

The Accepting, the Suffering and the Resisting: the different reactions to life under lockdown

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About this study

This King's College London study is a cluster analysis that groups people into distinct segments of the population: **The Accepting**, **The Suffering** and **The Resisting**, based on previously published data from a survey of 2,250 UK residents aged 18-75, from 1- 3 April 2020, carried out by Ipsos MORI.

The report categorises members of the population according to how they are responding to the coronavirus crisis and lockdown measures. The three groups – or “clusters” – of the UK population have been identified using a statistical technique called k-means clustering, which groups people who have similar characteristics together – although note there will still be a variety of attitudes and behaviours within each group.

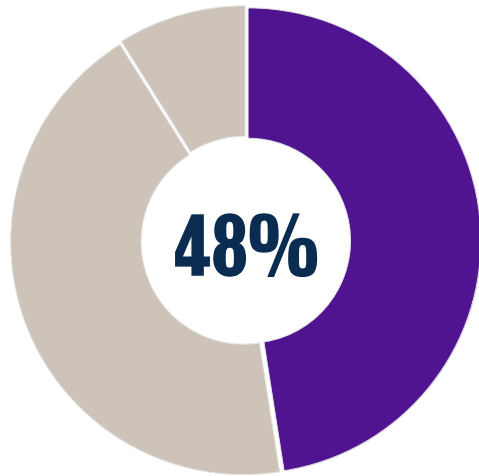
Understanding the different ways in which coronavirus is affecting different groups is vital to maintaining support for the lockdown measures and tracking how attitudes and behaviours are likely to develop as thoughts turn to relaxing elements of the rules.

The three groups of people responding to the coronavirus crisis

There are three clusters of attitudes, expectations and behaviours relating to coronavirus among the UK public: those accepting the current situation, those suffering as a result of it, and those resisting it.

Members of the three clusters are distinguished by their levels of support for the lockdown measures and their compliance with them, by how well they are coping under the current circumstances, by the extent to which they are following official guidance, and by their expectations about how those circumstances will change in the future.

The Accepting



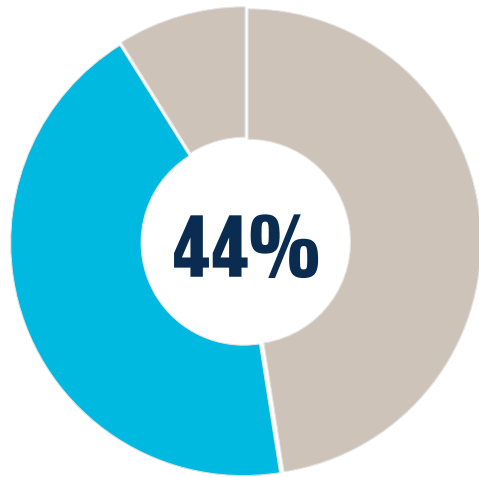
Key characteristics:

- 87% say they're following lockdown rules completely or nearly all the time.
- Just 12% report losing sleep over coronavirus, 6% arguing more with family or people in the home, and 8% feeling more anxious and depressed.
- Significantly less likely to say they are certain or likely to lose their jobs or experience financial difficulties during the lockdown.
- Less likely to expect life will return to normal within a month, or that the economy will start growing again within three months.
- Favourable towards the government's handling of the crisis, with only a third saying it has been confused and inconsistent.
- 73% trust the government to control the spread of coronavirus, and 81% trust the information it provides.
- 48% check social media every day or more often for information or updates about coronavirus – lowest of all groups.

Key demographics

- 59% male
- Mean age 50
- Voted Conservative over Labour by 40% to 21%
- Voted Leave over Remain by 47% to 39%

The Suffering



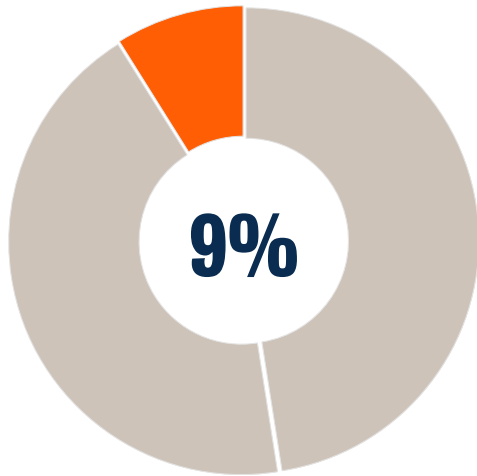
Key characteristics:

- 93% report feeling more anxious and depressed since lockdown measures introduced.
- 64% have slept less or worse than usual, a quarter say coronavirus makes them feel helpless.
- Spending much more time thinking about the coronavirus than other groups.
- 93% say they're following lockdown rules completely or nearly all the time – highest of all groups.
- Most likely to be closely following official guidance on how to protect themselves and others, with 95%+ adhering to most recommendations.
- 93% and 85% say they support lockdown measures and additional police powers respectively.
- 70% think the government acted too slowly to control the spread of the virus.
- Less likely than other groups to trust the government to deal with coronavirus and to trust the information it provides.
- 64% check social media for updates on coronavirus daily or more frequently.

Key demographics

- 64% female
- Mean age 44
- Equally split between Labour (30%) and Conservative (29%)
- Voted Remain over Leave by 46% to 35%

The Resisting



Percentages of three groups
sum to 101% due to rounding

Key characteristics:

- Just 49% say they're complying completely or nearly all the time with lockdown rules – much lower than other groups.
- Only around half support both lockdown measures and new police powers to enforce them.
- 58% agree that “too much fuss is being made about the risk of coronavirus” – around six times higher than other groups.
- Much less likely than other groups to be following official guidance, such as staying two metres away from others outside (73%), and much more likely to be taking measures that are not recommended, such as homeopathic remedies (50%).
- Doing things that go against official guidance, such as meeting up with friends or family outside the home (41%) or going outside when having coronavirus-like symptoms (35%).
- 35% have contacted a counselling or support service, and 51% have argued with family or people they live with.
- Much more likely to believe claims that are false or currently judged to be unlikely, such as that coronavirus was created in a lab (49%).
- Expect there will be a quick resolution to the coronavirus crisis and lockdown measures will end soon.
- 66% check social media for updates on coronavirus daily or more frequently.

Key demographics

- 64% male
- Mean age 29
- Voted Labour over Conservative by 35% to 22%
- Voted Remain over Leave by 57% to 43%

Key demographics in detail

Young people are most likely to be among the Resisting, while 55- to 75-year-olds are by far the biggest proportion of the Accepting.

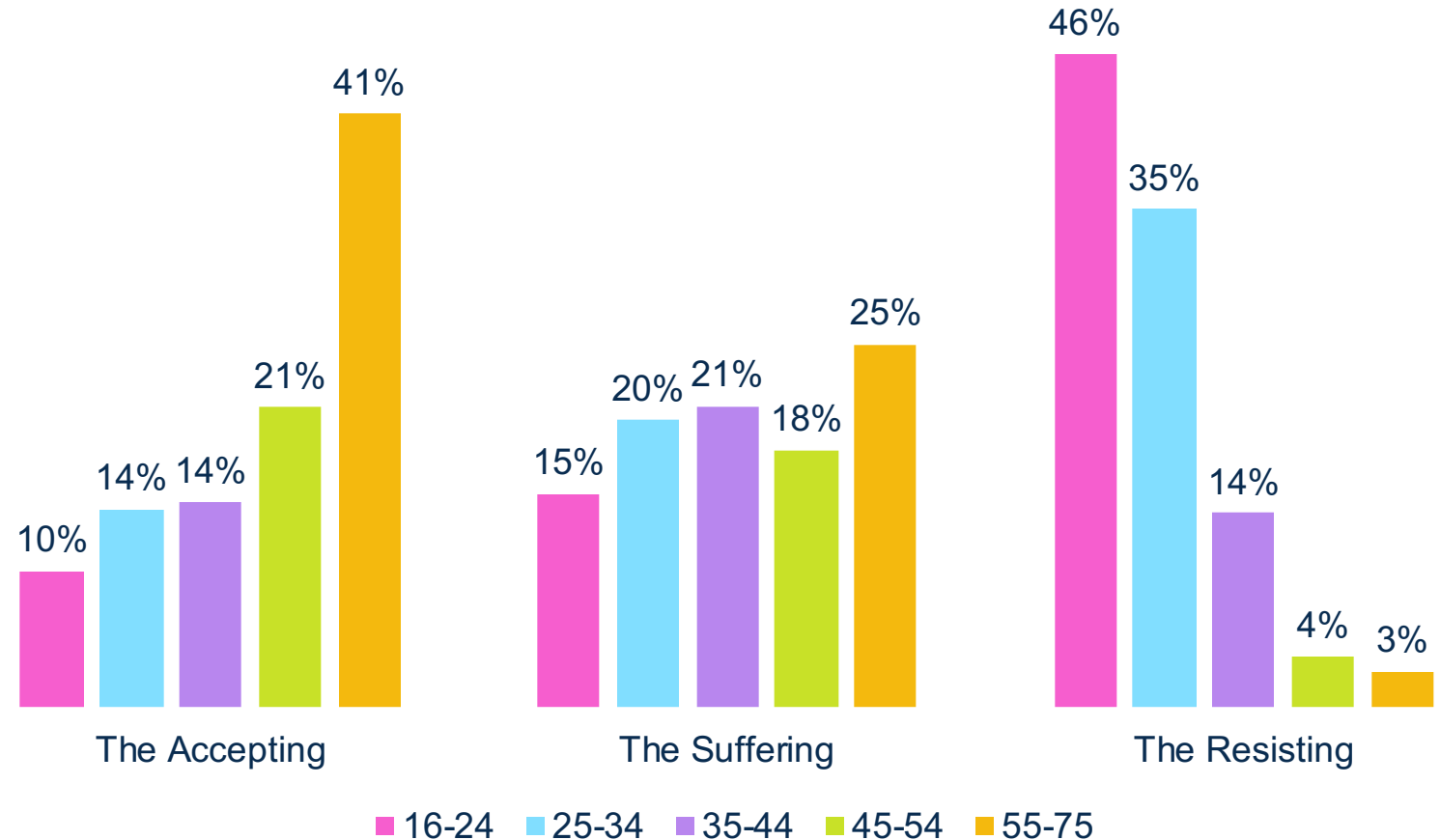
And women are having a harder time than men – they make up nearly two-thirds of the Suffering. The reverse is true for those resisting, with men representing almost two-thirds of this group.

