

ICO Public Awareness Survey

September 2022

Objectives & survey details

Primary objectives:

- Capture public awareness and perceptions of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
- Map out the public's perceptions of the ICO, compared to other regulators
- Measure public awareness of rights related to data use and protection, and how they exercise them

Secondary objectives:

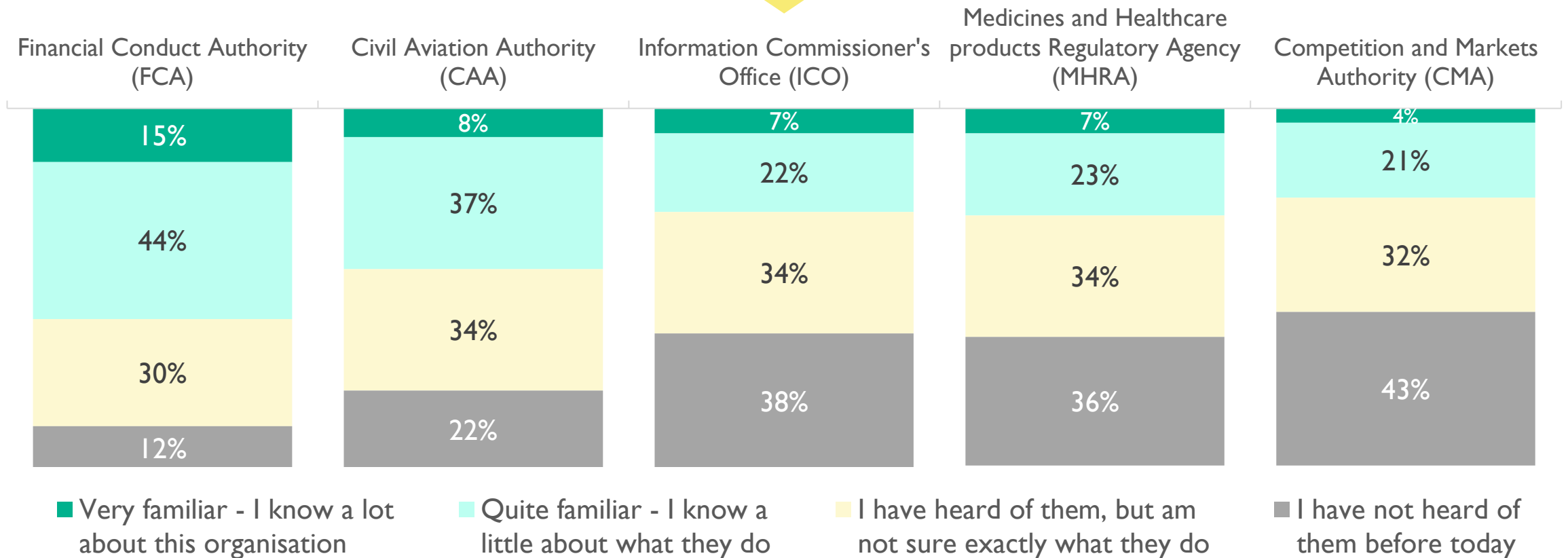
- Understand individuals' perceptions around handing over personal information in return for access to products and services
- Monitor the public's level of trust and confidence in how companies and organisations collect, use and store personal information



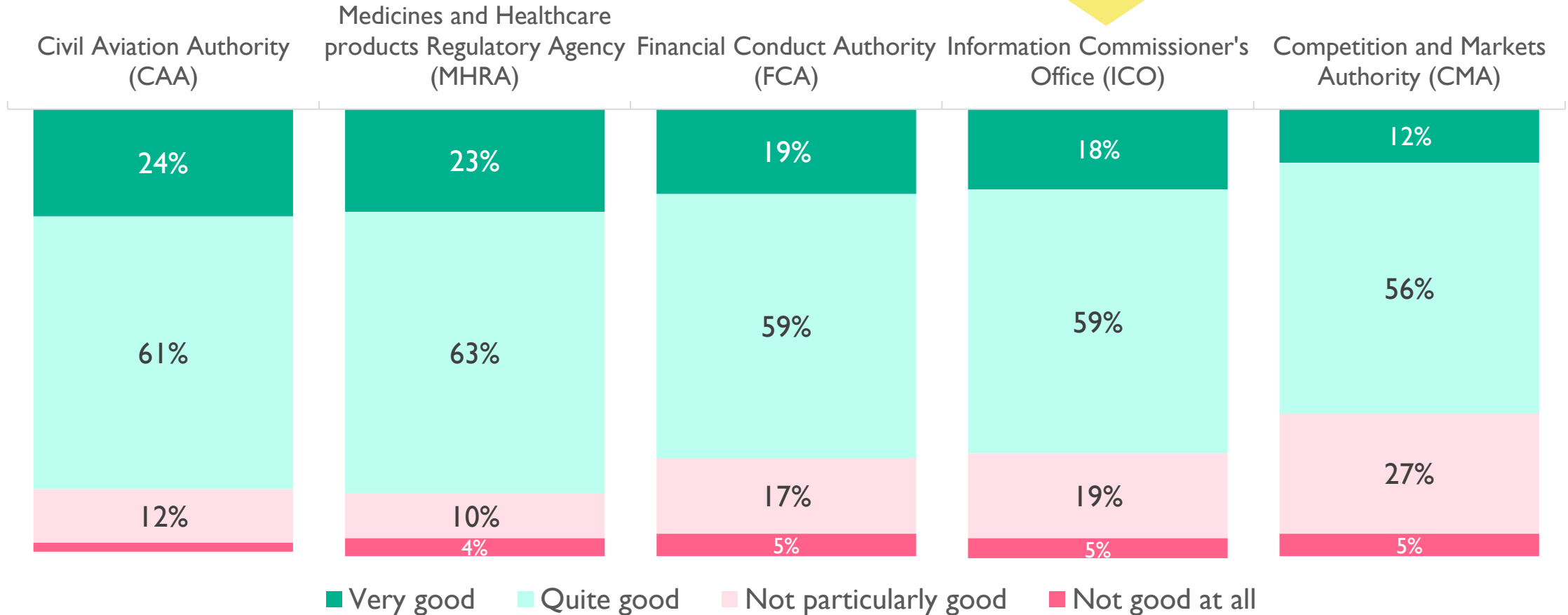
This survey was conducted online with a nationally representative sample of 2067 adults across the UK between 15th and 17th July 2022

Awareness of the ICO

As we anticipated, the ICO is one of the less well known regulators among those asked about



However, among those who feel like they know enough to provide an answer, the ICO's reputation is generally positive



REVEALING REALITY

BASE: All respondents excl. "I don't know enough about them to say"; Base varies by option
Q14. And for these regulatory bodies, how good a job do you think they are doing? Please think about what you know about each one, e.g. from personal experience, reading about them in the news.

