

Compliance or complacency? Attitudes to UK lockdown rules

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Introduction

This report includes findings from a survey of 2,244 UK residents aged 16-75 by [King's College London](#) and [Ipsos MORI](#), conducted on 20-24 November 2020. It finds that:

- One in four people (26%) have found it harder to follow the current coronavirus restrictions than they did during the UK-wide lockdown earlier in the year.
- But despite some struggling, most have not found the latest restrictions harder than they did in spring, with 24% saying they're easier to follow now and 48% saying they're coping about the same. The vast majority of people – 82% – also say they're still being just as or more careful about following the rules.
- Among the one in four who have found it harder to follow the rules more recently, reasons given include:
 - Difficulty in meeting up with family or friends outside because the weather is worse (44%).
 - A feeling of being worn out by the crisis (42%).
 - A sense that the restrictions were not being applied fairly to everyone (34%).
 - Reduced trust in advice given by government and the authorities (34%).

- There is also a gender divide in the reasons people were struggling. For example, 54% of women who have found the latest rules tougher to follow said the difficulty in meeting up with others outside was a key reason, much higher than the 33% of men who say the same. Men, by contrast, were more likely to say boredom was one of the reasons they'd found it harder to follow the rules this time (27% vs 19%).

Looking further back over the pandemic reveals a range of responses to the coronavirus restrictions:

- Seven in 10 (72%) have felt let down by the number of people they've seen not following the recommended measures in public, and three in 10 (32%) have felt embarrassed by someone they know doing the same.
- One in eight (12%) have felt embarrassed by someone they know sticking too closely to the rules.
- Three in 10 have felt anxious about whether they're obeying the restrictions correctly, while around half as many (16%) say they've accidentally broken the rules because they didn't understand what they were. This almost doubles, to 29%, among 16-34-year-olds.
- And in a further sign that some have struggled with the restrictions over the course of the pandemic, one in six (16%) say they've felt there's no point following the rules any longer, and one in seven (14%) say they've been pressured to break the rules by a friend or family member.

**Rule-following now and then:
how the current restrictions
compare with the UK-wide
lockdown earlier in the year**

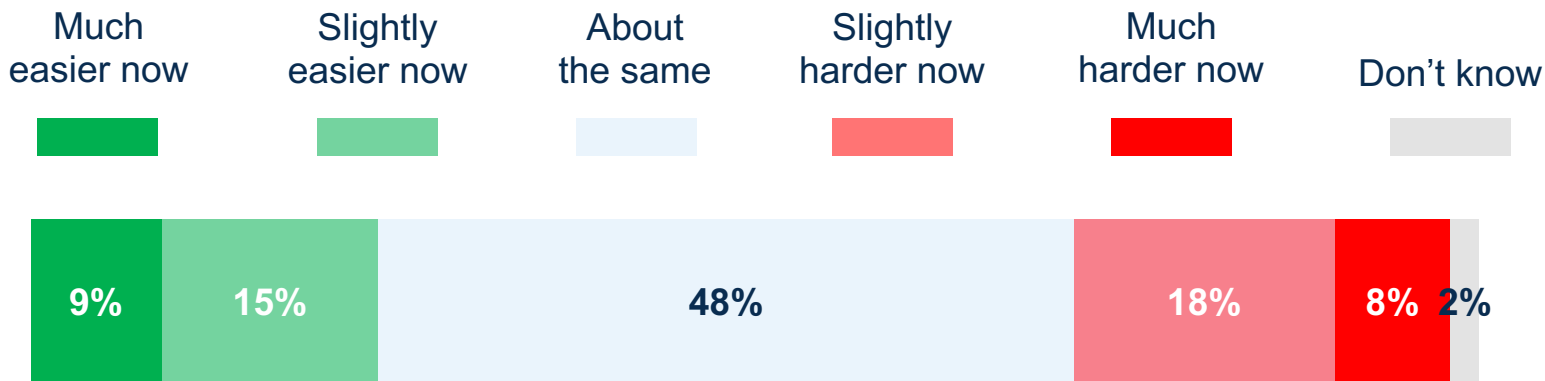


The public are most likely to say there isn't much difference in how they're coping with the rules now compared with during the UK-wide lockdown earlier this year (48%).

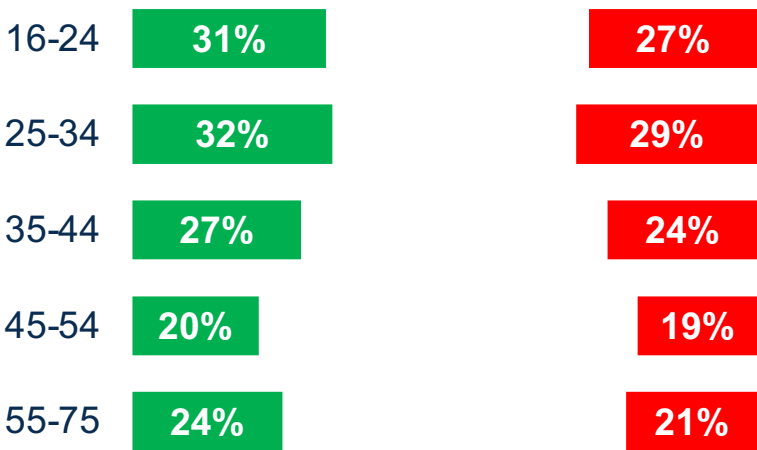
However, a quarter (26%) say they're finding it harder – although this is matched by almost the same proportion who feel it is easier (24%).

And while 16-34-year-olds are more likely (29%) than older age groups to report finding the rules tougher to follow, they're also the most likely to say they're finding them easier to comply with (32%).

To what extent, if at all, do you feel it is easier or harder for you personally to follow the coronavirus restrictions now compared with during the first lockdown in the spring?



% who say they are finding the current restrictions easier or harder, by age



Of the 26% of the UK public who are finding it harder to follow the rules now, difficulty meeting up with others outside because of the weather (44%) and a sense of feeling worn out by the pandemic (42%) are the top reasons why they are struggling more than they were back in spring.

