

OBS'COP 2020 CLIMATE CHANGE AND PUBLIC OPINIONS INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATORY

Presentation of results in the UK

NOVEMBER 2020

GAME CHANGERS



A reference study in 30 countries

The sample of countries questioned includes:

- 1 Countries with the **highest CO2 emissions in tons per year**, which can therefore be considered as the biggest contributors to climate change
- 2 Along with countries selected based on:
 - their **geographic location**: African countries (no African countries among the countries with the highest emissions) or located in the center of the European Union (Belgium).
 - their **exemplariness** when it comes to fighting climate change and the socioeconomic model (Norway, Sweden)



Context and methodology

Context

A wide-ranging, brand new study initiated by EDF and conducted by Ipsos in 30 countries, including countries with the highest CO2 emissions, and representative of two-thirds of the global population.

As a major player in the energy sector on an international level, EDF wanted to produce an international status report on opinions, knowledge, expectations and levels of engagement in relation to climate change, to add to reflection and contribute to the constructive search for solutions for the future.

This report is intended for the UK only.

Methodology

Nationally representative sample of the population aged 16 and over.

Sample size: 1000 respondents

Quotas: gender, age, region, profession, agglomeration size

Fieldwork dates: 22 to 29 September 2020

Data collection method: Ipsos online panel

Findings (1/2)

Climate change: status of knowledge and perceptions among populations

The Covid-19 crisis has not eclipsed concern about the environment

- The British have shown themselves to be heavily marked by the Coronavirus epidemic, which they put at the top of their list of concerns (65%). The environment also worries them: this is the 4th-ranking concern among the British population (44% vs 39% worldwide) and is only a few points behind the cost of living (49%) or the health system (45%).
- **There are many concerns pertaining to the environment:** the British are primarily concerned about the question of waste accumulation in their country (67%), with climate change in second position (60%). Note that extreme weather events, the most visible expression of climate change, are an increasing concern (46%, +6 points).
- **This concern is directly expressed in what the population wants:** despite a worsening economic situation, priority should first be given to the environment rather than to economic growth (52% vs 32%).

The reality of climate change is no longer disputed, but almost one third of the Britons interviewed still have doubts about the human origin of the phenomenon

- The UK shows a level of climate skepticism similar to the world average (31% reject the idea of human-generated climate change vs. 32% worldwide).

The CO₂ = climate change equation is particularly well-known in the UK

- More so than elsewhere, a large majority of Britons correctly mentioned greenhouse gas emissions (73% vs 62% worldwide) and deforestation (57% vs 42%) as causes of climate change. Electricity production methods using fossil fuels are considered to be the most polluting (88% for coal-fired power plants). Nuclear energy, although decarbonized, is thought to produce CO₂ by 37% of Britons (vs 50% worldwide).

Divergent opinions on its consequences

- Climate change has become a tangible reality since 65% claim to have already witnessed its effects. The most feared risk is by far an increase in extreme weather events, mentioned by 65% of respondents (vs 61% worldwide) and rising sea levels, a concern that is a reminder of the UK's island status (62% vs 33% worldwide).
- Despite the above, only half of Britons think that climate change will ONLY have negative consequences in their region (53%). However slightly more of them share that opinion this year (+2 points).

Lastly, climate change is generating increasing concern for a majority of the population

- Indeed, almost 2 out of 5 Britons are « *much more worried* » than they were a year ago about climate change and are generally more worried than the average for the countries questioned (18%). The level of concern is still lower than the world average (70%).

Findings (2/2)

Climate change: who should take action first and foremost and to do what?

Mobilization should primarily be driven by governments, who should be doing more about it in the eyes of the public

- Expectations of the government are high and it is identified as the player that should take action first and foremost (75%, stable figure compared to the previous wave). Citizens and companies also have their responsibilities in this struggle and even more so than last year: 50% for citizens (+4 points) and 49% for companies (+8 points).
- **The gap between expectations of the government and its estimated action is very big:** while 75% consider that it should take action, only 49% think that it is really acting (26-point gap). This gap can also be seen on the subject of what the population wants in relation to the environment vs. economy priority: only 32% want priority to be given to economic growth, but 76% think that that is what will actually happen.
- With this in mind, only 30% have noticed the authorities implementing actions **to adapt** to climate change.

Britons are also not very engaged in everyday actions and feel somewhat helpless about which actions are useful and effective for fighting climate change.

- Citizen mobilization for the climate is viewed as growing in the UK by over a third of the people questioned (37%). This feeling is stronger than elsewhere in the world (25%).
- For a majority, a change in lifestyles is what will enable climate change to be limited, and not technical progress (59%). A similar proportion also claim to have changed their own behavior over the last 12 months (60%).
- However, in detail, fewer than 2 out of 10 people (15%) know exactly what needs to be done to fight climate change on their level.
- In terms of individual actions, **gestures against climate change are still not a very integral part of everyday life**, with the exception of sorting waste (79% do so systematically). However, on the whole, they show themselves to be more active than the world average.
- On a more political level, around 1 out of every 2 people is mobilized in their own way: 58% have already signed a petition, 51% have already boycotted a product and 47% have voted for a political party because it was strongly committed to fighting climate change.

What measures would be acceptable if decided on by governments? There is little room for maneuver in the western countries and in the UK...

- Demonstrably, the conceivable measures for fighting climate change give rise to contrasting opinions: the level of acceptability drops whenever they directly force something upon citizens (taxes, travel, etc.). Measures aimed at taxing private individuals or limiting travel are not really approved of, or at a low level: 41% find it acceptable to have urban tollbooths at the entrance to big cities, 46% are for taxing household waste to encourage people to waste less, and 51% for making products manufactured abroad more expensive.

Climate change: status of knowledge and perceptions among populations

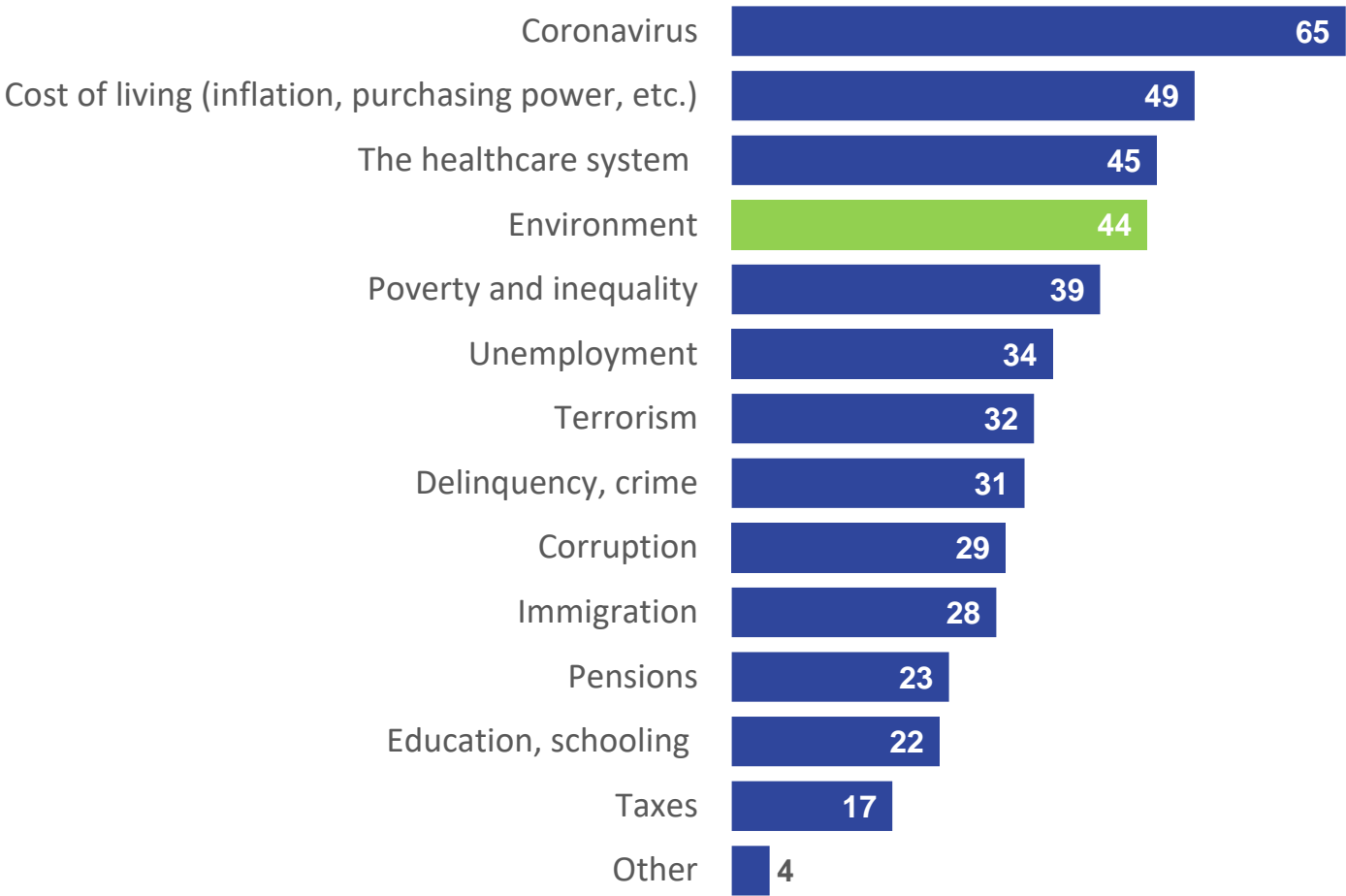
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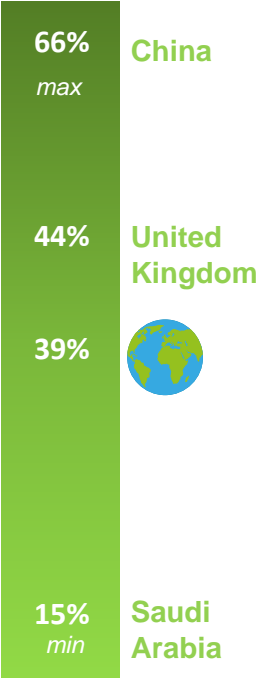
The COVID-19 crisis has not eclipsed concerns about the environment

With the United Kingdom among the countries most affected by Covid, Britons put the epidemic at the top of their list of concerns. The environment comes in 4th place.

Hierarchy of concerns

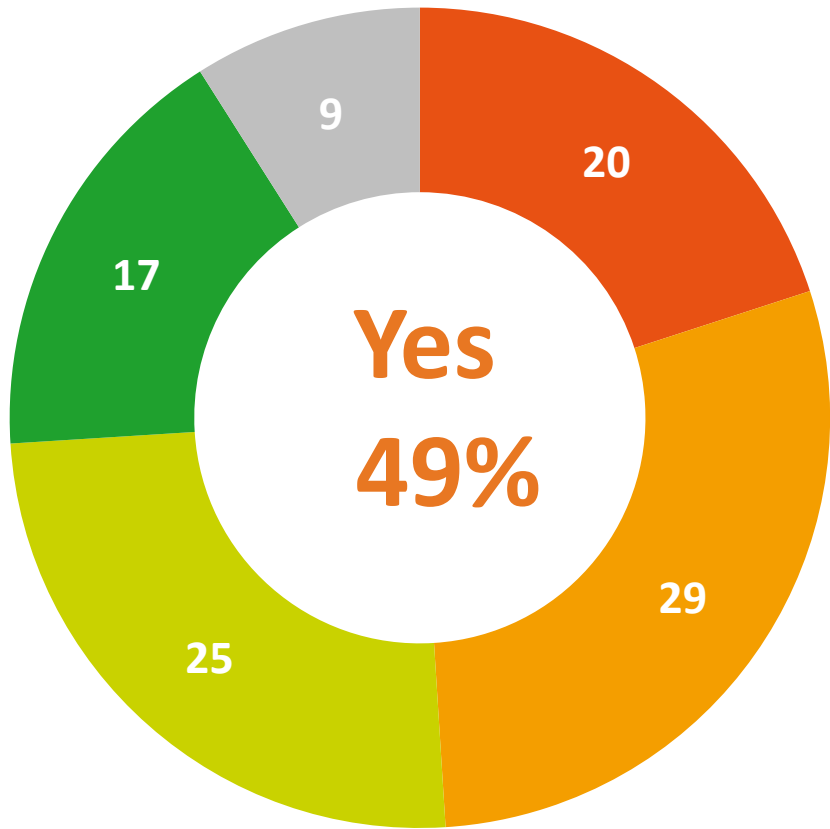


% Environment

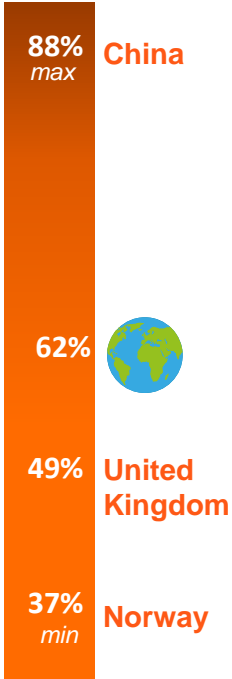


Opinions on the link between the impact human activity has on nature and the epidemic are very divided.

Do you think that the Coronavirus pandemic is linked to the negative effects of human activity on nature and the environment?



