

Perspectives on education and action on climate change

Survey research with the UK general public

November 2023



Students Organising
for Sustainability
United Kingdom

Summary

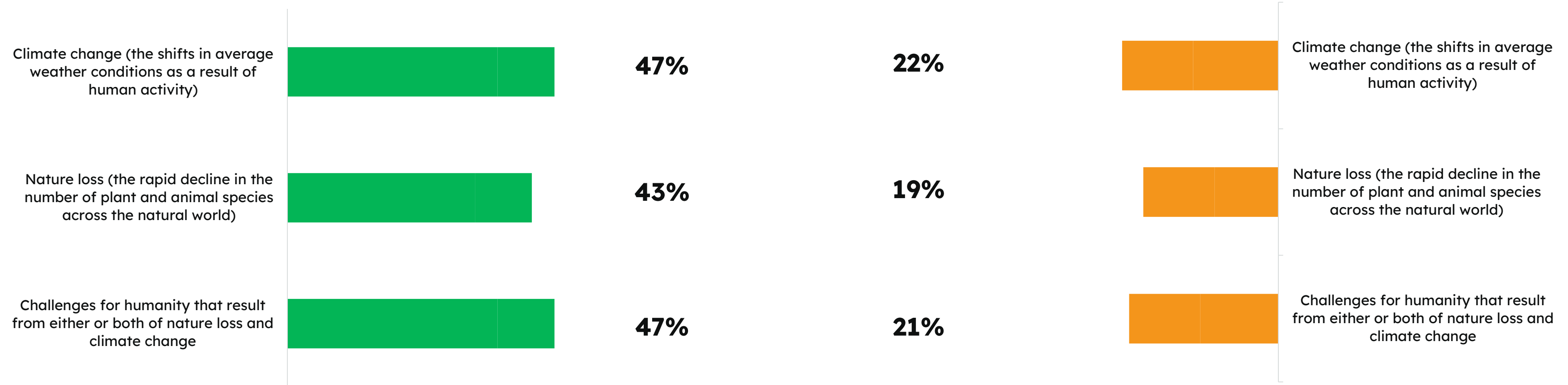


We asked UK adults for their views on education, climate change and nature loss. They told us...

The survey was carried out through Opinium in November 2023 with 2000 adults completing the survey. Responses have been weighted to be nationally representative of UK adults.

Almost half of respondents don't recall at all being taught about...

And less than a quarter of respondents think education today is preparing children and young people for the same issues.



We also asked about action on climate change, finding that...

Of the benefits that might result from government action to tackle climate change, the most important are seen as:

Improved air quality and health

41%

Warmer homes that are more affordable to heat

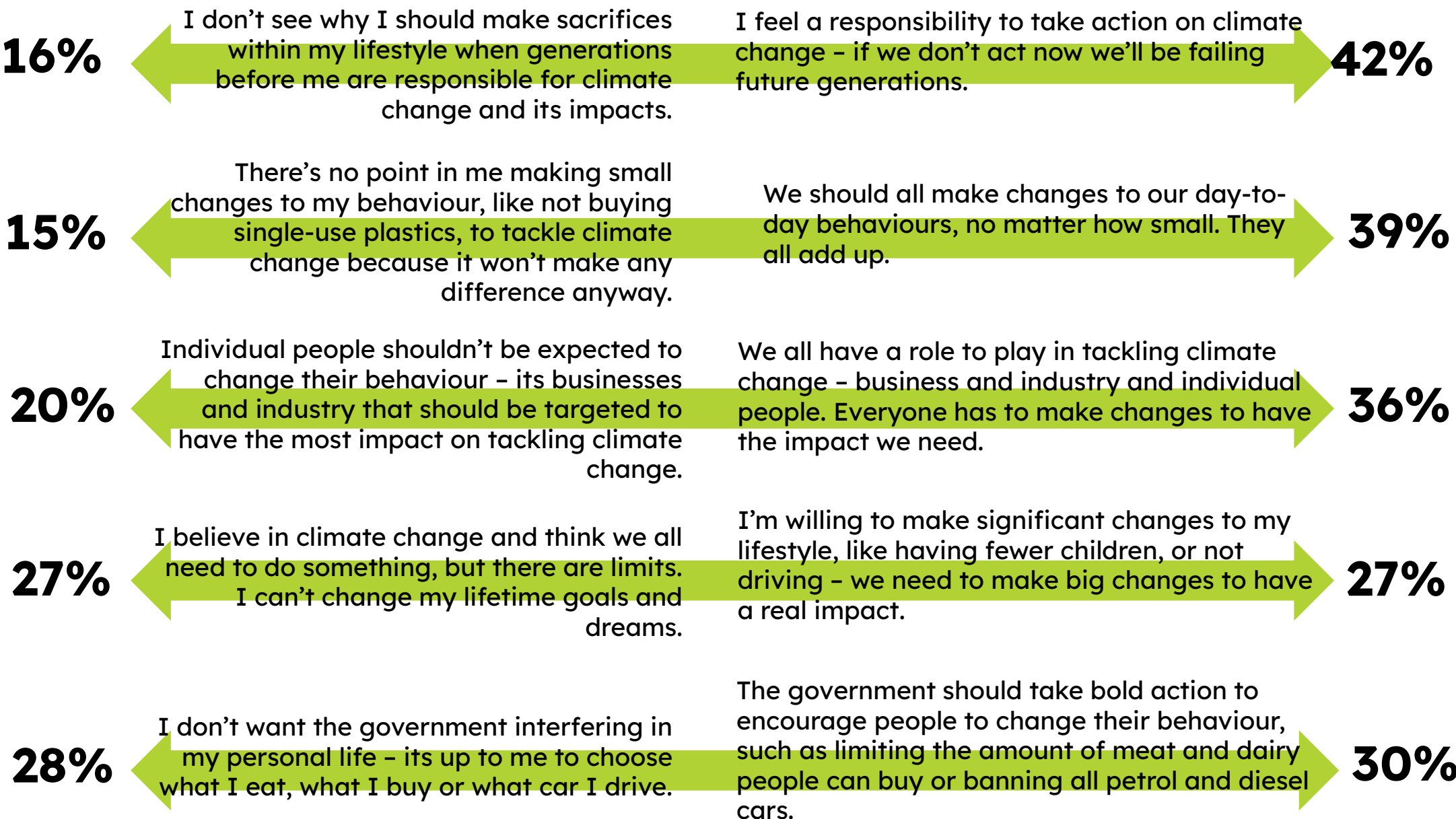
40%

Improved energy security

33%

77% Say they are very or fairly concerned about climate change

When asked to choose between two polar statements, respondents showed a clear sense of responsibility for taking action and that we should all be making changes to our behaviour to support climate action. Perceptions of what scale of change people should be expected to make, and the government's role in driving change is more evenly spread.



