



Department for
Business & Trade

DBT Unit Pricing Research

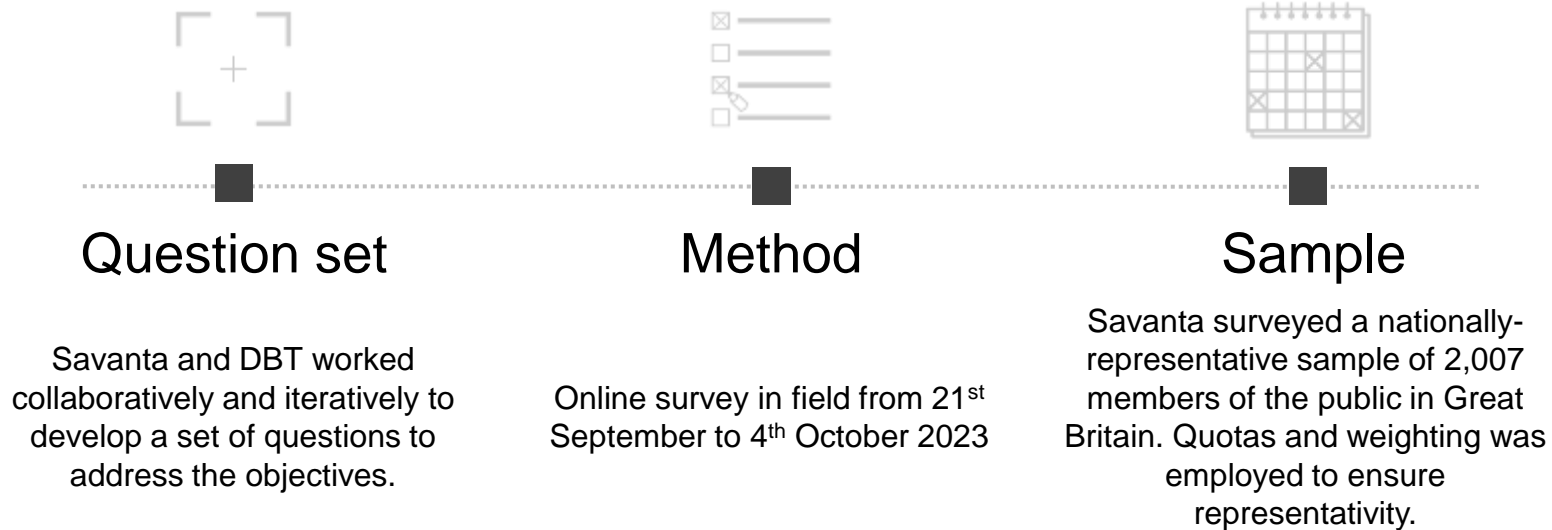
Report of findings

In partnership with **Savanta:**

Objectives and Methodology

The key aims of this research were to:

- Deliver robust, quantitative insight into consumer perceptions and behaviour relating to unit pricing, with a primary focus on grocery shopping.
- Feed into a broader evidence gathering process in the policy area of unit pricing and address known evidence gaps (e.g. in relation to Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), greenwashing, misleading pricing).

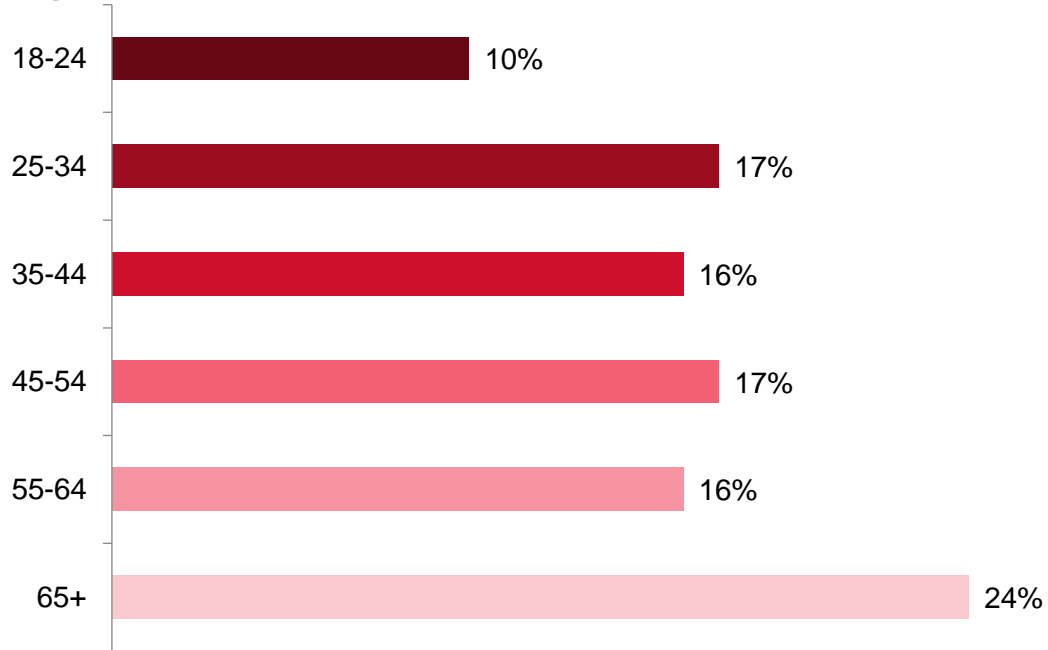


The nationally representative sample reflects the GB population

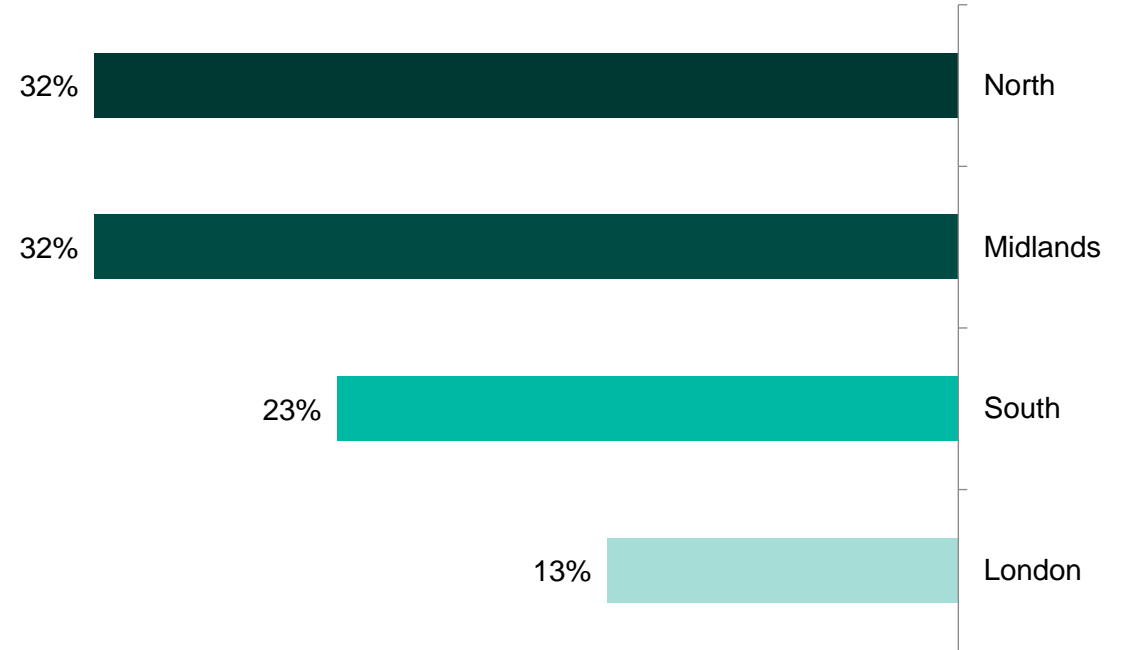
Gender



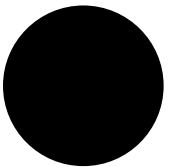
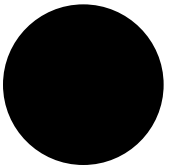
Age



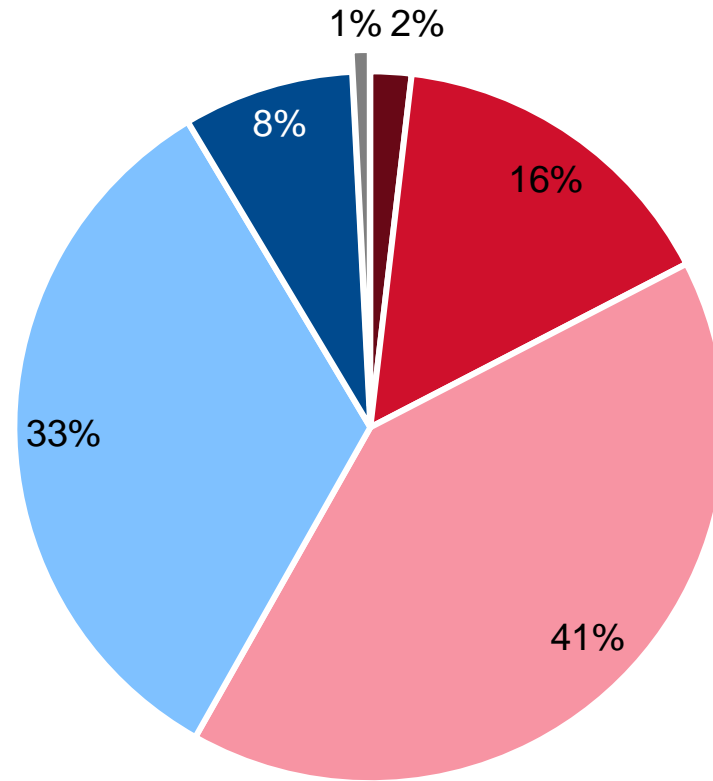
UK Region



General shopping habits and priorities



Most people spend between 30 and 120 minutes shopping per week



■ Less than 15 minutes ■ Between 15 minutes and 30 minutes ■ Between 30 minutes and 1 hour ■ Between 1 and 2 hours ■ Over 2 hours ■ Not sure

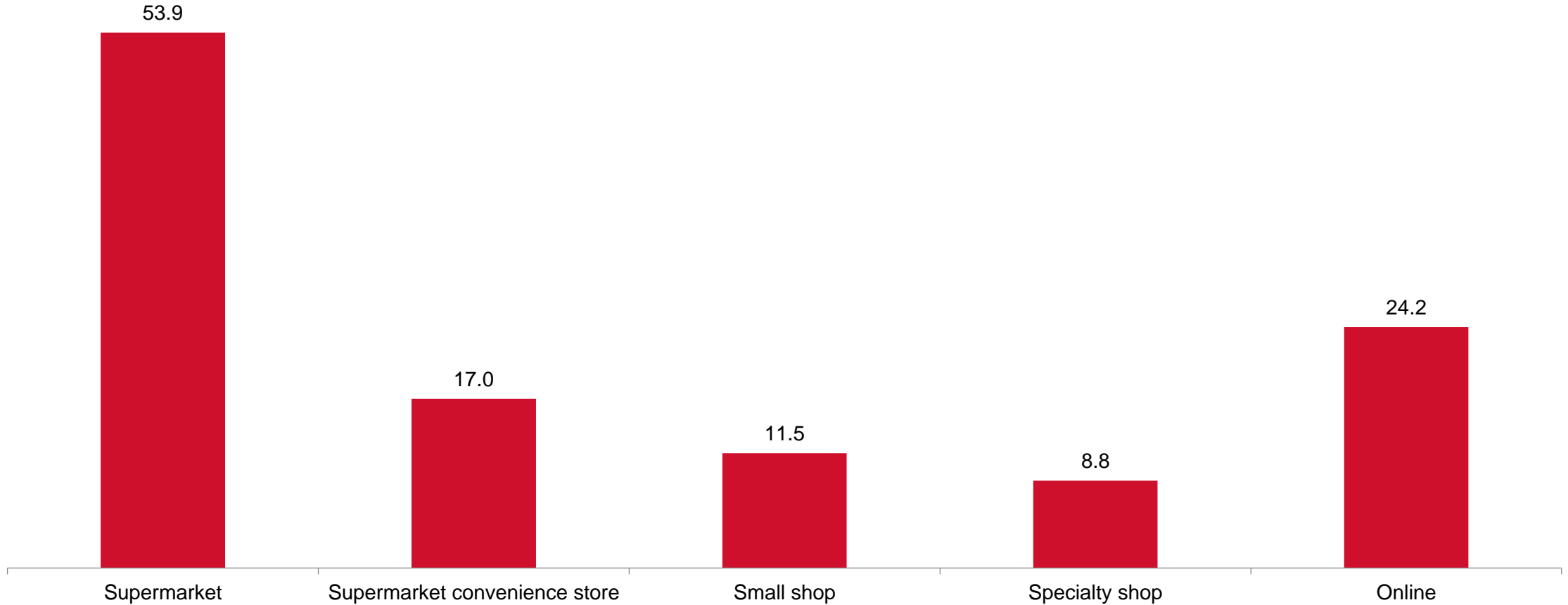
Three quarters see themselves as responsible for the majority or all of their household's grocery shopping



■ All ■ The majority of it ■ About half ■ Less than half ■ None of it ■ Not sure

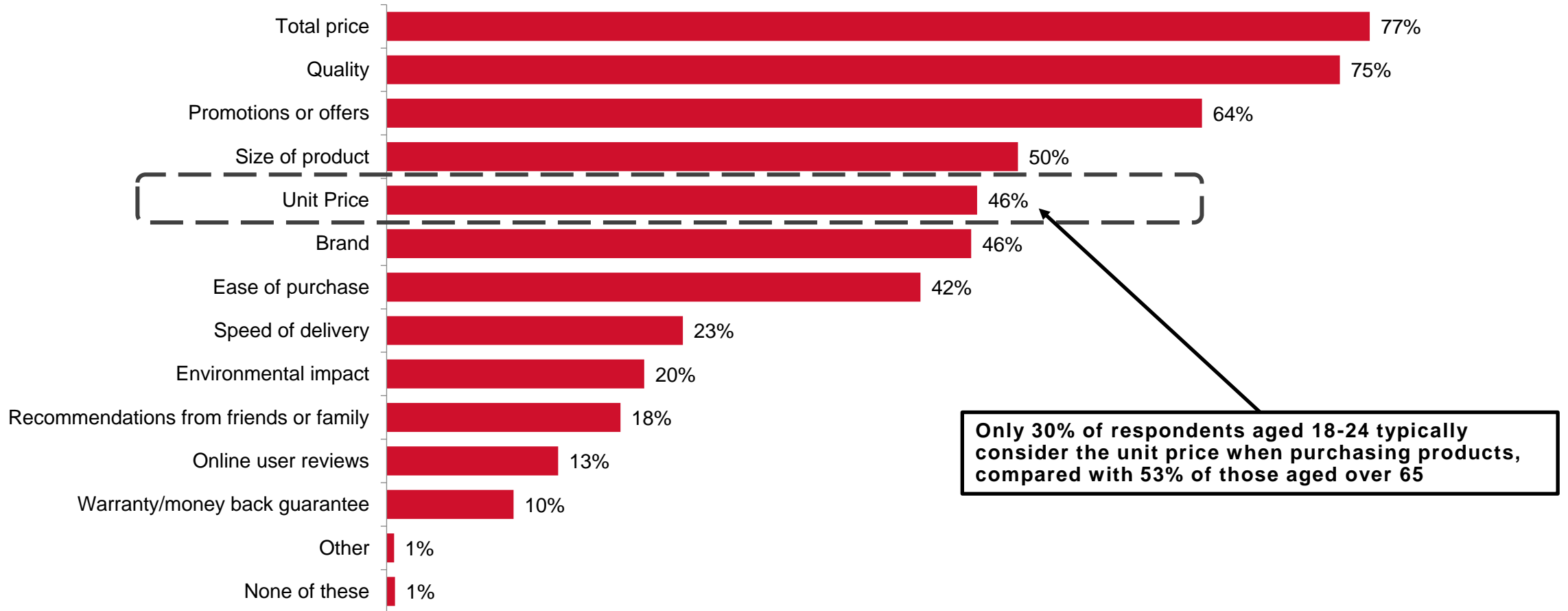
Q2. How much of your household's grocery shopping are you responsible for? (i.e. how much of the shopping do you do yourself compared to any others in your household)
Base = All respondents (2,007)

