



# The Consumer Council

Postal Services Survey

March 2019

Report of findings



# Introduction

- This summary report presents the findings of a survey of 1,014 adults aged 16+ living in Northern Ireland about postal services.
- The sample is representative of Northern Ireland by age, gender, social grade and local councils. Attention was paid to ensure responses from vulnerable consumer groups such as lower earning households, those aged 65 and over, living rurally or with a disability / long-term limiting illness.
- The survey took place from 7<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 and covered usage of postal service for personal, not business and using typical examples (size and cost) of standard letters and parcels to ensure each participant understood the terms referred to.

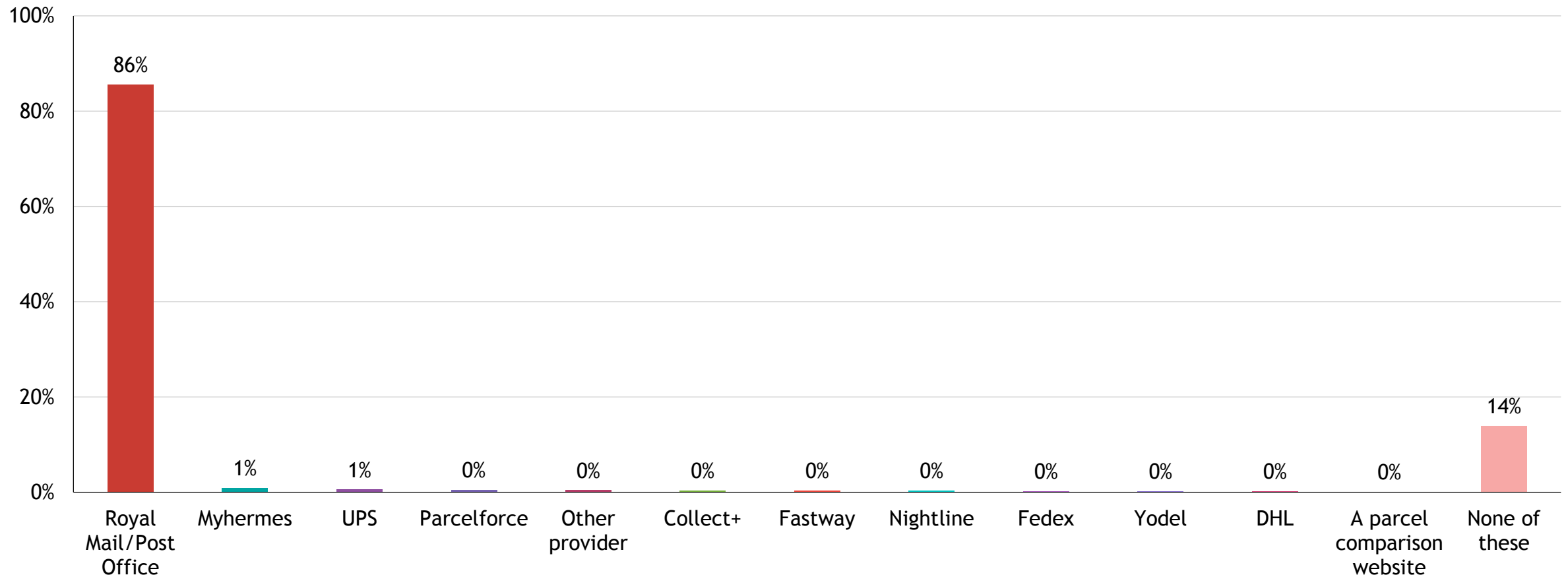


Using postal  
services



# Most people have sent letters with Royal Mail, very few have used alternative providers

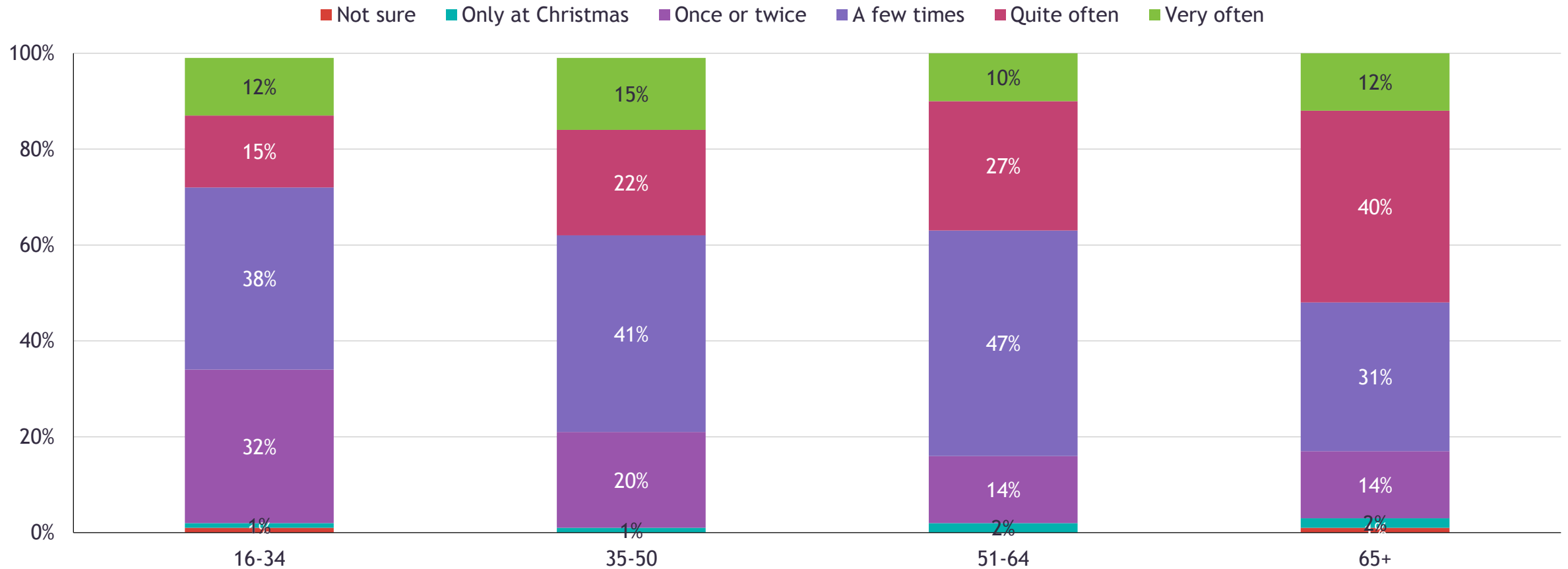
Older people significantly more likely to have used Royal Mail / Post Office (92% of those aged 65+, 78% of 16-34s).



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In the last 12 months which, if any, of the following have you used to send letters? Please tick all that apply. (Base: all 1,014)

# Over half of users aged 65+ use Royal Mail very or quite often for letters

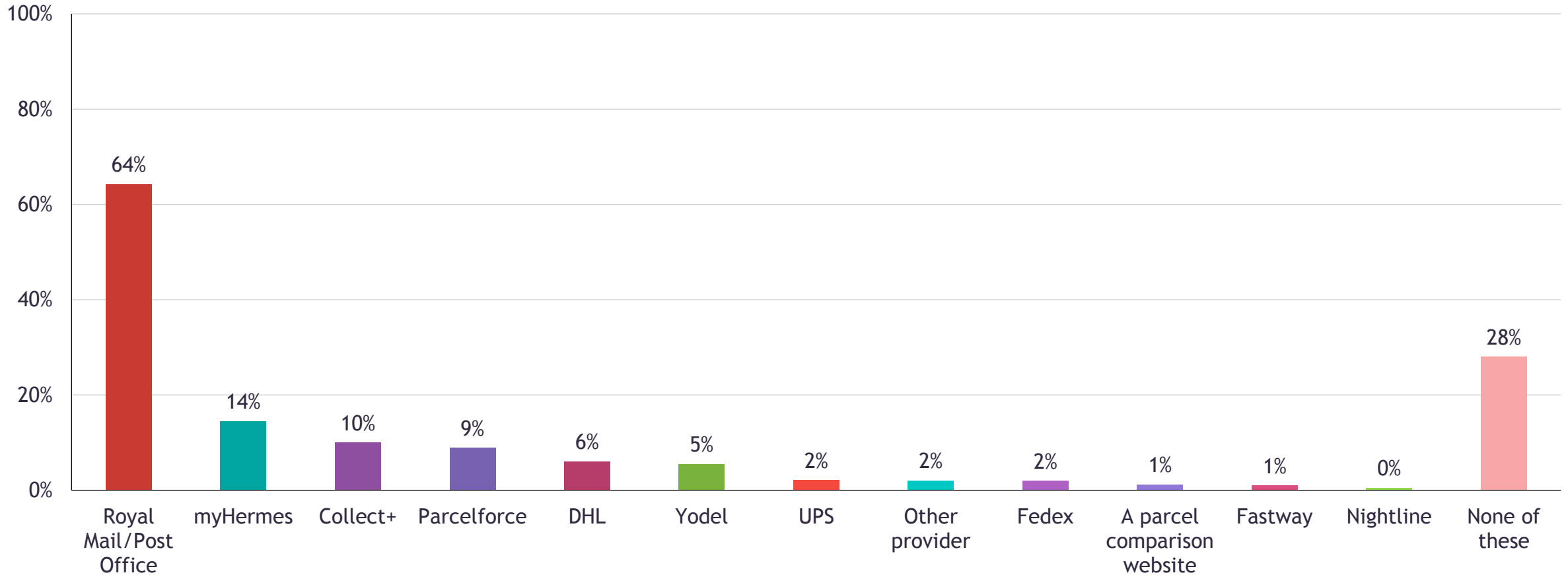


In the last 12 months how often have you used those postal providers to send letters? 16-34 (n=150); 35-50 (n=286); 51-64 (n=249); 65+ (n=195)

(Base: those using Royal Mail / Post Office)

# Fewer have sent parcels with Royal Mail, others such as myHermes and Collect+ have been used by some

Some variations by age with older 51+ age groups using Parcelforce more than younger people, just 4% of 16-34s. Conversely 10% of 16-34s have used DHL. Those with a disability more likely to have used any parcel service (78%) than those without (70%).

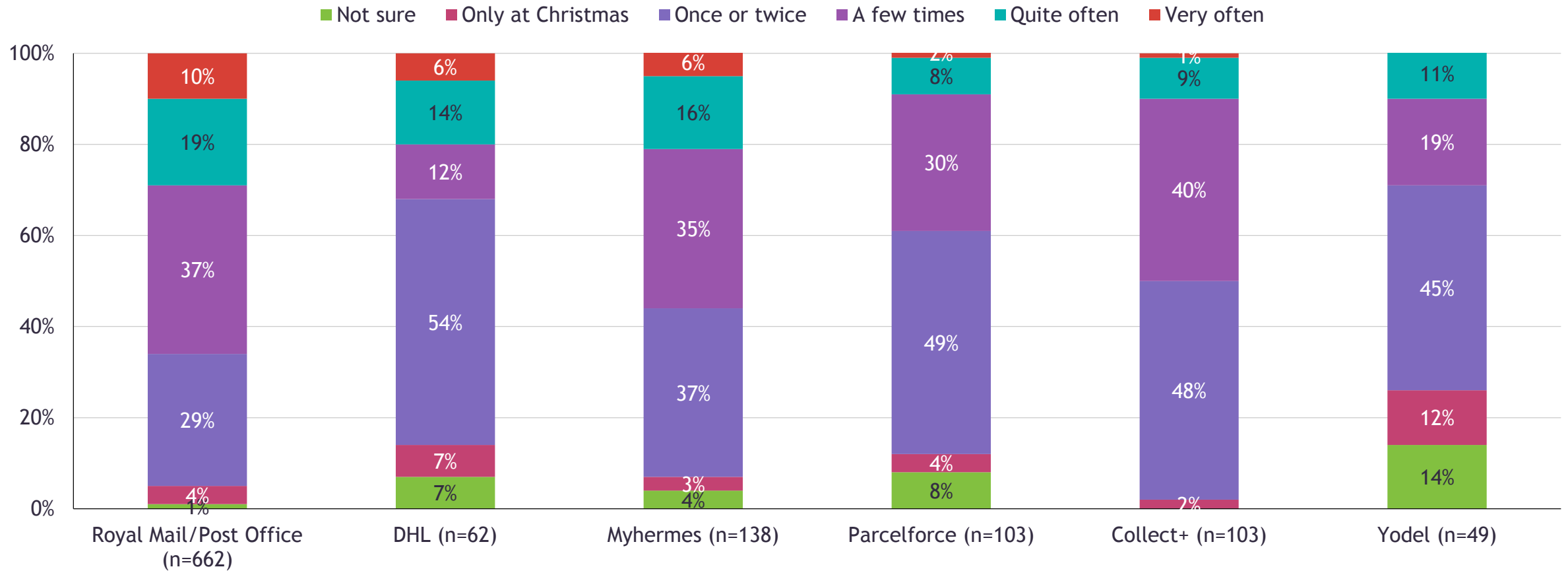


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In the last 12 months which, if any, of the following have you used to send parcels? Please tick all that apply. (Base: all 1,014)

# Those whose use parcel services do so fairly infrequently

37% of users of Royal Mail / Post Office parcel services with a disability do so very or quite often, compared to 24% of those without a disability.

