

**KING'S  
BUSINESS  
SCHOOL**

**THE  
POLICY  
INSTITUTE**

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**



# Attitudes to pay and management in the NHS

For more information, contact:  
[bobby.duffy@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:bobby.duffy@kcl.ac.uk) | [gerry.mcgivern@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:gerry.mcgivern@kcl.ac.uk)

July 2024

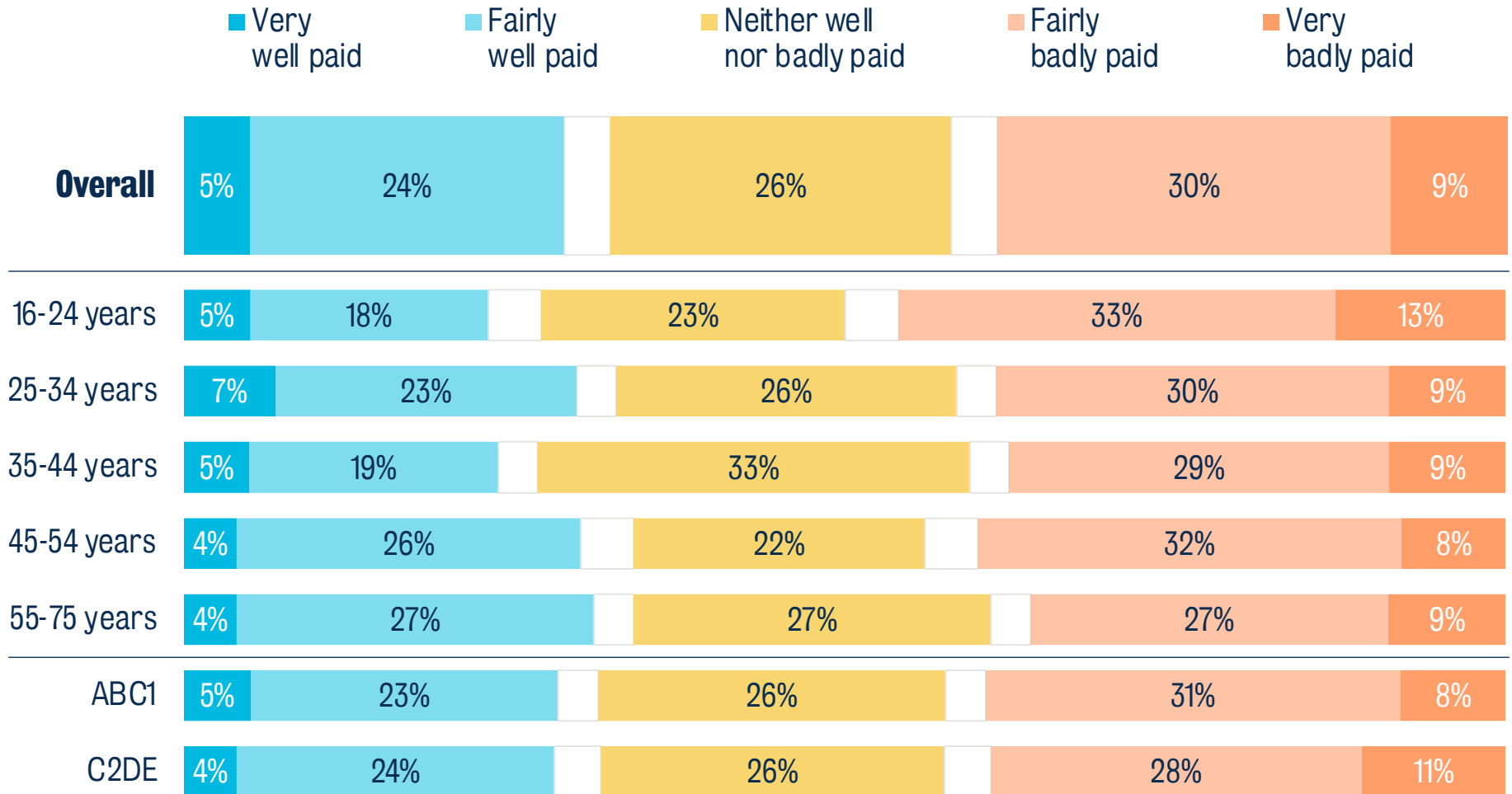
# The public are more likely to think NHS staff are badly paid than well paid, with this view most common among the youngest age group surveyed

Four in 10 people say NHS staff are badly paid, compared with three in 10 who say they are well paid.

While there is little difference in views among different age groups, 16- to 24-year-olds are most likely to say NHS staff are badly paid, with nearly half feeling this way.