Tendency to resist the current situation decreases gradually with age, with 16-24s at one end of the spectrum making up 46% of the group, and 55-75s at the other, making up just 3%.

Older people are by far the most likely to be accepting of the lockdown.

Those suffering are more evenly represented across the age distribution.

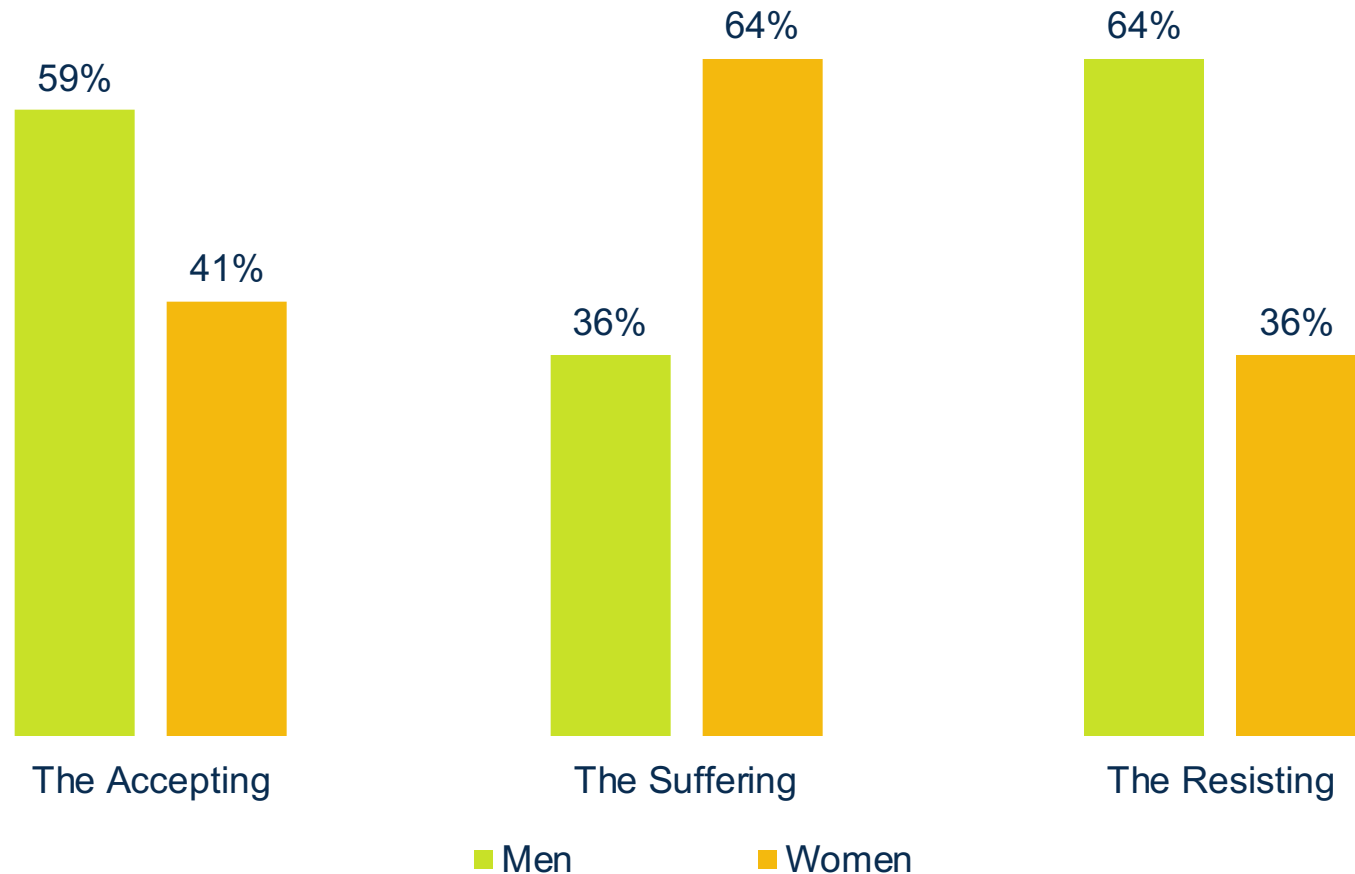
Age distribution of groups



By 64% to 36%, men make up the majority of those resisting.

Men are also much more likely to be accepting the lockdown, while women are significantly more likely to be suffering as a result of it.

Gender breakdown of groups



Political views

The Accepting are more likely to be Conservative voters and to have voted Leave in the EU referendum, while the Resisting are more likely to be Labour voters and to have voted Remain.

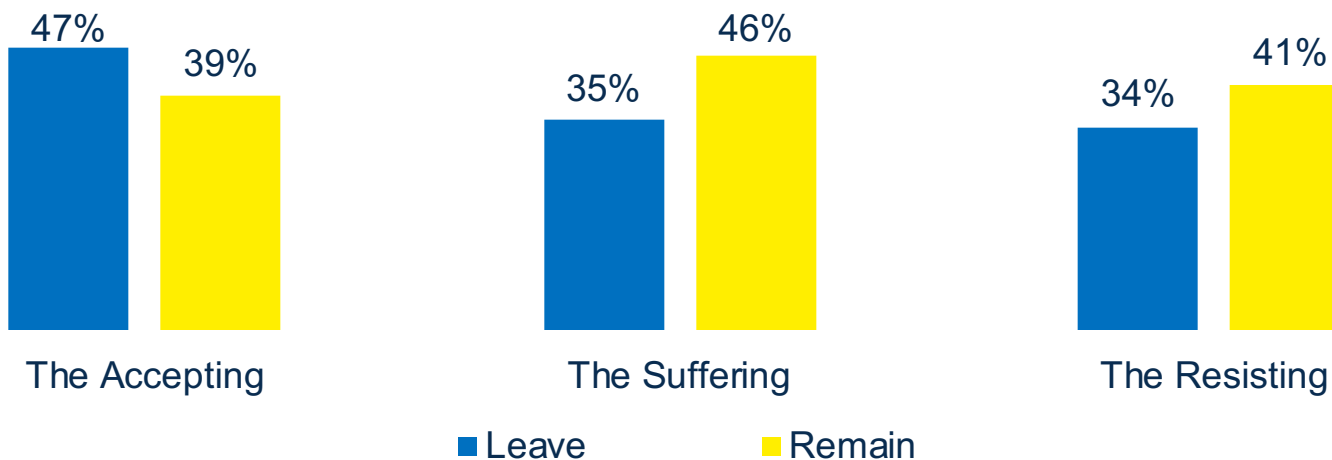
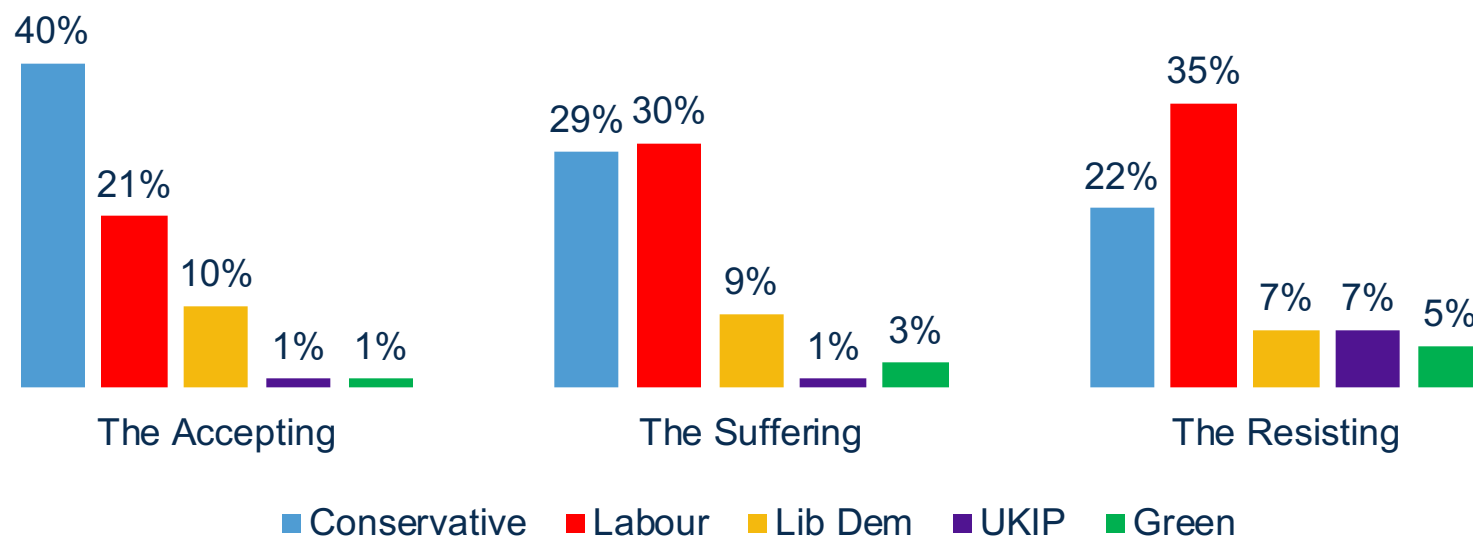
The Suffering are more evenly split across the two main political parties, and are more likely to have voted Remain.