The public is aware of the ICO's role in enforcing data protection regulations, alongside promoting transparency about the use of public information





Digging deeper

As one would expect, those already familiar with the topic of data protection were more likely to say that they were familiar with the ICO

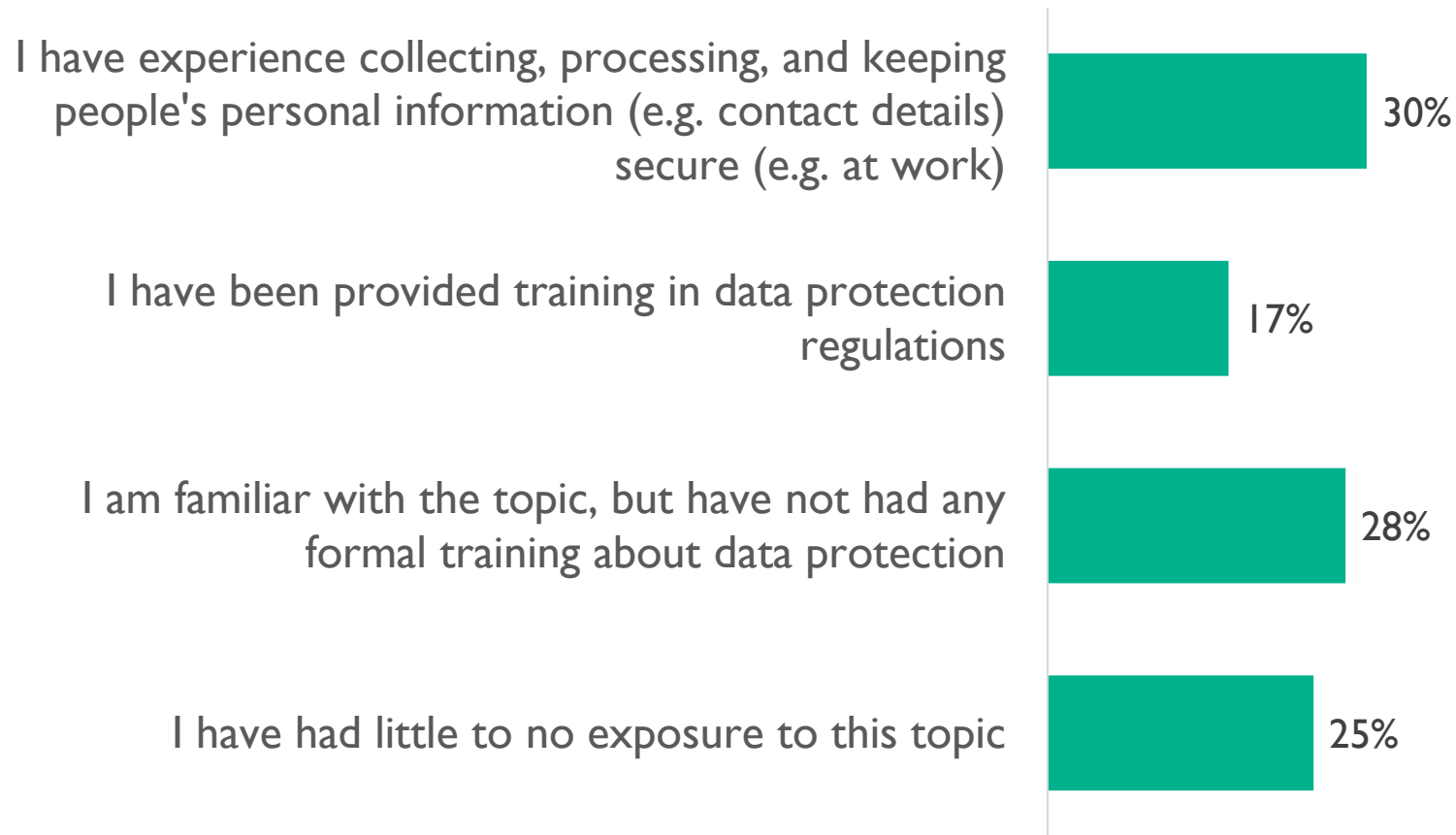
There is a group within the sample who report that they do have some experience or have received training related to data protection, but hadn't heard of the ICO before – this makes up 12% of the sample, and over-indexes on female respondents, and those aged 25-34

Implications

The results show that public awareness of the ICO's role and functions (particularly of its key strategic priorities, as outlined in the ICO25 plan) is low – messaging that reaches everyone can help improve this

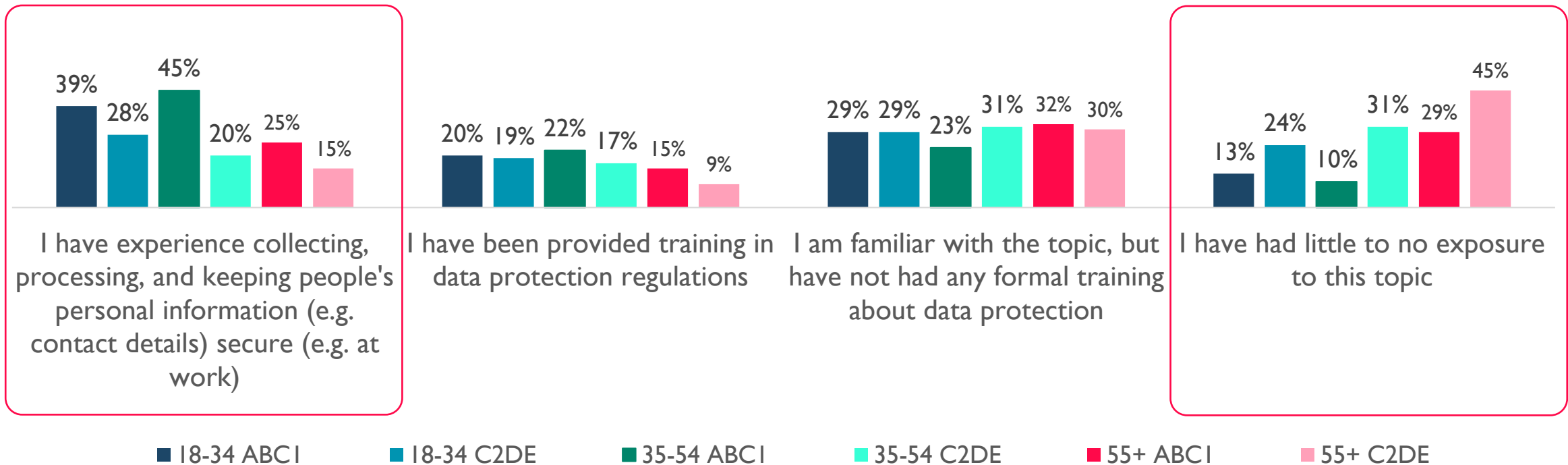
Familiarity with data protection

Most of our sample reported being familiar with data protection through one way or another, while a quarter said they had little to no exposure to the topic

