

The NHS: is it still there for us when we need it?

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There has been a big decline in the belief that the NHS will be there for people when they need it

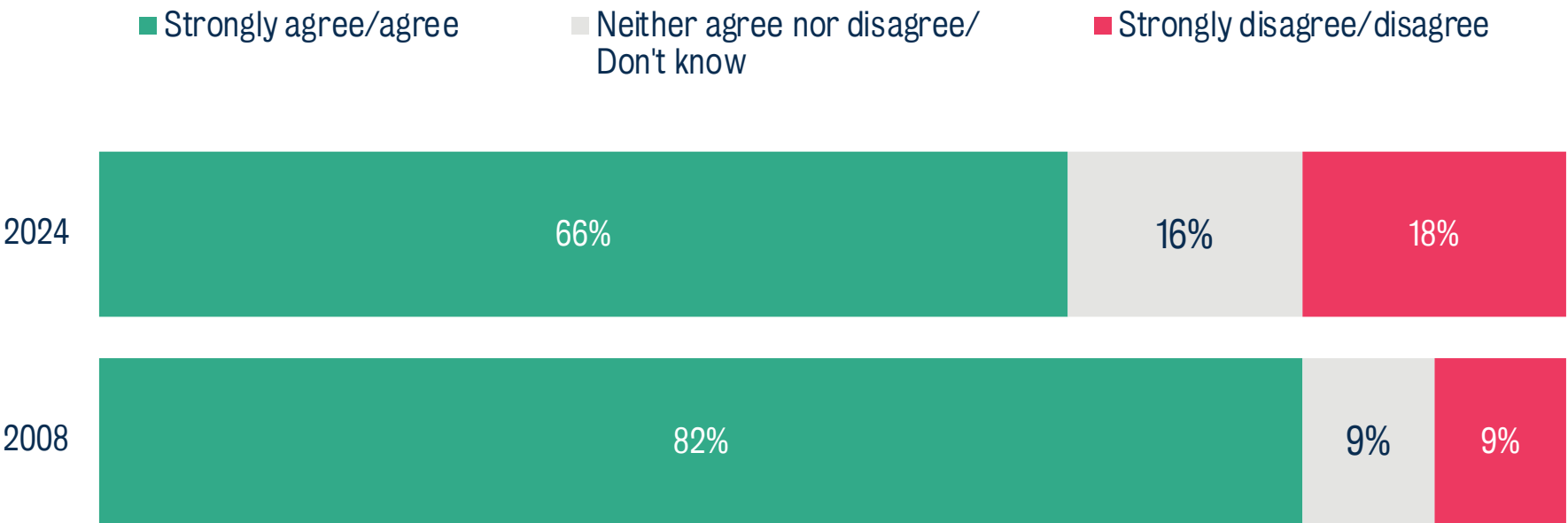
Between 2008 and 2024, the share of the public who agree the NHS will be there for them when they need it has fallen from 82% to 66%.

Correspondingly, the proportion who disagree with this view has doubled during this time, from 9% to 18%.

And there is virtually no difference in opinion between 2019 Labour and Conservative voters, with seven in 10 of both group feeling they'll be able to rely on the NHS when needed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement...