A third (34%) of this group say an unfair application of the rules and reduced trust in official advice are key factors for them.

A quarter (24%) say they're struggling because they disagree with personal freedoms being restricted any longer, while a similar proportion (23%) say cite boredom as a reason.

Only 6% say they're finding it harder to follow the rules because they think coronavirus is now less of a risk to other people in the UK.

Which of the following, if any, are the main reasons why you are finding it harder to follow the coronavirus restrictions now? Please pick up to five



There are notable gender differences among the 26% of the UK who say they're finding it harder to follow the rules now compared with during the lockdown back in spring.

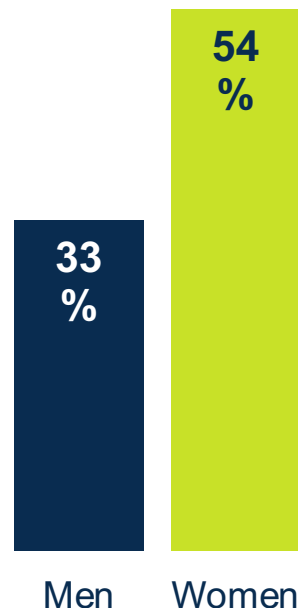
54% of women finding it harder say difficulty in meeting up with others outside is a key reason, much higher than the 33% of men who say the same.

Women are also more likely to feel worn out by the pandemic (47% vs 33%).

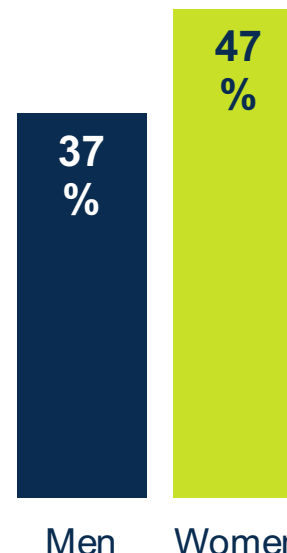
Men, however, are more likely to say boredom is one of the reasons they're struggling – 27% cite this, compared with 19% of women.

Gender differences in the reasons why 26% of the population are finding it harder to follow the rules now than they did during the UK-wide lockdown earlier in the year

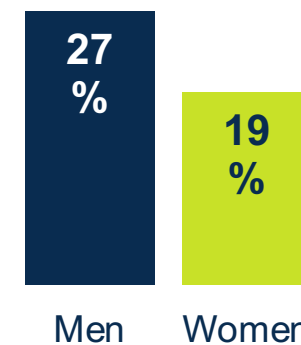
It is harder to meet up with family or friends outside because the weather is worse



I feel worn out by the coronavirus crisis



I feel bored by the coronavirus crisis

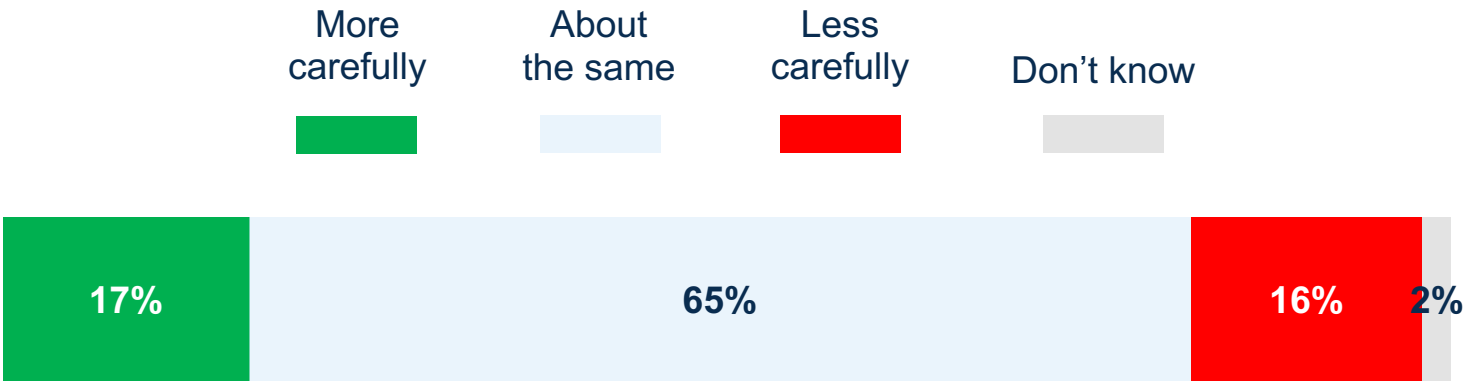


Two-thirds (65%) of the public say they're being about as careful now when it comes to following the rules as they were during the UK-wide lockdown in spring, while 17% say they're being more careful.

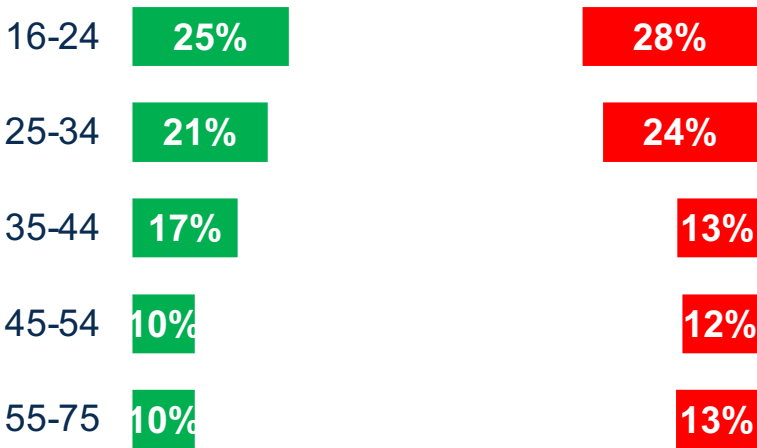
16% say they're being less careful.

