



British Embassy
Tbilisi

Public Attitudes in Georgia

Results of June 2020 survey



Carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia

This research project is funded with
UK aid from the British people

WHY WE CONDUCT POLLS?



To foster the development of more responsive policies and governance;

To help stakeholders diagnose and address issues of public concern.

- ❖ Leaders from across the political spectrum have reported that polls are important to their work and encourage continued polling;
- ❖ Inclusive process: the polling instrument was developed in consultation with political parties, government, and civil society leaders.

ABOUT THE POLL

- ❖ Fieldwork dates: June 26-30, 2020
- ❖ 1,550 completed interviews (35% response rate according to AAPOR standards)
- ❖ The average margin of error is +/- 2%
- ❖ **Note: the margin of error is different for every response**
- ❖ **Shift from face-to-face to telephone method might affect a change on historical slides.**

SAMPLE

- ❖ All interviews were conducted via **mobile phone interview** method
- ❖ Simple random sampling method was used. Respondents were selected using the **random-digit-dial method**
- ❖ Interviews were conducted in Georgian, Azerbaijani, Armenian and Russian languages
- ❖ The poll is representative of entire Georgian population (excluding the occupied territories)
- ❖ In addition, the poll is representative of the capital, urban and rural settlements

Quality control

- ❖ All interviewers receive special training
- ❖ CRRC central office coordinators conduct quality control interviews

ABOUT FOCUS GROUPS

- ❖ **Fieldwork dates:**
June 24-30, 2020
- ❖ **10 focus groups in 5 cities:** Tbilisi, Zugdidi, Batumi, Marneuli, Akhalkalaki
- ❖ **2 groups in each city:** Mixed age, gender and employment
- ❖ **Georgian speakers**



METHODOLOGY

- ❖ **Focus groups were conducted online, using Zoom platform**
- ❖ Combination of two methods for selecting participants: 1) CRRC coordinators go to several central places and randomly stop and recruit people 2) The snowball method
- ❖ Participation is voluntary
- ❖ Using an open-ended interview protocol to guide discussion, a professional moderator facilitates the focus groups
- ❖ Focus groups are recorded with the permission of the participants. The anonymity of participants is protected in this report.

Why focus on Covid-19 and disinformation?

Dissemination of misleading, inflammatory and false information about Covid-19 heightens fear and confusion, leading to:

- ❖ Non-compliance with public health measures;
- ❖ Political conflict;
- ❖ Information pollution;
- ❖ Empowering non-democratic forces.

Research goals:

- ❖ To help key stakeholders fight mis- and disinformation campaigns;
- ❖ To help respond to the public's concerns;
- ❖ To understand the communication ecosystem and main myths around the coronavirus; and understand people's favored channels and most trusted sources;
- ❖ To understand attitudes towards EU and NATO in light of the Covid-19.

Major Findings

- Georgians are concerned about the quality of information around the COVID-19 pandemic, but confident in their own ability to see through false narratives.
- Indeed, when presented with some prevalent disinformation narratives, significant numbers of Georgians disagreed with the statements, such as that the EU has abandoned its members, the Lugar Lab develops biological weapons against Russia, and 5G is linked to the spread of COVID-19. Of importance, however, is that while few Georgians believe these statements, roughly a third don't know whether they are true or false, pointing to disinformation's ability to confuse.
- The Lugar Lab, a prominent target of disinformation, received an overwhelmingly positive assessment, with 66 percent saying it has prevented the spread of COVID-19 in Georgia.

Major Findings

- Despite disinformation aimed at undermining support for transatlantic alliances, Georgians remain steadfast in their support for the country's EU and NATO goals, with support for membership at 76 and 69 percent, respectively.
- When it comes to trusted sources of information on the virus, most Georgians turn to the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) (90 percent) and the Government of Georgia (85 percent). Journalists (73 percent), local government (66 percent trust), and religious leaders or the church (61 percent trust) are also trusted sources.
- Georgians say they get their news on COVID-19 primarily from television (84 percent), social media (41 percent), and friends, family and colleagues (26 percent).
- When asked how they determine whether information on Facebook related to COVID-19 is true or false, 61 percent of those who receive news about COVID-19 from social media, point to the source or media channel, whereas a plurality, 37 percent, relies on their instincts.

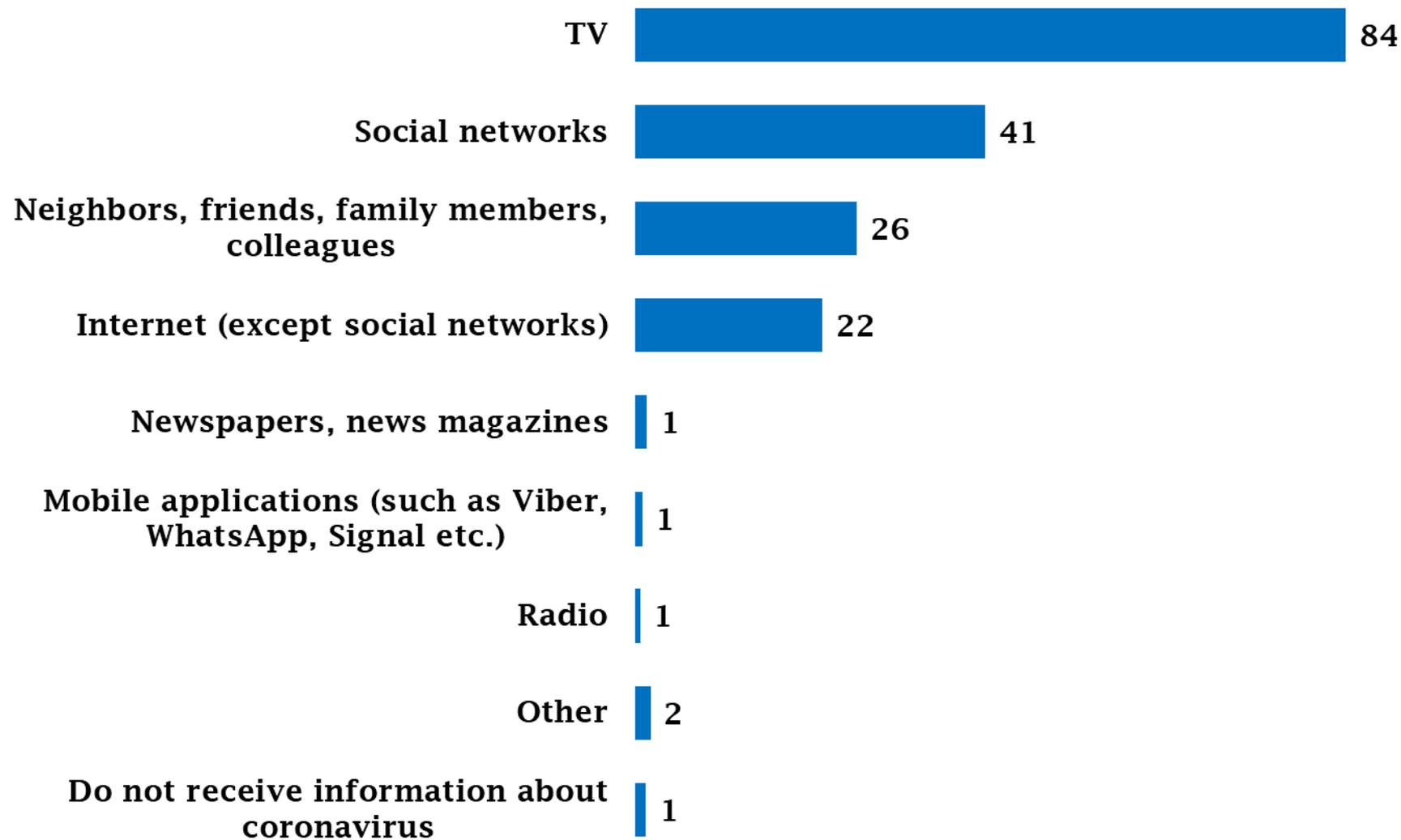
Major Findings

- Three quarters of Georgians (73 percent) believe the country's relatively low rate of infections and spread is due to steps taken by the government and doctors, while 17 percent say it's mostly due to Georgians' genetics and religion.
- Looking ahead, 80 percent of citizens remain concerned that they or their family members will get infected with the virus.
- Despite this concern, close to half of Georgians (46 percent) say they would not get a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available (38 percent would). Focus group results demonstrated that while Georgians are generally not against vaccines, they listed number of concerns, including "it will depend on the origin of the vaccine," "it will take time (at least a year) to be sure it's safe," and "it won't be necessary if pandemic is no longer a danger."

