

What do the UK public think about policies that can deliver for climate and health?

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The 2024 Lord Darzi Review of the NHS stated that “often health and climate are mutually reinforcing goals”. Aligning climate and health objectives can help existing budgets to go further – something that is particularly relevant given the high levels of pressure on the NHS and tight public finances. But what do the public think about policies that could deliver for health and climate change simultaneously?

These slides summarise findings from a nationally representative sample (on the basis of age, gender and ethnicity) of 897 people who were asked to share their opinions about the benefits that climate action can bring and their level of support for policies that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions while improving public health.

Potential policies included in the survey were adapted from recommendations for further action from the Climate Change Committee’s 2023 and 2024 mitigation and adaptation reports, the National Infrastructure Commissions 2023 report, the 2021 National Food strategy and previous research from the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST).

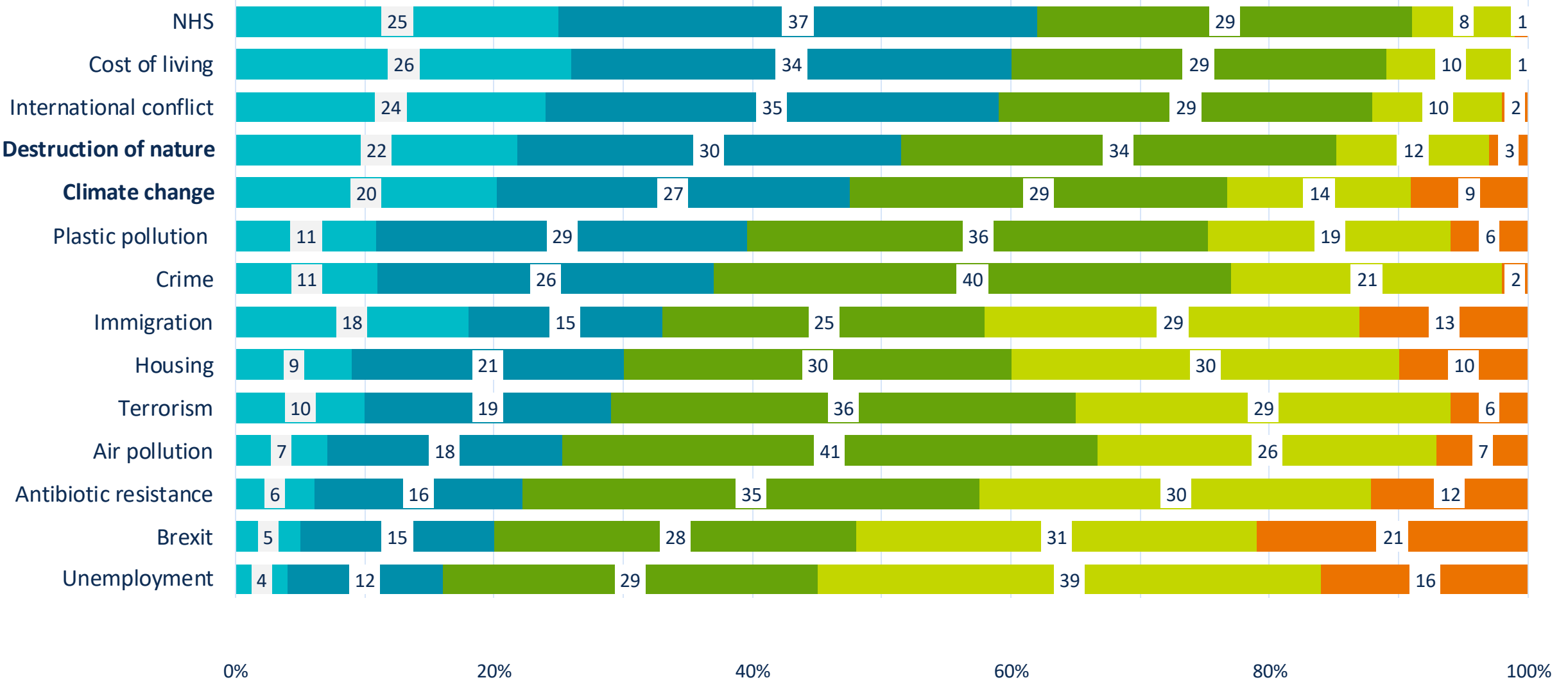
This document accompanies a briefing [‘How can action to tackle climate change improve people’s health and save the NHS money?’](#) which provides more detail on the opportunities that climate action provides for improving public health.