Adults report spending on average just under an hour in a supermarket in a typical week, far more than other shop types

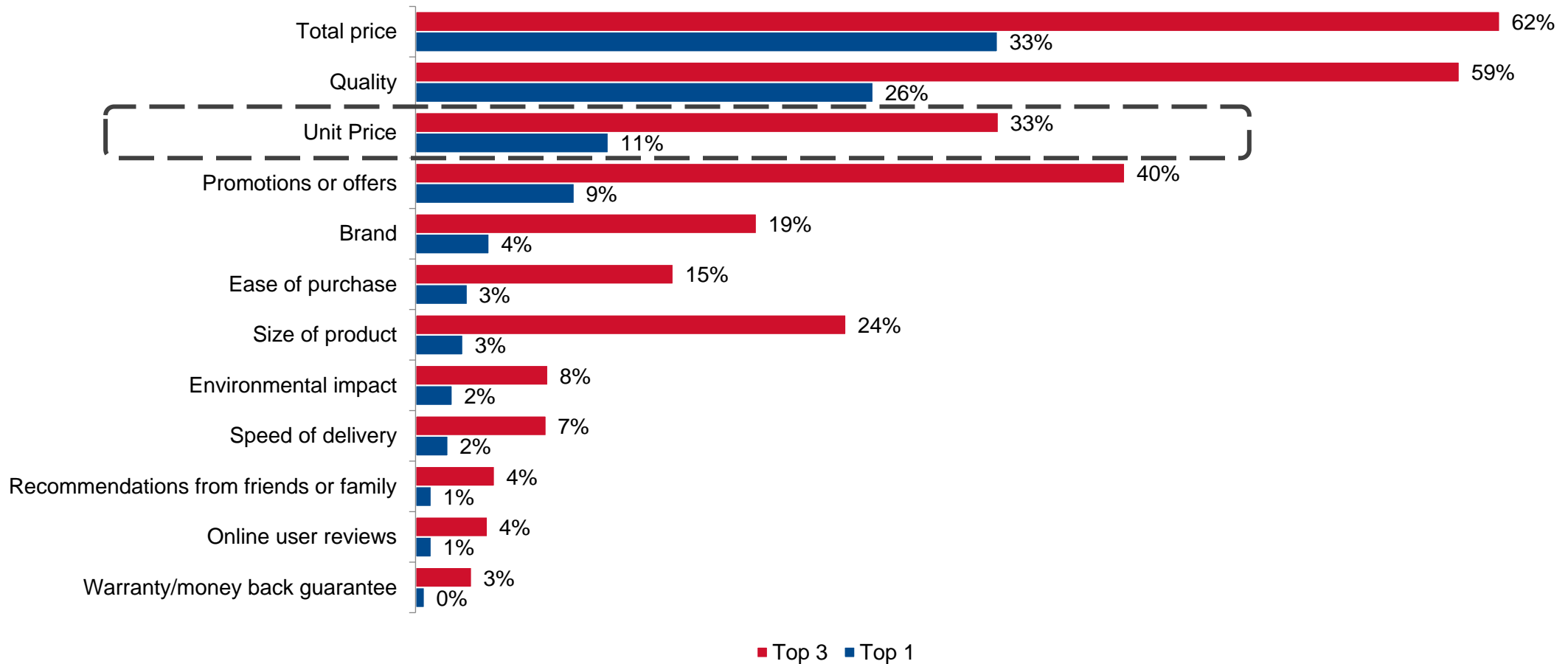


Note: Chart shows mean averages. Definitions of types of shops show in notes below.
Q3. In a typical week, roughly how many minutes do you spend shopping through each of the following methods?
Base = All respondents (2,007)

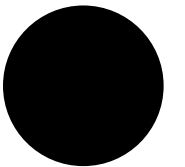
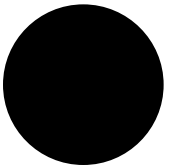
Price, quality and promotions or offers are the most widely used considerations when buying groceries. Just under half say they consider unit price



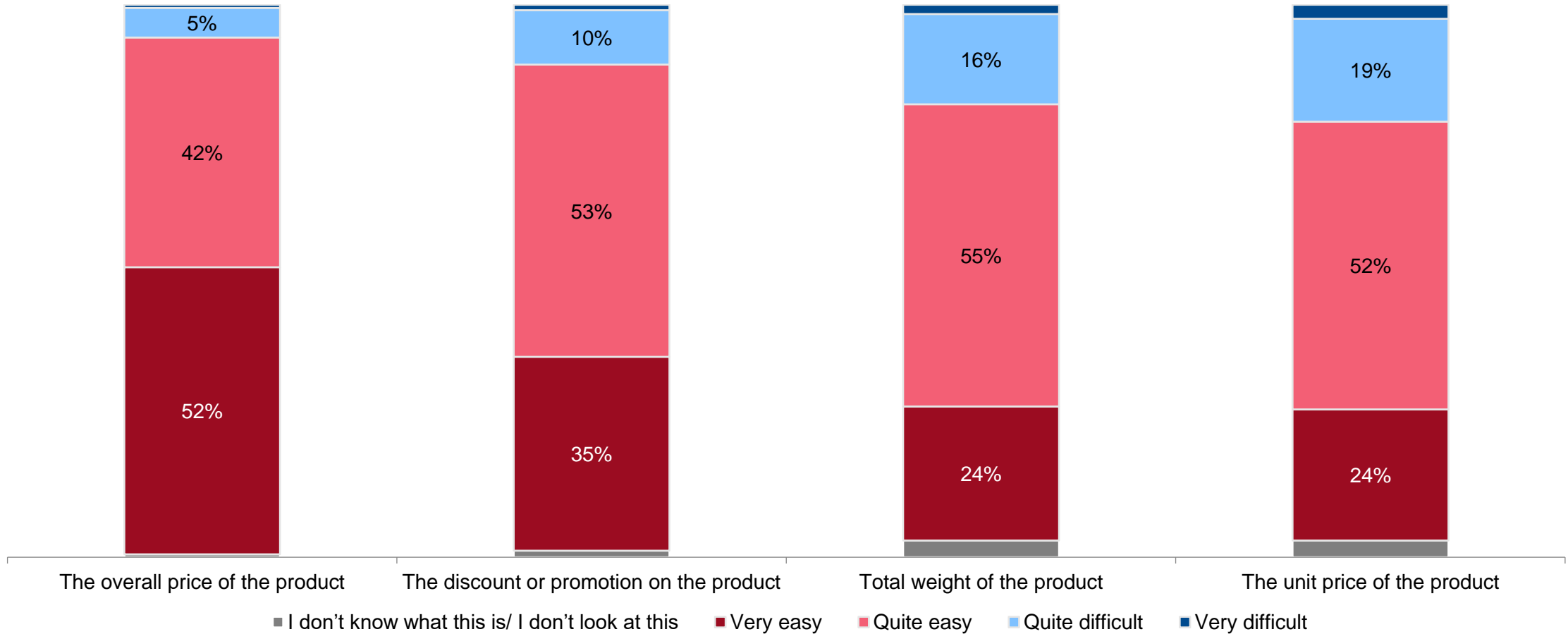
One in three see price as the #1 most important consideration, whereas a quarter prioritise quality. One in ten see unit price as the most important



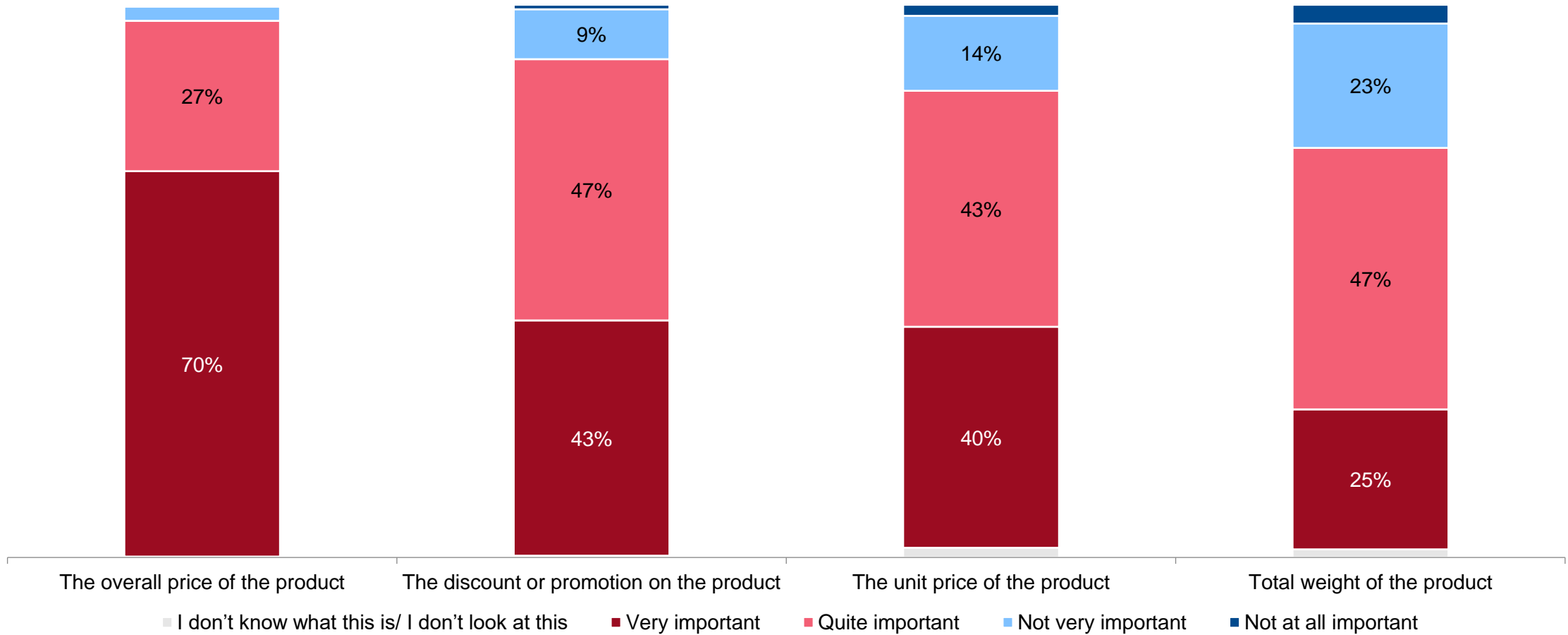
Price legibility, promotions and offers



Three in four think the unit price is easy to find, which is lower than our three other elements of pricing information



Perceived accessibility of different types of information (*shown on previous slide*) broadly mirrors their perceived importance



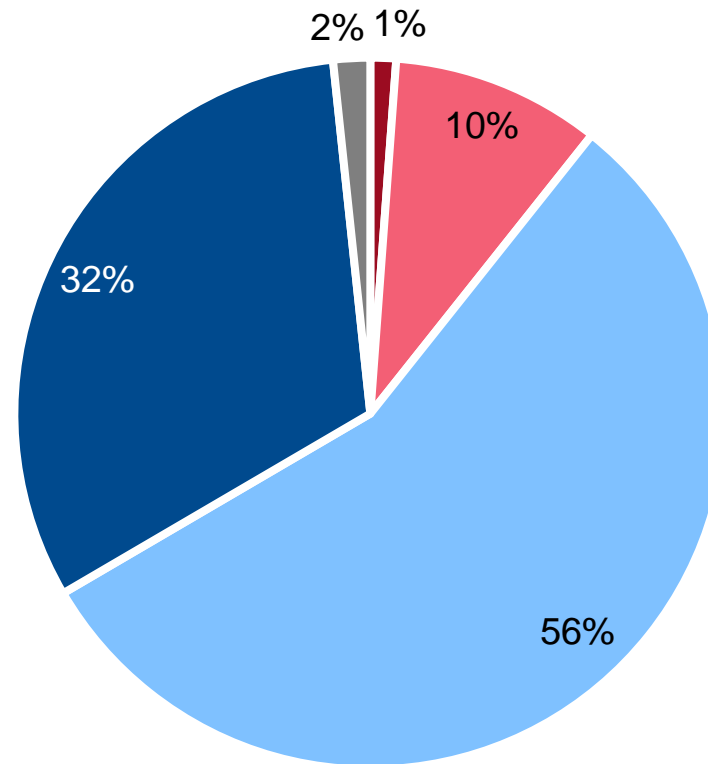
Only one in ten think it is difficult to understand the final price they will pay for an item if its price has been reduced

“I read the details very carefully and mentally add things up”

“The shop or supermarket usually has both the full price and the reduced price displayed with the same prominence”

“It tells you on a sticker or your till receipt”

“A lot of the time the final price is written clearly or the discount is relatively easy to calculate but occasionally it can be made quite vague by stores on purpose”



■ Very difficult ■ Quite difficult ■ Quite easy ■ Very easy ■ Don't know

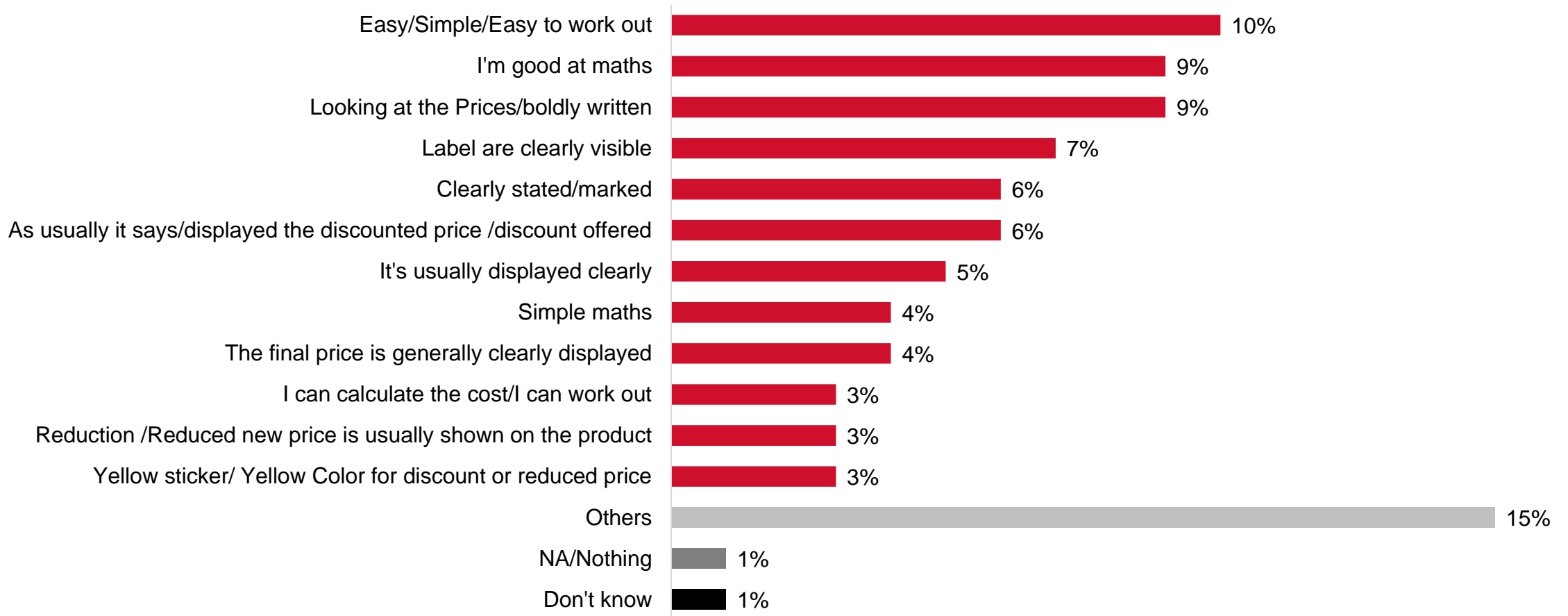
“Because doing the maths isn't always straight forward”

