

# A Complex Picture

Results of the 2014 Survey of Adult Alumni  
of the Modern Christian Homeschool Movement

Survey Conducted by HARO  
Data Analysis by CRHE



**Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out**  
presents

**A Complex Picture:**

Results of a 2014 Survey of Adult Alumni of the Modern Christian Homeschool Movement  
Installment 2: Demographics  
February 1, 2015

Data analysis provided by:



**Coalition for Responsible Home Education**

661 Washington Street #563

Canton, MA 02021

(617) 765-7096

[info@responsiblehomeschooling.org](mailto:info@responsiblehomeschooling.org)

See the first installment, which includes a description of the survey methodology, [here](#). Note that this survey should not be used to make any generalized statements about homeschoolers as a whole; the only people it can be used to make claims about are the 3,702 people who completed the survey.

## 0. Introduction to Installment 2: Demographics

In this installment, we will discuss some of the findings from the ‘Demographics’ section of the survey. This includes the effects of age and gender on the homeschooling experience; particular interest groups who took the survey; family structure; socioeconomic status and its effect on the homeschooling experience; educational values; and the educational attainment of the respondents. Again we present primarily descriptive statistics.

### 1. Effect of age and gender

#### Age

Recall that the mean and median of respondents’ birth years were both 1988, meaning that at the time of the survey our respondents’ mean age was 26. See Figure 1 (from Installment 1) below.

Figure 1: Respondent birth years

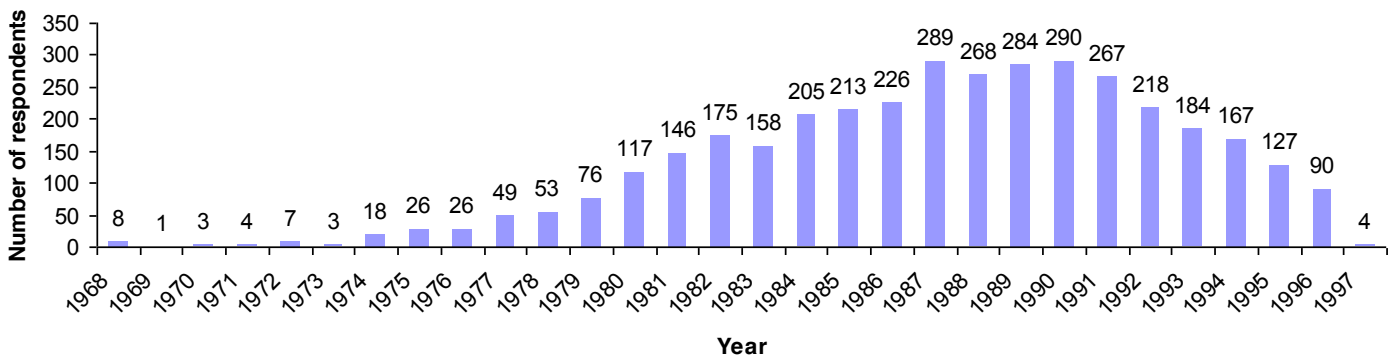
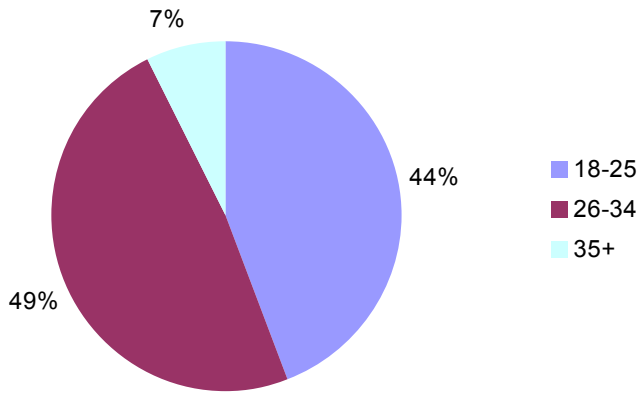
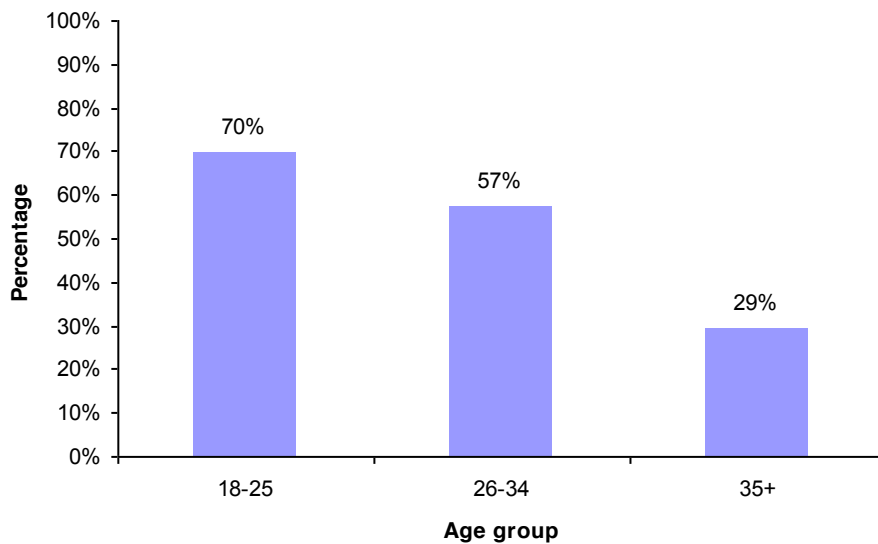


Figure 1 shows a small and slow increase in the number of respondents born from 1968 to 1979. The vast majority of respondents were born in 1980 or later.

There were some striking differences between the homeschooling experiences of different age groups. Participants were divided into three age groups as shown in Figure 2: ages 18-25 (birth years 1989-1997), ages 26-34 (birth years 1980-1988), and ages 35 and older (birth years 1968-1979). The youngest group composed 44% of the sample, the oldest group composed 7% of the sample, and the middle group composed 49%.

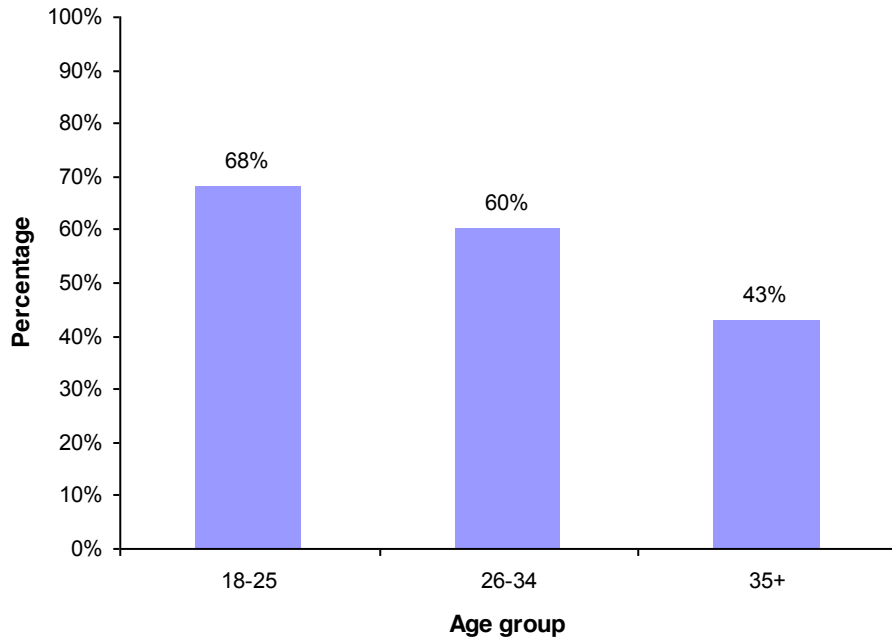
**Figure 2: Number of respondents**

First, younger participants were much more likely to be so-called ‘movement’ homeschoolers, who were homeschooled for 12 years or more, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Respondents homeschooled for 12 years or more**

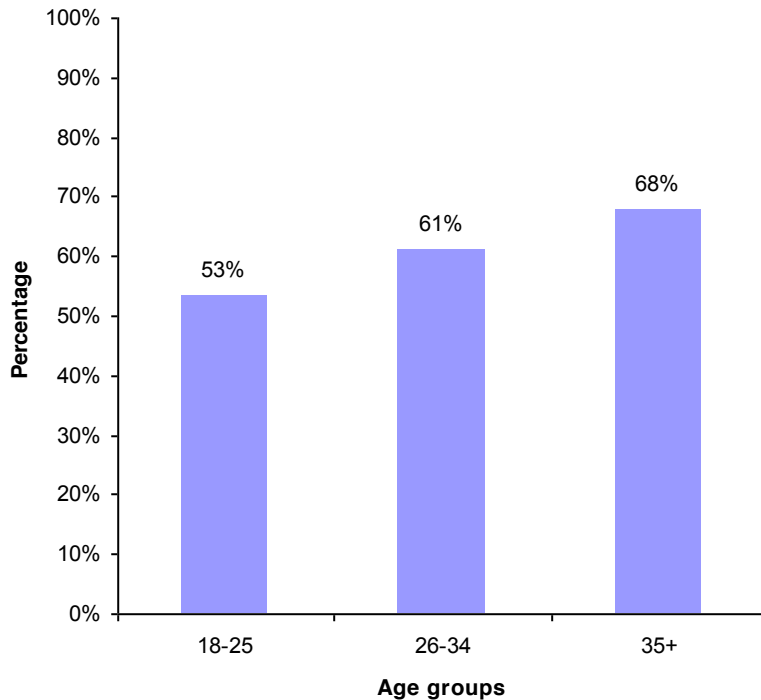
Next, younger participants were much more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement ‘My homeschool experience prepared me for the future’ as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Respondents who agree with the statement 'My homeschool experience prepared me for the future.'**

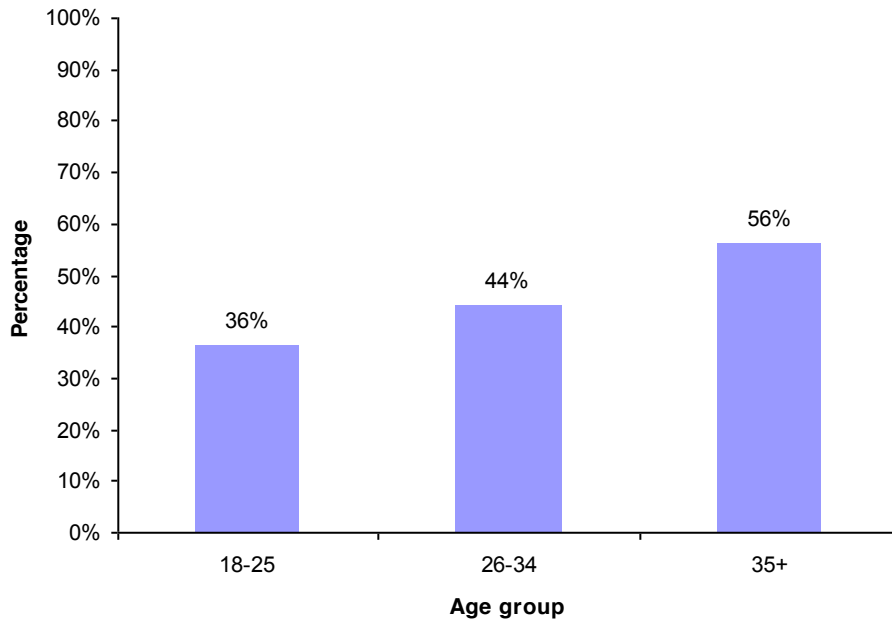


Younger participants were less likely to have been raised in a fundamentalist home, as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Respondents who were raised in a fundamentalist home**



Younger participants were less likely to have been abused, as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Respondents who experienced abuse**

These figures seem to suggest an increased mainstreaming of homeschooling over time. One possible explanation for these findings is that, as lifelong homeschooling becomes more common, parents who are fundamentalists or child abusers compose a smaller and smaller proportion of homeschoolers, producing an increasing number of homeschooled alumni who feel prepared for modern life. Another possible explanation is that older homeschool alumni are less likely to be involved in the alumni movement if they had good experiences homeschooling.