The survey was conducted via the platform Prolific.com between 2-4 October 2024.

The UK public are concerned about climate change and the environment

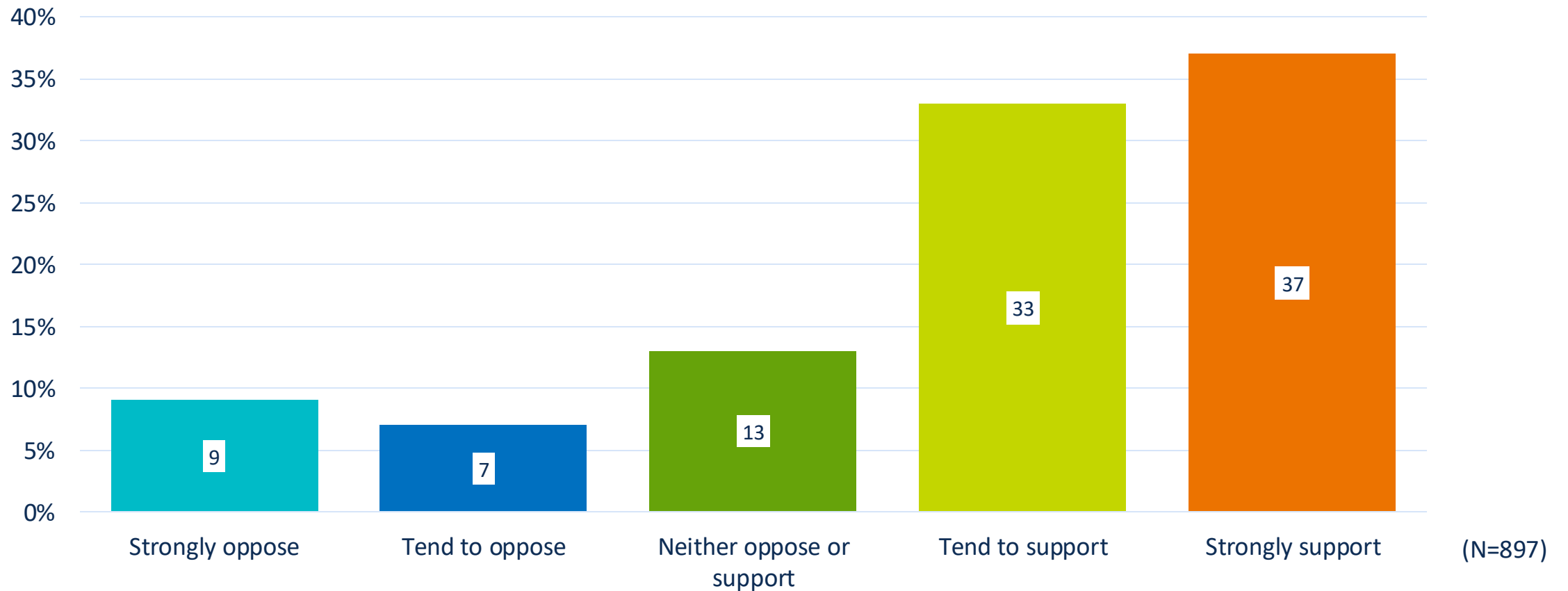
Question: How worried are you personally about the following issues at present?

Key: ■ Extremely worried ■ Very worried ■ Somewhat worried ■ Not very worried ■ Not at all worried (N=897)