“The discount is shown but not the original AND discount unit price”

“You don't always get unit price when a reduction is shown, so you cannot tell how much cheaper it is”

“I am not good with maths so I find it difficult”

Most feel that prices are generally easy to work out themselves if needed or already displayed



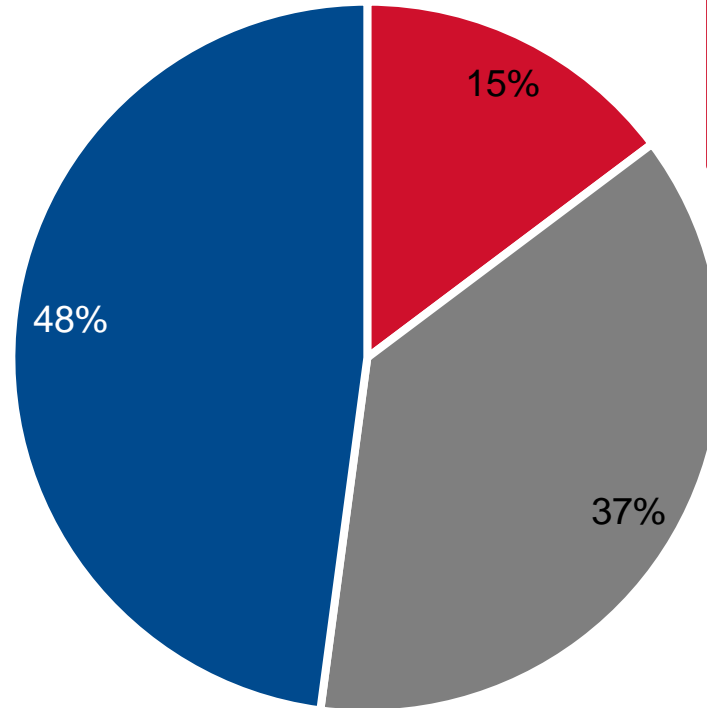
When presented with different options, three times as many people preferred having the promotion start date to not having it

Perthshire Still Water
12 x 500ml
7.2p per 100ml

Normal price: £4.30▲
Special offer: 2 for £6.50▲

▲ Includes 20p deposit for each bottle that will be refunded on return

This product went on promotion on 01/09/2023



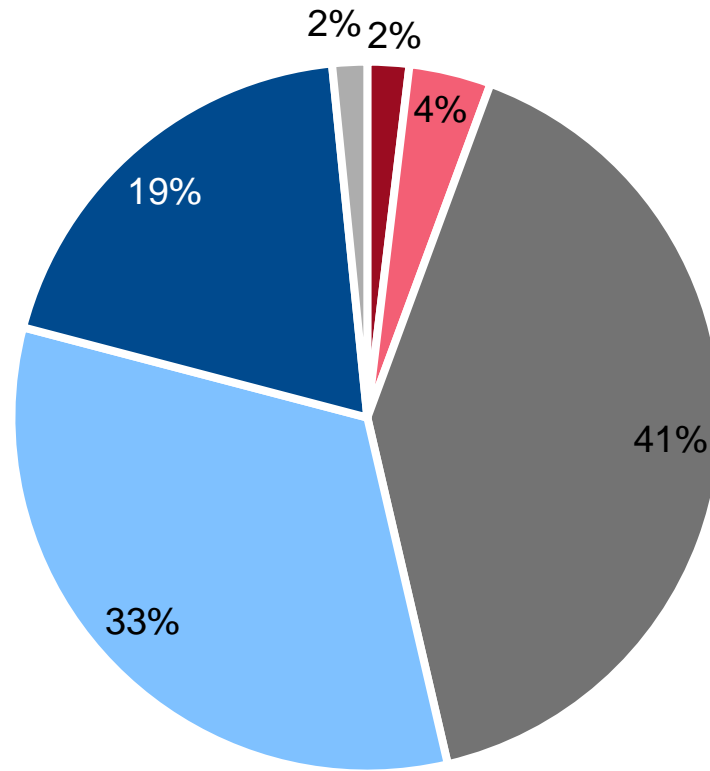
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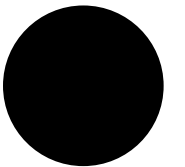
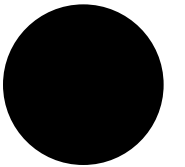
▪ I have no preference

Half would find it helpful to know when an item's promotion began and only 6% would find it unhelpful

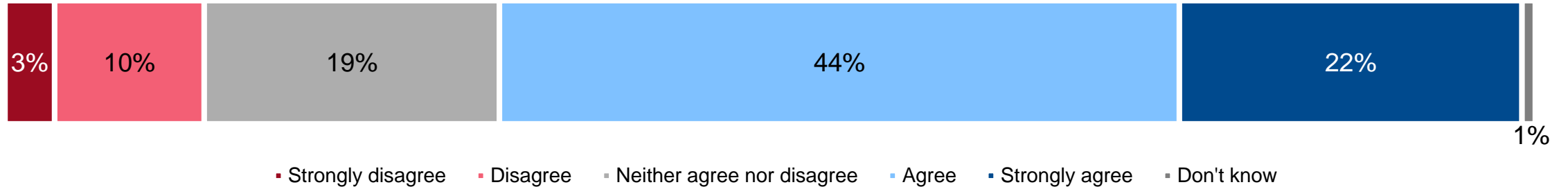


▪ Very unhelpful ▪ Quite unhelpful ▪ Neither helpful nor unhelpful ▪ Quite helpful ▪ Very helpful ▪ Don't know

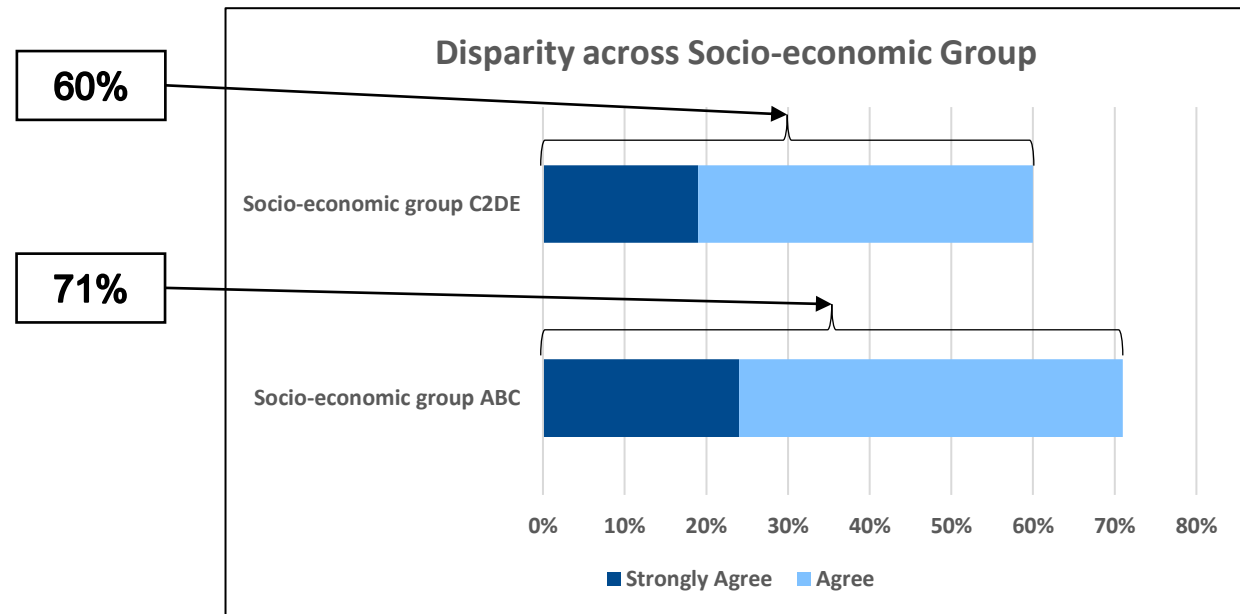
Unit pricing



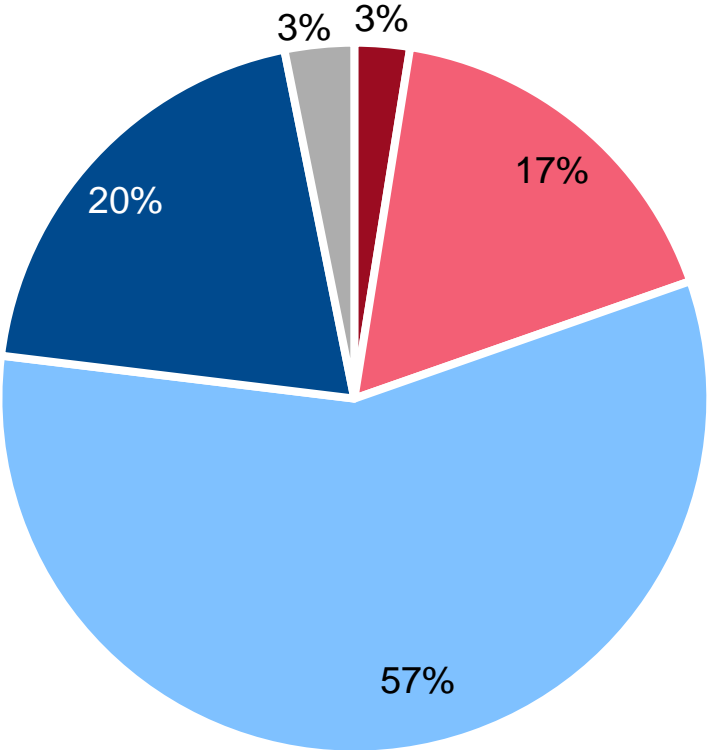
Two thirds report that they use unit pricing to find the best value products when shopping for groceries



- 71% of socio-economic group ABC regularly using unit pricing, compared with only 60% of socioeconomic group CDE

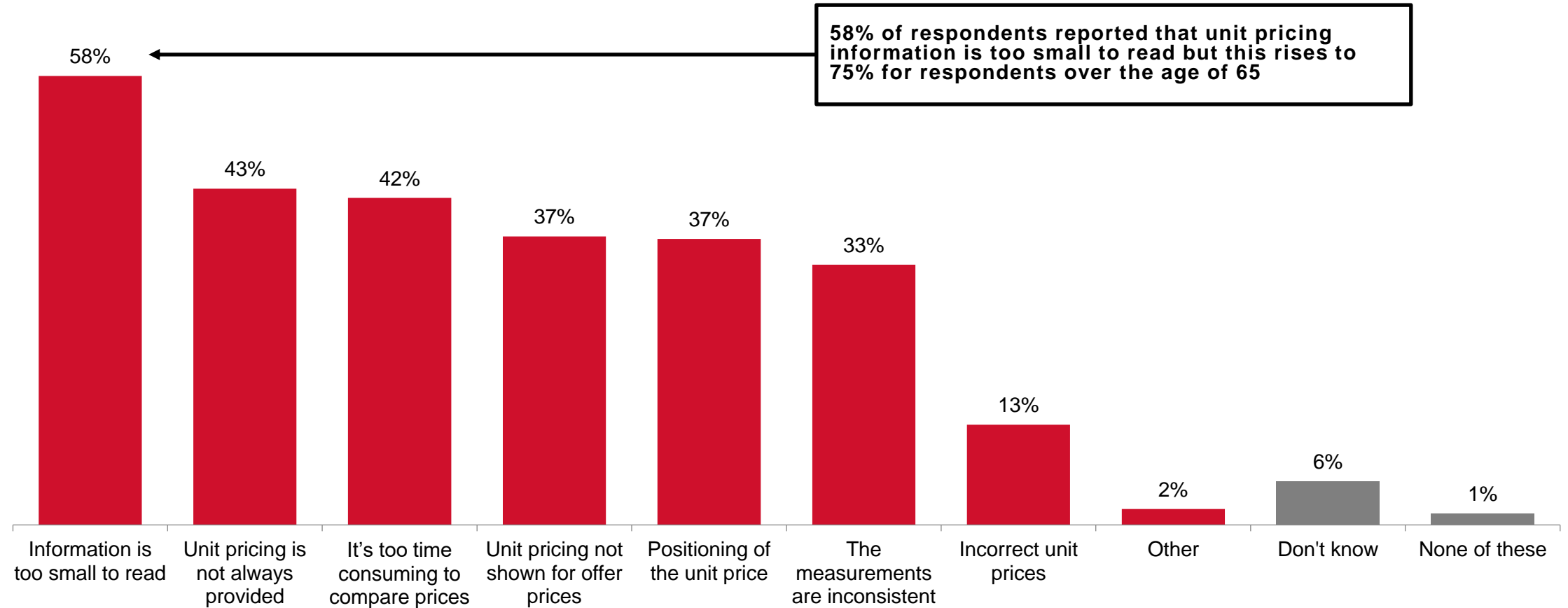


Three quarters feel that unit price information is easy to understand. One in five find this difficult

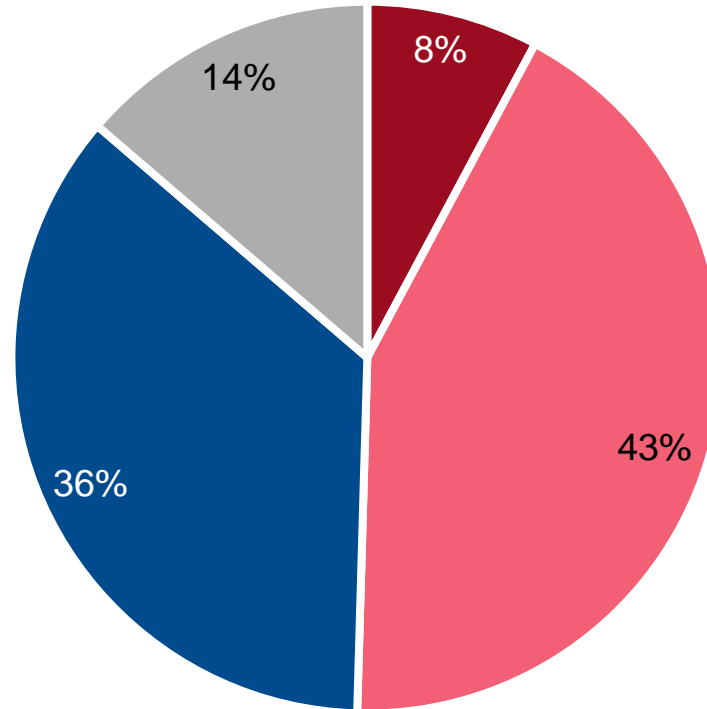


■ Very difficult ■ Quite difficult ■ Quite easy ■ Very easy ■ Don't know

Among those who find unit price information difficult to understand, the most common reasons relate to accessibility, lack of unit prices and the time needed to compare prices