Further evidence for the increased mainstreaming of homeschooling is demonstrated by respondents' rating of the quality of instruction they received in various school subjects. Figure 7 shows the percent of respondents in each age group who rated the quality of the academic instruction they received in elementary school as 'good' or 'very good'.

**Figure 7: Percent of respondents rating the quality of the academic instruction they received in elementary school as 'Good' or 'Very good'**

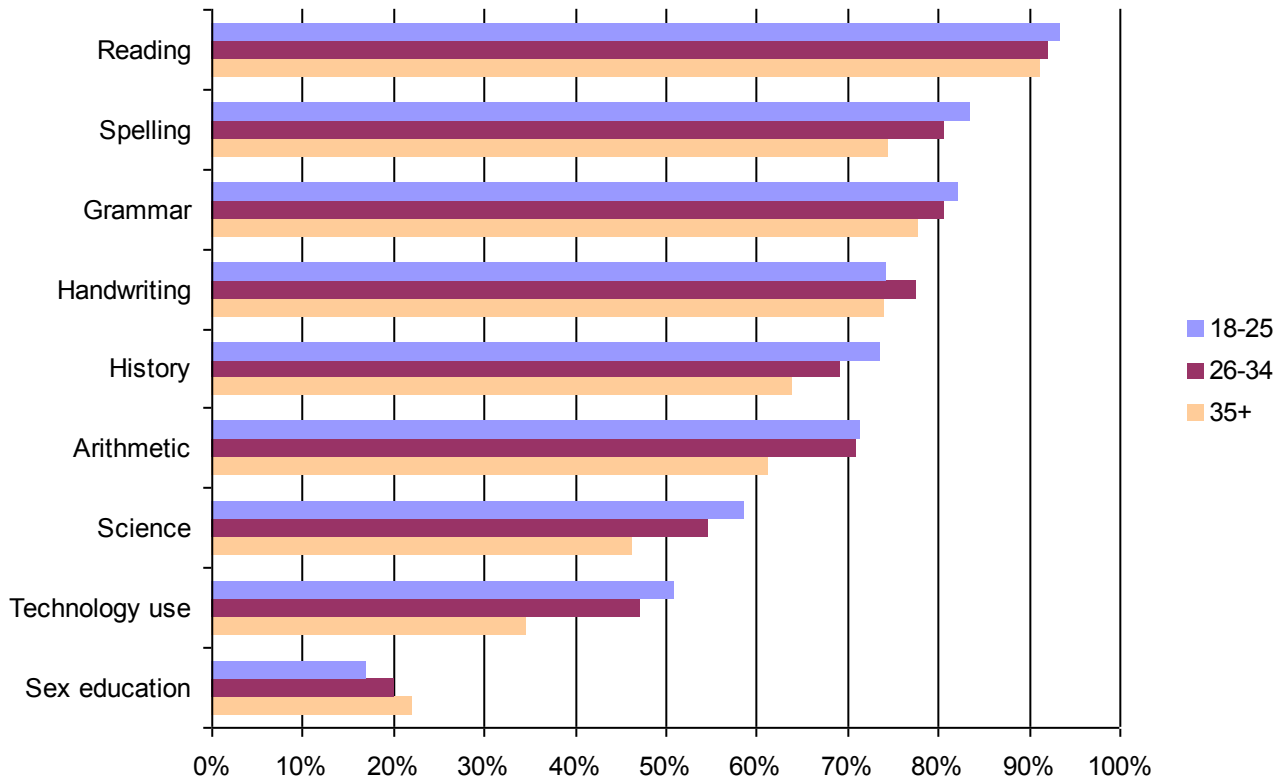
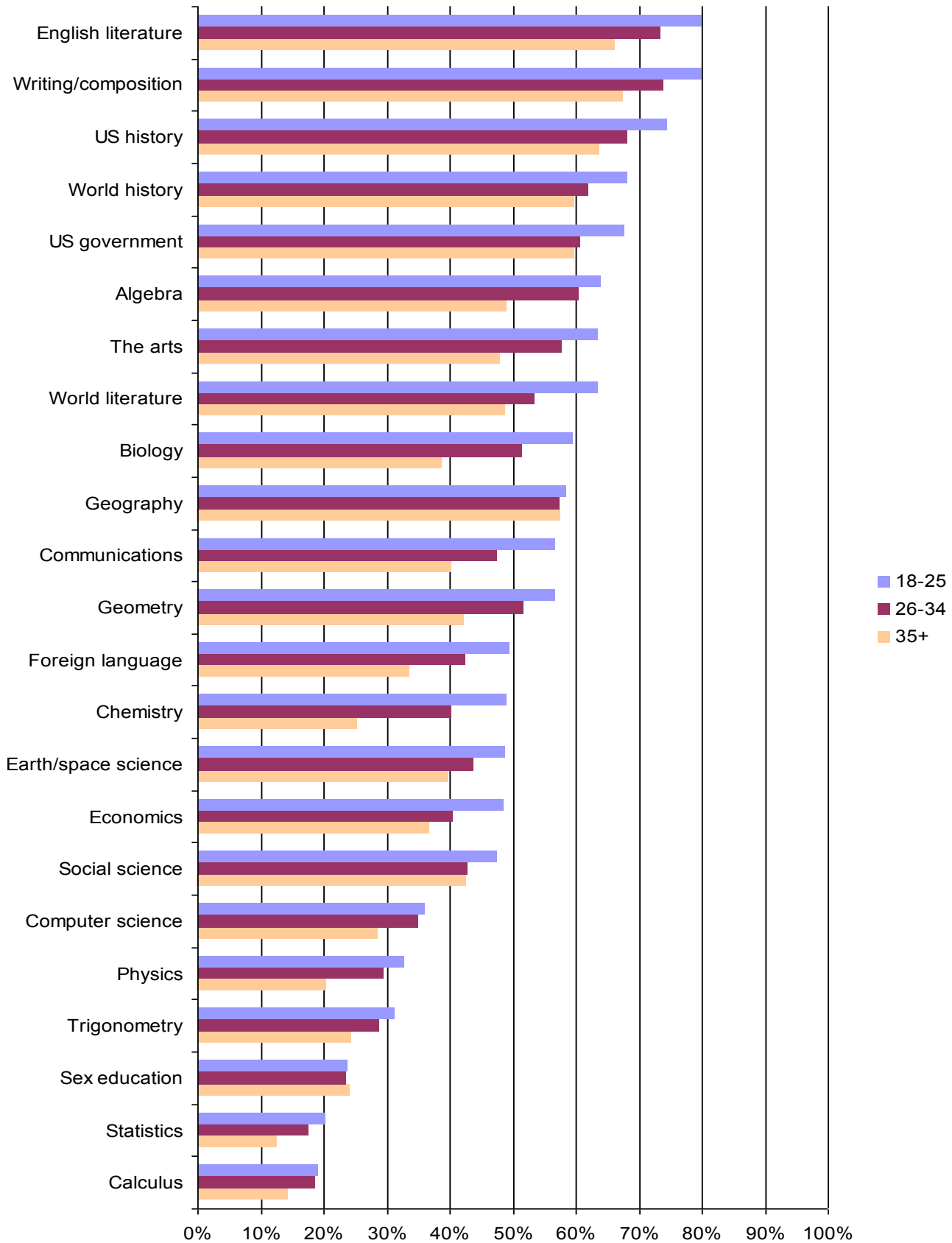


Figure 8 shows the percent of respondents in each age group who rated the quality of the academic instruction they received in middle and high school as 'good' or 'very good'.

**Figure 8: Percent of respondents rating the quality of the academic instruction they received in junior high/middle school and high school as 'Good' or 'Very good'**



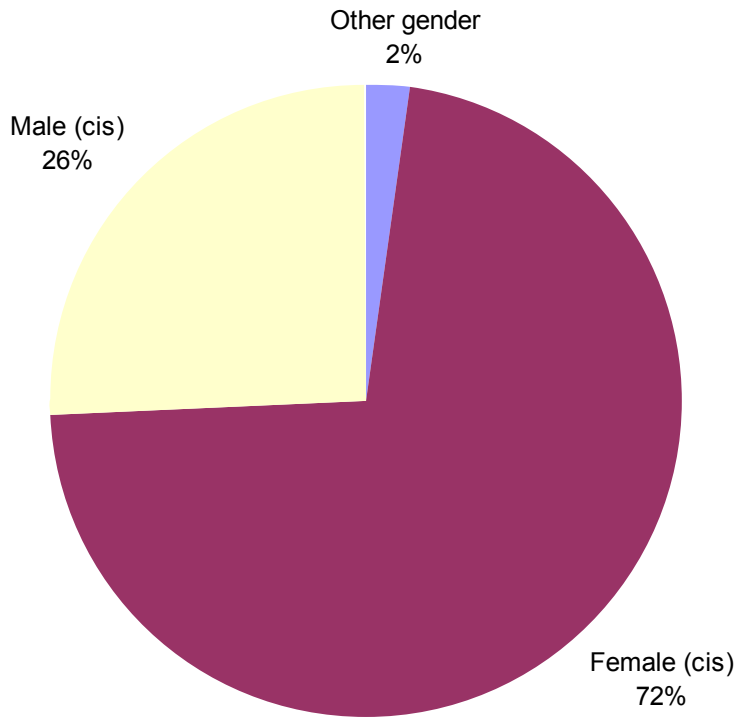


Note that what is a subtle trend in elementary school becomes a stronger trend in the higher grades— in nearly all subjects, respondents who were homeschooled more recently were more likely than earlier homeschoolers to say that the quality of instruction they received was ‘good’ or ‘very good’. The most likely explanation for this phenomenon is the increasing mainstreaming of homeschooling over the decades and the concomitant increase in availability of curricular and other pedagogical materials for homeschoolers.

### **Gender**

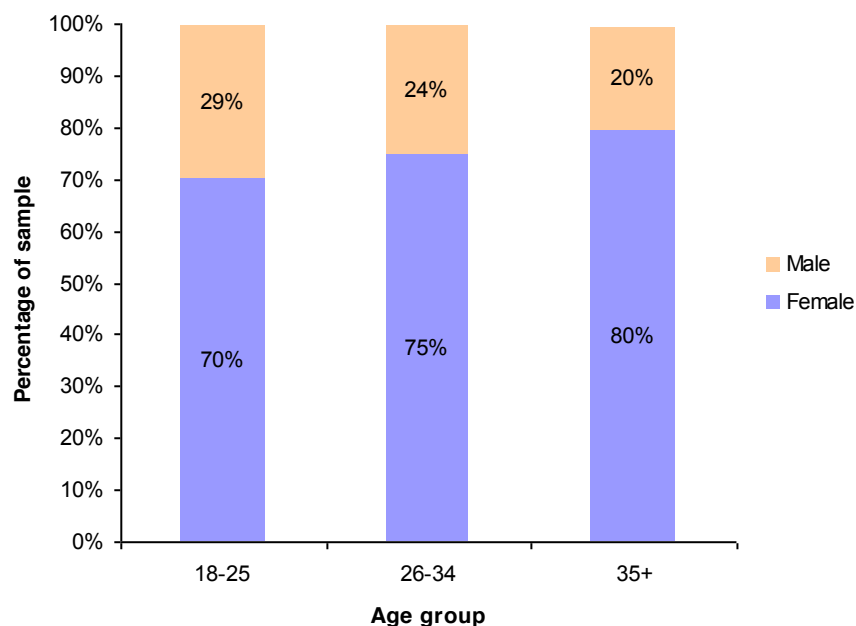
Recall that approximately three times as many women took the survey as men, as shown in Figure 9 (from Installment 1).

