



THE  
POLICY  
INSTITUTE

KING'S  
*College*  
LONDON

# The UK's changing 'culture wars'

## Division, tension and common ground

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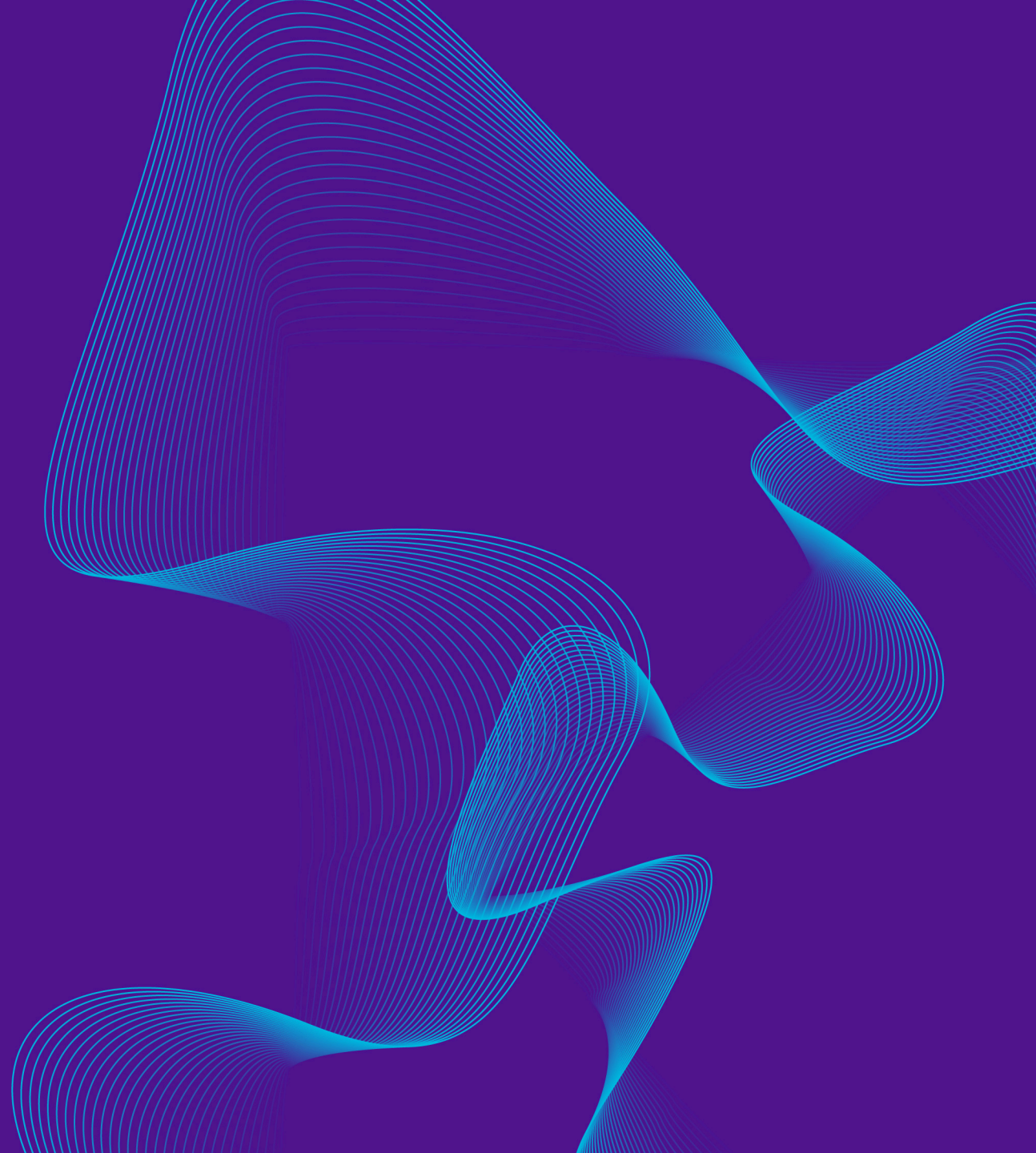
Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy

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# 1. Perceptions of division and tension

The proportions of the UK public who say the nation feels divided, as well as divided by culture wars specifically, are at their highest points since these trends began in 2020.

Perceived tension between immigrants and UK-born citizens has also reached a new high, although the Brexit divide continues to heal, with the share of the public who feel there is tension between Remainers and Leavers declining further.

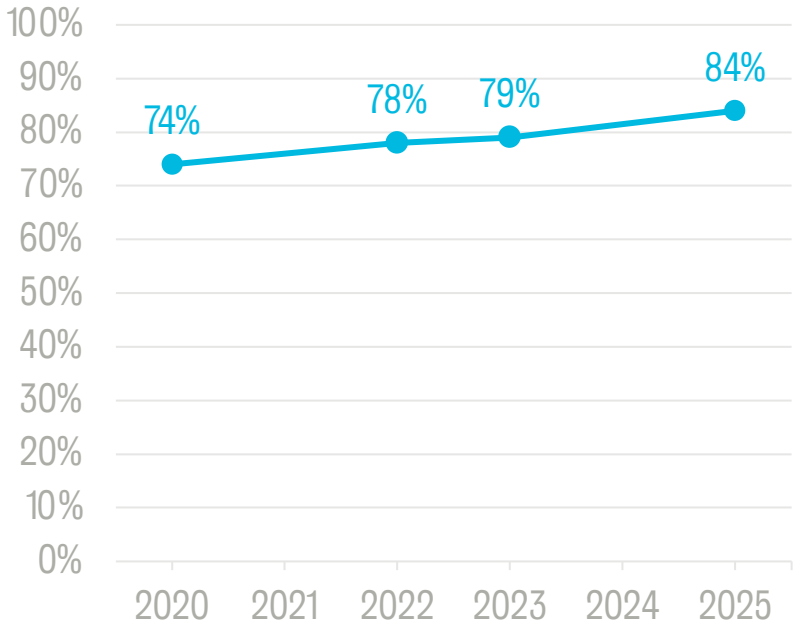


# The proportion of people who feel the UK is divided has risen in the last five years, and there has been a big increase in those who say the nation is divided by culture wars

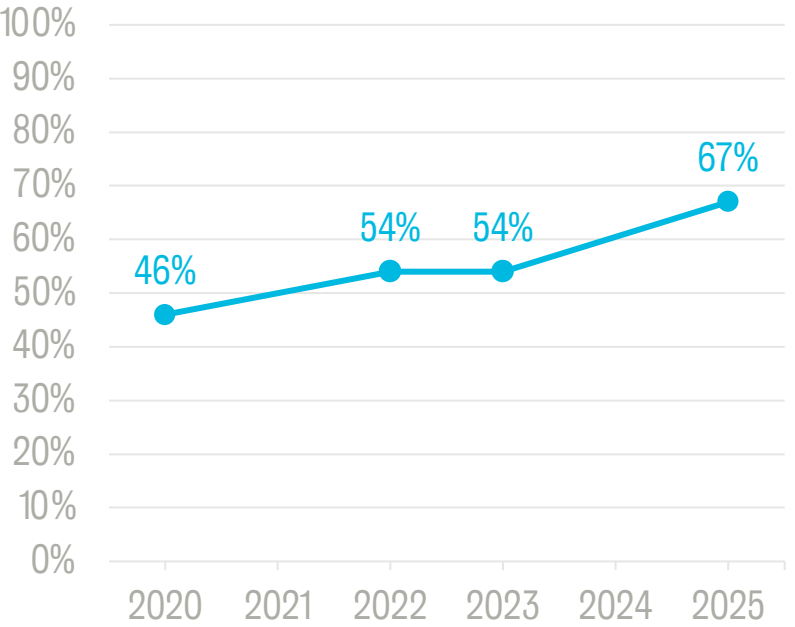
84% of people now say the UK feels divided – up from 74% in 2020.

Back then, less than half the public – 46% – agreed the nation was divided by “culture wars”. Now 67% feel this way, with most of this increase occurring in the last two years.

How united or divided does the UK feel to you these days? (% who say divided)

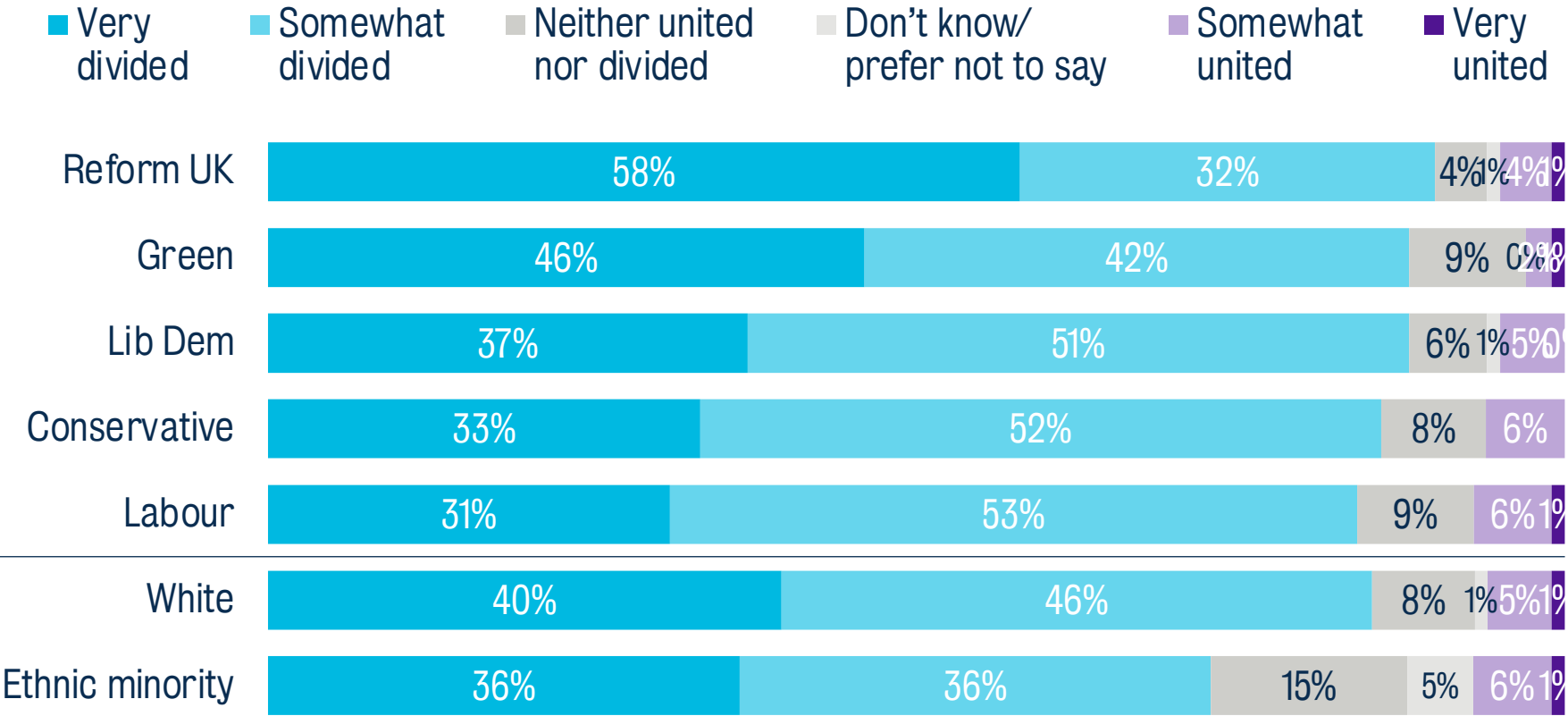


From what you see on TV, in the news media and online, and in your conversations with others, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the UK is divided by “culture wars”? (% who agree)



# Reform UK is the only party with a majority of supporters who feel the UK is *very* divided, while a sense of division is also more widespread among white people than ethnic minorities

How united or divided does the UK feel to you these days?



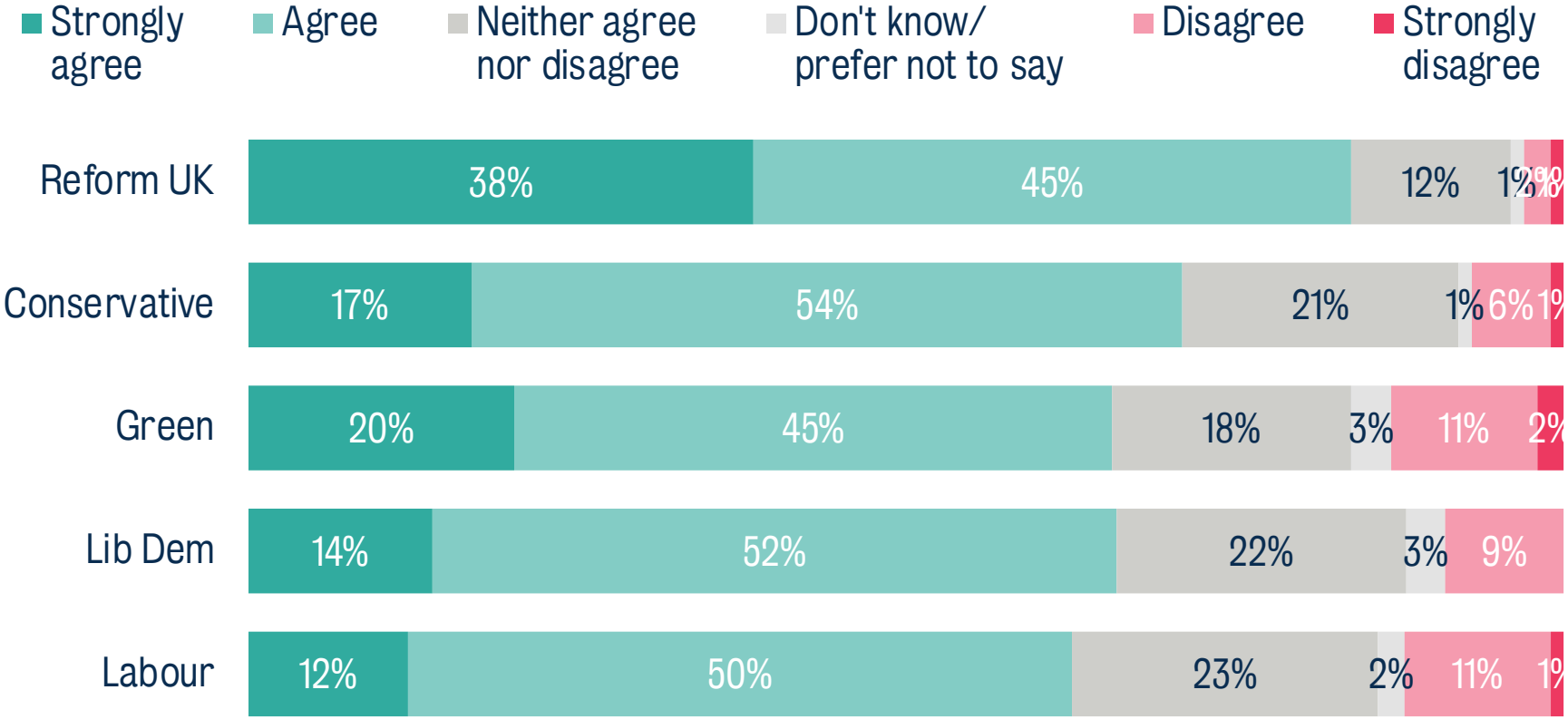
Six in 10 Reform UK supporters say the country is *very* divided – almost double the share of Conservative and Labour supporters who feel the same.

And 86% of white people feel the nation is divided, compared with 72% of those belonging to ethnic minorities – though there is no greater sense of unity among the latter; instead just a higher proportion who take a neutral position or say they don't know.

There is also relatively little difference in perceptions by age, although over-55s are most likely to sense division, with 87% feeling this way compared with closer to eight in 10 of other age groups.

# Reform UK supporters are also most likely to agree the UK is divided by culture wars

From what you see on TV, in the news media and online, and in your conversations with others, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the UK is divided by “culture wars”?



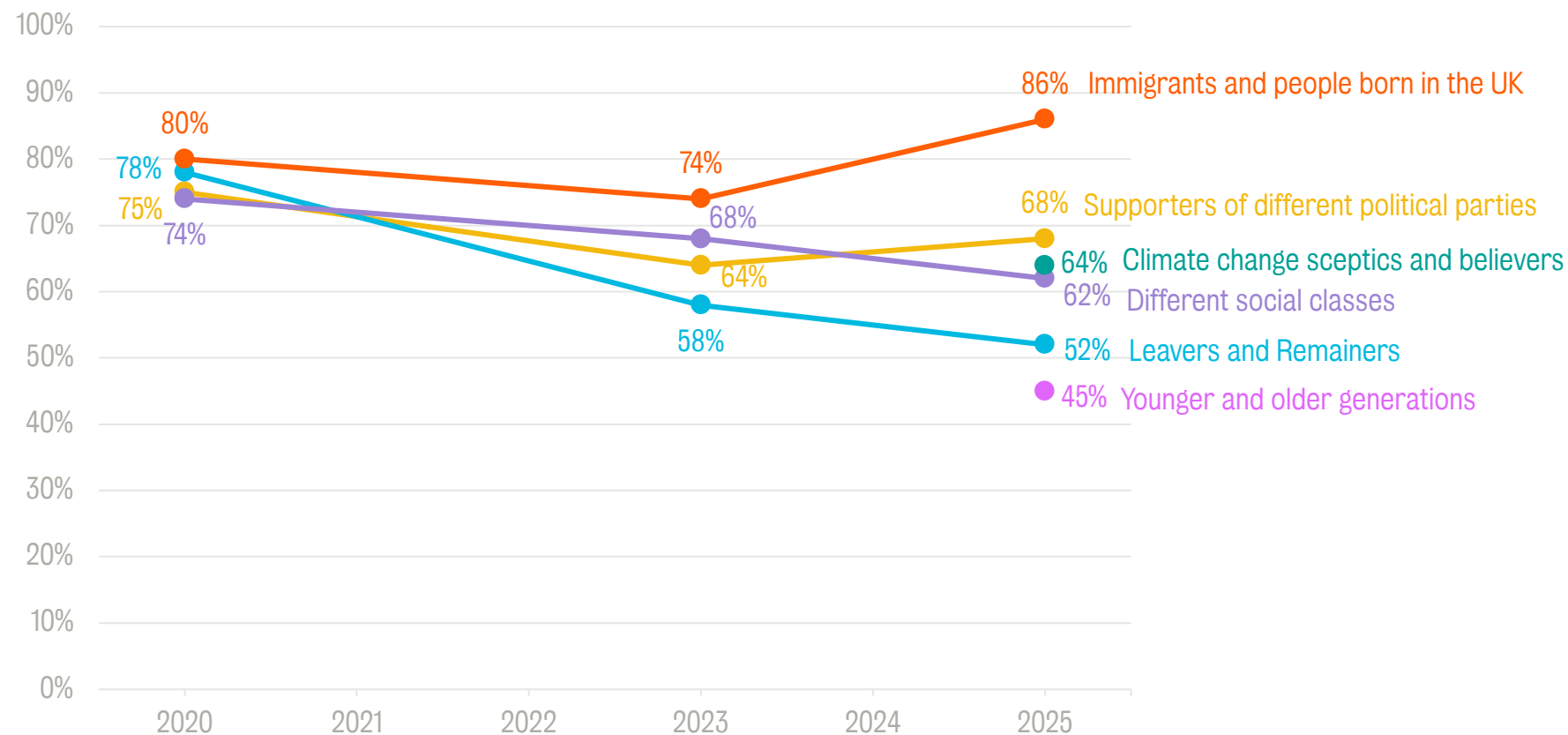
Eight in 10 (83%) Reform UK supporters feel the country is divided by culture wars, compared with seven in 10 or fewer among supporters of other parties.

Reform supporters are also significantly more likely to *strongly* agree the UK is divided in this way.

\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# Perceived tension between immigrants and UK-born citizens has risen, but the Brexit divide continues to heal and tensions between social classes have declined further

How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today?  
(% who say a great deal/fair amount)



Between 2020 and 2023, perceived tension between immigrants and people born in the UK decreased slightly. But since then it has increased sharply, rising from 74% in 2023 to 86% in 2025 – a new high.

