Trust in scientists
The five groups of trusters that make up the UK

SENSE about SCIENCE

THE POLICY INSTITUTE

KING'S College LONDON

wellcome

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Executive summary

This study, led by the Policy Institute at King's College London and Sense about Science, and funded by Wellcome, is based on a **nationally representative survey of 4,262 UK adults aged 18+**, conducted by YouGov, as well as **regression modelling** to identify the factors most associated with trust in scientists, and **segmentation analysis** to break the public into groups with distinct positions on trust in scientists.

Understanding and enhancing trust in scientists has emerged as a priority, as seen in the growing number of studies that have attempted to identify the key drivers of trust and actions to support perceptions of trustworthiness.

The combination of increasingly polarised societies and identity-driven politics alongside elements of science being pulled into 'culture war' debates presents a clear risk: when or if trust or distrust in science become part of a deeply held political identity, engaging those with sceptical views becomes much more difficult – as does communication across groups with diverging attitudes towards scientists.

In this context, our study aims to understand the importance of underlying values and political identities in driving trust in scientists, whether this varies for different types of scientists, how this varies across segments of the public, and what this suggests for the most effective communications and engagement approaches.

This report focuses mainly on the trust levels and related attitudes of the five groups revealed by the segmentation analysis. A more detailed discussion of the study's methods and full results can be found in *Trust in scientists: the role of values and moral and political identities in the UK*..

Executive summary

As seen in other studies, trust in scientists in general is high, with 63% giving a score of seven or above on an 11-point scale of 0-10. Only 5% give a score of 0-3. This does, however, vary significantly by area of specialism and institutional connection, where scientists working in private companies (34% high trust), in government (42%) and on climate (54%) have notably lower levels of public trust.

The UK population ranges from 'Science Advocates' through to 'Science Critics'

In terms of how the public segment by level and nature of trust, our analysis reveals five distinct groups in the UK:

- **Science Advocates** (17% of the population) – 94% have high trust in scientists in general
- **Contented Trusters** (19%) – 79% high trust
- **Betrayed Trusters** (18%) – 78% high trust
- **Disengaged Trusters** (25%) – 72% high trust
- **Science Critics** (21%) – 7% high trust

The three middle segments, although having relatively high trust in most types of scientist, have much more nuanced attitudes and underlying drivers:

- **Contented Trusters** have high levels of trust generally, and relatively high contentment with their lives.
- In stark contrast, **Betrayed Trusters** trust science *despite* a strong sense of being let down by other institutions – their trust in science is the exception.
- **Disengaged Trusters** are generally not actively suspicious of science, but just pay much less attention, not just to science but in general.

Executive summary

The entirely different mindsets of the five groups are clear:

- Nearly nine in 10 (86%) Science Advocates say they **challenge people when they say something scientifically inaccurate**, compared with just 16% of Disengaged Trusters, who are lowest on this.

- Seven in 10 or more of all groups say they'd **always get an NHS-recommended vaccine** – except Science Critics, only 36% of whom say they would do this.

There are big differences even among the middle segments: 68% of Betrayed Trusters think **scientists won't publish results their funders don't like**, but just 29% of Disengaged Trusters feel the same.

And there is a broad spectrum of views across segments on the **crucial sense of scientists 'being on my side'**: 88% of Advocates believe this, compared with 63% of Contented Trusters, 58% of Betrayed Trusters, less than half of Disengaged Trusters (41%), and only 13% of Critics.

What the five groups say would actually build trust

From the segmentation, it's clear that each group presents distinct challenges to scientists and research institutions who want to increase and demonstrate their trustworthiness –there is no one-size-fits-all model.

- The top two actions that the public say would increase their trust is scientists **actively correcting misinformation** (45%) and **explaining how their work improves ordinary people's lives** (44%). The latter ranks as the biggest (or joint biggest) lever that Disengaged Trusters (39%) and Contented Trusters (55%) say would make a difference to their trust.

Executive summary

- Actions the scientific sector often reaches for – such as **scientists advising policymakers**, **involving the public in setting research priorities**, or **engaging with the local community** – rank near the bottom. For example, just 13% of Disengaged Trusters and 7% of Science Critics say scientists giving policymakers advice on research findings would help increase their trust, with this measure faring worst across the two groups overall.

- The encouraging point is that **very few say that *nothing* will increase their levels of trust**: even among the Science Critics, only 17% actively say there is nothing scientists can do, although a further 24% of this group say they don't know what would make them more trusting of scientists.

Report structure

1. **Overall levels of trust**
   How much the public trust a range of types of scientists.

2. **What factors are most associated with trust in scientists?**
   Based on results of our regression analysis.

3. **The five trust groups**
   Introduces each group and details how they vary on trust and wider aspects of their values, attitudes and mindsets.

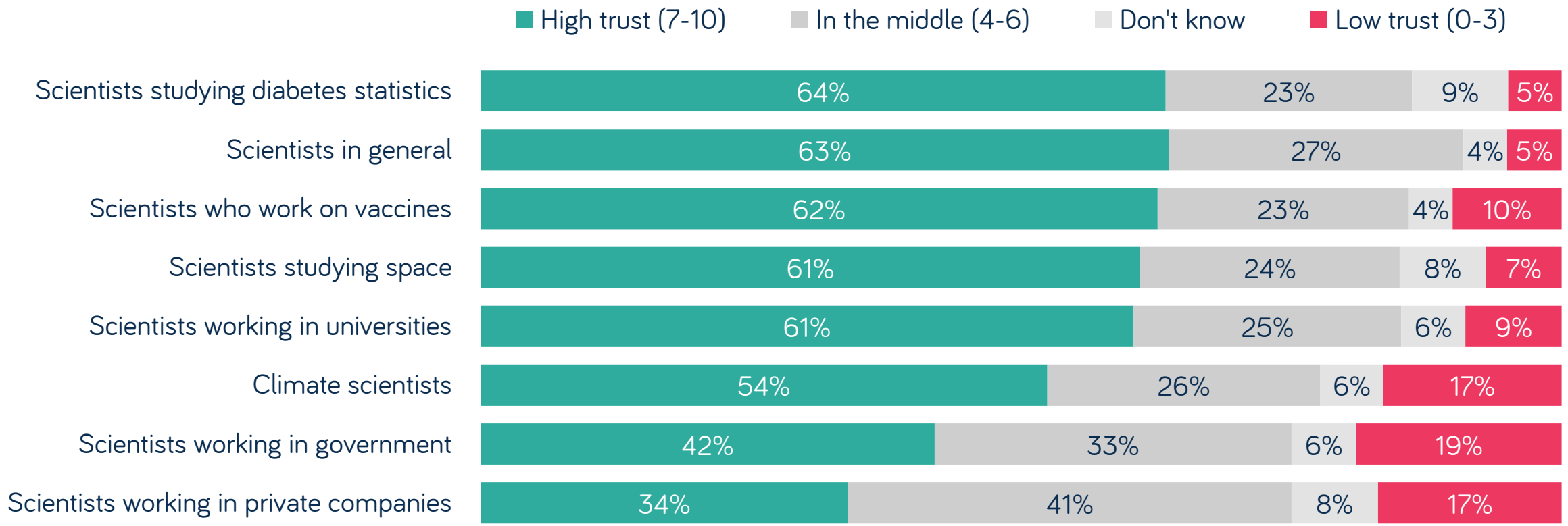
4. **General support for science**
   How each group rates the impact of science on society, support and willingness to advocate for science, and willingness to act on scientific information.

5. **What would increase trust?**
   Reports on what each group says would be most likely to increase their trust in scientists.

1. Overall levels of trust

Nearly two-thirds of the public trust scientists in general. Trust levels are similar for other specific types of scientist, but fall to around half for climate scientists – while only a minority trust scientists who work in government and private companies

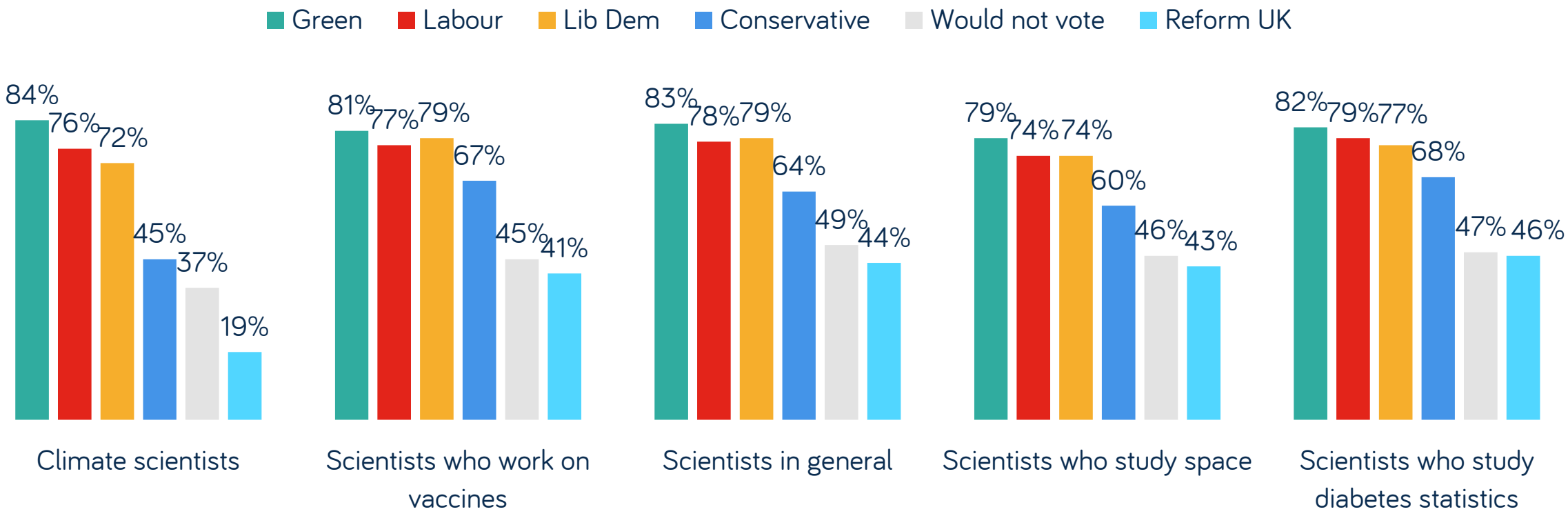
How much, if at all, do you trust the following...? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'do not trust at all' and 10 is 'trust completely'.



Base: 4,262 UK adults, 8-11 May 2026.

There is a steep political gradient in trust, particularly for climate scientists. For all types of scientists, Green supporters have the highest trust and Reform the least, with those who say they wouldn't vote tracking Reform in most cases

How much, if at all, do you trust the following...? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'do not trust at all' and 10 is 'trust completely'.
% with high trust (7-10)



Base: 4,262 UK adults, of whom 524 say they intend to vote Conservative, 590 Labour, 483 Liberal Democrat, 778 Reform UK, and 626 Green at the next general election. Would not vote: 368. 8-11 May 2026.

Getting beneath the surface of trust levels

To get beneath the surface of the above headline insights, we used two statistical techniques to better understand how different attitudes and values interact with trust in scientists. These are regression analysis and segmentation analysis.

Regression

Regression analysis is a statistical method which aims to determine how a dependent variable (trust in scientists) relates to other variables, controlling for the interrelationship between variables: it therefore provides an indication of what is *most* associated.

We use regression to identify factors that are statistically significantly associated with levels of trust in **three groups of scientists**: scientists **in general**, scientists **who work on vaccines**, and **climate** scientists.

Segmentation

This involves combining trust scores with other measures to identify what most distinguishes groups, using a technique called Latent Class Analysis.

This has resulted in five distinct groups that are roughly similar in size.: a very trusting group of Science Advocates at one end of the spectrum, a low-trusting or distrusting group of Science Critics at the other, and three groups in the middle.

The three middle groups still have relatively high trust in scientists but tend to be more cynical and less enthusiastic about science than Advocates. The three middle groups are: Contented Trusters, Betrayed Trusters and Disengaged Trusters.

We start by presenting the results of the three regression models.

2. What factors are most associated with trust in scientists?

2. What's most associated with trust?

How to read the charts

In the following charts, we represent the proportion of variance in trust explained by each factor – the larger a predictor's share of the explained variance, the more of the model's explanatory power it accounts for.

Explanatory power of the models

Each of the models explains a high degree of the variation in levels of trust in scientists, which suggests these give us a strong understanding of what's most associated: we would expect this to be the case, given the questionnaire has been built on a review of which factors other studies have shown to be highly related to trust in science or scientists.

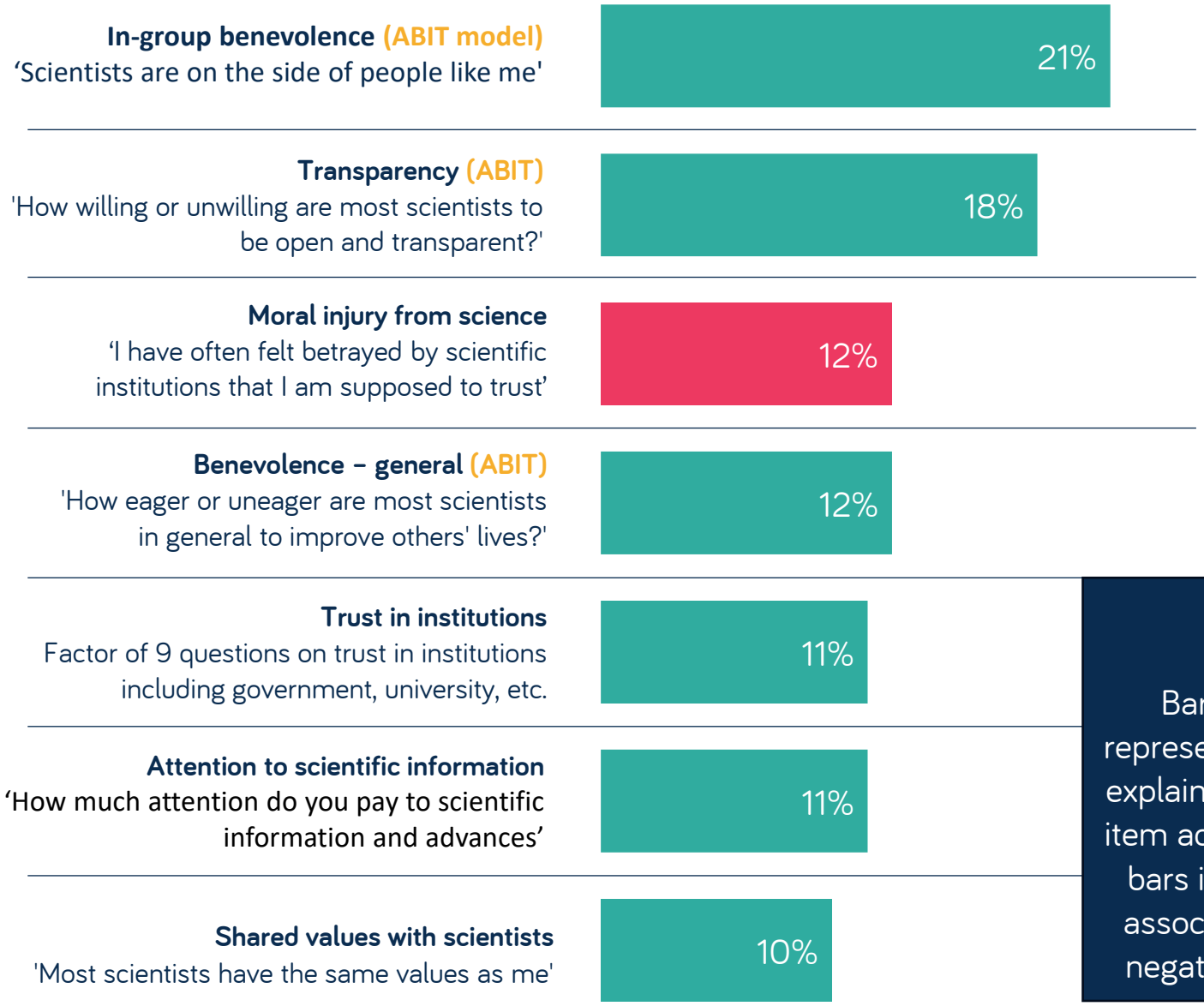
Reinforcing and building on the 'ABI(T)' model of trust

In the widely used 'ABI(T)' model, trust is shaped by perceived Ability (A), Benevolence (B) and Integrity (I), with Transparency (T) also found to be relevant in science.