**Figure 9: Respondent gender**



72% of respondents were cisgender females, while only 26% were cisgender males. 2% of those surveyed were intersex, transgender, genderqueer, or identified as another gender.

Interestingly, the proportion of males who took the survey was higher for younger respondents than for older respondents, as shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Percentage of each age group by gender (assigned at birth)**

In the youngest group of respondents, males composed nearly 30% of the sample, while in the oldest group they composed only 20%—the survey was more likely to be answered by males who were recently homeschooled than by males who were homeschooled earlier in the homeschooling era. This fact, and the fact that younger respondents rated the quality of their education more highly than did older respondents, may play a role in explaining another important finding: male respondents were much more likely than females to report a ‘good’ or ‘very good’ academic experience in almost all subjects. Figure 11 shows that the only elementary school subjects where female respondents reported receiving better instruction than male respondents were handwriting and sex education.

**Figure 11: Percentage of respondents rating their academic experience in elementary school as 'good' or 'very good', by gender assigned at birth**

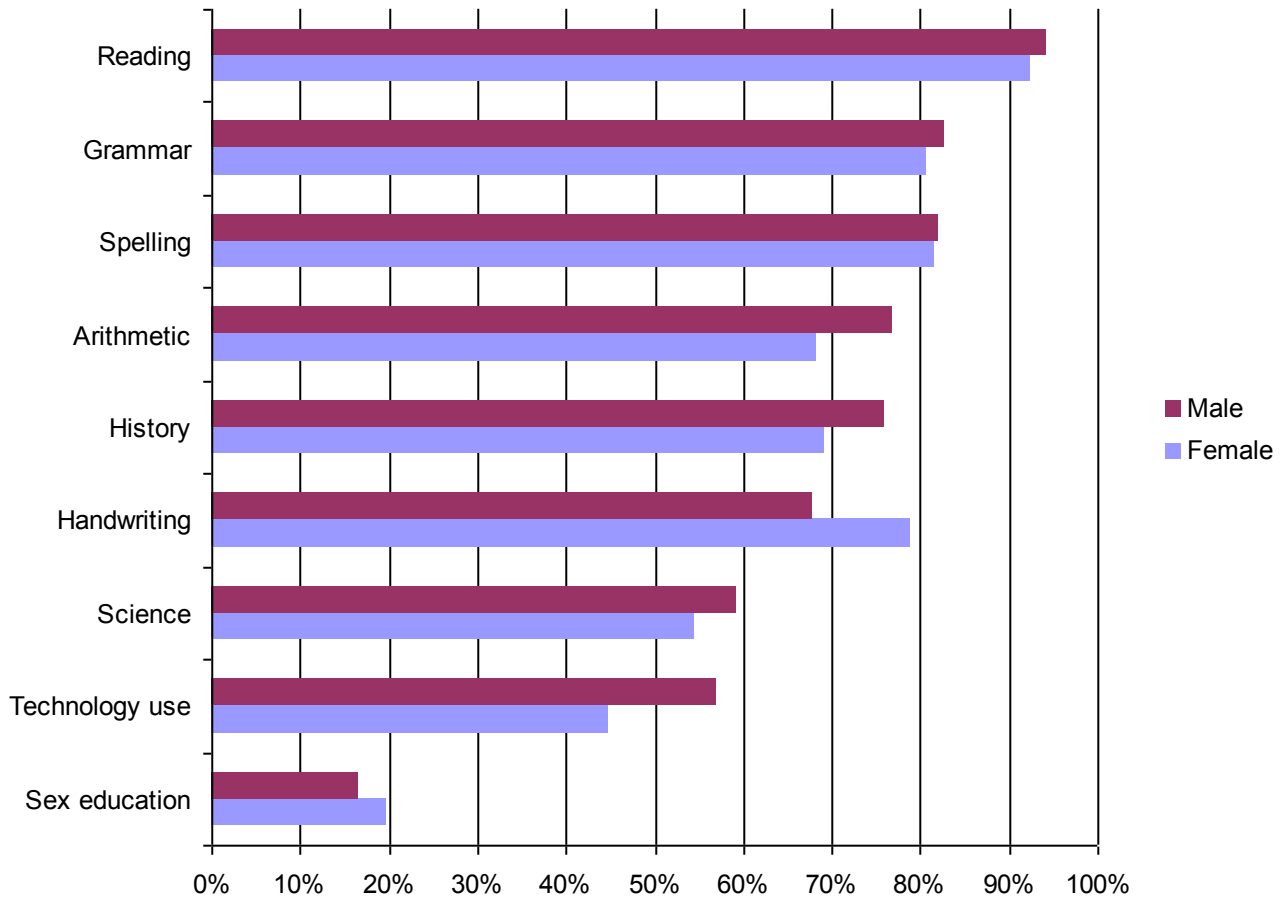
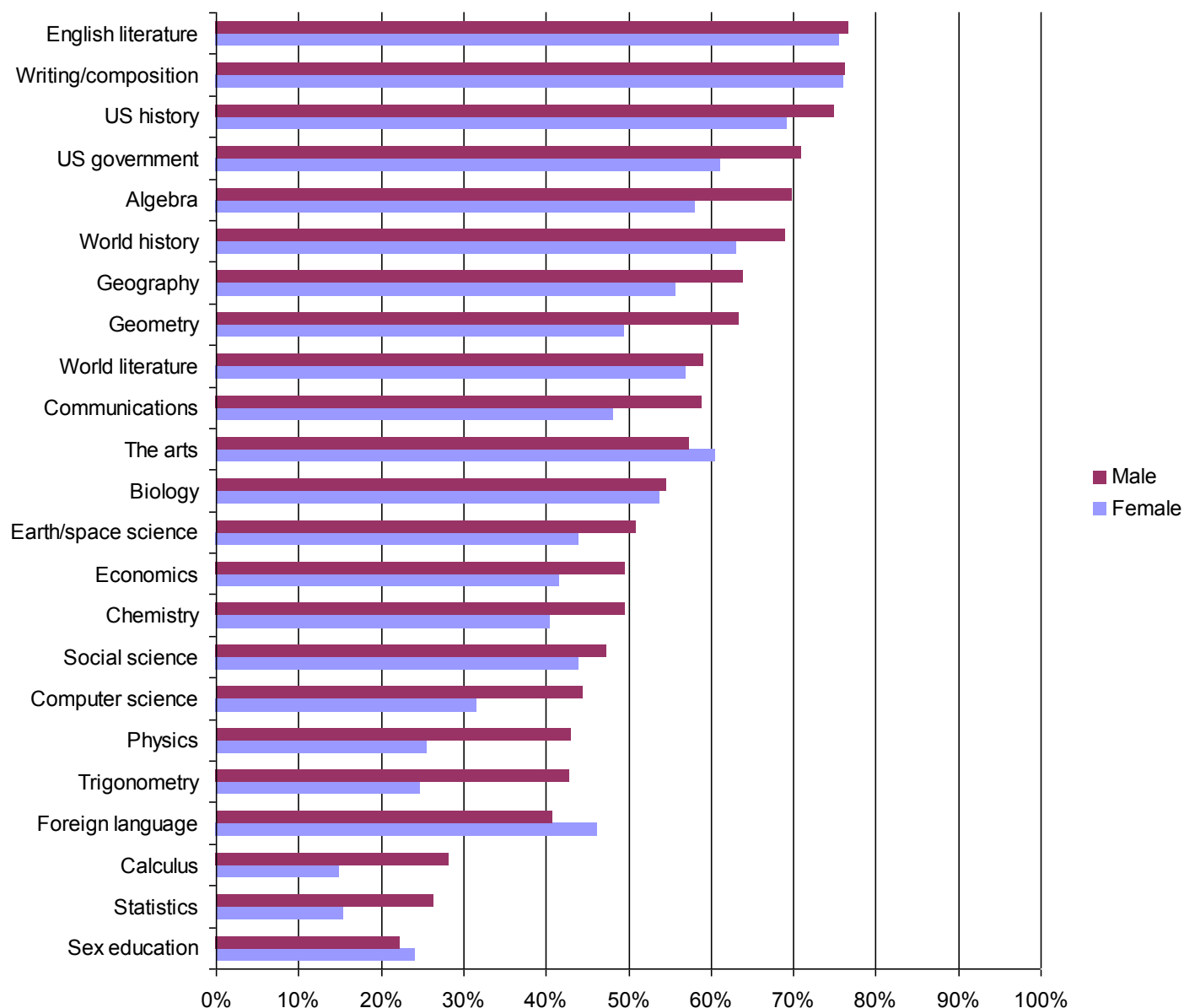


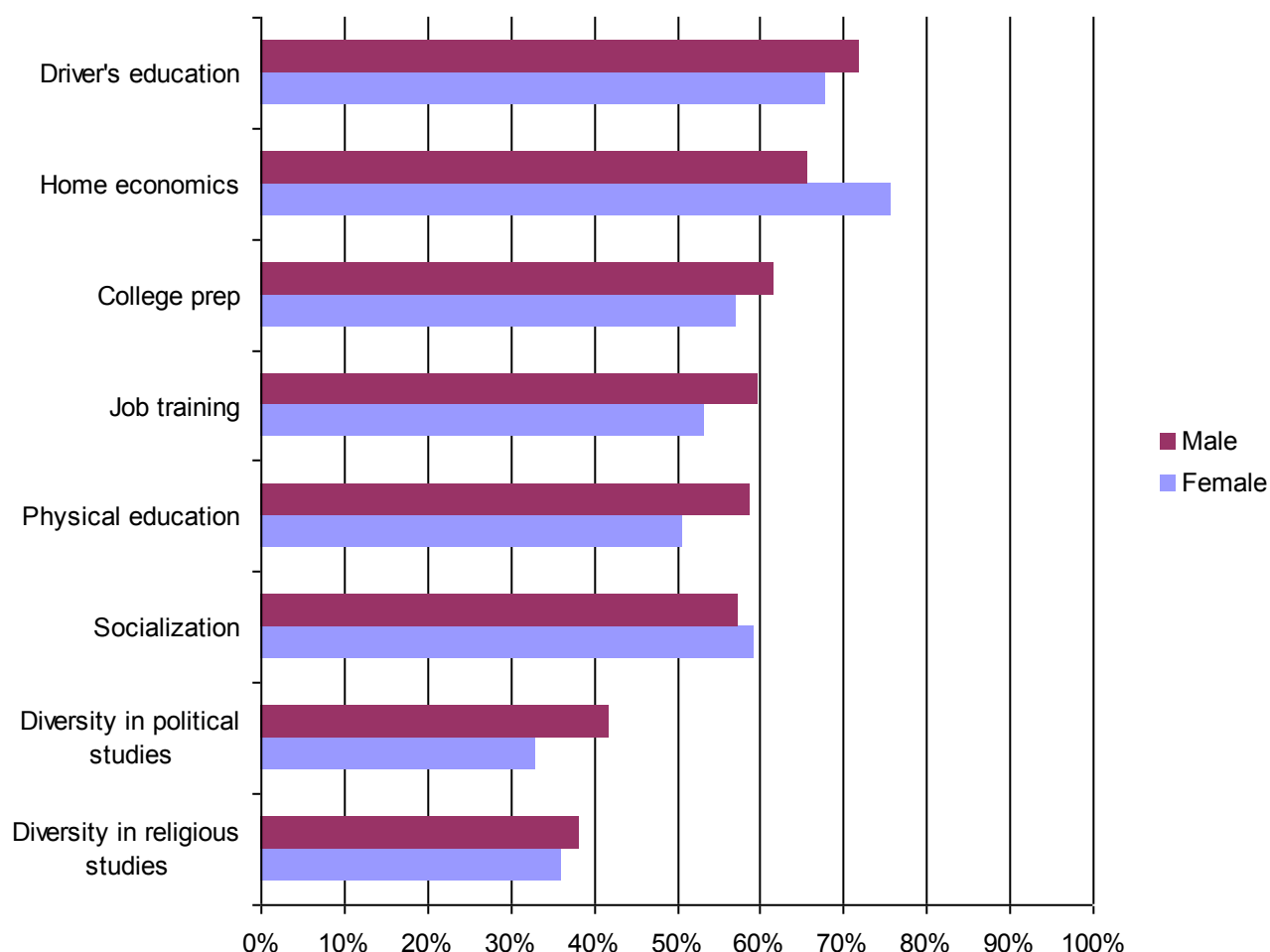
Figure 12 shows that, in middle and high school grades, the only subjects where female respondents reported receiving better instruction than male respondents were the arts, foreign language, and sex education.

