



The invisible threat: Women’s knowledge and concerns about air pollution during pregnancy

Ms Karen Joash¹, Dr Agnes Agyepong², Dr Michelle Peter², Reyss Wheeler²

¹Imperial College Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK; ²Global Child & Maternal Health CIC, London, UK

Correspondence: karen.joash@nhs.net

Background

- Air pollution is the leading environmental threat to health.
- It is linked to asthma and stroke, as well as adverse maternal and fetal outcomes such as like low birth weight, preterm birth, and maternal depression.
- Racial inequalities in exposure to air pollution mean that Black communities in London face higher exposure to harmful air pollutants, putting Black mothers and pregnant women at greater risk.
- Yet, little is known about how Black mothers feel about air pollution or how it shapes their behaviours - despite them being among the most exposed to harmful pollutants.

Objectives

- To explore the awareness, attitudes, and behaviours of Black mothers’ and Black pregnant women living in London towards air pollution across three domains: (a) personal health, (b) health during pregnancy, and (c) the health of a baby in the womb.
- To identify gaps in understanding that can inform policy and health interventions.

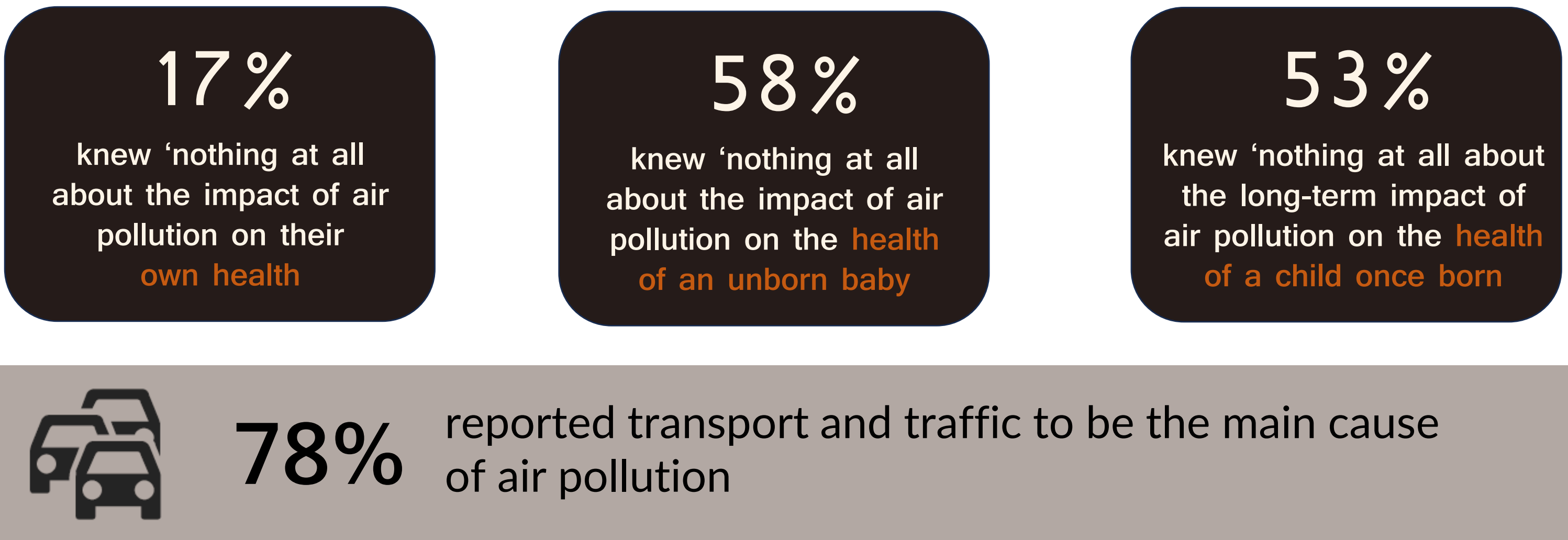
Methods

In October 2023, an online survey was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from 226 women of Black or mixed Black heritage living in London. All women were either currently pregnant or had been pregnant since November 2017.

