



Centre for Climate Change  
and Social Transformations

THE  
POLICY  
INSTITUTE

KING'S  
College  
LONDON

# Declining urgency, enduring support

## Public attitudes to net zero and climate policy

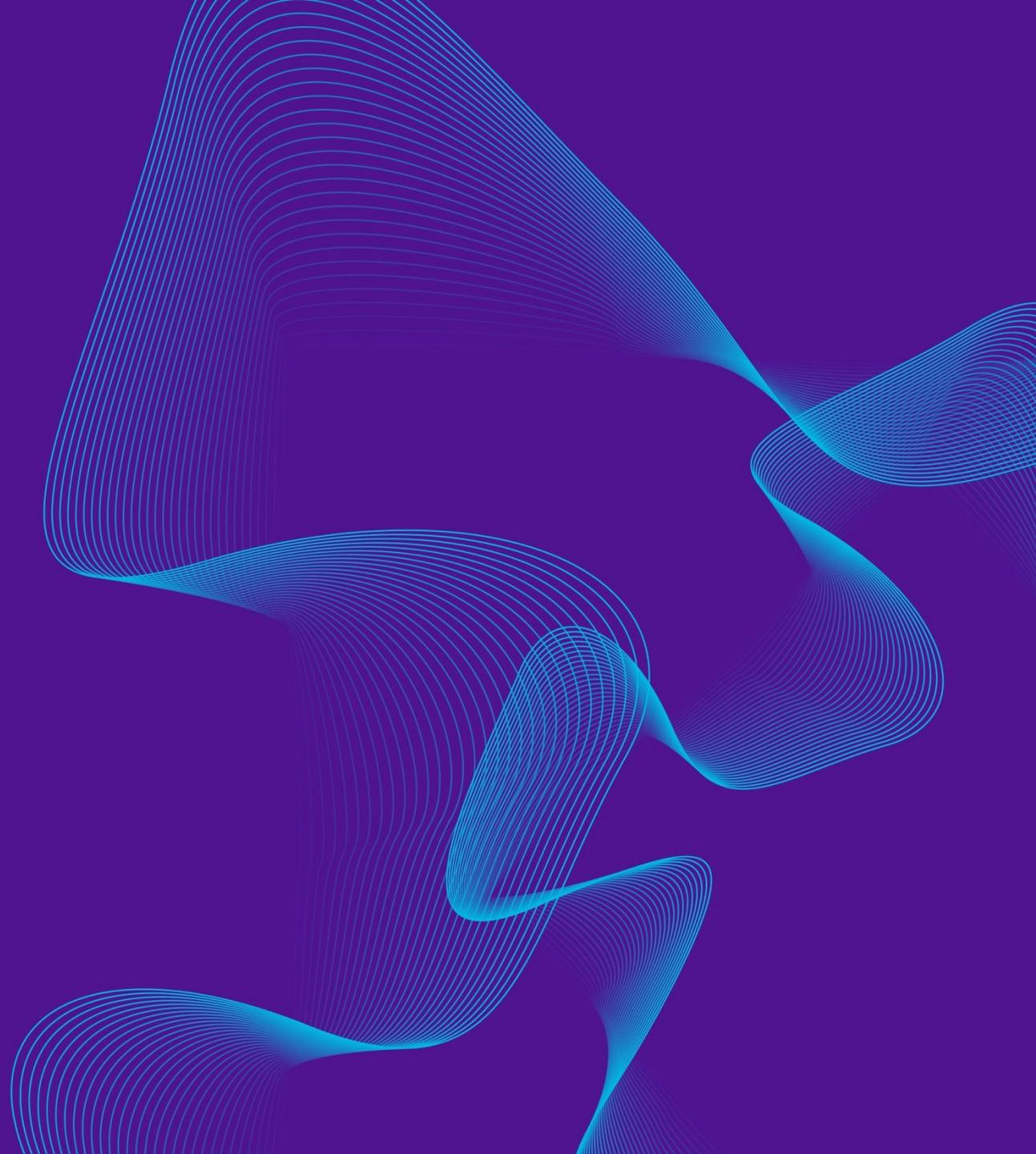
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Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy

February 2026

## 1. The urgency of achieving net zero

While the aim of getting to net zero still commands wide public support, the proportion of people viewing it as an urgent priority has fallen sharply



# There has been a big decline in the public's sense of urgency about achieving net zero – even if most still feel this should be a target for the UK

Which of the following best describes how you feel about the UK government's target to reduce UK carbon emissions to net zero by 2050?

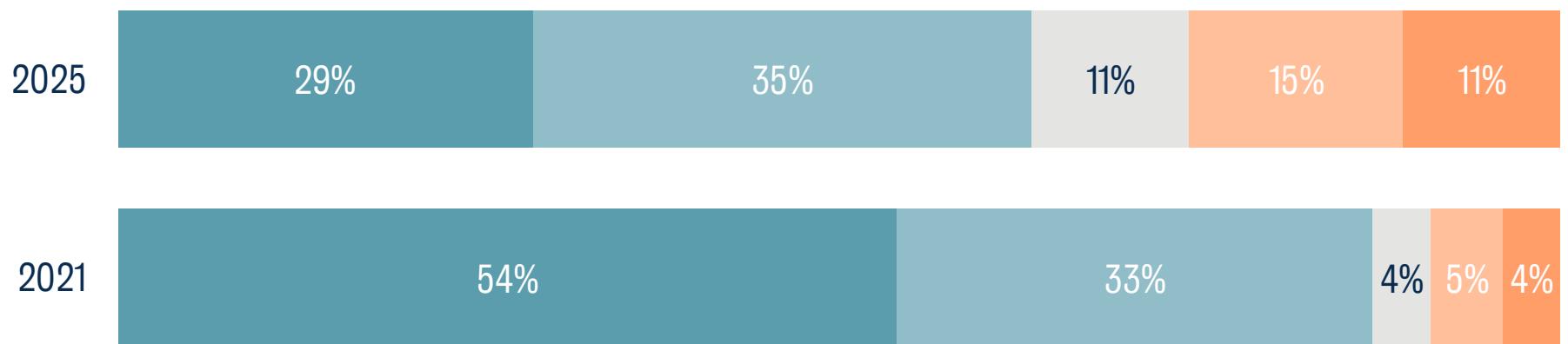
■ The UK needs to reduce our carbon emissions to 'net zero' sooner than 2050

■ Reducing the UK's carbon emissions to 'net zero' by 2050 is a sensible target

■ Don't know/prefer not to say

■ The UK does not need to reduce our carbon emissions to 'net zero' as soon as 2050

■ The UK does not need a target for reducing our carbon emissions to 'net zero' at all

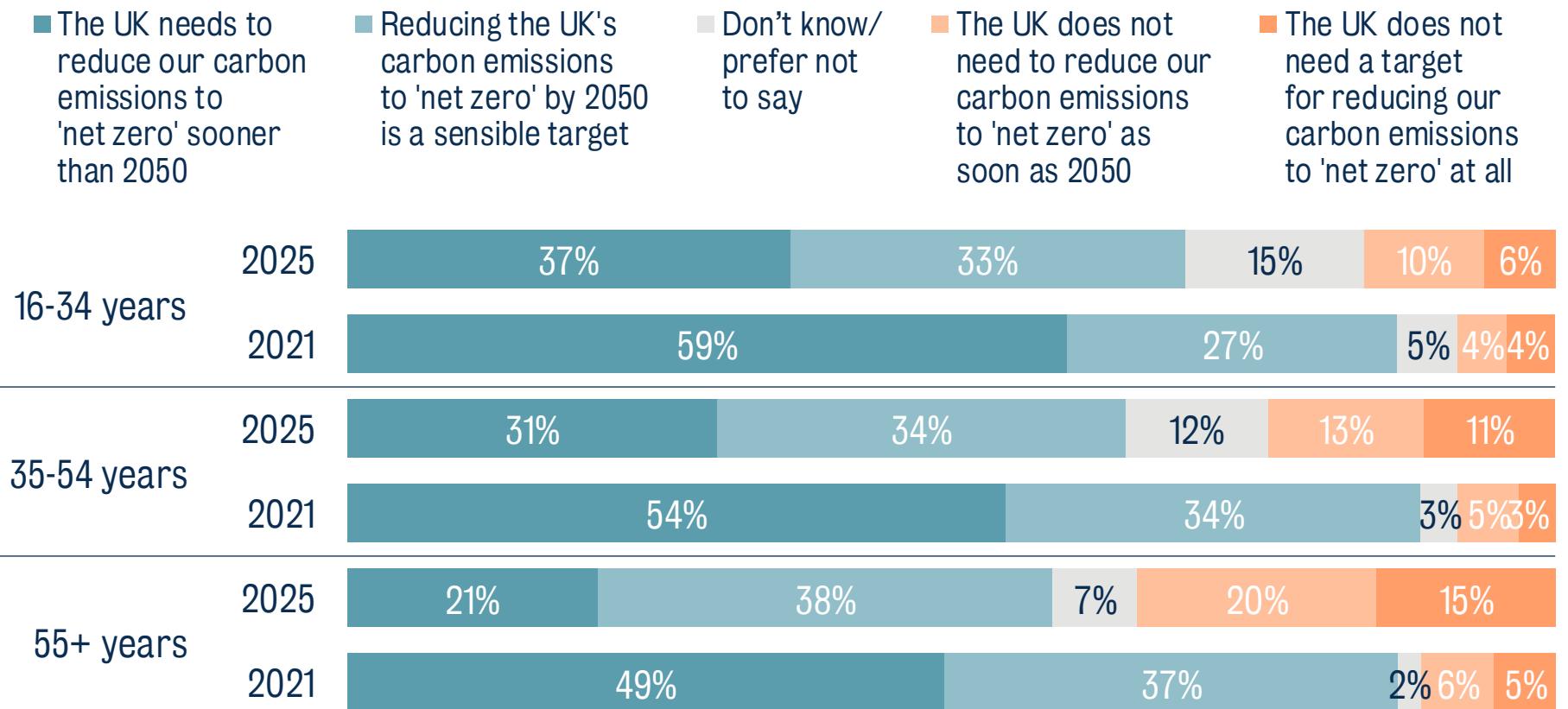


The share of the public who say the UK needs to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero sooner than 2050 fell from 54% in 2021 to 29% in 2025 – although overall a significant majority (64%) still feel the government's target for net zero should be at least 2050, if not earlier.

The proportion who feel the UK either doesn't need to hit its 2050 net zero target or shouldn't have a target at all roughly trebled between 2021 and 2025, from 9% to 26%.

# The belief that the UK needs to achieve net zero sooner than 2050 is no longer the majority view among young and middle-aged people, but older people are now most sceptical

Which of the following best describes how you feel about the UK government's target to reduce UK carbon emissions to net zero by 2050?



In 2021, 59% of those aged 16 to 34 felt the UK should achieve net zero sooner than the government's 2050 target. Now 37% of this group hold this view.

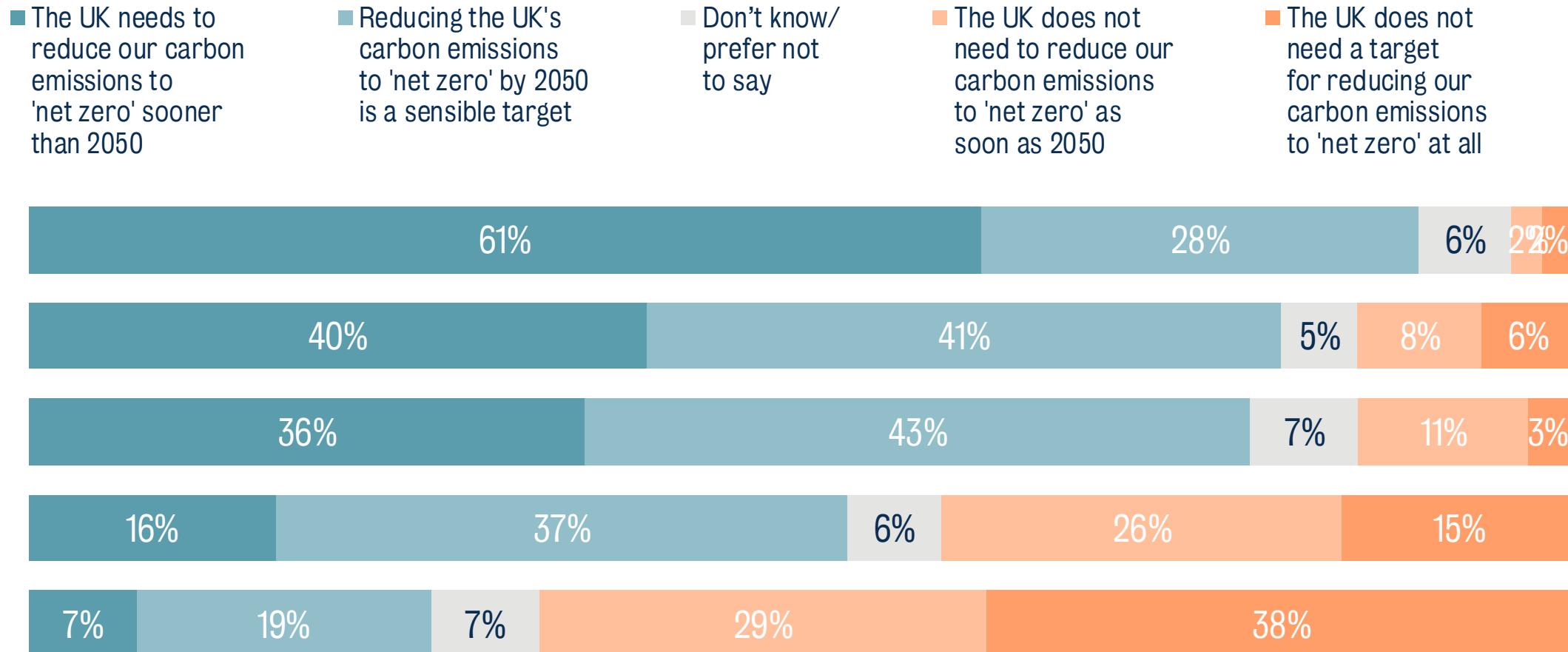
Middle-aged people have seen a similar shift in attitudes, with this belief no longer the majority view among those aged 35 to 54.

And in 2021 there was little difference in the share of each age group who felt the UK either doesn't need to hit its 2050 net zero target or shouldn't have a target at all – but now those aged 55+ (35%) are notably more likely than other age groups to feel this way.

Nonetheless, overall, majorities of all age groups still favour achieving net zero by 2050 or earlier.

