

Climate, Covid and conflict

Generational myths and realities

generations-book.org

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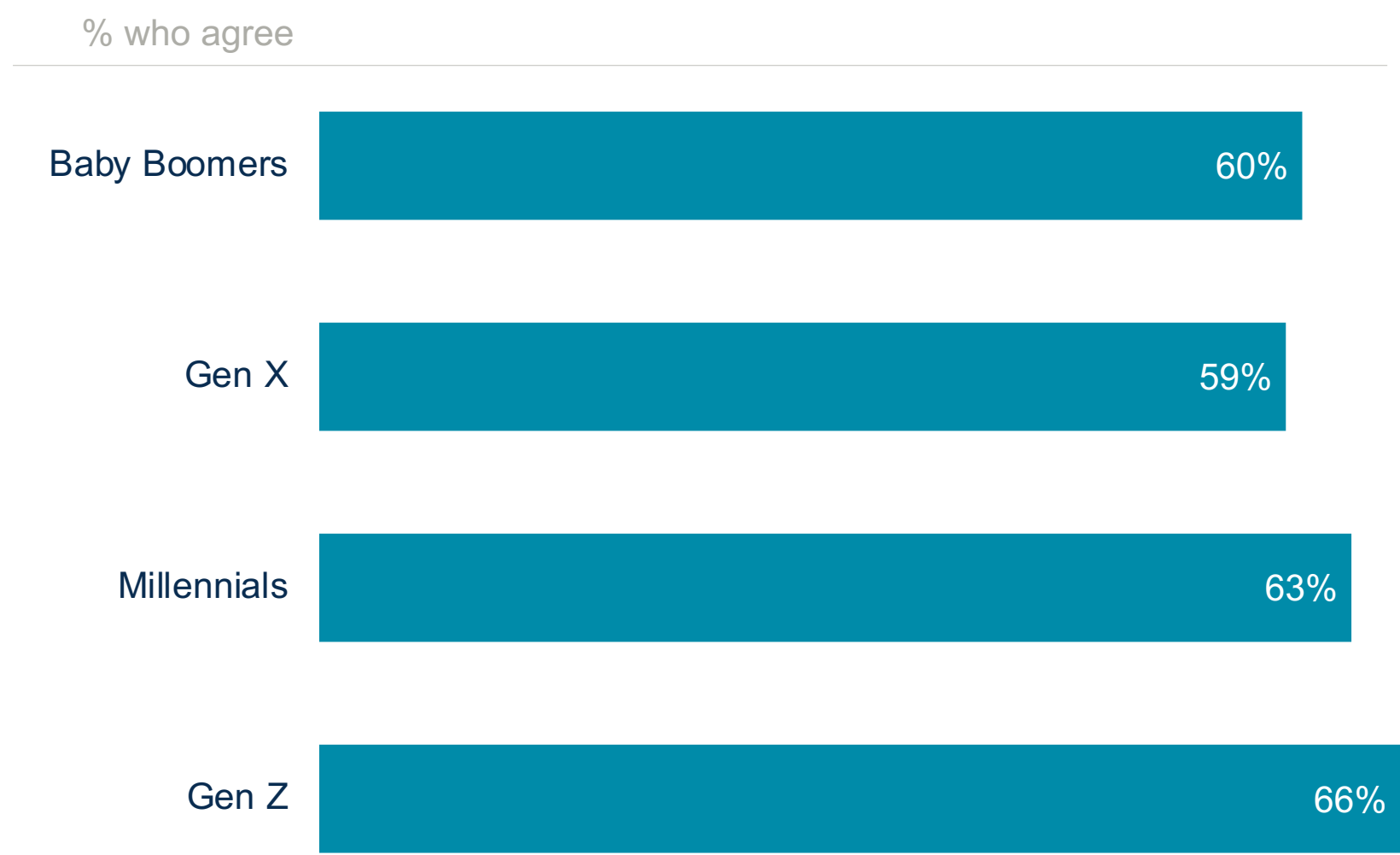


Climate change definitely isn't something that only younger generations are concerned about – older people are just as likely as the young to support big changes to how we live in order to protect the environment.



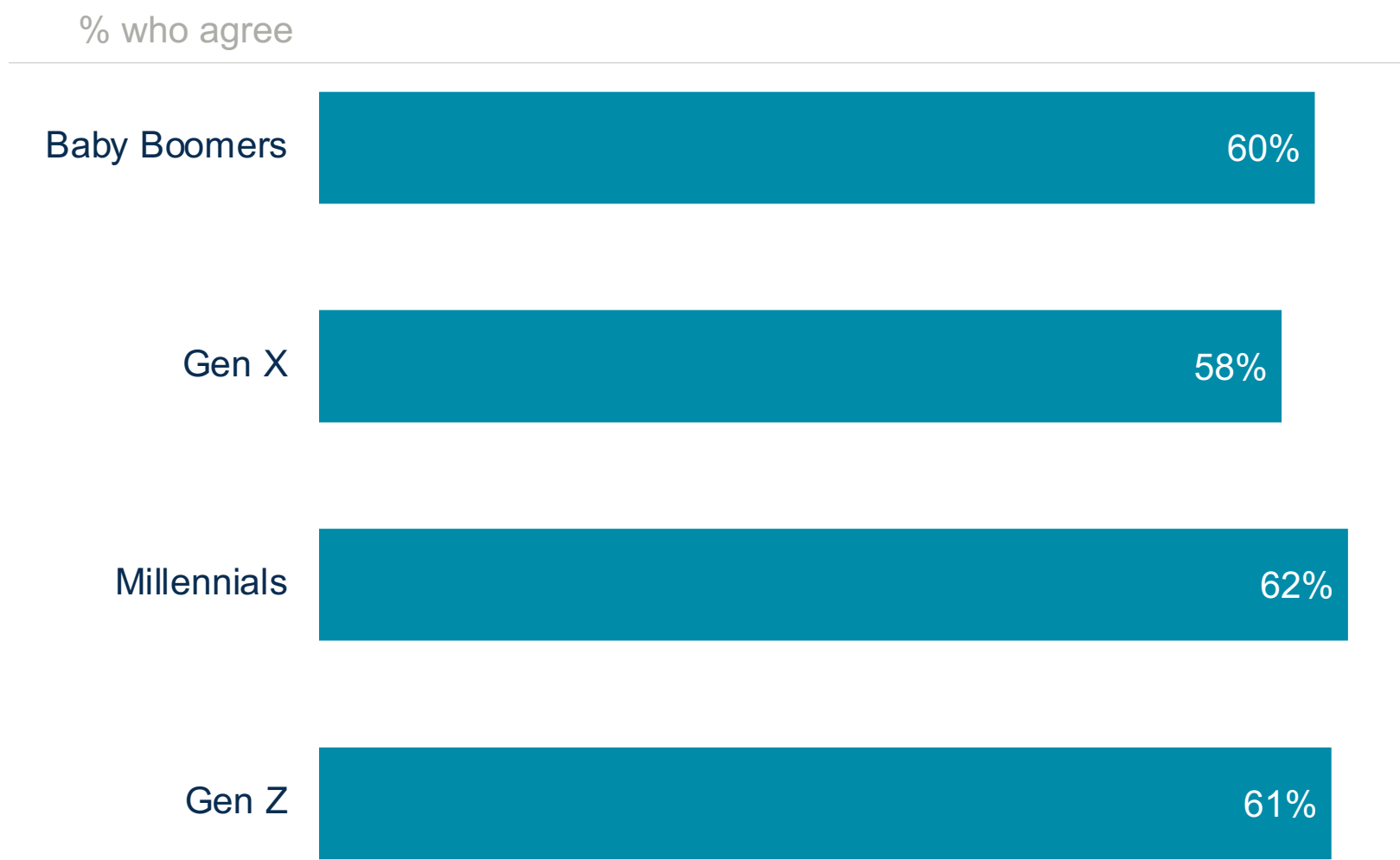
In the US, around six in 10 of all generations surveyed say climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental issues are big enough problems that they justify significant changes to people's lifestyles, with very little difference in views between older and younger people.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental issues are big enough problems that they justify significant changes to people's lifestyles**



There are almost identical levels of agreement across the generations that people themselves are willing to make big changes to their own lifestyle to reduce the impact of climate change: there is virtually no difference between the proportion of Baby Boomers (60%) at one end of the age distribution and Gen Z (61%) at the other who say they're prepared to make such a sacrifice.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **I am willing to make significant changes to my own lifestyle to reduce the impact of climate change**



Where there is a generational difference in views is on whether environmental concerns should take precedence over economic growth.