% Yes



Yes, very much so

Yes, in part

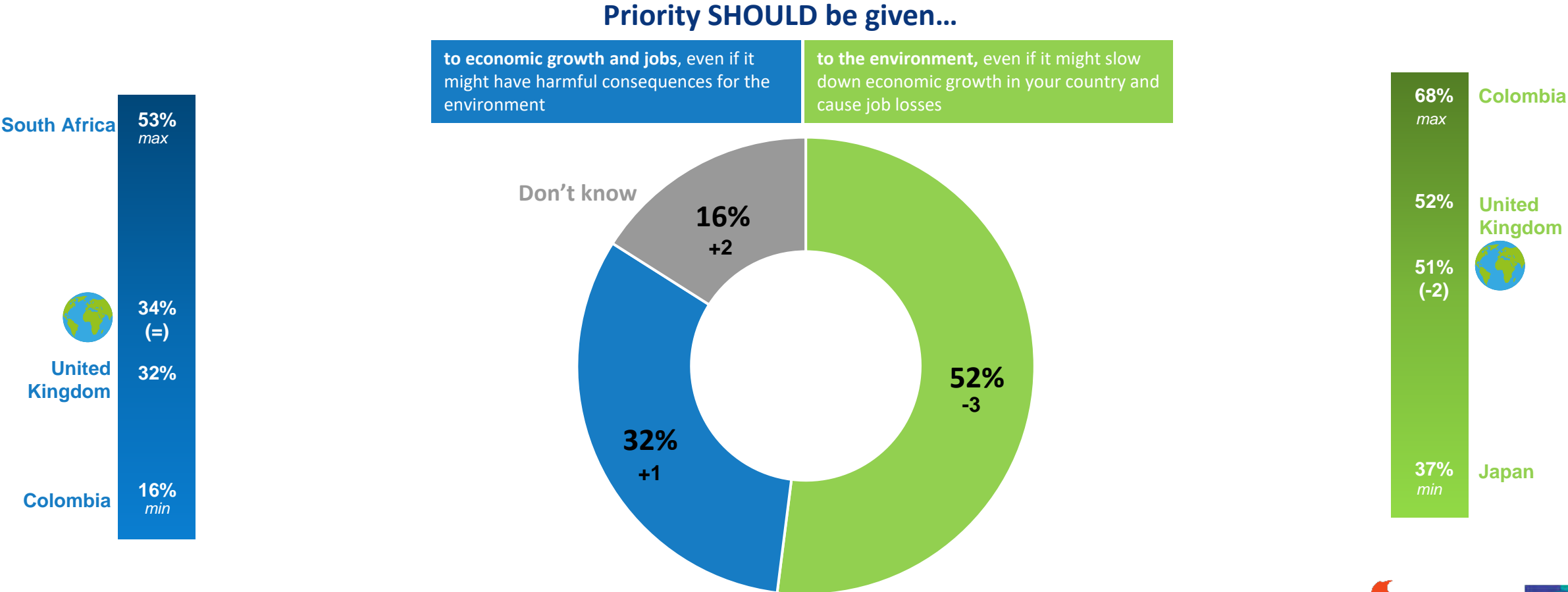
No, not really

No, not at all

I don't know

Despite a worsening economic situation, priority should be given to the environment according to a small majority of the British population.

Which of the following two statements do you agree with most?



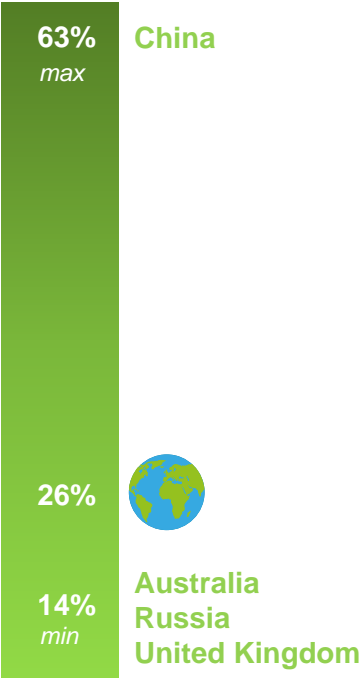
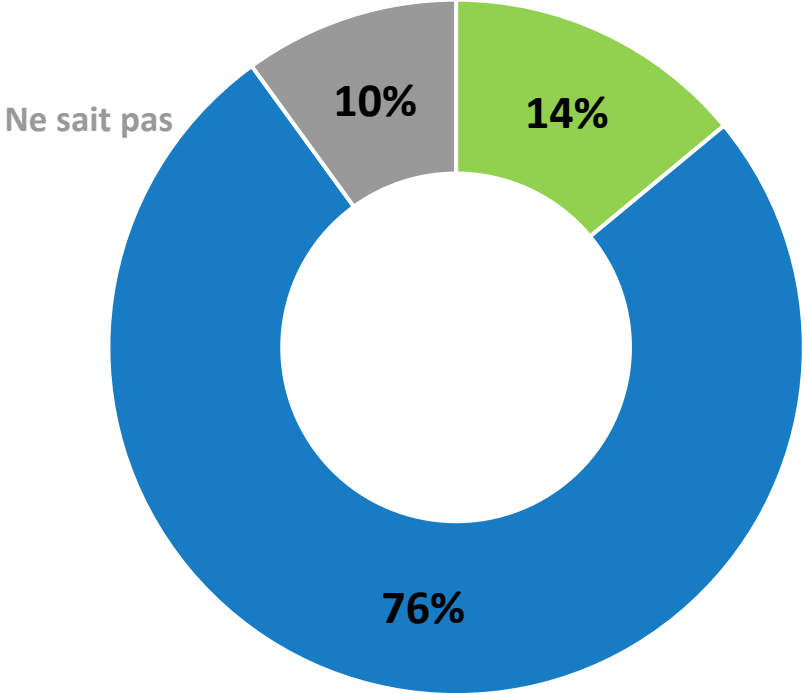
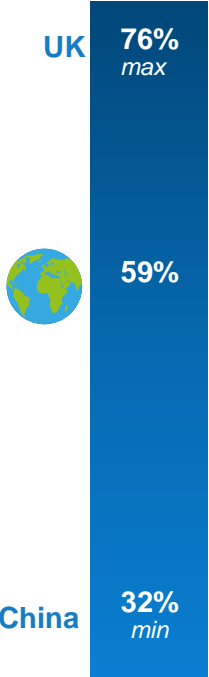
But Britons think that priority will actually be given to the economy and jobs over the months to come

And what do you think will happen over the next few months in your country?

We WILL TAKE priority...

to economic growth and jobs, even if it might have harmful consequences for the environment

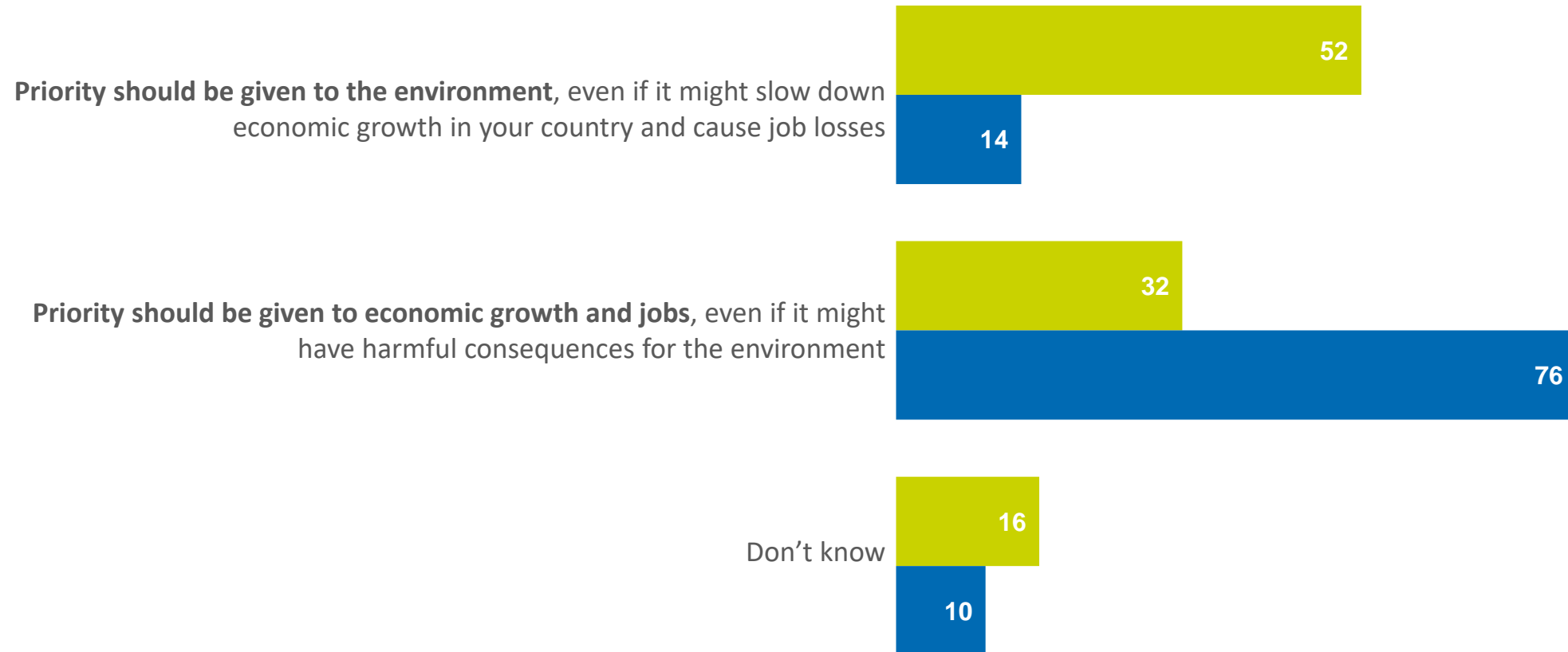
to the environment, even if it might slow down economic growth in your country and cause job losses



So there is a big gap between what the people want and what they think will happen.

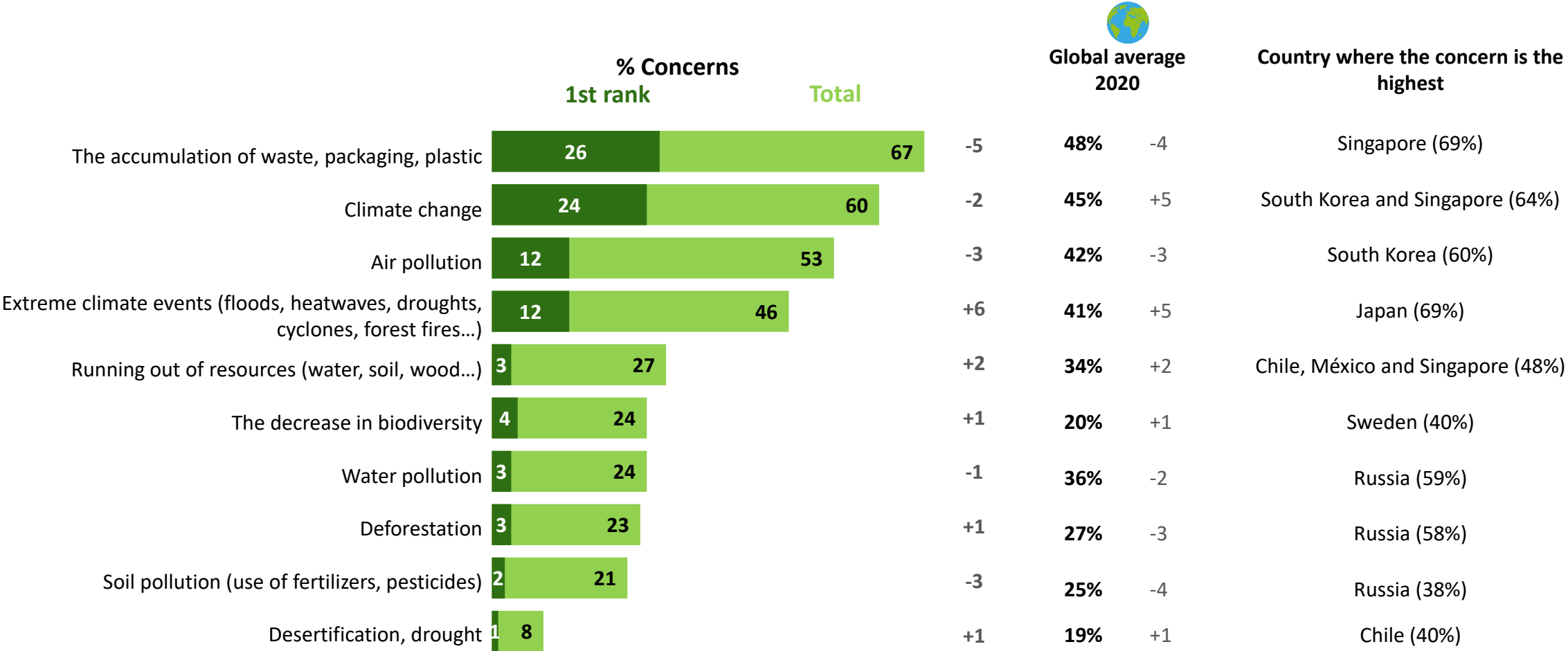
Which of the following two statements do you agree with most?

And what do you think will happen over the next few months in your country?



Among problems relating to the environment, extreme weather events are increasingly worrisome. Climate change is of concern to a large majority of the public.

Which environmental problems do you think are the most concerning in your country?