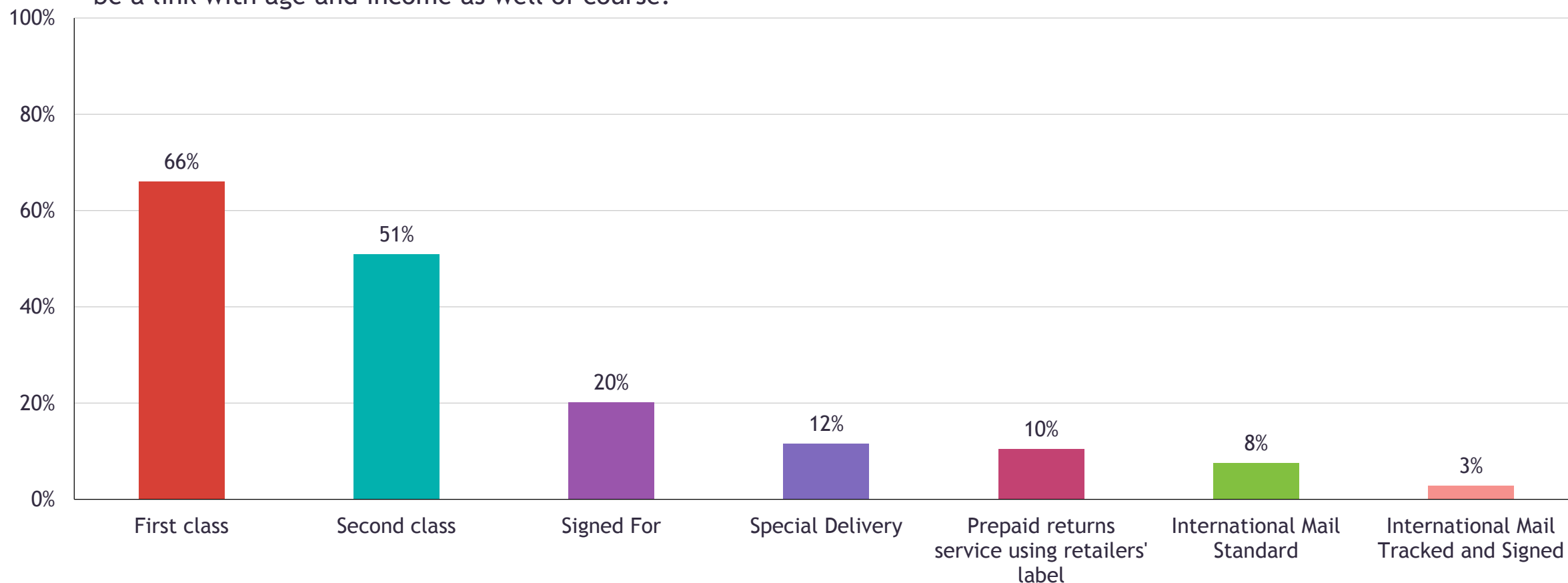


In the last 12 months how often have you used those postal providers to send parcels?

(Base: those using each service - as shown on chart) Note: only those services with 49 responses or higher shown

# In addition to first and second class, a fifth have used the 'signed for' service for letters

Most enhanced services are used more by older people and higher income groups. Those with £40,000 to £59,999 household income use 'signed for' (28%) and First Class (80%) more than those under £20,000 (22% and 64% respectively) and there will be a link with age and income as well of course.



Which of the following Royal Mail services have you used in the last 12 months? Please tick all that apply.

Letters (Base: all - 1,014)



# 3 in 10 have returned a parcel through Royal Mail / Post Office services, a fifth have sent something using the 'signed for service'

There is fairly even usage across age groups, income and location. 35% of those with a disability have used pre-paid labels returns services in the last year, compared to 28% without a disability.

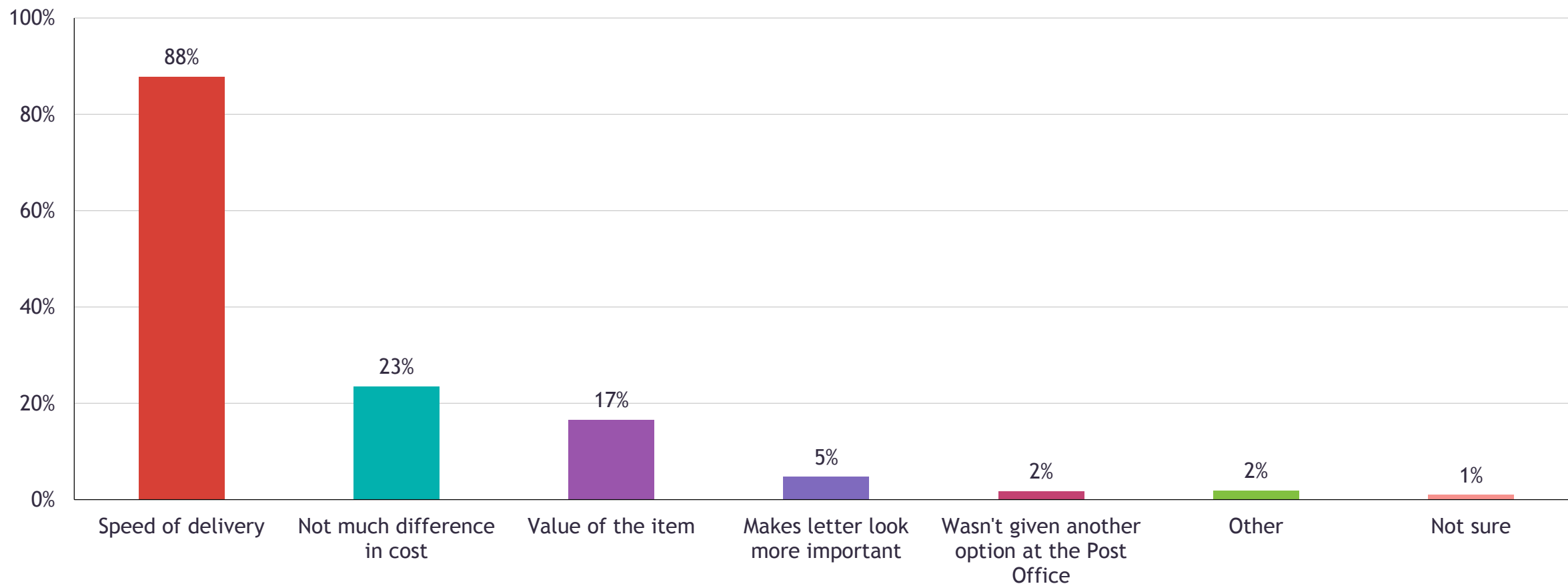


Which of the following Royal Mail services have you used in the last 12 months? Please tick all that apply.

Parcels (Base: all - 1,014)

# The vast majority choose First Class postage for speed, a quarter do so because the cost difference isn't much

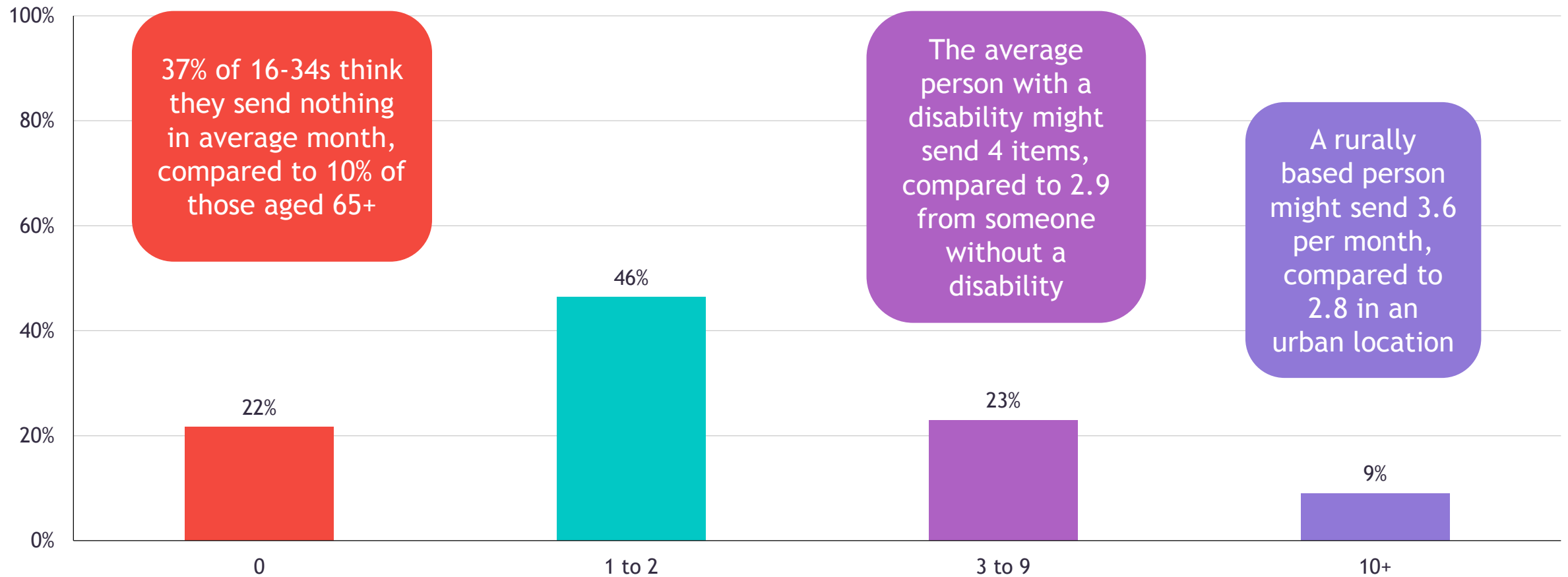
Reasons for using First Class do not tend to vary by age, location, income or disability.



For which, if any, of the following reasons do you use First class instead of Second Class? Please tick all that apply.  
(Base: first class users - 738).

# The average number of items (letters and parcels) each person sends per month is 3.3

The median of 1 item each per month suggests that some are sending a lot of items, indeed 1 in 10 estimates they post 10 or more.

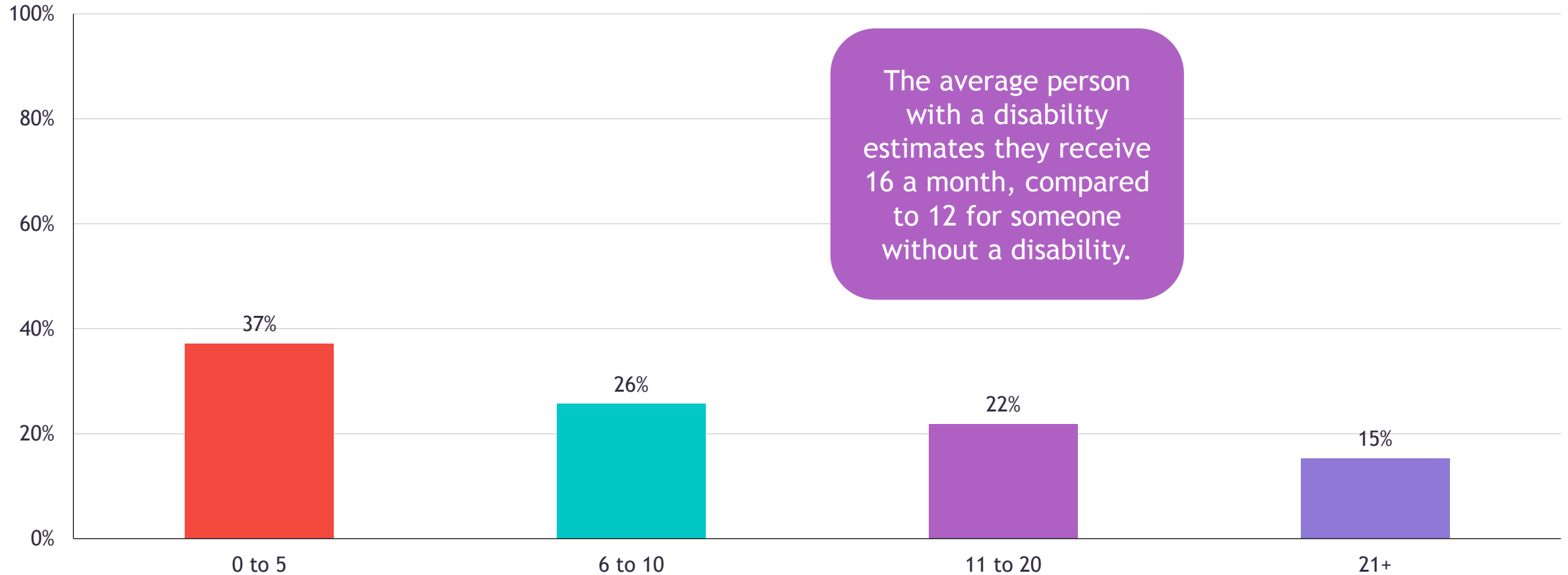


Approximately how many items of post (including letters, packets and parcels) do you personally send in an average month?

