

INDEPENDENT OFFICE FOR POLICE CONDUCT (IOPC)

IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker Summary Report, Financial Year 2023/24

.YONDER

March 2024

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 1,800–3,000 depending on the wave.
- + This report includes results from two waves of research. The most recent wave was conducted between 13 and 16 March 2024 (Wave 7.2). Some slides display aggregated (combined) data across Waves 7.1 (September 2023) and 7.2 (March 2024).
- + The total number of respondents (n) combined between waves 7.1 and 7.2 was 4,704. Subgroups for Black, Asian and 18-24 year old respondents were boosted in both waves to a total of 220, 613 and 1,023 respectively. Wave 7.2 individually comprised 2,317.
- + 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 (1/2)

The context of policing remains challenging

The public recall similar news stories relating to the police in this wave of research compared to previous waves. News stories from the past few years such as the murder of Sarah Everard by Wayne Couzens and police officers committing acts of sexual assault have led to deep rooted damage to the police's reputation which by extension has impacted the reputation of the IOPC.

Despite this difficult context, positivity towards the police remains higher than negativity, with half of the public feeling positive and a quarter negative, remaining unchanged since 2022/23.

When comparing local police forces to the police overall, the public are slightly more favourable to their local police force, although most consider them to be the same.

Increasing awareness of the IOPC among the public

Awareness of the IOPC has been higher over the past year than previously, with over two thirds having heard of the organisation. Despite this increase, the majority still don't know enough about the IOPC to say anything about what it does, demonstrating that depth of knowledge of the IOPC remains low, and awareness still sits below historic IPCC awareness levels*.

Confidence in the IOPC has increased very slightly over the course of the year, with 40% feeling confident that the IOPC does a good job in the most recent wave (7.2), however over a quarter lack confidence.

**The IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Commission) became the IOPC in 2018.*

The public thinks the IOPC can have a positive impact on policing

Just over half of the public think the IOPC will help improve policing by identifying ways the police can learn from the IOPC's work, with under a third thinking the IOPC will have no or minimal effect.

The feeling that the IOPC has a positive impact on policing is relatively higher amongst younger people (i.e. those aged 18-24) and black people.

Executive summary (2/2)

Black members of the public are more confident in the IOPC than the public overall

Black members of the public are more likely to have a negative view of the police compared to the public overall. Despite this, compared to the general public they are more aware of the IOPC, more confident in the IOPC, and hold a stronger belief that IOPC learnings can help improve policing. This contrasts with the consistent finding in previous research that negativity towards the police is linked to a more negative view of the IOPC and suggests improving perceptions of Black people towards the IOPC.

Regarding racial discrimination, if Black members of the public report an incident of racial discrimination to the police and are unhappy with the response, they are more likely to make a complaint to an independent body such as the IOPC than to the police force involved.

LGBTQ+ communities are lacking confidence in the police, IOPC and Government

LGBTQ+ members of the public have a comparative lack of confidence in both the IOPC and the police. Despite this, they are less likely than the public overall to complain if unhappy with how a police officer behaved towards them, therefore they could require additional focus and support from the police accountability system.

The LGBTQ+ community have a similar lack of faith in their local police force, the Metropolitan Police and the Government so this may represent a more systemic challenge among this group.

Attitudes towards police

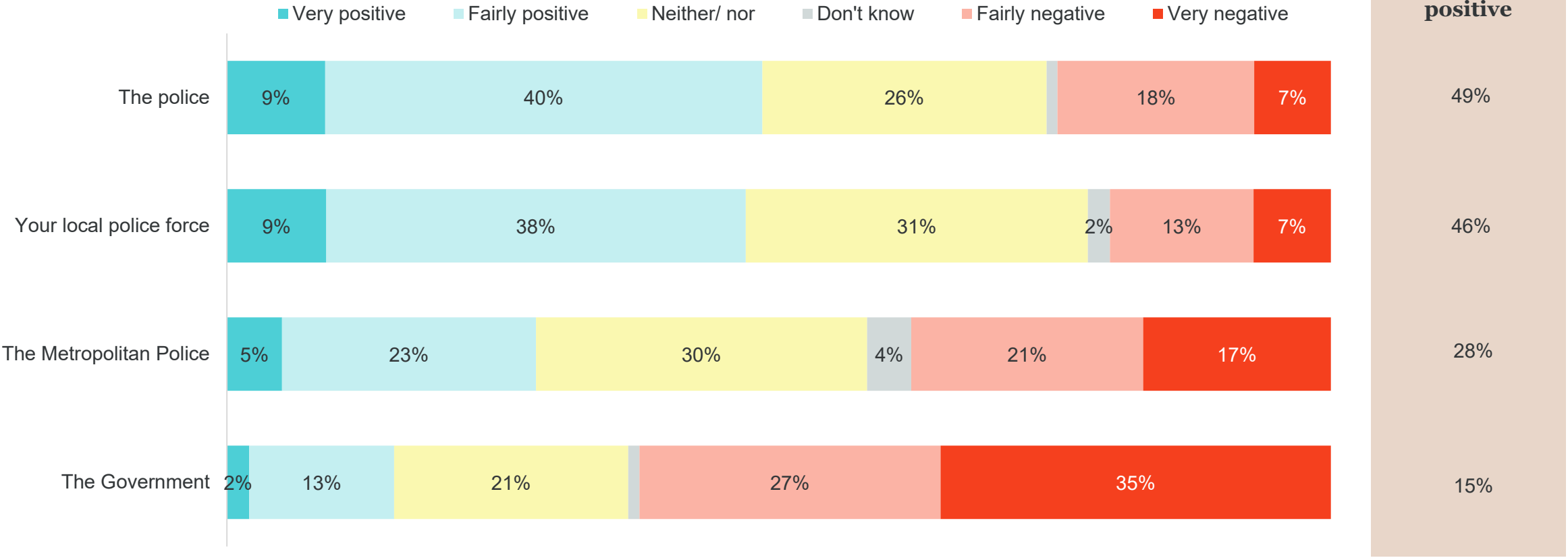
The murder of Sarah Everard remains the most noticed news story about the police recalled by the public

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



Almost half of the public feel positive towards the police, and a similar proportion feel positive towards their local police force

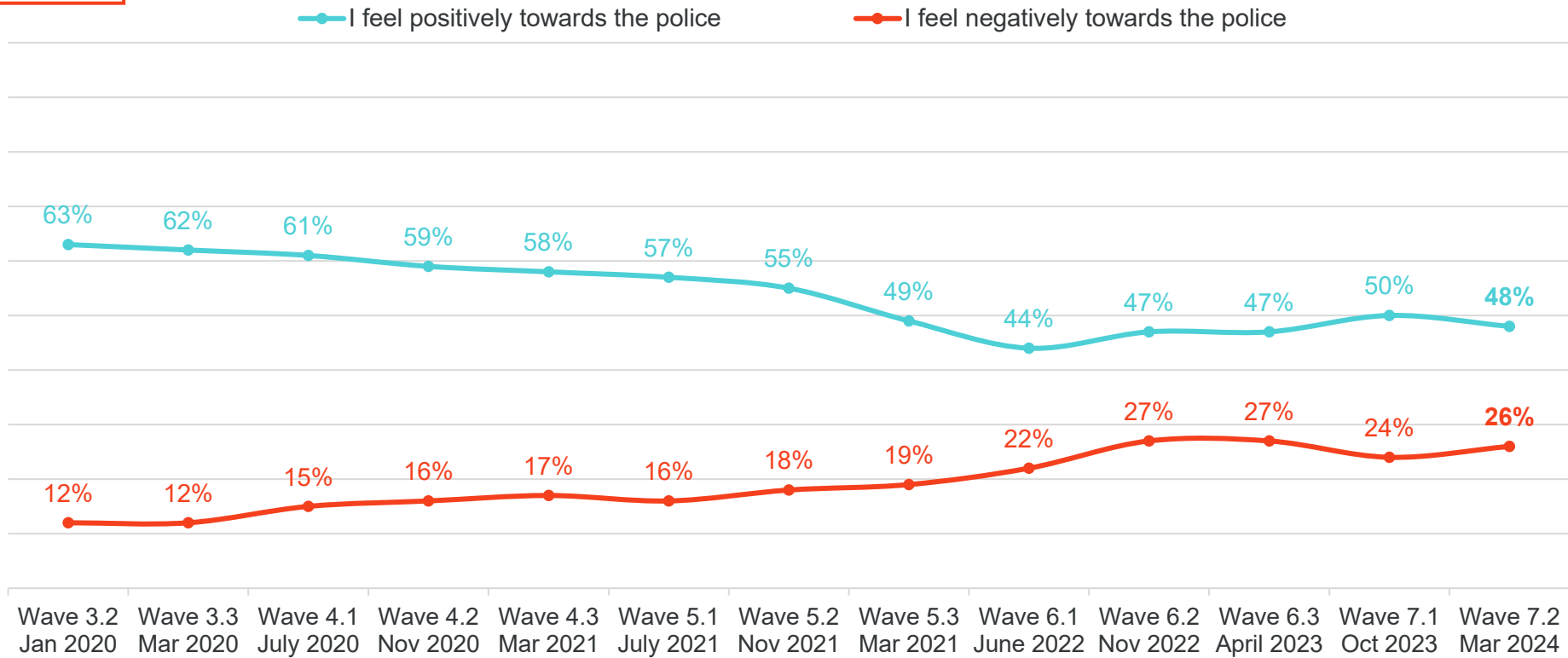
Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following?