% shown for 'Very much like me' and 'A lot like me'

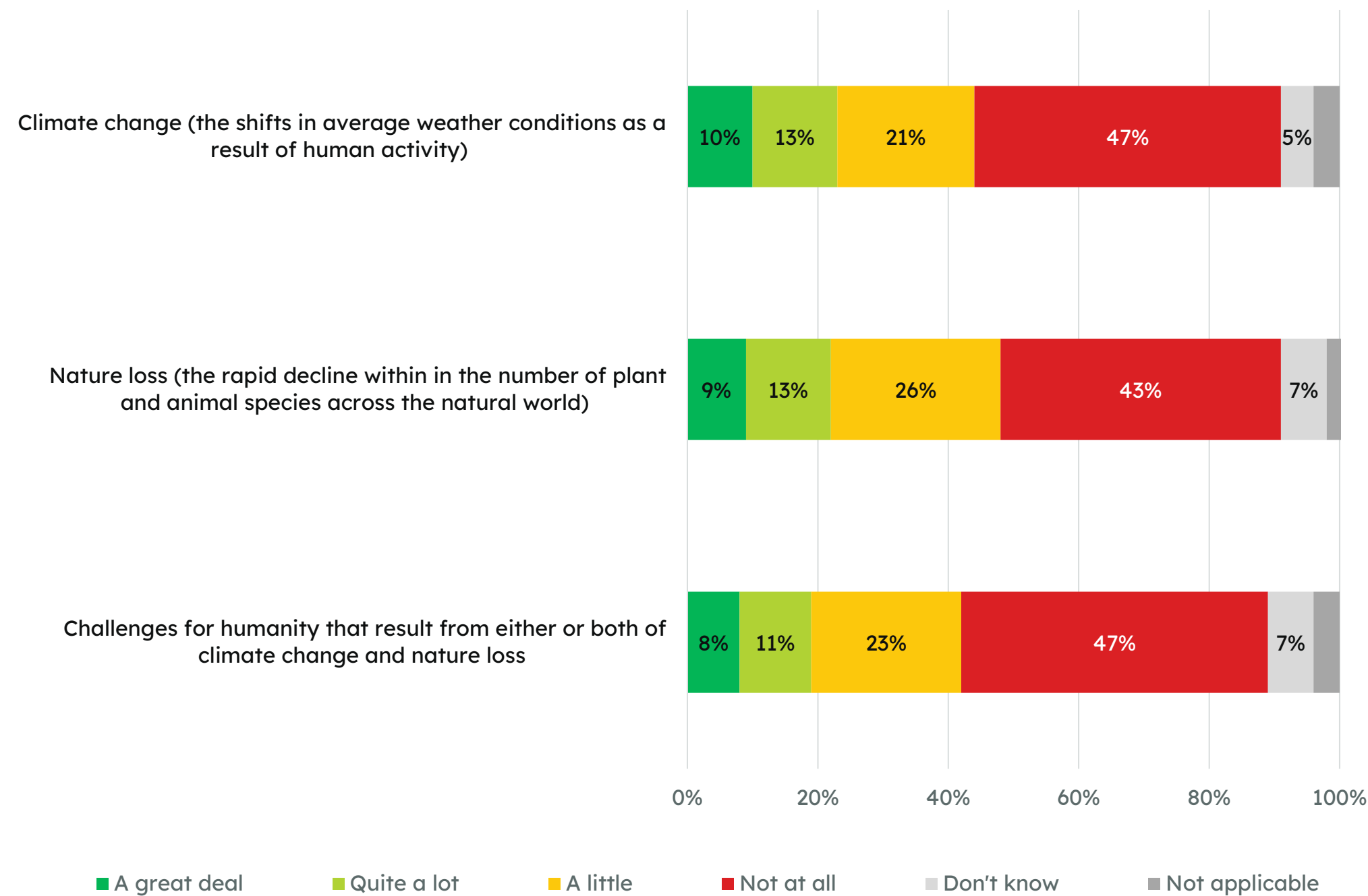




Findings in detail



Almost a half of respondents do not recall at all being taught about climate change (47%), nature loss (43%) or the challenges for humanity that result from these issues (47%) during their time in education.



Differences* by personal characteristic:

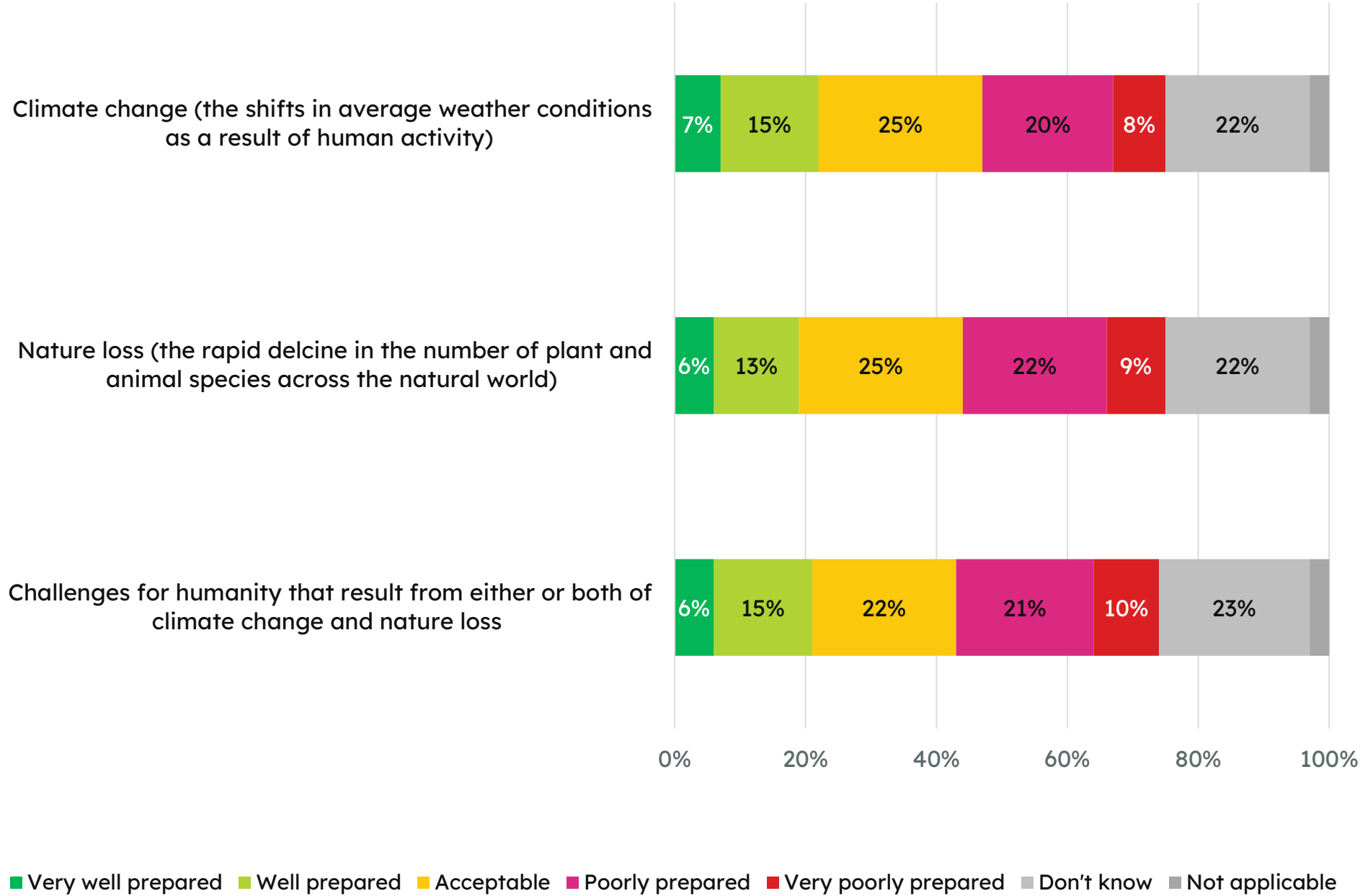
- 52% of graduates compared with 35% of non-graduates say climate change was covered at least ‘a little’ during their time in education.
- 80% of 18-34 year olds say climate change was covered at least ‘a little’ compared with 45% of 35-54 year olds, and 17% of 55+ year olds.
- 55% of graduates compared with 39% of non-graduates say nature loss was covered at least ‘a little’ during their time in education.
- 74% of 18-34 year olds say nature loss was covered at least ‘a little’ compared to 53% of 35-54 year olds and 23% of 55+ year olds.
- 49% of graduates compared with 35% of non-graduates say the challenges facing humanity from climate change and nature loss were covered at least ‘a little’ during their time in education
- 75% of 18-34 year olds say the challenges from climate change and nature loss were covered, compared with 44% of 35-54 year olds, and 17% of 55+ year olds.