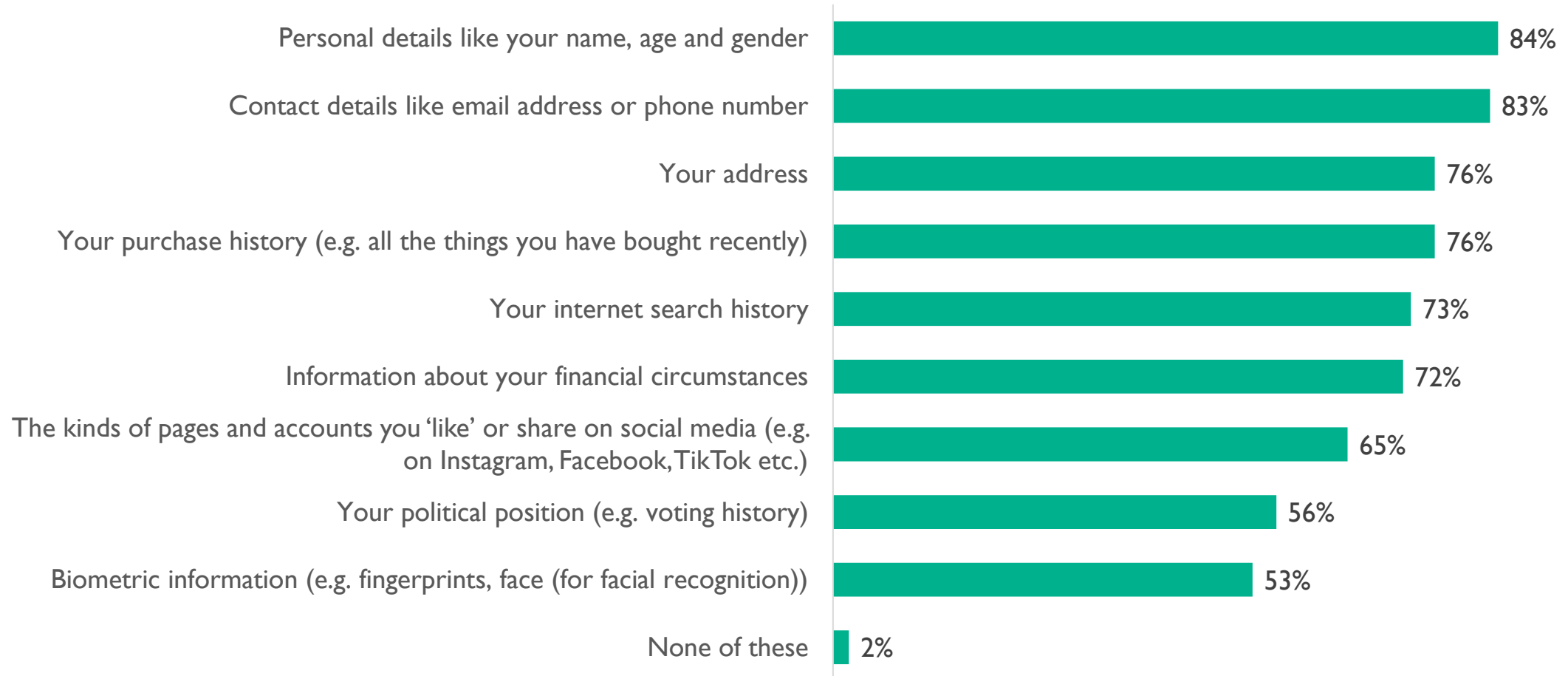


Familiarity with data protection appears to be closely related to age and social grade. Those of working age and from higher socioeconomic grades were more likely to report being familiar with data protection.

Age and socioeconomic grade (SEG) both correlate with familiarity with data protection – by combining them, we can see that SEG appears to play a slightly larger role in exposure to data protection issues

