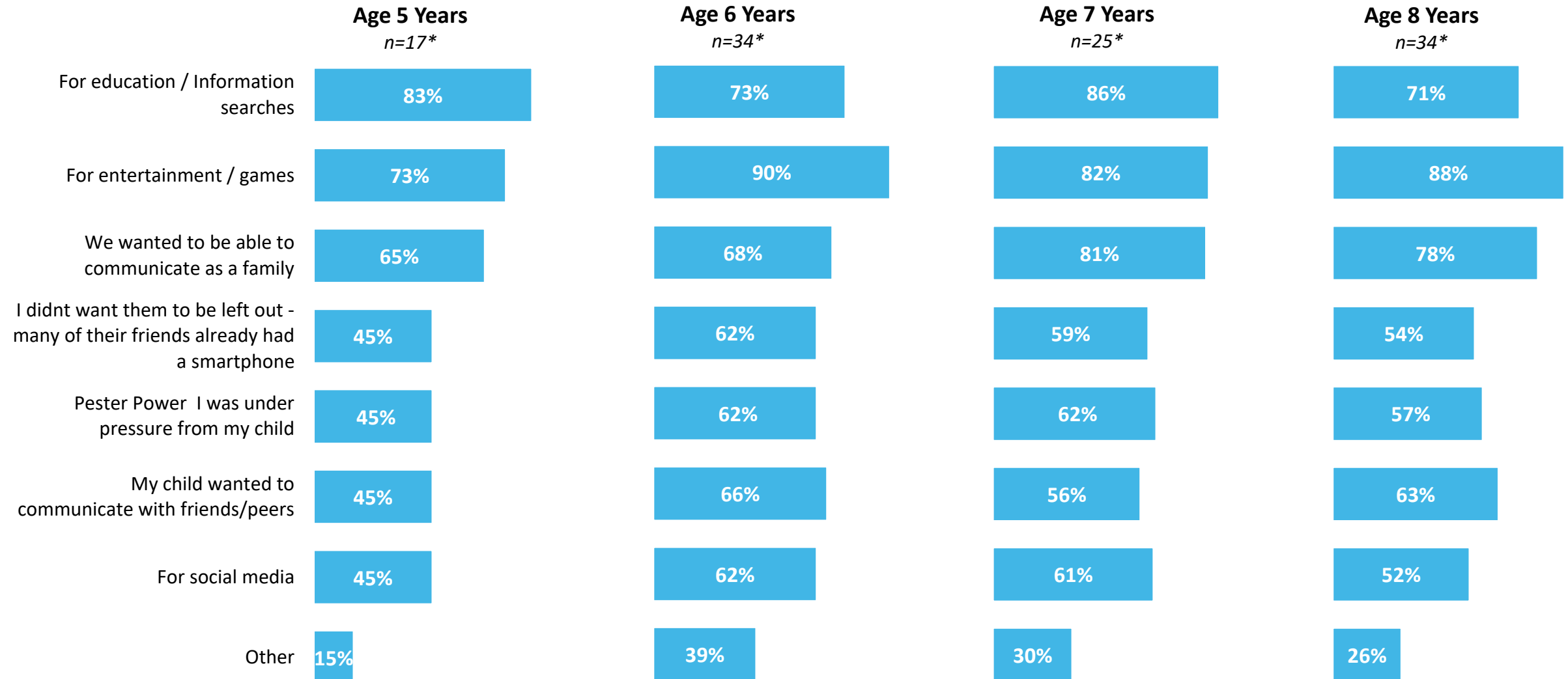
## Age 16-17 years with own smartphone



Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone. Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone? Where 1 = main driver in the reason to get a smartphone and 8 = lowest driver in the reason to get a smartphone.



# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making? By individual age



Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone.  
Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone?

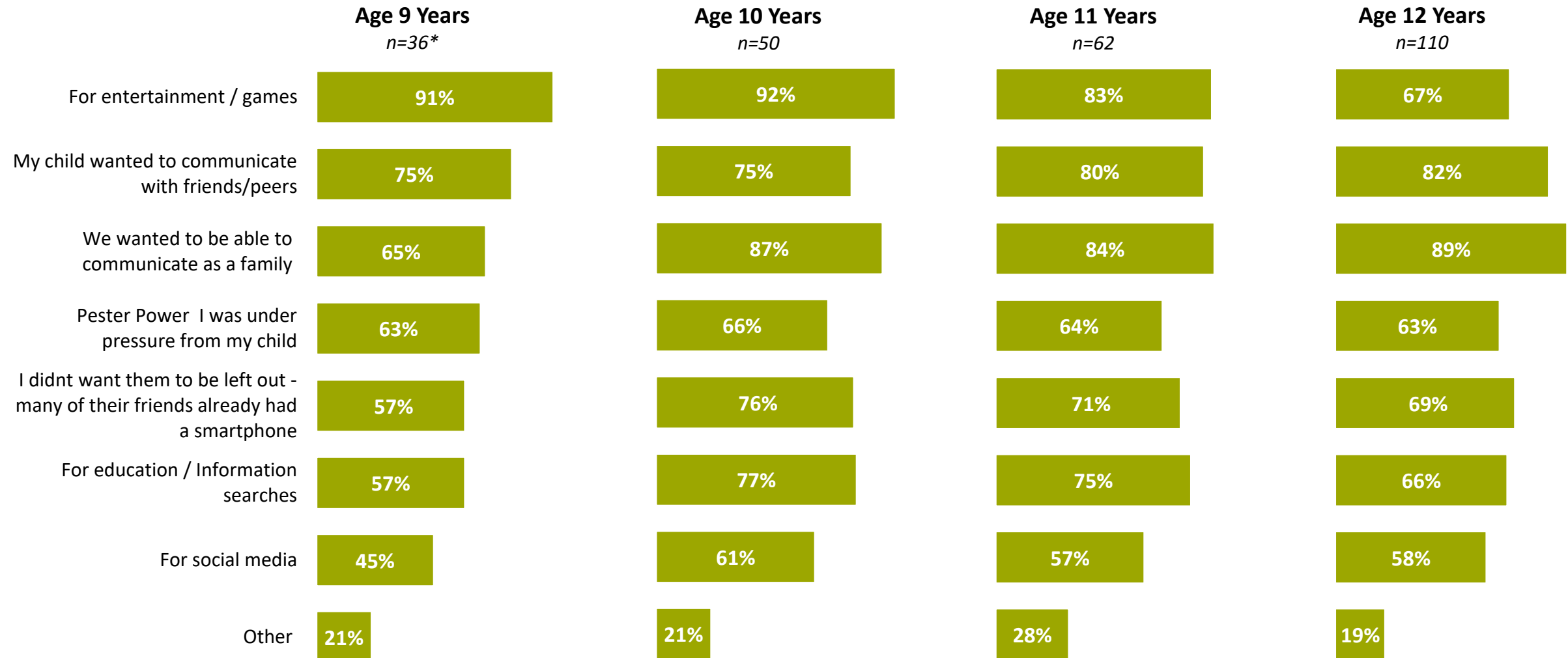
\* Note: caution low base





# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making?

## By individual age

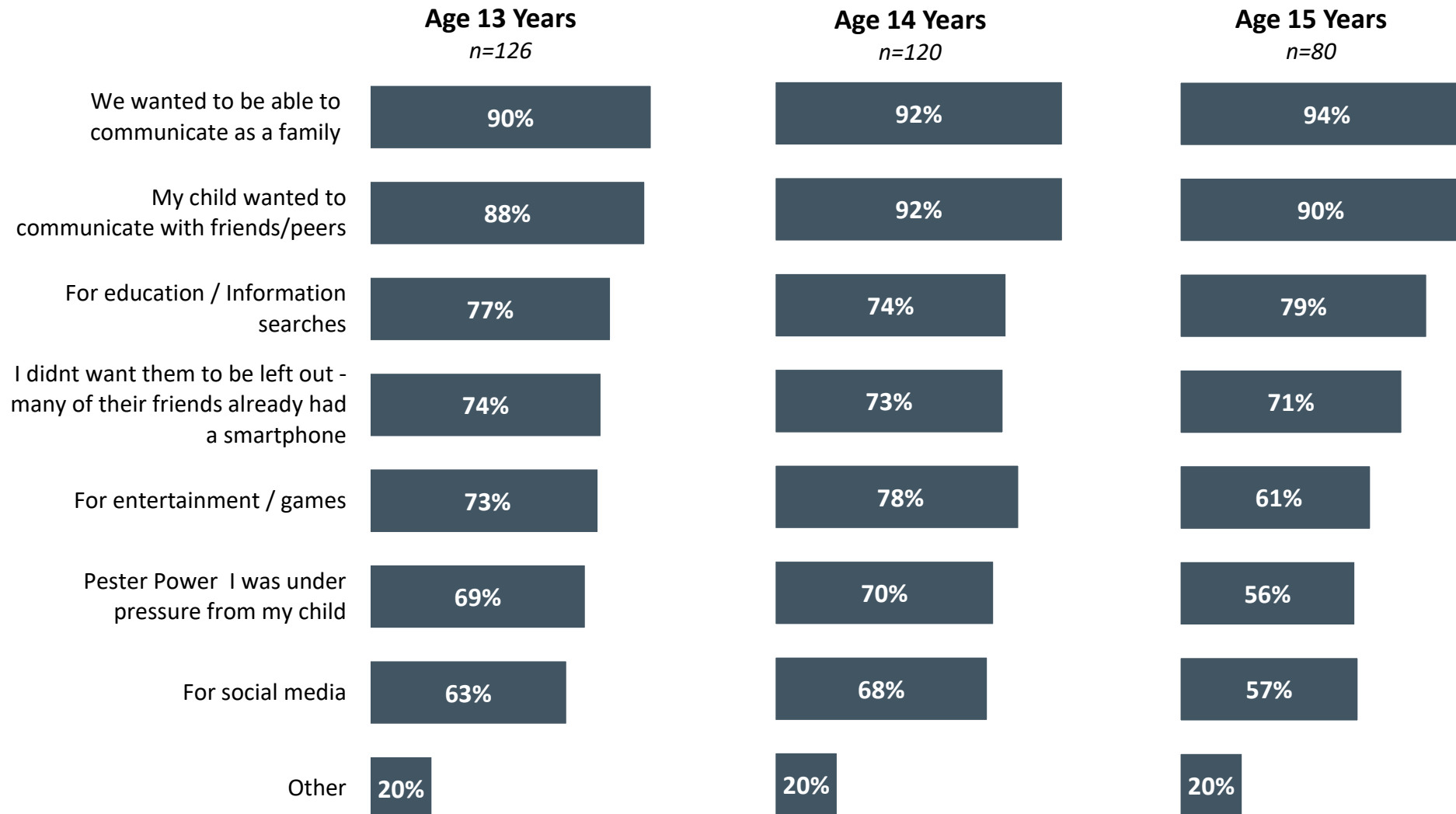


Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone.  
Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone?

\* Note: caution low base



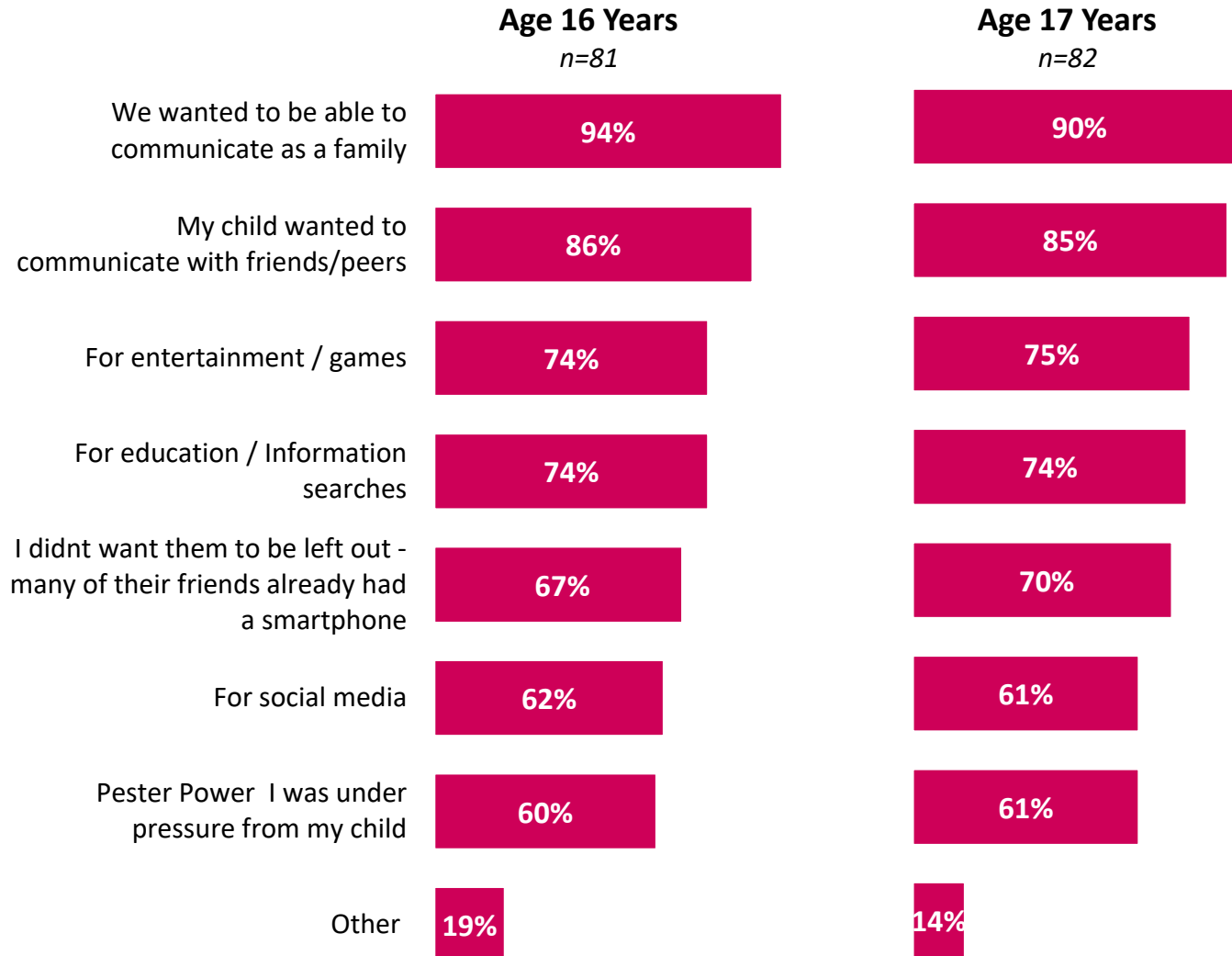
# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making? By individual age



Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone.  
Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone?



# First smartphone purchase drivers – what influenced decision making? By individual age



Q4a - Thinking about when your child/children aged [pipe in from Q3] first got their own smartphone.  
Please rank the following to indicate where each featured in the decision for them to have their own smartphone?



