

# Childcare and childcare assistance

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## Introduction

We asked respondents to the New Zealand Income Support Survey who were potentially eligible for the Childcare or Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) Subsidies questions about:

- access to childcare
- awareness and understanding of Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies
- self-reported receipt of Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies
- reasons for non-receipt of Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies

The survey included people aged 18 to 64 on incomes that could potentially qualify them for income support payments such as the Accommodation Supplement and Working for Families (WFF) and excluded full-time students.

In total, 1,852 people from across the country responded to the survey between June and December 2022, including 1,018 people in families with children. Of those, 651 appeared potentially eligible for either the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies.

## What are Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies?

### Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies are payments that subsidise childcare costs for families in work or study

The **Childcare Subsidy** is for families with children aged under five years old, to help with the costs of childcare while the parents are working or studying and unable to look after their children.<sup>1</sup> Depending on a family's circumstances, they may be able to receive this subsidy for up to 50 hours of childcare a week.

The **Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) Subsidy** is for families with children aged between five and 13 years old, to help families with the costs of childcare before and after school hours, and during the school holidays while the parents are working or studying and unable to look after their children.<sup>2</sup>

Depending on the family's circumstances, they may be able to receive this subsidy for up to 20 hours of childcare a week during school term time, and up to 50 hours of childcare a week during the school holidays.

While the survey was running, a family could receive between \$1.77 and \$5.69 of subsidy per hour per child, depending on their family type and income. This has since increased to between \$1.99 and \$6.38 as at 1 April 2024.

The income limits for these subsidies since 1 April 2022 are in the table below.

Number of children	Maximum gross weekly income as at 1 April 2022	Maximum gross weekly income as at 1 April 2023	Maximum gross weekly income as at 1 April 2024
One	\$1,466	\$2,144	\$2,257
Two	\$1,675	\$2,450	\$2,579
Three or more	\$1,885	\$2,756	\$2,902

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Childcare Subsidy, see: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/childcare-subsidy.html>

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the OSCAR Subsidy, see: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/oscar-subsidy.html>

## **Approach to reporting results**

### **Weighting**

Results are weighted to be representative of the New Zealand population of working-age families on low- and middle-incomes.

### **Reporting of results**

Some results are marked with a hash (#). Results with a hash should be reported with additional context in text (for example: "52 ( $\pm 15$ ) percent respondents said..."). This is because these results have high margins of error and/or high relative sampling errors, and so should be used with care.

For more information about how this is determined, please read the methodology report. For confidence intervals, see the supporting excel tables.

### **Sub-group comparisons**

Sub-group level comparisons are only reported when there are at least 300 respondents included in the total analysis and there are enough sub-groups where it is viable to produce the comparison. Two forms of sub-group comparison are commented on:

- comparison to the overall survey result (for example, comparing the result for respondents aged 18 to 24 against the overall survey result)
- comparison with other sub-groups in the same breakdown (for example, comparing the result for respondents aged 18 to 24 to the results for other age groups).

Differences that are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level using confidence intervals are commented on.

Differences compared to other sub-groups in the same breakdown are generally only commented on if they have not already been mentioned in comparison with the survey average.

On occasion, differences that are not statistically significant using confidence intervals but display interesting trends that may be of interest to readers are commented on.

### **Rounding of percentages and weighted figures**

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent, and weighted figures may not add up to weighted totals.

### **Aggregation and suppression of sub-groups and categories**

Where sub-group and/or category counts are small and/or have large confidence intervals and/or relative sampling errors, these are sometimes aggregated together, or suppressed and not displayed in graphs.

### **Reporting of ethnicity**

A respondent can identify with more than one ethnicity. This results in totals for ethnic breakdowns adding up to more than 100 percent of respondents. Statistical testing for differences between ethnic sub-groups compares those in a selected ethnic group with those not in the group (including respondents who did not provide an ethnicity).

### **Reporting of gender**

Respondents were asked about their gender, with the possible responses being male, female, another gender, don't know, or prefer not to say. In the reporting of results, we only report gender sub-group results for respondents who identified as male or female due to the small number of respondents who responded otherwise. This is to protect confidentiality.

### **Coding of scale responses**

Where respondents were asked to rate how easy or hard it was on a scale from 1 to 5 to get childcare that met their family's needs, or to pay the amount they do for their childcare, these were coded as shown to the right.

- 1 or 2: Very easy or easy
- 3: Neither easy nor difficult
- 4 or 5: Difficult or very difficult

### **Defining potential eligibility in this pack**

The childcare questions in this findings pack were asked of respondents with children who had a family income that qualified them for the family tax credit. This population was filtered by whether they met residency requirements for main benefits and had at least one child that met the shared care requirements. This calculation differs from practice, where a family must also have childcare costs to qualify for the subsidies. This is because we are unable to distinguish between childcare costs before and after any subsidies were applied. We also did not collect information about whether families were receiving 20 hours free Early Childhood Education, which can impact their eligibility for the Childcare Subsidy. The approach taken in this pack also excludes families with incomes above the family tax credit thresholds that could have been eligible.

## **Access to childcare for respondents with children under 14 years old**

### **What did we ask respondents?**

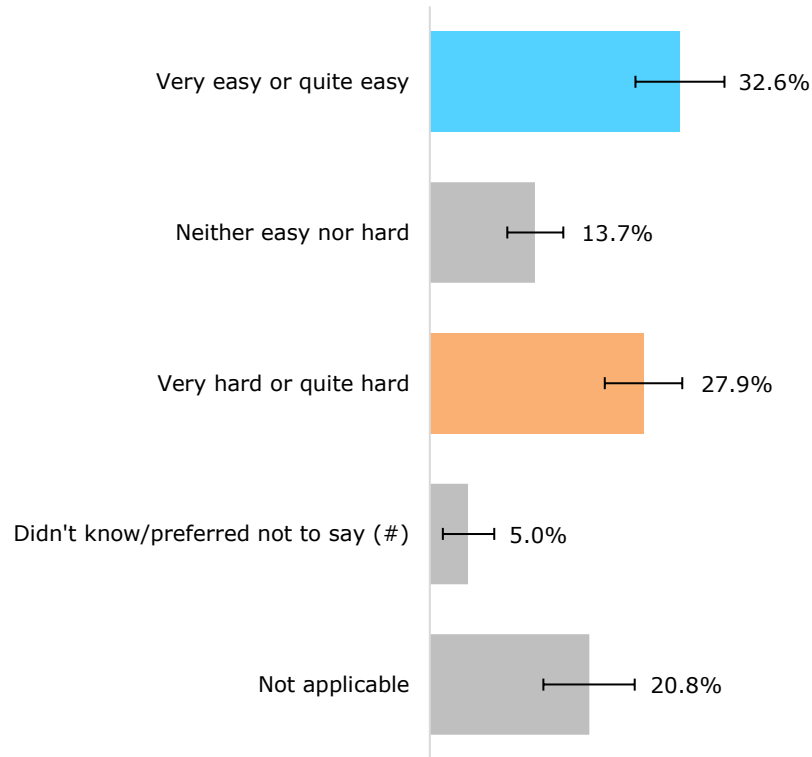
#### **Respondents were asked the following questions about their ease of access to childcare services:**

- (Thinking about all your children under 14) How easy or hard is it for you to get childcare that meets your family's needs?
- During the last 12 months, have you not worked, or worked fewer hours than you wanted, because of the cost of childcare?
- If in a two-parent family with children: During the last 12 months, has your partner not worked, or worked fewer hours than they wanted, because of the cost of childcare?
- What is the typical cost for you, for all your childcare per week? (*Help text: This includes all childcare, such as day-care, before and after school programs, and babysitters*).
- Given your (and your partner's combined) income, how easy or difficult do you find to pay this amount (amount from previous question) per week for childcare? Would you say it was very easy, easy, neither easy nor difficult, difficult or very difficult?

**Respondents with children aged under 14 had varied responses about the level of difficulty they faced in getting childcare that met their family’s needs.**

A similar proportion of respondents with children aged under 14 who appeared eligible for the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies said that they either found it **very easy or quite easy (32.6 percent)** or **very hard or quite hard (27.9 percent)** to get childcare that met their family’s needs.

A sizable proportion of respondents with children aged under 14 (20.8 percent) also said that this question was not applicable to their circumstances.



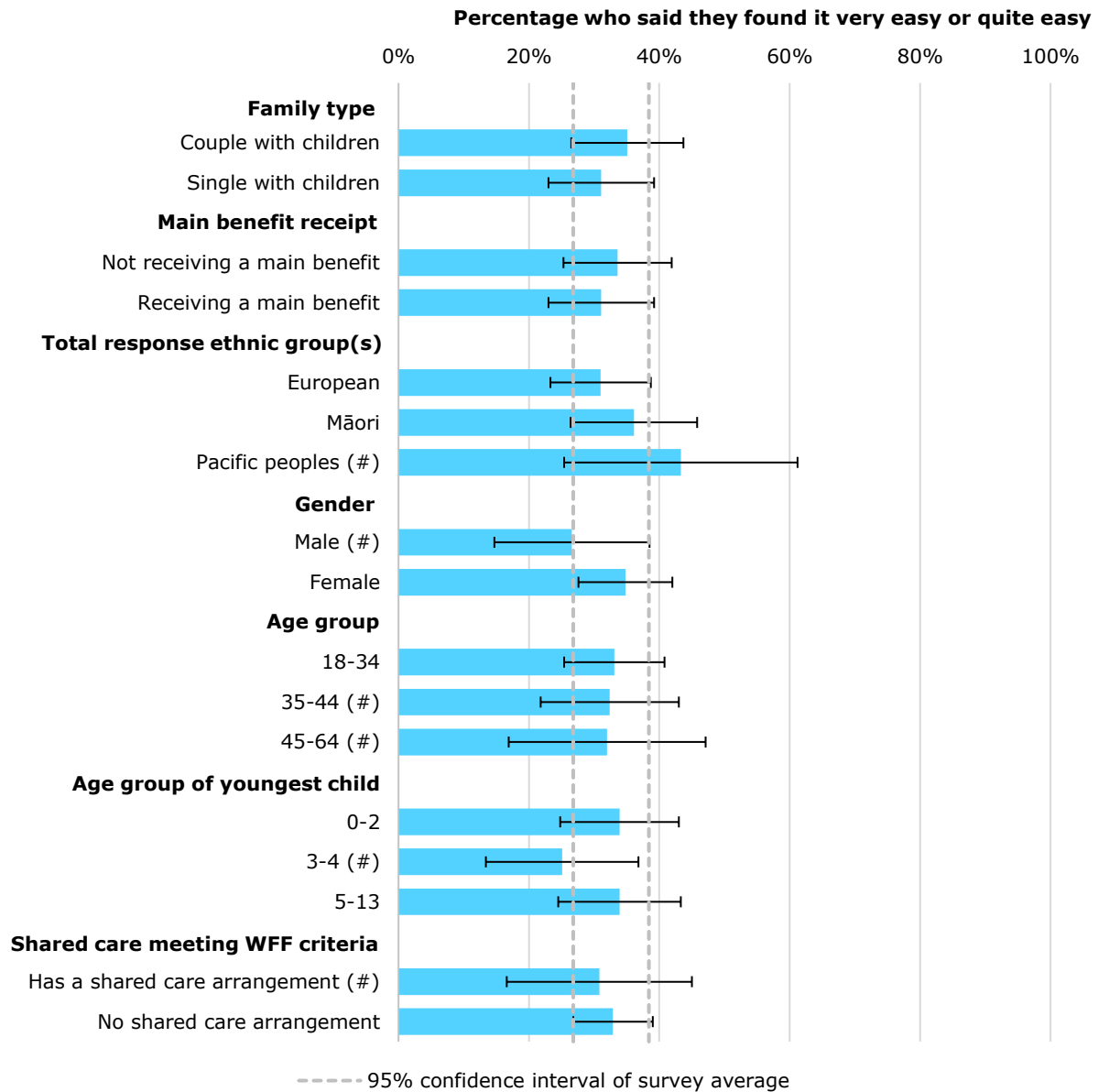
Note: Total families = 651, total weighted families = 216,371.

**There were no statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion who said it was quite easy or very easy to meet their family’s childcare needs**

The proportion of respondents saying they found it easy or very easy to find childcare that met their family’s needs ranged between 25 and 43 percent depending on sub-group.