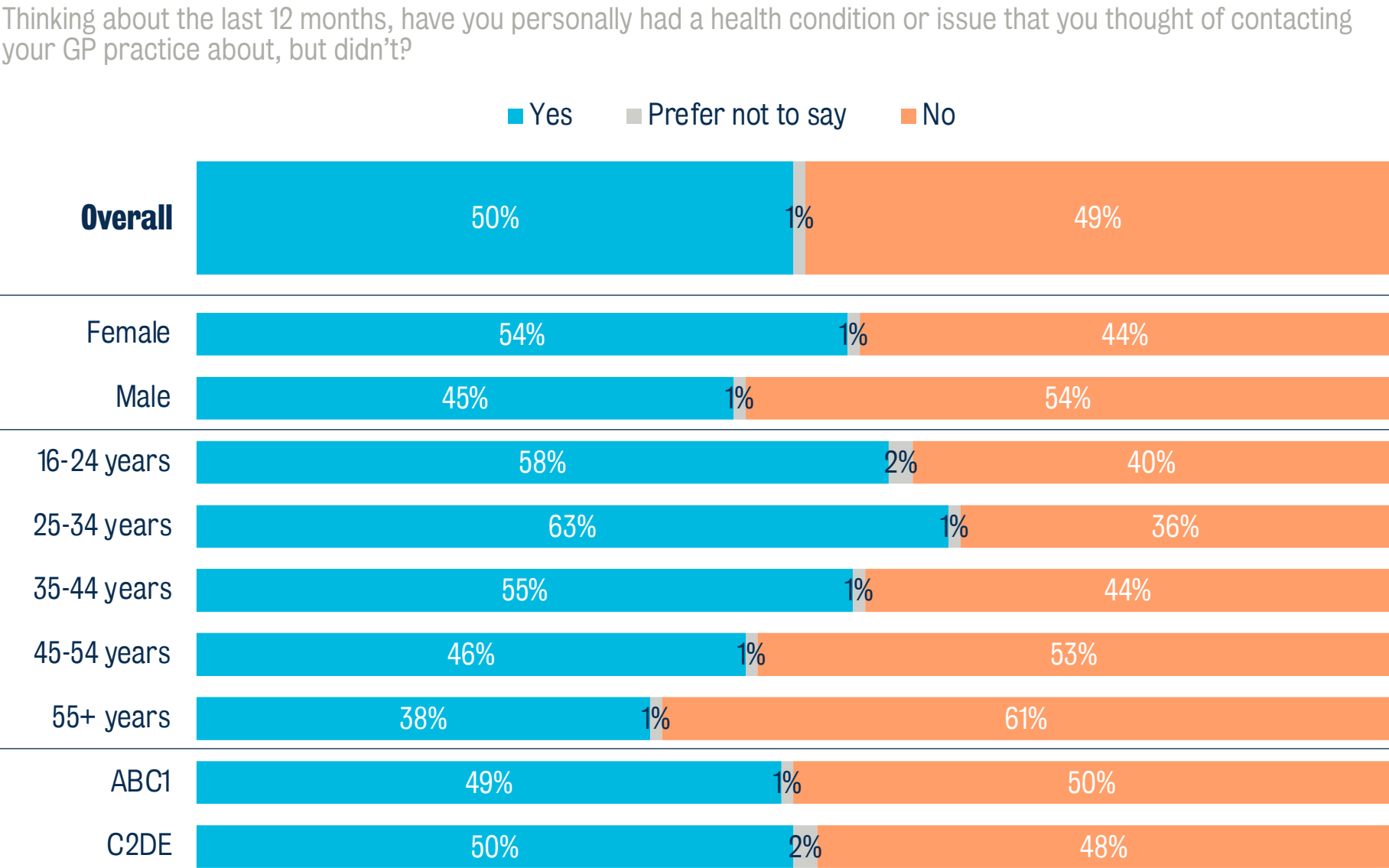
The NHS will be there for me when I need it



