Exploring attitudes, motivations and barriers to adoption and fostering: a quantitative survey

Findings from a study of adults in England

14th December 2012

Objectives & Methodology

The role of this quantitative phase

- The qualitative phase of the study sought to explore and map the barriers and triggers to fostering and adoption across a selection of targets identified in the market scoping phase; and to give input to the design of the quantitative phase

- This quantitative phase is designed to provide robust data to inform stakeholders on potential routes to increasing the supply of adopters/foster carers

- Specifically:

  - To examine the attitudinal and perceptual framework

  - To assess barriers, triggers and motivations

  - To identify segments of interest vis-à-vis potential future engagement, placement and retention

Sample and methodology

- Sample of 4,948 adults based in England
- Online survey
- Quotas imposed to deliver a nationally representative sample on age, gender and region
- Data weighted to reflect estimated incidence of people who were (i) adopted as a child or (ii) who are currently an approved foster carer
- Fieldwork conducted 30th November to 5th December 2012

Approach to analysis

- 4 key subgroups identified for this analysis

  - Adoption: High Propensity
    Defined as “Certain/Very Likely” to consider adopting a child some time in the future

  - Adoption: Low Propensity
    Defined as “Fairly UNlikely” to consider adopting a child some time in the future

  - Fostering: High Propensity
    Defined as “Certain/Very Likely” to consider becoming a foster carer some time in the future

  - Fostering: Low Propensity
    Defined as “Fairly UNlikely” to consider becoming a foster carer some time in the future

Main Sections

- Propensity data

- Hotspots: indexing population segments against total sample

- Context-setting statistics

- Attitudes and perceptions
    - End-benefits
    - Concerns
    - What people think that you think

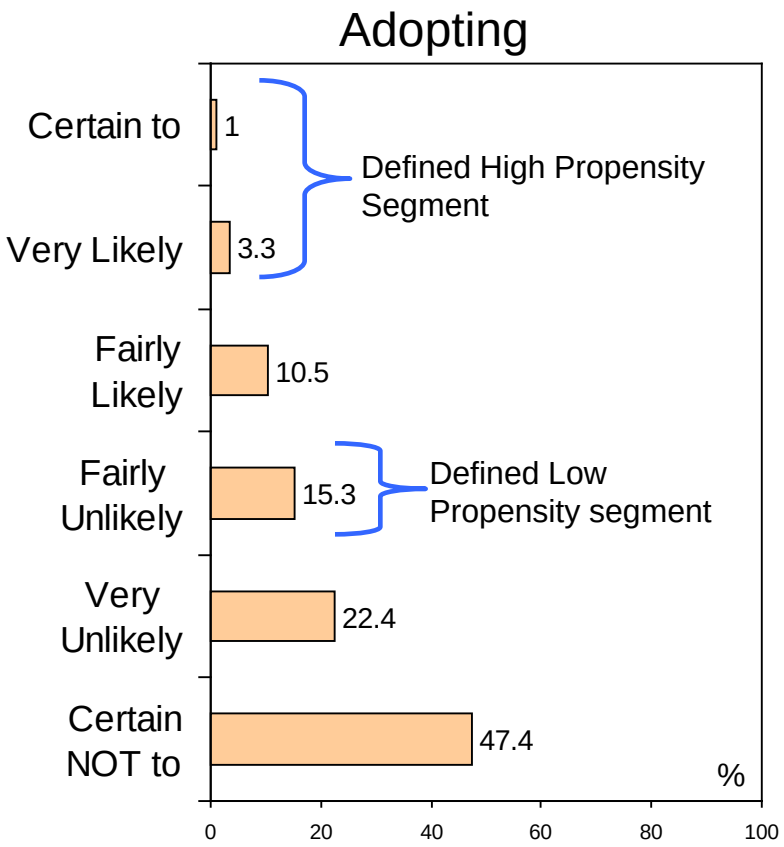
- Family ‘configuration’ preferences

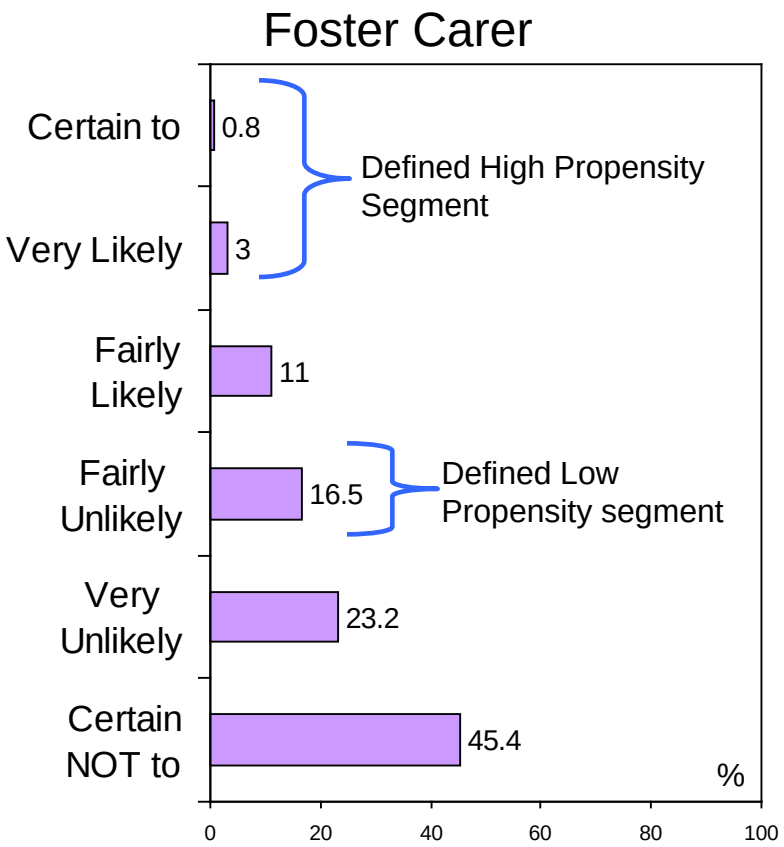
- Drivers: non-engagement vs engagement

Propensity Data

Claimed Propensity to Consider Adopting / Becoming Foster Carer

Q: "How likely are you to actually consider adopting a child / becoming a foster carer some time in the future?"

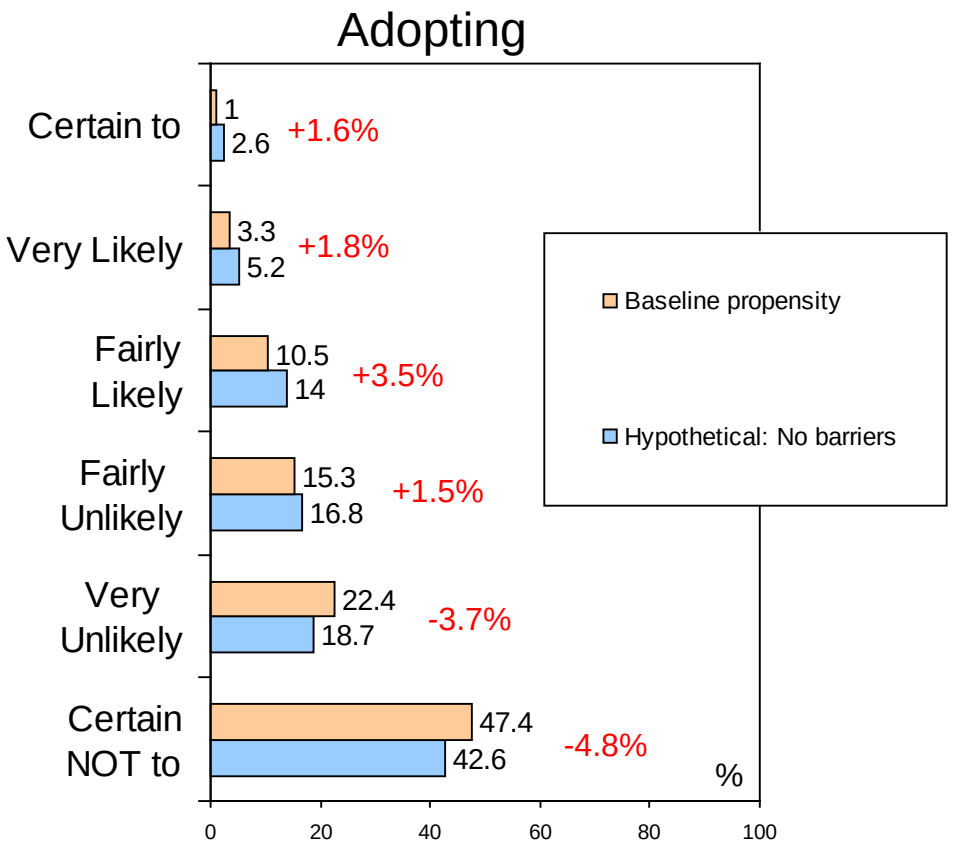


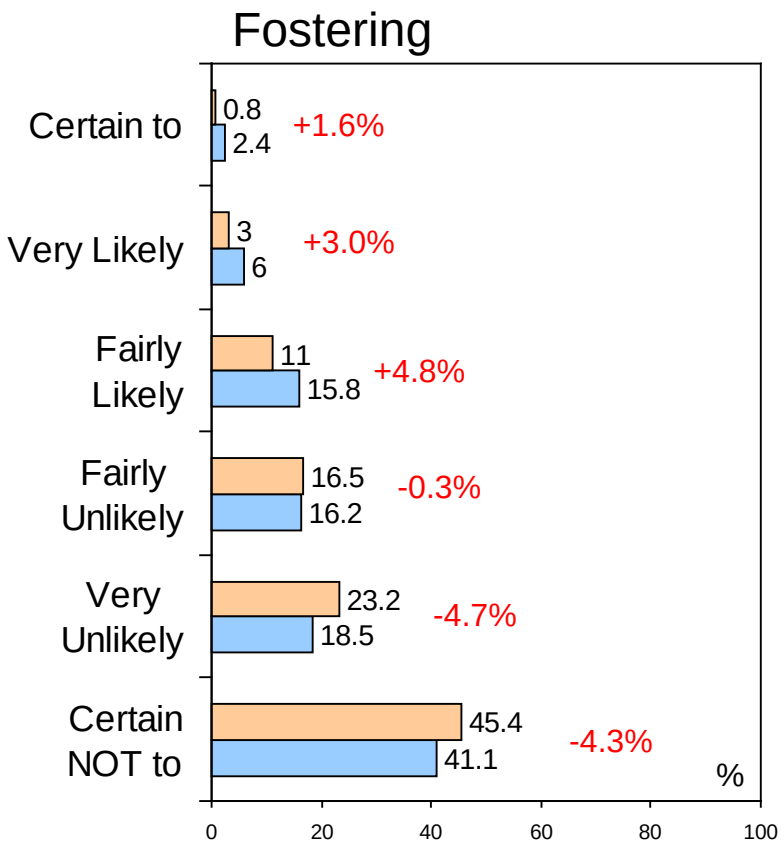


Base: All

Impact of Removing '*Perceived Barriers*'

Q: "In the event that the things you consider to be barriers to [adoption (within the adoption system)] / becoming a foster carer (within the fostering system}] did not exist, how likely would you be to [consider adopting a child / becoming a foster carer] some time in the future?





Base: All

Hotspots: Indexing Population Segments Against Total Sample

Kindred work.

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
'CARING': EXPERIENCE / LINK (1)

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Occupation: Social Care	**1.4**	65	121	236	100
Occupation: Education	**7.7**	78	103	118	121
Occupation: Healthcare	**5.3**	123	121	115	111
Occupation: Not for profit	**2.6**	163	104	169	135
Done voluntary work? Yes	**53.5**	136	112	135	119
No	**46.5**	59	86	60	78
Active in local community? YES	**27.7**	208	122	226	120
NO	**72.3**	59	91	52	92

Kindred work.

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
'CARING': EXPERIENCE / LINK (2)

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Any children in household adopted? YES	**0.7**	511	145	579	88
Know someone outside household who has adopted? YES	**35.3**	138	112	125	110
Adopted as a child? YES	**0.7**	314	86	329	86
Know someone who is current/former foster carer? YES	**31.4**	125	111	166	118
Full-time carer on informal basis? YES	**2.7**	488	76	494	88

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
GENDER; AGE

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Male	**49.0**	106	98	102	86
Female	**51.0**	94	102	98	114
18-24 yrs	**15.1**	162	148	143	122
25-34 yrs	**22.8**	174	160	170	129
35-44 yrs	**24.0**	88	98	90	117
45-54 yrs	**21.7**	54	67	53	88
55-65 yrs	**16.4**	18	20	40	32

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
MARITAL STATUS; RELATIONSHIPS

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Married	**45.8**	108	83	107	92
Divorced	**8.0**	51	73	74	98
Widowed	**1.1**	0	36	100	73
Never married	**39.1**	101	127	86	113
Civil P'ship	**2.9**	177	124	269	93
Separated	**1.9**	72	68	116	68
(Non-married) Enduring Relationship? Yes	**33.7**	120	118	124	109
No	**64.5**	88	90	85	96
Heterosexual	**92.4**	94	99	97	100
Gay/Lesbian	**2.5**	200	84	160	40
Bisexual	**2.6**	242	127	165	115
Transgender/ Transsexual	**0.1**	100	300	100	400

Kindred work.

