

What do the UK public think about the co-benefits that climate action can bring?

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1st March 2024

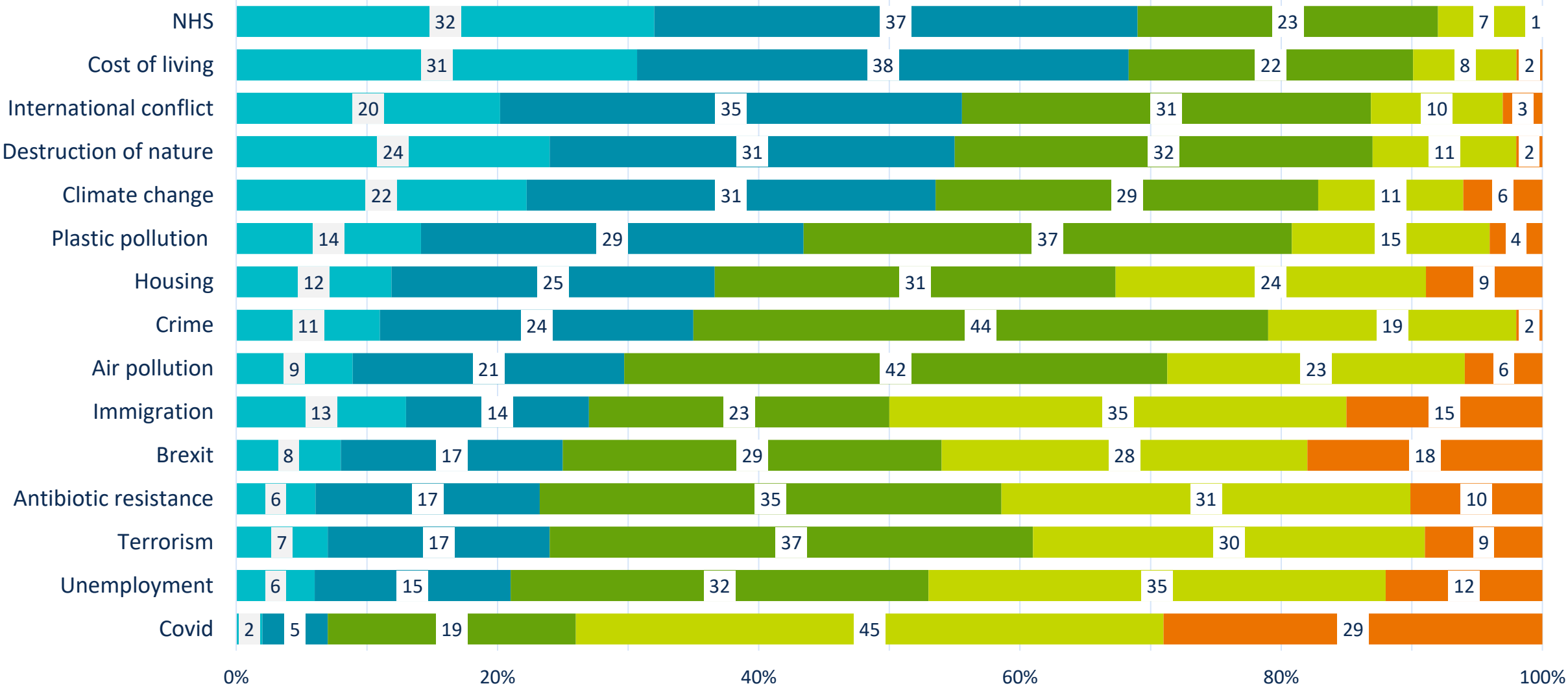
Climate action can bring a wide range of co-benefits or 'win-wins' such as homes that are more affordable to heat, improved air quality and health, and improved energy security. Understanding what the public think about these co-benefits can help to guide approaches to communicate climate action and ensure that the way in which climate policies are designed is aligned with the issues that are of most concern to the public.

These slides summarise findings from a nationally representative sample (on basis of age, gender and ethnicity) of 1,021 people who were asked to share their opinions about the co-benefits of climate action. People were surveyed via the online survey platform Prolific on Mon 12th February 2024. The headline findings and recommendations are followed by a case study focused on homes that are more affordable to heat. The insights in this slide deck build on findings from a Grantham Institute [report](#) published in October 2023 which included survey and focus groups with members of the UK public.

The UK public are concerned about climate change

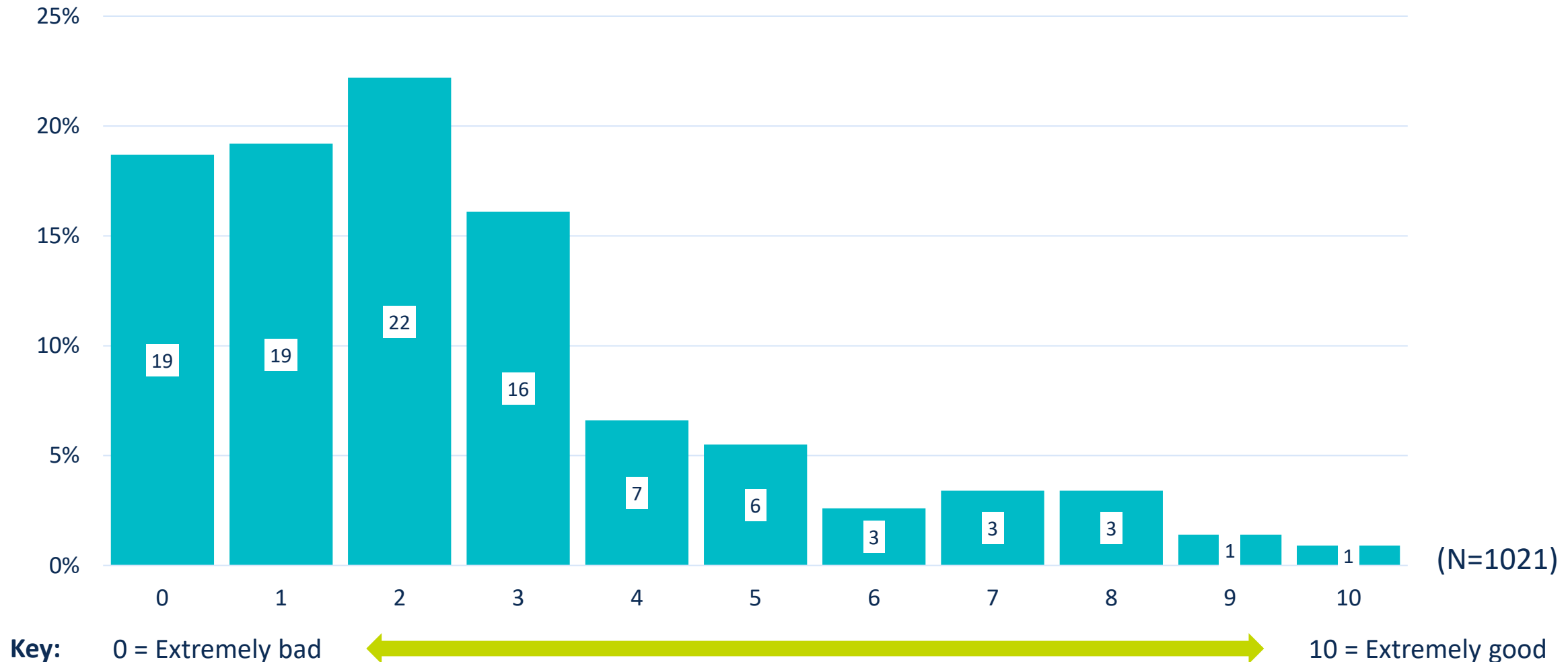
Question: How worried are you personally about the following issues at present?

