



UNDERSTANDING SCOTLAND

A NEW SURVEY FOR SCOTLAND

ENVIRONMENT

February 2022



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UNDERSTANDING SCOTLAND

Understanding Scotland is a new quarterly survey tool measuring the most important facets of our lives and decision-making in Scotland: our society, economy, and environment.

This high-quality, large-scale survey tool is brought to you by Diffley Partnership and Charlotte Street Partners.

We are extremely grateful for this inaugural wave's sponsors who have made this exciting new endeavour possible, and especially to Scotland's Rural College, who sponsored this module.



INTRODUCTION

ENVIRONMENT - DECEMBER 2021

We are delighted to present this Understanding Scotland report on environmental attitudes and expectations.

In the wake of the recent COP26 conference in Glasgow, this report takes the pulse of the Scottish public on fundamental environmental issues and questions.

We find a clear consensus that climate change constitutes a global emergency - regardless of sex, age or class - and most people see it as a unifying concern.

Governments are held primarily responsible by a majority of people for tackling climate change, followed by individuals. Most people do not believe that taking action to tackle climate change would damage the economy, though oil-rich geographical regions are more sceptical and we find limited understanding of 'the green economy'.

We also find a clear role, in the eyes of the public, for education within the fight against climate change, with public support for a designated environmental educational institution, and for a larger role for environmental issues in curricula.

Subsequent waves of the survey will monitor changes and trends in this data. The value and insight of Understanding Scotland will grow exponentially over time, as we track, explain and anticipate long-term shifts and trends.

UNDERSTANDING SCOTLAND

ENVIRONMENT

IN 10 POINTS

Our inaugural edition of Understanding Scotland brings you insights from over 2,000 members of the adult (16+) Scottish public on the most pressing environmental questions of the day.

01 THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SEE CLIMATE CHANGE AS AN UNAMBIGUOUS GLOBAL EMERGENCY

There is a clear consensus among the Scottish population that climate change constitutes a global emergency, with 4 in 5 people saying so, and only 12% disagreeing. A clear majority believed this to be the case regardless of sex, age or social grade.

02 THE PUBLIC DO NOT SEE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AS THE PRESERVE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

By a ratio of 3:1 people believe that climate change is an issue that worries everybody, regardless of background. In fact, more affluent respondents appear to have internalised this notion, with a greater proportion of ABC1 respondents saying it primarily motivates more privileged individuals (24%) than C2DE respondents (19%).

03 PEOPLE HOLD GOVERNMENT MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

58% of people overall hold Government singularly most responsible for tackling climate change.

04 THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

There is, in the public eye, a clear responsibility on us to tackle climate change as individuals, with a fifth (18%) of people saying that individuals have prime responsibility. This was followed by businesses (12%) and international bodies (10%).

05 YOUNG PEOPLE, HOWEVER, ARE OUTLIERS

While there was a high degree of consistency across other age brackets in apportioning responsibility, 16-34 year olds were markedly less likely than others to hold individuals responsible (12%), and almost twice as likely to hold businesses most responsible (20%).

06 MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT CLIMATE ACTION WOULD BOOST THE ECONOMY

Overall, half of respondents disagreed with the suggestion that tackling climate change would imperil economic productivity, with only a quarter suggesting it would be harmful. Female and younger respondents were especially likely to think that it would benefit the economy.

07 BUT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE VARIATION BETWEEN GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

While a greater proportion of people in all areas said it would be economically beneficial than damaging, the margin was much tighter in the North East of Scotland, where 35% said that it would harm the economy.

08 MOST PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE 'GREEN ECONOMY'

50% of people know 'a little' about what the term means, while 36% know nothing or have never heard the term. Reported familiarity with the term was higher among older and more affluent respondents.

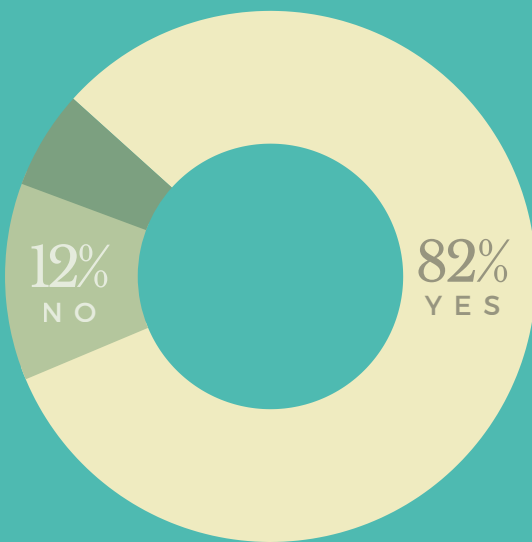
09 IN THE MINDS OF THE PUBLIC, THERE IS A CLEAR ROLE FOR EDUCATION IN TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Two thirds of the Scottish public believe a designated educational institution would support Scotland to tackle climate change, and 55% said that all higher and further education courses should include climate change education.

