

Everyday life, education and work in the UK

Public opinion and
behaviour then and now

About this study

This study compares changes and similarities in attitudes and behaviours between 2024 and various points in the 1930s and 40s. Question wordings and response options have been kept consistent between the two surveys to preserve trends, even though in some cases they do not reflect current best practice in polling methods (for example, not allowing “don’t know” responses).

Fieldwork

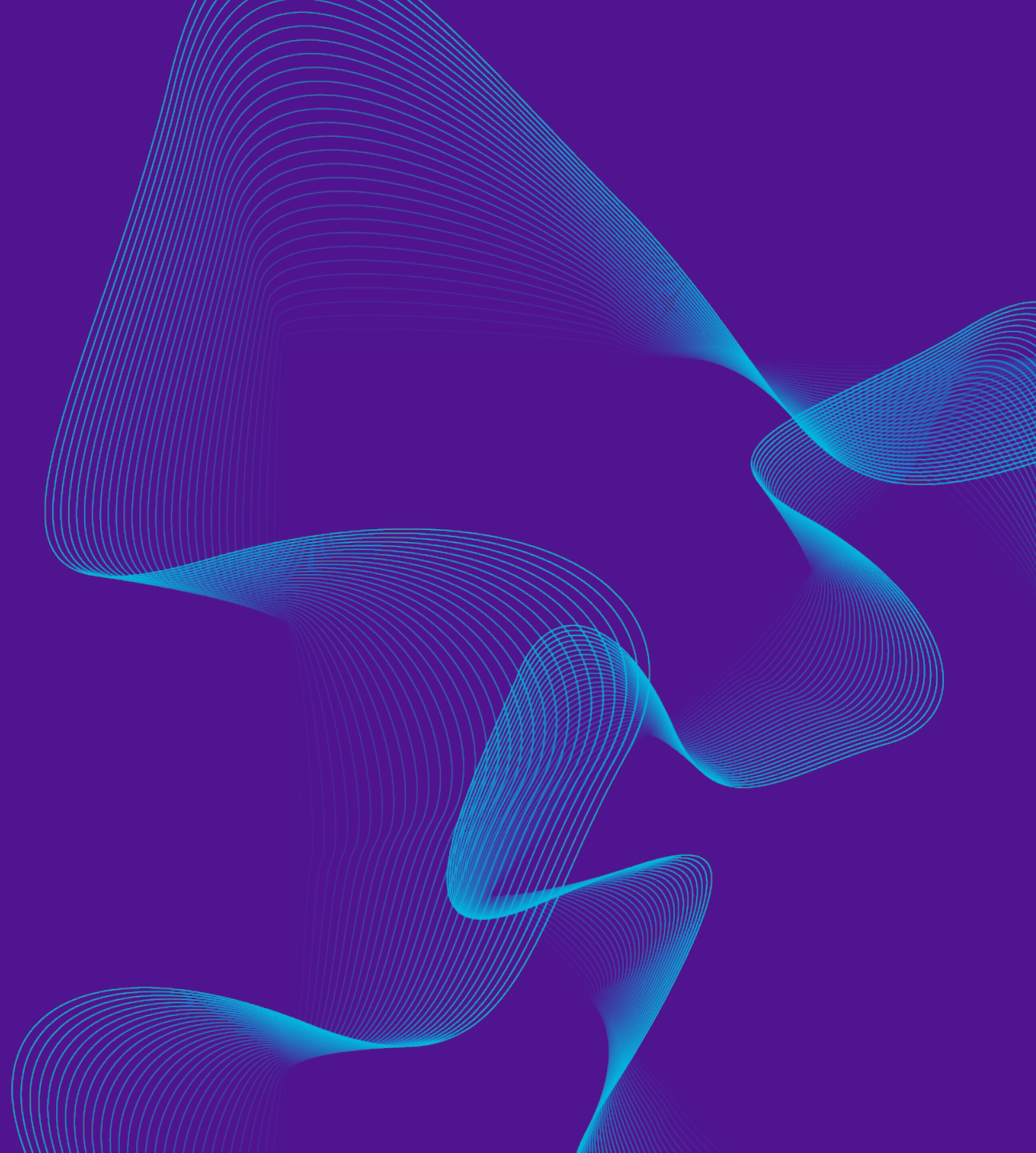
2024

Fieldwork was conducted via Focalddata’s in-house platform, with API integration to an online panel network. Data collection took place between 11 and 12 December 2024, with a total of 1,033 respondents from a nationally representative group of those aged 18+ in the UK completing the survey. Data was weighted by age, gender, region, ethnicity and education status.

Other years

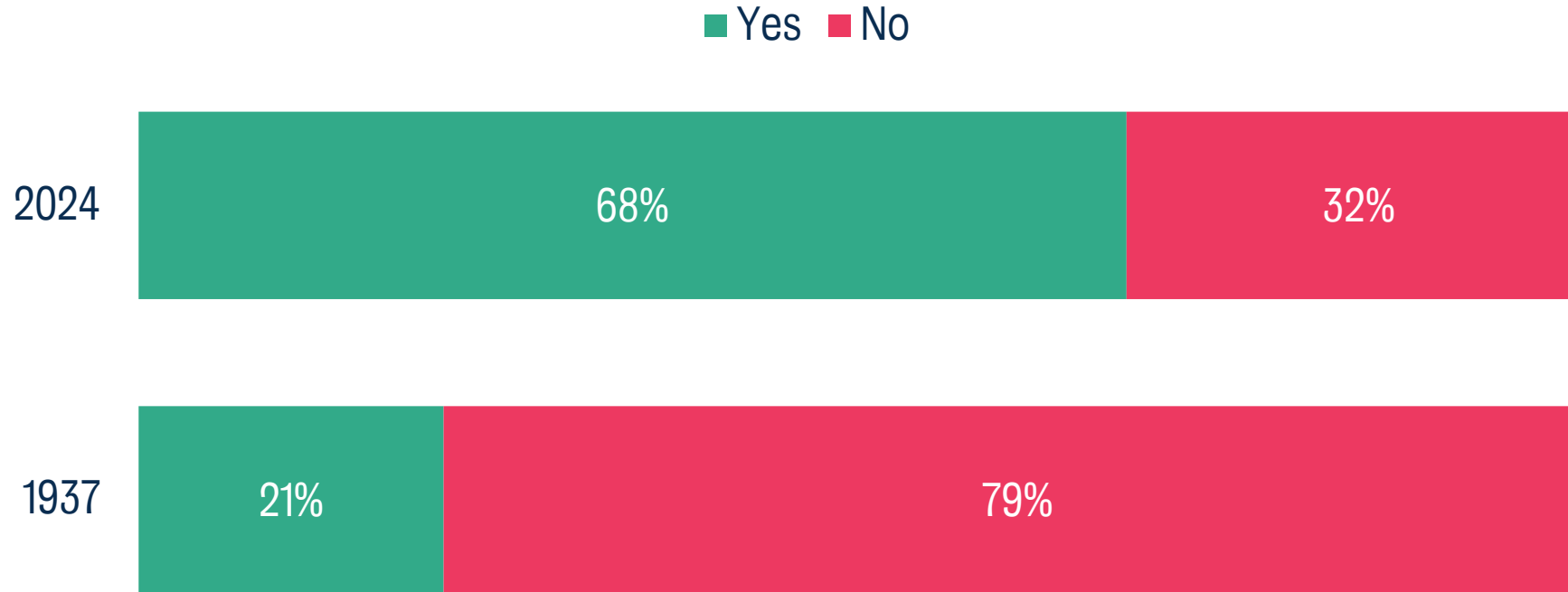
Data from other years was taken from Gallup surveys included in *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain, 1937–1975*, with a sample size of c1,000 GB adults.