Younger people are most likely to say they're following the restrictions both more and less carefully.

Would you say that you are following the current restrictions more carefully, less carefully, or about the same as you followed the restrictions during the first lockdown in the spring?



% who say they are following the restrictions more or less carefully, by age



Experiences of the restrictions over the course of the crisis



7 in 10 people (72%) have felt let down by the amount of rule-breaking they've witnessed over the course of the Covid-19 crisis, and 3 in 10 (32%) have felt embarrassed because of rule-breaking by people they know.

At the same time, one in eight (12%) have felt embarrassed by people they know sticking too closely to the rules.

3 in 10 (31%) have felt anxious about correctly obeying the restrictions, while around half as many (16%) say they've accidentally broken the rules because they didn't know what they were. A similar proportion (17%) say they've needed someone to explain the current rules to them.

In a sign that some people have struggled with the restrictions, 1 in 6 (16%) have felt there's no point following the rules any longer, and 1 in 7 (14%) report being pressured to break them.

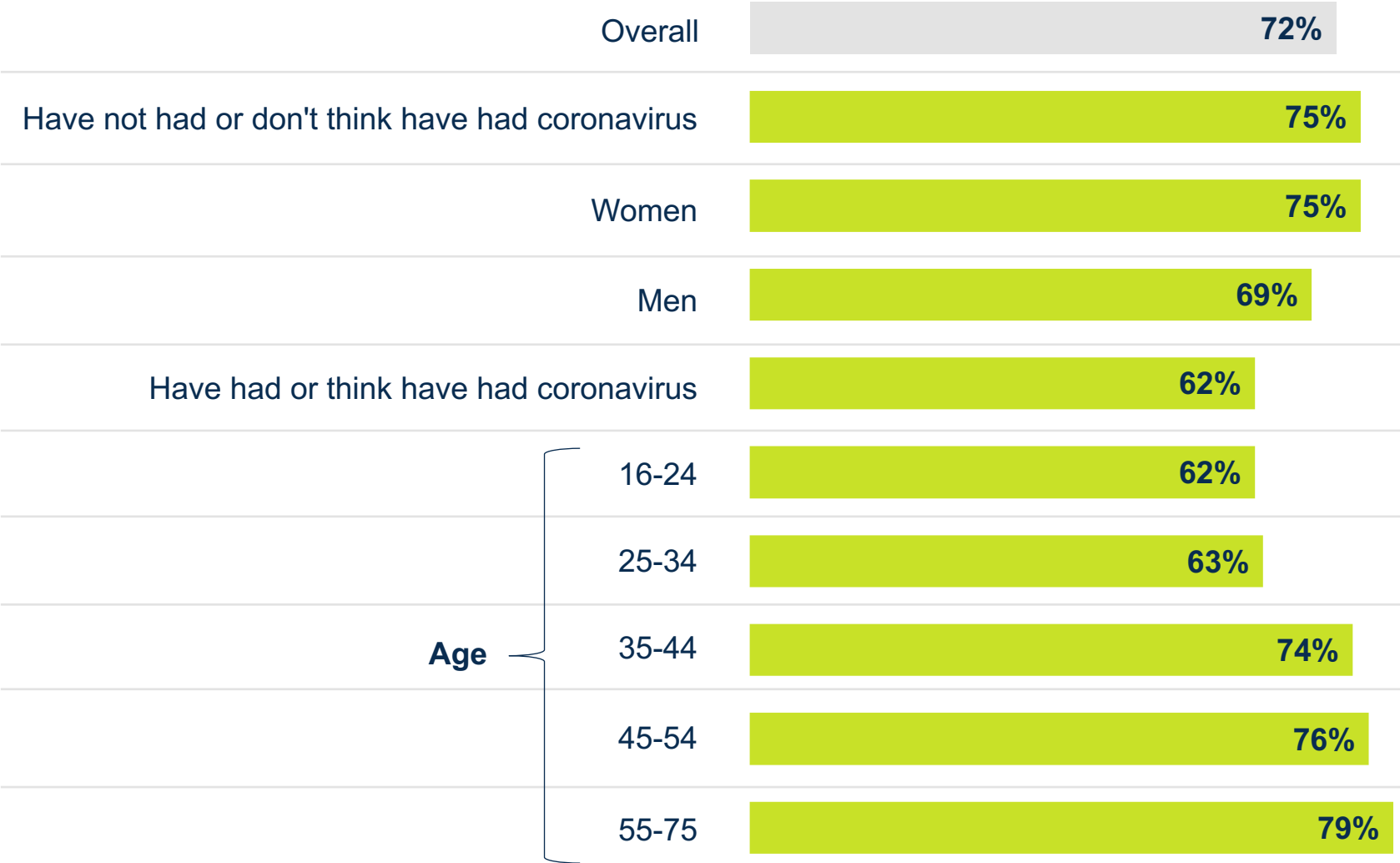
For each of the following, please say whether they have or have not applied to you during the coronavirus crisis. Please answer honestly – all answers to this survey are anonymous

	Applies to me	Does not apply to me
I have felt disappointed by the number of people I have seen not following the recommended measures in public places	72%	18%
I have felt embarrassed by someone I know <u>not following</u> the recommended measures in public	32%	57%
I have felt anxious about whether I am following the recommended measures correctly in public places or at home	31%	58%
I have needed someone I know to explain the current lockdown restrictions to me	17%	74%
I have felt as though there is no point in following the recommended measures any longer	16%	72%
I have broken lockdown restrictions by accident because I didn't understand what they were	16%	71%
I have been pressured to break lockdown restrictions by a friend or family member	14%	78%
I have felt embarrassed by someone I know following the recommended measures <u>too carefully</u> in public	12%	78%

16-34-year-olds (63%) are less likely than older age groups (76%) to say they've felt disappointed about rule-breaking they've witnessed, and women (75%) are more likely than men (69%) to have felt this way.

