



Environmental Protection Agency Public Attitudes To Air Quality

May 2024

Job Reference: 723324/CM



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Objectives and Methodology

RED Line Methodology

/Research was conducted using our RED Line online omnibus on behalf of the EPA to explore awareness of and attitudes towards air quality in particular and environmental issues generally.

/Through our online panel of over 40,000 members, the RED Line service allows you to reach a representative sample of the adult population 18+ across Ireland in a cost effective and timely manner.

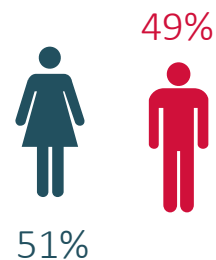
/Quota controls are used to ensure a nationally representative sample of ROI adults aged 18+, with interlocking quotas to provide extra confidence in sample profile

/Data was weighted across Gender, age, region and social class so as to ensure a nationally representative sample based on latest CSO projections.

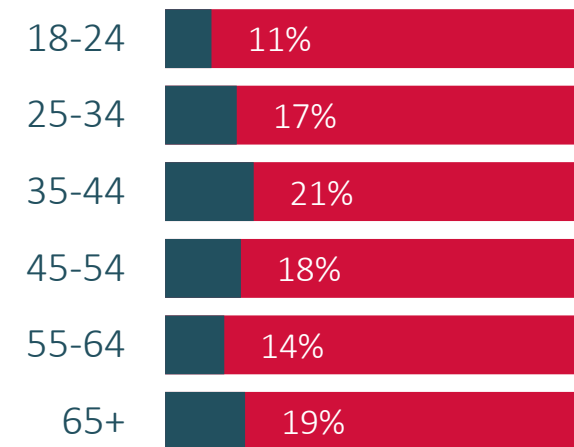
/1,027 respondents took part in this survey between the 19th and 25th April 2024.



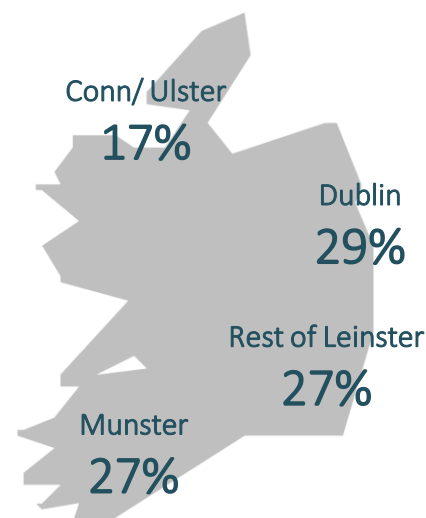
Gender



Age



Region



Social Class



2

Key Findings

So What is this Report Telling us?

1. Climate change is considered most pressing issue by almost half, similar to 2021. ABC1s and Dubliners most likely to rate Climate Change 1st. Waste and water pollution make up a further one third of concern. Air pollution and radiation are lower down the list of top concerns. Very little change evident on the findings from 2021.
2. **Air pollution less likely seen as an issue at National level than it was back in 2021** although 3 in 5 Irish adults still believe it to be a Very or Fairly Serious problem, a decline of 5% points on 2021 levels. **Only 1 in 3 believe it to be a problem in their local area, similar to 2021.** Females and adults between the ages of 18 and 34 are most likely to believe we have a national issue with poor air quality. Urban dwellers are twice as likely as rural to claim there is a problem with air quality in their locality.
3. Familiarity with all health risks decline on 2021 levels. Carbon Monoxide, followed by E. Coli are the most well known risks. The biggest decline in familiarity is with E. Coli which declines by 8% points on the level seen in 2021.
4. Only 1 in 12 Irish adults can correctly identify home heating (stoves/fires) as the main source of PM in Ireland. Industry is increasingly incorrectly mentioned. Only 1 in 5 correctly identify diesel cars/trucks/buses as the main source of NO₂, while 1 in 3 incorrectly believe it to be Industry (an increase from 26% to 33% since 2021) and a further 1 in 3 have no idea.
5. EPA is the most mentioned organisation spontaneously, ahead of Google/search engine as being the place to go if looking for information about the air quality in Ireland. On prompting, Met Eireann moves more to the fore.

6. EPA is the most mentioned organisation spontaneously, ahead of Google/search engine as being the place to go if looking for information about the air quality in Ireland. On prompting, Met Eireann moves more to the fore.
7. While there is very strong agreement that air pollution is a serious health risk with 3 in 4 Irish adults agreeing with this statement, this view has declined by 5% points since 2021. Similarly, an increasing (+6% points) significant minority (36%) incorrectly assert that the problem is restricted to our cities. Half of Irish adults incorrectly agree that when it comes to car emissions, CO₂ is just as unhealthy for our lungs as PM and NO₂ on par with 2021 findings.
8. Half of Irish adults claim they do not know about PM and NO₂ being some of the main air pollutants in Ireland.
9. There is declining support since 2021 for implementation of almost all potential transport policy options put to respondents. While 79% in 2021 believed we should increase subsidies for electric cars and other low emissions products, this has now fallen to 65% support. Similar declines also seen for the ban on the sale of new diesel and petrol cars and on the stricter controls on emissions from new vehicles. There is declining support also for all the 'Other' potential policy options, including prohibiting the burning of smoky fuels.
10. Significant increase in the number of adults using public transport more to help reduce air pollution over that seen in 2021 (+14% points). Upgrading homes to make them more energy efficient remains the key change considered going forward to help reduce air pollution in their local area.

3

Ranking of Pressing
Environmental Issues

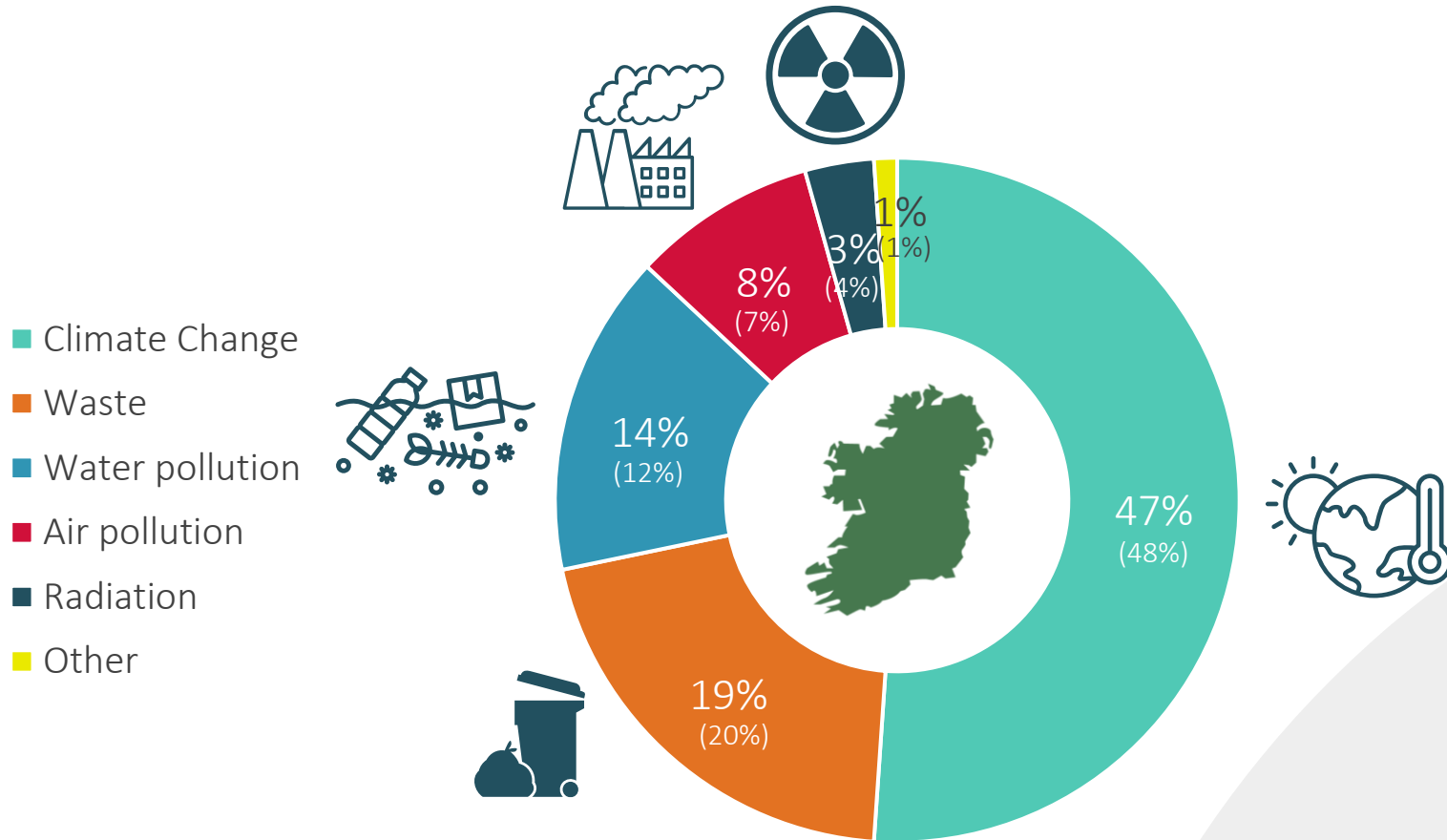
Focus on Air Pollution
National Vs Local

Climate change is considered most pressing issue by half



Waste and water pollution make up a further one third of concern. Air pollution and radiation are lower down the list of top concerns. Very little change evident on the findings from 2021.

Most Pressing Environmental Issues Facing Ireland Today



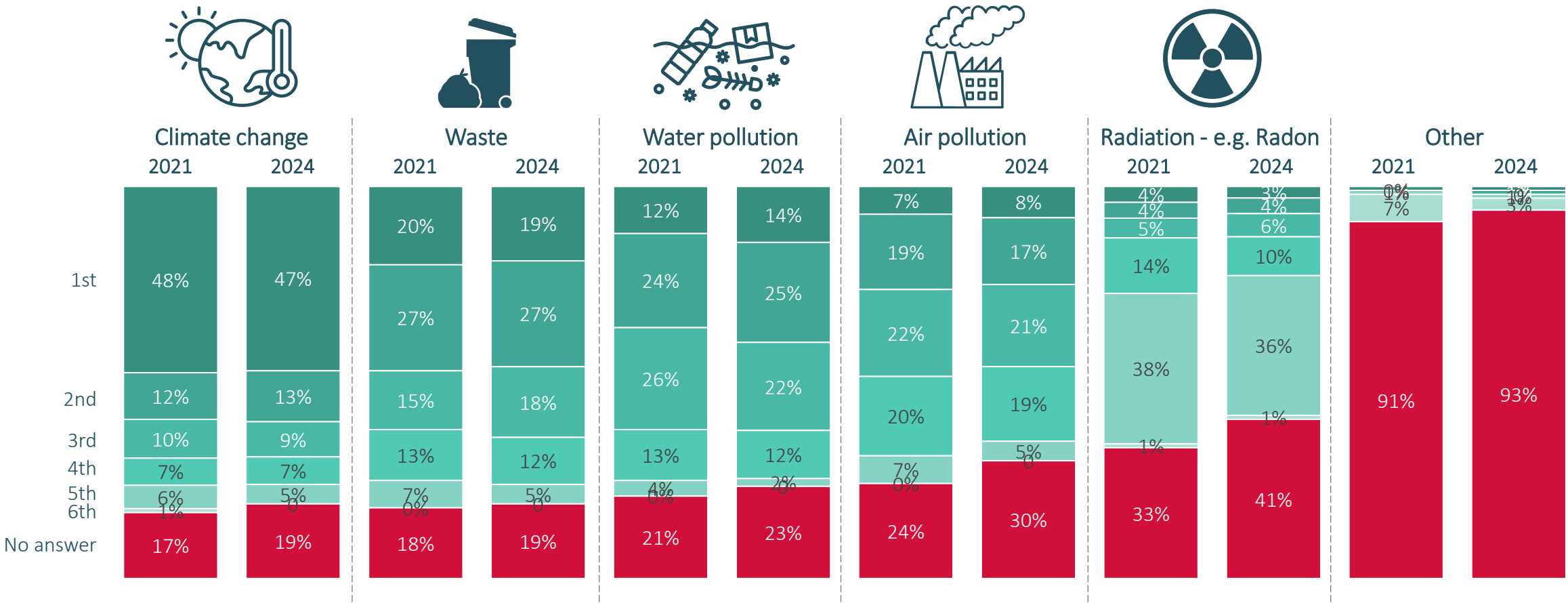
Don't know / No answer: 8% (8%)

Climate change is considered most pressing issue by half



Water pollution increases slightly as a concern since 2021

Most pressing environmental issue(s), if any, facing Ireland as a country



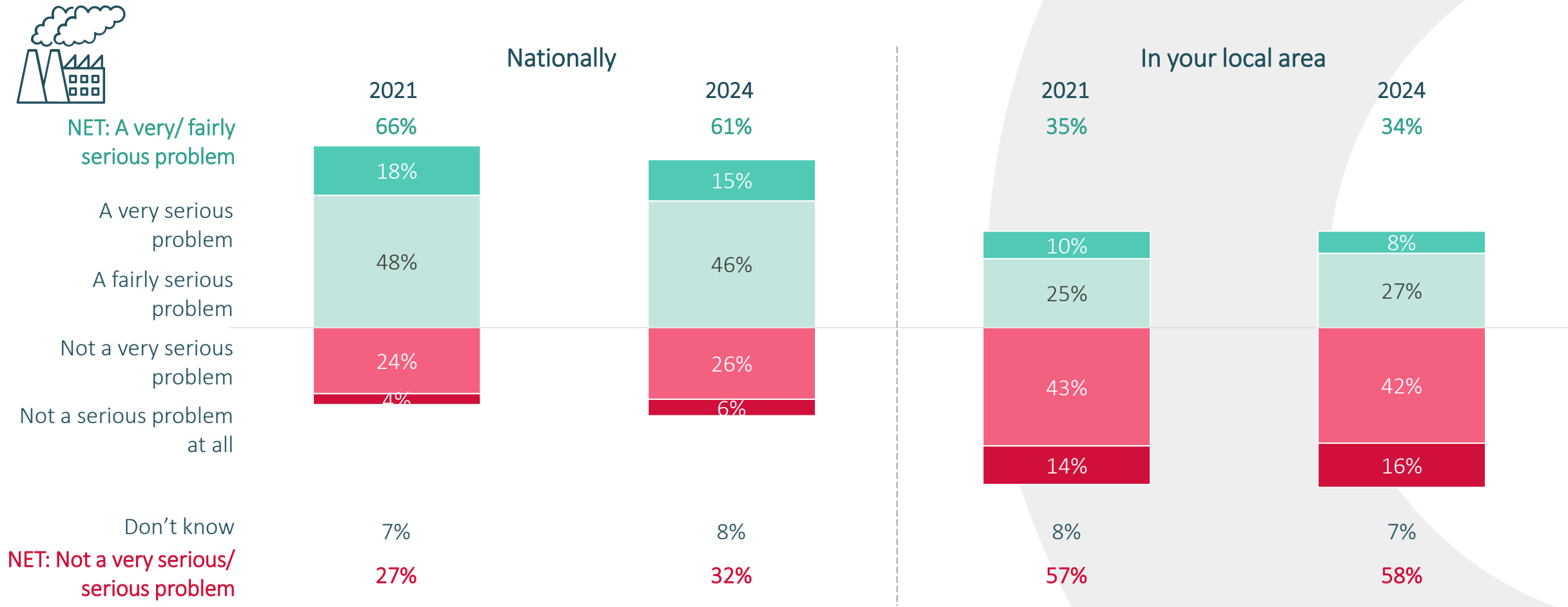
Q1. What do you believe are the most pressing environmental issue(s), if any, facing Ireland as a country?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Air pollution less likely seen as an issue at National level than 2021 C

There is less concern evident for Air Pollution than there was back in 2021 nationally, locally it remains the same

Poor air quality / air pollution is...



