Nurturing number confidence

The role of public policy in building number confidence between the generations

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BARCLAYS | National Numeracy Getting on with numbers

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Barclays' Group Policy Development team creates public policy thought leadership content on behalf of Barclays. Our work draws on the bank's expertise, data and insights, and is intended to inform the design and application of public policy solutions in response to pressing economic and societal challenges.

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Foreword

Every day, families make many in the moment small decisions that make a real difference to their finances. Confidence with numbers underpins those decisions. That's why this report, produced with our charity partner National Numeracy, matters. It shines a light on how number confidence is formed and shared within families, and what more we can all do to help it grow in the interest of better money management and unlocking economic growth.

The headline finding is stark: an estimated 2.1 million children in the UK have at least one parent with low number confidence. That matters because, while confidence and capability are not the same thing, they are connected. Low confidence can hold people back from supporting their children with learning about numbers and can stop them feeling in control of their own money.

There is also cause for optimism, however. Parents are powerful catalysts. Many tell us they are motivated to build their own confidence so they can support their children. When numbers are used at home confidence rises on both sides. That is the intergenerational ripple effect we want to accelerate.

Barclays is committed to helping people make the most of their money. Through our LifeSkills programme and our partnership with National Numeracy, we're supporting parents, carers, teachers and children with practical resources and community support. But this is a challenge best solved together - by government, educators, industry and communities.

This report sets out three practical policy steps to help build the UK's number confidence focused on numeracy parity, support for parents and empowering schools to grow number confident communities.

If we give parents and carers the right tools and support, we will see confidence with numbers grow at the kitchen table, in the classroom, and across the country. That confidence is the bedrock of better financial decisions, stronger household finances and, ultimately, a growing economy.

Vim Maru
CEO, Barclays UK

Executive summary

This report, which is part of the partnership between Barclays and National Numeracy, presents new insights around the ways in which number confidence is spread between the generations. Number confidence, defined as how confident people feel working with numbers in everyday life, matters because of the relationship with other variables of interest to policy makers, in particular household finances.

Using the results of a specially commissioned survey of parents and their children conducted by YouGov on behalf of Barclays, we find that 84% of parents surveyed say they feel confident using numbers in everyday life and 16% report low confidence, with higher socioeconomic groups having higher number confidence.

When asked five questions of varying difficulty involving percentages, we found a connection between confidence and capability but being confident with numbers did not necessarily mean parents were able to use them accurately: low number confidence parents achieved an average score of 1.21 out of 5, compared to 2.48 for high confidence parents. Low number confidence parents were also significantly more likely to answer 'I don't know'.

> **By scaling up our survey data to the UK population, we estimate that 2.1 million children in the UK have at least one parent with low number confidence.**

Looking at children aged five to sixteen, 80% of those surveyed feel confident using numbers in everyday day life compared to 16% who do not, and 4% who did not know or did not want to say.

There is a measurable weak to moderate statistical relationship between parent and child number confidence that appears linked to the nature of interactions between parents and children in the home.

- High number confidence children are more likely to hear messages about maths from their parents that are either positive or stress the importance of engaging with maths.
- Parents with high number confidence are more likely to encourage their children with mathematical thinking than low number confidence parents.
- Child number confidence is particularly positively affected when parents encourage children to work out maths problems themselves.

Being a parent affects adult number confidence in two ways: not only is the desire to support their children and family a strong motivator for adults to take action to improve their own number confidence, but parents' own number confidence can also be directly affected by the nature of the interactions they have with their children.

- 49% of parents with lower number confidence cite helping their children as a motivator to increase it.
- The most impactful type of interaction in the home that affects parental number confidence positively is when parents point out and explain the application of numbers in everyday life to their children.

Looking specifically at parents with lower number confidence, we find that child-related interventions to improve number confidence are the most appealing and that the type of support most likely to be used is digital.

- The most appealing options to improve number confidence among parents with low number confidence are those that are child-centred, namely 'provide parent-friendly guides to how maths is taught in school' and 'encourage parents to build number confidence for their child's benefit'.
- The type of support most likely to be used is digital; parents tend to use or consider low-effort formats that fit easily into daily life, such as 'online videos/tutorials' and 'AI tools such as ChatGPT'.
- Structured or time-intensive programmes may be less effective, highlighting the importance of designing support that is flexible, informal, and easy to engage with regardless of confidence or circumstance.

The stand-out insight is that the natural motivation of parents to support their children provides an opportunity also to improve their own number confidence, both through the interactions that take place in the home and through building deeper connections with how their children are engaging with numbers at school.

There is a potential double dividend here: supporting parents and carers to become number confident, if they do not identify as such already, seems to improve outcomes not only for those adults but also for their children. Government should therefore seek to nurture number confident communities that include parents and carers. This should include the means – through parent-friendly curriculum-linked digital resources, tools and activities – for parents and carers to have access to more information around how maths is taught at school and in the process expose them to content that is designed to build their own number confidence for their own and their child's benefit.

Specifically, we recommend:

1. **The government should have a policy of parity between the way that literacy and numeracy are promoted to include a National Year of Numeracy to follow in due course the 2026 National Year of Reading. This should leverage the desire of parents to support their child's learning and draw on our research insights to promote the types of conversations that lead to greater number confidence in the home.**

2. **Government-funded curriculum providers of mathematical classroom content should be additionally resourced to create complementary digital tools for parents and carers to support their child's learning including through building their own number confidence. These digital materials would enable self-directed adult learners to follow the same schemes of work as their children as well as prompting the types of positive engagement with their children that promotes intergenerational number confidence, drawing on our insights.**

3. **Non-statutory guidance from government to schools should outline best practice for building number-confident wider school communities. This should include guidance on the importance of choosing curriculum content providers that create complementary digital tools for parents and carers and the need to direct parents to these resources to build number confidence for their child's benefit.**

Overall, our research has shown that number confidence has an intergenerational dimension, running the risk that for some families, low number confidence could be the norm over a long period of time. By supporting today's parents and carers to become more number confident, policymakers can help achieve the reverse, creating an intergenerational ripple effect that supports not only the numeracy levels of the next generation but also many more generations to come.

Gap analysis and research question

This report is concerned with the concept of 'number confidence', defined as how confident adults and children feel working with numbers in everyday life.

It presents insights around the ways in which confidence with numbers can spread between the generations – both from parent to child and vice versa - and the extent to which parenthood itself may increase the motivation to improve number confidence. We then use these insights to draw out policy recommendations for government.

Our particular focus on parents and children derives from an evidence review – summarised below – showing parenthood may be linked to an increased desire to engage with mathematics, meaning a family lens could be useful to policymakers interested in improving number confidence in the wider adult population. With the House of Lords setting up a special inquiry committee "to consider numeracy in England", to report by the end of November 2026, now is a good time to explore this issue.[1]

This work is part of a partnership between Barclays and National Numeracy.

Why is number confidence an issue for policymakers?

Low number confidence is a risk factor for financial vulnerability.[2] While around one in five (19%) of the adult population report low number confidence according to research from the Financial Conduct Authority, the incidence is considerably higher for those out of work due to caring responsibilities, disability or illness (38%), people with no qualifications (35%), the unemployed (34%) and lone parents (31%).[3]

Confidence in working with numbers is essential for making informed financial decisions and so affects financial capability;[4] lower number confidence can lead to poorer financial decision making.

Low number confidence is also associated with lower actual mathematical skill levels,[5] which in turn are linked to lower earnings in the workplace,[6] and so to worse outcomes for both individuals and the wider economy. And, with nearly one in five people (18%) avoiding applying for a job or qualification because it, or the interview process, involves maths,[7] low number confidence also leads to reduced labour supply, shrinking the pool of talent available for employers.

Why explore intergenerational number confidence in particular?

