

Department of Education

Community Attitudes around Education Reform



1

Research Objectives and Methodology



Background and Research objectives

- The State Government is undertaking the largest ever reform of school education in Western Australia. This research will determine the necessity for a communication campaign to communicate this reform to the community. The overarching research objectives are outlined below.

Is there a need to communicate to the community about the reform of school education in Western Australia?

- Key objectives:
 - To determine the **level of community awareness** of the changes / initiatives in school education.
 - To determine the **level of current knowledge** around the changes / initiatives in school education.
 - To determine the **level of community support** for the changes / initiatives in school education.
 - To understand whether these changes / initiatives **impact on perceptions** of public and private education.
 - To establish if the community is **aware of the overall reform of school education** and to gauge their level of support for this.
 - To understand whether there are there any **negatives issues** arising from the changes / initiatives.
 - To determine where the community would go to get **further information** about the changes / initiatives.

Methodology

Who	Community (n=413) and parents of public school students (n=106) and parents of private school students (n=63)
How	11 minute online survey using the My Opinions online panel
Sample	4267 invites sent out with aim of 600 interviews, with hard quotas on total sample, and soft quotas on gender, age and location for the gen pop sample
Response	581 responses achieved, a 14% response rate
Sample structure	Parents of public school students and parents of private school students were deliberately oversampled to allow detailed analysis by subgroup
Weighting	To ABS census statistics by gender, age and location The parent samples were not weighted
When	Tuesday March 11 th to Monday 24 th March

This project was carried out in accordance with International standards.

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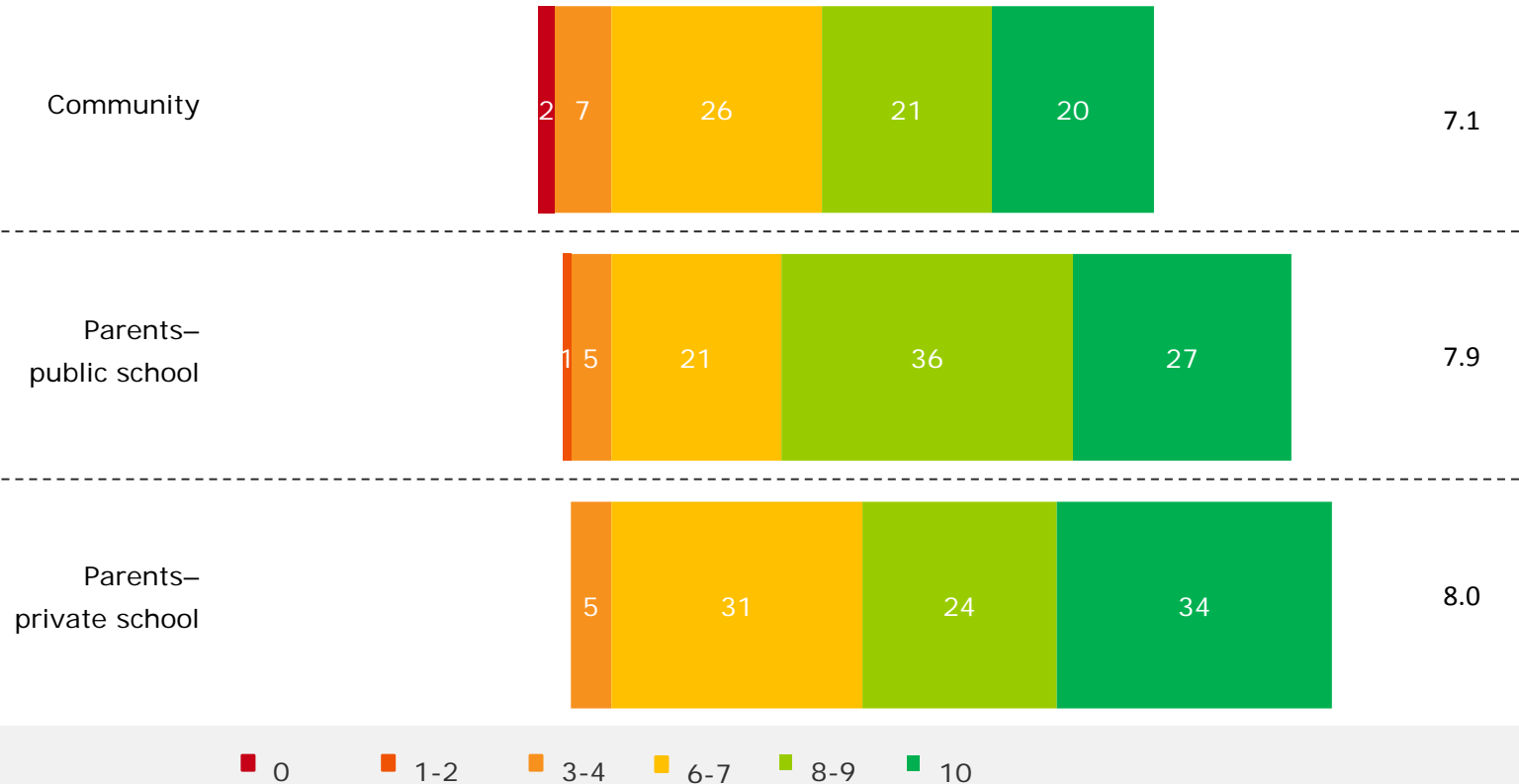
What is the current level of community **awareness**, **knowledge** and **support** for the reform of school education in Western Australia?



Two thirds of the community **support the reform of school education in WA.**

Support is even stronger specifically among parents of public (84%) and private school students (89%).

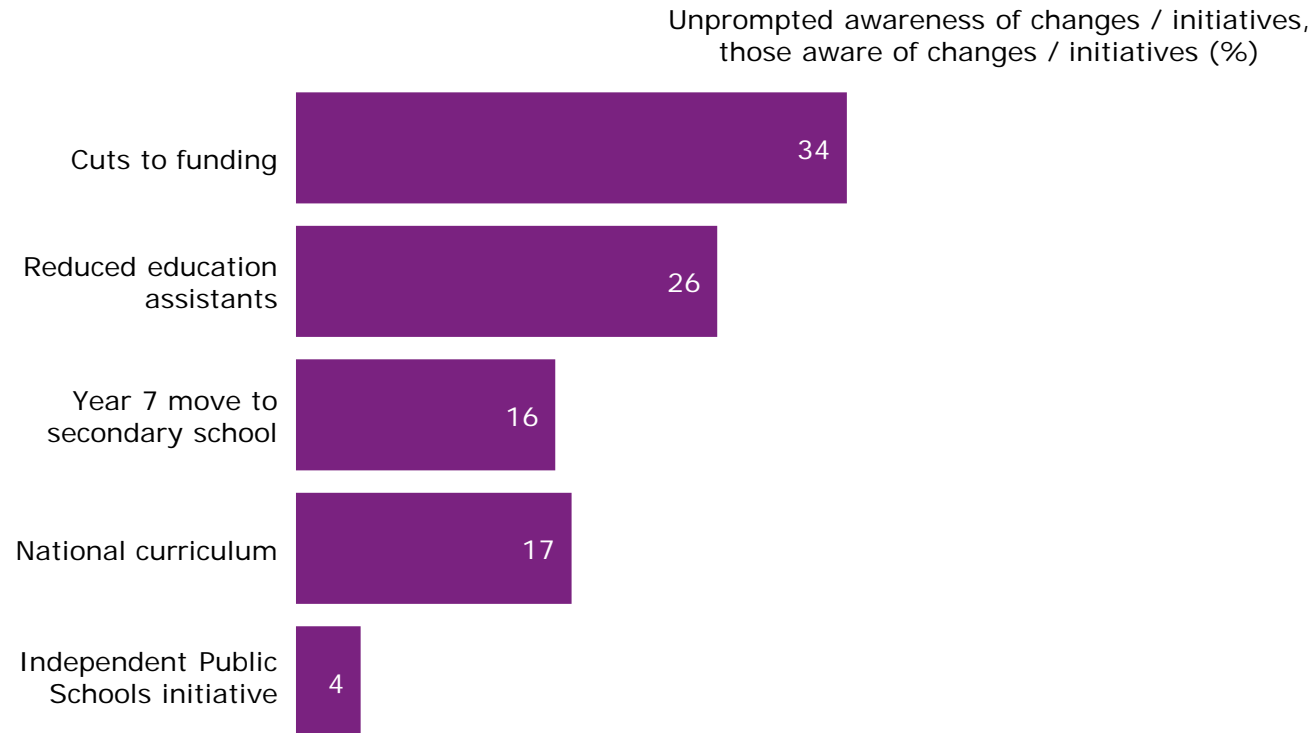
Support of overall reform of school education in WA (%)



SOURCE: J2. To what extent do you support this overall reform of school education in Western Australia?
BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Unprompted, just under one quarter of respondents (21%) indicate that they are aware of changes / initiatives taking place in school education ...

... with the most salient **unprompted** changes / initiatives taking place in school education cited as **cuts to funding** and the **reduction of education assistants**.

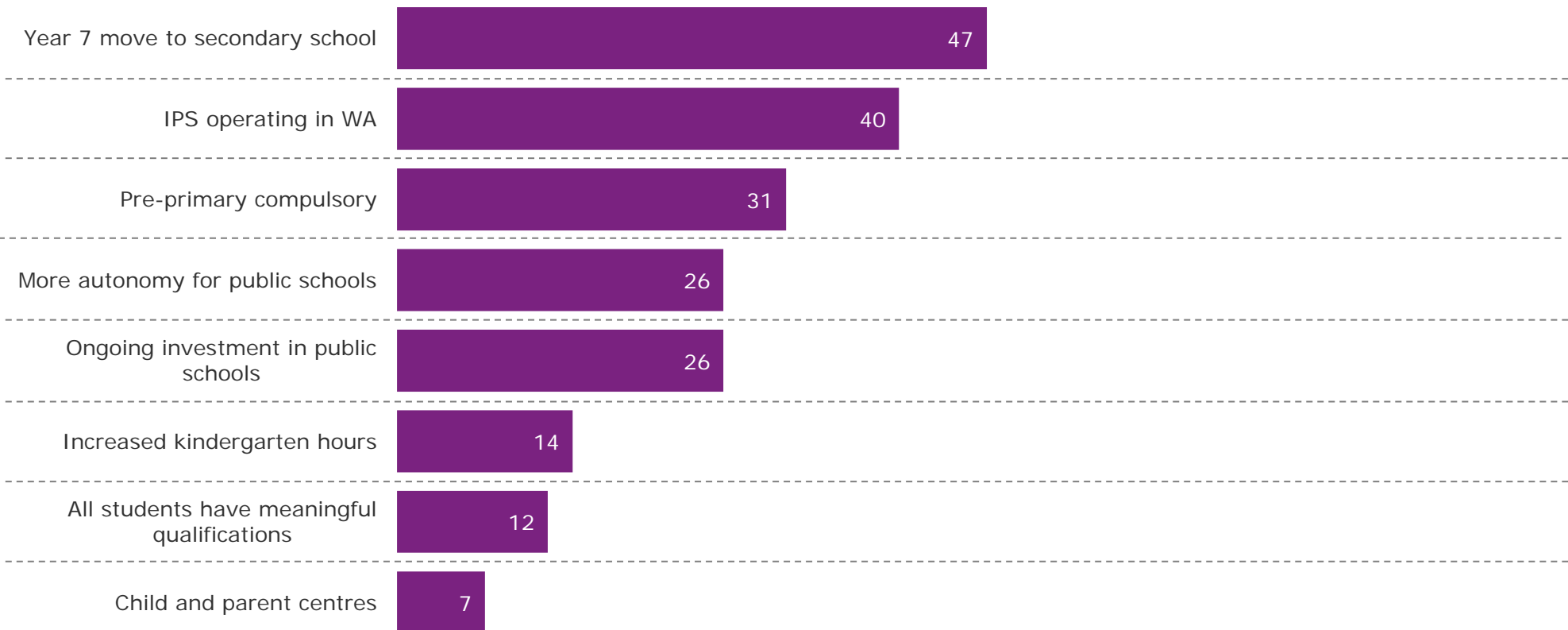


SOURCE AA1. Are you aware of any changes and/or initiatives that are taking place in school education in Western Australia? (n=413)

AA2. Can you briefly describe these changes and/or initiatives? (n=88)

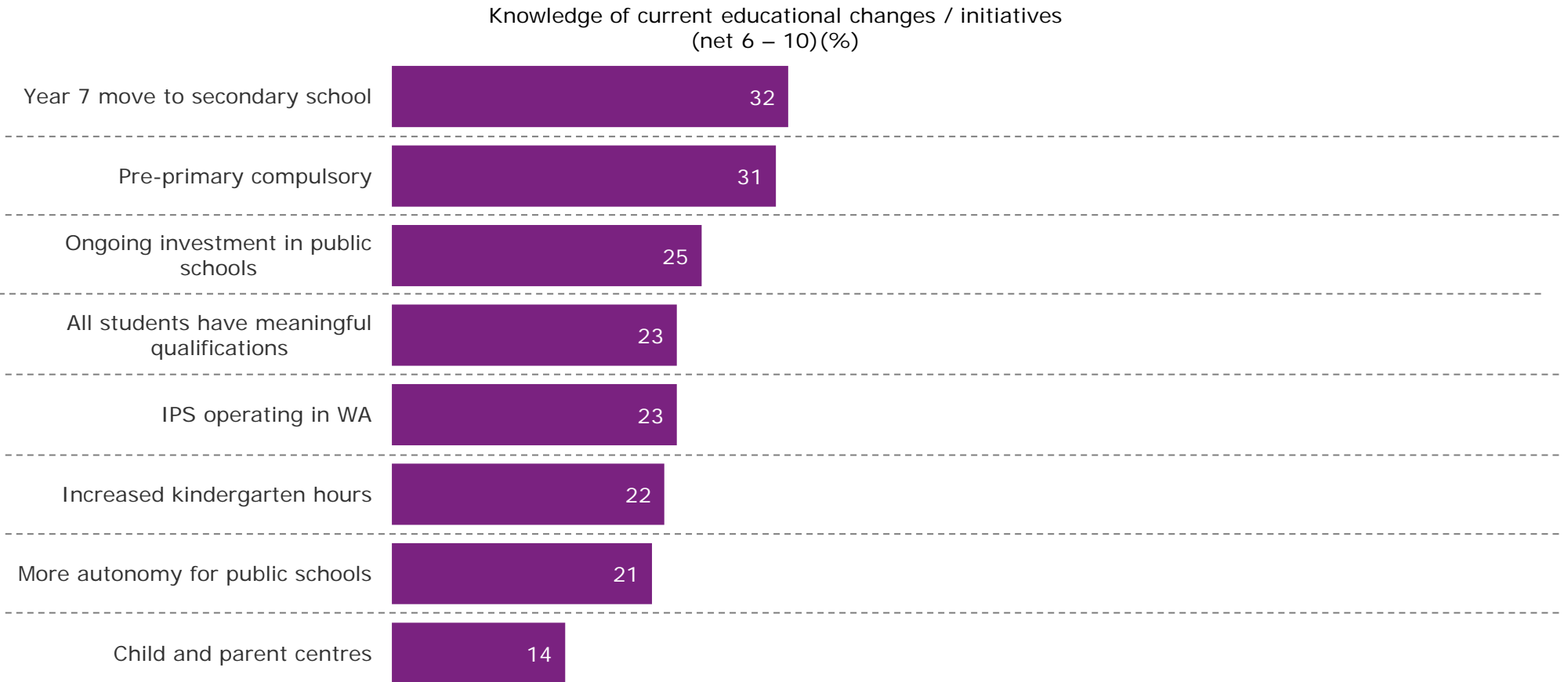
When **prompted**, awareness is slightly higher among the general community for each of the changes / initiatives currently taking place. However, less than half of the community is aware of the current educational changes / initiatives.

