

Taking action to safeguard a child

Public opinion research conducted by BMRB Social
Research for the NSPCC, June-August 2005

Presentation of findings

September 2005

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Methodology

- The research was conducted by BMRB Social Research.
- Data were collected throughout the UK through an in-house face-to-face omnibus survey, using random location sampling.
- Interviews were conducted during five weeks' fieldwork from 30 June and 3 August 2005.
- The interviews used CASI (Computer Assisted Self Interviewing). CASI reinforces confidentiality of responses and encourages respondents to answer honestly
- Data was weighted to ensure a representative demographic profile

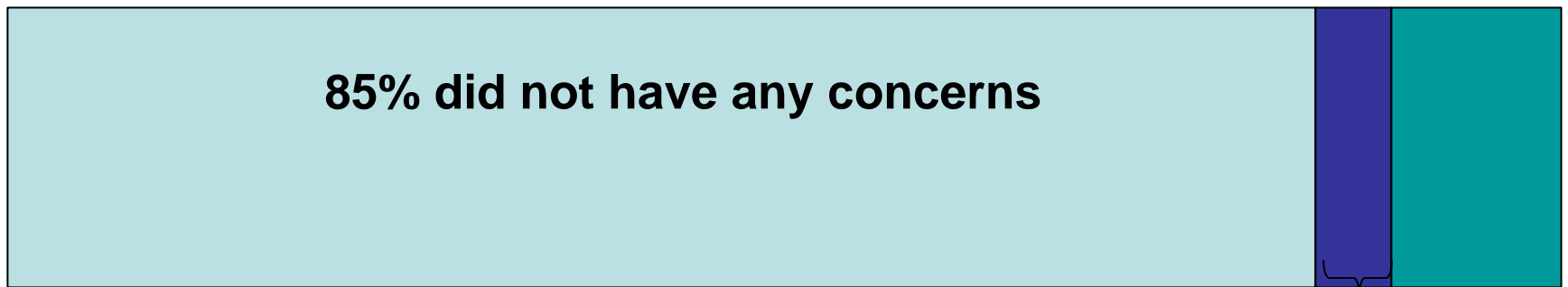
Prevalence of concerns

Concerns about the safety of a child

- Nearly ten thousand people in the UK were asked the first question of the survey in order to establish a measure of the prevalence of people who have had concerns about a child or suspected a child was being abused.
 - *“Could you tell me, at any point in the last 10 years, have you ever had concerns about the safety of a child, or suspected a child was experiencing abuse? By abuse we mean physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or bullying”*
 - *“A child I know” can be defined loosely as a child they are worried about in their neighbourhood, but don’t know the name of; through to a child they do know well.”*
 - *“A child I don’t know” can be a child they saw in public and they don’t know which family/school s/he is from.”*
- This question revealed that 11% of adults in the UK – 1108 of 9964 respondents - said they have had concerns about a child known to them in the last ten years
- A further 5% of adults said they have had concerns about a child they don’t know.
- Removing double-counting of people who said they have had concerns both for a child they know and a child they don’t know (20 respondents in total), gives an overall prevalence of 15% of adults who have had concerns about a child (either known or not known to them) during the last 10 years.

Percentage of adults who have had concerns about a child

11% had concerns for a child they know

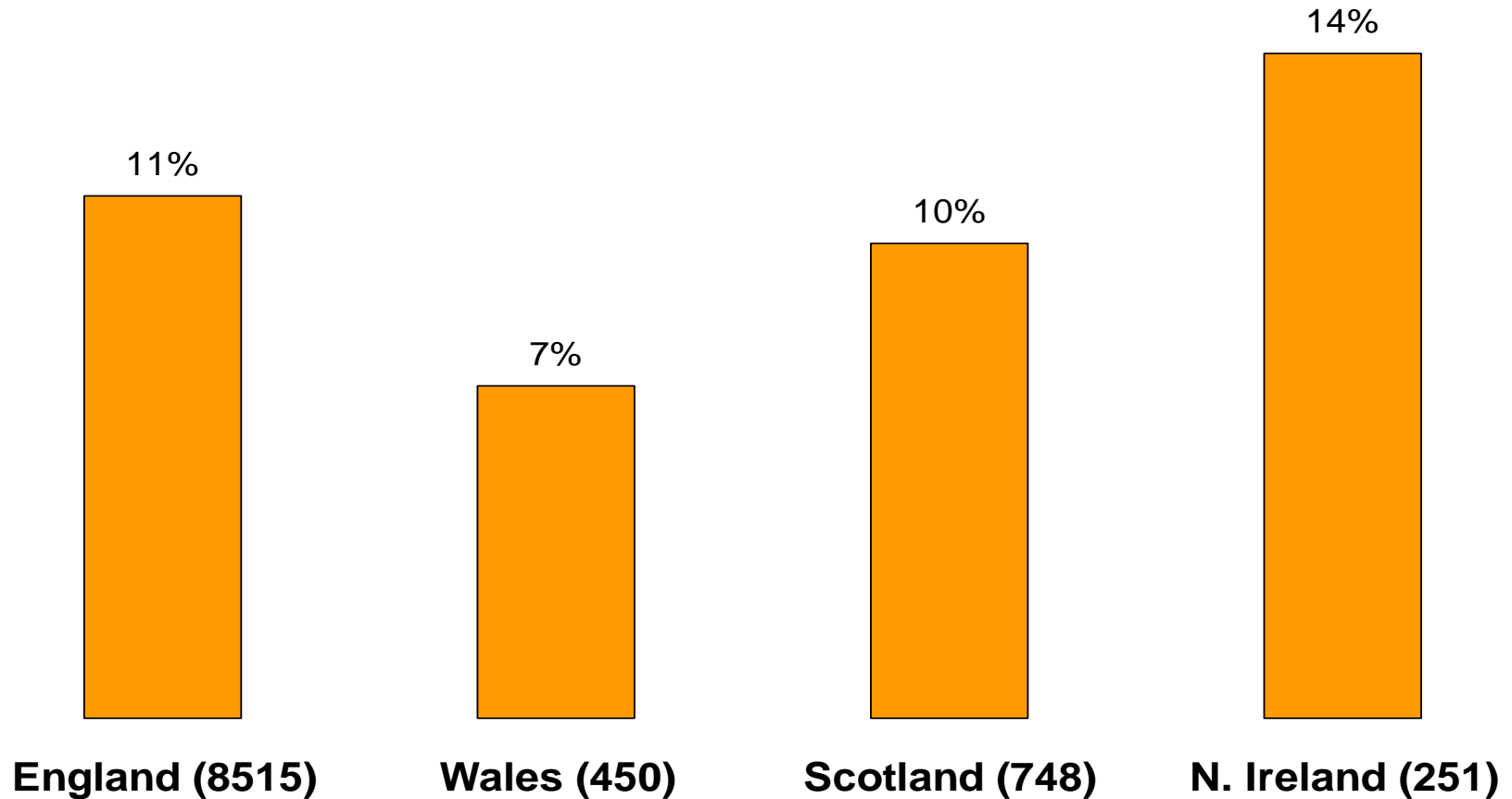


5% had concerns for a child they did not know

Most likely to have concerns

- Women (14%) were more likely to have had concerns about a child known to them in the last ten years than men (7%)
- Those who were of child rearing age (25-54 years old) were also more likely to have had concerns than adults aged 18-24 and 55 and above.

