RELEASED AUGUST 2026

CST FOUNDATION 2026 COST OF LEARNING SURVEY

Key Findings

Thinking forward.

Current financial situation (by demographics)

Respondents in Quebec are significantly more likely to report saving comfortably, and less likely to say they are 'managing expenses but don't have much left to save'. Boomers are more likely to be getting ahead and saving than younger generations.

Column %	Total	Region						QC vs RoC		Generations			
	Total	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	Alberta	BC + Terr	Quebec	Rest of Canada	Gen Z (18-29)	Millennials (30-45)	Gen X (46-60)	Boomers (61+)
Getting ahead and saving	33% -	25%	**46% bDEfG**	30%	20%	30%	30%	**46% I**	29%	32%	25%	31%	**41% jKl**
Managing and meeting expenses, but don't have much left to save	44% -	**52% c**	38%	**45% c**	**54% c**	43%	44%	38%	**46% h**	40%	47%	43%	44%
Barely getting by and concerned about making ends meet	15% -	**19% c**	9%	**17% C**	16%	**19% c**	15%	9%	**17% H**	**20% m**	**20% M**	14%	10%
Falling behind and worried about your ability to recover	6% -	5%	4%	6%	8%	6%	**8% c**	4%	6%	5%	6%	**10% jM**	3%
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	3% -	0%	**3% b**	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Column Names	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

Q9: Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?
(Base: Total; n=1500.)

Current financial situation (by parental status)

Almost half of parents say they are managing, but do not have much left to save, a somewhat more precarious position than grandparents. Those who do not yet have children are the most likely to be barely getting by.

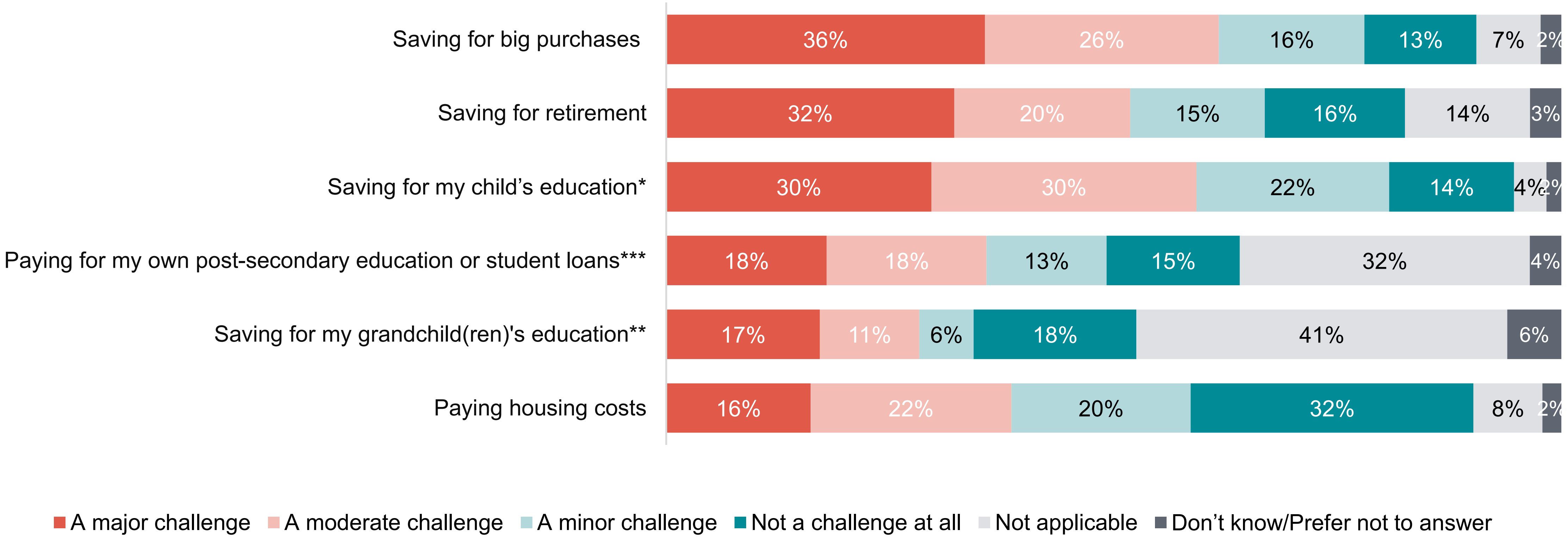
Column %	Total	Parental Status		
	Total	Parent	Grandparent	Open to having children
Getting ahead and saving	33% -	27%	**38% b**	29%
Managing and meeting expenses, but don't have much left to save	44% -	**47% d**	44%	38%
Barely getting by and concerned about making ends meet	15% -	17%	11%	**23% c**
Falling behind and worried about your ability to recover	6% -	7%	4%	6%
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	3% -	1%	3%	**3% b**
Column Names	A	B	C	D

Note: Parents in Quebec are more likely to be getting ahead and saving (36%) than parents across the rest of Canada (25%).

Q9: Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?
(Base: Total; n=1500.)

Current financial challenges

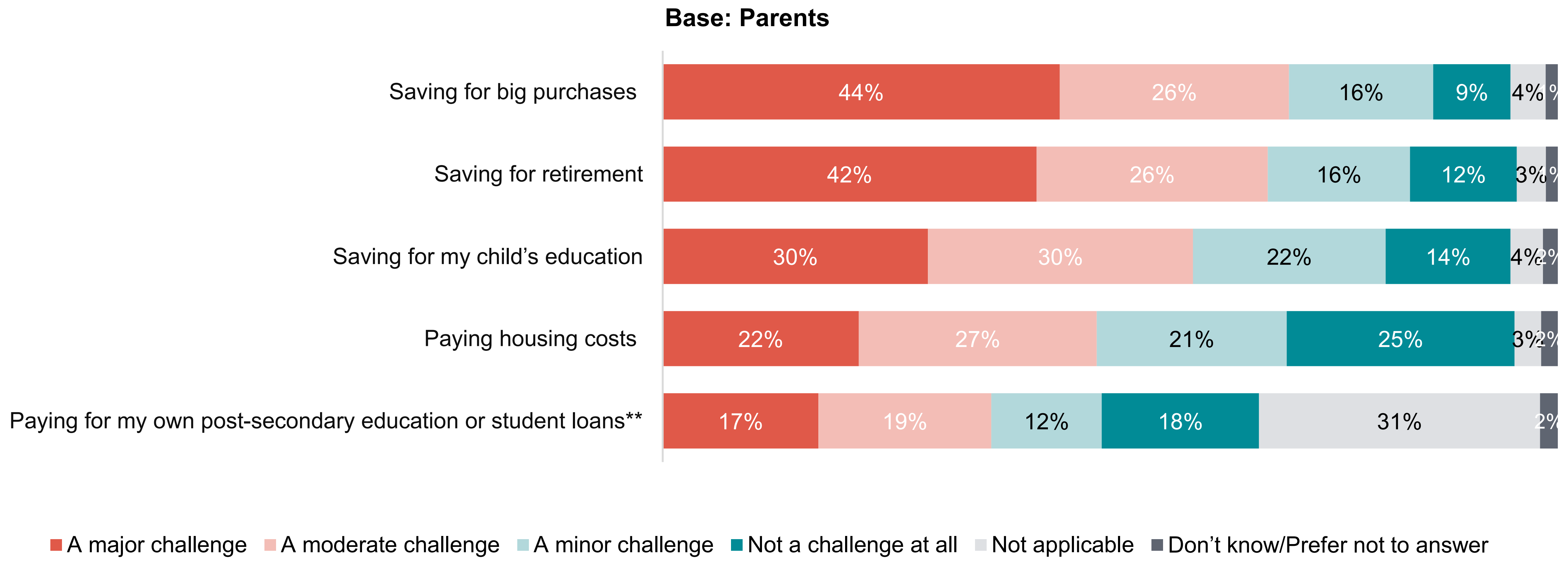
Saving for their child's education and for large purchases was cited as at least a moderate challenge by more than half of Canadians. Roughly half are struggling to save for retirement.