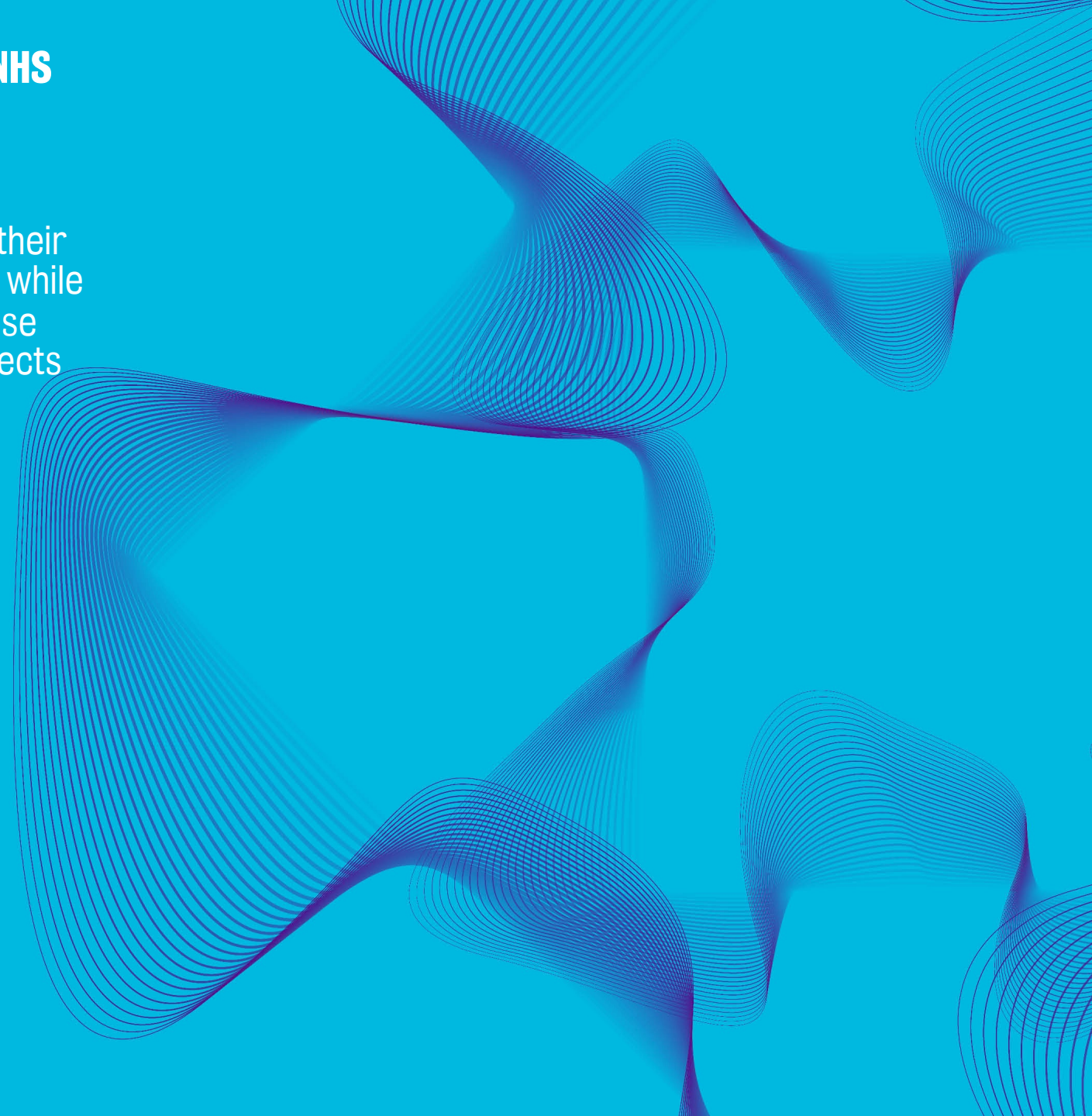
One in four of the public overall think NHS staff are neither well nor badly paid.

This question is about all staff working for the NHS. In general, would you say NHS staff are...?



**While the public are generally more likely to think NHS staff are badly paid than well paid, views vary depending on the specific role and salary**

In the study, half the sample was asked – unprompted – their views on pay levels for NHS staff and other professions, while the other half was prompted with the average salary these jobs attract. In some cases, knowing this information affects views of how well paid NHS staff are.



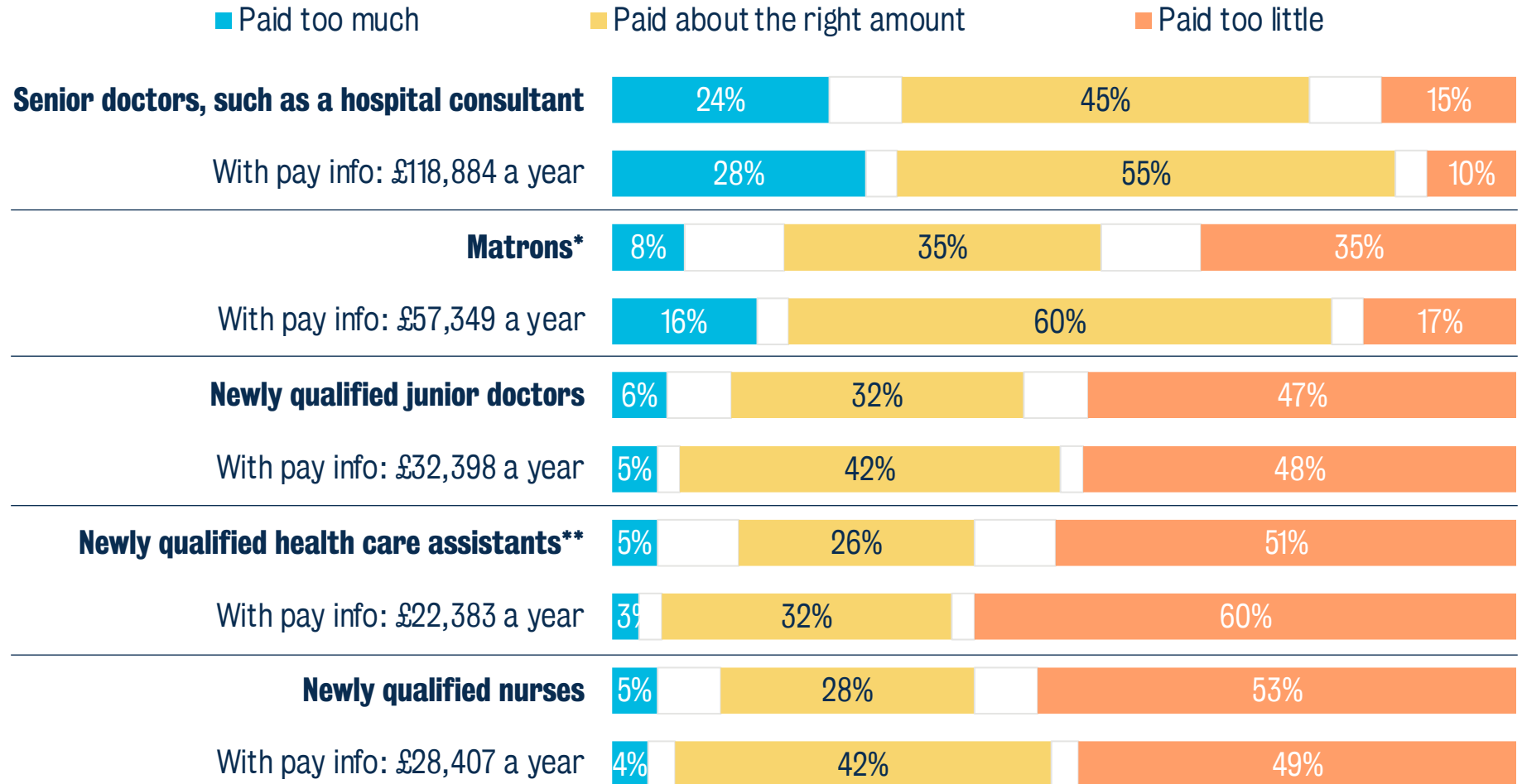
# The public generally think frontline NHS staff are underpaid, though not senior doctors