10 HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL MORE TO DO IN THIS VEIN

Less than a quarter (24%) of people think that enough is currently being done in schools to educate young people about climate change, with 34% disagreeing.

CLIMATE 'EMERGENCY'



Do you think climate change is a global emergency?
Unmarked Section reflects the 6% answering 'Don't know'.

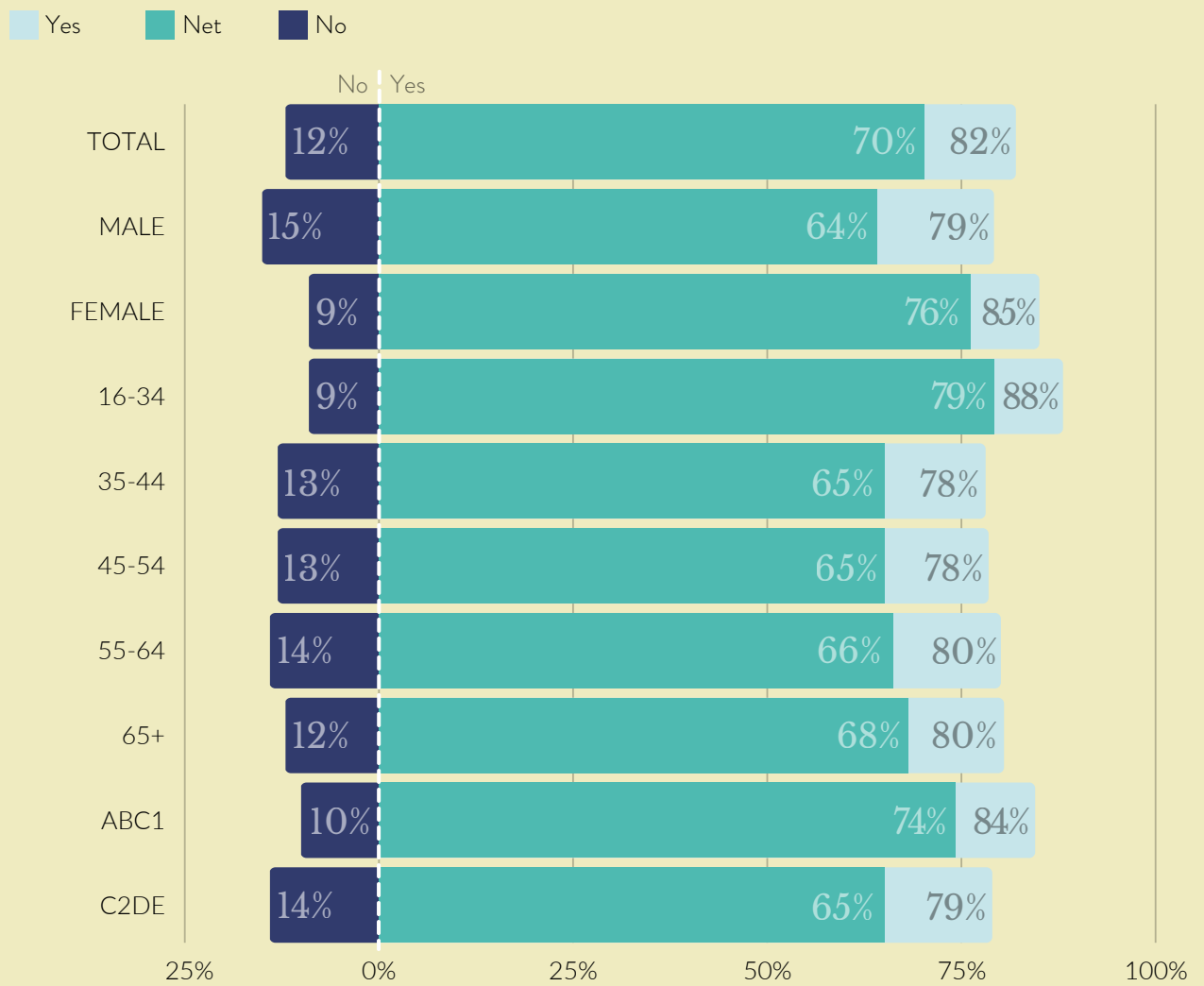
There is a clear consensus that climate change constitutes a global emergency, regardless of sex, age or social grade.

Over 4 in 5 members of the public believe that climate change is a global emergency, with only 12% disagreeing. This rises to 87% when those answering 'don't know' are excluded.

Female respondents and younger people were markedly more likely to consider climate change a global emergency, as were people from more affluent backgrounds. However, across all groups, a clear majority believed this was the case, albeit by varying margins

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Proportion of respondents saying that climate change is a global emergency.



