

# Climate change

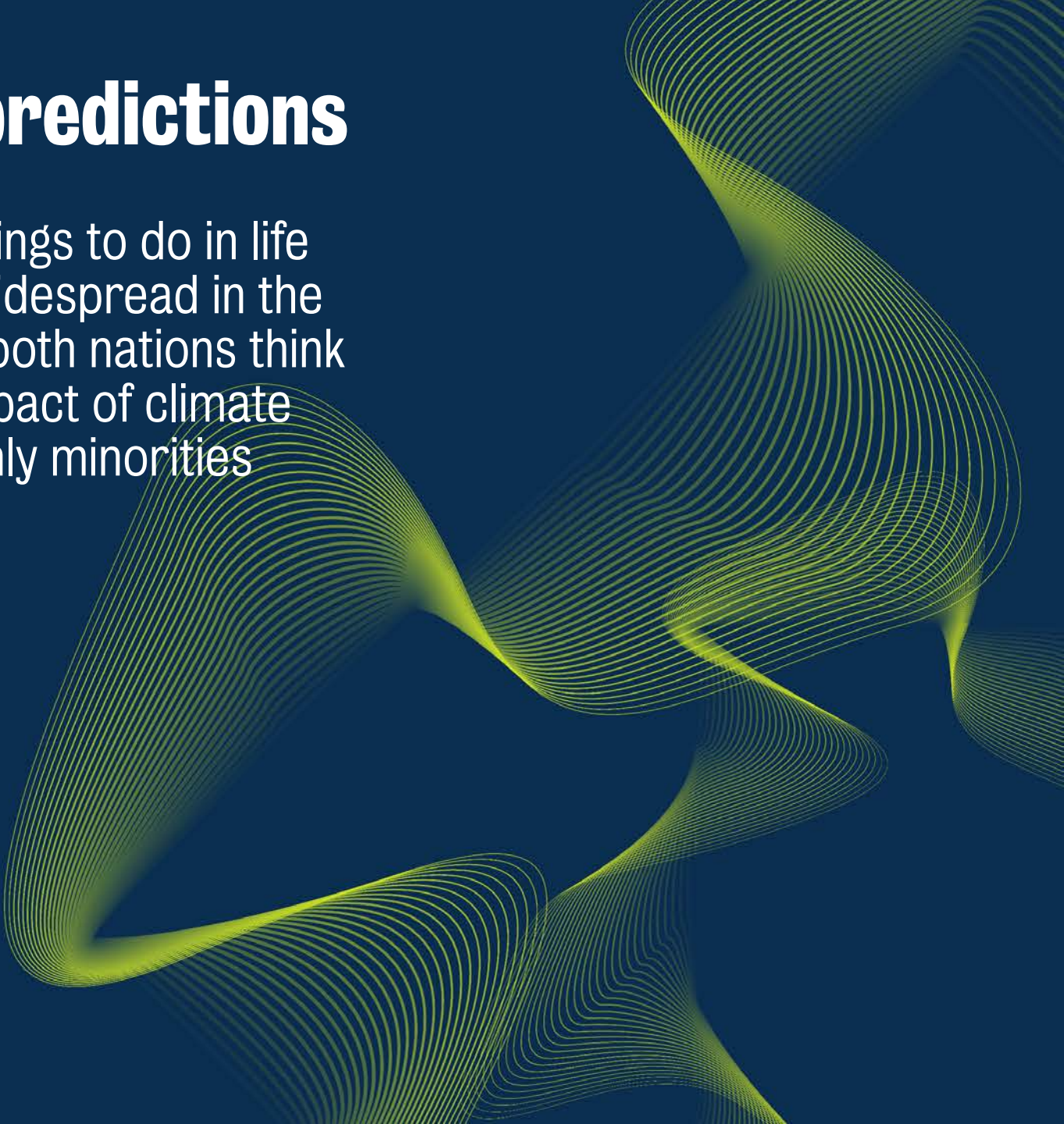
How the British and US public  
perceive the challenge – and how  
they think we should respond

*Survey to mark the 2022 Fulbright  
Distinguished Lecture by US Special  
Presidential Envoy for Climate **John Kerry***

9 December 2022

# 1. Climate attitudes and predictions

The idea that there are more important things to do in life than think about climate change is more widespread in the US than in Britain, and while majorities of both nations think various scientific predictions about the impact of climate change are fairly likely to come to pass, only minorities think they are *certain or very likely to*.

An abstract graphic on the right side of the slide, consisting of numerous thin, wavy green lines that create a sense of movement and depth against the dark blue background. The lines are arranged in a way that suggests a three-dimensional, flowing structure.

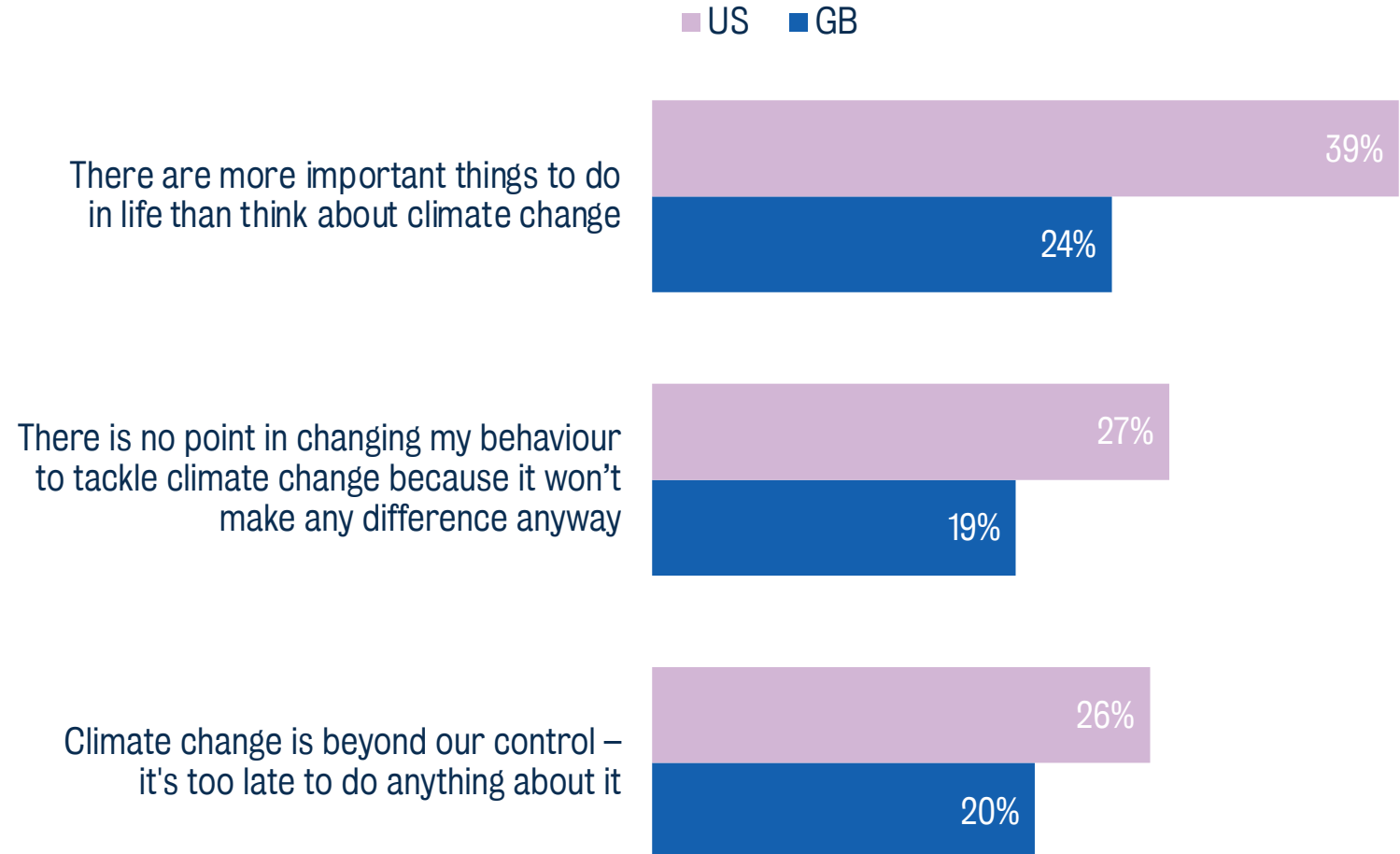
# People in the US are much more likely than those in Britain to say there are more important things to do in life than think about climate change

39% of the US public agree there are more important things to do in life than think about climate change, compared with 24% who say the same in Britain.

Americans are also more fatalistic: 27% say there is no point in changing their behaviour to tackle climate change because it won't make any difference anyway, while 19% of people in Britain agree with this view.