35% of the public think matrons are paid too little, but when they have their salary information, this halves to 17%, with the share who think they are paid too much then doubling.

Similarly, the public are more likely to think senior doctors are paid too much or about the right amount when they know the reality of how much they earn.

There is less change in views when it comes to newly qualified doctors, with around half believing they are paid too little, regardless of whether they are told their typical salary.

In your opinion, on average, would you say the following groups of workers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

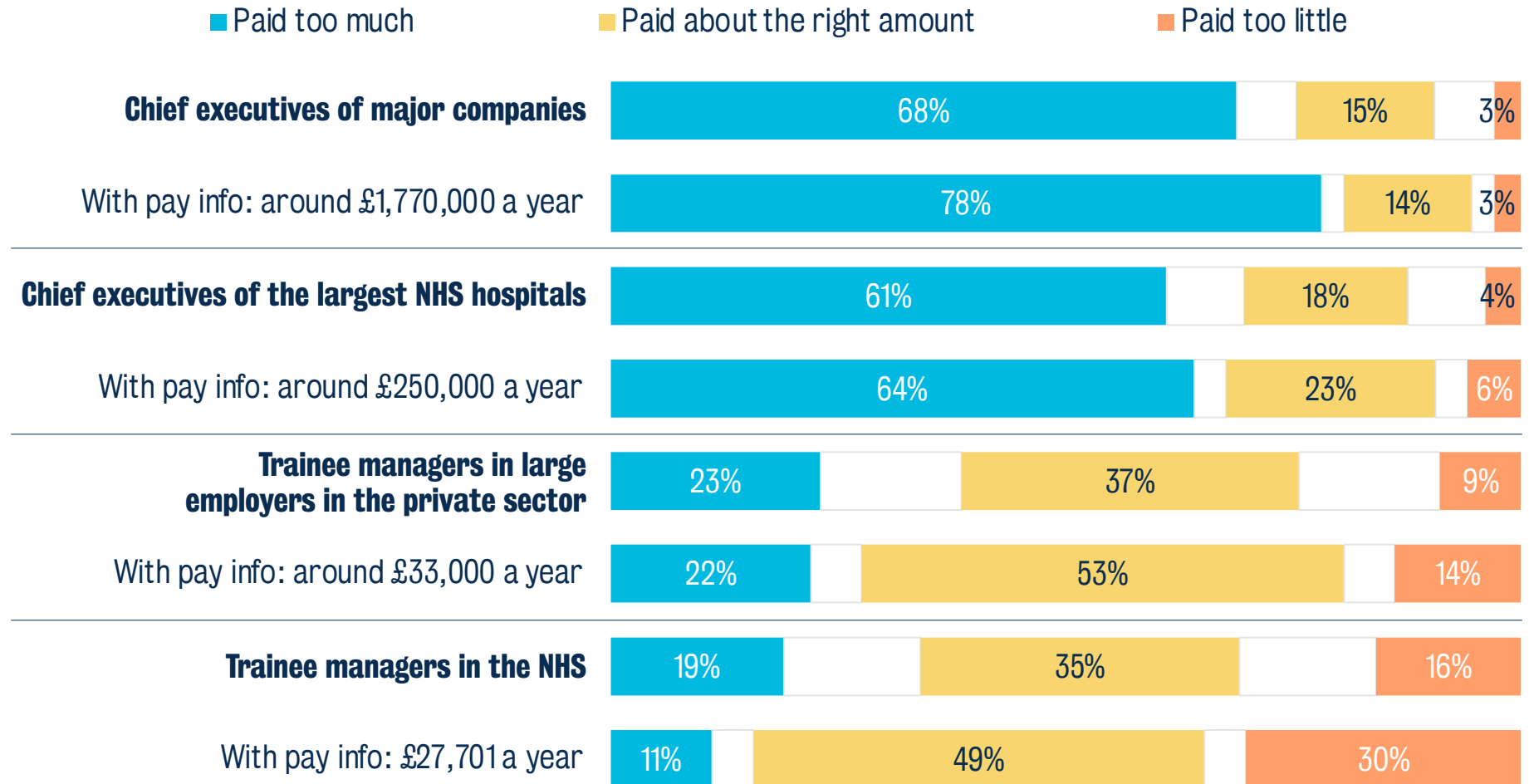


# One in six say trainee NHS managers are paid too little – but this nearly doubles when the public are told how much they are actually paid

16% of the public think trainee NHS managers aren't paid enough, rising to 30% when they are told how much they actually earn – although the share who think they are paid about the right amount also rises considerably.

