

IVI Institute

Fertility Barometer

UK

COUNTRY REPORT OCTOBER 2026

Research conducted by GfK, a NielsenIQ company

Published by IVI Institute in partnership with IVI Fertility and CREATE Fertility



IVI Fertility



CREATE
Fertility



IVI Institute

About the study

The IVI Institute Fertility Barometer

Fertility is an urgent social and public health issue, yet it is still discussed with little evidence on what people themselves think, want and fear. The IVI Institute Fertility Barometer was created to close that gap.

The study examines how people think about fertility, parenthood and family formation, and the barriers that shape reproductive decisions today. It was conducted by GfK, a NielsenIQ company, in collaboration with the member brands of IVI Institute and spans nine countries. Participating brands: IVI Fertility, Everleap Fertility, ART Fertility, Genera, Create Fertility, LIVIO, and TRIO Clinics.

This report sets out findings for the UK and what they reveal about the future of family planning and motherhood.

IVI INSTITUTE Global leader in reproductive medicine

200+

locations in 15 countries

5

basic research centers

100+

babies born every day

Methodology

STUDY POPULATION

Women aged 19–49 years old
UK (~14.1M)

SAMPLE SIZE

4,000 interviews

SURVEY DATES

June 10 – July 3, 2026

SELECTION CRITERIA

Nationally representative sample, with quotas on age, region and education

METHODOLOGY

Online interviews (Computer Assisted Web Interviews)

MARGIN OF ERROR

±1.55 percentage points at the 95% confidence level
(p=q=50%)

Executive summary – the intention gap

Women still want children, but they start later and have fewer children than they wanted

01 ASPIRATION

Motherhood is still a mainstream goal — 81% of women 19–49 are already mothers or want to be mothers and 71% say it is an important goal for them

02 THE GAP

Women start later and have fewer children than they wanted — 38% start later than desired, by about six years on average, and want 2.9 children against the 2.0 they have

03 ACCELERATION

The age of first child has significantly increased over the last 3 decades — From 21 years old to 28 years old at the time of first child, this increase is the result of a mix of the age of intent increasing, as well as a further delay experienced beyond what women intended

04 WHY LATER

The delay is circumstantial, not a change of heart — women point to finding the right partner, feeling ready and economic issues as reasons to wait to start having children

Executive summary — the support gap

The toll is heavy and support is valued, but workplace and emotional support are not reliably offered

05 INFERTILITY

Infertility reaches one woman in five — 2.8M have experienced it, ~620,000 face it now

06 SECONDARY INFERTILITY

It also strikes after a first child — 9% (~1.3M) struggled to conceive again after having had a baby

07 STIGMA

The silence has lifted — 88% say they would discuss the issue with family and friends if they had fertility issues

08 EMOTIONAL TOLL

The toll is heavy and widely felt — 68% of women who experienced infertility rate the impact at 7 or higher out of 10, and during treatment 86% report negative emotions against 50% positive

09 SUPPORT GAP

Psychological support is wanted far more than it is offered — 84% rate it 7 or higher in importance, yet only 62% were offered it during treatment

Executive summary – the treatment gap

Few women who face difficulty conceiving ever reach fertility care

10 CONSULTATION

Women who suffer infertility do seek help, and early — 71% who experienced it consulted a professional, at 27, after 14 months of trying

11 TREATMENT GAP

IVF works, but few women reach it — only 44% receive any treatment and 17% start any IVF

12 BARRIERS AND BURDEN

Navigating fertility treatment is as much about trust and information as it is about cost — 95% of women who have experienced infertility cite reasons other than costs, with 72% highlighting lack of trust and information as barriers to treatment

13 OPPORTUNITY

Reproductive medicine can reverse the trend — 30% say the UK faces a fertility crisis, and treatment can help the ~620,000 women facing infertility now build the families they want

The UK fertility picture in eight numbers

IVI Institute Fertility Barometer – UK · 4,000 women aged 19–49

81%

Are mothers or want to be mothers and 71% consider motherhood an important life goal

38%

Have a child later than desired — and these have an average delay of about six years

2.9 → 2.0

children wanted versus children had — a shortfall of 0.9 per woman

2.8M
women

one in five have experienced infertility; ~620,000 are affected right now

17%

of women who experienced infertility in the past had any IVF treatment, despite the fact that 71% did consult a healthcare professional

95%

cite barriers other than cost to access treatment, with 72% focusing on lack of trust and information

68%

report a significant negative impact; 62% were offered psychological support during treatment, which 84% rate as important

2.7

fertility rate if every woman experiencing infertility now had a baby (620k)

Family formation: aspirations vs. reality

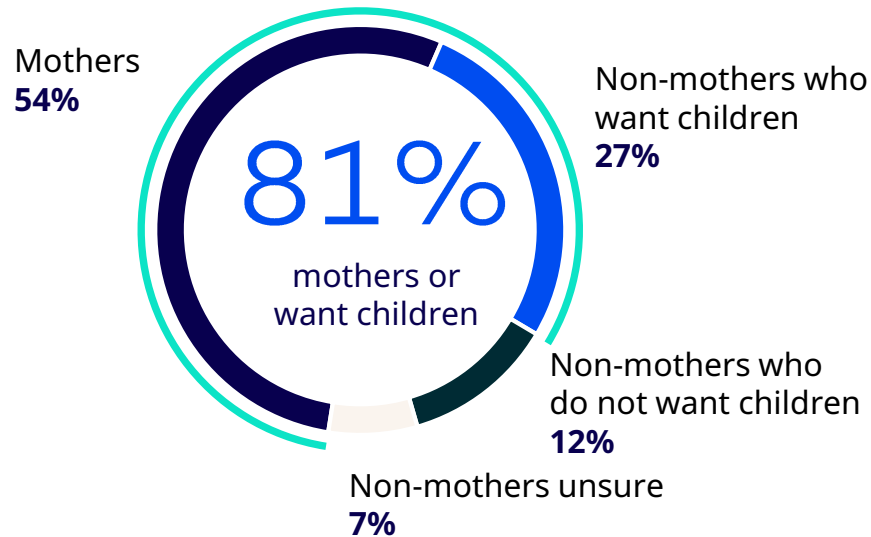
01

Motherhood remains a strong aspiration

8 in 10 UK women are already mothers or would like to have children, and 7 in 10 rate motherhood as an important life goal

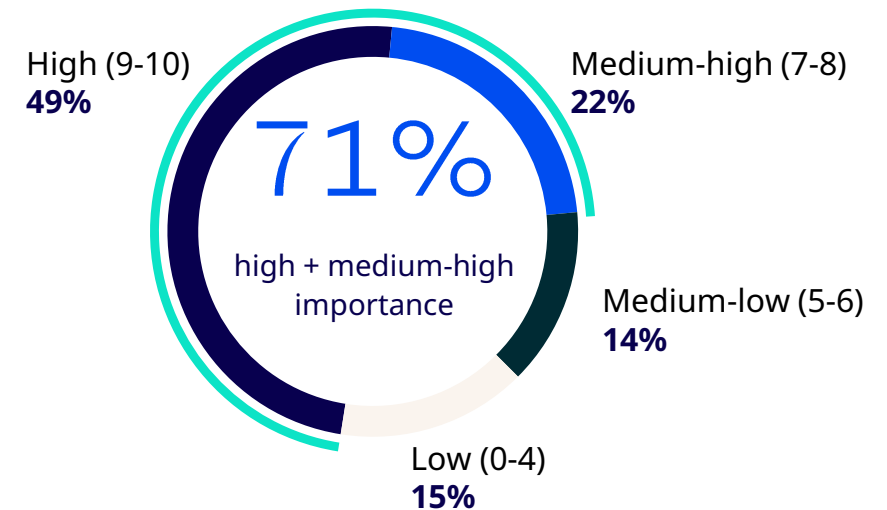
Current motherhood status

% of women (n=4,000)



Importance of becoming a mother

% of women (n=4,000)



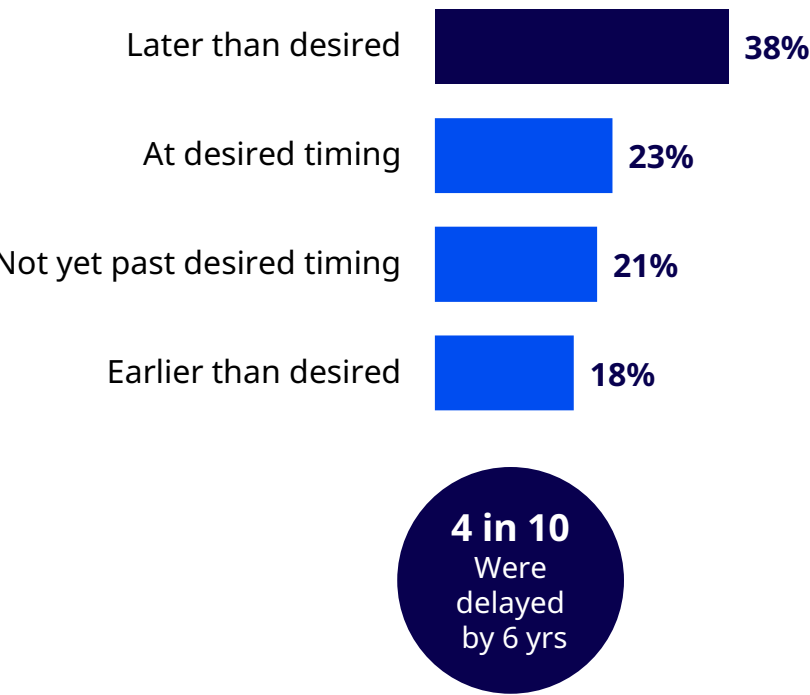
[Q] Thinking about the future, would you like to have more children?
[Q] Thinking about the future, would you like to have children?
[Q] How important is becoming a mother to you?

Later and fewer children than intended

Despite their strong desire for motherhood, their plans don't always turn out as intended

Timing of first child

% of women who have target age (n=2,517)



