



**THE  
POLICY  
INSTITUTE**



# A year of life under lockdown: how it went and what's next

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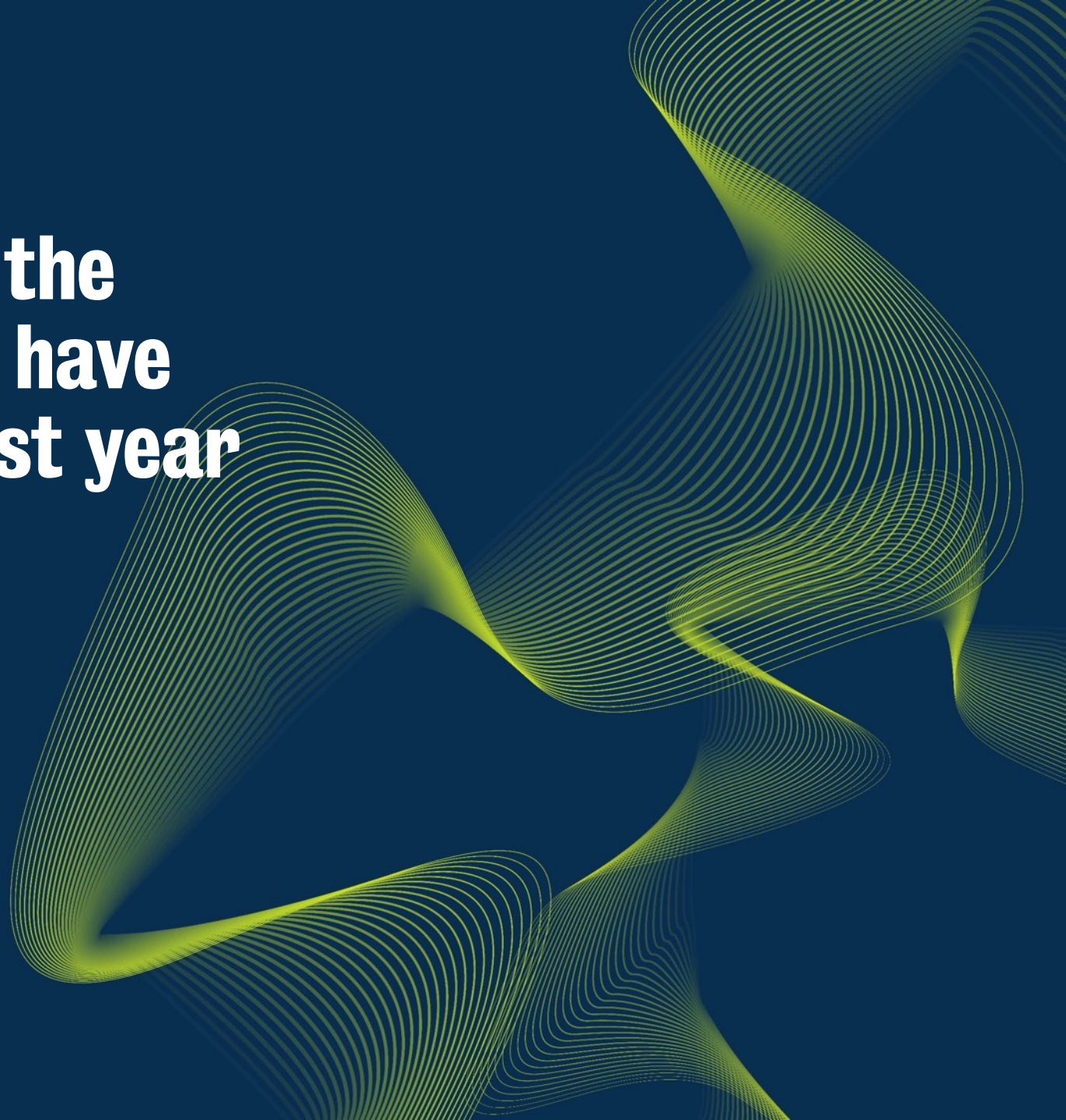
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**Wednesday 24 March**



**How the public and the  
country as a whole have  
experienced the past year**





Two-thirds of the public (65%) feel the last year has been worse or much worse than average.

By 70% to 60% women are more likely than men to feel this way. Men, on the other hand, are more likely than women to say it's been similar to an average year for them (27% vs 18%).

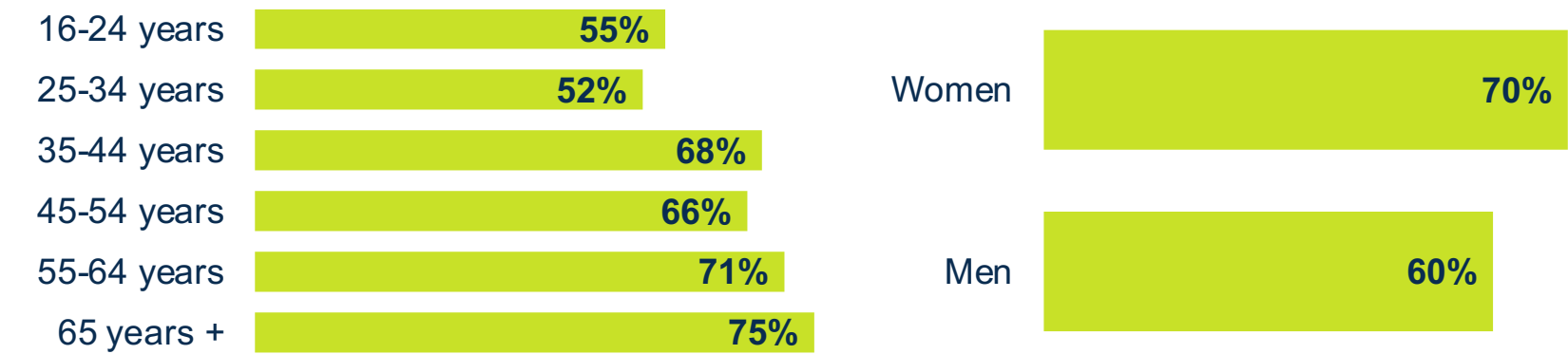
And the likelihood of having had a worse or much worse year than average increases with age: 75% of those aged 65 and over feel this way, compared with 54% of 16- to 34-year-olds.

One in 10 people (11%) say they've had a better or much better year than average, while one in five (22%) say it's been similar to an average year for them.

Looking back over the last year as a whole and thinking about all its effects on **you personally**, has it been...

		Men	Women
A much worse year than average	24%	24%	25%
A worse year than average	41%	36%	45%
Similar to an average year	22%	27%	18%
A better year than average	8%	8%	8%
A much better year than average	2%	3%	2%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%

% who say they had a worse or much worse year than average



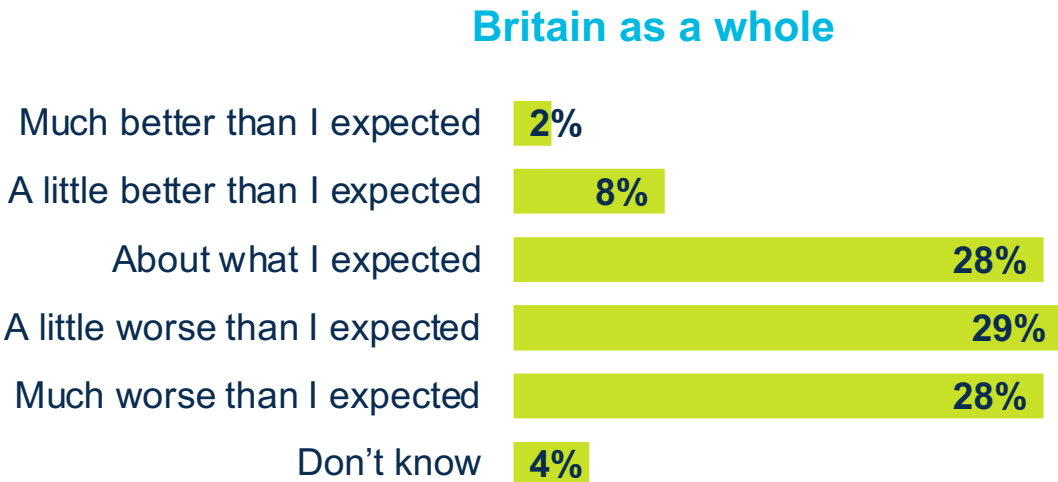
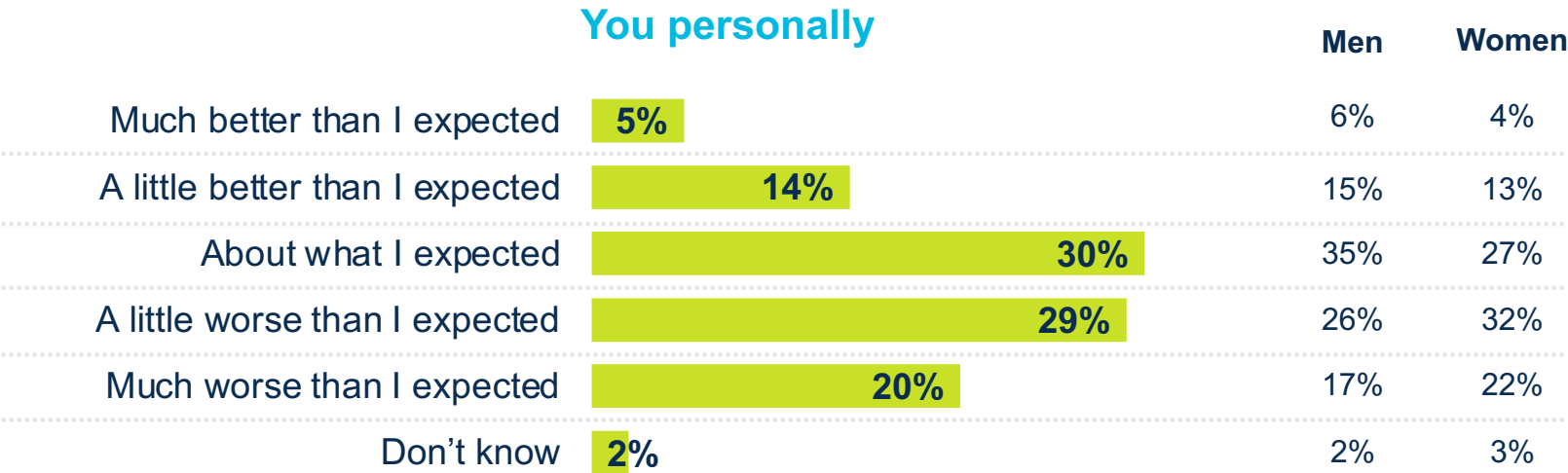
Base: 2,442 UK adults aged 16+, interviewed 12–15 March 2021

Nearly half the public (49%) say the last year has been worse than expected, with women (54%) more likely than men (43%) to feel this way – but one in five people (19%) say it's been better than expected.

People are more likely to think the year has been worse for Britain as a whole – 57% hold this view, compared with 11% who say the country's year has been better than expected.

Around three in 10 think the year has turned out in roughly the way they expected for both themselves and the wider country.

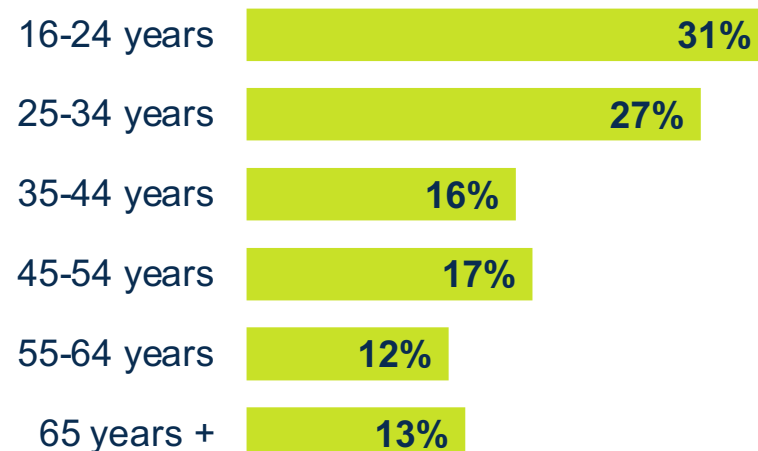
And thinking back to the start of the “lockdown” restrictions around a year ago, and what you expected to happen then, has the last year been better than you expected, worse than you expected or about what you expected for...



