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# **Value orientations of sexuality education materials in Latvia and their contribution to education for family formation**

Manuel Joaquín Fernández González, Svetlana Surikova, Lāsma Dene, and Kristīne Lapiņa

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# Research context 1



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- ✓ **The family is a cornerstone of Latvian society** and is recognised as such in the Constitution, which emphasises the state's role in protecting marriage, family, and the rights of parents and children.
- ✓ However, Latvia faces significant **challenges related to family stability and demography**, including high divorce rates, a large proportion of single-parent families, and a very low birth rate leading to a rapid declining population.
- ✓ These issues underscore **the urgent need to equip young people with values and attitudes that support the formation of strong families**, with education playing a crucial role in this effort.

# Research context 1



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## RESEARCH DIRECTIONS at LU:

- ✓ Sexuality education and family-formation values in the normative documents of the Republic of Latvia, taking into account the cultural heritage of Latvian society
- ✓ A needs analysis (survey) for supporting teachers to implement virtue-based sexuality education for family formation literacy in Latvia (survey, 1200 respondents)
- ✓ International best practices (literature review, educational initiatives)
- ✓ Educational materials in Latvia

# Research context 1



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## Approaches to sexuality education

- ✓ UNESCO's (2018) Comprehensive sexuality education – human rights and equality.
- ✓ Risk Reduction Approach (e.g., Kirby & Coyle, 1997) focuses on preventing STIs and unwanted pregnancies through contraception.
- ✓ The Abstinence-Only approach (Ott & Santelli, 2007) promotes delaying sexual behaviour until marriage.
- ✓ The Virtue-Based Approach (Beltramo, 2022; Lickona, 2013) fosters character development, moral values, and respectful relationships.
- ✓ The Physiology-Only Approach (Raith-Paula, 2018) teaches reproductive processes before puberty
- ✓ Holistic Love and Fertility Approach (Carter, 2017) merges virtue-based and physiology-based models within responsible love.

# About human rights



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Fernando Simón-Yarza Associate Professor of Constitutional Law University of Navarra: “Between Desire and Reason: Rights Discourse at the Crossroads” - . <https://www.amazon.com/Between-Desire-Reason-Discourse-Crossroads/dp/1786614405>

- ✓ About the Declaration of Human Rights – initially (Eleanor Roosevelt, René Cassin, Edward Hallet Carr, Richard McKeon, Jacques Maritain) Human rights were understood as ‘basic human goods, fundamental goods’.
- ✓ From the outset, there was criticism – why call goods ‘rights’? (Michel Villey, Alasdair MacIntyre, Pierre Manent...). It would be better to talk about goods...

Rights as trumps. Ronald Dworkin “Taking Rights Seriously”

- ✓ defined – and enthusiastically defended – rights as a “trump card”.
- ✓ Criticism: Nigel Biggar (What's Wrong with Rights? (2020) <https://www.amazon.com/Whats-Wrong-Rights-Nigel-Biggar-ebook/dp/B08JZDVZ3W> with its “tendency to exclude all other moral considerations”, the discourse of rights ‘overtakes and concludes all discussions’, “by initially stating what should be the conclusion”. Rights have no limits. Trump outcompetes any debate.

## Research context 2 – sexuality education materials in Latvia



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- ✓ Currently, sexuality education materials in Latvia, such as those prepared by the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and several NGOs, **focus predominantly on health-oriented approaches.** Topics such as committed love, character, chastity, fertility, abstinence, and respect for unborn life are often absent or underrepresented.
- ✓ Recently, the dissemination of age-inappropriate materials advocating liberal views on sexuality and gender transitions by the Ministry of Education and Science has highlighted **concerns about the dominance of a liberal worldview in sexuality education policy.**

# Research context 2

- ✓ To uphold democratic principles and ensure diversity, there is **a need to introduce** in the Latvian education system **virtue- and family values-based educational resources**, allowing parents and educators to choose materials that align with their own perspectives.
- ✓ However, there is **a lack of systematic evaluation of existing sexuality education materials** in Latvia and their contribution to promote education for family formation.



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# Study aim and research question

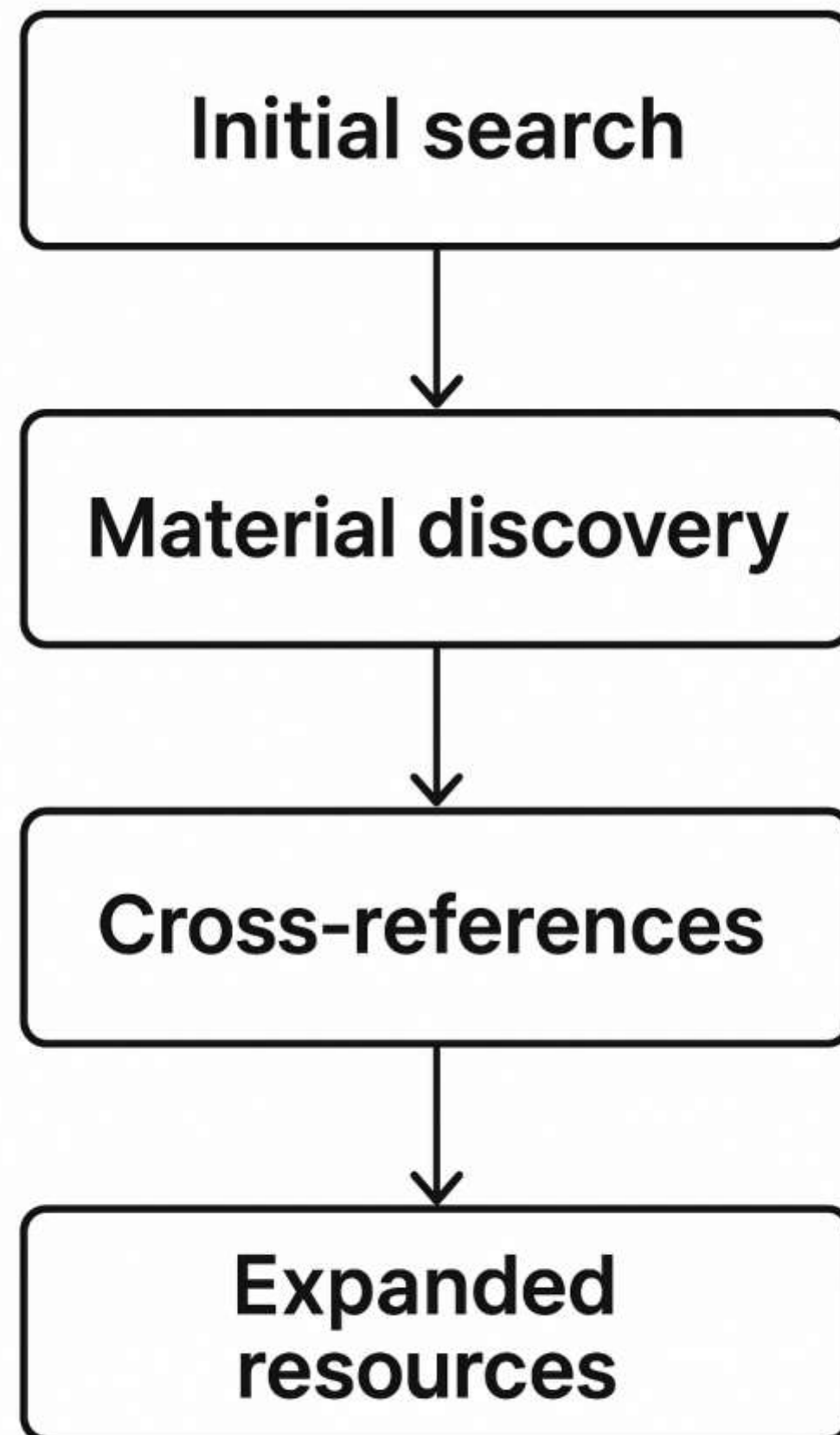


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**This study aims** to contribute to provide a foundation for balanced, values-oriented educational materials that support education for family formation and promote virtuous approaches to sexuality education in Latvia.

This study is **guided by the research question**: *What are the value orientations of current educational materials for sexuality education in Latvia, and how do they contribute to promoting education for family formation?*

# Search strategy



- ✓ **4 researchers** were involved.
- ✓ **Keyword search** was a common method. Keywords used: sexuality education, sexuality, puberty, family, marriage, love, etc.
- ✓ **Materials sourced from:**
  - Search engines (e.g., Google);
  - Digital platforms (soma.lv, uzdevumi.lv, mape.gov.lv, skolo.lv, tavaklase.lv, etc.);
  - NGO websites (papardeszieds.lv, centrstdardedze.lv);
  - Government portals (izm.gov.lv, spkc.gov.lv, viaa.gov.lv, etc.);
  - Social media (YouTube, Facebook);
  - Publishers' websites (zvaigzne.lv, janisroze.lv);
  - School websites and **libraries**.
- ✓ **Additional materials found via cross-references.**

# EXAMPLE: Procedure for Selecting Sample Curricula

<b>Step 1. Sexuality Education and Sexuality</b>	
<b>Keywords in Latvian:</b> “dzimum...” (dzimums, dzimumšūna, dzimumidentitāte, dzimumvairošanās, dzimumdzīve utt.); “seks...” (sekss, seksualitāte, seksuālā veselība, seksuālā vardarbība); “reproduktīv...” (reproduktīvā veselība, reproduktīvais vecums)	<b>Question:</b> Does the sample curriculum include information related to the biological, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality education?
<b>Step 2. Puberty</b>	
<b>Keywords in Latvian:</b> “pubertāte”	<b>Question:</b> Does the sample curriculum mention physical (bodily) and emotional changes during adolescence?
<b>Step 3. Family and Marriage</b>	
<b>Keywords in Latvian:</b> “laulība”, “ģimene” (ģimene kā vērtība, ģimenes plānošana, ģimenes veidošanas pratība)	<b>Question:</b> Does the sample curriculum cover the role of family and marriage, family formation values?
<b>Step 4. Relationships and Emotions</b>	
<b>Keywords in Latvian:</b> “attiecības”, “jūtas”, “draudzība”, “mīlestība” (attiecību līmeņi)	<b>Question:</b> Does the sample curriculum include topics on human relationships, levels of relationships, and emotional intelligence?
<b>Step 5. Health and Safety</b>	
<b>Keywords in Latvian:</b> “veselība”, “higiēna”, “drošība”, “vardarbība”	<b>Question:</b> Does the sample curriculum include aspects of personal and public health, safety, and prevention of any kind of violence (e.g., sexual)?