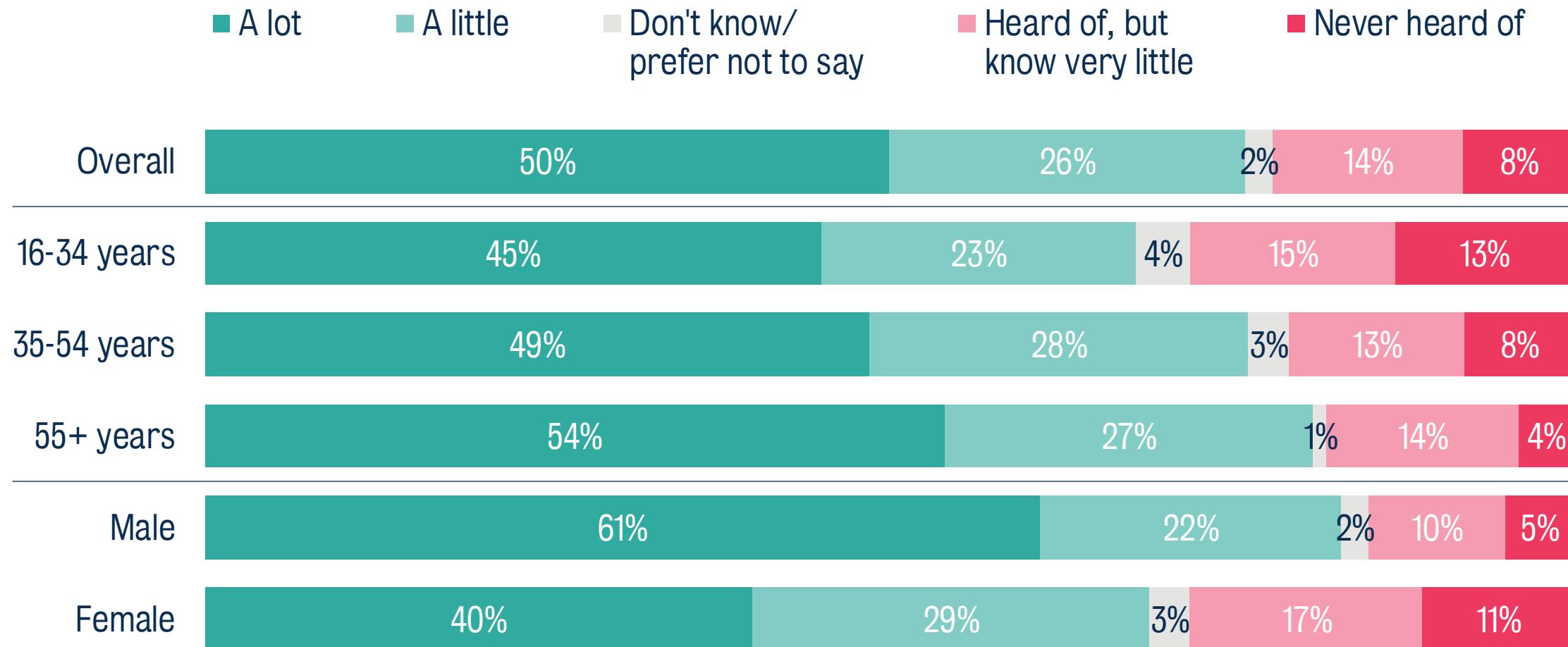
# Majorities of nearly all parties' 2024 voters – especially Labour, Lib Dems and Greens – support net zero by 2050, but Reform UK voters take a very different view

Which of the following best describes how you feel about the UK government's target to reduce UK carbon emissions to net zero by 2050?



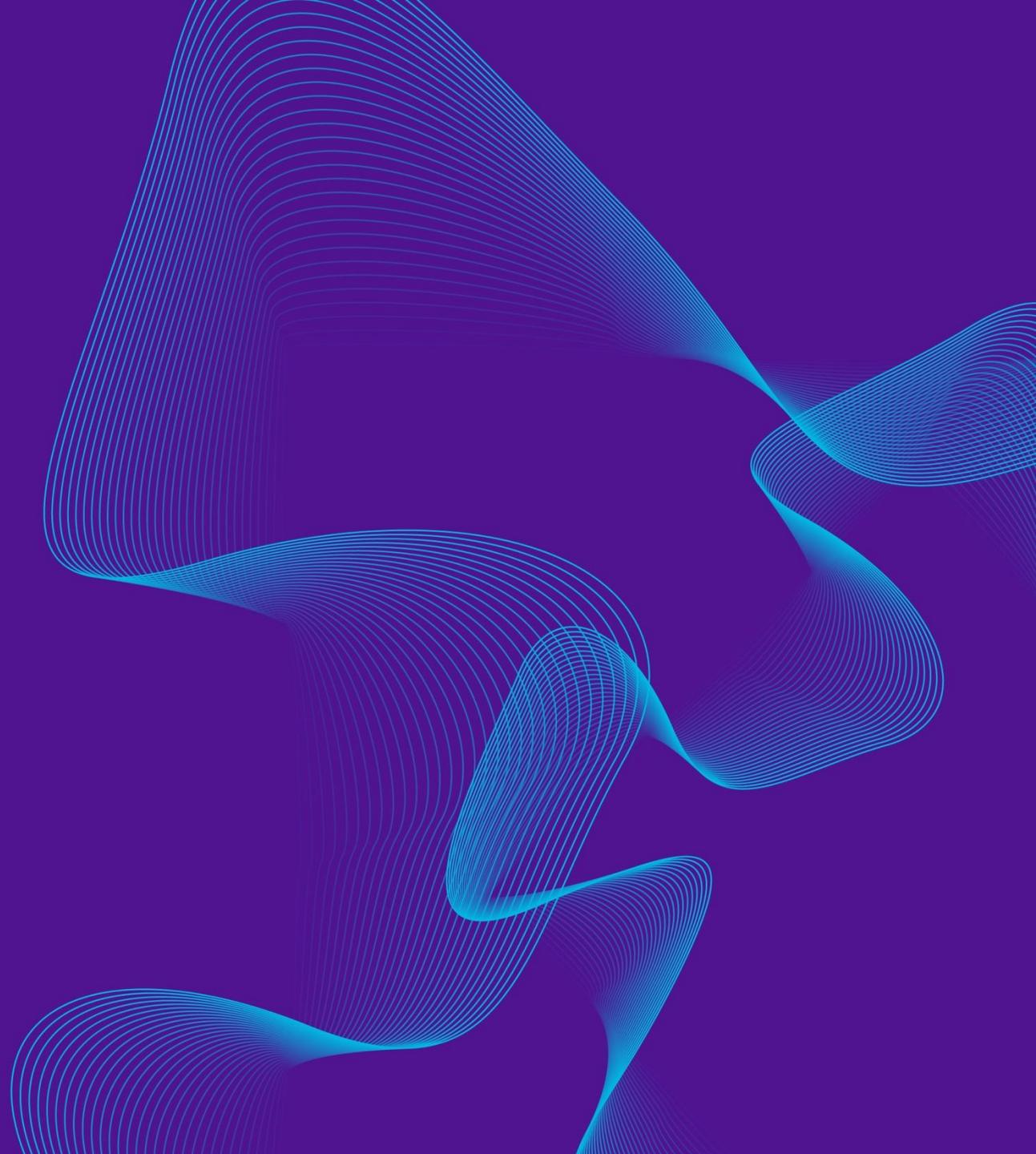
# Three-quarters of people say they've heard a lot or a little about net zero, with awareness higher among older people than younger people, and higher among men than women

How much, if anything, have you heard or read about the following terms or phrases? **Net zero**



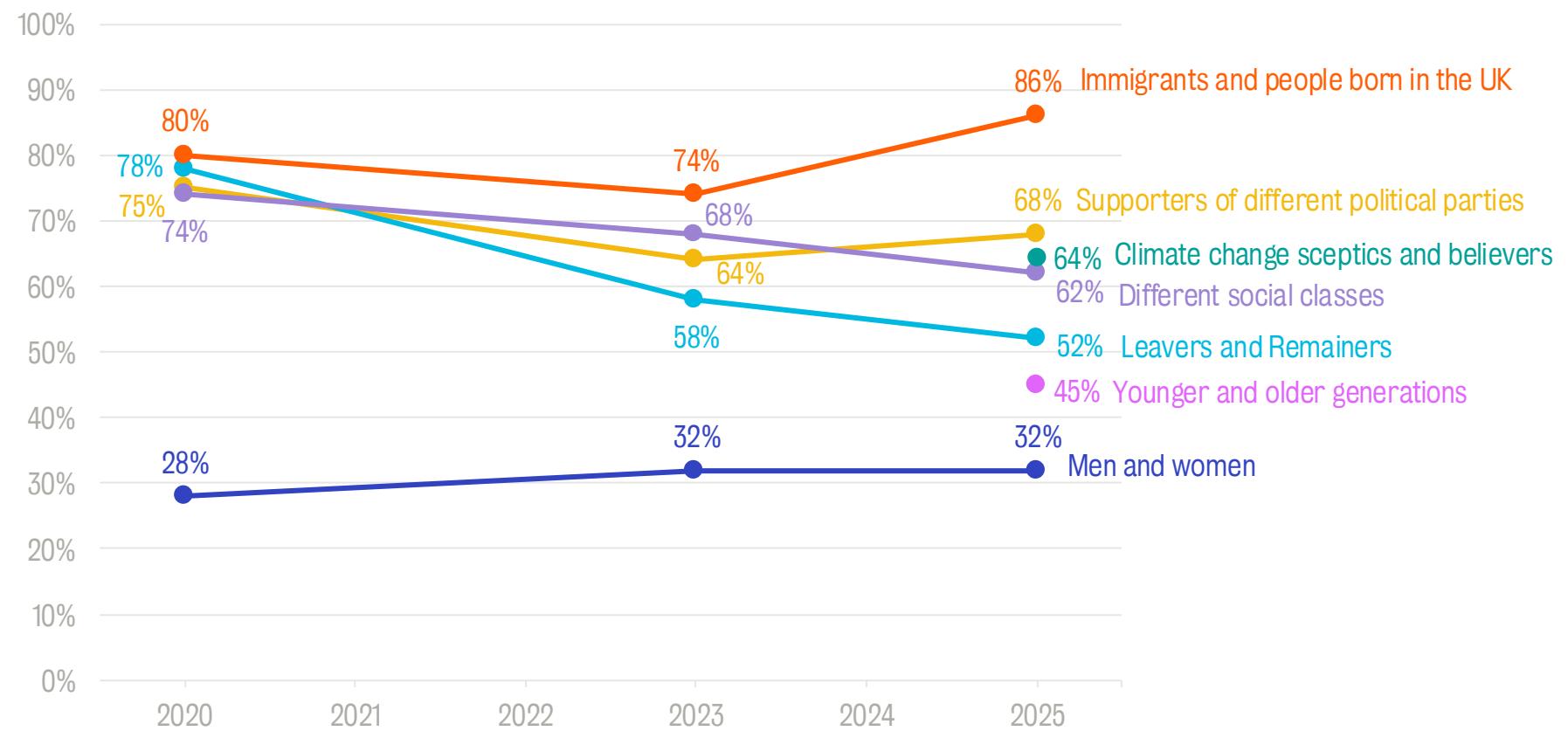
## **2. Climate change as a source of tension in society**

Britons are more inclined to see tension between climate change sceptics and believers than between Leave and Remain voters, different generations, or men and women



# The public are more likely to think there is tension between climate change sceptics and believers than between Leavers and Remainers, younger and older generations, and men and women

How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today? (% who say a great deal/fair amount)



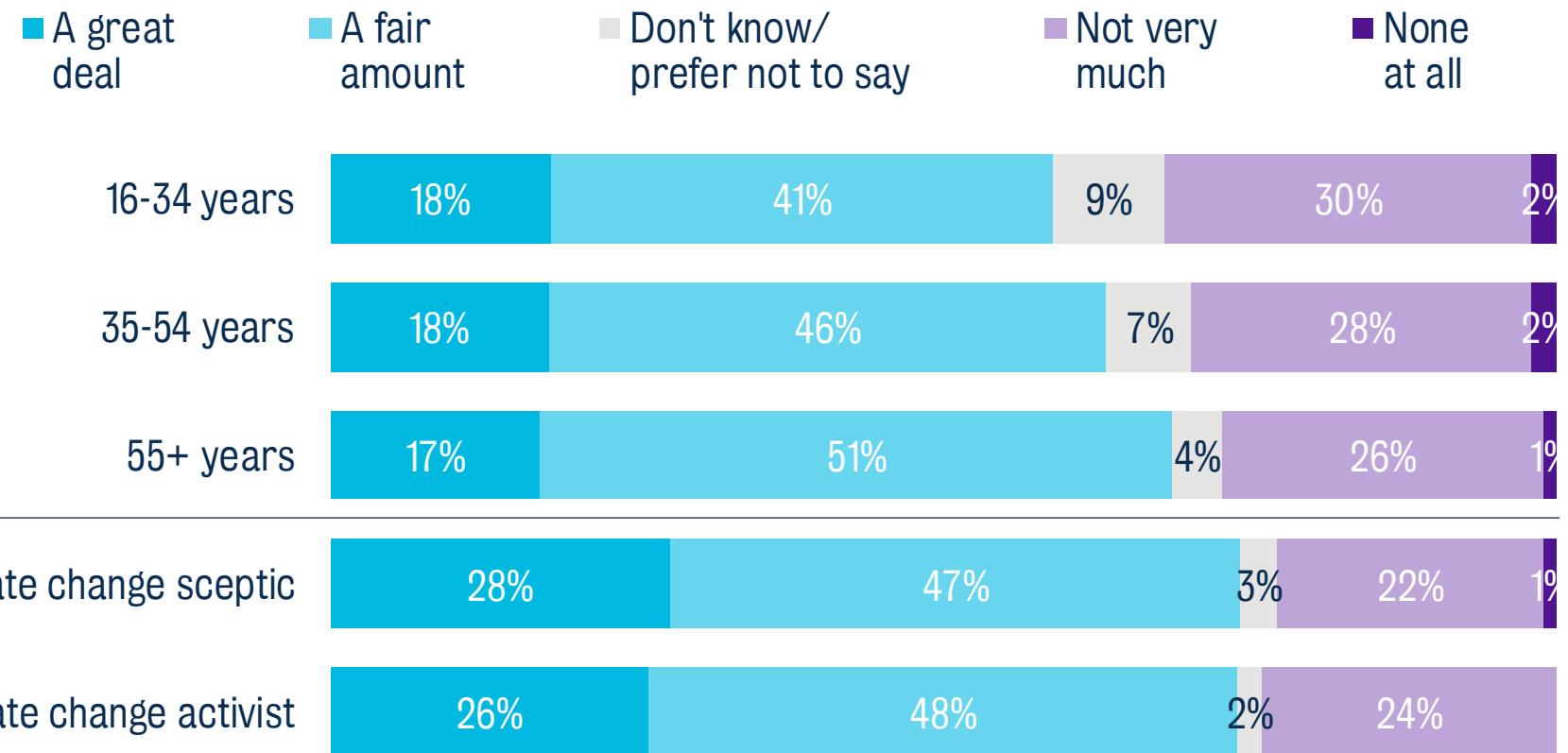
64% of people say there is a great deal or fair amount of tension between climate change sceptics and climate change believers in the UK today. This compares with 52% who now say the same of Leavers and Remainers, as the perception of Brexit divides healing has grown in recent years.

Of the seven groups asked about, only two – supporters of different political parties and immigrants and people born in the UK – are seen as currently having more tense relations.

# Majorities of all age groups, but particularly those who put themselves on one side of the debate or the other, feel there is tension between climate change sceptics and believers

How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today?

Between climate change sceptics and climate change believers



Around six in 10 or more of all age groups say such tension exists, with those aged 55+ (68%) most likely to feel this way.

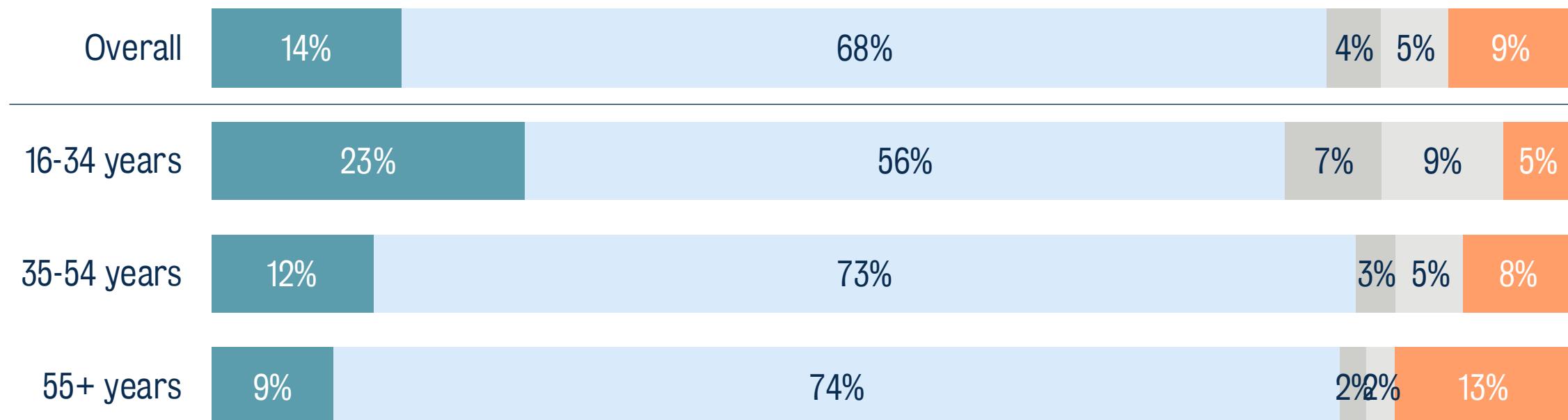
And three-quarters (74%) of both those who consider themselves climate activists and those who see themselves as climate sceptics feel there is tension between people who believe in climate change and those who are sceptical of it.

