



Who cares about climate change?

Attitudes across the generations

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generations-book.org

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Climate change definitely isn't something that only younger generations are concerned about – older people are just as likely as the young to support big changes to how we live in order to protect the environment.



In the UK, around seven in 10 of all generations surveyed say climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental issues are big enough problems that they justify significant changes to people's lifestyles, with the oldest generation surveyed – Baby Boomers (74%) – slightly more likely than the others to feel this way.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental issues are big enough problems that they justify significant changes to people's lifestyles**

% who agree

Baby Boomers

74%

Gen X

69%

Millennials

70%

Gen Z

71%

There are almost identical levels of agreement across the generations that people themselves are willing to make big changes to their own lifestyle to reduce the impact of climate change: there is virtually no difference between the proportion of Baby Boomers (68%) at one end of the age distribution and Gen Z (70%) at the other who say they're prepared to make such a sacrifice.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **I am willing to make significant changes to my own lifestyle to reduce the impact of climate change**

% who agree

Baby Boomers

68%

Gen X

66%

Millennials

65%

Gen Z

70%

Where there is a generational difference in views is on whether environmental concerns should take precedence over economic growth.

But despite this, older generations are still more likely to agree than disagree that the environment should come first.

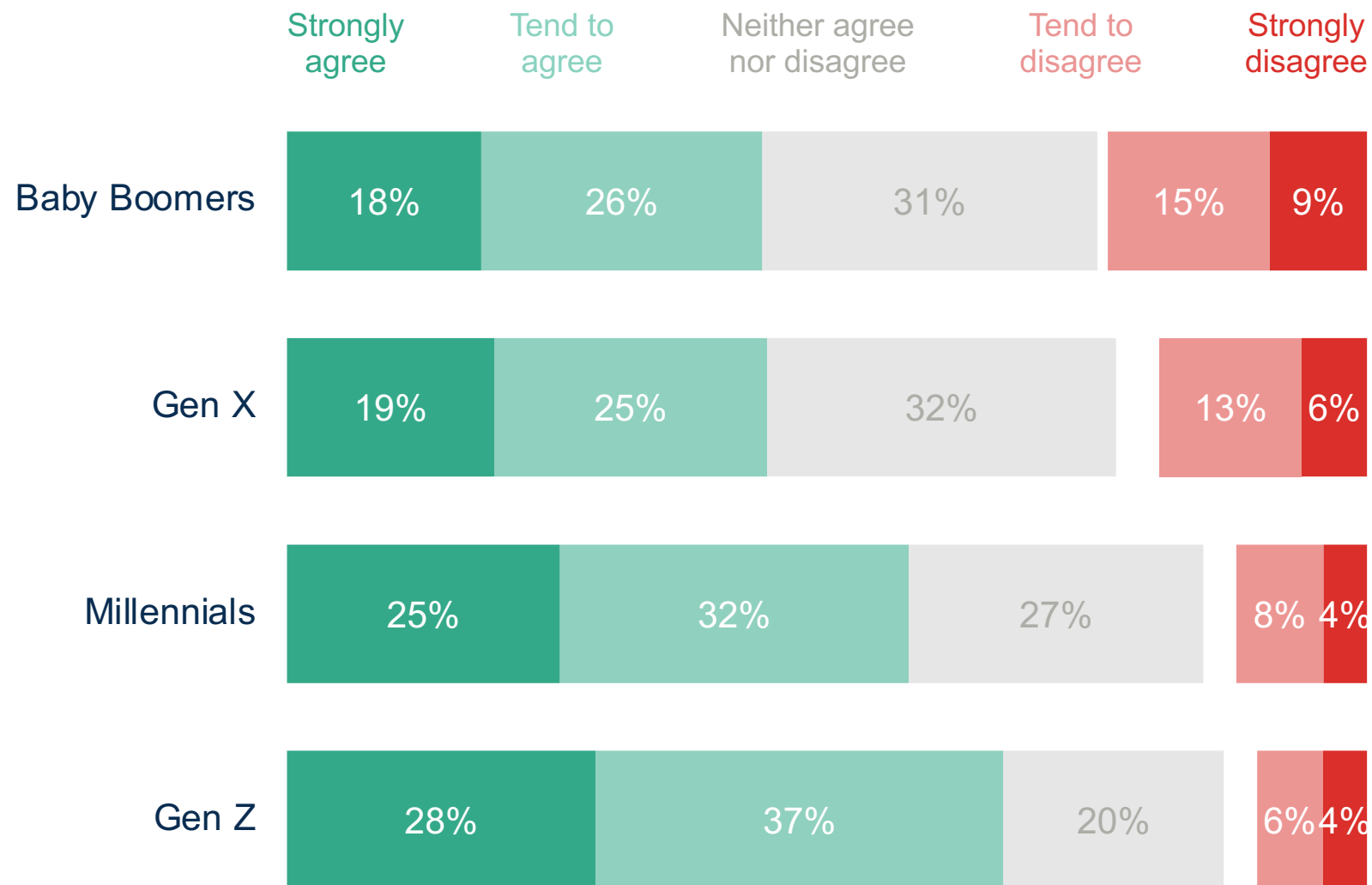


66% of Gen Z and 57% of Millennials agree environmental concerns should take priority over economic growth, compared with 44% of Baby Boomers and 45% of Gen X.

But despite this, the proportion of older age groups who actively disagree that climate concerns should take precedence is still comparatively low – for example, 24% of UK Baby Boomers think the environment shouldn't come first, while 31% say they neither agree nor disagree.

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Environmental concerns should be prioritised over economic growth**



Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

While younger people are often thought to be most active on climate issues, they are actually more likely than older generations to say there's *no point* acting in environmentally conscious ways because it won't make a difference anyway.

