

INDEPENDENT OFFICE FOR POLICE CONDUCT (IOPC)

IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker Summary Report, Waves 4.1 – 4.3

April 2021

.YONDER

Aims and approach

Methodology & research objectives

Tracking the public's perceptions towards the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

- + Yonder (formerly Populus) has conducted regular online surveys among adults in England and Wales since 2017. These are nationally representative with sample sizes of approximately 1800–3000 depending on the wave.
- + The most recent wave was conducted between 26-28 March 2021 (Wave 4.3). Some slides display aggregated data across Waves 4.1 (July 2020), 4.2 (November 2020) and 4.3 (March 2021).
- + The numbers of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) respondents and respondents aged 18-24 were boosted in Wave 4.3 to 500 each.
- + The survey is repeated at regular intervals. The first four of these surveys in 2017 were conducted before the organisation became the IOPC.
- + The results are also available to view in the IOPC/Yonder dashboard.
- + The research objective for this project is to track and explore public perceptions relating to the IOPC and the police complaints system, against the backdrop of news stories and events.



Executive summary

Executive summary (1/2)

Awareness of the IOPC among the public continues to be relatively low

The vast majority cannot name the IOPC unprompted, and when prompted, only half say they have heard of it, with little change over the past year. Those who say they have heard of it normally admit to only knowing a little about the organisation.

The public remains more confident in the IOPC than not, but a third do not know

There has also been a slight increase in the proportion who say they are not confident in the IOPC, and a slight decrease in the proportion who say that the IOPC is independent of the police.

Recent news stories – the ‘Kill the Bill’ protests and Sarah Everard, along with Black Lives Matter and Covid – are likely to have had some impact on public opinion about policing and police accountability

Each of these stories has been widely noticed, and coincide with a slight fall in the proportion who think that the UK police responds in a fair and proportionate way when dealing with incidents involving members of the public. There appears to have been a particularly strong effect on young people aged 18-24, who are much less likely to feel positive towards the police than a year ago and less likely to be confident in its complaint handling.

Over a fifth of the public say more police on the streets would improve confidence in the UK police

Other suggested improvements include improvement in policing practices and investigations, addressing perceived racism within the police force, a more transparent police force and increased police accountability.

Executive summary (2/2)

Only half of the public believe the police have responded well to the challenges presented by Covid-19

And less than half think the police have done a good job in enforcing coronavirus rules and restrictions. For those who say that the police have done poorly in enforcing rules and restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic, this is usually as a result of a perceived lack of enforcement. Many say they have witnessed the police declining to step in when they see rule-breaking.

A clear majority of the public think stop and search is necessary, but they are divided over whether it is being applied correctly

BAME respondents and younger people are least in favour of stop and search as it is currently used. For those who think stop and search is not applied as it should, perceived inconsistencies are key. They suggest that the police do not apply it the same to all groups or applies it when there are no grounds to do so. Those who have been stopped and searched themselves are less likely to feel positive towards the police and to be confident that complaints against police are dealt with fairly. They are also less likely to think the police respond in a fair and proportionate way, and they are less likely to think the IOPC is independent of the police.

Awareness of the IOPC

AWARENESS OF THE IOPC

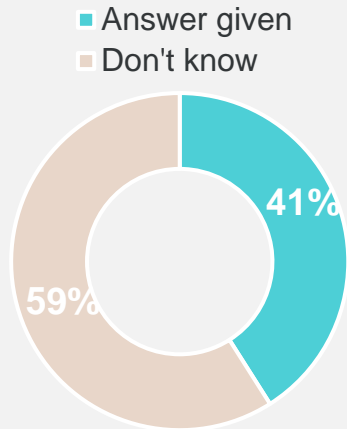
Awareness of the IOPC remains low.

A majority of the public do not know which organisation is responsible for holding the police to account in the UK.

There has been no significant change in prompted awareness across the course of 2020-21 overall.

The majority of the public do not know what organisation is responsible for holding the police to account in the UK

Q. Which organisation or organisations, if any, do you think is responsible for holding the police accountable for their actions in the United Kingdom? If you don't know the name please select don't know and move on to the next question.



Of the 41% who gave an answer to the question, the majority thought the organisation responsible for holding the police accountable was the IPCC, rather than the IOPC. Other common answers also included the Government and the Home Office.

Home Office
 Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

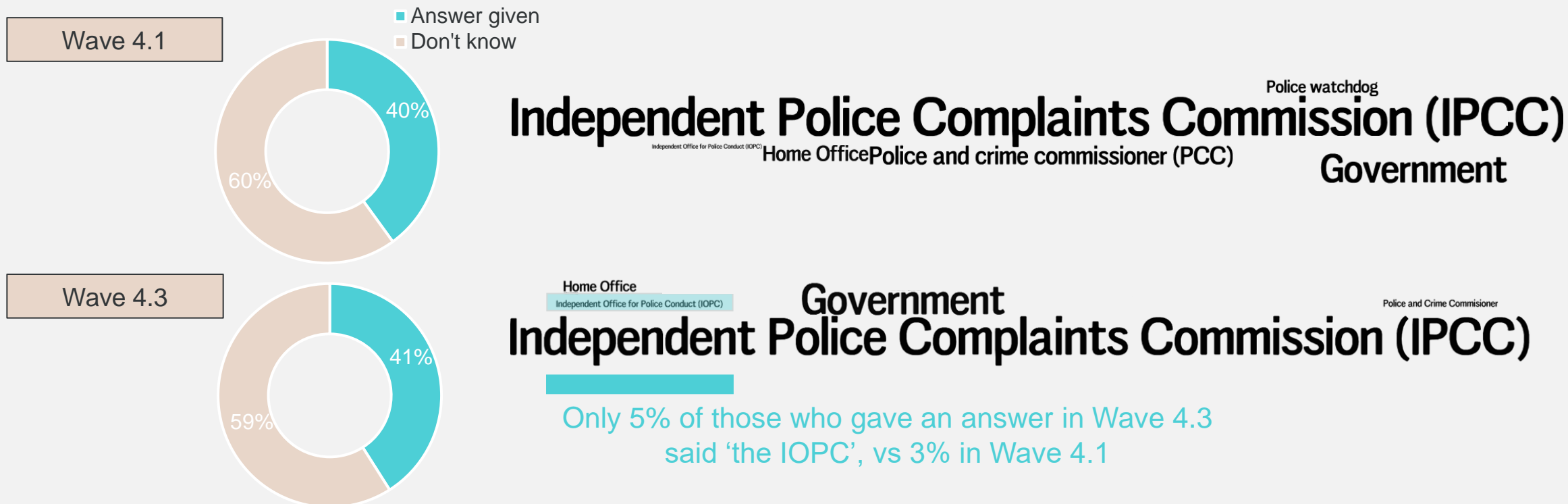
Government

Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

Police and Crime Commissioner

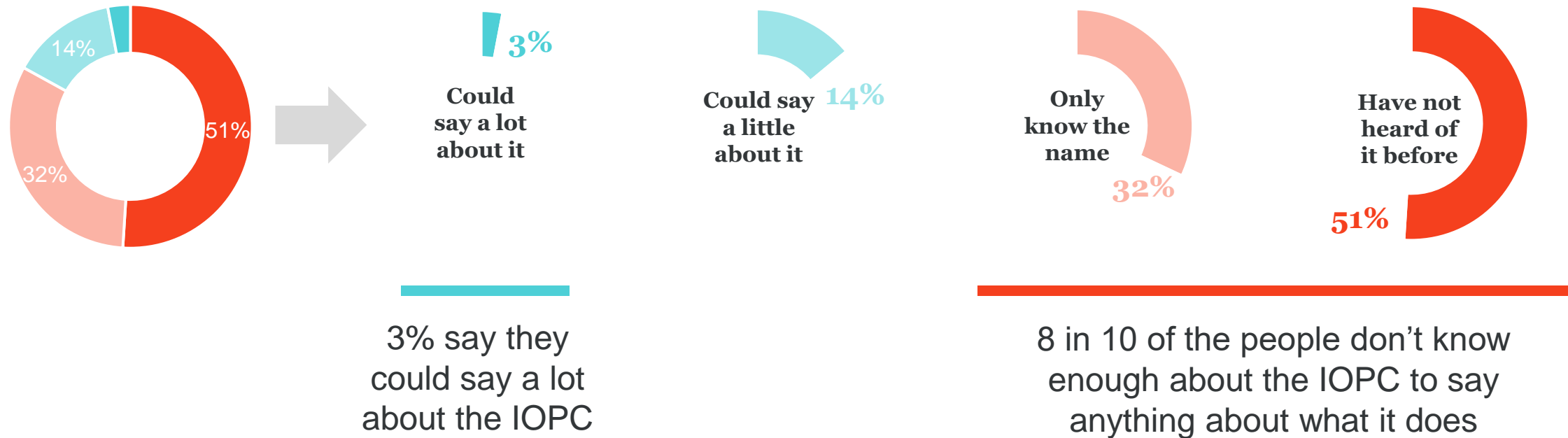
There has been little increase in unprompted awareness of the IOPC over the past year

Q. Which organisation or organisations, if any, do you think is responsible for holding the police accountable for their actions in the United Kingdom? If you don't know the name please select don't know and move on to the next question.



When prompted, about half of people say they have heard of the IOPC, but awareness remains mostly surface-level

Q. Have you heard of the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)?



Prompted awareness of the IOPC has remained consistent throughout the past year

Old measure

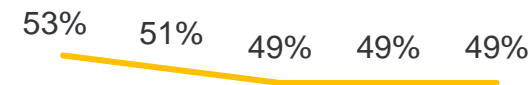
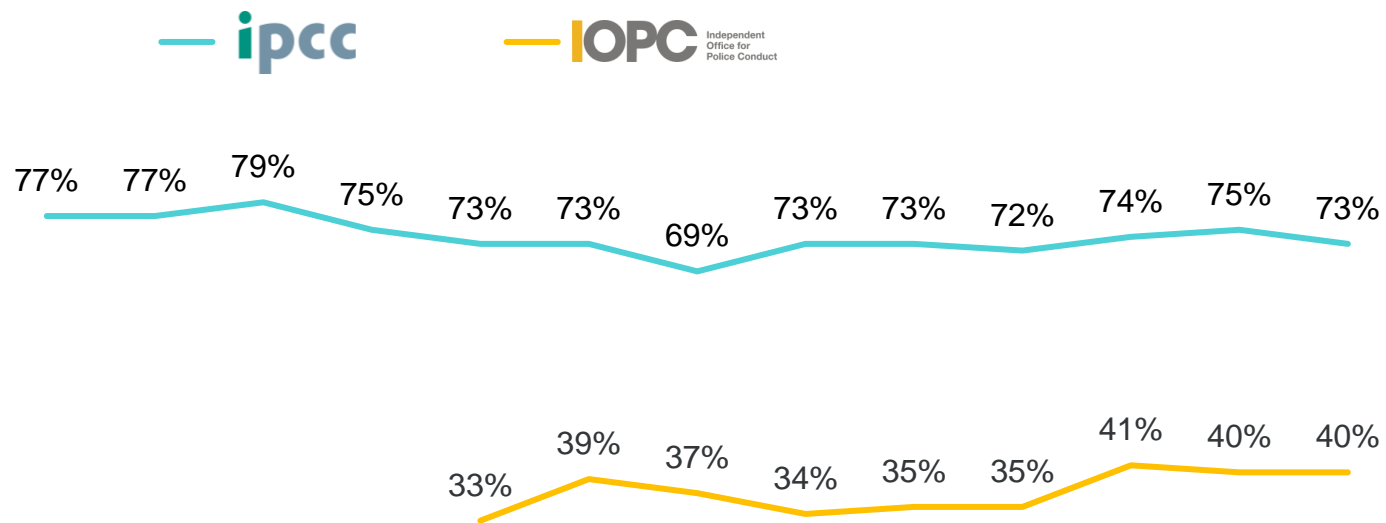
Q. Have you heard of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) before today? [% saying 'yes']
 Q. Have you heard of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) before today? [% saying 'yes']

New measure

Q. Have you heard of the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)? [% saying 'yes']



- a) Yes – and I could say a lot about it
- b) Yes – and I could say a little about it
- c) Yes – but I only know the name
- d) No – I don't think I have heard of it before

