# Teachers' attitudes towards educational neuroscience

**Learning Skills Research**

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# Background and methodology

- Learning Skills Research commissioned YouGov to carry out a research project to understand teachers' perceptions of educational neuroscience and ascertain their openness towards Learnus' offering.
- The objective of this study was to provide Learning Skills Research with a baseline for awareness, understanding and interest in relation to educational neuroscience, as well as evidence to inform future decision-making and program development.
- Fieldwork was undertaken online between 28th June and 19th July 2022.
- The total sample size was 1,006 teachers and senior leaders in state schools.
  - Classroom teachers: n=631
  - Senior leaders: n=375
- The figures have been weighted and are representative of all teachers in the UK by school type, teaching level, region, gender and age.

# Key Findings (1/2)

**Teachers' Current Experiences**

- Overwhelmingly, teachers identify workloads as the biggest issue they're currently facing (42%), followed by funding cuts (19%) and student behaviour (13%).
- When thinking about students' learning, teachers identify behaviour (28%) and learning loss due to the pandemic (17%) as the biggest factors facing students' ability to learn.
- Almost half (45%) think their school's teacher development/ CPD provision is ineffective, while a similar proportion (43%) report they would like their school to dedicate more time to it.
- When thinking about their development and CPD, a quarter (27%) say their school does not encourage teachers to use different pedagogical approaches.

**Perceptions of Educational Neuroscience**

- One in three teachers are aware of educational neuroscience (31%), with almost half (47%) of those aware saying they are encouraged to implement its insights in their classroom by their school.
- The majority (76%) of teachers aware of educational neuroscience have found its insights useful in their teaching.
- A majority of teachers (71%) agree that it is relevant to their professional development and over half (55%) believe it would be possible to implement in their classroom, a smaller proportion (39%) feel that it underpins the future of teaching.
- Two in five teachers (40%) feel it would positively impact their experience of teaching through helping them to understand students' learning by taking stages of brain development into account.

# Key Findings (2/2)

**Barriers and Opportunities**

- Although half think it would be feasible to implement insights from educational neuroscience in their classroom (53%), three in ten (31%) do not. This belief is particularly strong among secondary school teachers.
- In line with it being identified as the biggest issue they're currently facing, workload is cited by the plurality as something that would need to change in order for them to implement insights from educational neuroscience (46%).
- Although workload is a dominant concern, a strong proportion of teachers show appetite for learning more about educational neuroscience. A little over a third (36%) would like to have greater knowledge in order to implement it in their classroom, and three in ten (30%) would like information on how to apply its insights.
- Correspondingly, teachers express that they require dedicated time to learn more about educational neuroscience, such as committed planning time (35%) and dedicated CPD sessions (32%).

**Information and Communication**

- Although half think they could implement insights from educational neuroscience in their teaching, six in ten (59%) say they would need practical guidance on how to do so.
- Among the ways suggested to learn about educational neuroscience, sessions with teacher educational providers as a part of CPD are the most favoured with half (51%) of teachers selecting this as the most useful method of information sharing on educational neuroscience.

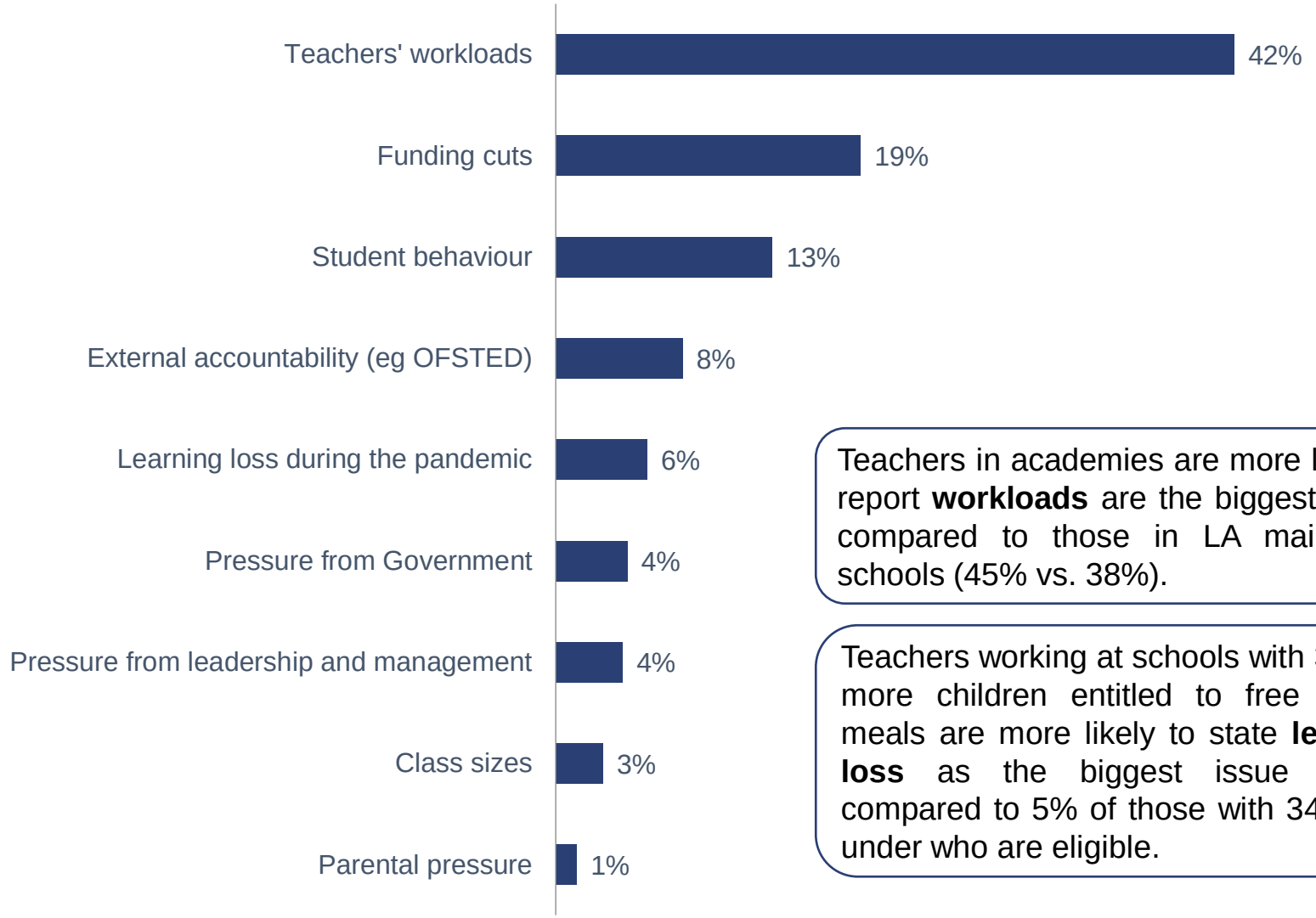
# Teachers' Current Experiences

YouGov

# Overwhelmingly, teachers identify workloads as the biggest issue they're currently facing.

This is followed by funding cuts, which is noted by one fifth of teachers. This is being particularly driven by primary school teachers (22%) compared to secondary school teachers (15%)

**Biggest issue facing teachers**




Teachers in academies are more likely to report **workloads** are the biggest issues compared to those in LA maintained schools (45% vs. 38%).