Key: Extremely worried Very worried Somewhat worried Not very worried Not at all worried (N=1021)



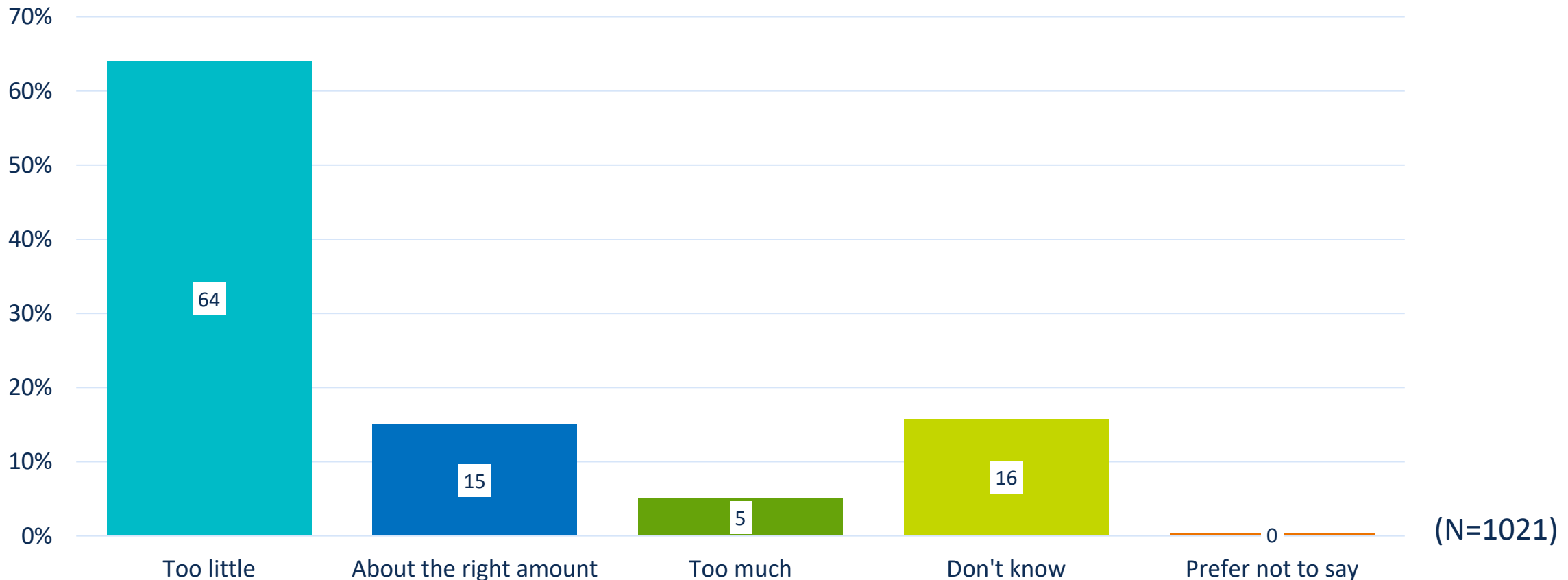
The large majority of citizens believe that the impacts will be bad for people around the world

Question: How good or bad do you think the impact of climate change will be on people across the world?



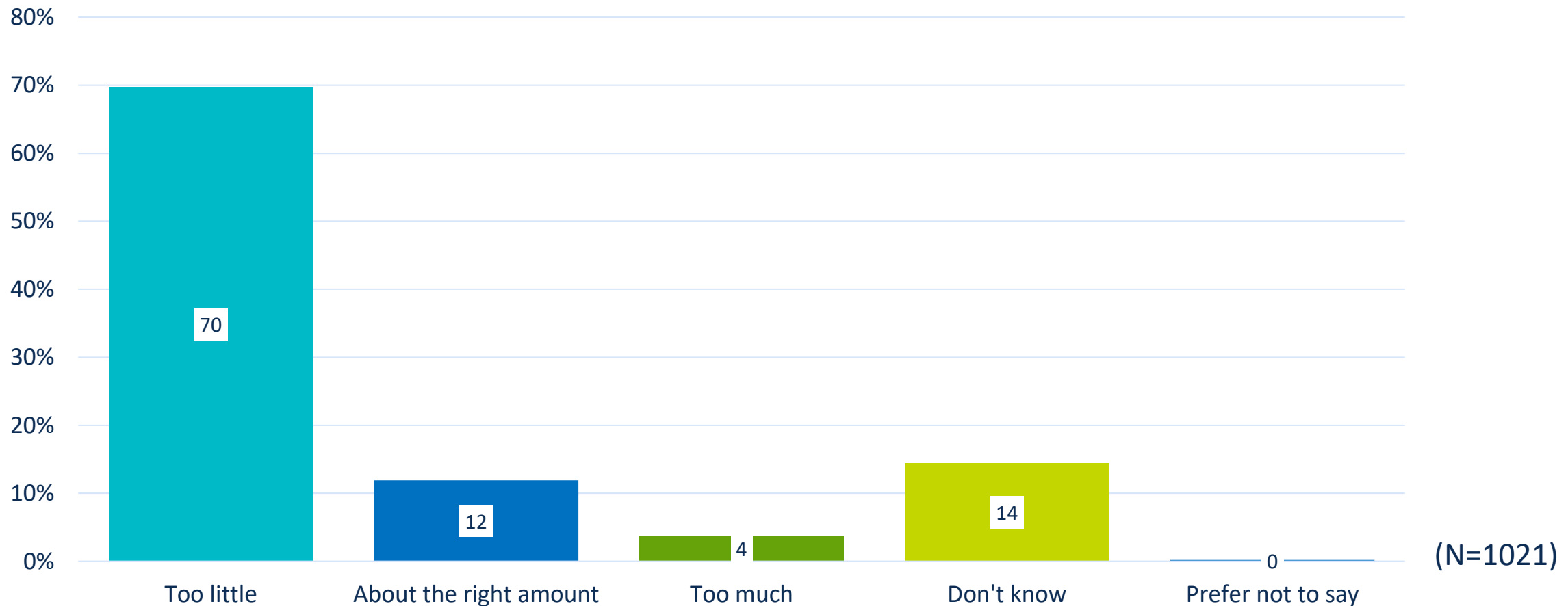
But they don't think the UK government is currently taking sufficient action to address the issue. Whether on mitigation:

Question: Over the last 12 months, do you think the UK government has done too much, too little or has done about the right amount to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to help prevent climate change?



Or on adaptation:

Question: Over the last 12 months, do you think the UK government has done too much, too little or has done about the right amount to prepare for the impacts of climate change (e.g. to prepare for hotter summers or more extreme weather events such as floods)?



And when it comes to the co-benefits that can result from climate action, what do people think?

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, whether they had heard of them before and whether they thought climate action would deliver these benefits in practice. 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](#).