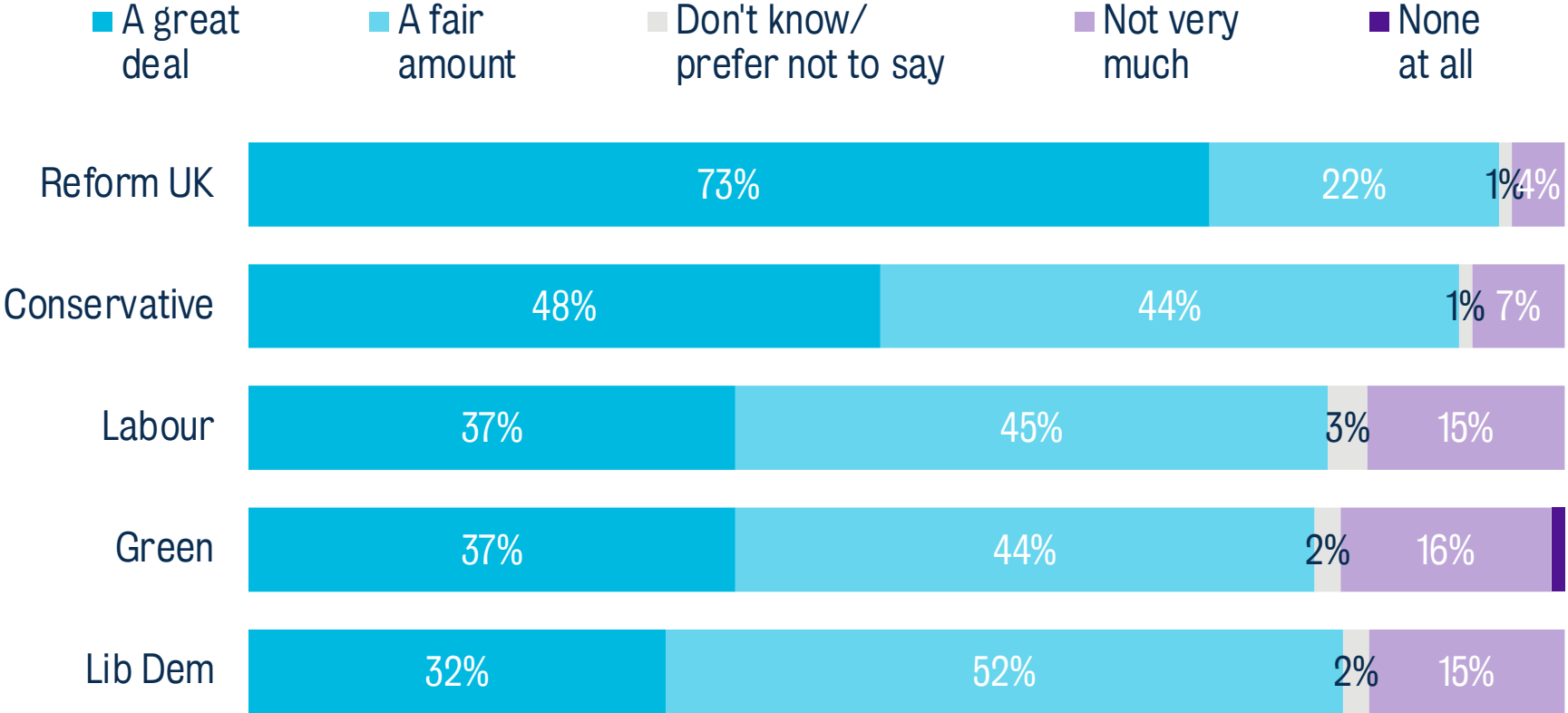
Perceived tension between supporters of different political parties has risen by four points, although this is still down on the level seen in 2020.

Meanwhile, perceived tension between different social classes and between Leavers and Remainers has continued to fall.

People today also feel there is greater tension between climate change sceptics and believers than between Leavers and Remainers or between younger and older generations.

# Large majorities of all parties' supporters feel there is tension around immigration in the UK, but Reform supporters are by far most likely to say there is a *great deal* of tension

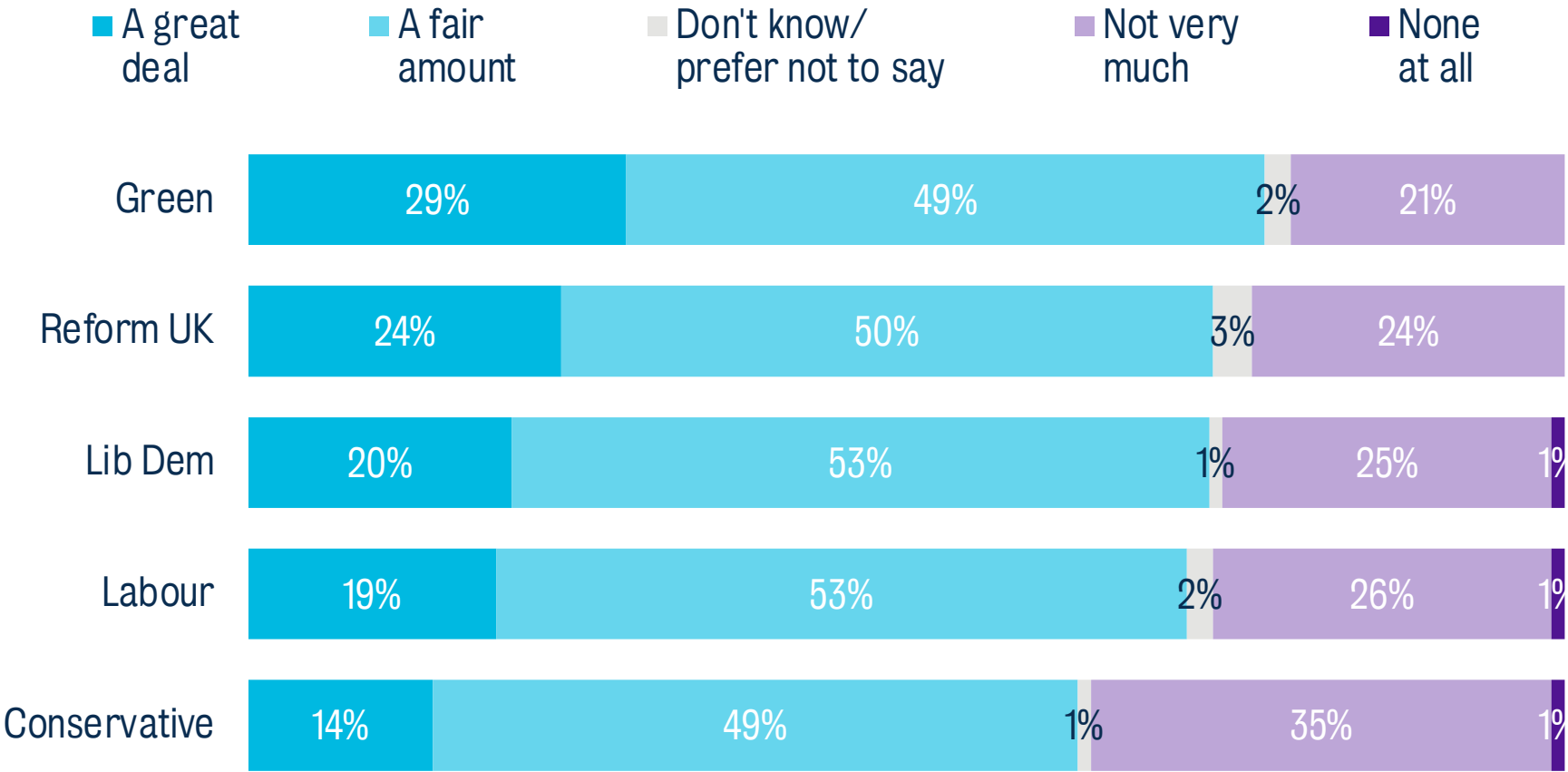
How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today?  
**Between immigrants and people born in the UK**



Similar proportions of Reform UK (94%) and Conservative (92%) supporters think there is tension between immigrants and people born in the UK – but there is a big difference in strength of feeling between the two groups, with Reform supporters 25 points more likely to say there's a *great deal* of tension.

# Green Party supporters are most likely to say there is tension between people who support different political parties

How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today?  
**Between people who support different political parties**



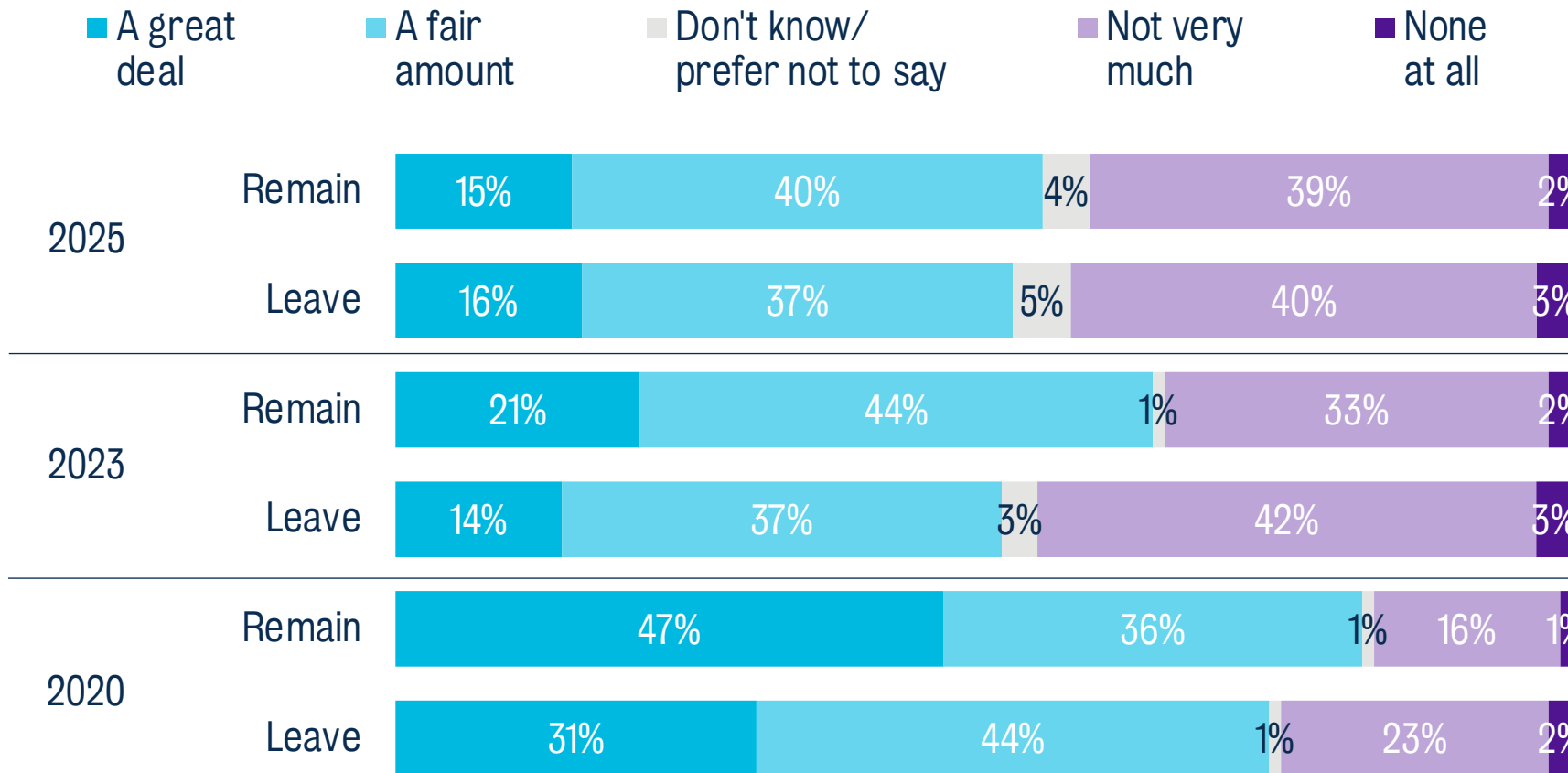
Eight in 10 (78%) Green Party supporters hold this view, including three in 10 (29%) who feel there is a *great deal* of tension.

They are closely followed by Reform UK (73%), Lib Dem (74%) and Labour (72%), supporters, seven in 10 of whom say there is tension across political divides, while Conservatives (63%) are notably less likely to feel this way.

\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# The Brexit divide continues to heal, with Remain voters coming into line with Leave voters for perceived tension between the two sides

How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today?  
**Between Leavers and Remainers**



In 2020, 83% of Remain voters and 75% of Leave voters felt there was tension across both sides of the Brexit divide.

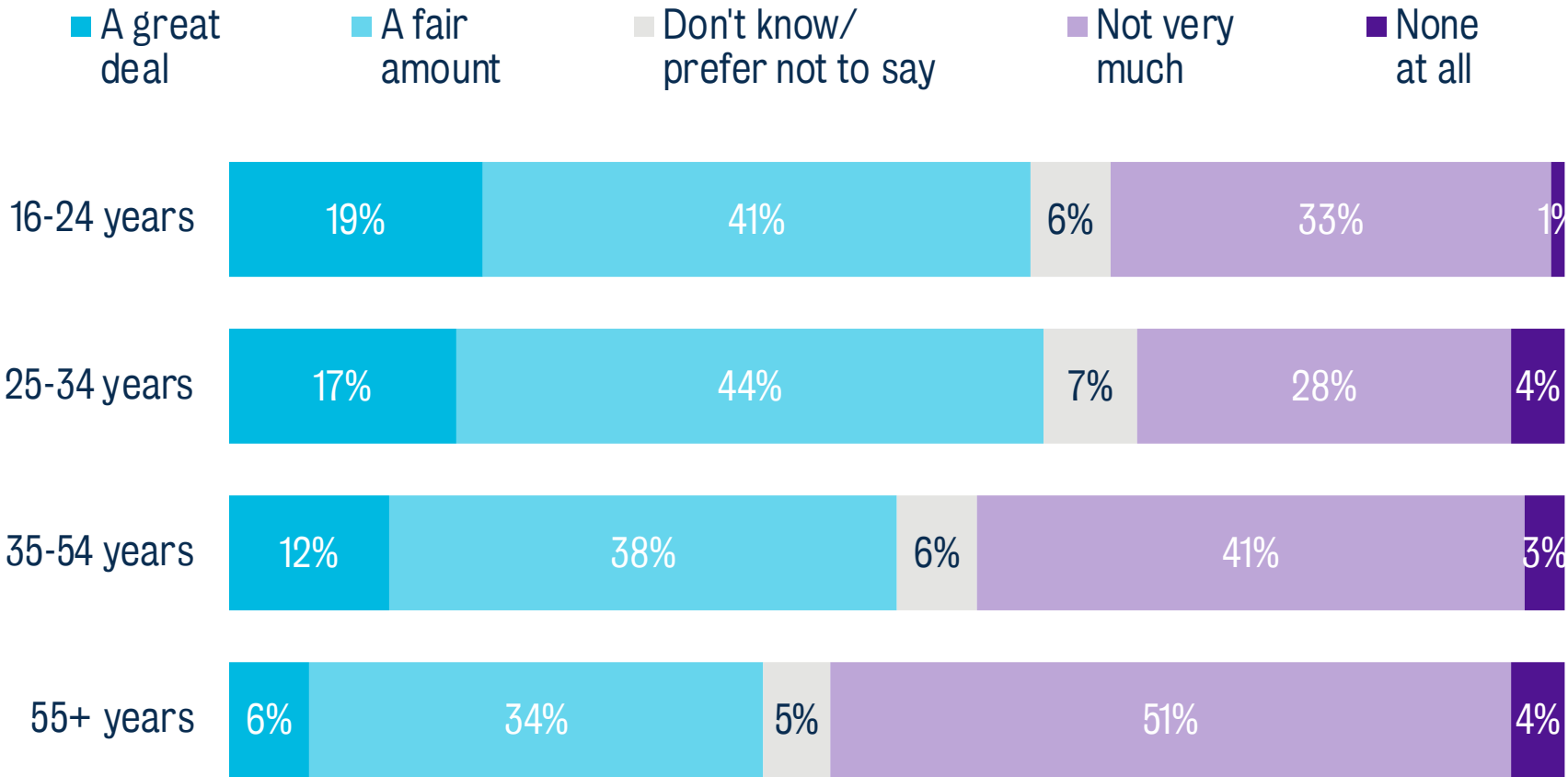
While this had fallen significantly by 2023, Remain voters (64%) were still notably more likely than Leave voters (51%) to say there was tension.

However, this gap has since virtually disappeared, with almost equal proportions of both sides now sensing tension, following a decline among Remain voters (55% Remain vs 53% Leave).

# Younger people are most likely to perceive intergenerational tension in the UK

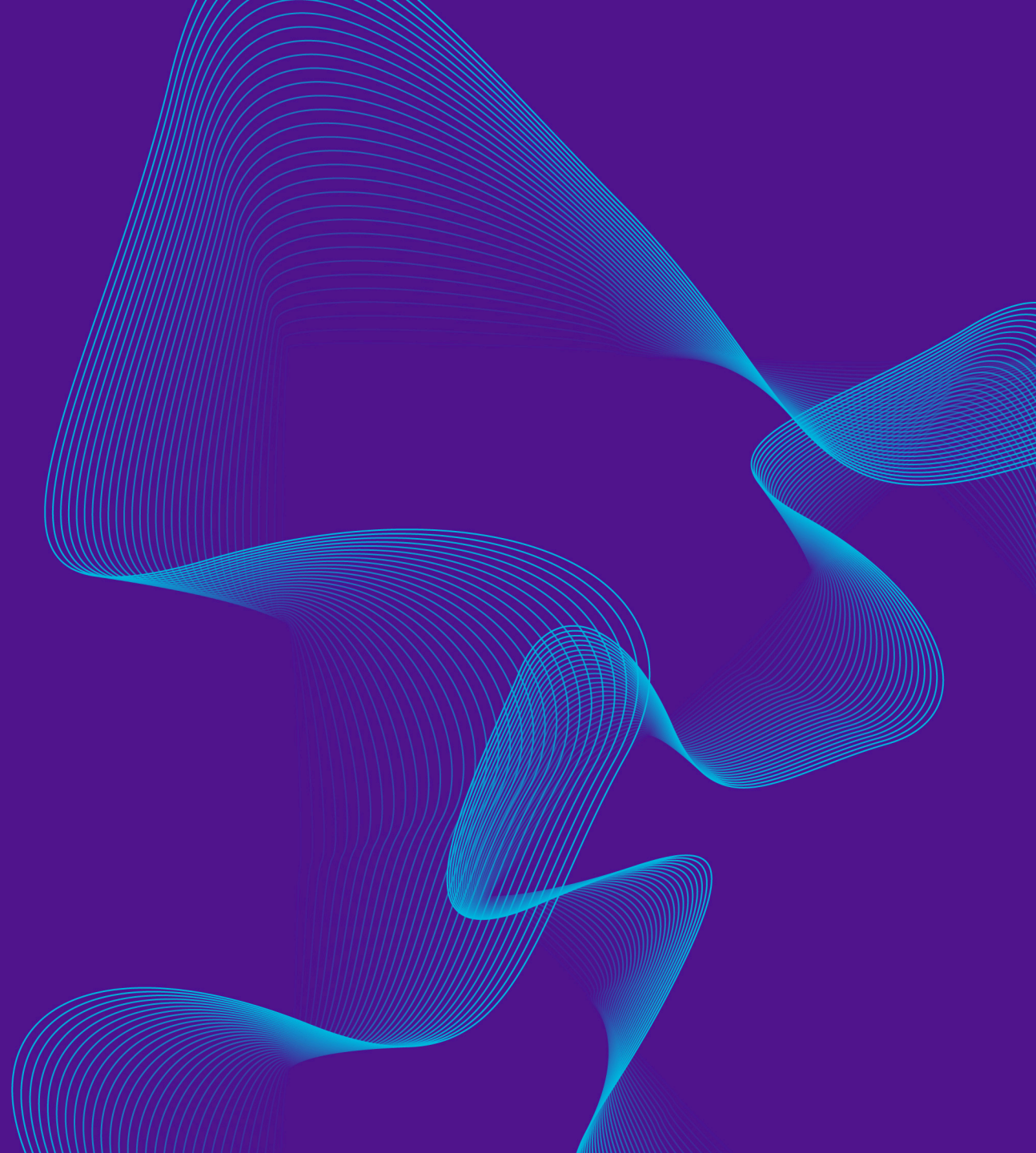
How much tension, if any, would you say there is between the following groups in the UK today?  
**Between younger generations (eg Gen Z) and older generations (eg Baby Boomers)**

Six in 10 16-to-24s (60%) and 25-to-34s (61%) feel there is tension between younger and older generations, compared with five in 10 (50%) and four in 10 (40%) among the two older age groups surveyed.