**Figure 12: Percentage of respondents rating their academic experience in middle/high school as 'good' or 'very good', by gender assigned at birth**



Both Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the most striking differences between male and female respondents' quality of instruction in math and science. Figure 13 shows that this difference also extends to extracurricular activities associated with higher education and career preparedness. The only extracurricular subjects where female respondents reported receiving better instruction than male respondents were home economics and socialization.

**Figure 13: Percentage of respondents rating their extracurricular experience as 'good' or 'very good', by gender assigned at birth**



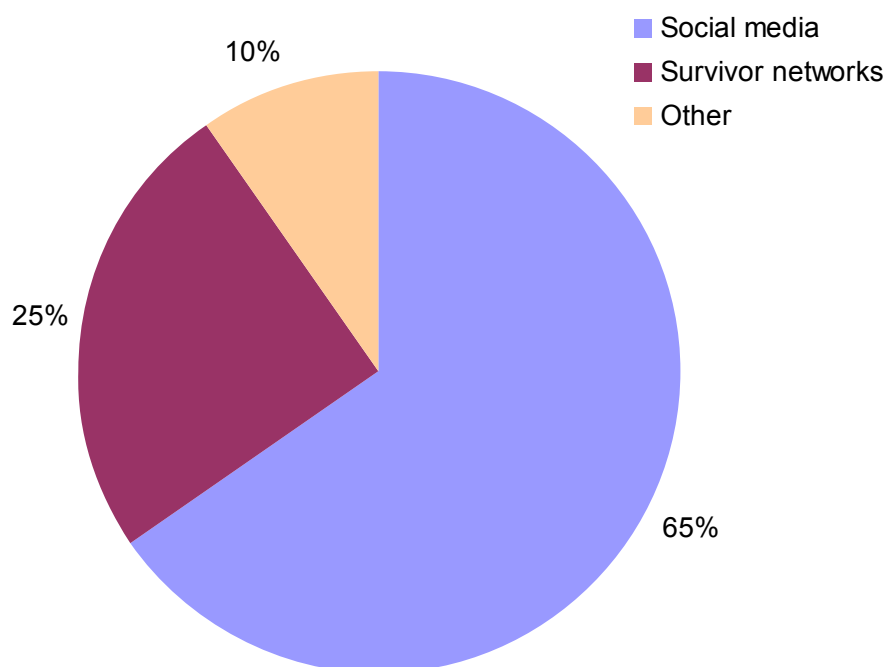
These figures provide strong evidence for the existence of a gender gap in academic instruction among the survey respondents. Across the board, the quality of instruction reportedly received by female respondents—particularly in math, science, and career preparedness—was inferior to that reportedly received by male respondents. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including gender discrimination, or perhaps the male survey respondents remember their experiences more positively than female respondents.

## 2. Interest Groups

### *Homeschool survivors*

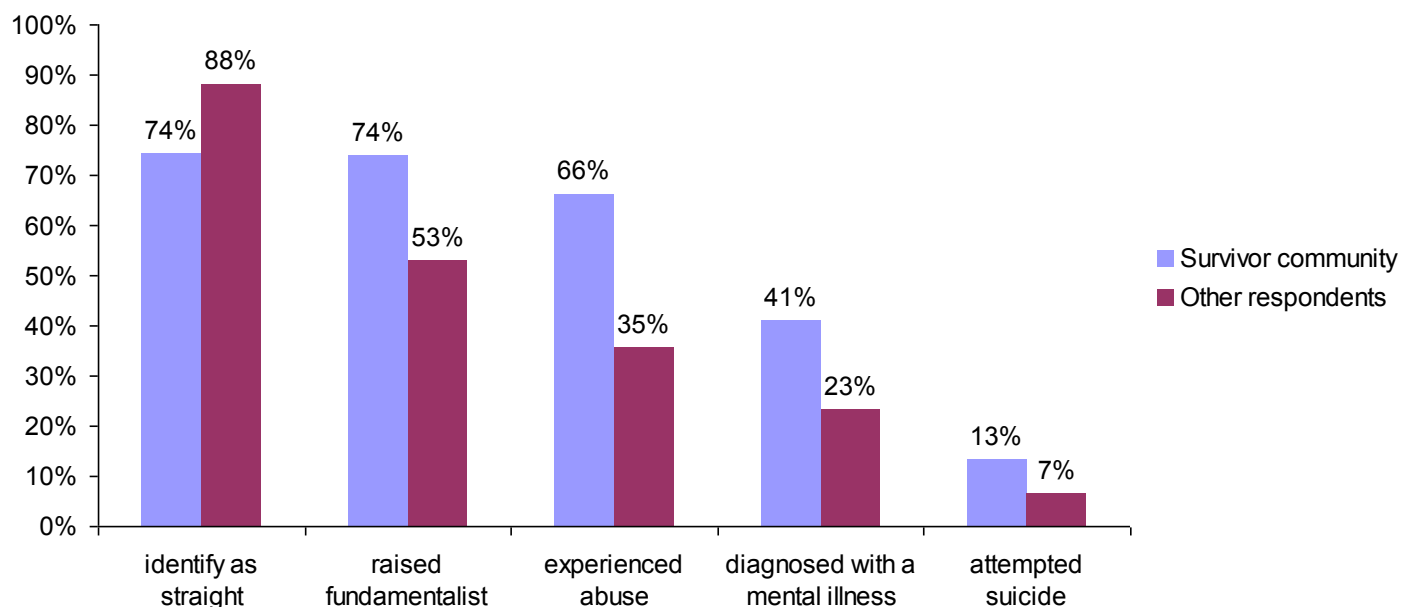
A full 65% of respondents to the survey came from online social media networks, primarily Facebook (also Twitter and Pinterest). Only 25% of the sample came explicitly from the homeschool abuse survivor community (Homeschoolers Anonymous/Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out, Love Joy Feminism, and No Longer Quivering). A further 10% of the sample came from other sources, primarily word-of-mouth, blogs, and other online communities.

Figure 14: Where did you hear about this survey?



Survey respondents who found the survey through a survivor support group had very different homeschooling experiences from those who did not (Figure 15). They were 14% less likely to identify as straight; they were 21% more likely to have been raised in a fundamentalist home; they were 31% more likely to have experienced abuse; they were 18% more likely to have been diagnosed with a mental illness; and they were 6% more likely to have attempted suicide.

Figure 15: Homeschool survivors vs. other respondents



However, this does not mean that the negative experiences reported by the survey respondents were isolated to the survivor community. Of those not affiliated with the survivor community, more than half (53%) were raised in fundamentalist homes; more than one-third (35%) reported experiencing abuse; and almost one-quarter (23%) have been diagnosed with a mental illness.

### ***'Movement' homeschoolers***

Figure 16 shows that 61% of respondents were lifelong homeschoolers who were homeschooled for 12 years or more.

**Figure 16: Number of years homeschooled**

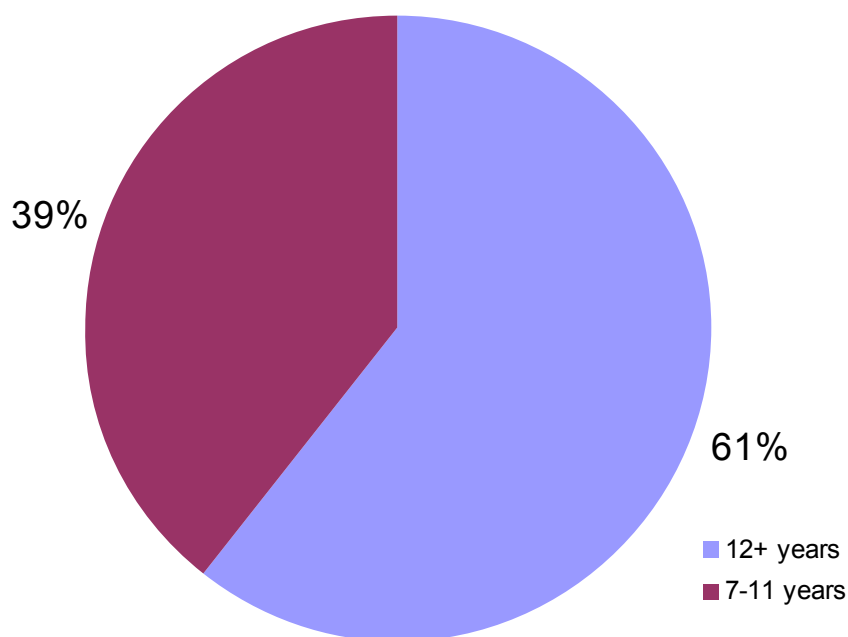
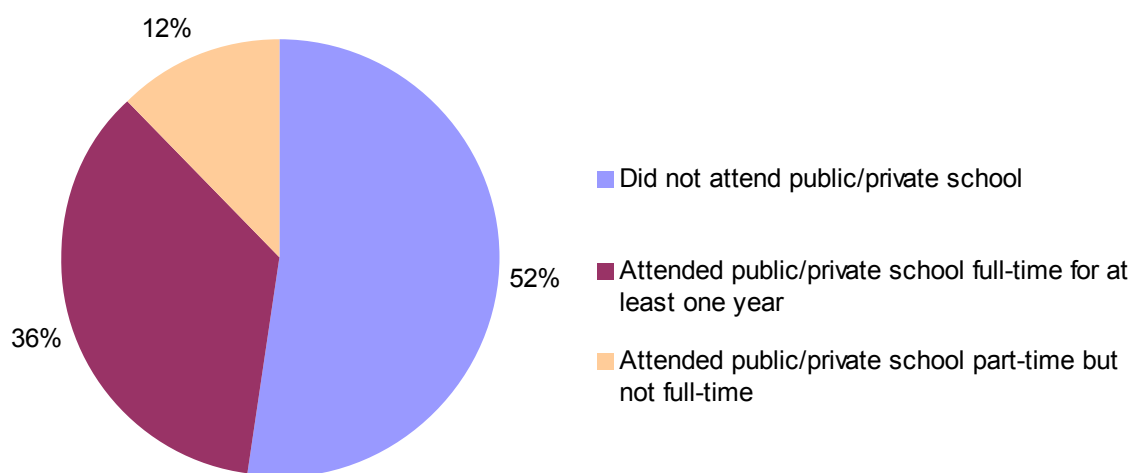


