

# Governor’s Commission on Early Learning

## **BRAIN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AWARENESS & ATTITUDES SURVEY OF PARENTS & CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

JANUARY 2000

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## • INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a telephone survey of 400 expecting parents, parents and child care providers who care for children under five in Washington state sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Early Learning.

This study was designed to:

1. Assess parents and child care providers awareness and understanding of early learning in young children, specifically,
  - awareness of early learning milestones,
  - knowledge about brain development,
  - beliefs about what to do when caring for a young child and,
  - their knowledge about techniques to encourage early learning in young children.
2. Assess parents and child care providers receptiveness to new information on early learning issues.
3. Identify sources of information about child development relied upon by parents and child care providers.

Elway Research, Inc. developed the questionnaire in close collaboration with account representatives from Bozell Worldwide. Data were collected January 4 - 5, 2000.

The sample was a stratified random sample of expecting parents; parents and child care providers who care for children under five in the state of Washington.

A discussion of the findings and summary charts are presented in the pages that follow. A complete set of crosstabulation tables and the questionnaire used for the survey are found in the appendix section of this report.

## METHODS

**SAMPLE:** 400 expecting parents, parents and child care providers who care for children under the age of five in Washington state.

**TECHNIQUE:** Telephone interviews.

**FIELD DATES:** January 4-5, 2000

**MARGIN OF ERROR:**  $\pm 5.0$  at the 95% confidence interval. That is, in theory, had all qualified individuals in Washington state been interviewed, there is a 95% chance the results would be within  $\pm 5.0$  of the results from this sample.

**DATA COLLECTION:** Calls were made during weekdays and weekday evenings. Trained, professional interviewers under supervision conducted all interviews. Questionnaires were edited for completeness, and a percentage of each interviewer's calls were re-called for verification.

It must be kept in mind that survey research cannot predict the future. Although great care and the most rigorous methods available were employed in the design, execution and analysis of this survey; these results can be interpreted only as representing the answers given by these respondents to these questions at the time they completed the survey.

## SAMPLE PROFILE

In interpreting these findings, it is important to keep in mind the characteristics of the people actually interviewed. This table presents a profile of the 400 respondents in the survey.

Note: Here and throughout this report, percentages may not add to 100%, because of rounding.

<b>REGION</b>	33%	King County
	31%	Central Sound
	14%	West
	22%	East
<b>PERSONS INTERVIEWED</b>	10%	Expecting Parents
	83%	Parents
	16%	Child Care Providers
<b>CHILD CARE PROVIDER</b> (N=62)	26%	Licensed
	74%	Non-Licensed
<b>RESPONDENT GENDER</b>	27%	Male
	73%	Female
<b>RESPONDENT AGE</b>	15%	18-24 yrs
	25%	25-30 yrs
	24%	31-35 yrs
	16%	36-40 yrs
	10%	41-44 yrs
	3%	45-50 yrs
	8%	50+ yrs
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b> (N=338 Parents)	83%	Single-Parent Household
	18%	Two-Parent Household
<b>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</b> (N=338 parents)	2%	None (Expecting)
	32%	1
	35%	2
	17%	3
	7%	4
	3%	5 or more

## SAMPLE PROFILE (CONTINUED)

<b>CHILD GENDER</b> (Respondents were asked to focus on their youngest child when answering the questions)	55%	Boy
	43%	Girl
	1%	Twins
	1%	Pregnant
<b>CHILD AGE</b>	20%	Under 12 months
	22%	1 yr
	22%	2 yr
	13%	3 yr
	12%	4 yr
	11%	5 yrs
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>	16%	\$20,000 or less
	30%	\$20 to 40,000
	23%	\$40 to 60,000
	12%	\$60 to 80,000
	9%	Over \$80,000
	12%	Refused
<b>PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b> (Income divided by number of children)	23%	Low (<\$20,000 per child)
	38%	Med (\$20 to \$40,000)
	44%	High (Over \$40,000)
<b>RESPONDENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>	41%	Employed Full-Time
	19%	Employed Part-Time
	35%	Not Working
	5%	Retired
<b>MOTHER EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b> (N=338)	28%	Employed Full-Time
	20%	Employed Part-Time
	51%	Not Working
<b>EDUCATION</b>	10%	Some High School
	23%	High School Graduate
	5%	Business/Voc/Tech
	27%	Some College
	27%	College Degree
	8%	Grad/Professional School
<b>RACE</b>	80%	Caucasian
	7%	Asian/Pacific Islander
	4%	African American
	3%	Hispanic/Latino
	2%	Native American

## PROFILE OF PARENTS AND CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Two populations were sampled for this survey: parents (including people who were expecting a child within six months); and child care providers, who cared for a child under age 5 for at least three days a week or 12 or more hours per week. The table below compares the demographic profiles of Parents and Child Care Providers.

It must be kept in mind that "Child Care Providers" included only 16 licensed providers; the remaining 46 were non-licensed child care providers, such as relatives, friends and baby sitters.

	PARENTS (n=338)	CHILD CARE PROVIDERS (n=62)
<b><i>GENDER</i></b>		
• Male	30%	15%
• Female	70%	86%
<b><i>Age</i></b>		
• 18-30	42%	23%
• 31-40	45%	15%
• 41 or older	13%	60%
<b><i>Education</i></b>		
• Some high school	9%	13%
• High school	20%	34%
• Some college/voctech/business	33%	26%
• College degree or higher	38%	25%
<b><i>Employment</i></b>		
• Working, full-time	42%	32%
• Working, part-time	18%	23%
• Not working outside the home	37%	23%
• Retired	2%	18%
<b><i>Household Income</i></b>		
• Under \$20,000	13%	27%
• \$20,000 to \$40,000	31%	24%
• Over \$40,000	46%	30%

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## CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Fewer than half of the parents who had a child in childcare for at least three days a week or 12 or more hours a week. Those children who did attend childcare were most likely to be cared for by a family member.

- Forty-two percent of parents had at least one child who attended childcare.
- Thirty-six percent of these young children were in the care of a family member, such as a grandmother, aunt or sister.
- Thirty percent attended a childcare center.
- In-home child care provider, such as a nanny, au pair or baby sitter cared for 19%.

