

Brexit misperceptions

October 2018

THE
POLICY
INSTITUTE

KING'S
College
LONDON



The **UK** in a
Changing Europe



Ipsos MORI

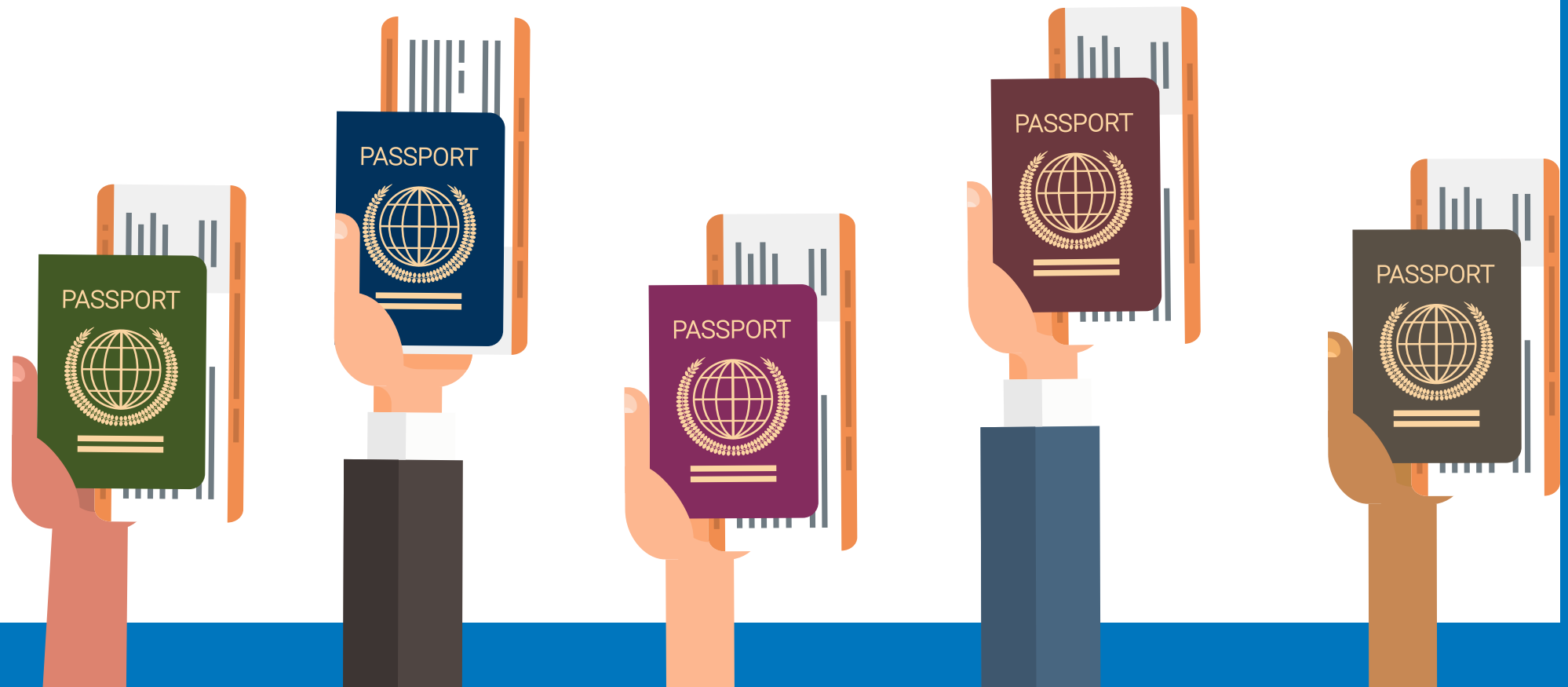


The Policy Institute at King's College London, in partnership with **Ipsos MORI** and **UK in a Changing Europe**, has run a major survey of over 2,200 people aged 18-75 in Great Britain on misperceptions of immigration and Brexit realities.

- Part of the study takes conclusions from the **government-commissioned Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) report**, *EEA Migration in the UK*, and tests these against public perceptions, alongside **other facts, such as where UK direct investment comes from, the UK's payments to the EU and immigrant numbers**.
- The large sample size for the survey allows us to look at how party support and Leave/Remain support interacts, by **identifying how misperceptions vary** among groups of Conservative-Leave, Conservative-Remain, Labour-Leave and Labour-Remain supporters.