(Base: all - 1,014)

# An average of 13.2 letters are received each month

Those aged 65+ think they receive an average of 21 letters a month compared to just 7 for 16 to 34s. Items received don't vary as much by urban or rural location.



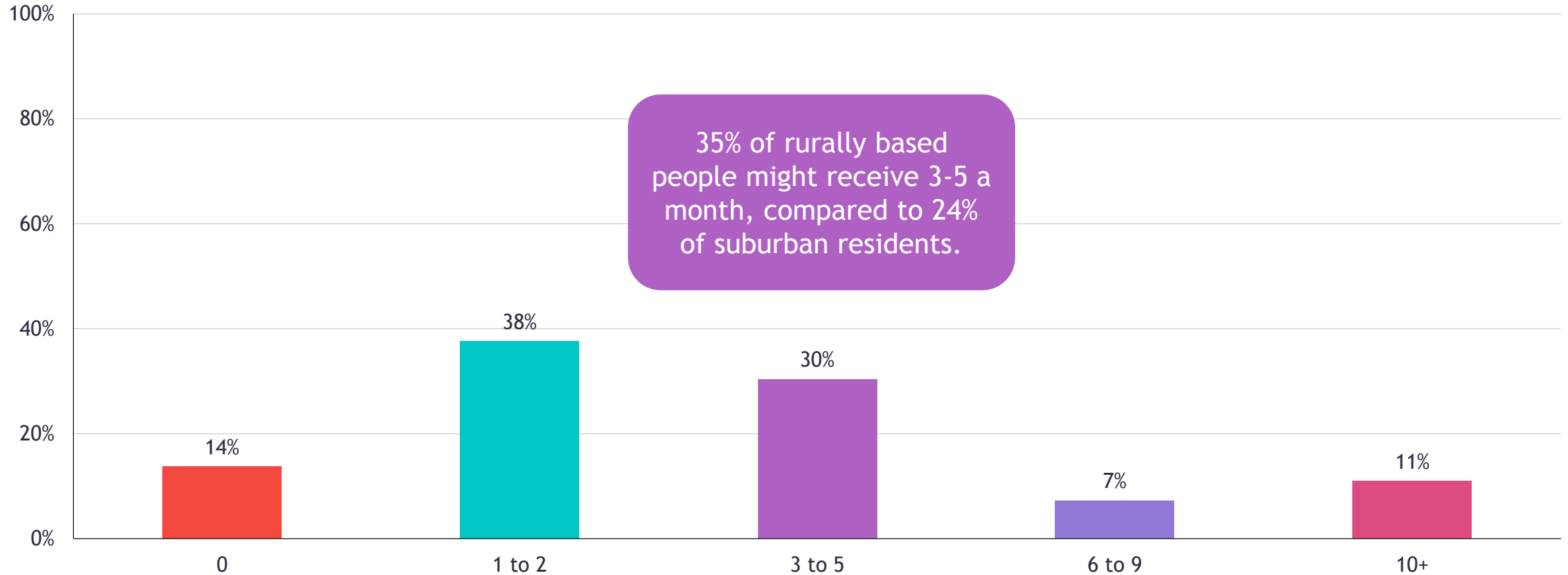
12

In an average month, can you estimate how many letters you receive?

(Base: all - 1,014)

# An average of 3.7 parcels are received each month

This is not so affected by age differences. However those with a disability estimate they receive 4.5 parcels a month compared to 3.3 for those without a disability.



In an average month, can you estimate how many parcels you receive?

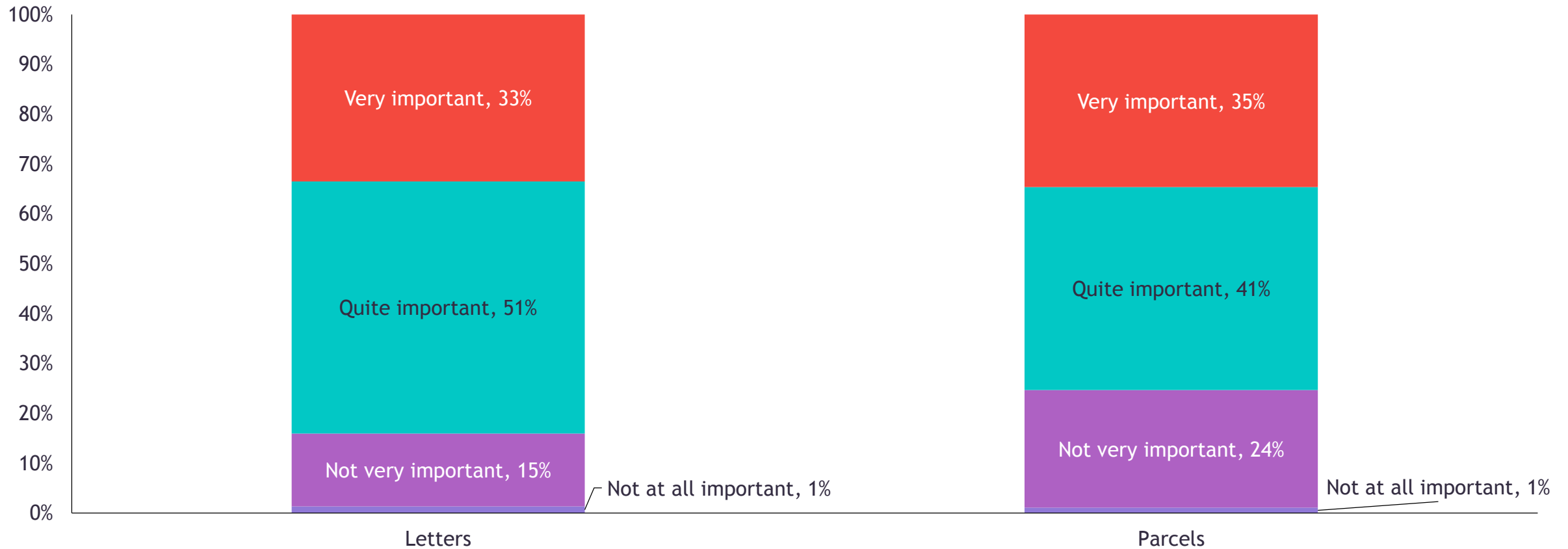
(Base: all - 1,014)

# Priorities and acceptance of services



# Most users of First Class consider it important that the mail arrives the next working day, more so for letters than parcels

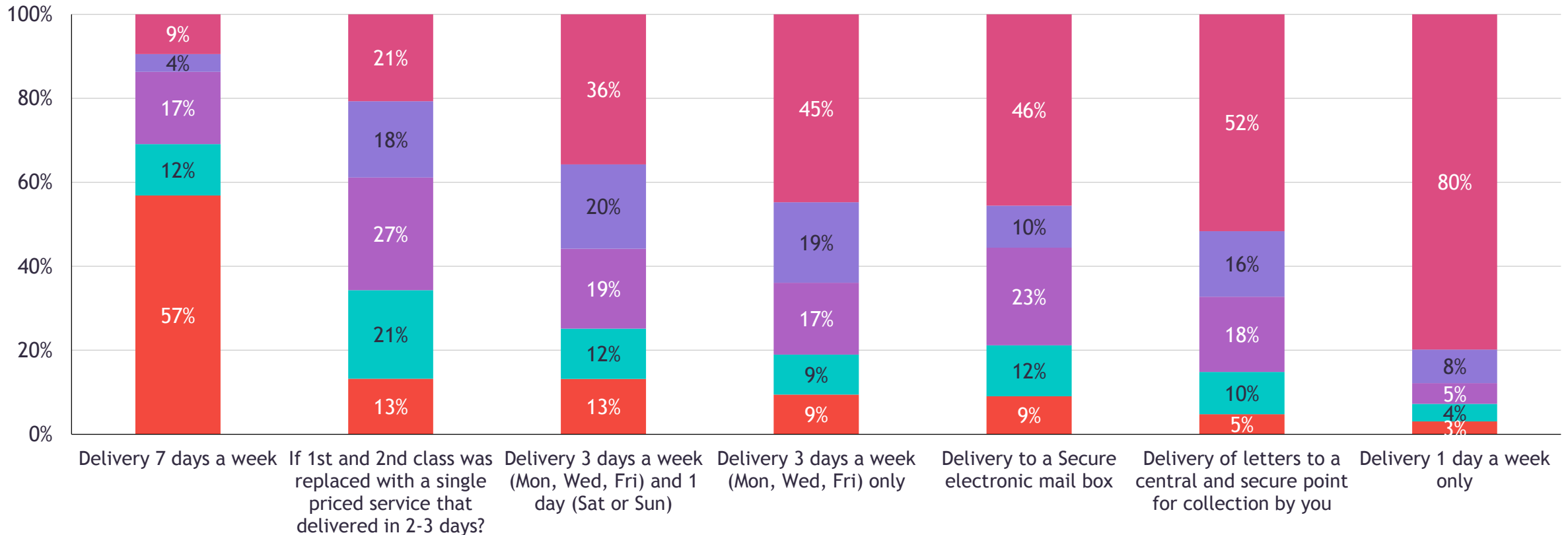
91% of those sending 6 or more letters a month think it is very or quite important, compared to 80% of those sending one or fewer.



# None of the reduced service scenarios for letter delivery command a majority that are willing to accept. The replacement of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class is supported by 34% and opposed by 39%.

Only 2% of those aged 65+ are willing to accept 1 day a week only, compared to 10% of 16-34s. Over a third (34%) support one price replacing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class with little variation by age, location, income or disability, but 39% are opposed.

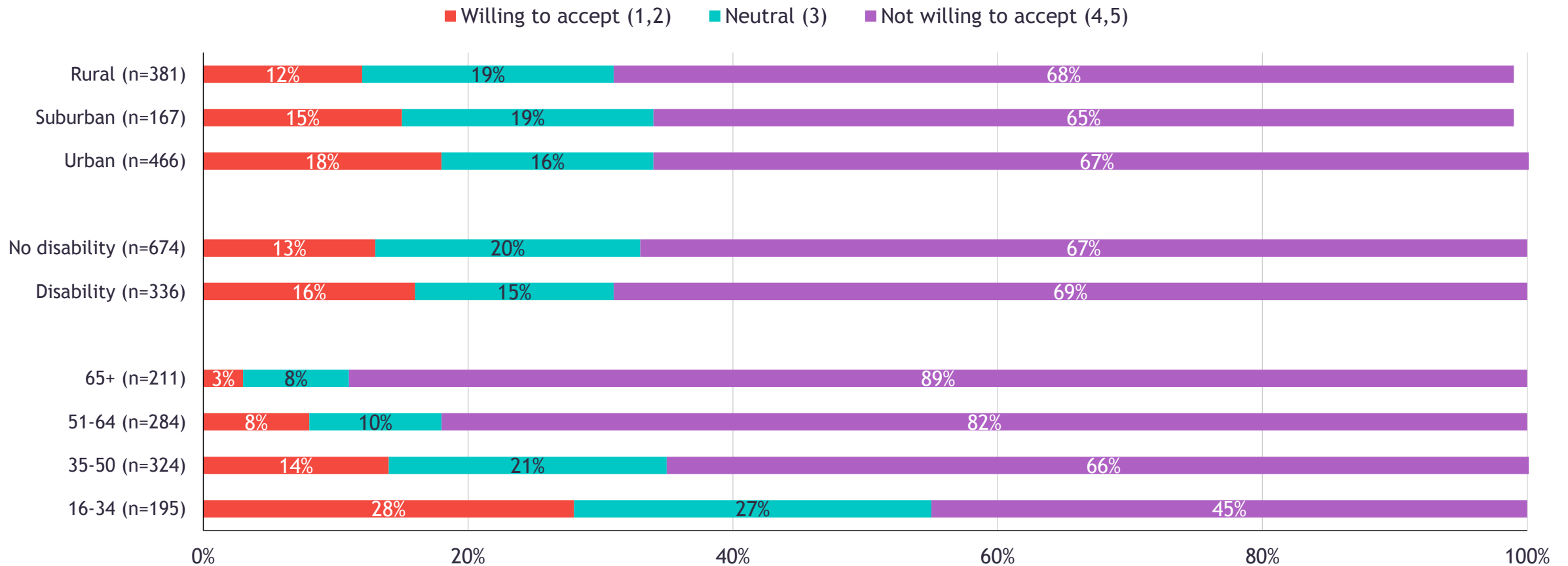
1 - Very willing to accept   2   3   4   5 - Not at all willing to accept