The root causes of low number confidence will vary by individual, however one theme that often emerges is negative experiences of learning maths at school.[8] Significant efforts have been made over the past decade to improve maths education in schools.[9] Particularly encouraging is the recent decision by government to make financial education compulsory within the primary school curriculum (it had already been compulsory for 11-16 year olds), as well as legislating to ensure that all state-funded schools teach the national curriculum, and so be bound by this requirement.[10]

Aside from schooling, our review of the evidence suggests that the way numbers and maths are experienced in the home is also relevant when considering the drivers of number confidence for both children and adults:

1 House of Lords, New committee activity in 2026, November 2025.
2 FCA, Consumer Vulnerability, pg.23, February 2015.
3 FCA, Financial Lives 2024, pg.84, May 2025. The FCA defined 'low' number confidence as choosing an answer between 0-6 on a 10 point scale in answer to the question 'How confident do you feel working with numbers when you need to in everyday life?'
4 FCA, Financial Lives 2024, pg.84, May 2025.
5 National Numeracy, Building a numerate nation: confidence, belief and skills, November 2019.
6 Pro Bono Economics suggested in 2021 that the average worker in the UK with low numeracy skills is currently earning around 6.5% less than they would if they had a basic level of numeracy skills – the equivalent of nearly £1,600 less per year (Pro Bono Economics, Counting on the recovery, April 2021.
7 National Numeracy, New research: Make National Numeracy Day count!,May 2021
8 National Numeracy, Number confidence and social mobility, April 2023.
9 For evidence of a structural improvement in maths teaching, see GOV.UK, Coordinating mathematical success: the mathematics subject report, July 2023.
10 GOV.UK, New curriculum to give young people the skills for life and work, November 2025.

- An analysis of data from the 1970 British Cohort Study shows a significant association between adults' numeracy skills and the numeracy-related cognitive performance of their children, an association that remains evident even when parental qualifications and other socio-economic factors are taken into account.[11]
- During the pandemic, nearly two-thirds of parents surveyed (65%) said their own maths skills had improved as a result of pandemic home-schooling.[12]
- A 2024 research project run jointly between National Numeracy and Mumsnet demonstrated that when parents express negative views about maths, their child's average confidence score was 6.8 out of 10 but positive reinforcement raises the child's confidence to 7.7.[13]
- Early evaluations of the government's Multiply programme, which ran from 2022-25 and provided face-to-face maths support to adults with low qualifications, show the relevance of parenthood to number confidence. Examples include the programme sparking greater family learning (Lincolnshire);[14] and parents' desire to better support their children with their studies being a motivation to engage with the programme (London).[15]
- Evaluations of the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) 'Talk, Learn, Do' programme for parents of 3-11 year-olds show it not only increases parents' knowledge about financial matters but also makes them more confident in talking to their children about money, leading to more frequent conversations.[16]

Barclays experience

Barclays LifeSkills is a free employability and financial education programme. Since it was set up in 2013, it has supported millions of participants and placed thousands into work through collaboration with the education sector, respected charities, and the business community. It is designed for all ages from young people aged 5+ to adults and families; our resources are used in 94% of secondary schools.

At the heart of LifeSkills we fund charity partners to support the UK's most disadvantaged communities, providing tailored interventions to young people, adults and families. Specifically, LifeSkills and National Numeracy have partnered to help young people, adults and families to learn how number confidence leads to financial confidence, including providing dedicated resources for teachers, adults and families to grow their confidence to use numbers in everyday life. This includes working together to train Numeracy Champions in more than 60 primary schools in communities across the UK with the aim of reaching over 13,000 children, parents, carers and staff and boosting their number confidence.[17]

Research questions

Building on this experience we therefore set out to explore in more detail the nature of the relationship between parents and children as it relates to number confidence and draw out policy implications for government.

Specifically, our research questions are as follows:

1) What is the relationship between parents' number confidence and their children's number confidence?

2) How might being a parent affect number confidence?

3) What are the most effective interventions to improve number confidence of parents?

11 Bynner, J., & Parsons, S. (2006). New light on literacy and numeracy. National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), November 2006.
NRDC, The intergenerational transfer of numeracy skills, pg.4, June 2013.
12 National Numeracy, New research: Make National Numeracy Day count!, May 2021.
13 National Numeracy, Parents pass fear of maths on to their children, new Mumsnet research suggests, November 2024.
14 Lincolnshire County Council, Innovation in the Lincolnshire Multiply Programme – Need, Impact, Learning, and Future Potential, pg.44, April 2025.
15 ies, Evaluation of London Multiply, p25, May 2025.
16 HM Treasury, Financial Inclusion Strategy, November 2025.
17 National Numeracy, Barclays LifeSkills: a new partnership.

Methodology

This study is based on an online survey conducted by YouGov on behalf of Barclays, in collaboration with National Numeracy. The survey engaged a nationally representative sample of UK parents (n = 2,040) alongside a child of theirs who was aged 5–16 years (n = 2,040), recruited via YouGov's market research panel. By seeking responses from parent and child together we were able to explore statistical correlations between the two. Fieldwork took place between 23 September and 6 October 2025.

The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions designed to explore attitudes and behaviours related to numeracy. Parent data was weighted by age, gender, social grade and region to ensure national representativeness.[18] Quantitative responses were analysed using regression techniques to identify patterns and relationships across key variables, while qualitative responses provided additional context and an opportunity for parents to share additional thoughts.

We use the phrases 'number confident parents' or 'parents with high number confidence' to mean those who self-selected between 6-10 out of 10 on a confidence scale. Those who self-selected 0-5 on the same scale are classed as having 'low number confidence' or being 'not number confident'. The question was: *On a scale of 0-10 where 0 = 'Not at all confident' and 10 = 'Very confident', how confident do you feel working with numbers in everyday life?*

Child number confidence is measured across a five-point scale from 'I feel very confident' to 'I don't feel confident at all' and an option to say 'I don't know' and 'I don't want to say'. The child and parent questions used a different scale in order to make the survey easier for children to participate in. The phrases 'being number confident' or with 'high number confidence' relate to children who choose one of the top two boxes and being 'not number confident' or with 'low number confidence' is defined as choosing one of the bottom two boxes. The question was: *How confident do you feel when you use numbers? Please tick the answer you think fits you most.*

18 Data in the report is based on the weighted data only. The unweighted base size is included in the footnotes.

Results

Context: the distribution of parent and child number confidence

Overall, 84% of parents say they feel confident using numbers in everyday life and 16% report low confidence.

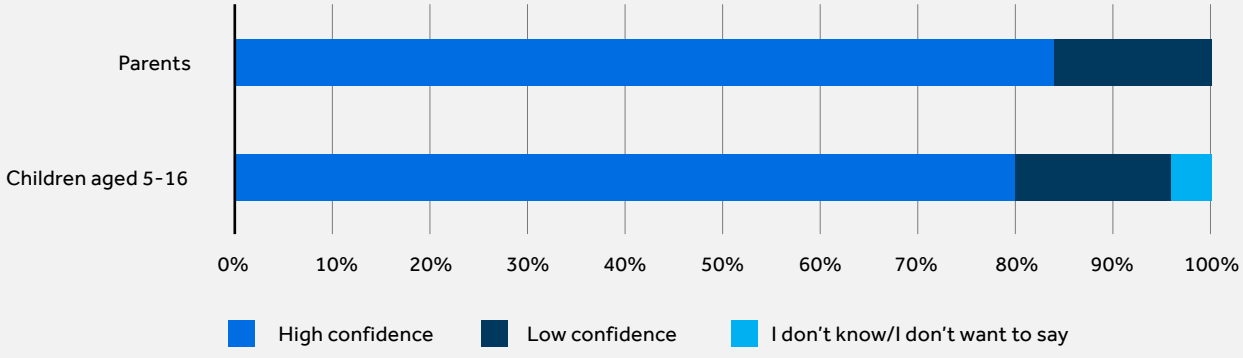
Low number confidence disproportionately affects more disadvantaged parents: 24% of parents in socioeconomic group DE and 19% in socioeconomic group C2 reported low number confidence, compared to 10% in socioeconomic group AB.[19] Similarly, 25% of parents in low income households reported low number confidence, compared to 16% in medium-income households and 9% in high income households. And 27% of unemployed respondents reported low number confidence compared to 13% of those in employment. Women, too, were more likely to report low number confidence (20%) compared to men (11%).[20]

Looking at children aged five to sixteen, 80% feel confident using numbers in everyday day life compared to 16% who do not (Chart 1). These figures are consistent across all key stage groups, suggesting that numeracy is not a major source of anxiety for most children.[21]

By calculating the number of children in our sample that have a parent with low number confidence and comparing that with the total number of children in our sample, we can estimate the proportion of all children that have at least one parent with low confidence. Applying this proportion to national statistical data this, we estimate that 2.1 million children in the UK have at least one parent with low number confidence (see Appendix).