While none of these differences were statistically significant, respondents who identified as Pacific peoples seemed slightly more likely to say they found it very easy or quite easy to find childcare that met their family’s needs.

Respondents with a youngest child aged three or four years old seemed slightly less likely to say that they found it very easy or quite easy to find childcare that met their family’s needs.

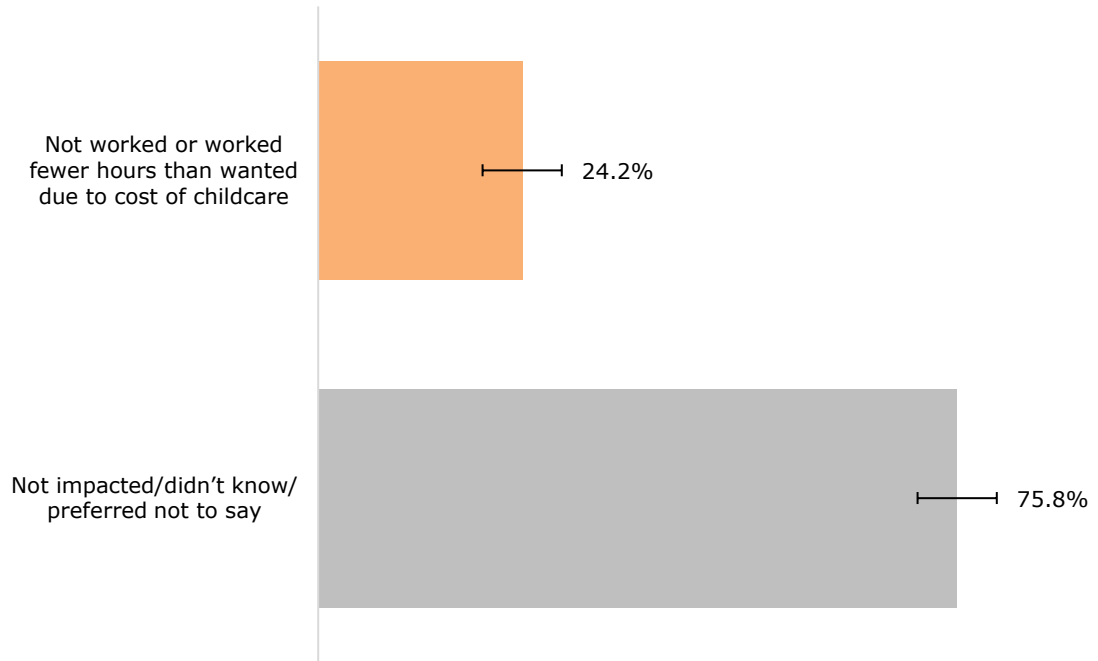




**Around 24 percent of respondents with children aged under 14 said that during the last 12 months they had not worked, or worked fewer hours than they wanted, because of the cost of childcare**

**75.8 percent** of respondents with children said that their work decisions were not impacted because of the cost of childcare in the last 12 months, or that they didn't know if their work decisions were impacted.

**24.2 percent** of respondents with children aged under 14 that looked eligible for either Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies said that they **had either not worked, or worked fewer hours than they wanted**, due to the cost of childcare.



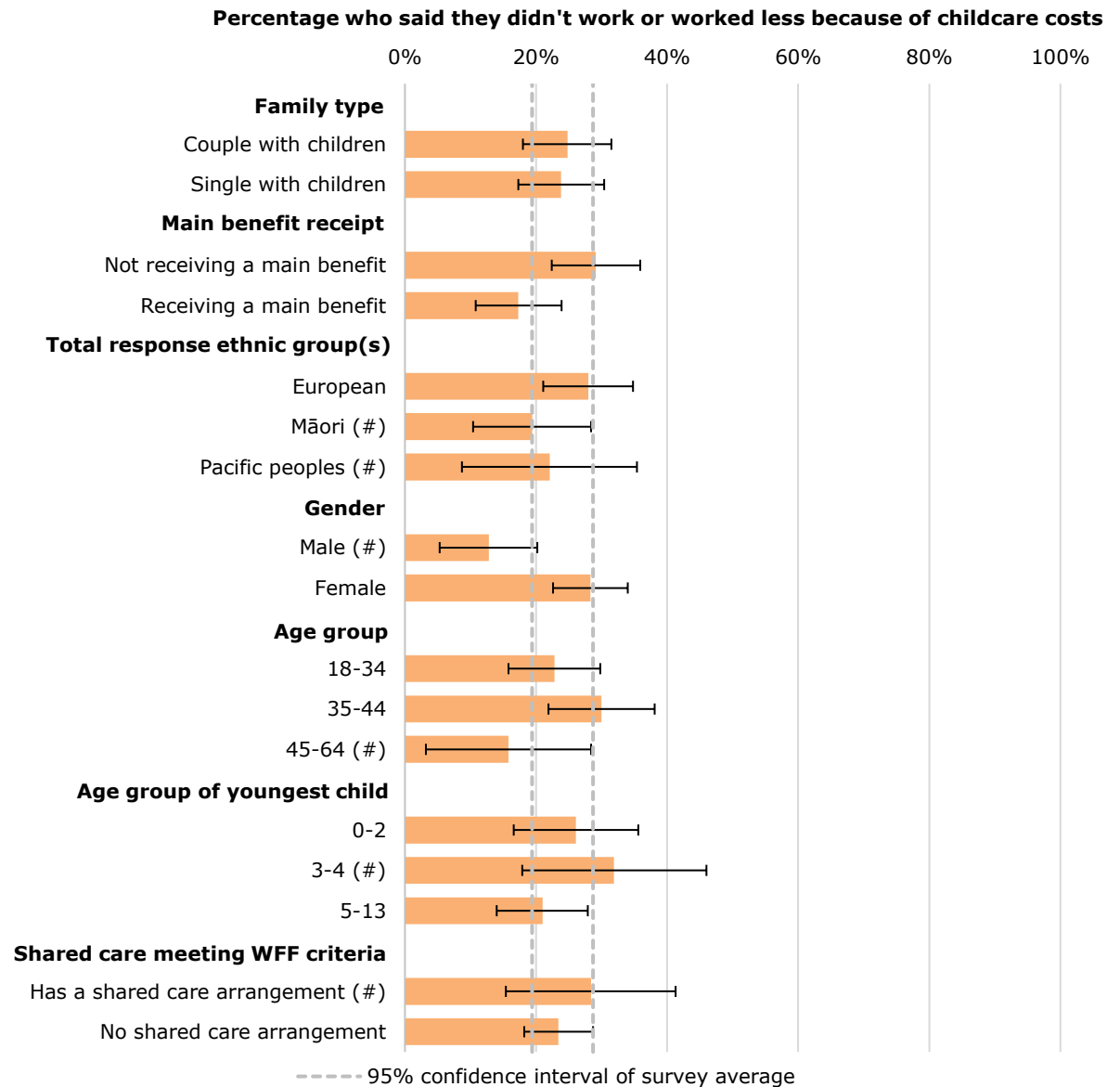
Note: Total families = 651, total weighted families = 216,371.

**There were few statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion who said they didn't work or worked less in the previous 12 months because of childcare costs**

Comparing within sub-group breakdowns, respondents who were female were statistically significantly **more likely** to say they didn't work or worked less in the previous 12 months because of childcare costs compared to male respondents.

Additionally, while not statistically significant, respondents who were not receiving a main benefit, were aged 35 to 44, or had a child aged three to four, seemed slightly more likely to say they didn't work or worked less because of childcare costs.

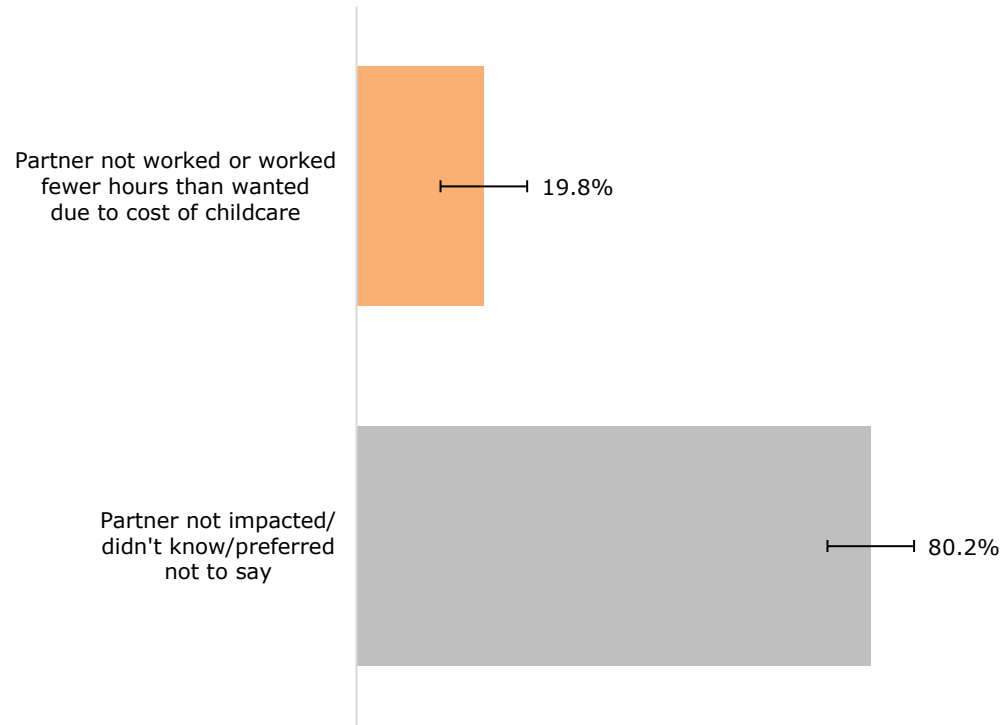
In contrast, respondents receiving a main benefit, or were aged 45 to 64, seemed slightly less likely to say they didn't work or worked less.



**Around 20 percent of respondents in a couple with children said that during the last 12 months their partner had not worked, or worked fewer hours than they wanted, because of the cost of childcare**

**80.2 percent** of respondents with children under 14 that were in a couple and looked eligible for Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies, said that their partners' work decisions were not impacted because of the cost of childcare, or said they didn't know if their work decisions were impacted.