Awareness of current educational changes / initiatives
(net Yes) (%)



SOURCE: A1/B1/D1/E1/F1/G1/H1/I1. Before today, were you aware...
BASE: General Population n=413

This is accompanied by a relatively **low level of knowledge** about each change / initiative.



SOURCE: A3/B3/D3/E3/F3/G3/H3/I3. If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
BASE: General Population n=413

Summary of changes / initiatives

A. Independent Public Schools have been operating in Western Australia for the last four years

Independent Public Schools have a different governance model that places greater responsibility and accountability with the principal and local community than is the case in other public schools. For example, Independent Public School principals have more control over school finances and human resources than principals of other public schools.

b. All Western Australian public schools are being given more autonomy

All Western Australian public schools are progressively being given more autonomy, and bureaucracy and red tape are being removed. For example, all principals now have greater responsibility for recruiting and selecting their own staff.

C. From 2016 all students in WA public and private schools must leave school with meaningful qualifications

To graduate from secondary school, from 2016 Year 12 students must pass tests to ensure they meet literacy and numeracy standards. They must also achieve an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) high enough to allow them to gain entry into university or achieve a minimum of a certificate II level training qualification.

D. From 2015, Year 7 will be part of secondary school in all WA public schools

This move aims to give Year 7 students access to specialist subject teaching and facilities that best support the new Australian Curriculum. It also brings Western Australian public schools in line with most other states/territories as well as most private schools in Western Australia.

E. Pre-primary was made compulsory in 2013

In 2013, pre-primary became the first year of compulsory schooling for children in all Western Australian schools. Prior to this, Year 1 was the first year of compulsory schooling.

Summary of changes / initiatives

F. All Western Australian schools (public and private) have increased the number of hours a week four year old children attend kindergarten

Over the past few years all WA schools have increased the number of hours four year old children attend kindergarten from 11 hours a week to 15 hours a week. kindergarten is the year of schooling before pre-primary.

G. Ongoing investment in new and replacement public schools and facilities

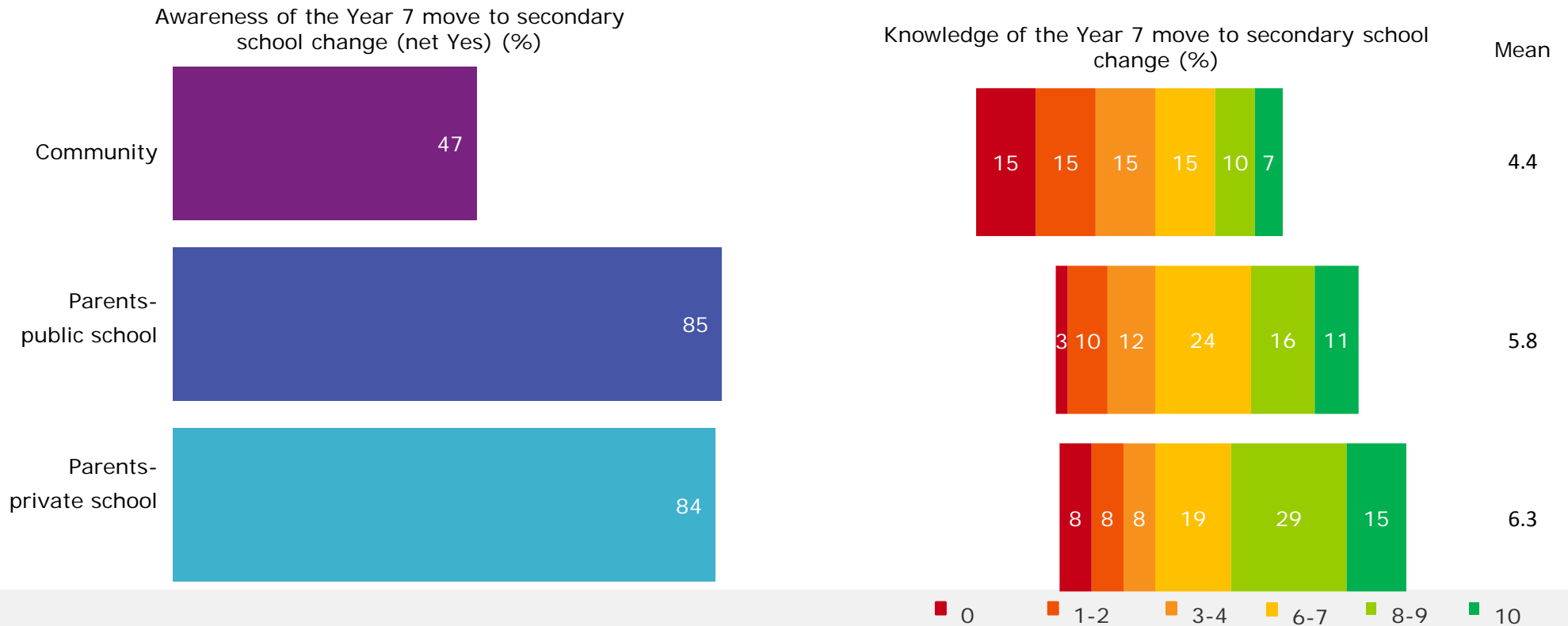
Continued investment is being made in new and replacement public schools and facilities across Western Australia, as well as expansions and upgrades in public schools.

H. Child and parent centres are opening at some public schools

Child and parent centres are opening at some public schools to provide support, services and programs for parents with young children and babies up to eight years old (including parents expecting children).

The **Year 7 move to secondary school** change has the highest level of awareness of all changes / initiatives among all groups. Despite this, less than half of the community (47%) is aware of this change.

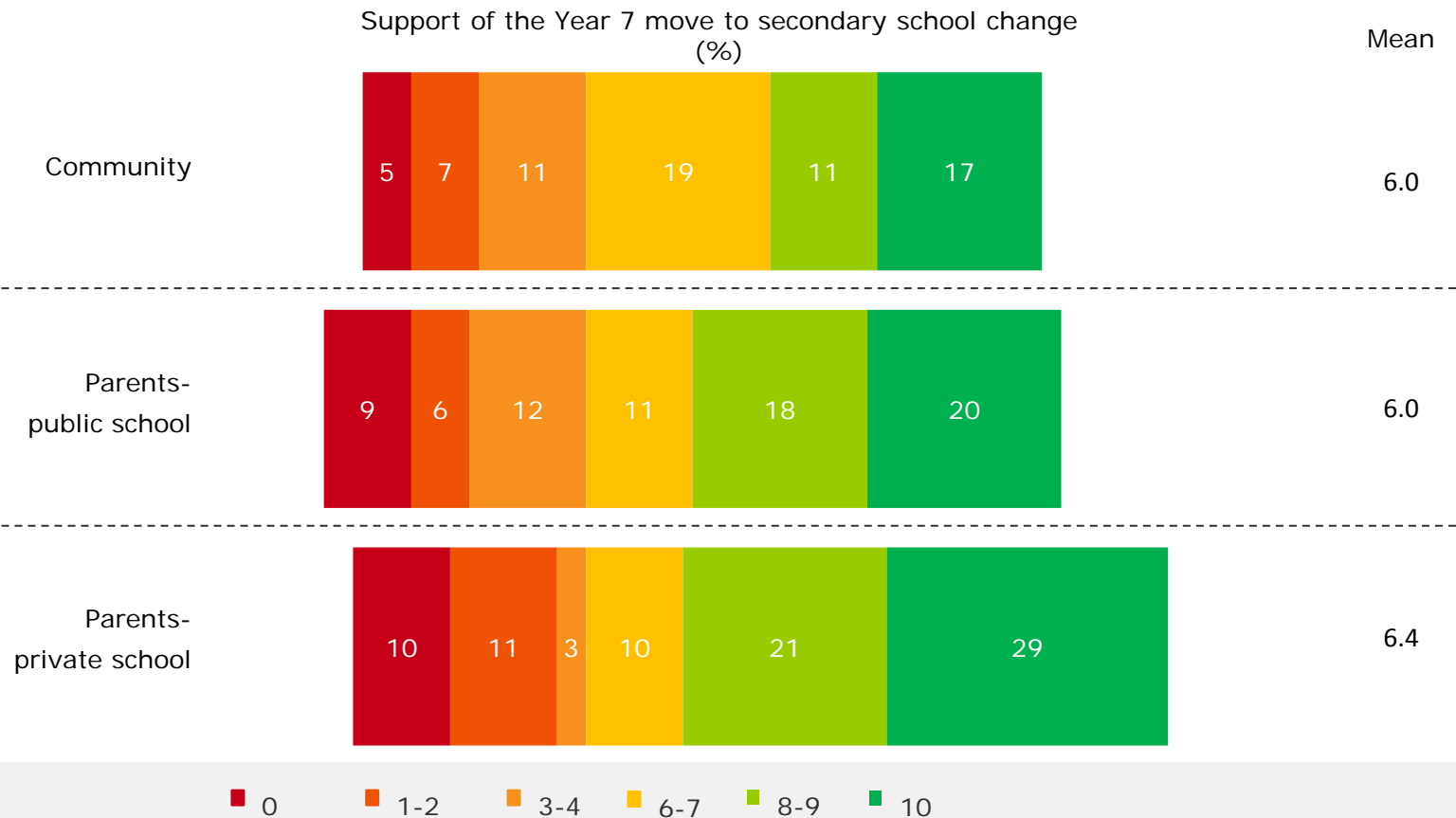
Correspondingly, nearly half of the community (45%) and a quarter of parents indicate that they have a low level of knowledge about the change (0-4/10).



SOURCE: E1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

SOURCE: E3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

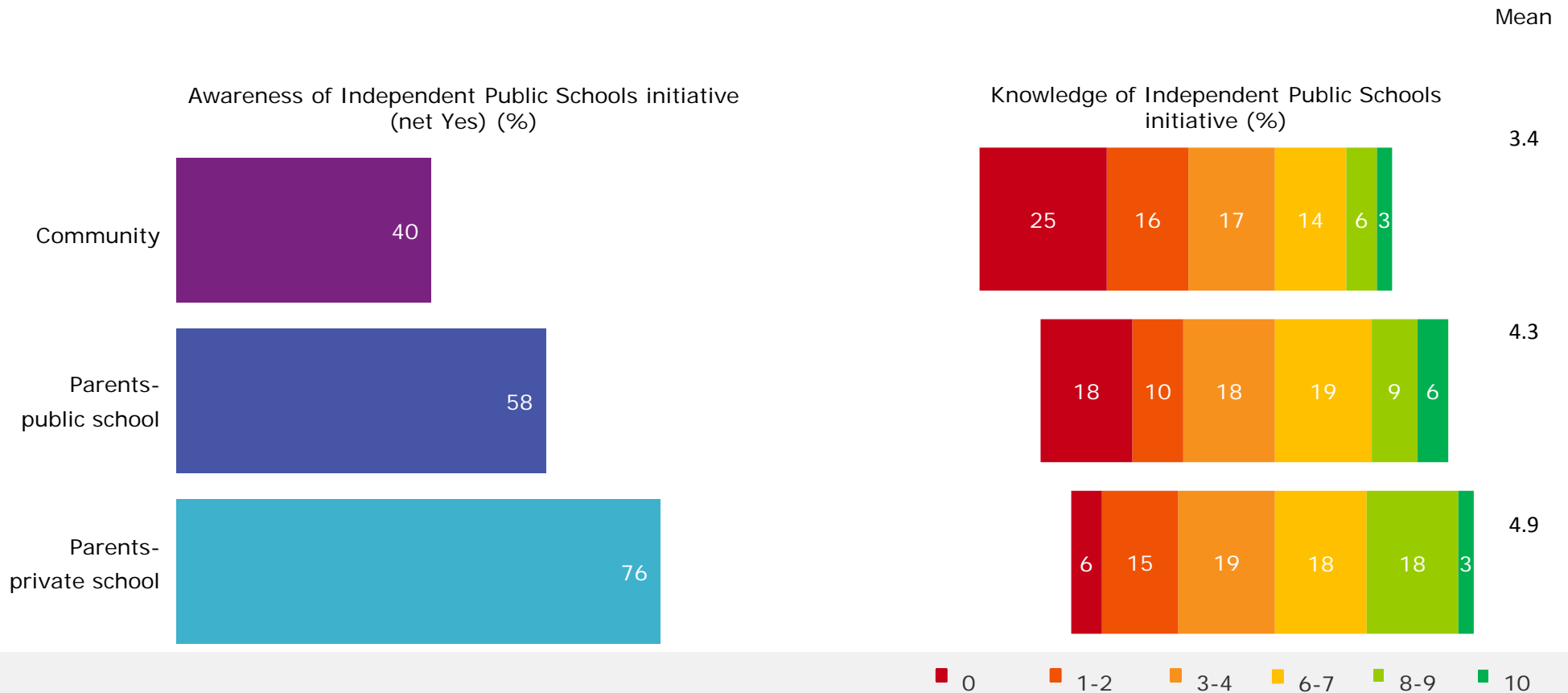
In addition to a low level of knowledge about this change among some areas of the community, around one quarter of both the community and parents does not support the **Year 7 move to secondary school**, making it the least supported change.



SOURCE: E2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

While awareness around the **Independent Public Schools** initiative is relatively high among parents, just 40% of the community is aware of this initiative.