Education across the nation: attitudes to homework and mixed-gender schools



Just two in 10 people thought children should have homework after school back in 1937, compared with seven in 10 today

Should children have homework to do at the end of the school day?

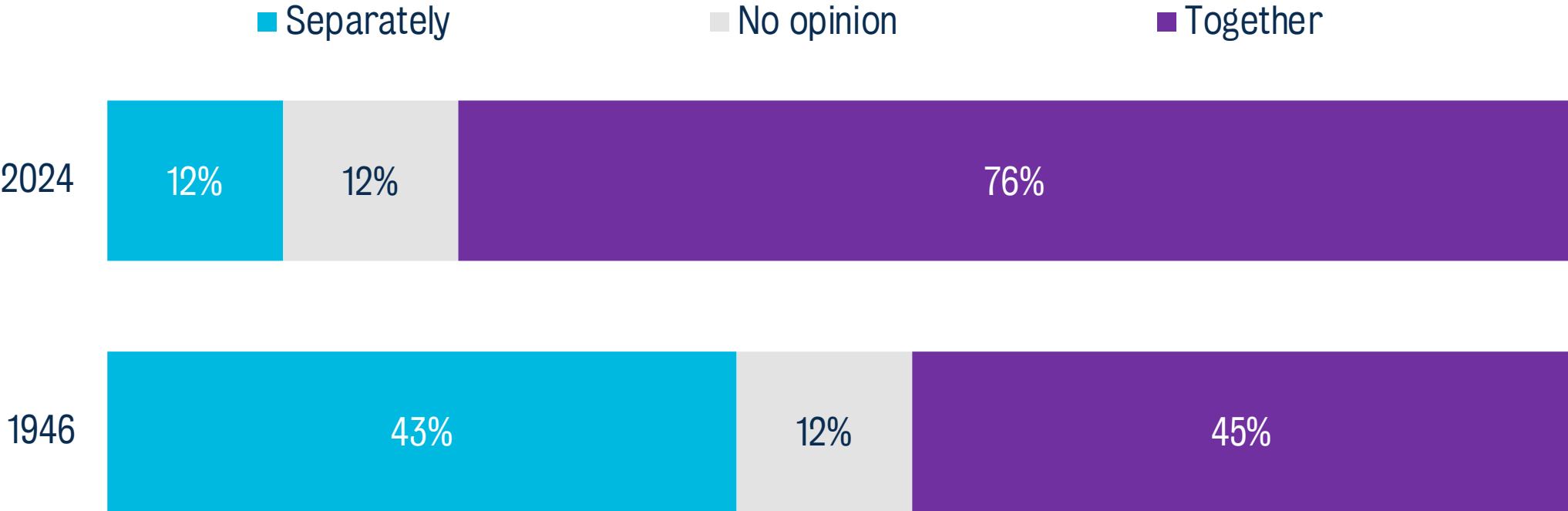


The Education Endowment Foundation – which works to improve teaching and learning through better use of evidence – says that, in both primary and schools, children who do homework appear to make several months of additional progress compared to children who don't do homework.

However, they emphasise the strength of the evidence is weak, in part because a large proportion of the studies into this question are not randomised controlled trials.

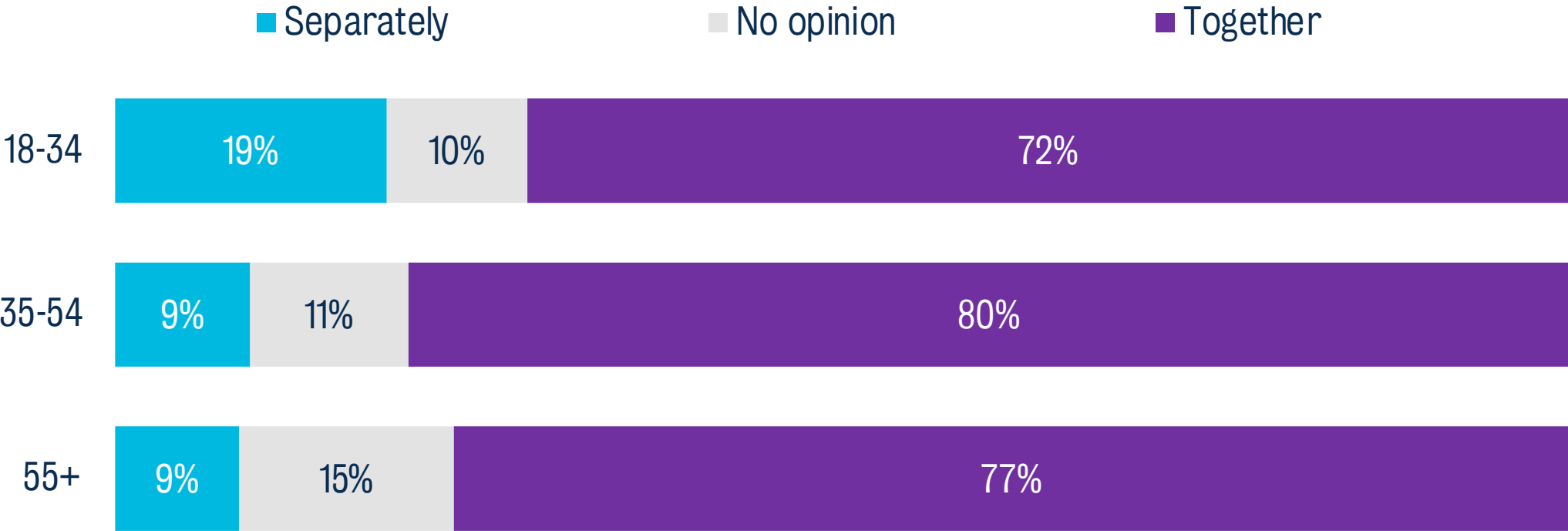
In 1946, the public were split on whether boys and girls should be taught separately or together. Now people are hugely in favour of them being taught together

Should boys and girls over 11 years of age be taught separately or should they be taught together?