* Differences are statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

Question: Thinking about your time in education, including school, college and/or university... how much, if at all, do you recall the following topics being part of the teaching you experienced? Base: 2000



Just 22% of respondents think that children and young people are prepared for climate change through their education. 19% think the same for nature loss and 21% think this about the challenges for humanity that results from climate change and/or nature loss. Nearly a quarter of respondents say they don't know how well young people are prepared for these issues through education.



Differences* by personal characteristic:

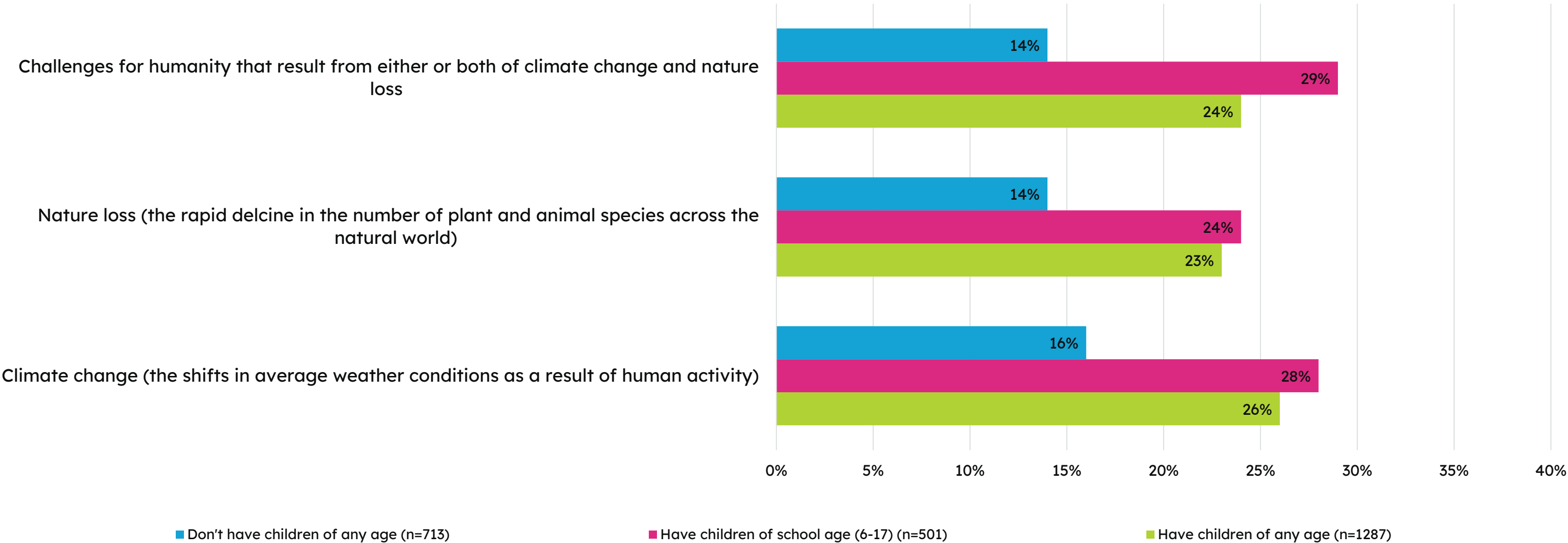
- Male respondents (24%) are more likely to agree that children and young people are being prepared for the challenges that results from climate change and/or nature loss than female respondents (17%).
- Respondents aged 18-34 and aged 35-54 are more likely to agree that children and young people are not being prepared for these issues compared to those aged 55+ (e.g. 33%, 33% and 21% respectively for climate change). However those aged 18-34 are also more likely than the other age groups to say that children and young people are being prepared (e.g. 26% compared with 15% 35-54 year olds for nature loss).
- Graduates are more likely compared to non-graduates to think children and young people are not being prepared for climate change, nature loss, or the challenges presented by these issues e.g. 34% compared with 22%, 35% compared with 26%, and 35% compared to 27% respectively

Question: Based on your knowledge of education in the UK today, how well, if at all, do you think children and young people are being prepared for the following issues? Base: 2000

* Differences are statistically significant at 95% confidence level.