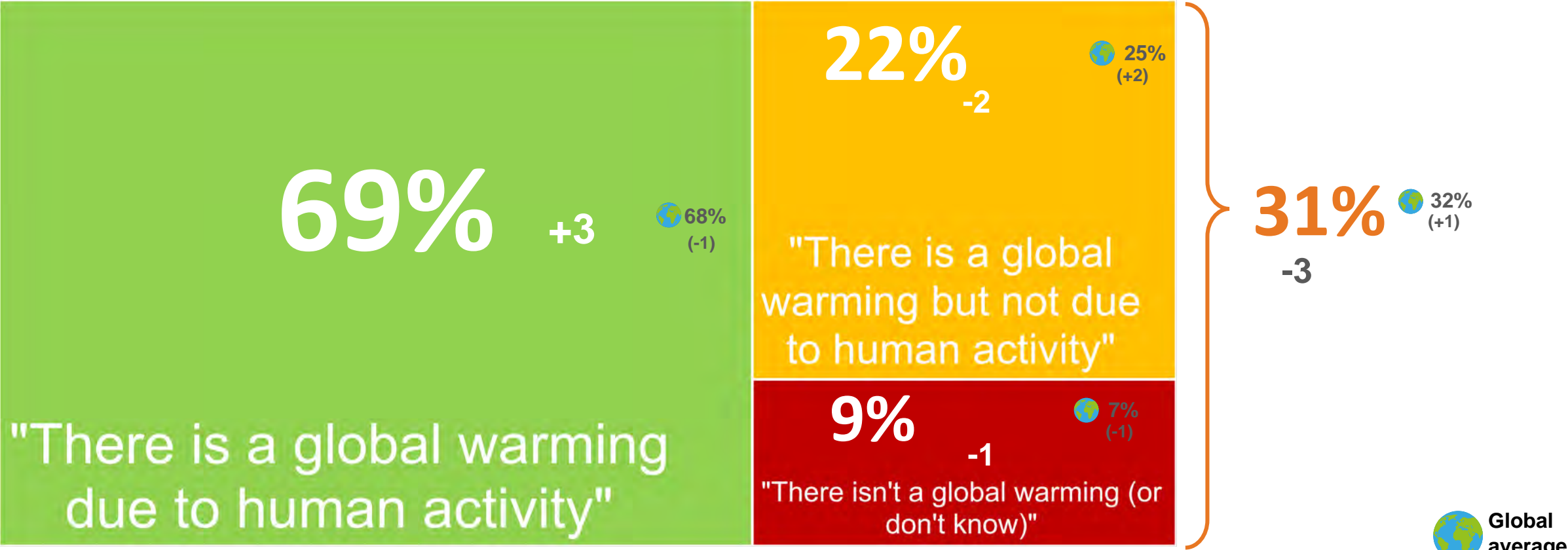




The reality of climate change is no longer disputed, but almost a third of the Britons interviewed still have doubts about the human origins of the phenomenon

More than two-thirds of citizens remain convinced of the existence of human-generated climate change, but almost a third are still climate skeptics.

Summary of climate skepticism levels

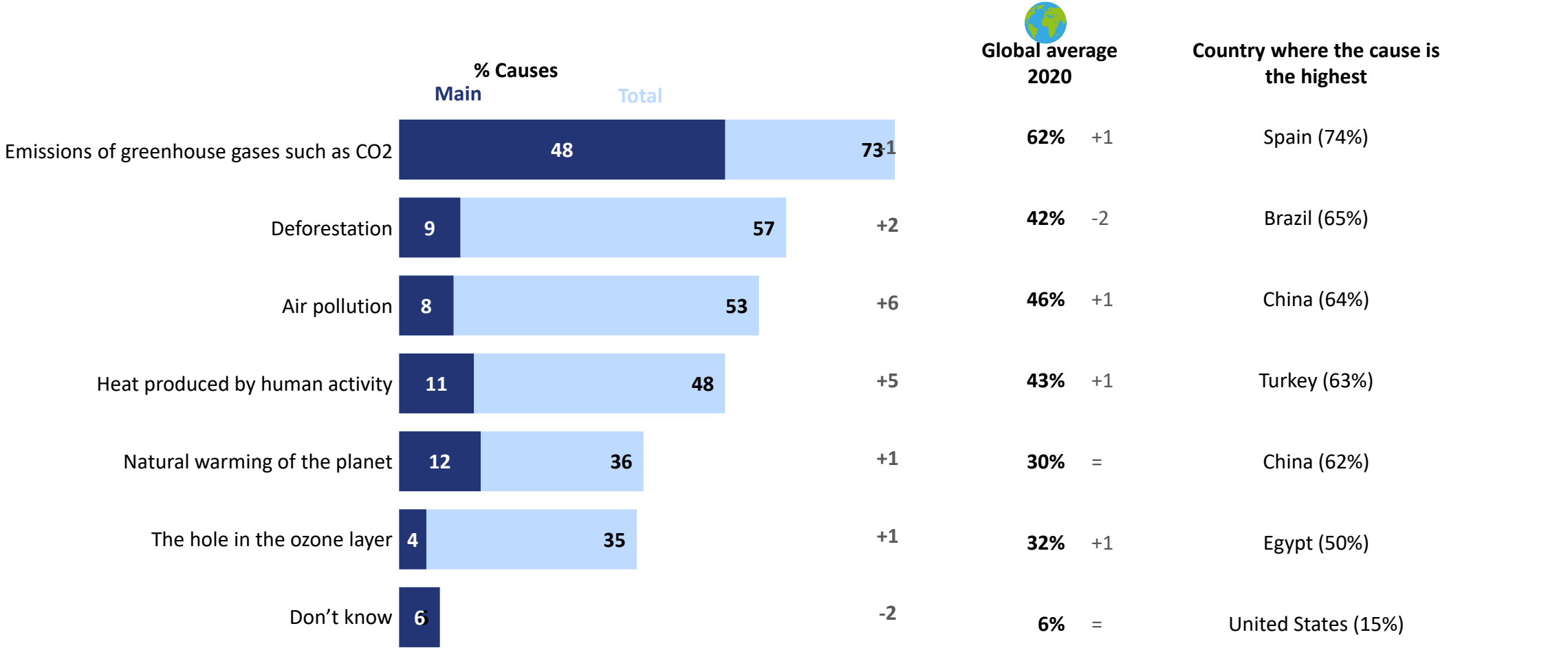




While the CO₂ = climate change equation is still well-known, climate change still generates confusion as to its causes...

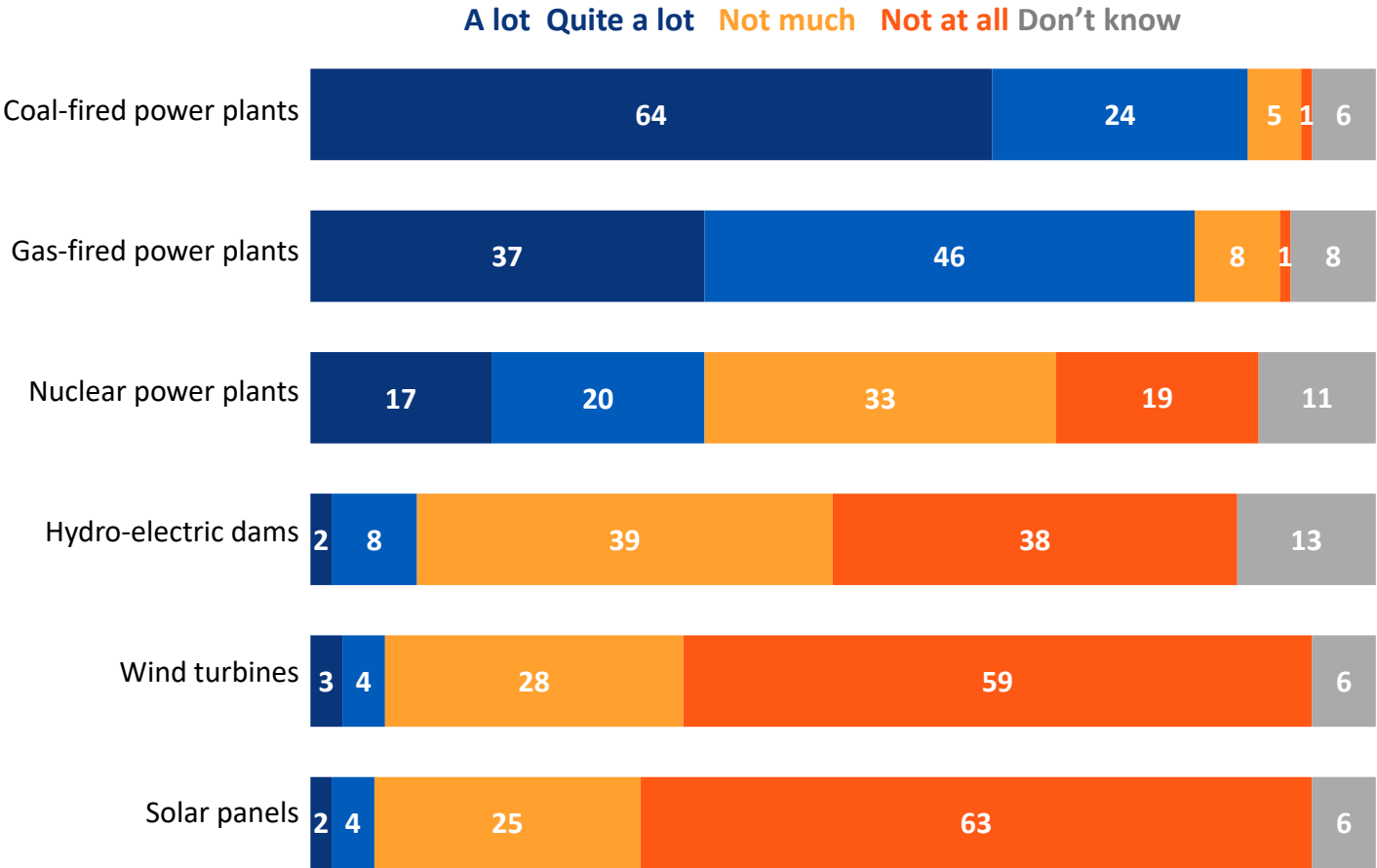
The Britons identified greenhouse gas emissions as a cause of climate change better than the world average...


Based on your own knowledge, what is/are the cause(s) of climate change?





...and are able to recognize electricity production methods that produce CO2.

The following methods of electricity production do produce CO2?



A LOT / QUITE A LOT	
88 +1	79 -1
83 +3	66 =
37 -3	50 -3
10 -1	24 -1
7 -1	17 =
6 -1	17 +2

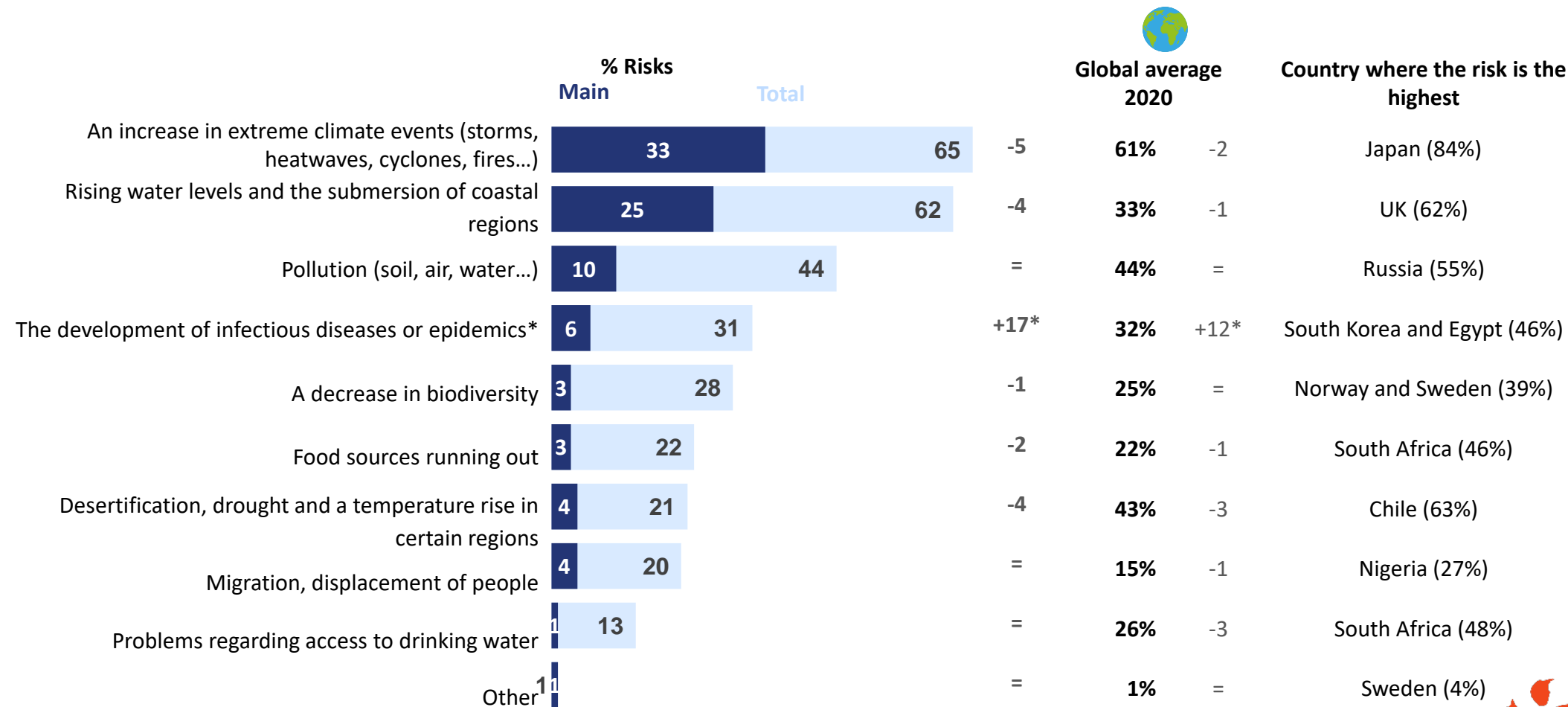




... and divergent opinions about its consequences, which are still many and very largely contested by the population

