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Public attitudes towards the COVID-19 pandemic



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This survey is part of the EU-funded PERITIA project which reviews the role of science in policy decision-making and the conditions under which people should trust and rely on expert opinion that shapes public policy.

The survey was conducted in the UK, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Italy and Germany, drawing on the proprietary online panel of Savanta in the UK and similar panels in their network in the other countries. See the technical note at the end of this report for more details.

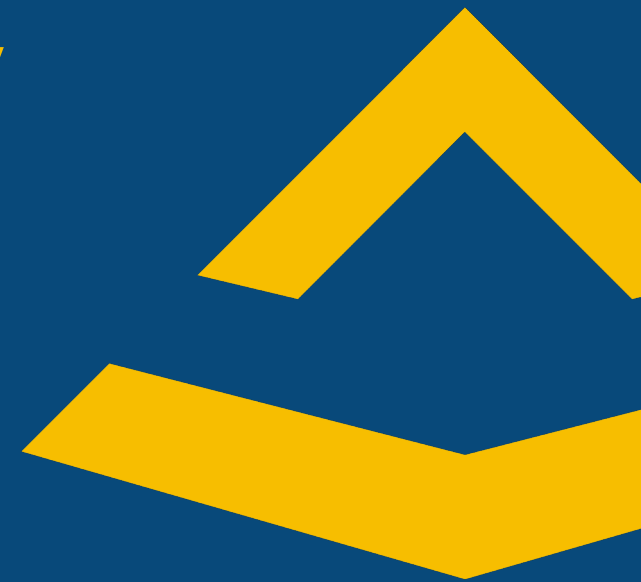
This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 870883.



Knowledge and misperceptions about the COVID-19 pandemic

Across the six countries surveyed, seven in 10 people think that nearly all scientists agree that vaccines are safe – three in ten do not.

Minorities also believe certain Covid conspiracies such as that apparent coronavirus symptoms are linked to 5G network radiation. In the UK, around one in six people say they believe this, while one in three think the government is exaggerating the number of deaths from coronavirus. Those who tend to believe this most are from younger age groups and are religious.



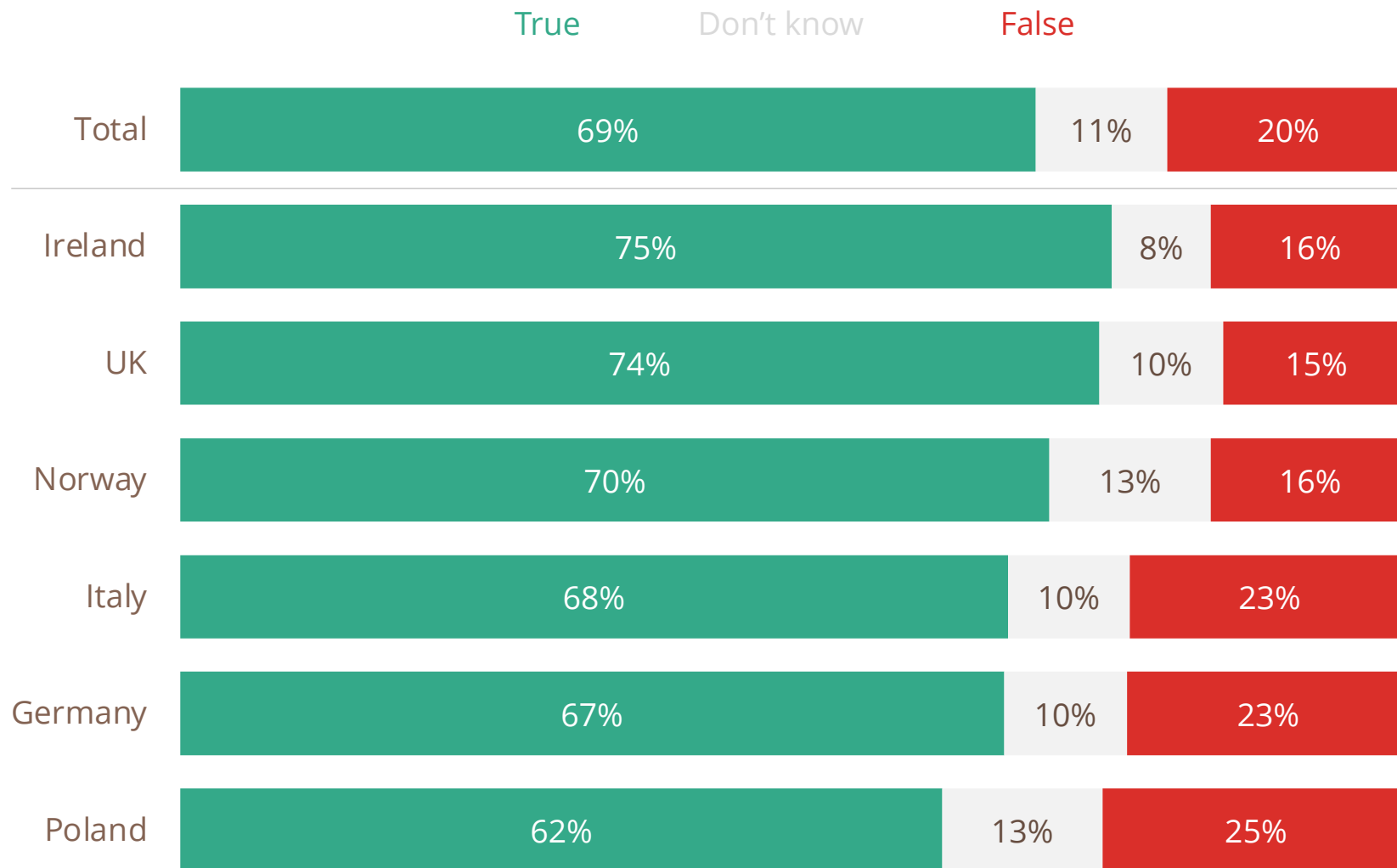
One in seven people in the UK think scientists do not agree that vaccines are safe.

Please say whether you think the following statement is true or false... **Nearly all scientists agree that vaccines are safe**

Even though the World Health Organisation agrees that vaccines are safe and closely monitors their safety,¹ around one in seven (15%) people in the UK think it's false that nearly all scientists agree vaccines are safe, while another one in 10 (10%) say they don't know.

But three-quarters (74%) of the UK public do believe such a scientific consensus exists – virtually joint-highest with Ireland (75%) across the nations surveyed.

By contrast, six in 10 (62%) people in Poland think this is true – the lowest of the countries polled.



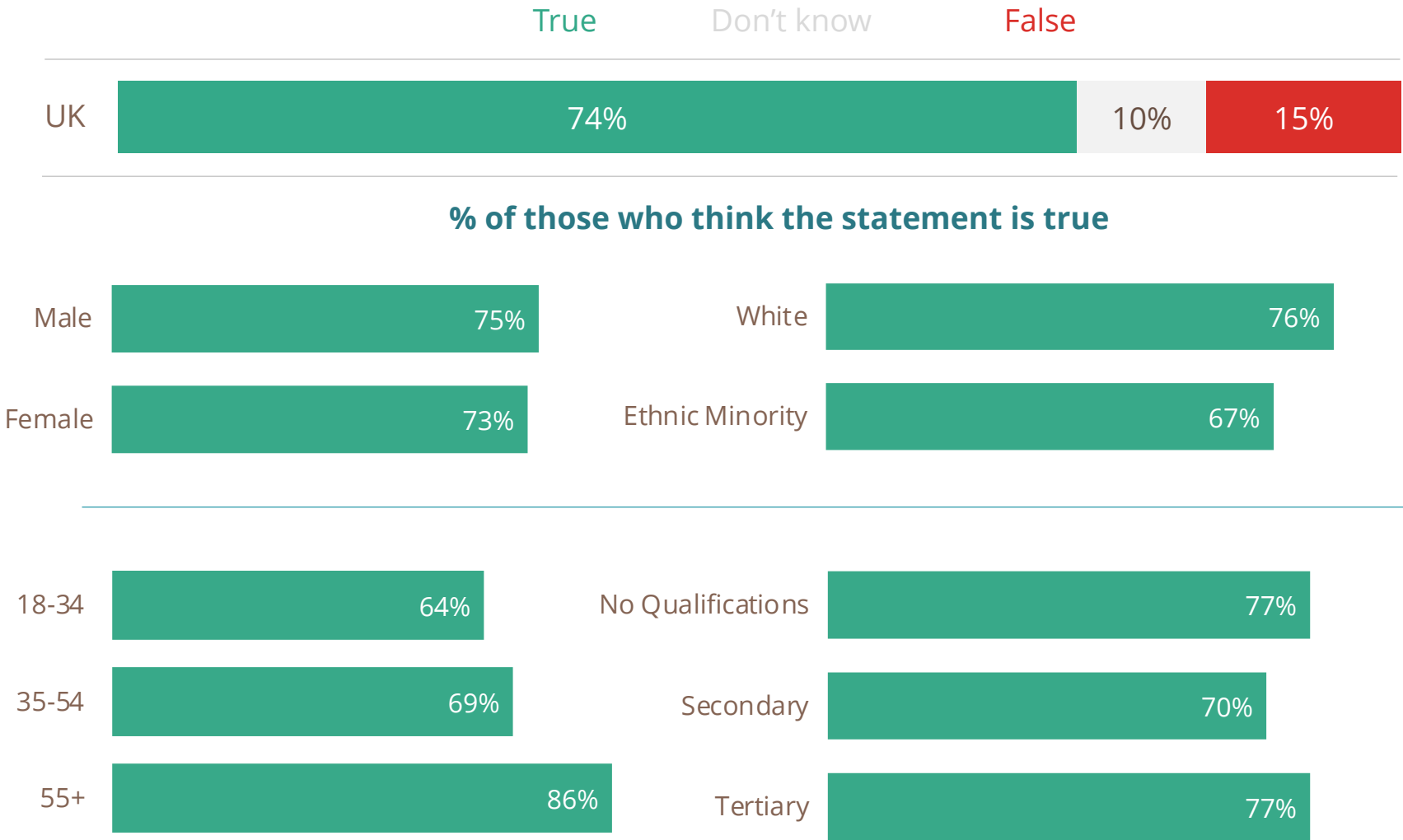
[1] <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/vaccines-and-immunization-vaccine-safety>

Older people in the UK tend to have more accurate beliefs about scientists' views on vaccine safety.

Please say whether you think the following statement is true or false... **Nearly all scientists agree that vaccines are safe – UK**

86% of people aged over 55 in the UK think that nearly all scientists agree that vaccines are safe. This drops to 69% in people aged between 35 and 54, and to 64% in adults 18-34.

Another predictor of this view is ethnicity, with 67% of people belonging to ethnic minorities believing scientists agree vaccines are safe, compared with 76% among white people.



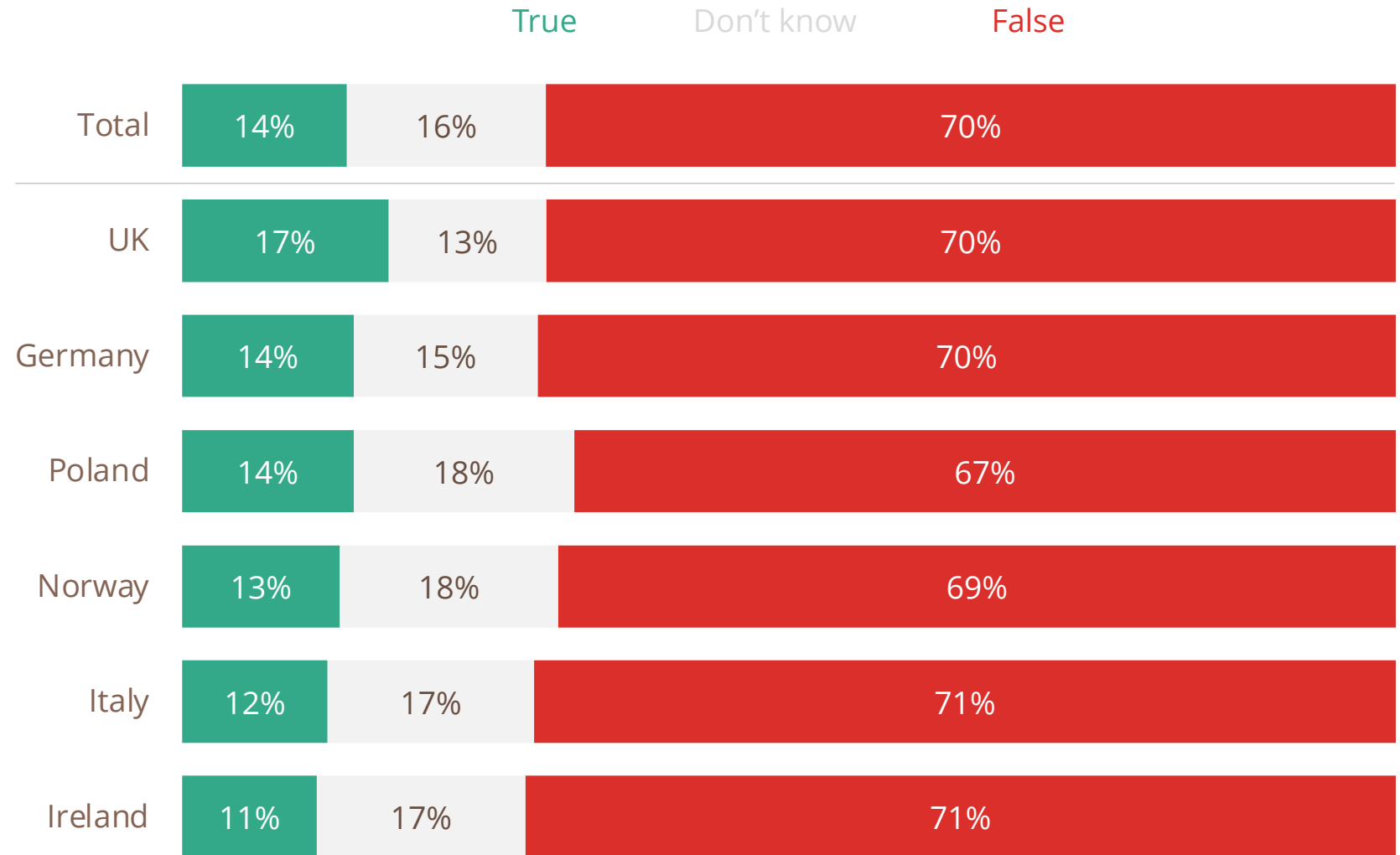
Base: 2,042 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 4–19th January 2022

One in six people in the UK think the symptoms that most people blame on coronavirus appear to be linked to 5G network radiation.