# Child/children's usage of apps/platforms – increases per app where unsupervised.

(BASE : All respondents -900)

	Age of child (All children)	Age of child with own phone				Access supervised (all ages) full week					
		5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	Yes/ sometimes	Unsupervised
		425	392	300	164	104	241	298	162	771	240
YouTube	83%	80%	85%	84%	85%	78%	84%	84%	86%	83%	88%
WhatsApp	59%	35%	68%	90%	92%	43%	77%	90%	92%	56%	84%
Search engine e.g. Google	56%	37%	64%	75%	79%	34%	64%	75%	79%	54%	73%
TikTok	49%	31%	50%	76%	77%	30%	55%	76%	79%	44%	77%
Snapchat	48%	26%	53%	81%	85%	18%	57%	81%	85%	44%	78%
Instagram	28%	12%	25%	48%	70%	13%	25%	47%	71%	23%	58%
Facebook Messenger	12%	7%	9%	15%	30%	15%	10%	16%	30%	10%	20%
BeReal	9%	4%	7%	17%	20%	2%	7%	17%	21%	7%	17%
Discord	6%	3%	6%	13%	11%	3%	7%	13%	11%	5%	11%
Twitch	5%	3%	4%	8%	8%	5%	4%	8%	8%	4%	9%
Yubo	1%	1%	1%	*	1%	1%	1%	*	1%	1%	1%
Others	8%	14%	4%	4%	2%	6%	3%	3%	2%	9%	2%
None of these	2%	4%	2%	*	0%	2%	1%	*	0%	2%	0%
Don't know/ not sure what apps they have	1%	1%	*	1%	2%	1%	*	1%	2%	1%	2%

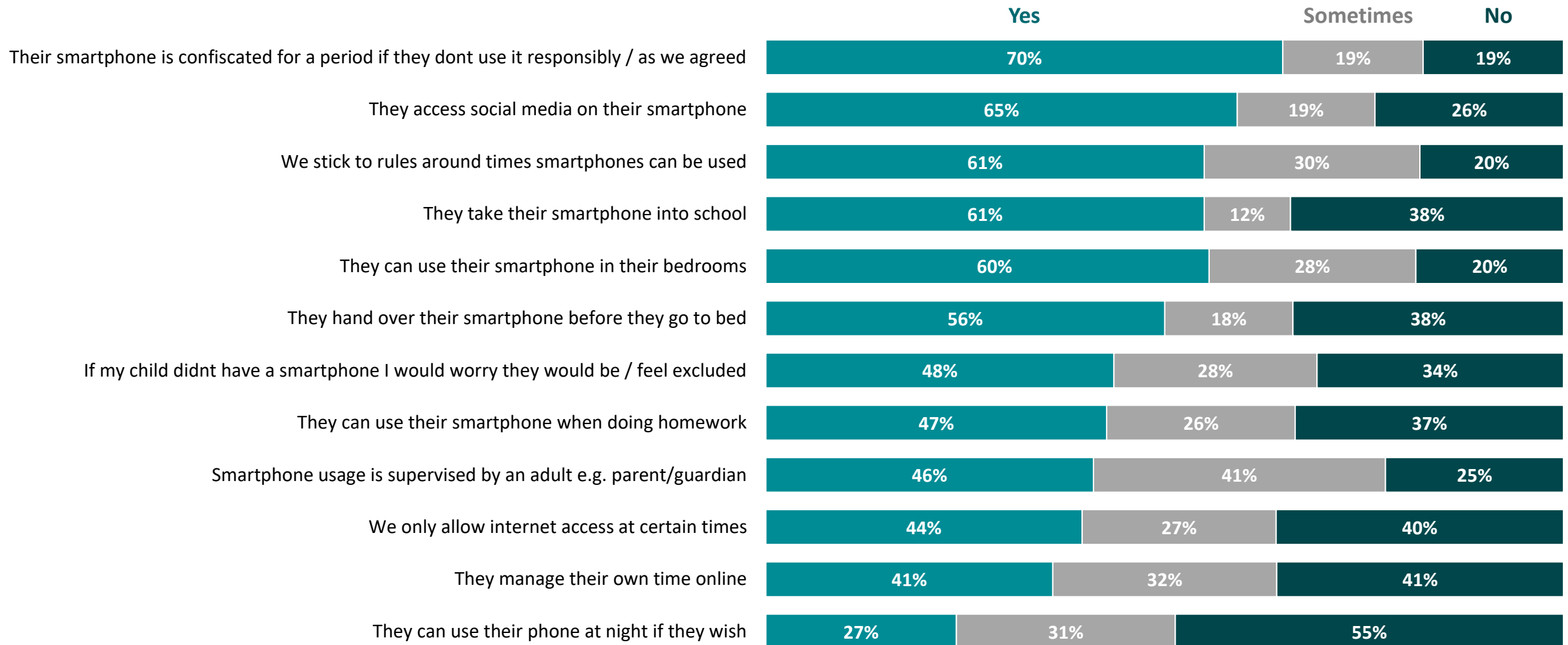
Q4b. Which of the following apps and platforms does your child or children use or access on a Smartphone? Select all that apply



# Child smartphone usage circumstances.

(BASE : Parents of children with their own smartphone - 635)

## All parents of children with own smartphone



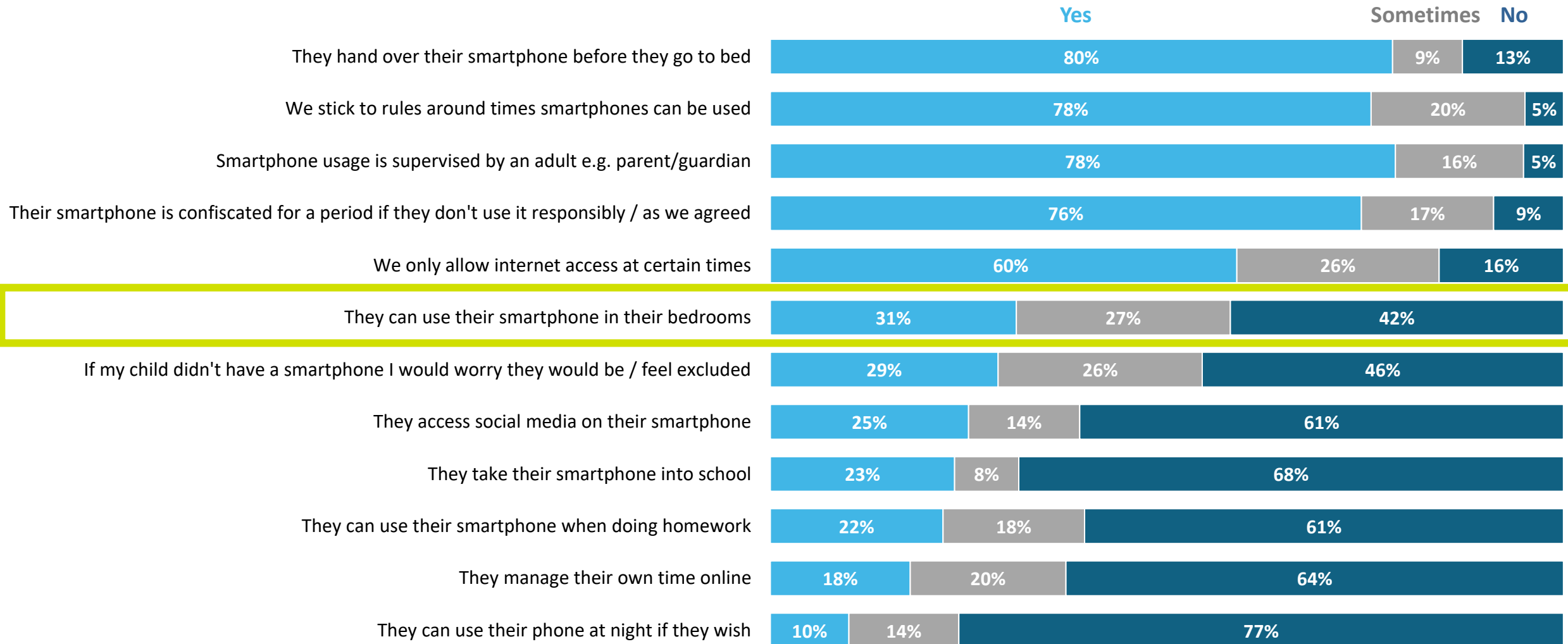
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?



# Child smartphone usage circumstances.

(BASE : Parents of children 5-8 with their own smartphone - 104)

## Age 5-8 years with own smartphone



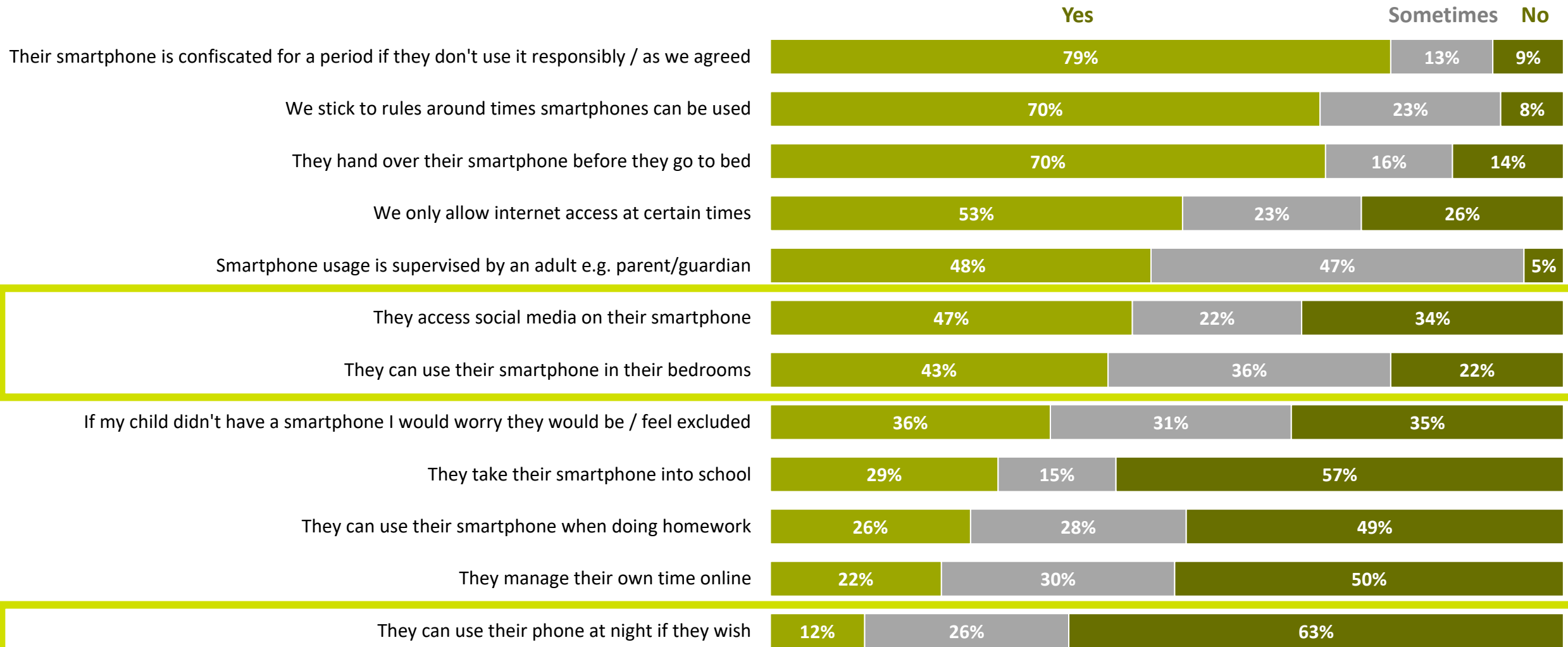
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?



# Child smartphone usage circumstances.

(BASE : Parents of children 9-12 with their own smartphone - 241)

## Age 9-12 years with own smartphone



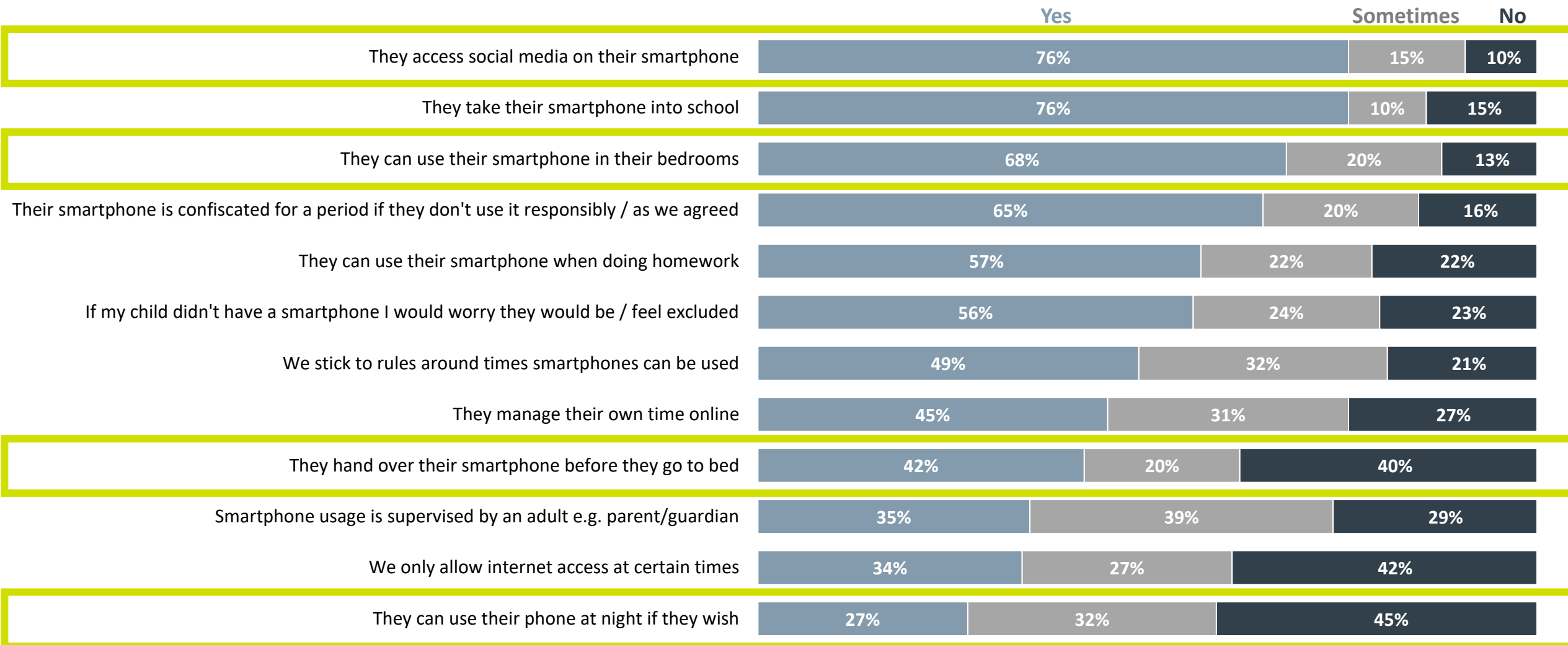
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?



# Child smartphone usage circumstances.

(BASE : Parents of children 13-15 with their own smartphone -298)

## Age 13-15 years with own smartphone



Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?

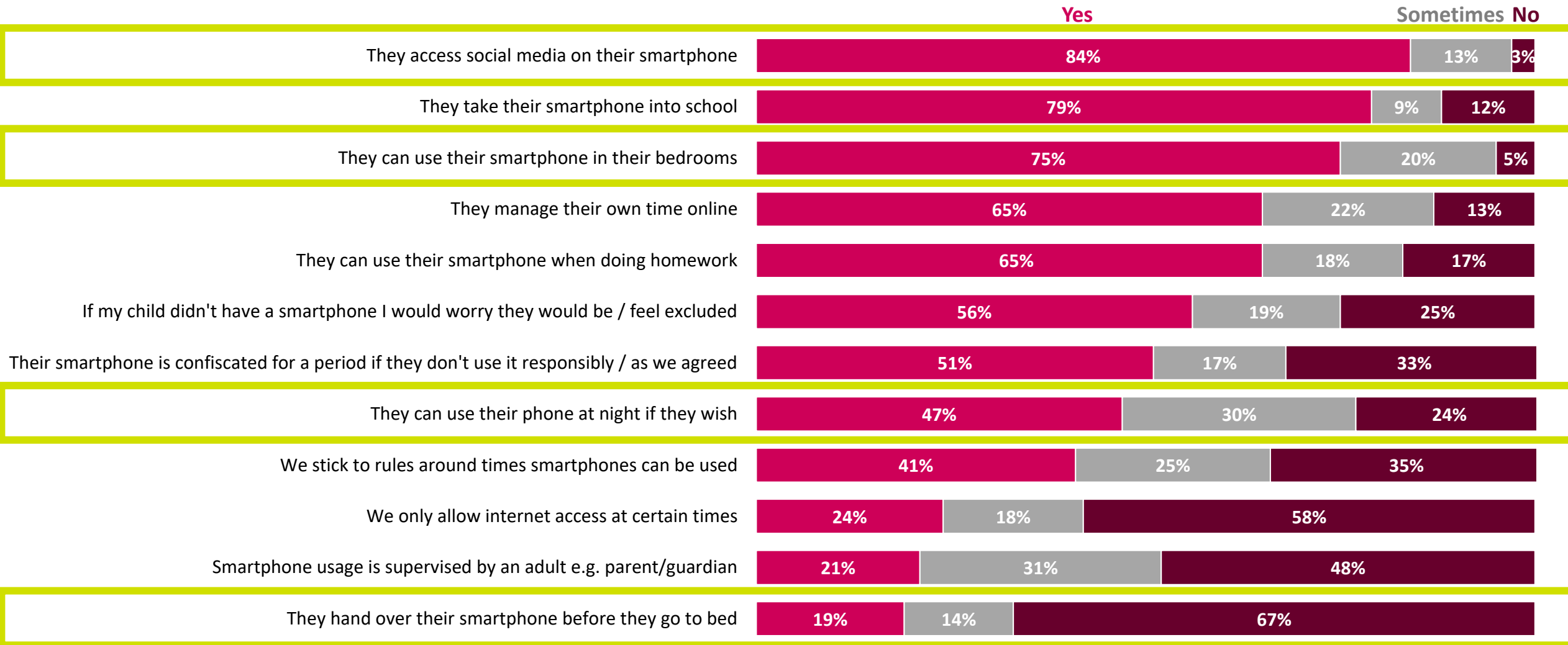




# Child smartphone usage circumstances.

(BASE : Parents of children 16-17 with their own smartphone -162)