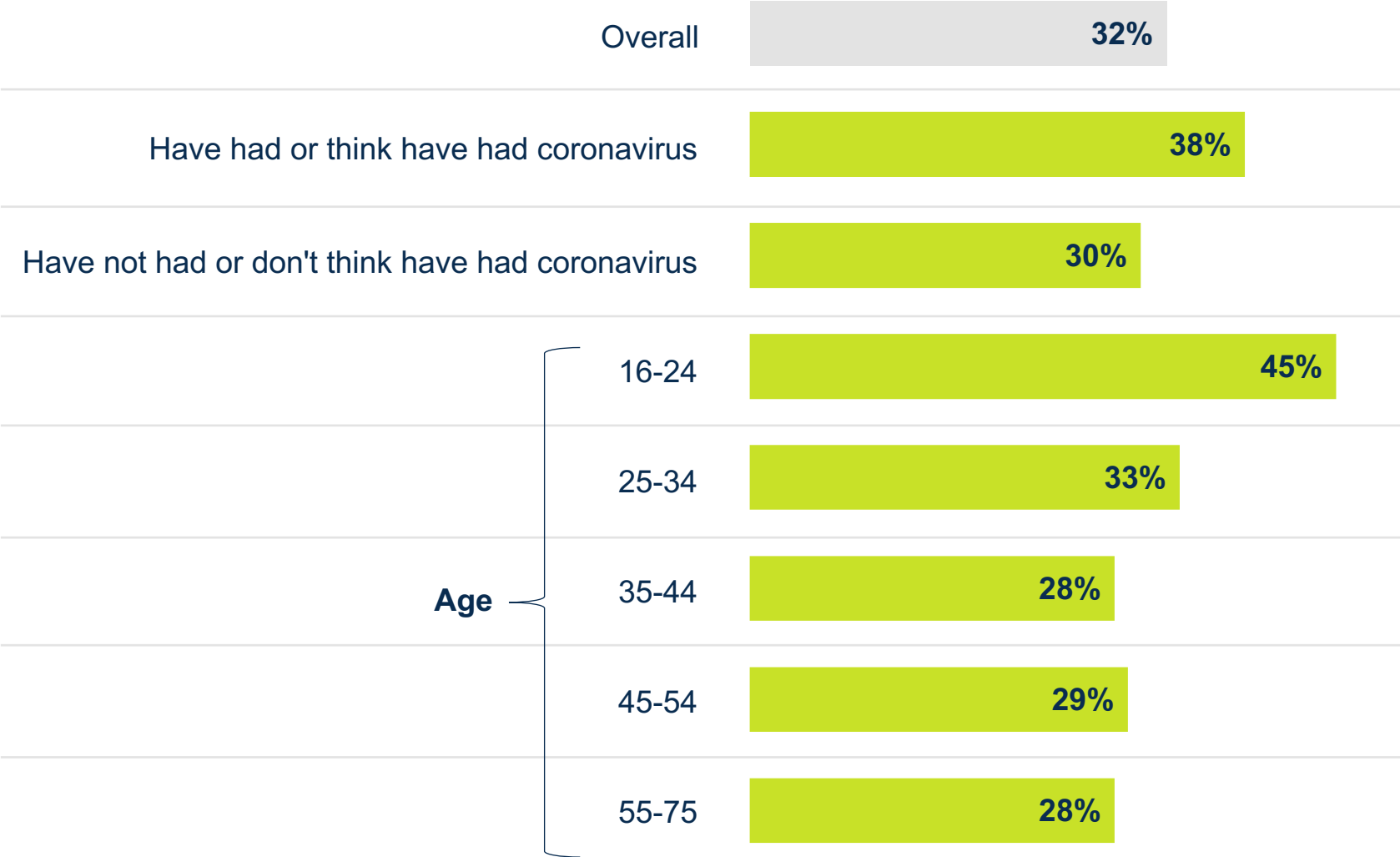
People who think they've had Covid-19, or have had it confirmed by a test, are less likely (62%) than those who don't or haven't (75%) to feel disappointed.

% within each group who say they have felt disappointed by the number of people they have seen not following the recommended measures in public places



Those aged 16 to 24 (45%) are much more likely than other age groups to have felt embarrassed about rule-breaking by people they know.