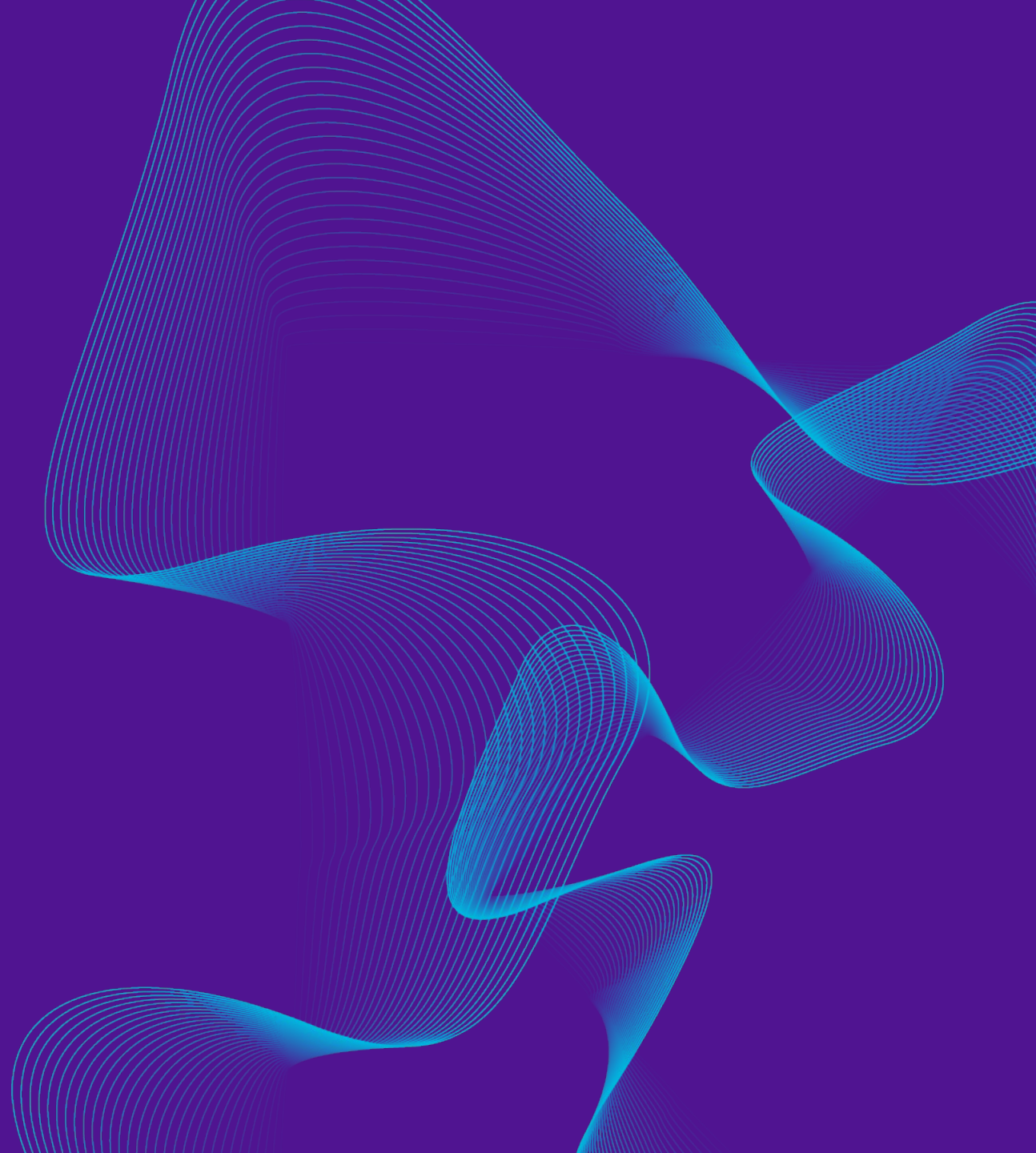


And it's the youngest age group surveyed – 18 to 34s – who are today *most* keen on boys and girls being taught separately

Should boys and girls over 11 years of age be taught separately or should they be taught together?

