



Covid cohorts: pandemic impacts and attitudes across the generations

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September 2021

The UK public are more 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.



The public are most likely to have a negative view of young people's behaviour during the Covid-19 crisis: 49% 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 31% 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.

There is remarkably little difference in views across the generations, with even younger cohorts more likely than not to think that people their age have acted selfishly.

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

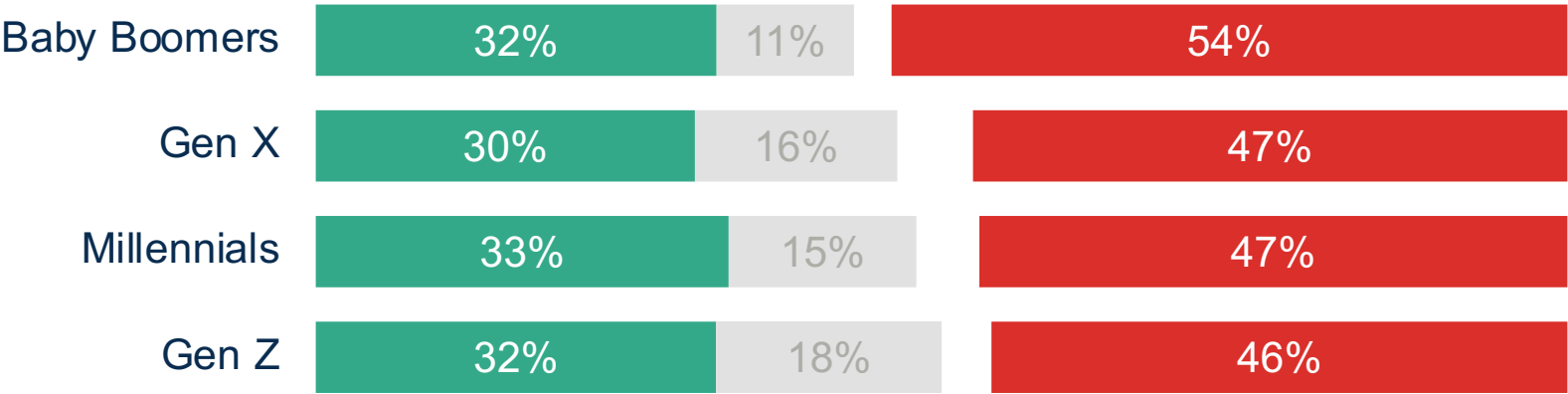
The vast majority of young people in the UK have been **remarkably selfless** in following restrictions on their freedoms, to control a virus that doesn't pose a high risk to most of them

Neither of these statements reflect my view

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

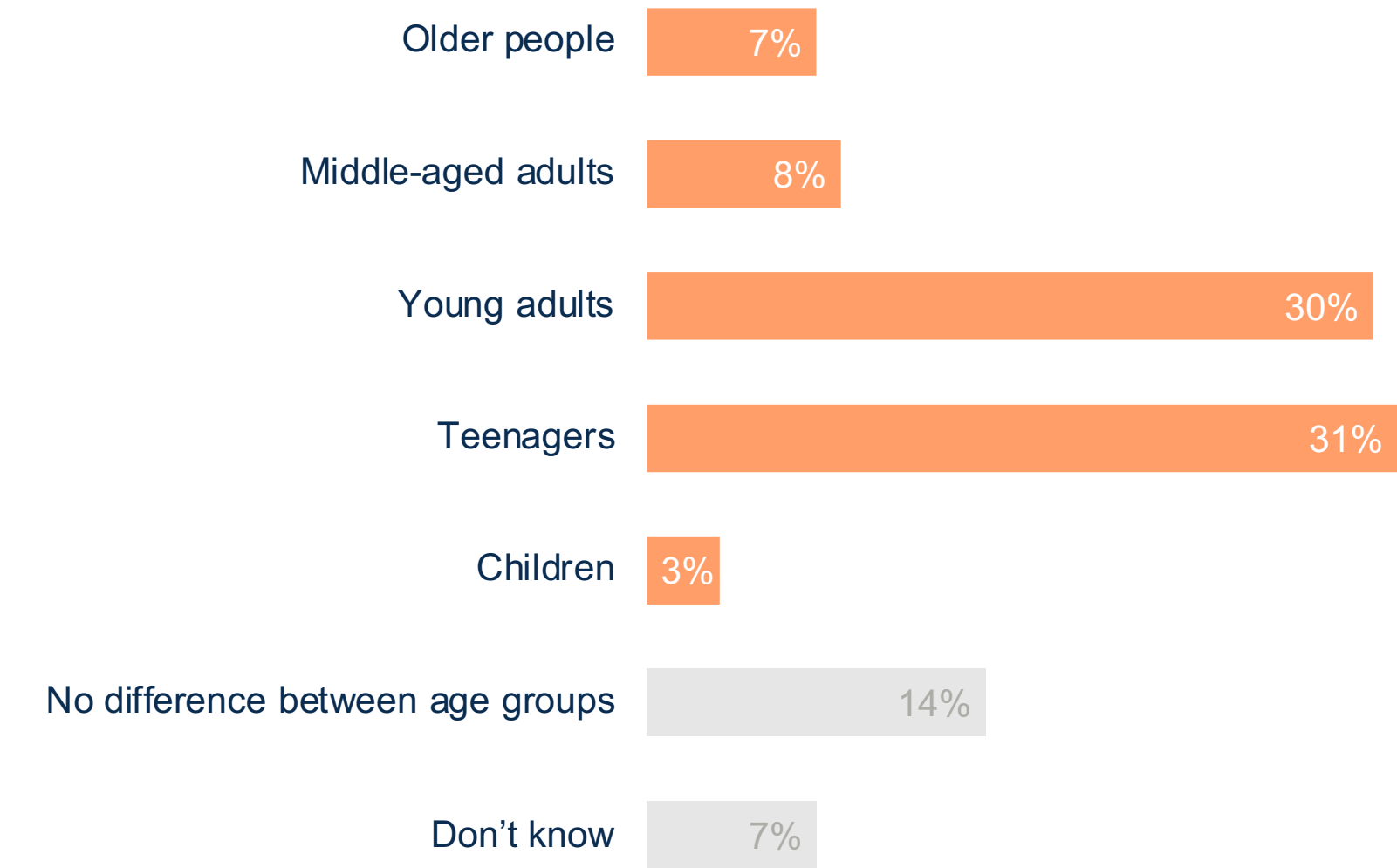


Views by generation



Teenagers (31%) and young adults (30%) are seen by the public as having acted least responsibly during the pandemic, while only 7% and 8% respectively think that older people and middle-aged adults have been most reckless.