But despite this, older generations are still more likely to agree than disagree that the environment should come first.

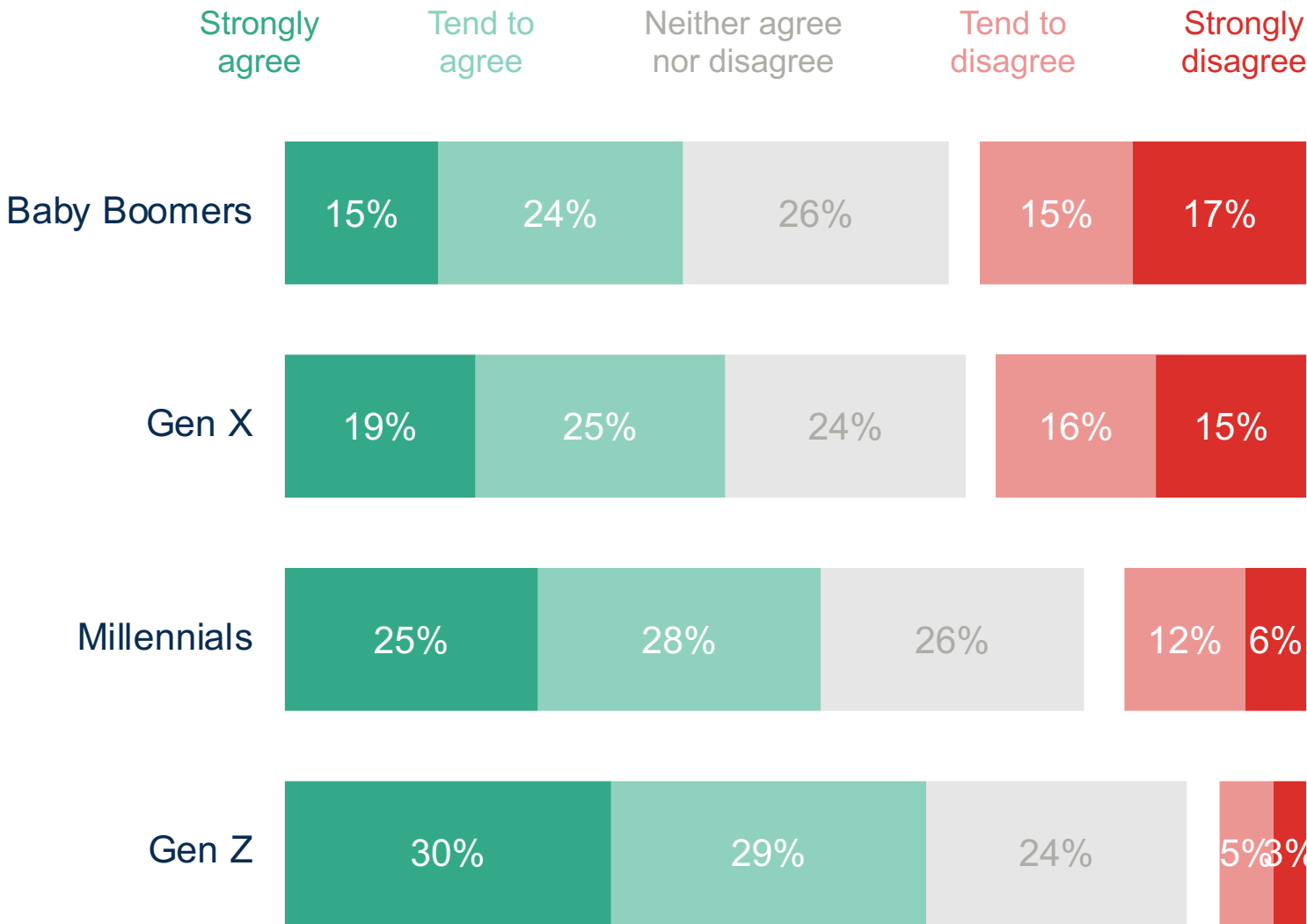


59% of Gen Z and 53% of Millennials agree environmental concerns should take priority over economic growth, compared with 39% of Baby Boomers and 43% of Gen X.

But despite this, older age groups are still more likely to agree than disagree that climate concerns should take precedence over the economy. For example, 30% of Gen X think the environment shouldn't come first – 13 percentage points lower than the proportion who think it should.

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Environmental concerns should be prioritized over economic growth**



While younger people are often thought to be most active on climate issues, they are actually more likely than older generations to say there's *no point* acting in environmentally conscious ways because it won't make a difference anyway.