Whether have had concerns about a child known to them by country



Whether have had concerns about a child known by region

- London (6%)
- South East (13%)
- South West (11%)
- Wales (7%)
- East Anglia (11%)
- East Midlands (13%)
- West Midlands (10%)
- Yorkshire/Humberside (12%)
- North West (11%)
- North (10%)
- Scotland (10%)
- Northern Ireland (14%)

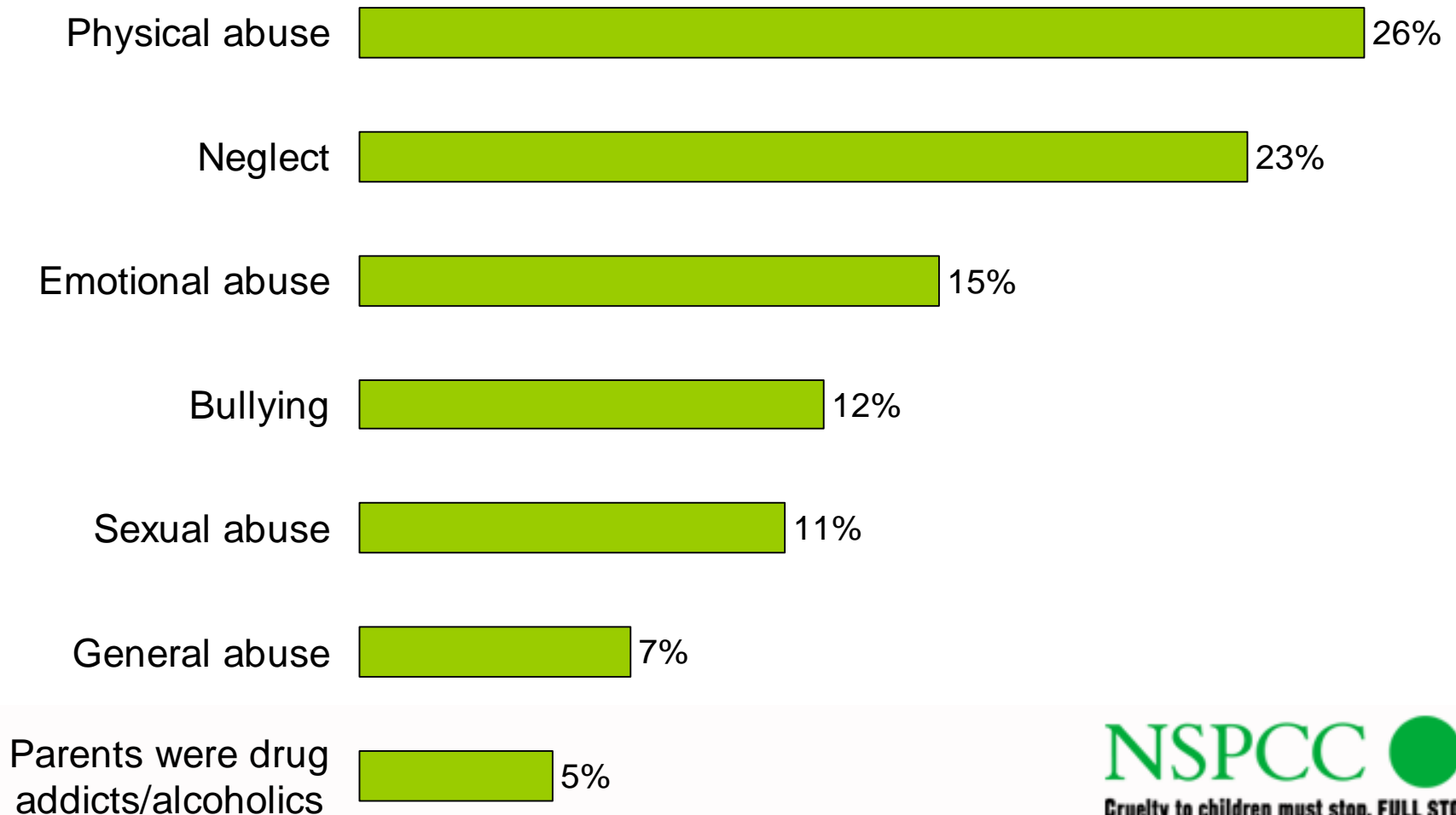
Types of concern

Types of concern: survey questions asked

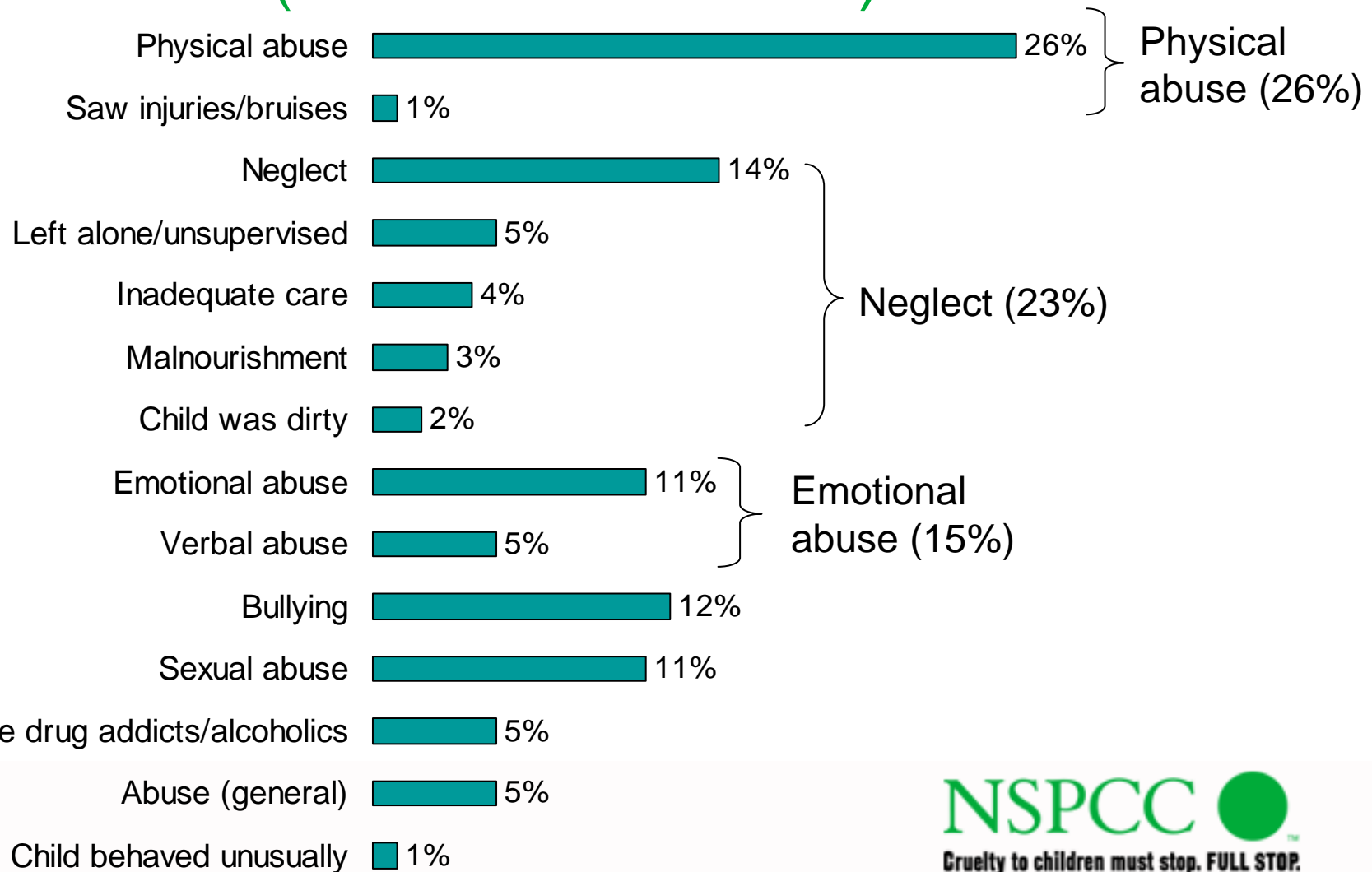
- **Respondents were asked from this point on to think only about the child known to them in response to the questions**
- The base was 1108 adults aged 18 or over who had concerns in the last ten years about the safety of a child they know
- *“Thinking about the concern that most sticks in your mind, can you tell me briefly what you thought was happening to the child?”*