Please say whether you think the following statement is true or false... **The symptoms that most people blame on coronavirus appear to be linked to 5G network radiation**

17% of people in the UK think that the symptoms most people blame on coronavirus appear to be linked to 5G network radiation. Despite this, there is no evidence to link the symptoms of coronavirus to 5G network radiation.¹

A similar perception was found across all of the countries surveyed, where the overall average for this view was 14%.



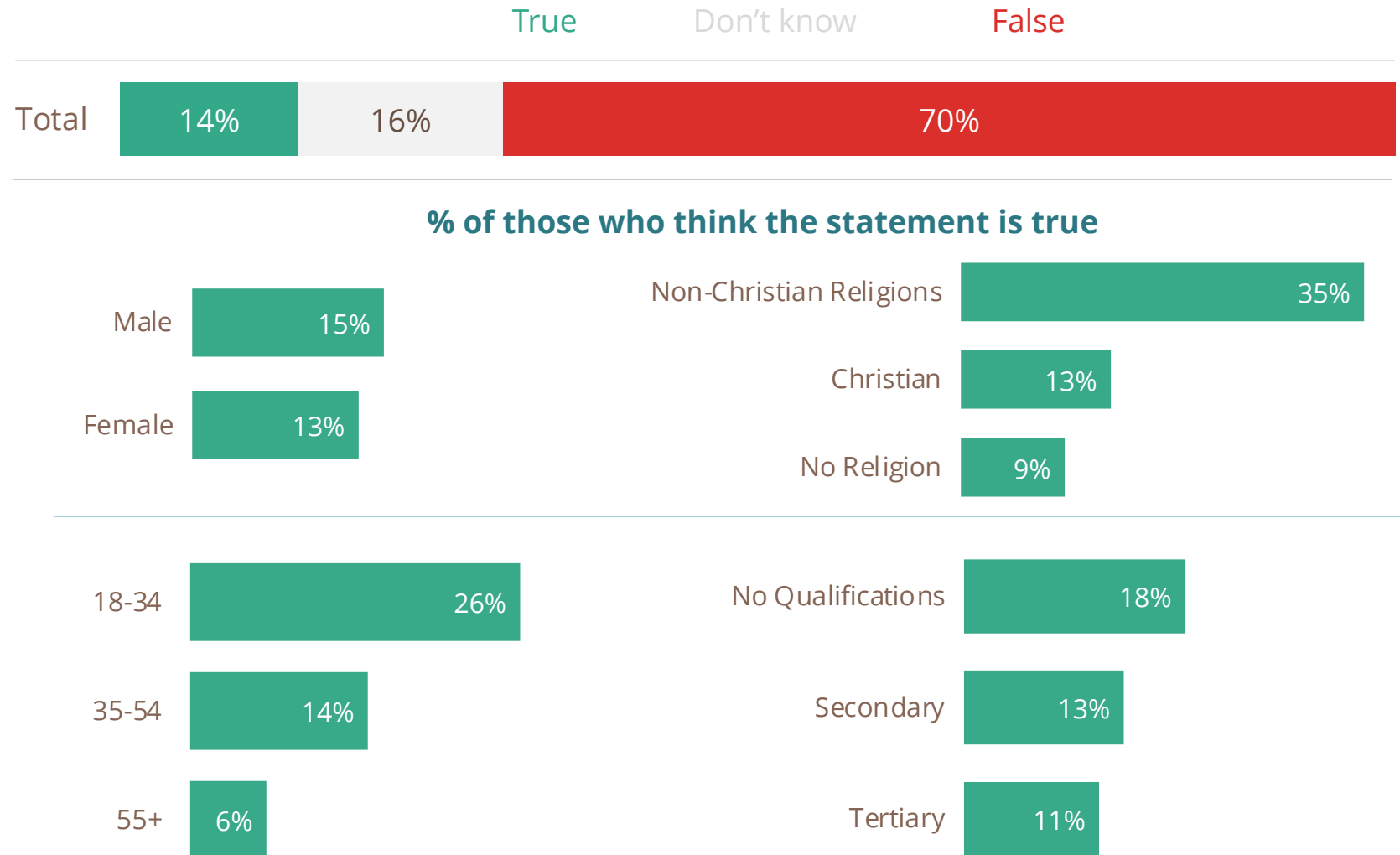
[1] Uthman, M. et al. (2020) '5G Radiation and COVID-19: The Non-Existent Connection,' *International Journal of Research in Electronics and Computer Engineering*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, pp. 34-38.

People who are younger, less educated and more religious are more likely to believe that coronavirus symptoms are linked to 5G network radiation.

Please say whether you think the following statement is true or false... **The symptoms that most people blame on coronavirus appear to be linked to 5G network radiation - UK**

35% of people with a religious affiliation, excluding Christians, think it's true that 5G network radiation is linked to coronavirus symptoms. 9% of people with no religious affiliation agree with this.

When looked at by age, younger people are most likely to believe this conspiracy: 26% of under-34s think it's true, falling to 14% between those aged 35 and 54, and just 6% among people aged over 55.

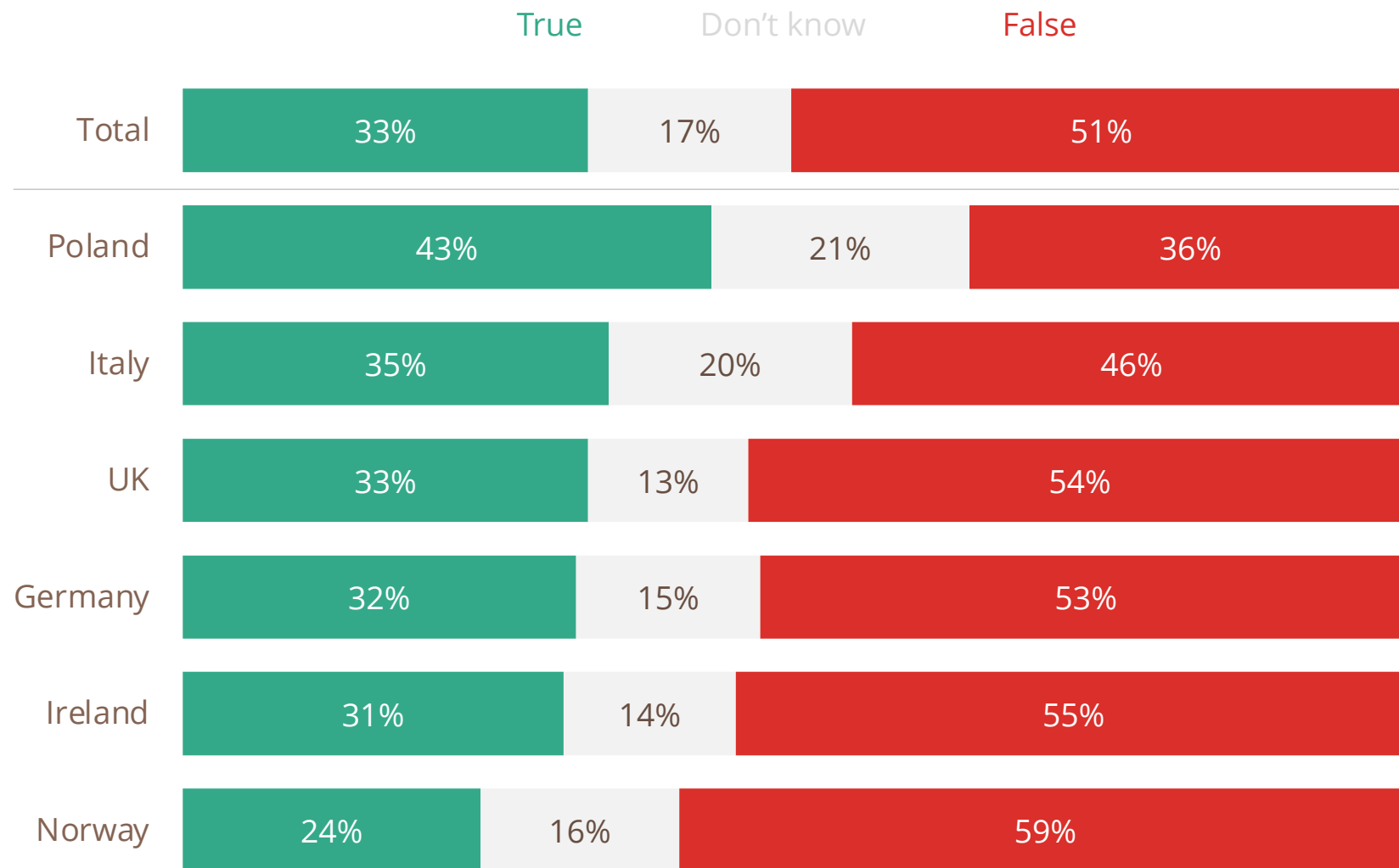


One in three people in the UK think the government is exaggerating the number of deaths from coronavirus

Please say whether you think the following statement is true or false... **The government is exaggerating the number of deaths from coronavirus**

33% of people in the UK think the government is exaggerating the number of deaths from coronavirus – in line with the average across the six countries surveyed.

At the upper end of the range, 43% of people in Poland believe their government is doing this, while at the other, 24% in Norway believe theirs is inflating the number of Covid deaths.



COVID-19 pandemic impact and concern

People in Norway and the UK tend to be the least worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, while people in Poland and Italy tend to be the most worried.

For example, 81% of people in Poland are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for them personally – this is just 49% for people in Norway.

People in all countries tend to be more concerned about the impact of the pandemic for the country and for humanity in general than for themselves personally and for future generations.

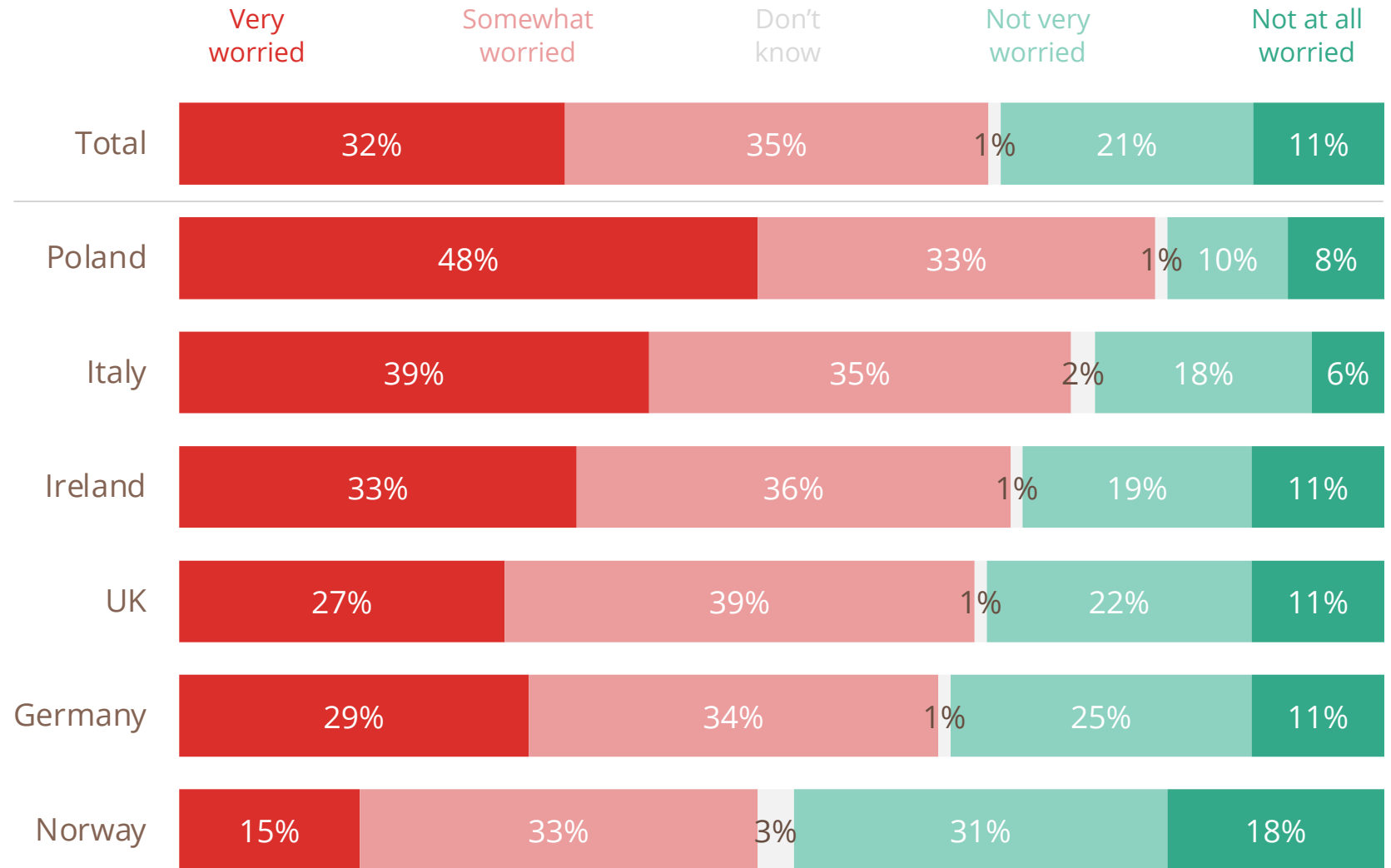


Four in five people in Poland are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for them personally.

How worried, if at all, are you about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic... **for you personally?**

In Poland, 81% of people are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for them personally.

By contrast, in the UK, 66% of people are worried about this. The least worried are those in Norway, where 49% of people are concerned about the pandemic's impact on their personal lives.