Meanwhile, there is little difference in views by political affiliation, with around two-thirds of 2024 voters for all major parties saying there is tension across this climate divide.

# Most people don't consider themselves to be either a climate change activist or climate change sceptic, but younger people are more likely to identify as the former and older people as the latter

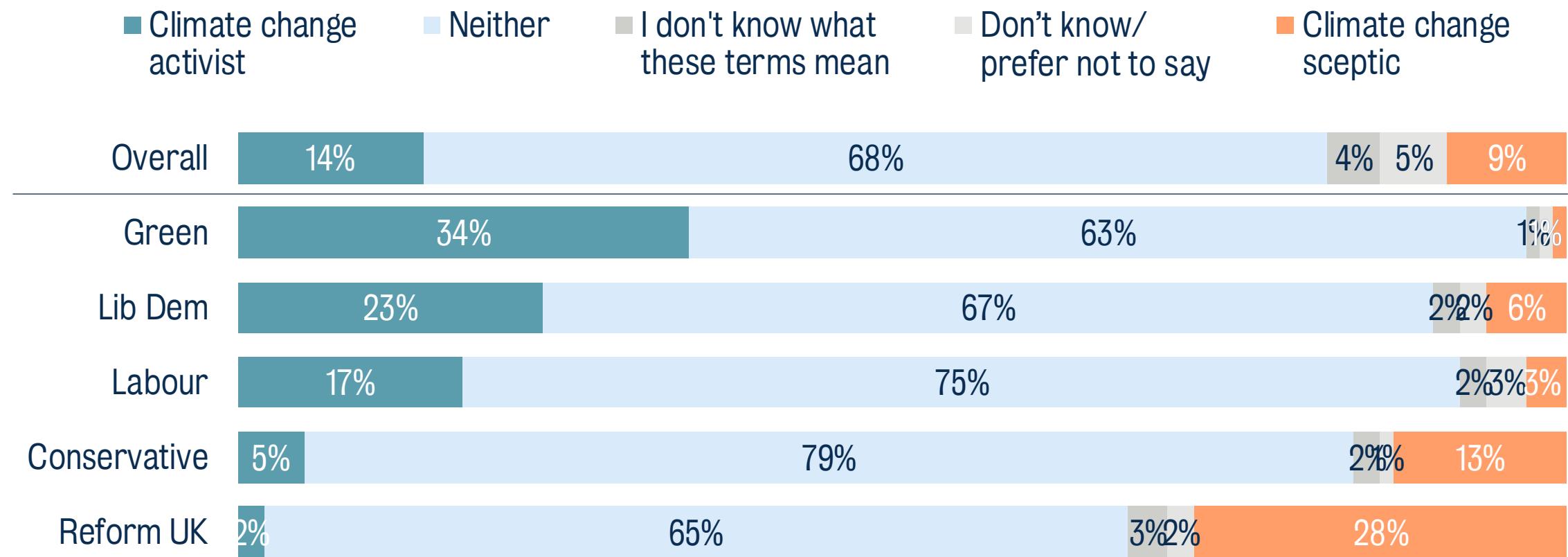
Do you consider yourself to be a climate change activist, a climate change sceptic, or neither?

■ Climate change activist      ■ Neither      ■ I don't know what these terms mean      ■ Don't know/prefer not to say      ■ Climate change sceptic



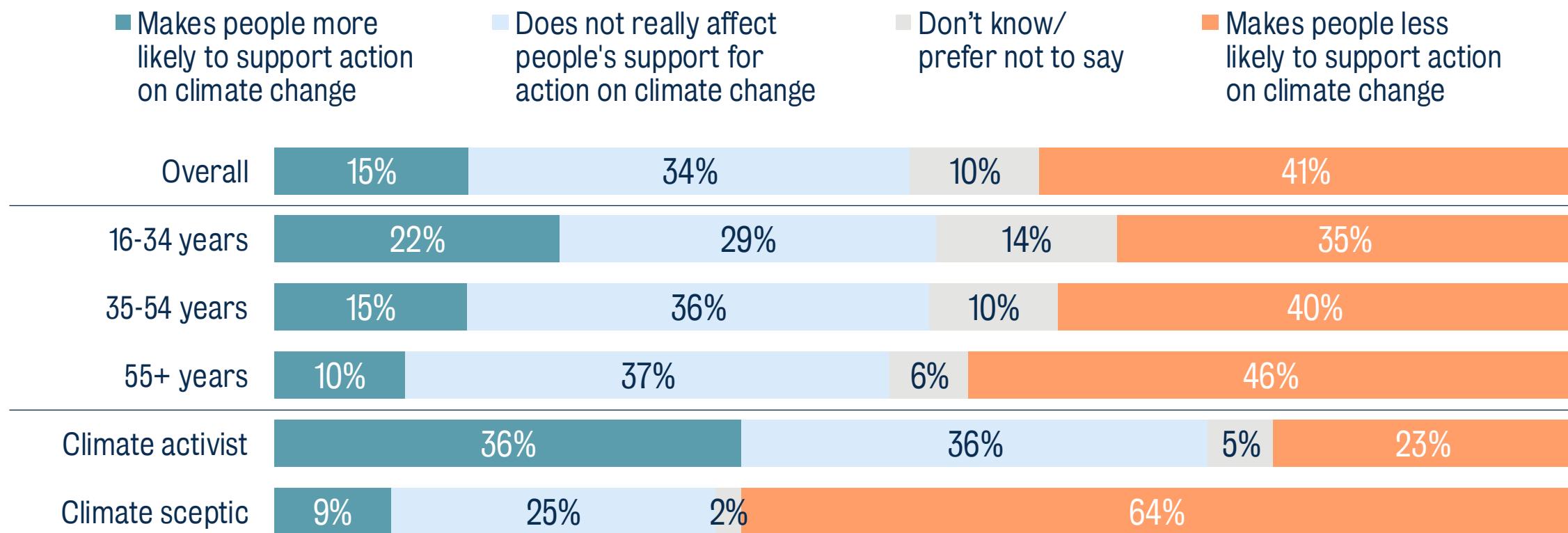
# Around a third of 2024 Green voters describe themselves as climate activists, and three in 10 2024 Reform UK voters as sceptics – but the large majority of all party supporters don't consider themselves to be either

Do you consider yourself to be a climate change activist, a climate change sceptic, or neither?



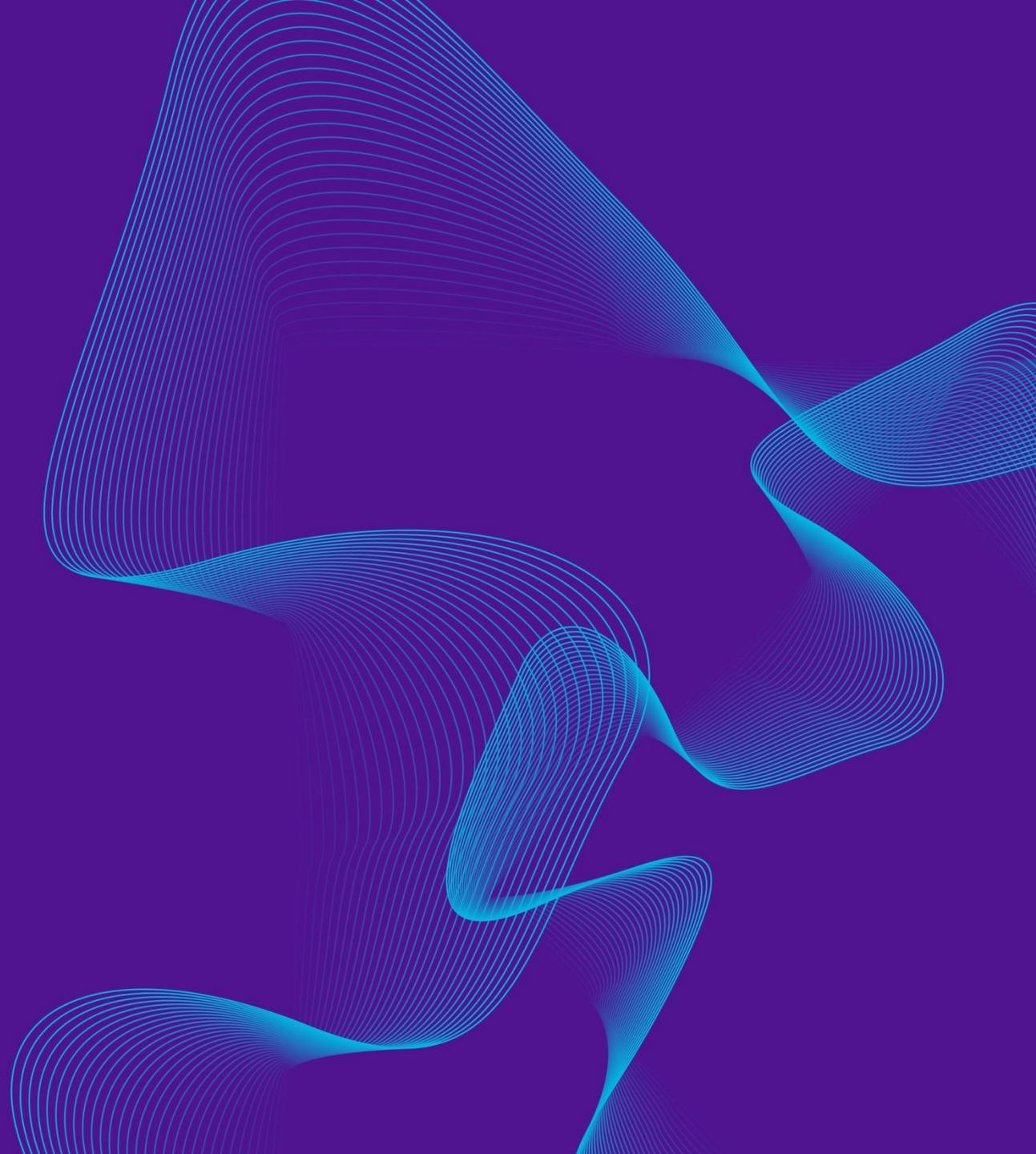
# The public are relatively split on whether climate activism makes people less likely to support action on climate change or whether it doesn't really make a difference. And while young people are most likely to feel activism does boost support, a greater share of this group still take a different view

Do you think climate activism, such as protests, rallies and volunteering...



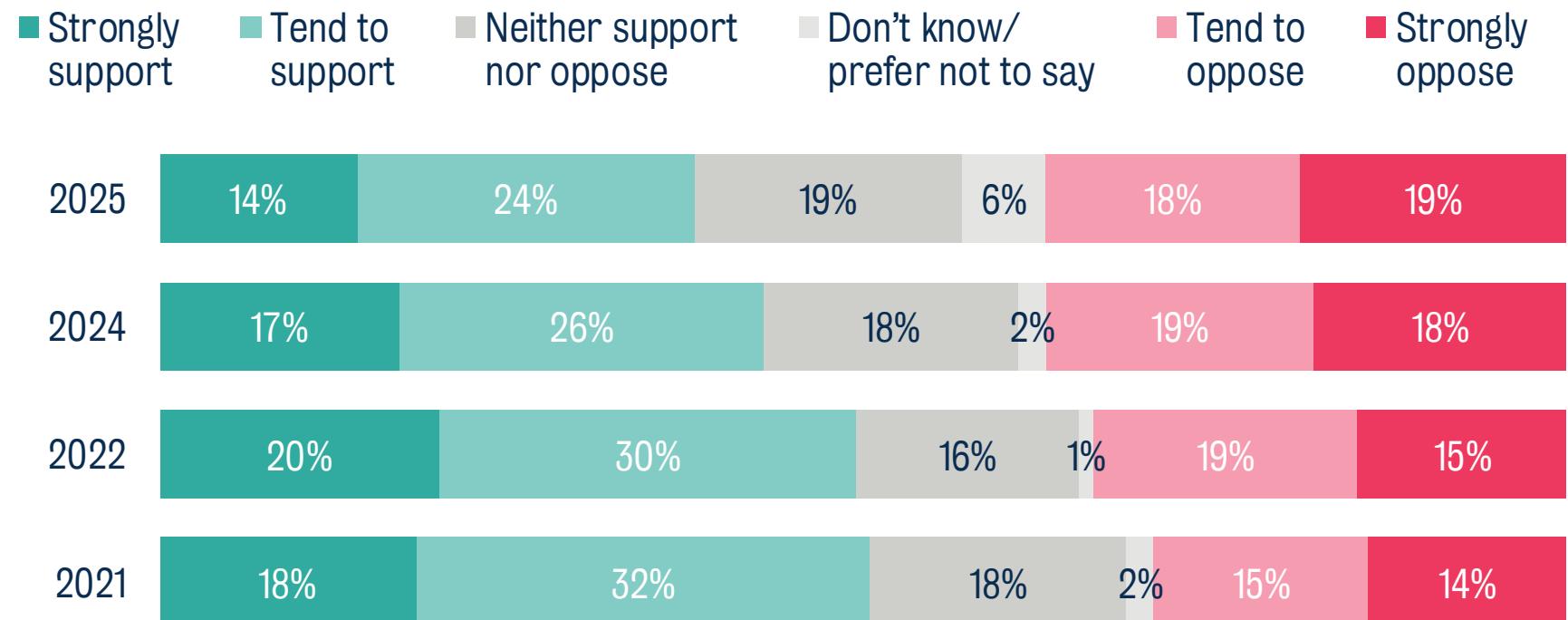
### **3. Support for government actions to tackle climate change**

Between 2024 and 2025, support for low-traffic neighbourhoods, taxes on those who fly more, subsidies for electric vehicle purchases, and a tax on environmentally damaging foods all declined, with opposition to some of these measures now greater than support for them – a stark reversal of attitudes from just a few years earlier



# Support for low-traffic neighbourhoods has continued to fall

The government may want to reduce the number of vehicles on the road by creating low-traffic neighbourhoods. This is where cars, vans and other vehicles are stopped from using residential roads as shortcuts. This is done by putting some road closures in place using measures such as bollards or planters. Residents are still able to drive onto their street, but it is made more difficult or impossible to drive straight through the area from one main road to the next. To what extent do you support or oppose this?