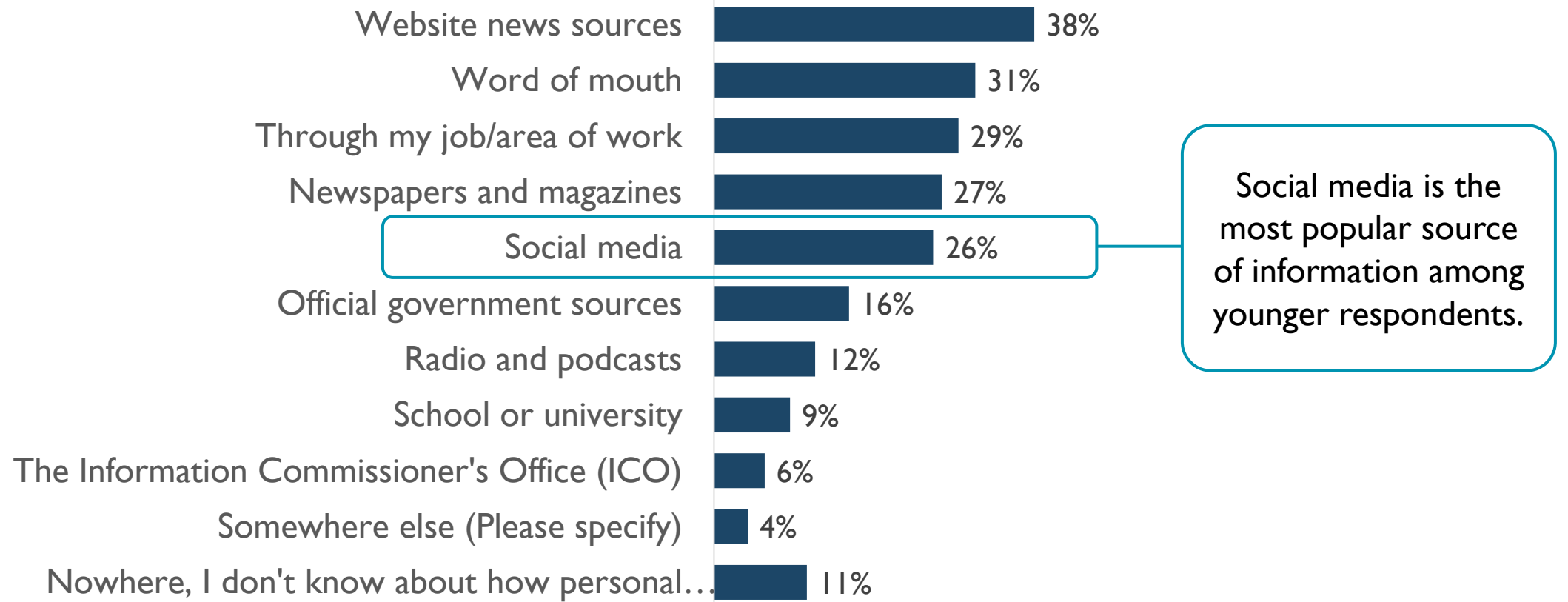


However, when asked about what types of data they would think of as personal information, the vast majority of respondents were able to correctly identify these



Respondents cite using a variety of sources for learning about how personal information is used

Thinking about what you know about how companies/organisations use personal information, generally where would you say you have learnt most about this before?



Implications

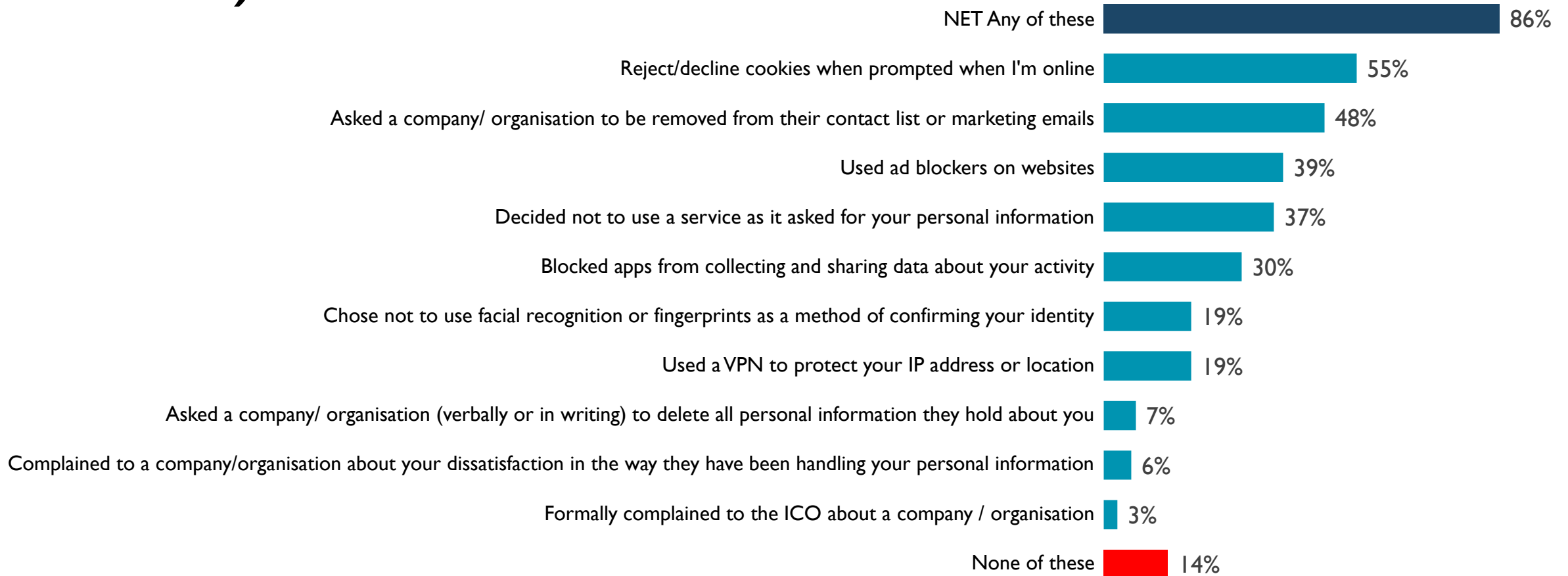
The ICO needs to actively reach people who are less likely to have encountered data rights through work

Behaviours/ experiences related to use of personal information



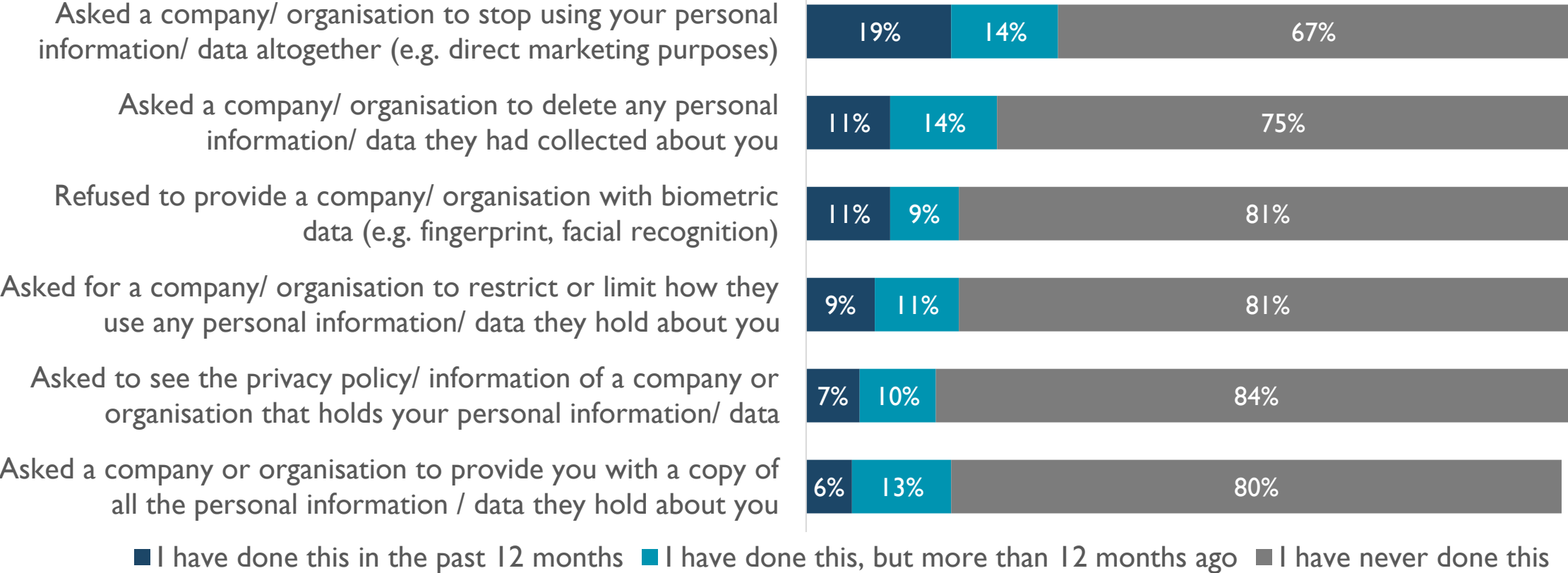
9% of our sample reported having shared personal information about a vulnerability or personal circumstances (e.g. a health condition) with an organisation so that they could be provided with better support