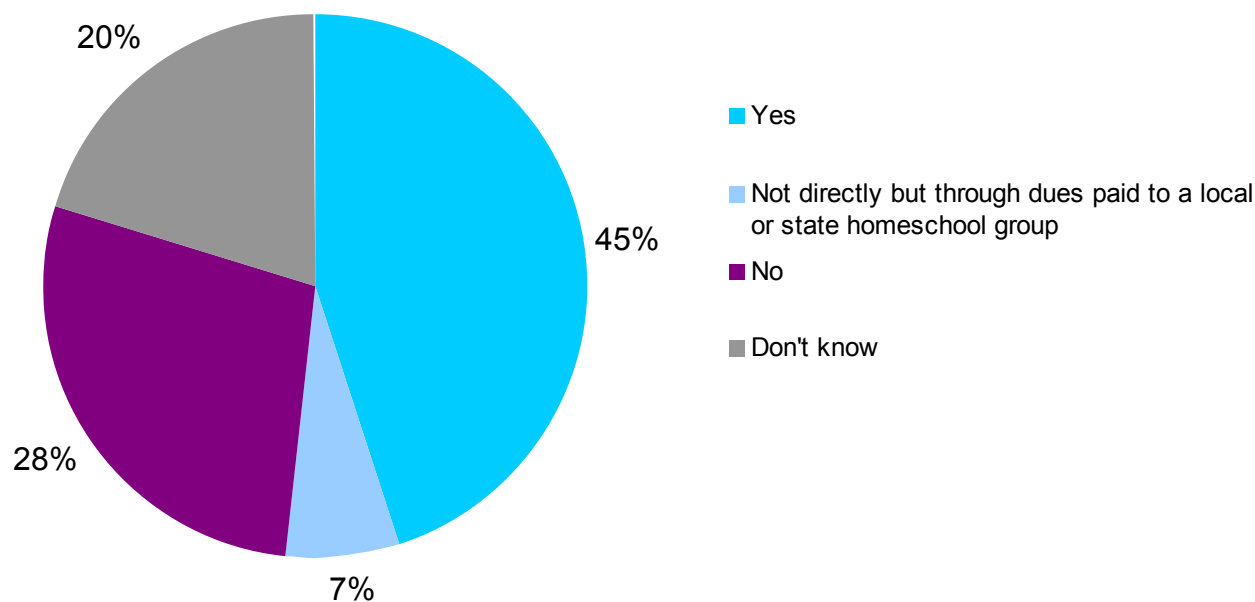
Figure 17 shows that slightly more than half of respondents (52%) were never enrolled in either public or private school. 36% spent at least one year enrolled full-time in a public or private school, while a further 12% enrolled part-time (but not full-time) in a public or private school.

**Figure 17: Respondents enrolled in alternative educational methods**



As Figure 18 shows, more than half of the respondents (52%) were, directly or indirectly, members of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA).

Figure 18: Was your family a member of HSLDA?

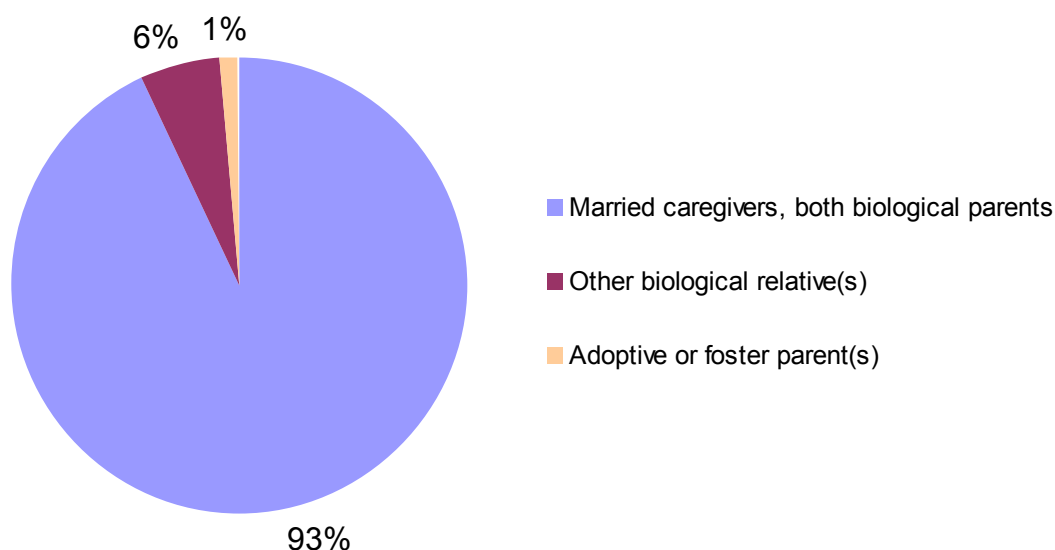


In summary, 61% of respondents were homeschooled for 12 years or more; 52% were never enrolled in alternative educational methods; and 52% were HSLDA members. These figures suggest that somewhere between 50% and 60% of the sample may be classified as so-called 'movement' homeschoolers, for whom homeschooling is an identity and a lifestyle in addition to being a method of education.

### 3. Family Structure

As Figure 19 shows, the vast majority of respondents (93%) were raised in a home with married, biological parents. Another 6% were raised by one or more biological relatives—this includes respondents raised by single, separated, divorced, and widowed parents; respondents raised by one biological and one step-parent; and respondents raised by extended family members. Only 1% of respondents were raised by unrelated adoptive or foster parents.

Figure 19: Relationship to caregivers



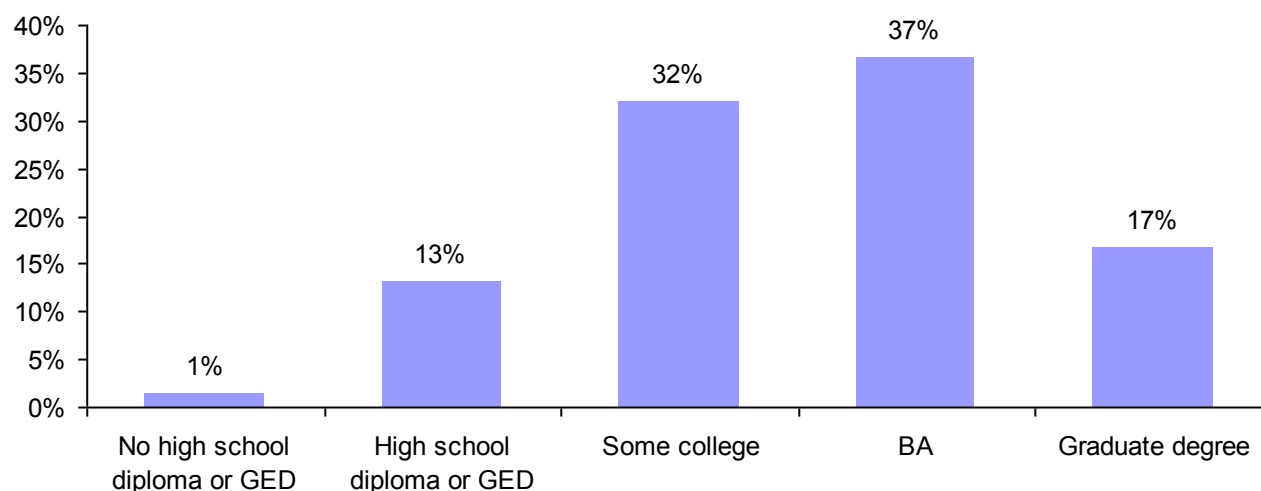


## 4. Socioeconomic Status

### Parental Education

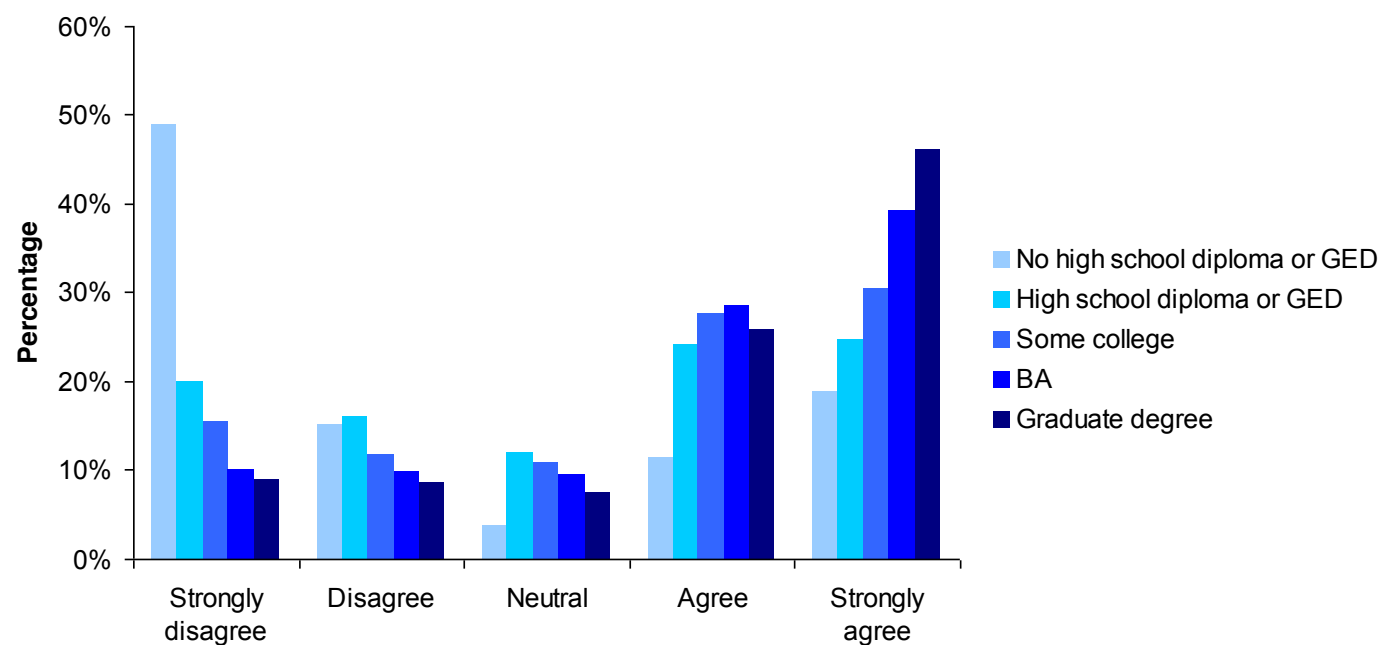
Respondents' primary homeschool teachers were, in general, a well-educated group. More than half (54%) had at least a bachelor's degree, as shown in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: Education level of respondents' primary teacher**



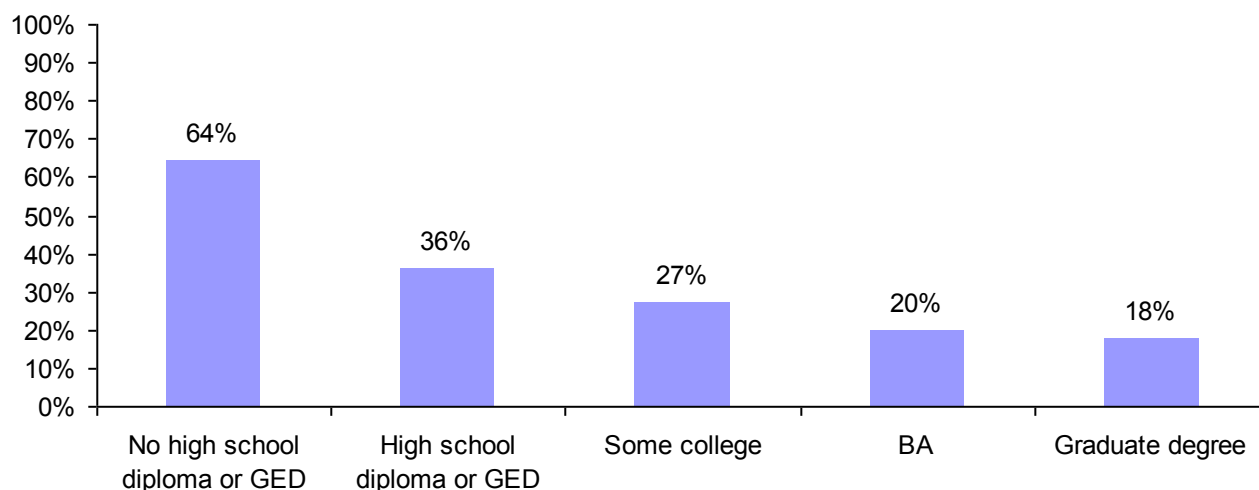
However, the primary teacher's education level had a strong influence on respondents' homeschooling experience. The higher the parent's education level, the more likely respondents were to report that their homeschooling experience prepared them for the future (Figure 21).