Sentiment towards the police has remained consistent over the past year, with positivity sitting below historic highs

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following? [The police]

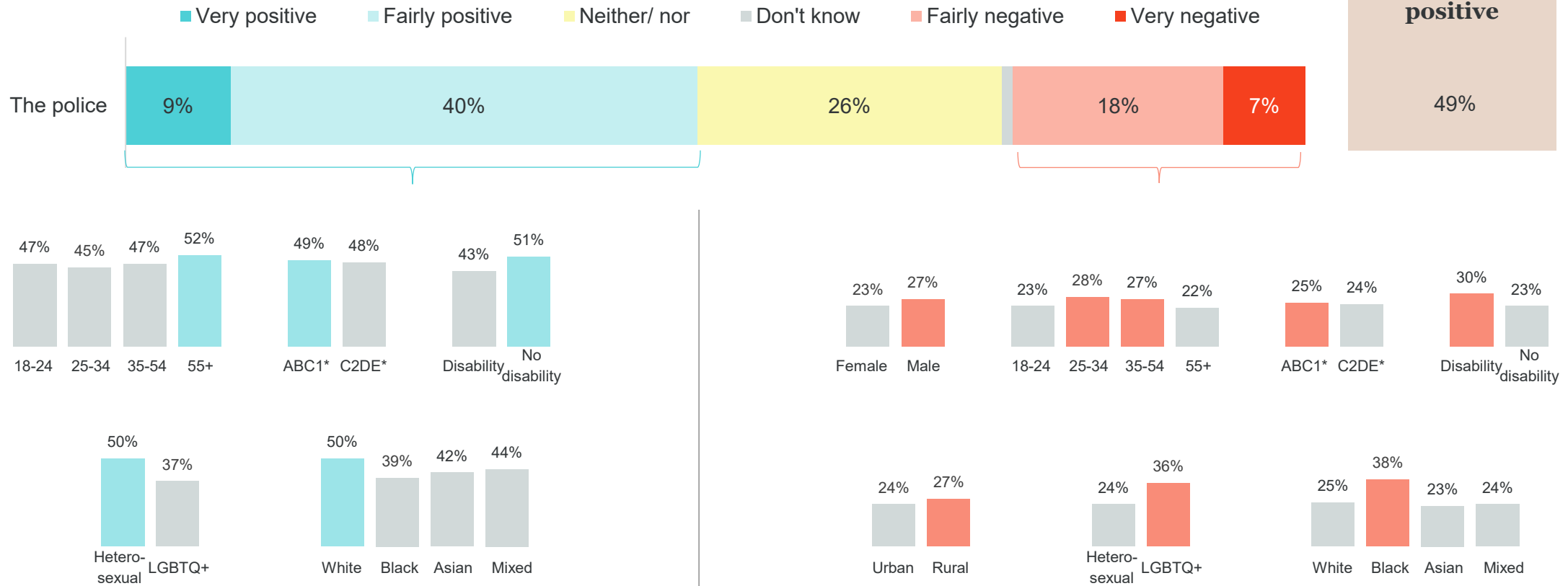
The police



Base: All waves approx. n=1,800 – 3,000, Wave 7.2 n=2,317. No data available pre-Jan 2020

Older people are most positive, while negativity is highest among LGBTQ+, Black people, and those with a disability

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following? [The police]

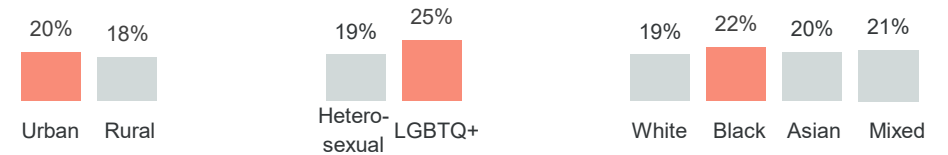
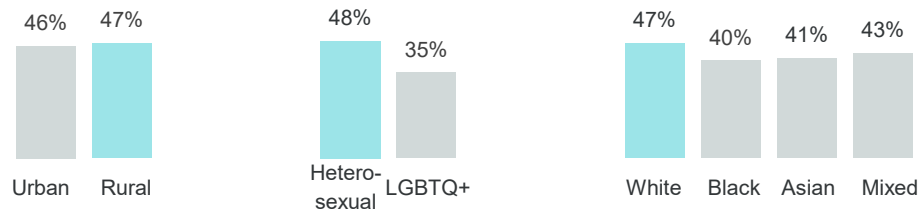
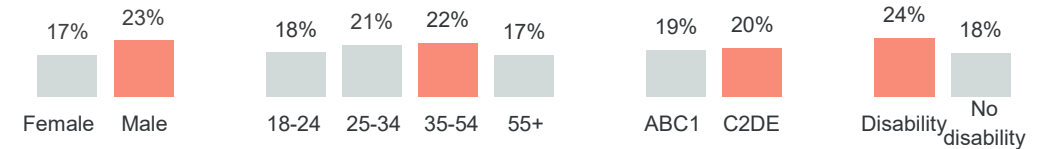
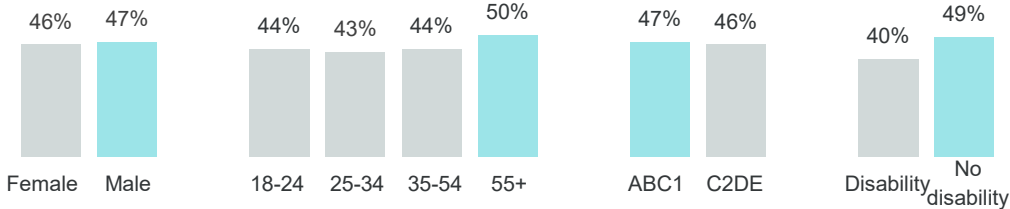
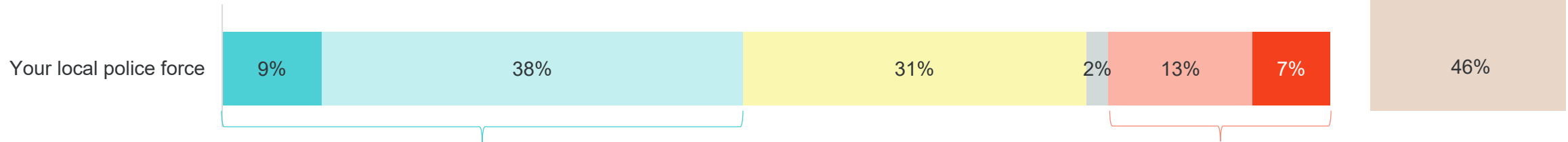


Base: Total n=4,704, Female n=2,440, Male n=2,250, 18-24 n=1,023, 25-34 n=730, 35-54 n=1,379, 55+ n=1,572, ABC1* n=2,719, C2DE* n=1,985, Disability n=1,146, No disability n=3,441, Urban n=3,943, Rural n=761, Heterosexual n=4,133, LGBTQ+ n=481, White n=3,660, Black n=220, Asian n=613, Mixed n=121. *Social grade system of demographic classification based on the occupation of the head of a household – see link for more information: <https://www.mrs.org.uk/resources/social-grade>

Older people are also more positive towards their local police force than average; LGBTQ+ and those with a disability are more negative

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following? [Your local police force]

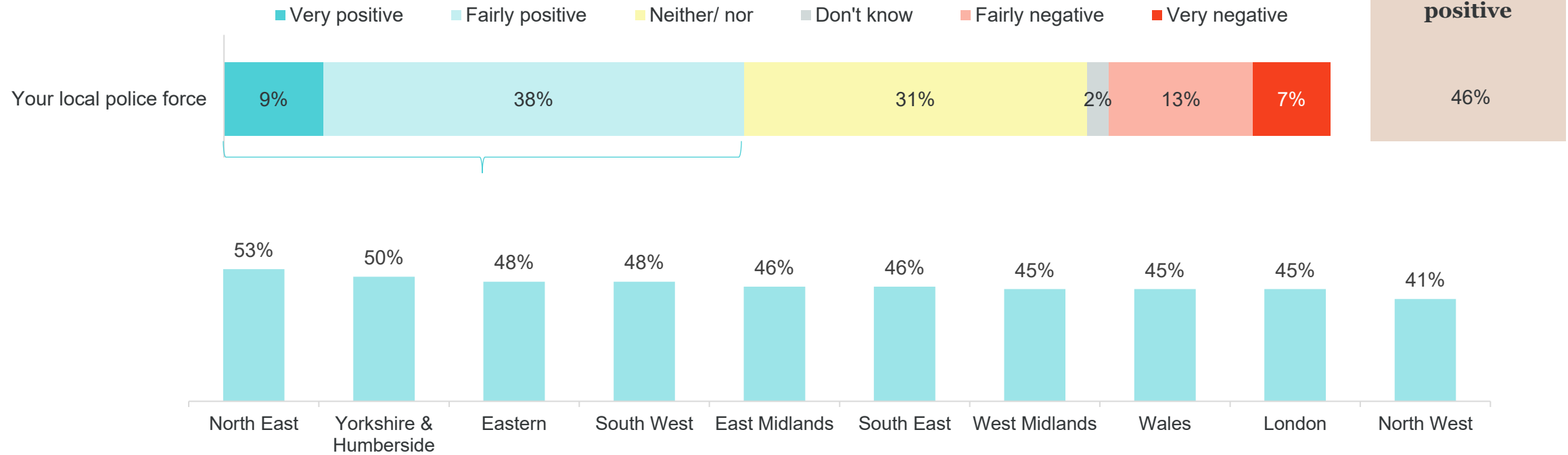
Very positive Fairly positive Neither/ nor Don't know Fairly negative Very negative



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People from the North East and Yorkshire & Humberside are most positive about their local police forces

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following? [Your local police force]*

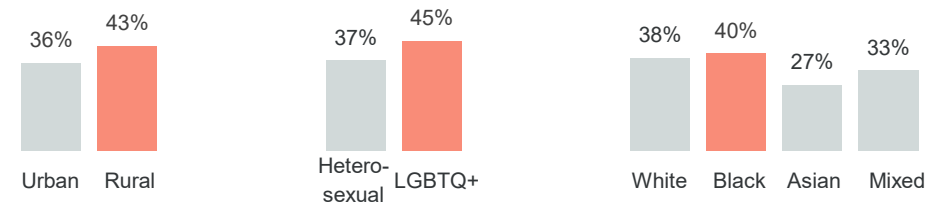
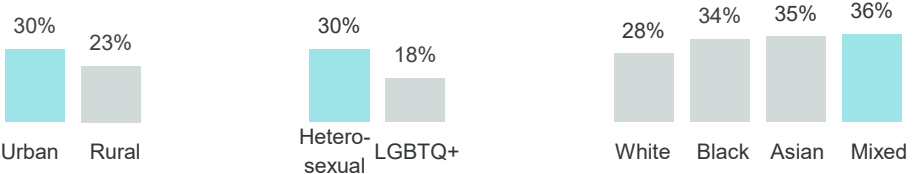
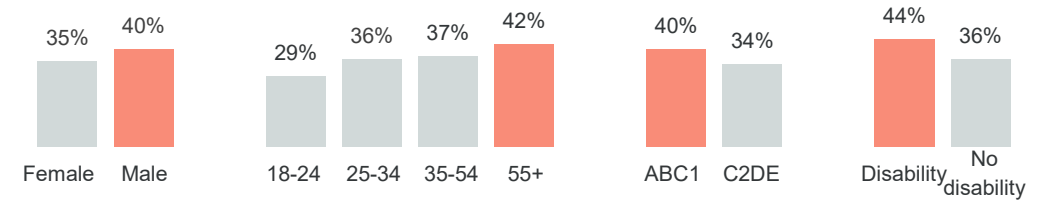
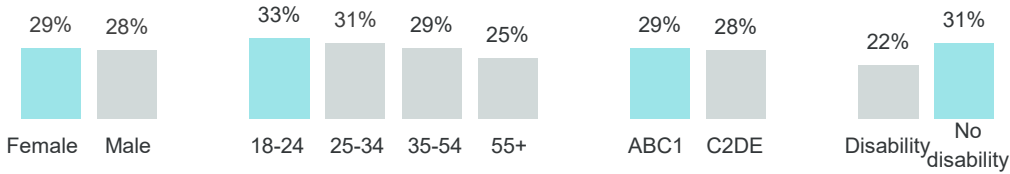
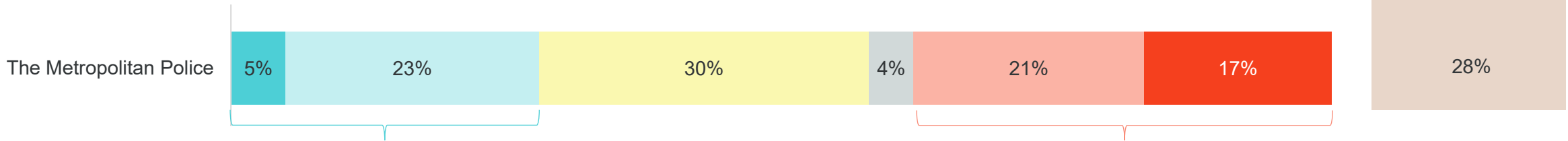


Base: Total n=4,704 North East n=200, North West n=582, Yorkshire & Humberside n=437, West Midlands n=511, East Midlands n=387, Wales n=226, Eastern n=493, London n=807, South East n=650, South West n=411.