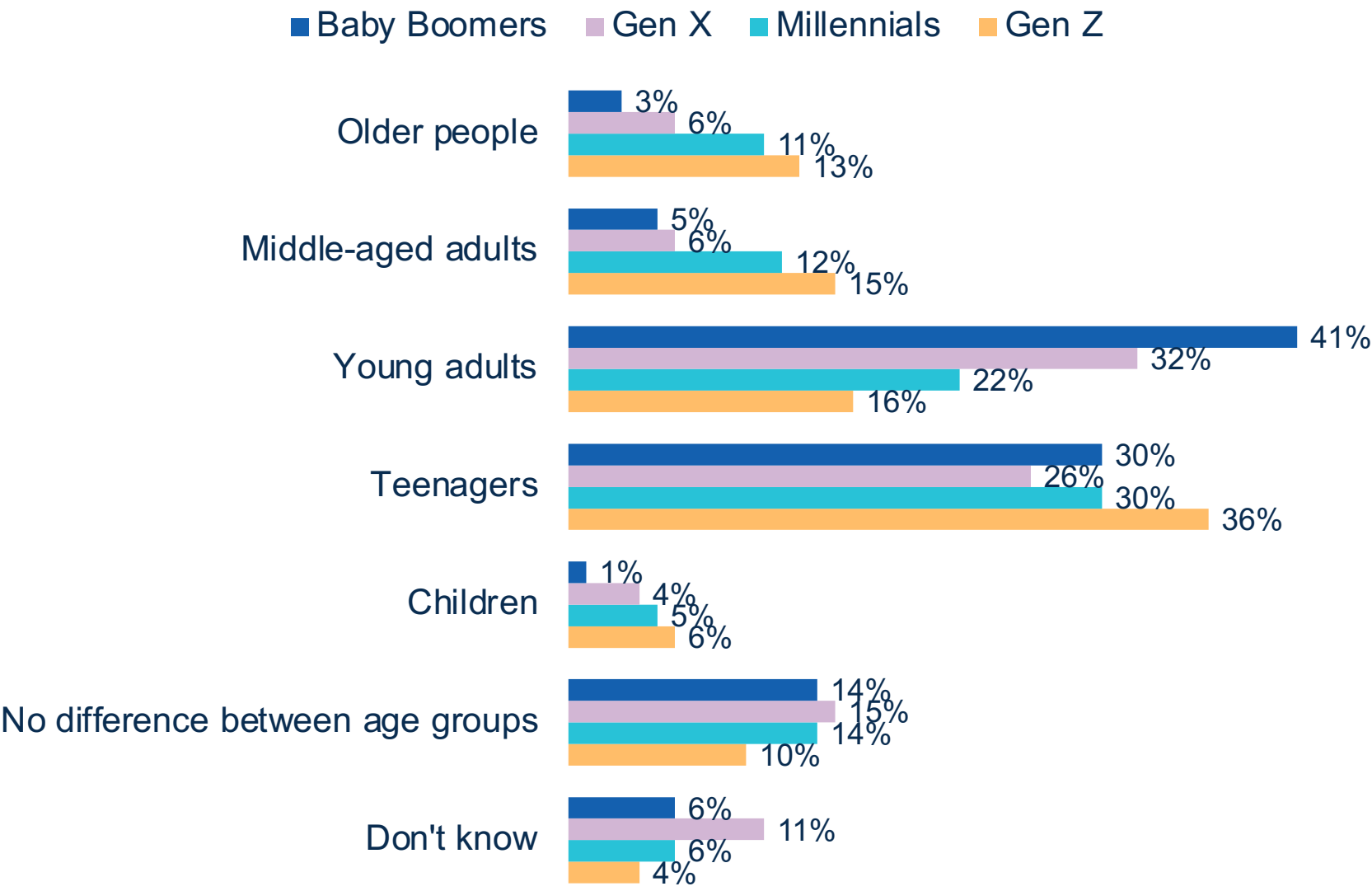
Which, if any, of the following groups do you think have **acted least responsibly in following the pandemic restrictions?**



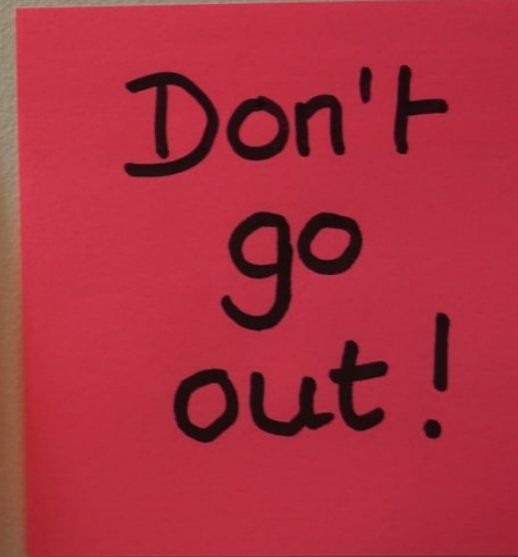
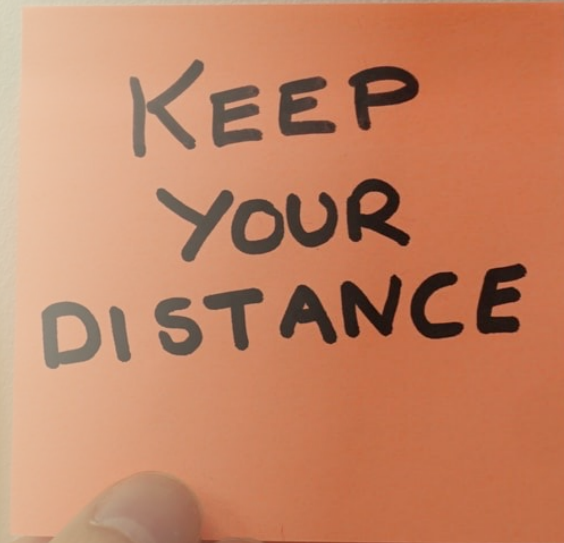
Older generations are much more likely to place the blame on young people for irresponsible behaviour during the pandemic.

For example, 41% of Baby Boomers and 32% of Gen X think young adults have acted least responsibly when it comes to following Covid rules – much higher than the 22% of Millennials and 16% 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?**



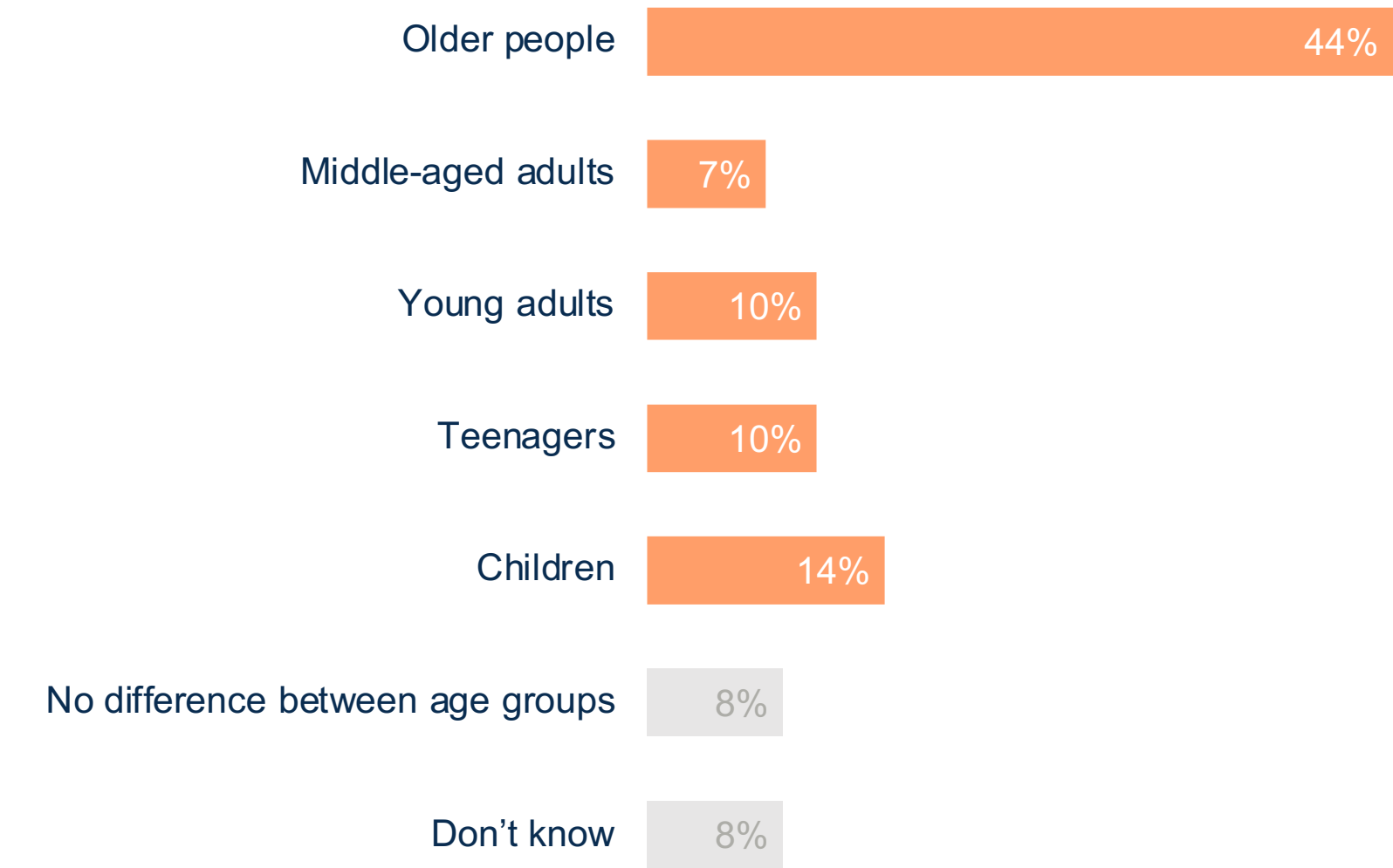
Britons overwhelmingly think older people have suffered most during the Covid crisis – but older generations are roughly twice as likely as younger generations to say they've suffered *no* negative effects due to the pandemic.