**Figure 21: Influence of parent's education level on response to 'My homeschool experience prepared me for the future.'**



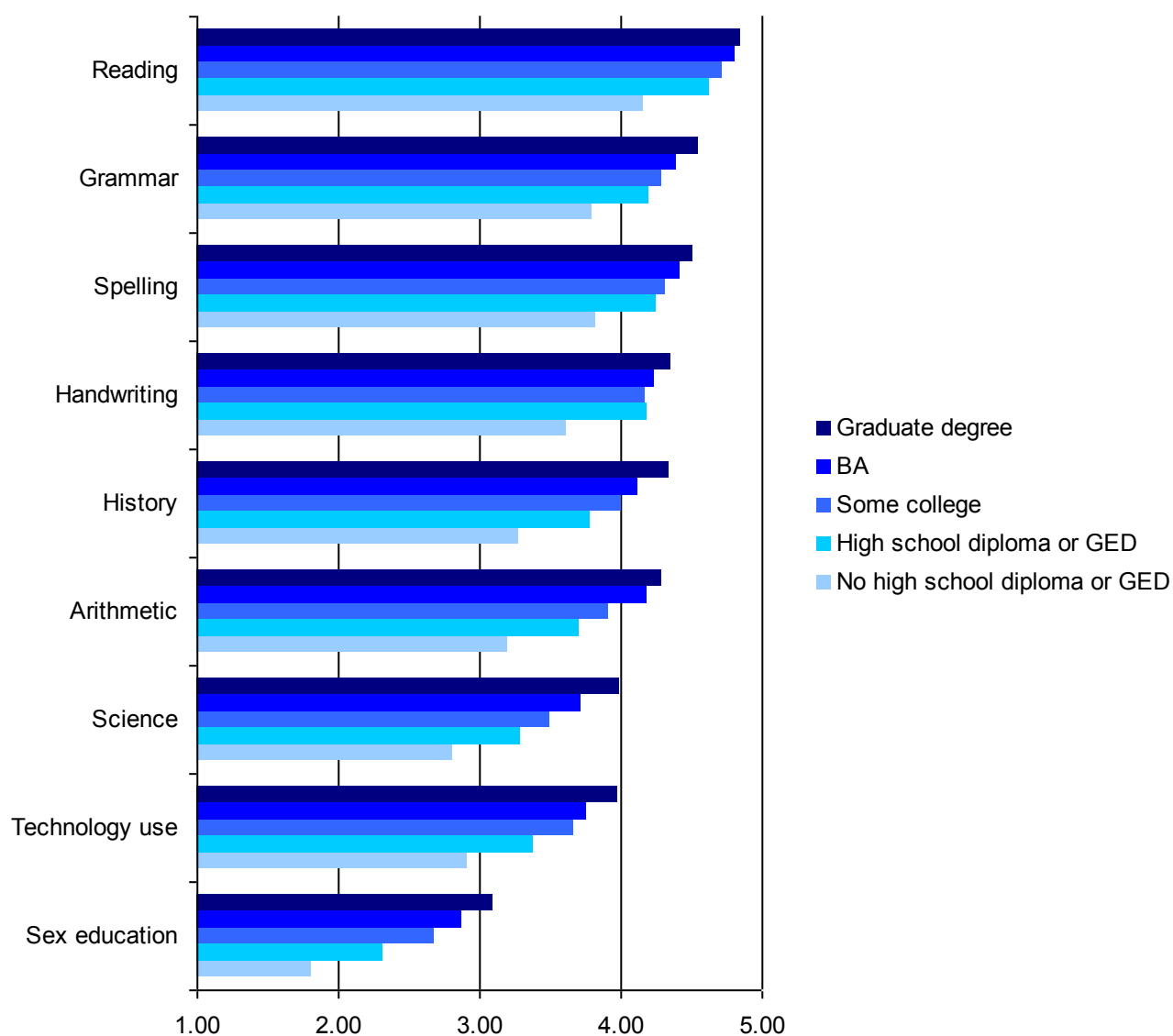
Of the 53 respondents whose primary homeschool teacher did not have a high school diploma or GED, nearly two-thirds (64%) disagreed that their homeschool experience prepared them for the future. This figure was cut down to a little over one-third (36%) for the 486 respondents whose primary homeschool parent had only a high school diploma or GED (Figure 22).

**Figure 22: Percent of respondents who disagree with the statement 'My homeschool experience prepared me for the future.' based on parent education level**



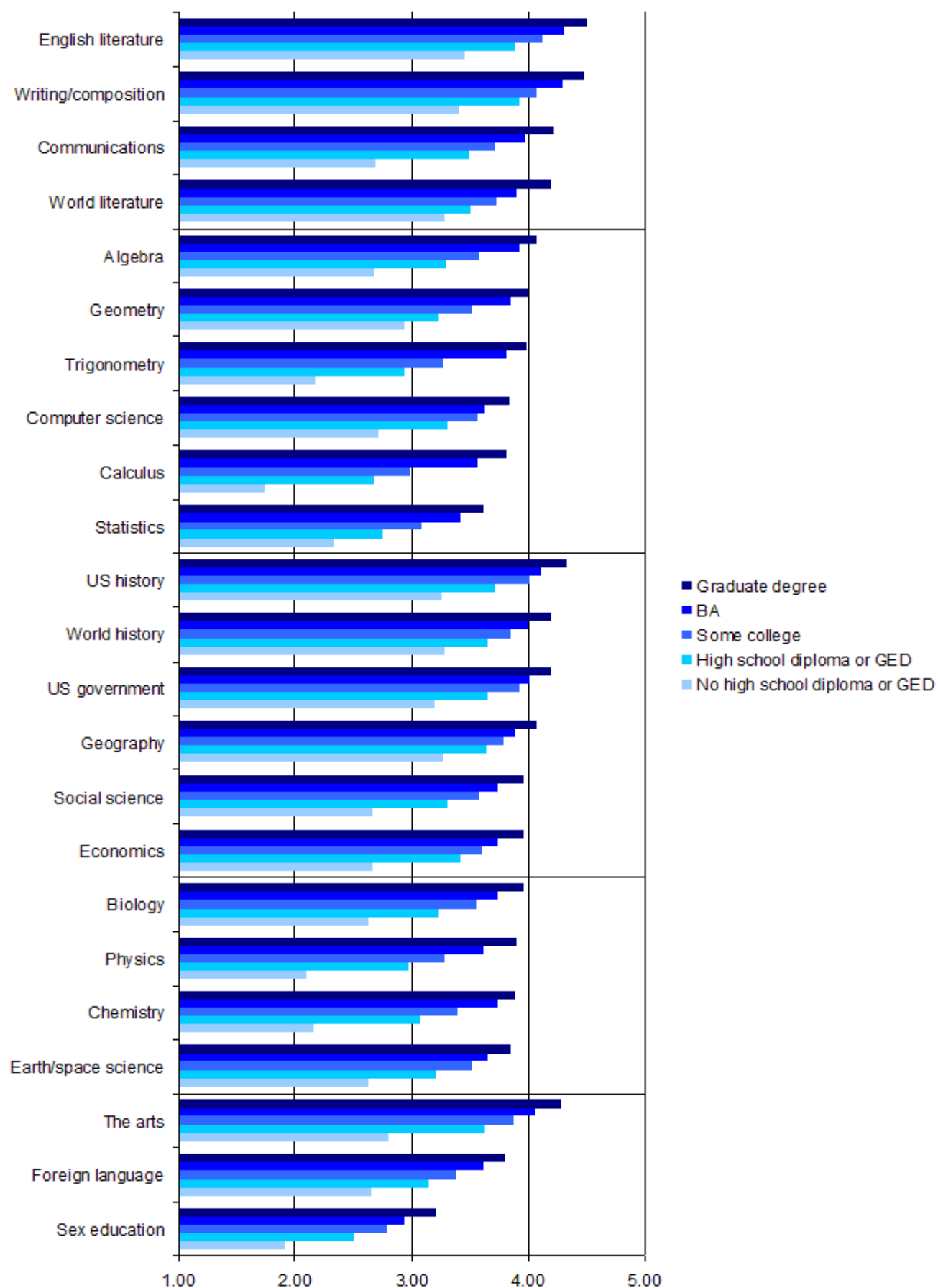
We can get a more granular picture of the effect of parental education on our respondents' academic success by examining how they rated the instruction they received by subject. Figure 23 shows a clear correlation between the primary homeschool teacher's level of education and the quality of instruction for every academic subject (here, a rating of '1' indicates 'very poor' and a rating of '5' indicates 'very good').

**Figure 23: Respondents' rating of the academic instruction they received in elementary school, by parent education**



The effect of parental education becomes even more pronounced in the higher grades, as shown in Figure 24.

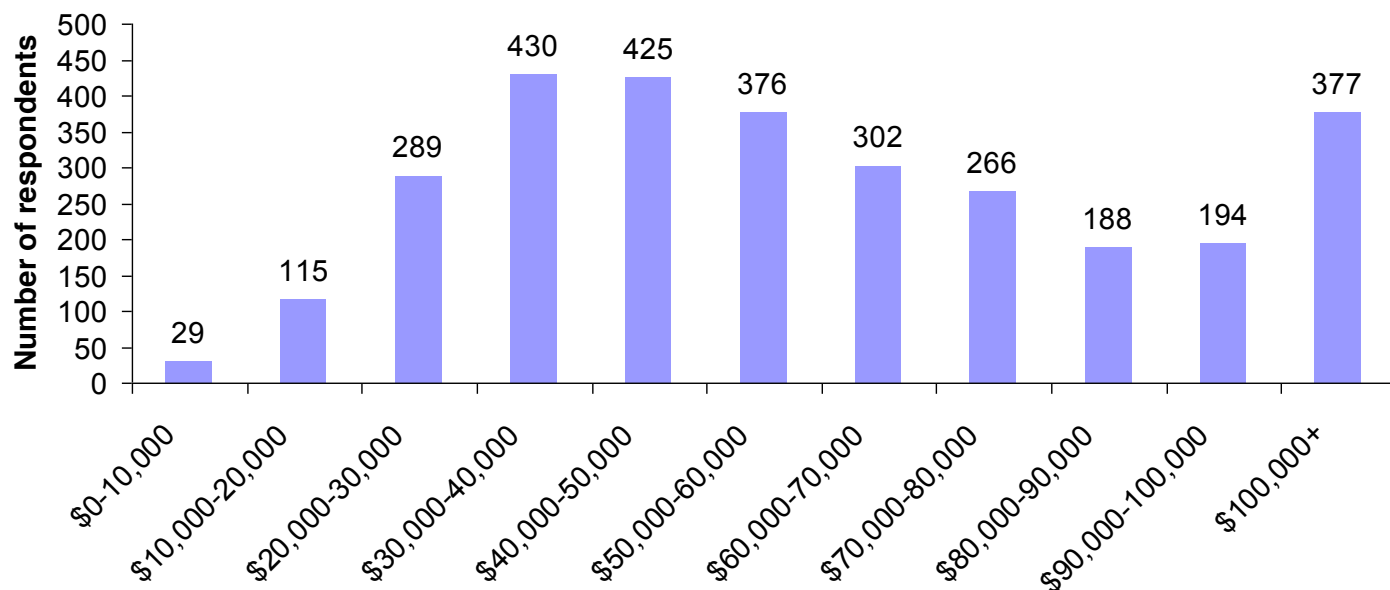
Figure 24: Respondents' rating of the academic instruction they received in middle and high school, by parent education



### Income

As presented in Installment 1, approximately one fifth of respondents (19.2%) reported that they did not know their family's income bracket during the time they were homeschooled. The rest of the respondents are represented in Figure 25.

