

**GLOBAL  
TRENDS**

الشبكة العالمية لمؤسسات  
استشراف المستقبل  
GLOBAL FUTURES SOCIETY

# PORTRAIT OF A FUTURIST

**An Ipsos report, in partnership  
with the Global Futures Society  
and the Dubai Future Foundation**

March 2025



# Welcome to the Portrait of a Futurist

What do futurists believe, and how do their views differ from the typical global citizen?

Our Ipsos Trends & Foresight experts set out to explore this by partnering with the [Global Futures Society](#), an organization which convenes futurists, scenario planners, and foresight analysts to create a global view and enable institutional collaboration from multiple regions and sectors.

We asked their members and other futurists from around the world to participate in a unique survey, asking the same questions that Ipsos posed to more than 52,000 people in 50 markets worldwide in our [Ipsos Global Trends](#) study. More than 120 futurists took part in the survey, which was fielded between June and September 2024. Our goal was to uncover the

differences between those who are shaping the future, and everyday citizens.

We also added some open-ended questions where the futurists zoomed in on three key themes:

- The rapid development of technology, especially AI
- Climate change/sustainability
- Geopolitical instability/shifts

We found some distinct similarities – and a few sharp distinctions – that help us understand how futurists think, and what we can learn from their perspectives. Read on to learn more about what futurists believe about themselves, the present, and what's next.





# Overview

## **Futurists are not, by nature, hedonists or nihilists**

Futurists are drawn to the profession from a wide range of backgrounds. Some have formal training, some don't. They work for companies, consultancies, governments and organizations of all shapes and sizes. Some have futurist or foresight in their job titles. Some do the work under different banners.

But there are shared values among futurists, and these differ in key ways from those of people in general. It's important to understand the areas of disconnect between those shaping the future, those thinking about the future, and those who will be impacted by the future.

## **Happy and optimistic**

Looking at global citizens as a whole,

some patterns emerge. People tend to be happy and optimistic, but they are more optimistic personally. Our own future is bright, but we're less sure about the world around us.

For futurists, it's more so. They are happier and more optimistic until it comes to the future of the world as a whole, where they are more pessimistic.

Perhaps that's because futurists are more likely to say they're good at planning for the future than the general public. Yet few futurists, or anyone else for that matter, have much faith that business or government leaders are good at foresight.

## **Value traditions and change**

While futurists are less likely to say that religion is important to them, they are just as (highly) likely to say that

tradition is important. Yet they embrace change. On a superficial level, this means they are innovators.

Futurists are more likely to say that they are the first of their friends to try new products (although they are less curious about survival equipment). But they are open to change in systems and norms.

They are more likely to support an expansive definition of gender and an expansion of women's roles beyond wives/mothers - and less likely to believe that people should have children.

Futurists believe that wealth inequality is bad for society, but that immigration is positive. However, they recognize that the issue is divisive and blame leaders for stirring up anti-immigration sentiment for their own power.

# Overview

## **Futurists are even-keeled**

Futurists tend to be less prone to some of the tensions we see but, on technology, they are equally resigned to losing privacy. Futurists are less convinced that technology is needed to solve the world's problems, or that technological progress is destroying our lives.

Similarly, on climate change, futurists agree that we're heading for disaster if we don't act, but are much more optimistic that there's still time to slow and reverse the effects of climate change.

## **Sceptical of business**

Futurists believe that companies need to do more for the world and try to motivate this through their purchases.

One of the biggest 10-year leaps in Ipsos Global Trends was the idea that people buy from brands that reflect their personal values. Futurists are even more likely to express this. But they are less likely to value economic growth over human wellbeing, or that it's OK for a brand to make good products without being ethically or socially responsible. They also don't trust companies to tell the truth.

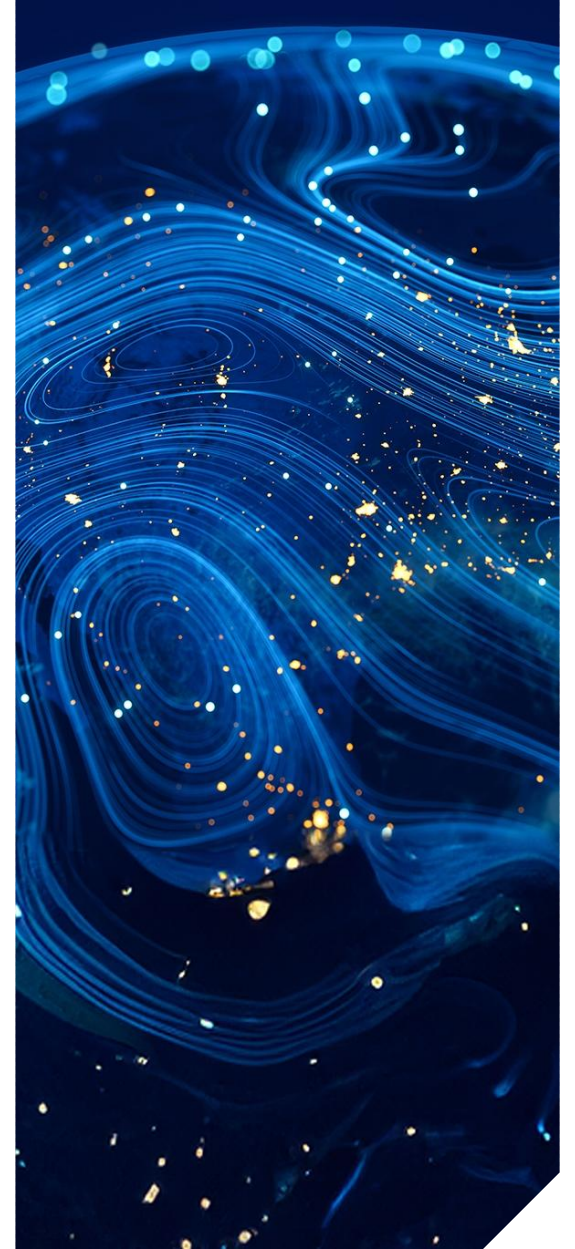
## **Futurists live for the future**

The Ipsos Global Trends report identified nine trends based on 23 human values. One of the most provocative was the Nouveau Nihilism trend, based on the values of 'living in the moment' and 'anti-establishment'. We see global citizens of all ages, in response to all the global challenges we face, taking more of a 'seize the day' approach to making decisions in the here and now.

Futurists take a very different approach. Perhaps because they are such good planners and focus on plausible futures, they are far less likely to say that they live for today because the future will take care of itself. But that could be both sides of the same statement. They are not living for today because they are focused on the future. Nor do they believe that the future will take care of itself.

More than anyone else, futurists understand the theme of Ipsos Global Trends: that while there are tensions all around us, we must work with intention to get to the hopeful future that futurists are so optimistic we can achieve.

**The Ipsos Global Trends team  
with the Global Futures Society**





When we asked futurists what trends they think will most shape the future, **three key themes** emerged:

## The rapid development of technology, especially AI

01

*"Digital convergence is enabling new forms of communication, collaboration and commerce, and transforming daily life with streamlined experiences," said Eissa Salem Alhosani, Recruitment Manager for Dubai Electricity & Water Authority. Asma Yousuf Zainal, Senior Projects Manager at DCAS takes this a step further. "Data is the New Land," he said. "Geopolitical power will shift from controlling physical territories to controlling data networks and AI ecosystems. Countries and corporations that dominate AI, cloud, and cyber infrastructures will redefine global power, much like the rise of empires through colonialism in past centuries."*



Only **27%** of futurists think that "technical progress is destroying our lives" vs. **57%** of the global population

When we asked futurists what trends they think will most shape the future, **three key themes** emerged:

## Climate change/sustainability

# 02

Many pointed out that since this is a global problem, it's going to require global solutions. But can we get there?