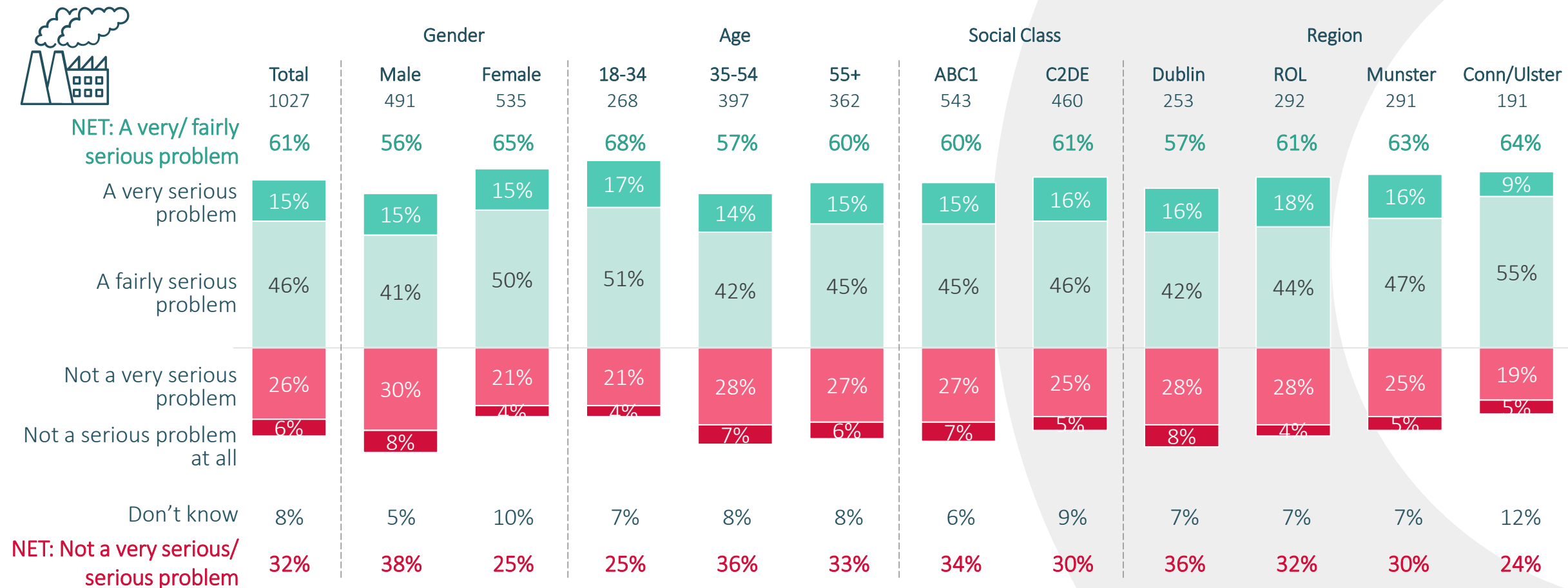
Q4. How much of a problem, if at all, do you believe poor air quality / air pollution is...?
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Females most likely to believe we have a national air quality issue



Younger (18-34) adults, more likely than older age groups to think we have a “serious problem” at national level with air quality / pollution

Poor air quality / air pollution is - Nationally



Q4. How much of a problem, if at all, do you believe poor air quality / air pollution is...?

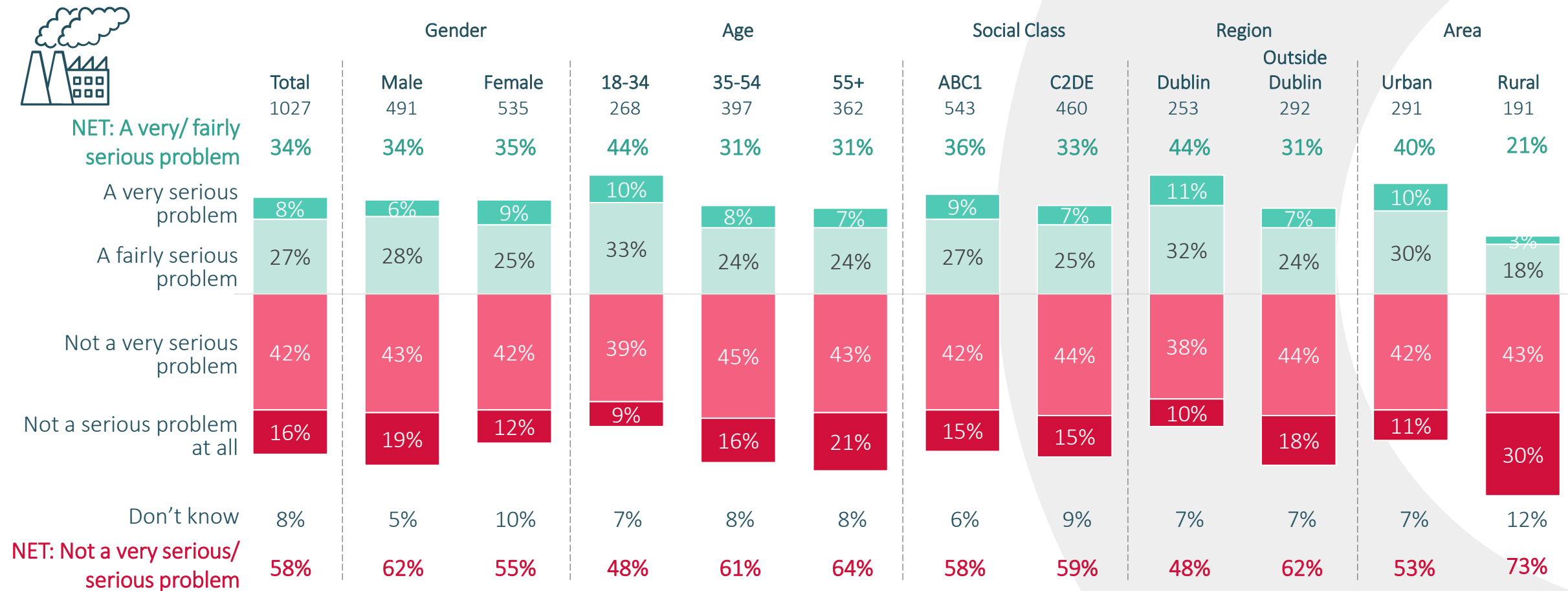
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Urban dwellers much more likely to have local air pollution issues



Those living in rural areas are far more likely than their urban counterparts to not see an issue with air pollution in their local areas. Younger adults and Dubliners also more likely to claim local air quality issues.

Poor air quality / air pollution is - Locally



Q4. How much of a problem, if at all, do you believe poor air quality / air pollution is...?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

4

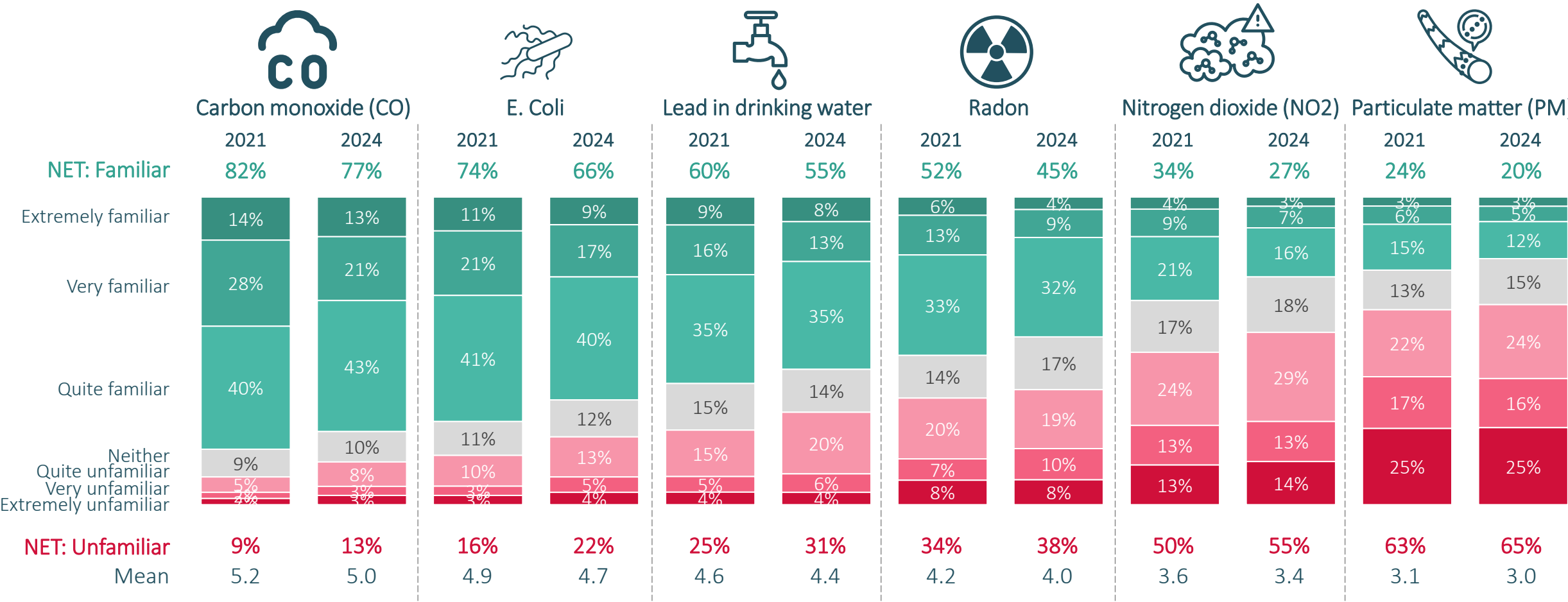
Familiarity With Pollution Risks and Knowledge of Sources

Familiarity with all health risks decline on 2021 levels



Carbon monoxide remains the most well known risk, followed by E. Coli, lead in drinking water and Radon. Nitrogen dioxide and Particulate matter are least well known.

Familiarity with Risks - Summary

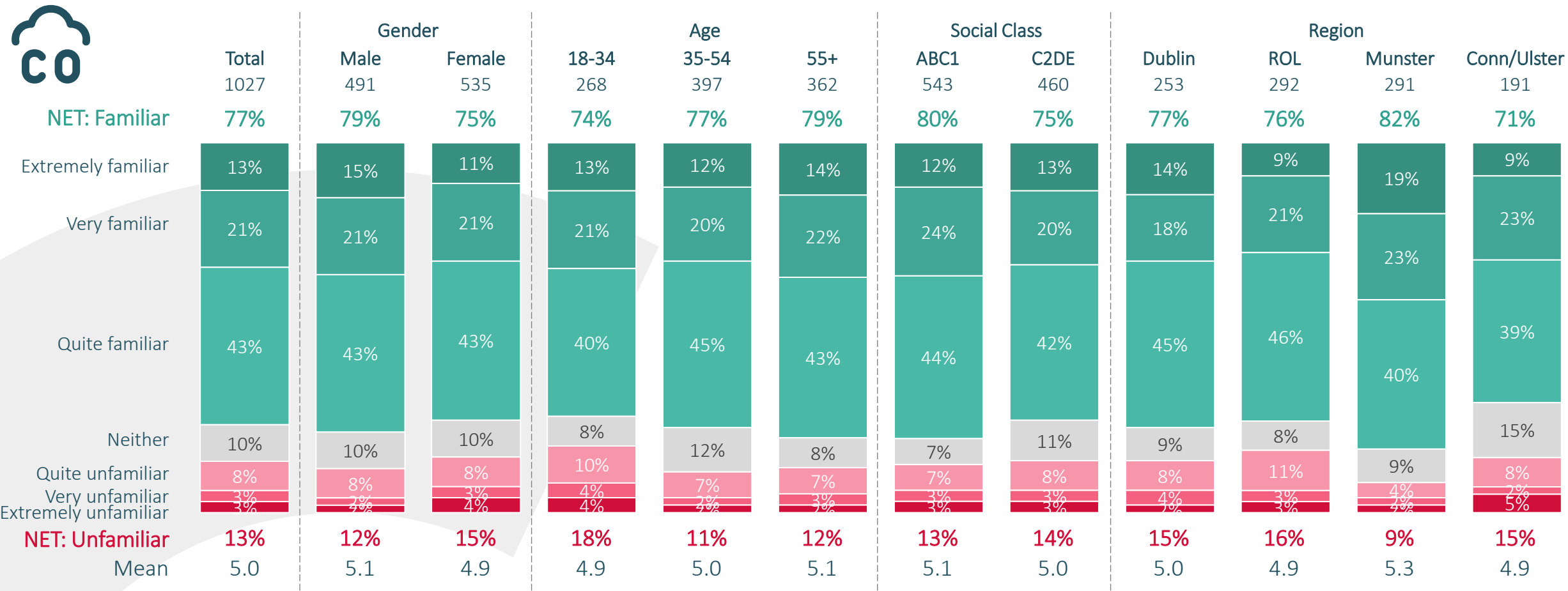


Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one. (Base: All respondents n=1027)

Familiarity with Carbon Monoxide almost equal across demographics

Younger adults (18-34s) and those living in Rest of Leinster are most likely to claim to be unfamiliar.

Carbon Monoxide familiarity



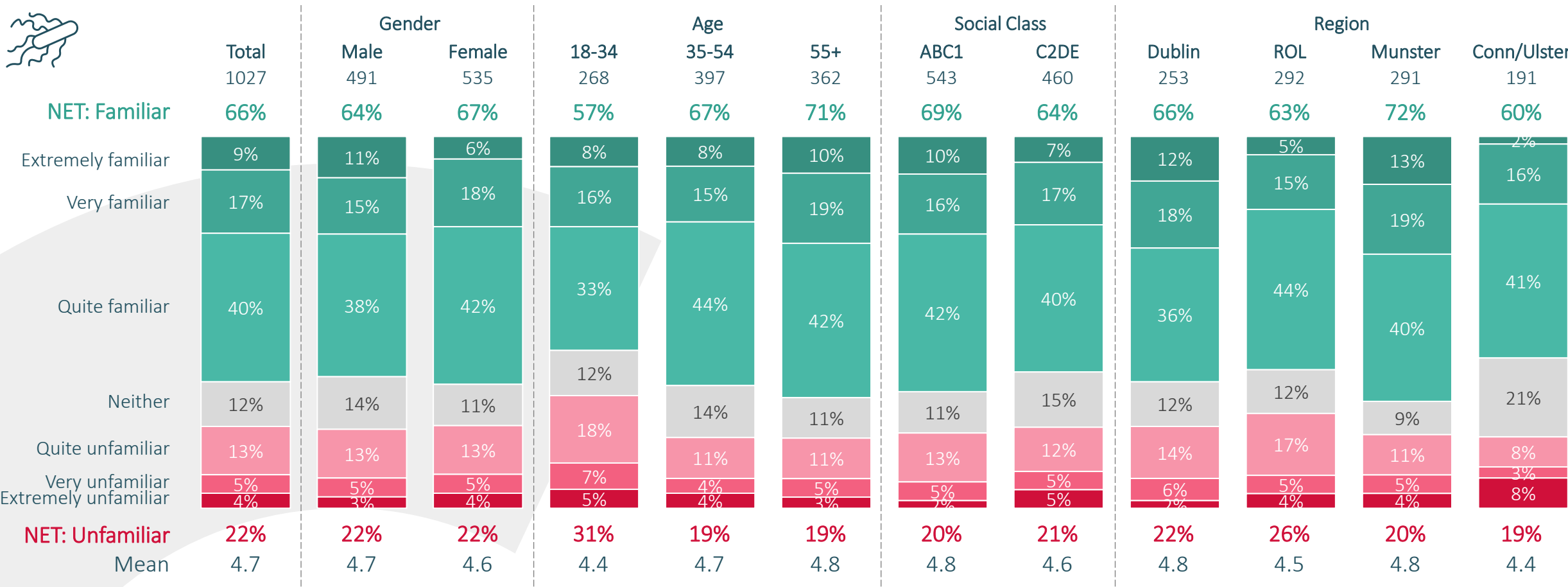
Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one.

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Older (55+) Irish adults slightly more likely to be aware of E. Coli

Over 3 in 10 younger (18-34) adults are unfamiliar with E. Coli. ABC1s are slightly more likely than C2DEs to be familiar. Those in Munster are most familiar.

