

Evidence use

Under the microscope of public opinion in a time of crisis

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Attitudes to evidence | November 2020 | Version 1 | PUBLIC

Ipsos MORI

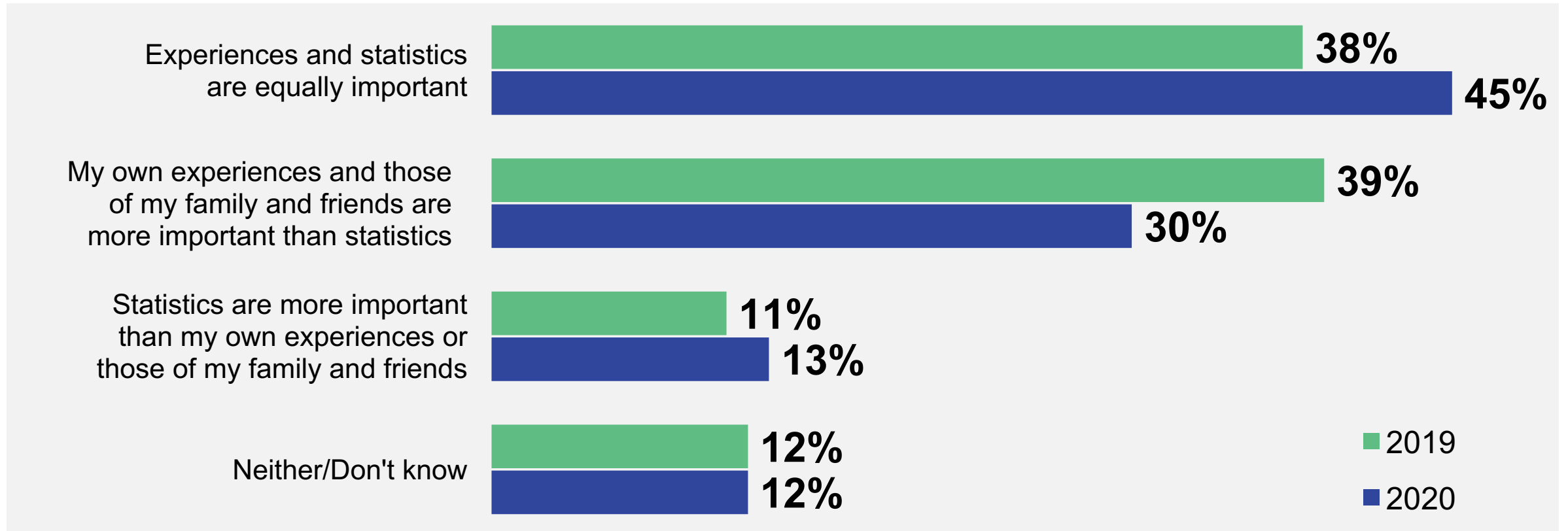


What do the public think about politician's use of evidence, generally?



The public are placing more importance on statistics, but only when used in conjunction with their own experiences

Which one of the following do you agree with most in helping you keep track of how the government is doing?