As expected, those respondents who work outside the home and those parents who are in a single-parent household were more likely to have a child in childcare than were those who do not work outside the home or are two-parent households. It may be less expected to find that parents with high per capita income are more likely than middle or low per capita incomes to have had a child in childcare.

- Sixty percent of full-time working respondents compared to 17% who were not working had at least one child who attended childcare.
- Sixty-six percent of full-time working mothers compared to 54% of part-time working mothers and 23% of non-working mothers had at least one child in childcare.
- Seventy-eight percent of single-parent household respondents had at least one child in childcare. Thirty-four percent of two-parent household respondents had at least one child attend childcare.
- Fifty-three percent of two-parent household respondents compared to 42% of single-parent household respondents had a child who attends a childcare center or had an in-home child care provider.
- Fifty-five percent of parents with a per capita income of \$40,000 or more, whereas 29% of parents with a per capita income under \$20,000 had at least one child in childcare.

## TARGET POPULATION VARIABLE

The Commission and Bozell Worldwide specified certain demographic variables as being of particular interest. The variables specified for particular attention were:

- **Relationship to Child.** Three categories of respondents were interviewed: 1) expecting parents (within 6 months); 2) parents and 3) child care providers who cared for a child at least three days a week or 12 or more hours per week.
- **Age.** Respondent age was collapsed into three categories: Young (18-30), Middle (31-40), or Old (41+).
- **Gender.**
- **Marital Status of Parents:** Marital status was calculated into two categories: Single-parent household respondents or two-parent household respondents. Married and parents livings with someone other than the child's other parent were included in the two-parent household category.
- **Mother's Employment Status:** Mother's Employment status was calculated as a household variable in three categories: Full-time Working Mother or Part-time Working Mother or Non-working Mother.
- **Household Income:** Per Capita Household Income was used for this measure. It was calculated by dividing the annual household income by number of children in the household. Three levels were calculated: Low Per Capita Income (less than \$20,000 per child), Middle Per Capita Income (\$20,000-\$40,000) or High Per Capita Income (\$40,000+). This relative measure, while resulting in broad categories, provides a more refined picture of household finances than just annual income alone.



## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TARGET SEGMENTS

This section presents a profile of demographic differences between the target population segments. Differences that were not statistically significant are not discussed in this analysis.

### MARITAL STATUS

Though most young children in this survey live in a two-parent household, 17% live in a single-parent household. Two-parent household respondents were more likely than single-parent household respondents to be older, have a college degree and be in the highest per capita income.

- Almost twice as many single-parent household respondents as two-parent household respondents were 30 or younger. Thirty-seven percent of single-parent household respondents compared to 63% of two-parent household respondents who were 30 or younger.
- Nineteen percent of single-parent household respondents compared to 31% of two-parent household respondents had a college degree.
- Two-parent household respondents were more likely than single-parent household respondents to have completed college. Thirty-one percent of two-parent household respondents compared to 19% of single-parent household respondents had a college degree.
- About 30% of single-parent household respondents and 30% of two-parent household respondents had a per capita income between \$20,000 to \$40,000. Thirty-seven percent of single-parent household respondents compared to 20% of two-parent household respondents had a per capita income of less than \$20,000.

### MOTHER'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS

No significant demographic differences were found between mother's who worked outside the home and those who did not.

**HOUSEHOLD PER CAPITA INCOME**

Households with a per capita income less than \$20,000 were less likely than those who had a per capita income more than \$40,000 to have a college degree and to be employed outside of the home.

- Twenty-two percent of parents who had a per capita income less than \$20,000 compared to 36% of parents who had a per capita income more than \$40,000 had a college degree.
- Thirty-five percent of parents who had a per capita income less than \$20,000 compared to 49% of those who had a per capita income more than \$40,000 were employed full-time.
- Fifty-two percent of parents who had a per capita income less than \$20,000 compared to 29% of those whose per capita income were more than \$40,000 were not working outside of the home.

**ATTITUDE AND AWARENESS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TARGET SEGMENTS**

This section presents an overview of significant differences between target population segments in the substantive questions of the survey. These differences will be discussed in detail in the following section. For those questions where target population segments do not appear it should be assumed that no significant differences were found.

**CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

Compared to parents, child care providers were more likely to:

- Agree that if a baby's basic health and safety needs were met then most everything else would take care of itself.
- Believe a baby's level of intelligence is determined at birth.
- Think that more caregivers are better than a few for a child's development.
- Believe that you could spoil a newborn if you respond every time he or she cries.

**PARENTS**

Parents were more likely than child care providers to correctly answer questions about childhood development milestones.

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**NON-LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

Compared to licensed child care providers, non-licensed child care providers were more likely to:

- Think you could never give a baby too much attention.
- Believe that early relationships affect how a baby's brain develops.

**RESPONDENT AGE**

Respondents 30 or younger were more likely than older respondents to:

- Not to know when a child develops memory ability.
- Think it was important to choose a child care provider who has had formal training in child development.
- Agree that playing was just for fun and that a child could learn more using flash cards than through a playing a game of peek-a-boo.
- Think the government should be spending more on early learning issues.

**RESPONDENT GENDER**

Men were more likely than women to:

- Think a newborn could spoiled if he or she was picked up every time he or she cries.
- Think that plays was just for fun and think that flash cards would teach a child more than a game of peek-a-boo.
- Think that television could act as a substitute for language development.
- Men were more likely than female respondents to turn to the other parent for information on a child's development.
- Women were more likely than men to correctly answer questions about childhood development milestones.

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**MARITAL STATUS**

Respondents in a two-parent household were more likely than were those in a single-parent household to:

- Believe that setting limits with a child could affect his or her self-esteem.
- Think that holding a baby affects brain development.

**MOTHER'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

- Full-time working mothers were more likely than part-time or non-working mothers to think that television could act as a substitute to stimulate language development.
- Full-time working mothers and part-time working mothers were more likely than non-working mothers to have had at least one child attend childcare.

**HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

Parents in households with the *highest per capita income* were:

- Less likely than those with lower income to believe a baby's brain was fully developed at birth.
- More likely than those with the lowest per capita income to believe that holding a baby could affect brain development.
- More likely than those with the lowest per capita income to believe that most brain development occurs during the first three years of life.
- More likely than those with the lowest per capita income to have had at least one child in childcare.
- More likely than those with lower income to correctly answer questions about development milestones.