E. Coli familiarity



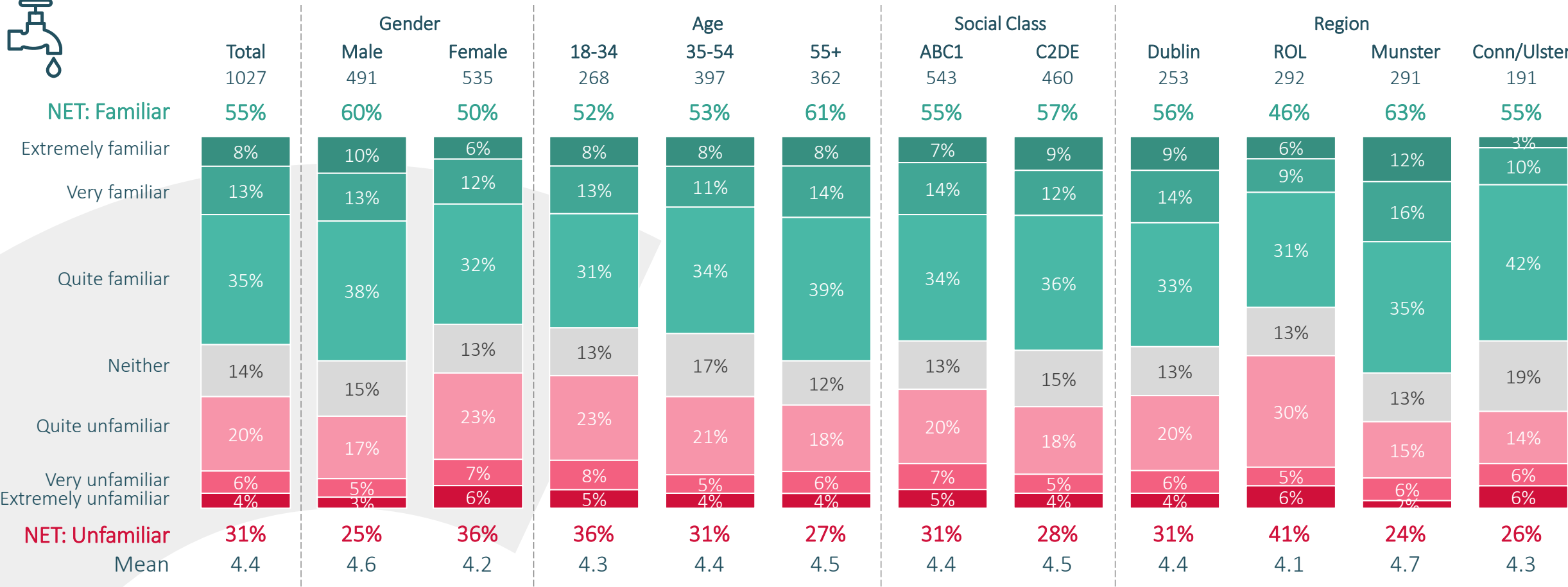
Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one.

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Over 55s and those in Munster more familiar with lead in the water

Females and those aged 18-34 are more likely to say they're unfamiliar with the risk of lead contained in our drinking water

Lead in drinking water familiarity



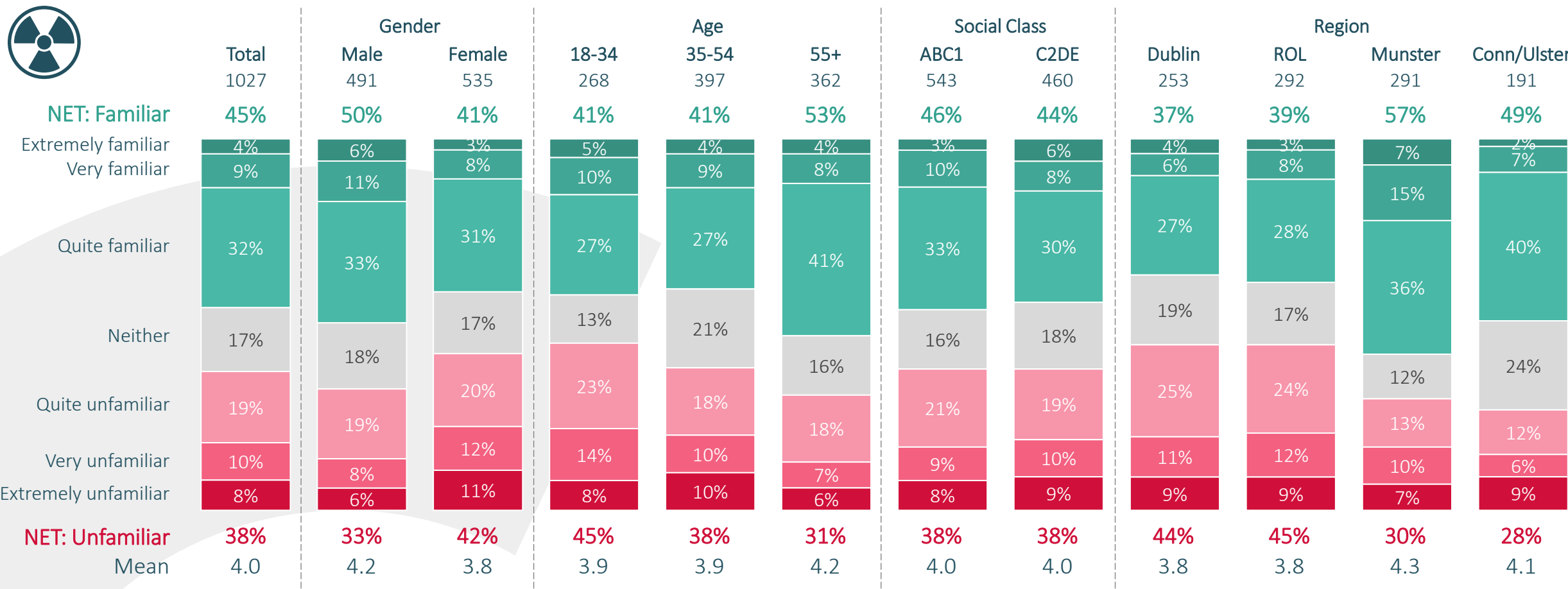
Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one.

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Over 55s and those in Munster much more familiar with Radon

Males are more likely than Females to claim familiarity with Radon. 18-34s and Leinster residents (including Dublin) are much more likely to be unfamiliar.

Radon familiarity



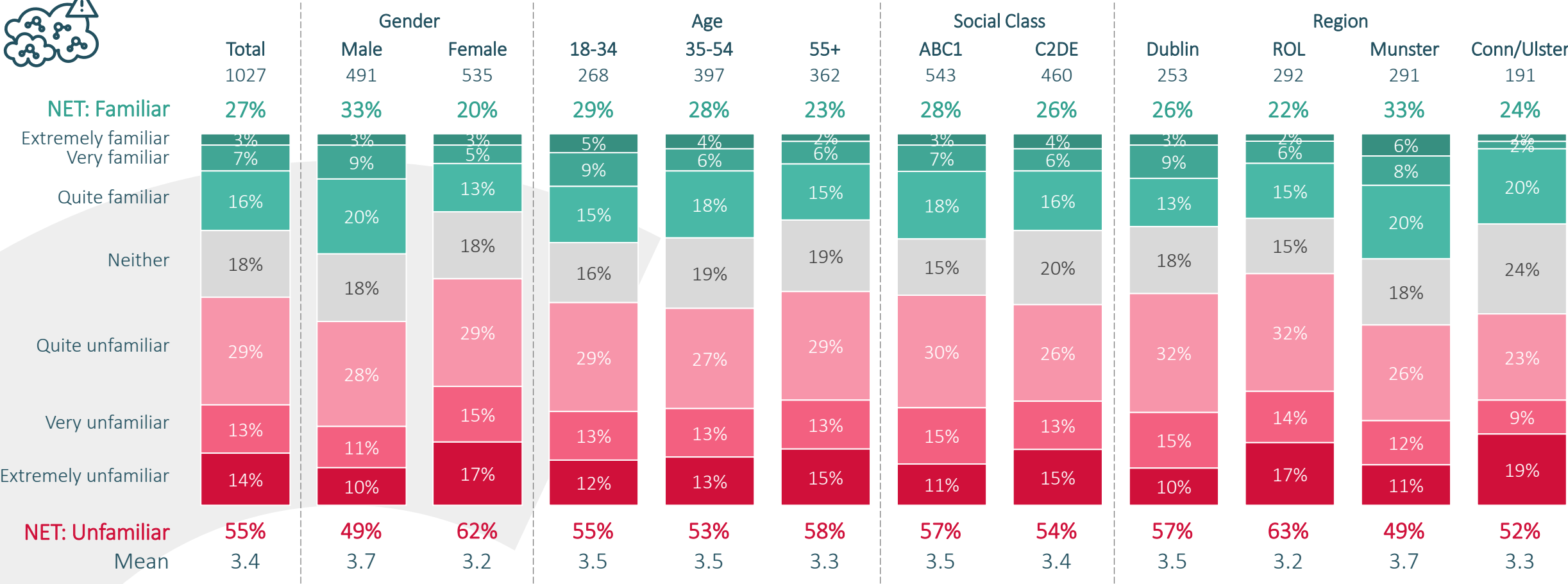
Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one.

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Familiarity with NO₂ is low and highest among Males and 18-34s

Those living in Munster are more familiar with NO₂ than those in other regions of the country. Lack of familiarity with NO₂ is highest among females.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) familiarity



Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one.

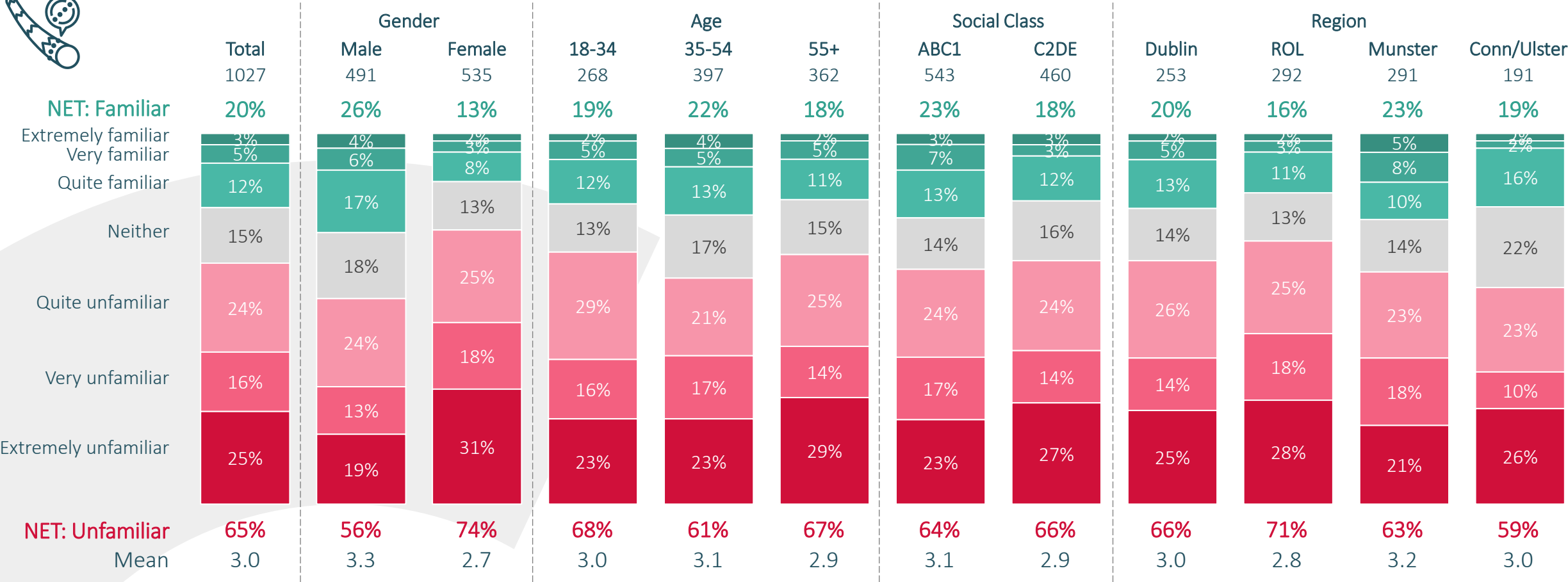
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Only 1 in 5 Irish adults familiar with Particulate Matter



Awareness is highest among Males, ABC1s and Munster residents and lowest among Females

Particulate Matter (PM) familiarity



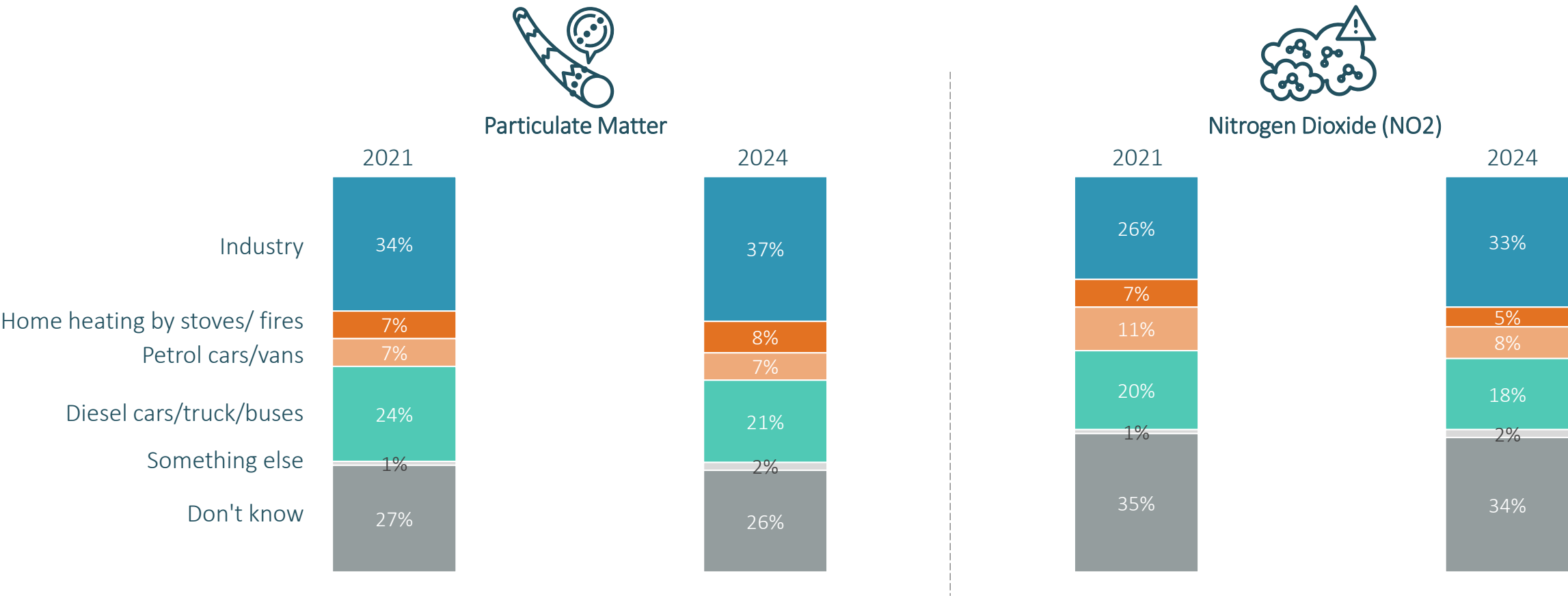
Q5. Below is a list of different environmental health risks. Some of them you may have heard of before and some of them you may not have. Please rate how familiar you are with each one.

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

More in 2024 mistakenly attributing Industry as being the main pollutant



Sources of Air Pollutants



Q8 Which of the following do you think is the most significant source of Particulate Matter in Ireland?