In our models, several of these do come out as among the key drivers of trust. But the very strongest is our novel indicator of Benevolence, which is a sense of personal or 'In-group Benevolence', measured by whether scientists are seen as 'on the side of people like me', as opposed to the general Benevolence measure of 'eagerness to benefit society', which is less prominent in our models.

While the ABIT components play an important role, several other factors also come out as strongly associated with trust in the three groups of scientists.

Trust in scientists in general is most strongly positively associated with perceived in-group benevolence, transparency, trust in a wider set of institutions, a sense that scientists want to improve lives and share our values – and is negatively associated with feelings of betrayal by scientific institutions

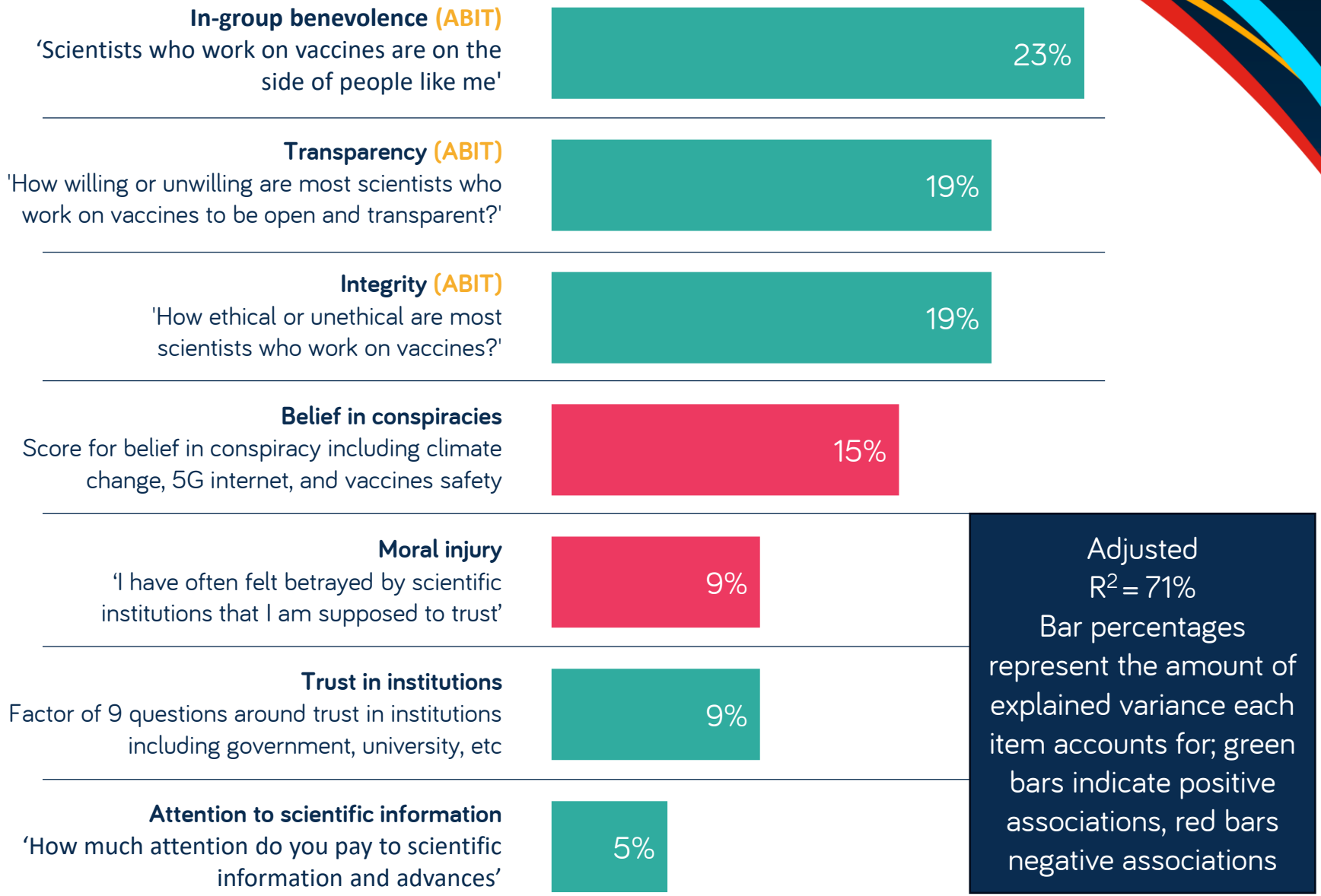


Adjusted $R^2 = 58\%$

Bar percentages represent the amount of explained variance each item accounts for; green bars indicate positive associations, red bars negative associations

General standardised dominance statistics (weighted regression, n=1,351). Only displaying effects significant at the 5% level and accounting for >2% of total R-squared.

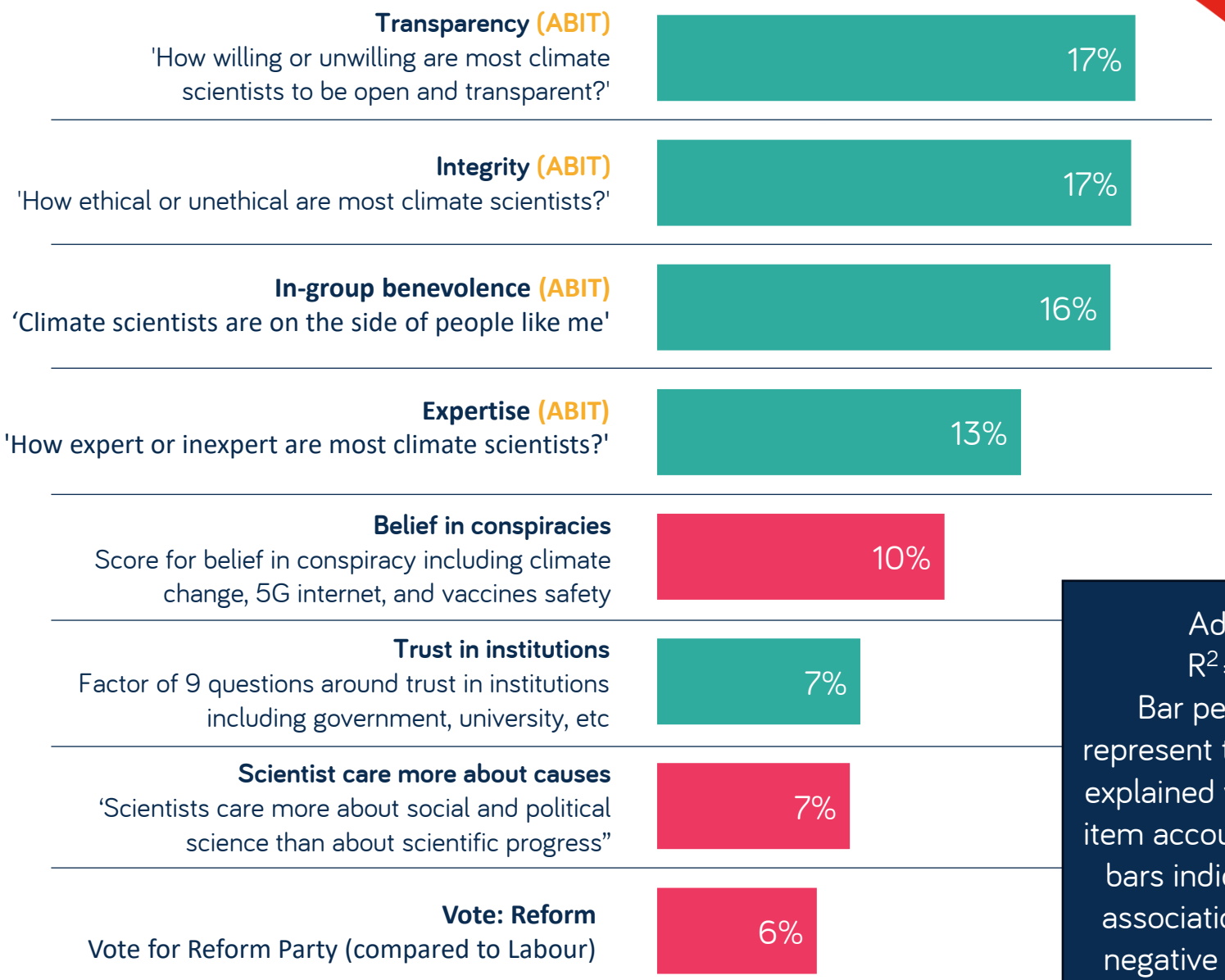
Trust in scientists who work on vaccines is most strongly positively associated with perceived in-group benevolence, transparency, integrity and trust in wider institutions - and negatively associated with conspiracy beliefs and feelings of betrayal by scientific institutions



Adjusted $R^2 = 71\%$
Bar percentages represent the amount of explained variance each item accounts for; green bars indicate positive associations, red bars negative associations

General standardised dominance statistics (weighted regression, n=1,341). Only displaying effects significant at the 5% level and accounting for >2% of total R-squared.

Trust in climate scientists is most strongly positively associated with perceived transparency, integrity, expertise, in-group benevolence and trust in wider institutions – and negatively associated with belief in conspiracies, thinking scientists care more about social and political issues than scientific progress, feelings of betrayal from scientific institutions and intention to vote for Reform UK



Adjusted $R^2 = 79\%$
Bar percentages represent the amount of explained variance each item accounts for; green bars indicate positive associations, red bars negative associations

General standardised dominance statistics (weighted regression, n=1,339). Only displaying effects significant at the 5% level and accounting for >2% of total R-squared.

3. The five groups of trusters that make up the UK

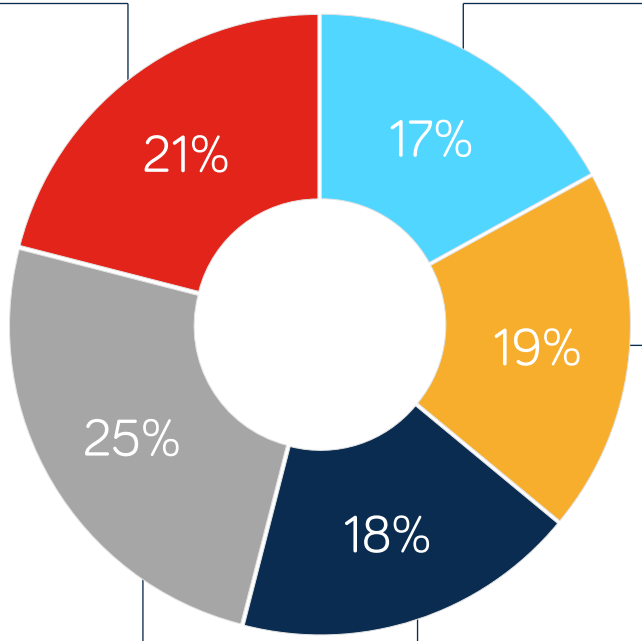
The five groups of trusters that make up the UK

Science Critics (21%)

Lowest trust in every type of scientist measured, and most likely to believe scientists are dishonest or self-serving. Skew right-leaning and Reform-voting

Science Advocates (17%)

Trust scientists almost universally and act on it – most likely to challenge misinformation, back science funding, and see scientists as sharing their values. Majority left-leaning



Contented Trusters (19%)

Trust in scientists generally, but less convinced on climate science specifically – the least likely group to feel let down by leaders or institutions

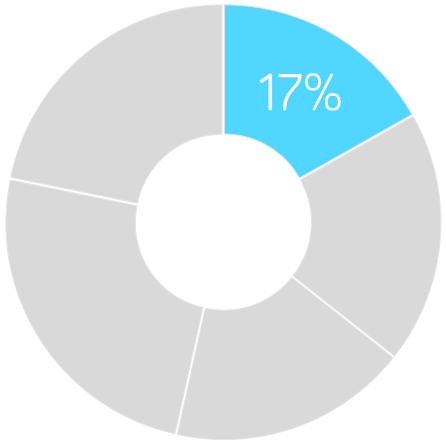
Disengaged Trusters (25%)

Moderate trust in scientists, but the lowest engagement of any group – most likely to have paid no attention to science news and least likely to act on it.

Betrayed Trusters (18%)

Trust scientists almost as much as advocates do, but feel deeply let down by leaders and institutions, with distrust more about betrayal, rather than scepticism about science itself

Science Advocates



Key characteristics

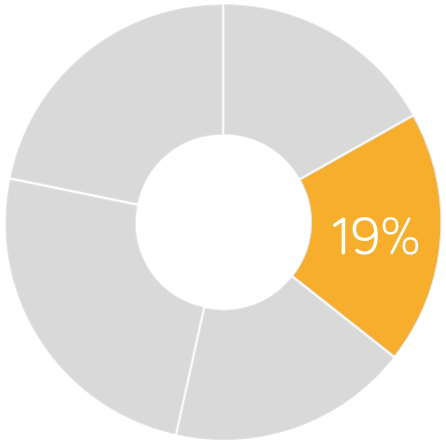
- Highest trust across every type of scientist measured: 94% trust scientists in general, 93% trust vaccine scientists, even 75% trust government scientists, compared with only 42% of the overall public.
- Most likely to act on scientific information: 79% see themselves as science advocates, 86% would challenge someone who said something scientifically inaccurate, and 65% want government investment in science increased.
- Almost entirely reject the idea that scientists behave badly – only 1% think scientists ignore evidence that contradicts their work, and just 3-5% agree scientists protect each other when wrong or are secretive about their research.
- 57% identify as politically left-leaning – the only segment with a majority who identify clearly as either right- or left-leaning.

Key demographics

- Most male of the groups (57%)
- Majority aged 25 to 49 (52%)
- 83% white vs 17% ethnic minority
- Highest proportion of Green supporters (28%) and most Remain-voting group (57%)
- Group with the highest levels of HE qualifications (55% vs 34% average)
- By far most likely to know someone who works in science (73%)

Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 8-11 May 2026.