Information Space

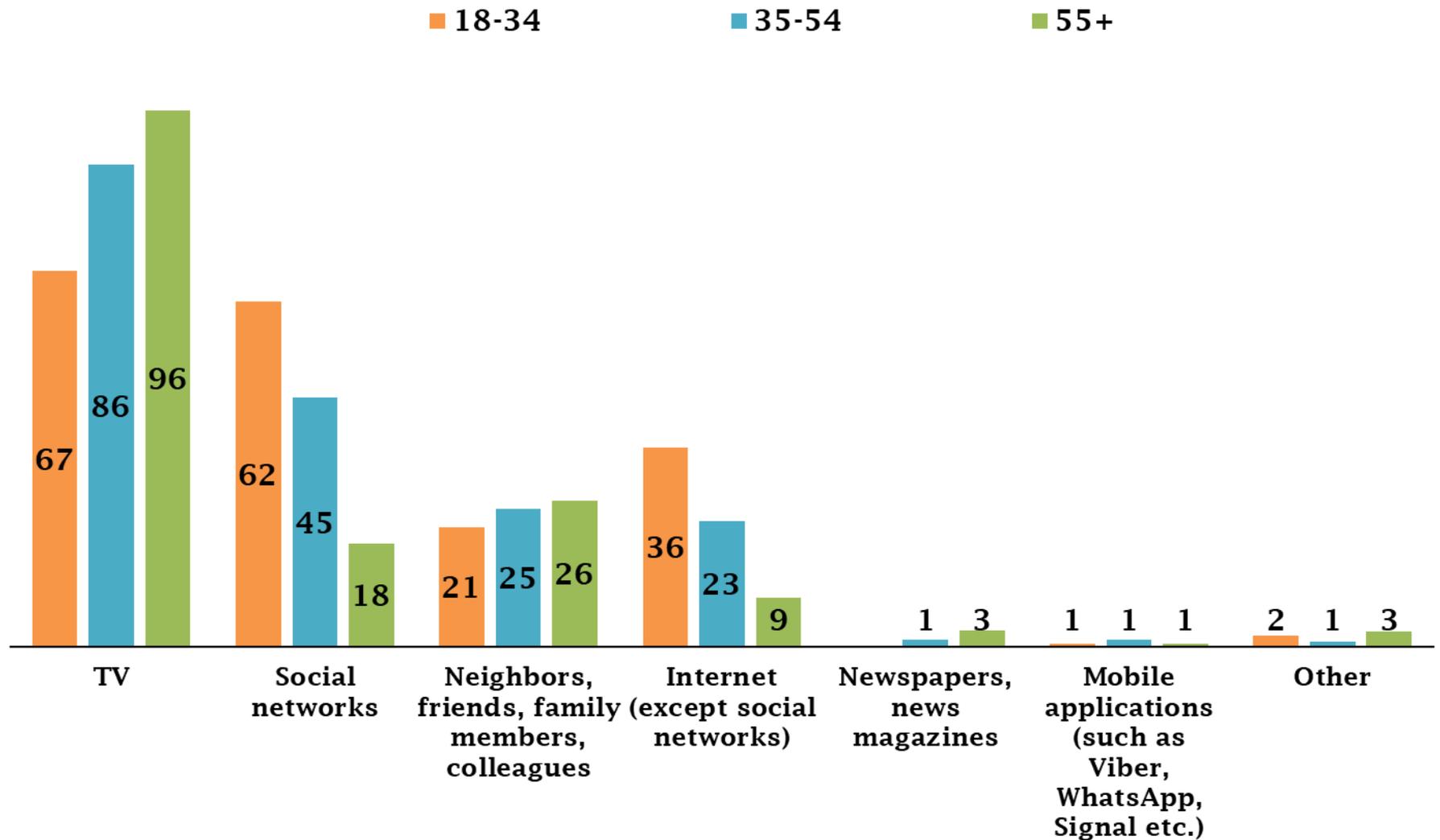
Information sources

What is your main source of information for receiving news about Coronavirus pandemic? Up to 3 answers (q1)



Information sources

What is your main source of information for receiving news about Coronavirus pandemic? Up to 3 answers (q1 X Age) Part 1



Trust towards information sources

How much do you trust or distrust information about coronavirus received from following sources ...? (q2) - of the 99% who receives information about coronavirus

■ Fully trust ■ Partially trust ■ Partially distrust ■ Fully distrust ■ Do not receive information about coronavirus from this source ■ DK

NCDC



Government



Journalists/media



Your local government (Sakrebulo, Mayor's office)



Your religious leader/church



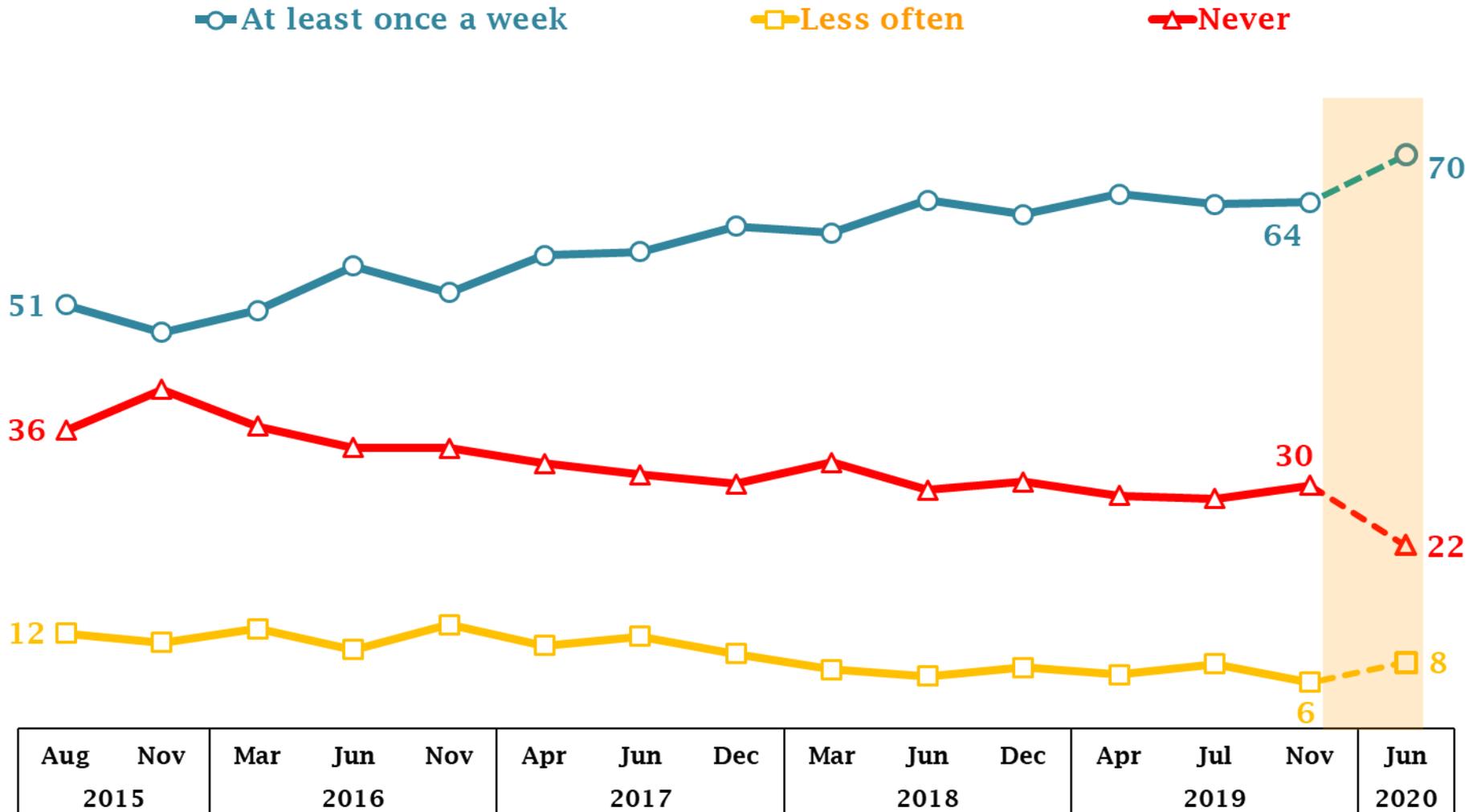
NGOs



Internet usage

How often do you use the Internet? Do you use the Internet ... (q3)

