



# PERITIA

Policy, Expertise and Trust

**Public attitudes towards  
national government and  
other institutions**



# PERITIA

Policy, Expertise and Trust



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.



# Perceptions of national governments

People in the UK are among the most likely to think their government ignores rules and procedures, acts unfairly towards them and usually ignores people like them.

UK citizens are also less likely to think the government is honest and truthful and to believe that it communicates accurate information.

In other countries – particularly Ireland, Norway and Germany – the national government is perceived more positively on many of these trust measures. Poland, however, fares poorly when it comes to perceptions of its government.



## People in the UK are most likely to say their government ignores rules and procedures.

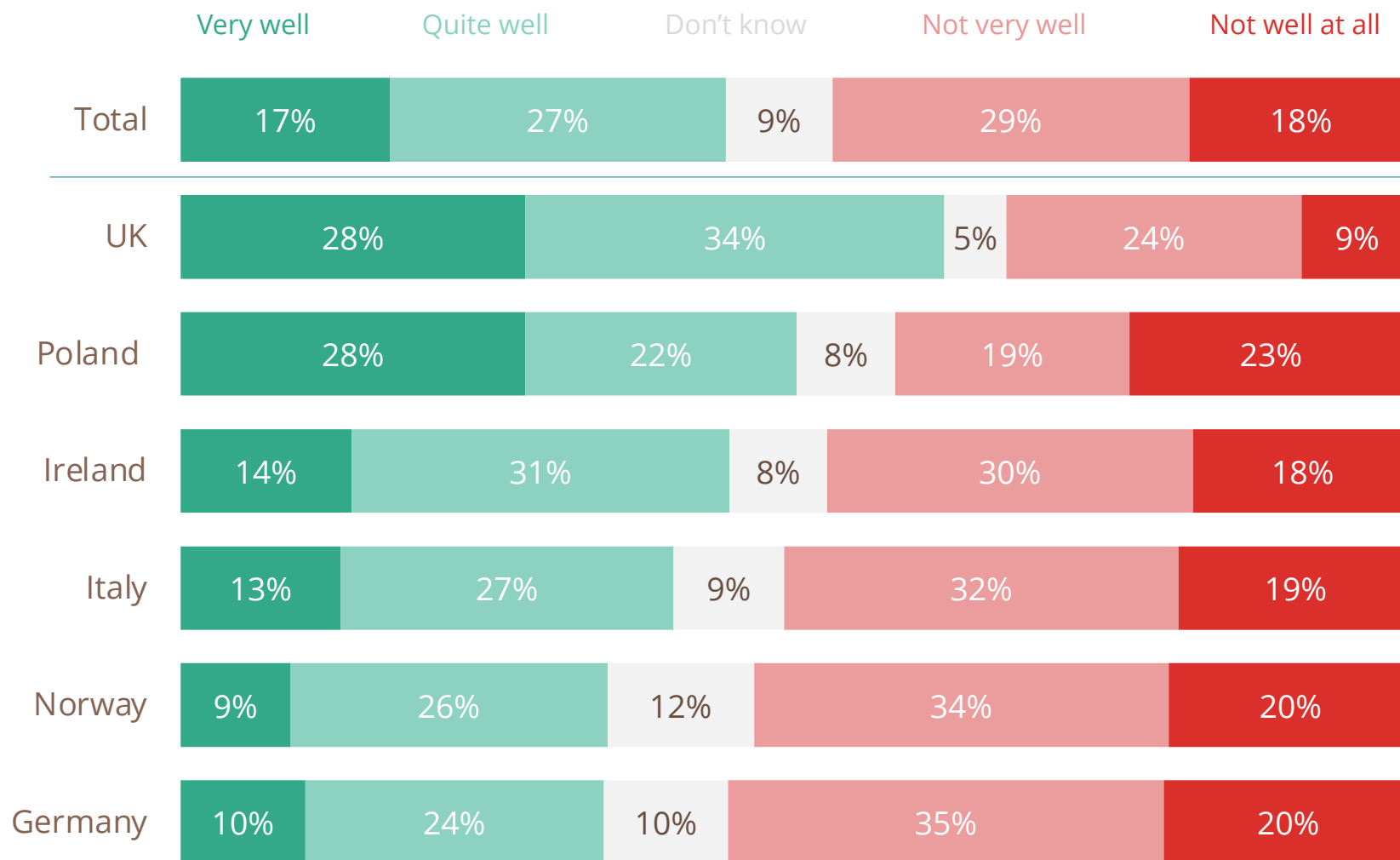
How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Ignores rules and procedures**

In the UK, 62% of people say the government ignores rules and procedures – the highest across the six countries surveyed.

In Poland, which ranks second on this measure, 50% think their government disregards rules.

Germany (35%) and Norway (34%) are least likely to have such a negative perception of government rule-following, with around a third in each country feeling this way.

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.



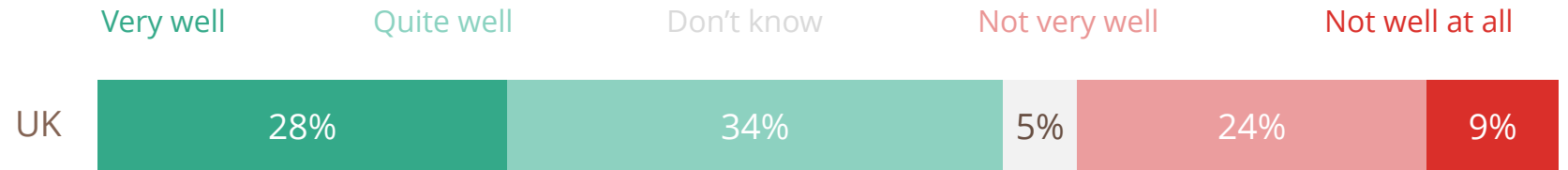
# In the UK, Conservative voters are less likely to think the government ignores rules and procedures.

How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Ignores rules and procedures**

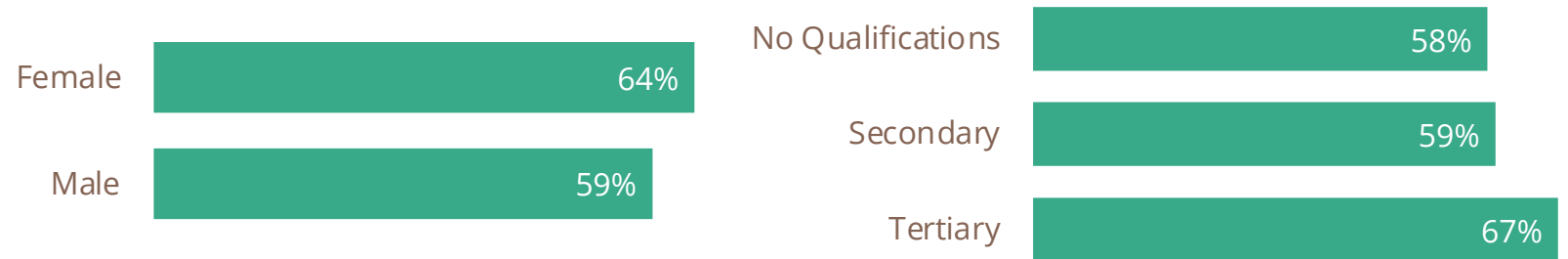
50% of people in the UK who voted Conservative in the 2019 General Election think the government ignores rules and procedures, compared with 72% among Labour voters and 67% among Liberal Democrat voters.

Women (64%) are more likely than men (59%) to hold this view, while people with tertiary educational qualifications (67%) are more likely than those without (58%) to see the government in this way.

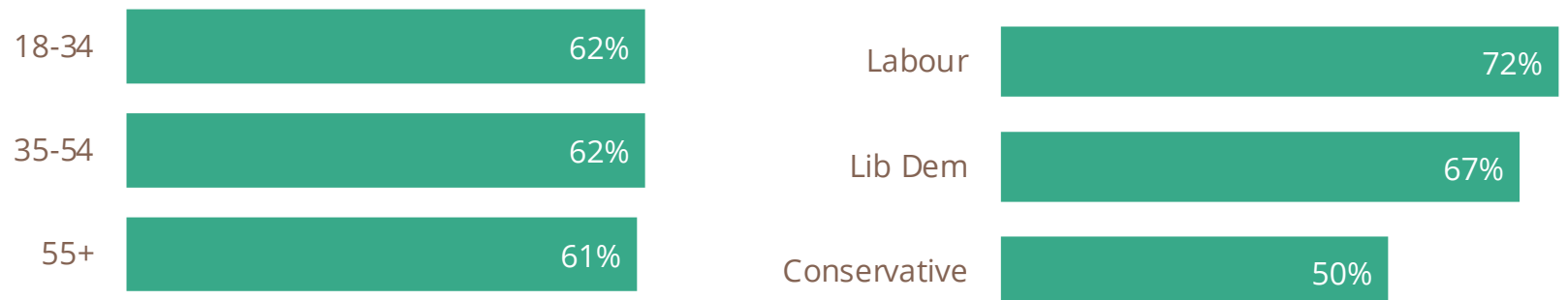
There is virtually no difference in views by age, with majorities of all age groups feeling the government ignores rules.



## % of those who think UK government ignores rules and procedures



## 2019 General Election Vote



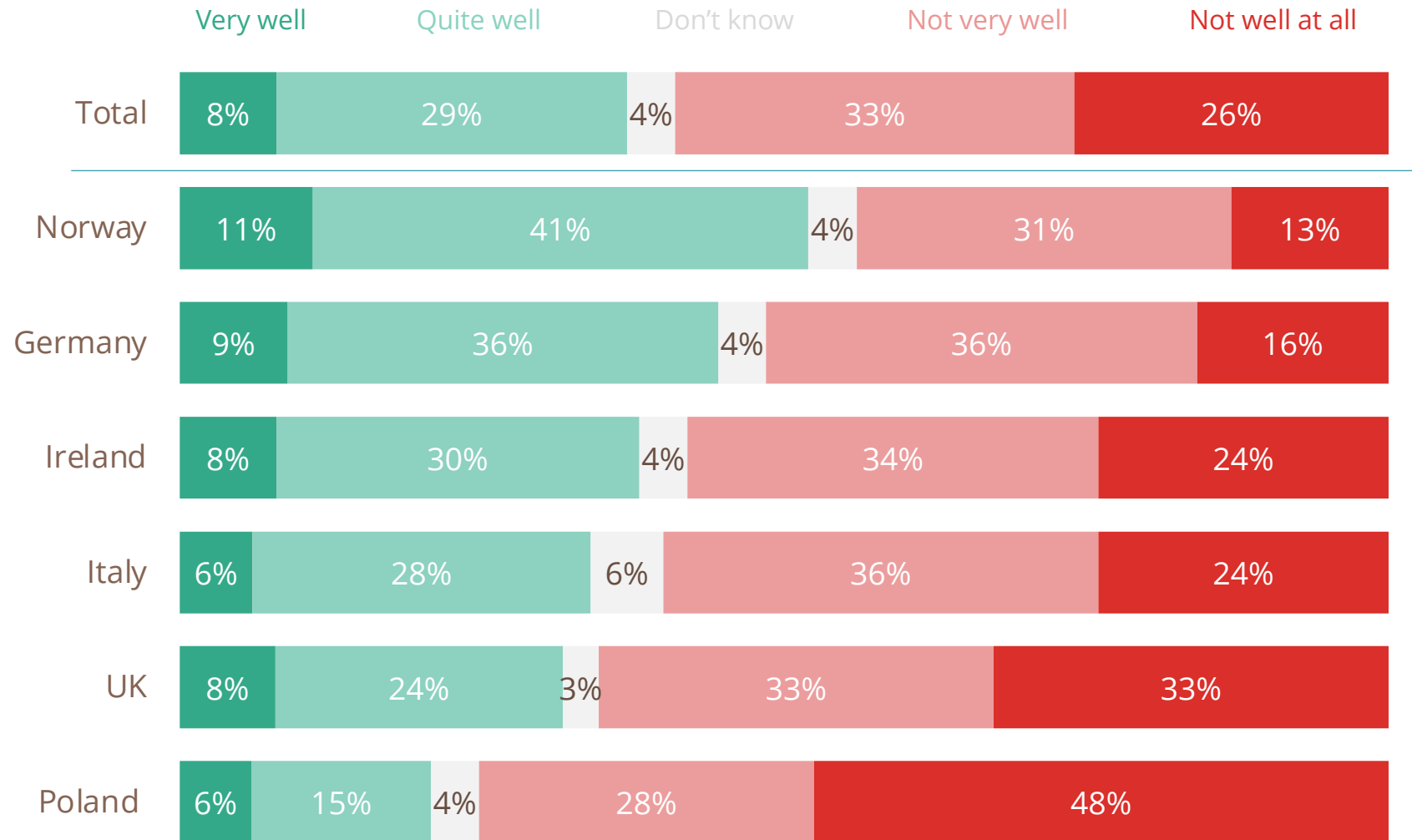
## A third of people in the UK say the government is well respected – but two-thirds disagree.