44% of the public think older people have suffered the most during the pandemic to date, and this is the most common answer given by all generations.

Children (14%), young adults (10%) and teenagers (10%) are perceived by far few people as having been most negatively affected, while middle-aged adults (7%) are the group least likely to be seen this way.

And which, if any, do you think has **suffered the most negative effects due to the coronavirus pandemic to date?**



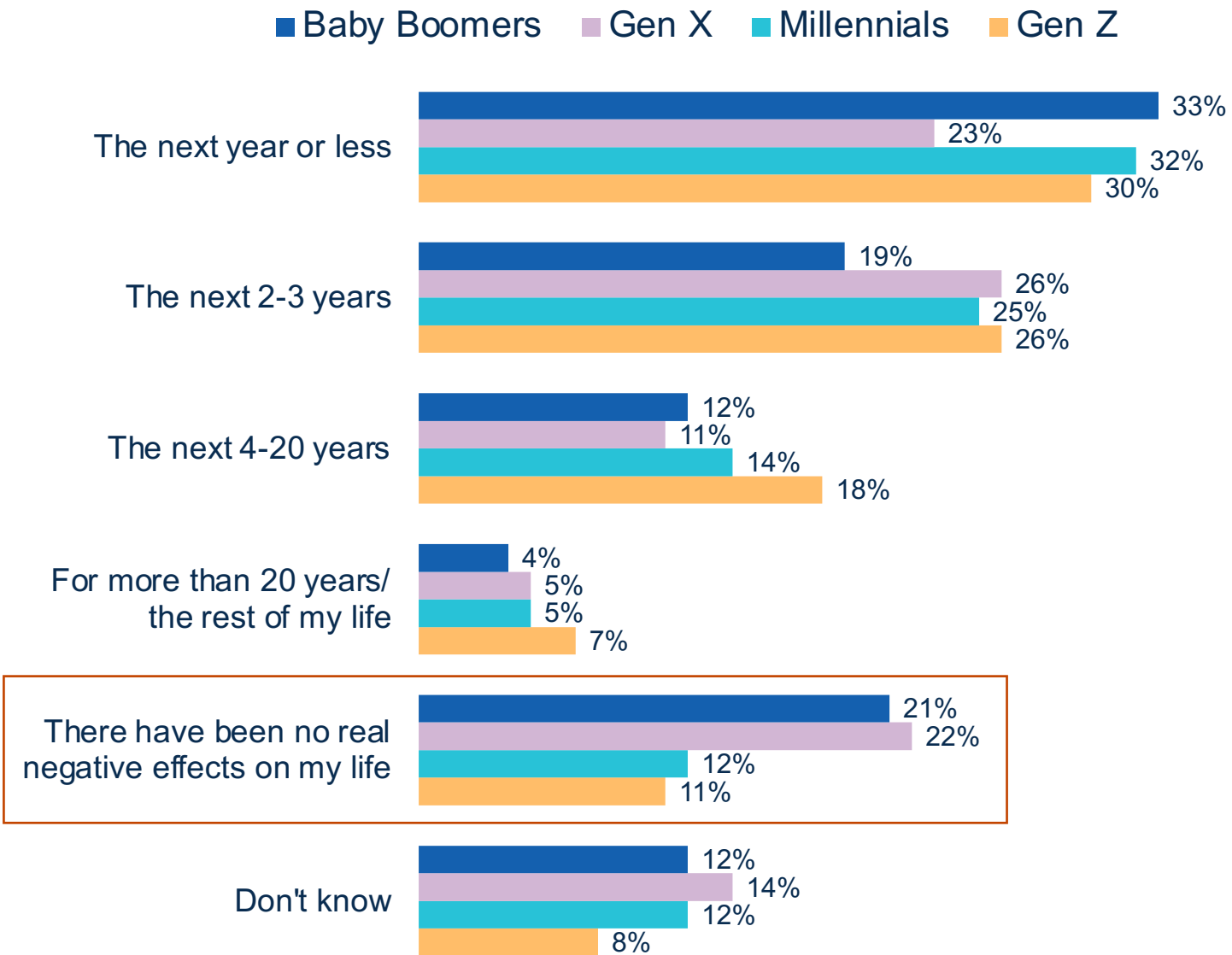
Older generations are roughly twice as likely as younger ones to say there have been *no* real negative effects on their life from the pandemic.

Around one in five Baby Boomers (21%) and Gen X (22%) report that this is the case, compared with around one in 10 Millennials (12%) and Gen Z (11%).

But this is still a minority, and most Britons – including older people – think they will continue to be adversely affected by the pandemic for some time to come.

Among those who *have* experienced negative effects from the pandemic, there is relatively little difference between generations in how long they are anticipated to last.