*"We say we have become more globalized, that technology has connected us to other sides of the world, but are we truly global citizens?" wonders Joanna Lepore, Global Foresight Strategist, founder of Foresight Inside Group, and former futurist for McDonald's Corp. and Mars Inc. "With the rise of protectionism, reshoring, reverse globalization, national division, we are if anything becoming more insular."*

**96%** of futurists believe "we are heading for environmental disaster unless we change our habits quickly" vs. **80%** of the global population



When we asked futurists what trends they think will most shape the future, **three key themes** emerged:

## Geopolitical instability/shifts

03

Those global solutions will be a challenge due to the third trend the futurists identified. Civil engineer, Raul Alejandro Oberreuter Olivares is worried about, *"...rebellious and a forced return to the humanization of social and business activities."* He said, *"the adoption of AI will force us to rethink a new philosophy where the human species is once again placed at the center of survival objectives".*

But, as Tanushree Kedia, a Design Futurist at the Royal College Of Art points out, it's really all about the intersection of themes. *"The coming years will present significant challenges as rising populations, dwindling resources, and unbridled technological developments converge."*

One other key trend many discussed was demographic shifts. *"Don't even get me started on*

*the silver tsunami, more oldies, fewer babies, and a growing divide between city and country. It'll put a massive strain on our healthcare and social services,"* said Rob Warner, Chief Advisor, Maritime NZ. *"We need to get creative and fight the good fight against inequality."*

One thing they all naturally understood is the value foresight brings to these conversations for businesses and governments alike. *"Too often, companies, governments and citizens take action based on past results, past strategies, and outdated to-do lists,"* said Deborah Hayek, Head of Futurecasting, Global Innovation for Manulife. *"While this may have been enough at one time, the rate of change - in technology, society, the economy, our political system, our cultural systems, even our environment - is outpacing our ability to take action in all spheres of life."*

As the data showed, futurists tend to be optimists, but that is a bias they should check - or at least be aware of. As Ibon Zugasti, Deputy Director of The Millennium Project said, *"The world is improving better than most pessimists know, but future dangers are worse than most optimists indicate."*

Only **56%** of futurists think "the world today is changing too fast" vs. **83%** of the global population

# SURVEY RESULTS



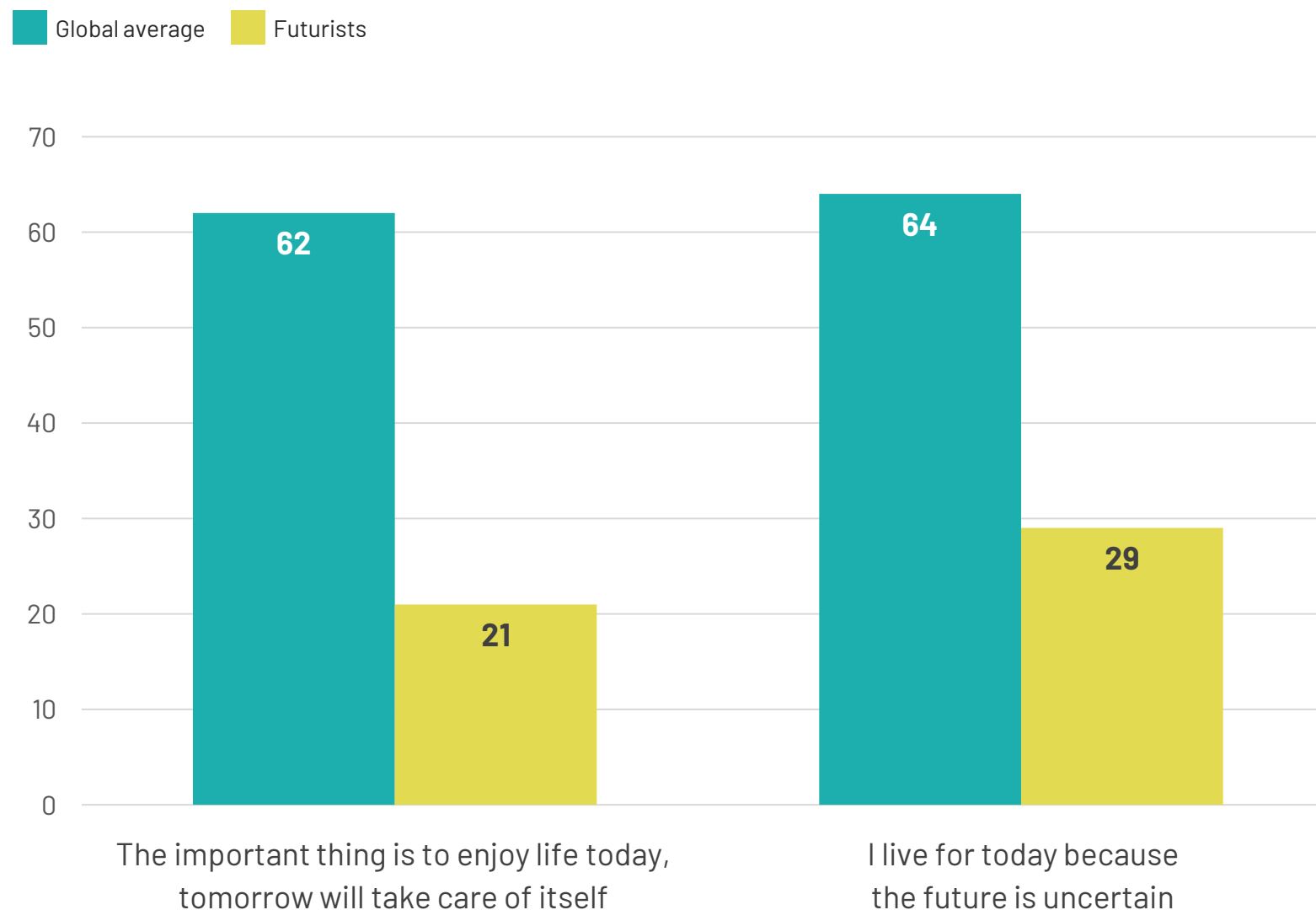
# Futurists are not nihilists

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

% agree

**Base:** 50,237 adults surveyed in the markets shown between 15 February and 23 April 2024. 126 Futurists surveyed between 24 June – 12 September 2024. For full methodology see [ipsosglobaltrends.com](https://ipsosglobaltrends.com).

