



# ACCORD Couples Research

Amárach Survey Findings

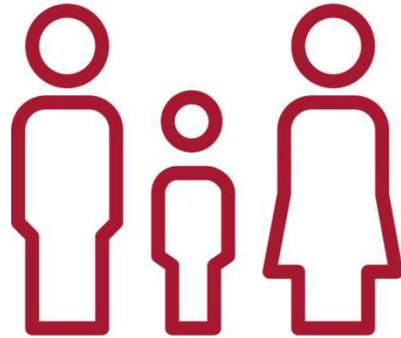
May 2022



- ACCORD commissioned Amárach to conduct research into couple relationships in May 2022.
- Amárach surveyed a representative sample of 700 adults who answered ‘yes’ to the question:  
*Are you living as a couple with a spouse or partner?*
- Note: we did not interview *both* partners or spouses in the *same* relationship – only one partner was interviewed from each of 700 couples in the research.
- This report is in three parts:  
Part 1 – The state of relationships today  
Part 2 – Perspectives on relationship counselling  
Part 3 – Attitudes towards ACCORD



23 years  
average time  
together as  
couple



78%  
have children  
(55% have  
children 18<)



75%  
married or  
civil partnership  
(18% cohabiting)



12%  
have attended  
relationship  
counselling

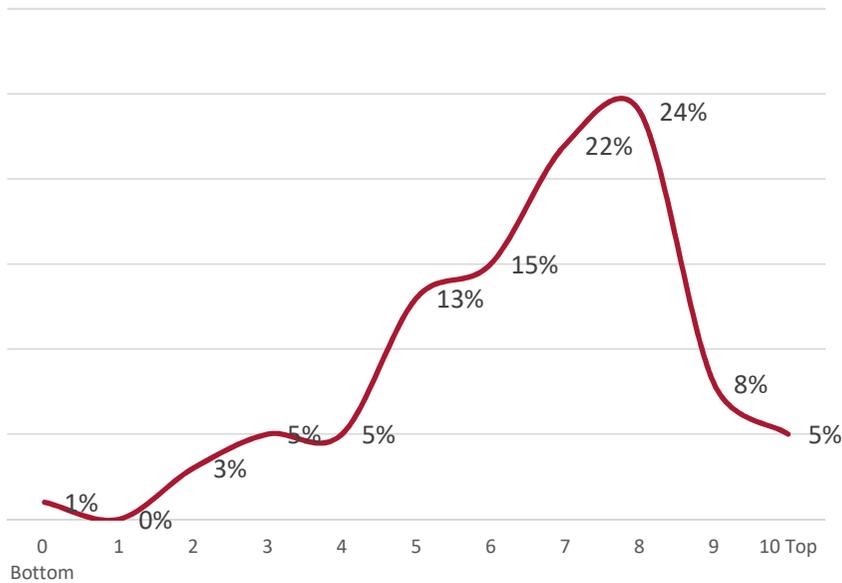


# Part 1: The State of Relationships

# Life is good for most people...

- ▶ Life for most people living in a couple relationship is good

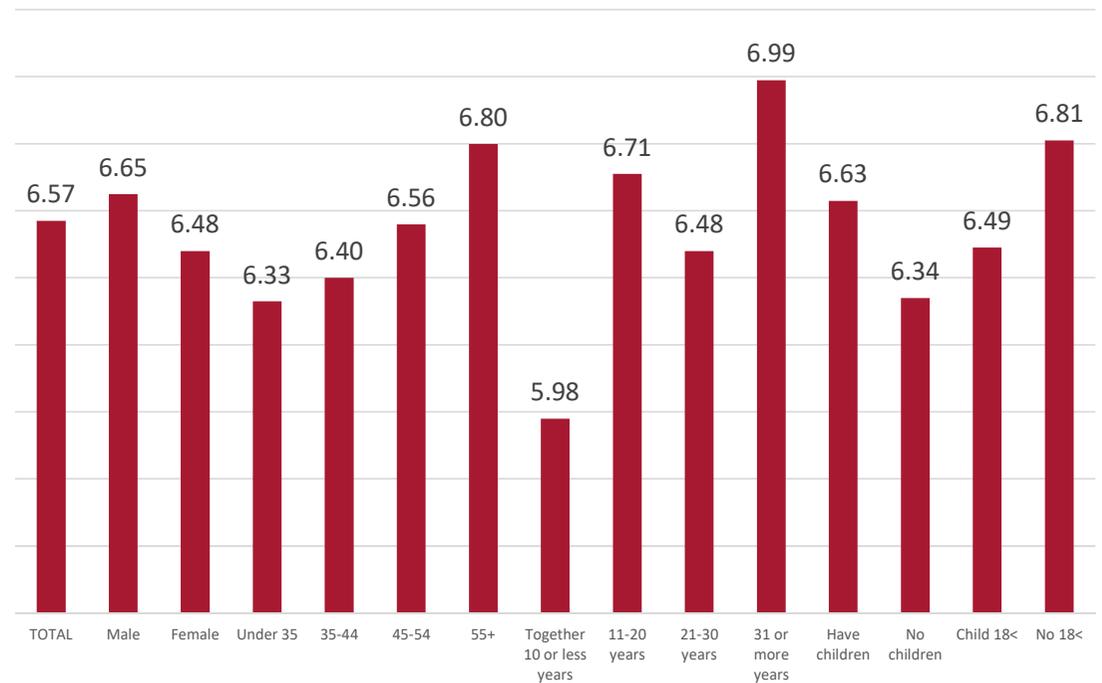
Cantril Personal Happiness Score



Please imagine a ladder, with steps number 0 at the bottom and 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom the worst possible life for you. On which step would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?

- ▶ Age and the absence of children under 18 is associated positively with happiness

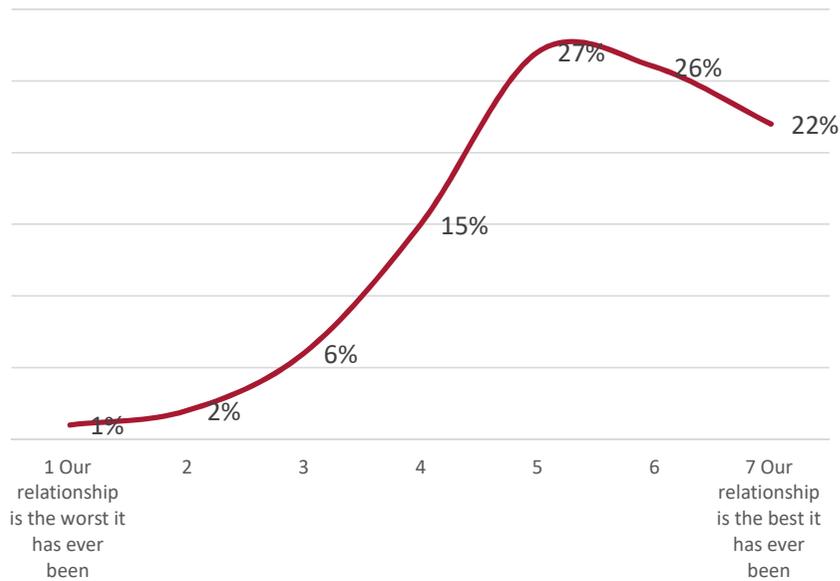
Average Cantril Score



# ...and relationships tend to be good as well

➤ Most relationships are very good

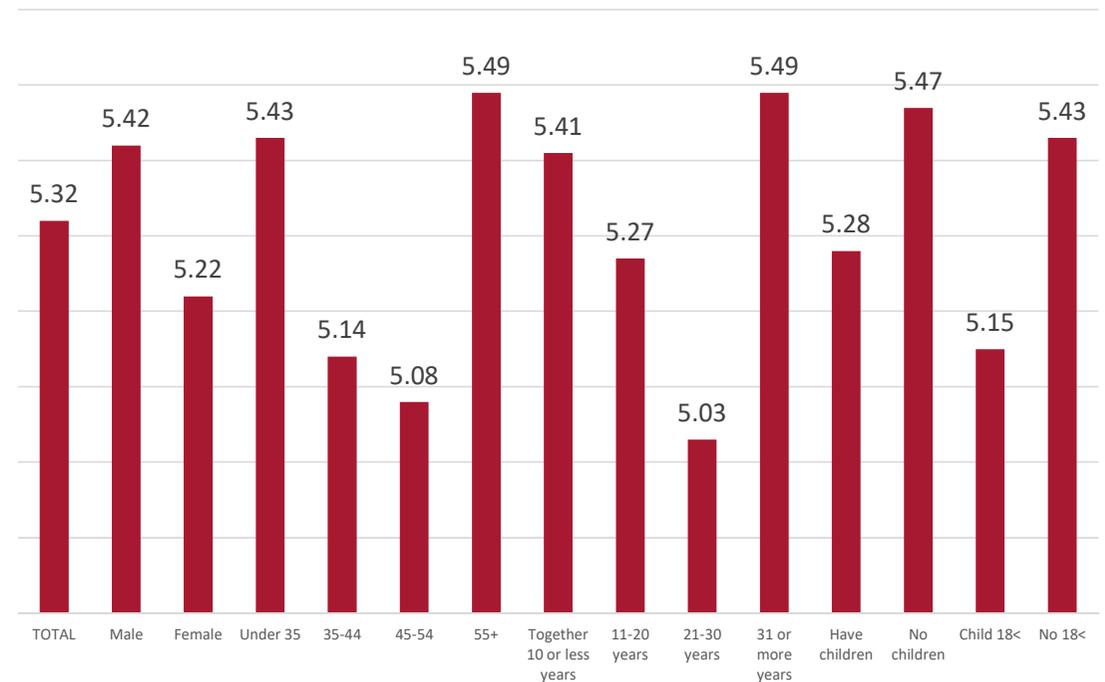
Relationship Quality Score



Thinking about your relationship as a couple, we would like your own views on the quality of your relationship. Select the point on the scale that is closest to your experience: (scale of 1-7)