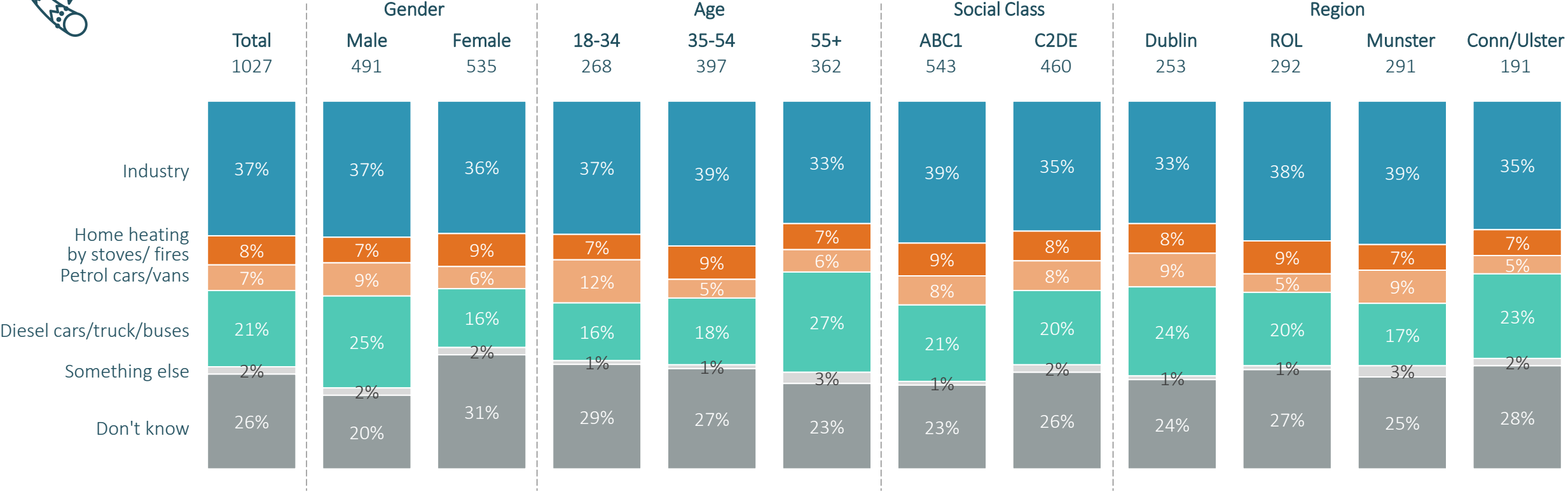
Q9. Which of the following do you think is the most significant source of emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) in Ireland?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Industry followed by diesel vehicles incorrectly seen as main sources of PM

Only 8% can correctly identify home heating by stoves/fires as the most significant source of PM in Ireland

Most significant source of Particulate Matter in Ireland



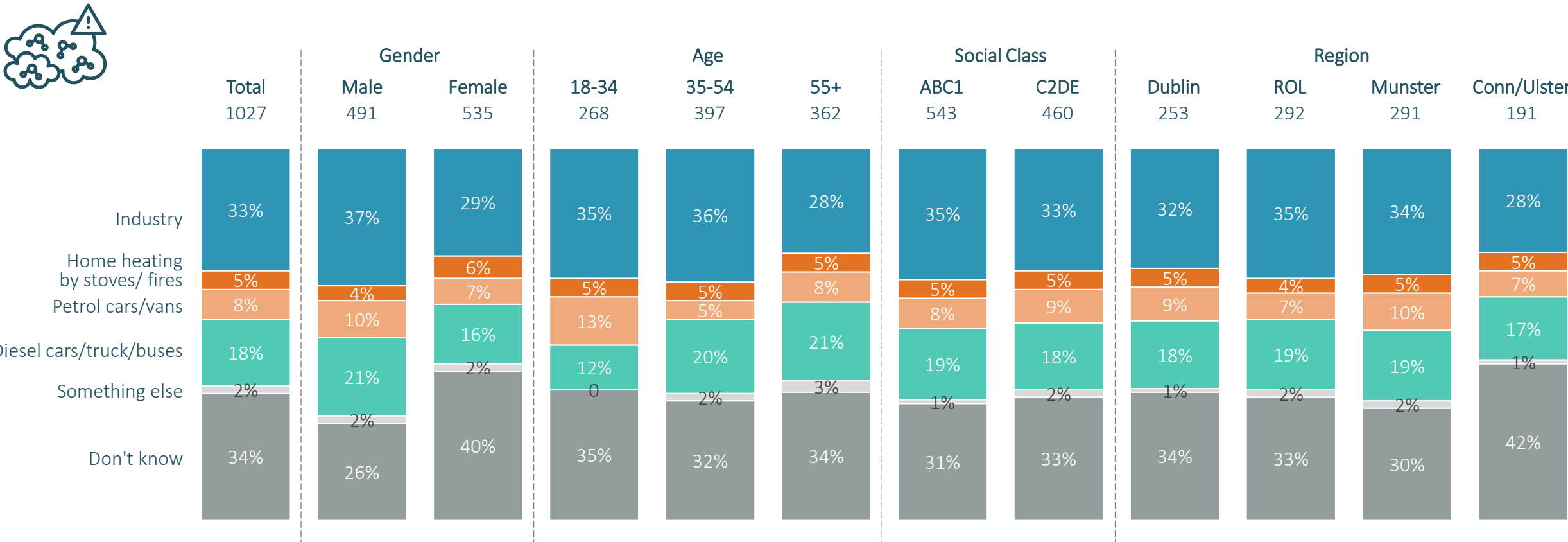
Q8 Which of the following do you think is the most significant source of Particulate Matter in Ireland?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Only 1 in 5 correctly identify diesel cars/trucks/buses as main source of NO₂

A higher proportion are likely to incorrectly cite industry as the most significant source and this is more evident among Males, Under 55s and ABC1s.

Most significant source of emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in Ireland



Q9. Which of the following do you think is the most significant source of emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in Ireland?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

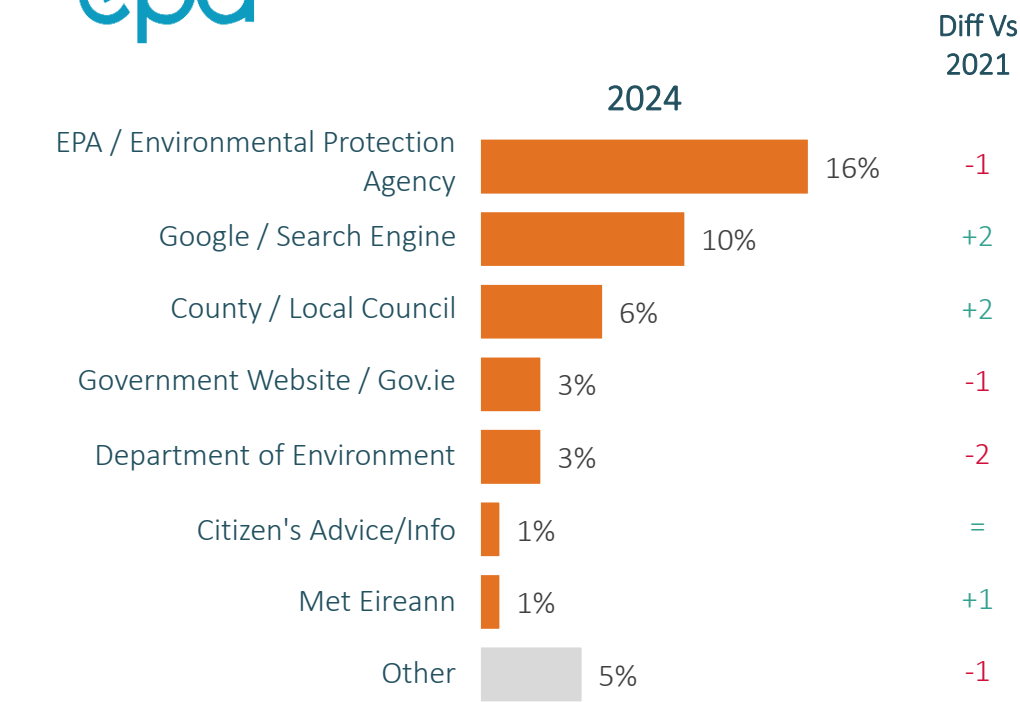
5

Awareness of Organisations for Air Quality Information

EPA most mentioned spontaneously, ahead of Google/search engine

“Other” answers include mentions of the HSE, Irish Water, SEAI and Green Party

Organisations aware of that provide information about air quality - Spontaneous



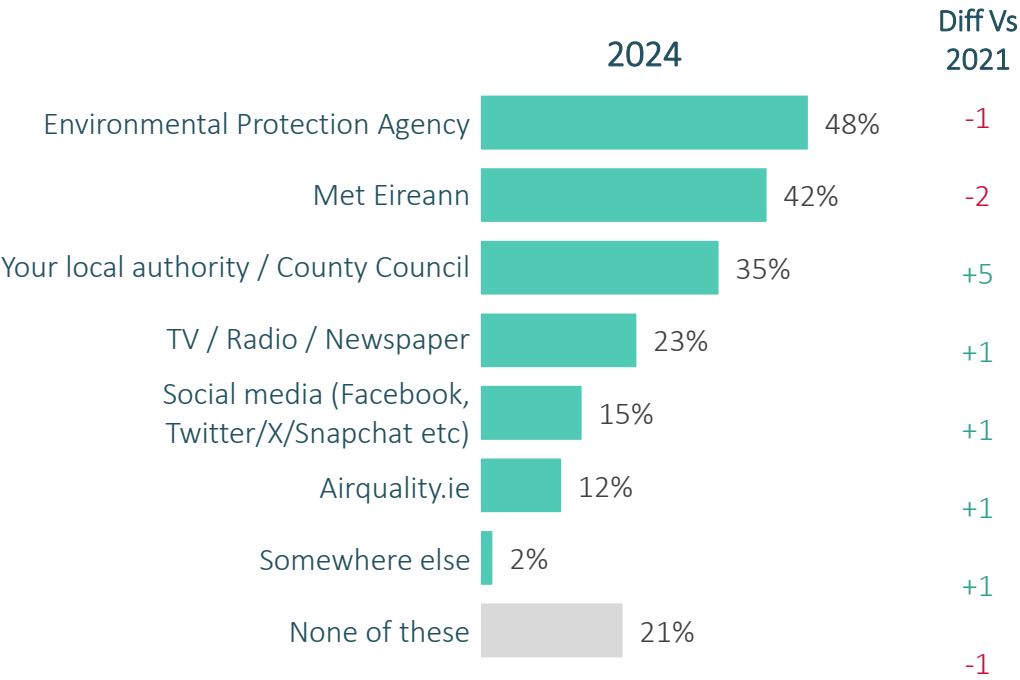
Don't know / No idea : 59% (=%)

Gender		Age			Social Class		Region			
Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/Ulster
475	530	274	422	309	495	490	259	279	290	177
19%	14%	11%	16%	21%	22%	10%	15%	17%	18%	15%
8%	11%	8%	11%	9%	9%	11%	10%	9%	9%	11%
6%	6%	3%	7%	7%	5%	7%	3%	7%	8%	6%
4%	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%	1%	4%	4%	3%
3%	3%	1%	3%	5%	4%	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%
2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
2%	1%	2%	0	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
6%	4%	5%	4%	7%	6%	5%	6%	4%	8%	2%

Older adults, Males and ABC1s most aware of EPA and air quality info

Met Eireann also are strongly associated with provision of air quality information upon prompting

Organisations aware of that provide information about air quality - Prompted



Gender		Age			Social Class		Region			
Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/Ulster
491	535	268	397	362	543	460	253	292	291	191
53%	43%	39%	43%	60%	53%	43%	53%	48%	49%	38%
44%	39%	38%	40%	46%	44%	39%	41%	40%	45%	38%
37%	33%	29%	31%	44%	36%	35%	35%	34%	37%	30%
23%	23%	29%	19%	24%	23%	23%	27%	24%	18%	24%
16%	14%	22%	12%	12%	16%	15%	17%	13%	16%	10%
13%	11%	12%	14%	10%	10%	13%	13%	13%	9%	12%
2%	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	3%	1%
18%	24%	23%	24%	15%	21%	20%	18%	22%	20%	25%

6

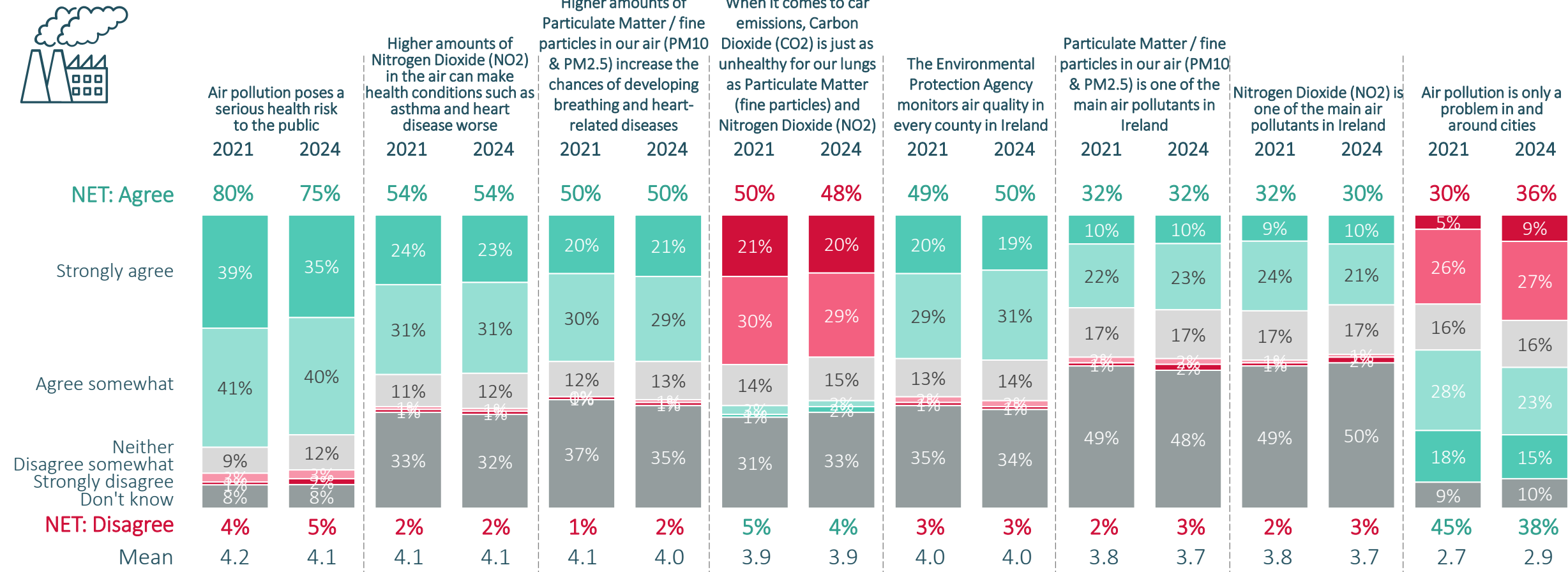
Attitudes to Air Quality and Potential Policy Options

Declining perception that air pollution is a serious health risk



The are also more people incorrectly believing that the problem is restricted to in and around our cities

Agree/Disagree with statements on air quality



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

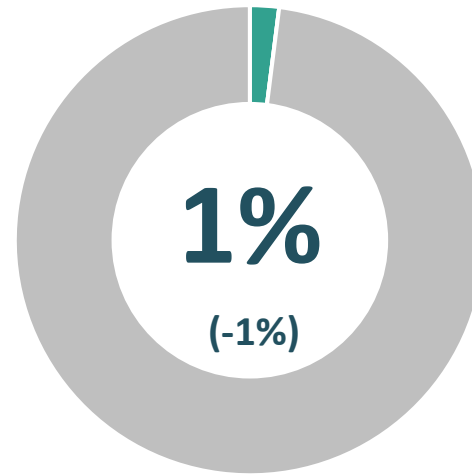
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Only 1% of Irish adults can correctly answer all three



The falls to less than ½% when the answer needed is more certain (Agree / Disagree strongly).

1. Higher amounts of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in the air can make health conditions such as asthma and heart disease worse (AGREE STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY)
2. Higher amounts of Particulate Matter / fine particles in our air (PM₁₀ & PM_{2.5}) increase the chances of developing breathing and heart-related diseases (AGREE STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY)
3. When it comes to car emissions, Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) is just as unhealthy for our lungs as Particulate Matter (fine particles) and Nitrogen Dioxide (DISAGREE STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY)



ABs at 3% and 35-54 year old Males (3%) are more likely to be able to get all 3 correct.