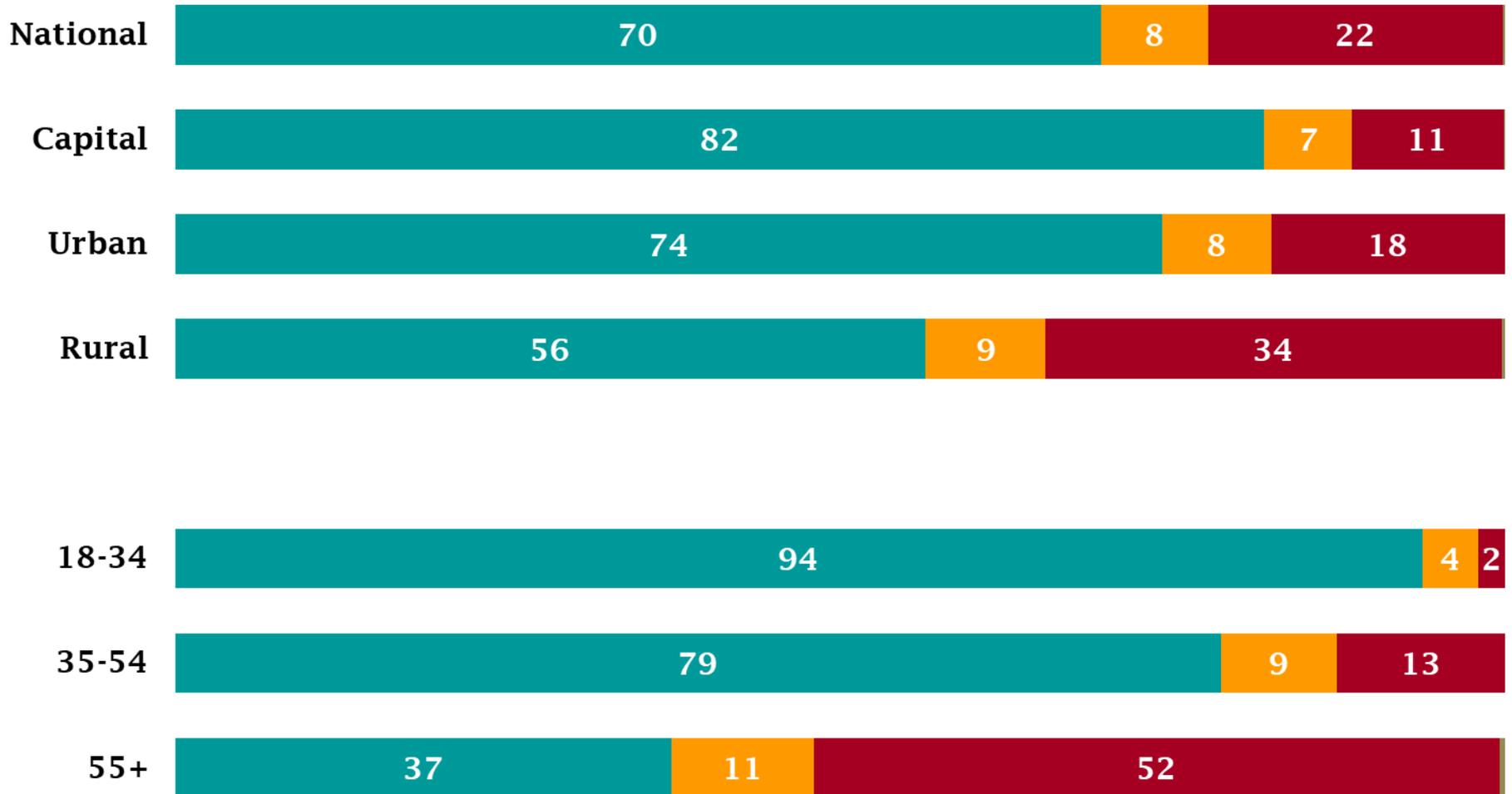
*Dashed line represents change in method from face-to-face to telephone



Internet usage

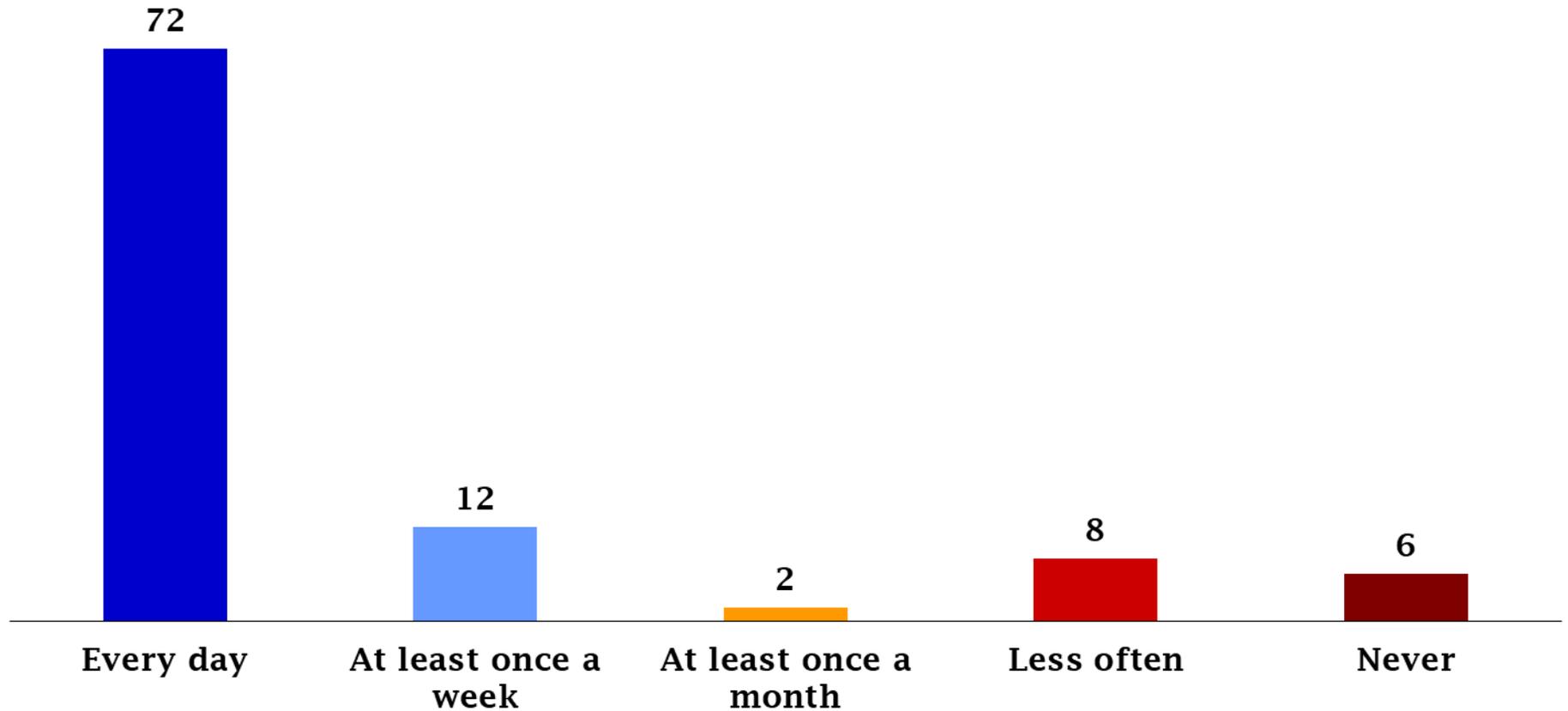
How often do you use the Internet? Do you use the Internet ...
(q3 X Settlement, Age)

■ At least once a week ■ Less often ■ Never ■ DK



Social media usage

How often do you use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vkontakte etc.? (q4) - of the 78% who uses internet