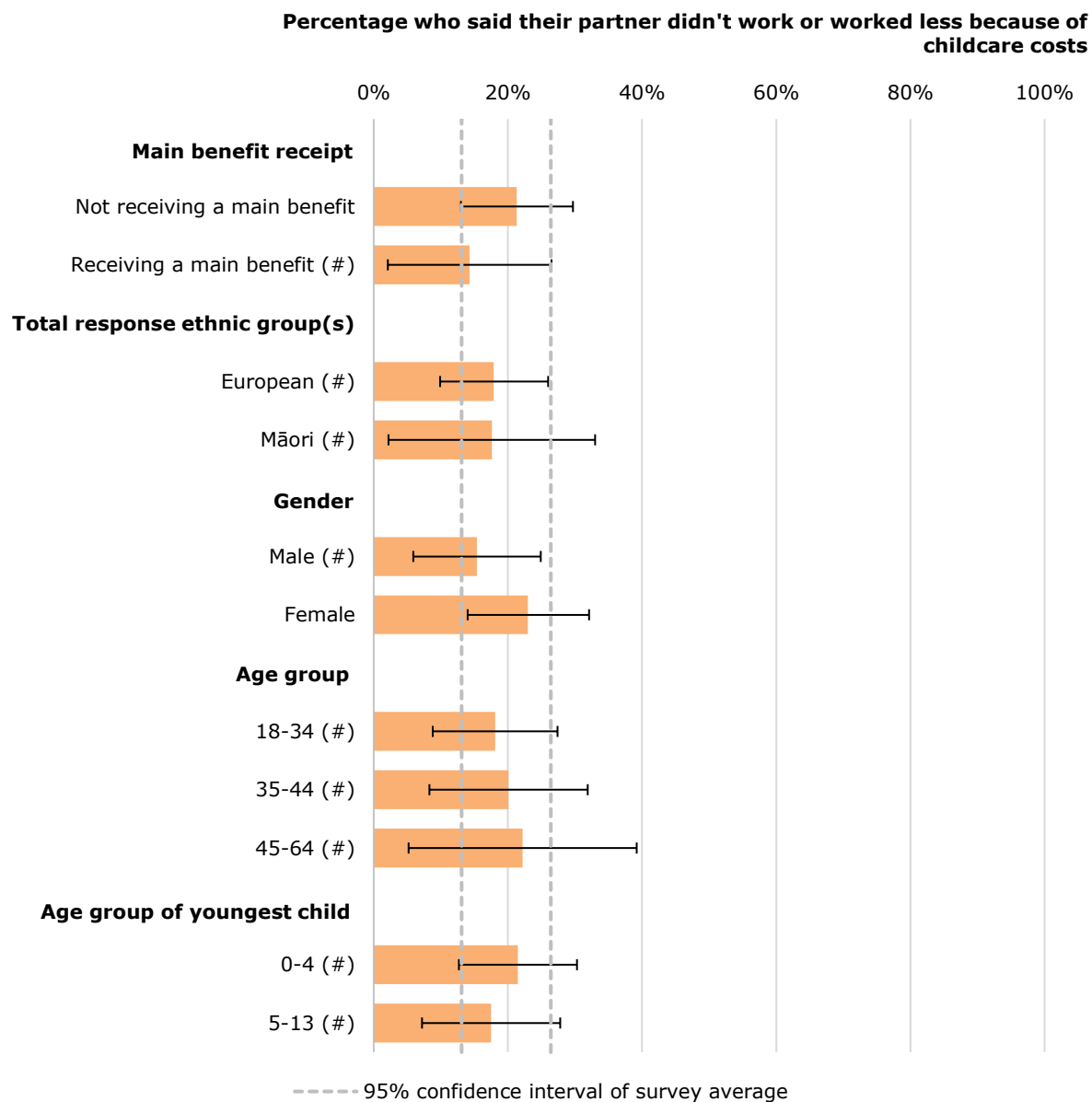
**19.8 percent** said that their partners had either **not worked, or worked fewer hours than wanted**, due to the cost of childcare.



Note: Total families = 317, total weighted families = 81,425.

**There were no statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion of respondents who said their partners didn't work or worked less in the previous 12 months because of childcare costs**

The proportion of respondents saying that their partner didn't work or worked less because of childcare costs ranged between 14 and 23 percent depending on sub-group. None of these differences were statistically significant.



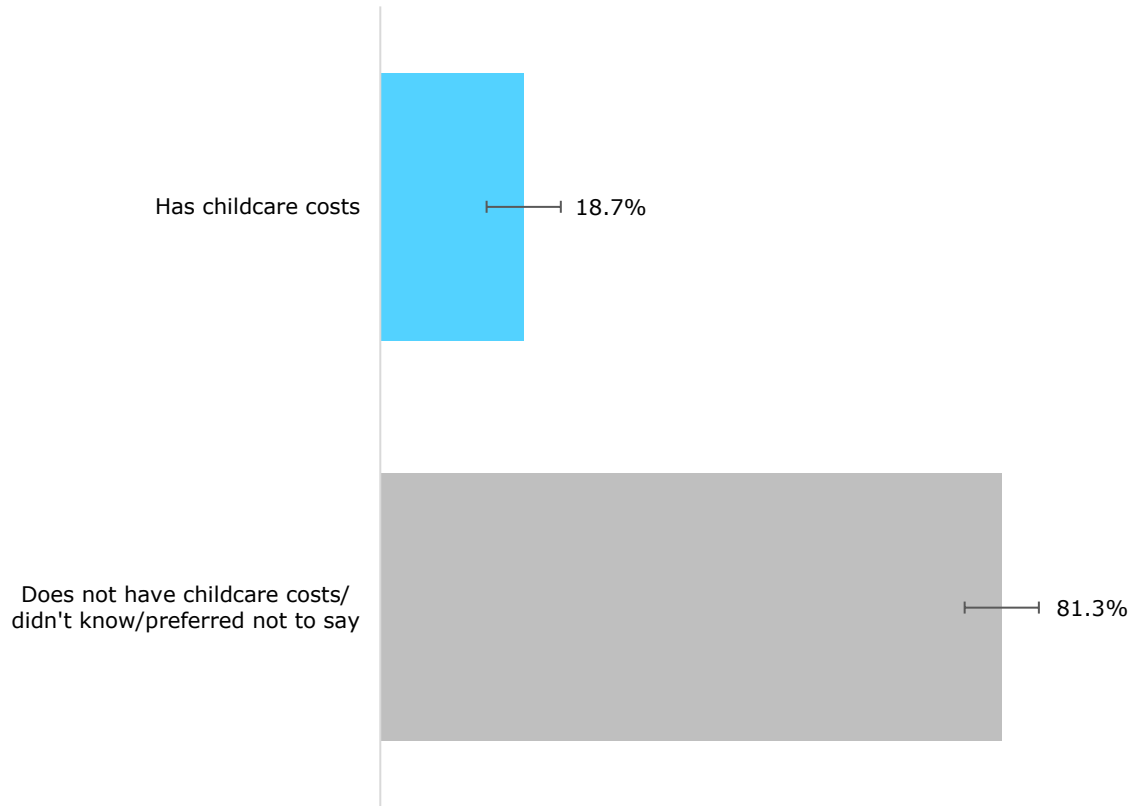
**Around 19 percent of respondents with children aged under 14 said they had childcare costs**

**81.3 percent** of respondents with children aged under 14 who looked eligible for either the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies said they did not have childcare costs, didn't know or preferred not to say if they had childcare costs.

**18.7 percent** said they **did have childcare costs.**

Respondents who **reported childcare costs** reported having **average costs of \$92.05 per week** (95 percent confidence interval: \$78.01 to \$106.09).

This was higher than the median childcare cost of \$75.15 per week. Fifty percent of respondents with childcare costs had costs between \$31.98 and \$122.07 per week.

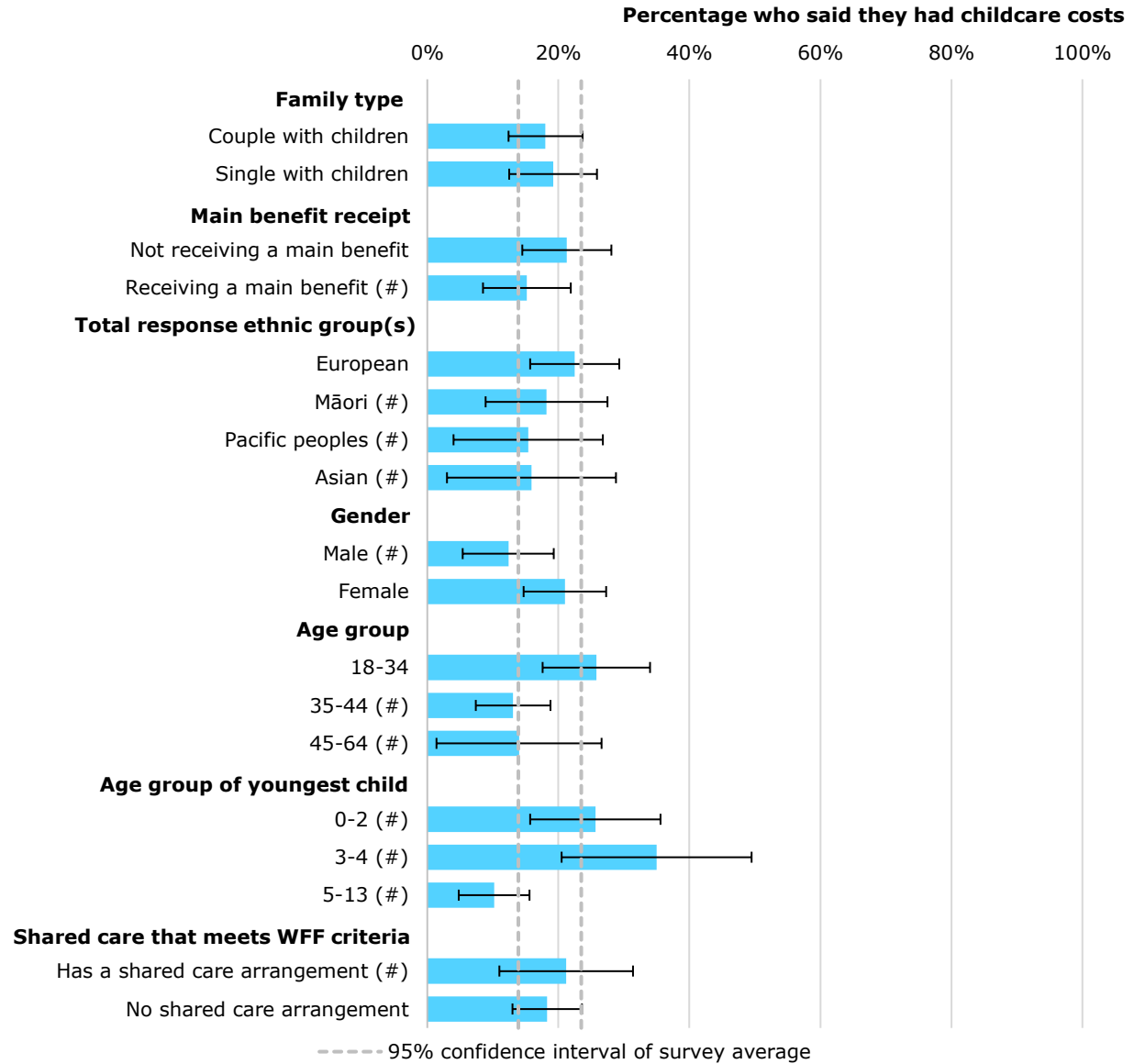


Note 1: Total families = 651, total weighted families = 216,371.

Note 2: Care should be taken in interpreting these figures, as the question respondents were asked did not distinguish between costs before and after any subsidies they may have received.

**There were few statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion who said they had childcare costs**

Comparing within sub-group breakdowns, respondents who had a youngest dependent child aged zero to two, or three to four were statistically significantly **more likely** to say they had childcare costs compared to respondents with a youngest child aged five to 13.



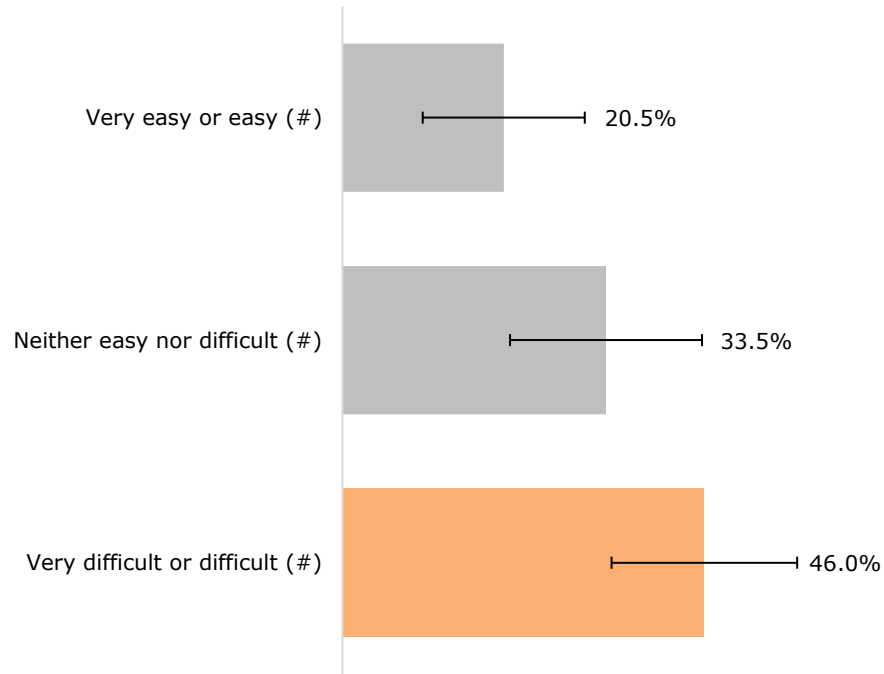
**Of respondents who reported their weekly childcare costs, around 46 percent said that, given their family's income, it was difficult or very difficult to pay those costs**

**46.0 (± 11.8) percent** of respondents with children aged under 14 who looked eligible for the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies and said they had childcare costs said that it was **difficult or very difficult** to pay those costs.

