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Covid in the UK: trust and freedom the second year of the pandemic

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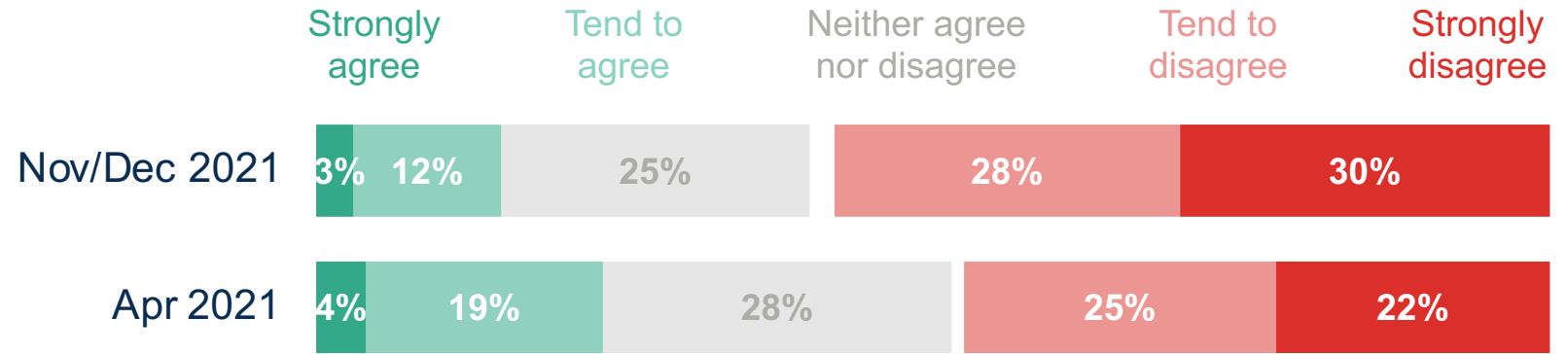
Over the period April to November/December 2021, there was a general deterioration of trust in the UK government to tell the truth and do the right thing

In Nov/Dec of last year, 58% of people disagreed that the UK government is honest and truthful, compared with 47% who felt the same back in April 2021.

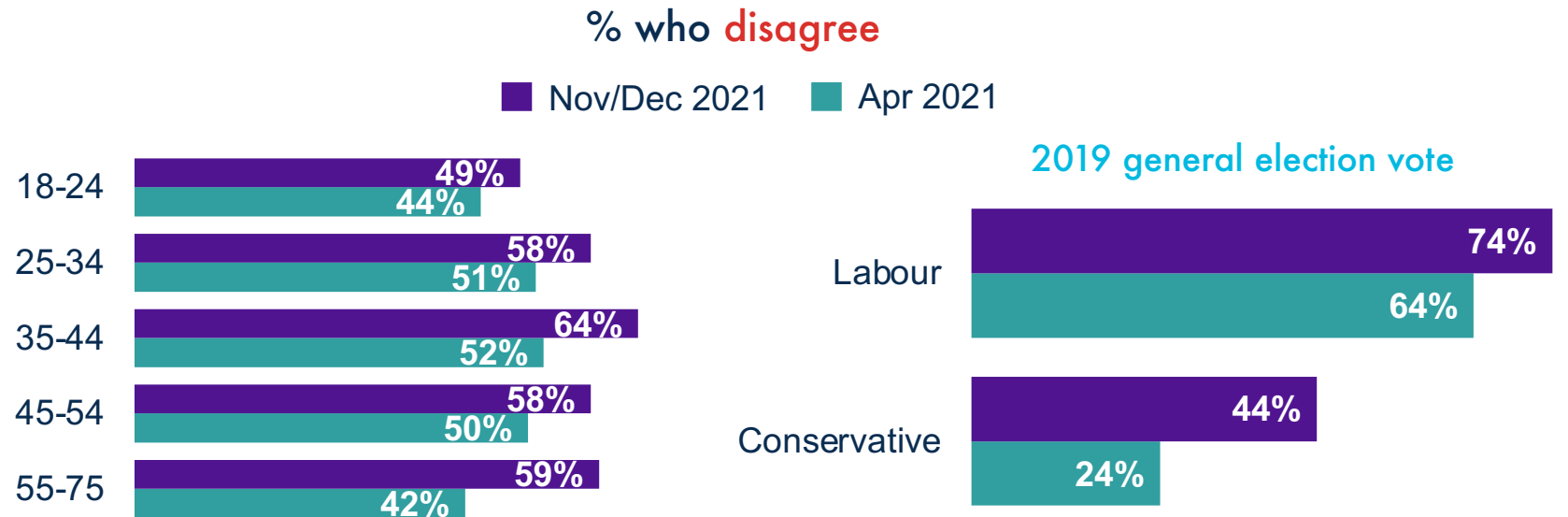
This increased distrust is seen across all age groups, but most markedly among 55-75-year-olds: 59% of this age group disagreed that the government is honest and truthful in this latest survey, up from 42% in April last year.

And the proportion of Conservative voters who feel this way nearly doubled, rising from 24% to 44% over the same period.

To what extent, if at all, do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?
The UK government is honest and truthful



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, and 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021'



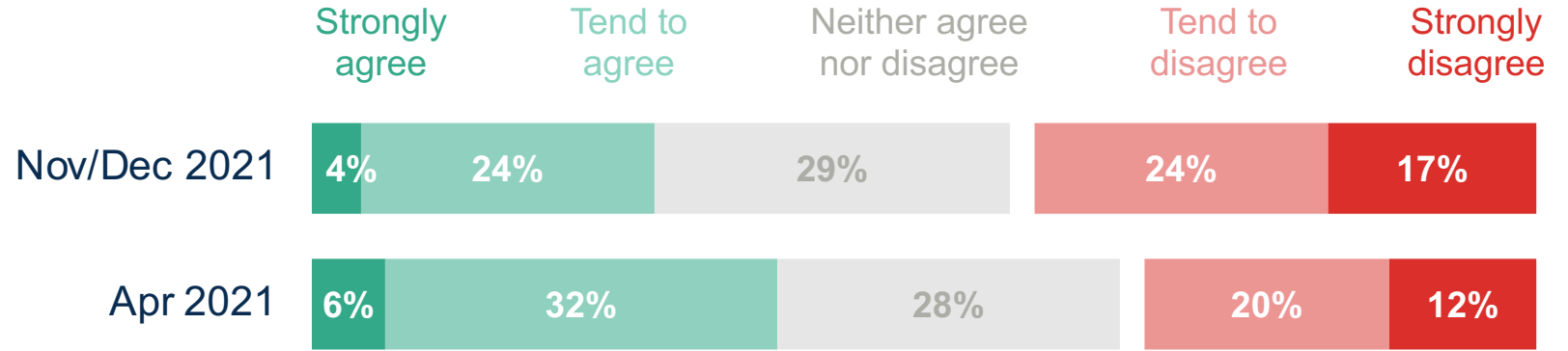
Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By age: 18-24 (507); 24-35 (873); 35-44 (902); 45-54 (991); 55-75 (1,599); By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780). Base: 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021. By age: 18-24 (603); 24-35 (902); 35-44 (869); 45-54 (947); 55-75 (1,575); By GE vote: Conservative (777); Labour (776)

28% of the public said the UK government usually does the right thing – down from 38% in April 2021.

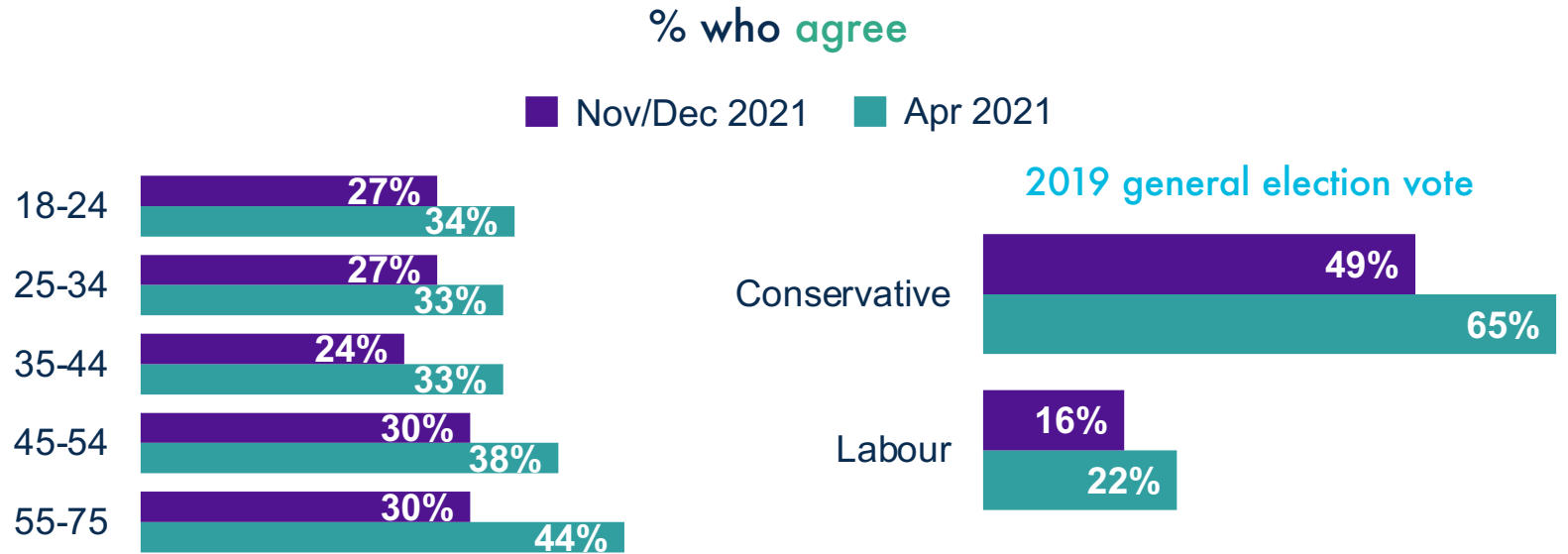
Back in April, 65% of Conservative voters felt this way, but by Nov/Dec this had fallen to 49%.