And the US public are slightly more likely to feel that it's too late to do anything about climate change.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements... (% who strongly or tend to agree)



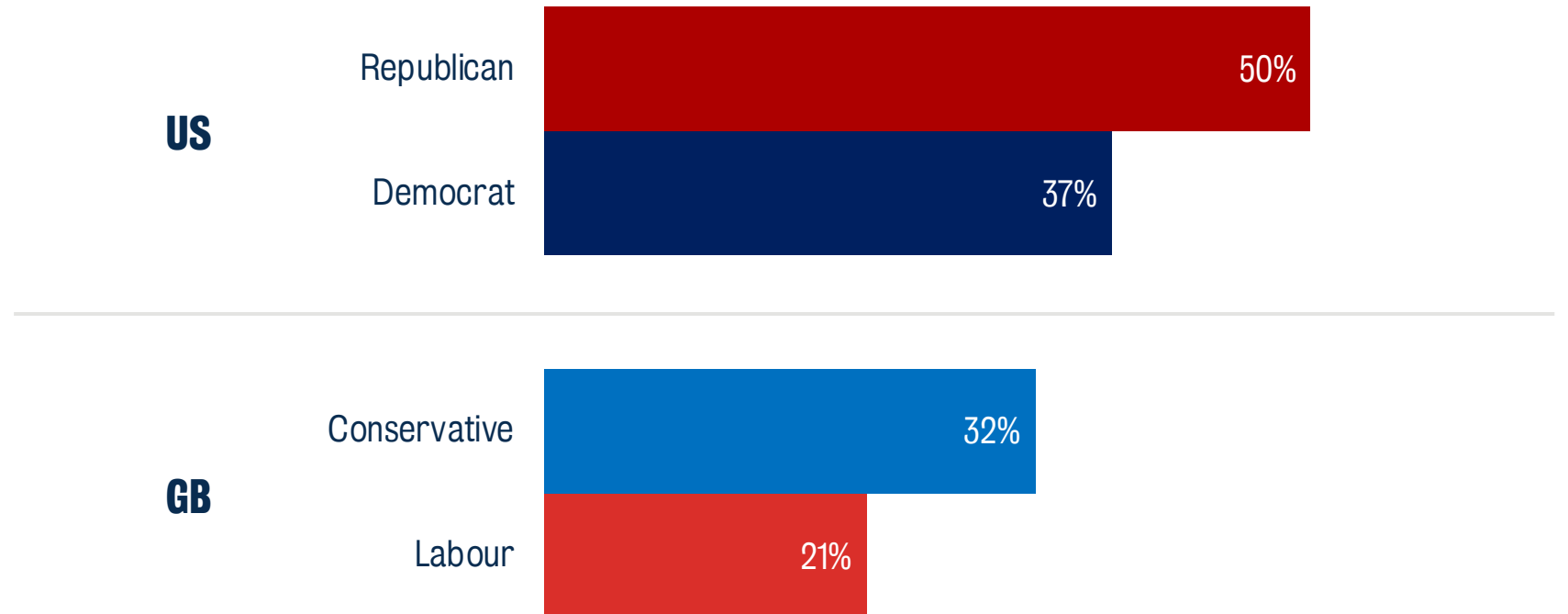
# Voters for the two main parties in the US and Britain have differing views on the importance of climate change

In the US, Republicans (50%) are more likely than Democrats (37%) to agree that there are more important things to do in life than think about climate change.

There is a similar partisan split in Britain, where 32% of Conservative voters agree with this view, compared with 21% of Labour voters.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

**There are more important things to do in life than think about climate change** (% who strongly or tend to agree)

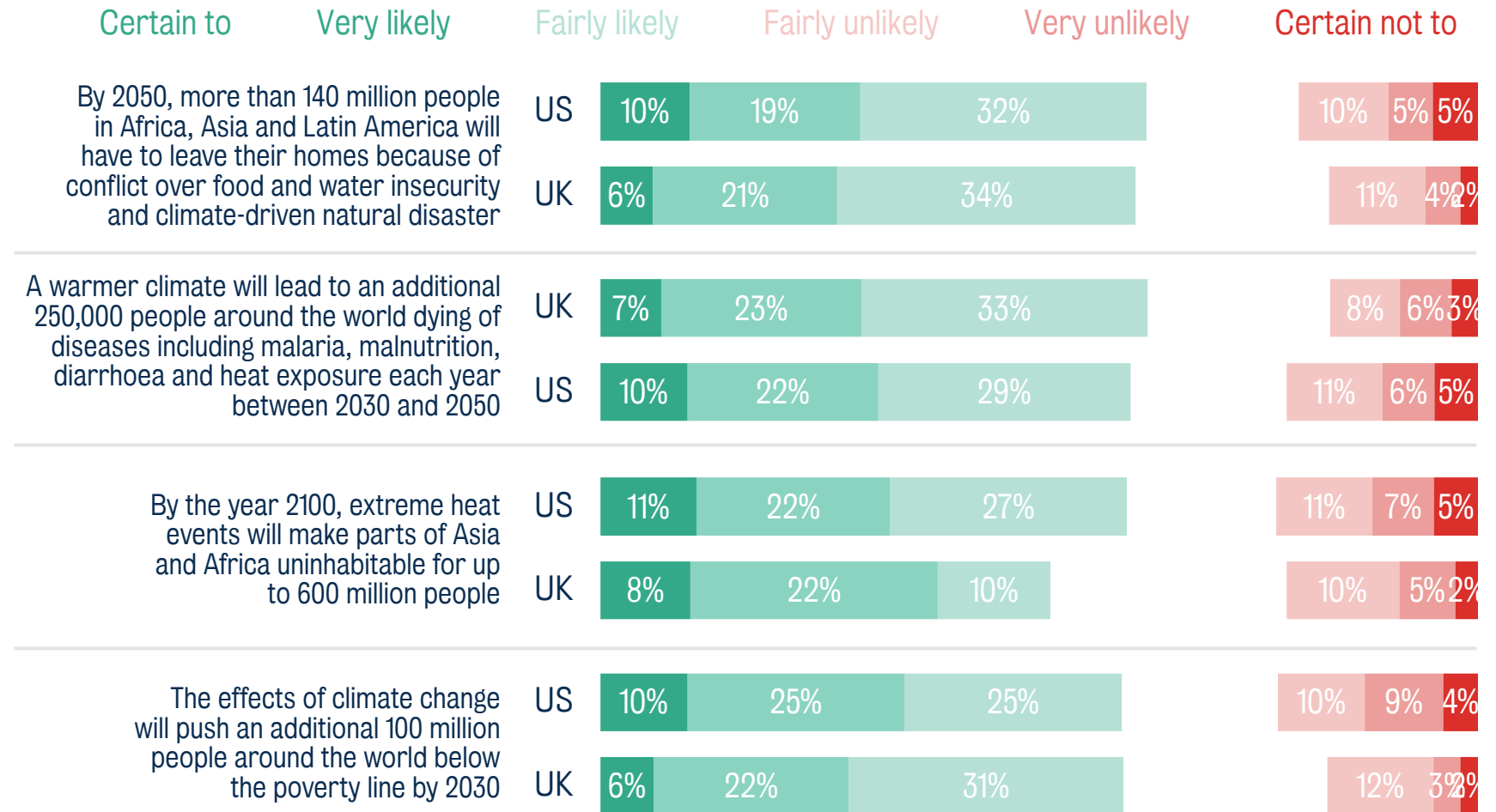


# Majorities of both the US and British public think scientists' predictions about the impacts of climate change are at least fairly likely to occur

While most people in the US and Britain consider various scientific predictions about climate change at least fairly likely to occur, only a minority in each country think they are certain or very likely to.

For example, 62% of the US public think it's at least fairly likely that by 2050, more than 140 million people in Africa, Asia and Latin America will have to leave their homes because of conflict over food and water insecurity and climate-driven natural disaster – but a smaller proportion, 30%, give this a higher likelihood of occurring.