## Age 16-17 years with own smartphone



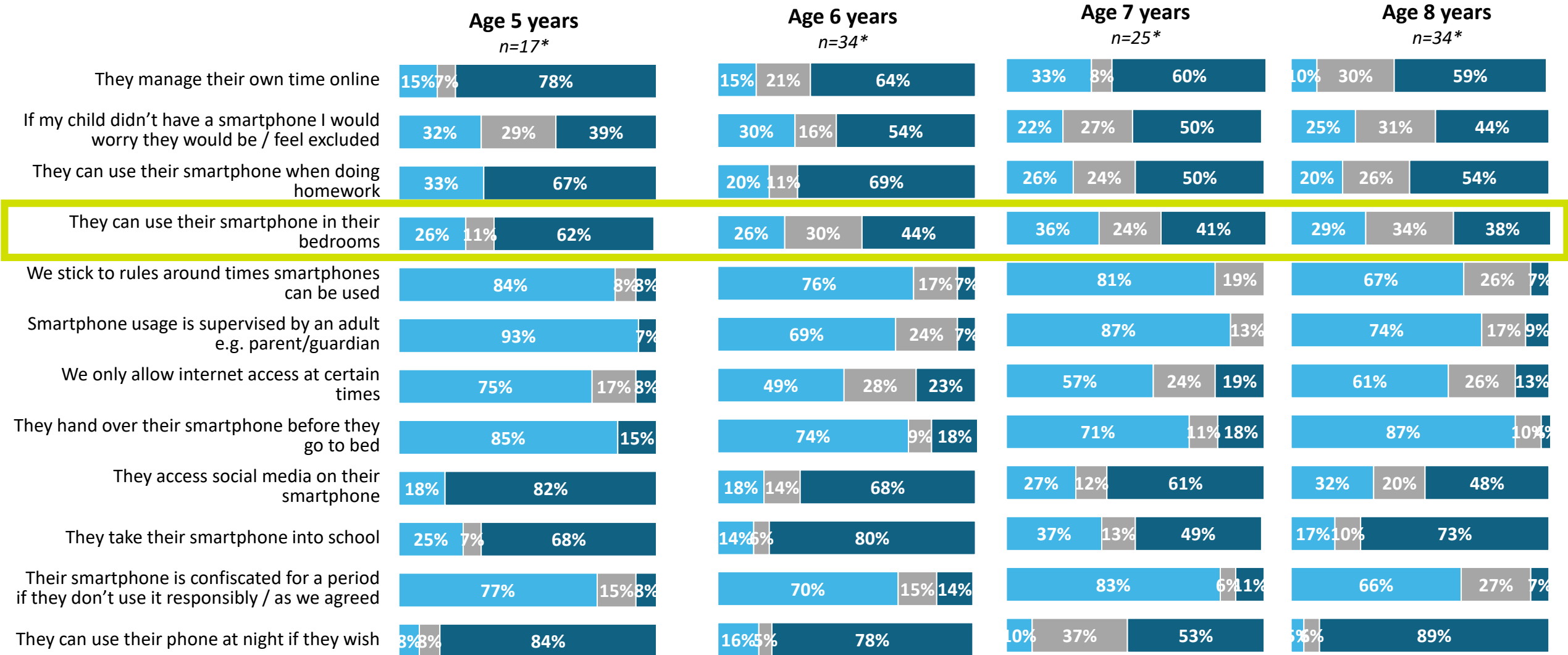
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?



# Smartphone usage arrangements – by individual age.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

Yes Sometimes No



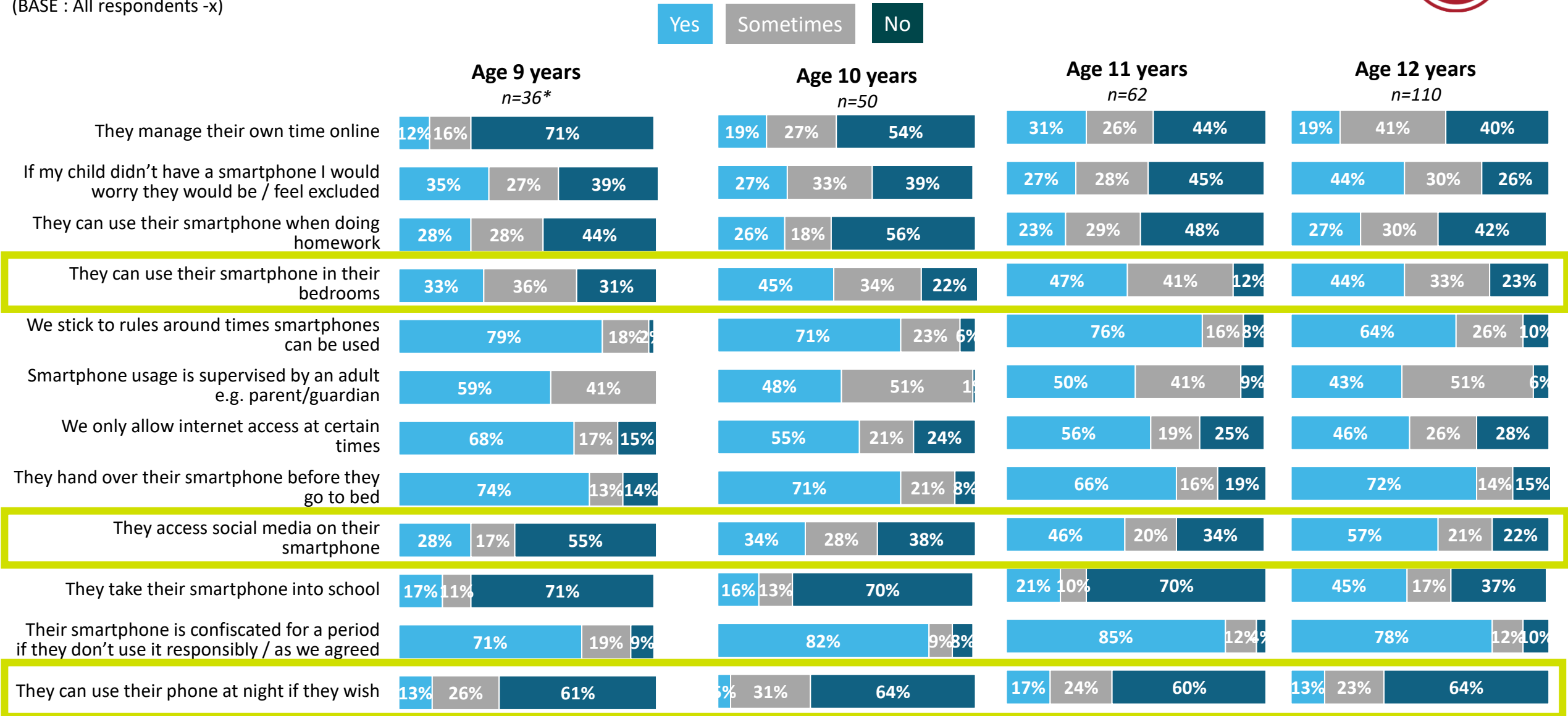
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?

\* Note: caution low base 26



# Smartphone usage arrangements – by individual age.

(BASE : All respondents -x)



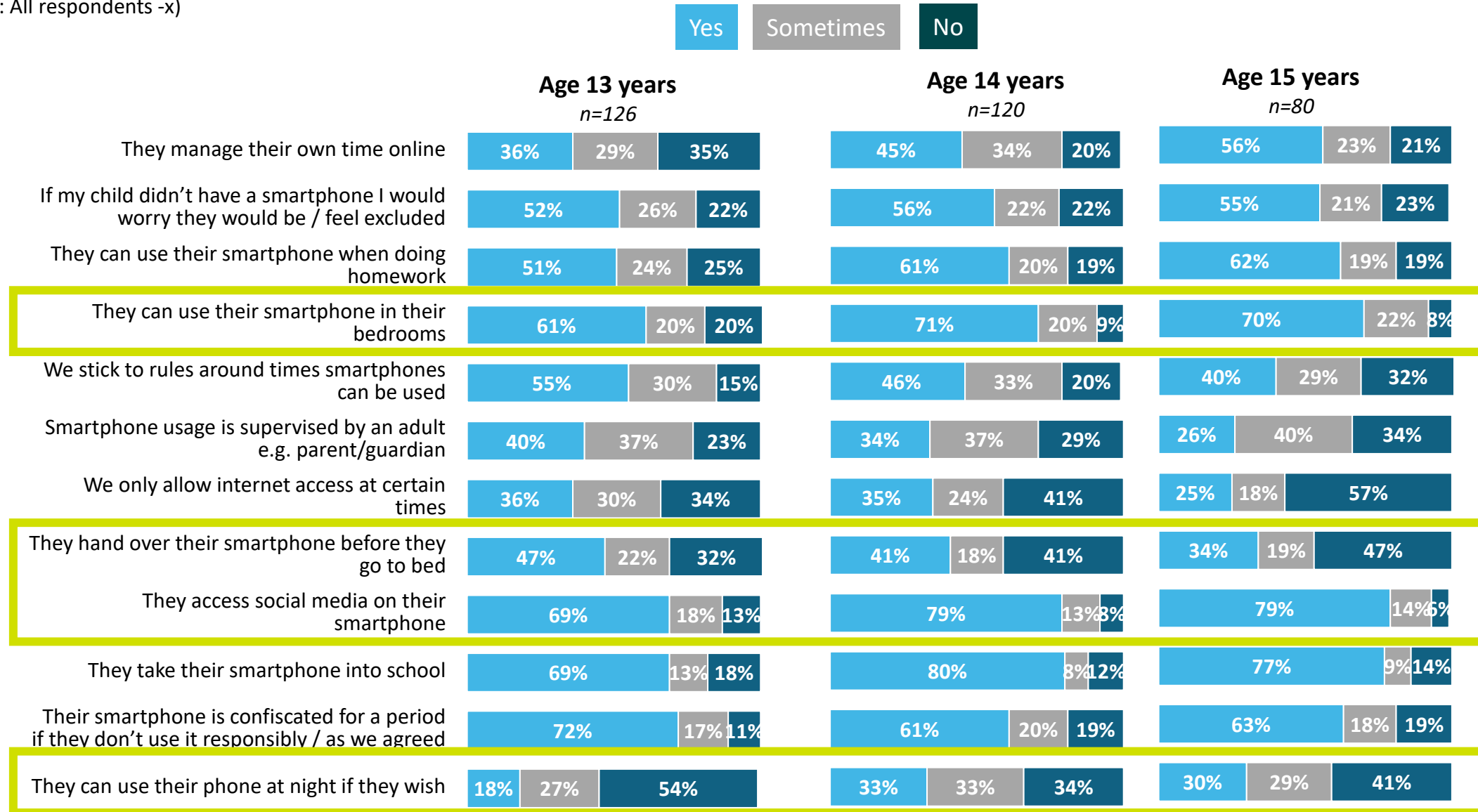
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?

\* Note: caution low base



# Smartphone usage arrangements – by individual age.

(BASE : All respondents -x)



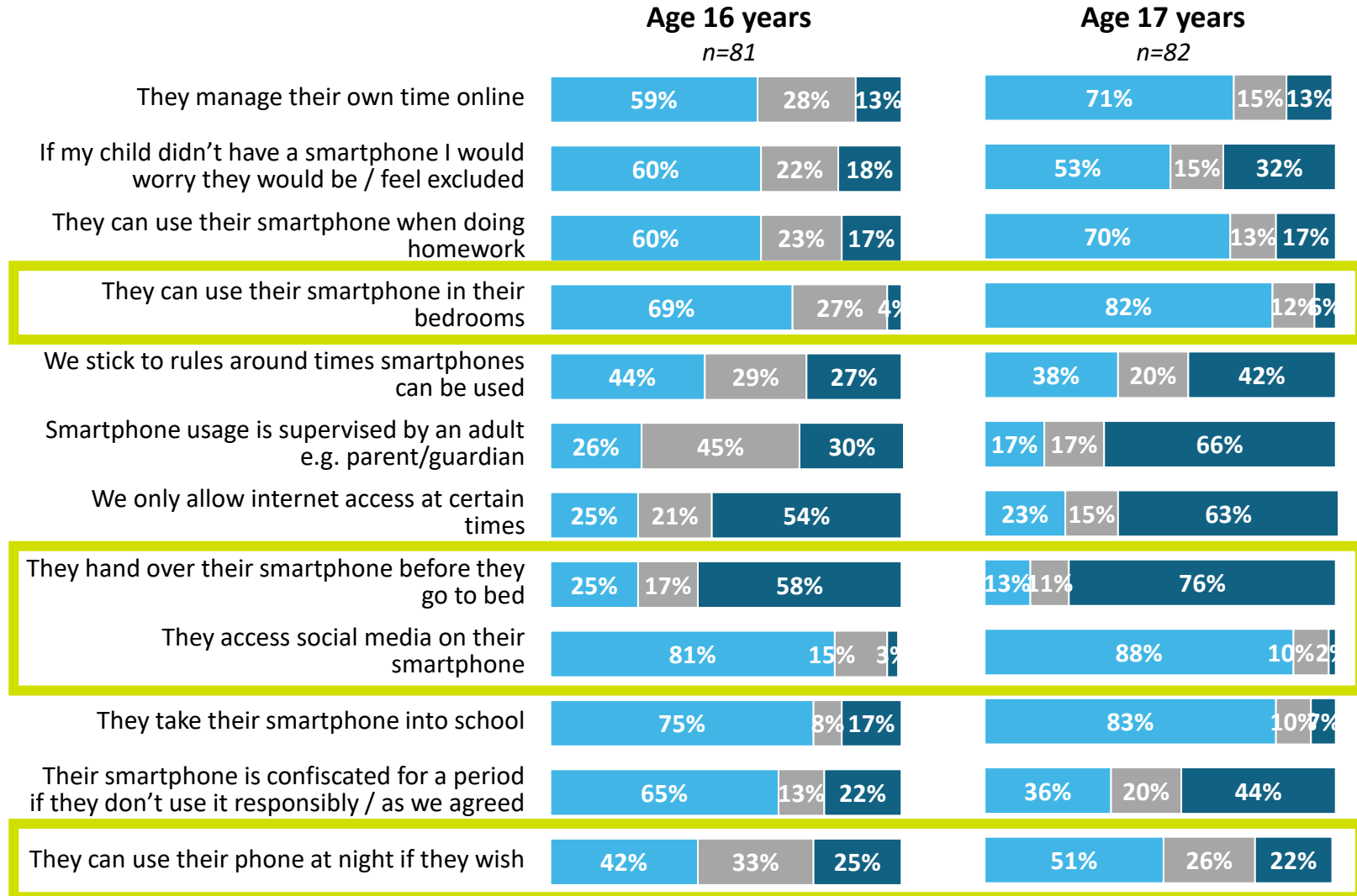
Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?