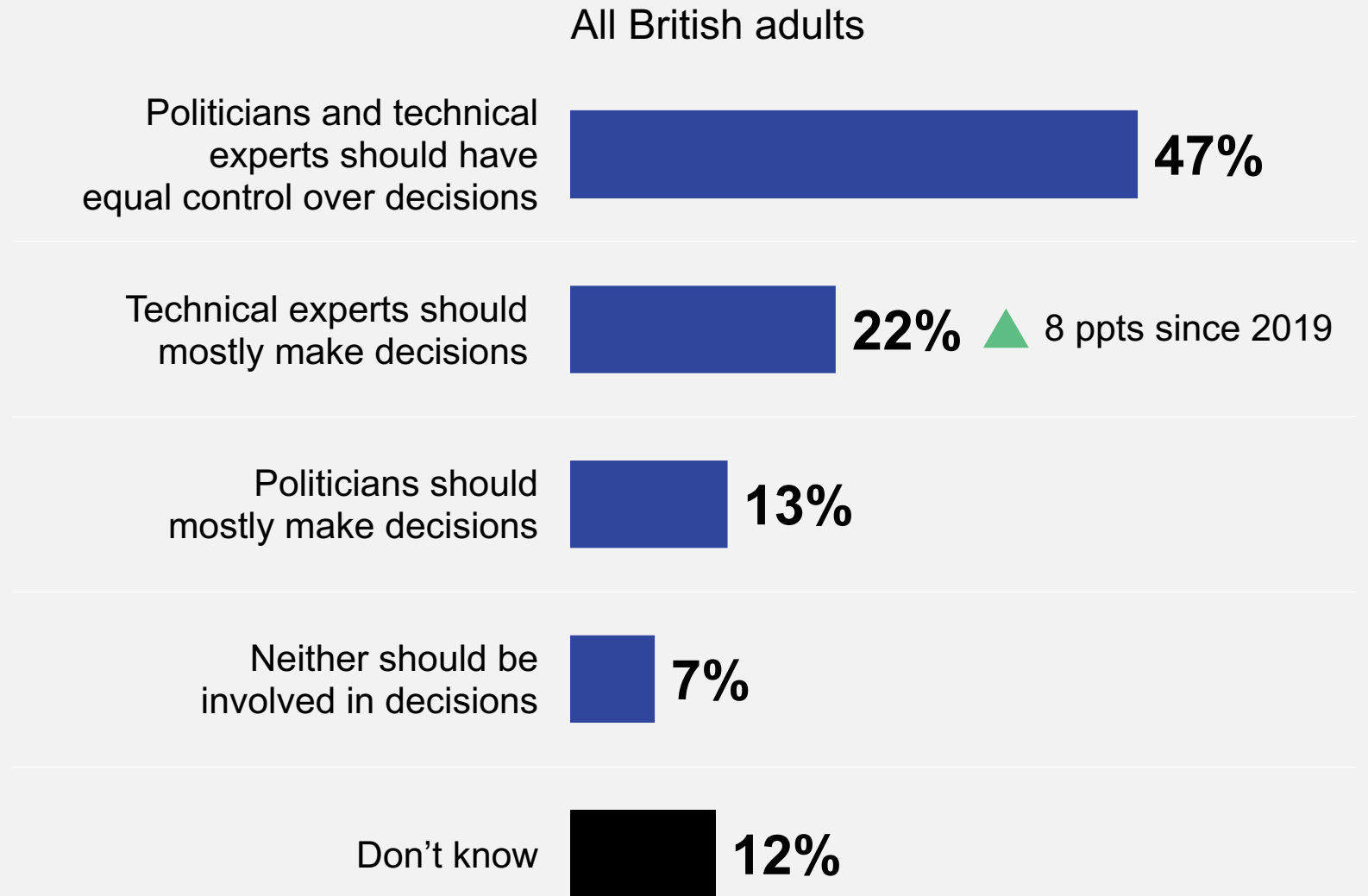


Base: All respondents 2020 (1,085), all respondents 2019 (1,140)

The public favours a blended approach to decision-making with politicians and experts having equal control

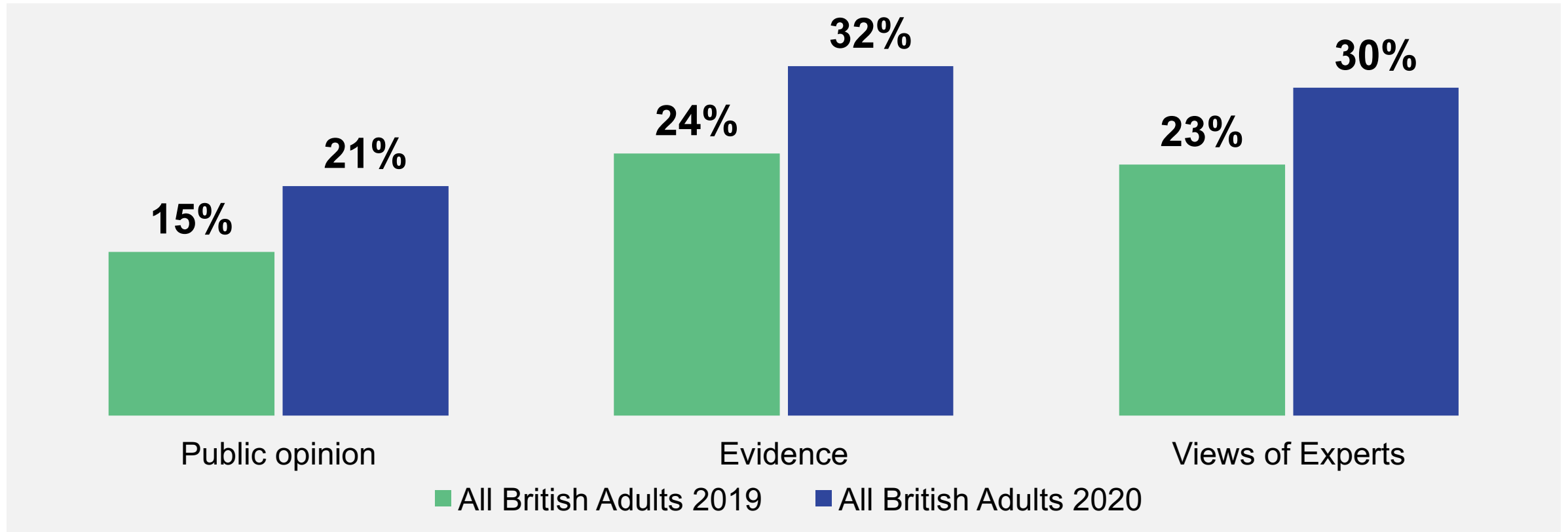
Which one of the following statements do you agree with most when making decisions about new government-led projects?

Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085), 2019 'Technical experts should mostly make decisions' (14%)



Compared to 2019 politicians are perceived to be listening more (to evidence, experts and public opinion) but still not enough

When politicians are making decisions, they pay **ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT** of attention to ...