By contrast, views on chief executives of the biggest NHS hospitals barely change when people know their salary – unlike perceptions of chief executives of major companies, with the public more likely to say they are overpaid when they have this information.

In your opinion, on average, would you say the following groups of workers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

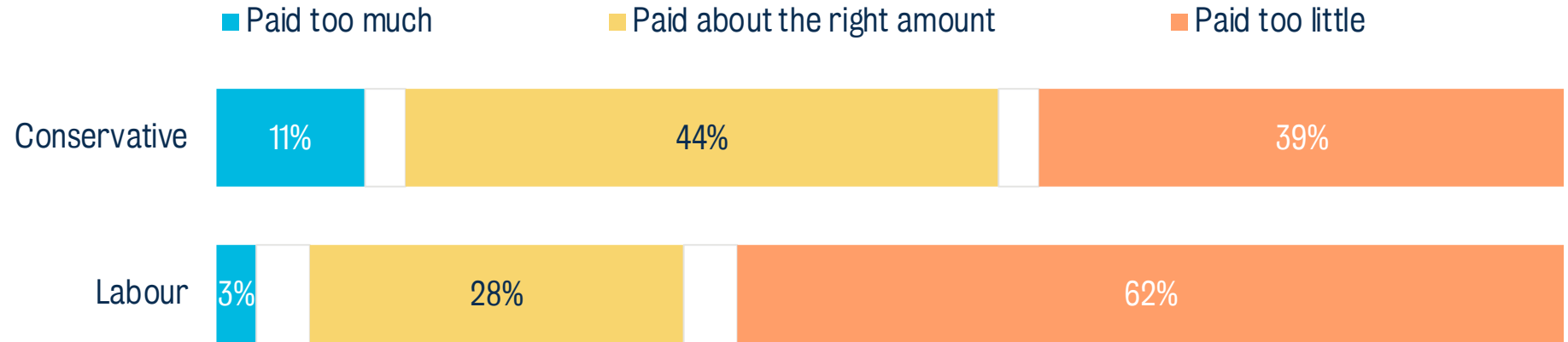


# Labour voters are much more likely than Conservative voters to say junior doctors are paid too little

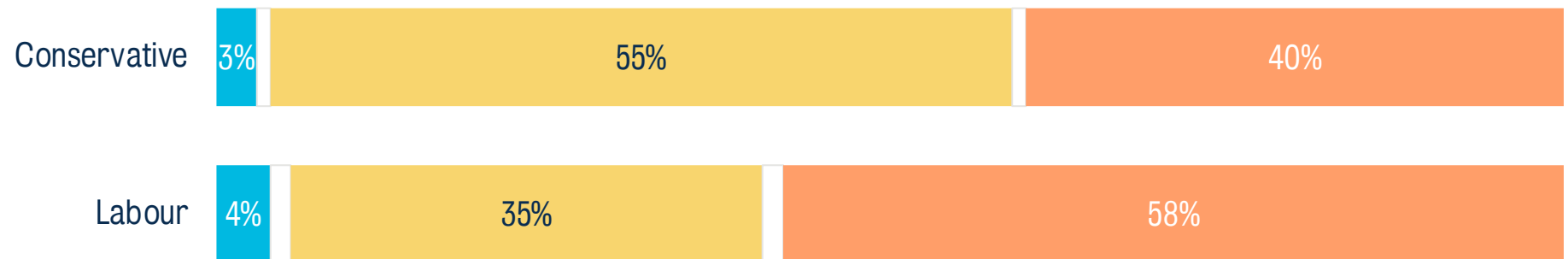
When given the true salary information of newly qualified junior doctors, those who said they intended to vote Conservative at the general election become more likely to feel they are paid the right amount, as do likely Labour voters – albeit to a lesser extent.

In your opinion, on average, would you say the following groups of workers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