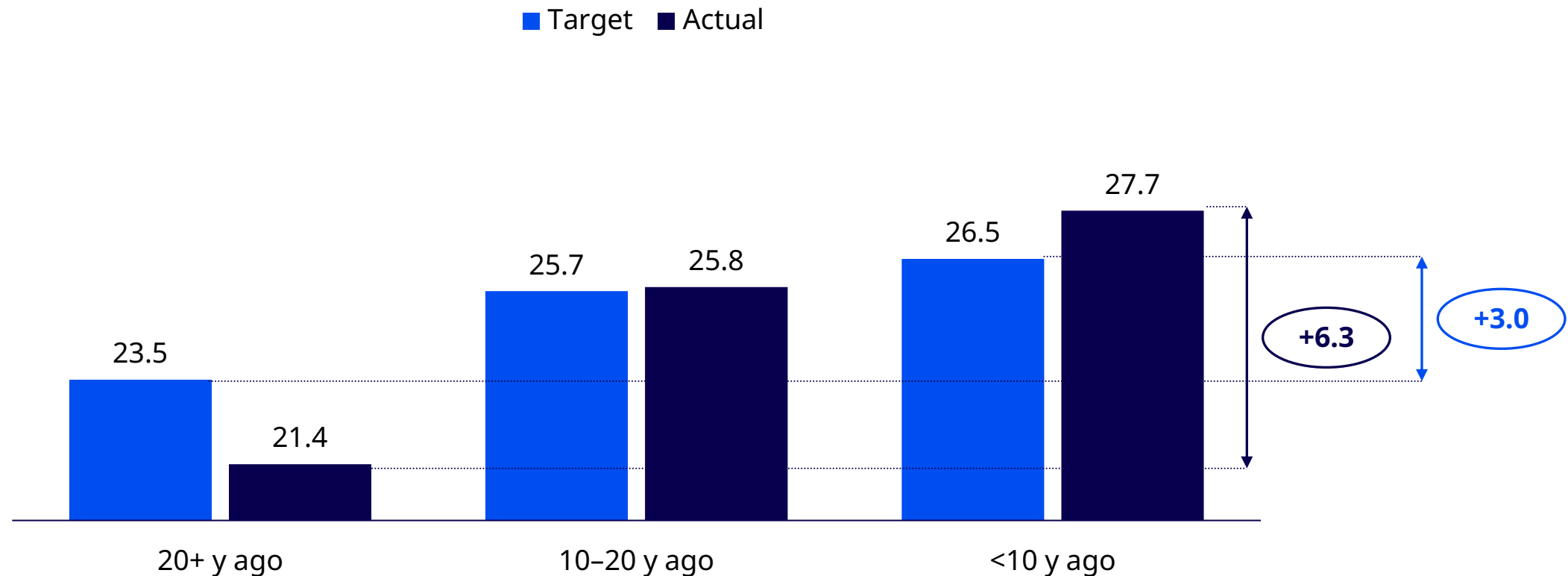
INTENDED VS. ACTUAL	TARGET	ACTUAL	GAP
CHILDREN PER MOTHER Mothers (n=2,145)	2.9	→ 2.0	0.9 fewer
AGE AT FIRST CHILD Age at first child — reported an ideal age + pregnancy in the past 10 years (n=831)	27	→ 28	1 yr later
AGE AT FIRST CHILD Later-than-desired group (n=926)	25	→ 31	6 yrs later

[Q] At what age would you like to or would you have liked to have gotten pregnant for the first time?
[Q] At what age did you get pregnant?
[Q] How many children would you like to have in total, including those you already have?

The increase of age at first child is accelerating

From 21 years old to 28 years old at the time of first child, this increase is the result of a mix of the age of intent increasing as well as this intent being realized even later than women wanted it to

Age at first child Target vs actual age, by time since having a baby (mothers n=1,683, by age group)

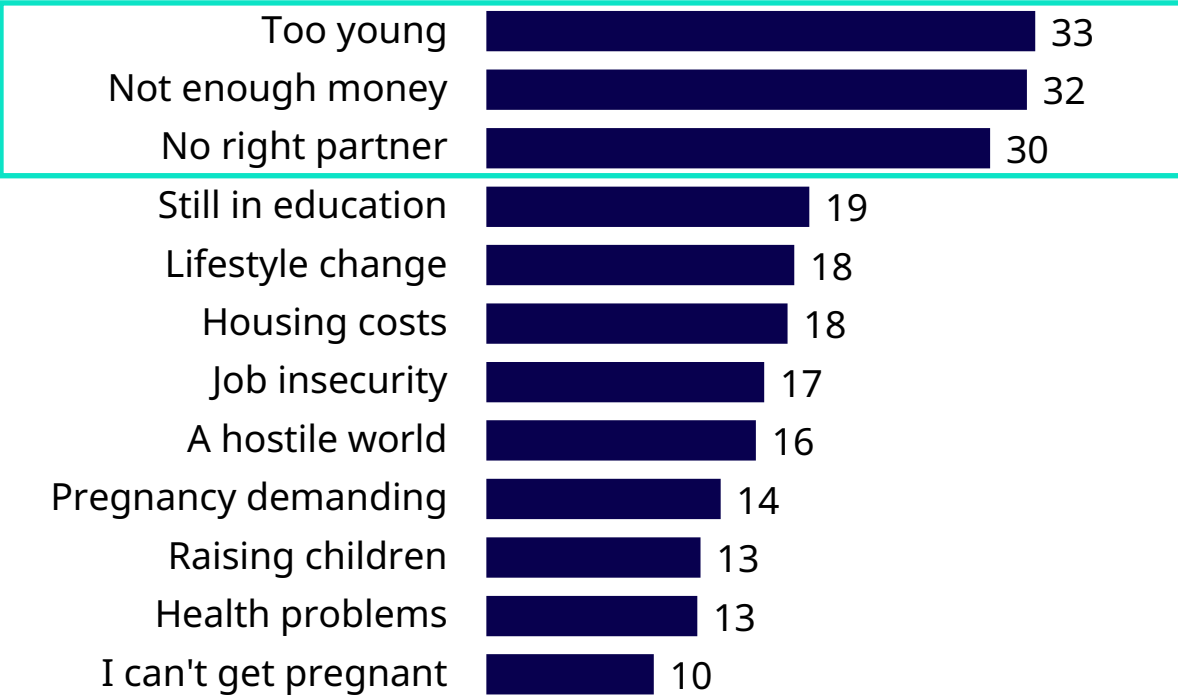


The delay is circumstantial, not intentional

The gate is readiness — a partner and money, not desire

Reasons they have not had children

Still waiting to become mothers, % | n=1,364



What made it the right time

Already mothers or pregnant, % | n=2,210



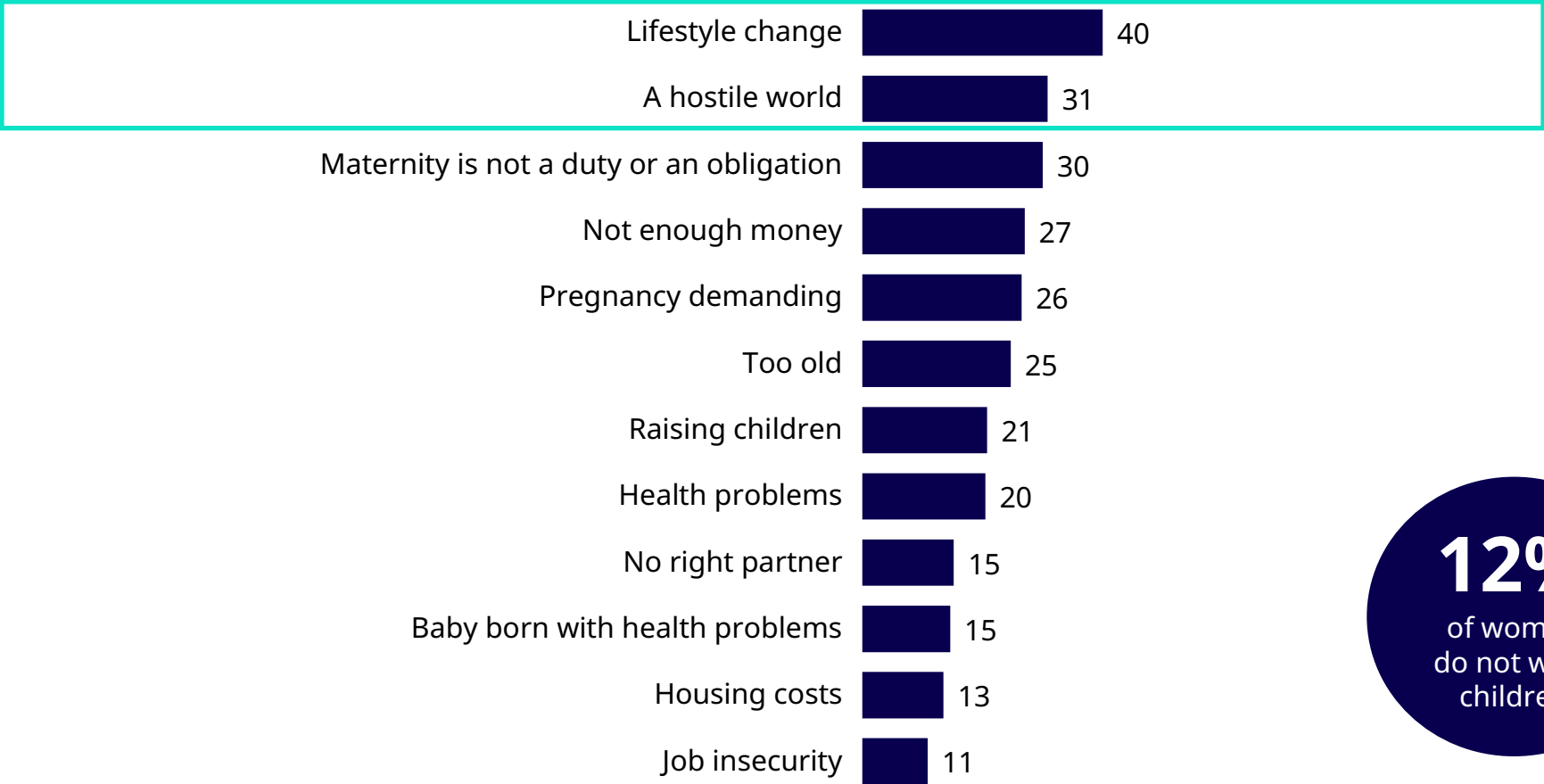
Top 12 responses shown per question
[Q] What are the reasons why you have not had children?
[Q] Did any of the following have an impact on deciding when the right time to become a mother was?

It is about identity, not obstacles

Among women who don't want children, personal identity and lifestyle outweigh practical barriers

Reasons not to become mothers

% of women (n=491)



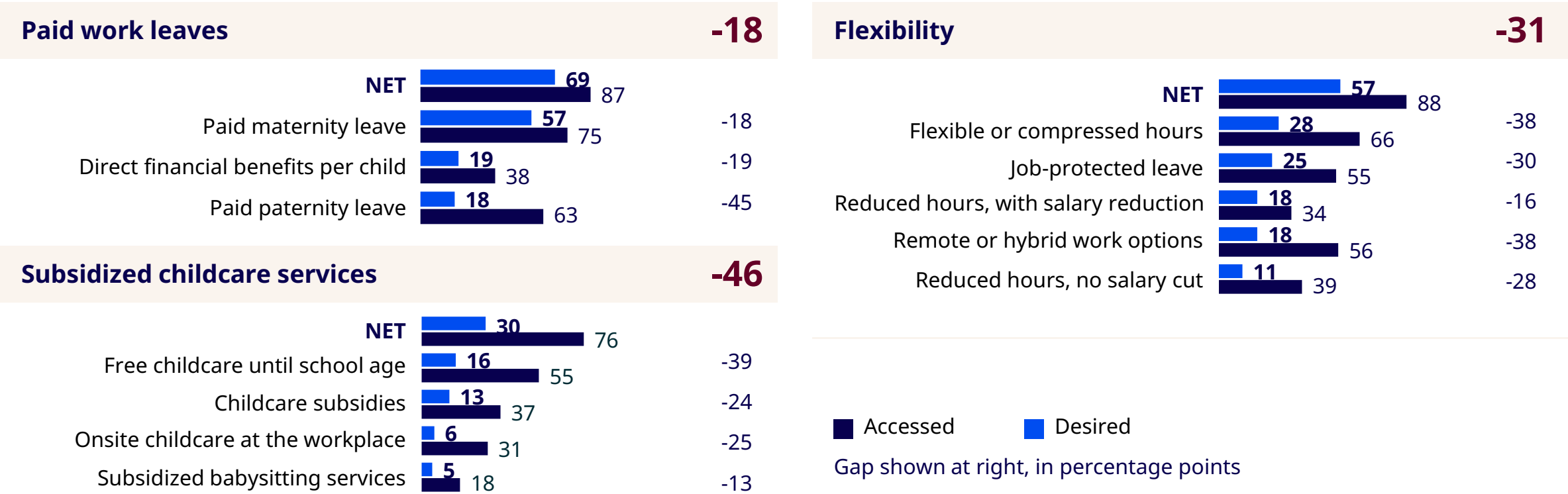
12%
of women
do not want
children

Leave is solved, flexibility and childcare are not

Mothers report significant shortfalls in access to childcare support and flexible work arrangements