Do you think climate change is a global emergency?

*Net ('Yes' minus 'No')

A MIDDLE CLASS ISSUE?

Overall, there was a clear consensus that climate change is a matter of concern to everybody, not just to the better off.

Two thirds of the Scottish population overall said that 'Climate change is an issue that everyone is worried about, regardless of their background', while only 22% said that it is an issue 'that mainly more privileged and well-off people are worried about'. Across all demographic groups, the former led by a ratio of at least 2:1.

Male respondents were more likely to see climate change as a middle class issue, with just over a quarter (27%) saying so, as were people below the age of 45.

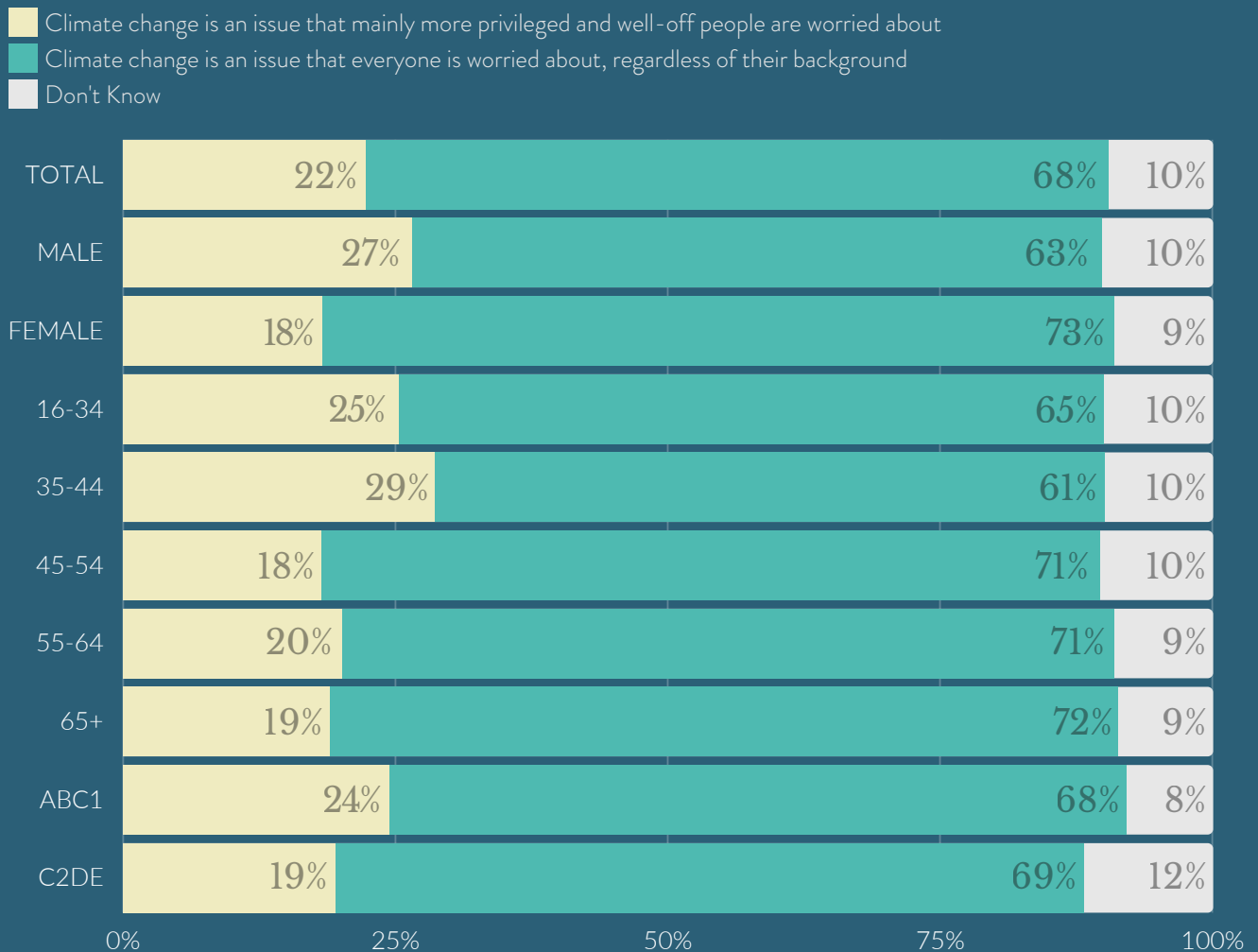
Respondents in the most deprived areas were actually less likely to believe it was an issue for privileged people than those in the least deprived areas.

Geographically, respondents in the North East Scotland region were most likely to see climate change as a middle class concern with 30% saying so.



CLIMATE CONCERNS

Proportion of respondents saying that each statement is closest to their views



Thinking about the issue of climate change, which of the following two statements come closer to your view?