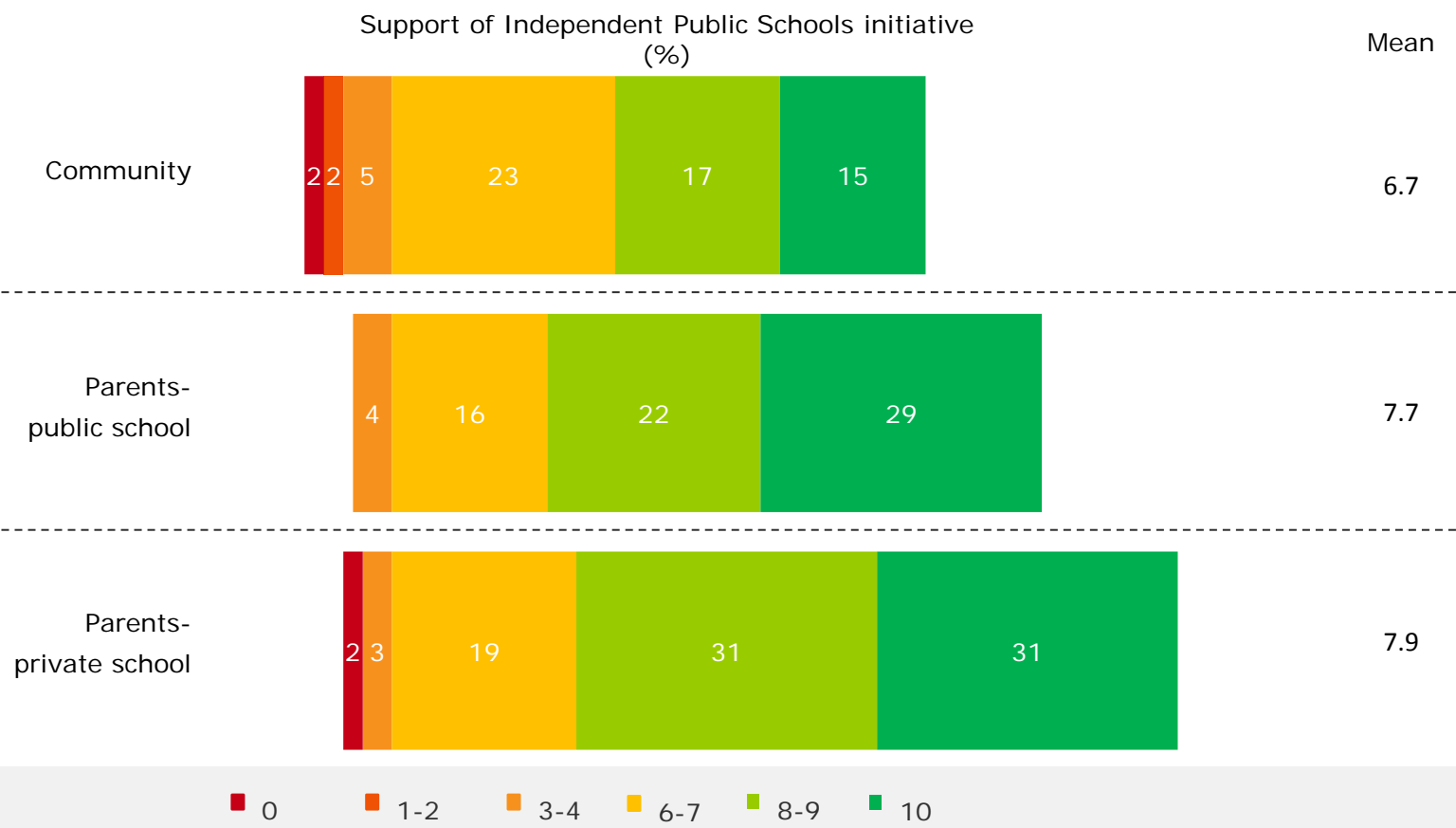
There is also a lack of knowledge about the initiative among community (58%), public parents (46%) and private parents (40%).



SOURCE: A1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

SOURCE: A3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

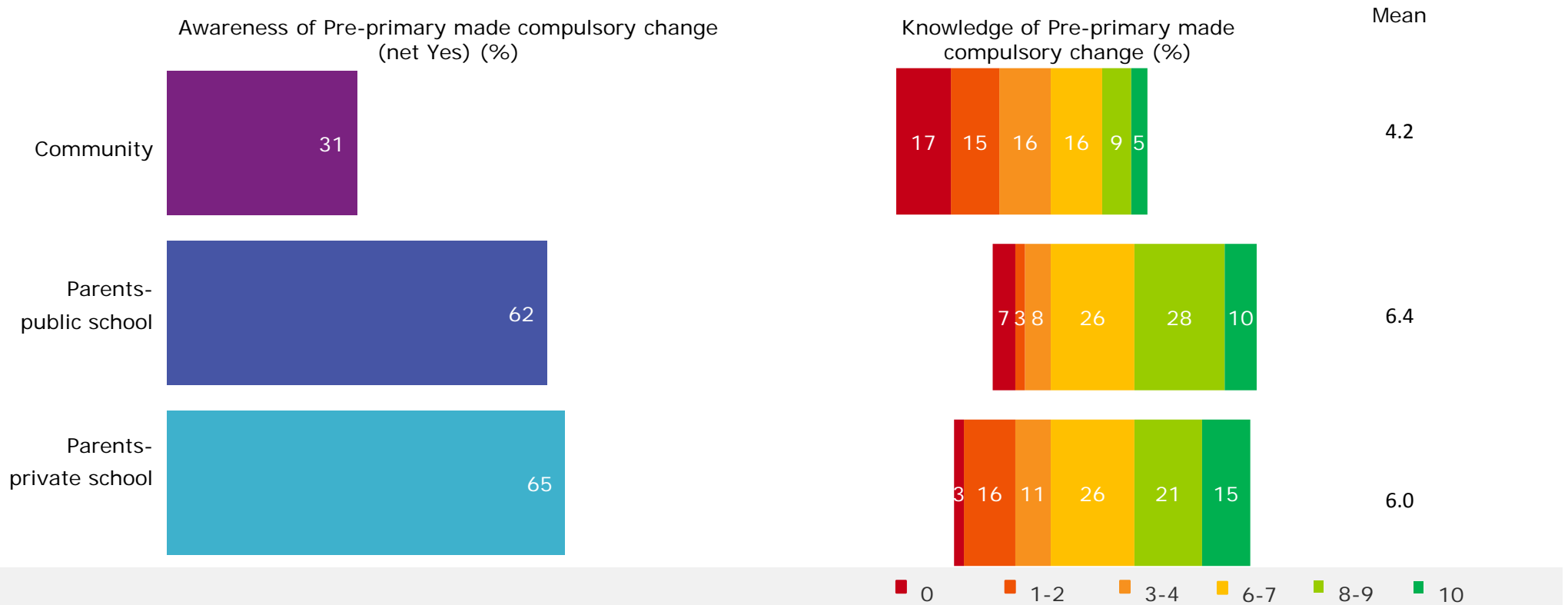
Despite low awareness and knowledge about this initiative, the majority of all three sample groups support the **Independent Public Schools** initiative, with the strongest support from private parents.



SOURCE: A2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Two thirds of parents are aware that **pre-primary was made compulsory** in 2013, however awareness is much lower among the community, with just one third aware.

Correspondingly, knowledge is much lower among the community (48% indicating awareness is 0-4/10) compared to just 18% of public parents and 30% of private parents.

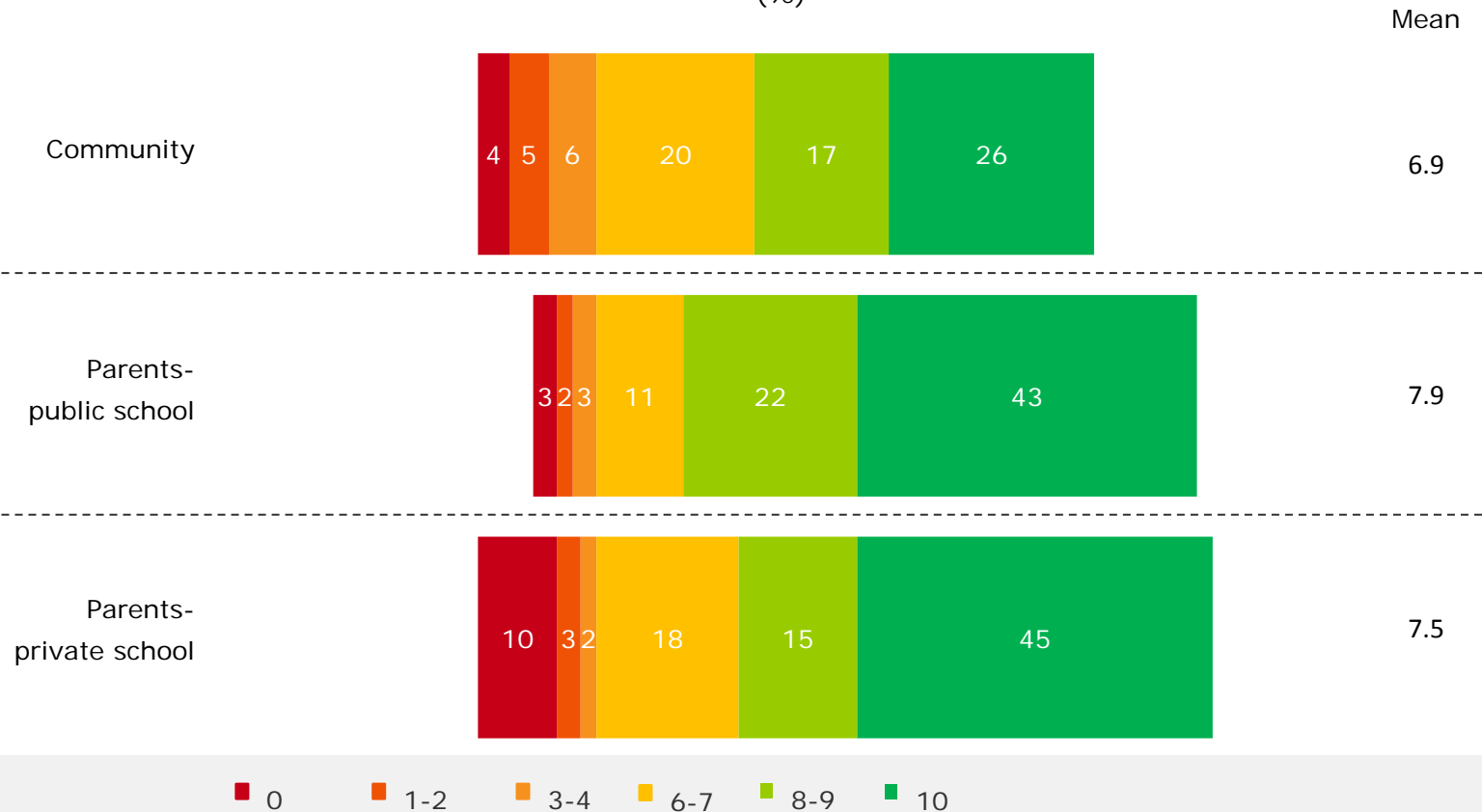


SOURCE: F1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

SOURCE: F3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

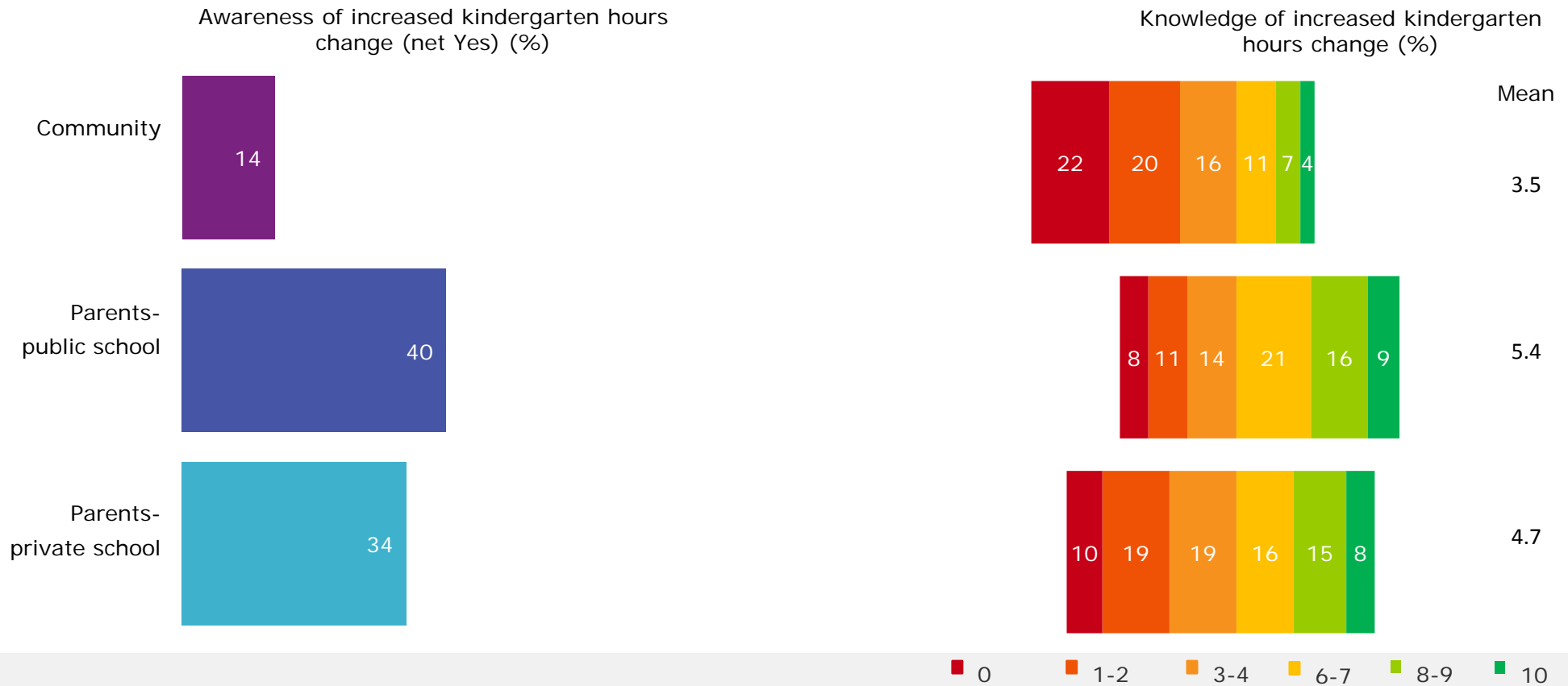
Despite a low level of awareness among the community around making **Pre-primary made compulsory** two thirds of the population are supportive of this change. Support is stronger among public parents (76%) and private parents (78%).