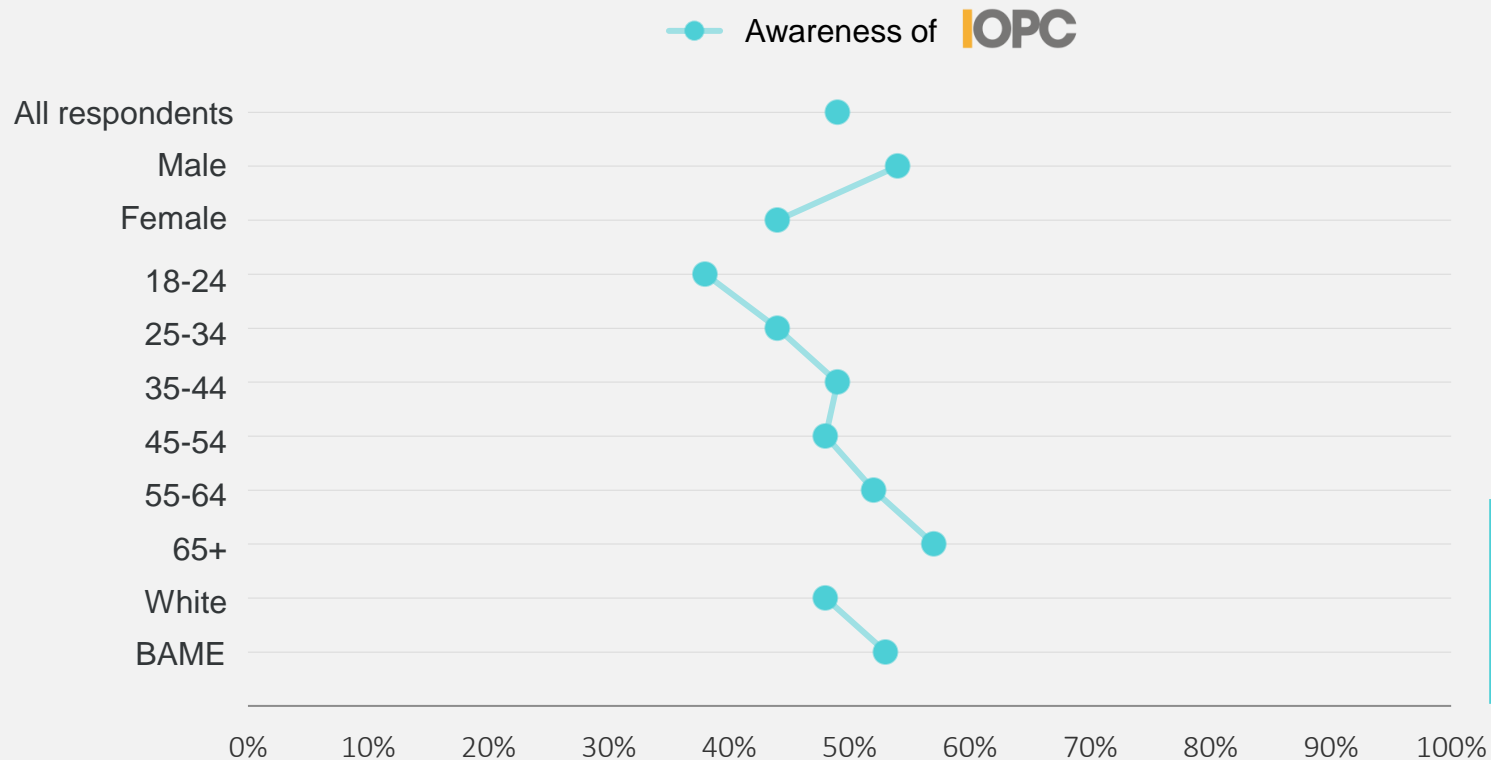


Wave 1.1 June 2017 Wave 1.2 Aug 2017 Wave 1.3 Oct 2017 Wave 1.4 Dec 2017 Wave 1.5 Jan 2018 Wave 1.6 Mar 2018 Wave 2.1 Jun 2018 Wave 2.2 Aug 2018 Wave 2.3 Oct 2018 Wave 2.4 Dec 2018 Wave 2.5 Feb 2019 Wave 2.6 Mar 2019 Wave 3.1 July 2019

Wave 3.2 Jan 2020 Wave 3.3 Mar 2020 Wave 4.1 July 2020 Wave 4.2 Nov 2020 Wave 4.3 Mar 2021

Awareness of the IOPC increases with age. Awareness of the IOPC among BAME respondents may have slightly increased since 2020

Q. Have you heard of the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)? (NET: Yes)



In last year's end of year summary report, 48% of BAME respondents had heard of the IOPC. This year the figure is 53%

Attitudes towards and perceptions of the IOPC

While there have been no major changes in attitudes towards the IOPC, there are some small signals of change.

This wave, fewer are confident in the IOPC's independence from the police.

There appears to have also been a small increase since July 2020 in the proportion who say they are not confident that the IOPC does a good job.

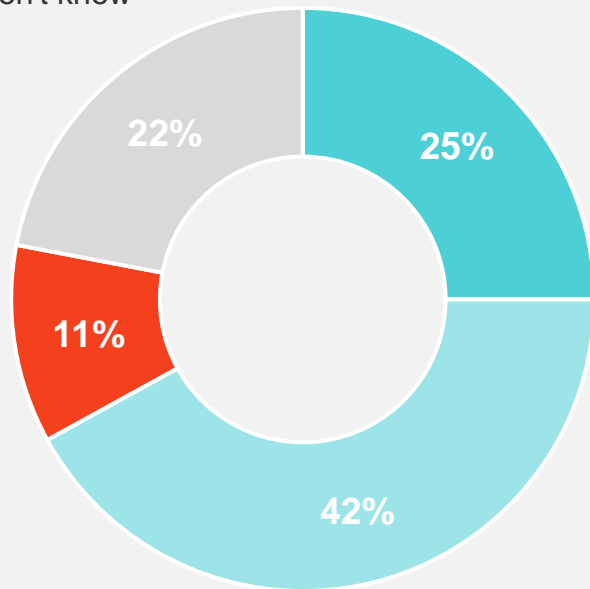
However, the public remains more confident than not in the IOPC's work.

Only one in four think the IOPC is completely independent of the police

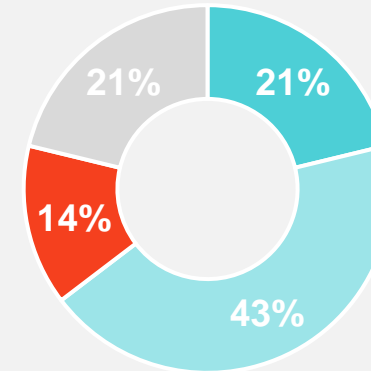
Q. Do you think that the IOPC is independent of the police?

- I think it is completely independent of the police
- I think it is somewhat independent of the police
- I think it is not independent of the police
- Don't know

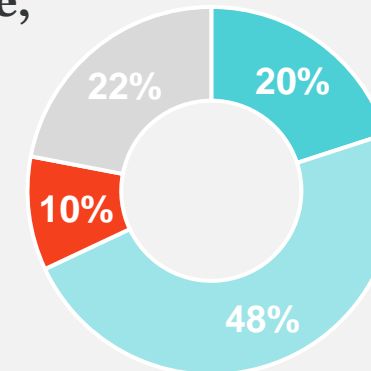
All



BAME

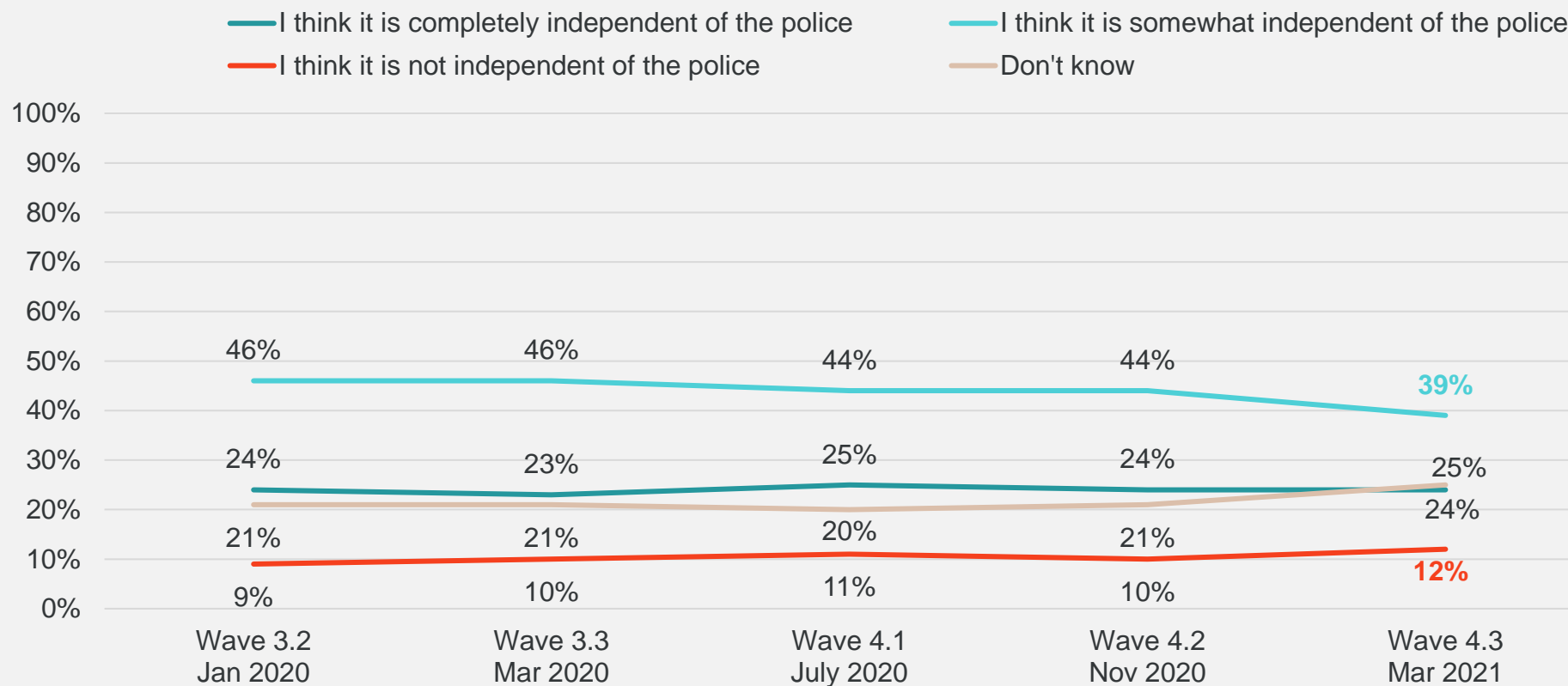


Young people,
aged 18-24



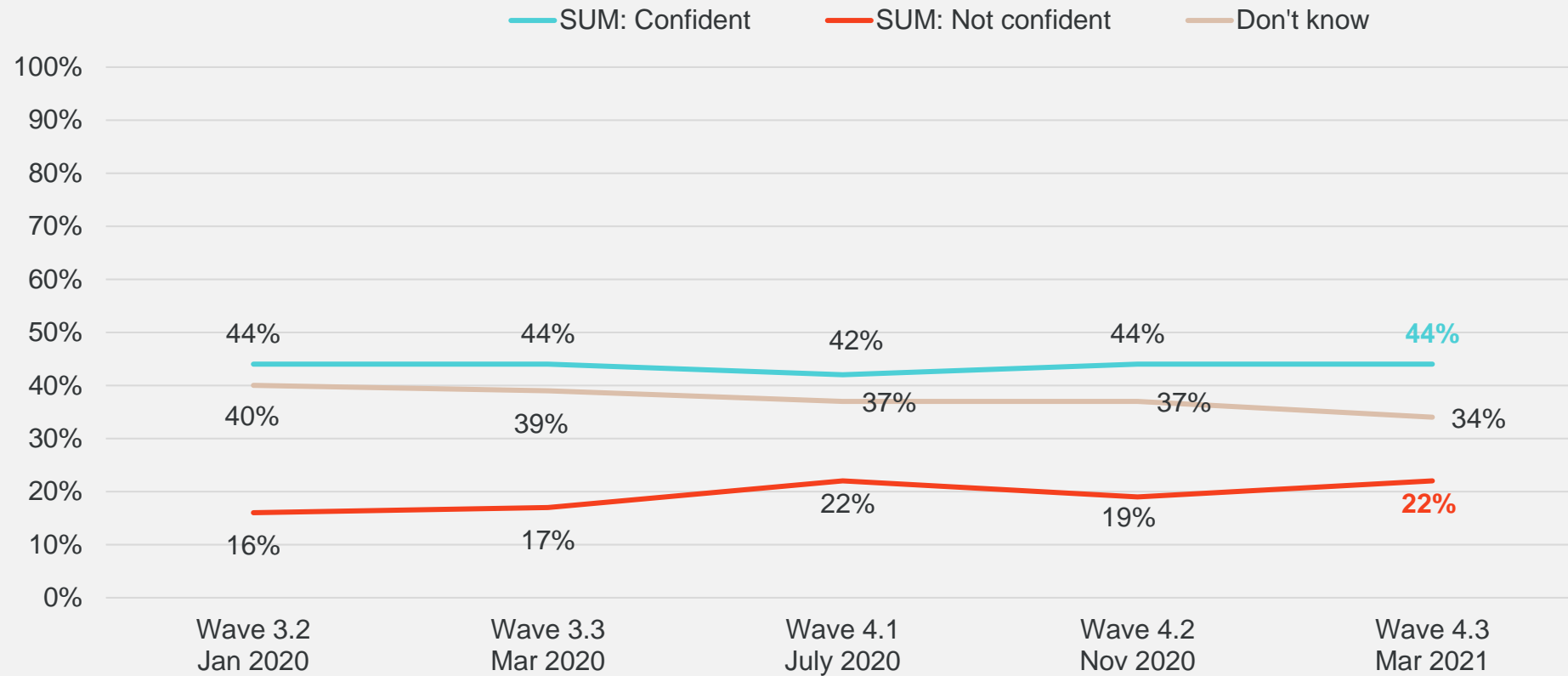
Perceptions of the IOPC's independence may have declined slightly in recent months