Agree (2024)
Labour: 71%
Conservative: 72%

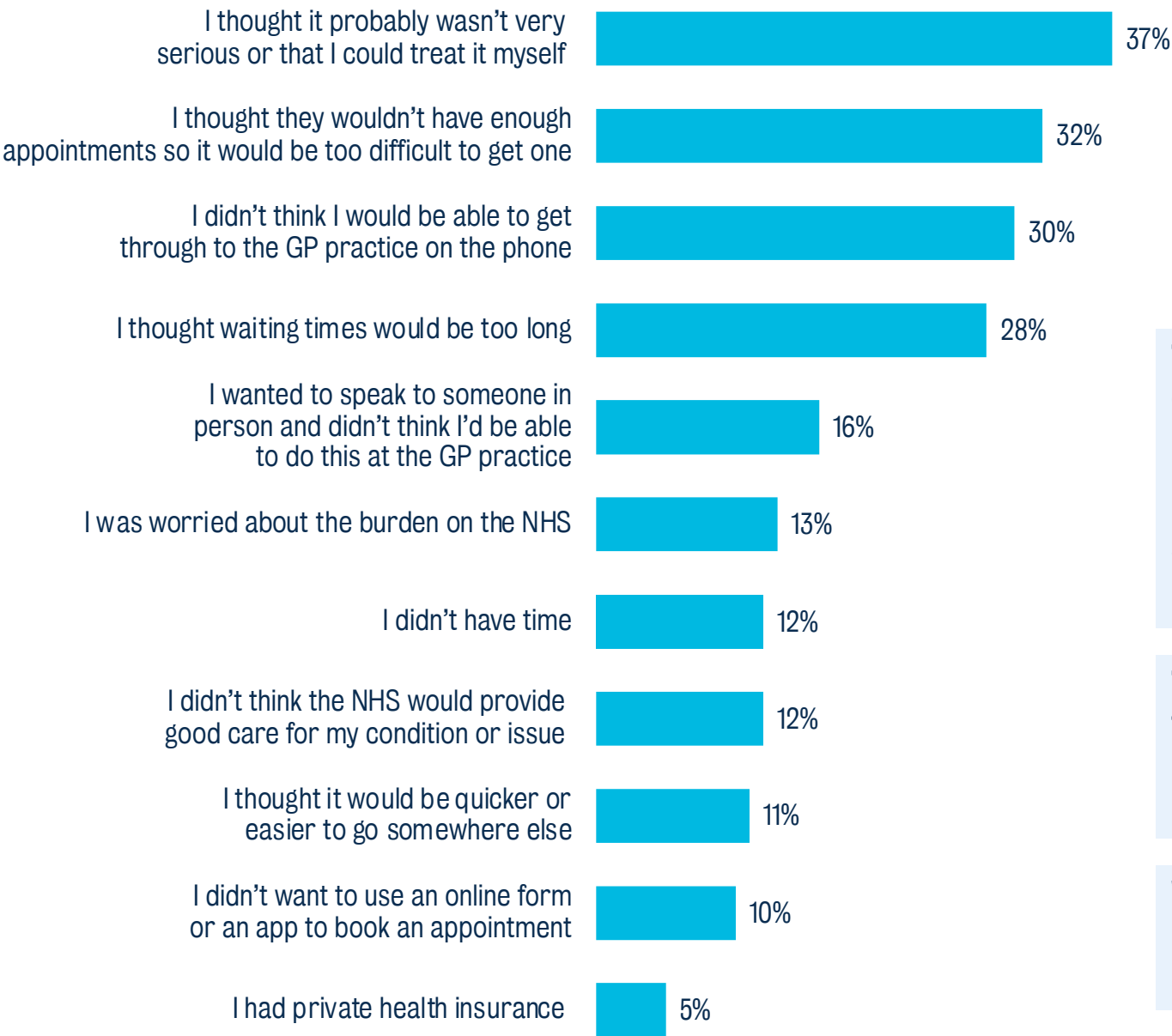
Half the population say they've decided against seeing a GP about a health condition in the last year

Women are more likely than men to say they have a health condition but ended up not contacting their GP about it, as are those aged 44 and below compared with older age groups. But there is virtually no difference among those belonging to ABC1 and C2DE social grades, which are based on occupation.



Among the top reasons given for forgoing GP care are concerns about the availability of appointments and systemic issues in the NHS

Around a third who didn't contact their GP said it was because they thought their condition wasn't very serious or that they could treat it themselves – but similar proportions said they did so because they didn't think they'd be able to get an appointment, that they wouldn't be able to get through on the phone, or that waiting times would be too long.



Please think about the last time you had a health condition or issue that you thought of contacting your GP practice about, but didn't. Why didn't you try to contact your GP practice about this health condition or issue? Please select all that apply*