➤ There is a 'U-Shape' distribution in relationship satisfaction by age

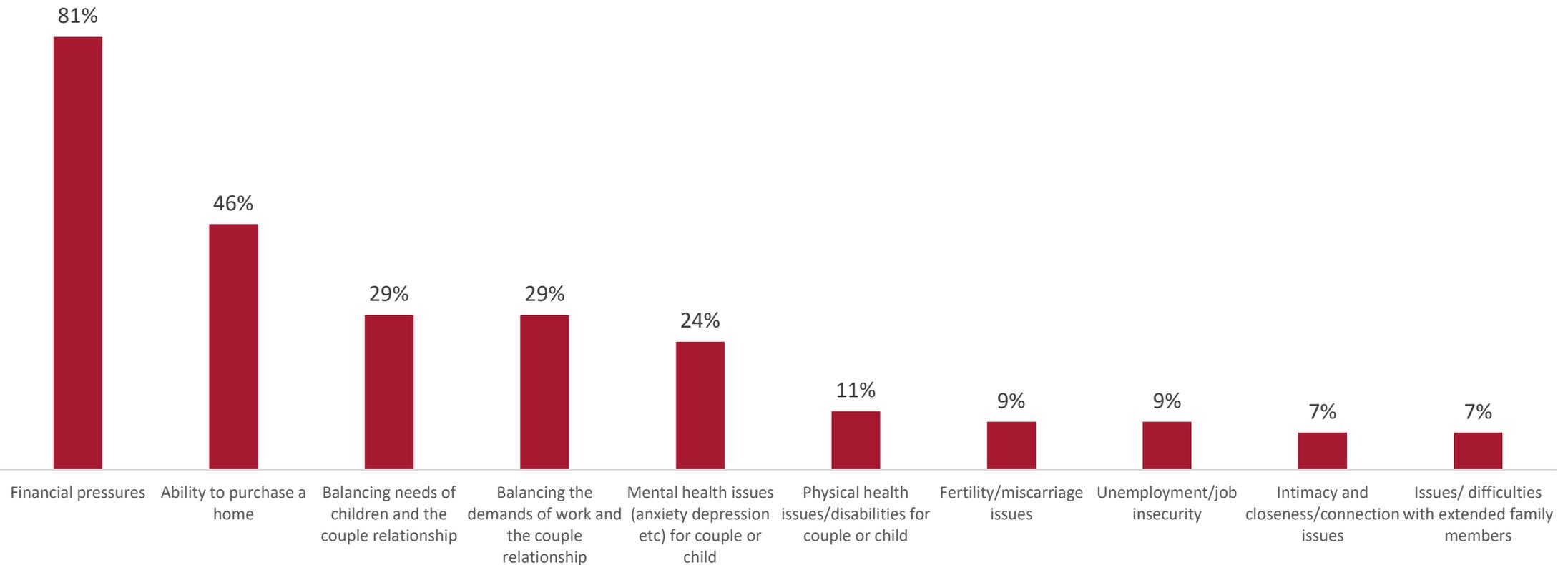
Average Relationship Score



# Money is considered the main pressure point for couples...



What do you think are the main pressures on couples nowadays?  
Top 10 - Base: all adults



Source: Amárach Survey for ACCORD, May 2022

# ...while buying a home is a major issue for young couples



What do you think are the main pressures on couples nowadays?

Top 10

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	Together 10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Cantril: Bottom (0 to 3)	Middle (4 to 6)	Top (7 to 10)	Relationship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)
Financial pressures	81%	82%	79%	78%	85%	81%	79%	82%	81%	84%	77%	80%	82%	80%	74%	83%	81%
Ability to purchase a home	46%	47%	45%	57%	37%	39%	49%	53%	42%	34%	52%	50%	42%	48%	36%	35%	50%
Balancing needs of children and the couple relationship	29%	28%	31%	25%	38%	28%	27%	23%	36%	34%	26%	24%	31%	29%	32%	29%	29%
Balancing the demands of work and the couple relationship	29%	30%	27%	38%	30%	25%	25%	35%	28%	29%	24%	27%	22%	33%	27%	20%	31%
Mental health issues (anxiety depression etc) for couple or child	24%	19%	28%	24%	27%	26%	20%	22%	28%	25%	20%	29%	28%	21%	23%	35%	21%
Physical health issues/disabilities for couple or child	11%	12%	11%	4%	13%	5%	18%	2%	15%	7%	19%	12%	14%	10%	11%	14%	11%
Fertility/miscarriage issues	9%	7%	12%	18%	13%	10%	2%	18%	11%	8%	2%	5%	11%	9%	5%	6%	11%
Unemployment/job insecurity	9%	12%	7%	5%	7%	12%	13%	8%	7%	9%	13%	4%	14%	8%	7%	10%	10%
Intimacy and closeness/connection issues	7%	8%	6%	2%	8%	10%	8%	4%	6%	9%	10%	5%	10%	7%	18%	14%	5%
Issues/ difficulties with extended family members	7%	7%	8%	10%	4%	9%	7%	7%	7%	6%	8%	10%	4%	9%	10%	3%	8%

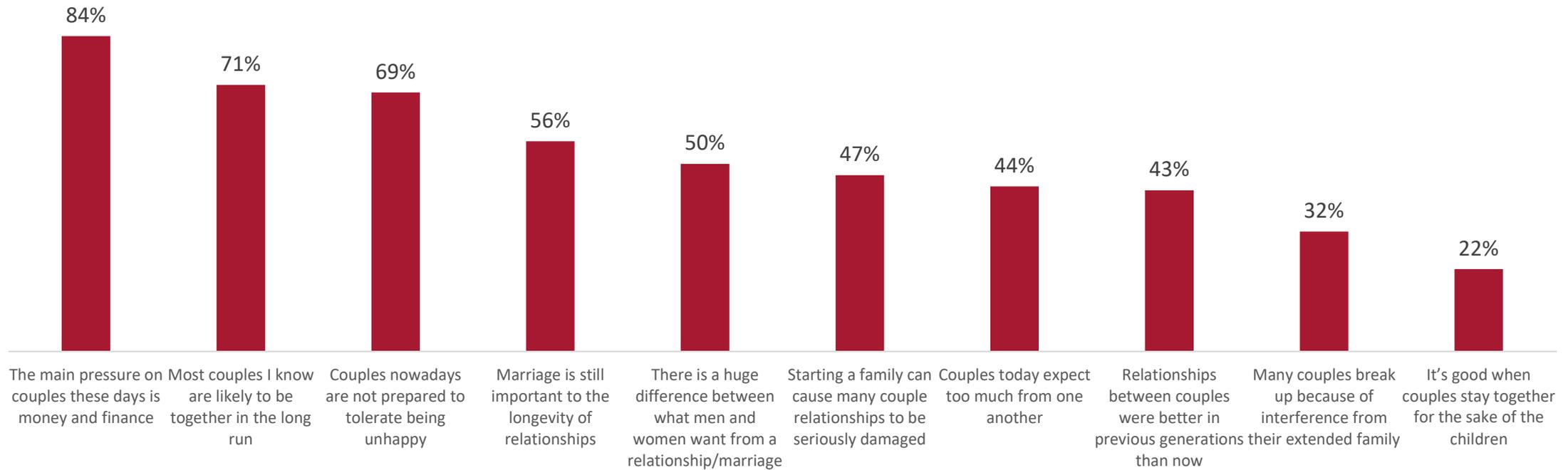
Source: Amárach Survey for ACCORD, May 2022

  = Significant difference from total population

# People have realistic appreciation of couple relationships...



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about couple relationships nowadays?  
% Agree – Base: all adults