- The MAC report is clear that it is not possible to come to firm conclusions on impact on every area – **but it was often possible to rule out directions of impact, or to be clear that the impact was small.**
- The survey shows that there are **significant misperceptions on some key facts around Brexit**, not just from the MAC report on immigration, but on other issues such as the basic numbers of European immigrants in the UK, the £350m claim and the scale of investment that the UK receives from European countries.



Only 29% of the public correctly think that immigrants from European countries **pay £4.7bn more** in taxes than they receive in welfare benefits and services

Q: Immigrants from European countries contribute resources to public services in the UK, through the taxes that they pay. Immigrants also take resources out, through using public services and the welfare benefits they receive.

Which of these do you think was true in the UK in 2016/17?

The MAC report concludes that: “In 2016/17, EEA migrants as a whole are estimated to have paid **£4.7bn more in taxes** than they received in welfare payments and public services.”

Leave supporters are least likely to answer correctly (16%) and most likely to wrongly think that European immigrants contribute less than they take out (42%).

★ **1** “European immigrants paid around **£4.7bn more in taxes** than they received in welfare benefits and public services”

(Overall: 29%)

2 “European immigrants paid **about the same** in taxes as they received in welfare benefits and public services”

(Overall: 18%)

3 “European immigrants paid around **£4.7bn less in taxes** than they received in welfare benefits and public services”

(Overall: 27%)

Remain

47%

18%

14%

Leave

16%

17%

42%

★ Correct response according to MAC report

The three things we get **most wrong** about European immigration are that it:

- increases crime
- decreases quality of healthcare services
- increases unemployment among lower-skilled workers born in the UK

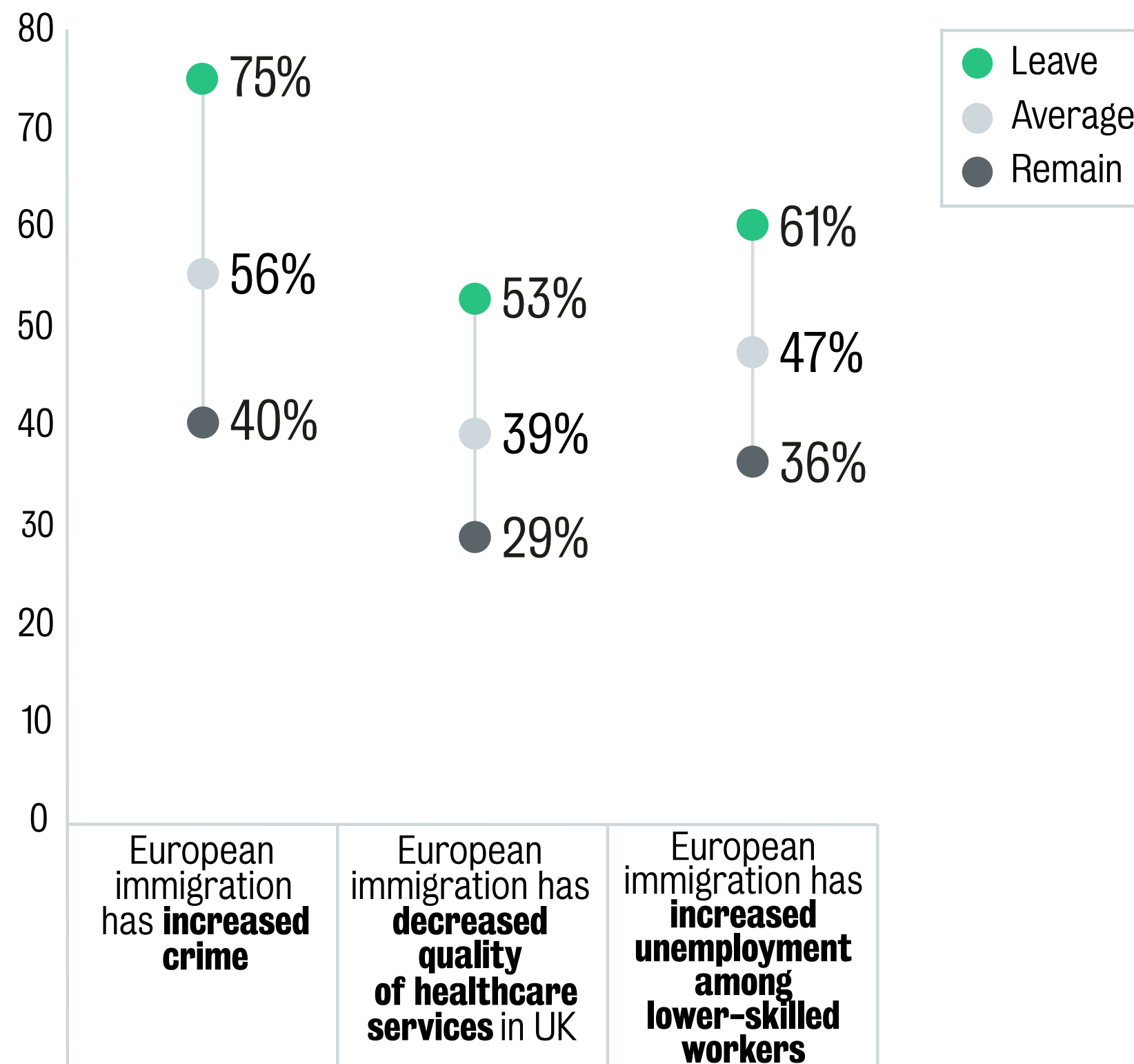
Q: We would like you to think about the impact of immigration from European countries on the UK. Do you think that immigration from Europe has increased, decreased or made no real difference to the following?