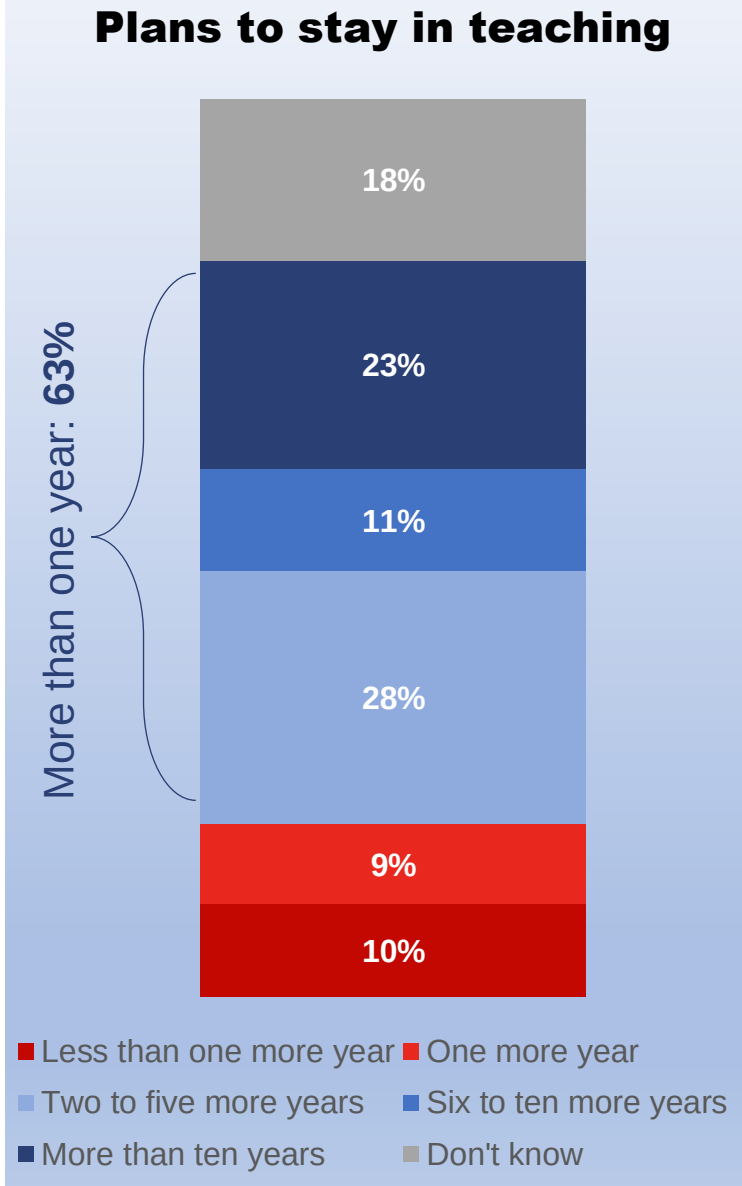
Teachers working at schools with 35% or more children entitled to free school meals are more likely to state **learning loss** as the biggest issue (10%), compared to 5% of those with 34% and under who are eligible.

Q1_rb. Please rank the following in order of how significant you believe it is as an issue facing teachers in the UK at the moment, where '1' is the biggest issue.- top issue ranked
Base all teachers - excluding N/A (n=996)

# Despite concerns about workload and behaviour, intention to stay in teaching remains strong

- Six in ten (63%) report that they plan to stay in teaching for more than one year, with just under a quarter (23%) reporting plans to stay for more than 10 years.
  - The proportion reporting that they plan to stay for less than a year (10%) is driven by those who have over 20 years of teaching experience (16%).
  - However, there is no difference by tenure when looking at the plans to stay for only one more year (9%).

- This is despite a split in satisfaction when thinking about teaching: two fifths (39%) report they are satisfied compared to a quarter (26%) who report they are dissatisfied.
  - Unsurprisingly, those who are dissatisfied are most likely to report planning to stay for less than a year (26%), while two fifths (41%) of those who are satisfied plan to stay for more than ten years.

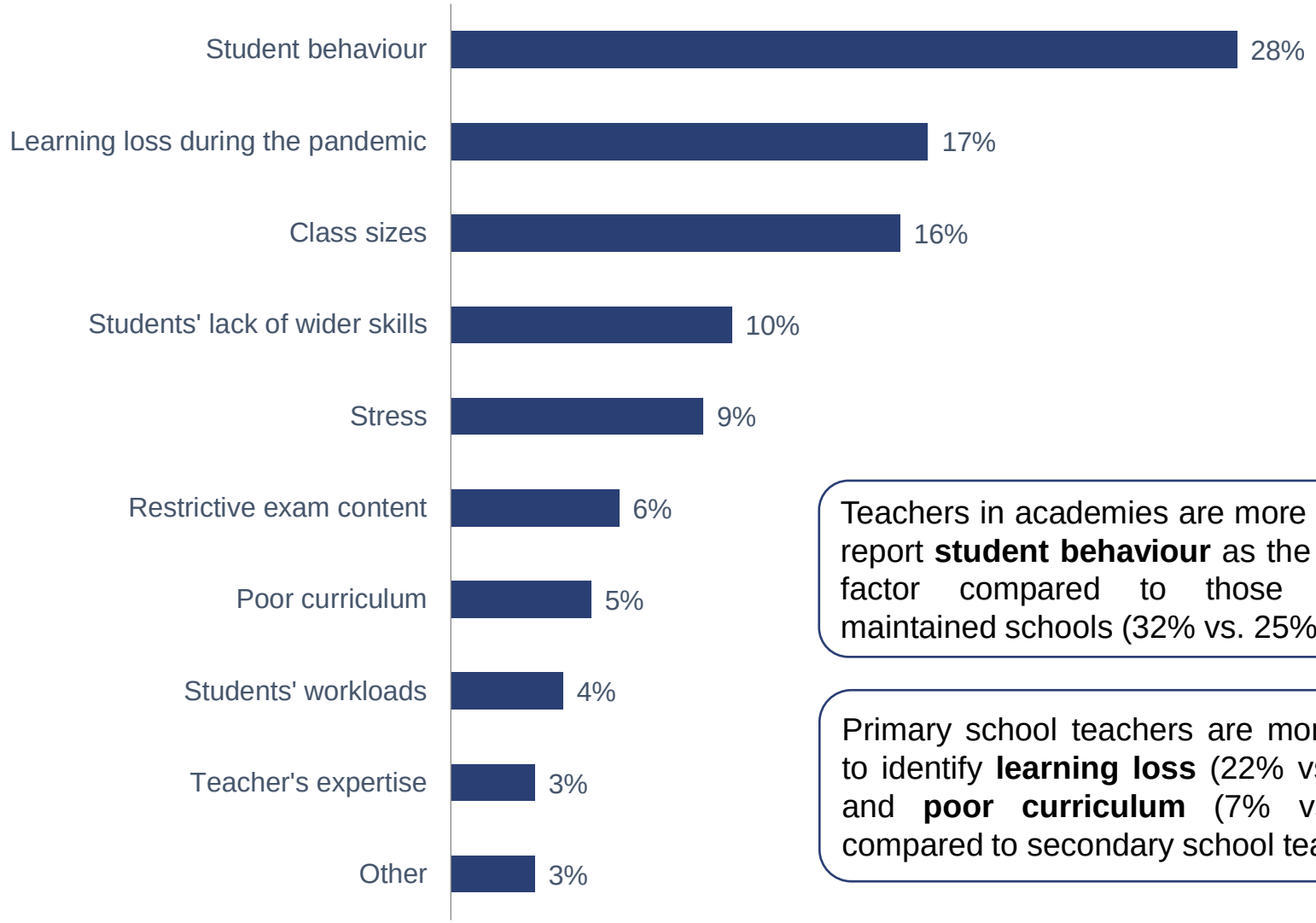



Q4. How many more years from now do you believe you will stay in the teaching profession?
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# Identification of the biggest factor facing students' ability to learn is relatively split, with roughly three in ten stating student behaviour

Despite only being identified by 6% as the biggest factor facing teachers, learning loss due to the pandemic is noted by a sixth (17%) as the biggest factor facing students' ability to learn. This increases to 63% among those who stated it as the biggest issue for teachers.