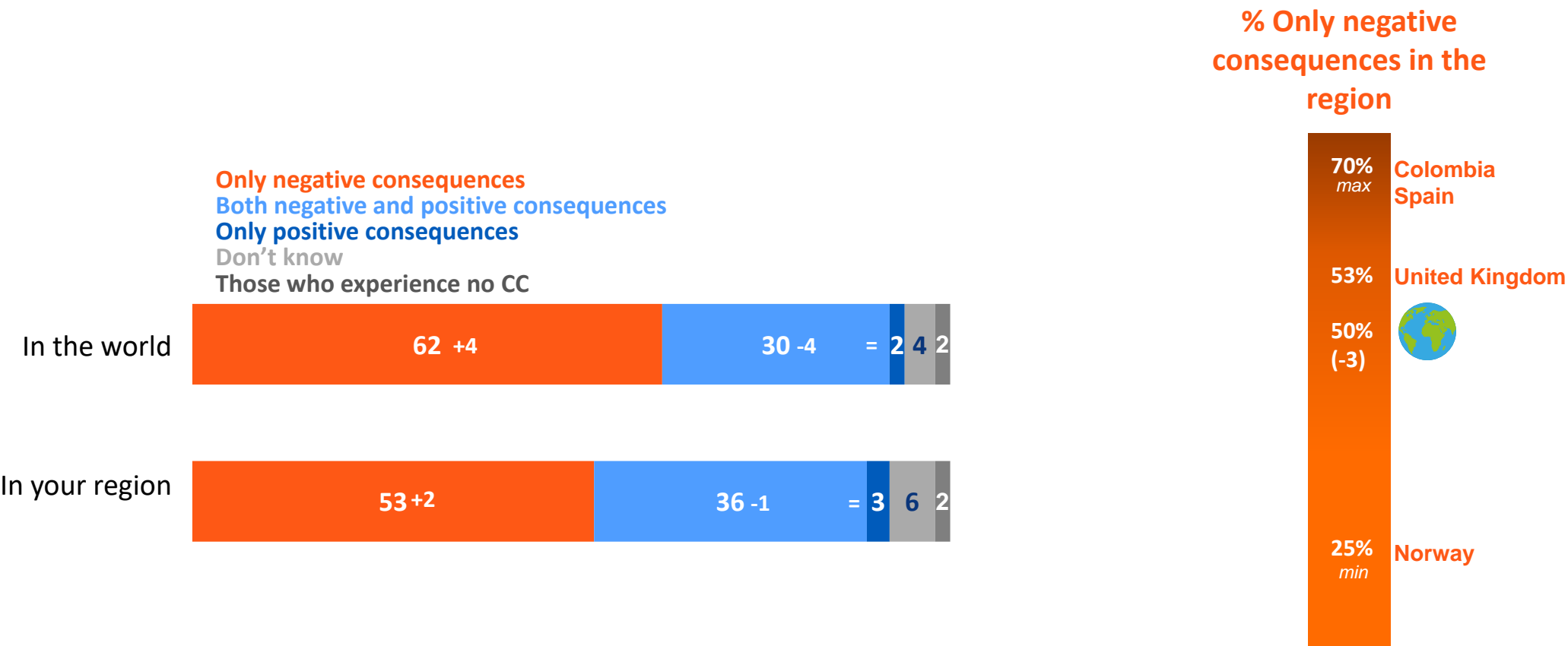
The most feared risk is by far an increase in extreme weather events (the most visible “expression” of climate change), but also the rise in sea water levels, a concern that serves as a reminder of the UK’s island status.

In your opinion, what risks does climate change present for your country?



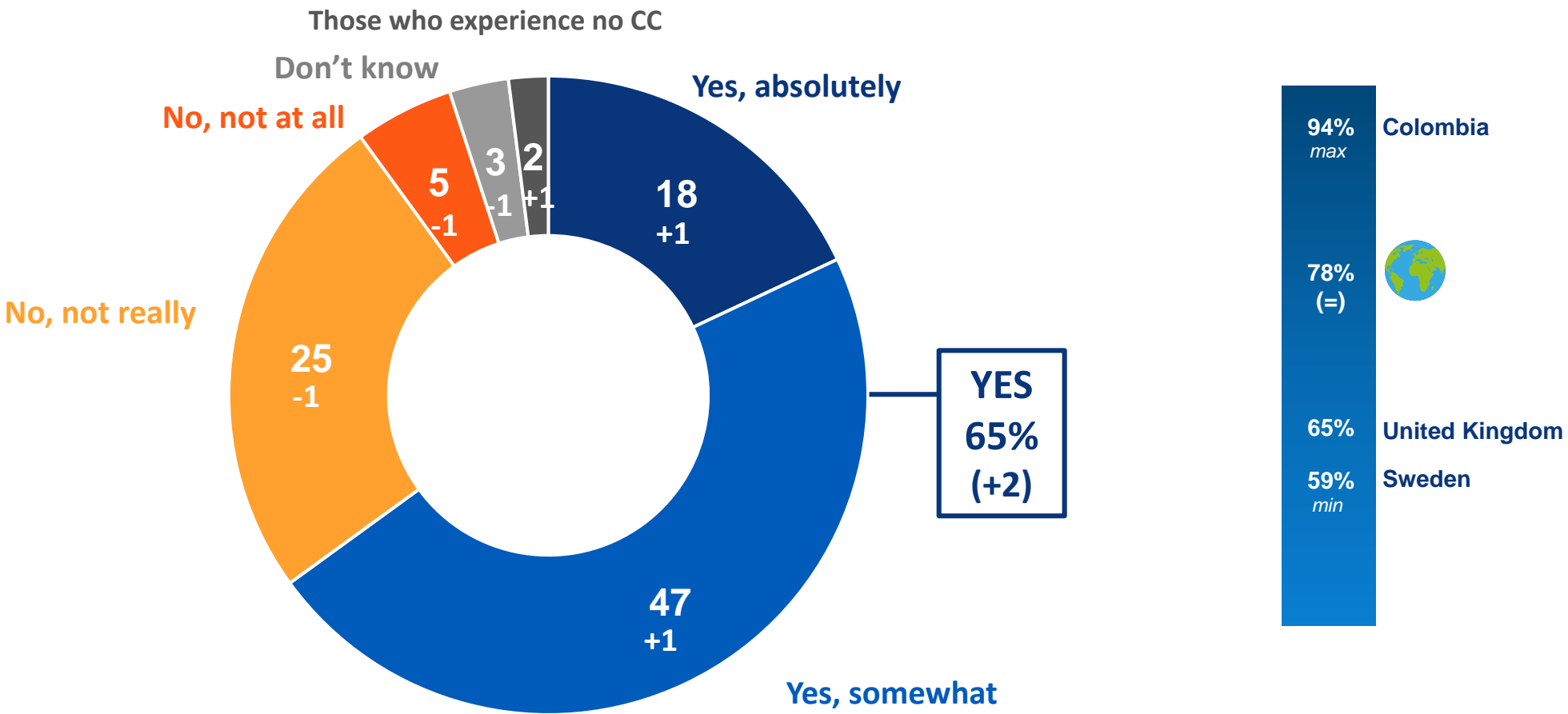
Despite that, only half of Britons think that climate change will ONLY have negative consequences in their region.

Consequences of climate change



Climate change is a tangible reality today: 65% have already witnessed its effects.

Have you already noticed the effects of climate change?

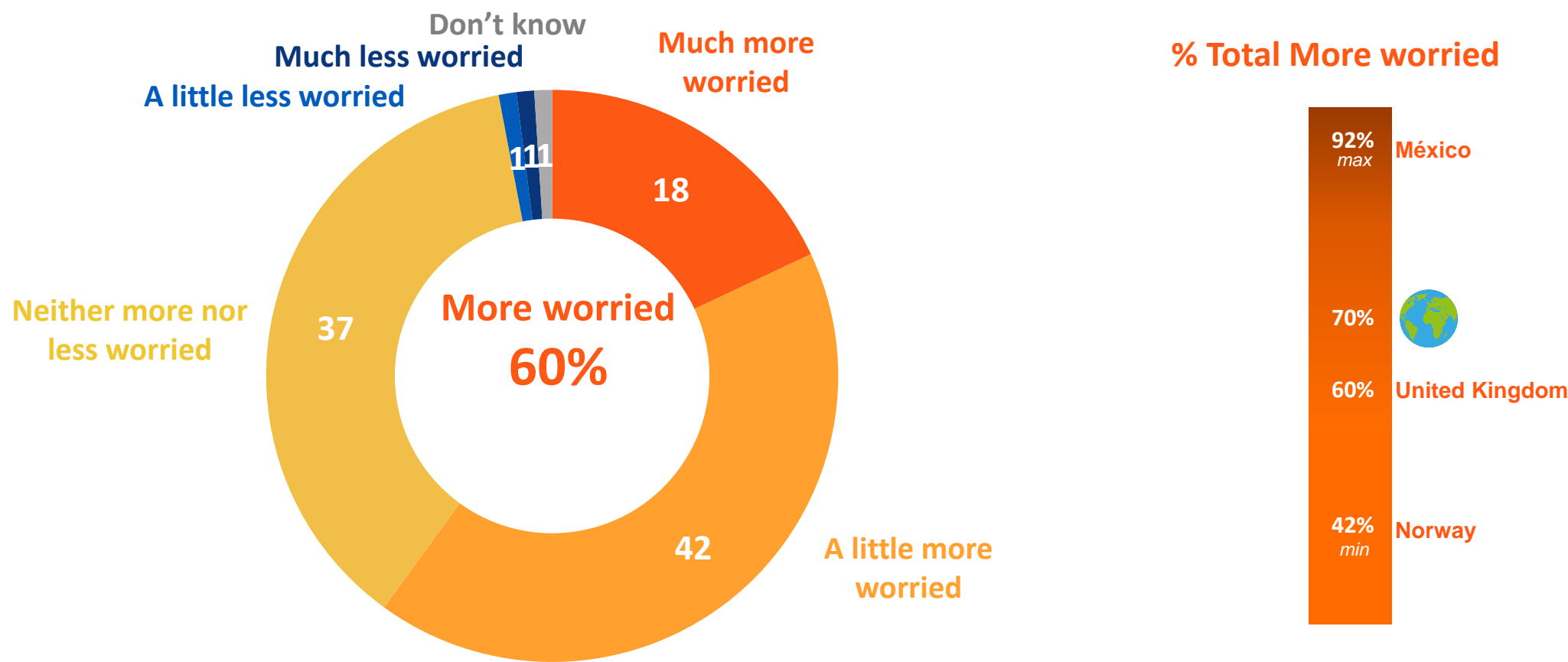




**But in the end, climate change is a cause
of increasing concern for a majority of the
population**

Concern has reached a majority of Britons, but a little less so than elsewhere.

In relation to climate change, would you say that compared to 1 year ago, you are:





Climate change: who should act and to do what?

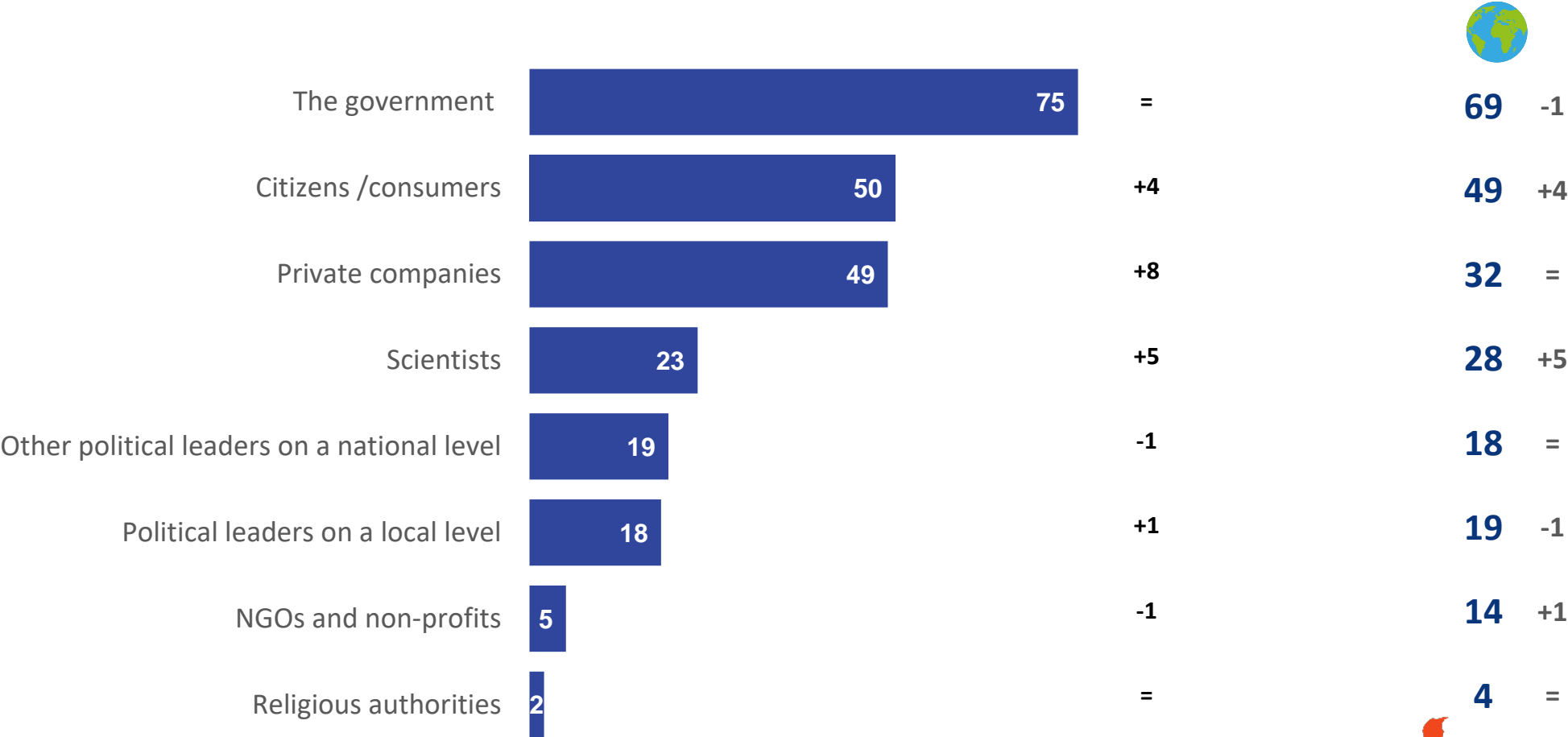
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Mobilization should primarily be driven by governments, which should be doing more in the eyes of the public.