**Homes that
are more
affordable
to heat**



**Improved
energy security**



**Improved air
quality and
health**



**Improved diet
and health**



**Reduced
inequality**



**Connecting
with
nature and
biodiversity**



**Reduced risk of
local flooding and
of extreme heat**



**Stronger
communities**

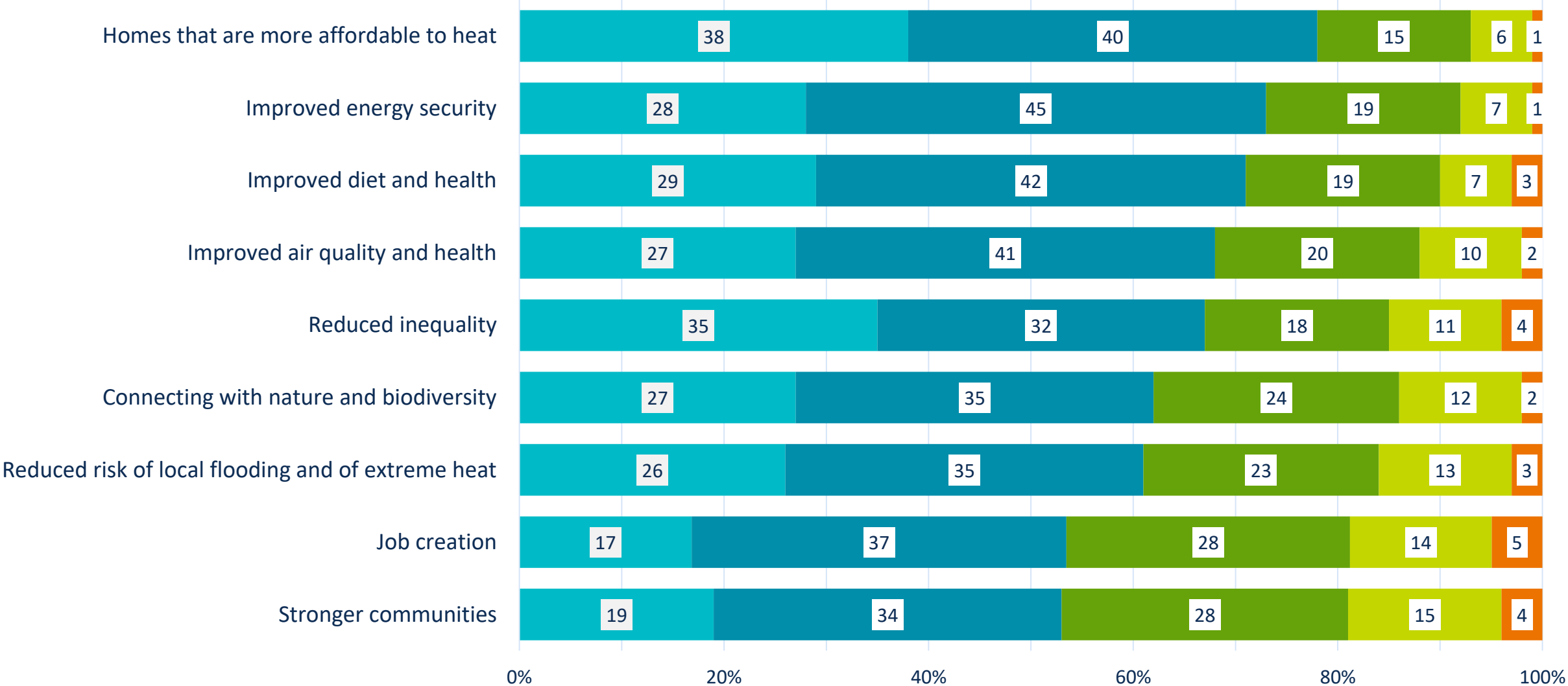


Job creation

People perceive these outcomes to be important to themselves...

Question: How important are these benefits to you?

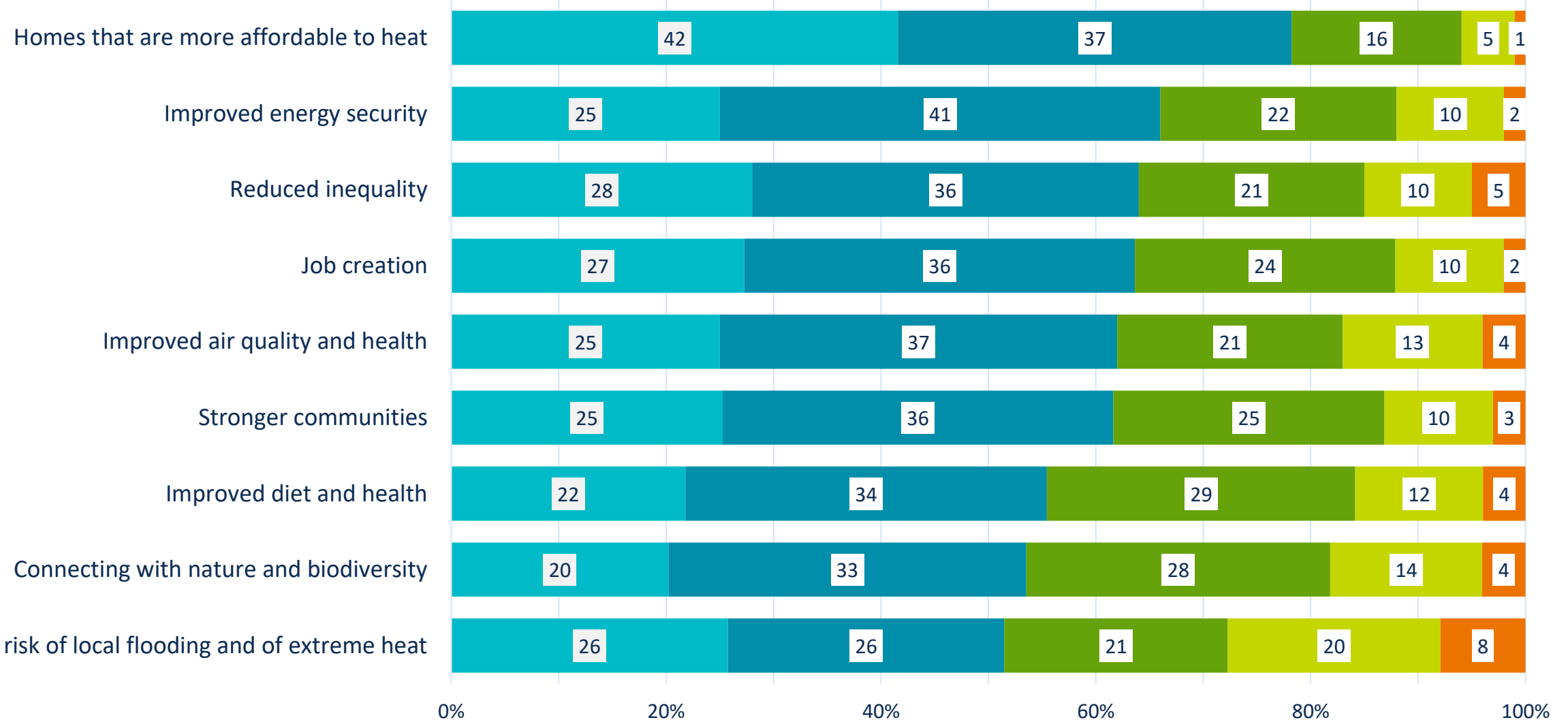
Key: Very important Important Moderately important Slightly important Not at all important (N=1021)



To their local community...

Question: How important do you think these benefits are to your local community/local area?

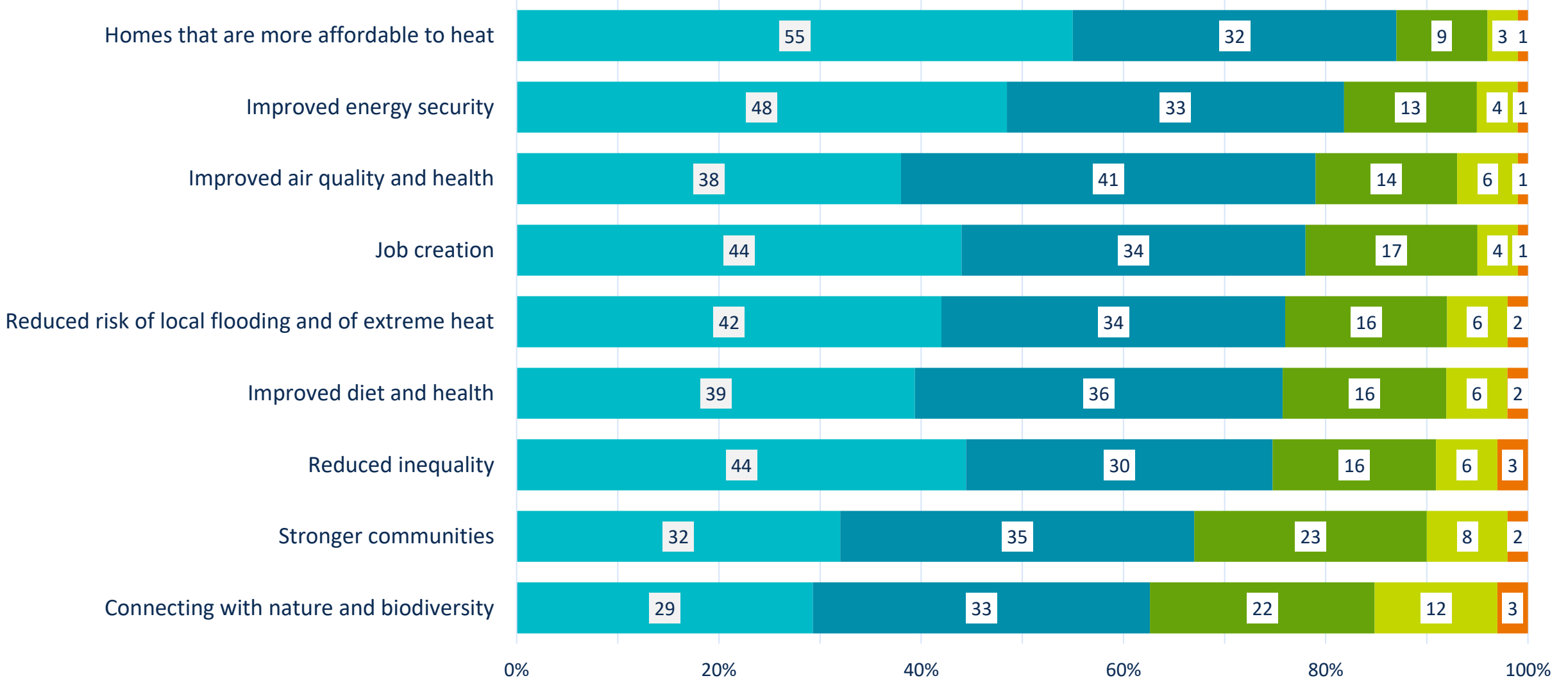
Key: Very important Important Moderately important Slightly important Not at all important (N=1021)