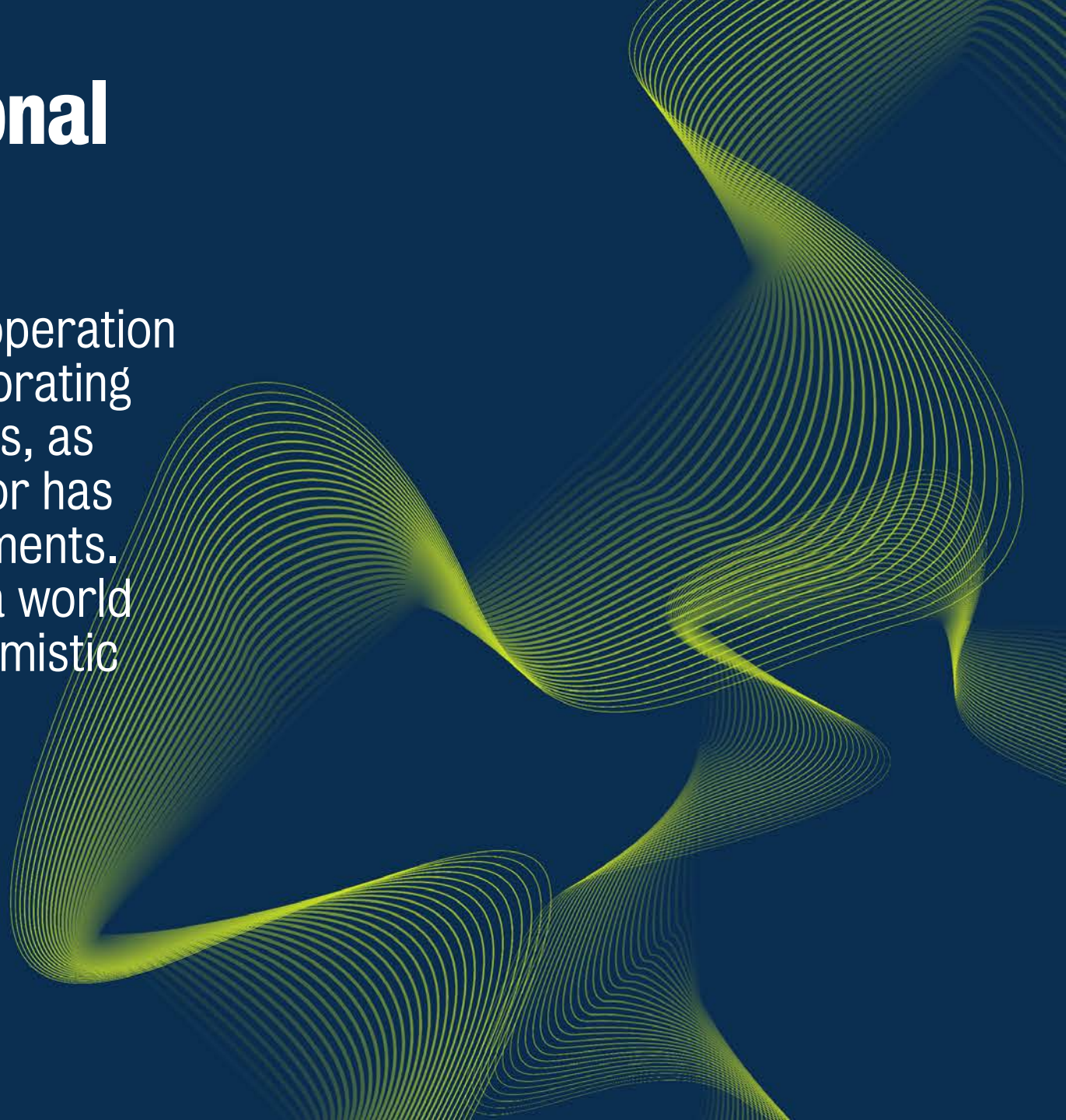
As you may know, there are many predictions about how climate change could affect the world, if we don't stop the rise in global temperatures. Below are some of those predictions – how likely or unlikely do you think they are to happen if global temperatures continue to rise at their current rate?



Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

## 2. National and international responses

There is high support for international cooperation on climate change, even if it means collaborating with nations that have conflicting ideologies, as well as a recognition that the private sector has just as important a role to play as governments. Meanwhile, the US sees itself as more of a world leader on climate change and is more optimistic about COP27 resulting in action.

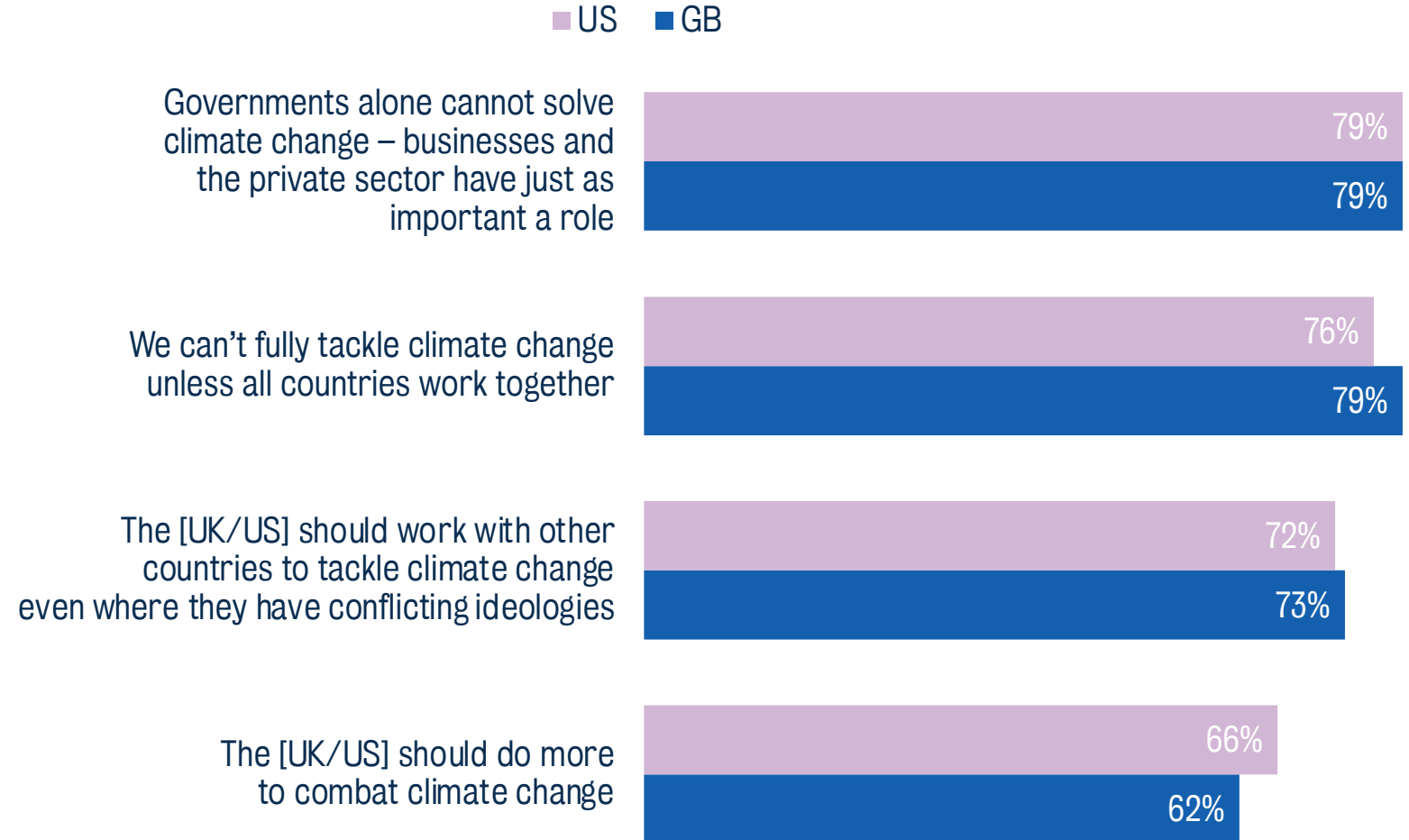


# There is high agreement that climate change can't truly be tackled without international cooperation, including with other nations that have conflicting ideologies

Around eight in 10 people in both Britain and US agree that we can't fully tackle climate change unless all countries work together, and around seven in 10 think Britain or the US should even work to address climate change with nations that have conflicting ideologies.

Eight in 10 among the British and US public also see businesses and the private sector as having just as important a role in solving climate change as governments.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements... (% who strongly or tend to agree)



# The US is more likely to see itself as a world leader on climate change, with both Democrats and Republicans more likely to agree than disagree with this view