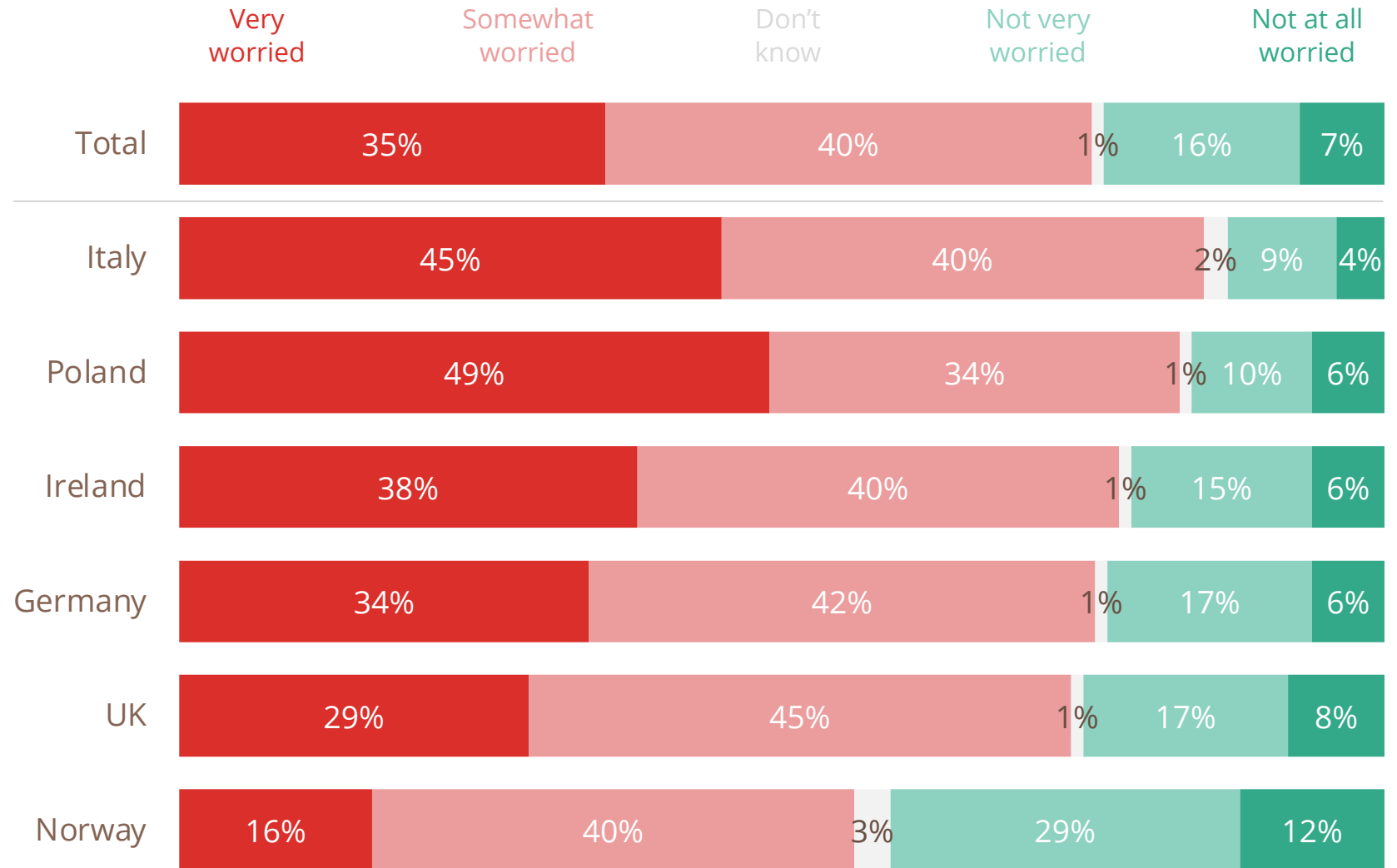
Three-quarters of people in the UK are worried about the impact of coronavirus for the country.

How worried, if at all, are you about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic... **for your country?**

74% of people in the UK are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for the country.

But a number of other countries have higher levels of concern. In Italy, 85% of people are worried about the impact of the pandemic for their country, and in Poland, the figure is 83%.

The least worried are those in Norway, where 56% of people are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for the country.



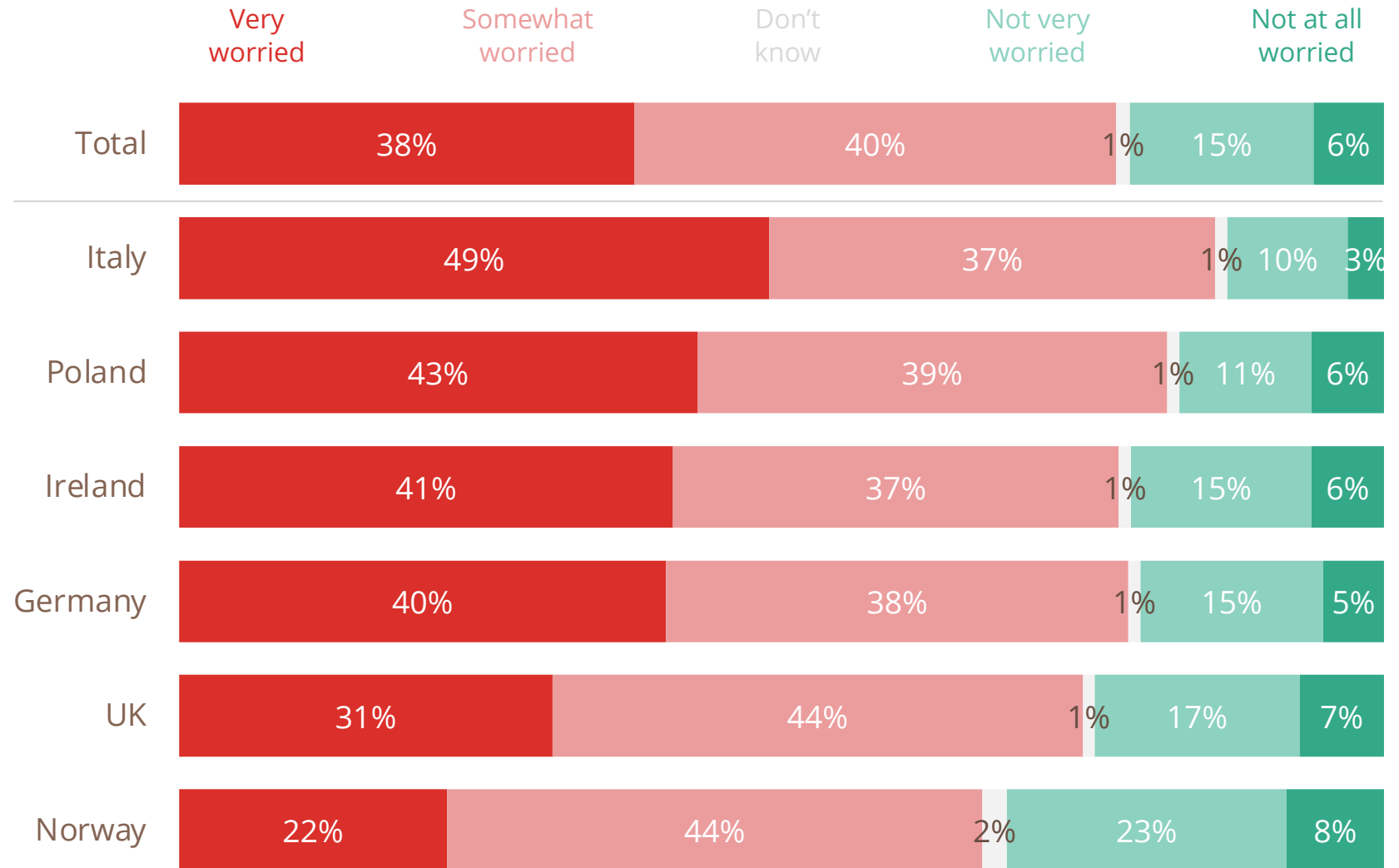
Three quarters of people in the UK are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for humanity in general.

How worried, if at all, are you about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic... **for humanity in general?**

In the UK, 75% of people UK are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for humanity in general.

However, the UK has a relatively low level of concern about this compared with other countries. It is just below the average, which stands at 78%.

Only in Norway are people less worried than those in the UK, with 66% concerned about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for humanity in general.



Two-thirds of people in the UK are worried about the impact of coronavirus for future generations.

How worried, if at all, are you about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic... **for future generations?**

67% of people in the UK are worried about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic for future generations.

A number of other countries are more concerned than people in the UK. In Italy, 77% of people are worried about the impact of the pandemic for future generations, and in Poland, the figure is 77%.

Again, those in Norway are least concerned on this measure, with 53% of people worried about this potential impact of the pandemic.



Action and information on COVID-19

People in all countries show a high level of willingness to comply with actions needed to address the pandemic, such as mask wearing. However, an average of 12% say they would never get vaccinated.

A third of people in the UK think there are more important things to do in life than think about the coronavirus pandemic, and three in ten say they would agree to give part of their income in taxes to help prevent the spread of the disease.

Information on the pandemic tends to come from TV. In the UK, three quarters (76%) of people take their information on coronavirus from this source, while around 40% do so from newspapers and around 30% from both social media and radio.



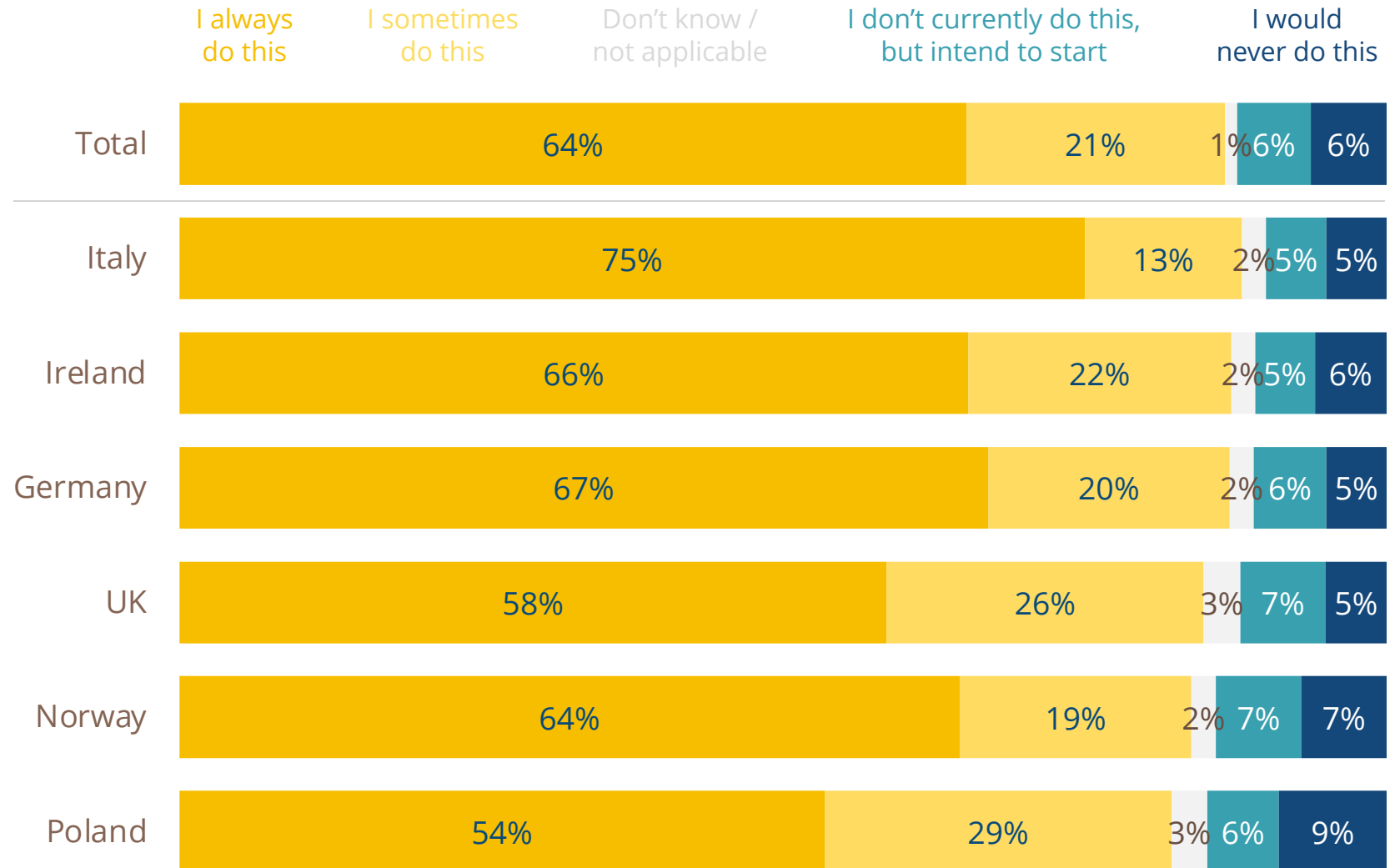
People in the UK are less inclined than those in other countries to always stick to the coronavirus restrictions put in place by government.

Below are some actions that people may take to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For each one, please choose which statement applies to you personally at the moment... **Sticking to all coronavirus restrictions put in place by government**

58% of people in the UK say that they always stick to all coronavirus restrictions put in place by government. This is the second-lowest rate of compliance, with compliance levels only lower in Poland.

Despite this, an additional 26% of people in the UK say that they will at least sometimes stick to all of the coronavirus restrictions put in place by government.

The highest rate of compliance with all coronavirus restrictions put in place by government is in Italy, where 75% of people say that they always do this.



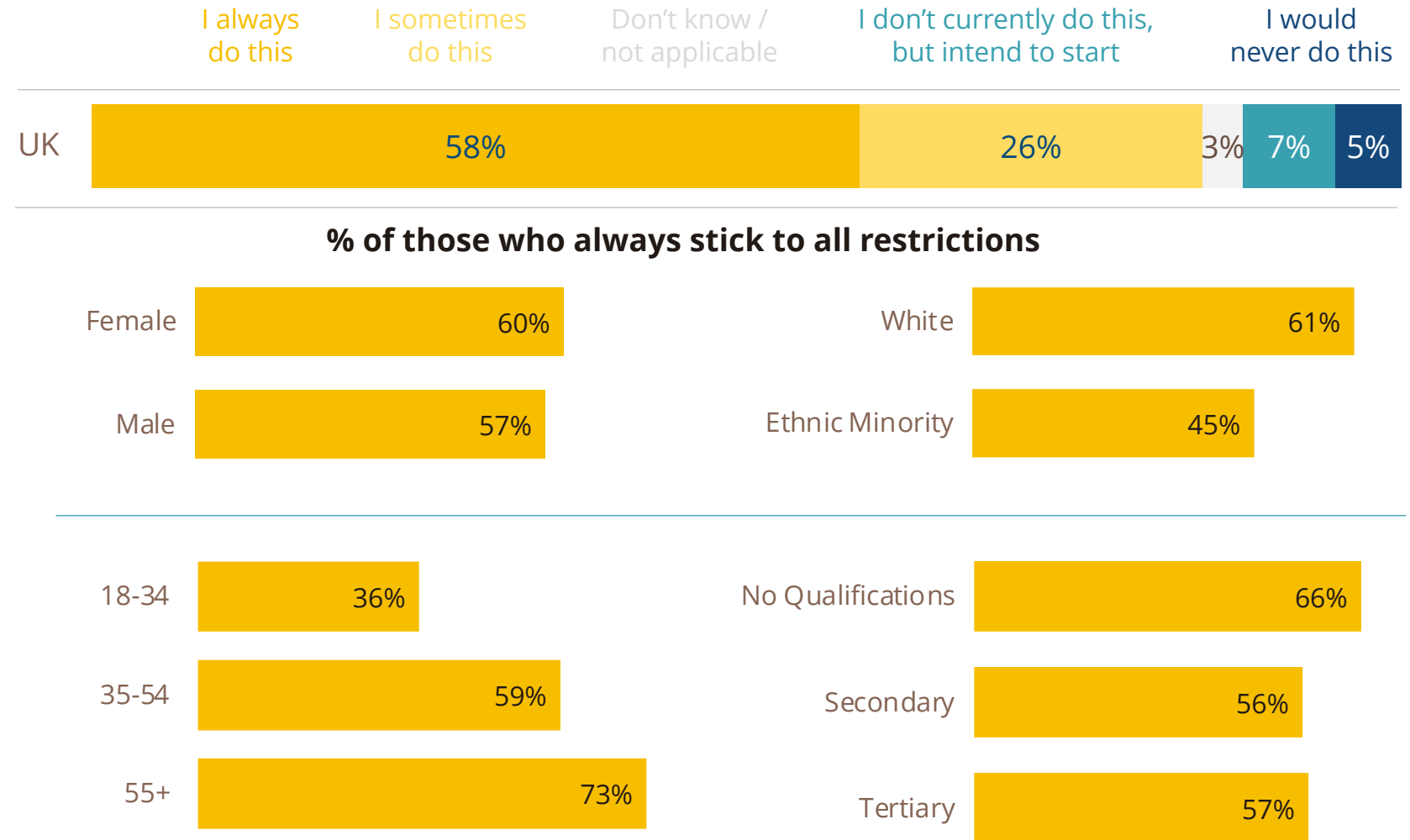
In the UK, older people are more than twice as willing as younger people to say they always stick to COVID restrictions.