The vast majority of respondents also report taking some kind of action to limit access to their personal information in the last 12 months (though this is predominantly more simple or passive actions)



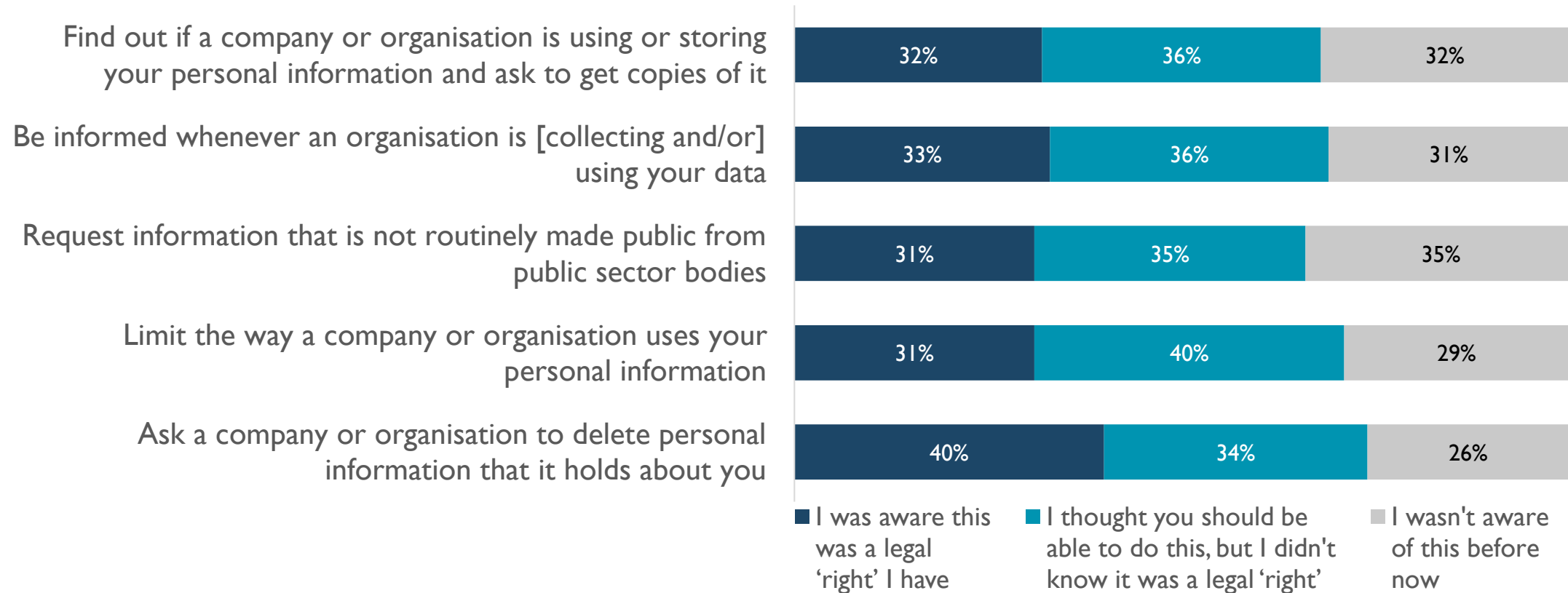
Only a small proportion of respondents reported actively contacting an organisation in relation to personal information

Have you ever contacted organisations or companies for any of the following things related to personal information that they might hold about you?



Although the majority of respondents expect to be able to make reasonable demands around their data, awareness of these as legal rights is more limited

Were you **aware this was a legal right** you held, that is protected by law?





Digging deeper

14% of our sample were aware of all the data-related legal rights shown to them

People within this group are more likely to be:

- Male
- Under 54 years of age
- From higher socioeconomic grades (ABCI)
- Have had experience or training related to data protection

Through a simple linear regression, we observe that lack of familiarity with data protection is most strongly correlated to a lack of awareness of data-related legal rights.

Implications

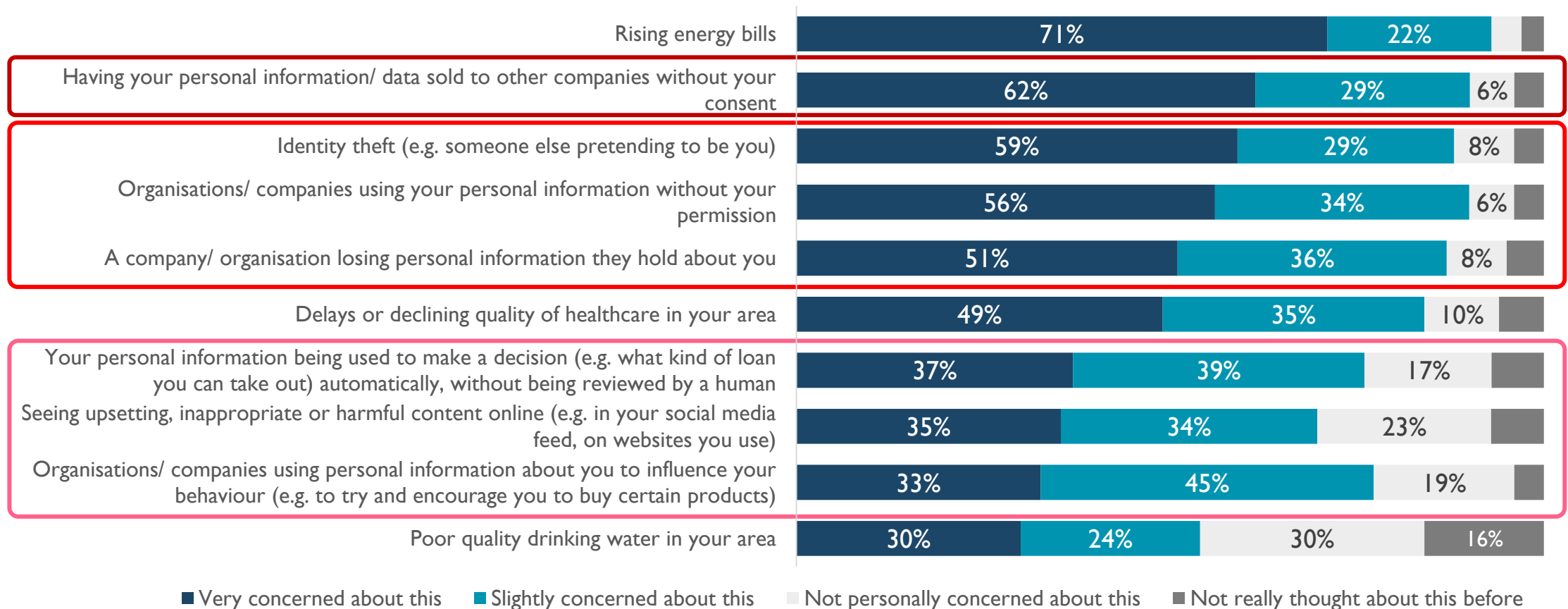
The ICO needs to empower people to act on their rights when needed – increasing awareness *and* removing barriers