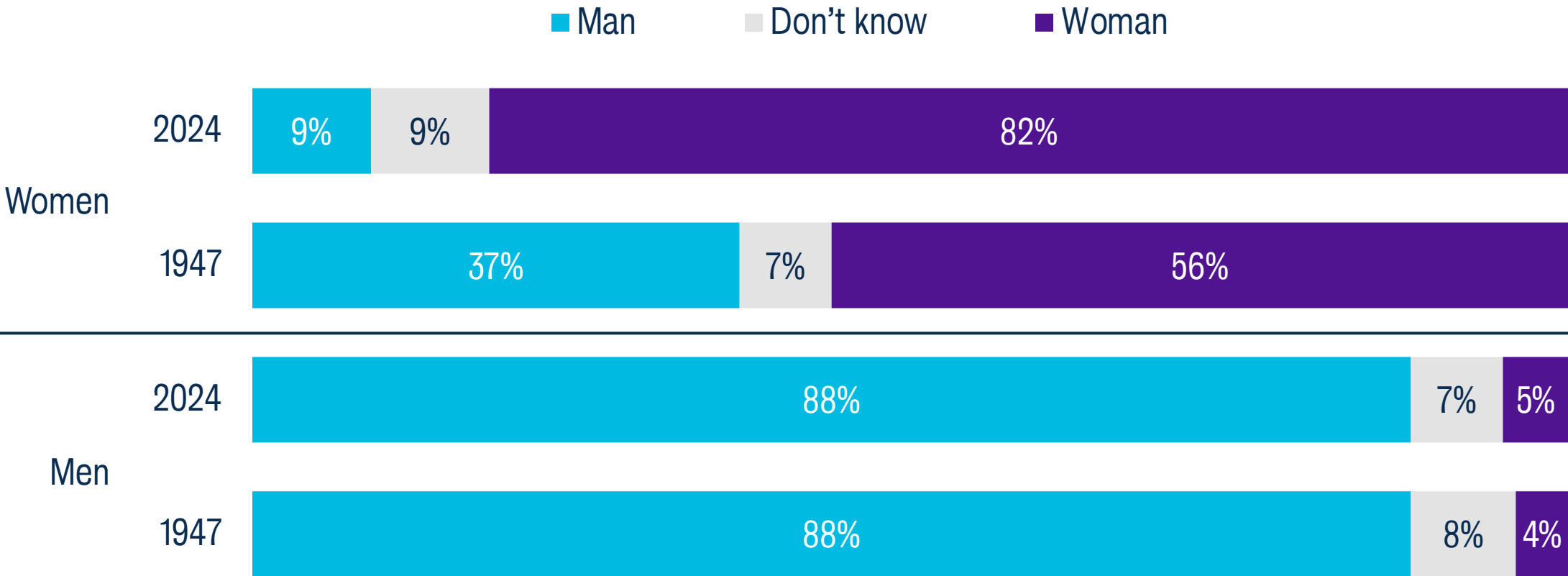


**How women became much
happier to be women**

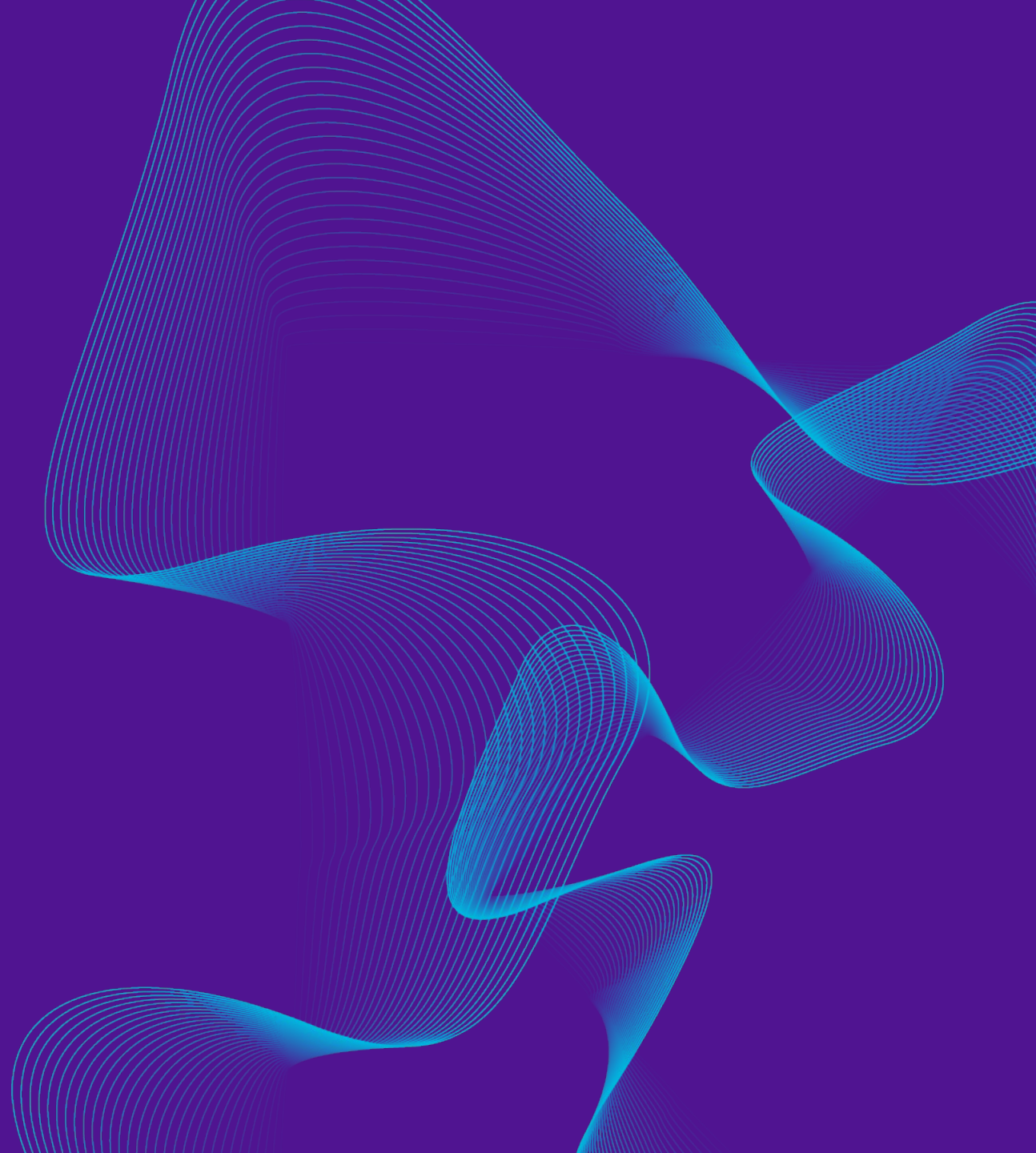


**In 1947, nearly four in ten women said they'd rather be a man – but today just one in 11 feel this way.
Men's preference remains unchanged, with only around one in 20 saying they'd rather be a woman**

If you had a choice, which would you rather be, a man or a woman?



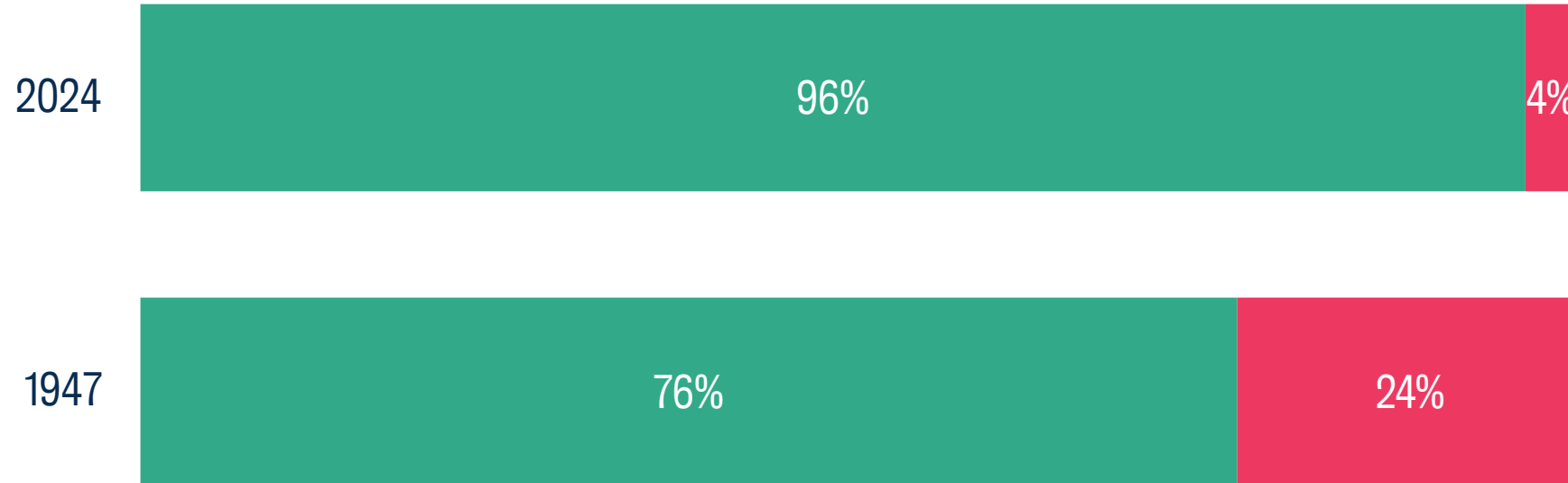
**Everyday life: chores, leisure,
exercise... and getting up in the
morning**