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
WORKING STATUS

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Work Full-Time	**43.9**	128	114	125	104
Part-Time	**15.2**	76	100	109	122
FT Homemaker	**4.8**	44	81	106	127
FT Student	**7.4**	135	162	123	124
Self employed	**6.5**	83	97	25	132
Not working Carer resp.	**3.2**	75	75	69	81
Not working Retired	**6.9**	14	17	23	7
Not Working Disability/Illness	**6.2**	63	79	89	60
Unemployed	**5.8**	128	69	59	84

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
RELIGION

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Buddhism	**0.8**	138	63	63	100
Christianity	**50.6**	101	99	115	101
Hinduism	**1.1**	327	118	345	127
Islam	**2.6**	431	108	412	108
Judaism	**0.8**	63	100	0	163
Sikhism	**0.3**	233	200	33	133
Non-religious	**37.4**	69	103	58	97
Actively practising a religion? YES	**30.9**	179	107	186	102
NO	**66.0**	57	97	56	100

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
HOUSING TENURE; HOUSEHOLD INCOME

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Owner occupied	**58.7**	73	91	80	96
Private rental	**22.0**	157	128	125	120
Rental (HA or Local Authority)	**17.1**	118	93	137	89
Gross H/Hold Income: <£18.5K	**24.9**	145	88	91	93
£18.5K - £21K	**7.1**	103	86	128	101
£21K - £30K	**19.7**	118	102	121	99
£30K - £40K	**13.9**	95	101	129	114
> £40K	**24.2**	95	116	89	103

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP

	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
Higher managerial	**6.9**	201	113	177	99
Intermediate managerial	**24.3**	99	107	113	109
Supervisory/clerical jnr. Management	**29.7**	81	102	79	106
Skilled manual	**15.6**	103	112	119	107
Semi-skilled / unskilled manual	**12.6**	108	98	99	102
Senior citizen / welfare dependent	**10.9**	77	59	53	53

Propensity by Subgroup: Indexed Against Total Sample
REGION

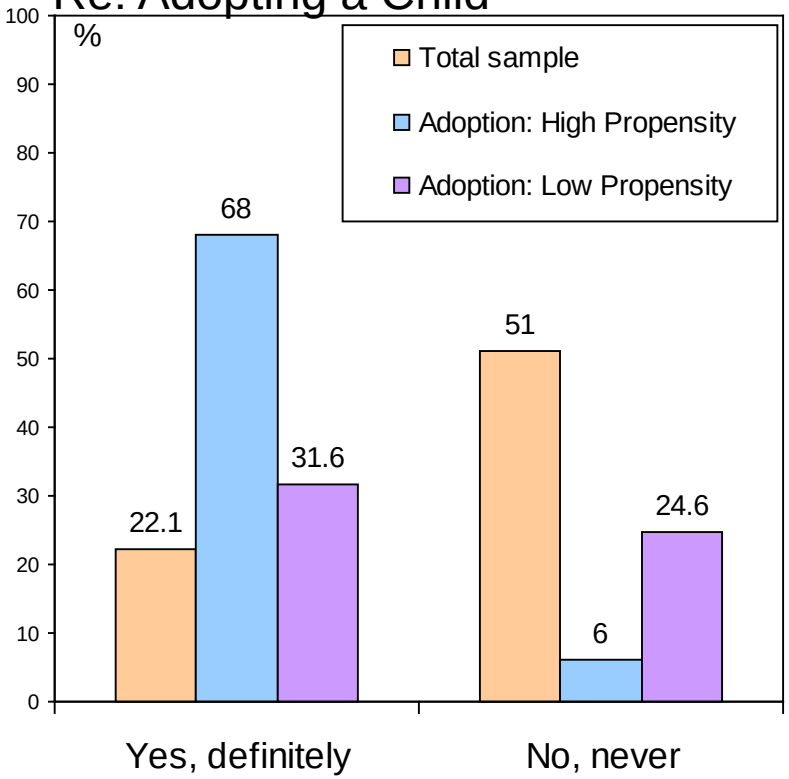
	TOTAL SAMPLE %	Segment = Adoption: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment= Adoption: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: High Propensity INDEXED TO 100	Segment = Fostering: Low Propensity INDEXED TO 100
East Anglia	**11.4**	69	91	64	90
East Midlands	**8.5**	100	92	78	96
London	**15.1**	171	121	155	113
North	**10.1**	74	91	83	100
North East	**5.0**	100	84	110	96
North West	**13.5**	120	108	119	101
South East	**15.7**	70	91	78	94
South West	**10.1**	67	110	88	105
West Midlands	**10.5**	109	97	111	100

Some Context-Setting Statistics

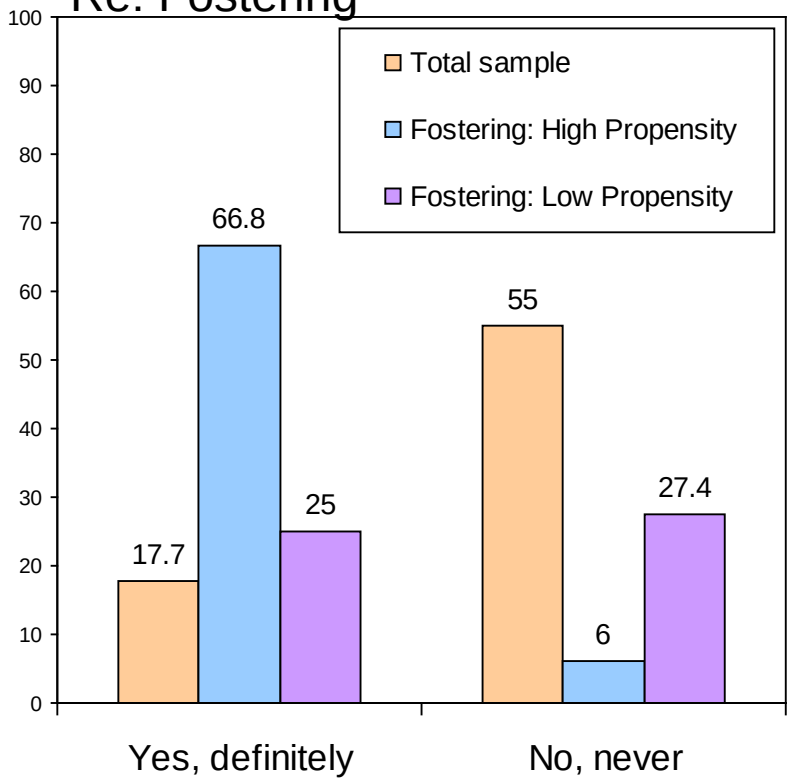
Q: "Has the subject of adopting / fostering a child ever been something that you have thought about, regardless of whether or not it is of relevance or interest to you?"

This question estimates the proportion of the population for whom the individual subjects of adopting and fostering have ever 'crossed their minds'. It provides a basic estimate of 'back-of-mind' salience

Re: Adopting a Child



Re: Fostering

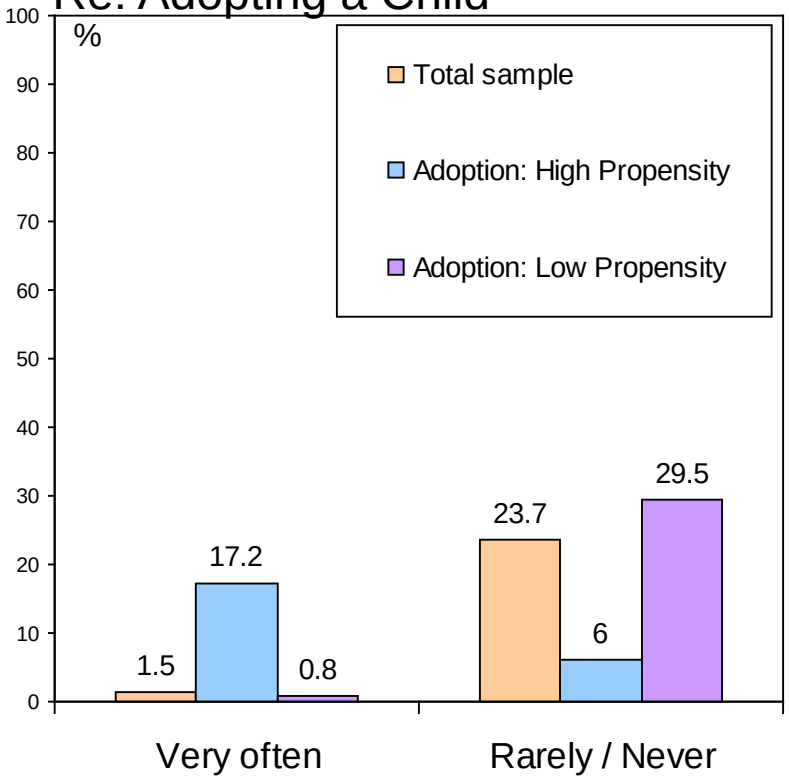


Base: All

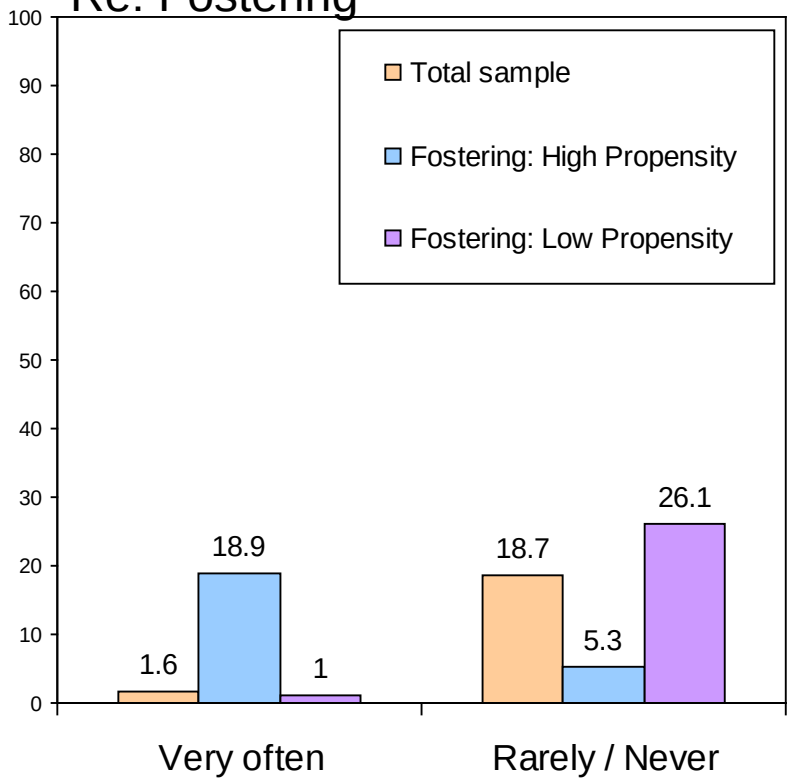
Q: "Nowadays, how often would you say you think about the subject of adopting a child / foster care (for whatever reason)?"

The 2 core subjects have low 'front-of-mind' salience, although encouragingly, there is significantly stronger salience among the High Propensity segment.

Re: Adopting a Child



Re: Fostering

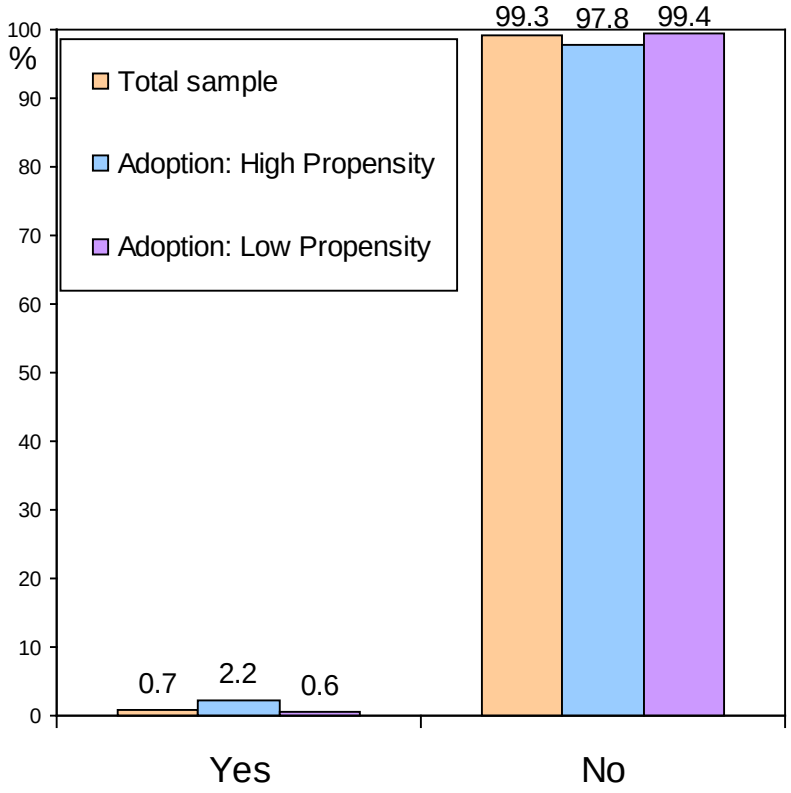


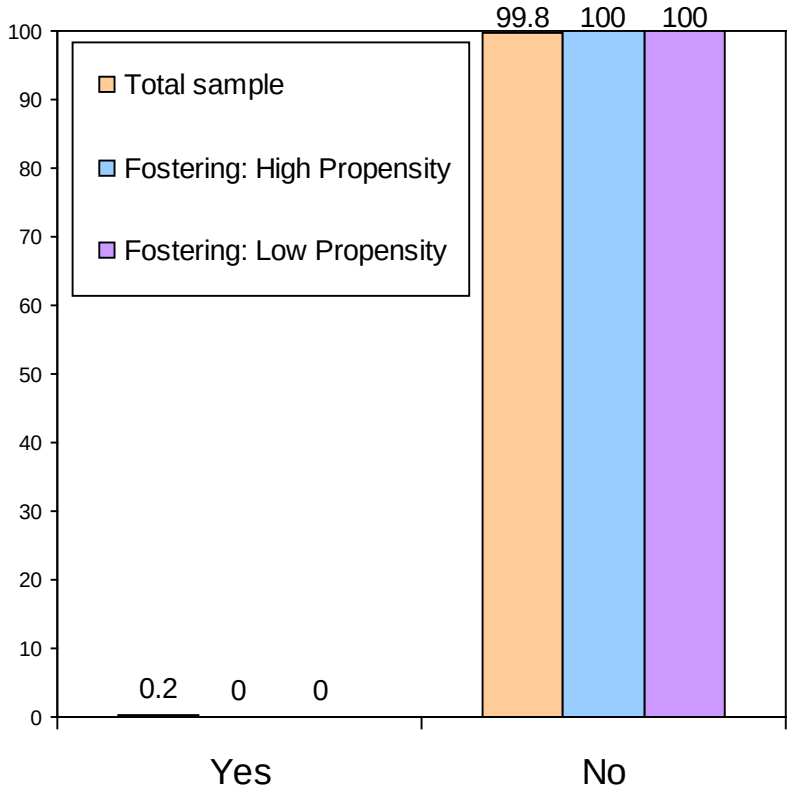
Base: All

Q: "Were you adopted as a child?"

Q: "Are you currently a foster carer?"