Q. Do you think that the IOPC is independent of the police?



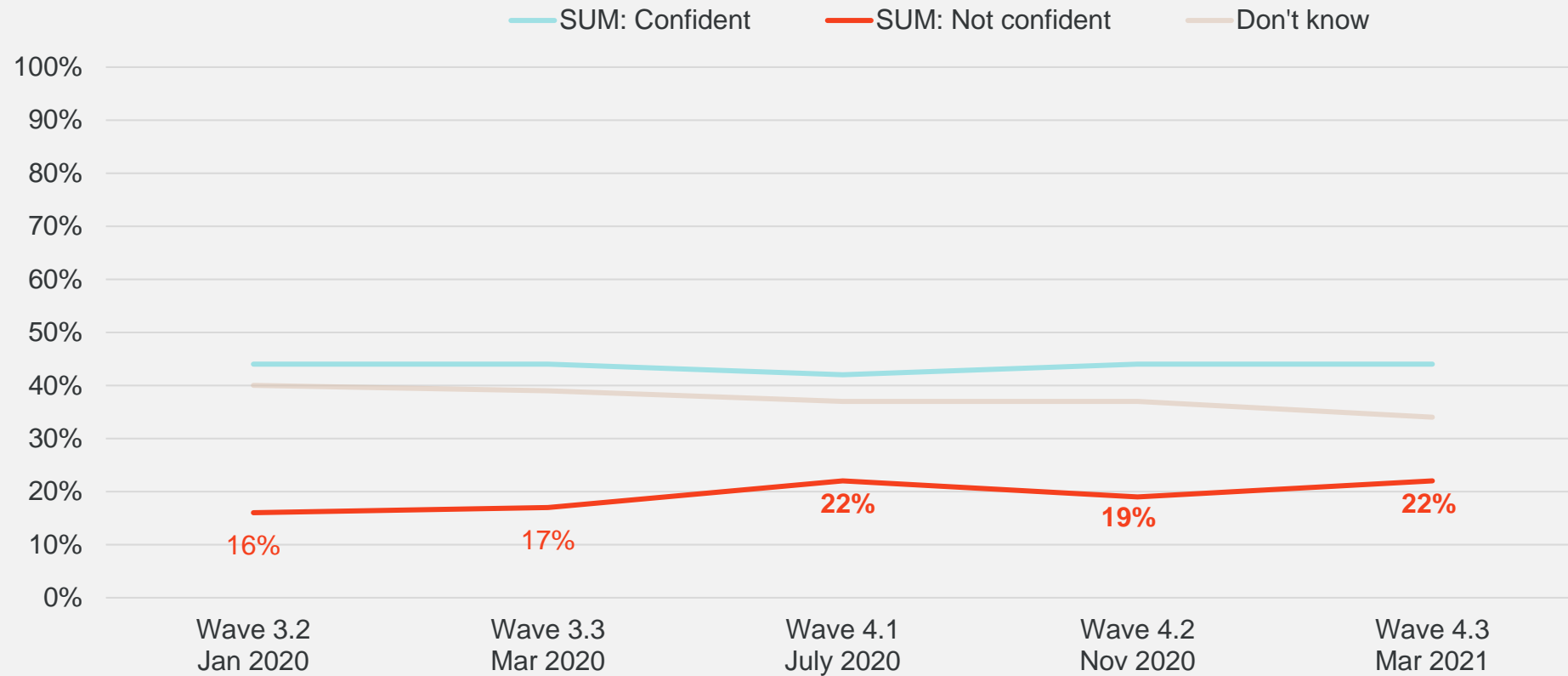
The public is more likely to be confident than not that the IOPC does a good job, but many don't know

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job?



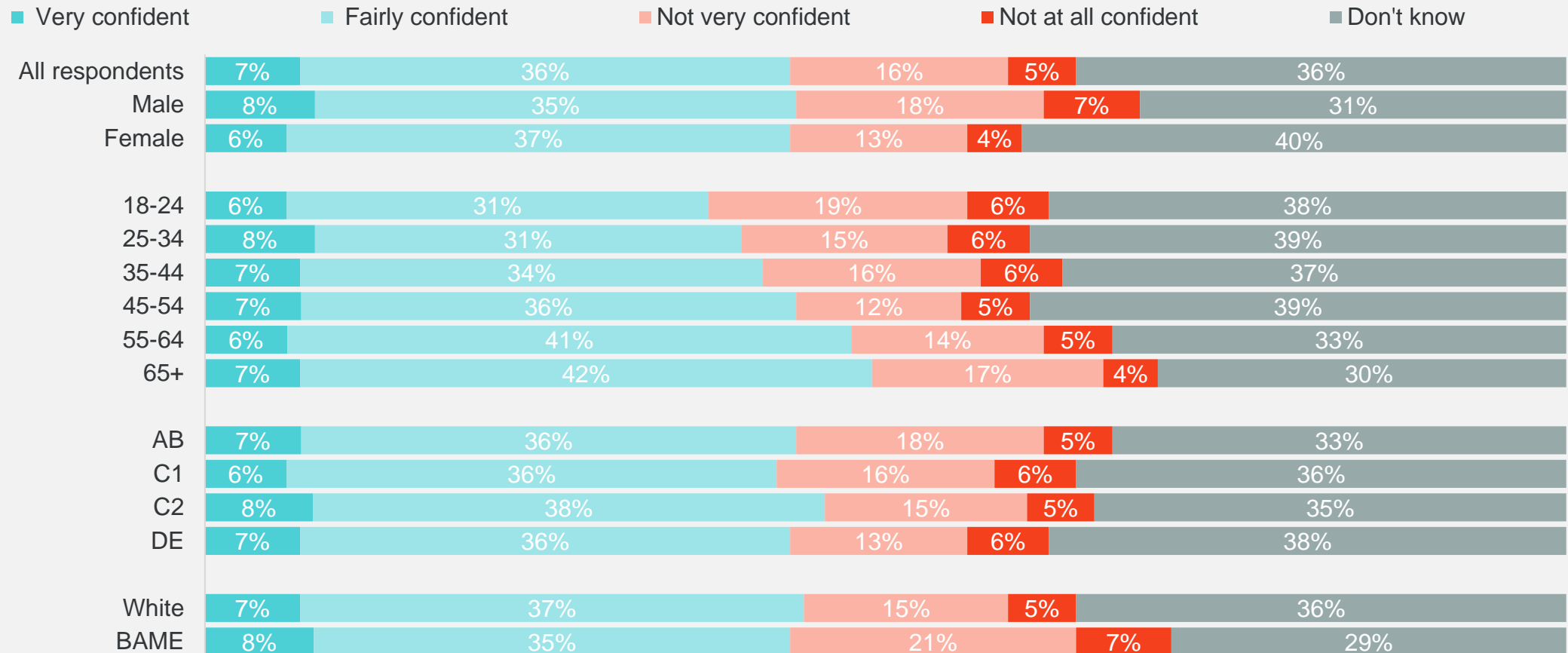
The proportion who say they are not confident appears to have risen slightly since July 2020

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job?



Those who are confident tend to be fairly confident rather than very confident – this is true across demographic groups

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job?



The factors that would increase positivity towards the IOPC the most relate to ensuring mistakes are not repeated

Q. To what extent would each of the below make you think more positively or more negatively about the IOPC? [% saying 'positive']



Attitudes towards the police and the police complaints system

The public continues to feel much more positive towards the police than negative, and the majority think the police respond in a fair and proportionate way when dealing with the UK public.

However, we have seen some signs of change over the past year.

Slightly fewer now think the police responds fairly and proportionately. Young people are much less likely to feel positive towards the police than a year ago, and confidence issues remain among the BAME population.

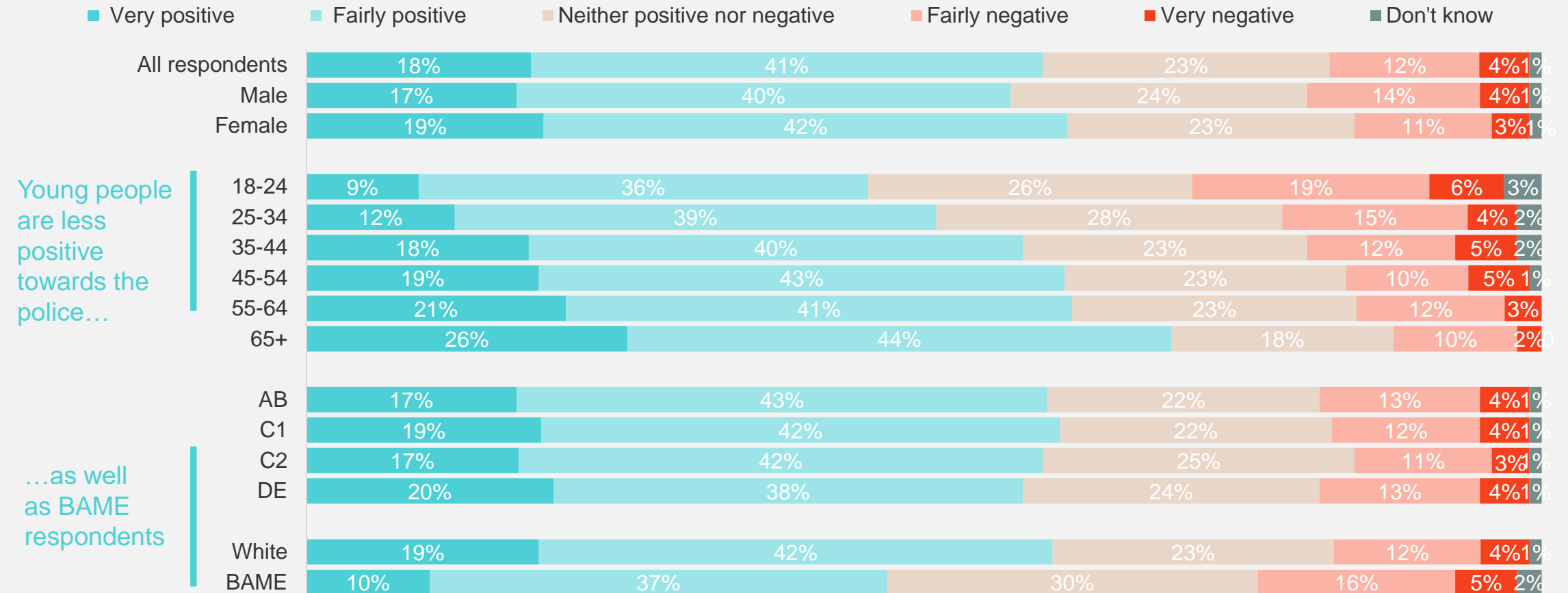
The ‘Kill the Bill’ protests and the policing of the Sarah Everard case have been widely noticed

Q. What news stories involving the police have you noticed recently, if at all? Please name any and all stories you can think of.



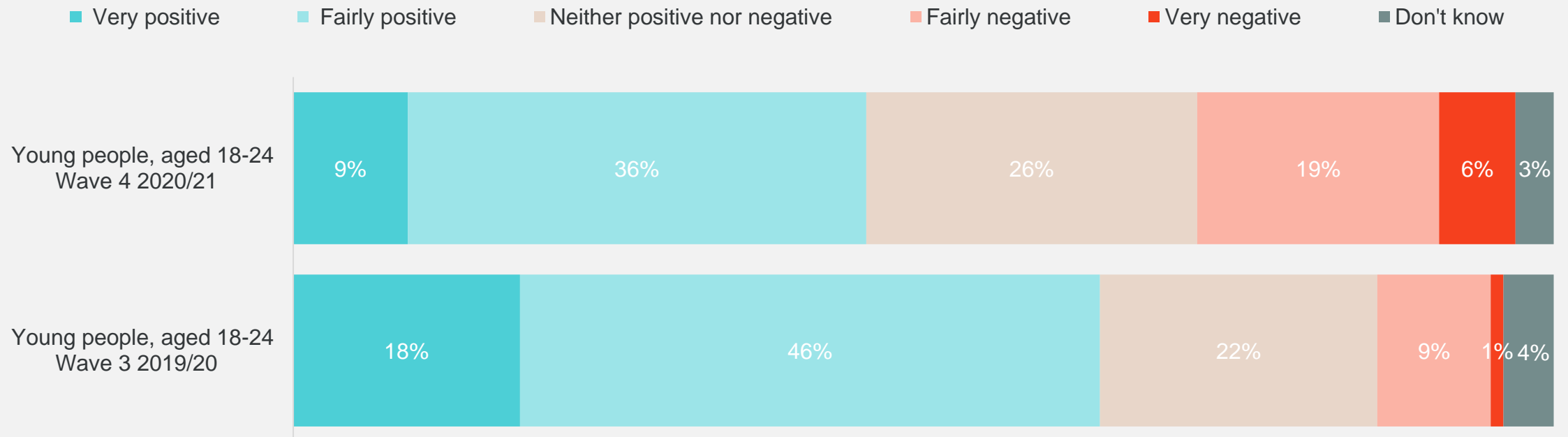
More people feel positive towards the police than negative, but only 1 in 5 are 'very positive'

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards the police?