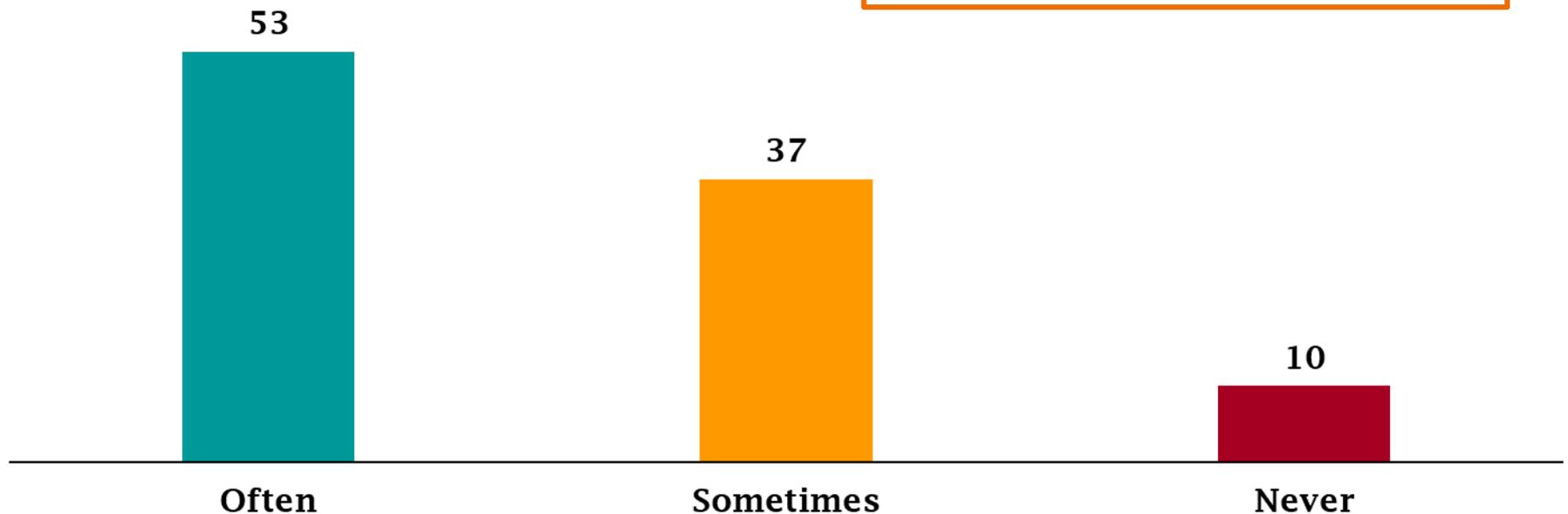


Social media and Covid-19

How often, if ever, do you get news and information about the Covid-19 outbreak on social networks? (q5) - of the 72% who uses social media and receives information about coronavirus

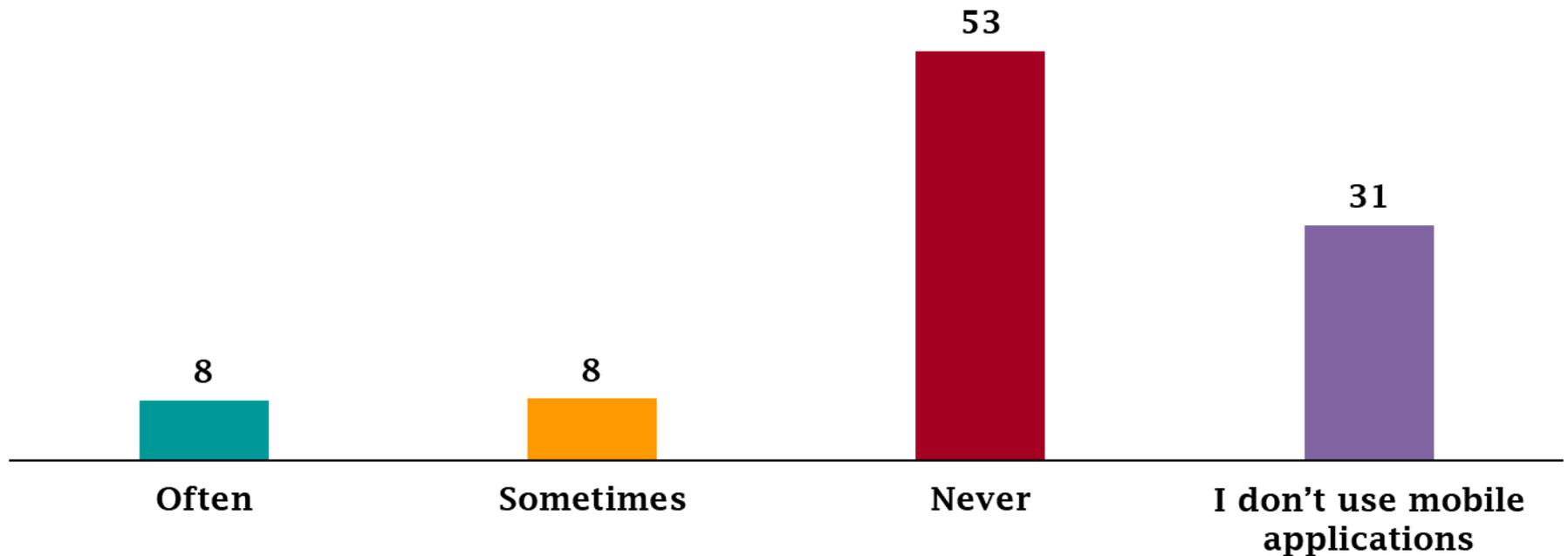
Focus groups

Focus group participants said they don't trust information and news on Facebook, because it's usually fake. Both FB users and non-users prefer TV for receiving information about Covid-19.



Mobile apps and Covid-19

How often, if ever, do you get news and information about the Covid-19 outbreak on mobile apps (Viber, WhatsApp, Signal etc.)? (q6) - of the 99% who receives information about coronavirus



Infodemic*



Getty image

*As stated by the WHO, the COVID-19 outbreak and response has been accompanied by a massive infodemic: an overabundance of information - some accurate and some not - that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it.

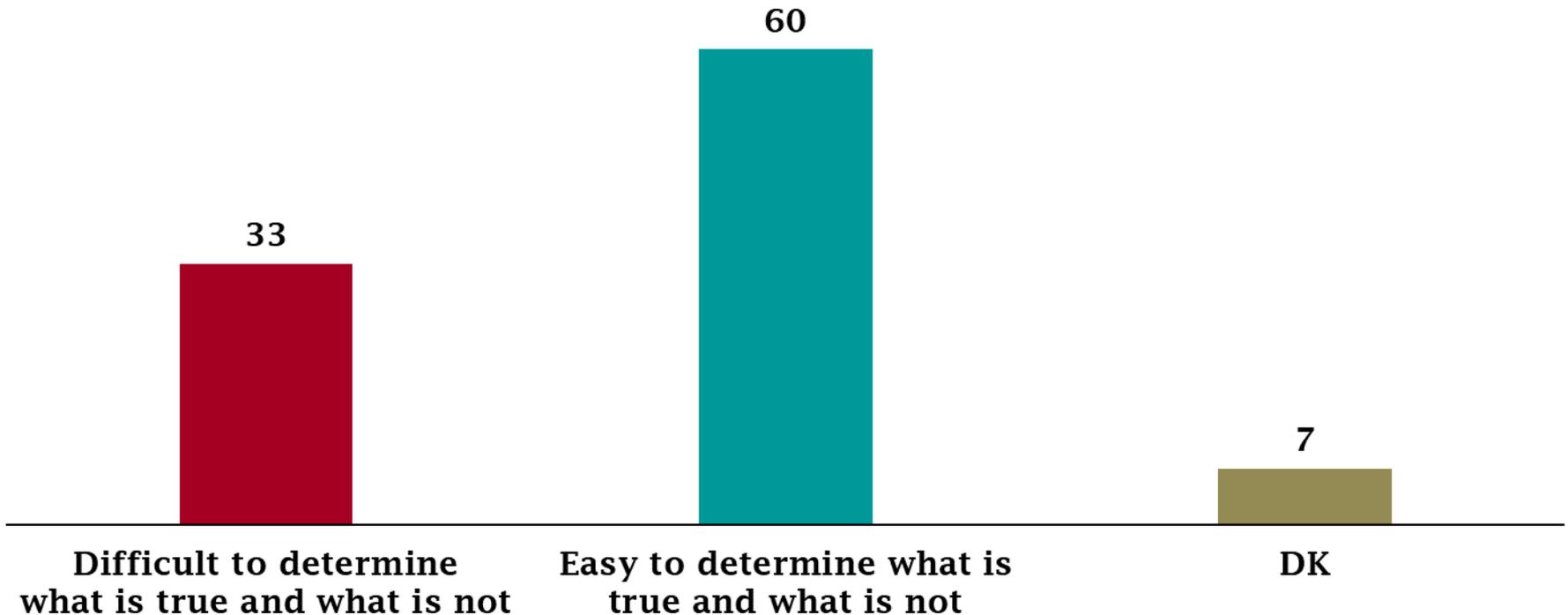
WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST
CHALLENGE DURING PANDEMIC?