**33.5 (± 12.2) percent** said it was neither easy nor difficult.

**20.5 (± 10.3) percent** said it was **very easy or easy**. This was statistically significantly less than the proportion that reported difficulty in paying their childcare costs.

Respondents who reported higher costs were more likely to report higher levels of difficulty in paying those costs.



Note: Total families = 121, total weighted families = 40,546.

## **Awareness and understanding of Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies for respondents who were potentially eligible**

### **What did we ask respondents?**

#### **Respondents were asked the following questions:**

- Before today, were you aware of the Childcare and OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) subsidies?

#### **If aware:**

- Looking at the Showcard, who do you think can receive the Childcare and OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) subsidies? Respondents were asked to respond "Yes", "No", or "Don't know" to the following options: Families receiving a main benefit, low / middle / high income families not receiving a main benefit.

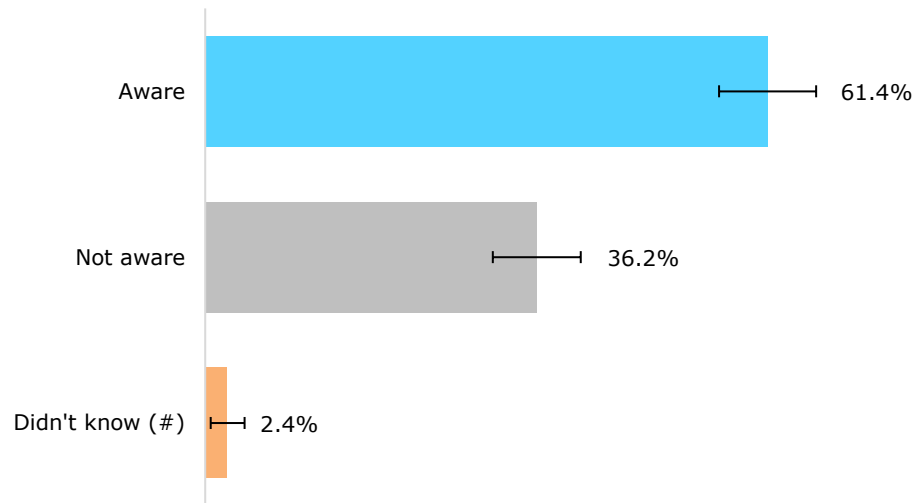


**Among potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies, around 36 percent were not aware of the subsidies**

**61.4 percent** of potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies said that they **were aware** of the subsidies.

**36.2 percent** said they **were not aware**.

**2.4 (± 1.9) percent** said they didn't know.



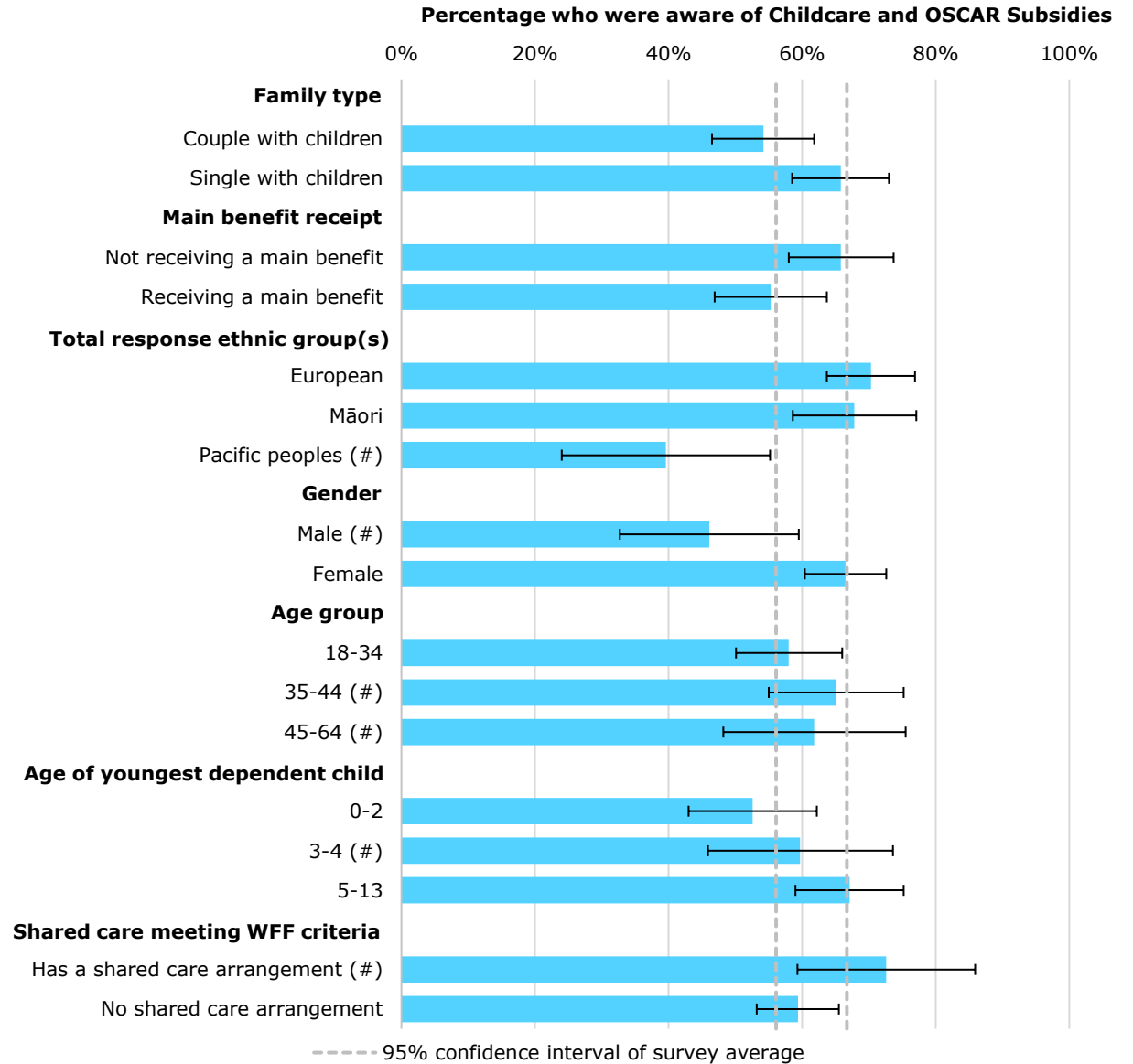
Note: Total families = 651, total weighted families = 216,371.

**There were few statistically significant differences in the proportion aware of Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies across sub-groups**

Awareness of the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies for potentially eligible respondents was statistically significantly **lower** than the survey average for those who identified as Pacific peoples.

Comparing within sub-group breakdowns, respondents who were statistically significantly **more likely** to say they were aware of the subsidies:

- identified as European (compared to non-European)
- were female (compared to male).



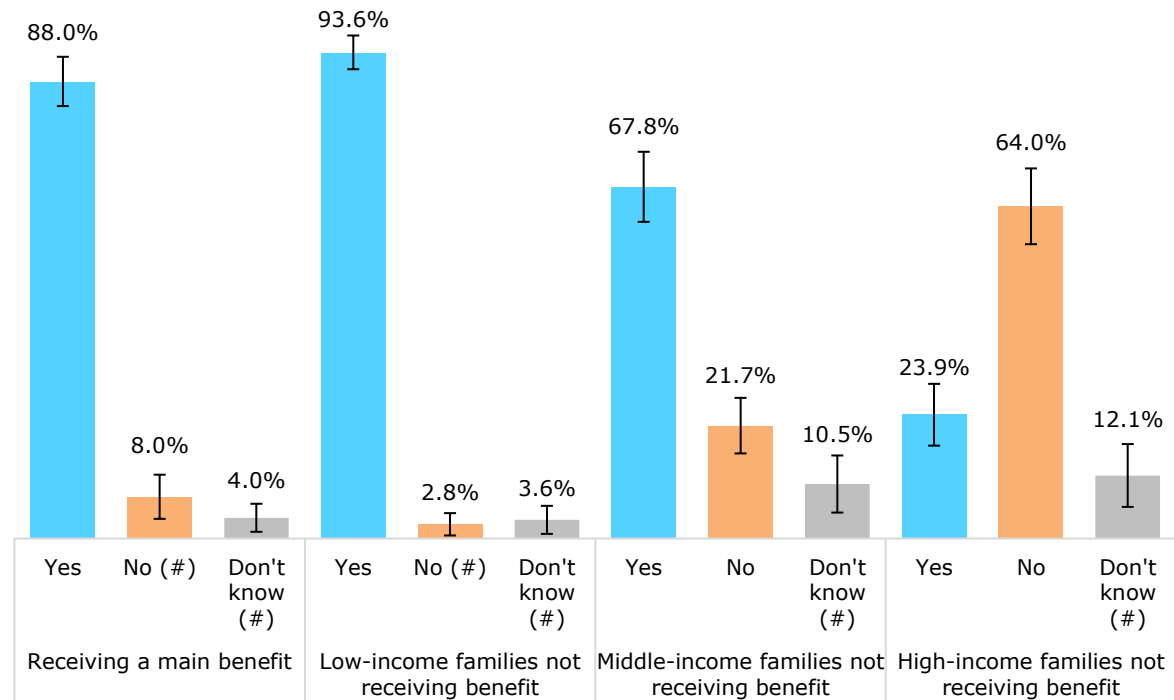
**Many potentially eligible respondents who were aware of the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies understood these subsidies can be received by families on low incomes who are not receiving a main benefit**

**88.0 percent** of potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies thought that **families receiving a main benefit can receive** the subsidies.

**93.6 percent** understood that **low-income** families not receiving a main benefit **can receive** the subsidies. Understanding was universally high across the sub-groups analysed.<sup>3</sup>

**67.8 percent** said **middle-income** families not receiving a main benefit **can receive** the subsidies.

**64.0 percent** thought that **high-income** families not receiving a main benefit **cannot receive** the subsidies.



Note: Total families = 390, total weighted families = 132,880.

<sup>3</sup> Sub-group breakdowns are contained within the excel file for this findings pack, but not commented on further here as there were no differences of note at the sub-group level among the sub-groups analysed.

## **Self-reported receipt of Childcare Subsidy by those with potential eligibility**

### **What did we ask respondents?**

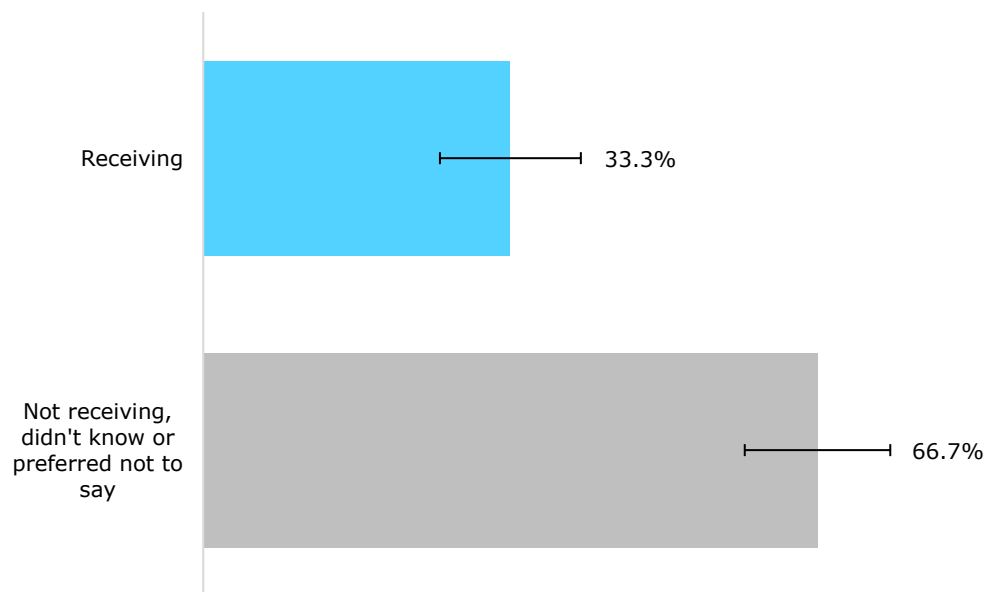
#### **Respondents were asked the following questions:**

- Are you currently receiving a Childcare Subsidy for your child(ren) aged under 5?
- Do you think you would be eligible for a Childcare Subsidy for children under 5, if you were to apply?