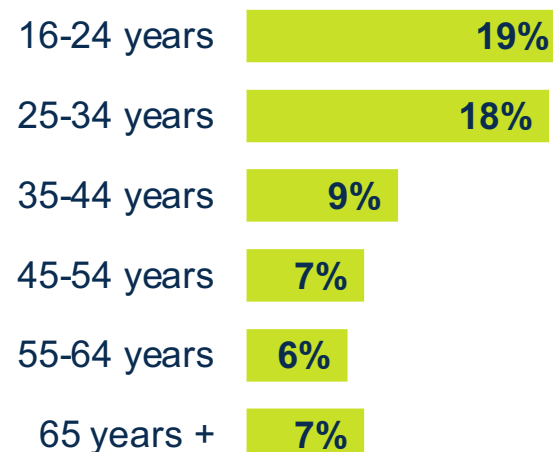
Those aged 16 to 34 (29%) are twice as likely as those aged 35 and above (14%) to report having had a better-than-expected year.

They are also more than twice as likely to feel that Britain as a whole had a better year than they anticipated (18% vs 7%).

### % who say they've **personally** had a **better** year than they expected



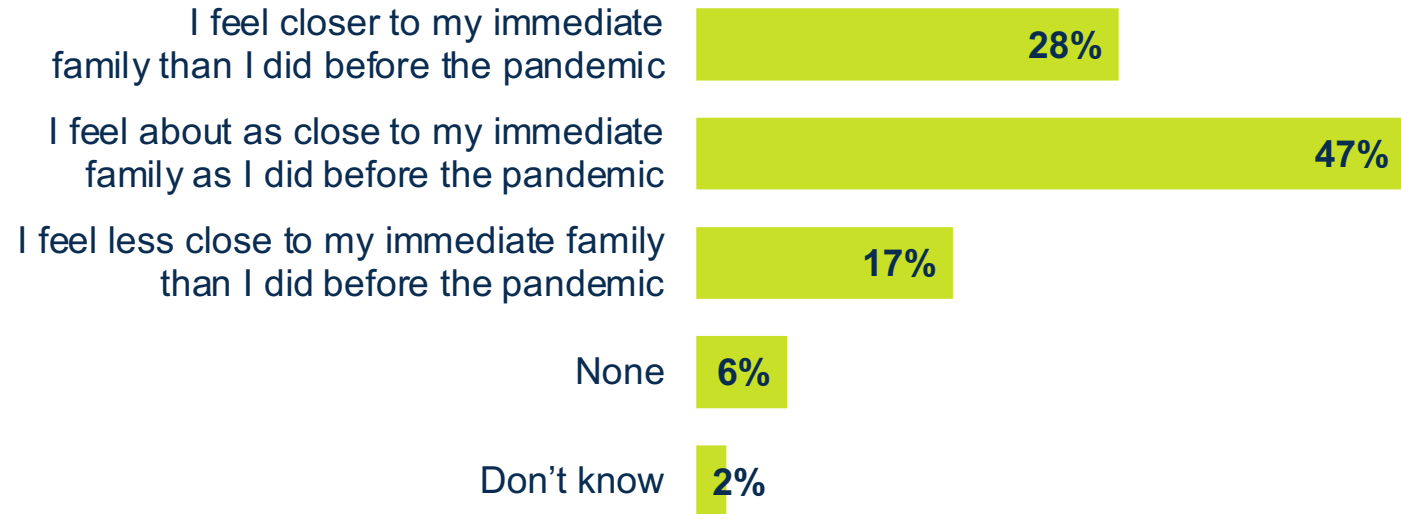
### % who say **Britain as a whole** as had a **better** year than they expected



More than a quarter of people (28%) feel closer to their family than they did pre-pandemic, while around one in six (17%) feel less close to them.

But the most common response, given by nearly half the public (47%), is that they feel about as close to their family as they did before the crisis.

**Which of these, if any, of these is closest to your own view? Please compare how you feel now with how you felt before the pandemic started**



**% who feel about as close to their immediate family as they did before the pandemic**

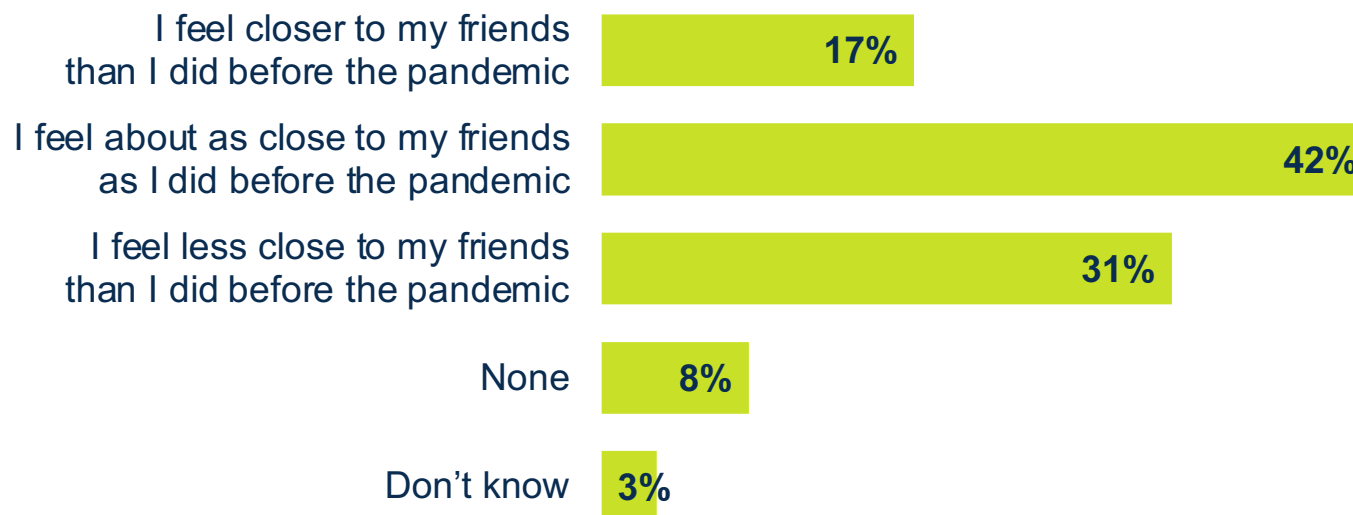


31% of people say they feel less close to their friends than they did before the crisis began – almost double the 17% who say the same about their family.

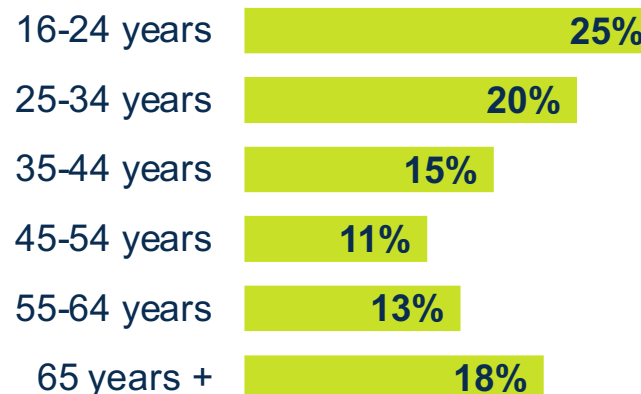
In line with this, the public are less likely to say they feel closer to their friends than they are to say the same about their family (17% vs 28%).

A quarter (25%) of 16- to 24-year-olds say they've grown closer to their friends since the pandemic started – the highest of the age groups surveyed.

### Which of these, if any, of these is closest to your own view? Please compare how you feel now with how you felt before the pandemic started



### % who feel **closer** to their friends than they did before the pandemic

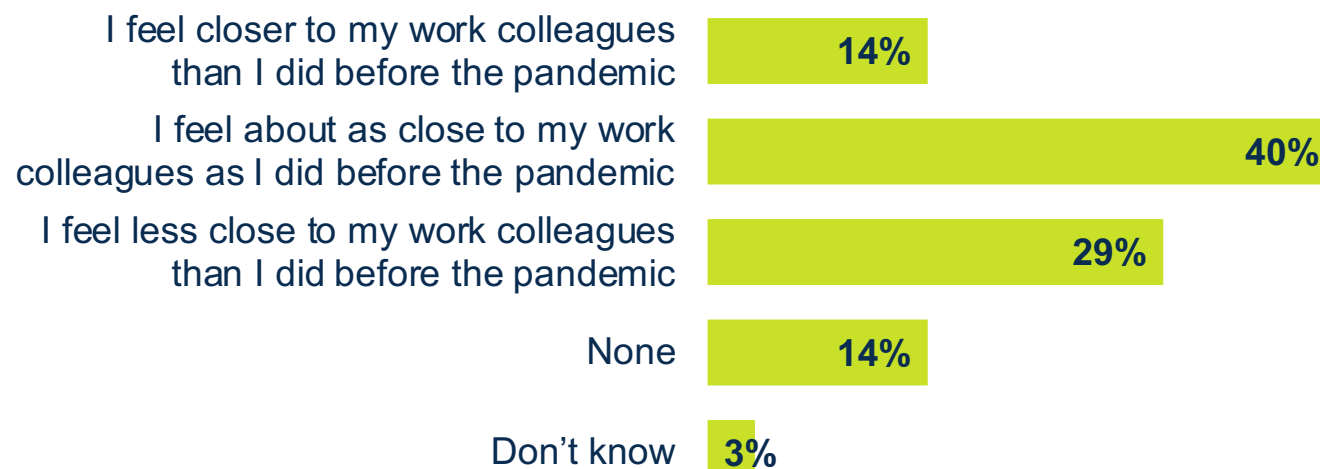
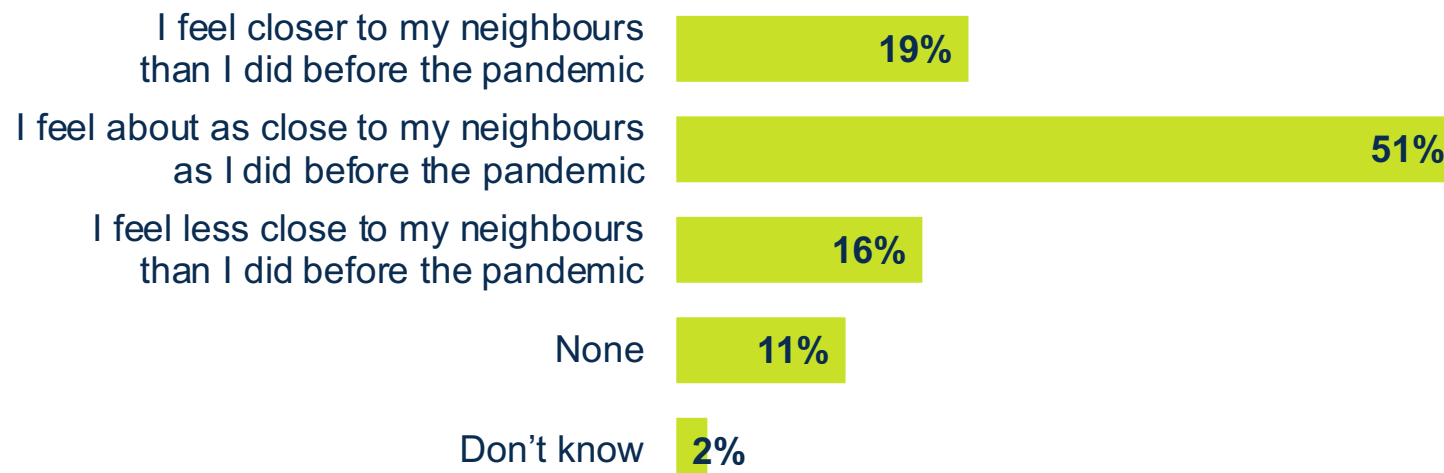




People are most likely to say that the closeness of their relationship with their neighbours (51%) and colleagues (40%) is basically unchanged compared with before the pandemic.