Q10. Thinking of your current financial situation, are the following a major challenge, a moderate challenge, a minor challenge or not a challenge at all? (Base: Total; n=1500. *Parents n=414; **Grandparents n=235; ***Under 40 n=518)

Current financial challenges: Parents

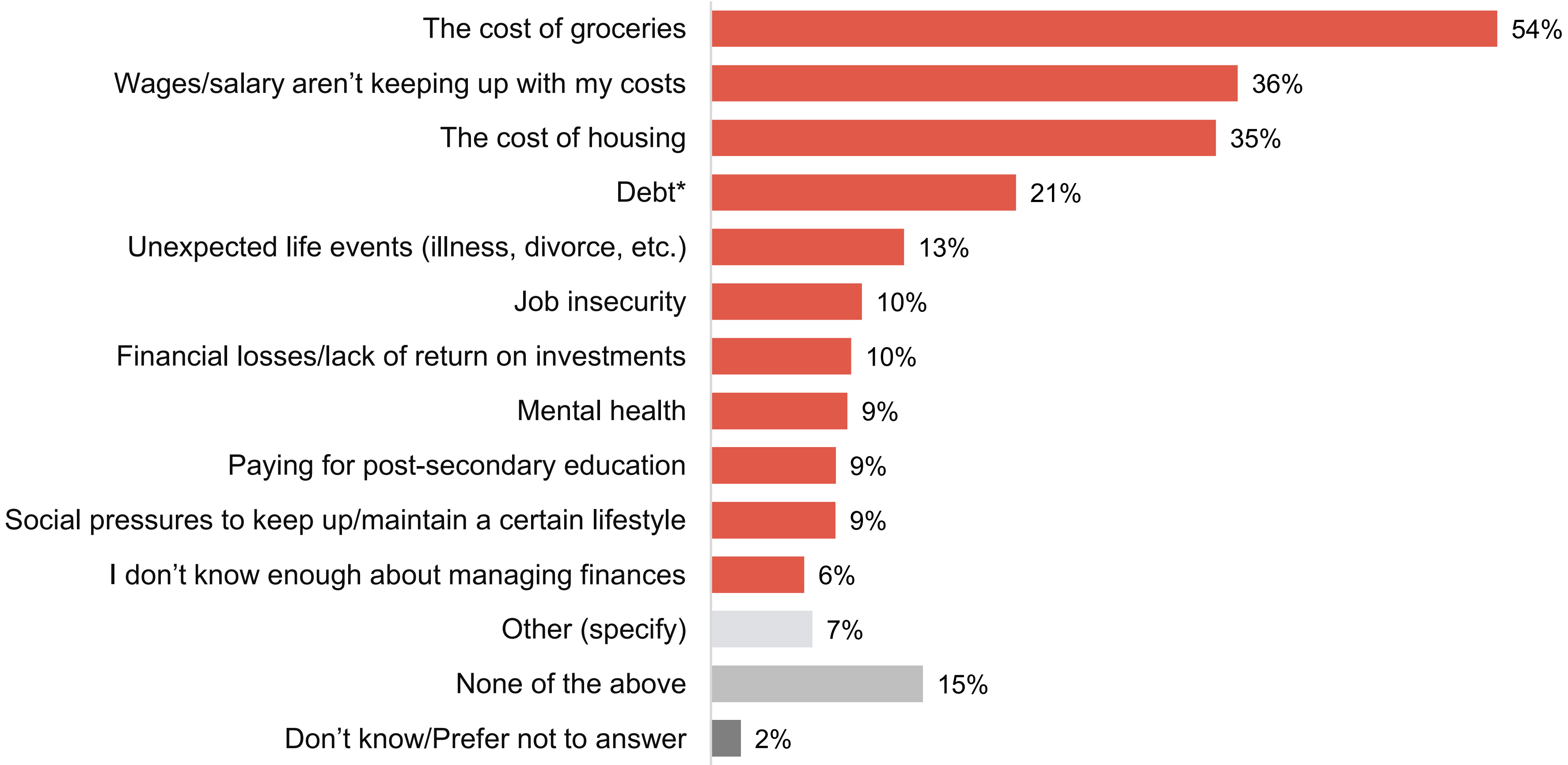
Among parents, these financial pressures are more evident.



Q10. Thinking of your current financial situation, are the following a major challenge, a moderate challenge, a minor challenge or not a challenge at all? (Base: Parents n=414; **Under 40 n=200)

Barriers to saving more

The cost of groceries is the most cited barrier to saving more, mentioned by just over half of Canadians, followed by income failing to keep up with rising costs and housing expenses.