# Smartphone usage arrangements – by individual age.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

Yes Sometimes No

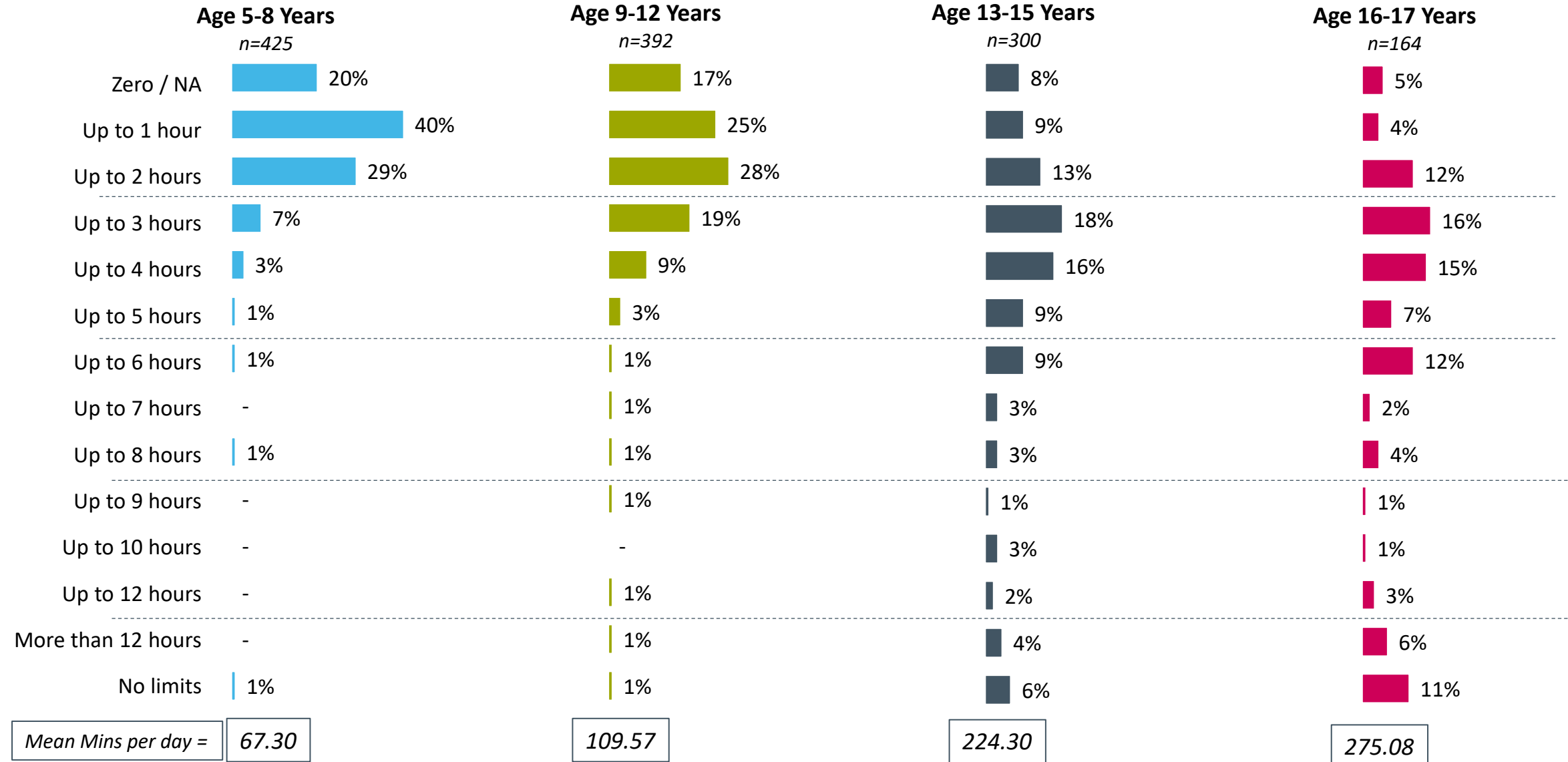


Q4c. Every home is different. Which of the following, if any, apply in your household with regard to your child/children's smartphone usage?



# Daily internet access – weekday.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

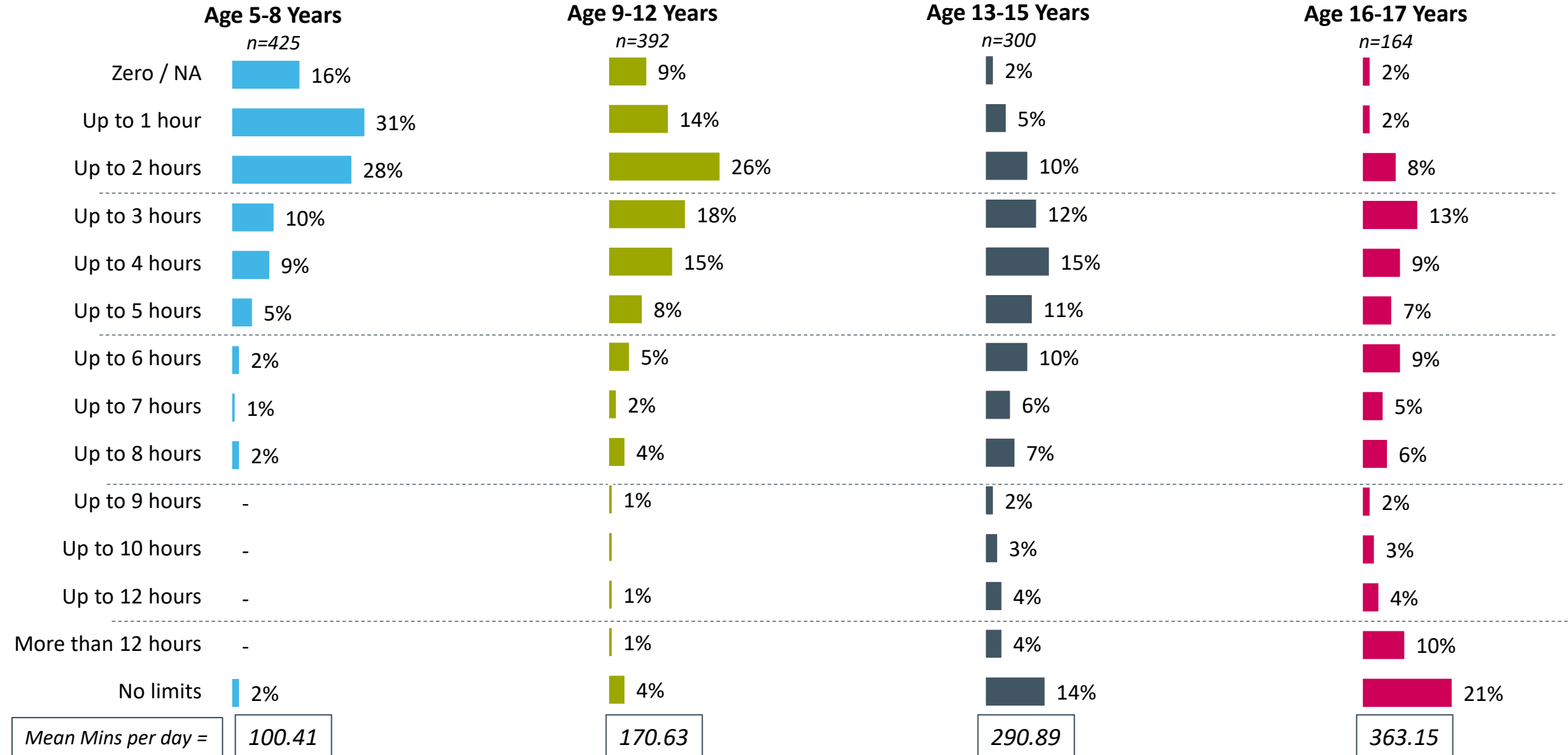


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekend / holidays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

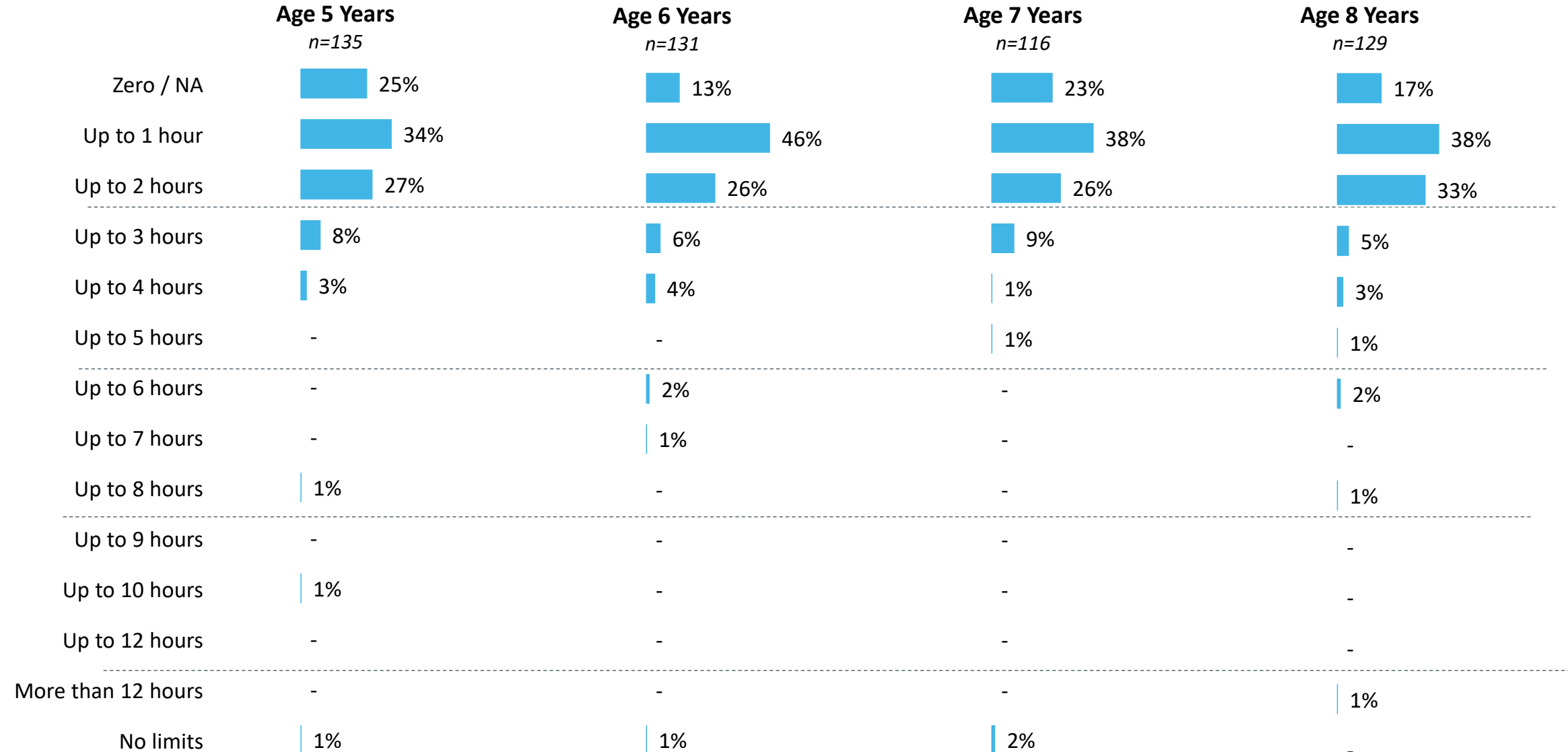


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekdays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)



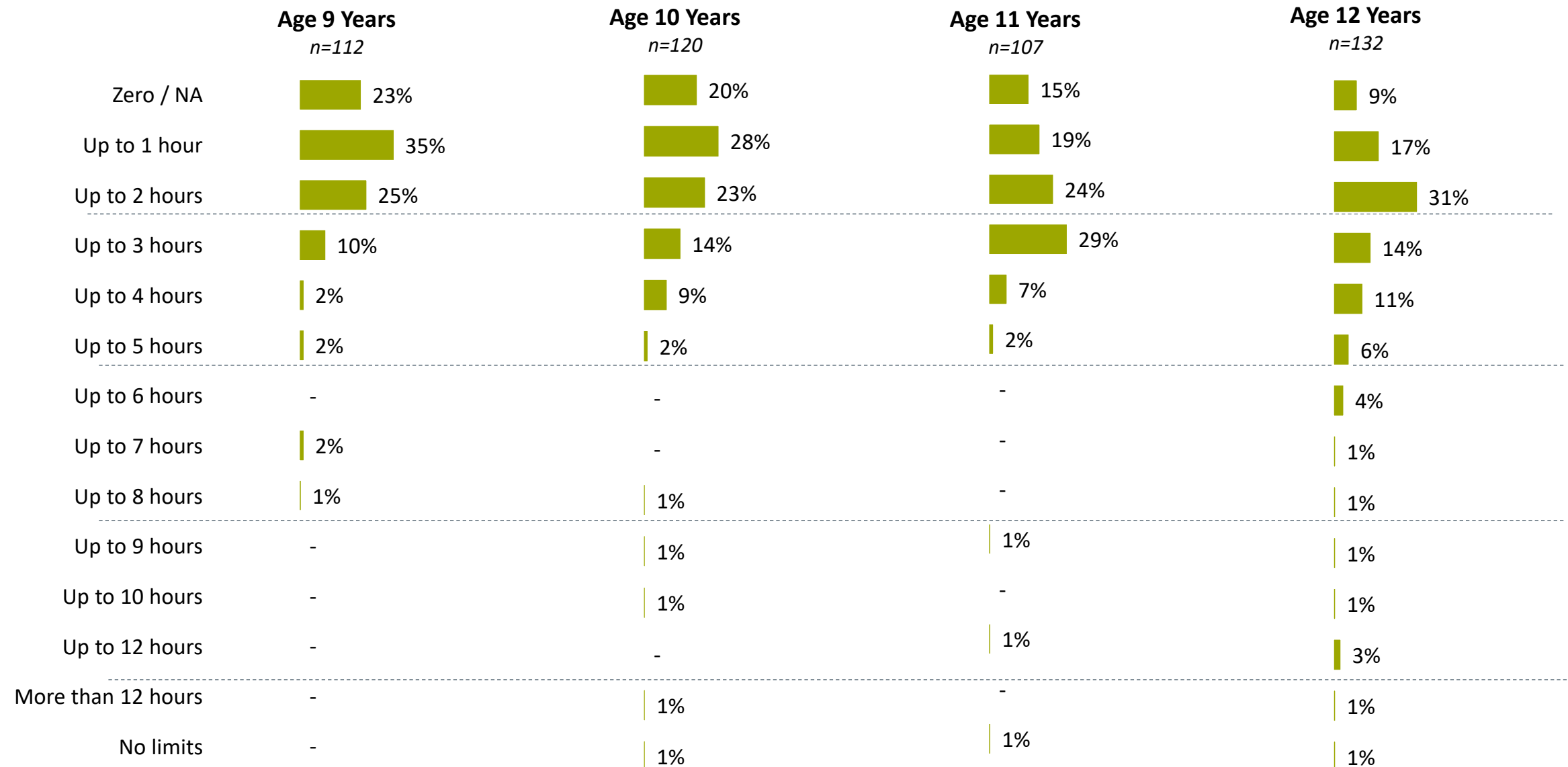
Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?





# Daily internet access – weekdays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

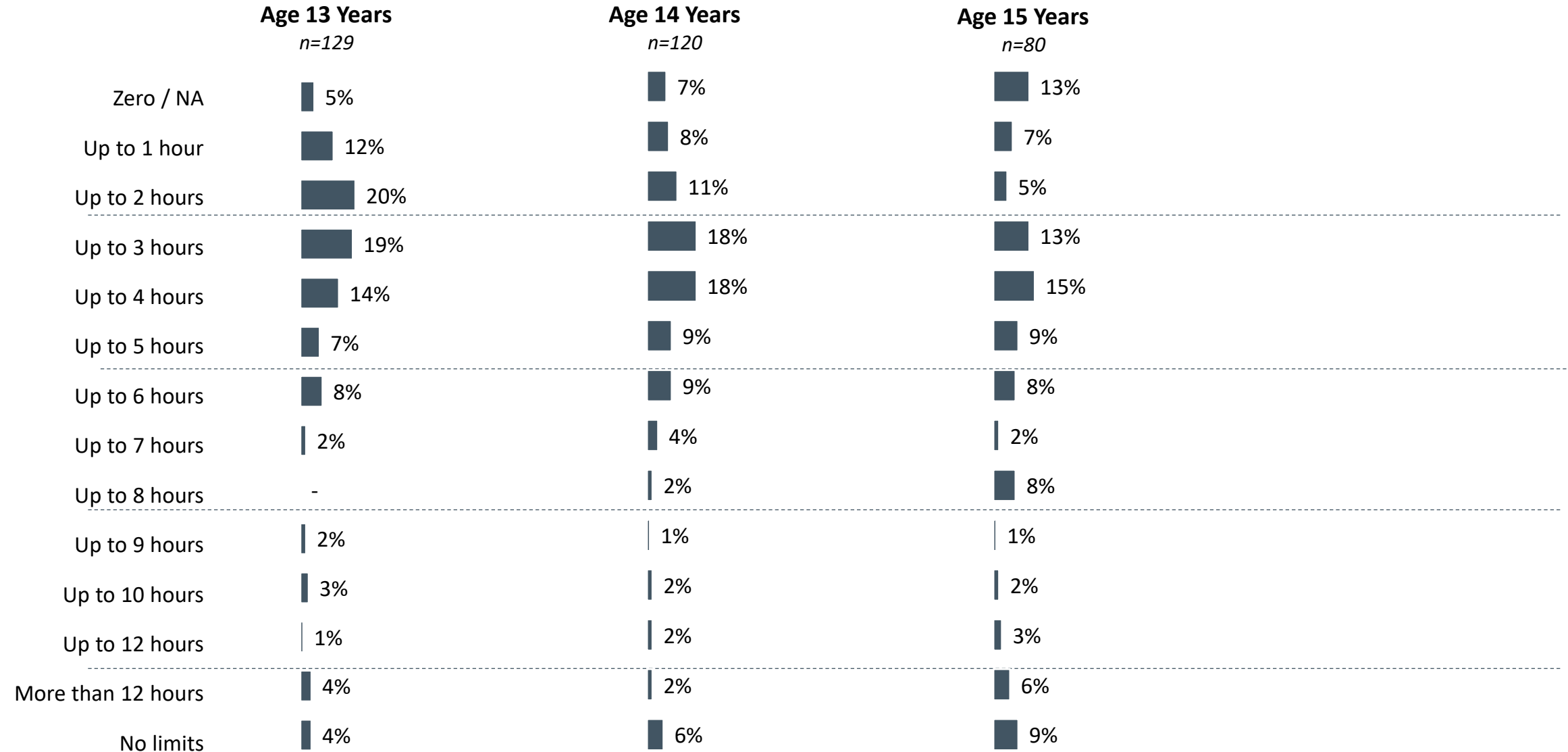


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekdays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