Again, 55-75-year-olds have seen the biggest change in views – in Nov/Dec 2021, 30% agreed the government usually does the right thing, compared with 44% who said the same earlier in April of that year.

To what extent, if at all, do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?
In general, the UK government usually does the right thing



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, and 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021'



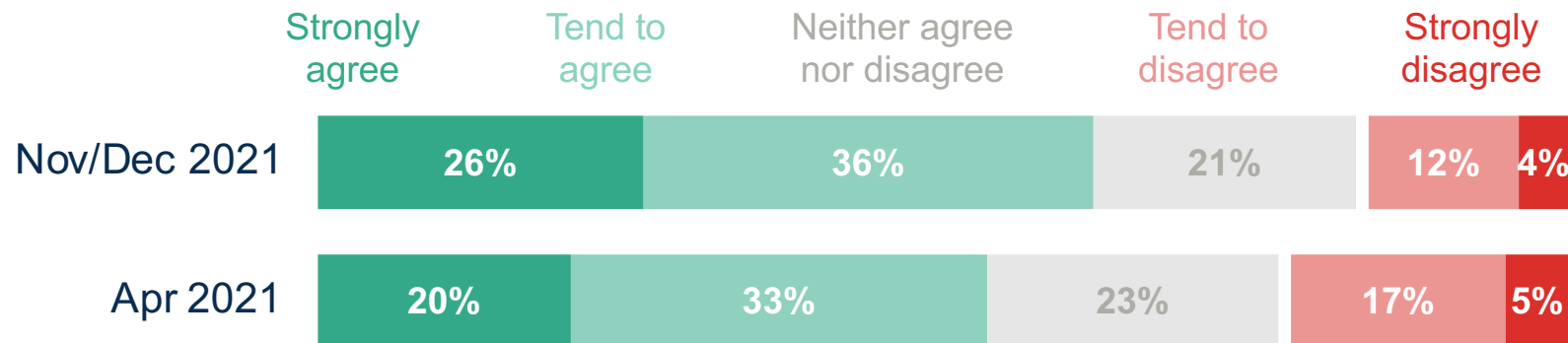
Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By age: 18-24 (507); 24-35 (873); 35-44 (902); 45-54 (991); 55-75 (1,599); By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780). Base: 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021. By age: 18-24 (603); 24-35 (902); 35-44 (869); 45-54 (947); 55-75 (1,575); By GE vote: Conservative (777); Labour (776)

62% said they were unsure whether to believe the UK government – up from 53% who said the same in April.

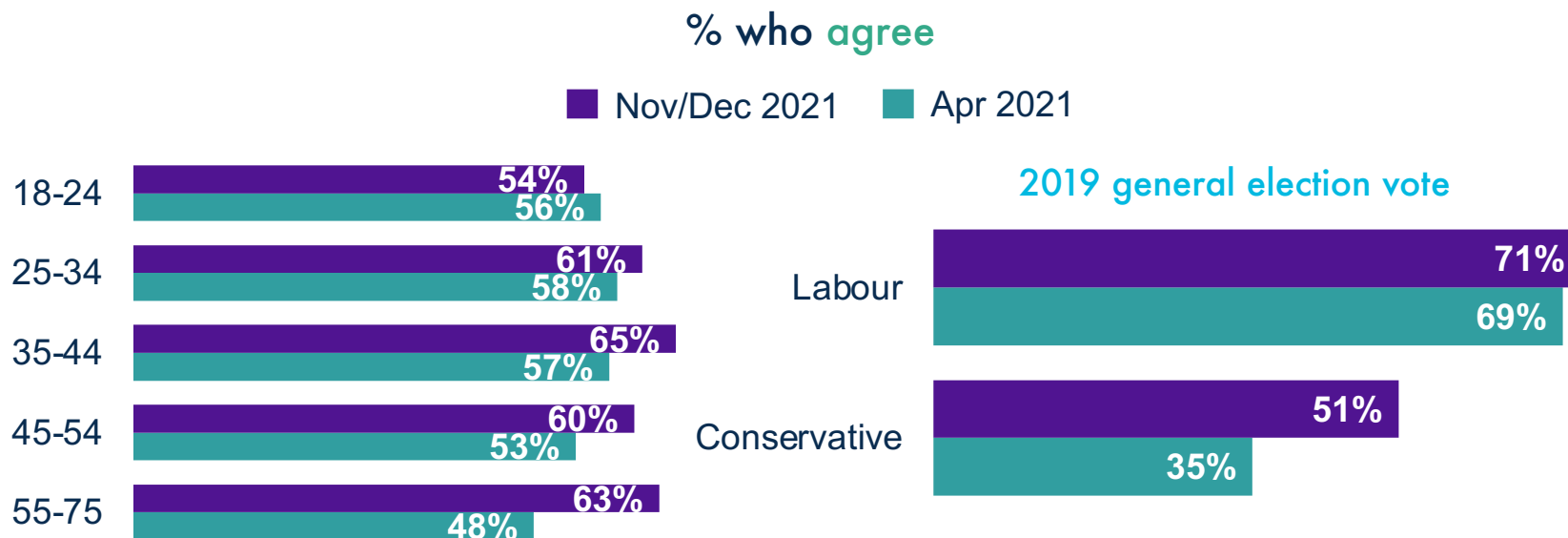
While there has been little change in feeling among Labour voters, the proportion of Conservative voters who said they were unsure whether to believe the government rose from 35% to 51% between April and Nov/Dec.

55-75-year-olds were the age group who experienced the biggest change in views. In Nov/Dec, 63% of this group said they were unsure whether to believe the UK government – up from 48% in April.

To what extent, if at all, do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?
I am unsure whether to believe the UK government



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, and 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021'



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By age: 18-24 (507); 24-35 (873); 35-44 (902); 45-54 (991); 55-75 (1,599); By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780). Base: 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021. By age: 18-24 (603); 24-35 (902); 35-44 (869); 45-54 (947); 55-75 (1,575); By GE vote: Conservative (777); Labour (776)

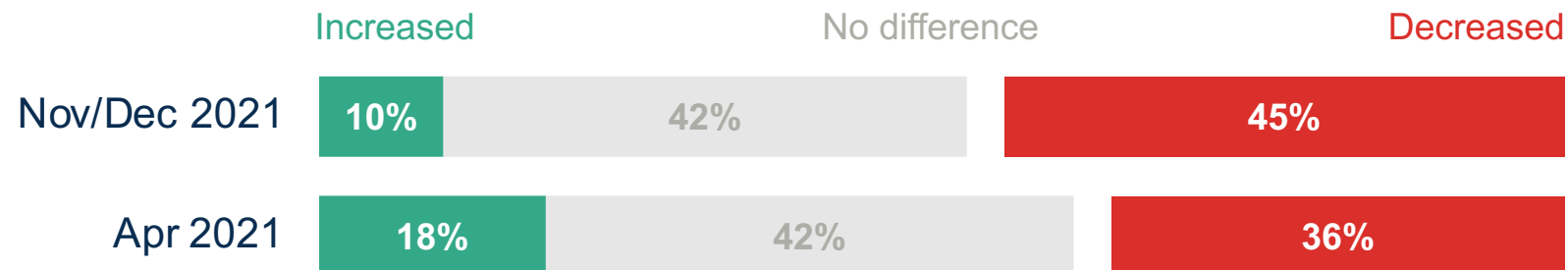
45% of people said the overall experience of the pandemic has decreased their general level of trust in the UK government, up from 36% who said the same in April.