Contented Trusters



Key characteristics

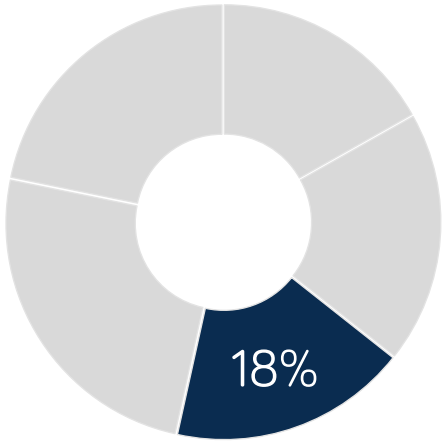
- Moderately high-trust group – 79% have high trust in scientists generally, but a noticeable dip for climate scientists specifically (62%).
- Most likely of all five groups to say most people in general can be trusted (42%) and to report having a good life (61%).
- Least likely to feel let down by leaders (44%) or betrayed by institutions (18%) – the most settled, least aggrieved segment of the five.
- High action and engagement with science, without the more vocal edge of Science Advocates. About half as likely as that group to say they see themselves as a science advocate.

Key demographics

- Most gender-equal group (51% male vs 49% female)
- Older than Science Advocates (51% vs 33% aged 50+)
- 86% white vs 14% ethnic minority
- Evenly split between Labour (18%), Con (16%), Reform (16%) and Lib Dem (15%) supporters
- 40% have HE qualification
- Second most likely to know someone working in science (47%), along with Betrayed Trusters (45%)

Base: 811 'Contented Trusters', 8-11 May 2026.

Betrayed Trusters



Key characteristics

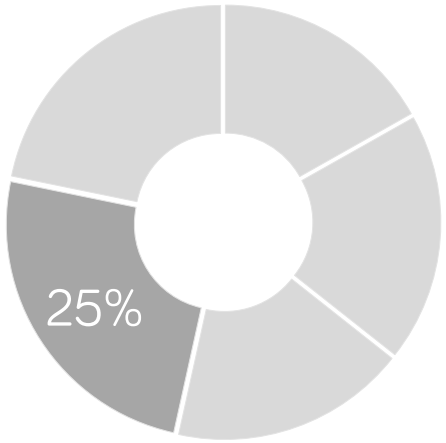
- Moderate trust in scientists generally (78%) but a sharp gap for scientists working in private companies (27%) and government (41%).
- Defined by grievance, not science scepticism: highest of all segments on feeling let down by people in leadership roles (94%), feeling betrayed by institutions like the police, church, schools, or government (82%), and feeling betrayed by friends or family (51%).
- Also stand out on specific reasons to distrust scientists – highest agreement that scientists intentionally keep their work secret (49%), don't care if ordinary people understand their work (61%), and won't publish results their funders don't like (68%).
- Despite all this, still take actions informed by science – 65% would challenge a scientific inaccuracy, and 75% would get a recommended vaccine, so the sense of betrayal sits alongside continued engagement, not withdrawal, from science.

Key demographics

- Group with largest ethnic minority share (20%)
- Second-largest proportion of under-50s (61%)
- Majority female (53%)
- Second-highest share of Green supporters (26%)
- 39% have HE qualification – virtually the same as Contented Trusters (40%)
- Second most likely to know someone working in science (45%), along with Contented Trusters (47%)

Base: 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 8-11 May 2026.

Disengaged Trusters



Key characteristics

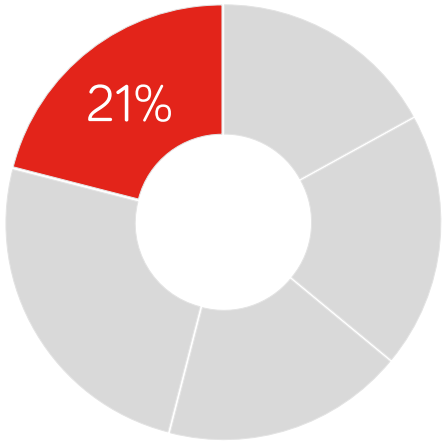
- Moderate trust in scientists generally (72%) but it doesn't translate into action – lowest of all segments on identifying as a science advocate (5%), willingness to challenge scientific inaccuracies (16%), or joining a march to protest science funding cuts (3%).
- Most disengaged from science: 67% haven't paid attention to any science information in the past 30 days, and have the lowest score of any segment when it comes to rating their own knowledge of science (18%).
- Largest 'don't know' group politically too – 32% don't know their political leaning and 14% don't know who they'd vote for, suggesting a broader pattern of disengagement rather than something specific to science.
- Best described as trusting but checked-out, rather than actively sceptical.

Key demographics

- Oldest of the groups (58% aged 50+)
- Most female group (57%)
- Highest share of white people (90%) across groups
- Second-most Reform-supporting (22%) and second most likely to say would not vote (11%)
- Virtually joint-lowest proportion of people with HE qualifications (20%).
- Lowest likelihood of knowing someone working in science (19%)

Base: 996 'Disengaged Trusters', 8-11 May 2026.

Science Critics



Key characteristics

- Lowest trust on every single type of scientist measured – only 7% have high trust in scientists in general, falling to just 1% for scientists working in government.
- Most likely to believe scientists are dishonest or self-serving: 52% think scientists work in cahoots with politicians and businesses, 47% think scientists ignore evidence that contradicts their work, and 43% think scientists are only interested in their own advantage.
- Right-leaning skew (36%) and most likely to say they'd vote Reform (37%) or to use GB News as their main news source (17%).
- Despite the cynicism, not entirely closed off – around a third (36%) would still get a vaccine recommended to them by the NHS or a doctor, so there is still some willingness to act on scientific advice, although significantly lower than average.

Key demographics

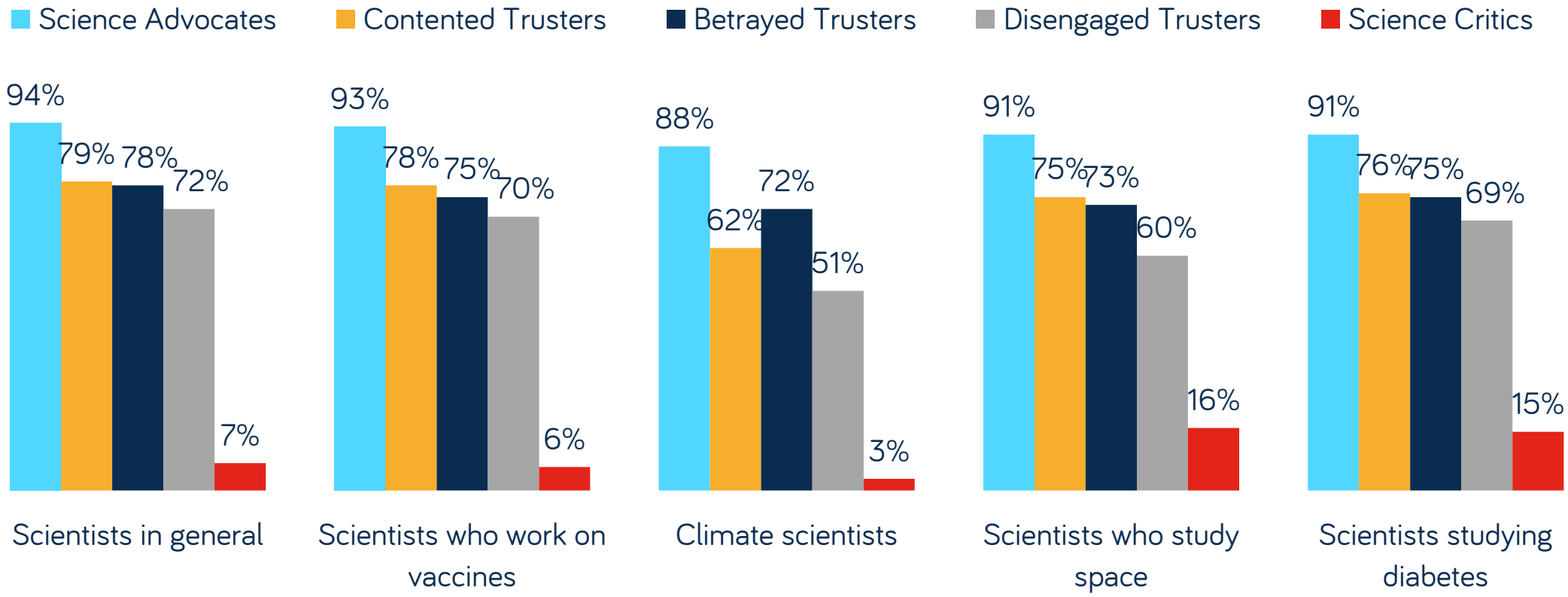
- Most Reform UK-supporting (37% vs 22% among Disengaged Trusters) and most likely to say they wouldn't vote (14%)
- Most Leave-voting group (50%)
- More female (53%) than male (47%)
- Second-oldest of the groups (54% aged 50+)
- 21% have an HE qualification – virtually joint lowest with Disengaged Trusters (20%)
- Few personally know someone working in science (22%)

Base: 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

3.1. Levels of trust in scientists across the five groups

Advocates almost all have high trust in scientists across disciplines, as do a smaller majority of the three middle segments. Very few Critics have high trust, but there is a jump for scientists studying space and diabetes statistics

How much, if at all, do you trust the following...? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'do not trust at all' and 10 is 'trust completely'.
% with high trust (7-10)

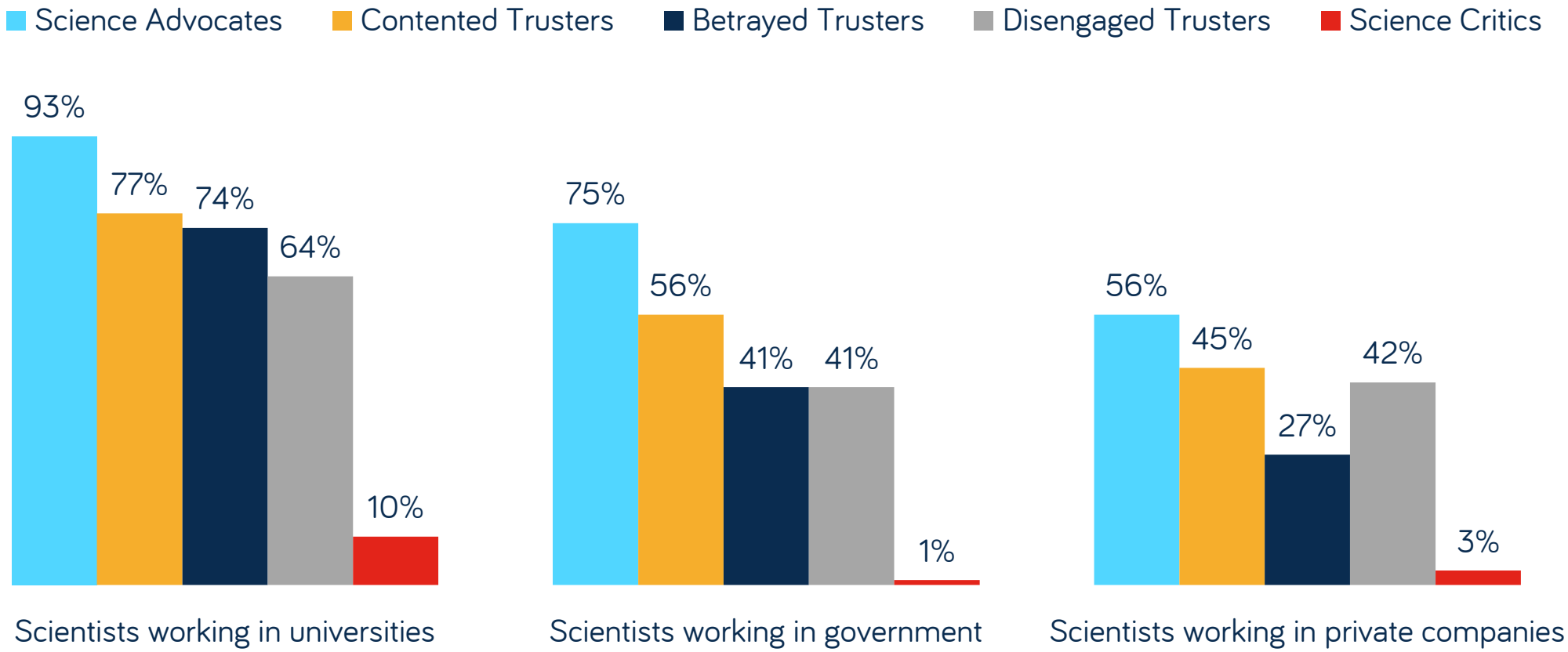


Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Scientists in universities receive higher trust than those in government and the private sector, from all segments

How much, if at all, do you trust the following...? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'do not trust at all' and 10 is 'trust completely'.

% with high trust (7-10)



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

3.2. Signals, cues or drivers of trustworthiness in common trust and distrust models

3.2. Trust, distrust and science-related populism

As mentioned earlier, several components of the classic **ABI(T) model of trust** come out strongly associated with trust in the three models – especially our novel addition of a more personal or 'in-group benevolence' measure focused on whether scientists are 'on the side of people like me', as opposed to eagerness to improve lives more generally.

We also asked items from the **Trust in Science and Scientists Scale (TISS)** , a standardised survey instrument widely used by researchers to measure public confidence in the scientific method and scientific institutions or scientists. The TISS items used largely **map onto the ABIT model of trust, but with items phrased negatively**: for example, instead of asking about 'openness and transparency', TISS asks whether scientists 'won't publish results their funders don't like'.

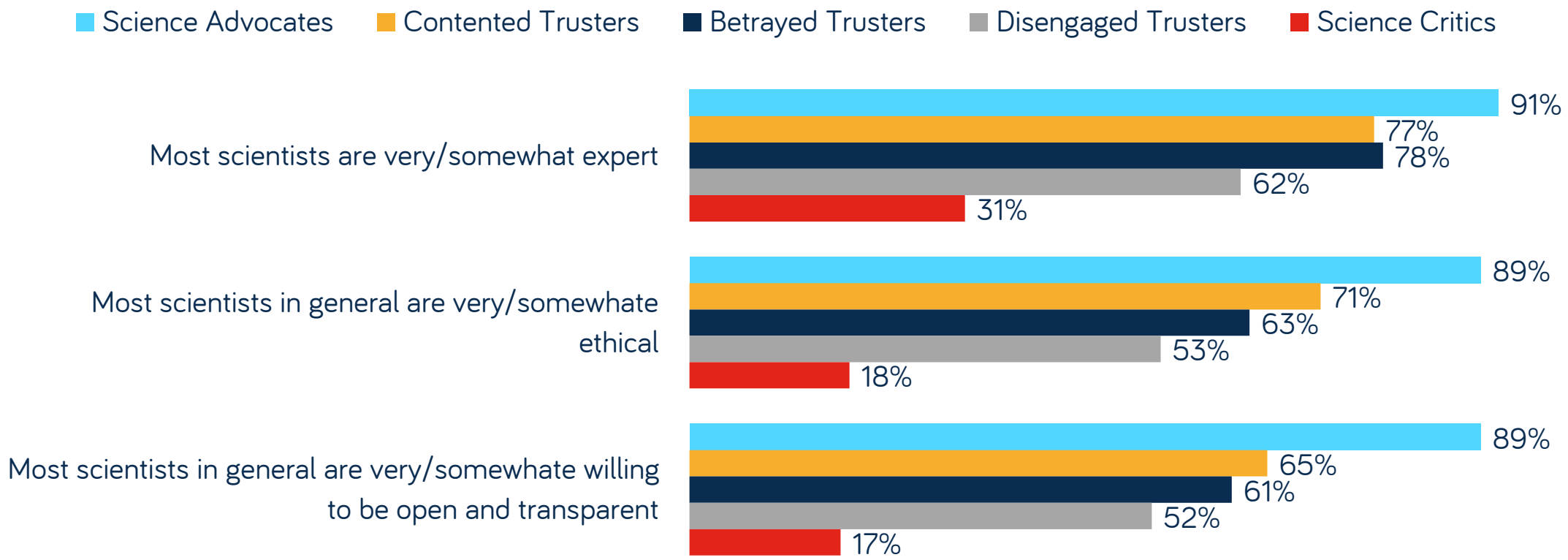
A psychometric assessment of the TISS concluded that its negatively worded items appear to be measuring a distinct construct from the positively worded items – potentially the construct of distrust[8], suggesting these items may be useful if interested in the possibility that 'distrust' is a distinct (albeit related) construct from trust, and not merely its opposite.