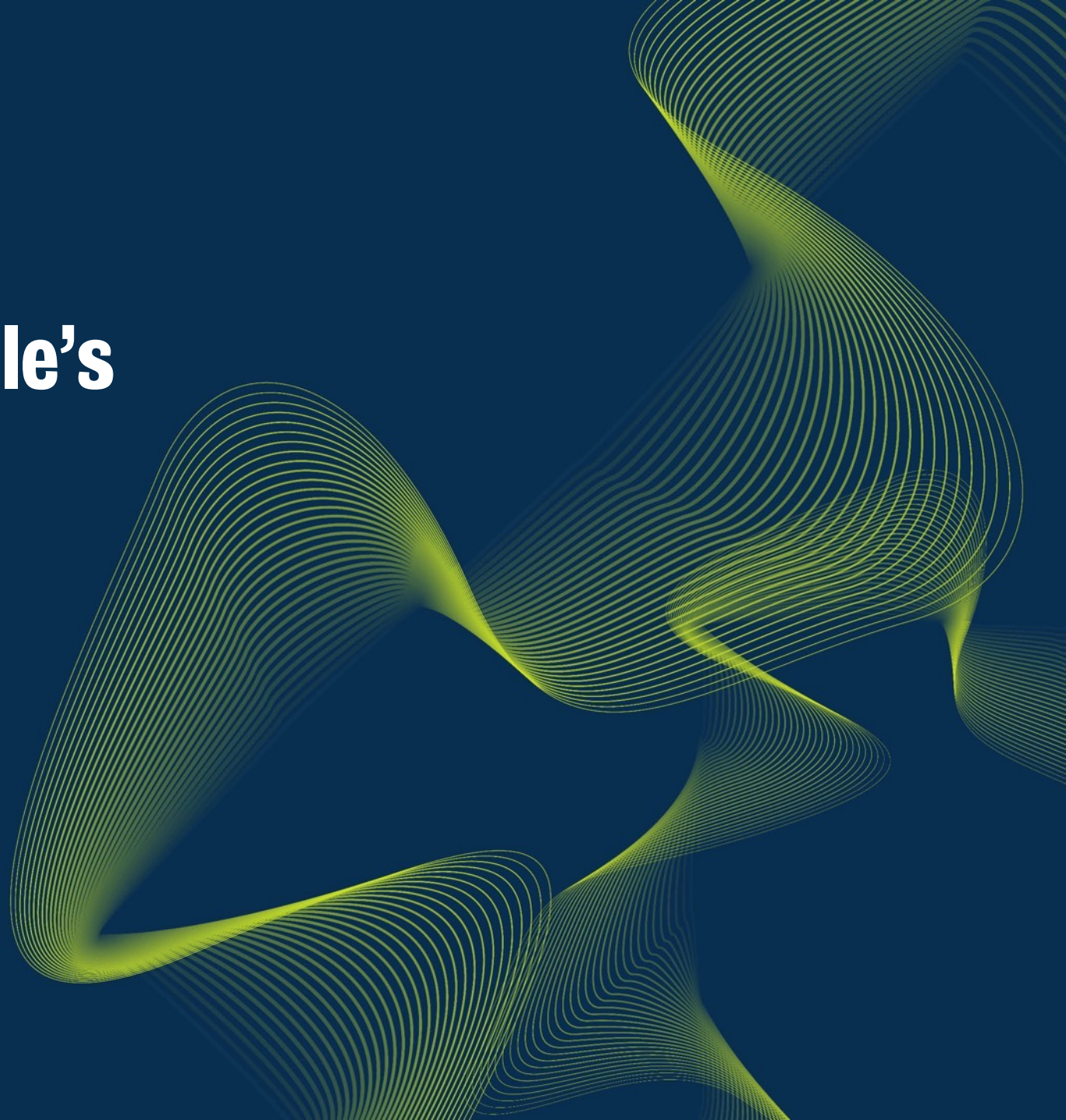
But the public are around twice as likely (29%) to say they now feel less close to their colleagues than they are to say the same about their neighbours (16%).

**Which of these, if any, of these is closest to your own view? Please compare how you feel now with how you felt before the pandemic started**





**The impact on people's  
personal lives**



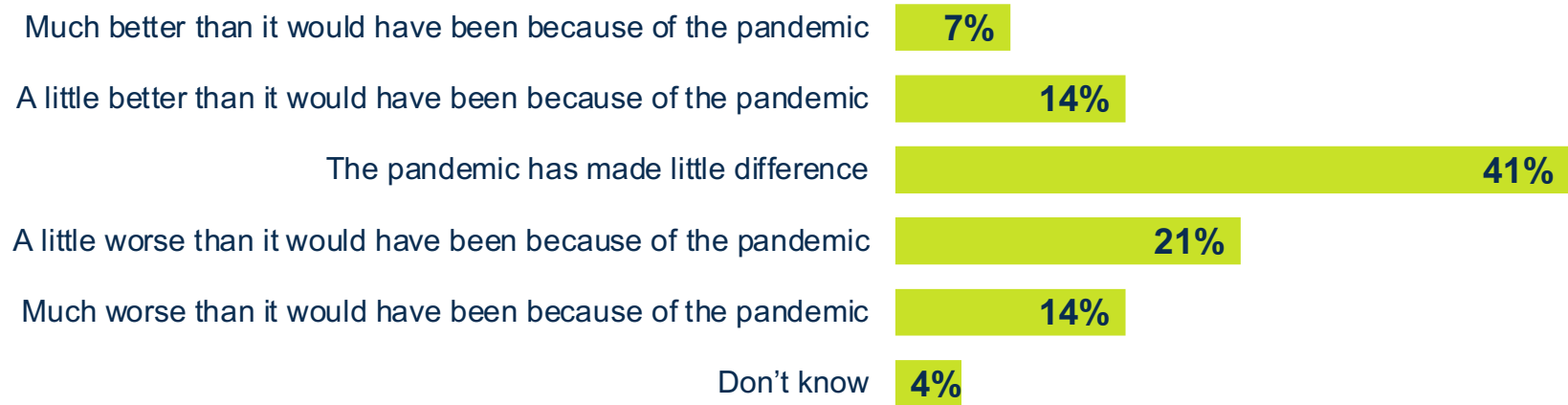
A third of the public (34%) say the pandemic will worsen their financial situation, compared with one in five (21%) who say the crisis will improve it. But the most common response, given by 41%, is that the pandemic has made little difference to people's finances.

People from ethnic minorities (46%) are more likely than white people (33%) to say their financial situation will now be worse – although at the same time the former are also roughly as likely to say the pandemic will improve their finances (25% vs 20%).

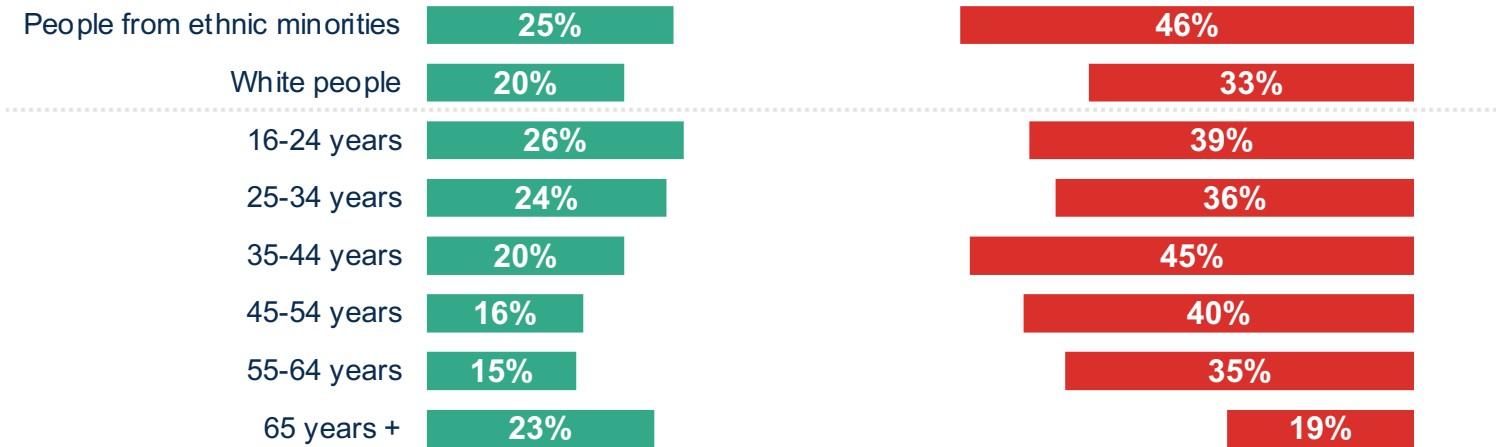
35- to 44-year-olds are the age group most likely to report that their finances will be worse than they otherwise would have been: 45% say this is the case – more than double the proportion of those aged 65 and above (19%) who say the same.

For each of the following, do you think they will be better or worse than they would have been if the coronavirus pandemic had never happened, or if it has made little difference?

My personal financial situation



% who say their personal financial situation is now better or worse

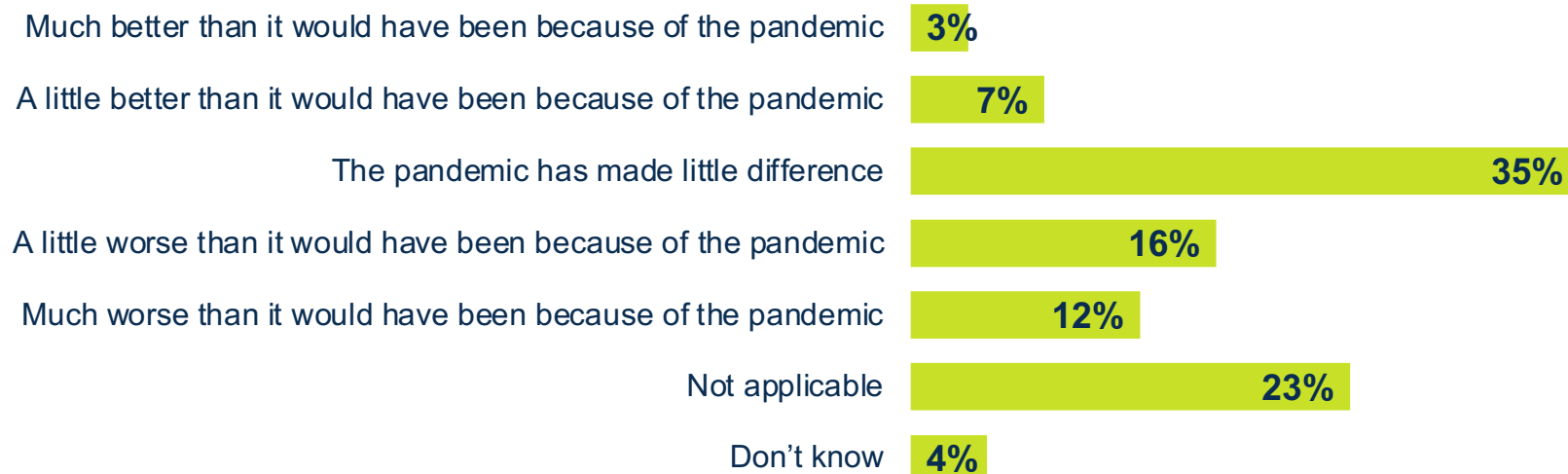


People are most likely to say the pandemic will have little impact on their job prospects (35%), but more than a quarter (28%) think their career will be negatively affected, compared with one in 10 (10%) who think it'll be positively impacted.

People from ethnic minorities (20%) are twice as likely as white people (9%) to think their job prospects will improve – but they're also significantly more likely to say they will worsen (43% vs 27%).

For each of the following, do you think they will be better or worse than they would have been if the coronavirus pandemic had never happened, or if it has made little difference?