**Around a third of potentially eligible respondents who were asked about the Childcare Subsidy said they were receiving the Childcare Subsidy**

**33.3 percent** of respondents with children aged under five years old who were asked about their receipt of the Childcare Subsidy and looked eligible for the subsidy said they **were receiving** the subsidy.

**66.7 percent** said they were **not receiving** the subsidy, said they didn't know, or said they preferred not to say.

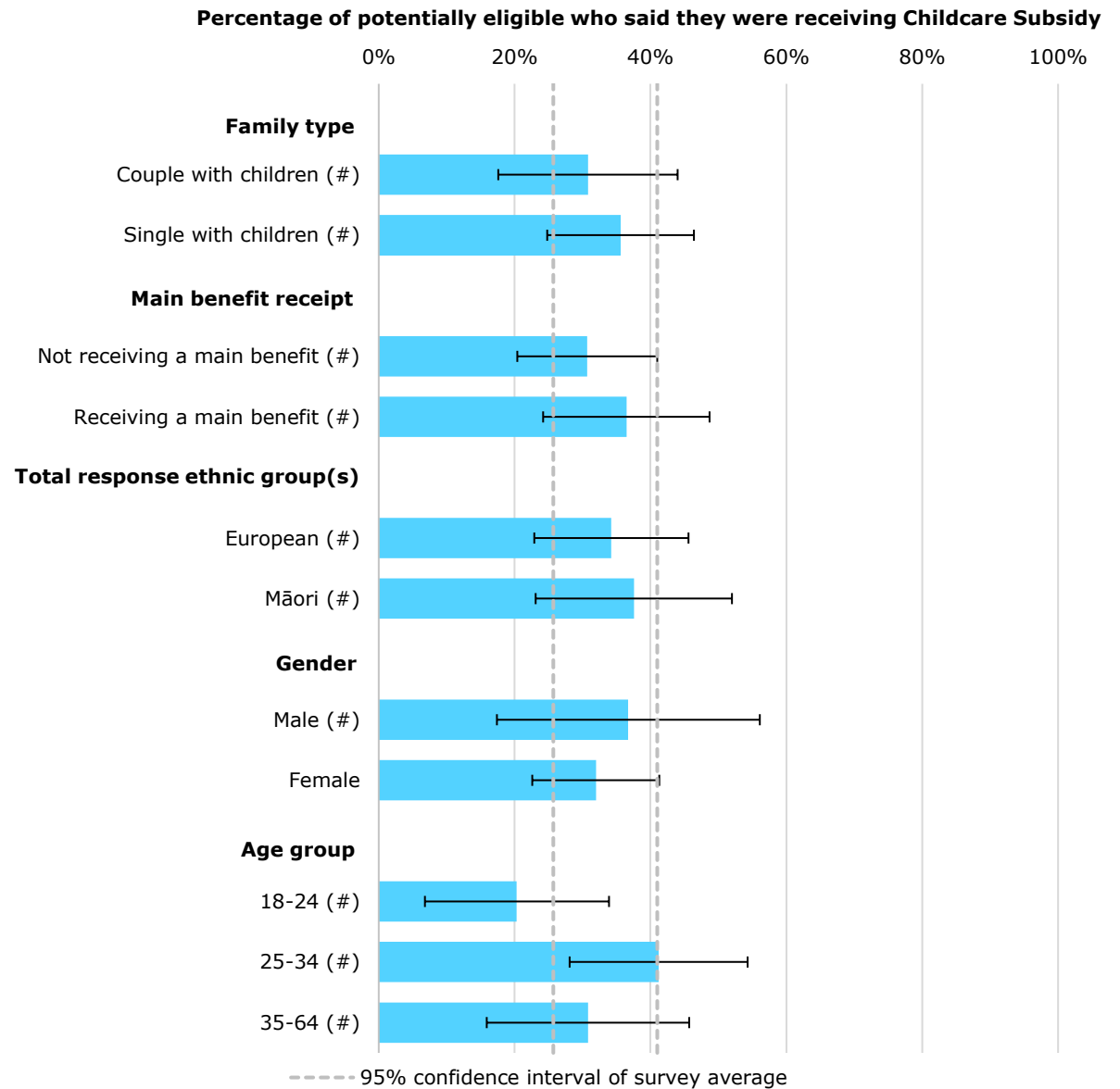


Note: Total families = 337, total weighted families = 99,687.

**There were no statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion of potentially eligible respondents who said they were receiving the Childcare Subsidy**

The proportion of respondents who said they were receiving the Childcare Subsidy ranged between 20 and 41 percent depending on sub-group.

While no differences were statistically significant, respondents who were aged 18 to 24 seemed slightly less likely to say that their family was receiving the Childcare Subsidy.



## Findings for potentially eligible respondents not receiving the Childcare Subsidy

### What did we ask respondents?

In addition to the earlier questions about awareness, self-reported receipt, childcare costs, and difficulty in accessing appropriate childcare, respondents who said they were not receiving the Childcare Subsidy were also asked about their perceived eligibility for the subsidy.

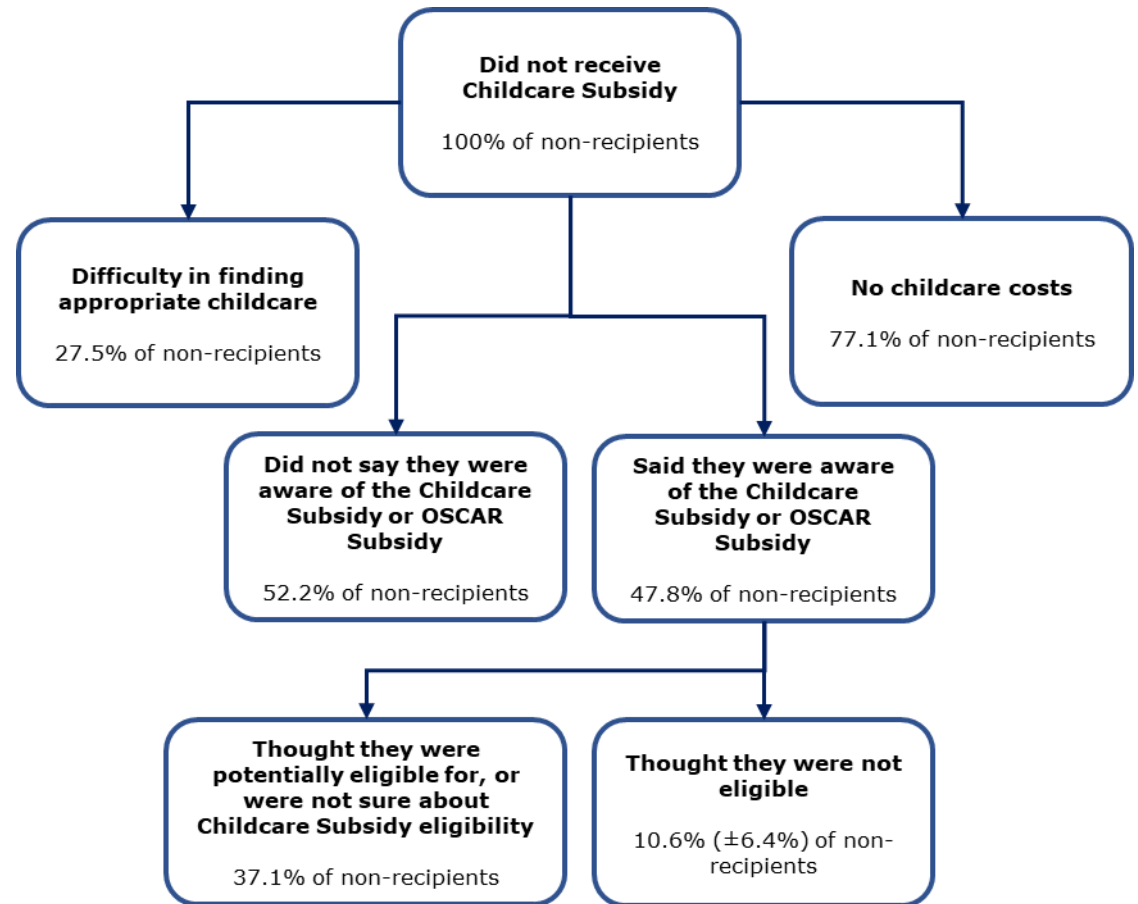
### What did we find for these respondents?

Around a quarter (27.5 percent) of Childcare Subsidy non-recipients found it **quite difficult or very difficult** to find appropriate childcare.

Most non-recipients (77.1 percent) said they did not have childcare costs.

**Just over half** (52.2 percent) of non-recipients **were not aware** of either the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies.

Around **one in 10** (10.6 ± 6.4 percent) of non-recipients **were aware** of the subsidies **but did not think they were eligible** for the Childcare Subsidy.

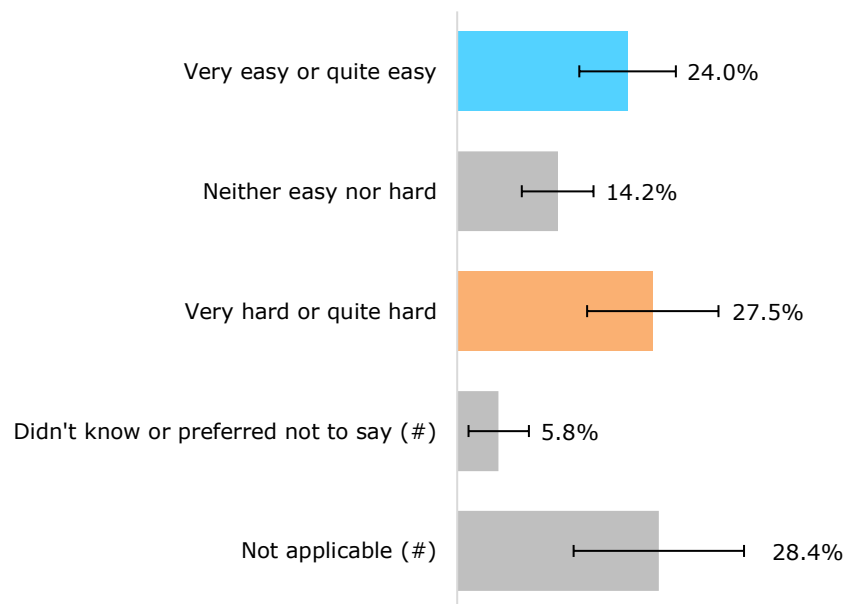


Note: Due to the way the survey was constructed, we assume that if the respondent says they are aware of either Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies that they are aware of both subsidies and therefore an “aware” non-recipient. However, it is possible that the respondent could be aware of the OSCAR Subsidy but not the Childcare Subsidy. Therefore, care should be taken in interpreting the findings in this section.

### Just over a quarter of the Childcare Subsidy non-recipients found it very hard or quite hard to find appropriate childcare

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy:

- **27.5 percent** said it was **very hard or quite hard** to find appropriate childcare
- **24.0 percent** said they found it **very easy or quite easy**
- **14.2 percent** found it neither easy nor hard.