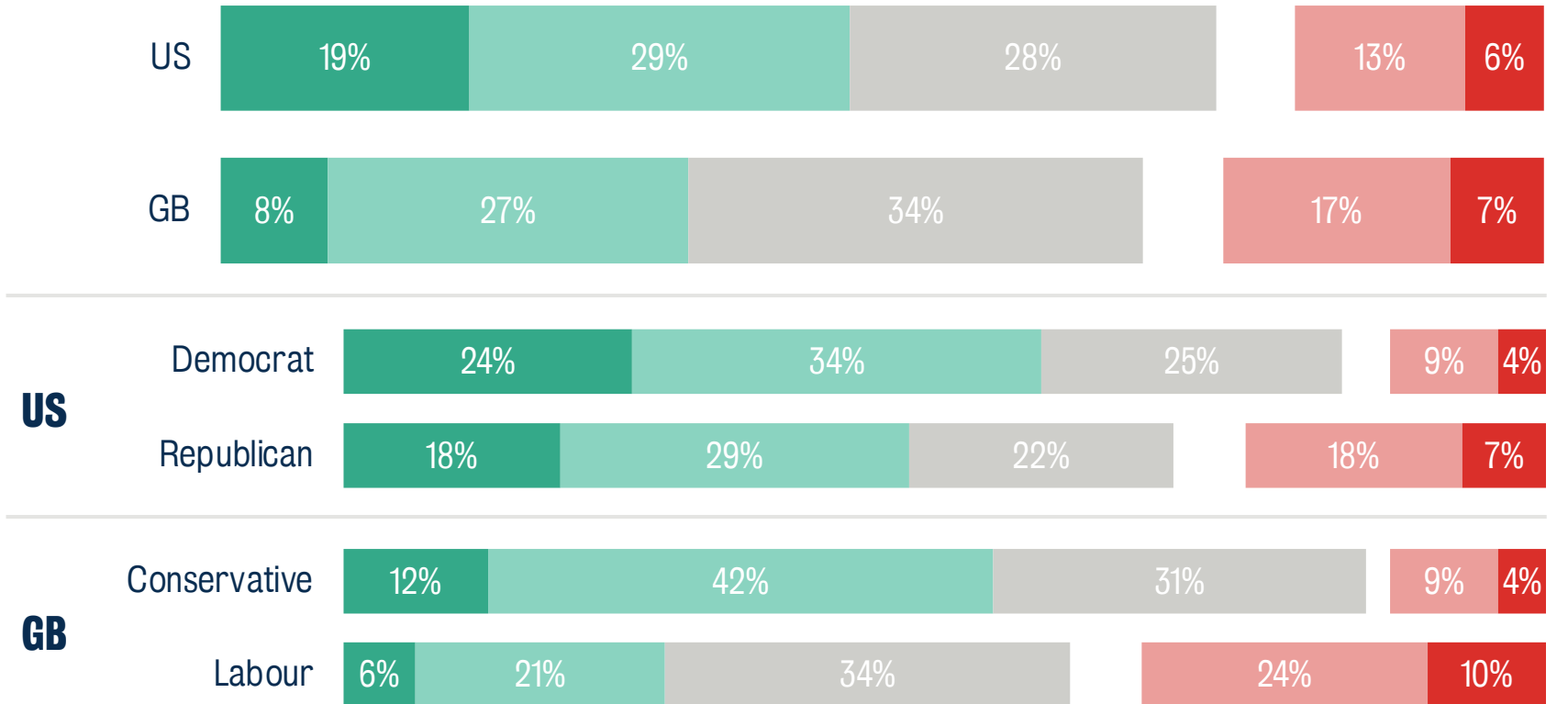
In the US, 48% agree their country is a world leader in the fight against climate change. This compares with 35% who feel this way in Britain.

By 58% to 47%, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to think the US is a world leader on this issue, but in Britain, the difference in views between the two main parties is far greater, with Conservative voters (54%) twice as likely as Labour voters (27%) to see the nation as a global leader on climate change.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

## The [UK/US] is a world leader in the fight against climate change

Strongly agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Strongly disagree



Base: 1,084 people aged 16-75 in Great Britain, and 1,110 people aged 18-75 in the US, surveyed 18-21 Nov 2022 (including 289 Labour voters and 326 Conservative voters in the 2019 general election, and 453 Democrats and 294 Republicans)

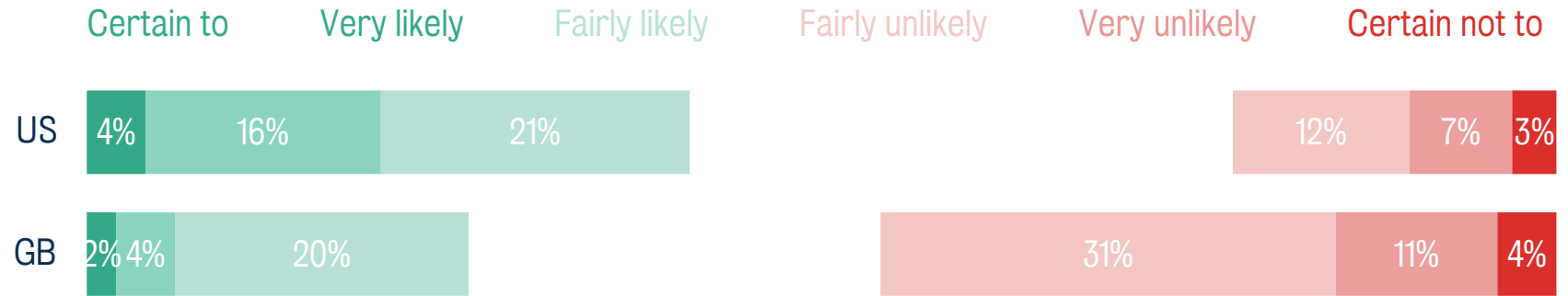


# The US is much more optimistic than Britain that commitments made at COP27 will result in action

40% of the US public think it's at least fairly likely that COP27 commitments will result in action – higher than the 26% of the British public who share this opinion.

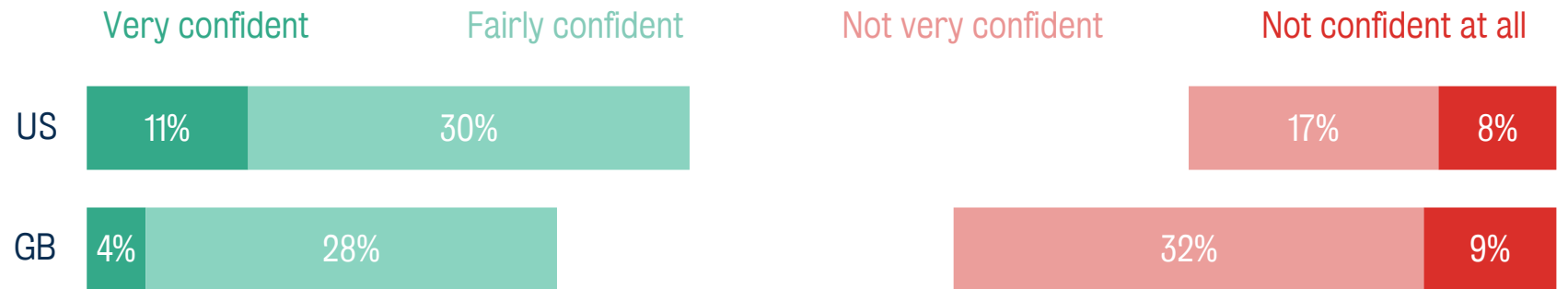
The US also has greater confidence that, if the commitments agreed are COP27 are actually carried out, they will make a real difference to tackling climate change. 41% in the US say they're very or fairly confident of this, compared with 32% of those in Britain.

In November 2022 Egypt hosted the COP27 UN Climate Change Conference, in which world leaders gathered to discuss approaches to limiting climate change and protecting against its impacts. From what you know or have heard, how likely or unlikely, if at all, do you think it is that **COP27 commitments will result in action?**



Base: 1,084 people aged 16-75 in Great Britain, and 1,110 people aged 18-75 in the US, surveyed 18-21 Nov 2022

And if the commitments agreed at COP27 are actually carried out, how confident, if at all, are you that this would **make a real difference to tackling climate change?**



Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

Base: 1,084 people aged 16-75 in Great Britain, and 1,110 people aged 18-75 in the US, surveyed 18-21 Nov 2022

### 3. The role of more developed countries

The economic contribution that more developed countries should make to poorer nations was a key issue that emerged from COP27, with the establishment of a fund to help less developed countries affected by climate disasters.

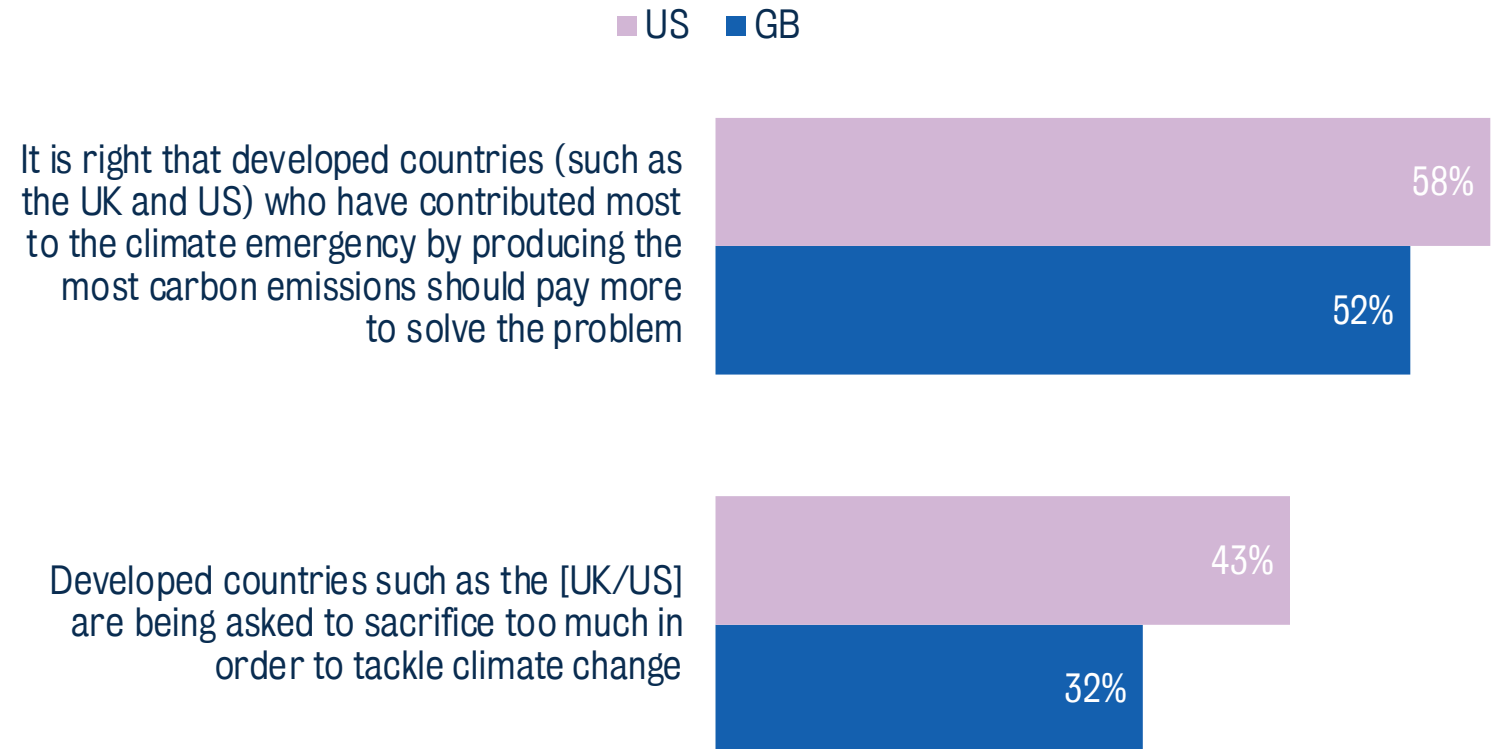
Half or more of people in the US and Britain think it's right that developed nations pay more to tackle climate change, but a notable minority also think developed nations are being asked to sacrifice too much, with a considerable political divide in views.