Access vs. desire for family benefits

% of mothers (n=2,145)



Experiences with trying to conceive

02

One in five women have faced infertility

One in five UK women have experienced infertility; 4% are experiencing it right now

20% Lifetime infertility prevalence

2.8M women

have experienced infertility at some point



20% Yes

80% No

4% Last 12 months infertility prevalence

~620k women

are experiencing infertility right now



4% Yes

96% No

Secondary infertility accounts for 46% of cases

~1.3M UK women have faced infertility after a previous pregnancy; ~270,000 are affected now

Lifetime — ever experienced

2.8M

20% of UK women aged 19–49

Last 12 months — experiencing now

620k

4% of UK women aged 19–49

Primary infertility

~1.5M

11% — unable to achieve a first pregnancy

Primary infertility — experiencing now

~350k

~2% — trying now without success, no previous pregnancy

Secondary infertility

~1.3M

9% — unable to achieve another pregnancy

Secondary infertility — experiencing now

~270k

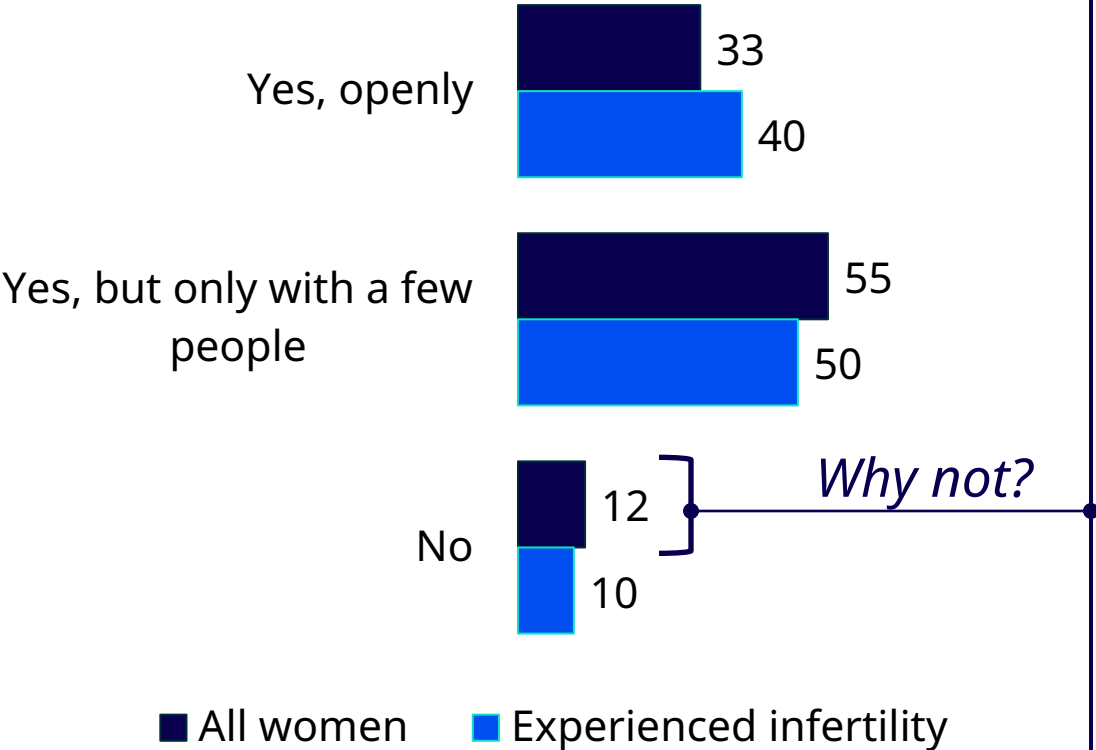
~2% — trying now without success after a previous pregnancy

The silence has largely lifted

Social acceptance of fertility conversations appears high, with 88–90% of women willing to discuss it

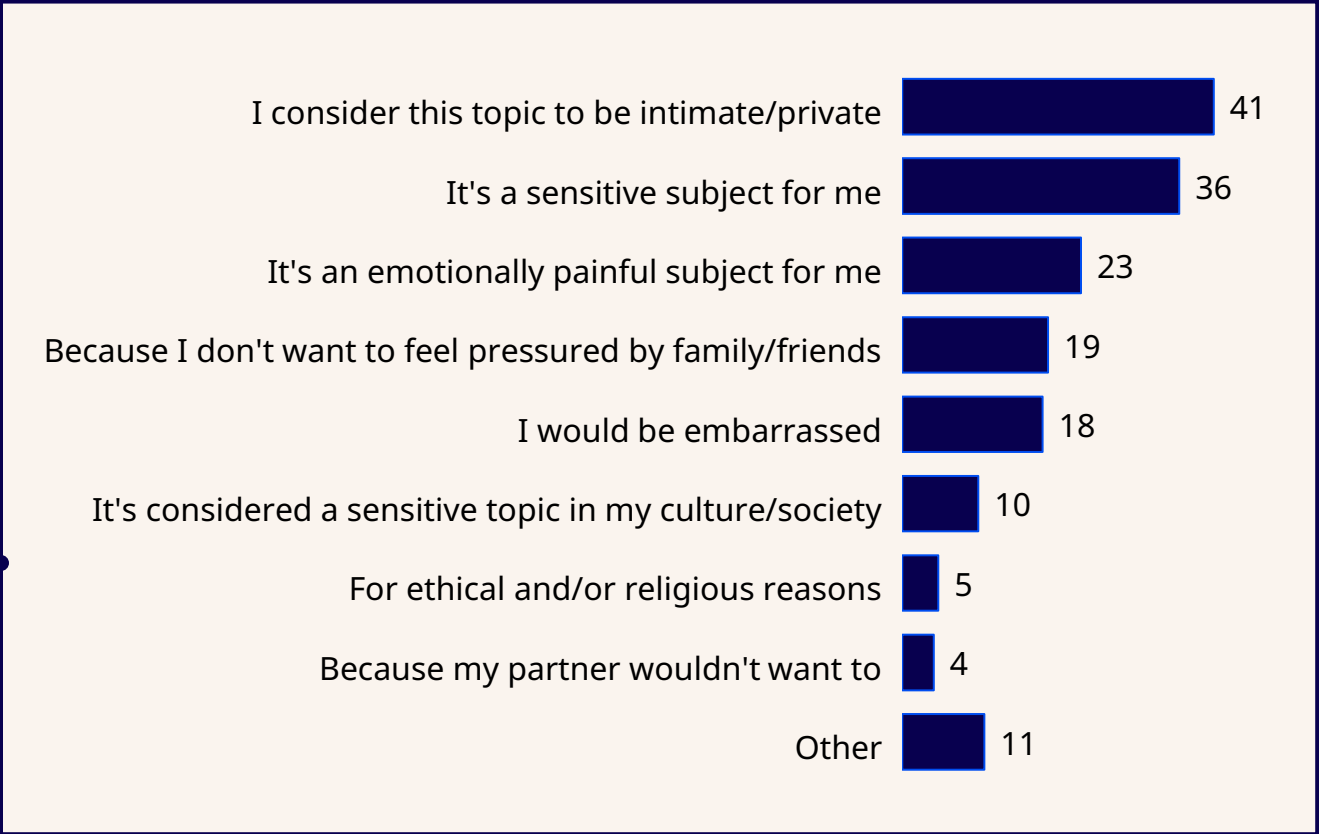
Willingness to discuss fertility problems

% of all women (n=4,000)
% of women who have experienced infertility (n=799)



Reasons for not talking about it

% who would not talk (n=480)



Emotional and financial impact of fertility challenges

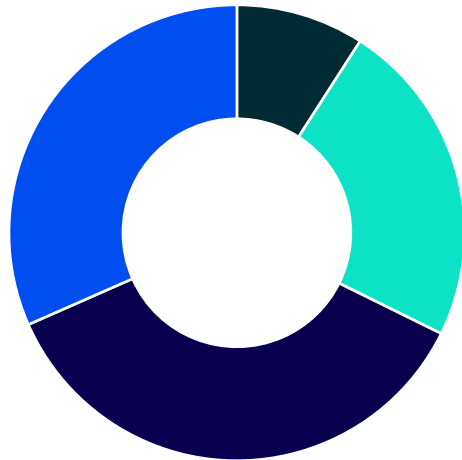
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Women who have experienced infertility report a significant negative impact on their lives

Impact of fertility challenges

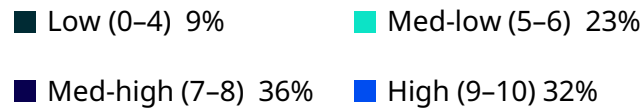
% who tried to conceive for 12 months without success (n=533)

0 = has not impacted me at all • 10 = has impacted me extremely negatively



68%

rate the impact of fertility challenges
at 7 or higher out of 10

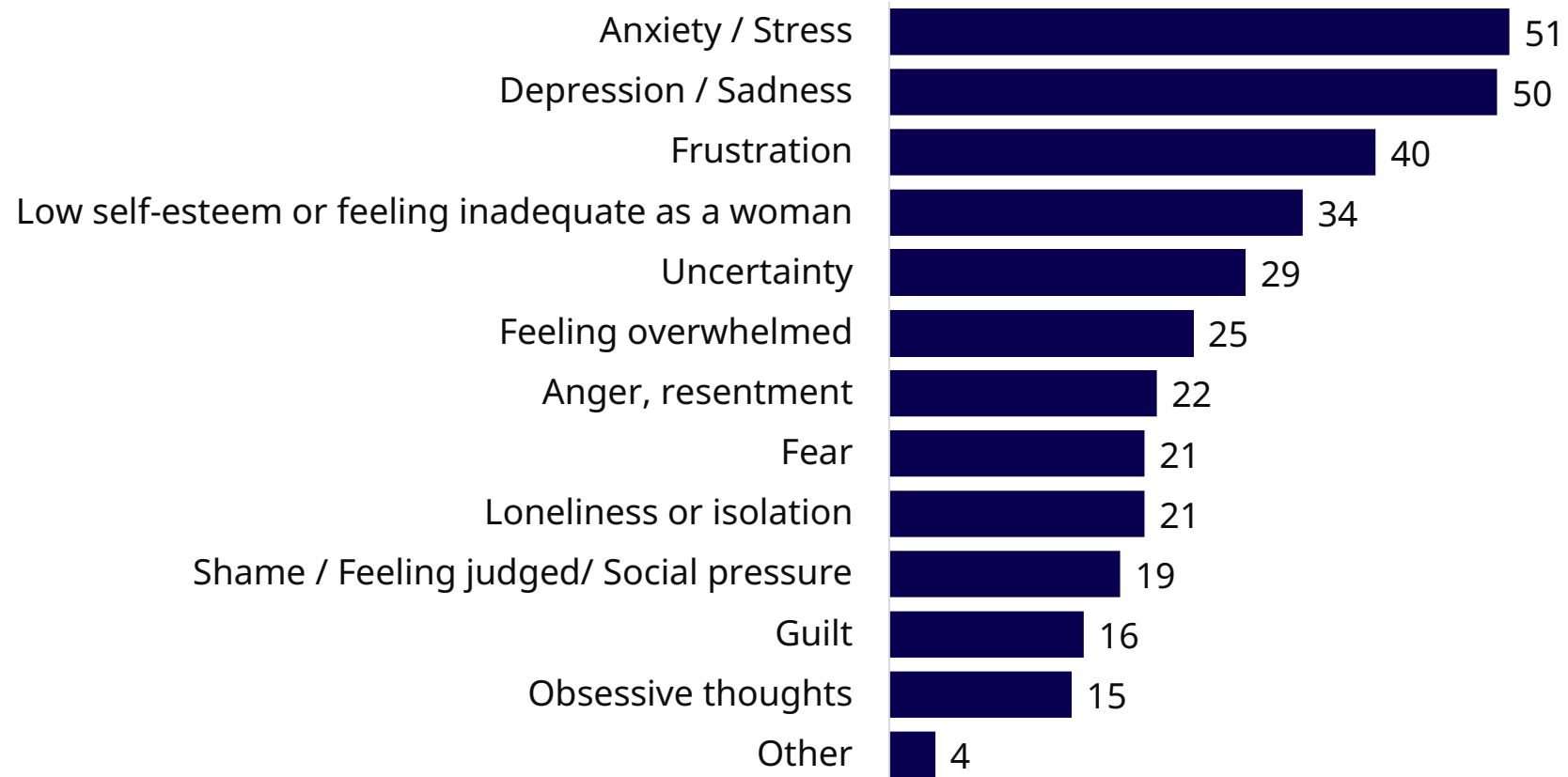


Emotions before care: getting pregnant

Fertility challenges generate a broad spectrum of emotional responses

Emotions experienced

% of women who have experienced infertility (tried to conceive for 12 months without success)
or had contact with healthcare professional (n=753)