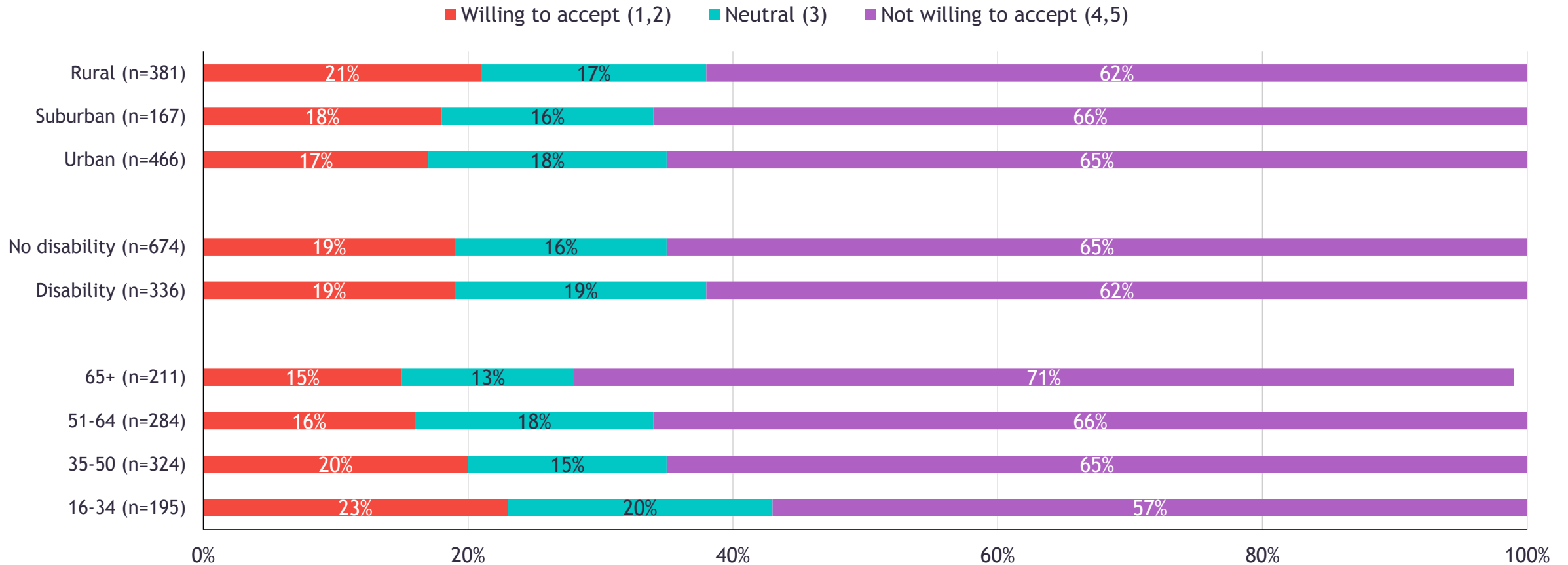
# Only 15% are willing to accept delivery to central and secure collection and 67% oppose it

It is considered more acceptable by younger people and those living in urban areas but still not by a majority.



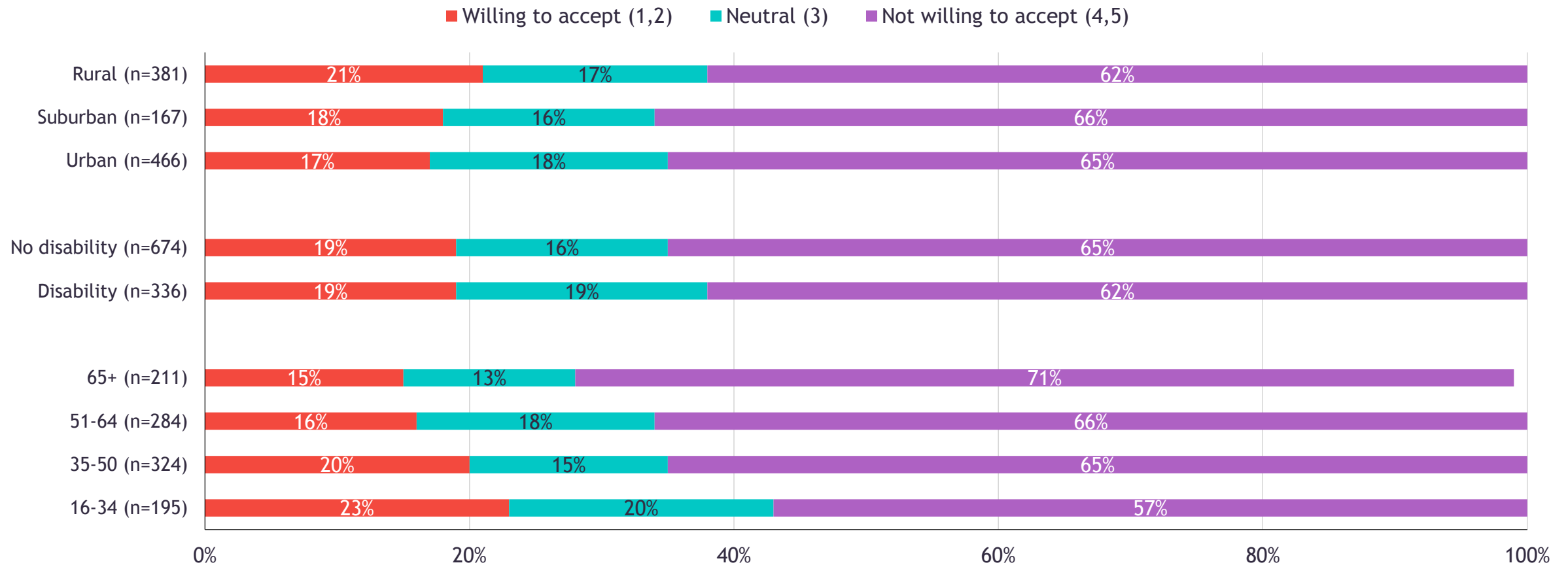
# Delivery just 3 weekdays a week is considered acceptable by just 19% overall and 64% would be unwilling

Little difference on the basis of location disability or income, only that more younger people are comfortable with the idea.



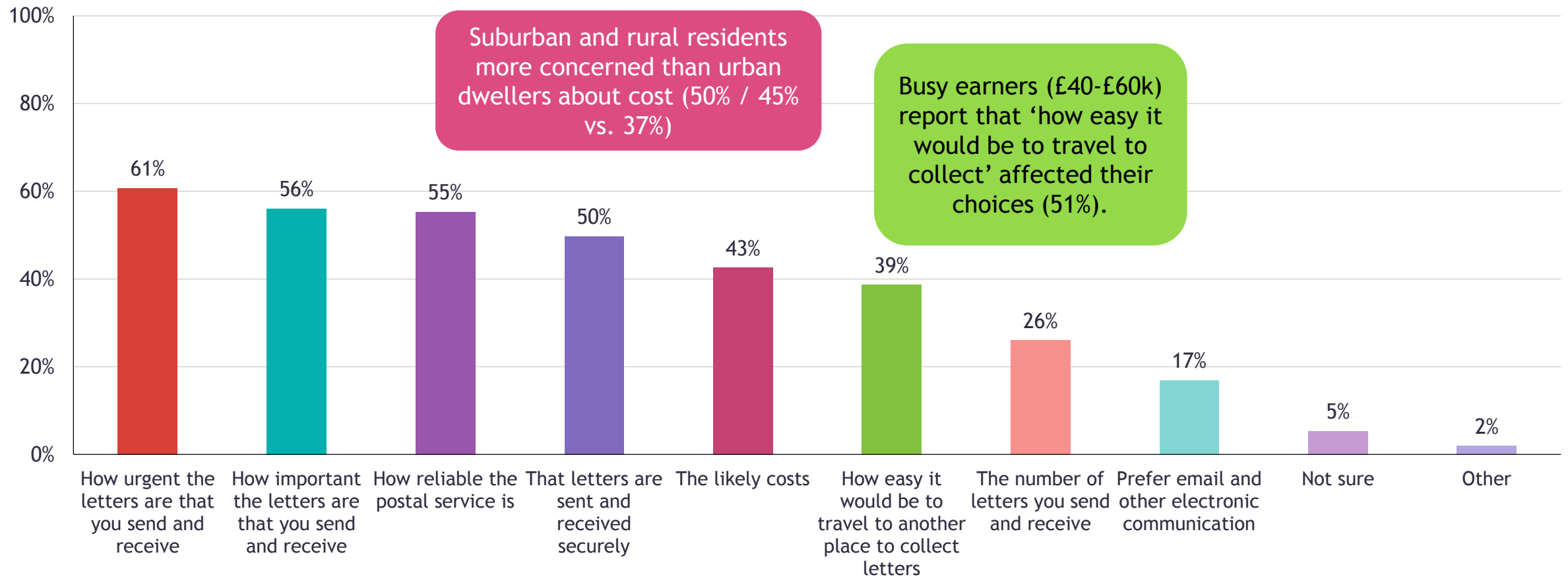
# Over a third (34%) support the idea of one single price replacing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class

Little difference on the basis of location disability or income, only that more younger people are comfortable with the idea.



# Urgency, importance, reliability and security all feature strongly in consumer decision making

Reliability, importance and security are greater factors for older people. For example, 65% of 65+ cite reliability as a key issue. 24% of those aged 16-34 prefer email and other forms of electronic communication.

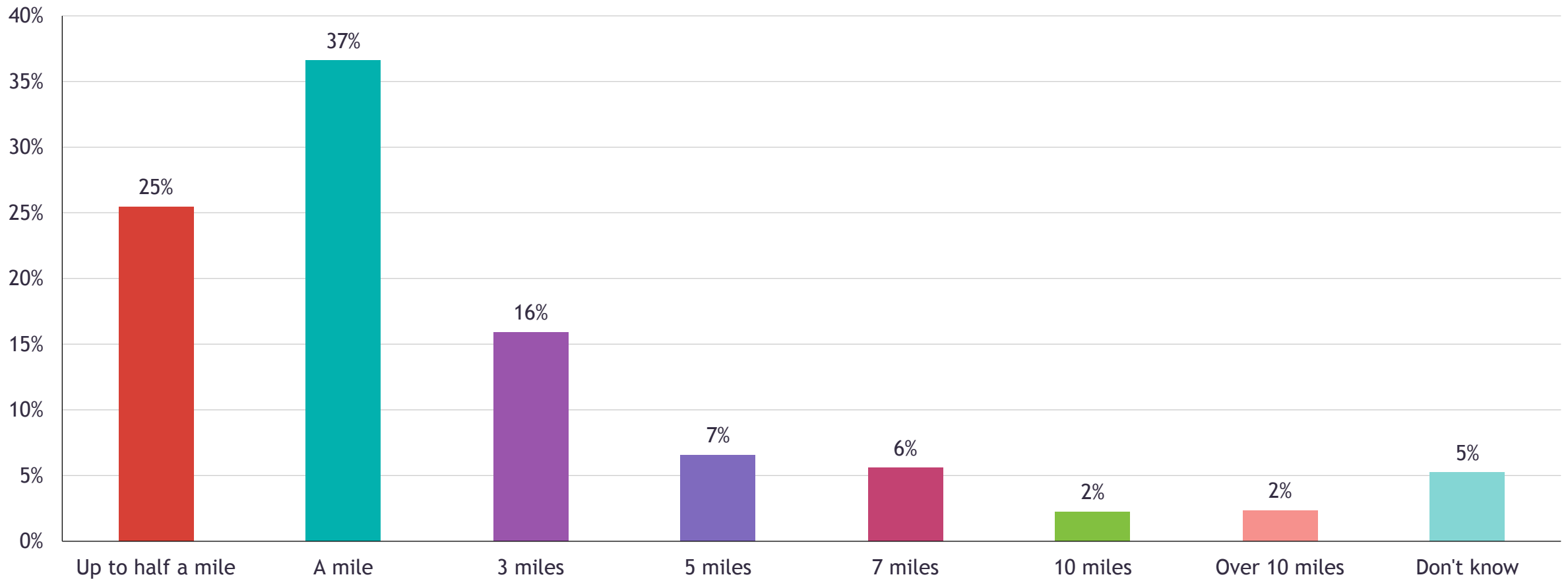


Which, if any, of the following influence the choices you just made? Please tick all that apply

(Base: all - 1,014)

# 15% were willing to accept having to travel to collect letters, 62% of them feel this should be no more than a mile

Because relatively few were comfortable with this concept there are no significant differences between the most interesting sub-groups.