# The US is more likely than Britain to say that developed nations are being asked to sacrifice too much in the fight against climate change

The US public (58%) is slightly more likely than the British public (52%) to say it's right that developed countries who have contributed most to the climate emergency by producing the most carbon emissions should pay more to solve the problem.

But the same time, the US public are also more likely to feel that developed countries such as their own are being asked to sacrifice too much in order to tackle climate change (43% US vs 32% GB).

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements... (% who strongly or tend to agree)



# In both the US and Britain, all age groups are more likely to agree than disagree that developed countries should pay more to address climate change...

Across all age groups surveyed in both Britain and the US, people are more likely to agree than disagree that developed countries who have contributed most to the climate emergency should pay more to solve the problem.

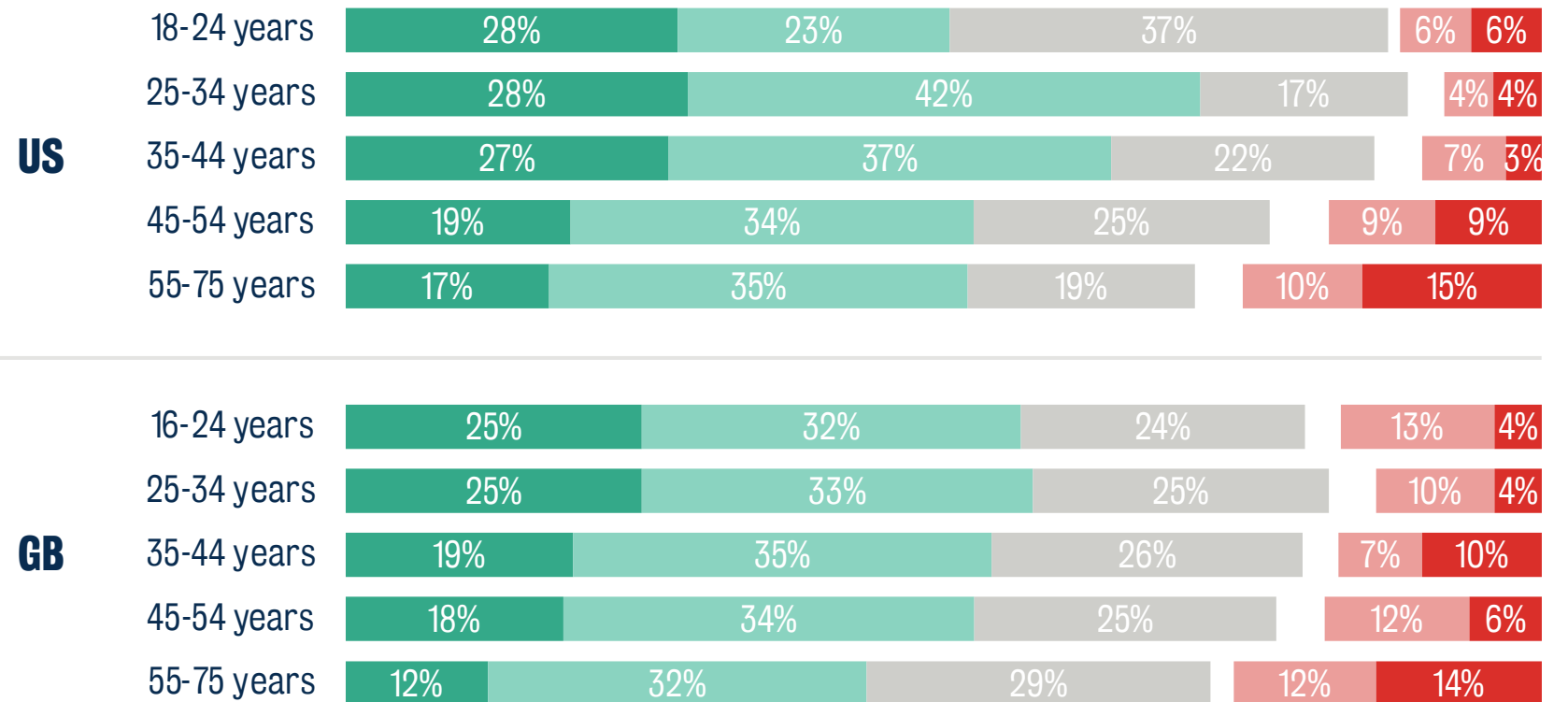
Agreement is highest among 25- to 34-year-olds in the US, 71% of whom think such nations should pay more.

Meanwhile, those aged 55 to 75 in Britain are least likely to hold this view (44%), and the only age group where less than half agree.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

**It is right that developed countries (such as the UK and US) who have contributed most to the climate emergency by producing the most carbon emissions should pay more to solve the problem**

Strongly agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Strongly disagree



Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

## ...but there is more variation in views by age on the question of whether developed countries are being asked to sacrifice too much

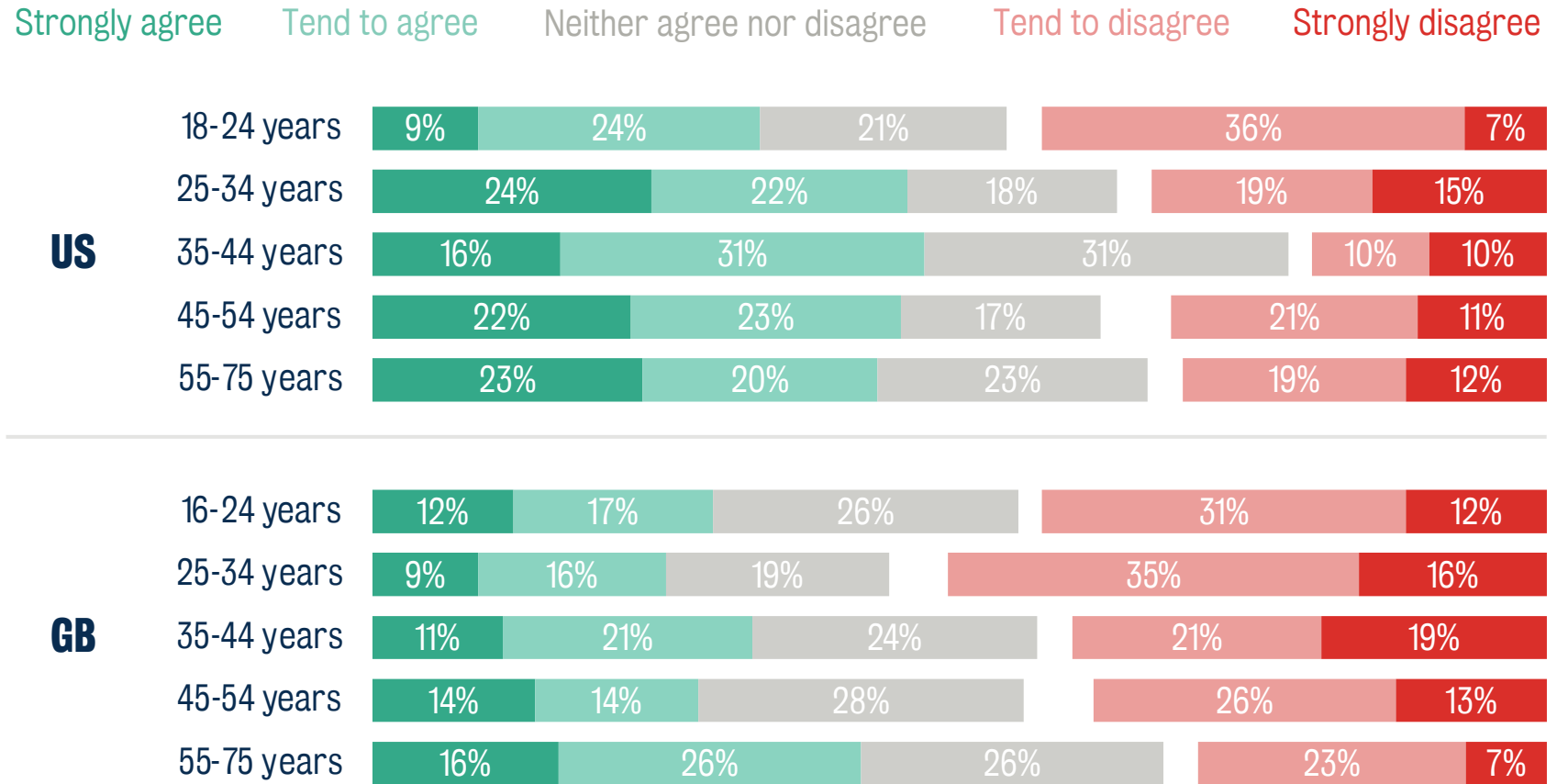
In the US, the only age group that is more likely to disagree than agree that developed nations are being asked to sacrifice too much in order to tackle climate change is 18- to 24-year-olds (43% disagree vs 33% agree).