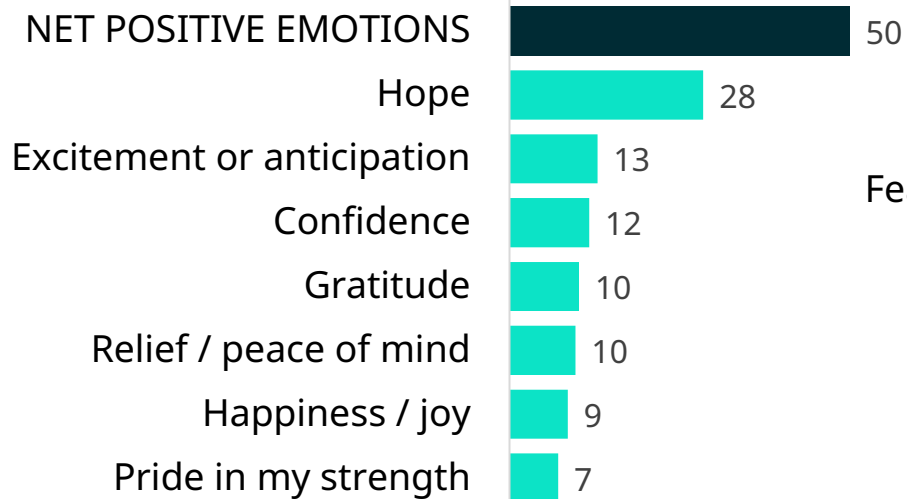


Emotions during care: fertility treatment

The fertility treatment journey is emotionally demanding, although hope remains a central part of it

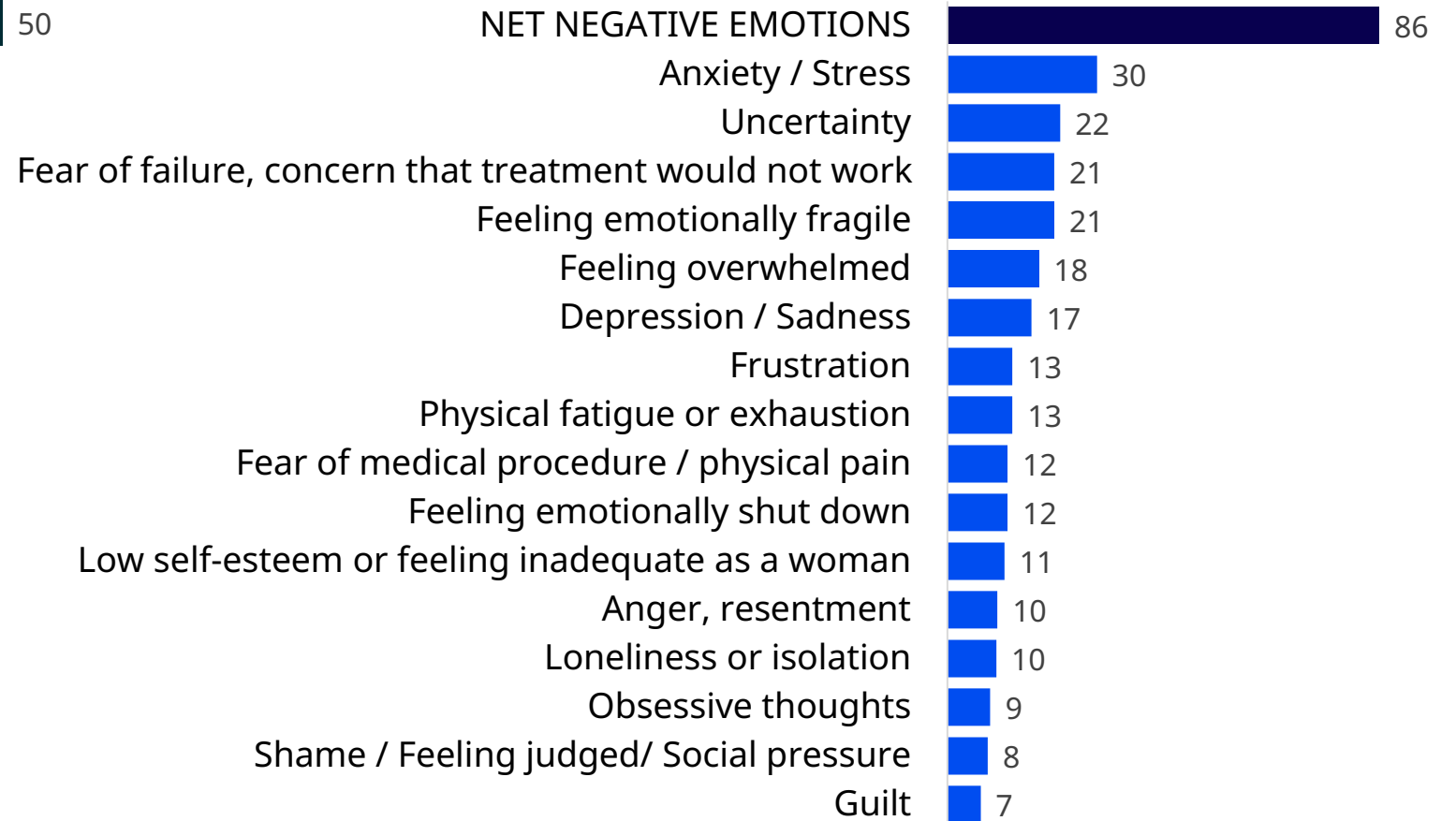
Positive emotions

% who received care (n=719)



Negative emotions

% who received care (n=719)