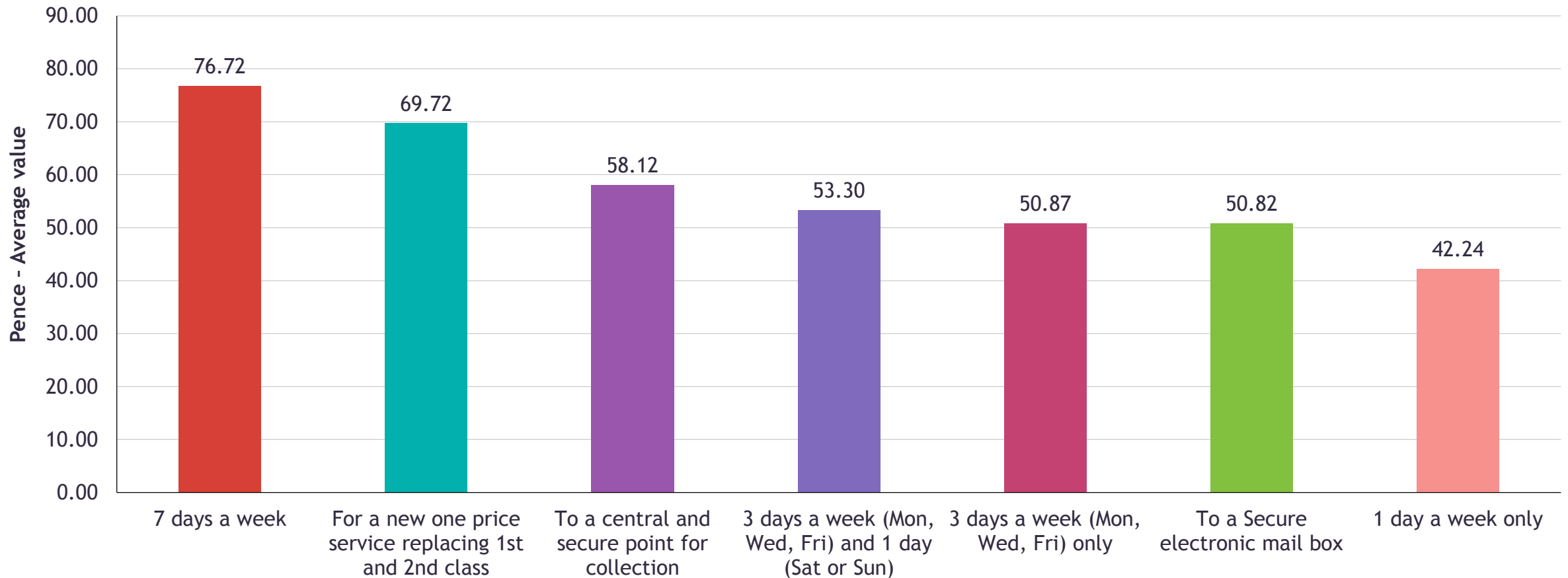


If you might be willing to travel to a central and secure point for collection, how far would you be willing to travel?

(Base: those willing to accept points for collection - 122)

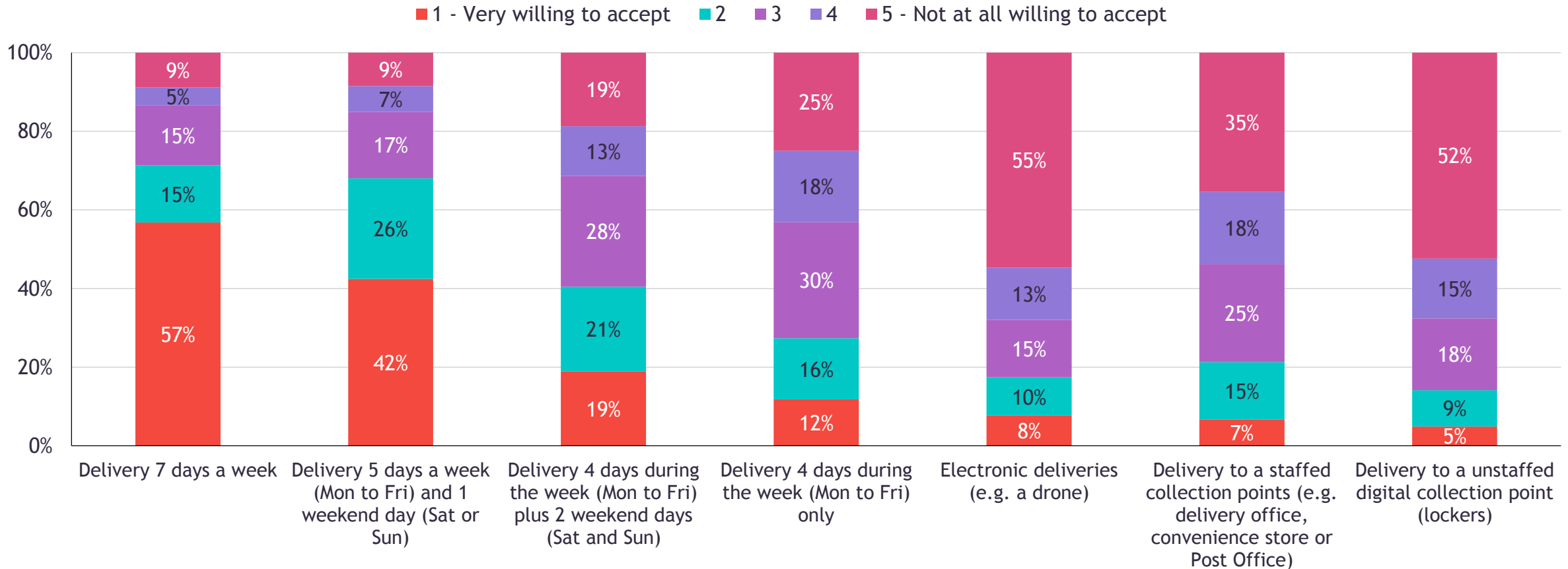
# On average they would pay the same as a current 1<sup>st</sup> class letter (70p) for a combined 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class service

They were also willing to pay more for a central collection pick-up than the reduced 3 days a week options.



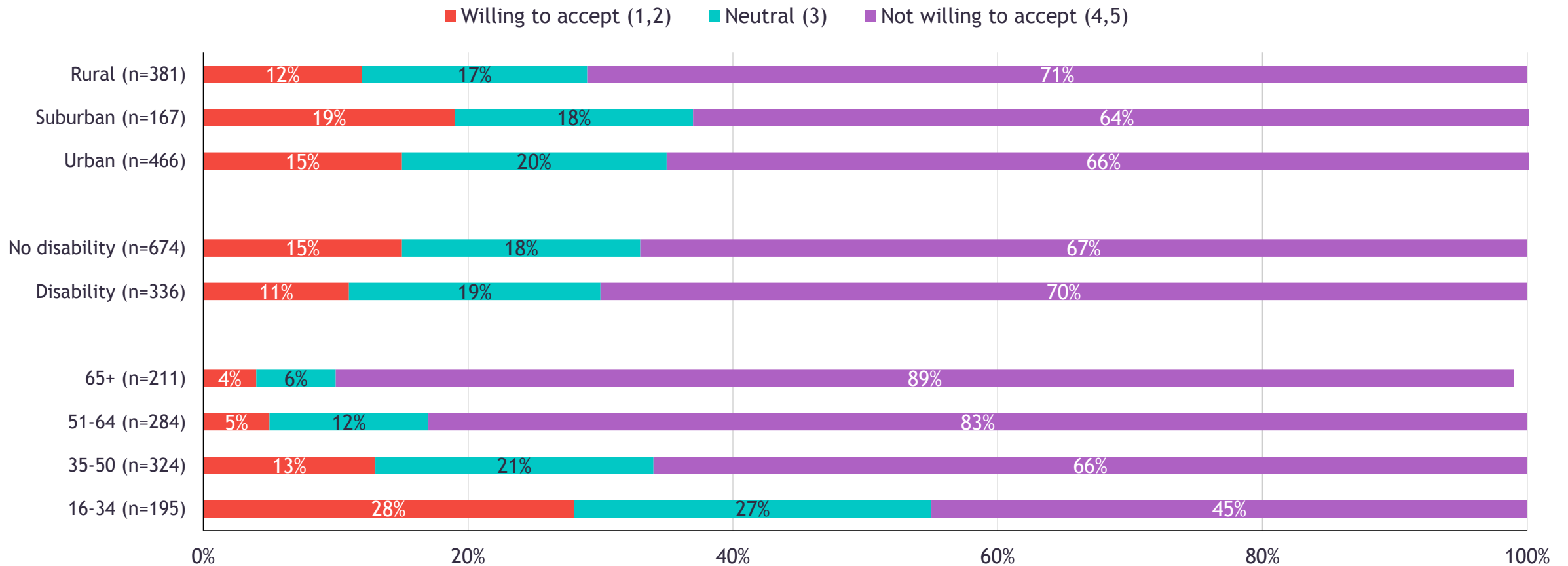
# Delivery of parcels 5 days a week plus a weekend day was popular with over two-thirds support, but takeaway a weekday and support collapses

Delivery for collection at unstaffed lockers was the least popular idea, delivery by drones drew the strongest 'not at all' response



# Limited support (14%) for delivery to unstaffed digital collection point such as lockers

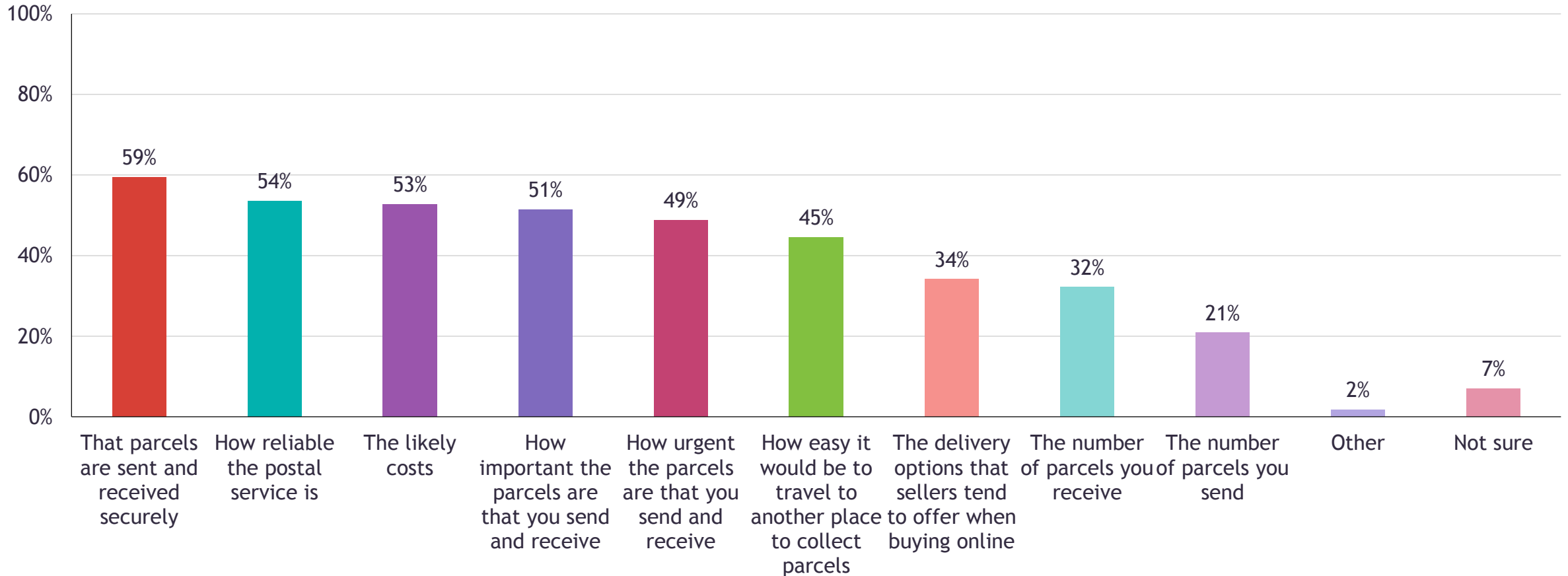
More younger people and men (17%, women 11%) like to support the idea, just 4% of those aged 65+ would be comfortable with that solution.





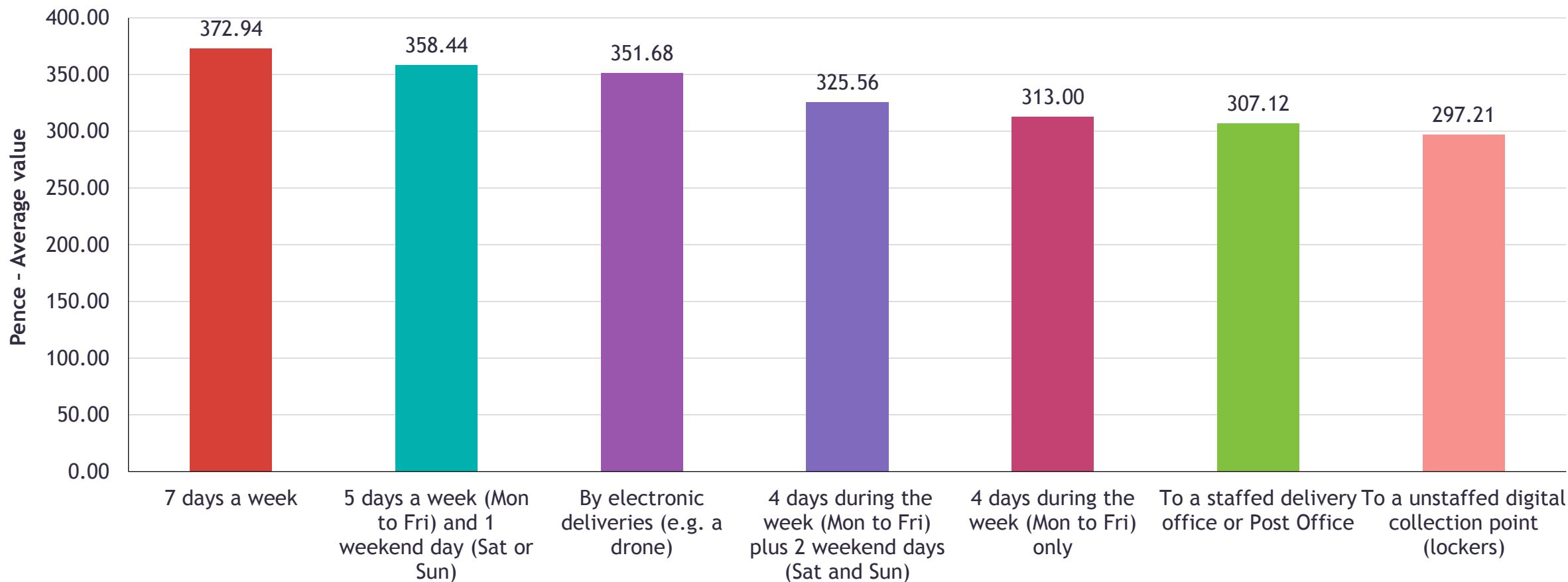
# For parcels, the important aspects are felt to be security, reliability and cost

Strongest feelings amongst older people, for example 69% concerned about security of parcels, compared to 46% of 16-34s, older people less concerned than younger groups about ease of travelling to another place which could be connected having the time to do so.