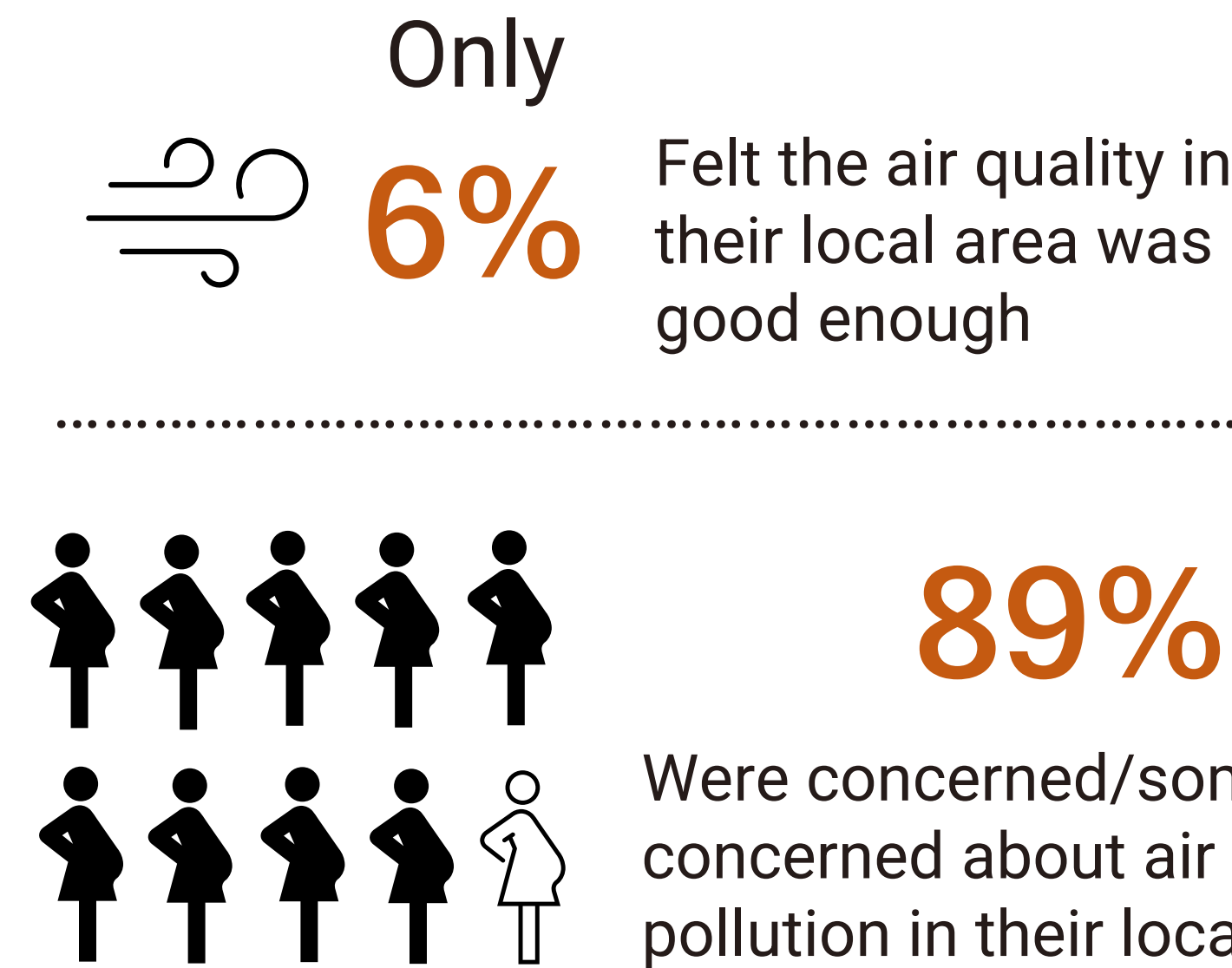
Key finding

Black mothers in London are worried about air pollution but lack the facts and freedom to protect themselves and their babies