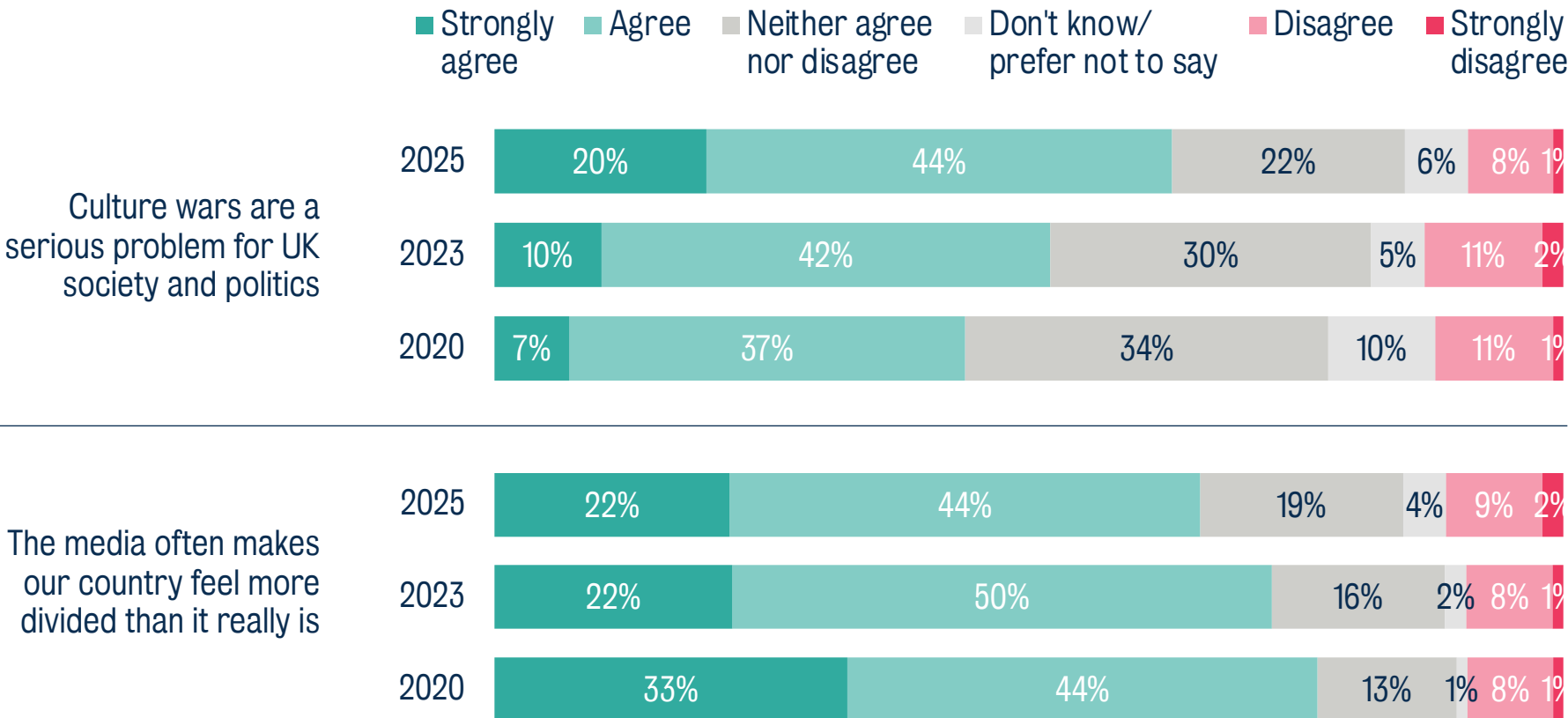
## 2. Culture wars: serious problem or manufactured?

A growing share of the public see culture wars as a serious problem for UK society and politics, with Reform UK supporters most likely to feel they pose a serious challenge. Alongside this, people have become slightly less certain that the media is fuelling division, and most Britons continue to believe politicians invent or exaggerate culture wars as a political tactic.



# A growing share of the public see culture wars as a serious problem, at the same time as becoming less certain the media is fuelling division

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



64% of the public now agree culture wars are a serious problem – up from 52% in 2023 and 44% in 2020.

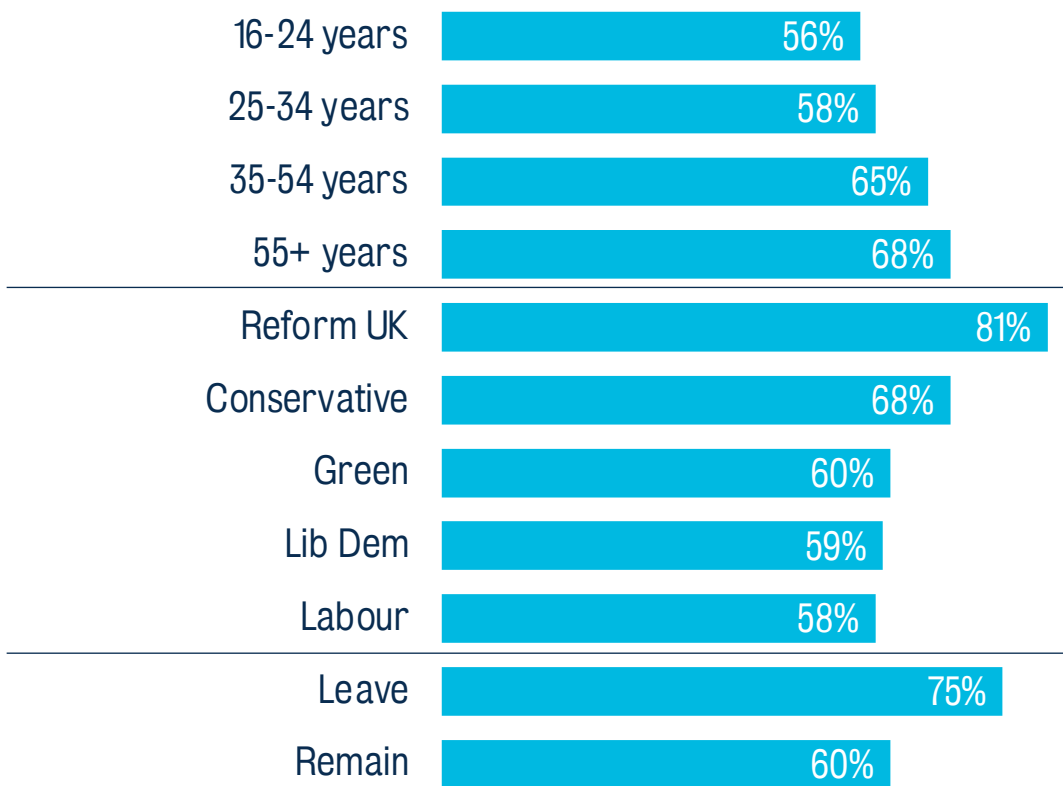
And in the last two years, the proportion who *strongly* agree with this view has doubled from 10% to 20%.

In 2020, 77% of people felt the media often fuels a sense of a division in the UK. Now 66% feel this way.

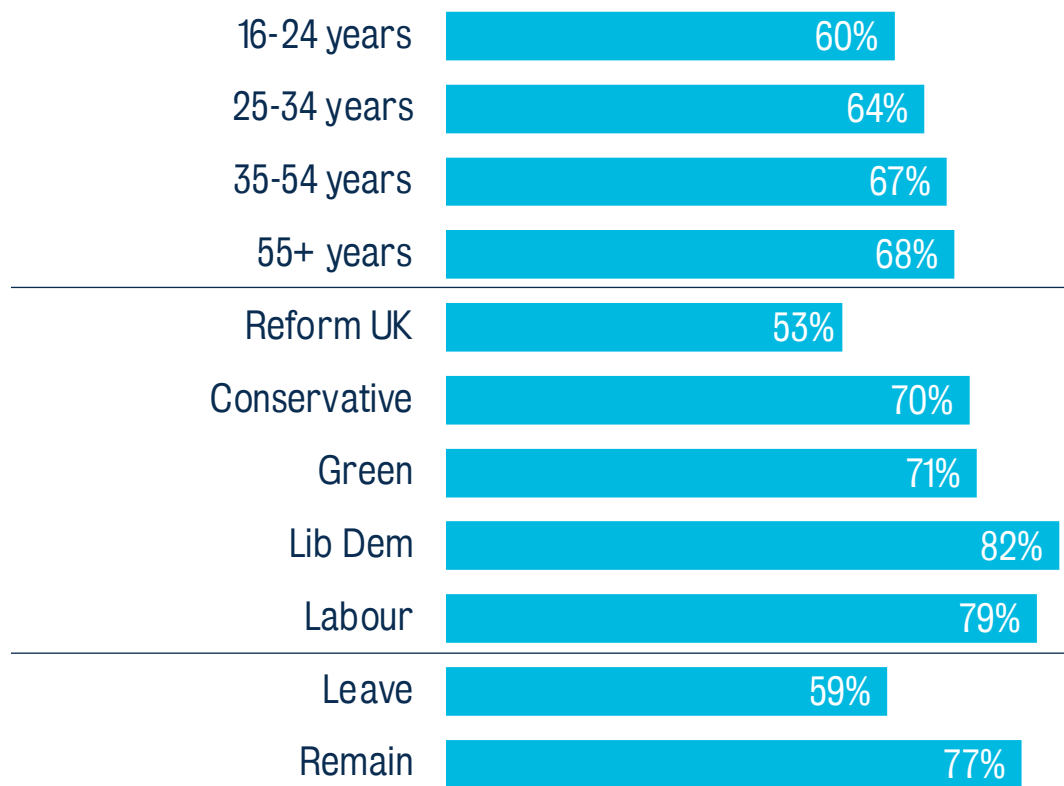
\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# Older age groups, Reform UK supporters and Leave voters are most likely to say culture wars are a serious problem, while Lib Dem and Labour supporters, as well as Remain voters, are most inclined to blame the media for divisions

Culture wars are a serious problem for UK society and politics (% who strongly agree/agree)



The media often makes our country feel more divided than it really is (% who strongly agree/agree)

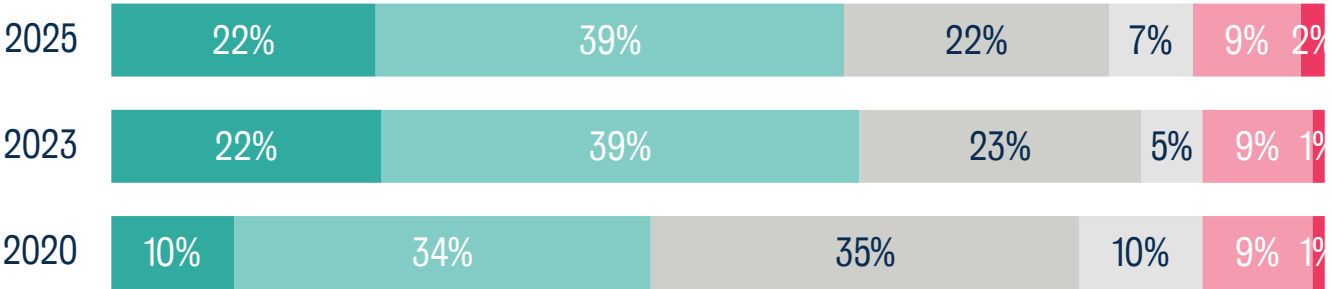


# Three in five think politicians invent or exaggerate culture wars and around one in five say culture wars only exist in the media and on social media

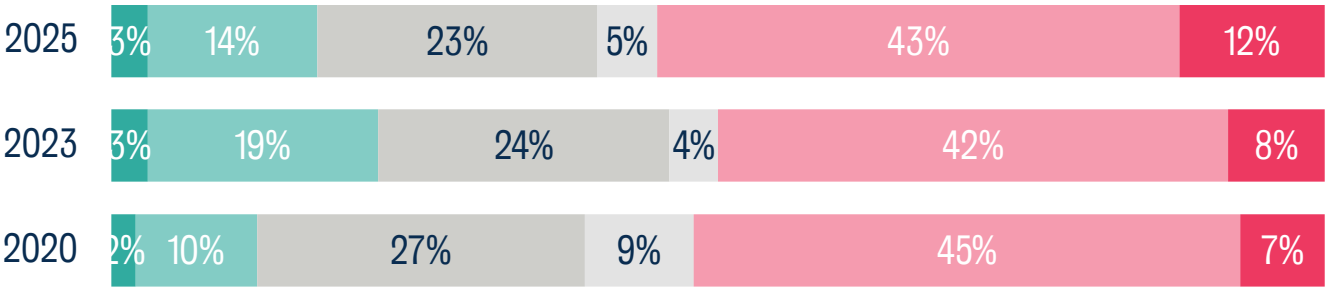
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
 ■ Don't know/ prefer not to say  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly disagree

Politicians invent or exaggerate culture wars as a political tactic



Culture wars only exist in the media and on social media, not in real life

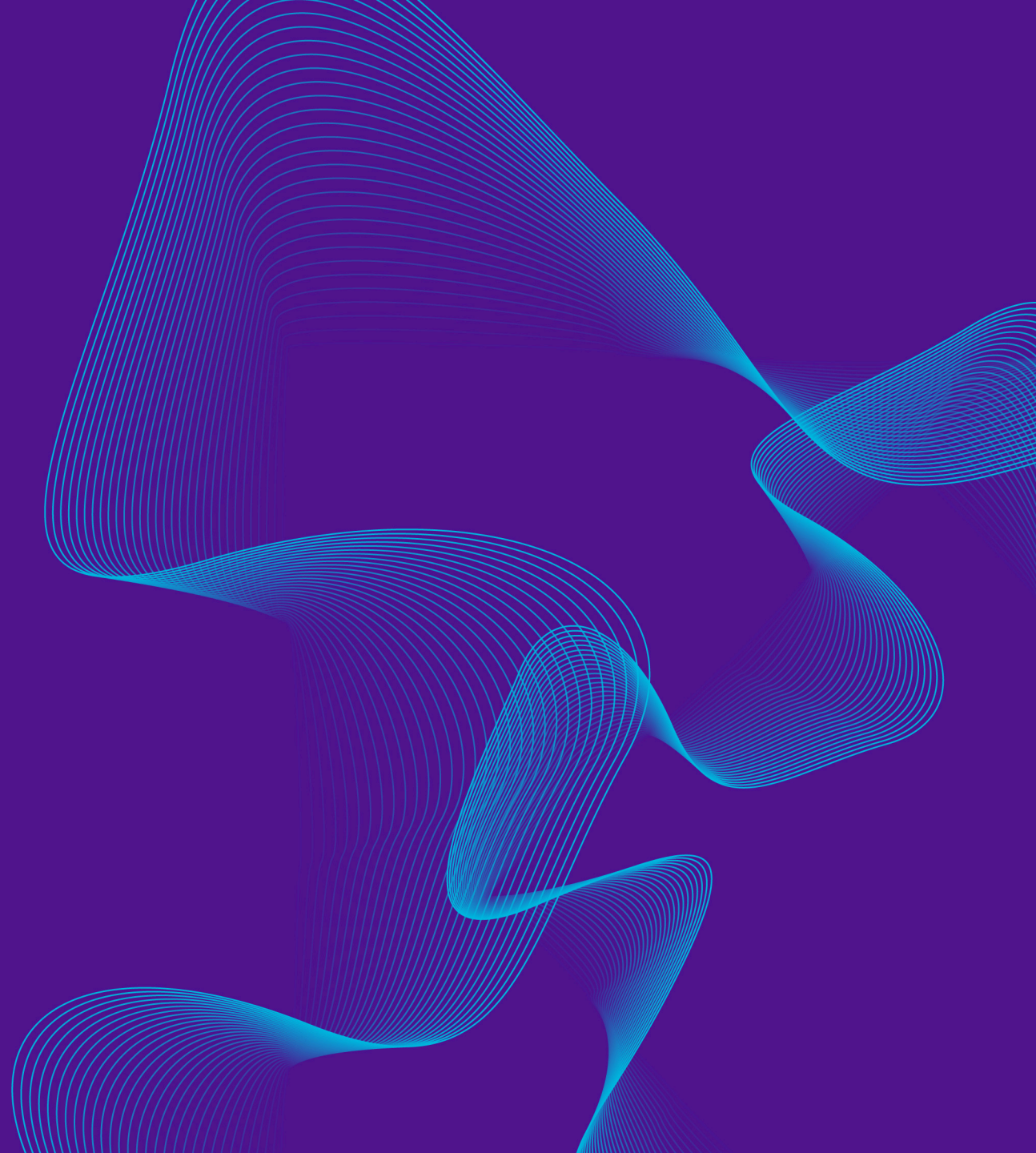


60% of the public feel politicians invent or exaggerate culture wars as a political tactic – virtually unchanged from two years ago (62%), but still far higher than back in 2020 (44%).

The share of the public who say culture wars only exist in the media and on social media has fallen back slightly since 2023, declining from 22% to 17%, although this is still higher than in 2020 (12%).

### 3. Culture change

Around half the public now say UK culture is changing too fast and would like the country to be “the way it used to be” – representing substantial increases over the past five years. At the same time, national pride has declined below a majority since 2020. These shifts are most pronounced among older and middle-aged groups, though even younger people and ethnic minorities show increased nostalgia for the past.

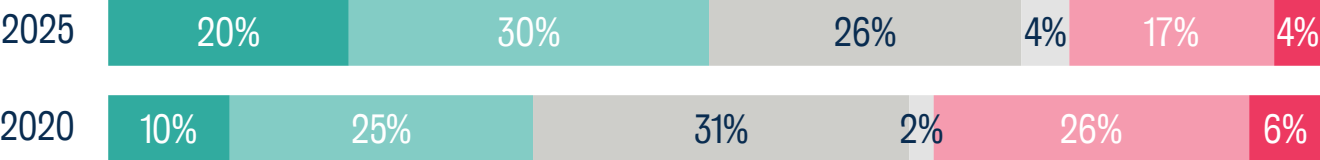


# There have been big increases in people feeling the UK's culture is changing too fast and preferring the country to be the way it used to be, at the same time as national pride has declined

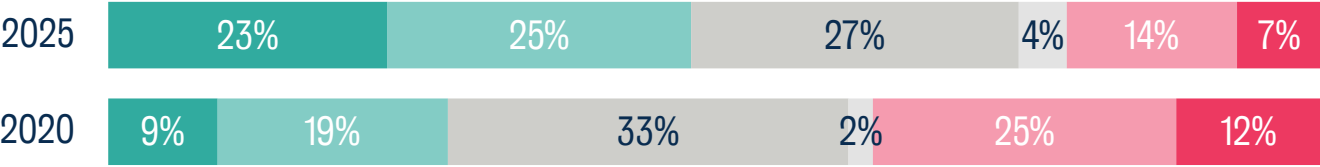
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
 ■ Don't know/prefer not to say  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly disagree

The culture in the UK is changing too fast



I would like my country to be the way it used to be



I am proud of my country



Half (50%) the public now say culture is changing too fast, compared with around a third (35%) five years ago.

Similarly, half (48%) would like their country to be the way it used to be – up from around a quarter (28%).

Alongside this, the share of the UK public who say they feel proud of their country has dipped below a majority, falling from 56% to 46% in the last five years.