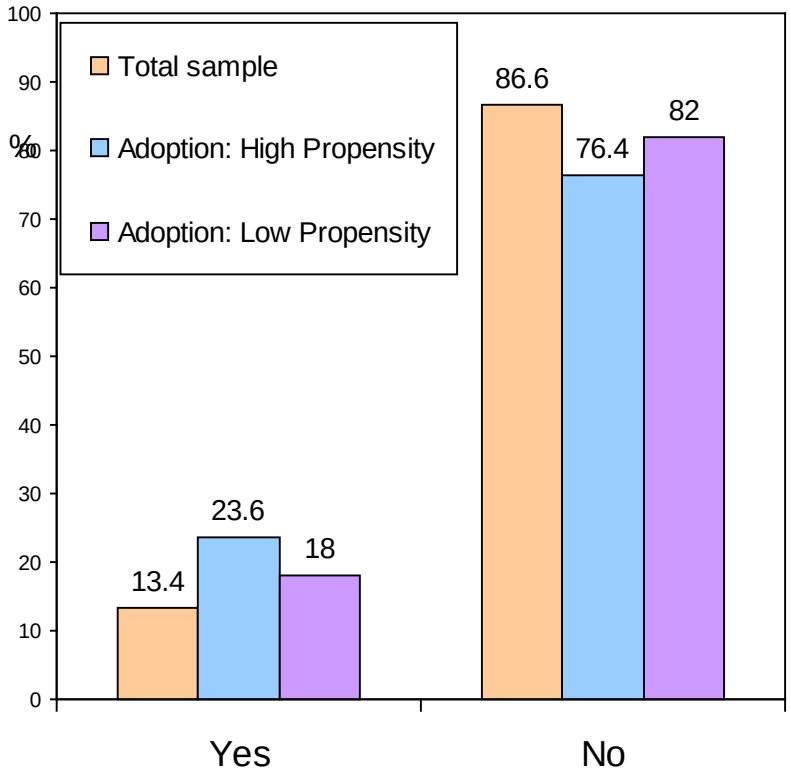
Equates to c. 230,000 people saying they were adopted and c.65,000 saying they are approved foster carer



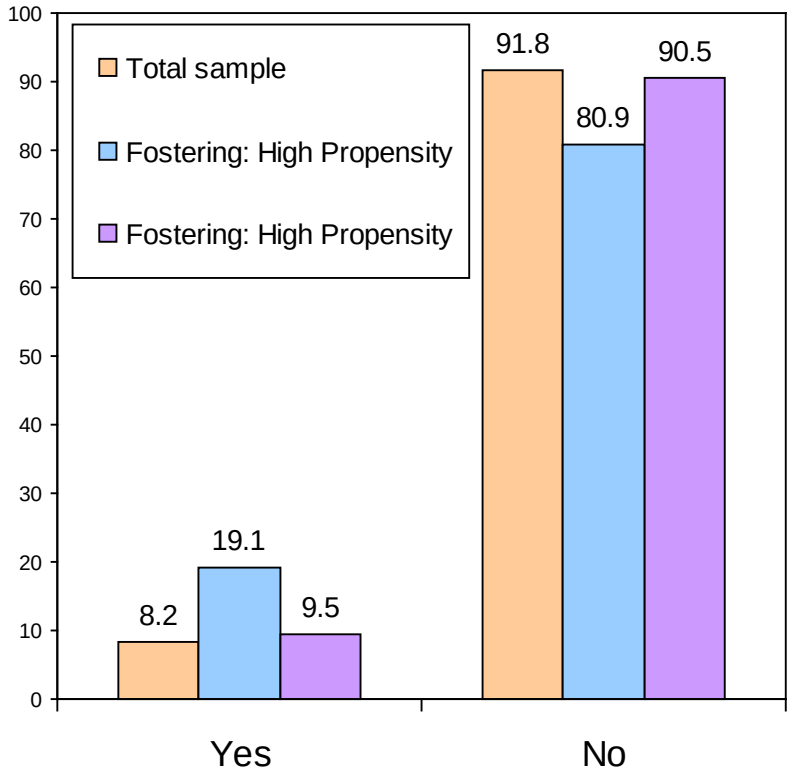


Base: All

Q: "Do you have any brother, sisters, relatives or friends that were adopted as kids?"



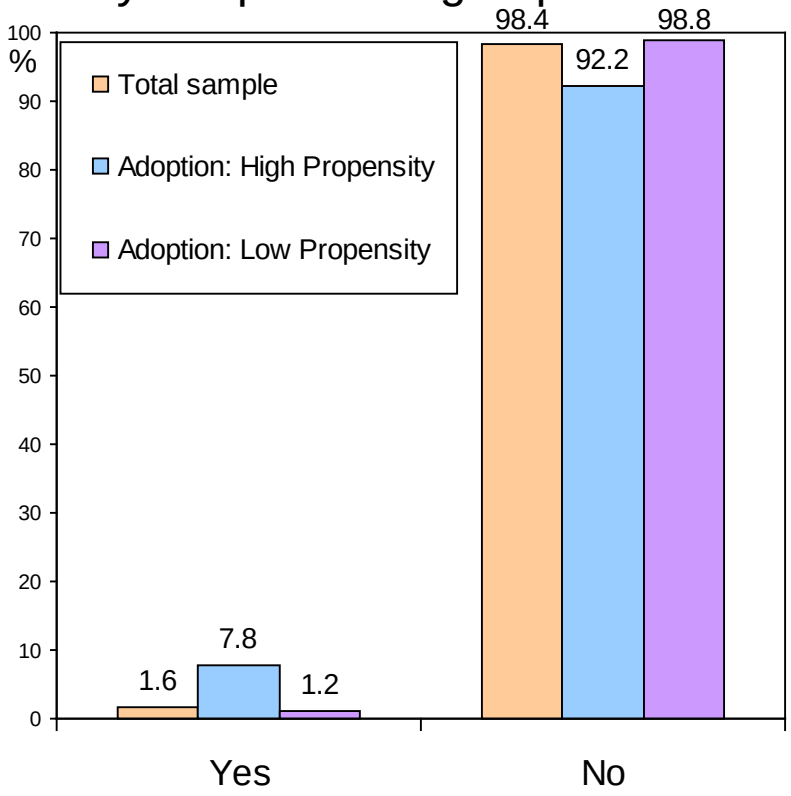
Q: "Have any brothers, sisters relatives or friends of yours ever spent any time in foster care?"



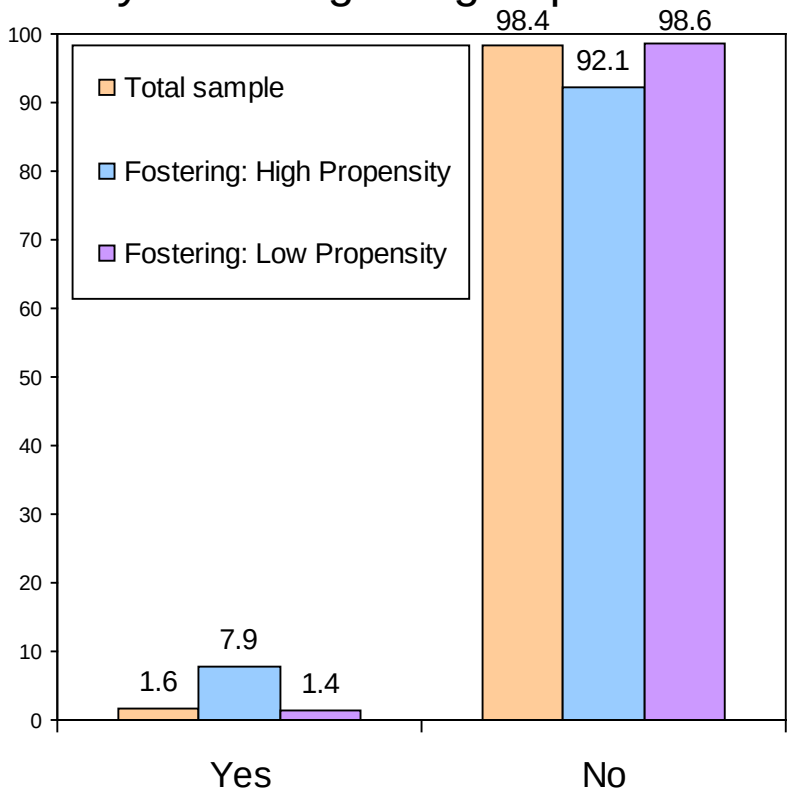
Base: All

Q: "Are you currently or formerly the full-time carer, on an informal basis, for a child that is not one of your own children (e.g. a child of a relative or friend)?"

By Adoption Subgroups



By Fostering Subgroups



Base: All

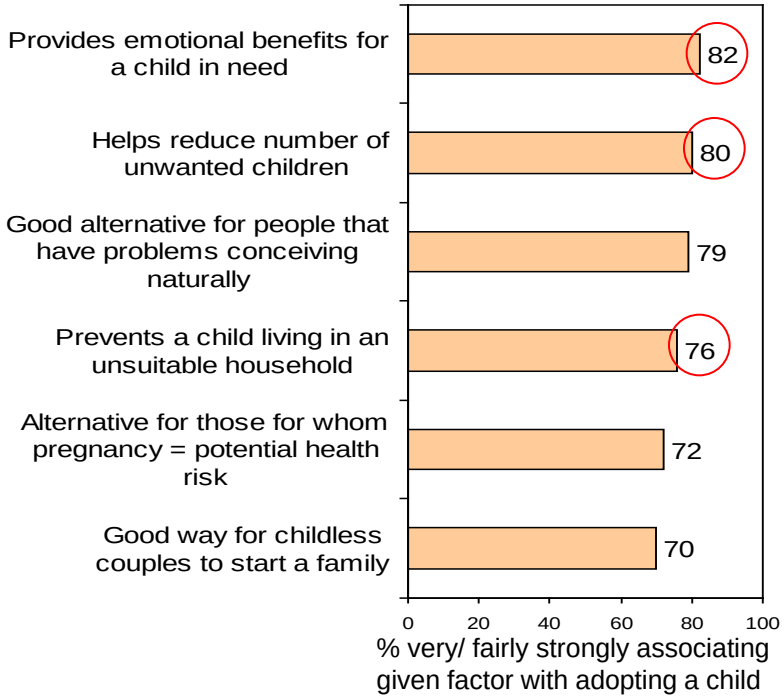
Attitudes and Perceptions

- Perceived End-Benefits
- Concerns
- What People ‘Think that you Think’

ADOPTING: Hierarchy of Perceived End-Benefits: Total Sample

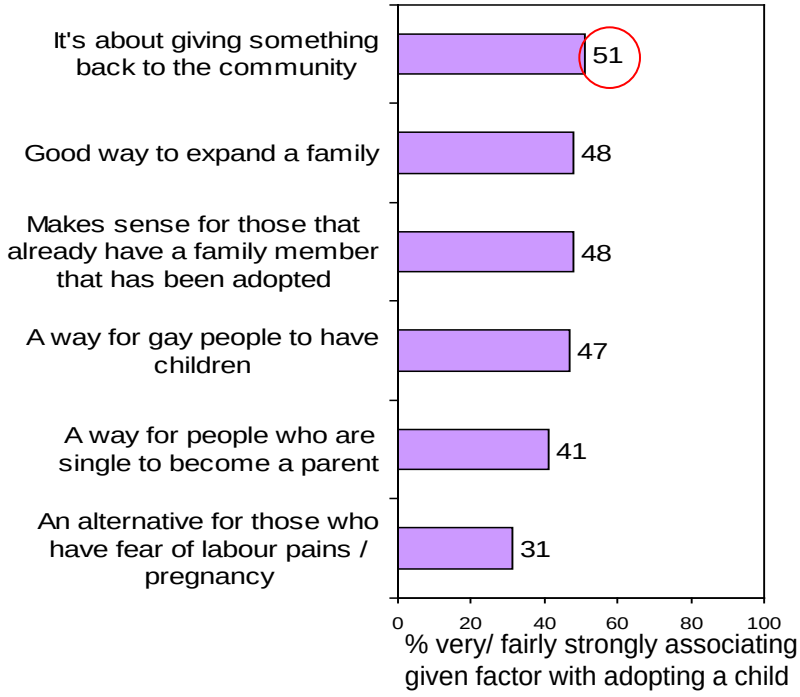
Q: "Thinking about how you view adoption of children in general, please indicate how strongly you associate each of the following factors with the process of adoption"

Top 6 factors most widely associated with adopting a child



- 3 of the top 4 factors underpinned by altruistic motivation
- Remainder inwardly directed

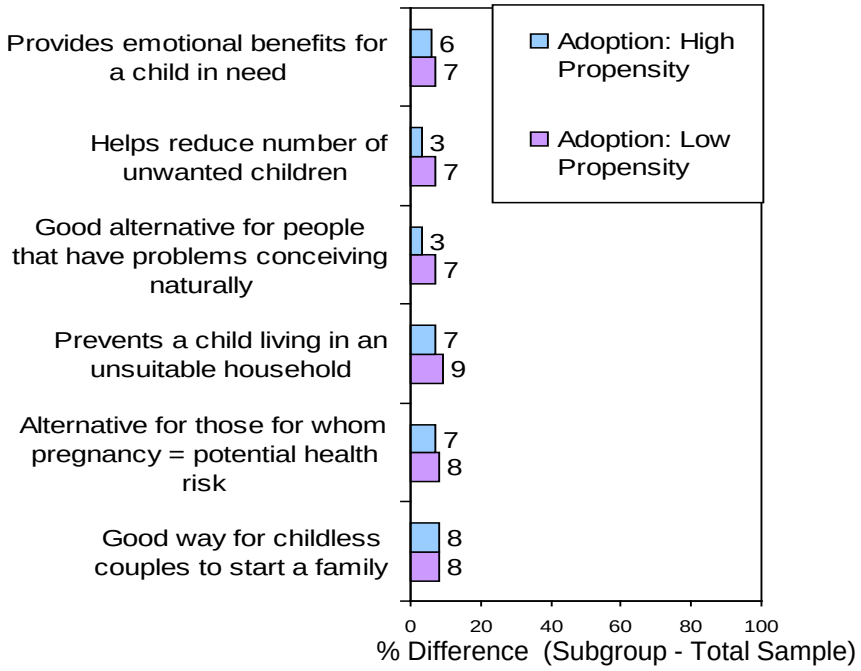
Next 6 factors

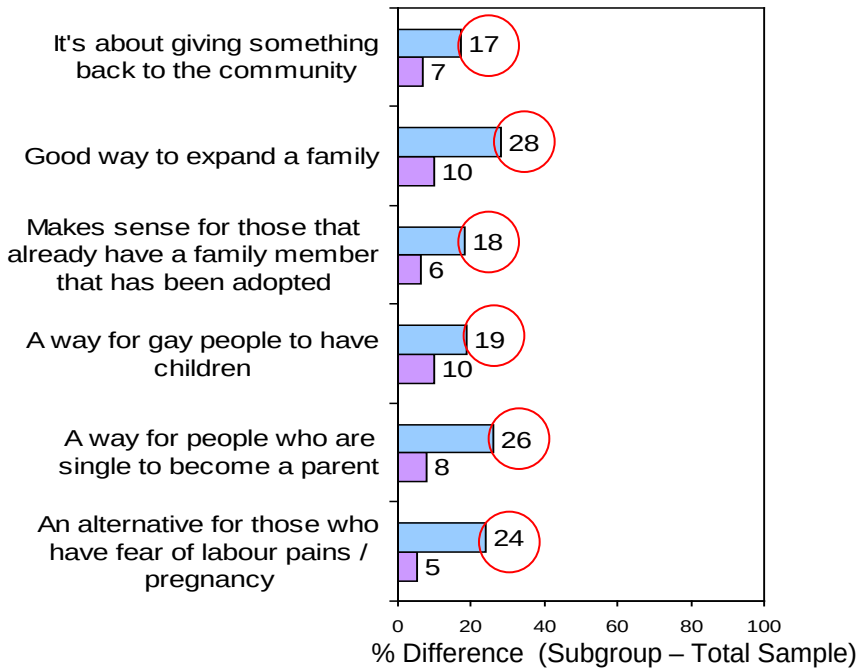


- Just 1 of these factors has altruistic focus.
- Remainder more focused on personal rationale / end-benefit

Base: All

ADOPTING: Hierarchy of Perceived End-Benefits: Subgroups vs Total Sample





While both High and Low Propensity subgroups exhibit relatively small 'premium' relative to total sample for the top 6 factors… .