Q11. Which of the following, if any, are preventing you from saving more?
(Base: Total; n=1500. *Debt n=1,454)

Barriers to saving more (by parental status)

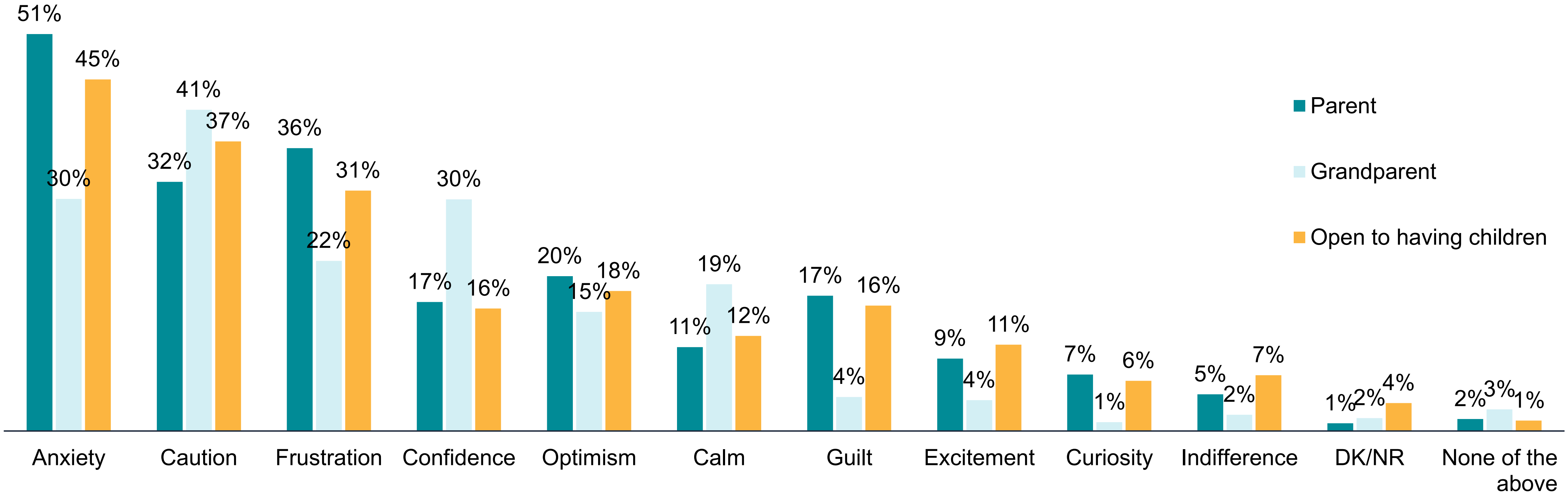
Parents and those open to having children face significantly greater barriers to saving than grandparents, likely reflecting differences in life stage and age. Among these groups, grocery costs stand out as a particularly significant challenge for parents.

Column %	Total	Parental Status		
	Total	Parent	Grandparent	Open to having children
The cost of groceries	54% -	**60% cd**	51%	47%
Wages/salary aren't keeping up with my costs	36% -	**47% C**	21%	**43% C**
The cost of housing	35% -	**41% C**	21%	**42% C**
Debt	21% -	**27% cd**	15%	17%
Unexpected life events (illness, divorce, etc.)	13% -	16%	12%	12%
Job insecurity	10% -	**16% C**	2%	**19% C**
Financial losses/lack of return on investments	10% -	**14% c**	7%	9%
Mental health	9% -	**12% C**	3%	**12% C**
Paying for post-secondary education	9% -	**10% c**	1%	**16% C**
Social pressures to keep up/maintain a certain lifestyle	9% -	**13% C**	5%	**13% c**
I don't know enough about managing finances	6% -	**9% c**	2%	**9% c**
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	2% -	0%	**3% B**	**3% b**
Other (specify)	7% -	4%	**12% Bd**	4%
None of the above	15% -	9%	**26% BD**	6%
Column Names	A	B	C	D

Q11. Which of the following, if any, are preventing you from saving more?
(Base: Total; n=1500. *Debt n=1,454)

Emotions about managing finances

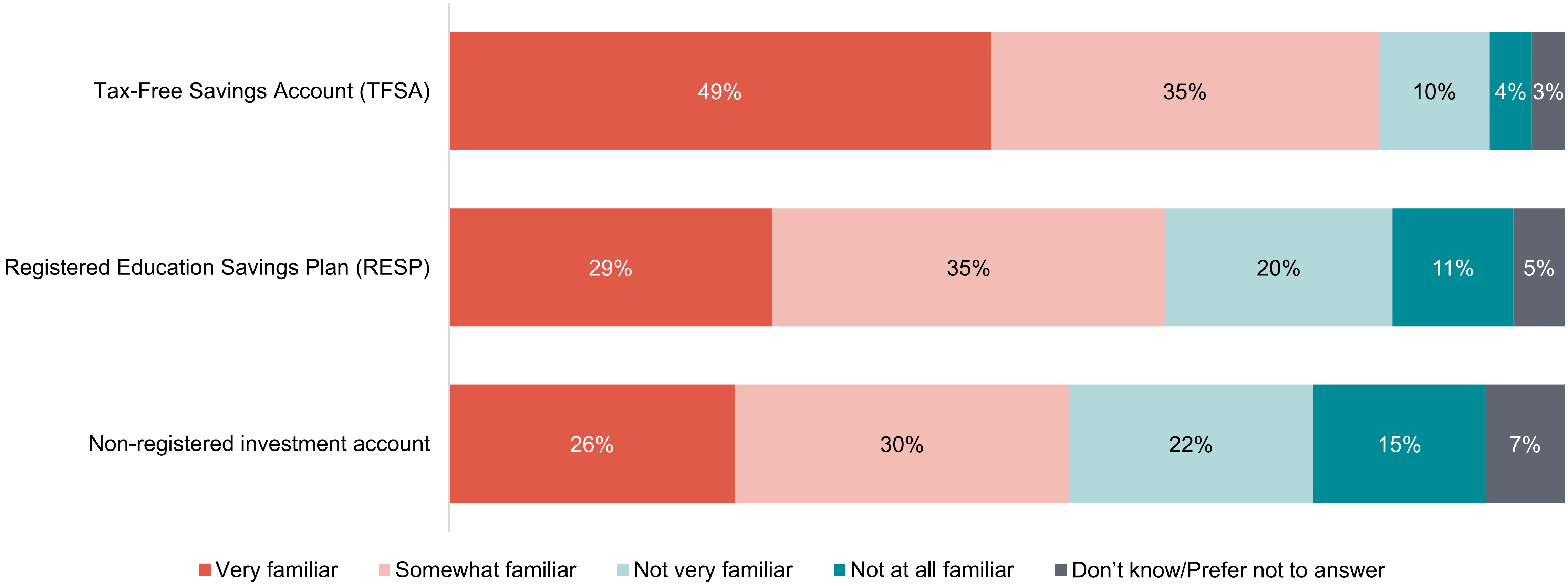
Emotions vary by parental status, with parents and those considering children reporting higher levels of anxiety and frustration than grandparents, potentially reflecting differences in life stage and financial responsibilities.



Q12. Which of the following emotions do you typically associate with how you feel about managing your money and savings?
(Base: Parental status.)