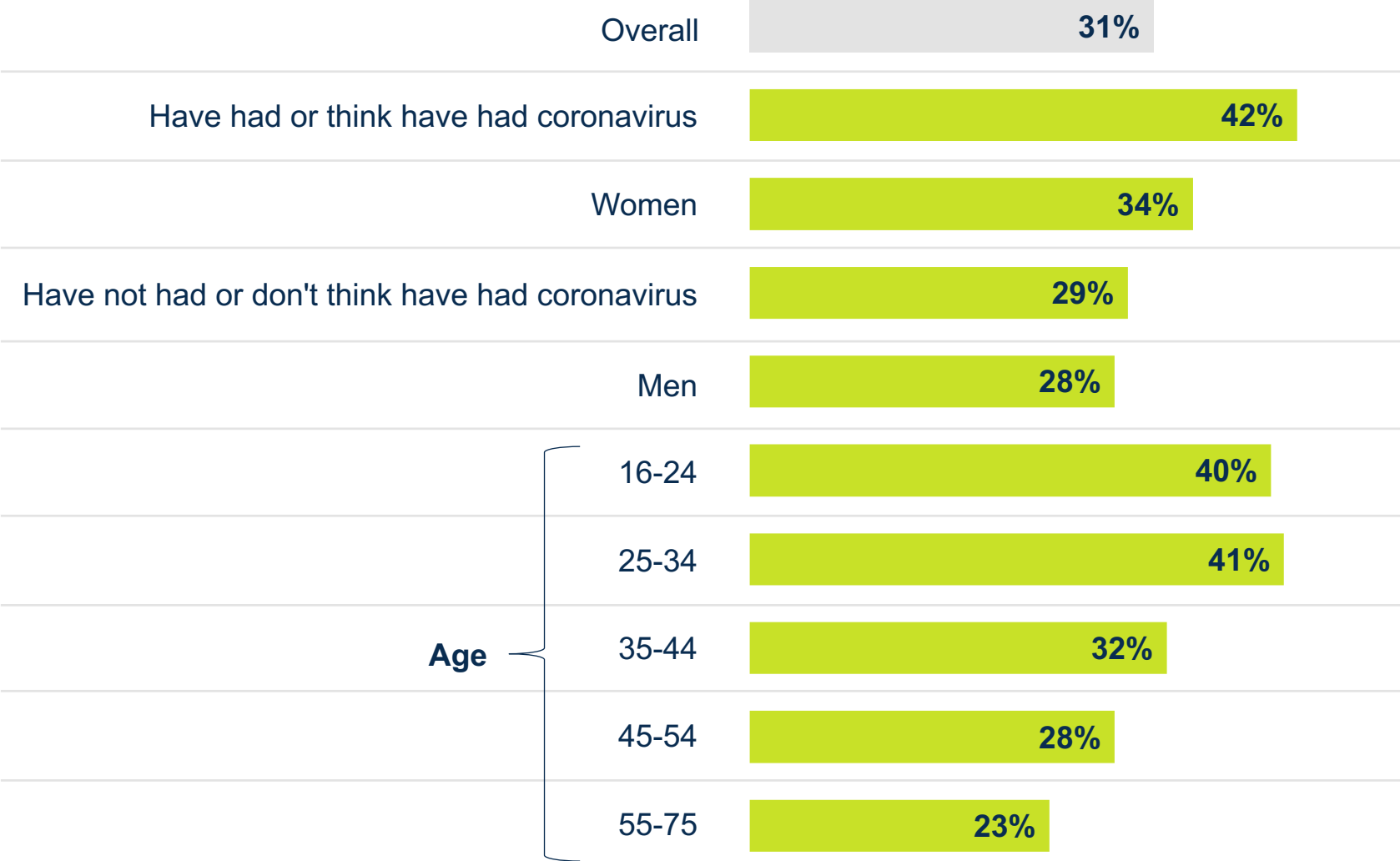
% within each group who say they have felt embarrassed by someone they know not following the recommended measures in public



People who have had – or suspect they’ve had – coronavirus (42%) are much more likely to have felt anxious about correctly following the rules, perhaps because of concerns about infecting others.

Women (34%) are more likely than men (28%) to have felt anxious about adhering to the restrictions, and younger people are more likely than older people to have felt this way.

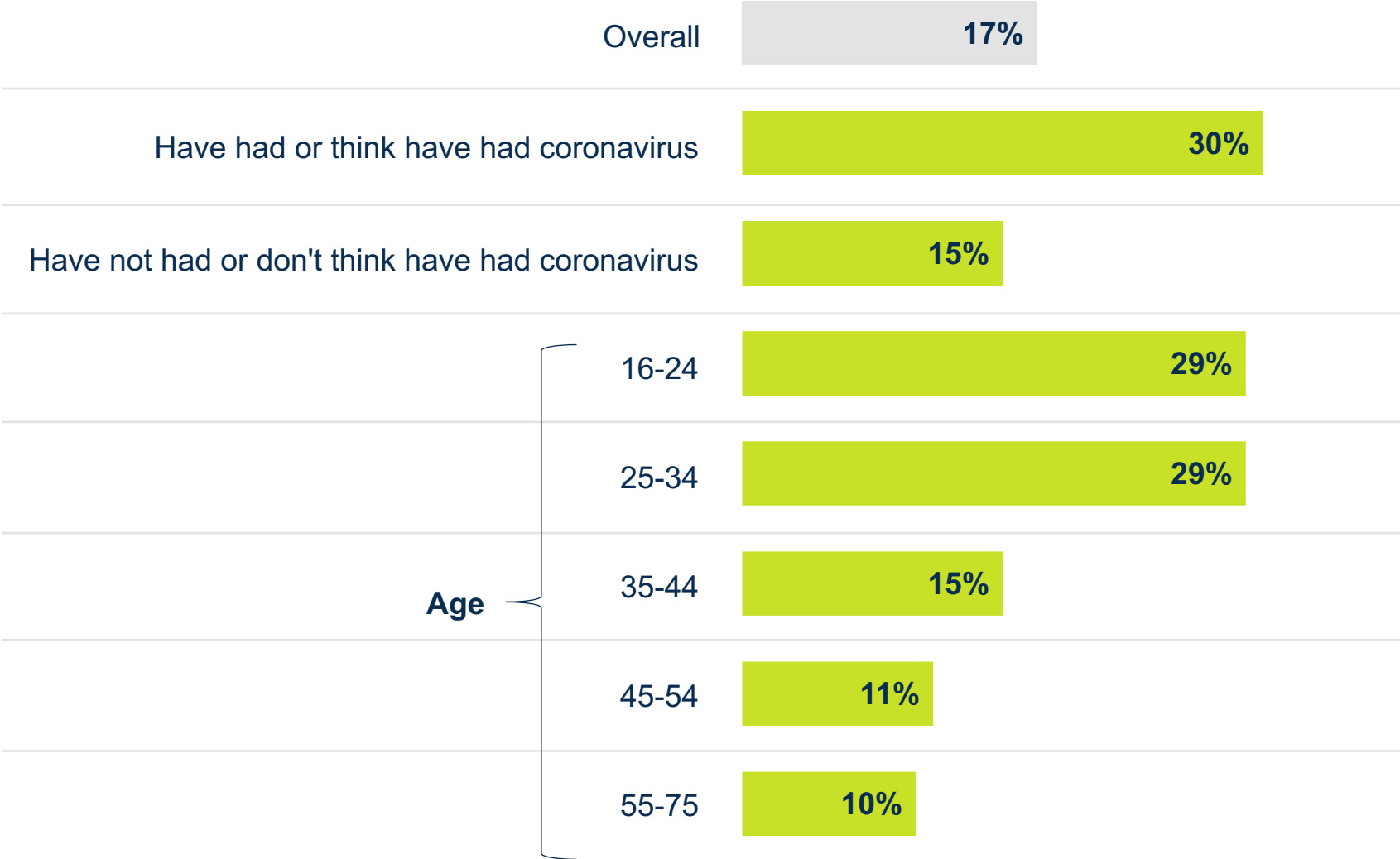
% within each group who say they have felt anxious about whether they are following the recommended measures correctly in public places or at home



Suspected or confirmed Covid-19 sufferers are more likely to have needed someone to explain the current restrictions to them, which may be because they've needed guidance on isolating.