# Nine in 10 Reform UK supporters feel the pace of cultural change is too fast and want the country to return to how it used to be – far higher than among other parties' supporters

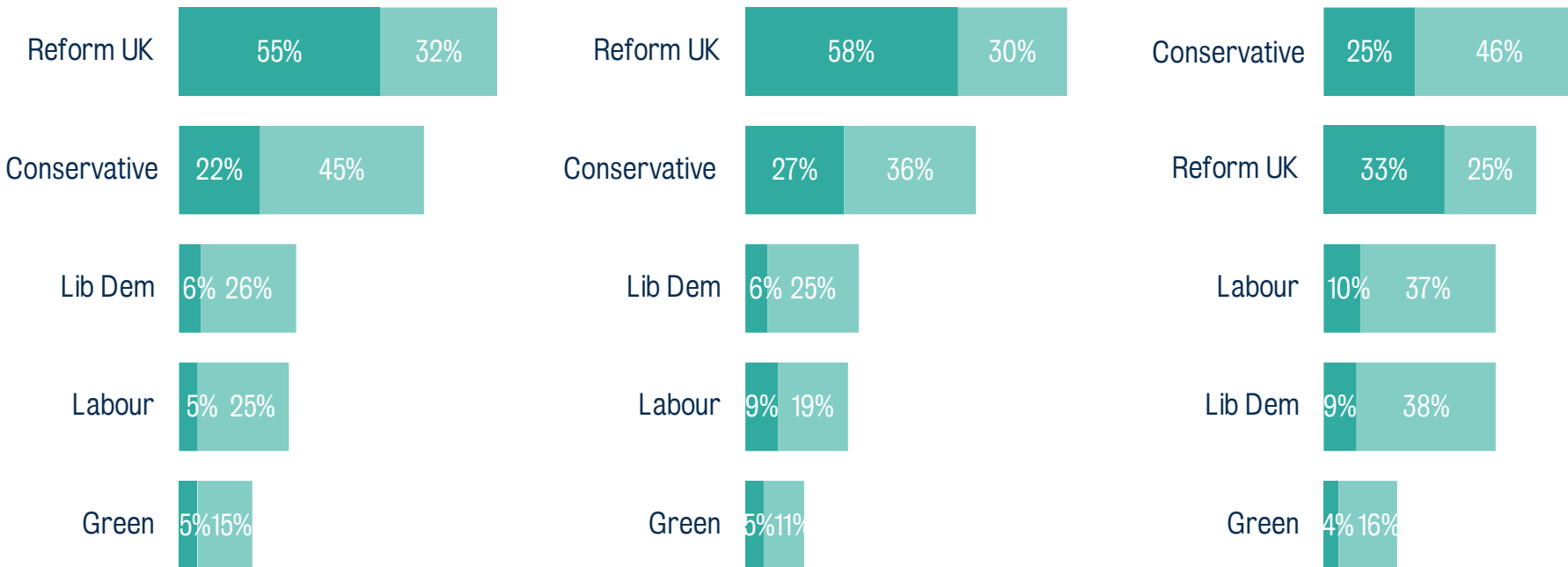
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree

The culture in the UK is changing too fast

I would like my country to be the way it used to be

I am proud of my country



Reform UK supporters are also the only political group where a majority *strongly* feel this way.

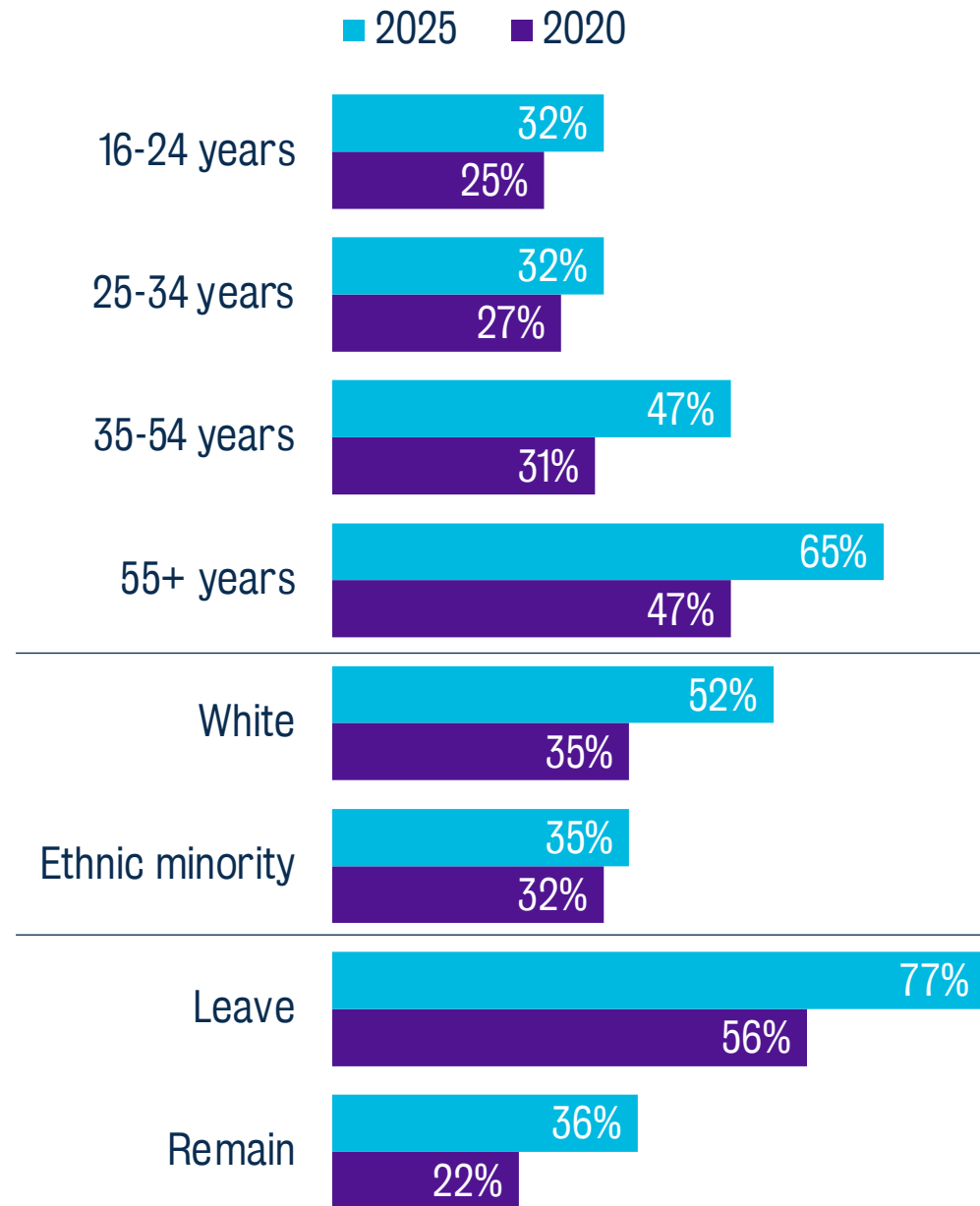
Meanwhile, Conservatives (72%) come top for overall reported pride in their country, although a greater proportion of Reform supporters *strongly* agree they are proud.

Green Party supporters are least nostalgic about the state of the UK and its culture, as well as least proud of their country, with just one in five (19%) feeling this way.

\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# The overall rise in belief that the UK's culture is changing too fast is largely driven by older and middle-aged people, with little change among people from ethnic minorities

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
**The culture in the UK is changing too fast**  
 (% who strongly agree/agree)

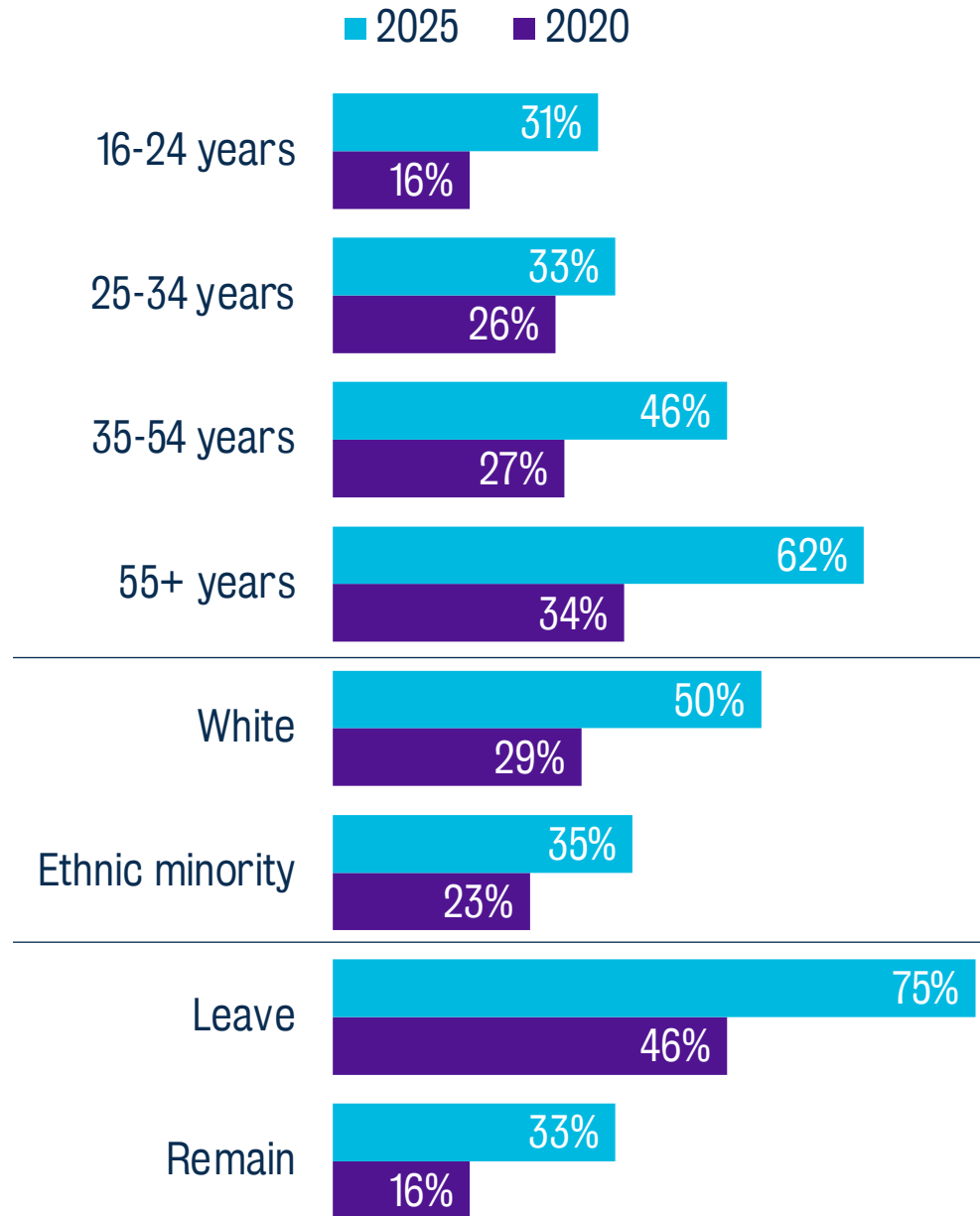


While agreement that the pace of cultural change is too fast in the UK has increased (at least slightly) across all age groups, it is among 35-54s and those aged 55+ where the rise is most marked, with the latter group seeing an 18-point increase since 2020.

Similarly, agreement with this view among ethnic minorities is virtually unchanged compared with five years ago – unlike among white people, where it has risen 17 points.

# Nostalgia for Britain's past has risen across every age group – not just the oldest – and among Remainers and ethnic minorities too

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
**I would like my country to be the way it used to be**  
 (% who strongly agree/agree)



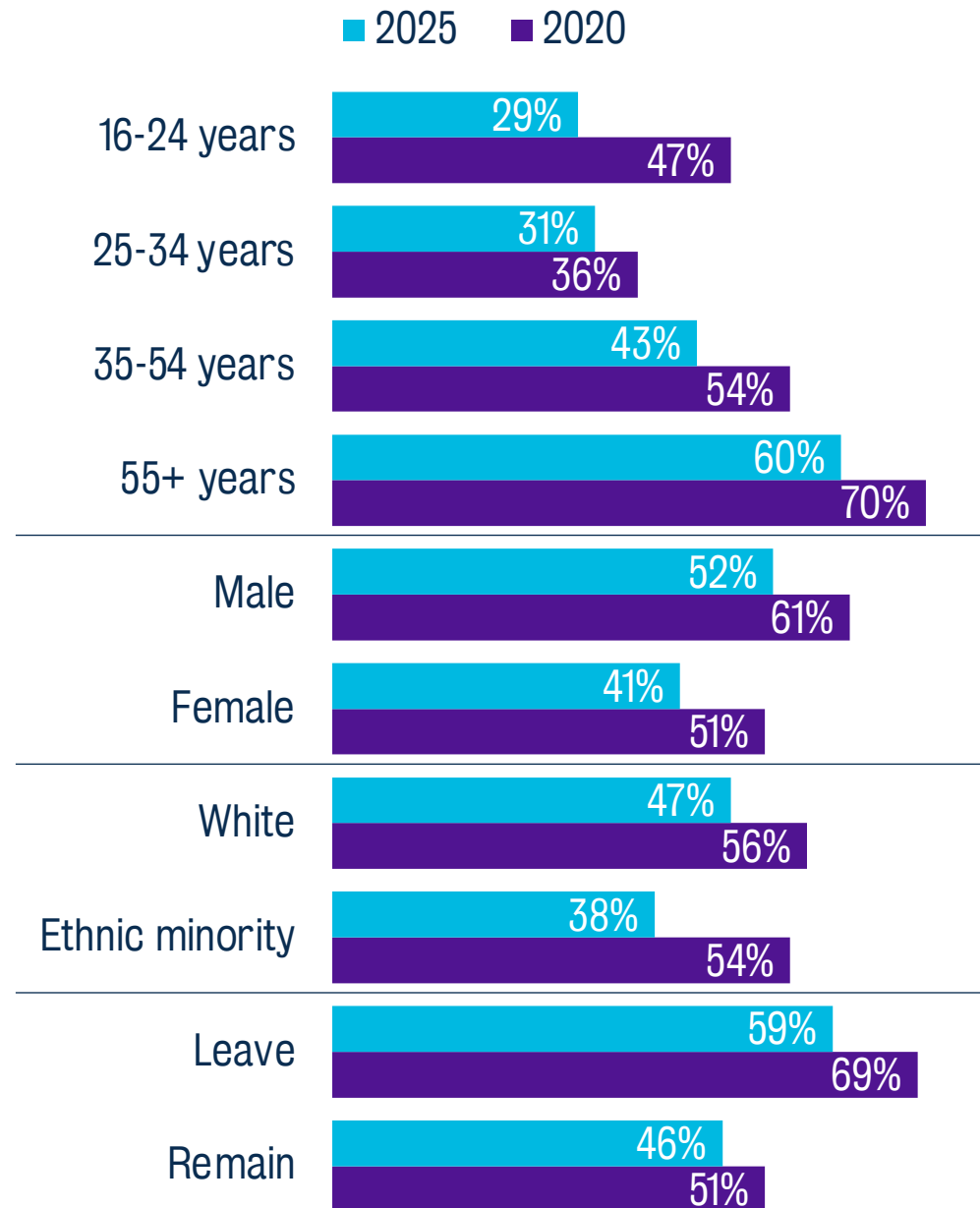
25- to 34-year-olds are the only age group which hasn't seen a double-digit increase since 2020 in a preference for the country to be the way it used to be.

While the biggest overall rise is among those aged 55+, the youngest surveyed have also seen a large shift, with the share of 16- to 24-year-olds who feel this way virtually doubling.

And both ethnic minorities and white people have become much more likely to feel this type of nostalgia for the past, even if the rise has been larger among the former.

# National pride is now lowest among young people and ethnic minorities

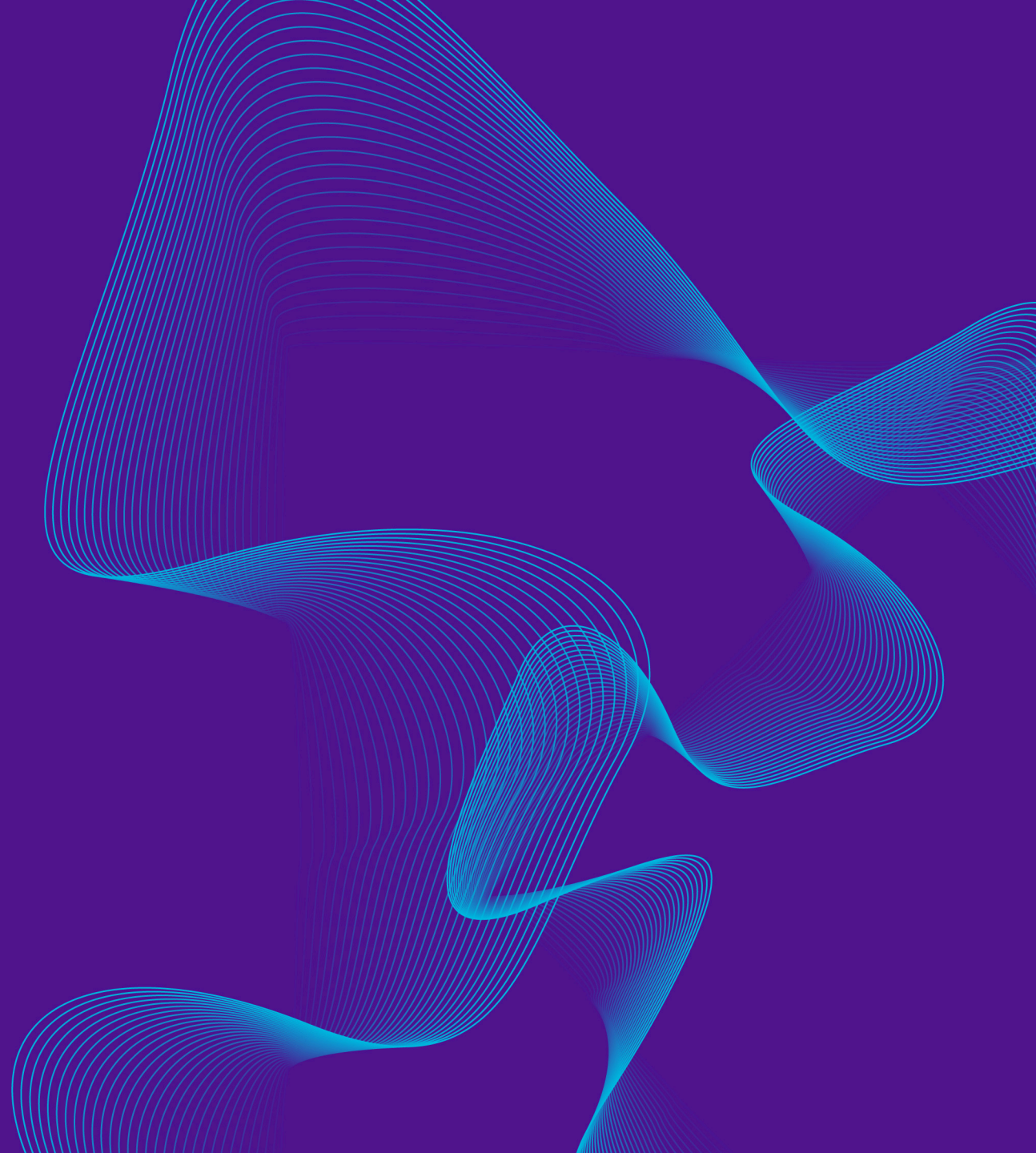
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
**I am proud of my country**  
 (% who strongly agree/agree)



The proportion of people saying they are proud of their country has declined across a range of groups, but most prominently among 16- to 24-year-olds, where it's fallen 18 points, and ethnic minorities, where it's dropped 16 points.