RESPONSIBILITY FOR TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

An outright majority – overall and across all demographic groups – held government singularly most responsible for tackling climate change. This figure was especially high among younger, male, and more affluent respondents, with male respondents 10 percentage points more likely to hold governments responsible than female respondents.

In all but one demographic groups, this was followed by individuals.

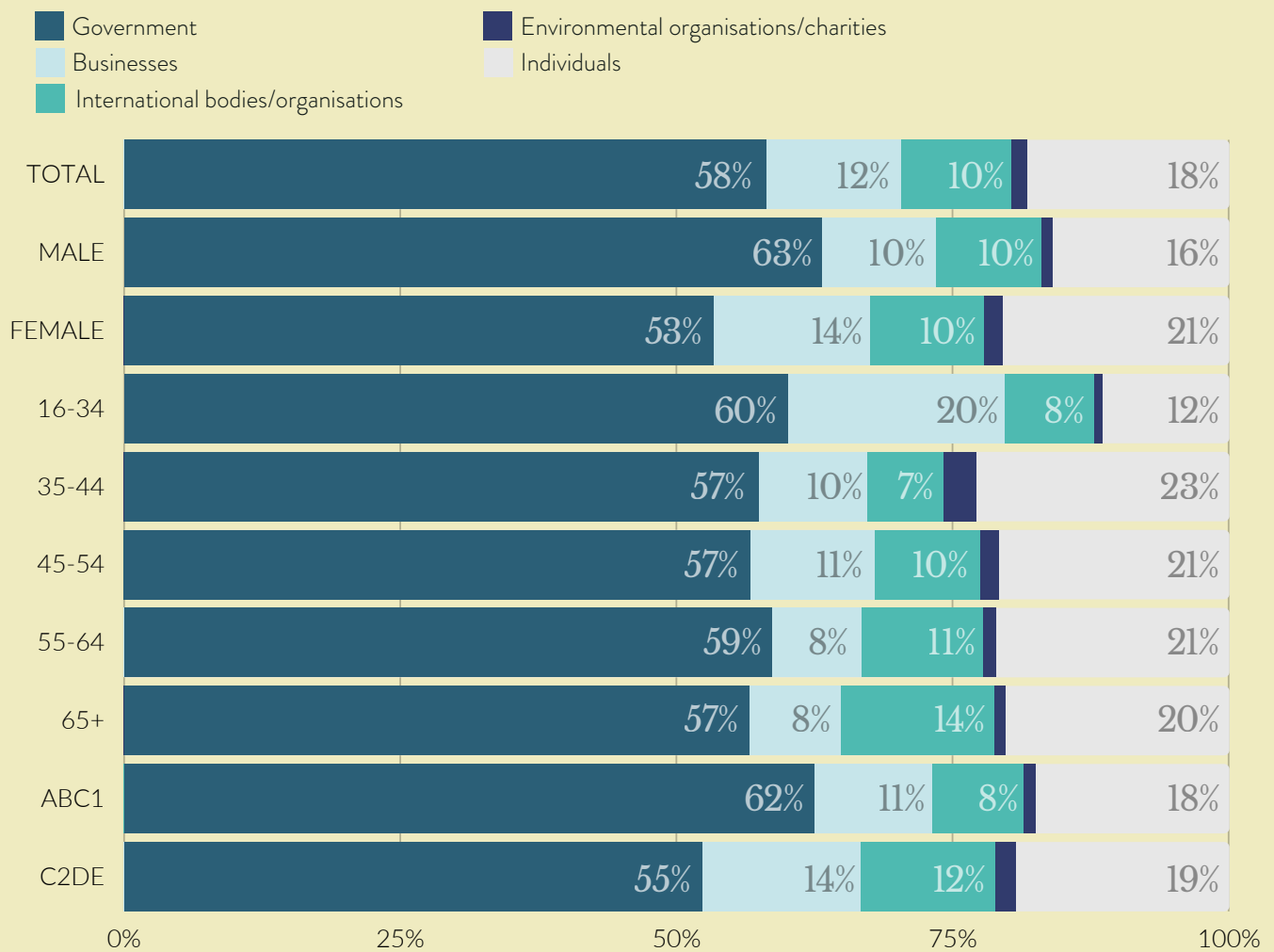
There was a strong degree of consistency to how different groups apportioned responsibility, with the exception of younger respondents.

Young people were markedly less likely to hold individuals most responsible, at 12% compared to 18% overall, and were almost twice as likely as any other group to hold businesses most accountable, with 20% attributing them singular responsibility.

Older respondents, in contrast, were less likely to hold businesses responsible, and more likely to apportion responsibility to international bodies.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Proportion of respondents deeming given actors to be most responsible for tackling climate change



Thinking about responsibility for tackling climate change, looking at the list who do you think has the main responsibility?