And 16-34-year-olds (29%) are more than twice as likely as 35-75-year-olds (12%) to have needed clarity on the rules.

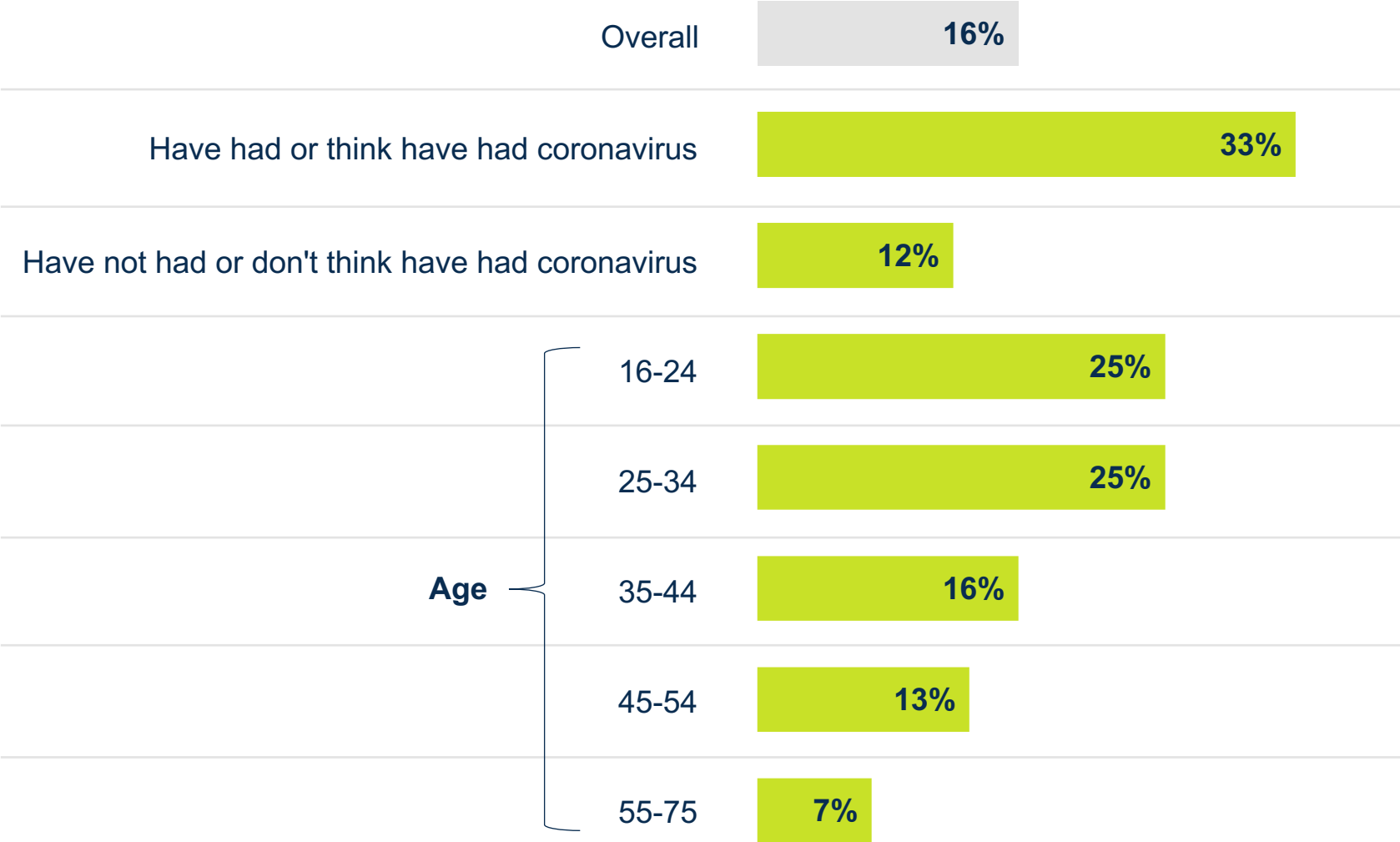
% within each group who say they have needed someone they know to explain the current lockdown restrictions to them



Of all age groups, surveyed, despondence about the lockdown rules is highest among 16-34-year-olds, with a quarter (25%) saying there's no point following them any longer.