Below are some actions that people may take to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For each one, please choose which statement applies to you personally at the moment... **Sticking to all coronavirus restrictions put in place by government**

73% of people aged 55+ in the UK say that they always stick to all of the coronavirus restrictions put in place by the government. This compares with 59% for people aged 35-54, and only 36% for those aged 18-34.

People with a lower level of education are also more willing to always stick to the rules: 66% with no education say they do this, compared with 57% of people with tertiary education.

And 61% of white people report always sticking to the restrictions, while 45% of people from ethnic minority backgrounds say they do.



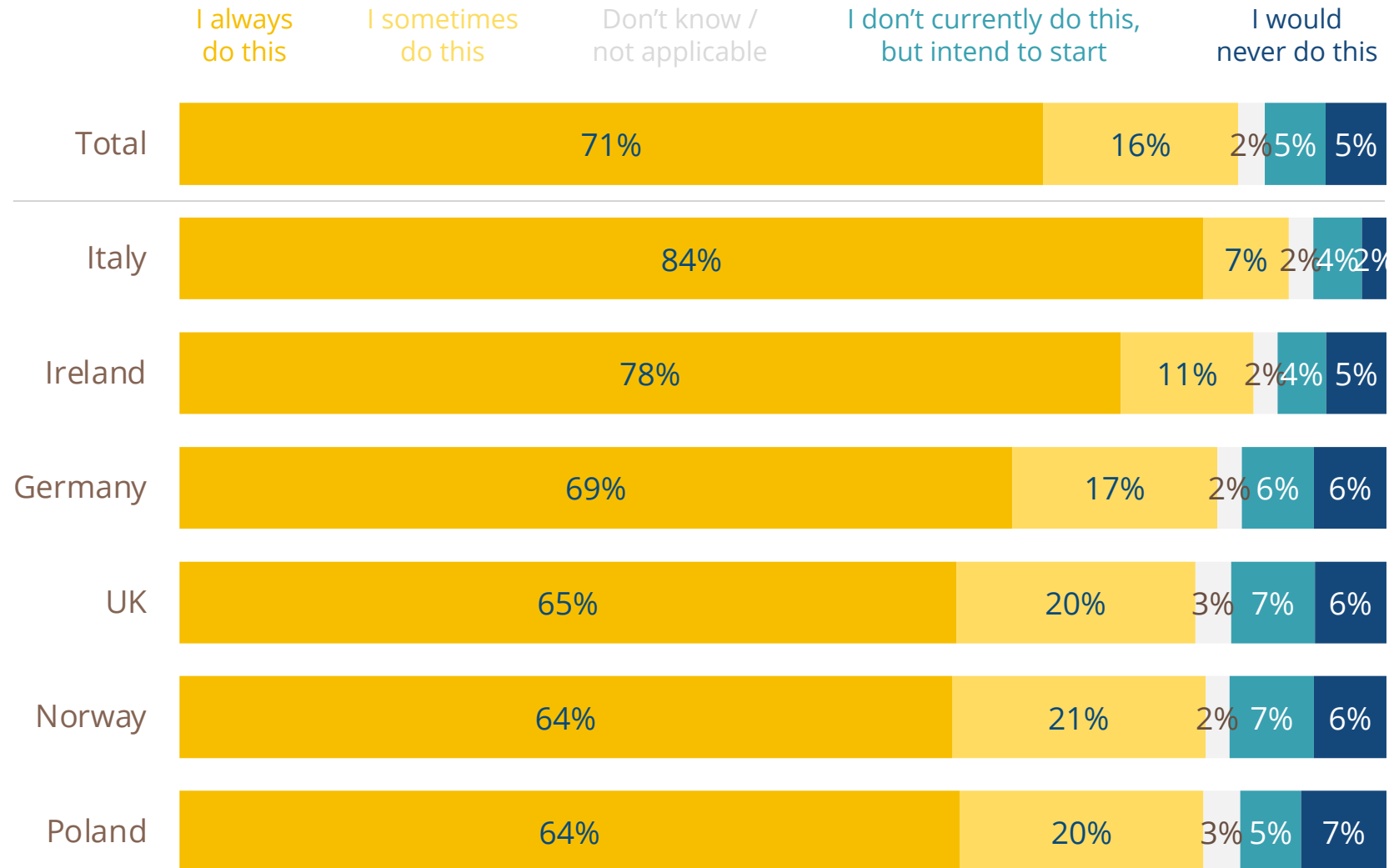
People in the UK are less inclined to wear a mask in public places than people in Italy and Ireland.

Below are some actions that people may take to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For each one, please choose which statement applies to you personally at the moment... **Wearing a mask in public places**

65% of people in the UK say that they always wear a mask in public places. That figure is substantially higher in Italy (84%) and Ireland (78%).

Similar levels of non-compliance with wearing masks are also expressed in Norway and Poland.

However, a significant majority of people in all countries at least sometimes wear masks in public places. In the UK, 85% of people sometimes wear masks in public, with only 6% saying that they would never do this.



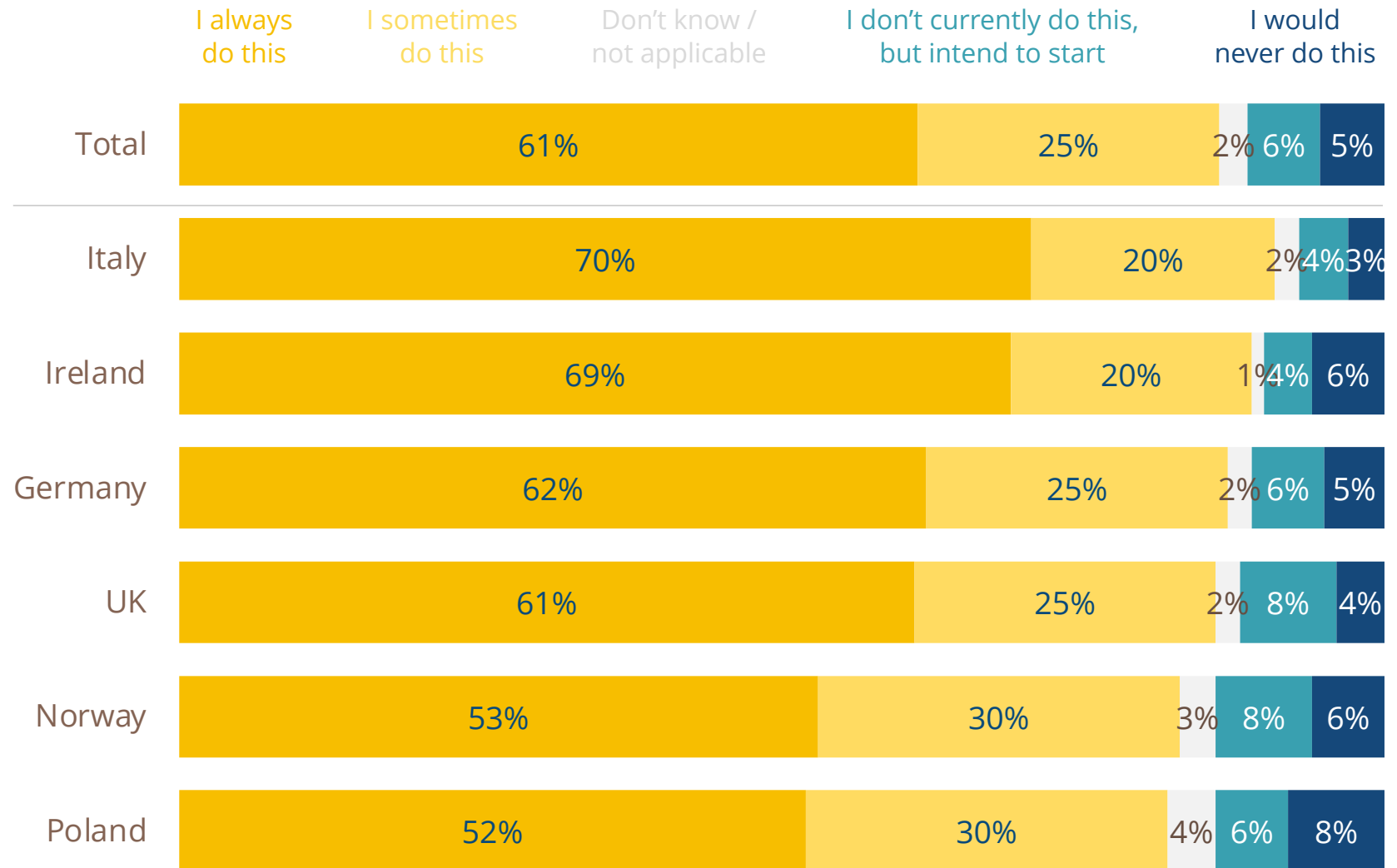
People in Italy and Ireland are the most committed to sanitising their hands regularly to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Below are some actions that people may take to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For each one, please choose which statement applies to you personally at the moment... **Frequently washing and/or sanitising my hands for at least 40 seconds (eg after coughing or sneezing, using the toilet, or before eating or preparing food)**

The vast majority of people in all countries say that they always or sometimes wash and sanitise their hands to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

86% of people in the UK say that they do this. This is exactly the same as the average across all other countries.

90% of people in Italy and 89% of people in Ireland wash and sanitise their hands. The lowest this figure drops to is in Poland where 82% of people do this.

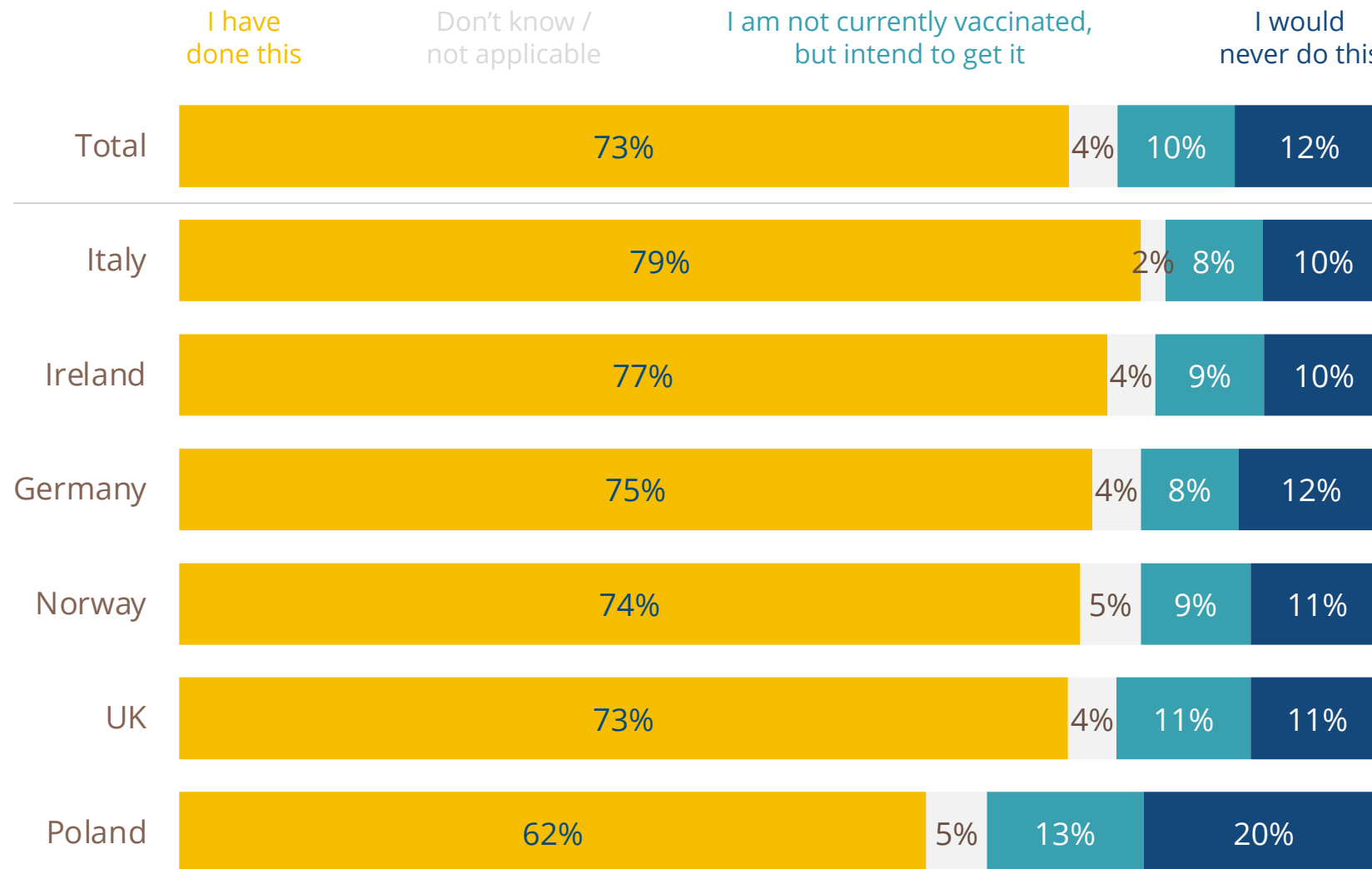


Six in ten people in Poland have had the coronavirus vaccine – two in ten say they would never have the vaccine.