Trust in scientists has also changed over the course of last year, with a smaller proportion of people saying the pandemic had increased their trust in scientists in Nov/Dec (32%) than in April (42%).

There has been virtually no change in how the pandemic has affected people's trust in social media.

Looking back over the past year / couple of years as a whole since the start of the pandemic: Has the overall experience of the pandemic increased, decreased or made no difference to your general level of trust in...

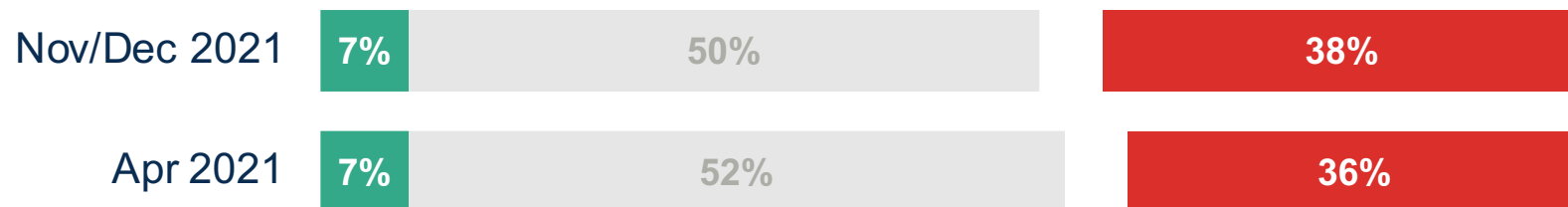
The UK government?



Scientists?



Social media?

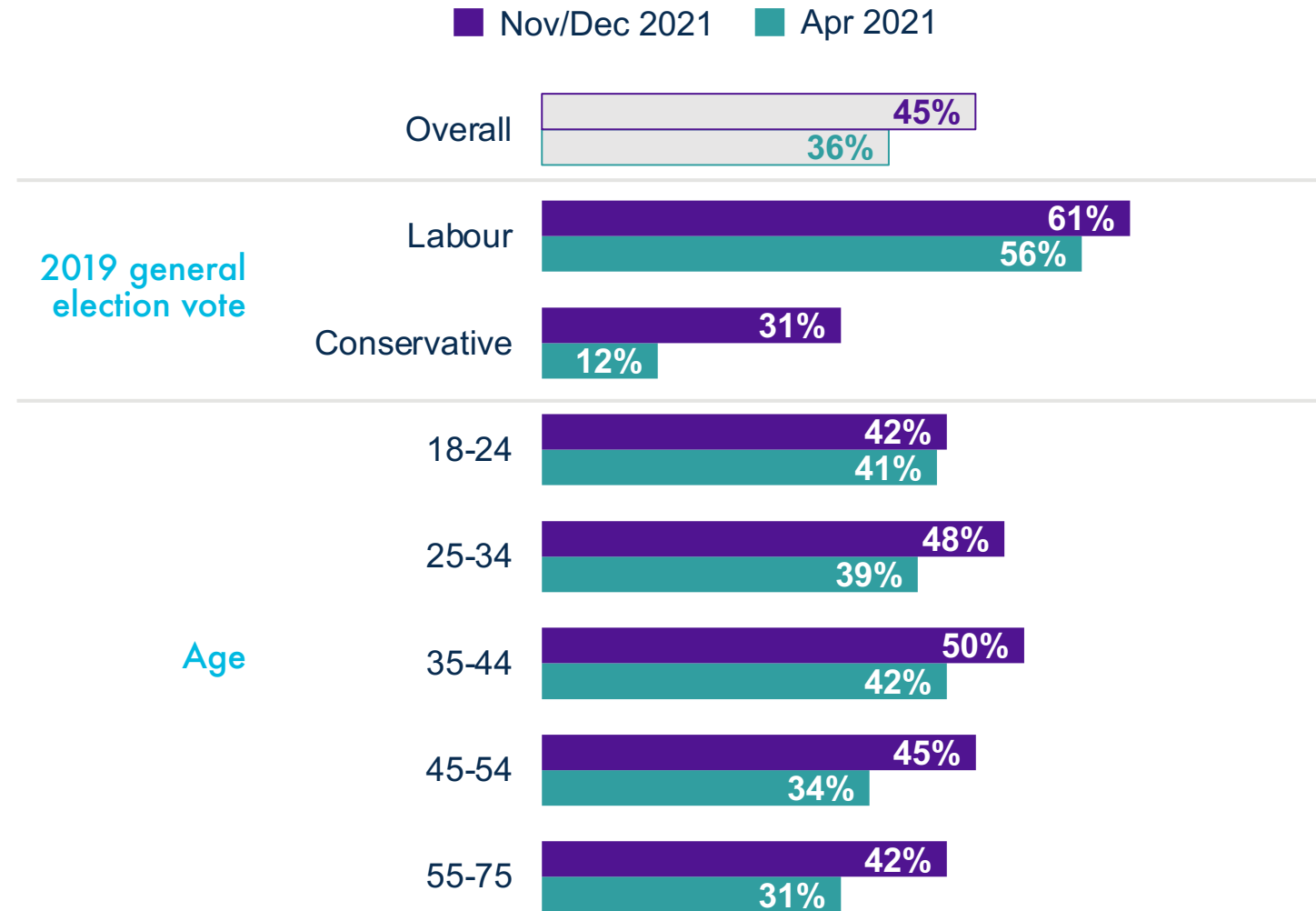


Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, and 2,485 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021

Conservative voters were more than twice as likely to say the pandemic had reduced their trust in the government in Nov/Dec than in April (31% vs 12%). By contrast, there has been virtually no change in feeling among Labour voters.

All age groups except for 18-24-year-olds saw a notable rise in distrust over this period.

% who say the overall experience of the pandemic **decreased** their general level of trust in the UK government

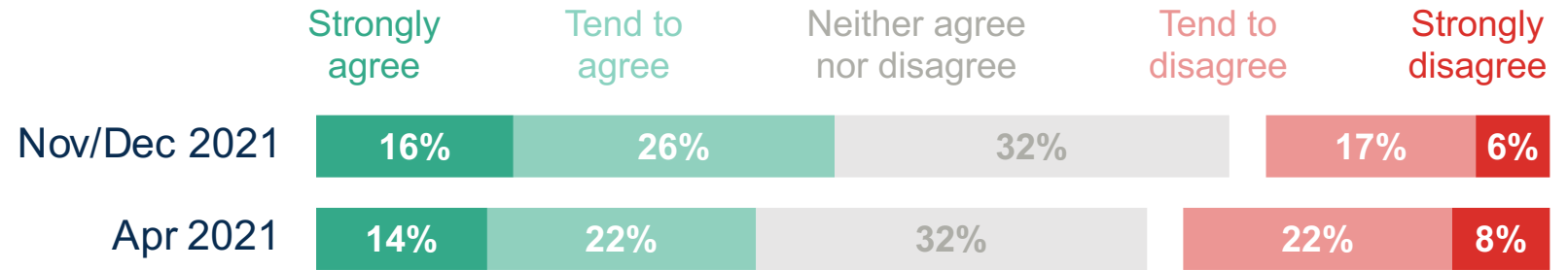


Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By age: 18-24 (507); 24-35 (873); 35-44 (902); 45-54 (991); 55-75(1599); By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780). Base: 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021. By age : 18-24 (603); 24-35 (902); 35-44 (869); 45-54(947); 55-75(1575); By GE vote: Conservative (777); Labour (776)

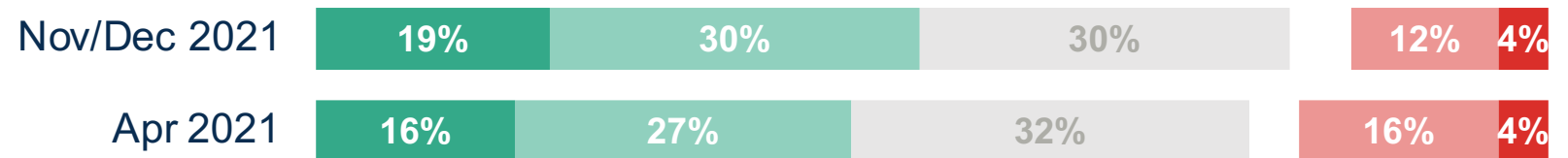
There were slight increases in negative perceptions of the UK government between April and Nov/Dec 2021:

- 42% thought the UK government acts unfairly towards people like them, up from 35%.
- 49% believed the UK government usually ignores their community, compared with 43% previously.
- 66% said they are usually cautious about trusting the UK government – a rise of 5 percentage points.