From focus groups



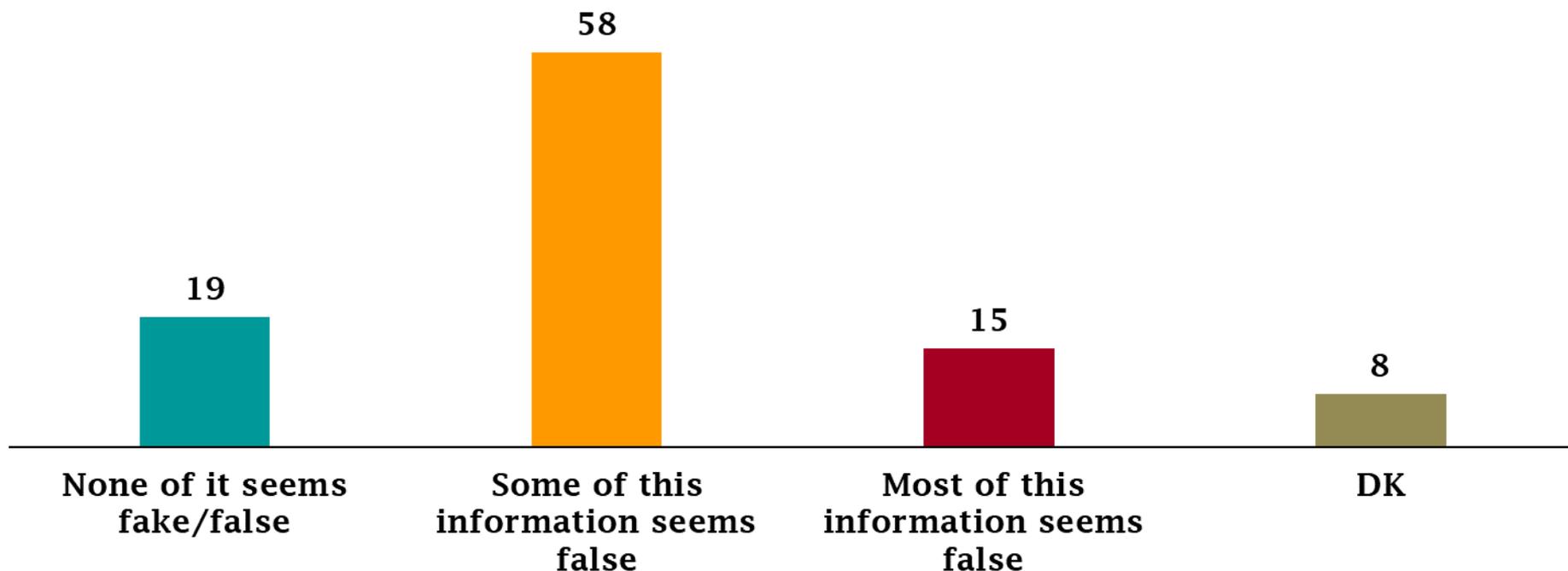
Covid-19 - telling truth from lies

When you get news and information about the Covid-19 outbreak, do you generally find it ... (q7) - of the 99% who receives information about coronavirus



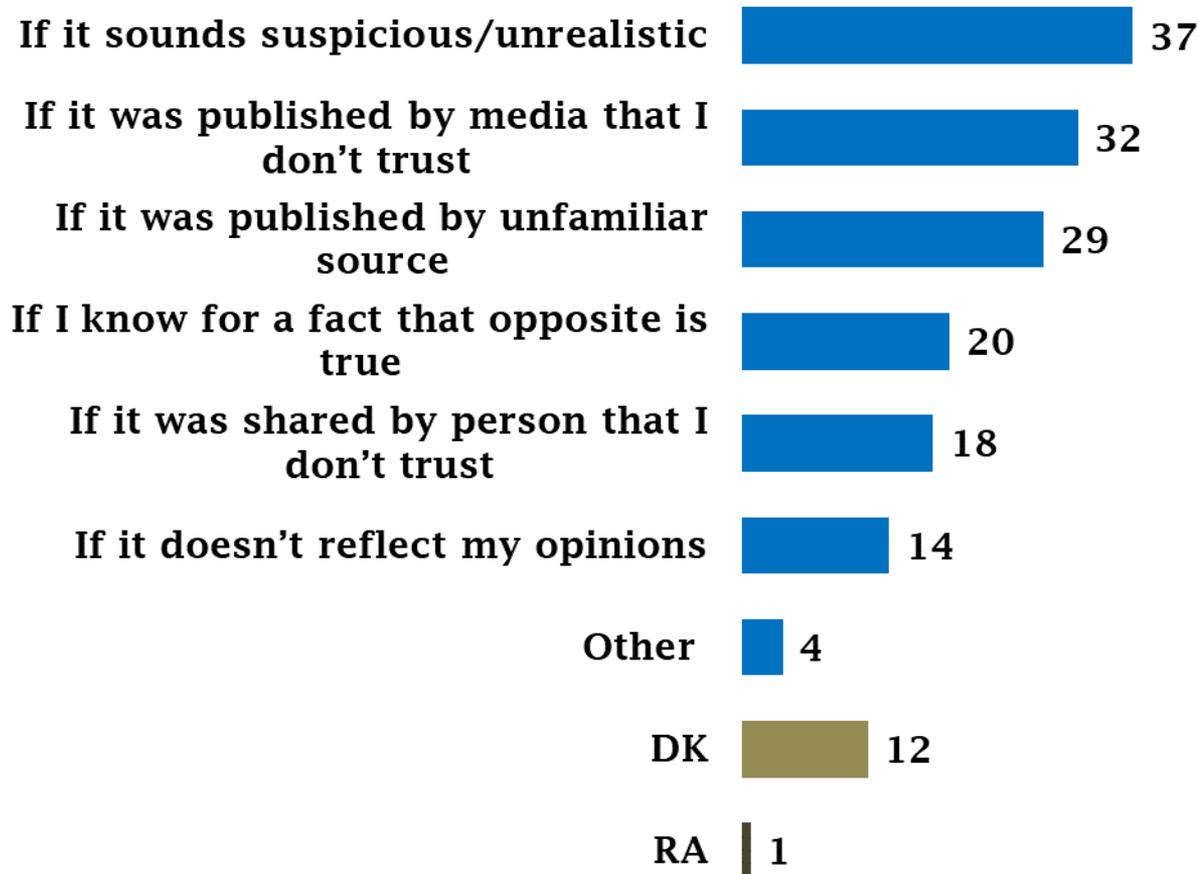
Covid-19 - telling truth from lies

A lot of information is circulating about the Covid-19. Based on your observation: (q8) - of the 99% who receives information about coronavirus



Covid-19 – telling truth from lies

When you get news and information about the coronavirus outbreak on Facebook, how do you decide if a piece of information you encounter is false/fake? Up to 3 answers (q9) - of the 65% who receives information about coronavirus from social networks



Quotes

From focus groups

“I don’t trust news on Facebook. I read them because I’m curious, but I don’t trust most of it. I can usually tell by the comments and reactions to the news whether it’s fake or not”

Woman, 33 y/o, unemployed, Batumi

“I only trusted information on broadcasters’ Facebook pages, I didn’t even read other news, they were all fake. If a TV station shared something - it’s okay, otherwise there is lot of fake news out there, not only about this [coronavirus] but about everything”