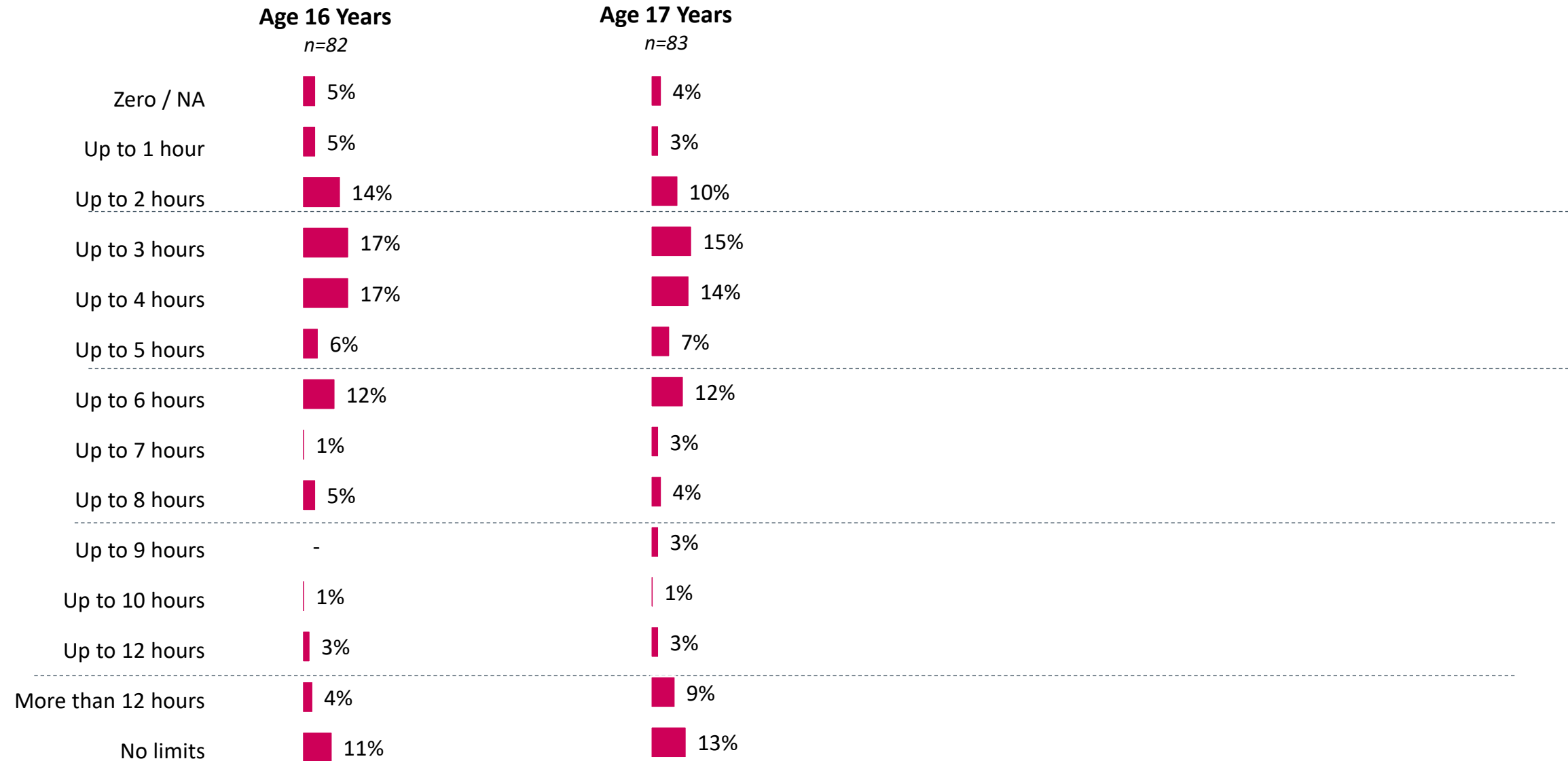


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekdays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

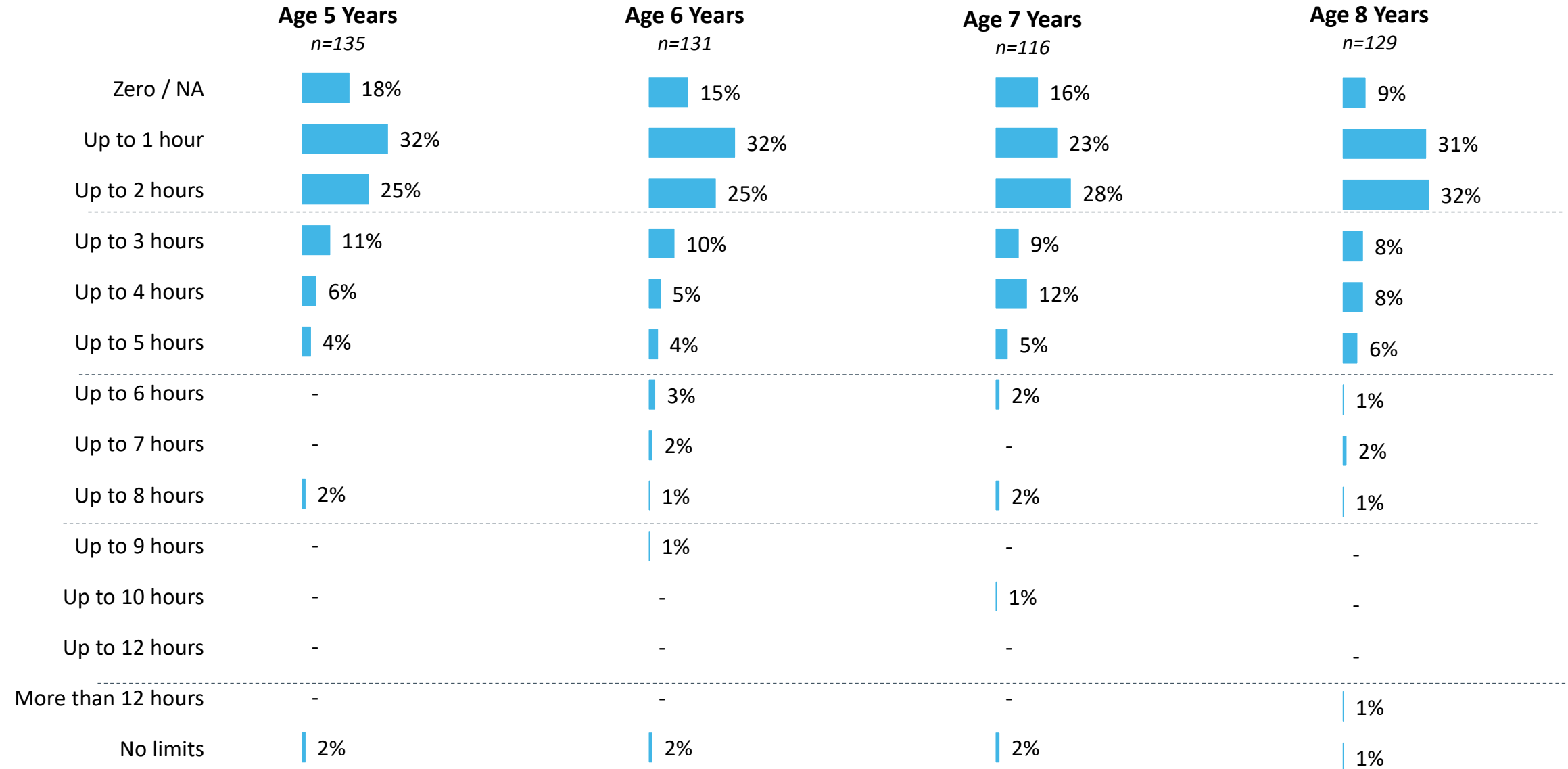


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekends / holidays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

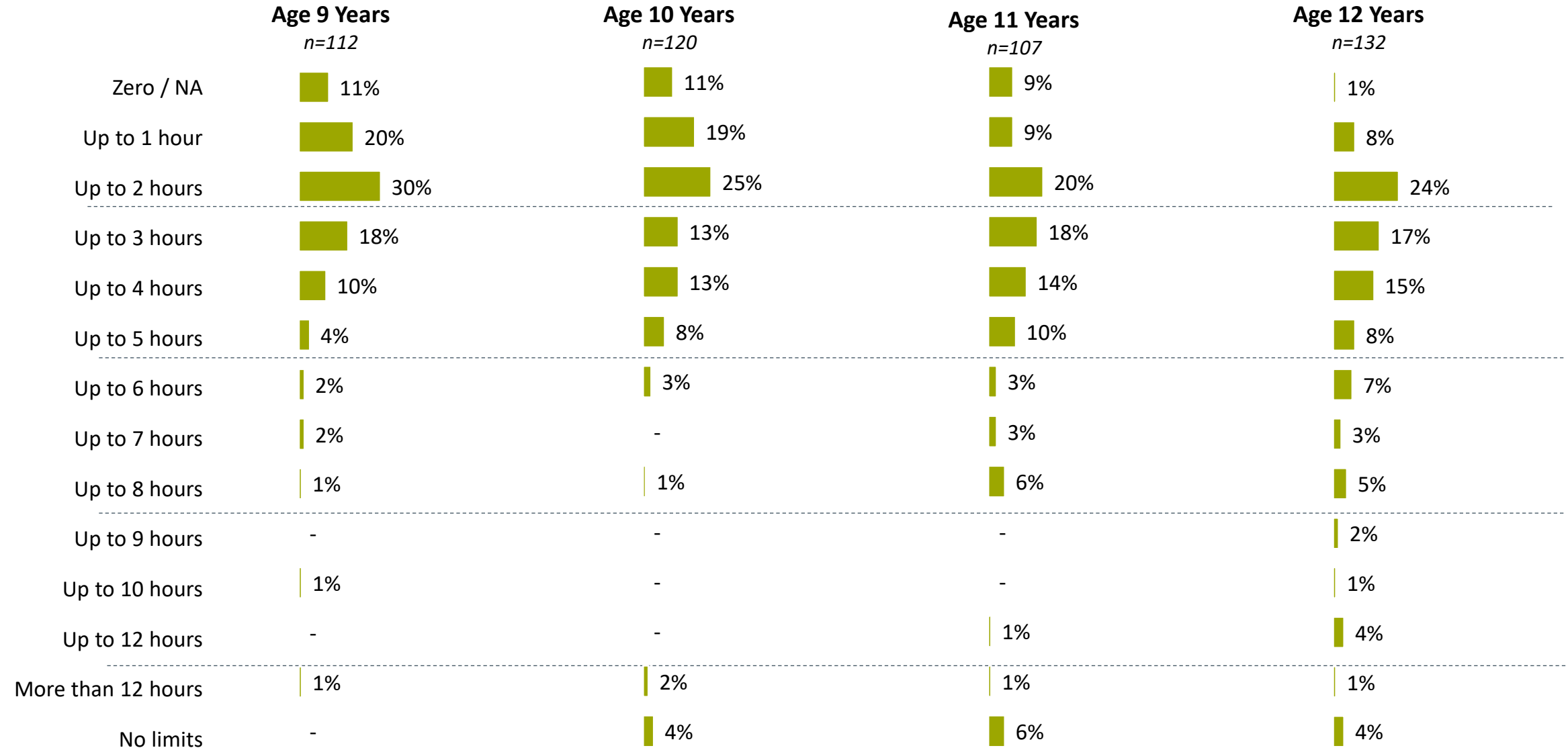


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekends / holidays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

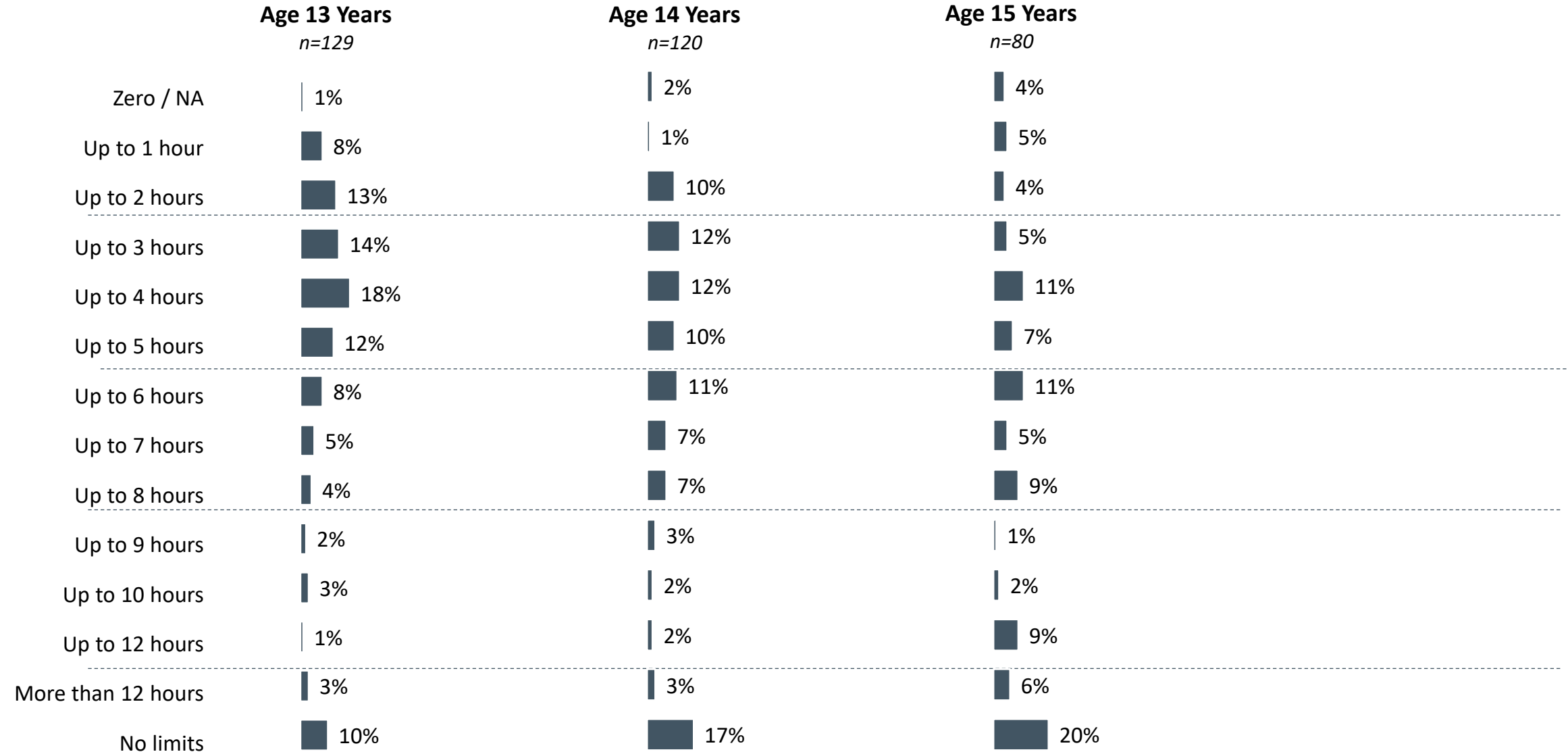


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekends / holidays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