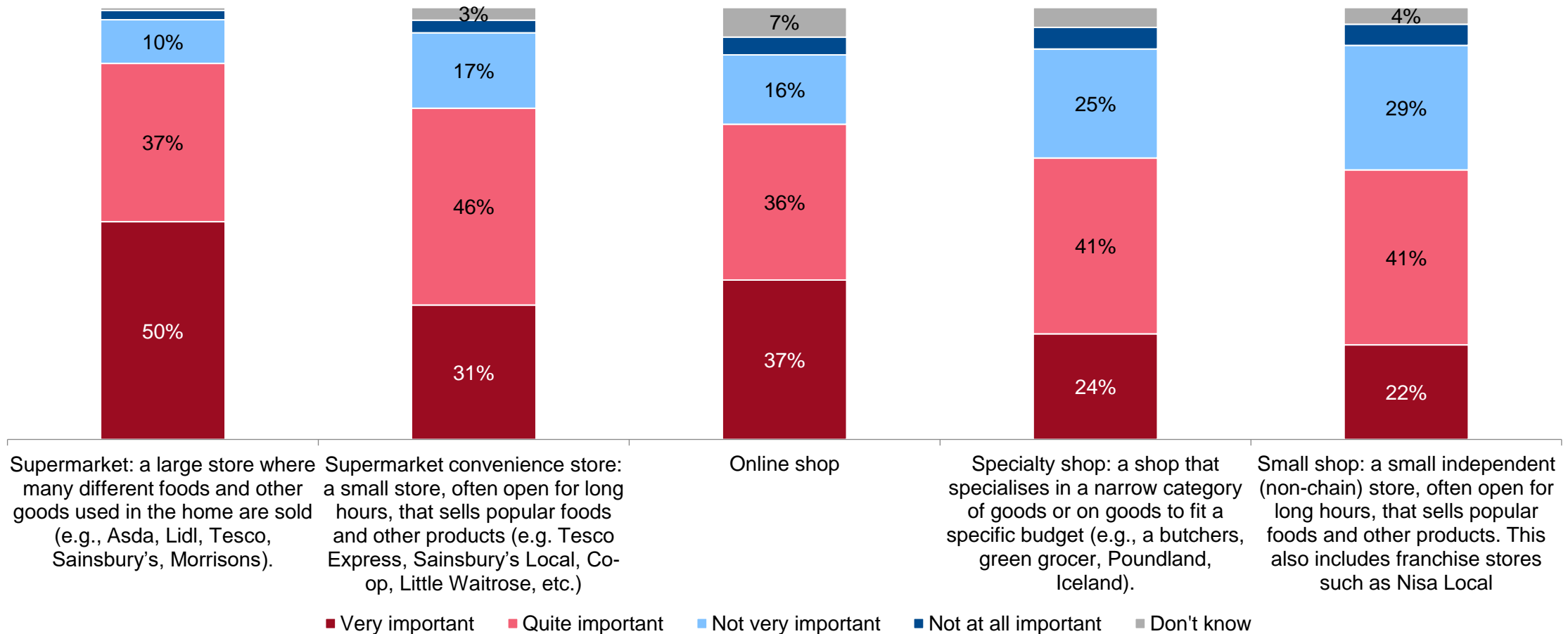


A third think unit prices are less common in smaller supermarket convenience stores compared to large supermarkets. Two in five think its about the same

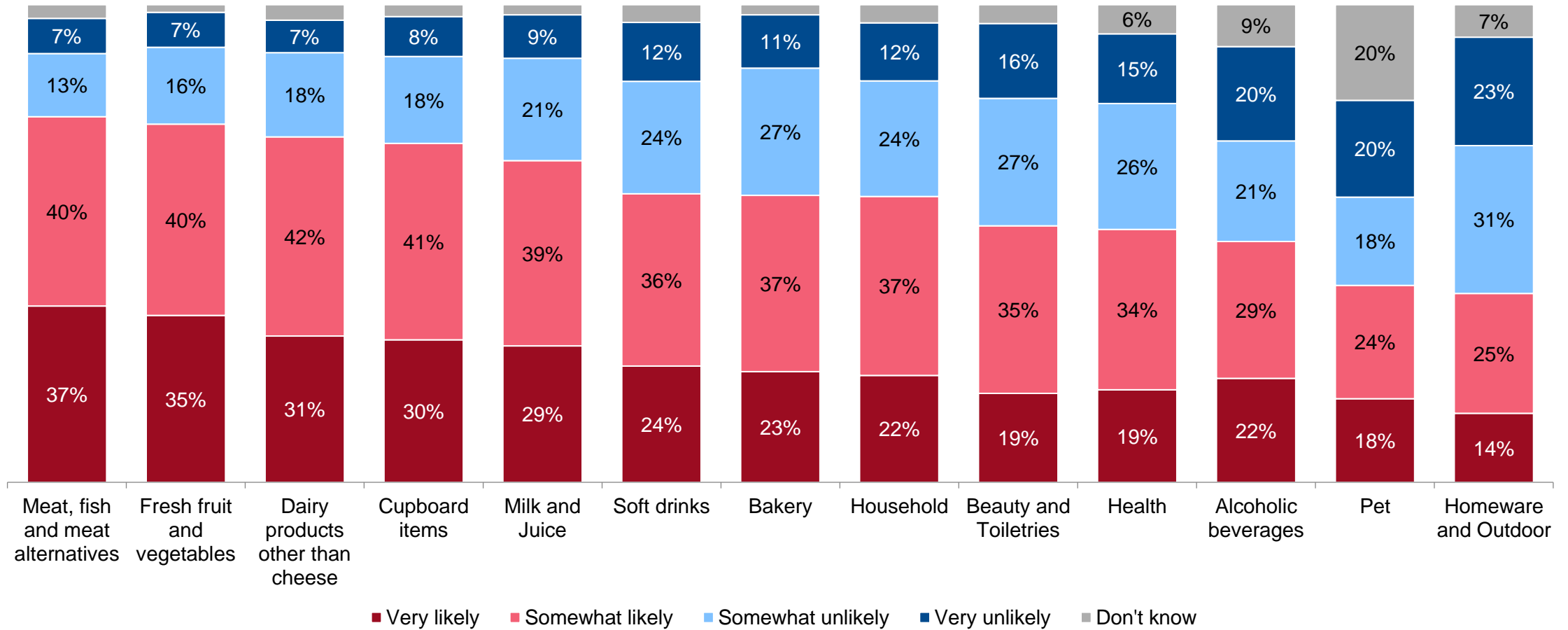


▪ More commonly found in smaller supermarket convenience stores ▪ About the same ▪ Less commonly found in smaller supermarket stores ▪ Not sure

Unit pricing is more commonly seen as important when shopping in a supermarket, when compared to online, specialty & small shops



There is significant variation in the perceived utility of unit pricing across grocery categories...

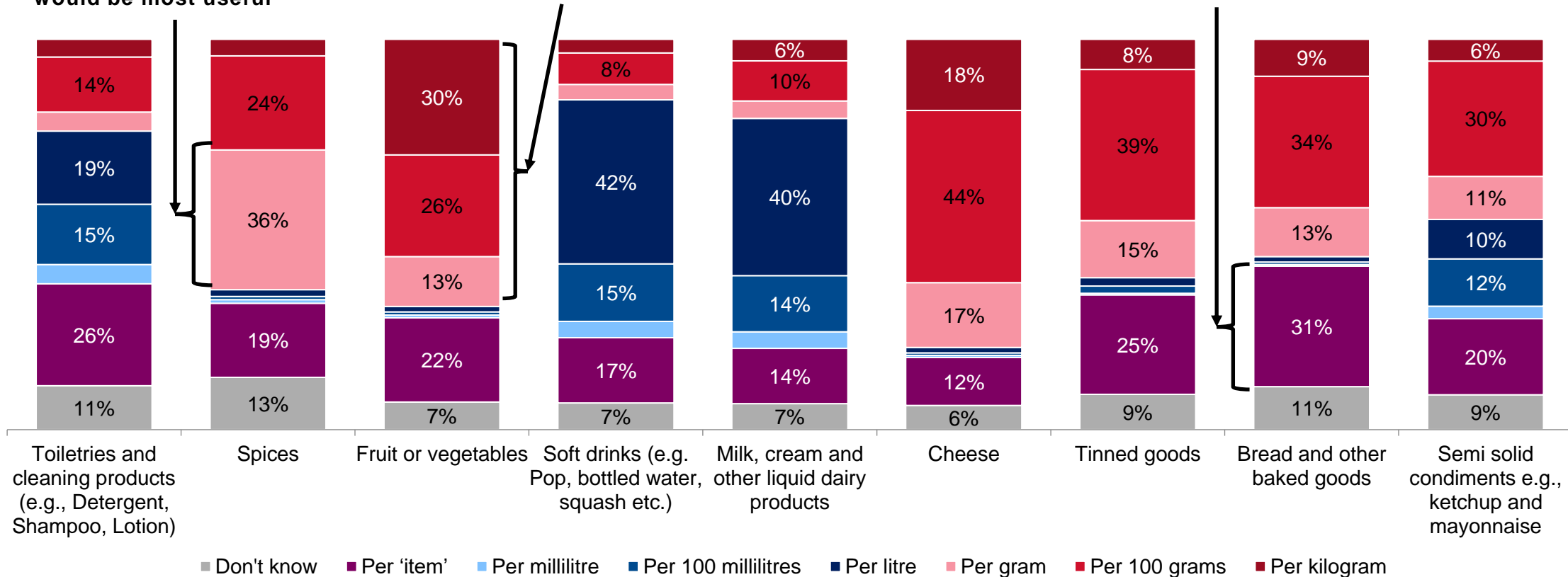


...and in the most useful measurement

- 36% of respondents thought a 'per gram' measurement for spices would be most useful

- 69% of respondents feel that unit pricing fruit and vegetables by weight is most useful

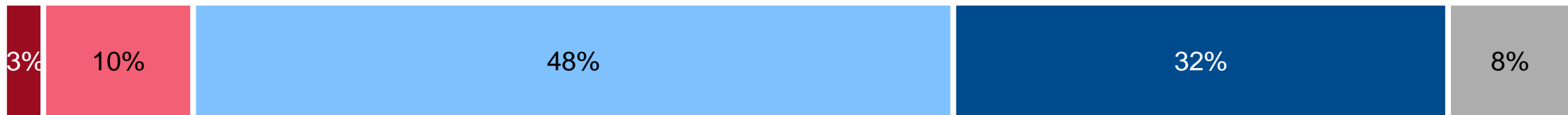
- Bread and baked goods (31%) showed the highest levels of preference for a 'per item' unit price



- The underlying data shows that across all product types younger respondents were less supportive of a 'per item' unit of measure compared to older respondents

There is broad agreement that unit pricing would help consumers get greater value for money

■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Strongly agree
 ■ Don't know



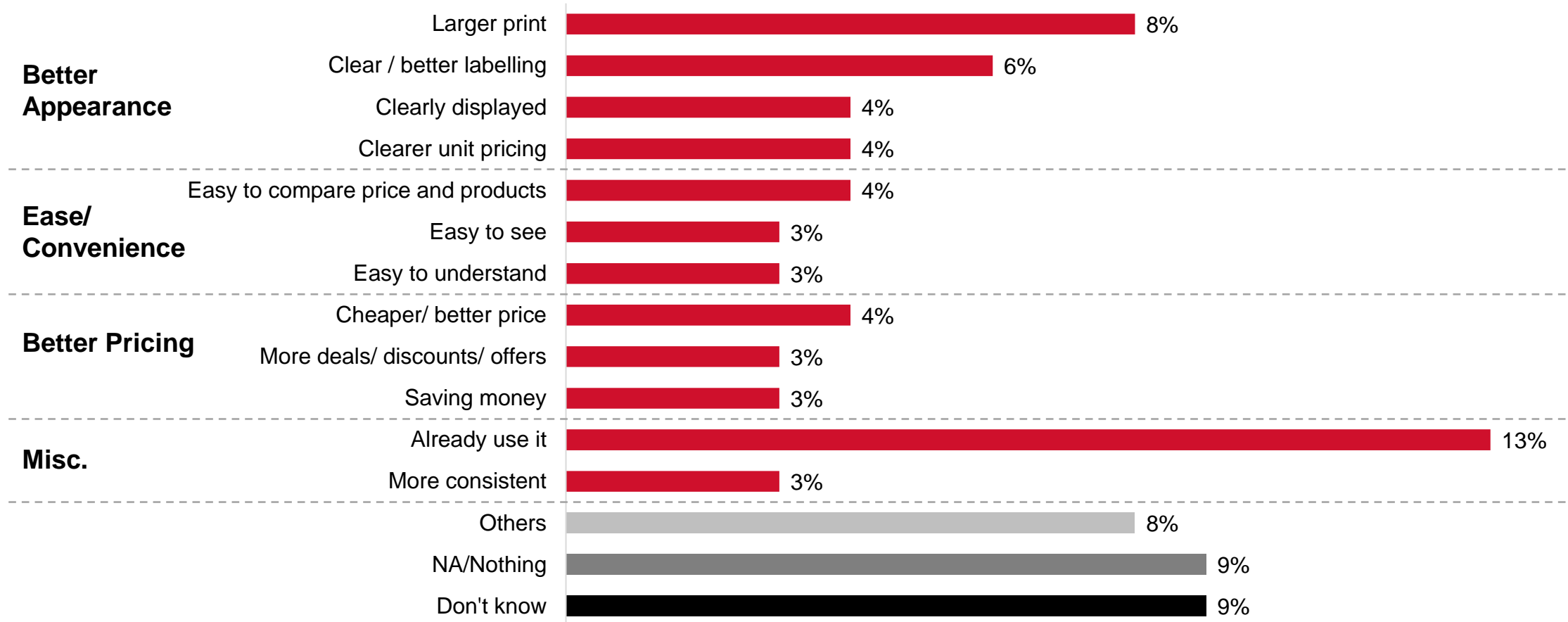
What would make unit pricing more useful for you?

- “I don’t have the time nor patience to spend calculating unit pricing”
- “Nothing really. Just keep it simple so that the ordinary shopper can see they are getting real value and not having wool pulled over their eyes”
- “Nothing as its irrelevant. The total cost is what is paid and that's the important amount”
- “Larger lettering in a more prominent place”

What would encourage you to use unit pricing more?