And to the UK as a whole...

Question: How important do you think these benefits are to the UK?

Key: Very important Important Moderately important Slightly important Not at all important (N=1021)

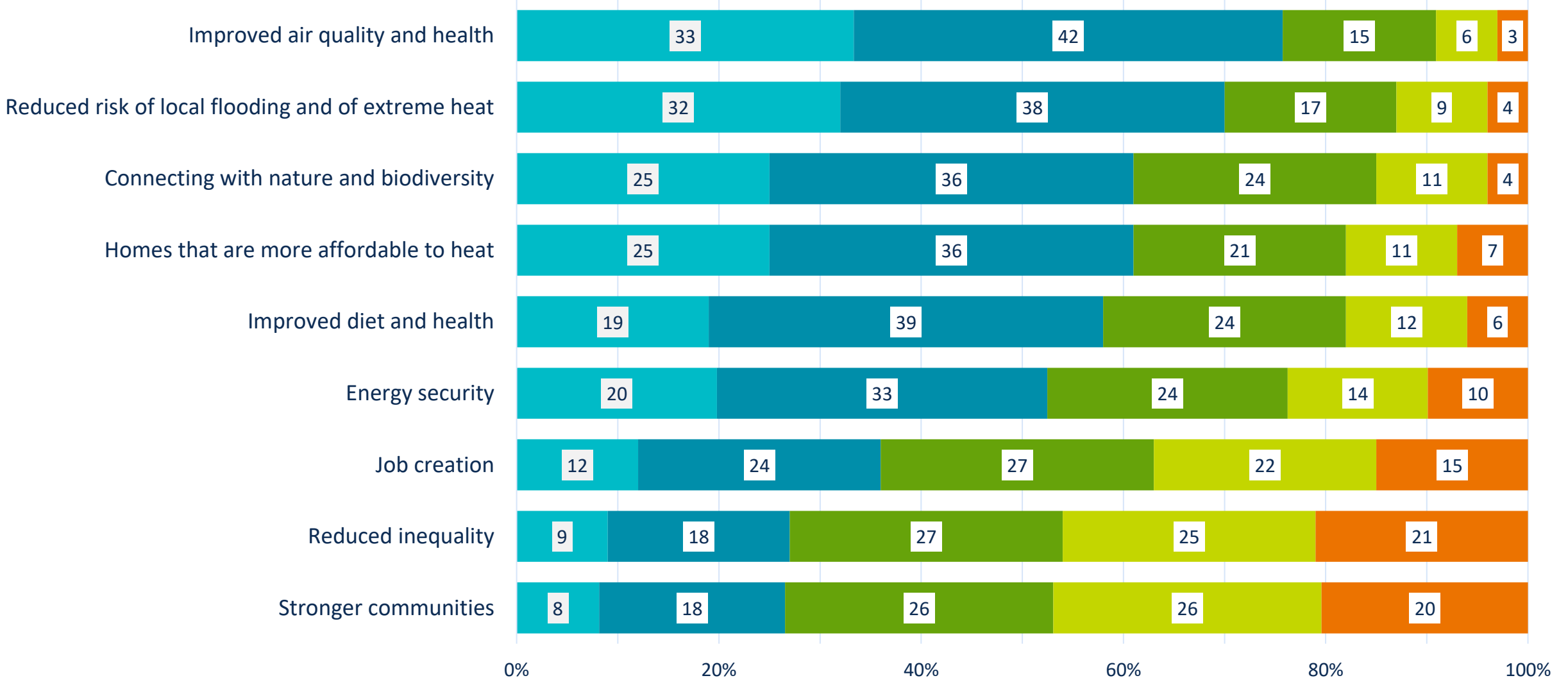


Yet, awareness of these co-benefits amongst the public is mixed:

Question: Before you read this survey, how aware are you that action to tackle climate change could lead to each of these potential benefits?

Key: Fully aware Aware Somewhat aware Slightly aware Not at all aware

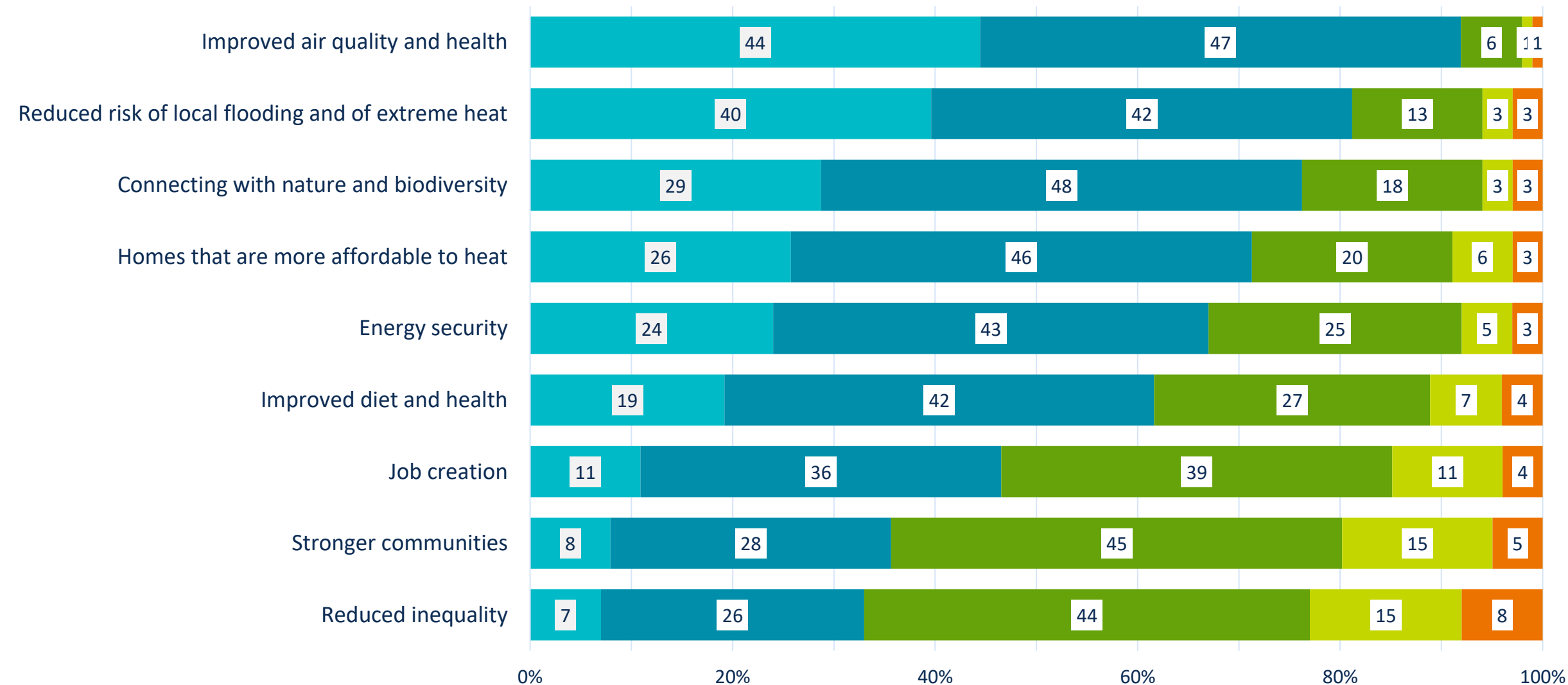
(N=1020)



And, while the public seems confident on the opportunity to realise some of these co-benefits, there remains a level of scepticism of the degree to which other co-benefits can be achieved in practice:

Question: To what extent do you believe that climate action can help achieve the following outcomes?