**Source:** Ipsos Global Trends

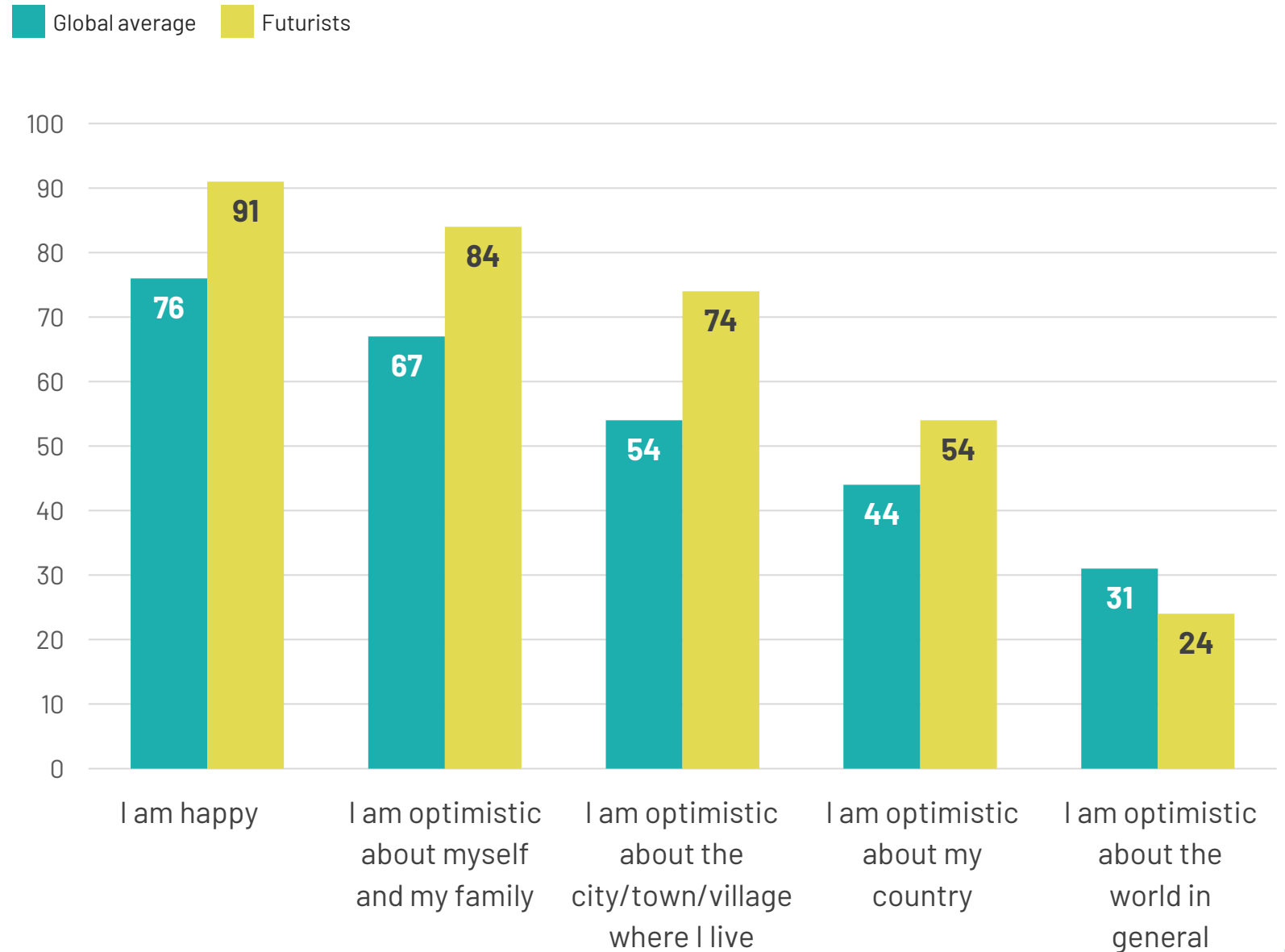


# Futurists are happy and generally not nihilistic

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

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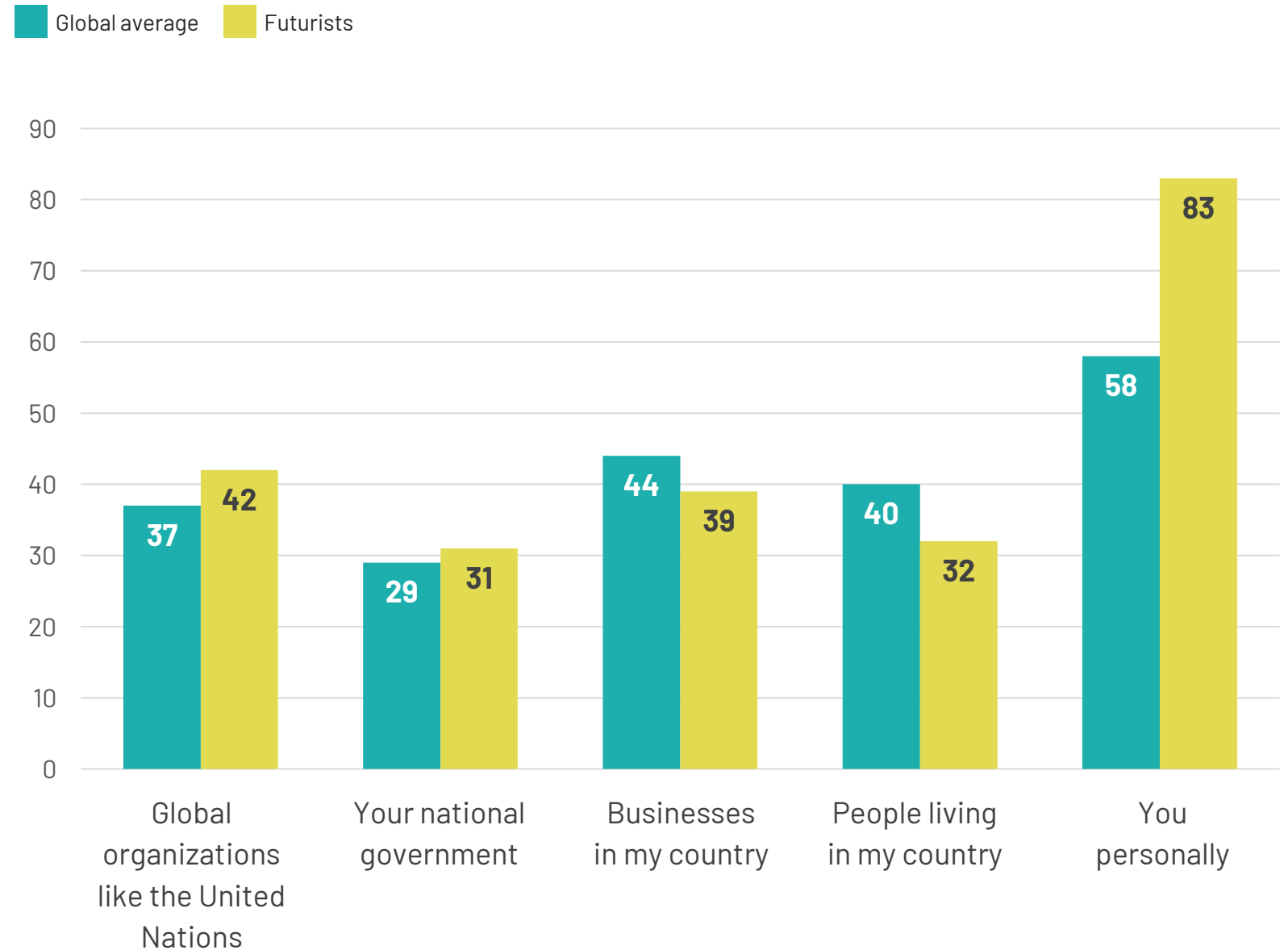


# Futurists think they are better at planning than anyone else is

On balance, how good or poor do you think each of the following are at planning for the long term?