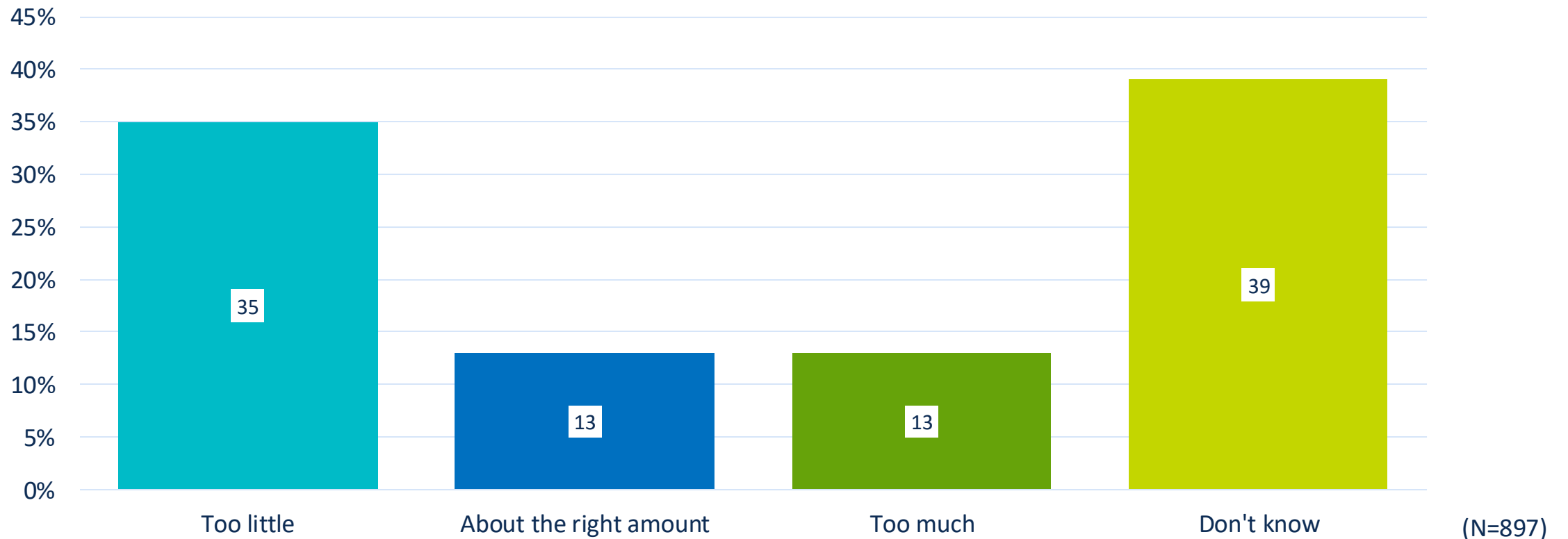
And are supportive of the 2050 Net Zero target

Question: To what extent do you support or oppose the Net Zero target?



While many people are yet to form an opinion on this Government's climate mitigation plans, the majority of those who have an opinion believe current plans to be insufficient

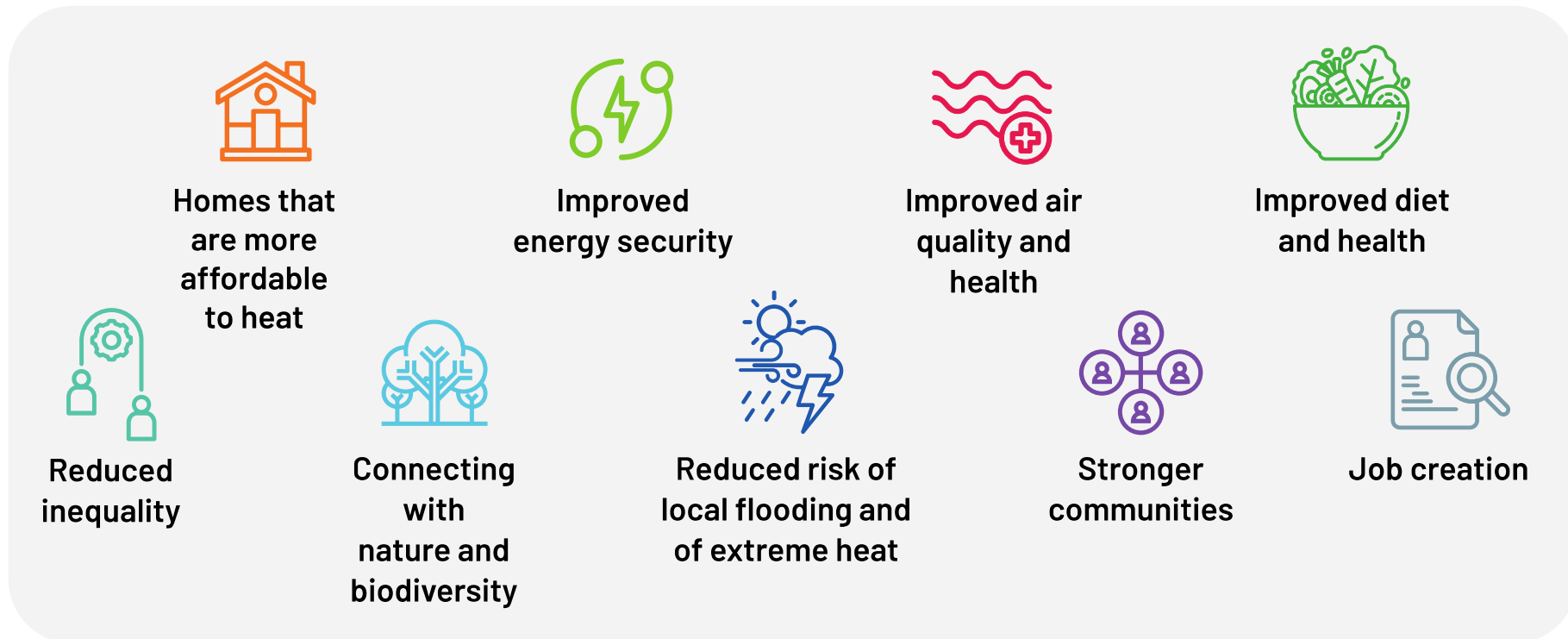
Question: Do you think the new Labour government is planning to do too much, too little or about the right amount to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to help prevent climate change?