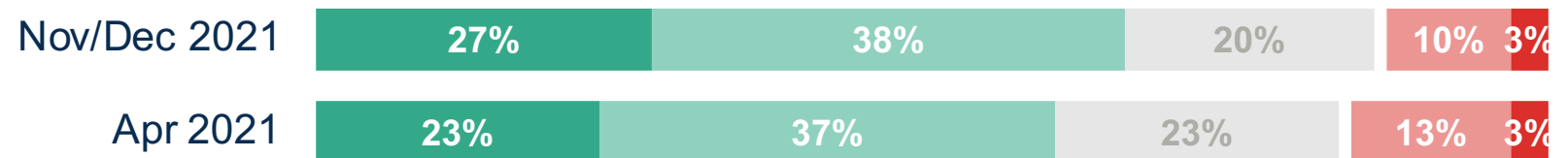
To what extent, if at all, do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?
The UK government acts unfairly towards people like me



The UK government usually ignores my community



I am usually cautious about trusting the UK government



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, and 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021

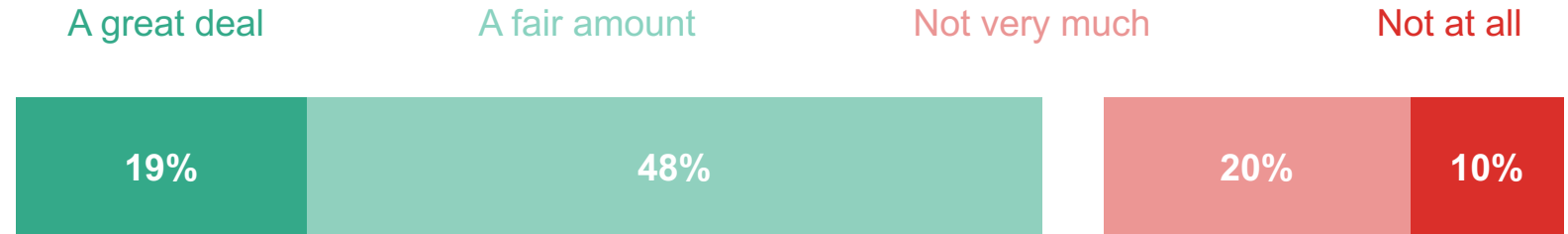
In Nov/Dec, the majority of people (67%) said they trusted the information provided by the UK government about Covid vaccines – although three in 10 (29%) said they did not.

Unsurprisingly, people who had had both doses of the vaccine were almost three times as likely to trust this information than those who hadn't had any dose (73% vs 27%), while Conservative voters were more likely than Labour voters to do so (78% vs 63%).

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

Now thinking about the UK government's performance and information sources since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. To what extent, if at all, do you trust...

The information provided by the UK government on the coronavirus vaccine?



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021

% who trust the information a great deal/a fair amount



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780). By vaccination status: Had both doses (4,199); not had any dose (429)

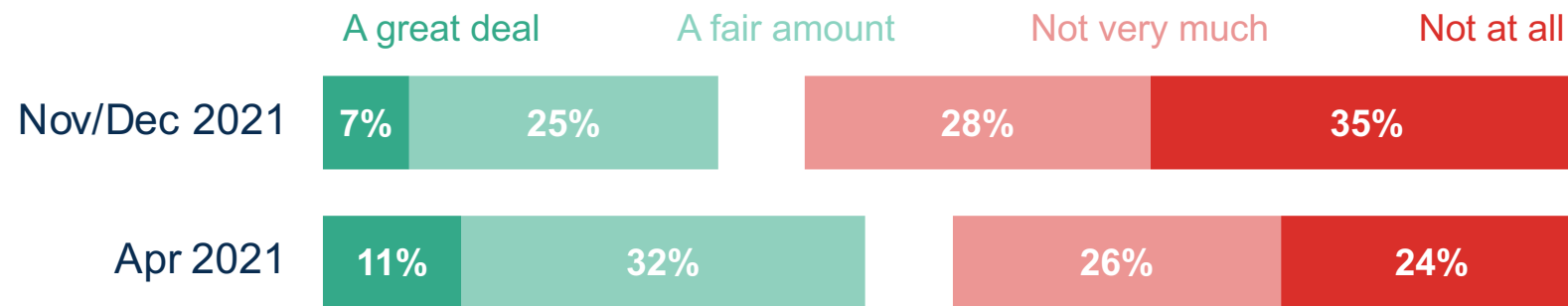
The proportion of people who said they didn't trust the prime minister on issues relating to Covid increased over the course of 2021 – and the share of Conservative voters who felt this way doubled

62% of people said they didn't trust Boris Johnson very much or not at all on issues related to coronavirus in Nov/Dec, compared with 50% in April.

At the end of last year, the public were twice as likely to distrust as trust Johnson on the pandemic (62% vs 31%).

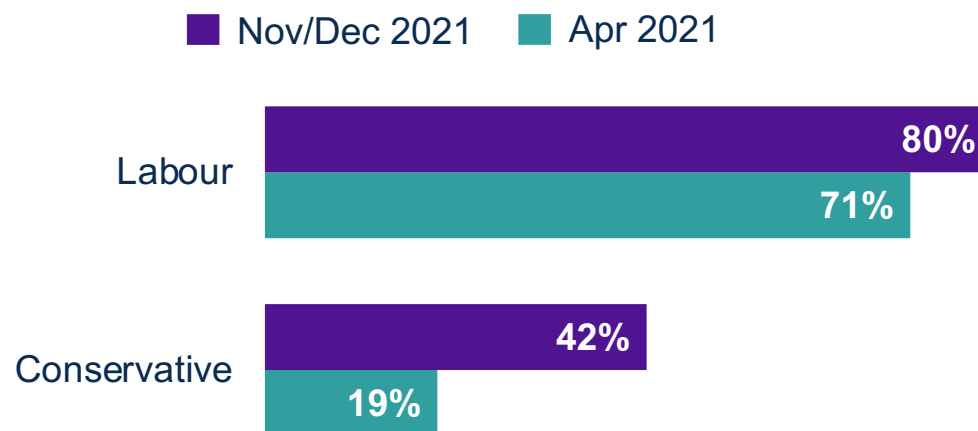
And the proportion of Conservative voters who said they distrusted the prime minister on these issues more than doubled during the course of 2021, rising from 19% to 42%.

To what extent, if at all, do you trust the following people on issues related to coronavirus and how we should be responding to it? **Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party**



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, and 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021'

% who trust Boris Johnson **not very much/not at all** by 2019 general election vote