Thought they wouldn't have enough appointments

Women: 37%
Men: 26%

16-24s: 22%
55-75s: 36%

Thought they wouldn't be able to get through on phone

35-54s: 37%
55-75s: 23%

Worried about burden on NHS

25-54s: 17%
55-75s: 6%

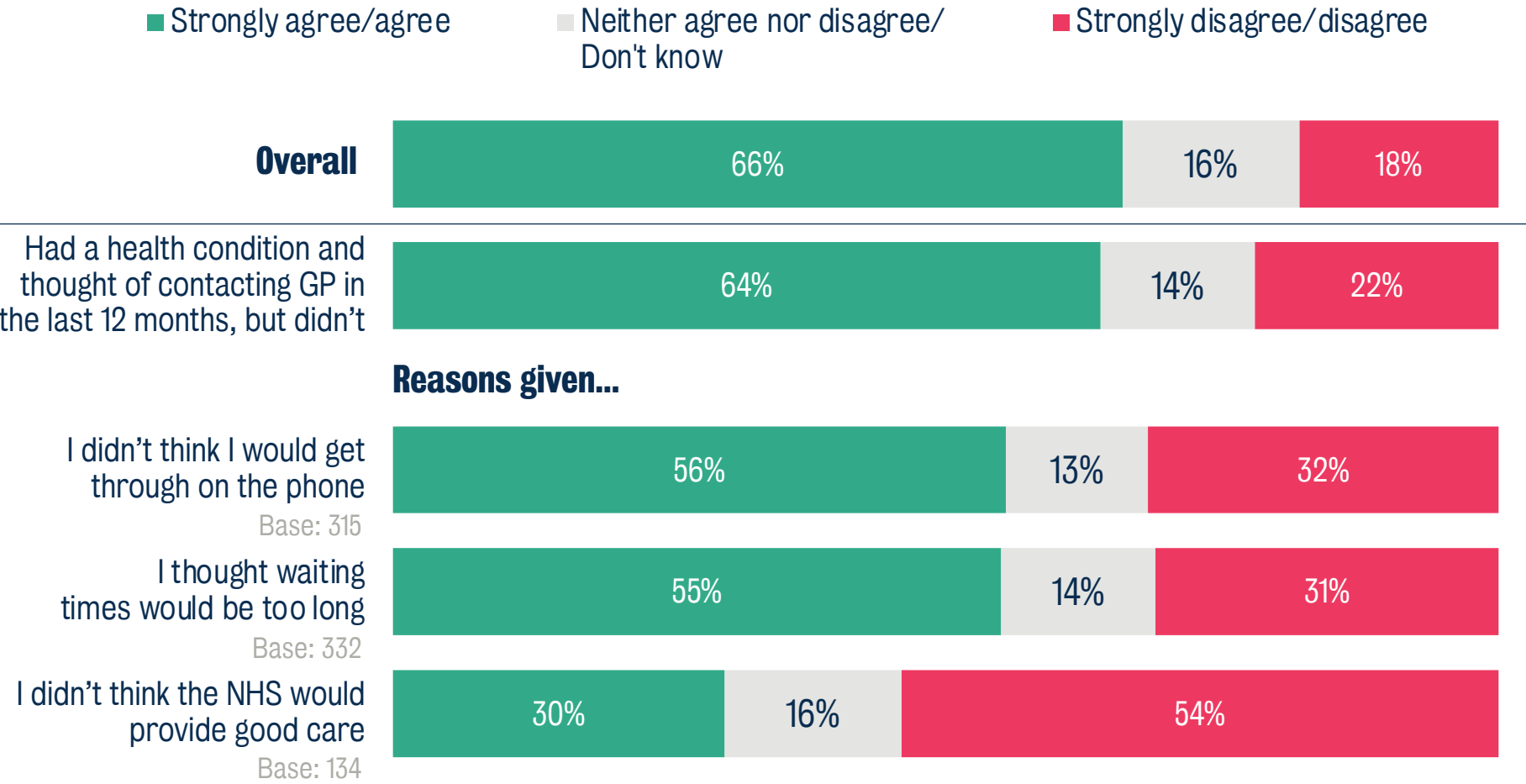
Those who didn't contact their GP about a condition are more likely to feel they won't able to rely on the NHS when the time comes

People who considered contacting their GP about a health condition before deciding against it are slightly more likely than the public overall to disagree that the NHS will be there for them when they need it.

And this rises even higher when looking at those who give various reasons for not doing so. For example, around a third of those who believed they wouldn't get through to their GP on phone do not think they'll be able to rely on the health service – nearly double the proportion of the public as a whole who feel this way.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement...