We then contextualised parents' self-reported confidence with numbers against their actual maths skills by asking them to complete five maths questions you could expect to see in a GCSE exam paper.[22] In each case, parents with low number confidence were significantly more likely to answer 'I don't know' than parents with high number confidence. For those that did answer the questions, while we found a connection between confidence and capability, being confident with numbers did not necessarily mean parents were able to use them accurately: 26% of high number confident parents were operating at the level required for a GCSE pass, compared to 5% of low number confident parents.[23] And overall, we found that the average correct score out of 5 was 2.48 for high number confidence parents and 1.21 for low number confidence parents.

Chart 1: Parent and child number confidence



19 A and B represent higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, or professional roles (e.g., directors, teachers); C1 covers supervisory and junior managerial positions (e.g., office supervisors, nurses); C2 refers to skilled manual workers (e.g., electricians); D includes semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (e.g., factory workers); and E comprises state pensioners, casual workers, and the unemployed.

20 Base sizes: low income households (weighted n=208; unweighted n=209), medium income households (weighted n=825; unweighted n=829), high income households (weighted n=730; unweighted n=730), unemployed (weighted n=398; unweighted n=425), in employment (weighted n=1642; unweighted n=1615), women (weighted n=1102; unweighted n=1095), men (weighted n=938; unweighted n=945), AB (weighted n=673; unweighted n=658)), C1 (weighted n=551; unweighted n=595), C2 (weighted n=469; unweighted n=413), DE (weighted n=347; unweighted n=374)). Low household income defined as <£19,999, medium household income as £20,000 to £59,999, and high as >£60,000.

21 KS1 (weighted n=493; unweighted n=500), KS2 (weighted n=485; unweighted n=493), KS3 (weighted n=509; unweighted n=500), KS4 (weighted n=553; unweighetd n=547)

22 The questions were provided by National Numeracy, included in annex

23 Answering four out of five questions correctly is comparable to a GCSE Pass or Adult level 2

Research question 1: What is the relationship between parent and child number confidence?

Result: There is a measurable weak to moderate statistical relationship between parent and child number confidence that appears linked to the nature of interactions between parents and children in the home.

Our regression analysis found a statistically significant weak to moderate positive correlation between parent and child number confidence across UK households. In simple terms, when parents feel confident with numbers, their children tend to feel the same, and this link becomes stronger as children grow older.

The strength of this relationship is captured by correlation coefficients, which range from 0.35 in Key Stage 1 (ages 5–7) to 0.49 in Key Stage 4 (ages 14–16). A coefficient of 1 would indicate a perfect correlation, so these figures suggest a meaningful and growing connection. The overall correlation across all age groups is 0.42, indicating a weak to moderate association. This suggests that feeling confident with numbers isn't just an individual trait, but could be a shared household sentiment.

Overall correlation coefficient:
0.42

The correlation strengthens as children age:

KS1: 0.35

KS2: 0.38

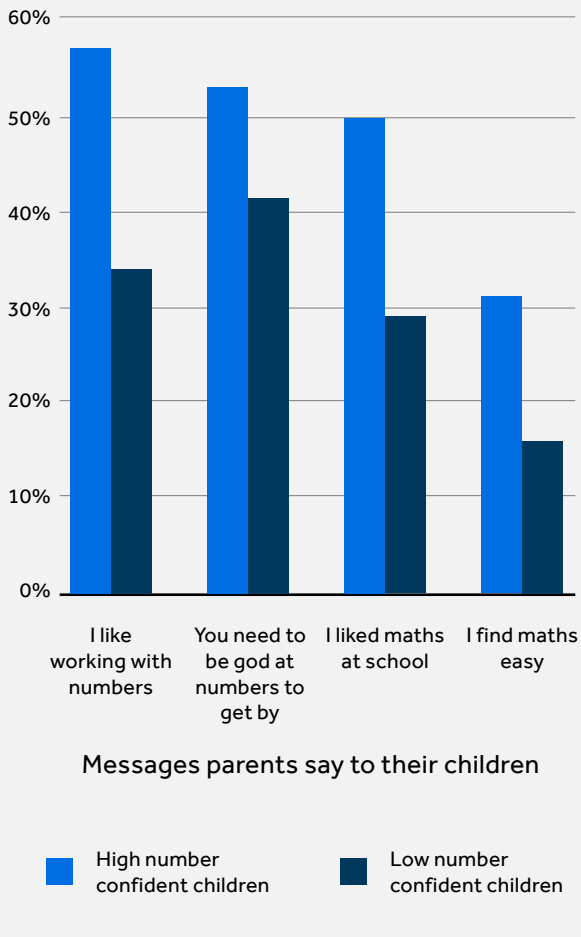
KS3: 0.42

KS4: 0.49

The mechanism that drives the connection between parent and child number confidence appears to be linked to the types of everyday interactions that take place in the home.

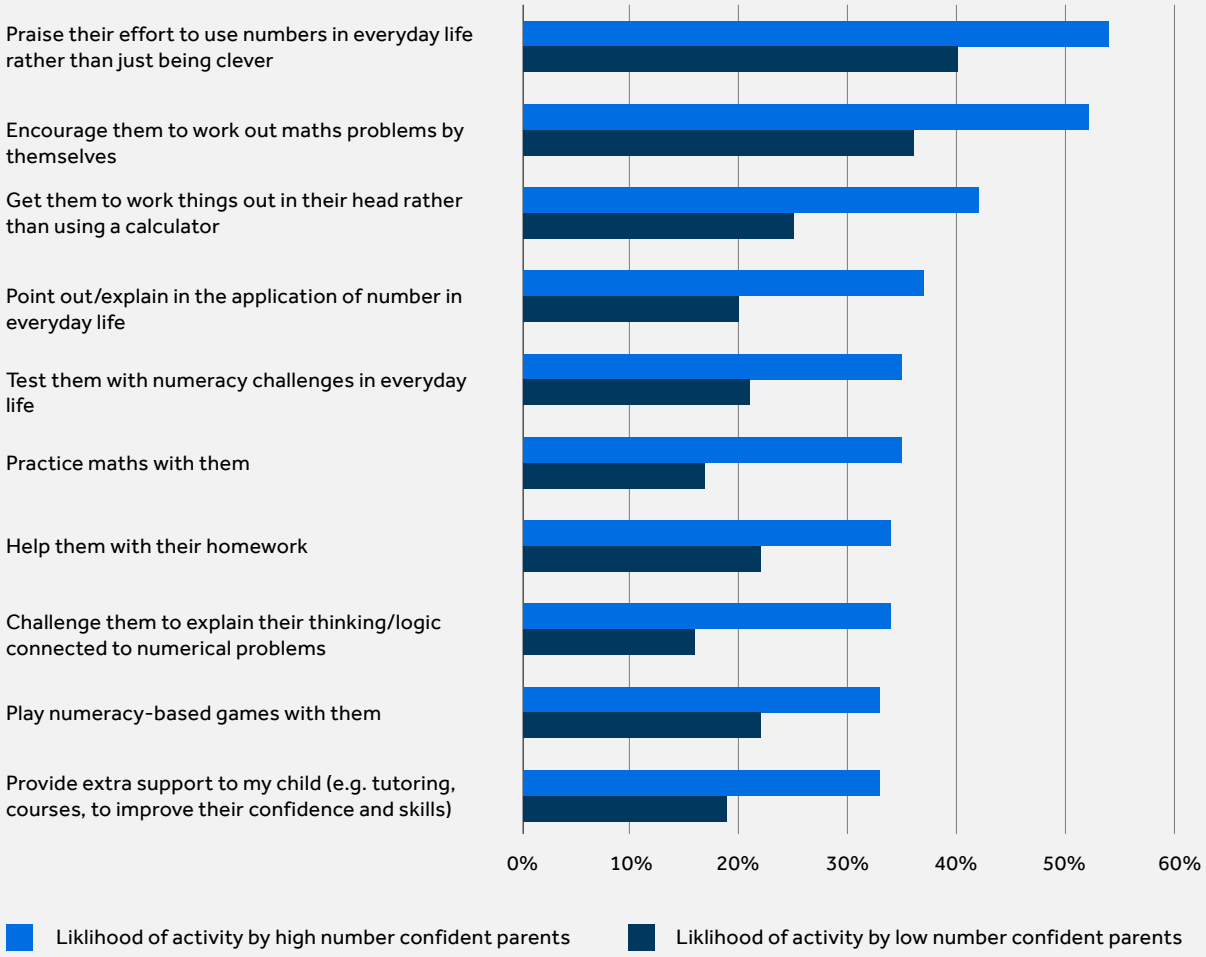
We find for example, that children that are confident with numbers are far more likely to have heard messages about maths at home from their parents that are either positive or stress the importance of engaging with maths (Chart 2).[24] In contrast, children who are less confident with numbers are more likely to miss out on these types of messages from their parents, which may in turn shape children's own attitudes towards numbers.[25]