The ICO needs to ensure it understands what people mean by data protection and related concepts, so that public-facing communications use language that people understand

Attitudes towards data use

People feel very strongly about perceived misuse of personal information

For each of these things, please say whether this is something you are worried about, or if it's something you don't give much thought to or are simply not concerned about



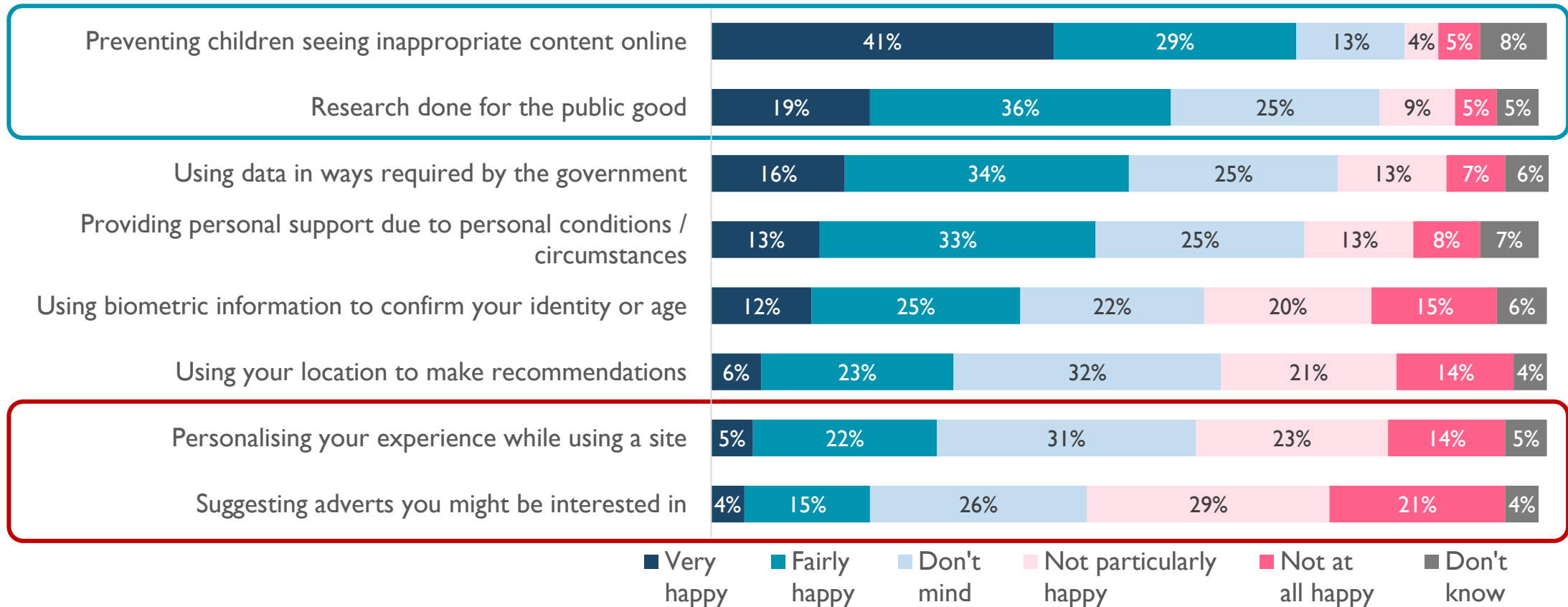
REVEALING REALITY

BASE: Total Sample, n=2067 (weighted)