## 4. Fault lines in the culture war

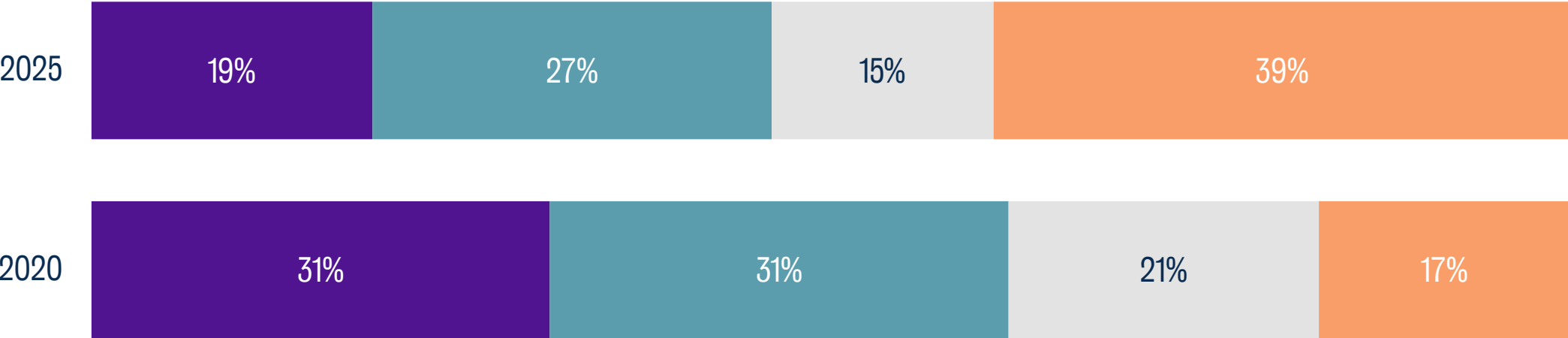
Public opinion on transgender rights has shifted significantly, with those saying these rights have “gone too far” more than doubling since 2020, including among young people – although there is still no overall public consensus on the issue. And views on Britain’s imperial past remain divided, but among all age groups men are considerably more likely than women to express pride in the Empire.



# The share of the public who say transgender rights have gone too far has more than doubled in the last five years – though overall there is still no public consensus on the issue, with a slightly higher proportion still saying trans rights have either not gone far enough or have gone as far as they should

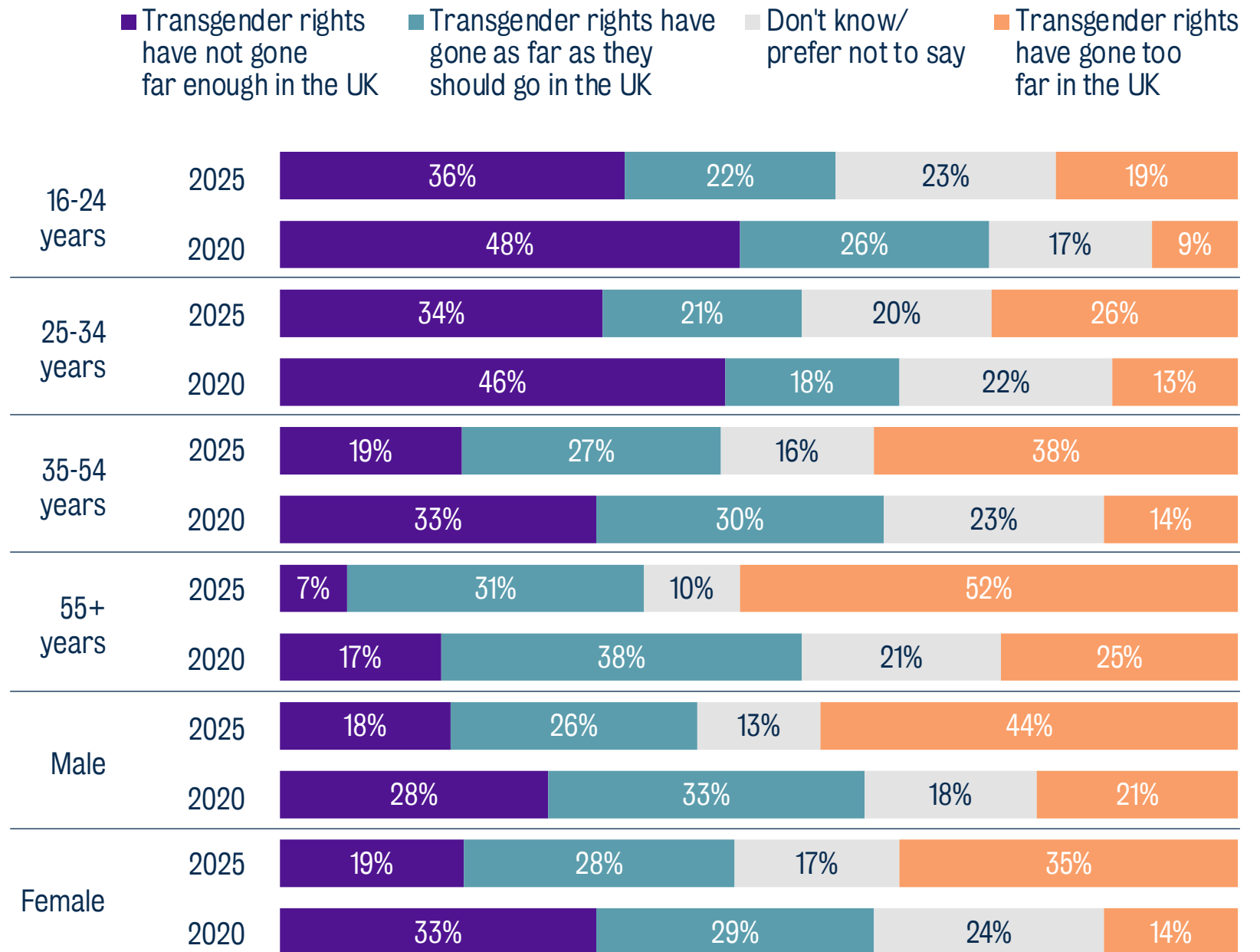
Which of the following statements best matches your view?

- Transgender rights have not gone far enough in the UK
- Transgender rights have gone as far as they should go in the UK
- Don't know/ prefer not to say
- Transgender rights have gone too far in the UK



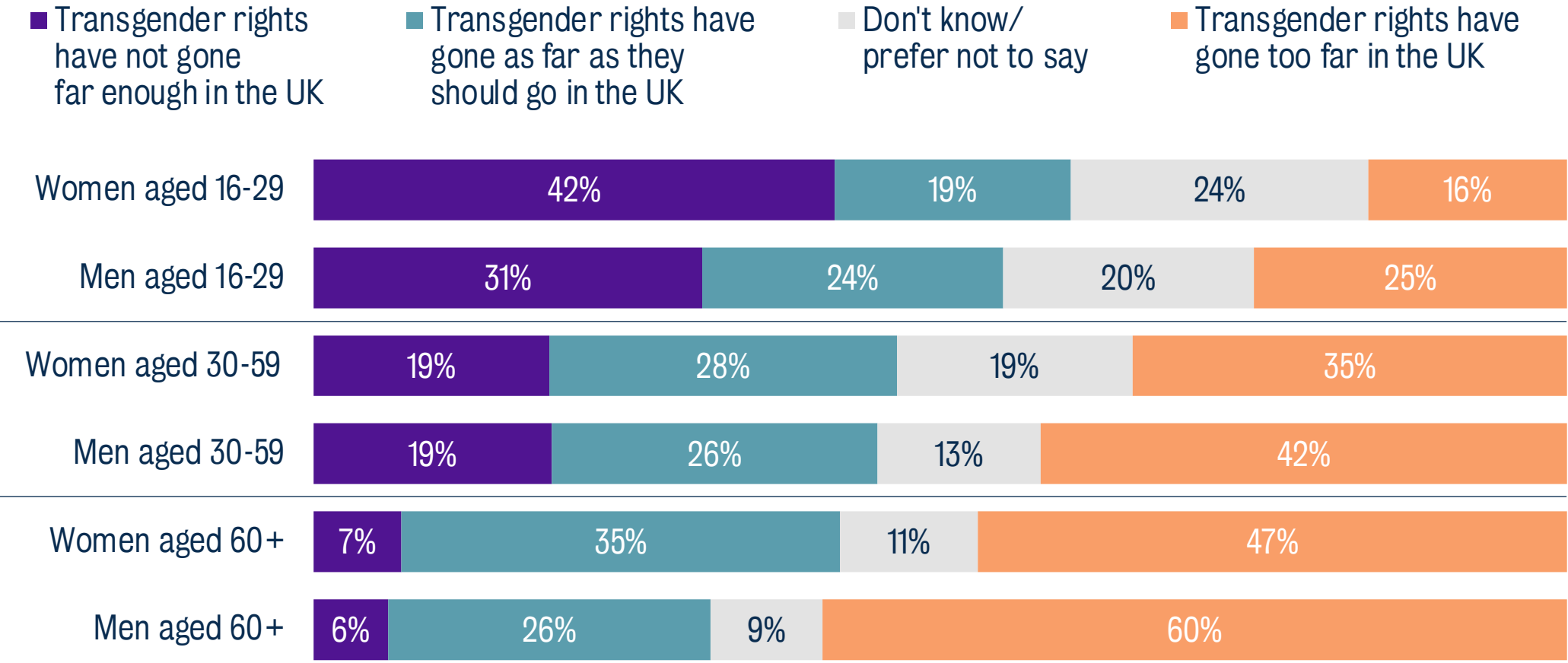
# The proportion of people who say transgender rights have gone too far has doubled among all age groups – even 16-24s, although this group are still much more likely to hold the opposite view

Which of the following statements best matches your view?



# Among all age groups, men are more likely than women to say transgender rights have gone too far – although this is still only a minority of men except for the oldest

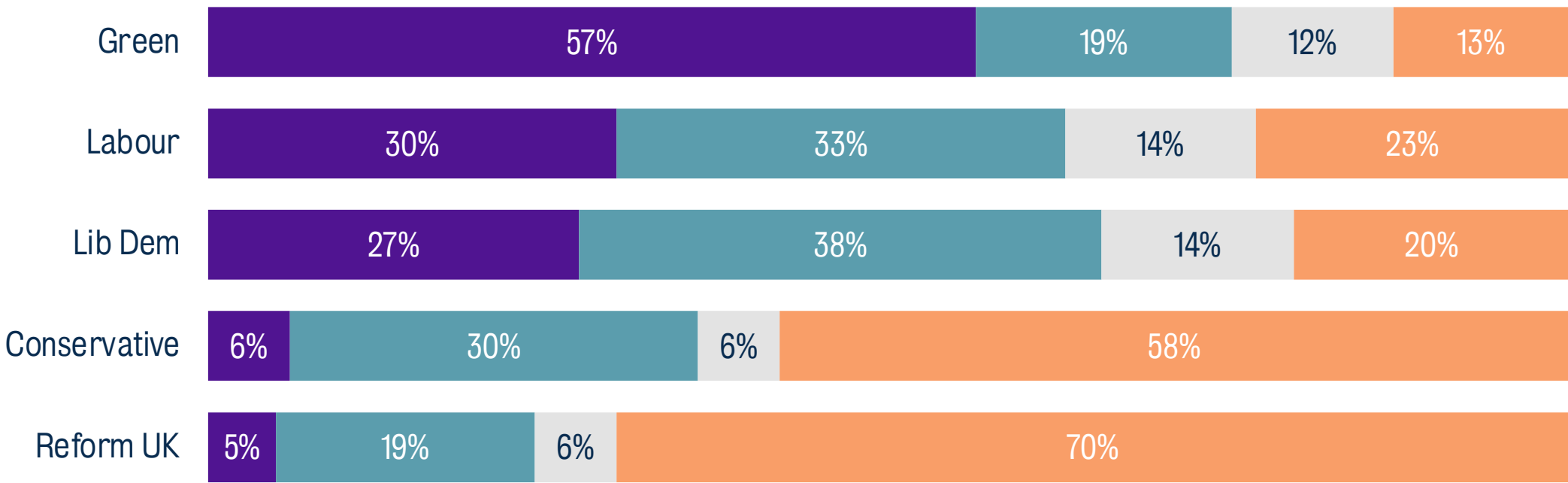
Which of the following statements best matches your view?



# Green Party supporters are by far the most likely to feel transgender rights have not gone far enough, while Reform UK supporters overwhelmingly say they've gone too far

Which of the following statements best matches your view?

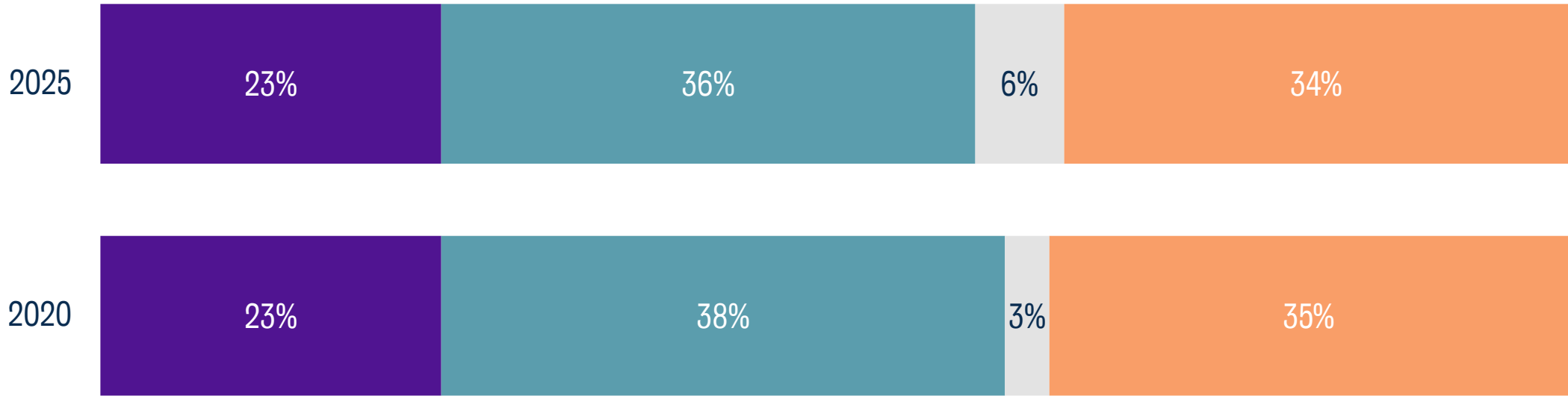
- Transgender rights have not gone far enough in the UK
- Transgender rights have gone as far as they should go in the UK
- Don't know/ prefer not to say
- Transgender rights have gone too far in the UK



# People are still relatively divided on how Britain's colonial past should be viewed today

Is the British Empire more something to be proud of or ashamed of?

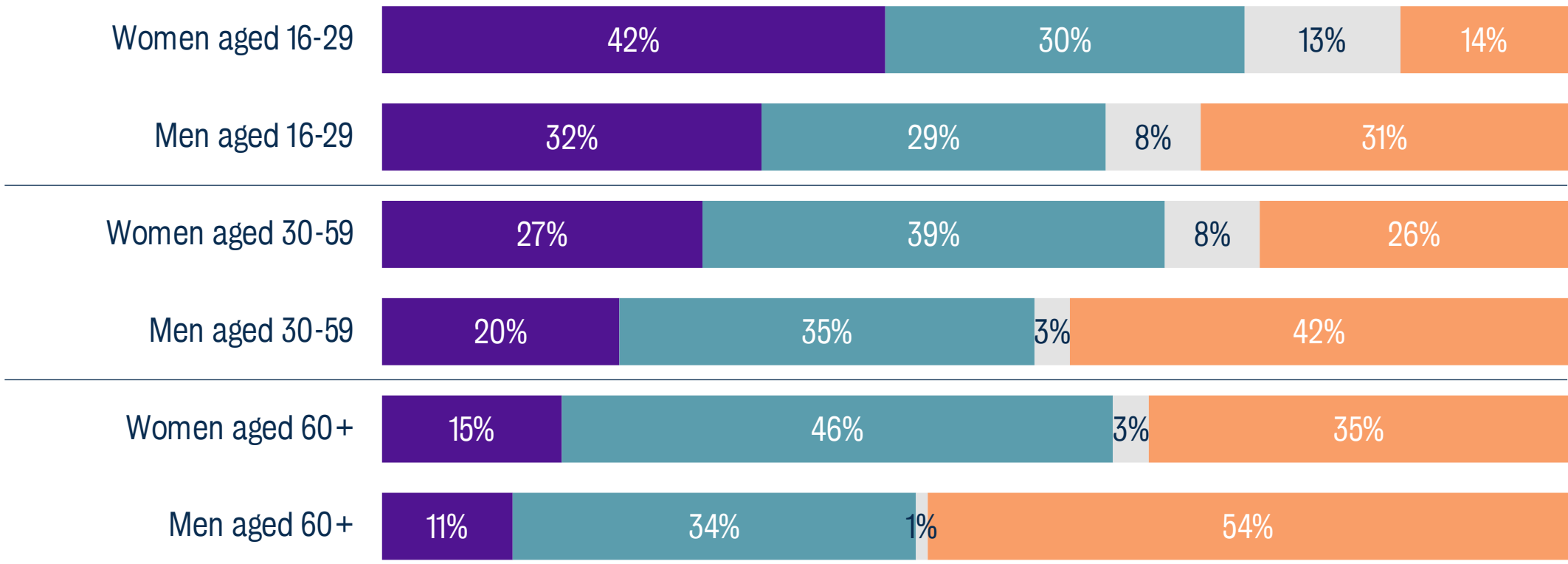
■ Something to be ashamed of   ■ Neither   ■ Don't know/prefer not to say   ■ Something to be proud of



# Among every age group – including the youngest – men are much more likely than women to say the British empire is something to be proud of

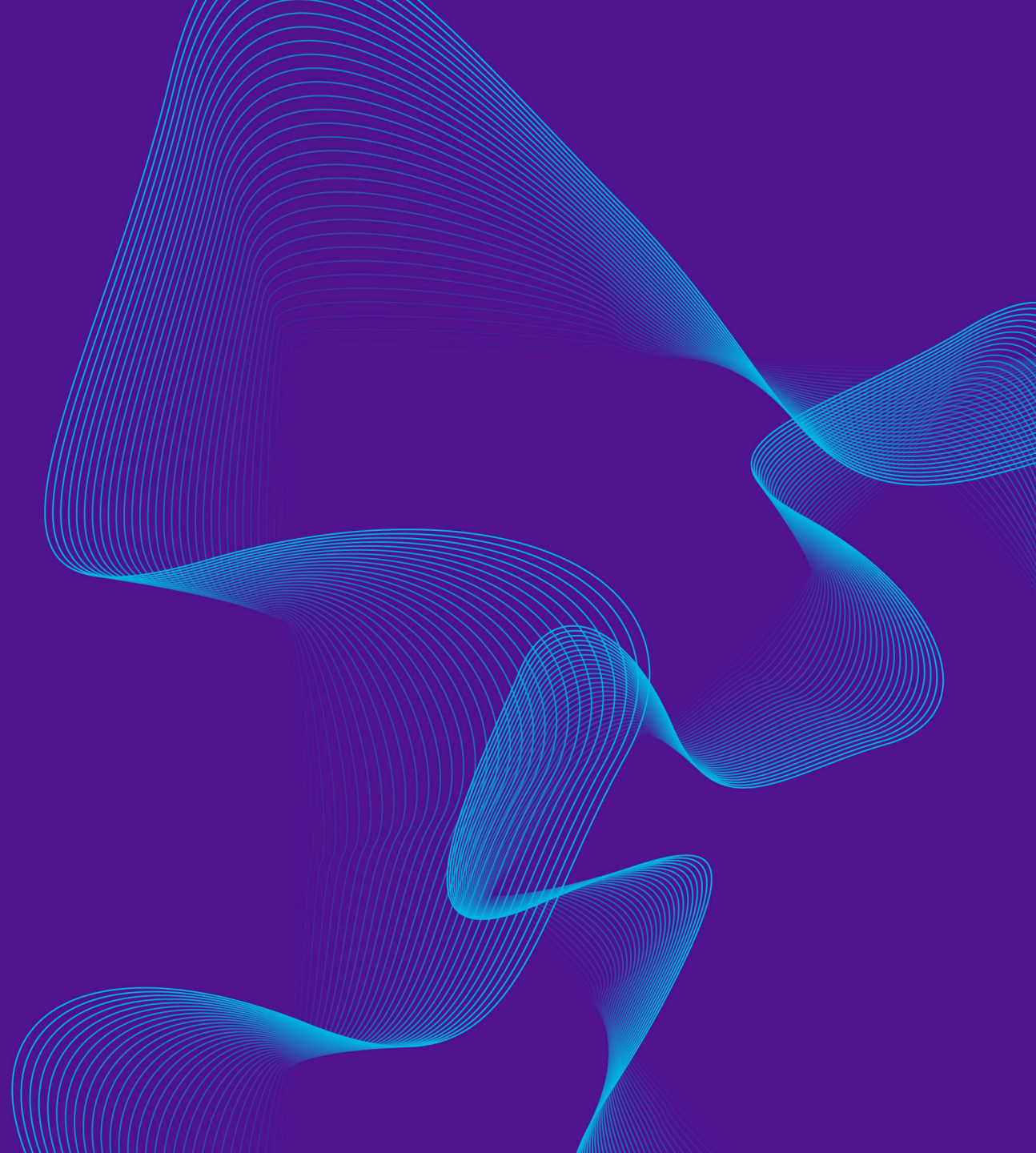
Is the British Empire more something to be proud of or ashamed of?