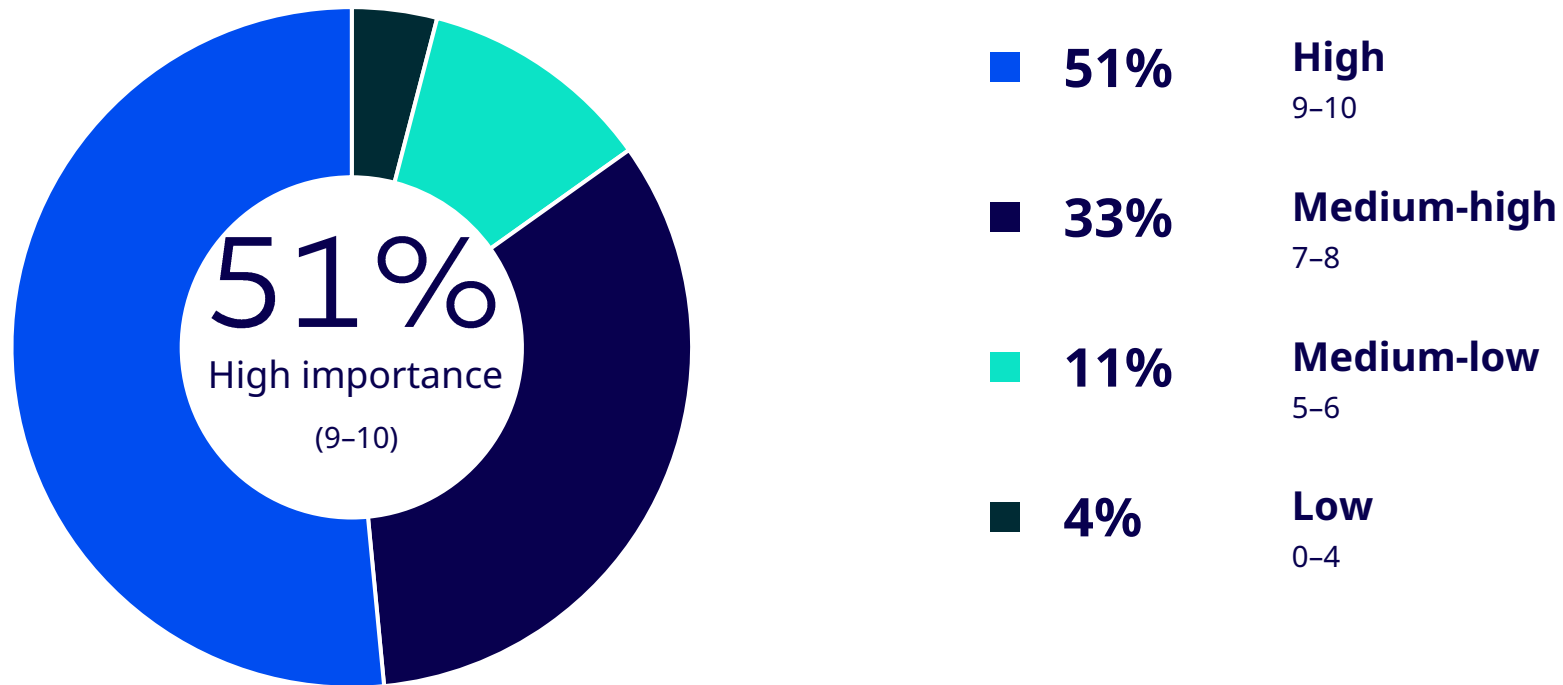


Importance of psychological support

Women view psychological support as a core component of fertility treatment

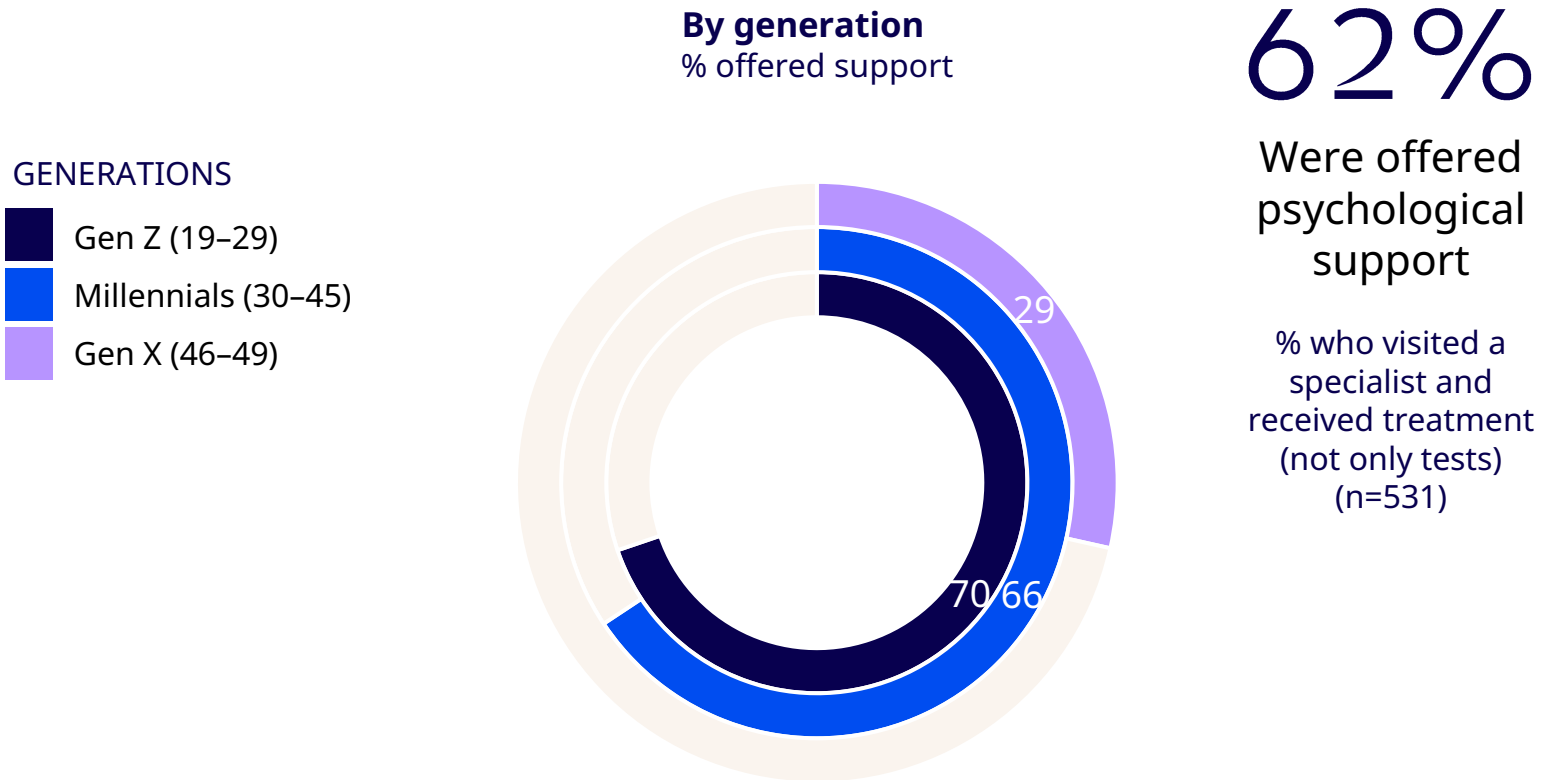
Importance of psychological support offered by the clinic

% who visited a specialist and received treatment (not only tests) (n=531)



Availability of psychological support in the clinic

Six out of ten women in the UK report being offered it. Access is notably higher among younger generations



Two added stressors in the fertility journey

Most women feel men take fertility less seriously; financial burden, while real, affects a smaller share

Men seen as less engaged

66%

of UK women believe men take fertility health less seriously than women; only 12% think men take it more seriously — reinforcing the feeling of carrying the burden alone

Financial burden

32%

of women who received care — one in three — report a high financial burden from procedures, medication, travel and lost income during fertility treatment

Fertility care and treatment pathways

04

Medicine leads, but not all roads are medical

Medical pathways lead the consideration set, but alternative family-building options also matter for a meaningful share of UK women

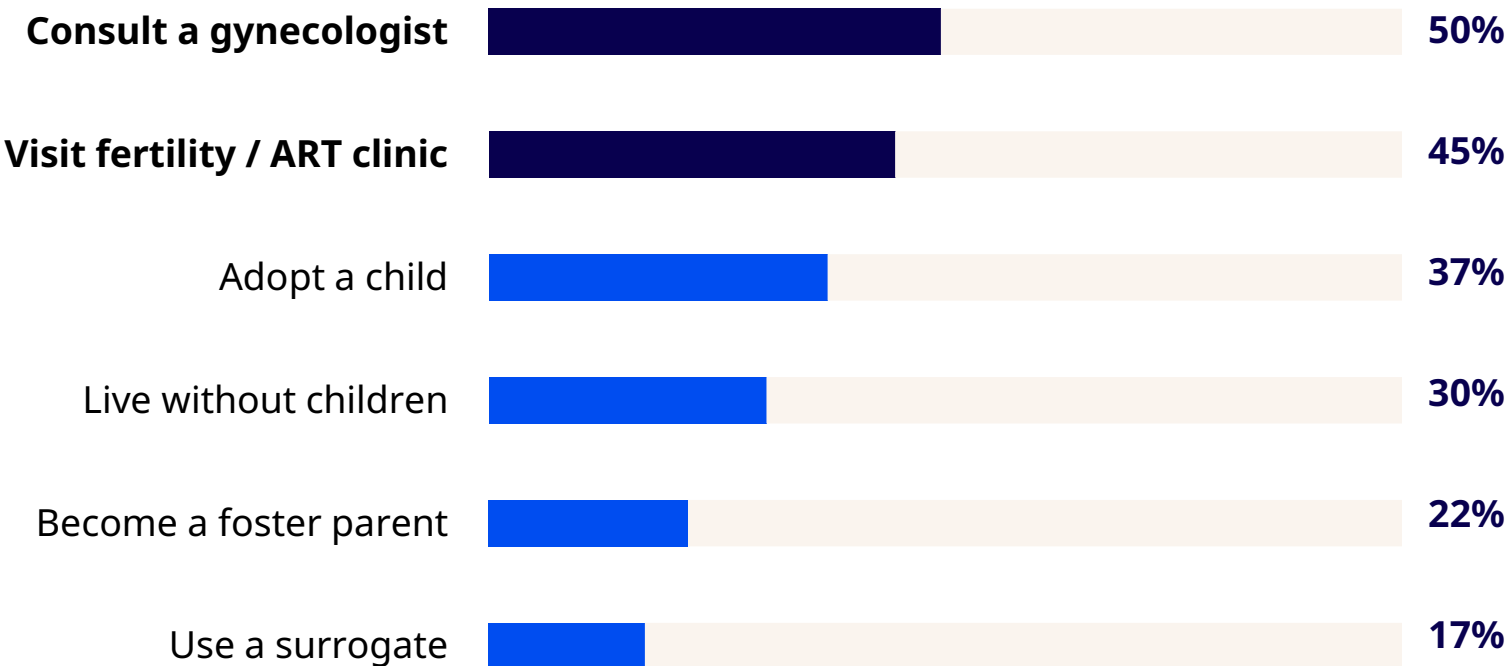
Preferred medical pathway
% of all women (n=4,000)

65%

would consider a
gynecologist or
fertility clinic

NET of the two medical
options

Specific options they would consider if faced with infertility issues
% of all women (n=4,000)



Women do consult, and they consult early

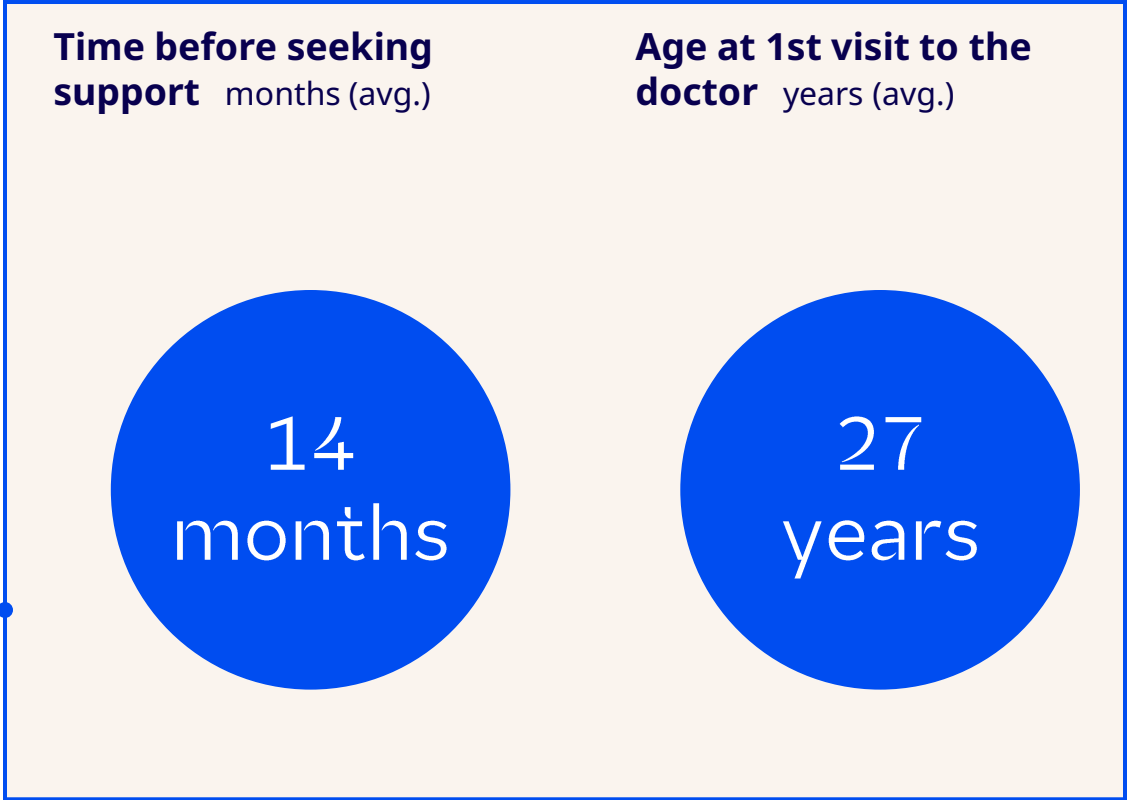
71% of women who have experienced infertility contacted a healthcare professional

Consulted a healthcare professional

% of all women (n=4,000)

% of women who have experienced infertility (n=799)

Have you ever consulted a doctor or other healthcare professional to discuss ways to help you get pregnant?