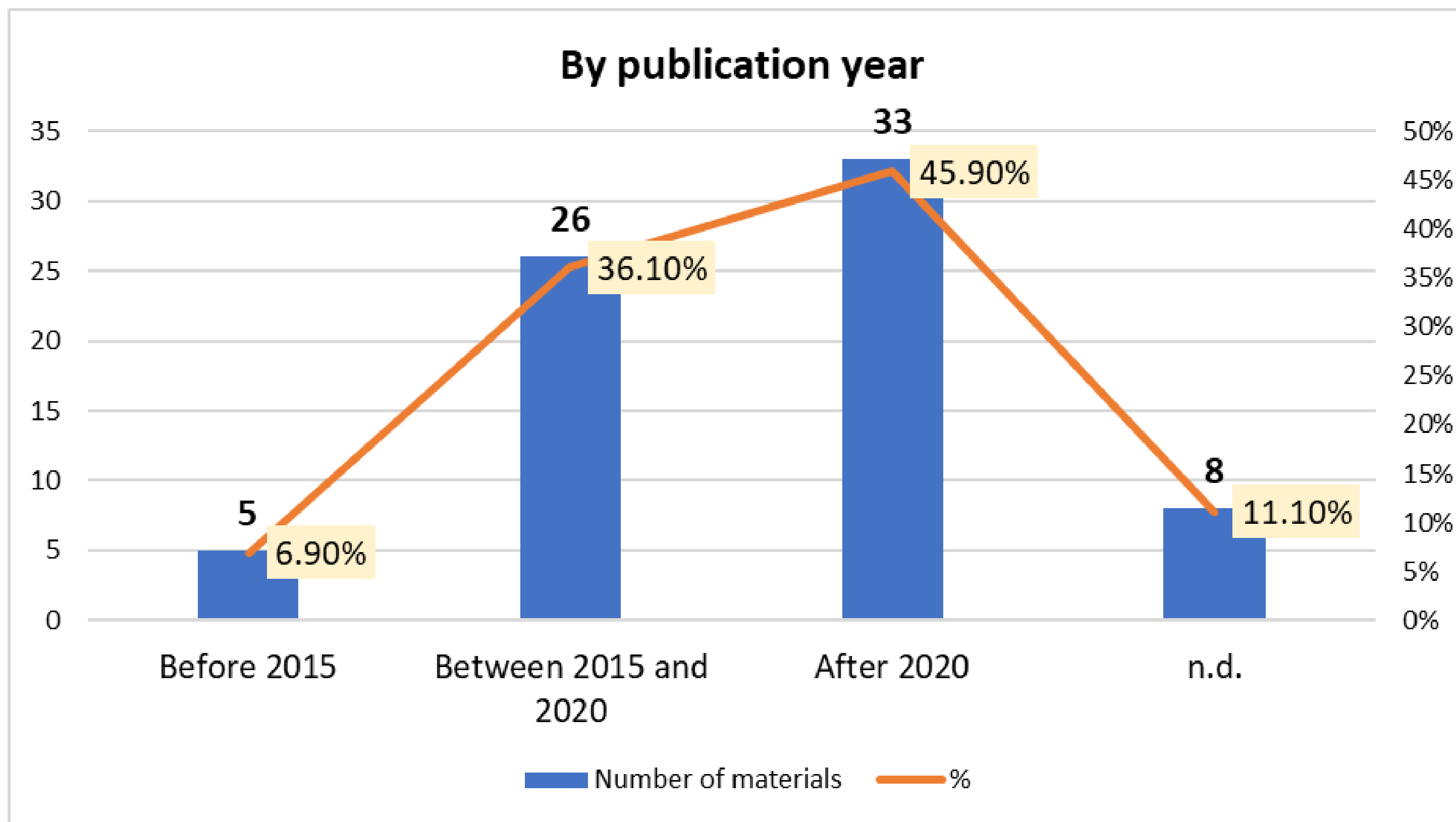
# Research sample 1

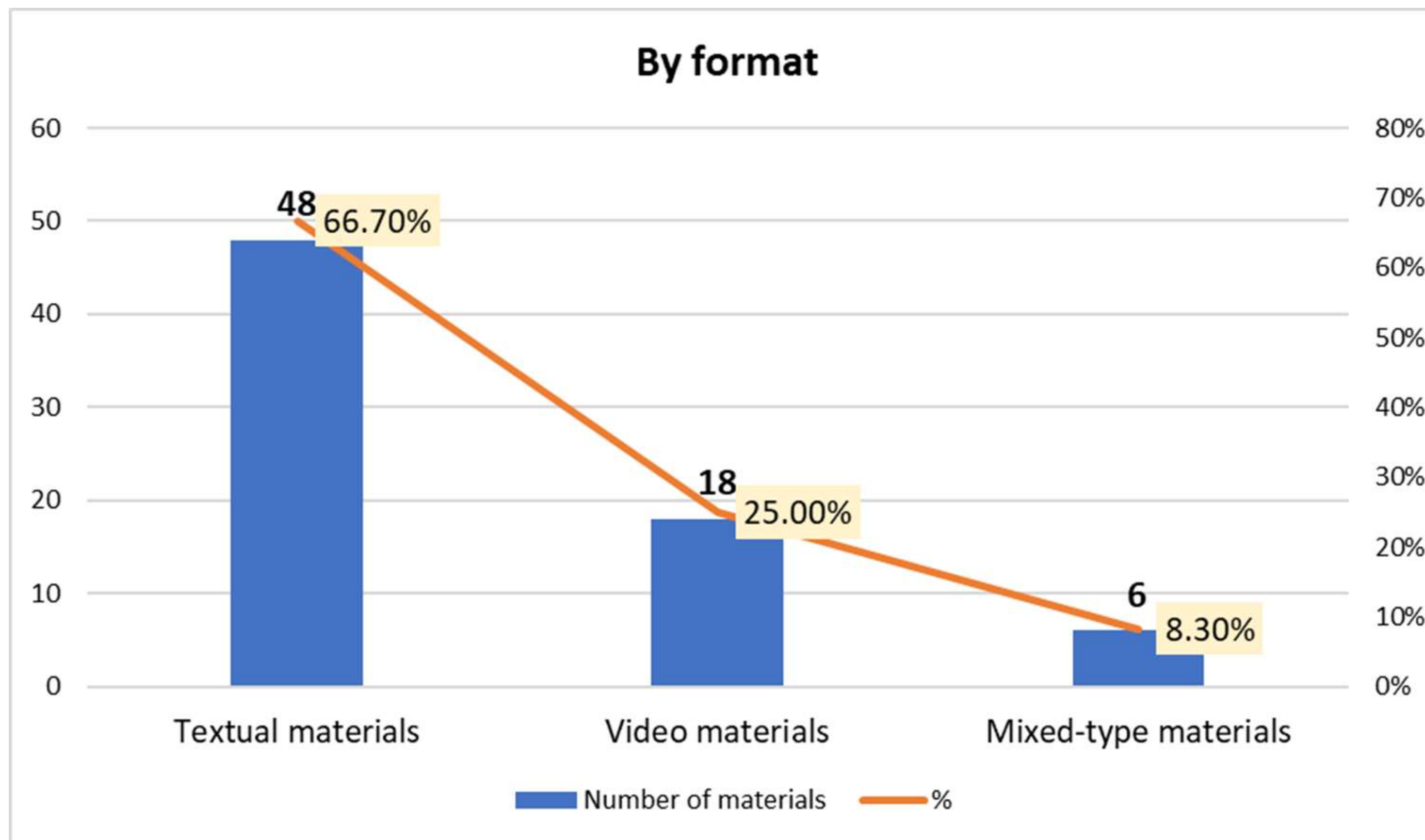


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- ✓ **84 materials published in 2001-2024;**
- ✓ **Teaching and learning aids** for pre-school, lower- and upper-secondary school (textbooks, handbooks, handouts in biology, anatomy, hygiene, physiology, social sciences, etc.);
- ✓ **Other informative educational materials** (paper and online) developed and/or disseminated by public authorities, different NGOs, and educational portals (e.g., [uzdevumi.lv](http://uzdevumi.lv), [soma.lv](http://soma.lv)).

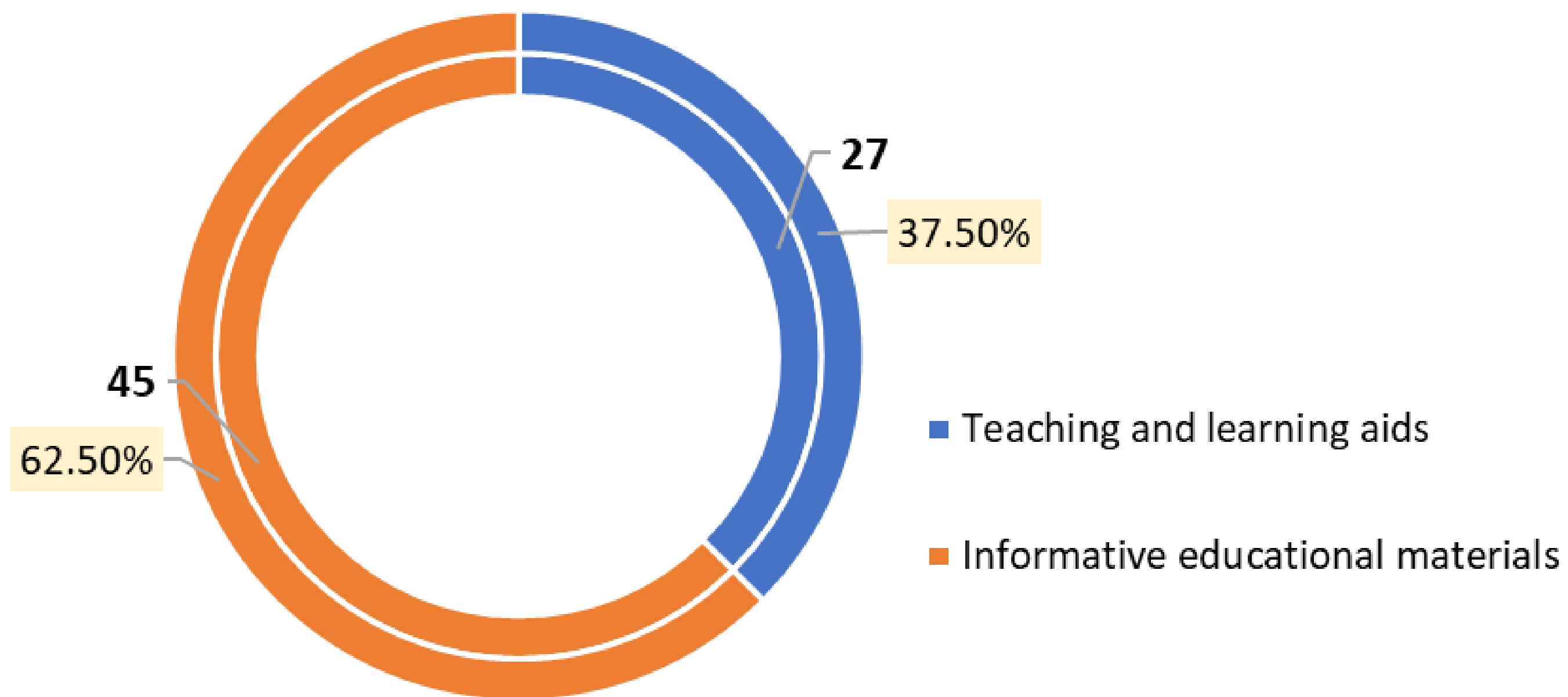
From the initially identified 84 materials, a targeted selection of **72 of the most recent and/or most relevant materials** was made.