Negativity towards The Met is more concentrated among the LGBTQ+ community and those with a disability than the general public

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following? [The Metropolitan Police]*

Very positive Fairly positive Neither/ nor Don't know Fairly negative Very negative

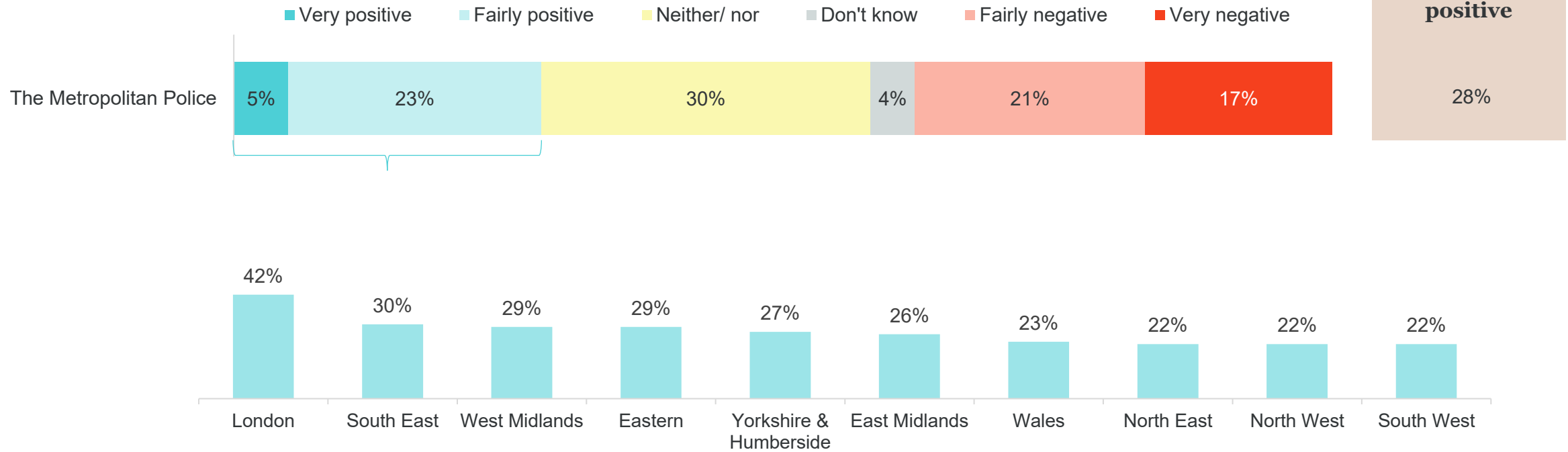


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*NB: Favourability towards The Met was tested to understand how far this influences perceptions of policing overall given recent high profile news stories.

Londoners are more positive towards The Met than people from other regions in the UK

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards each of the following? [The Metropolitan Police]*



Base: Total n=4,704 North East n=200, North West n=582, Yorkshire & Humberside n=437, West Midlands n=511, East Midlands n=387, Wales n=226, Eastern n=493, London n=807, South East n=650, South West n=411.

A perceived failure of the police to tackle crime and a lack of police presence in communities are driving negativity towards the police

Q. Why do you feel negative towards the police/your local police force?

Failure to tackle crime / lack of presence	55%
Never see the police	15%
Don't do enough	14%
Incompetent	13%
Focus on the "wrong crimes"	7%
Don't convict or solve crimes	5%
Not working for/protecting the people	4%
Don't care or take matters seriously	3%
Difficult to reach/unreliable	2%
Systemic issues	29%
Corruption	10%
Racism	9%
Too "woke"	6%
Sexism/misogyny	5%
Abuse of power	5%
General discrimination	2%

Specific incidents	24%
Negative personal experience	10%
Police officers committing crimes	5%
Seen negative media coverage	4%
Police officers committing sexual assault	3%
Police violence	2%
Structural challenges	7%
Lack of internal accountability	3%
Recruitment issues/poor training	2%
Lack of police funding	2%
Issues within the Metropolitan Police	2%
General negative view	13%
Lack of trust	7%
General police misconduct	5%
General negative	2%
Don't know	1%

Base: Those feeling negative towards the police or their local police force n=648

A perceived failure of the police to tackle crime and a lack of police presence in communities are driving negativity towards the police

Q. Why do you feel negative towards the police/your local police force?

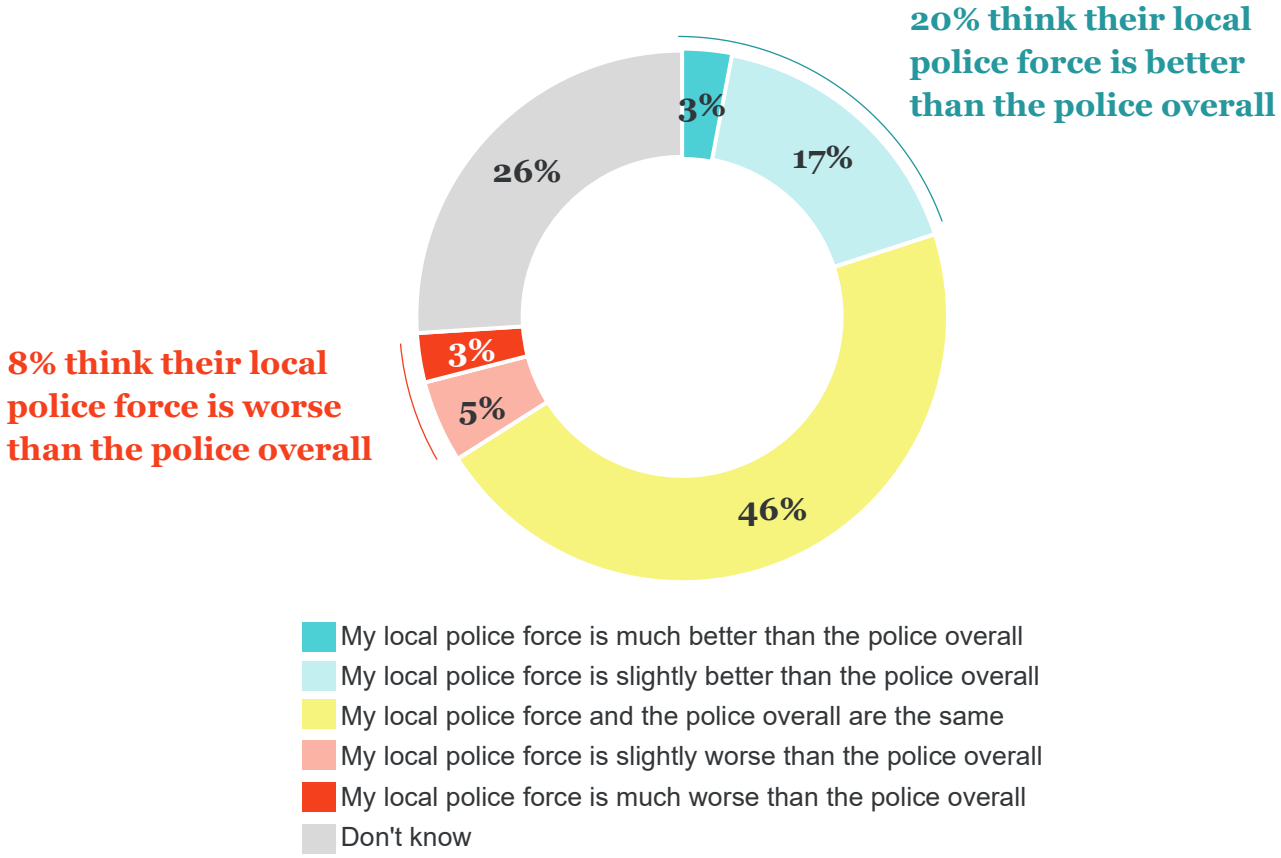
Failure to tackle crime / lack of presence	55%
<p><i>"I can't remember seeing a policeman in my area. When I tried to take an enormous bunch of keys to hand in to the police station it was close/unmanned."</i></p> <p><i>"Criminal acts are common in my area and there is no present community policing."</i></p>	
Systemic issues	29%
<p><i>"There are too many stories about corruption and inappropriate behaviour."</i></p> <p><i>"They are corrupt and institutionally racist."</i></p>	

Specific incidents	24%
<p><i>"Bad experiences in the past, where they have not helped at all."</i></p> <p><i>"I had a robbery and they did absolutely nothing about it. Complete waste of time."</i></p>	
Structural challenges	7%
<p><i>"The criminal members of the police are not punished despite their actions."</i></p>	
General negative view	13%
<p><i>"I don't trust them to do the right thing."</i></p>	
Don't know	1%

Base: Those feeling negative towards the police or their local police force n=648