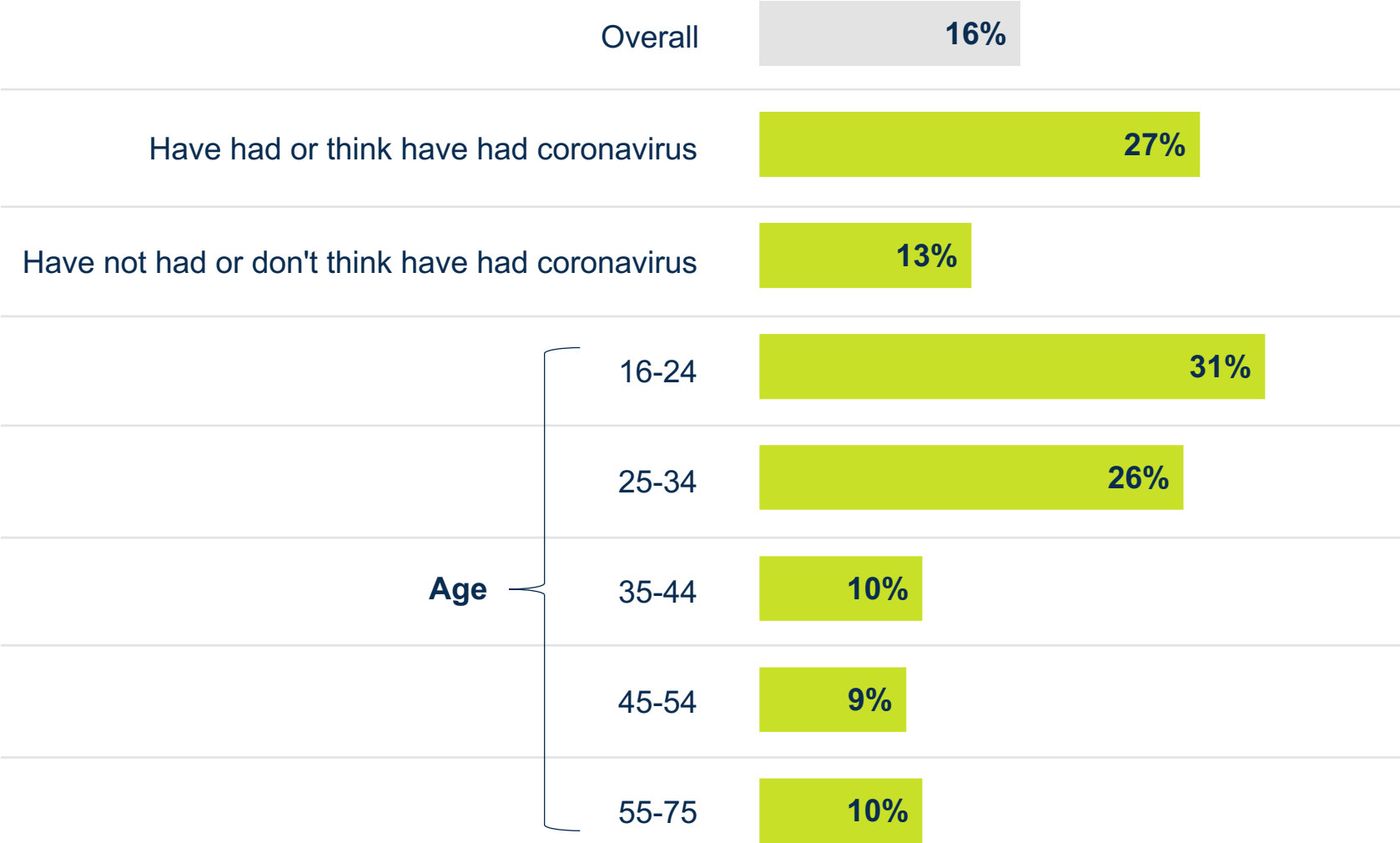
A third (33%) of confirmed or suspected coronavirus sufferers also feel this way – around twice as high as the population overall.

% within each group who say they have felt as though there is no point in following the recommended measures any longer



There is another age divide when it comes to those who have broken the rules by accident. 29% of 16-34-year-olds report doing so because they weren't aware of the details of the restrictions, around twice as high as the proportion of 35-75-year-olds who say the same (15%).

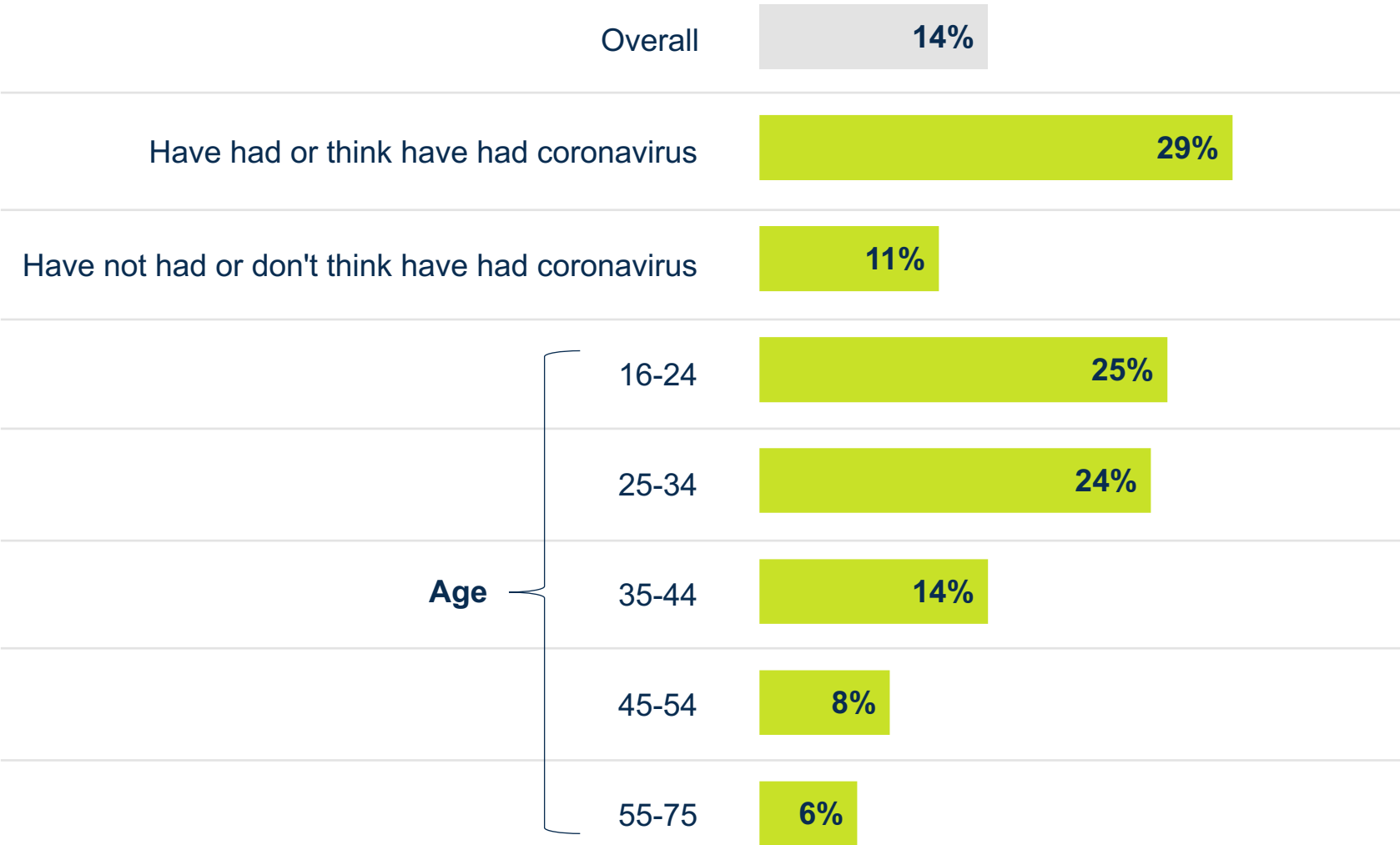
% within each group who say they have broken lockdown restrictions by accident because they didn't understand what they were