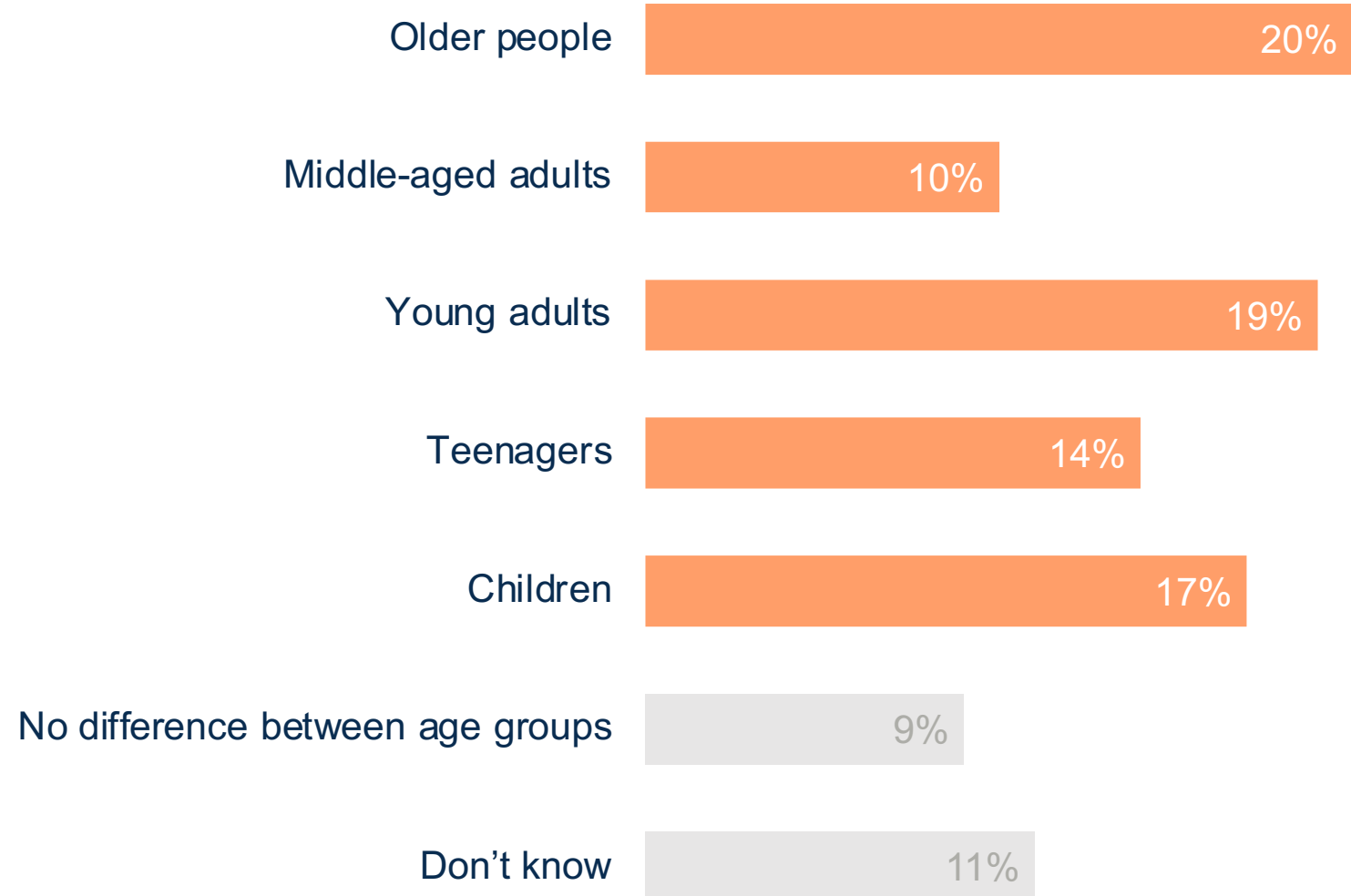
How long, if at all, do you think you will feel any negative effects of the pandemic on your own life?



There is a greater split among the public on who will suffer most *long-term* as a result of the pandemic.

Older people (20%), young adults (19%) and children (17%) are roughly equally likely to be perceived as bearing the brunt of the crisis in the long run. Again, middle-aged adults (10%) are least likely to be seen this way.

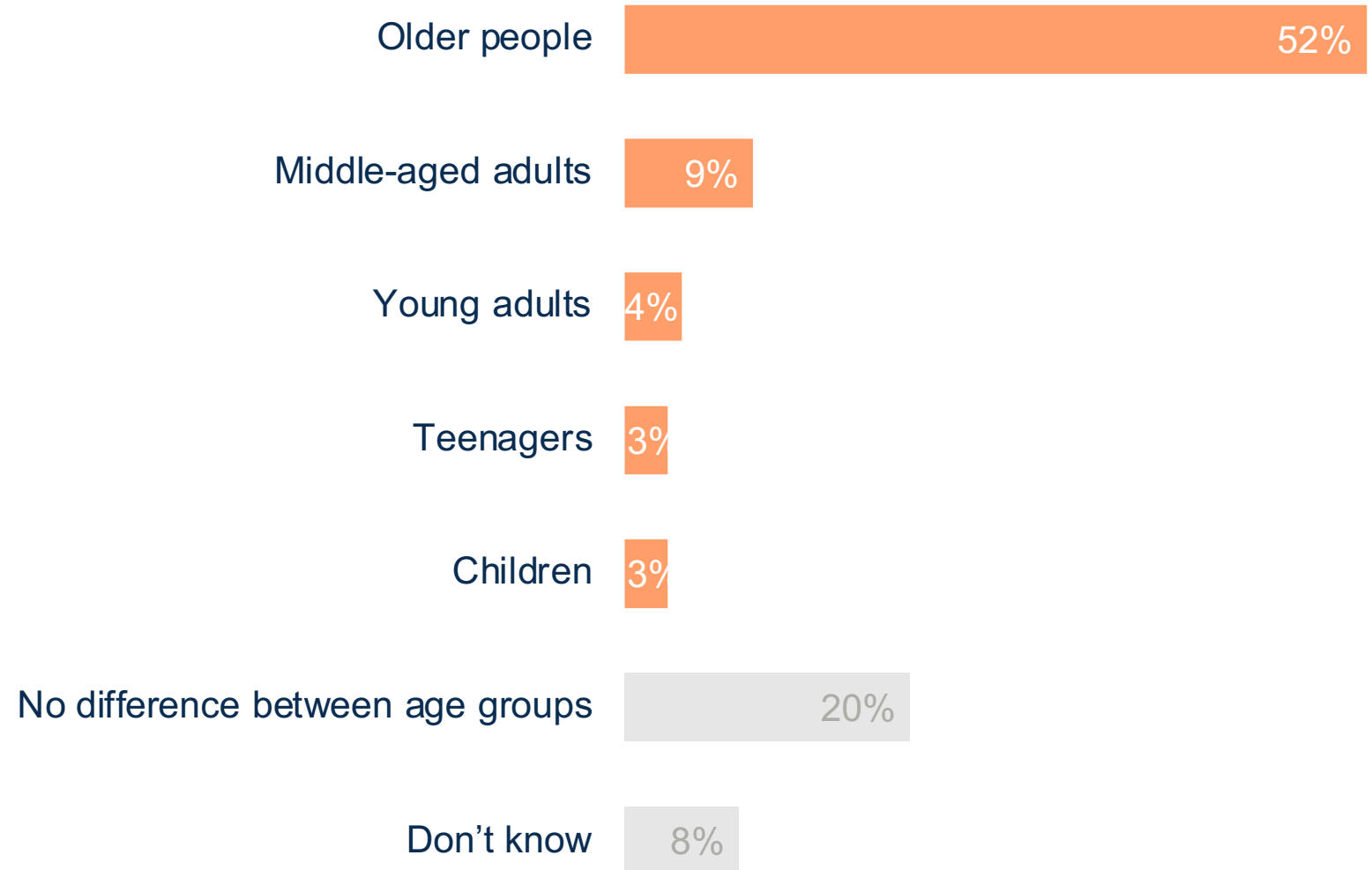
And which, if any, do you think will **suffer the most negative effects due to the coronavirus pandemic over the long term?**



Older people are overwhelmingly seen as having been prioritised by the UK government during the pandemic, with 52% of the public feeling this way.

Younger age groups – including young adults (4%), teenagers (3%) and children (3%) – are thought to have been the government's priority by comparatively tiny proportions of the population.