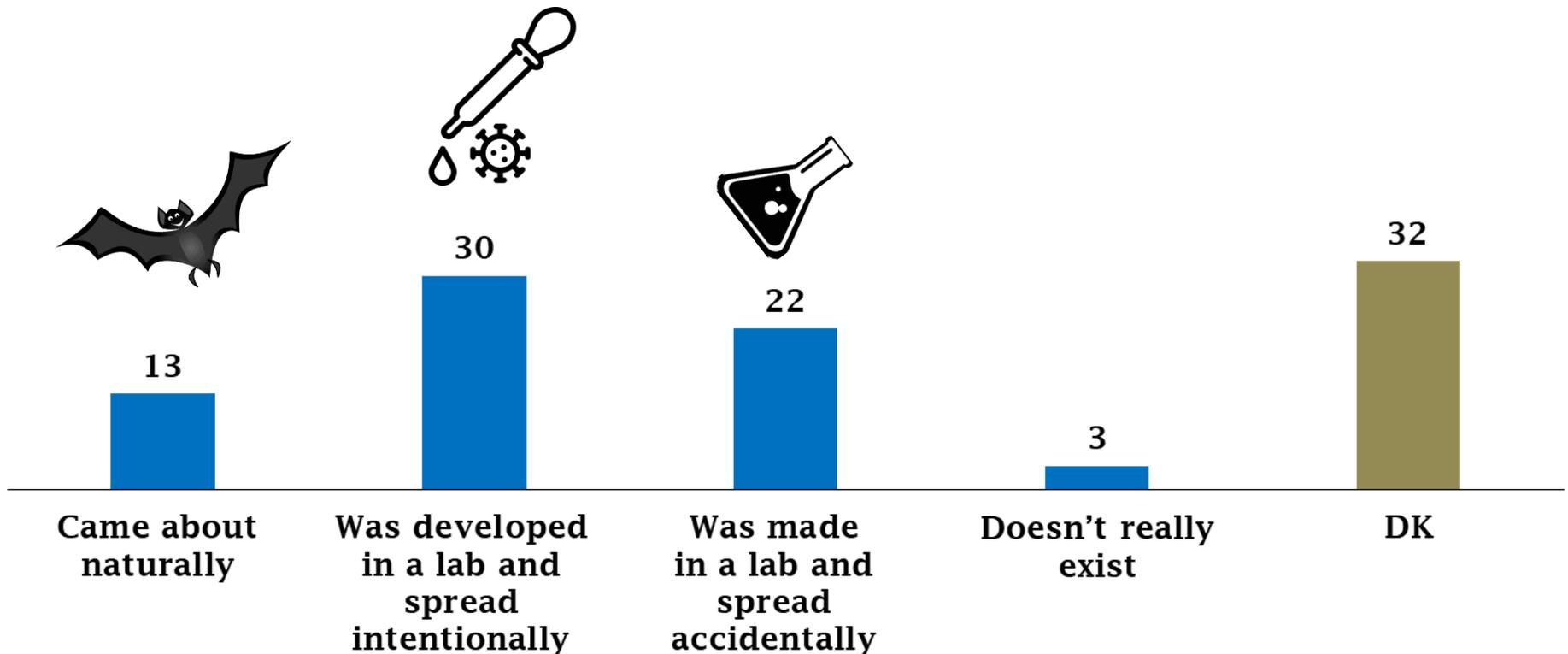
Man, 50 y/o, employed, Akhalkalaki

“If a piece of information was shared both online and on TV, I considered it correct. Since we are internet users, we have seen lots of news, photos and footage, so I could compare and I could tell, even just from the photos, that a certain piece of information was fake”

Woman, 35 y/o, employed, Akhalkalaki

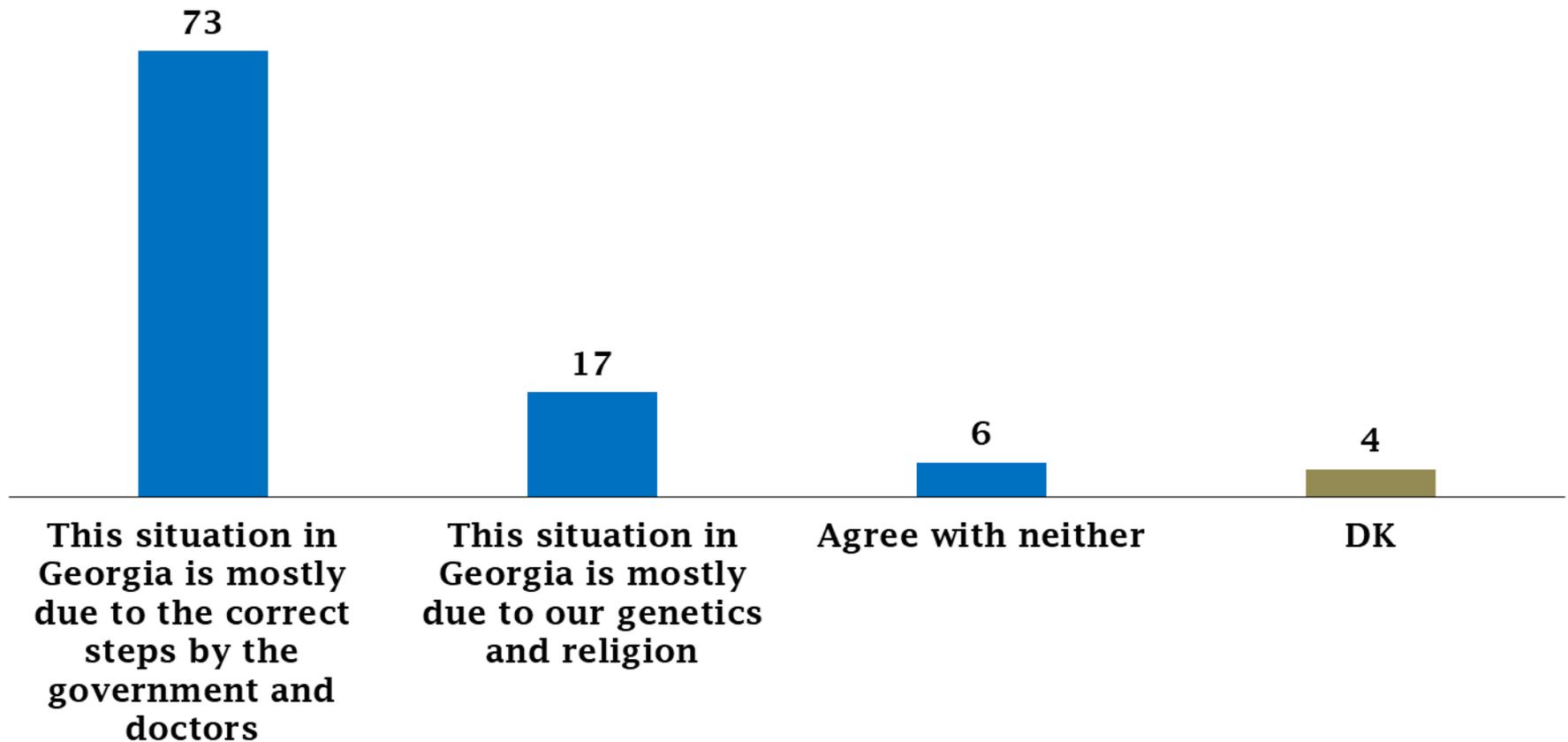
Origin of Covid-19

Do you think it is most likely the Covid-19 ... (q17)



Pandemic situation in Georgia

So far, Georgia has relatively low level of spread and mortality rate of Covid-19. Which of the following statements do you agree with the most? (q23)



Quotes

From focus groups

“First of all, the restrictions were introduced early on and secondly, there were very high fines for breaking the rules, which I believe were effective measures. People were afraid of getting fined and stayed at home.”

Woman, 38 y/o, employed, Akhalkalaki

“The preventive measures were introduced very quickly, the borders were closed down and as it turned out, we, Georgians were not as unorganized as we thought we were. All this led to good results.”