Support of Pre-primary made compulsory change (%)



SOURCE: F2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

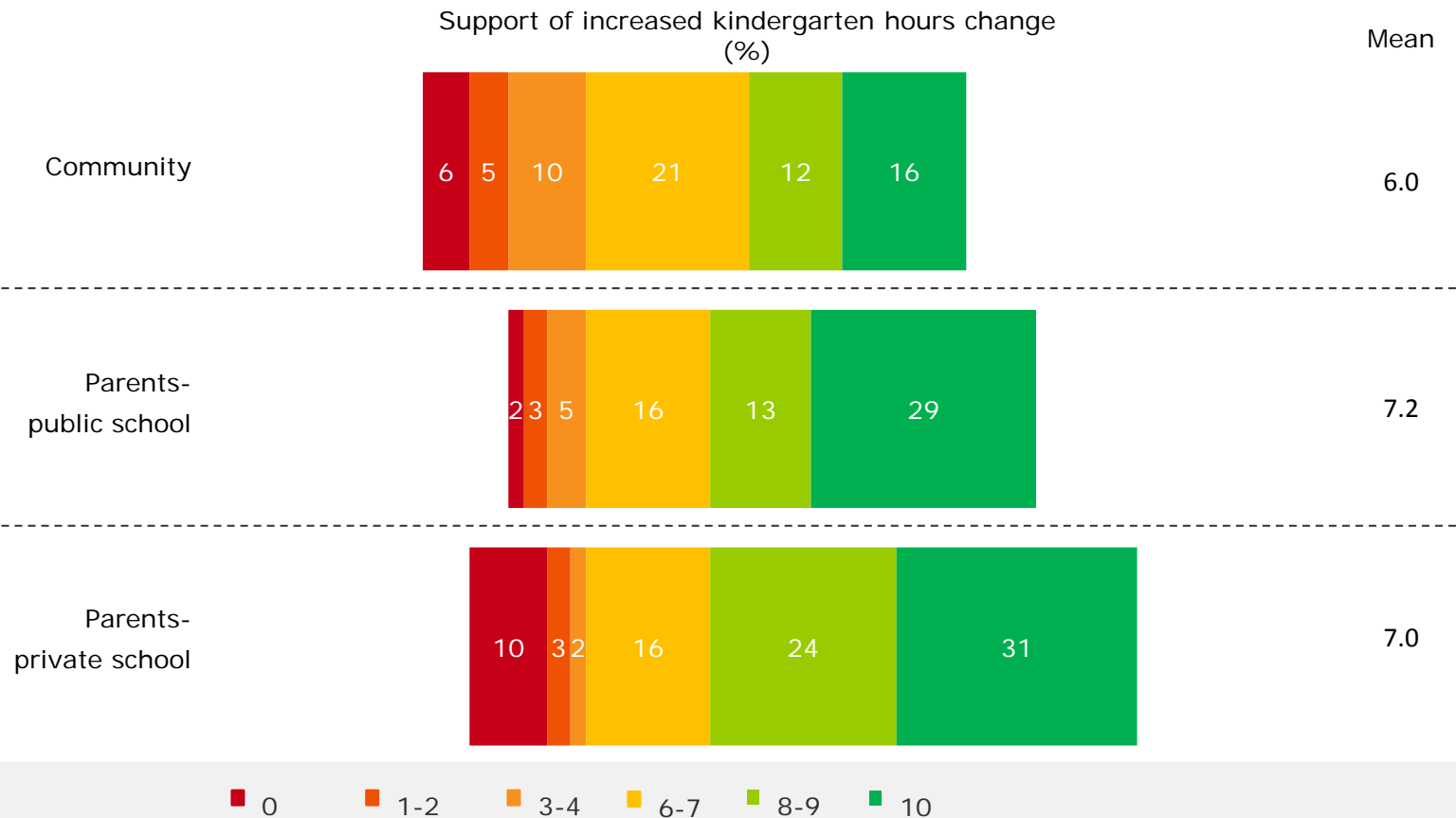
There is a low level of awareness around the **increased kindergarten hours** change among all three groups, as well as limited knowledge of the change. Awareness and knowledge are lowest among the community and private parents.



SOURCE: G1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

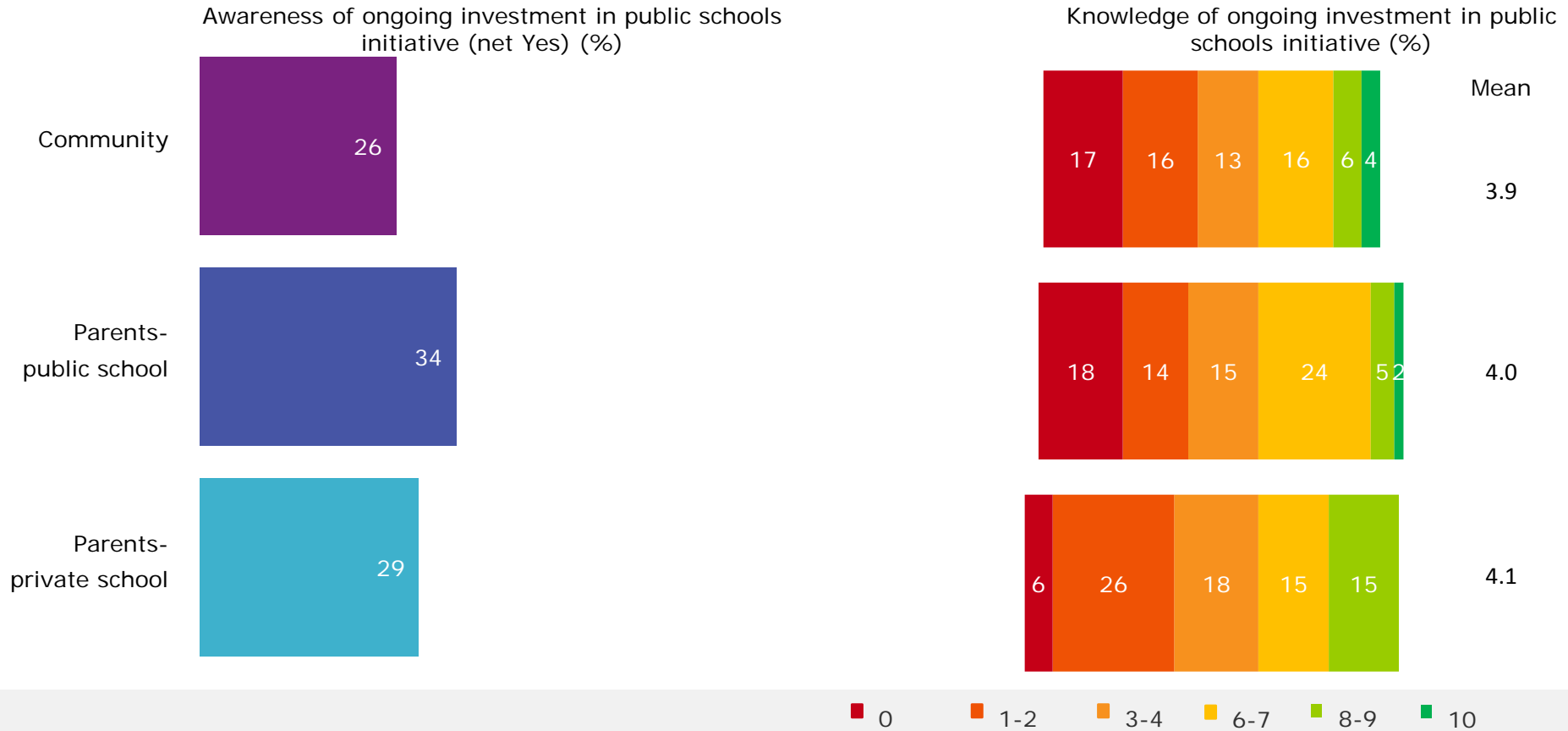
SOURCE: G3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

While the **increased kindergarten hours** change is largely supported among all three groups, nearly one quarter of the community and 15% of private parents do not support the change.



SOURCE: G2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

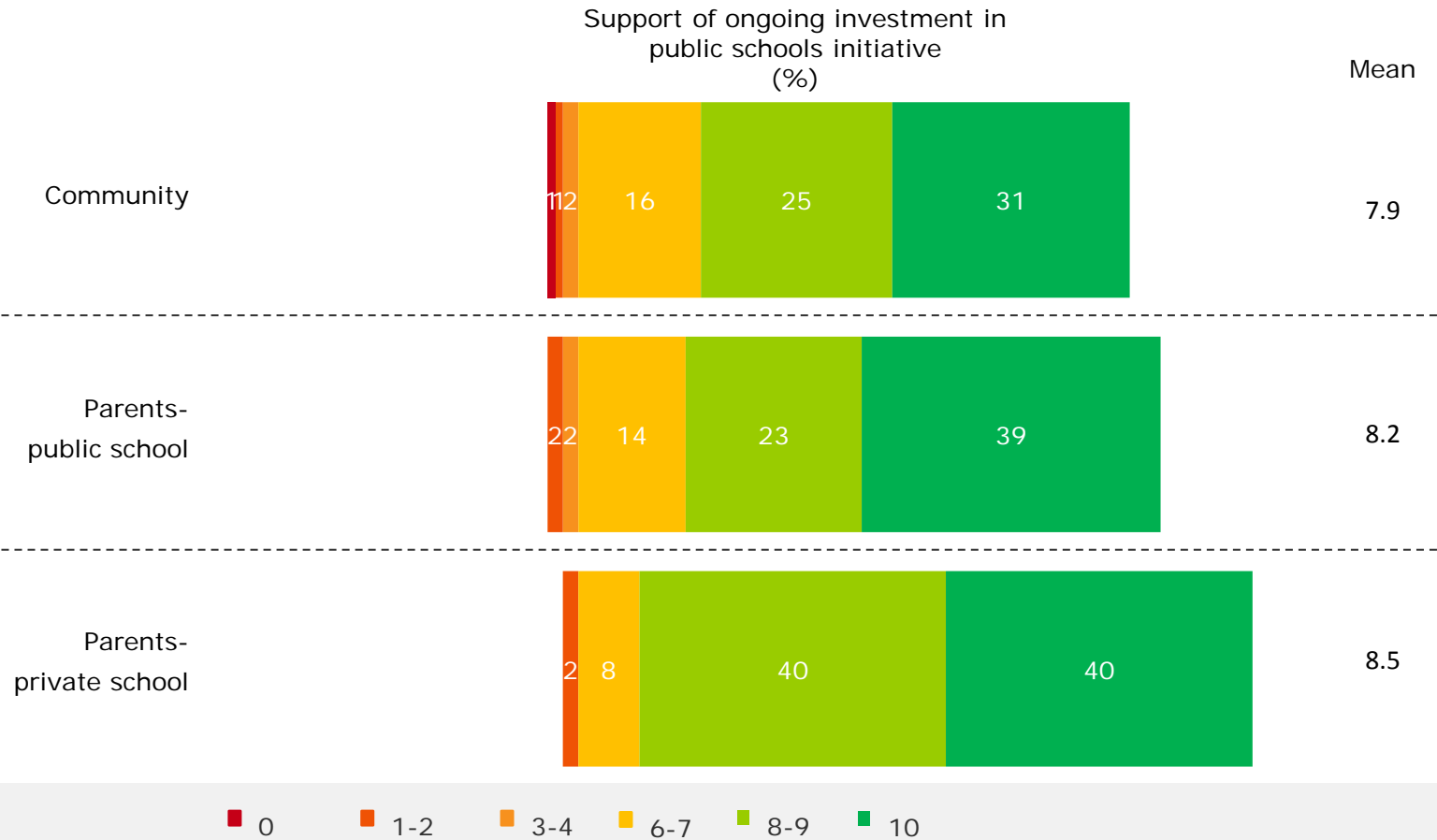
Over three quarters of the community is unaware that there is **ongoing investment in public schools** and nearly half indicate that they have a low level of knowledge about it (46% 0-4/10). Awareness and knowledge are slightly higher among parent groups.



SOURCE: H1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

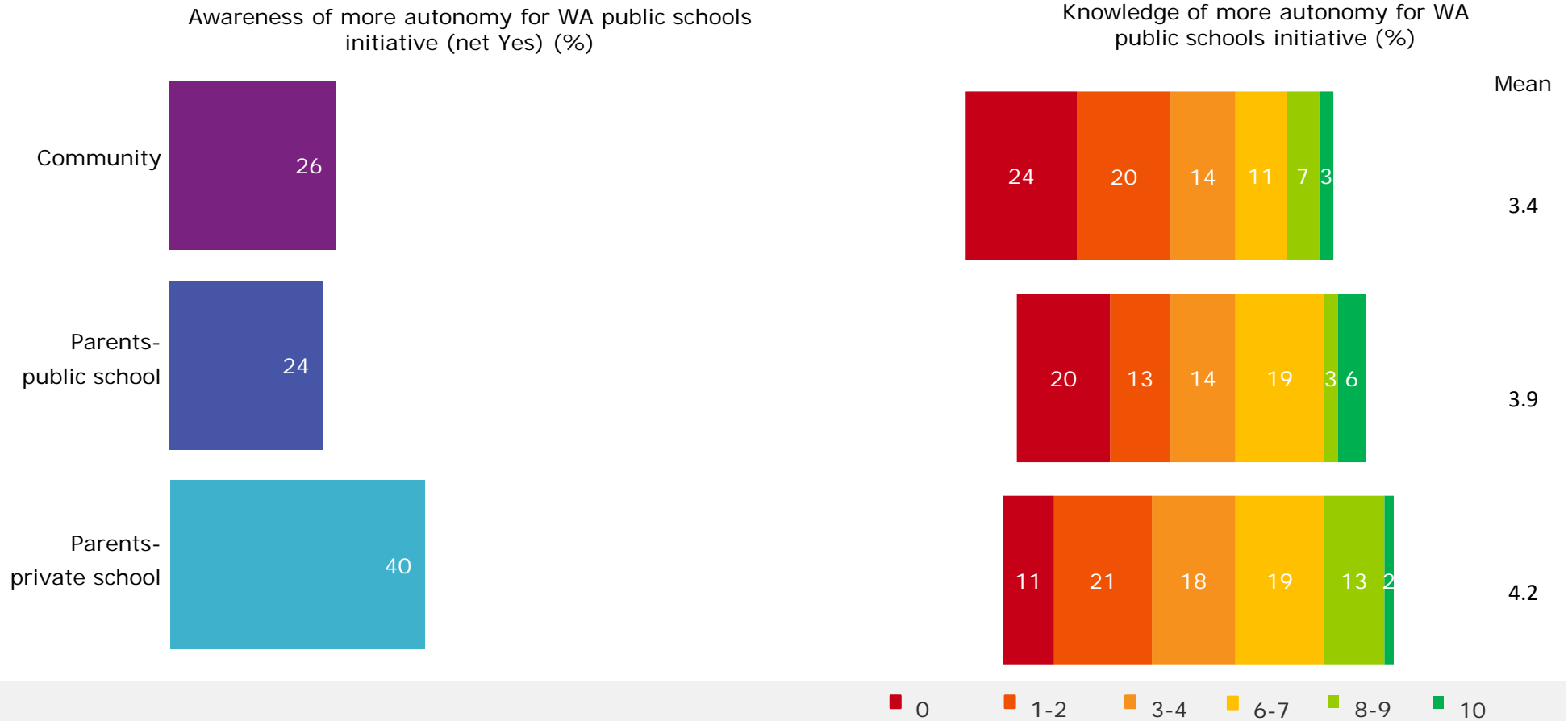
SOURCE: H3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge.
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

There is strong support for **ongoing investment in public schools** coupled with a low level of awareness and knowledge.