In 1947, a quarter of men said they never help with housework. Today just 4% admit this

Do you ever help with the housework? (Asked to men)

■ Yes ■ No

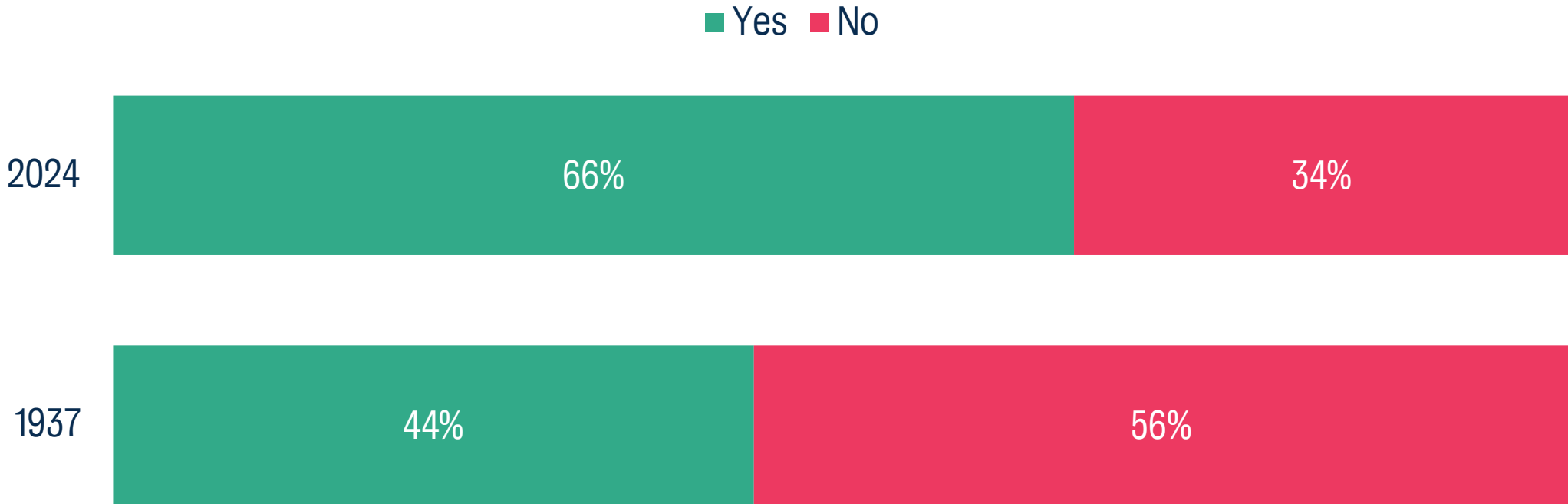


Despite this shift, evidence suggests women still do far more housework than men today.

The Office for National Statistics Time Use Study found women spent an average of 3 hours and 32 minutes per day doing unpaid work activities including housework, caring for others and volunteering in March 2024. This was 57 minutes more than the average among men.

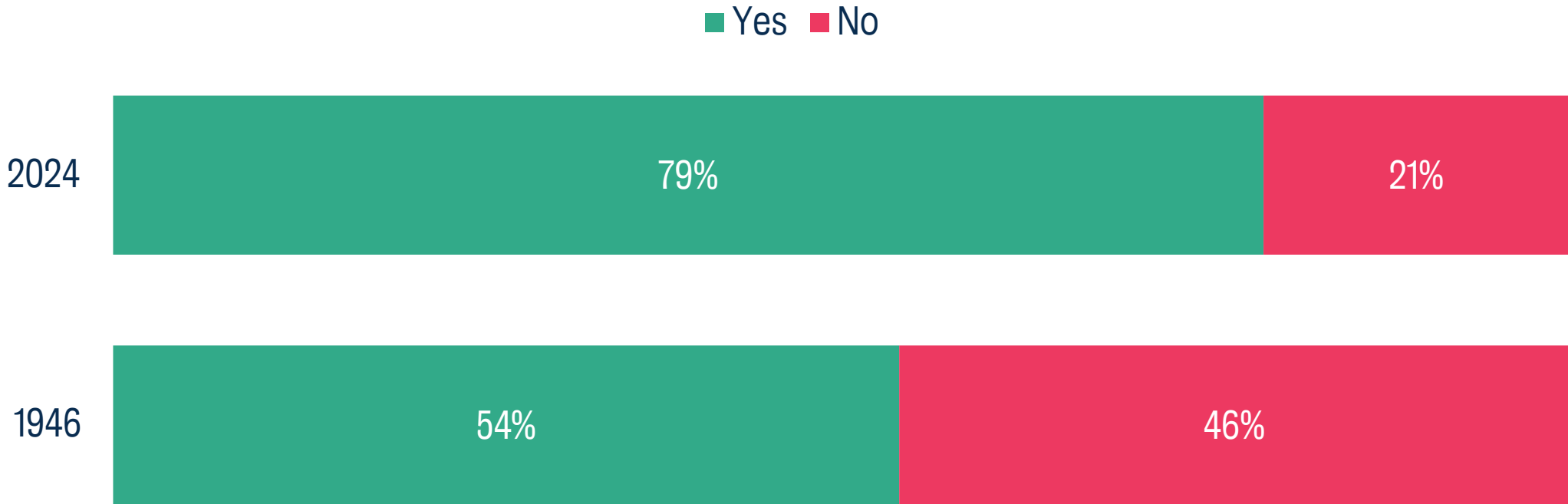
Two-thirds of people now say they exercise to keep fit – up from around four in 10 in 1937...

Do you exercise to keep fit?