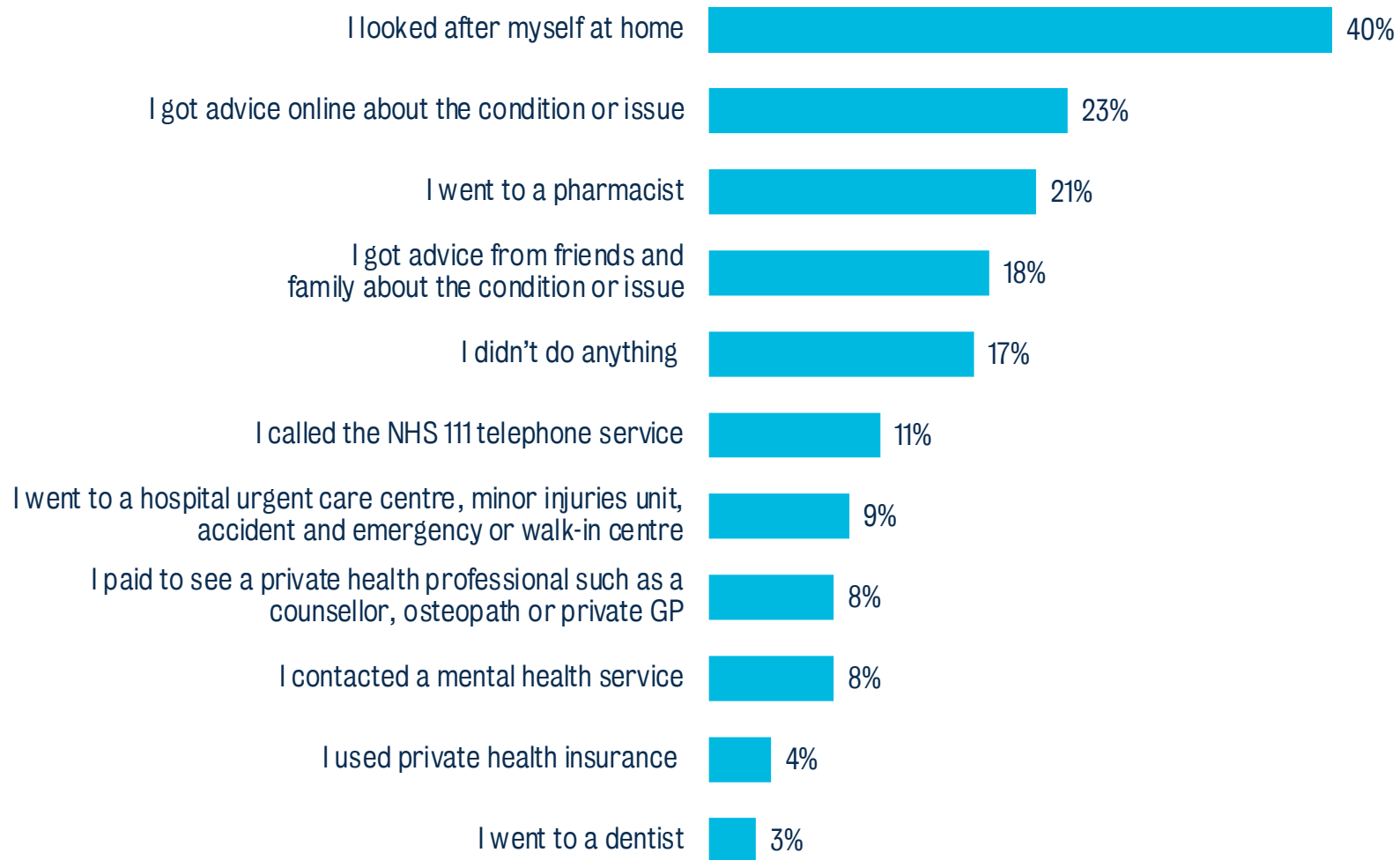
The NHS will be there for me when I need it



Four in 10 who didn't bother contacting their GP say they looked after themselves at home instead – the top answer given

Around two-thirds – 65% – of those who didn't contact their GP say they sought help or advice from other sources, including the internet, pharmacists or friends and family.