- “If it was bigger on products so you could see it easier”
- “If standard units are used, e.g. some drinks are per ml, others per unit so comparison is difficult”
- “If it was clearer and easy to read/ do the maths”
- “It being more clearly marked on the shelf. Bigger signage. More consistent unit price unit”
- “I already use it as much as I can so I’m not sure if there’s anything that would encourage me to use it more”

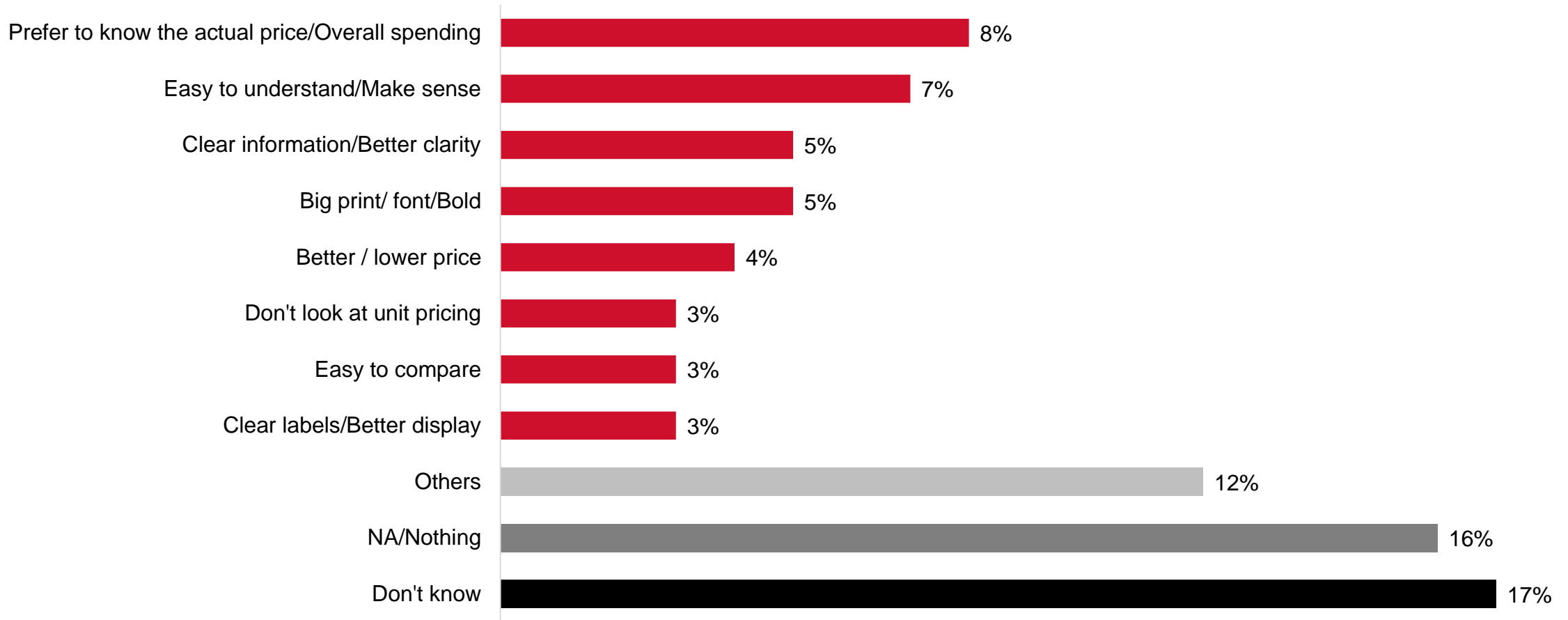
Consumers would use unit pricing more if the appearance and convenience was improved



Q20. What would encourage you to use unit pricing more?

Base = All respondents who agree that unit pricing does/ would help to get greater value for money (1605)

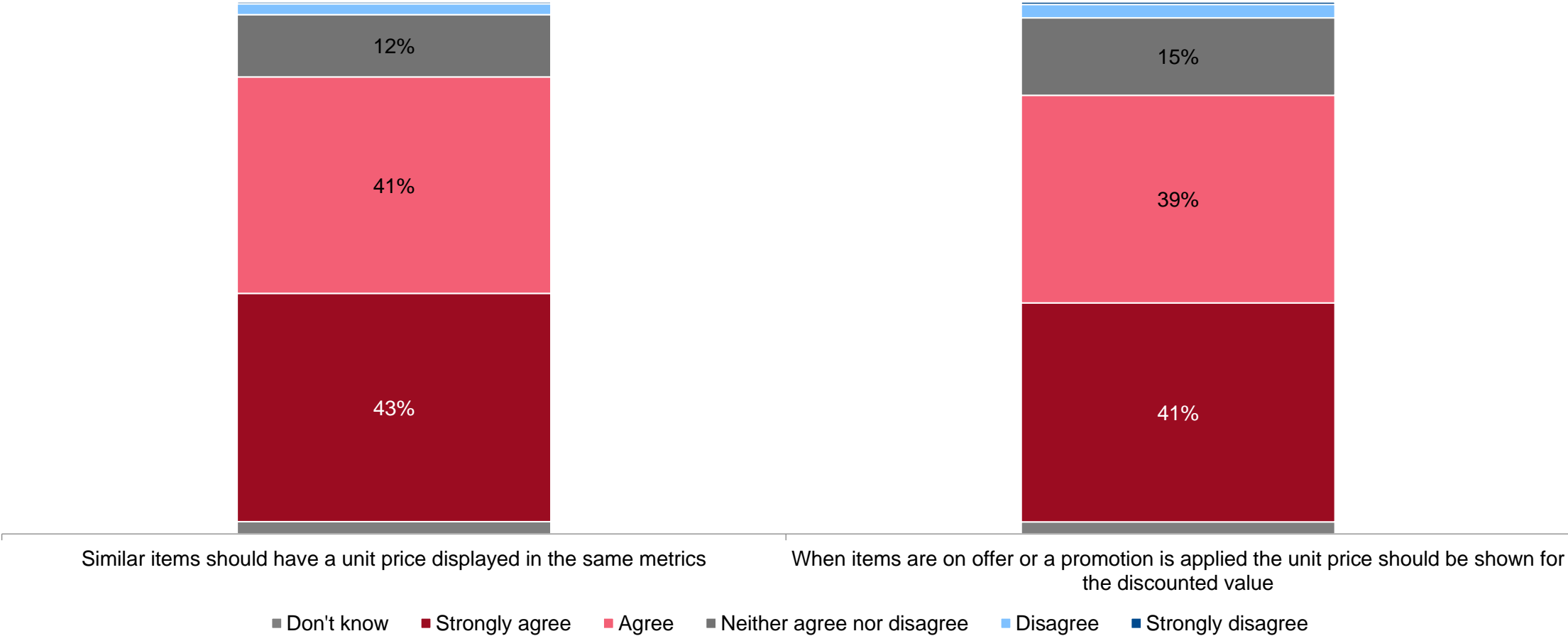
For those who do not think unit pricing helps achieve better value for money shopping, making unit pricing easier to understand was the most popular response for how to make unit pricing more useful



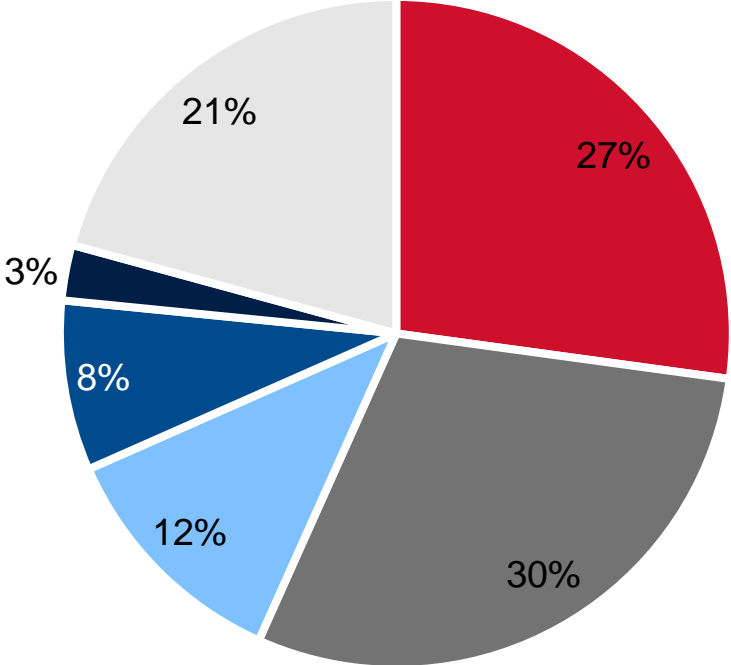
Q21. What would make unit pricing more useful for you?

Base = All respondents who do not agree that unit pricing does/ would help to get greater value for money (243)

There is strong agreement for our two suggestions to improve the comparability and consistency of unit pricing



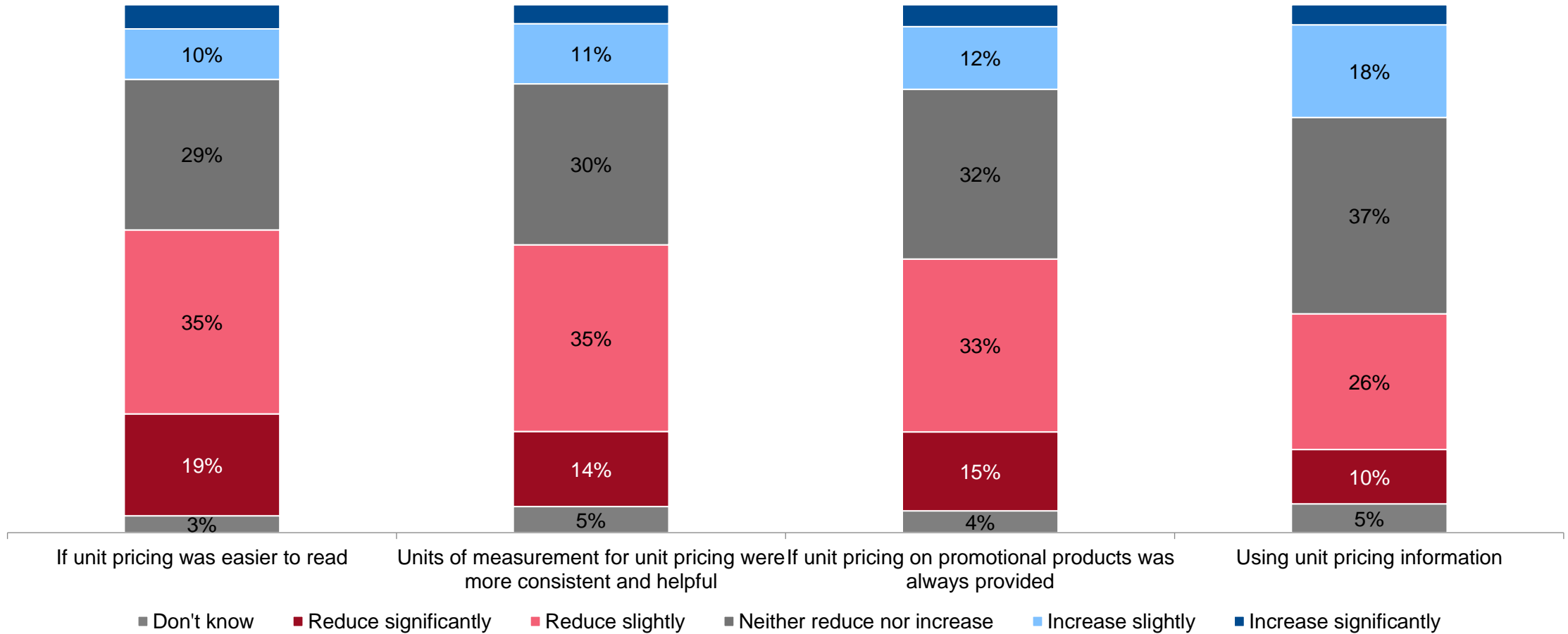
A majority say that unit pricing either adds time to their shop or saves them no time. A quarter report that it saves them time



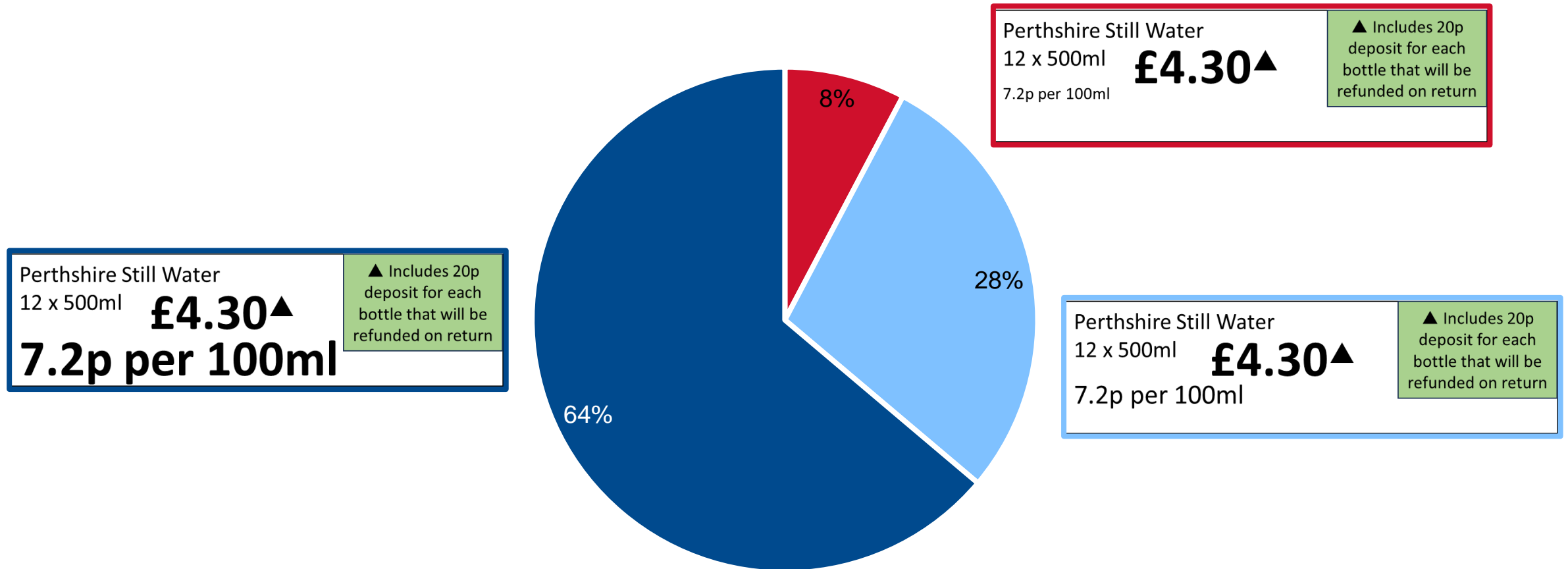
- It adds time to my shopping
- It saves me no time on my weekly shopping
- It saves me less than 2 minutes
- It saves me between 2 and 10 minutes
- It saves me more than 10 minutes
- I'm not sure

Q24a. How much time, if any, does the display of unit prices reduce the amount of time it takes you complete your weekly grocery shopping?
Base = All respondents (2,007)

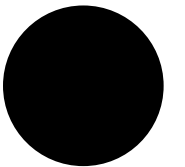
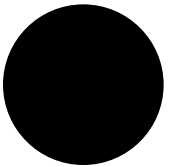
The majority think that making unit pricing easier to read would reduce the time taken to shop