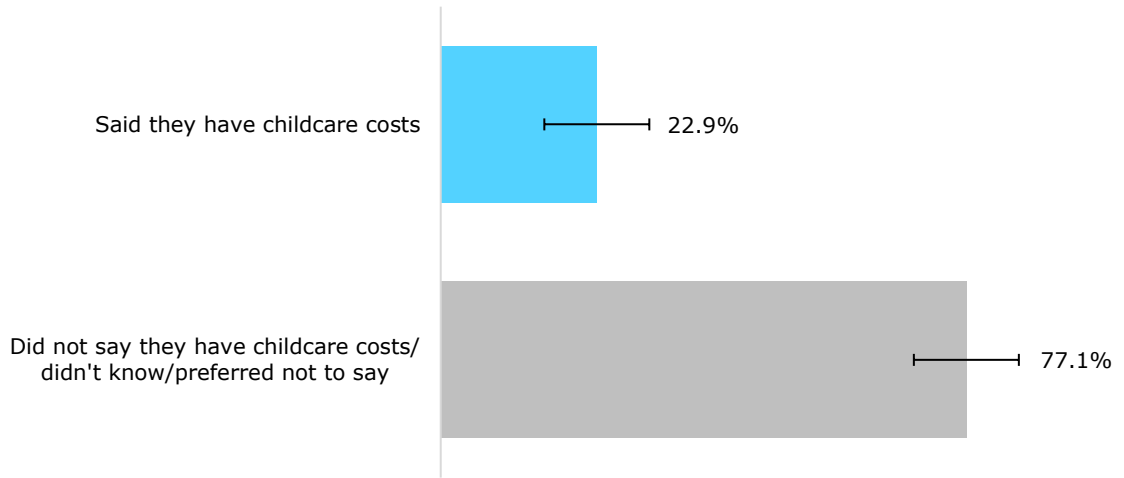
Note: Total families = 250, total weighted families = 66,458.



**Just under a quarter of the  
Childcare Subsidy non-recipients  
said they have childcare costs**

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy:

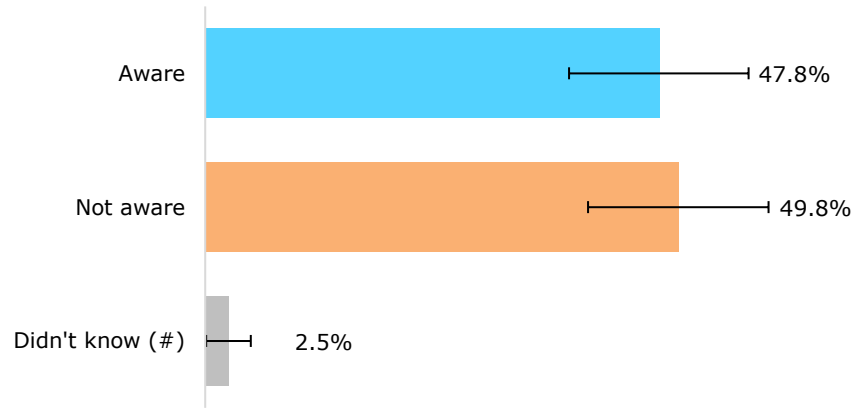
- **22.9 percent** said they have childcare costs
- **77.1 percent** said they did not have childcare costs, didn't know if they did, or preferred not to say.



Note: Total families = 250, total weighted families = 66,458.

**Around half of the Childcare Subsidy non-recipients were not aware of either the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidy**

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy, **similar proportions** said they were **aware (47.8 percent), or not aware (49.8 percent) of the Childcare Subsidy or OSCAR Subsidy**. A small proportion said they didn't know about the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidy.



Note: Total families = 250, total weighted families = 66,458.

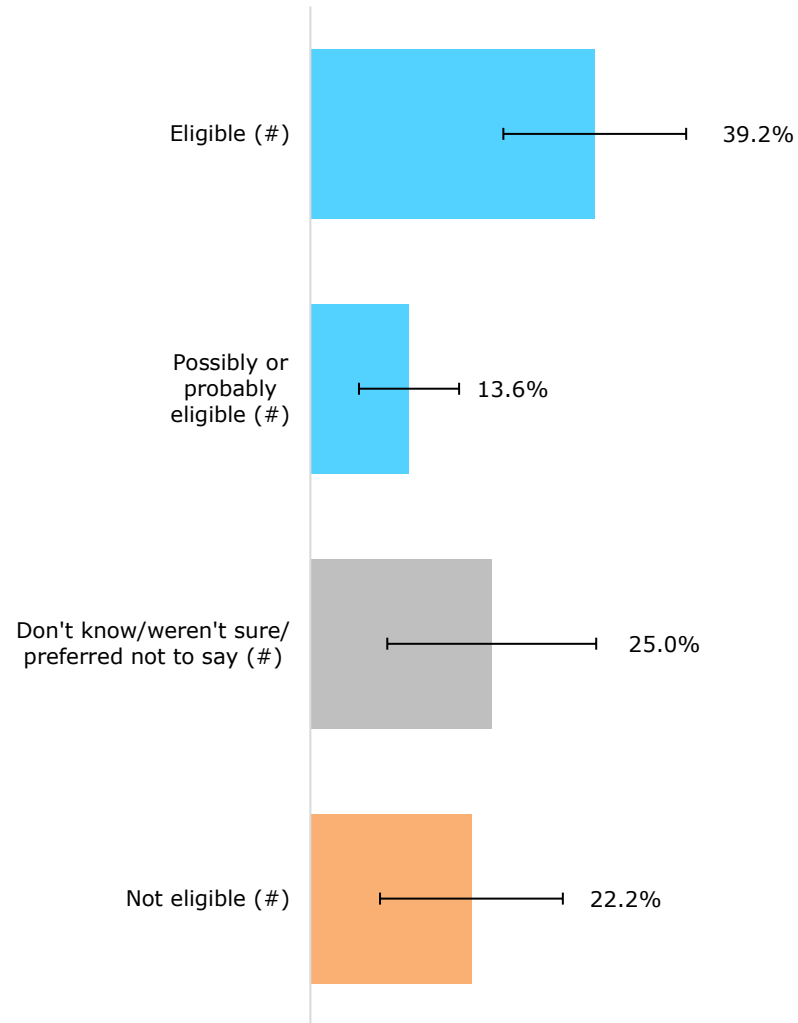
Note: Awareness of the Childcare Subsidy was not asked independently of the OSCAR Subsidy. As a result, there is a possibility that aware non-recipients may be aware of the OSCAR Subsidy, but not the Childcare Subsidy. We assume that if they said they were aware of Childcare or OSCAR Subsidy that they are aware of both subsidies.

**Around 22 percent of respondents in this group of non-recipients who were aware of either the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies thought they were not eligible for the Childcare Subsidy**

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare Subsidy, who did not say they received the subsidy and were aware of the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies:

- **39.2 percent** ( $\pm 12.6$  percent) said they thought they were **eligible** for the subsidy
- **13.6 percent** ( $\pm 6.9$  percent) said that they thought they were **possibly or probably eligible**
- **25.0 percent** ( $\pm 14.4$  percent) said they didn't know, weren't sure or preferred not to say
- **22.2 percent** ( $\pm 12.6$  percent) said they were **not eligible**.

In total, respondents who said they were not eligible made-up 10.6 ( $\pm 6.4$ ) percent of all Childcare Subsidy non-respondents. Respondents who thought they were eligible, probably or possibly eligible, didn't know or were not sure made-up 37.1 percent of non-respondents.



Note: Total families = 120, total weighted families = 31,738.

## **Self-reported receipt of OSCAR Subsidy by those with potential eligibility**

### **What did we ask respondents?**

#### **Respondents were asked the following questions:**

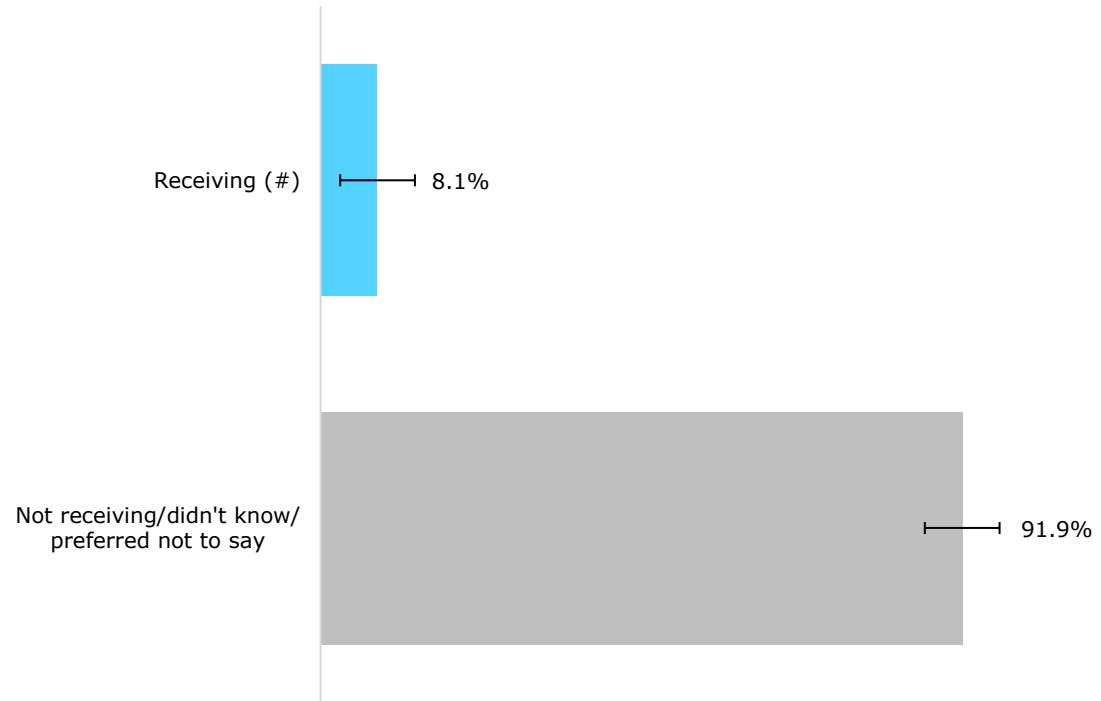
- OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) is a type of government childcare subsidy, for before and after school programmes for children aged 5 to 13 years. Are you currently receiving an OSCAR Subsidy?
- Do you think you would be eligible for an OSCAR subsidy, for before and after school programmes for your child(ren) aged 5 to 13 years, if you were to apply?

**Just under 91 percent of potentially eligible respondents who were asked about the OSCAR Subsidy said they were not receiving the subsidy**

**8.1 (± 5.4) percent** of potentially eligible respondents who were asked about their receipt of the OSCAR Subsidy and looked eligible for the subsidy said they **were receiving** the subsidy.

**91.9 percent** said they were **not receiving** the subsidy, said they didn't know, or said they preferred not to say.

Due to the low numbers of respondents who reported receiving the OSCAR Subsidy, sub-group breakdowns of OSCAR Subsidy receipt are not published within this pack.



Note: Total families = 496, total weighted families = 170,422

## Findings for potentially eligible respondents not receiving the OSCAR Subsidy

### What did we ask respondents?

In addition to the earlier questions about awareness, self-reported receipt, childcare costs, and difficulty in accessing appropriate childcare, respondents who said they were not receiving the OSCAR Subsidy were also asked about their perceived eligibility for the subsidy.