What, if anything, did you do instead of trying to contact the GP practice? Please select all that apply*



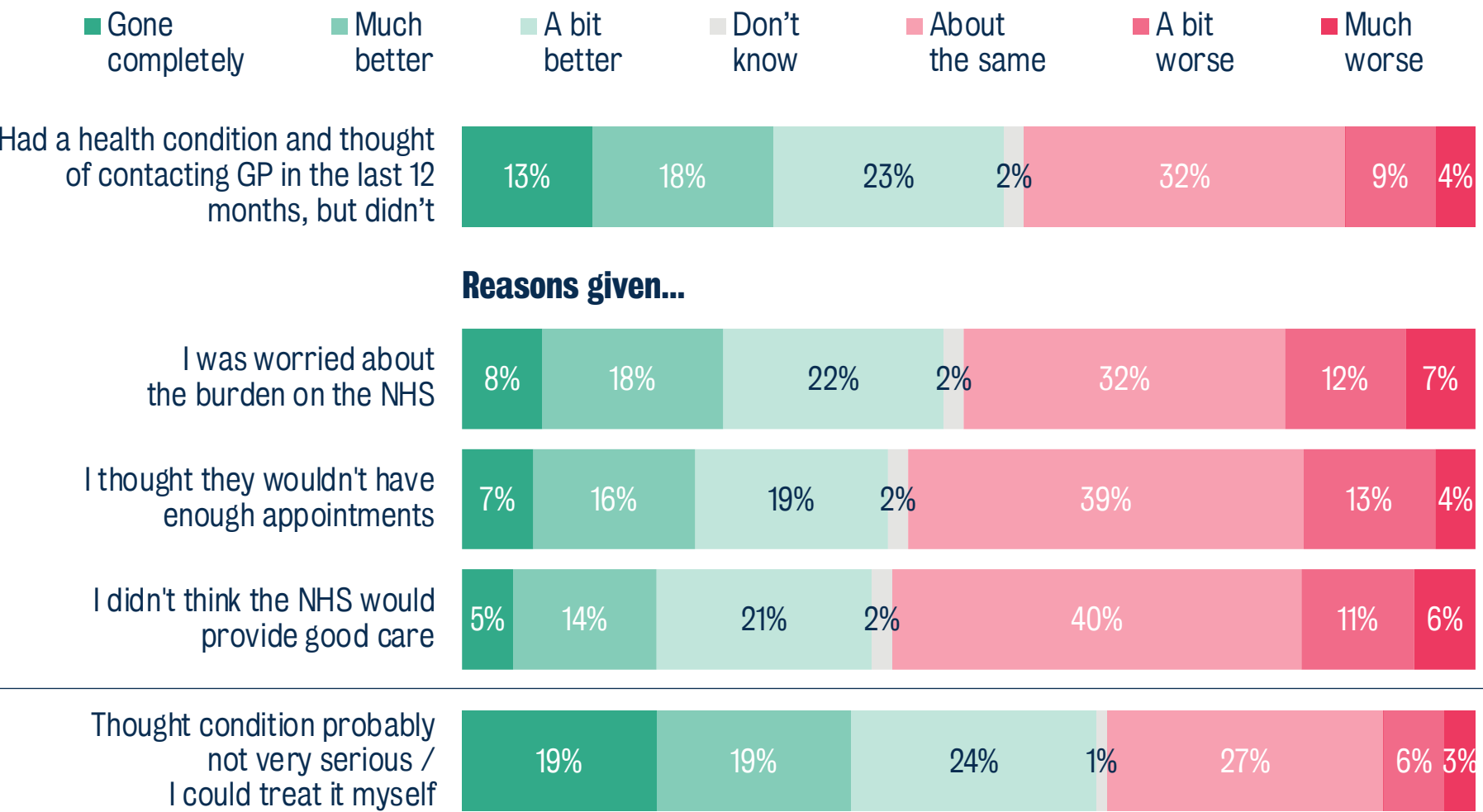
Nearly half say their condition hasn't improved or has worsened

45% of those who considered contacting their GP but didn't report that their condition is about the same or worse since they thought about seeking care.

31% say their condition has either gone completely or is much better, while 23% say it's only a bit better.

And those who give certain reasons for ultimately not contacting their GP are more likely to say their condition remained the same or deteriorated. For example, this applies to 56% of those who thought the surgery wouldn't have enough appointments and 57% who thought the NHS wouldn't provide good care.

Please still think about the health condition or issue that you considered contacting your GP practice about but didn't. How has this condition or issue changed since you first thought about contacting your GP practice about it?