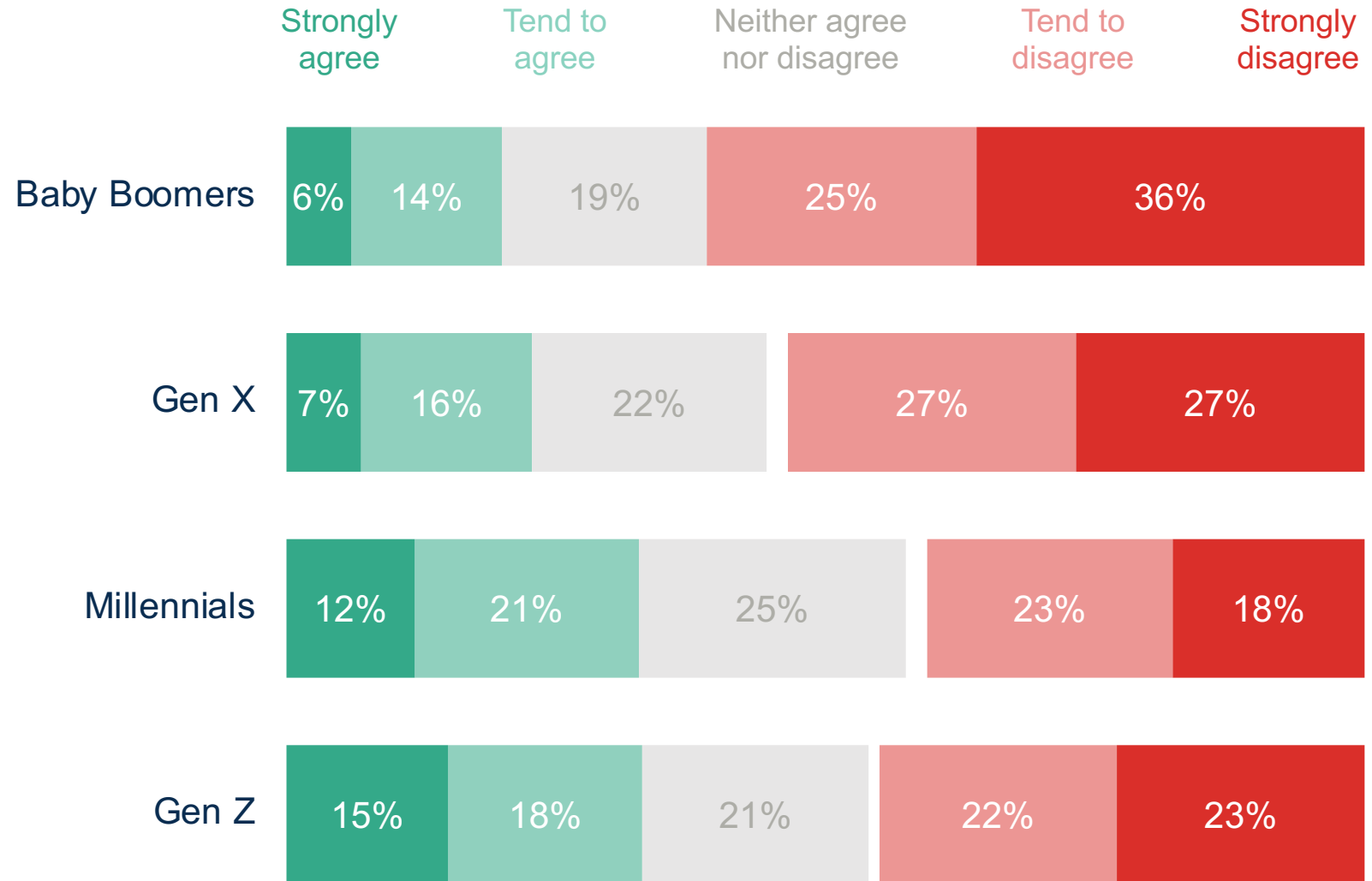


It is younger generations, rather than older ones, who are most fatalistic about the impact they themselves can have in tackling climate change: 33% of Gen Z and 32% of Millennials in the UK say there's no point changing their behaviour because it won't make a difference anyway, compared with 22% of Gen X and 19% of Baby Boomers.

There is an even bigger gap between different generations when it comes to rejection of this idea: 61% of UK Baby Boomers disagree that there's no point altering their behaviour – compared with 41% of Millennials.

Some figures differ from charts due to rounding

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **There is no point in changing my behaviour to tackle climate change because it won't make any difference anyway**



Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

But the public perception is that older people are most likely to see changing their behaviour as pointless, when it's in fact younger generations who are more inclined to feel this way.



Half the UK public (wrongly) believe that older people are most resigned about what they can do to save the environment.

49% think Baby Boomers and those in older generations are most likely to say there's no point changing their behaviour to tackle climate change, compared with 30% who think Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z are most inclined to feel this way.

But the reality is that these younger generations are more likely to be fatalistic about this.

Thinking about the UK population overall, on average, which of the following age groups do you think is most likely to say that there is no point changing their behaviour to tackle climate change because it won't make any difference?

Who the UK public think are most likely to say there's no point changing their behaviour