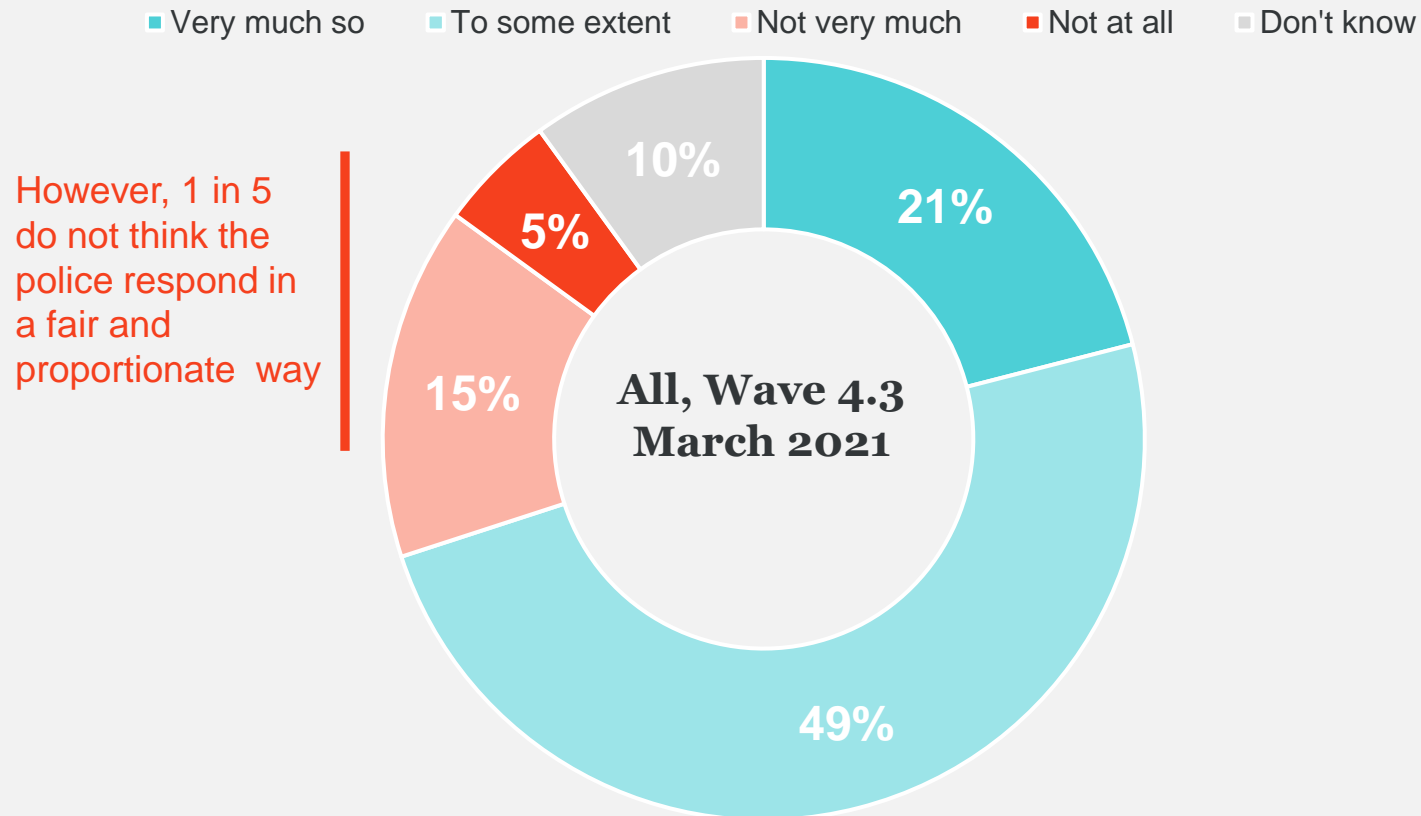
Young people are much less likely to feel positive towards the police compared with a year ago

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards the police?



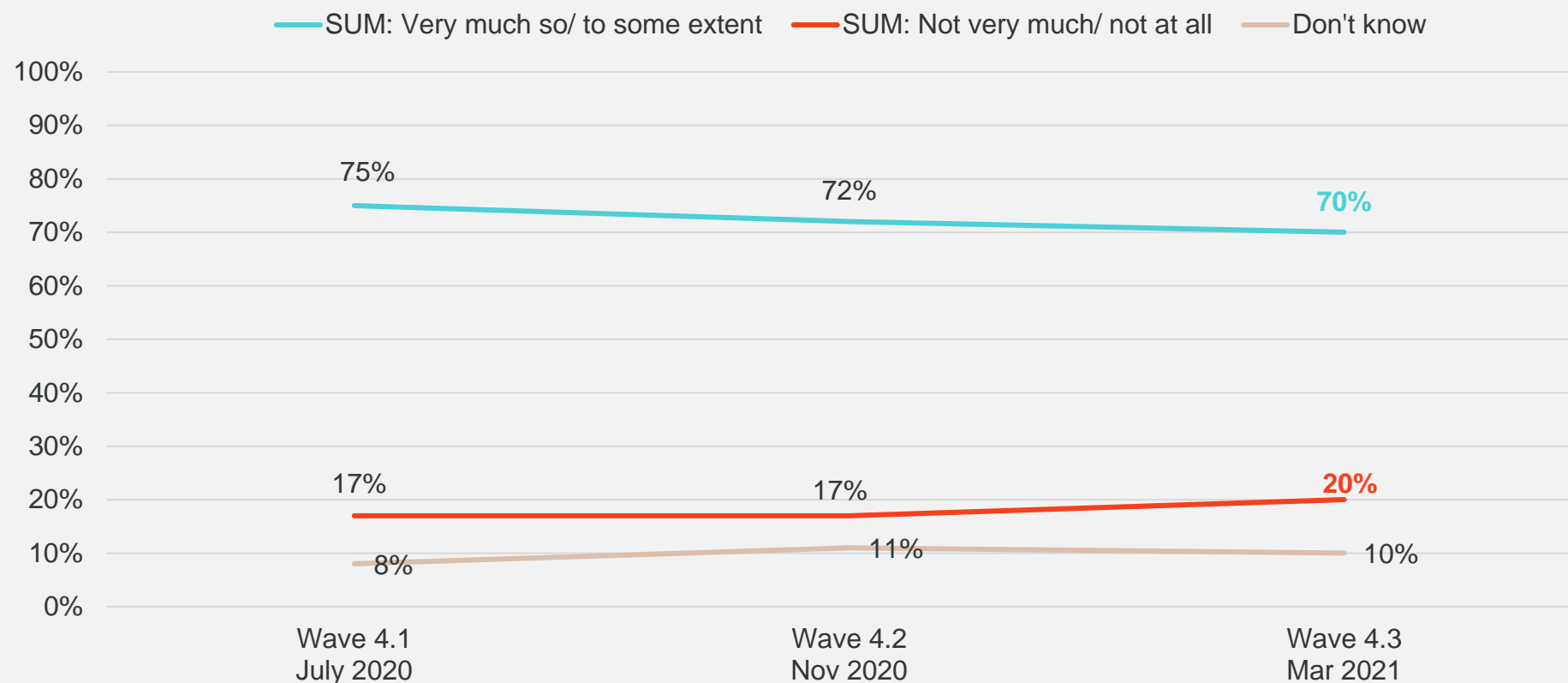
A majority think the police respond in a fair and proportionate way when dealing with the UK public

Q. To what extent, if at all, do you think that the police in the United Kingdom respond in a fair and proportionate way when dealing with incidents involving members of the public?



However, slightly fewer now believe the UK police respond in a fair and proportionate way compared to July last year

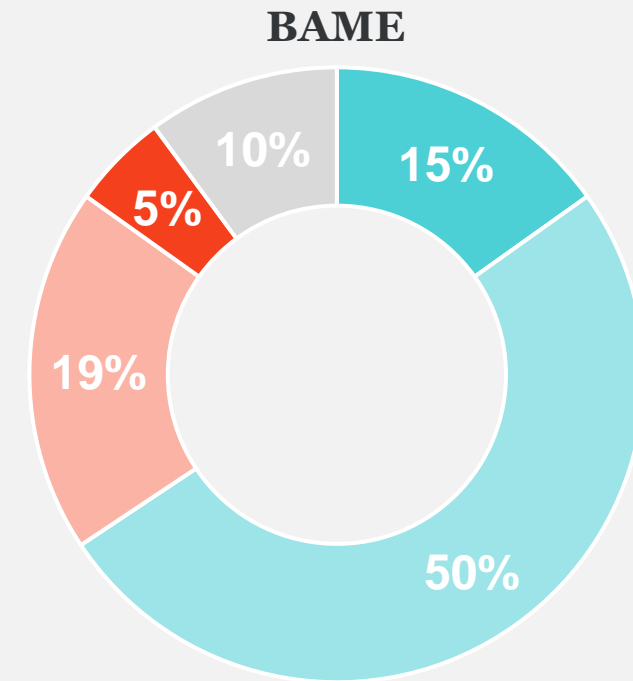
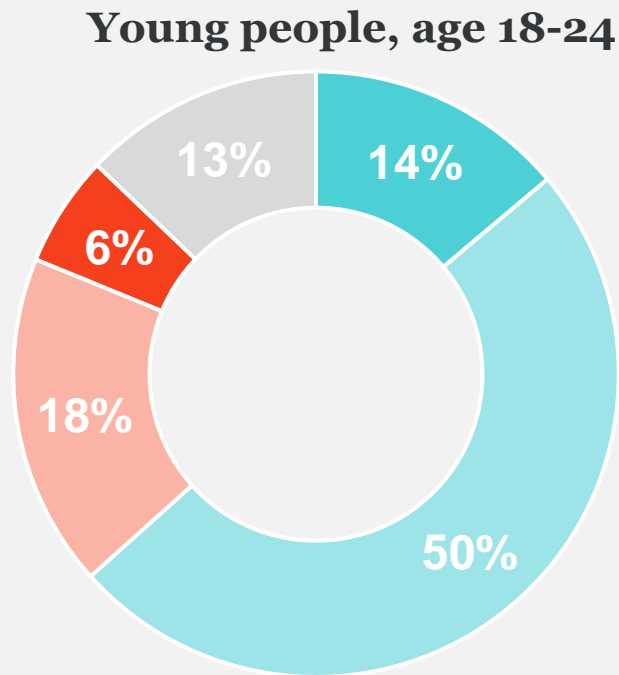
Q. To what extent, if at all, do you think that the police in the United Kingdom respond in a fair and proportionate way when dealing with incidents involving members of the public?



Young people and BAME respondents are more likely than others to think the police is not fair and proportionate

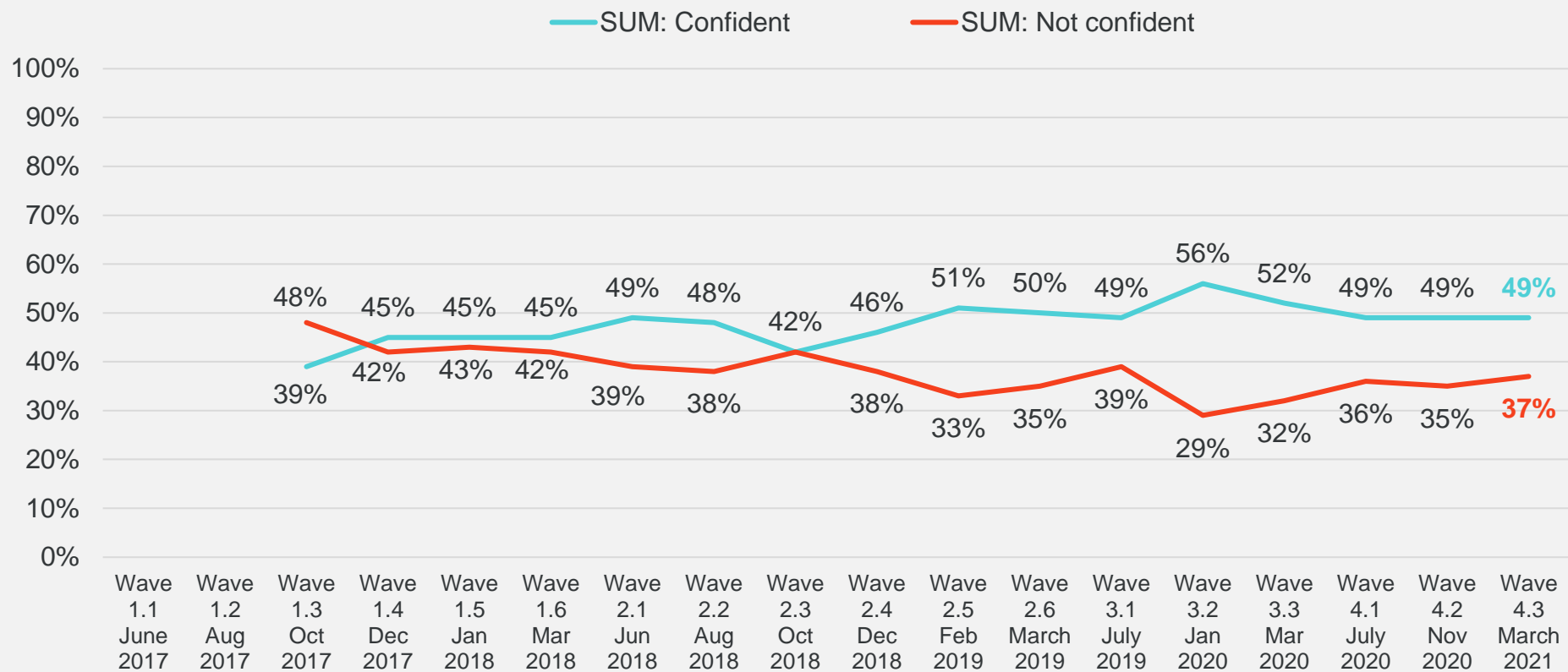
Q. To what extent, if at all, do you think that the police in the United Kingdom respond in a fair and proportionate way when dealing with incidents involving members of the public?