() Brackets denote 2021 data
Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

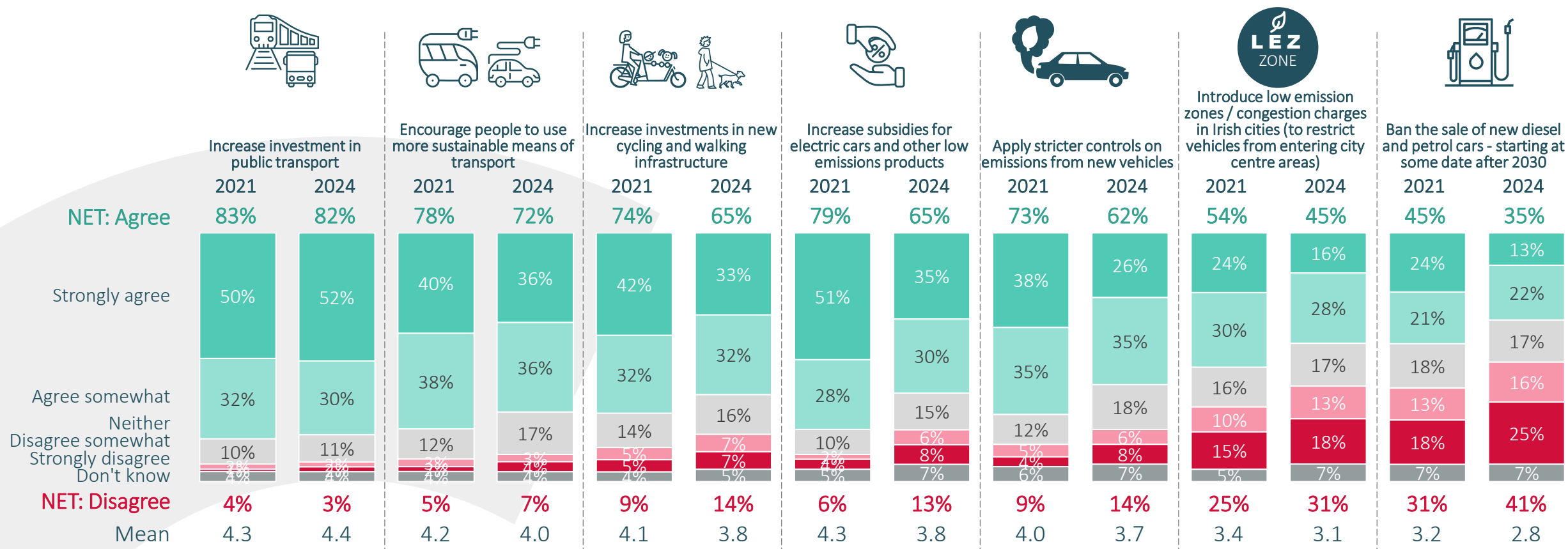
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Declining support for almost all transport policy options



Congestion charges and the ban on the sale of ICE cars at some point after 2030 achieve lowest support, and have declined significantly since 2021. Biggest decline seen in support for subsidies on EVs/low emission products

Policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality - Summary



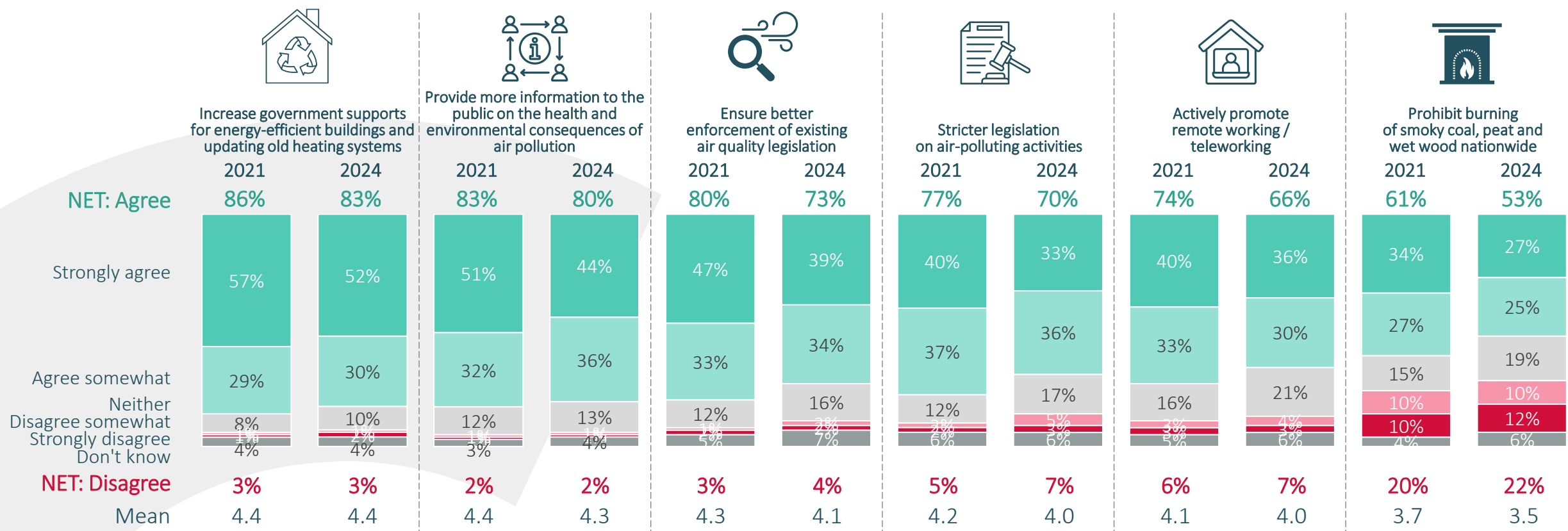
Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Support for all “other” policy options also declines on 2021 levels

Weakening of support is driven by the declines in “Strongly agree”. Lowest support is garnered for the prohibition of smoky fuel nationwide, though half still support this option.

Statements relating to possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality - Summary



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

7

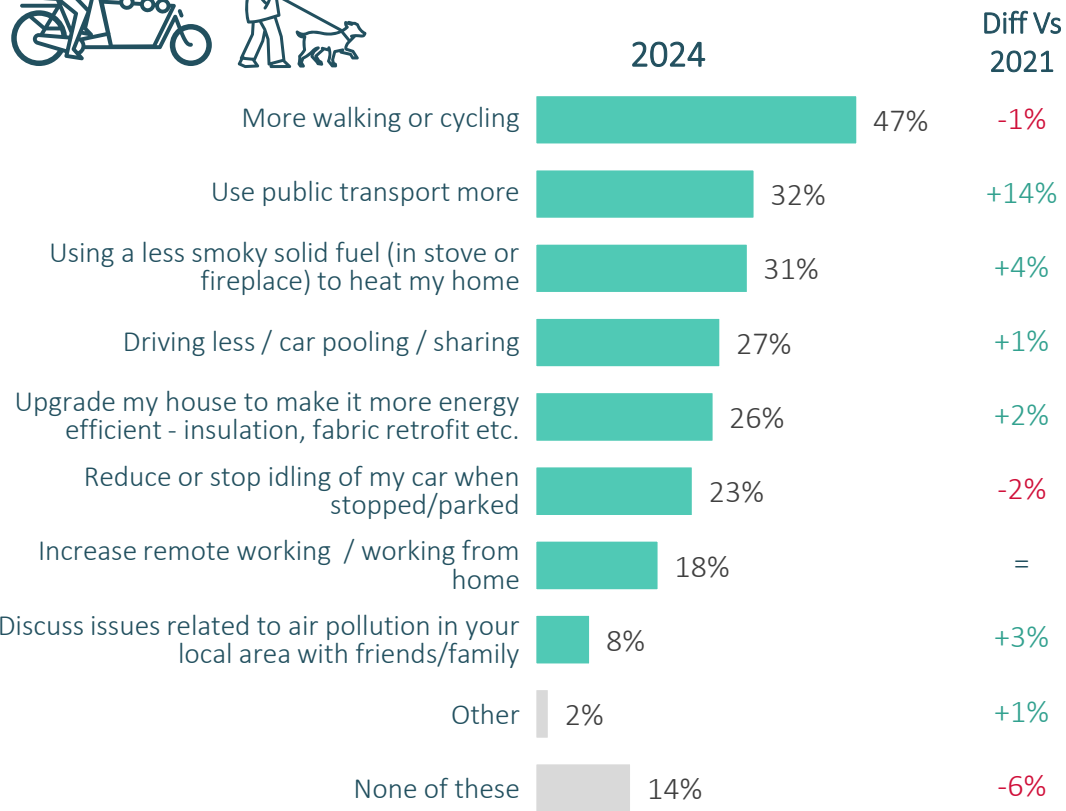
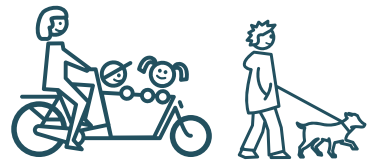
Changes in
Behaviour Made
Vs Changes Will
Make to Impact
Air Quality

Significant increase in public transport usage since 2021



This has been driven by younger and Dublin residents. Over 55s significantly more likely to say they are using a less smoky solid fuel (in stove or fireplace) to heat their homes

Changes already taken to reduce air pollution and improve the quality of the air in your local area

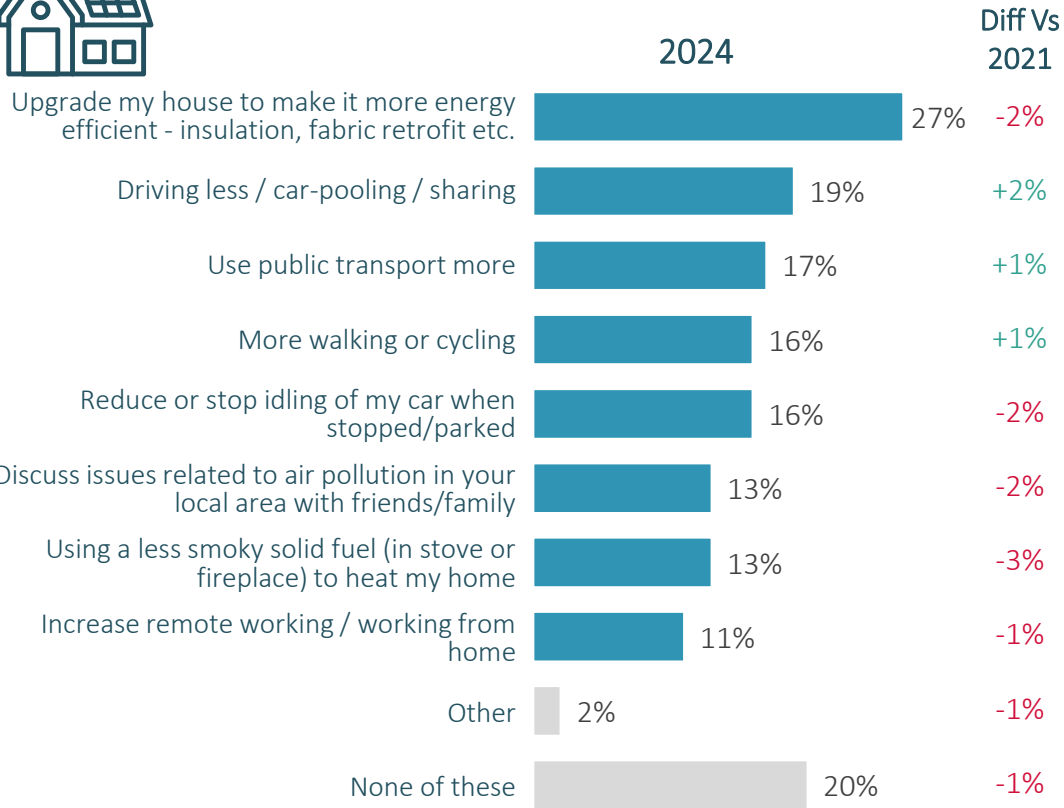


Gender		Age			Social Class		Region			
Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/Ulster
491	535	268	397	362	543	460	253	292	291	191
47%	48%	51%	46%	46%	49%	48%	51%	46%	50%	39%
34%	30%	42%	24%	34%	38%	29%	47%	24%	30%	24%
30%	31%	18%	31%	40%	29%	33%	20%	34%	33%	38%
26%	27%	30%	22%	30%	31%	23%	30%	23%	27%	27%
28%	24%	19%	23%	35%	29%	24%	28%	23%	29%	23%
23%	23%	20%	20%	29%	21%	24%	17%	26%	24%	28%
20%	16%	25%	20%	10%	26%	11%	24%	13%	19%	14%
9%	7%	12%	6%	7%	8%	8%	7%	5%	10%	9%
3%	2%	1%	2%	4%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	1%
14%	14%	15%	16%	12%	14%	14%	15%	13%	13%	16%

Energy efficient house upgrades are top of the list for the future

This is down slightly on 2021 levels, while there is a slight uplift in potential driving less / car pooling

Changes consider taking to reduce air pollution and improve the quality of the air in your local area



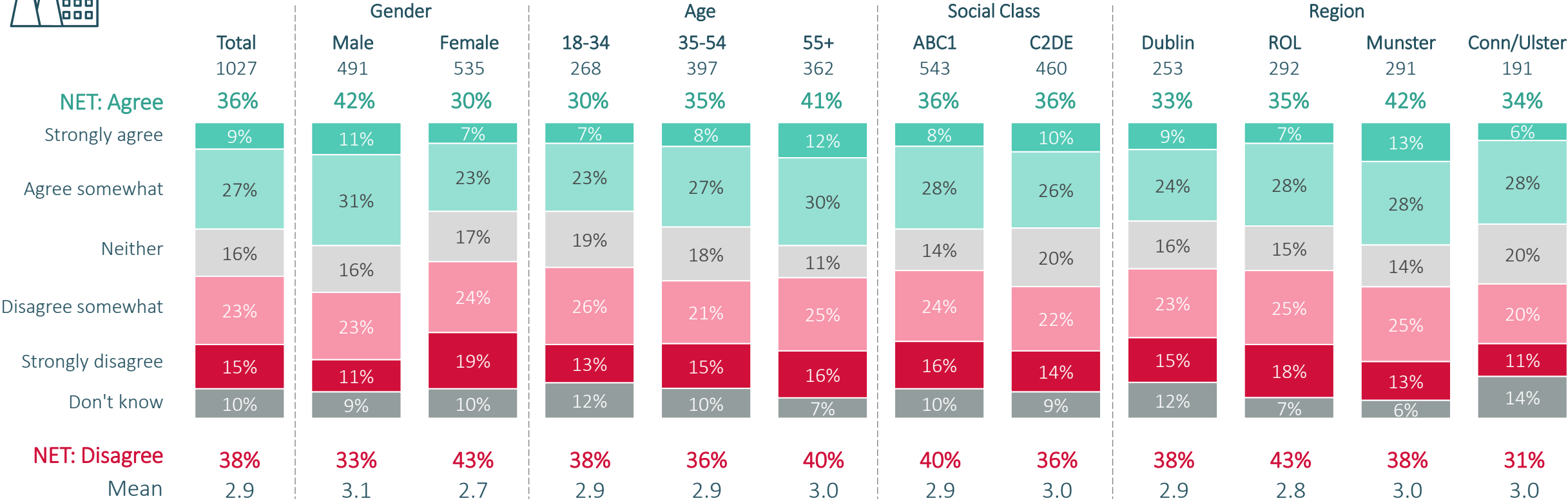
Gender		Age			Social Class		Region			
Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/Ulster
491	535	268	397	362	543	460	253	292	291	191
26%	28%	27%	31%	23%	28%	27%	24%	31%	28%	27%
17%	20%	21%	18%	17%	18%	19%	18%	21%	21%	12%
21%	14%	19%	13%	20%	17%	15%	18%	18%	16%	17%
17%	16%	20%	16%	15%	18%	16%	18%	16%	15%	16%
17%	15%	17%	16%	14%	18%	15%	15%	17%	17%	14%
13%	14%	18%	10%	13%	15%	11%	13%	13%	18%	8%
15%	11%	16%	12%	12%	11%	15%	11%	13%	15%	12%
12%	10%	19%	11%	5%	14%	9%	11%	9%	13%	12%
2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
19%	21%	13%	23%	22%	18%	21%	19%	17%	20%	25%

Appendices - Detailed Attitudinal Slides



Attitudes to air quality

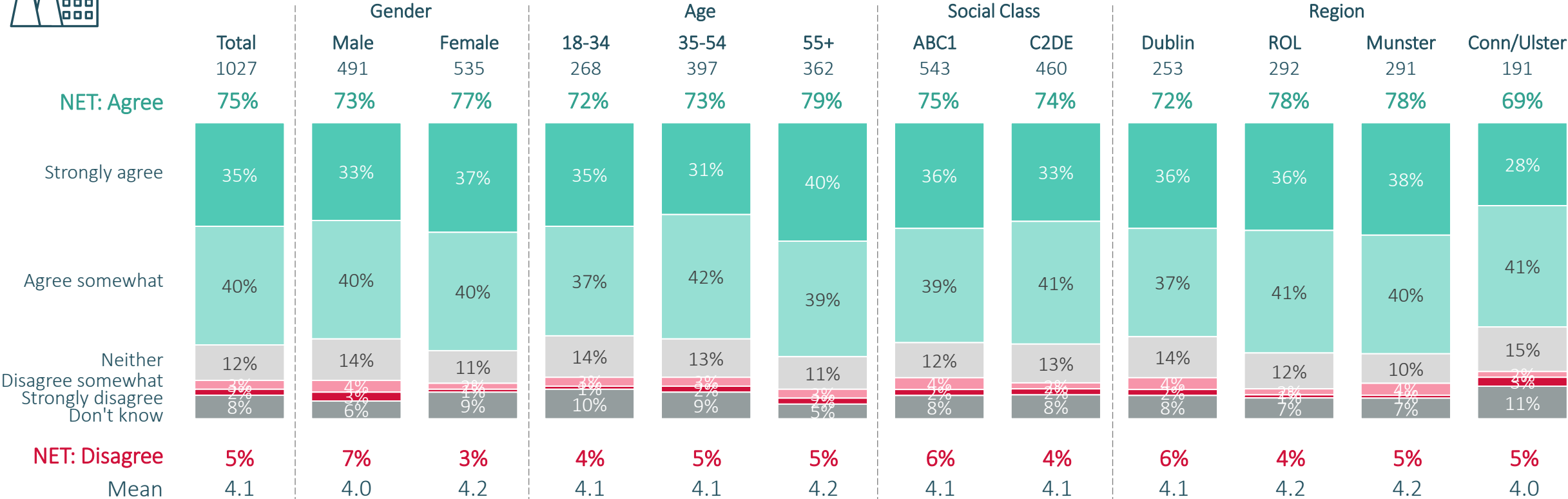
Air pollution is only a problem in and around cities