The Accepting are twice as likely to have voted Conservative (40%) than Labour (21%) in the 2019 general election. They are also more likely to have voted Leave in the EU referendum.

The Suffering have virtually the same likelihood of being Conservative (29%) or Labour (30%) voters, and are 9 percentage points more likely to have voted Remain.

The Resisting are most likely to be Labour voters, and are more likely than people in the other groups to have voted UKIP or Green. And they voted Remain over Leave by 41% to 34%.

Composition of groups by vote at 2019 general election and 2016 EU referendum



Behaviours: how the different groups are acting in the crisis

The Suffering are following official guidance most rigorously and most closely, with 95% or more saying they are taking several recommended steps.

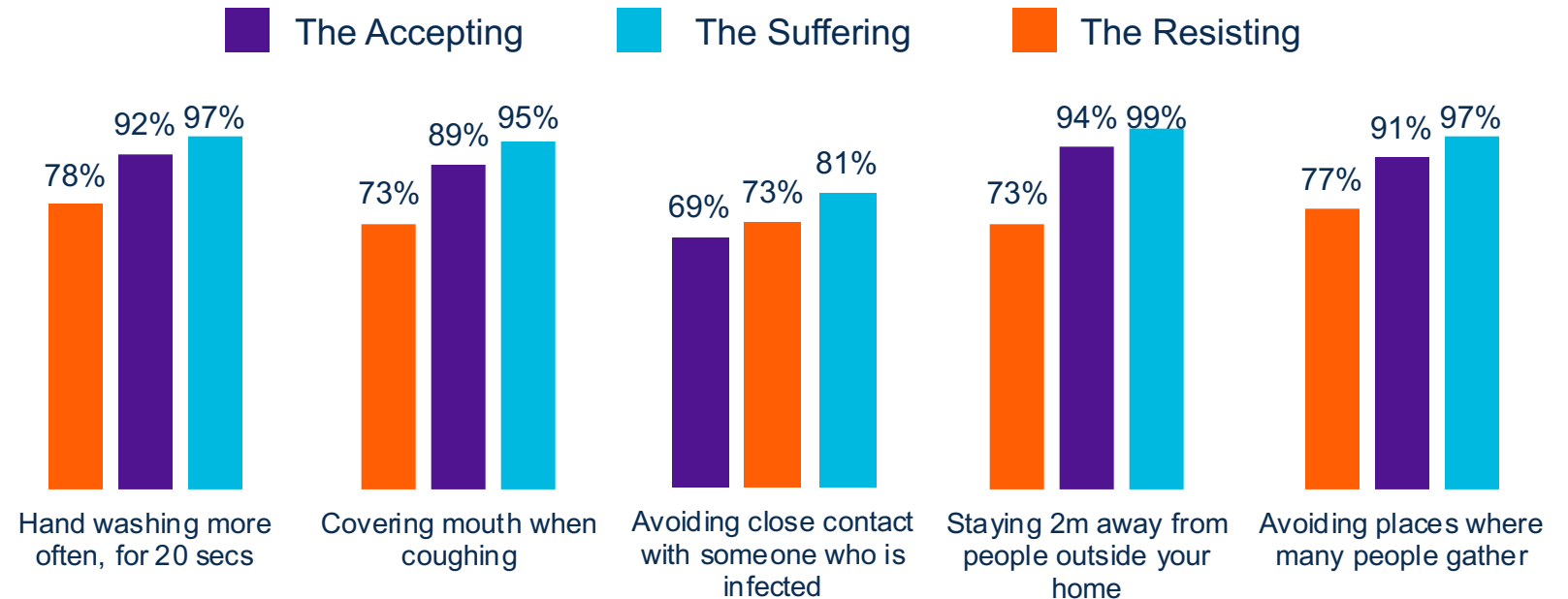
By contrast, only around three-quarters of the Resisting are taking such steps. Instead, many – including a majority in some cases – are taking steps that have not been recommended by the government. This group is also around 10 times more likely to say they have met up with friends or family outside their home.

The Suffering are most likely to be following official guidance on how to protect themselves and others from coronavirus.

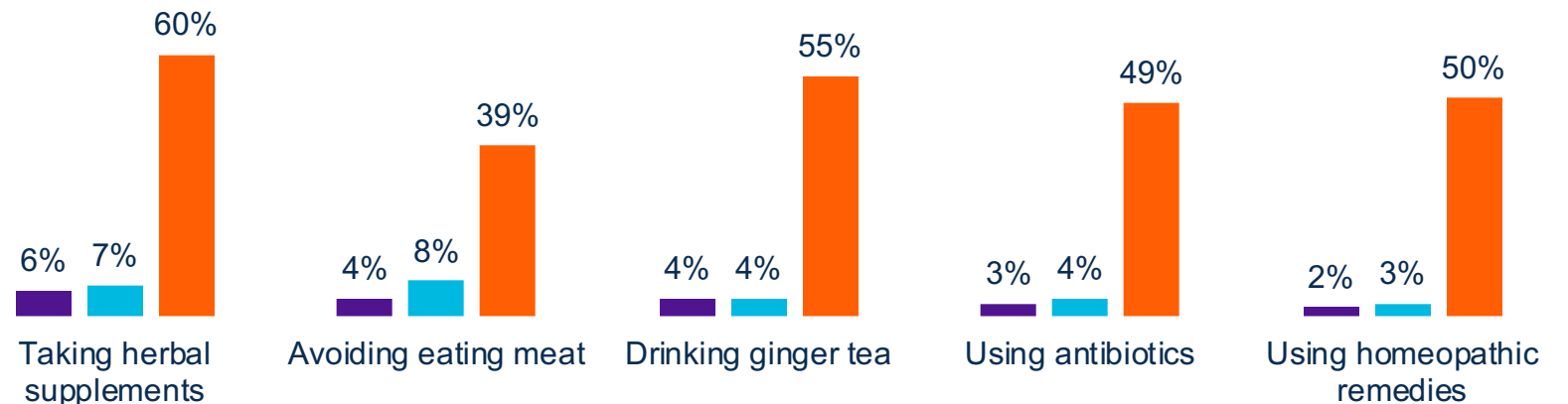
The Accepting have the next-highest levels of adherence, apart from when it comes to avoiding close contact with someone who is infected.

The Resisting are markedly less likely to be following government recommendations, with significant proportions instead taking steps that are not recommended.