How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Well respected**

66% of the UK public think the government is *not* well respected – around double the proportion who think it is well respected (31%).

Only people in Poland hold more negative views on this measure, with 75% saying their government is not well respected.

At the other end of the spectrum, Norway is the only country surveyed where a majority (52%) feel the national government is held in such good standing.

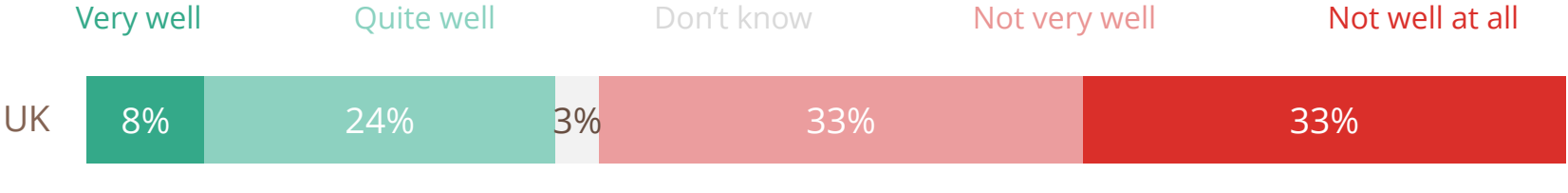


# In the UK, younger people and Conservative voters are more likely to view the government as well respected.

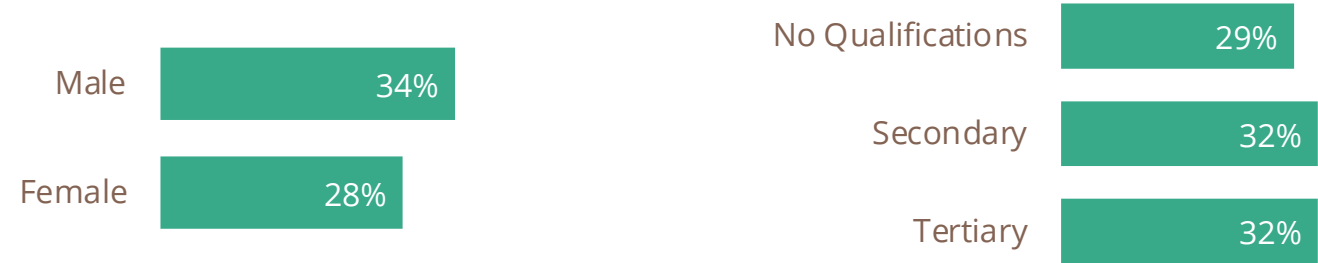
How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Well respected**

Younger people are most likely to say the UK government is well respected, with 40% of those aged 18-34 feeling this way, compared with 33% of 35- to 54-year-olds and 23% of people aged 55+.

Looking at views by political support, 2019 Conservative voters (41%) are more likely than Labour (28%) and Lib Dem (28%) voters to think the government is well respected.



% of those who think UK government is well respected



2019 General Election Vote



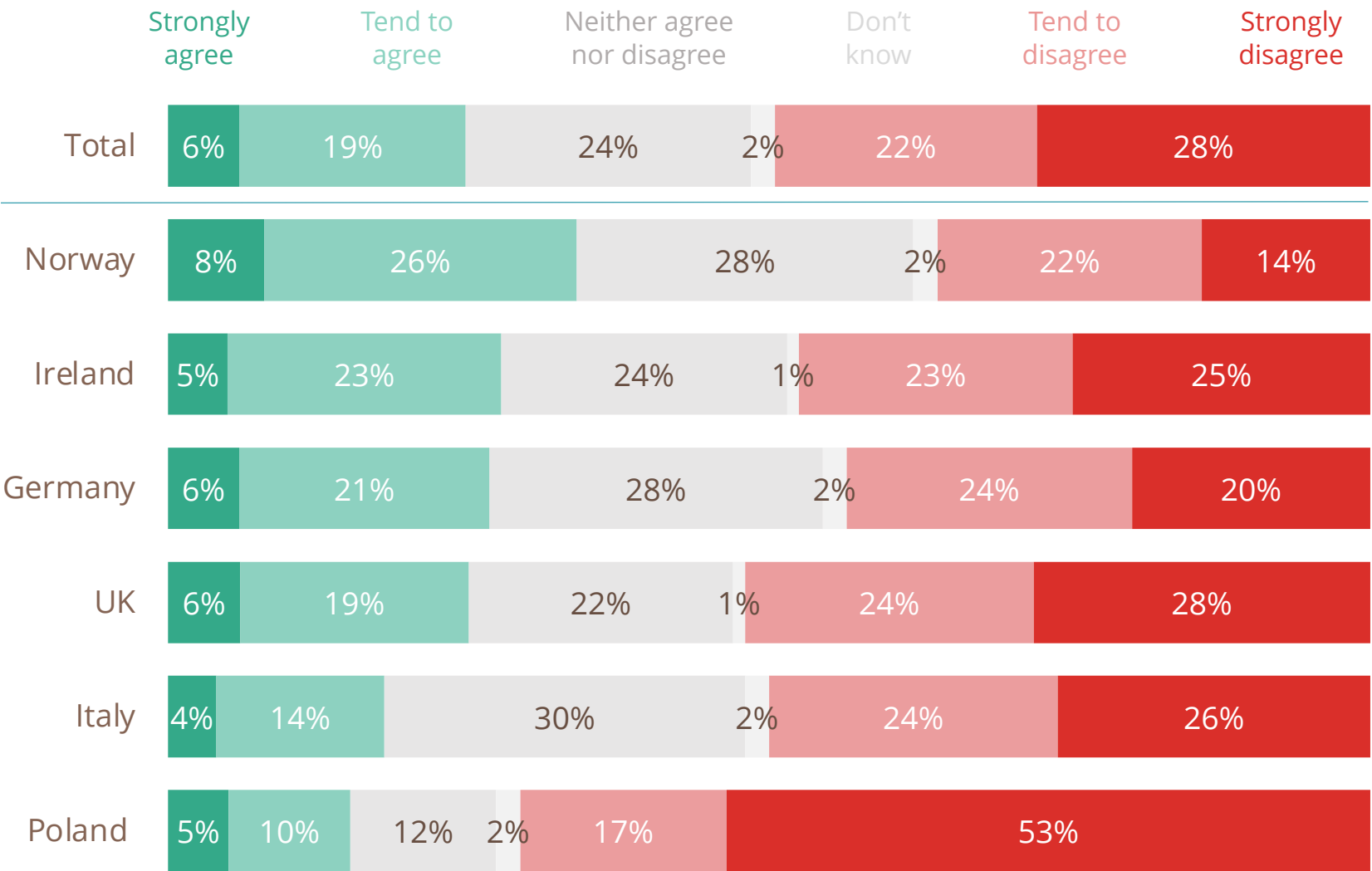
# A majority of the UK thinks the government is not honest and truthful.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **The [national] government is honest and truthful**

Poland has the most negative view of its government on this measure, with 70% saying the country’s government is not honest and truthful.

In the UK, 53% of people say the same about their government – double the proportion who think it *is* honest and truthful (25%).

People in Norway have the most positive perception of their government’s honesty and truthfulness. But despite this, opinion is still relatively divided, with 34% thinking the government has these characteristics and 36% saying it does not.



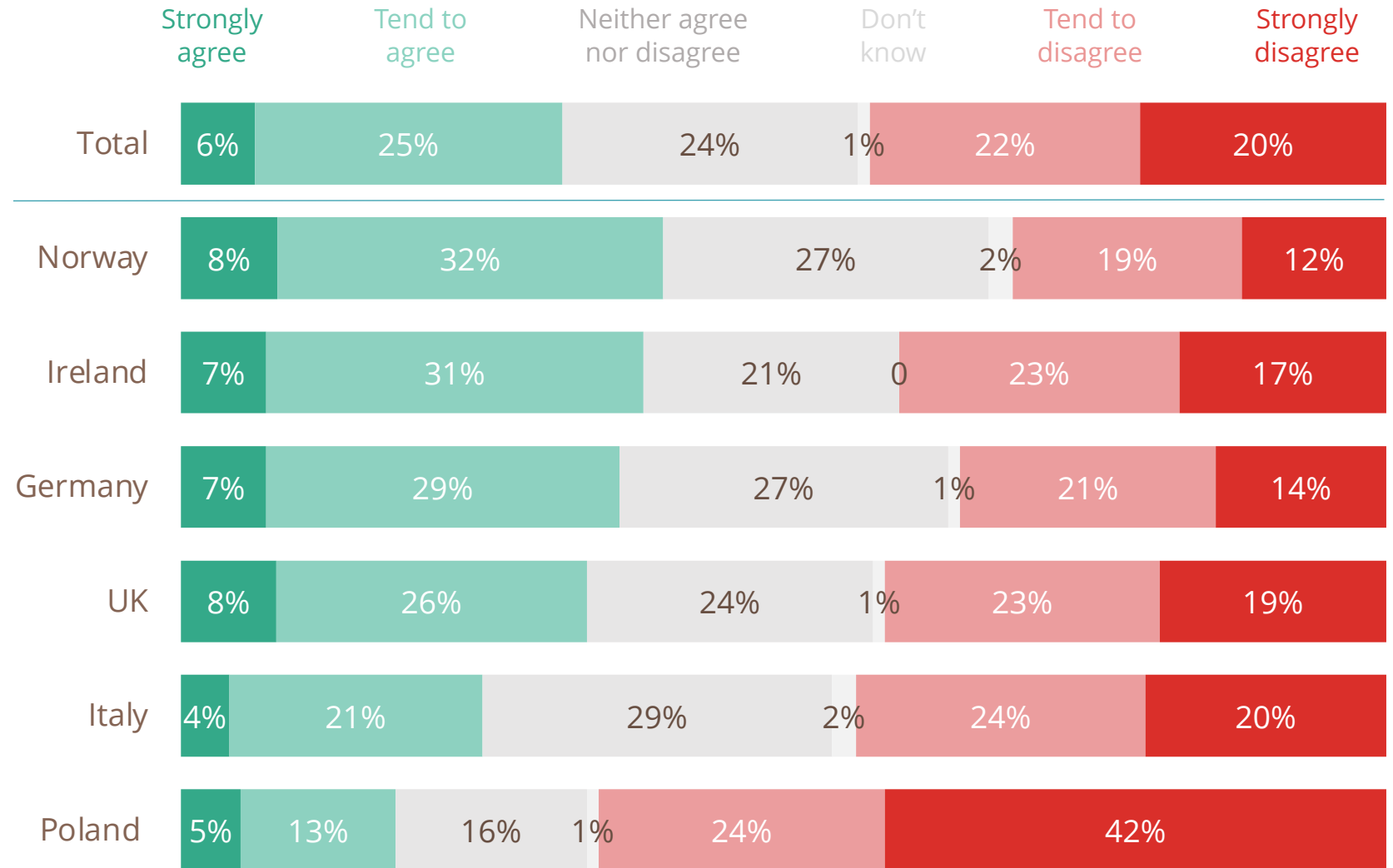


## The UK public are relatively divided over whether the government usually does the right thing.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **In general, the [national] government usually does the right thing**

34% of people in the UK agree the government usually does the right thing, compared with 42% who disagree – in line with the average across the six countries surveyed.

In Poland, 65% of the public disagree that the government usually does the right thing – far higher than the other nations polled and the only country where a majority say this.