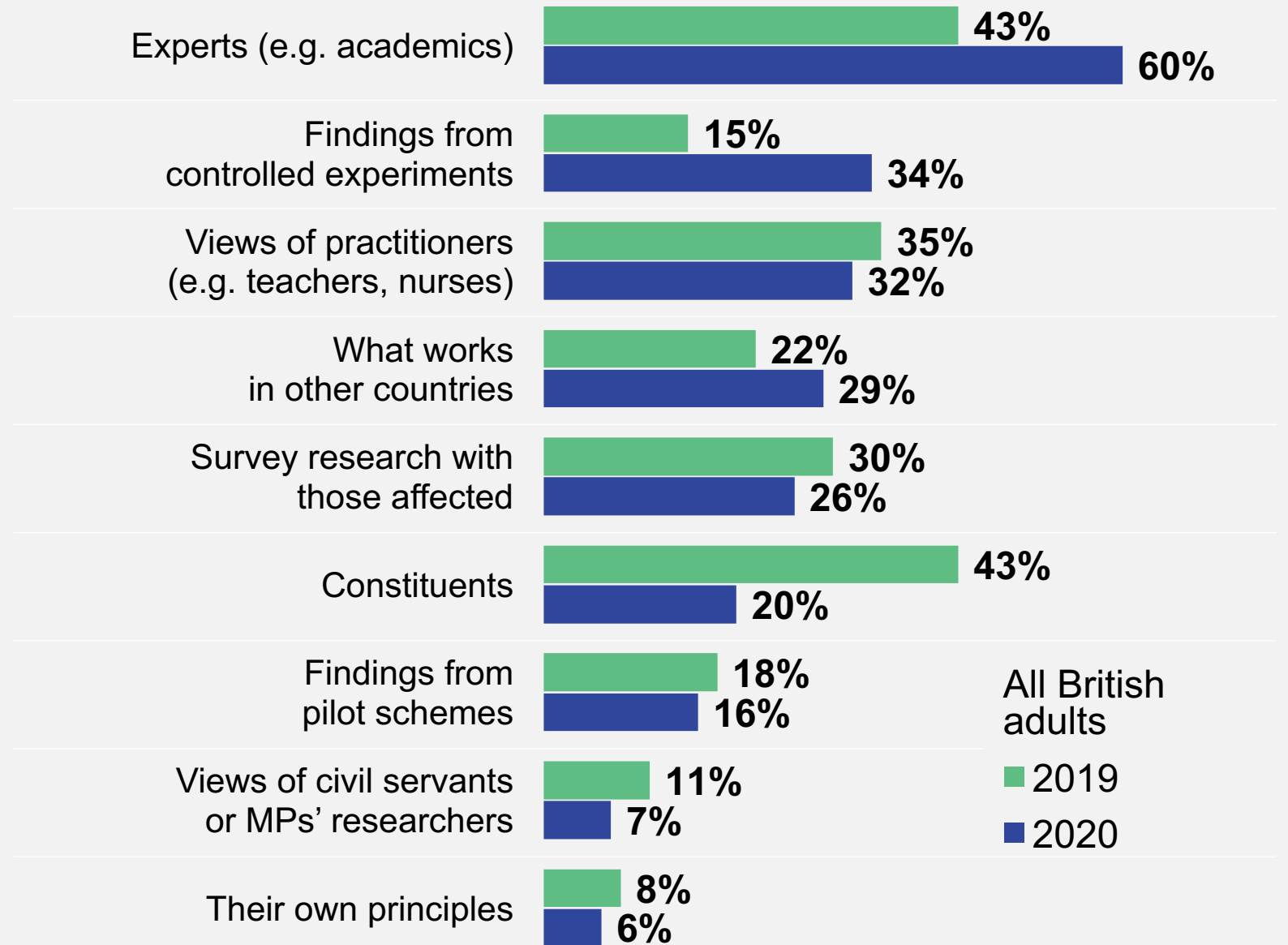


Base: All respondents 2020 (1,085), all respondents 2019 (1,140)

The public have definitely not had enough of experts

Which of the following **SHOULD** politicians pay most attention to when deciding what should be done?

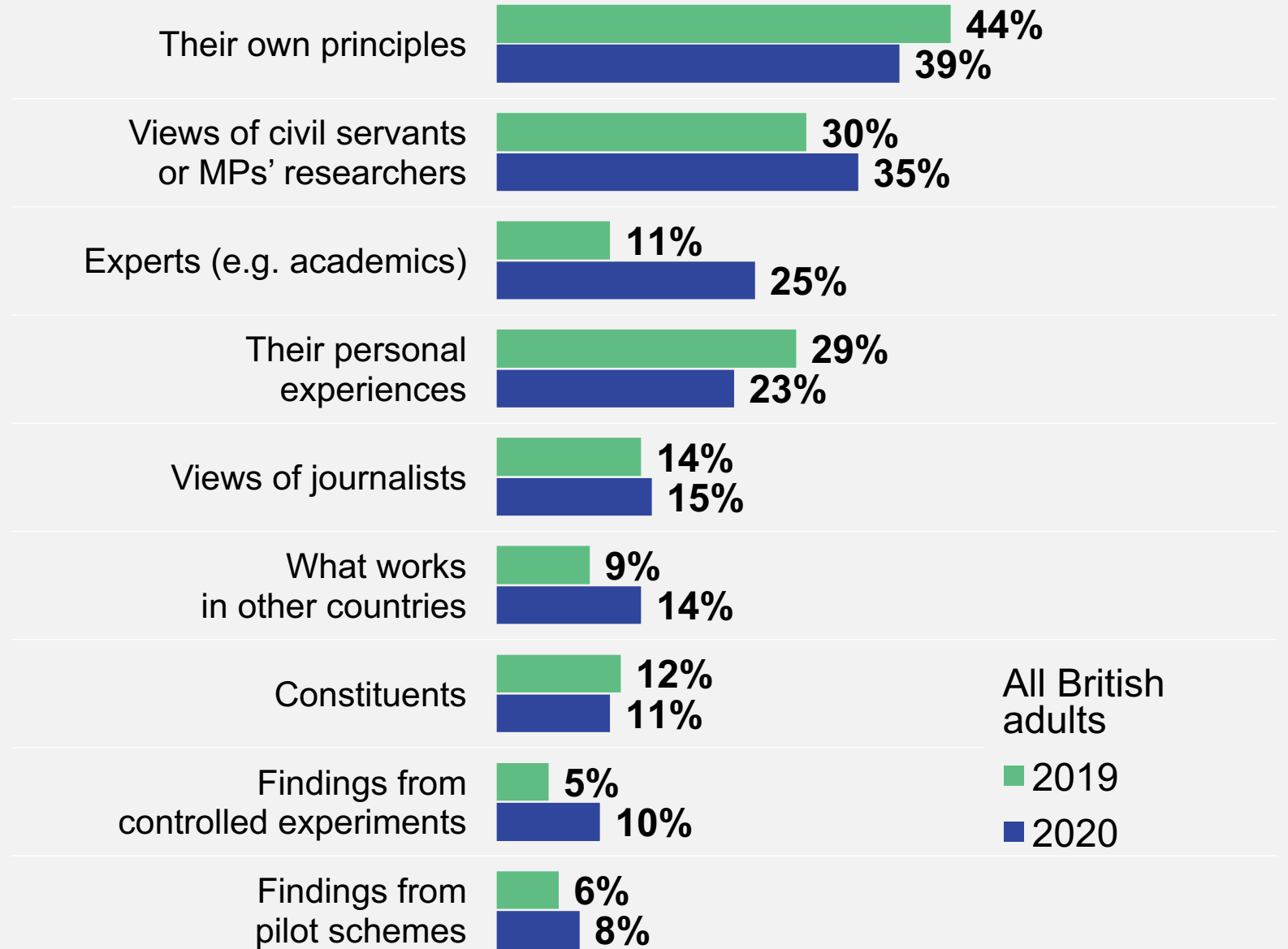
Base: 2020 - all respondents (1,085), 2019 - all respondents (1,140). Top answers shown only.