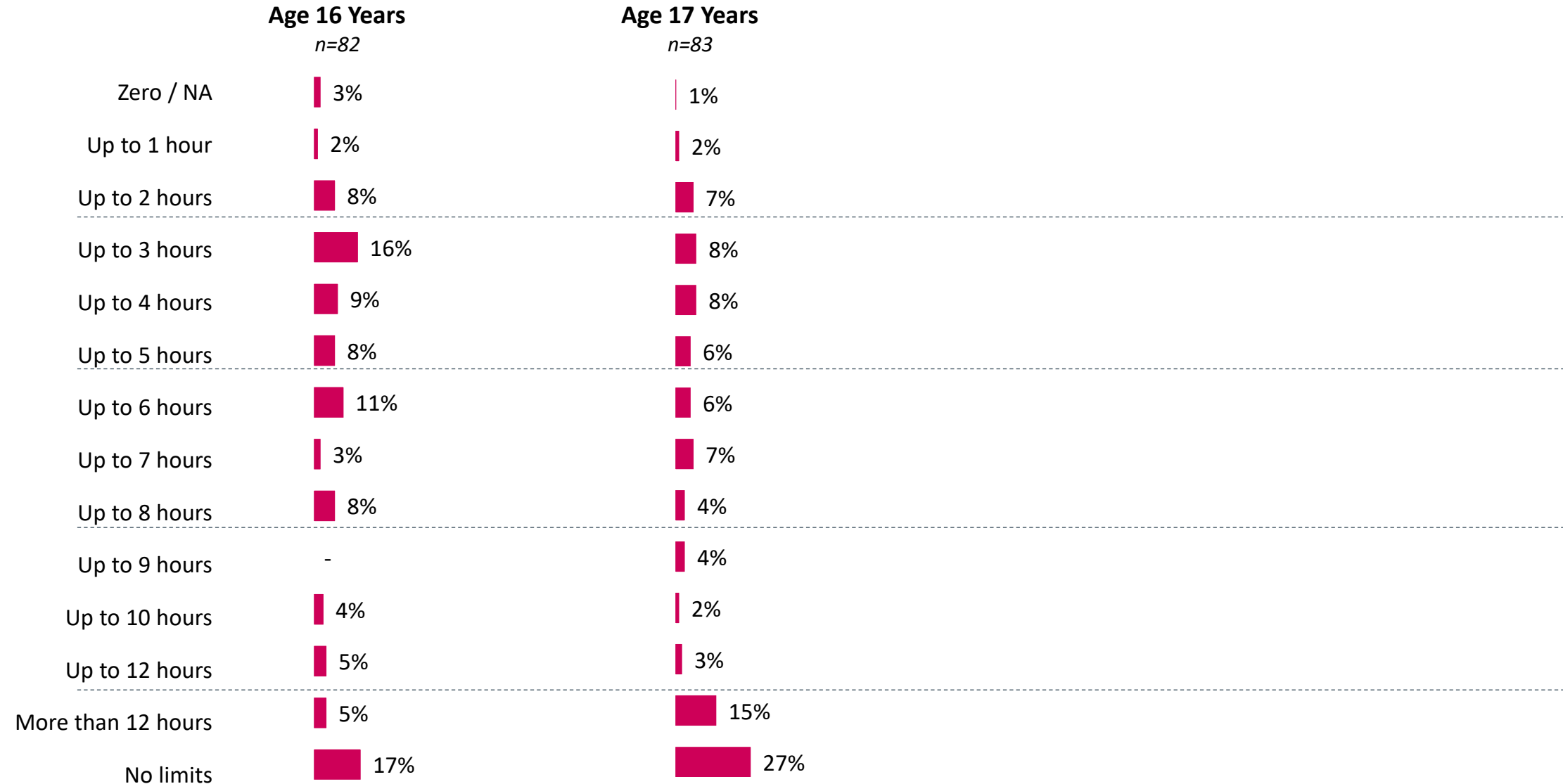


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Daily internet access – weekends / holidays.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

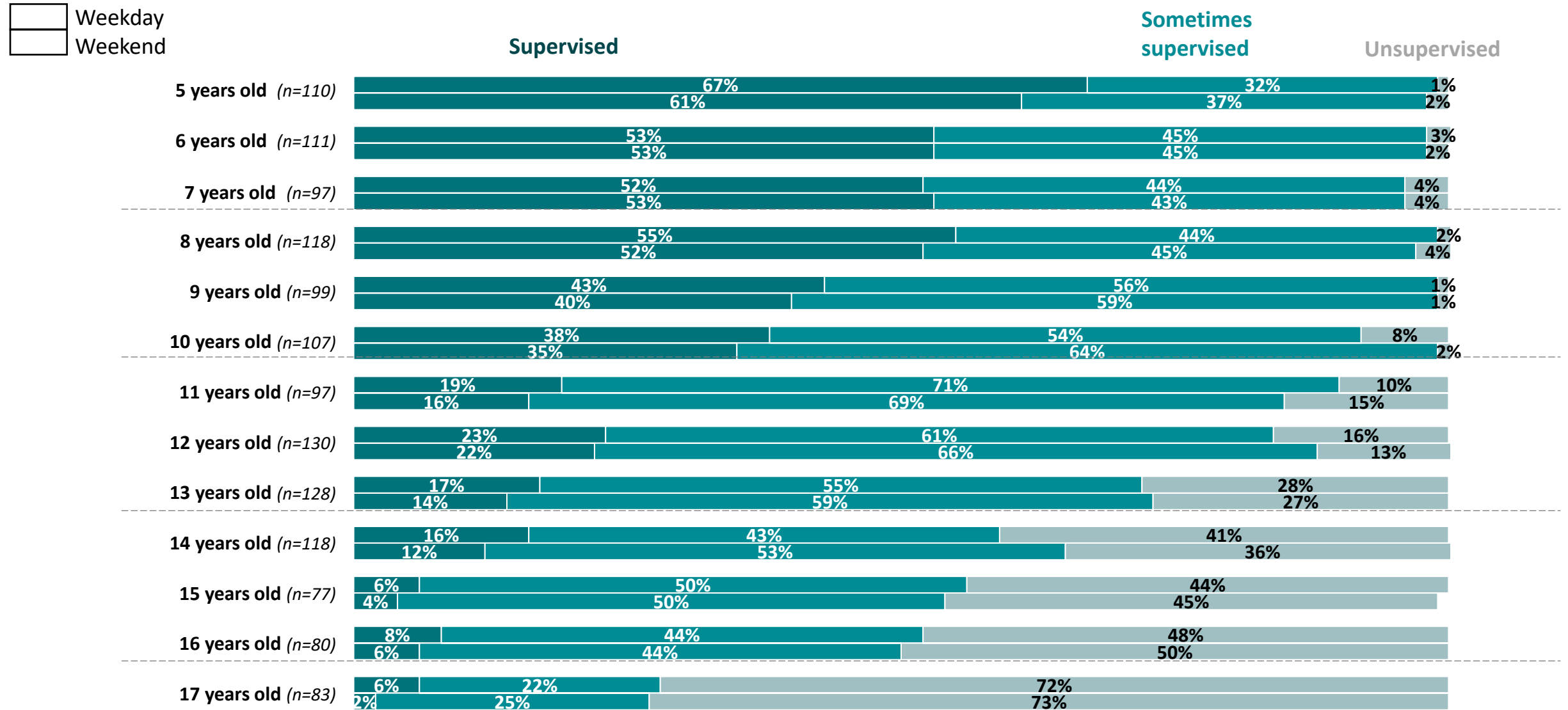


Q4d. On average, how many hours a day does your child/children have internet access via a smartphone or other device?



# Internet access supervision reduces with age, and is lower during weekends and holiday times. Supervision levels for children aged 11+ decline considerably.

(BASE : All respondents -x)



Q4e. To what extent is this access supervised?

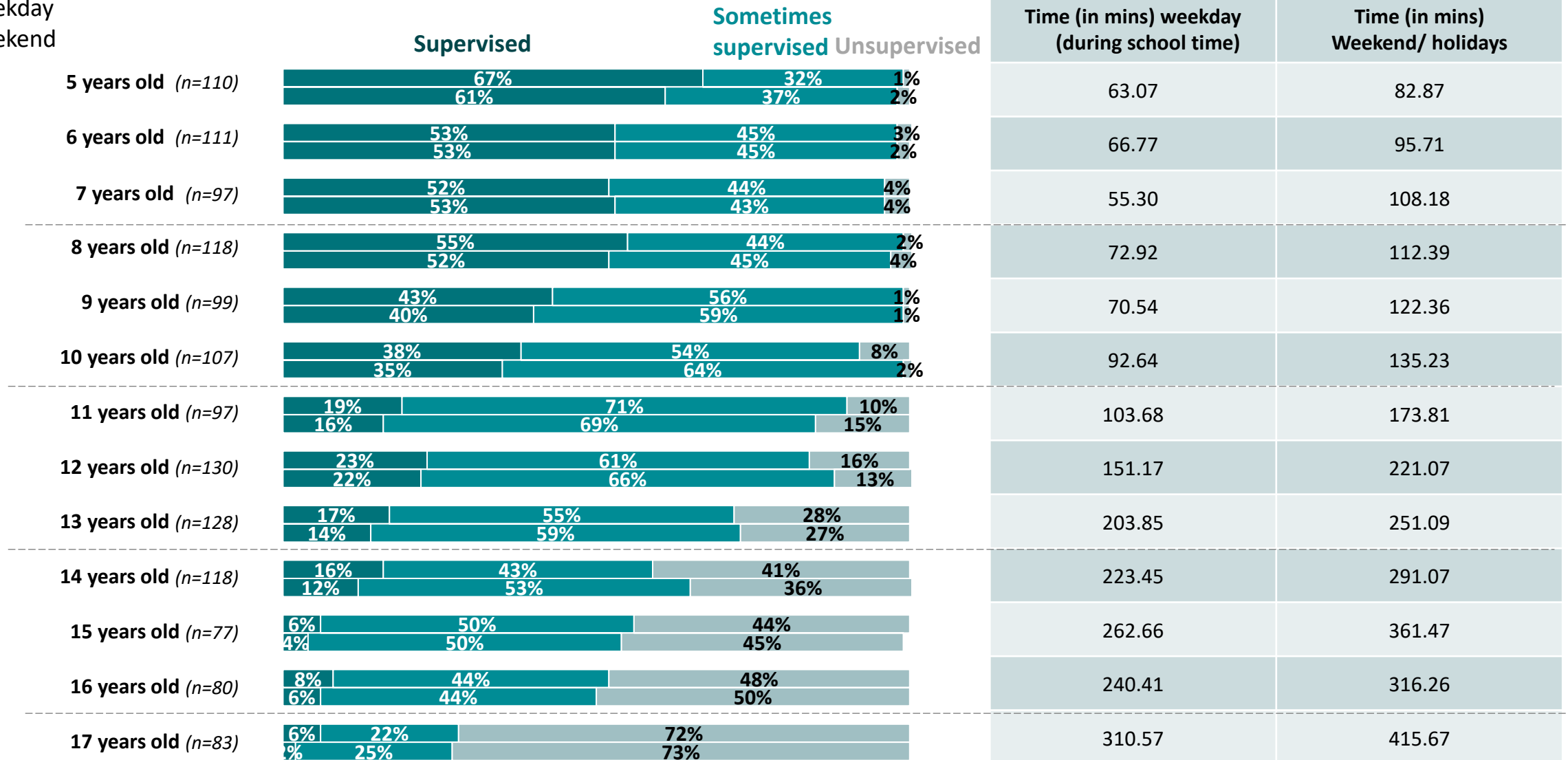




# Children spend considerably more time online as they get older, whilst levels of supervision reduce.

(BASE : All respondents -x)

Weekday  
Weekend



Q4e. To what extent is this access supervised?



# Parent or Guardian's concerns around their child/children's smartphone usage.

(Base: All respondents – 900)

	Not at all concerned					Total Sample					Extremely concerned			Mean Score	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
Cyberbullying	6%	5%	4%	6%	6%	9%	9%	9%	12%	9%	26%			6.45	
Risk of receiving or accessing disturbing or harmful content in relation to self-harming suicidal ideation mental ill health	6%	3%	6%	6%	8%	9%	8%	11%	11%	7%	25%			6.35	
Risk of online grooming	7%	4%	5%	7%	6%	11%	9%	6%	10%	6%	29%			6.31	
Risk of accessing pornography	11%		3%	5%	6%	5%	11%	6%	10%	11%	6%	25%		6.09	
Effect on mental health	5%	4%	8%	8%	7%	14%		9%	10%	11%	7%	18%		5.98	
Social media addiction	10%		4%	6%	8%	7%	11%	10%	9%	13%	6%	16%		5.68	
Risk of sharing potentially harmful content	11%		5%	6%	8%	7%	11%	8%	11%	10%	6%	18%		5.61	
Risk of receiving or accessing disturbing or harmful content in relation to 'thinspo', 'pro ana', 'pro mia'	11%		6%	6%	6%	6%	11%	8%	9%	11%	6%	18%		5.61	
Time spent on smartphone	6%	4%	8%	9%	10%		15%		10%	11%	12%	6%	10%	5.37	
Reduced involvement in other activities	13%		4%	9%	10%	10%		11%	8%	10%	9%	5%	11%	4.99	
Disrupted sleep patterns	15%		5%	8%	10%	8%	10%		9%	10%	9%	4%	11%	4.81	
Damage to eyesight	11%	5%	8%	11%		9%	15%		11%	9%	9%	4%	7%	4.80	
Risk of financial fraud or scam	21%			8%		11%	10%	8%	10%	8%	6%	6%	3%	10%	3.98

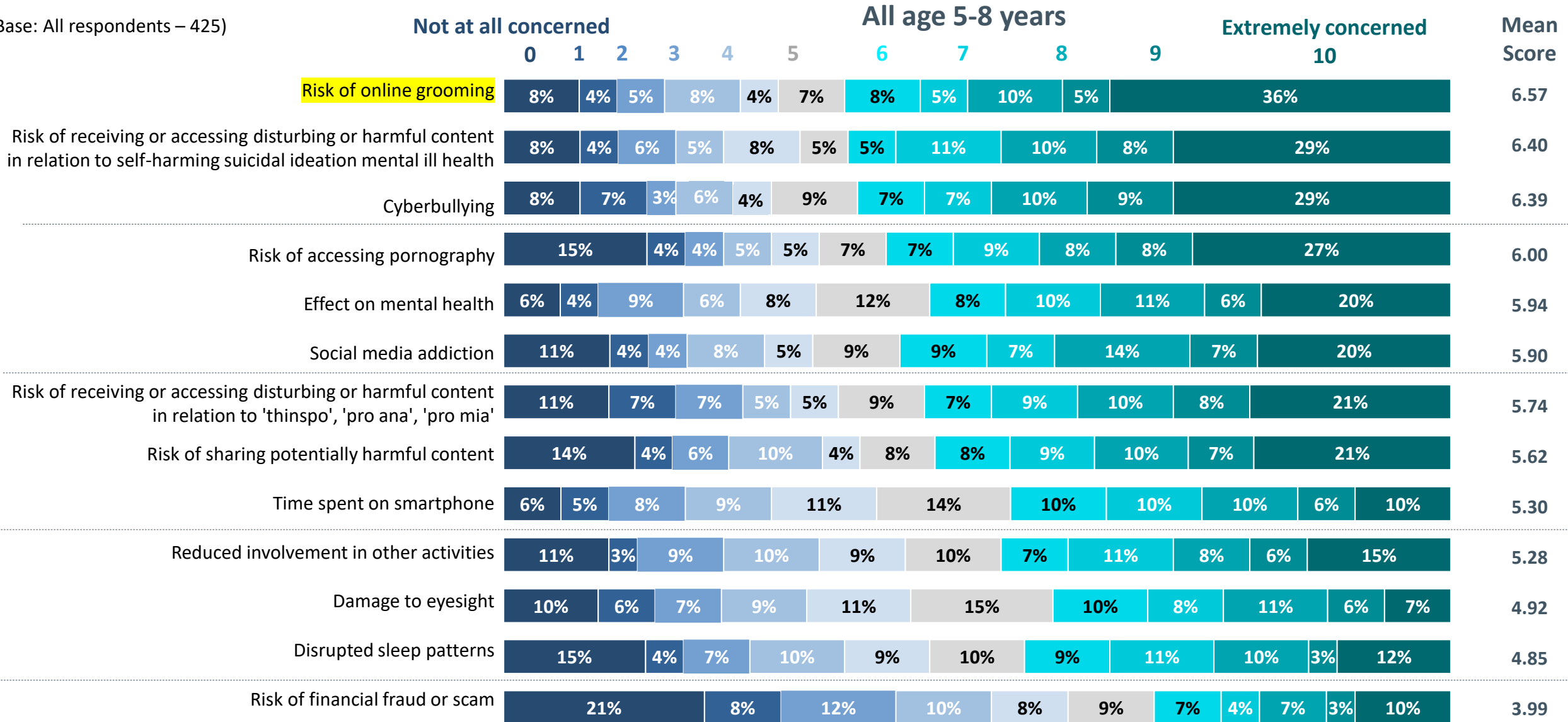
Q5. Thinking of your child/children in the 5 to 17 age group only: to what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following with regard to your child/children and their smartphone usage?

xxxx = highest % scoring 10



# Parent or Guardian's concerns around their child/children's smartphone usage.

(Base: All respondents – 425)