Chart 2: High number confident children are more likely to hear positive messages about maths from their parents



24 Child high number confidence base size (weighted n=1632; unweighted n=1631).
25 Child low number confidence base size (weighted n=324; unweighted n=321)

Chart 3: Parents with high number confidencve are more likely to encourage their children with mathematical thinking than parents with low number confidence



We also find that parents who themselves have high number confidence are more likely than parents with low number confidence to take proactive measures to encourage their children to develop their mathematical thinking, such as praising their effort to use numbers in everyday life, encouraging them to work out maths problems by themselves and getting them to work things out in their head rather than using a calculator (Chart 3).[26]

We were also able to check the extent to which these types of interactions in the home have an impact on the number confidence of children, regardless of the number confidence of parents. This was achieved through a two-stage statistical process. First, a linear regression analysis was performed to identify the correlations between each of the behaviours of all parents in our sample and their children's number confidence. The relative importance of these behaviours was then drawn out using Johnson's Relative Weight Analysis, and the results presented in Chart 4, below.[27]

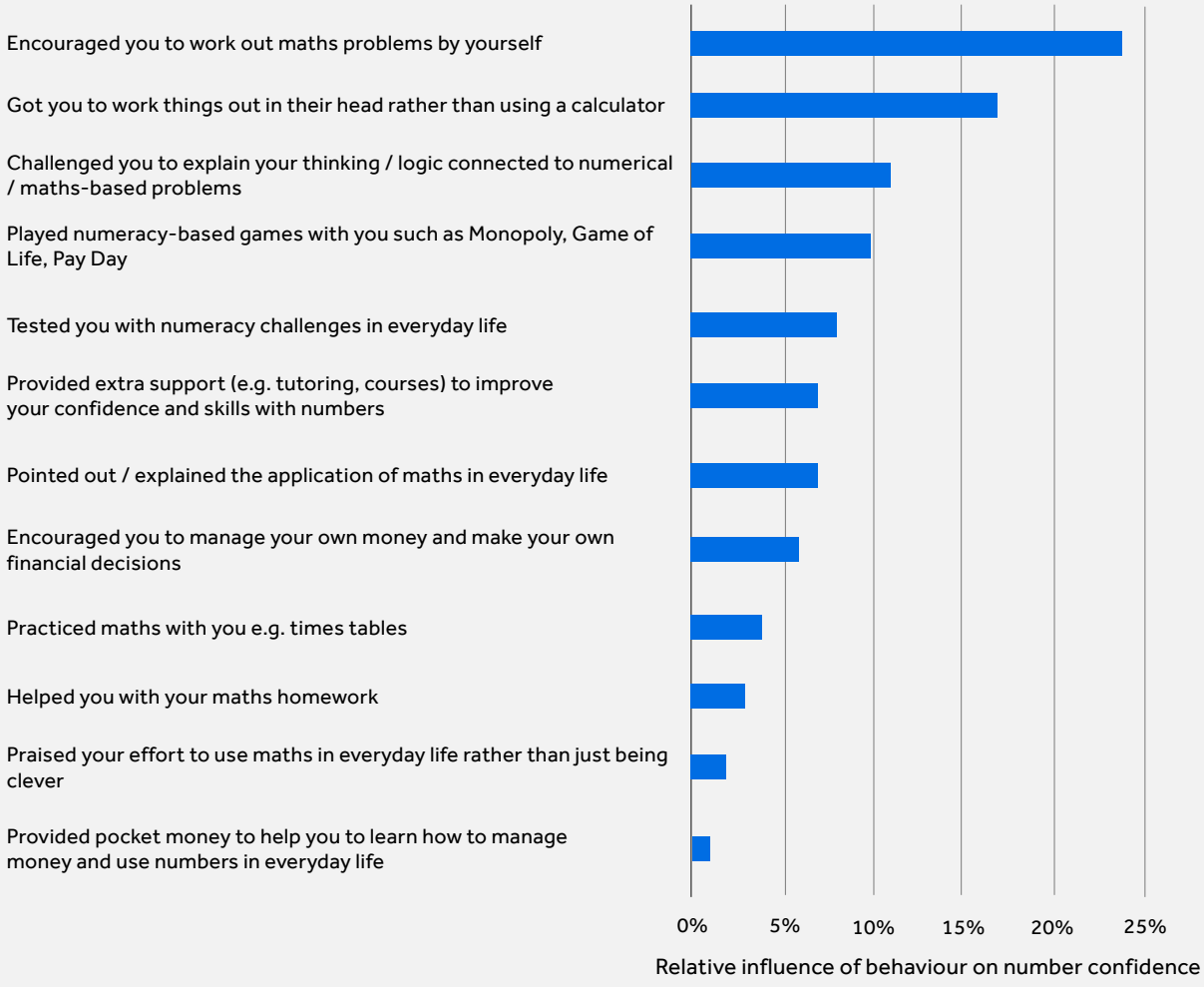
As can be seen, having a parent that engages with their child in relation to maths and numbers, and in particular one that encourages the child 'to work out maths problems by themselves' and to 'work out things in their head rather than with a calculator', is connected to the child's number confidence.

Given that we saw from Chart 3 that parents with high number confidence are also more likely to encourage both of these things, it could be that parents encouraging children to 'work out maths problems by themselves' and 'work things out in their head rather than with a calculator' may provide at least part of the explanation as to why there is a statistical connection between the number confidence of parents and children.

26 Data used is based on parents who do these activities 'often' with their children. Other parents may do these activities but selected 'sometimes' or 'rarely' in the survey.

27 The statistical analysis described was conducted by the research agency YouGov.

Chart 4: Influence of parent-child behaviours on children's number confidence



Research question 2: How might being a parent affect number confidence?

Result: Not only is the desire to support their children and family a strong motivator for adults to take action to improve their own number confidence, but parents' own number confidence can also be directly affected by the nature of the interactions they have with their children.