(Respondents wrote in a brief description which was subsequently coded into agreed categories)

What respondents thought was happening to the child (categories)



What respondents thought was happening to the child (further breakdown)

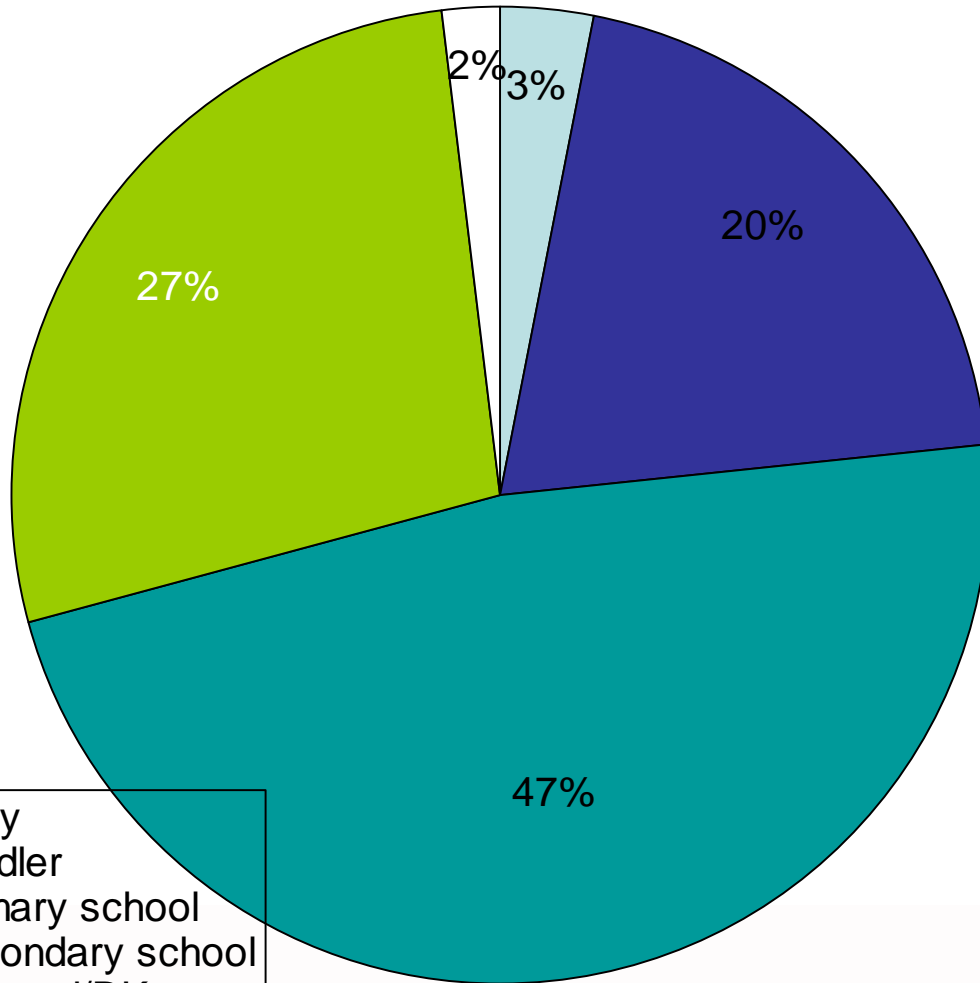


Context of concerns

Context of concerns: survey questions (1)

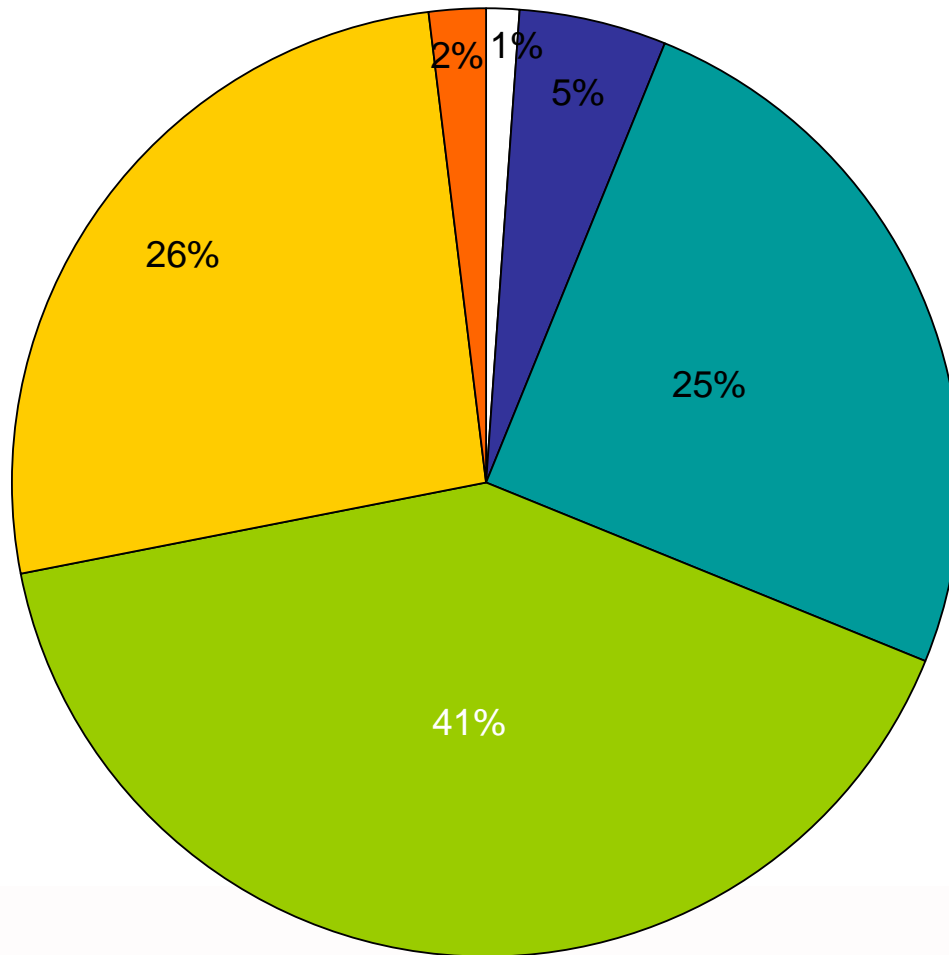
- *“Approximately how old was the child at the time of your concern?”*
- *“When did you first have concerns about this child?”*
- *“What is your relationship with this child?”*
 - Parent or guardian
 - Immediate family member
 - Extended family member
 - Neighbour
 - A friend or acquaintance’s child
 - Own child’s friend
 - A child I have known through my work
 - A child I have known through my voluntary work