% who say they are following these government recommendations

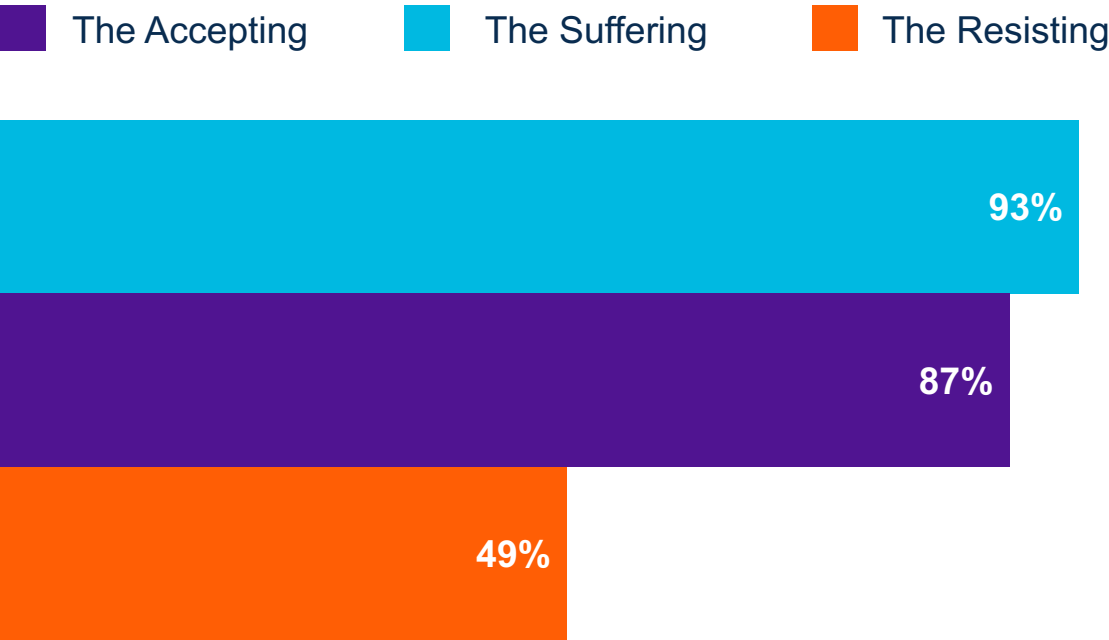


% who say they are taking these steps, which are not part of official advice



Those suffering are most likely to report following the lockdown rules completely or nearly all the time. 93% of this group say they do, compared with 87% of those who are accepting, and just 49% of those resisting.

% who say they are following the lockdown measures completely or nearly all the time



The Resisting are around 10 times more likely than the other groups to say they have met up with friends or family outside their home, or had friends or family visit them at home.

They are also around 17 times more likely than the other groups to have gone to work or outside despite having coronavirus-like symptoms.

All of these activities go against official government advice and the lockdown measures.

 The Accepting

 The Suffering

 The Resisting

% who say they have met up with friends or family outside their home



% who say they have gone to work or outside despite having symptoms that could be coronavirus



% who say they have had friends or family visit them at home



It is worth noting that the Resisting are 15 times more likely than the other groups to say they have or have had a confirmed case of coronavirus, and are more likely to be unsure but think they have or had it.

If true, and many more in this group have had the virus and are now immune, this may have affected their behaviour and adherence to official guidance and the lockdown measures.

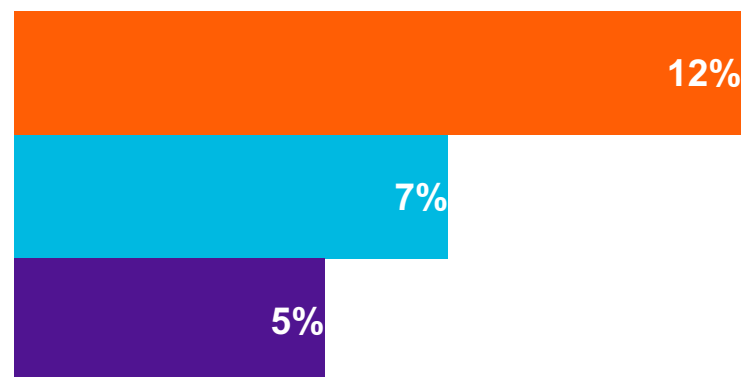
However, it may also be that members of this group who describe themselves as having had “confirmed” cases of coronavirus are mistaken – and that this mistaken belief is leading them to take risks.

Given the dates of fieldwork, it would be surprising if so many of them had actually been tested for coronavirus.

% who say they have or have had a confirmed case of coronavirus



% who say they are not sure but they think they have or have had case of coronavirus



Coping strategies: how the groups feel about the crisis, and how they are getting through it

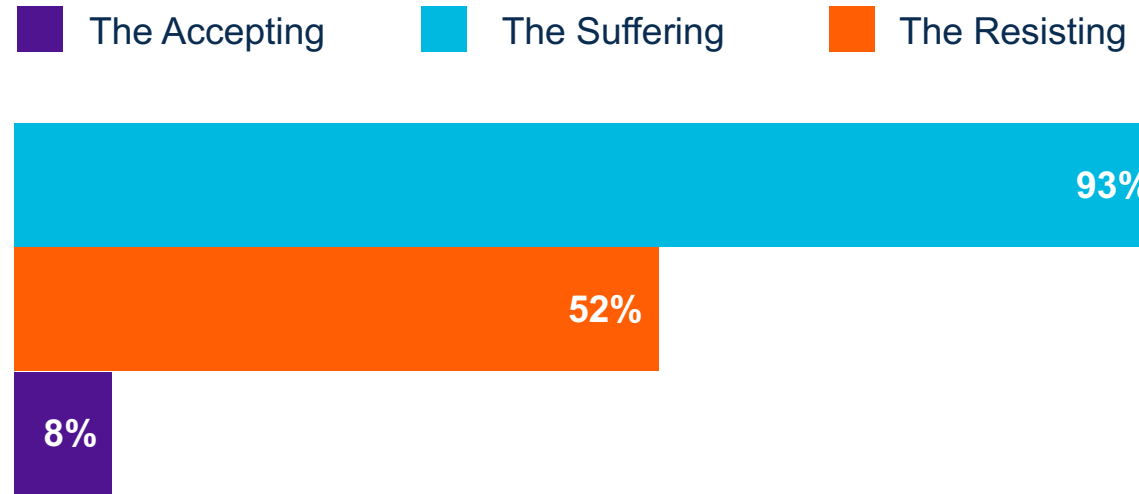
The Suffering are experiencing a greater negative mental health impact than the other groups as a result of the coronavirus crisis, and also more likely to report having sleep problems.

However, the Resisting appear to be engaging in unhealthy behaviours – such as drinking and eating more – at a higher rate in response to the current situation.

The overwhelming majority – 93% – of those suffering report being more anxious and depressed than usual.

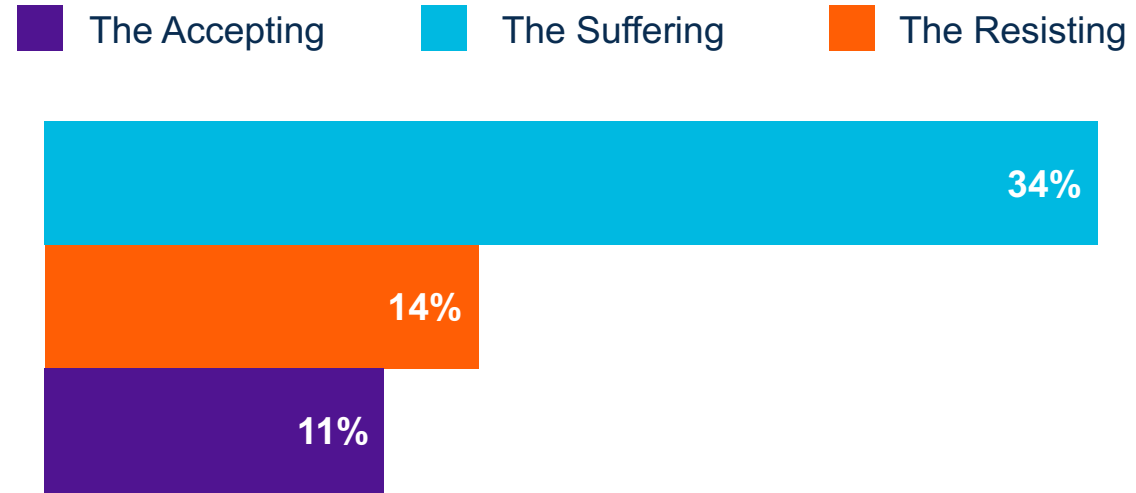
A majority (52%) of those resisting report feeling the same, but this falls to just 8% among those who are accepting of the current situation.