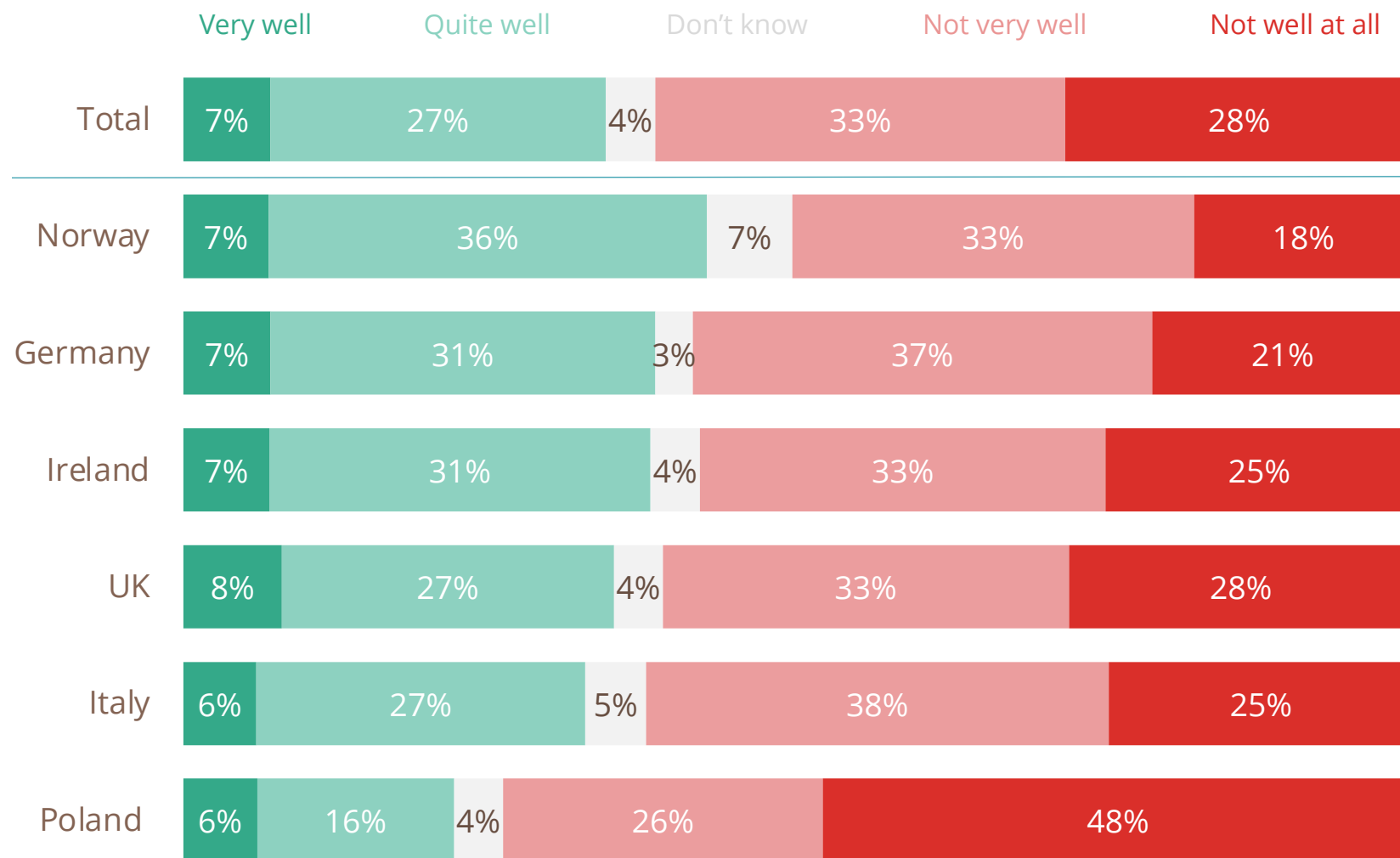


## Most people in the UK think the government does not communicate accurate and unbiased information.

How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Communicates accurate and unbiased information**

61% of the UK public think the government does not communicate accurate and unbiased information, compared with 35% who think it does. There is a similar divide in opinion among people in Italy, Ireland and Germany, while Norway has a more favourable view of the information its government communicates.

By contrast, perceptions are worst in Poland, where 75% think the government doesn't communicate accurate and unbiased information, with around half saying it does not at all.

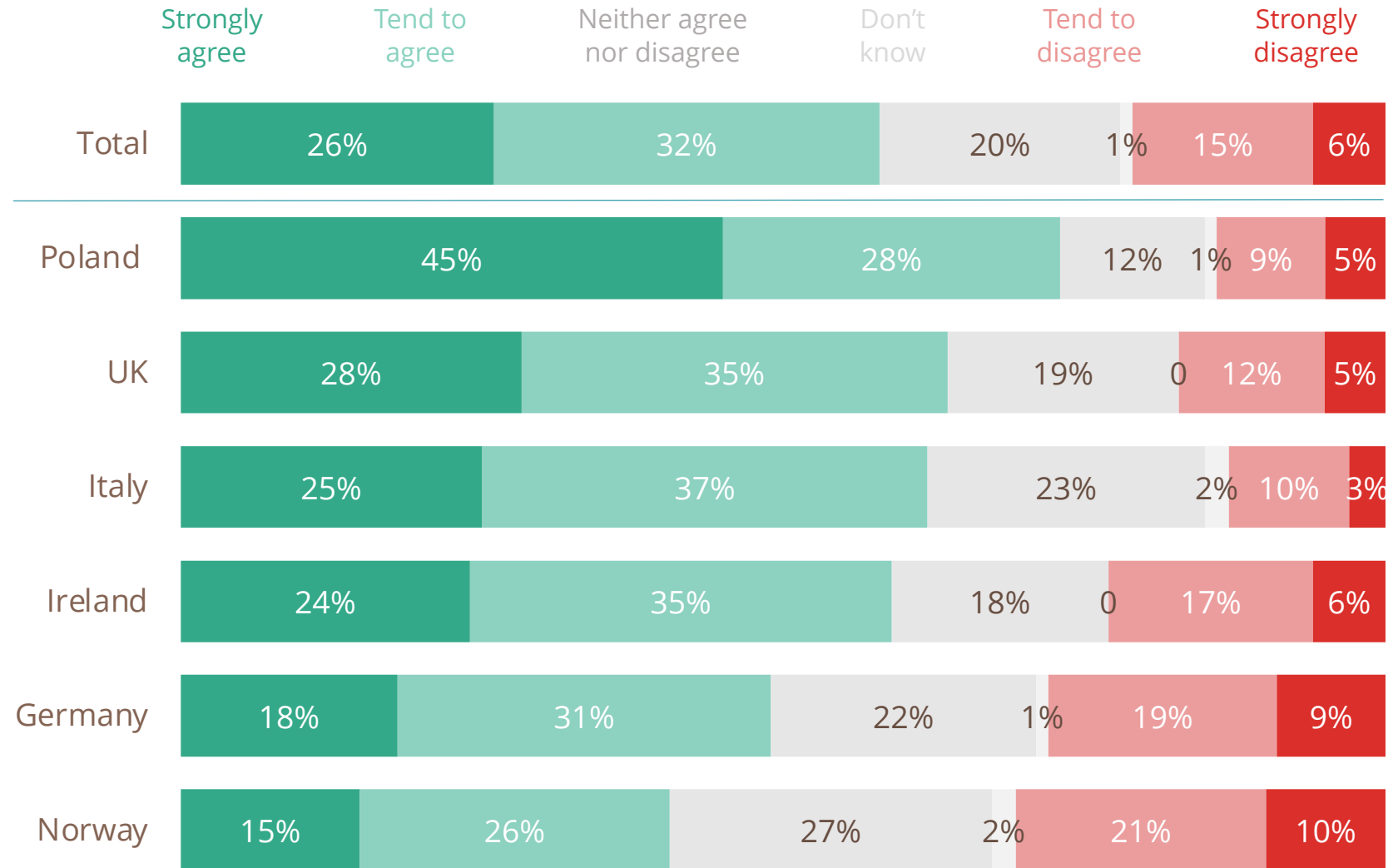


## The UK is among the more cautious countries when it comes to trusting the government.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **I am usually cautious about trusting the [national] government**

63% of people in the UK say they are usually cautious about trusting the government – higher than in Germany (49%) and Norway (40%), but similar to Italy (40%), but similar to Italy (62%) and Ireland (59%).

In Poland, 74% report being cautious about trusting their government – the highest among countries surveyed – while at the other end of the spectrum, 40% of people in Norway say the same.



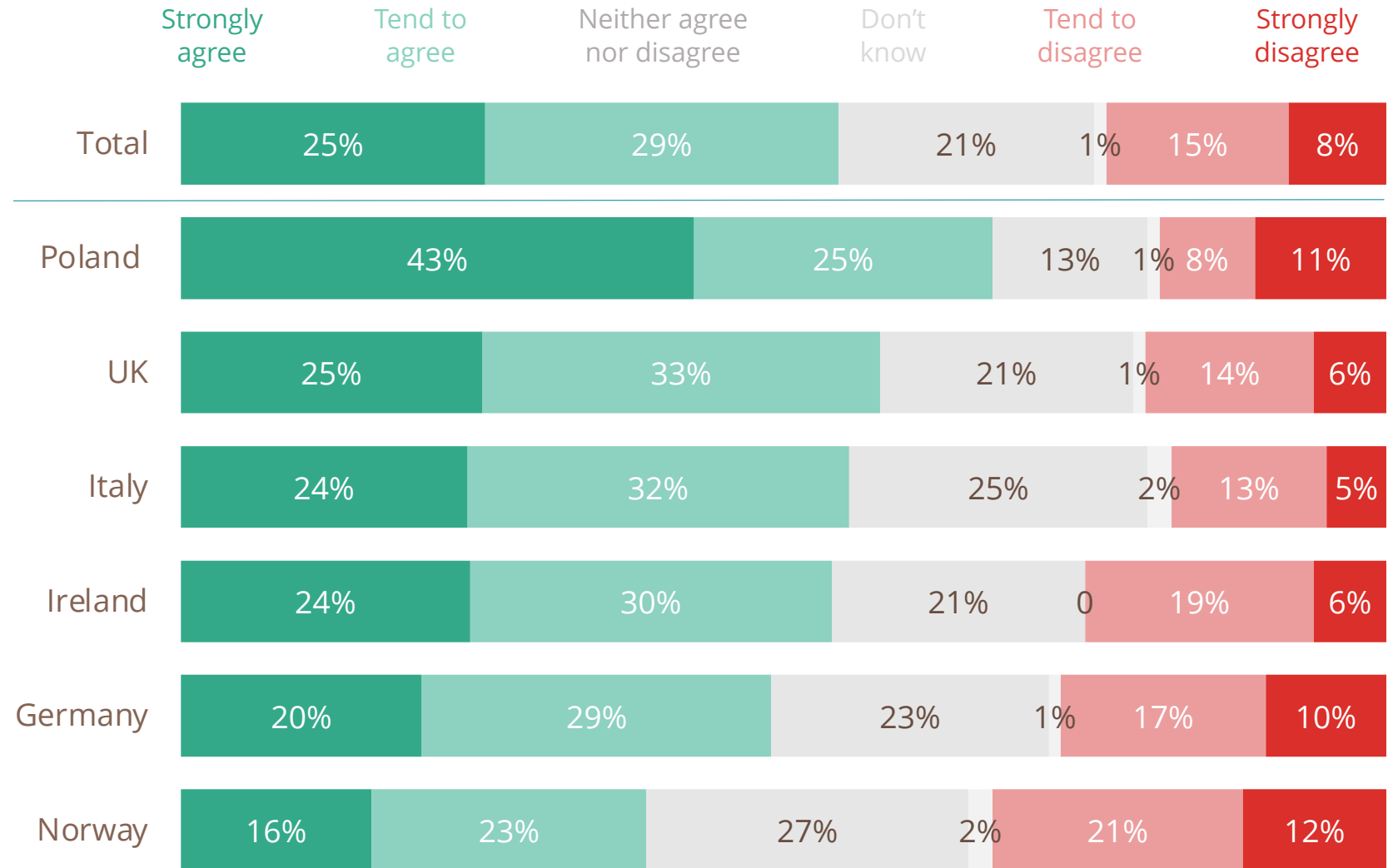
## The majority of people in the UK say they are unsure whether to believe the government.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **I am unsure whether to believe the [national] government**

In the UK, 59% of people say they are unsure whether to believe the government.

The UK has one of the higher levels of uncertainty about believing the government, coming slightly ahead of Italy (56%) and Ireland (54%), but behind Poland, where 68% of people say they are unsure whether to believe the government.

Despite having a more positive view of their government, 38% of people in Norway still say they are unsure whether to believe the government.