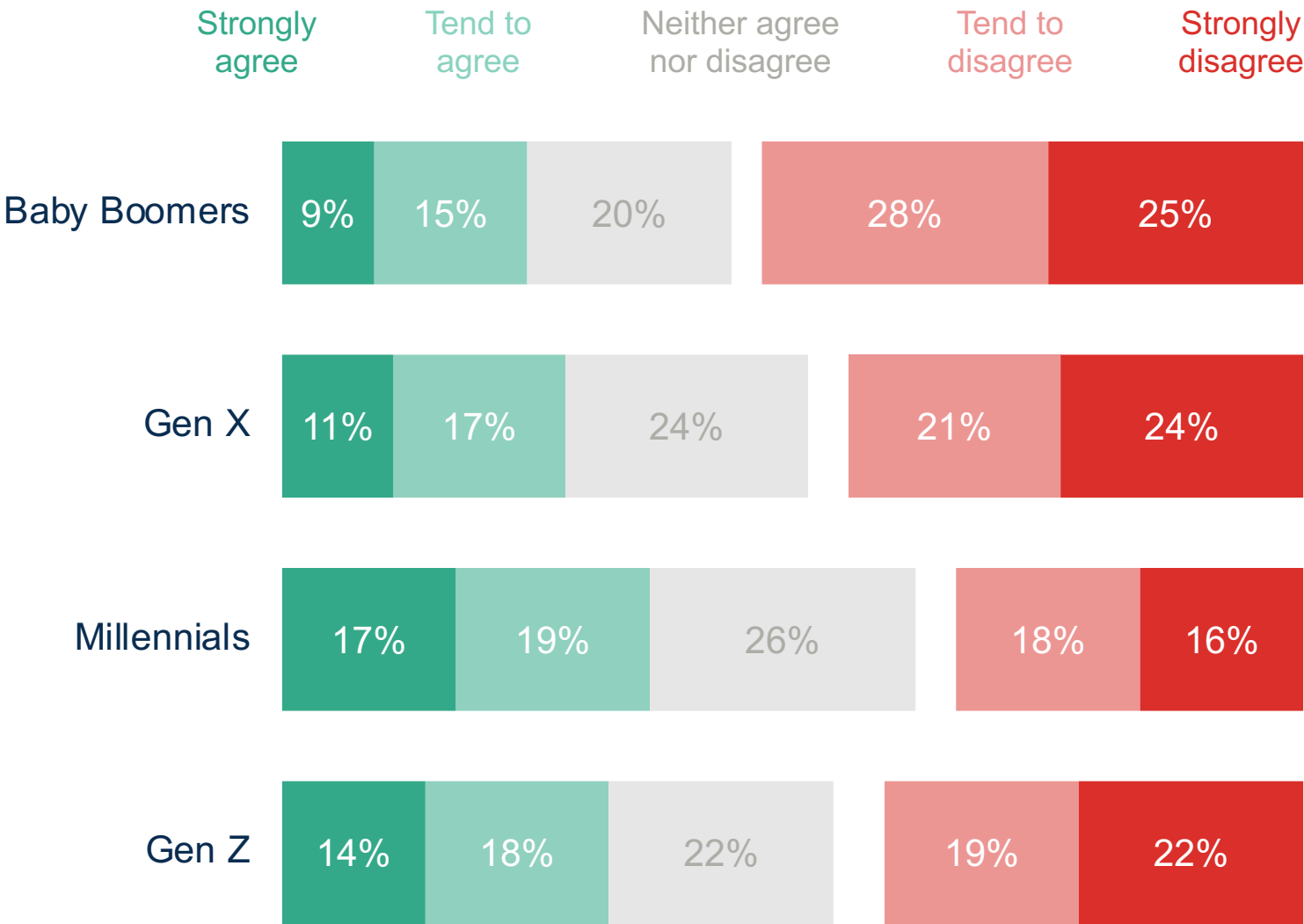


It is younger generations, rather than older ones, who are most despondent about the impact they themselves can have in tackling climate change: 36% of Millennials and 32% of Gen Z say there's no point changing their behaviour because it won't make a difference anyway, compared with 25% of Baby Boomers and 27% of Gen X.

There is an even bigger gap between different generations when it comes to rejection of this idea – for example, 53% of Baby Boomers disagree that there's no point altering their behaviour, while 41% of Gen Z and 34% of Millennials feel the same.

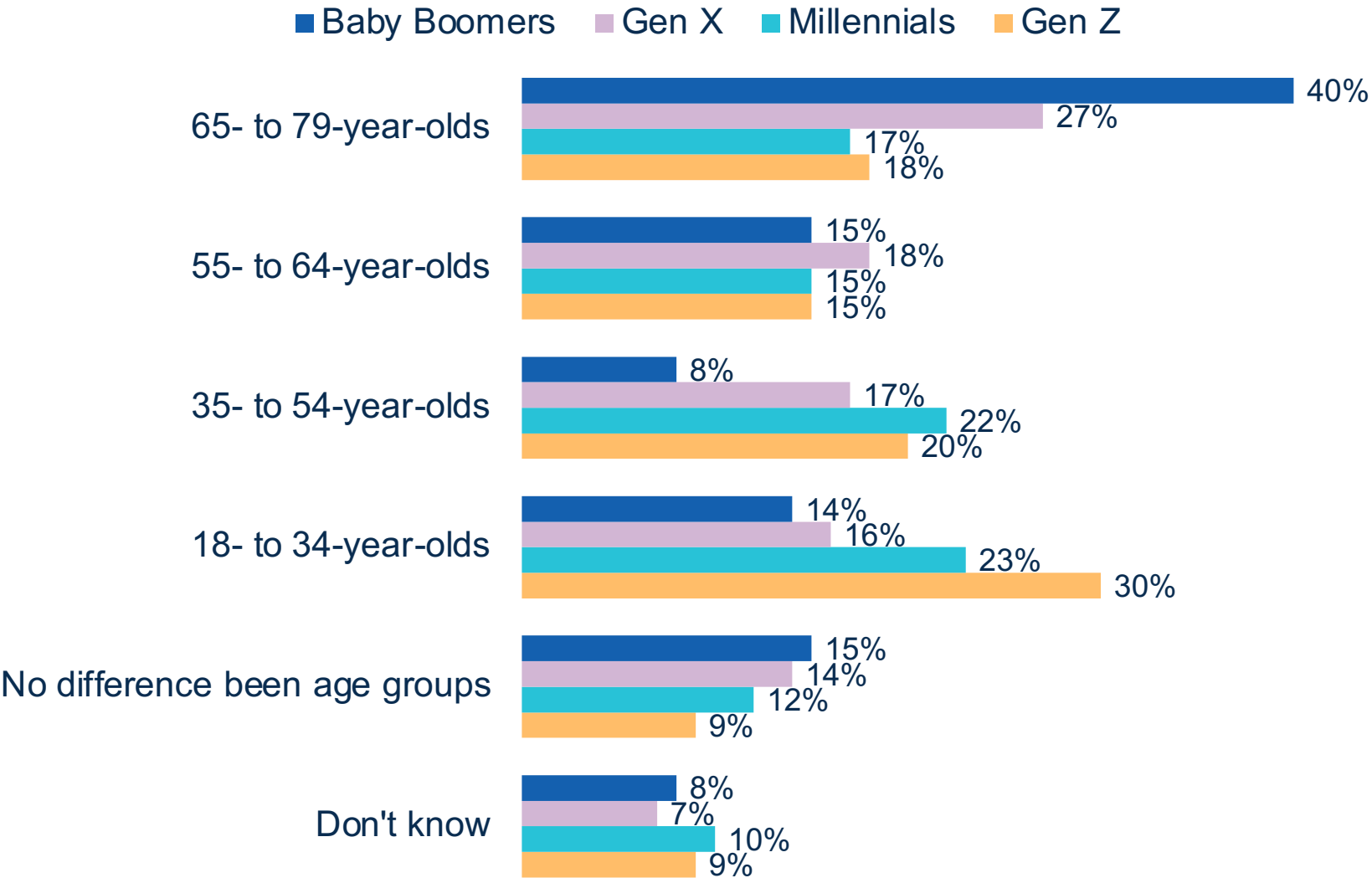
Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **There is no point in changing my behaviour to tackle climate change because it won't make any difference anyway**



But Baby Boomers (40%) are considerably more likely than other generations surveyed to believe that 65- to 79-year-olds would be most against changing their behaviour – reflecting little confidence in their own cohort’s willingness to make sacrifices for the environment, despite younger age groups being more likely to feel this way.

Thinking about the US population overall, on average, which of the following age groups do you think is most likely to say that there is no point changing their behaviour to tackle climate change because it won't make any difference?



Base: 2,153 US adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

Claims abound that Millennials and Gen Z are “purpose-driven” consumers, obsessed with sustainable or socially responsible brands – but it’s actually older generations who are most likely to have boycotted a product or company for socially conscious reasons.