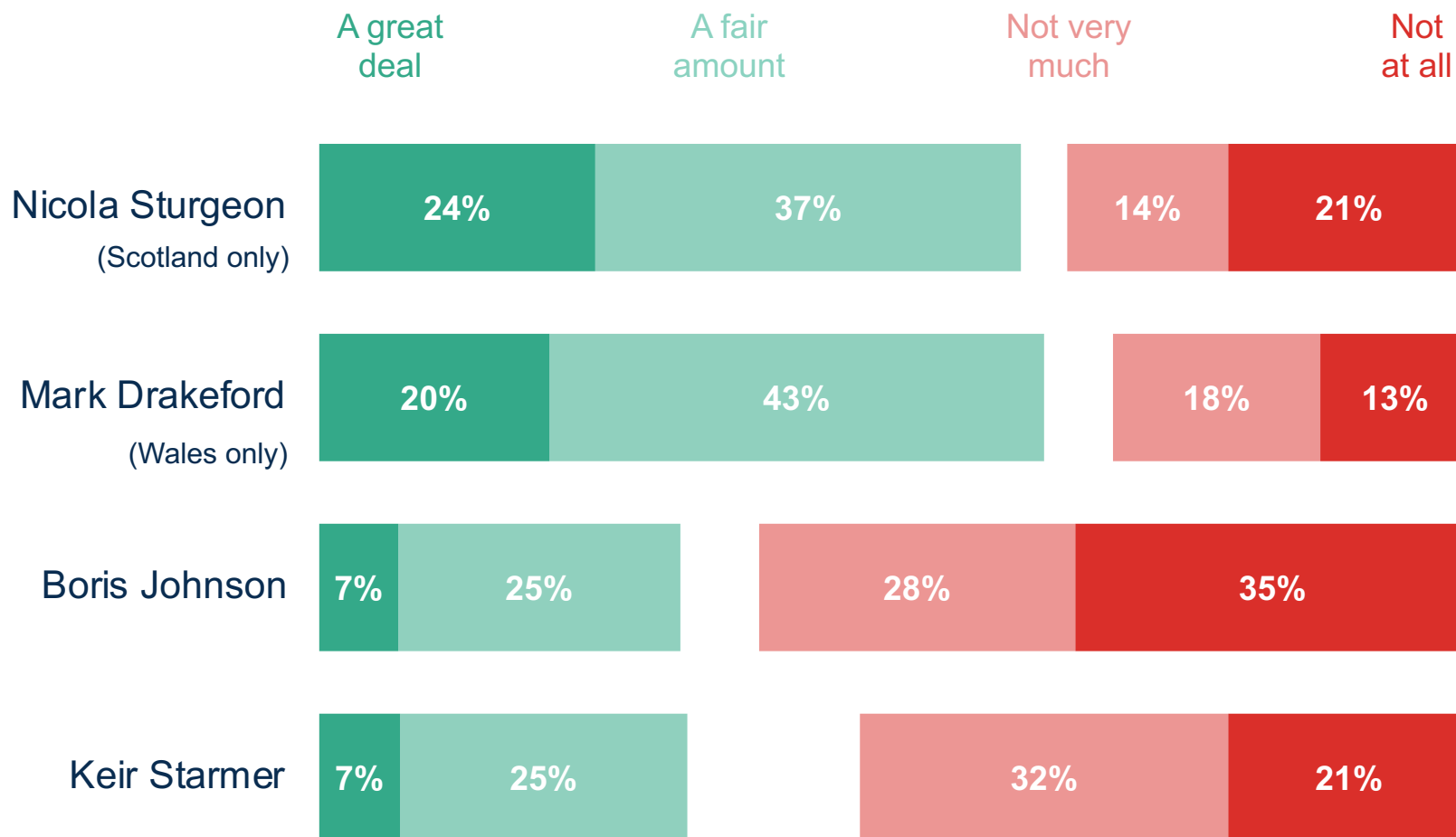


Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780).
 Base: 4,896 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 1-16 Apr 2021. By GE vote: Conservative (777); Labour (776)

When it comes to trust in politicians, towards the end of 2021, people were more likely to distrust Boris Johnson (62%) than Keir Starmer (53%) on issues related to Covid – although virtually the same proportion said they actively trusted each on these issues (31% for Johnson; 32% for Starmer).

By contrast, around six in 10 people in Scotland and the same proportion in Wales say they trust Nicola’s Sturgeon and Mark Drakeford respectively on issues relating to the crisis.

To what extent, if at all, do you trust the following people on issues related to coronavirus and how we should be responding to it?



The experience of the pandemic appears to have made around half the public appreciate the need to obey government rules even when they curtail their civil liberties, while around a quarter said the UK government used the crisis to undermine such liberties

Half the public (48%) agreed the pandemic made them realise it's best to obey government rules, even when they restrict our freedoms – compared with 19% who disagreed and 29% who neither agreed nor disagreed.

Around six in 10 Conservative and four in 10 Labour voters agreed with this statement, while those who have been vaccinated against Covid were more than twice as likely to agree than those who hadn't had any dose (52% vs 21%).

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
The experience of the coronavirus pandemic has made me realise that it is best to obey government rules even when they restrict our freedoms



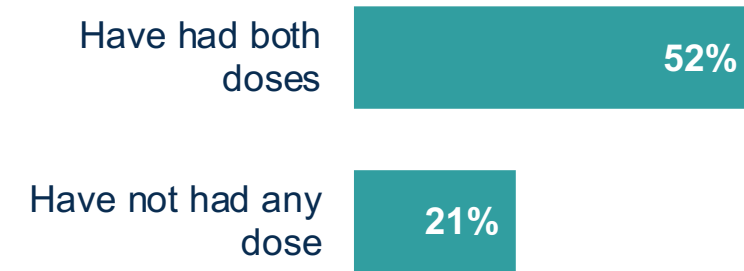
Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021

% who agree

2019 general election vote



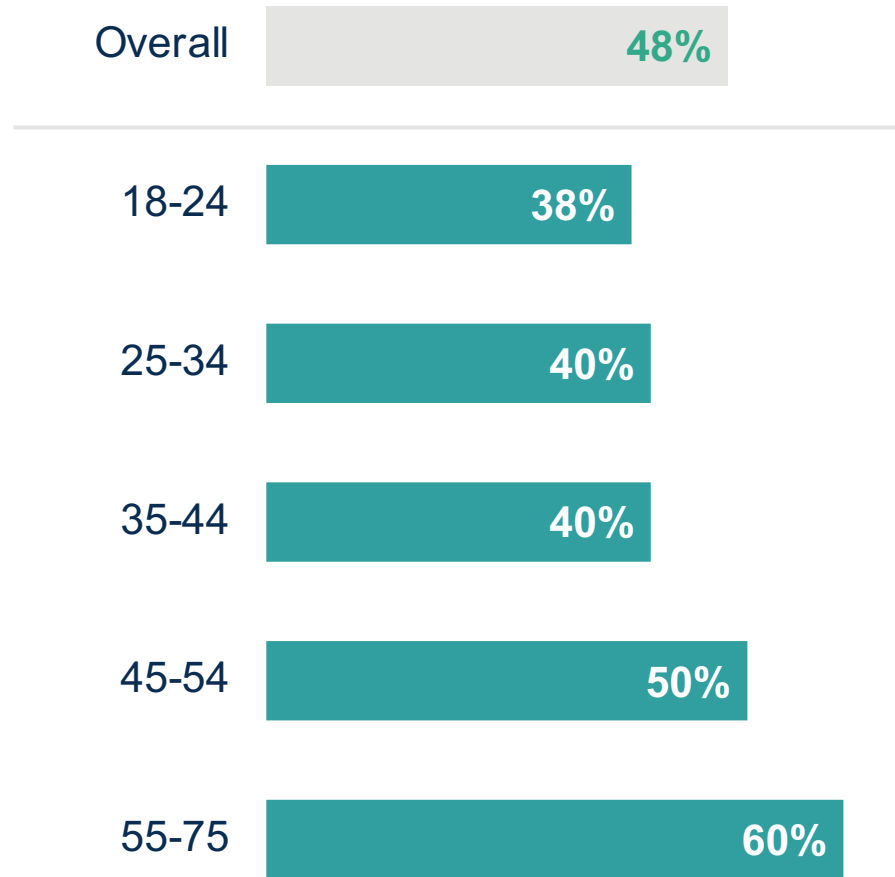
Covid-19 vaccination status



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780). By vaccination status: Had both doses (4,199); not had any dose (429)

Around four in 10 of those aged 18 to 44 said they agreed the pandemic has made them realise that it is best to obey government rules even when they restrict our freedoms, compared with half of 45-54-year-olds and six in 10 55-75-year-olds.

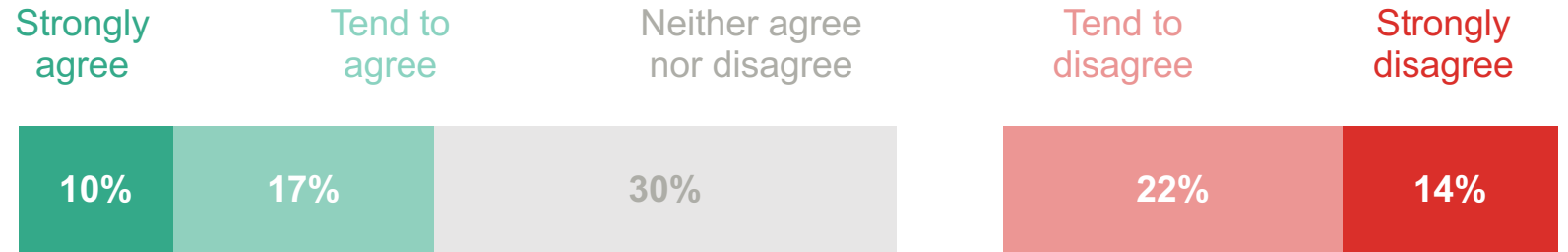
% who **agree** that the experience of the coronavirus pandemic has made them realise that it is best to obey government rules even when they restrict our freedoms



Around a quarter (27%) of the public believed the UK government has used the crisis to undermine civil liberties.

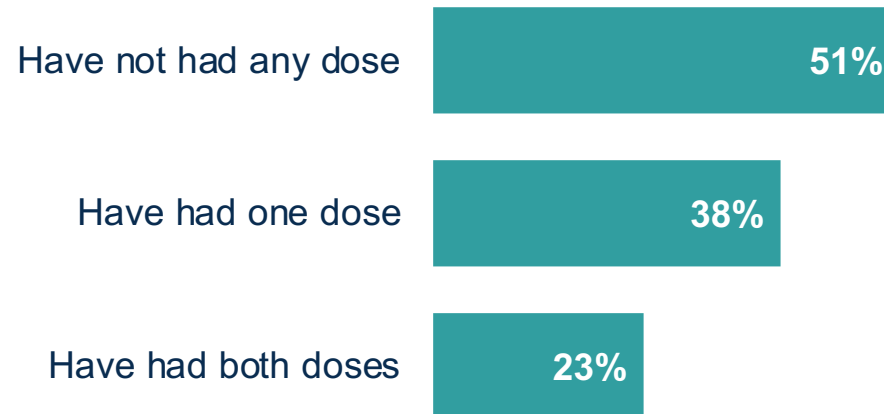
Unvaccinated people were more than twice as likely to hold this view than people who have received two doses of a Covid vaccine (51% vs 23%).