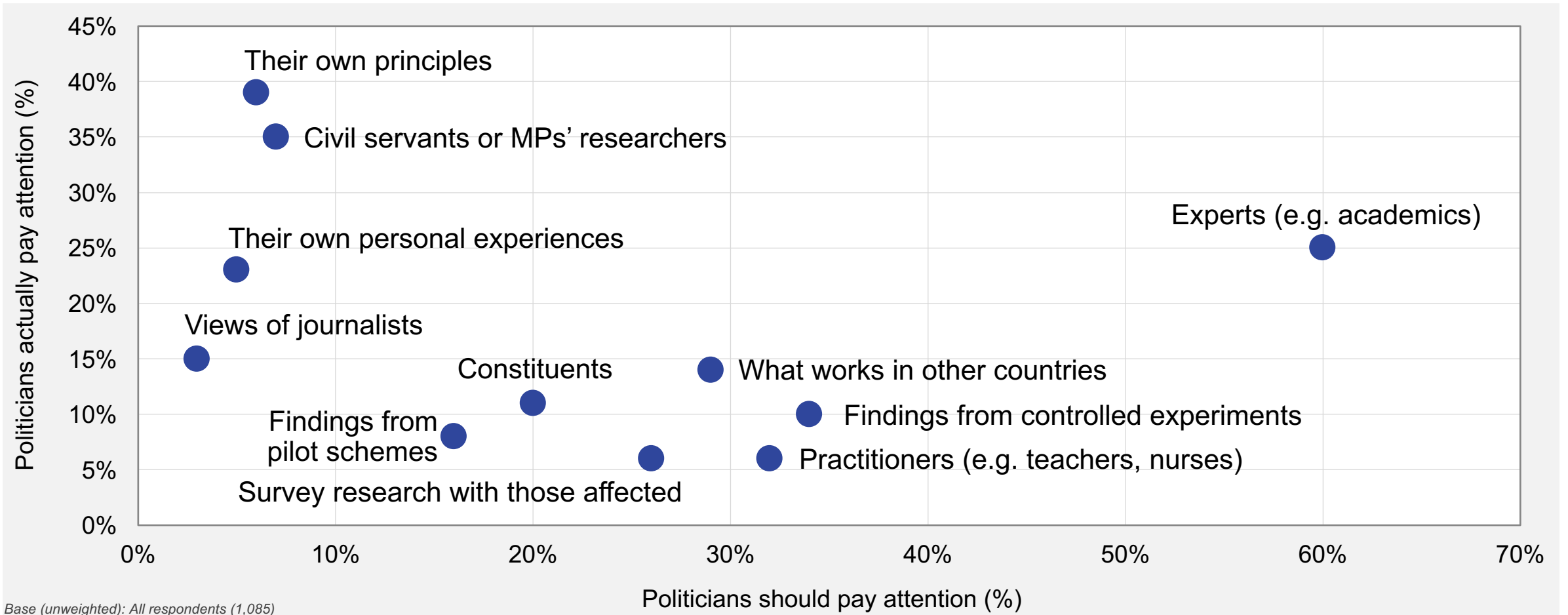
However, they still don't believe that politicians are paying as much attention to experts as they are their own principles

Which of the following do you believe politicians **ACTUALLY** pay most attention to when deciding what should be done?

Base: 2020 - all respondents (1,085), 2019 - all respondents (1,140). Top answers shown only.



The public thinks the government listens too much to sources they shouldn't, and not enough to those they should