Age of child at the time of concern



- Almost half of those concerned were worried about a child of primary school age.
- Women were more likely to have had concerns for a toddler and less likely to have had concerns for a child of secondary school age.

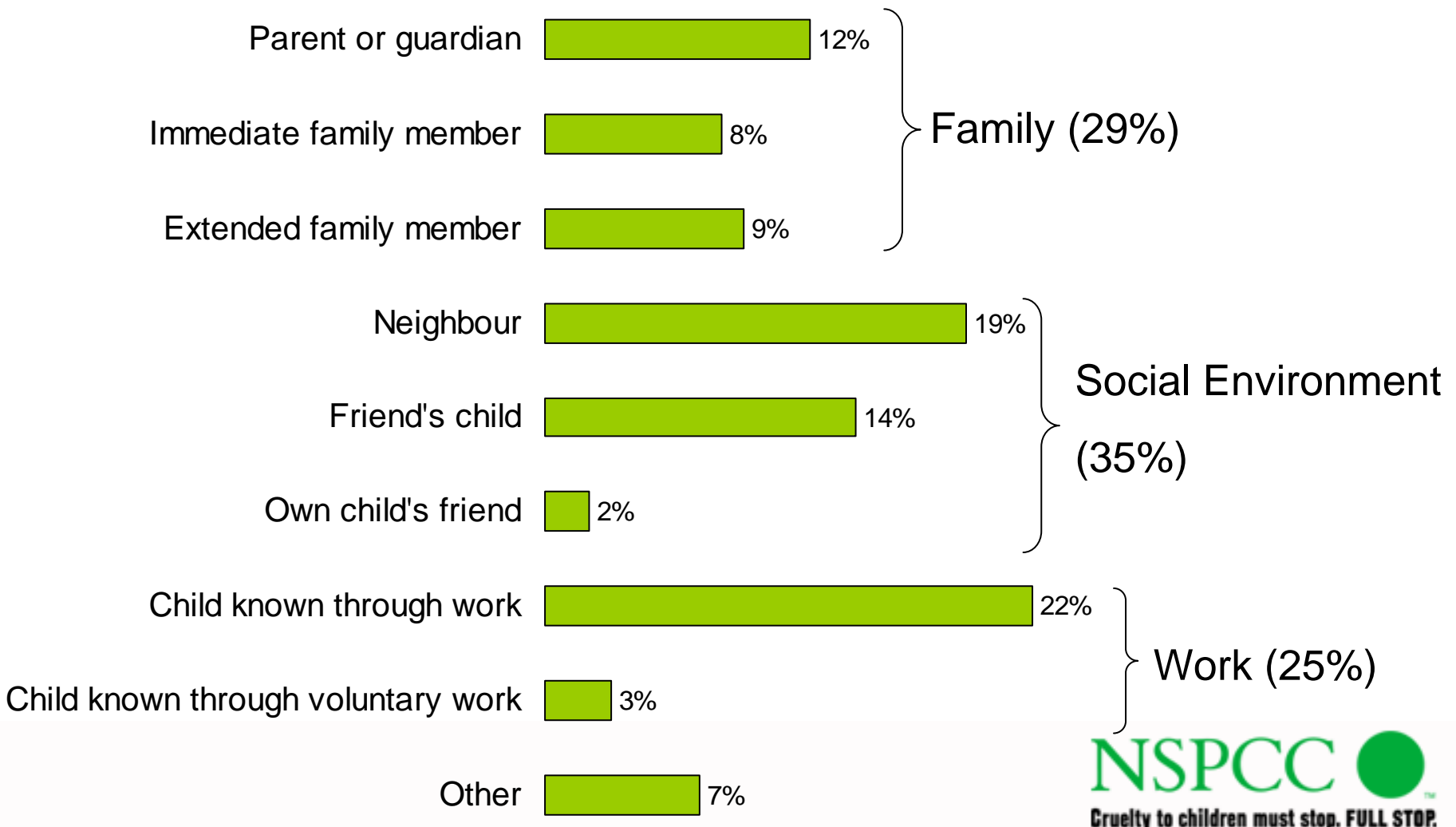
When respondents first had concerns



Three in ten had concerns within the last year. Four in ten within the last one to five years