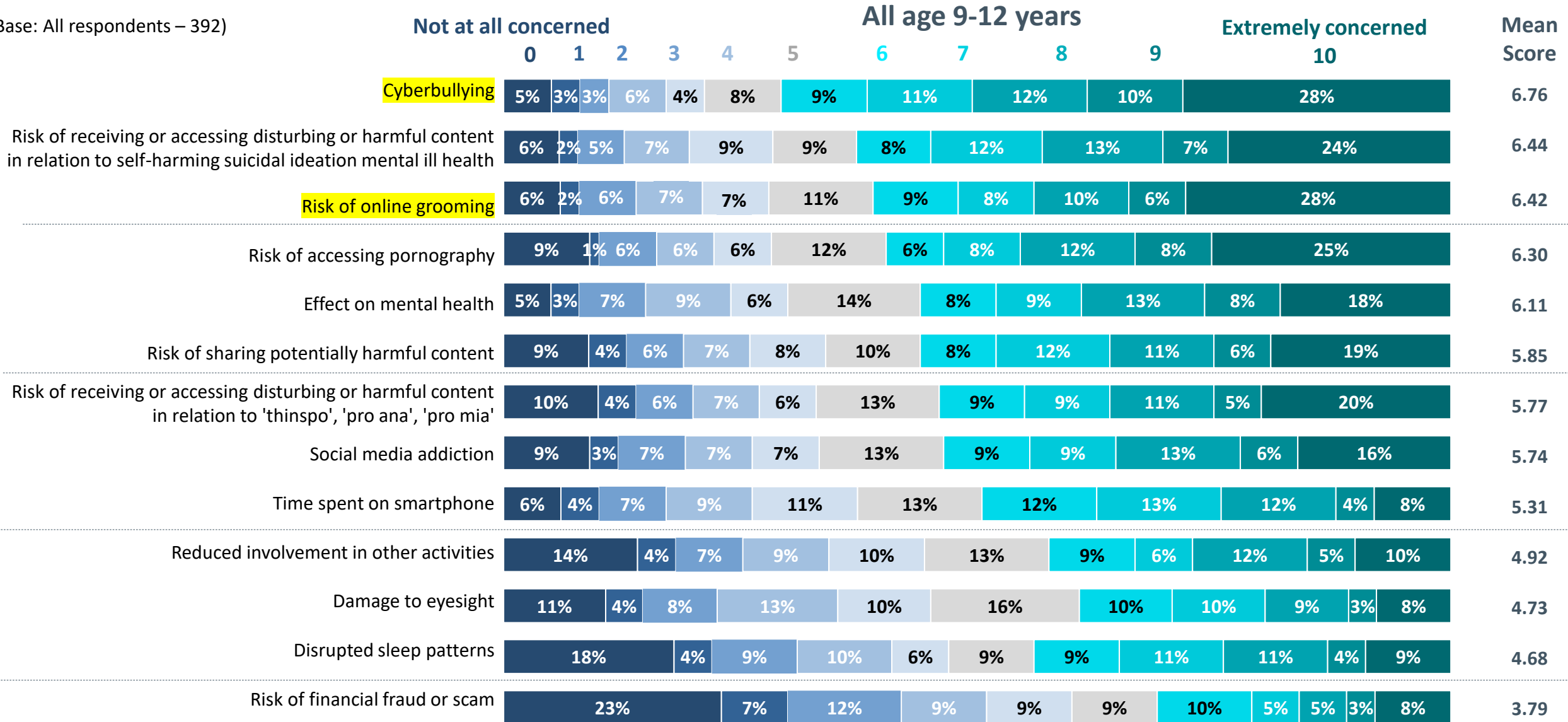
Q5. Thinking of your child/children in the 5 to 17 age group only: to what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following with regard to your child/children and their smartphone usage?

xxxx = highest % scoring 10



# Parent or Guardian's concerns around their child/children's smartphone usage.

(Base: All respondents – 392)



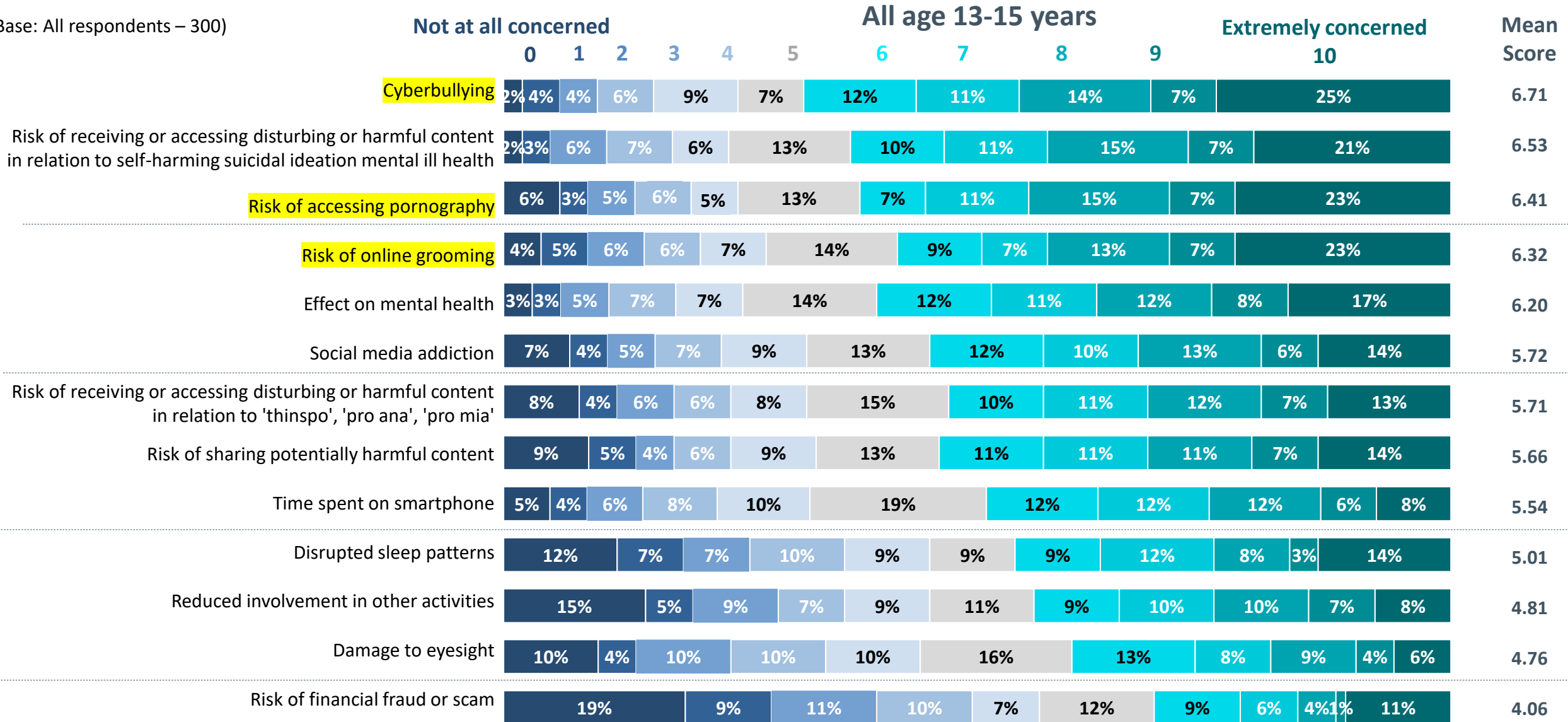
Q5. Thinking of your child/children in the 5 to 17 age group only: to what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following with regard to your child/children and their smartphone usage?

xxxx = highest % scoring 10



# Parent or Guardian's concerns around their child/children's smartphone usage.

(Base: All respondents – 300)



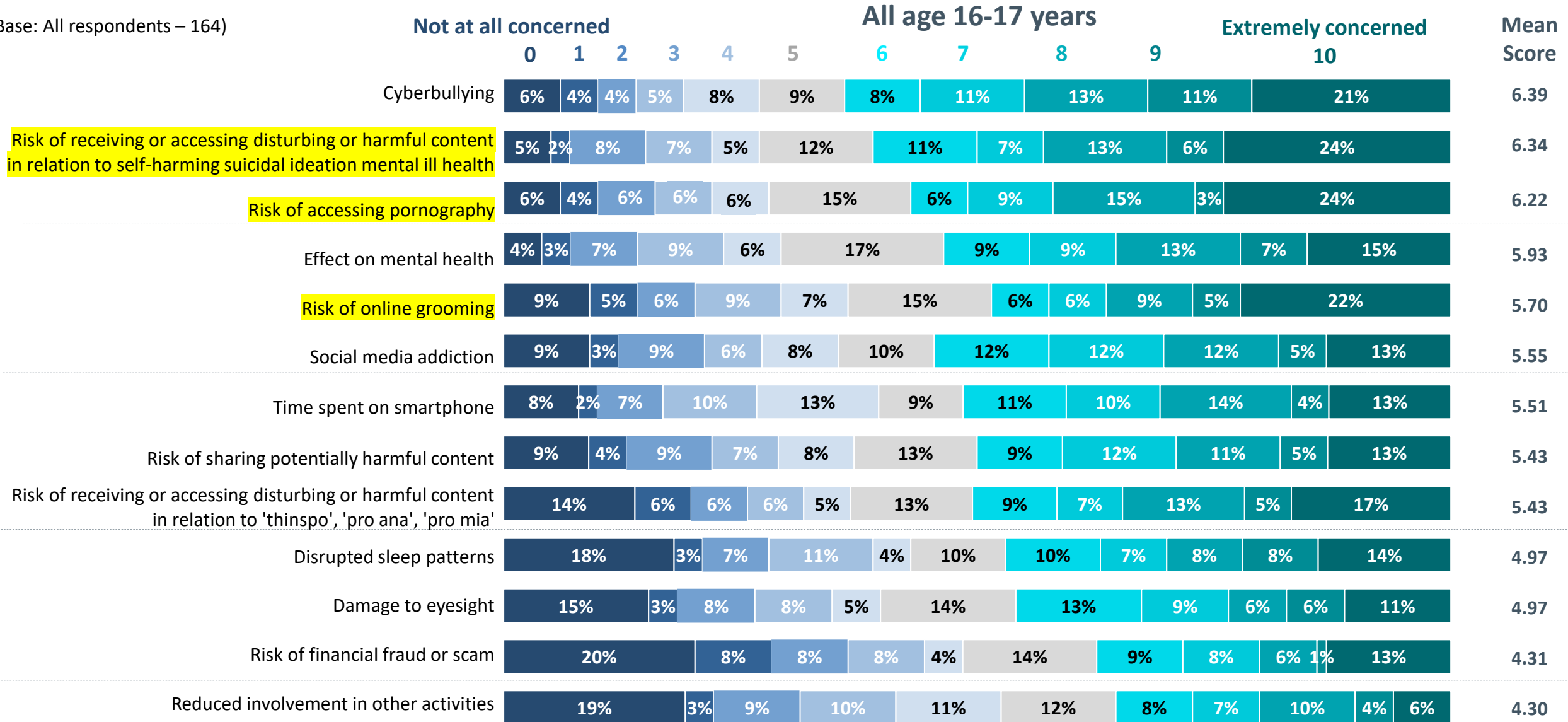
Q5. Thinking of your child/children in the 5 to 17 age group only: to what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following with regard to your child/children and their smartphone usage?

xxxx = highest % scoring 10



# Parent or Guardian's concerns around their child/children's smartphone usage.

(Base: All respondents – 164)



Q5. Thinking of your child/children in the 5 to 17 age group only: to what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following with regard to your child/children and their smartphone usage?

xxxx = highest % scoring 10



# Parent or Guardian’s knowledge of their children’s online experiences. (i)

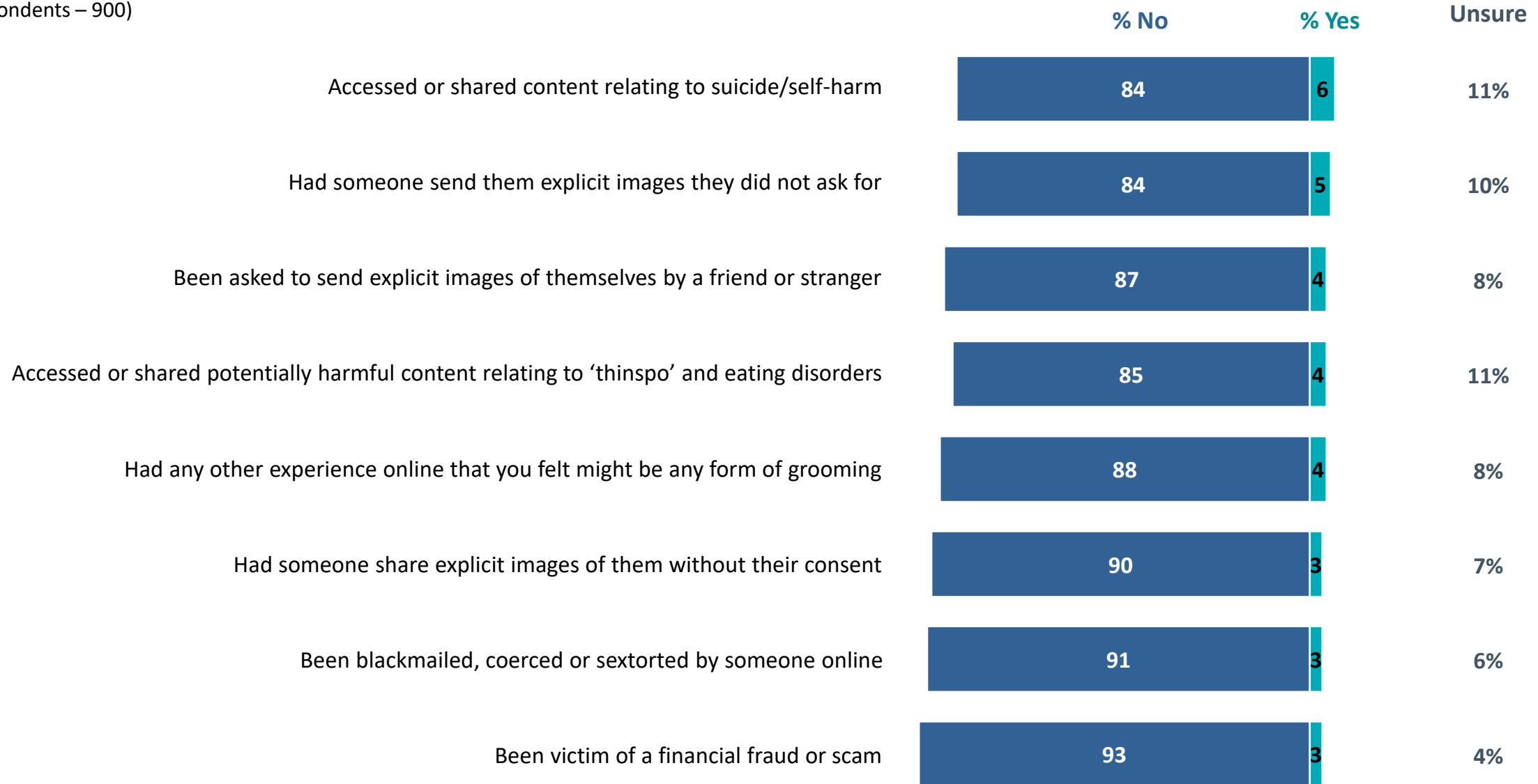
(Base: All respondents – 900)





## Parent or Guardian's knowledge of their children's online experiences. (ii)

(Base: All respondents – 900)

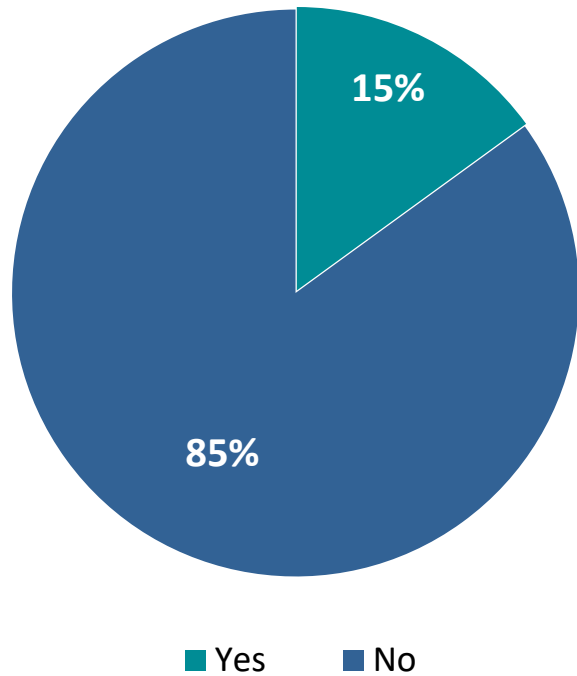






# Parent had suspicions child may be experiencing circumstances but been / felt unable to stop or deal with it – increases to 20% where unsupervised.