Below are some actions that people may take to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For each one, please choose which statement applies to you personally at the moment... **Having the coronavirus vaccine**

Three-quarters of people in the UK say they have received a vaccination for coronavirus, compared with around one in 10 who say they would never get one – in line with the six-country average.

Vaccine uptake appears lowest in Poland, where 62% say they have had a COVID jab and 20% say they would never have one.



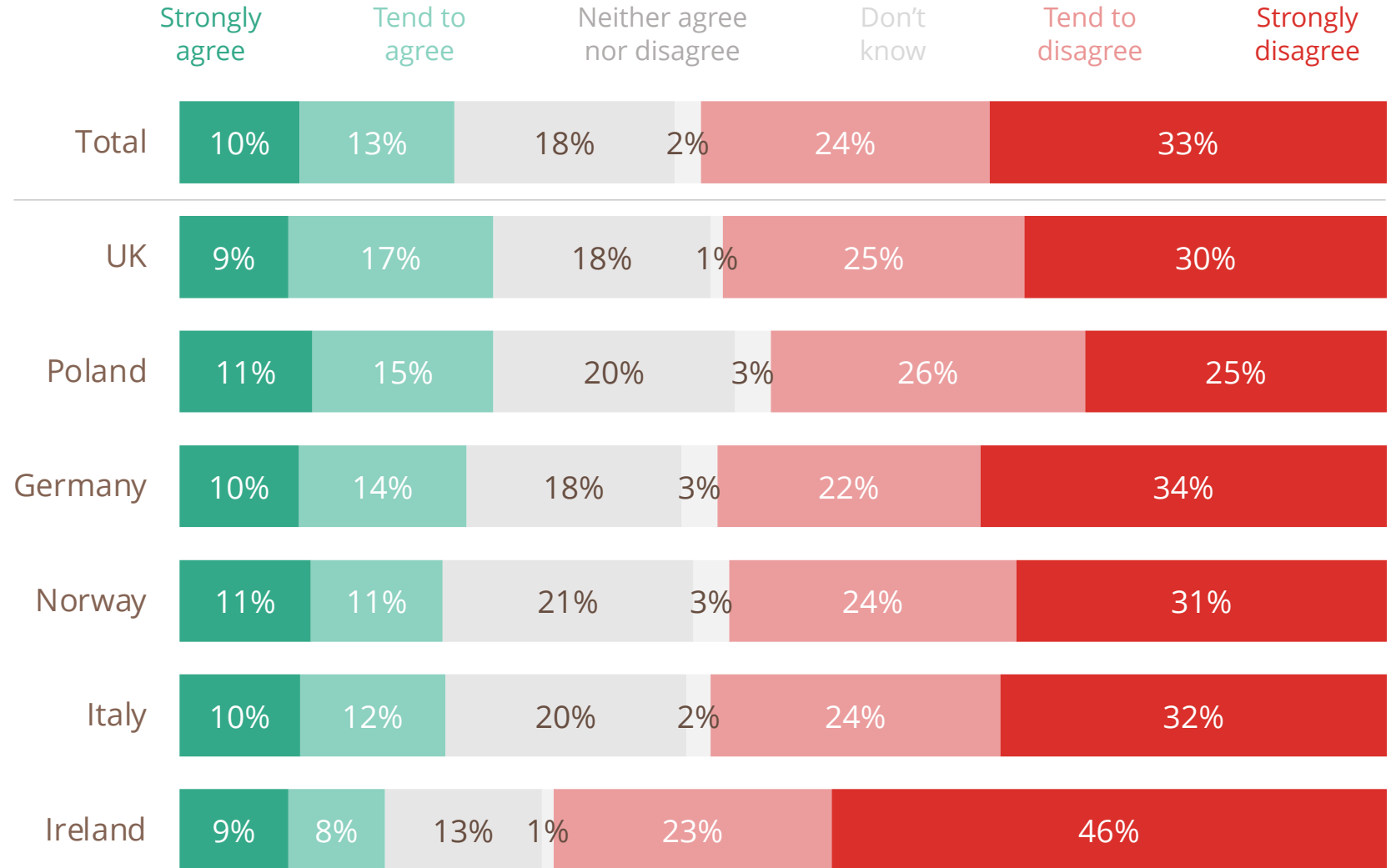
Most people in the UK disagree that there is no point in changing their behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus – but a quarter agree.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **There is no point in changing my behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus because it won't make any difference anyway**

One in four people in the UK agree that there is no point in changing their behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus because it won't make any difference anyway.

However, many more are less pessimistic about a change in behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus. 55% of people at least tend to disagree that there is no point in changing their behaviour.

The view in the UK is similar in most other countries, except for Ireland, where seven in 10 take a less fatalistic view of how their actions can mitigate against the pandemic.



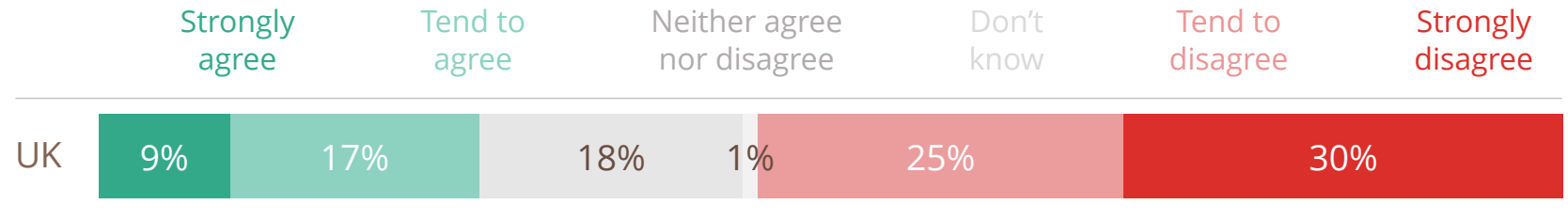
In the UK, younger people and ethnic minorities are more likely to agree that there is no point in changing their behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **There is no point in changing my behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus because it won't make any difference anyway**

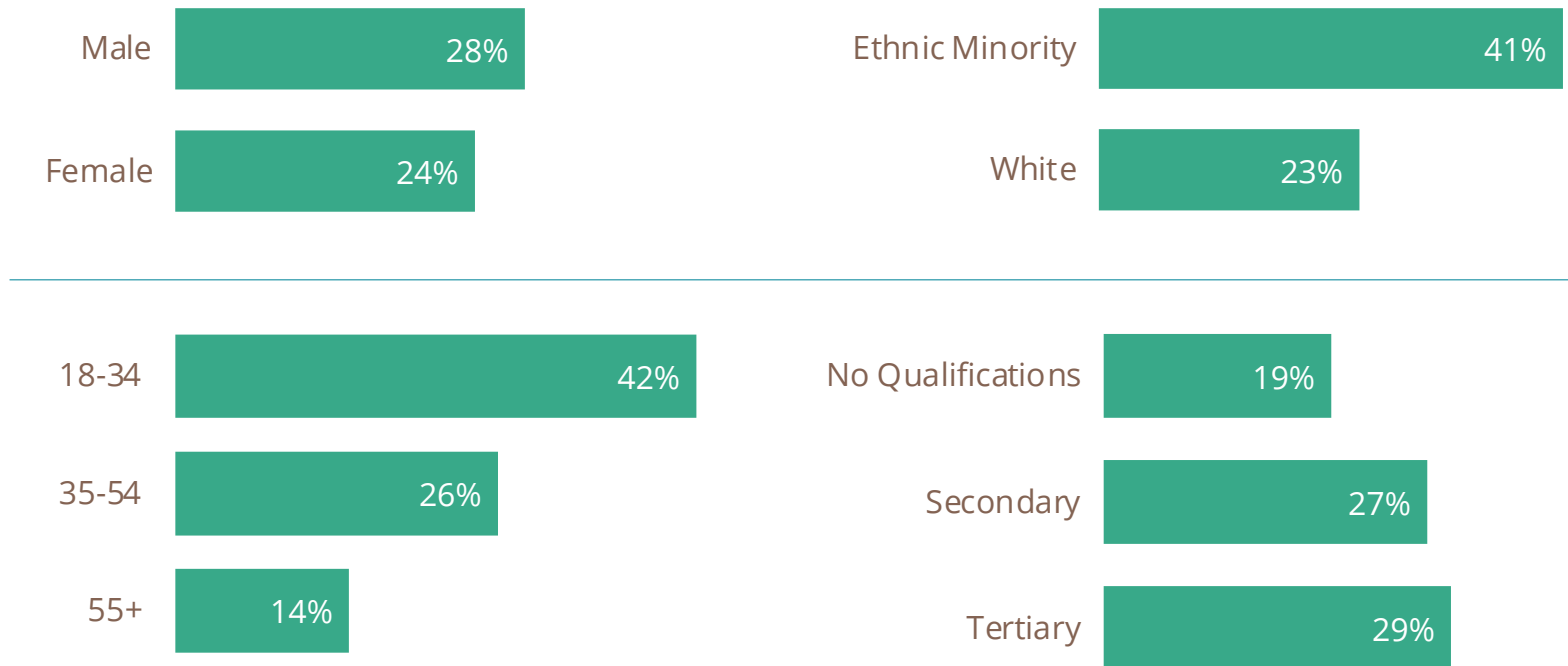
Younger people are more inclined to agree that there is no point in changing their behaviour to help stop the spread of coronavirus because it won't make any difference. 42% of people aged 18-34 agree with this statement, which drops to 26% in people aged 35-54, and to just 14% in those aged 55+.

Another predictor of agreement with this view is ethnicity. 41% of people from an ethnic minority background agree with, compared with 23% among people who are white.

People with at least secondary-level educational qualifications also more inclined to agree with this view than those with no qualifications.



% of those who agree with the statement



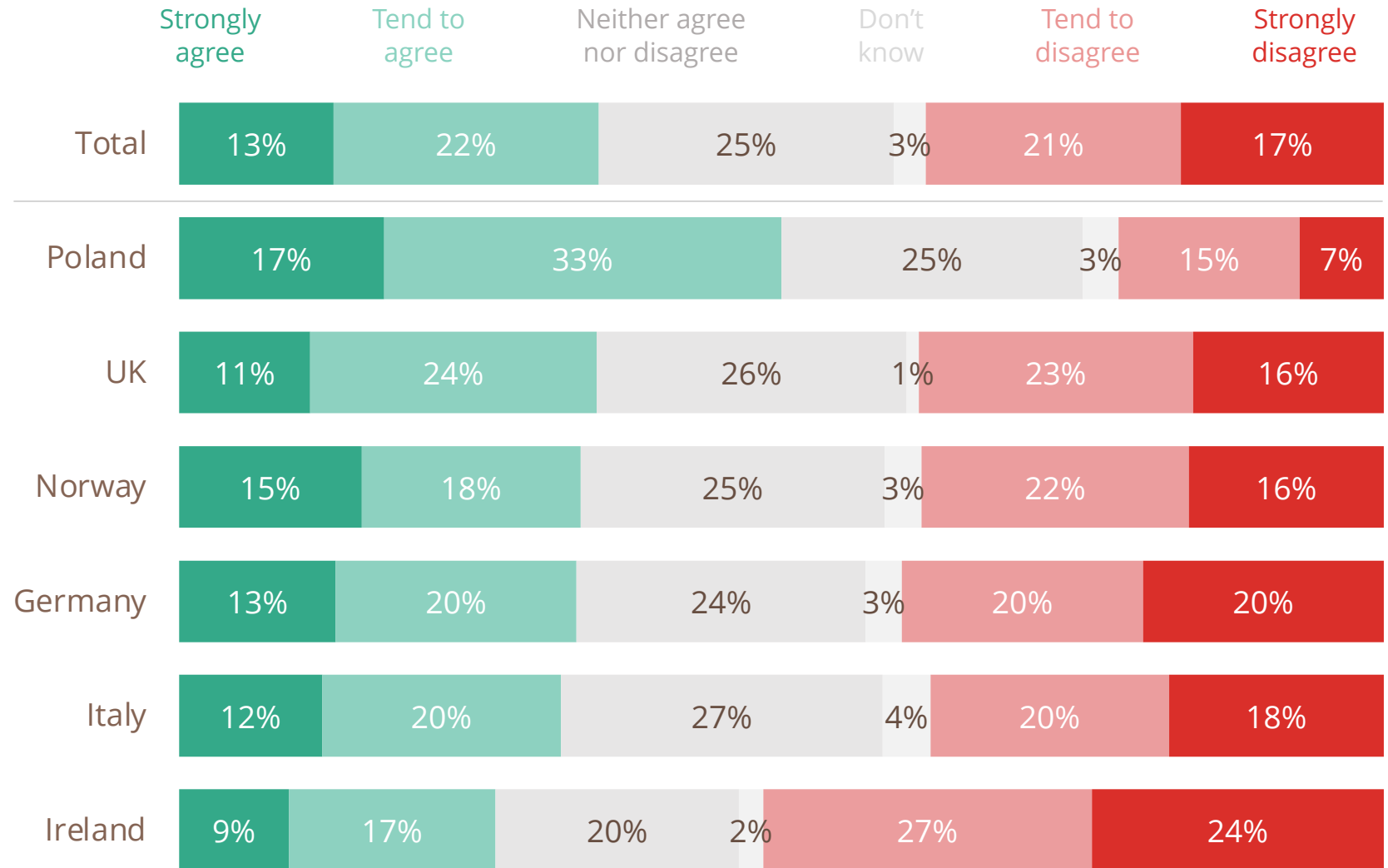
One in two people in Poland, and one in three people in the UK, agree that it is just too difficult for someone like them to do much about the coronavirus pandemic.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the coronavirus pandemic**

34% of people in the UK agree that it is just too difficult for someone like them to do much about the coronavirus pandemic – virtually the same as the six-country average.

The country with the lowest agreement is Ireland, where 26% of people agree that it is just too difficult for someone like them to do much about the coronavirus pandemic.