**Figure 25: What bracket best represents your family's average annual household income during the time you were homeschooled?**

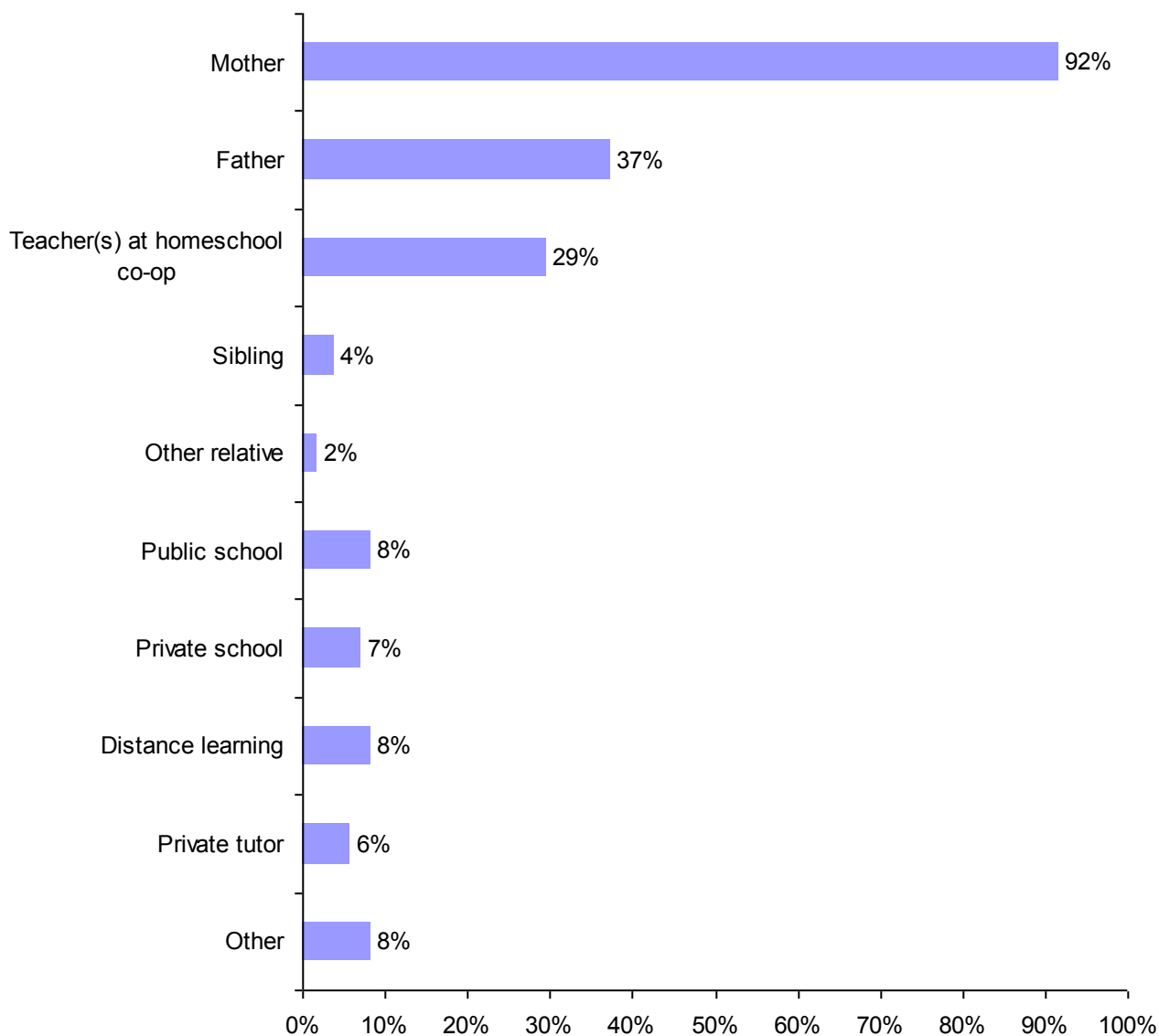


The occupations of respondents' chief breadwinning parents were quite diverse, including truck driver, CEO, farmer, and physicist. The most common career industries were engineering (approximately 10% of the sample), computers/IT (8%), ministry/missions (7%), education (4%), medicine (3%), and sales (3%). Of family breadwinners, 94% were employed full-time.

## 5. Educational Values

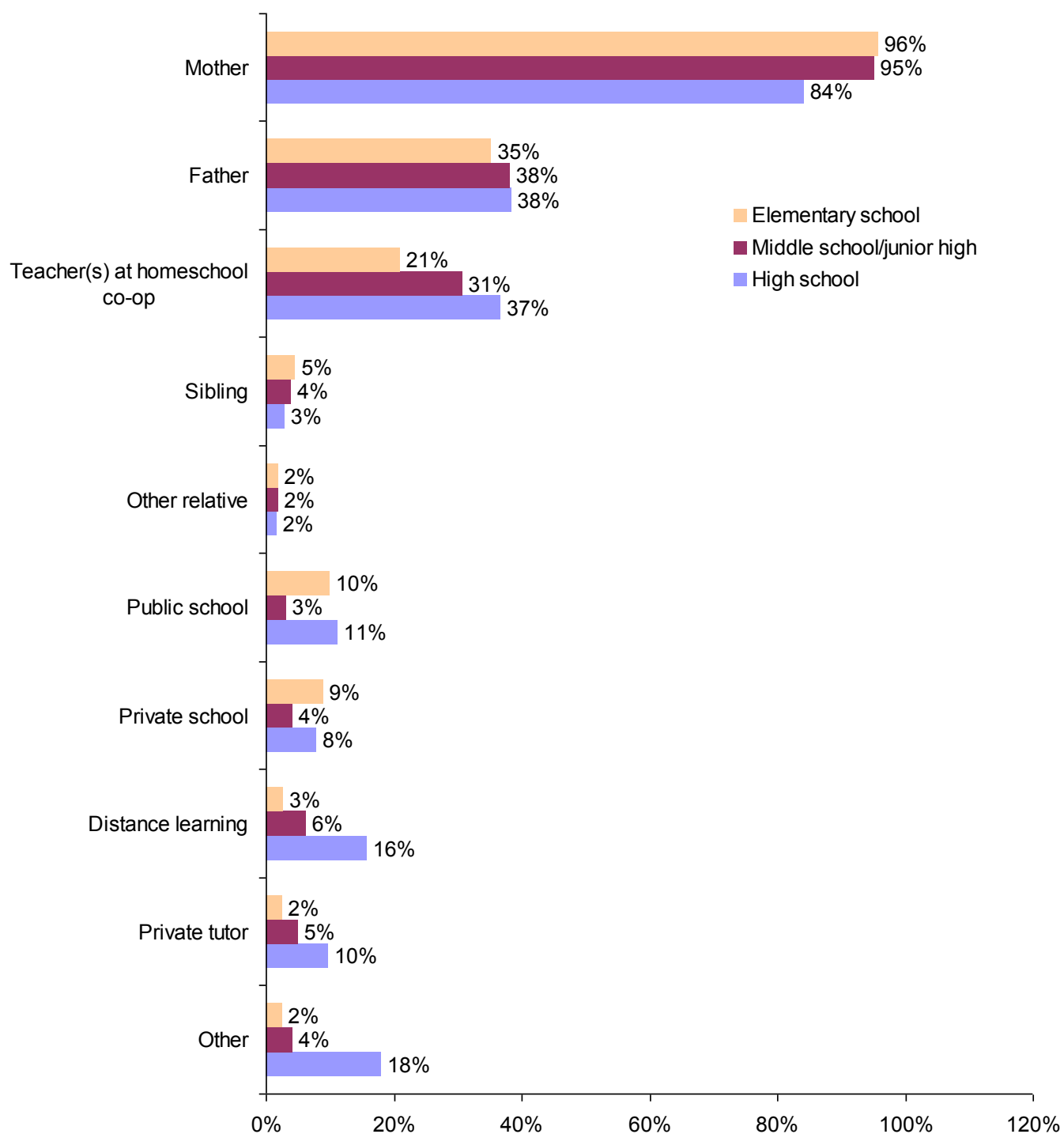
### Responsibility

Figure 26 shows that the vast majority (92%) of the respondents relied on their mothers for their education. Many respondents (37%) also relied on their fathers or on teachers in a homeschool co-op (29%). Note that respondents could select multiple answers.

**Figure 26: Other than yourself, who was responsible for your education?**

Interestingly, the parties responsible for the respondents' education changed as they aged. Figure 27 shows that respondents' reliance on their mothers and siblings decreased as they grew up, while their reliance on their fathers, their co-op teachers, distance learning, private tutors, and other education methods increased. Respondents were least likely to attend public or private school during their middle school years.

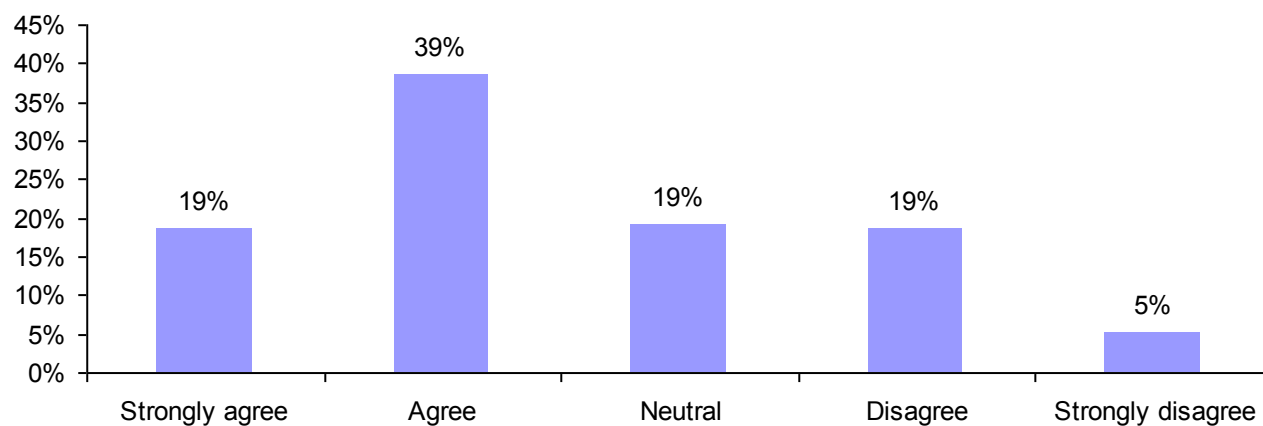
Figure 27: Other than yourself, who was responsible for your education?



### ***Self-direction***

As shown in Figure 28, 58% of respondents agreed with the statement 'I directed my own education.'

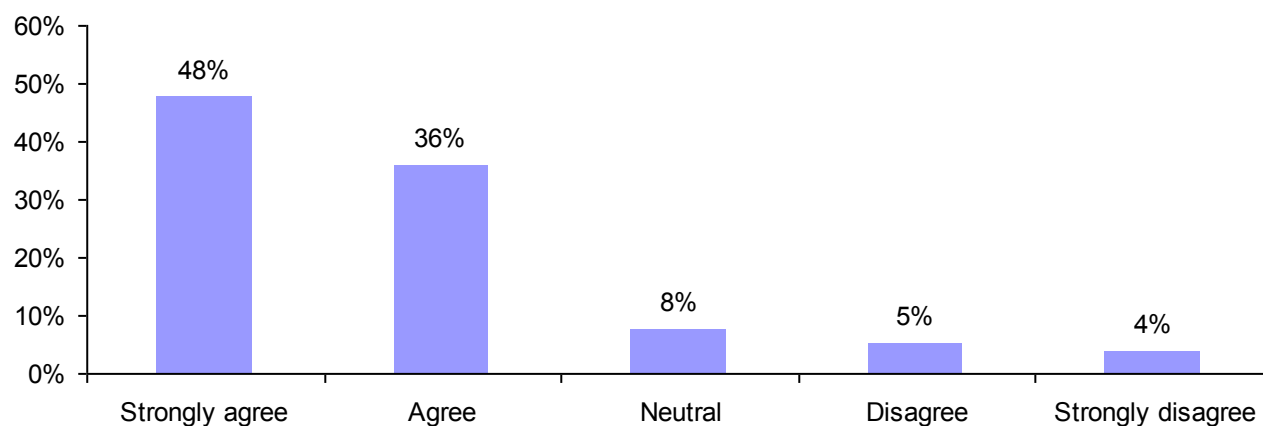
**Figure 28: I directed my own education.**



### ***Educational Support***

As shown in Figure 29, 84% of respondents agreed with the statement ‘I received educational support from my caregiver(s).’