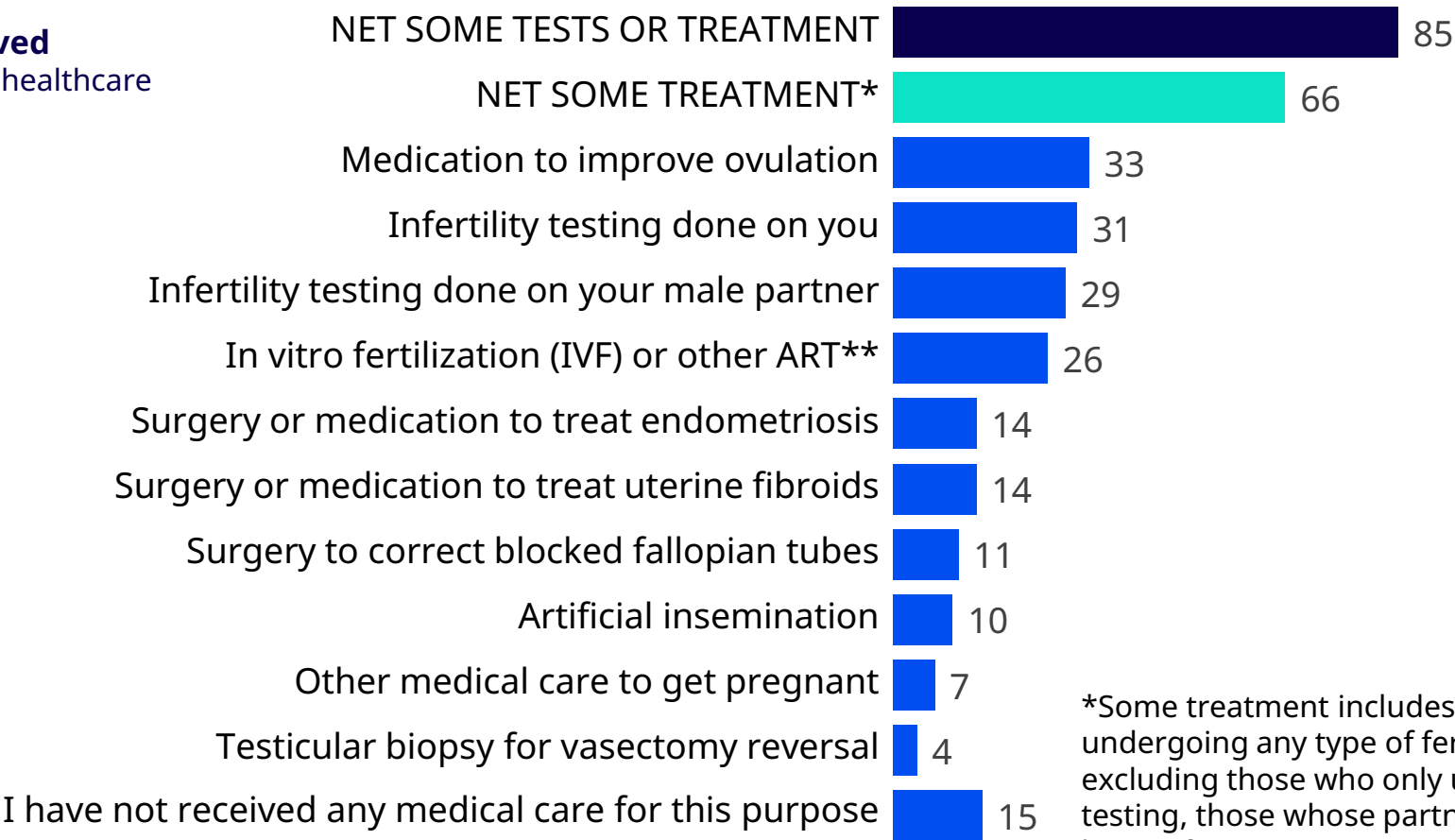


Services and treatments received

66% of women who ever experienced infertility and consulted a healthcare professional received some treatment

Services and treatments received

% of women who had contact with healthcare professionals and have ever experienced infertility (n=564)

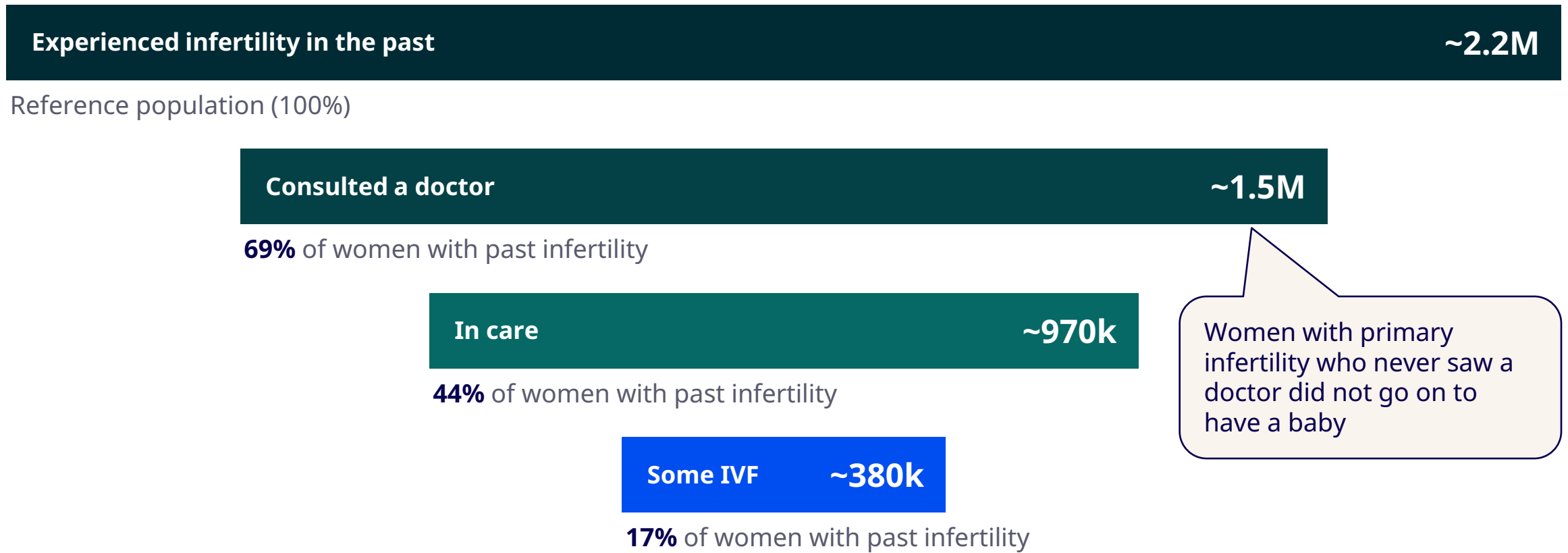


*Some treatment includes women who reported undergoing any type of fertility treatment, excluding those who only underwent fertility testing, those whose partner only had a testicular biopsy for vasectomy reversal, or those who reported only "Other" treatments.

**ART: Assisted Reproductive Technology
Base: [Q] Think about all the medical care you or your partner(s) have received throughout your lives to help you get pregnant. Which of the following services have you received?

69% of women with past infertility consult a doctor, but only 44% start any treatment

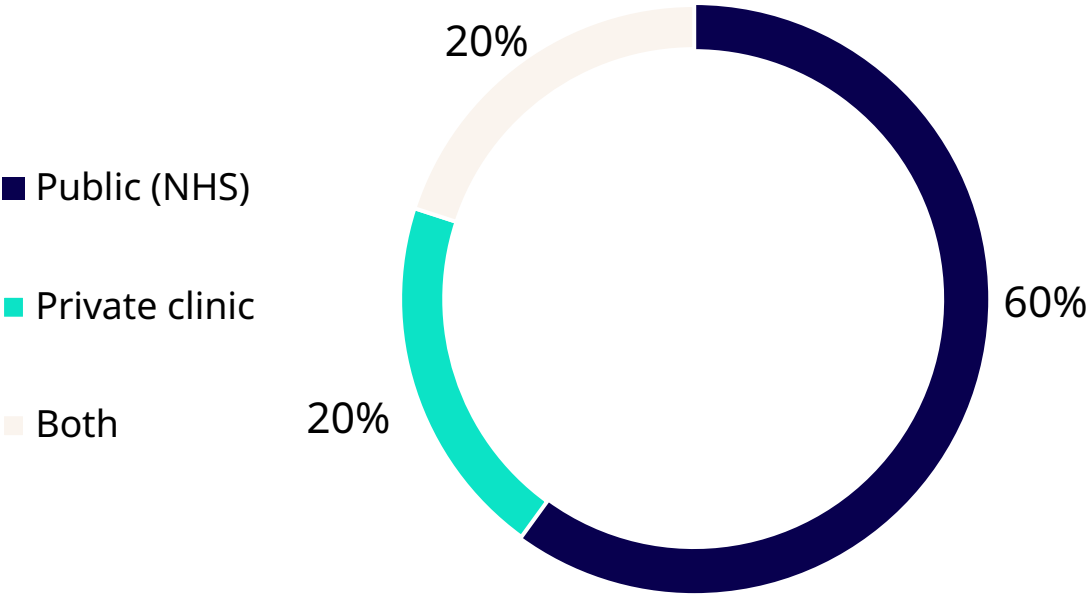
Only 17% of women who experienced infertility in the past underwent IVF



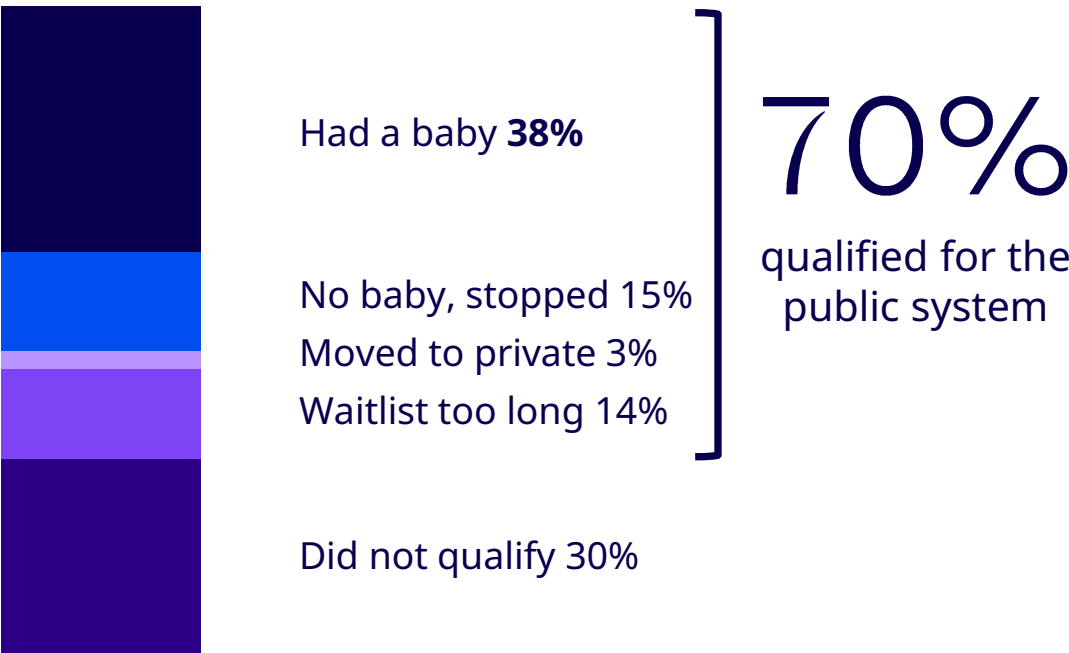
Public vs private medical care

The public system (NHS) is the main entry point: 80% start there, 20% go private only. Eligibility rules and waiting times interrupt many journeys — 30% were told they did not qualify

Where have you looked for medical care to get pregnant?
Contact with healthcare professionals (n=909)



Were you able to access assisted reproduction treatments through public health insurance?
Contact with the public system (public or both) and has received medical care (n=564)