### My career/job prospects



### % who say their career/job prospects are now better or worse



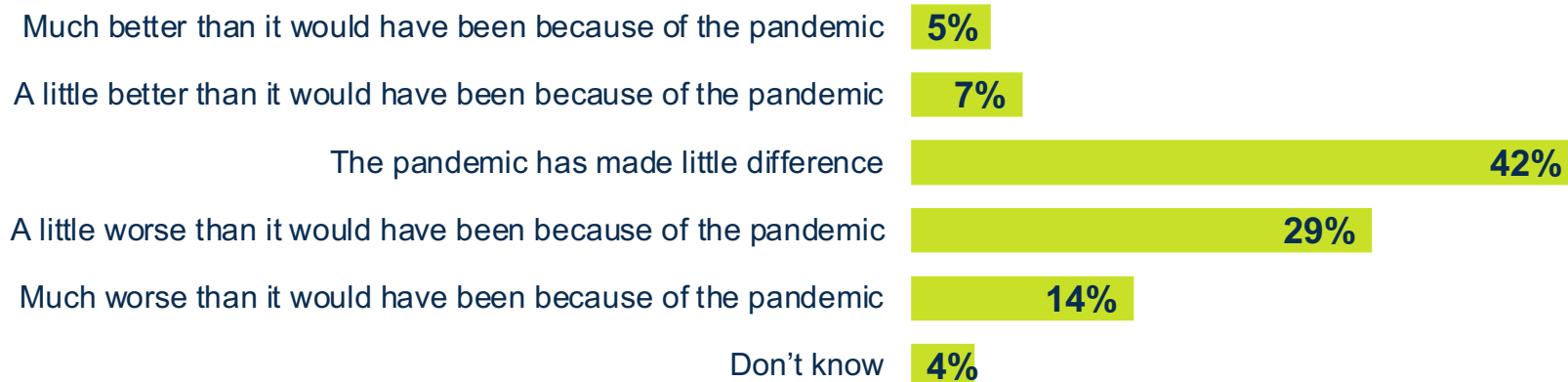


43% of the public say the pandemic will worsen their mental health, while 42% say it will make little difference. Around one in eight people (12%) say their mental health will improve because of the crisis.

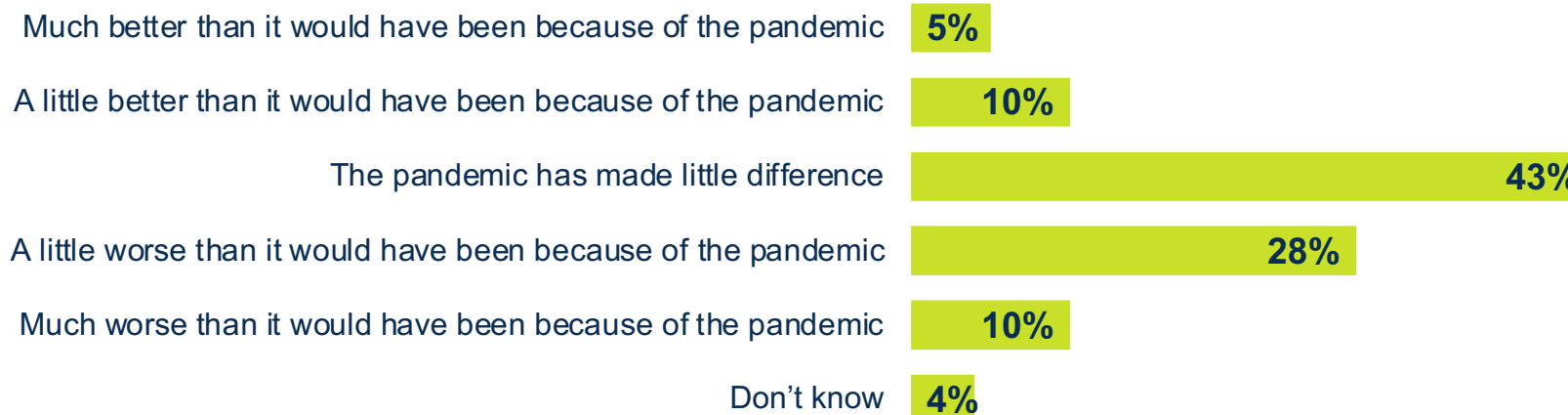
A similar proportion (15%) say their physical health will be better as a result of the pandemic – but the public are more than twice as likely to say it will get worse (38%) or there has been little change (43%).

**For each of the following, do you think they will be better or worse than they would have been if the coronavirus pandemic had never happened, or if it has made little difference?**

### My mental health



### My physical health



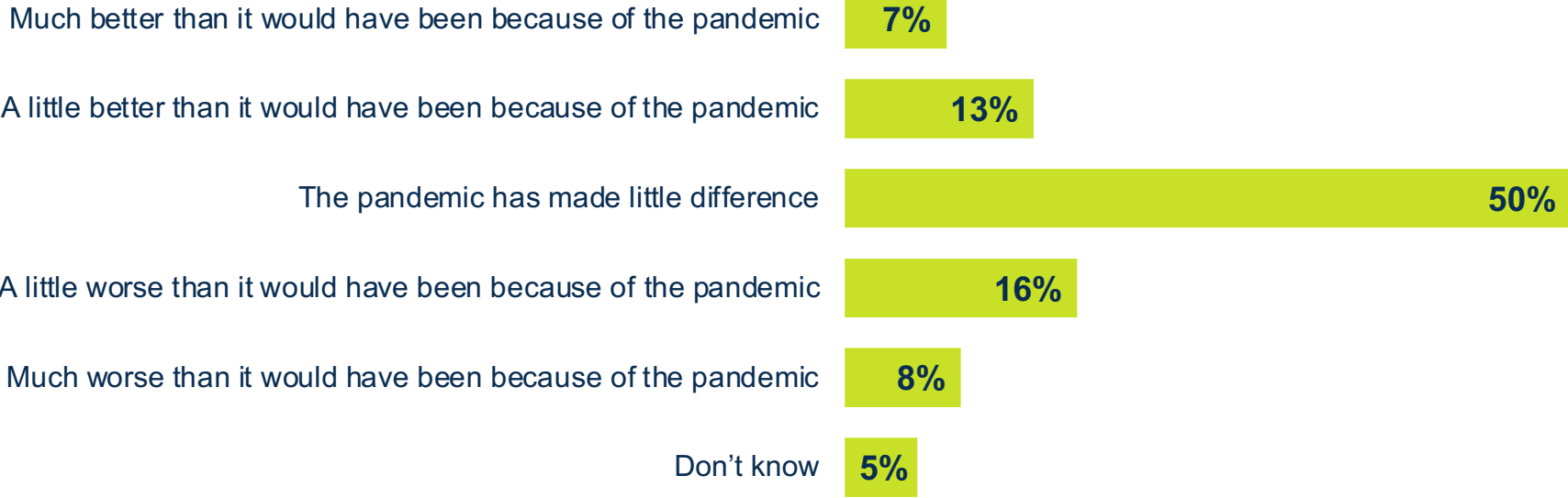
Base: 2,442 UK adults aged 16+, interviewed 12–15 March 2021



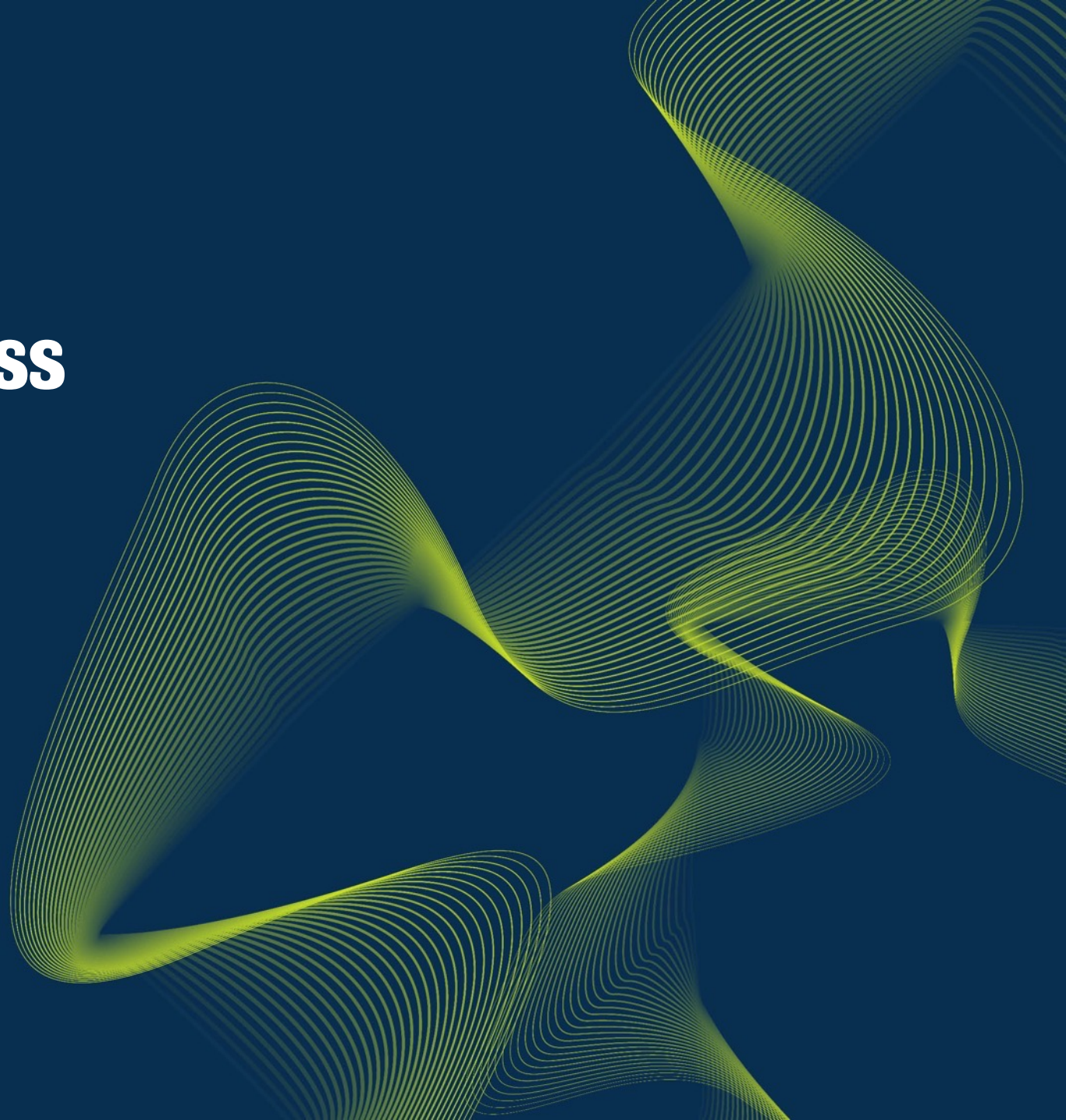
Half the public (50%) say the pandemic has barely affected their personal relationships, with the other half relatively divided on whether they it will improve (20%) or worsen them (24%).

For each of the following, do you think they will be better or worse than they would have been if the coronavirus pandemic had never happened, or if it has made little difference?

My personal relationships



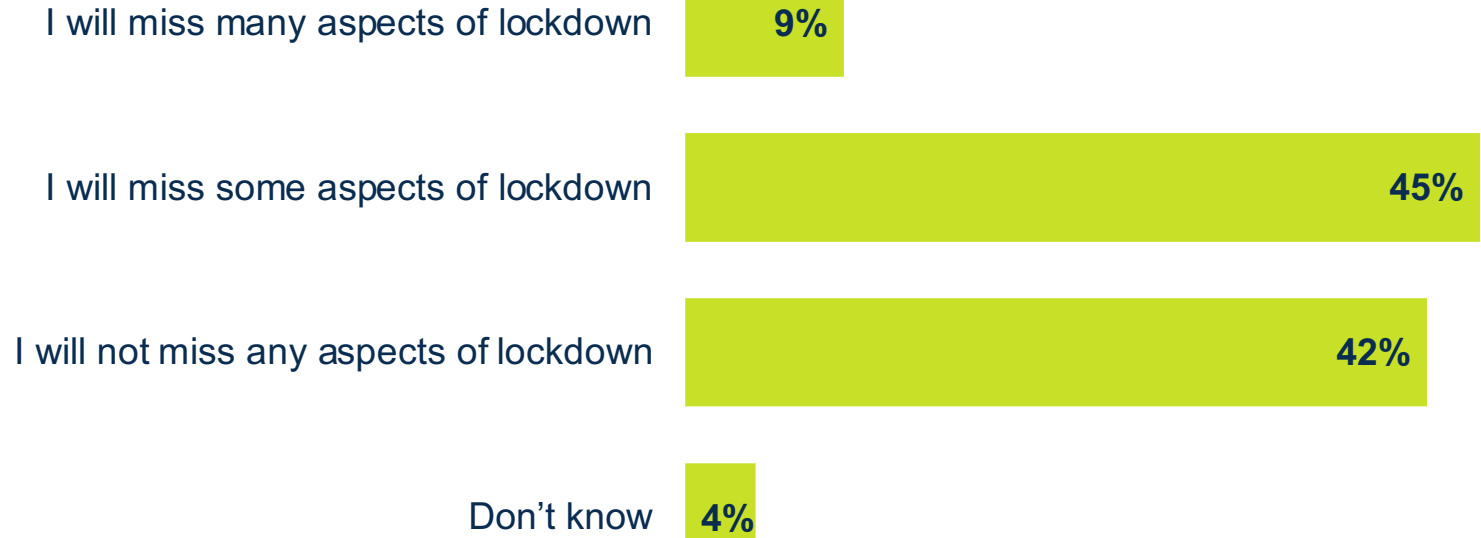
**What people will miss  
about lockdown**



The public are relatively divided on how they'll feel about saying goodbye to some of the Covid-19 restrictions.