SOURCE: H2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

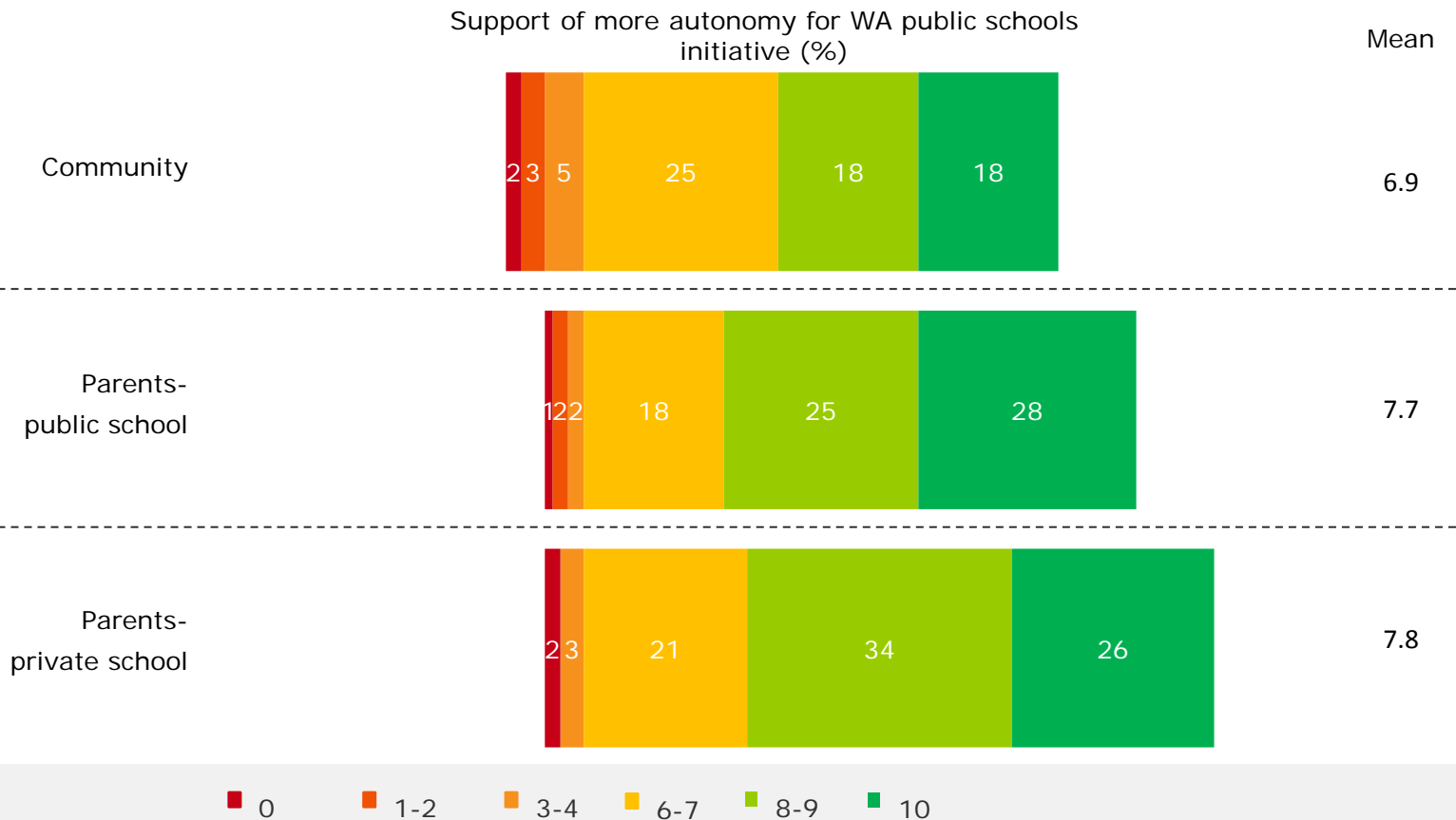
Awareness and knowledge around the **more autonomy for WA public schools** initiative is also low among all three groups, with private parents having the highest level of awareness of the initiative.



SOURCE: B1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

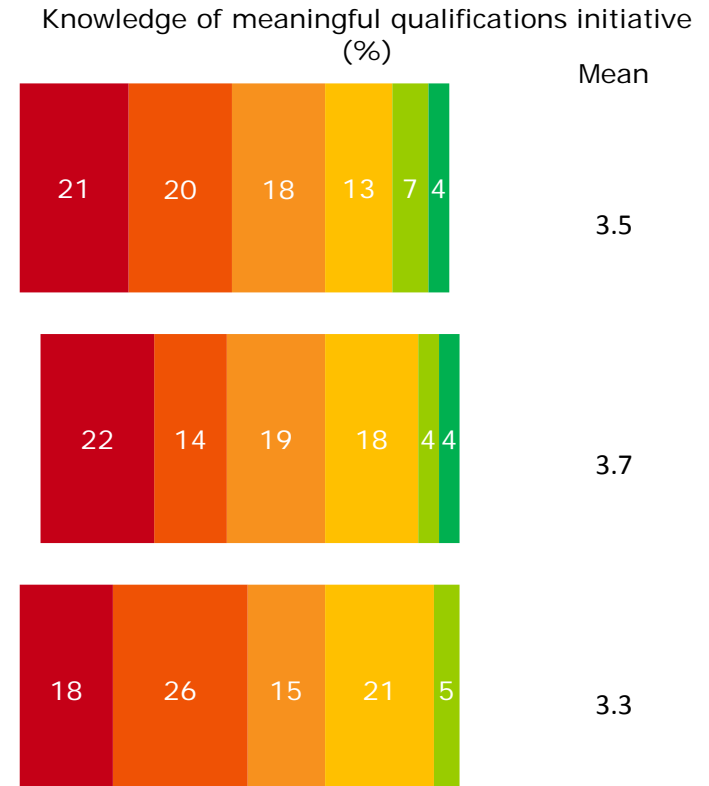
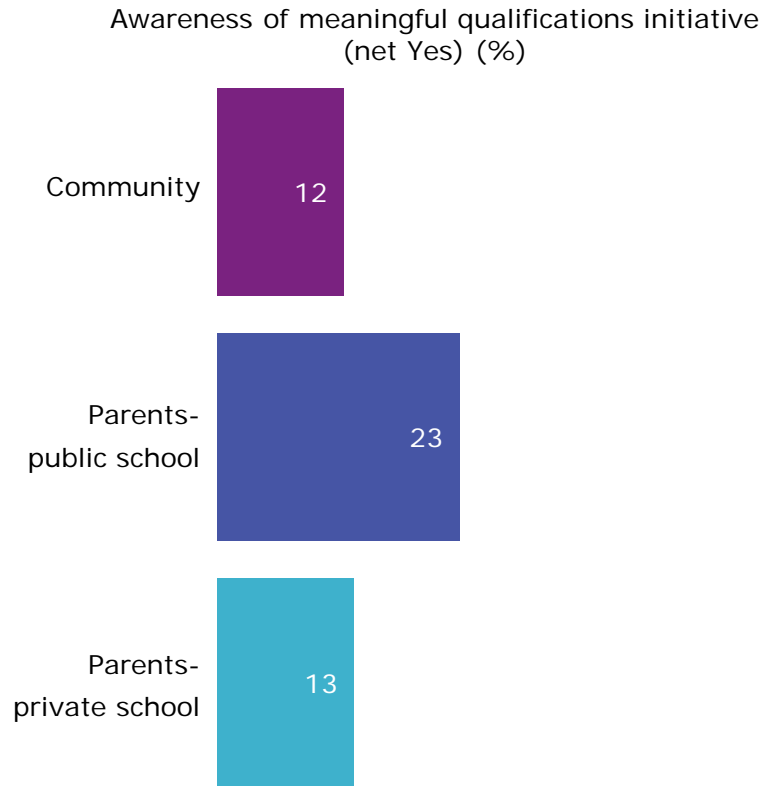
SOURCE: B3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Again, despite a low awareness and knowledge around the **more autonomy for WA public schools** initiative, support for the initiative is high, especially among private parents.



SOURCE: B2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Awareness and knowledge around the **meaningful qualifications** initiative is low, particularly among the community and private parents.



0 1-2 3-4 6-7 8-9 10

SOURCE: D1. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

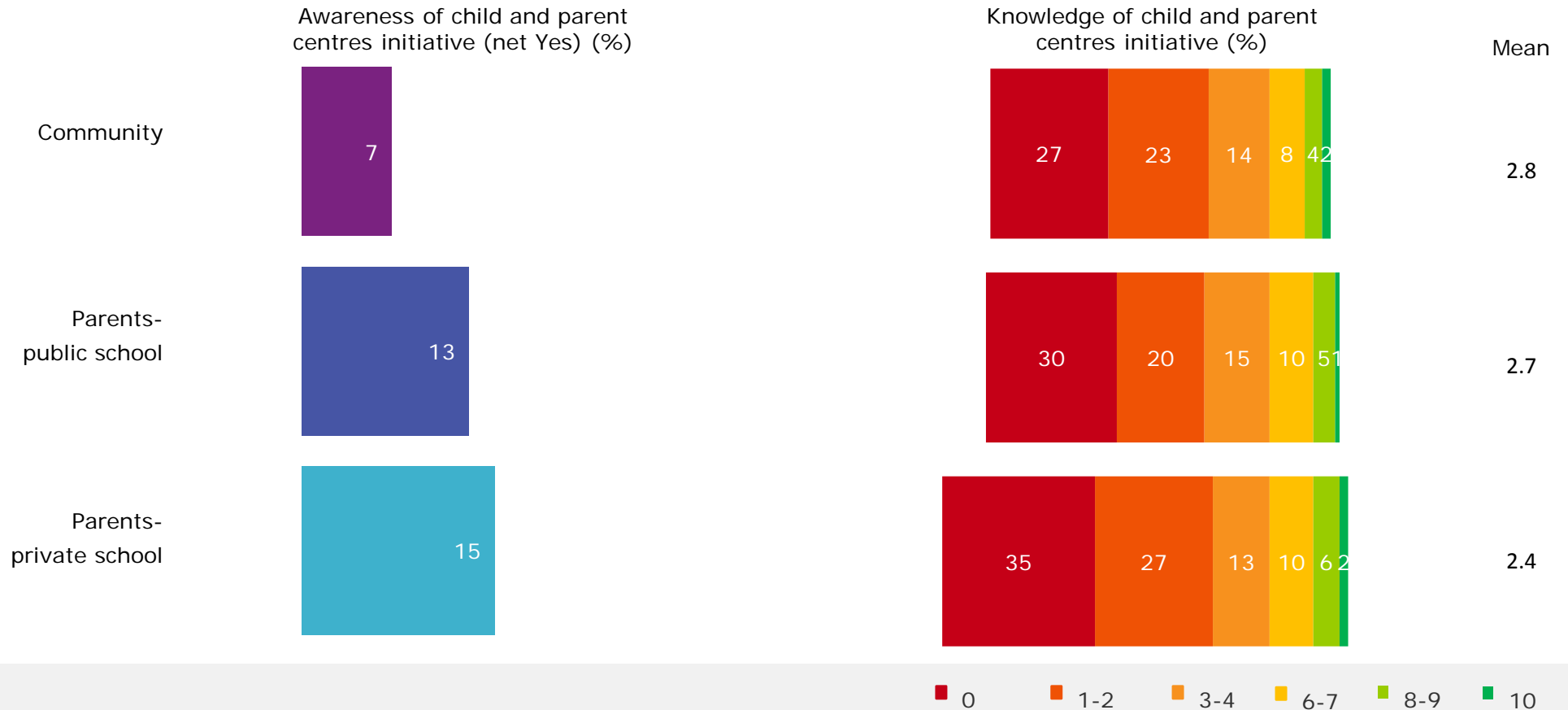
SOURCE: D3 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Overall support is highest for this initiative, with half of private parents 'fully supporting' this initiative (10/10) as well as over one third of the community and public parents.



SOURCE: D2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

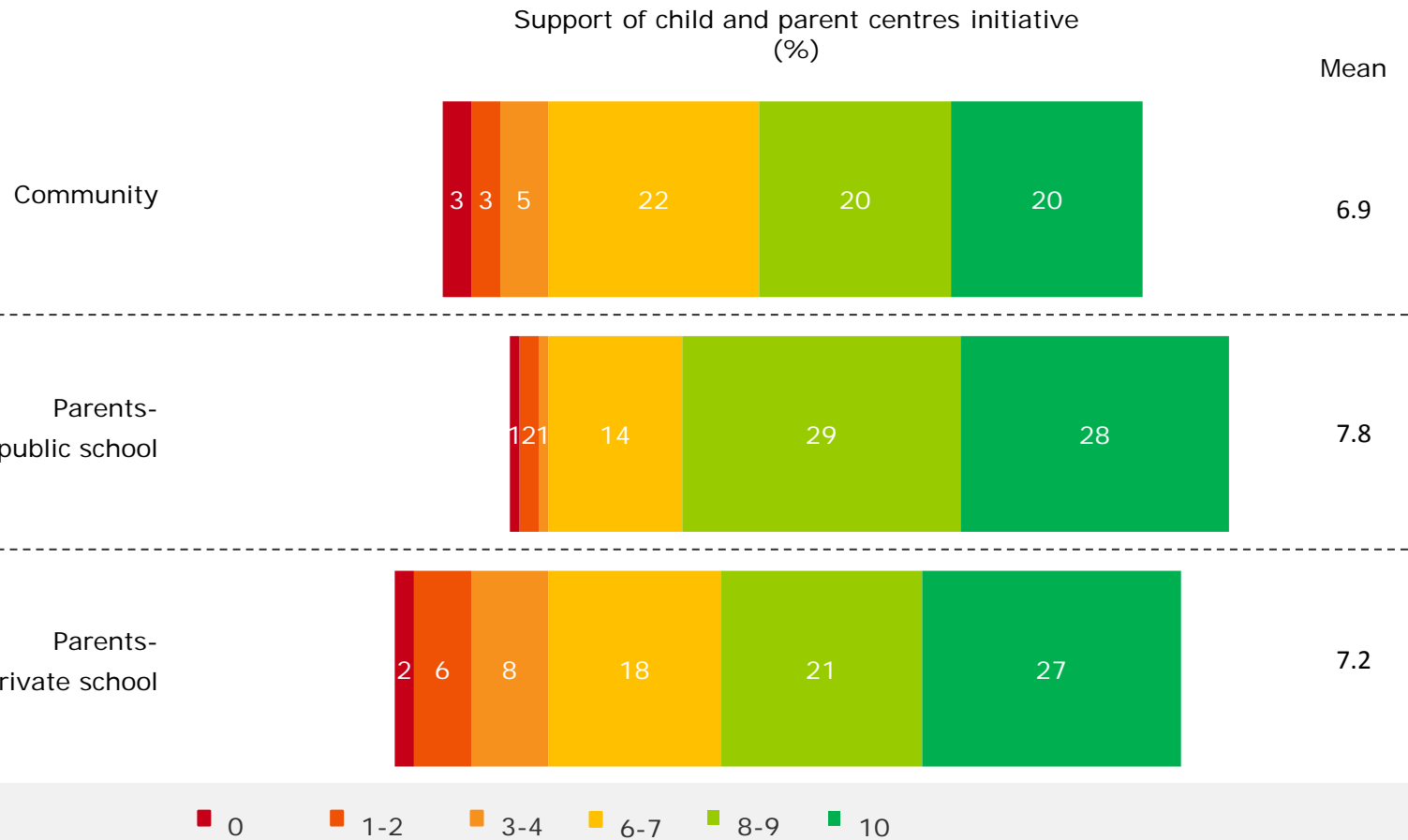
The lowest level of knowledge and awareness is around the **child and parent centres** initiative, with over two thirds of all samples both unaware and lacking knowledge.



SOURCE: 11. Before today, were you aware...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

SOURCE: 13 If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Support for **child and parent centres** is strong across all groups, particularly public parents.