Key: Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree (N=1017)



Key findings



The public are concerned about climate change, see its impacts as being negative or very negative, and believe that government is not taking sufficient action, whether on mitigation or adaptation.



The public are supportive of the benefits that climate action can bring, such as improved air quality and health, and homes that are more affordable to heat, and perceive many of the benefits to be likely to result from climate action.



But for some of the co-benefits, awareness is relatively low and/or there is a degree of scepticism that they will be delivered in practice.

Key recommendations



1. Raise awareness: Those communicating climate action to the public should highlight how such measures are a key route to delivering on other issues of public concern.



2. Strengthen the evidence base: The evidence base on co-benefits should be improved, particularly for co-benefits where the public is unsure whether climate action can deliver the benefit in practice, such as for job creation or reduced inequality. This will help build better understanding and trust in the full set of benefits that climate action can bring, and can inform policy design to maximise these outcomes.



3. Enhance policy design and acceptability: While there is strong public concern around climate change and the need for more government action, concerns remain around access to clean and affordable alternatives (as highlighted in our case study on heating below) and the extent to which co-benefits can be realised. Stronger public engagement will be important to shape policy design to maximise effectiveness, and to further strengthen public trust and support.



4. Ensure fairness: To maintain levels of public support for climate action, policies must be just and equitable to ensure that the poorest in society don't pay disproportionately for the transition and can access climate friendly alternatives and the co-benefits they can deliver. The following case study from the survey provides an example of this in the context of energy efficiency measures.

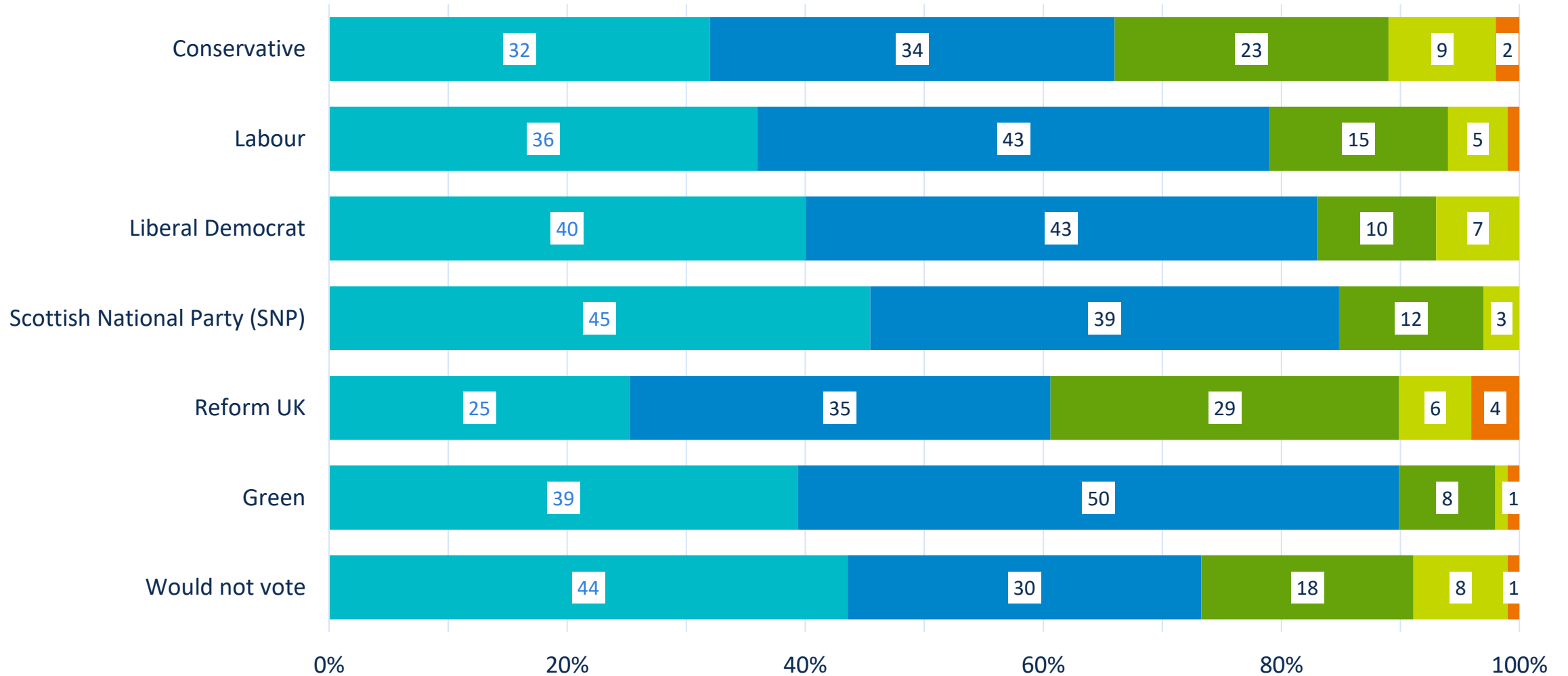
Case study: Homes that are more affordable to heat

The following slides provide more detail about public perceptions of homes that are more affordable to heat. This co-benefit of climate action can be achieved via investment in energy efficiency, such as insulation, and can have follow-on benefits for improving people's health, creating jobs and improving energy security. This co-benefit was selected as it is particularly popular amongst the public across the political spectrum.

People across the political spectrum perceive homes that are more affordable to heat to be important to themselves...

Please rate how important these benefits are to you: Homes that are more affordable to heat