- Last week
- Last month
- Last year
- 1-5 years
- >5 years
- Refused/DK

Relationship with the child

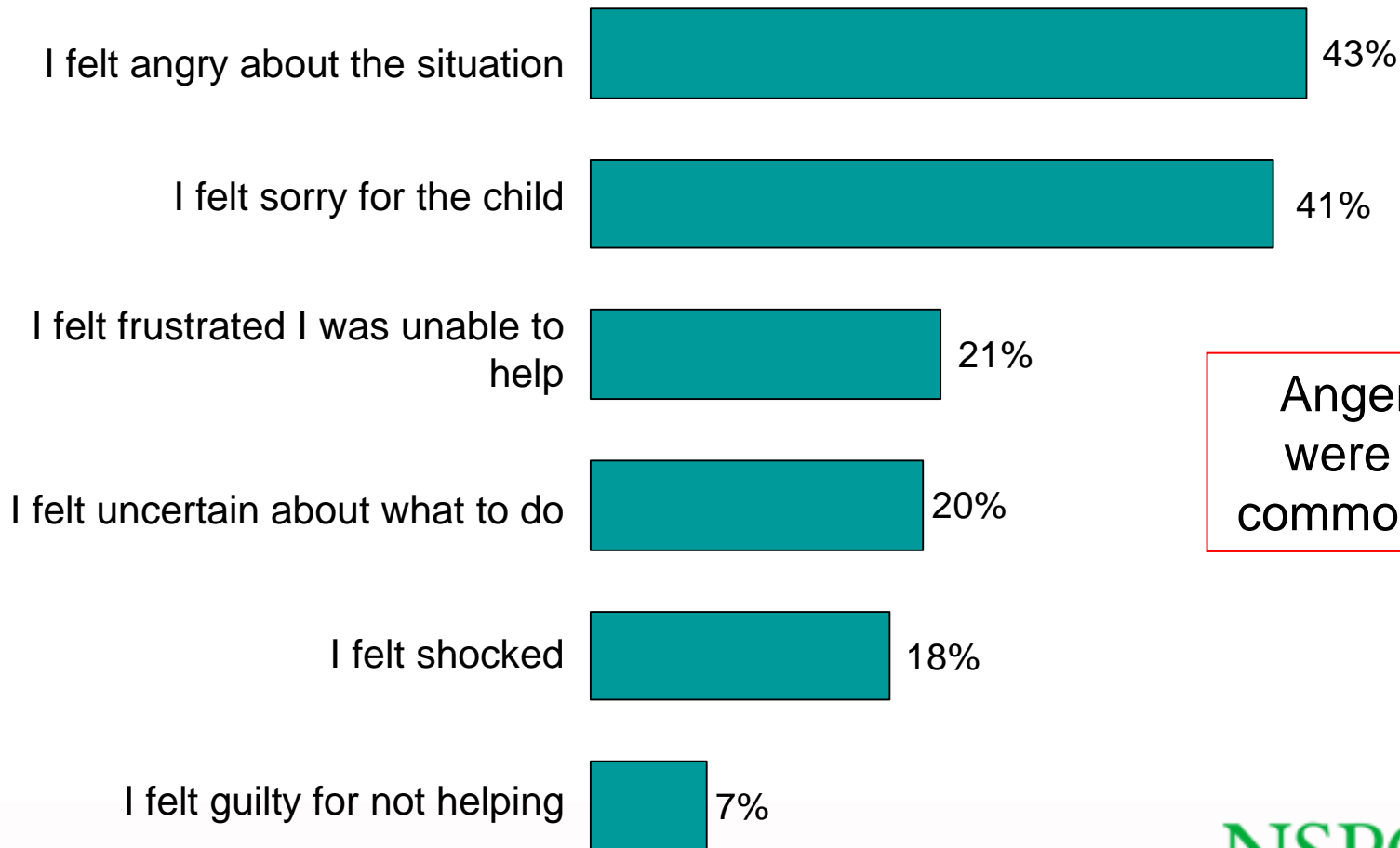


Base: all respondents aged over 18 who had concerns for a child they know (1108), single-coded

Context of concerns: survey questions (2)

- *“As far as you can remember, which, if any, of the following best describes how you felt when you were first concerned?”*
 - I felt uncertain about what to do
 - I felt shocked
 - I felt sorry for the child
 - I felt angry about the situation
 - I felt frustrated I was unable to help
 - I felt guilty for not helping
 - Don't know
 - Don't want to answer
 - Other (please specify)

Feelings at the time of concern

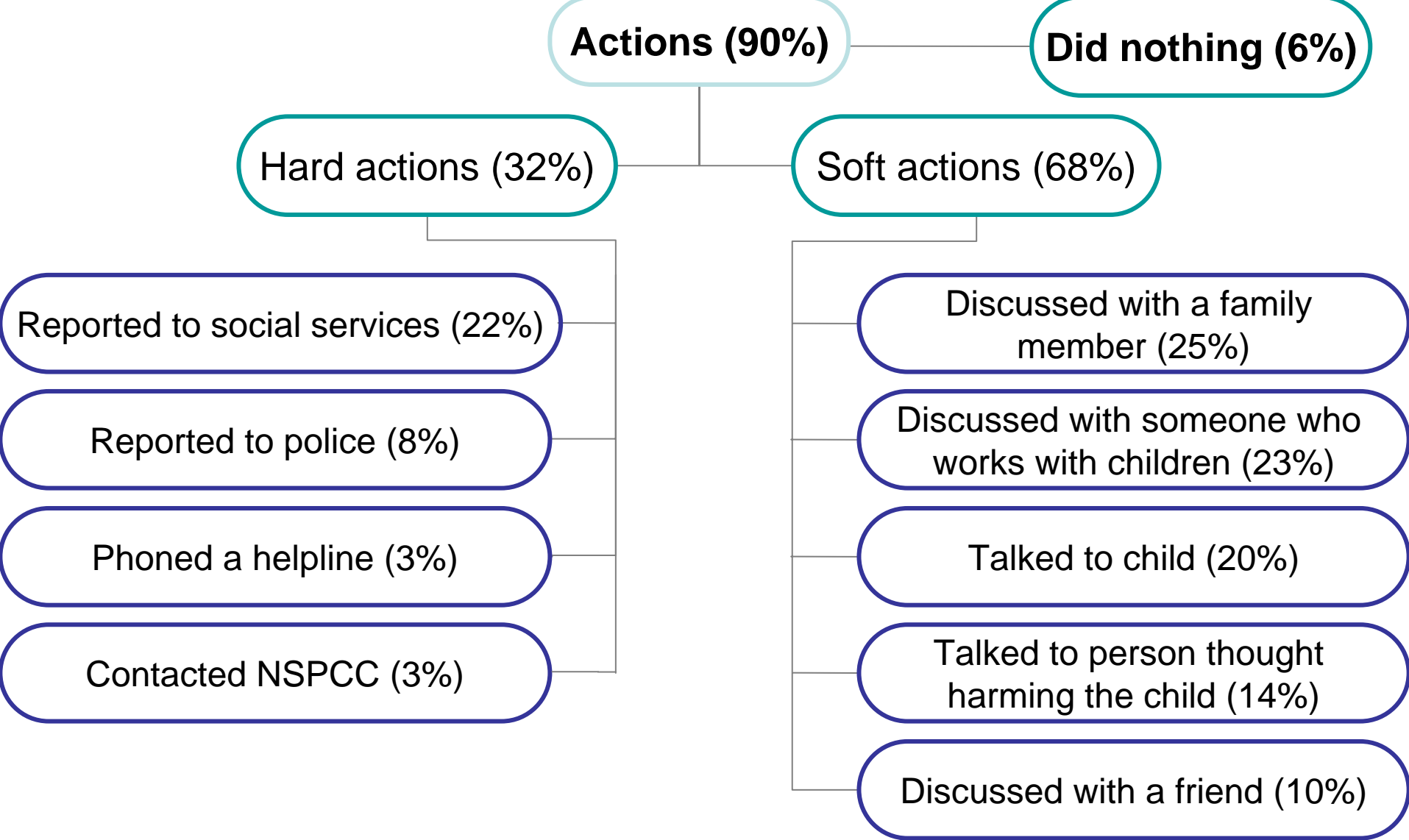


Anger and pity were the most common emotions

Taking action

Taking action in response to concerns: survey questions (1)