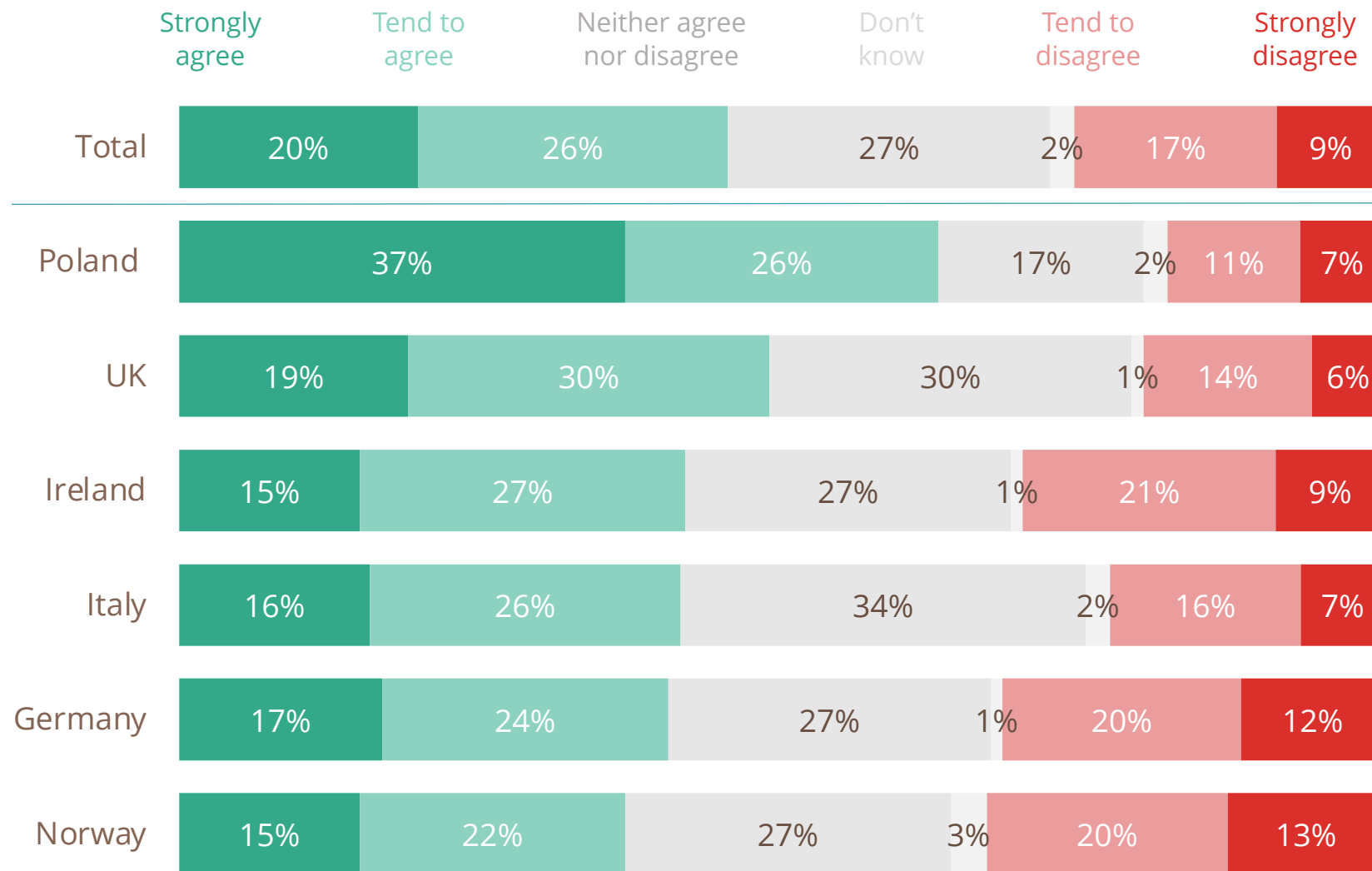


## Half the UK public say the government acts unfairly towards people like them.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **The [national] government acts unfairly towards people like me**

In the UK, 49% feel the government acts unfairly towards people like them – more than double the proportion who think it acts fairly (20%). This is a more negative perception than that found in four of the five other nations surveyed.

However, people in Poland have the worst view of their government on this measure, with 63% saying it acts unfairly towards people like them.



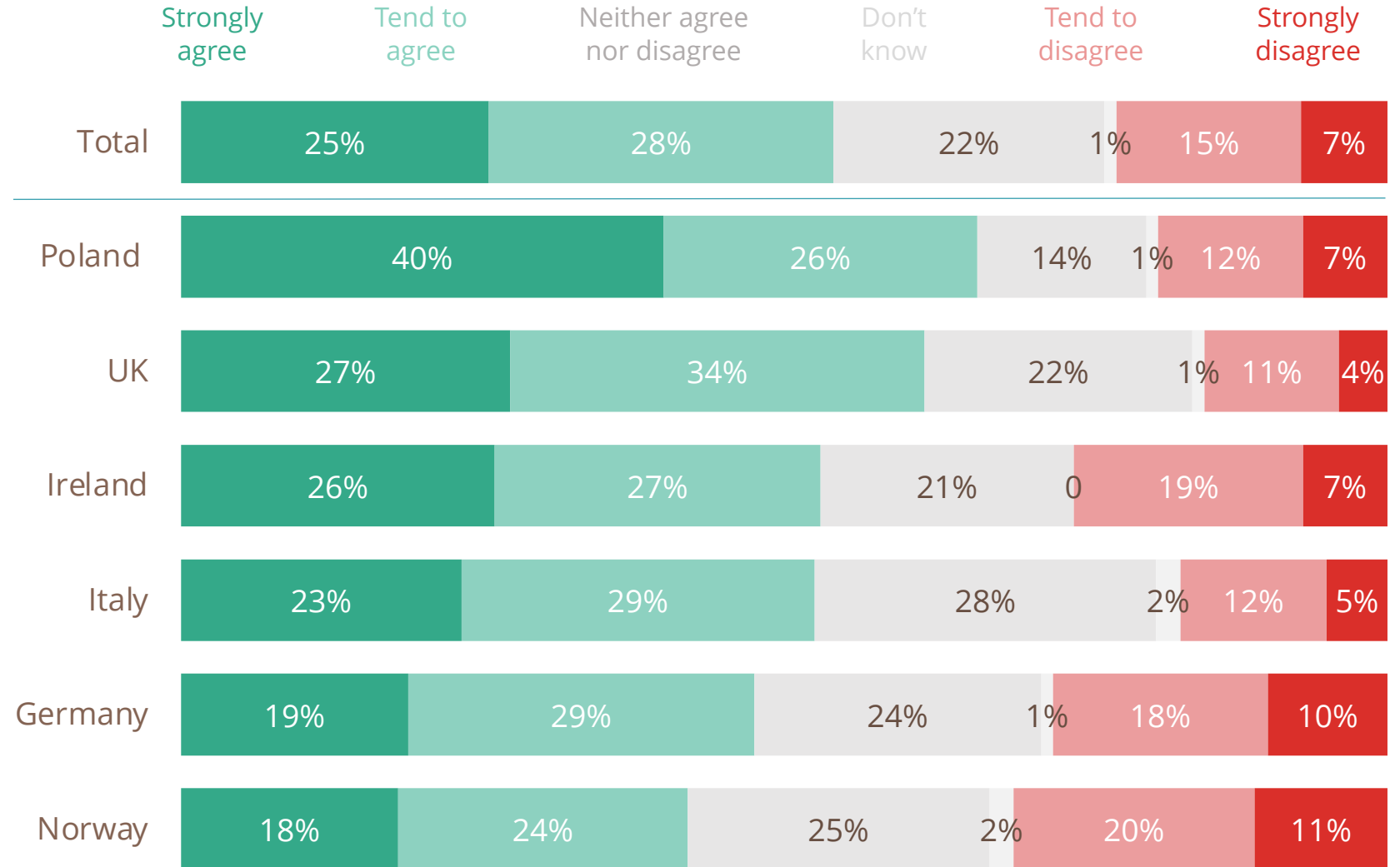
## Six in 10 people in the UK say the government ignores people like them.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **The [national] government usually ignores people like me**

61% of people in the UK agree the government usually ignores people like them, compared with 15% who disagree.

Only people in Poland have a less favourable view of whether their government ignores people like them, with 66% feeling this way.

At the other end of the ranking, people in Norway are least likely to hold this opinion (42%).



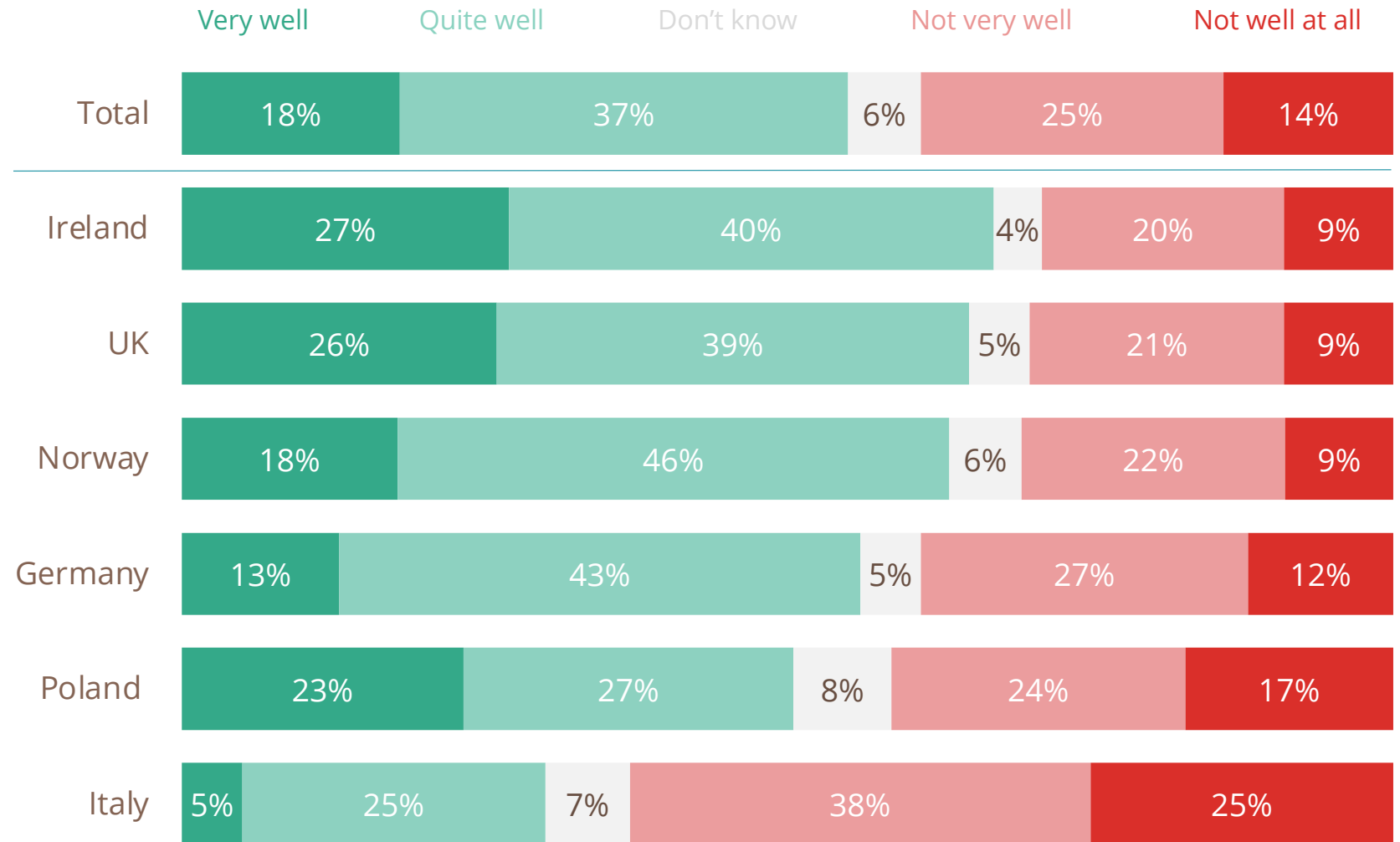
## Two-thirds of people in Ireland, Norway and the UK describe the government as politically motivated.

How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Politically motivated**

In the UK, 65% of people describe the government as politically motivated, with a similar proportion of people in Ireland (67%) and Norway (64%) saying the same about their governments.

Poland is relatively divided, with 50% of people describing the government as politically motivated and 42% not.

Italy is the only country with a very different perspective, with a comparatively much smaller share of the population – 30% – saying the government is politically motivated and a clear majority of 63% do not hold this view.

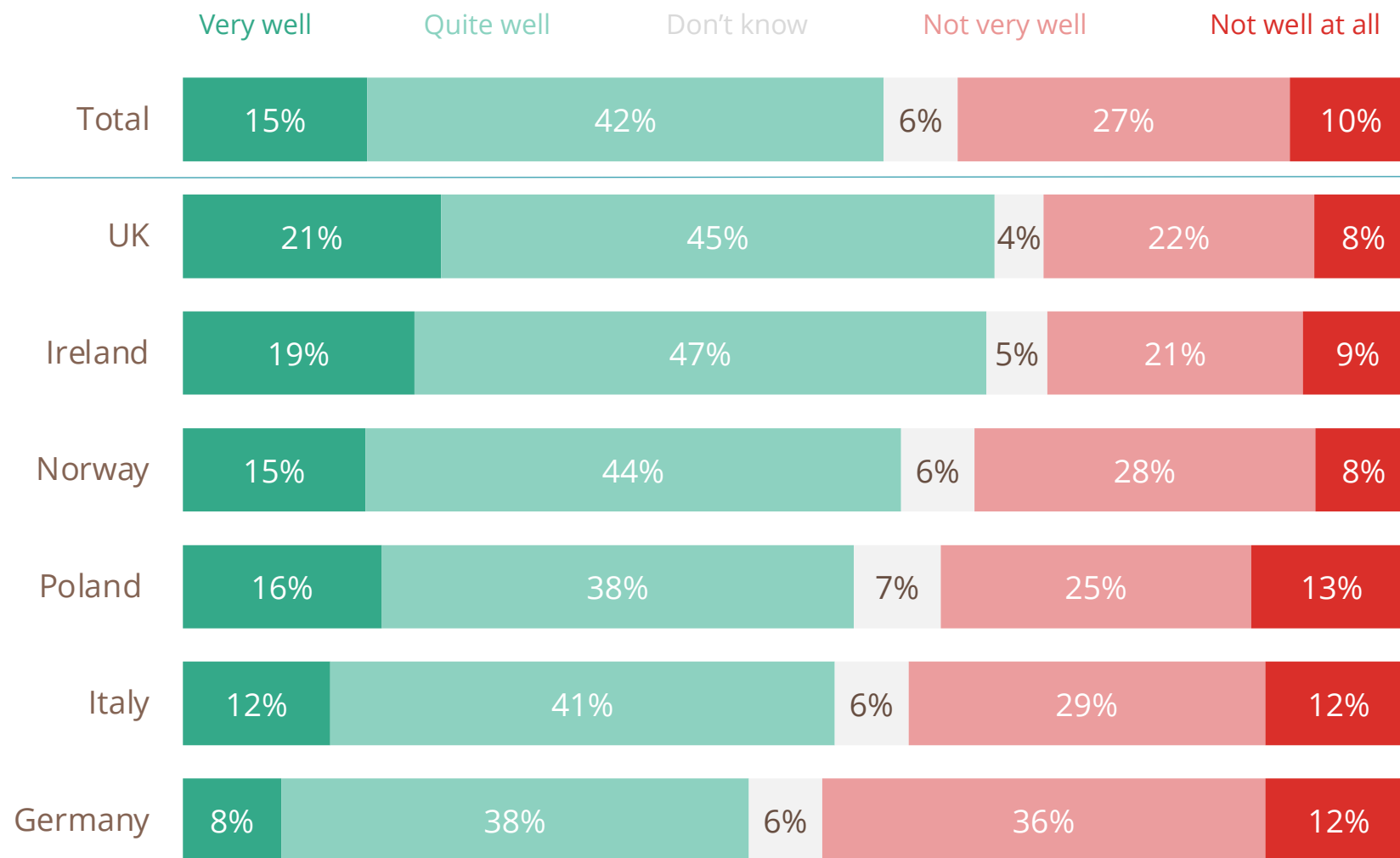


## People in Germany are least likely to say their government is prominent in the public eye.

How well would you say the following characteristics generally describe the [national] government? **Prominent in the public eye**

In the UK 66% of people describe the government as prominent in the public eye – in line with Ireland (65%).