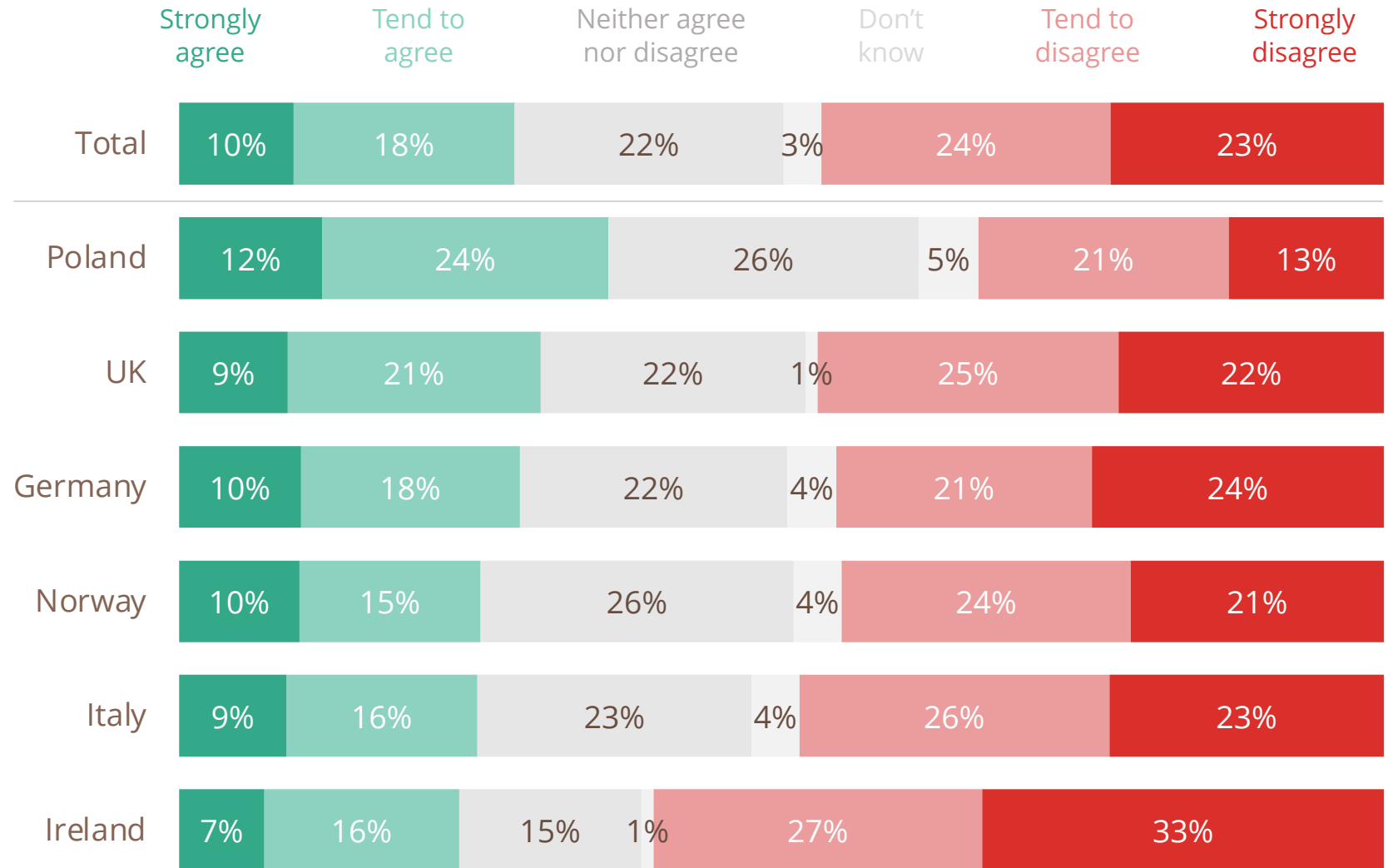
Poland – where this pessimistic view is most common – is the only country where a majority agree.



Three in ten people in the UK think that it's too late to do anything about the coronavirus pandemic.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **The coronavirus pandemic is beyond control – it's too late to do anything about it**

In the UK, 30% of people agree that the coronavirus pandemic is beyond control – it's too late to do anything about it. This compares with 46% who disagree with this view – the same as the overall average.

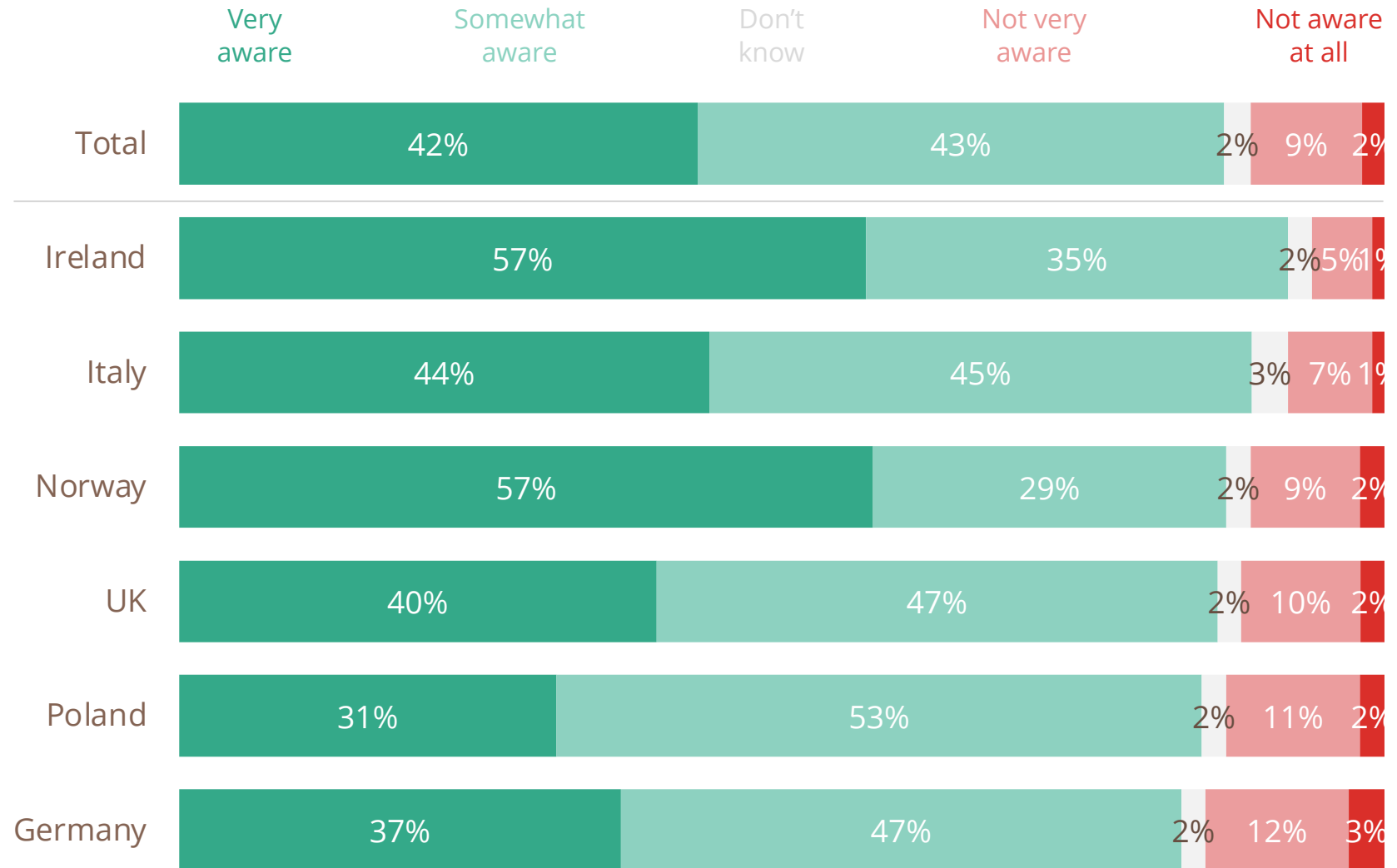


The majority of people in all countries are aware of the actions being taken to address the coronavirus pandemic.

How aware, if at all, would you say you are about actions currently being taken to address the coronavirus pandemic in [your country]?

87% of people in the UK say that they are aware of the actions being taken to address the coronavirus pandemic, which is the same as the overall average.

All other countries showed a similarly high degree of awareness. The country with the most awareness of these measures was Ireland, where 91% of people said that they were aware of the measures, and the lowest was in Germany, where 83% of people said that they were aware of them.



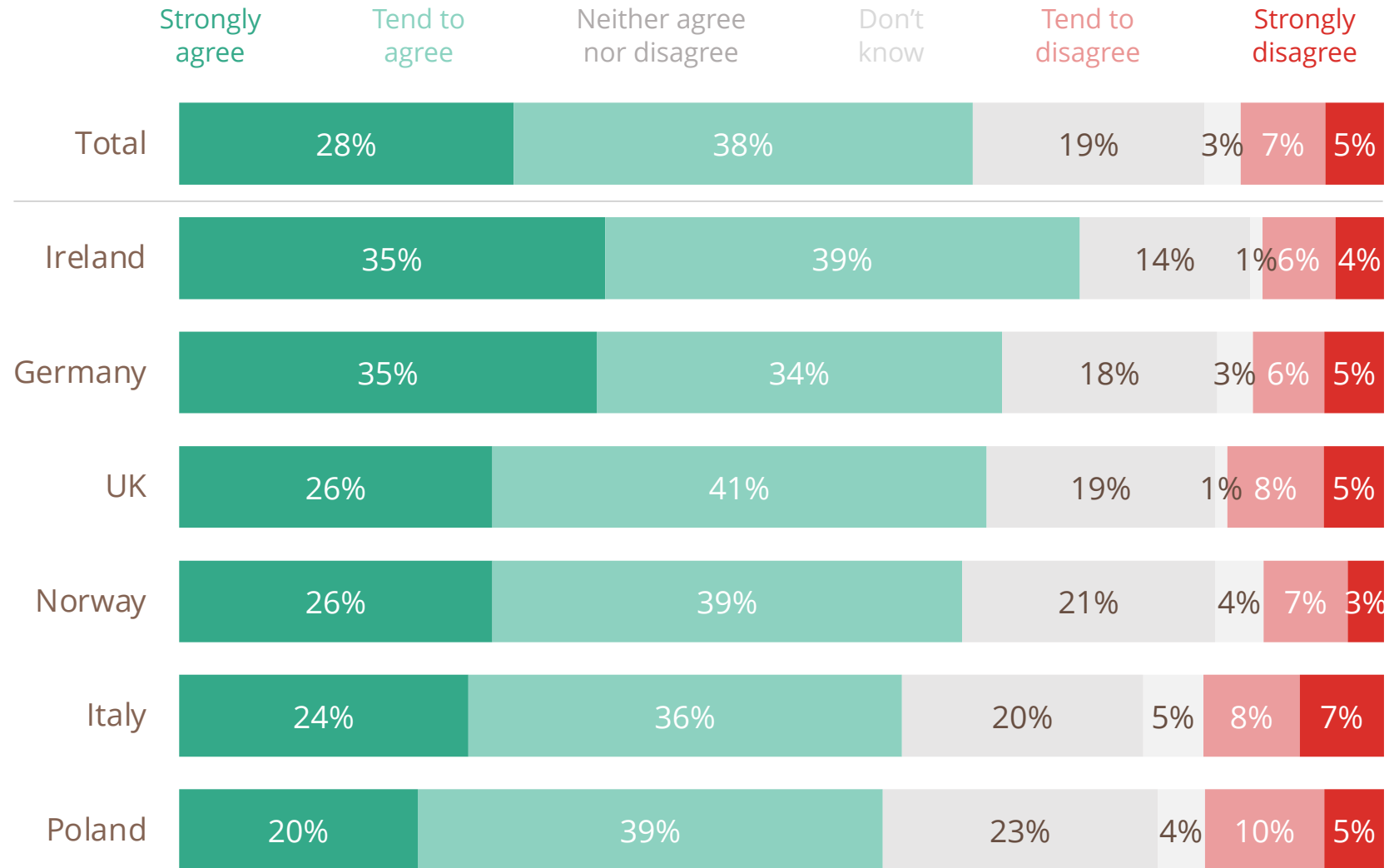
Three quarters of people in Ireland say they know what they can do to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **I know what I can do to help stop the spread of coronavirus because there is clear guidance on what the public can do to help**

74% of people in Ireland agree that they know what they can do to help stop the spread of coronavirus because there is clear guidance on what the public can do to help.

This figure is above the overall average of 66%, and the figure in the UK, where 67% of people say that there is clear guidance on what the public can do to help.

The country who have the lowest agreement on this are in Poland, where 59% of people agree.



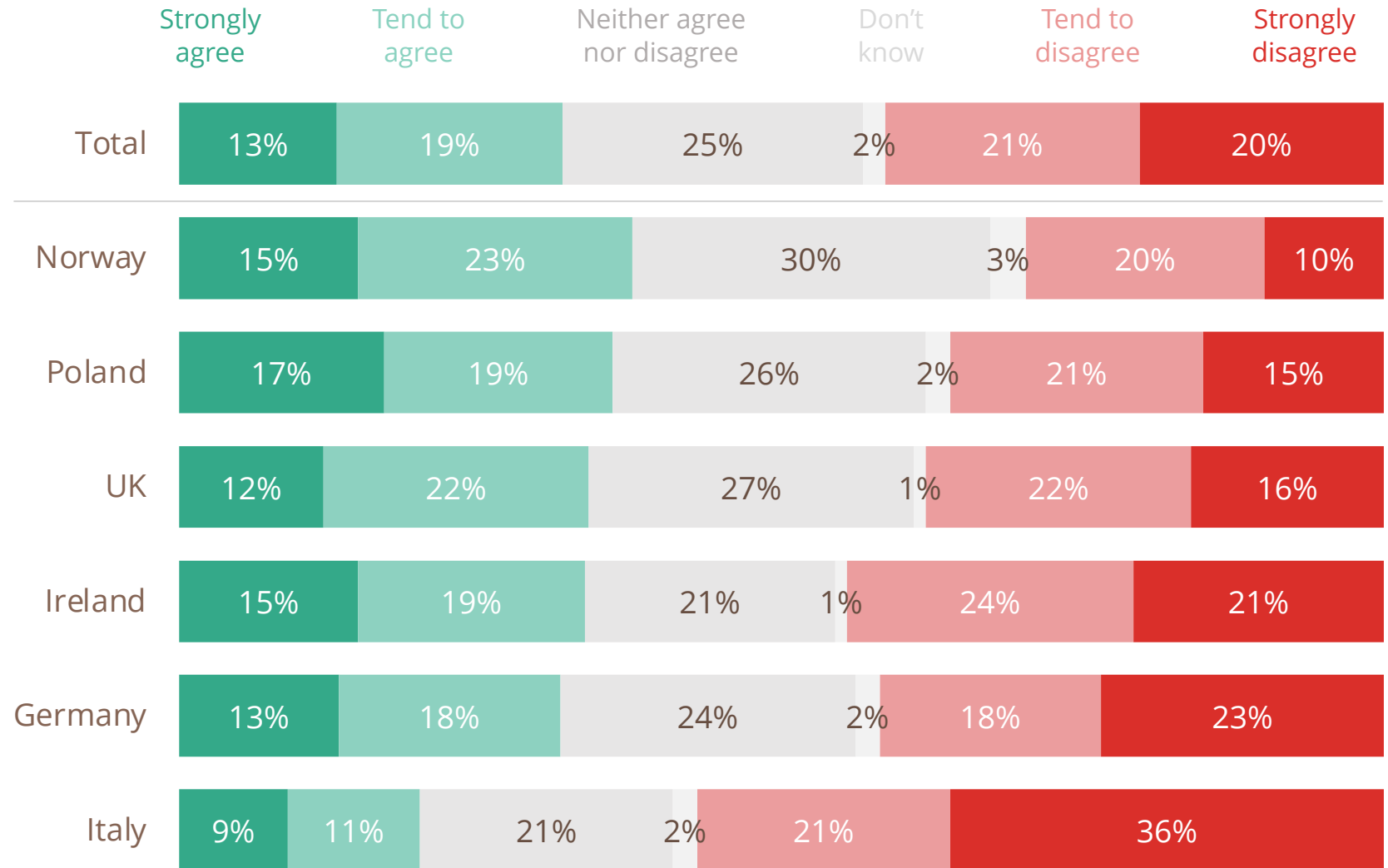
A third of people in the UK agree that there are more important things to do in life than think about the coronavirus pandemic.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **There are more important things to do in life than think about the coronavirus pandemic**

34% of people in the UK think that there are more important things to do in life than think about the coronavirus pandemic. This is slightly above the average of 32%.