Some of the TISS items also overlap with those used in recent studies of '**science-related populism**', in which scientists are viewed as part of a self-serving elite class, antagonistic to and less virtuous than 'ordinary people'.

Key features of science-related populist attitudes include a feeling that ordinary people do and should rely more on their own commonsense knowledge and everyday experience than on scientific research, and a perception that scientists are interested in their own or other elites' advantage, rather than that of ordinary people.

Fewer people think scientists are ethical and transparent than think they're expert. The biggest difference is amongst Betrayed Trusters, from 78% saying expert to 61% saying open and transparent. But its Critics' negative views that stand out

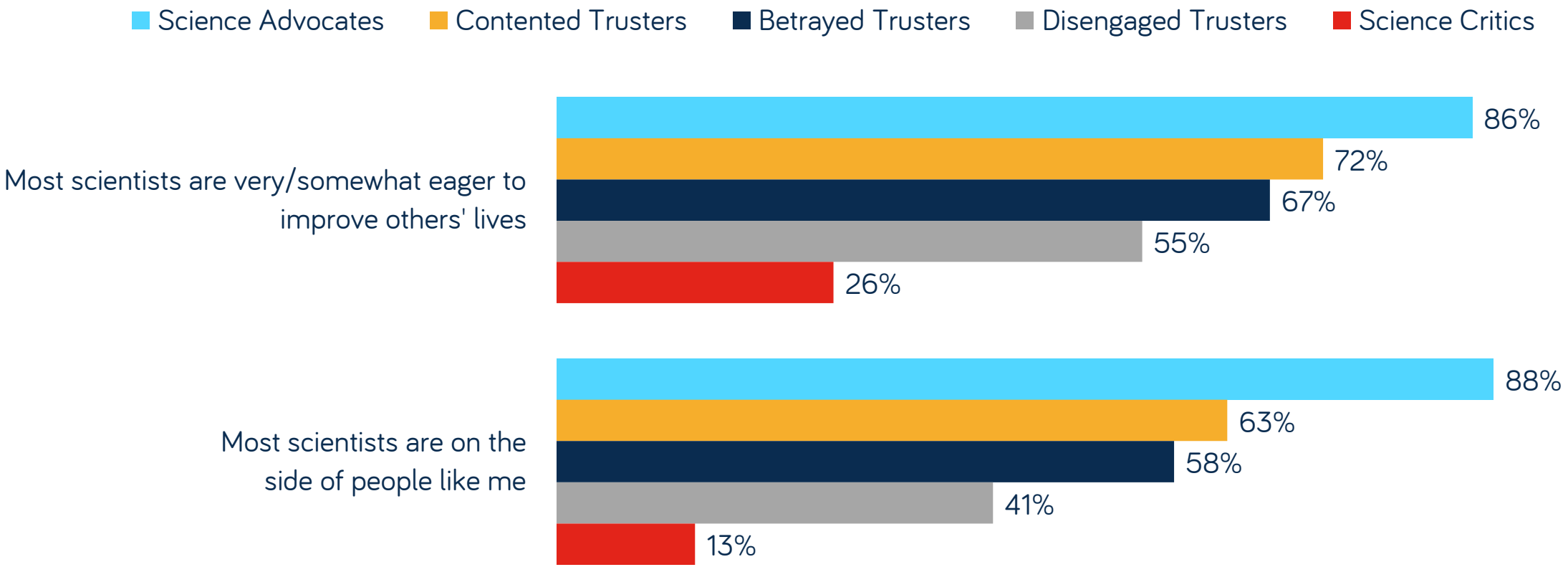
How [expert or inexpert] / [ethical or unethical] / [willing or unwilling to be open and transparent] are most scientists in general?



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

There are clear steps down from the most to least trusting and engaged groups on whether scientists want to improve others' lives and are on the side of 'people like them'

How eager or uneager are most of the following groups to improve others' lives? / To what extent do you agree or disagree that most scientists are on the side of people like me. **% who strongly/tend to agree**

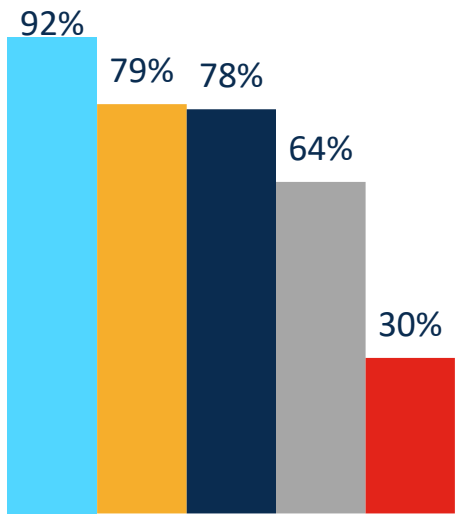


Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

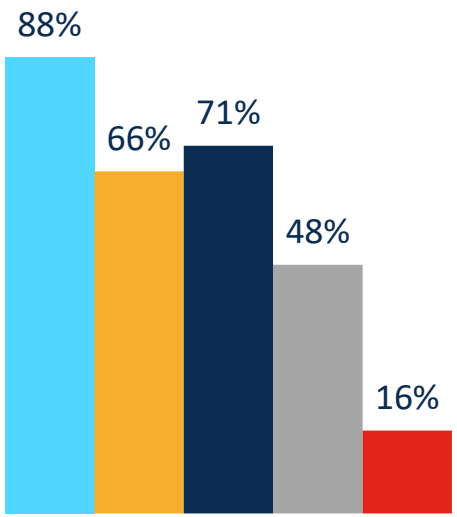
Most segments see climate scientists as much less expert and 'on their side' than scientists who work on vaccines

Science Advocates | Contented Trusters | Betrayed Trusters | Disengaged Trusters | Science Critics

How expert or inexpert are most of the following groups?

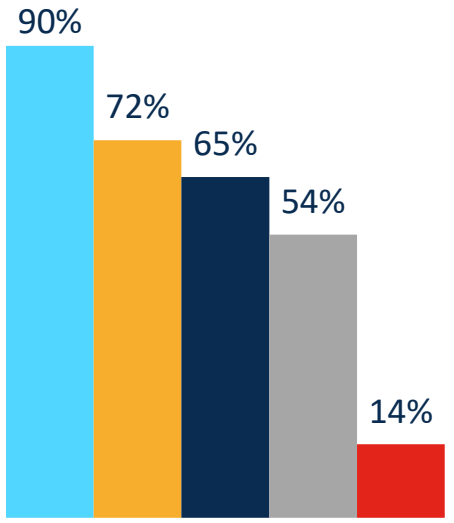


Scientists who work on vaccines are very/somewhat expert

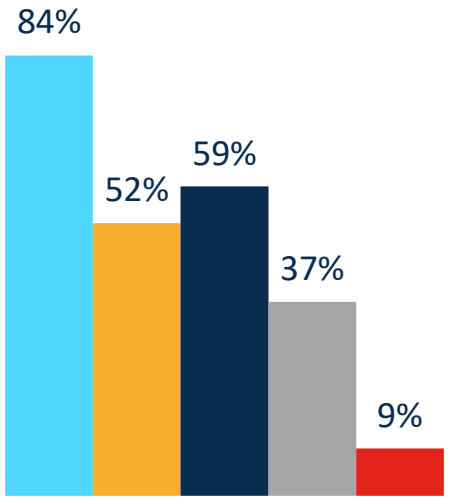


Climate scientists are very/somewhat expert

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following scientists are on the side of people like me? **% who strongly/tend to agree**



Scientists who work on vaccines are on the side of people like me

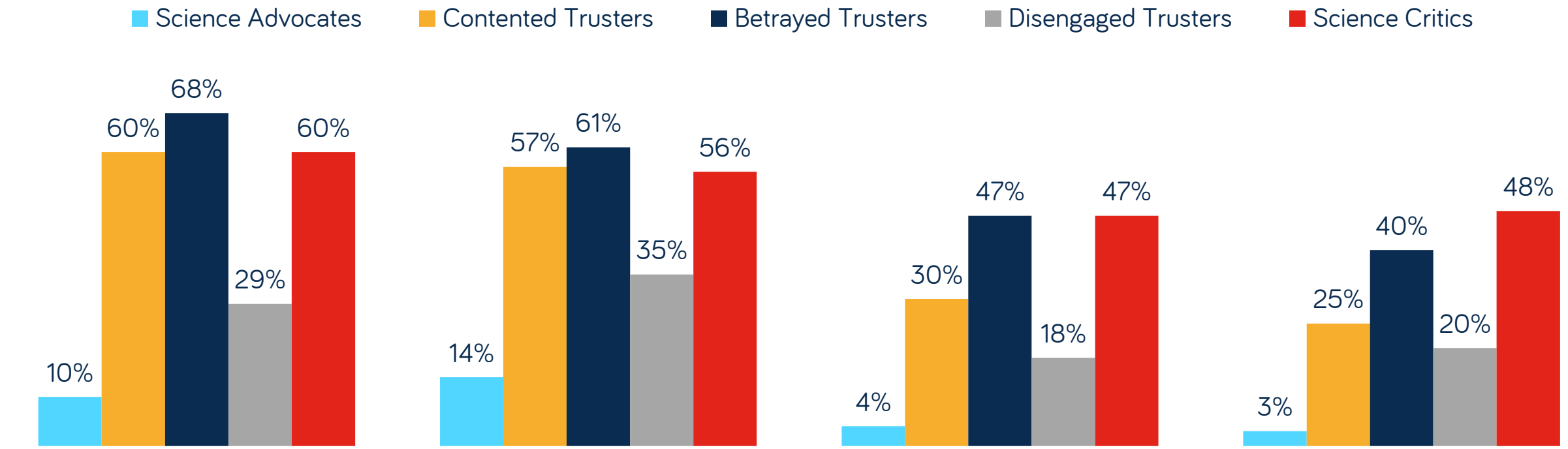


Climate scientists are on the side of people like me

Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Contented and Betrayed Trusters are united with Science Critics by a suspicion about whether scientists have the best interests of society in mind and are disinterested in ordinary people

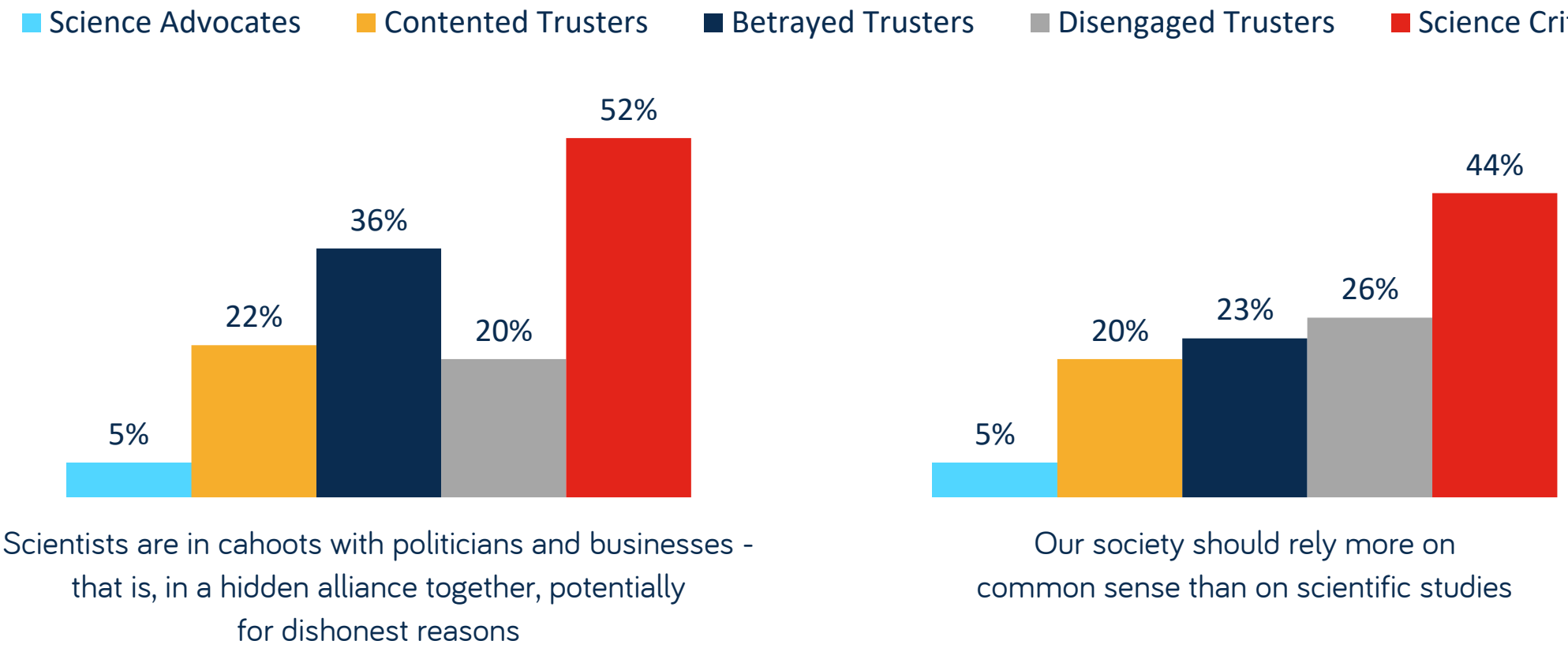
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about scientists in general? **% who strongly/tend to agree**



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Betrayed Trusters and Critics are also the most likely to hold certain ‘science-related populist’ beliefs, such as scientists being ‘in cahoots’ with politicians and businesses. But the middle groups are more aligned on ‘common sense’ vs science

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about scientists in general? **% who strongly/tend to agree**



Base: 795 ‘Science Advocates’, 811 ’Contented Trusters’, 788 ‘Betrayed Trusters’, 996 ‘Disengaged Trusters’ and 872 ‘Science Critics’, 8-11 May 2026.

3.3. Wider feelings of trust, moral injury and wellbeing

3.3. Wider feelings of trust, moral injury and wellbeing

The Wellcome Global Monitor highlights that **trust in wider societal institutions** is related to trust in scientists. Our study reinforces this, showing wider institutional trust to be one of the factors most associated with trust for all three groups of scientists in our regression models.