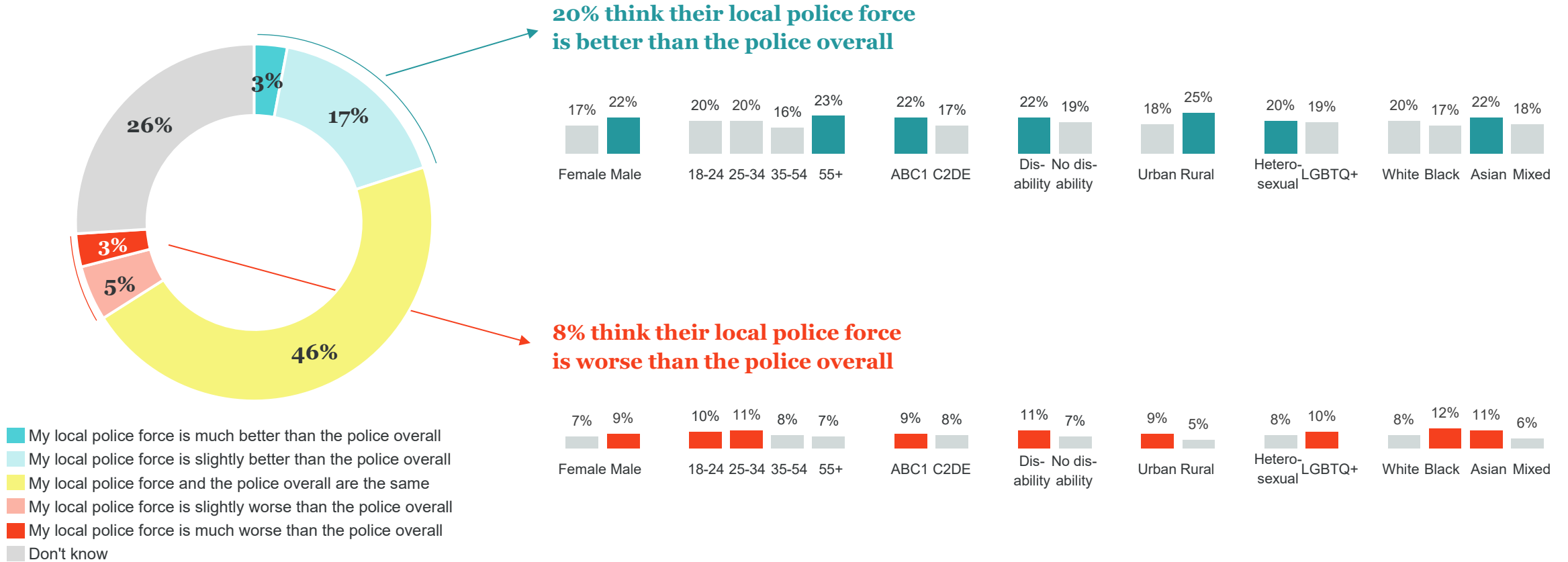
Approximately half the public perceive their local police force to be neither better nor worse than the police overall

Q. To what extent do you think your local police force is better or worse than the police in the country overall?



Older people and people from rural areas are more likely to think their local police force is better than the police overall

Q. To what extent do you think your local police force is better or worse than the police in the country overall?



Base: Total n=4,704, Female n=2,440, Male n=2,250, 18-24 n=1,023, 25-34 n=730, 35-54 n=1,379, 55+ n=1,572, ABC1 n=2,719, C2DE n=1,985, Disability n=1,146, No disability n=3,441, Urban n=3,943, Rural n=761, Heterosexual n=4,133, LGBTQ+ n=481, White n=3,660, Black n=220, Asian n=613, Mixed n=121

Local police forces doing their day-to-day job well and being present in communities drive positivity towards local police

Q. Why do you think your local police force is better than police in the country overall?

Local police force is better than the police overall

Does its job well	58%
Present in the community	21%
Does its job well	15%
Positive personal experience	9%
Responsive	8%
Approachable	7%
Helpful	5%
Communicates well	2%
Operates under better conditions	31%
Involved in less controversy than police overall	19%
Deals with less crime	8%
Operates in a better area	2%
Fewer systemic issues	5%
Less corrupt than police overall	4%
General positive	5%
Has a good reputation	4%

“ ”

*“They patrol on horseback, **wave at us, and are very friendly**. I am confident that they would deal well with any local crimes, but we don’t have much.”*

*“Generally have **good interactions with the local community** and lack of negative news stories.”*

*“It’s a **smaller, better organised force** that, in spite of cuts, try to do right by the general public.”*

*“I am **not aware of issues of honesty or behaviour** by the local police. They seem to do a good job under difficult circumstances.”*

*“As far as I’m aware they are **rarely embroiled in scandal unlike forces such as the Met police**, and I haven’t had any negative experiences with them personally.”*

When local police forces are perceived more negatively than the police overall, this is mostly because of failure to tackle local crimes

Q. Why do you think your local police force is worse than police in the country overall?

Local police force is worse than the police overall

Failure to tackle crime / lack of presence	75%
Doesn't tackle crime properly	39%
Not present in community	24%
Unresponsive	15%
Doesn't care	5%
Doesn't have the right priorities	3%
Force placed in special measures	3%
Poor attitude	3%
Too much crime in local area	2%
Structural issues	19%
Corruption	7%
Underfunded	4%
Understaffed	3%
General structural issues	2%
Poor recruitment and training	2%
Poor leadership	2%

General negative	10%
Bad reputation	10%
Specific incidents	4%
Police officers committing sexual assault	2%
Systemic issues	3%
Racism	2%

“ ”

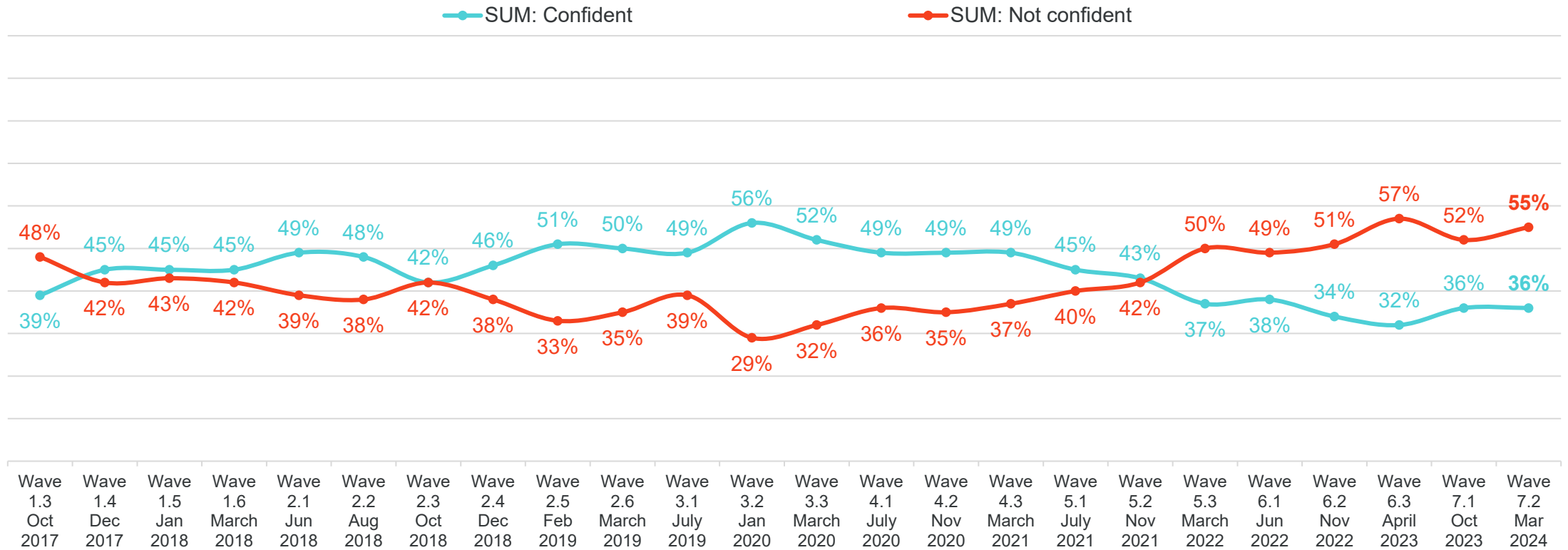
*“They **don't** respond to burglaries and the police station isn't open in the evenings.”*

*“They are **only physically present in the town station for limited periods daily**. When contacted it **takes them ages to respond**. They don't deal with the town's drug/drink problem well.”*

Police complaints

Over half of the public continue to lack confidence that the police deal fairly with complaints made against itself

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

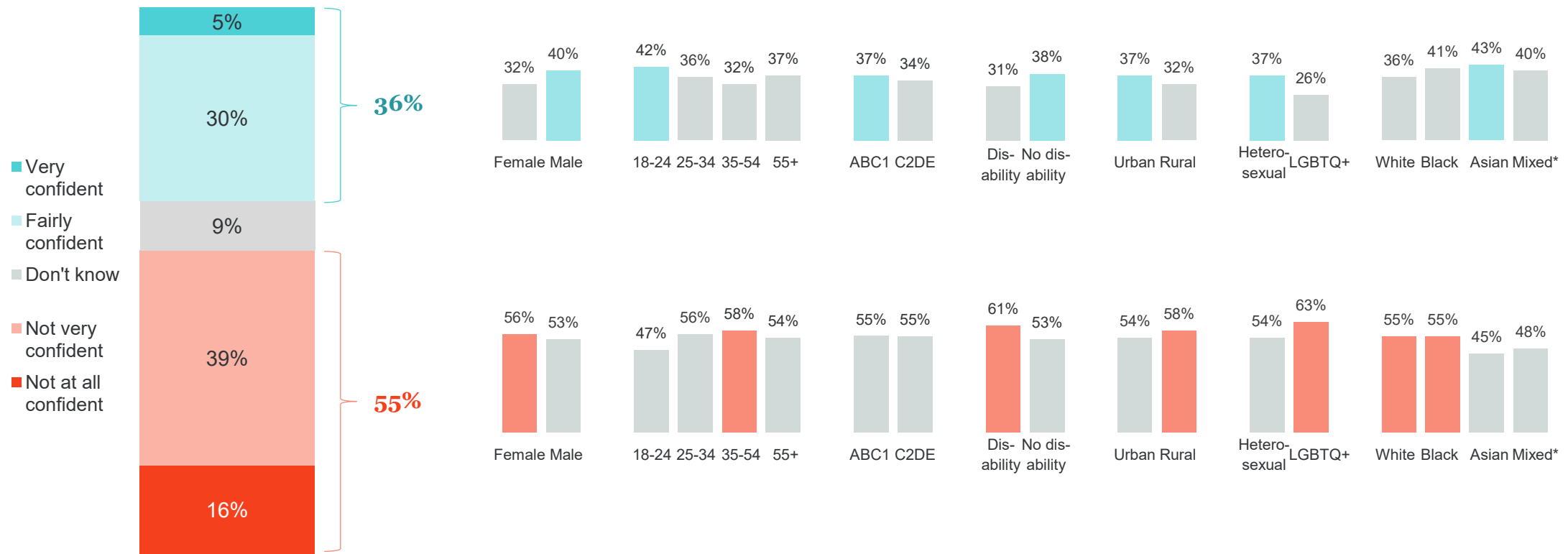


Base: All waves approx. n=1,800 – 3,000, Wave 7.2 n=2,317

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Those with a disability and LGBTQ+ members of the public are particularly likely to lack confidence in the police dealing with complaints