SOURCE: I2. To what extent do you support...
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

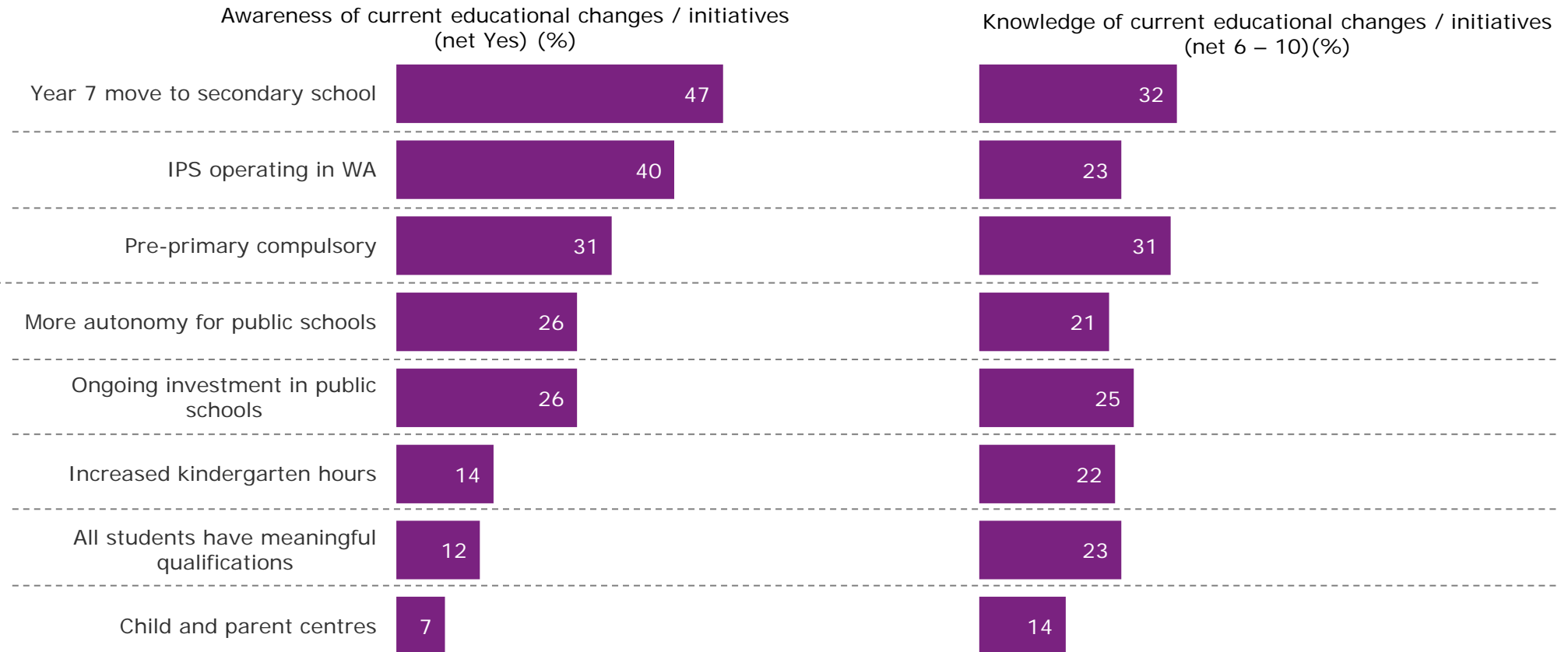
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Is there a **need to communicate** to the community about the reform of school education in Western Australia?



More than **half of the community are not aware** of the current changes / initiatives occurring in school education in WA...

...and **less than a third feel they are knowledgeable** about the changes / initiatives.



■ General Population

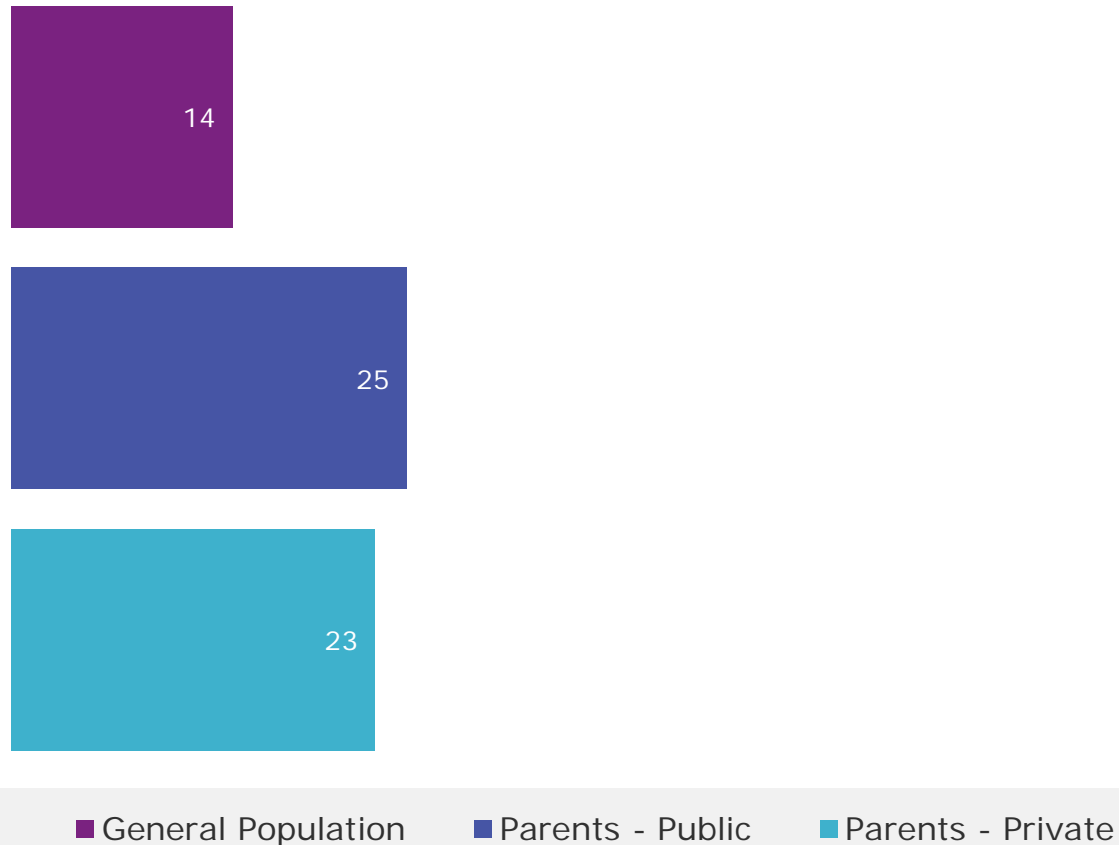
SOURCE: A1/B1/D1/E1/F1/G1/H1/I1. Before today, were you aware...

A3/B3/D3/E3/F3/G3/H3/I3. If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge

BASE: General Population n=413

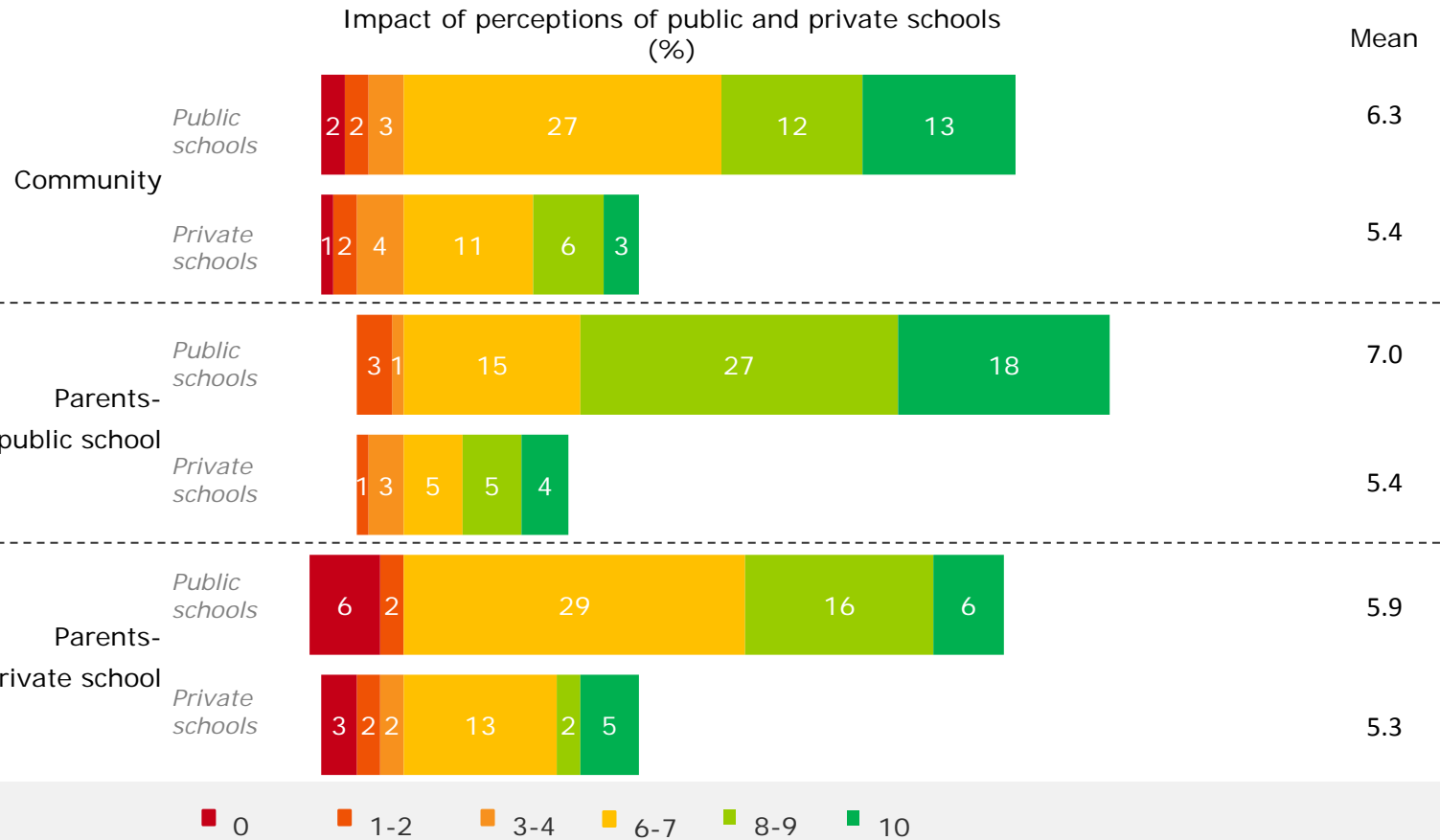
There is also a **lack of awareness of the changes / initiatives to school education** forming part of a central reform of school education in WA, among both the community and parent groups.

Awareness of whether the changes / initiatives are part of a central reform (net Yes) (%)



SOURCE: J1. Overall, were you aware, before today, that all of the above mentioned changes and initiatives are part of the largest ever reform to school education in Western Australia?
BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

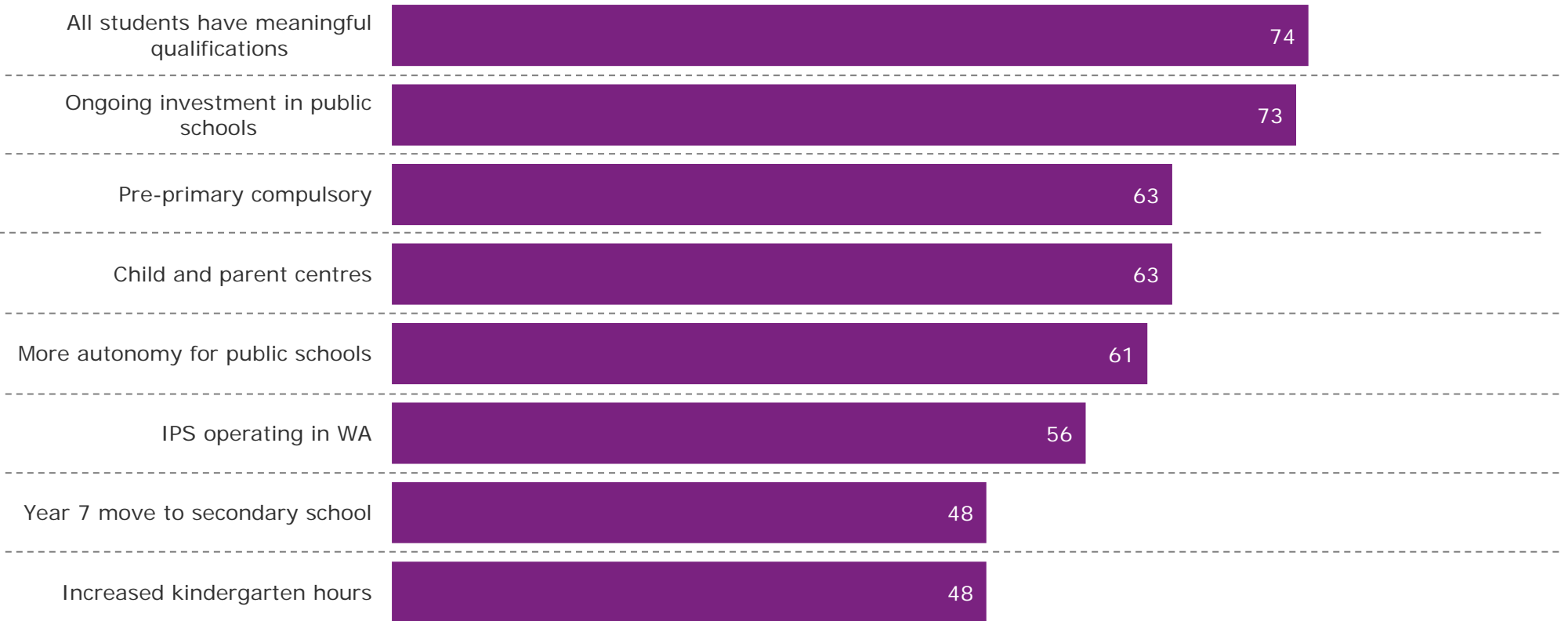
Despite relatively low levels of awareness and knowledge about the changes / initiatives, they are likely to have a **positive impact** on perceptions of public schools among all three groups. This indicates that increasing awareness and knowledge of the changes / initiatives are likely to **drive positive perceptions of public schools**.



SOURCE: J3a. To what extent do these changes and initiatives impact on your perception of public schools in WA?
 J3b. To what extent do these changes and initiatives impact on your perception of private schools in WA?
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

While support for the changes / initiatives is relatively high, there is still over a quarter of the general population who do not support the changes / initiatives, with more than half unsupportive of the **Year 7 move** and **increased kindergarten hours**.

Support of current educational changes / initiatives
(net 6 – 10)(%)



■ General Population

SOURCE: A2/B2/D2/E2/F2/G2/H2/I2. To what extent do you support...
BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Higher knowledge about an initiative is positively related to higher support for half of the initiatives...

...indicating that increasing communications around these changes / initiatives is likely to **drive higher support for the changes / initiatives.**

Knowledge vs. support of current educational changes / initiatives (%)

Knowledge of initiative (6-10/10)	High support of initiative (6-10/10)	Low support of initiative (0-4/10)
Year 7 move to secondary school	49	47
IPS operating in WA	38	22
Pre-primary compulsory	52	28
More autonomy for public schools	32	25
Ongoing investment in public schools	35	9
Increased kindergarten hours	40	28
All students have meaningful qualifications	27	20
Child and parent centres	20	16

SOURCE: A3/B3/D3/E3/F3/G3/H3/I3. If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with a high level of knowledge
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

Is there a need for a communications campaign?