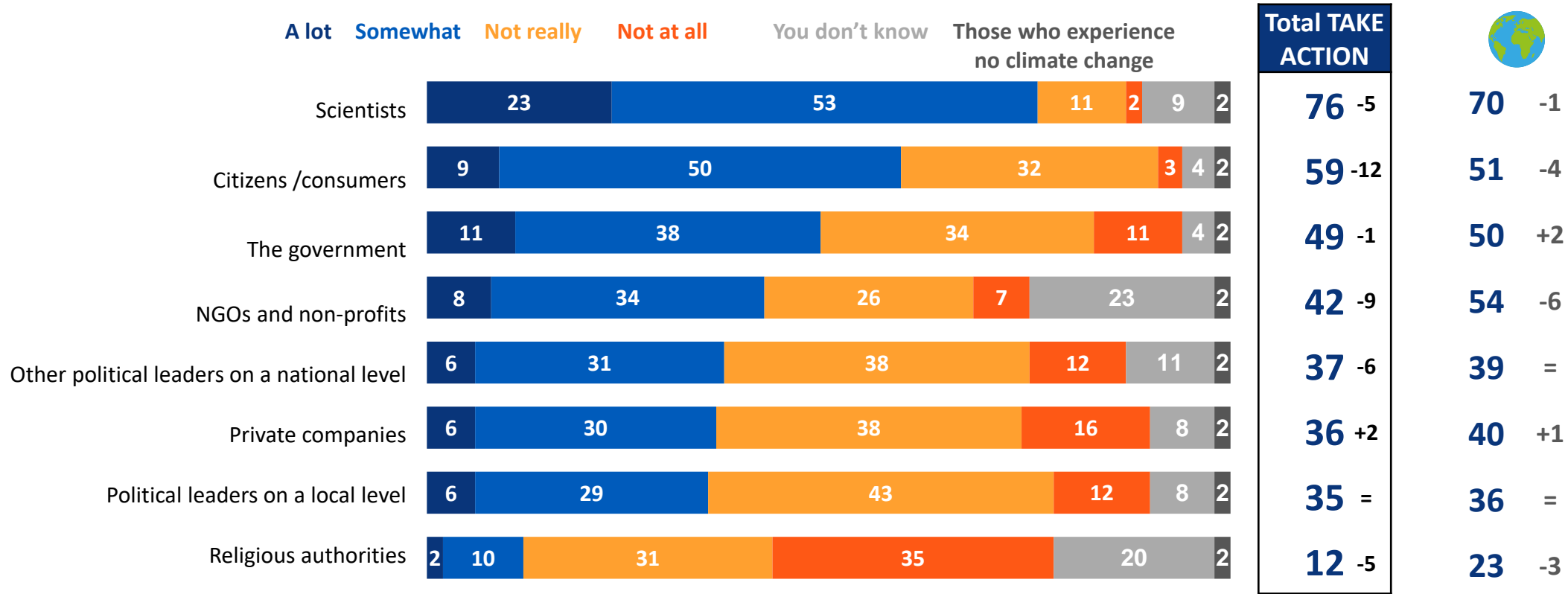
Expectations of the government are high, and it is identified as the player that should take action first and foremost. Citizens and private companies also have their responsibility in this struggle.

Which entities need to take action first and foremost to fight climate change in your country?



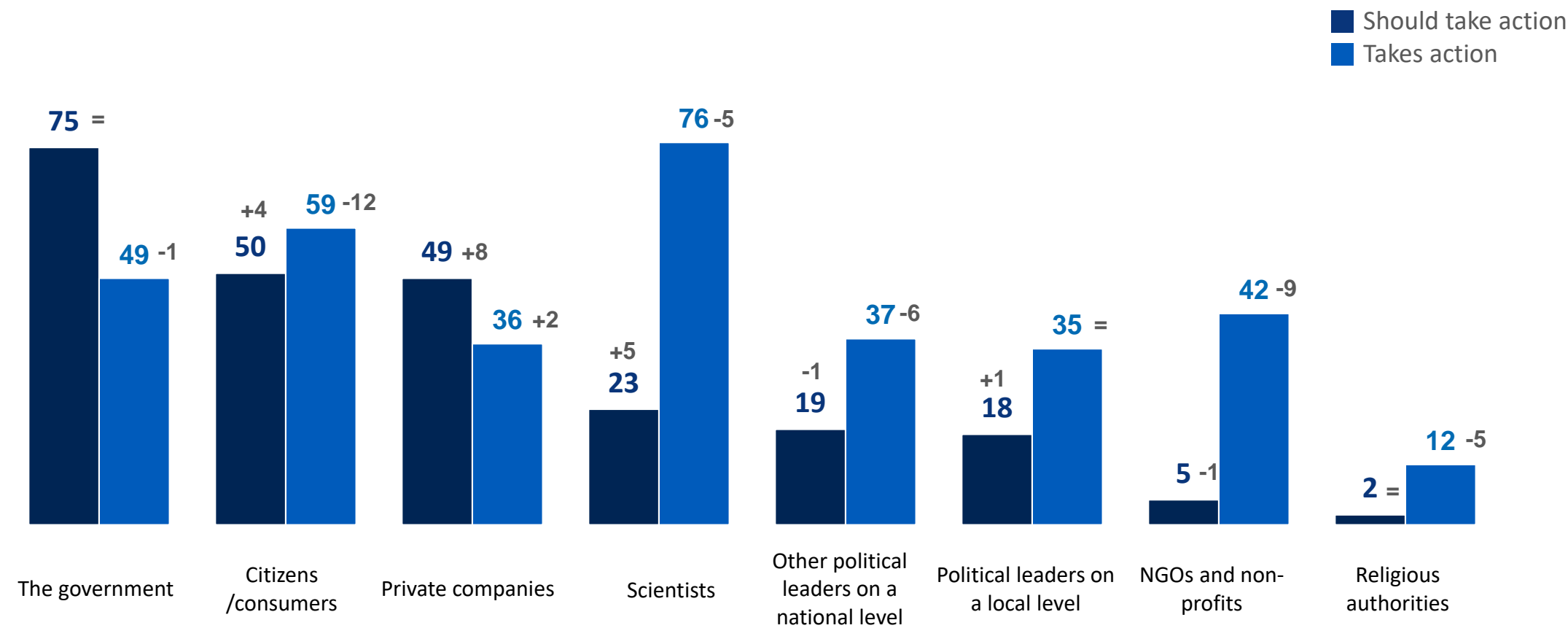
The government is taking action, but not enough in relation to the demands expressed, whereas scientists are recognized by the large majority.

Do you think that they are taking action to fight climate change in your country?



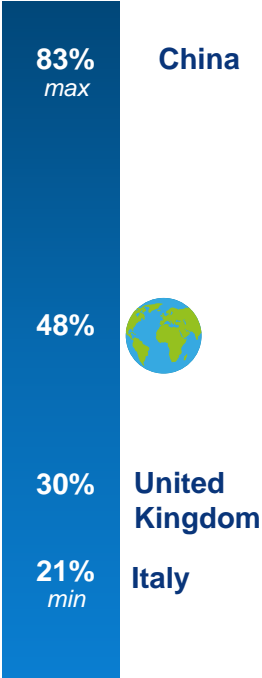
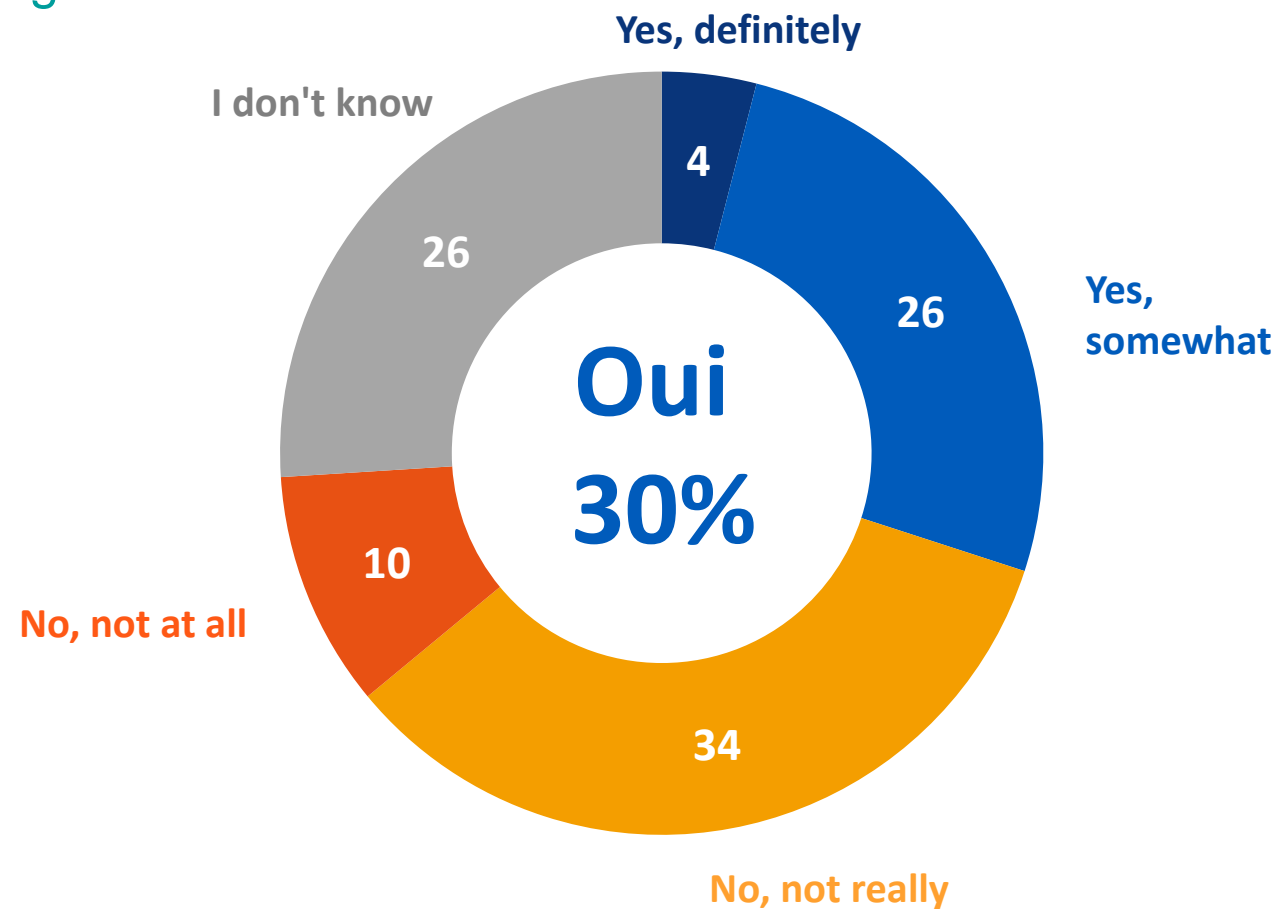
A gap between expectations of the government and its perceived action

Who should take action as a priority to fight against climate change in your country?



British public opinion takes a severe view: only 30% of citizens think that actions have been taken to adapt to climate change.

Have the public authorities in your country put measures in place to account for climate change and its effects ?

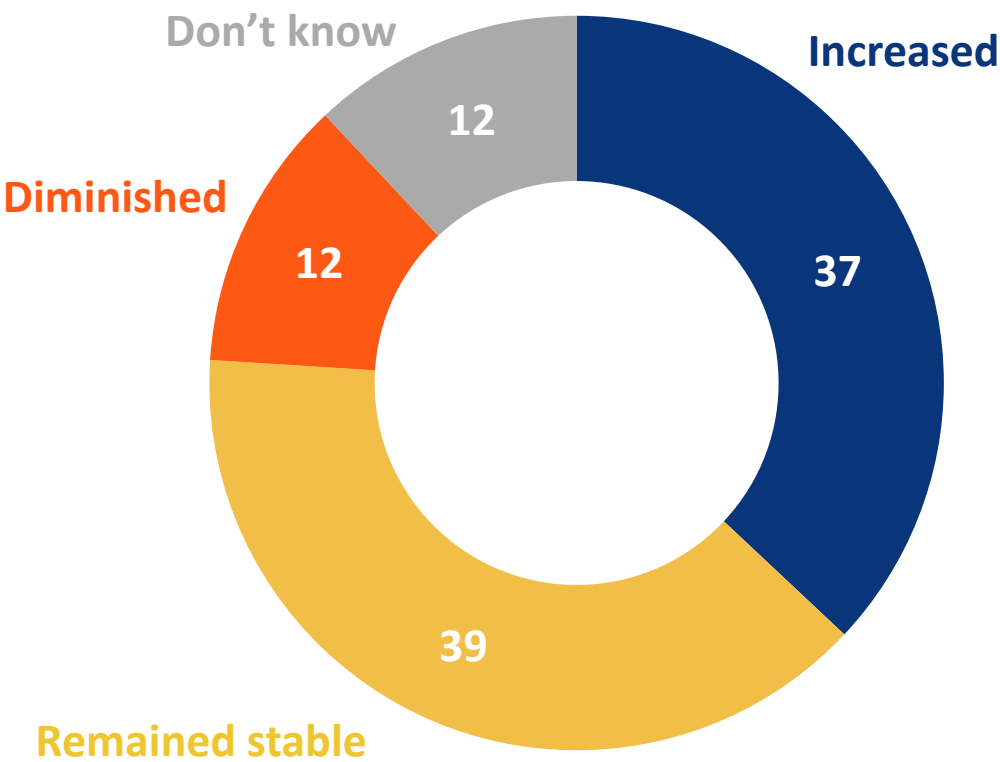




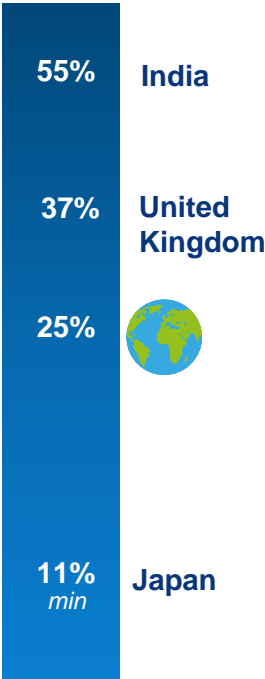
**Although citizens are convinced that there
needs to be a change in lifestyles, that is
not always followed up by concrete actions
on a day-to-day basis**

Citizen mobilization has grown according to over one third of Britons, despite a complicated year for gatherings.