## Newly qualified junior doctors



## Newly qualified junior doctors (with pay info: £32,398 a year)

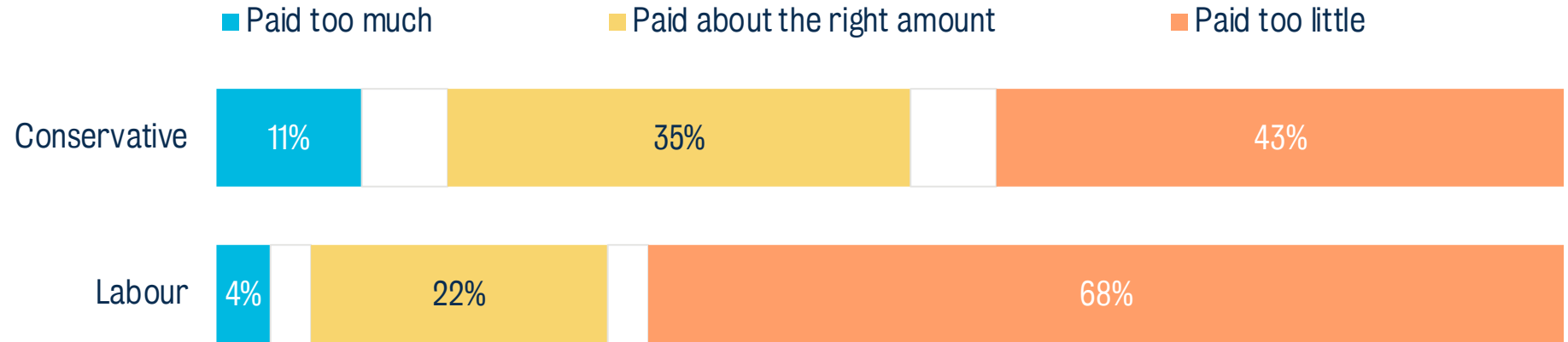


# Labour voters are also more likely to say newly qualified nurses are underpaid

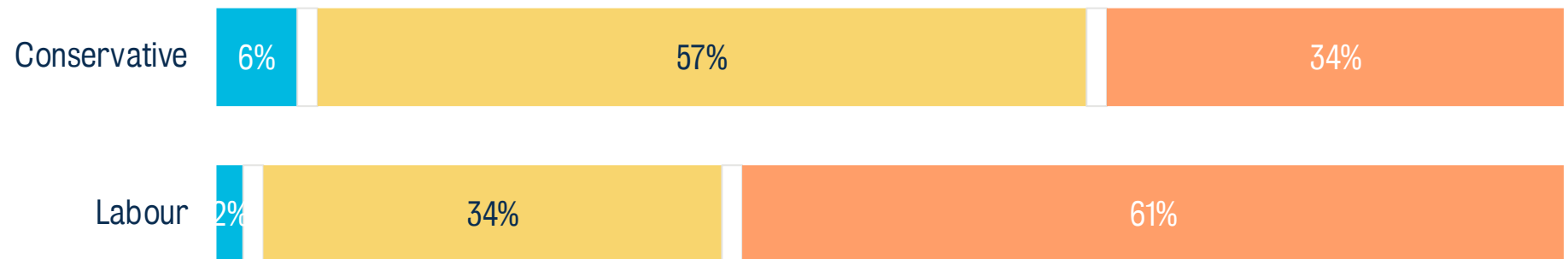
Although the share of both likely Labour voters and likely Conservative voters who feel newly qualified nurses are paid the right amount increases when they know their salary.

In your opinion, on average, would you say the following groups of workers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

## Newly qualified nurses



## Newly qualified nurses (with pay info: £28,407 a year)

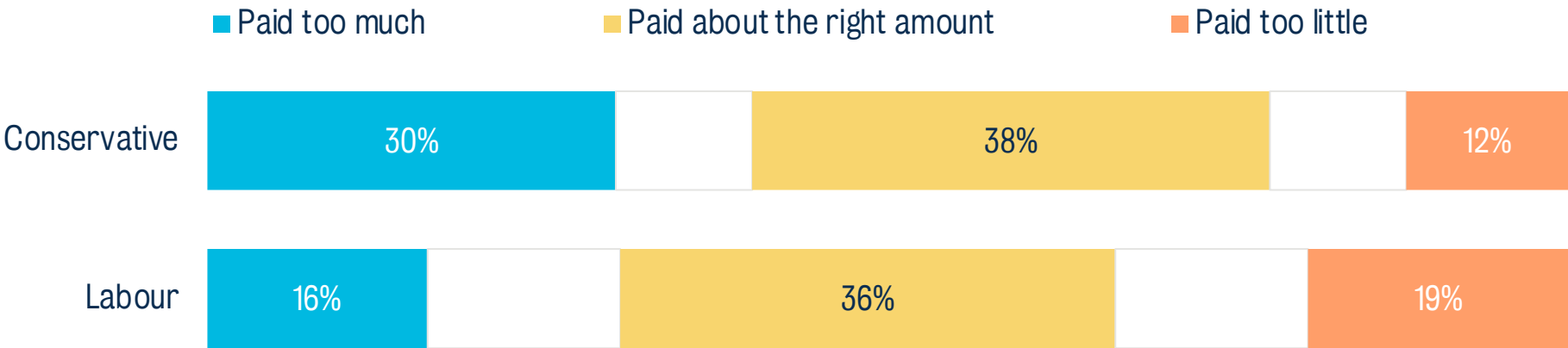


# Both Labour and Conservative voters become more likely to think trainee NHS managers are paid too little once they're told their salary information

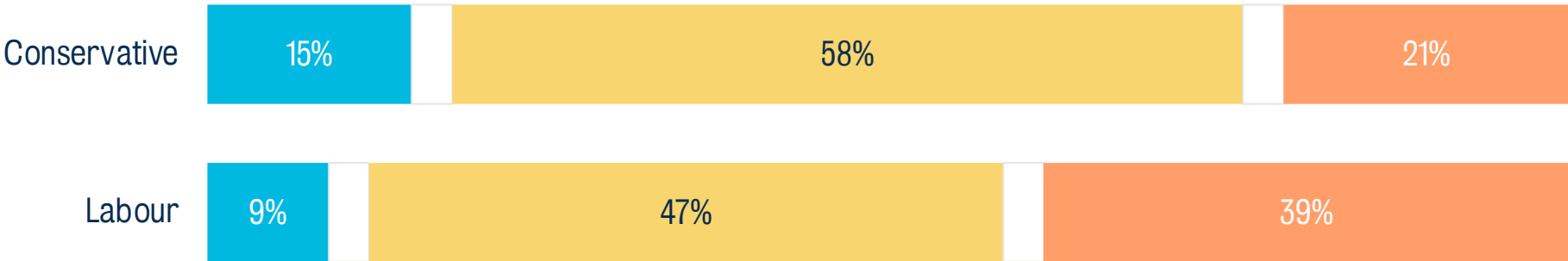
However, the biggest shift among likely Conservative voters is in the share who think trainee managers are paid the right amount, which increases by 20 percentage points when they know how much they earn in reality.