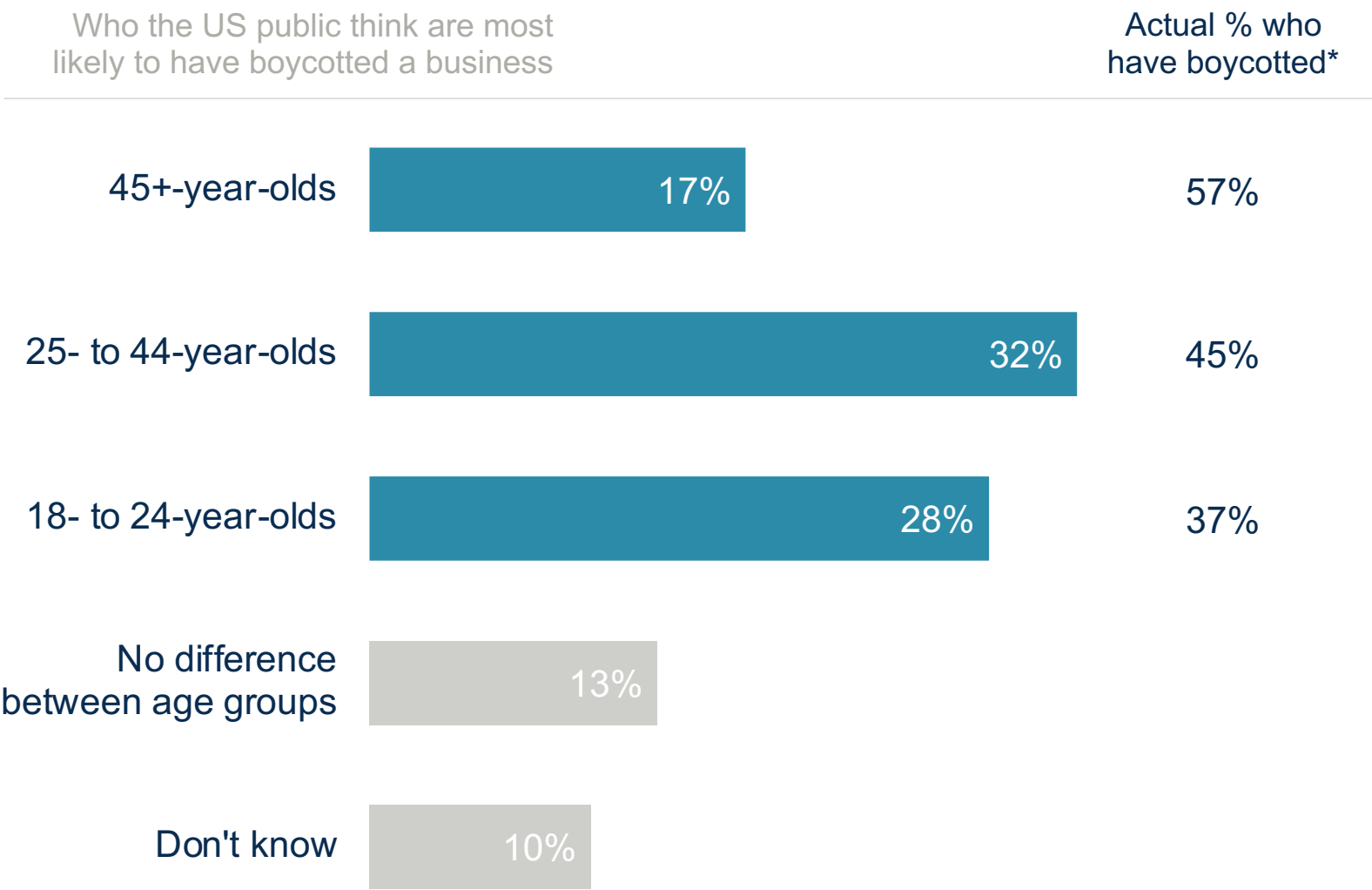
On this measure at least, “cancel culture” is more of a middle-age thing.



Previous research has found that older Americans are more likely than younger Americans to have boycotted a business, with 57% of those aged 45+ having done so, compared with around 45% of people aged 25 to 44 and 37% of those aged 18 to 24.

But the US public wrongly believe that the oldest age group, people 45 and over, are *least* likely to have carried out such a boycott. 17% think this group have done so, while 32% think 25- to 44-year-olds (most of whom would be classed as Millennials) have and 28% choose 18- to 24-year-olds (Gen Zers).

A representative survey of people in the US asked them whether they had boycotted a business, that is, whether they stopped buying goods or services from a business in protest. **Which of the following groups do you think was most likely to have boycotted a business?**

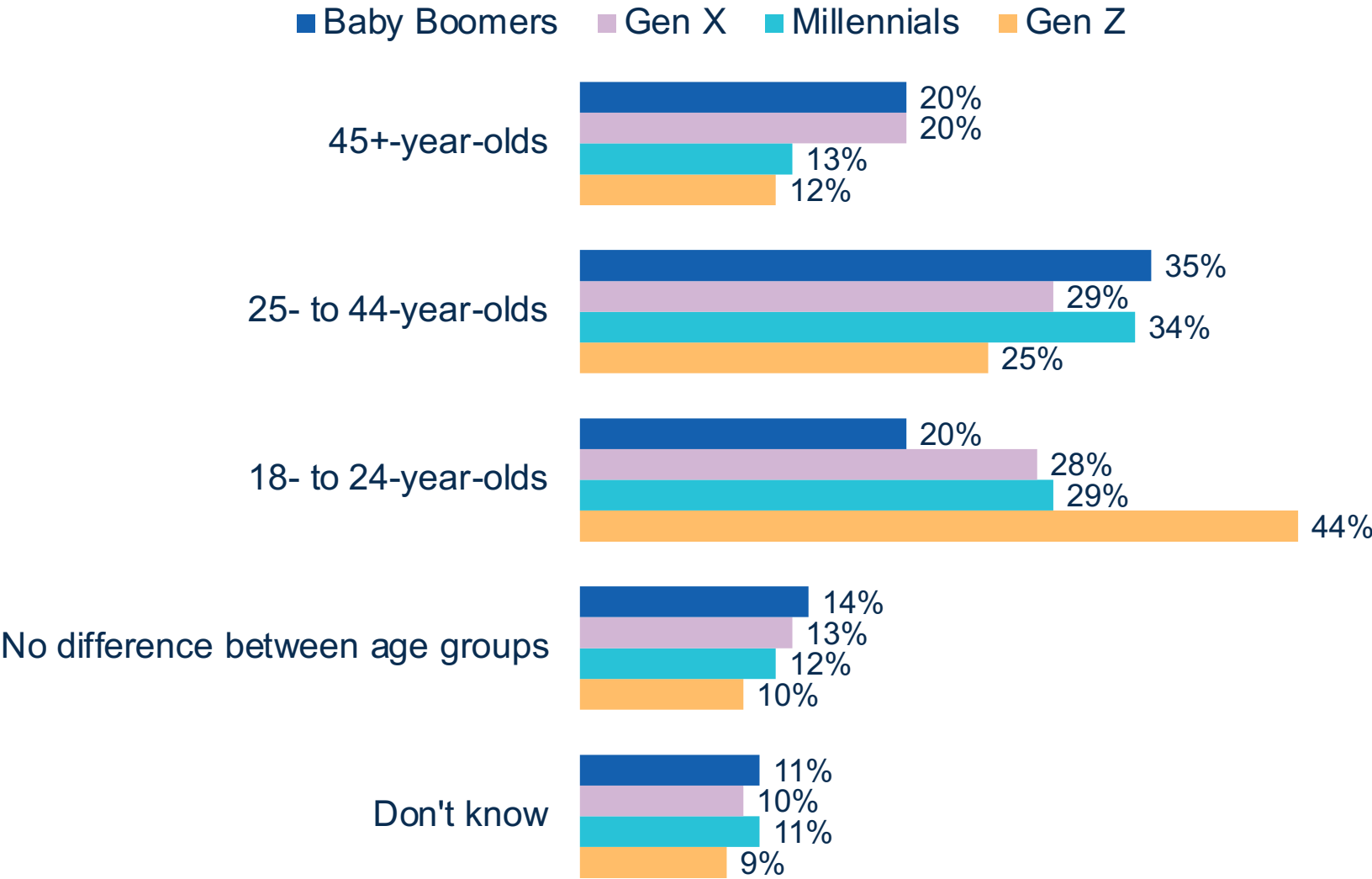


Base: 2,153 US adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

* Source: YouGov

Gen Z are by far the most likely to wrongly believe that boycotting a business is something done by younger age groups: 44% think that 18- to 24-year-olds have pursue such a boycott, compared with around three in 10 Millennials and Gen Xers and two in 10 Baby Boomers who think the same.