% who say they feel more anxious and depressed since the lockdown measures were announced

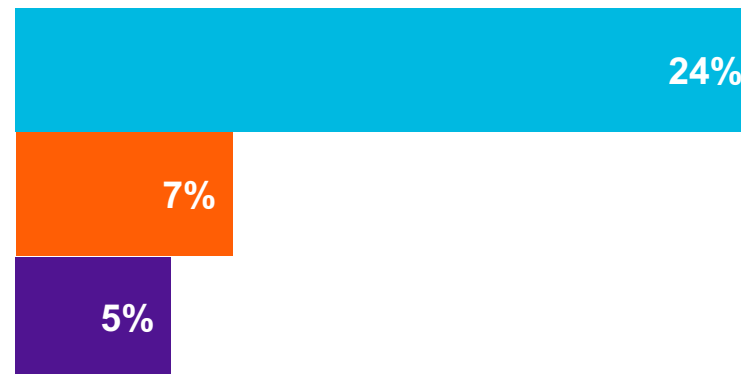


The Suffering are significantly more likely to say coronavirus is something that they think about all the time, and something that makes them feel helpless.

% who say that coronavirus is something they think about all the time

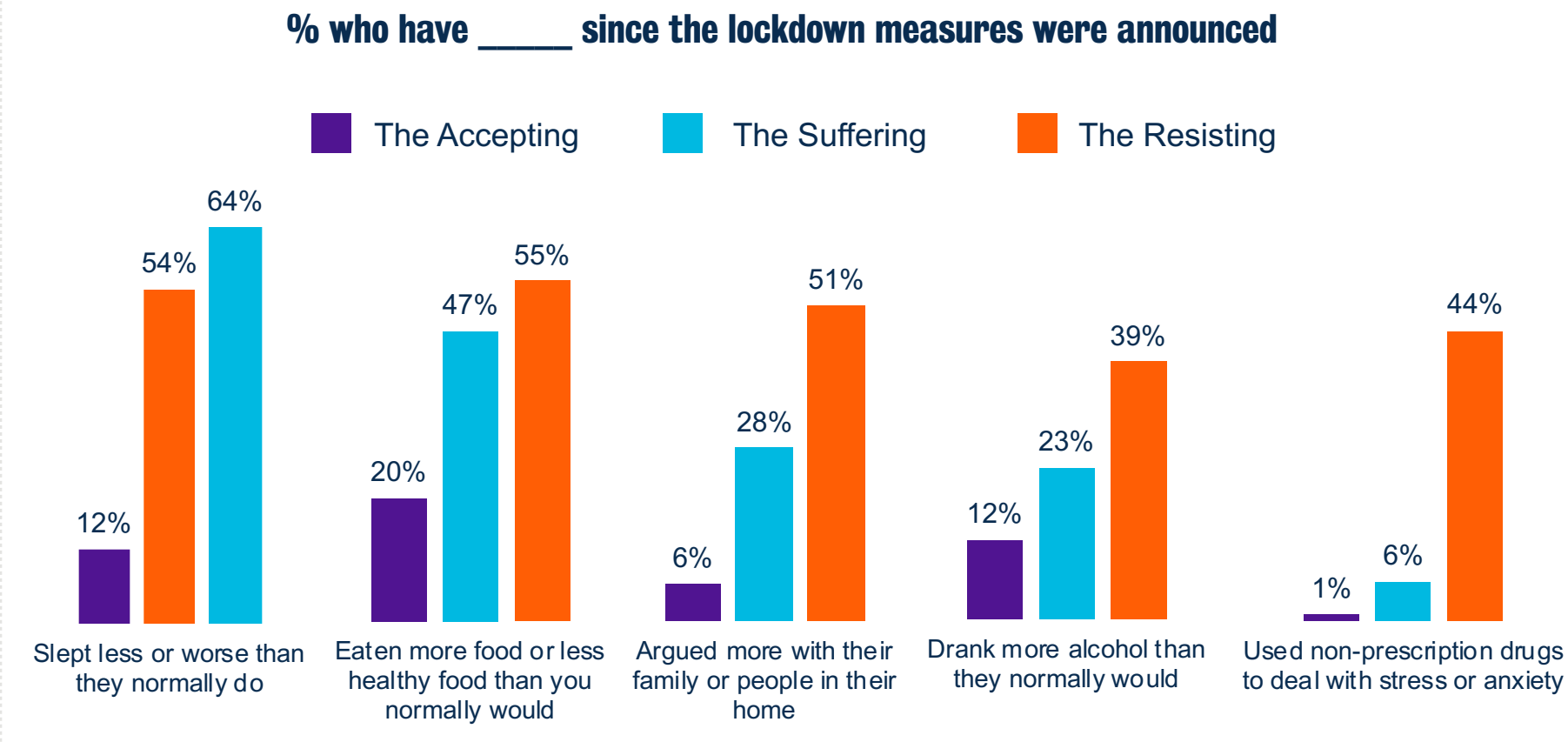


% who say coronavirus is something that makes them feel helpless



The Accepting report relatively little change in their behaviour since lockdown measures were announced, but there have been significant impacts on the behaviour of both the Suffering and the Resisting.

The Suffering in particular are sleeping less well, while the Resisting are much more likely to be arguing with family, drinking more and using non-prescription drugs

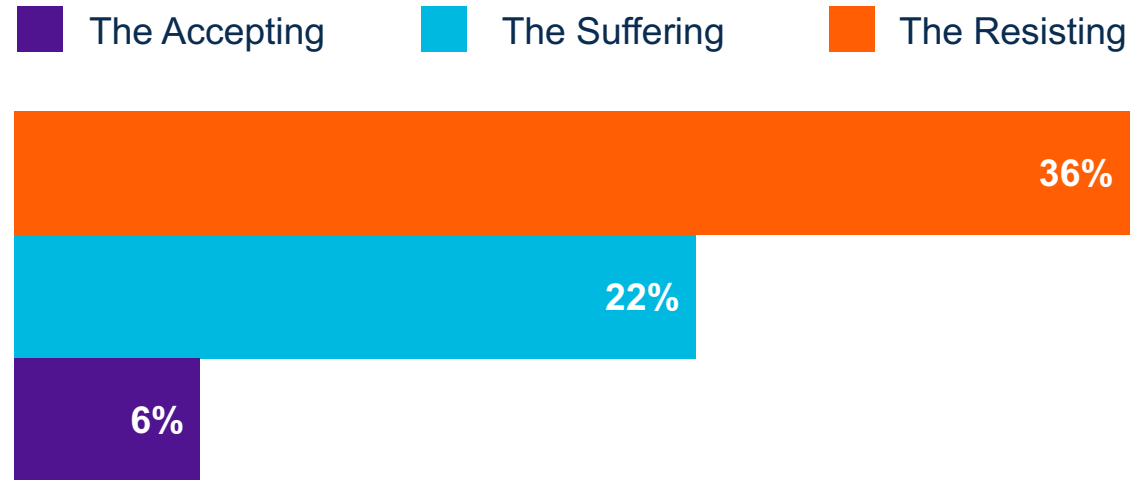


Source: Ipsos MORI: Base: 2,250 UK residents aged 16-75, interviewed 1-3 April 2020

Among the minority who are resisting, 36% say they are already finding the lockdown measures extremely difficult to cope with, compared with 22% and 6% among the Suffering and the Accepting respectively.

The Resisting are also hugely more likely to have phoned or contacted a counselling or support service as a result of the lockdown measures.

% who say they are already finding the lockdown measures extremely difficult to cope with



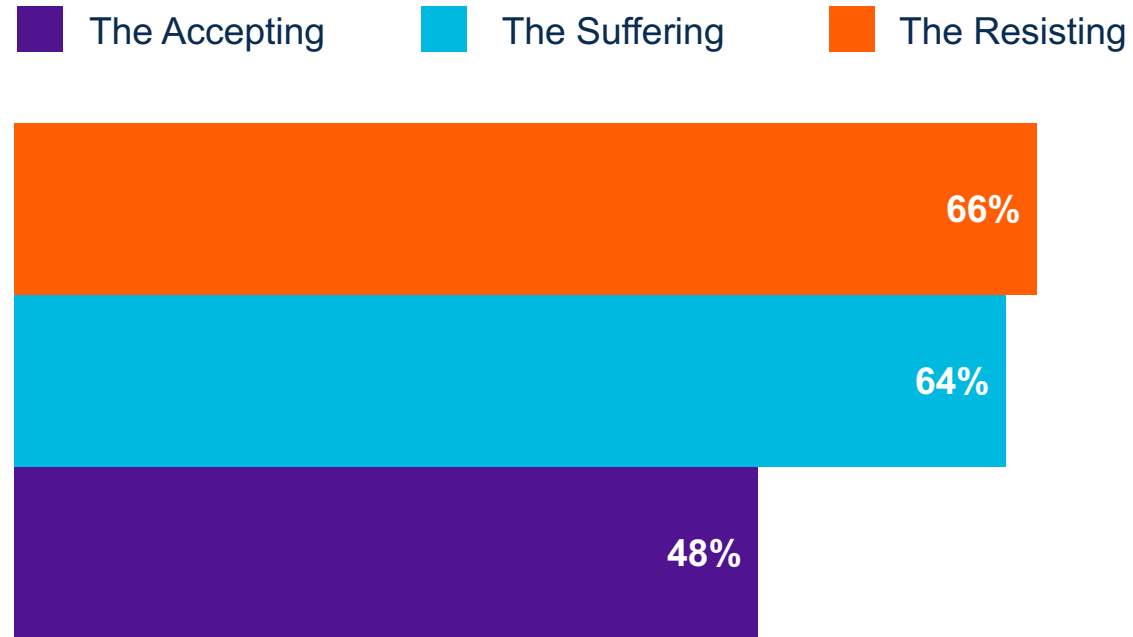
% who say they have phoned or contacted a counselling or support service since the lockdown measures were announced



The Resisting (66%) and the Suffering (64%) are more likely to say they check social media daily or more often for updates on coronavirus.