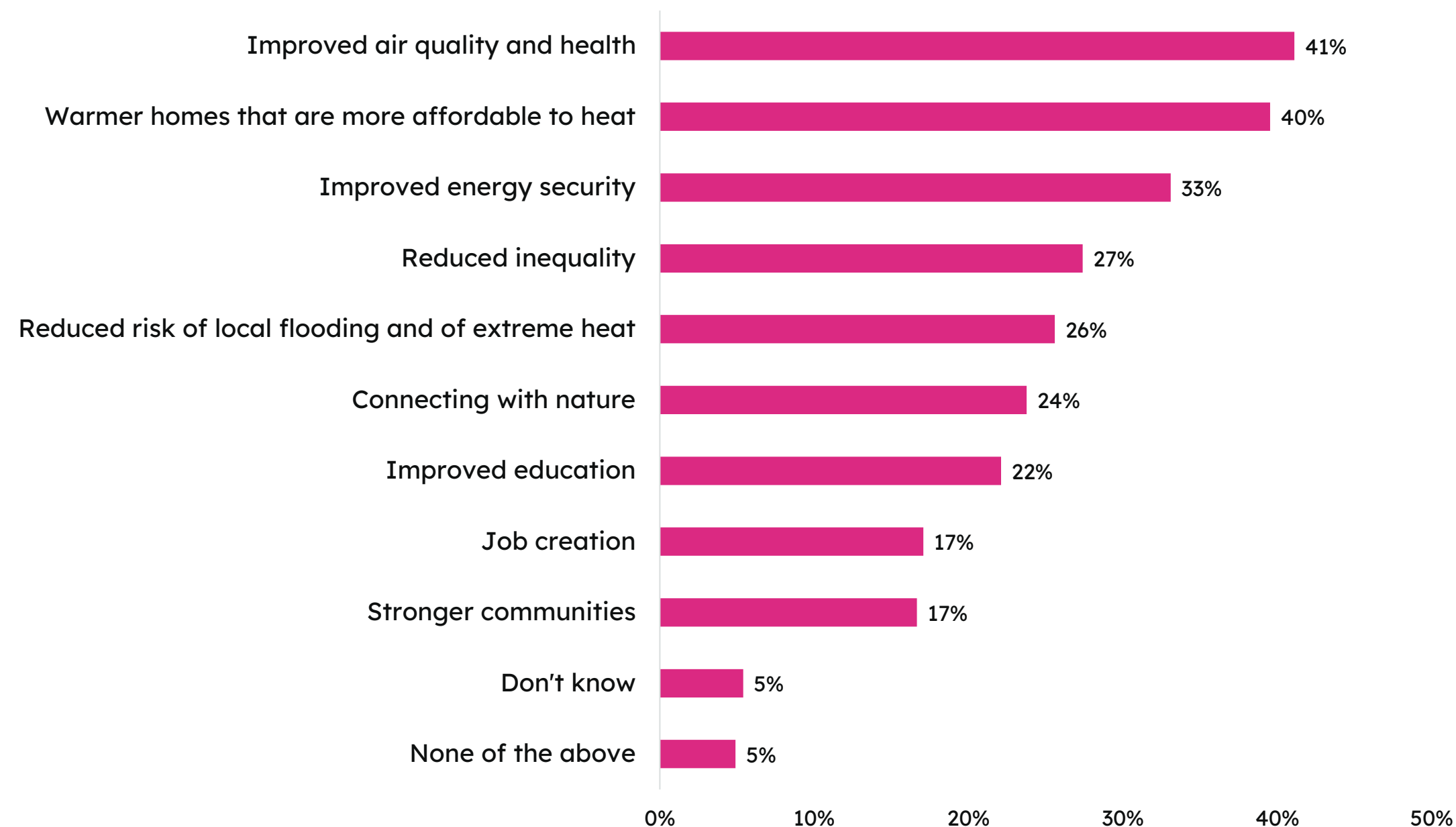
When looking at the responses for those who have children and those who don't, those with no children are least likely to say they think children and young people are being prepared for climate change, nature loss and associated challenges for humanity by their time in education. Those with school age children (6-17 years) are most likely to say they are being prepared, however less than a third think this the case for all three aspects.



Question: Based on your knowledge of education in the UK today, how well, if at all, do you think children and young people are being prepared for the following issues? Base: See chart Balance: Don't know and 'Unprepared'



Respondents were shown a list of benefits which might occur as a result of the UK government taking action on climate change. The most important benefits to respondents are improved air quality and health, warmer homes and improved energy security. The least important are job creation and stronger communities.



Differences by personal characteristic:

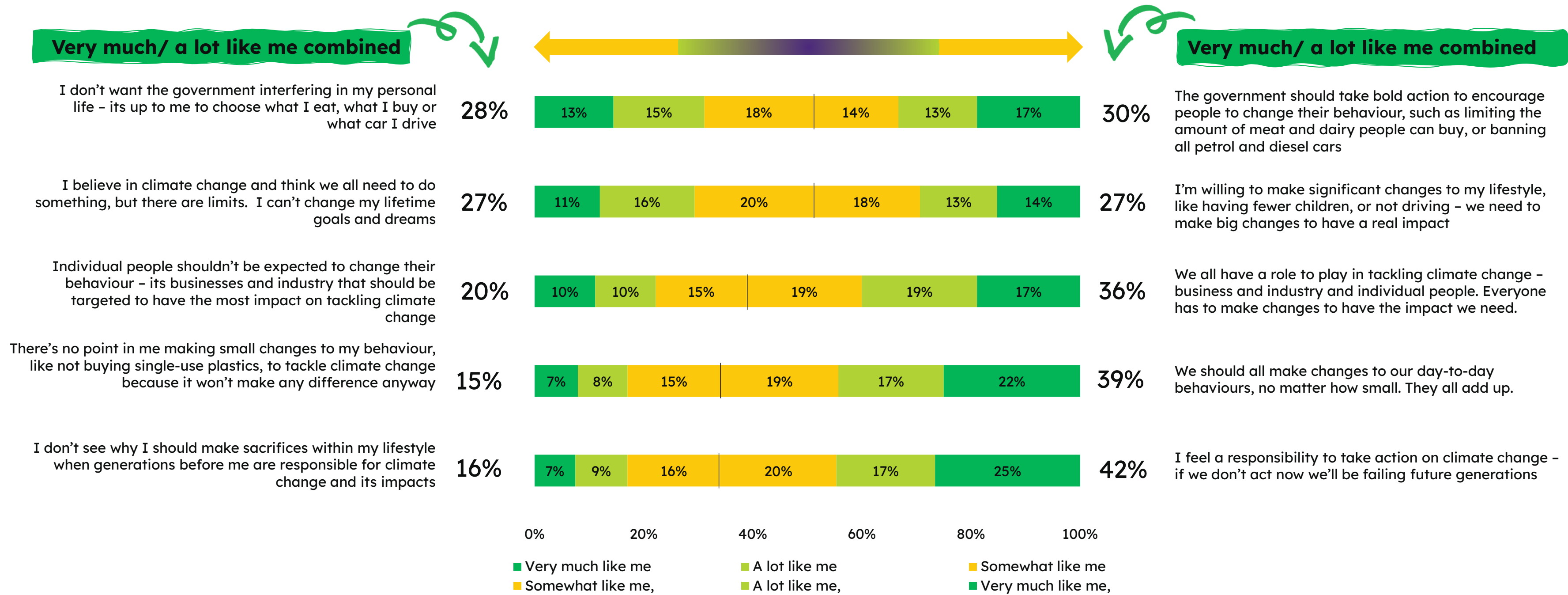
- Female respondents were more likely compared to males to say that improved air quality and health (44% vs 38%), warmer homes (43% vs 35%) and reduced inequality (29% vs 25%) is important to them.
- Male respondents were more likely than female to say that improved energy security (38% vs 29%) and job creation (20% vs 15%) are important to them.
- Respondents under 35 are more likely to say that reduced inequality (34% vs 20%), improved education (27% vs 17%) and job creation (27% vs 10%) is important to them compared to respondents over 55.
- Graduate respondents are more likely to say improved education (26% vs 18%) is important to them compared to non-graduates.