There is less consensus in Germany, where views are split more evenly. It is the only country where nearly half (48%) say that the government is not prominent in the public eye, while a similar proportion (46%) say it is.



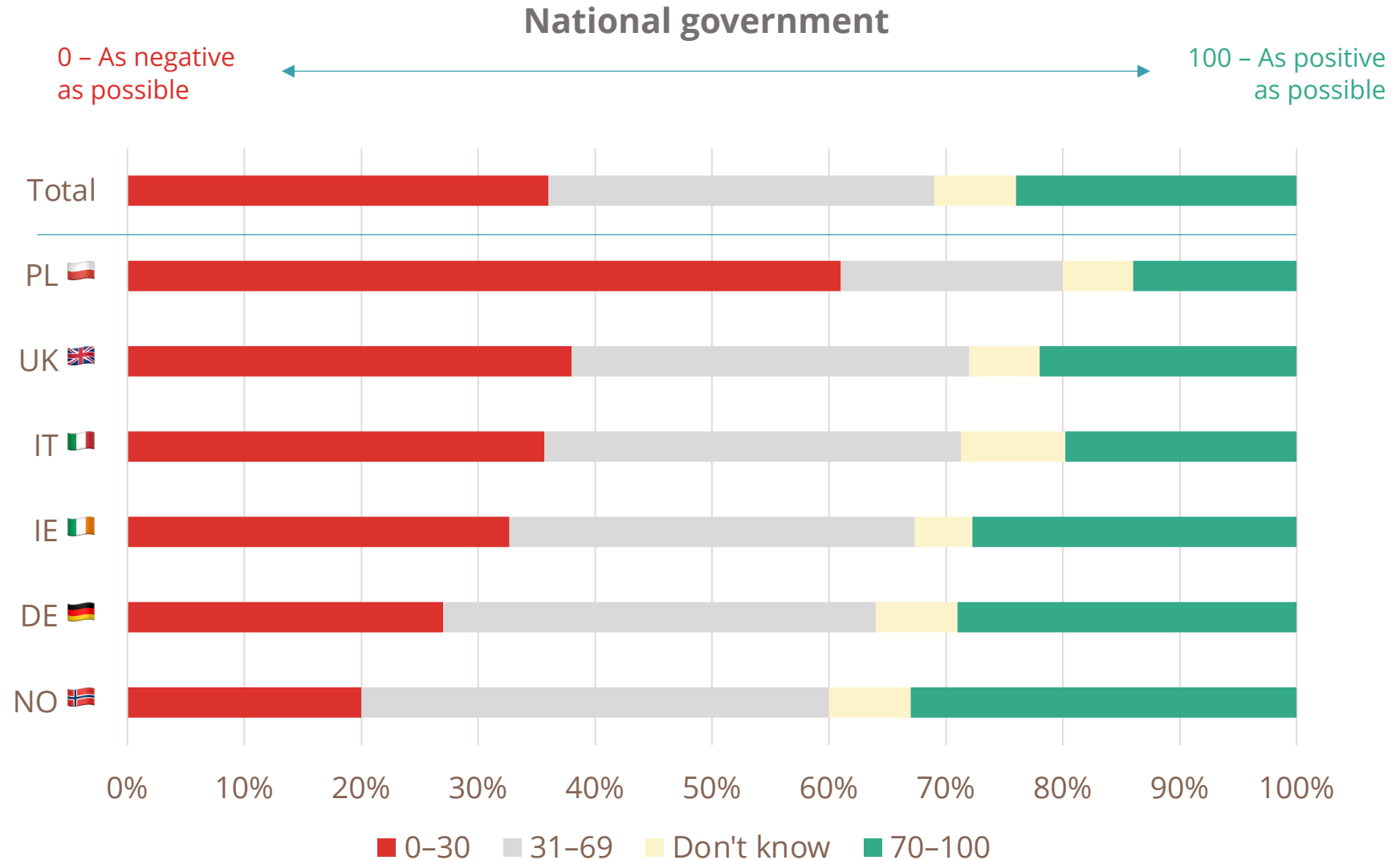


## Six in ten people in Poland feel negatively towards their government.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

61% of people in Poland say they feel negative about their national government. The proportion who hold this view is 25 points higher than the average across the six countries, of 36%.

The UK (38%) and Italy (36%) rank second for such negative feelings, while people in Norway are least likely to have a negative perception of their own government, with 20% having an unfavourable view, compared with 33% who feel positive.



Base: 12,346 adults aged 18+, interviewed 4-19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

# Feelings towards the European Commission

Out of the six countries included in the study, the UK has the most negative feelings towards the European Commission, with the UK public also least likely to think the Commission shares similar values to them.



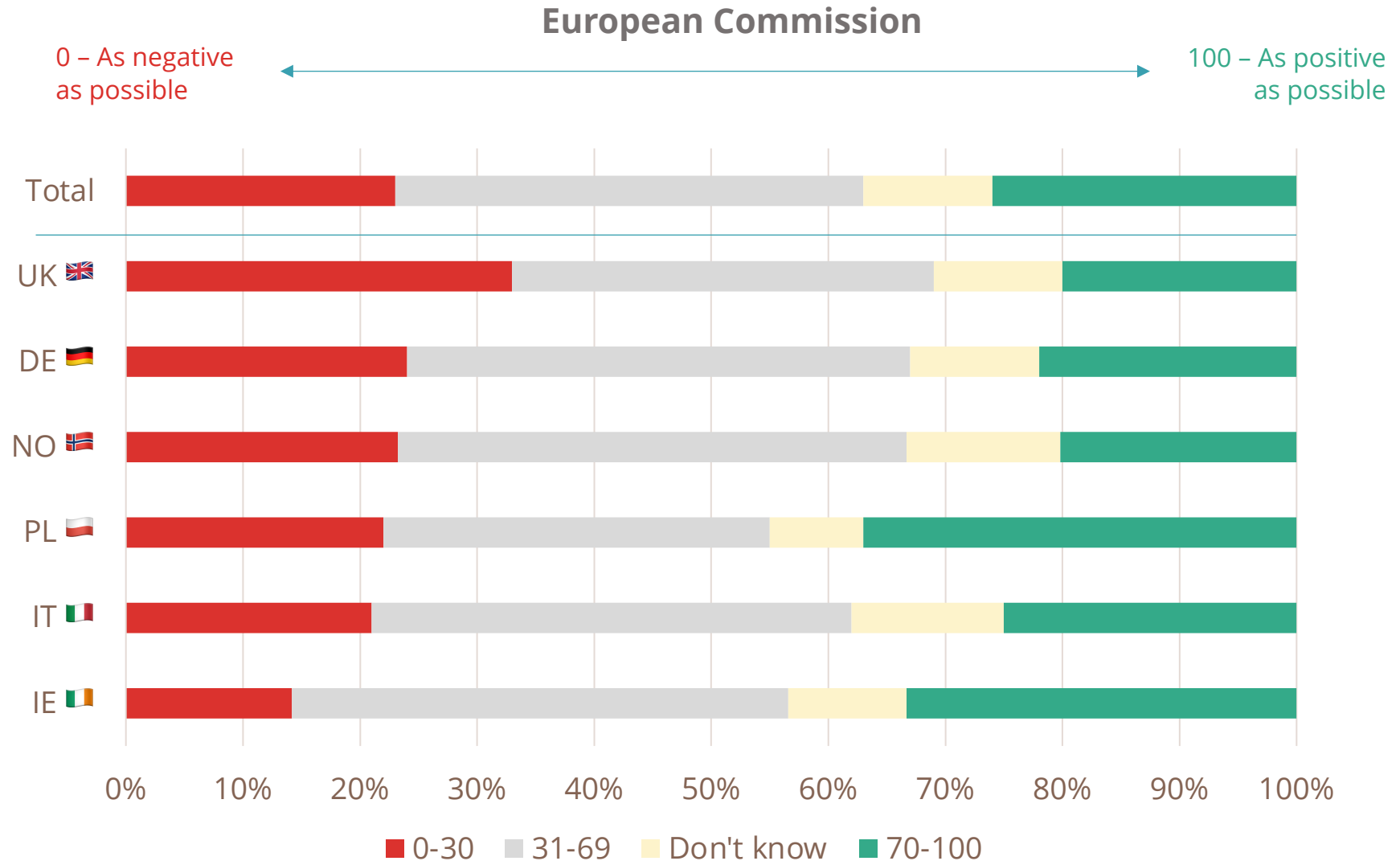
## The UK feels most negative towards the European Commission.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

33% of people in the UK rate their feelings towards the European commission negatively – the highest among the nations surveyed, and above the six-country average of 23%.

In Ireland, the view is very different, with just 14% feeling negative towards the European Commission.

The most favourable view of the European Commission is in Ireland and Poland where, respectively, 33% and 37% view the organisation positively.



Base: 12,346 adults aged 18+, interviewed 4–19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

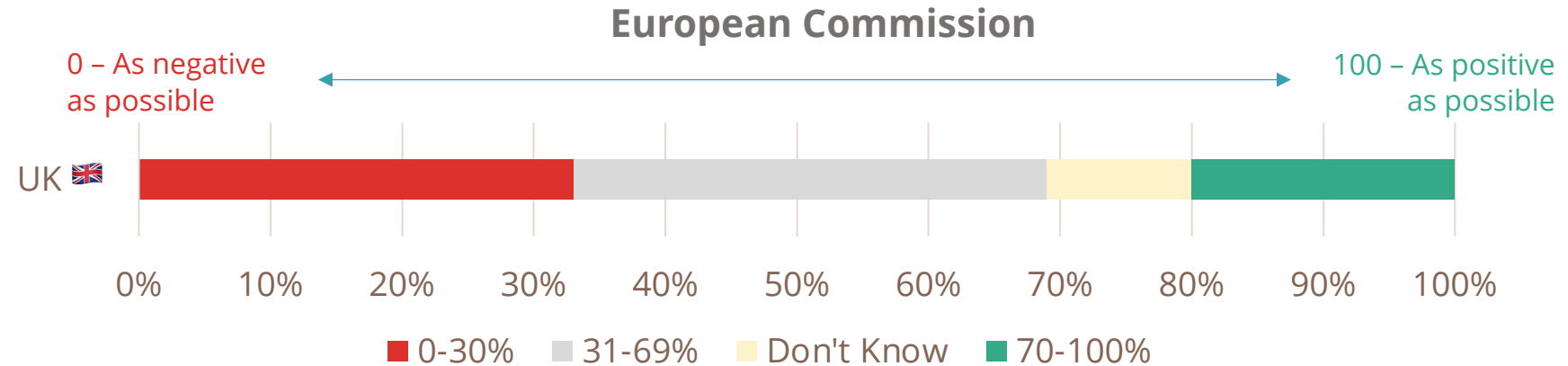
## In the UK, people who are older, white and vote Conservative are more likely to have a negative view of the European Commission.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a "feeling thermometer". How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

51% of people in the UK who voted Conservative in the 2019 general election have negative feelings towards the European Commission. This figure is 21% for Liberal Democrat and Labour voters.

This negative view is also common among older people and people who are white.