However, 38% of people disagree with this view, and believe that there are not more important things to do in life than think about the coronavirus pandemic.

Other countries also expressed significant disagreement. In Italy, 57% of people disagree that there are more important things to do in life than think about the coronavirus pandemic.

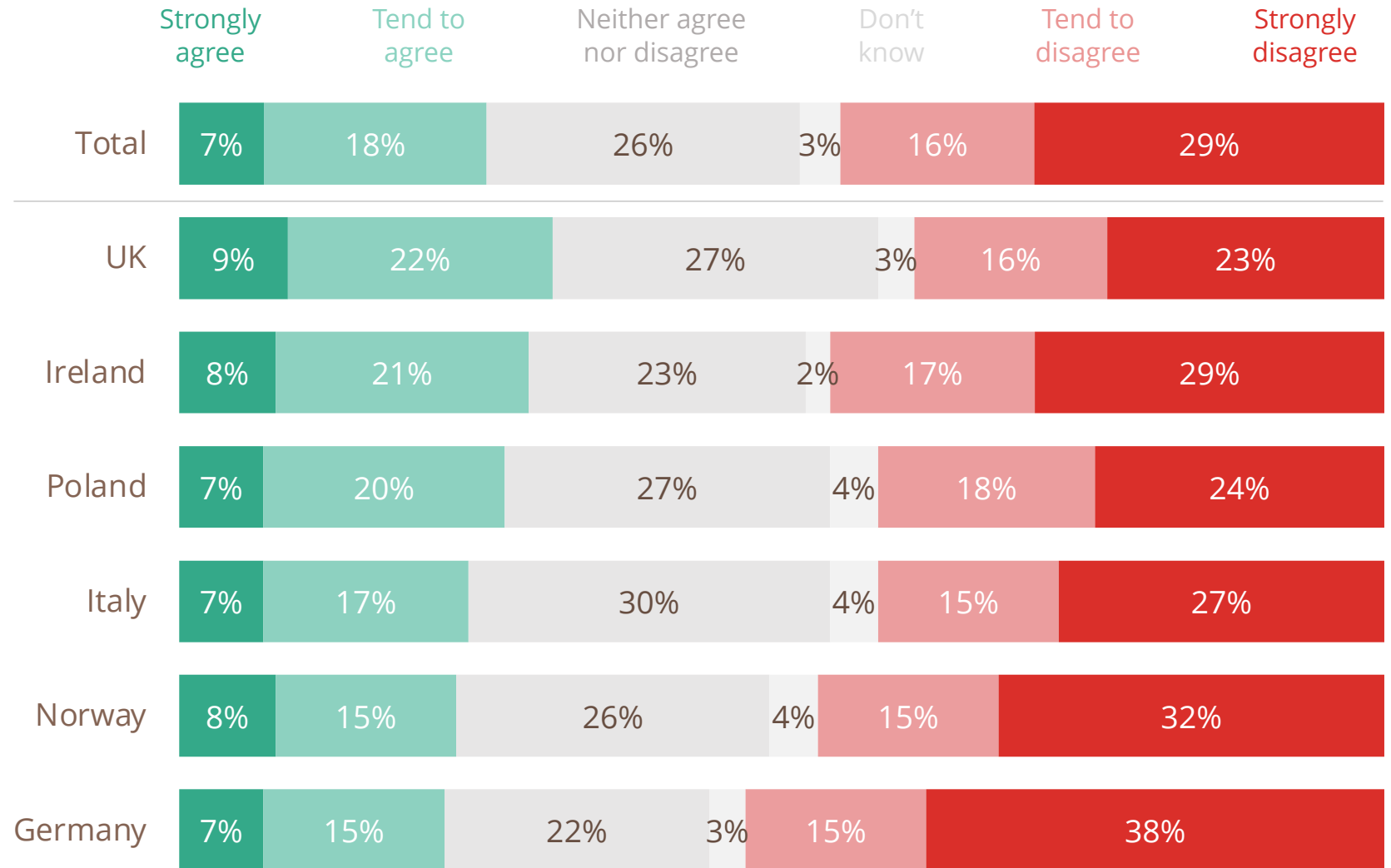


Three in ten people in the UK say they would give part of their income in taxes to help prevent the spread of coronavirus

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **I would give part of my income in taxes to help prevent the spread of coronavirus**

Despite widespread concern about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, only a minority of people in each country are inclined to give part of their income in taxes to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

In the UK, 30% of people agree with this, while 39% disagree. By contrast, in Germany, 21% say they would give part of their income in taxes for this cause and a majority of 54% say they wouldn't.



In the UK, younger, more educated, higher earners are more willing to pay taxes to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

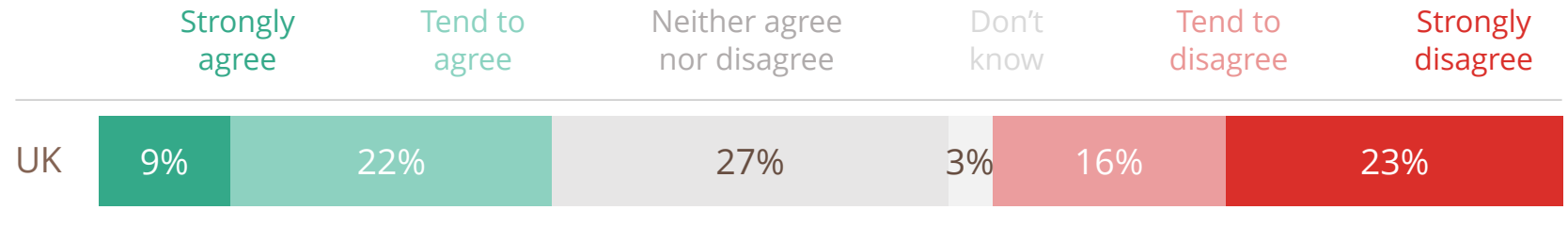
How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? **I would give part of my income in taxes to help prevent the spread of coronavirus**

In the UK, when it comes to someone giving part of their income in taxes to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, 35% of men would agree to do this, compared with 26% of women.

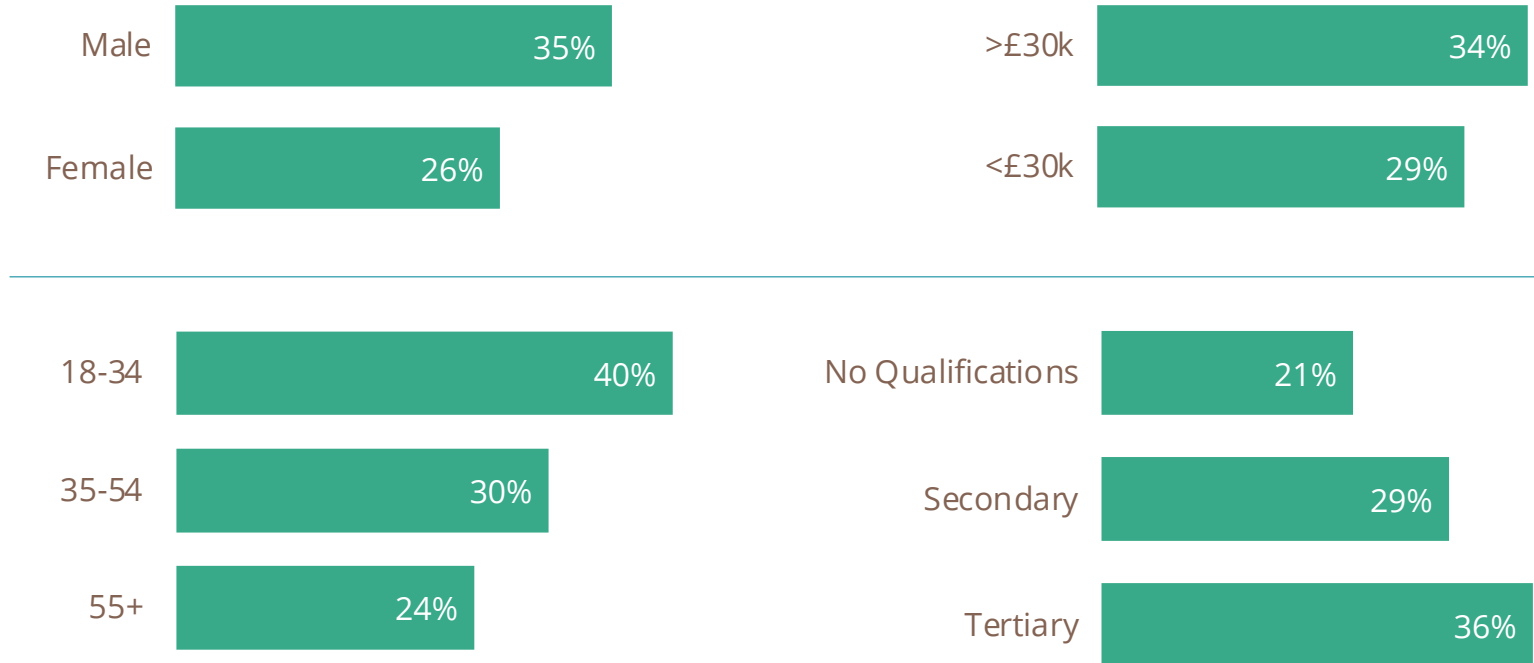
34% of people earning over £30k per year agreed to this, compared to 29% of people earning less than £30k.

40% of 18-34 year olds would agree to these taxes compared with 24% of people aged 55+.

36% of people with tertiary education would agree, compared with 21% of people with no education.



% of those who agree with the statement

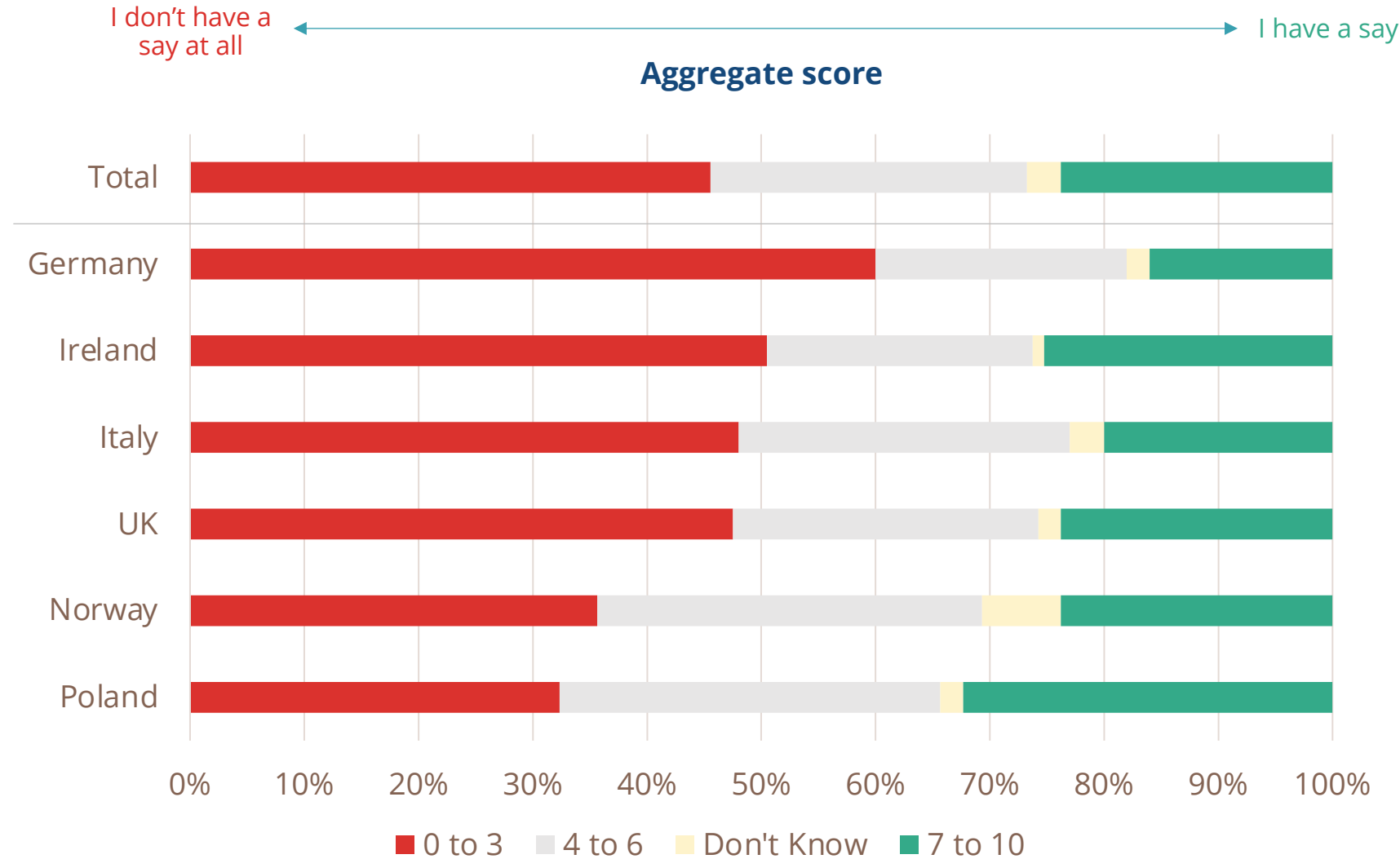


Half of people in the UK, and six in ten people in Germany, think that they have little or no say in actions taken to address the coronavirus pandemic.