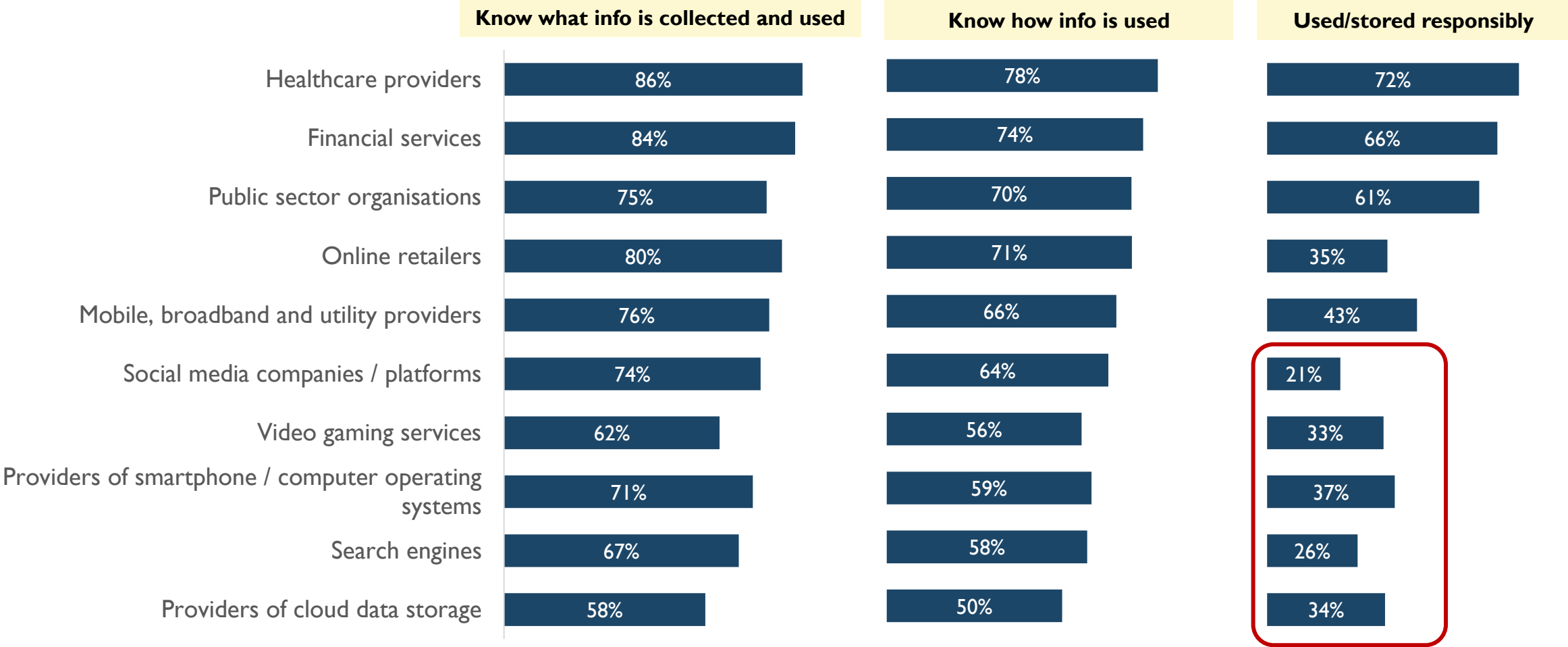
Q: Below are some things that people tell us they have been concerned about at different times. For each of these things, please say whether this is something you are worried about, or if it's something you don't give much thought to or are simply not concerned about.

Within our sample, many state that they are not happy for their data to be used for commercially oriented purposes, whereas over half are happy for their data to be used for ‘social good’

How do you feel about your **personal information being used for...**?



While knowledge of what and how personal information is used is reported as reasonably high across organisations, perceptions of responsible usage are much lower



REVEALING REALITY

BASE: Total sample (weighted), n= 2090. Q4: How well do you feel you know what type of personal information they would be likely to collect and use? Q5: How well do you feel you know how they would use personal information? Q6: And how sure are you that these types of companies/organisations would use and store your personal information responsibly?

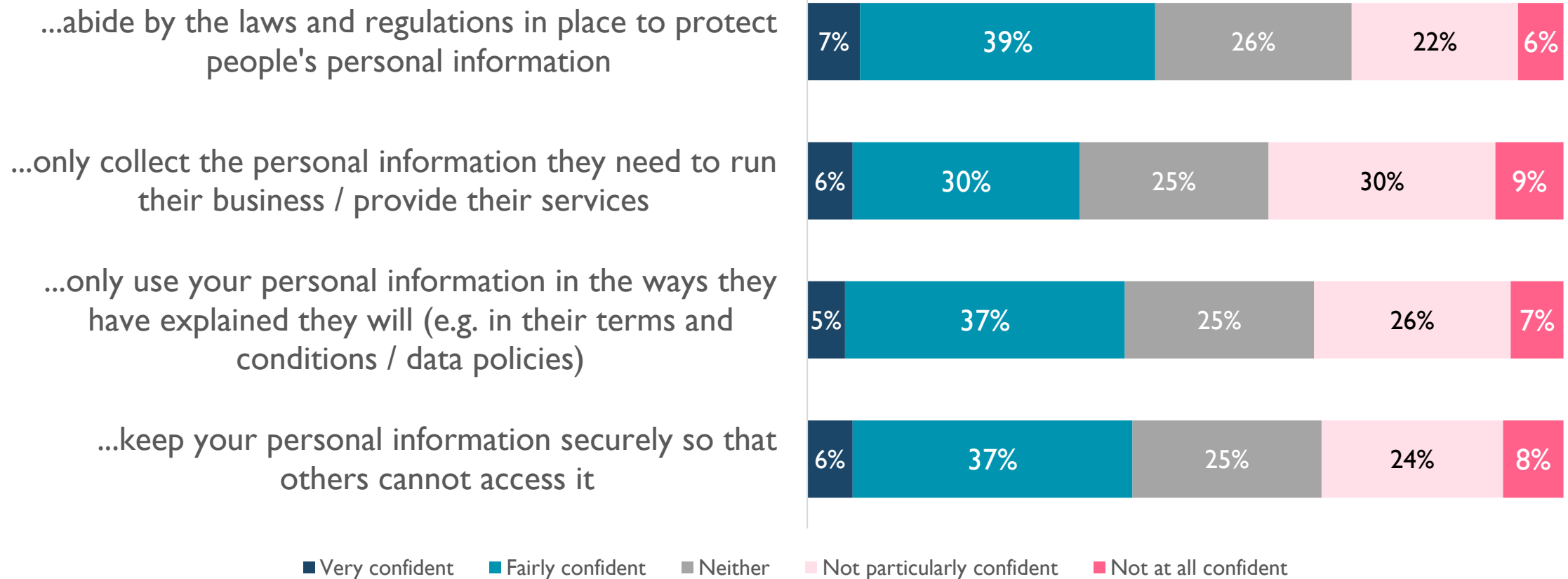
For certain types of organisations, younger respondents were more likely to say that they understood the type(s) of personal information collected, how it would be used, and were more confident that it was being used responsibly

These organisations were:

- Providers of smartphone / computer operating systems
- Social media platforms
- Online retailers
- Video gaming services
- Search engines
- Providers of cloud data storage (e.g. DropBox, iCloud, Google Drive)

People appear to have varying levels of confidence in organisations' compliance with data protection regulations

Thinking about organisations and companies operating in the UK generally, how confident are you that they...