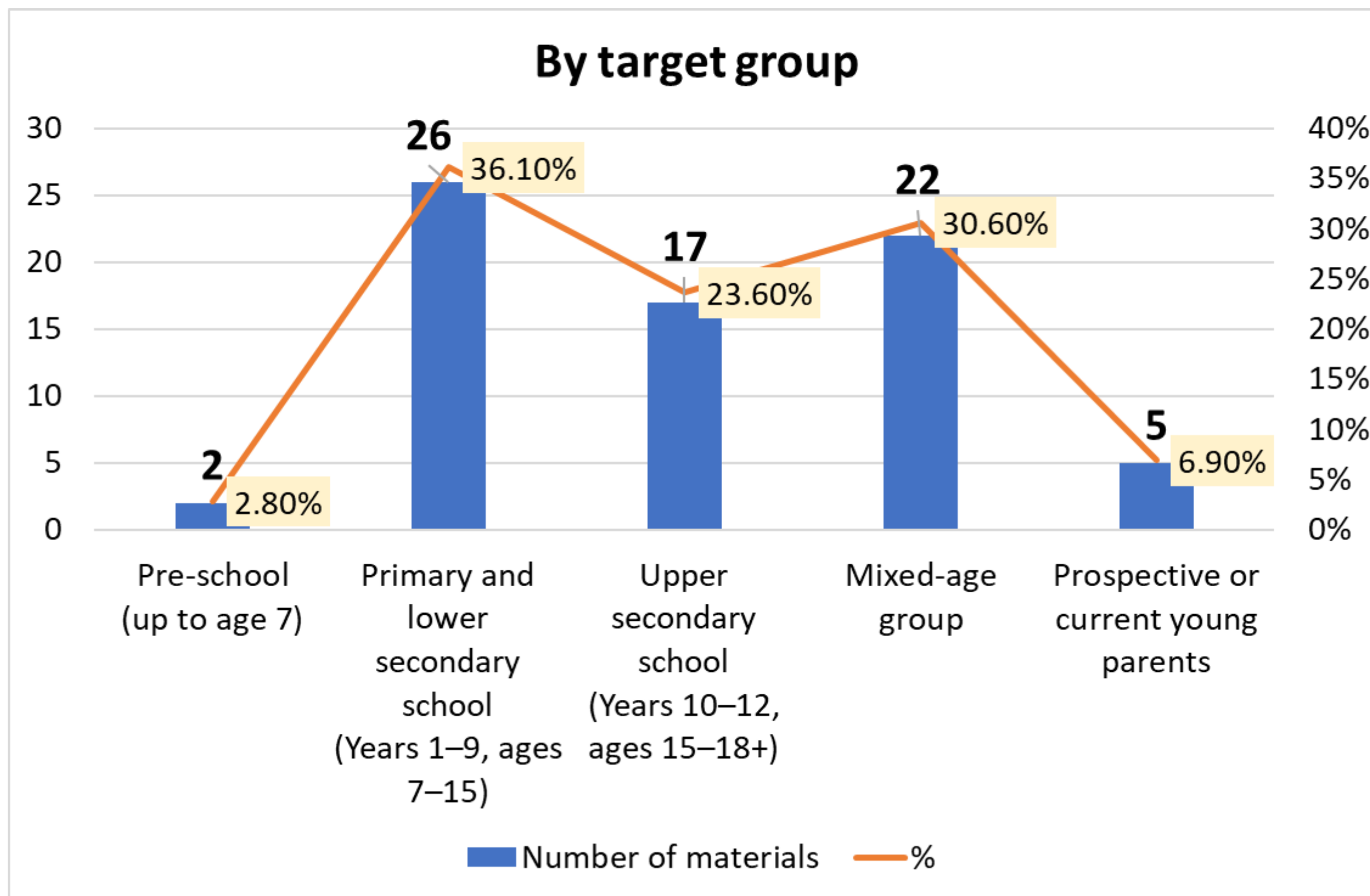






### By type





# Research instrument

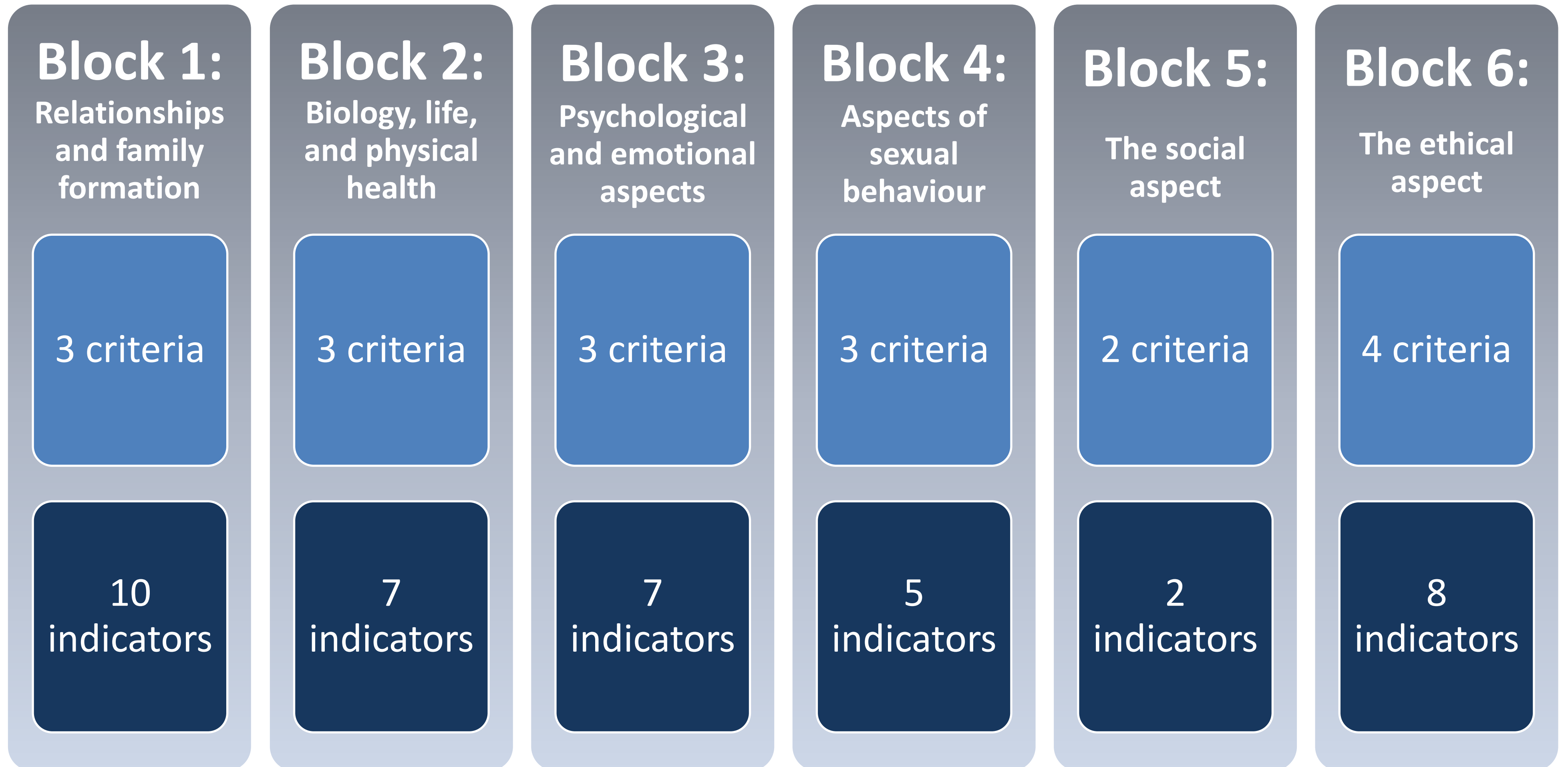


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A document analysis tool was elaborated to analyse the selected materials through six aspects / blocks:

- **Block 1: Relationships and family formation** (framework of love, to family formation values, parental involvement);
- **Block 2: Biology, life, and physical health** (stance on life, physical health);
- **Block 3: Psychological and emotional aspects** (gender awareness, sexual desire, psychological health risks);
- **Block 4: Aspects of sexual behaviour** (age of sexual relations, behavioural models);
- **Block 5: The social aspect** (gender roles);
- **Block 6: The ethical aspect** (acquisition of virtues, authenticity of body language).

**Each analysis aspect / block includes 2 to 4 criteria. Each criterion includes 1 to 6 indicators. Each indicator can be assessed using a 3- to 5-level scale.**



# Block 1 – Family values



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## FAMILY VALUES:

- ✓ complementarity of the two sexes (male and female)
- ✓ selfless love (mutual self-giving)
- ✓ social recognition in marriage (civil or religious)
- ✓ openness to life (fertility, childbearing and childrearing)
- ✓ stability (a permanent union for life)
- ✓ comprehensiveness (family as an holistic system)
- ✓ exclusivity (monogamy).