# ...but those in a 'poor' relationship are more negative

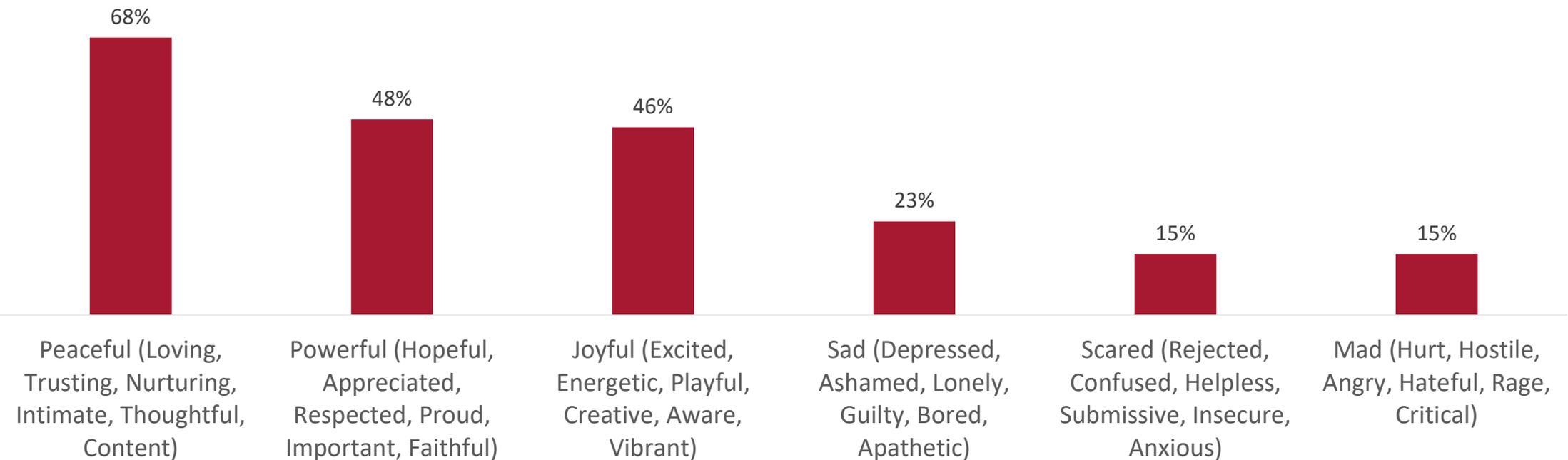
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about couple relationships nowadays? % Agree

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	Together 10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Cantril: Bottom (0 to 3)	Middle (4 to 6)	Top (7 to 10)	Relation-ship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)
The main pressure on couples these days is money and finance	84%	82%	87%	91%	86%	83%	80%	86%	88%	88%	78%	77%	81%	87%	70%	78%	88%
Most couples I know are likely to be together in the long run	71%	72%	70%	62%	78%	71%	71%	66%	72%	70%	75%	58%	62%	77%	49%	63%	75%
Couples nowadays are not prepared to tolerate being unhappy	69%	67%	72%	64%	71%	63%	75%	71%	62%	69%	75%	68%	63%	73%	55%	65%	72%
Marriage is still important to the longevity of relationships	56%	62%	51%	46%	47%	61%	66%	46%	52%	54%	70%	39%	48%	64%	37%	52%	60%
There is a huge difference between what men and women want from a relationship/marriage	50%	52%	47%	39%	48%	49%	57%	47%	44%	48%	58%	35%	51%	51%	53%	52%	49%
Starting a family can cause many couple relationships to be seriously damaged	47%	46%	49%	52%	58%	42%	40%	49%	54%	46%	40%	46%	45%	49%	44%	48%	48%
Couples today expect too much from one another	44%	48%	39%	35%	43%	43%	49%	42%	38%	45%	50%	35%	42%	46%	32%	37%	47%
Relationships between couples were better in previous generations than now	43%	42%	44%	46%	39%	40%	46%	45%	42%	40%	45%	47%	45%	42%	55%	36%	43%
Many couples break up because of interference from their extended family	32%	32%	33%	36%	32%	31%	31%	34%	37%	28%	30%	29%	31%	34%	23%	27%	35%
It's good when couples stay together for the sake of the children	22%	31%	12%	19%	15%	17%	30%	17%	19%	17%	32%	27%	19%	22%	22%	14%	23%

# Most associate positive feelings with their relationship...



Take a look at each of the feelings categories and their related feelings and select any you associate most often with your relationship as a couple? Select all that apply, there are no right or wrong answers (based on the Feelings Wheel). % Selected – Base: all adults



# ...but there are significant gender and age differences



Take a look at each of the feelings categories and their related feelings and select any you associate most often with your relationship as a couple? % Selected

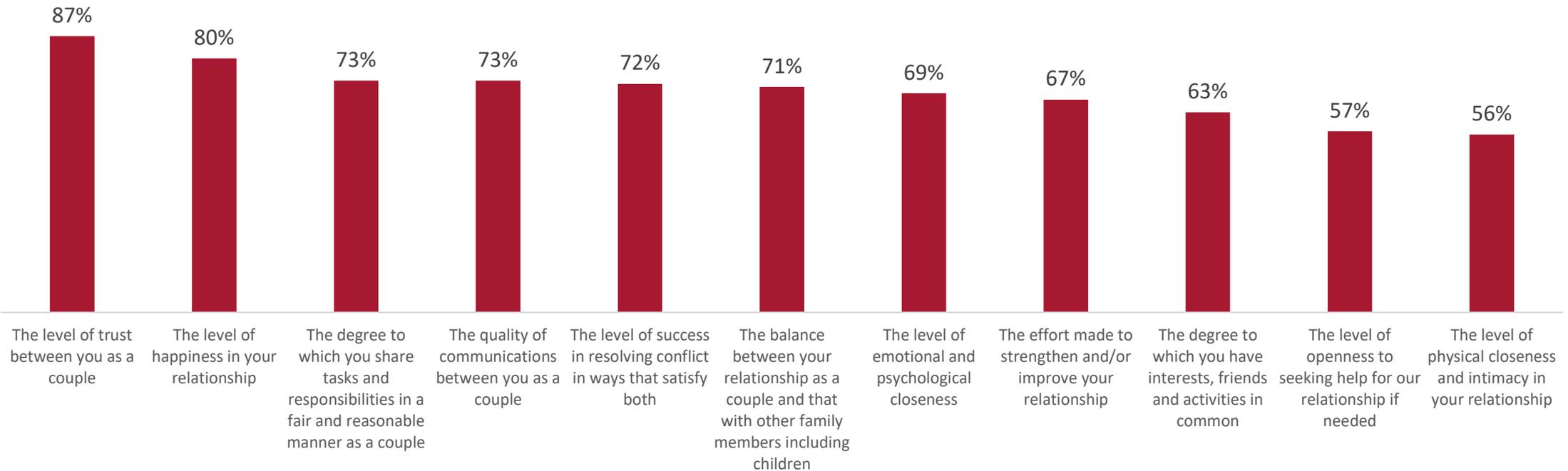
	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	Together 10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Cantril: Bottom (0 to 3)	Middle (4 to 6)	Top (7 to 10)	Relation-ship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)
Peaceful (Loving, Trusting, Nurturing, Intimate, Thoughtful, Content)	68%	70%	66%	72%	63%	60%	73%	67%	69%	61%	72%	47%	58%	77%	14%	43%	80%
Powerful (Hopeful, Appreciated, Respected, Proud, Important, Faithful)	48%	46%	50%	46%	44%	46%	52%	46%	50%	42%	52%	27%	40%	56%	14%	35%	55%
Joyful (Excited, Energetic, Playful, Creative, Aware, Vibrant)	46%	45%	47%	60%	46%	39%	42%	53%	50%	37%	42%	28%	39%	52%	18%	27%	53%
Sad (Depressed, Ashamed, Lonely, Guilty, Bored, Apathetic)	23%	21%	25%	19%	26%	30%	20%	21%	26%	25%	21%	59%	33%	12%	75%	48%	12%
Scared (Rejected, Confused, Helpless, Submissive, Insecure, Anxious)	15%	14%	15%	11%	21%	15%	12%	15%	18%	15%	12%	41%	20%	8%	44%	27%	8%
Mad (Hurt, Hostile, Angry, Hateful, Rage, Critical)	15%	12%	17%	17%	20%	12%	12%	15%	19%	11%	13%	31%	14%	12%	41%	35%	8%

   = Significant difference from total population

# The overall relationship ratings are very high...



How would you rate different aspects of your relationship as a couple? Select the point on the scale that is closest to your experience on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is very poor and/or weak, and 7 is very strong and/or stable. % 5-7 – Base: all adults



# ...but there are huge differences by relationship quality



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about couple relationships nowadays? % Agree