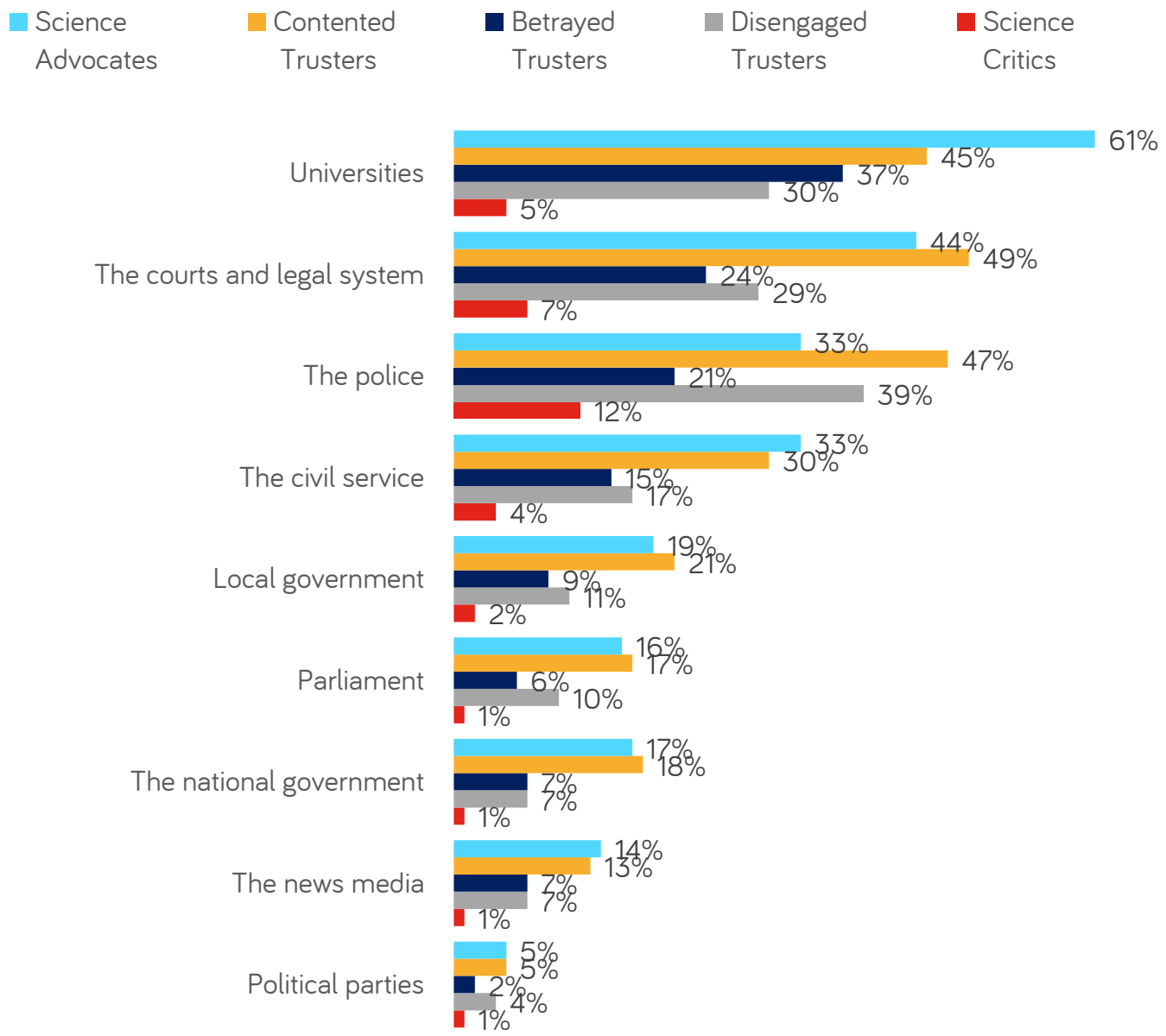
Relatedly, we also find an association between trust and **'moral harm/injury'.** Moral harm can be brought on from having done or experienced things that disagree with one's own morals or values, or feeling pressured to do such things. But it can also arise from the feeling of having been *betrayed* by institutions that people should have been able to trust.

We find significant variation across the segments on several of the moral injury measures used, especially in the items we have adapted to focus on science and scientific institutions.

The five segments also vary by **general wellbeing**, with Science Critics having the lowest self-reported life satisfaction.

Science Advocates and Contented Trusters have the highest trust in most institutions asked about, and Science Critics the lowest.
Disengaged Trusters tend to have higher trust than Betrayed Trusters

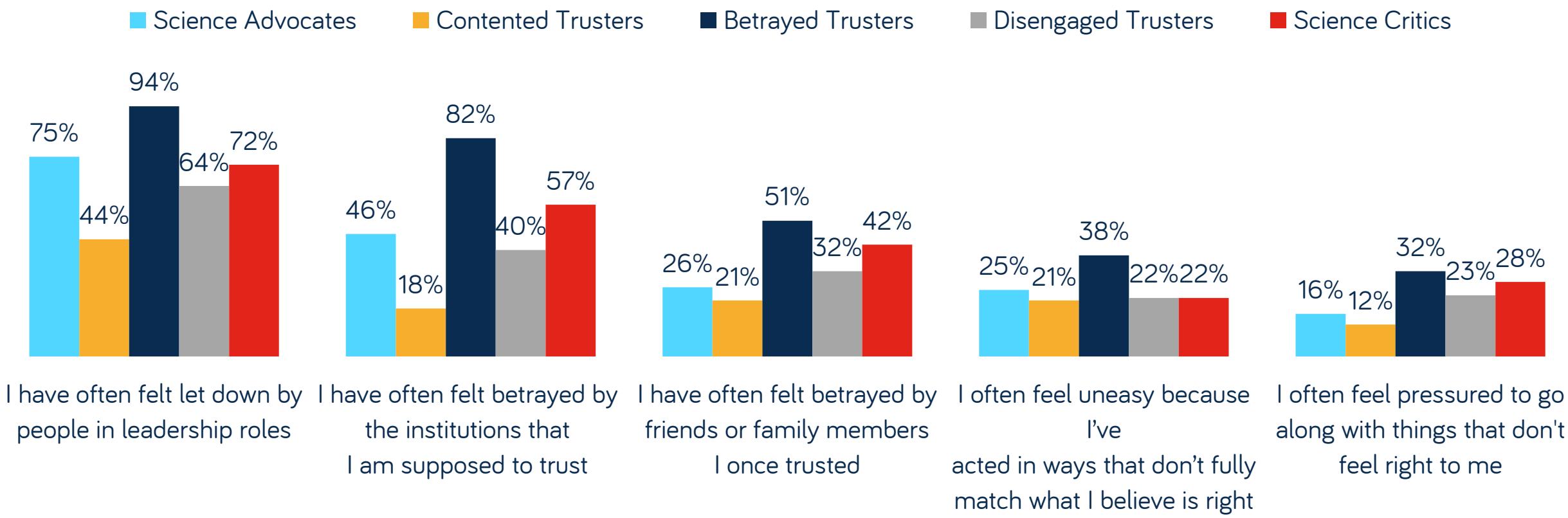
In general, how much do you trust each of the following...? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'do not trust at all' and 10 is 'trust completely'.
% with high trust (7-10)



Base: 2,817 UK adults with 'high trust' (7-10) in scientists in general, 1,107 'in the middle' (4-6) and 206 with 'low trust' (0-3), 8-11 May 2026.

Betrayed Trusters score highest on moral injury/harm measures, such as feeling let down by those they should be able to trust, and pressure or unease about doing things that don't feel right. Contented Trusters are least likely to feel this way

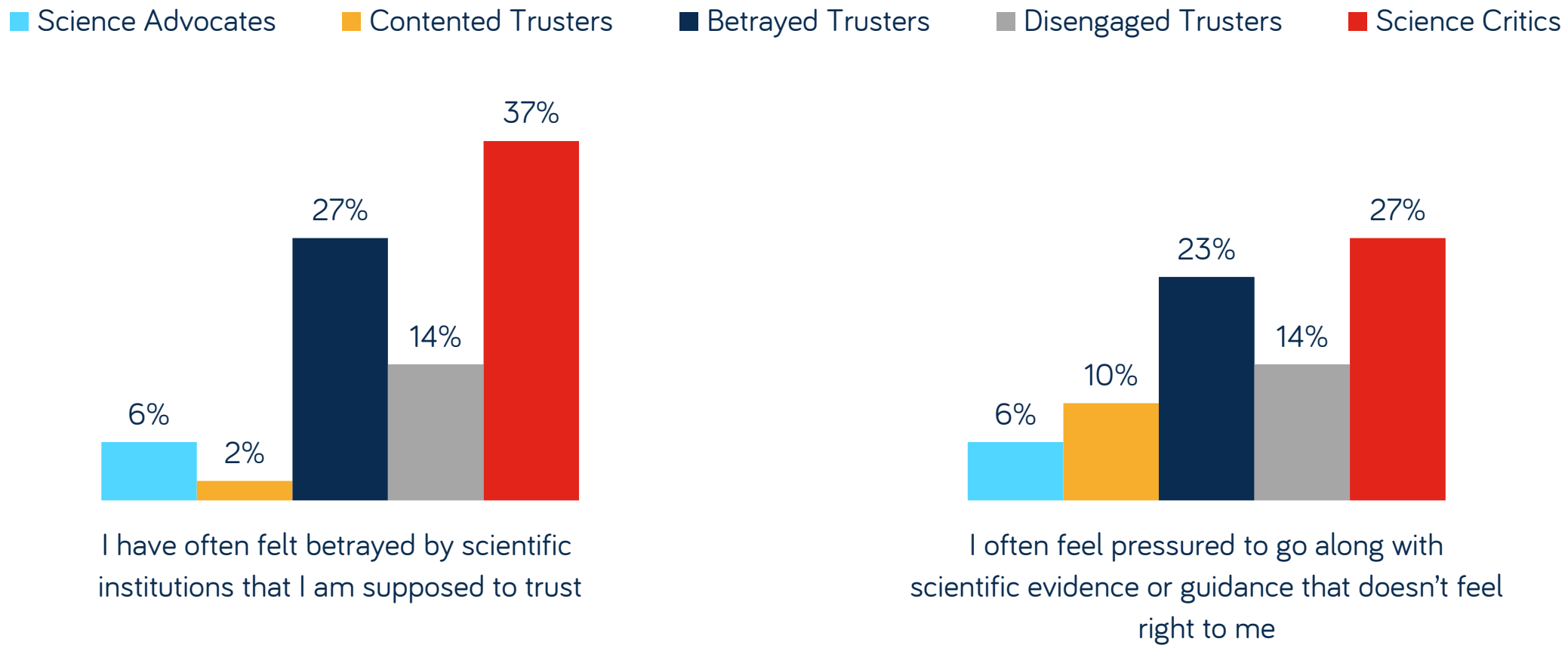
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **% who strongly/tend to agree**



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

When moral injury measures are adapted to focus on science and scientific institutions, Critics overtake Betrayed Trusters

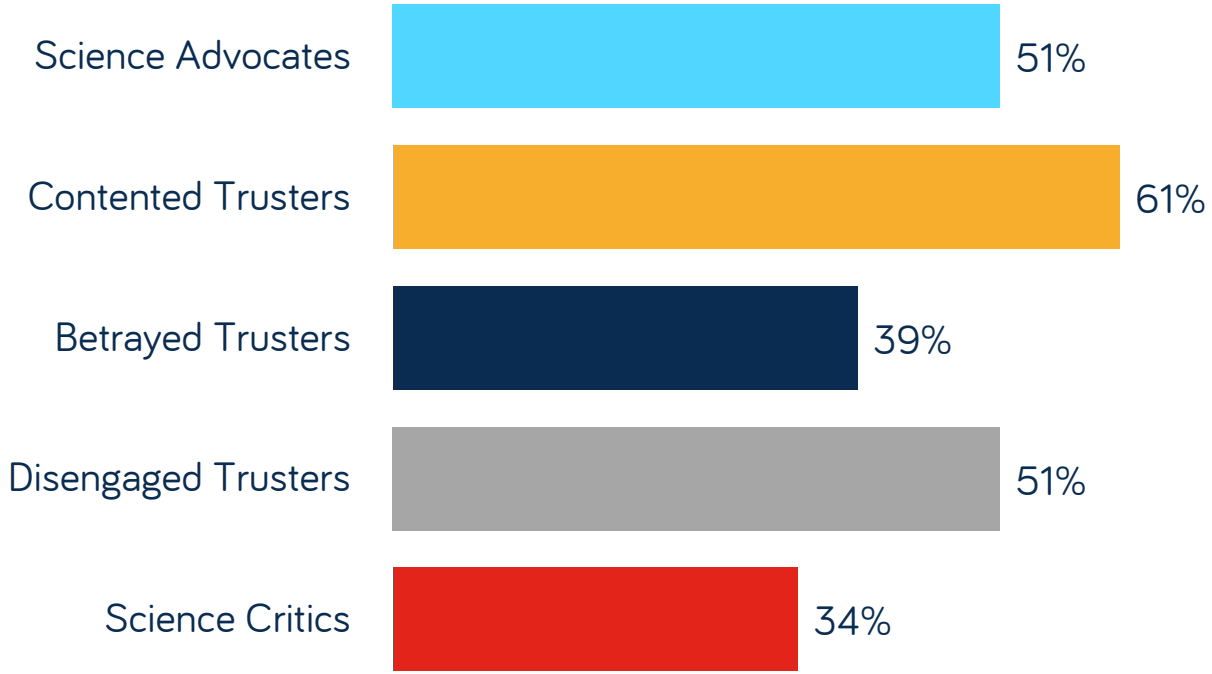
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **% who strongly/tend to agree**



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Contented Trusters are most likely to feel that they have a good life, while only minorities of Science Critics and Betrayed Trusters feel this way

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you stand at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your life, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it?
% who say they have a good life (7-10)

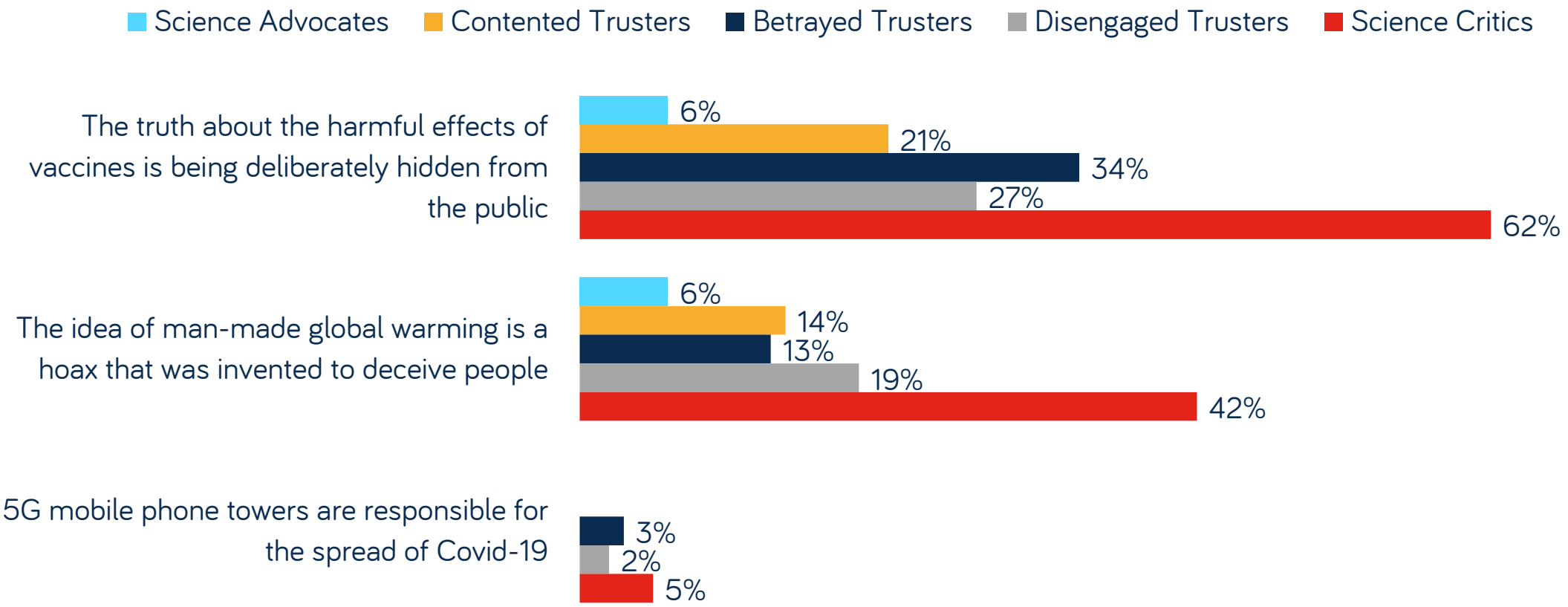


Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

3.4. Belief in conspiracies about science

Four in 10 Science Critics believe man-made global warming is a hoax, and six in 10 that truths about vaccines are being deliberately hidden – in both cases around twice the proportion of any other segment. Almost no one believes 5G towers caused Covid