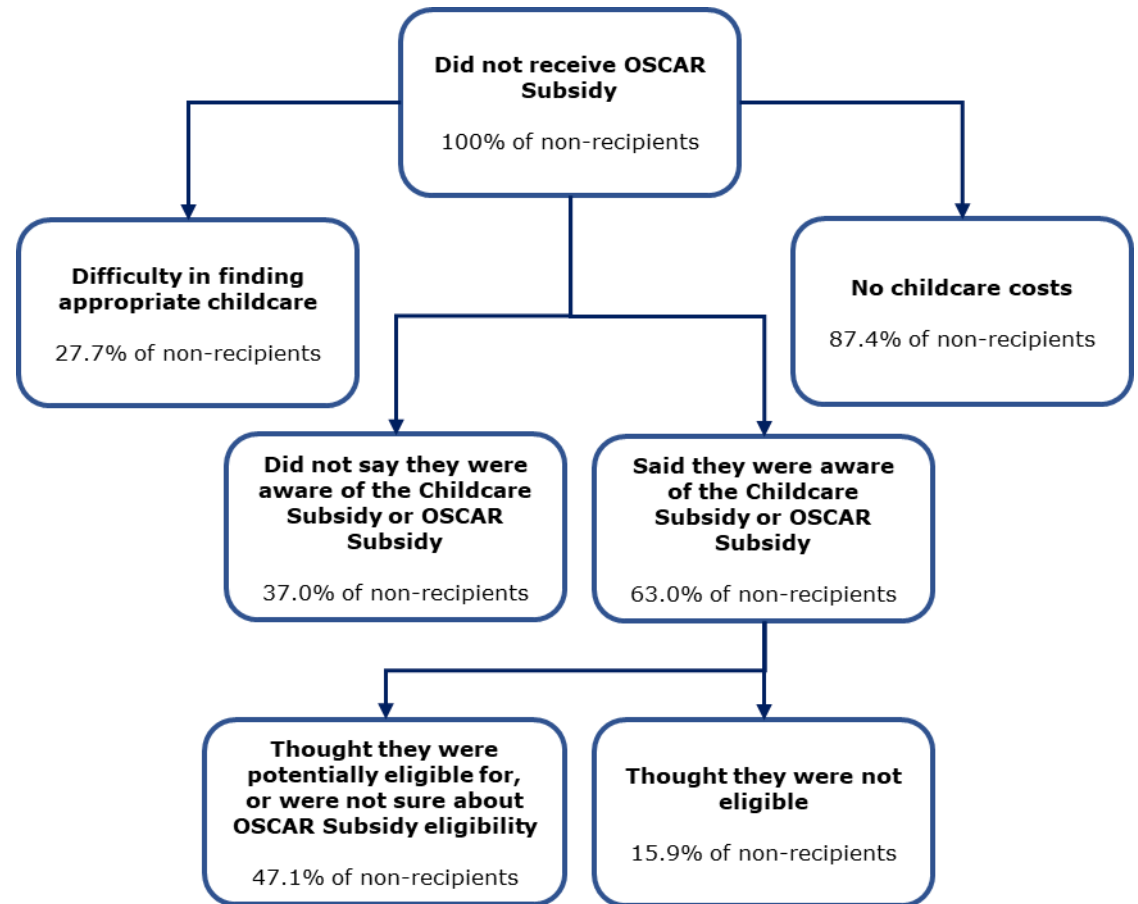
### What did we find for these respondents?

Around a quarter (27.7 percent) of OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients found it **quite difficult or very difficult** to find appropriate childcare.

Most non-recipients (87.4 percent) said they did not have childcare costs.

**Just over a third** (37.0 percent) of non-recipients **were not aware** of either the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies.

Some non-recipients (15.9 percent) **were aware** of the subsidies **but did not think they were eligible** for the OSCAR Subsidy.

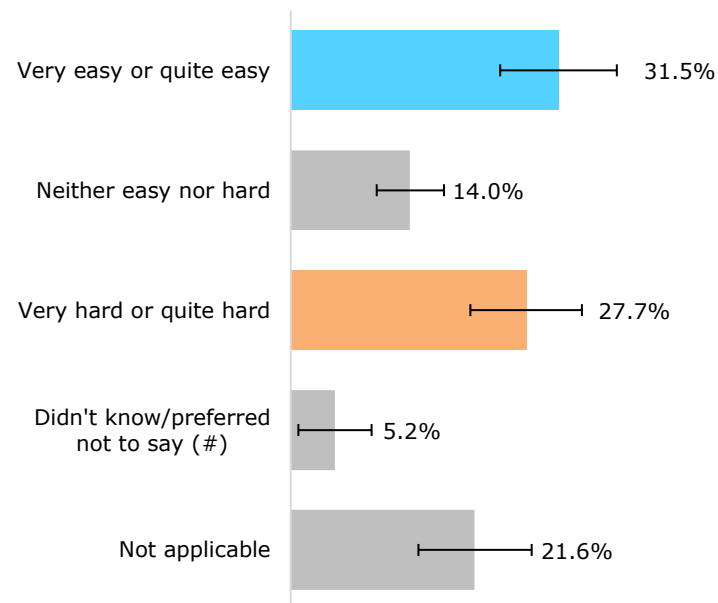


Note: Due to the way the survey was constructed, we assume that if the respondent says they are aware of either Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies that they are aware of both subsidies and therefore an “aware” non-recipient. However, it is possible that the respondent could have been aware of the Childcare Subsidy, but not the OSCAR Subsidy. Therefore, care should be taken in interpreting the findings in this section.

### Just over a quarter of the OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients found it very hard or quite hard to find appropriate childcare

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the OSCAR Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy:

- **27.7 percent** said it was **very hard or quite hard** to find appropriate childcare
- **31.5 percent** said they found it **very easy or quite easy**
- **14.0 percent** found it neither easy nor hard.

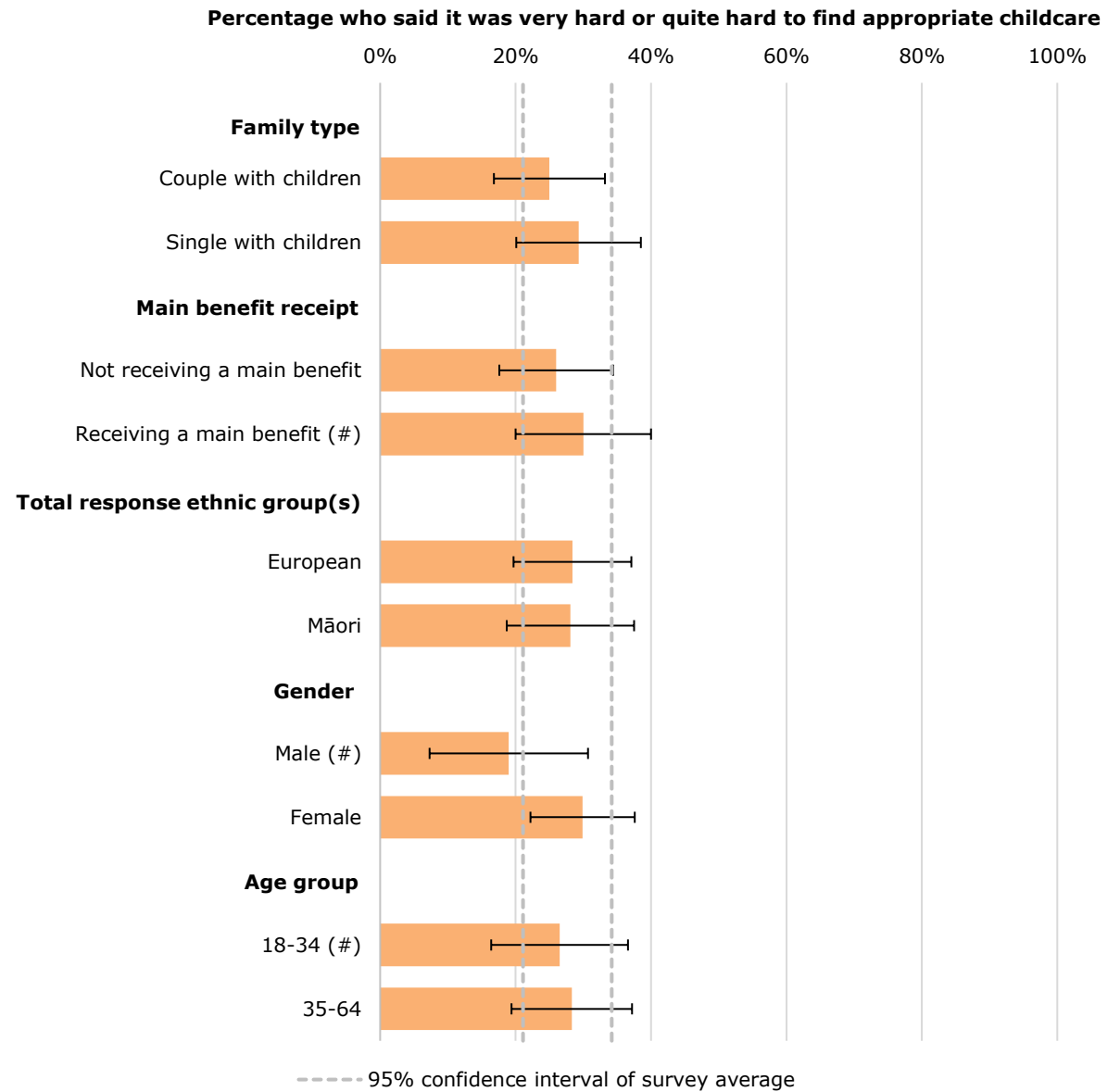


Note: Total families = 467, total weighted families = 156,540.

**There were no statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion of OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients who said it was very hard or quite hard to find appropriate childcare**

The proportion of OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients who said it was very hard or quite hard to find appropriate childcare ranged between 19 and 30 percent depending on sub-group.

While no differences were statistically significant, respondents who were male seemed slightly less likely to say that it was very hard or quite hard to find appropriate childcare.

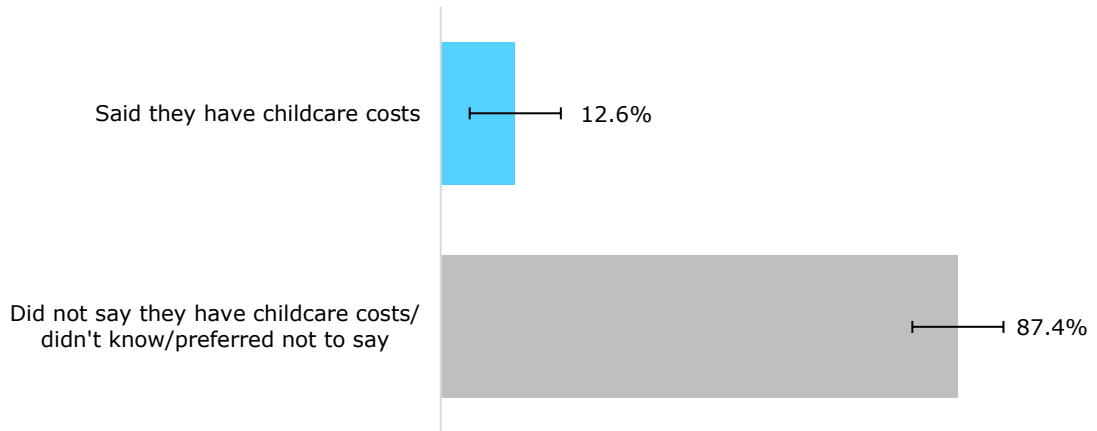




**Around 13 percent of the OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients said they have childcare costs**

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the Childcare Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy:

- **12.6 percent** said they have childcare costs
- **87.4 percent** said they did not have childcare costs, didn't know if they had costs or preferred not to say.