By contrast, in Britain, all age groups are more inclined to disagree than agree that developed countries are being asked to make too great a sacrifice – except 55- to 75-year-olds, 41% of whom agree with this view and 29% of whom disagree.

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

**Developed countries such as the [UK/US] are being asked to sacrifice too much in order to tackle climate change**



# There is a clear political divide in views on whether developed nations should pay more to tackle climate change

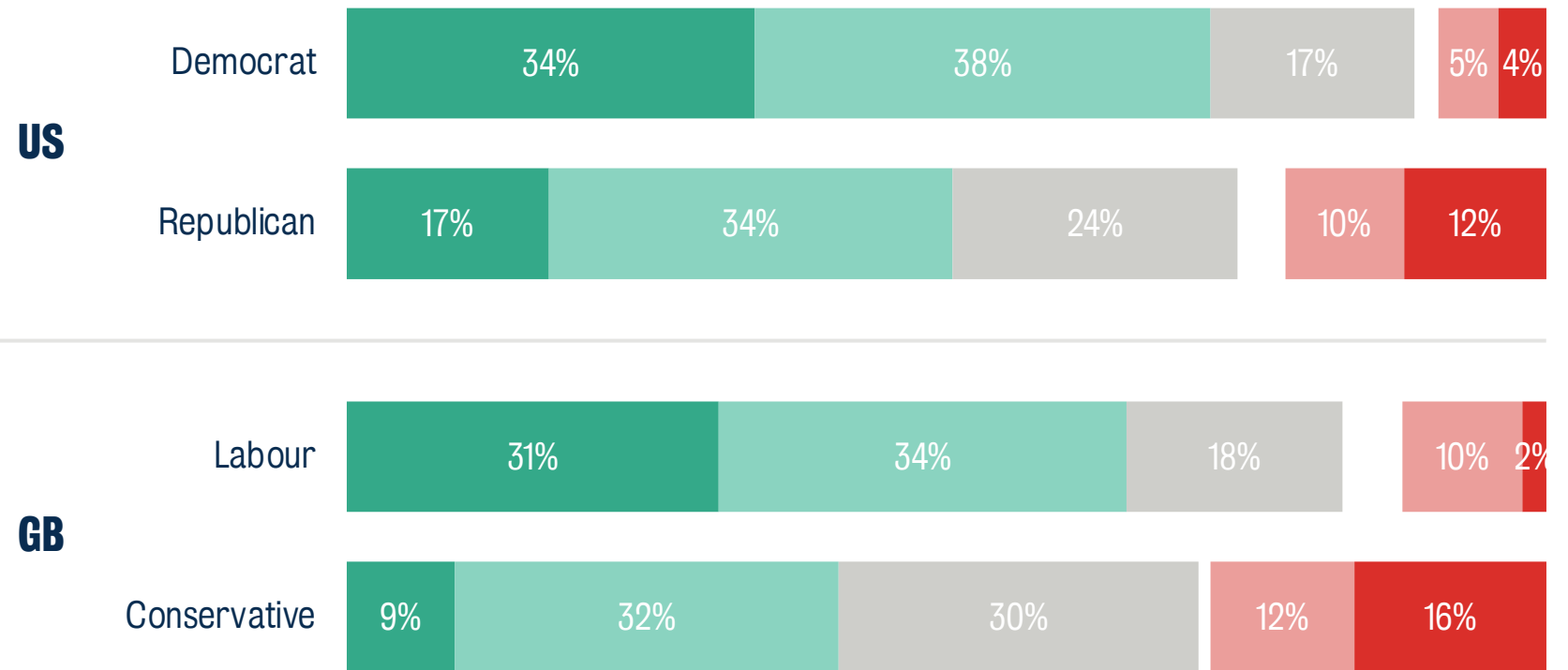
In Britain, 65% of Labour voters agree developed nations who have contributed most to the climate emergency should do more to solve the problem – far higher than the 41% of Conservative voters who share this view.

There is a similar split in the US, where 72% of Democrats think developed countries should pay more, compared with 50% of Republicans.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

**It is right that developed countries (such as the UK and US) who have contributed most to the climate emergency by producing the most carbon emissions should pay more to solve the problem**

Strongly agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Strongly disagree



Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# On the question of whether developed countries are being asked to sacrifice too much, the political divide in views is bigger in Britain than in the US

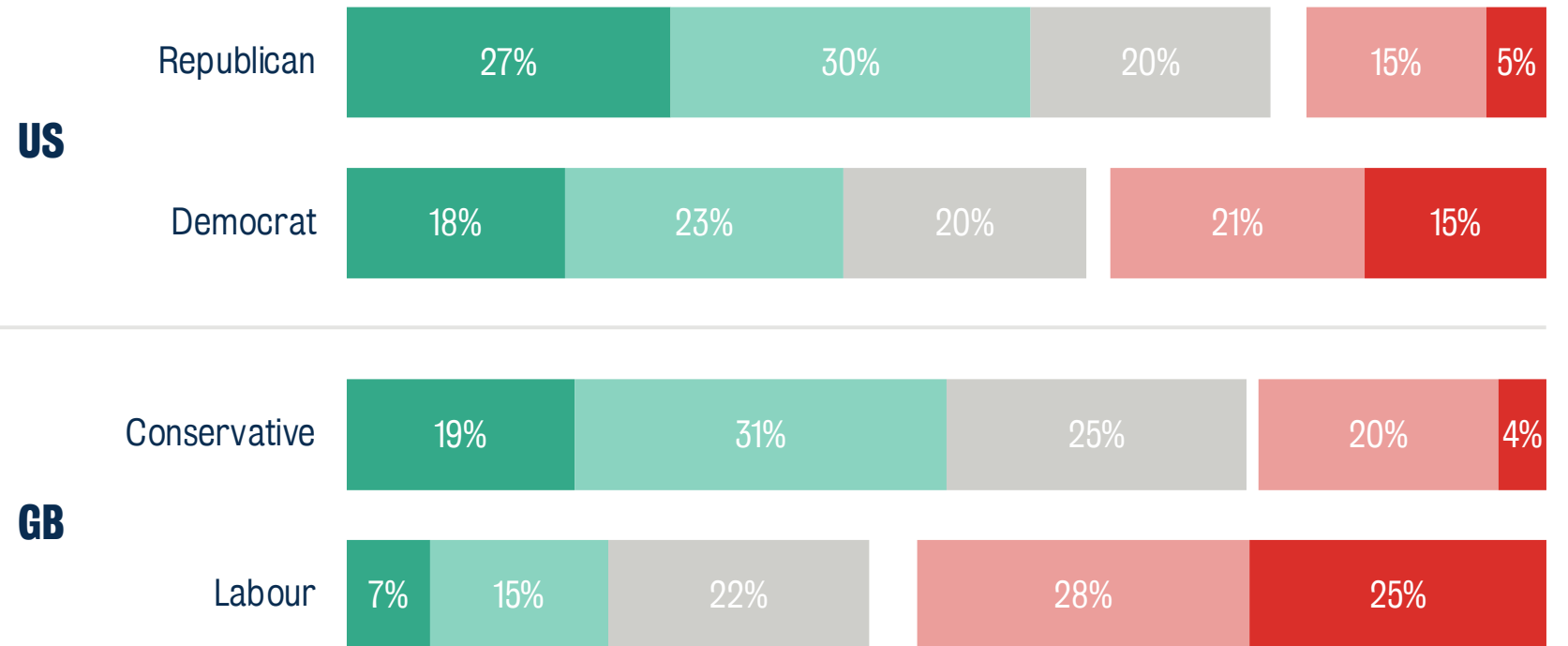
Conservative voters (50%) in Britain are more than twice as likely as Labour voters (22%) to agree that developed countries are being asked to sacrifice too much in order to tackle climate change.