- *“What did you do about your concerns for this child?”
(multiple answers allowed)*
 - Talked to the person that you thought was harming the child
 - Talked to the child that you were concerned about
 - Discussed your concerns with a family member to get their advice
 - Discussed your concerns with someone who works with children to get their advice
 - Phoned a helpline for advice
 - Contacted the NSPCC
 - Reported your concerns to the police
 - Reported your concerns to the social services
 - Did nothing
 - Don't know
 - Don't want to answer
 - Other (specify)



Actions undertaken

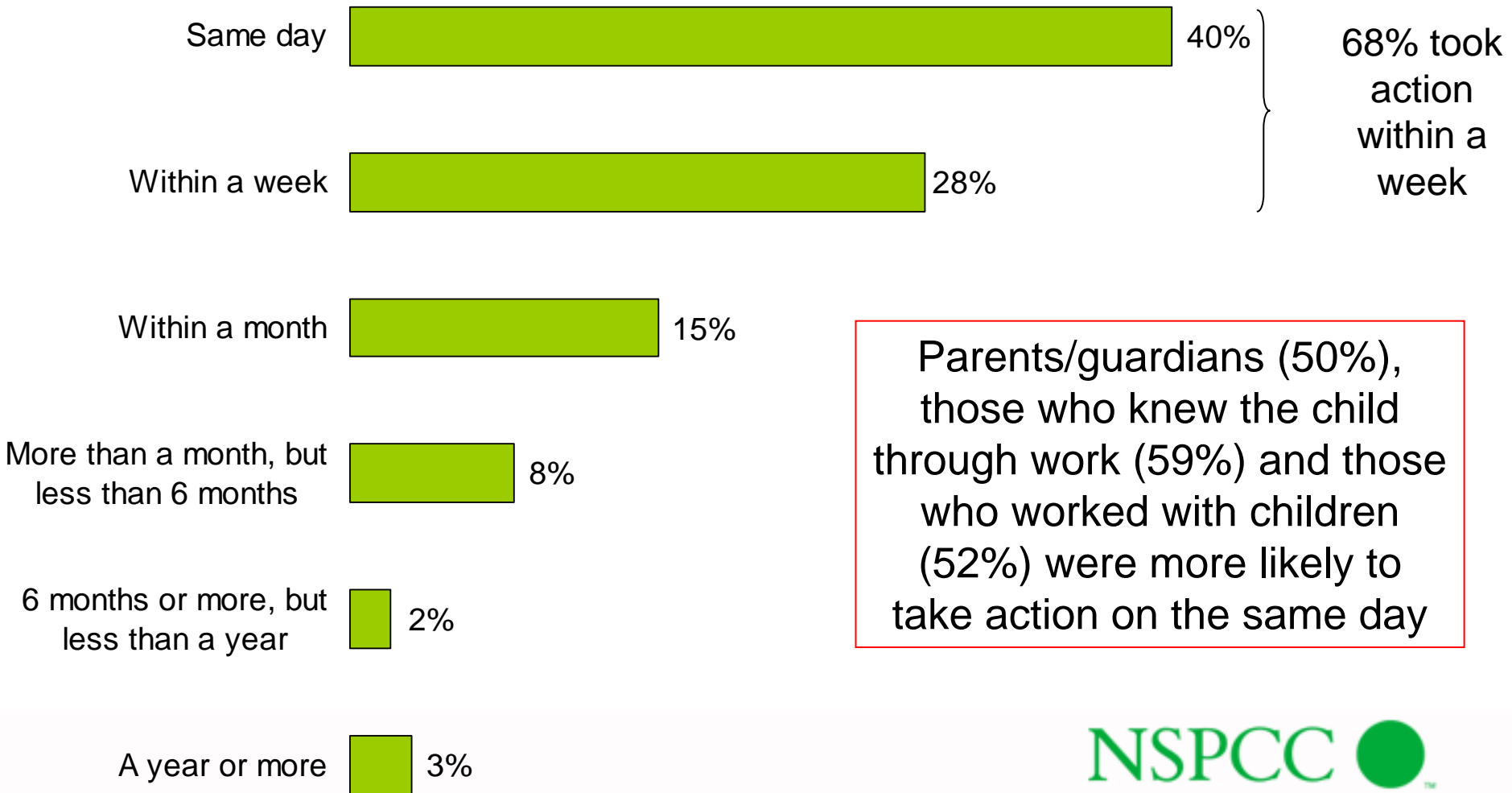
Actions undertaken by subgroups

- Women (25%) were more likely than men (18%) to have discussed concerns with someone who works with children to get advice
- Immediate or extended family members were more likely to have discussed their concerns with another family member to get advice
- Parents or immediate family members were more likely to talk to the child they were concerned about
- The 18-24 age group was more likely to discuss concerns with a family member for advice

Time taken to act: survey questions

- *“How long after you were first concerned about the child, did you take action?”*
 - Same day
 - Within a week
 - Within a month
 - More than a month, but less than 6 months
 - 6 months or more, but less than a year
 - A year or more
 - Don't know
 - Don't want to answer