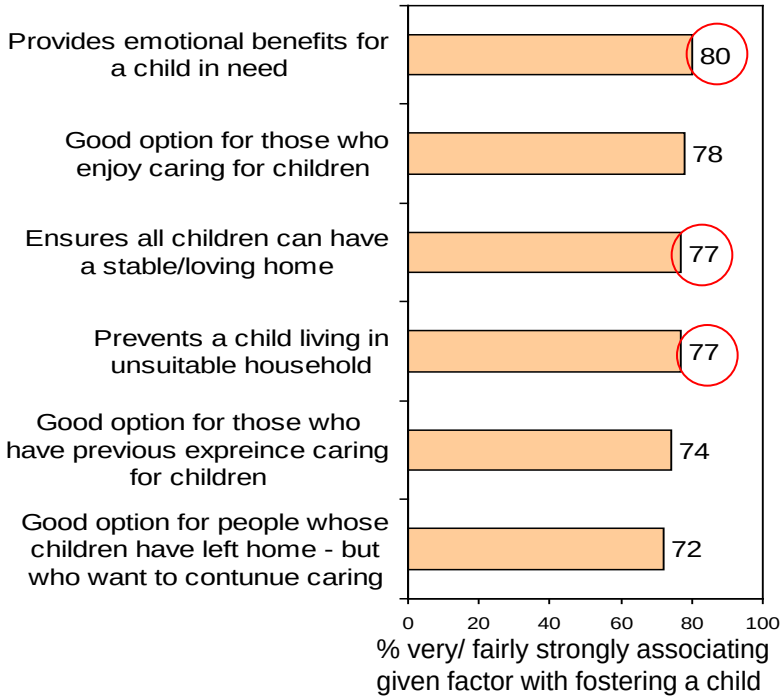
… there is a far greater degree of disparity for the factors lower down the hierarchy (which tend to focus more on the personal rationale / end-benefits)

Base: All

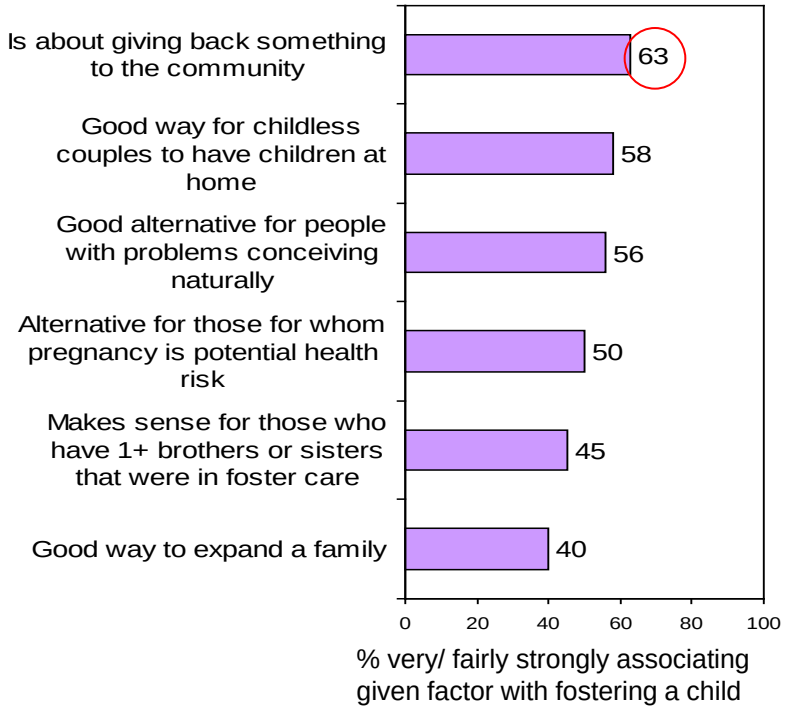
FOSTERING: Hierarchy of Perceived End-Benefits: Total Sample

Q: "Thinking about foster care in general, please indicate how strongly you associate each of the following factors with fostering""

Top 6 factors most widely associated with fostering a child



Next 6 factors

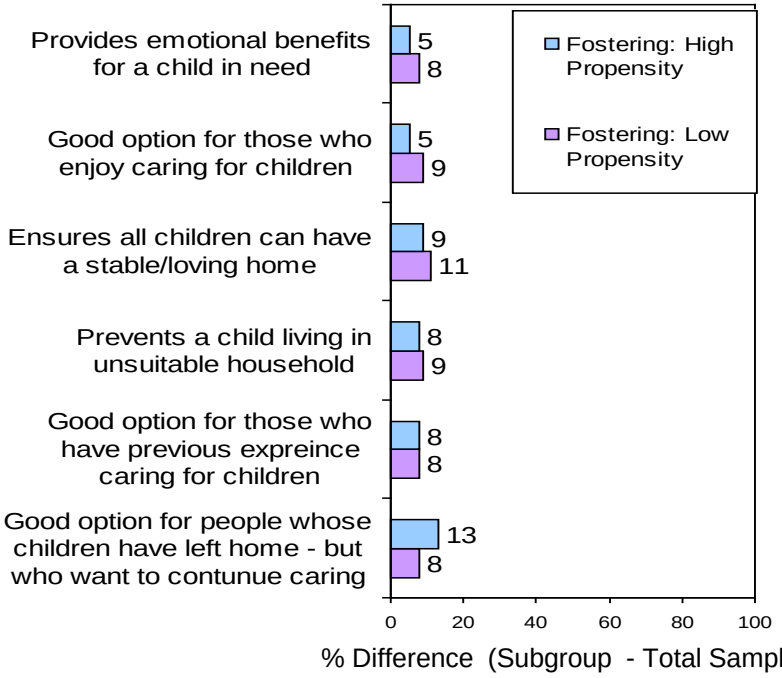


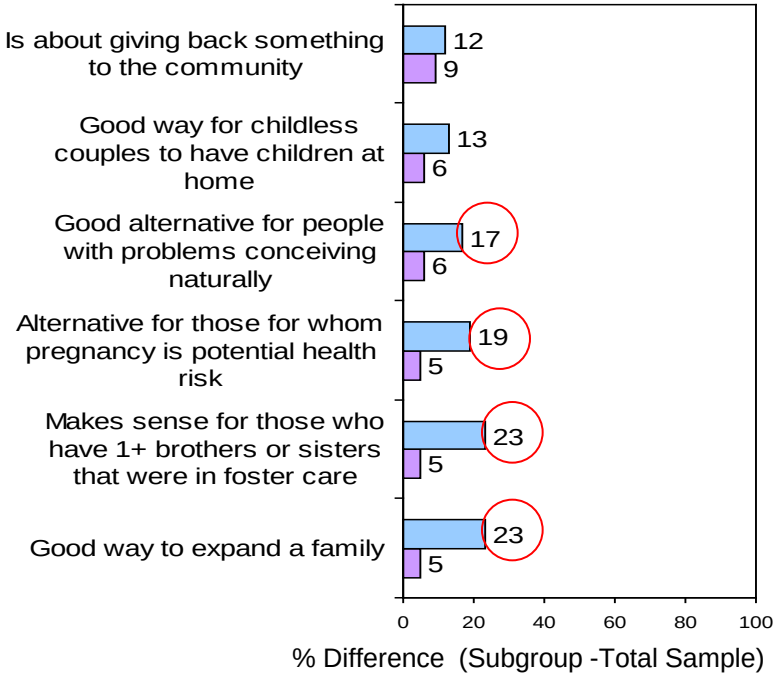
As with Adoption, 3 of the top 4 have altruistic leaning

Factors lower down the hierarchy focused on personal rationale / end-benefit

Base: All

FOSTERING: Hierarchy of Perceived End-Benefits: Subgroups vs Total Sample





Again, High and Low Propensity segments show relatively small 'premium' relative to total sample ….

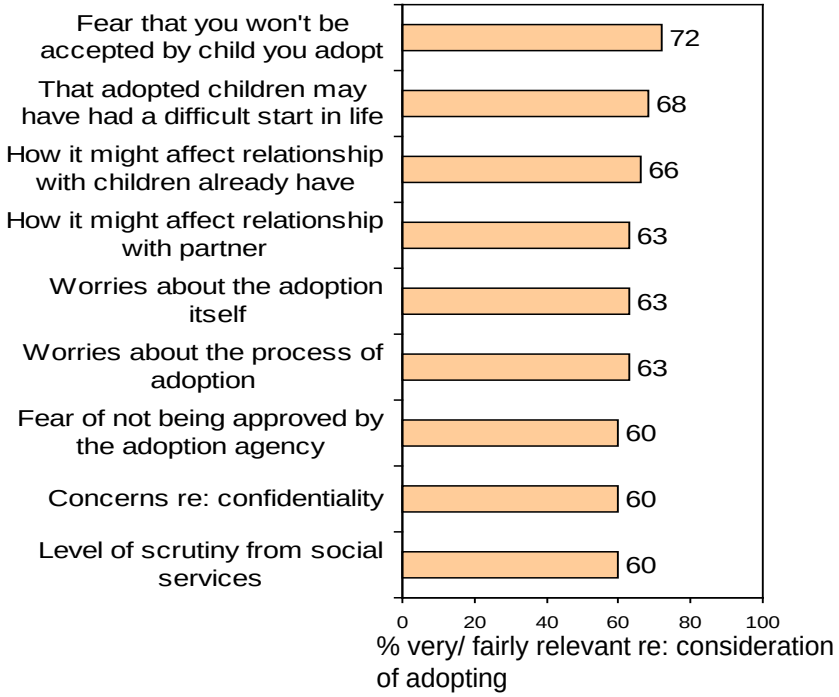
… and again, the greatest degree of disparity applies to factors which are lower down the hierarchy and also focus more on personal rationale / end-benefit

Base: All

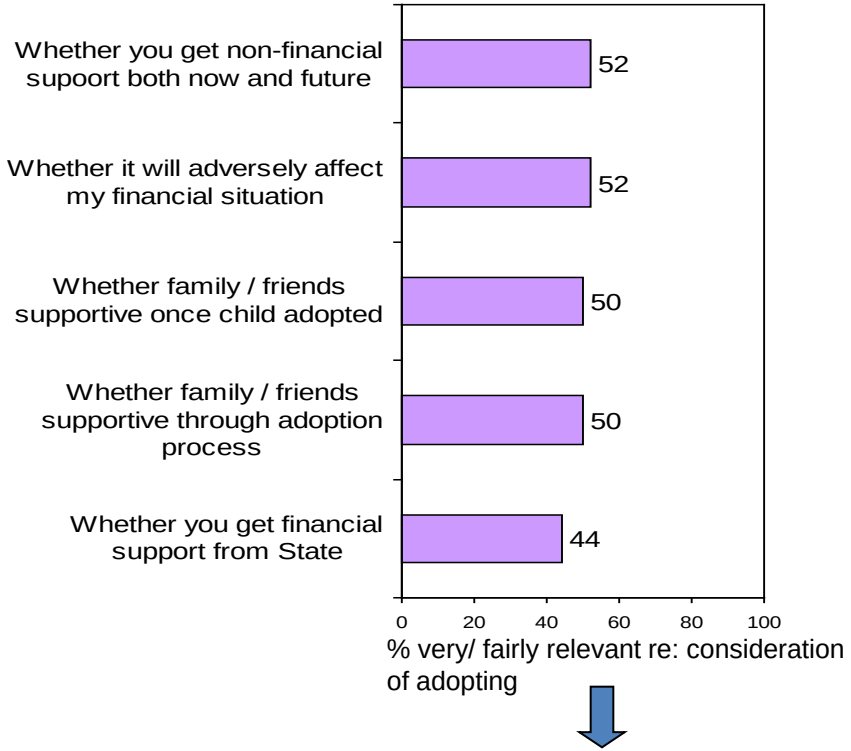
ADOPTING: Hierarchy of Concerns: Total Sample

Q: "How relevant would you consider each of these factors to be in potentially considering adopting a child?"