The MAC report concludes that:

- “migration **does not** impact crime levels”.
- “there is **no evidence** that migration has reduced the quality of healthcare”.
- “migrants have **no or little impact** on the overall employment and unemployment outcomes of the UK born workforce”.

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Leave supporters are most likely to hold these incorrect beliefs.

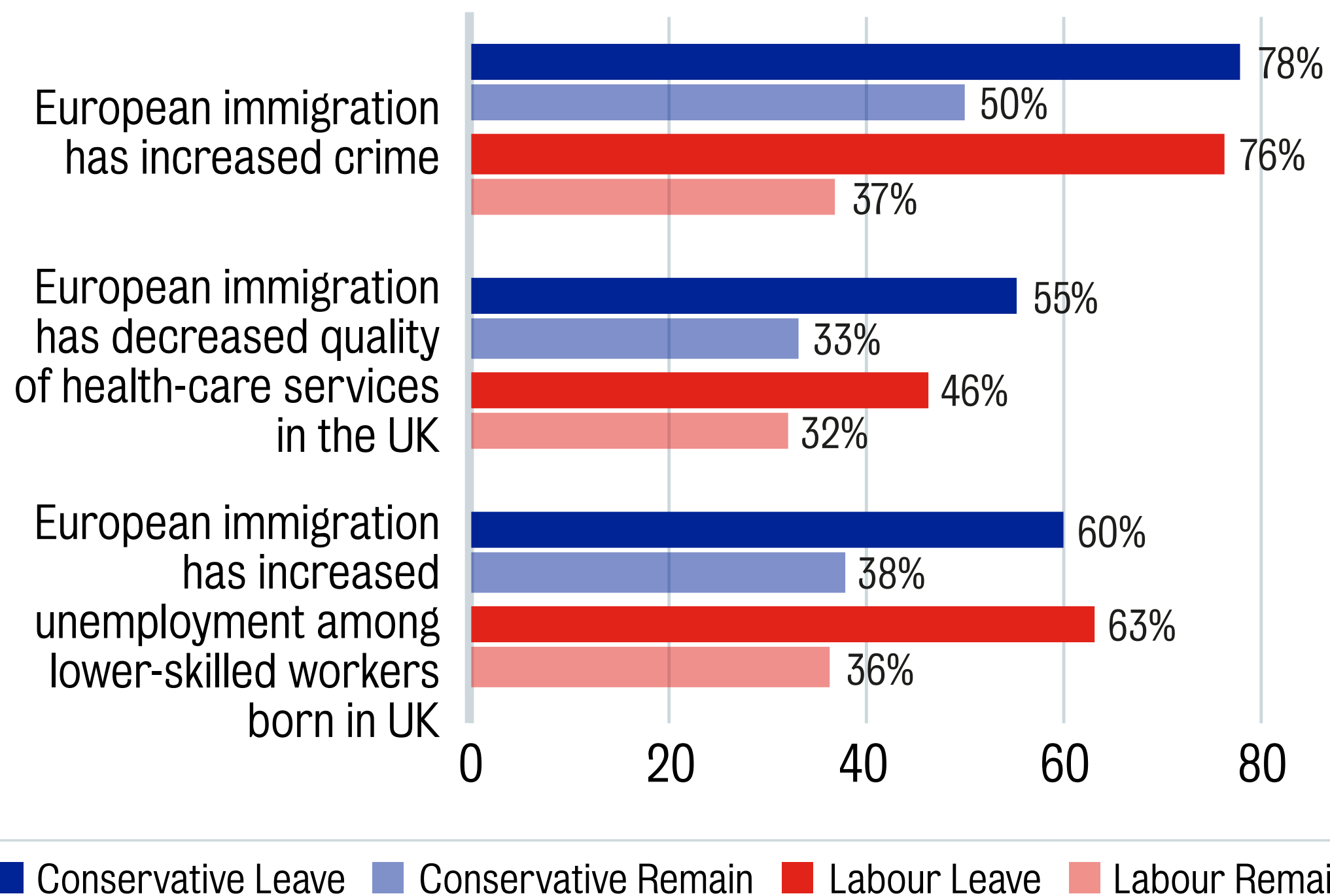


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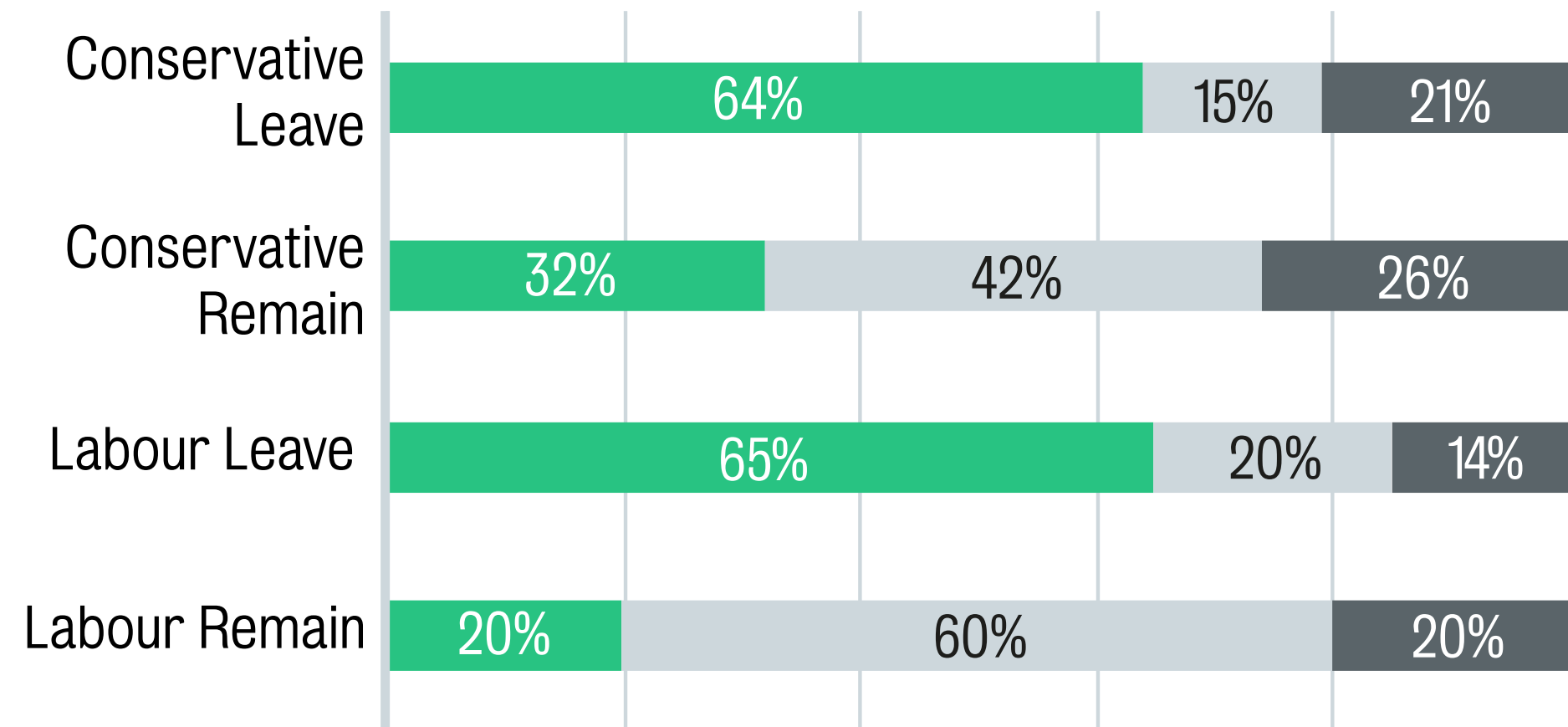
But there are huge variations in how people see these realities, depending on their party and Leave/Remain support.