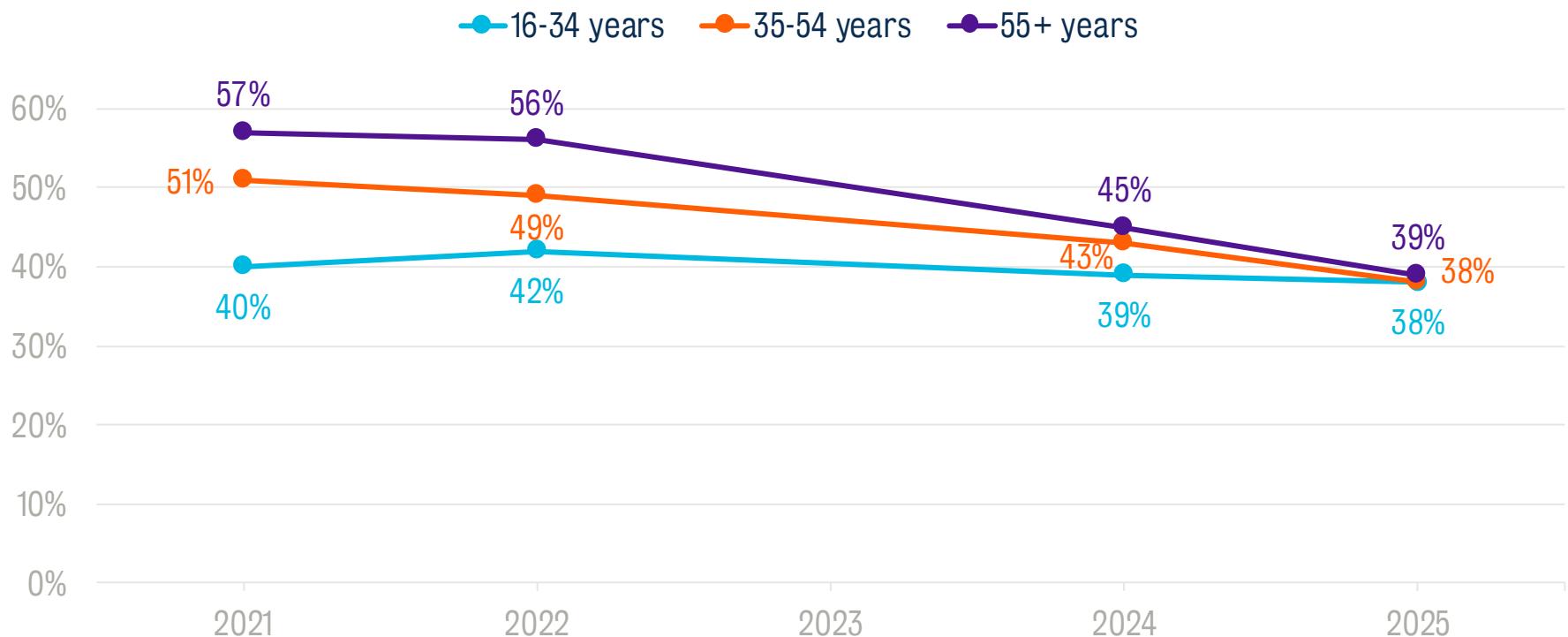


38% of people now say they support LTNs – down from 43% in 2024 and 50% back in 2022 and 2021.

With this shift in views, the public are today almost evenly split on support for LTNs, with the proportion opposing them (37%) virtually the same as those who support them (38%).

# Older people were once more likely than younger people to support low-traffic neighbourhoods – but support among older people has now declined, and they are now more opposed than younger people

The government may want to reduce the number of vehicles on the road by creating low-traffic neighbourhoods. This is where cars, vans and other vehicles are stopped from using residential roads as shortcuts. This is done by putting some road closures in place using measures such as bollards or planters. Residents are still able to drive onto their street, but it is made more difficult or impossible to drive straight through the area from one main road to the next. To what extent do you support or oppose this? (% who say support)

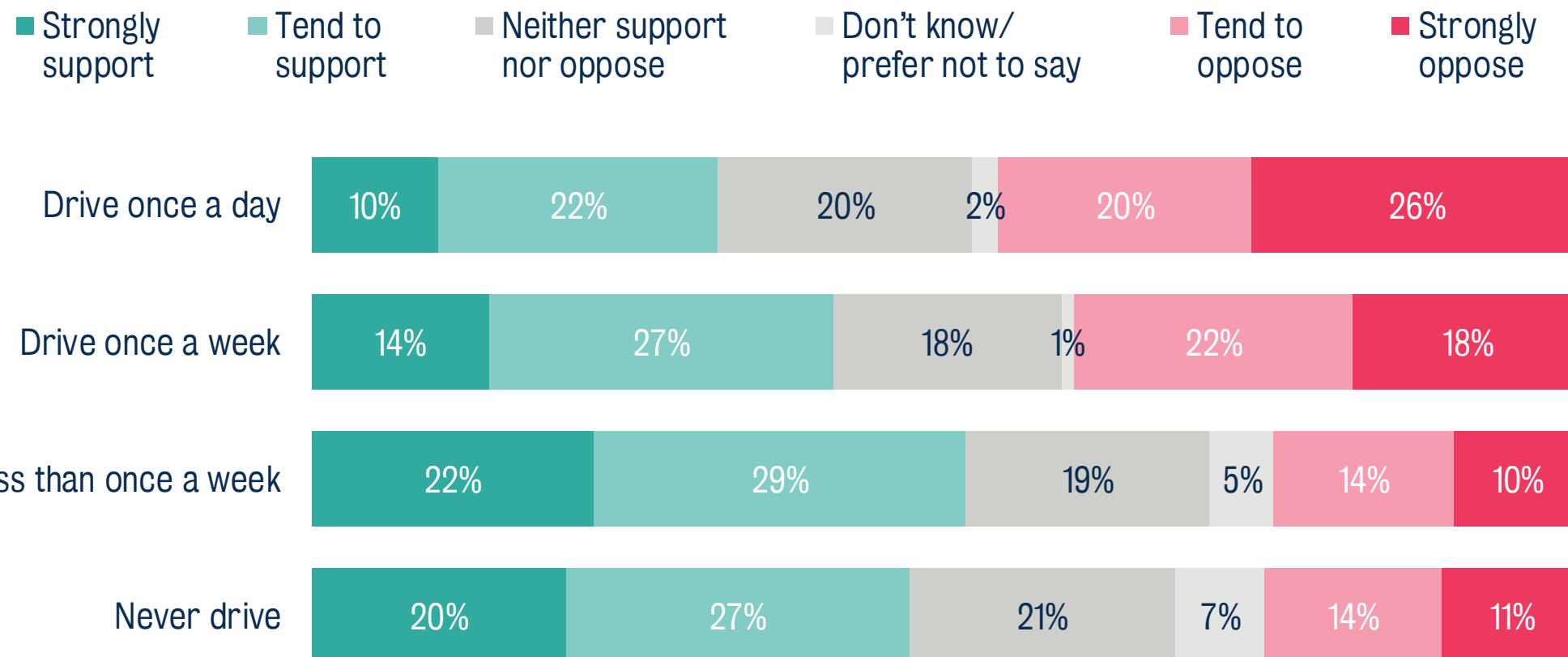


When this trend began, there was a 17-point gap in support for LTNs among the oldest (57%) and youngest surveyed (40%). But since then support has fallen among older and middle-aged people, so that there is now virtually no difference by age, with around four in 10 of all age groups backing the measure.

Indeed, older people are actually now more likely to oppose LTNs (41% among 55+ and 37% among 35-54s) than younger people (31% among 18-34s), meaning younger people are now the only group where support outweighs opposition.

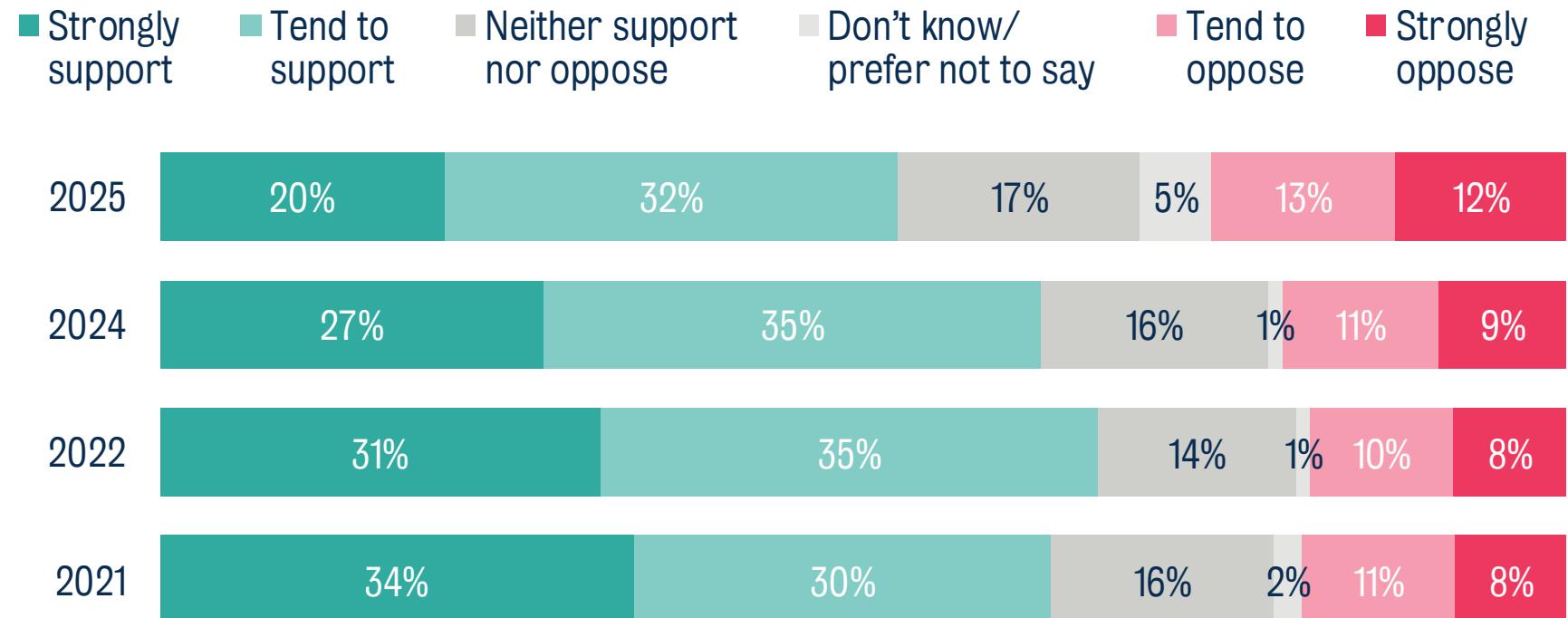
# Opposition to low-traffic neighbourhoods is highest among more frequent drivers

The government may want to reduce the number of vehicles on the road by creating low-traffic neighbourhoods. This is where cars, vans and other vehicles are stopped from using residential roads as shortcuts. This is done by putting some road closures in place using measures such as bollards or planters. Residents are still able to drive onto their street, but it is made more difficult or impossible to drive straight through the area from one main road to the next. To what extent do you support or oppose this?



# Support for taxing people who fly more often fell by 10 points between 2024 and 2025, although most of the public still back this measure

The government may want to replace the current tax on flights (Air Passenger Duty) by a tax that increases as people fly more often. People who only fly once in a year could pay no tax, while people who fly several times per year could pay a large amount of tax. This could mean people replace some flights with alternatives, like trains or ferries, or with videoconferencing instead of some travel. To what extent do you support or oppose this?

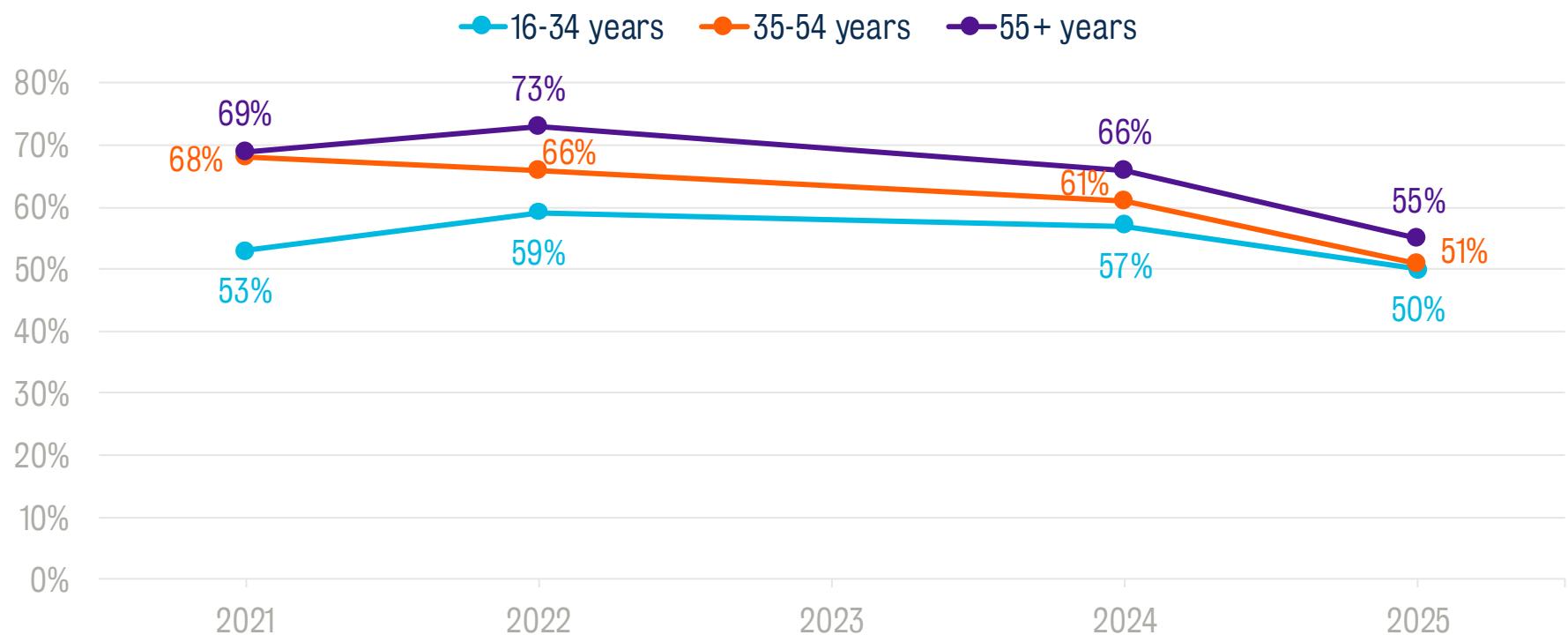


52% of people now support a tax that increases as people fly more often – down from 62% in 2024, which is around the level it had been since this trend began in 2021.

Yet despite this decline, the public are still twice as likely to support (52%) rather than oppose (25%) such a tax.

# Around half of all age groups now support a tax on frequent flyers, as the age gradient in support for this measure has narrowed over time due to falling support among older and middle-aged people

The government may want to replace the current tax on flights (Air Passenger Duty) by a tax that increases as people fly more often. People who only fly once in a year could pay no tax, while people who fly several times per year could pay a large amount of tax. This could mean people replace some flights with alternatives, like trains or ferries, or with videoconferencing instead of some travel. To what extent do you support or oppose this? (% who say support)

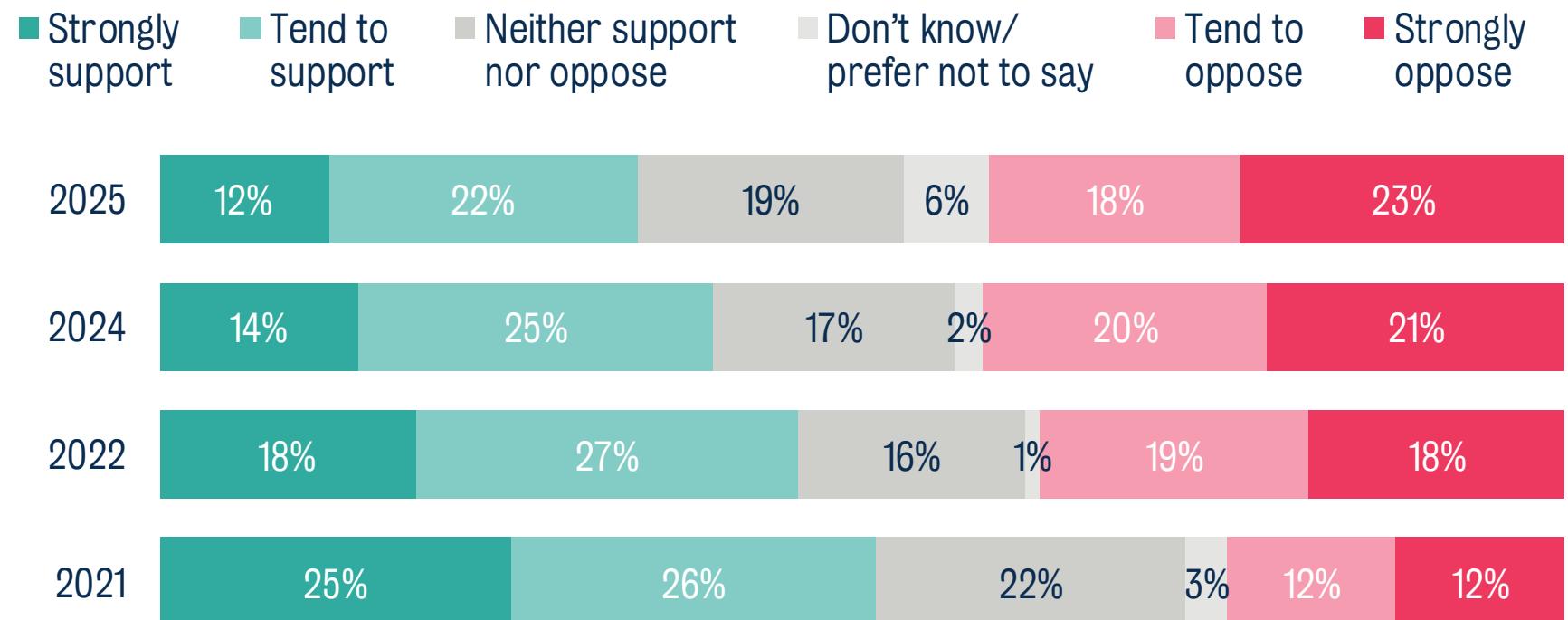


The age gap in support for a frequent flyer tax is now just five points between the oldest (55%) and youngest (50%) surveyed, compared with 16 points back in 2021, when the gap was at its widest.