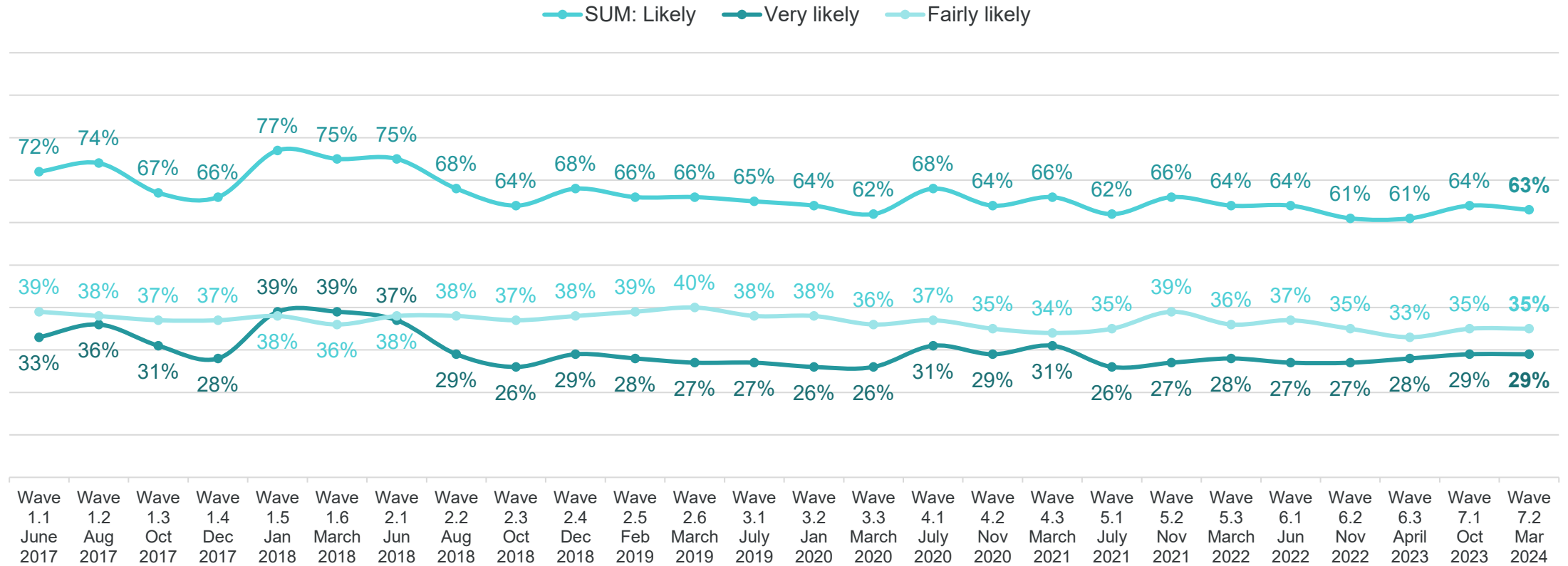
Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?



Base: Total n=2,317, Female n=1,189, Male n=1,118, 18-24 n=518, 25-34 n=329, 35-54 n=689, 55+ n=781, ABC1 n=1,402, C2DE n=915, Disability n=558, No disability n=1,705, Urban n=1,947, Rural n=370, Heterosexual n=2,036, LGBTQ+ n=245, White n=1,780, Black n=107, Asian n=330, Mixed n=62. *NB: small base size

Just under two thirds are likely to complain if they were unhappy about how a police officer behaved towards them

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?

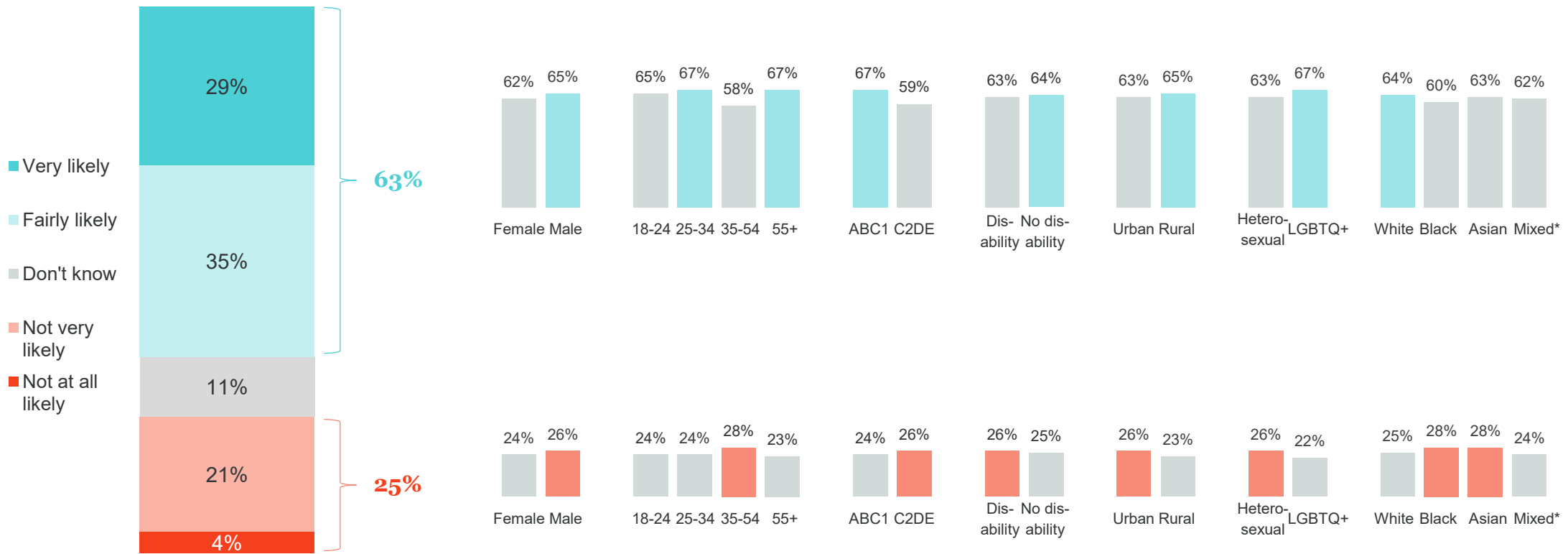


Base: All waves approx. n=1,800 – 3,000, Wave 7.2 n=2,317

IOPC - Yonder Public Perception Tracker Wave 7 Summary Report FY 2023/24

ABC1s** and those from the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to complain if they were unhappy with a police officer than other groups

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?

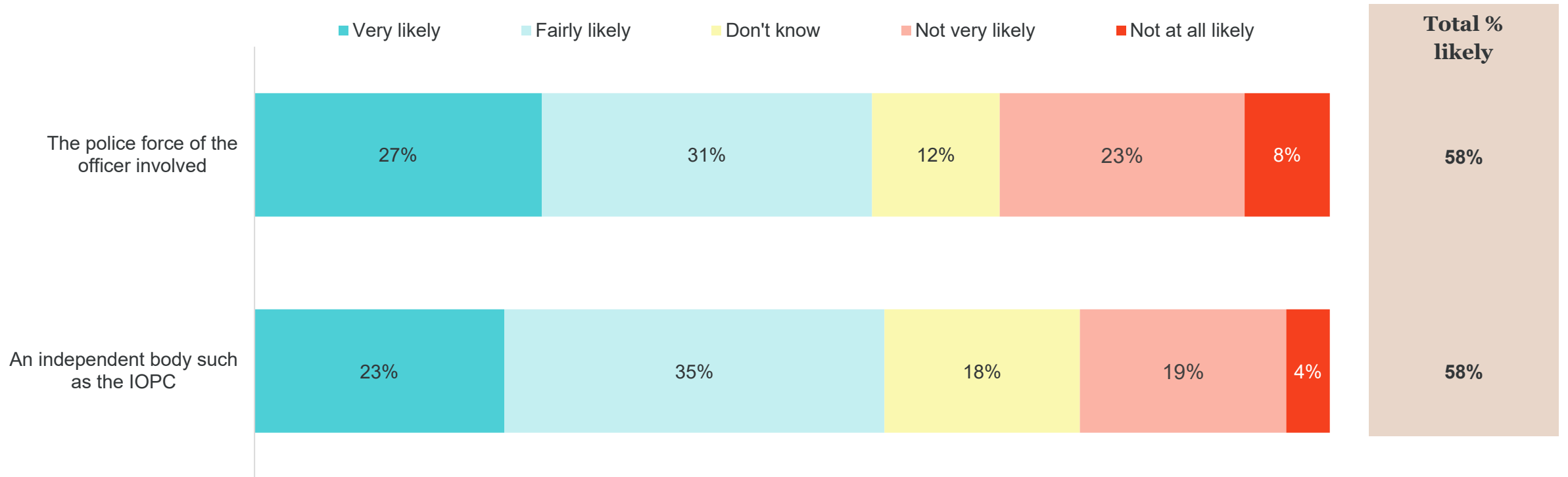


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**Further information on social grade classification is available here: <https://nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>

If unhappy with a police officer, the public are as likely to complain to the force of the officer involved as an independent body such as the IOPC

Q. Please keep imagining a scenario where 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 to...

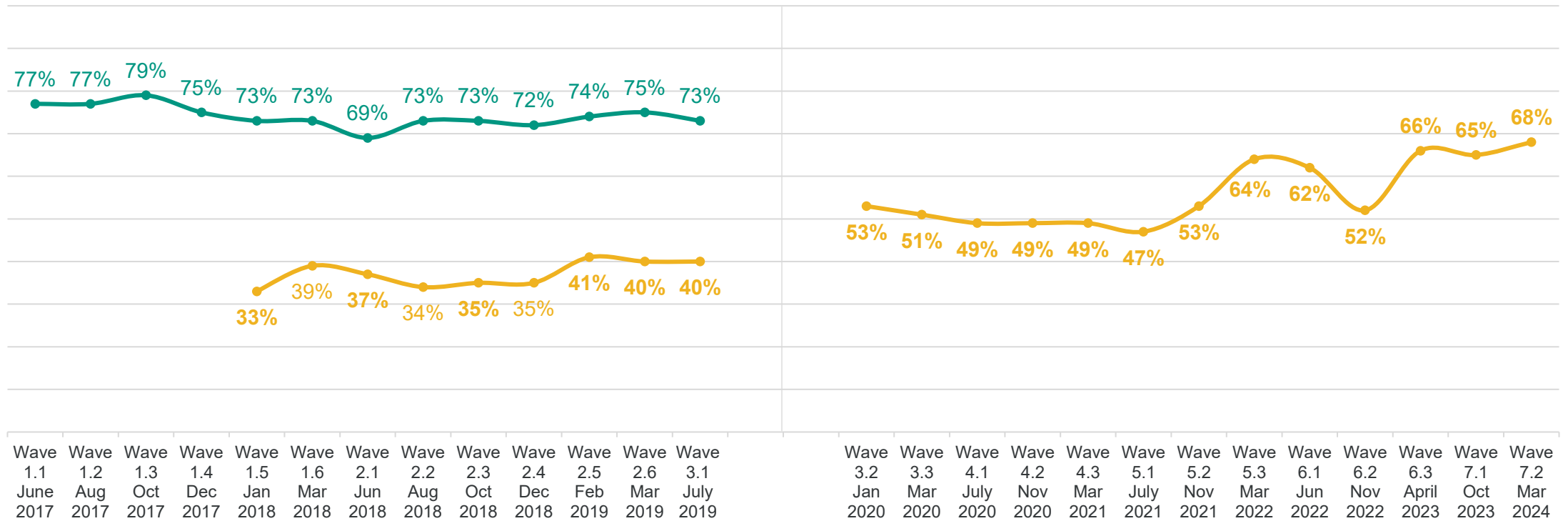


IOPC

Awareness of the IOPC remains consistent with April 2023 - higher than historic levels but still below that of the IPCC pre-2019