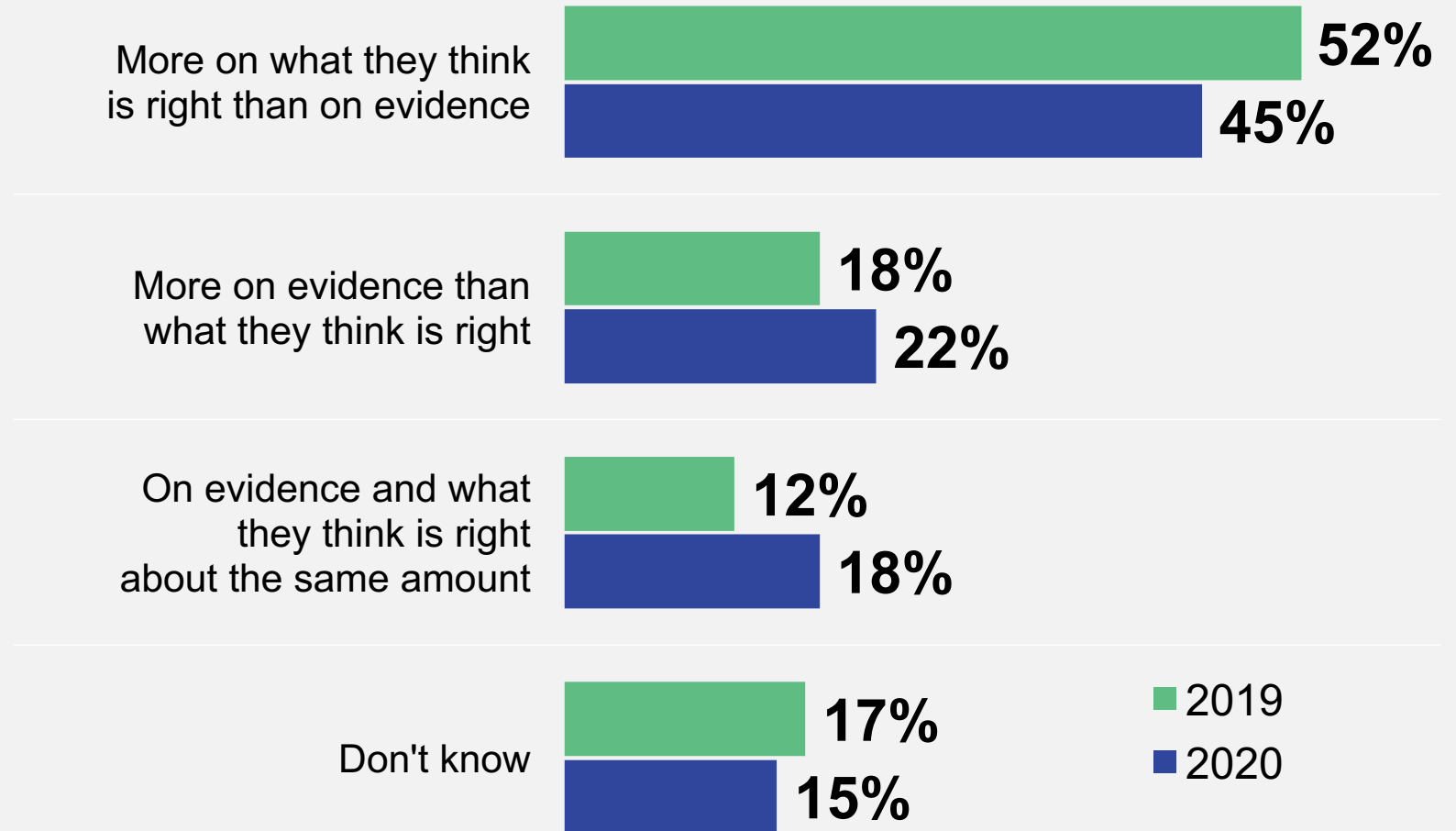


Politicians are perceived to be relying less on their own personal views when making decisions than in 2019

Politicians will take decisions partly based on what they think is right, and partly on evidence of what works

Base: 2020 - all respondents (1,085), 2019 - all respondents (1,140)

Do you think they base their decisions more on what they think is right than on evidence, more on evidence than on what they think is right, or do you think they consider them in equal measure?



People overestimate their own understanding of numbers and statistics



6 in 10 rate their own ability with figures, but the public are far less trusting of the media's, government's and politicians' grasp of statistics

How strongly, if at all, do you agree or disagree with each of the statements?

I generally feel confident when dealing with numbers

58%

Official Statistics in the UK are produced without political interference

30%

The UK Government uses official figures honestly when talking about the COVID-19 pandemic

27%

Newspapers and television channels report statistics accurately

23%

The UK Government uses official figures honestly when talking about its policies

22%

Politicians use figures accurately when talking about their policies

19%

Base: All respondents (1,085)

If you spin a coin twice,
what is the probability
of getting two heads?

While **58%** of people say they
are confident dealing with numbers,
only **47%** passed our test.

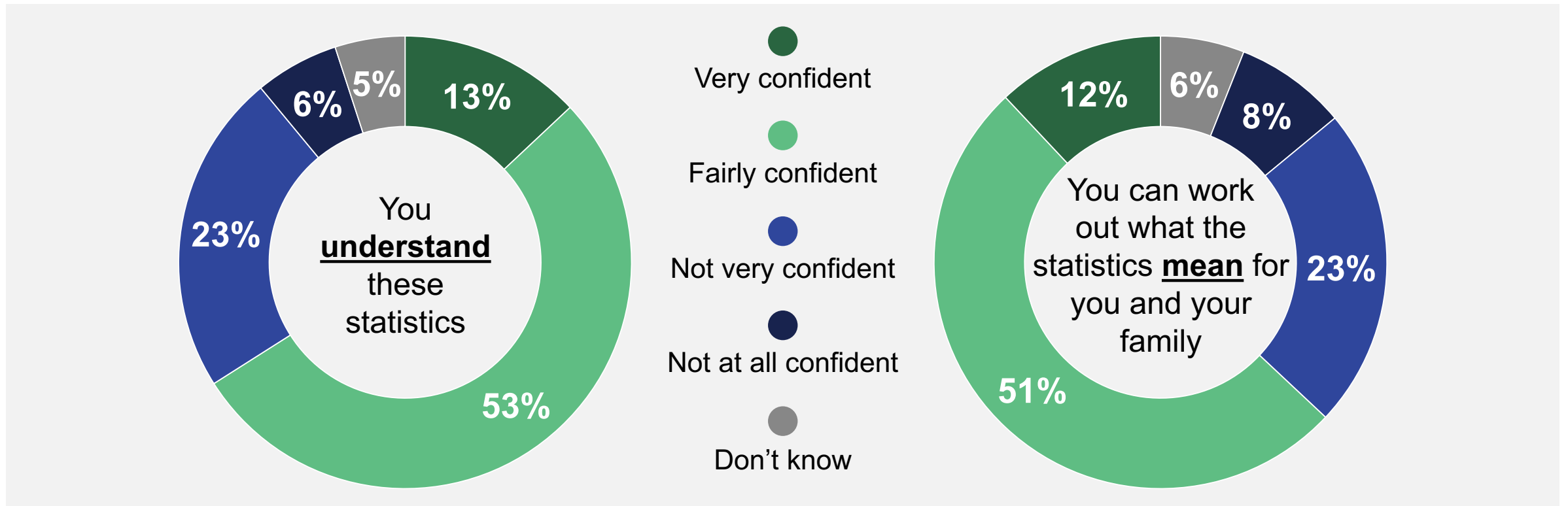
(It's 25% by the way).

Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085)



Two thirds feel confident handling COVID-19 statistics, and assessing what they mean for their daily life

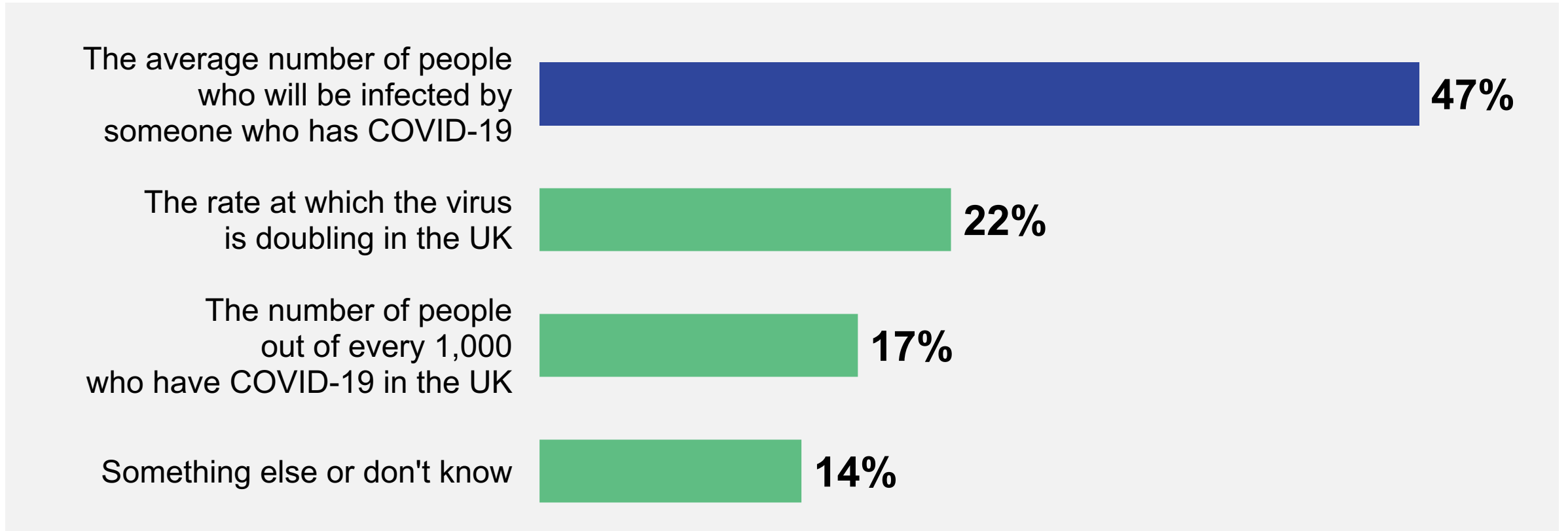
A lot of figures and statistics are being used when people talk about the COVID-19 pandemic and actions we need to take as a country to respond to it. How confident, if at all, are you that...?



Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085)

But similarly to the heads or tails question people have a false sense of security when handling the Covid-19 statistics

As you may know, there is currently a lot of discussion about the R number when talking about COVID-19. Can you tell me what the R number means?



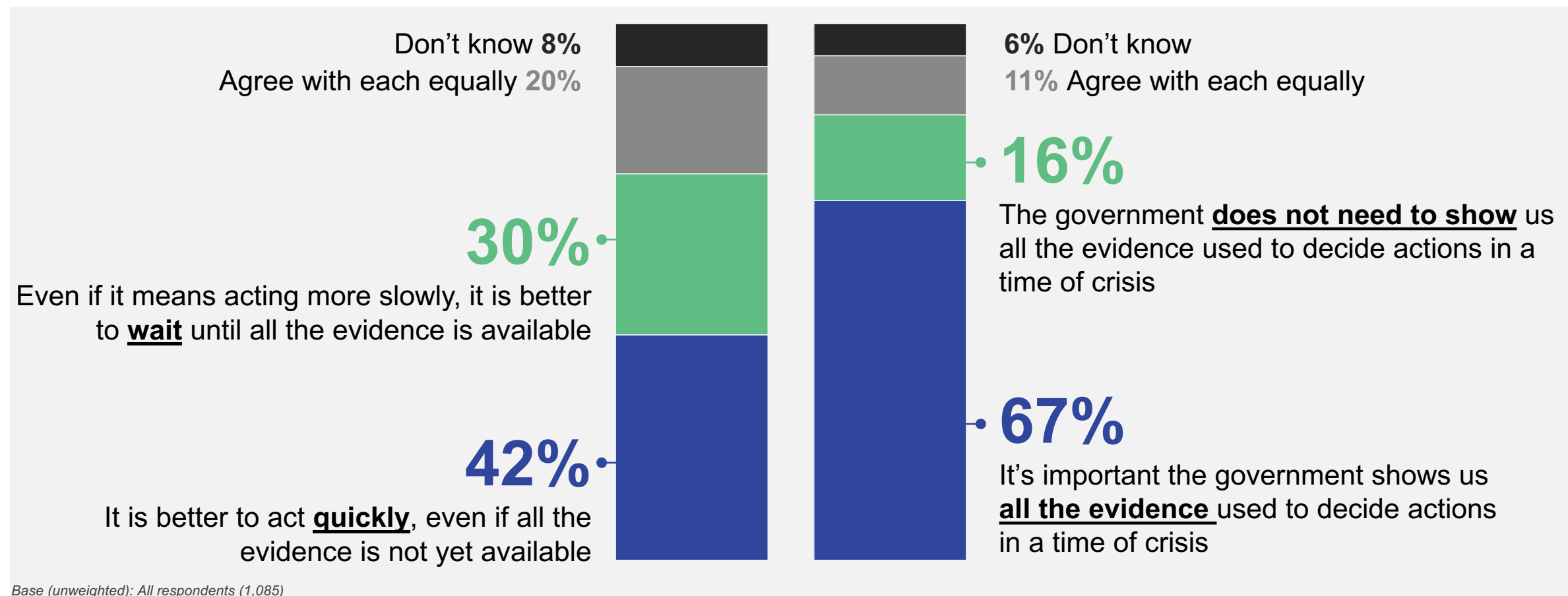
Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085), 'Something else' (3%), Don't know (11%)

How effectively have government used the evidence?