(BASE : All respondents -900)

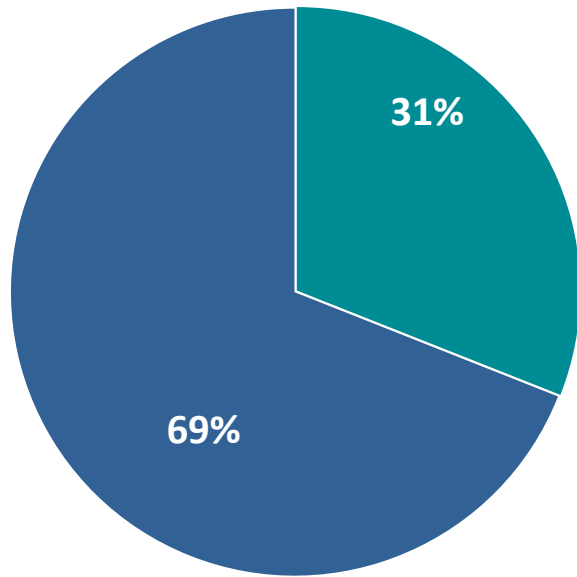


	Age of child (All children)				Age of child with own phone				Access supervised (all ages) full week	
	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	Yes/ sometimes	Unsupervised
<i>n=</i>	425	392	300	164	104	241	298	162	771	240
Yes	11%	14%	19%	23%	23%	15%	19%	23%	14%	<b>20%</b>
No	89%	86%	81%	77%	77%	85%	81%	77%	86%	80%



# Child or children has spoken about friends or others who have experienced these online circumstances – increases to 40% where unsupervised.

(BASE : All respondents -900)



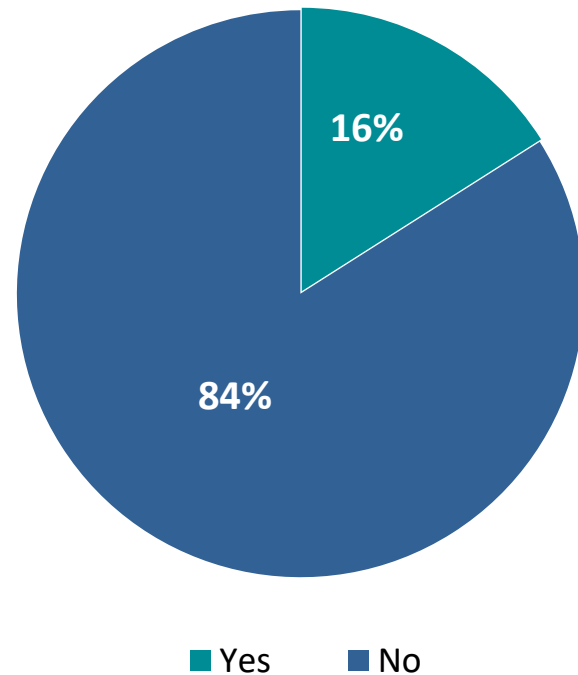
■ Yes ■ No

	Age of child (All children)				Age of child with own phone				Access supervised (all ages) full week	
	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	Yes/ sometimes	Unsupervised
<i>n=</i>	425	392	300	164	104	241	298	162	771	240
Yes	20%	31%	44%	53%	30%	30%	44%	54%	30%	<b>40%</b>
No	80%	69%	56%	47%	70%	70%	56%	46%	70%	60%



# Concerned about child or children's online experiences resulting in telling other parents/ teachers or others (including the Gardai).

(BASE : All respondents -900)



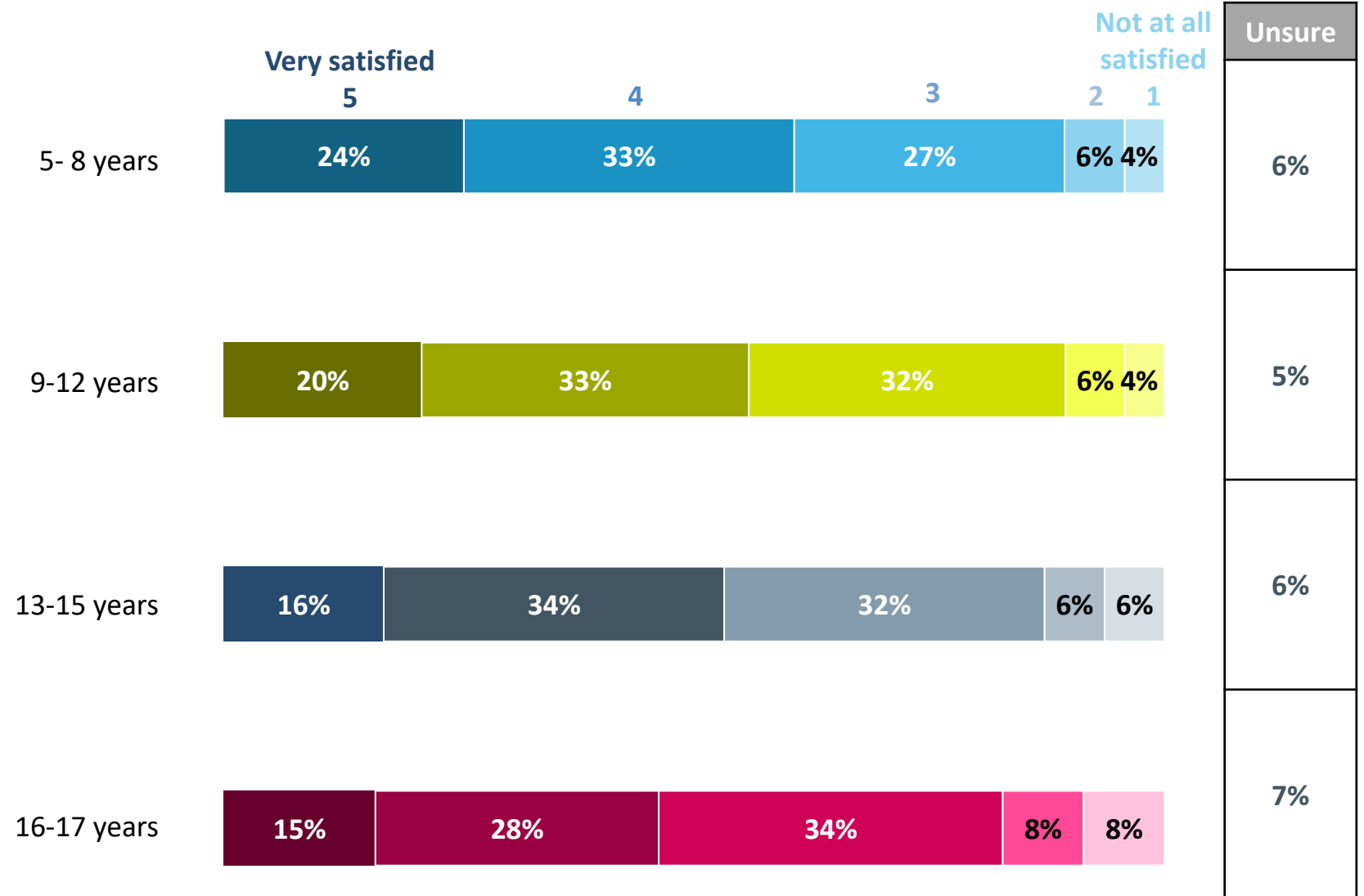
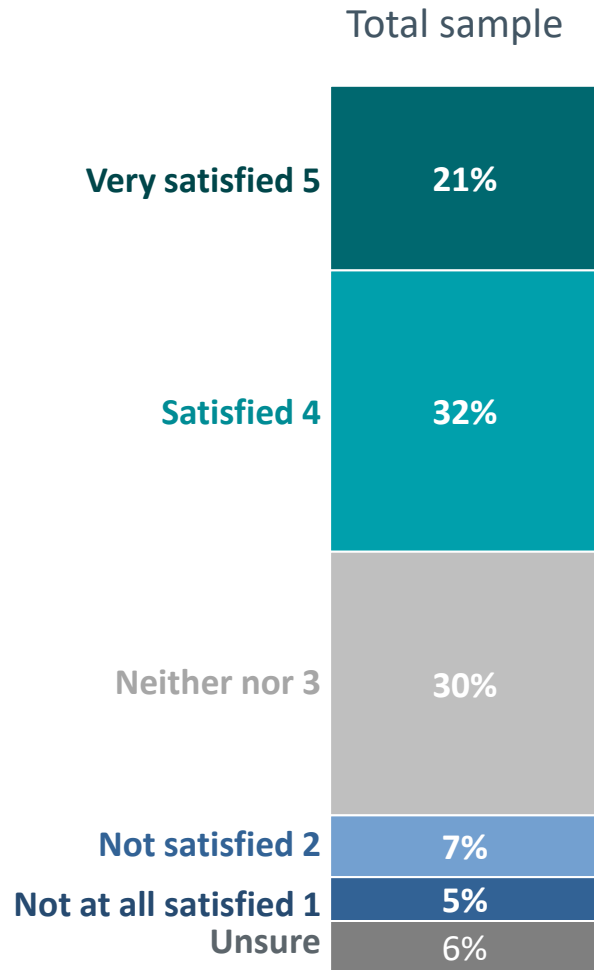
	Age of child (All children)				Age of child with own phone			
	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old	5-8 Years old	9-12 Years old	13-15 Years old	16-17 Years old
<i>n=</i>	425	392	300	164	104	241	298	162
Yes	14%	14%	18%	19%	26%	16%	18%	19%
No	86%	86%	82%	81%	74%	84%	82%	81%

Q6c. Have you ever been so concerned about your child's or children's experiences online or on their phones that you felt you should mention it to other parents, teachers or others (including the Gardai)?



# Satisfied with current solutions to monitor child's online activities and interactions?

(Base: All respondents –900)

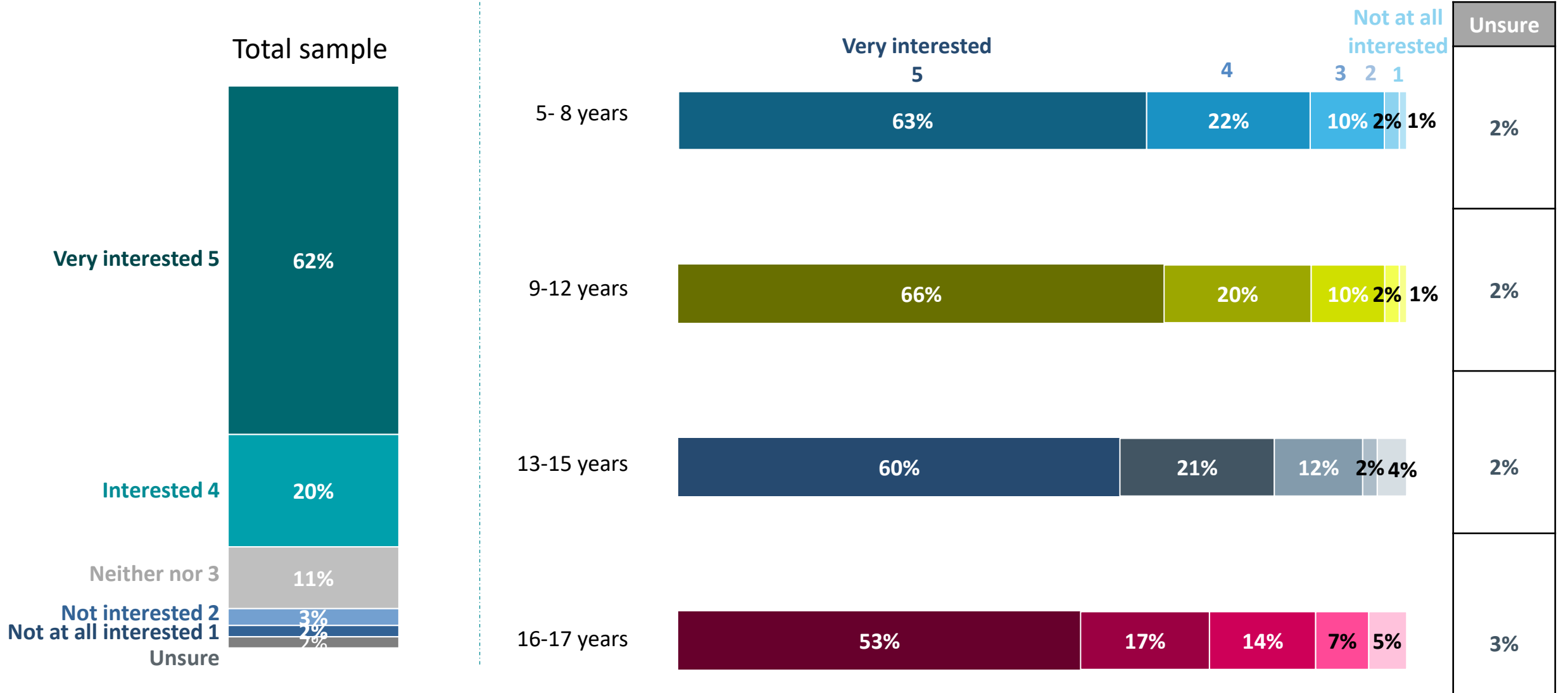


Q7a. To what extent are you satisfied with the current solutions to monitoring your child's online activities and interactions?  
Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = not at all satisfied and 5 = very satisfied.



# Interested in a solution?

(Base: All respondents –900)

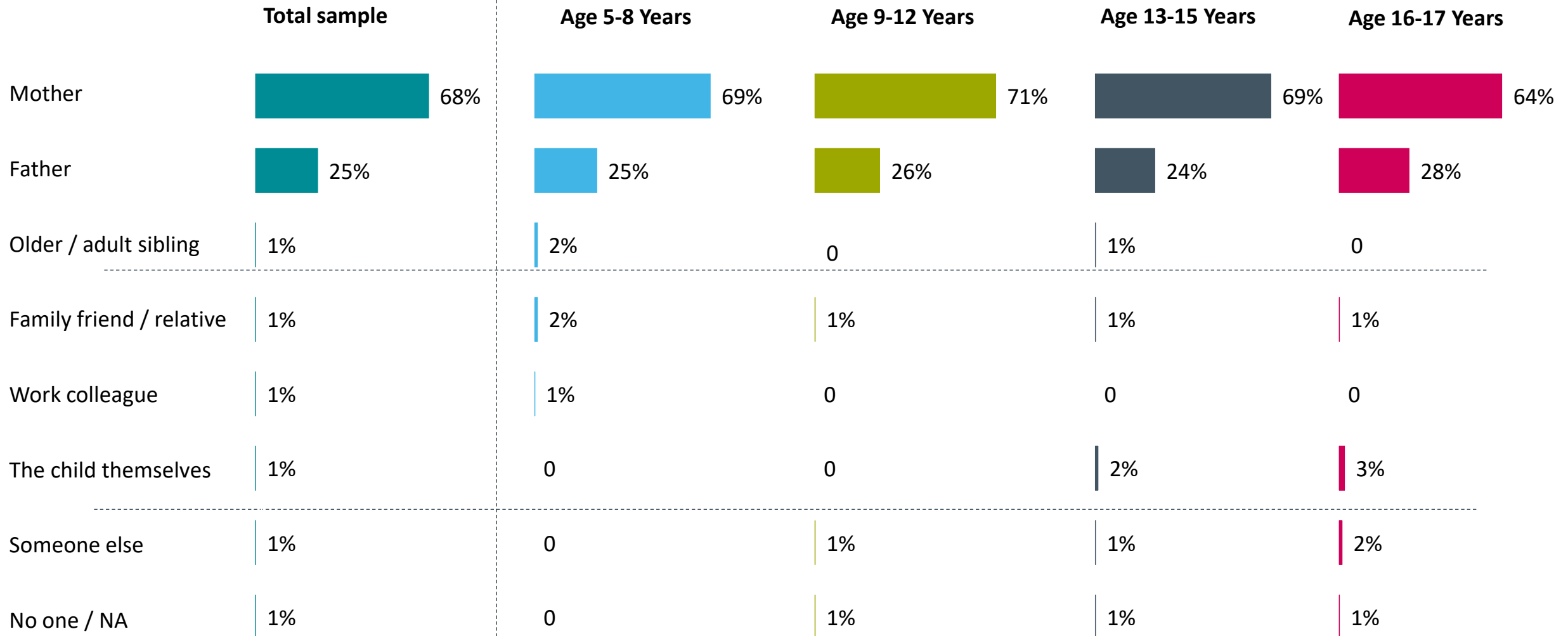


Q7c. How interested or not would you be in a solution to parental monitoring of your child's online activities and interactions that was built into the child's smartphone to block the wrong type of messages at source, keep you informed and isn't just another app? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = not at all interested and 5 = very interested.



# Adult decision maker – online child-protection / technical solutions.

(BASE : All respondents -900)



 [info@amarach.com](mailto:info@amarach.com)

 01 410 5200

 [www.amarach.com](http://www.amarach.com)

 [amarach.research](https://www.linkedin.com/company/amarach-research)

 [@AmarachResearch](https://twitter.com/AmarachResearch)