Familiarity with savings products

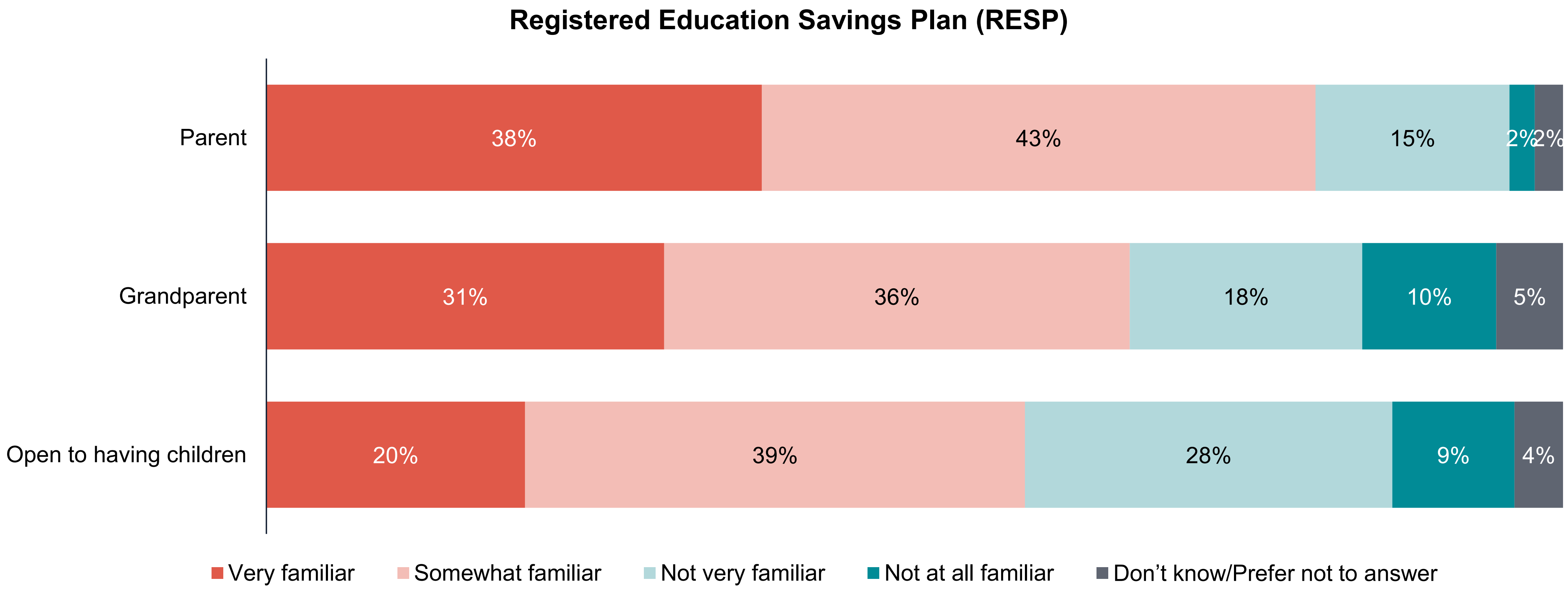
While more than 8-in-10 Canadians are familiar with TFSAs, familiarity drops to two-thirds for RESPs and just over half for non-registered investment accounts.



Q16. How familiar are you with the following products?
(Base: Total; n=1,500)

RESP familiarity

RESP familiarity is highest among parents, while those open to having children show the greatest knowledge gap, highlighting an opportunity to build awareness before families begin saving.

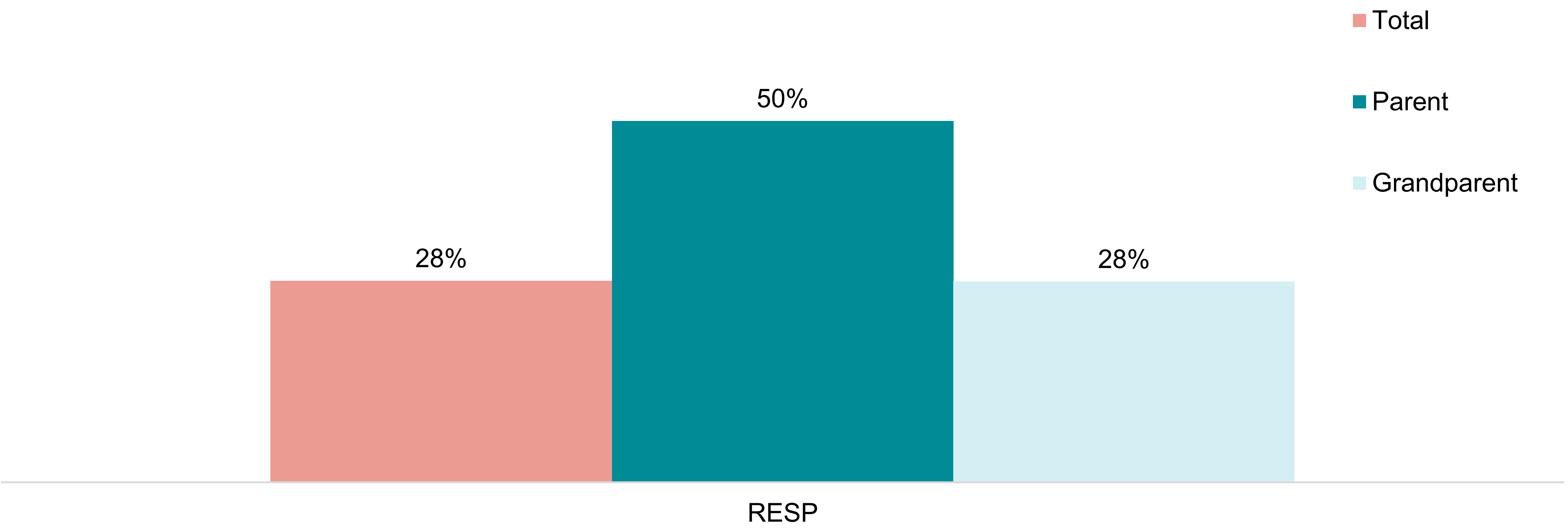


Q16. How familiar are you with the following products?
(Base: Parental status)

Proportion of Canadians opening RESPs

Half of parents have opened an RESP.