■ Very much so ■ To some extent ■ Not very much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know



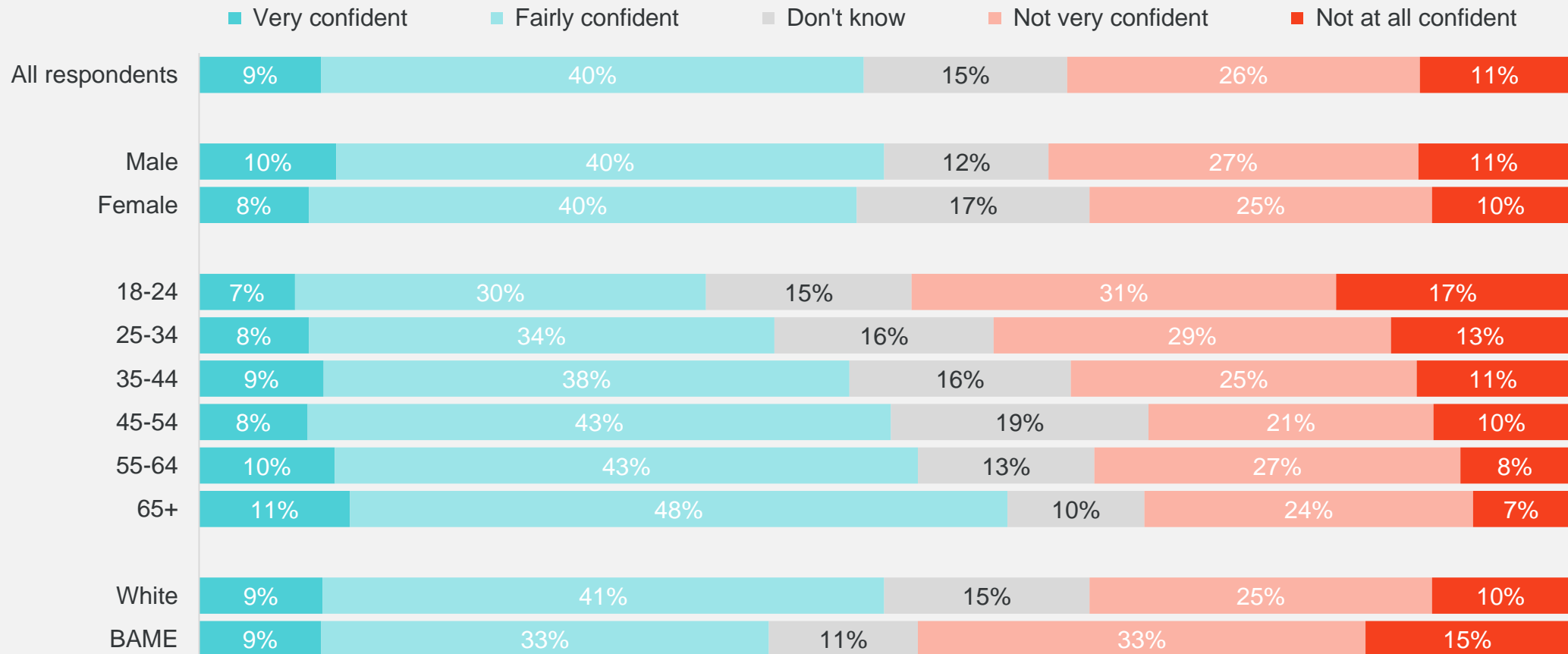
Confidence in the police's handling of complaints over time remains relatively stable, but over 1 in 3 are not confident

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?



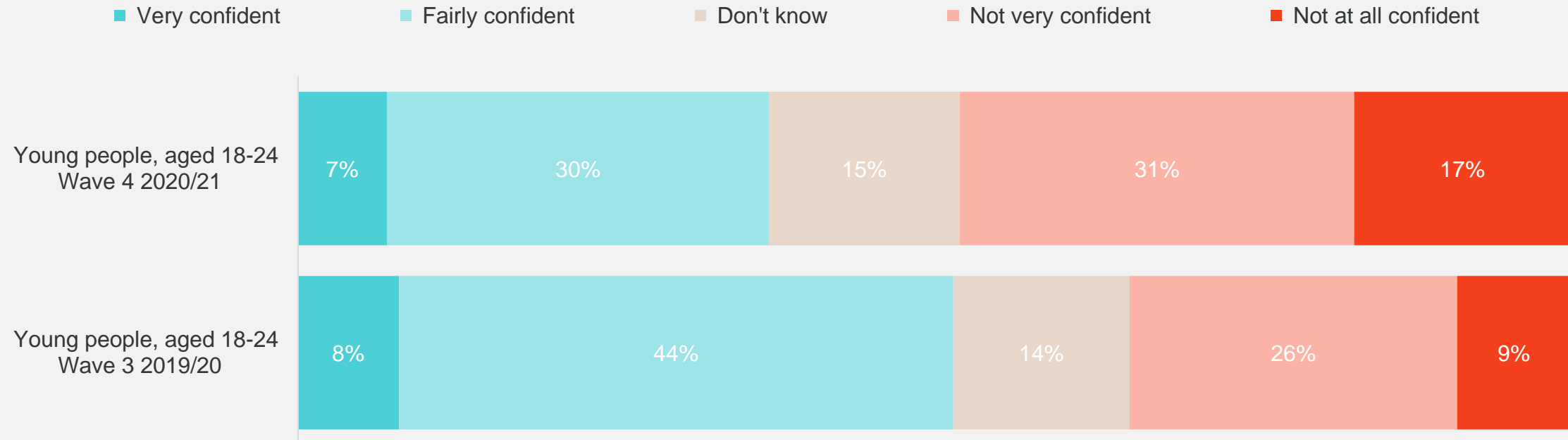
Confidence in the police's handling of complaints increases with age and is lower among young people and BAME respondents

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?



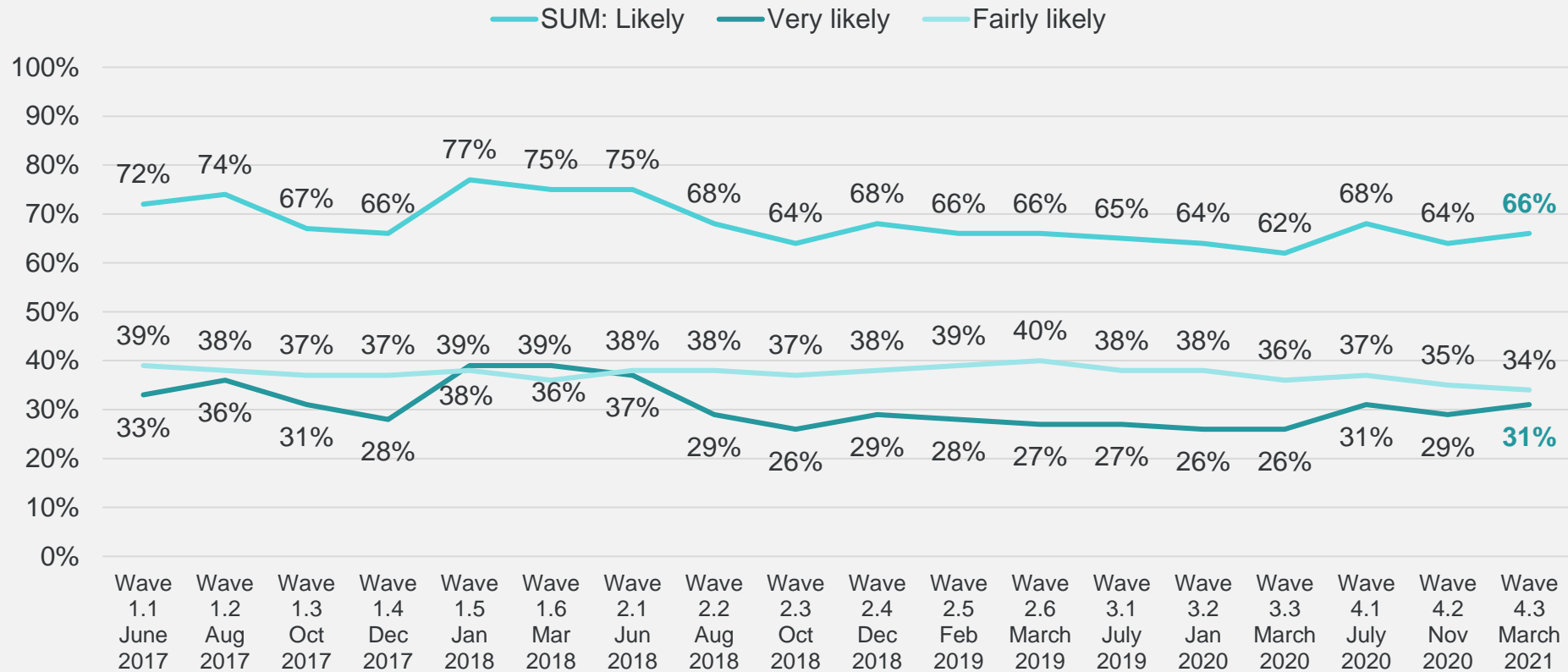
Confidence in the police's handling of complaints has dropped significantly among those aged 18-24

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?



Likelihood to complain remains relatively high, although only a third say they would be ‘very likely’ to complain

Q. If you were really unhappy about how a police officer behaved towards you, OR handled a matter in which you were involved, how likely would you be to complain?



Increased police presence on the streets is the most common suggestion for improving confidence in policing

An increased presence of police on the streets, is the most common answer given when people are asked what would improve their confidence in policing in the UK.

Over a fifth (22%) say more police on the streets would improve confidence.

Other suggested improvements include improvement in policing practices and investigations (7%), addressing perceived racism within the police force (6%), a more transparent police force (5%) and increased police accountability (4%).

Increased police presence

*“I think a **greater presence in my local community would feel reassuring** as there has been a significant increase in local crimes (muggings, car jackings, property theft etc), but I understand they have their hands tied as their are staffing shortages.”*

Improvement in policing (general)

*“If the police **would react to call outs quicker and with more enthusiasm**. Lately so many school kids and young adults in my area are being held at knife point and robbed, it seems that **police are not doing enough** to stop.”*

Addressing racism in the police

*“If they **stopped being racist/having racist practices - stop and search for example**. I’ve not seen any evidence that they’ve changed. Cressida Dick needs to step down but more than that they need to route out **institutional racism** that runs right through the police.”*

More transparent and police accountability

*“Constant and up to date **criminal record checks for serving officers**. **Absolute clarity on what the police can and can't do if they stop you on the street**, for example.”*

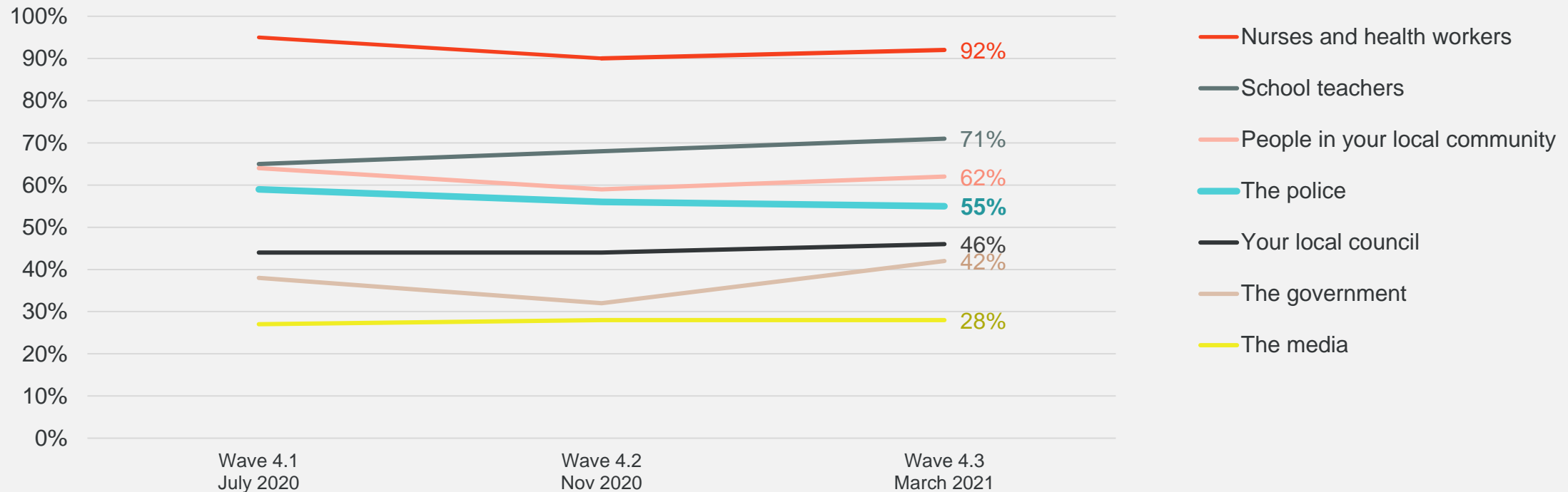
The police's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Only half of the public believe the police have responded well to the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic, and below half think the police have done a good job in enforcing coronavirus rules and restrictions.