Baby boomers and older

49%

Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z

30%

Reality

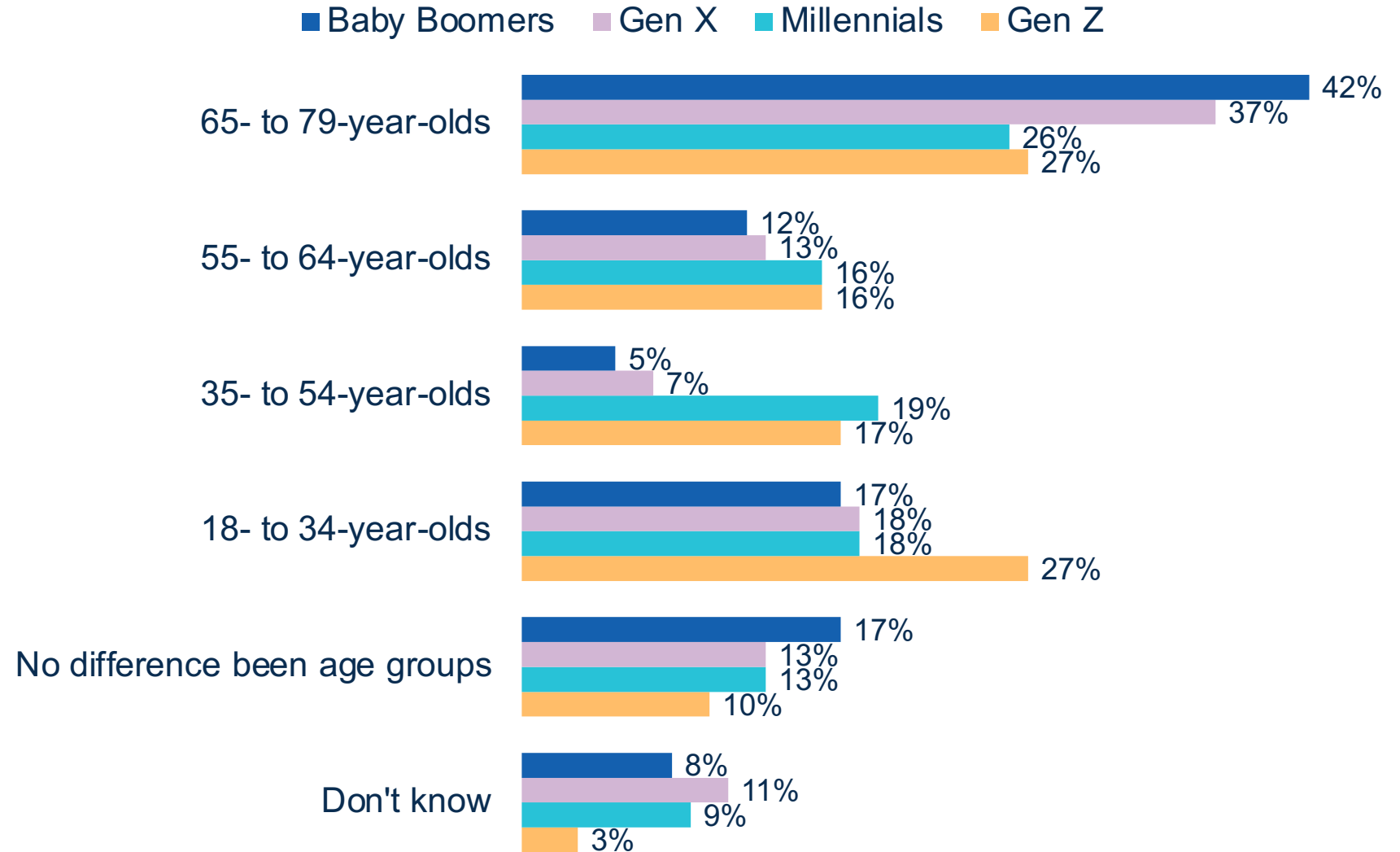
21% of Baby Boomers and older say there's no point changing their behaviour...

...compared with **29%** of Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z combined

In the UK, it is the oldest generation surveyed, Baby Boomers (42%), who are most likely to have the misperception that older people are less willing to change their behaviour to address climate change, suggesting they most underestimate their own cohort.

And Gen Z (27%) are more likely than other generations to correctly identify that younger people like them will see behaviour change as pointless – although the same proportion of this group (27%) think 65- to 79-year-olds are most likely to feel this way.

Thinking about the UK population overall, on average, which of the following age groups do you think is most likely to say that there is no point changing their behaviour to tackle climate change because it won't make any difference?



Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

Claims abound that Millennials and Gen Z are “purpose-driven” consumers, obsessed with sustainable or socially responsible brands – but it’s actually older generations who are most likely to have boycotted a product or company for socially conscious reasons.