There is a similar, but smaller, split in the US, where 57% of Republicans agree with this view, compared with 41% of Democrats.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

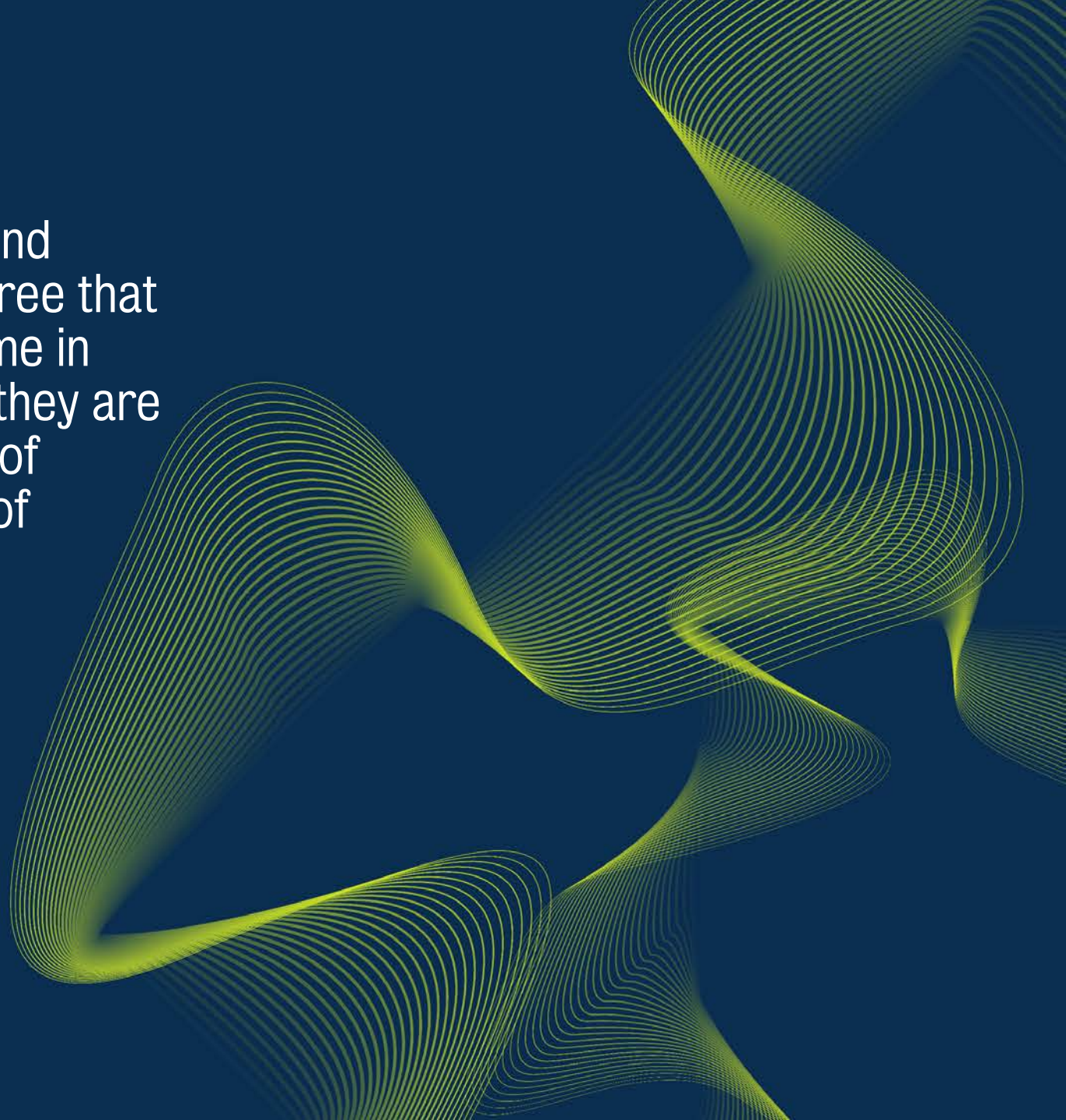
**Developed countries such as [the UK/US] are being asked to sacrifice too much in order to tackle climate change**

Strongly agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Strongly disagree



## 4. The economic costs

More generally, the public in both the US and Britain are more likely to disagree than agree that they'd be willing to pay more of their income in taxes to tackle climate change – although they are more inclined to view the economic costs of climate change as greater than the costs of measures to reduce it.





# The US public are more likely to say it's not the right time for green investment, but also slightly more likely to say they'd pay a greater amount in taxes to prevent climate change

By 43% to 30%, people in the US are more likely than those in Britain to agree now is not the right time to be investing in renewable energy and other measures to reduce climate change given the tough economic conditions.

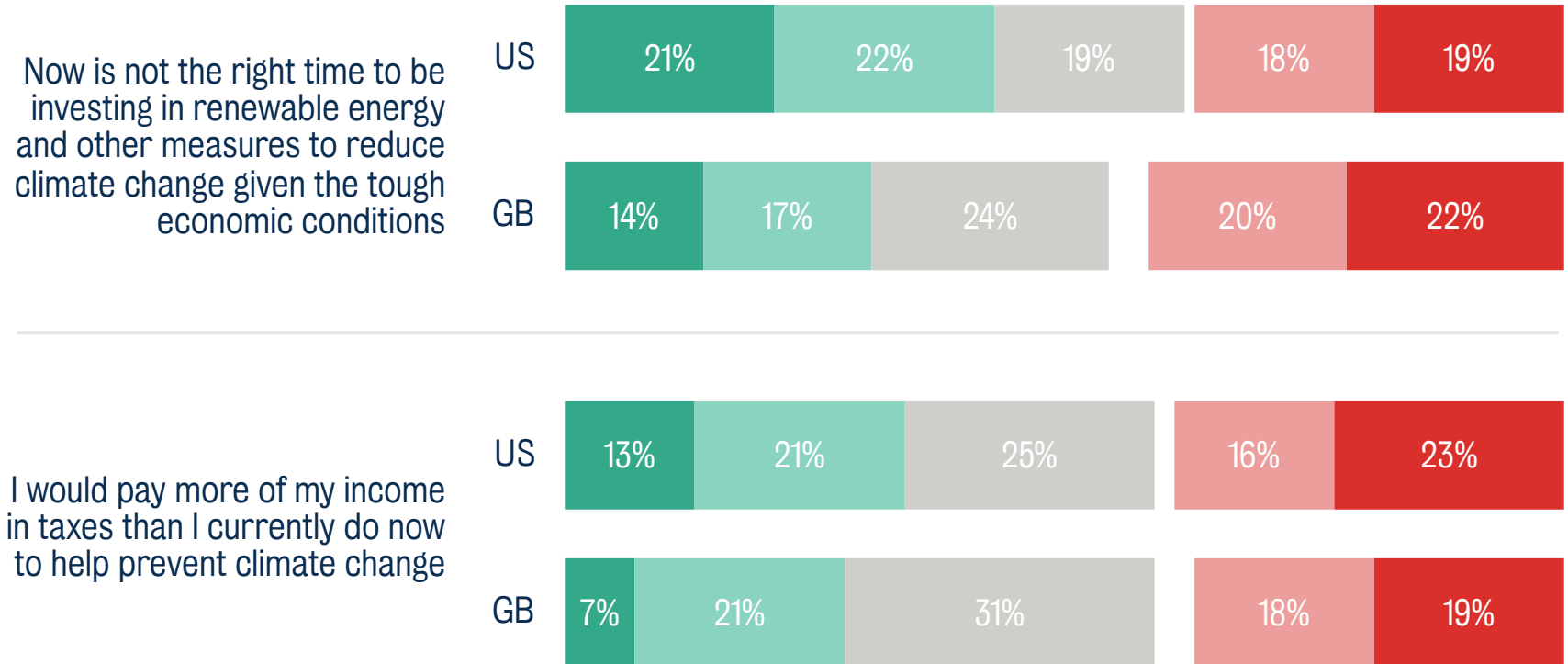
However, at the same time, the US public are slightly more inclined to say they'd pay more of their income in taxes to help prevent climate change (34% in US vs 28% in GB).

Overall, in both countries, the public are more likely to disagree than agree that they'd be willing to pay more in taxes for this reason (37% vs 28% in GB and 39% vs 34% in US).