This points to the opportunity to be more ambitious on climate change.

Crucially, there are a range of benefits that climate action can bring beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But what do people think about them?

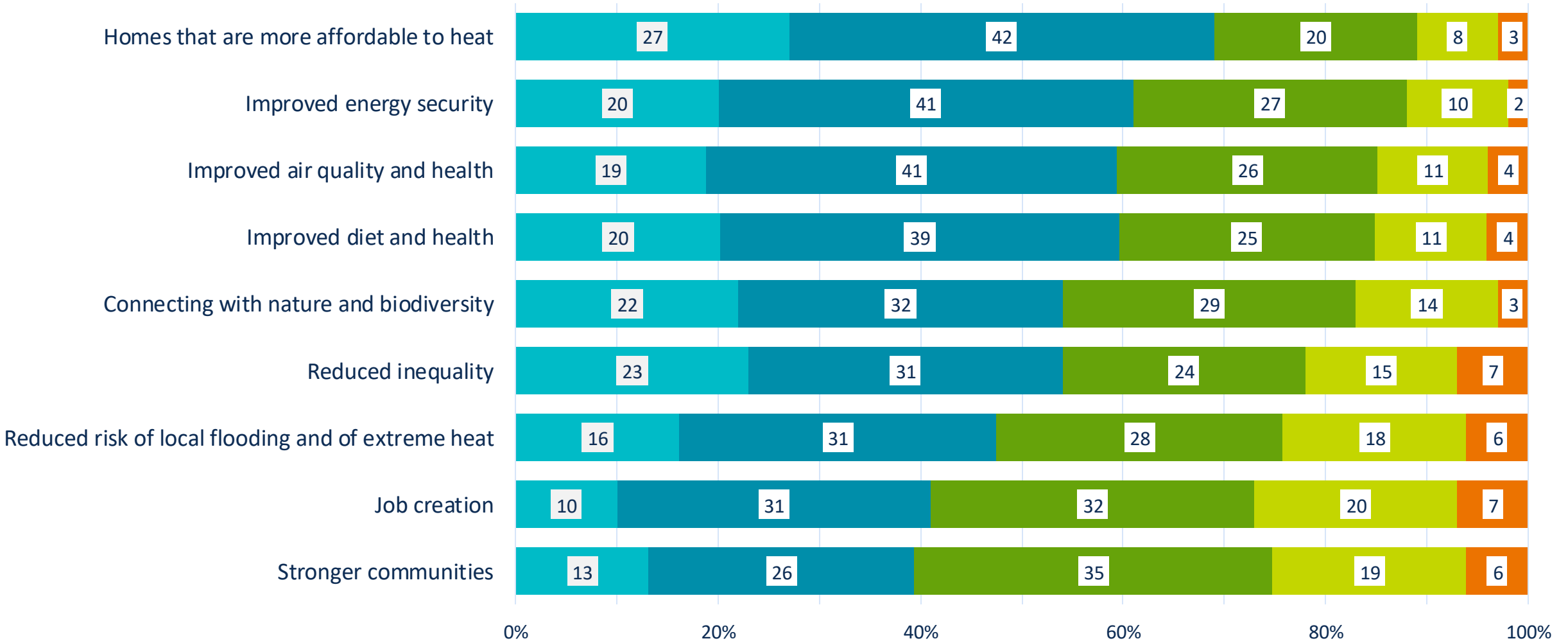
As part of the survey, we shared nine different potential co-benefits of climate action and asked respondents to state how important they perceived them to be. These co-benefits represent a range of potential outcomes that can result from climate action and are discussed in more detail in our October 2023 report.



