**Better Health Start for Life ‘Little Moments Together’ campaign: methodology and summary of results**

**Methodology**

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) commissioned Censuswide, a market research consultancy, to provide attitudinal insights to support the launch of the Better Health Start for Life ‘Little Moments Together’ campaign.

An online survey with a nationally representative sample of 2,000 parents (18+) with children aged 0 – 5 years old in England was conducted from 14 to 21 November 2023. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

The following statistics were featured in the national press release for the campaign to raise awareness of the importance of everyday interactions between parents and their children. All the chatting, playing, and reading they enjoy together has a huge impact on their child’s development, helping them to be happy, to make friends easily and get on well at school.

To note, regional survey results are available upon request. Email [EarlyYearsHLE@freudsplus.com](mailto:EarlyYearsHLE@freudsplus.com).

**Summary**

Top-line survey results include:

* Over 4 in 5 (83%) parents are unaware that 90% of brain growth happens by the age of 5[[1]](#footnote-2)
* Parents acknowledge the significance of activities such as the following on their child’s development:
  + Chatting (46%)
  + Playing (35%)
  + And reading (40%)
* However, parents cite lack of time (30%) as getting in the way, exacerbated by:
  + Household chores (39%)
  + Work commitments (34%)

**Survey questions and results**

The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions to gain insights, knowledge and attitudes around parental understanding on the impact they can have in a child’s early years.

Unless specified, the number of overall responses for each table is 2,000. Data can also be viewed here: <https://sv.censuswide.com/survey/cw12596rs>.

Table 1: demographics of survey sample by age

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Demographic** | **Number of people surveyed** |
| 18-24 | 206 |
| 25-34 | 983 |
| 35-44 | 740 |
| 45-54 | 63 |
| 55+ | 8 |

Table 2: results from Q1: by the time children reach the age of five, how much of a child's brain do you think is developed?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| 0% | 0.30% |
| Less than 10% | 2.55% |
| 10% - 15% | 3.60% |
| 16% - 20% | 6.55% |
| 21% - 30% | 9.70% |
| 31% - 40% | 12.20% |
| 41% - 50% | 12.00% |
| 51% - 60% | 11.50% |
| 61% - 70% | 13.15% |
| 71% - 80% | 11.75% |
| 81% - 90% | 6.85% |
| 91% - 100% | 3.90% |
| Don't know | 5.95% |

Table 3: results from Q2: what, if anything, do you count as significant milestones in your child's development? (Select up to three)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Walking | 74.05% |
| Saying their first words | 65.95% |
| Crawling | 32.35% |
| Smiling and facial expressions | 26.45% |
| Sitting up | 25.65% |
| Playing with friends | 16.55% |
| Scribbling and drawing | 15.90% |
| Making sounds | 12.50% |
| Climbing | 8.00% |
| I do not consider anything as a significant milestone in my child's development | 1.40% |
| Other, please specify | 0.70% |

Table 4: results from Q3: what age do children begin to develop their social and communication skills?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| At less than 1 month | 11.50% |
| 1-6 months | 31.35% |
| 7-11 months | 23.05% |
| 1-2 years | 24.55% |
| 3-4 years | 8.70% |
| 5 years+, please specify | 0.85% |

Table 5: results from Q4: what, if anything, do you consider as the most important stages of development during the first five years of a child`s life? (Select up to three)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Learning language and communications skills | 73.35% |
| Learning to walk | 53.55% |
| Learning emotional skills | 50.15% |
| Developing social skills and making friends | 49.95% |
| Learning to sit up | 14.30% |
| Learning to crawl | 14.20% |
| Learning to climb | 6.10% |
| I do not consider anything as the most important stages of development | 0.85% |
| Other, please specify | 0.20% |

Table 6: results from Q5: what, if any, activities do you feel have the most significant impact on developing a child's communication and social skills? (Select up to three)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Chatting back and forth with my child | 46.10% |
| Reading with my child | 40.20% |
| Playing with my child | 35.25% |
| Spending time with other children | 32.45% |
| Going to children's events, such as toddler groups, activity classes etc | 26.35% |
| Singing nursery rhymes which tell stories | 21.90% |
| Cuddling and soothing my child | 18.55% |
| Smiling and giggling with my child | 14.70% |
| Playing with their toys | 13.60% |
| Days out (such as trips to the museum, going to the park) | 12.30% |
| Sleeping | 9.85% |
| Eating | 7.20% |
| No activities have the most significant impact | 1.05% |
| Other, please specify | 0.40% |