A representative survey of people in the US asked them whether they had boycotted a business, that is, whether they stopped buying goods or services from a business in protest. **Which of the following groups do you think was most likely to have boycotted a business?**



Base: 2,153 US adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

The US public are twice as likely to think young people have been selfish rather than selfless in how they've behaved during the Covid crisis, with even young people themselves feeling this way.



Americans are most likely to have a negative view of young people's behaviour during the Covid-19 crisis: 45% say they lean towards thinking young people have been selfish during the pandemic, ignoring restrictions on their freedoms because of the lower risk to them – compared with 22% who say the majority of young people have been remarkably selfless in following the rules to control a virus that doesn't pose a high risk to most of them.

Even younger cohorts are more likely than not to think that people their age have acted selfishly. For example, 47% of Gen Z think young people have been selfish – much greater than the 24% who think they've been selfless.

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

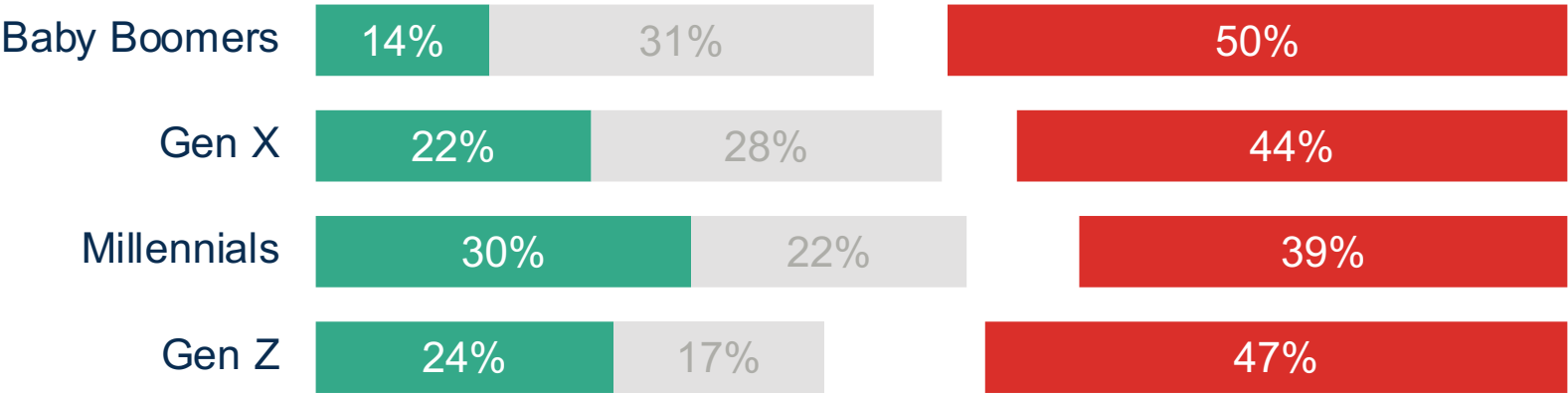
The vast majority of young people in the US have been **remarkably selfless** in following restrictions on their freedoms, to control a virus that doesn't pose a high risk to most of them

Neither of these statements reflect my view

Too many young people in the US have been **selfish** during the pandemic, ignoring restrictions on their freedoms, because the virus doesn't pose a high risk to most of them



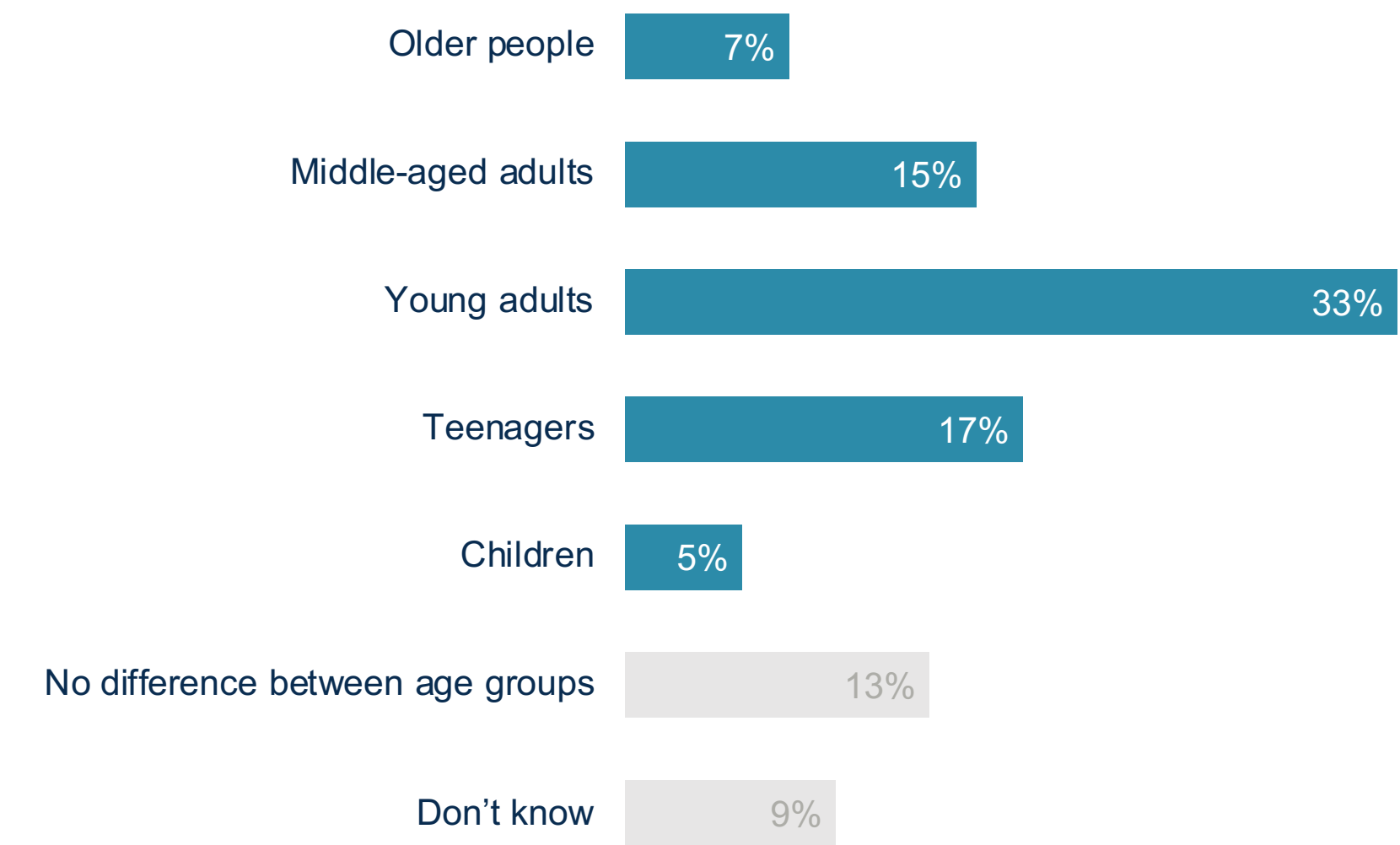
Views by generation



Base: 2,153 US adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

Young adults (33%) are seen by the public as having acted least responsibly during the pandemic, while middle-aged people (15%) and teenagers (17%) are around half as likely to be viewed this way.