**Biggest factor facing students' ability to learn**

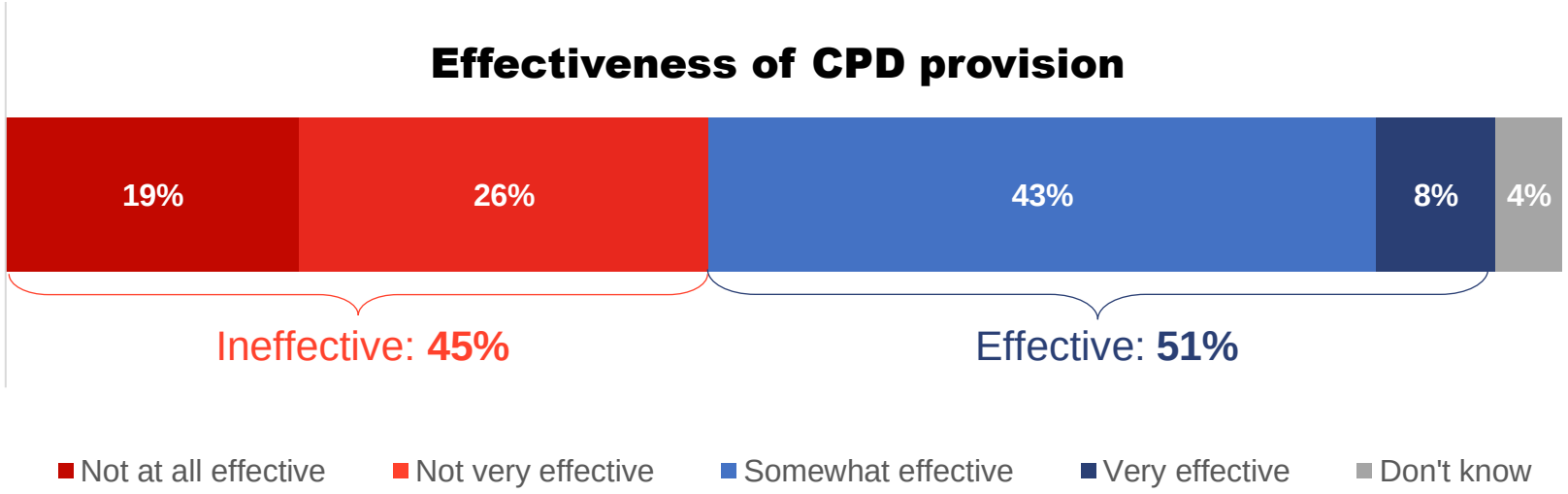


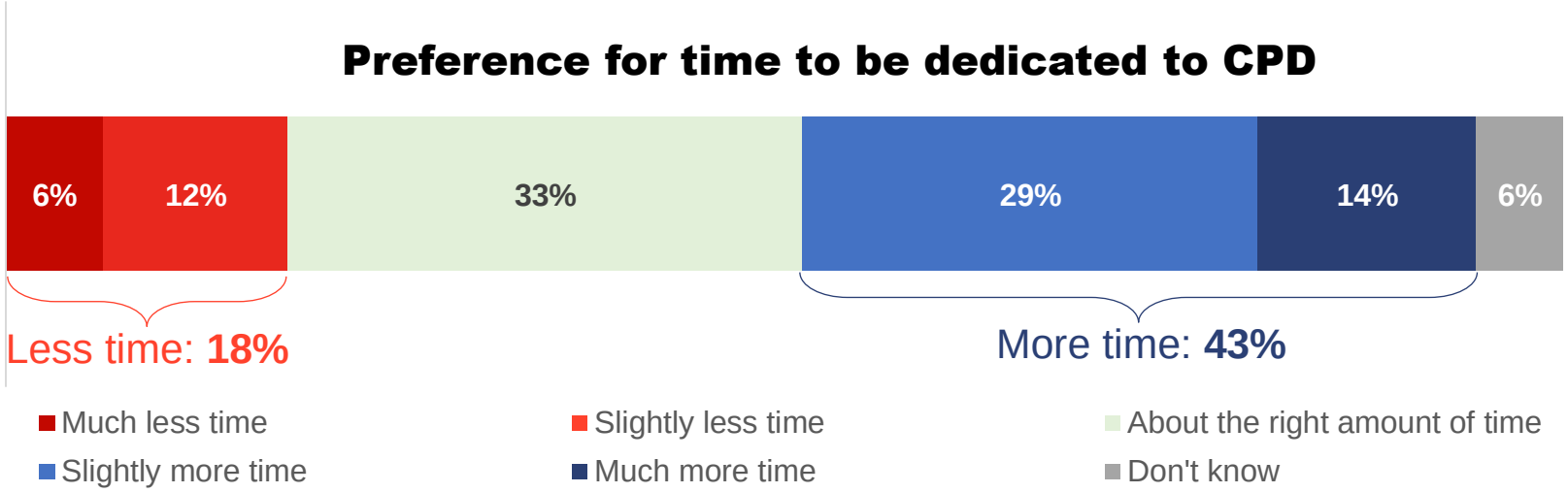

Teachers in academies are more likely to report **student behaviour** as the biggest factor compared to those in LA maintained schools (32% vs. 25%).

Primary school teachers are more likely to identify **learning loss** (22% vs. 11%) and **poor curriculum** (7% vs. 3%) compared to secondary school teachers.

Q2_rb. Please rank the following in order of how significant you believe it is as a factor impacting students' ability to learn, where '1' is the biggest factor - top factor ranked
Base all teachers - excluding N/A (n=963)

# Almost half report their school's CPD provision to be ineffective and a similar proportion report they would like more time dedicated to it




Appetite for increased CPD is higher among primary school teachers (47% vs. 38% of secondary school teachers). This audience are more likely than secondary school teachers to report that **learning loss** and **poor curriculum** are factors impacting students' ability to learn, and so could benefit more from CPD based around these areas.

Comparatively, secondary school teachers are more likely to identify **student behaviour** and **stress** as factors impacting students' learning and so may benefit from CPD based around these areas.

Q5. To what extent do you find your school's teacher development/ CPD provision is effective or ineffective for improving your teaching practice?
Q6. Would you prefer more or less time to be dedicated to teacher development/ CPD at your school?
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# Although the majority are aware of pedagogical approaches, a quarter report their school does not encourage them to be used

- It's possible that focus on certain pedagogies in schools has fallen out of current practice:
  - Those who have been in their current school for 5 years or less (31%) are much more likely to report not being encouraged to use an approach, compared to those who have been teaching for over 20 years (14%).

- There appears to be a link between use of pedagogical approaches and the effectiveness of a school's CPD:
  - 56% of those who report they are encouraged to use pedagogy report that their CPD is effective (vs. 38% who are not encouraged to use any pedagogical approaches).
  - Comparatively 54% of those who are not encouraged to do so report that their school's CPD provision is ineffective.