A majority of Britons – 54% – say they'll miss at least some aspects of lockdown, while 42% say they won't miss any.

### Do you think you will or will not miss any aspects of lockdown when it is over?



When asked an open-ended question about what they will miss about lockdown, the public give a range of responses, which can be coded into different themes.

Family time is the top answer given (15%), along with peace and quiet on the roads (14%) and staying home (11%).

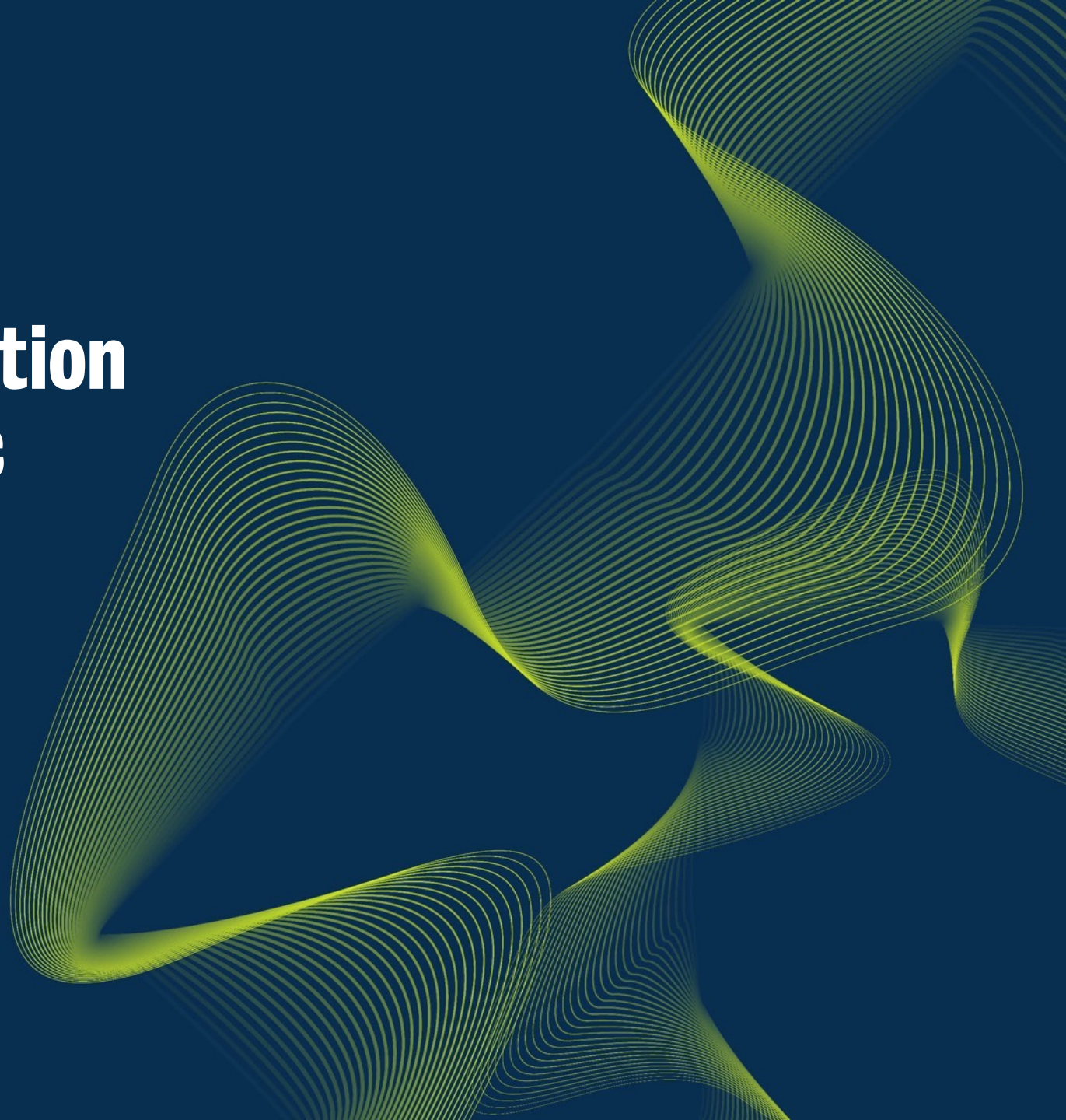
Women (20%) are twice as likely as men (9%) to say they'll miss family time.

### Which aspects of lockdown will you miss? Please give as much detail as you can (asked to the 54% of the public who say they'll miss parts of lockdown)

		Men	Women
Family time	15%	9%	20%
The peace and quiet on the roads / less traffic	14%	13%	15%
Staying home	11%	9%	13%
Not going to work / working from home	10%	9%	9%
Calmness / stress-free / peace / relaxation	8%	8%	8%
Not having to make excuses when I don't feel like socialising / not having to socialise	6%	4%	8%
Less crowded cities / places not so congested / fewer people out and about	6%	5%	6%
Having time for myself / free time	6%	6%	6%
Social distancing	5%	4%	6%
Quietness	5%	4%	6%
Less crowded shops / quieter supermarkets / shops / organised shops	4%	3%	4%
Not having to rush around all the time 'doing things' / slower pace	4%	3%	6%
Spending less money / saving money	3%	3%	3%
Not going out	3%	2%	4%



# **The state of the nation after the pandemic**

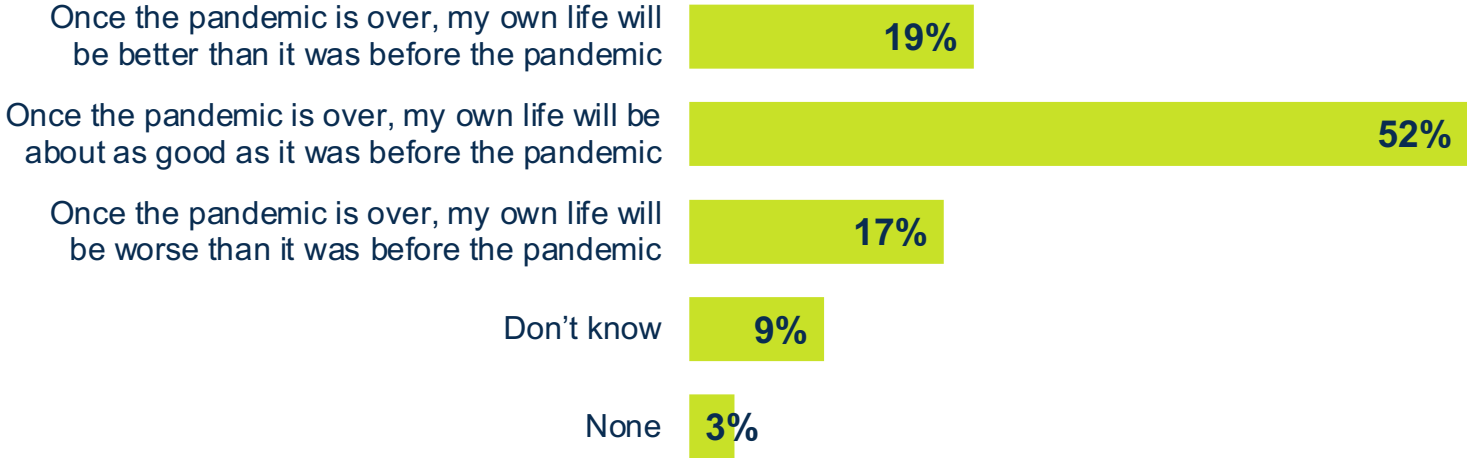


Half the public (52%) think that when the crisis is over their lives will be about as good as they were pre-pandemic, with one in five (19%) believing they will be better and around one in six (17%) thinking they will be worse.

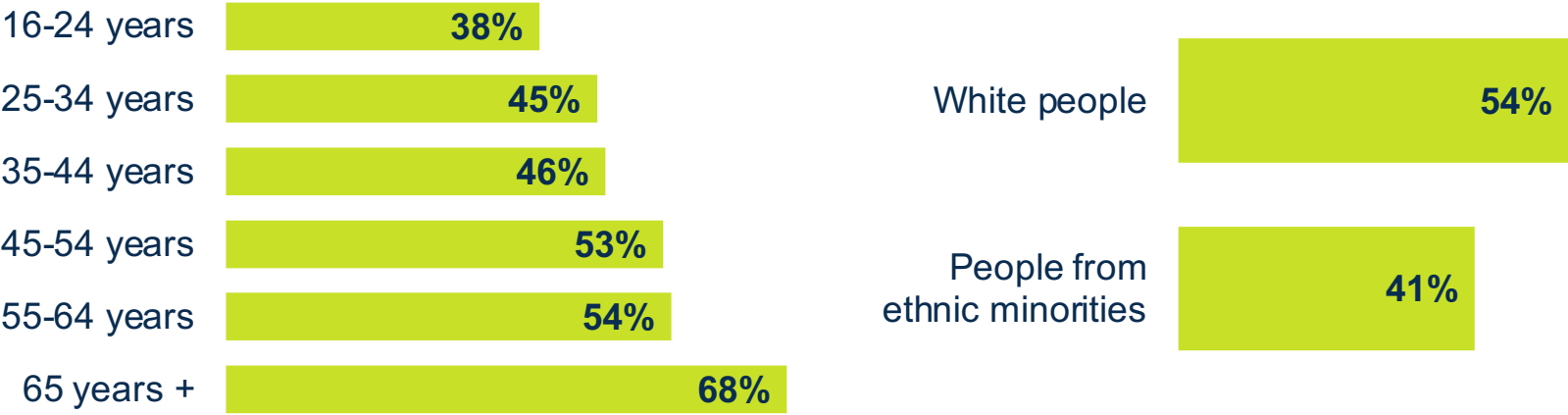
White people (54%) are much more likely than people from ethnic minorities (41%) to say their lives will emerge largely unaffected by the crisis.

And there is significant variation in views among age groups – the older people are, the more likely they are to predict their lives will be about as good as they were before the pandemic. 68% of those aged 65 and above believe this, declining steadily among younger age groups and ending with 38% of 16- to 24-year-olds who think their lives will be more or less the same post-pandemic.