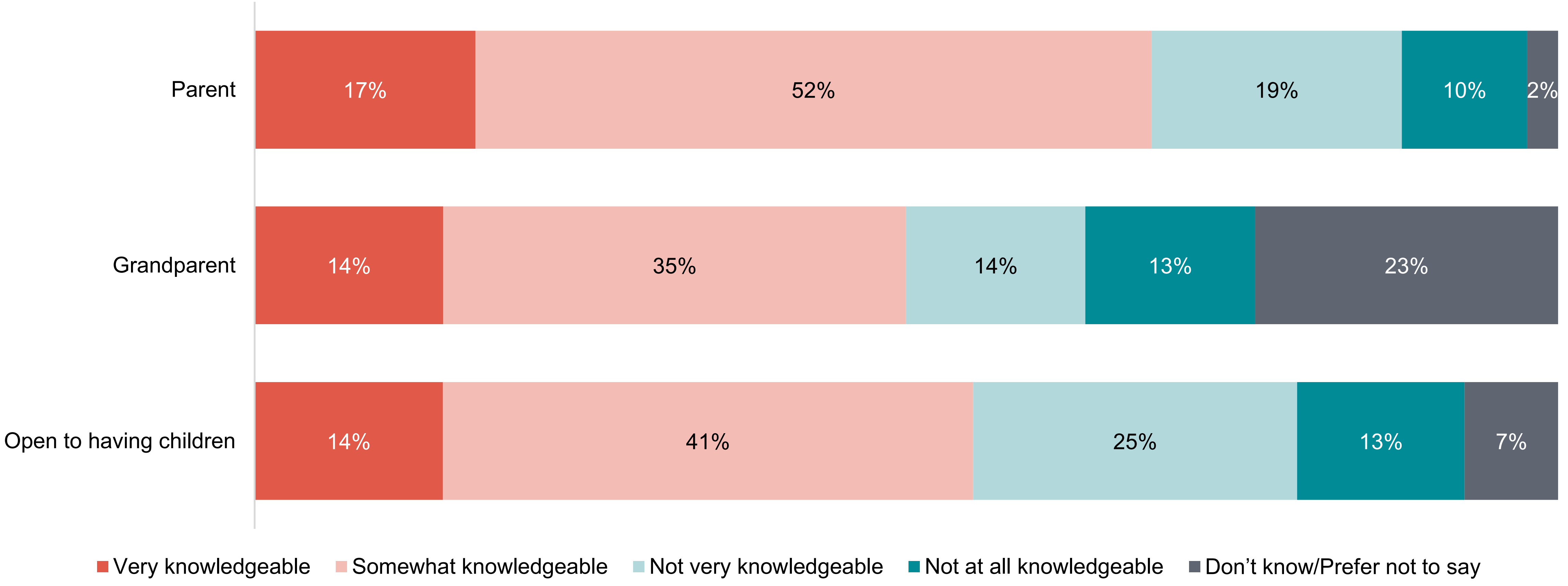
Comparable RESP uptake among parents in Quebec and ROC



Q17. Have you ever opened any of the following to help you save?
(Base: Total; n=1,500.)

Understanding how to start saving

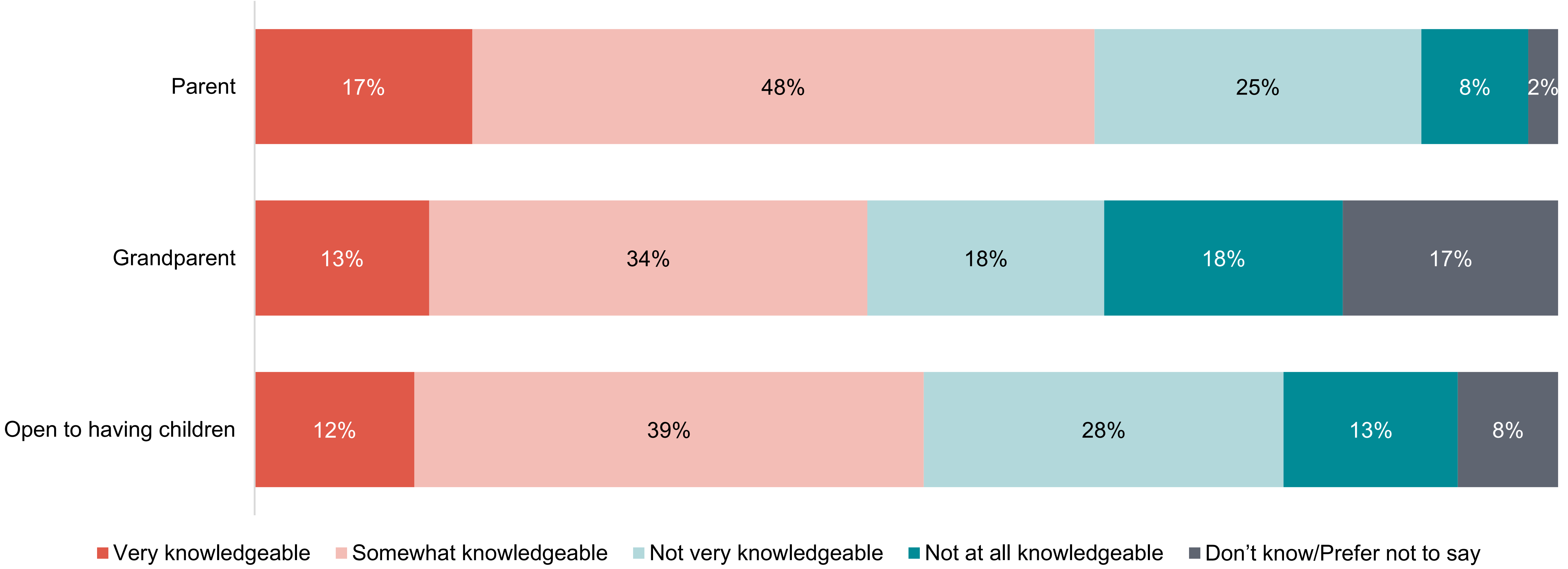
Findings suggest that parents are the most informed about how to start saving for a child's post-secondary education. Although most prospective parents report at least some knowledge, more than one in three indicate they lack knowledge in this area.



Q14. When it comes to saving for post-secondary education for children or grandchildren, how knowledgeable would you say you are about the following? [How to start saving for post-secondary education] (Base: Parental status)