To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
The experience of the coronavirus pandemic has shown me that the UK government has used the crisis to undermine civil liberties



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021

% who agree, by vaccination status

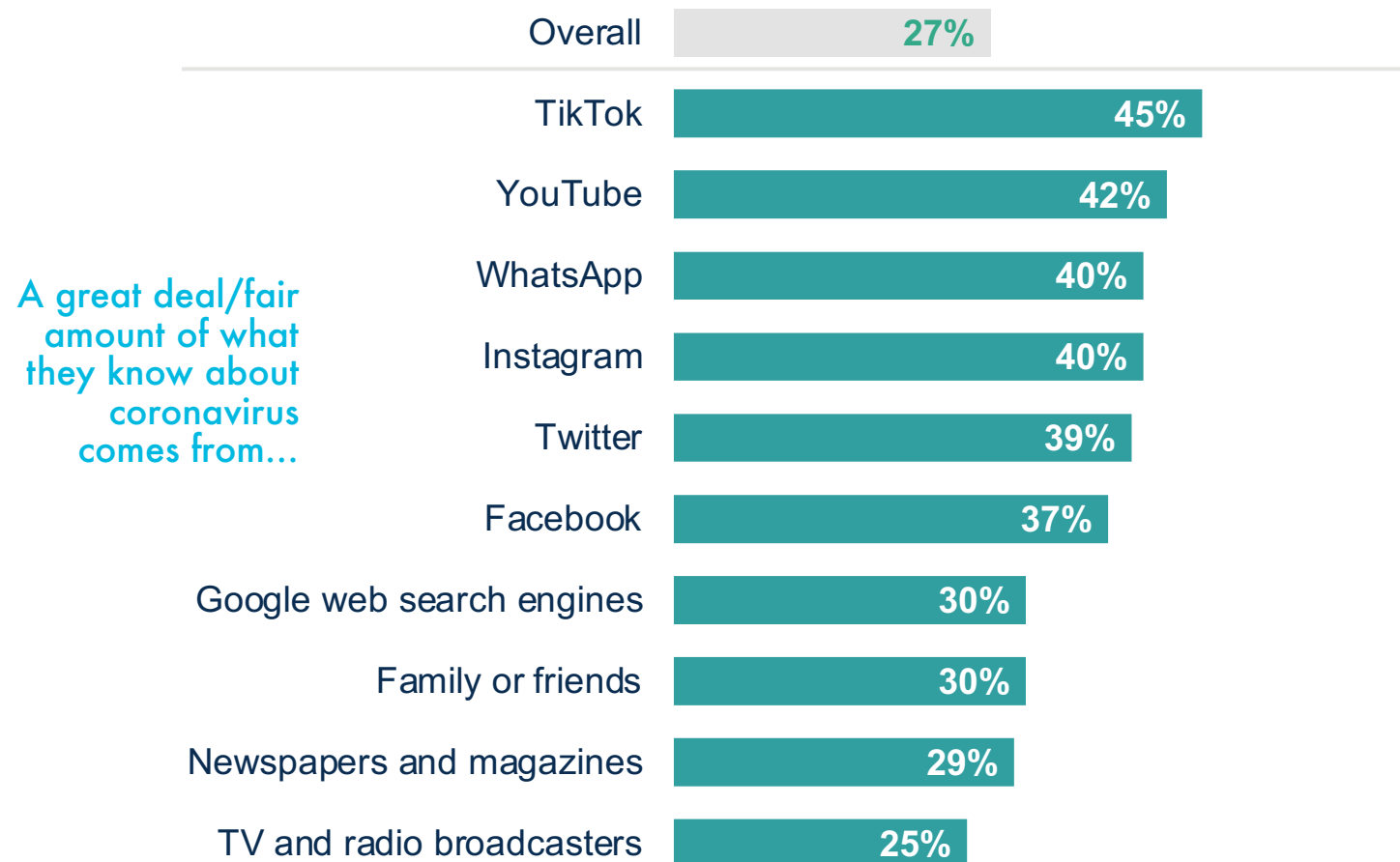


Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By vaccination status: Had both doses (4,199); had one dose (155) not had any dose (429)

People who reported getting a great deal or fair amount of their information about Covid from social media were more likely to believe the UK government had used the crisis to undermine civil liberties.

For example, approaching four in 10 or more people who use platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook in this way believed this, compared with around three in 10 or fewer for Google or traditional news sources such as TV and radio.

% who **agree** that the experience of the coronavirus pandemic has shown them that the UK government has used the crisis to undermine civil liberties. (By information source)



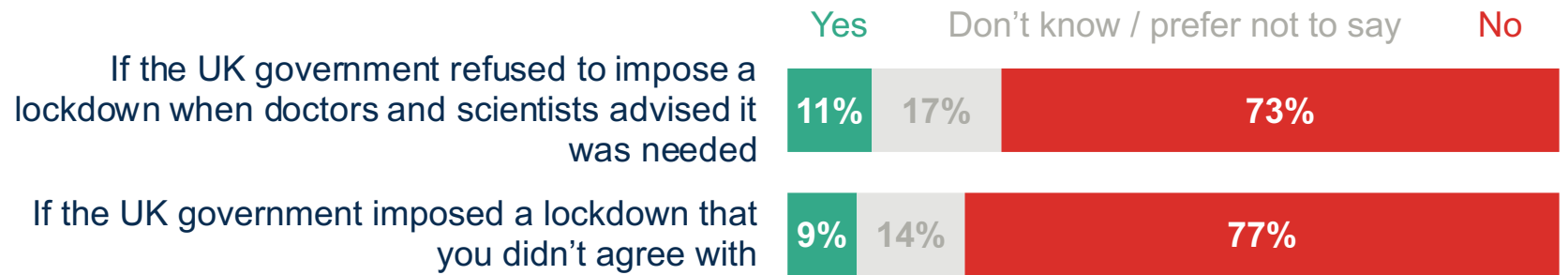
Around one in 10 people say they would potentially support violent demonstrations or protests in two different scenarios linked to the introduction of lockdowns

The vast majority of the UK public said they would not support violent demonstrations or protests either for or against a lockdown, but small minorities said they would.

One in nine people (11%) said they would support such action if the UK government refused to impose a lockdown when doctors and scientists advised it was needed, while one in 11 (9%) say they'd do so if the UK government imposed a lockdown they didn't agree with.

Support for attacking police officers was higher if a lockdown they did not agree with was imposed, than if a lockdown was refused when doctors and scientists advised it was needed.

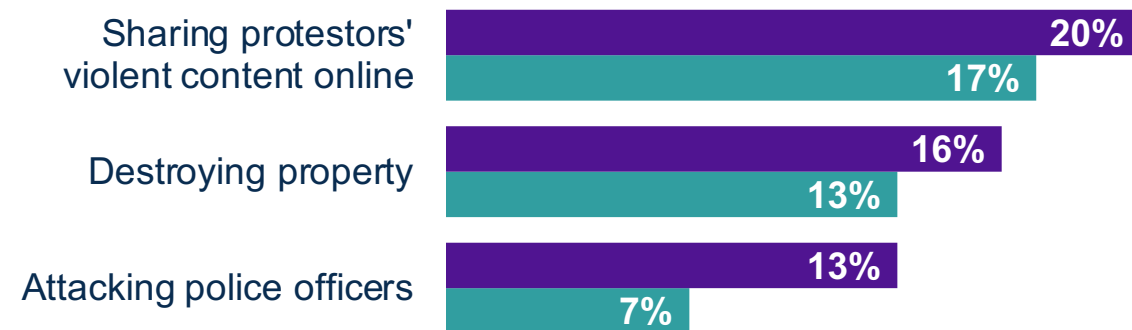
Would you ever support violent demonstrations or protests in the following situations?