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Strongly agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Strongly disagree



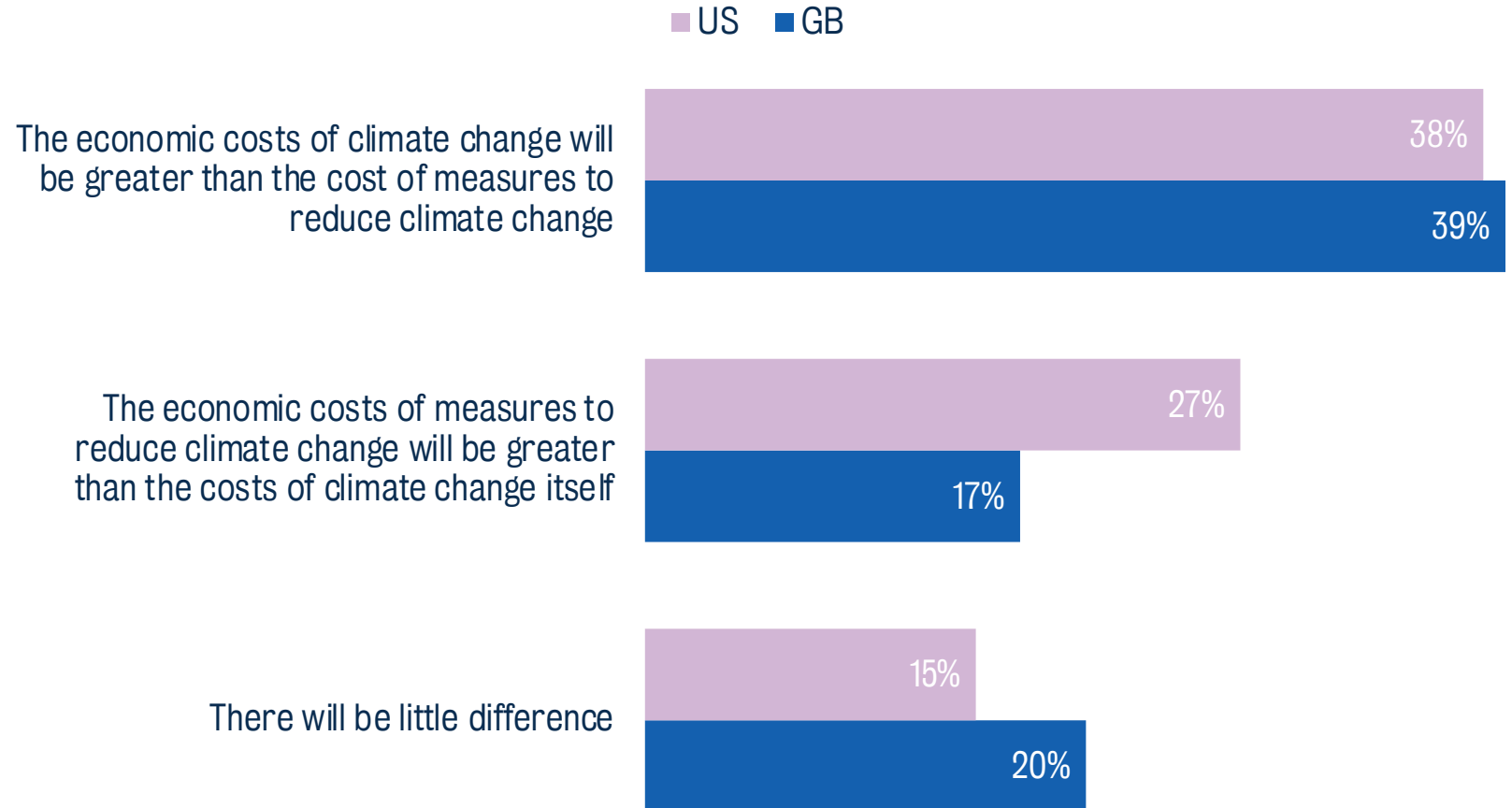
Base: 1,084 people aged 16-75 in Great Britain, and 1,110 people aged 18-75 in the US, surveyed 18-21 Nov 2022

# In both Britain and the US, people are most likely to think the economic costs of climate change will outweigh the cost of efforts to reduce it

Four in 10 people in Britain (39%) and US (38%) say that the economic costs of climate change will be greater than the cost of measures to reduce it.

And while the opposite view is less common in both nations, the US public are more likely to hold this opinion, with 27% saying the economic costs of climate change will be greater than the costs of climate change itself, compared with 17% in Britain.

What do you think will be greater, the economic costs of measures to reduce climate change, or the economic costs of climate change itself, or do you think there will be little difference?

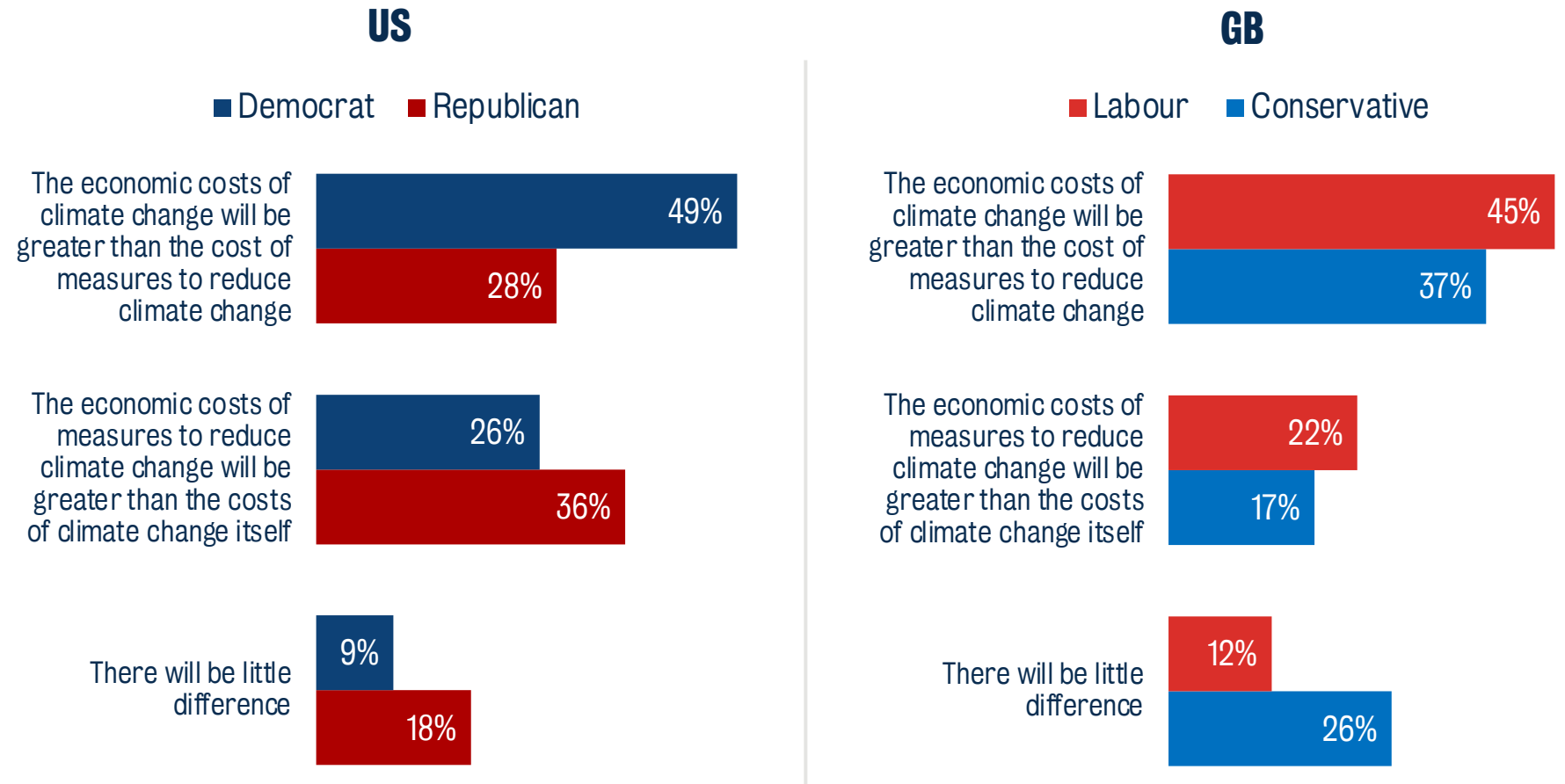


# When it comes to the economic costs of measures to reduce climate change, there is a bigger political divide in views in the US than in Britain

In the US, 49% of Democrats think the economic costs of climate change will be greater than the cost of measures to reduce it – far higher than the 28% of Republicans who share this view. By contrast, the political divide in Britain is much smaller, with 45% of Labour voters holding this opinion, compared with 37% of Conservative voters.

The most common view among Republicans in the US is that the economic costs of measures to reduce climate change will be greater than the costs of climate change itself, with 36% selecting this response.

What do you think will be greater, the economic costs of measures to reduce climate change, or the economic costs of climate change itself, or do you think there will be little difference?



## Survey details

These are the results of an online survey conducted by Ipsos in Great Britain and the US. Between 18 and 21 November 2022, Ipsos interviewed a total of 1,084 people aged 16-75 in Britain and 1,100 aged 18-75 in the US. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

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