So far, we have explored the mechanism through which parents with higher number confidence may transmit this to their children. We now consider the extent to which the opposite effect also exists, namely whether being a parent can increase the opportunity to raise the number confidence of adults.

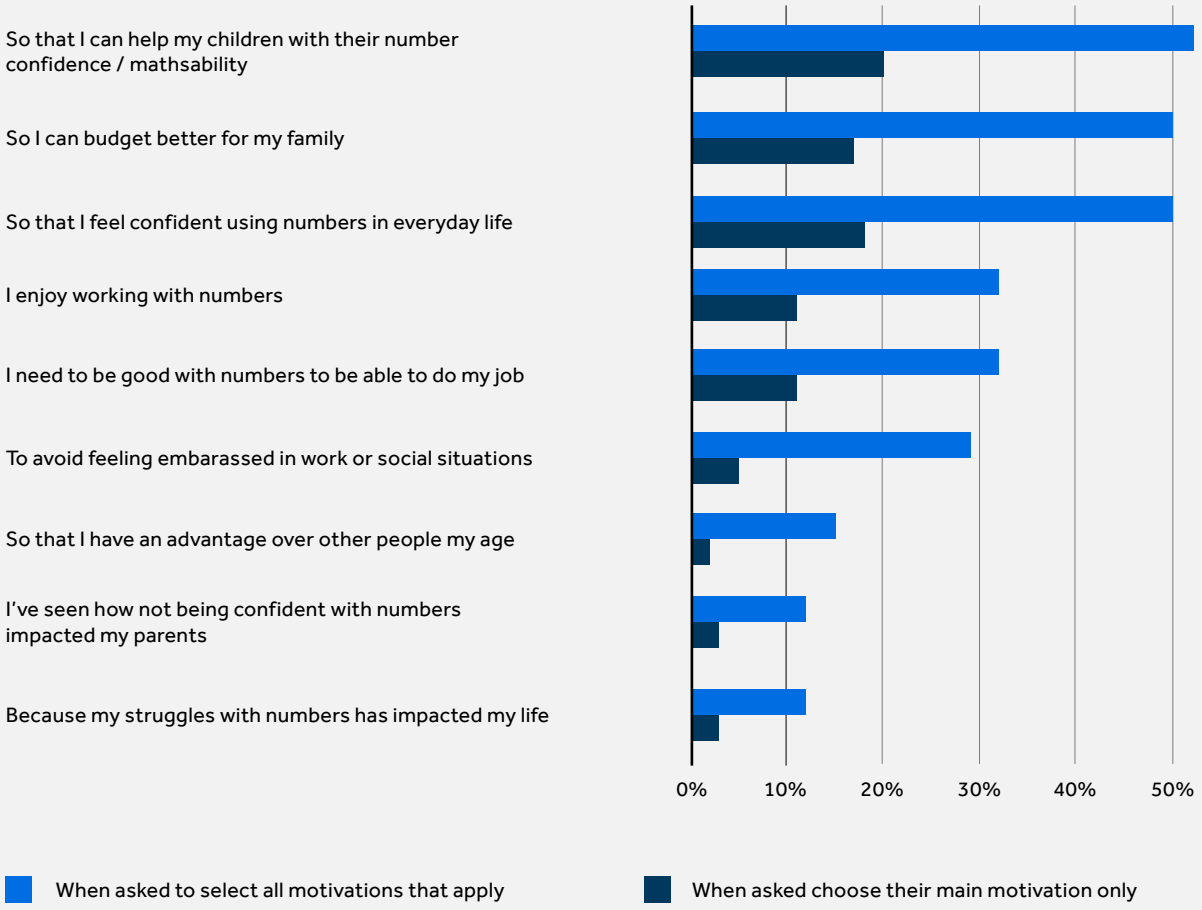
As a starting point, children can be part of the solution when asked directly. Around half (51%) of parents say they've asked or would consider asking their child for help with numbers,[28] and 64% of children agreed with the statement 'I feel like I could explain what I learn in my maths lessons to my parents', suggesting an opportunity for reciprocal learning.

We also find that the mere fact of being a parent provides a strong motivator for adults to take action to improve their number confidence through the desire to support their children and family. This is not just a general aspiration; it is deeply felt. An overwhelming 94% of parents believe it's important for their children to feel confident with numbers.

When asked to select all the motivating factors to improve their own number confidence from a list of options, around half of parents chose 'so that I can help my children' (52%) and 'so I can budget better for my family' (50%). When forced to only select one motivation from the list provided, 'so that I can help my children' came out on top with one in five parents selecting this as what is most motivating to them (Chart 5).

28 Sum of parents who said they currently use (9%), have used in the past (17%) and would consider asking their child for help with numbers in the future (25%). The question asked was: which, if any, of the following types of help or support do you use, have you used in the past or would you be likely to use in the future to help you improve your confidence with numbers?

Chart 5: Motivating factors for parents to improve their own number confidence (% of all parents)



Among parents who are less confident using numbers, this motivation to support their children is consistent:

> **49% of parents with lower number confidence cite helping their children as a motivator to increase it.**

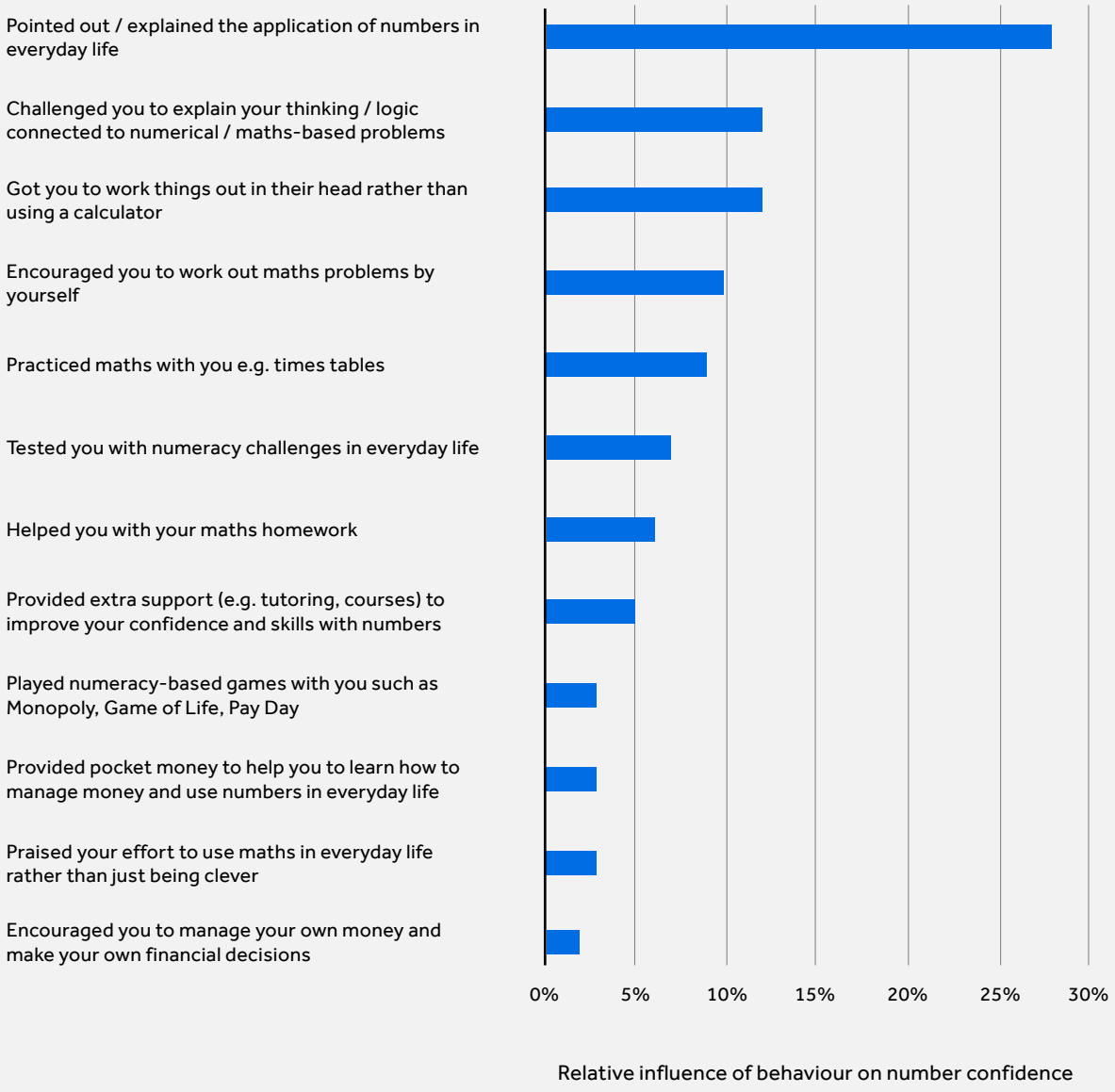
Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of our research, however, is that the nature of interactions between parents and children in the home can also increase the number confidence of parents themselves, over and above the impact that, as we have already seen, parent-child interactions can have on children.