**Figure 29: I received educational support from my caregiver(s).**

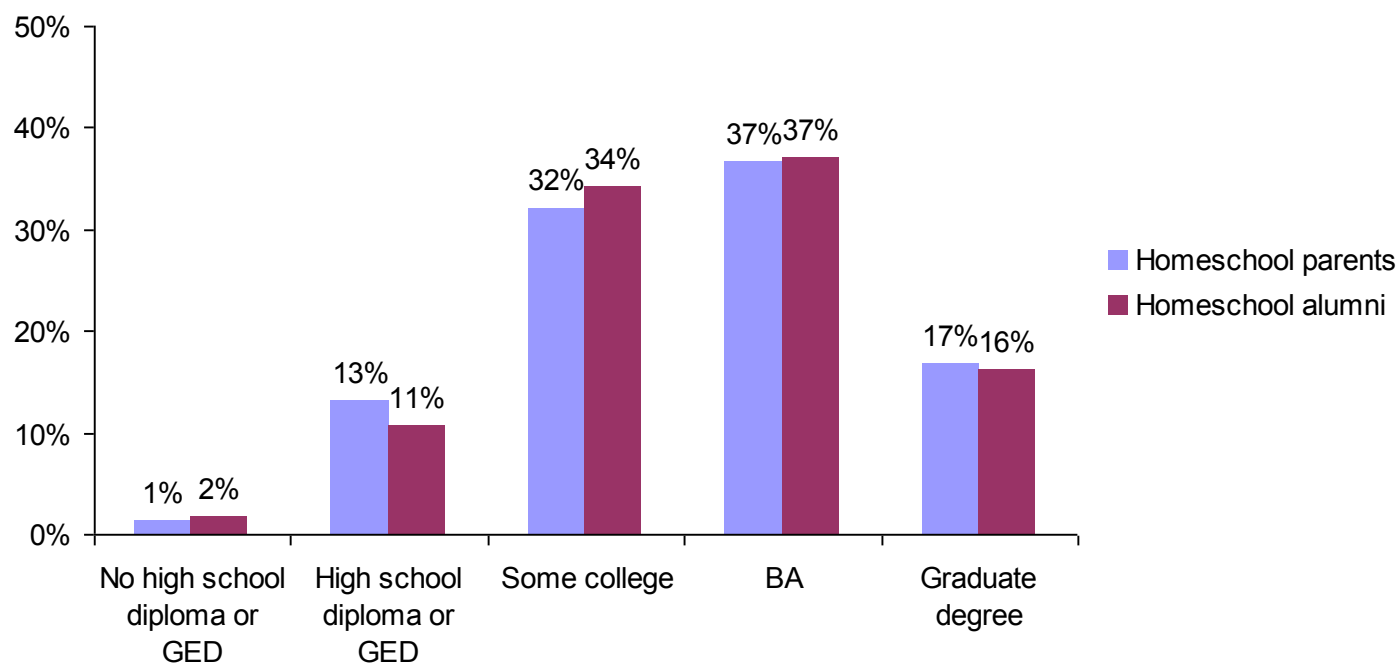


## **6. Educational Attainment**

The survey respondents, like their parents, were a well-educated group—53% had attained at least a bachelor’s degree (Figure 30).

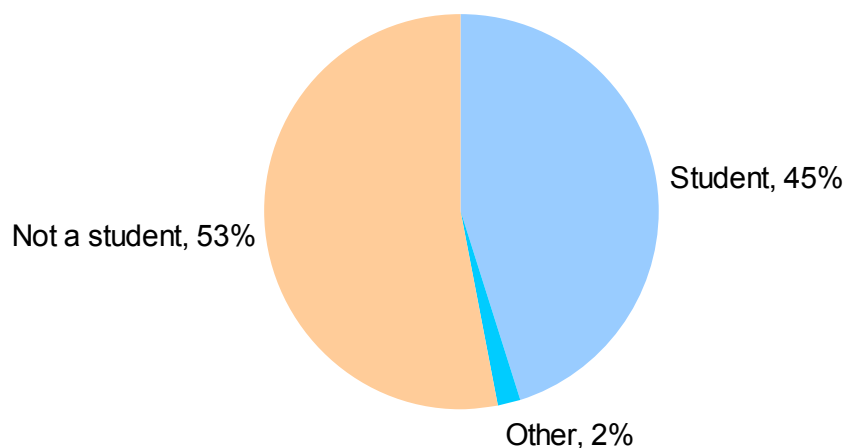


**Figure 30: What level of education have you completed?**

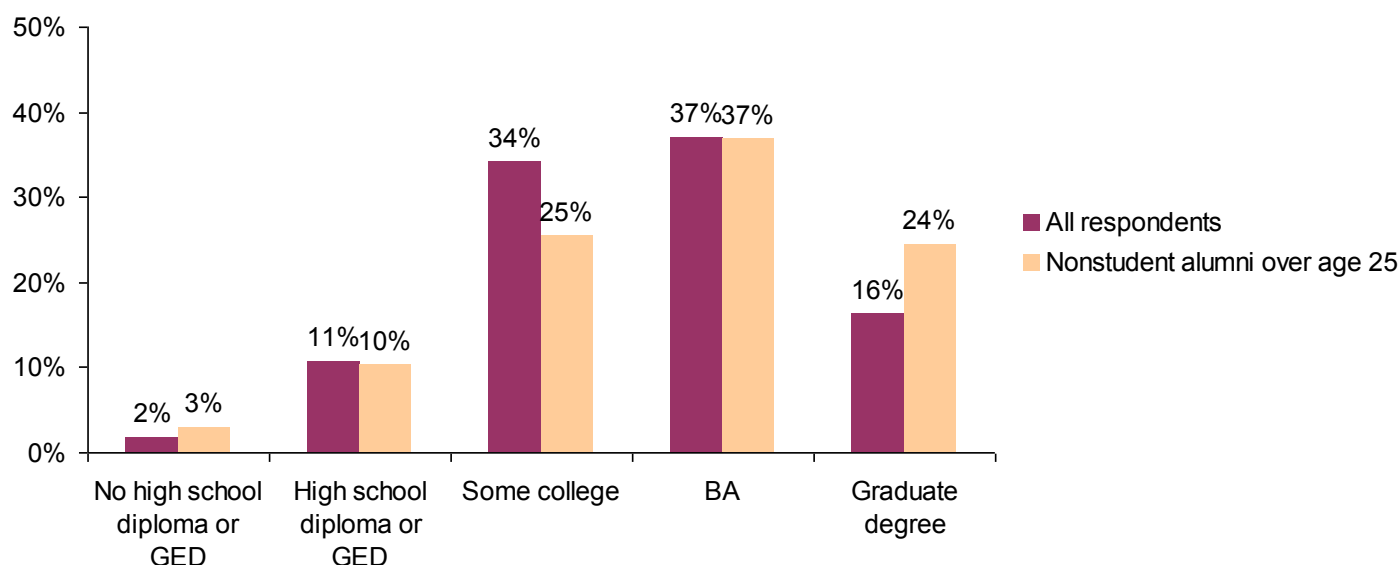


Nearly half of the respondents were current students (Figure 31). Note that those in the 'Other' category included recent graduates, enrollees who had not yet started the school year when the survey took place in August, non-degree-seeking students, and those who were taking a leave of absence from school.

**Figure 31: Are you currently a student?**



If we exclude current students and respondents age 25 and younger as in Figure 32—thereby approximating the subset of respondents who have completed their educations—we see that an even higher percentage of these 1,352 respondents—61%—have obtained at least a bachelor's degree.

**Figure 32: What level of education have you completed?**

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we find that several variables, particularly age, gender, and parental education level, influenced our respondents' homeschooling experiences. Younger respondents reported receiving better academic instruction than older respondents. Male respondents reported receiving better educations than female respondents. While the parents of our respondents were highly educated and our respondents had similarly high educational attainment, parental education made a profound difference in the quality of instruction received by respondents.

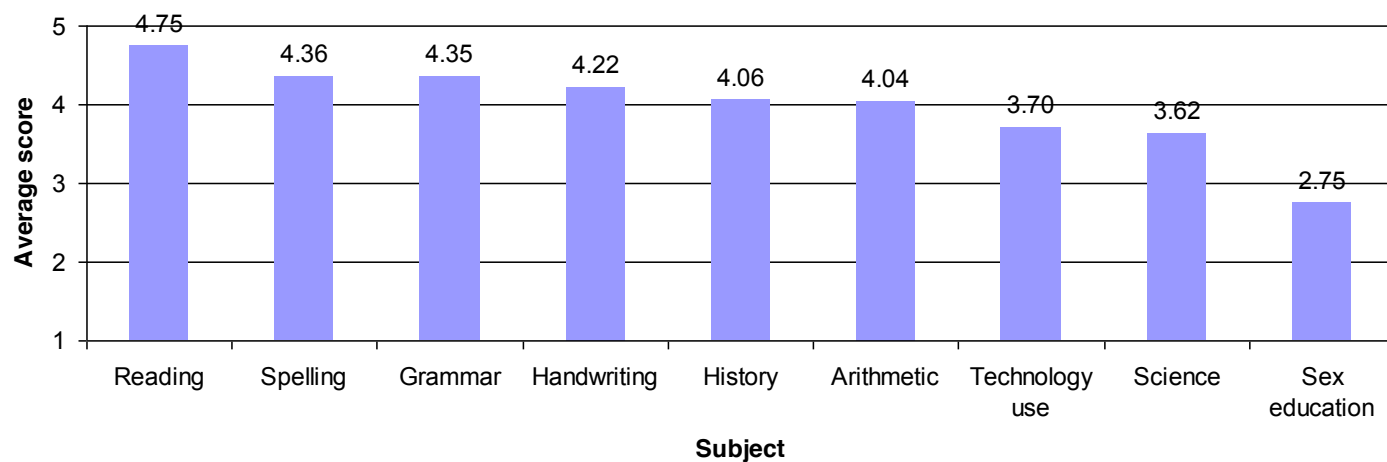
In general, respondents reported a moderate amount of influence over their own educations and were positive about the educational support they received. Respondents relied less on instruction from their mothers and more on instruction from outside sources as they grew up. Slightly more than half of our respondents were 'movement' homeschoolers, and negative homeschooling experiences were not isolated to those respondents from the survivor community.

## Errata

In Installment 1, we inaccurately reported average scores for K-5 academic subject instruction on page 16. The algorithm we used improperly incorporated the responses of those who did not take the course into the weighted average. The corrected scores are reported below.

In elementary education, participants rated all the subjects except for sex education as better than neutral. The highest-ranked subject was reading, followed by other language arts topics. STEM fields ranked lower, with sex education being the lowest-ranked subject. (see Figure 33; note that here 5 is the best rating and 1 is the worst).

Figure 33: K-5 Academics



In Installment 1, on page 8, we stated that “in most states, the number of respondents was under 5% of the total.” Note that here ‘total’ refers to the 90% of respondents who were homeschooled primarily in the United States. “California and Texas each accounted for between 9% and 10% of respondents” who were homeschooled primarily in the United States. They each accounted for approximately 9% of all respondents to the survey.