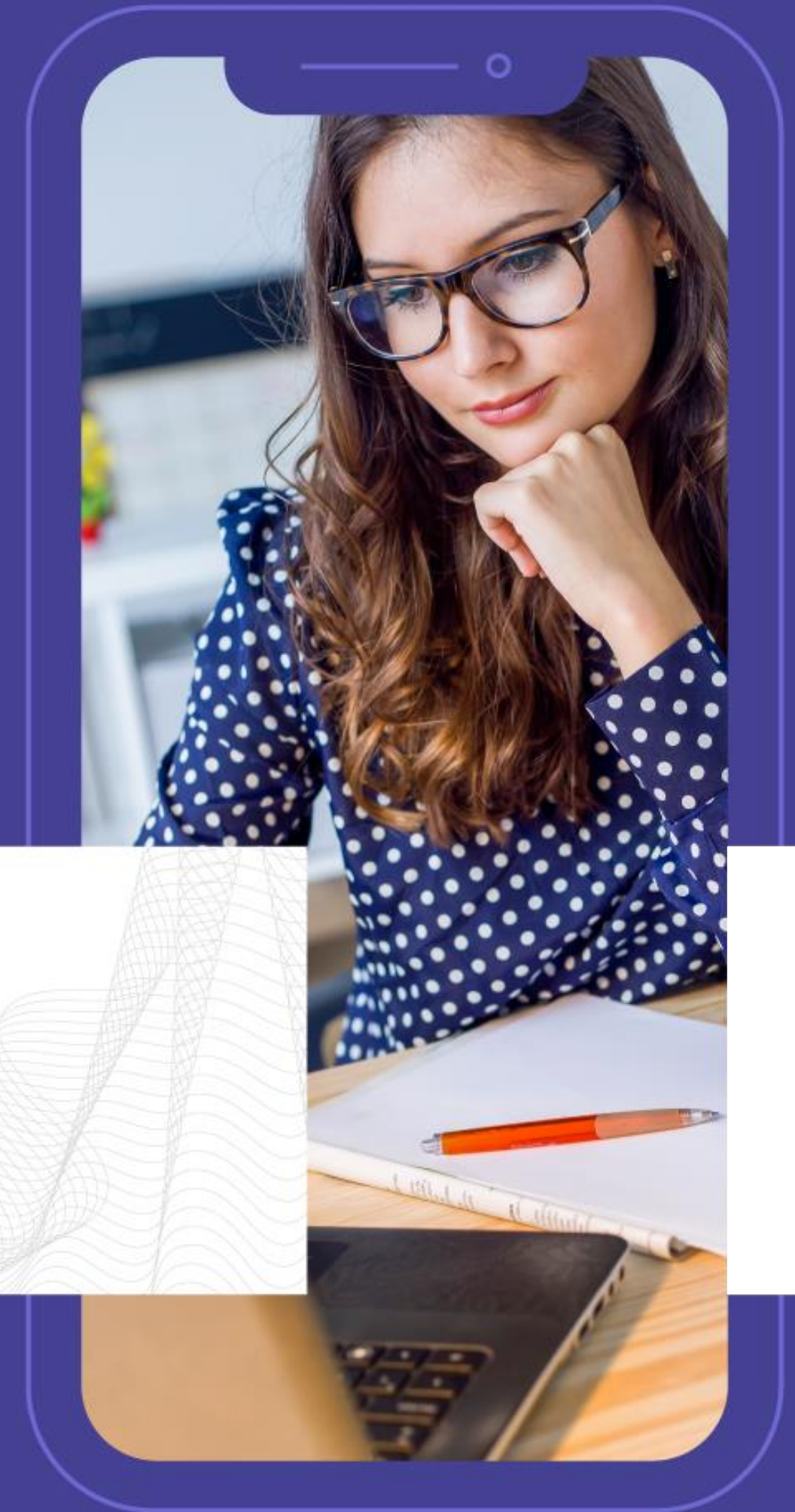




# Socioemotional gains of taking Cambridge exams

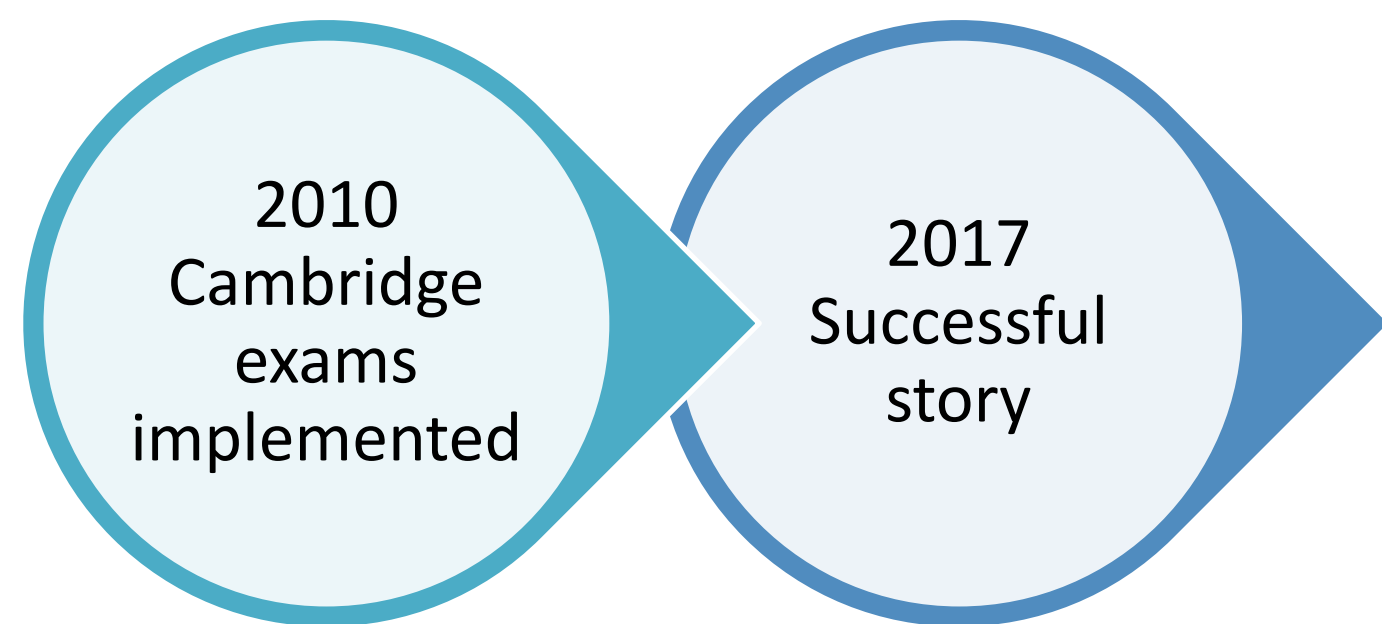
Alberto Costa



# Agenda

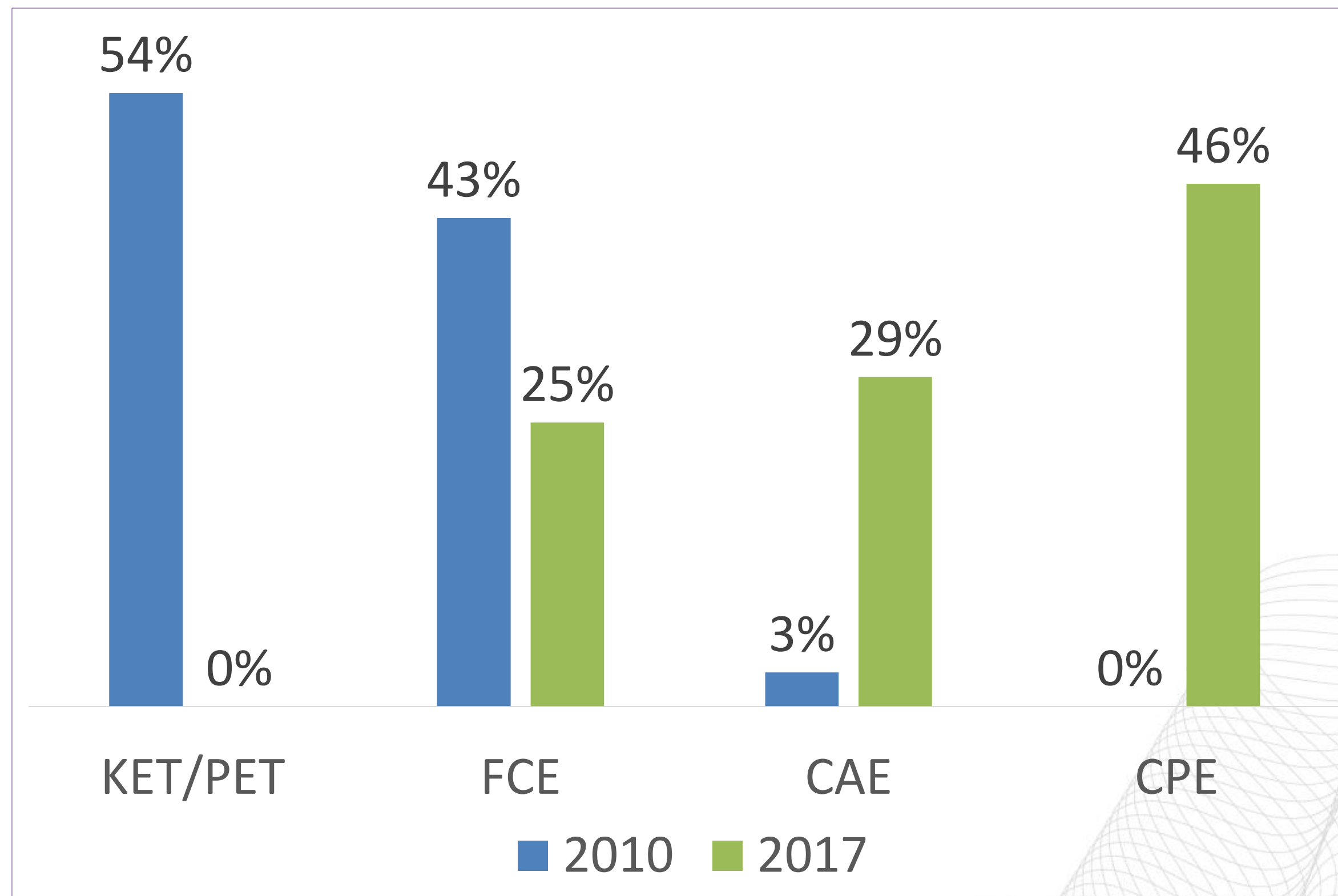
1. Cambridge and Colégio Farroupilha
2. Preparing for the exam improves your English. But how?
3. But what do we know about the impact of our exams in schools?
4. Impact study in Porto Alegre
5. Conclusions and recommendations
6. Acknowledgements
7. References
8. Q&A