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021

Support for actions among those who say they would support violent demonstrations or protests in these circumstances

- If the UK government imposed a lockdown that you didn't agree with
- If the UK government refused to impose a lockdown when doctors and scientists advised it was needed

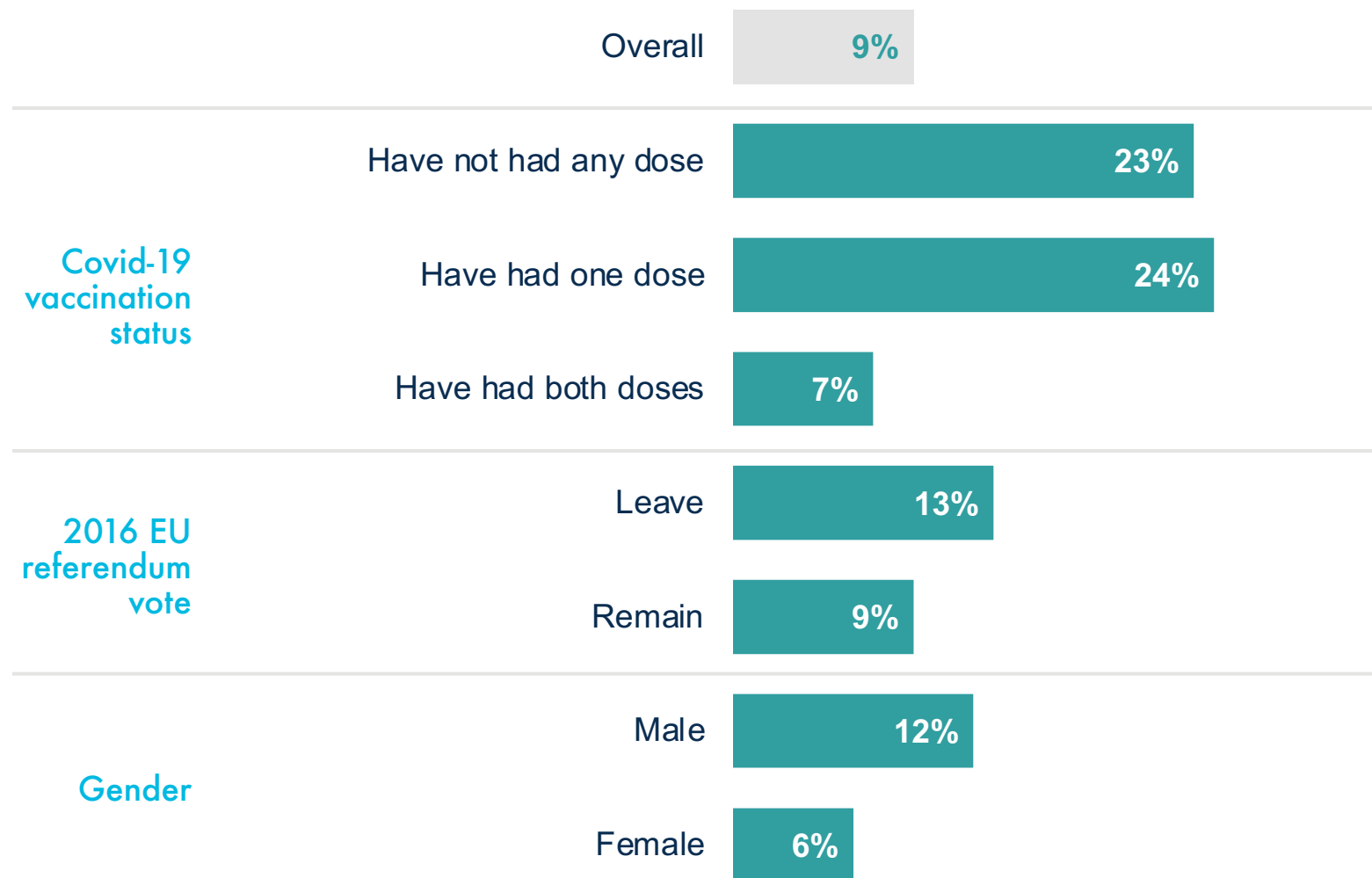


Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, including 424 who would support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government imposed a lockdown that they didn't agree with; 511 who would support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government refused to impose a lockdown when doctors and scientists advised it was needed.

Around a quarter of those who were unvaccinated or who had only received one dose of a Covid vaccine said they would support violent anti-lockdown demonstrations or protests – compared with 7% of the double vaccinated who said the same.

Men were twice as likely than women to support such violence (12% vs 6%), while people who voted Leave in the Brexit referendum were slightly more likely to agree than those who voted Remain (13% vs 9%).

% who would support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government imposed a lockdown that they didn't agree with

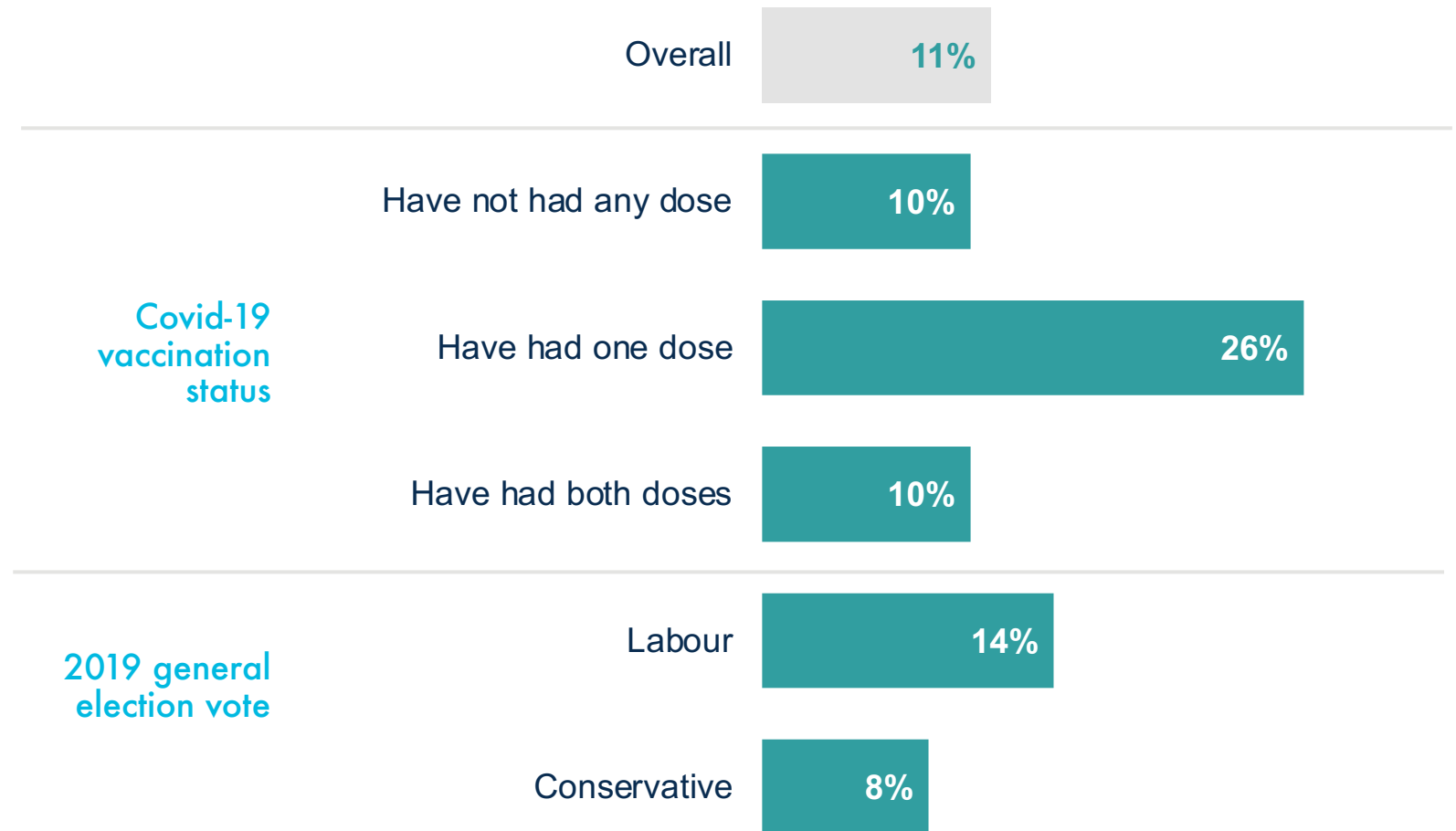


Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, including 424 who said they would support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government imposed a lockdown that they didn't agree with. By vaccination status: Had both doses (4,199); had one dose (155) not had any dose (429). By 2016 EU referendum vote: Leave (1,056); Remain (1,314). By gender: Male (2,325); Female (2,527)

People who had only had one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine were more than twice as likely as the public overall to say they'd support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government refused to follow advice from doctors and scientists that a lockdown was needed (26% vs 11%).

Labour voters were also nearly twice as likely as Conservatives to support such action (14% vs 8%).

% who would support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government refused to impose a lockdown when doctors and scientists advised it was needed



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021, including 511 who said they would support violent demonstrations or protests if the UK government imposed a lockdown that they didn't agree with. By vaccination status: Had both doses (4,199); had one dose (155) not had any dose (429). By GE vote: Conservative (883); Labour (780).

People who get a great deal or fair amount of their information on the pandemic from social media were much more likely to say they would support violent demonstrations or protests for or against the introduction of lockdowns.