■ Something to be ashamed of    
 ■ Neither    
 ■ Don't know/prefer not to say    
 ■ Something to be proud of



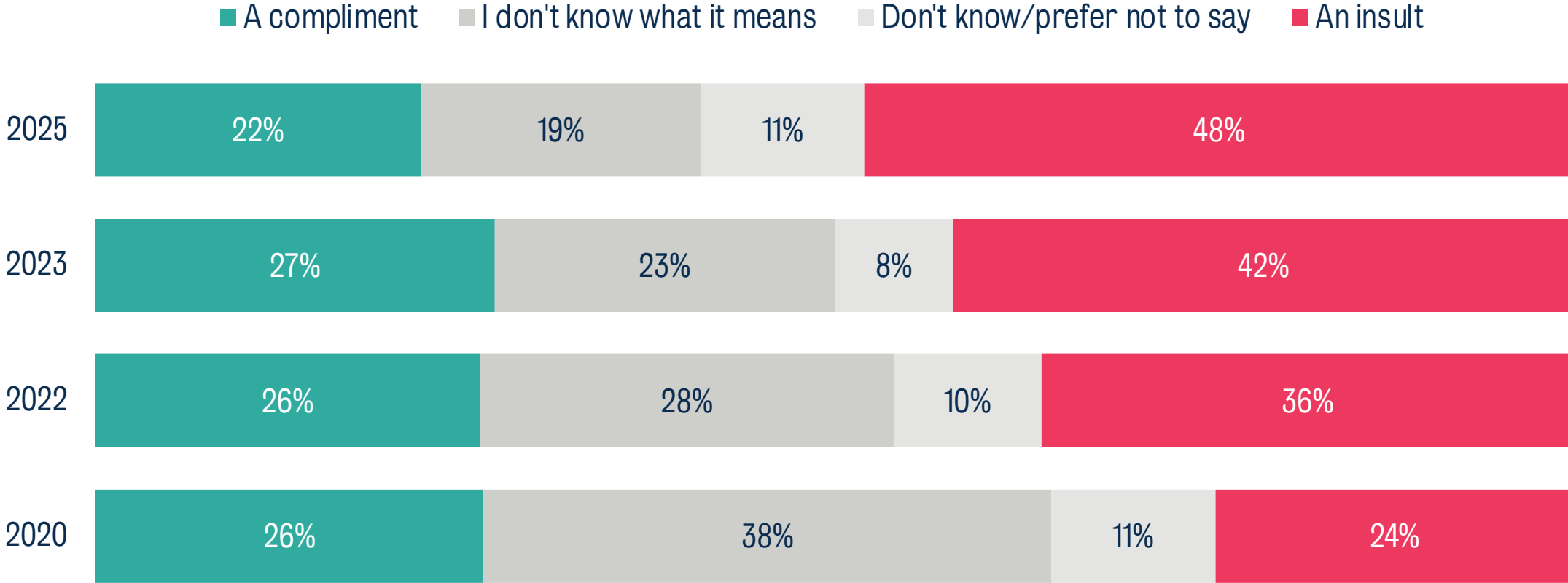
## 5. “Woke”, culture war terms and freedom of expression

The share of the public who consider “woke” an insult has continued to rise, with young people seeing the biggest increase since 2023. And men are consistently more negative about woke than women, although young men are the only group to have seen a substantial increase in the share who identify as woke themselves.



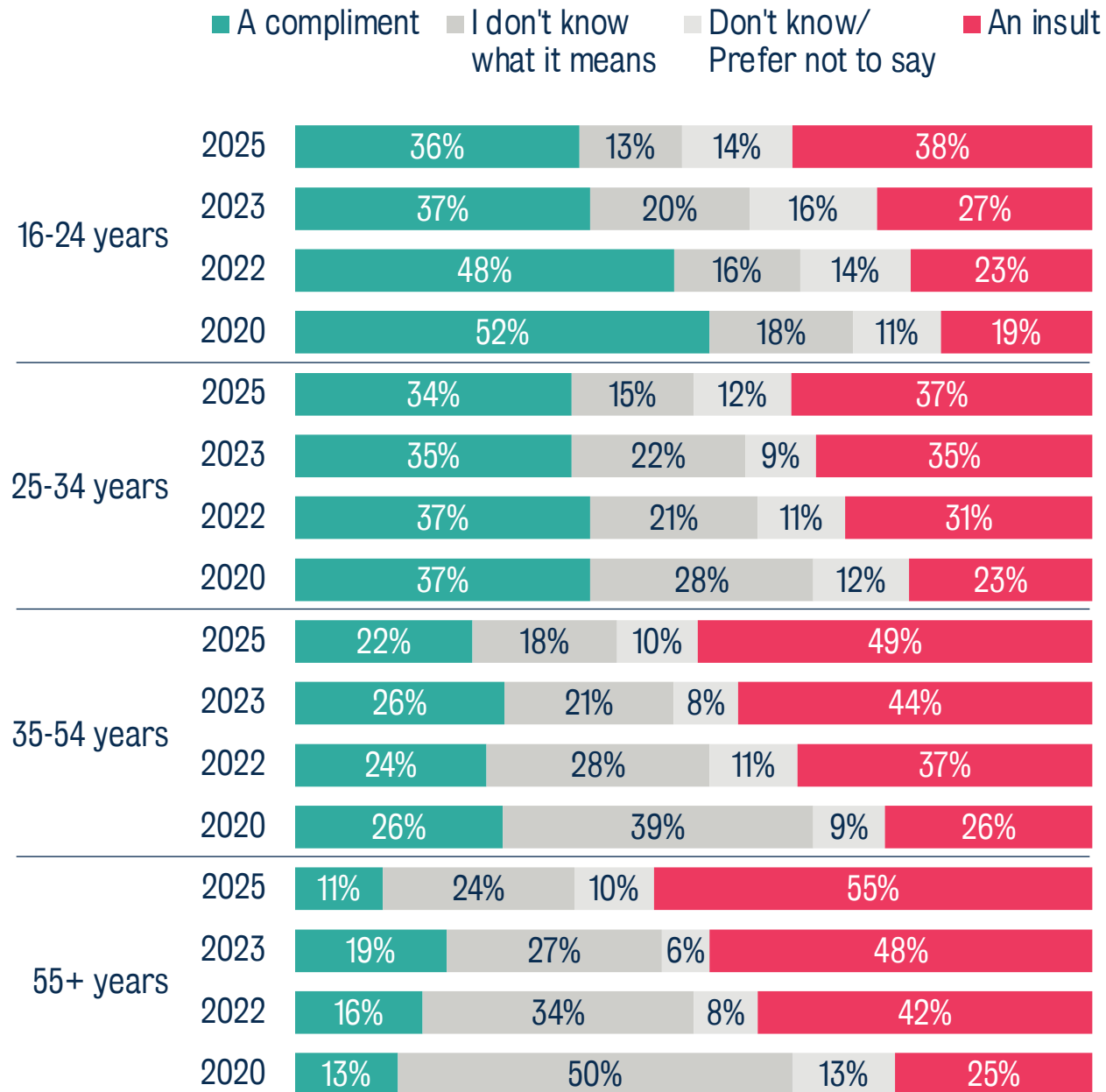
# Around half the public now consider “woke” an insult, with this view becoming more widespread as awareness of the term has grown

If someone described you as “woke” would you consider it....



# Since 2023, young people have seen the biggest rise in the belief that “woke” is an insult – though over the longer term the biggest rise has been among older people

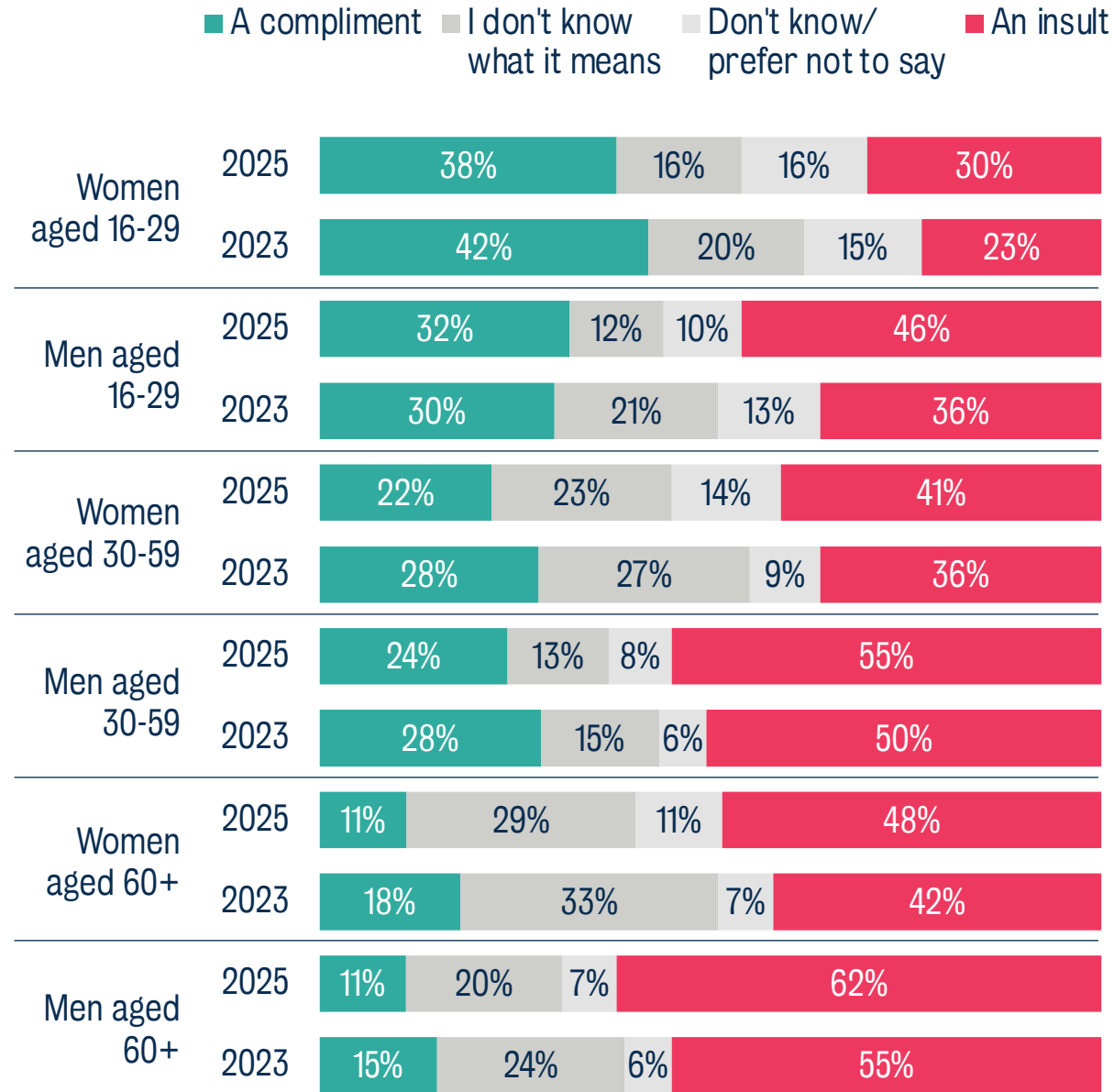
If someone described you as “woke” would you consider it....



The share of 16- to 24-year-olds who see “woke” as a pejorative term has risen 11 points in the last two years – a greater shift than even among those aged 55+ , who have seen the second-largest shift, with a seven-point increase.

# Across all age groups, men are consistently more likely than women to see “woke” as an insult

If someone described you as “woke” would you consider it....

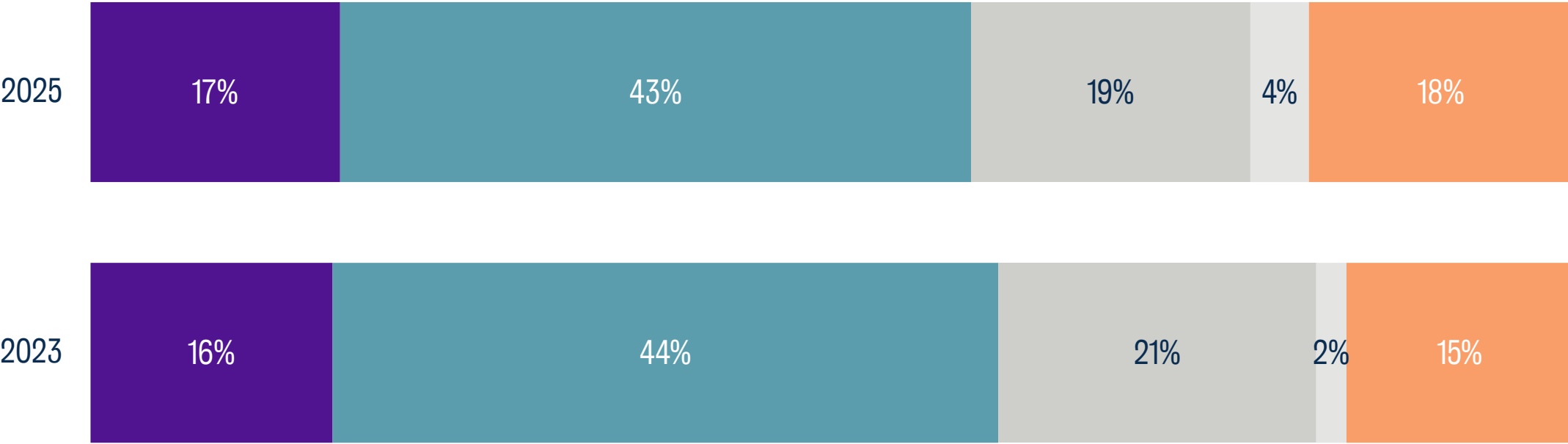


Meanwhile, young women are the only group more likely to see “woke” as a compliment than an insult – although the share of the public who see it as a pejorative term has risen for every age/gender group.

# A majority of Britons do not identify as either “woke” or “anti-woke” or don’t know what the terms mean, with around one in five identifying as each

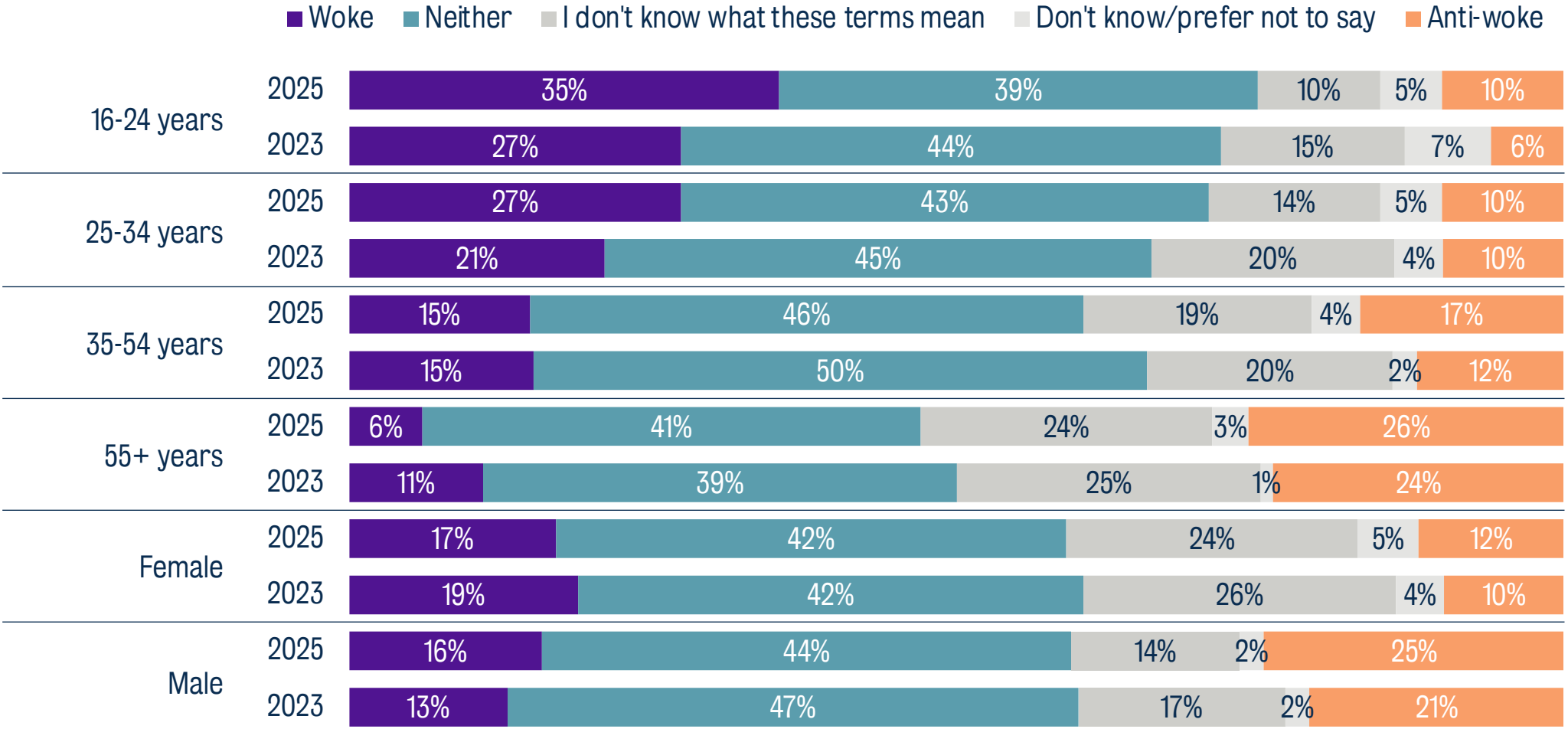
Do you consider yourself to be woke, anti-woke, or neither?