## Cambridge and Colégio Farroupilha

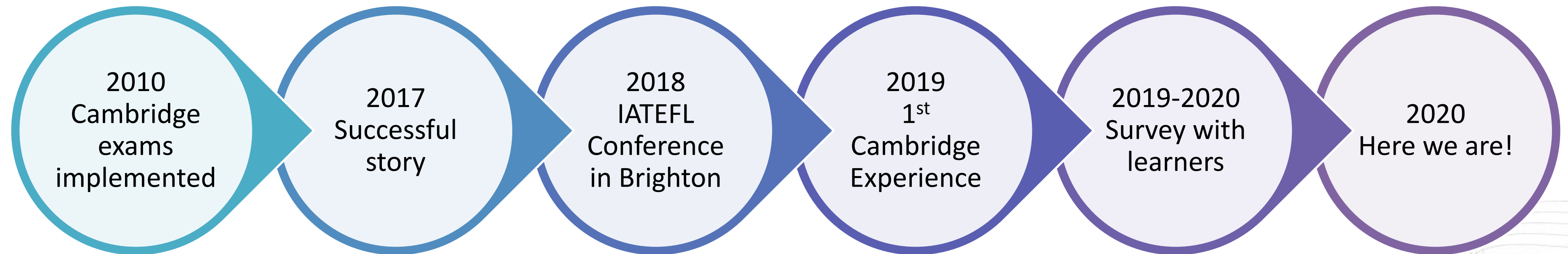


### 2018 2º Ano EM

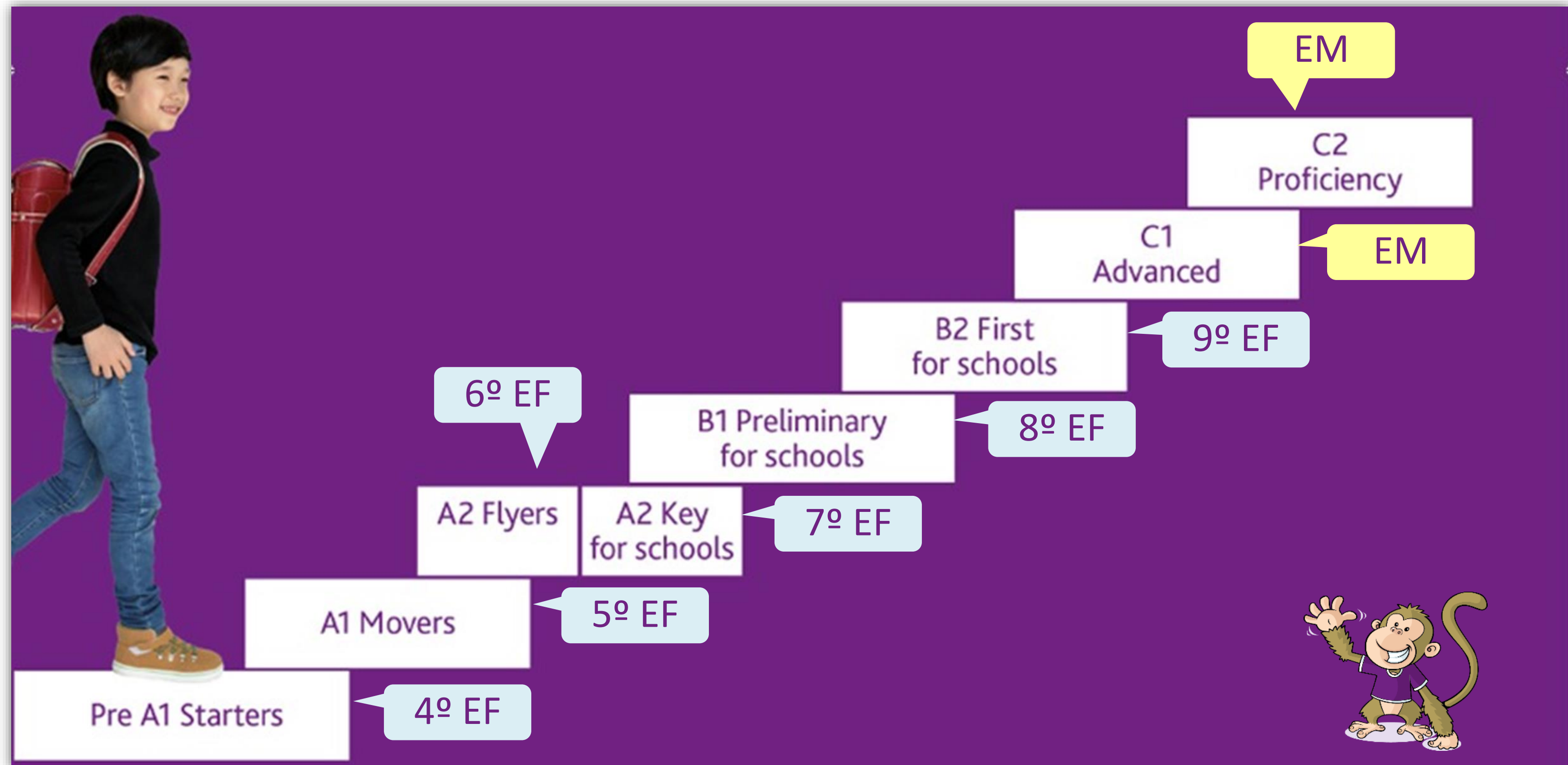
- 26%- B2 First (FCE)
- 43%- C1 Advanced (CAE)
- 30%- C2 Proficiency (CPE)



# Cambridge and Colégio Farroupilha



# Cambridge Exams integrated in the curriculum



# Preparing for the exam improves your English. But how?

- There is a target to aim for:
  - The target is internationally understood – CEFR
  - The target is described in detail
  - Having a target (or series of targets) improves motivation – this is vital!
    - 800 guided learning hours to reach C1
    - 40 school weeks a year
    - 3 hours of English per week
    - Nearly 7 years of study

# Preparing for the exam improves your English. But how?

- Not just a level: also a detailed description of competencies in the four skills
- Shapes what happens in the classroom, helps teachers to plan long-term, gives structure to a long process:
  - Language content the teacher covers
  - Development of all four skills
  - Communicative approach
- The exam drives the teaching – **NB:** positive only if the exam is assessing the right constructs/abilities/skills

## But what do we know about the impact of our exams in schools?

- What are the benefits of preparing for and sitting the Cambridge exams on learners' attitudes towards test preparation?
- What is the impact of taking the exams on learners' emotions towards forthcoming exams and their attitudes towards learning English?



## Impact study in Porto Alegre



December 2018

- Cambridge launches Impact of A1 Movers and A2 Flyers exams on learner attitudes
- Research team from UK and Southern Cone
- Inspiration for the study carried out in Porto Alegre



December 2019

- Study in Porto Alegre begins
- First group of learners surveyed
- Learners who have sat Cambridge exams previously and 'first timers'



March-September 2020

- **March:** More learners surveyed
- **May:** initial plan to present the results impacted by the pandemic
- **September:** what have we learned from this study?

# Methodology

- 1.166 respondents participated in this study.
- All learners completed an online questionnaire
- 74% of the learners completed the questionnaire in English



# Methodology

The questionnaire asked learners about:

- Exam experience  
(whether they had taken an exam previously or had no experience of English language exams).
- Test ease  
(to what degree learners felt calm about their forthcoming exam).
- Speaking confidence  
(to what degree learners felt confident about speaking English).



# Methodology

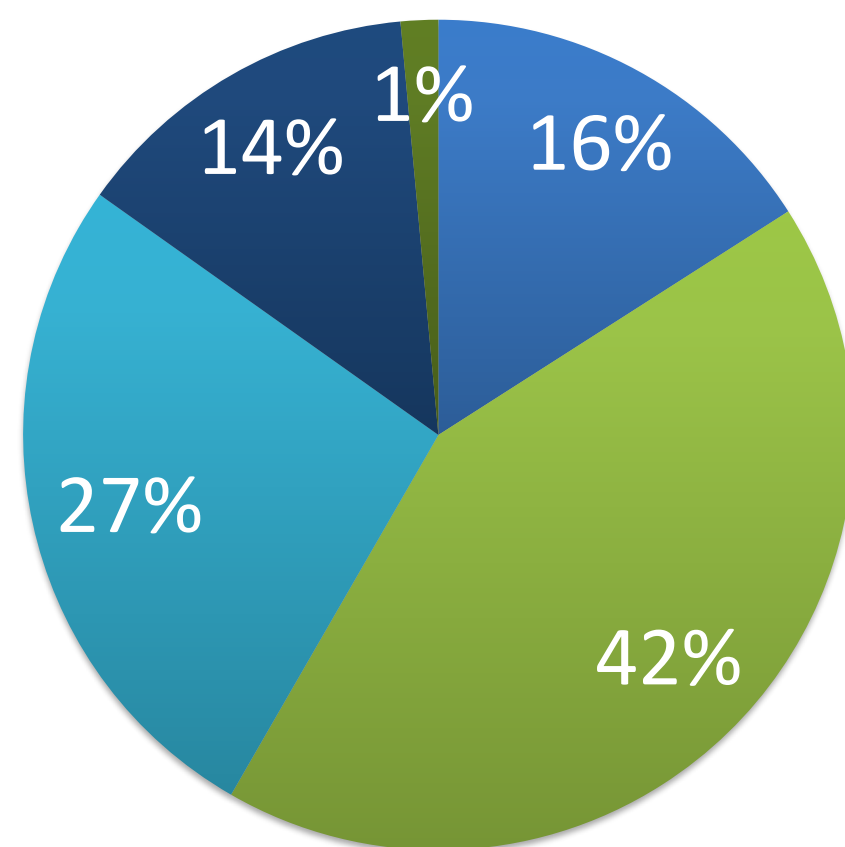
The questionnaire asked learners about:

- Beliefs about intelligence  
(whether learners believed their English abilities were stable or could be improved).
- Goal orientation  
(whether learners' goals tended to focus on mastering English or on comparing their performance with their peers).