That is, regardless of the degree of number confidence of parents, we find that if they engage in everyday conversations around maths and numbers with their children they can potentially raise their *own* number confidence in the process.

Using the same methodology as was used to obtain the results for children in Chart 3, we find that many parent-child behaviours in relation to numbers and maths have the potential to improve *parental* number confidence, over and above the positive impacts that we also see on the number confidence of the child. In particular, the most influential type of interaction in the home that affects parental number confidence is when parents point out and explain the application of maths in everyday life to their children (Chart 6).

> **It seems possible therefore that the mere act of explaining everyday maths to children can help to boost adult number confidence.**

Chart 6: Influence of parent-child behaviours on parents' number confidence



Overall therefore, one of our main results is that that parents, too, could benefit from doing more with numbers alongside their children, creating shared experiences that build confidence for both.

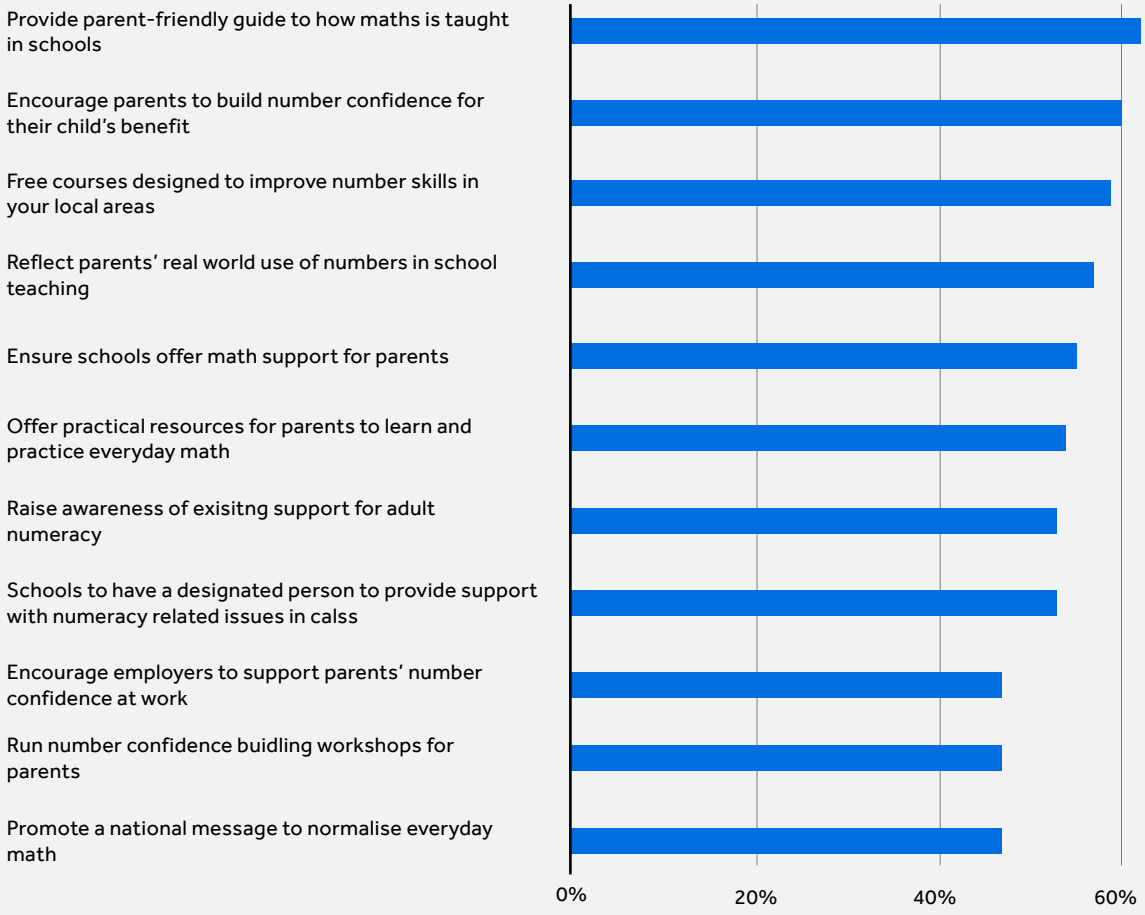
Research question 3: What are the most effective interventions that would improve the number confidence of parents?

Result: Looking specifically at parents with lower number confidence, we find that child-related interventions to improve number confidence are the most appealing and that the type of support most likely to be used is digital.

We explored potential policy interventions with all parents and then isolated the responses of parents with low number confidence since this is the group of particular policy interest.

We found good levels of support for all the ideas we tested, however the most appealing were children-related interventions, likely because they centre on parents' main motivation, namely helping their child. These included 'providing parent-friendly guides to how maths is taught in schools' (62%) followed by 'encouraging parents to build number confidence for their child's benefit' (60%) (Chart 7).