To what extent do you feel you have a say in actions taken to address the coronavirus pandemic?

A significant proportion of people in the UK say that they have limited say in actions taken to address the coronavirus pandemic. Almost 50% said that they would rank their say on this somewhere between 0 and 3 out of 10.

This view is about average overall. But in Germany, over 60% of people ranked their say on actions taken to address the pandemic between 0 and 3 out of 10. In Poland, this figure was much lower, where only around 30% of people thought this.



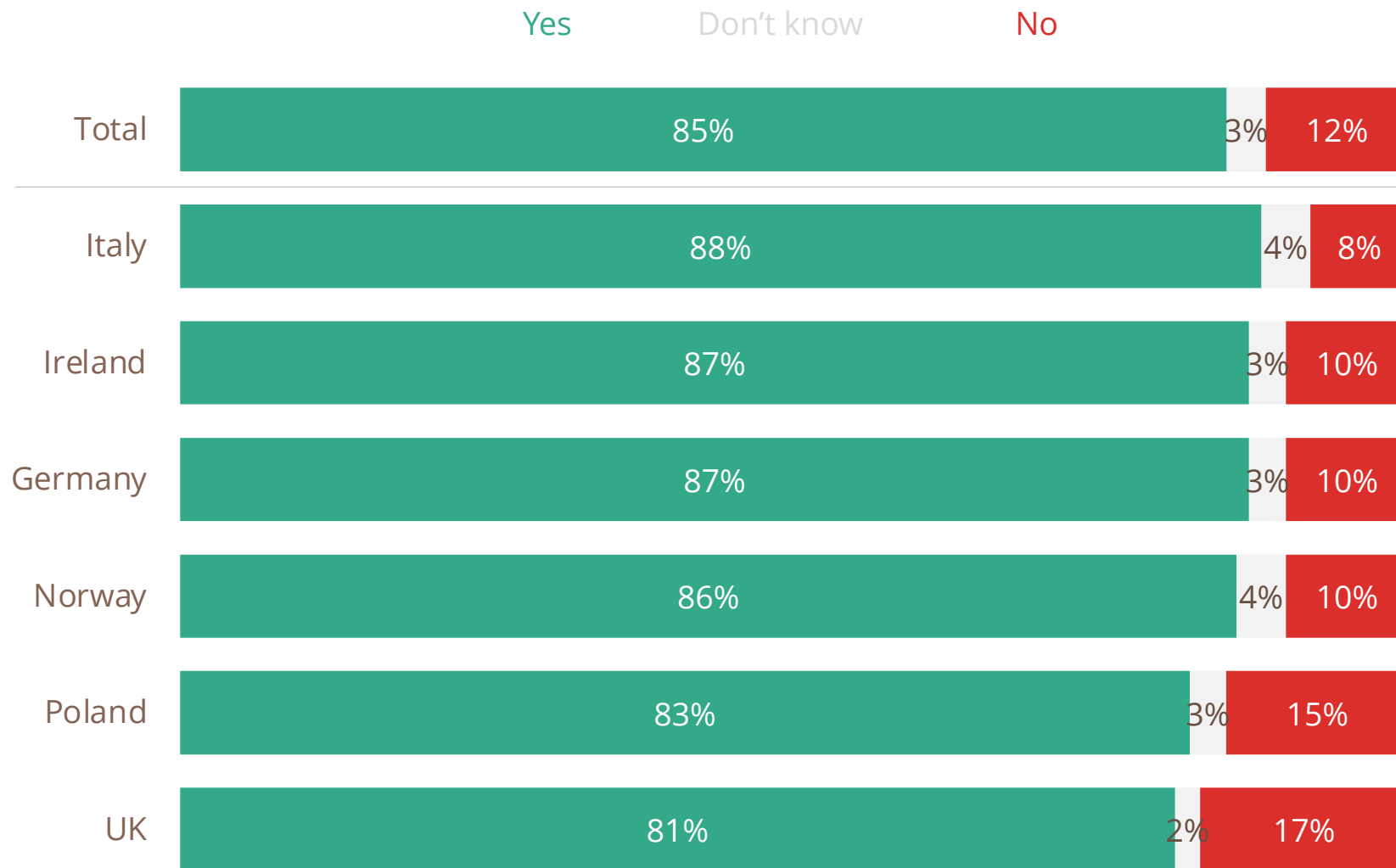
The majority of people in most countries are paying attention to information about coronavirus.

Have you personally paid attention to any information about the coronavirus pandemic in the past 30 days?

In the UK, 81% of people said that they had paid attention to information about the coronavirus pandemic in the last 30 days. This is slightly below the overall average of 85%, and the lowest of all the countries.

However, only 2% of people in the UK firmly said that they had not paid any attention to information about the pandemic during the last month.

People in Italy paid the most attention to this information. 88% said that they had paid attention to this information in the last month.



Almost 80% of people take their information on the coronavirus pandemic from TV.

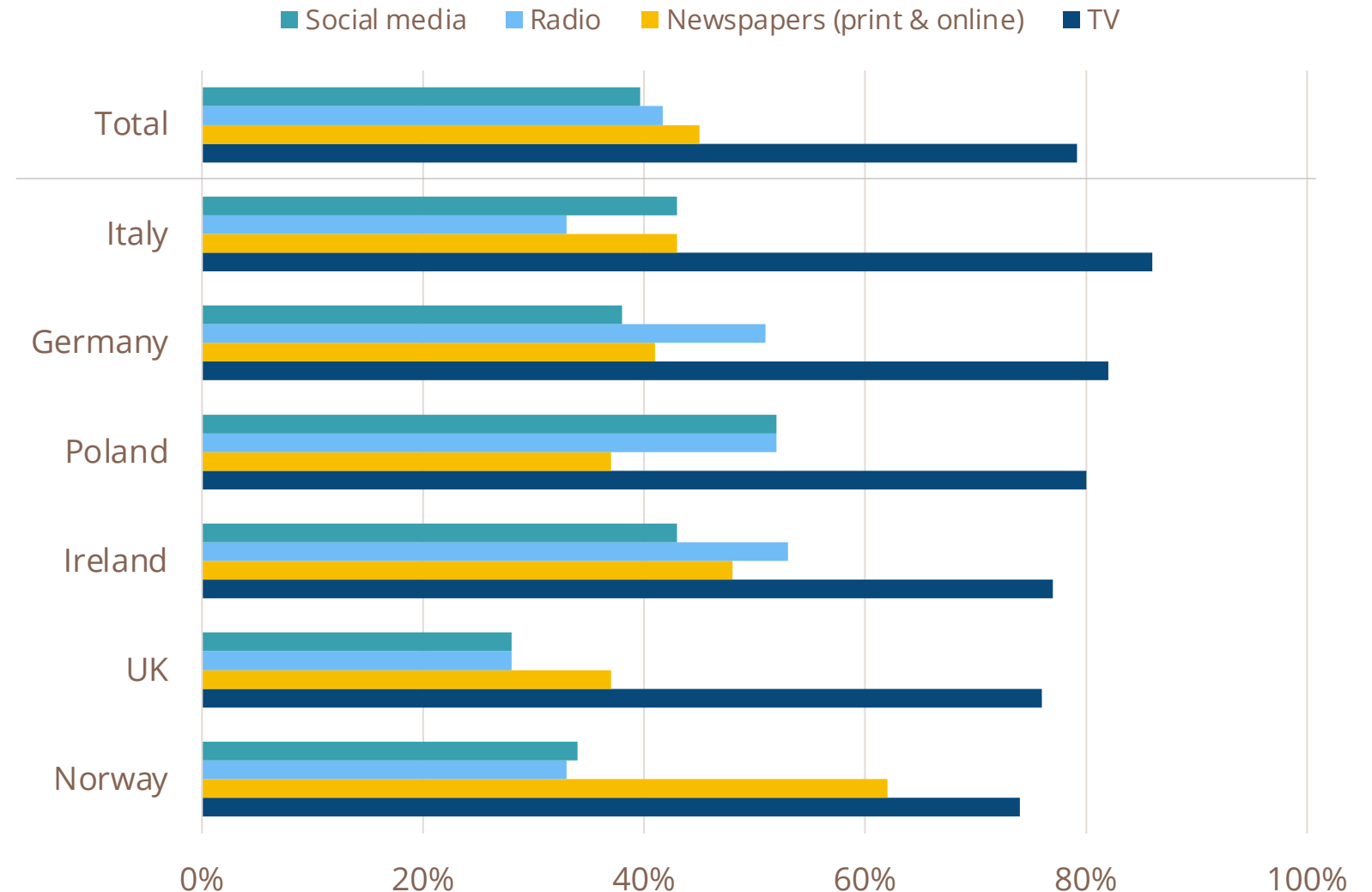
Where did you see or hear this information about the coronavirus pandemic?

In the UK, almost 80% of people take their information on coronavirus from TV, which is just below the overall average.

Almost 40% of people in the UK take this information from newspapers, and around 30% from both social media and radio.

However, in other countries, newspapers are far more common sources of information. In Norway, over 60% of people take this information from newspapers, and the figure is almost 50% in Ireland.

Note not all categories displayed on chart.



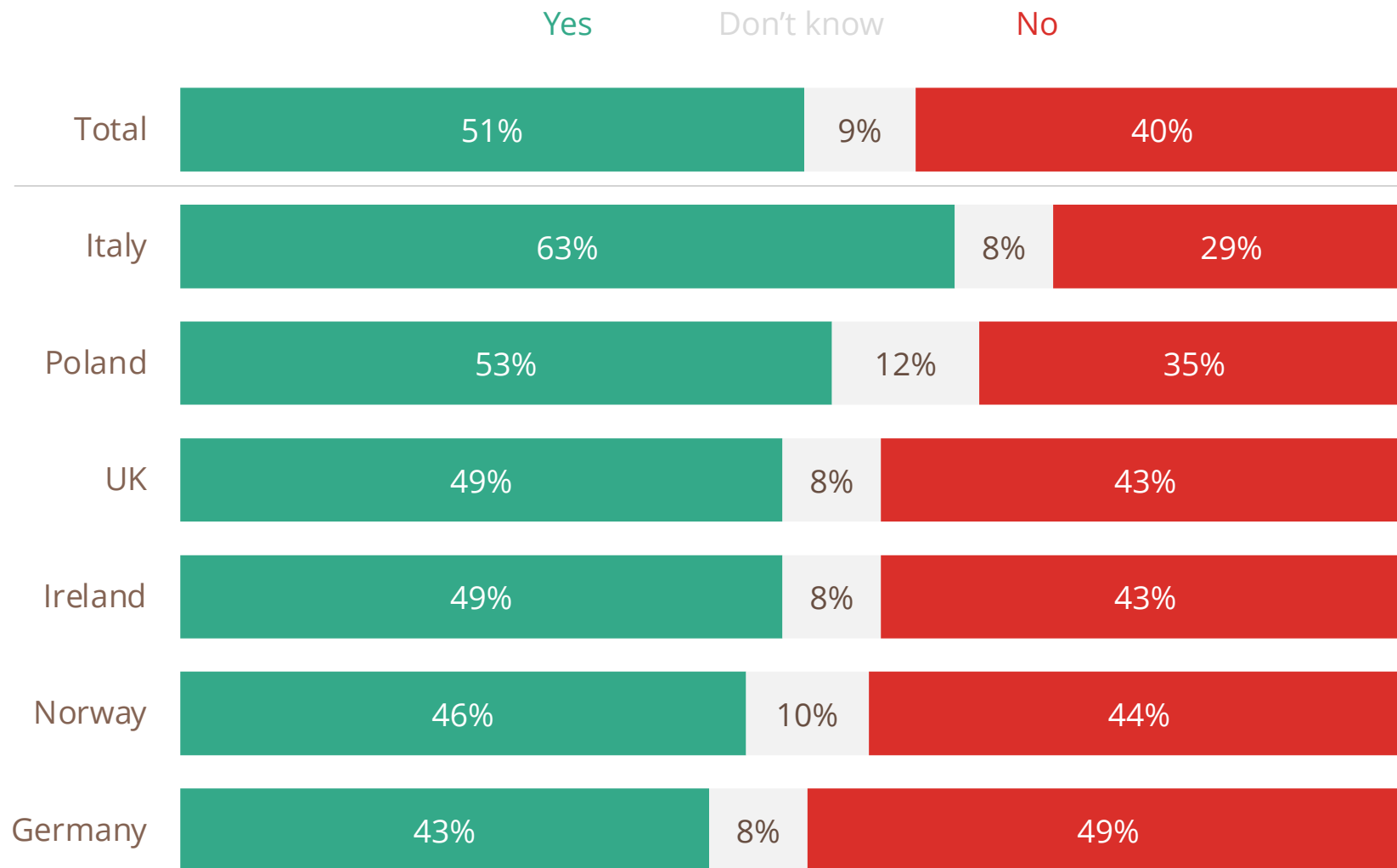
Half of people in the UK would like to know more about the coronavirus pandemic.

And would you, personally, like to know more about the coronavirus pandemic?

49% of people in the UK say that they would like to know more about the coronavirus pandemic. This is close to the average of 51%.

However, 43% of people in the UK would not like to know more about the pandemic, which is also close to the average of 40%.

People in Italy were the most eager to learn more about the pandemic, with 63% saying they would like to know more. Germany were the least inclined, with 43% of people saying they would like to know more about the pandemic.





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Technical Note



This survey was conducted drawing on the proprietary online panel of Savanta in the UK and similar panels in their network in the other countries. Quotas were set to ensure sufficient responses within each country in terms of age, gender, region, education, and income. Once data collection was complete, weights were applied to observations to create a sample reflective of the population in age, gender, region, education, and income. Sample sizes were: 2,017 in Germany; 2,030 in Ireland; 2,044 in Italy; 2,045 in Norway; 2,168 in Poland; and 2,042 in the UK. Data were collected directly from respondents via a self-completed online survey. Fieldwork dates ranged from 4th-19th January 2022.

Note: For net figures (e.g. adding 'Very Well' to 'Quite Well'), there may be one percentage point difference on simple aggregation due to rounding).



For further information please contact:

Prof. Bobby Duffy
Director, Policy Institute
bobby.duffy@kcl.ac.uk

Dr Finlay Malcolm
Research Associate,
Policy Institute

George May
Head of Communications,
Policy Institute

Dr Kirstie Hewlett
Research Fellow,
Policy Institute

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