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	Together 10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Cantril: Bottom (0 to 3)	Middle (4 to 6)	Top (7 to 10)	Relationship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)
The level of trust between you as a couple	87%	88%	86%	90%	87%	86%	87%	91%	86%	87%	85%	71%	82%	93%	47%	77%	94%
The level of happiness in your relationship	80%	82%	78%	91%	76%	71%	82%	89%	76%	76%	79%	58%	70%	89%	7%	55%	95%
The degree to which you share tasks and responsibilities in a fair and reasonable manner as a couple	73%	82%	64%	71%	72%	69%	75%	74%	69%	73%	74%	49%	68%	79%	29%	45%	84%
The quality of communications between you as a couple	73%	78%	69%	75%	74%	67%	76%	76%	72%	69%	76%	51%	62%	83%	12%	46%	87%
The level of success in resolving conflict in ways that satisfy both	72%	75%	69%	73%	69%	64%	78%	72%	67%	73%	76%	59%	60%	81%	14%	44%	86%
The balance between your relationship as a couple and that with other family members including children	71%	75%	68%	72%	62%	73%	76%	73%	63%	69%	78%	53%	62%	79%	21%	39%	84%
The level of emotional and psychological closeness	69%	69%	69%	76%	66%	61%	71%	77%	67%	65%	66%	55%	57%	77%	7%	26%	85%
The effort made to strengthen and/or improve your relationship	67%	70%	64%	74%	69%	57%	67%	74%	67%	59%	67%	44%	58%	75%	8%	28%	82%
The degree to which you have interests, friends and activities in common	63%	62%	63%	65%	65%	62%	60%	67%	63%	62%	59%	39%	55%	71%	8%	35%	75%
The level of openness to seeking help for our relationship if needed	57%	61%	53%	66%	58%	52%	53%	67%	57%	54%	50%	41%	52%	62%	8%	31%	68%
The level of physical closeness and intimacy in your relationship	56%	57%	55%	70%	51%	48%	55%	66%	56%	46%	54%	48%	42%	65%	6%	16%	70%



- In general, people living in a couple relationship rate their overall relationship (and personal wellbeing) quite high.
- There are significant differences between cohorts – but no one factor (age or children or longevity of relationship) explains all differences.
- Money and financial pressures are, however, a significant source of pressure for some couples, and perceived as source even among those not ‘under pressure’.
- In Part 2 we look at perspectives on counselling.

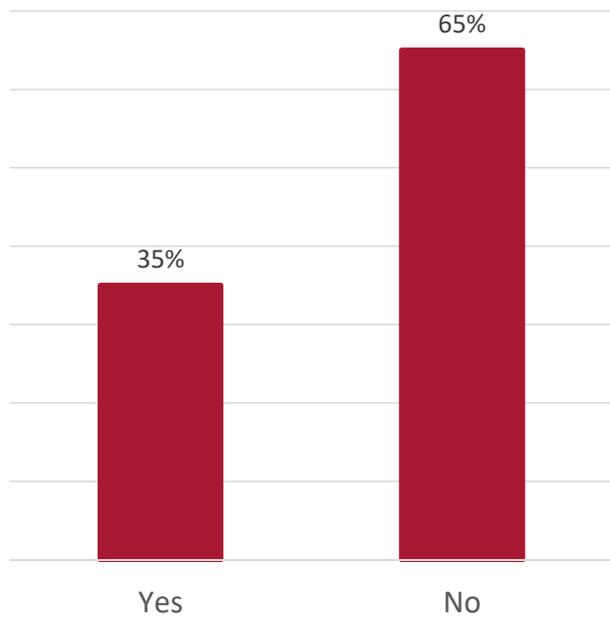


## Part 2: Perspectives on Counselling

# Younger people are more open to therapy/support...

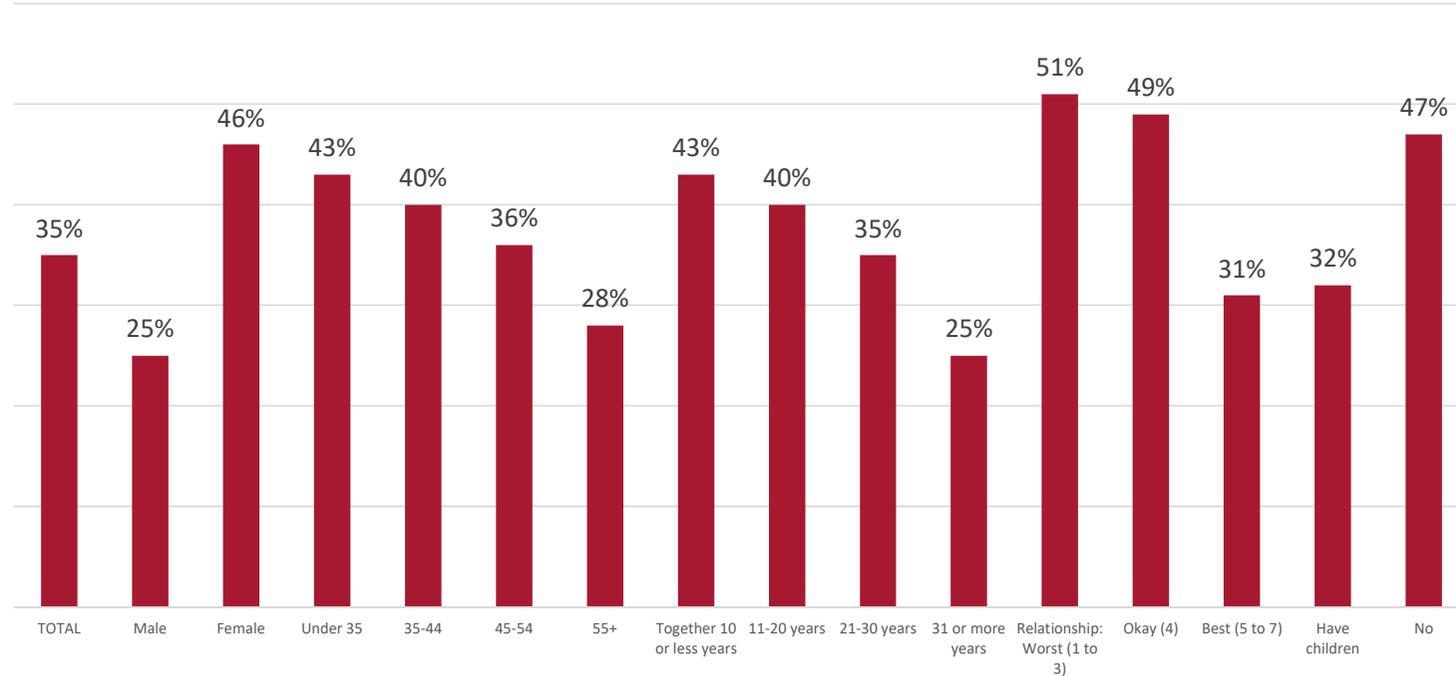
- Over one in three have ever attended a counsellor, psychologist, or psychotherapist – especially women, under 35s, those with poor relationship, and those with no children

Ever Attended



Have you ever attended a counsellor, psychologist, or psychotherapist?