In your opinion, on average, would you say the following groups of workers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

## Trainee managers in the NHS



## Trainee managers in the NHS (with pay info: £27,701 a year)



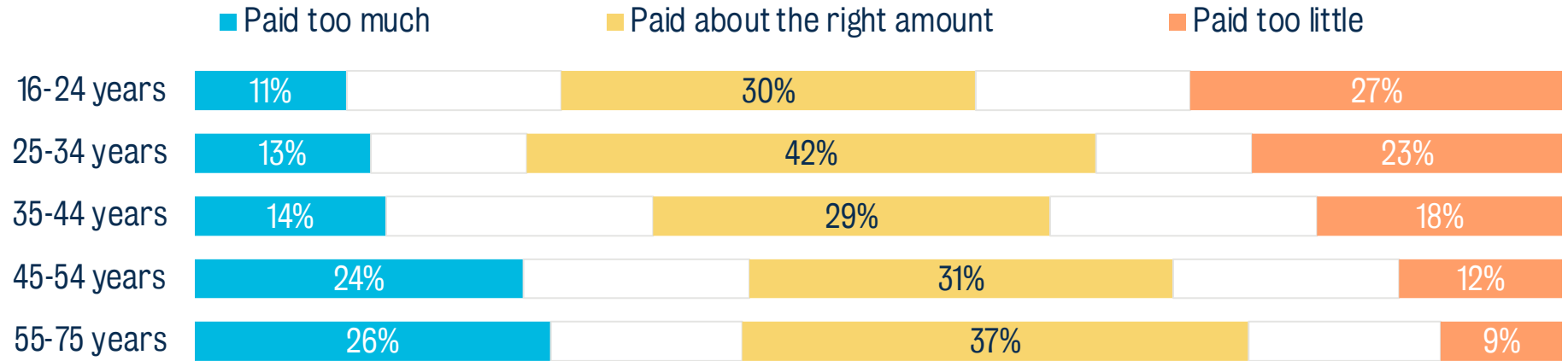


# Young people are much more likely to say trainee NHS managers are paid too little

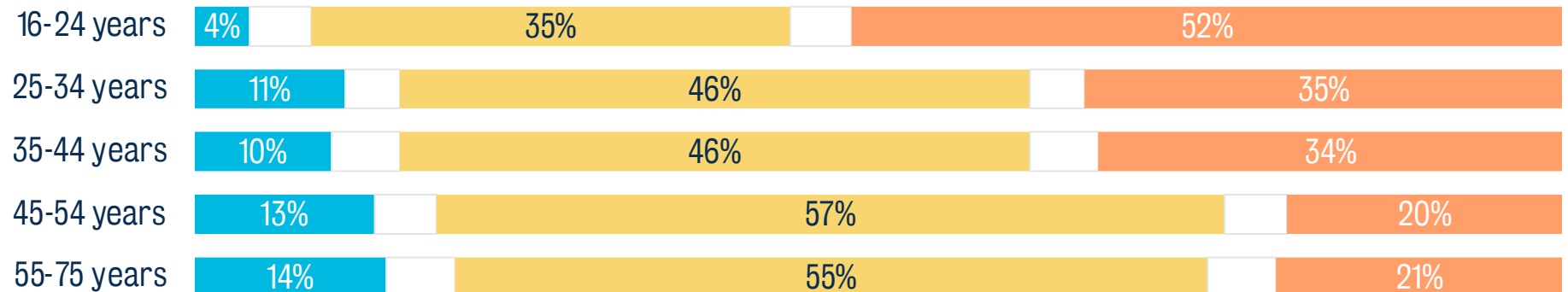
The difference in views between younger and older people is particularly stark when respondents are given trainee NHS managers' salary information. 52% of 16- to 24-year-olds then say they are paid too little – up from 27%.

In your opinion, on average, would you say the following groups of workers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