Which, if any, of the following groups do you think **the UK government has prioritised during the pandemic?**

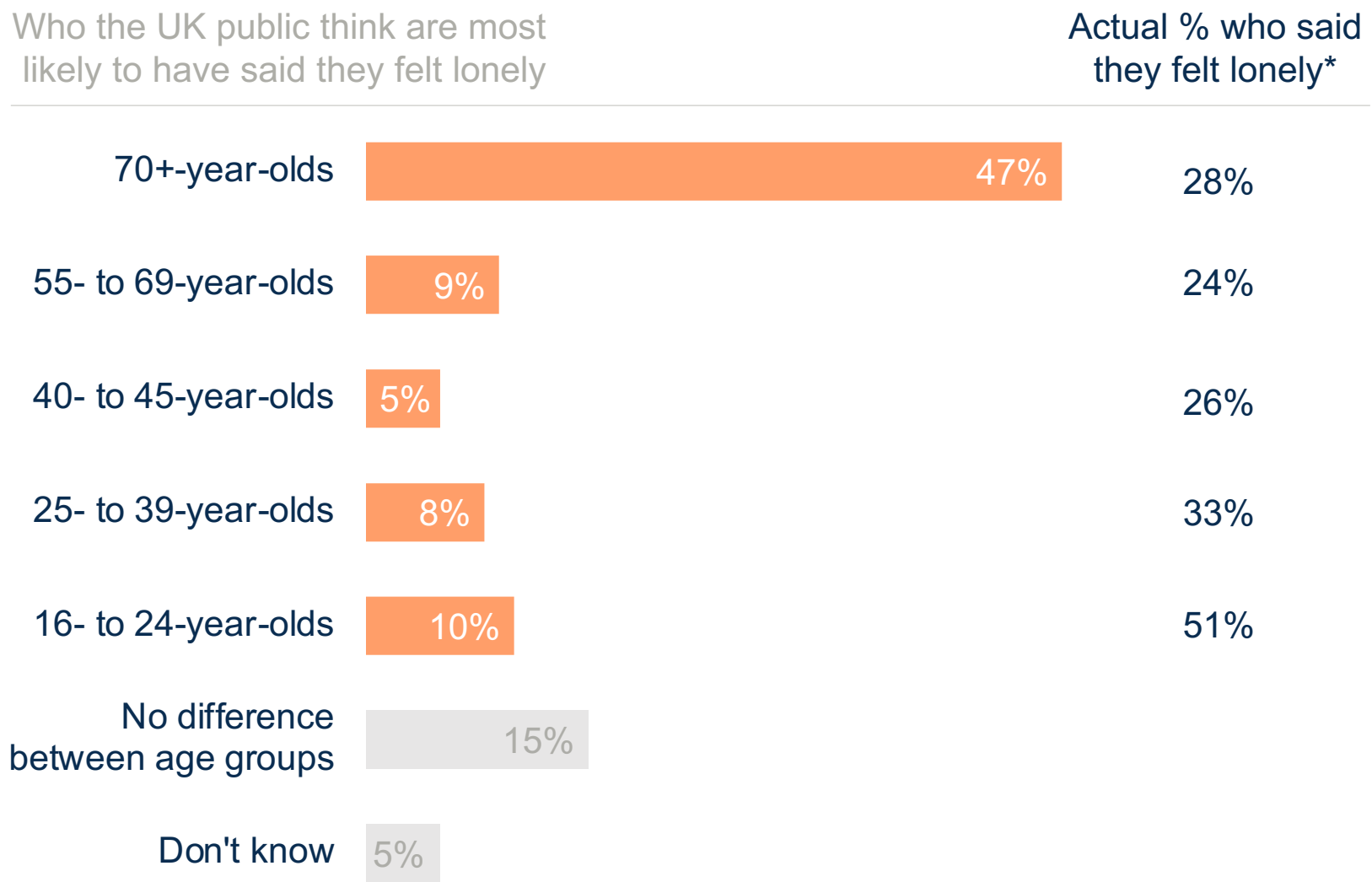


The public's perception is that those aged 70 and above were loneliest at the start of the first lockdown in 2020 – but in reality, 16- to 24-year-olds were by far the most likely to say they felt lonely.



When asked which age group was most likely to have said they felt lonely at the beginning of the first lockdown, nearly half the public (47%) choose people aged 70 and over. But the reality, according to the Office for National Statistics, is that 16- to 24-year-olds – the youngest age group surveyed – were by far the most likely to have said they felt lonely at this time. This is correctly guessed by just one in 10 people (10%).

Which of the following age groups in Britain, if any, do you think are most likely to have said they felt lonely at the beginning of the “lockdown” measures, from April to May 2020?

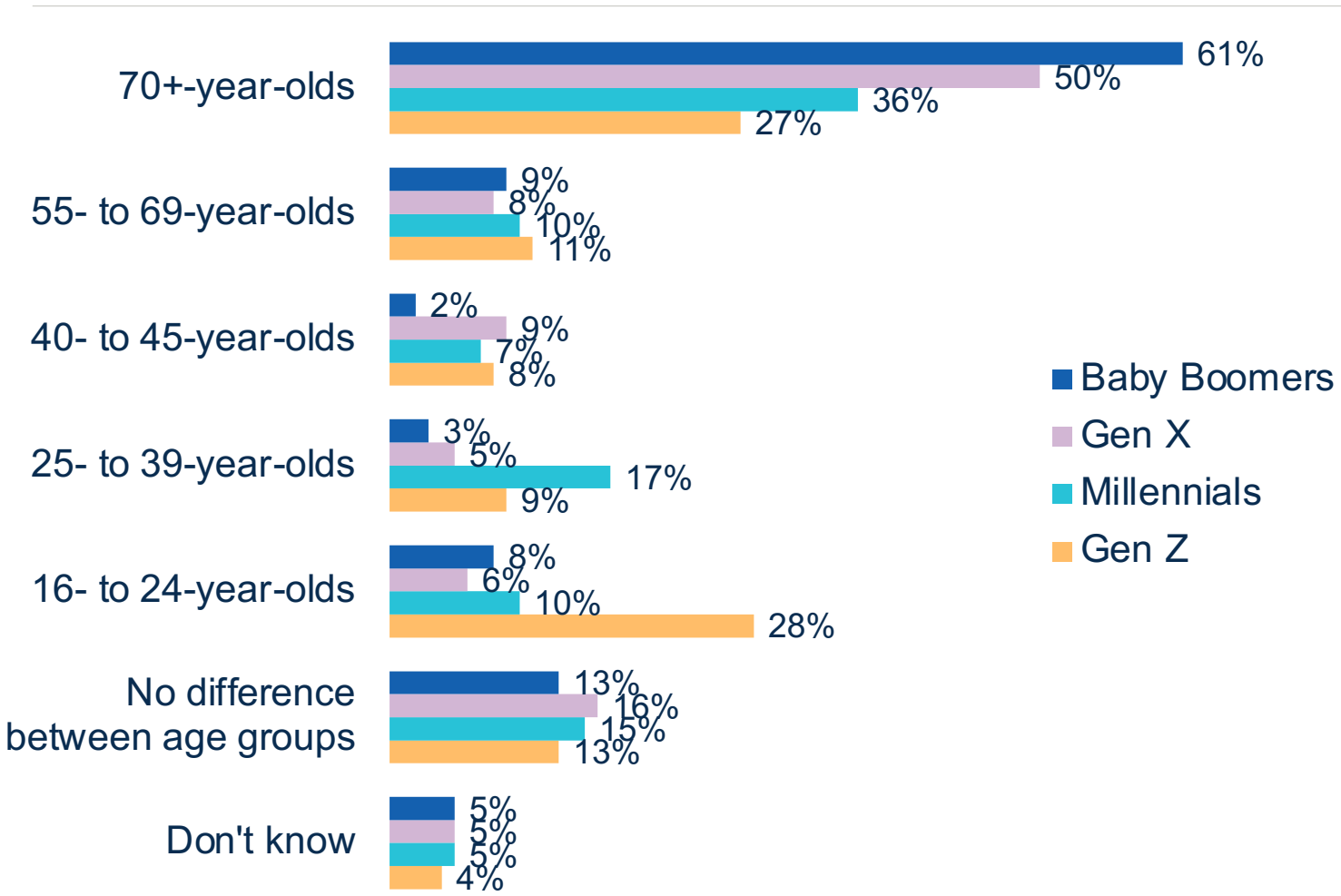


Gen Z are much more inclined than other generations to correctly identify that 16- to 24-year-olds – who are in their own cohort – were most likely to say they felt lonely at the beginning of the first lockdown.

By contrast, older generations are much more inclined to wrongly think people aged 70 and over were loneliest. For example, 61% of Baby Boomers select this age group – the highest of all the generations surveyed.

Which of the following age groups in Britain, if any, do you think are most likely to have said they felt lonely at the beginning of the “lockdown” measures, from April to May 2020?