## Age range

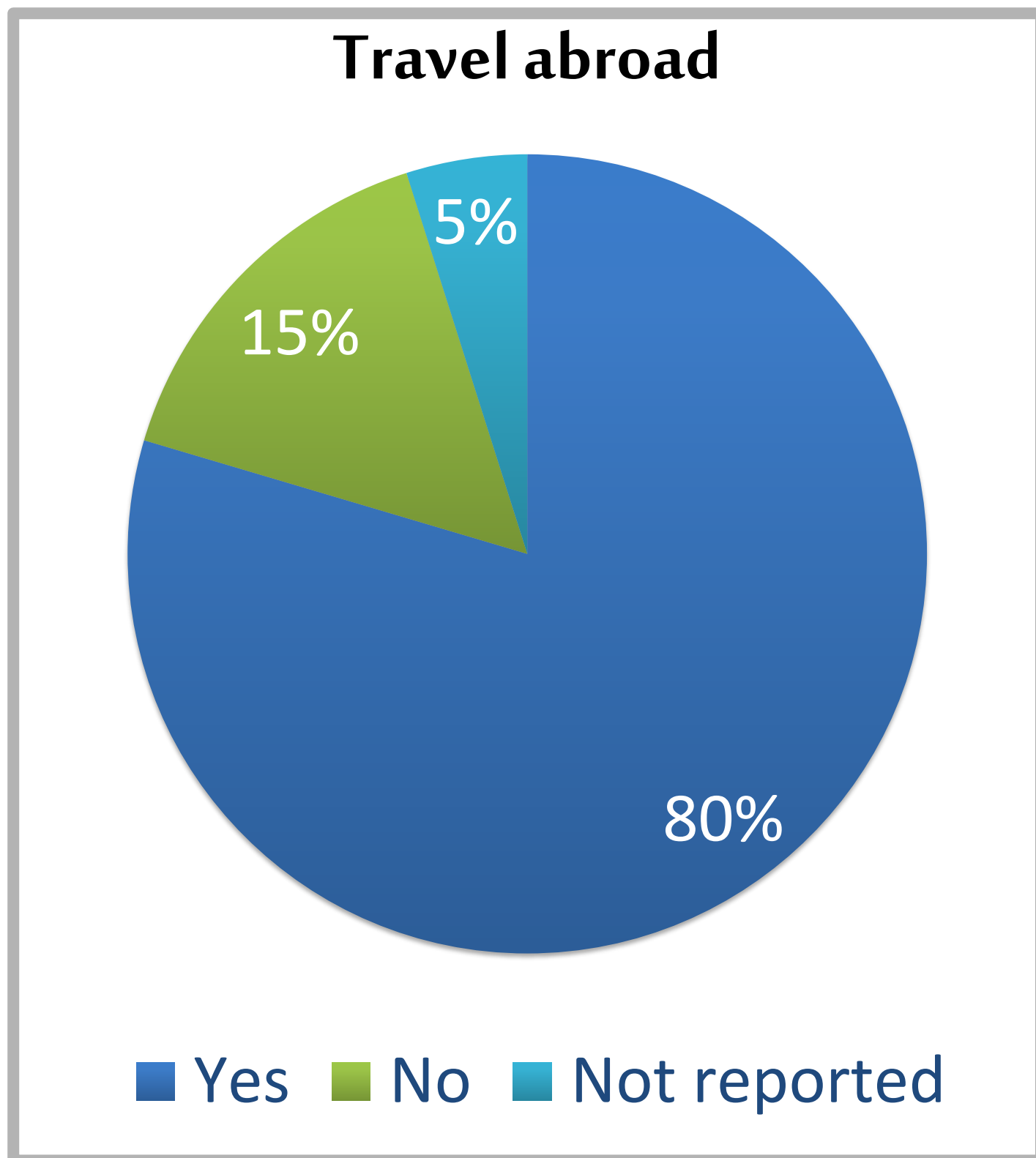
1.166 respondents



- Age 8-10
- Age 11-13
- Age 14-16
- Age 16-17
- Age 18+



## Travel experience

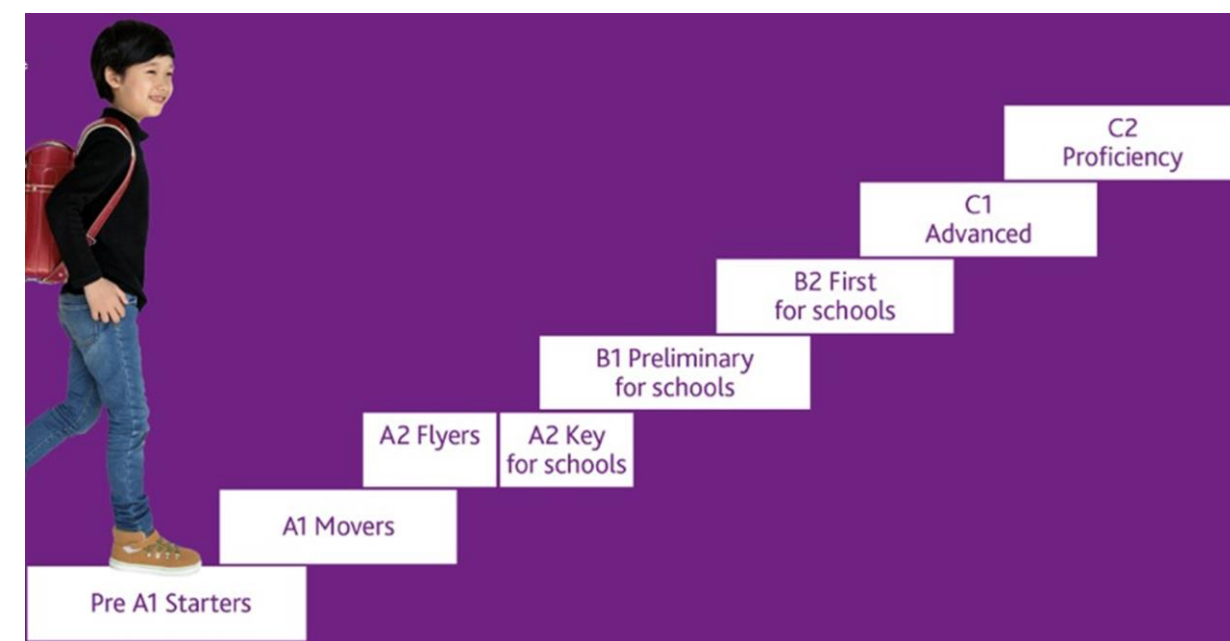
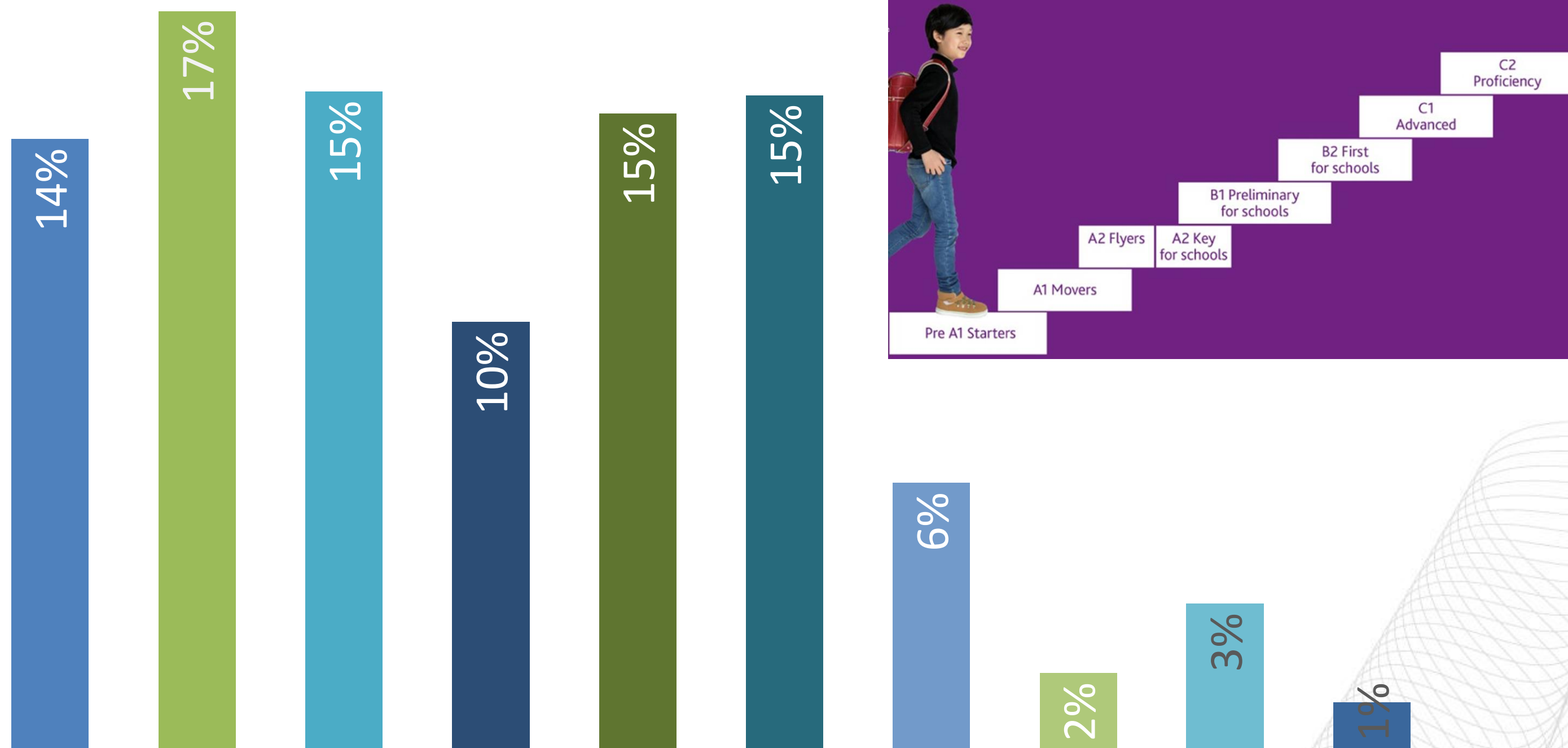