## Trainee managers in the NHS



## Trainee managers in the NHS (with pay info: £27,701 a year)



# Half the public say there are too many managers in the NHS

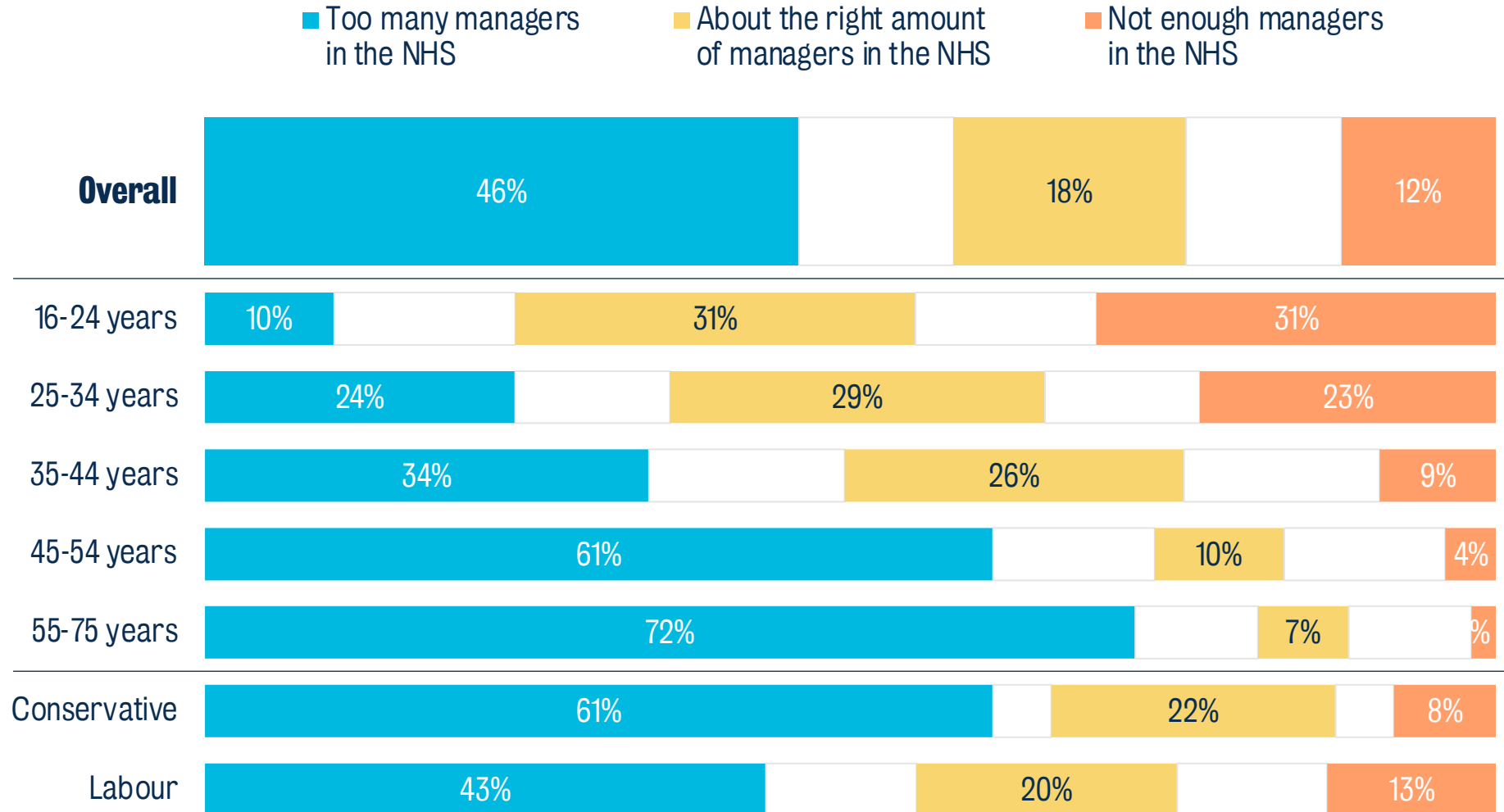
The public are around four times as likely to say there are too many rather than too few managers in the health service.

And there is a big age gradient in views, with seven in 10 of the oldest surveyed feeling there are too many managers, compared with just one in 10 of the youngest. Under-35s are more likely to think there are not enough managers in the NHS than too many – in stark contrast to older groups.

Views also differ significantly by political affiliation, with those who said they'd vote Conservative at the general election much more likely than their Labour counterparts to say there are too many managers.

Research commonly finds people are less supportive of managers than frontline staff in the NHS, which may in part be due to a lack of knowledge about their role and lack of contact with them.

This question is about managers in the NHS. By managers we mean people who oversee services and staff and manage budgets, and do not provide care to patients directly. Would you say there are...