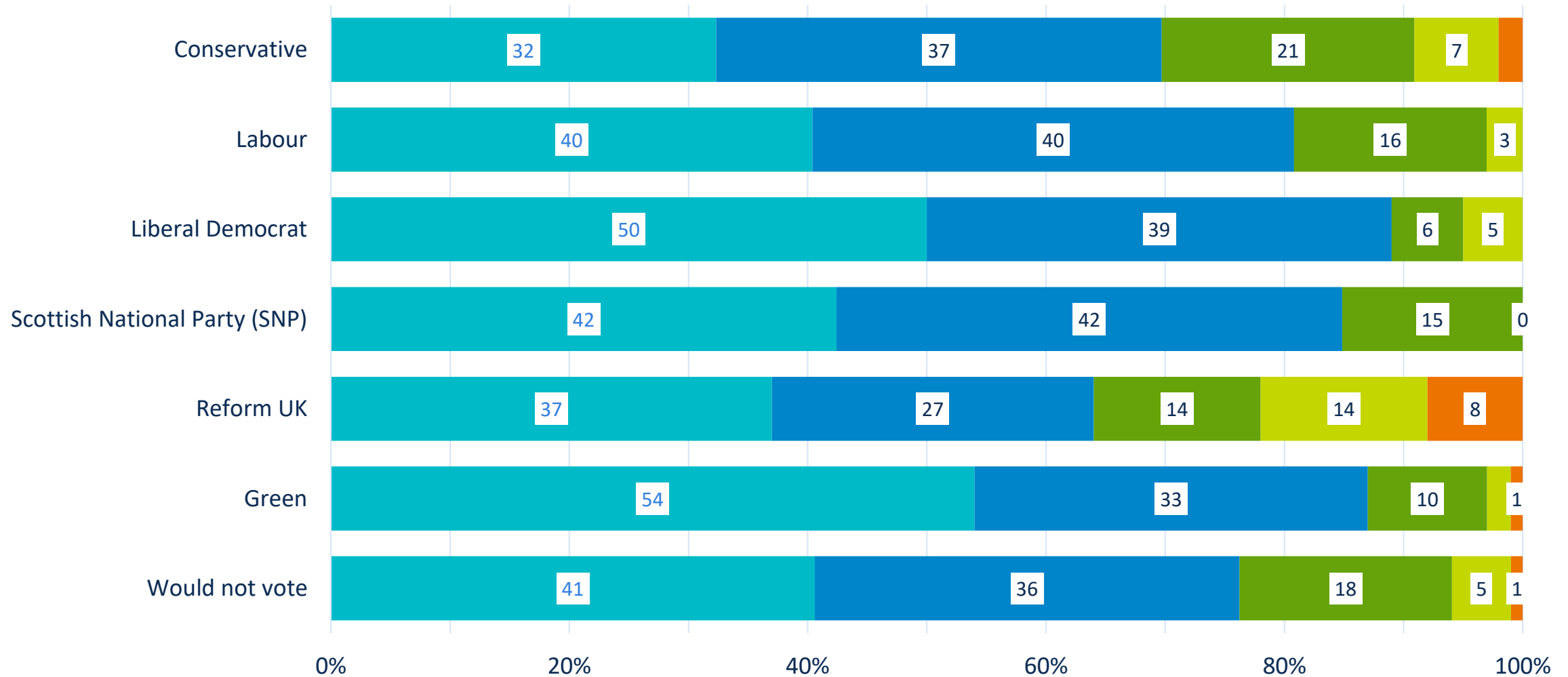
Key: Very important Important Moderately important Slightly important Not at all important (N=907)



...to their local community...

Please rate how important you think these benefits are to your local community/local area: homes that are more affordable to heat

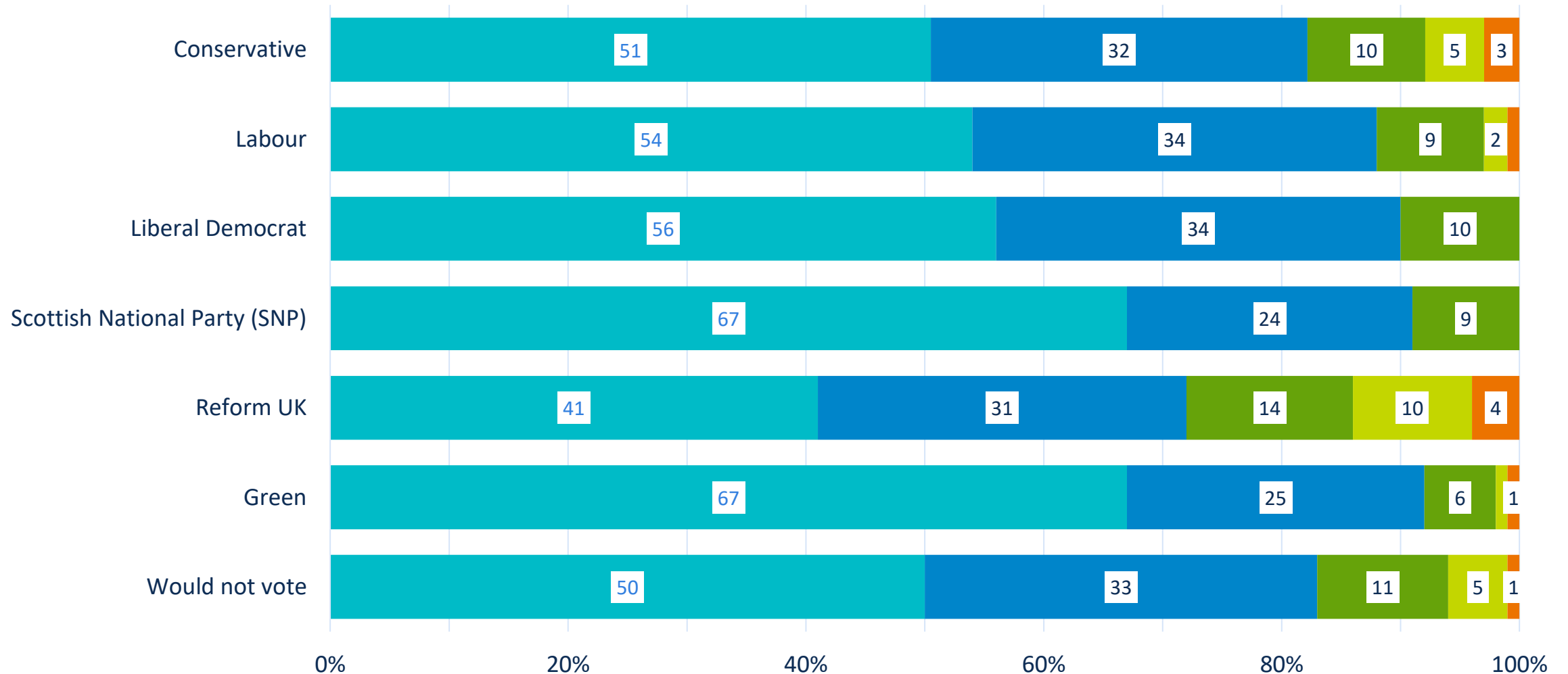
Key: Very important Important Moderately important Slightly important Not at all important (N=907)



...and particularly to the UK as a whole

Please rate how important you think these benefits are to the UK: homes that are more affordable to heat

Key: Very important Important Moderately important Slightly important Not at all important (N=907)



In focus groups, people spoke about this co-benefit as being something fundamental that a country like the UK should be providing to all its citizens



“Warmer homes that are more affordable to heat... That’s something basic that everyone should have, especially during winter.”

(16-17 year old male, white, Greater London)

“It’s my firm belief... no one in this country, no one should have to choose between heating and eating and that would be my primary concern over anything, to be honest, because I think that’s a social thing that as a country, we should be thoroughly ashamed that we’ve been brought to this.”

(65+ year old female, white, Greater London)

And people highlighted that this co-benefit was particularly important because of the cost-of-living crisis and the impact that cold homes have on people's health

"Obviously the energy bills are really high right now... I feel like it's something that really should be accessible to people... if you're not able to do that adequately... it can affect, really affect your quality of life and your children's lives. And possibly even mental health."

(25-34 year old male, Pakistani heritage, central Scotland)