## Exam experience

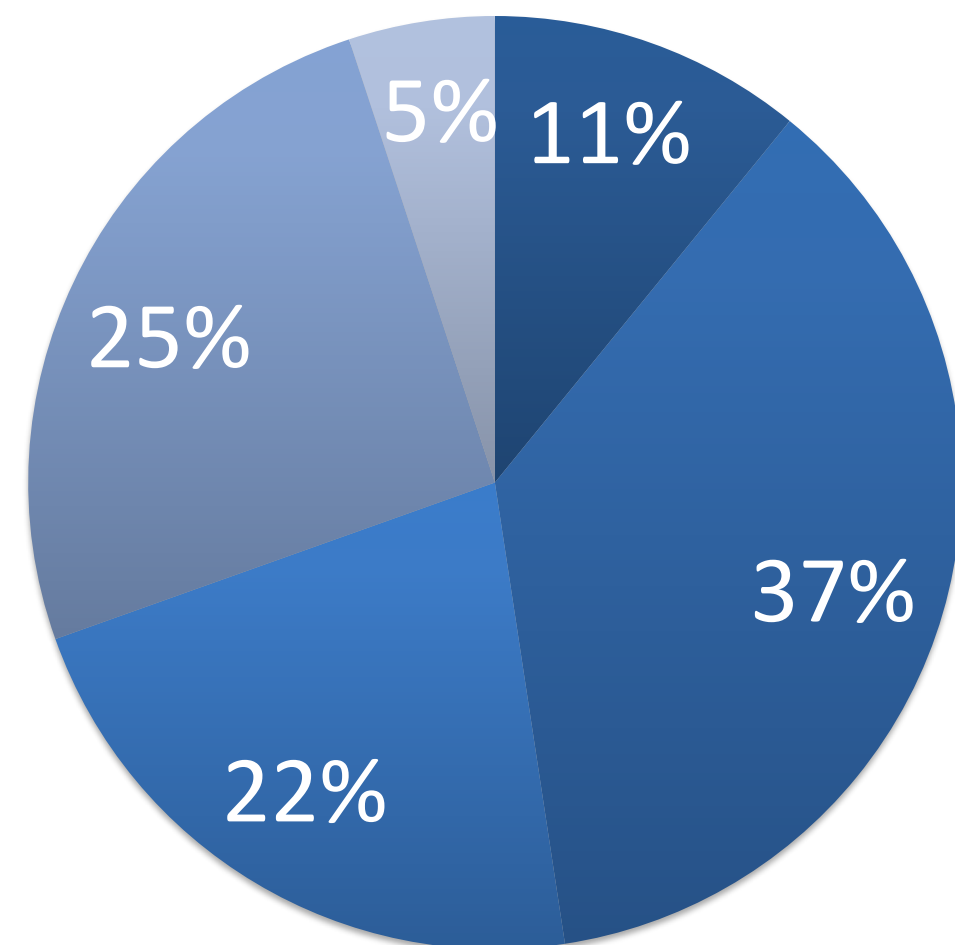


## Exam Experience: Last exam you have sat

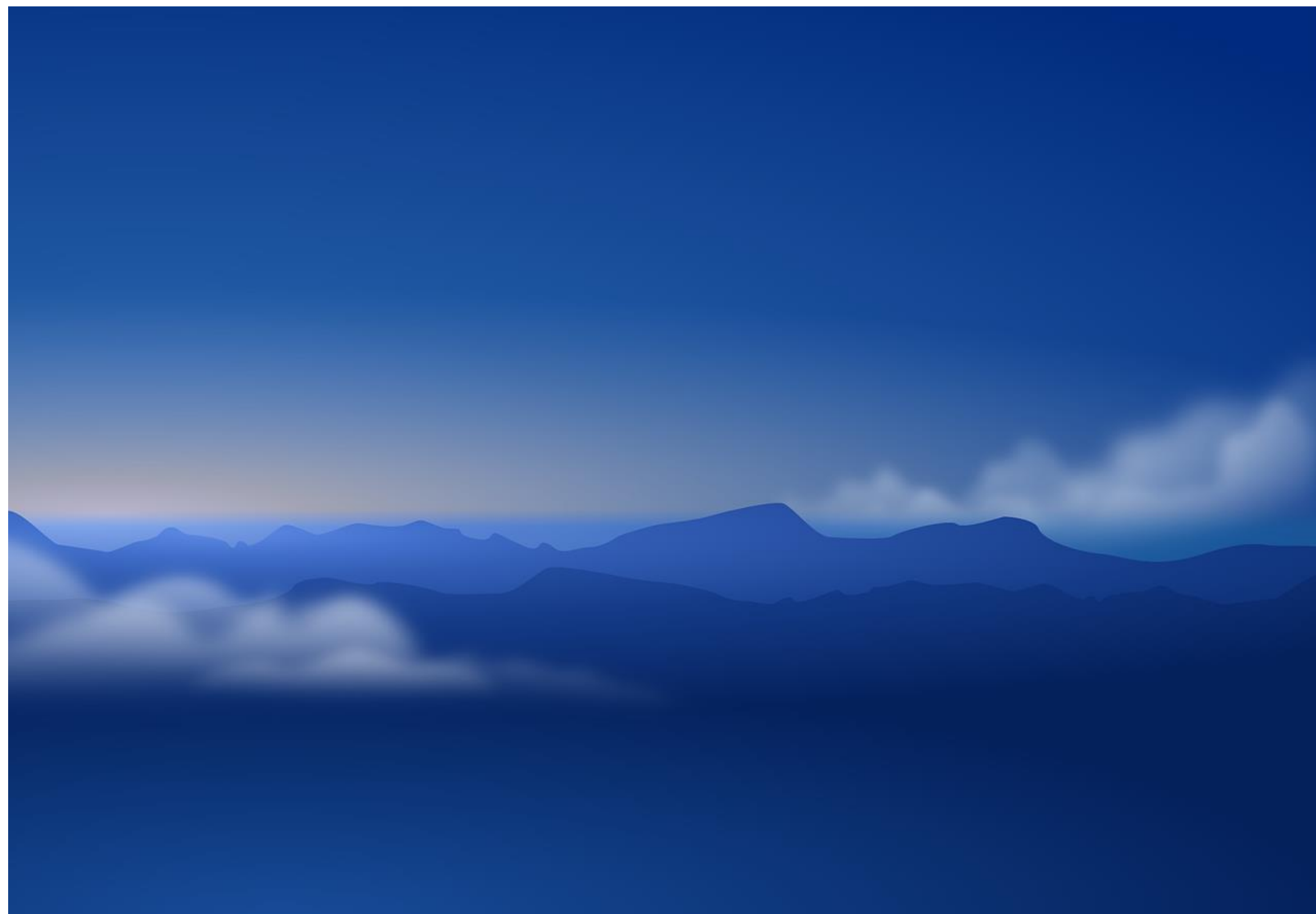
- Pre-A1 Starters
- A1 Movers
- A2 Flyers
- A2 Key
- B1 Preliminary
- B2 First
- C1 Advanced
- C2 Proficiency
- None
- Others



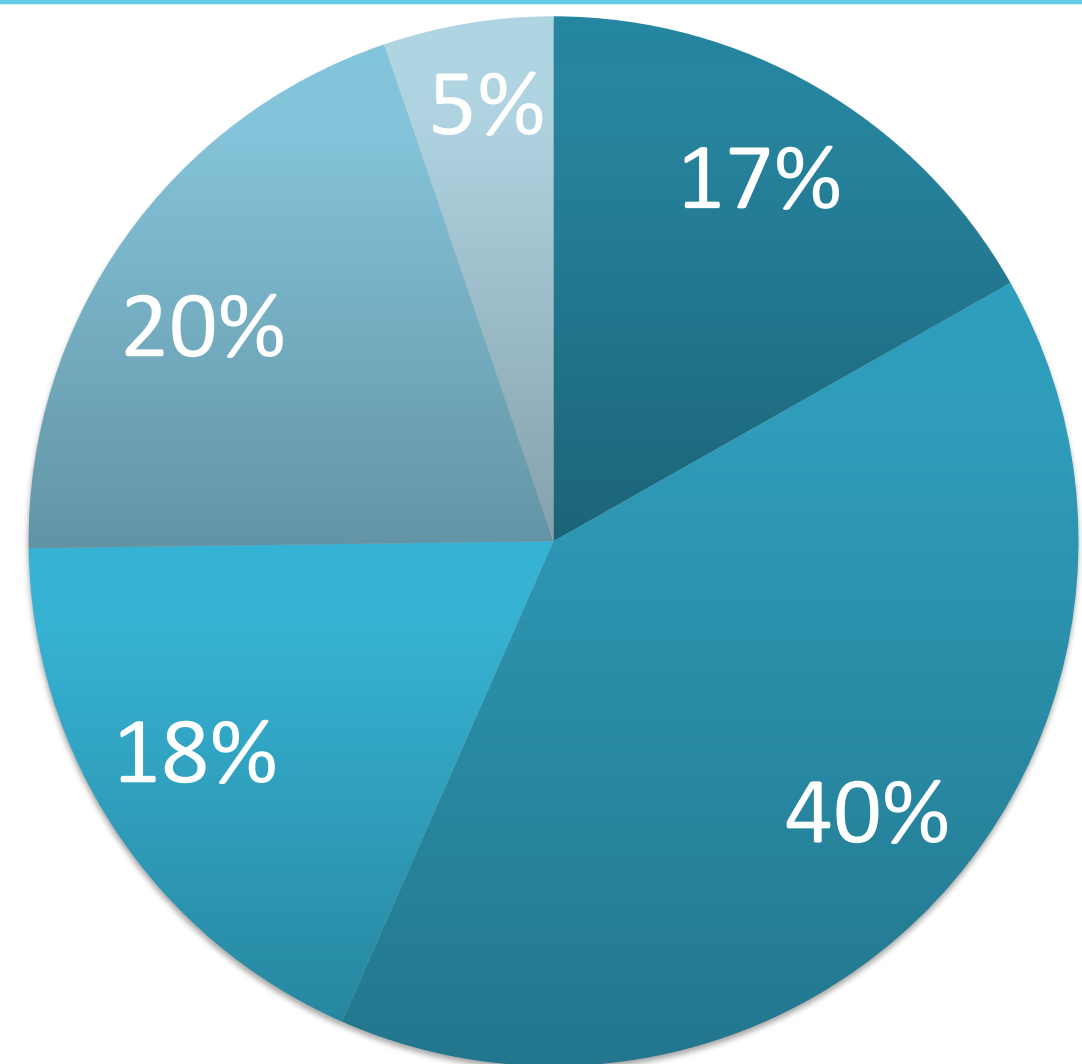
## How did you feel about taking this exam?