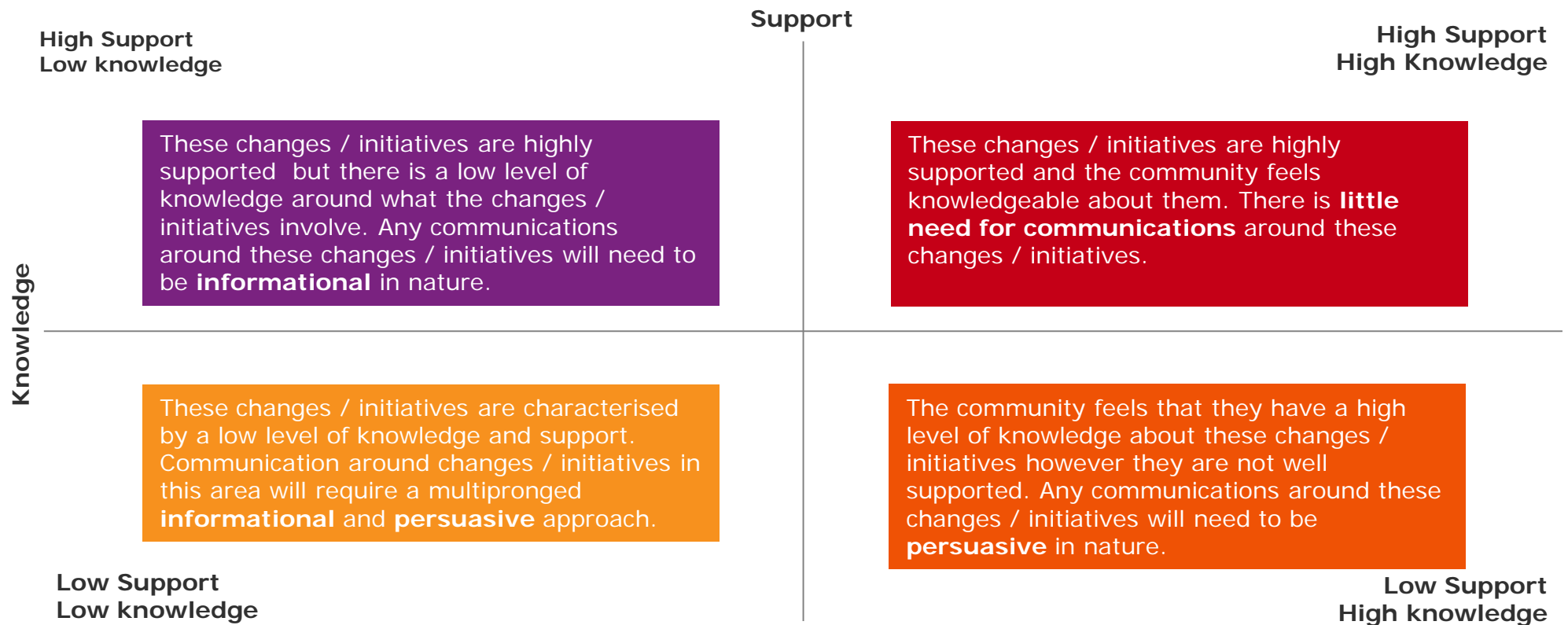
The findings reveal that:

- There is a relatively **low level of awareness** about the changes / initiatives and the overall reform of school education, coupled with a **low level of knowledge** about the changes / initiatives among the general community.
- Awareness and knowledge of the changes / initiatives are likely to **drive positive perceptions of public schools**.
- While support for some of these changes / initiatives is relatively high, there remains a **core of the general population who are currently unsupportive**.
- Increasing knowledge around a number of these changes / initiatives is likely to **drive higher support for the changes / initiatives**.

Therefore there is evidence that **there is need for a communications campaign around these changes / initiatives** among the general community.

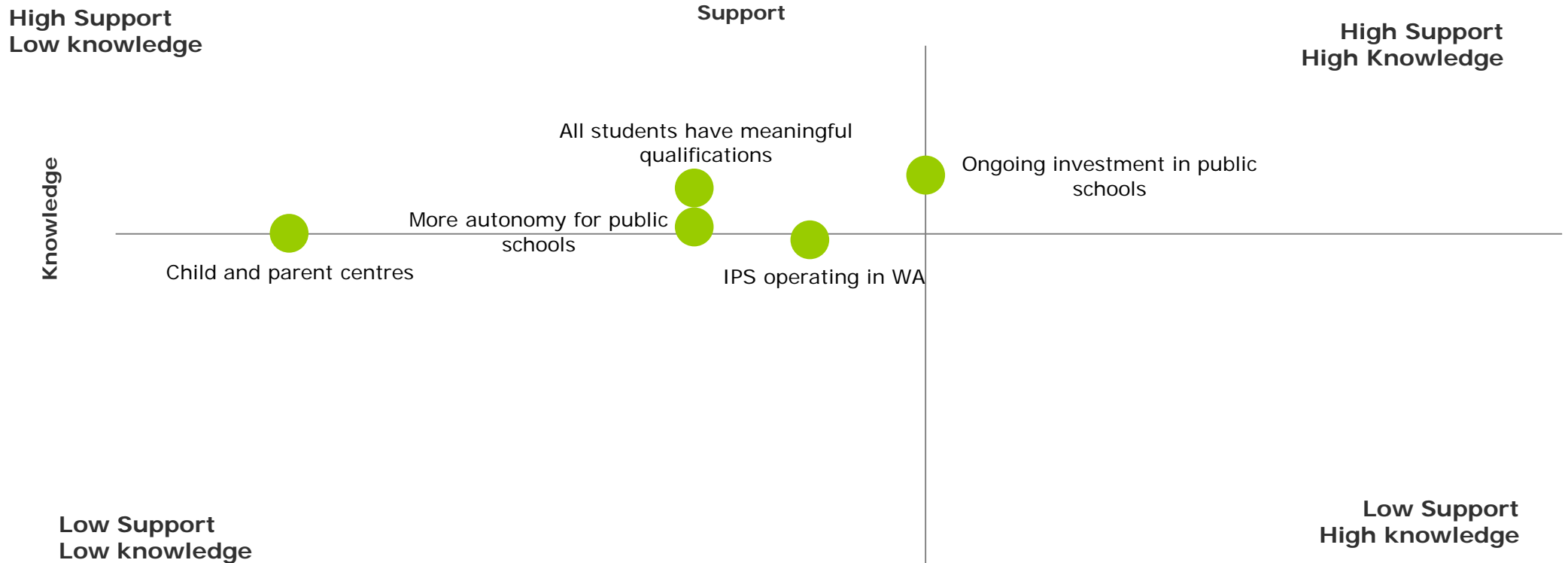
However, what should be the focus of the campaign?

Mapping **knowledge** against **support** reveals where the communication needs lie for each initiative.



There are five initiatives that are highly supported by the community, but about which there is a low level of knowledge.

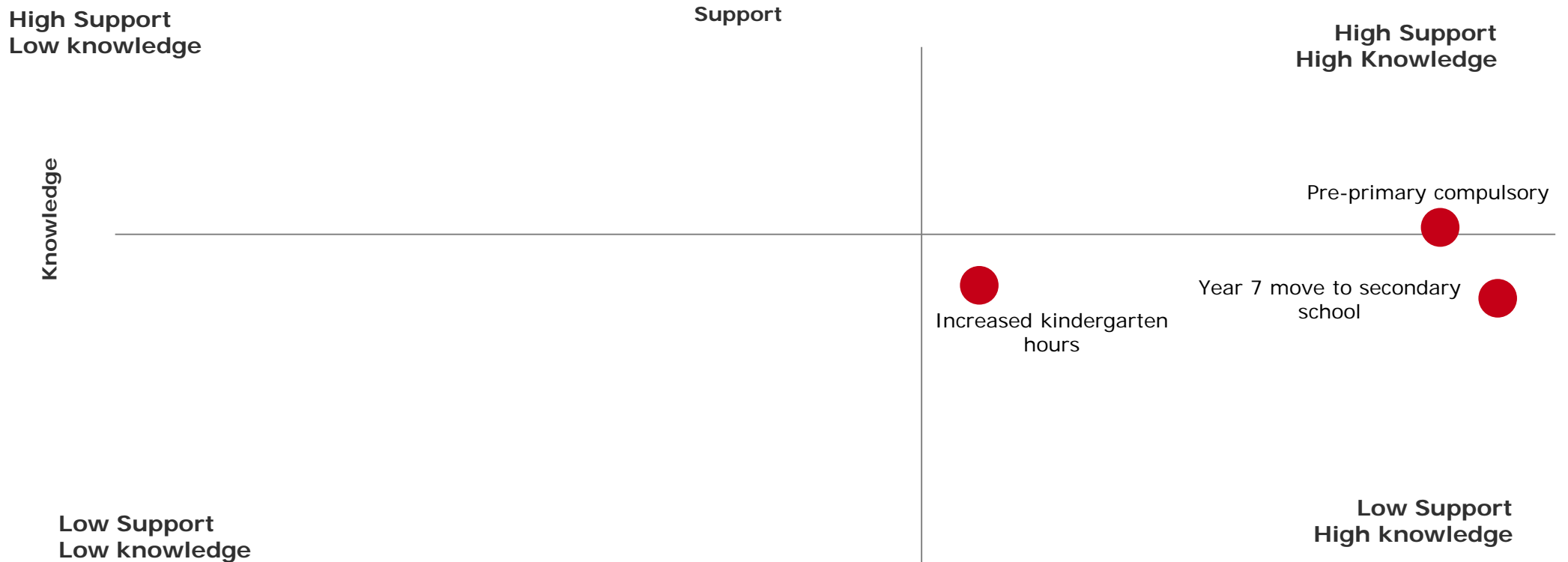
An **informational campaign** around these initiatives is likely to assist in increasing knowledge, thereby further increasing support and positive perceptions of public schooling in WA.



SOURCE:
x2. To what extent do you support this?
x3. If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with...
BASE : n=583

There is a relative lack of support around making pre-primary compulsory, increased kindergarten hours and the Year 7 move to secondary school among the general community.

This indicates the **need for a persuasive campaign targeting these specific initiatives.**



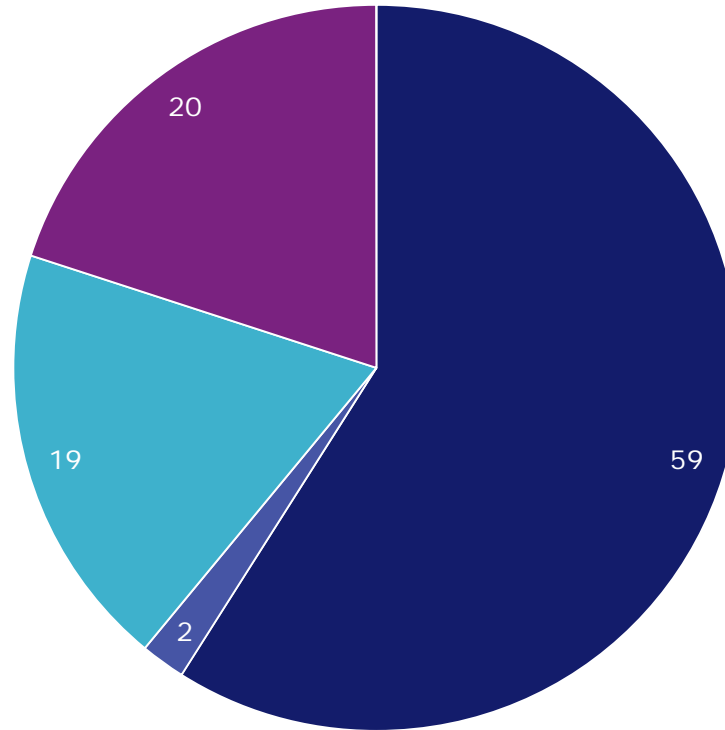
SOURCE:
x2. To what extent do you support this?
x3. If you were chatting about this, would you be speaking with...
BASE : n=583

4

Are there any negative issues arising from the changes / initiatives?



The majority of the community (59%) have **no concerns about the changes / initiatives** taking place.

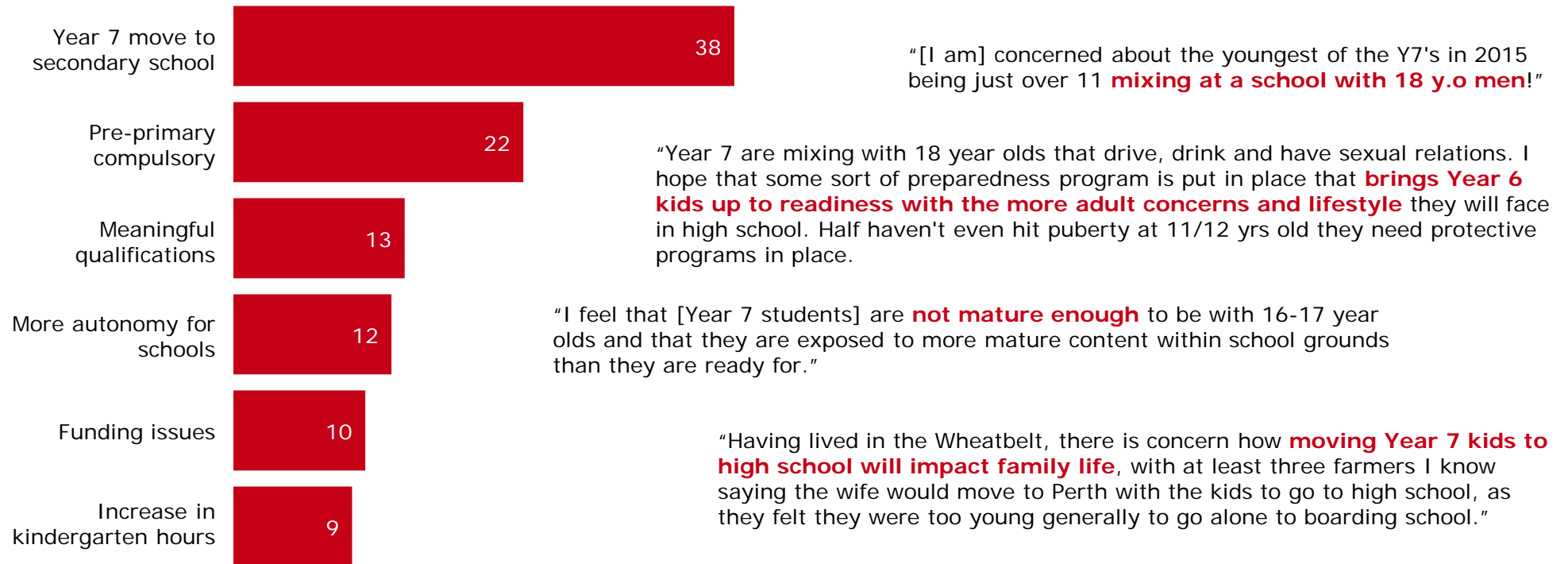


■ No concerns about reforms ■ Positive comments about reforms ■ Concerns about reforms ■ Other comments

SOURCE: J5. Do you have any concerns about these changes and initiatives?
BASE: All respondents n=567

Of those who are concerned, the biggest concern around the changes / initiatives is the **Year 7 move to secondary school**, with many parents feeling that children are not ready to move to secondary school, as well as having concerns around safety.