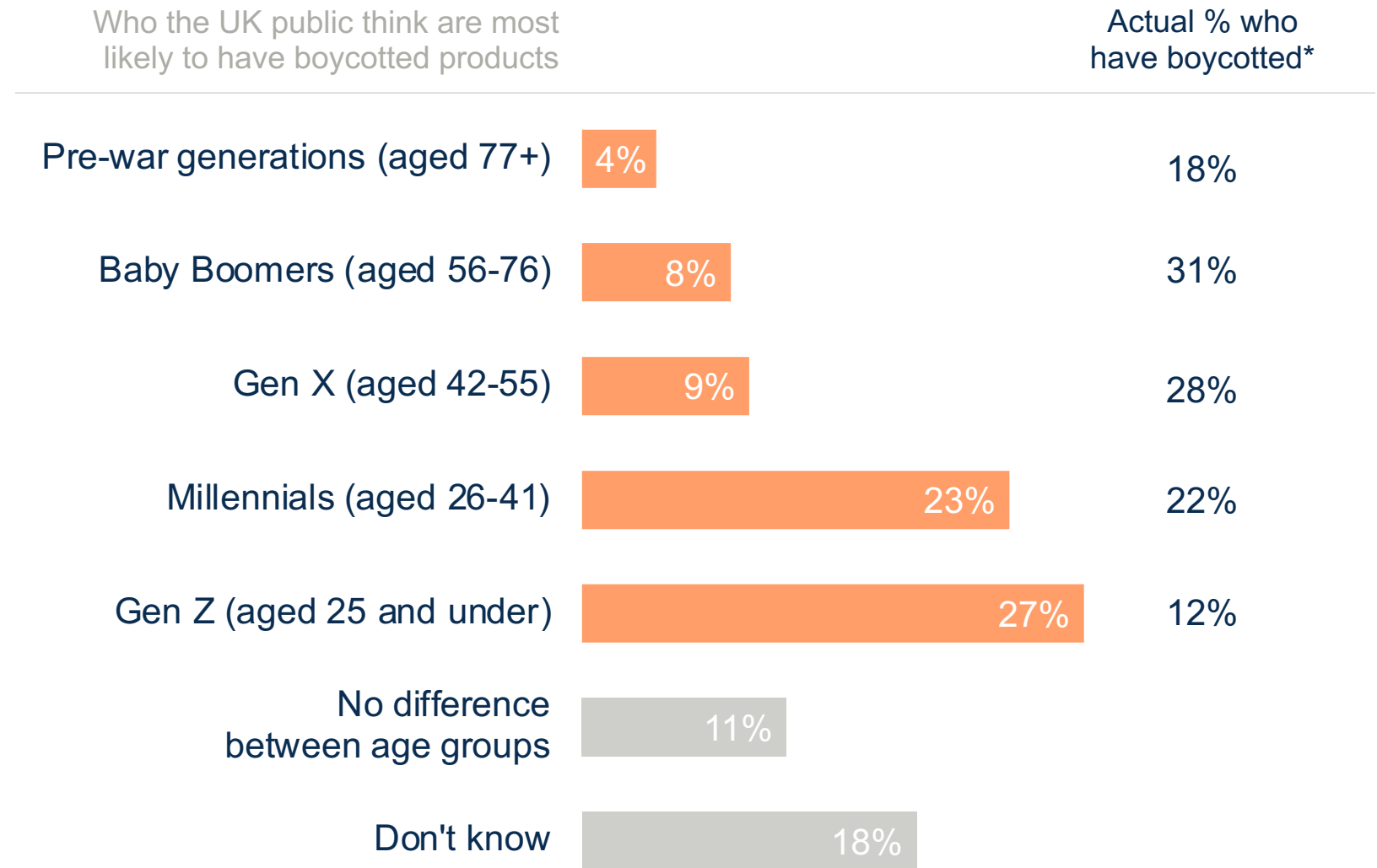
On this measure at least, “cancel culture” is more of a middle-age thing.



The UK public think that younger generations are most likely to have boycotted products out of social concerns in the last year, with 27% guessing that Gen Z have done so and 23% saying the same about Millennials.

But according to previous research, it is Baby Boomers and Gen X who are in fact most likely to have boycotted something – which is predicted by only 8% and 9% of the population respectively.