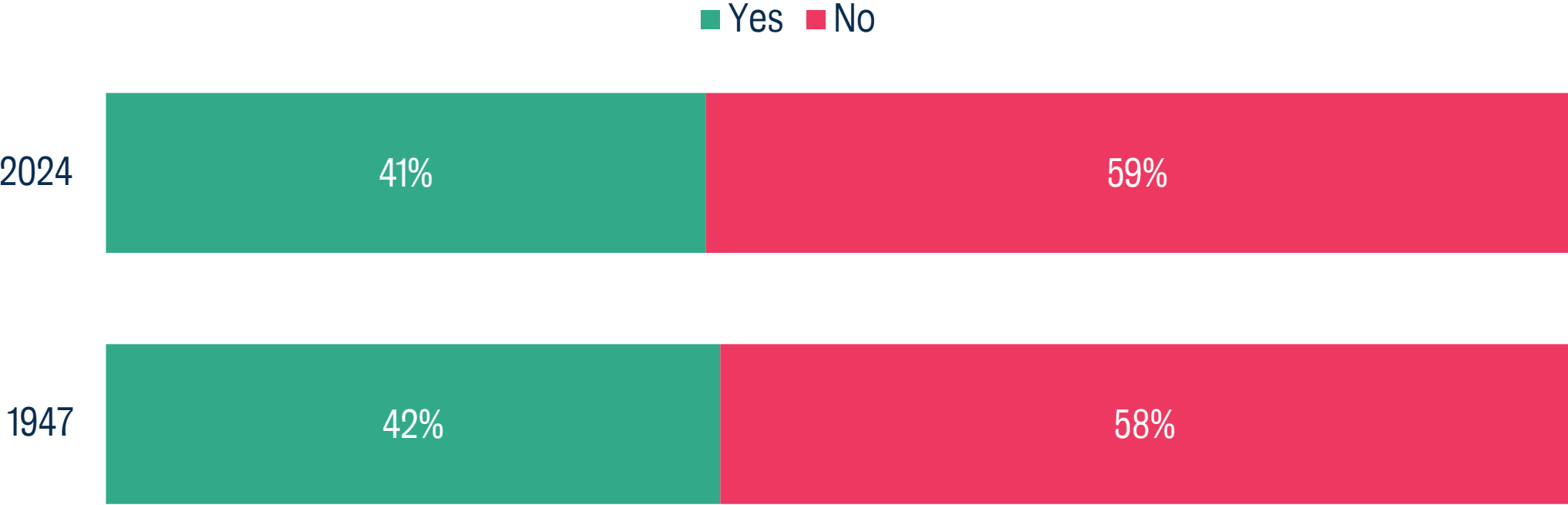
...and the share of the public who say they can swim has also risen hugely – from around half in 1946 to eight in 10 today

Can you swim?



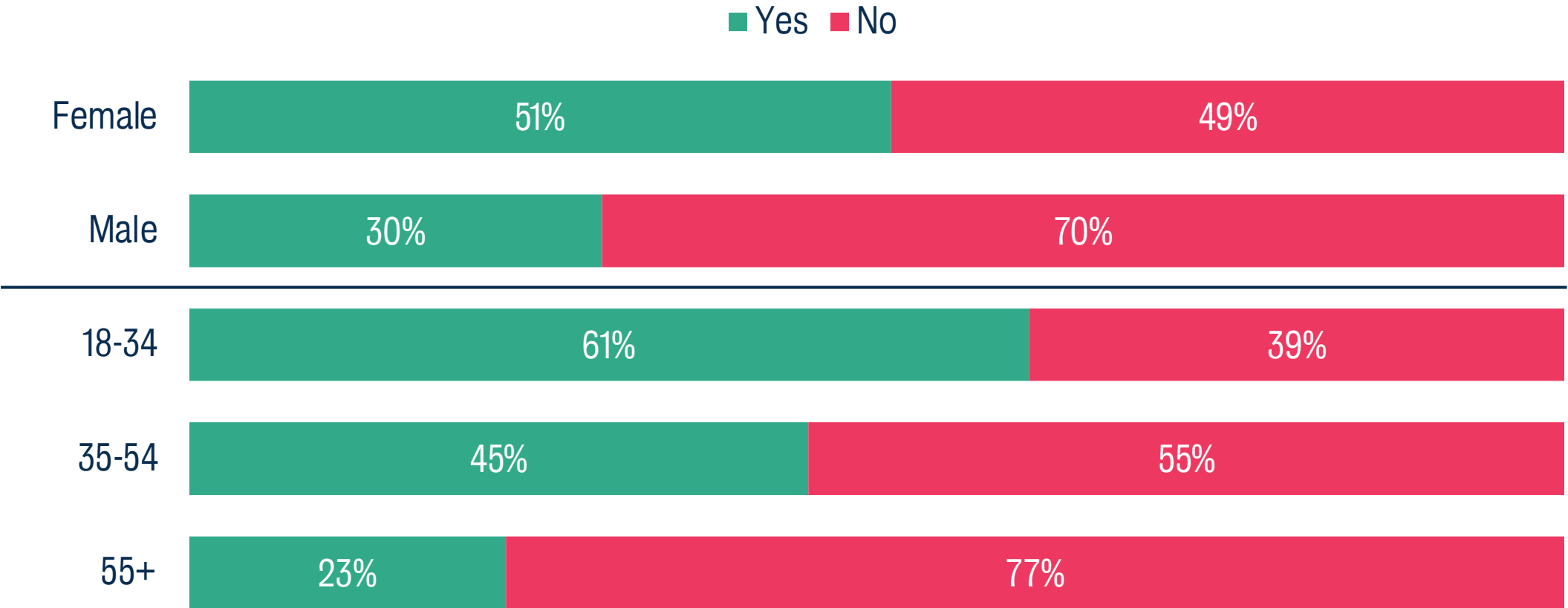
Two in five people say they struggle to get up in the morning today – virtually unchanged from 1947...

Do you find it difficult to get up in the morning?