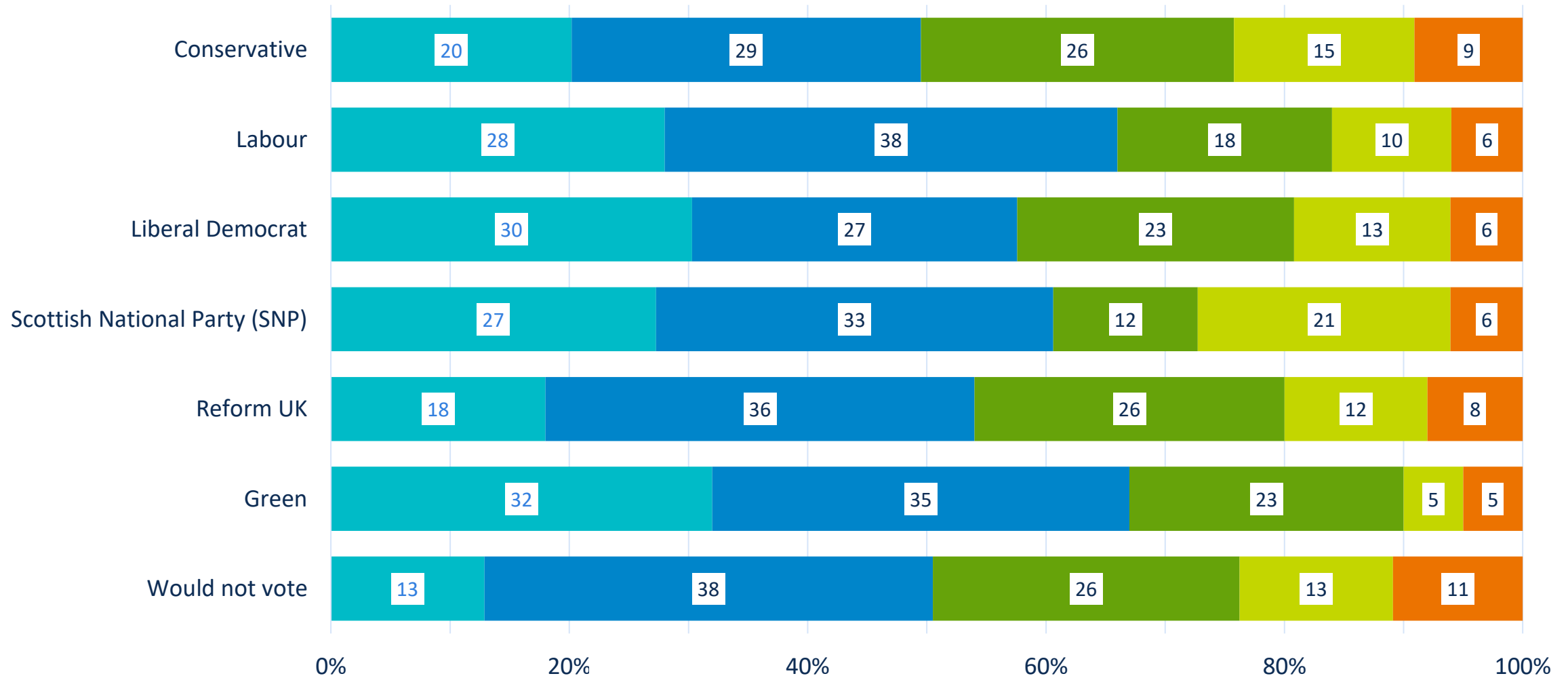
"...warmer homes that are more affordable to heat, that's a really good thing because a lot of people can't heat their homes and it leads to them having damp in their homes and also making them more sick."

(16-17 year old female, mixed ethnic background, Greater London)

Awareness that climate action can help create homes that are more affordable to heat is reasonably high across the political spectrum

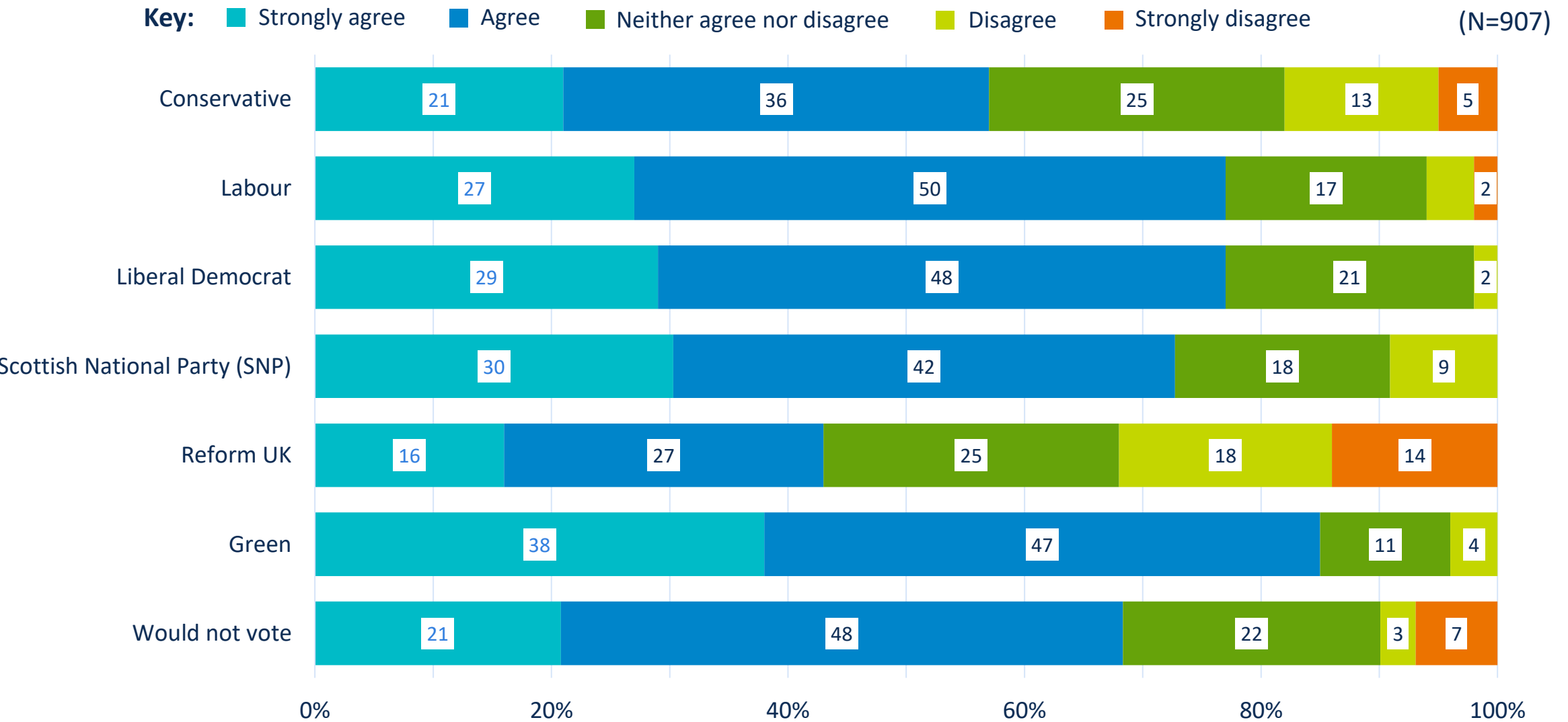
Before you read this survey, how aware were you that action to tackle climate change could lead to each of these potential benefits: homes that are more affordable to heat

Key: Fully aware Aware Somewhat aware Slightly aware Not at all aware (N=907)



But there is more variability by voting intention when it comes to perceptions of whether climate action can achieve this co-benefit in practice

To what extent do you believe that climate action can help achieve the following outcomes: homes that are more affordable to heat



Those who were sceptical of the potential to deliver homes that are more affordable to heat often raised concerns over the up-front cost of energy efficiency measures



“I agree with the outcomes but the equipment to install them are prohibitively expensive.”

(65 year old female, white,
Greater London)

“I don’t agree that homes will be more affordable to heat because the initial costs are high and it takes a long time before the initial outlay can be recovered. I also don’t believe this can reduce inequality because the poorer people cannot afford the higher costs involved in being green. Green products always cost more (whether for good reason or not).”

(45-54+ year old male, Asian heritage,
East Midlands)

Case study summary and recommendation

- Action to improve the energy efficiency of people's homes holds widespread public support across the political spectrum.
- Housing retrofit policies need to ensure the affordability and accessibility of energy efficiency measures for those on lower incomes.
- Decision makers have a number of options to realise these benefits.
- Government advisers such as the Climate Change Committee and the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) have outlined a set of steps that government can take to address insulation and heat pump installations.
- These include the NICs recommendation to invest £1.5-4.5bn/year to cover the full cost of heat pump installations and energy efficiency measures for households on lower incomes.

Annex

Sample information

- 1021 respondents, nationally representative sample (on basis of age, gender and ethnicity) via the online survey company Prolific.
- All participants completed the survey on Monday 12th February 2024
- Average completion time of the survey was 10mins 26 seconds
- Survey respondents each received a payment of £2.29
- 51% female, 48% male, 0.7% non-binary, other or prefer not to say
- 87% white, 7% Asian, 3% Black, 2% Mixed/multiple/other
- 18-24 years old (8.7%), 25-34 (20.3%), 35-44 (20.0%), 45-54 (15.8%), 55-64 (22.9%), 65+ (12.3%)
- Focus groups took place between Dec 2022 and Apr 2023 and data from this aspect of the research was published in [the previous report](#) in Oct 2023.