Top 9 factors: most widely considered to be relevant



Next 5 factors

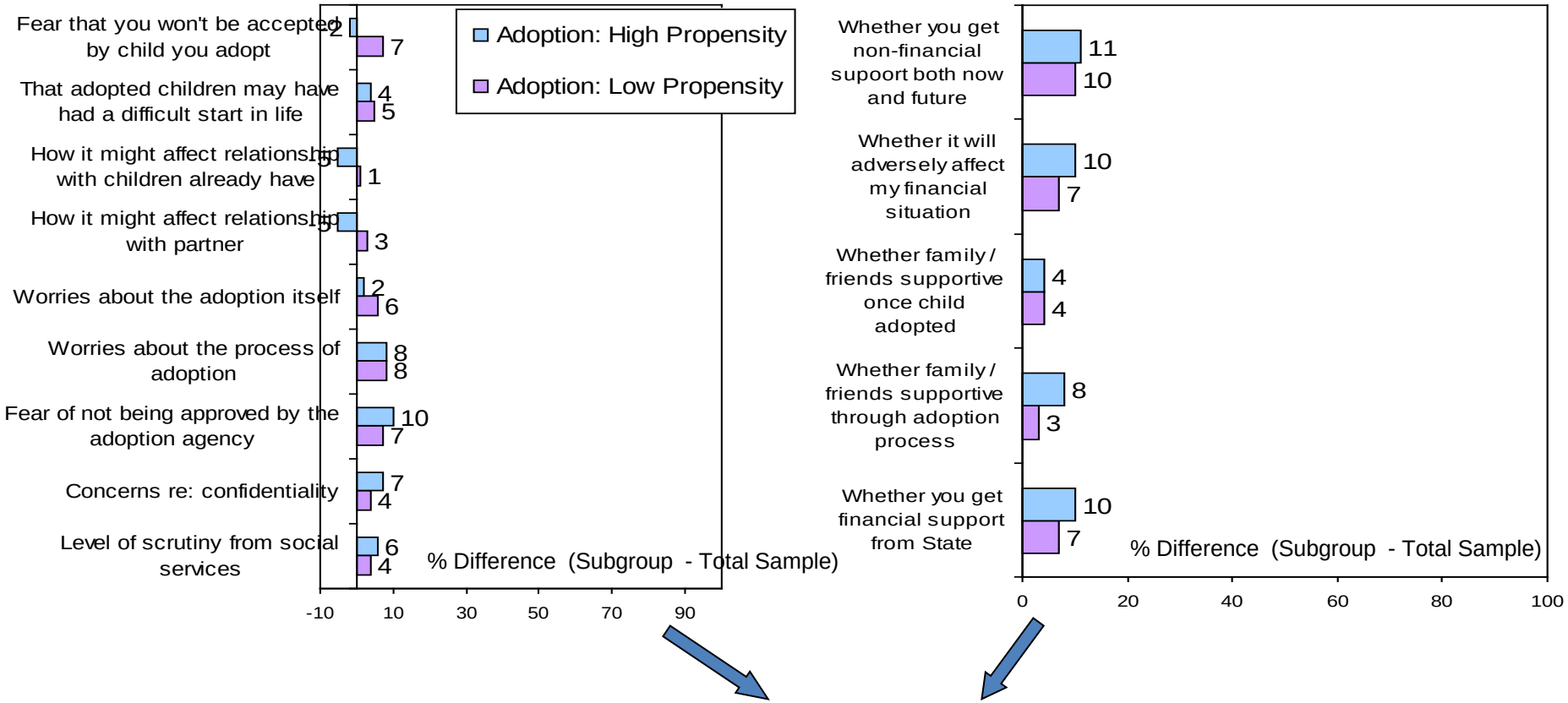


The most widespread concerns centre on potential detrimental impact on existing relationships, but also highlight reticence re: the 'process'; and 'fear of failure'

Main focus here is on financial implications and possible personal doubts about 'staying the course'

Base: All

ADOPTING: Hierarchy of Concerns: Subgroups vs Total Sample



Fairly modest variations across the core subgroups

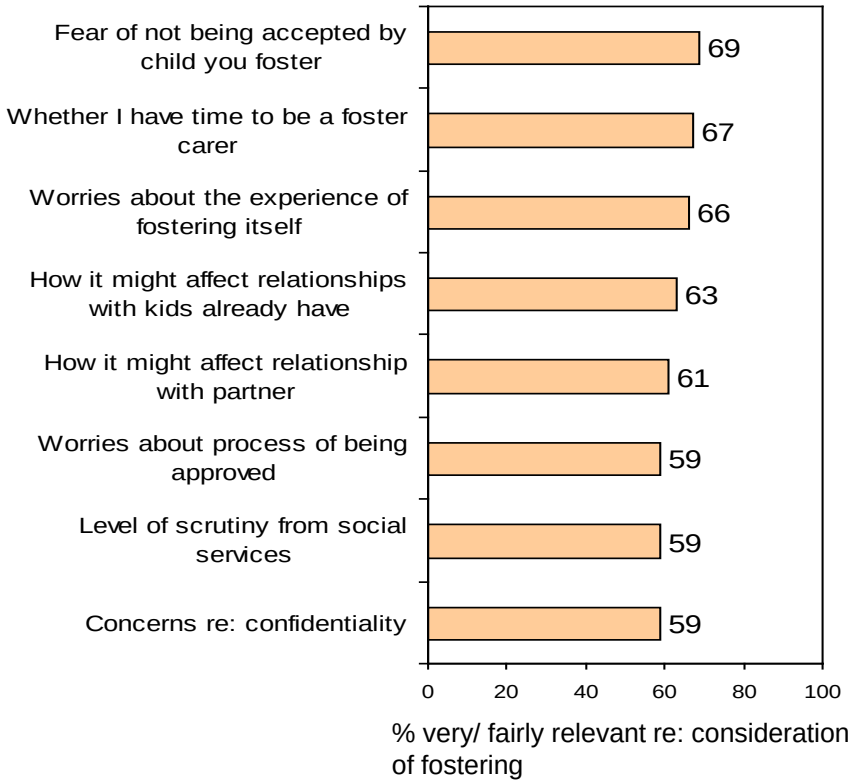
Nevertheless, both the High and Low Propensity segments proportionately more likely than people as a whole to attribute relevance to virtually all of these issues

Base: All

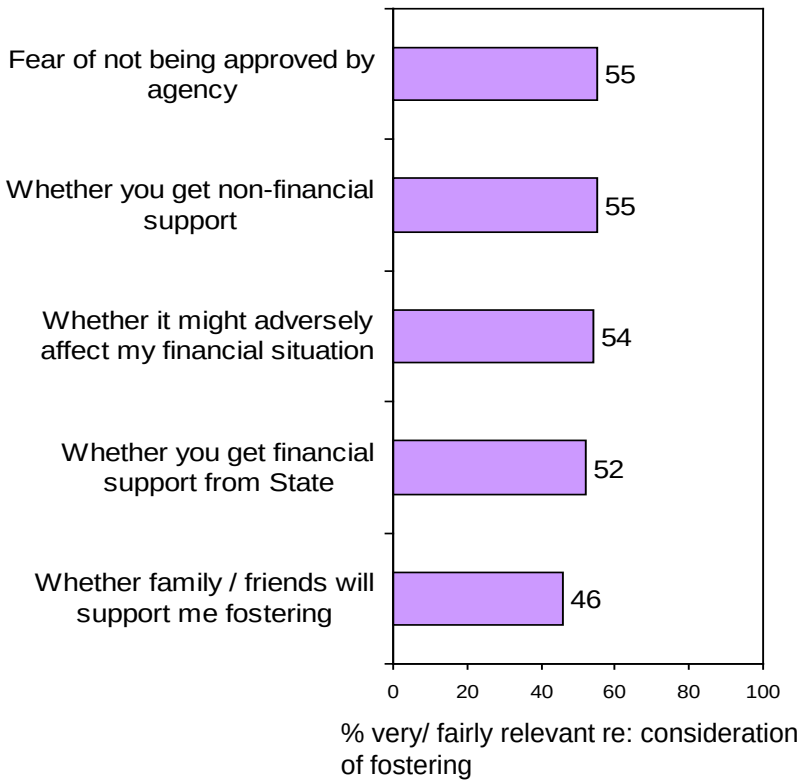
FOSTERING: Hierarchy of Concerns: Total Sample

Q: "How relevant would you consider each of these factors to be in potentially considering becoming a foster carer?"

Top 8 factors: most widely considered to be relevant



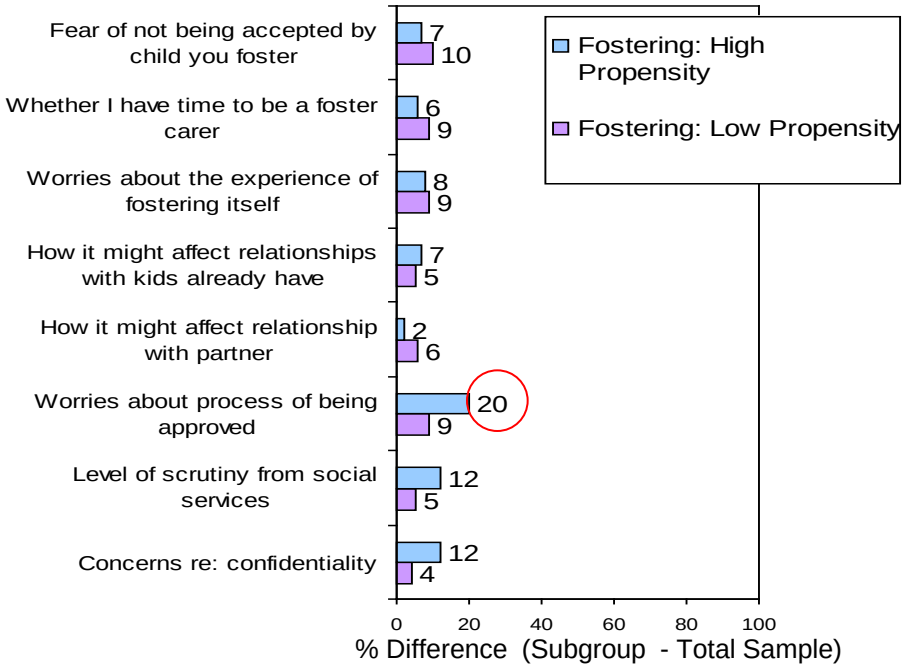
Next 5 factors

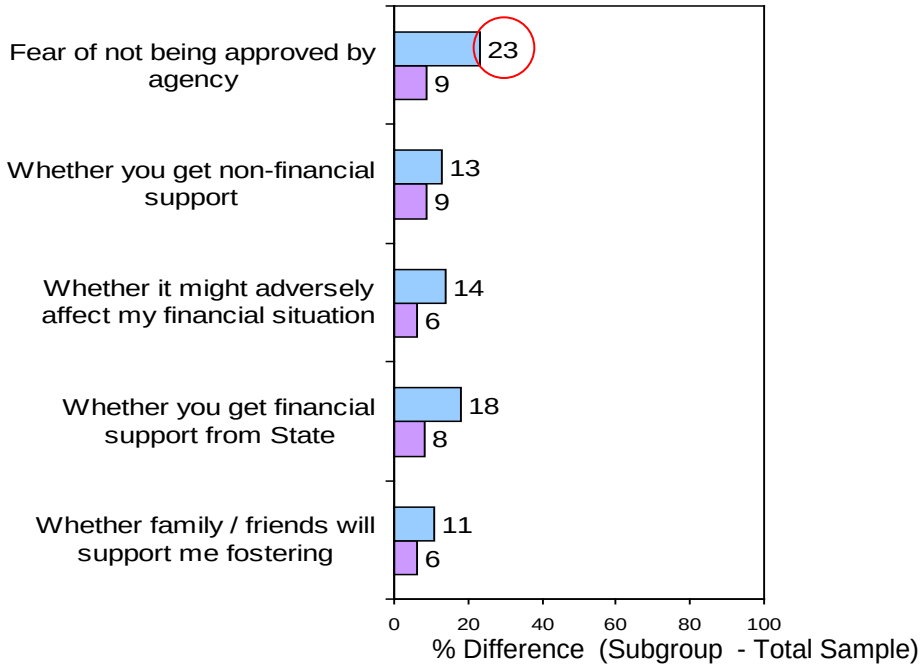


Similar profile to Adopting

Base: All

FOSTERING: Hierarchy of Concerns: Subgroups vs Total Sample





Variance to total sample within High Propensity segment more marked here than for corresponding distribution for Adopting

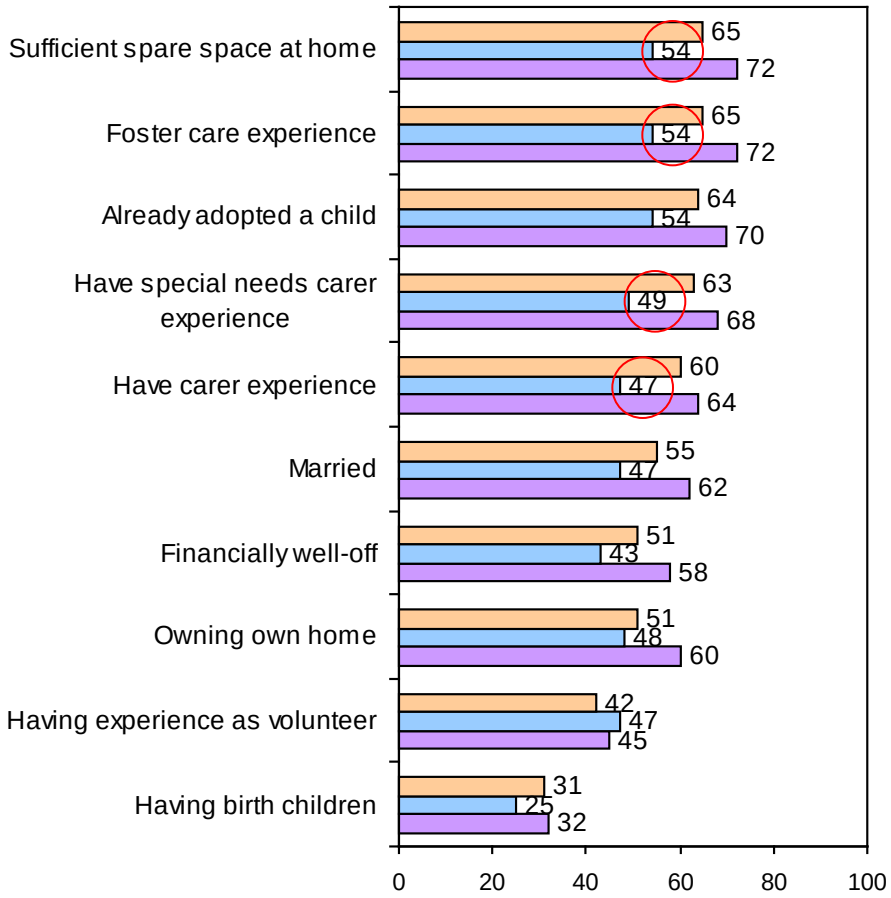
Fears relating to the ‘process’ and ‘acceptance’ particularly prominent

Base: All

ADOPTING: Perception of Authorities' Mindset (1)

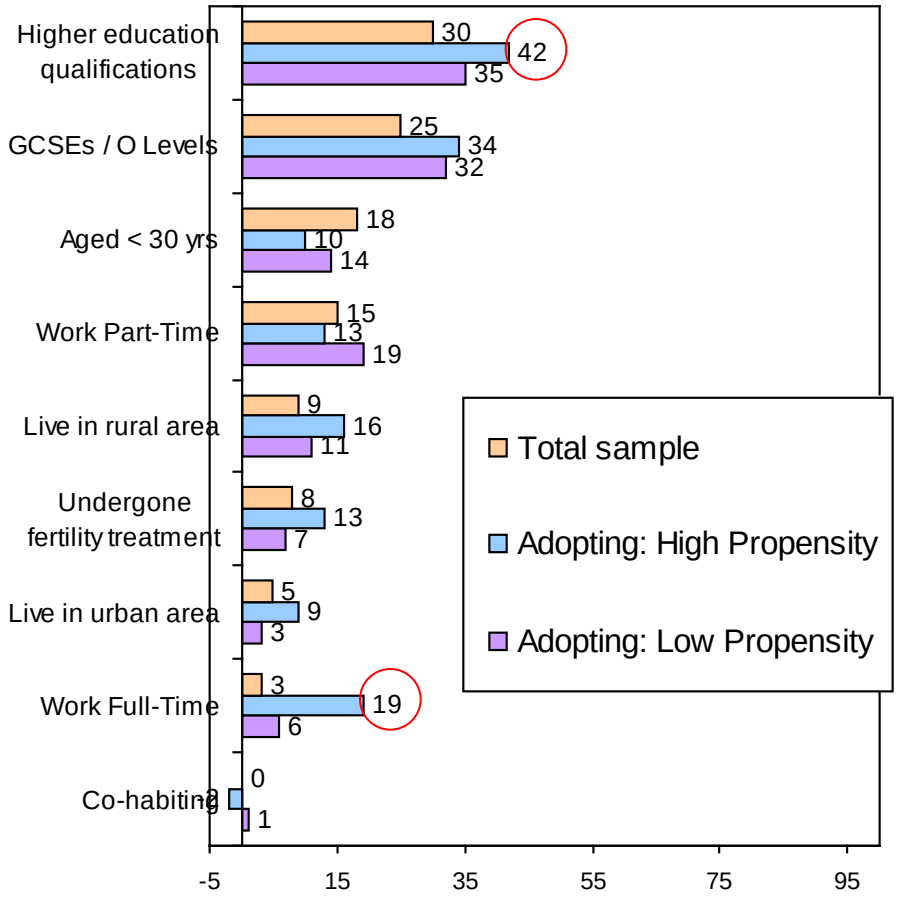
Q: "When local authorities and adoption agencies are considering the suitability of a prospective adoptive parent, which of the following factors do you believe are looked upon favourably, which ones are looked upon unfavourably, and which are not particularly relevant in terms of influencing the process?