Parents with the lowest per capita income were the least likely to turn to a health care provider for information about a child's development.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

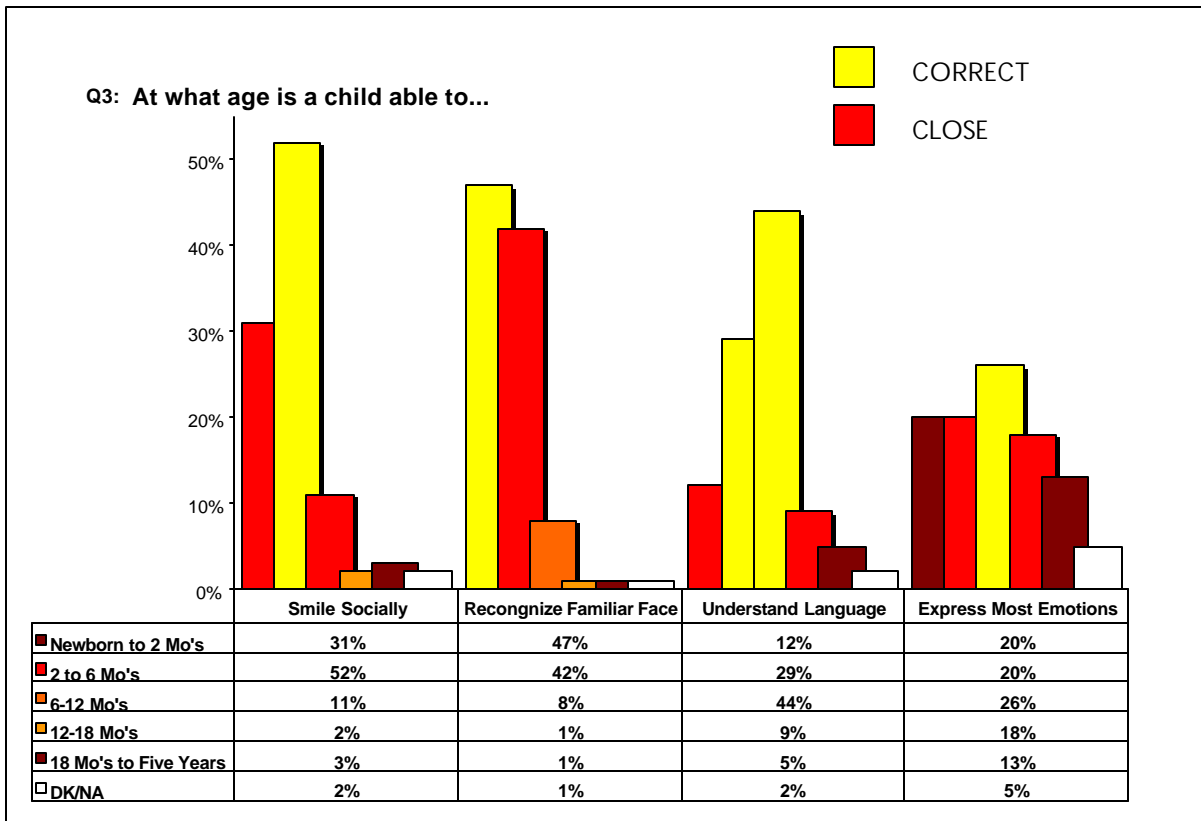
Most respondents were aware of and were knowledgeable about early learning in young children. Even though most had a strong understanding of what was involved in brain development and caring for young children, they expressed an eagerness to learn and do more.

The majority believed they had a great influence on all aspects of a child's development and if they had questions they would most likely to turn to a health care provider or other relative for information.

Overall, most of the respondents would like to see the government spending more on early learning issues.

## EARLY LEARNING MILESTONES

Respondents were asked four questions about milestones in the early years of a child's life, including the age at which a child is first able to smile socially, recognize familiar faces, understand language and express most emotions.



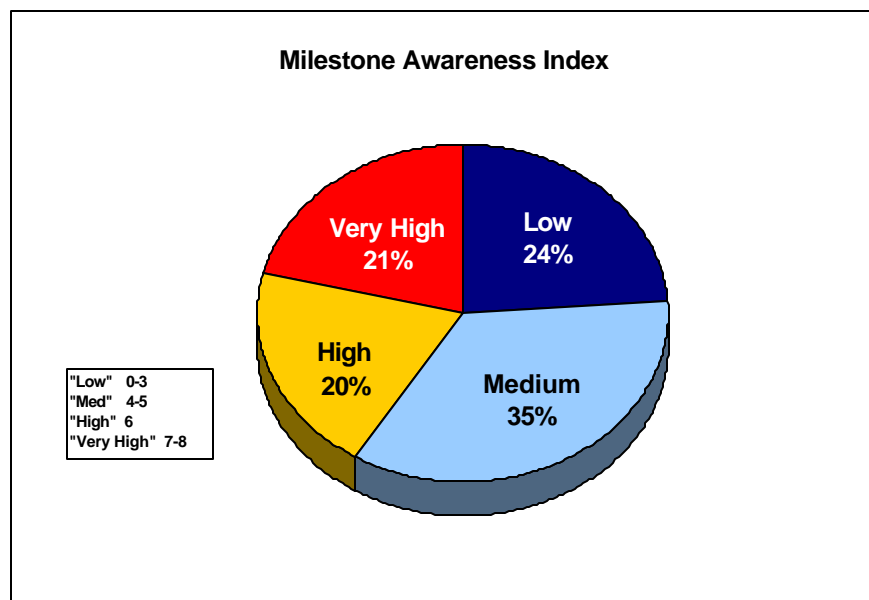
Most respondents were at or near the generally accepted correct answer for each of the four behaviors.

Giving respondents 2 points for a correct answer and one point for a "nearly correct" answer created an index. Thus, each respondent had an index score of 0 to 8. These scores were then collapsed into broader categories, shown in the chart on the following page.

One in five respondents (21%) scored 7 or 8 on the 8-point scale, meaning they answered at least three of the four questions correctly and were nearly correct on the fourth question. One respondent in four (24%) scored 3 or lower, meaning they answered one question correctly, at most.

More than half of the respondents knew a child was able to socially smile between two and six months.