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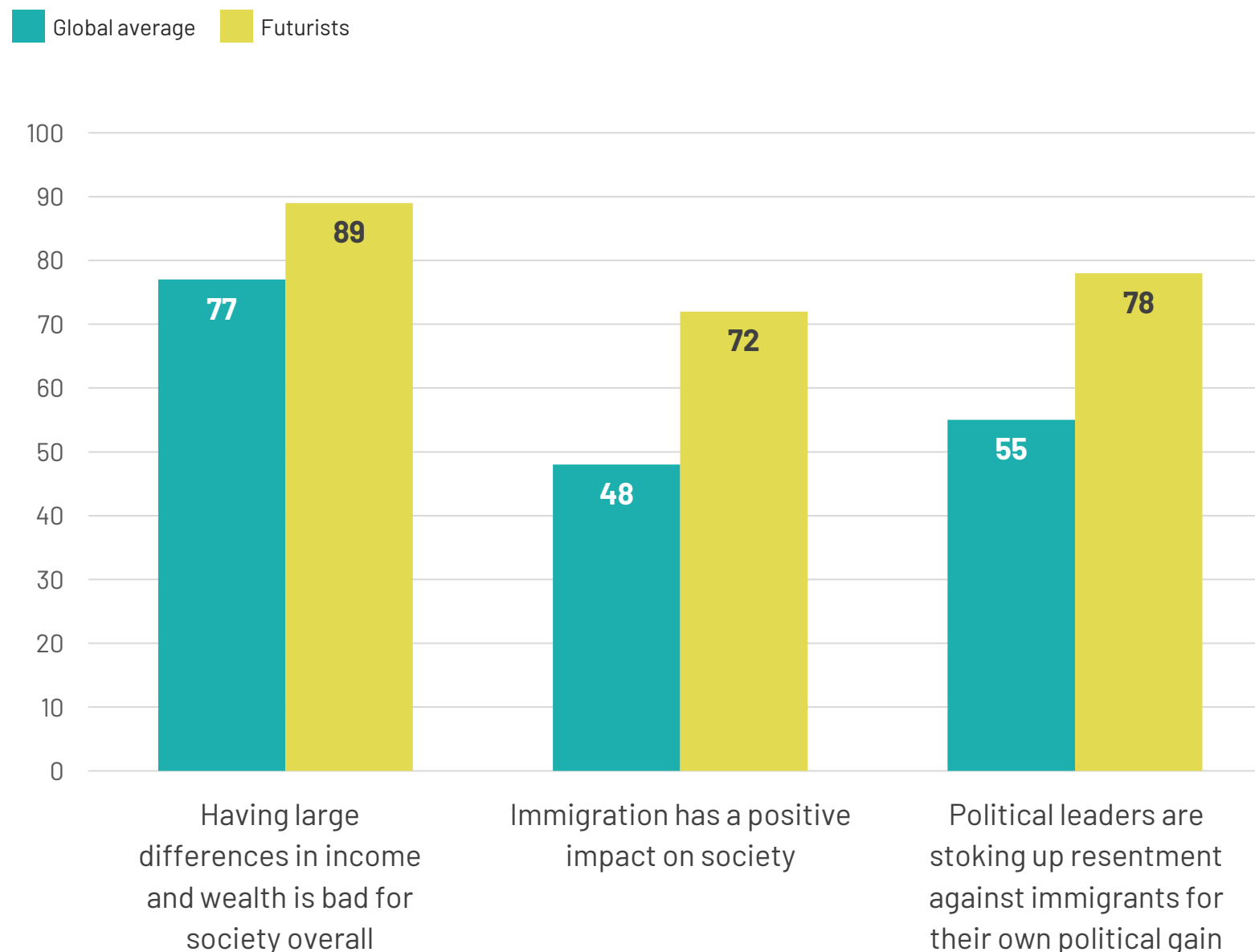
# Futurists believe immigration is good for society, but also divisive

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

% agree

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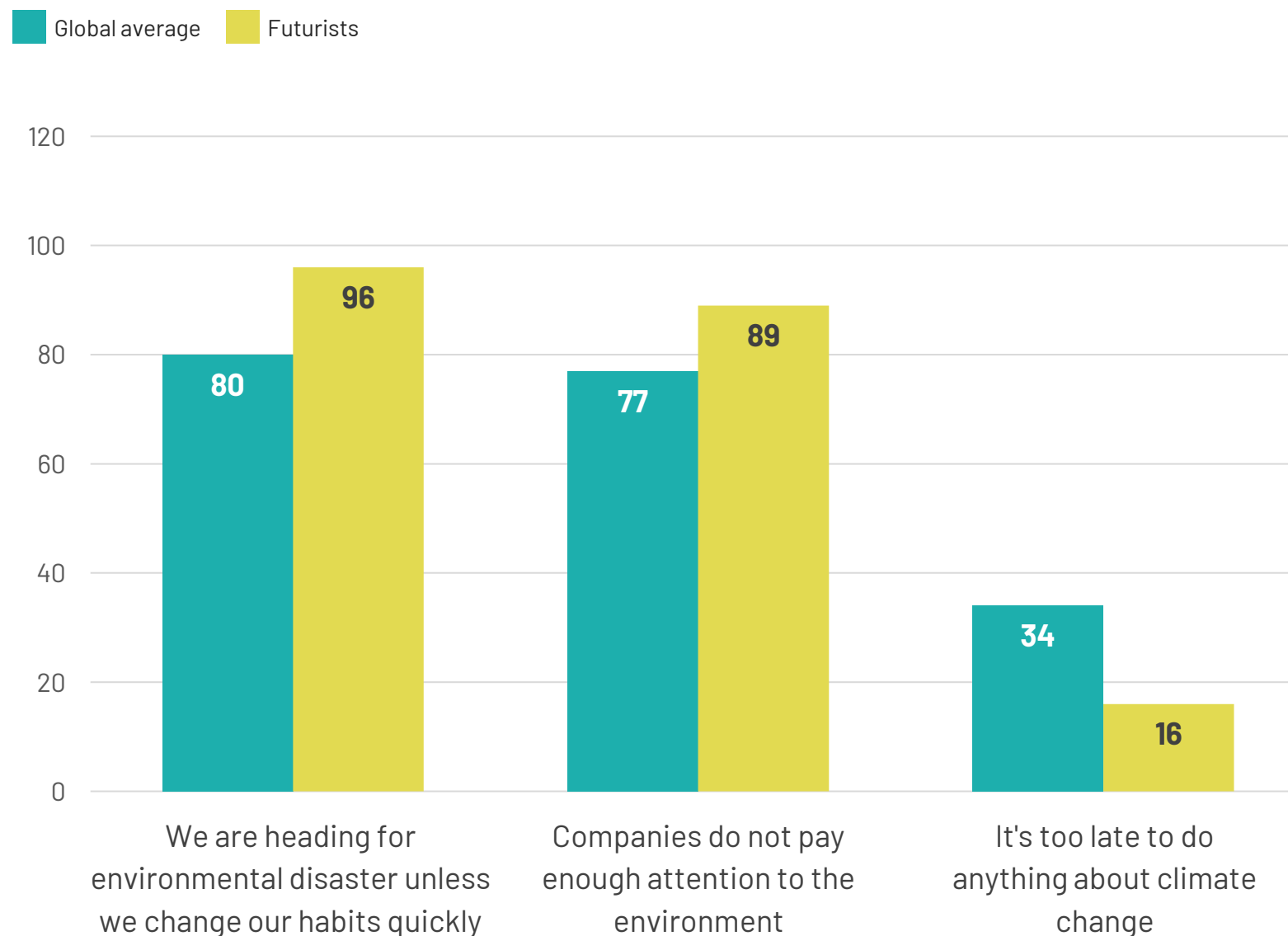
# Futurists think that we're headed for environmental disaster, companies aren't doing enough about it – but are also optimistic we can still fix it