## RATIONALE

Latvian historical heritage

Latvian Constitution

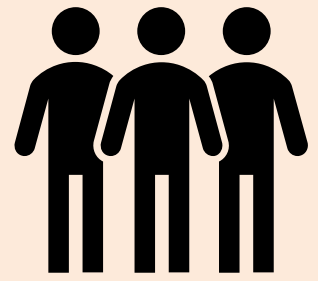
Research: Girgis et al., 2020; Benagiano et al, 2012; de Boer et al, 2012; Birnbaum & Reis, 2019; Bauman, 2008...



## Block 6: The ethical aspect

Acquiring virtues	What is its notion on children and adolescents' ability to manage themselves and acquire virtues (including self-control and self-discipline)?
Personal growth (in freedom, responsibility, practical wisdom, fortitude, perseverance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does it speak about education of freedom?</li><li>• Does it speak about prudence (practical wisdom) for easier integration supervision of sex drive?</li><li>• Does it speak about self-respect and courage - the ability to say "no"?</li><li>• Does it encourage not to be discouraged by mistakes (side-steps), not to give in to self-growth, to choose to make better decisions in the future?</li></ul>
Relationship virtues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does it talk about respect for others (not to be intimidating, respecting the other person's privacy, intimacy...)?</li><li>• Does it talk about responsibility (informed, free mutual consent)?</li></ul>
Body language authenticity	Does it contain information about the authenticity of body language (the appropriateness of bodily actions to the type of relationship)?
Framework of well-being	What is its notion on the relationship between pleasure and well-being?

# Analysis approach



Content analysis will be implemented by three researchers

1

Conducting an initial joint analysis of the first material

2

Individual assessments of all materials by each researcher

3

Weekly meetings and discussions via MS Teams to resolve discrepancies and consolidate ratings

6

Evaluating materials using indicators across six thematic blocks

5

Categorising the materials by year of publication, format, type, and target group

4

Storing both individual and consolidated results

7

Developing a scoring system for each block and for the overall score

8

Sorting materials by total score to identify top-performing items

9

Statistical analysis (descriptive statistics, group comparisons); using Excel for data visualisation

# Scoring system for evaluating the relevance levels by block and total

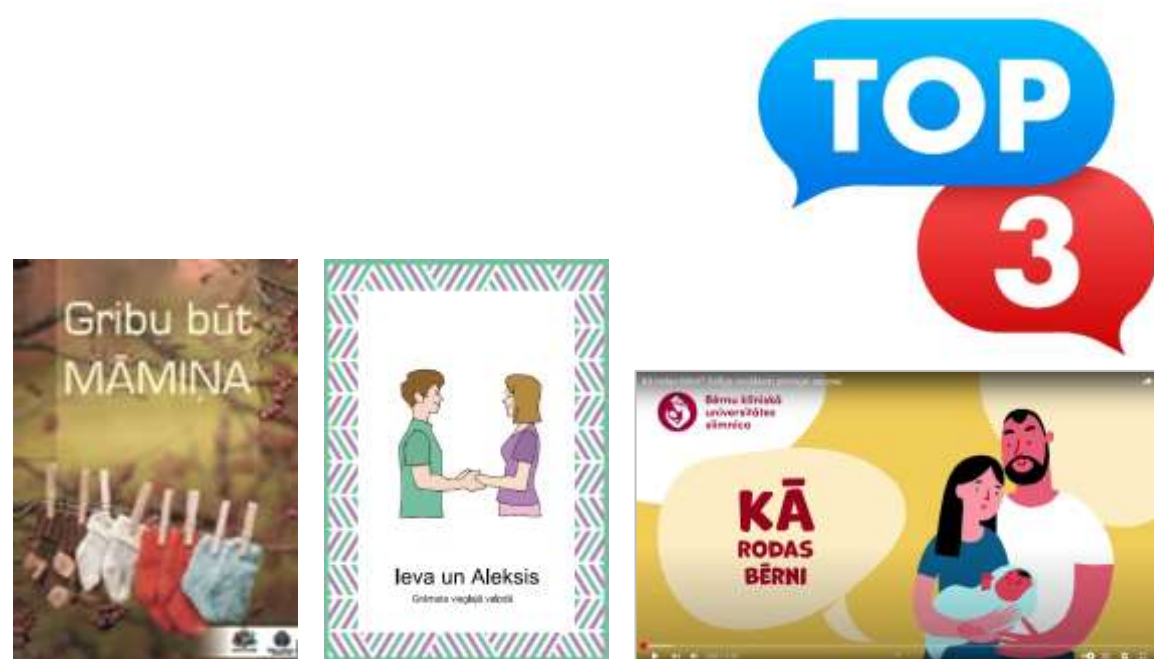


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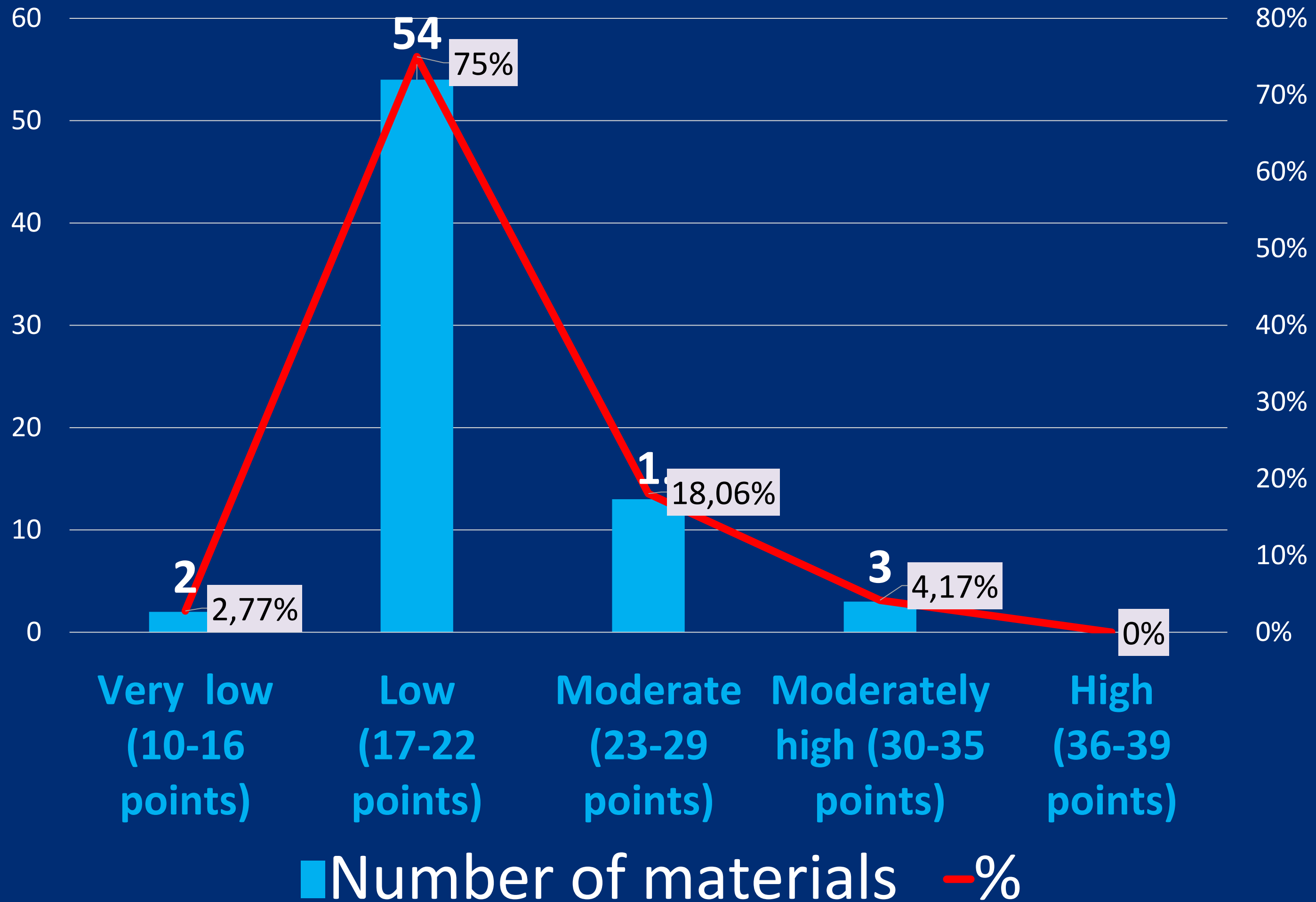
Relevance levels Points	Block 1 Relationships and family formation	Block 2 Biology, life, and physical health	Block 3 Psychological and emotional aspects	Block 4 Aspects of sexual behaviour	Block 5 The social aspect	Block 6 The ethical aspect	Total
Minimum point value (min)	10	7	7	5	2	8	39
Maximum point value (max)	39	26	28	21	10	33	157
Critical point value	17	9	14	10	6	14	70
Very low	10-16	7-10	7-11	5-8	2-4	8-12	39-62
Low	17-22	11-14	12-15	9-12	5-6	13-17	63-86
Moderate	23-29	15-19	16-20	13-15	7-8	18-23	87-110
Moderately high	30-35	20-23	21-24	16-18	9	24-28	111-134
High	36-39	24-26	25-28	19-21	10	29-33	135-157

# Results 1

Overall alignment of the materials with the criteria and indicators of **Block 1** (**Relationships and family formation**)