Q: Do you believe the claim that the UK sends £350m a week to the European Union is true or false?

The UK Statistics Authority judged this claim to be “misleading” and a “clear misuse of statistics”.

Different groups also have very different levels of belief in the claim that the UK sends £350m a week to the EU. Conservative and Labour Leave supporters most likely to believe it (64% and 65%), and Labour Remain supporters least likely (20%).

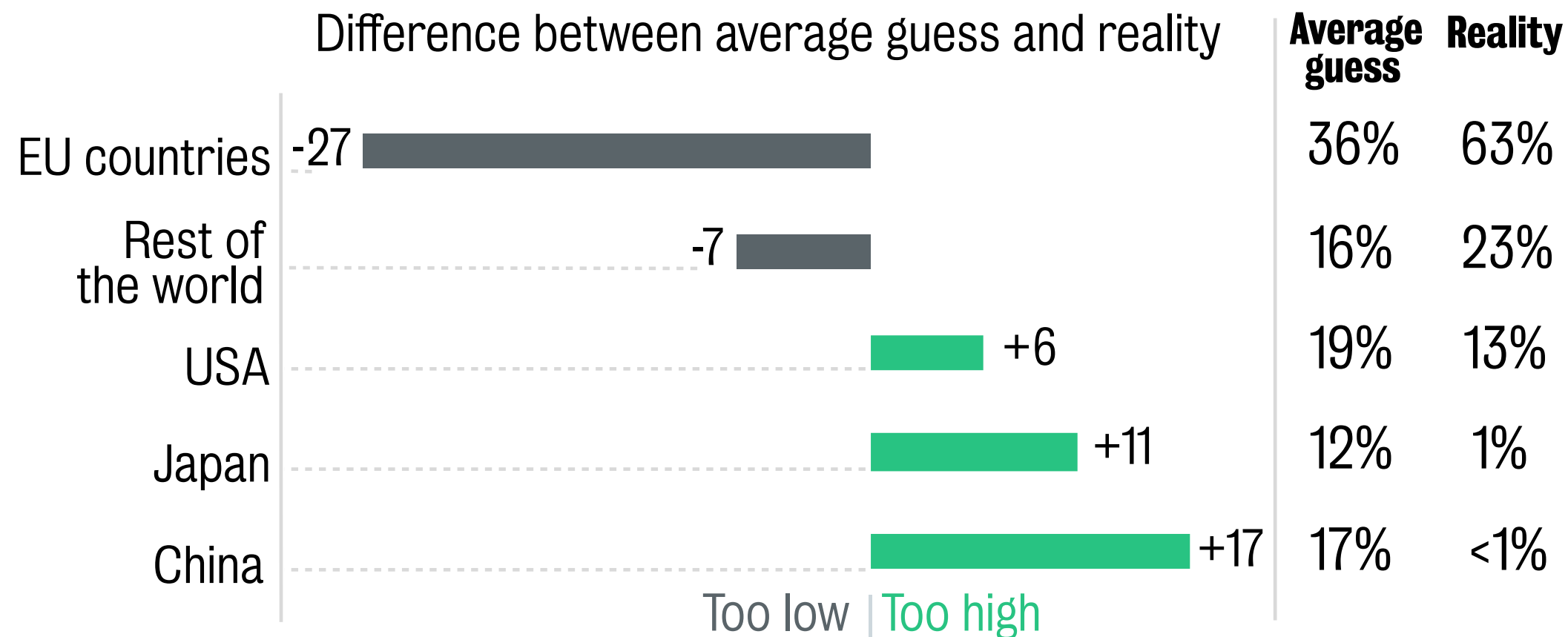


(Base: all who have heard of claim)

True (Overall: 42%) **False** (Overall: 36%) **Don't know** (Overall: 22%)