- Seventy-three percent knew a child was able to understand language by the time he or she was between six and 12 months old.
- Forty percent scored "high" or "very high" on the early learning milestone index.



Some respondents were less certain about milestones in the early years of a child's life than others.

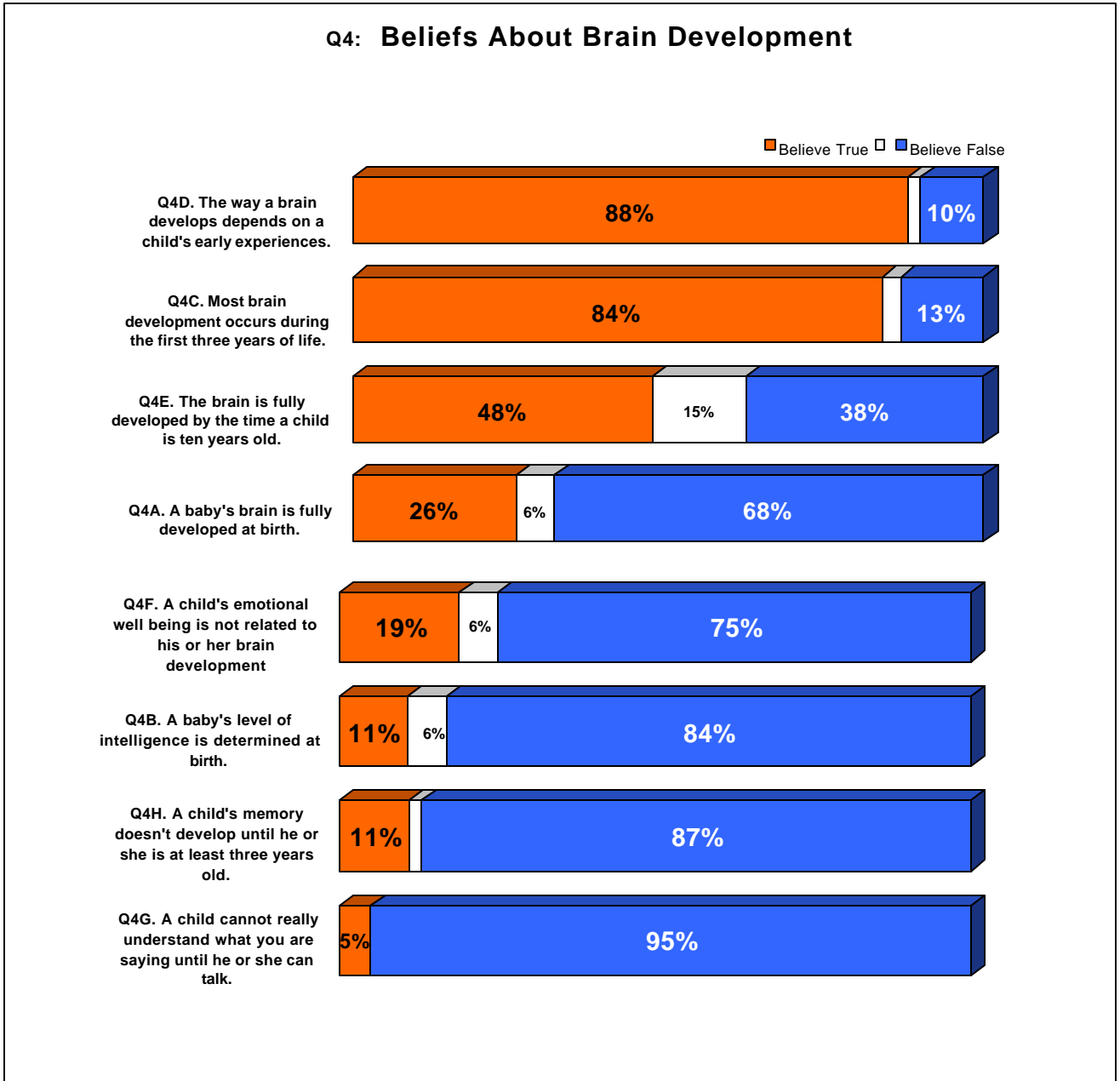
- Forty-seven percent thought a child was able to recognize a familiar face as a newborn, compared to 42% who thought it was not until a child was at least two to six months old.
- Twenty-four percent of respondents scored "low" on the early learning milestone index.

Significant differences on the early learning milestone index were found between target population segments.

- Thirty-one percent of males compared to 69% of female respondents scored "high" on the milestone index.
- Eighty percent of parents compared to 20% of child care providers had a "high" score on the milestone index.

## BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

The overwhelming majority of respondents were knowledgeable about brain development in young children. Most knew a baby's brain was not fully developed when he or she was born and that early experiences impact brain development. Fewer knew when the brain was fully developed.





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- Sixty-eight percent of respondents knew that a baby's brain was not fully developed at birth.
  - Eighty-eight percent knew that early experiences played an important role in brain development
  - Thirty-eight of respondents knew the brain was fully developed by the time a child was ten years old.

Some of the younger respondents and those parents with a lower per capita income had difficulty answering the brain development questions.

- Nineteen percent of respondents 30 or younger compared to 7% of respondents older than 31 believed a child's memory does not develop until after he or she is three years old.
- Thirty-five percent of parents who had a per capita income under \$20,000 compared to 18% of parents who had a per capita income over \$40,000 thought a baby's brain was fully developed at birth.

## CARING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Most of respondents knew what was needed to properly care for young children. Most knew that routines, setting limits and involvement in a child's childcare were important to a child's overall well being.

- More than 95% of respondents agreed that a child should have routines and that a child's parents should be involved in a child's childcare.
- Eighty-three percent agreed that it was important to choose a child care provider who had formal training in child development.

Some of the respondents found these questions to be more challenging. Several of the respondents were not sure if a child could be given too much stimulation and if more caregivers were better for a child's development.

- Seventy-six percent said that you could never give a baby too much attention.
- Fifty-three percent thought the more people caring for a child, the better it was for the child's development.

Some of target population segments differed in their knowledge about caring for young children.

- Thirty percent of males compared to 20% of female respondents believed a child could never be given too much attention.
- 100% of non-licensed child care providers compared to 0% of the licensed child care providers believed a child could never be given too much attention.
- Twenty-eight percent of respondents who had a high school degree compared to 7% of those who had a college degree thought that if a baby's basic health and safety needs were met then most everything else would take care of itself.