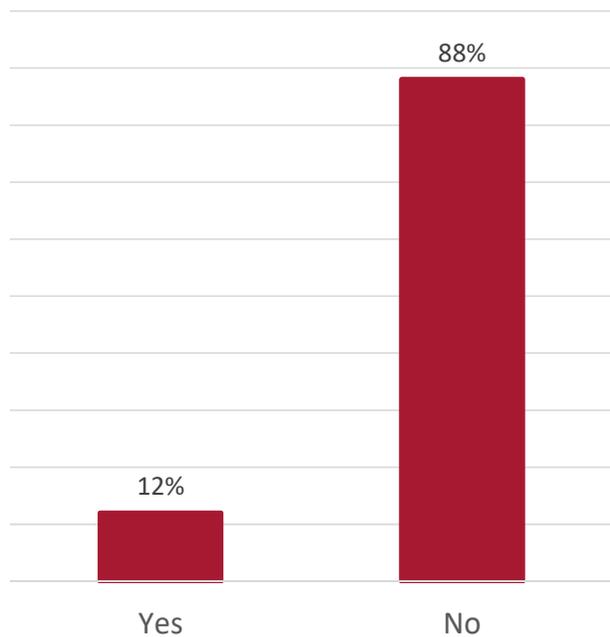
% Yes



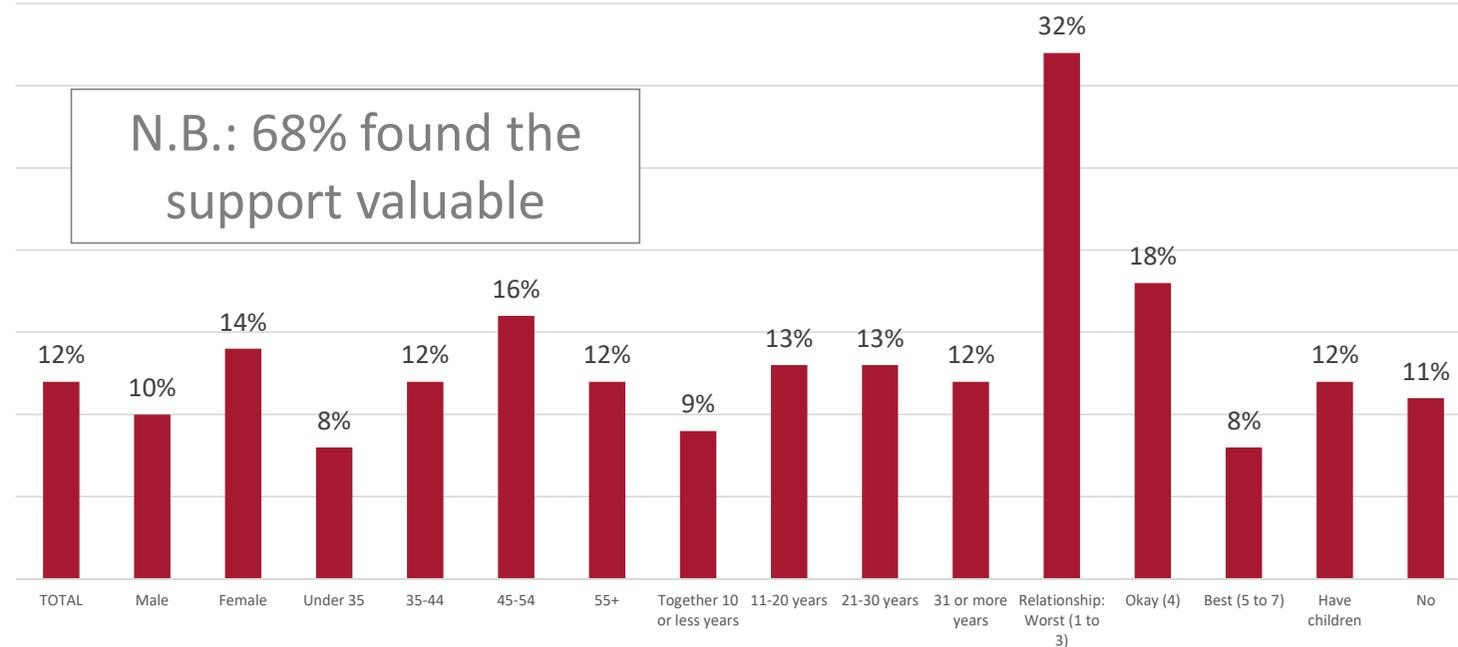
# ...though couple therapy is much less common

- Over one in ten have ever attended therapy for their relationship – slightly higher for women, 45-54s – and very high for those with a poor relationship

Ever Attended



% Yes

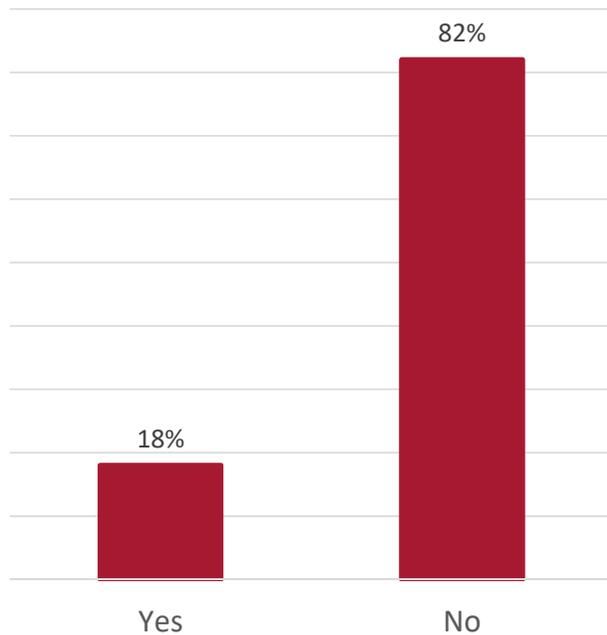


Have you ever attended counselling /therapy for your relationship/marriage from a counsellor, psychologist, or psychotherapist?

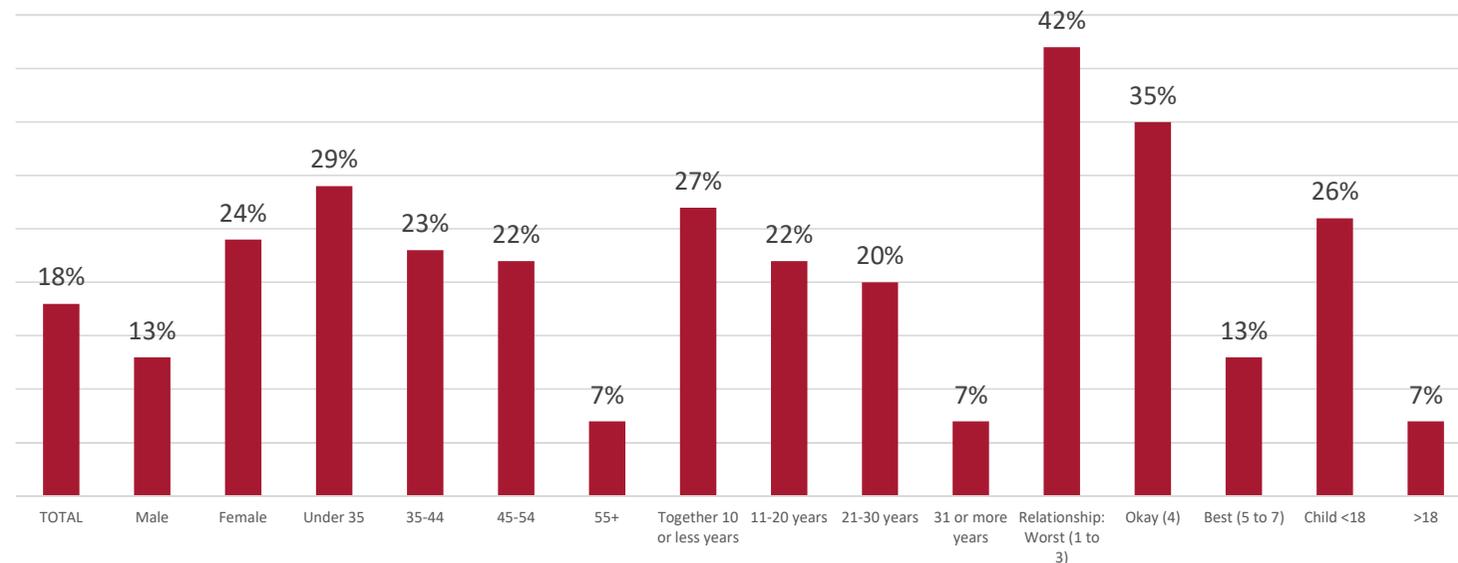
# Only a minority have considered couple counselling...

- Nearly one in five would consider couple therapy – higher for women, under 35s, those in a ‘young’ relationship, those with children <18 – and very high for those with a poor relationship

Considered Counselling



% Yes

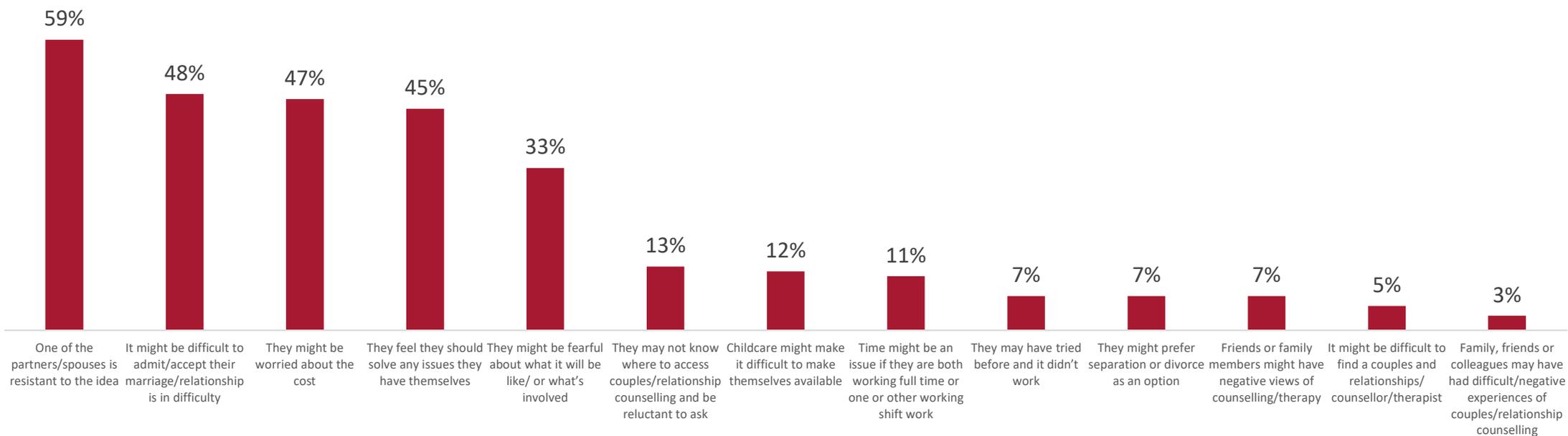


Have you ever considered couple/relationship counselling?  
Base: haven't attended before

# ...most recognise partner reluctance to be a problem



If a couple could benefit from couples and relationship counselling what might prevent or be a barrier to them from seeking support? % Any Top 3 – Base: all adults





# Cost is a barrier for young couples more than others

If a couple could benefit from couples and relationship counselling what might prevent or be a barrier to them from seeking support? % Top 3