44% of people aged 55+ hold a negative view of the Commission, compared with 18% of people aged 18-34. 37% of people who are white also feel this way – far higher than the 14% of people from ethnic minorities who feel the same.



### % of those who rank their feelings 0-30% towards the European Commission



### 2019 General Election Vote

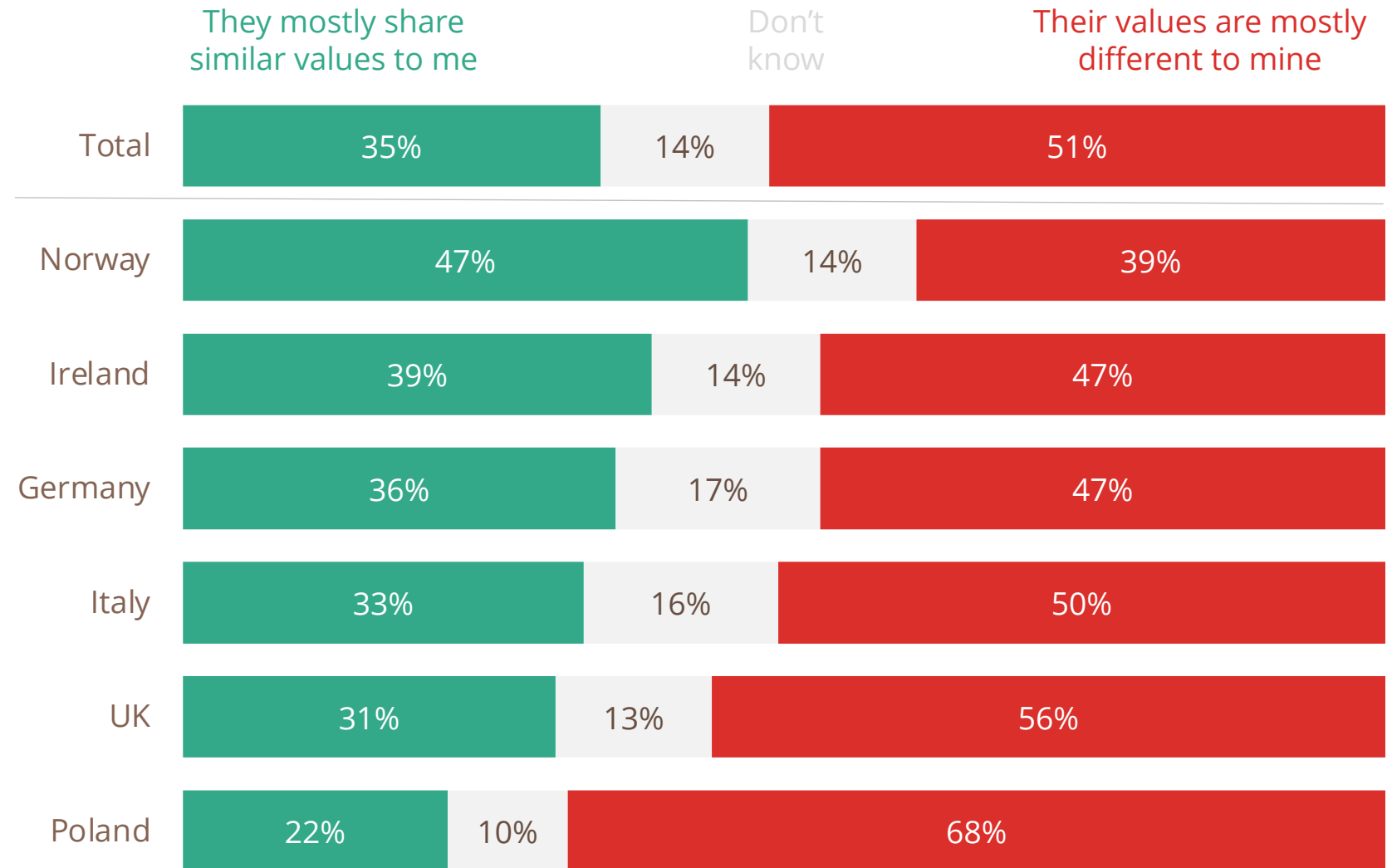


# The UK and Poland are the only two countries where majorities feel the government's values are mostly different to theirs

Which of the following two statements comes closest to your view about [the **National government**]?

56% of people in the UK and 68% of those in Poland think their government's values are mostly different values from their own – the only countries where majorities hold this view.

By contrast, 39% of people in Norway feel this way and nearly half (47%) say their government does largely hold the same values.

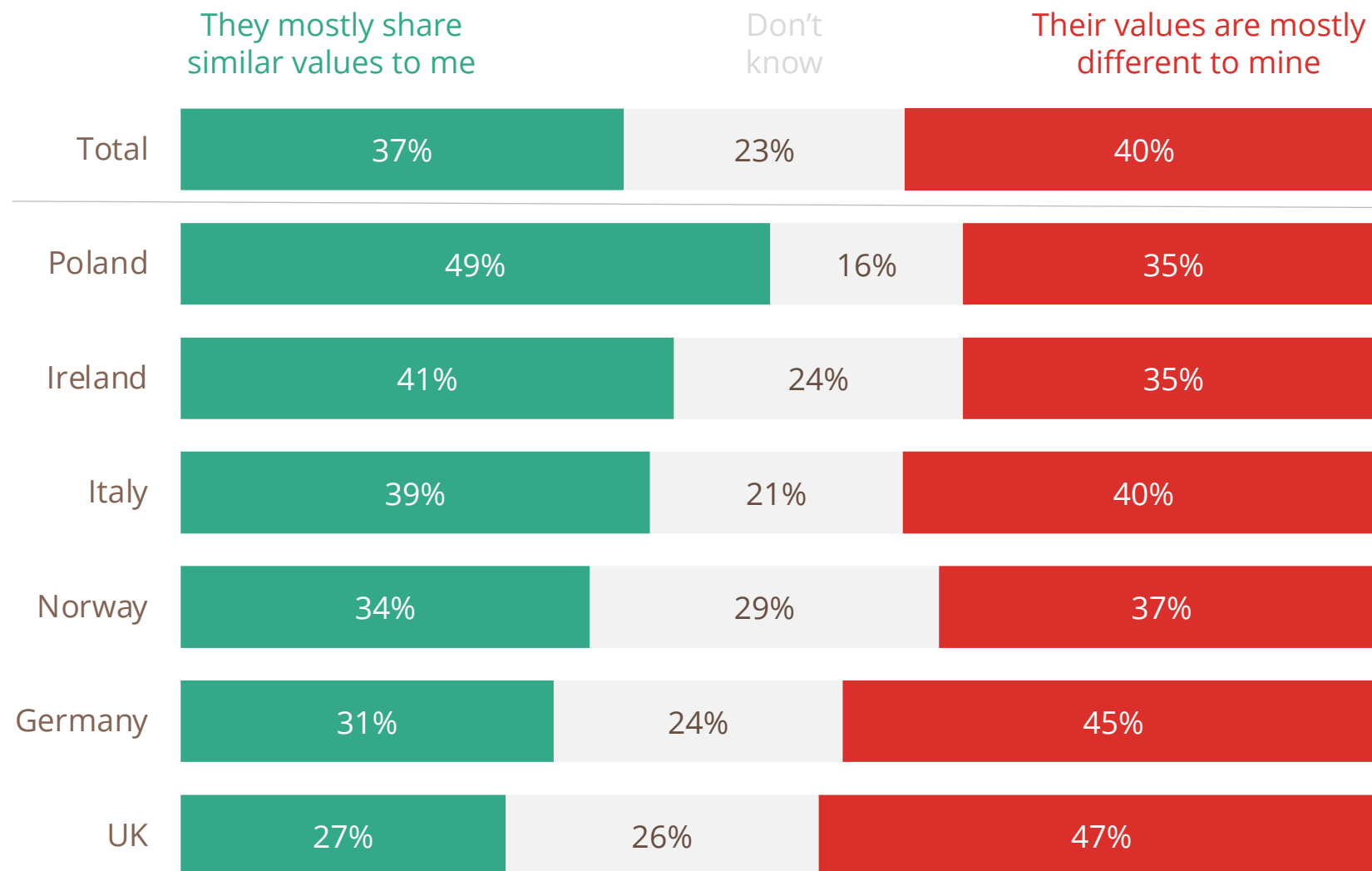


## Half of people in Poland think the European Commission mostly shares similar values to them.

Which of the following two statements comes closest to your view about [the **European Commission**]?

49% of people in Poland think the European Commission mostly shares similar values to them – more than double the 22% who thought this of their own government.

The UK has the lowest proportion of people who think the European Commission mostly shares similar values to them, with 27% reporting this – similar to Germany, where 31% feel the same.



# Feelings towards media and charities

People in the UK have some of the most negative feelings towards both social media platforms and traditional media organisations.

Only Poland feels more negatively about news and media, while they also feel most positively about social media.



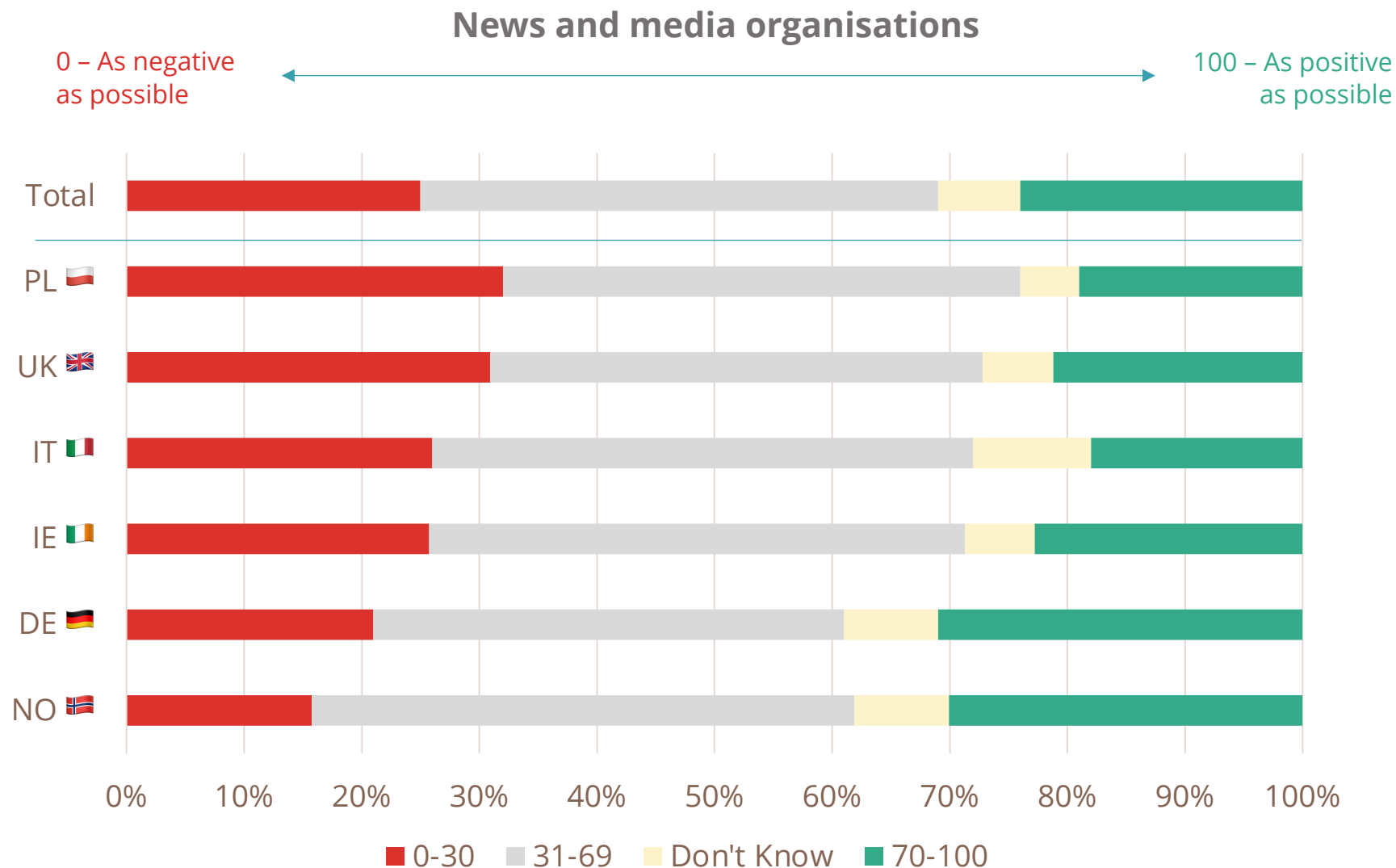
## Three in ten people in the UK have negative feelings towards news and media organisations.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

31% of people in the UK have negative feelings towards news and media organisations. This figure is similar in Poland, where 32% feel the same. The country with the least negative view is Norway (16%).

But people in most countries take a more neutral view – on average, 44% of people across the six nations do not have particularly negative or positive feelings towards news and media organisations.