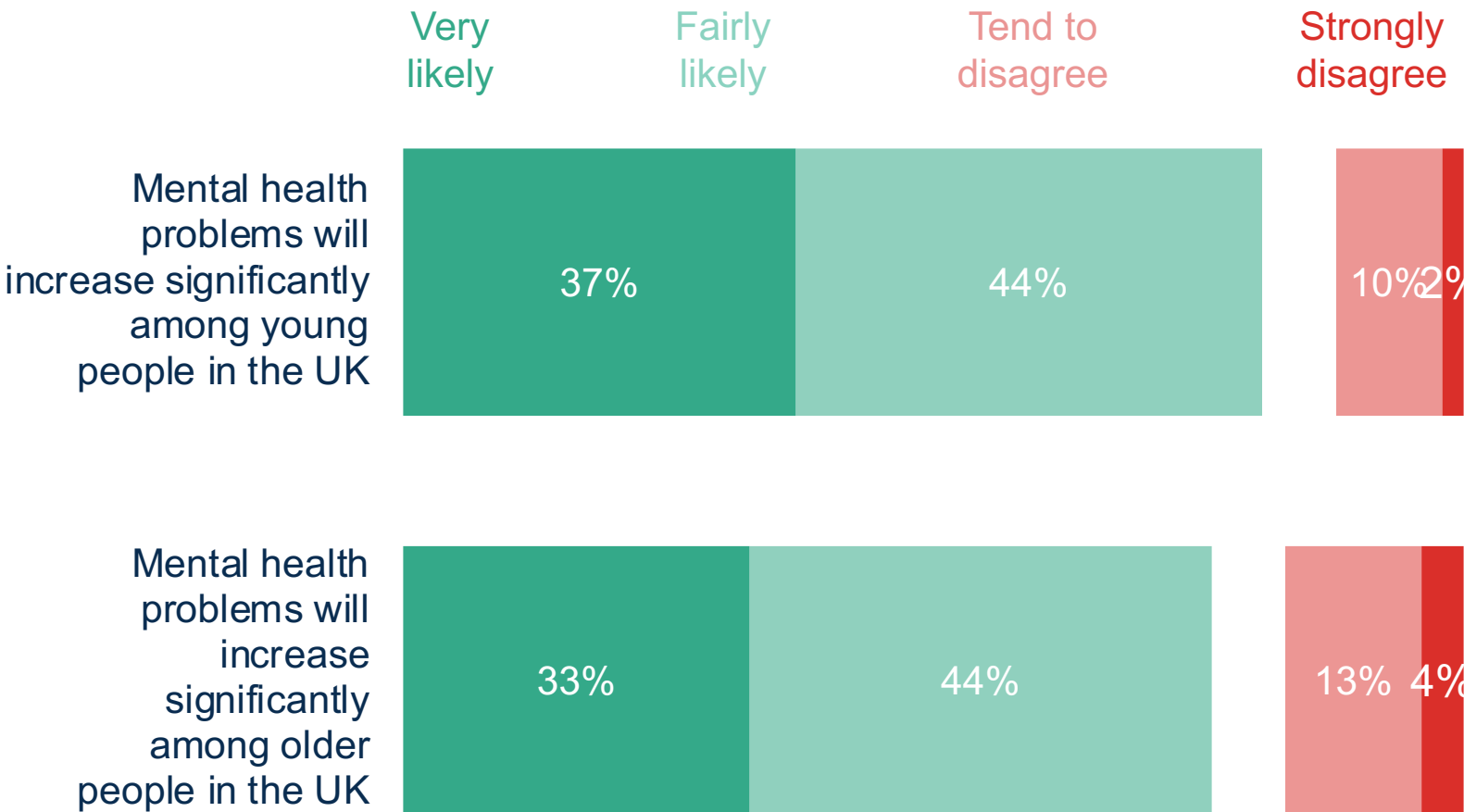
Who the different generations think are most likely to have said they felt lonely



Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

Around eight in 10 people think it's likely that mental health problems among young people will increase significantly in the UK in the next few years, and a similar proportion say the same about mental health problems among older people. This belief is held evenly across the different generations.

How likely, if at all, do you think it is that the following things will happen in the next 2-3 years following the pandemic?



A majority of Britons think intergenerational conflict has got worse in recent decades, with younger people much more likely to feel this way.

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

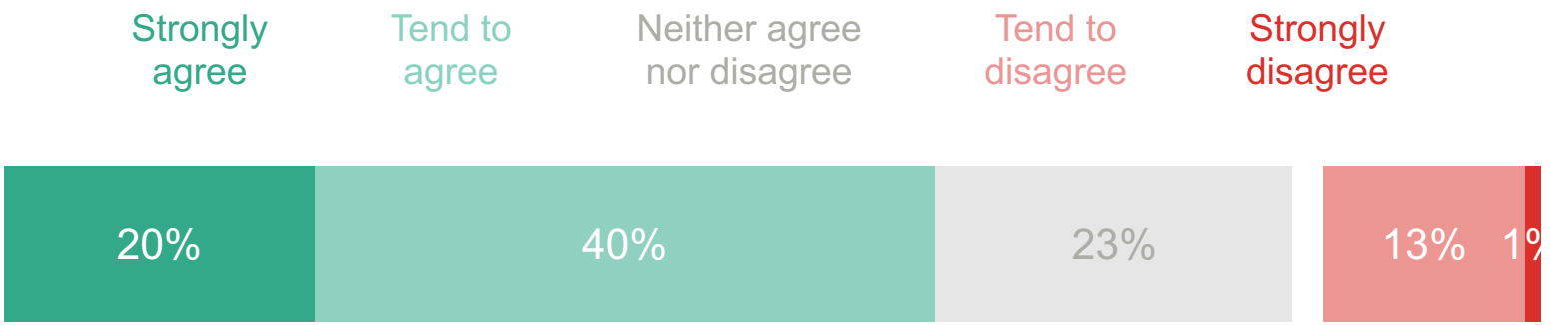


60% of the public agree there is more conflict between old and young people in the UK these days than there was a few decades ago, with 15% disagreeing.

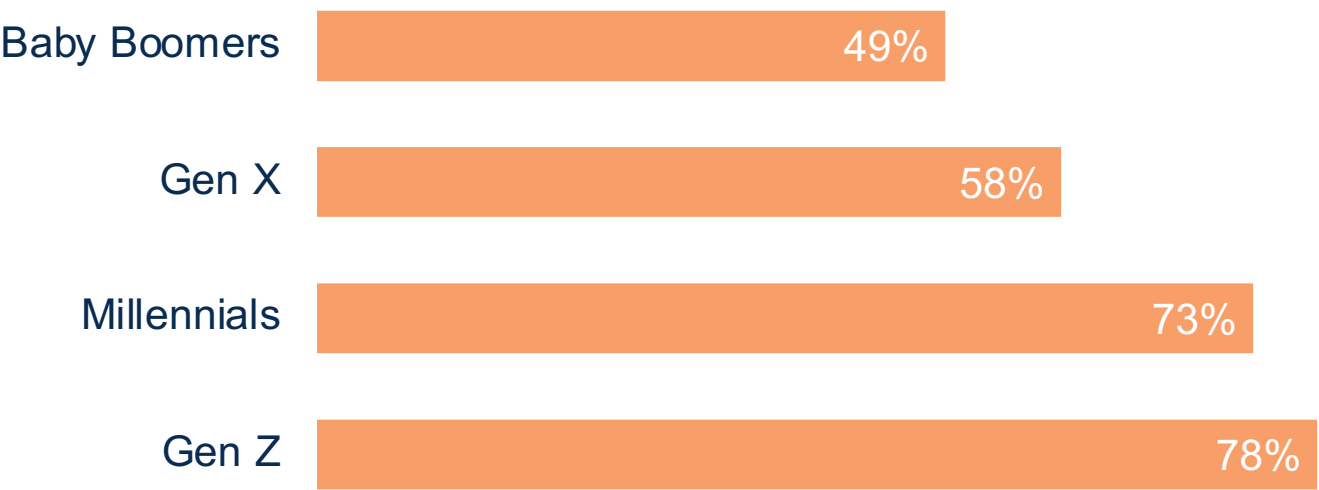
Gen Z (78%) and Millennials (73%) are more likely than Gen X (58%) and Baby Boomers (48%) to feel this way.