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

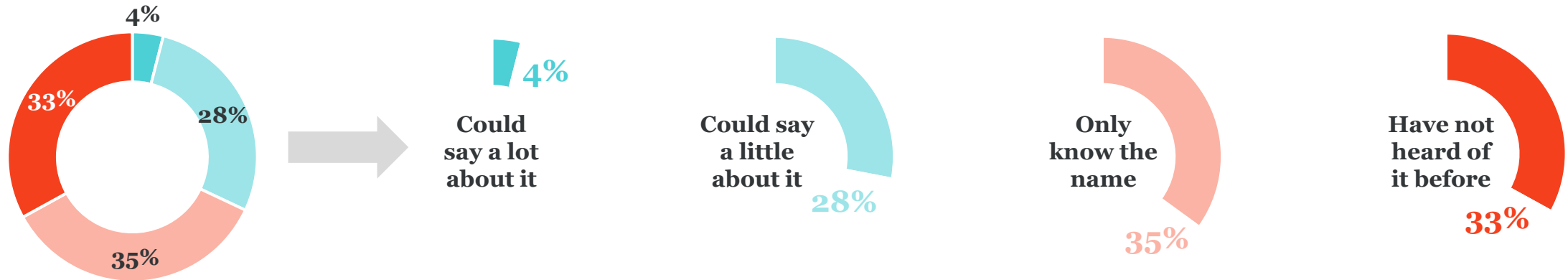
Q. Have you heard of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) before today? [% saying 'yes']



Base: All waves approx. n=1,800 – 3,000, Wave 7.2 n=2,317

The majority do not know enough about the IOPC to say anything about what it does

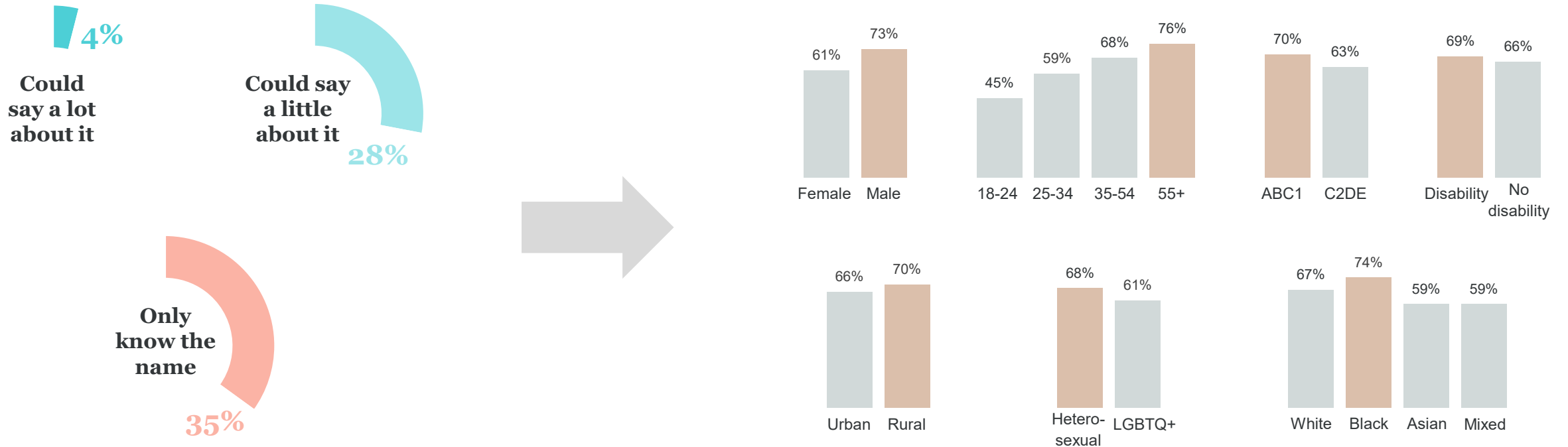
Q. Have you heard of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) before today?



Around two thirds don't know enough about the IOPC to say anything about what it does

Older people and Black members of the public are more likely to have heard of the IOPC than other demographic subgroups

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



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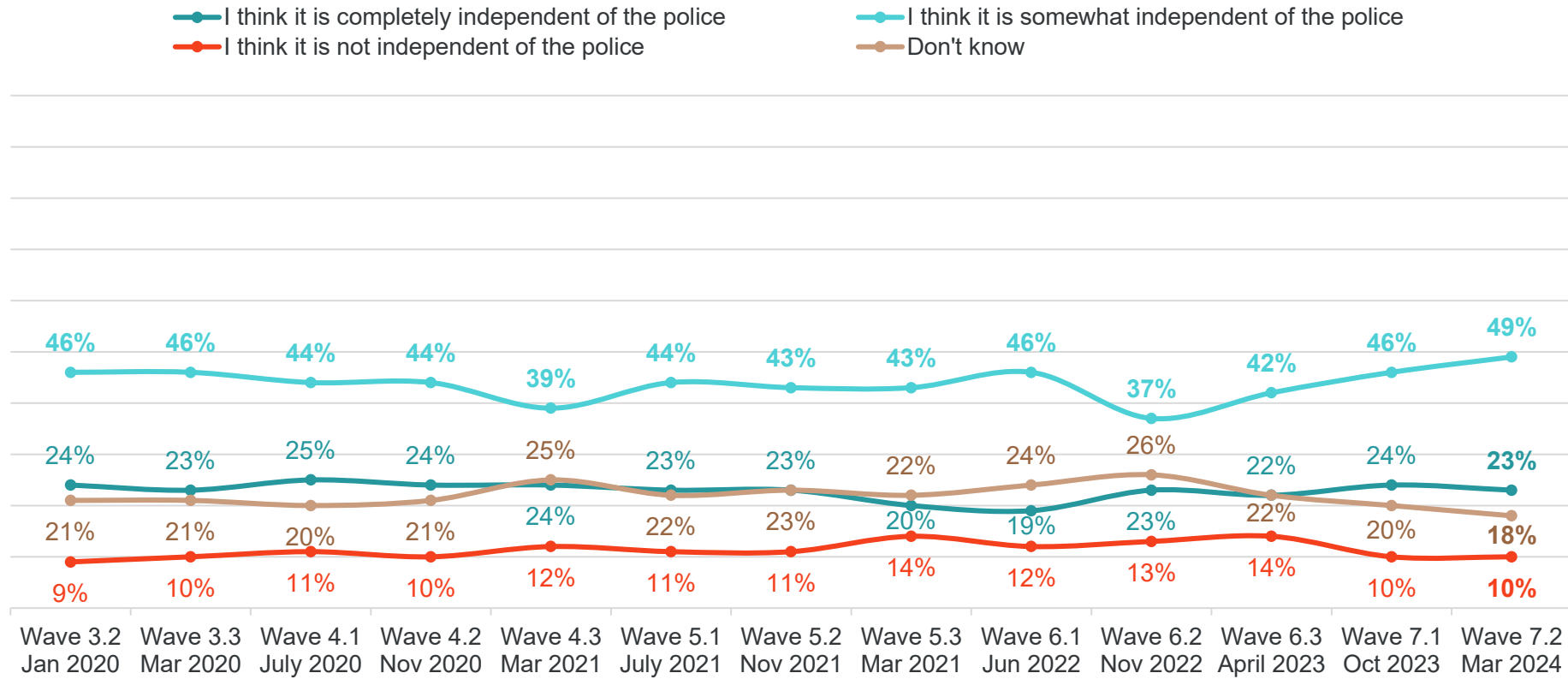
The public recall general police misconduct investigations conducted by the IOPC and the investigation into Sarah Everard's murder by the IOPC

Q. What can you remember seeing or hearing about the IOPC recently, if anything at all?



The portion of the public that considers the IOPC to be at least somewhat independent of the police is back at the level observed in 2020

Q. The IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct) is the body that oversees complaints made about the police in England and Wales. It investigates all of the most serious incidents involving the police. It uses learning from its work to influence changes in policing. Based on what you know, do you think that the IOPC is independent of the police?



Base: All waves approx. n=1,800 – 3,000. Wave 7.2 n=2,317. No data available pre-Jan 2020.

Those who think the IOPC is not independent cite close relationships with police, ex-police on staff and general scepticism

Q. Why do you think the IOPC is not fully independent of the police?

Close working relationships impact independence

IOPC staff are ex-police officers

General scepticism of organisations claiming to be independent

“Although it should be independent I feel that **all the interaction that they have with the police will influence them to a certain extent.**”

“There [sic] aim is to be independent but they can probably **understand why the police have behaved in a certain way** e.g. lack of staff which has resulted in poor decision making. This **may influence their decision** on how to react.”

“I suspect that a **majority of the people in the IOPC were once police officers** themselves and therefore have connections with the police force and are **not completely impartial and can be influenced** by the police.”