## Relevance level of the materials (Block 1)



# Results 2

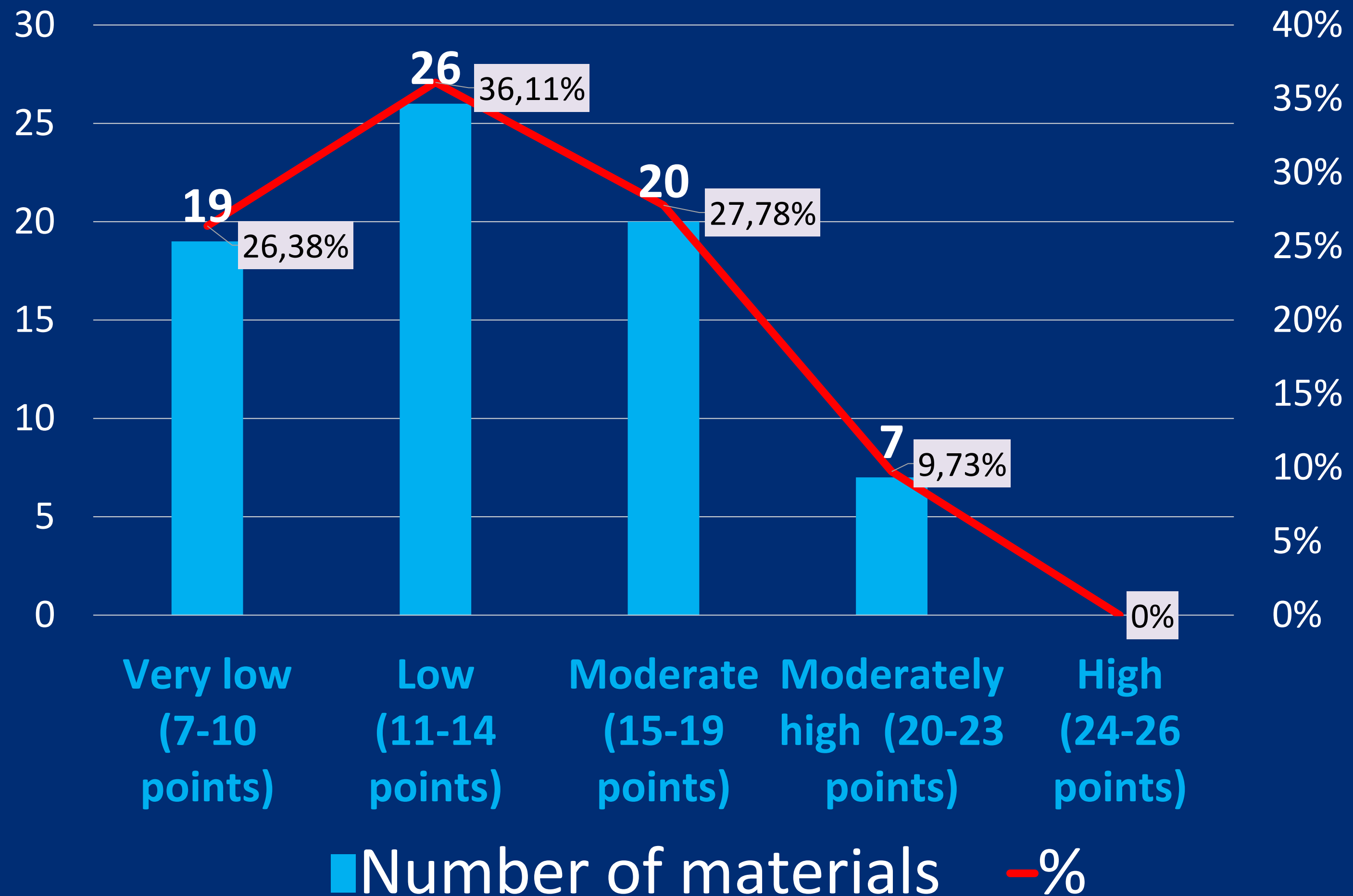
Overall alignment of the materials with the criteria and indicators of **Block 2**  
**(Biology, life, and physical health)**

**TOP 3**



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## Relevance level of the materials (Block 2)



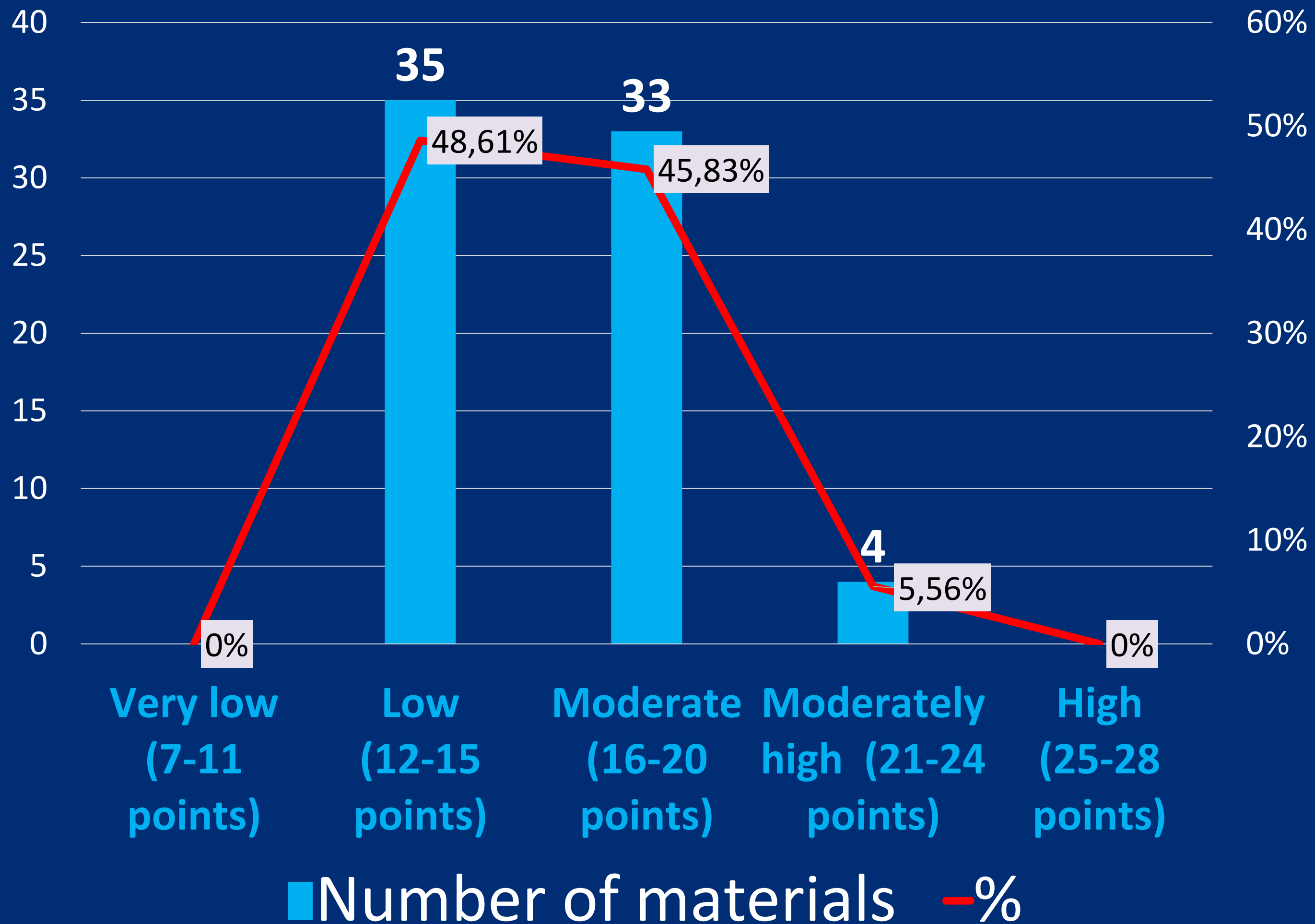
# Results 3

Overall alignment of the materials with the criteria and indicators of **Block 3** (Psychological and emotional aspects)



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## Relevance level of the materials (Block 3)



# Results 4

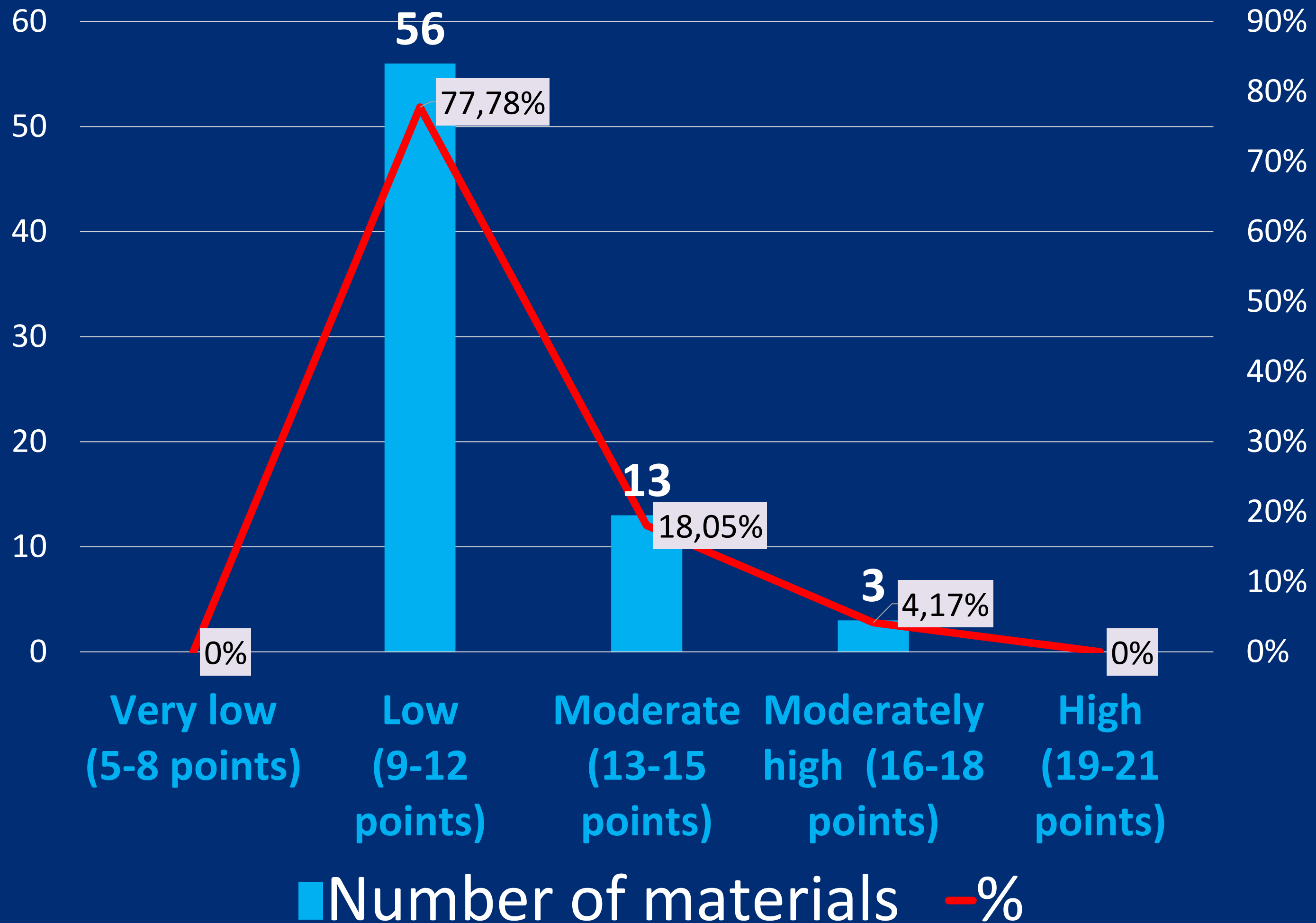
Overall alignment of the materials with the criteria and indicators of **Block 4**  
(Aspects of sexual behaviour)