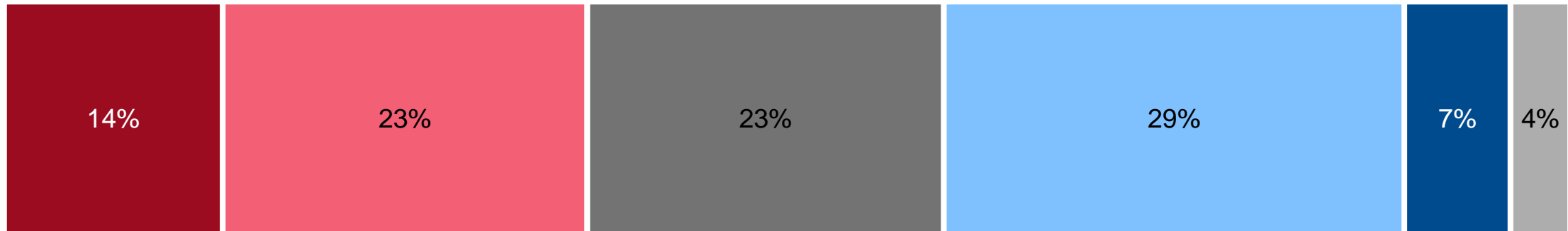
When presented with different options, the majority preferred the unit price being the same font size as the total price



Misleading prices

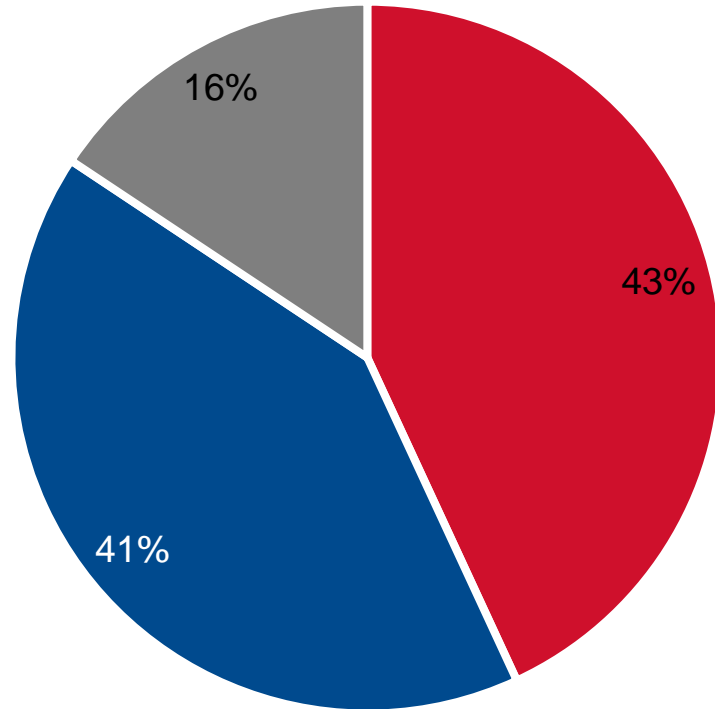


Respondents are evenly split on whether they often pay a different price at the till than they saw on the price label



▪ Strongly disagree ▪ Somewhat disagree ▪ Neither agree nor disagree ▪ Somewhat agree ▪ Strongly agree ▪ Don't know

A sizeable minority feel as if they have been misled on the price of an item in the past year for a variety of reasons



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

“Charged full price not reduced price”

“Old promotion details left beyond the expiration of offer. Multi-buy offers that are very restrictive (only some of the product range included or specific sized products only)”

“When a large sized product is on special offer then you realise, on unit price, a smaller size is better value”

“Especially on meat, it states by kg and at the till the item is 4x the price stated”

“The picture showed three pizzas and garlic bread for a price. It was only 2 pizzas and garlic bread in the offer but the writing was much smaller than the picture”

“Displayed discount but a wrong product had been placed there”

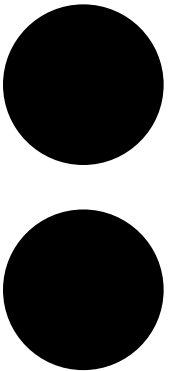
“I bought some ham recently. The ticket next to it actually belonged to a smaller item.”

“Sometimes the unit prices per tablet, sometimes per hundred and sometimes the promotion isn’t included”

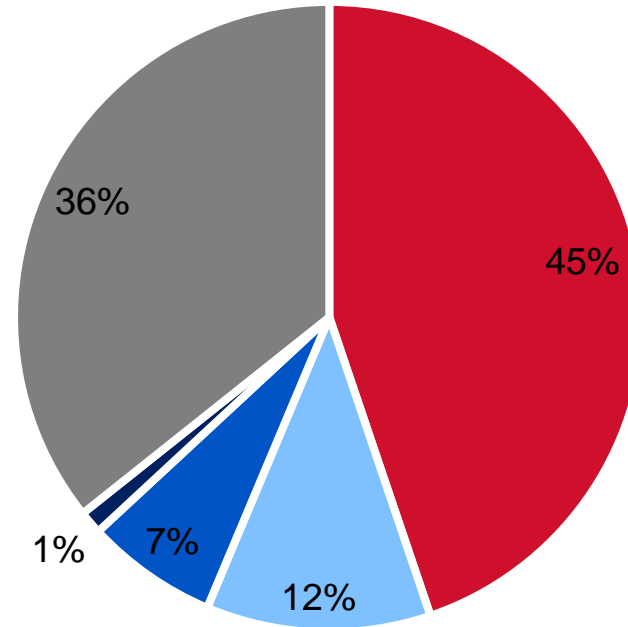
Q27. In the last year, when shopping for groceries, have you at any point felt you were misled on the price of an item?

Base = All respondents (2,007) Quotes are from Q28. Please could you tell us more about any instances about when you have been misled by the price of a grocery product you purchased.

Greenwashing and the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)



One in five have learned that the environmental claims about products of services they used in the last 12 months were incorrect



- No, I have not experienced this
- Yes, I have experienced this once
- Yes, I have experienced this multiple times (less than 5 instances)
- Yes, I have experienced this many times (5 or more instances)
- Not sure

Q34. In the last 12 months, about how many products or services, if any, have you learned that their environmental claims you used were incorrect?

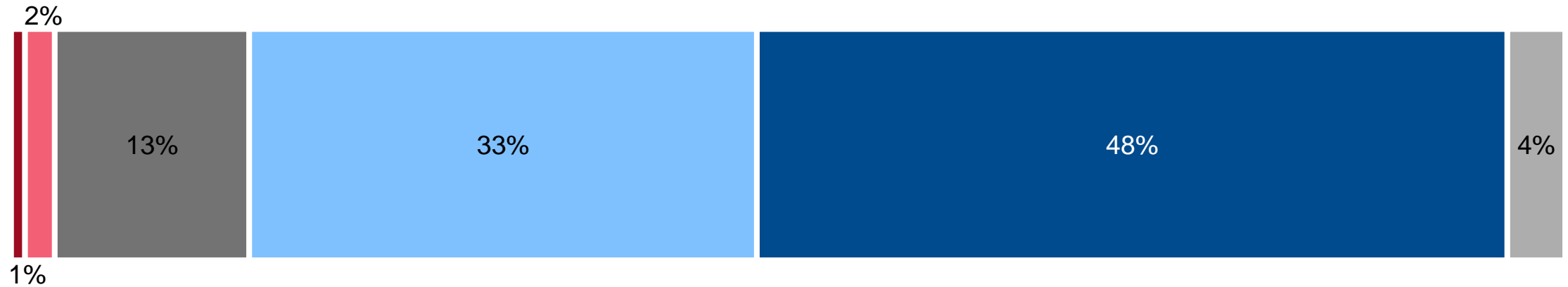
Base = All respondents (2,007)

Two in five agree that most environmental claims about goods or services are reliable, while half as many disagree



▪ Strongly disagree ▪ Somewhat disagree ▪ Neither agree nor disagree ▪ Somewhat agree ▪ Strongly agree ▪ Don't know

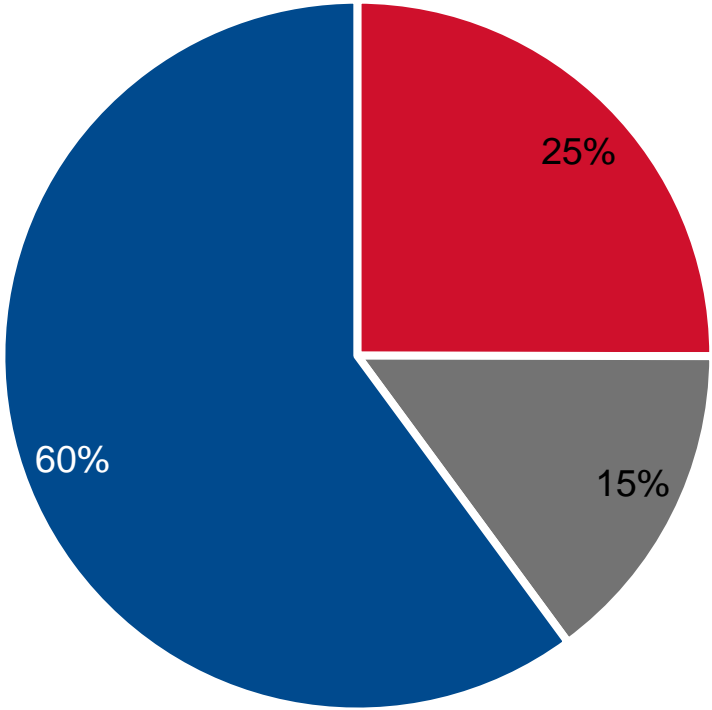
Four in five agree that the deposit and price should be displayed separately on the price label



▪ Strongly disagree ▪ Somewhat disagree ▪ Neither agree nor disagree ▪ Somewhat agree ▪ Strongly agree ▪ Don't know

When presented with different options, three in five preferred to see the breakdown of the retail price and deposit

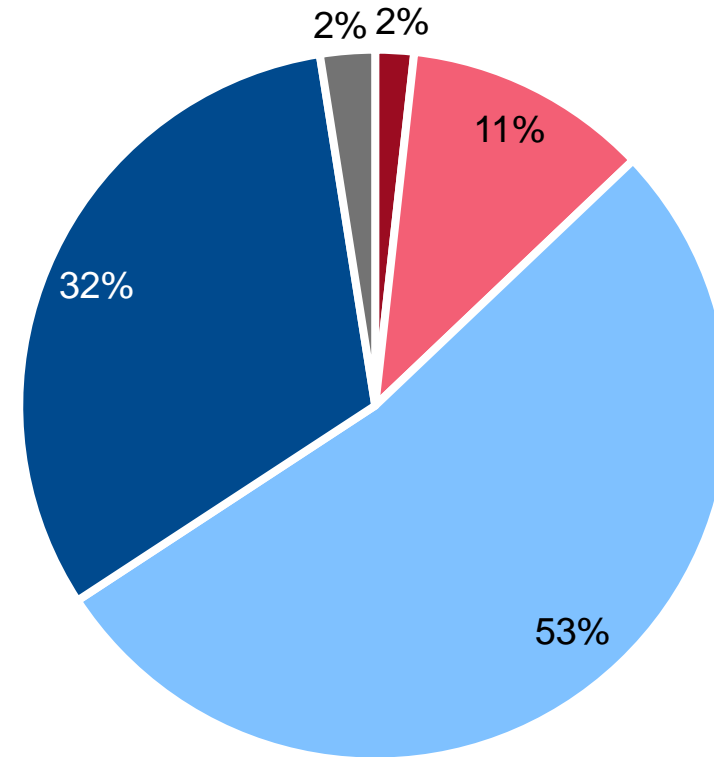
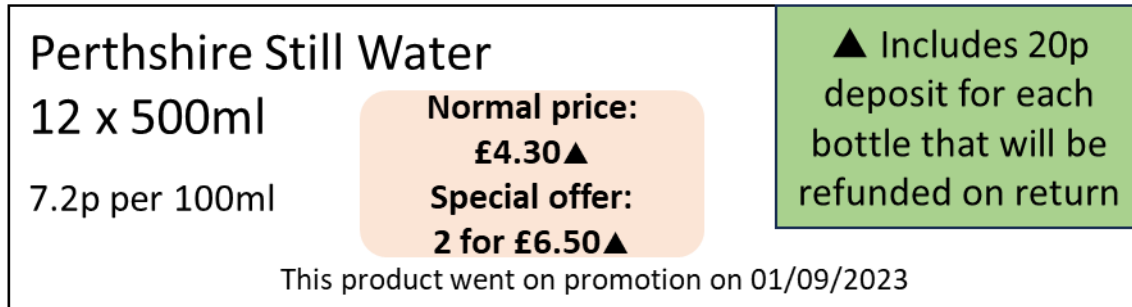
Perthshire Still Water 12 x 500ml 3p per 100ml ▲ Retail price £1.90 plus Deposits total £2.40	£4.30▲ ▲ Includes 20p deposit for each bottle that will be refunded on return
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Perthshire Still Water 12 x 500ml 7.2p per 100ml	£4.30	Includes 20p deposit for each bottle that will be refunded on return
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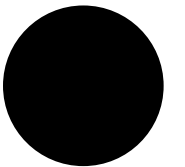
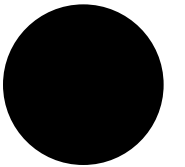
▪ I'm not sure

A clear majority find all the information on this price label for Perthshire Still Water clear



Very unclear Quite unclear Quite clear Very clear Don't know

Summary of findings



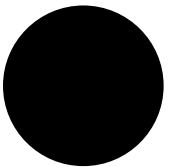
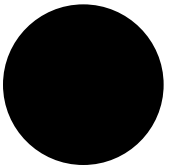
Summary of findings – Unit pricing

- **Two thirds report that they use unit pricing** to find the best value products when shopping for groceries.
- **Three in four think the unit price is easy to find**, which is lower than the overall price and the discount or promotion on the product. However, **unit price information is also seen as less important than those types of information**.
- **Three quarters feel that unit price information is easy to understand**. One in five find this difficult. Among those who find unit price information difficult to understand, the most common reasons relate to accessibility, lack of unit prices and time needed to compare prices.
- Unit pricing is more commonly seen as **important when shopping in a supermarket**, when compared to online, specialty and small shops.
- **The majority say that unit pricing either adds time to their shop or saves them no time**, while a quarter report that it saves them time. When presented with possible improvements, the majority think that making unit pricing easier to read would be key to reducing the time taken to shop.