The evolution of citizen mobilization for the climate

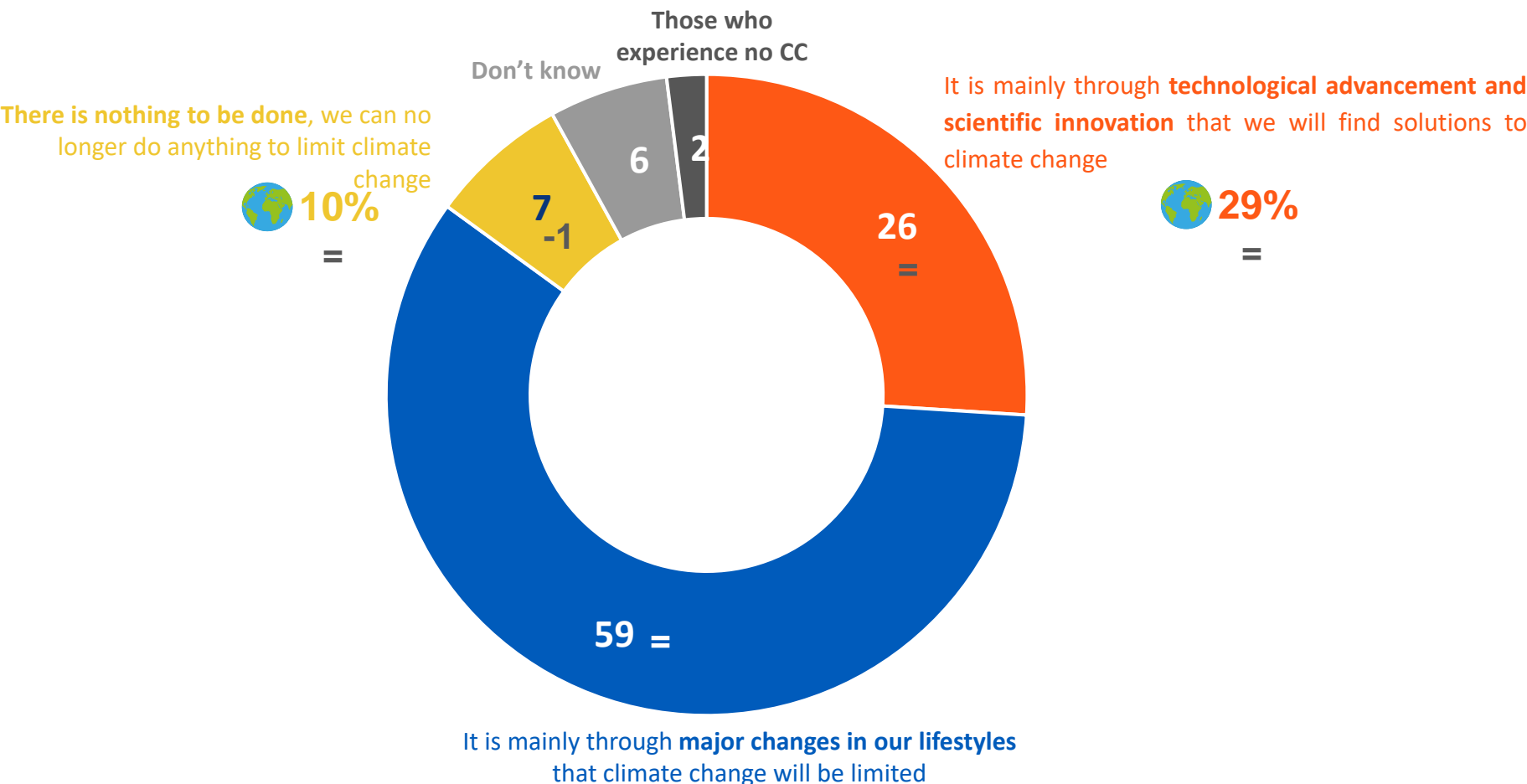


% Increased in the country

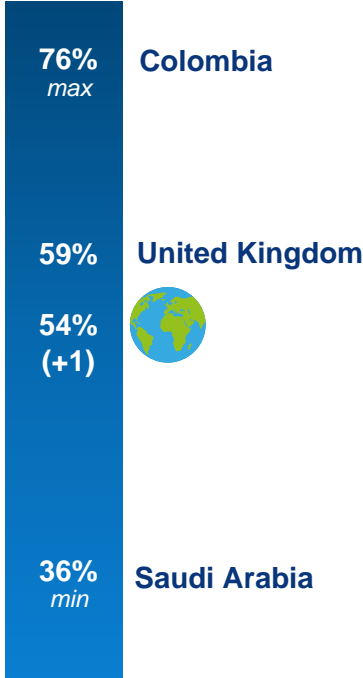


The solution for fighting climate change involves a major change in lifestyles.

The preferred solution to fight against climate change

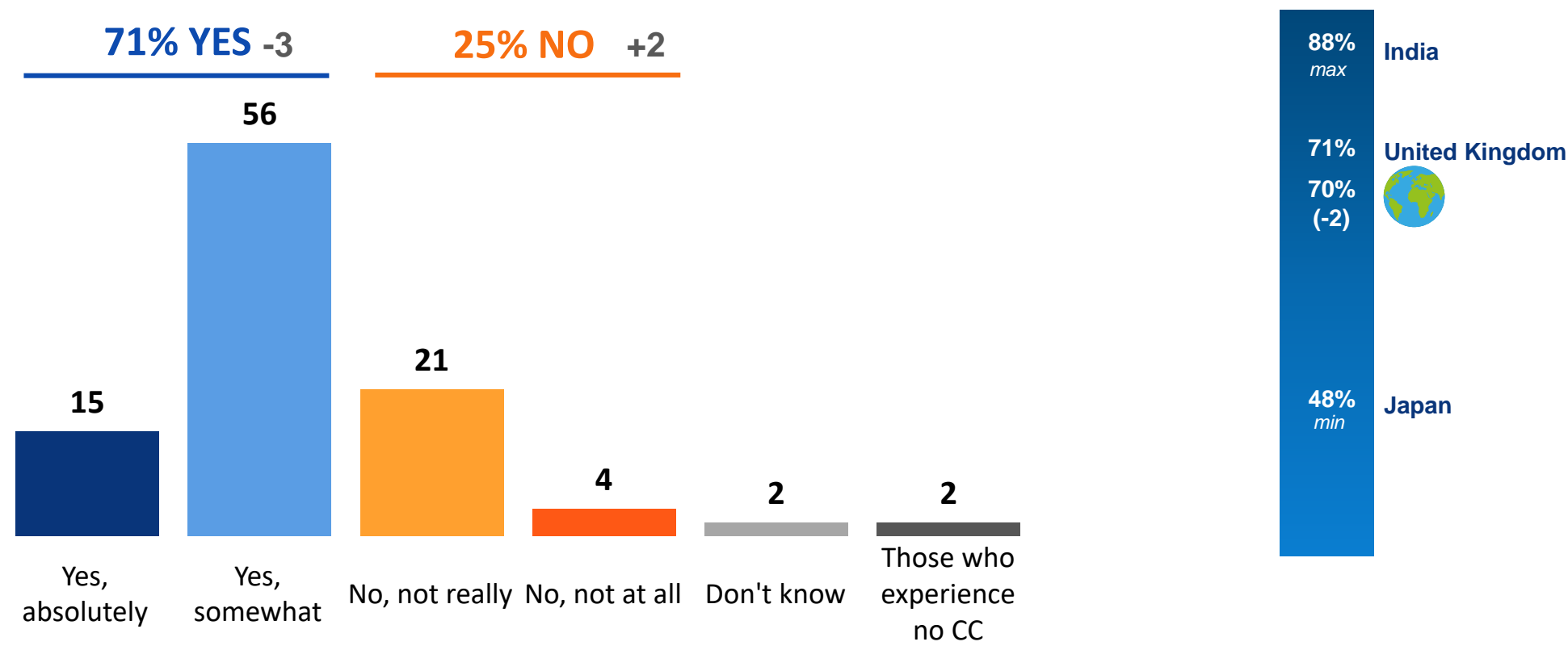


% Major changes in our lifestyles



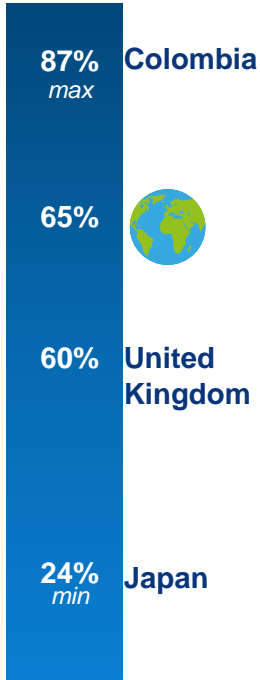
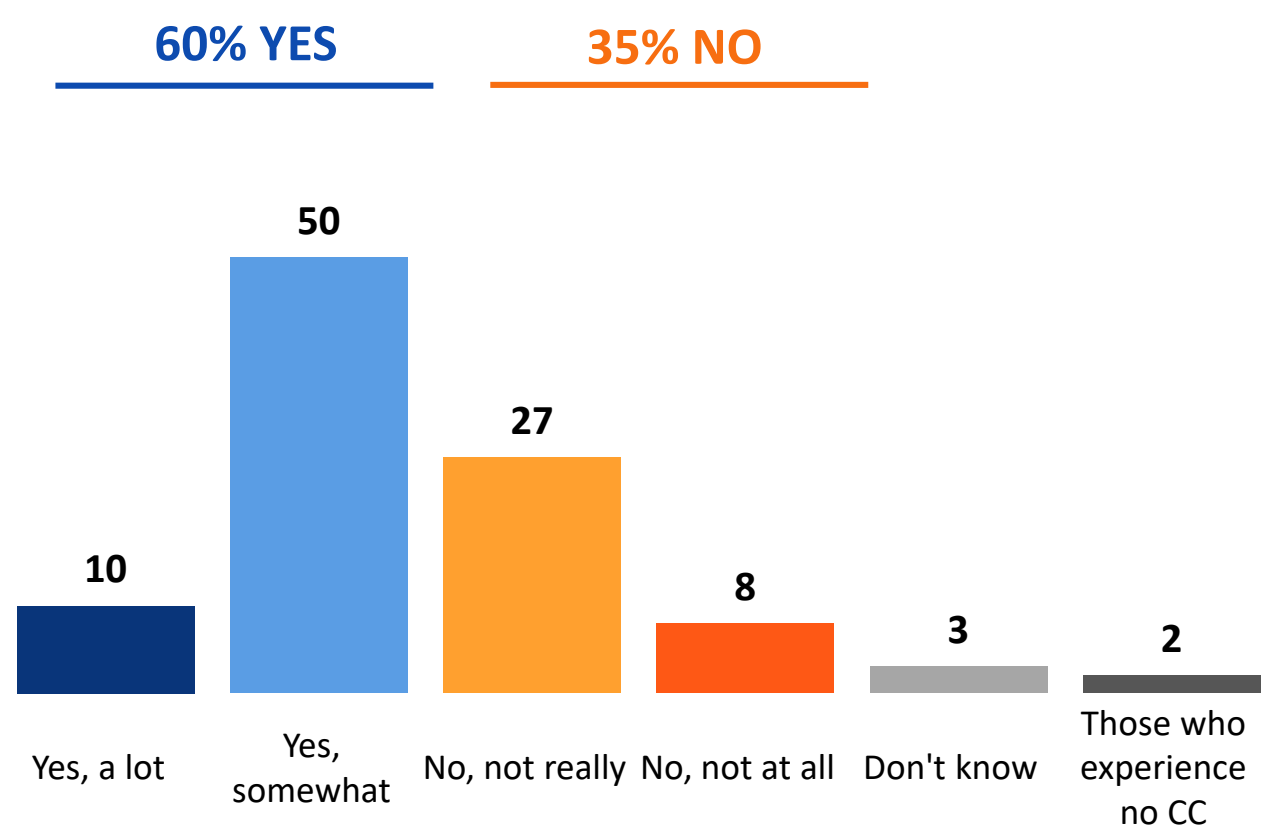
A majority know what to do on their own level to fight climate change, but less than 2 out of 10 are sure about it

Do you know what you can do on a personal level to fight climate change?



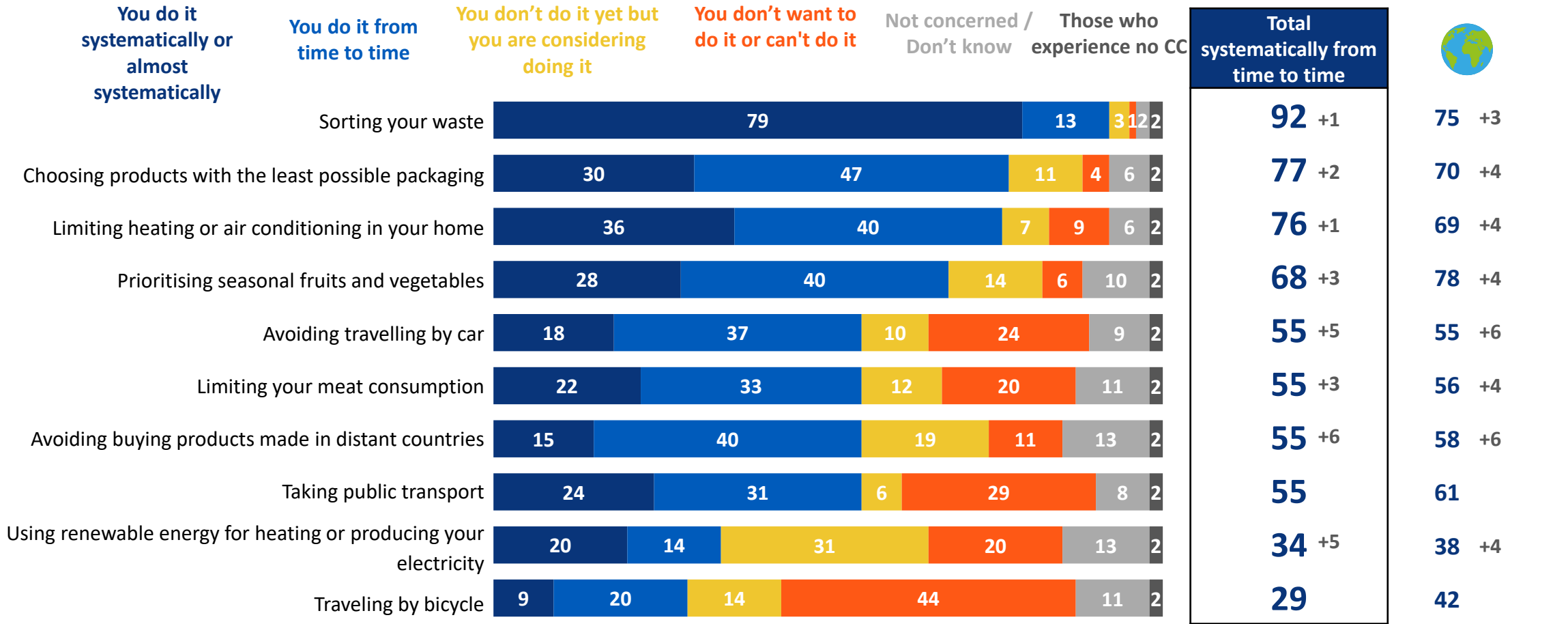
Over the last 12 months, a majority of Britons claim to have changed their behavior to fight climate change.