For those who say that the police have done poorly in enforcing rules and restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic, this is usually as a result of a perceived lack of enforcement. Many say they have witnessed the police declining to step in when they see Covid rule-breaking.

Just over half think the police have responded well to Covid-19 – above politicians & the media, but below local communities

Q. How well or poorly do you think each of the following have responded to the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic? [NET: Well]

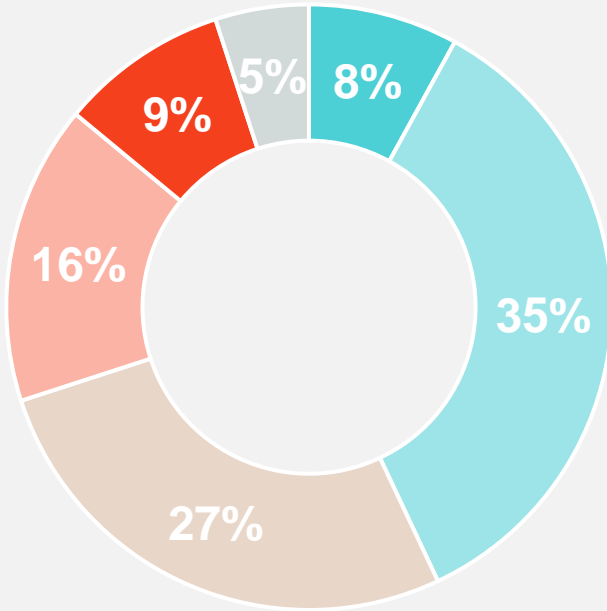


Below half think the police have done a good job in enforcing coronavirus rules and restrictions, but up since November

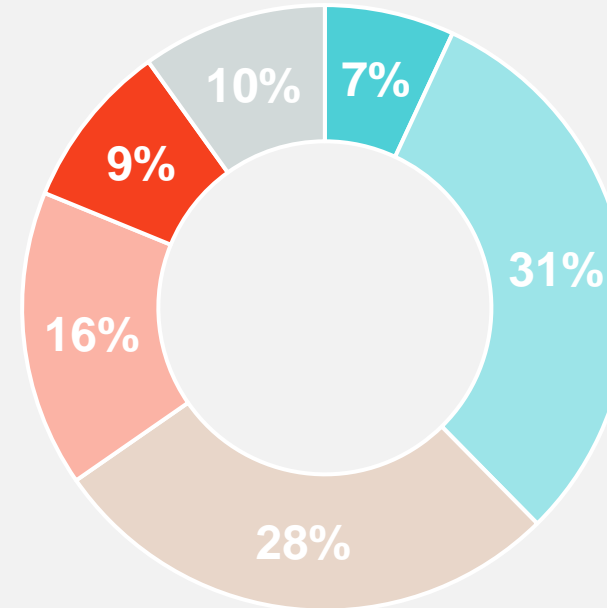
Q. How well or poorly do you think the police have done in enforcing rules and restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic?

- Very well
- Quite well
- Neither well or poorly
- Quite poorly
- Very poorly
- Don't know

Wave 4.3 March 2021

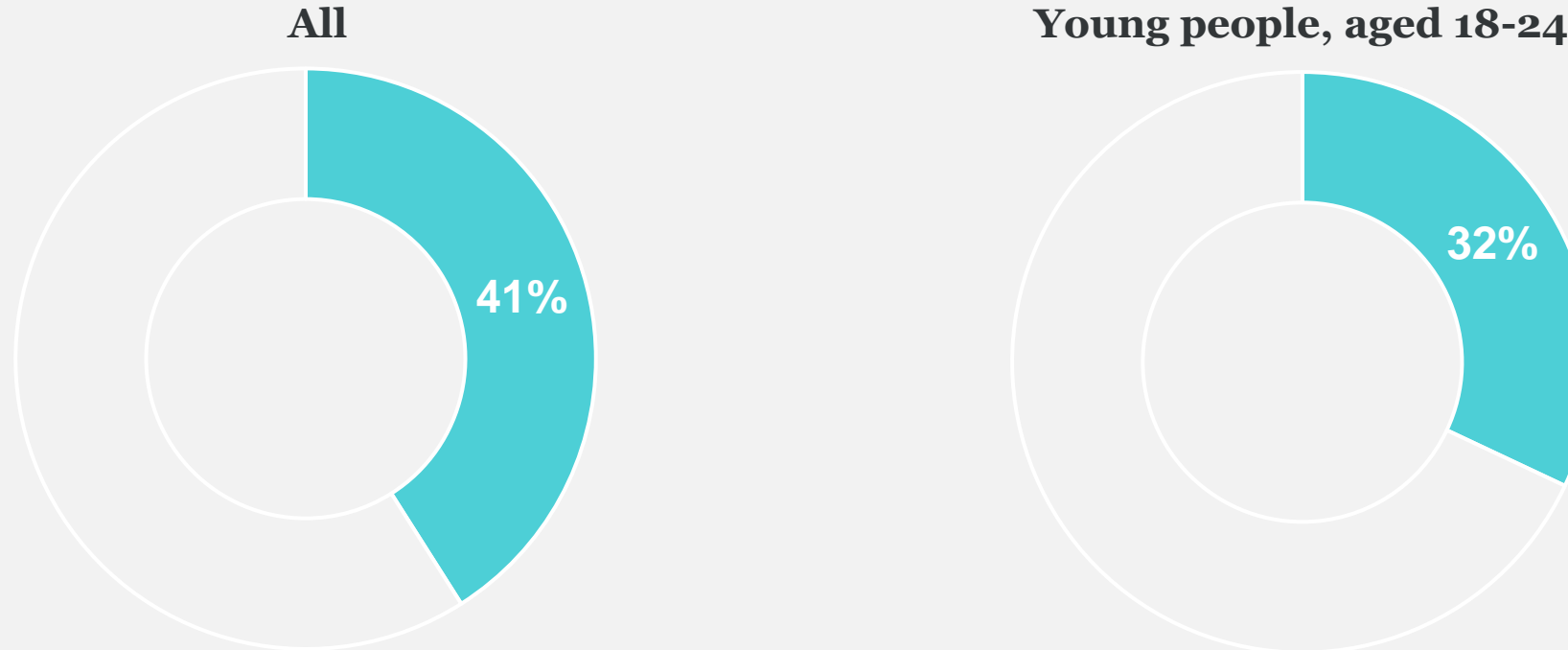


Wave 4.2 November 2020



Young people are less likely to think the police have done a good job in enforcing rules during the pandemic

Q. How well or poorly do you think the police have done in enforcing rules and restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic? [NET: Well]



Lack of enforcement of the coronavirus rules is the main reason people think the police have done poorly during Covid-19

For those who say that the police have done poorly in enforcing rules and restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic, most attribute this to a lack of enforcement (41%).

They say they have seen people get away with not following guidelines, observing police officers witnessing rule infringements without stepping in.

Others instead attribute the poor performance on enforcing the rules down to perceived inconsistencies across the country (15%).

A small minority take a different line, criticising the police for being too heavy-handed in enforcing the rules (9%). They suggest some of these rules are 'obscure' or 'unimportant', while others in this group criticise attempts to control anti-lockdown protests.

Lack of enforcement

“Absolutely nobody in my local area follows the guidelines and I often see police walking past and doing nothing. People enter shops without masks, gather on pavements, refuse to leave outside seating areas and the police regularly ignore all of this. But when a legitimate gathering happens e.g. a protest - then they come in their hundreds and use unnecessary force and violence to break it up.”

Not enough powers

“People have basically just been allowed to do what they want with very few repercussions. I don't necessarily believe it's all on the police. The government have to hold a large portion of the blame for not giving the police any power to do anything really.”

Inconsistency in enforcement

“There seemed to be no continuity across the country. Some constabularies were prosecuting the most bizarre things (buying luxury food in supermarkets) while others seemed to have little presence.”

The police's use of stop and search

POLICE'S USE OF STOP AND SEARCH

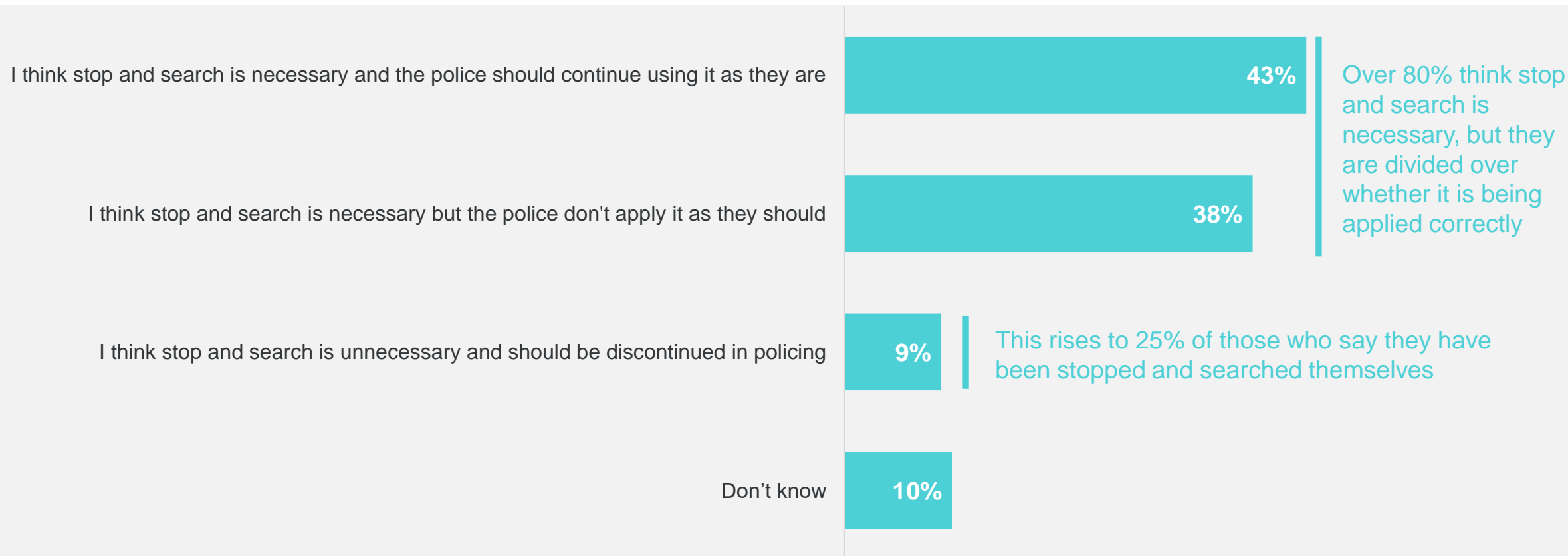
Over fourth-fifths think stop and search is necessary, but they are divided over whether it is being applied correctly. BAME respondents and younger people are least in favour of stop and search as it is currently used.

For those who think stop and search is not applied as it should, perceived inconsistencies are key – that the police does not apply it in the same way to all groups or does so when there are no grounds.

Those who have been stopped and searched themselves are less likely to feel positive towards the police and to be confident that the police deals fairly with complaints.