■ Woke ■ Neither ■ I don't know what these terms mean ■ Don't know/prefer not to say ■ Anti-woke



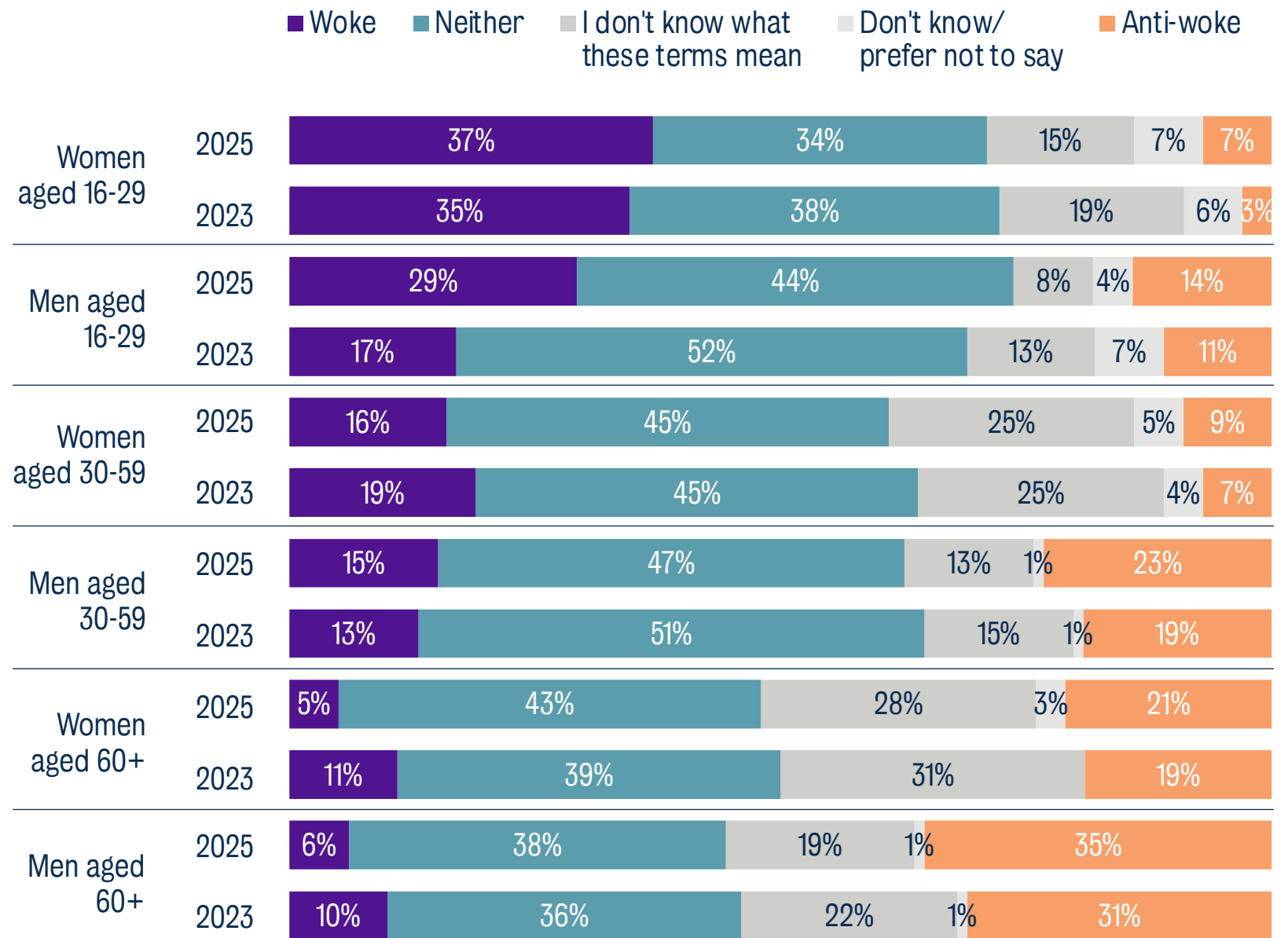
# 16-24s and 25-34s are the only groups who have become more likely to identify as woke in the last two years

Do you consider yourself to be woke, anti-woke, or neither?



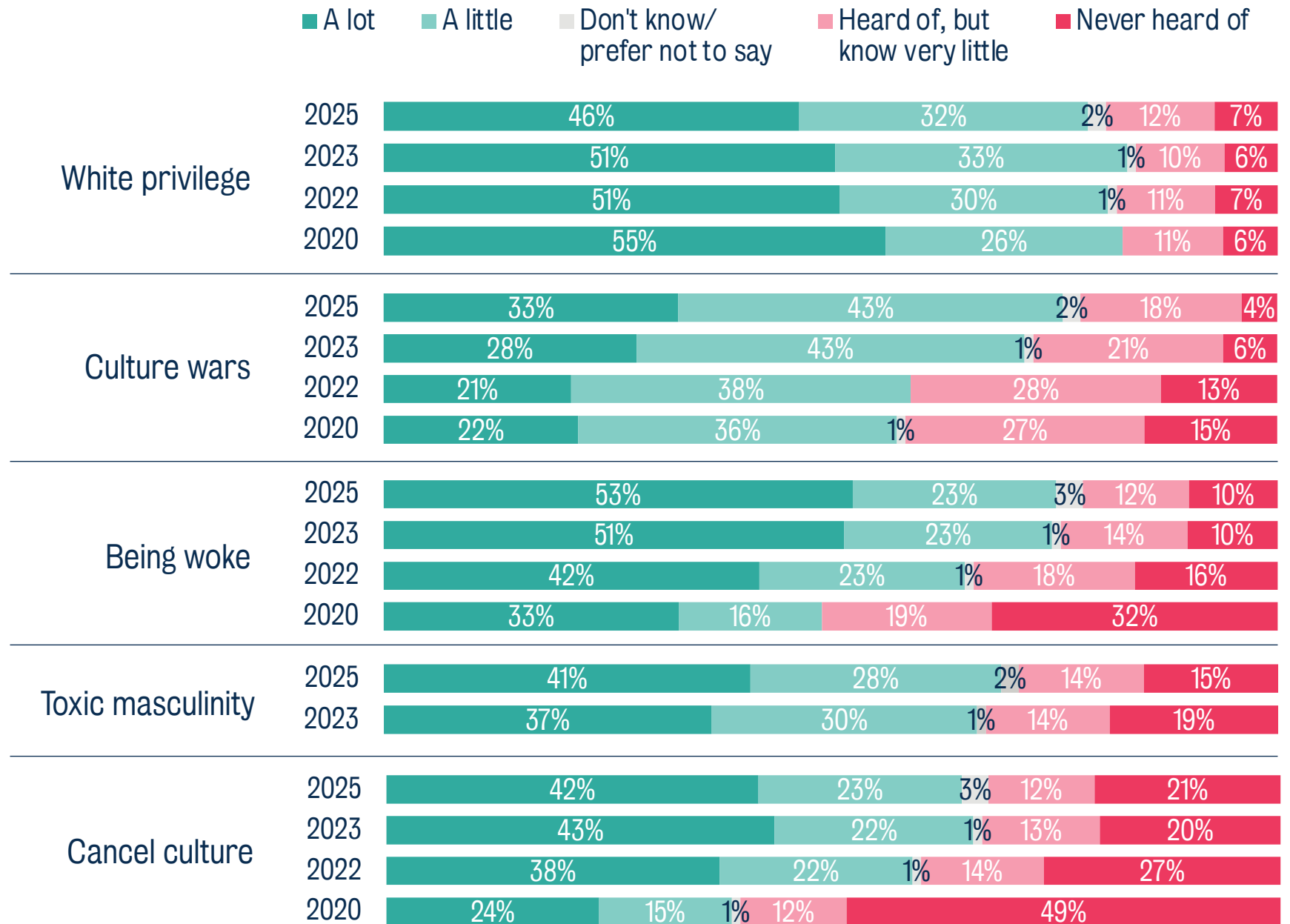
# Combining age with gender shows at all ages men are more anti-woke than women – although young men are the only group to have seen a substantial increase in the share who identify as woke

Which of the following statements best matches your view?



# Awareness of key terms used in the debate around culture wars has remained largely stable since 2023, aside from an increase in the share of the public who say they've heard a lot about the term "culture wars" itself and a decrease in the share who say the same about "white privilege"

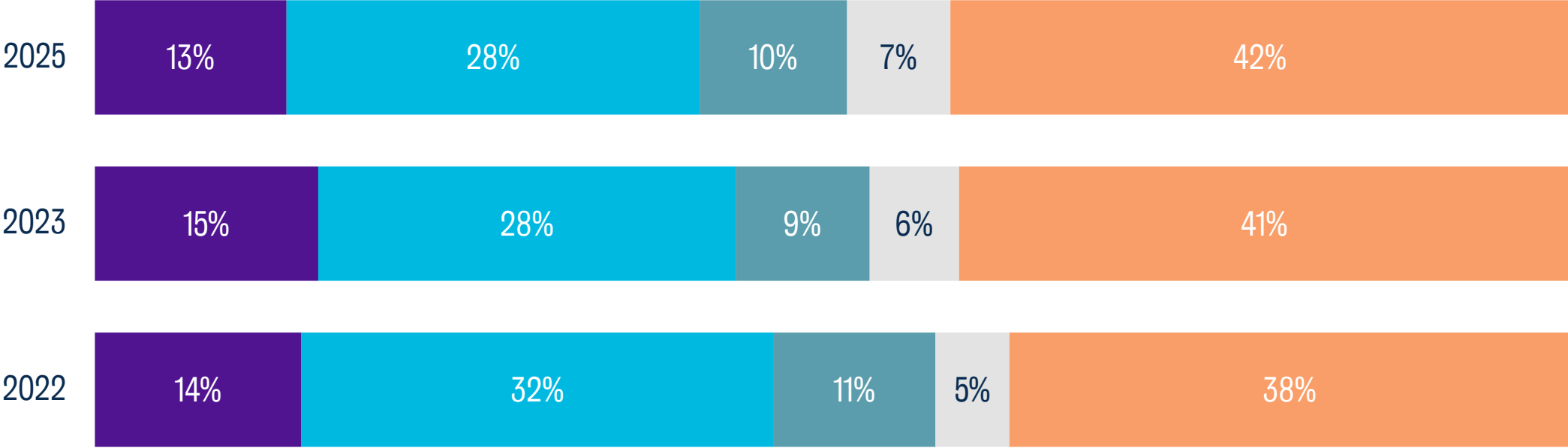
How much, if anything, have you heard or read about the following terms or phrases?



# Freedom to express opinions without interference is still seen as more at risk than freedom from threats and abuse – though some feel both are threatened

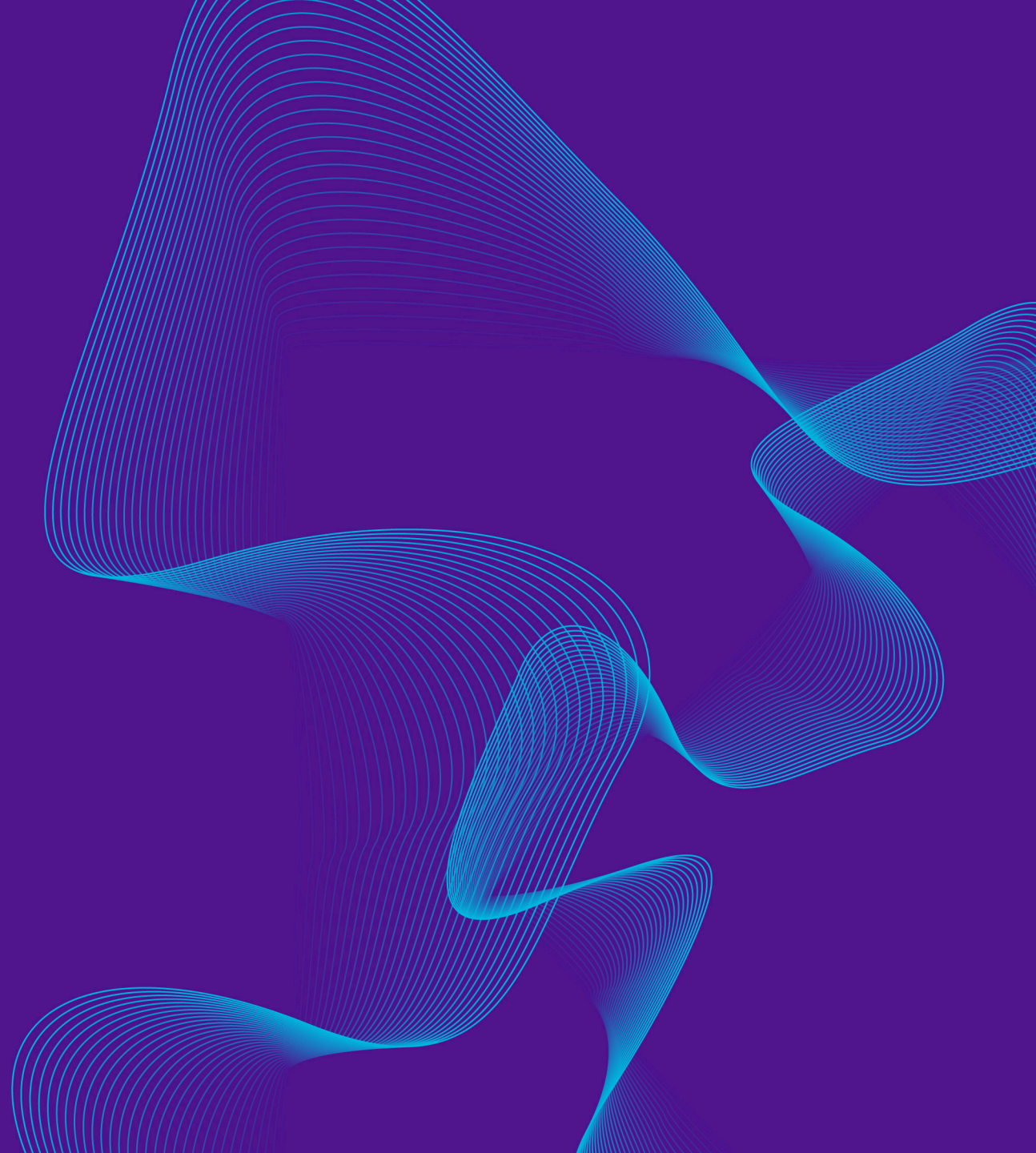
This question asks about the expression of people's opinions, for example through speech, online, in the media and on social media. Generally speaking, which of these two freedoms, if either, do you think is the most threatened in the UK today?

■ Freedom from the expression of threatening or abusive opinions   ■ Both equally threatened   ■ Neither   ■ Don't know/ prefer not to say   ■ Freedom to express opinions without interference



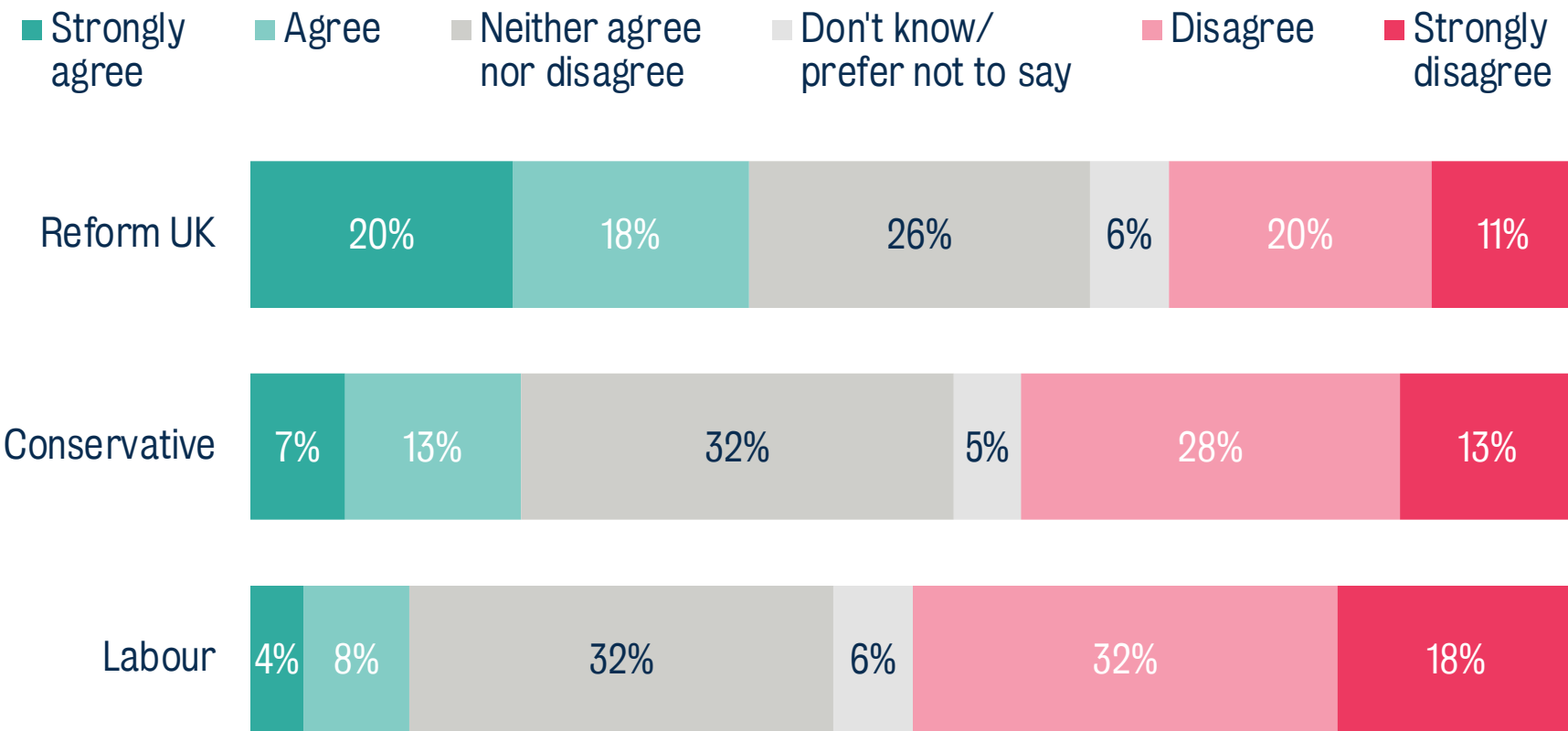
## 6. Friends across the political fault lines?

The public overall are most likely to say it's hard to be friends with Reform UK voters, although this is still only a minority view. And across parties, it is Green supporters who find friendships with Conservative and Reform voters hardest. Majorities of all parties' supporters – except Reform UK – say it's not hard to be friends with those who vote Labour.



# The public are most likely to say it's hard to be friends with Reform UK voters, even if it's only a minority who feel this way

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the Conservative party/Labour party/Reform UK**

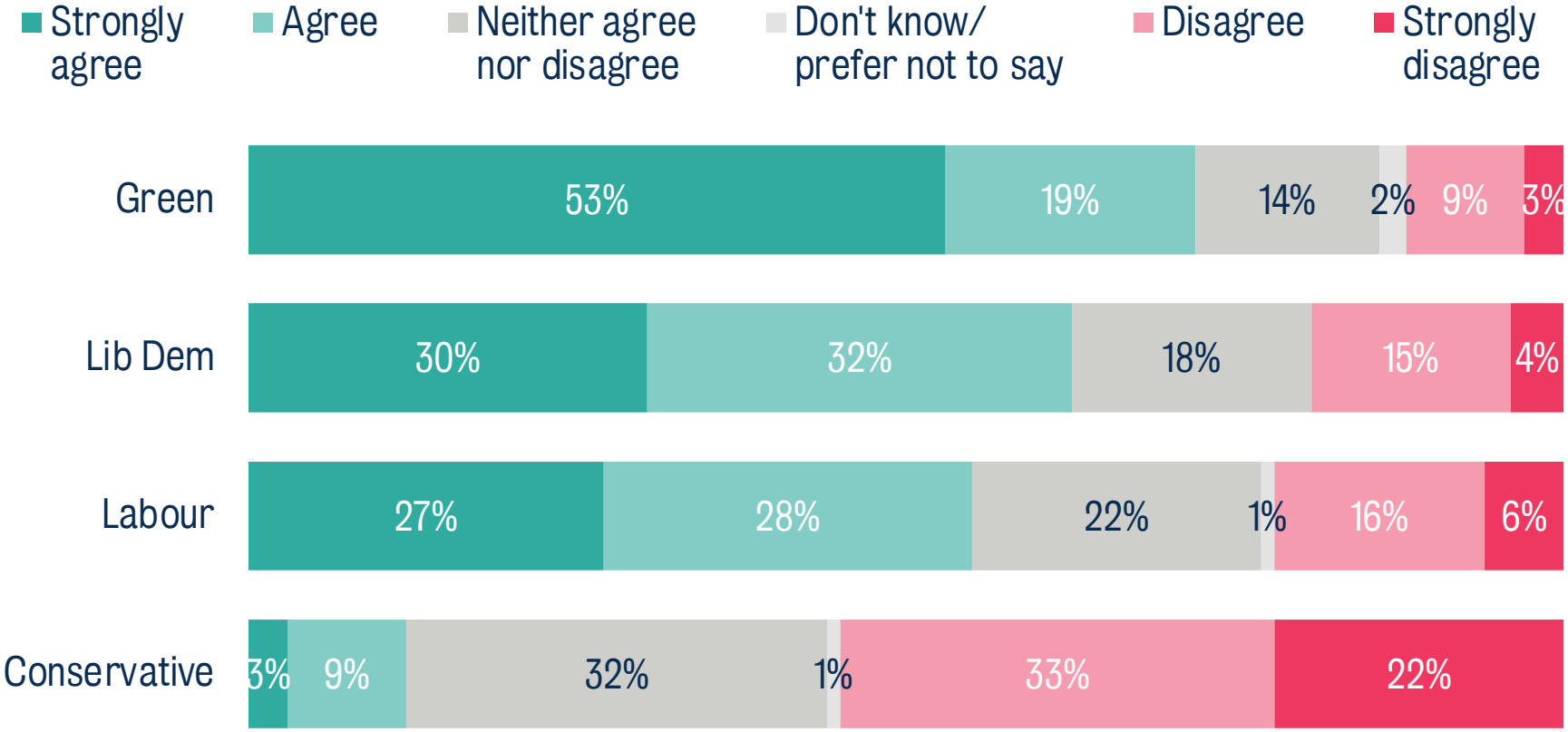


Two in five (38%) people say it's hard to be friends with Reform UK voters, with one fifth *strongly* agreeing with this view.