By comparison, a much lower proportion of the Accepting report checking so frequently.

% who say they check social media for updates on coronavirus daily or more frequently



Perceptions and misperceptions: what the different groups get right and wrong

Those resisting are by far most likely to believe claims that are false or that are currently judged to be unlikely.

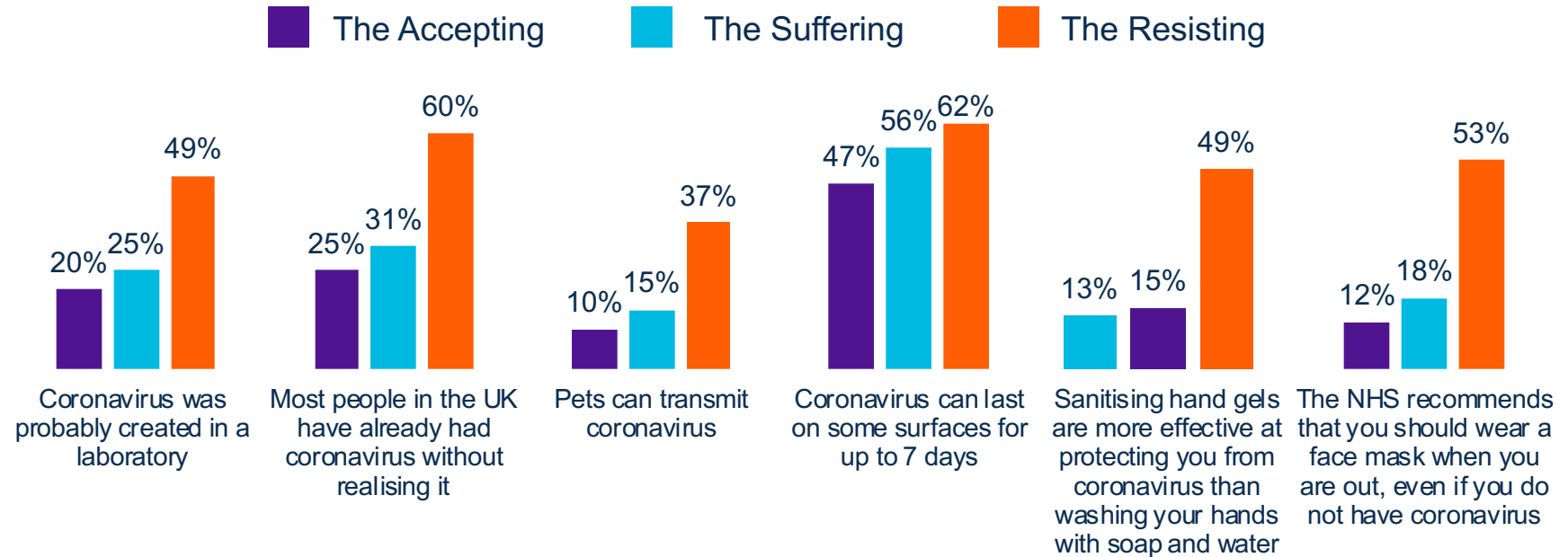
Those who are accepting of the current situation are least likely to believe such claims.

The Resisting are much more likely to believe a range of false or unlikely claims, often by a significant margin.

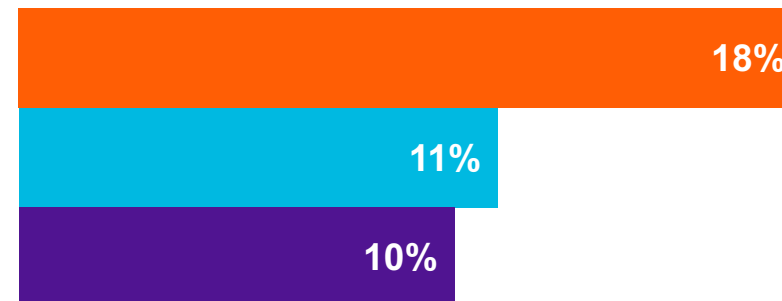
This is despite this group being most likely to rate themselves as having a very high level of knowledge about coronavirus.

(This group is also most likely to rate themselves as having a very low level of knowledge, while the other two are more likely to rank themselves towards the upper end of the spectrum – although not right at the top.)

% who say they the following claims, which are **false or currently judged to be unlikely**, are true



% who rate themselves as having a “very high level of knowledge about coronavirus”



Attitudes: What the different groups think of the government's response

The Resisting are around six times more likely than the other groups to think “too much fuss is being made about the risk of coronavirus”. Correspondingly, they are significantly less likely to approve of the lockdown measures and the new police powers to enforce them.

This group still has relatively high levels of trust in the government to deal with coronavirus. However, that may be because members of this group are less likely to see coronavirus as a very serious problem.

The Accepting have most confidence in the government's handling of the crisis, while the Suffering are most likely to think the government acted too slowly to control the spread of the virus.

A majority – 58% – of those resisting think too much fuss is being made about the risk of coronavirus, compared with just 10% and 7% who feel the same among the Accepting and the Suffering respectively.

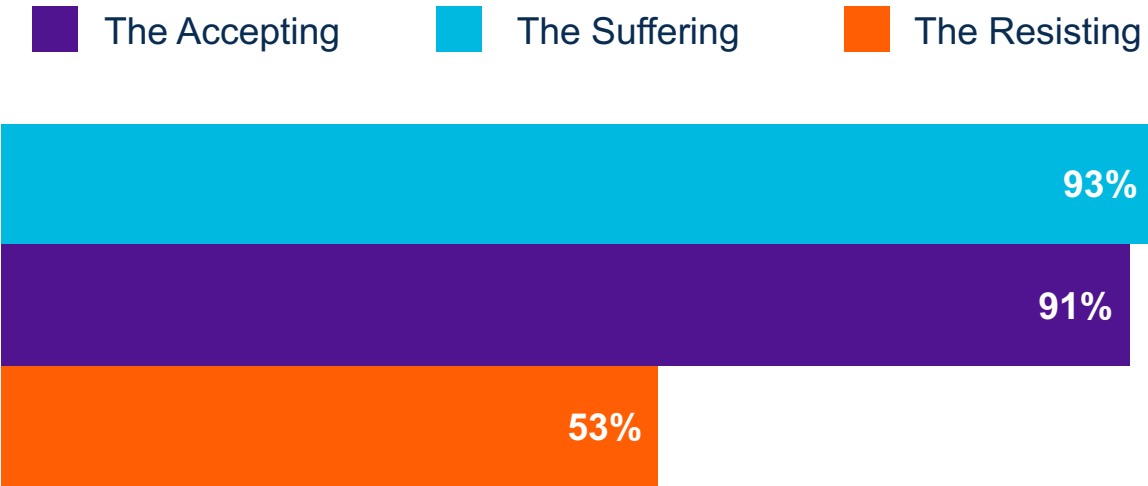
% who think “too much fuss is being made about the risk of coronavirus”

■ The Accepting ■ The Suffering ■ The Resisting

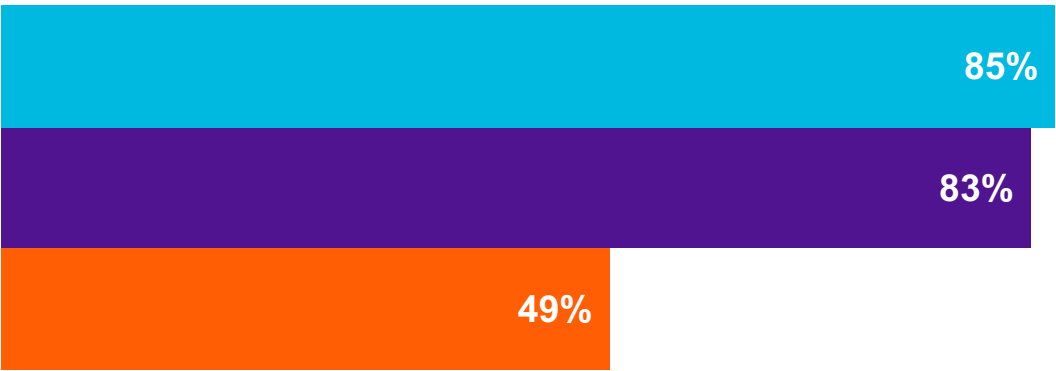


In line with this, the Resisting are far less supportive of the lockdown measures and the additional powers that police powers have been given to enforce them.