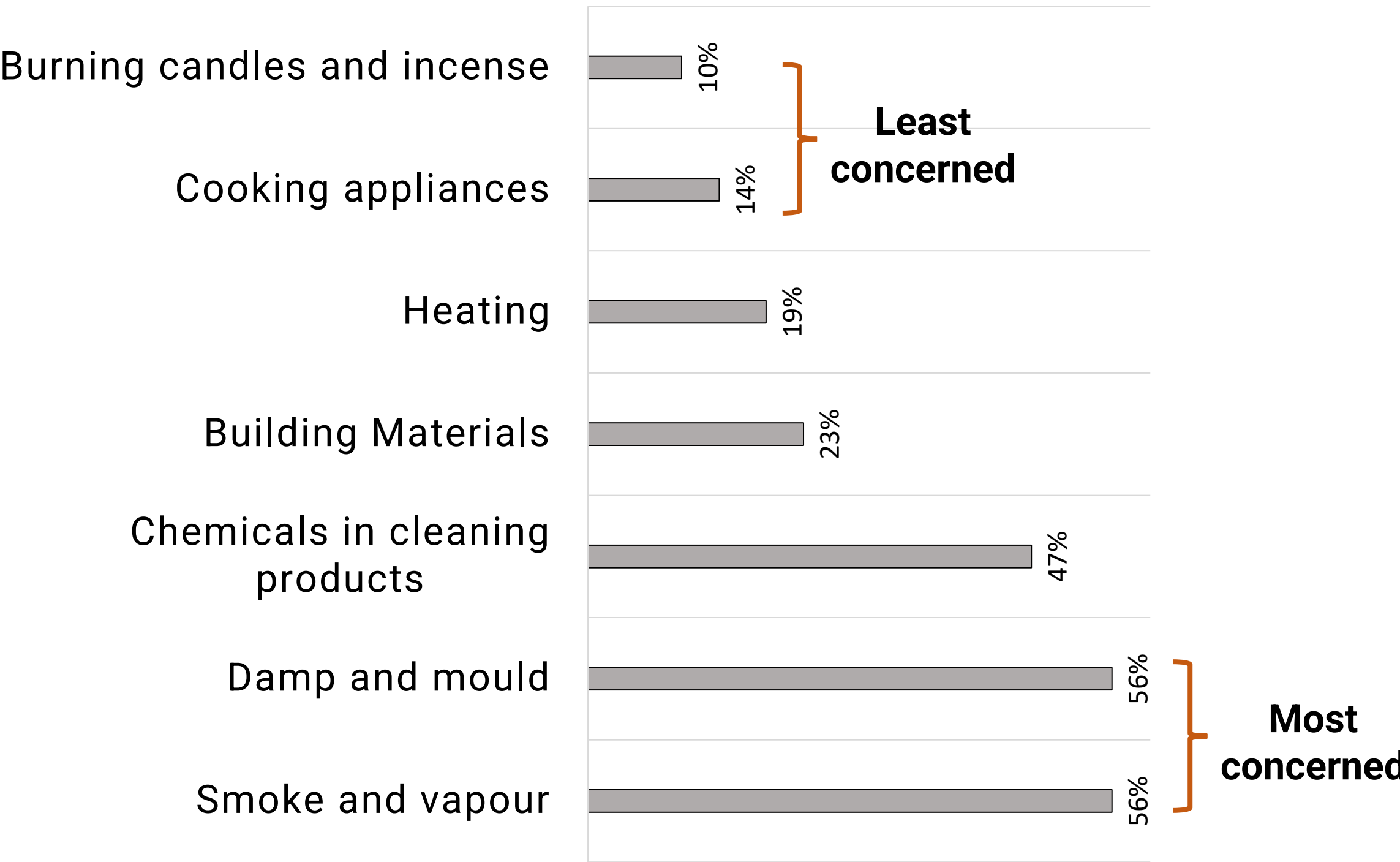
Awareness of air pollution’s impacts



Attitudes towards outdoor air pollution



Concerns about indoor air pollution