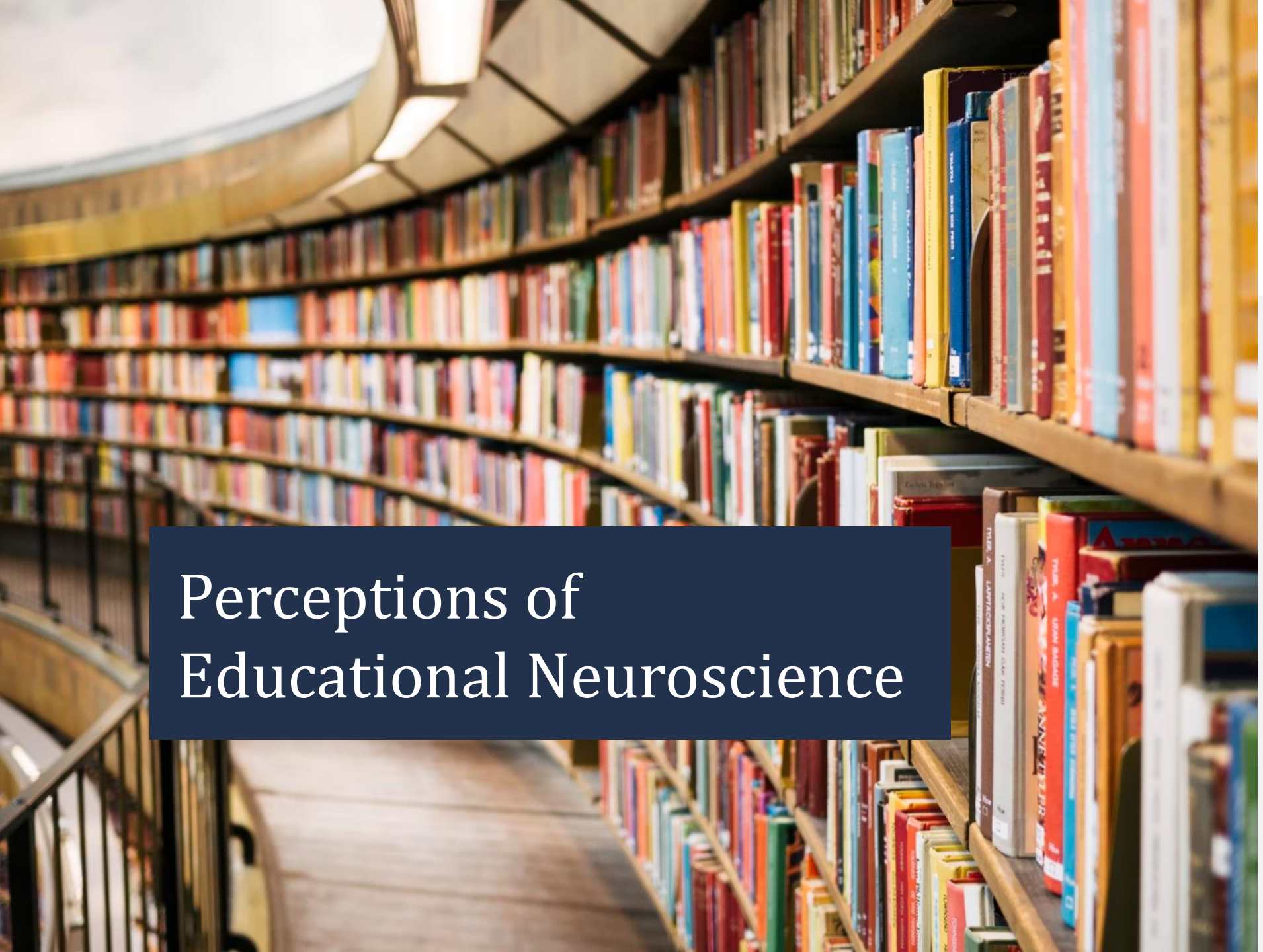
**13%**

**Are not aware of any pedagogical approaches to learning**

**27%**

**Of those aware of pedagogies report they are not encouraged to use any approaches in their teaching**

Q7. Which, if any, of the following pedagogical approaches to learning are you aware of? Please select all that apply.
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)
Q8. Which, if any, of the following pedagogical approaches to learning does your school encourage you to use/ apply in your teaching? Please select all that apply.
Base: All aware of a pedagogy (n=871)



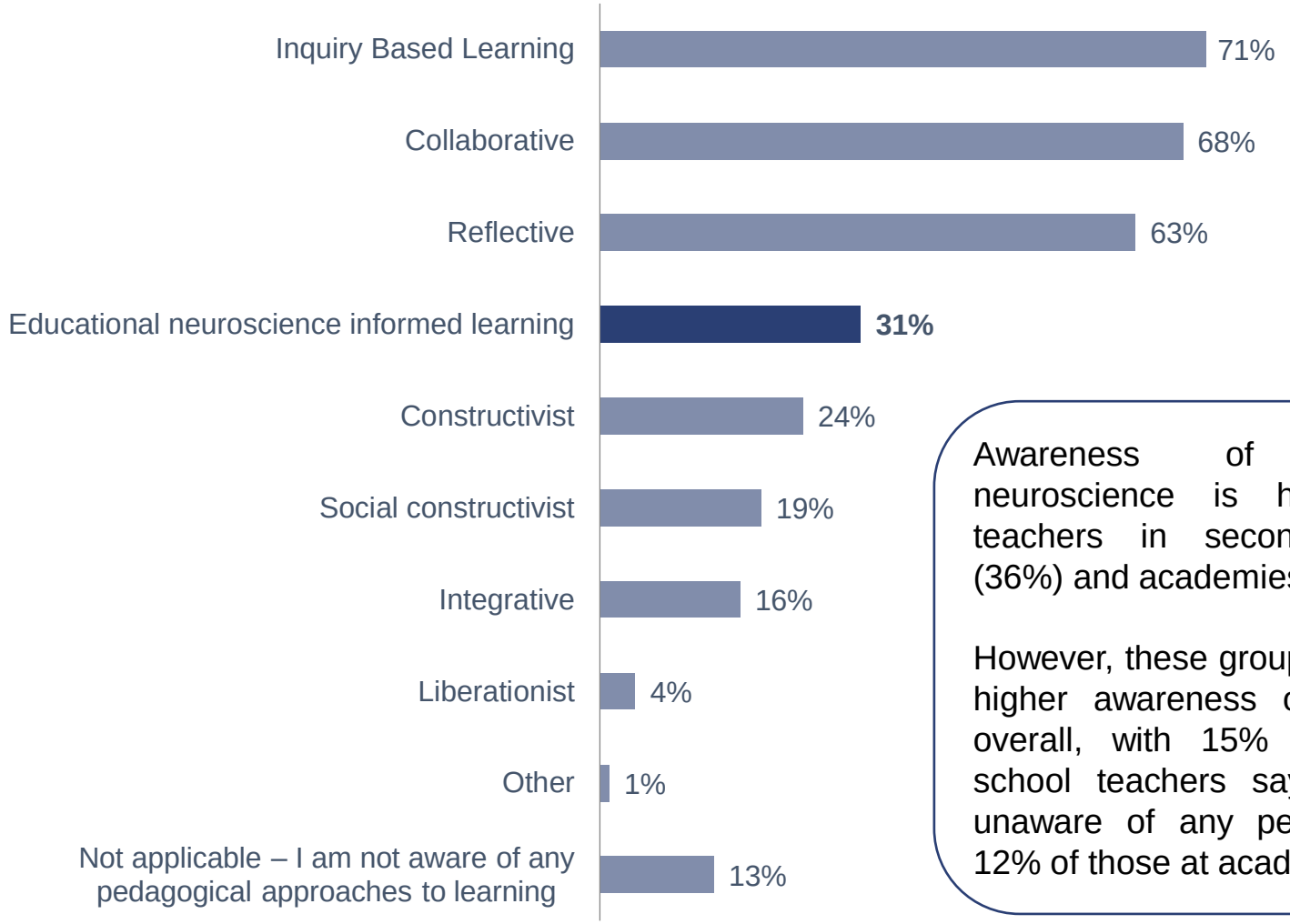
# Perceptions of Educational Neuroscience

YouGov

# One in three teachers are aware of educational neuroscience

Around half (47%) of those who are aware of educational neuroscience are encouraged to use it by their school, which suggests that teachers have been made aware of the pedagogy in large part by their school's encouragement of it.

**Awareness of pedagogies used in teaching**




Awareness of educational neuroscience is higher among teachers in secondary schools (36%) and academies (34%).

However, these groups do not have higher awareness of pedagogies overall, with 15% of secondary school teachers saying they are unaware of any pedagogies and 12% of those at academies.