Implications

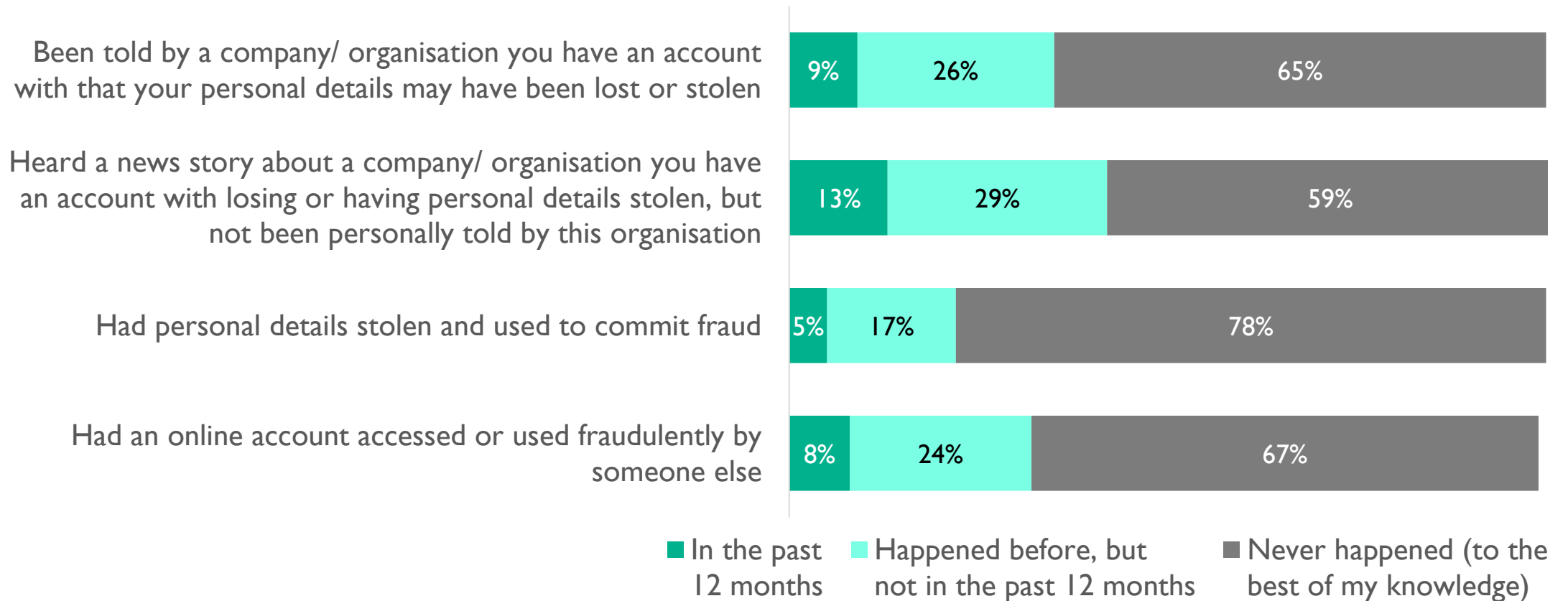
Messages about enforcement may resonate with people and help to assuage some concerns

The ICO will need to remain aware of people's seemingly contradictory beliefs about data use and sharing – and how to manage these when talking about other aims (e.g. promoting innovative use of personal information)

Response to hypothetical data breach

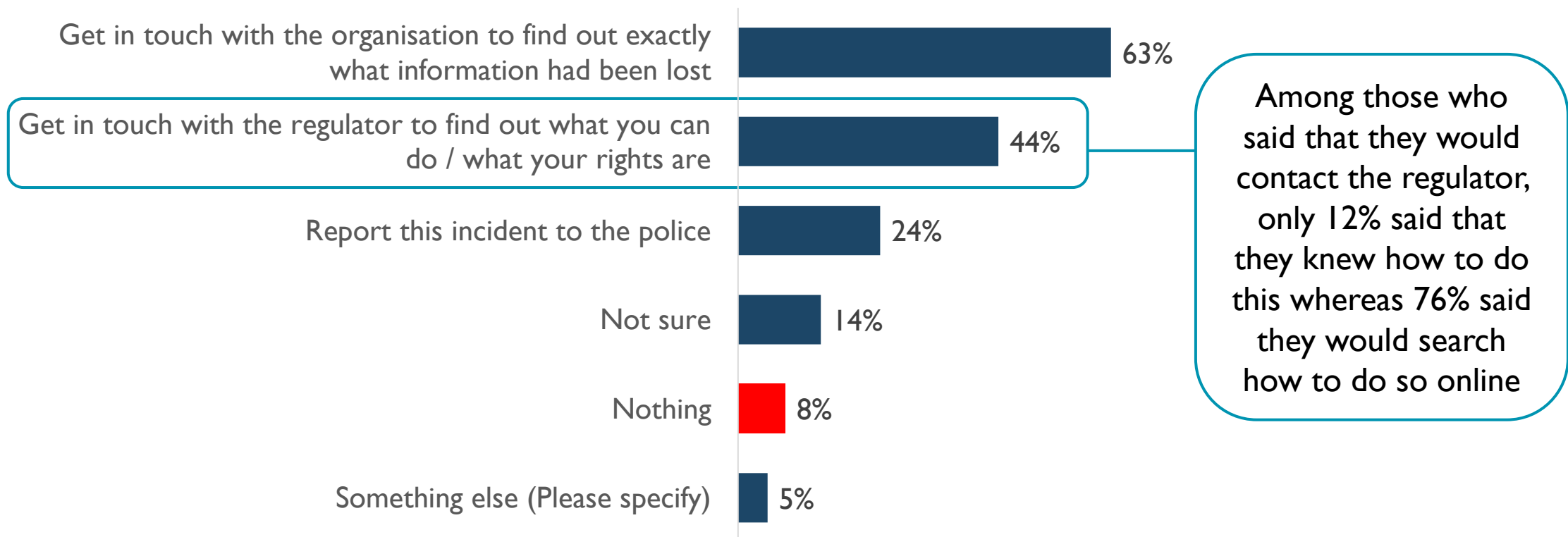
More than 1 in 3 people in our sample reported having experienced some form of data breach in the past

Personal experiences with data 'breaches'



Most people said that they would get in touch with the relevant organisation and the regulator if faced with the prospect of lost or stolen personal information

If you found out that an organisation had lost your personal information, or this information had been stolen, which of the following, if any, do you think you would do?



Implications

While people express a desire for taking action and engaging with the ICO in the event of a data breach, few know how to do so

The ICO will need to take steps to improve public visibility and accessibility of information about steps the public should take when such incidents occur

Summary

- **The results show that there are opportunities to improve public awareness of the ICO's role and functions, particularly among those who are less likely to have encountered data protection through work**
- **The ICO needs to empower people to act on their rights when needed – by increasing awareness and removing barriers**
- **The ICO needs to ensure it understands what people mean by data protection and related concepts, so that public-facing communications use language that people understand**
- **The ICO should also be mindful of people's seemingly contradictory beliefs about data use and sharing, when developing public-facing communications**