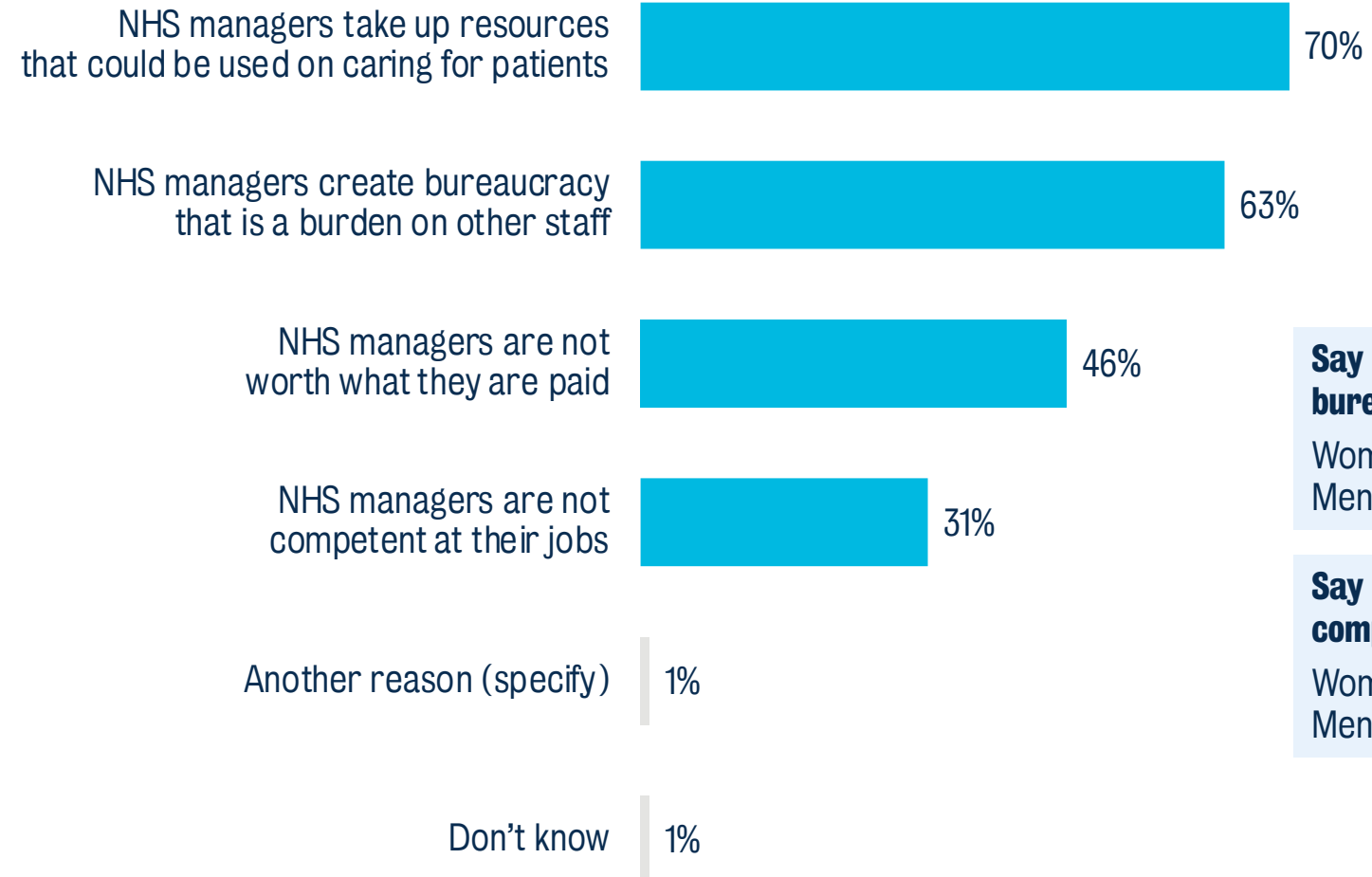
# Taking up resources and creating bureaucracy are the top reasons given for people saying there are too many NHS managers

Understanding why people feel there are too many managers in the health service is key, and it's clear there are several reasons. Seven in 10 who hold this view say it's because managers take up resources that could be used for patients, while six in 10 say they create a burdensome bureaucracy, with men more likely than women to feel this way.

To increase the legitimacy of these roles in the eyes of the public, the NHS therefore needs to make clearer what managers do to maintain and improve the health service.

There is also a slight gender divide in views on these issues. For example, 27% of women who think there are too many managers in the NHS say they are not competent at their jobs, compared with 34% of men.

You said there are too many managers in the NHS. What makes you say this? (Respondents allowed multiple responses)



**Say NHS managers create bureaucracy**

Women: 59%  
Men: 66%

**Say NHS managers are not competent at their jobs**

Women: 27%  
Men: 34%

## Sources for pay

- a) Newly qualified nurses: paid £28,407 a year (Agenda for Change pay band 5)
- b) Newly qualified junior doctors: paid £32,398 a year (BMA)
- c) Newly qualified health care assistants (health care assistants are workers who assist nurses and doctors, for example by helping wash and care for patients or taking blood): paid £22,383 a year (Agenda for Change pay band 2)
- d) Senior doctors, such as a hospital consultant: paid £118,884 (BMA – salary after 10 years' experience)
- e) Matrons (senior nurses who manage nursing staff on wards): paid £57,349 per year (Agenda for Change pay band 8a – but with five years' experience)
- f) Trainee managers in the NHS: paid £27,701 per year (NHS Graduate Trainee Management Scheme)
- g) Trainee managers in the private sector: paid around £33,000 per year (ISE Recruitment Survey 2022)
- h) Chief executives of the largest NHS hospitals: paid around £250,000 per year (NHS England)
- i) Chief executives of major UK companies: paid around £1,770,000 per year – the median FTSE 250 CEO's salary (High Pay Centre)

## Survey details

Ipsos interviewed a representative sample of 2,252 people aged 16-75 across the UK. Polling was conducted online between 21st and 24th June 2024. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

For more information,  
contact:

### **Bobby Duffy**

[bobby.duffy@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:bobby.duffy@kcl.ac.uk)

[@bobbyduffyknights](https://www.instagram.com/bobbyduffyknights)

### **Gerry McGivern**

[gerry.mcgivern@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:gerry.mcgivern@kcl.ac.uk)

[@GerryMcGivern](https://www.instagram.com/GerryMcGivern)

### **Catherine Crick**

Associate Director, Ipsos

### **Prof Bobby Duffy**

Director of the Policy  
Institute, King's College  
London

### **Dr Nick Krachler**

Lecturer in Human  
Resource Management,  
King's Business School

### **George May**

Head of Communications,  
the Policy Institute,  
King's College London

### **Prof Gerry McGivern**

Professor in Public Services  
Management & Organisation,  
King's Business School

### **Dr Paolo Morini**

Research Fellow,  
the Policy Institute,  
King's College London

### **Dr Sam van Elk**

Lecturer in Management  
and Organisation, King's  
Business School

### **Anna Quigley**

Research Director, Ipsos

## Connect with us

 [@policyatkings](https://twitter.com/policyatkings)  [kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute)

 [@kingsbschool](https://twitter.com/kingsbschool)  [kcl.ac.uk/business](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/business)