Q7. Which, if any, of the following pedagogical approaches to learning are you aware of? Please select all that apply.
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)
Q8. Which, if any, of the following pedagogical approaches to learning does your school encourage you to use/ apply in your teaching? Please select all that apply.
Base: All aware of educational neuroscience (n=308)

# Among those aware of educational neuroscience, there is disparity about what it actually covers

Among those who are aware of educational neuroscience, **levels of knowledge are fairly high**.

- One in two (51%) say that they know the concept very well or know a fair amount about it, and more broadly 93% report know at least a little about it.
- This knowledge can be seen in the open-ended written descriptions provided by teachers, with responses demonstrating that there is a range of knowledge on the topic. Teachers asked to summarise educational neuroscience gave **a broad spectrum of answers**, from understanding neurodiversity in the classroom to being a discipline unifying other pedagogies.

However, despite high general awareness, only 8% of those aware report that they **know a lot** about the concept of educational neuroscience.

## Open-ended descriptions of educational neuroscience

"I understand it to be everything that influences a student's ability to absorb information - it could be anything from the specific capacity of their working memory which is different for everyone or the pressures of cognitive overload posed by the school day or a specific condition like ADHD or being on the autistic spectrum"
**Yorkshire and the Humber**

"What we know about how our brains learn and store information into memory, and how to teach in a way that helps children's brains do that as efficiently as possible."
**East of England**

"Research that brings all scientific learning styles together"
**West Midlands**

"Understanding how the brain alters and is able to access knowledge through creating neural pathways. The biological pathways the brain creates linking neurons and how to create maintain and sustain those links."
**North West**

"It is where you apply research to your own teaching methods."
**South East**

"Using knowledge of how the brain works to improve learning"
**London**

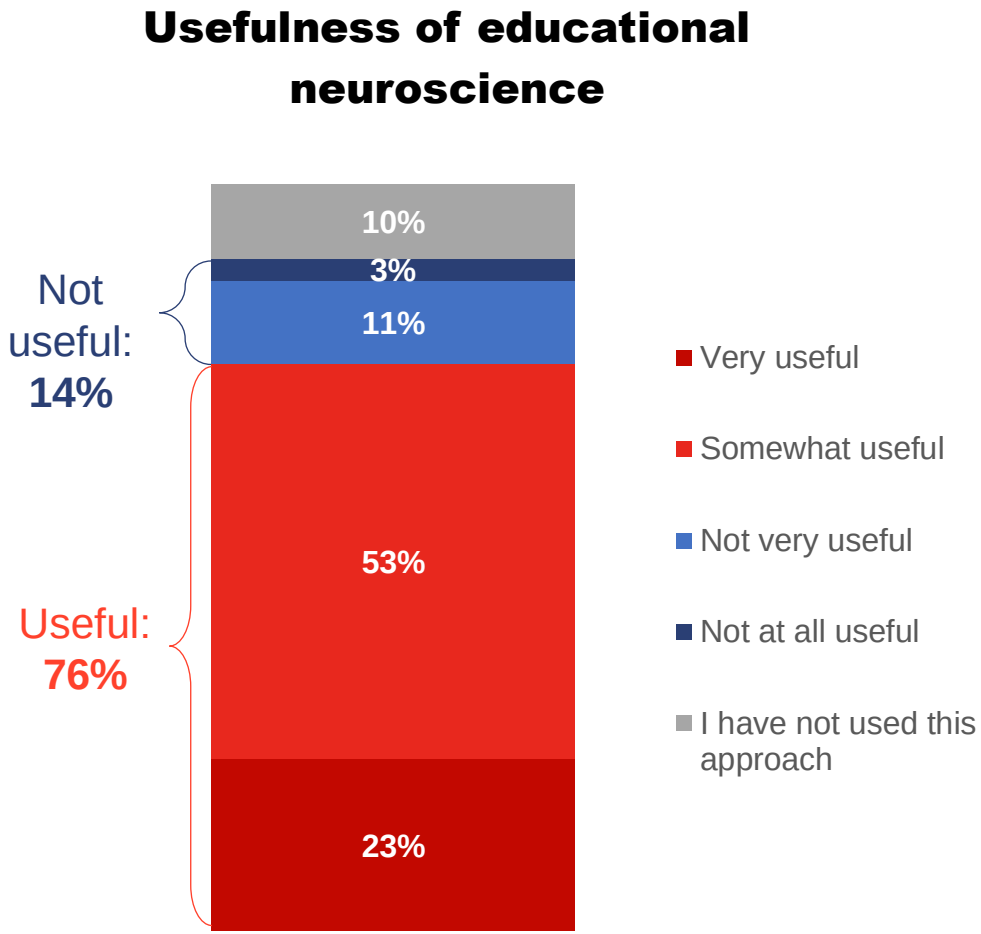
Q11. Can you please summarise for us your understanding of the concept of educational neuroscience?
Base: All aware of educational neuroscience (n=308)
Q10. How much do you feel you know about the concept of educational neuroscience?
Base: All aware of educational neuroscience (n=308)

# Among those aware of educational neuroscience, the vast majority have found its application to be useful in the classroom

Those who know more about educational neuroscience are more likely to consider it useful.

- 88% of those who know at least a fair amount about educational neuroscience consider it to be somewhat or very useful. This compares to 71% who know just a little bit about it.

This is also true among those who are encouraged by their school to use educational neuroscience in their teaching, among whom 87% consider it at least somewhat useful compared to 66% of those who are aware but are not encouraged to use it in their classroom.




Q9. How useful, or not, have you found any of the following pedagogical approaches to learning in your teaching?
Base: All aware of educational neuroscience (n=308)
Q10. How much do you feel you know about the concept of educational neuroscience?
Base: All aware of educational neuroscience (n=308)

# Although teachers agree that educational neuroscience is relevant to them, they are less convinced of its wider importance in the field of education

- A majority of teachers agree that educational neuroscience is relevant to their professional development, and that it is possible for them to implement the insights in their classroom.
- However, fewer teachers agree with statements about educational neuroscience being essential and underpinning the future of teaching.
- This shows that they can see how it might be broadly useful to themselves, but not necessarily how it can be used on a greater scale to impact the education sector as a whole.

**71%**
of teachers agree that educational neuroscience is relevant to my professional development

**44%**
of teachers agree that educational neuroscience is essential

**55%**
of teachers agree it is possible to implement educational neuroscience in their classroom

**39%**
of teachers agree that educational neuroscience underpins the future of teaching

Q12. Based on the description you have just read, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the concept of educational neuroscience?.
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# Teachers with more experience are less likely to agree with the positive statements about educational neuroscience, suggesting that they are more wary of new pedagogies

**71%** of teachers agree that educational neuroscience is relevant to their professional development

- 66% of more experienced teachers (over 20 years) agree, whereas newer teachers (under 6 years) are slightly more convinced (72%)
- Primary school teachers are more likely to agree (76%) than secondary school teachers (65%), although a majority of both agree

**44%** of teachers agree that educational neuroscience is essential

- Primary school teachers (48%), especially those teaching reception (51%), are more likely to agree that educational neuroscience is essential, while secondary school teachers are less likely to agree (40%)
- Older teachers aged over 50 are less likely to agree (39%) compared with younger teachers aged 18-40 (49%)