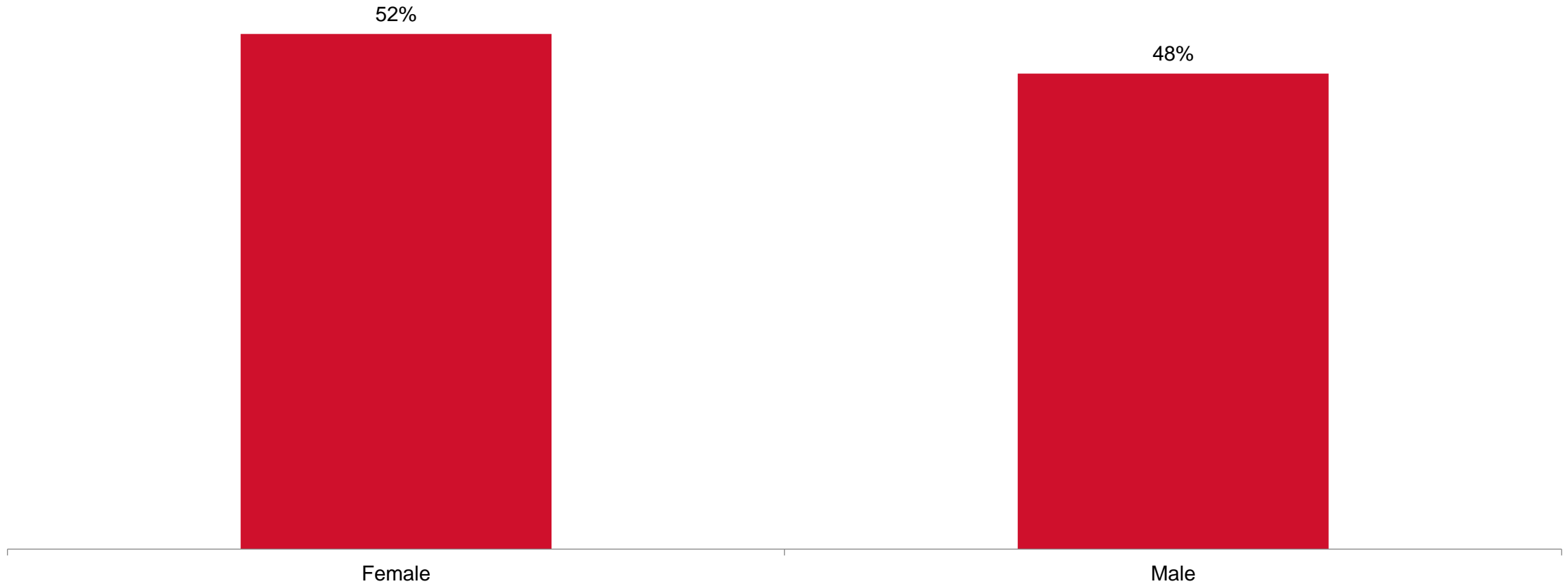
Summary of findings – Other areas

- When presented with different options, the **majority preferred the unit price being the same font size as the total price.**
- **Total price, quality and promotions or offers are the most widely used considerations when buying groceries.** Just under half say they consider unit price.
- **Only one in ten think it is difficult to understand the final price they will pay** for an item if its price has been reduced. Half would find it helpful to know when an item's promotion began and only 6% would find it unhelpful. When we tested different images of price labels, three times as many people preferred having the promotion start date to not having it, while a third had no opinion on this.
- **Two in five agree that most environmental claims about goods or services are reliable.** However, one in five have learned that the environmental claims about products of services they used in the last 12 months were incorrect.
- For products which are impacted by the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), **four in five agree that the deposit and total price should be displayed separately on the label.** When we tested different images of price labels, three in five preferred to see the breakdown of the retail price and deposit, while a quarter preferred not to.

Appendix: Demographics



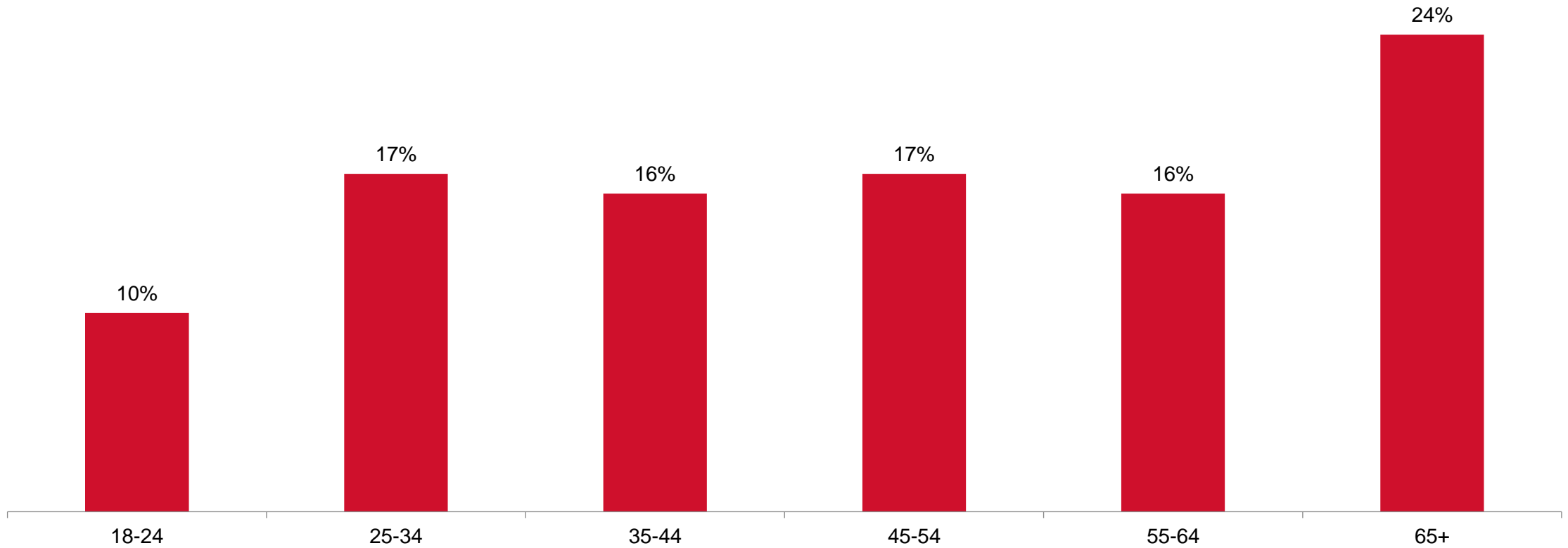
About you: In which of the following ways do you identify?



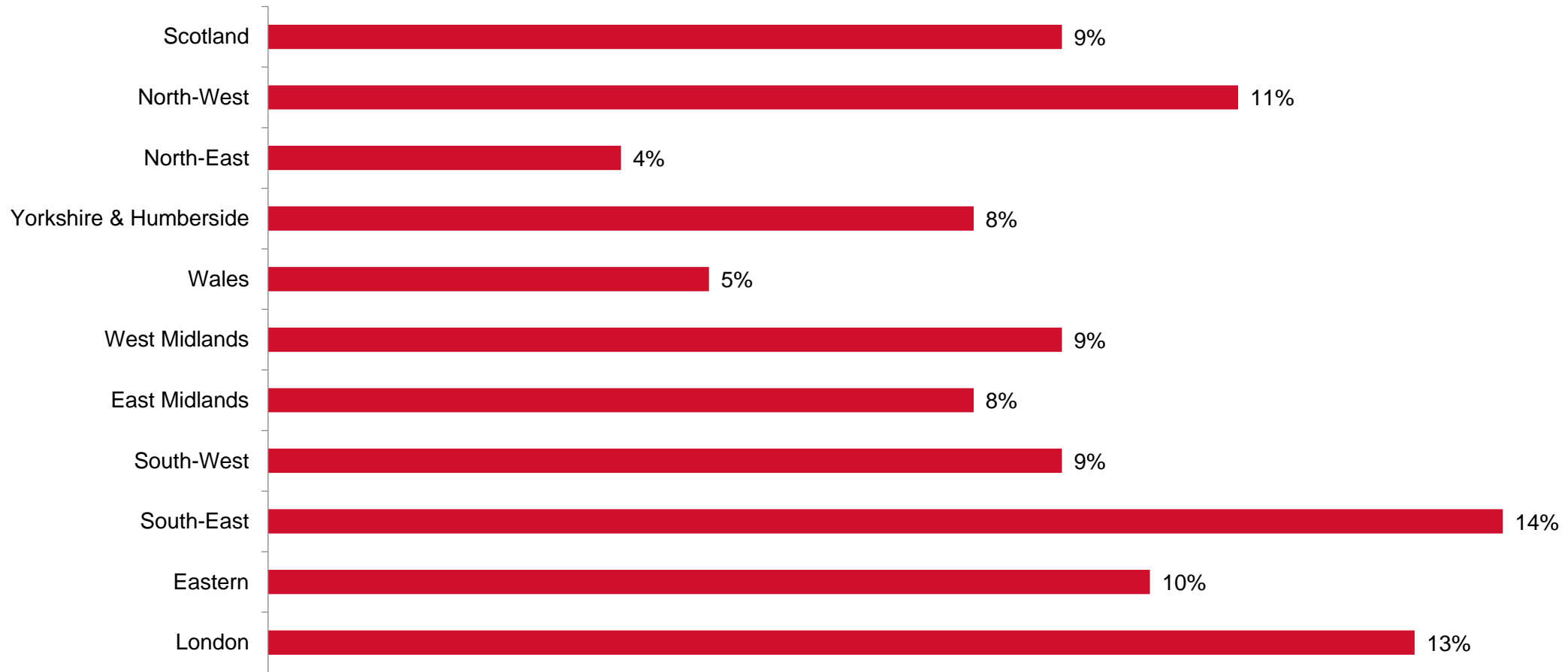
Q. In which of the following ways do you identify? Base = All respondents (2,007)

Note: Options *I identify in another way* and *Prefer not to say* are excluded from above due to small sample sizes.

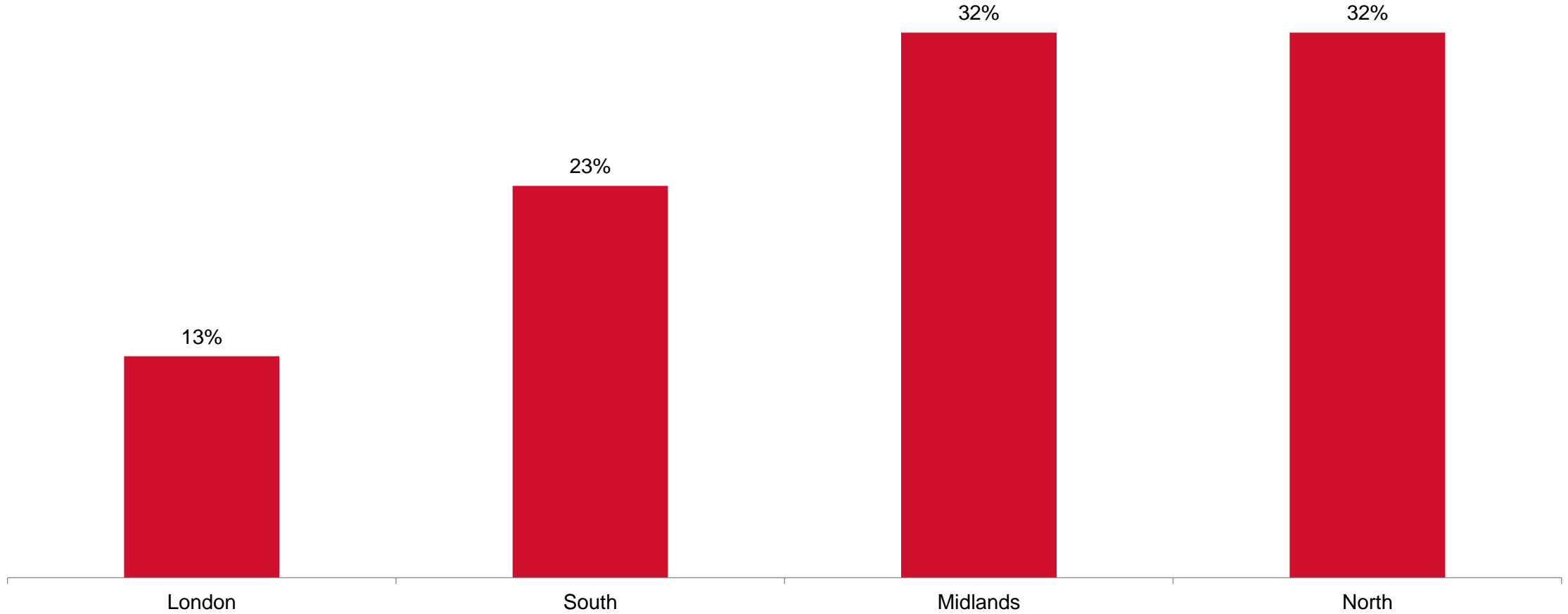
Age band - set from age question



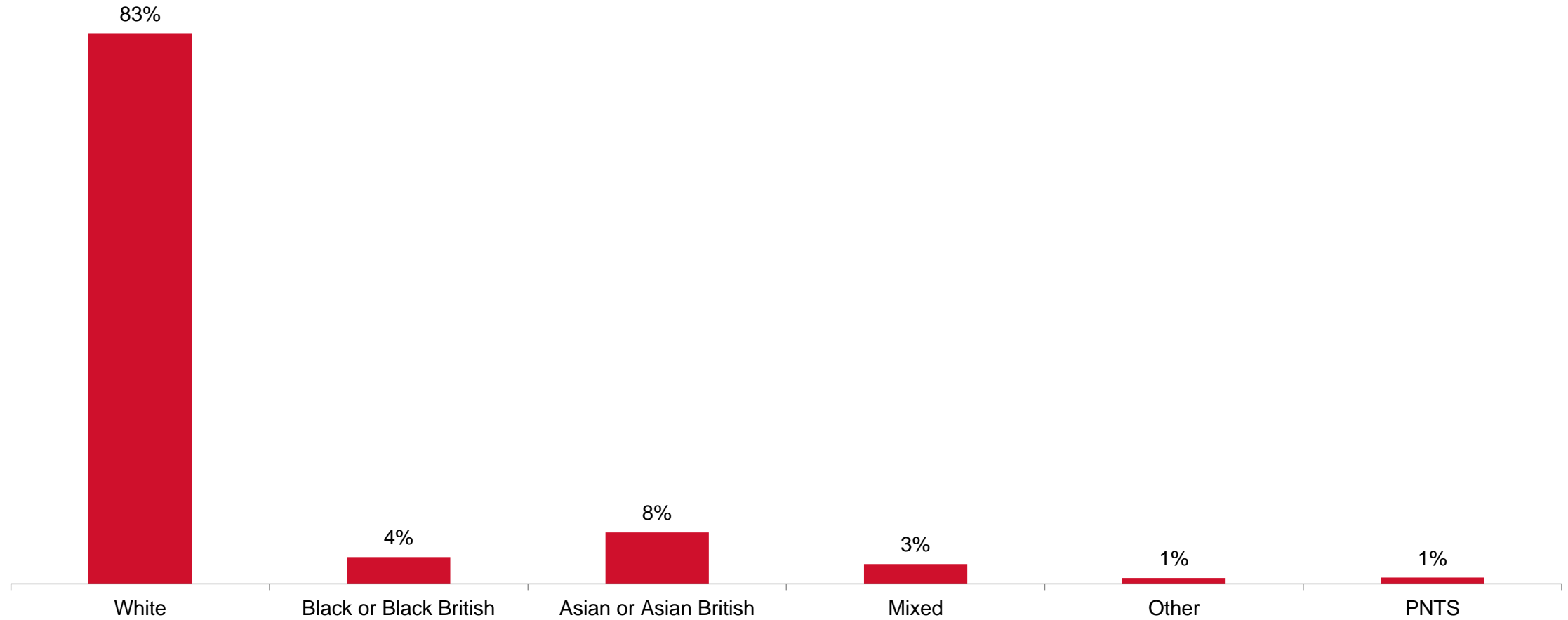
About you: Where do you live?