Top 10 (By Variance relative to total sample)



Difference between % who think Local Authorities/ Agencies view the factor favourably and % who believe Local Authorities/Agencies view it unfavourably

Positions 11 - 19

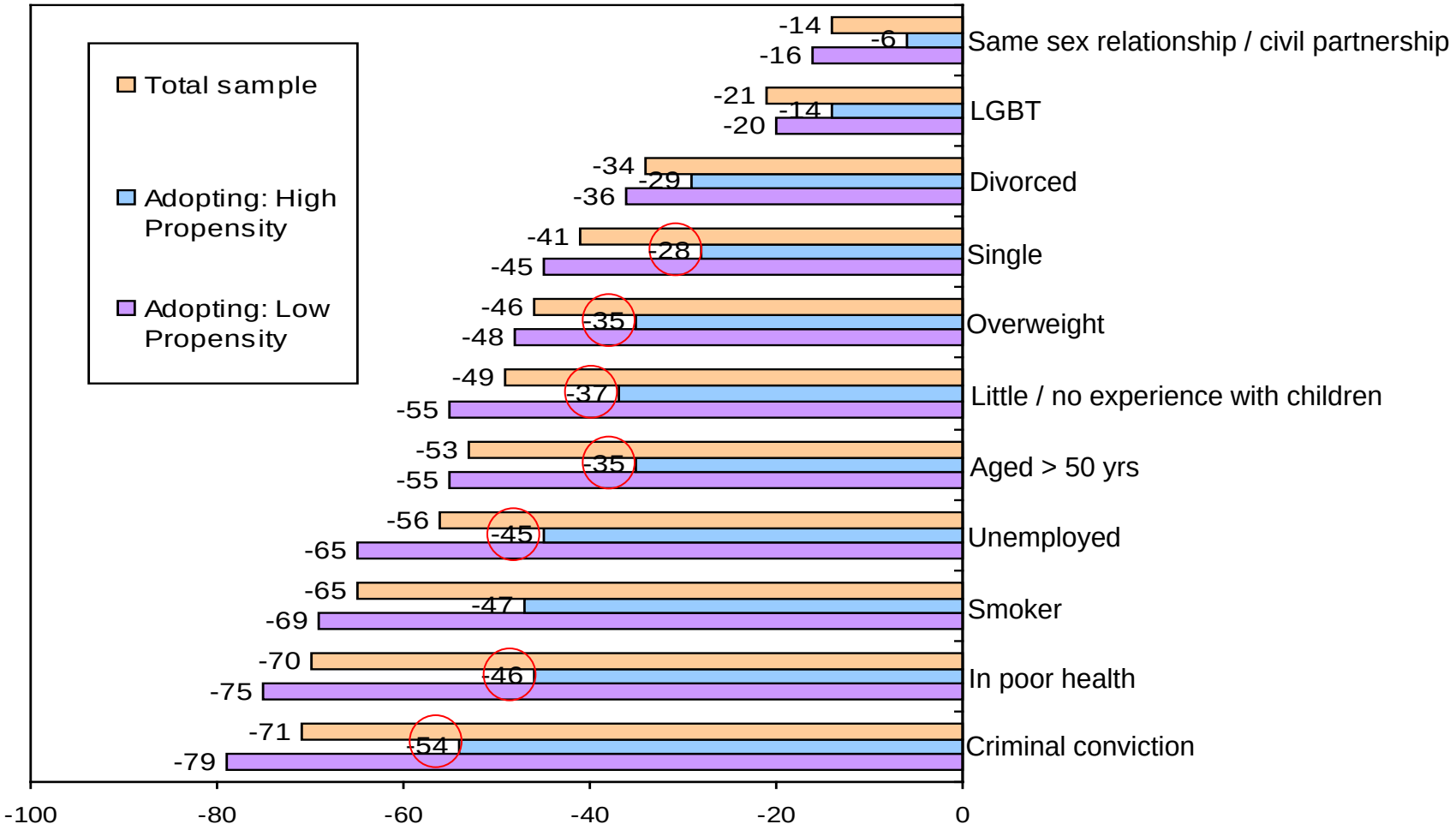


Difference between % who think Local Authorities/ Agencies view the factor favourably and % who believe Local Authorities/Agencies view it unfavourably

Base: All

ADOPTING: Perception of Authorities' Mindset (2)

Positions 20 - 30



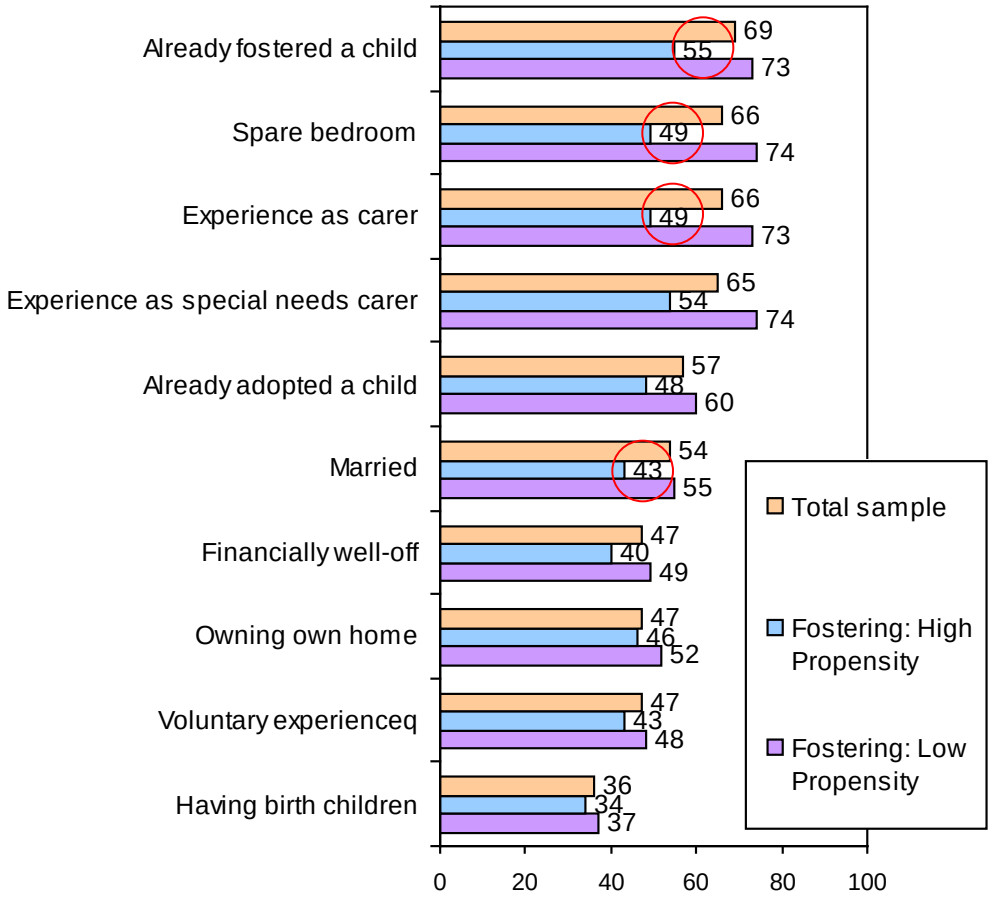
Difference between % who think Local Authorities/ Agencies view the factor favourably and % who believe Local Authorities/Agencies view it unfavourably

Base: All

FOSTERING: Perception of Authorities' Mindset (1)

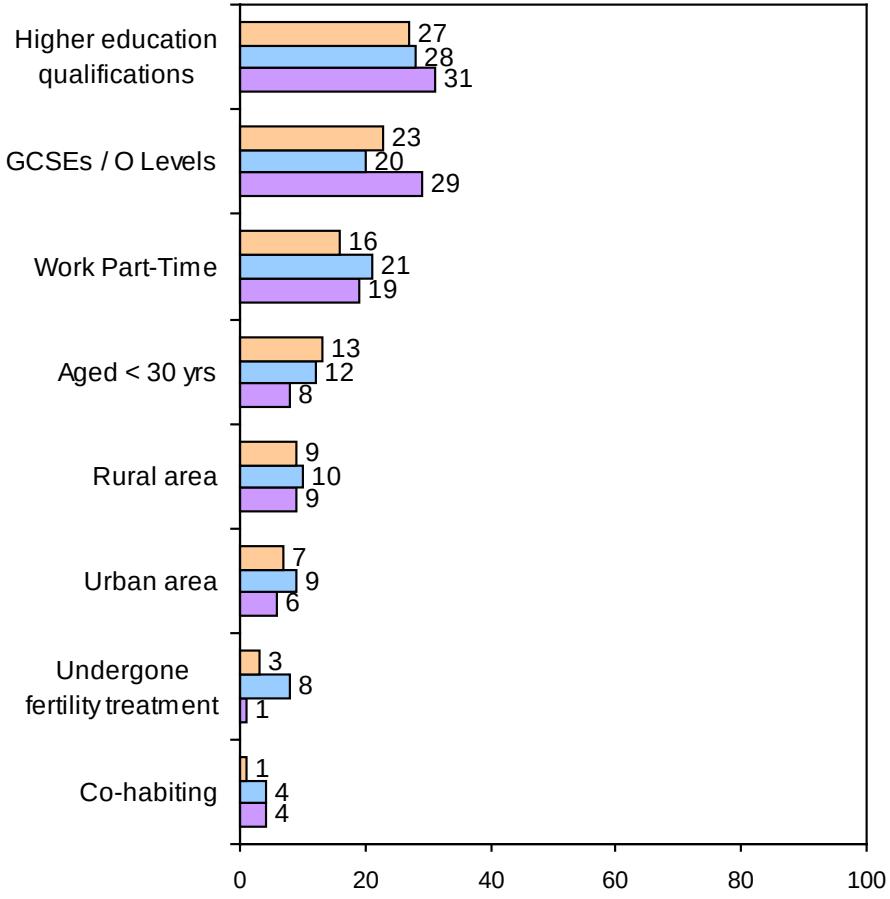
Q: "When local authorities and adoption agencies are considering the suitability of a prospective foster carer, which of the following factors do you believe are looked upon favourably, which ones are looked upon unfavourably, and which are not particularly relevant in terms of influencing the process?

Top 10 (By Variance relative to total sample)



Difference between % who think Local Authorities/ Agencies view the factor favourably and % who believe Local Authorities/Agencies view it unfavourably

Positions 11 - 18

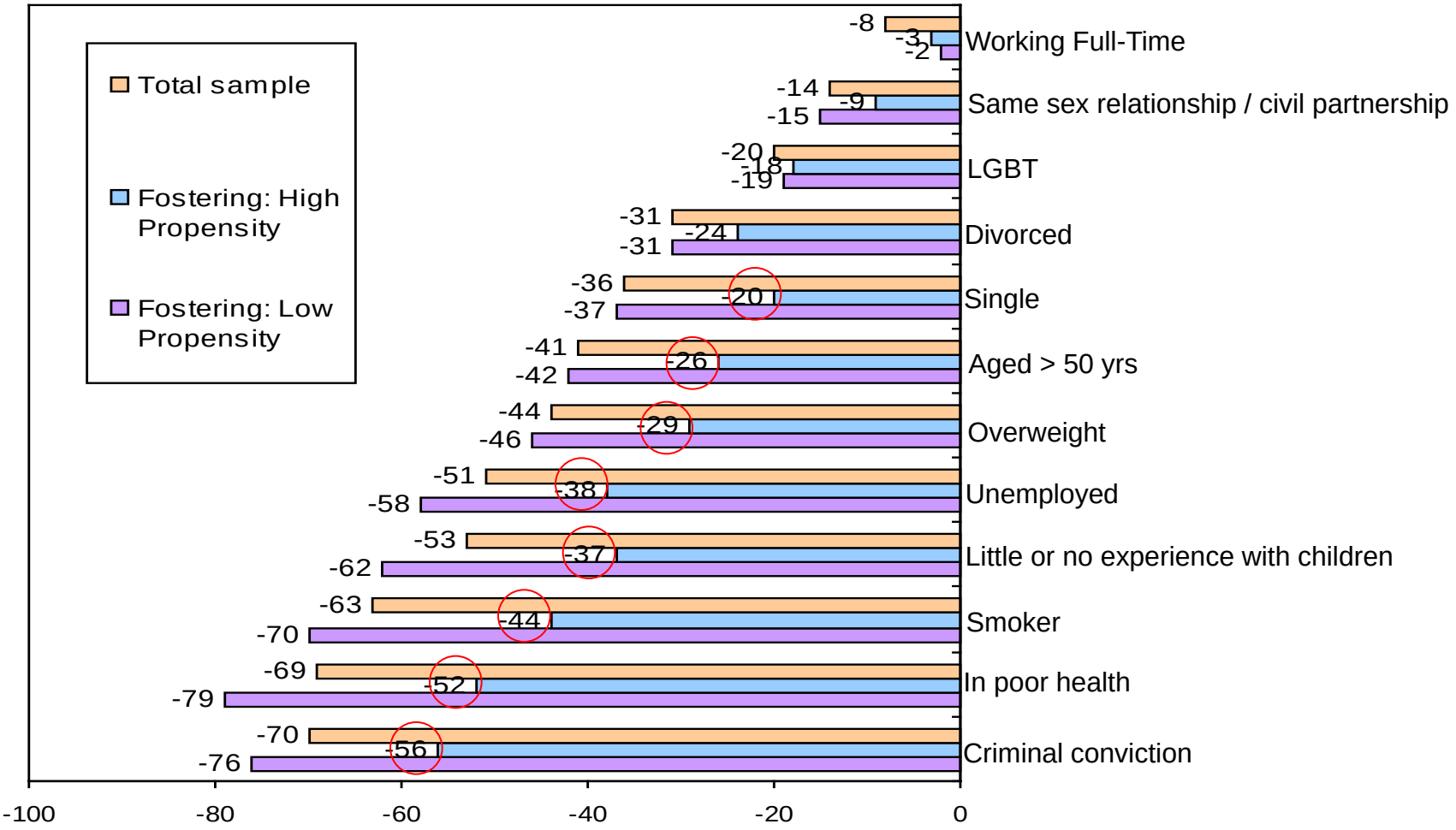


Difference between % who think Local Authorities/ Agencies view the factor favourably and % who believe Local Authorities/Agencies view it unfavourably