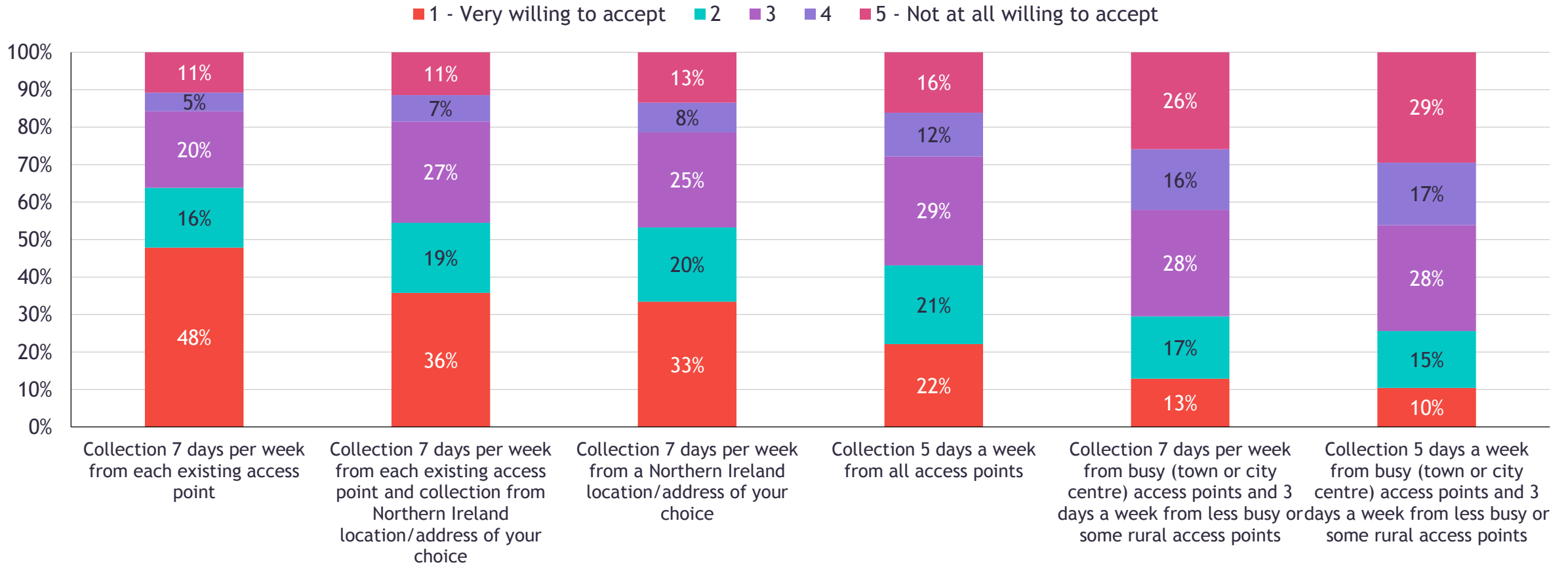
# Supporters of 5 days a week plus a weekend day would spend 8p more than the current standard price

Those willing to accept collection only options like staffed offices or unstaffed lockers expect to pay significantly less, 43p and 53p respectively



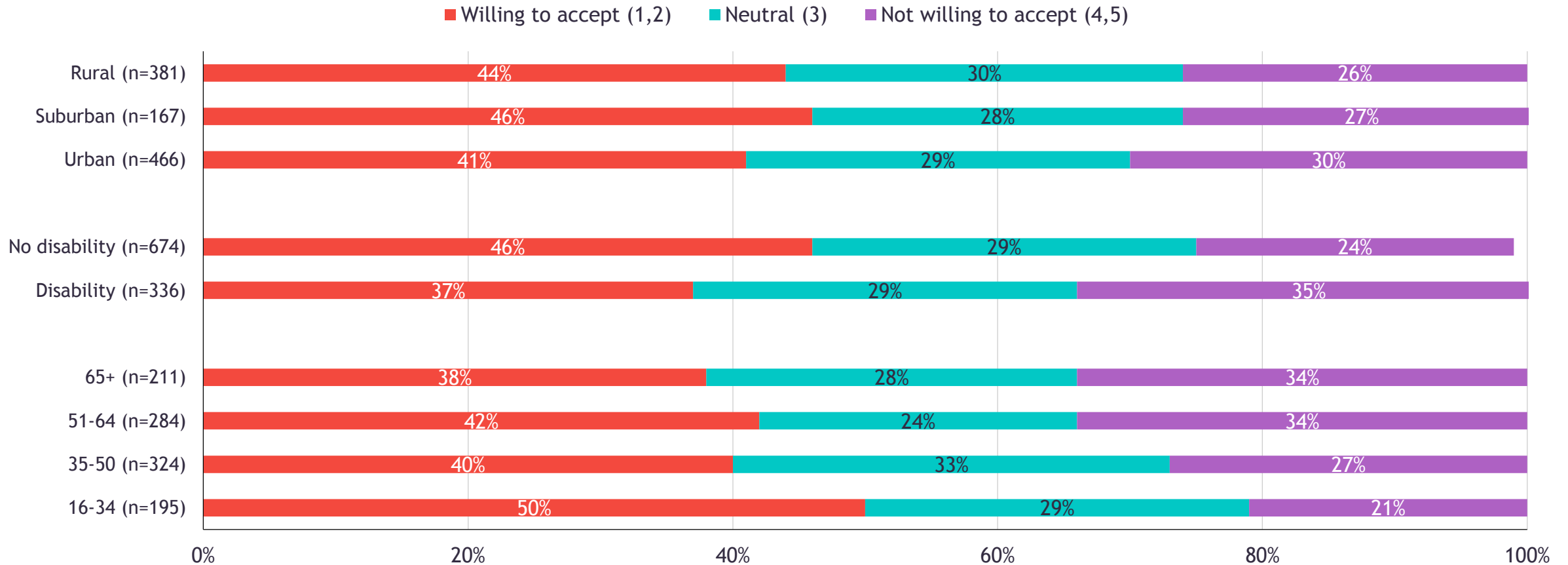
# There is a greater willingness to accept different letter collection scenarios, but less so where differentiation between town and rural frequency

But uncertainty about the idea of just 3 times a week from less busy rural areas



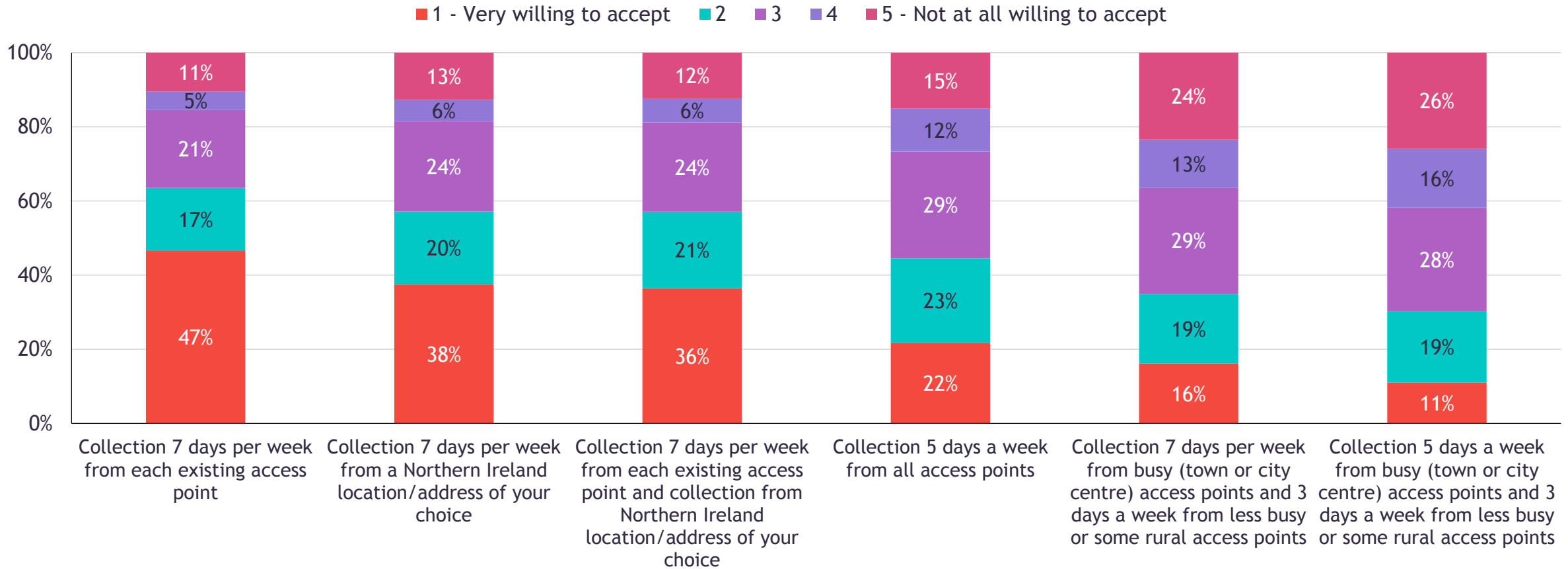
# 5 day a week collection from all access points has broad support (43%) with 28% unwilling

Younger people comfortable with the scenario but those with a disability significantly more likely to be concerned than those without.



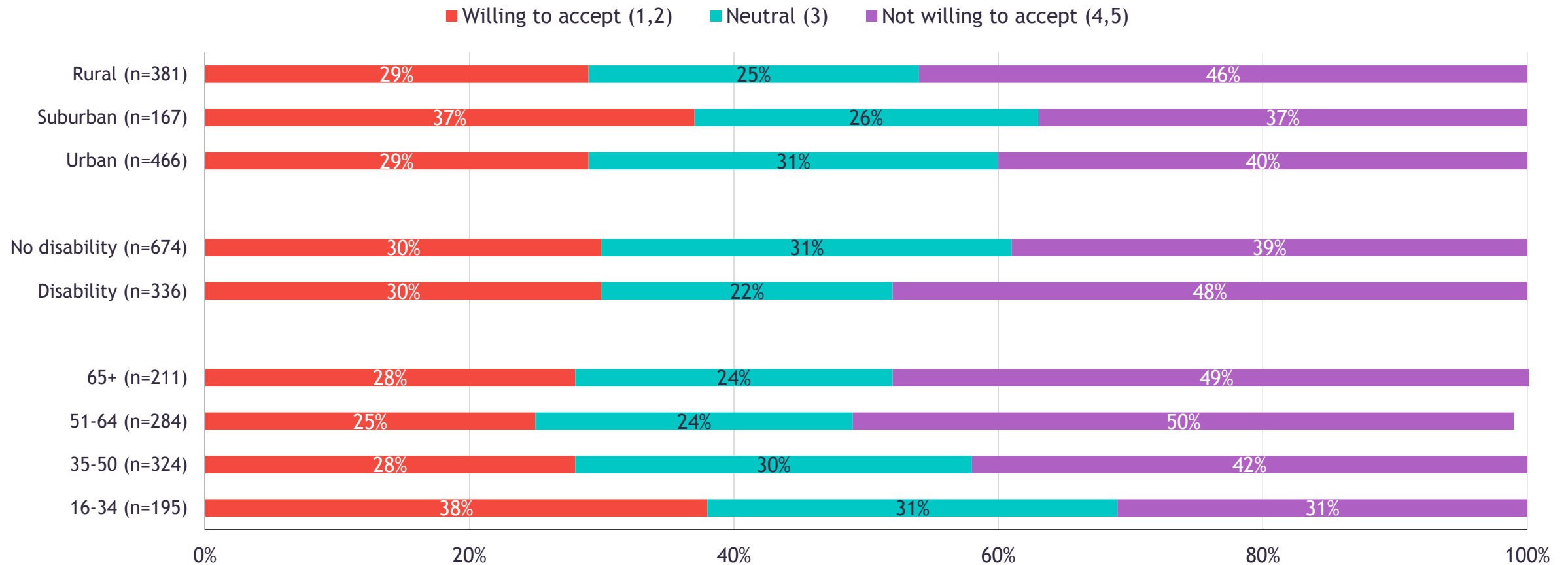
# With parcels 7 days a week collection is a well supported enhancement, but only around a third willing to accept 3 days a week from less busy / rural areas.