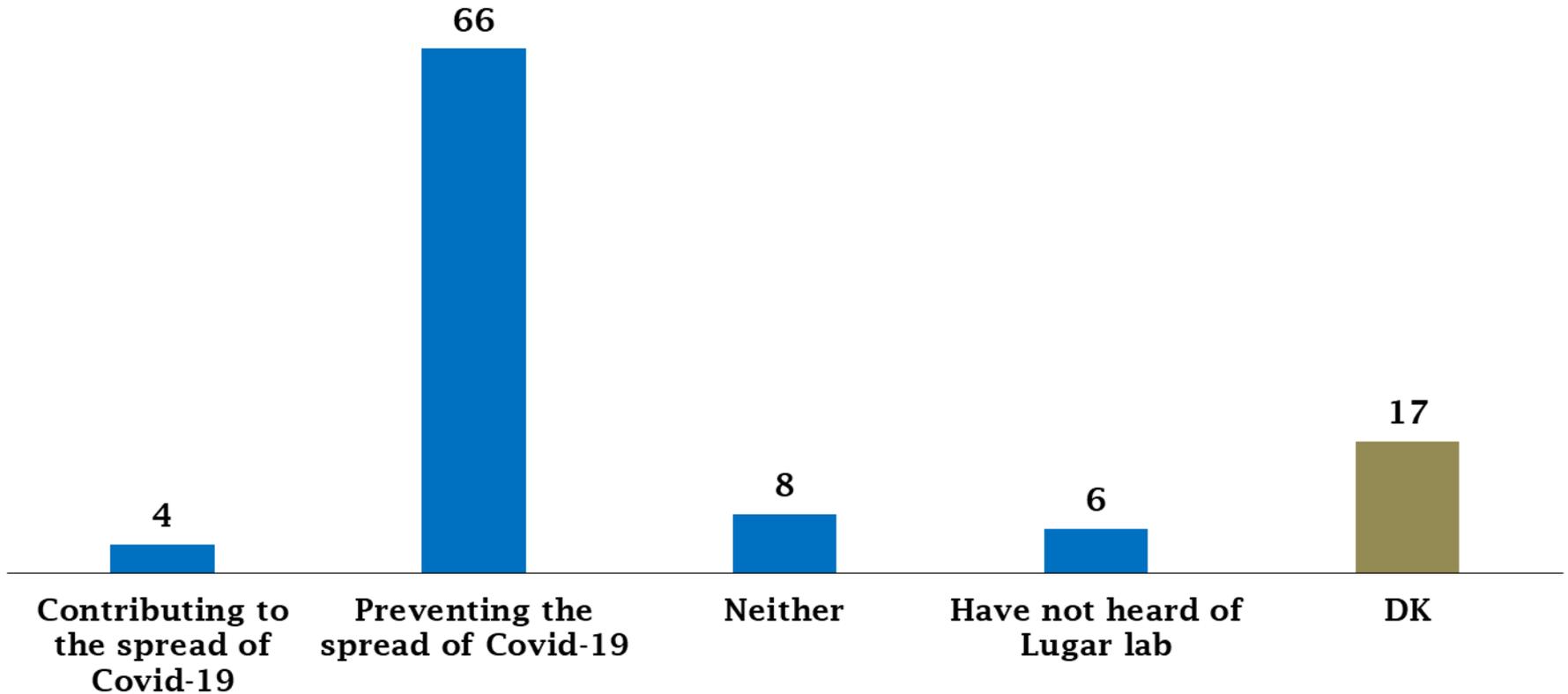
Man, 28 y/o, self-employed, Tbilisi

“This is the result of synchronized efforts from the government and the doctors. Doctors introduced correct protocols and treatment plans, and the restrictions of course. The government, everyone agrees, did a very good job”

Man, 55 y/o, employed, Zugdidi

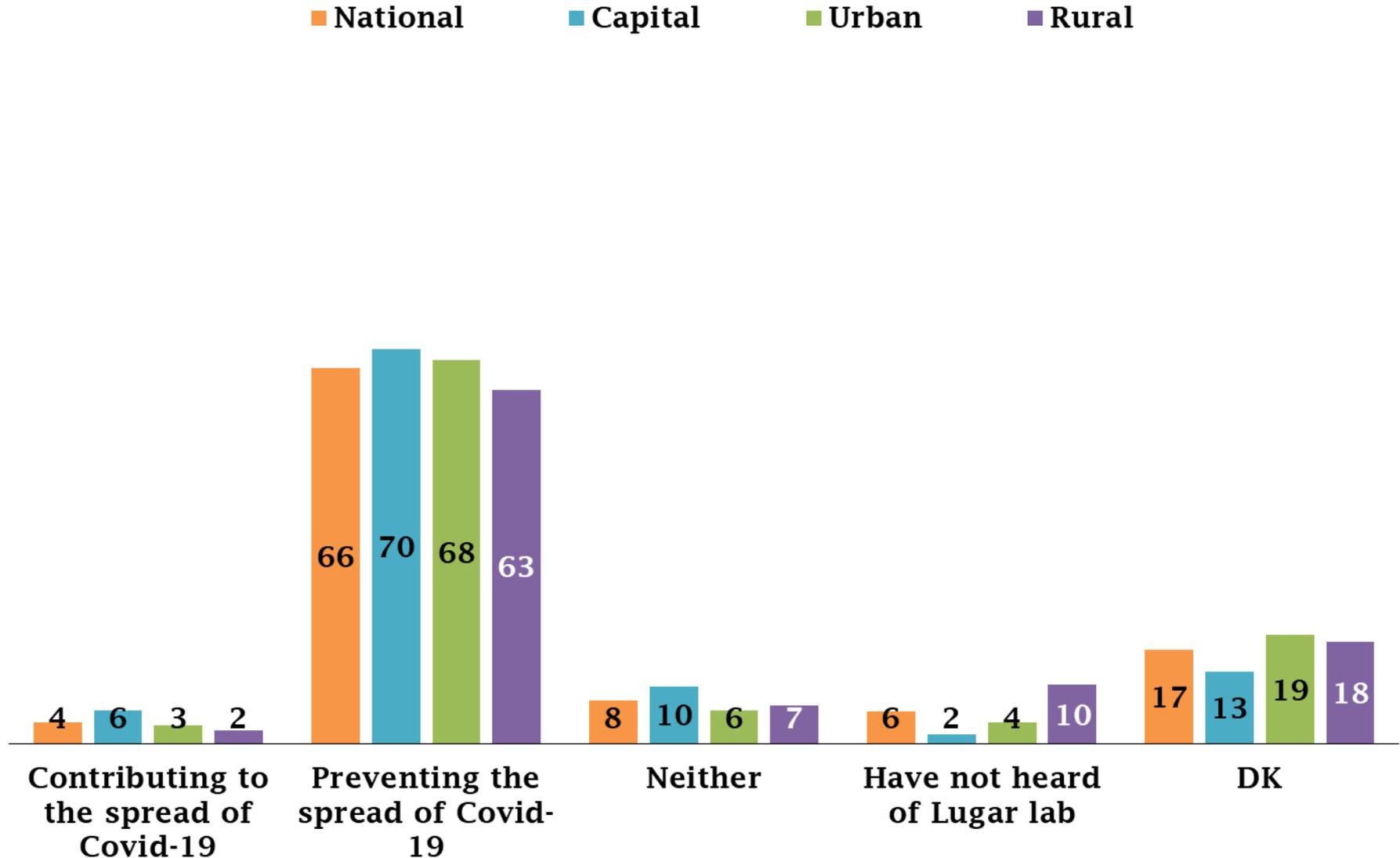
Lugar Lab and the pandemic

Do you believe the Lugar Lab is ... (q10)



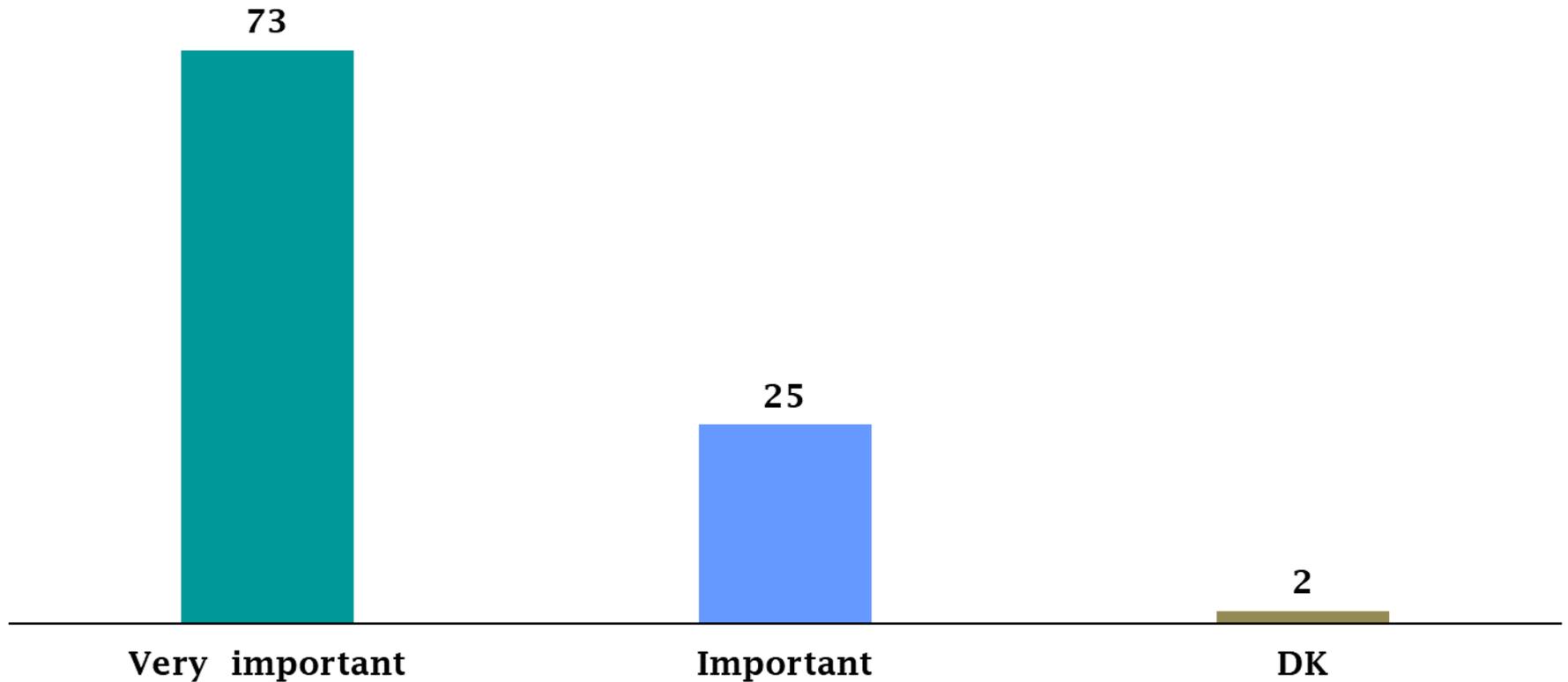
Lugar Lab and the pandemic

Do you believe the Lugar Lab is ... (q10 X Settlement)



Lugar Lab and the pandemic

How important or unimportant is the Lugar Lab in fighting the coronavirus in Georgia? (q11) - of the 66% who says Lugar Lab is preventing the spread of coronavirus



Quotes

From focus groups

“I don’t think that the world would allow Georgia to create biological weapons in the Lugar laboratory, but I will say that we have a great laboratory. Maybe it is Russia’s political move to turn other countries against Georgia.”