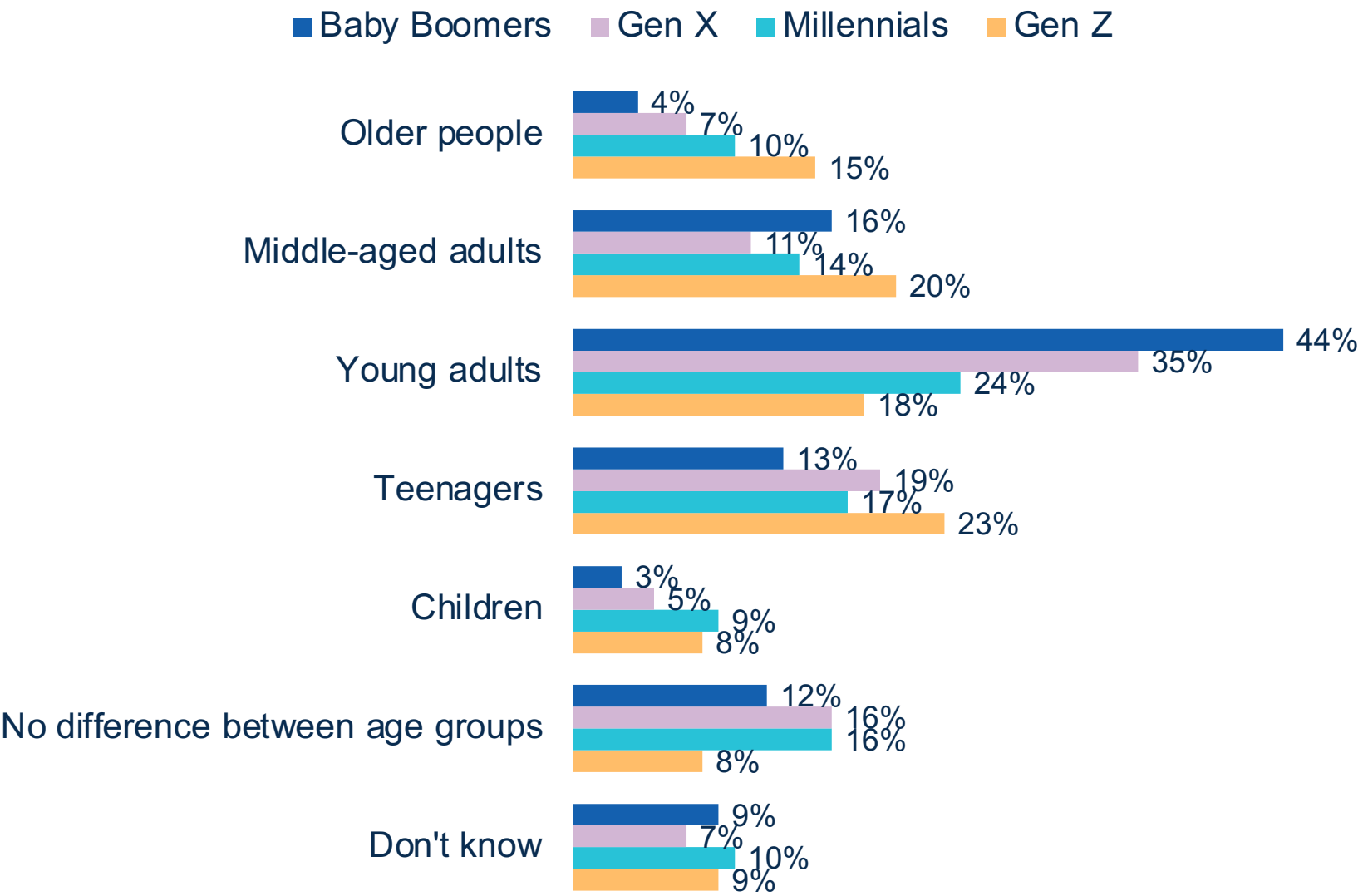
Which, if any, of the following groups do you think have **acted least responsibly in following the pandemic restrictions?**



Older generations are much more likely to place the blame on younger people for irresponsible behaviour during the pandemic.

For example, 44% of Baby Boomers think young adults have acted least responsibly when it comes to following Covid rules – much higher than the 18% of Gen Z who feel the same.

Which, if any, of the following groups do you think have **acted least responsibly in following the pandemic restrictions?**



A majority of Americans think intergenerational conflict has worsened in recent decades, with younger people more likely to feel this way.

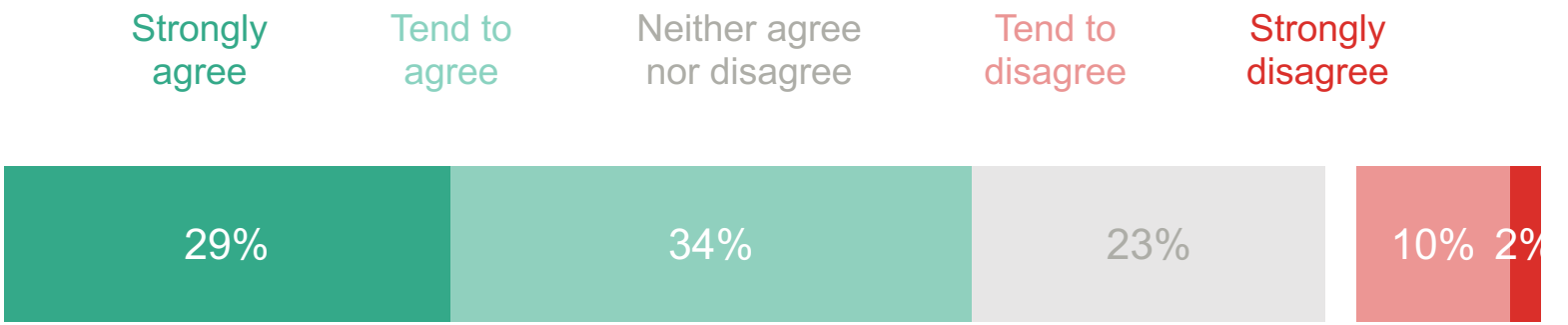
But there's a more widely held belief that intergenerational separation has worsened, with old and young leading increasingly separate lives – something that *all* generations are united on.



63% of the public agree there is more conflict between old and young people in the US these days than there was a few decades ago, with 12% disagreeing.