Concerns about health impacts of air pollution

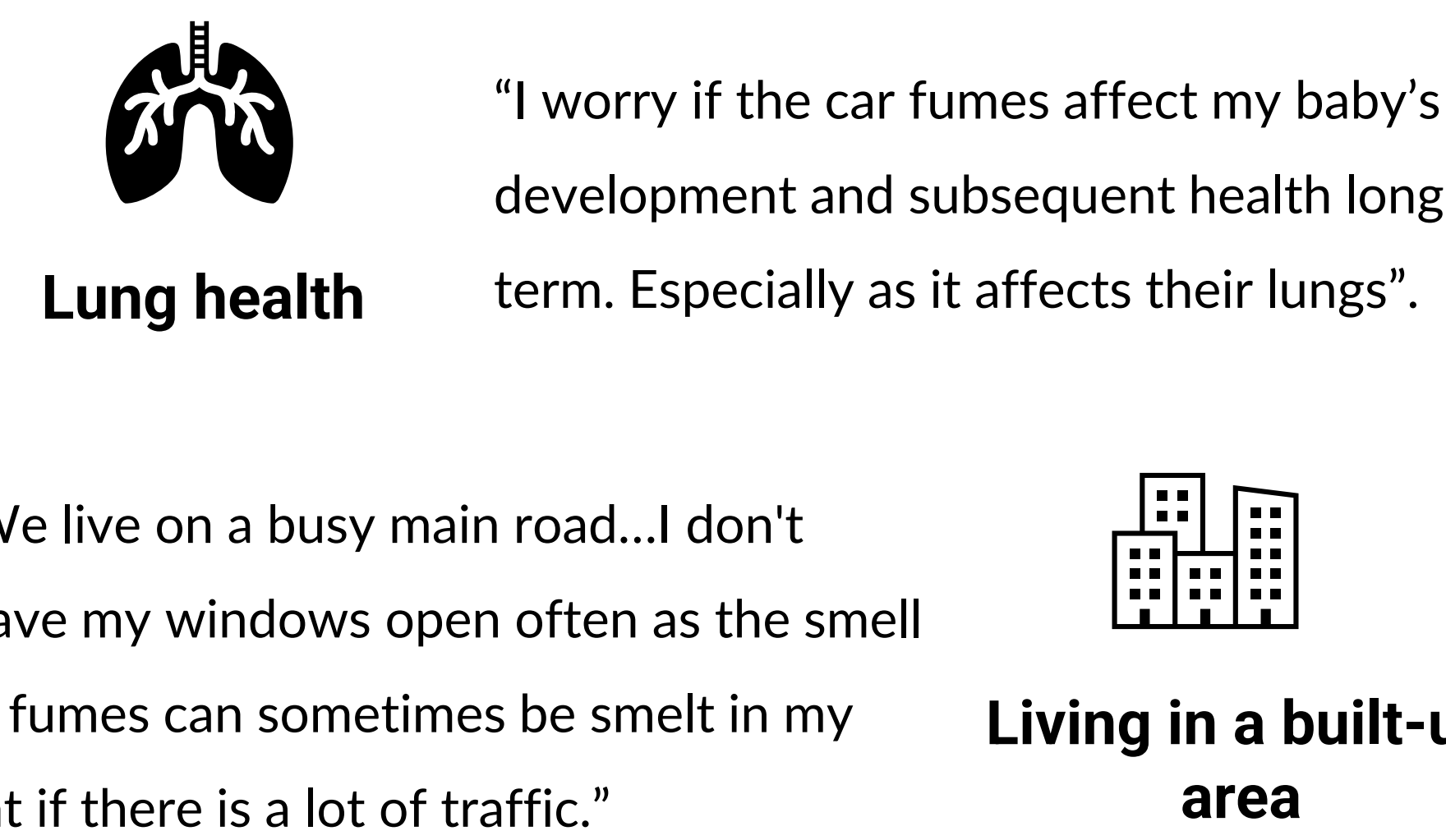
The majority were concerned in their current/ most recent pregnancy about the impact of air pollution on