* Differences are statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

Question: Please read the statements below which provide examples of changes which might occur as a result of action by the UK government to address climate change. Which of the following, if any, are most important to you? Please select up to three options. (Definitions for each statement given to respondents). Base: 2000



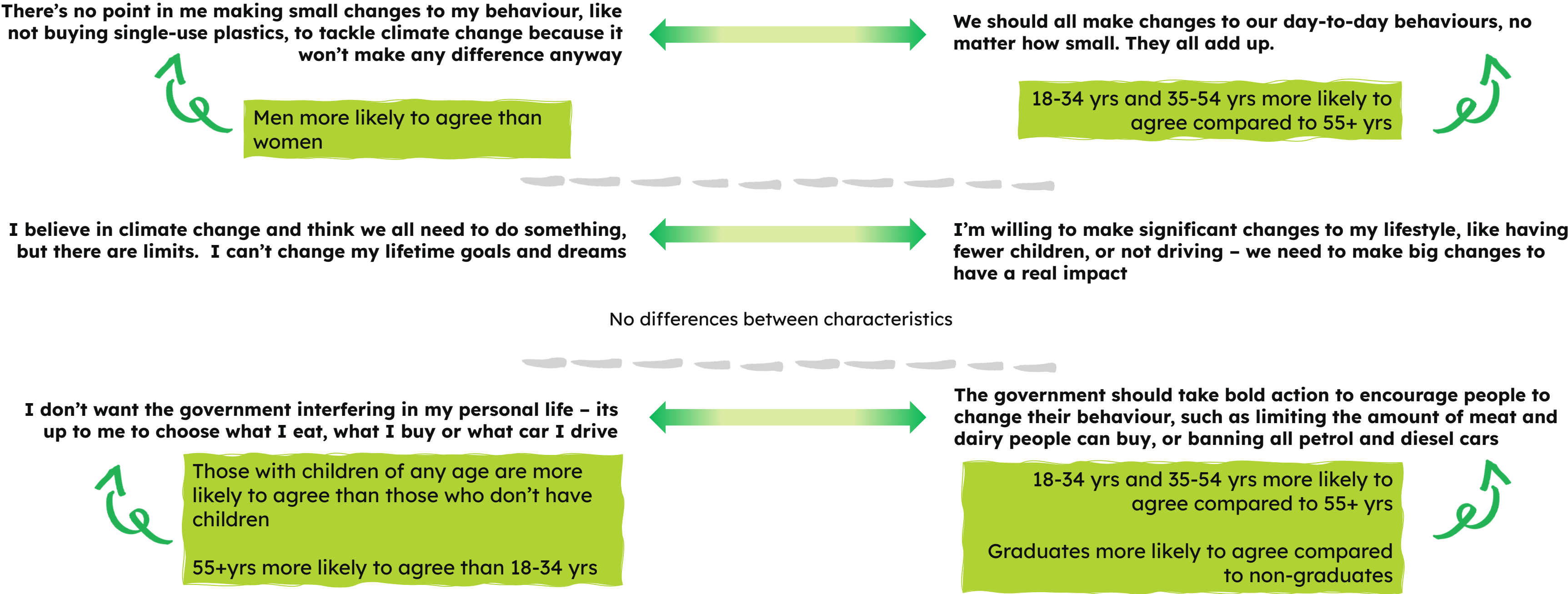
Respondents were presented with two polar statements and asked to place themselves on scale according to what best described their views and beliefs. In general, they identified with having an individual responsibility for taking action on climate change and the need for everyone to play a role in tackling climate change. Respondents identified less so with bold government action on behaviour change and making significant individual change to their lifestyles.



Question: Which of the following best describes your views and beliefs on the changes you can make as an individual to reduce the impact of climate change? Base: 2000 Balance: Don't know



Looking at differences* in responses between respondents with different characteristics, we found:



Question: Which of the following best describes your views and beliefs on the changes you can make as an individual to reduce the impact of climate change? Base: 2000 Balance: Don't know

* Differences are statistically significant at 95% confidence level.



Looking at differences* in responses between respondents with different characteristics, we found:

Individual people shouldn't be expected to change their behaviour – it's businesses and industry that should be targeted to have the most impact on tackling climate change



We all have a role to play in tackling climate change – business and industry and individual people. Everyone has to make changes to have the impact we need.

No differences between characteristics



I don't see why I should make sacrifices within my lifestyle when generations before me are responsible for climate change and its impacts



Graduates more likely to agree compared to non-graduates



I feel a responsibility to take action on climate change – if we don't act now we'll be failing future generations