Base: All

FOSTERING: Perception of Authorities' Mindset (2)

Positions 19 - 30



Difference between % who think Local Authorities/ Agencies view the factor favourably and % who believe Local Authorities/Agencies view it unfavourably

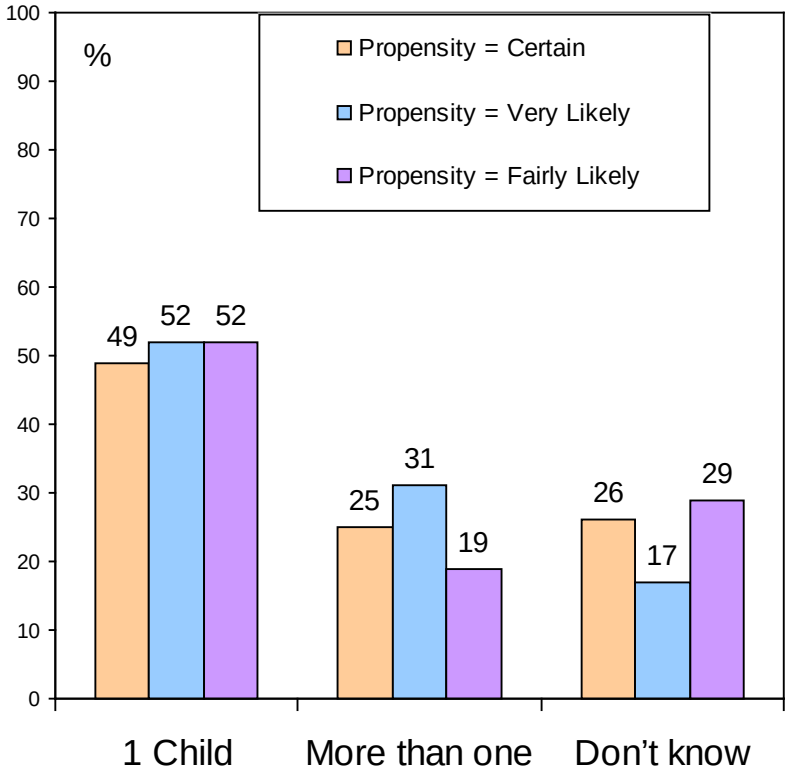
Base: All

Family ‘Configuration’ Preferences

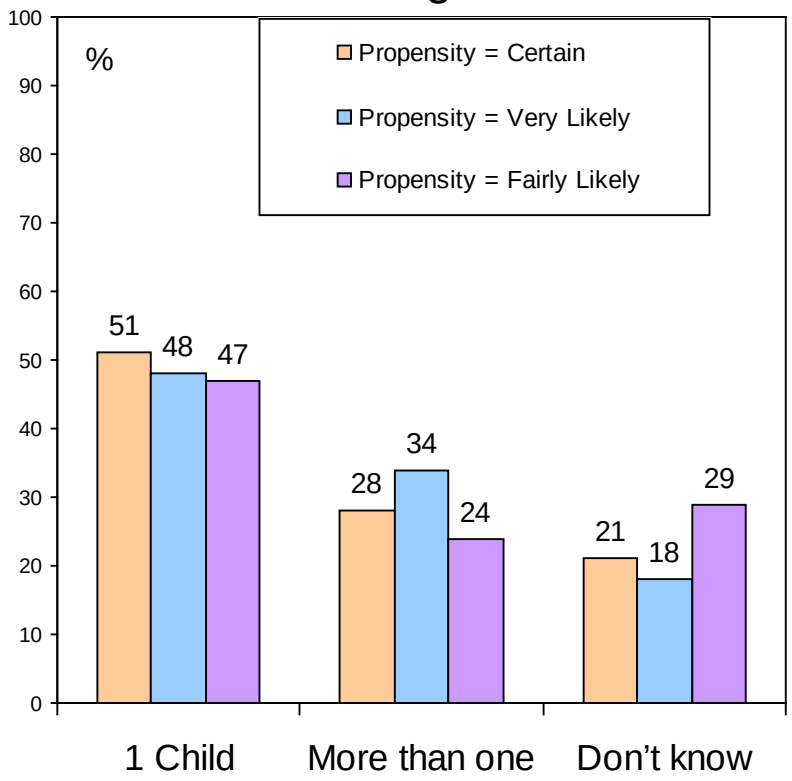
Preference: Single Child vs 2+ Children

Q: "On balance, would you be more likely to consider adopting / fostering one child at a time or more than one?

Adopting



Fostering

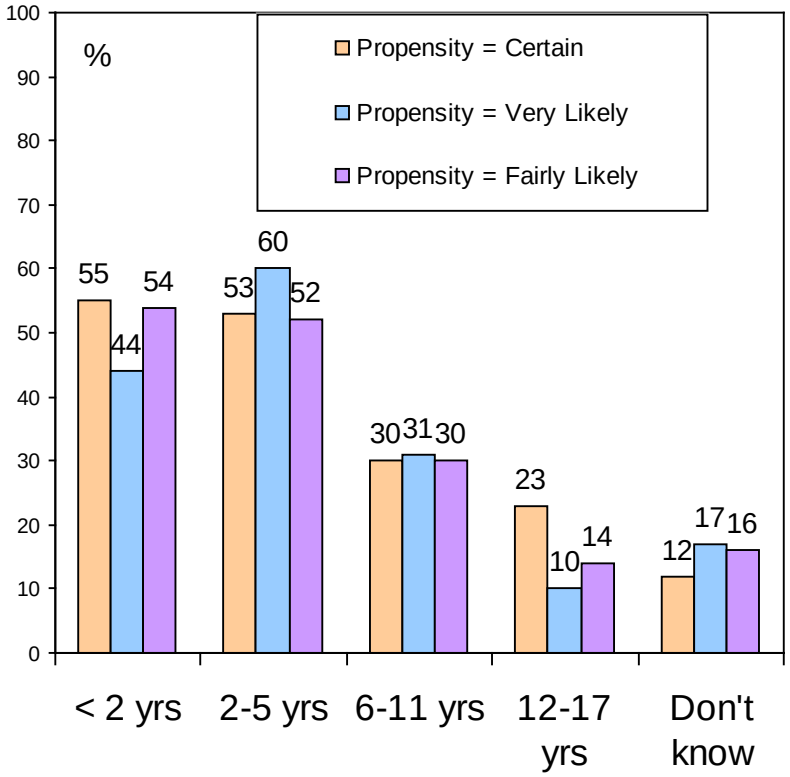


Base: Propensity = Certain/Very Likely/Fairly Likely

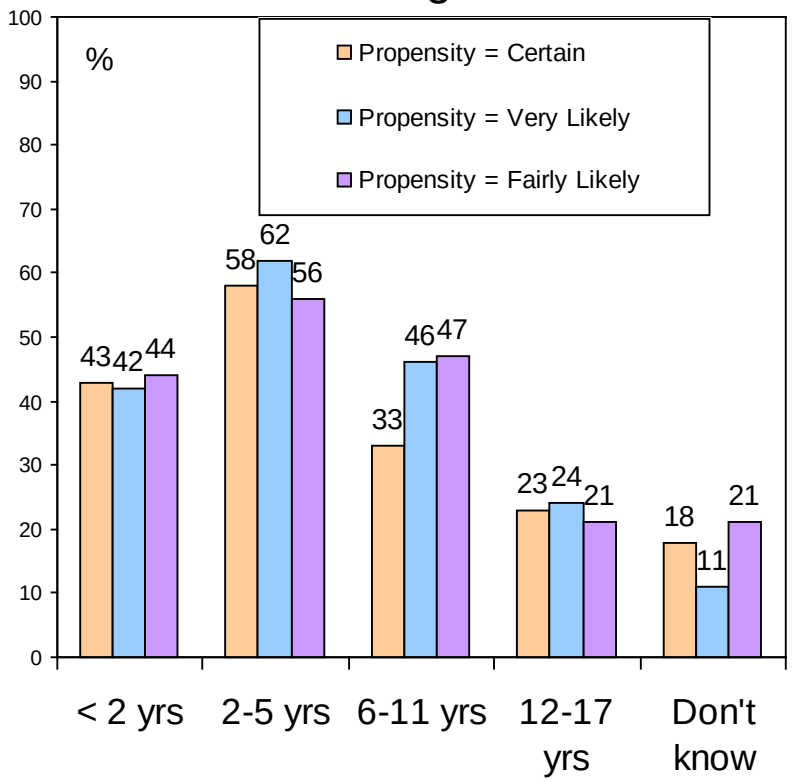
Preferred Age of Child(ren)

Q: "If you were considering adopting a child / becoming a foster carer, which age(s) of child would you be most likely to consider?"

Adopting



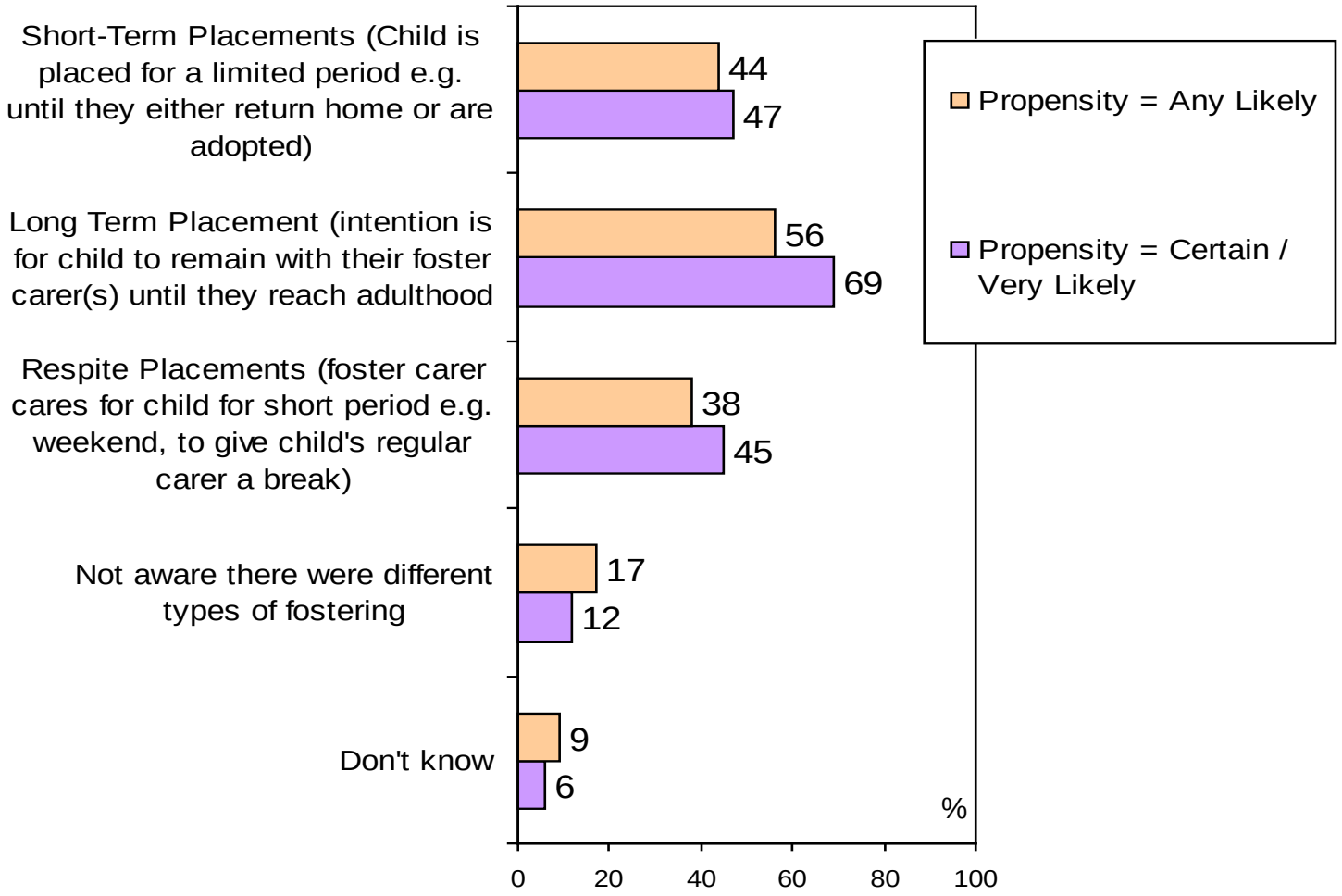
Fostering



Base: Propensity = Certain/Very Likely/Fairly Likely

Foster Placement Alternatives - Preference

Q: "Which of these types of fostering might you be interested in?"