Awareness of the types of savings accounts available

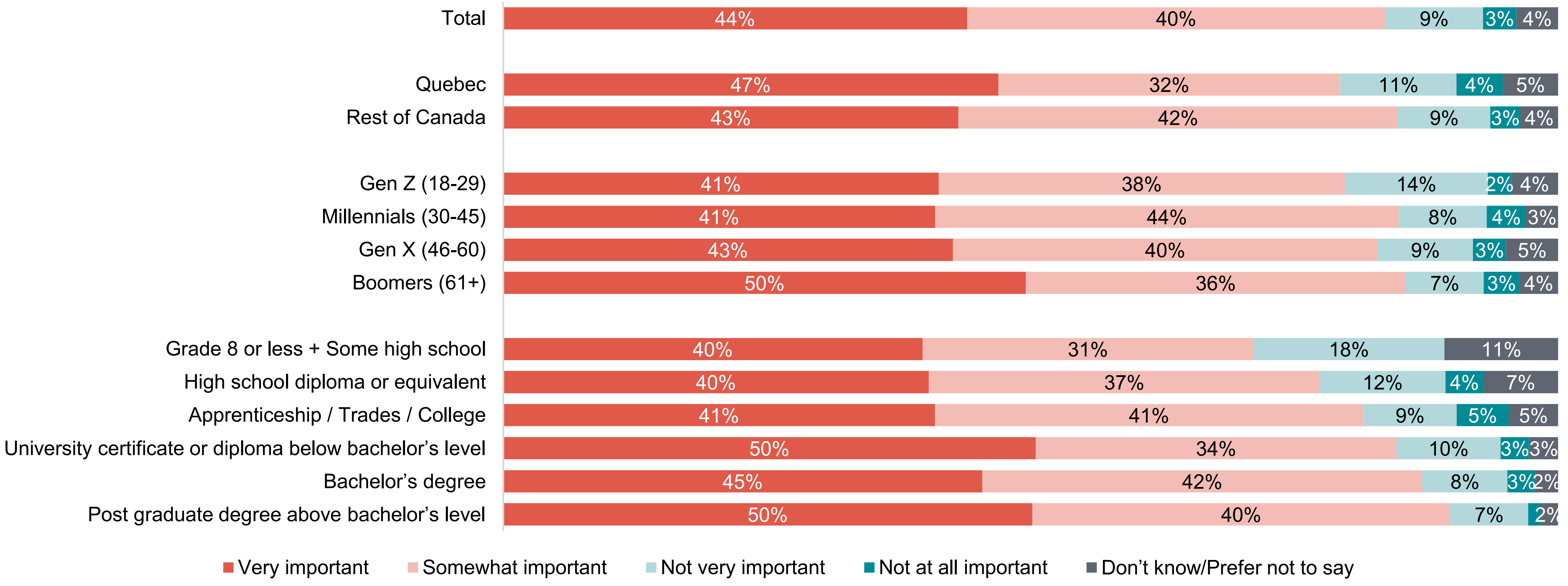
About two-thirds of parents are at least somewhat knowledgeable about the types of savings accounts that are available to help save for post-secondary education, while grandparents and those open to children are less aware.



Q14. When it comes to saving for post-secondary education for children or grandchildren, how knowledgeable would you say you are about the following? [The types of savings accounts that are available to help save for post-secondary education] (Base: Parental status)

Importance of post-secondary education

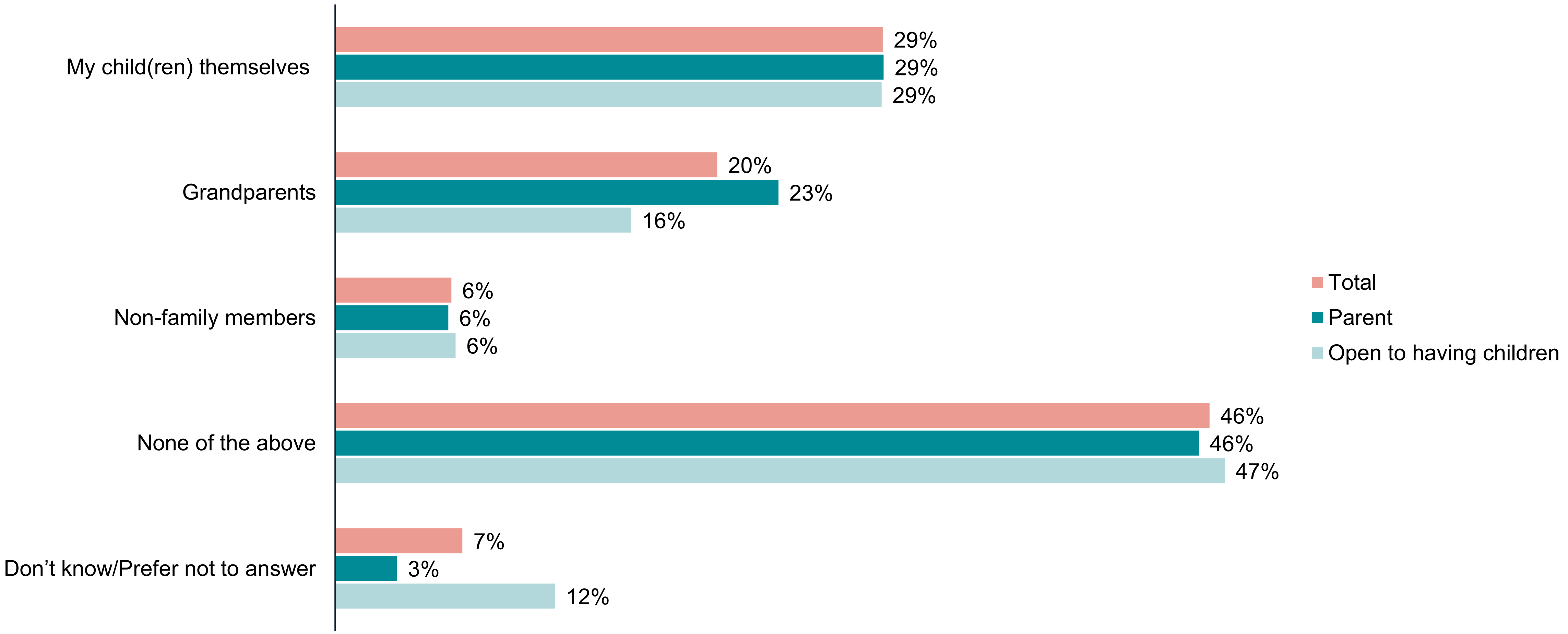
When considering financial success and security, most Canadians say post-secondary education is at least somewhat important. Boomers are more likely than younger generations to feel it is very important.



Q15: Is post-secondary education today very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important to long-term financial success and security? (Base: Total; n=1,500)