**55%** of teachers agree it is possible to implement educational neuroscience in their classroom

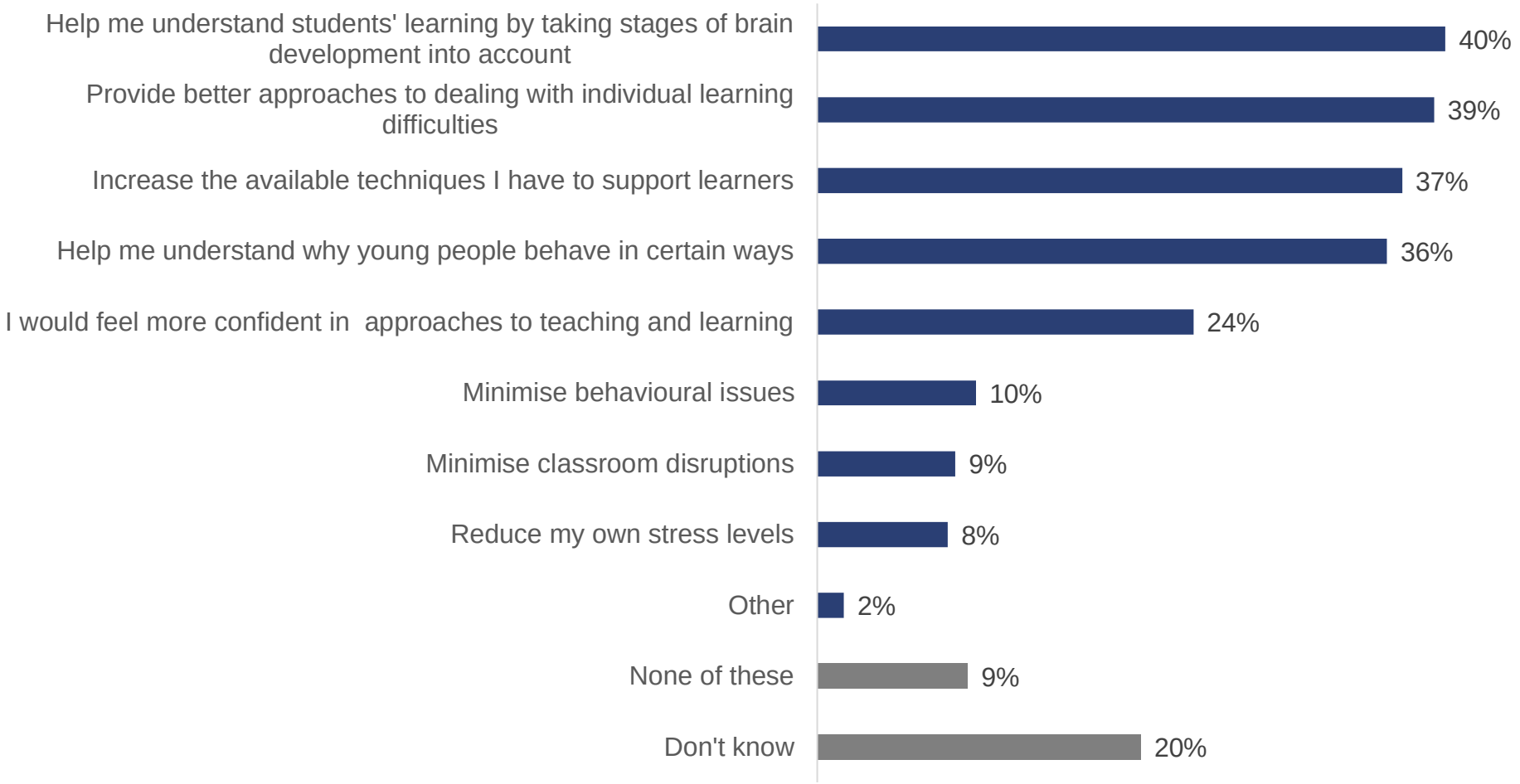
- Teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience are more likely to disagree (16%) than those who have been teaching for five years or less (9%)
- 80% of those aware of educational neuroscience believe they can implement it in their classroom (compared to 44% of those not previously aware)

**39%** of teachers agree that educational neuroscience underpins the future of teaching

- Those who would be interested in becoming a member of an organisation like Learnus are more likely to agree that educational neuroscience underpins the future of teaching (51%). This is particularly driven by those who would be willing to pay a membership fee (76%)

Q12. Based on the description you have just read, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the concept of educational neuroscience?.
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# Around two in five teachers believe that implementing insights from educational neuroscience would improve their experience of teaching in various ways related to supporting learners and understanding their mental development



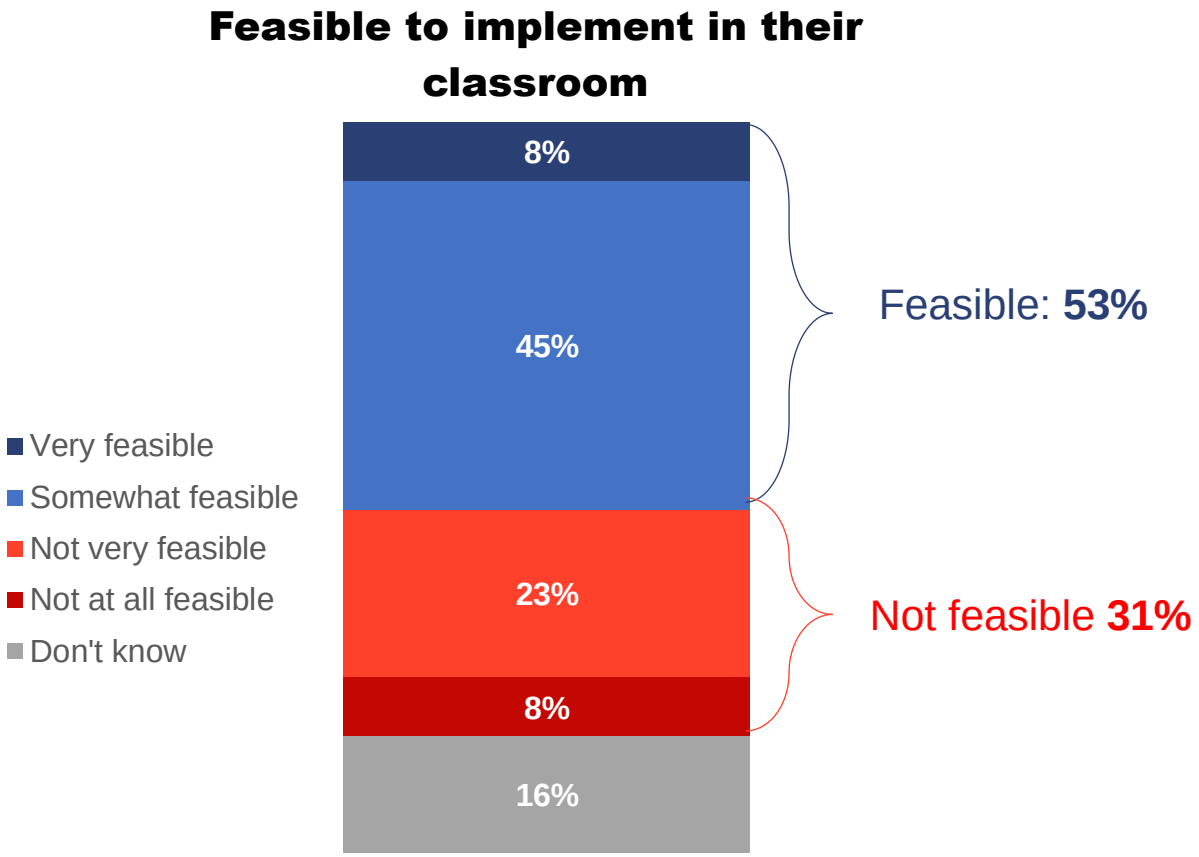

Those teaching for **under six years** are least likely to report that it would help by taking stages of brain development into account (29%). However, this group is most likely to think educational neuroscience would help them understand why young people behave in certain ways (40%) compared to any other impact.

A **fifth of teachers** saying they don't know of any positive impact on teaching here suggests that more information on educational neuroscience would be needed before teachers can fully understand any of its positive effects on teaching.