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

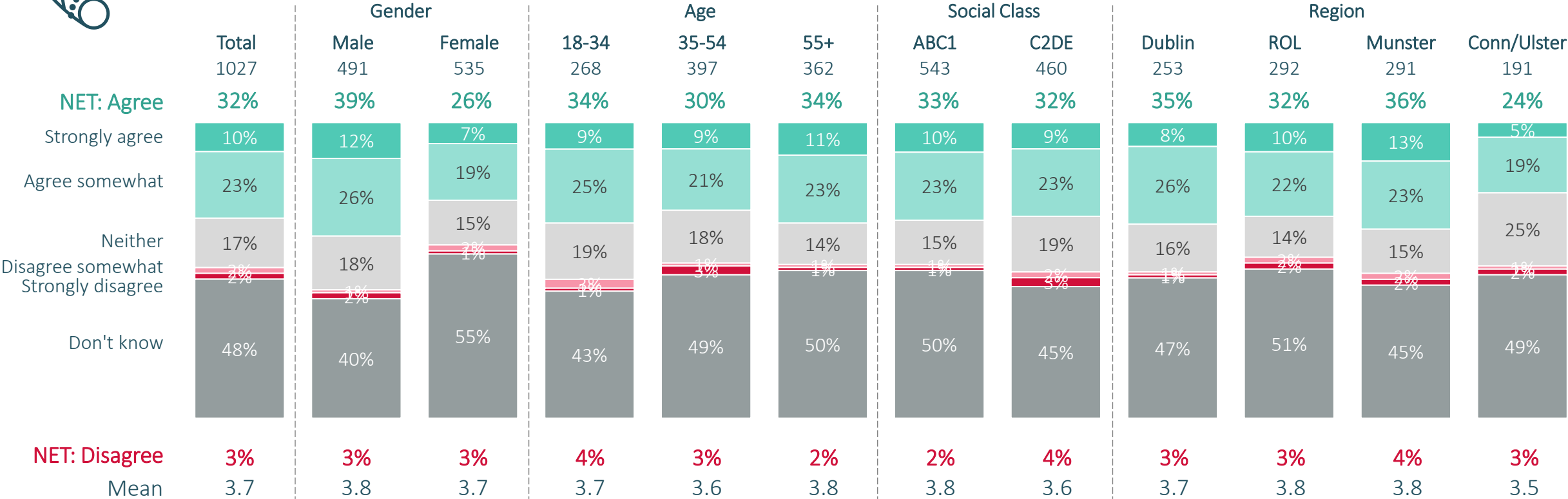
Air pollution poses a serious health risk to the public



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

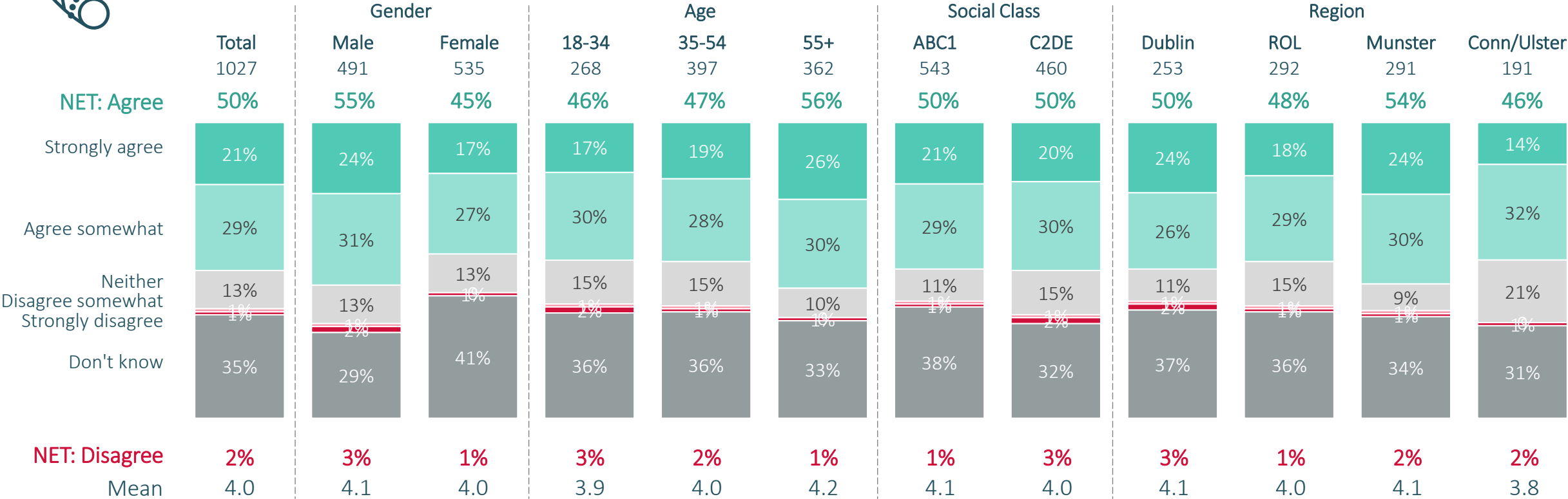
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Particulate Matter / fine particles in our air (PM10 & PM2.5) is one of the main air pollutants in Ireland



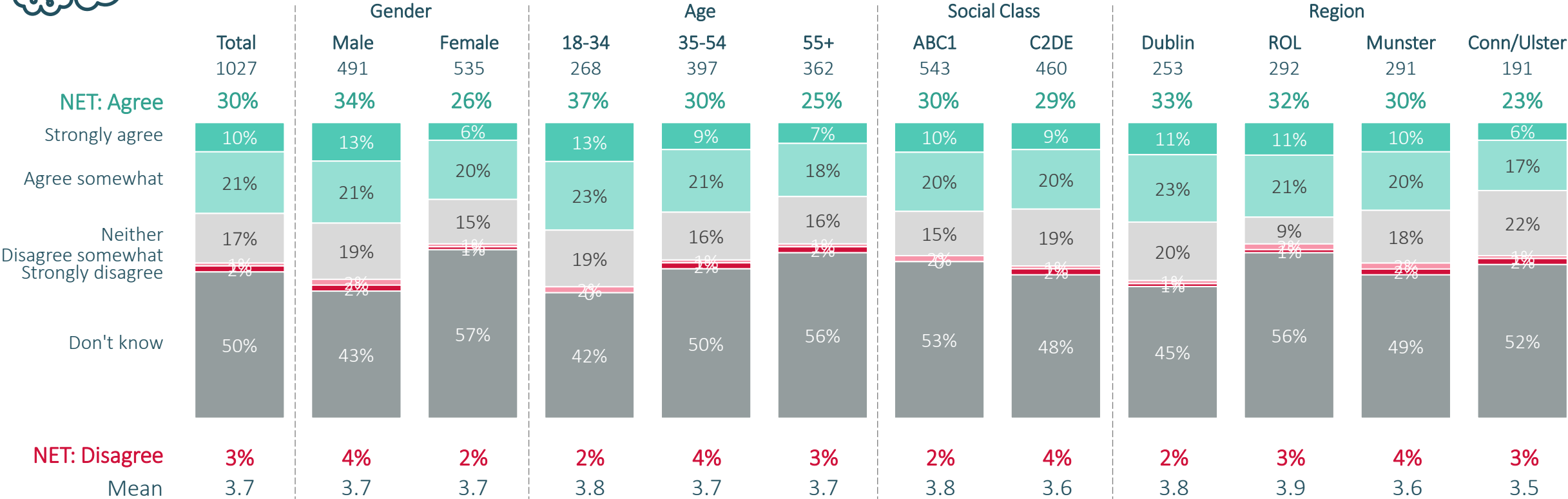
Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Higher amounts of Particulate Matter / fine particles in our air (PM10 & PM2.5) increase the chances of developing breathing and heart-related diseases



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?
(Base: All respondents n=1027)

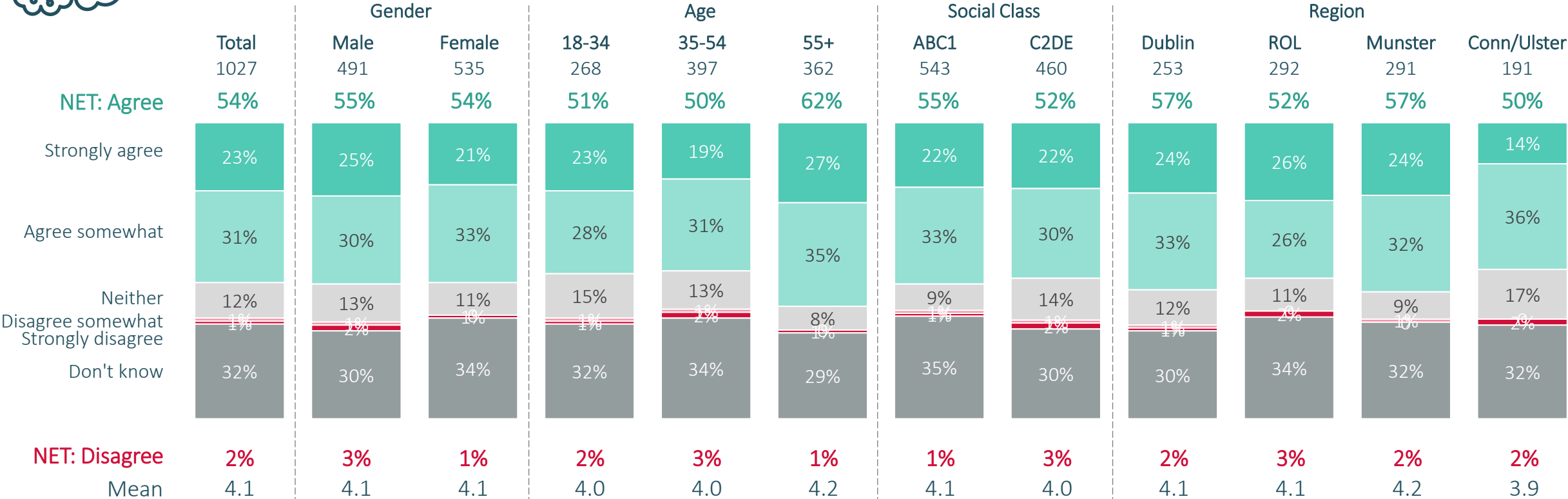
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) is one of the main air pollutants in Ireland



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

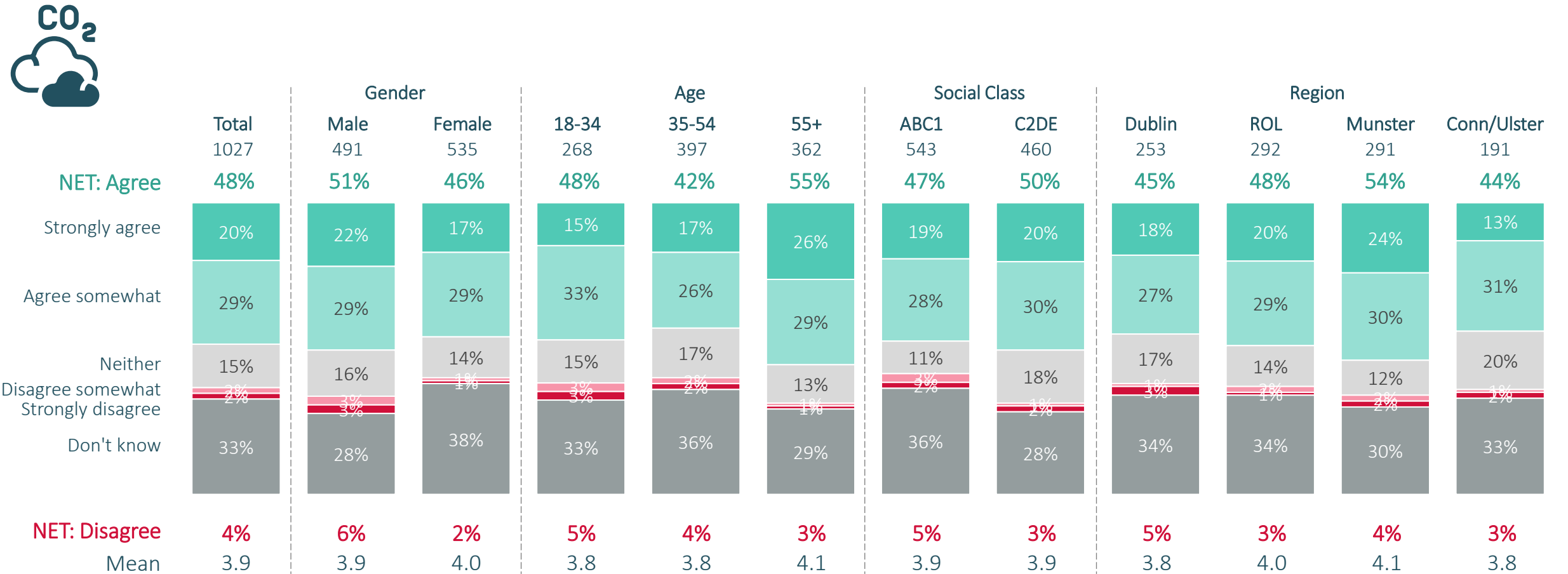
Higher amounts of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in the air can make health conditions such as asthma and heart disease worse



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

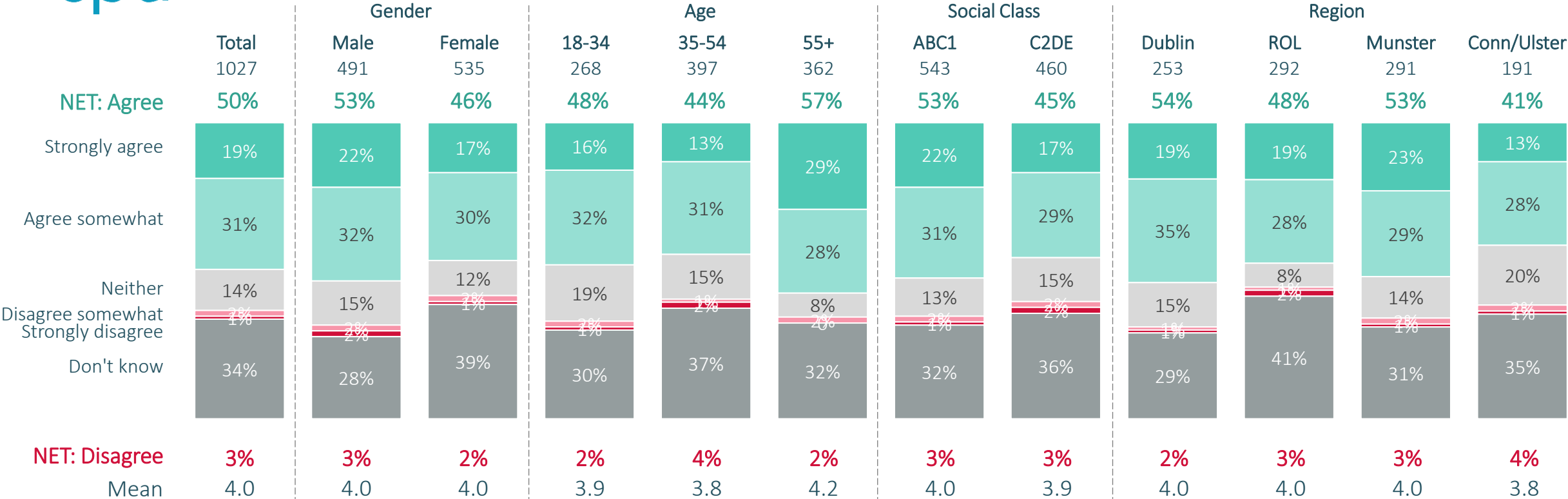
When it comes to car emissions, Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) is just as unhealthy for our lungs as Particulate Matter (fine particles) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)



Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

The Environmental Protection Agency monitors air quality in every county in Ireland