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

% agree

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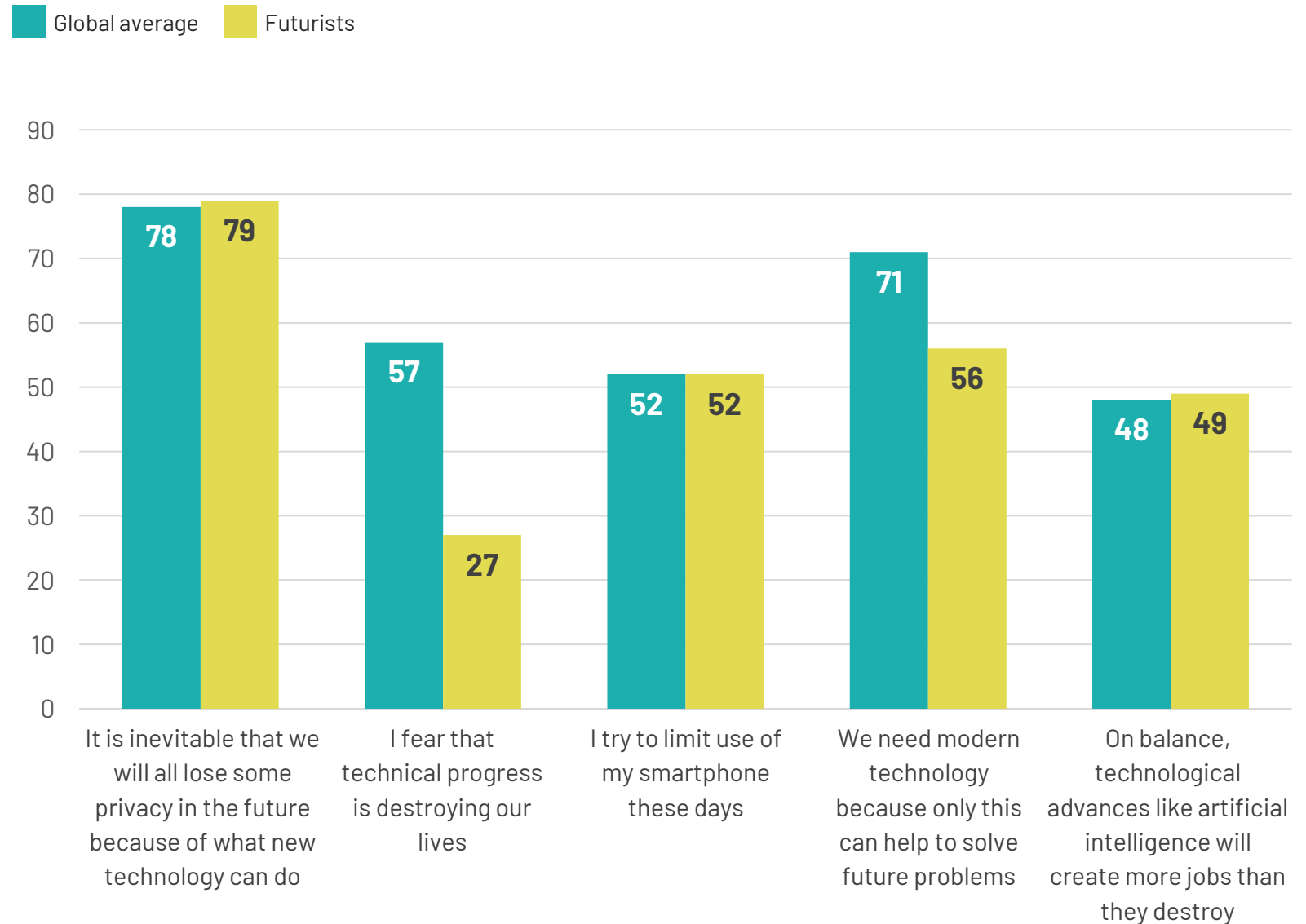


# Futurists are less likely to think we need tech to solve our problems, but also less likely to think it's destroying our lives.

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

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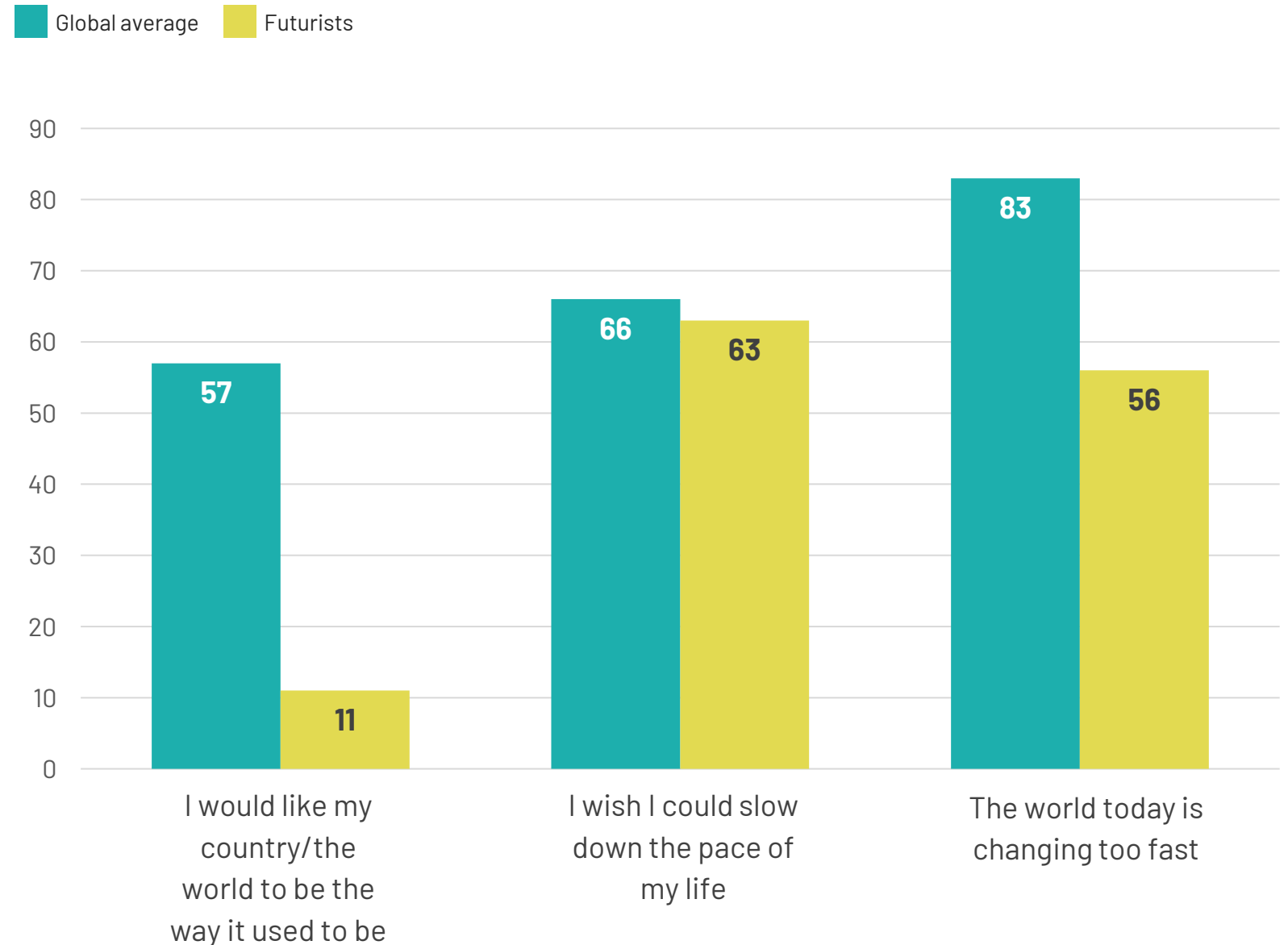
# Futurists are overwhelmed, but don't want to slow change