In your opinion, to what extent are the following statements true or false? **% saying probably/definitely true**

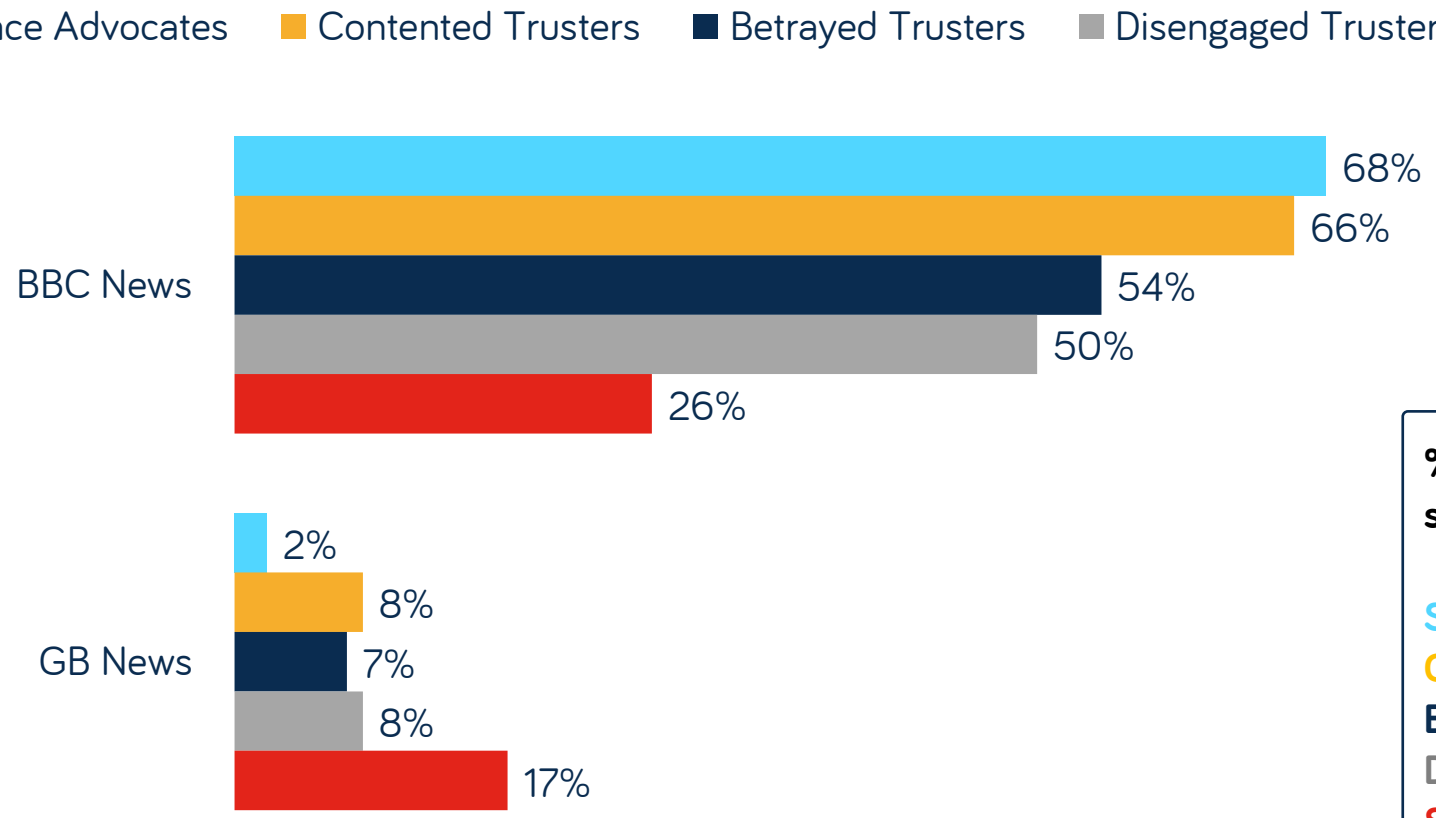


Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

3.5. Information, engagement and direct connection to science

The BBC is a significant source of general news for all groups, except Science Critics – although not all who use it think it's reliable. Few of any segment use GB News

Which of the following do you use most often to find the news? Please tick all that apply.



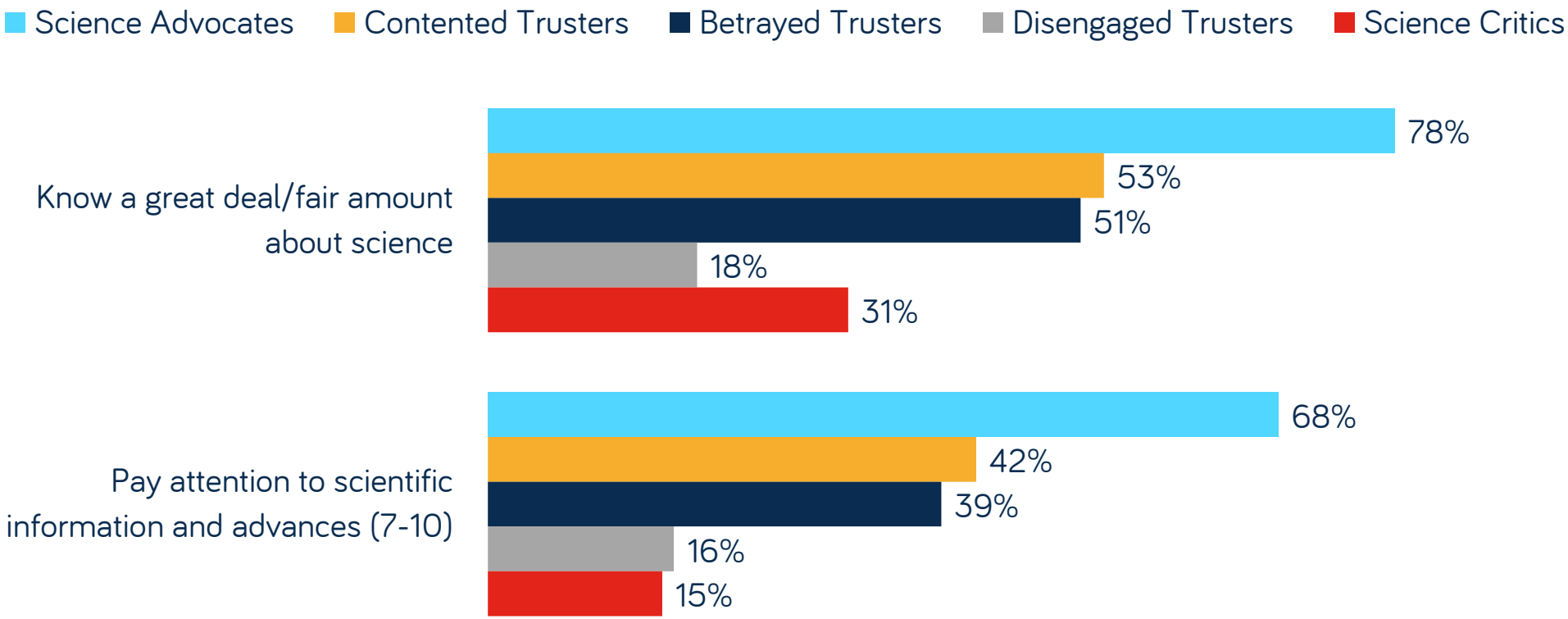
% who think BBC is a reliable source of information

Science Advocates: 55%
Contented Trusters: 52%
Betrayed Trusters: 33%
Disengaged Trusters: 36%
Science Critics: 9%

Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Self-rated knowledge about science generally aligns with levels of attention paid to science. The exception is Critics, who are twice as likely to say that they know at least a fair amount about science (31%) as to say they pay attention to it (15%)

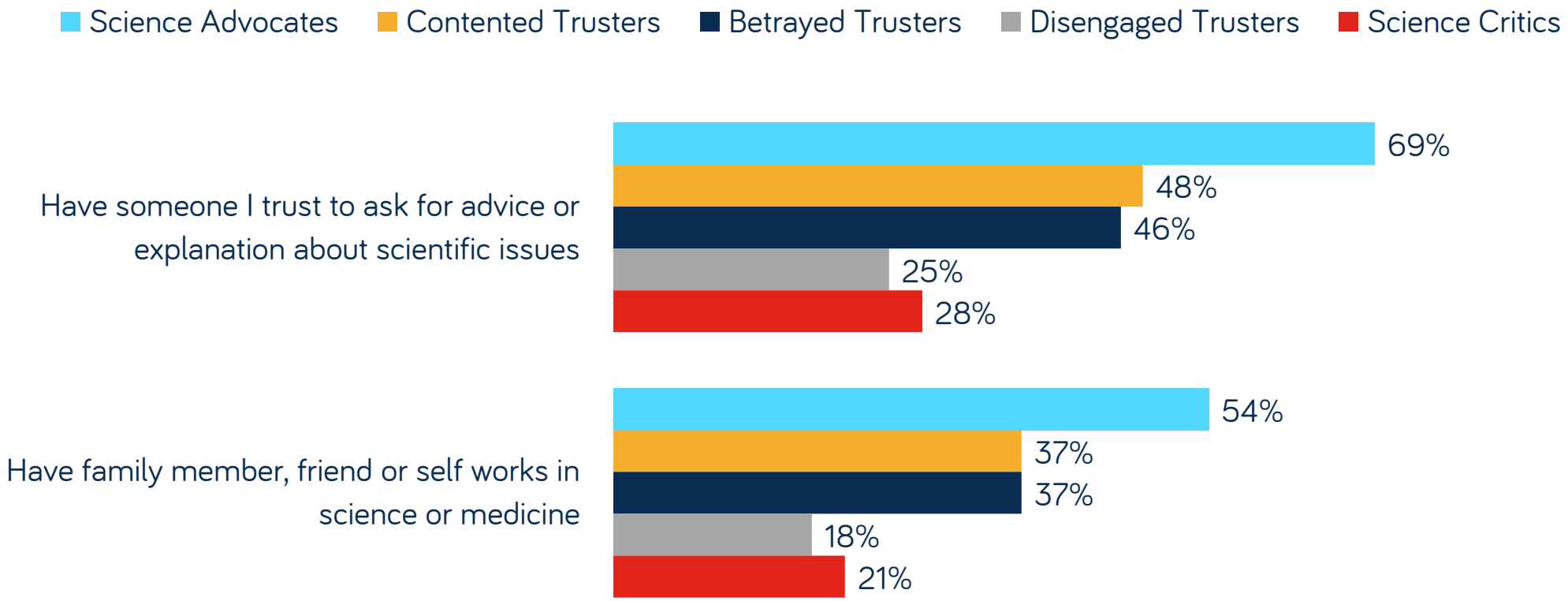
How much do you, personally, know about science? / In general, how much attention, if any, do you pay to scientific information and advances? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'do not trust at all' and 10 is 'trust completely'.



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Most Advocates have a personal connection to a scientist, or someone they can get science advice from, while only minorities of other groups do

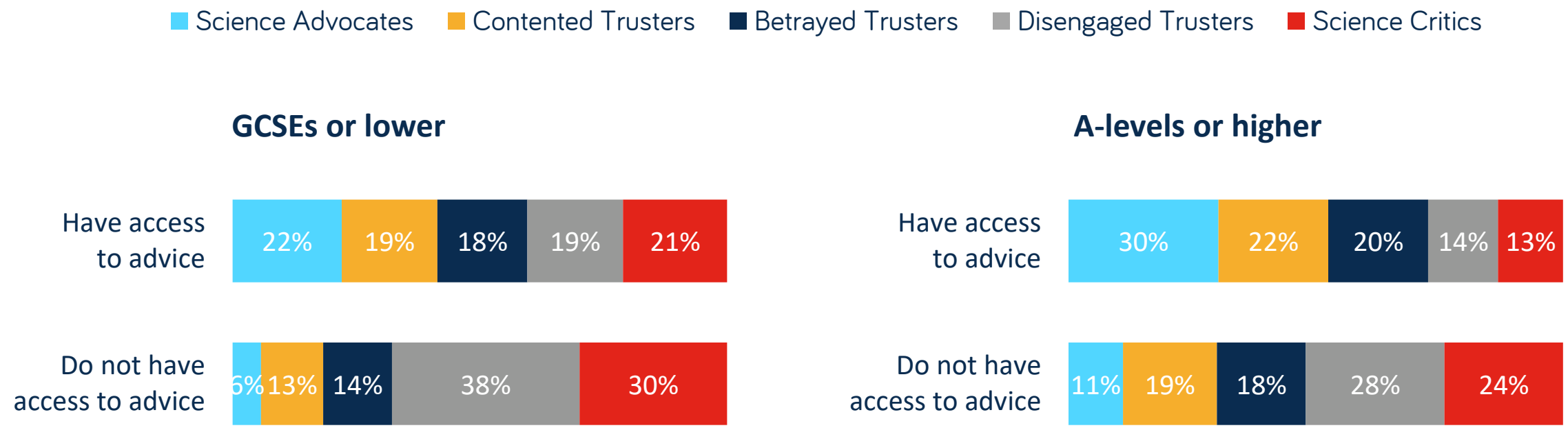
Do you, or do any of your friends or family, work in a job using science or medicine? / Do you have anyone you know and trust that you could ask for advice or an explanation around a scientific issue you were interested in, or not?