**TOP 3**



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## Relevance level of the materials (Block 4)

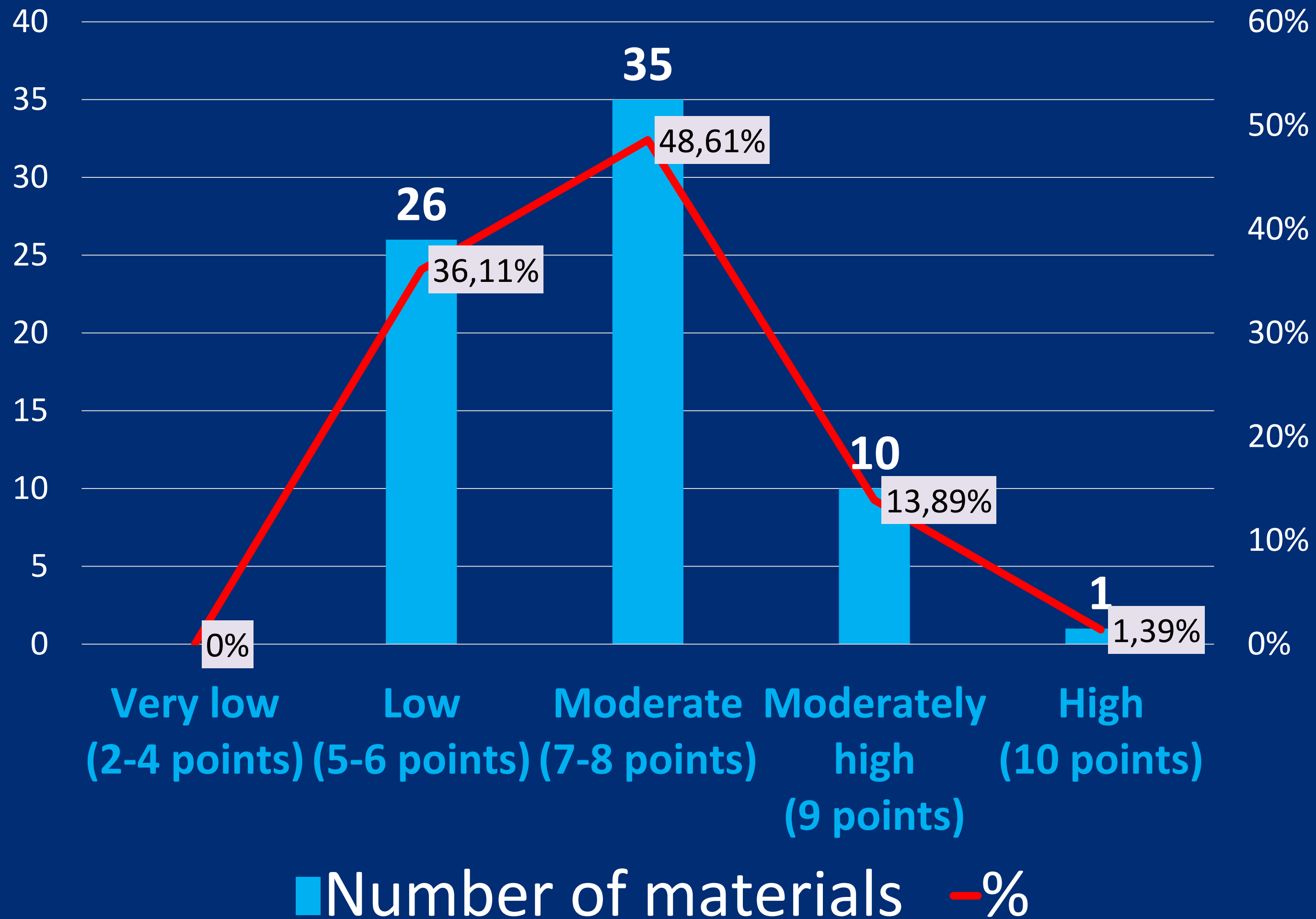


# Results 5

Overall alignment of the materials with the criteria and indicators of **Block 5**  
(**The social aspect**)



## Relevance level of the materials (Block 5)

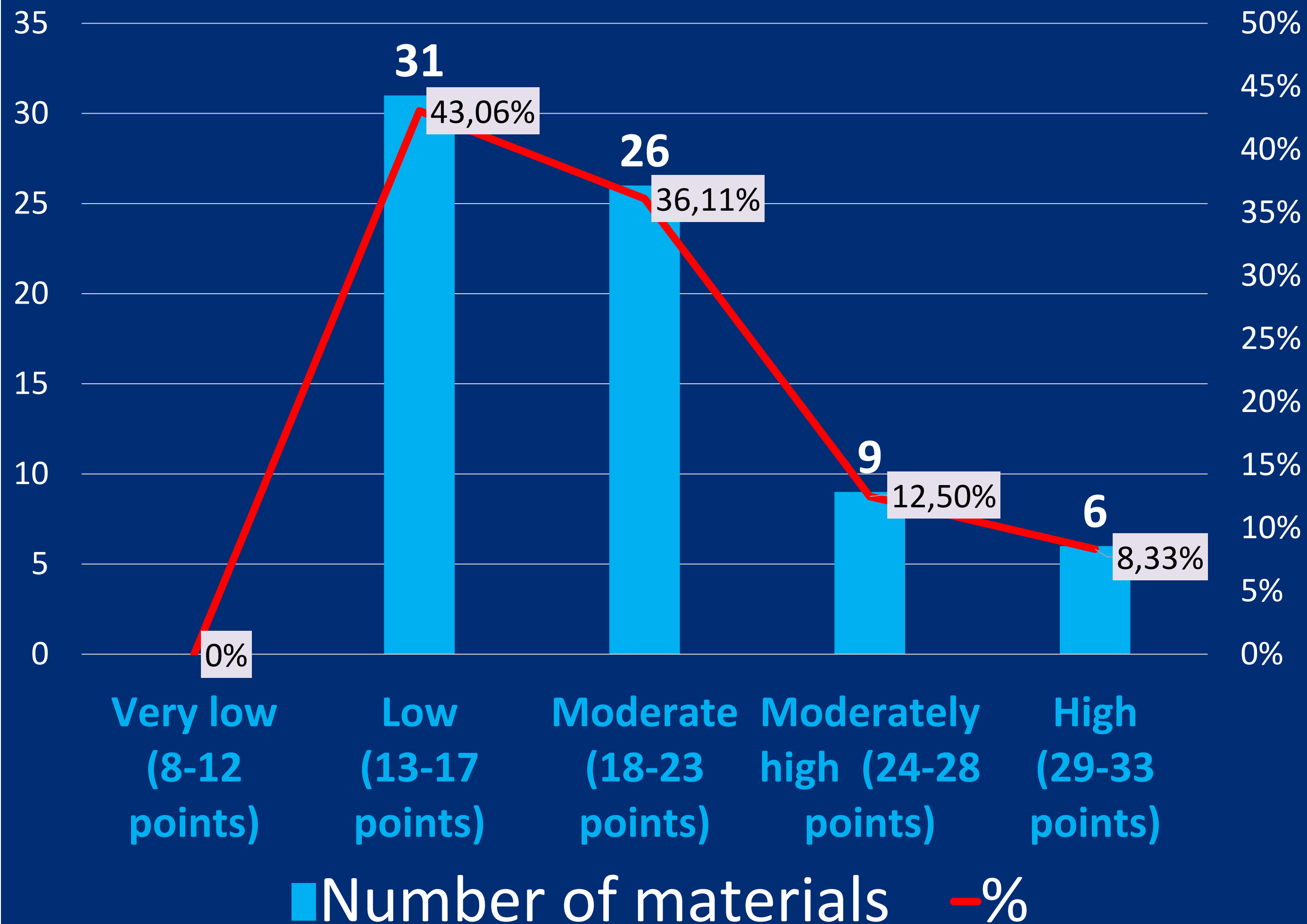


# Results 6

Overall alignment of the materials with the criteria and indicators of **Block 6**  
(**The ethical aspect**)