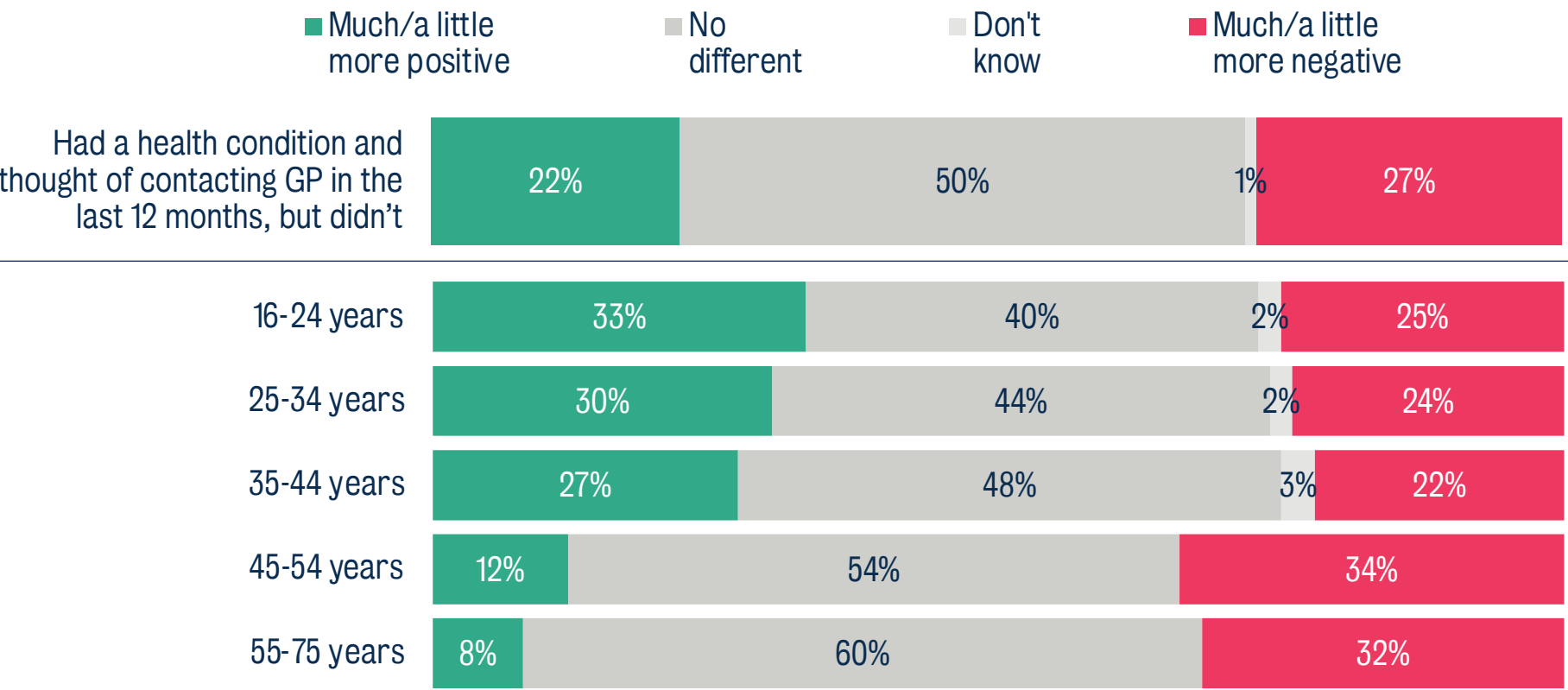


One in four say this experience has made them view the NHS more negatively – though a similar share say it’s made them more positive towards it

Among those who decided against contacting their GP about a condition, 27% say the experience has given them a worse view of the NHS, compared with 22% who say they feel more positively towards it as a result – but the most common response, given by half, is that the experience has not changed perceptions of the health service.

Those aged 45 to 75 (33%) are more negative about the NHS following this experience than those aged 44 and under (24%), while those who said they intended to vote Conservative at the general election are more likely than their Labour counterparts to say it’s made them view the health service more favourably.

Thinking about this experience, what impact, if any, has it had on your views about the NHS as a whole? Are your views on the NHS now...



More positive
Labour: 19%
Conservative: 34%

Survey details

Ipsos interviewed a representative sample of 2,252 people aged 16-75 across the UK. Polling was conducted online between 21st and 24th June 2024. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

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