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Relation-ship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)	Child <18	>18
One of the partners/spouses is resistant to the idea	59%	59%	59%	48%	57%	59%	66%	54%	55%	61%	65%	63%	62%	58%	55%	66%
It might be difficult to admit/accept their marriage/relationship is in difficulty	48%	49%	48%	43%	53%	42%	52%	45%	44%	54%	52%	39%	44%	51%	46%	52%
They might be worried about the cost	47%	37%	58%	66%	52%	42%	36%	57%	56%	38%	37%	51%	51%	46%	51%	40%
They feel they should solve any issues they have themselves	45%	52%	37%	43%	37%	48%	48%	41%	39%	51%	47%	32%	40%	47%	41%	48%
They might be fearful about what it will be like/ or what's involved	33%	36%	29%	25%	33%	34%	36%	28%	34%	31%	37%	32%	38%	32%	32%	32%
They may not know where to access couples/relationship counselling and be reluctant to ask	13%	12%	13%	14%	7%	17%	13%	13%	10%	17%	11%	12%	8%	14%	11%	12%
Childcare might make it difficult to make themselves available	12%	7%	16%	15%	15%	12%	7%	12%	17%	8%	9%	13%	18%	10%	18%	9%
Time might be an issue if they are both working full time or one or other working shift work	11%	10%	12%	14%	14%	14%	7%	14%	12%	11%	8%	12%	8%	12%	14%	7%
They may have tried before and it didn't work	7%	8%	7%	8%	6%	7%	8%	10%	8%	5%	6%	12%	11%	6%	7%	8%
They might prefer separation or divorce as an option	7%	8%	5%	5%	5%	8%	9%	8%	3%	7%	9%	12%	4%	7%	5%	10%

Source: Amárach Survey for ACCORD, May 2022

# Younger couples prefer digital channels to find support...



If you wanted to find a couples and relationship counsellor, which of these would you use? Base: all adults

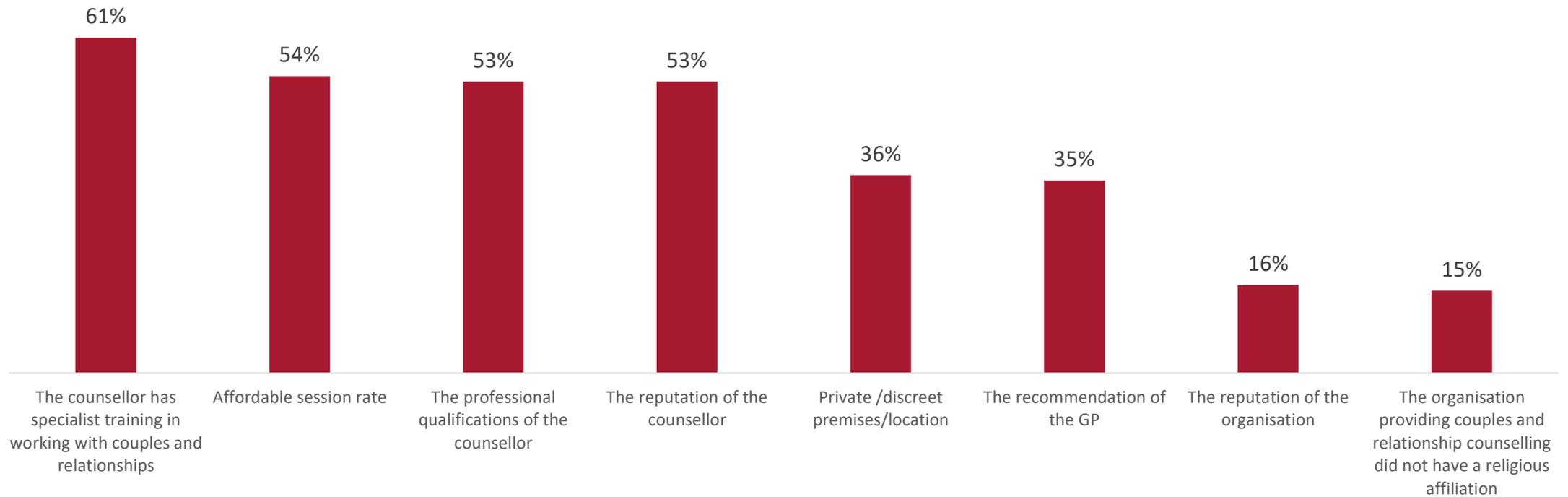
	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Relation-ship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)	Child <18	>18
Search online	74%	68%	81%	93%	88%	73%	56%	87%	84%	77%	54%	79%	77%	73%	79%	77%
Ask your GP	52%	59%	46%	42%	47%	48%	63%	43%	50%	53%	61%	36%	44%	56%	36%	44%
Ask a friend/family member	14%	14%	14%	15%	9%	12%	19%	17%	11%	9%	19%	9%	10%	16%	9%	10%
Ask your therapist	8%	8%	8%	11%	9%	5%	7%	10%	8%	7%	5%	3%	11%	8%	3%	11%
Ask a priest/minister/faith leader or person in a faith community	8%	11%	5%	9%	2%	5%	12%	7%	4%	9%	11%	8%	10%	7%	8%	10%
Use a couple therapy app	3%	5%	2%	3%	2%	3%	5%	3%	2%	3%	5%	3%	5%	3%	3%	5%
Ask your social worker	3%	5%	2%	2%	1%	3%	5%	2%	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%	3%	2%	4%
Ask a colleague at work	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4%	3%	1%	3%	4%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Other	2%	2%	2%	0	1%	3%	3%	0	2%	2%	4%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%

Source: Amárach Survey for ACCORD, May 2022

# ...and most would look for specialist training...



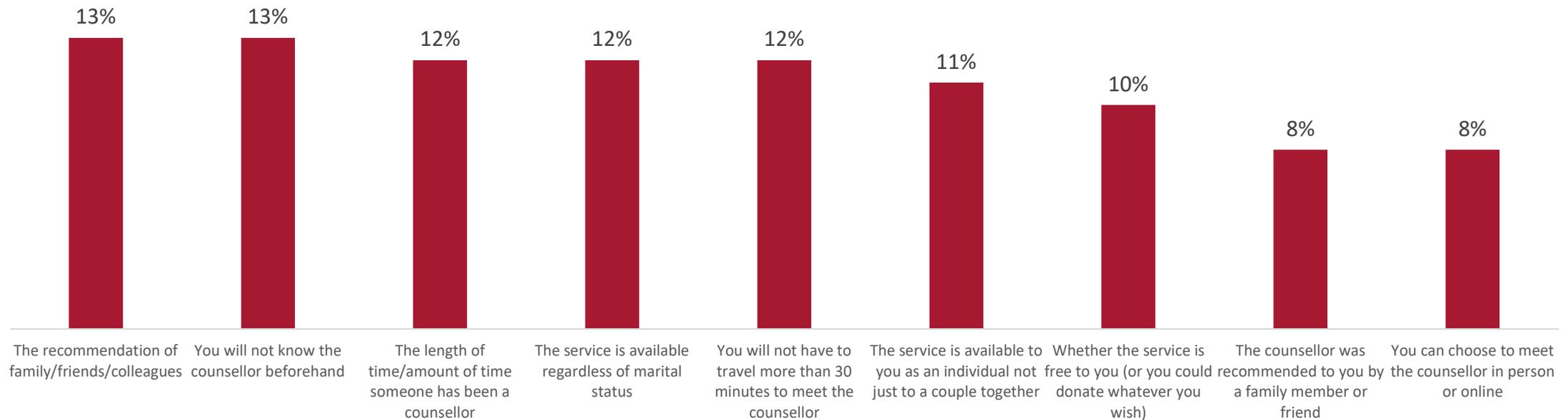
If you were to seek the services of a couples and relationship counsellor, what would your top five requirements be in choosing one (in order, 1st, 2nd, 3rd 4th, 5th)? % Any Top 5 – Base: all adults



# ...while other influences score relatively low...



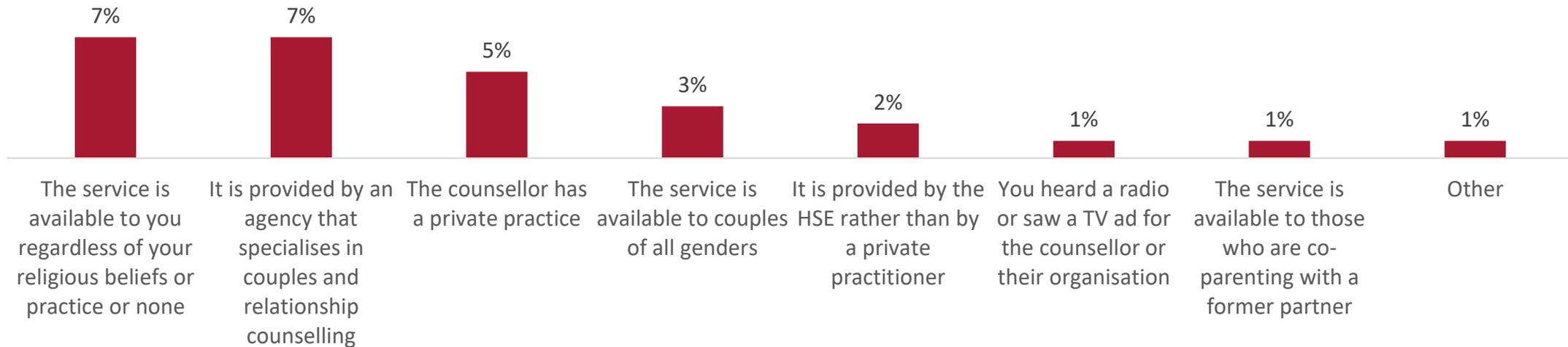
If you were to seek the services of a couples and relationship counsellor, what would your top five requirements be in choosing one (in order, 1st, 2nd, 3rd 4th, 5th)? % Any Top 5 – Base: all adults



# ...and some hardly matter at all



If you were to seek the services of a couples and relationship counsellor, what would your top five requirements be in choosing one (in order, 1st, 2nd, 3rd 4th, 5th)? % Any Top 5 – Base: all adults



# Men are more likely to be influenced by GP advice



If you were to seek the services of a couples and relationship counsellor, what would your top five requirements be in choosing one (in order, 1st, 2nd, 3rd 4th, 5th)?