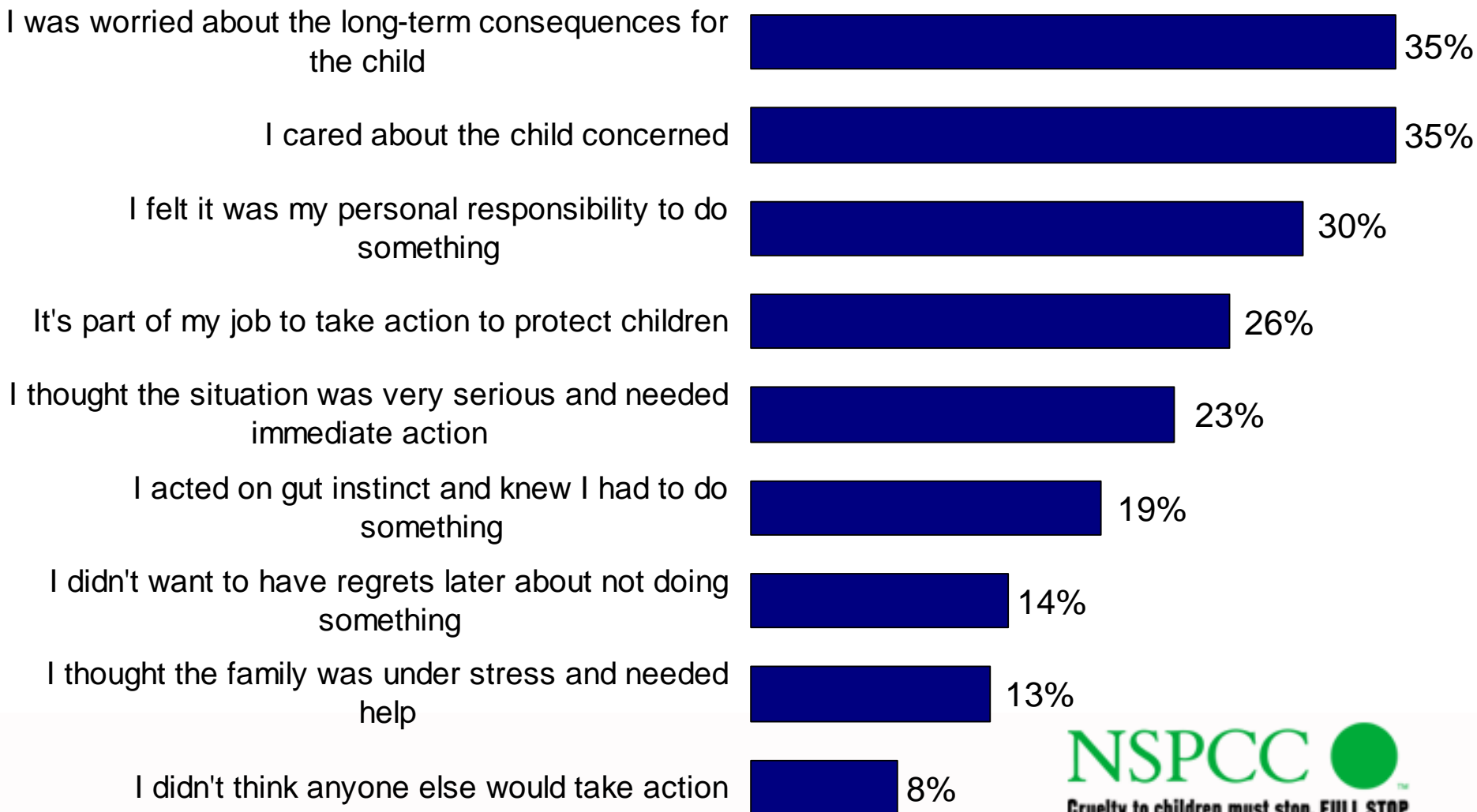
Length of time before taking action



Main reasons for taking action: survey questions

- *“What were your main reasons for deciding to take action? You may choose up to three answers”*
 - I acted on my gut instinct and knew I had to do something
 - I felt it was my personal responsibility to do something
 - I didn't think anyone else would take action
 - I thought the situation was very serious and needed immediate action
 - It's part of my job to take action to protect children
 - I didn't want to have regrets later about not doing something at the time
 - I cared about the child concerned
 - I was worried about the long-term consequences for the child if I didn't do something
 - I thought the family was under stress and needed help
 - Don't know
 - Don't want to answer
 - Other (specify)

Main reasons for taking action



Barriers or difficulties when taking action: questions asked

- *“Were there any barriers or difficulties experienced when you took action? You may choose up to three answers”*
 - I was unsure abuse was actually taking place
 - I didn't know what was the right thing to do
 - I didn't know who to contact to help the child
 - I didn't know what would happen next if I did something
 - I was worried that I might make a false allegation of abuse
 - I didn't think it was my responsibility to do something
 - I didn't want to get involved
 - I had fears for my own safety if I did something
 - I thought I might make the situation worse for the child if I did something
 - I was worried the family involved might be broken up
 - I didn't think the authorities would be able to help
 - Someone else I spoke to about the situation advised me not to do anything further
 - No, none
 - Don't know
 - Don't want to answer
 - Other

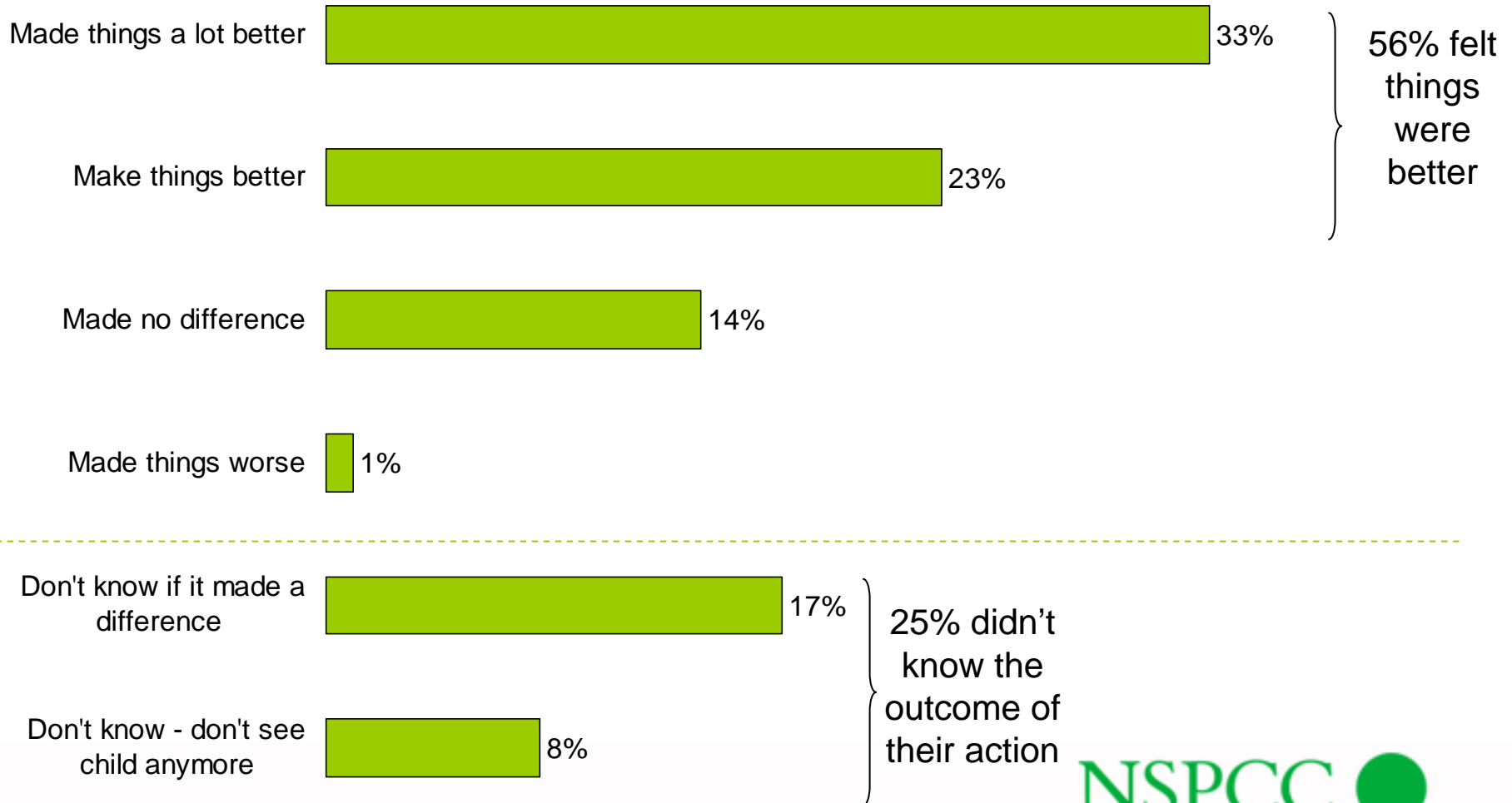
Barriers or difficulties when taking action