Support for the government's lockdown measures



Support for additional powers for the police to enforce the lockdown measures



But despite the Resisting approving far less than the other groups of the lockdown measures and new police powers to enforce them, they still have relatively high levels of trust in the government to deal with coronavirus.

Overall, the Accepting have most confidence in the government and the information and communications it has put out.

 The Accepting  The Suffering  The Resisting

% who trust the government to control the spread of the virus



% who trust the information provided by the government on coronavirus



% who say they've found the communication and advice from government helpful

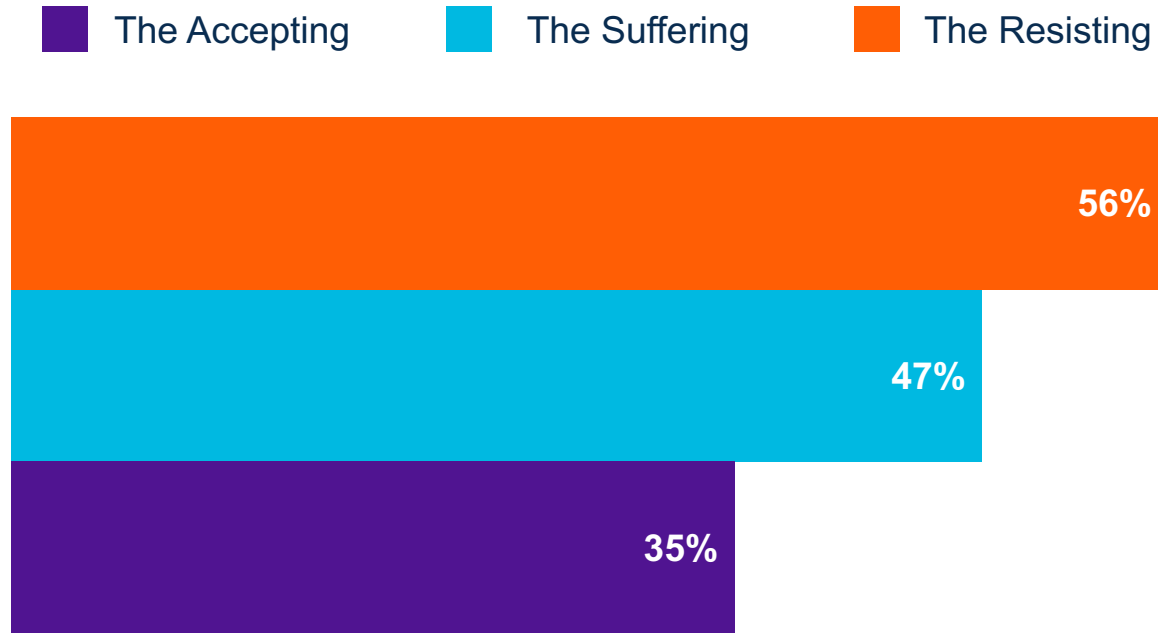


% who say the government's plan has responded well to the changing scientific information and situation



Although they trust the government on coronavirus and a majority think its plan has responded well to new evidence, those resisting are nonetheless most likely to agree that the government's response to the coronavirus has been confused and inconsistent.

% who agree that the government's response to coronavirus has been confused and inconsistent



Those suffering are most likely to think that the government acted too slowly to control the spread of coronavirus – in line with their lower levels of trust in the government's ability to control the virus.

% who agree that the government acted too slowly to control the spread of coronavirus

 The Accepting  The Suffering  The Resisting

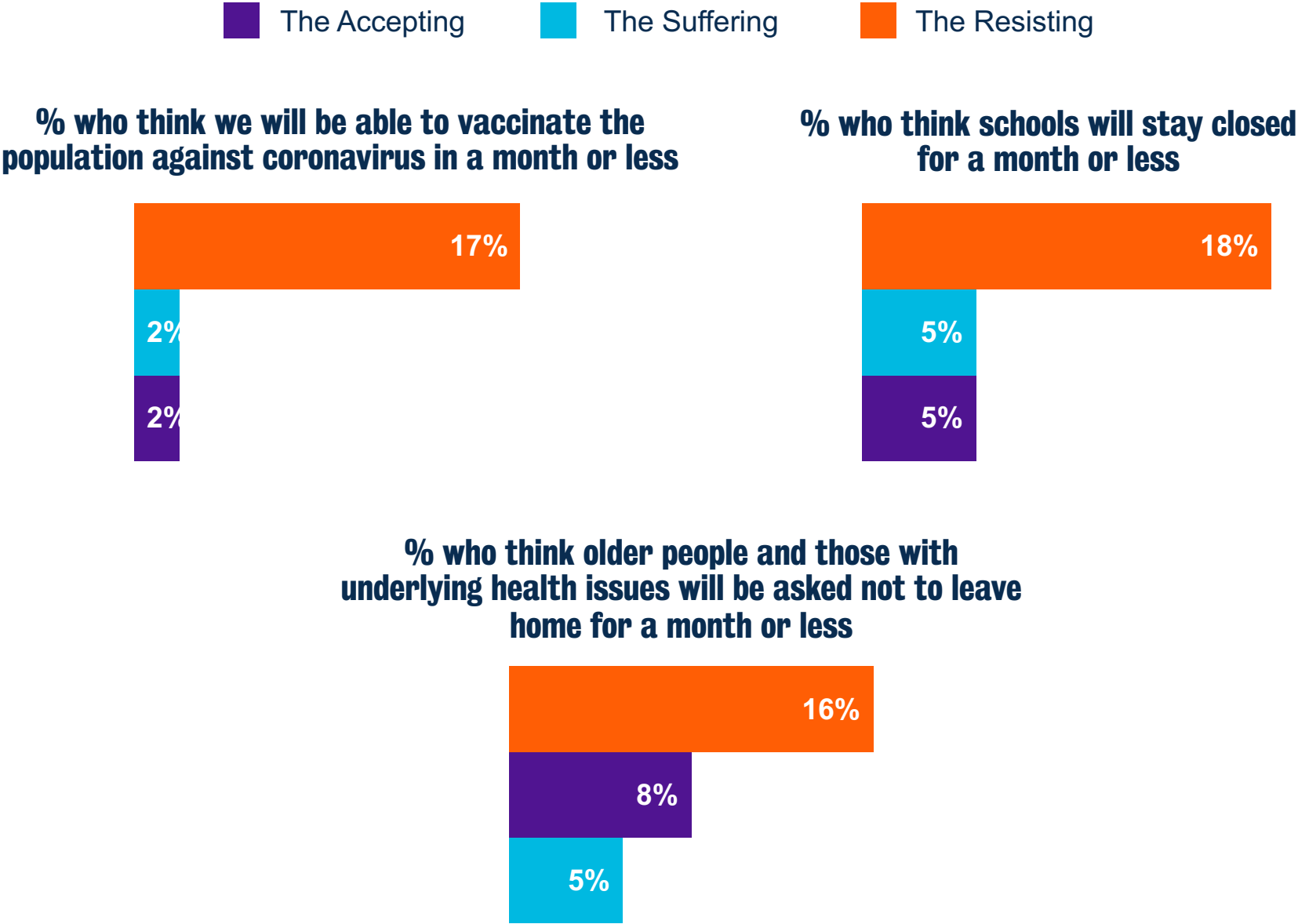


Expectations: how the different groups think the crisis will end

The Resisting are by far the most optimistic about a quick resolution to the crisis, and are most positive about the future of the economy – despite reporting that their own work and financial prospects are significantly worse than those of the other groups.

A significant majority of all three groups think the lockdown measures will need to be reintroduced at some point in the future, after having being relaxed or lifted, to deal with a new coronavirus outbreak.