EXPECTED ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CLIMATE ACTION

While a plurality of respondents across all demographic groups disagreed with the statement 'Concentrating on tackling climate change is likely to have a negative effect on the productivity of the Scottish economy', the scale of this varied considerably.

Male respondents were more evenly split, with 36% agreeing and 44% disagreeing, whereas the equivalent figures for females were 17% and 53% respectively.

Similarly, respondents in the youngest age bracket were significantly more likely to think that climate action would bolster productivity than their older counterparts. Disagreement led over agreement by 31 percentage points among younger respondents, compared to only 10 points among respondents aged over 65.

The most affluent fifth of neighbourhoods was more evenly matched than all others, with a net disagreement of 14%, whereas the most deprived saw disagreement lead by 24 percentage points.

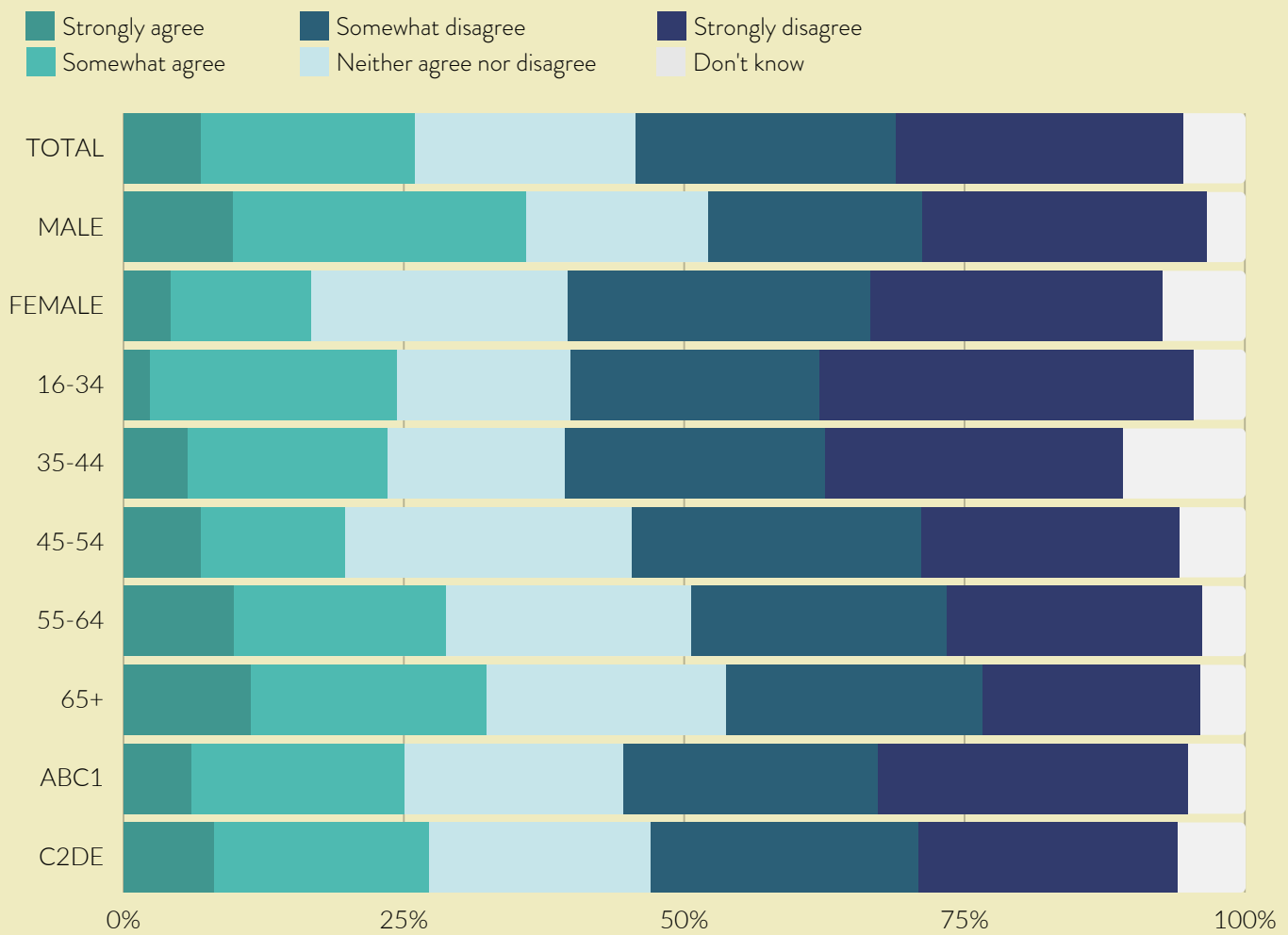
There was also considerable geographical and regional variation, with the North East of Scotland much more evenly split on the issue. While the proportion disagreeing still exceeded those agreeing, it was by a much tighter margin of 6 percentage points, compared to a lead of 40 points in the Highlands.