People perceive the benefits that climate action can bring to be important to themselves - particularly benefits that can improve their health such as making homes more affordable to heat and improving air quality and diet

Question: Please rate how important these benefits are to you

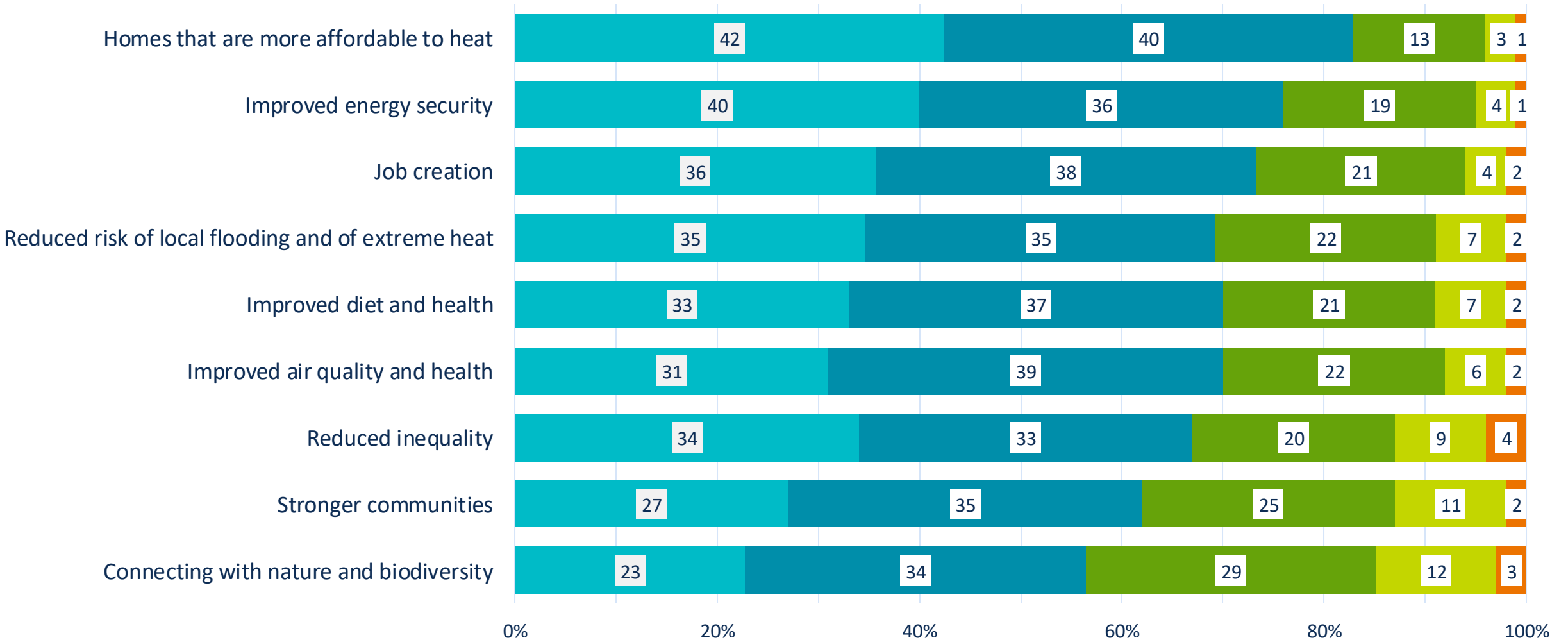
Key: ■ Extremely important ■ Very important ■ Moderately important ■ Slightly important ■ Not at all important (N=897)



These benefits are perceived to be even more important when considered at the UK level – all 9 co-benefits are perceived as being extremely or very important by the majority of respondents.