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Relationship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)	Child <18	>18
The counsellor has specialist training in working with couples and relationships	61%	60%	63%	62%	55%	63%	64%	57%	60%	60%	66%	62%	67%	60%	63%	62%
Affordable session rate	54%	47%	61%	66%	63%	51%	42%	63%	57%	56%	40%	64%	63%	51%	61%	41%
The professional qualifications of the counsellor	53%	55%	51%	56%	58%	47%	51%	54%	56%	43%	56%	40%	50%	55%	51%	51%
The reputation of the counsellor	53%	57%	49%	57%	54%	55%	49%	56%	59%	43%	53%	52%	51%	53%	56%	48%
Private /discreet premises/location	36%	37%	35%	31%	39%	37%	37%	34%	36%	37%	38%	42%	40%	35%	39%	35%
The recommendation of the GP	35%	42%	28%	16%	28%	35%	50%	25%	25%	39%	50%	23%	27%	38%	24%	55%
The reputation of the organisation	16%	20%	12%	15%	12%	21%	17%	13%	16%	15%	21%	19%	12%	16%	16%	19%
The organisation providing couples and relationship counselling did not have a religious affiliation	15%	12%	18%	18%	19%	14%	11%	17%	19%	15%	11%	19%	15%	15%	17%	11%
The recommendation of family/friends/colleagues	13%	12%	13%	16%	11%	10%	13%	12%	15%	10%	13%	10%	9%	14%	13%	14%
You will not know the counsellor beforehand	13%	13%	12%	9%	16%	14%	12%	12%	11%	17%	12%	13%	10%	13%	10%	14%



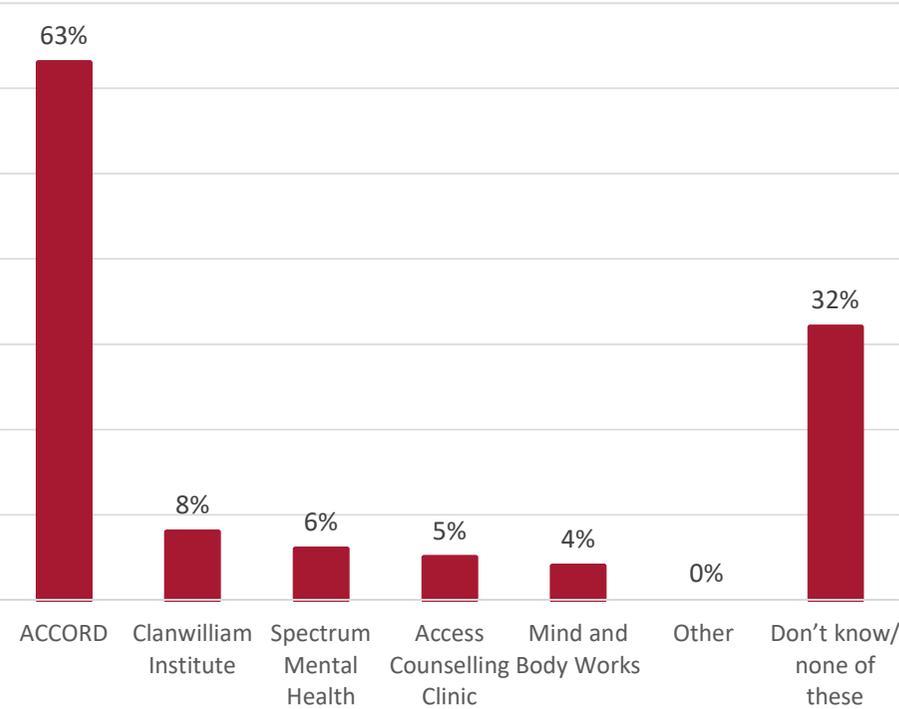
- About 1 in 10 have attended couple counselling in one for or another, and 1 in 5 would consider it (who have not attended before).
- Most people recognise that there are many barriers to seeking support from couple counselling, especially when it comes to admitting the need for support in the first place.
- The internet and GPs are the most likely channels for people to identify potential counsellors – with specialist training topping preferred requirements.
- In Part 3 we look at attitudes towards ACCORD.



## Part 3: Attitudes towards ACCORD

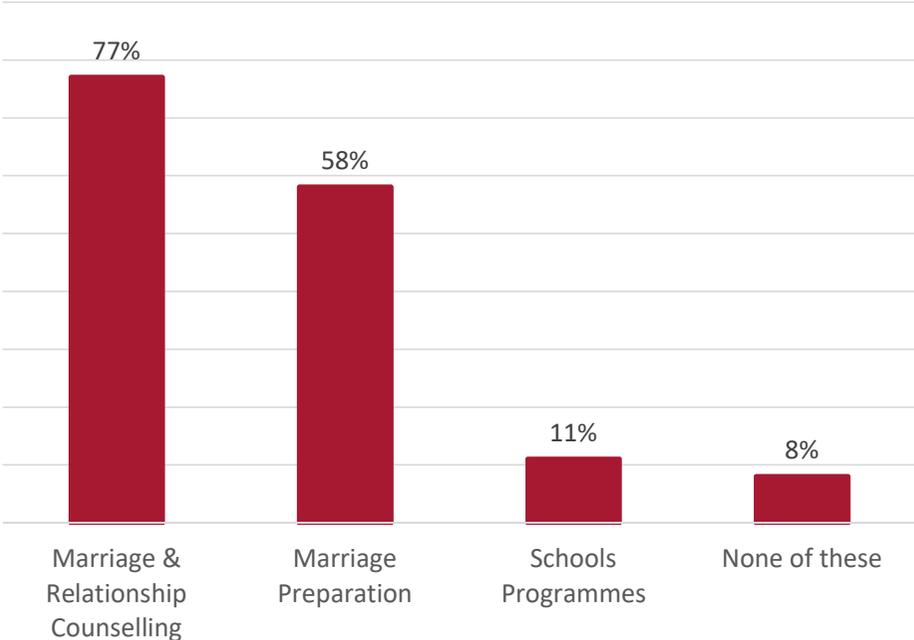
# ACCORD is the best known relation counselling provider...

Have you heard of...



Have you heard of any of the following organisations who provide couples and relationship counselling services?

ACCORD Services

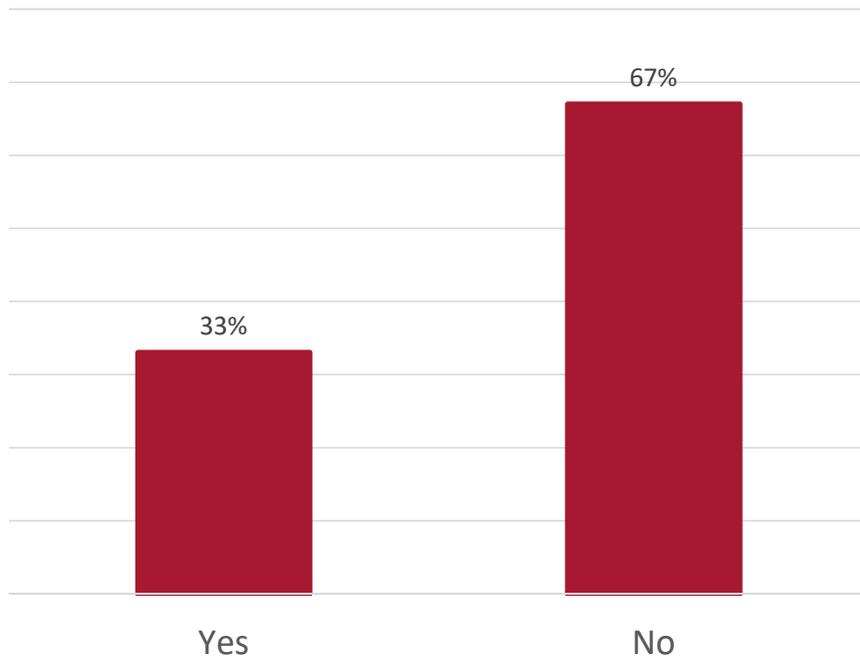


Which of the following ACCORD services were you aware of before today? Select any that apply. Base: All aware of ACCORD