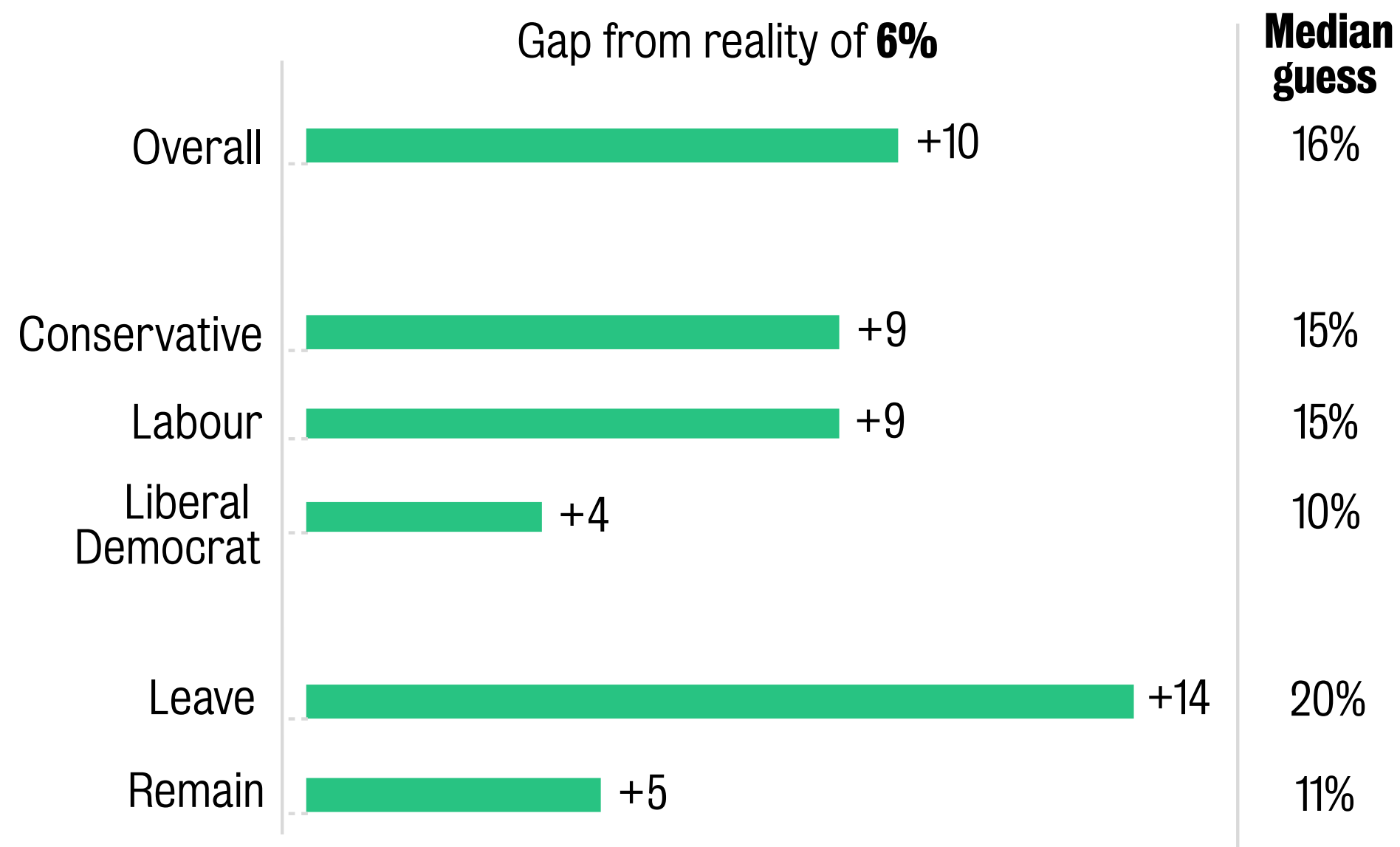
Q: In 2016, international investment into the UK was around £146bn. To the best of your knowledge, what share of this total amount do you think comes from the following?

The public hugely underestimate how much investment into the UK comes from EU countries: the actual figure for 2016 was 63%, but the average guess was only 36%.



Q: Out of every 100 residents in the UK, about how many do you think were born in a European Union member state other than the UK?

6% of the UK population is from an EU country, but the average (median) guess is 16%.



But there are three facts we're much **more accurate** on:



1. The public are much **more accurate on exports**, guessing that 40% of our exports go to EU countries, when the actual figure is 43%.



2. The public are more in line with the MAC report, with the largest group (47%) thinking that immigration has **increased house prices**, a conclusion supported by the report



3. They are also more likely to correctly think that immigration has had **relatively little impact on the unemployment levels** of highly skilled workers and the **wage levels** of both lower-skilled and higher-skilled workers.

For more information, please contact:

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