Question: Please rate how important these benefits are to the UK

Key: ■ Extremely important ■ Very important ■ Moderately important ■ Slightly important ■ Not at all important (N=897)



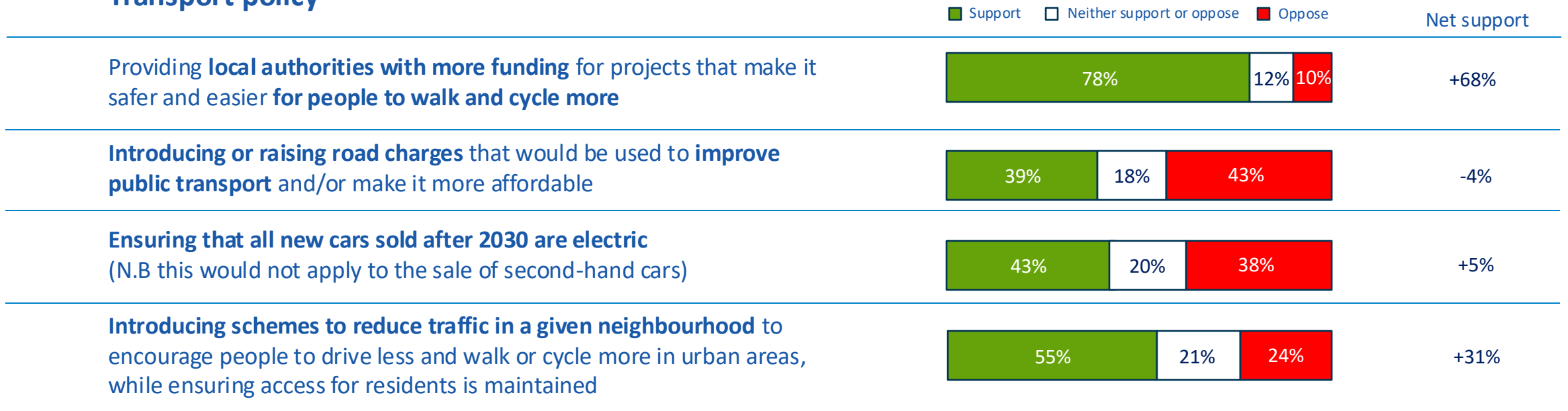
Amongst the co-benefits that are most important to individuals personally, three of the top four relate to direct benefits to people's health. This suggests an opportunity for Government to capitalise on synergies between climate and health, delivering on the UK's climate commitments while also addressing pressure on the NHS.

To understand how this translates into support for particular policies, we asked people to share their views on relevant measures that the Climate Change Committee and National Infrastructure Commission have highlighted as areas where UK climate policy has fallen short.

So how supportive are the UK public of policies that can simultaneously deliver benefits for climate and health?

On transport, support is relatively high for policies related to walking and cycling, while opinion is split when it comes to road charging and bringing forward the ban for new sales of non-zero emission vehicles:

Transport policy

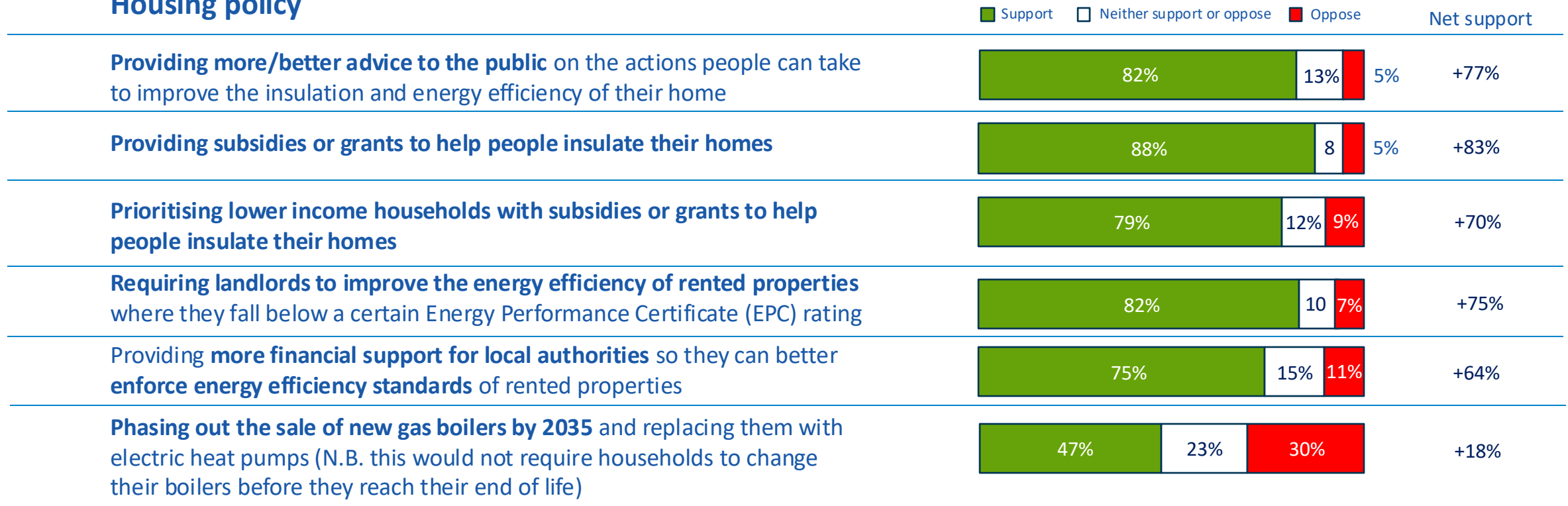


(N=897)

N.B. Net support refers to the percentage of people who strongly support or tend to support a policy minus those who strongly oppose or tend to oppose that policy. '+' signs indicate net support for a policy while '-' signs indicate net opposition.

In the **housing** sector, support is high for most policies – particularly those that are aimed at improving energy efficiency.

Housing policy



(N=897)

When it comes to **food**, there is support for policies that provide healthier options, but not for those more focused on financial incentives or disincentives:

Food policy

■ Support □ Neither support or oppose ■ Oppose Net support

Increasing the price of meat products and reducing the price of plant-based products



-26%

Requiring canteens and restaurants to offer vegetarian and vegan options



+42%

(N=897)

These opinions may partly reflect concerns with policies that are perceived to restrict choice but also concerns that reducing meat consumption may reduce levels of protein intake and negatively affect people's health.

Given that the public perceive improving diet and health to be important to themselves personally, the sentiment above suggests that policies to encourage individuals to adopt healthier, lower meat diets may need to focus more on the 'carrot' than the 'stick'.

And on **nature**, support is very high for tree planting and protecting green and blue space

Green space policy

■ Support □ Neither support or oppose ■ Oppose Net support

Increasing the number of trees planted across the UK



Introducing a **legal requirement for local authorities to protect and enhance public green and blue space** (e.g. parks, rivers, ponds, etc)



(N=897)

Key findings

1. The **public are concerned about climate change and the environment.**
2. Many people are **yet to form an opinion on the Government's climate mitigation plans**, but the majority of those who have an opinion believe current plans to be insufficient.
3. The **public are supportive of the benefits that climate action can bring**, such as homes that are more affordable to heat, improved air quality and health, and improved energy security. Notably, there is strong support for those benefits that relate directly to people's health.
4. The public show **high levels of support for a number of policies that can deliver health and climate benefits** simultaneously, particularly improving home energy efficiency, encouraging more active forms of travel and boosting green and blue spaces.

Key recommendations

- 1. Increase ambition on measures that deliver for climate and health:** build on the high levels of public support for energy efficiency, active travel and green space in particular by supporting policy interventions in those areas.
- 2. Ensure join up across departments:** greater coordination between government departments can help ensure climate action maximises benefits to other government priorities, such as health and economic outcomes. It can also help ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation actions are closely aligned.
- 3. Enhance policy design and communications:** for areas where support is less pronounced, increase the level of public engagement in policy design and communications to help strengthen public support.

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