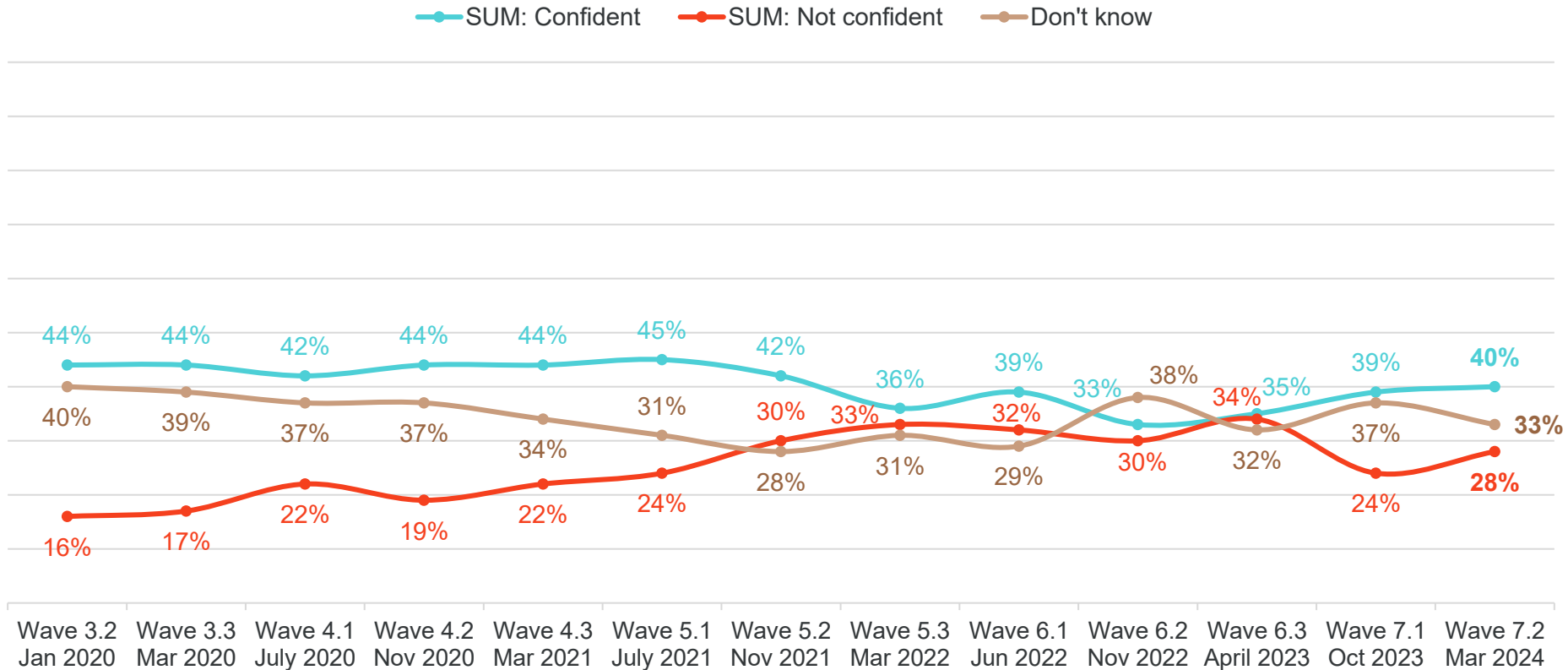
“Usually it turns out that these sorts of bodies require experience in the fields and therefore **consist of lots of ex police officers**. Even if ‘technically’ independent it’s very unlikely to be so in practice.”

“I **can’t be sure these days if any body is truly independent**. Too many supposedly ‘independent’ bodies turn out to be no such thing a few years down the road.”

“I think there will be some influence and political pressure from the police. **None of these organisations are truly independent** of the organisations they are supposed to oversee.”

Confidence in the IOPC has risen very slightly over the past 12 months

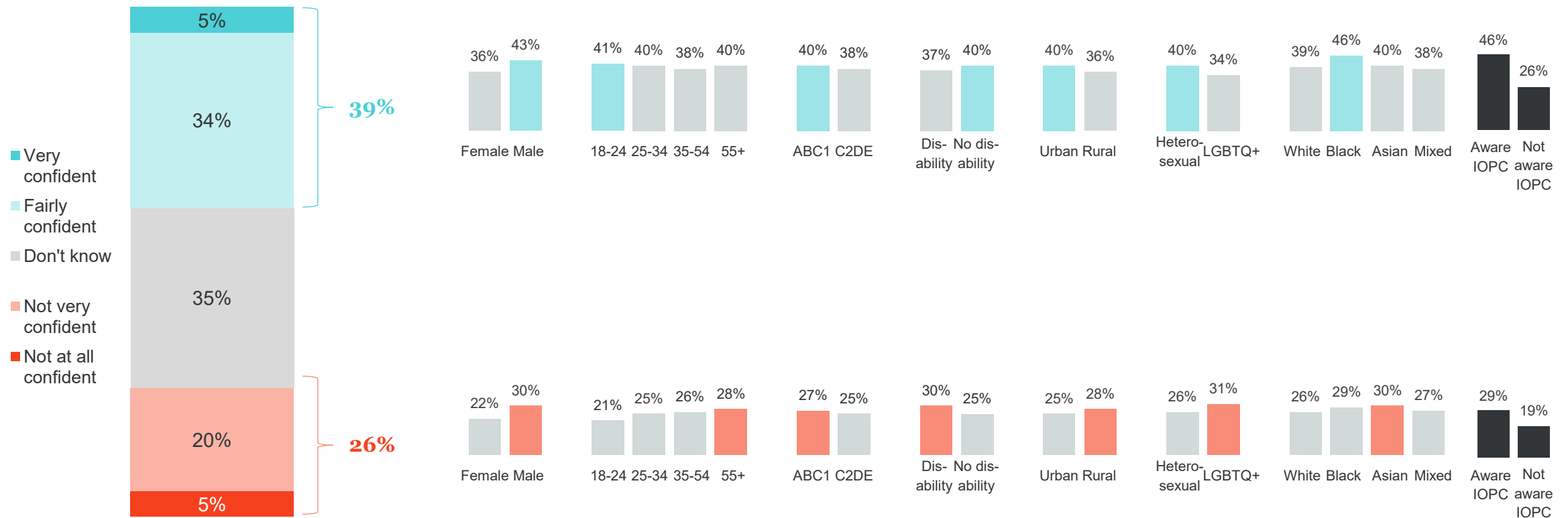
Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job?



Base: All waves approx. n=1,800 – 3,000. Wave 7.2 n=2,317. No data available pre-Jan 2020.

People from the LGBTQ+ community and those of Asian ethnicity are more likely than the general public to lack confidence in the IOPC

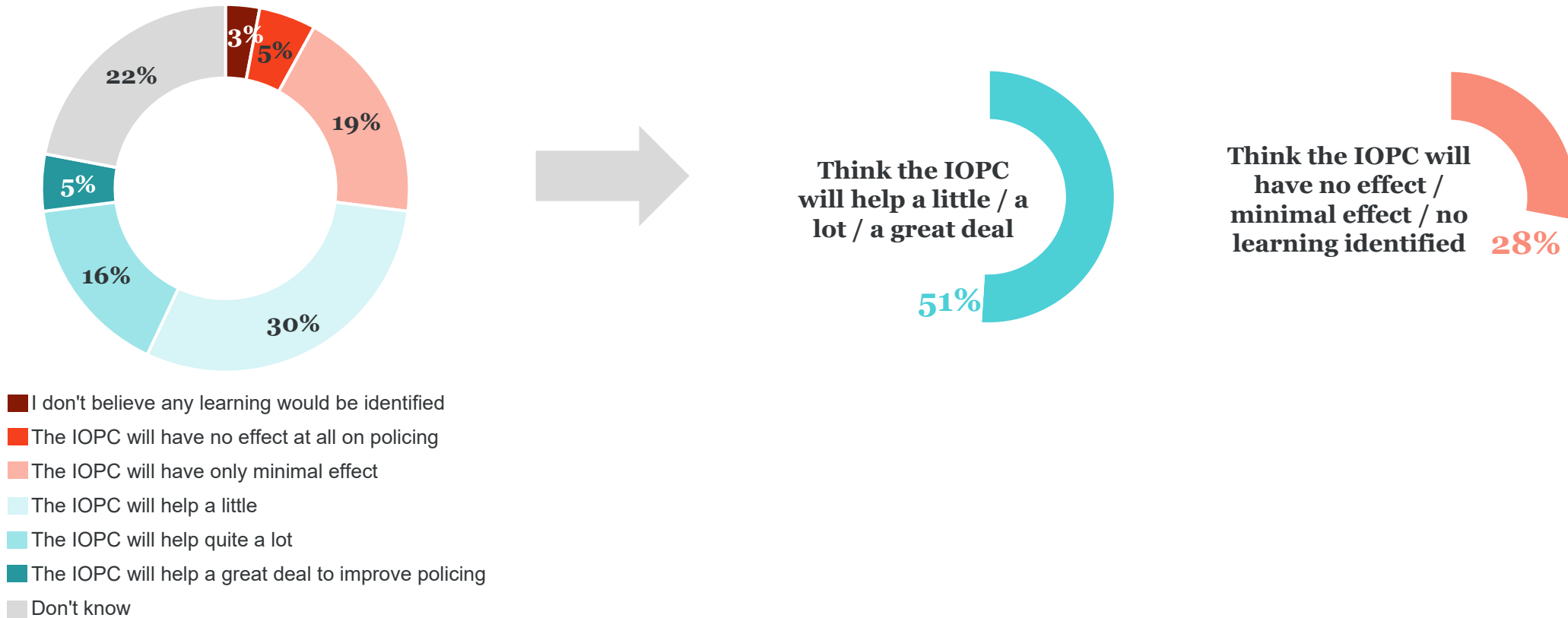
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Half of the public thinks the IOPC will help to improve policing by identifying ways the police can learn from the IOPC's work

Q. As part of its work, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) carries out investigations into the way police officers have behaved. To what extent do you believe that the IOPC will help to improve policing in the future by identifying ways the police can learn from the IOPC's work?



Base: Total n=4,704

Younger people and Black people are more likely to think the IOPC will help improve policing by identifying learnings from its work

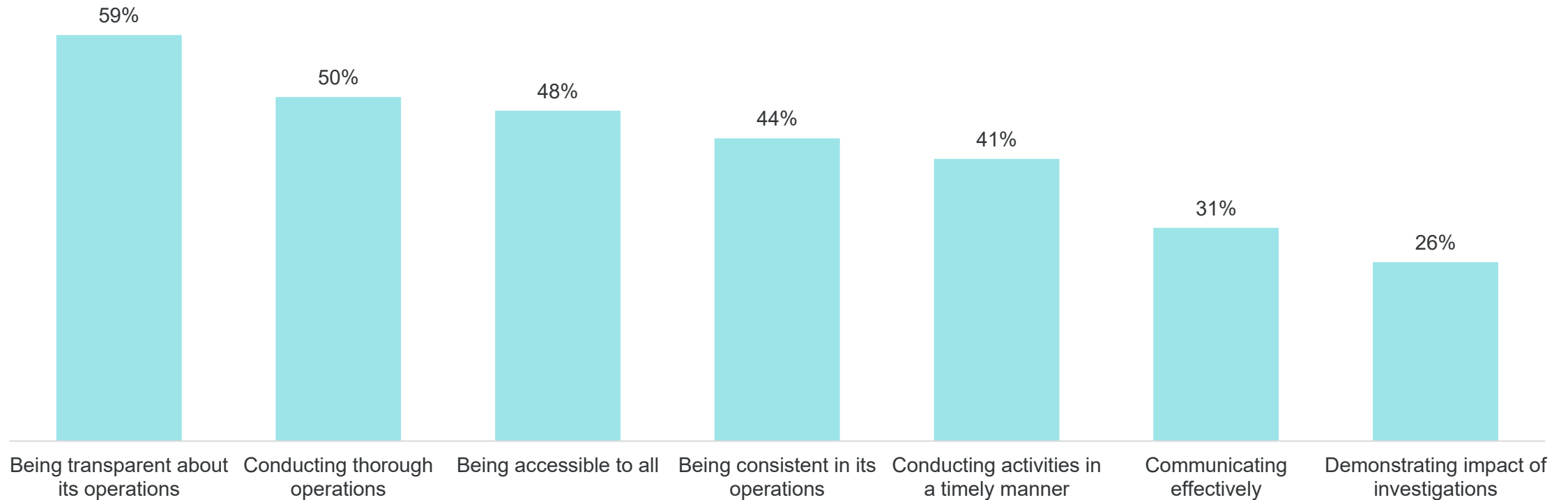
Q. As part of its work, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) carries out investigations into the way police officers have behaved. To what extent do you believe that the IOPC will help to improve policing in the future by identifying ways the police can learn from the IOPC's work?