## Relevance level of the materials (Block 6)

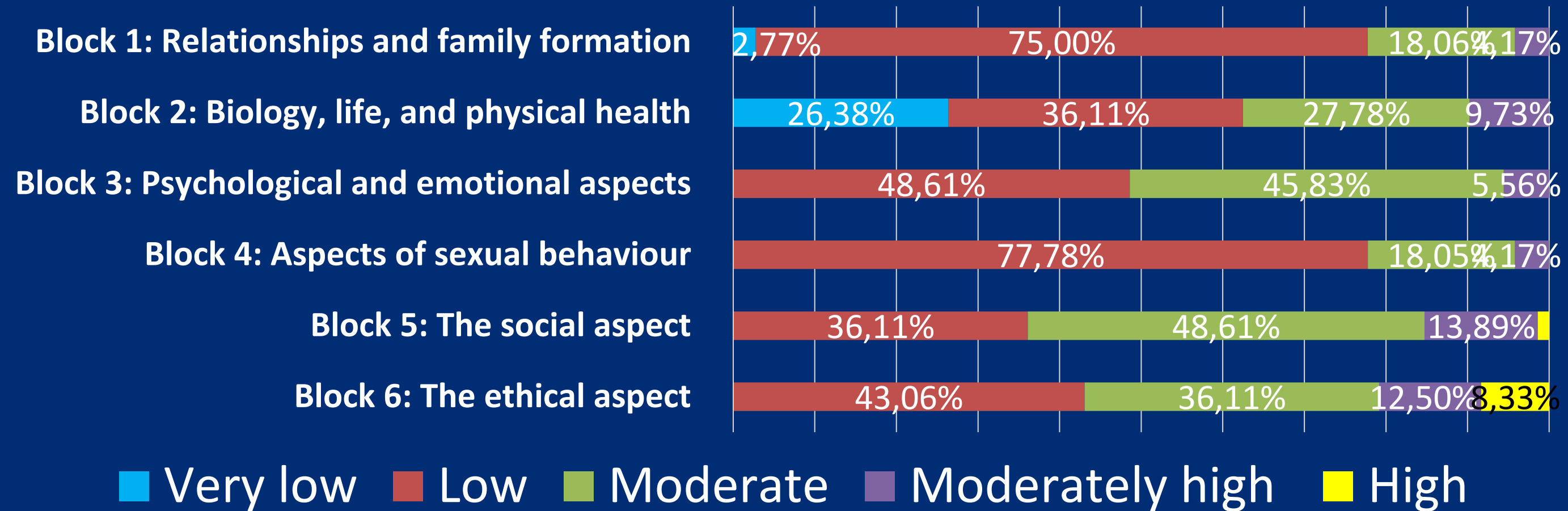


# Results 7

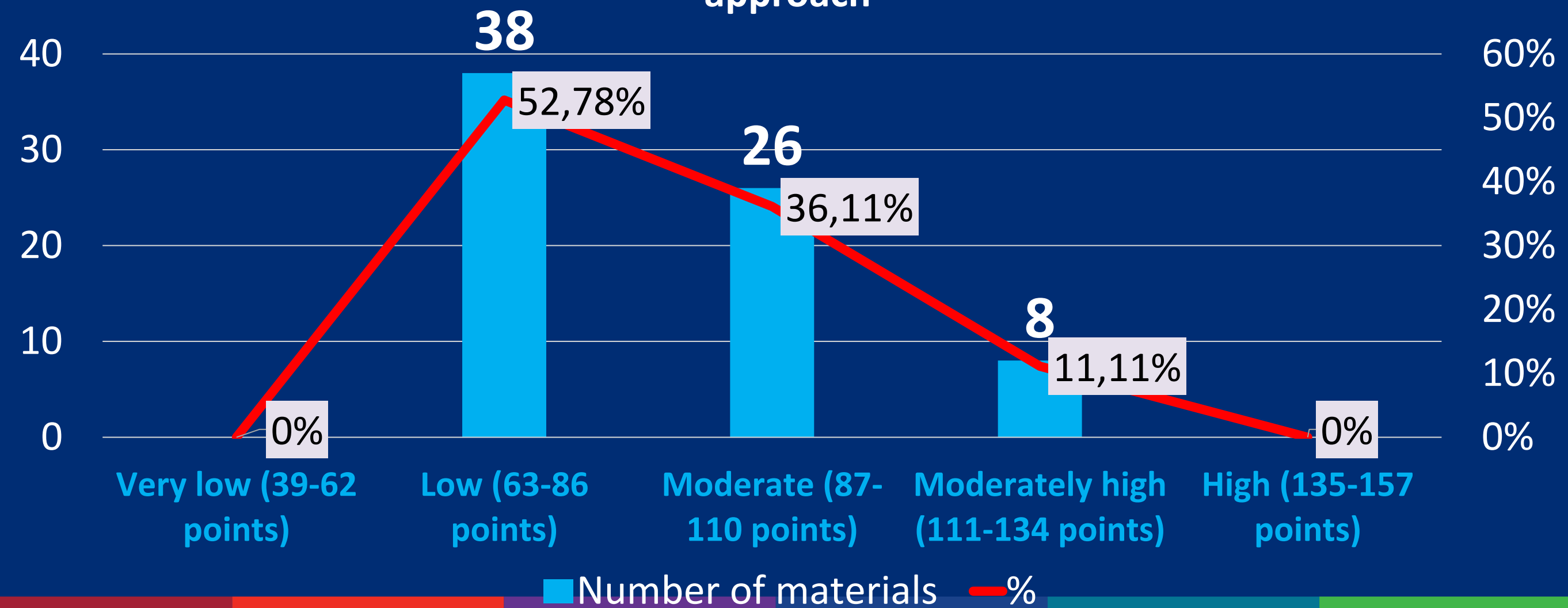
Overall alignment of the materials with the project's conceptual approach



## Relevance level of the materials (Blocks 1-6)



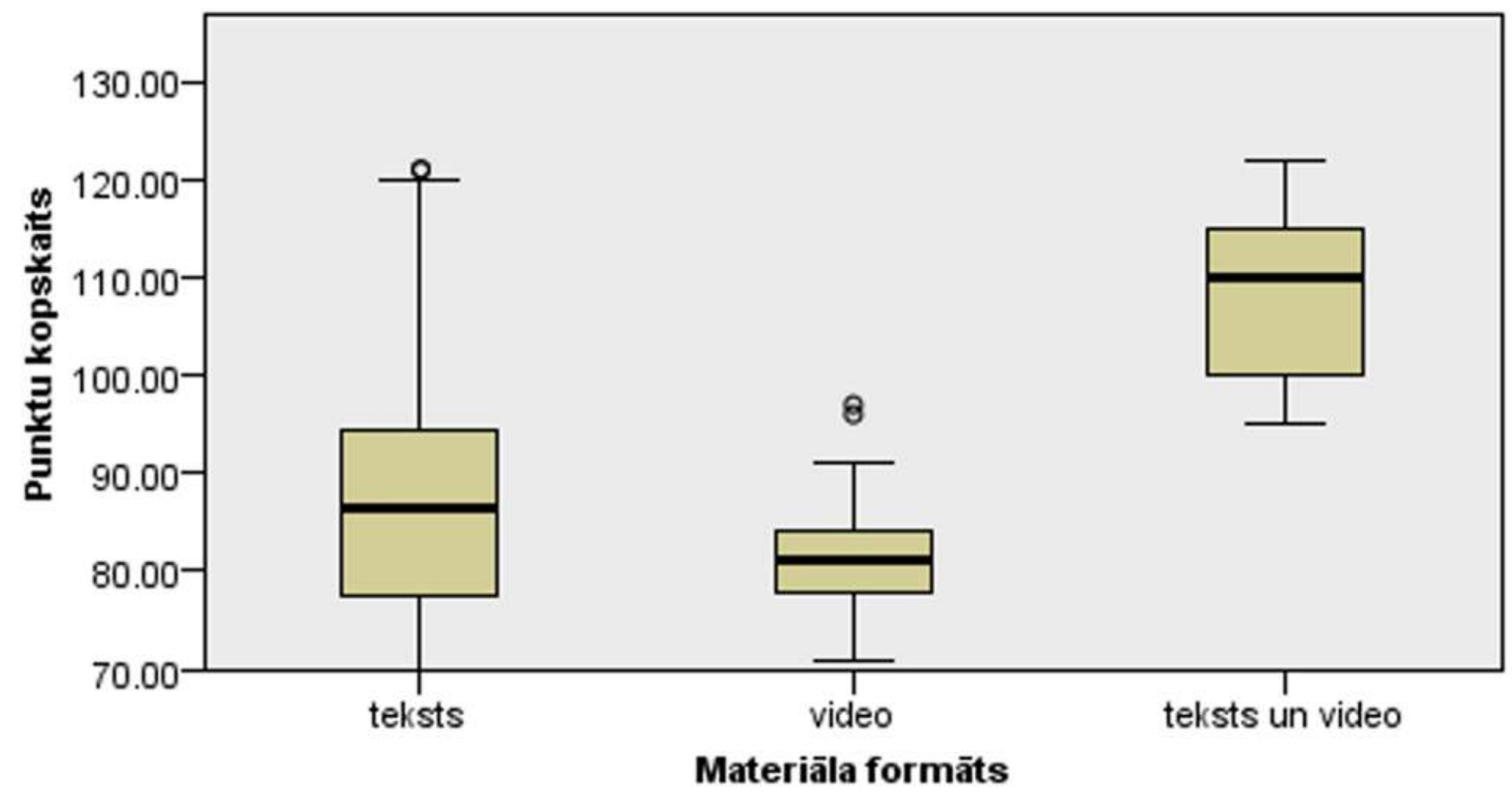
## Overall alignment of the materials with the project's conceptual approach



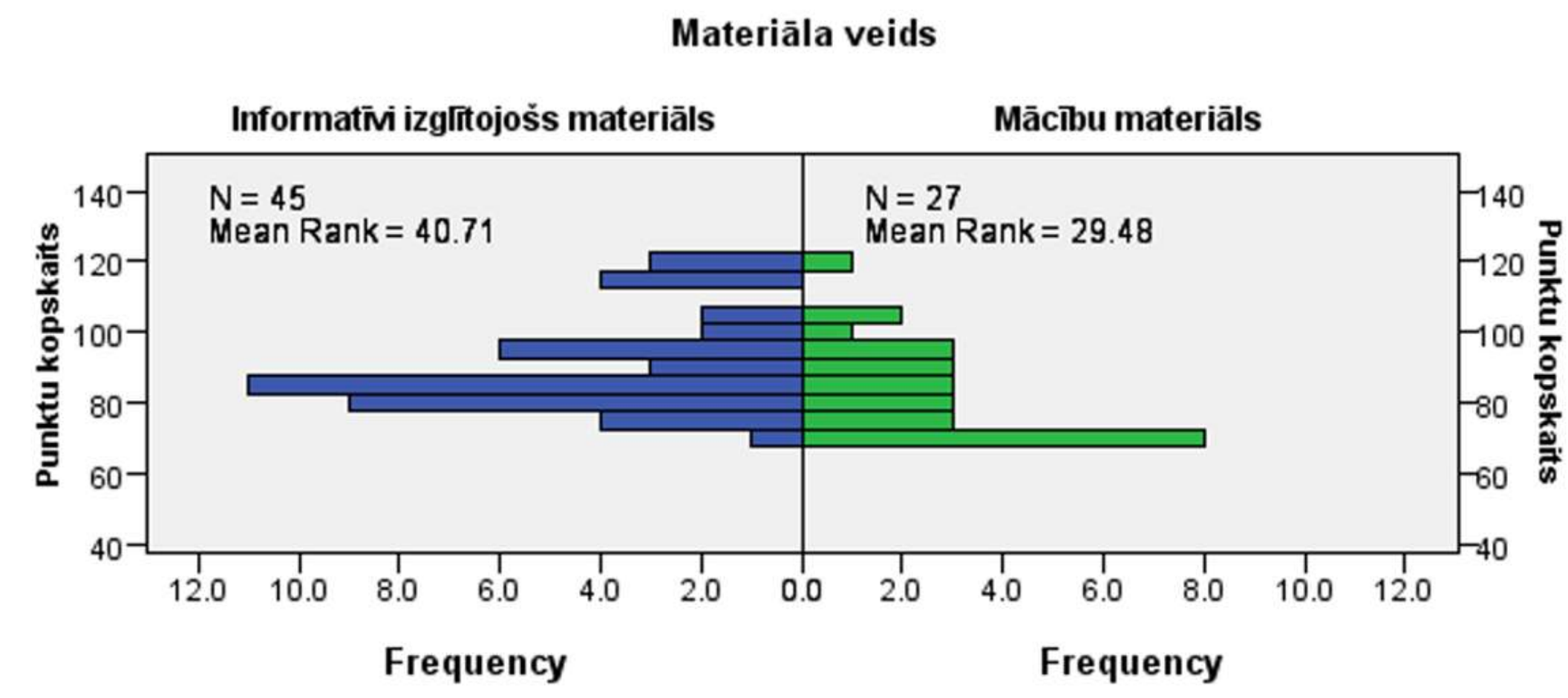
**Statistically significant differences found** in alignment based on:

alignment based on:

- **Material format** (text, video, mixed): mixed-format materials (text & video) outperformed single-format (text-only or video-only) materials
- **Material type** (informative educational materials vs. teaching & learning aids): Informative educational materials were rated significantly higher than teaching and learning aids.