Thus while all groups believe, on balance, that climate action could be economically advantageous, there are certain groups with much greater uniformity in this regard.

There is, however, a clear overall difference in the strength of feeling. Those disagreeing with the statement were more likely to do so strongly than those agreeing: over half of those disagreeing overall did so strongly, compared to only a quarter of those agreeing.

IMPACTS ON PRODUCTIVITY

Proportions of respondents agreeing and disagreeing with the statement 'Concentrating on tackling climate change is likely to have a negative effect on the productivity of the Scottish economy'

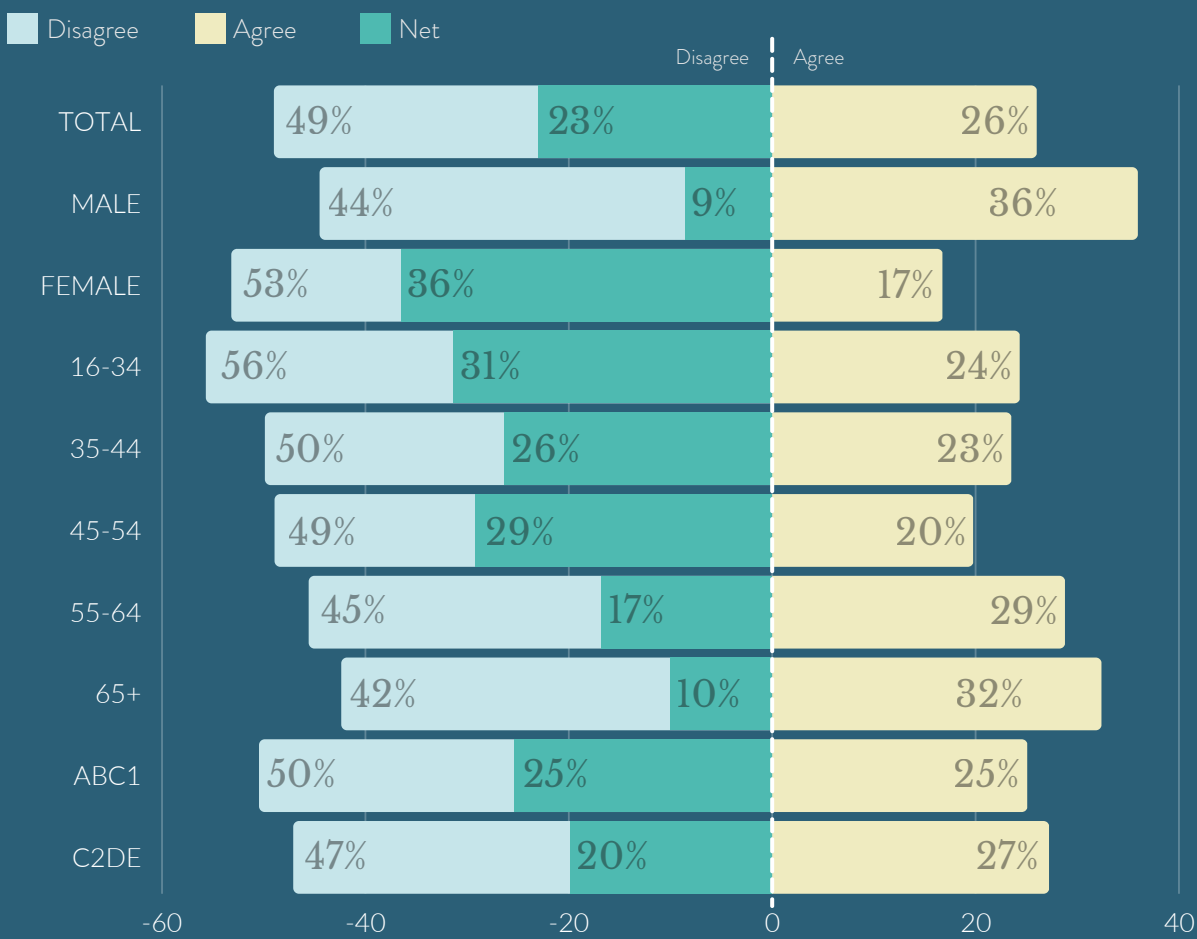


To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?



EXPECTED IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY

Proportion of respondents agreeing and disagreeing with the statement 'Concentrating on tackling climate change is likely to have a negative effect on the productivity of the Scottish economy'



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

FAMILIARITY WITH 'THE GREEN ECONOMY'

When respondents were asked about their knowledge of the term 'the green economy', across all demographic groups, the modal answer (at approximately half of respondents) was knowing 'a little'.