Gen Z (72%) and Millennials (69%) are more likely than Gen X (63%) and Baby Boomers (54%) to feel this way.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **There is more conflict between old and young people in the US these days than there was a few decades ago**



% who agree, by generation

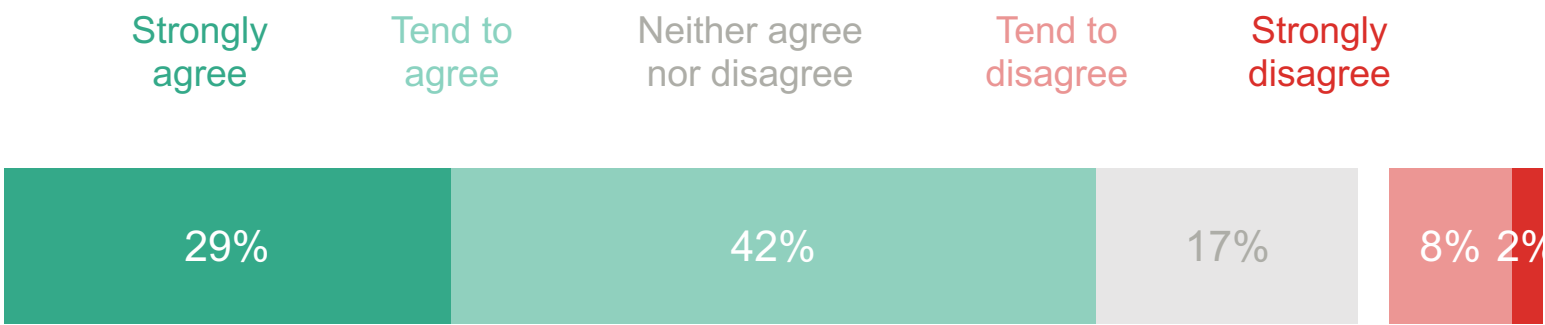


Base: 2,153 US adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

There is greater agreement – including across generations – that intergenerational separation is an issue: 71% of the public think old and young people in the US live more separate lives now than they did a few decades ago, while 10% disagree.

And unlike on the question of greater intergenerational conflict, here the various generations are much more united, with around seven in 10 of *all* generations agreeing that increased separation is a problem today.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Old and young people in the US live more separate lives these days than they did a few decades ago**



% who agree, by generation

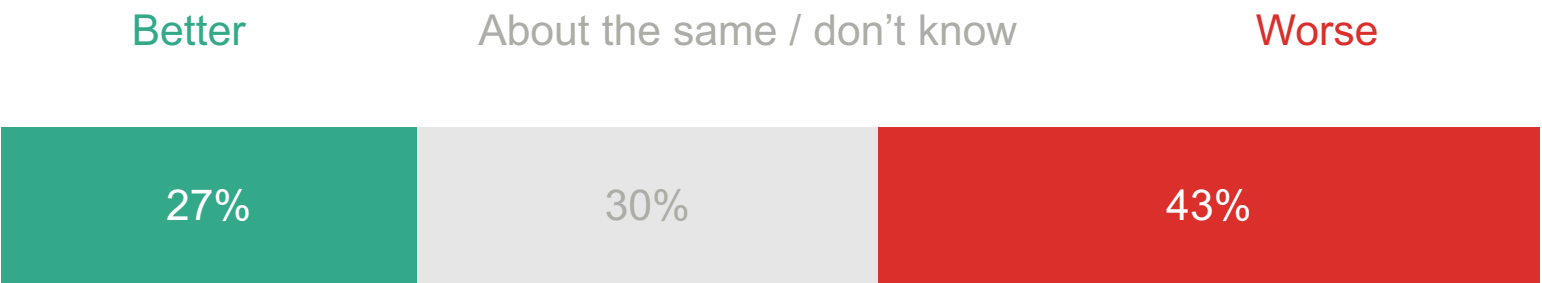


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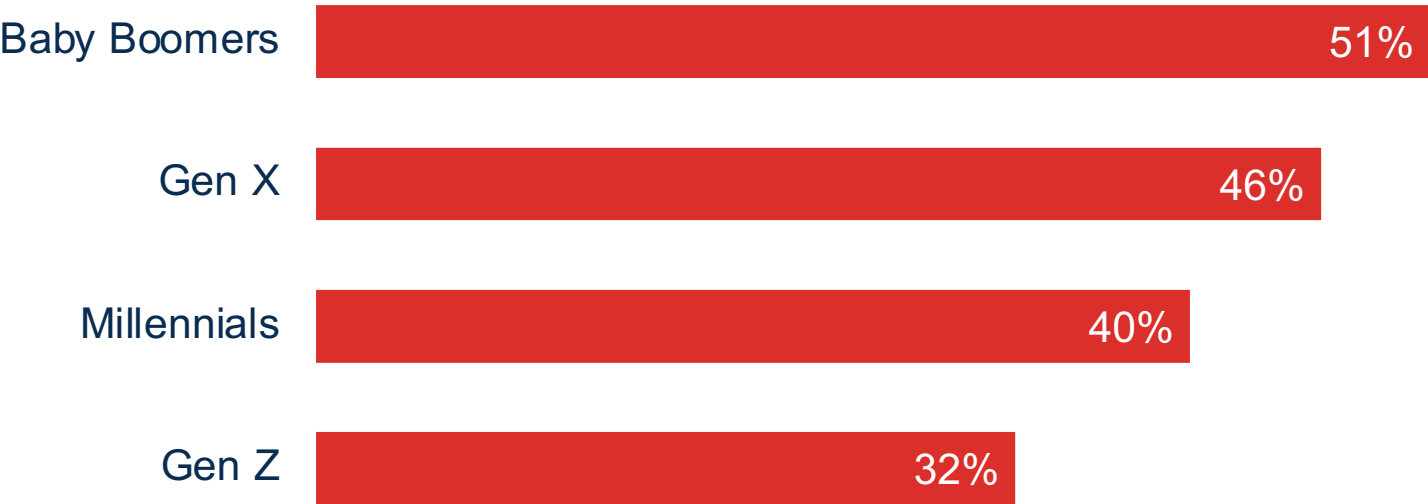
43% of the public think today's youth will have a worse life than their parents, while 27% think young people's lives be better.

There are some big differences in views by generation, with older cohorts more likely to be pessimistic about young people's prospects. For example, 51% of Baby Boomers think today's youth will have a worse life than their parents, compared with 40% of Millennials and 32% of Gen Z who think the same.

To what extent, if at all, do you feel that today's youth will have a better or worse life than their parents, or will it be about the same?