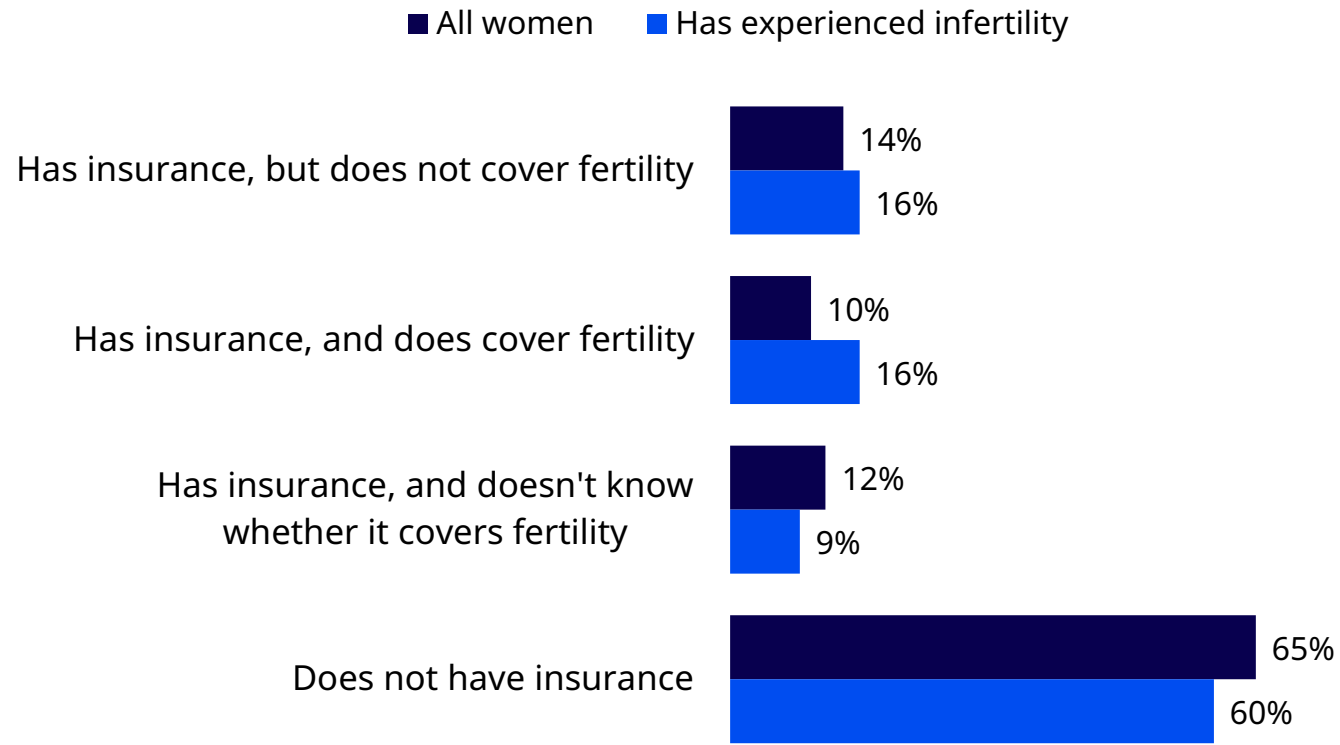


16% of women who have experienced infertility have insurance that covers fertility today

Insurance coverage today

% of all women (n=4,000)

% of women who have experienced infertility (n=799)

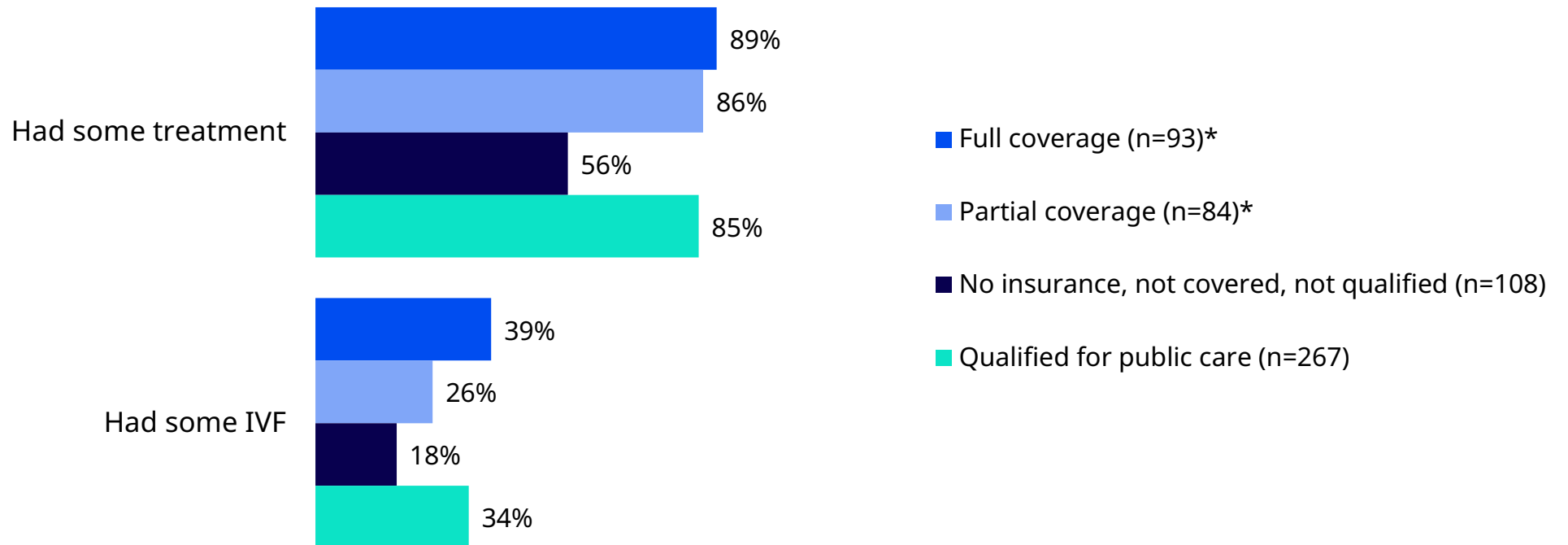


Funding widens access, but is not the full story

Even among women with full coverage, six in ten never start any IVF

Differences in access by level of insurance (at the time of consultation)

% of women had contact with healthcare professionals and have experienced infertility



* Low base (n<100): interpret with caution

Had some treatment and some IVF: [Q] Think about all the medical care you or your partner(s) have received throughout your lives to help you get pregnant. Which of the following services have you received?

Level of insurance: [Q] At that time, did you or your partner have any insurance plan that covered fertility treatments? [Q] Were you able to access assisted reproduction treatments through public health insurance?

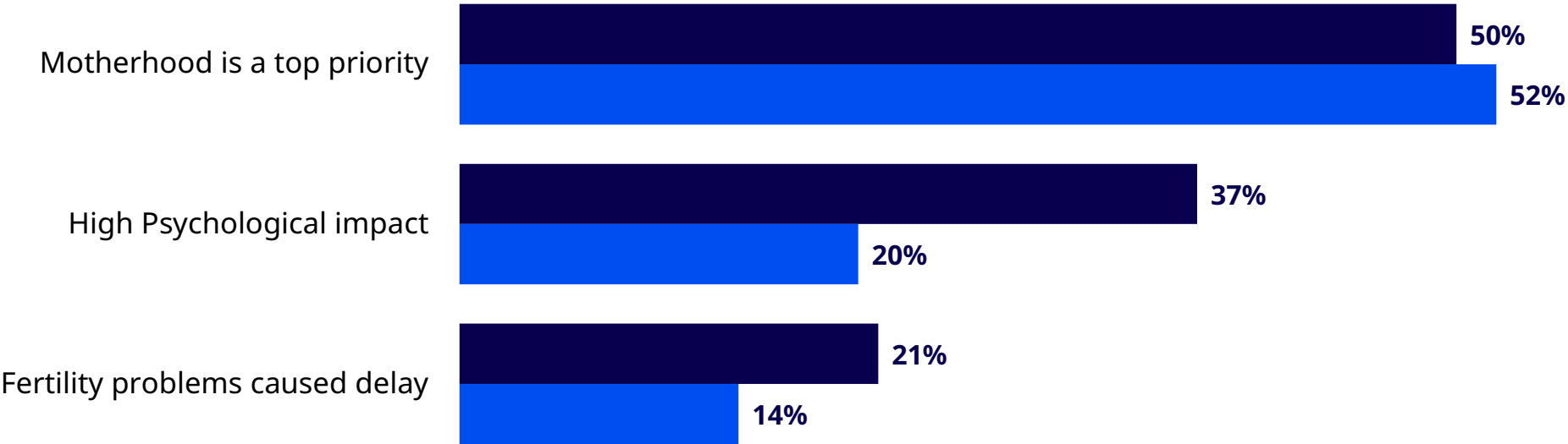
Education reveals two distinct fertility journeys

Women with GCSE level or below report greater emotional impact and more often cite fertility problems as a cause of delay

Differences by education level

% of women

■ GCSE level or below ■ University educated



WHAT THIS MEANS

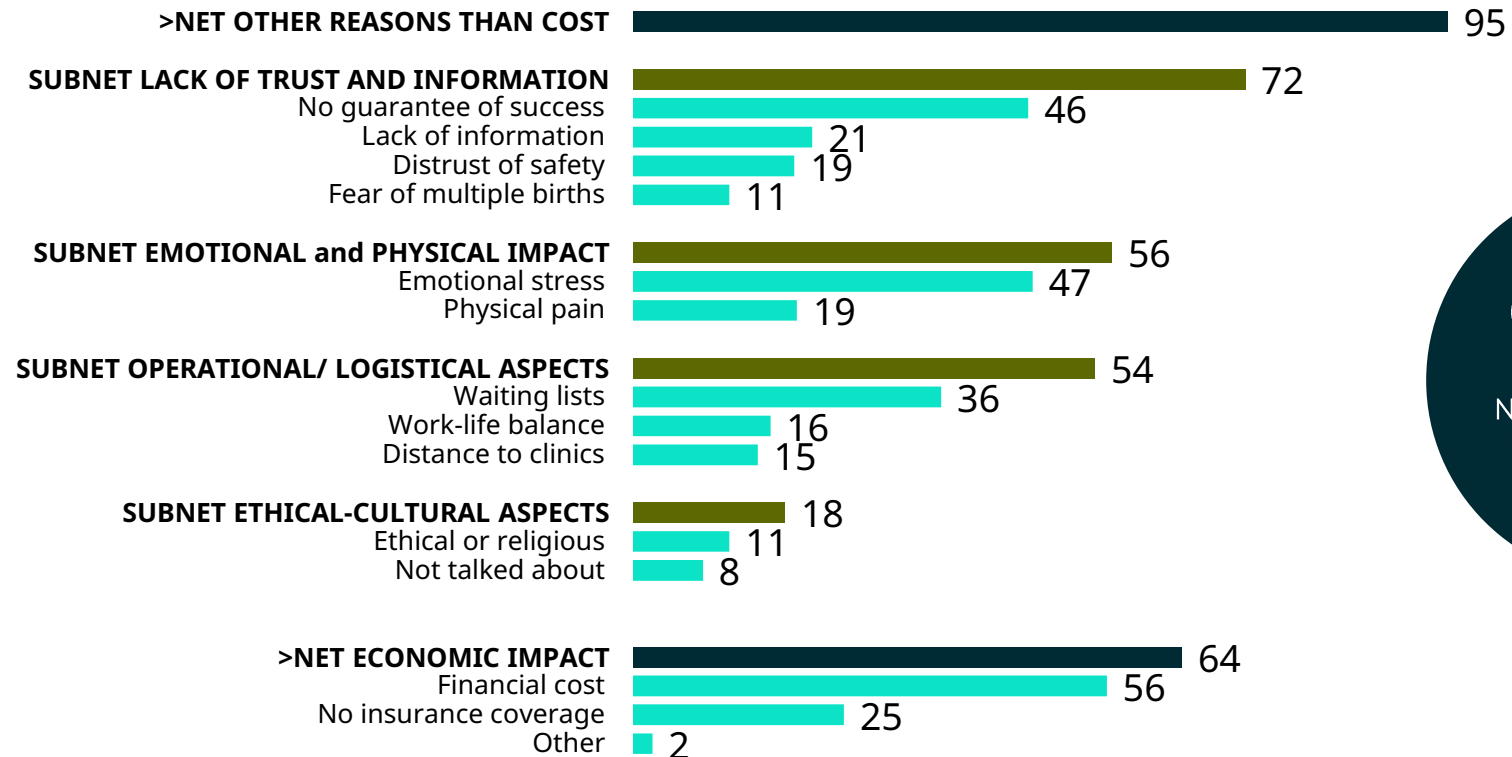
Earlier, accessible support for women with GCSE level or below