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

% agree

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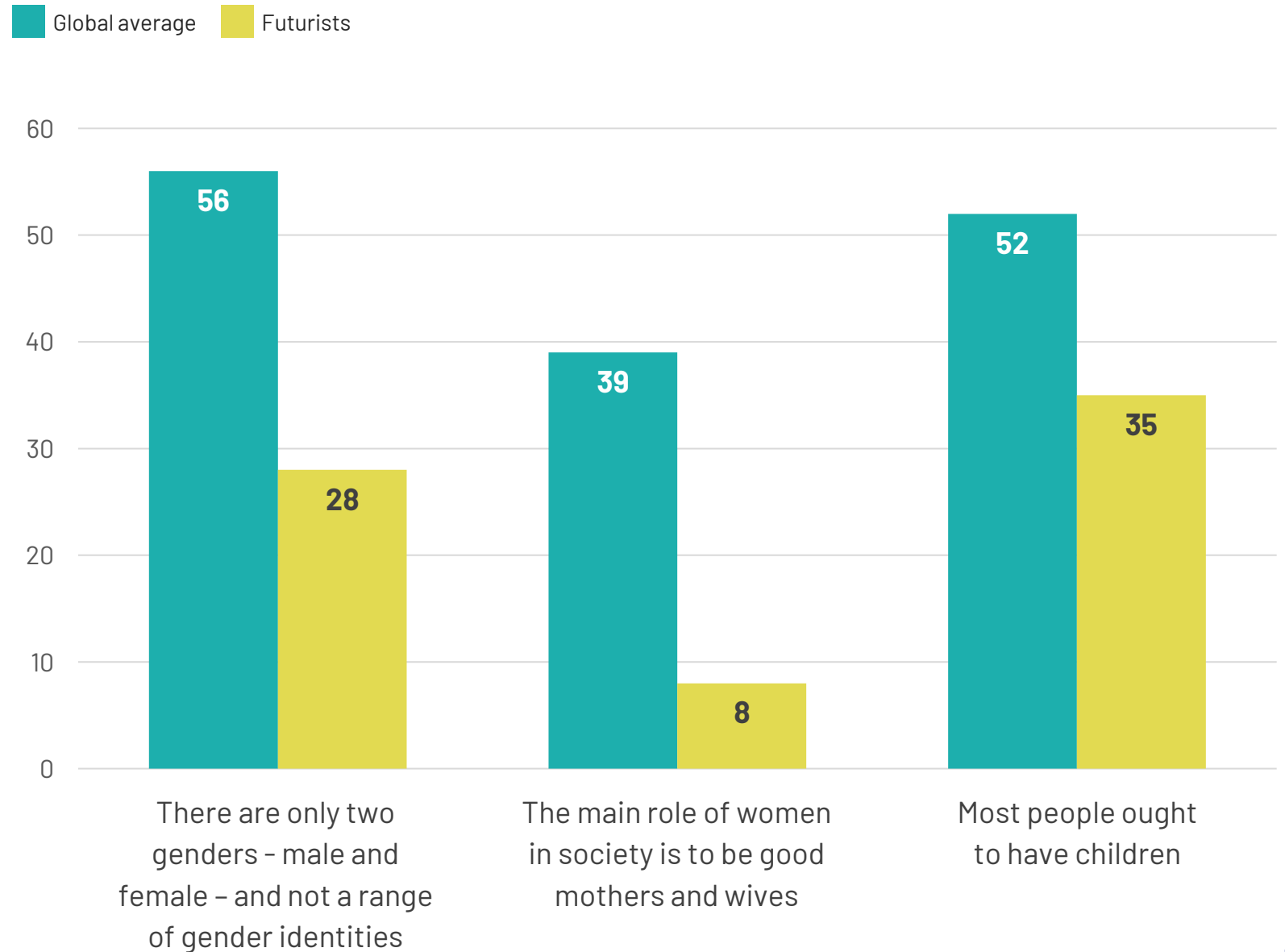
## Futurists take a more expansive view on gender roles, but not sold on having kids

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

% agree

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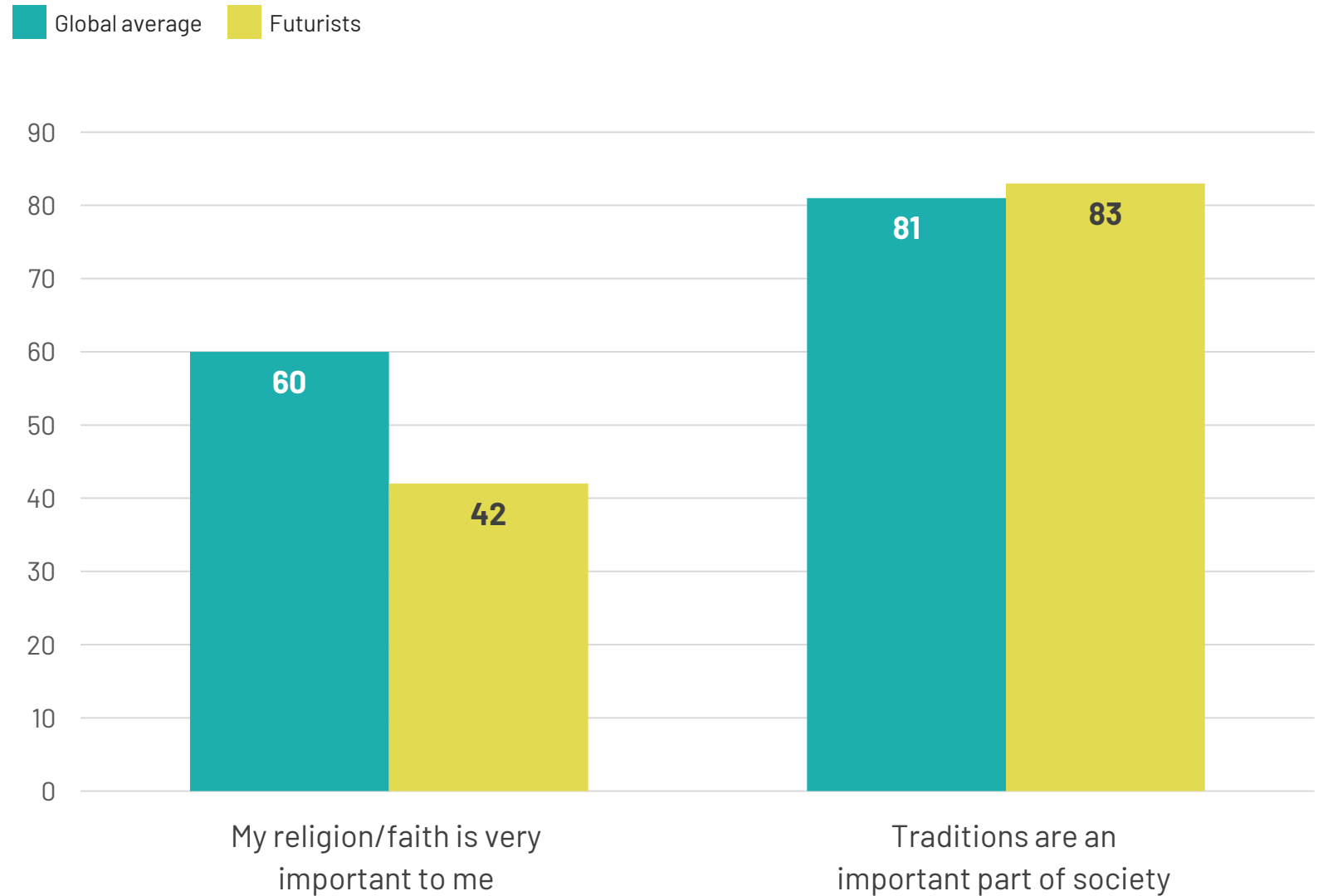