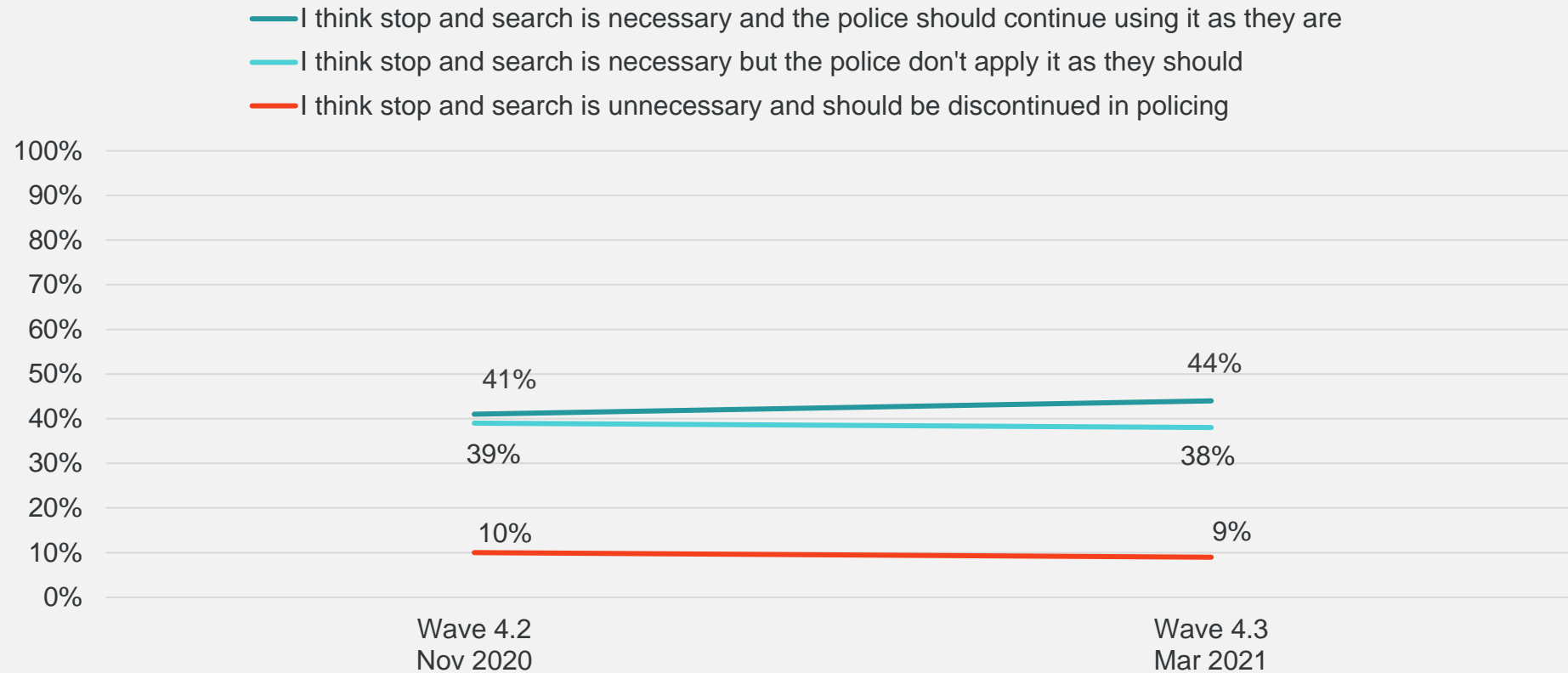
More than half of the public think stop and search is either not applied as it should be or is unnecessary

Q. Which of the following statements most accurately reflects how you feel about stop and search in policing?



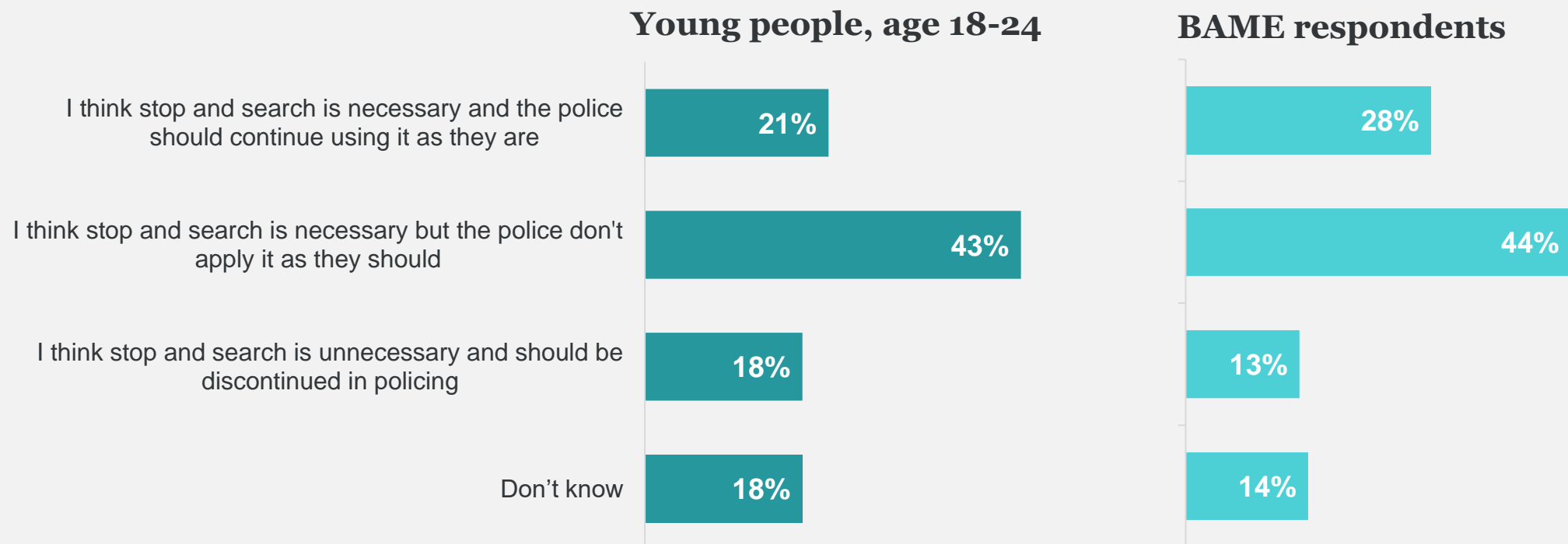
This remains consistent compared to the results in November 2020

Q. Which of the following statements most accurately reflects how you feel about stop and search in policing?



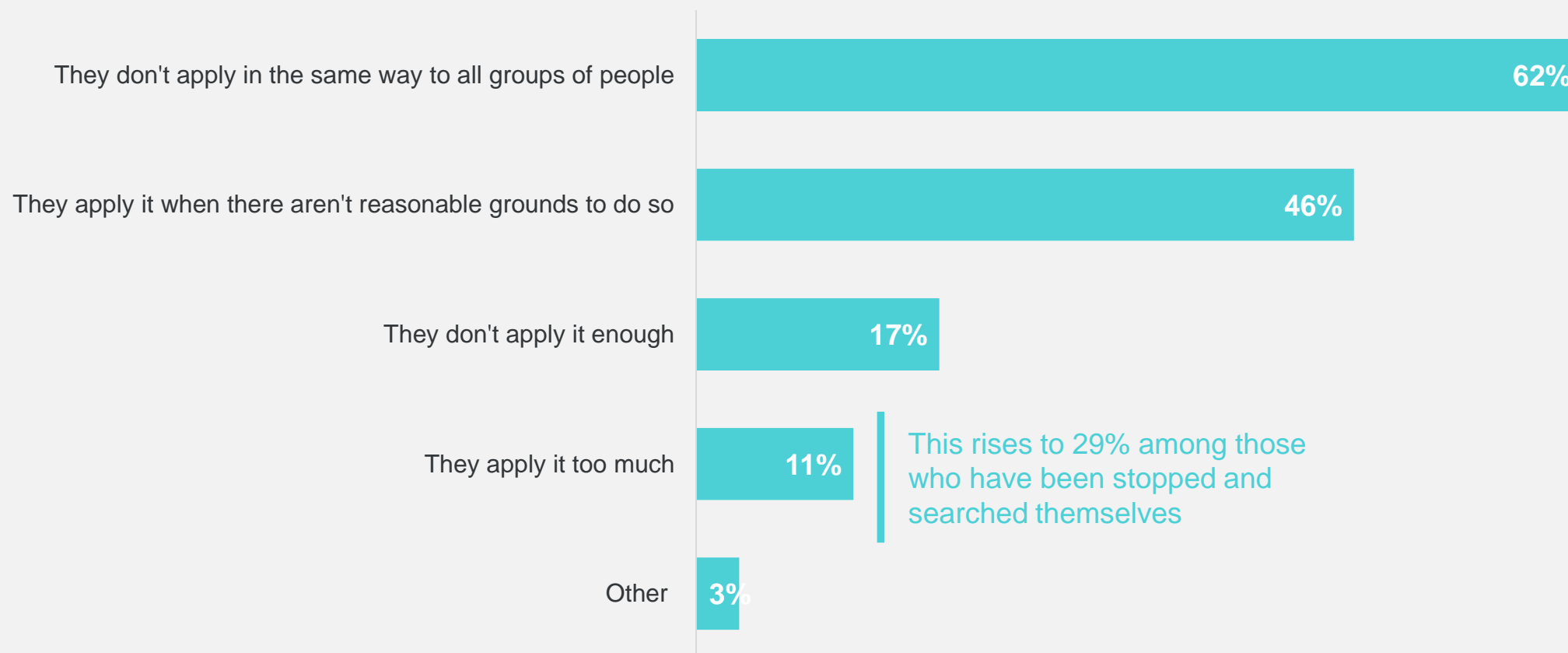
BAME respondents and younger people are least in favour of stop and search as it is currently used

Q. Which of the following statements most accurately reflects how you feel about stop and search in policing?



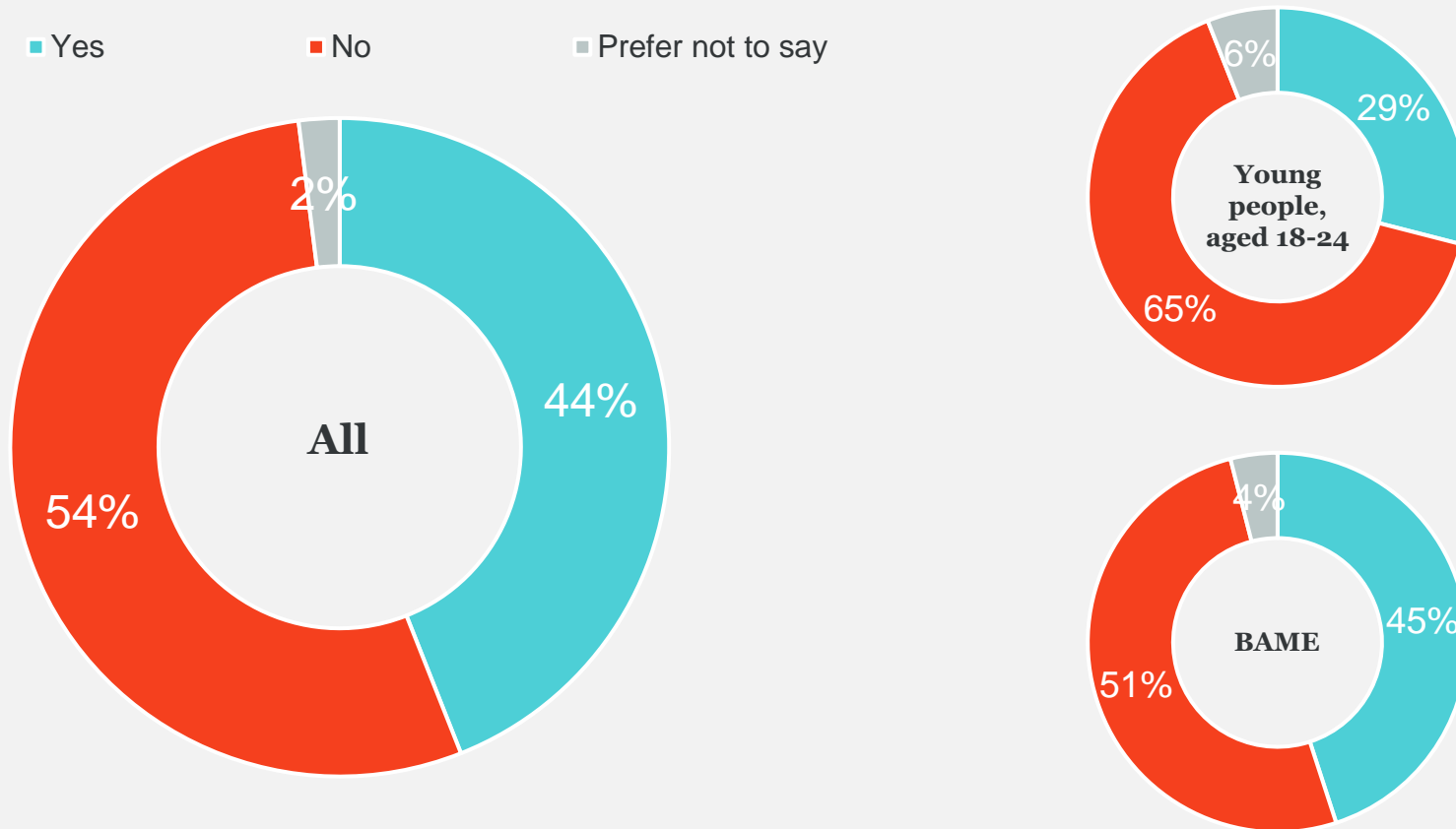
For those who think stop and search is not applied as it should, perceived inconsistencies are key