Norway (30% vs 16%) and Germany (31% vs 21%) are the only countries surveyed where people are more likely to feel positively than negatively about news and media organisations.





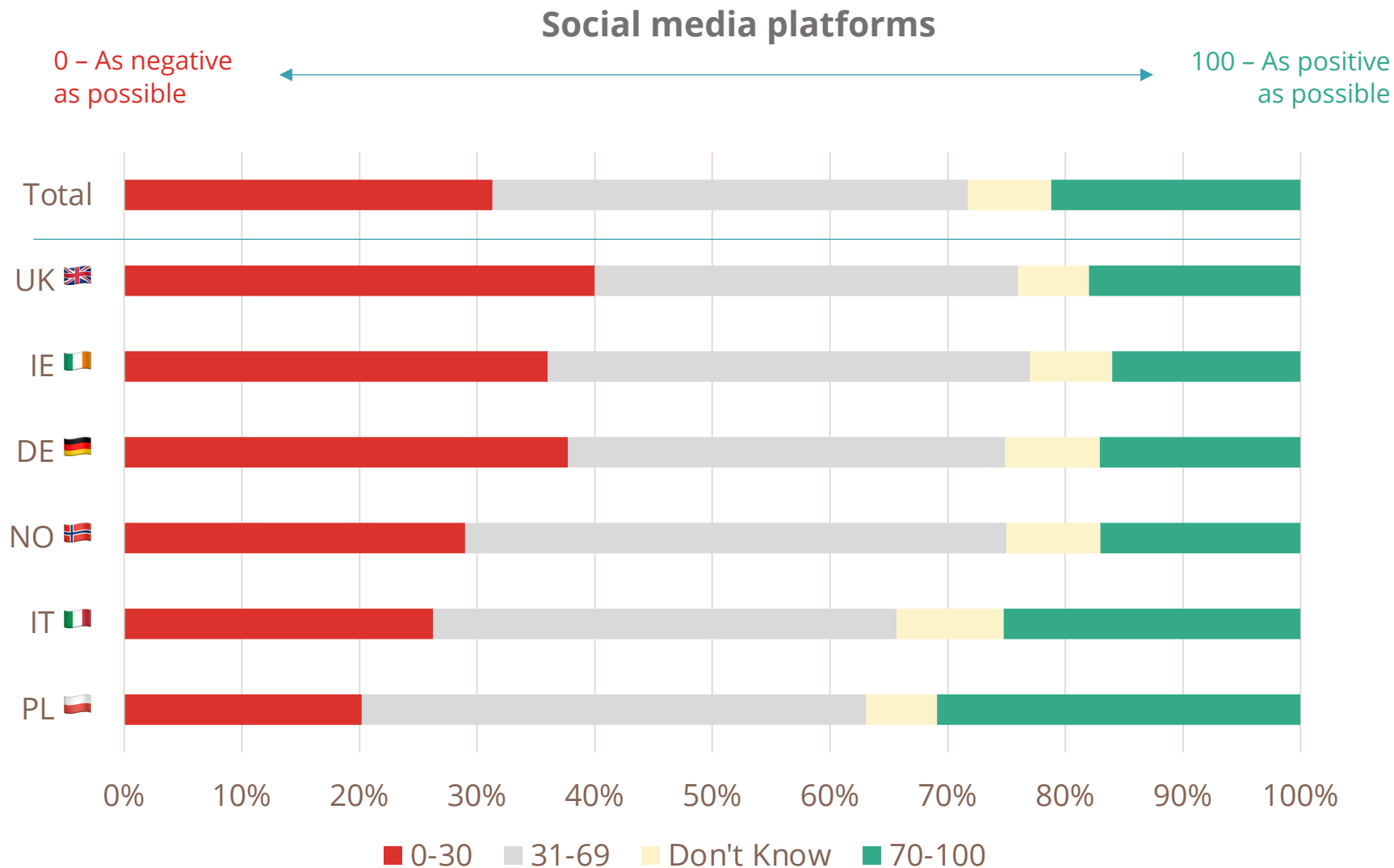
## People in the UK feel among the most negatively about social media platforms.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

An average of 31% of people across the six countries have negative feelings towards social media platforms.

Those in the UK are among the most likely to feel this way (40%), along with Germany (38%) and Ireland (36%).

The country with the most favourable views of social media platforms is Poland, where 20% feel negatively about them, compared with 31% who feel positively.



Base: 12,346 adults aged 18+, interviewed 4–19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

# Feelings towards scientists and people generally

The negative feelings expressed about government and some media organisations stand in strong contrast to the positive feelings expressed towards scientists.

Only a very small minority of people feel negatively towards scientists working at universities. The UK is one of the least likely to have an unfavourable view of them.

Across the six countries, there is less trust in people in general, with Italy the least trusting and Norway the most.

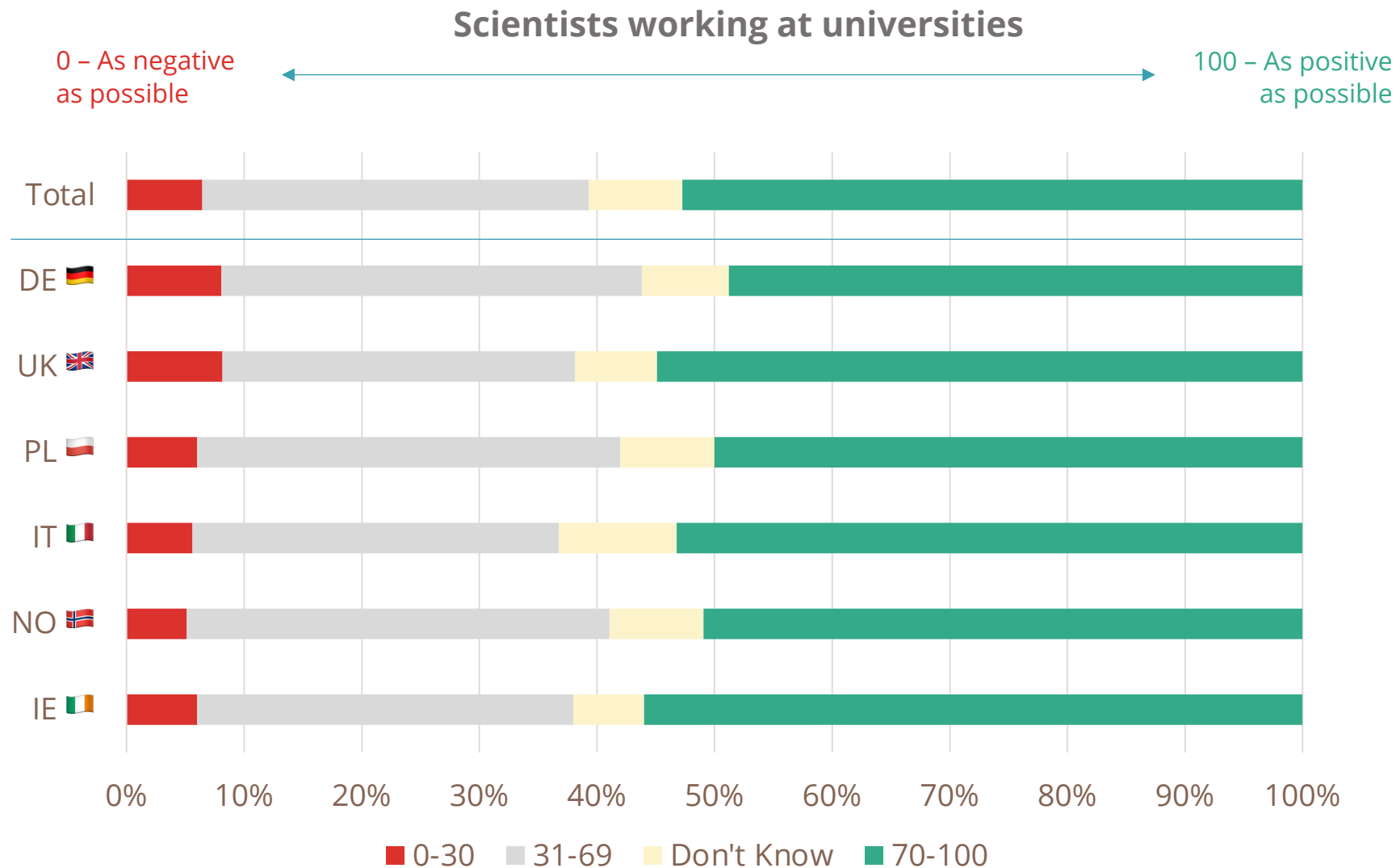


## On average, one in two people have positive feelings towards scientists working at universities.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

There are very limited negative feelings towards scientists working at universities, with an average of just 6% holding an unfavourable view of them, compared with 53% who have a favourable perception.

The countries with the most positive view of such scientists are Ireland (56%) and the UK (55%).



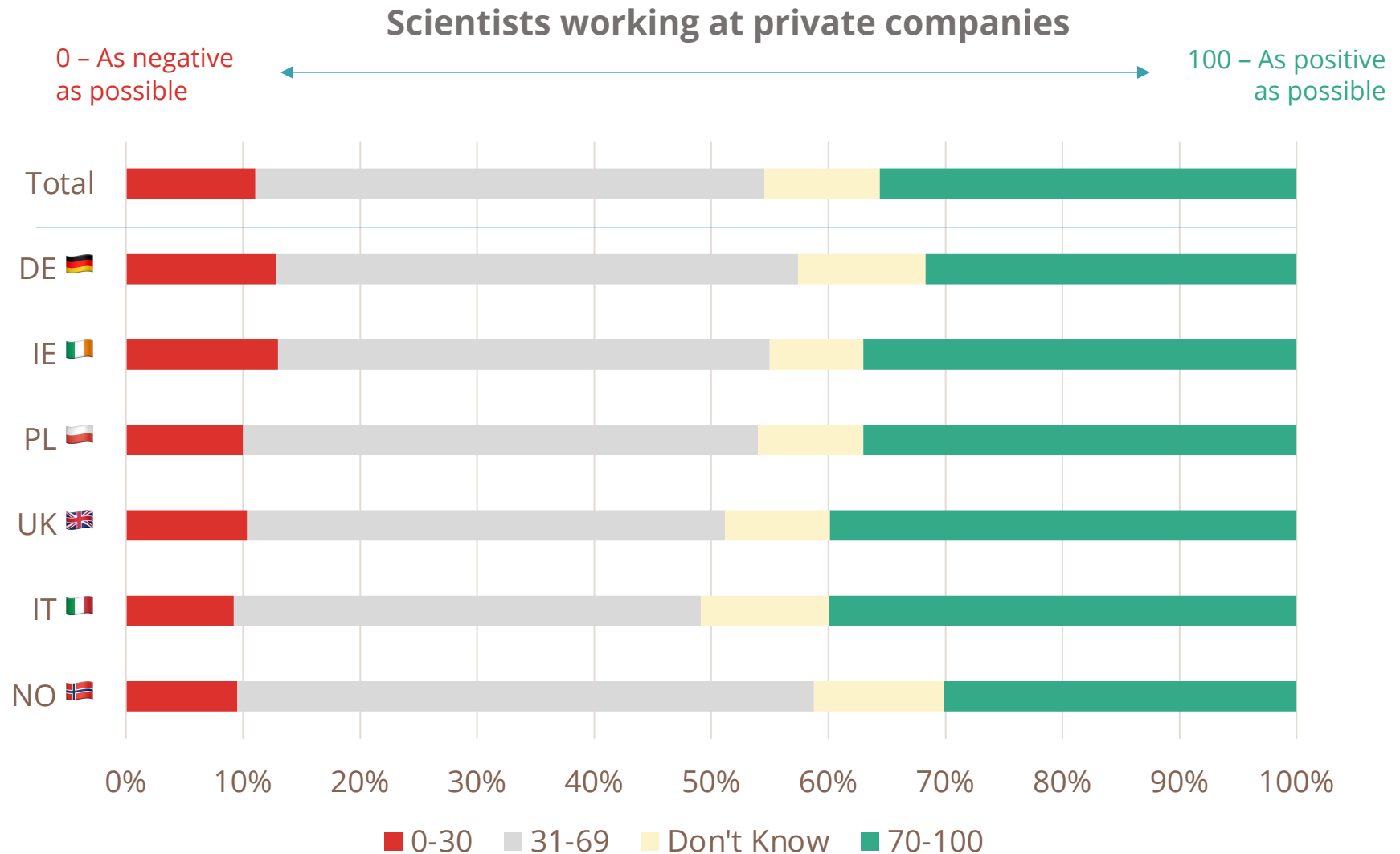
Base: 12,346 adults aged 18+, interviewed 4–19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## Just one in ten have negative feelings towards scientists working at private companies.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

Across the six countries, an average of 11% rate their feelings towards scientists working at private companies negatively, while 36% say they feel positive towards them.

The countries with the most positive view are Italy (40%), the UK (40%) and Ireland (37%).