**Which of these, if any, of these is closest to your own view? Please compare how you feel now with how you felt before the pandemic started**



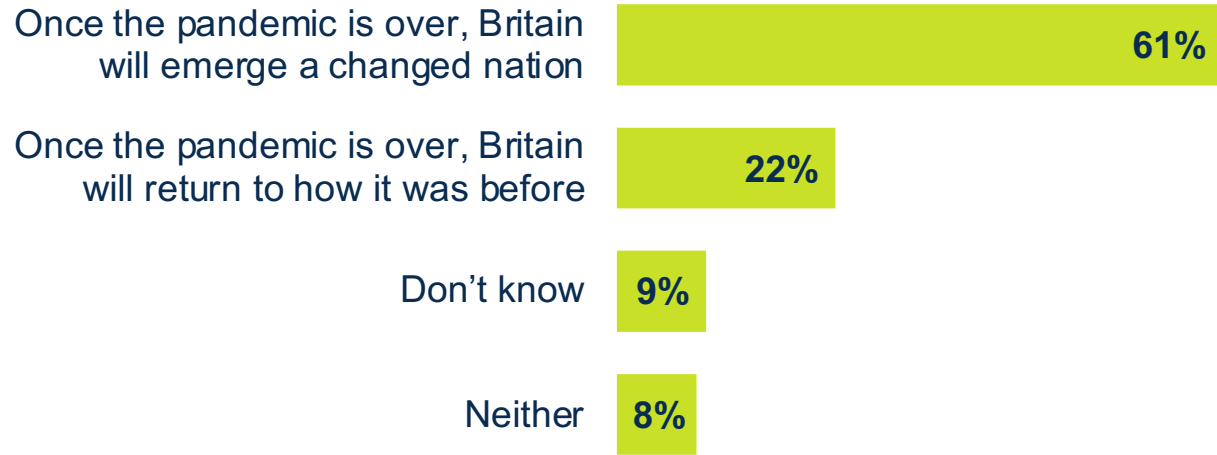
**% who say their own life will be about as good as it was before the pandemic**



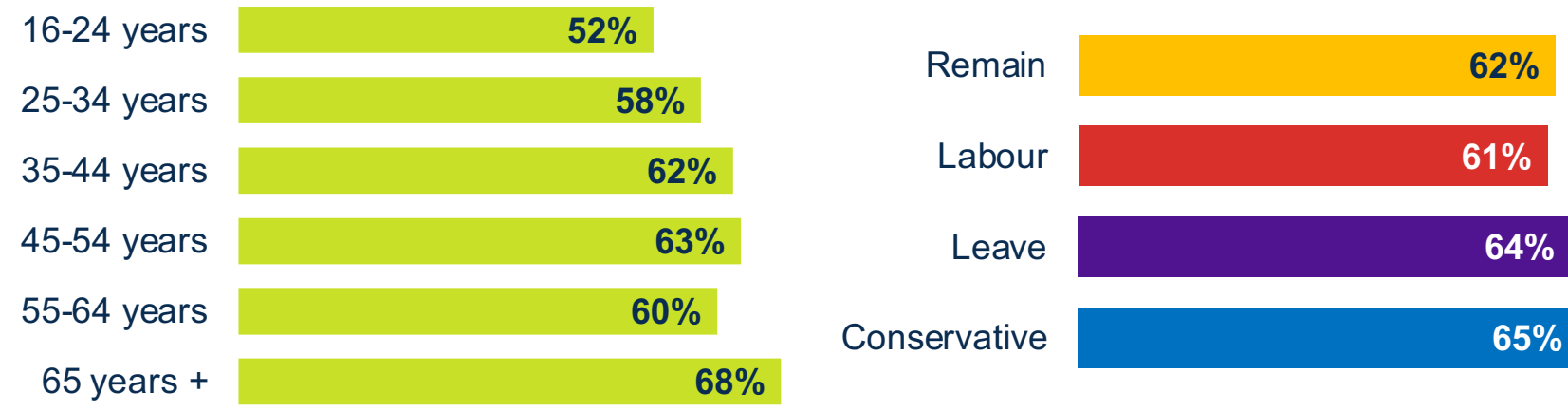
A majority of the public (61%) think Britain will emerge a change nation after the pandemic - compared with under a quarter (22%) who think the country will return to how it was before.

Belief that Britain will be different is consistent across political groups, and majorities in all age categories also hold this view.

Please read the following pairs of statements about the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Britain. For each of them, please say which is closest to your own view, or if you think neither is



% who say Britain will emerge a changed nation





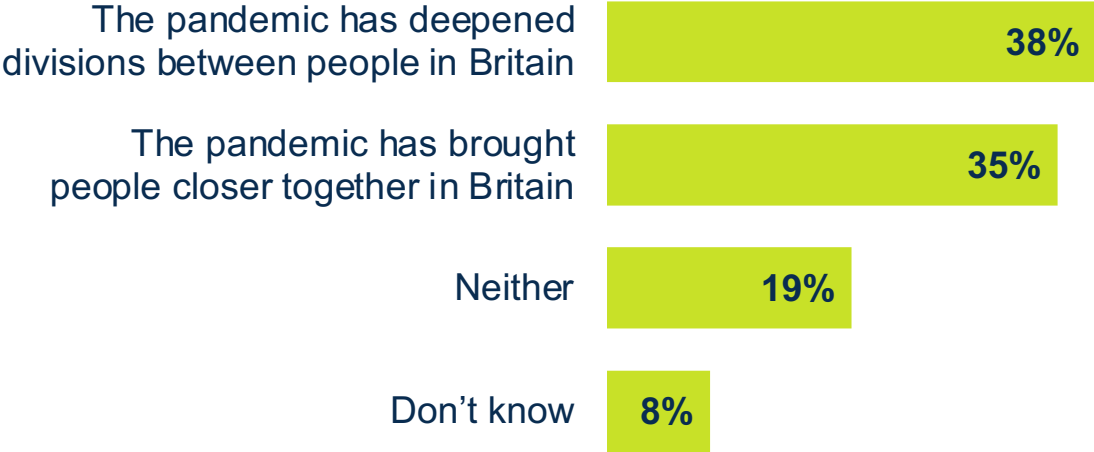
The public are split on whether the Covid crisis has deepened divisions in the country (38%) or brought people closer together (35%).

But there is a significant age gradient to the public's views, with people more likely to believe the pandemic has worsened divisions the younger they are.

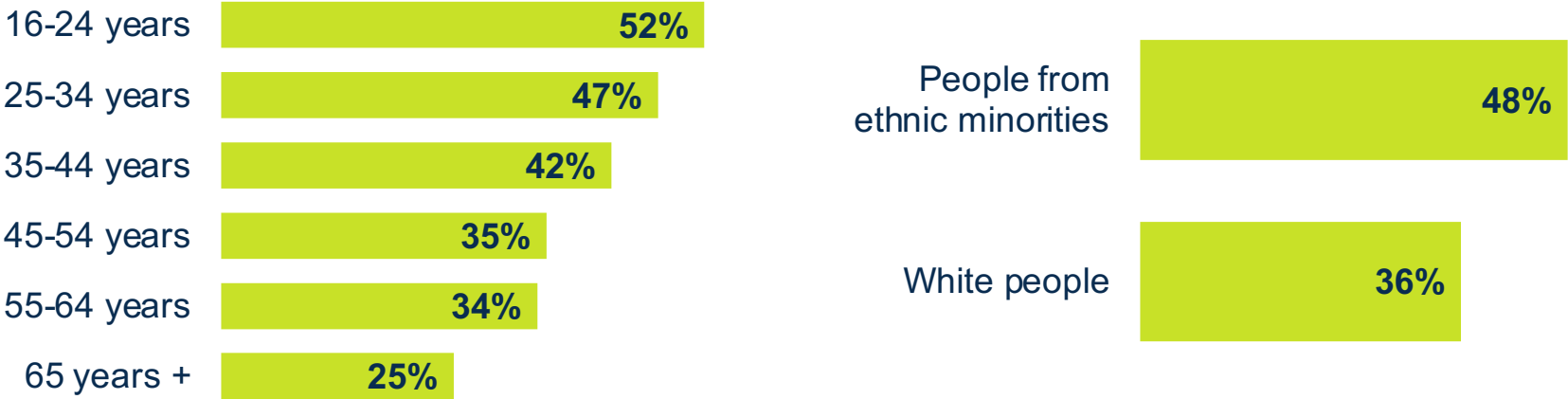
For example, half of 16- to 24-year-olds (52%) feel this way, compared with a quarter of those aged 65 and above (25%).

And nearly half of people from ethnic minorities (48%) believe divisions have deepened, versus just over a third of white people (36%) who believe the same.

**Please read the following pairs of statements about the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Britain. For each of them, please say which is closest to your own view, or if you think neither is**



**% who say the pandemic has deepened divisions**



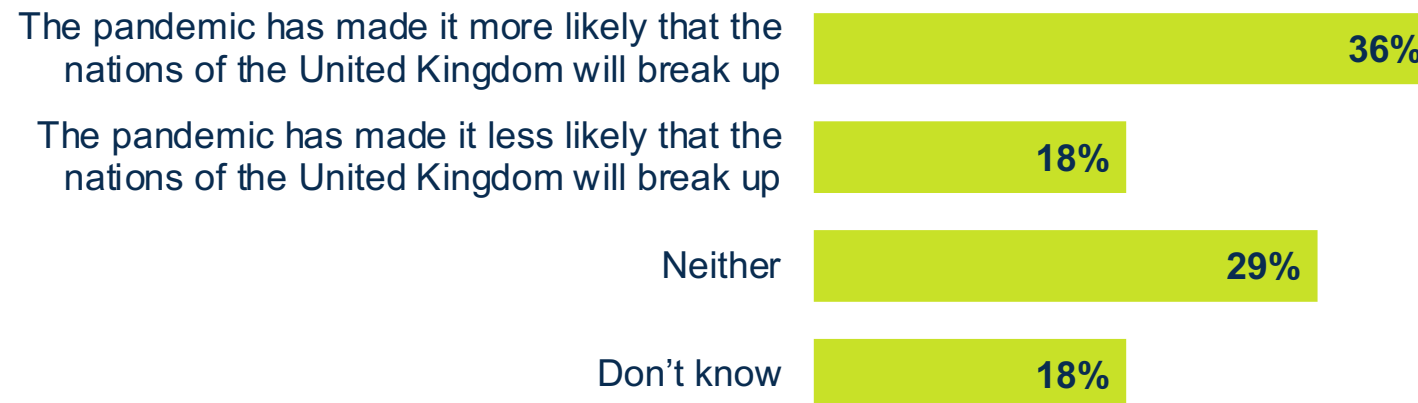


36% think the crisis makes it more likely that the nations of the UK will break up – twice as many as the 18% who believe the pandemic makes this less likely to occur. 29% say neither outcome is close to their view.

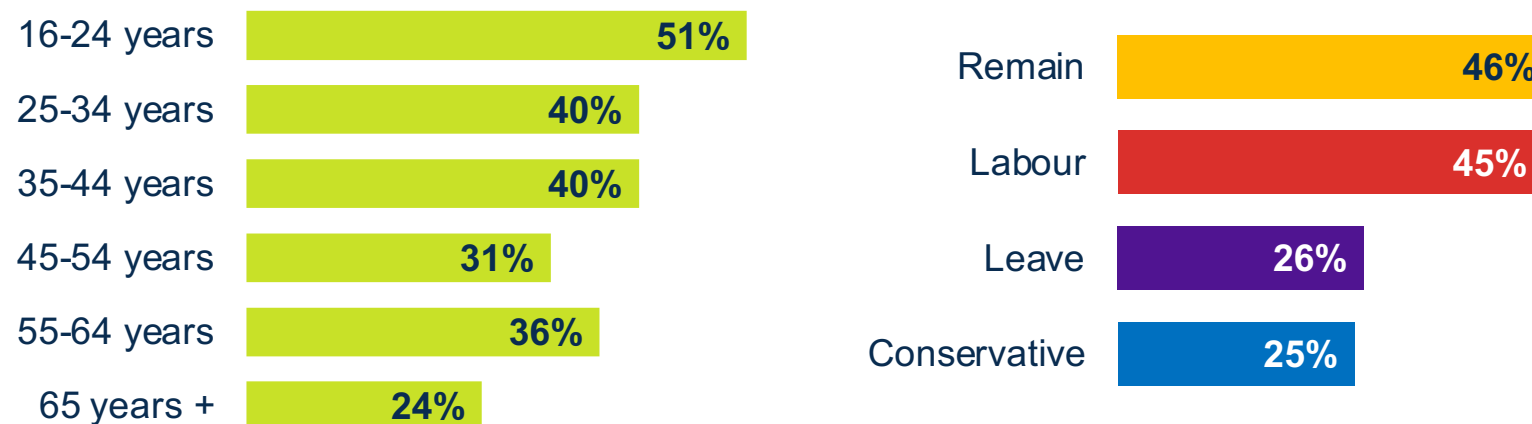
Remain (46%) and Labour voters (45%) are nearly twice as likely as Leave (26%) and Conservative voters (25%) to believe the crisis increases the chances of the UK splitting up.

And those aged 65 and above are least likely to hold this view – 24% of this group think this outcome is now more likely, compared with 51% of those aged 16 to 24 (although young people are also slightly more likely to believe the pandemic reduces the chances).