Have you changed anything in your own behavior to help fight climate change?



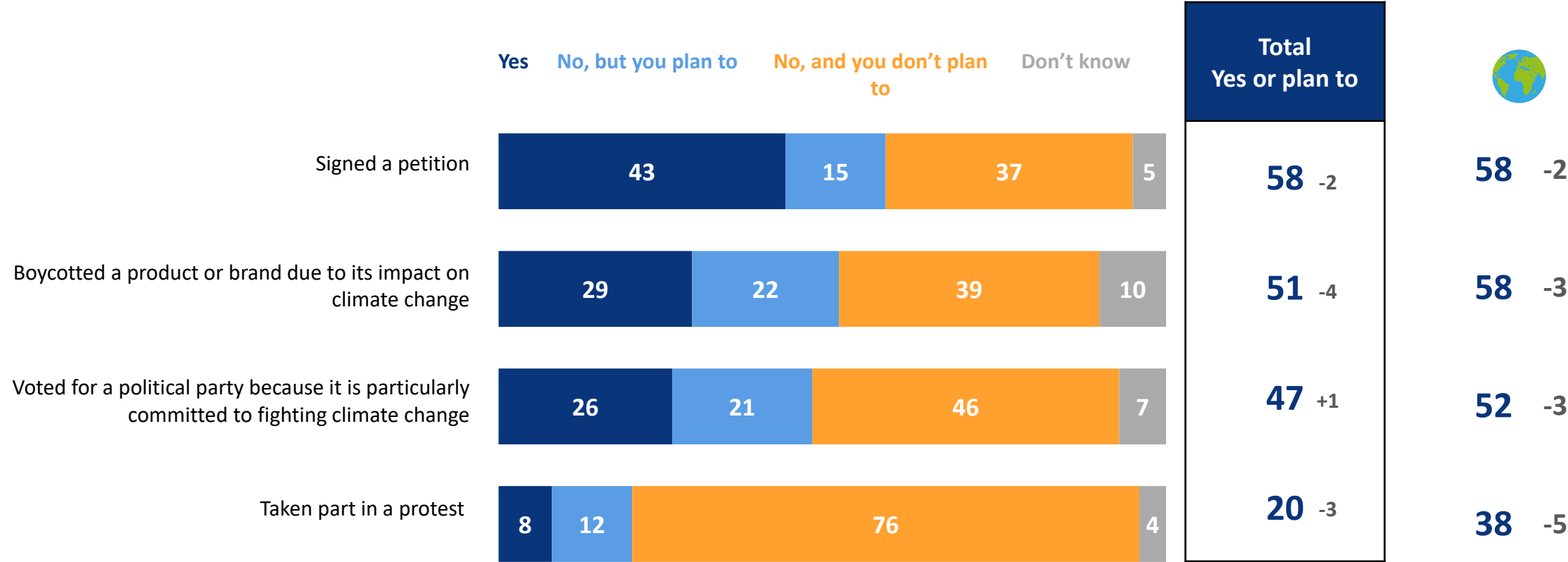
When it comes to individual actions, gestures for fighting climate change are still not a very integral part of everyday life, with the exception of sorting waste.

Individual actions to fight climate change



One out of every two people is mobilized in their own way: petition, boycott or vote.

To fighting climate change, have you personally ever:



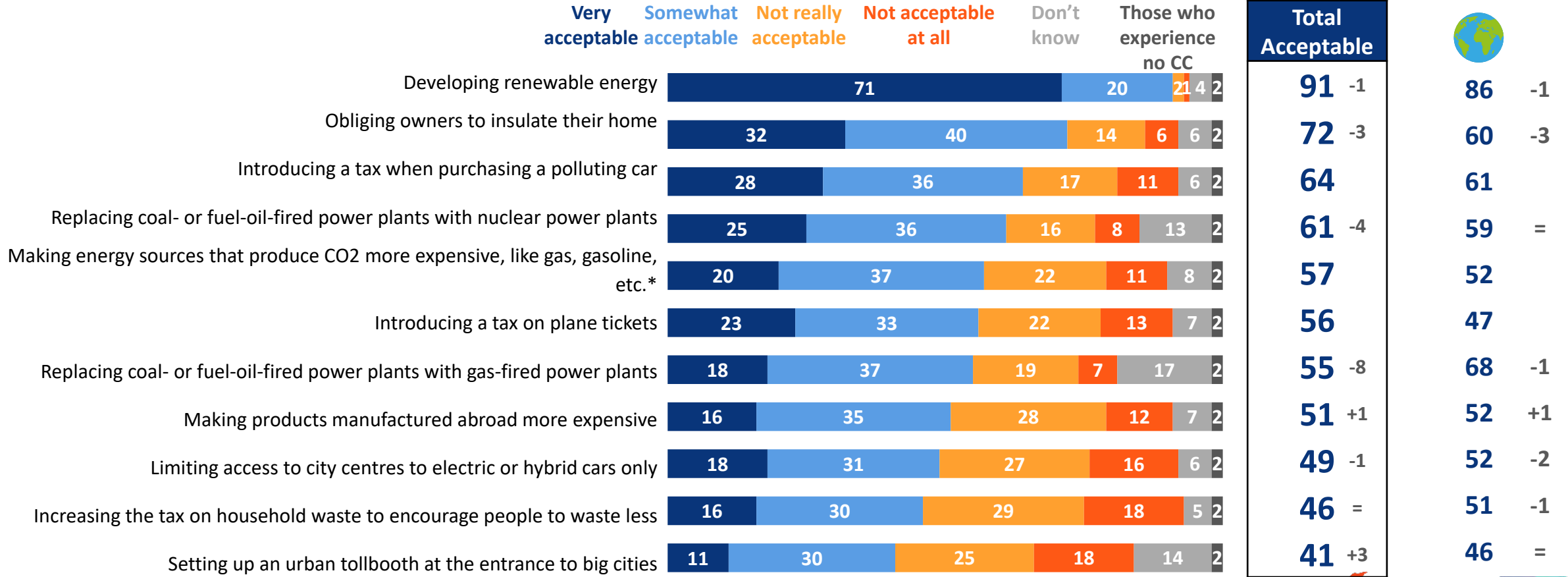


**What measures are acceptable for fighting
climate change?**

Room for maneuver is hard to find...

The conceivable measures for fighting climate change generate contrasting opinions: the level of acceptability drops whenever they impose something directly on citizens (taxes, travel, etc.)

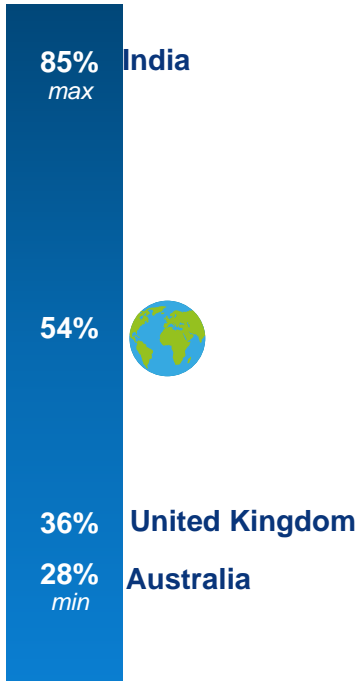
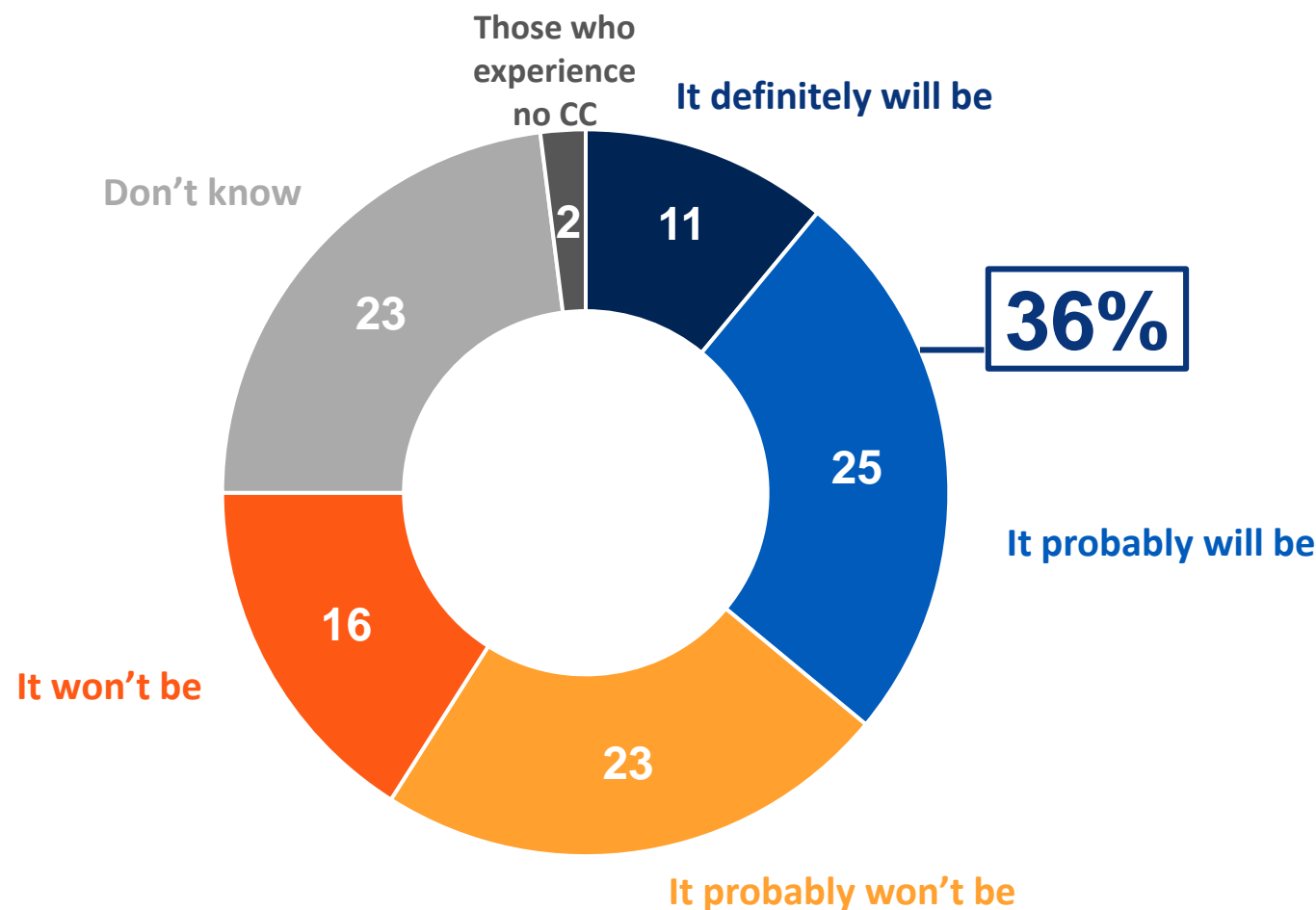
Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions



Appendix – other questions

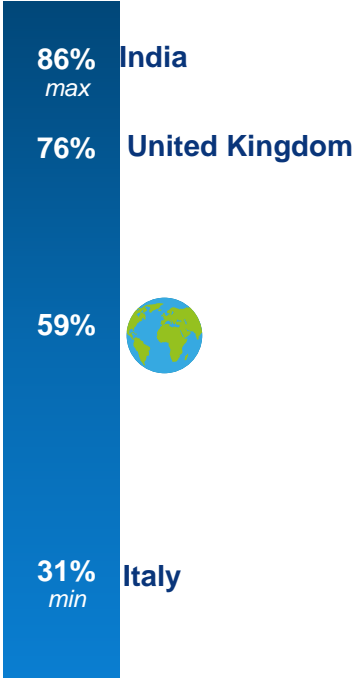
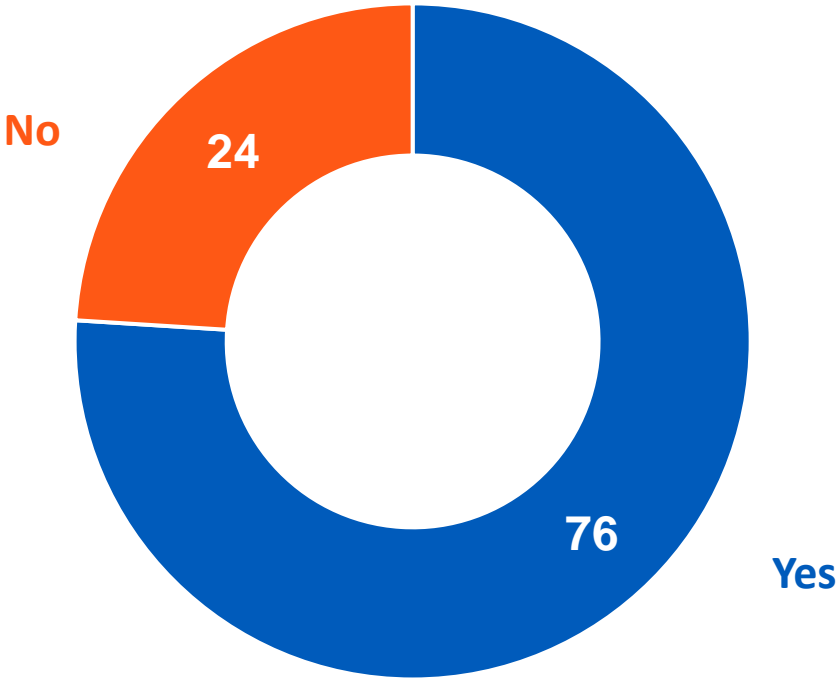
One third of Britons would be willing to acquire an electric or hybrid car