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

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



% who agree, by generation

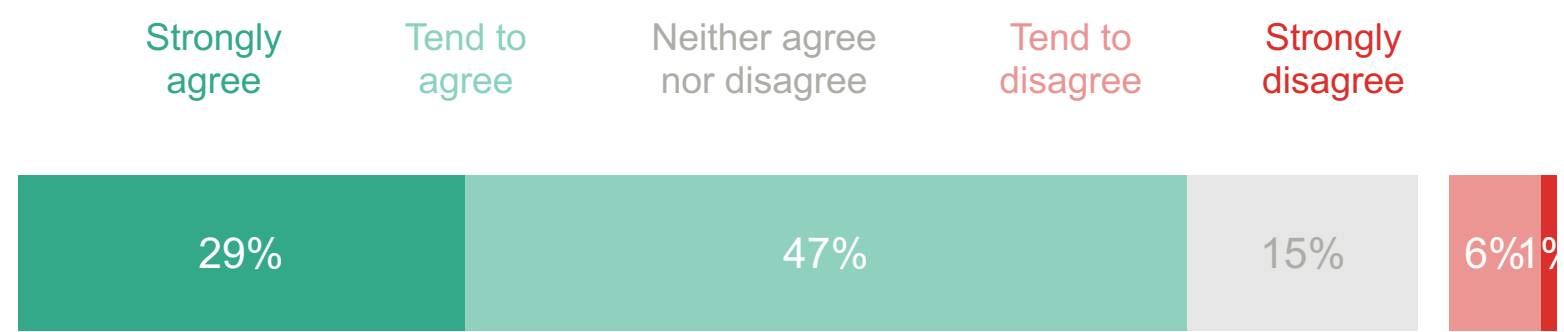


Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

There is greater agreement – including across generations – that intergenerational separation is an issue: 76% of the public think old and young people in the UK live more separate lives now than they did a few decades ago, while 7% disagree.

And unlike on the question of greater intergenerational conflict, where there are considerable differences in views across cohorts, here the various generations are much more united, with three-quarters or more 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 UK live more separate lives these days than they did a few decades ago**



% who agree, by generation

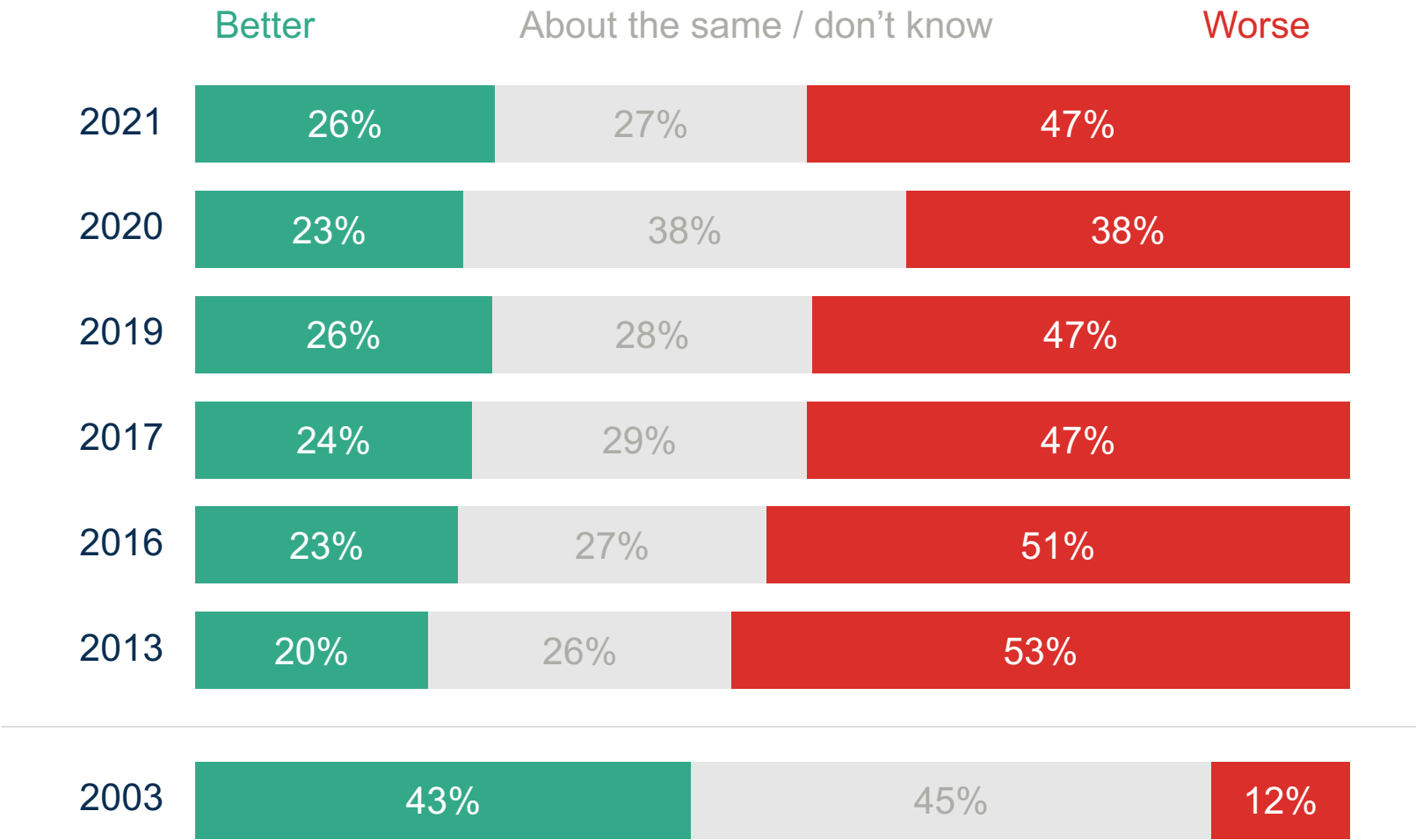


Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

47% of the UK public think today's youth will have a worse life than their parents – an increase from 38% who felt this way last year.

Looking further back, it's clear that optimism about young people's future has decline significantly from around the beginning of the 21st century. In 2003, for example, just 12% thought that young people then would have a worse life than their parents, compared with 43% who thought they'd do better. But this has collapsed following the 2008 financial crisis and not rebounded since.

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?