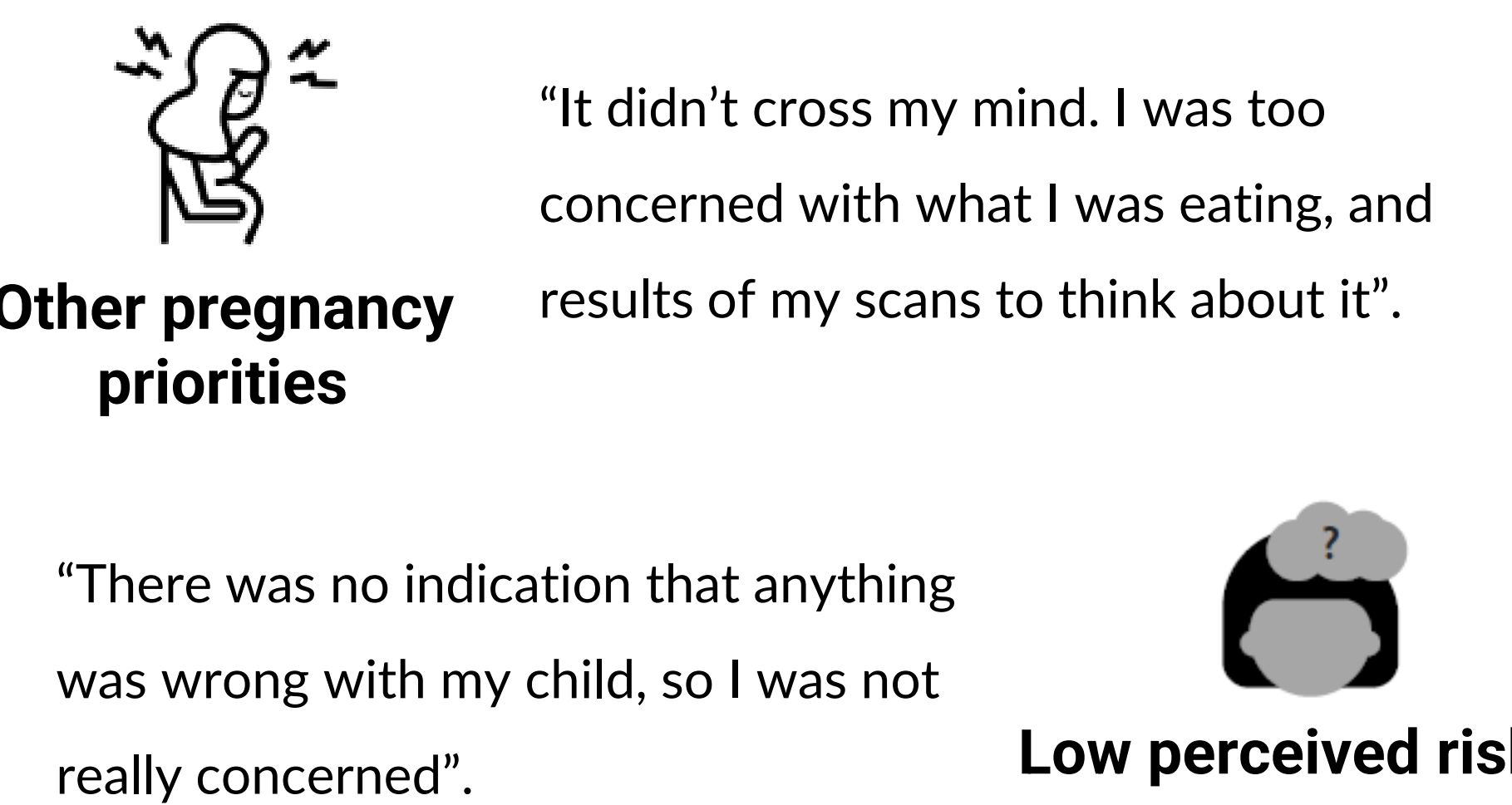
Of those not concerned

71% stated this was due to **lack of knowledge** about air pollution

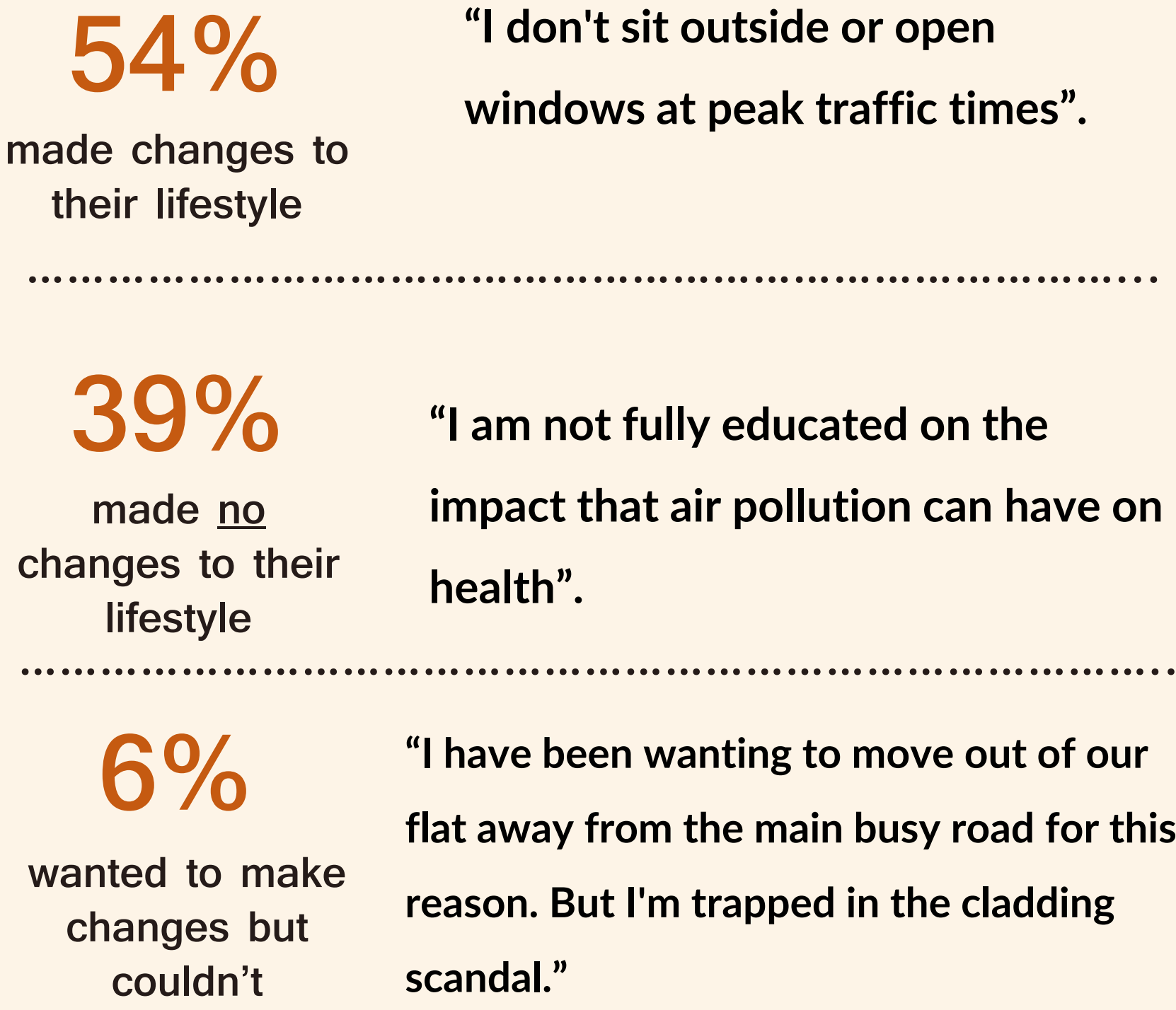
Those concerned worried about



Those not concerned said



Behaviours because of air pollution



Conclusion

Despite air pollution being a global concern, its negative health impacts are not well-understood.

- Black mothers and Black pregnant women want more information**, so they can understand how air pollution may impact the health of their unborn children and children once born.
- Education on air pollution is welcomed**, especially about indoor pollutants, so that women can make informed choices about their lifestyle.
- Clear need for policy action:** targeted public health campaigns, improved maternal health education, and culturally sensitive interventions to bridge the awareness gap.