Table 7: results from Q6: where, if anywhere, do you think a child begins learning communication, literacy, and social skills? (Select one)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| At school | 6.65% |
| At nursery | 12.55% |
| At home | 78.95% |
| Other, please specify | 0.35% |
| Nowhere in particular | 1.50% |

Table 8: results from Q7: how, if any way at all, are you feeling about your child starting school? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Emotional | 49.25% |
| Excited | 43.05% |
| Nervous / anxious | 41.80% |
| Happy | 39.45% |
| Worried | 24.30% |
| Confident | 23.20% |
| Sad | 14.15% |
| Fearful | 11.90% |
| Out of control | 5.65% |
| I don't feel any way at all | 2.85% |
| Unsure | 1.70% |
| Other, please specify | 0.55% |

Table 9: results from Q8: how confident, if at all, are you in ensuring your child has developed the skills they need to be ready for school (e.g. literacy skills, social skills, communications skills)?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Very confident | 37.75% |
| Somewhat confident | 53.85% |
| Not very confident | 7.15% |
| Not confident at all | 1.25% |

Table 10: results from Q9: which, if any, of the following academic and social aspects of your child starting school concern you? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Having the ability to make friends and play together | 44.15% |
| Having a sense of independence e.g., using cutlery, using the bathroom, dressing themselves and putting on shoes etc. | 43.20% |
| Being confident | 39.35% |
| Being able to concentrate and listen to teachers | 38.00% |
| Being able to talk to teachers/staff/peers | 34.05% |
| Being able to recognise some letters and write their name | 23.55% |
| Being able to understand the concept of time | 19.20% |
| Being able to count to ten | 14.00% |
| None of the above | 9.40% |

Table 11: results from Q10: what, if anything, do you find are the biggest barriers to chatting, playing and reading with your child? (Select up to five)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Household chores | 39.25% |
| Work commitments | 33.65% |
| Just not enough time | 29.60% |
| Needing to look after other children | 22.45% |
| Wider family responsibilities and commitments | 19.75% |
| Money pressures | 17.80% |
| Social media e.g. spending time on Instagram, or other phone usage | 16.65% |
| Need more time to myself and/or downtime | 16.40% |
| There are no barriers to chatting, playing and reading with my child | 15.25% |
| Not sure of what activities to do | 12.25% |
| Daily travel – time spent in car, bus or train etc | 11.05% |
| Feeling self-conscious | 9.00% |
| Lacking confidence | 8.65% |
| Time spent shopping | 7.25% |
| Other, please specify | 0.60% |

Table 12: results from Q11: which, if any, of the following day-to-day activities provide the best opportunities to develop your child's language and communications skills? (Select up to three)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Reading a bedtime story | 64.95% |
| Playing with them and their toys | 61.25% |
| Spending time outside | 31.70% |
| Going for a walk together | 27.55% |
| Playing in the park | 20.35% |
| Going to the library together | 19.35% |
| Watching TV / film | 18.45% |
| Going to the supermarket together | 14.10% |
| Travelling on public transport | 6.85% |
| None of the above | 1.20% |

Table 13: results from Q12: how do the everyday moments you spend with your child (such as playing, chatting or reading together) make you feel? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Happier | 69.10% |
| More connected to my child | 66.10% |
| More confident | 33.90% |
| Stressed | 7.45% |
| I feel no way about everyday moments I spend with my child | 1.20% |
| Other, please specify | 0.10% |

Table 14: results from Q13: to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would benefit from free support and advice on simple activities to do with my child that I can factor into our daily routine?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Strongly agree | 33.55% |
| Somewhat agree | 41.50% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 18.25% |
| Somewhat disagree | 4.65% |
| Strongly disagree | 2.05% |

Table 15: results from Q14: what, if anything, would you like to do more of with your child in the New Year? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Multiple choice answer selected** | **All responses** |
| Making everyday fun together | 49.10% |
| Playing together more often | 48.90% |
| Less screen time | 42.20% |
| Teaching my children about food and encouraging them to try new foods | 39.50% |
| Going on walks | 37.65% |
| Reading a bedtime story every night | 35.95% |
| Setting goals for my children to achieve, e.g., learning how to count to ten, writing their name | 33.65% |
| Cuddling together more | 30.90% |
| Playing in the park | 29.85% |
| Visiting family more | 29.10% |
| Celebrating goals and achievements more | 27.65% |
| Going to the supermarket together | 11.95% |
| There is nothing I would like to do more of with my child in the New Year | 1.95% |
| Other, please specify | 0.20% |

1. Lebel C, Walker L, Leemans A, Phillips L, Beaulieu C. “Microstructural maturation of the human brain from childhood to adulthood”, NeuroImage. 2007. doi:10.1016/j.neuroimage, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)