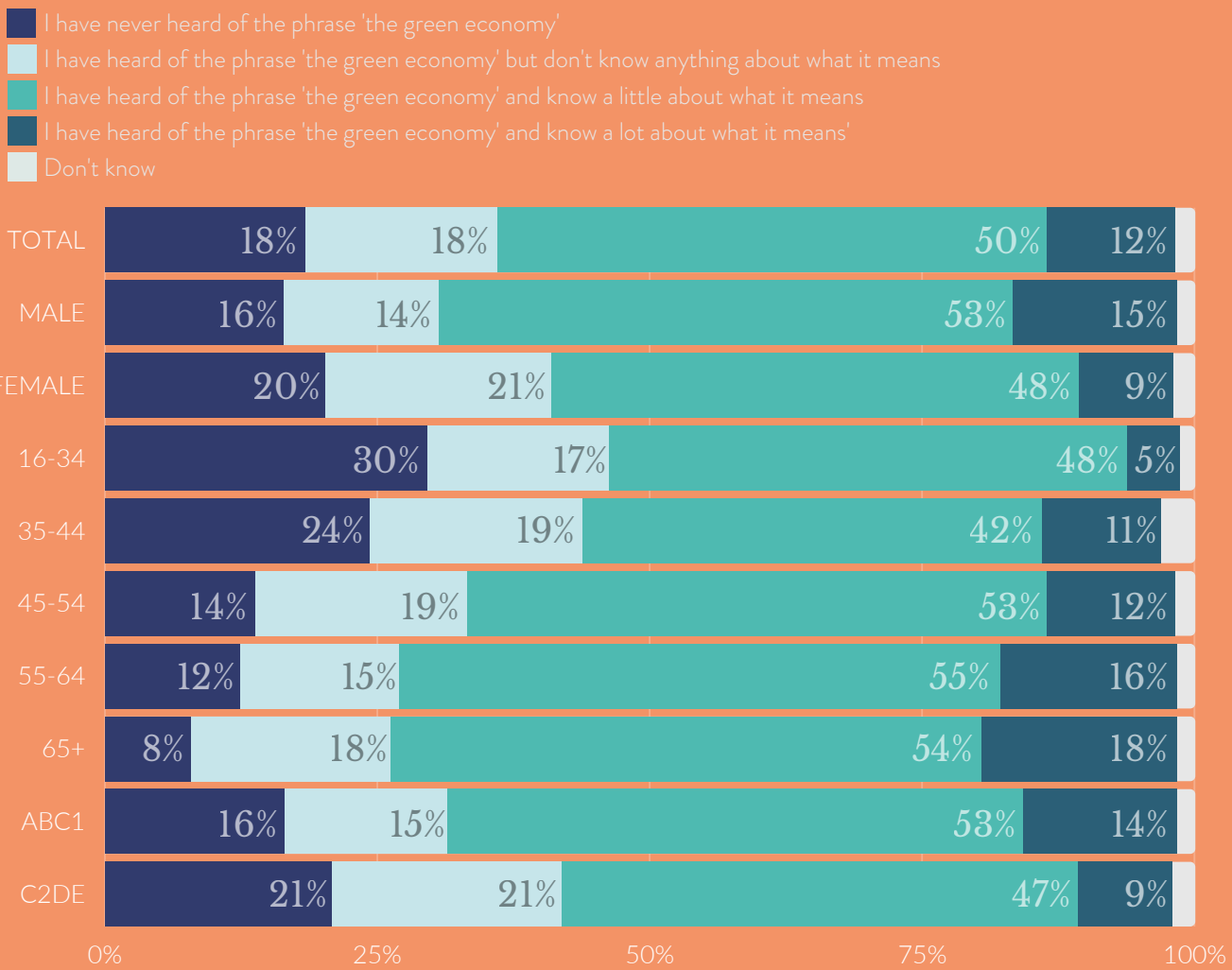
Younger respondents were markedly more likely to have never heard the phrase, with just under 1 in 3 (30%) saying so. This group was less than half as likely to say that they knew 'a lot' about it (5%) than the population overall (12%).

Male and older respondents were more likely to report knowing a little or a lot, with 2 in 3 (68%) saying so. 41% of female respondents reported that they had either never heard the phrase or didn't know anything about its meaning, compared to 31% of male respondents.

More affluent respondents were also more assured of their understanding of the term, with 2 in 3 ABC1 respondents confident that they knew either a little or a lot, compared to 55% of C2DE respondents.

FAMILIARITY WITH THE 'GREEN ECONOMY'

Reported understanding and familiarity with the term 'the green economy'



Which of the follow statements comes closest to your view?



CLIMATE (AND) EDUCATION

In the minds of the public, there is a clear role for education in the fight against climate change. Two thirds of people (66%) believe that a designated educational institution would help to tackle climate change, and 55% would like colleges and universities to include climate education in all their offerings.