Planning information and fertility guidance for university-educated women

Navigating fertility treatment is as much about trust and information as it is about cost

95% of women who have experienced infertility cite reasons other than costs, with 72% highlighting lack of trust and information as barriers to treatment

Woman who have experienced infertility
(n=799)



95%
NET reasons other
than financial or
coverage

Treatment works, but few women get there

Seven in ten women who experience infertility ask for help, but only one in six ever start IVF, and 95% point to reasons beyond cost

71%

They do ask for help

of women who have experienced infertility consulted a professional — on average at 27, after 14 months of trying

17%

Few start treatment

of women who experienced infertility in the past went on to start any IVF treatment

33%

Coverage is not enough

only 33% of women whose insurance covers fertility went on to start IVF

95%

The barriers are not only cost

cite reasons beyond cost — trust and information, emotional toll, logistics

71% ask for help, 17% reach IVF. Alongside cost, women point to trust, information, and emotional load as barriers to treatment

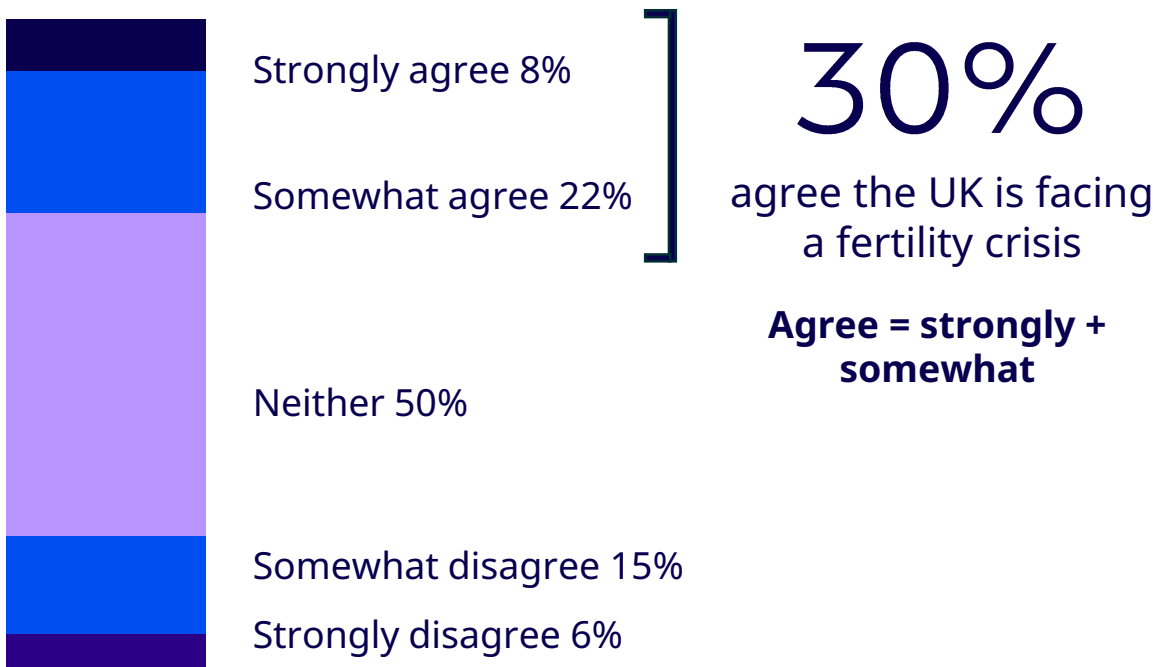
Societal implications of fertility dynamics

05

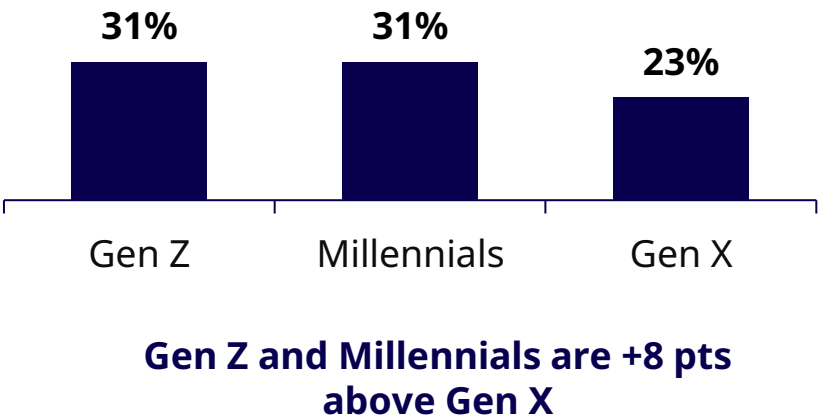
Perceived fertility crisis

3 in 10 UK women see a fertility crisis — and Gen Z sees it more than Gen X

Level of agreement
% of all women (n=4,000)



By generation
% who agree

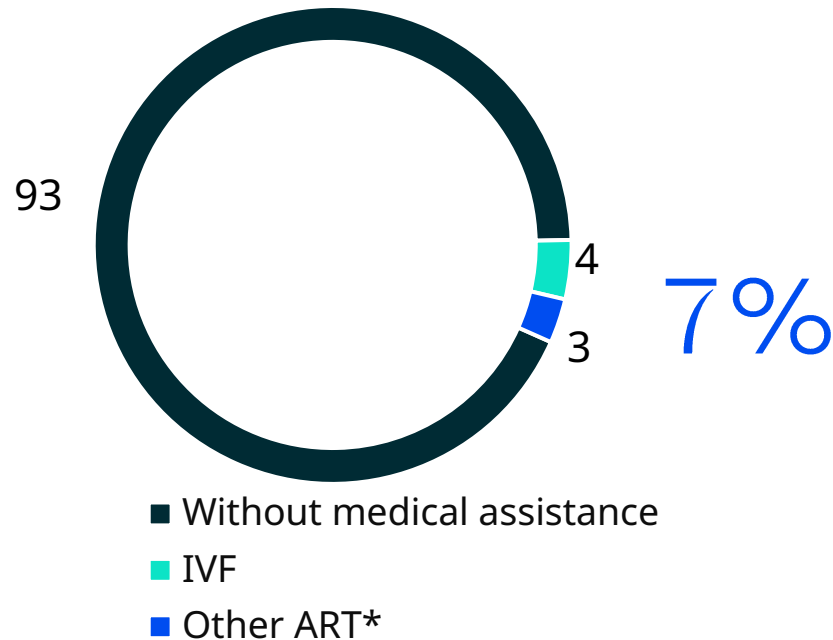


More expect to need ART than have used it

While 7% of current pregnancies were achieved through assisted reproductive technologies, 12% of women planning a future pregnancy expect they will need fertility treatment

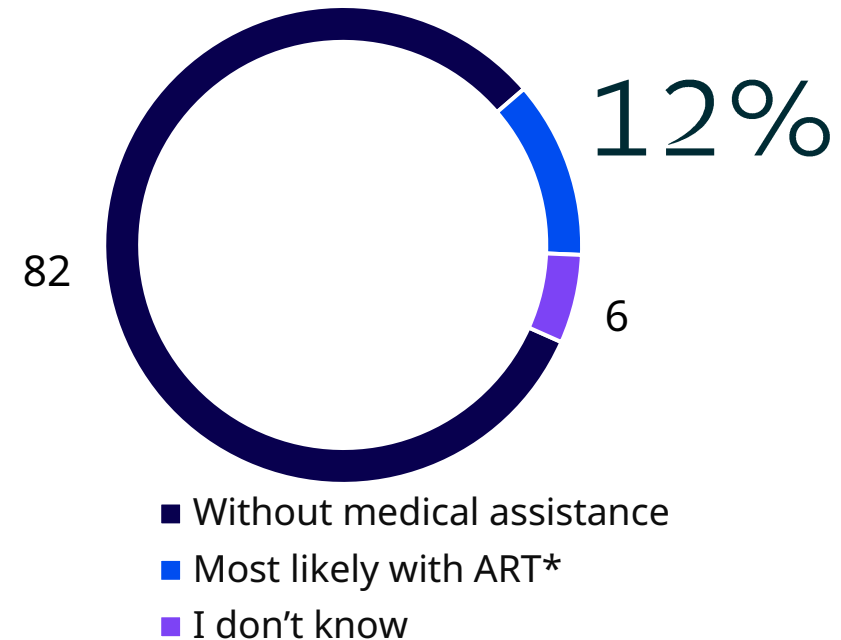
Is currently pregnant

How conceived (n=170)



Expectations for a future pregnancy

How expect to conceive in the future (n=1,596)

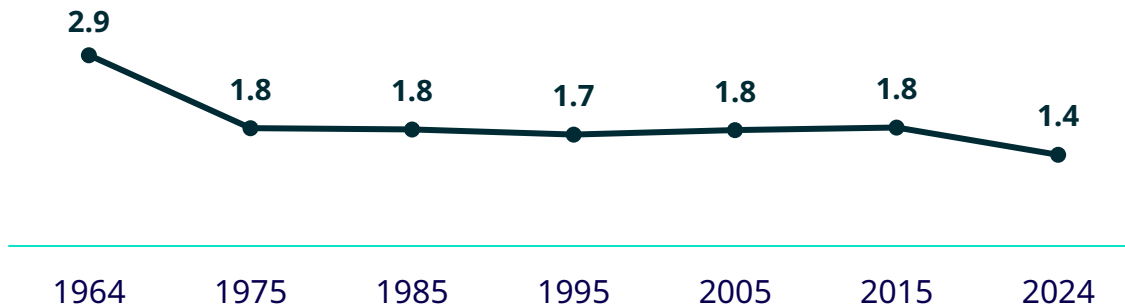


*ART: Assisted Reproductive Technology
[Q] How did you conceive your ___ pregnancy?
[Q] Did you experience a live birth the ___ time you were pregnant?
[Q] How do you expect to conceive your next child?

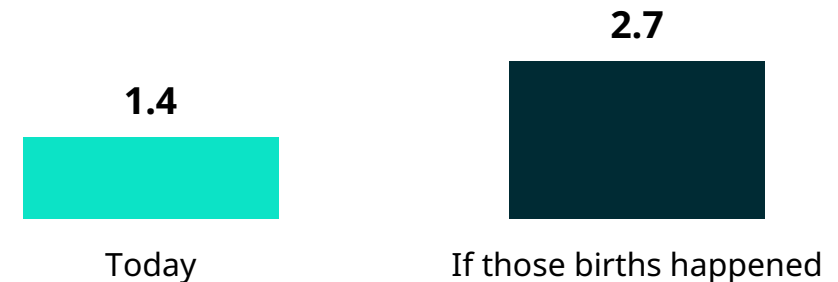
Access to care helps women reach the family they intended

For the women affected, infertility is the difference between having a child and not. Lowering the barriers they meet — cost, eligibility, waiting times, information — is about individual families, not national demographics

Children per woman in UK, 1964–2024



Children per woman — today vs if all of those women had a baby



620,000

women in the UK are experiencing infertility right now
4% of women aged 19–49