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Those who have someone they could ask for scientific advice are more likely to be in the higher-trust segments than those who don't – and that's true regardless of education level

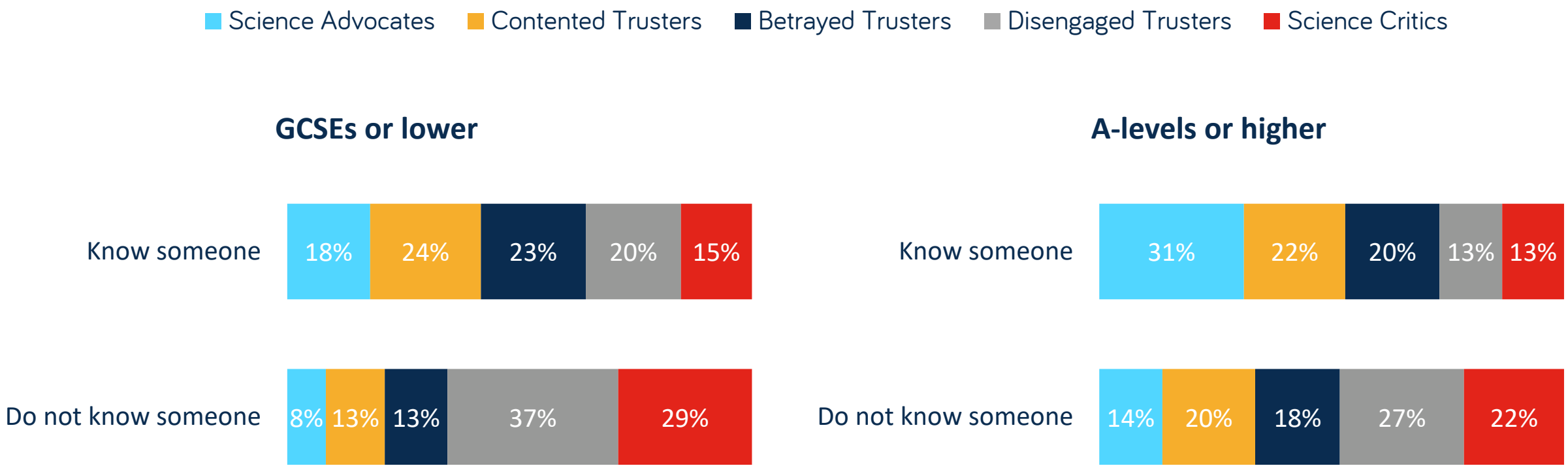
Do you have anyone you know and trust that you could ask for advice or an explanation around a scientific issue you were interested in, or not?



GCSE or lower base: 98 'Science Advocates', 139 'Contented Trusters', 156 'Betrayed Trusters', 329 'Disengaged Trusters' and 269 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.
A-levels or higher base: 692 'Science Advocates', 663 'Contented Trusters', 624 'Betrayed Trusters', 650 'Disengaged Trusters' and 587 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

The same pattern holds when it comes to working in science or medicine, or knowing someone who does

Do you, or do any of your friends or family, work in a job using science or medicine?

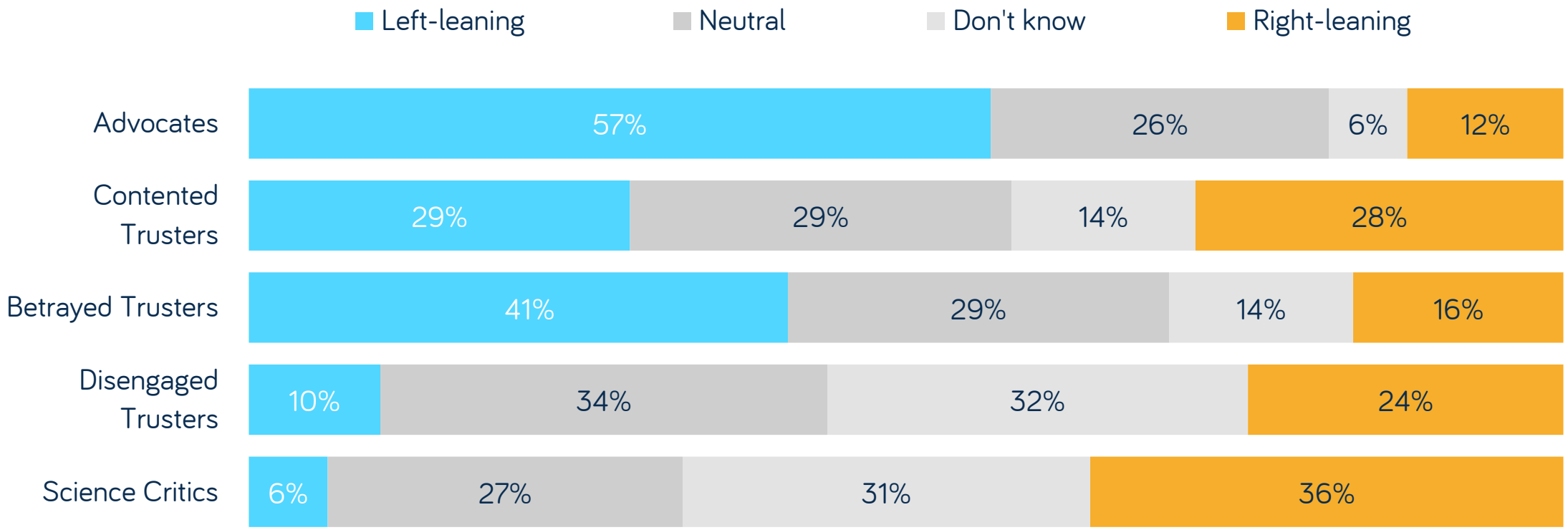


GCSE or lower base: 91 'Science Advocates', 134 'Contented Trusters', 139 'Betrayed Trusters', 327 'Disengaged Trusters' and 255 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.
A-levels or higher base: 626 'Science Advocates', 639 'Contented Trusters', 587 'Betrayed Trusters', 669 'Disengaged Trusters' and 568 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

3.6. Party political identity and cultural divisions

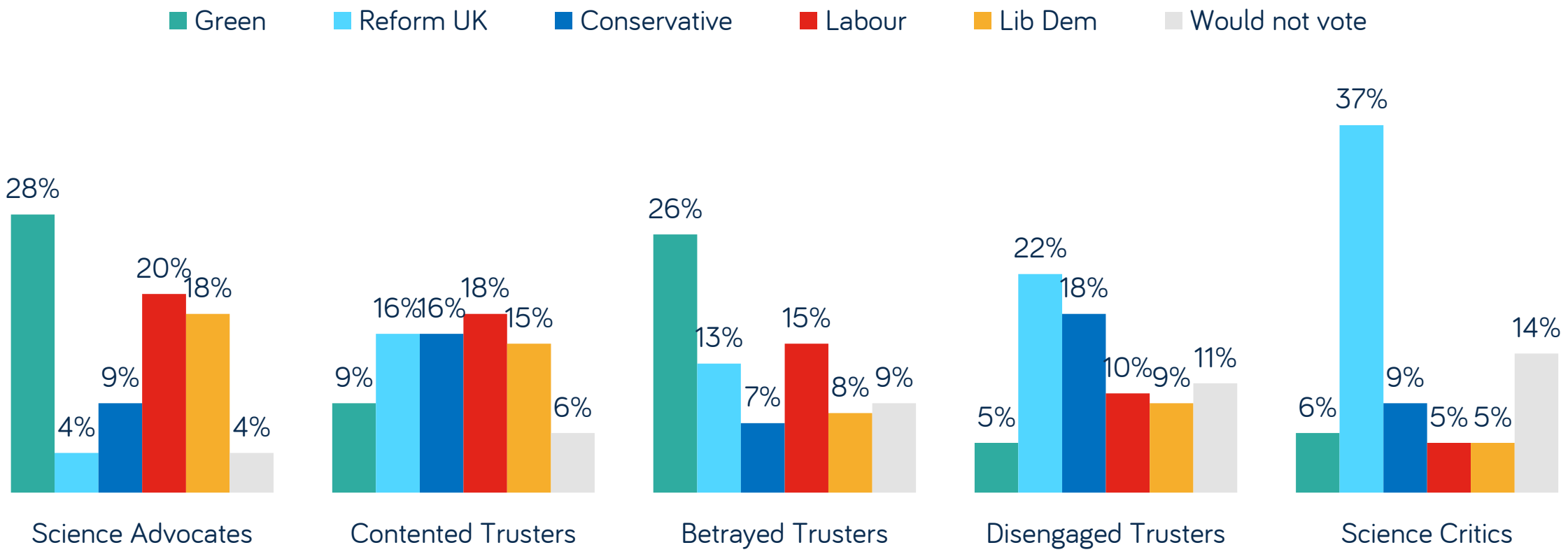
Advocates are the only group with a majority who lean left politically, while Contented Trusters are the most evenly split group. Betrayed Trusters are mainly left-leaning, while Critics and, to a lesser degree, Disengaged Trusters lean right

Political orientations are often classified on a left-right spectrum. Please indicate your political orientation on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is 'Strongly left-leaning' and 5 is 'Strongly right-leaning'.



Base: 4,262 UK adults, of whom 1,220 identify as left-leaning (1-2), 983 right-leaning (4-5) and 1,277 neutral (3), 8-11 May 2026.

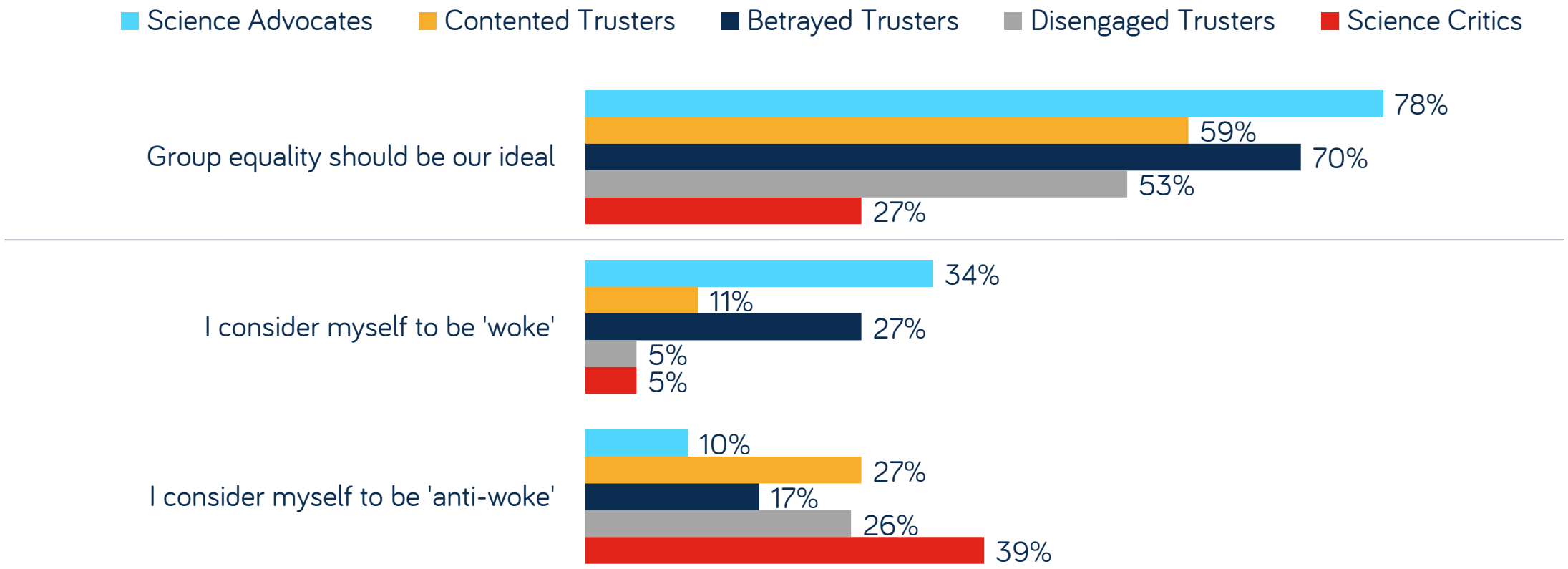
Nearly four in 10 Critics support Reform UK – the largest share of any segment supporting a single party. Green supporters represent more than a quarter of both Advocates and Betrayed Trusters, while Contented Trusters are the most politically balanced



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Other than Science Critics, majorities of all groups support the ideal of group equality. Advocates and Betrayed Trusters are the most in favour and are also the two groups most likely to identify as ‘woke’, while Critics are the most ‘anti-woke’

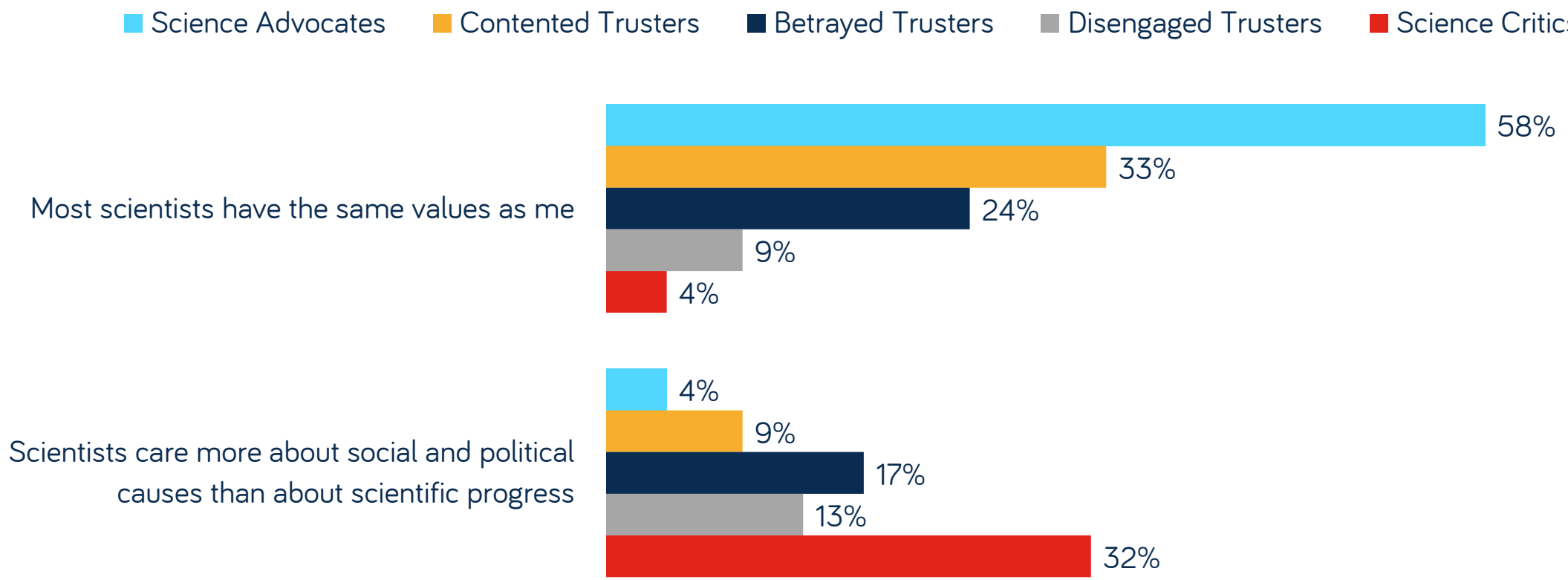
Please indicate your answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'strongly oppose' and 10 is 'strongly support’ / Do you consider yourself to be ‘woke’, ‘anti-woke’ or ‘neither’?



Base: 795 ‘Science Advocates’, 811 ’Contented Trusters’, 788 ‘Betrayed Trusters’, 996 ‘Disengaged Trusters’ and 872 ‘Science Critics’, 8-11 May 2026.