Concerns about changes / initiatives - those concerned about the changes /initiatives (%)

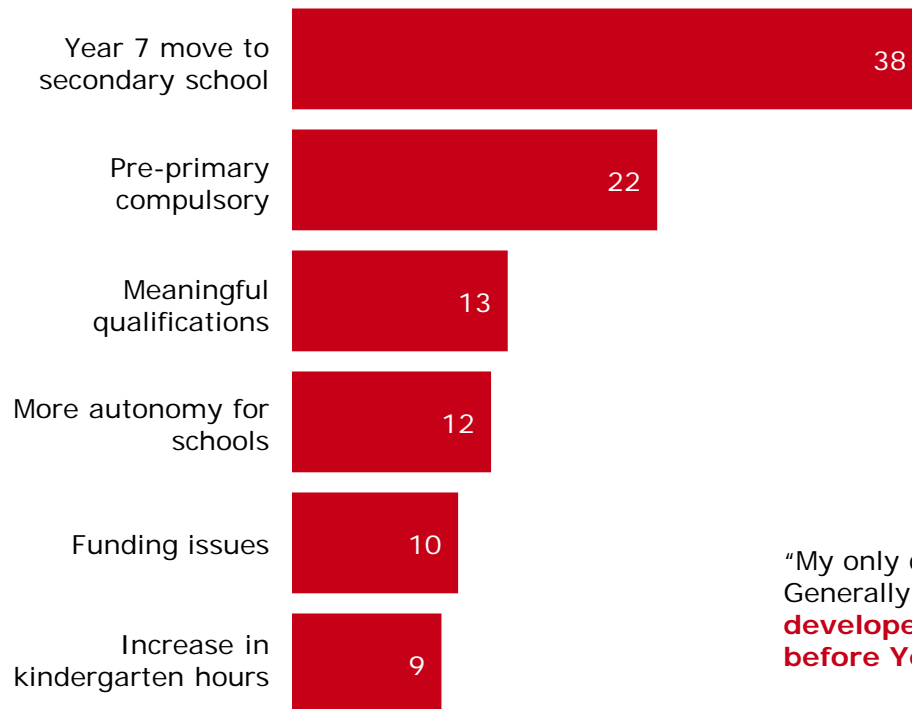


SOURCE: J5. Do you have any concerns about these changes and initiatives?

BASE: Those concerned about the changes and initiatives n=107

Around one quarter of those concerned about the changes / initiatives cite **making pre-primary compulsory** as a key concern, with concerns centering on a child's readiness and ability to cope with school before Year 1.

Concerns about changes / initiatives - those concerned about the changes / initiatives (%)



I have concerns about individual **children's ability to cope with extra hours** in kindy & pre school

Children spend many years in education. I do not agree with increasing hours spent in school during the formative years. **Children learn more interacting with family.**

"My only concerns are with compulsory pre-primary. Generally speaking, **children are not sufficiently developed mentally and physically to attend school before Year 1.**"

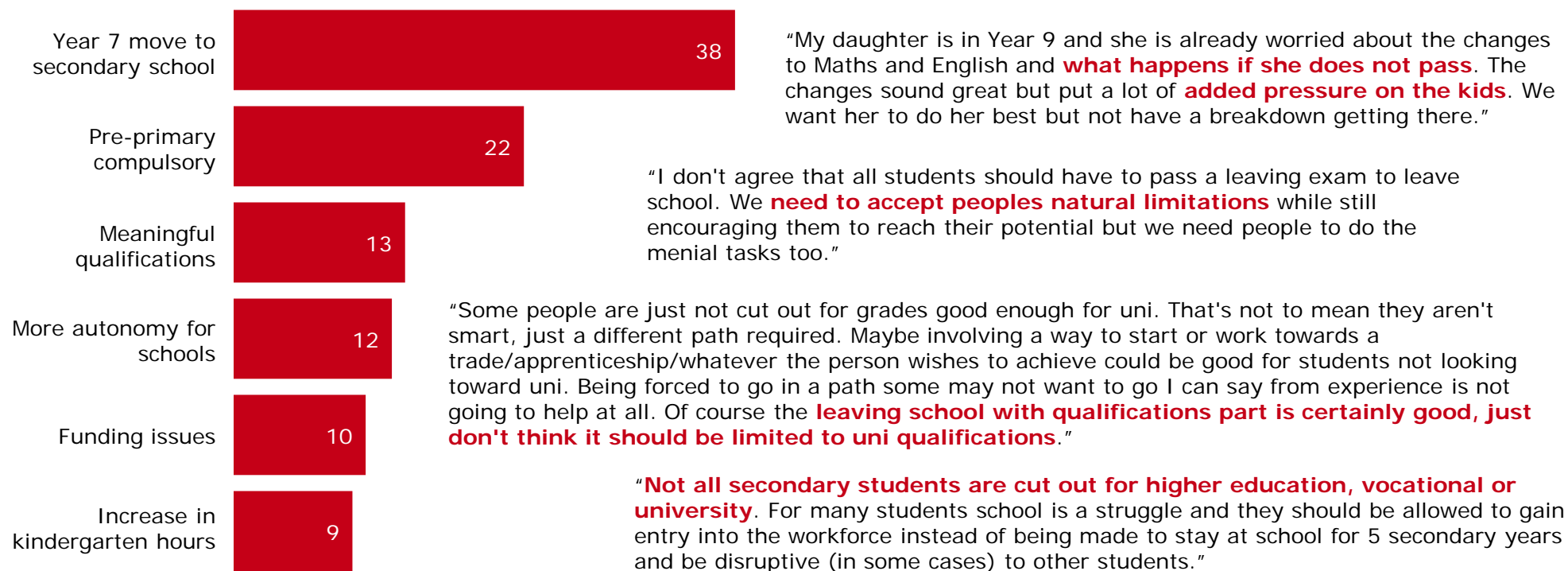
SOURCE: J5. Do you have any concerns about these changes and initiatives?

BASE: Those concerned about the changes and initiatives n=107

Key concerns around the **meaningful qualifications** initiative focus on not all students having the ability to leave school with a meaningful qualification, as well as concerns around what happens to those students who don't achieve the requirements.

There appear to be a some misconceptions around this initiative, likely to be a result of a low level of awareness of this initiative among the community.

Concerns about changes /initiatives -
those concerned about the changes /initiatives (%)



SOURCE: J5. Do you have any concerns about these changes and initiatives?

BASE: Those concerned about the changes and initiatives n=107

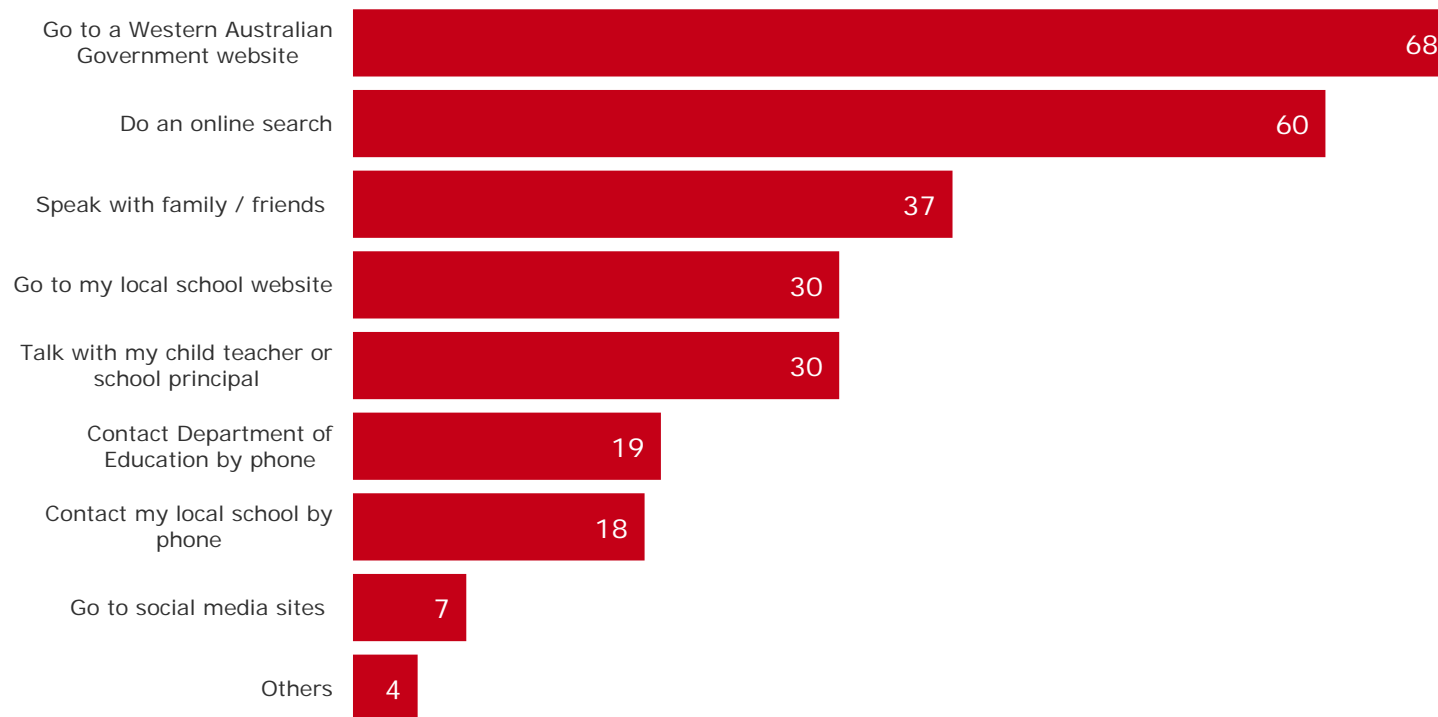
5

Where would the community go to get **further information** about the changes / initiatives?



The community indicates that they would be most likely to go to a Western Australian Government website, do a general online search or use word of mouth to search for more information about the changes / initiatives. This indicates the importance of a **strong digital strategy**, which includes search engine optimisation and continual investment in the website.

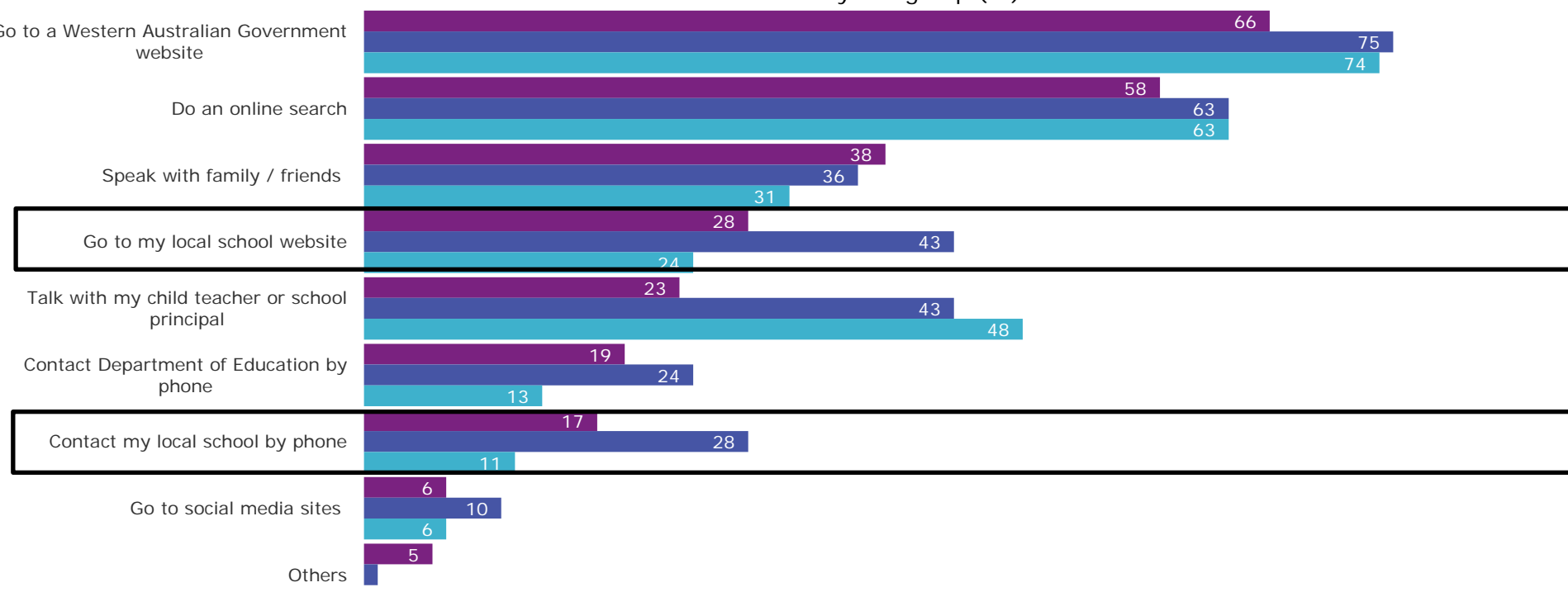
Channels of information,
total sample (%)



SOURCE: J4. If you were looking for more information about any of the above changes and initiatives, which of the following would you be most likely to do?
BASE: Total n=583

Public parents are more likely to **connect with their local school** when seeking further information, compared to private parents or the community.

Channels of information, by sub group (%)



■ General Population

■ Parents – Public School

■ Parents – Private School

SOURCE: J4. If you were looking for more information about any of the above changes and initiatives, which of the following would you be most likely to do?
 BASE: General Population n=413; Parents – Public n=106; Parent – Private n=62

6

Conclusions and Recommendations



Key conclusions and recommendations



Insights – the need for a campaign

- There is strong support by the community for an overall reform of school education, however there is a low level of awareness and knowledge of the changes / initiatives currently taking place.
- While support for some of these changes / initiatives is relatively high, there remains a core of the general population who are currently unsupportive.

Recommendations

- Increasing awareness of the changes / initiatives through a communications campaign is likely to drive positive perceptions of public schools.
- Increasing knowledge around a number of these changes / initiatives is likely to drive higher support for the changes / initiatives.

Key conclusions and recommendations



Insights – campaign type

- There are five changes / initiatives that are highly supported by the community, but about which there is a low level of knowledge:
 - All students have meaningful qualifications
 - More autonomy for public schools
 - Child and parent centres
 - Ongoing investment in public schools
 - Independent Public Schools operating in WA

- There is a relative lack of support among the general community around:
 - making pre-primary compulsory,
 - increased kindergarten hours and
 - the Year 7 move to secondary school

Recommendations

- An informational campaign around these changes / initiatives is likely to assist in increasing awareness and knowledge, thereby increasing support and positive perceptions of public schooling in WA.

- There is the need for a persuasive campaign targeting these specific changes / initiatives.

Key conclusions and recommendations



Insights – campaign messaging

- The biggest concern around the changes / initiatives is the **Year 7 move to secondary school**, with many parents feeling that children are not ready to move to secondary school, as well as having concerns around safety.
- Of those concerned about **making pre-primary compulsory**, concerns center on a child's readiness and ability to cope with school before Year 1.
- Key concerns around the **meaningful qualifications** initiative focus on not all students having the ability to leave school with a meaningful qualification, as well as concerns around what happens to those students who don't achieve the requirements.

Recommendations

- Targeting these concerns specifically will assist in persuading the general community about the benefits of these changes / initiatives.
- There is also a need to combat misconceptions around the meaningful qualification initiative such as what is classified as a 'meaningful qualification' and what impact / change this will make for students.

The logo consists of a solid magenta square. In the bottom right corner of this square, the letters "TNS" are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

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