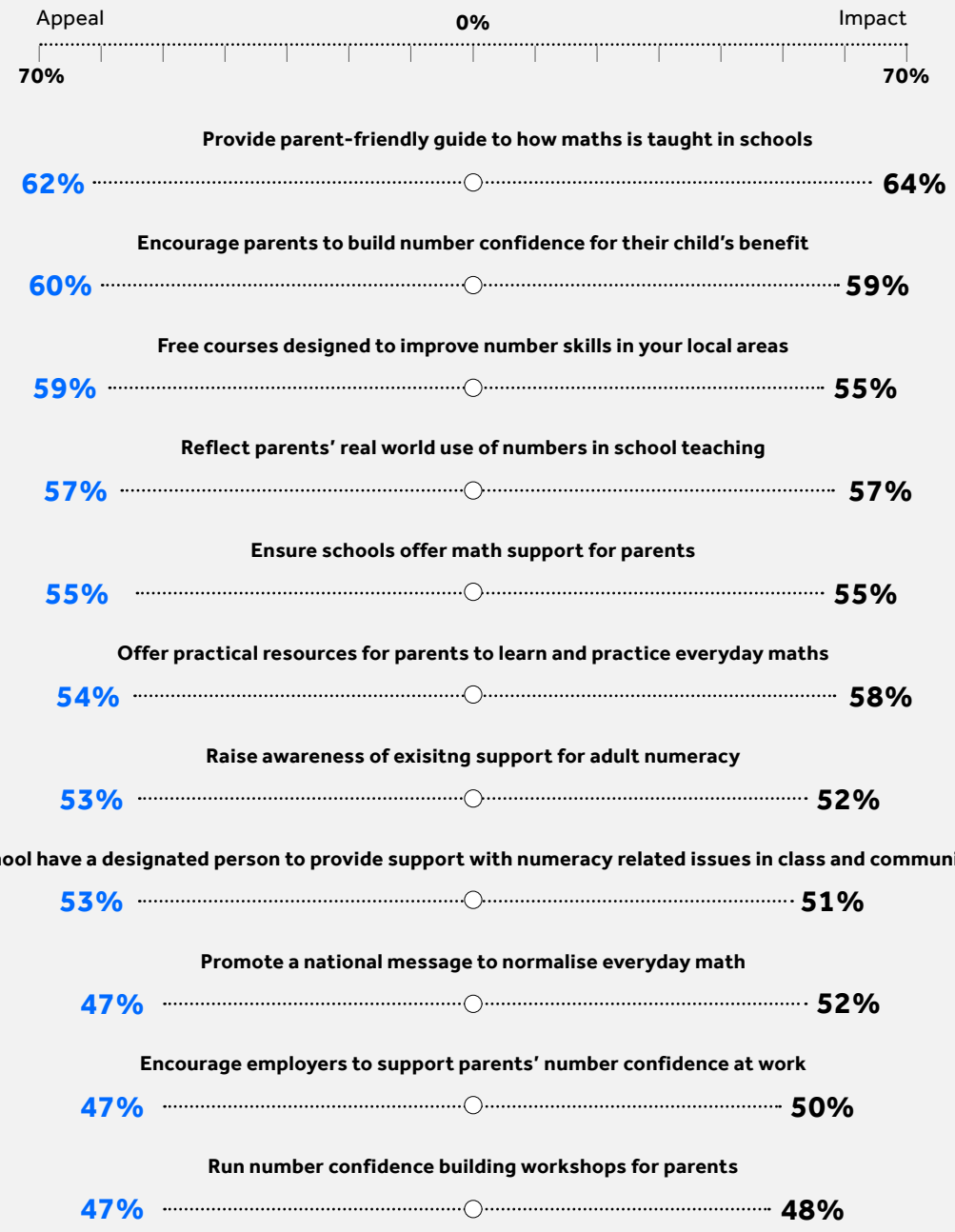
Chart 7: Appeal of policy ideas among low number confident parents



As well as asking about the appeal of our potential list of policy interventions, we also asked respondents about their perceived positive impact. We then plotted both the appeal and perceived impact of policy interventions on the same graph to be able to visualise which suggestions were perceived to be most appealing and impactful (Chart 8).

This showed that, although the differences are not large, the most appealing and impactful options to improve number confidence among parents with low number confidence remained those that were child-centred, namely 'provide parent-friendly guides to how maths is taught in school' and 'encourage parents to build number confidence for their child's benefit'.

Chart 8: Perceived appeal and positive impact of policy interventions on parents' number confidence (low confidence parents only)



However, valuing child-based interventions does not necessarily mean that parents want to be taught in traditional ways. The least appealing intervention we tested among low number confident parents was running 'confidence-building workshops specifically for parents that focus on maths and number' (47%).

Instead, qualitative survey responses about what parents feel would help improve their confidence identify a preference for simple, relevant, digital support:

"A guide to run parallel to what my children are being taught nowadays and to offer a back to basic style maths course that builds up gradually to more challenging maths."

"I think simple apps that allow parents to improve basic maths skills in bite size chunks and at their own convenience that is tailored to an appropriate level for the individual"

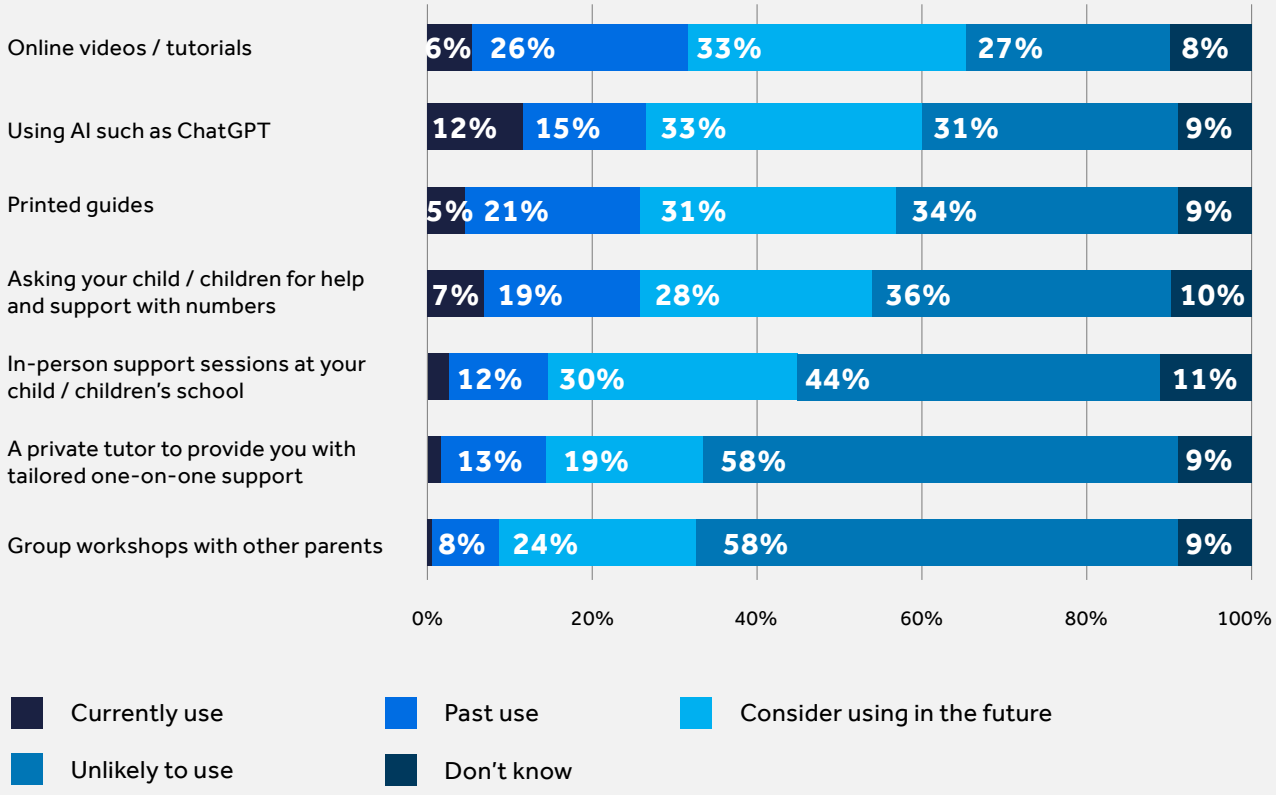
"Access to free online guides or training that is not full of jargon..."

This suggests that structured or time-intensive programmes may be less effective and highlights the importance of designing support that is flexible, informal, and easy to engage with regardless of confidence or circumstance.

Indeed when we asked more generally about support to improve their confidence with numbers, we found parents tend to use or consider low-effort formats that fit easily into daily life, such as online videos/tutorials (66%), AI tools like ChatGPT (60%), or – as mentioned above - asking their children (54%), as shown in Chart 9.[30] By contrast, parents are less likely to use or consider in-person options like group workshops with other parents (33%), private tutors (34%) or school sessions (45%).

Low number confident parents are a little less likely to have already used online support (32% compared to 46% of more confident parents for online videos/tutorials; 27% vs 33% for AI) but more likely in relative terms to consider in-person formats in the future, such as group workshops (24% vs. 19%) or school-based sessions (30% vs. 22%), although these formats are still less used than self-directed, low-effort formats.[31]

Chart 9: Use and consideration of support to improve number confidence among low number confident parents



30 % are the sum of support parents currently use, have used in the past and would consider using in the future.

31 Parent high number confidence (weighted n=1719; unweighted n=1719); parent low number confidence (weighted n=321; unweighted n=321).