Expectations of financial support for education

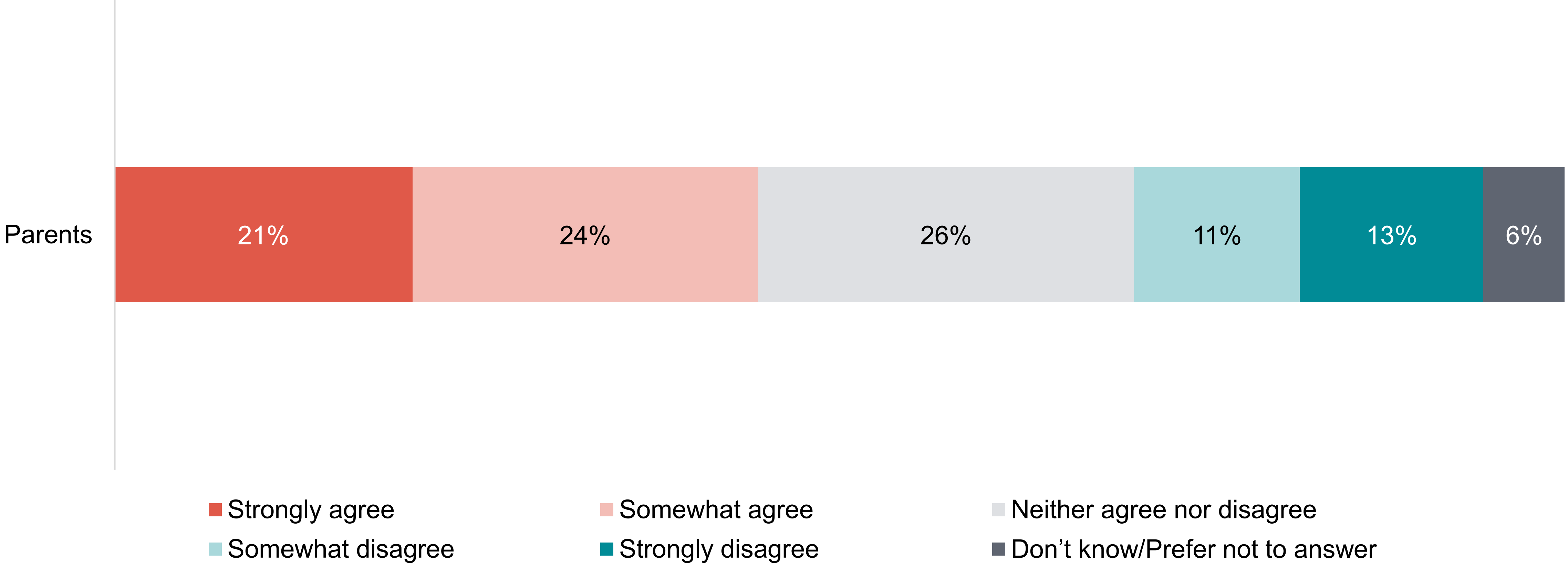
There is an expectation among some that their children will contribute to their own education or that grandparents will help.



Q19. Have any of the following contributed, or do you expect them to contribute, financially to your child(ren)’s post-secondary education? Would you expect the following to contribute financially to your child(ren)’s post-secondary education? (Base: Parents or open to having children)

Parents' regret about not saving sooner

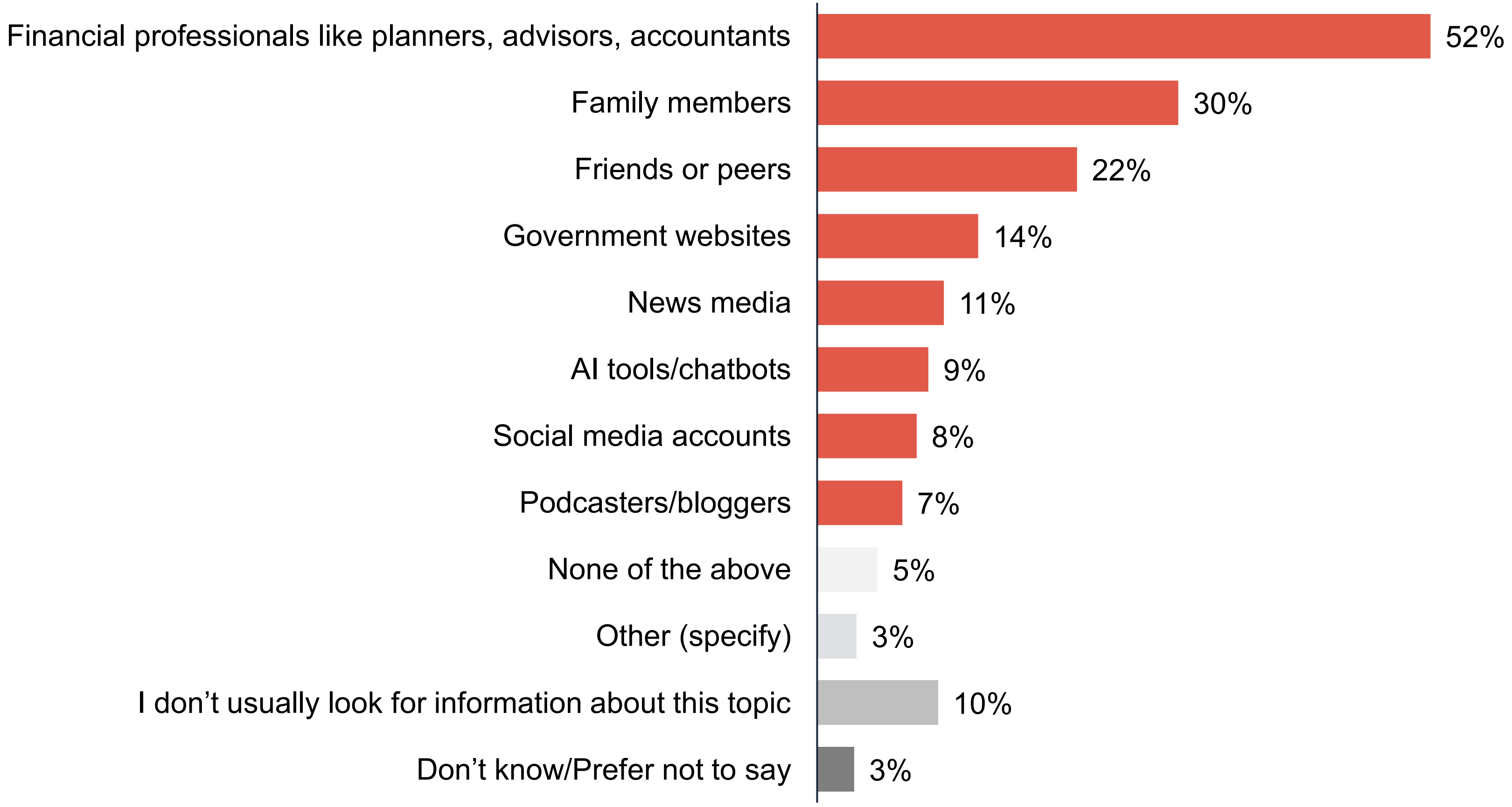
Nearly half of parents at least somewhat regret not saving for their child's post-secondary education sooner, underscoring the importance of early awareness and planning for education savings.