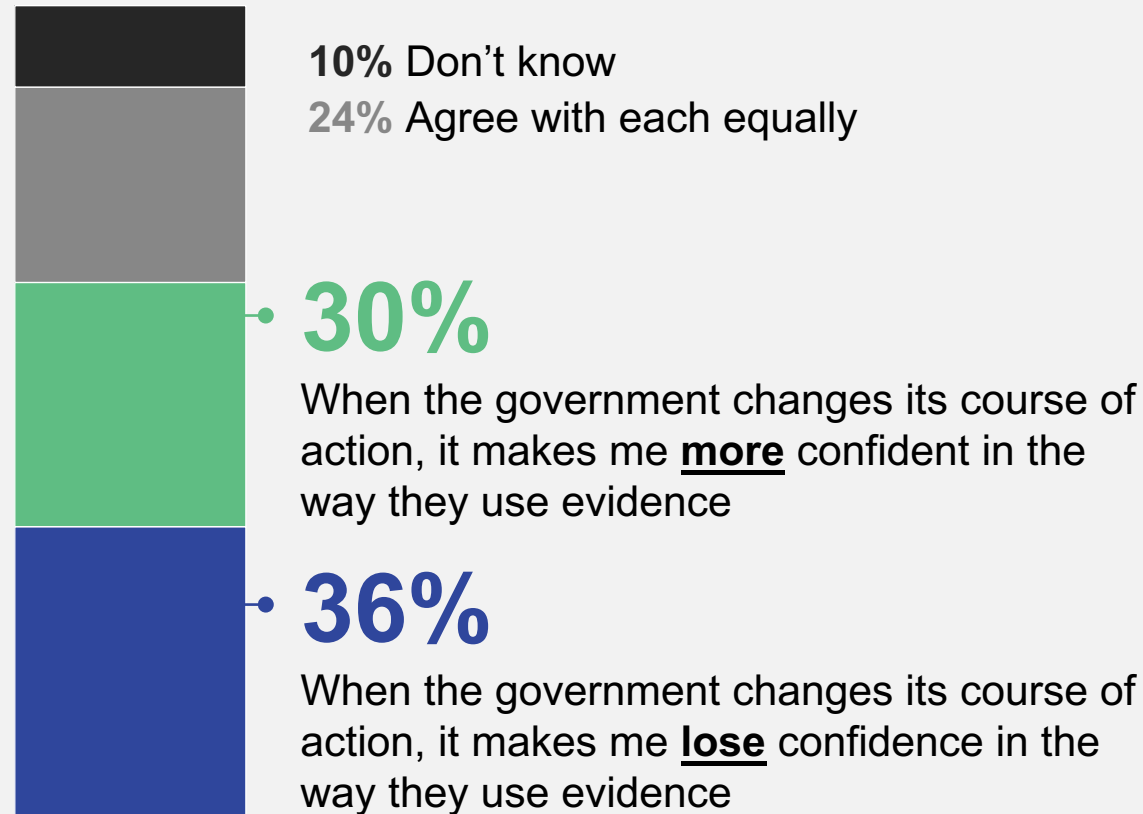
In a time of crisis, speed trumps having a complete evidence base, but only if the Government is transparent about its decisions.

Please read each pair of statements and decide which comes closest to your own opinion



Government U-turns seem to have limited bearing on public confidence in decision-making

Please read each pair of statements and decide which comes closest to your own opinion