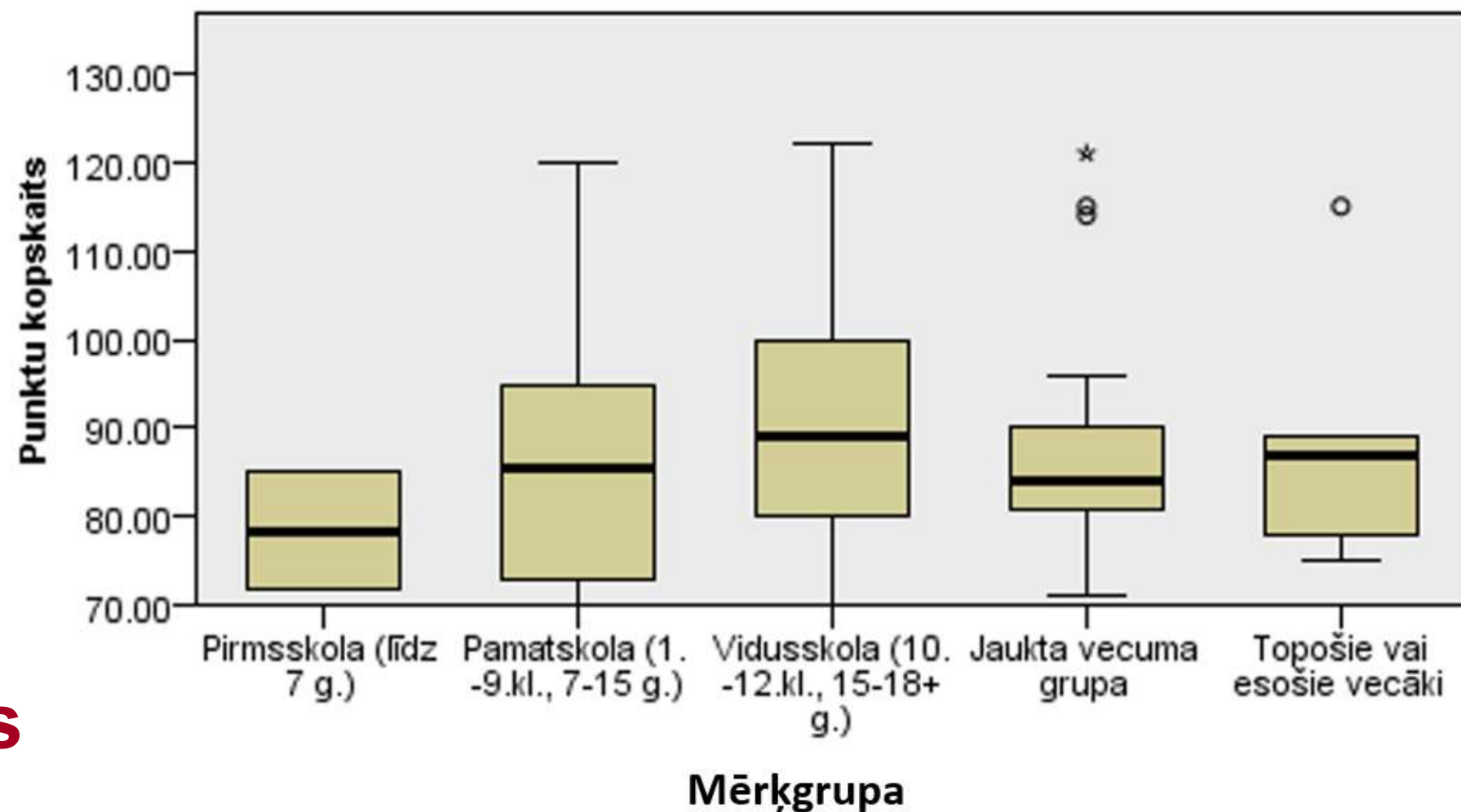


Total N	72
Test Statistic	12.722
Degrees of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.002

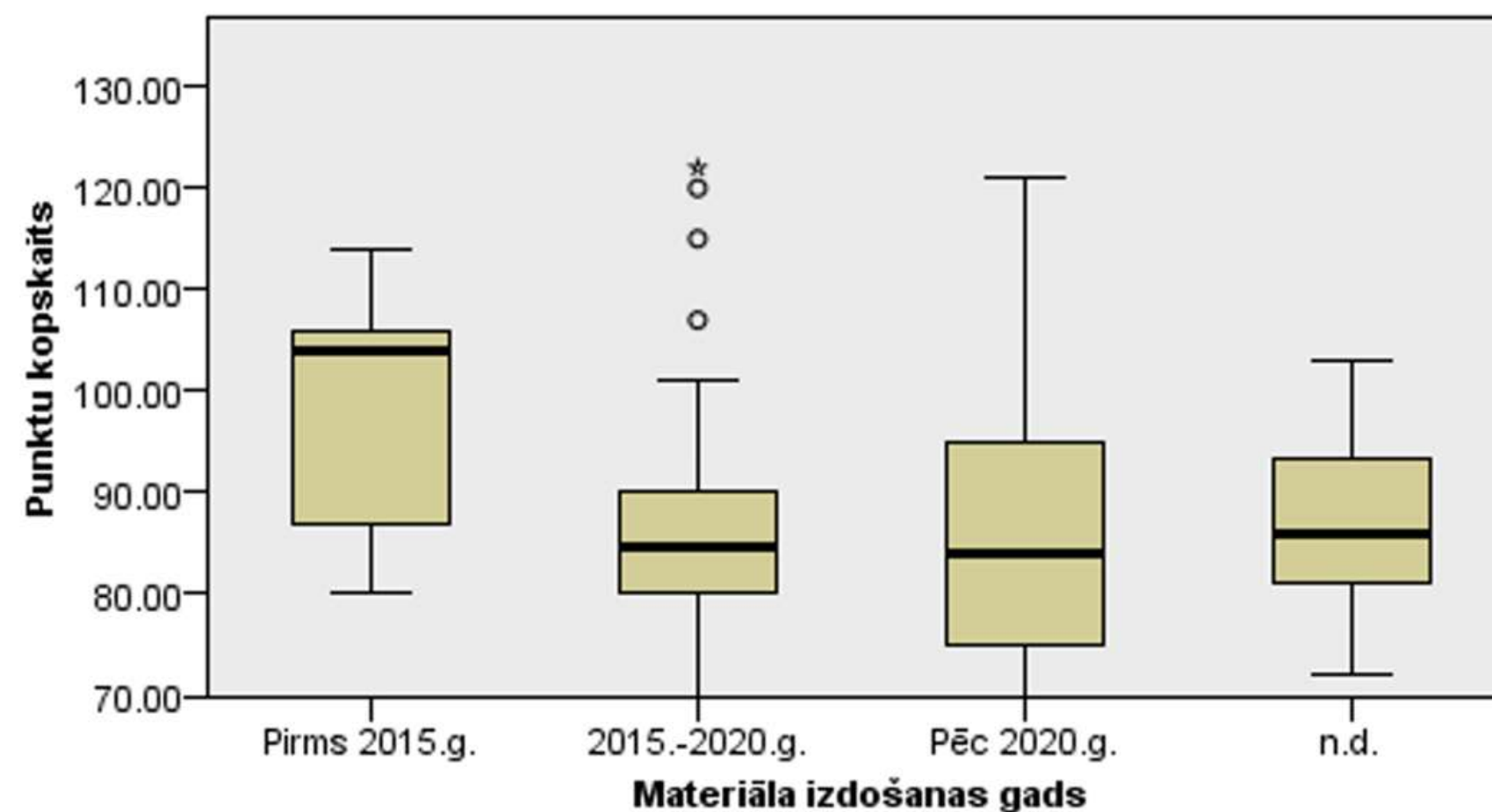


Total N	72
Mann-Whitney U	797.000
Wilcoxon W	1,832.000
Test Statistic	797.000
Standard Error	85.914
Standardized Test Statistic	2.206
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.027

**No significant differences found by target group or year of publication.**



Total N	72
Test Statistic	1.944
Degrees of Freedom	4
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.746



Total N	72
Test Statistic	2.607
Degrees of Freedom	3
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.456

# Conclusions

- ✓ Majority of materials show low (52.78%) or moderate (36.11%) alignment with the project's conceptual approach;
- ✓ Only 11.11% (n=8) of materials achieved a **moderately high** level of overall alignment;
- ✓ No materials reached a **high** level of alignment;
- ✓ Statistically significant differences found in alignment based on material format and type;
  
- ✓ Findings indicate current Latvian materials only partially align with the defined family formation value-oriented approach;
- ✓ Urgent need for:
  - Critical evaluation and revision of existing materials;
  - Targeted development of new, value-based resources.



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# Implications

Based on the study's conclusions, tailored recommendations can be made for specific target groups to improve the quality and relevance of materials for value-based virtuous sexuality education focused on family formation values.

The following groups are addressed:

- Researchers conducting material analysis and evaluation;
- Authors and publishers of teaching and learning aids, informative educational materials;
- Teachers and school management team members;
- Parents;
- Education policymakers.



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# THANK YOU!

**Manuel Joaquín Fernández González &  
colleagues**

[manuels.fernandezs@lu.lv](mailto:manuels.fernandezs@lu.lv)

[svetlana.surikova@lu.lv](mailto:svetlana.surikova@lu.lv)

[lasma.dene@lu.lv](mailto:lasma.dene@lu.lv)

[kristine.lapina@lu.lv](mailto:kristine.lapina@lu.lv)