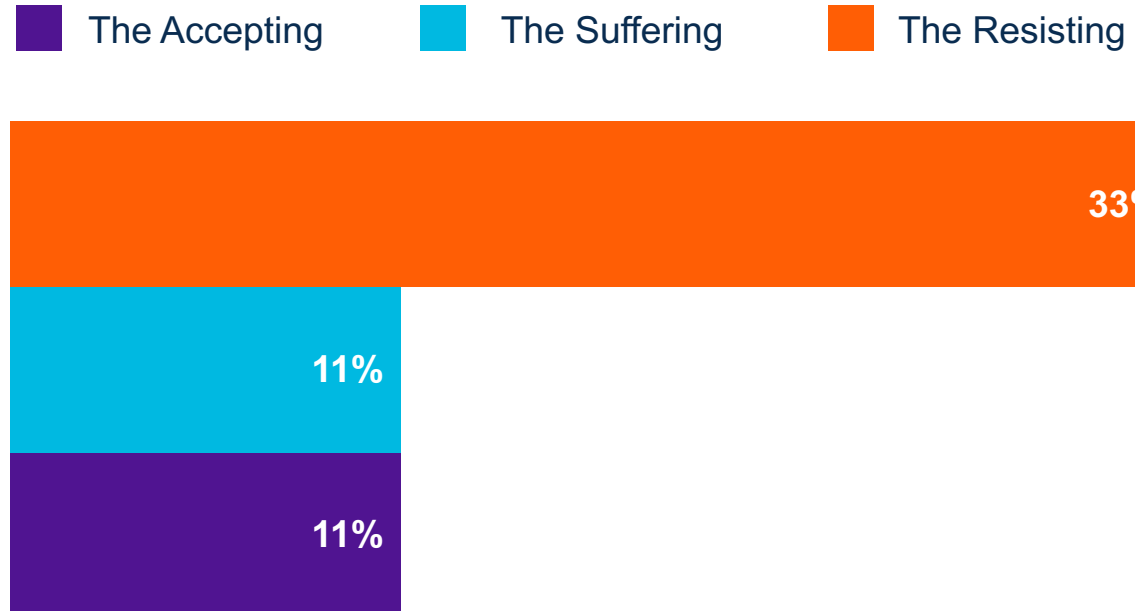
By a number of measures, the Resisting are most optimistic about a relatively quick end to the current crisis.



And a third of those resisting expect life will return to normal within three months – three times higher than the proportions of the other groups who expect the same.

It is worth noting that fieldwork for this study was conducted in early April, before the latest government indication that the social distancing measures will continue for several more months.

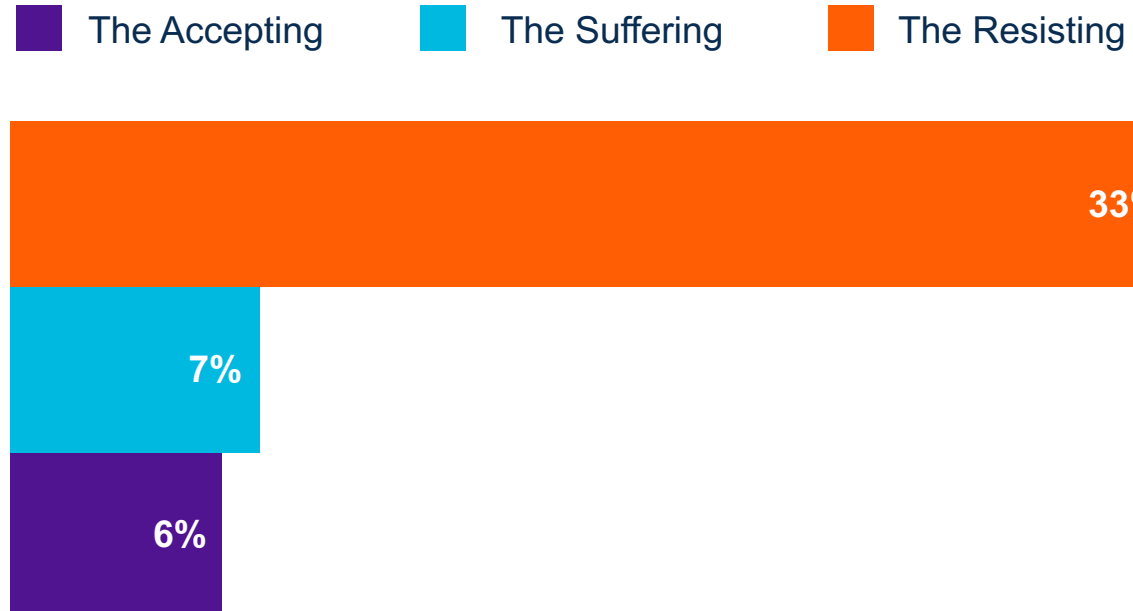
% who expect life to return to “normal” in three months or less



Those resisting are also around five times more likely than the other groups to expect that the economy will start growing again within three months.

Despite this optimism about the wider economy, this group are significantly more likely to say they are likely to experience hardship as a result of the current crisis...

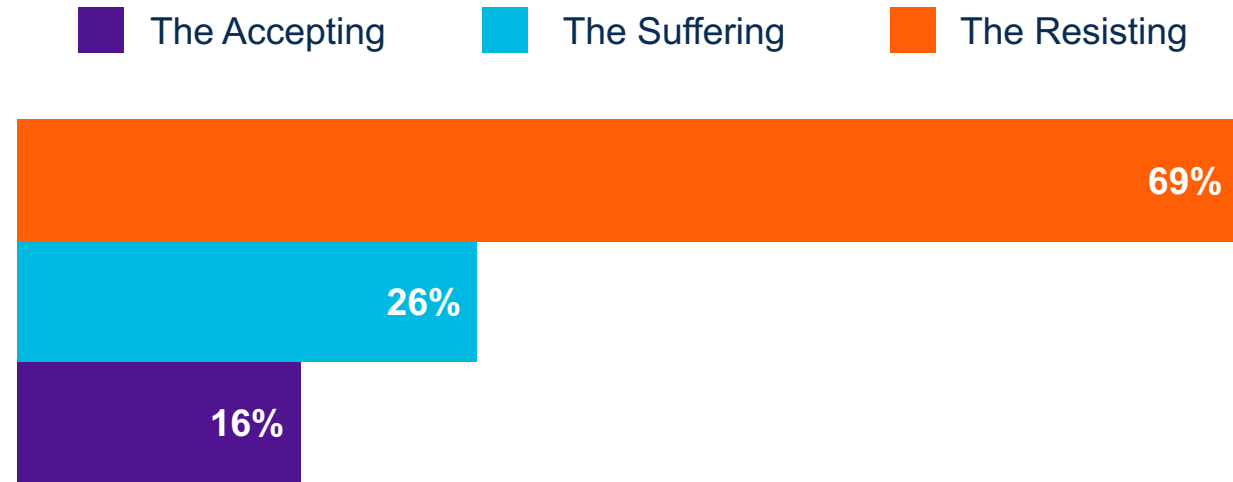
% who think the economy will start growing again in three months or less



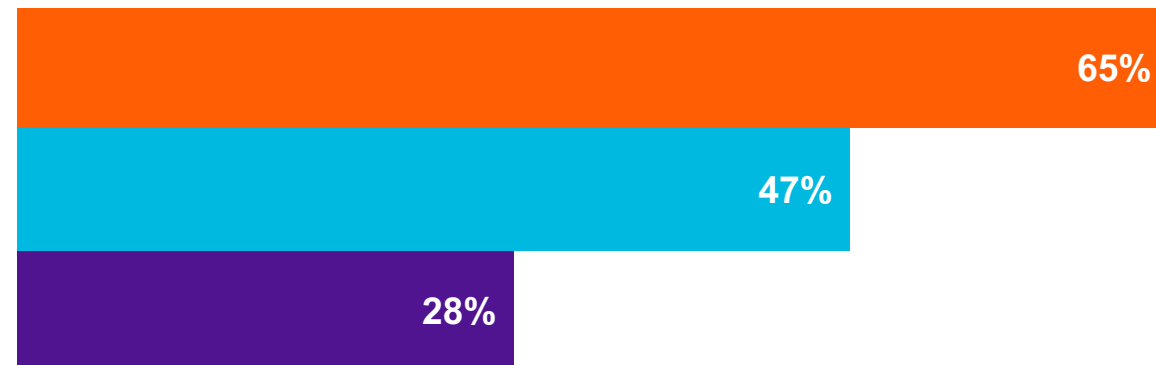
69% and 65% of the Resisting say they are certain/very/fairly likely to lose their jobs and face financial difficulties respectively – far higher than the other two groups.

This raises the question of whether the pressure this group is under is leading them to refuse to believe the seriousness of the threat posed by coronavirus and to justify not following official guidance as closely.

% who say they are certain, very likely or fairly likely to lose their jobs as a result of disruption from coronavirus



% who say they are certain, very likely or fairly likely to face financial difficulties as a result of disruption from coronavirus



Technical details

Respondents were grouped through k-means clustering using R v. 3.6.1. Variables used for clustering purposes included answers to all questions concerning attitudes, behaviours, expectations, and feelings with regard to the coronavirus and the official response, including compliance with and support for measures such as social distancing and hand-washing. Demographic information, voting history, and questions used to assess knowledge of the coronavirus and the official response were not used for clustering purposes. However, once the clusters were identified, these variables were used to supplement the analysis of the clusters themselves.

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