Impact of action: survey questions

- *“Thinking about the action you have taken, what difference do you think you have made to the child’s life?”*
 - Made things a lot better
 - Made things a little better
 - Made no difference at all
 - Made things worse
 - Don’t know if it made a difference
 - Don’t know as I don’t see the child anymore
 - Don’t know
 - Don’t want to answer

Impact of action



Impact of action

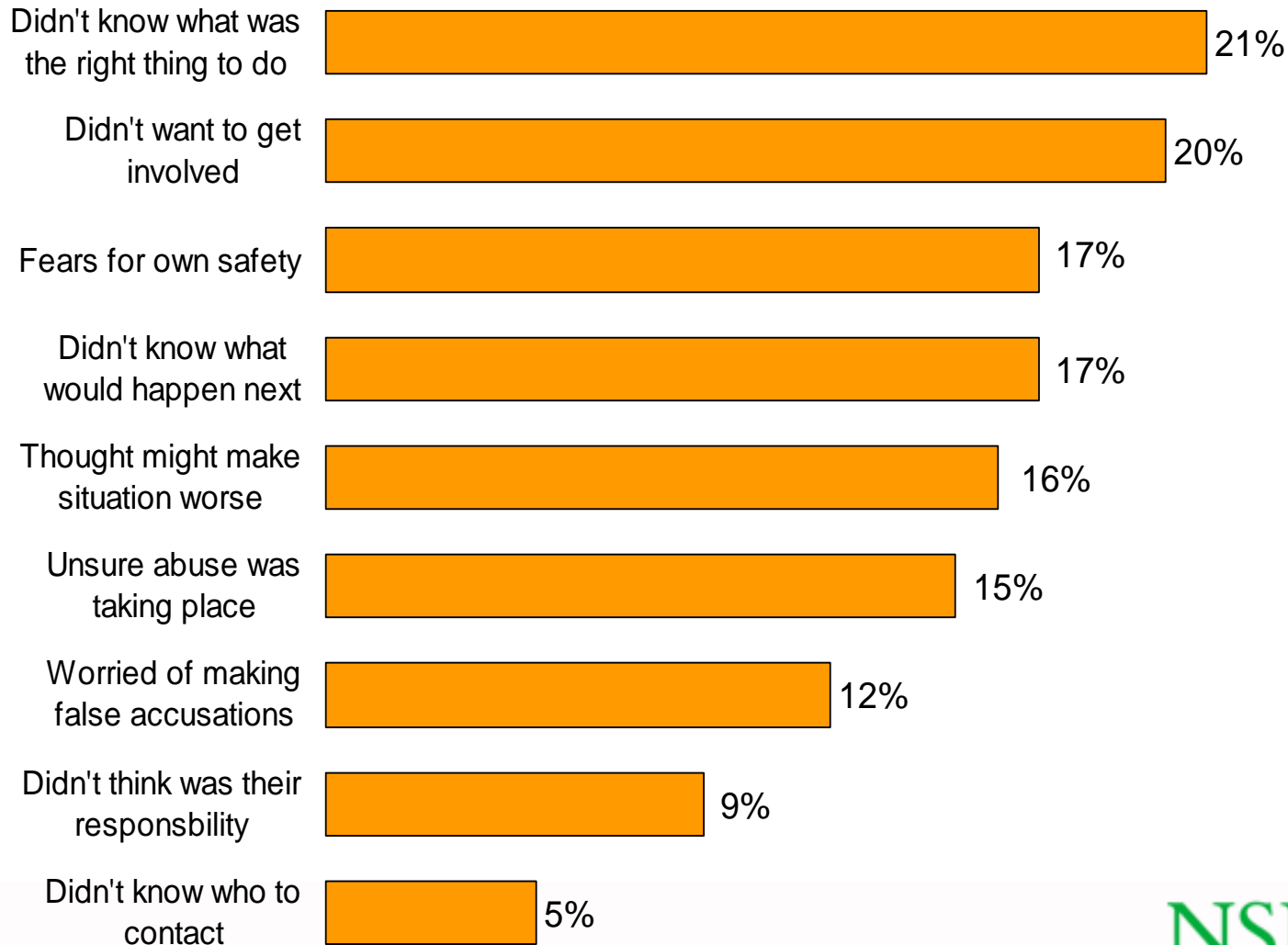
- Overall 72% of those who took action said they knew something about the outcome of the actions for the child
- Of those, three quarters (78%) said their actions made things better for the child.
- 71% said they made things better by talking to the child, 65% by discussing their concerns with someone who works with children and 63% by talking to the person they thought was harming the child

Not taking action

Not taking action: survey questions

- *“What were your main reasons for not doing anything?” You may choose up to three answers”*
 - I was unsure abuse was actually taking place
 - I didn't know what was the right thing to do
 - I didn't know who to contact to help the child
 - I didn't know what would happen next if I did something
 - I was worried that I might make a false accusation of abuse
 - I didn't think it was my responsibility to do something
 - I didn't want to get involved
 - I had fears for my own safety if I did something
 - I thought I might make the situation worse for the child if I did something
 - I was worried the family involved might be broken up
 - I didn't think the authorities would be able to help
 - Someone else I spoke to about the situation advised me not to do anything further
 - Don't know
 - Don't want to answer
 - Other (specify)
- **NB. Results from these questions are indicative only due to the small base size**

Reasons for not taking action



Summary

Prevalence and abuse concerns: summary

- 11% of the UK adult population have had concerns about the safety of a child known to them in the last ten years
- 15% of the general population had concerns about the safety of a child known or unknown to them in the last ten years
- The most common concerns were about physical abuse and neglect
- Almost half of those who suspected a child known to them was being abused were worried about a child of primary school age

Taking action: summary (1)

- Taking all actions together, respondents were twice as likely to discuss their concerns for a child known to them with a friend, family member, the child, the person they thought was harming the child or someone who works with children than to report them to child protection agencies or phone a helpline.
- **Most frequently mentioned actions:**
 - Discussed with family member (25%)
 - Discussed with someone who works with children (23%)
 - Reported to social services (22%)
- **Three main reasons for taking action:**
 - Worried about long-term consequences for child (35%)
 - Cared about child concerned (35%)
 - Felt it was their personal responsibility (30%)

Taking action: summary (2)

Barriers or difficulties faced when taking action

- 68% of respondents who took action in response to their concerns said they experienced some barriers or difficulties in taking action
- Being unsure whether abuse was taking place, not knowing the right thing to do or what would happen next and having worries about the consequences for the child were some of the main barriers or difficulties faced

Impact of action

- More than half of respondents (56%) thought their actions had made things better for the child
- A further quarter didn't know the outcome of their action
- However, only 1% thought it had made things worse

Taking action: summary (3)

Reasons for not taking action

- Six percent of adults suspected that a child known to them was being abused, but took no action in response
- The main reasons given for not doing anything were not knowing what to do (21%), not wanting to get involved (20%), having fears for own safety (17%), and not knowing what would happen next (17%).