Region - set from Region question

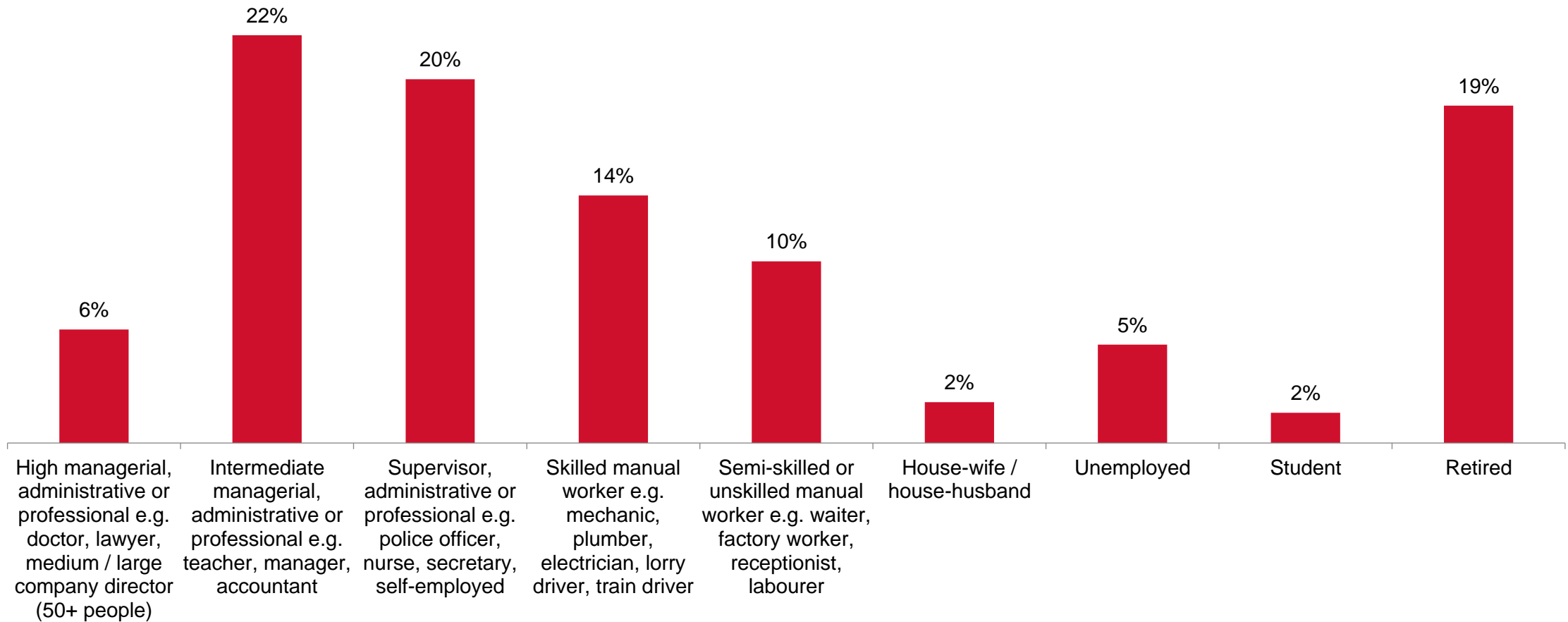


STANDARD SINGLECODE QUESTION

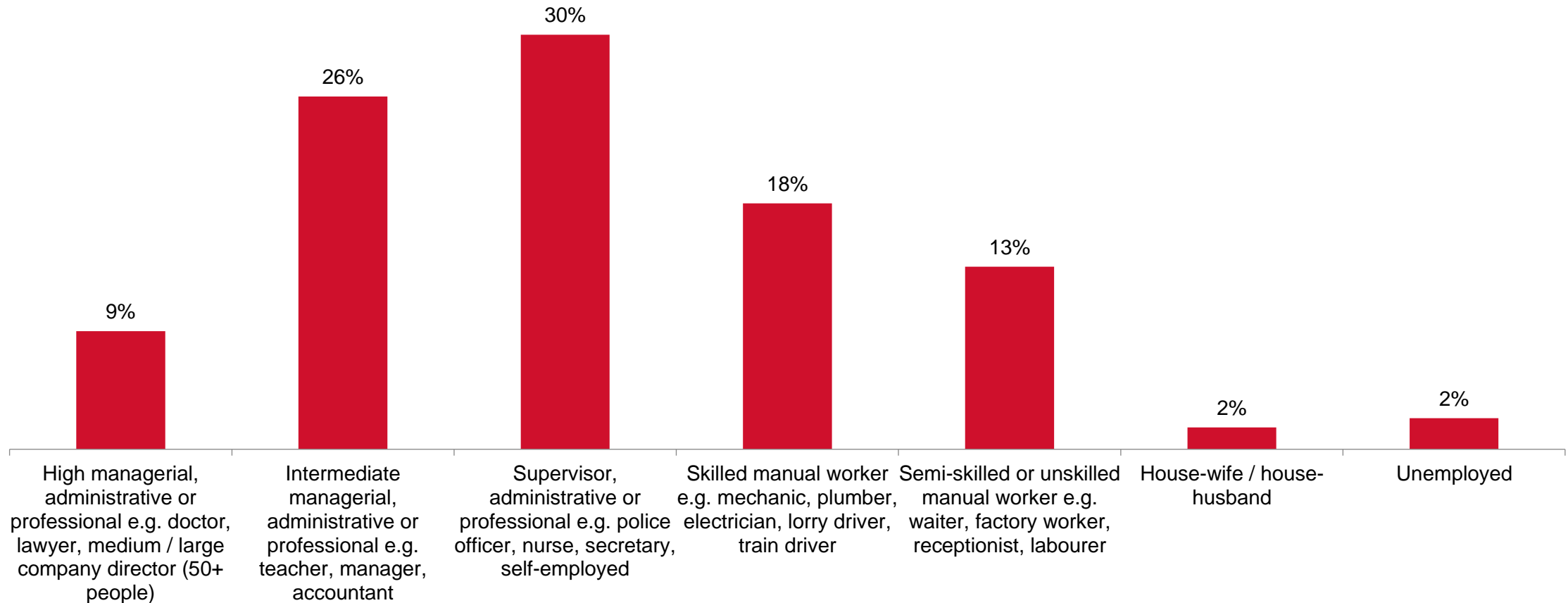


Q. How would you describe your ethnic origin? Base = All respondents (2,007)

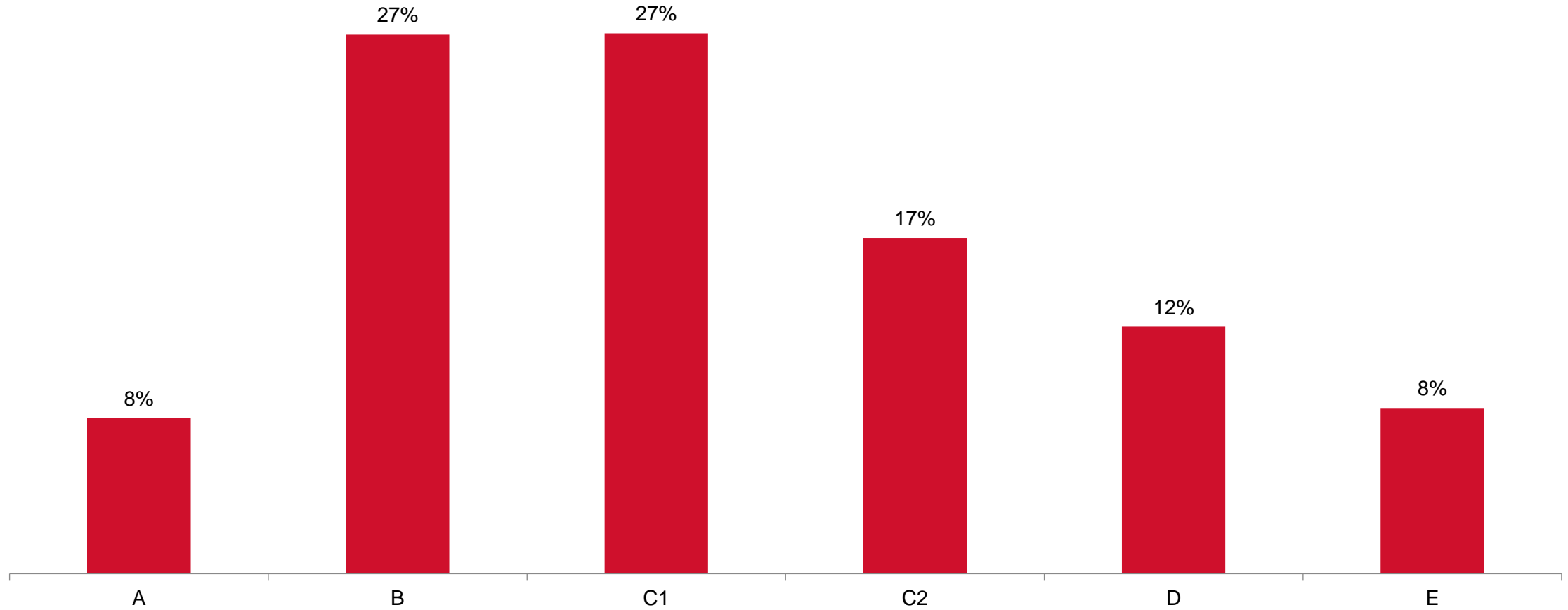
Please indicate which one of the following best describes the profession of the chief income earner in your household.



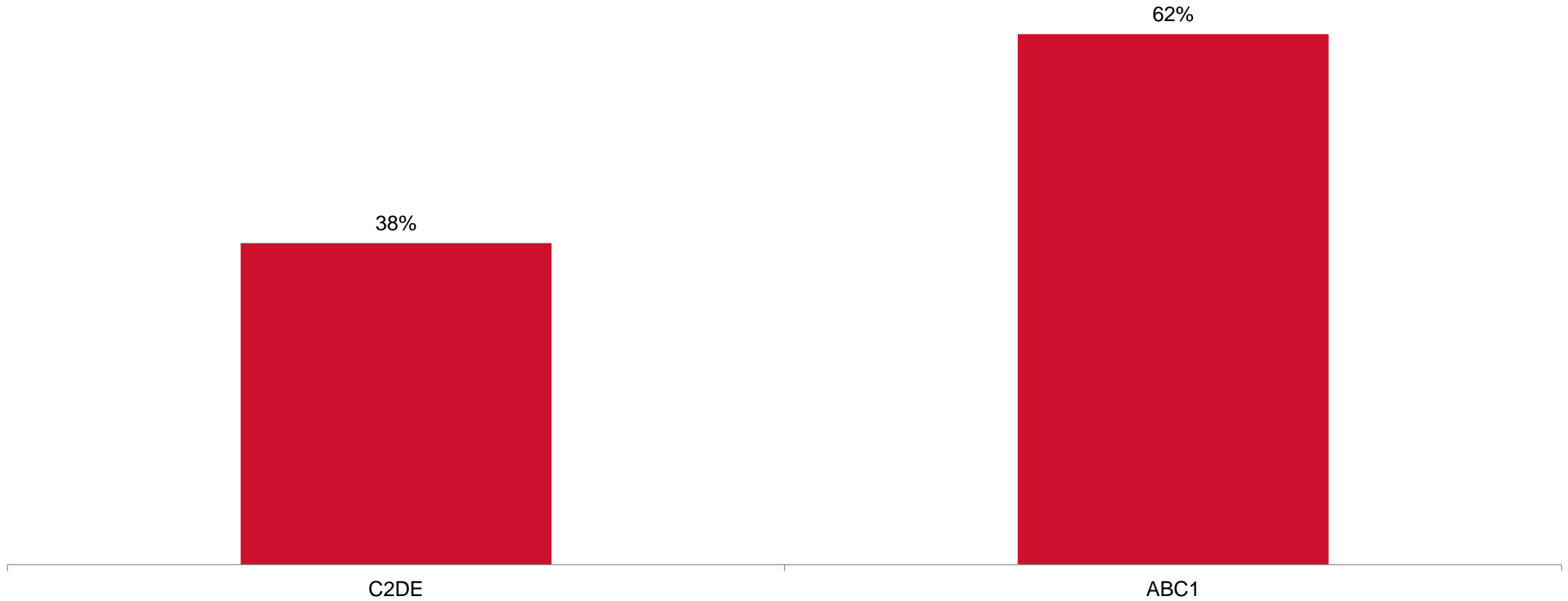
Which of the following best describes the previous occupation of the chief income earner in your household before retirement?



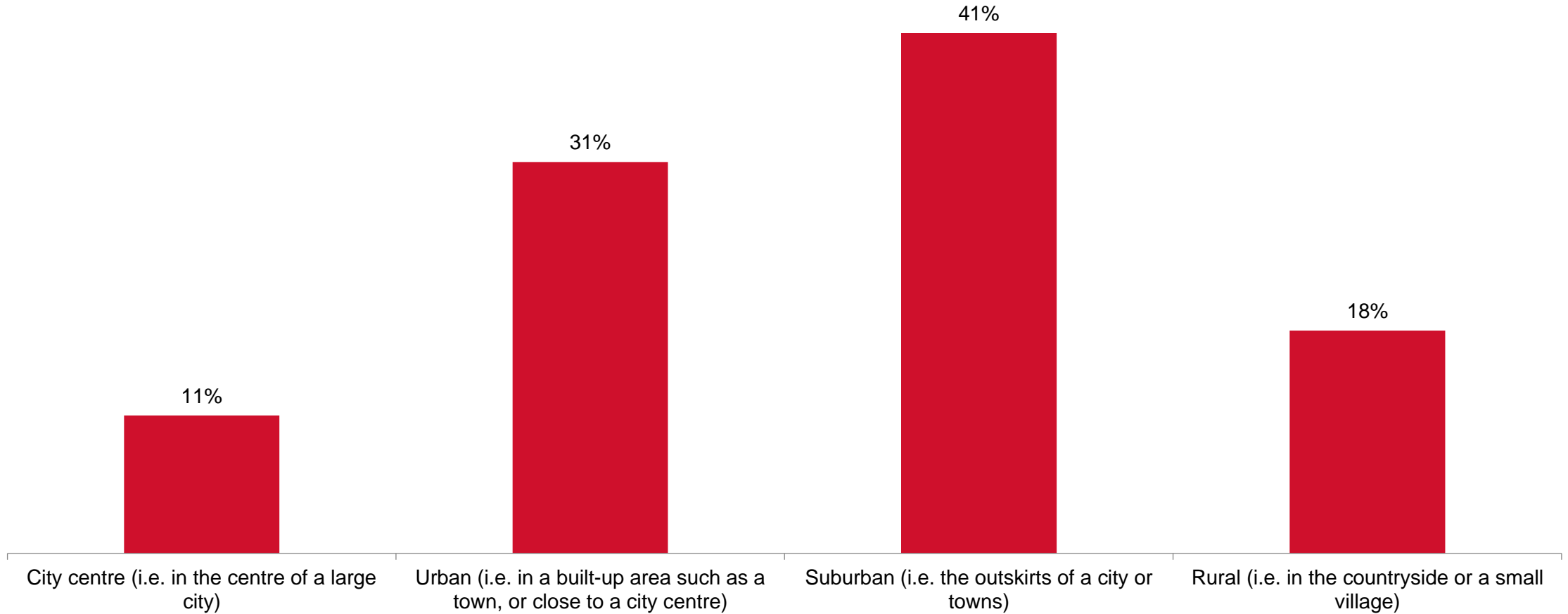
Socio-Economic Groups



SEG groupings



How would you describe the area that you live in?



What is your annual household income, before tax and deductions?