Base: 12,346 adults aged 18+, interviewed 4–19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

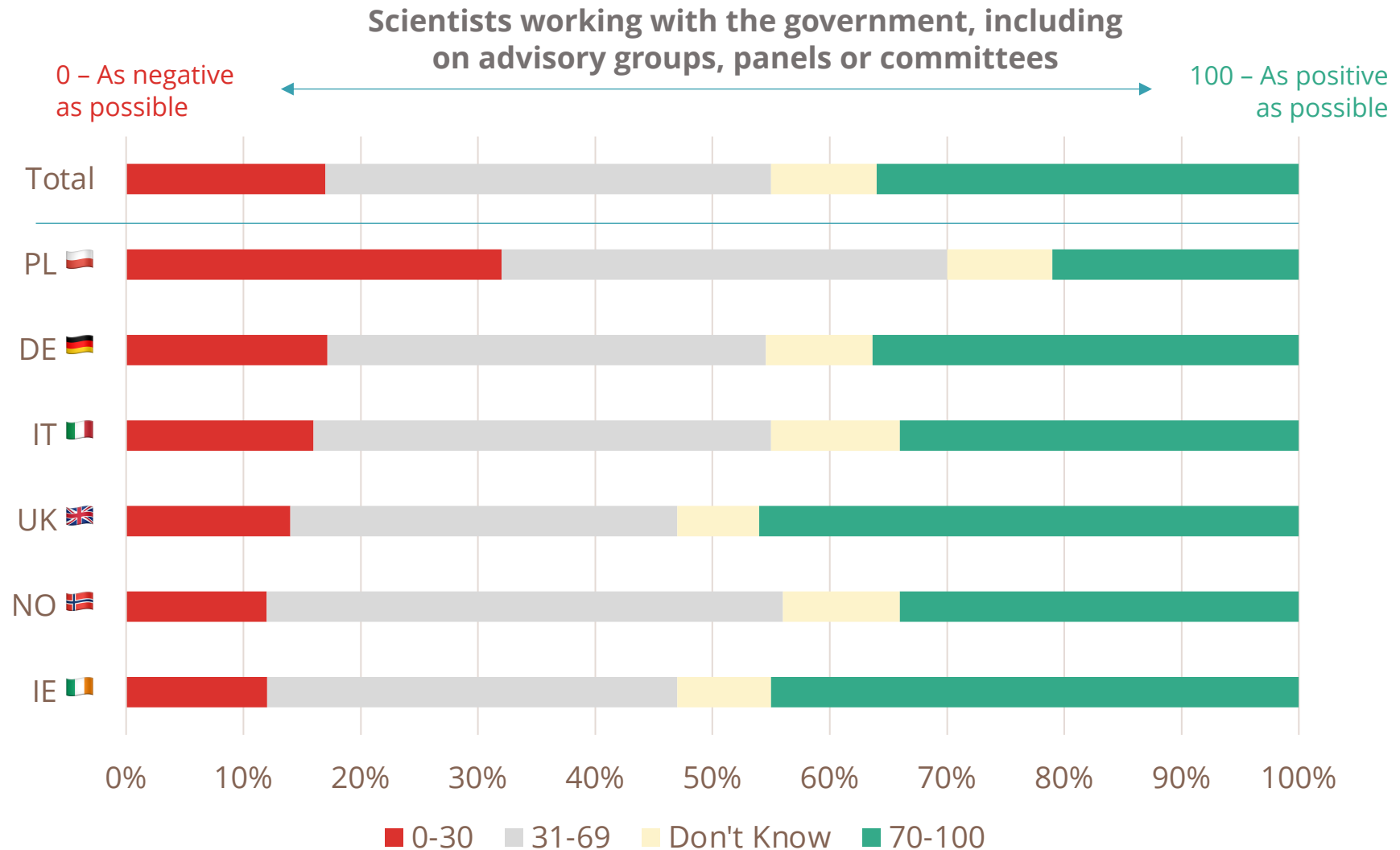
## Poland stands out for negative sentiment towards scientists working with the government, while the UK and Ireland are most positive.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a "feeling thermometer". How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

32% of people in Poland rate their feelings towards scientists working with the government negatively – much higher than the six-country average of 17%.

In Ireland, just 12% feel negatively about scientists with such a relationship with the government, and it is a similar story in Norway (12%) and the UK (14%).

People in the UK (46%) and Ireland (45%) feel most positively about such scientists.



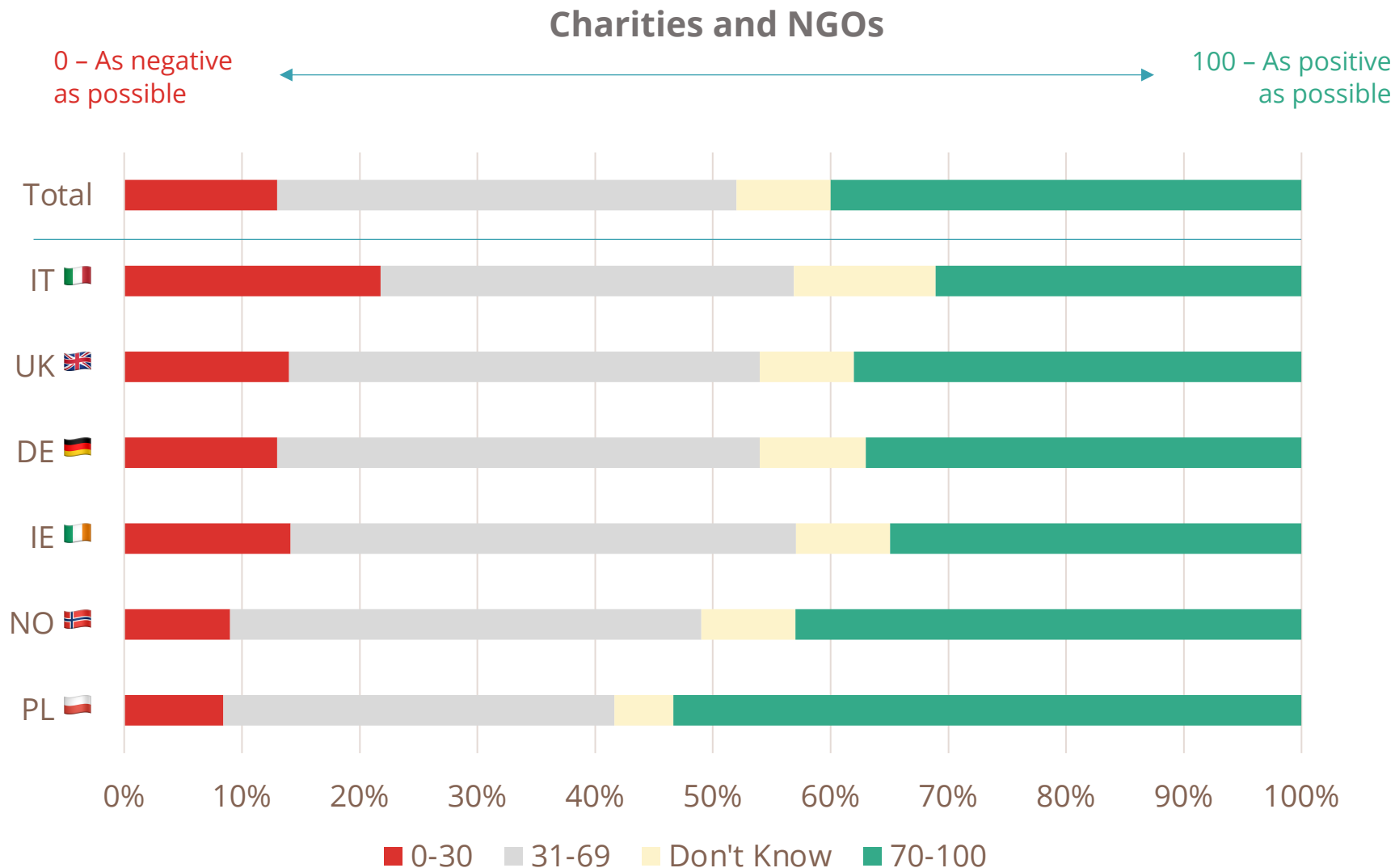
## Half of people in Poland rate their feelings towards charities and NGOs positively.

We'd now like to get your feelings toward this list of people or institutions on a “feeling thermometer”. How do you feel towards each of the following? Write the number in the box between 0 and 100 that reflects your feelings.

Among all six countries, people have more positive than negative feelings about charities and NGOs (40% vs 13%).

In Poland, just 8% of people say that their feelings towards these groups is negative, while 53% say positive. Similar ratings were given in Norway (9% vs 43%).

People in Italy have the least favourable view, with 22% say their feelings towards charities and NGOs are negative. In every other country polled, this figure is 14% or lower.



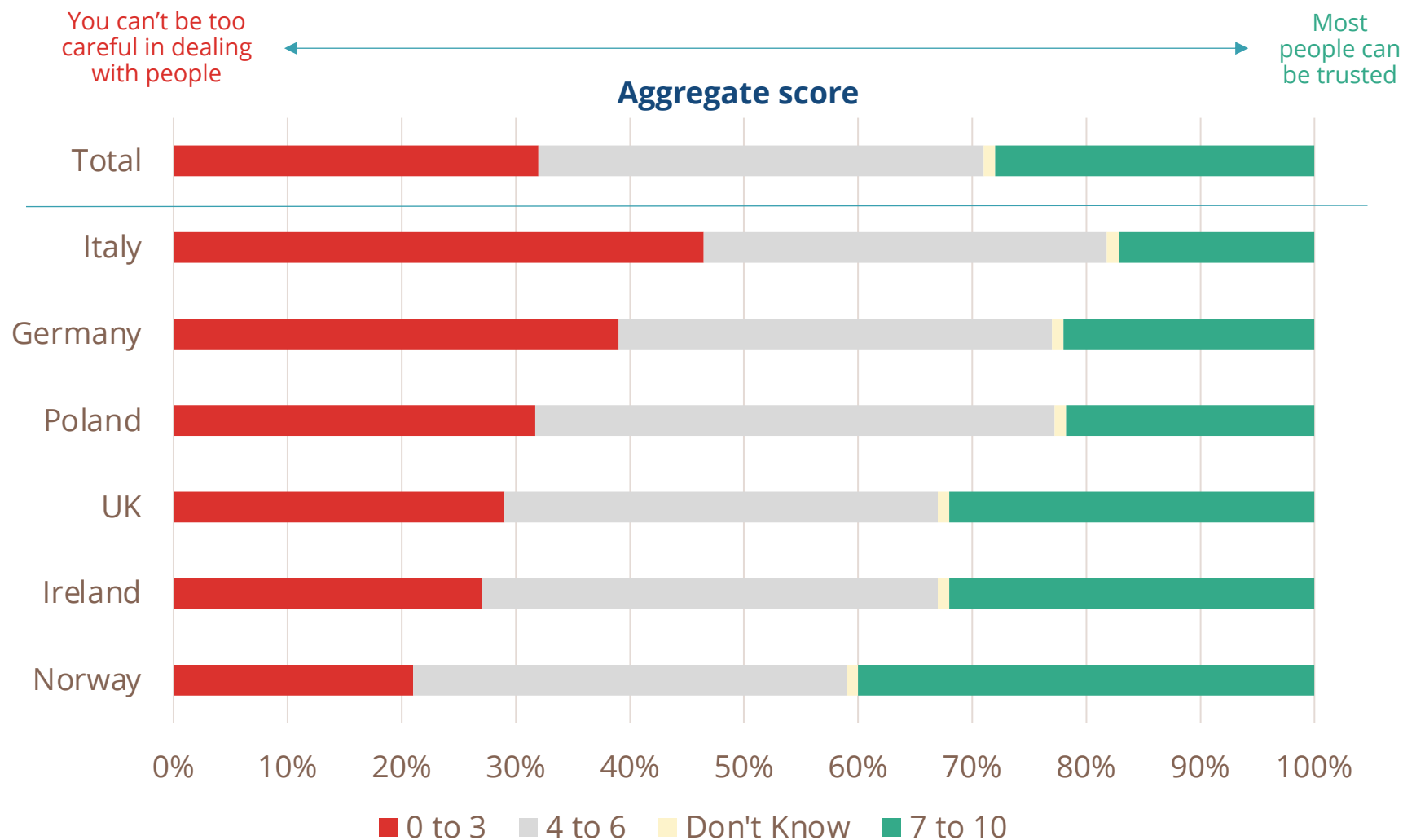
Base: 12,346 adults aged 18+, interviewed 4–19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## Norway has the most trusting view of people in general.

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please give your response on the following scale, where 0 means you can't be too careful in dealing with people and 10 means that most people can be trusted.

In Norway, 40% feel most people can be trusted, making it the most trusting of the six nations surveyed.

Ireland (32%) and the UK (32%) come next, while at the other end of the spectrum people in Italy are least trusting, with only 17% saying most people can be trusted, compared with nearly half (46%) who lean more towards thinking you can't be too careful in dealing with people.





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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 4<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> 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).





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