- Very calm
- Calm
- It didn't bother me
- Stressed
- Really stressed



## How confident did you feel about speaking English during the test?



- Very confident
- Confident
- It didn't bother me
- Stressed
- Really stressed

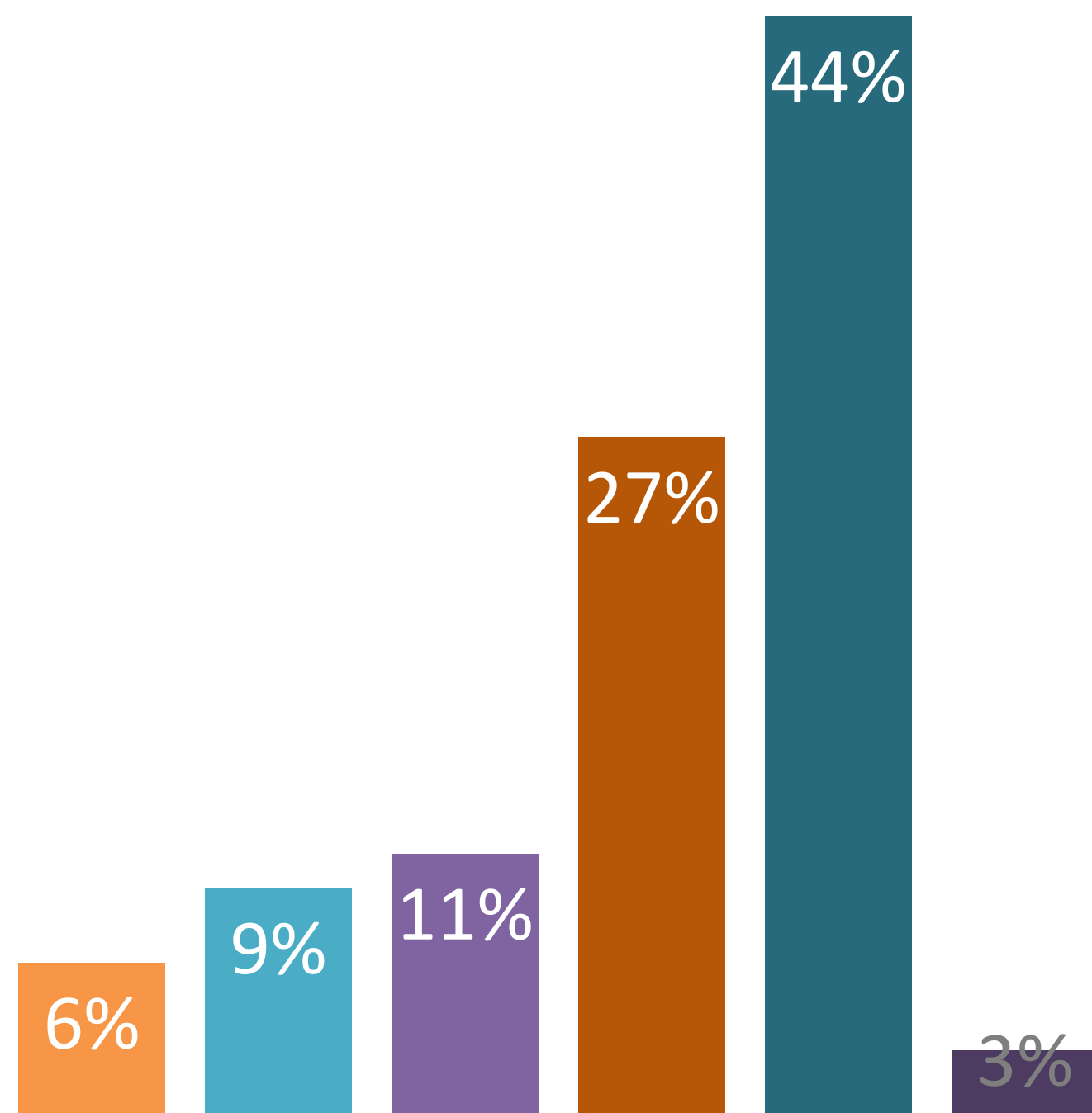


## Beliefs about intelligence

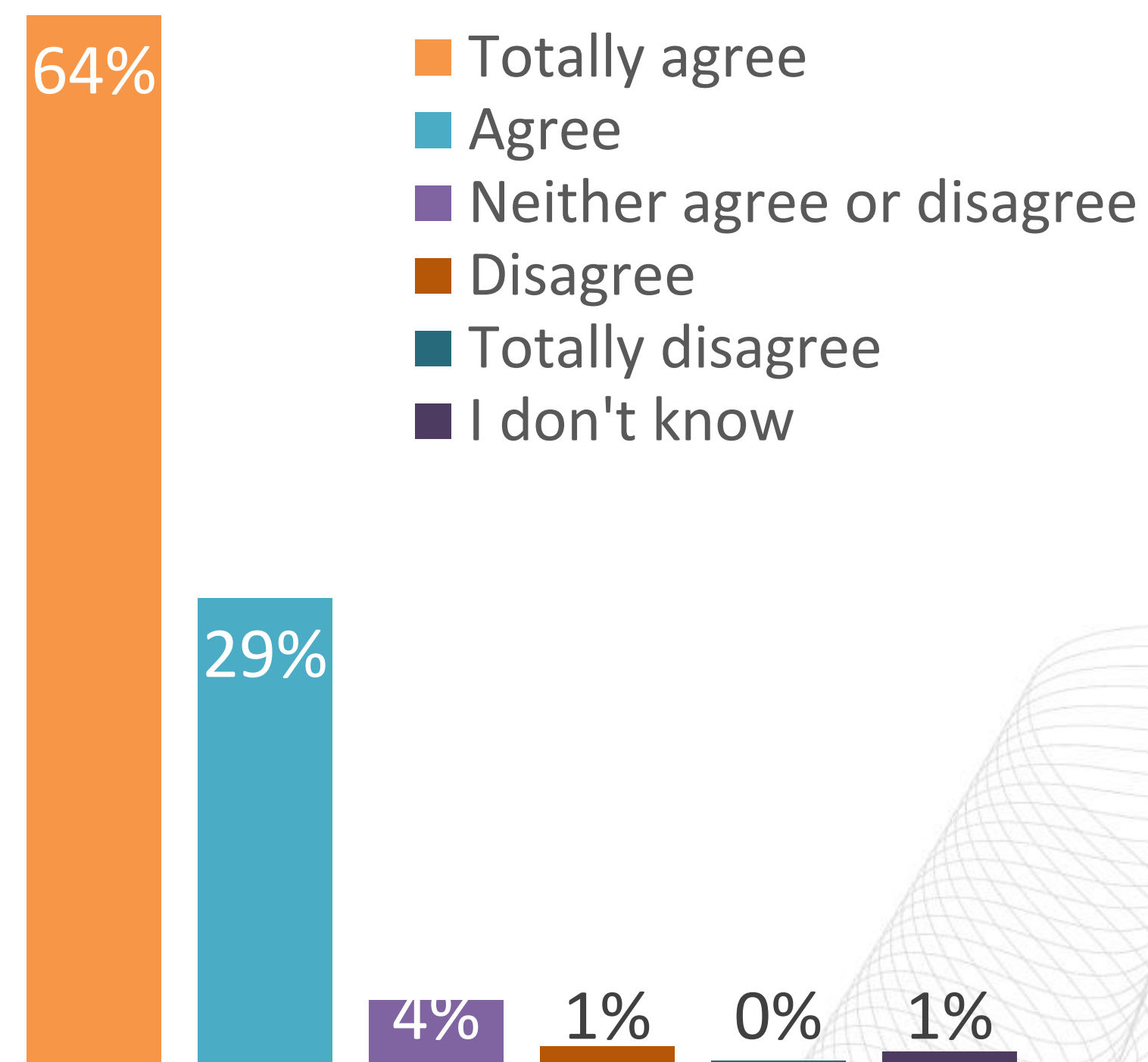
Whether learners believed their  
English abilities  
were stable or  
could be improved.



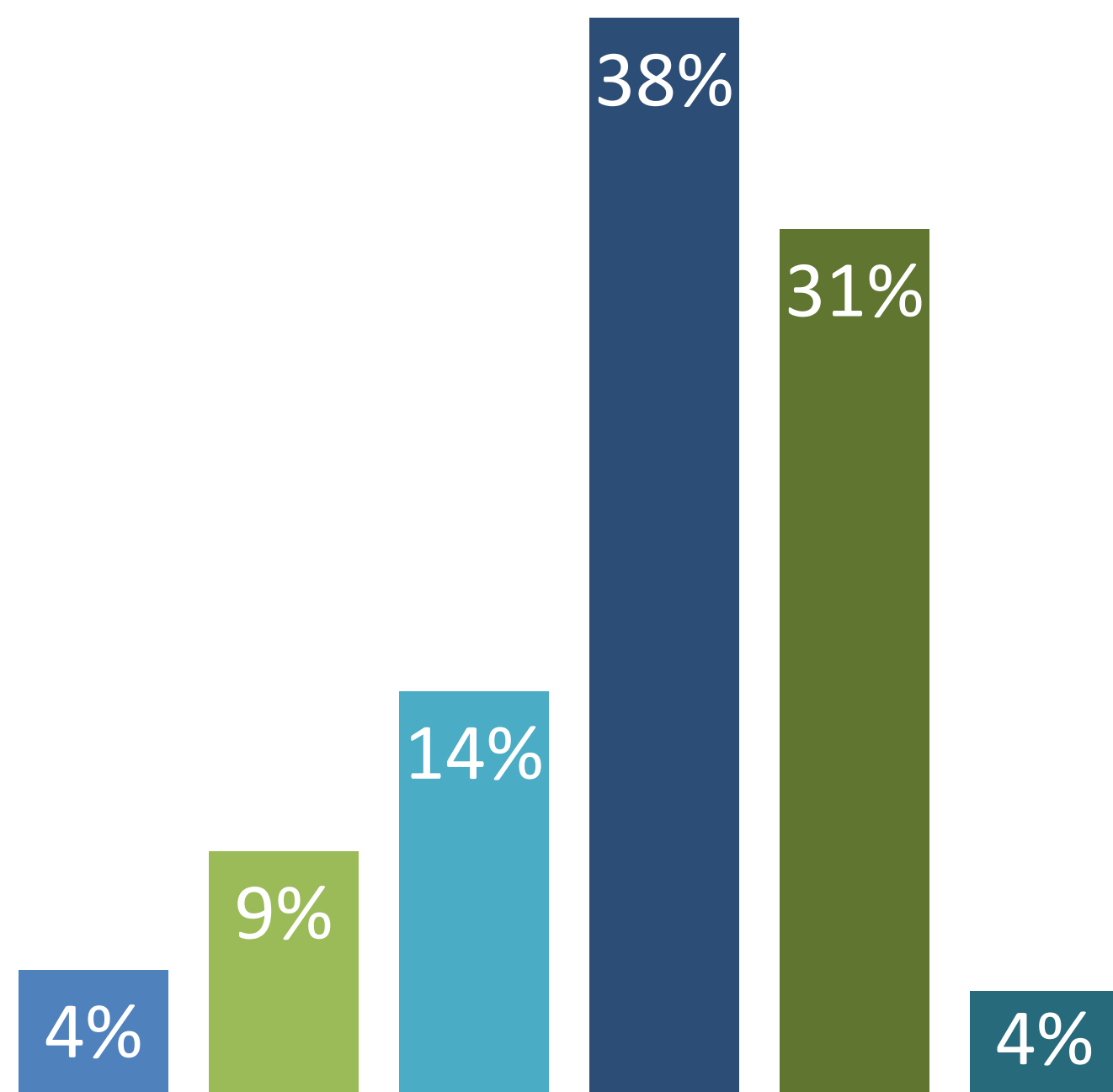
I will never be very good at English even if I work hard