While young people's views are little changed, support has fallen among older and middle-aged people (but is still around double the level of opposition).

# Support for subsidising the purchase of electric vehicles, if it might mean higher fuel duty, has declined further

The government may want to subsidise the purchase of electric vehicles by consumers to reduce the number of petrol and diesel cars on the road. The government is ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2035 and encouraging a shift to electric vehicles. Putting in place subsidies would mean electric vehicles become less expensive to buy than they are now. The money to do this may come from increasing fuel duty on petrol and diesel cars. To what extent do you support or oppose this?

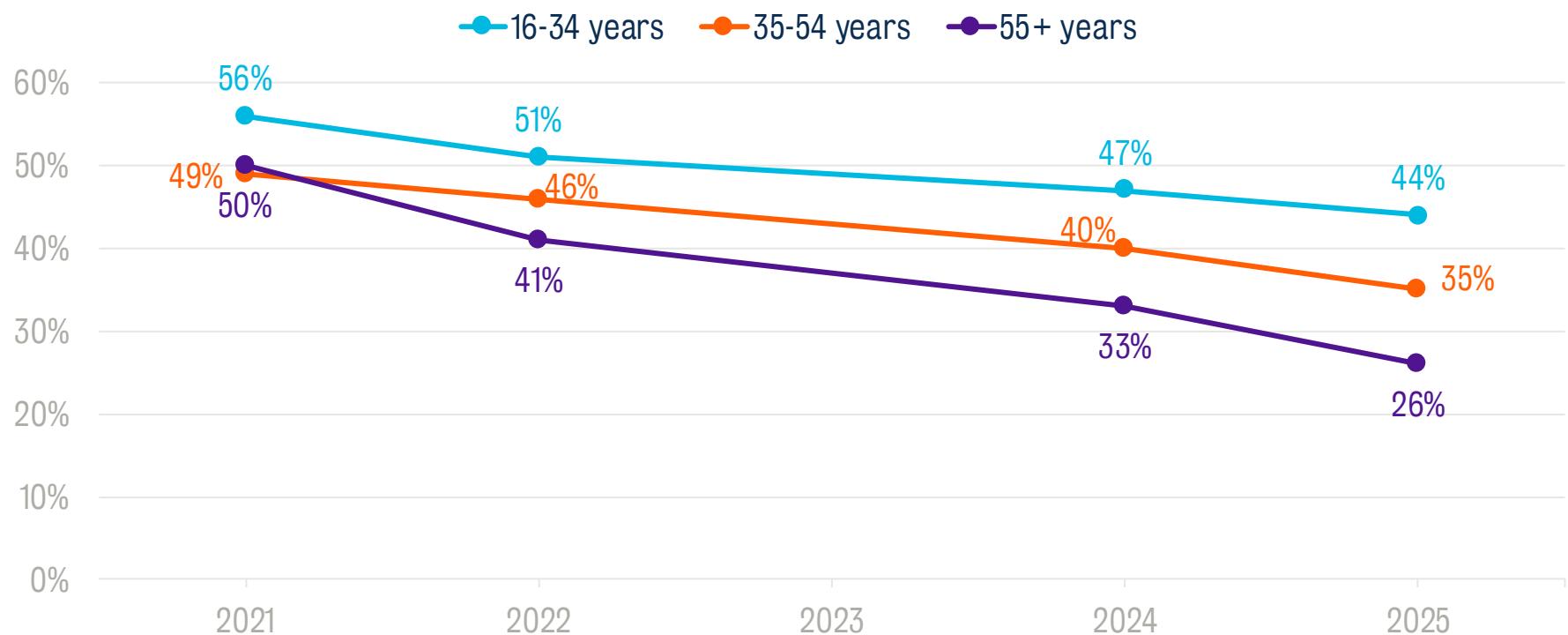


34% of the public today support the government subsidising the purchase of electric vehicles even if it might mean higher fuel duty – a five-point decline on 2024 (39%) and down 17 points on 2021 (51%), the high point in support for this measure.

Opposition (41%) to such subsidies is now slightly greater than support for them (34%) – a stark reversal of attitudes compared with when this trend began. Back in 2021, the public were twice as likely to be for (51%) rather than against (24%) electric vehicle subsidies.

# While support for electric vehicle subsidies has fallen among all age groups, the biggest drop is among older people, where there is now twice as much opposition as support

The government may want to subsidise the purchase of electric vehicles by consumers to reduce the number of petrol and diesel cars on the road. The government is ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2035 and encouraging a shift to electric vehicles. Putting in place subsidies would mean electric vehicles become less expensive to buy than they are now. The money to do this may come from increasing fuel duty on petrol and diesel cars. To what extent do you support or oppose this? (% who say support)



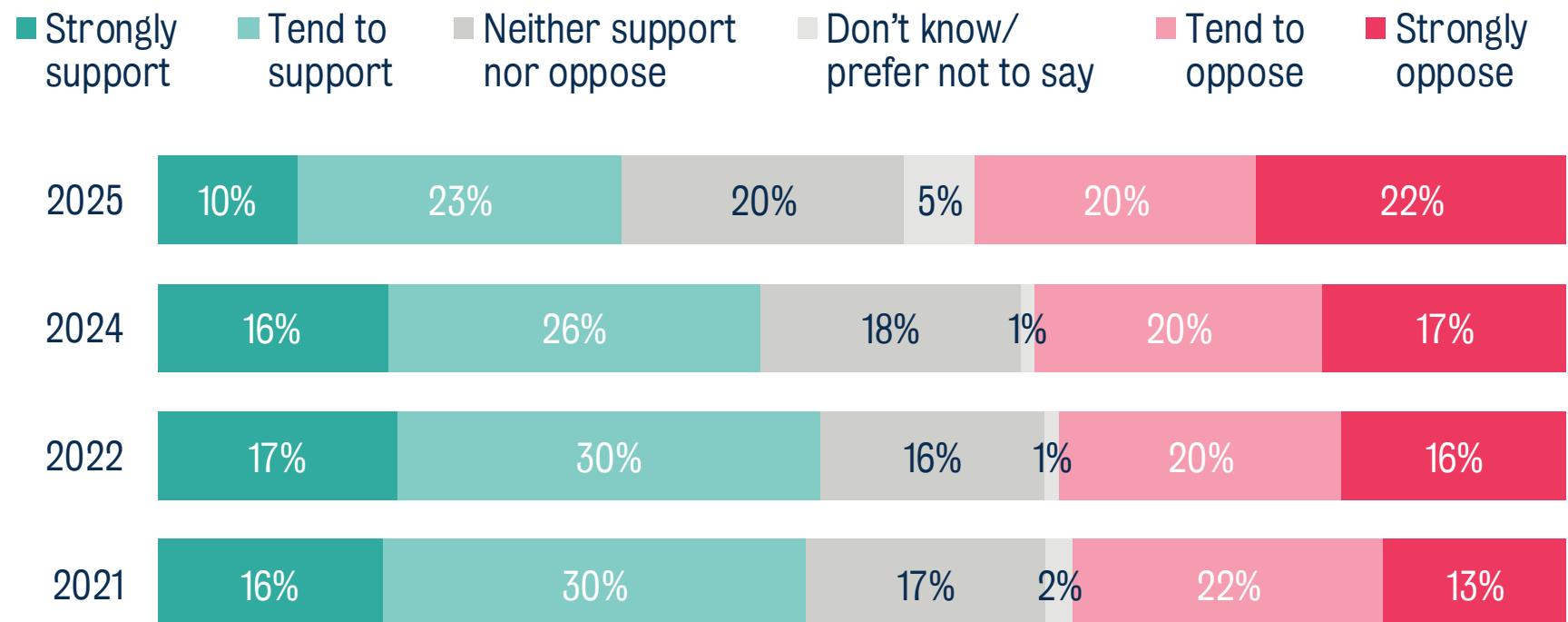
There is a growing age gap in attitudes towards electric vehicle subsidies if they may involve higher fuel duty.

While support has fallen among all age groups, the biggest drop is among those aged 55+, with a 24-point fall in support between 2021 and 2025.

At the same time, opposition has also grown the most among older people, outweighing support by a margin of 2:1 – 53% of those aged 55+ now oppose electric vehicle subsidies, while 26% support them.

# Support for a tax on foods with a negative environmental impact, such as red meat and dairy, is at its lowest since this trend began in 2021

The government may want to replace current taxes on food products with a tax that will vary according to the negative environmental impacts of different foods. This would increase the price of red meat and dairy products, and reduce the price of certain other foods (e.g. vegetables, bread). To what extent do you support or oppose this?



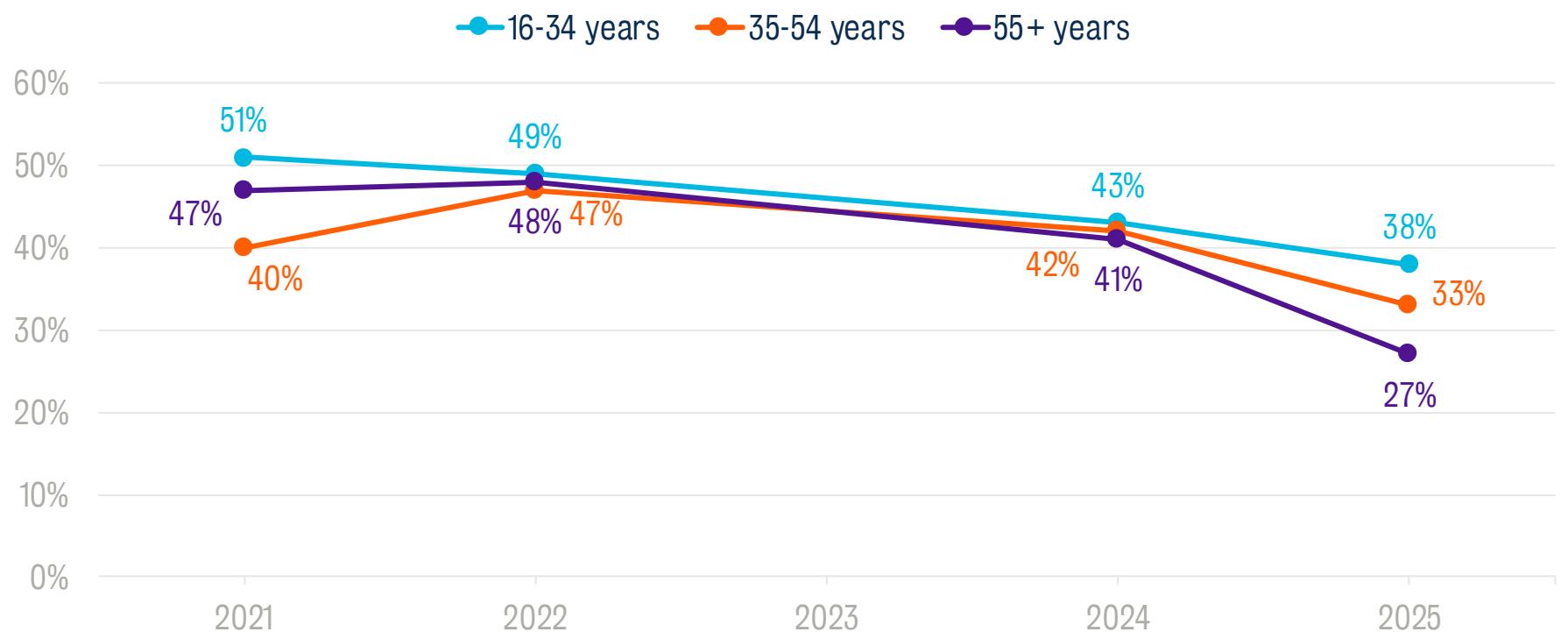
32% of the public now support a tax that varies according to the negative environmental impact of different types of food (meaning higher prices for red meat and dairy, and lower for bread and vegetables), compared with 42% in 2024 and 48% in 2022, which was the high point of support for this measure.

This decline means more people now oppose (42%) than support (32%) such a tax for the first time.

\* Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# An age divide has opened up on support for taxing foods with a negative environmental impact

The government may want to replace current taxes on food products with a tax that will vary according to the negative environmental impacts of different foods. This would increase the price of red meat and dairy products, and reduce the price of certain other foods (e.g. vegetables, bread). To what extent do you support or oppose this? (% who say support)

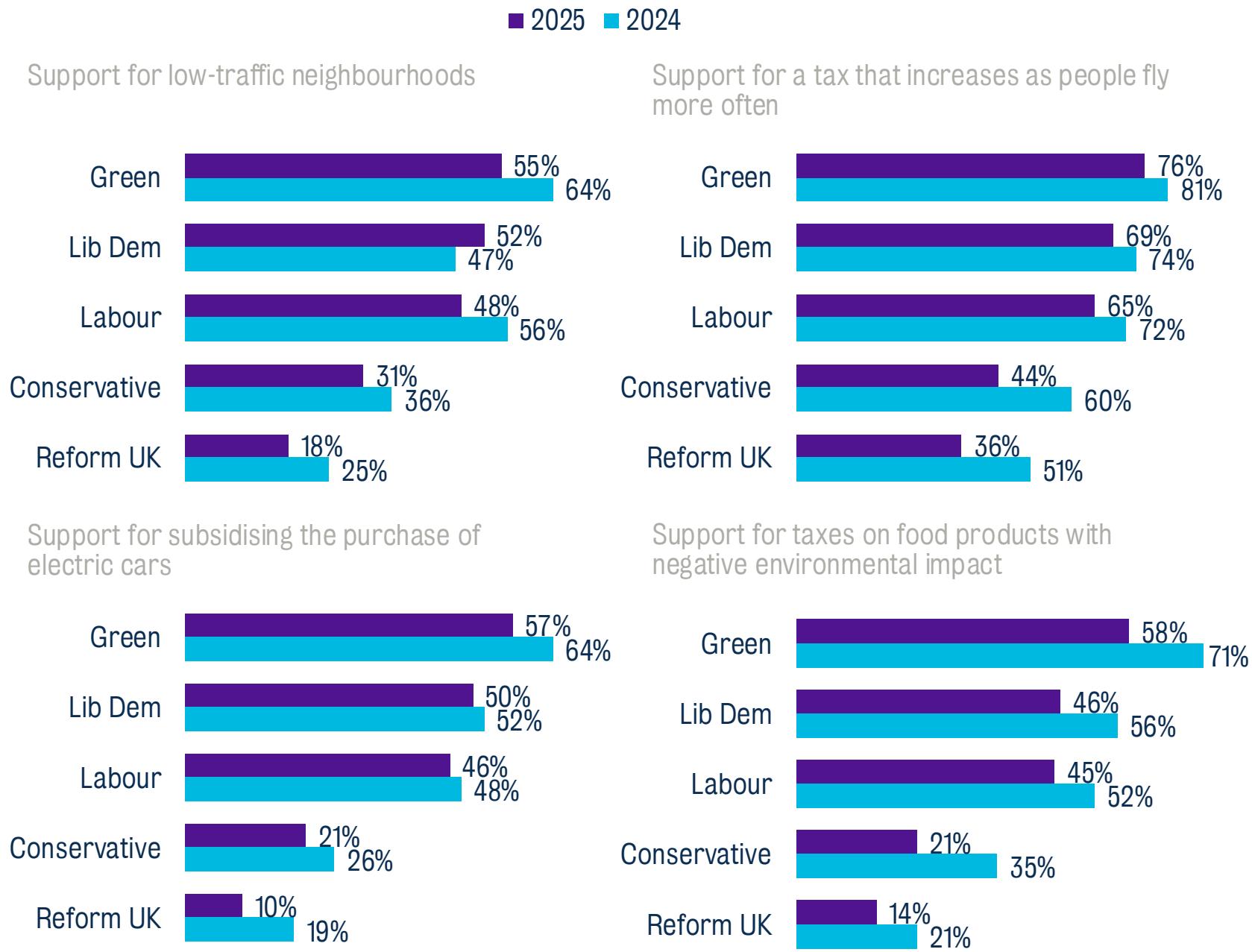


In 2021, there was a four-point gap in support for such a food tax between the youngest and oldest surveyed. But by 2025 this had grown to 11 points, as support fell among all age groups, but most sharply among those aged 55+, where it declined from 47% to 27% between 2024 and 2025.