38% of younger people willing to accept 5 weekdays and 3 in less busy / rural areas, but just 25% of 51-64s and 28% of 65+ agree.



# 5 day a week collection, but 3 days in less busy / rural areas is supported by 30%, opposed by 42%

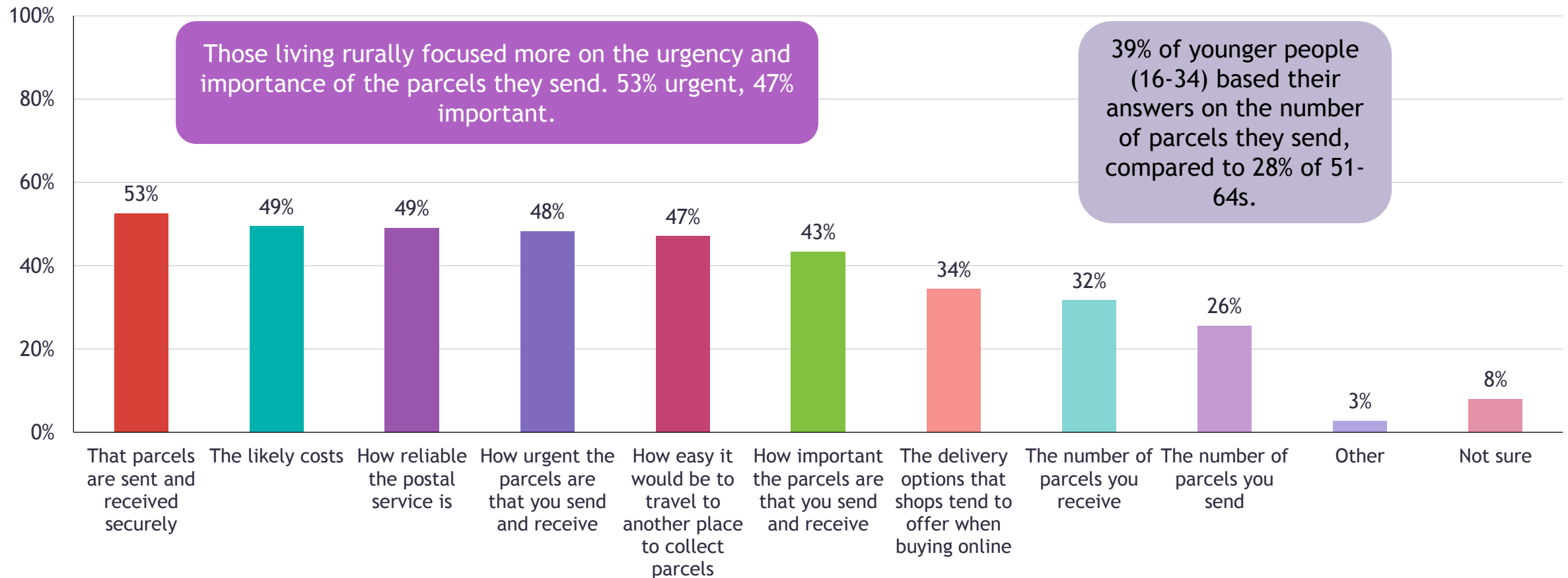
Younger people comfortable with the scenario but those with a disability significantly more likely to be concerned than those without.



The current obligation on Royal Mail is one collection of parcels every Monday to Friday from appointed access points (such as Post Offices or any staffed collection point) across the UK. How willing or not would you be to accept the following scenarios? Collection 5 days a week from busy (town or city centre) access points and 3 days a week from less busy or some rural access points Base: as shown

# When considering collection, nearly half thought about how easy it would be for them to travel to a another place to collect

Older people more concerned about security of collection and receipt, 66% of over 65s, compared to 47% of 16-34s.



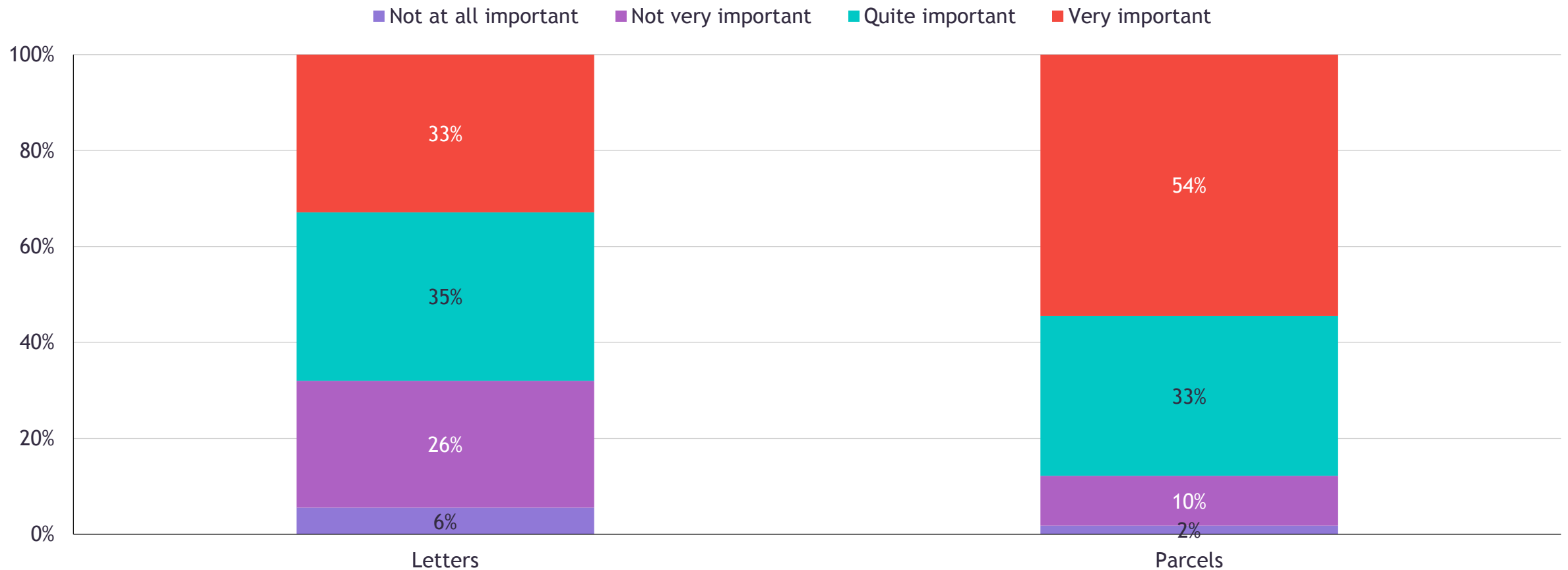
# Value of postal services





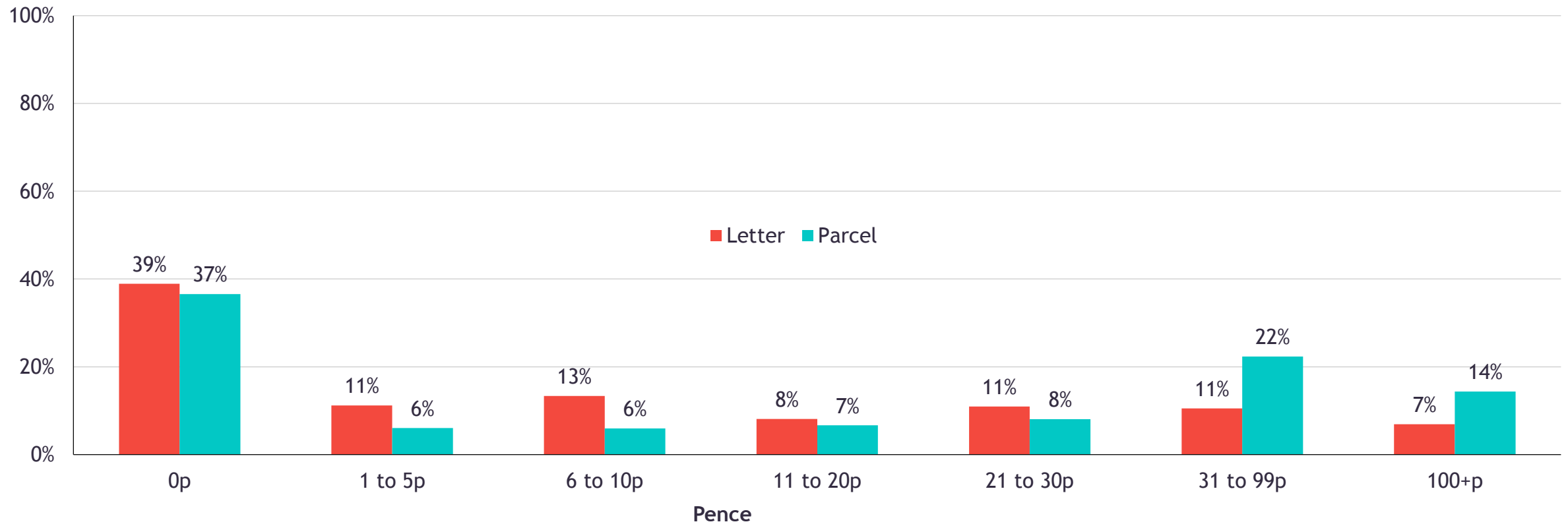
# Over half consider Track & Trace to be very important for parcels

For letters, 73% of women feel that Track & Trace is important, compared to 63% of men, no difference on parcels. 78% of those with a disability also recognised that importance for letters, compared to 63% of those without.



# Over 60% would consider paying for Track & Trace for both parcels and letters

For letters the median value was 5p and 20p for parcels. Those values were in the context of the current 70p and 350p basic costs for each.