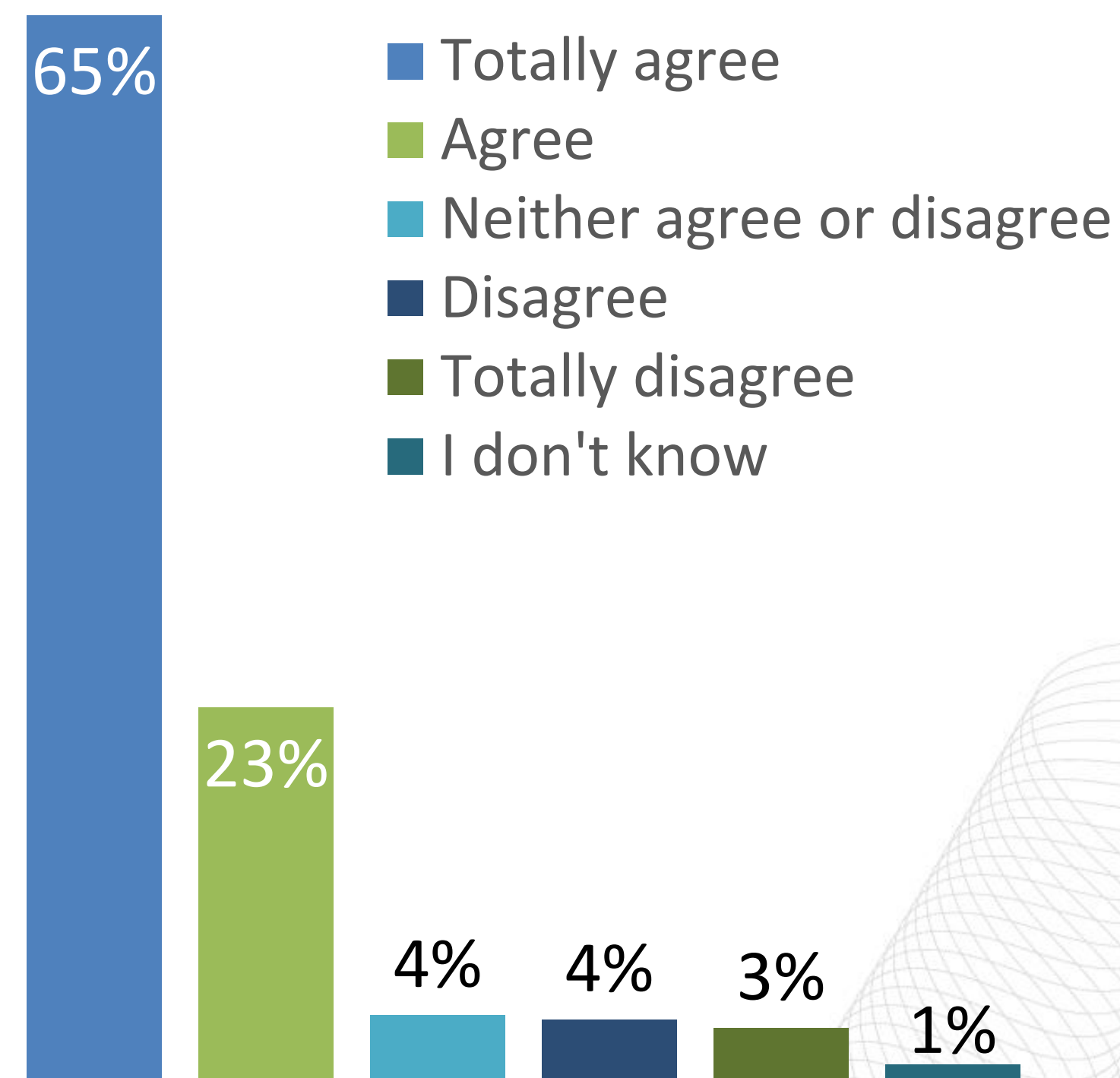
If I work hard, I will learn English well



## My knowledge of English is something I can't change much



## I can get better at English

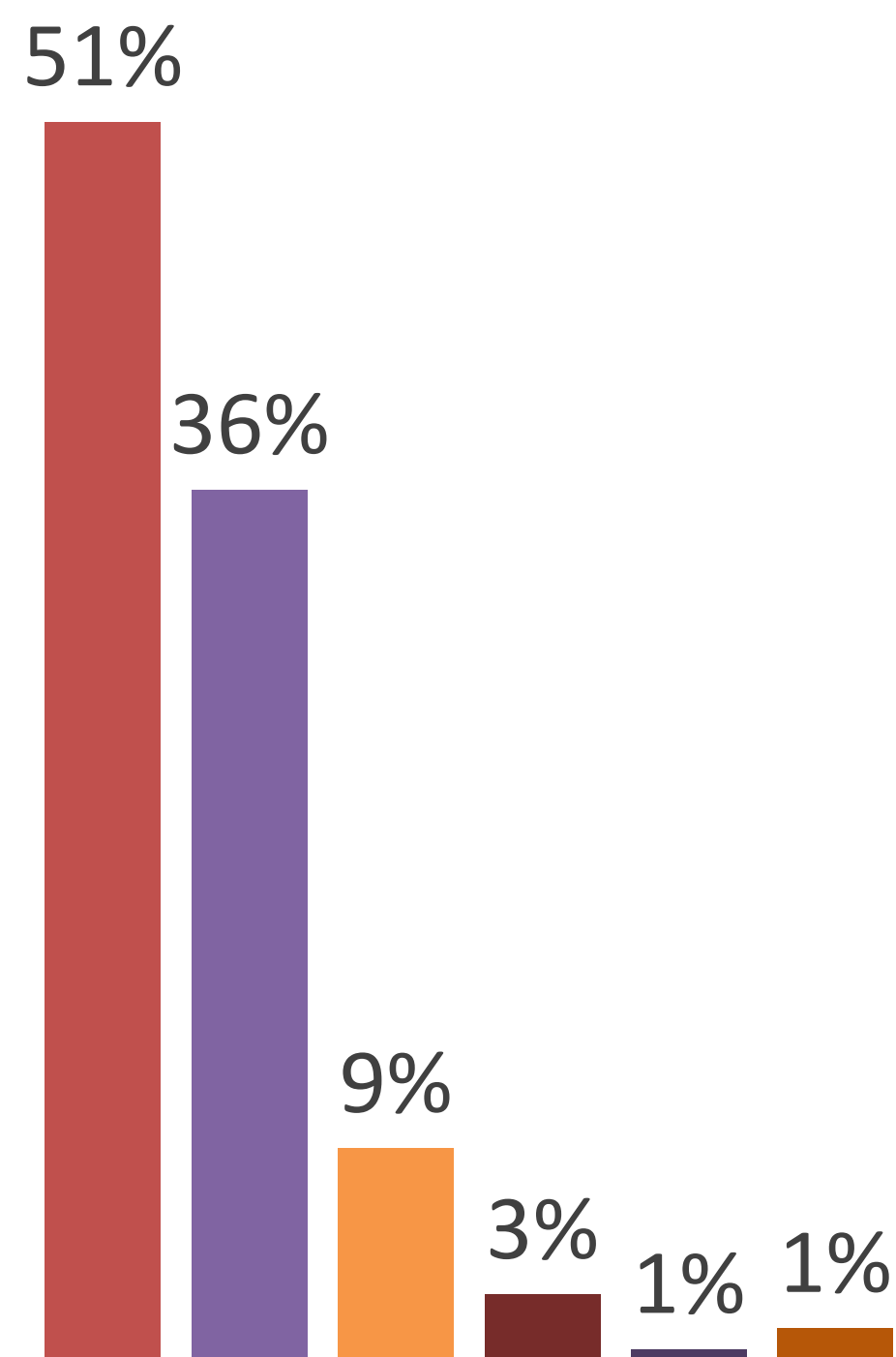


## Goal Orientation - Mastery

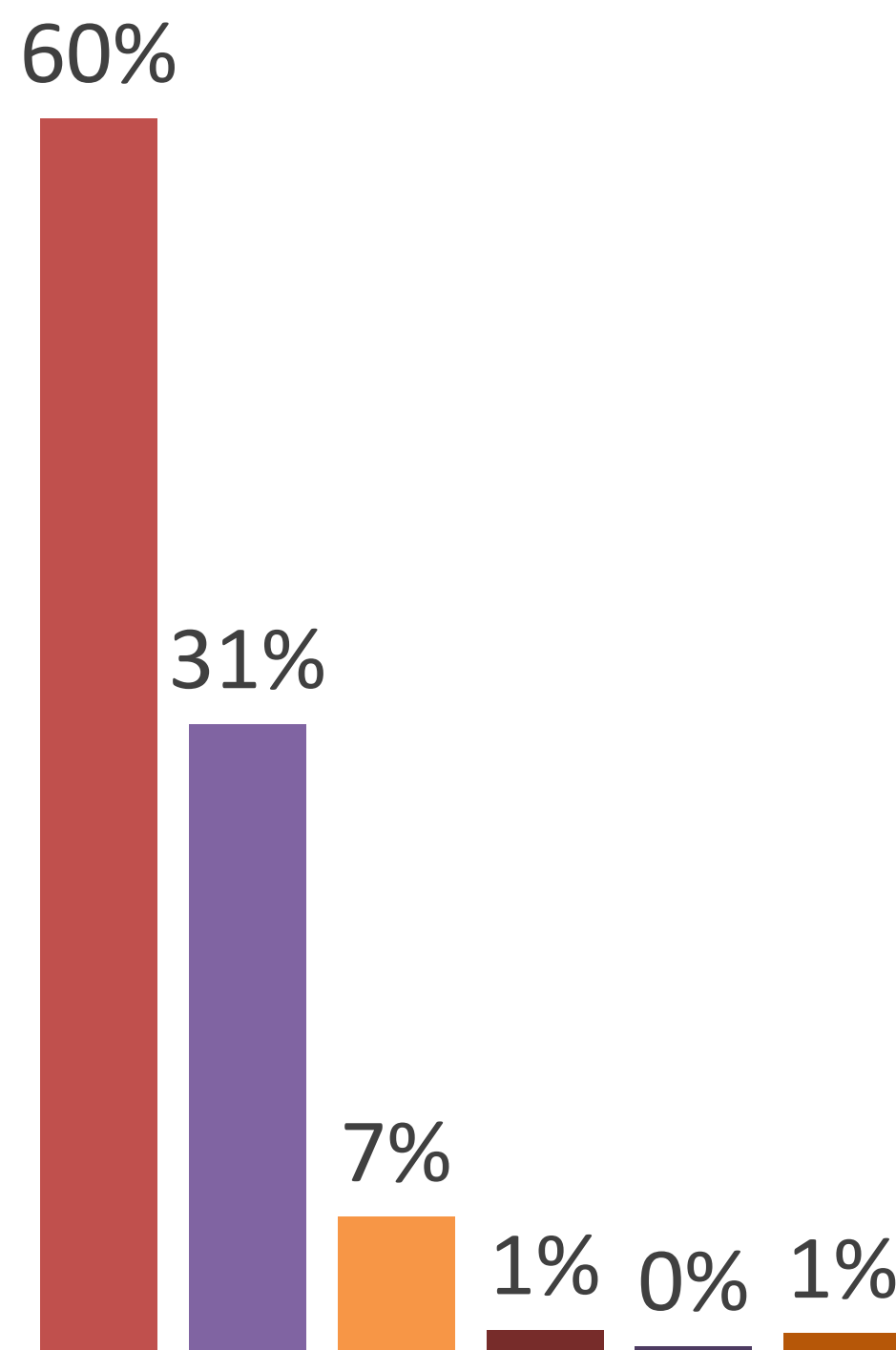
Whether learners' goals tended to focus on mastering English or on comparing their performance with their peers