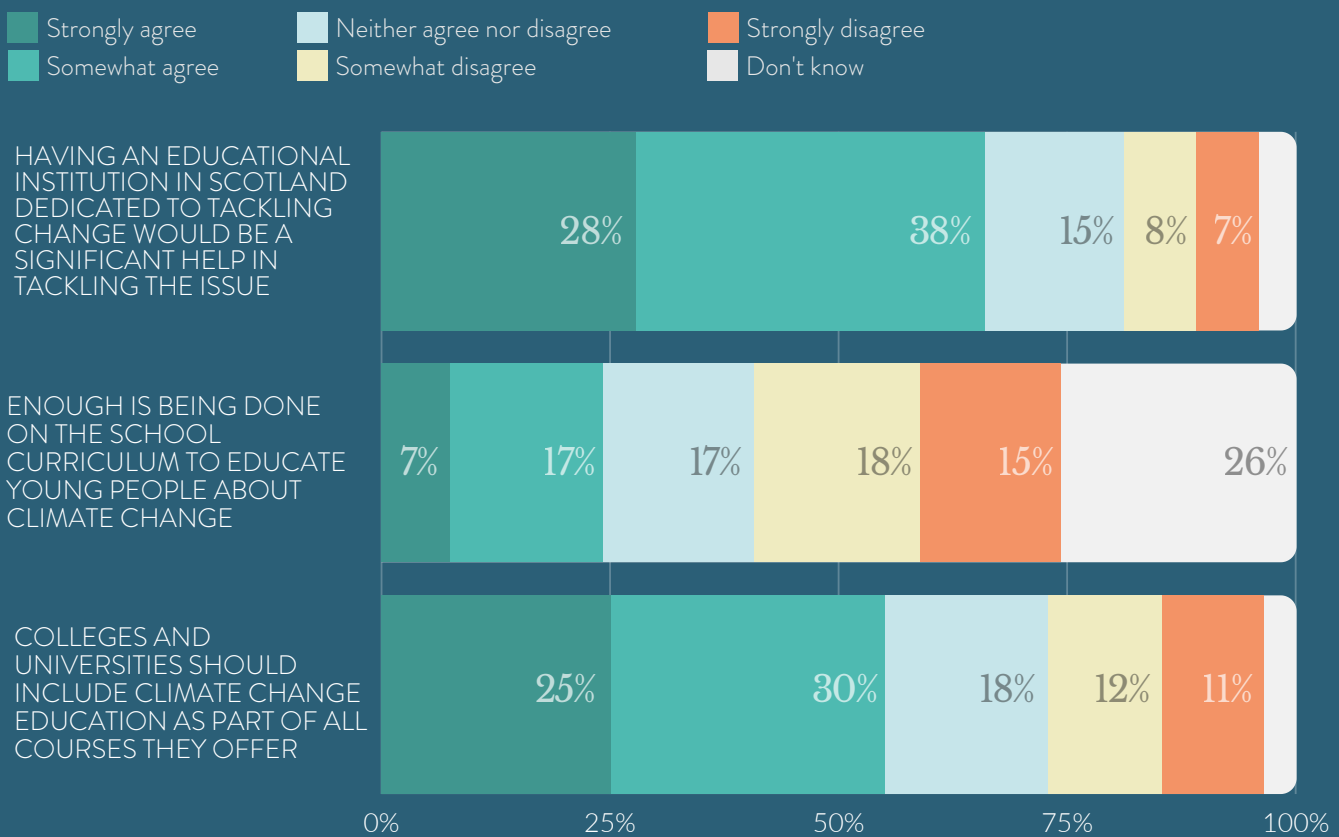
There is an evident appetite for climate change to occupy a larger role in education, with 33% of people (or 45% of those expressing an opinion) saying that school curricula are not currently doing enough to educate young people on climate change, compared to 24% saying that they are. However, a large proportion (26%) were unsure on this subject. Among those with children, 31% said enough was being done, and 37% said it was not.

Young people were especially likely to support the establishment of a dedicated educational institution, with three quarters of those aged 16-34 – 10 percentage points more than any other age bracket – believing this would be significant in tackling climate change. However, the same group was the least likely to say that all higher and further educational courses should include climate change education, at 48%.



CLIMATE (AND) EDUCATION

Proportions of respondents agreeing and disagreeing with the given statements



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





TECHNICAL DETAILS

The survey was designed by Diffley Partnership and invitations were issued online using the ScotPulse panel. Fieldwork was conducted between the 29th September - 1st October, and received 2,203 responses from a representative sample of the adult population, aged 16+, across Scotland. Results are weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender.



FIND OUT MORE

To explore the results for yourself, visit our website [here](#), and register for exclusive updates and a quarterly bulletin [here](#).

If you are interested in having your own questions asked and answered in future waves of Understanding Scotland, email us at contact@understanding-scotland.co.uk



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