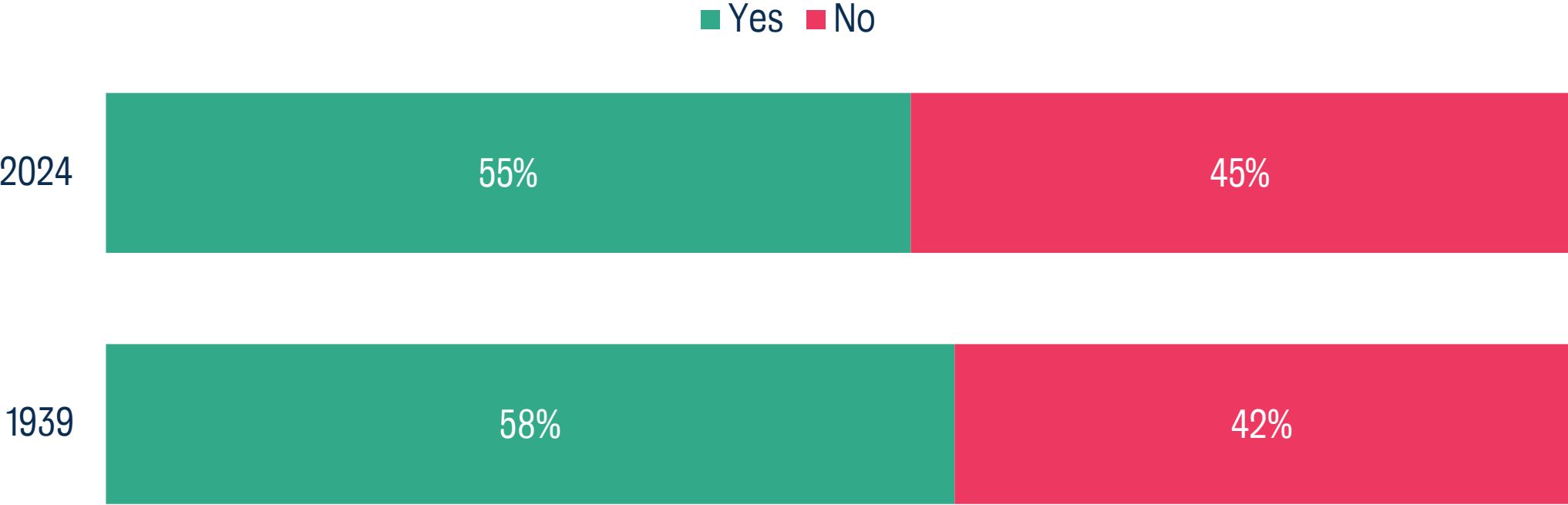
...and women today are much more likely to say they struggle to get up in the morning than men, as are young people compared with older age groups

Do you find it difficult to get up in the morning?

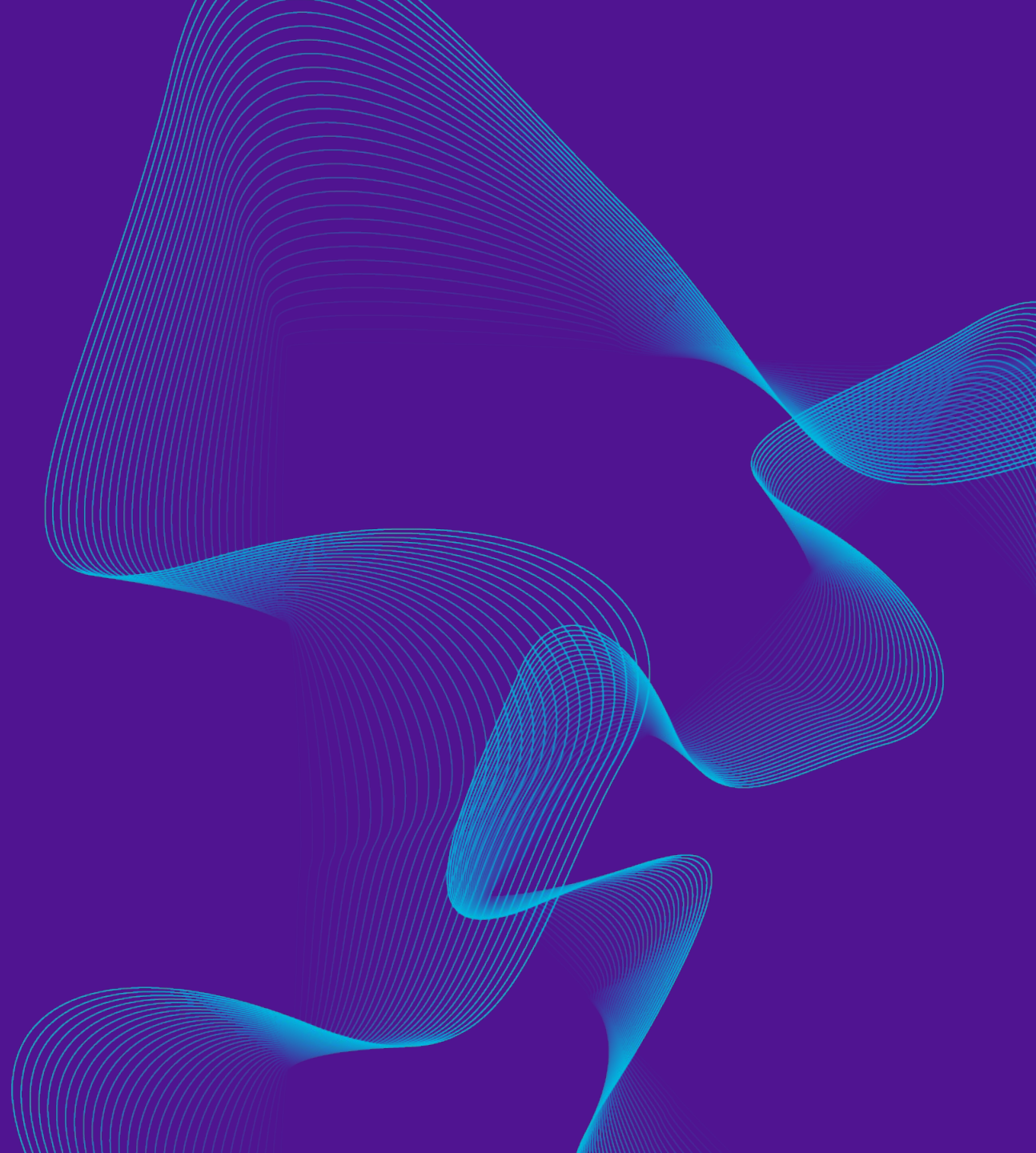


Just over half the public say they have a flower or vegetable garden today – the same as in 1939

Do you have a flower or vegetable garden?