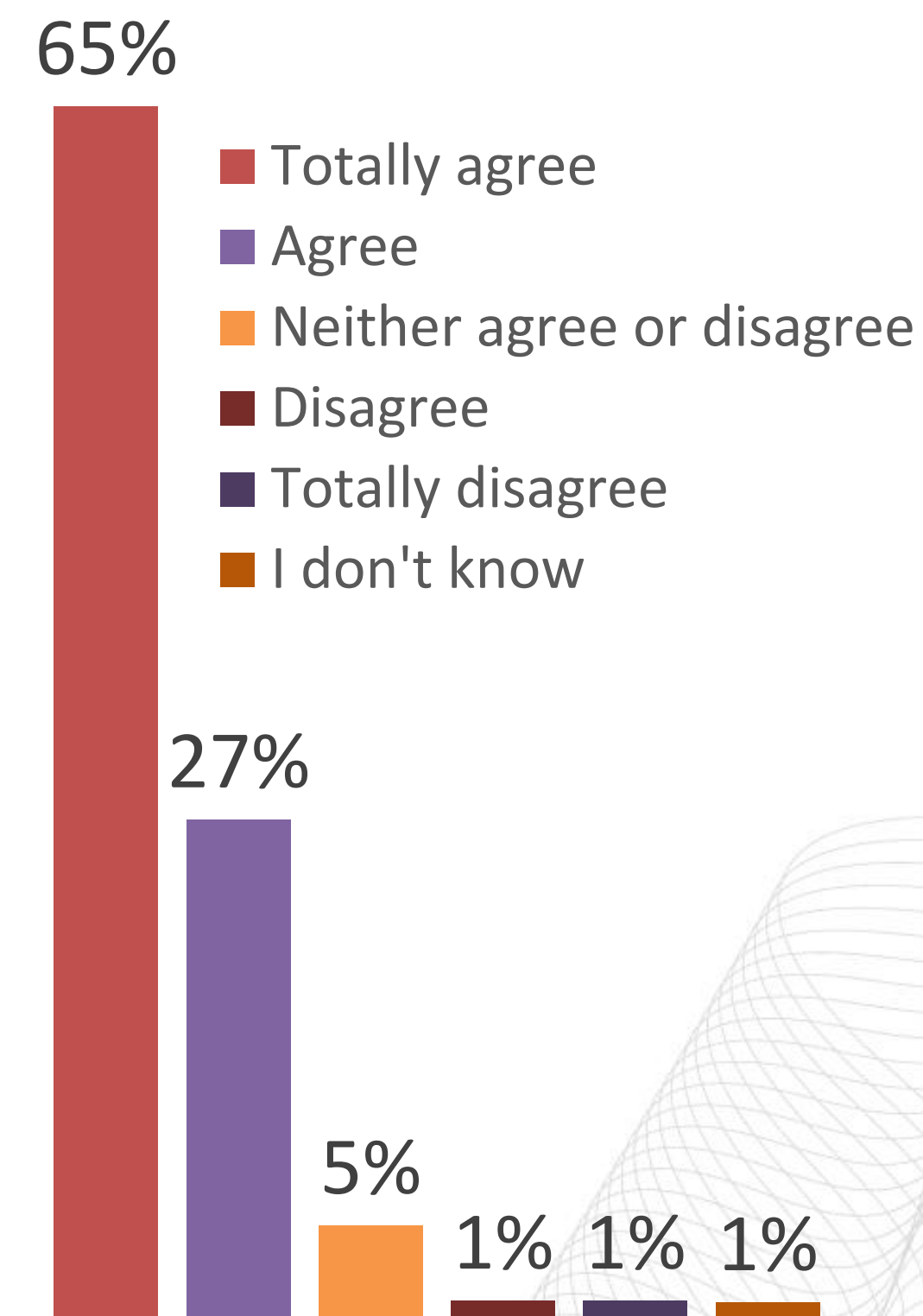
It's important to me that I thoroughly understand my English classwork