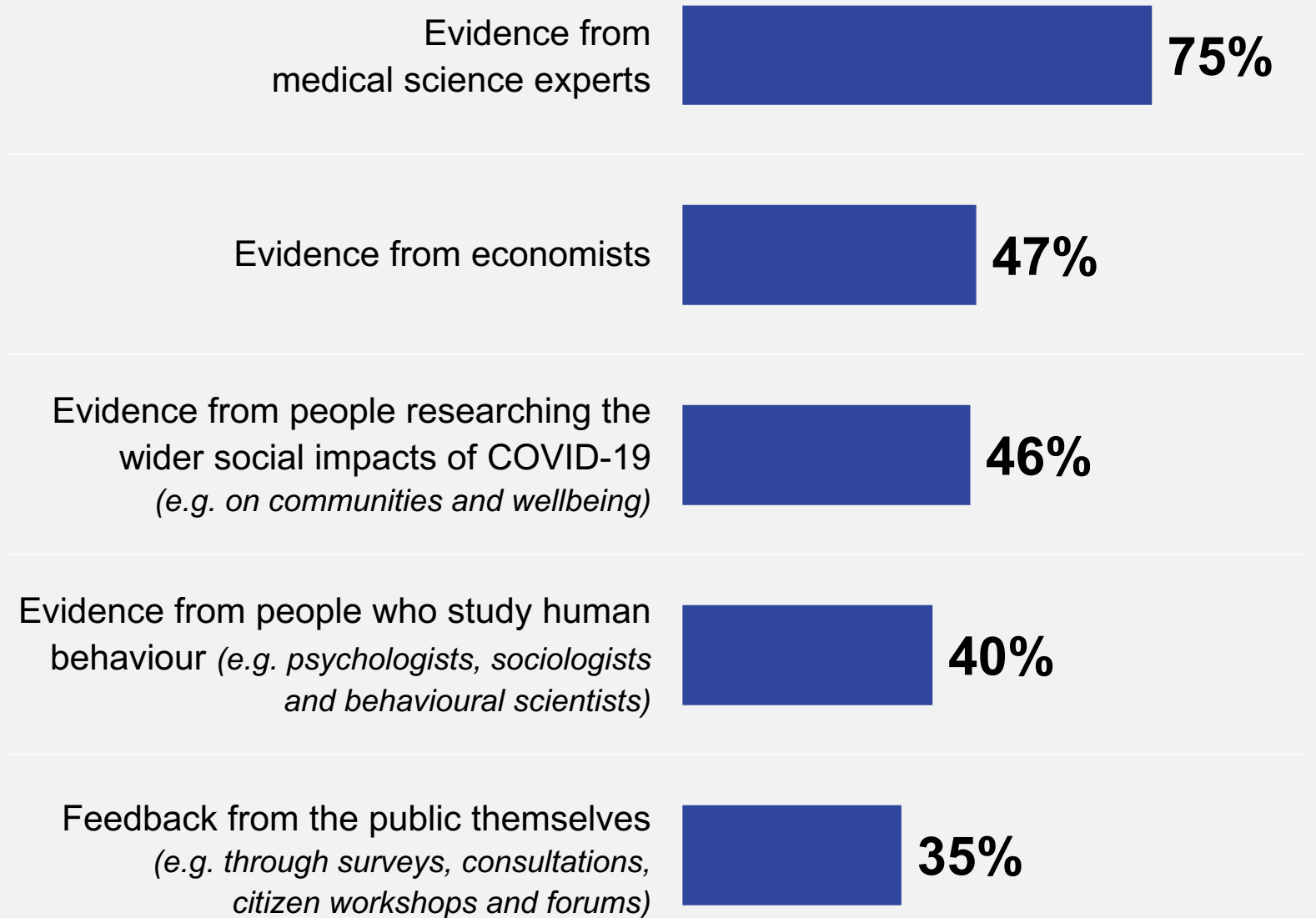


Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085)

Evidence from medical science experts leads the way in terms of what people think the government has been relying on to date


Have heard this type of evidence being used to decide on actions taken on COVID-19


Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085)




Public feedback and evidence on social impacts not listened to enough


The Government has not listened to this type of evidence enough when making decisions on COVID-19

Feedback from the public themselves
(e.g. through surveys, consultations, citizen workshops and forums)  **43%**

Evidence from people researching the wider social impacts of COVID-19
(e.g. on communities and wellbeing)  **41%**

Evidence from medical science experts  **38%**

Evidence from people who study human behaviour
(e.g. psychologists, sociologists and behavioural scientists)  **37%**

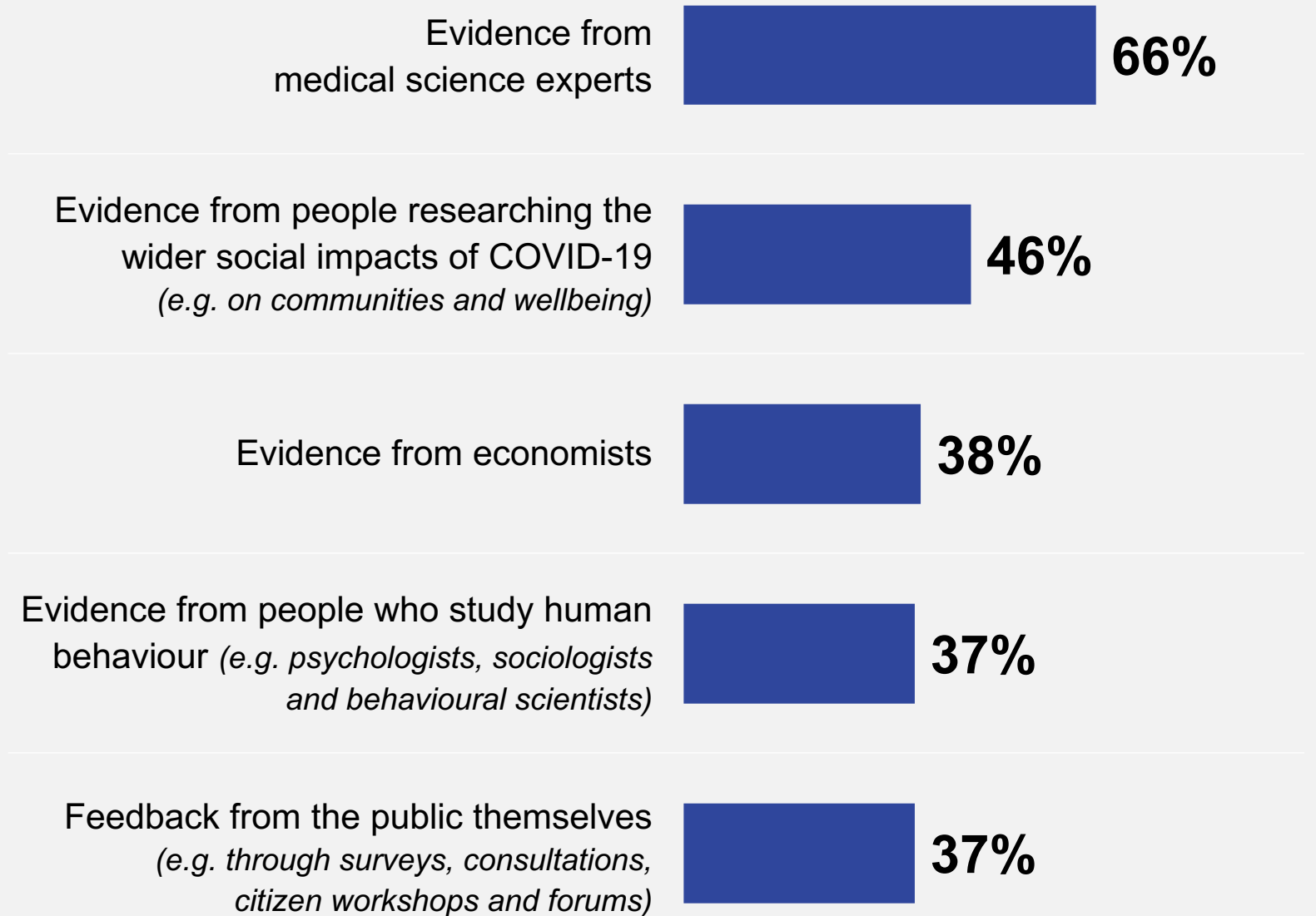
Evidence from economists  **23%**

Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085)

Evidence on wider social impacts second most important source to guide our recovery from COVID-19

Important for the Government to take this evidence into account when thinking about how best to recover from COVID-19

Base (unweighted): All respondents (1,085)



Technical Note

Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative sample of 1,085 British adults aged 18-75. Interviews were conducted online from 13th – 16th November 2020. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

For more information

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