Q14. In which of the following ways, if any, do you believe that implementing insights from educational neuroscience would positively impact your experience of teaching?
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# Barriers and Opportunities

# Positively, the majority of teachers feel it would be feasible to implement insights from educational neuroscience in their classroom. However, for three in ten it does not feel overly feasible




**More likely to perceive it to be feasible:**

- Senior leaders (60%) compared to 50% of classroom teachers Those who would consider becoming a member of an organisation like Learnus (64%) compared to those who would not (35%)
- Those satisfied with their job (59%) compared to those who are dissatisfied (42%)

**More likely to perceive it to not be feasible:**

- Those dissatisfied with their job (41%) compared to those who are satisfied (26%)
- Secondary school teachers (34%) compared to primary school teachers (28%)
- Teachers in larger schools of 1,201+ students (37%) compared to 1,200 students or less (29%)

Q18. In your opinion, to what extent, if at all, would it be feasible to implement insights from education neuroscience in your classroom?
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# In line with their increased belief that implementing the insights would not be feasible, secondary school teachers generally show more opposition to educational neuroscience

In order to change secondary school teachers' minds, it could be important to highlight the information educational neuroscience could provide on **behavioural aspects of brain development**. Secondary school teachers are more likely to be interested in this compared to primary school teachers (46% vs. 37%).

Notably, secondary school teachers are more likely to say that their current CPD is effective (52% vs. 40% of primary school teachers). In order to help them implement educational neuroscience, they are more likely than primary school teachers to want:

- **Committed planning time** (41% vs. 30%)
- **Smaller classes** (30% vs. 24%)

They would also be more likely to look for information:

- **On Twitter** (16% vs. 11%)
- **From unions** (16% vs. 11%)

Q12. Based on the description you have just read, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the concept of educational neuroscience?
Q15. To what extent, if at all, do you feel that insights achieved through educational neuroscience would be helpful in improving each of the following?
Base: Secondary school teachers (n=454); primary school teachers (n=524)

## Primary school teachers are more likely than those in secondary schools to…

Agree that educational neuroscience is relevant to their professional development **(76% vs 65%)**

Agree that it is essential **(48% vs 40%)**

Think that it would be helpful in helping students acquire/retain knowledge and skills **(73% vs 64%)**

Think that it would be helpful in students' experience of learning **(70% vs 60%)**

Think that it would be helpful in teachers' confidence in teaching **(59% vs 51%)**

# Workload was previously identified as the biggest issue facing teachers; unsurprisingly it is cited by the plurality as something that would need to change in order for them to implement insights from educational neuroscience

This is followed by a greater knowledge of educational neuroscience – previously only 8% of those who had heard of it reported they knew it well

## Elements to change in order to implement insights from educational neuroscience


Primary school teachers are more likely to identify dedicated CPD sessions compared to secondary school teachers (35% vs. 28%).

Q20. What, if anything, would need to change in order for you to be able to implement insights from educational neuroscience in your classroom? Please select up to three options.
Base all teachers (n=1,006)

# A strong proportion of teachers show appetite for learning more about educational neuroscience, however they require dedicated time to do so

## Elements to change in order to implement insights from educational neuroscience

### 36%
**Greater knowledge of educational neuroscience**

Identified by 51% of those who would consider becoming a member of an organisation like Learnus and would pay a membership fee

Identified by 55% of those who stated learning loss was the biggest issue facing teachers

Identified by 43% of reception teachers

Identified by 41% of those with over 20 years' experience

### 35%
**Committed planning time**

Identified by 41% of secondary school teachers

Identified by 41% of teachers in schools of over 1,200 students

Identified by 43% of those who know at least a little about educational neuroscience

Identified by 40% who would consider becoming a member of an organisation like Learnus

### 32%
**Dedicated CPD sessions**

Identified by 35% of primary school teachers

Identified by 39% of senior leaders

Identified by 38% of those with 35% or more students receiving free school meals

Identified by 52% of those who would consider becoming a member of an organisation like Learnus and would pay a membership fee

### 30%
**Information on how to apply insights**

Identified by 38% of those who have worked in their current school for a year or less

Identified by 55% of those who state that learning loss is the biggest issue facing teachers

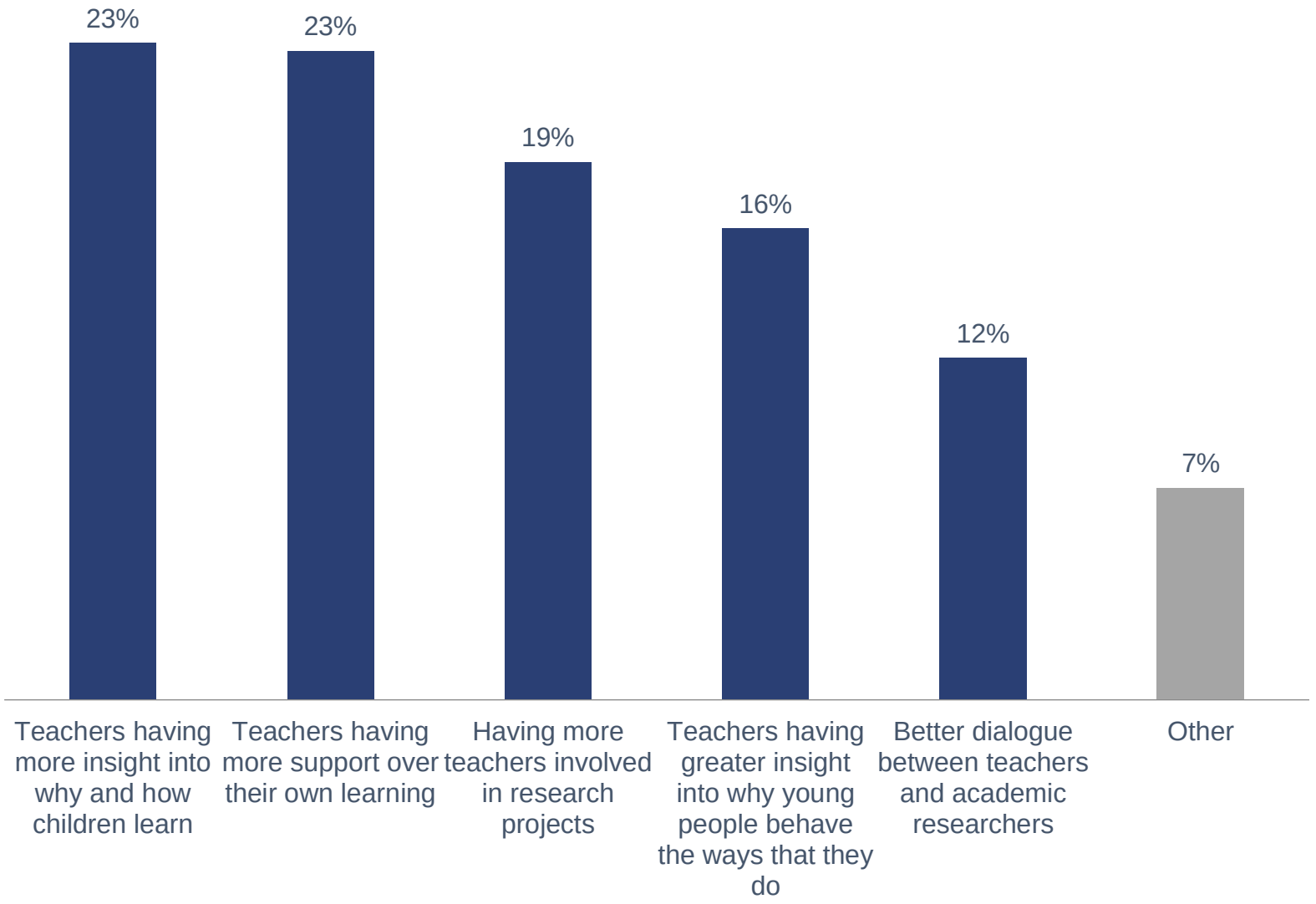
Identified by 34% who know at least a little about educational neuroscience