Policy recommendations

1. **The government should have a policy of parity between the way that literacy and numeracy are promoted to include a National Year of Numeracy.**
2. **Government-funded curriculum providers of mathematical classroom content should be additionally resourced to create complementary digital tools for parents and carers to support their child's learning including through building their own number confidence.**
3. **Non-statutory guidance from government to schools should outline best practice for building number-confident wider school communities.**

When considering the policy implications, the stand-out insight is that the natural motivation of parents to support their children provides an opportunity also to improve their own number confidence, both through the interactions that take place in the home and through building deeper connections with how their children are engaging with numbers at school.

> **There is a potential double dividend here: supporting parents and carers to become number confident, if they do not identify as such already, does not just improve outcomes for those adults but also for their children.**

Government should therefore seek to nurture number confident communities that include parents and carers. Given that the new Ofsted school inspection toolkit in use from November 2025, includes gathering evidence around 'parents and the school community engaging and participating in a thoughtful and positive way that supports pupils' education', now seems a good time to consider tangible ways in which this could be done. [32]

Activating family learning to support number confidence

Successive governments have placed strong emphasis on the importance of parent-child interactions to support literacy and specifically reading at home: most recently, in July 2025, for example, the Education Secretary launched a government-backed National Year of Reading in 2026, with the headline 'Parents urged to read more to boost children's life chances'.[33] The learnings from these campaigns to support literacy and specifically reading at home should be applied to the equally important desire to raise adult and child number confidence.

Parents who explain mathematical concepts at home, in the process also improve their own number confidence, in addition to the benefits such interactions also have on children. We also see a potential for upward transmission of number capability, with children feeling able to explain concepts to their parents and conversely many parents feeling comfortable asking their children to explain.

We therefore recommend that national government should have a policy of parity between the way that literacy and numeracy are promoted to include a National Year of Numeracy to follow in due course the 2026 National Year of Reading, leveraging the desire of parents to support their child's learning, and drawing on our research insights to promote the types of conversations that lead to greater number confidence in the home.

The government's recently published Financial Inclusion Strategy already commits to piloting the roll out through family support organisations of the 'Talk, Learn, Do' programme developed by MaPS to support parents of 3-11 year-olds to talk to their children about money.[34] As part of a future National Year of Numeracy, the learnings from this could be used to support families to improve the types of conversations they have more generally around numbers, with a view to raising the number confidence of all family members.

Parent-friendly content around how maths is taught in schools

Next, we address the demand on the part of parents and carers to have access to more information around how maths is taught at school and in the process expose them to content that is designed to build their own number confidence for their own and their child's benefit.

Given that new primary school classroom materials will need to be developed to support the new national curriculum requirement to teach financial literacy, now seems a good time also to consider the role for complementary materials to support intergenerational learning.

32 Ofsted, State-funded school inspection toolkit, November 2025.
33 GOV.UK, Parents urged to read more to boost children's life chances, July 2025.
34 HM Treasury, Financial Inclusion Strategy, November 2025.

Specifically, and in response to the openness on the part of parents to have 'parent-friendly guides to how maths is taught in schools' and their preference for digital content we recommend that government-funded curriculum providers of mathematical classroom content should be additionally resourced to create complementary digital tools for parents and carers to support their child's learning including through building their own number confidence.

Organisations that come in scope of this recommendation include Oak Academy, a non-departmental public body owned by the Department of Education that provides teaching resources, and the National Centre for the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) that is funded by the Department for Education and supports the ongoing professional development of maths teachers including through the Maths Hubs network and the provision of classroom resources.

This recommendation categorically does not mean that each lesson plan designed for teachers should also have parallel resources for parents. However, it does mean that digital tools be made available for the purpose of enabling self-directed adult learners to follow the same schemes of work as their children, laddering up to the national curriculum, introducing new mathematical ideas in the same conceptual way and in the same sequence. It should also prompt the types of positive engagement with their children that promotes intergenerational number confidence, drawing on our insights.

From a parent's point of view, this should enable them to both 'drop in' to deepen their understanding of how their child is currently being taught, with the ostensible aim of supporting them, and also – should they find it useful - to explore the resources until they find the starting level they feel most comfortable with to recommence their own learning journey, even if it is at a lower level to that of their children.

Our final recommendation is designed to bring these new resources into the everyday interactions between schools and parents, to strengthen the building of number confident communities.

Schools are free to choose or design their own classroom resources with teachers adopting their own approaches to bringing the curriculum to life in the classroom. The statutory curriculum requirements are stated by government at a high level,[35] with greater detail around the milestones to be achieved as a child progresses through school laid out through non-statutory guidance.[36]

In order to close the loop and ensure that parents are effectively signposted to the digital materials that will give them the information they seek, we recommend that non-statutory guidance from government should outline best practice for building number-confident wider school communities. This should include guidance on the importance of choosing curriculum content providers that promote complementary resources for self-directed adult learning and the need to direct parents to these resources to build number confidence for their child's benefit.

Taken together, these two recommendations meet the need we have identified from parents to have parent-friendly guides around how maths is taught in school and have access to resources to improve number confidence in digital form, while at the same time do not add to the requirements of time-poor teachers.

Overall, our research has shown that number confidence has an intergenerational dimension, running the risk that for some families, low number confidence could be the norm over a long period of time. Our recommendations are designed to achieve the reverse.

> **By supporting today's parents and carers to become more number confident, we can help to create a ripple effect that supports not only the numeracy levels of the next generation but also many more generations to come.**

35 GOV.UK, National curriculum in England: mathematics programmes of study, September 2021.
36 GOV.UK, Teaching mathematics in primary schools, September 2021.
GOV.UK, Teaching mathematics at Key Stage 3, September 2021.

Appendix

Estimate of number of children who have at least one parent who is not number confident using weighted survey data and ONS Annual Population Estimates

We asked respondents to our survey how many children were in their household: 1,2,3 or 4+ children. 1,566 parents provided this information. This enabled us to calculate the total number of children living in the households of our respondents, which is 3,073.

We presumed that where the option 4+ was chosen that the number of children was 4. We also presume for the purposes of this calculation that the respondent had parental responsibility for these children, and that the definition of "children" is people aged 0-17 inclusive.

We then isolated the group of parents who exhibited low number confidence according to our definition and who had provided information as to how many children they had in their household. In our sample, these parents had 448 children.

We then used these two results to estimate the proportion of children that had at least one parent with low number confidence, namely 448 divided by 3073, or 14.59%

We then calculated the number of children aged 0-17 in the UK using ONS Annual Population Estimates for 2024.[37] This gave a figure of 14,259,184 children.

Applying the proportion of children in our sample with at least one parent with low number confidence to this national population number gives an estimate of the number of children in the UK with at least one parent with low number confidence of 14,259,184 * 0.1459 = 2,080,730.

We then rounded this to give our estimate of 2.1m children.

Maths questions used to assess number skills.

If a scarf costs £11.70 after a 10% reduction, what was the original price? If you are unsure or do not know, please tick 'I don't know' and go to the next question.

- £12.50
- £13.25
- £13.00
- I don't know

Mike's lunch contains 640 calories of energy. What percentage is this of his target daily intake of 2000 calories? If you are unsure or do not know, please tick 'I don't know' and go to the next question.

- 45%
- 62%
- 65%
- 32%
- I don't know

Rail tickets increased by 2% in year 1, and 5% in year 2. What was the overall increase over the two years? If you are unsure or do not know, please tick 'I don't know' and go to the next question.

1. 7%
2. 7.1%
3. 10%
4. 10.7%
5. I don't know

There are three offers on the same ketchup. Which is the best value for money? If you are unsure or do not know, please tick 'I don't know' and go to the next question.

- 275g for £1.05
- 454g for £1.99
- 650g for £2.20
- 425g. buy 2 for £3.10
- I don't know

You buy a laptop that costs £899 including VAT at 20%. How much of the purchase price is VAT? If you are unsure or do not know, please tick 'I don't know' and go to the next question.

- £179.80
- £89.80
- £125
- None of these
- I don't know

37 Office for National Statistics, Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2024, September 2025.