Source: Amárach Survey for ACCORD, May 2022

# ...and over a third would recommend ACCORD...

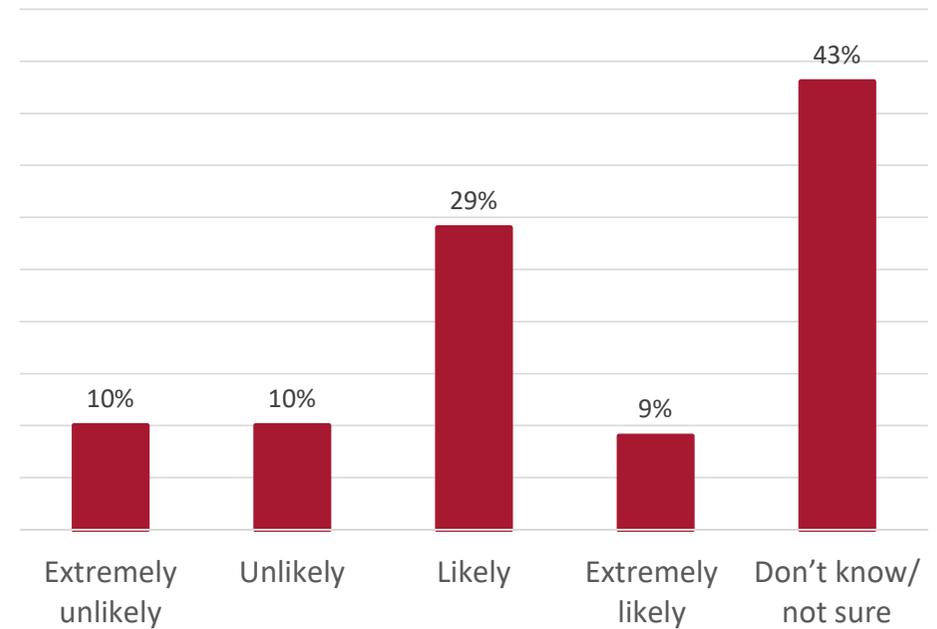
## Aware



Are you aware that Accord Couples and Relationships Counselling Services are open to couples and individuals who are experiencing difficulties in their relationships, regardless of marital status? Base: All Adults



## Recommend



If you (or someone close to you) were experiencing problems in a marriage or relationship, how likely would you be to choose or recommend the ACCORD Couples and Relationships Counselling service over another service provider? Base: All Adults

...though there are some significant differences...



### Knowledge about ACCORD/Likelihood to Recommend

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Relationship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)	Child <18	>18
Have heard of ACCORD	63%	65%	62%	47%	64%	72%	68%	50%	64%	73%	68%	74%	68%	61%	64%	67%
Marriage & Relationship Counselling	77%	79%	76%	59%	64%	85%	88%	65%	72%	80%	87%	75%	74%	78%	73%	87%
Marriage Preparation	58%	48%	68%	66%	72%	54%	48%	66%	63%	63%	44%	61%	59%	57%	66%	49%
Schools Programmes	11%	10%	12%	15%	13%	10%	9%	16%	10%	11%	8%	7%	10%	12%	11%	10%
None of these	8%	11%	4%	10%	9%	5%	8%	9%	8%	5%	8%	12%	3%	8%	7%	7%
Aware open to all couples	33%	38%	29%	22%	29%	38%	40%	20%	34%	43%	37%	38%	38%	32%	33%	38%
Extremely unlikely to recommend	10%	10%	9%	8%	12%	9%	9%	12%	8%	8%	10%	17%	7%	9%	8%	10%
Unlikely	10%	8%	12%	10%	11%	8%	10%	8%	12%	6%	11%	9%	10%	10%	8%	11%
Likely	29%	29%	28%	31%	26%	33%	27%	26%	29%	32%	28%	29%	38%	27%	30%	28%
Extremely likely	9%	10%	7%	6%	5%	10%	11%	5%	11%	9%	10%	5%	7%	9%	9%	12%

Source: Amárach Survey for ACCORD, May 2022

## ...and Catholic context affects some more than others



ACCORD is a Catholic faith-based organisation. However, it offers its couples and relationship counselling services to individuals and couples regardless of religious beliefs or none. In your opinion, does this make ACCORD less acceptable, more acceptable, makes no difference?

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55+	10 or less years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31 or more years	Relation-ship: Worst (1 to 3)	Okay (4)	Best (5 to 7)	Child <18	>18
Less acceptable	20%	22%	17%	23%	25%	16%	16%	24%	24%	12%	18%	28%	15%	19%	15%	17%
More acceptable	24%	25%	24%	26%	24%	21%	25%	24%	25%	27%	23%	28%	21%	25%	31%	23%
Makes no difference	42%	42%	42%	39%	33%	50%	45%	37%	38%	47%	46%	36%	46%	42%	40%	46%
Don't know	14%	12%	17%	12%	18%	13%	14%	16%	13%	15%	14%	9%	18%	14%	14%	14%

# There is a strong preference for a new logo

- The majority of people prefer one of the four logos, with the current logo least popular

Please look at potential logos for ACCORD. Please pick the one you prefer most:



6%

no strong  
demographic  
differences



9%

slightly higher  
among  
under 35s



29%

higher  
among  
Under 45s



56%

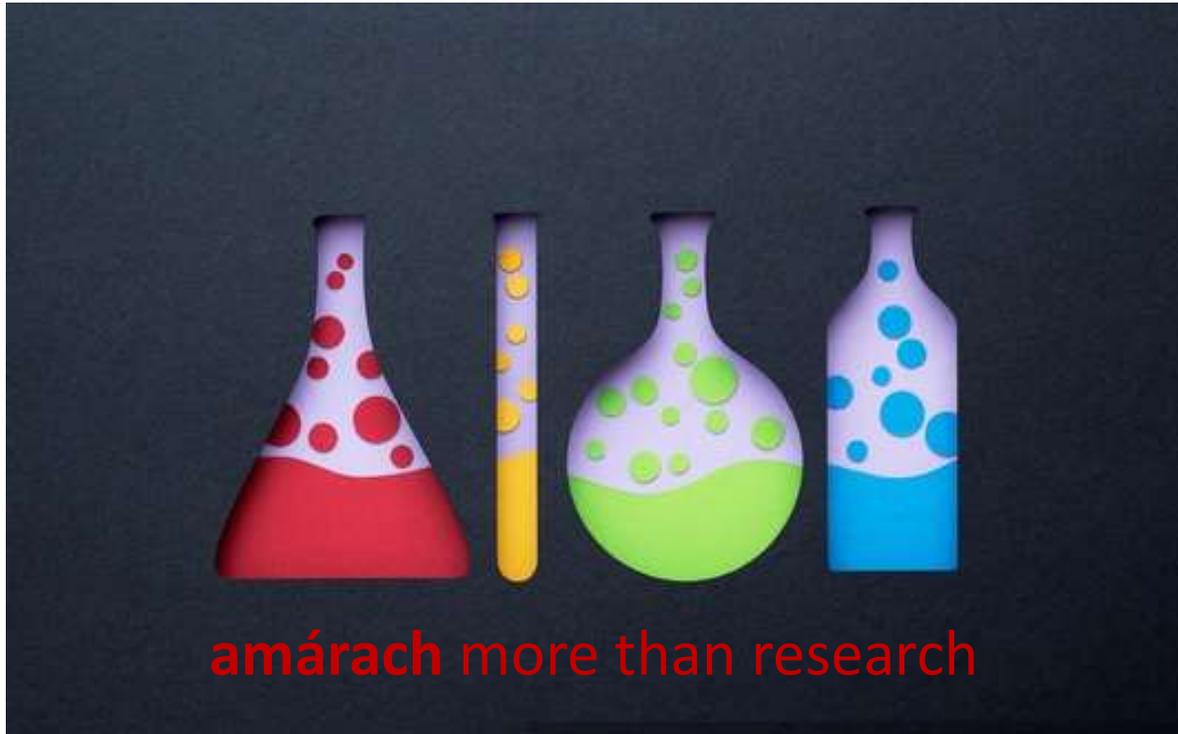
higher  
among women  
over 45s



# Conclusions



- Our research for ACCORD reflects a generally positive situation for most couples in Ireland today.
- There is a recognition that couples often face difficulties – some financial, others emotional – and that they need help at certain points in their relationship.
- However, relatively few have sought couple support services, though a large minority are open to it.
- ACCORD plays a widely recognised role in providing couple and relationship support – and there is considerable openness to engaging with ACCORD now and in the future.



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Image by Bogdan Dreava from NounProject.com