Q23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? I wish I had started saving for my child(ren)'s post-secondary education sooner.
(Base: All parents; n=860)

Source of financial information (i)

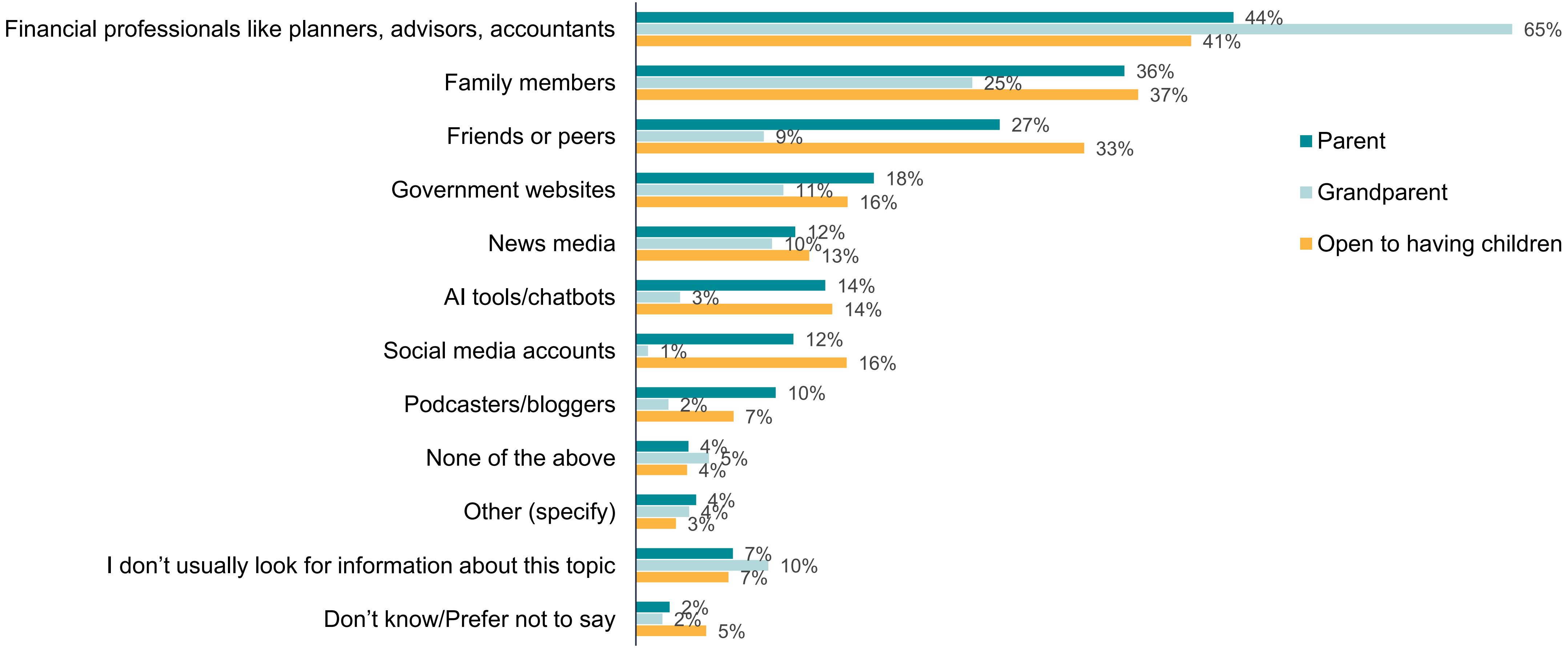
Advice from financial professionals remains the predominant source of financial decision-making, followed by family members and peers.



Q25. To whom or what do you turn to for advice about personal finance?
(Base: Total; n=1,500.)

Source of financial information

Canadians in earlier stages in their lives (parents and potential parents) are more likely to supplement advice from financial professionals with advice from family.



Q25. To whom or what do you turn to for advice about personal finance?
(Base: Total; n=1,500.)

Source of financial information (iii)

Boomers in particular are more likely to consult financial professionals, while Millennials and Gen Z rely on family and friends.

Column %	Total	QC vs RoC		Generations			
	Total	Quebec	Rest of Canada	Gen Z (18-29)	Millennials (30-45)	Gen X (46-60)	Boomers (61+)
Financial professionals like planners, advisors, accountants	52% -	**61% C**	49%	39%	46%	**54% d**	**63% DEf**
Family members	30% -	27%	**31% b**	**42% fG**	**36% fG**	**27% g**	20%
Friends or peers	22% -	17%	**23% b**	**30% G**	**27% G**	**23% G**	11%
Government websites	14% -	15%	13%	**19% eg**	13%	14%	10%
News media	11% -	9%	11%	14%	10%	10%	10%
AI tools/chatbots	9% -	6%	**10% b**	**14% G**	**14% G**	**11% G**	1%
Social media accounts	8% -	5%	**9% b**	**17% efG**	**10% G**	**9% G**	0%
Podcasters/bloggers	7% -	4%	**8% b**	**9% G**	**11% G**	**8% G**	2%
None of the above	5% -	5%	5%	3%	3%	**8% de**	6%
Other (specify)	3% -	2%	4%	1%	**5% d**	3%	4%
I don't usually look for information about this topic	10% -	7%	**11% b**	7%	8%	**13% de**	**12% d**
Don't know/Prefer not to say	3% -	1%	**4% b**	**6% fg**	**4% g**	2%	1%
Column Names	A	B	C	D	E	F	G

Q25. To whom or what do you turn to for advice about personal finance?
(Base: Total; n=1,500.)

About the study

About the survey

This online survey was conducted by Earnscliffe on behalf of CST Foundation. It was in field from **July 2 to 13, 2026**, and engaged a stratified sample of **1,500** respondents living in Canada 18 years or older who are members of Leger's LEO panel. The study includes a base sample of 1,001 individuals 18+ across Canada and an additional oversample of 499 individuals in Quebec.

Respondents had the option of completing the survey in French or English. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would have a margin of error of +/- 2.53% at a confidence level of 95%, with the margin of error for the Quebec sample at +/- 3.63%. The sample of parents would carry a margin of error of +/- 4.82%. The data was weighted by age, gender and region based on Census 2021 data.

Interpreting the data

- In the tables, statistically significant differences between demographic groups are shown using letters.
- A letter indicates the group/column that the **bolded percentage** is significantly higher than.
- Lowercase letters indicate significance at the **95% confidence level**. Uppercase letters indicate significance at the **99% confidence level**.

Sample profile

		Unweighted	Weighted
Total	**Total**	1,500	1,500
Region	**Atlantic**	70	99
	Quebec	730	329
	Ontario	390	590
	Prairies	60	95
	Alberta	110	172
	BC + Terr	140	216
Parental Status	**Parent (child <18)**	414	411
	Grandparent (grandchild <18)	235	225
	Open to children	271	291
Generation	**Gen Z**	261	298
	Millennials	424	407
	Gen X	369	345
	Boomers	446	450
Gender	**Man**	733	746
	Woman	767	754

For further information, please contact

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