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

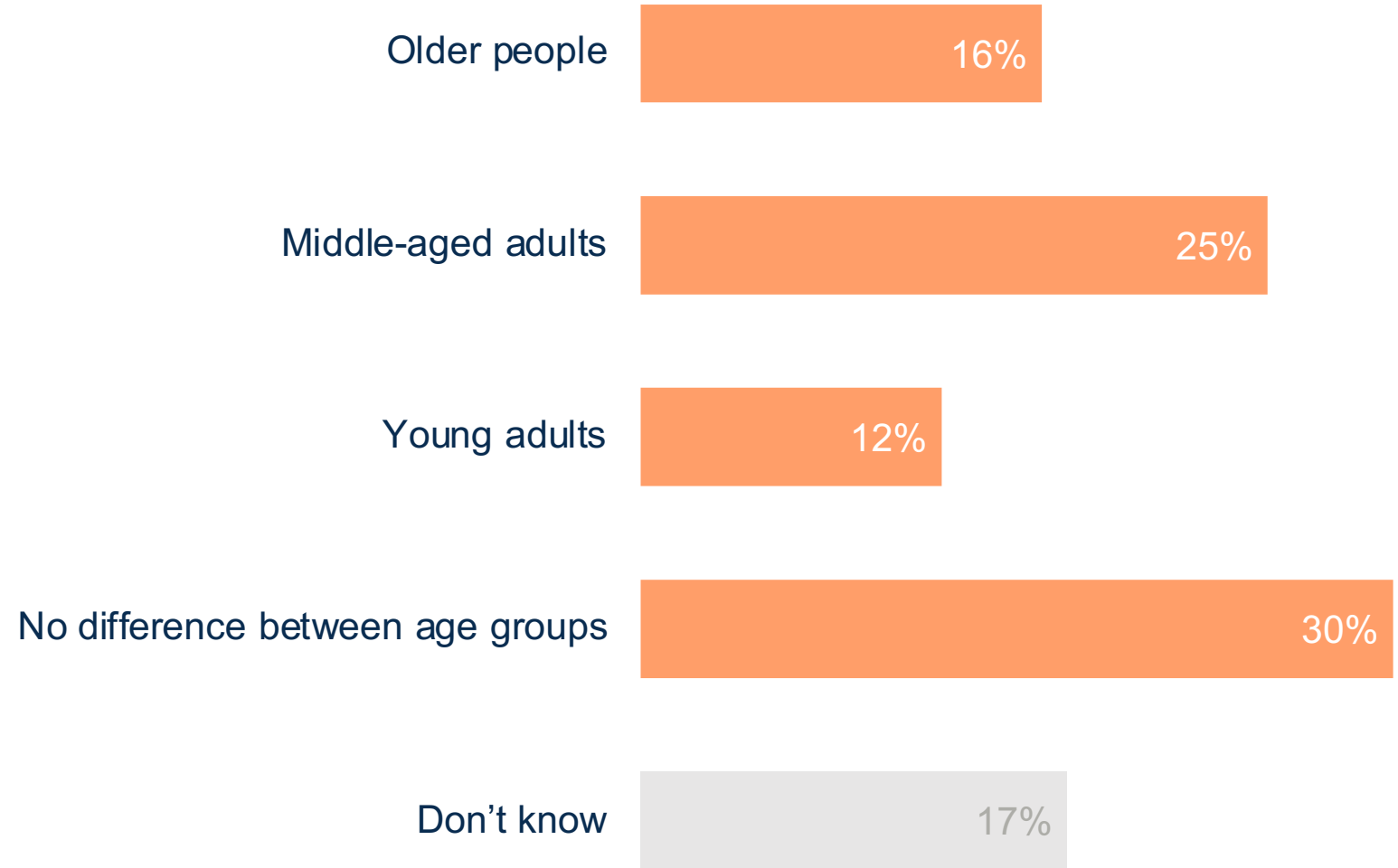
But younger generations are less likely than older ones to say there's no age divide in who gets a better deal.



The public are most likely to think the UK government's current economic policies do not benefit any particular age group more than any other. 30% of people hold this view, compared with 25% who think that middle-aged adults get the best deal from the government and 16% who say older people do.

Young adults are seen as benefitting most by just 12% of the population.

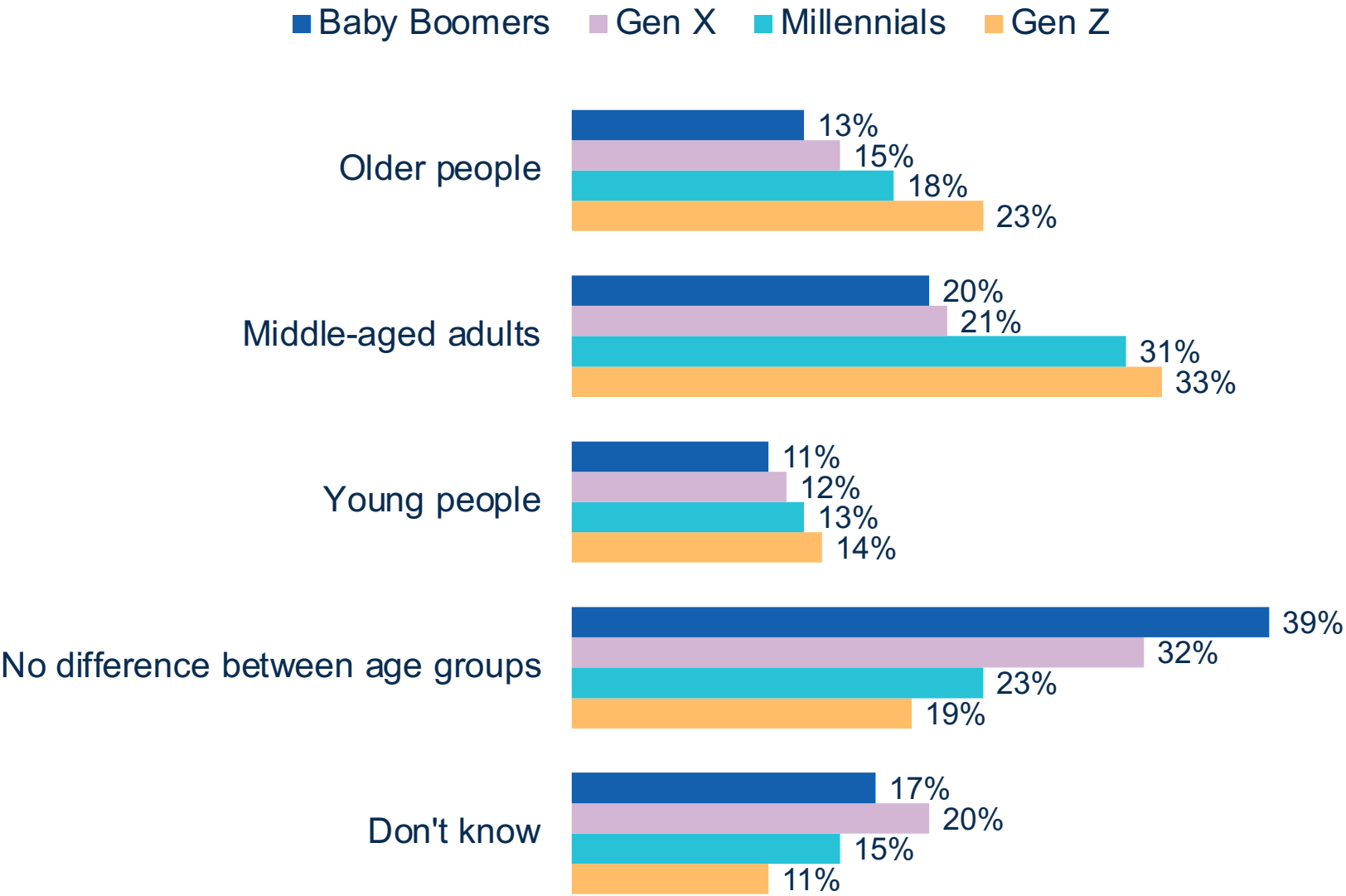
Thinking beyond the pandemic, in general, **which of the following groups, if any, do you think current economic policies from the UK government most benefit?**



Older generations are more likely to think there is no difference between age groups in terms of who benefits most from current economic policies. For example, 39% of Baby Boomers feel this way, compared with 19% of Gen Z.

Conversely, Gen Z (33%) and Millennials (31%) are more likely than Gen X (21%) and Baby Boomers (20%) to think middle-aged adults gain the most from government policies.

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



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Technical details

Savanta ComRes surveyed 2,050 UK adults aged 18+ online between 2 and 9 August 2021. Data were weighted to be representative of UK adults by age, gender, region and social grade. 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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