## Futurists are less religious but still traditionalists

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

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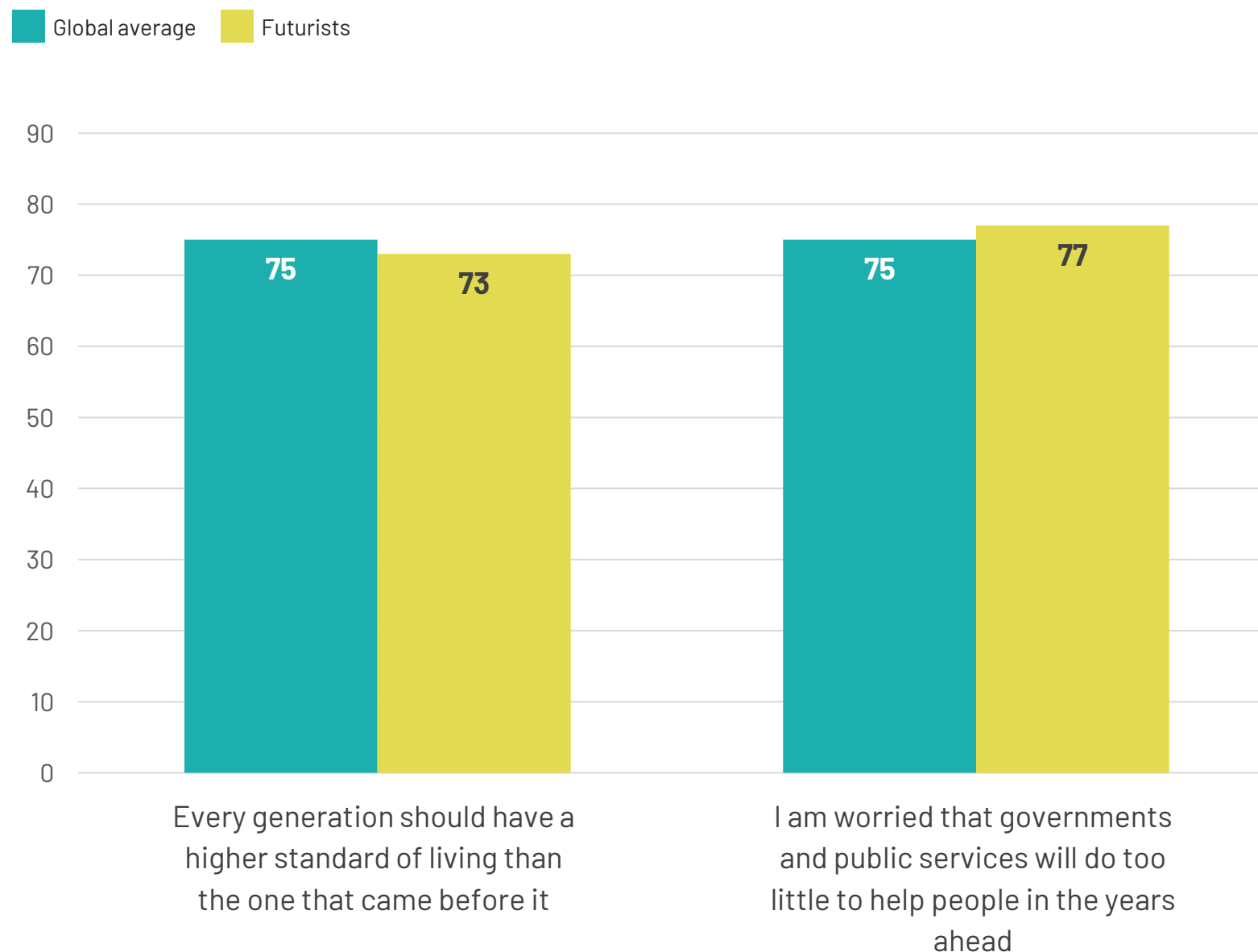
# Futurists agree every generation should improve its standard of living and government won't do enough to help

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

% agree

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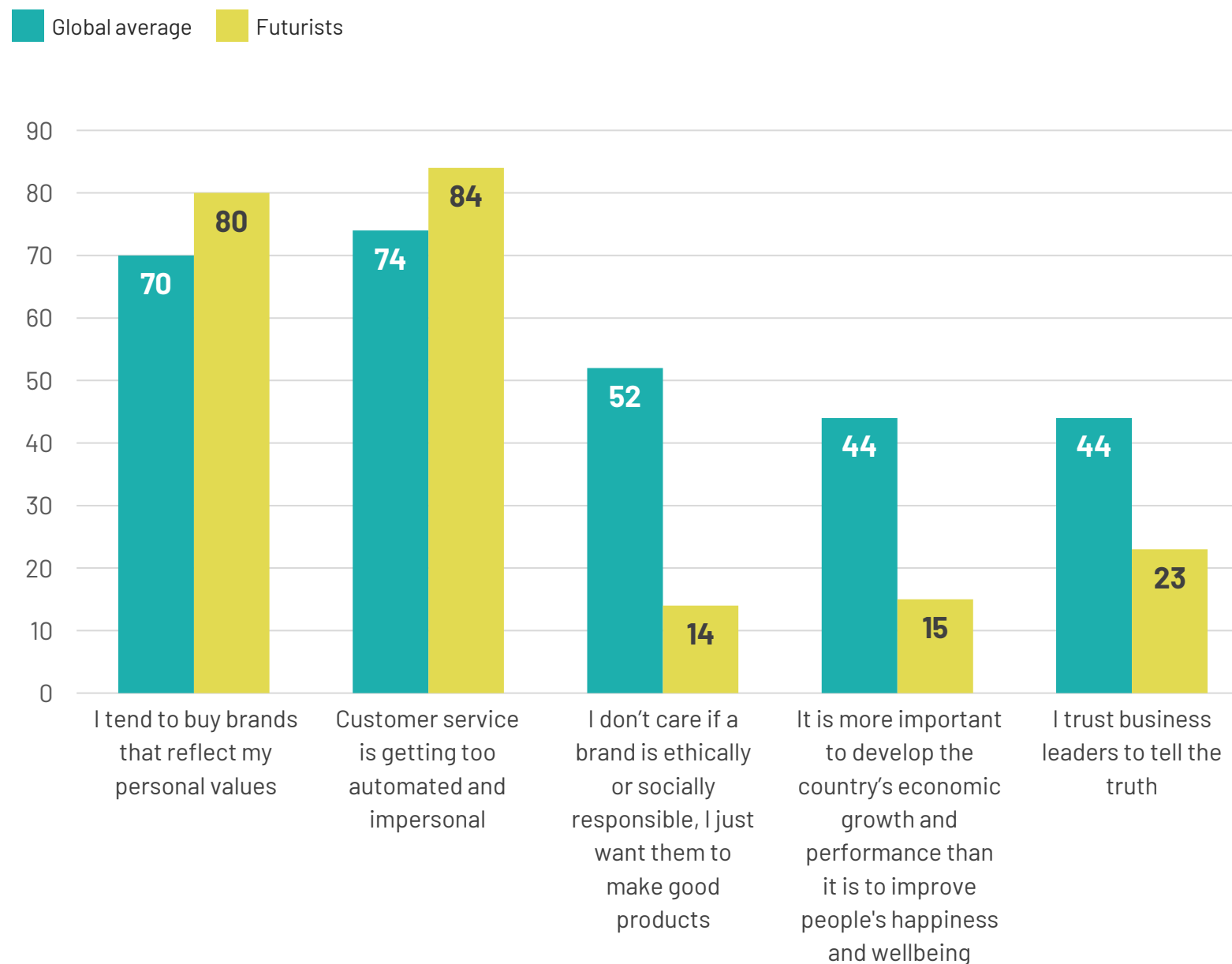
# Futurists want brands to reflect their values but are wary of businesses