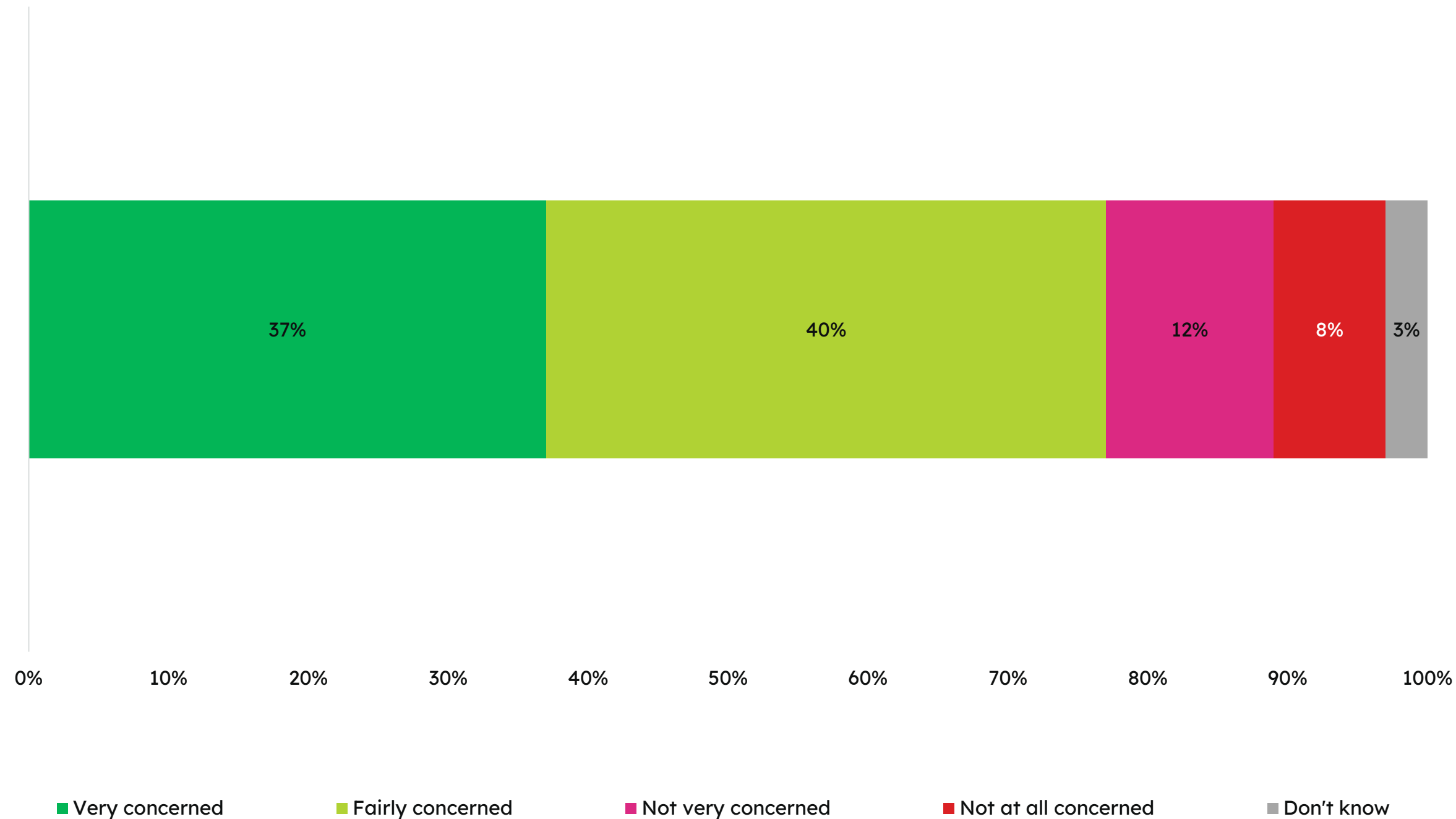


55+ yrs more likely to agree than 18-34 yrs

Question: Which of the following best describes your views and beliefs on the changes you can make as an individual to reduce the impact of climate change? Base: 2000 Balance: Don't know



Over three quarters of respondents (77%) are concerned about climate change.



Differences by personal characteristic:

- Female respondents are more likely to say they are concerned about climate change than male respondents (80% compared to 74%).
- Graduate respondents (80%) are more likely to say they're concerned than non-graduates (73%).
- Whilst there is no significant difference amongst those who are concerned, respondents aged 55+ are more likely than younger respondents to say they are not concerned (23% compared to 17% 18-34 year olds).

* Differences are statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

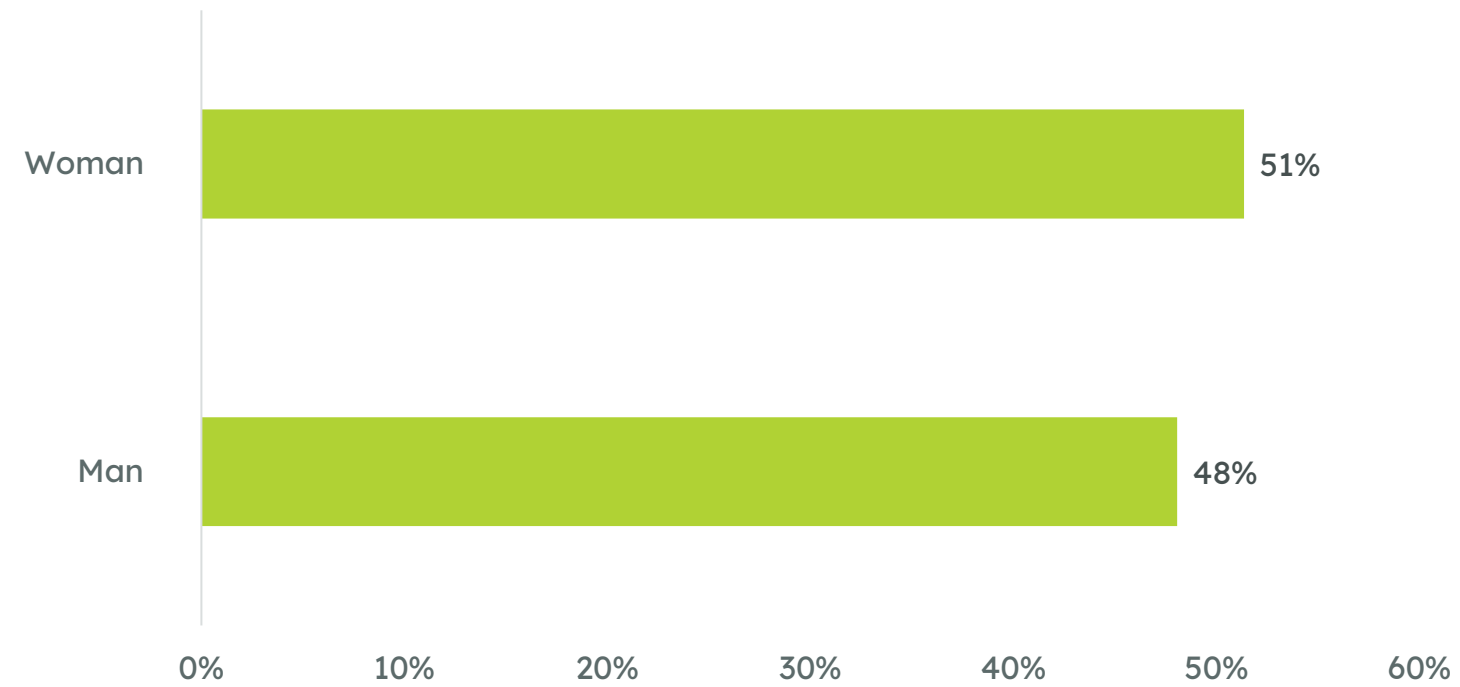
Question: How concerned, if at all, are you about climate change? Base: 2000