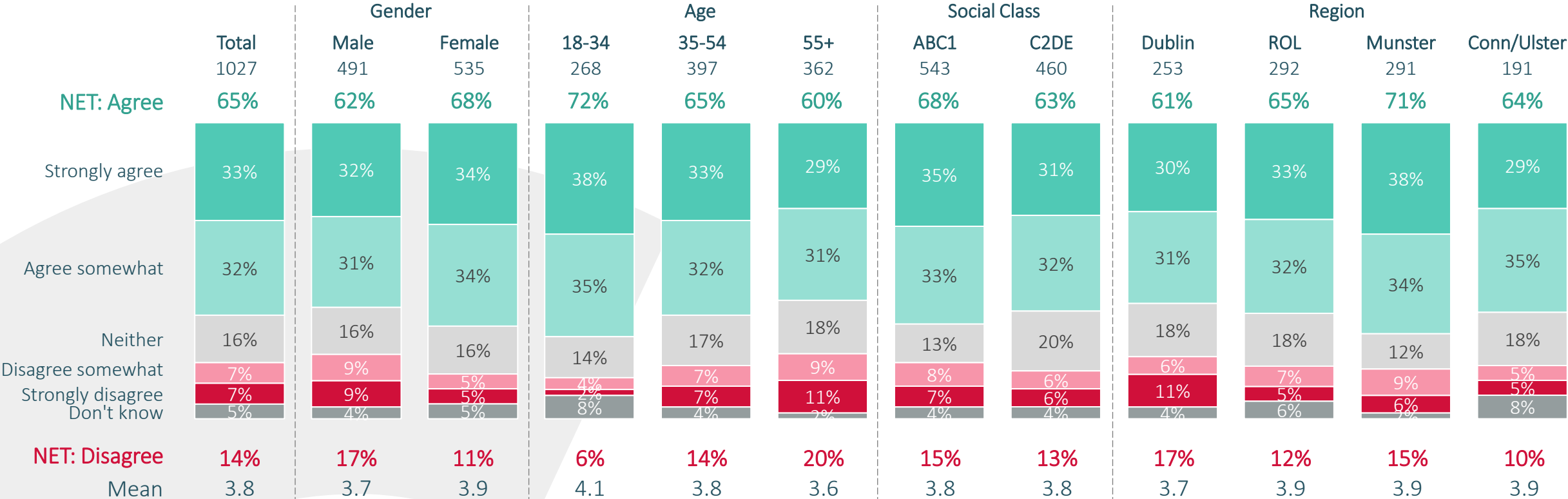
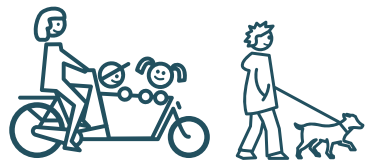


Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Attitudes to policy options

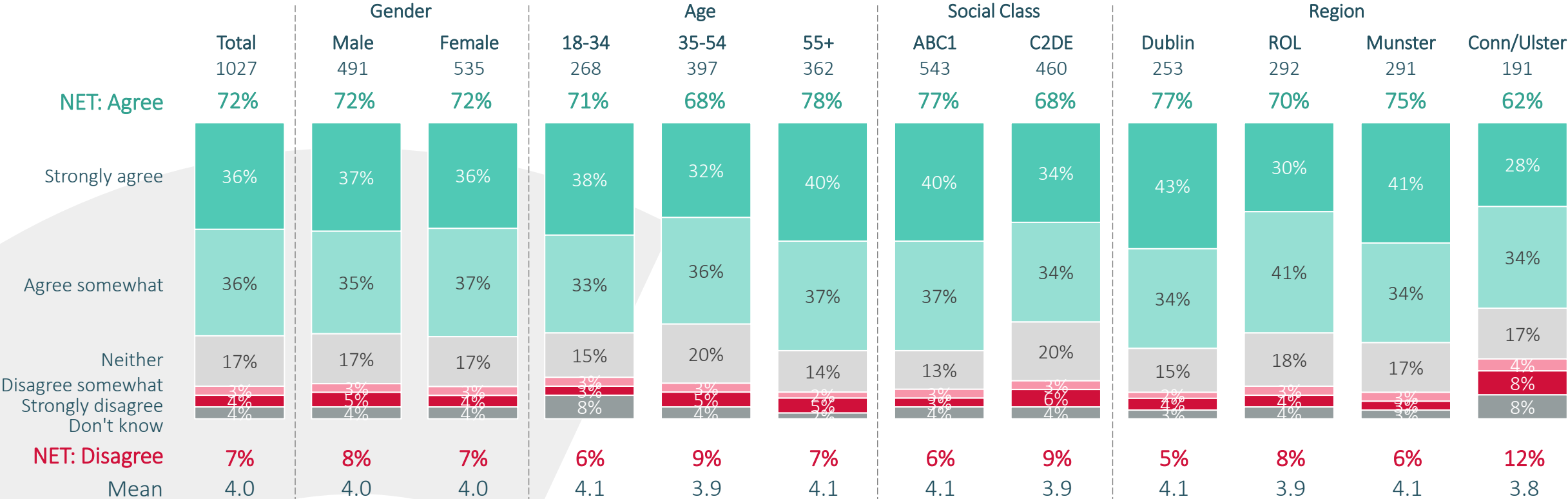
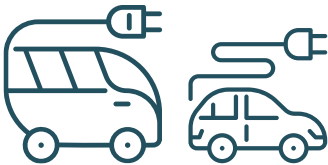
Increase investments in new cycling and walking infrastructure



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

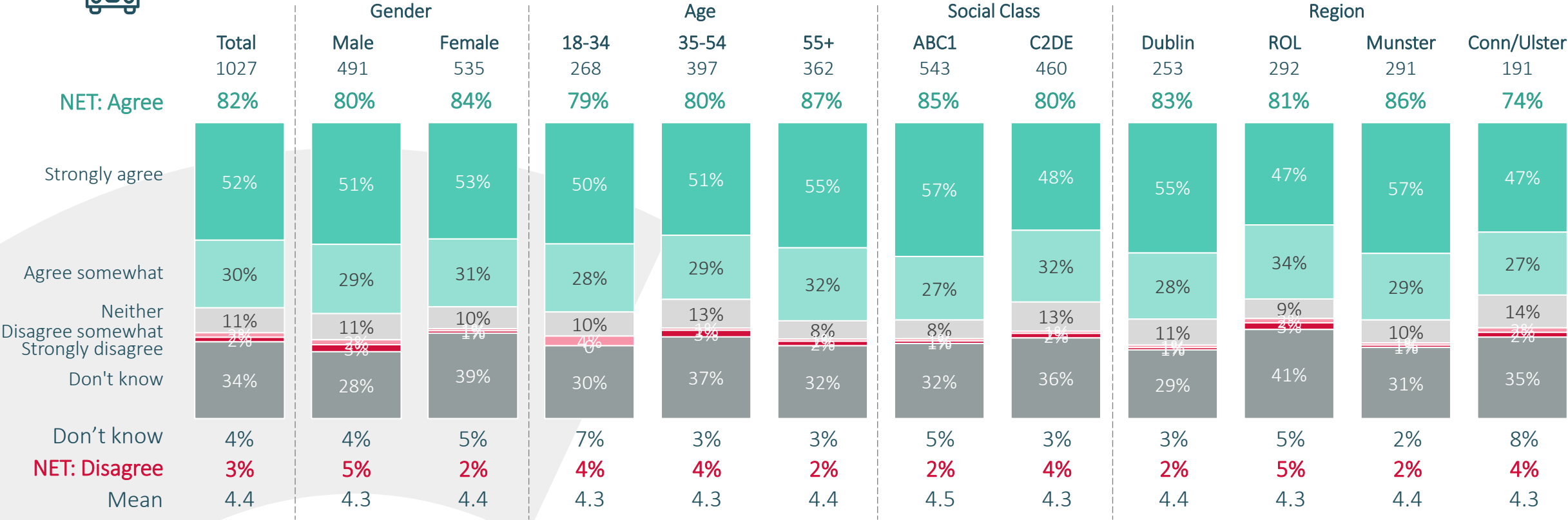
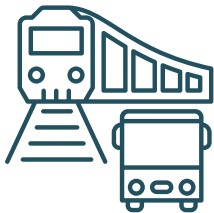
Encourage people to use more sustainable means of transport



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

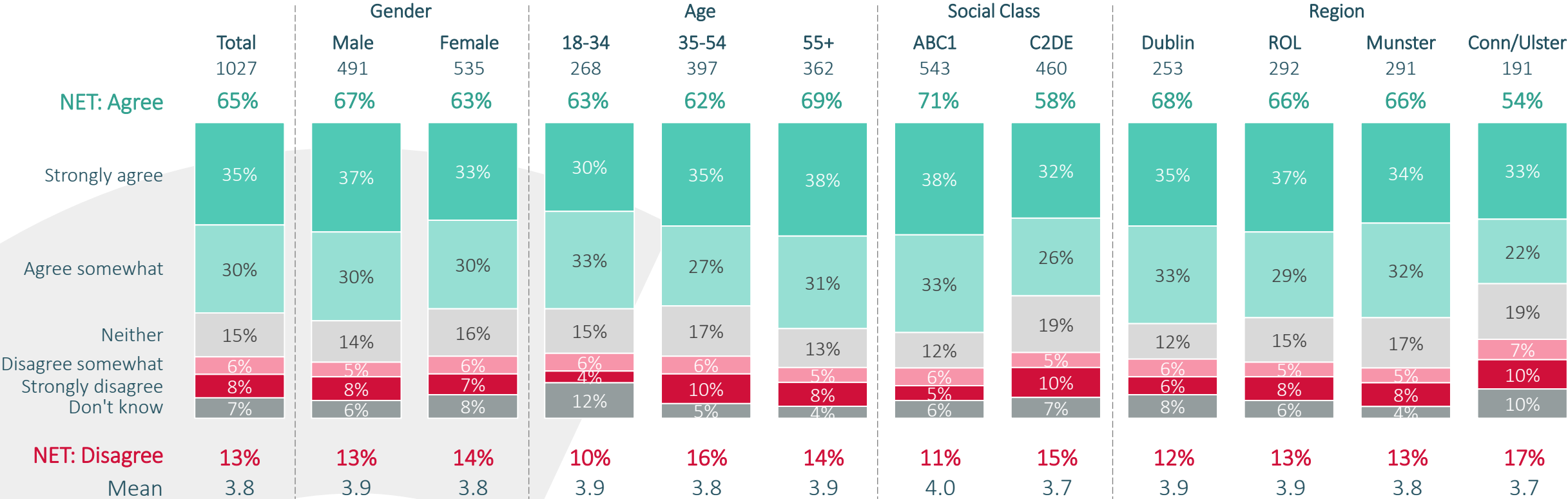
Increase investment in public transport



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

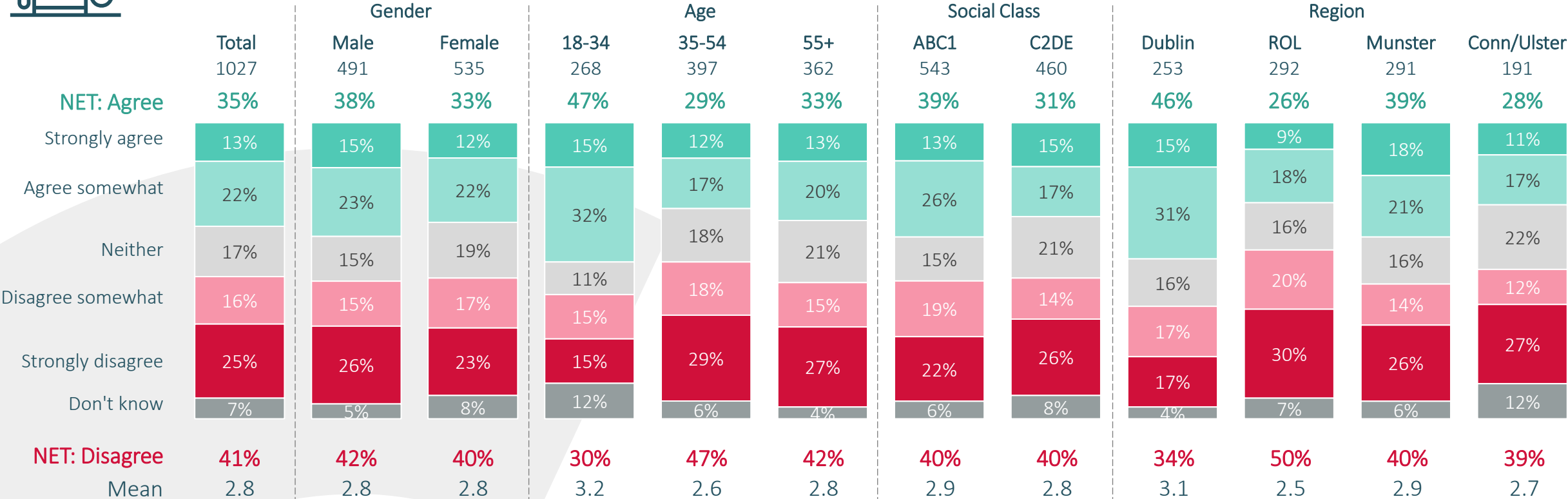
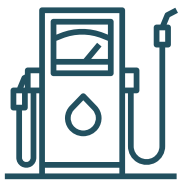
Increase subsidies for electric cars and other low emissions products



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

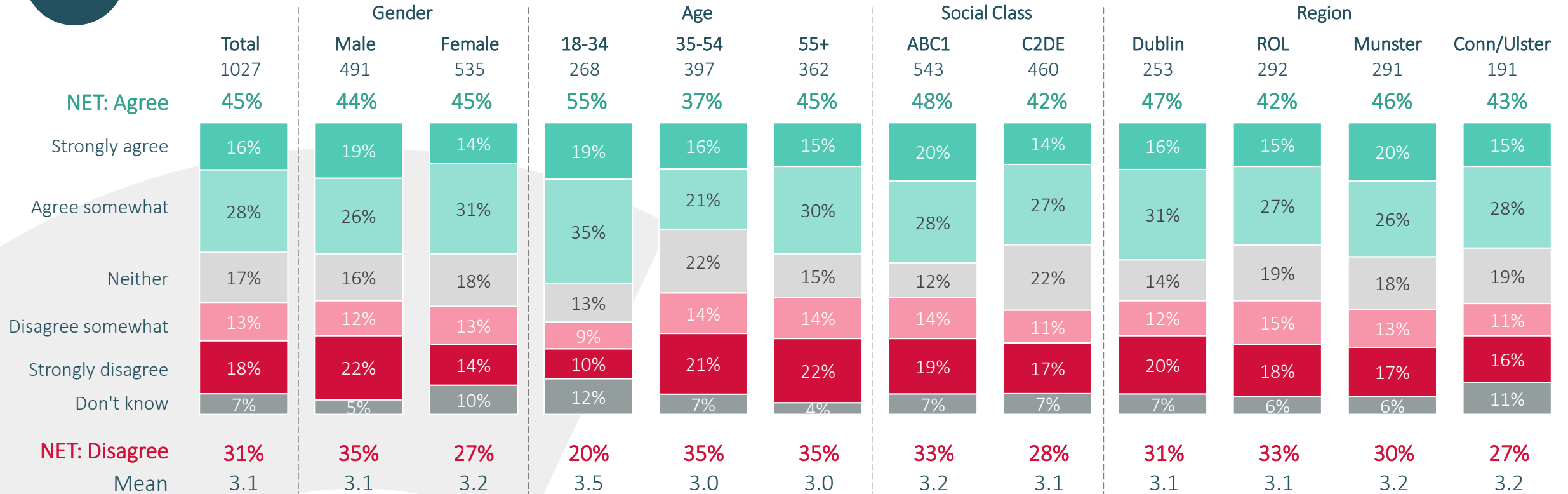
Ban the sale of new diesel and petrol cars - starting at some date after 2030