Base: Total n=4,704, Female n=2,440, Male n=2,250, 18-24 n=1,023, 25-34 n=730, 35-54 n=1,379, 55+ n=1,572, ABC1 n=2,719, C2DE n=1,985, Disability n=1,146, No disability n=3,441, Urban n=3,943, Rural n=761, Heterosexual n=4,133, LGBTQ+ n=481, White n=3,660, Black n=220, Asian n=613, Mixed n=121. Aware IOPC n=3,026, Not aware IOPC n=1,678.

Transparency and thoroughness of operations are considered to be more important qualities for a public oversight body such as the IOPC than demonstrating impact of investigations

Q. The IOPC aspires to demonstrate the below factors in all of its activities, how important do you think each of these factors are in a police oversight body? [Top 3 most important]



Base: Total n=2,317

Racial discrimination

Half of the public say that if they were a victim or were made aware of racial discrimination, they would be likely to report it to the police

Q. If you were a victim yourself OR were made aware of racial discrimination (eg. direct, indirect, harassment, assault), how likely would you be to report it to the police?

Report to police

51%

51% say they would be **very or fairly likely** to report to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of racial discrimination

34%

34% say they would be **not very or not at all likely** to report to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of racial discrimination

% very or fairly likely to report



Base: Total n=2,317, Female n=1,189, Male n=1,118, 18-24 n=518, 25-34 n=329, 35-54 n=689, 55+ n=781, ABC1 n=1,402, C2DE n=915, Disability n=558, No disability n=1,705, Urban n=1,947, Rural n=370, Heterosexual n=2,036, LGBTQ+ n=245, White n=1,780, Black n=107, Asian n=330, Mixed n=62. *NB: small base size.

If unhappy with the response after reporting racial discrimination, the vast majority would complain to the police force involved

Q. You said you would be likely to report racial discrimination to the police if you were a victim yourself or made aware of incidents of it. If you weren't satisfied with the response after reporting this, how likely would you be to make a complaint to the police force involved?

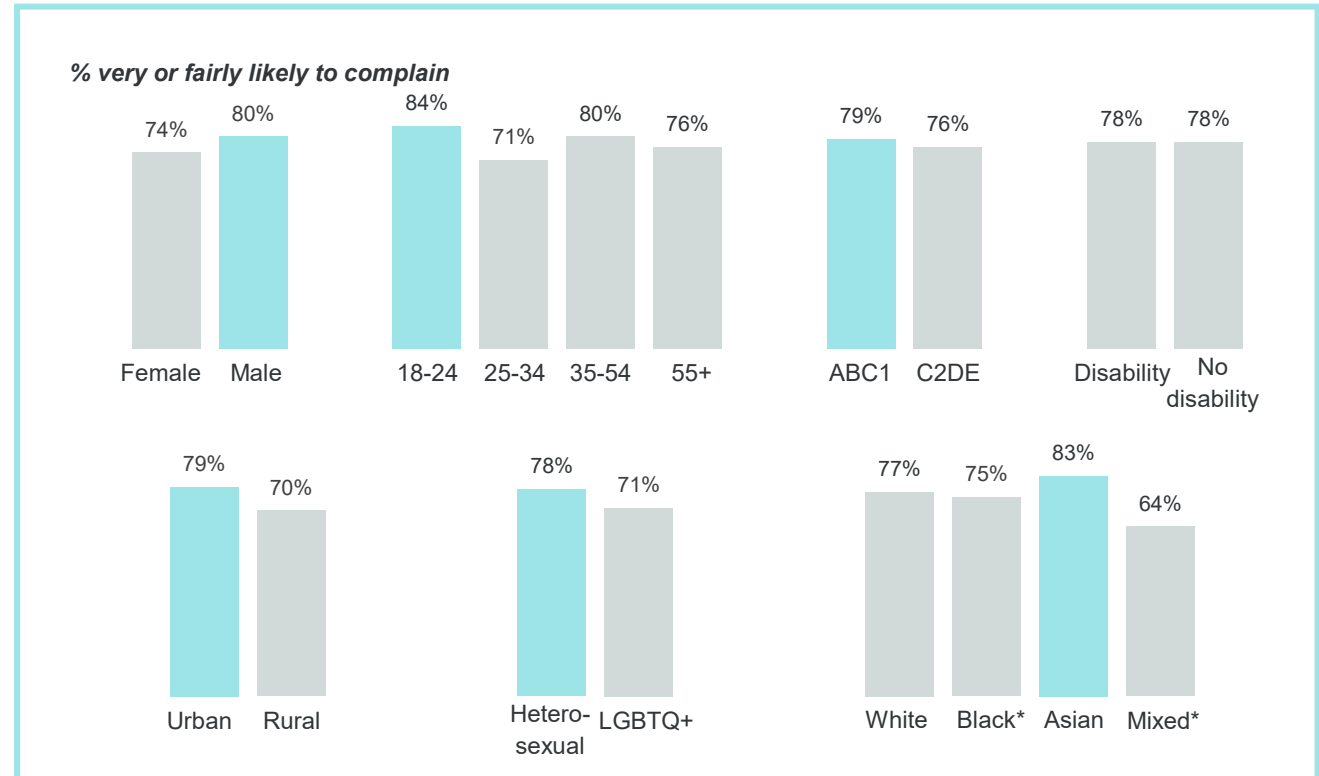
! Complain to police

77%

77% say they would be **very or fairly likely** to make a complaint to the police if they were not satisfied with the response after reporting racial discrimination

12%

12% say they would be **not very or not at all likely** to make a complaint to the police if they were not satisfied with the response after reporting racial discrimination



Base: Those likely to report racial discrimination n=1,193, Female n=573, Male n=615, 18-24 n=297, 25-34 n=195, 35-54 n=337, 55+ n=364, ABC1 n=752, C2DE n=441, Disability n=278, No disability n=890, Urban n=1,007, Rural n=186, Heterosexual n=1,051, LGBTQ+ n=125, White n=890, Black n=64, Asian n=183, Mixed n=41. *NB: small base size.

The public would be as likely to complain to an independent body such as the IOPC if unhappy with the response to reporting racial discrimination

Q. You said you would be likely to report racial discrimination to the police if you were a victim yourself or made aware of incidents of it. If you weren't satisfied with the response after reporting this, how likely would you be to make a complaint to an independent body such as the IOPC?

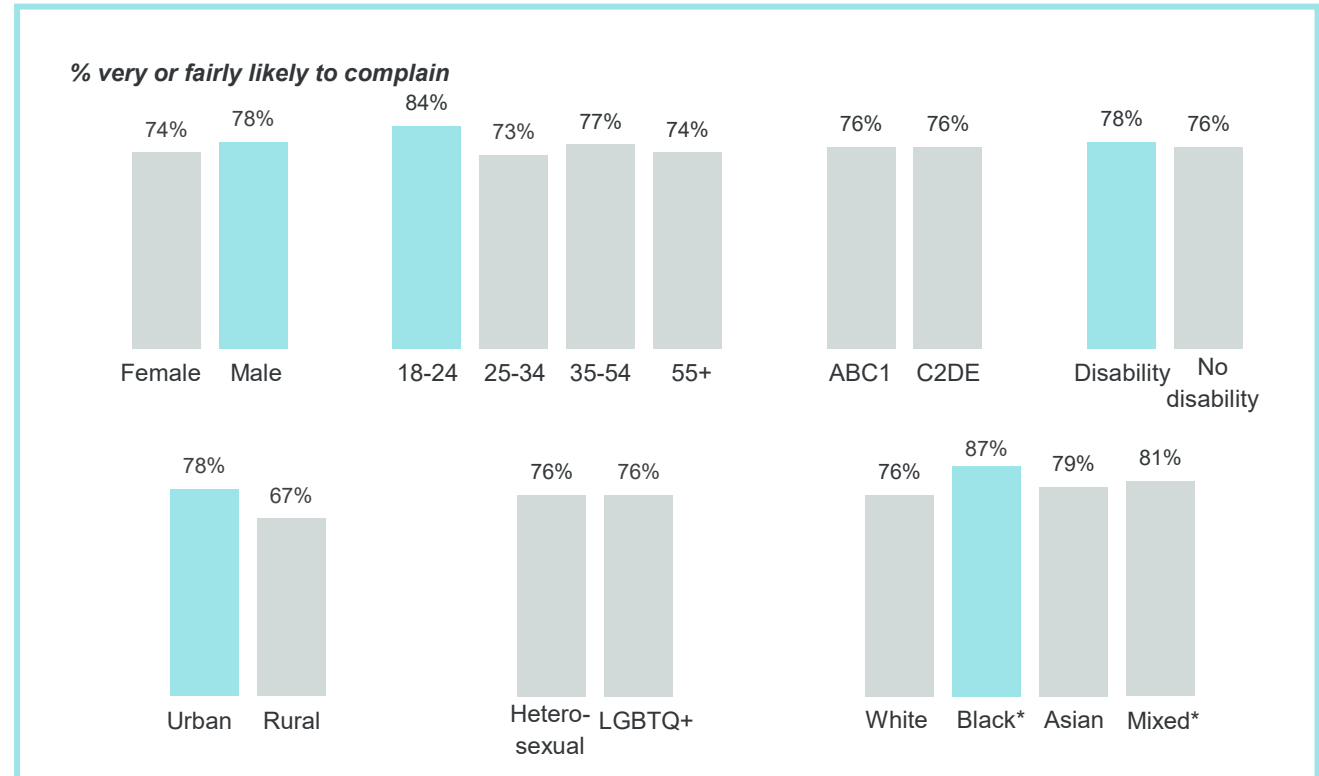
! Complain to independent body

76%

76% say they would be **very or fairly likely** to make a complaint to the IOPC if they were not satisfied with the response after reporting racial discrimination

13%

13% say they would be **not very or not at all likely** to make a complaint to the IOPC if they were not satisfied with the response after reporting racial discrimination



Base: Those likely to report racial discrimination n=1,193, Female n=573, Male n=615, 18-24 n=297, 25-34 n=195, 35-54 n=337, 55+ n=364, ABC1 n=752, C2DE n=441, Disability n=278, No disability n=890, Urban n=1,007, Rural n=186, Heterosexual n=1,051, LGBTQ+ n=125, White n=890, Black n=64, Asian n=183, Mixed n=41. *NB: small base size.

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