At the same time, opposition has grown six points among middle aged people and by 14 points among older people, meaning 49% of those aged 55+ now oppose such a policy, compared with 27% who support it.

**Between 2024 and 2025, support for most of these environmental measures declined among 2024 voters for all the main political parties, including the Green Party (though Lib Dems showed little change).**

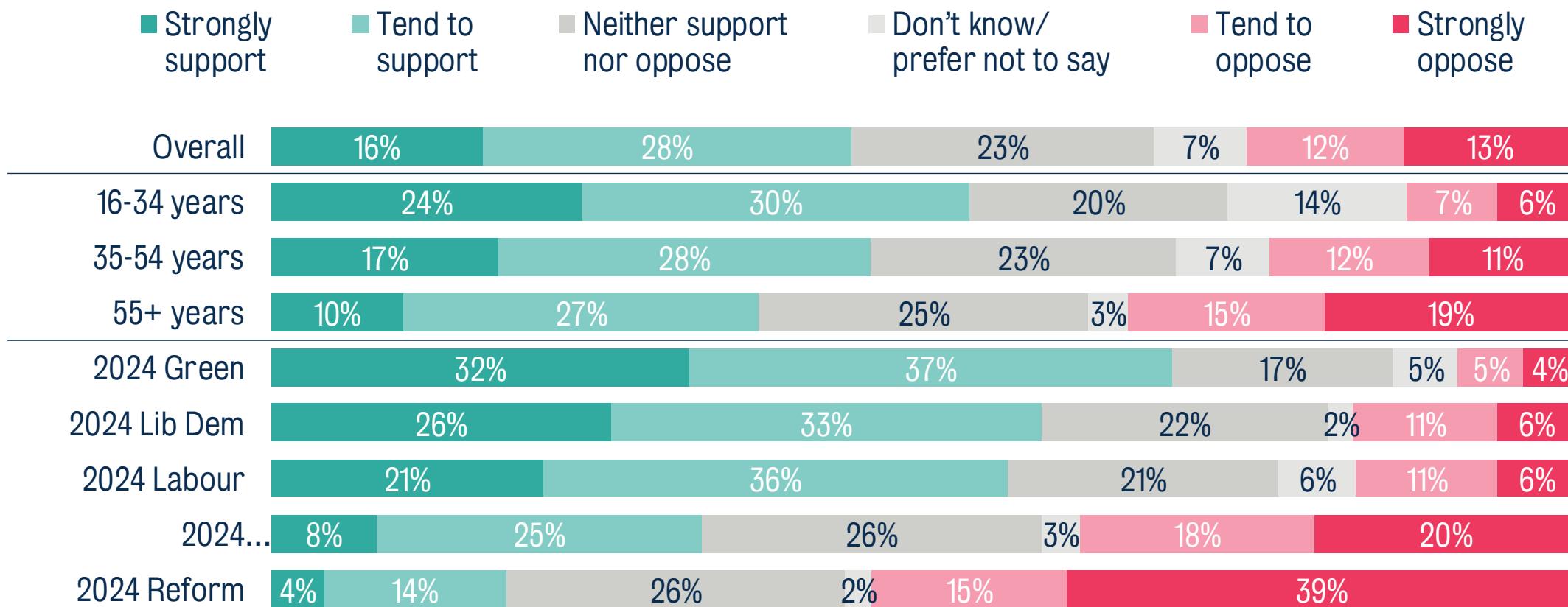
**However, support for the measures still outweighs opposition among Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters, while Conservative and especially Reform voters tend to be more opposed.**



Base: 4,027 UK adults aged 16+, 21-27 Aug 2025; 4,201, Apr 2024. See study details section for subgroup information

# By 45% to 24%, the public are more likely to support rather than oppose the government encouraging homeowners to switch to heat pumps

The government may want to cut down on the use of fossil fuel energy by increasing the uptake of heat pumps for heating people's homes. To help homeowners switch to heat pumps when replacing an existing fossil fuel home heating system (such as a gas boiler), the government currently offers grants towards the cost of installing an air source or ground source heat pump. These grants cover some, but not all, of the costs of installing a heat pump. To what extent do you support or oppose the government encouraging homeowners to switch to heat pumps when replacing their existing home heating system?

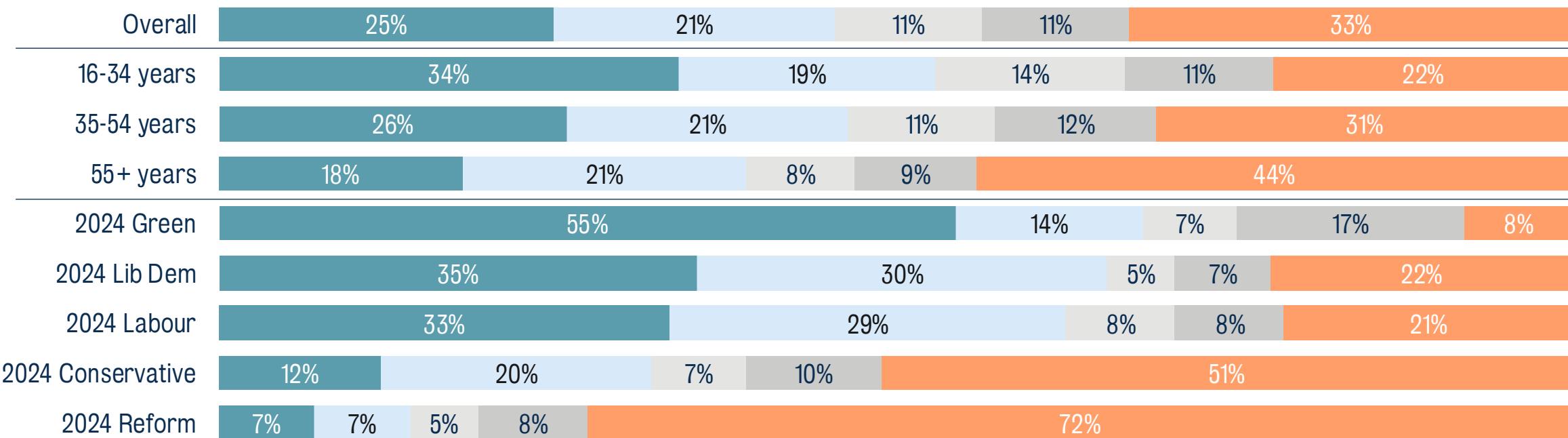


\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# The public are split on the current level of government spending to reduce the impact of climate change, compared with other things: 25% think it should be increased, 33% that it should be reduced, and 21% that the balance is about right

Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion?

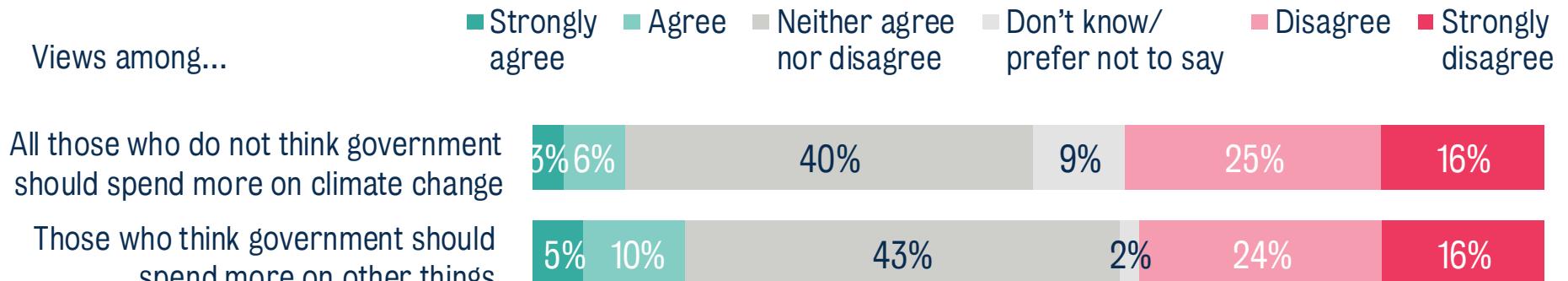
- The UK government should spend more on reducing the impact of climate change, even if it means spending less on other things
- The UK government currently has the balance of spending on climate change and other things about right
- Don't know/prefer not to say
- None of these
- The UK government should spend more on other things, even if it means spending less on reducing the impact of climate change



# Only a minority of the public see differing views about government spending on climate change as a reason not to be friends with someone, even among those who take the opposite view

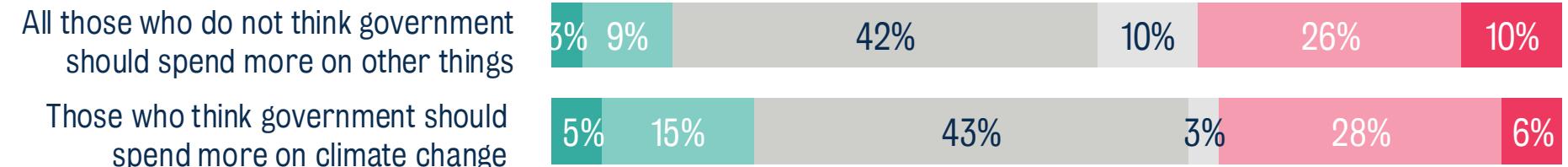
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with...

People who think the **government should spend more to reduce the impact of climate change** even if it means spending less on other things



Base: 2,965 UK adults aged 16+, 21-27 Aug 2025

People who think the **government should prioritise spending on other things** even if it means spending less to reduce the impact of climate change



Base: 2,686 UK adults aged 16+ 21-27 Aug 2025

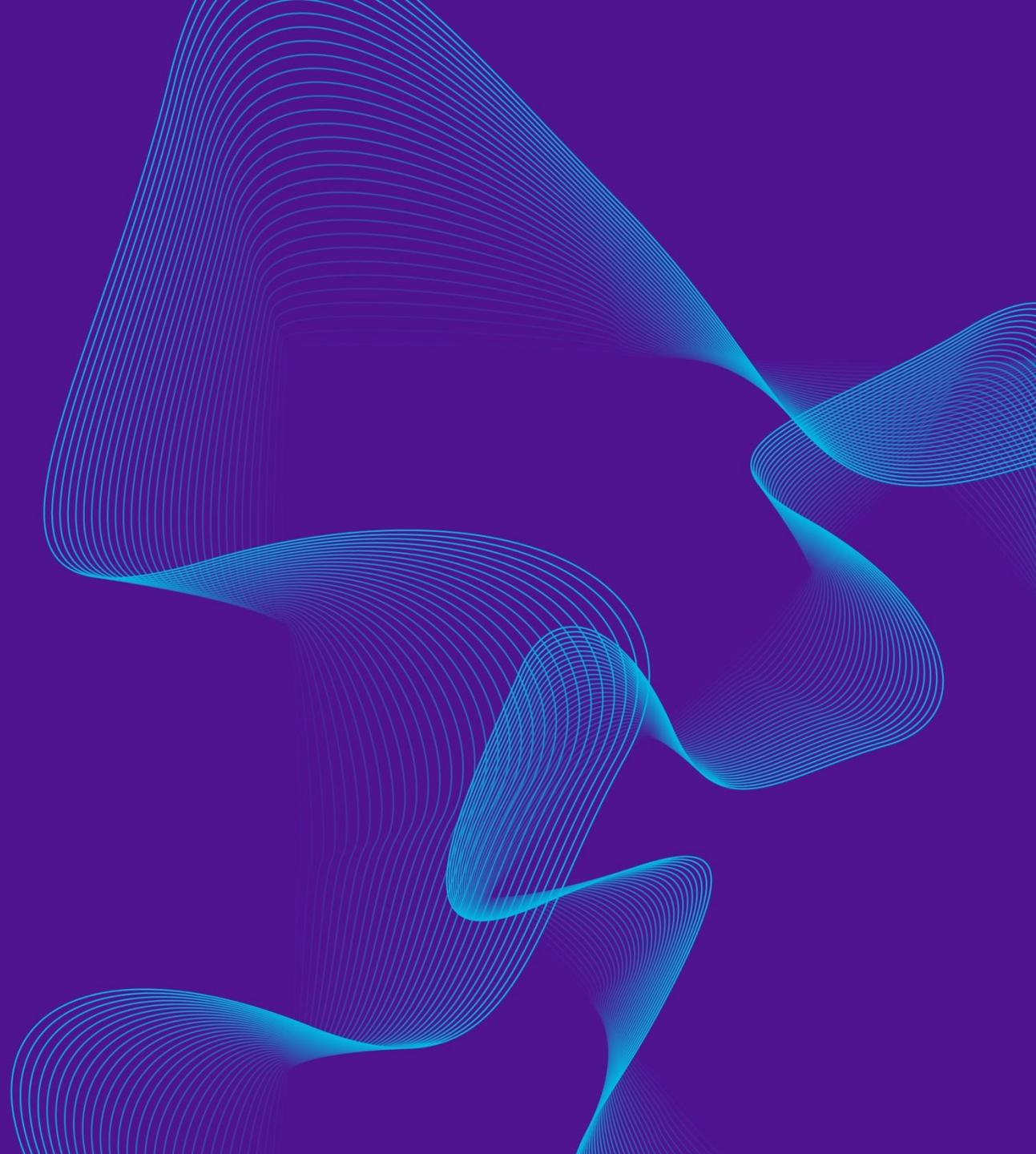
Among those who think the UK government should spend more on other things not related to climate change, 15% agree it's hard to be friends with those who think we need to increase government spending on climate action.

Similarly, 20% of the latter group say it's hard to be friends with the former.

Overall, far more people disagree that conflicting views on this issue are an impediment to friendship, or neither agree nor disagree that it's a problem.

## 4. Political preferences

Fewer people now say they favour a political party that takes strong action on climate change, though such a party is still the more preferred option. Despite this shift, young people have remained resolute in their preference for this kind of party, unlike older age groups



# Fewer people now say they favour a political party that takes strong action on climate change, though this remains the most popular position

Below are two different aims a political party could have. For these statements, please choose which would make you more likely to vote for a political party, or if it would make no difference?

**Statement A:** We will take strong action against things that cause climate change, even if this increases costs of oil and gas production and requires increased investment in renewable energy supplies

■ Strongly prefer a party saying Statement A

■ Tend to prefer a party saying Statement A

■ Neither A nor B would make a difference to my choice of party

■ Don't know/ prefer not to say

■ Tend to prefer a party saying Statement B

■ Strongly prefer a party saying Statement B



44% of people now say they would be more likely to vote for a political party if it had an aim to take strong action on climate change, even if this led to higher energy costs and required greater investment. This compares with 52% who felt this way in 2024.

And 32% favour a party that slows down action on climate change – up from 26% in 2024.

# Young people's preference for a party that takes strong action on climate change is virtually unchanged

Below are two different aims a political party could have. For these statements, please choose which would make you more likely to vote for a political party, or if it would make no difference?