% who say worse, by generation



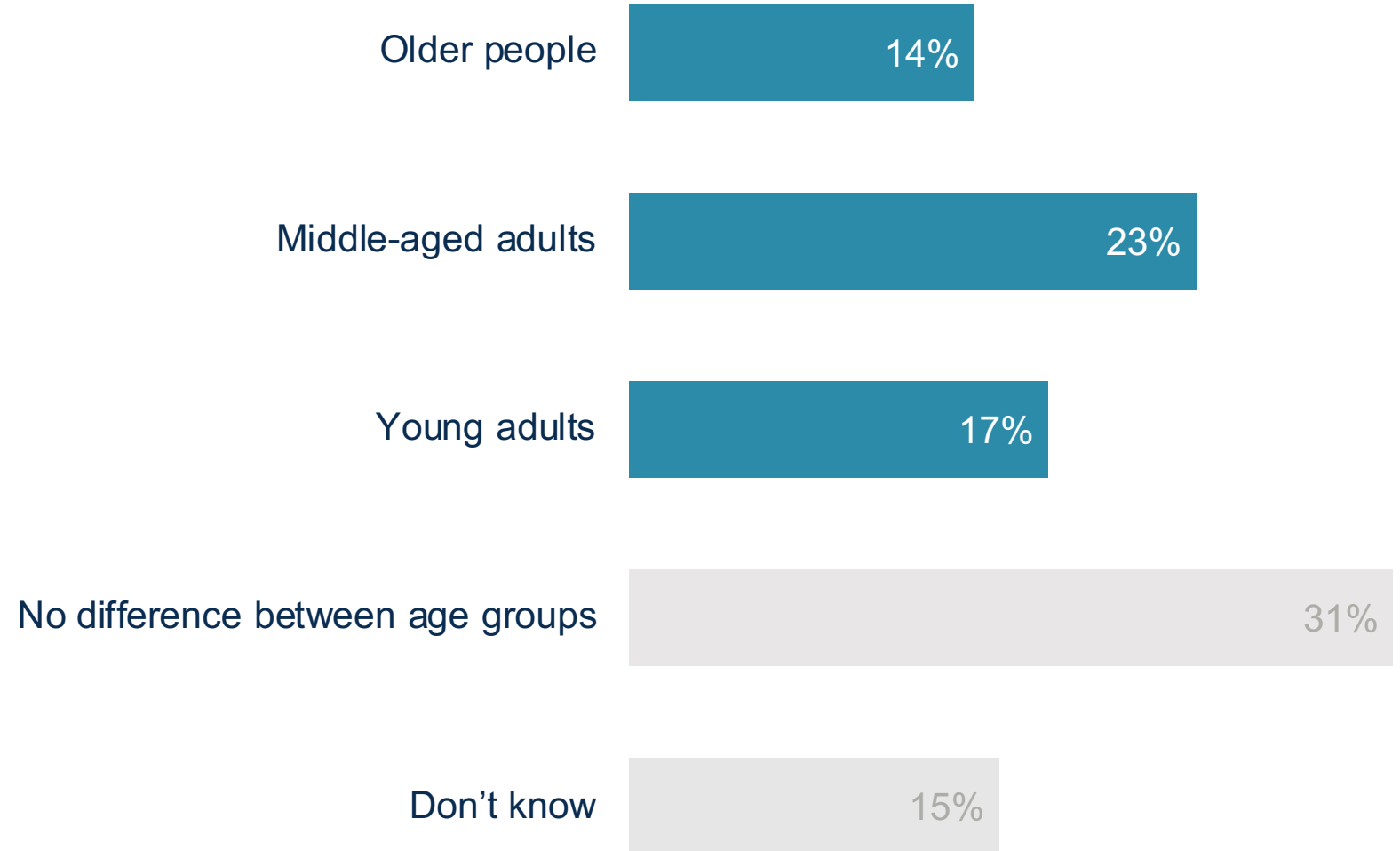
There's little sense among the public that some age groups benefit more than others from current economic policies.

But younger generations are less likely than older ones to say there's no age divide in who gets a better deal.



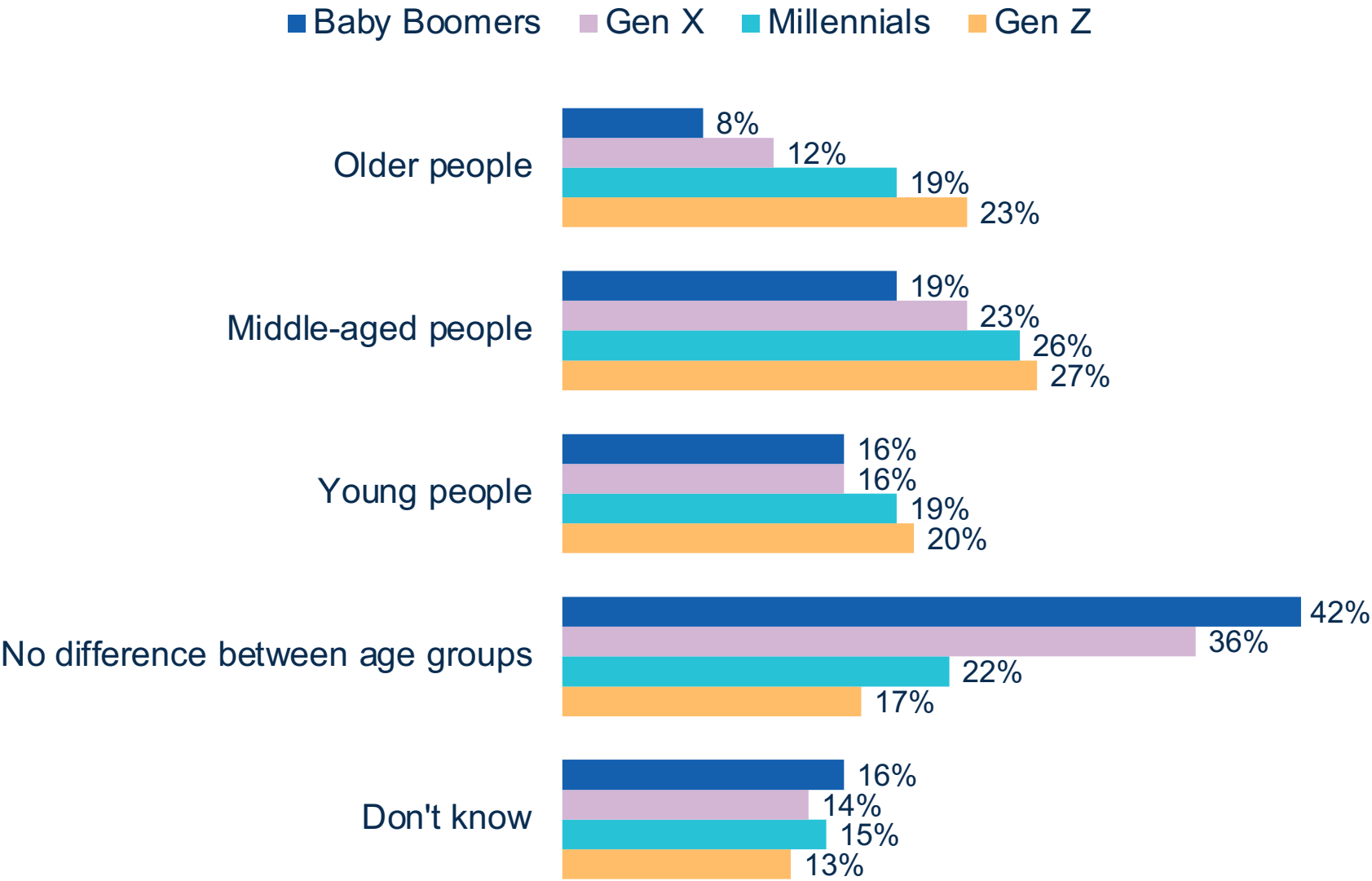
The public are most likely to think the US government's current economic policies do not benefit any particular age group more than any other. 31% of people hold this view, compared with 23% who think that middle-aged adults get the best deal from the government, 17% who say young adults do and 14% who say it's older people.

Thinking beyond the pandemic, in general, **which of the following groups, if any, do you think current economic policies from the US government most benefit?**



Older generations are much more likely to think there is no difference between age groups in terms of who benefits most from current economic policies: 42% of Baby Boomers feel this way, compared with 17% of Gen Z.

Thinking beyond the pandemic, in general, **which of the following groups, if any, do you think current economic policies from the US government most benefit?**



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Technical details

Savanta ComRes surveyed 2,153 US adults aged 18+ online between 2 and 9 August 2021. Data were weighted to be representative of US adults by age, gender, region and income. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Data tables are available at www.comresglobal.com

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