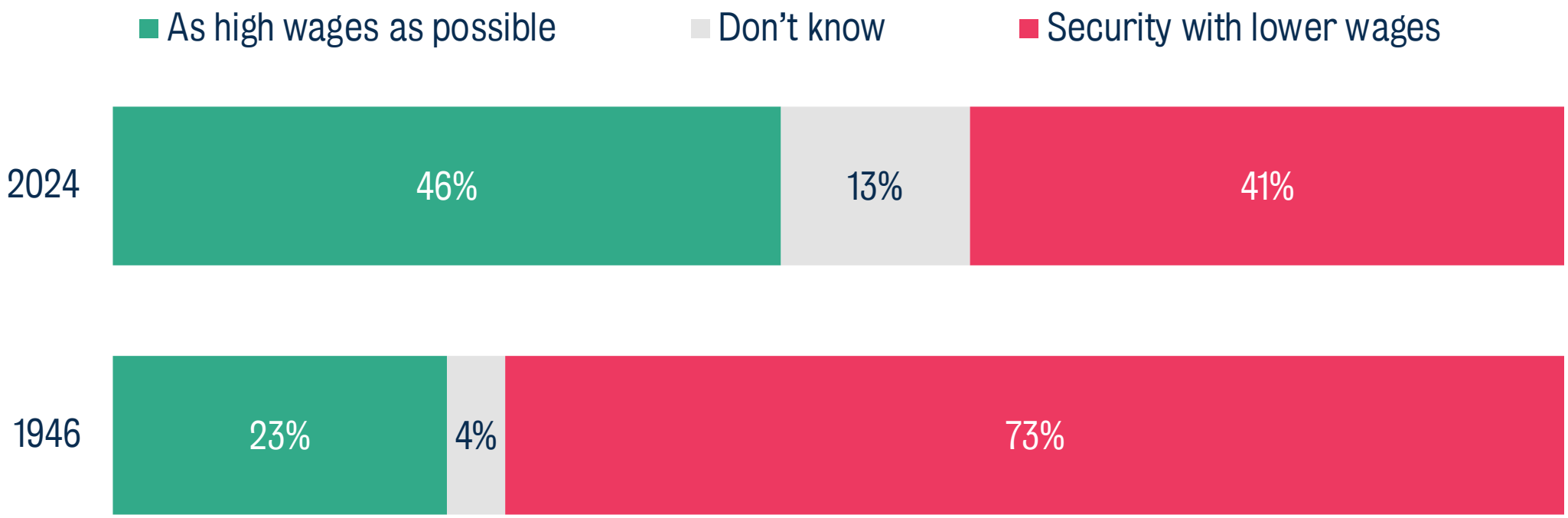


Work and where to live



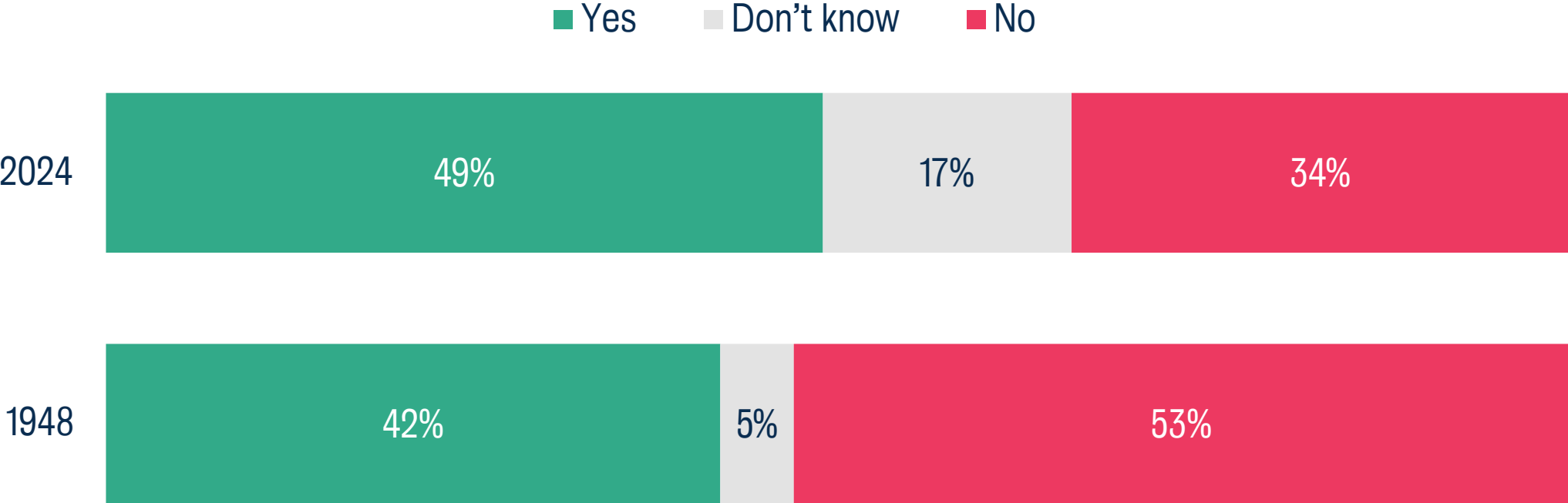
In 1946, the public valued job security far more than high wages – but today opinion is much more closely divided

Which do you think is more important in a job...



Half the public today say they would settle in another country if given the choice – up from around four in 10 in 1948, and with a big decline in the proportion ruling it out completely

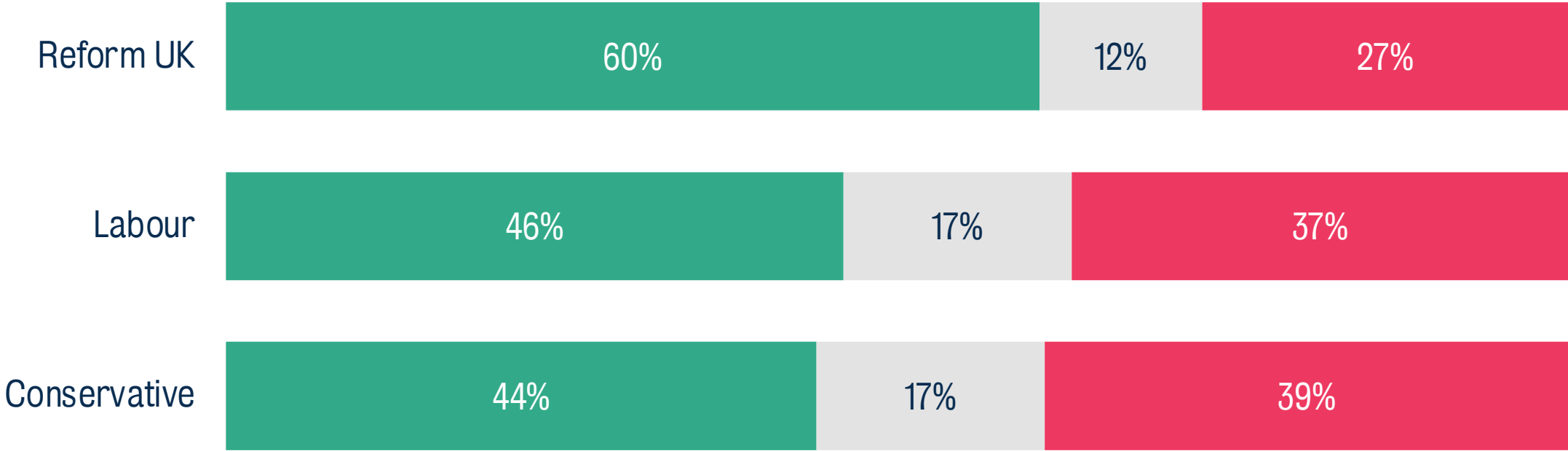
If you were free to do so, would you like to go and settle in another country?



Reform voters stand out as most keen to go and live in another country, if they were free to do so

If you were free to do so, would you like to go and settle in another country?

■ Yes ■ Don't know ■ No



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