Several target population segments differed on whether a newborn would be spoiled if responded to every time he or she cries.

- Fifty-three percent of males compared to 26% of female respondents thought a newborn would be spoiled if responded to every time he or she cries

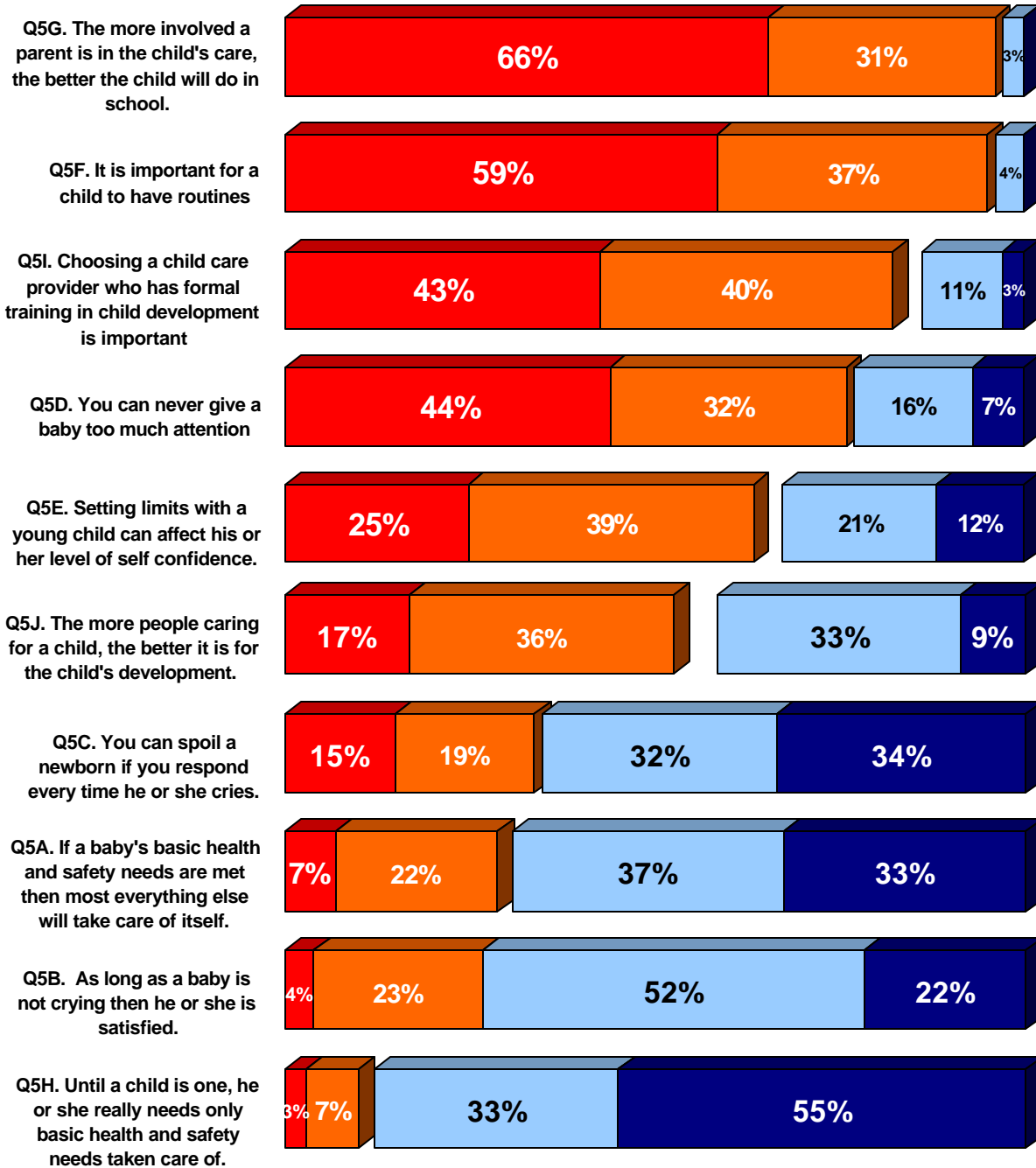
- Forty-two percent of child care providers compared to 32% of parents thought a newborn would be spoiled if responded to every time he or she cries.
- Forty-four percent of full-time working respondents compared to 18% of part-time and 29% of non-working respondents thought a newborn would be spoiled if responded to every time he or she cries.
- Sixty-two percent of those who had completed some high school compared to 25% of those who had a college degree thought a newborn would be spoiled if responded to every time he or she cries.

Single-parent household respondents and two-parent household respondents differed in their responses to whether setting limits with a child would affect his or her level of self-confidence.

- Sixty-seven percent of two-parent household respondents compared to 46% of single-parent household respondents agreed that setting limits with a child would affect his or her level of self-confidence.
- Some target population segments differed as to whether it was important for a child care provider to have training in child development.
- Twenty-three percent of parents who had three or more children compared to 7% of parents who had one child in the household who thought it was not important for a child care provider to have had formal training in child development.
- Nine percent of respondents 30 or younger compared to 18% of those between 31–40 and 15% of those over 41 thought it was not important for a child care provider to have had formal training in child development.

### q5: Beliefs About *Caring* for Young Children

■ Agree Strongly 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Disagree Strongly



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## EARLY LEARNING IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Nearly all respondents were knowledgeable about the techniques needed to encourage early learning in young children.

- Ninety-one percent of respondents agreed that early relationships affect how a baby's brain develops.
- Eighty-two percent of respondents said they agreed that holding a baby could affect brain development.
- Ninety-eight percent were sure it was never too early to read to a baby.
- Ninety-six percent agreed that repetitive activities were essential to learning.

Some respondents struggled with an answer to the question about whether the use of "baby talk" helps or hurts a child's language development.