One of my goals in the English class is to learn as much as I can



It's important to me that I improve my English this year

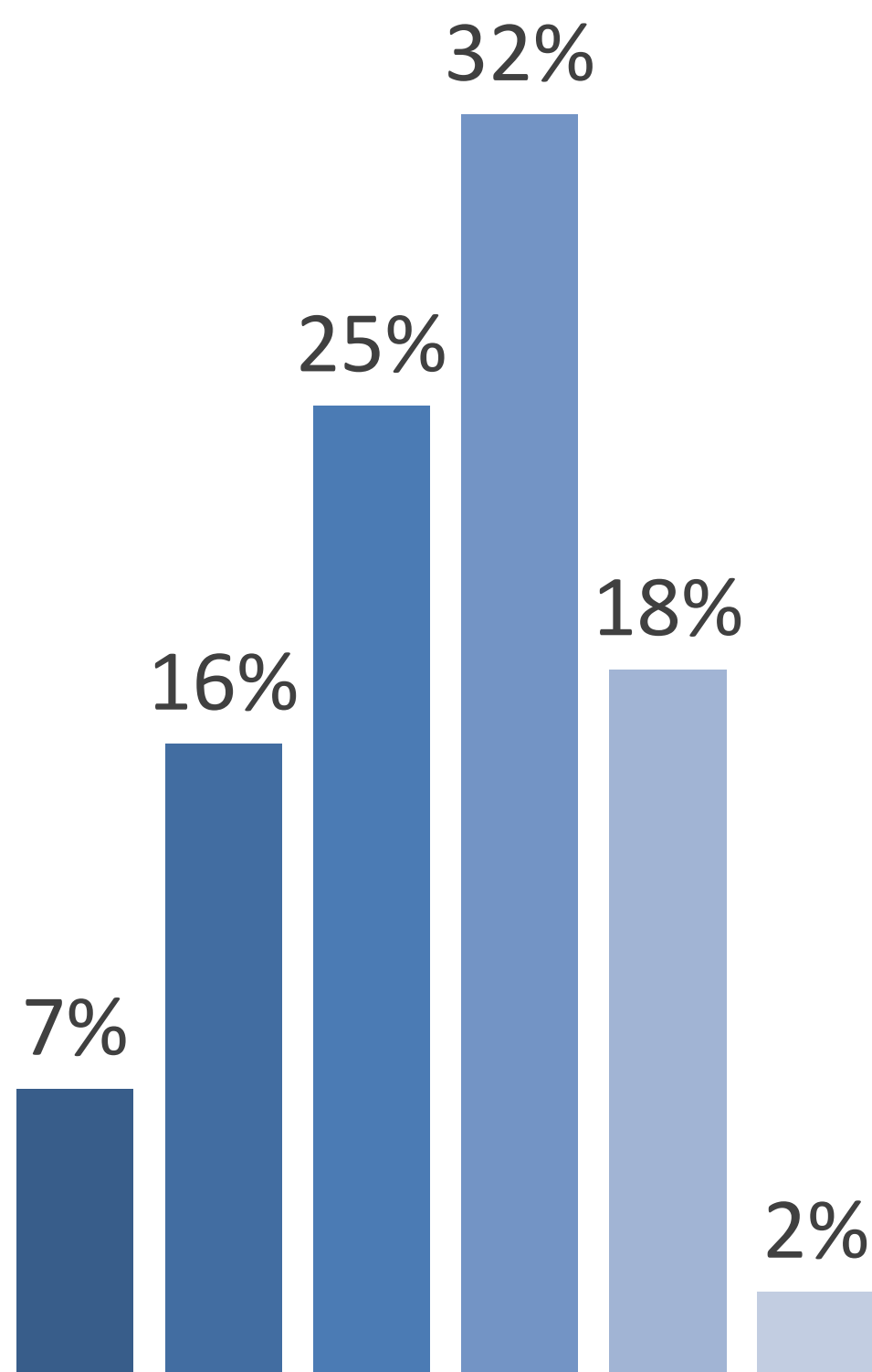


## Goal Orientation - Performance

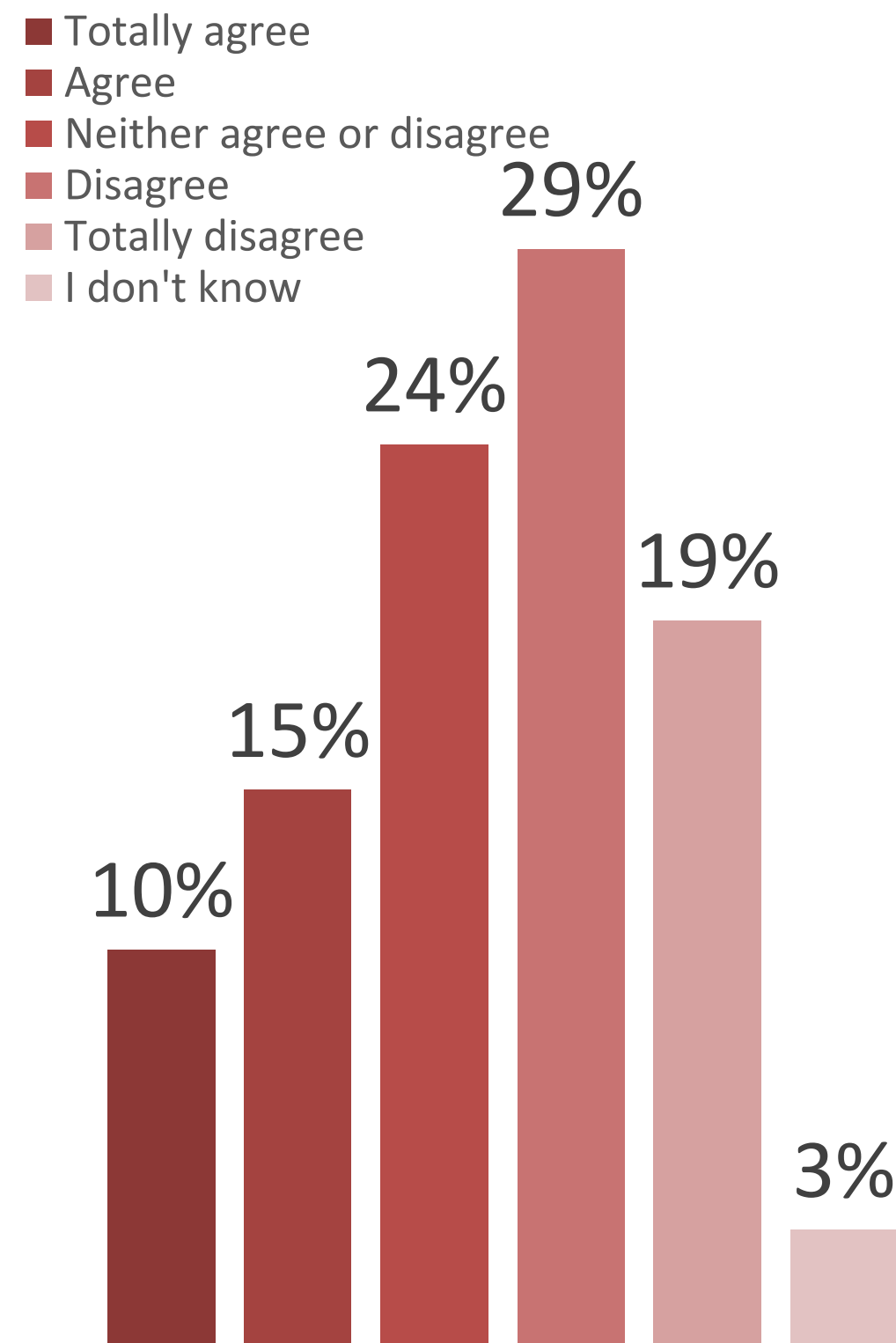
Whether learners' goals tended to focus on mastering English or on comparing their performance with their peers



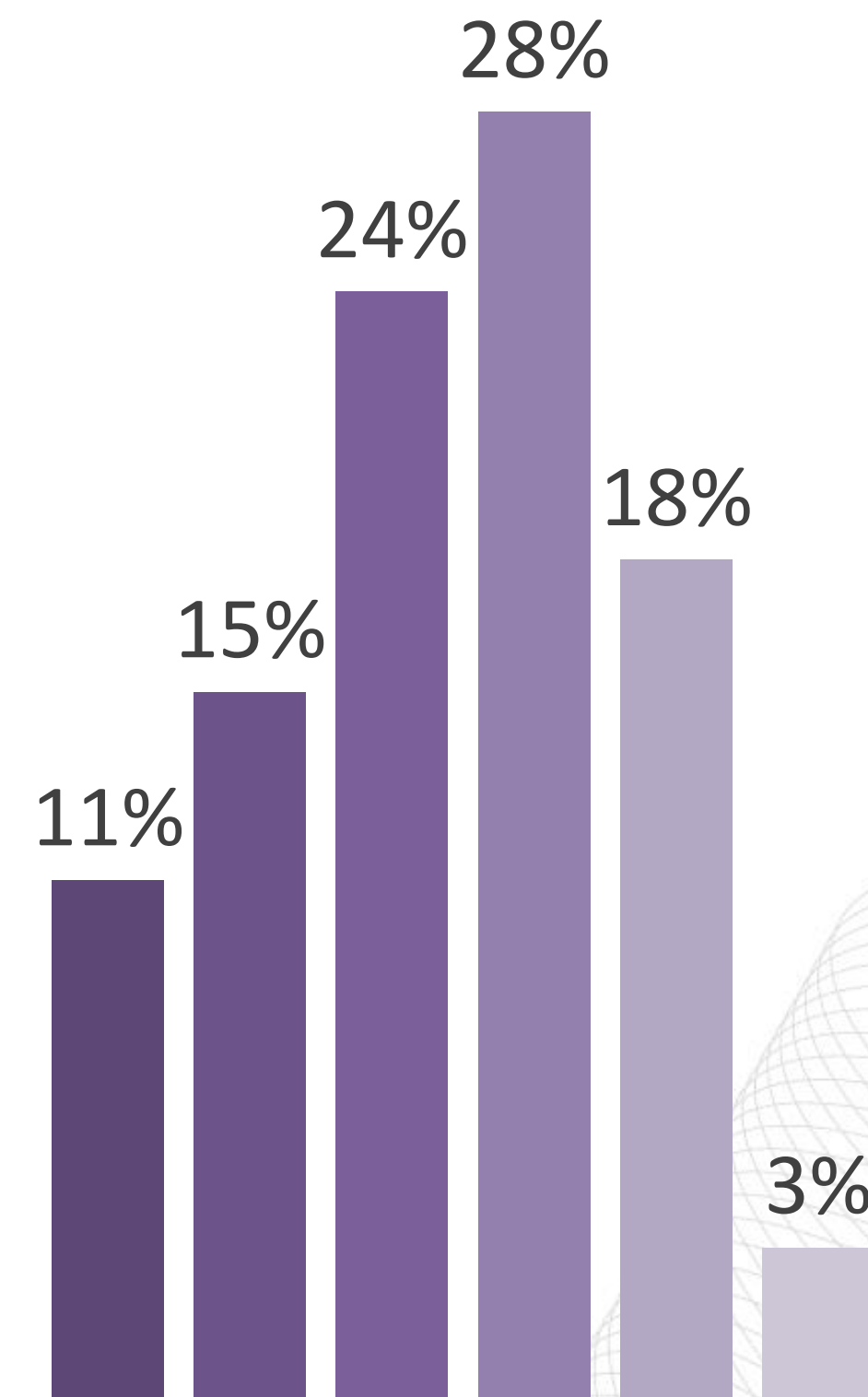
One of my goals is to show the others that English classwork is easy for me



It's important to me that I do better than others in my English class



One of my goals is to be the best of all my English classmates



## Conclusions and recommendations

- The results of this study indicated that learners that had previously taken a Cambridge exam were mostly calm and confident. This was particularly true for how they felt about speaking English during the test, which suggests that these learners had higher test ease (lower anxiety = confident or very confident = 53%).
- However, we could not investigate the difference in test ease levels between the learners above and the learners that had taken a different exam or no exam at all. These learners represented only 4% of the respondents so this can be an action point for the future
- The majority of learners in this study held positive attitudes towards learning English, which is reassuring as this suggests that teachers (and possibly parents) are instilling positive learning attitudes in these learners.
- Most students believed that they could improve their English language ability and that their English ability could be improved with hard work.
- Generally speaking, the learners reported positive attitudes towards learning English. Most students felt they were doing well in English and very few reported that learning English was difficult for them.

## Conclusions and recommendations

- The majority of students also reported they were motivated to master the English language
- Around 50% of learners did not endorse goals that focused on proving or comparing their performance to others
- The results also suggest that around 30% of students were anxious (stressed or really stressed) about their exam. Teachers may be able to help reduce learners' anxiety about tests and fears related to communicating in English by encouraging a low-anxiety environment in the classroom. For example:
  - Enable learners to practice English in different contexts e.g., role-plays, games, in digital media, with native speakers.
  - Emphasise the importance of communication rather than perfect spoken accuracy; encourage learners not to focus on their mistakes.
  - Gradually encourage shy students to speak English in class (e.g., allow solo practice, then build up to small group work and speaking in front of the class).
  - Avoid a high level of competition between peers in the classroom.
  - Familiarise learners with the test format...

# Acknowledgements

- Colégio Farroupilha BR 249
- Escola Regina Santos - Pelotas
- Instituto Cultural Santanense - Santana do Livramento
- Professores Inquietos
- Cambridge Assessment English



Thank  
You!

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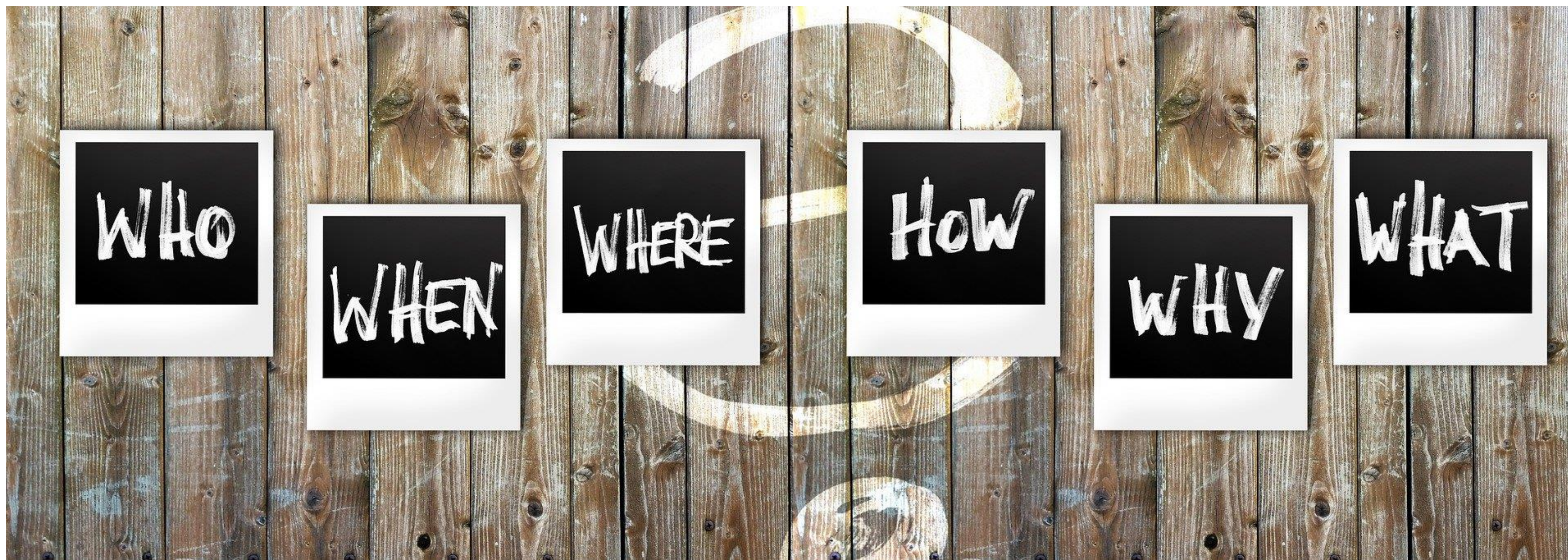
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# Questions





**Thank you!**  
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