Purchase of an electric or hybrid car



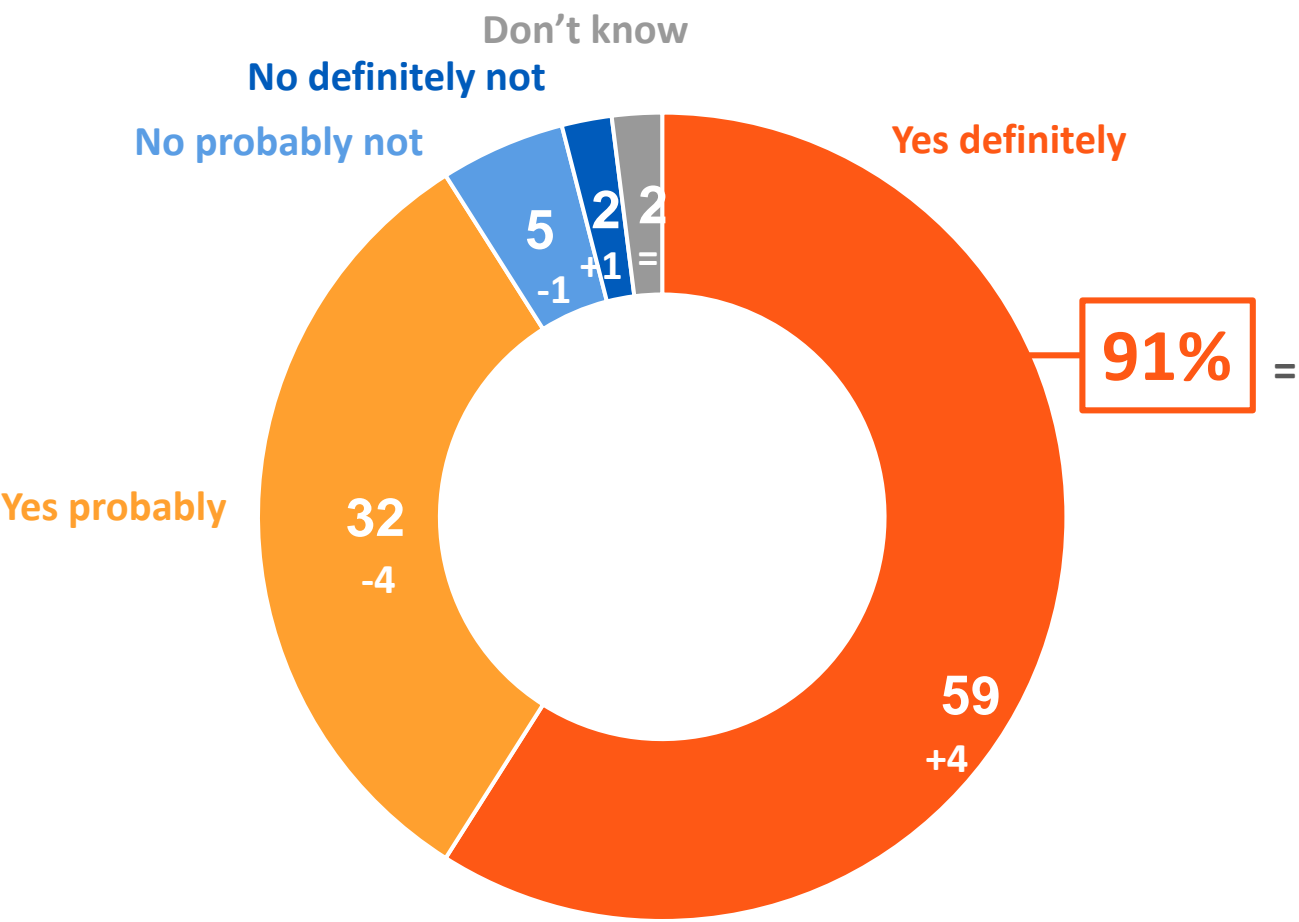
The large majority have heard of carbon neutrality

Awareness of carbon neutrality

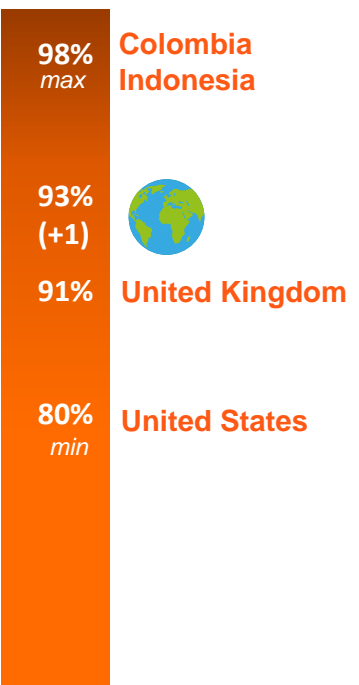


The reality of climate change is accepted by almost the entire population...

Are we experiencing a change in climate?

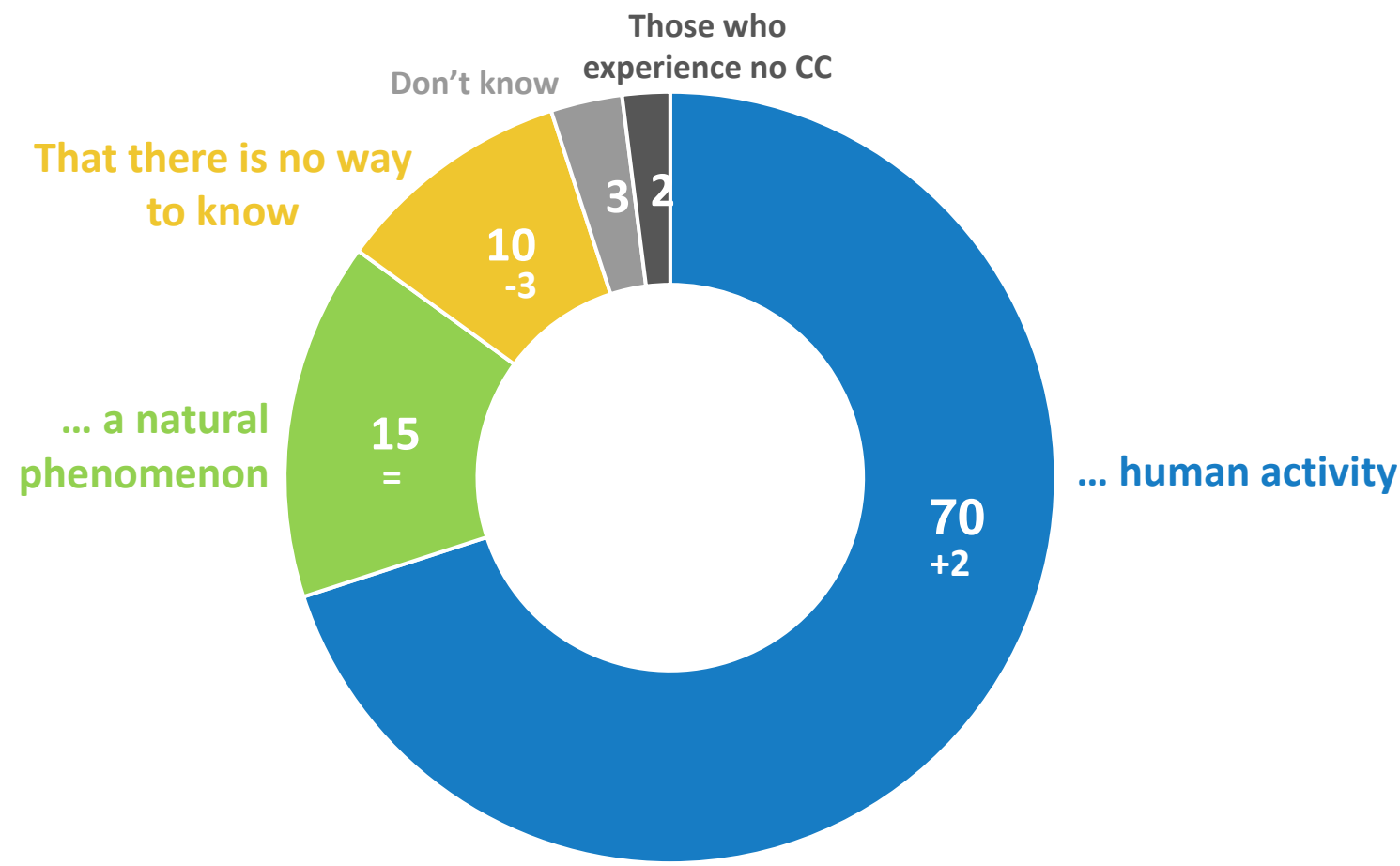


% change in climate

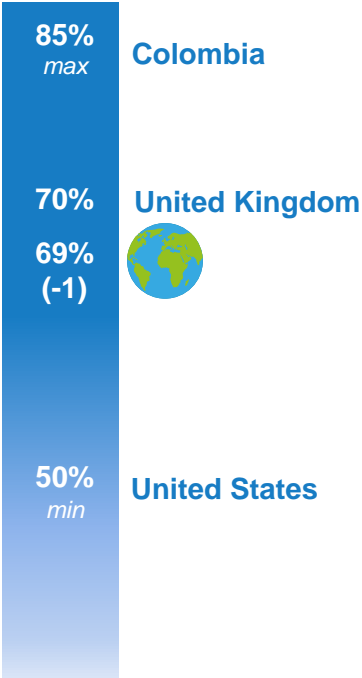


... the same applies to its cause, with more than two-thirds recognizing that it is linked to human activity.

You would say that climate change is due to...

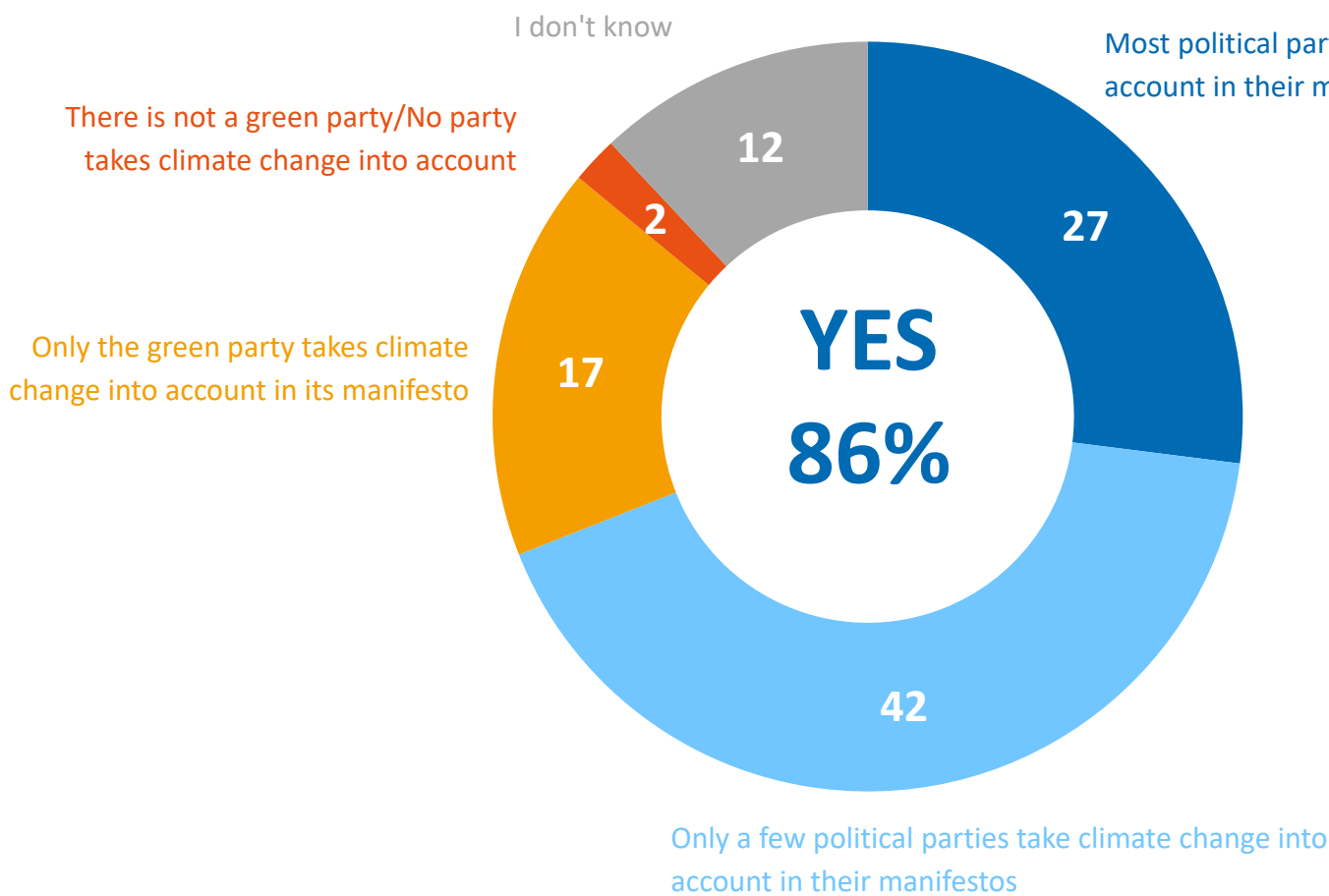


% Due to human activity



9 out of 10 Britons believe that climate change is taken into account in political party manifestos

Taking climate change into account in political programs / political parties



% Most take it into account