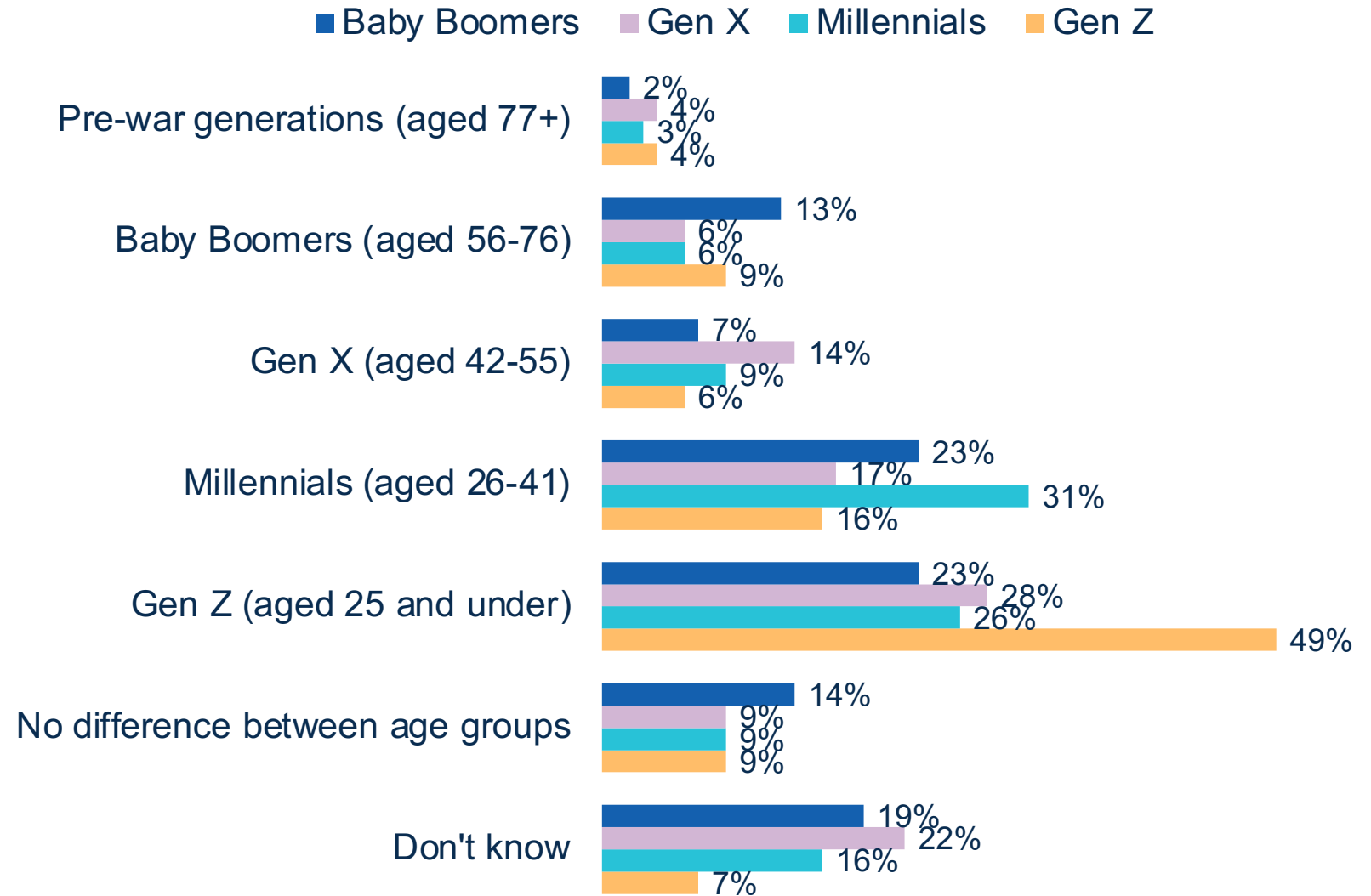
A representative survey of people in Britain asked them whether they had boycotted certain products as a way to improve things or prevent things going wrong. **Which of the following groups do you think was most likely to have boycotted products in the last year?**



Half of Gen Z (49%) wrongly guess that their generation were most likely to have boycotted products in the last year – much higher than the share of other generations surveyed who guess the same.

But even so, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers are all more likely to mistakenly think that boycotts are pursued by younger people rather than older people.

A representative survey of people in Britain asked them whether they had boycotted certain products as a way to improve things or prevent things going wrong. **Which of the following groups do you think was most likely to have boycotted products in the last year?**



Base: 2,050 UK adults aged 18+, interviewed 2 to 9 August 2021

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Technical details

Savanta ComRes surveyed 2,050 UK adults aged 18+ online between 2 and 9 August 2021. Data were weighted to be representative of UK adults by age, gender, region and social grade. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Data tables are available at www.comresglobal.com