**Please read the following pairs of statements about the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Britain. For each of them, please say which is closest to your own view, or if you think neither is**



#### % who say **more likely** UK will break up

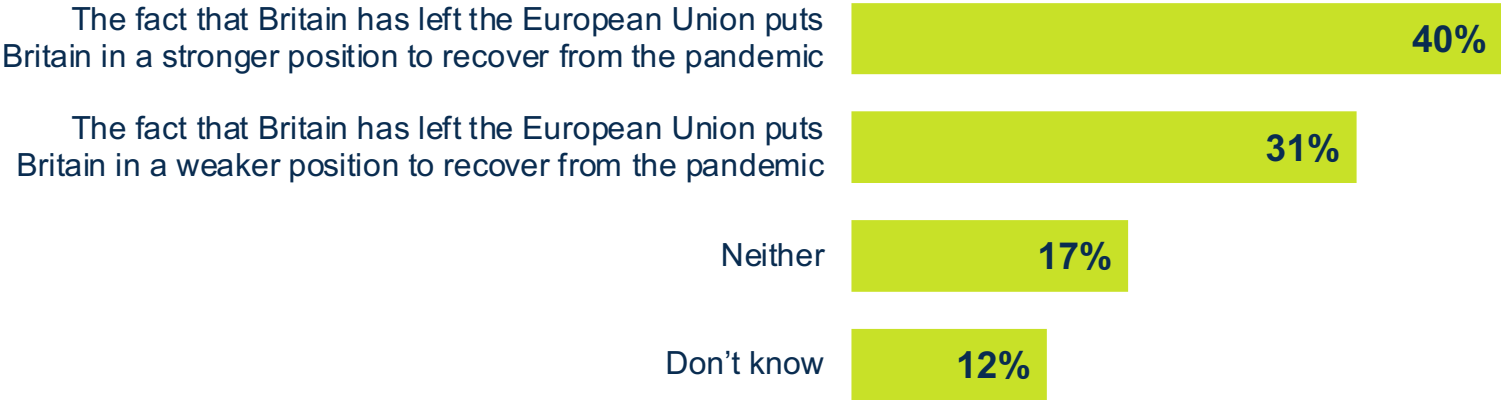


40% of the public think Brexit puts the country in a stronger position to recover from the pandemic, compared with 31% who think it makes Britain's position weaker.

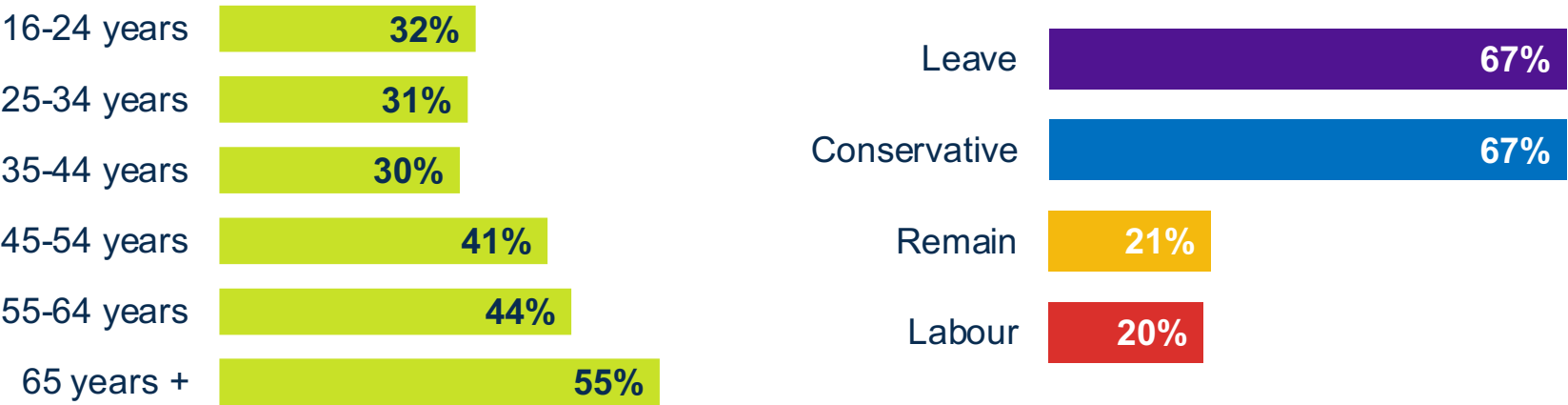
Conservative (67%) and Leave voters (67%) are more than three times as likely as Labour (20%) and Remain voters (21%) to think Britain's position is stronger because of Brexit.

There is also a big age divide in views, with those aged 65 and over (55%) particularly likely to believe Brexit is positive for the country's chance of recovering from Covid.

Please read the following pairs of statements about the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Britain. For each of them, please say which is closest to your own view, or if you think neither is



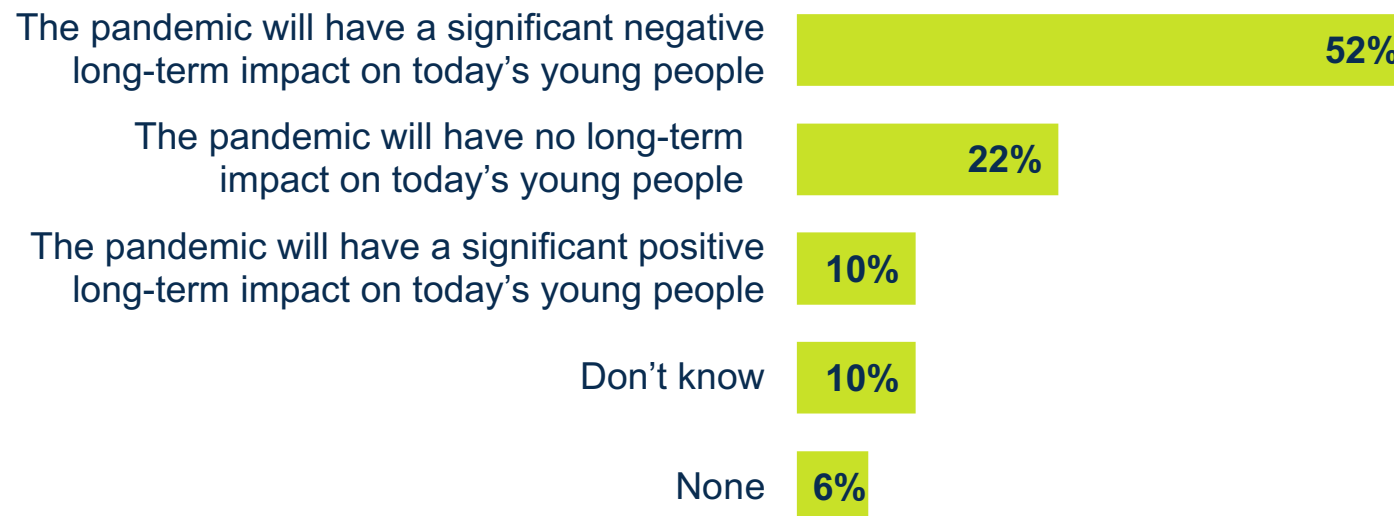
% who say Brexit puts Britain in a stronger position to recover



52% think the pandemic will negatively impact young people in the long term, compared with 22% who believe it will have no long-term effect and 10% who believe the effect will be positive.

Belief that the crisis will be bad for young people is relatively consistent across age groups, although 35- to 44-year-olds are most likely to believe the impacts will be negative (62%).

### Which of these, if any, of these is closest to your own view? Please compare how you feel now with how you felt before the pandemic started

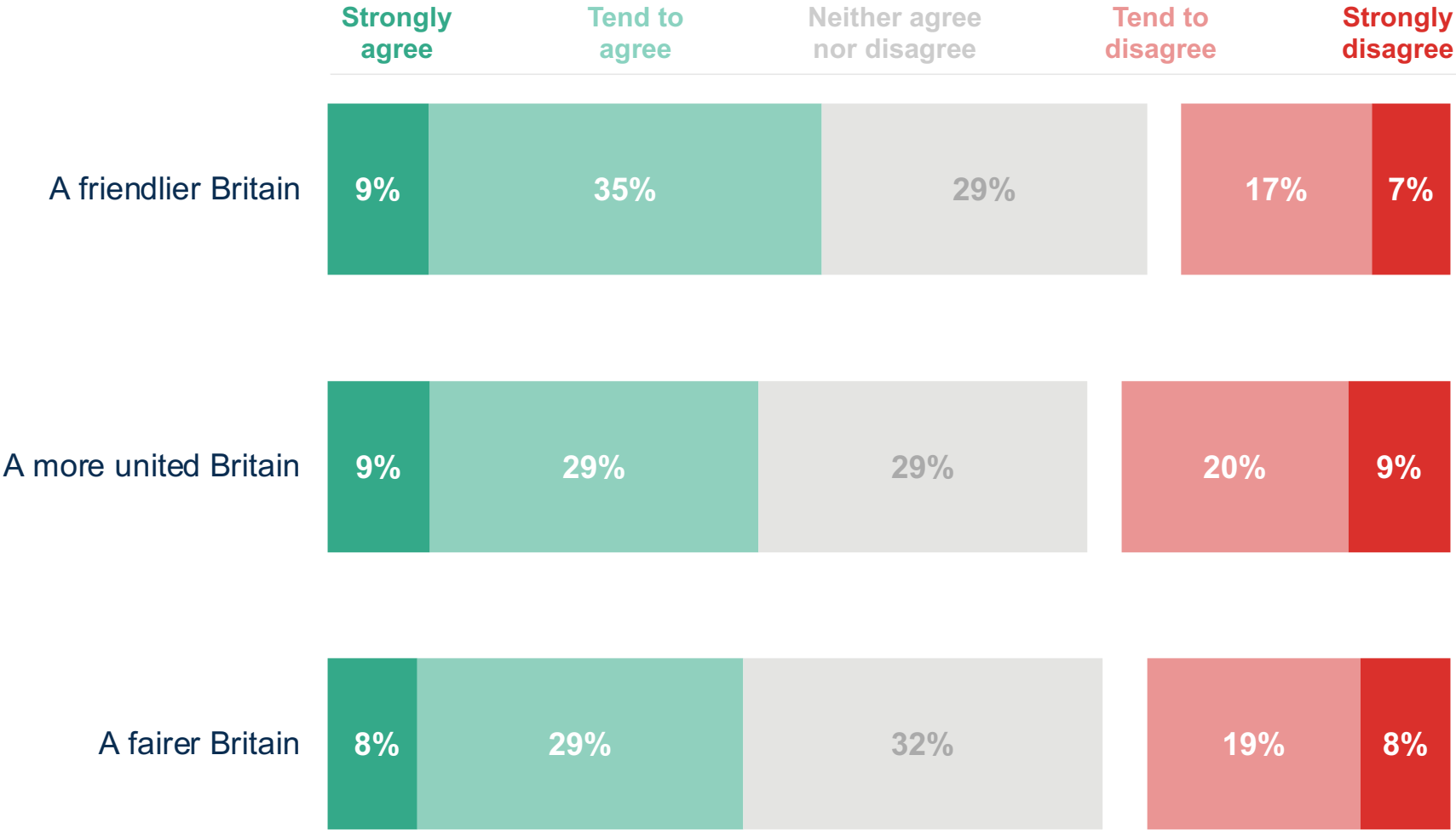


### % who think the pandemic will have a **negative** long-term impact on young people



The public are on balance most likely to think the end of the pandemic provides an opportunity to create a friendlier (44%), more united (39%) and fairer (37%) Britain – but the proportion who believe this falls short of a majority, and around a three in 10 neither agree nor disagree that it’s an opportunity for change.

To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree that the end of the pandemic provides an opportunity to create...