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

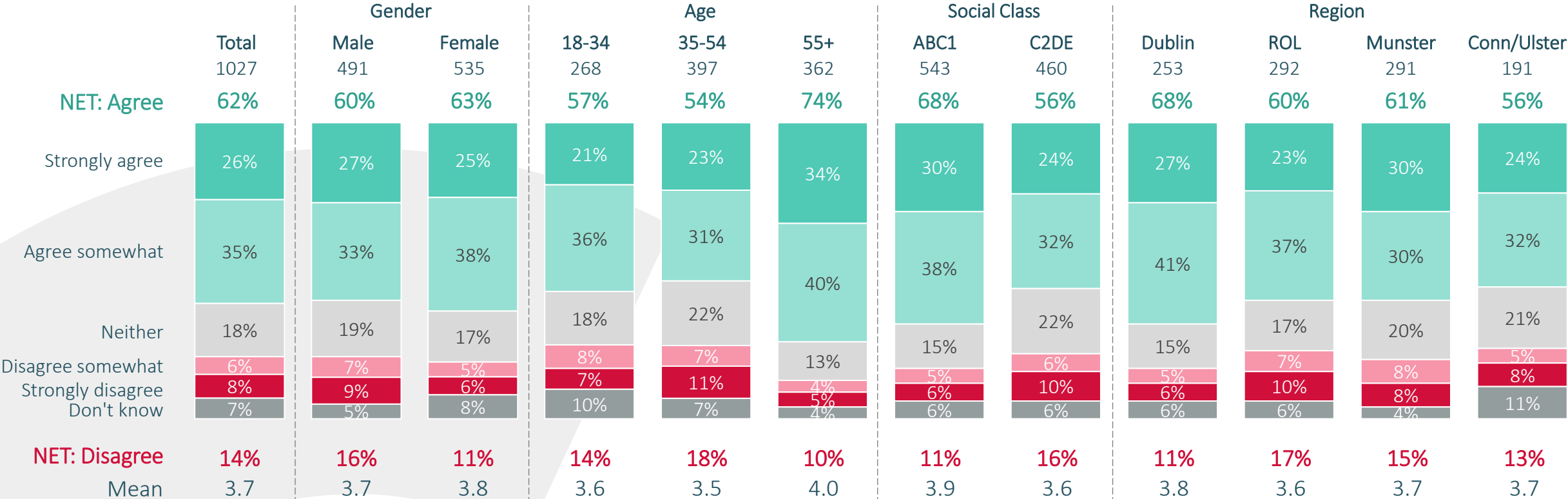
Introduce low emission zones / congestion charges in Irish cities (to restrict vehicles from entering city centre areas)



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

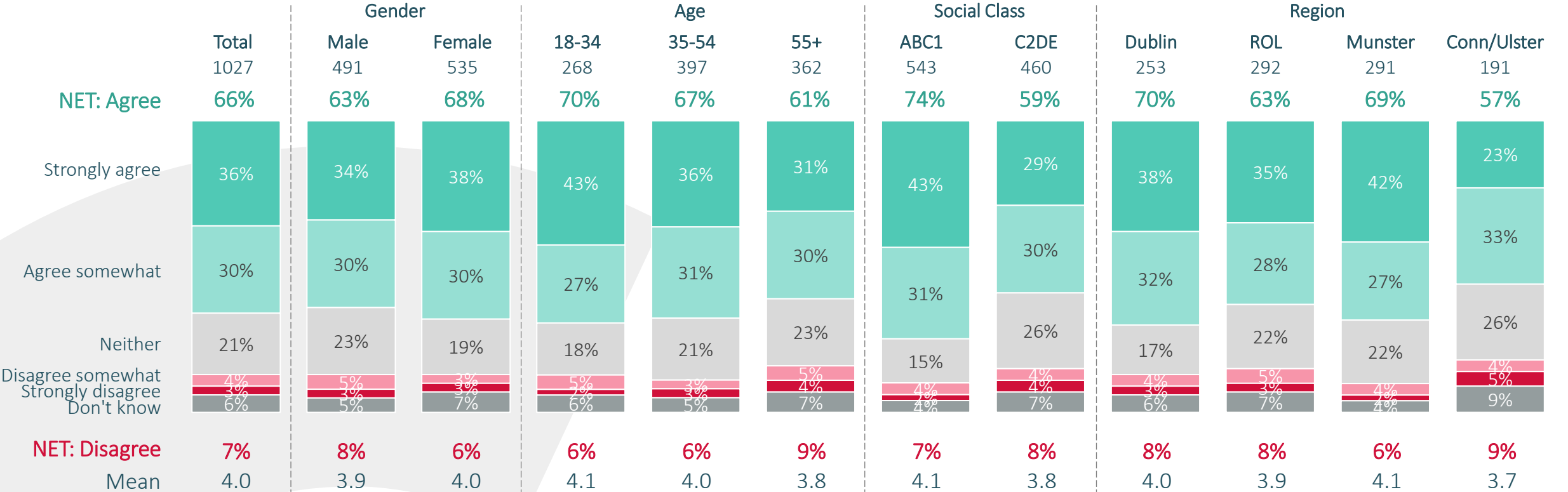
Apply stricter controls on emissions from new vehicles



Q10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to transport impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

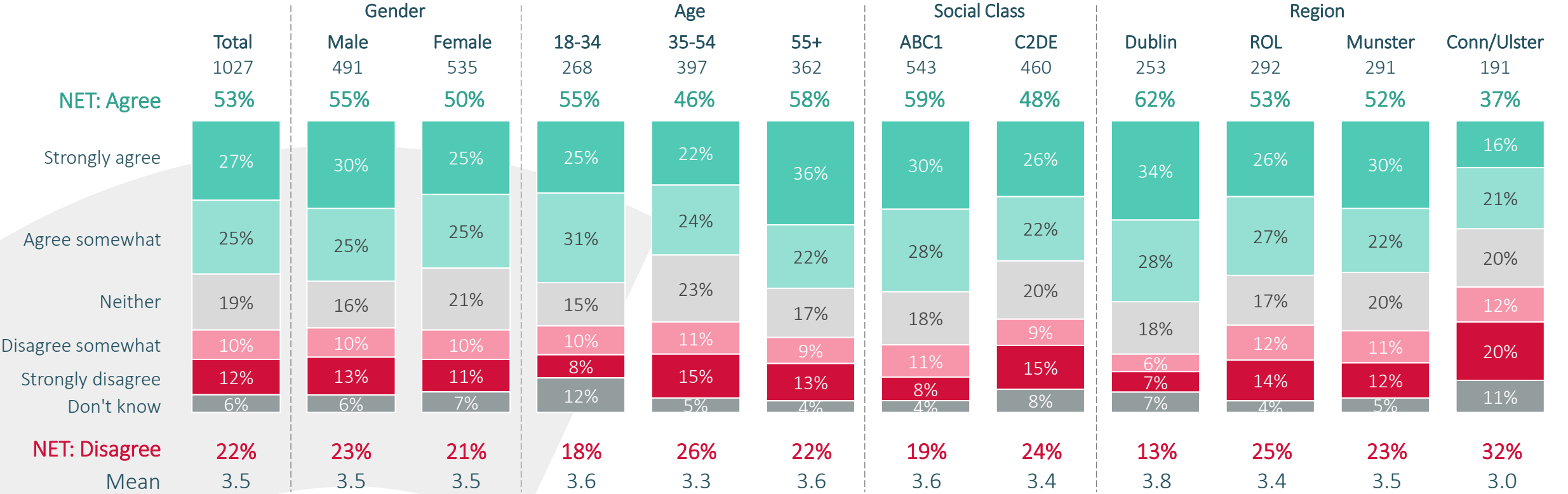
Actively promote remote working / teleworking



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

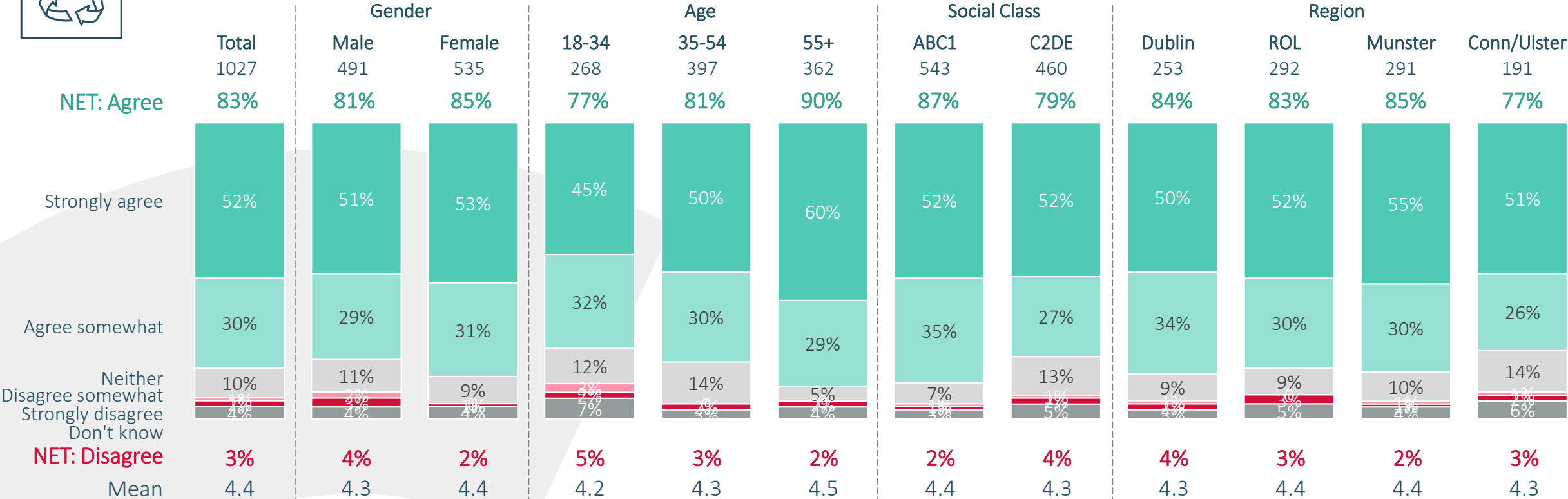
Prohibit burning of smoky coal, peat and wet wood nationwide



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

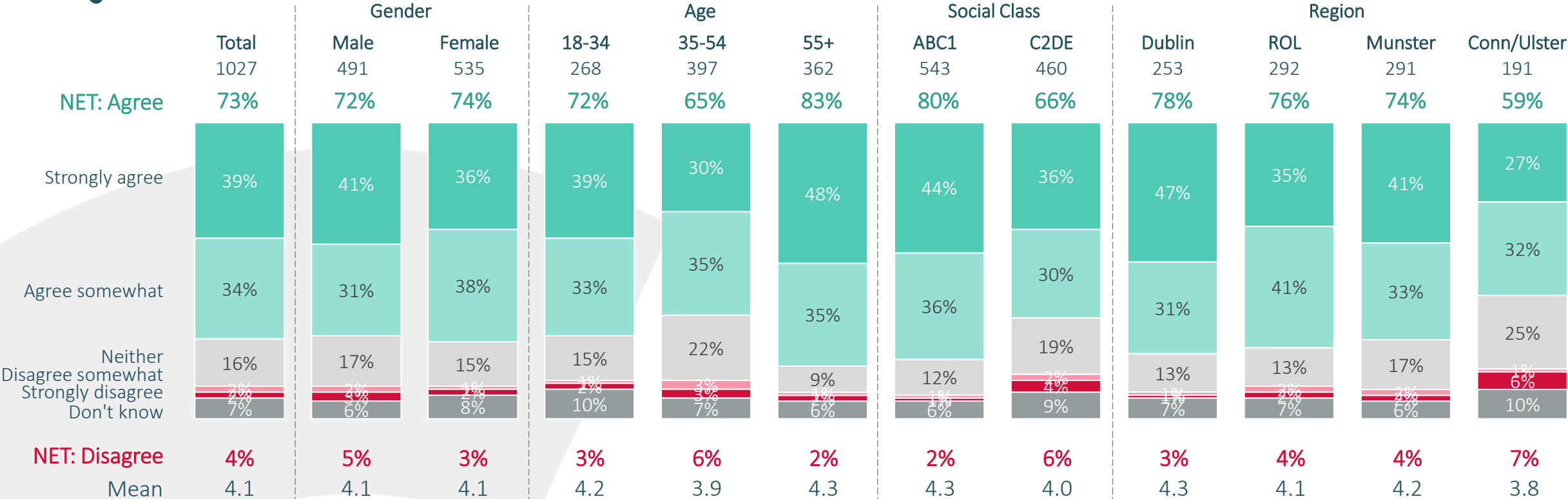
Increase government supports for energy-efficient buildings and updating old heating systems



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

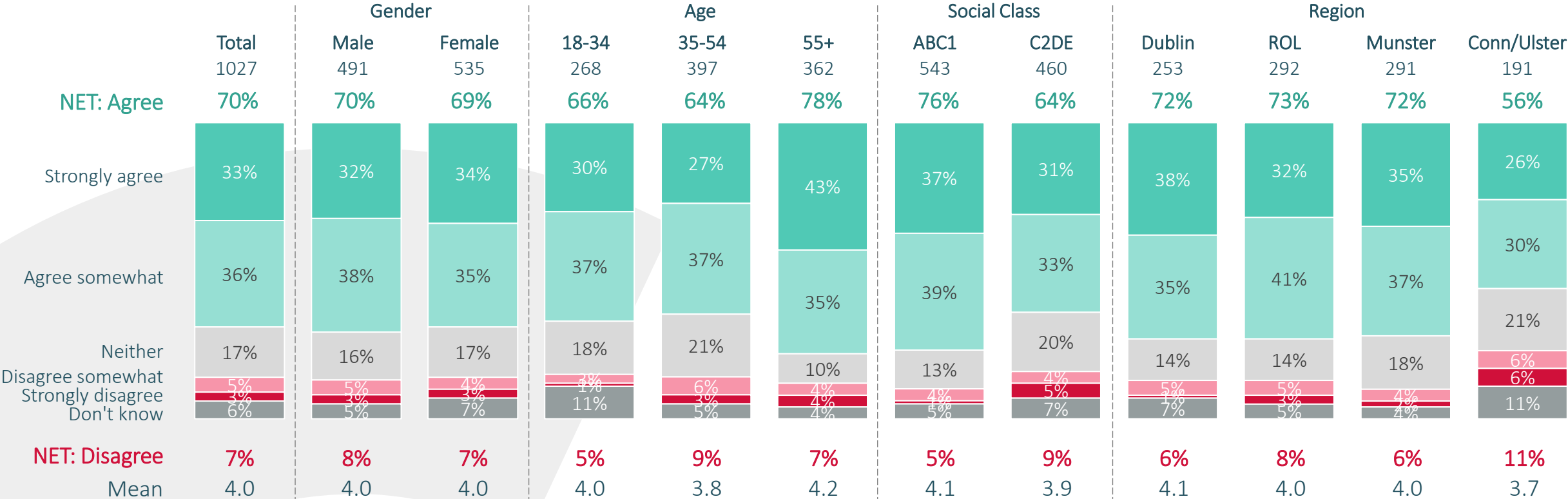
Ensure better enforcement of existing air quality legislation



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

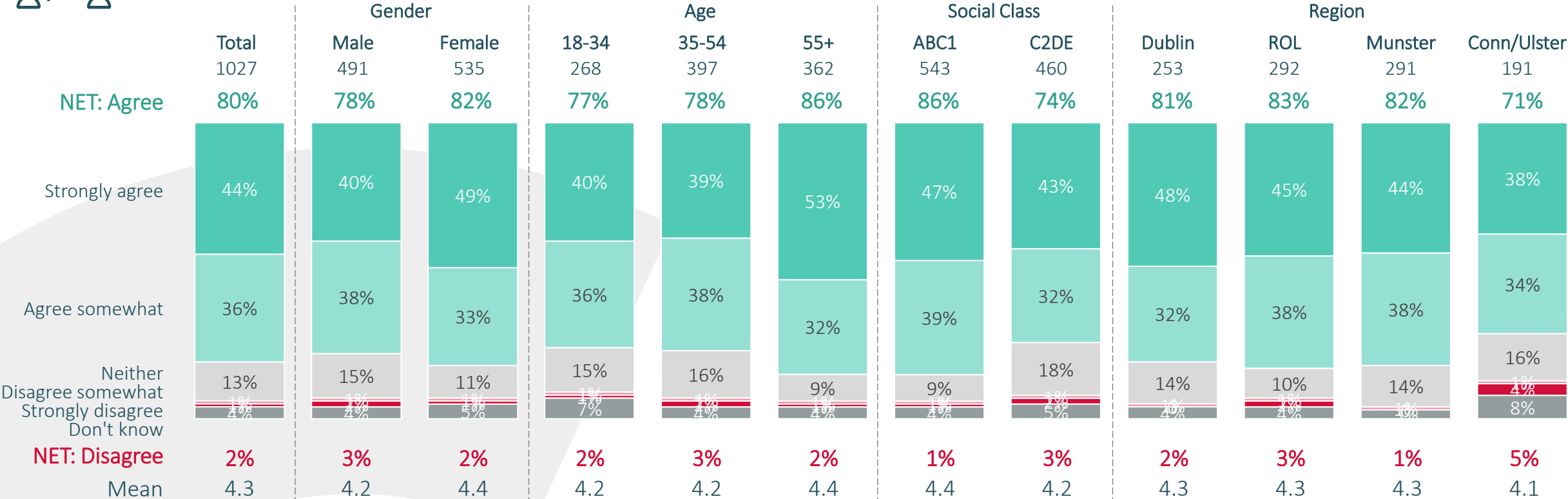
Stricter legislation on air-polluting activities



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

Provide more information to the public on the health and environmental consequences of air pollution



Q11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following possible policy options relating to the below areas impacting on air quality?

(Base: All respondents n=1027)

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