This is double the proportion who say it's hard to be friends with Conservative voters (20%) and three times the share who feel this way about Labour voters (12%).

# Majorities of Green, Lib Dem and Labour supporters say it's hard to be friends with Reform voters, while only a small share of Conservatives feel this way

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**It's hard to be friends with people who vote for Reform UK**



Seven in 10 (71%) Green Party supporters agree it's hard to be friends with Reform votes, including half (53%) who *strongly* agree.

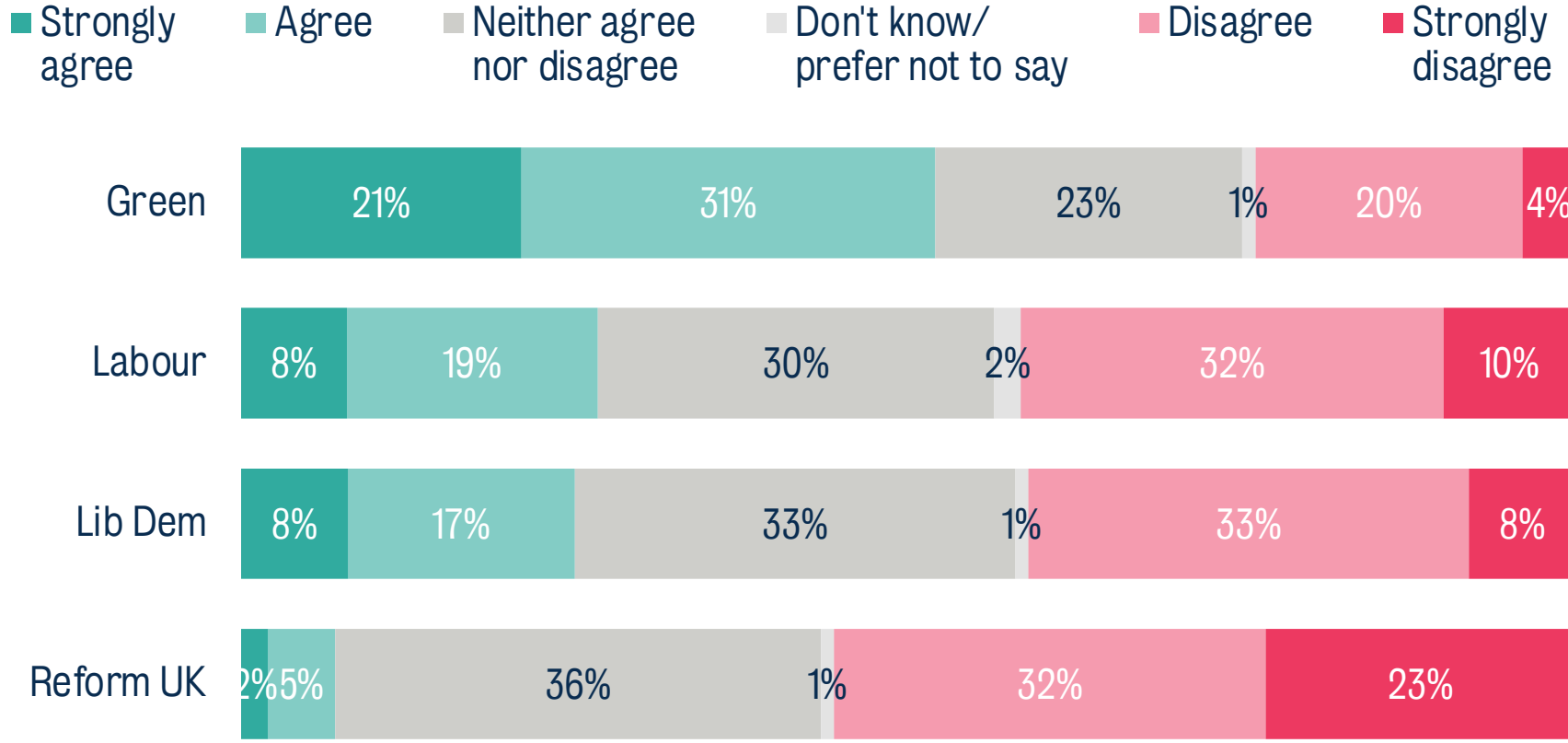
Notable majorities of Lib Dem (62%) and Labour (55%) supporters also say it's hard, though they feel this much less intensely than do the Greens.

And just 12% of Conservatives say friendships with Reform voters are hard, with most (55%) disagreeing with this view.

\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# Green supporters are the only group where a majority say it's hard to be friends with Conservative voters. Among Reform supporters, a majority say it is not hard

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the Conservative party**



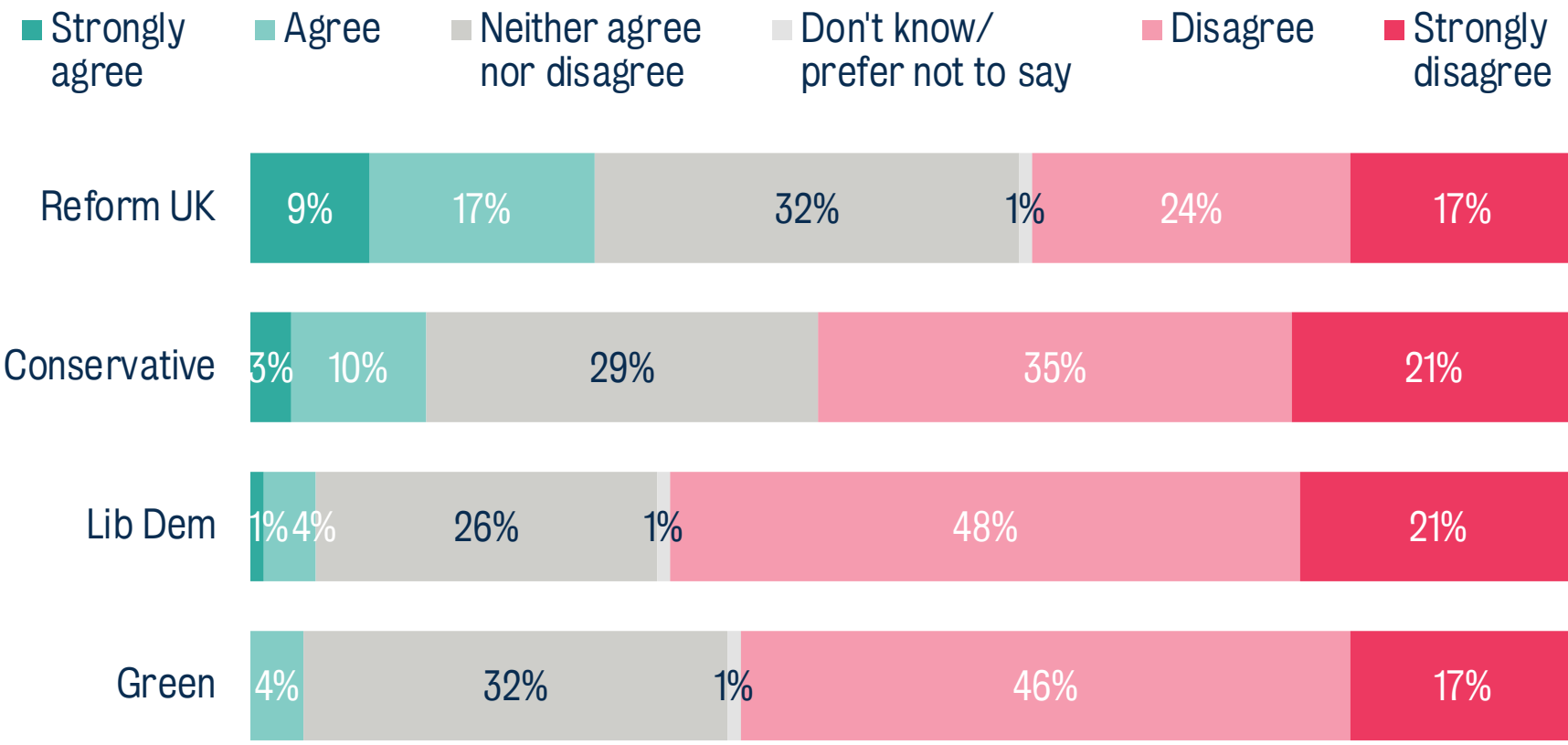
52% of Green Party supporters feel friendships with Conservative voters are hard – double the share of Labour (26%) and Lib Dem (25%) supporters who feel the same.

Just 7% of Reform supporters hold this view, with a majority (55%) disagreeing it's hard to be friends with those who vote Conservative.

\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# Majorities of all parties' supporters except Reform UK say it's not hard to be friends with Labour voters

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the Labour party**



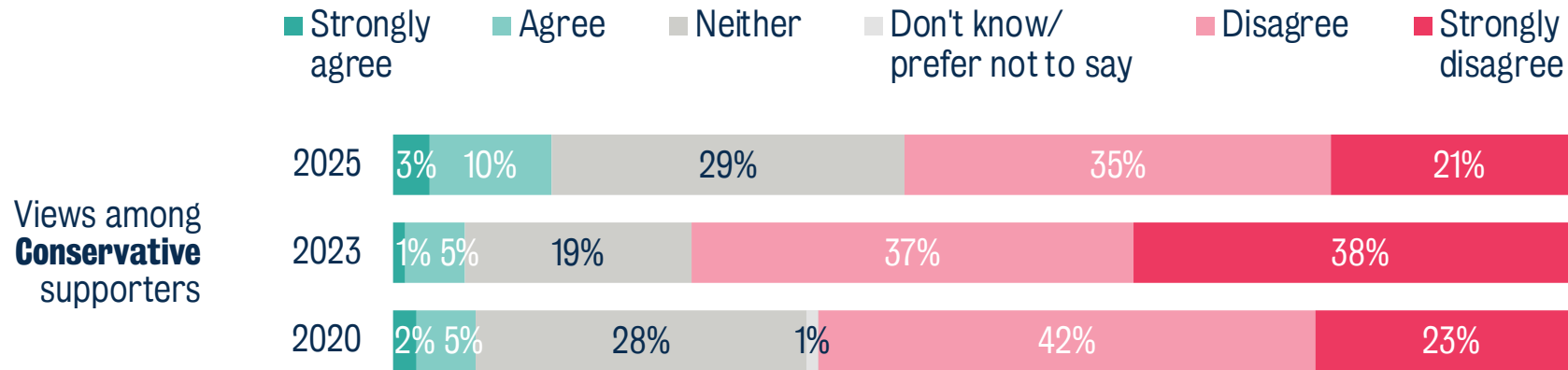
One in four (26%) Reform supporters say it's hard to be friends with people who vote Labour – almost double the share of Conservatives (14%) who feel this way, although still a minority.

And four in 10 (41%) Reform supporters disagree friendships with Labour voters are hard, compared with majorities of those who support other parties.

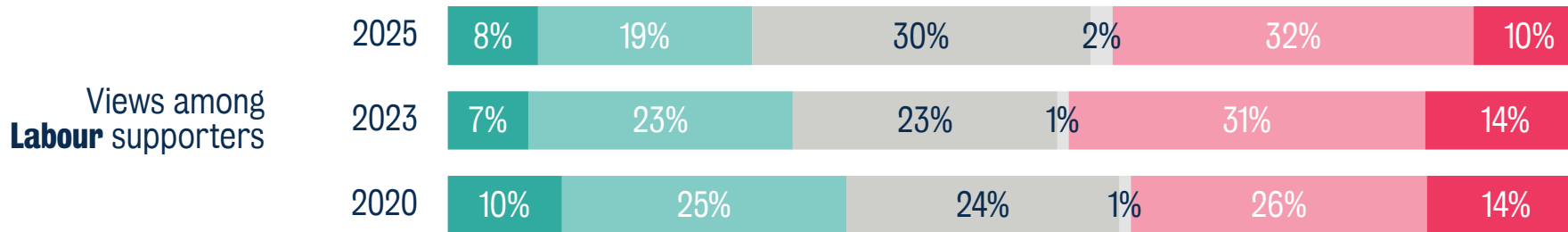
\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

# It's still only a minority, but Conservative supporters have become more likely to say it's hard to be friends with Labour voters, while the share of Labour voters who say the reverse has declined

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the Labour party**



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the Conservative party**



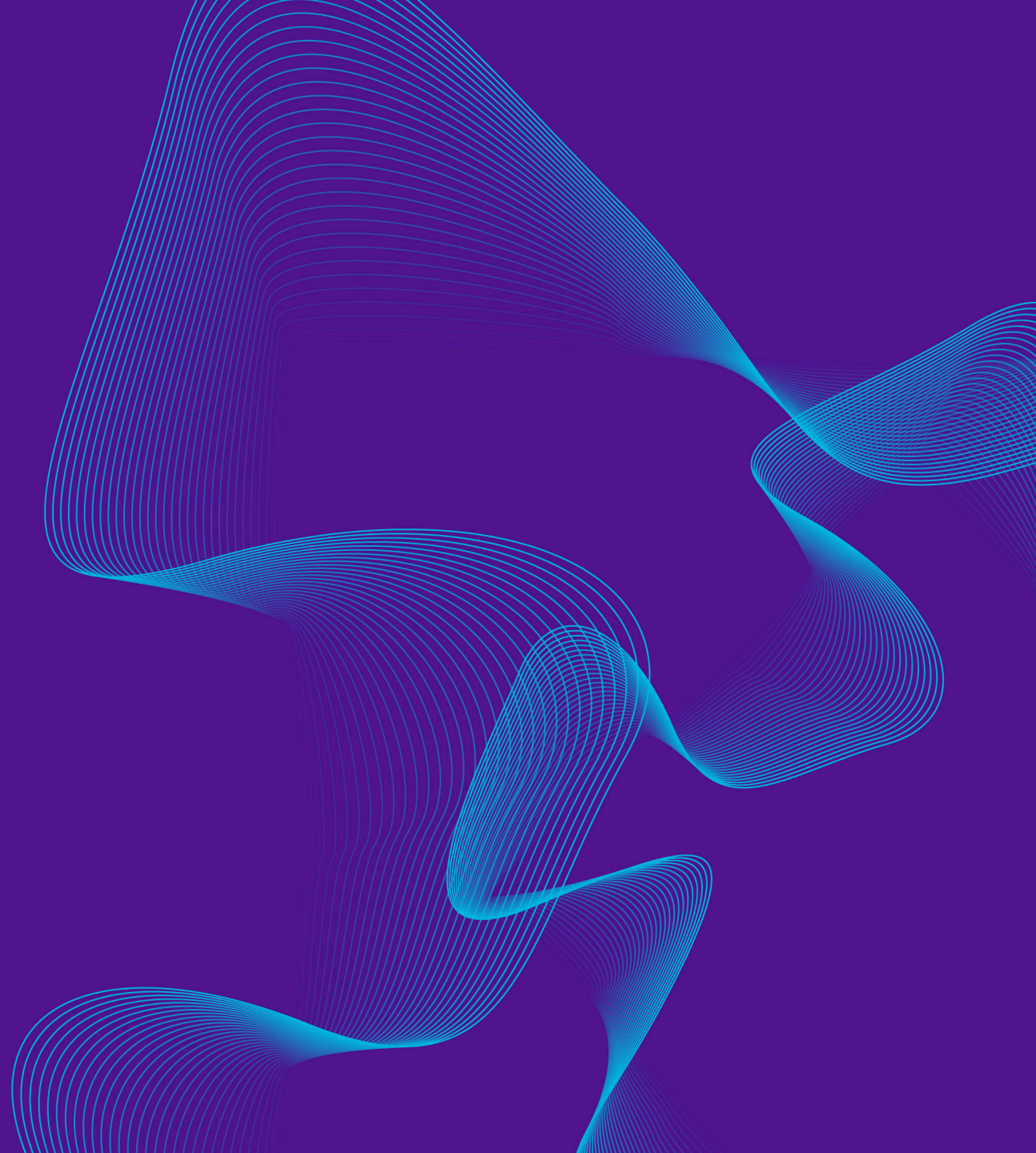
Comparing with past trends, the share of Conservative supporters who feel it's hard to be friends with Labour voters has more than doubled in the last two years, rising from around one in 20 (6%) to around one in seven (14%).

But Labour supporters are still more likely to doubt the possibility of being friends with Conservative voters, with one in four (27%) saying it's hard – roughly the same as in 2023 (30%), but down further on 2020 (35%).

\* Figures differ from charts due to rounding.

Base: 4,027 UK adults aged 16+, 21-27 Aug 2025; 3,716, 17-23 Aug 2023; and 2,834, 25 Nov-2 Dec 2020. See study details section for subgroup information

# Study details



# Study details

Ipsos UK interviewed online a representative sample of 4,027 adults aged 16+ across the United Kingdom between 21 and 27 August 2025, following previous surveys of 3,716 between 17 and 23 August 2023, 2,931 between 13 and 19 January 2022, and 2,834 between 25 November and 2 December 2020. This data has been collected by Ipsos' UK KnowledgePanel, an online random probability panel which provides gold standard insights into the UK population, by providing bigger sample sizes via the most rigorous research methods. Data are weighted by age, gender, region, Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile, education, ethnicity and number of adults in the household in order to reflect the profile of the UK population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

The Ipsos UK KnowledgePanel is the UK's largest online random probability panel, providing total understanding of the UK public for businesses and organisations looking for cutting edge insight at the gold standard of online research methods. It is important because it includes both online and offline participants selected at random from every address in the UK, the first of its kind, with a single interface to eliminate modal effects and produce accurate data rapidly.

UK KnowledgePanel utilises a panel of 30,000+ participants to provide a new innovative tool for all those organisations who wish to garner greater insights into the behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of not just the UK population as a

whole, but also into the specific communities which make up the UK's diverse population.

Studies completed on UK KnowledgePanel will be fully representative of the UK population including households who are considered "offline". This is made possible by recruiting offline and supplying participants with a tablet, internet access and the tech support needed to get online. As a result of this approach the panel utilises a single online data collection method, with no differential mode effects – a pioneering advancement which enhances the ability to understand our society.

The UK KnowledgePanel builds on [work done](#) by Ipsos in the US on their own, which has been operating since 1999, utilising that experience and blending it with Ipsos' own research and methodological expertise to produce a tool which delivers robust nationally representative data at speed. [Find out more.](#)

## Subgroups

Variable	Base
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	1,844
Female	2,105
<b>Age</b>	
16-24	375
25-34	691
35-54	1,298
55+	1,663
<b>Age by gender</b>	
Women aged 16-29	388
Men aged 16-29	252
Men aged 30-59	863
Women aged 30-59	1,112
Women aged 60+	605
Men aged 60+	729
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	3,531
Ethnic minority	383
<b>Party support</b>	
Conservative	610
Labour	723
Reform UK	658
Liberal Democrats	296
Green Party	311
<b>2016 Brexit vote</b>	
Leave	1,186
Remain	1,679



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