Identified by 38% of those who would consider becoming a member of an organisation like Learnus and would pay a membership fee

Q20. What, if anything, would need to change in order for you to be able to implement insights from educational neuroscience in your classroom? Please select up to three options.
Base all teachers (n=1,006)

**Corresponding with the importance of CPD and dedicated planning time, developing an understanding of learning is ranked as most important for improving education in the UK: whether that is learning more about how and why children learn, or having more support for teachers' own learning**

## Factors that could have the biggest role in improving the quality of education




Q22_rb. Thinking about the future, please rank the following in order of how big of a role you believe each could have in improving the quality of education for young people in the UK, where '1' is the biggest role. – the biggest role
Base all teachers excluding NA (n=941)

# Information and Communication

YouGov

# Despite half of teachers reporting that they could implement the insights from educational neuroscience in their classroom, 6 in 10 say they would need practical guidance on how to do so

- The teachers who are more positive about implementing educational neuroscience are the ones who most want practical guidance about how to do so.
  - Those who believe it is feasible to implement educational neuroscience insights in their classroom (68%) are more likely to want practical guidance on its application than those who do not think it feasible (55%).
  - Teachers who believe that educational neuroscience would be helpful to their lesson planning (71%) are more likely to want practical guidance than those who do not think it would be helpful (47%).
- Despite these differences, for all groups guidance on practical application is the most common information they would like to see to implement the insights from educational neuroscience in their teaching

**59%**

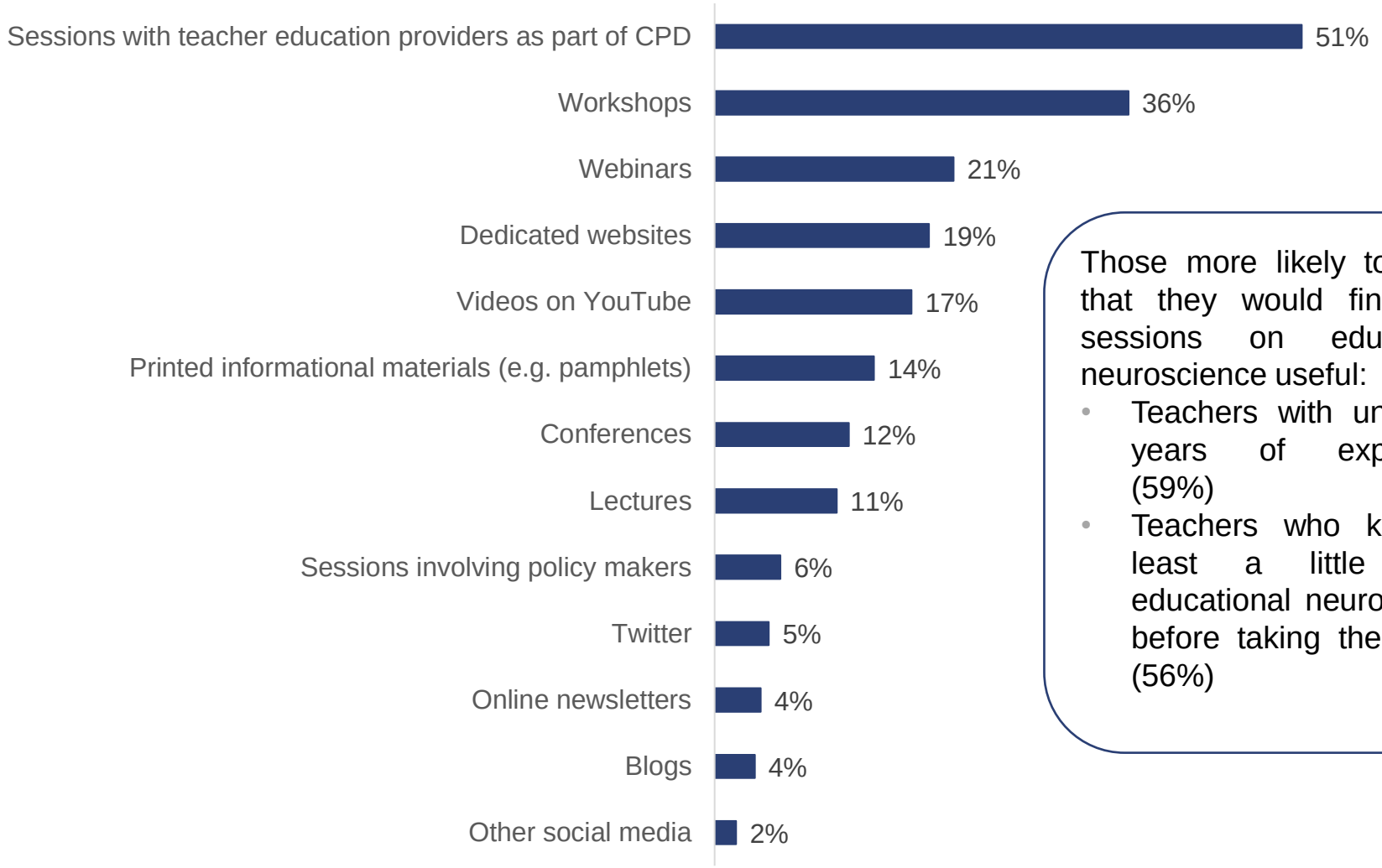
**Would need practical guidance about application of techniques in order to implement insights from educational neuroscience in their teaching**

Q16. What kinds of information would you like to see about educational neuroscience to help you implement its insights in your teaching? Please select all that apply. Information about…
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)

# Half of the teachers surveyed say that educational neuroscience-focused CPD would be most useful for implementing it in the classroom

Teachers who had some prior knowledge of educational neuroscience are most willing to learn how to implement it in the classroom. This is also the case with teachers with fewer years experience – as we have seen, they are also more open to the pedagogy

## Information sharing methods that would be most useful for teachers to implement the insights from educational neuroscience




Those more likely to report that they would find CPD sessions on educational neuroscience useful:

- Teachers with under six years of experience (59%)
- Teachers who knew at least a little about educational neuroscience before taking the survey (56%)

Q17. Which of the following methods of information sharing, if any, would be most useful to help you implement the insights of educational neuroscience? Please select up to three options.
Base: All teachers (n=1,006)


# Moving Forwards

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Understanding Learning

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# Summary

## Key takeaways

- Teachers are split on whether their school's current CPD provision is effective, and there is an appetite for more time to be dedicated towards professional development.
- Teachers think working with teacher education providers as part of CPD would be the best way to share information about educational neuroscience. Workload is of high concern and is the main barrier to implementing educational neuroscience in the classroom, so sharing information in a way which won't add to this is paramount.
- A strong proportion are aware of educational neuroscience but this needs developing; of this group only a small minority report knowing it very well.
- Teachers are generally positive towards educational neuroscience: the majority think it is relevant to their professional development and that it would positively impact their experience of teaching in at least one way. However, they are less convinced of its wider importance in the field of education, and so information on how it could impact the future of education is integral.
- A strong minority think that it would not currently be feasible to implement educational neuroscience in the classroom, correspondingly there is a desire for practice guidance on how to apply the insights.

## Recommendations

- Think about tailoring training and information to schools' current CPD provision, or developing workshops and webinars. These are seen as more helpful than other methods.
- Look at tactics to broaden and deepen teachers' current understanding of educational neuroscience:
  - In order to build buy-in it could be helpful to leverage information on individualised learning approaches and brain development, as well as improving students' experiences of learning; these are seen as the top benefits for teachers' current practice.
  - Teachers are concerned about learning loss and many think educational neuroscience would be helpful in developing students' ability to acquire and retain knowledge and skills. Information should be developed to target these areas.
  - Teachers report needing greater knowledge on educational neuroscience or information on how to apply the insights to them; it could be beneficial to present case studies or examples of where practices have worked well in the classroom.

# Thank you