- Thirty-one percent agreed and 30% disagreed that "baby talk" was useful for the mastery of skills needed for language development.
- There were target population segments whose responses to these questions indicated they were not fully aware of what all was entailed in early learning for young children.
- Ninety-one percent of non-licensed child care providers compared to 69% of licensed child care providers agreed that early relationships affect how a baby brain develops.
- Twenty three percent of parents who had a per capita income less than \$20,000 compared to 10% of those who had a per capita income more than \$40,000 did not believe that holding a baby affected brain development.
- Eighty-seven percent of respondents who had a college degree compared to 71% who had a high school degree did not think that holding a baby affected brain development.
- Eighty-five percent of two-parent household respondents compared to 68% of single-parent household respondents agreed that holding a baby affected brain development.

Several target population segments had opposing views about whether play was just for fun.

- Only 9% of college graduates compared to 36% of those who had attended some high school believed that learning was acquiring facts whereas play was just for fun.
- Twenty-three percent of males compared to 13% of female respondents said they agreed that that learning was acquiring facts whereas play was just for fun.
- Nineteen percent of respondents 30 or younger and more than 41 compared to 11% of those between 31 and 40 thought that learning was acquiring facts whereas play was just for fun.

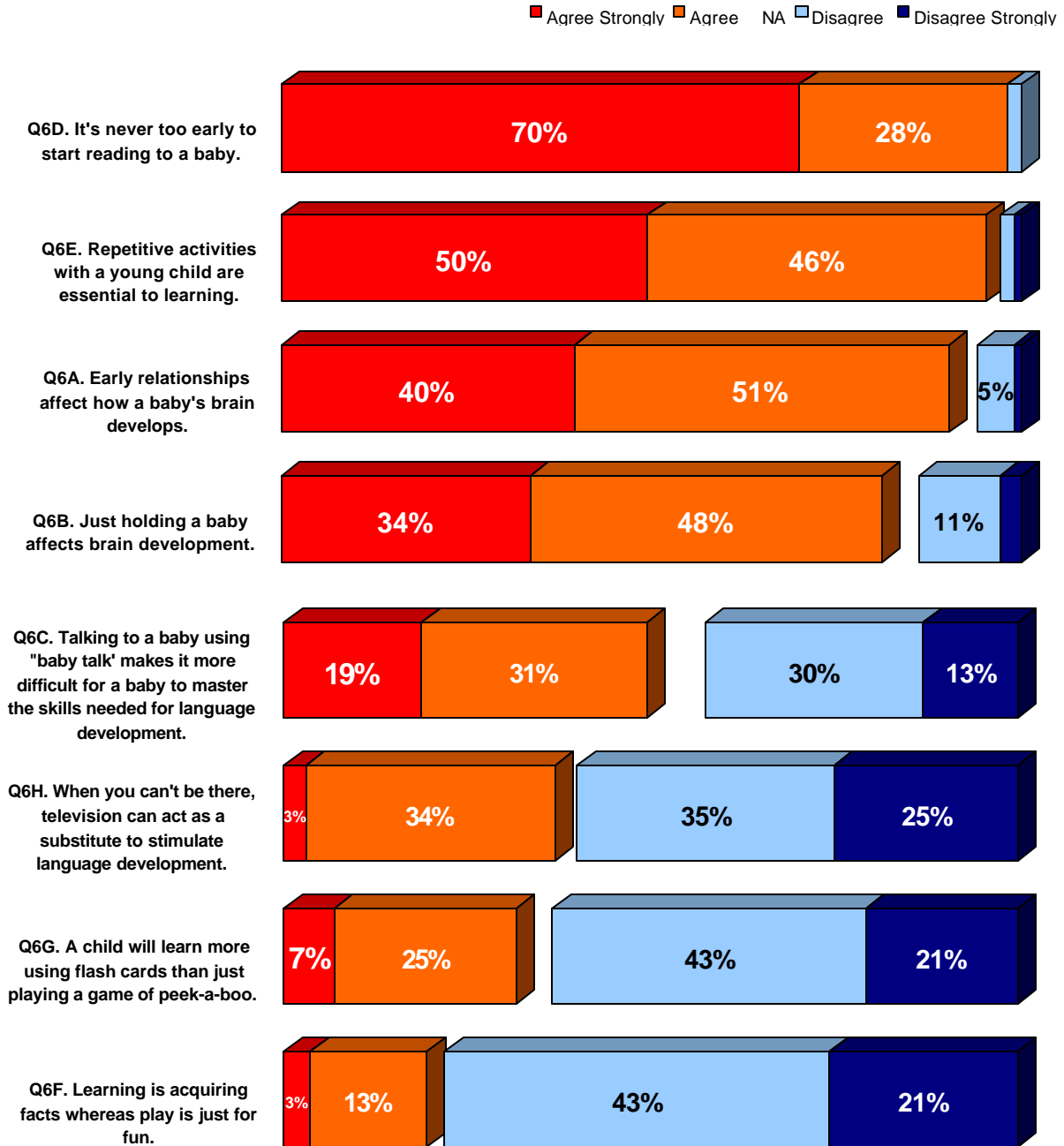
Overall, 60% of respondents agreed that a child would learn just as much playing game of peek-a-boo as using flash cards. There were some types of respondents who disagreed.

- Thirty-seven percent of respondents who were 30 or younger and more than 41 compared to 21% of those between 31 and 40 thought a child would learn more using flash cards than playing a game of peek-a-boo.
- Forty-seven percent of males compared to 25% of female respondents were likely to believe that a child would learn more using flash cards than playing a game of peek-a-boo.
- Thirty-nine percent of full-time working respondents compared to 23% part-time working respondents agreed that a child would learn more using flash cards than playing a game of peek-a-boo.
- Fifty-nine percent of respondents who had some high school compared to 23% who had a college degree thought that a child would learn more using flash cards than playing a game of peek-a-boo.

There were some target population segments that disagreed and others who were not as certain of the role television played in the mastery of language development.

- Fifty-one percent of male respondents compared to 32% of female respondents agreed that when you couldn't have television could act as a substitute to stimulate language development.
- Fifty percent of full-time working mothers compared to 32% of part-time and non-working mothers agreed that television could act as a substitute to stimulate language development.
- Forty-four percent of respondents who had graduated from high school compared to 33% of respondents who had graduated from college agreed that television could act as a substitute to stimulate language.