**Statement A:** We will take strong action against things that cause climate change, even if this increases costs of oil and gas production and requires increased investment in renewable energy supplies

■ Strongly prefer a party saying Statement A

■ Tend to prefer a party saying Statement A

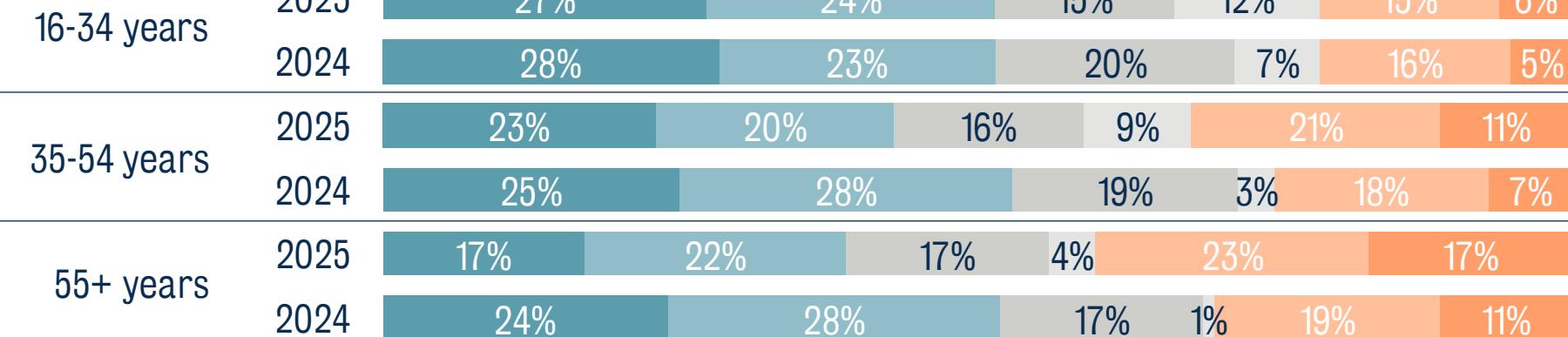
■ Neither A nor B would make a difference to my choice of party

**Statement B:** We will slow down actions against things that cause climate change, because it is not necessary or we can't afford the additional costs right now while there are other priorities

■ Don't know/ prefer not to say

■ Tend to prefer a party saying Statement B

■ Strongly prefer a party saying Statement B



Half of 16- to 34-year-olds say they'd prefer a party that takes strong action on climate change, with hardly any change in views between 2025 (52%) and 2024 (51%).

By contrast, older age groups have become less likely to favour such a party, with the biggest decline among those aged 55+. In 2024, 52% of this group were in favour of a party saying Statement A; now 39% are, with virtually the same proportion (40%) saying they'd prefer a party who takes a much slower approach to tackling climate change.

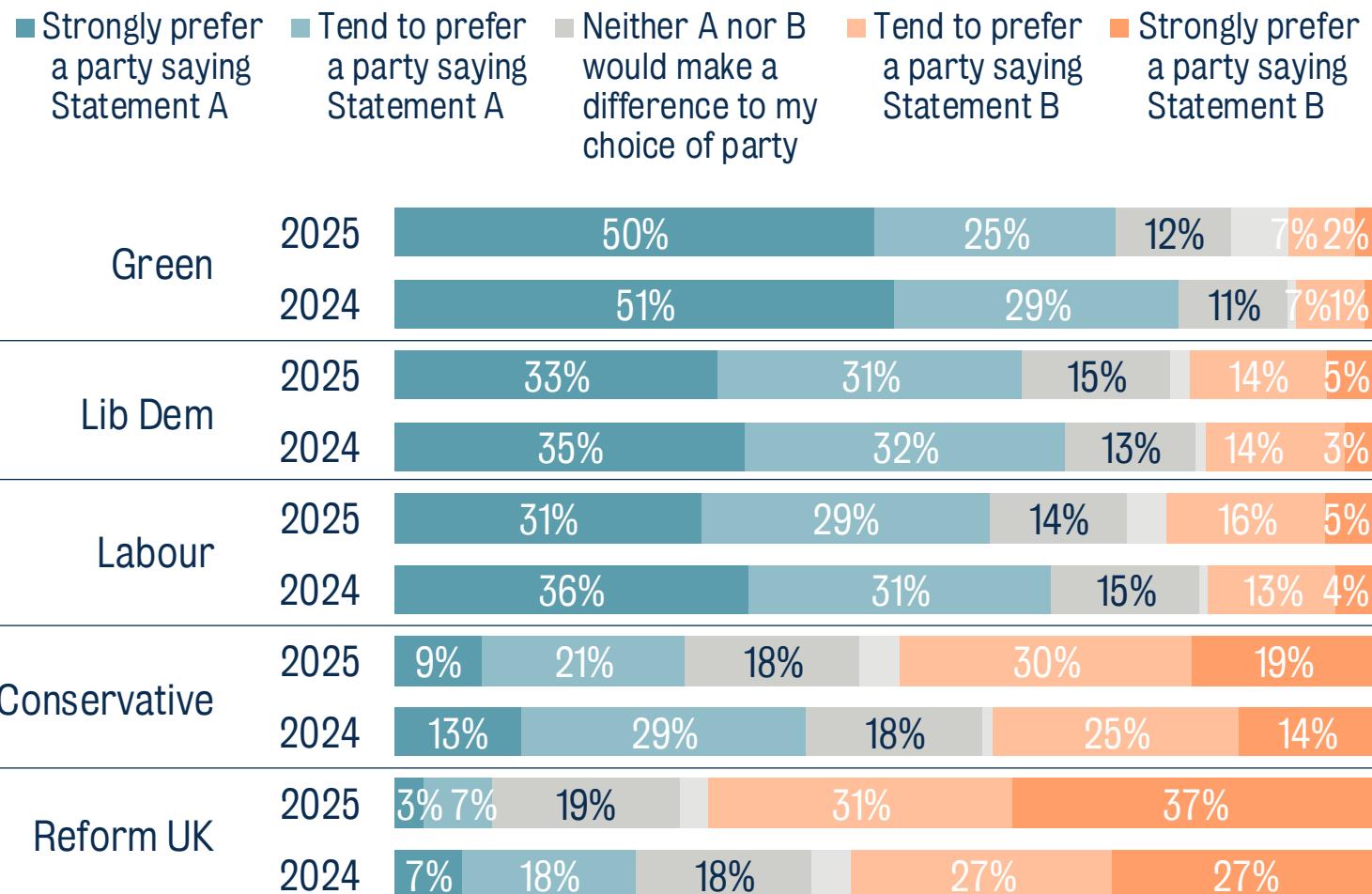
\* Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# 2024 Reform UK and Conservative voters have seen the biggest swings over the last year in favour of voting for parties that would slow down action on climate change, but voters for other parties are relatively consistent in their preference for a party that takes strong action against climate change

Below are two different aims a political party could have. For these statements, please choose which would make you more likely to vote for a political party, or if it would make no difference?

**Statement A:** We will take strong action against things that cause climate change, even if this increases costs of oil and gas production and requires increased investment in renewable energy supplies

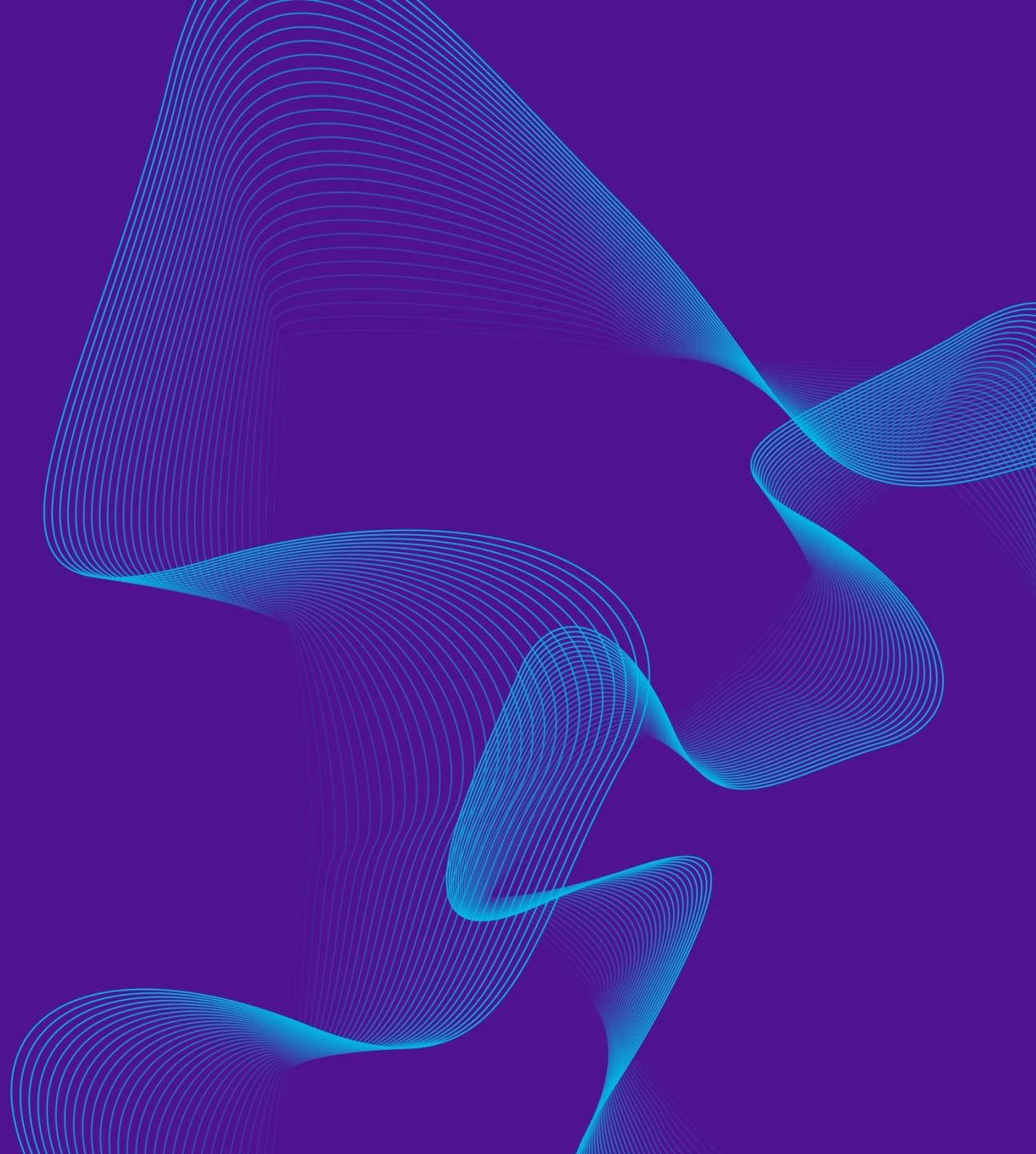
**Statement B:** We will slow down actions against things that cause climate change, because it is not necessary or we can't afford the additional costs right now while there are other priorities



Base: 4,027 UK adults aged 16+, 21-27 Aug 2025; 4,201, Apr 2024. See study details section for subgroup information

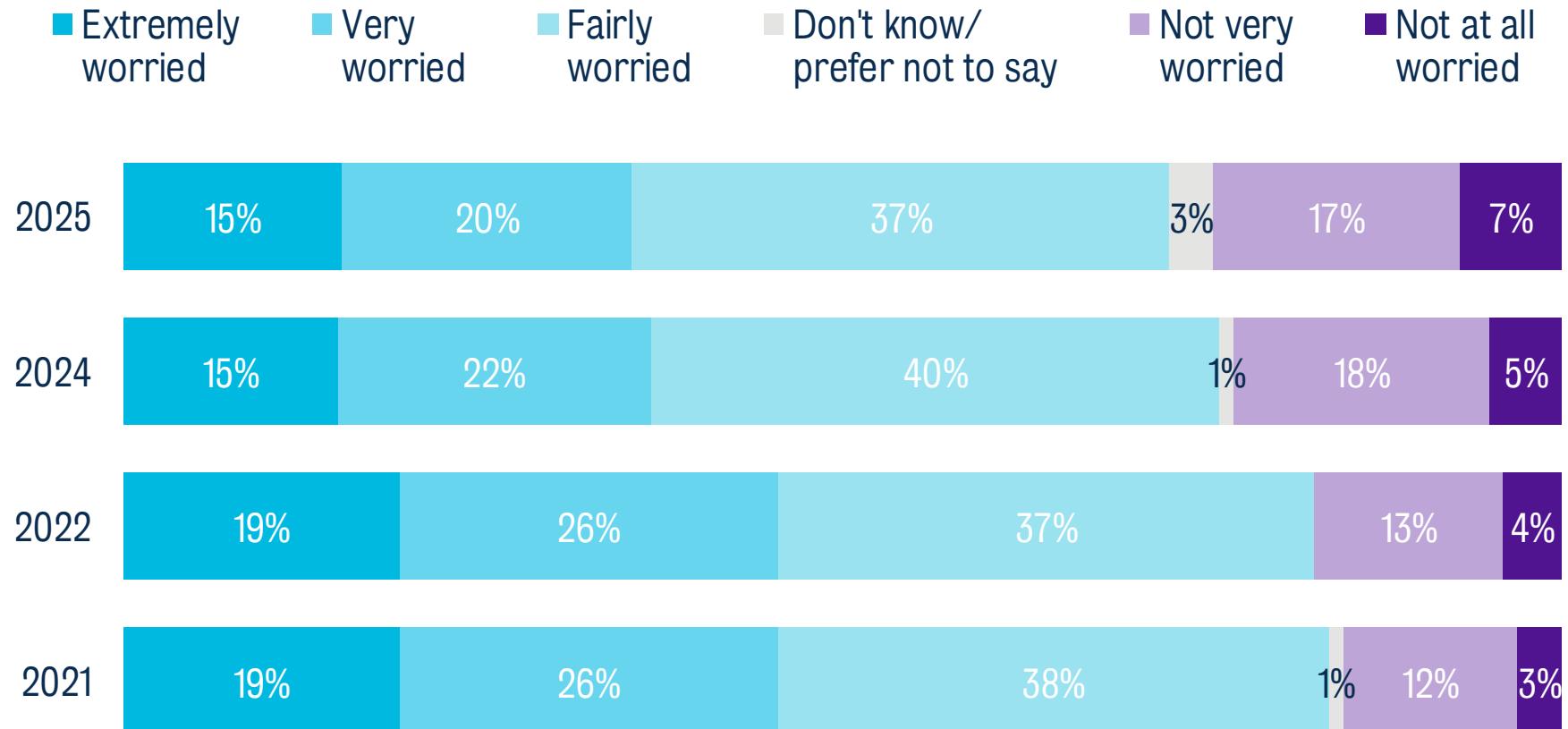
## 5. Worry about climate change

Worry about climate change has fallen in recent years – although the vast majority of the public are still concerned about it and Britons are still more likely than Americans to accept that climate change is caused by human activity



# The vast majority of the public say they're worried about climate change, even if the proportion who feel this way has declined in recent years

How worried, if at all, are you about climate change?