Sample information – comparison with recent poll

Question: If there were a general election held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

[Sample excluding those who would not vote, don't know or preferred not to answer]

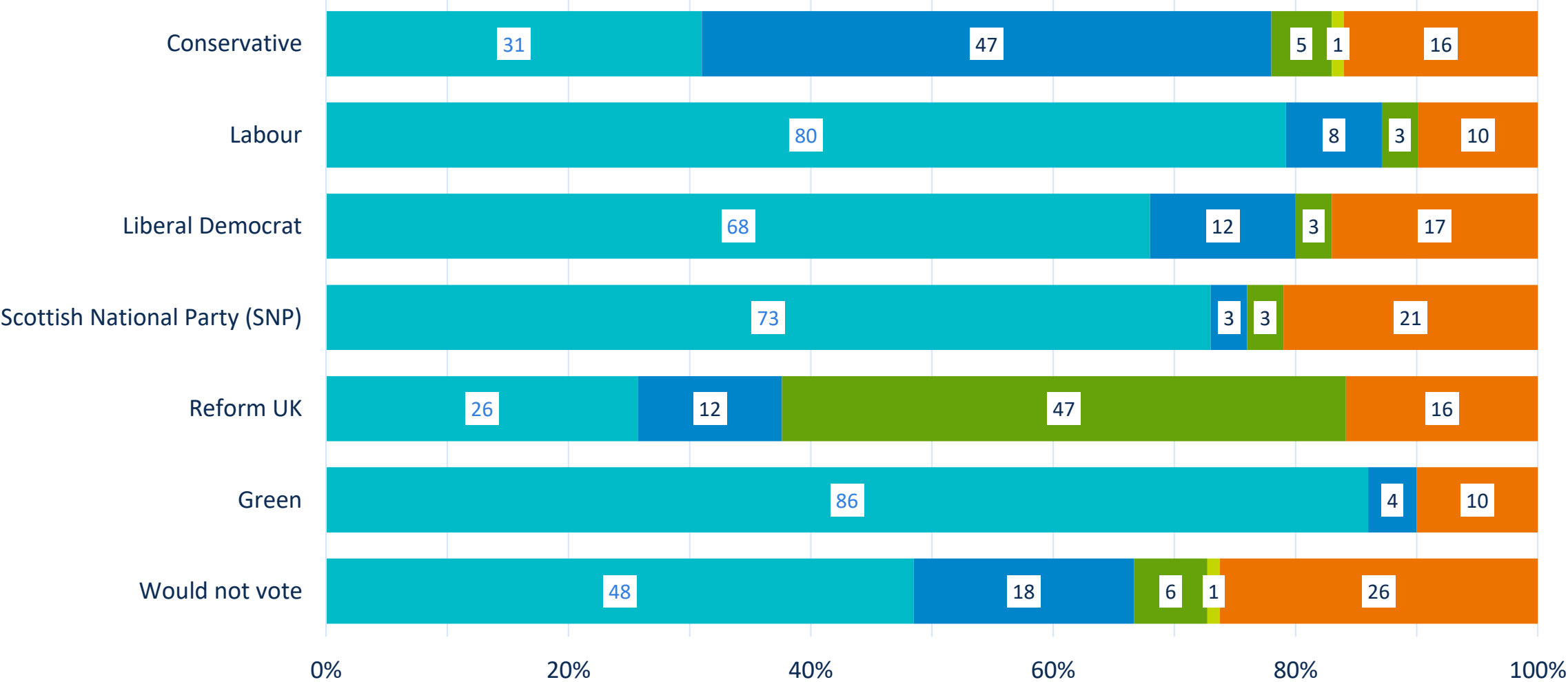
Party	Our sample from Prolific.com (%) (12 Feb 2024)	YouGov/Times (%) (30-31 Jan 2024)
Conservative	16	23
Labour	47	44
Lib Dem	10	9
SNP	4	3
Reform UK	6	12
Green	12	6

(N=856)

Perceptions of government mitigation action by voting intention

Question: Over the last year, do you think the UK government has done too much, too little or has done about the right amount to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to help prevent climate change?

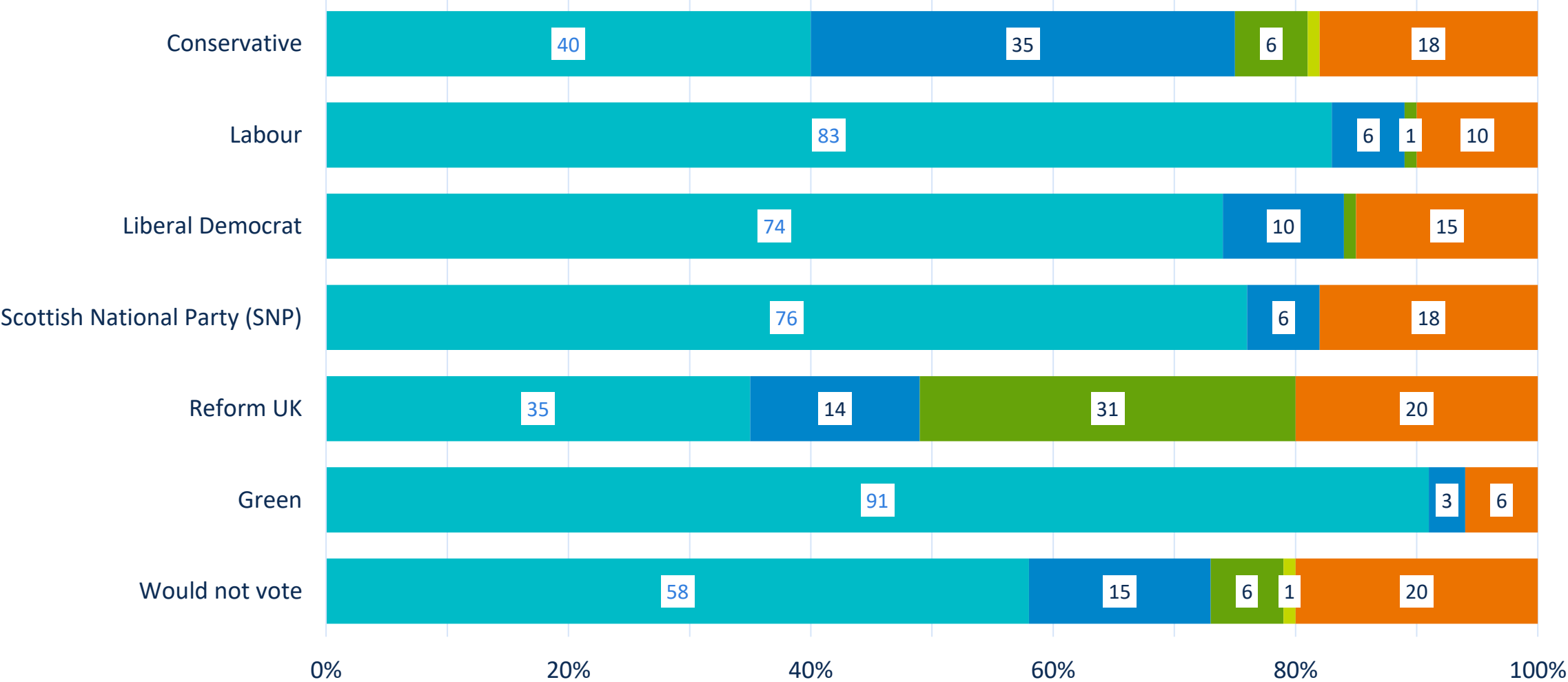
Key: Too little About the right amount Too much Prefer not to say Don't know (N=907)



Perceptions of government adaptation action by voting intention

Question: Over the last year, do you think the UK government has done too much, too little or has done about the right amount to prepare for the impacts of climate change (e.g. to prepare for hotter summers or more extreme weather events such as floods)?

Key: Too little About the right amount Too much Prefer not to say Don't know (N=907)



Please cite as: Jennings, N., Paterson, P., Whitmarsh, L., and Howarth, C. (2024) What do the UK public think about the co-benefits that climate action can bring? Grantham Institute report.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25561/109666>

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