**Q6: Beliefs About *Learning* in Young Children**



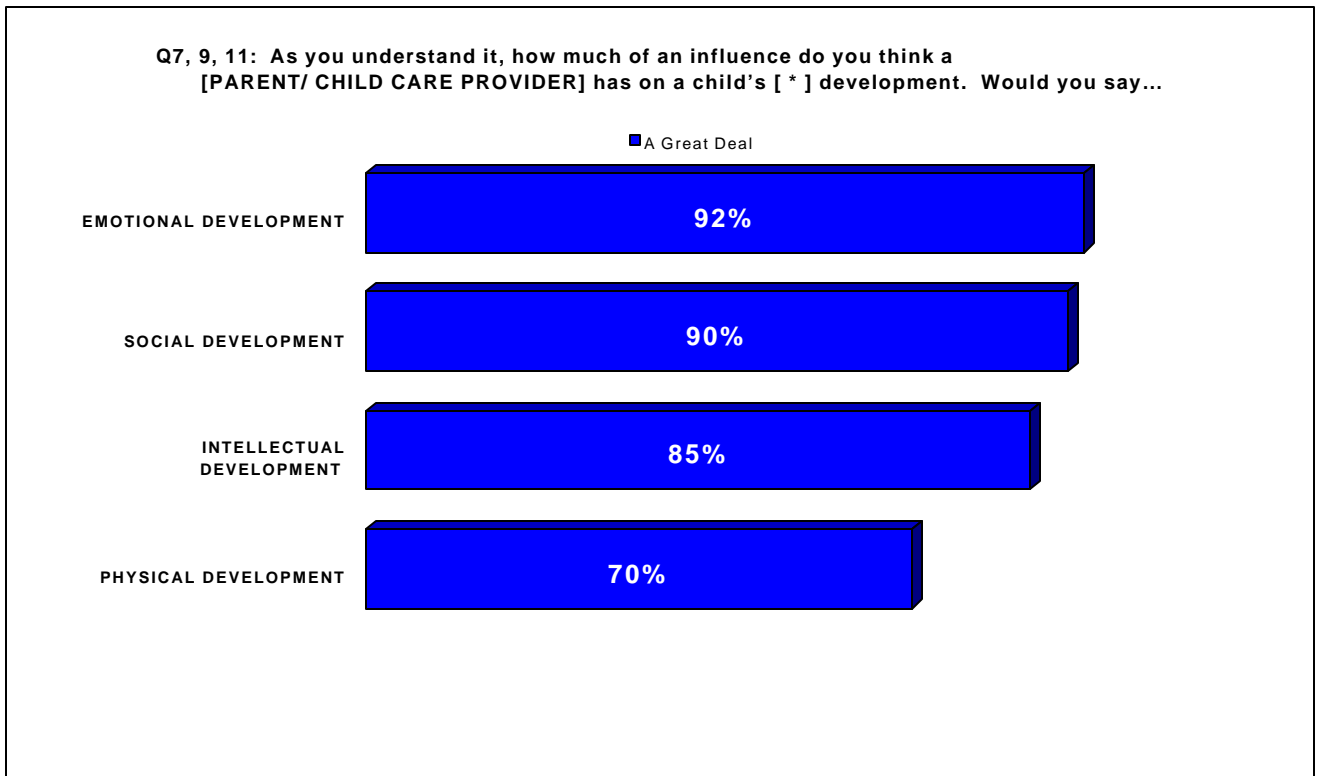


## INFLUENCE ON A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

Most of the respondents believed they played a critical role in development of the children in their care. They were confident they had a great deal of influence on a child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Respondents thought they had slightly more of an influence on a child's emotional and social development than on a child's physical and intellectual development.

- Over 90% believed they had a great deal of influence on a child's emotional and social development.
- Seventy percent felt they had a great deal of influence on a child's physical development.
- Eighty-five percent felt they had a great deal of influence on a child's intellectual development.

Some of the parents with a high per capita income were more likely than some of the parents with a low per capita income to turn to a health care provider for information on a child's development. Some male respondents were more likely than female respondents to turn to the other parent for information on a child's development.



- Twenty-nine percent of parents with a per capita income less than \$20,000 compared to 43% of those who had a per capita income more than \$40,000 were likely to turn to a health care provider for information on a child's intellectual development.
- Twenty-nine percent of males compared to 15% of female respondents said they turn to the other parent for information on a child's emotional development.

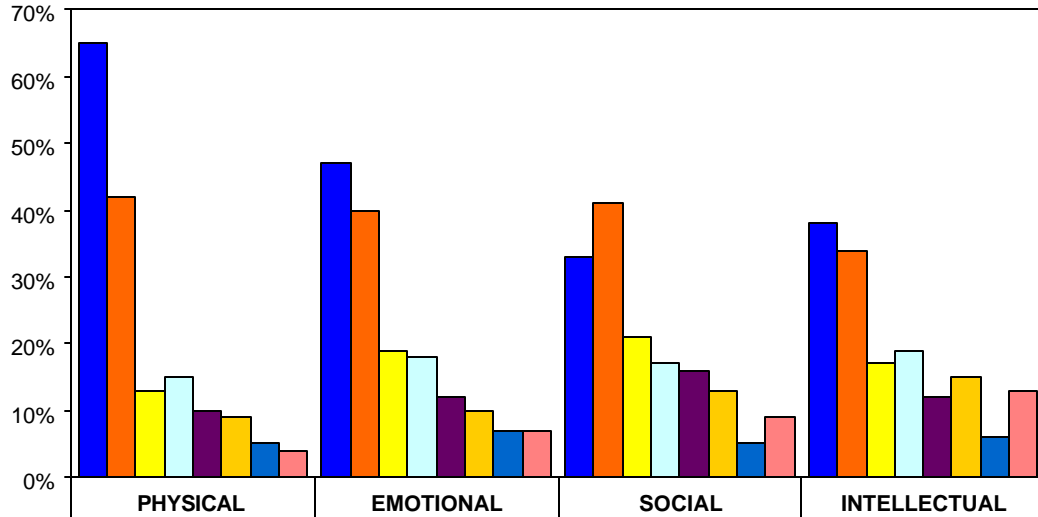
## INFORMATION SOURCES

Respondents were asked whom they were most likely to turn to for information on a child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Respondents were not read the answer choices and were permitted to provide more than one answer.

The overwhelming majority of respondents said they were most likely to turn to a health care provider or to another relative, such as their mother, grandmother or sister for information on a child's development.

- Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they would turn to a health care provider and 24% said they would turn to another relative for information on a child's physical development.
- Twenty-seven percent said they would turn to a health care provider and 23% said they would turn to another relative for information on a child's emotional development.
- Nineteen percent said they would turn to a health care provider and 25% said they would turn to another relative for information on a child's social development.
- Twenty-two percent said they would turn to a health care provider and 22% said they would turn to another relative for information on a child's intellectual development.

**Who are you most likely to turn for information on a child's [ \* ] development?**



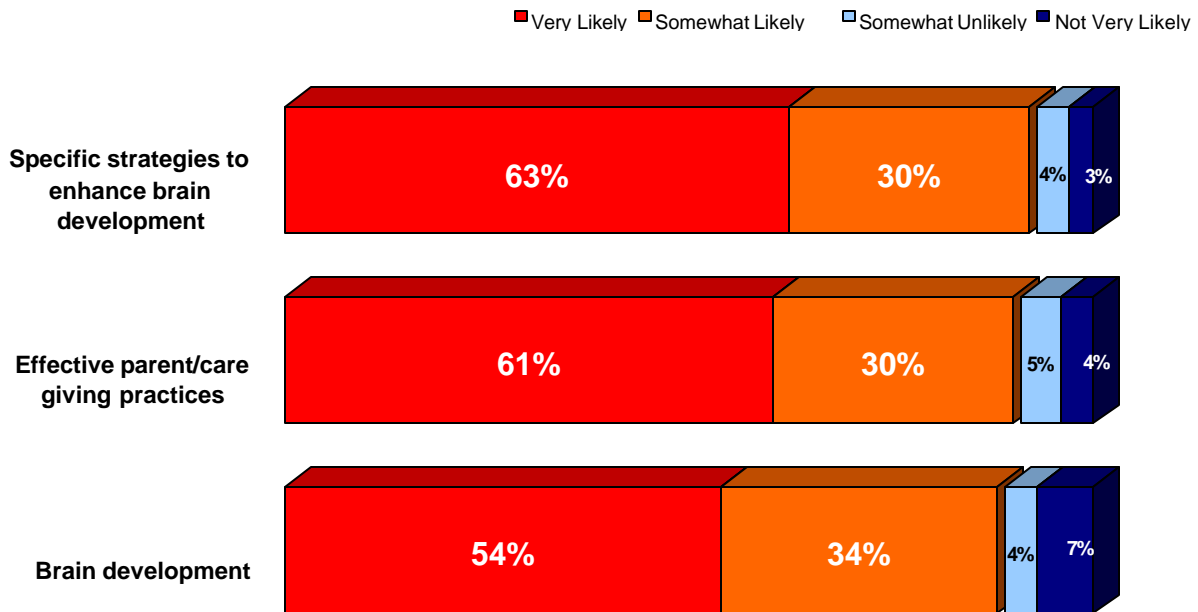
	PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	INTELLECTUAL
Health Care Provider	65%	47%	33%	38%
Relative	42%	40%	41%	34%
Other Parent	13%	19%	21%	17%
Books	15%	18%	17%	19%
Friends	10%	12%	16%	12%
Child Care Provider	9%	10%	13%	15%
Media	5%	7%	5%	6%
Community Resources	4%	7%	9%	13%

## INTEREST IN MORE INFORMATION

Nearly all respondents said they were interested in learning more about brain development and what they could do to improve a child's brain development.

- Eighty-eight percent of respondents said they would take the time to learn more about brain development.
- Ninety-three percent said they were very likely to make the effort to learn more about specific strategies and techniques to enhance a child's development.
- Over 90% said they would take the time to learn more about effective care-giving practices and early childhood education programs.

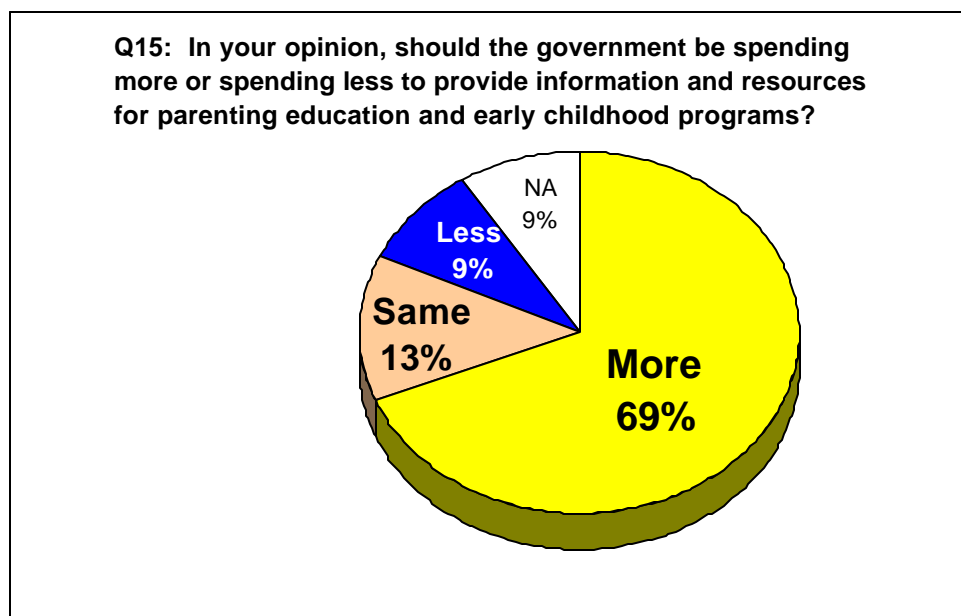
**Q16, 17, 18:** If the information were accessible, how likely are to to make the effort and take the extra time to learn more about...



## ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Most respondents said the government should be spending more to provide information and resources for early childhood programs early learning issues.

- Sixty-nine percent said the government should be spending more to provide information and resources for parenting education and early childhood programs.
- Only 9% of respondents thought the government should be spending less on information and resources for parenting education and early childhood programs.



Some target population segments had opposing views about the government's role in early learning issues.

- Eighteen percent of single-parent household respondents compared to 66% of two-parent household respondents thought the government should spend more to provide information and resources for parenting education and early childhood programs.
- Seventy-five percent of respondents 30 or younger compared to 64% of parents between the 31-40 thought the government should spend more to provide information and resources for parenting education and early childhood programs.