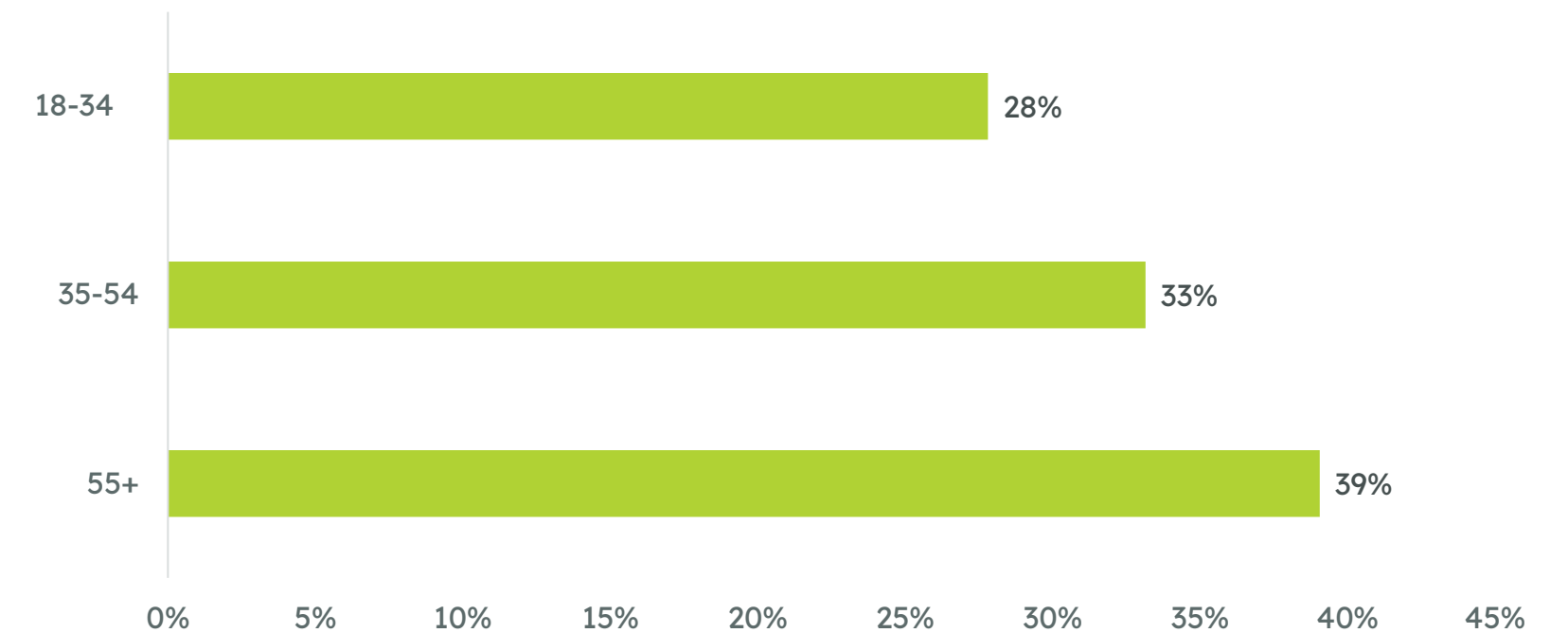
Demographics



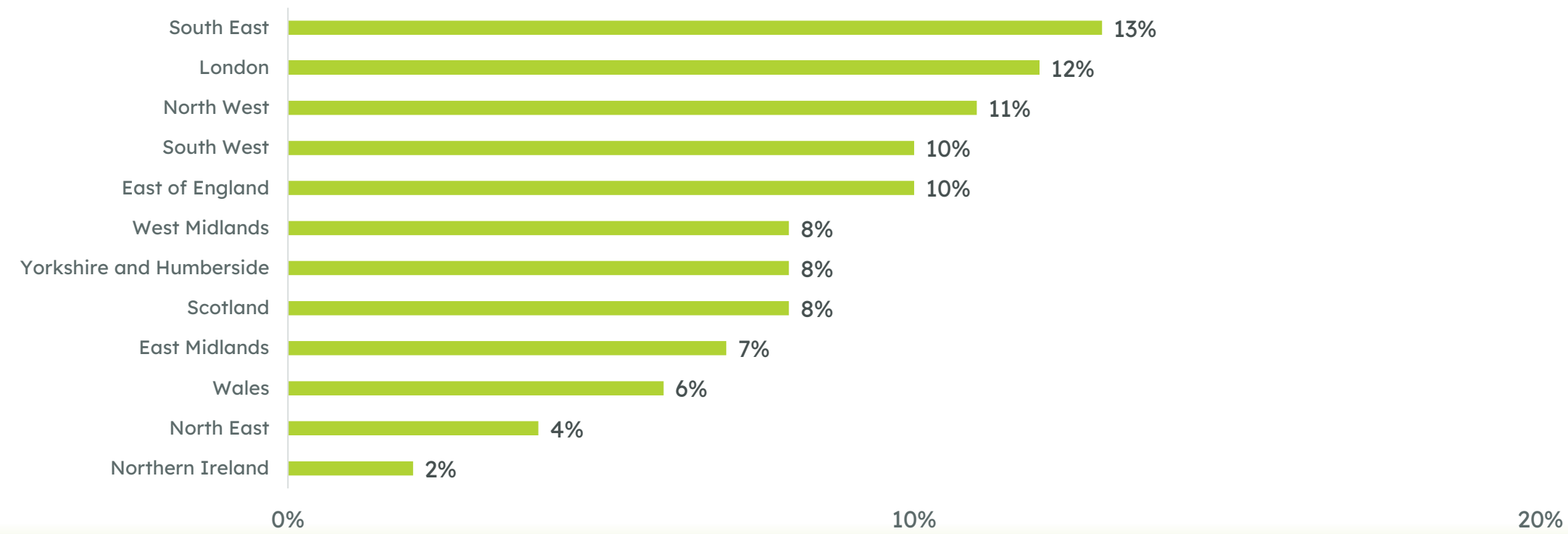
GENDER



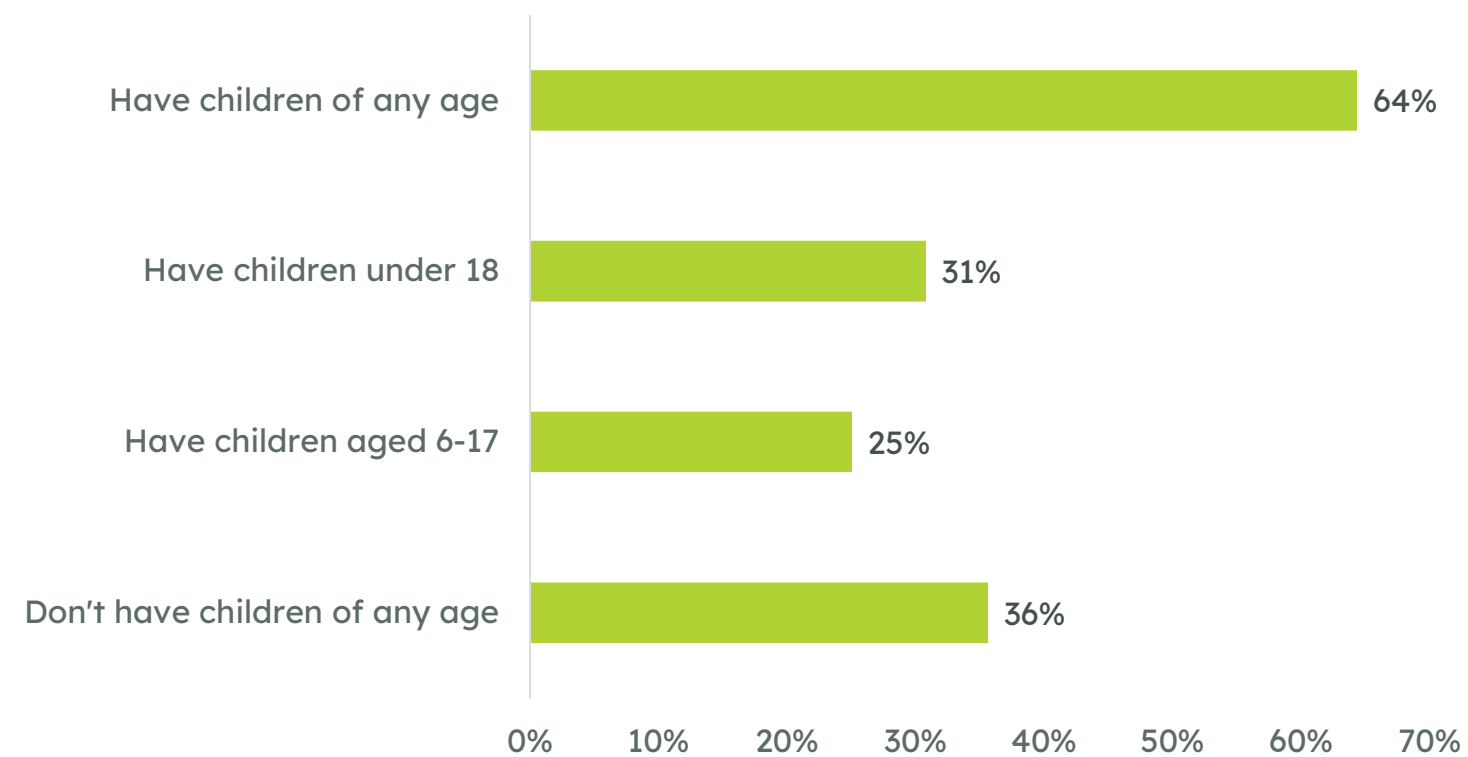
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