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

% agree

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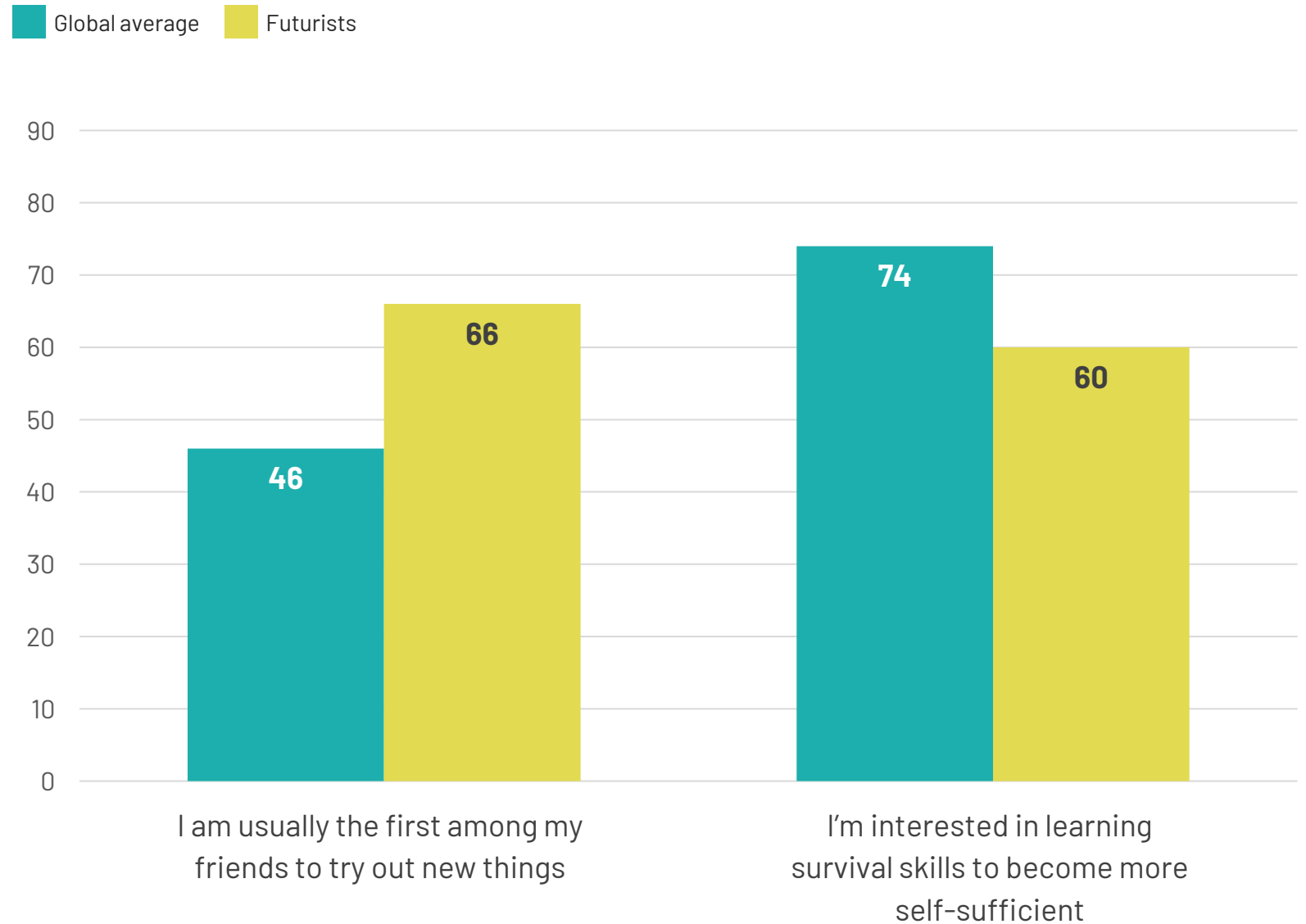


# Futurists are more interested in innovation, but less interested in survivalism

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

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# How futurists *differ* from the general population

	Difference	Gen Pop	Futurists
The important thing is to enjoy life today, tomorrow will take care of itself	-41	62	21
I don't care if a brand is ethically or socially responsible, I just want them to make good products	-38	52	14
I live for today because the future is uncertain	-35	64	29
The main role of women in society is to be good mothers and wives	-31	39	8
I fear that technical progress is destroying our lives	-30	57	27
It is more important to develop the country's economic growth and performance than it is to improve people's happiness & wellbeing	-29	44	15
There are only two genders - male and female - and not a range of gender identities	-28	56	28
The world today is changing too fast	-27	83	56
I often buy products or services based on influencers I follow on social media	-23	34	11
I trust business leaders to tell the truth	-21	44	23
It's too late to do anything about climate change	-18	34	16
My religion/faith is very important to me	-18	60	42
Most people ought to have children	-17	52	35
I think global brands make better products than brands that are just local to my country	-17	44	27
We need modern technology because only this can help to solve future problems	-15	71	56
I'm interested in learning survival skills to become more self-sufficient	-14	74	60
Having large differences in income and wealth is bad for society overall	12	77	89
Companies do not pay enough attention to the environment	12	77	89
Taking all things together, would you say you are...happy	15	76	91
We are heading for environmental disaster unless we change our habits quickly	16	80	96
Looking ahead to the next 12 months, are you optimistic or pessimistic about you and your family	17	67	84
I am usually the first among my friends to try out new things	20	46	66
Looking ahead to the next 12 months, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the following? The city/town/village where you live	20	54	74
Political leaders are stoking up resentment against immigrants for their own political gain	23	55	78
Immigration has a positive impact on society	24	48	72
On balance, how good or poor do you think each of the following are at planning for the long term? You personally	25	58	83

# How futurists *are the same* as the general population\*

	Difference	Gen Pop	Futurists
I tend to buy brands that reflect my personal values	-10	70	80
Customer service is getting too automated and impersonal	-10	74	84
On balance, how good or poor do you think each of the following are at planning for the long term?: Global organizations like the United Nations	-5	37	42
Traditions are an important part of society	-2	81	83
I am worried that governments and public services will do too little to help people in the years ahead	-2	75	77
I can find better deals shopping online than shopping in traditional stores	-2	73	75
It is inevitable that we will all lose some privacy in the future because of what new technology can do	-1	78	79
On balance, technological advances like artificial intelligence will create more jobs than they destroy	-1	48	49
I expect that I will live to be 100 years old	-1	38	39
I try to limit use of my smartphone these days	0	52	52
Every generation should have a higher standard of living than the one that came before it	2	75	73
I wish I could slow down the pace of my life	3	66	63
On balance, how good or poor do you think each of the following are at planning for the long term?: Businesses in my country	5	44	39
The economy of my country is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful	6	72	66
Looking ahead to the next 12 months, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the following?: The World in General	7	31	24
I think we will not move forward without a revolution first	8	45	37
On balance, how good or poor do you think each of the following are at planning for the long term?: People living in my country	8	40	32
Democracy is the ideal governance system	9	73	64
Looking ahead to the next 12 months, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the following?: My Country	10	54	44
On balance, how good or poor do you think each of the following are at planning for the long term?: Your National Government	15	31	16

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THANK  
YOU

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