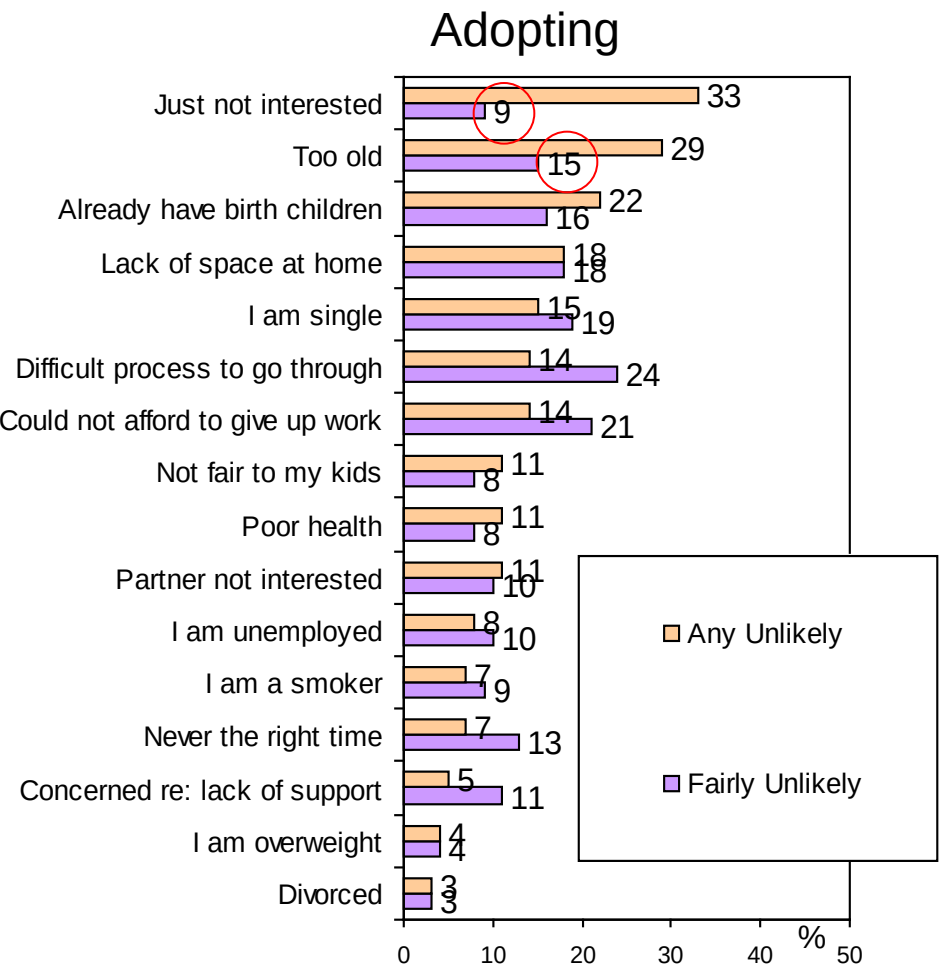


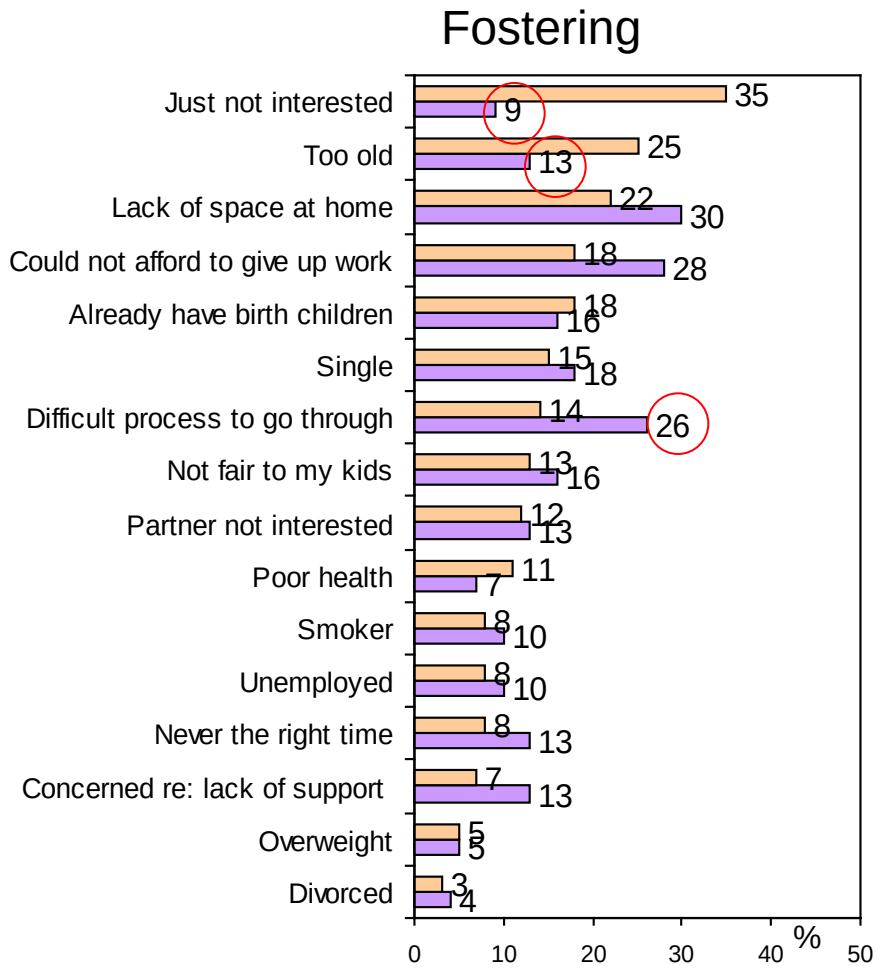
Base: Propensity = Certain/Very Likely/Fairly Likely

Drivers: Non-Engagement vs Engagement

Reasons for Non-Engagement

Q: "What are your main reasons for saying you are [unlikely] to consider adopting a child / becoming a foster carer some time in the future?"

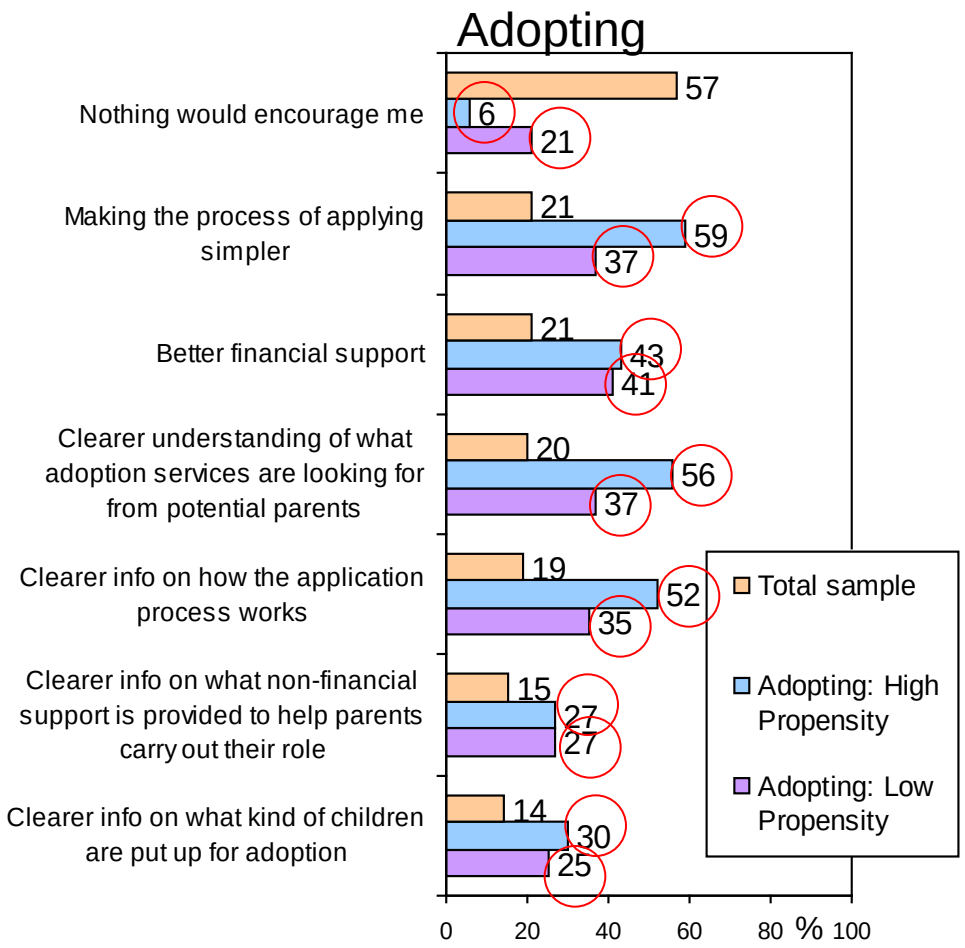


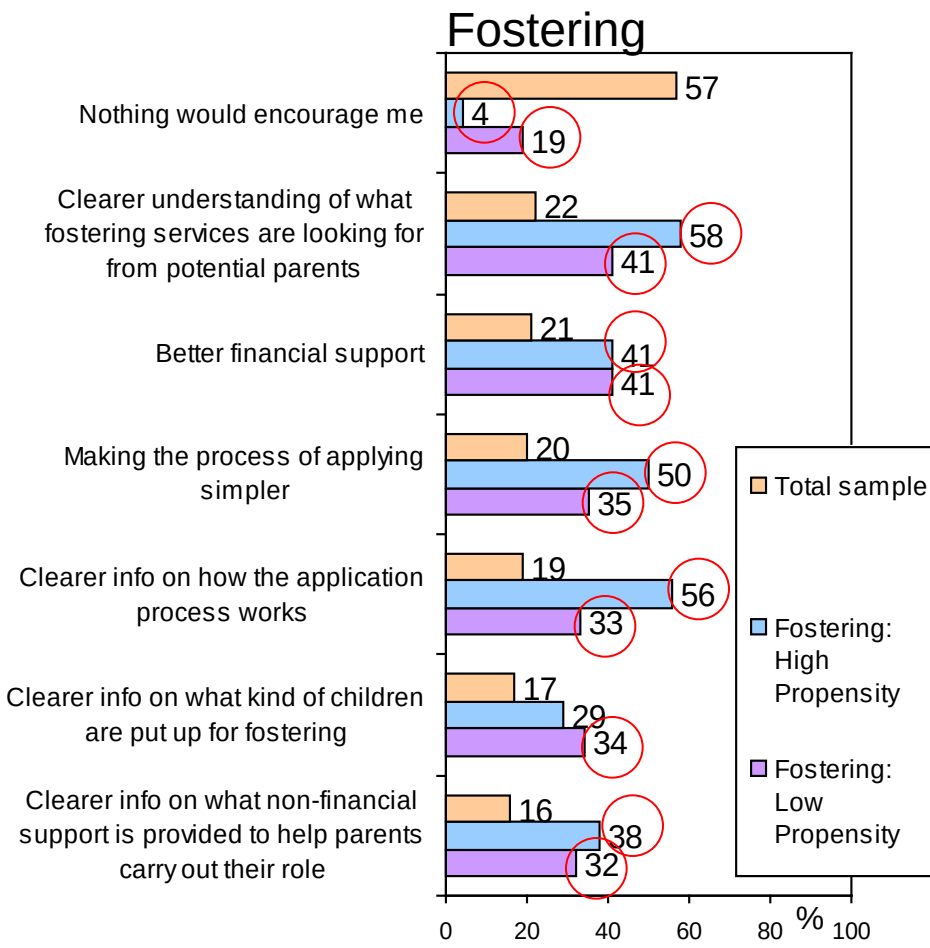


Base: Propensity = Certain not to/Very Unlikely/Fairly Unlikely

Potential Drivers of Engagement

Q: "Which of these things, if any, might encourage you to consider adopting a child / becoming a foster carer some time in the future?"





Base: All

Marketing proposals

Marketing objectives

Increase ongoing supply of adopters and foster carers

One-off increase in adopters and foster carers

Communications objectives

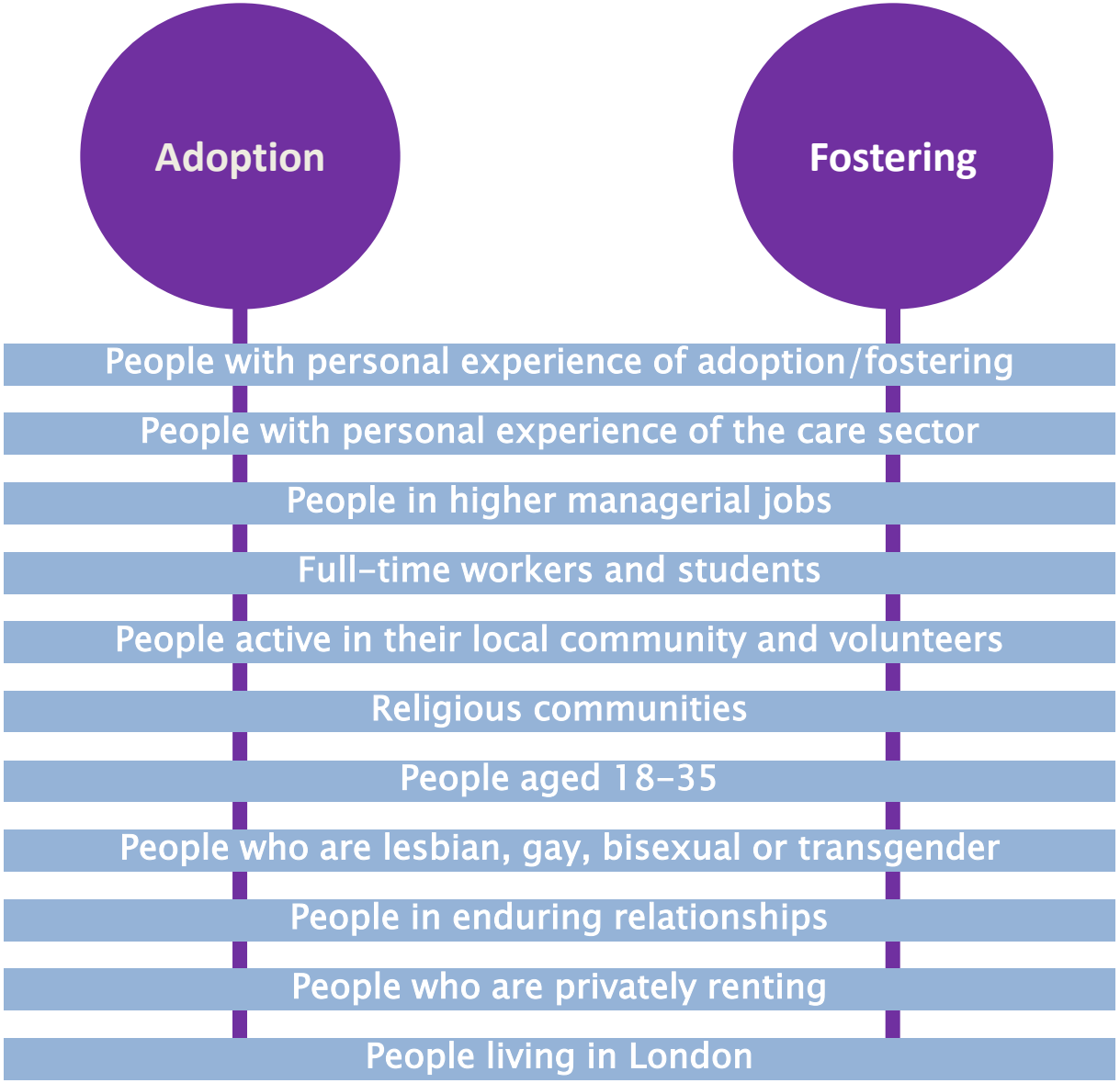
- Increase base level understanding of adoption and fostering

- Address the attitudinal barriers preventing engagement in adoption and fostering, including:
  - Perceptions of what they involve
  - Perceptions of how adoption and foster care agencies operate
  - Perceptions of the type of person who adopts or becomes a foster carer

- Make both the rational and emotional argument for undertaking adoption and fostering

- Communicate both the inner-directed and outward-directed benefits of undertaking adoption and fostering

Over-represented groups (relative to total sample)



Discussion and next steps