3 in 10 (29%) suspected or confirmed coronavirus sufferers say they've been pressured to break lockdown rules by a friend or family member – around twice the proportion of the population overall (14%) who say the same and higher still than the proportion who think they've not had coronavirus (11%).

A quarter (25%) of 16-34-year-olds have also been pressured to disobey the restrictions.

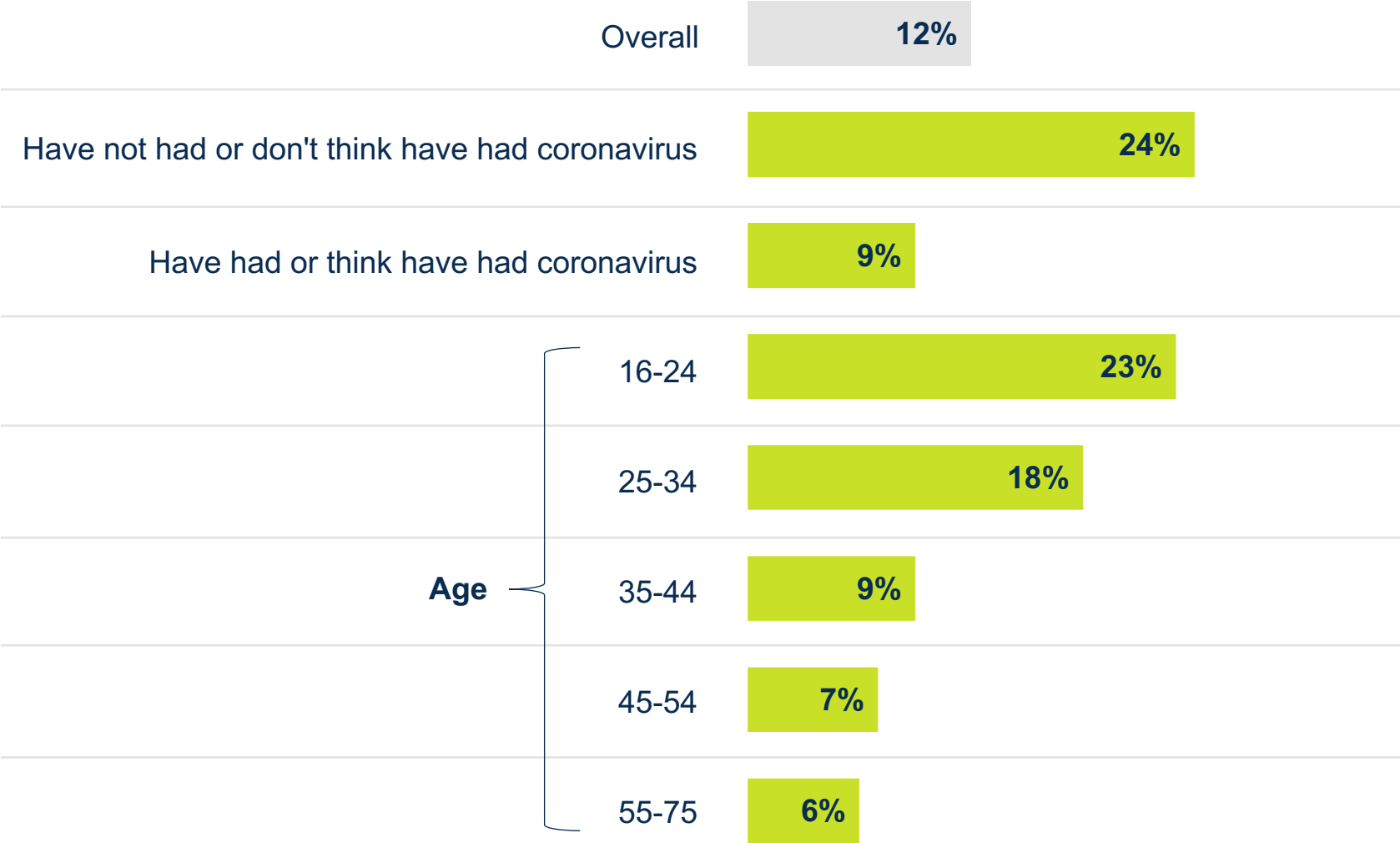
% within each group who say they have been pressured to break lockdown restrictions by a friend or family member



Suspected or confirmed coronavirus sufferers (24%) are twice as likely as the population overall (12%) to report feeling embarrassed by someone they know sticking too rigidly to the lockdown rules.

And 16-34-year-olds (21%) are three times as likely as 35-75-year-olds (7%) to have felt embarrassment about this.

% within each group who say they have felt embarrassed by someone they know following the recommended measures too carefully in public



Technical details

Ipsos MORI interviewed a sample of 2,244 adults aged 16-75 in the United Kingdom using its online i:omnibus between 20 and 24 November 2020. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age within gender, government office region, working status, social grade and education. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

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