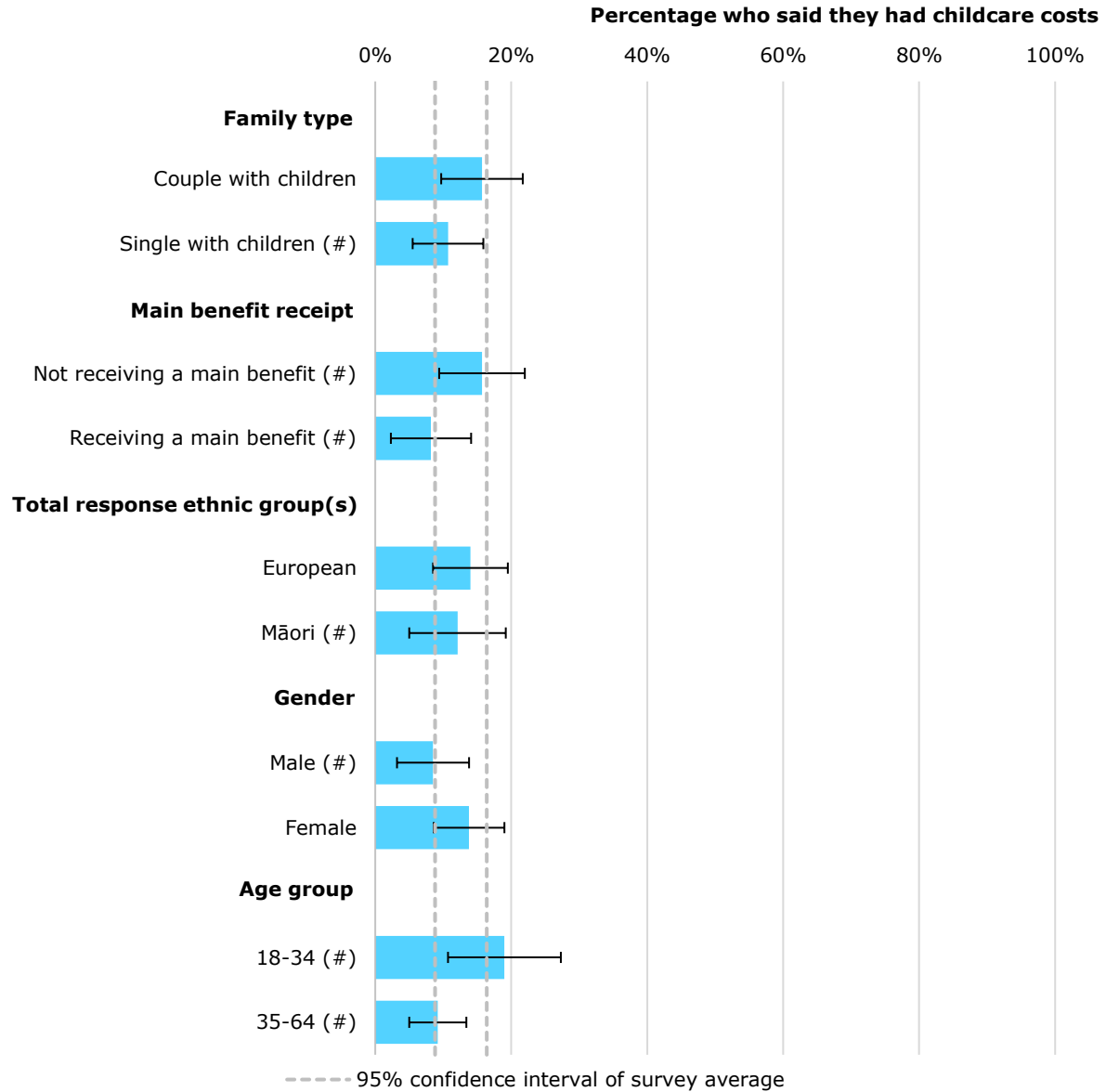


Note: Total families = 467, total weighted families = 156,540.

**There were no statistically significant differences at the sub-group level in the proportion of OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients who said they had childcare costs**

The proportion of OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients who said they had childcare costs ranged between eight and 19 percent depending on sub-group.

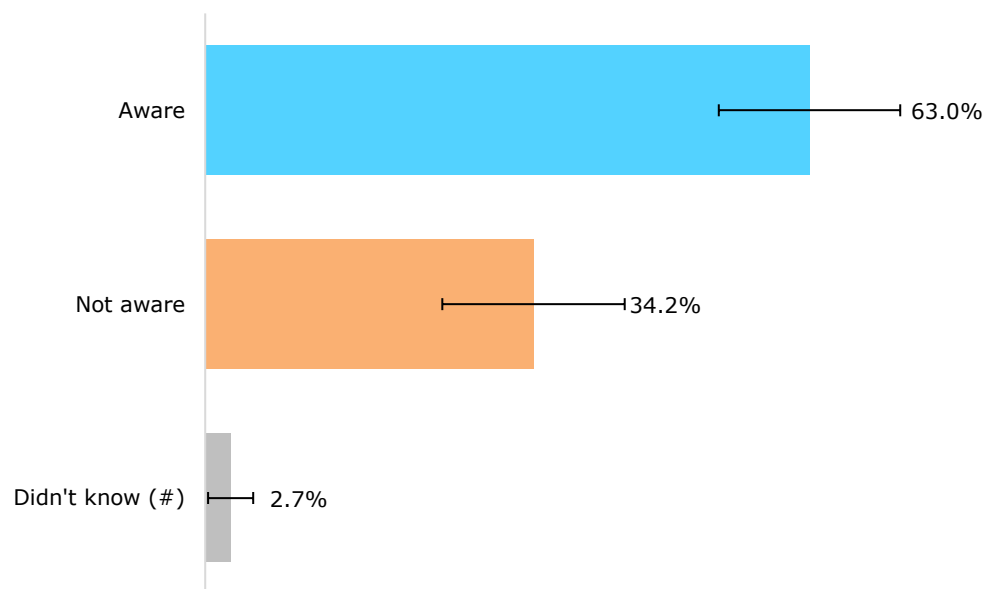
While no differences were statistically significant, respondents who were receiving a main benefit or who were male seemed slightly less likely to say they had childcare costs. Additionally, respondents who were aged 18 to 34 seemed slightly more likely to say they had childcare costs.



### Around a third of OSCAR non-recipients were not aware of either the Childcare Subsidy or OSCAR Subsidy

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the OSCAR Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy:

- **34.2 percent** said **they were not aware** of either the Childcare Subsidy or the OSCAR Subsidy
- **63.0 percent** said they were **aware**
- 2.7 ( $\pm$  2.5) percent said they didn't know.



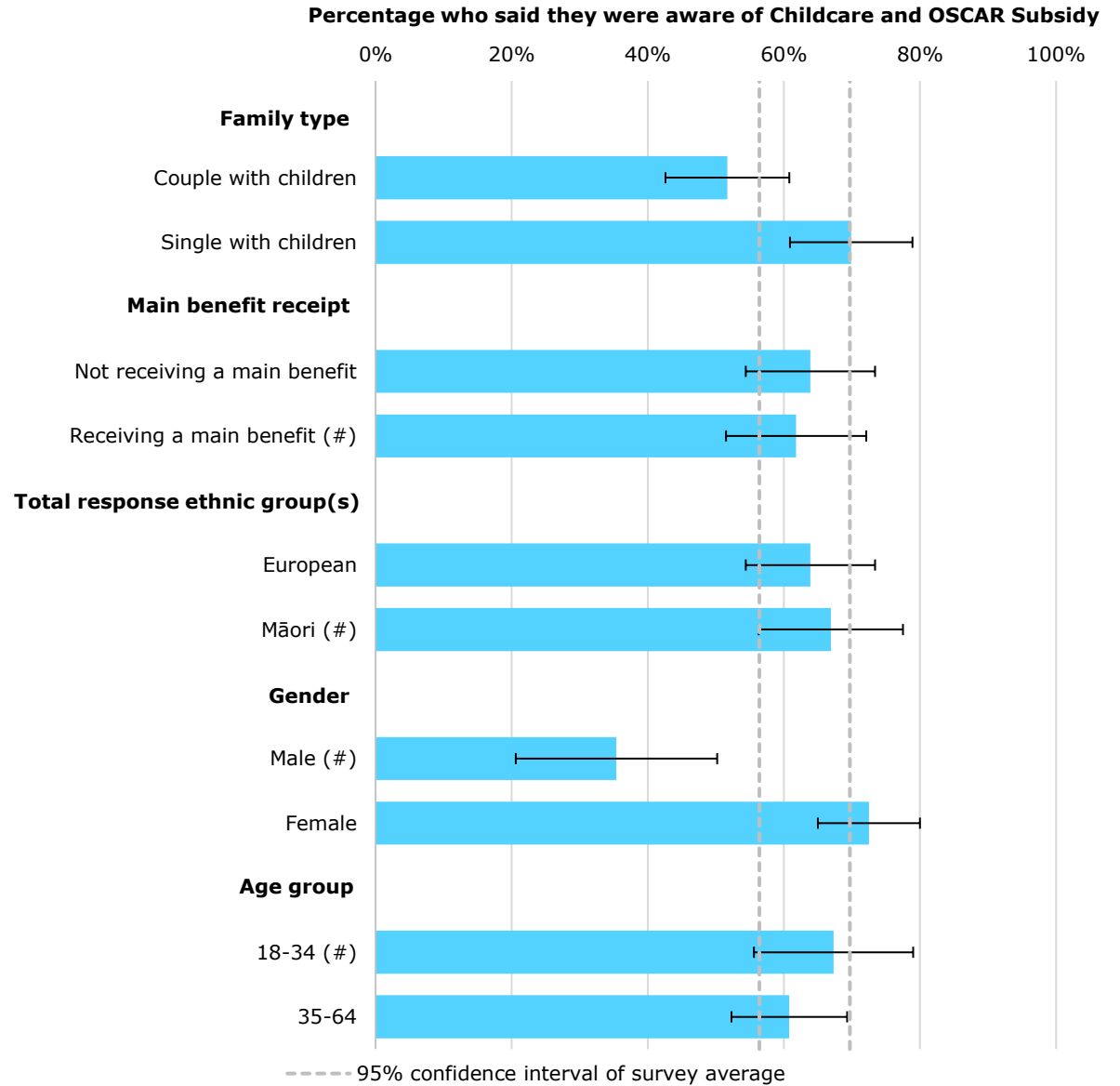
Note: Total families = 467, total weighted families = 156,540.

Note: Awareness of the OSCAR Subsidy was not asked independently of the Childcare Subsidy. As a result, there is a possibility that aware non-recipients may be aware of the Childcare Subsidy, but not the OSCAR Subsidy. We assume that if they said they were aware of Childcare or OSCAR Subsidy that they are aware of both subsidies.

**There were few statistically significant differences in the proportion aware of Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies across sub-groups**

Awareness of the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies for potentially eligible respondents was statistically significantly **lower** than the survey average for those who were male.

Comparing within sub-group breakdowns, respondents who were single with children were statistically significantly **more likely** to say they were aware of the subsidies compared to respondents who were in a couple with children.

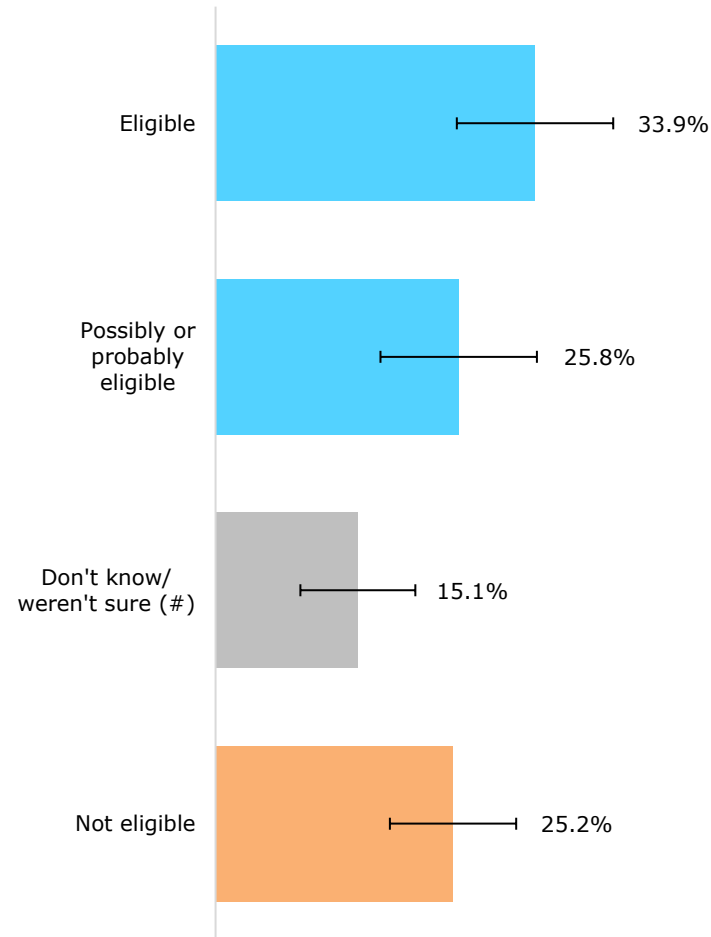


### **Around a quarter of OSCAR non-recipients who were aware of the Childcare or OSCAR Subsidies thought they were not eligible for the OSCAR Subsidy**

Of the potentially eligible respondents for the OSCAR Subsidy who did not say they received the subsidy and were aware of the Childcare and OSCAR Subsidies:

- **33.9 percent** said they thought they were **eligible** for the subsidy
- **25.8 percent** said that they thought they were **possibly or probably eligible**
- **15.1 (± 6.1) percent** said they didn't know or weren't sure
- **25.2 percent** said they were **not eligible**.

In total, respondents who said they were not eligible made up 15.9 percent of all OSCAR Subsidy non-respondents. Respondents who said they thought they were eligible, possibly or probably eligible, didn't know or weren't sure made up 47.1 percent of OSCAR Subsidy non-recipients.



Note: Total families = 297, total weighted families = 98,645.