Most Advocates think scientists share their values, with a steep gradient down to Critics, virtually none of whom feel that way. And Critics are eight times more likely than Advocates to think scientists care more about political causes than scientific progress

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **% who say strongly/tend to agree**

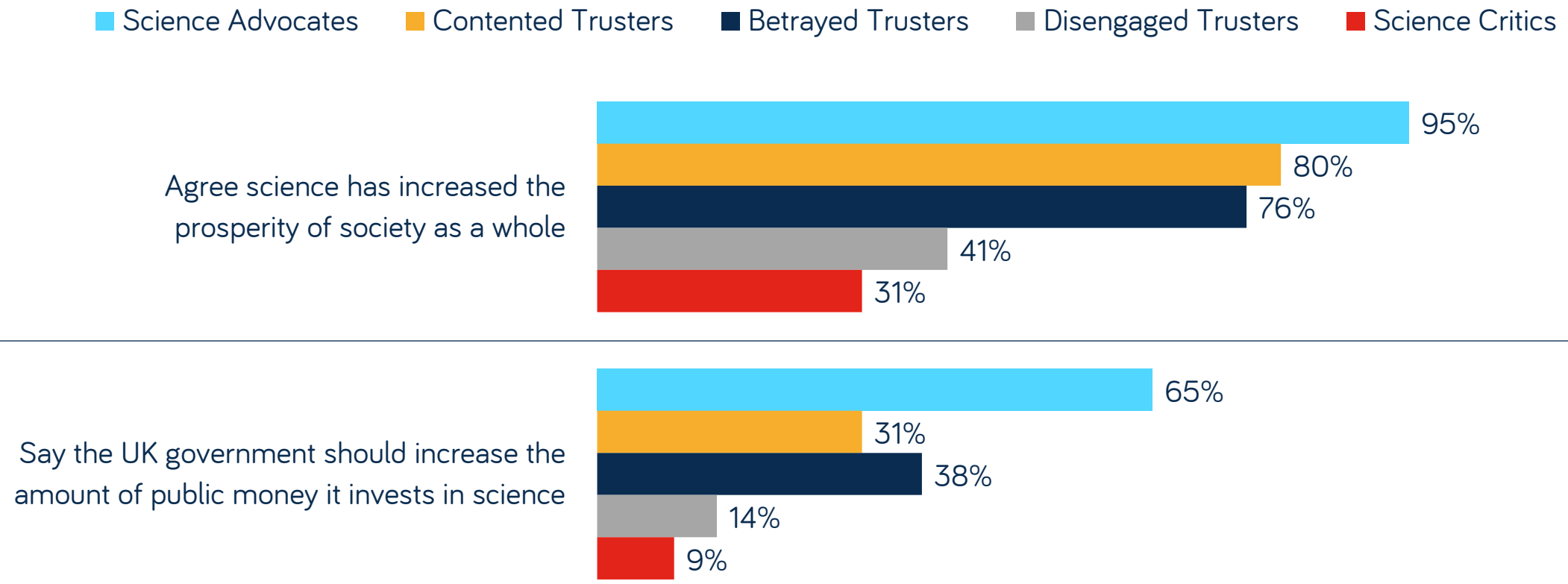


Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

4. General support for science

Most people believe science has added to prosperity, although this is a minority view amongst Critics and Disengaged Trusters. Advocates are the only group where a majority call for an increase in public funding for science

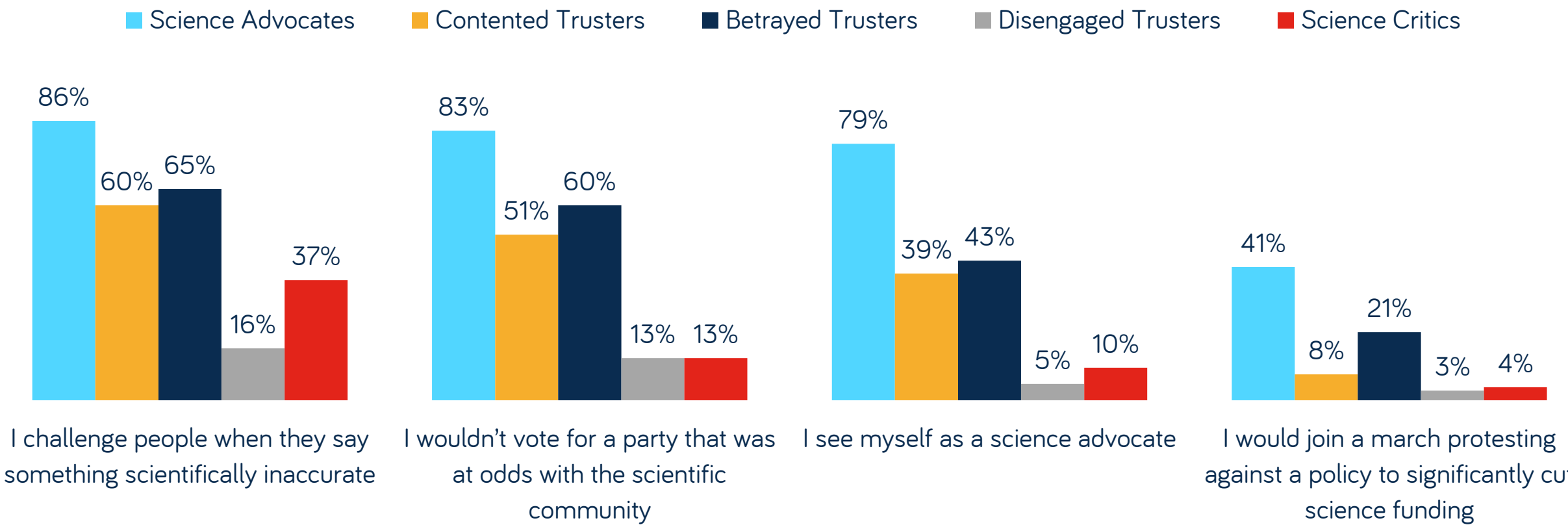
To what extent do you agree or disagree that science has increased the prosperity of society as a whole? / Do you think the UK Government should increase, reduce or keep at the same level the amount of public money it invests in science?



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

The commitment of Science Advocates is reflected in extremely high opposition to those who act in ways at odds with the scientific consensus or community – while hardly any Disengaged Trusters say they'd take action

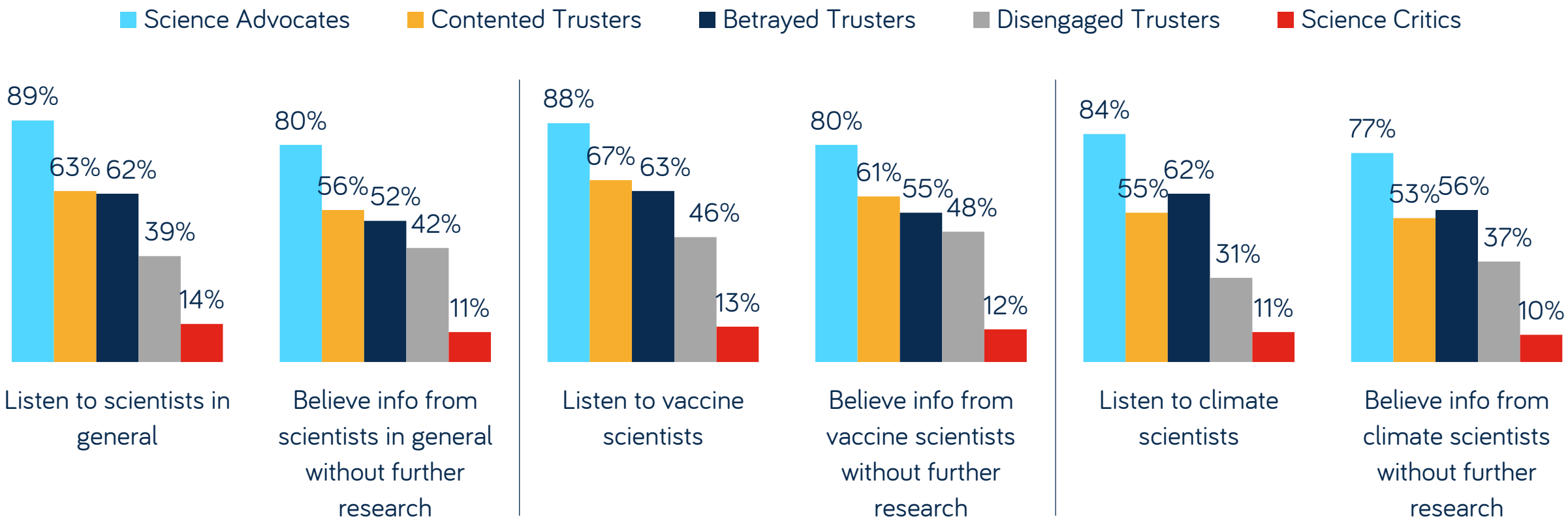
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about scientists in general? **% who strongly/tend to agree**



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Similarly, Disengaged Trusters – and especially Critics – are not inclined to listen to or believe information from scientists, in stark contrast to Advocates

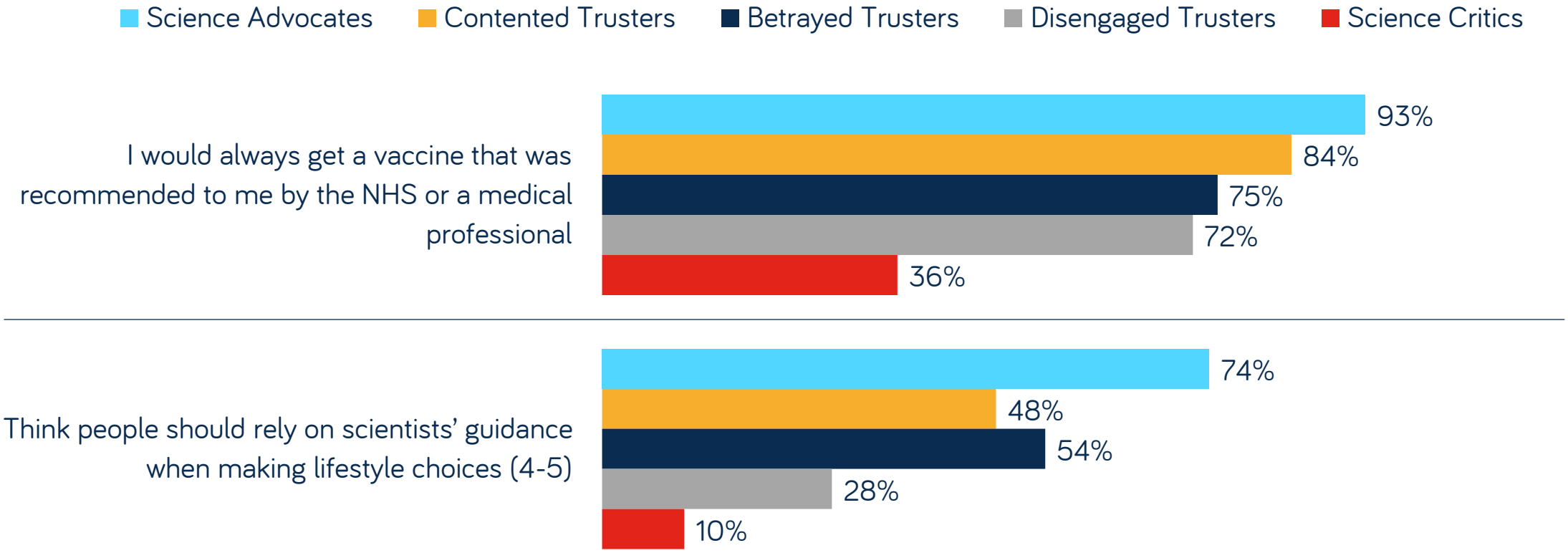
Where would you place yourself on these scales? 1 = I listen to / 5 = ignore everything scientists have to say.
1 = I generally believe / 5 = don't believe information from scientists without researching it further.
% selecting 1-2: listen to everything scientists say/believe information from scientists without researching it any further



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

All except Science Critics have large majorities who say they would always get recommended vaccines – although fewer of each group agree with relying on scientists' guidance when making lifestyle choices more generally

To what extent do the following apply to you personally? / How much or how little should people rely on scientists' guidance when making lifestyle choices? Please indicate your answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all' and 5 is 'Completely'

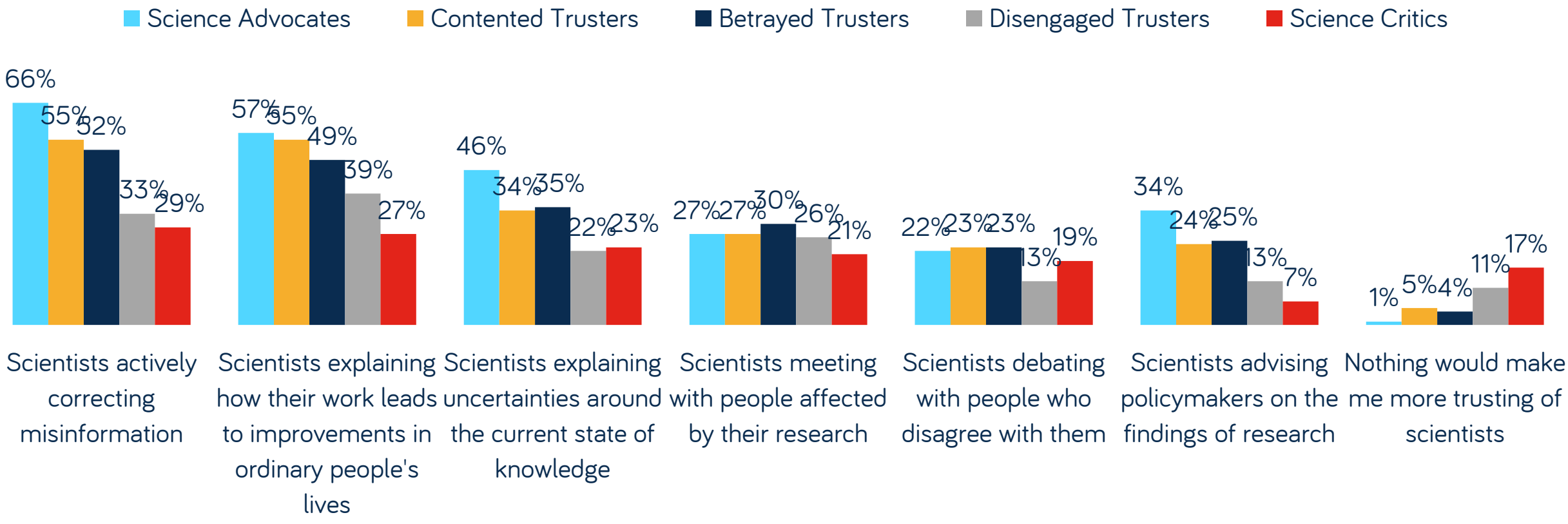


Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

5. What would increase trust?

The top actions to increase trust vary significantly by segment, but relatively few of any segment – even Critics – say *nothing* would make them more trusting

Scientists need to decide how to spend their time between doing their scientific research and engaging with the public and other groups to explain their research or its implications, so that people understand and trust their work. Which of the following, if any, is most likely to make you more trusting of scientists? Please select up to four.



Base: 795 'Science Advocates', 811 'Contented Trusters', 788 'Betrayed Trusters', 996 'Disengaged Trusters' and 872 'Science Critics', 8-11 May 2026.

Trustworthy
Communications

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Professor Bobby Duffy
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Eliel Cohen
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Paolo Morini
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Head of Communications

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Director of Partnerships and Governance

Hayley D'Souza
Head of Communities