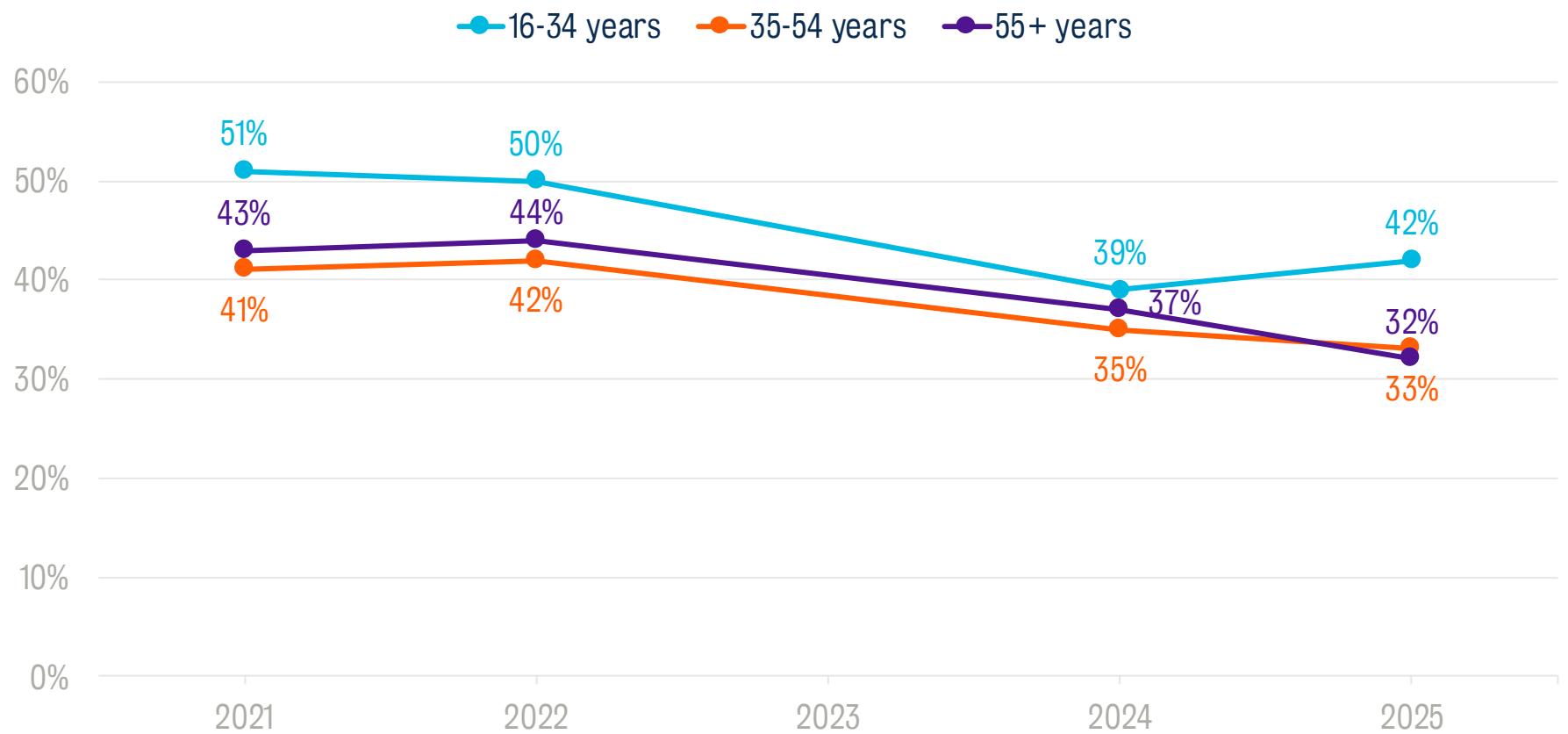


In 2021 (83%) and 2022 (82%), just over eight in 10 people said they were worried about climate change.

By 2024 this had fallen to around three-quarters (77%) and by 2025 it had declined further, to around seven in 10 (72%).

# Since 2022, all age groups have become less likely to say they are extremely or very worried about climate change

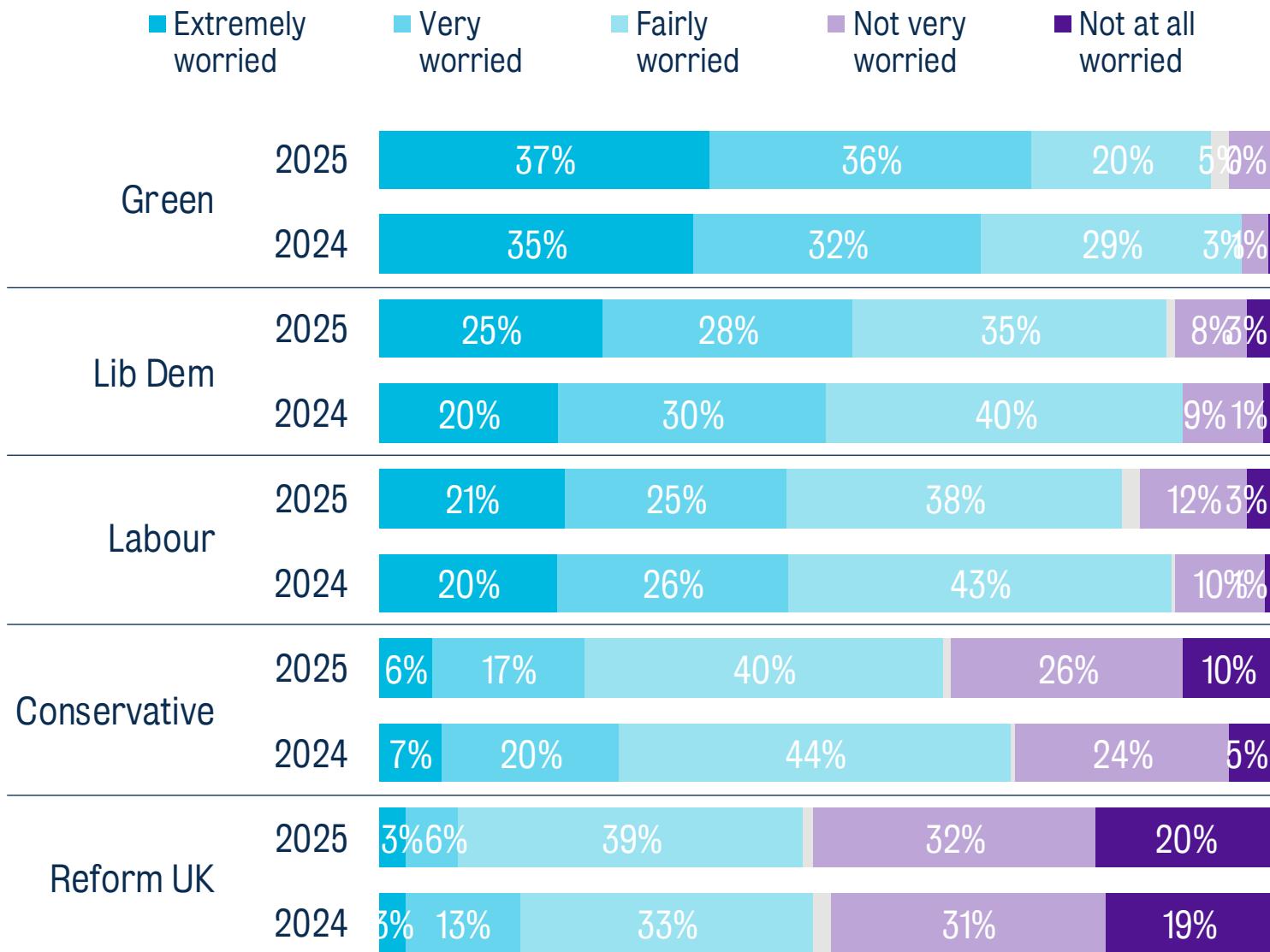
How worried, if at all, are you about climate change? (% who say extremely or very worried)



However, the proportion of young and middle-aged people who say they are extremely or very worried about climate change to this extent has held steady over the last year, at a time when it has continued to decline among older age groups.

**In both 2024 and 2025, those who voted Labour, Lib Dem or especially Green at the latest general election are notably more worried about climate change than Conservatives and especially Reform UK voters**

How worried, if at all, are you about climate change?



# People overestimate the share of the public who say they are extremely or very worried about climate change

We just asked you how worried, if at all, you were about climate change. We have put this question to a representative sample of British adults. On average, what percentage (between 0-100%) of the British public do you think say that they are extremely or very worried about climate change?

36% of the public say they're extremely or very worried about climate change, but their average guess is that 45% feel this way.

Public's average guess



45%

Reality



36%

# Despite changing levels of climate concern, people in the UK are still more likely than those in the US to think climate change is caused by human activity

Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion?

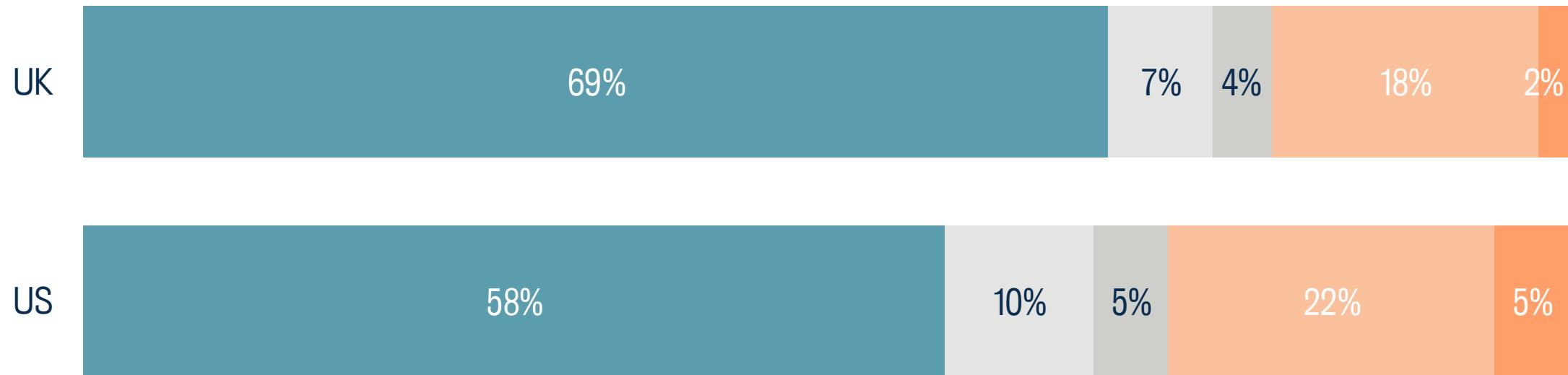
■ Climate change is mostly caused by human activity

■ Don't know/ prefer not to say

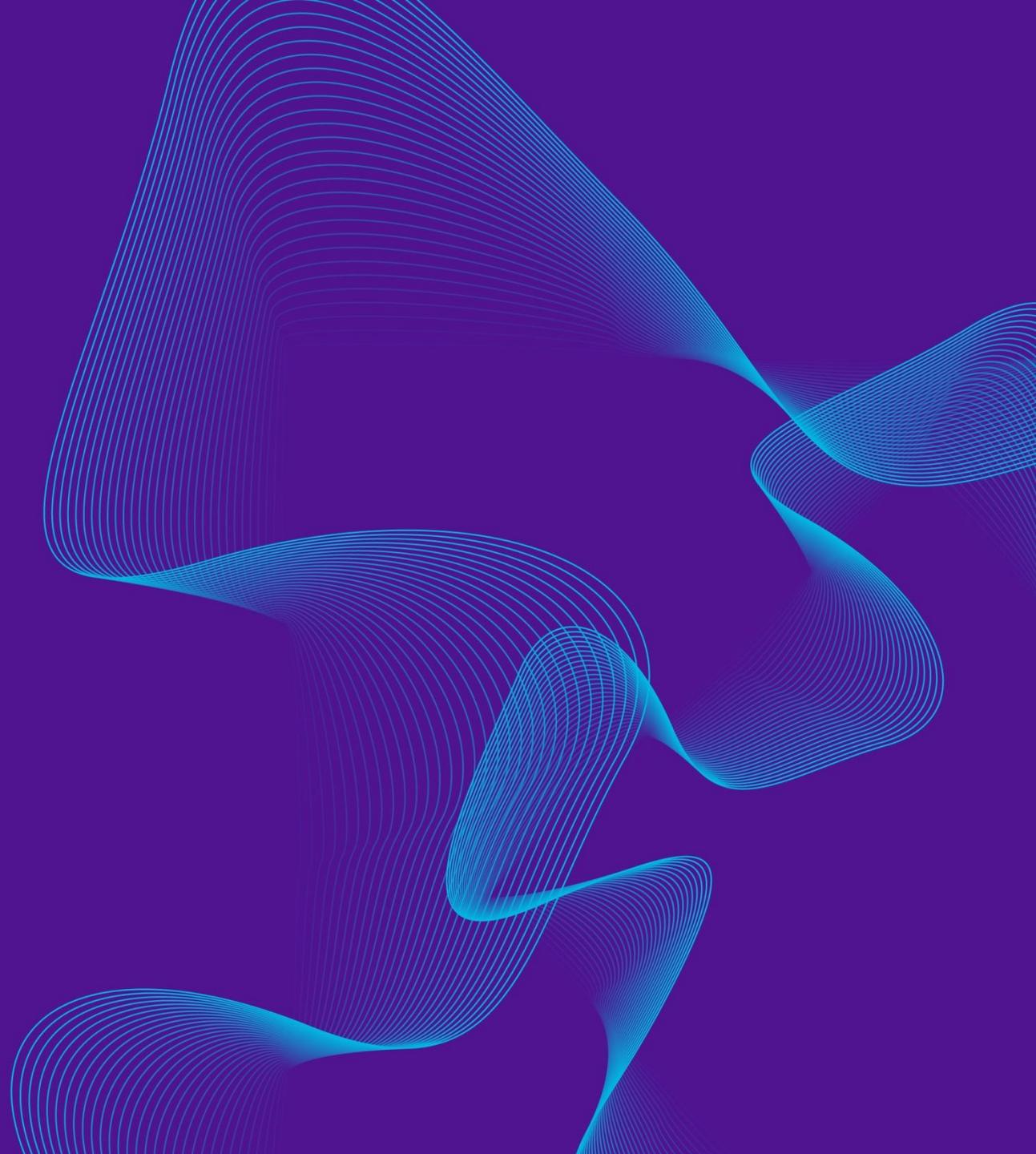
■ Other

■ Climate change is mostly caused by natural patterns

■ Climate change is not really happening



## Study details



# Study details

Ipsos UK interviewed online a representative sample of 4,027 adults aged 16+ across the United Kingdom between 21 and 27 August 2025, following previous surveys of 4,201 people between 18-24 April 2024, 16,160 people between 27 October-2 November 2022, and 5,665 people between 19-25 August 2021 (in 2021 some questions were only asked to randomised sub-groups of c700 people). This data has been collected by Ipsos' UK KnowledgePanel, an online random probability panel which provides gold standard insights into the UK population, by providing bigger sample sizes via the most rigorous research methods. Data are weighted by age, gender, region, Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile, education, ethnicity and number of adults in the household in order to reflect the profile of the UK population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

The Ipsos UK KnowledgePanel is the UK's largest online random probability panel, providing total understanding of the UK public for businesses and organisations looking for cutting edge insight at the gold standard of online research methods. It is important because it includes both online and offline participants selected at random from every address in the UK, the first of its kind, with a single interface to eliminate modal effects and produce accurate data rapidly.

UK KnowledgePanel utilises a panel of 30,000+ participants to provide a new innovative tool for all those organisations who wish to garner greater insights into the behaviours,

beliefs and attitudes of not just the UK population as a whole, but also into the specific communities which make up the UK's diverse population.

Studies completed on UK KnowledgePanel will be fully representative of the UK population including households who are considered "offline". This is made possible by recruiting offline and supplying participants with a tablet, internet access and the tech support needed to get online. As a result of this approach the panel utilises a single online data collection method, with no differential mode effects – a pioneering advancement which enhances the ability to understand our society.

The UK KnowledgePanel builds on work done by Ipsos in the US on their own, which has been operating since 1999, utilising that experience and blending it with Ipsos' own research and methodological expertise to produce a tool which delivers robust nationally representative data at speed. [Find out more](#).

## 2025 US survey

Ipsos in the US conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,085 US adults aged 18+ between 14 and 15 January 2025. The sample was weighted by gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education, with population targets taken from US Census 2022 American Community Survey data. [Find out more](#).

## Subgroups

Variable	Base
<b>Age (four categories)</b>	
16-24	375
25-34	691
35-54	1,298
55+	1,663
<b>Age (three categories)</b>	
16-34	1,066
35-54	1,298
55+	1,663
<b>2024 general election vote</b>	
Conservative	686
Labour	1,029
Reform UK	344
Liberal Democrats	348
Green Party	224
<b>Climate change position</b>	
Climate change activist	554
Climate change sceptic	365



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