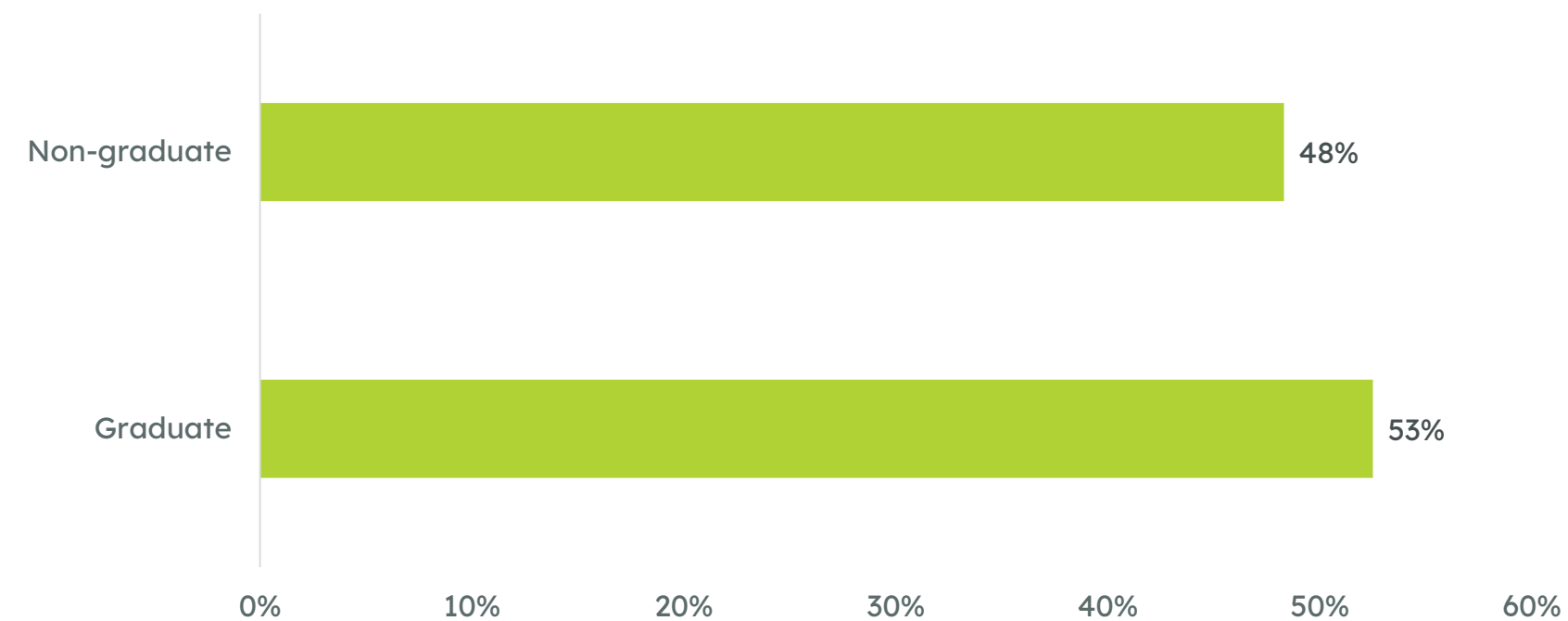
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PARENTAL STATUS



EDUCATION





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