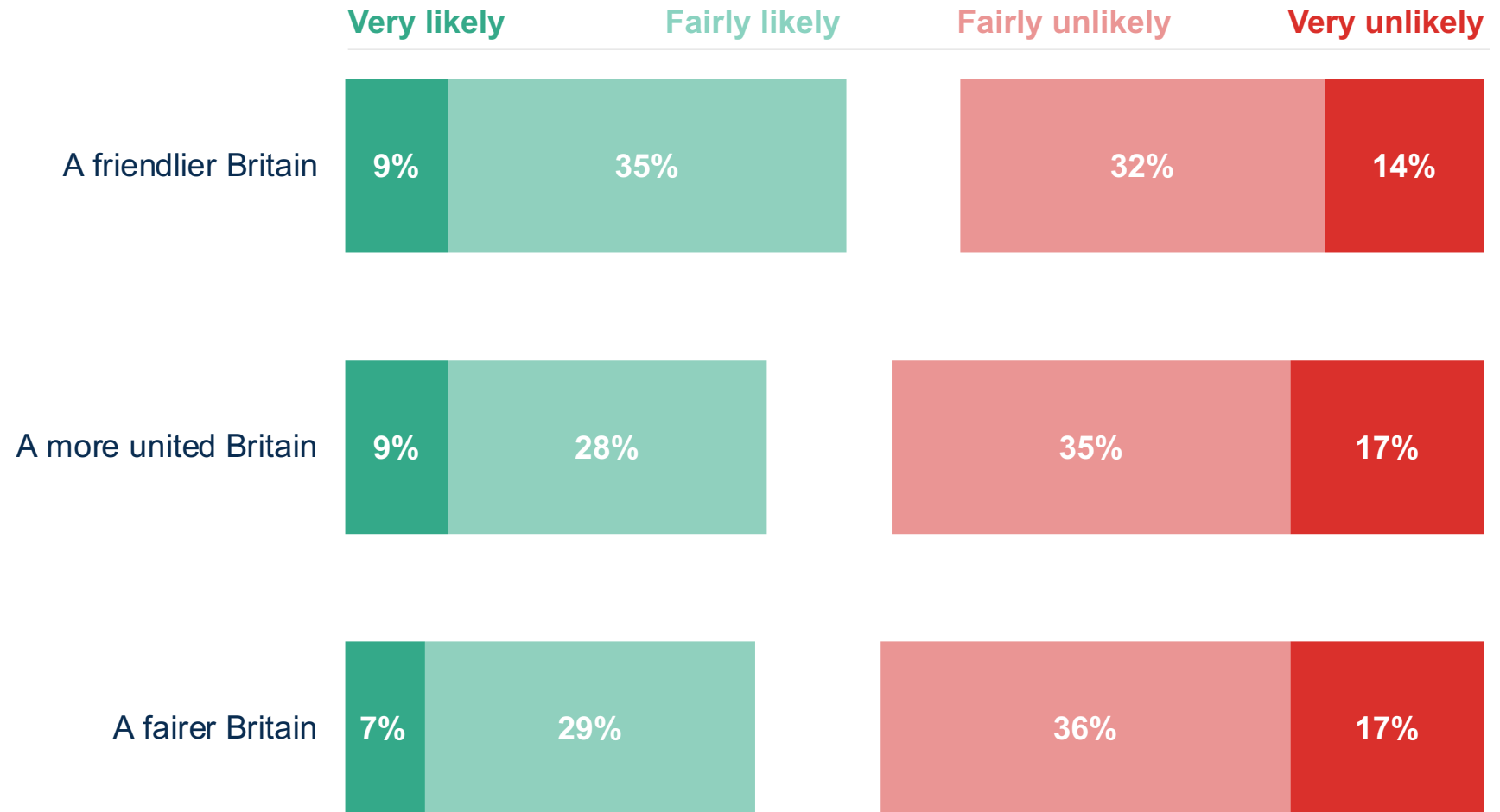


But while more people think the end of Covid is an opportunity for change than don't, when asked how *likely* they think positive changes are to occur, the public are sceptical.

For example, 53% think it's unlikely that Britain will be a fairer country – compared with 36% who think it is.

Similar proportions think the same about the chances of creating a more united Britain, and the public are evenly divided on whether the country will emerge a friendlier place (44%) or not (45%).

And how **likely or unlikely** do you think it is that the end of the pandemic will lead to....



**Will people do anything differently  
post-pandemic, and who should be  
given more support?**



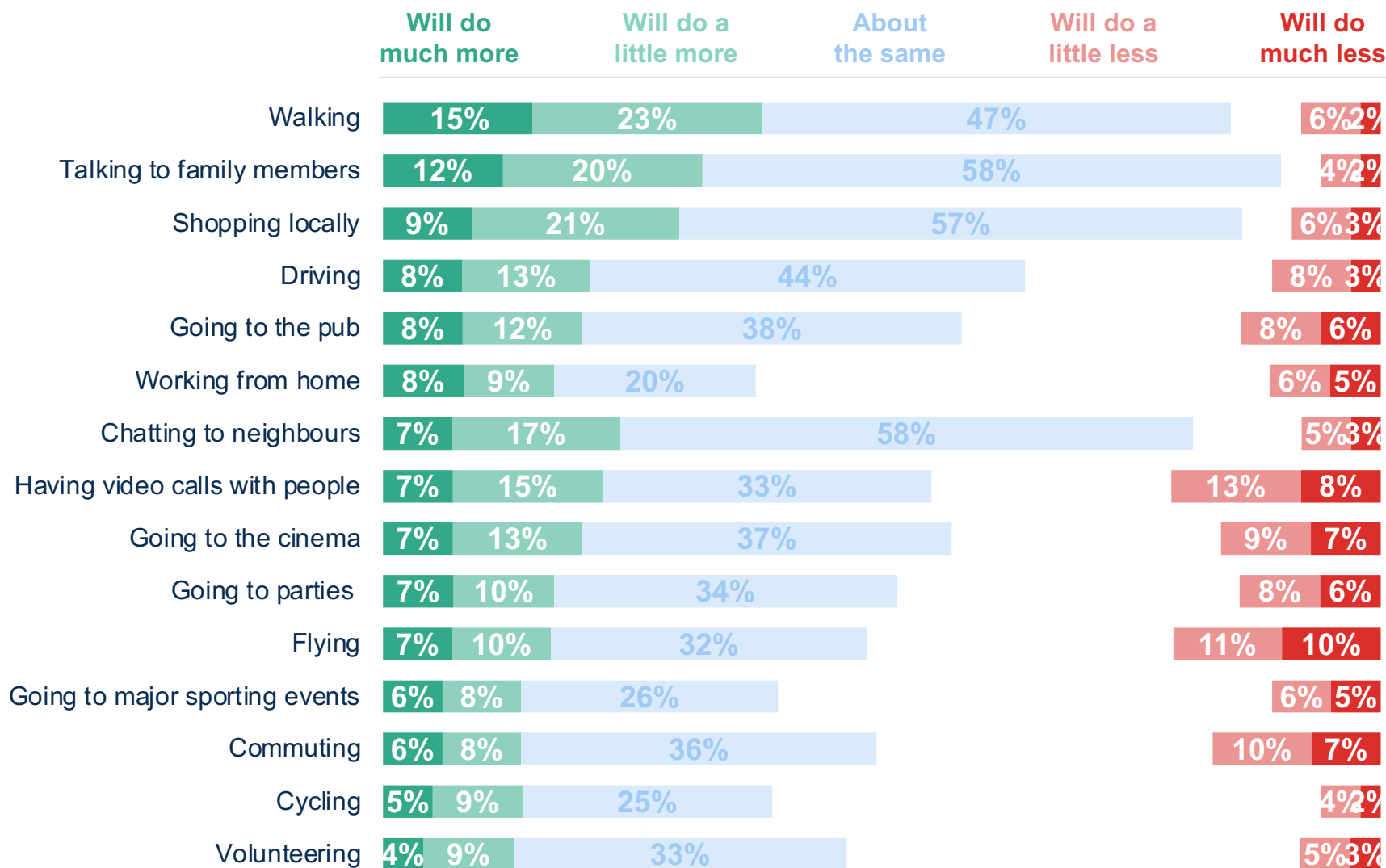
Walking (38%) comes top of the list of what people intend to do more of post-pandemic, followed by talking to family members (32%) and shopping locally (30%).

Around one in five expect to do more driving (21%) and to go to the pub more (20%).

There is also relatively little expectation of changes in ways of working: 17% expect to work from home more, and the same proportion anticipate commuting less.

And people are relatively split on whether their use of video calls will change post-crisis: 22% think they'll do more of them, and 21% think they'll do less.

## Compared with the year **before the pandemic**, do you expect to do more, less or about the same amount of these activities **in the year after restrictions are lifted?**



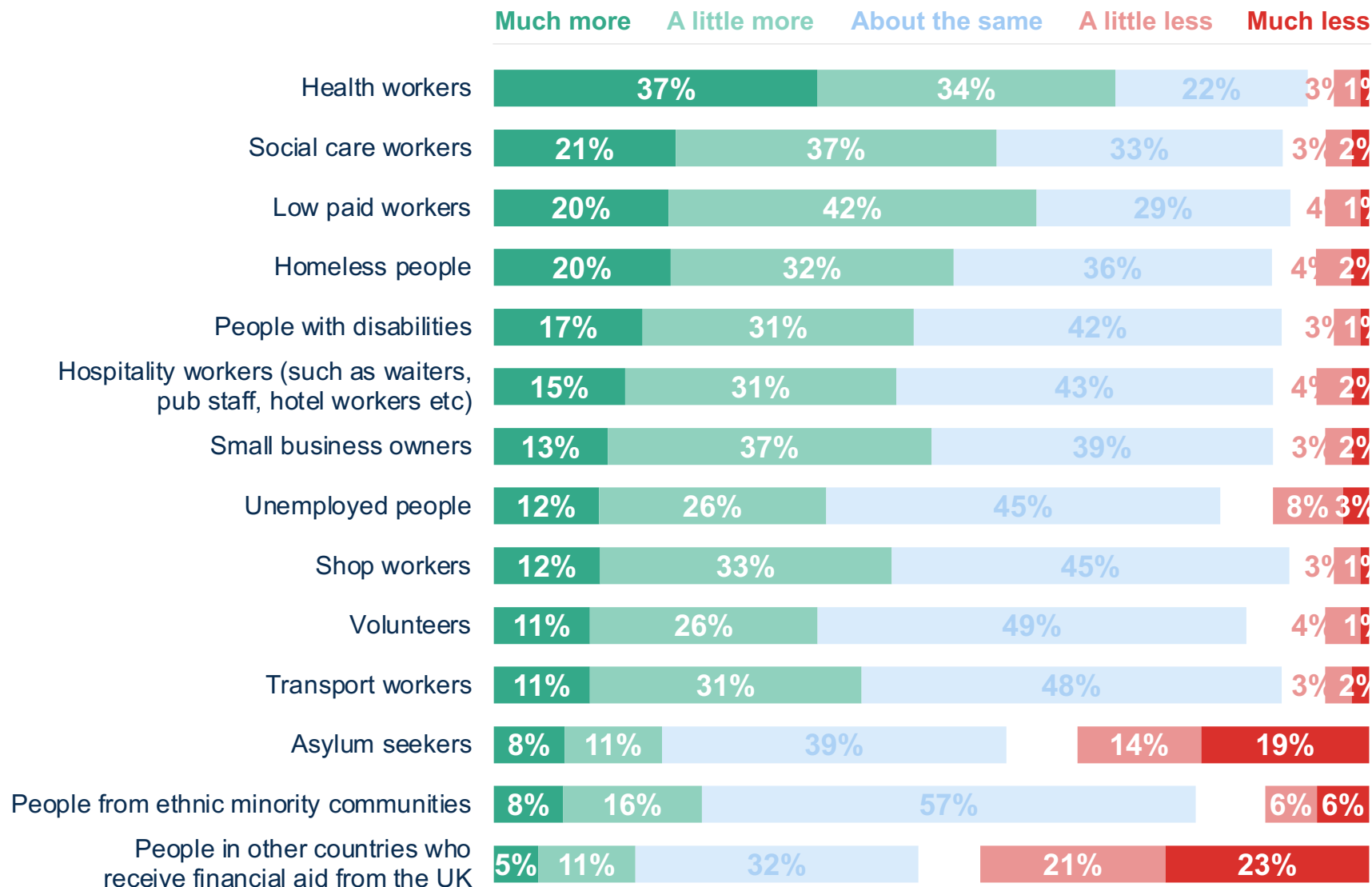
Base: 2,442 UK adults aged 16+, interviewed 12–15 March 2021



70% of the public think the government should give more financial support to health workers than they received before the crisis, while 62% and 58% say the same about the low paid and social care workers respectively.

Asylum seekers and people in other countries who receive financial aid from the UK are viewed most harshly – for example, 44% of Britons think the latter group should get less support than they had pre-pandemic.

Compared with the year **before the pandemic**, do you feel the government should give more or less financial support to each of the following groups of people **after restrictions are lifted, or about the same?**



Base: 2,442 UK adults aged 16+, interviewed 12–15 March 2021



# THE POLICY INSTITUTE

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