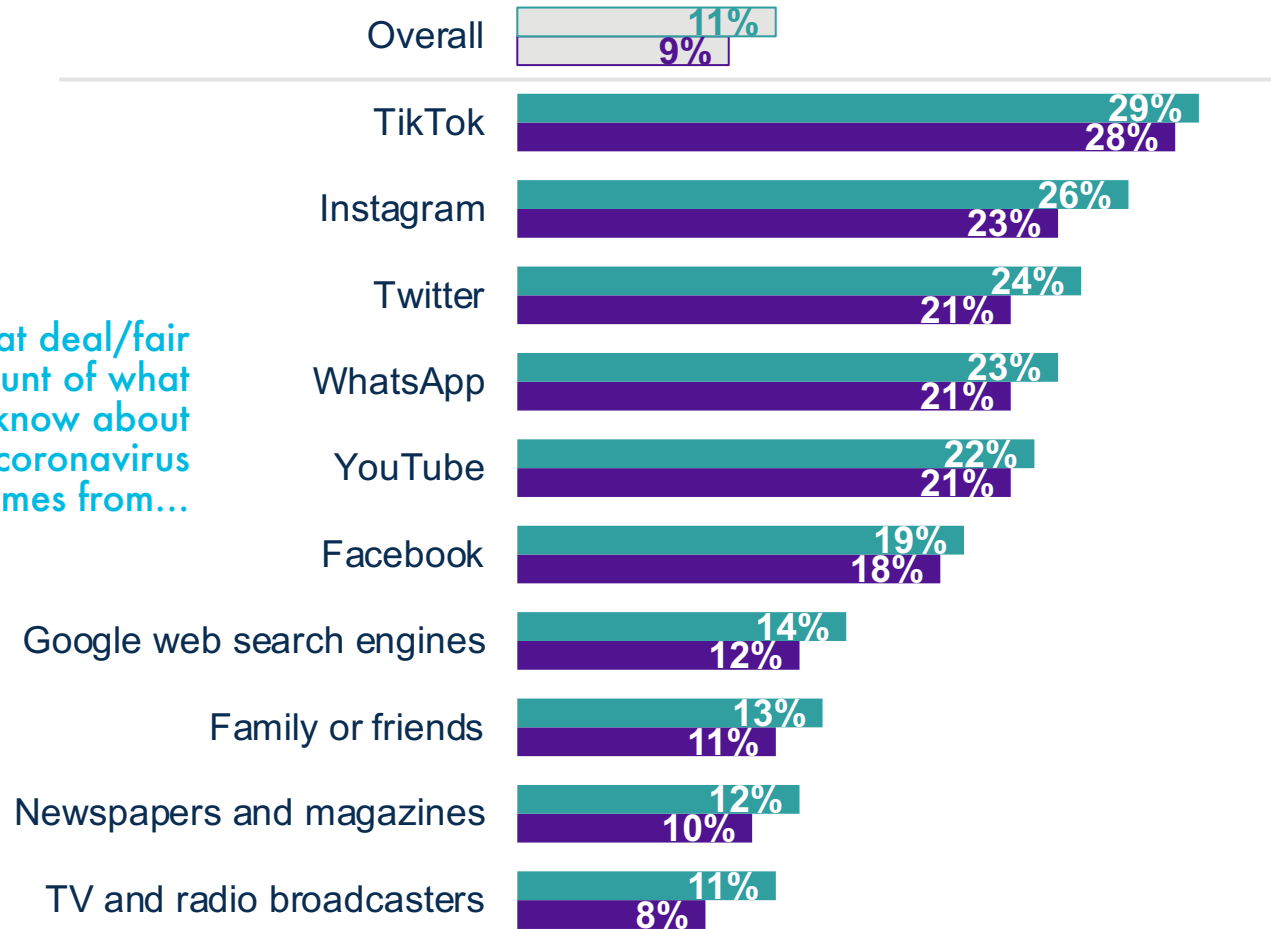
For example, between around a fifth and three in 10 of those who get this much of their Covid information from TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp or Facebook said they'd support such action, compared with around one in 10 among the population overall.

% who would support violent demonstrations or protests

■ If the UK government **refused to impose a lockdown** when doctors and scientists advised it was needed

■ If the UK government **imposed a lockdown** that you didn't agree with

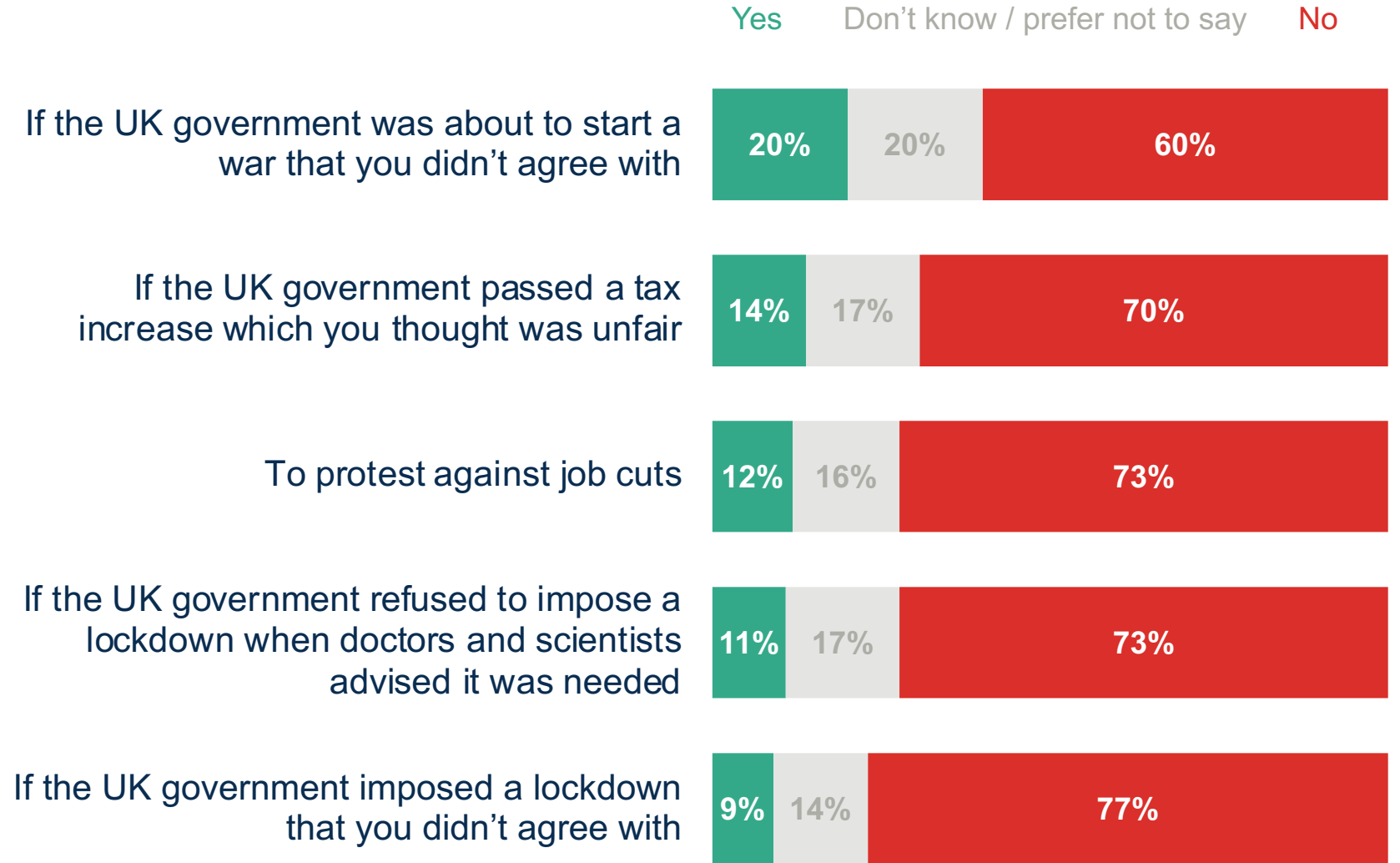
A great deal/fair amount of what they know about coronavirus comes from...



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021. By information source: TV and radio broadcasters (3,596); Newspapers and magazines (2,594); YouTube (699); Facebook (826); WhatsApp (567); Twitter (689); Family or friends (2478); Instagram (493); Google web search engines (2,131); TikTok (377)

While around one in 10 people said they'd support violent demonstrations or protests linked to the introduction of lockdowns, there was more support for such protests in the event that the UK government started a war that they didn't agree with (20%) or if it passed a tax increase seen as unfair (14%).

Would you ever support violent demonstrations or protests in the following situations?



Base: 4,872 UK adults aged 18-75, interviewed online 19 Nov-18 Dec 2021

Technical details

On behalf of researchers at King's College London and the University of Sheffield, Ipsos MORI carried out an online survey of 4,872 adults aged 16-75 in the United Kingdom between 19 November and 18 December 2021, and 4,896 adults aged 16-75 in the United Kingdom between 1 and 16 April 2021. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age within gender, government office region, working status, social grade and education.

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