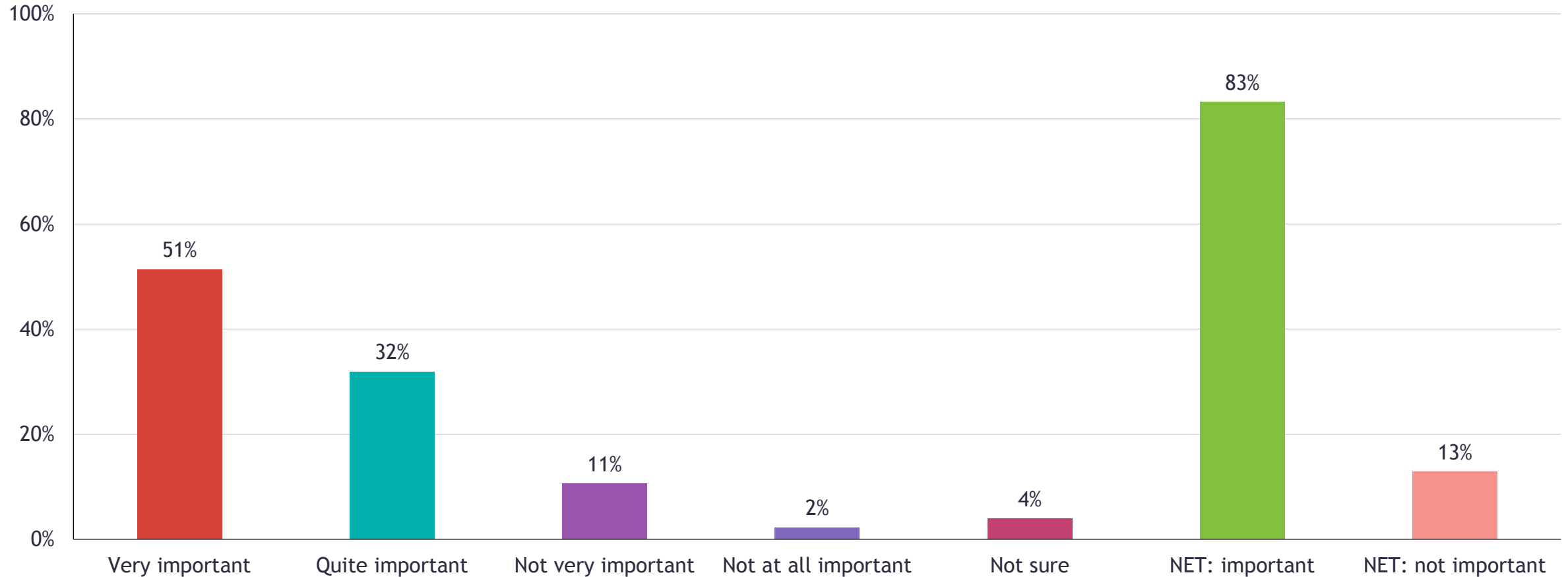


# Younger, urban and more affluent people willing to pay more for Track & Trace



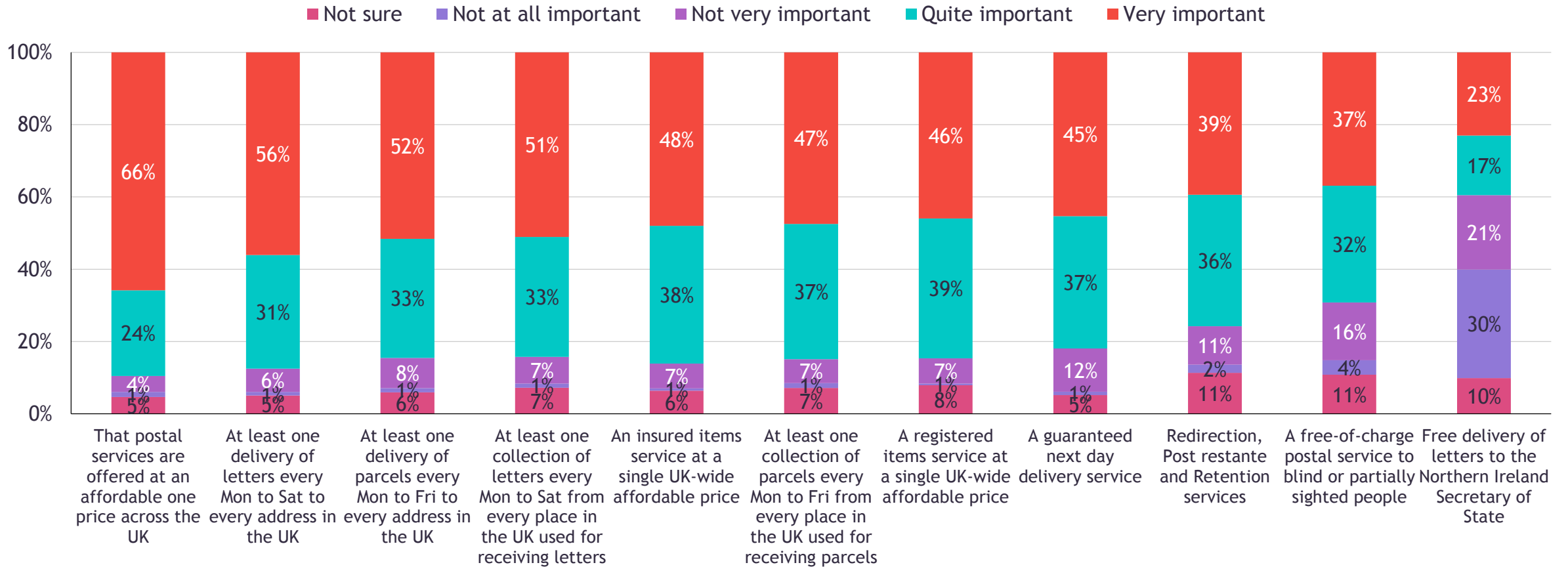
# The vast majority (83%) feel that the guaranteed next day delivery service is important

There is broad agreement on the importance across age, location, disability and income.

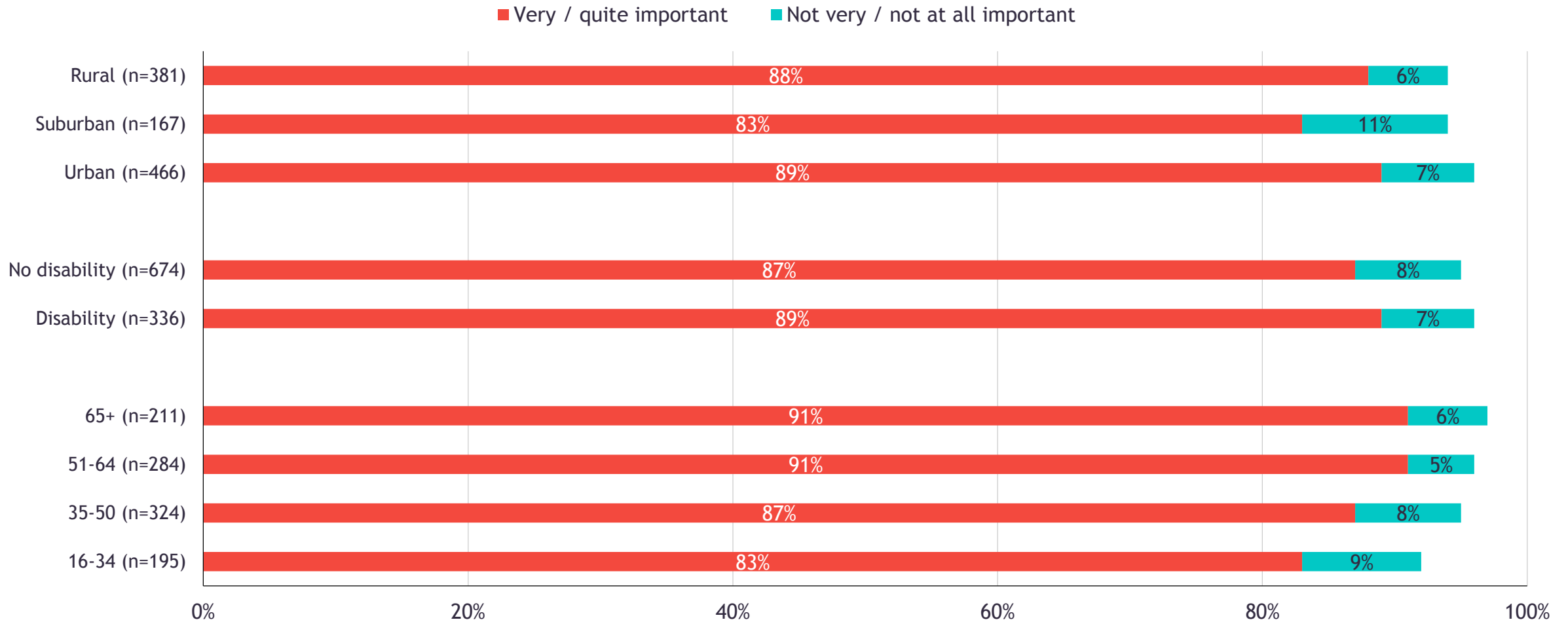


# When thinking of others, all services are considered important

There is strongest support for an affordable single price UK wide solution.

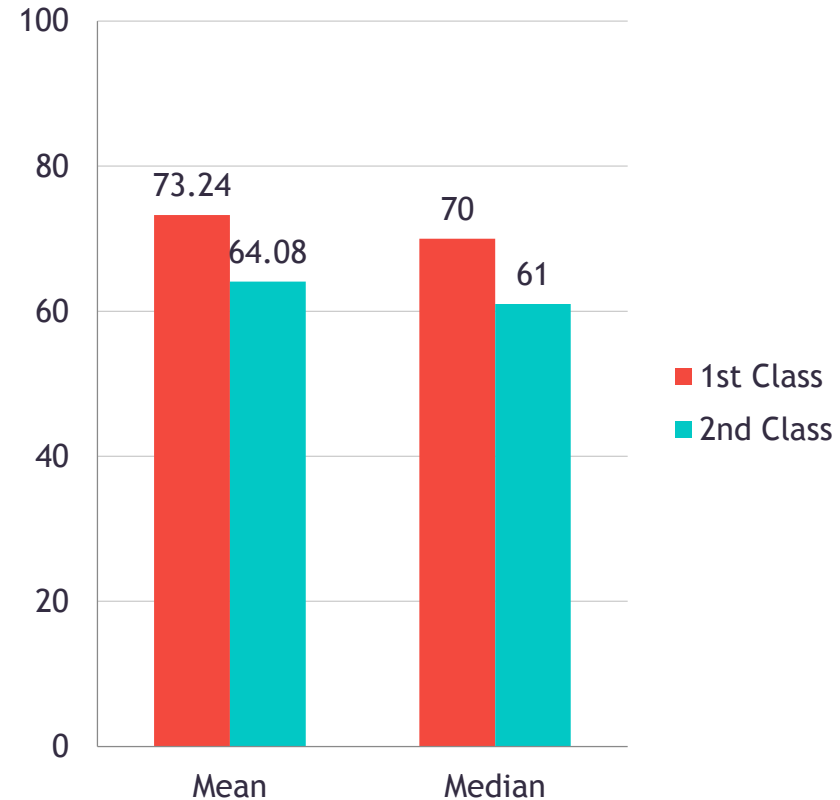
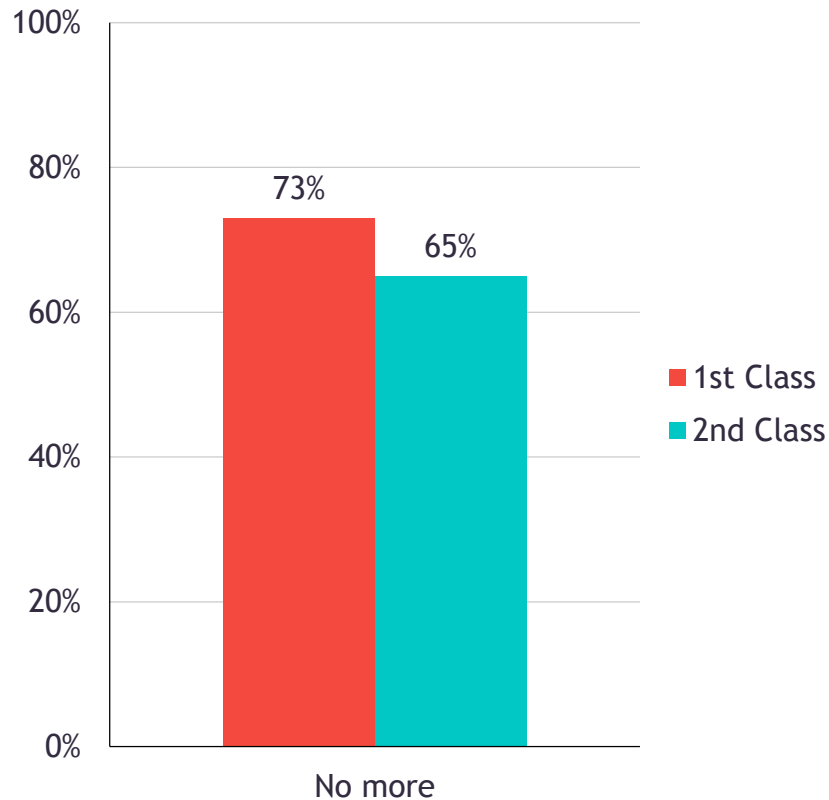


# At least one delivery every weekday and Saturday is still strongly supported, but less so by younger people



# Most expect the ‘one price to anywhere in the UK’ service to be maintained without paying more

Taking that into account, the mean willingness to pay is 73p for 1<sup>st</sup> class and 64p for 2<sup>nd</sup>.



# Older people, those on lower incomes, living rurally and with a disability most likely to want to pay no more than at present



From the 25th March, a standard size First Class letter to UK addresses will cost 70p and Second Class letter will cost 61p. The Royal Mail aim to deliver 1st class items to their UK destination by the next working day and 2nd class within 2-3 working days. Currently, Royal Mail is the only postal provider that is regulated to provide a “one price to anywhere in the UK” postal service. How much would you be willing for 1st and 2nd class stamps to keep that “one price to anywhere in the UK” for each class of mail? Please type the amount in pence. If you would not pay any more type in 70 or 61 respectively. Base: as shown



# Appendix



# Respondent breakdown

		Unweighted	Weighted
Gender	Men	492	497
	Women	522	517
Age	16-34	195	304
	35-50	324	298
	51-64	284	246
	65+	211	167
Urban / Rural	Urban	466	389
	Suburban	167	182
	Rural	381	443

		Unweighted	Weighted
Disability	Limited a lot	132	143
	Limited a little	204	202
	No	674	663
Gross Household income	<£20,000	203	234
	£20,000 to £39,999	329	306
	£40,000 to £59,999	139	124
	£60,000+	105	80

# Guidance notes for participants repeated at each relevant stage (1)

*When answering this survey please always think about **personal use** of postal services not for business. Also when the survey refers to **letters** we mean standard size letters like greetings cards, personal letters, postcards or bills and for **parcels** we mean small parcels like the size for shoes, small presents, portable speakers or mobile phones for example.*

*From the 25th March a standard size First Class letter to UK addresses will cost 70p. The current obligation on Royal Mail is one delivery of **letters** every Monday to Saturday to every address in the UK.*

*From the 25th March a standard small parcel weighing up to 1kg (e.g. shoe box or mobile phone box) to UK addresses will cost £3.50p. The current obligation on Royal Mail is one delivery of **parcels** every Monday to Friday to every address in the UK.*

## Guidance notes for participants repeated at each relevant stage (2)

*The Royal Mail Special Delivery Guaranteed service guarantees delivery the working next day by either 9am or 1pm or they will refund your cost. It includes tracking of the delivery, higher levels of compensation for loss or damage and insurance for consequential losses.*

*Track & Trace allows you to see where letters and parcels are by looking up their progress online. It is available with services such as Special Delivery.*

*From the 25th March, a standard size First Class letter to UK addresses will cost 70p and Second Class letter will cost 61p. The Royal Mail aim to deliver 1st class items to their UK destination by the next working day and 2nd class within 2-3 working days. Currently, Royal Mail is the only postal provider that is regulated to provide a “one price to anywhere in the UK” postal service.*