Q. Why do you think that the police don't apply stop and search powers as they should?



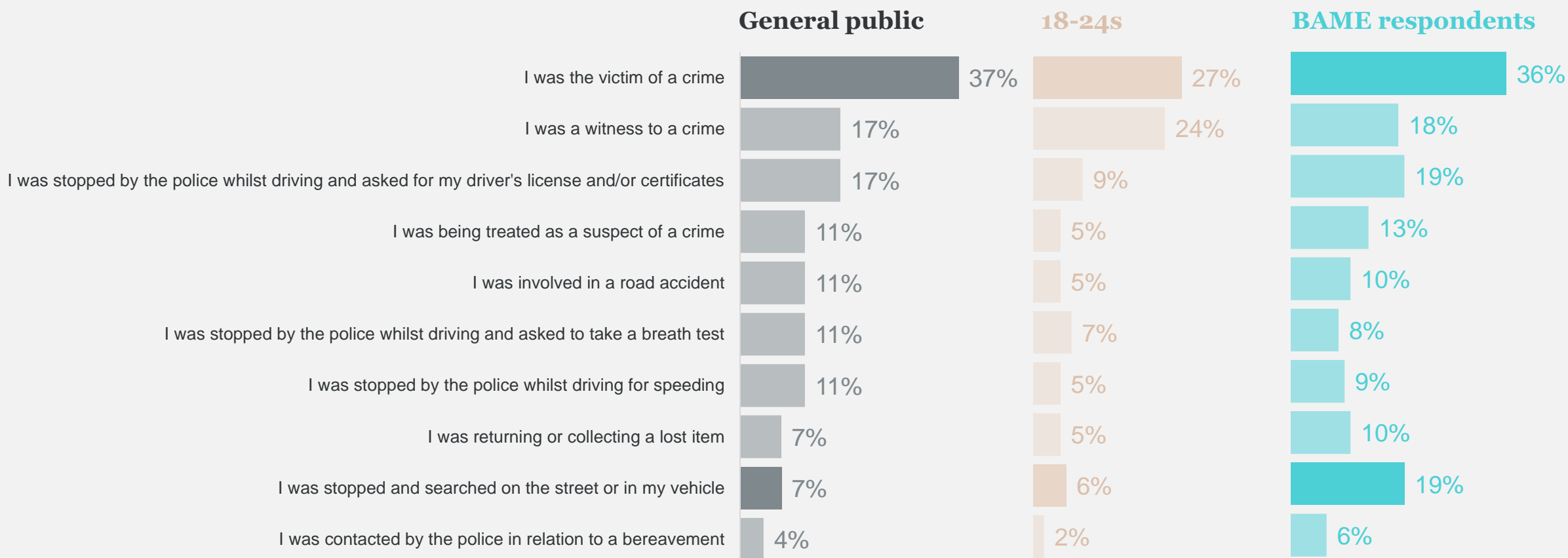
Young people are less likely to have had contact with the police than the general public and BAME respondents

Q. Have you come into contact with the police in any way?



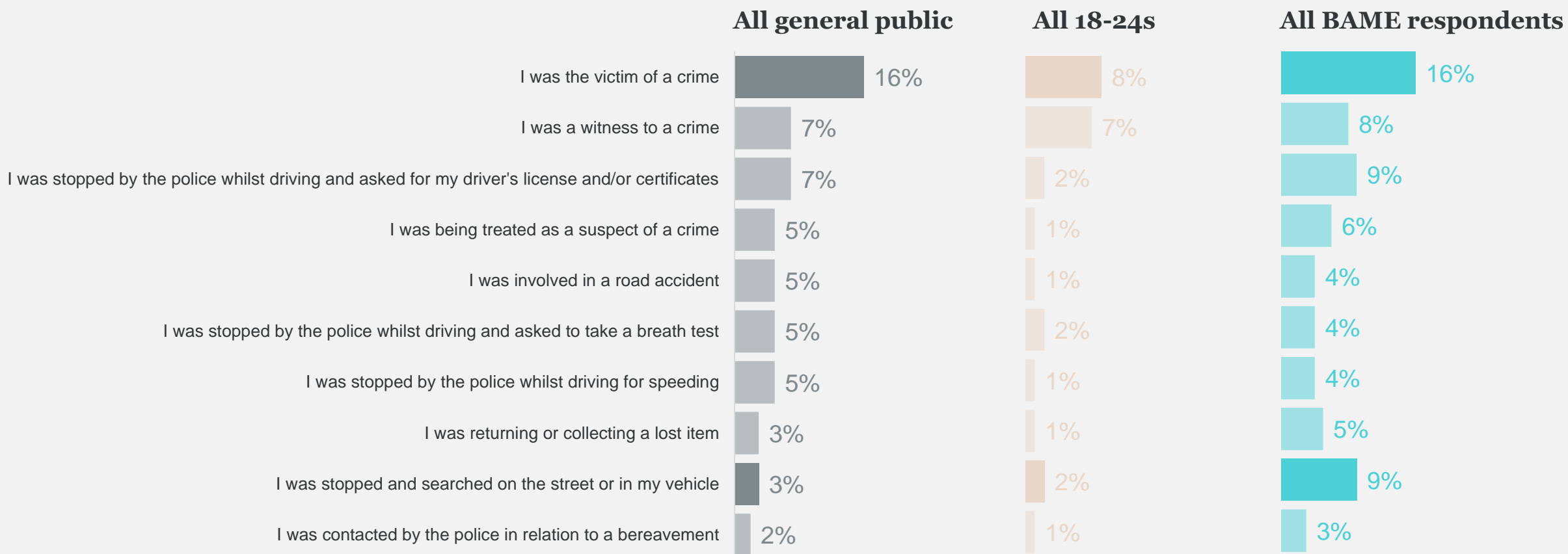
Those who had contact with the police were most likely the victim of a crime, but many BAME respondents were stopped and searched

Q. And thinking about the contact or contacts that you have had with the police, what were the reason or reasons for that contact? If you have had multiple forms of contact with the police, please select all that apply. [%s for all who answered the question]



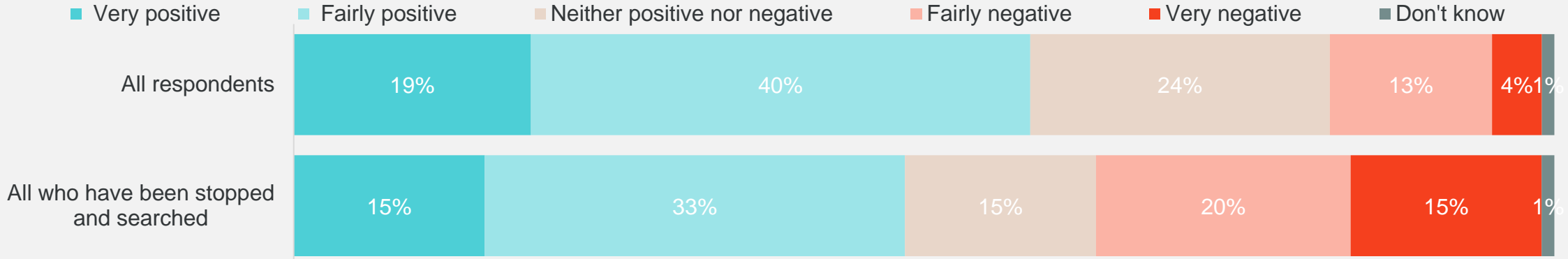
Among each population as a whole...

Q. And thinking about the contact or contacts that you have had with the police, what were the reason or reasons for that contact? If you have had multiple forms of contact with the police, please select all that apply. [%s for the population as a whole]

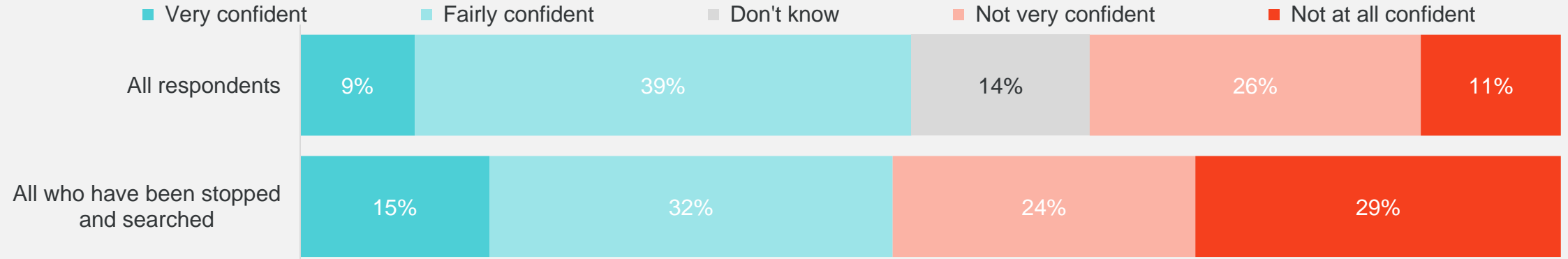


Those who have been stopped and searched are less likely to be confident that complaints are dealt with fairly by the police

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards the police?



Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?



They are also less likely to think the police respond in a fair and proportionate way, and less sure of the IOPC’s independence

Q. Do you think that the IOPC is independent of the police?

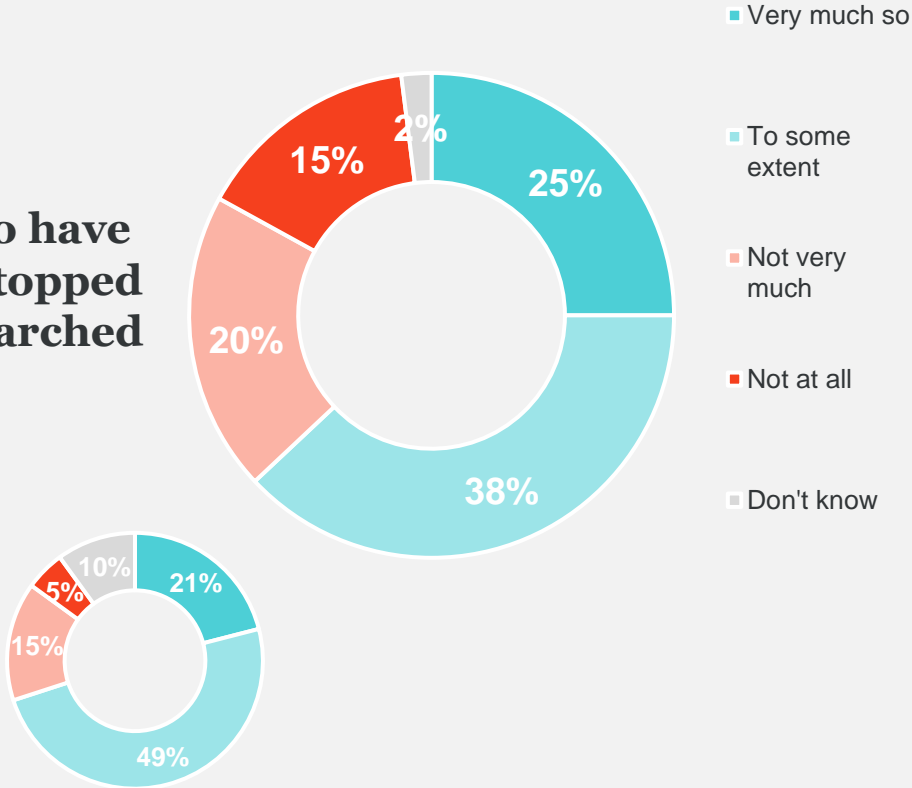
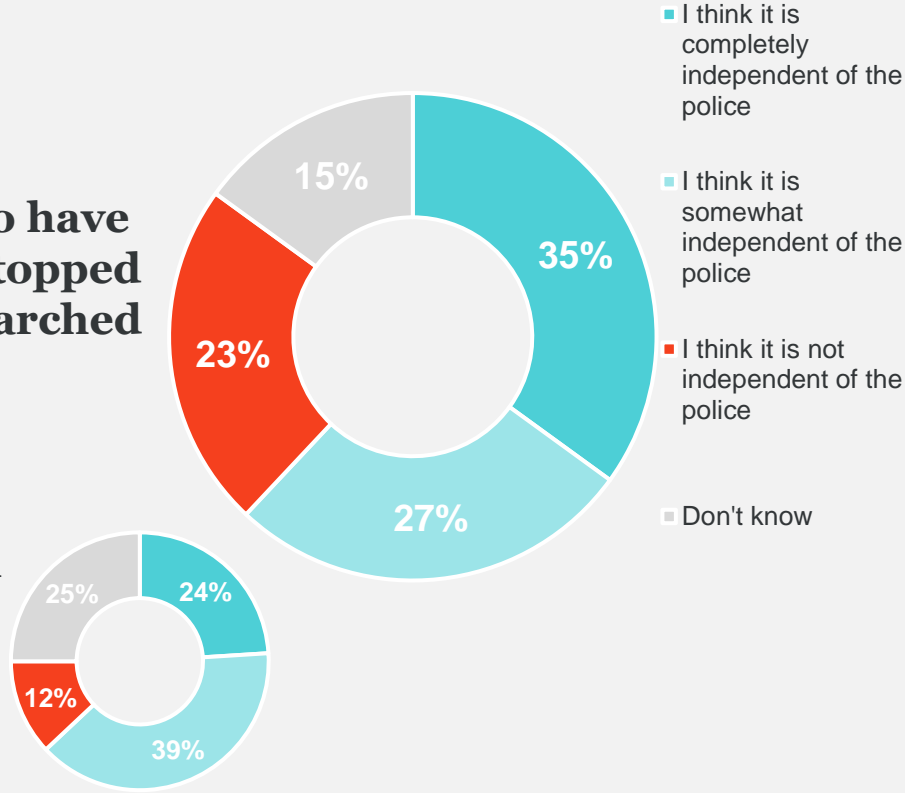
Q. To what extent, do you think that the police in the United Kingdom respond in a fair and proportionate way?

All who have been stopped and searched

All who have been stopped and searched

All

All



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