Man, 41 y/o, unemployed, Batumi

“I have heard of it [Lugar lab developing biological weapons], I’ve read fake news about it, as though this lab is developing things against Russia. This isn't true, its ridiculous

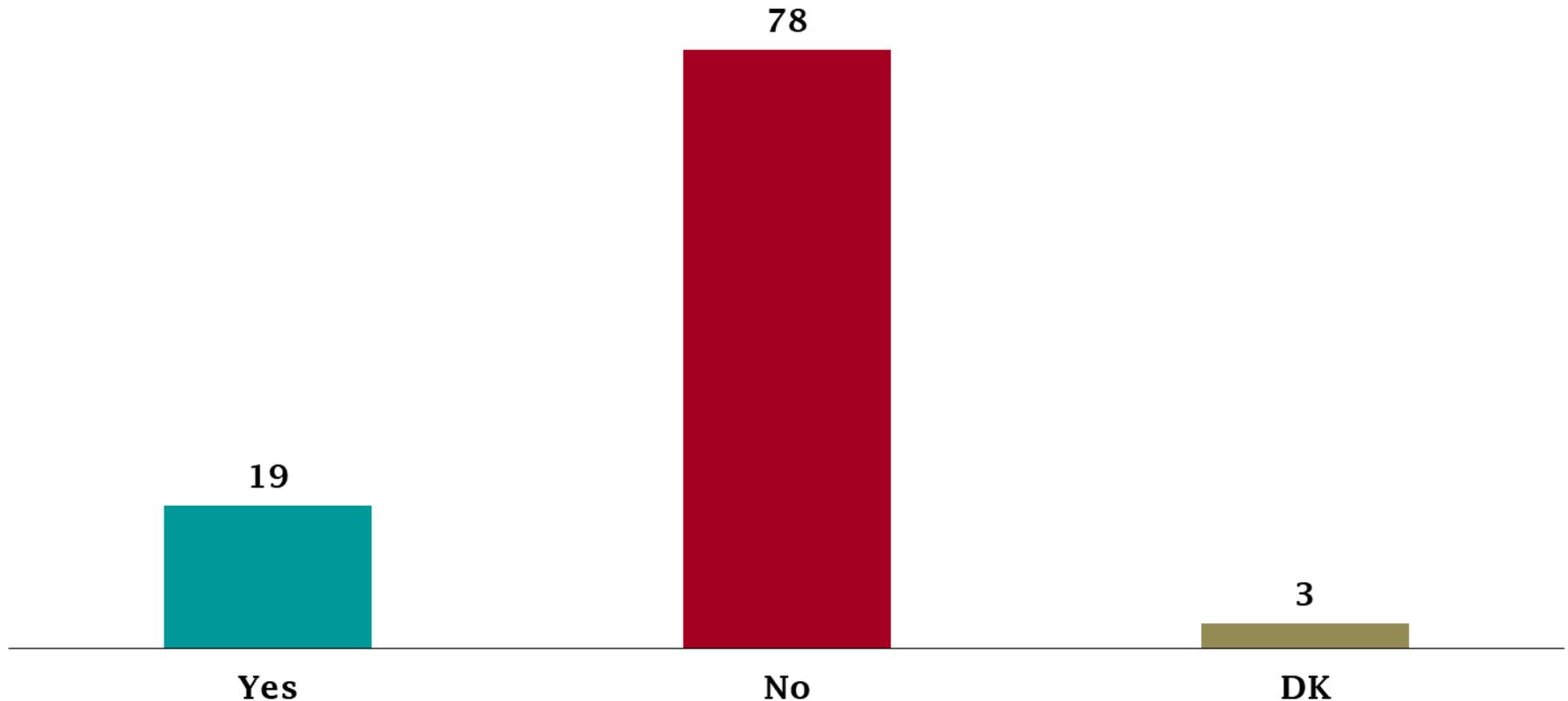
Woman, 44 y/o, employed, Akhalkalaki

“I have heard on TV that Russia has suspicion that Lugar lab is producing weapons against them. I really don’t think this is true, but if it was - I would be on board with it.”

Man, 66 y/o, Tbilisi

Natural remedies vs Covid-19

Some people say that “natural remedies” (such as drinking hot water, vodka, eating garlic etc.) are effective in protecting against Covid-19 and as a cure. Have you used any “natural remedies” for protection against Covid-19 or as a cure? (q18)



Quotes

From focus groups

“Generally, I don't like taking meds just like that, I also don't like giving too much meds to my children and I prefer to treat things with simple, at-home remedies. However, I don't think that this virus is the kind of illness that can be prevented or cured by hot tea and such.”

Woman, 41 y/o, self-employed, Tbilisi

“I don't think home remedies can handle such dangerous virus. And I believe it is wrong to count on home remedies in this situation.”

Woman, 21 y/o, employed, Marneuli

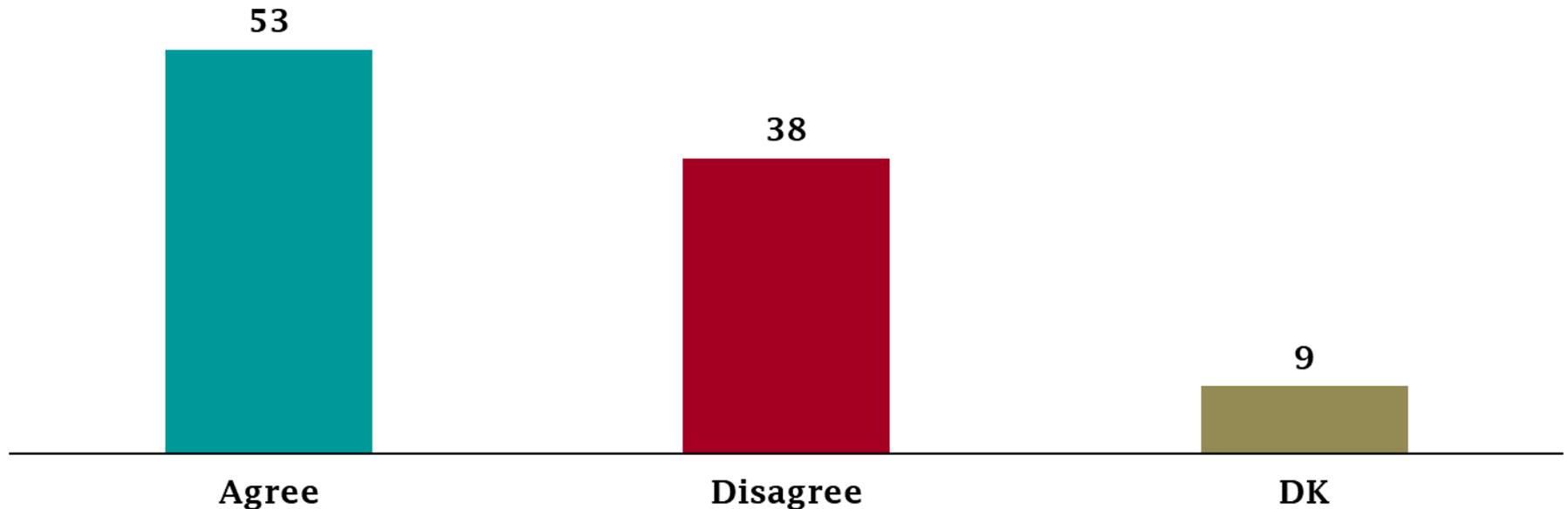
“At the end of the day, at-home remedies are all about strengthening the immunity: the vitamin C, citrus, amino acids, vodka and garlic. But if the virus shuts down the lungs and such, then of course the chicken soup won't help you. But maybe home remedies can be used until the condition is critical, or maybe for the prevention - I can't really say for sure.”

Man, 47 y/o, employed, Tbilisi

Faith and Covid-19

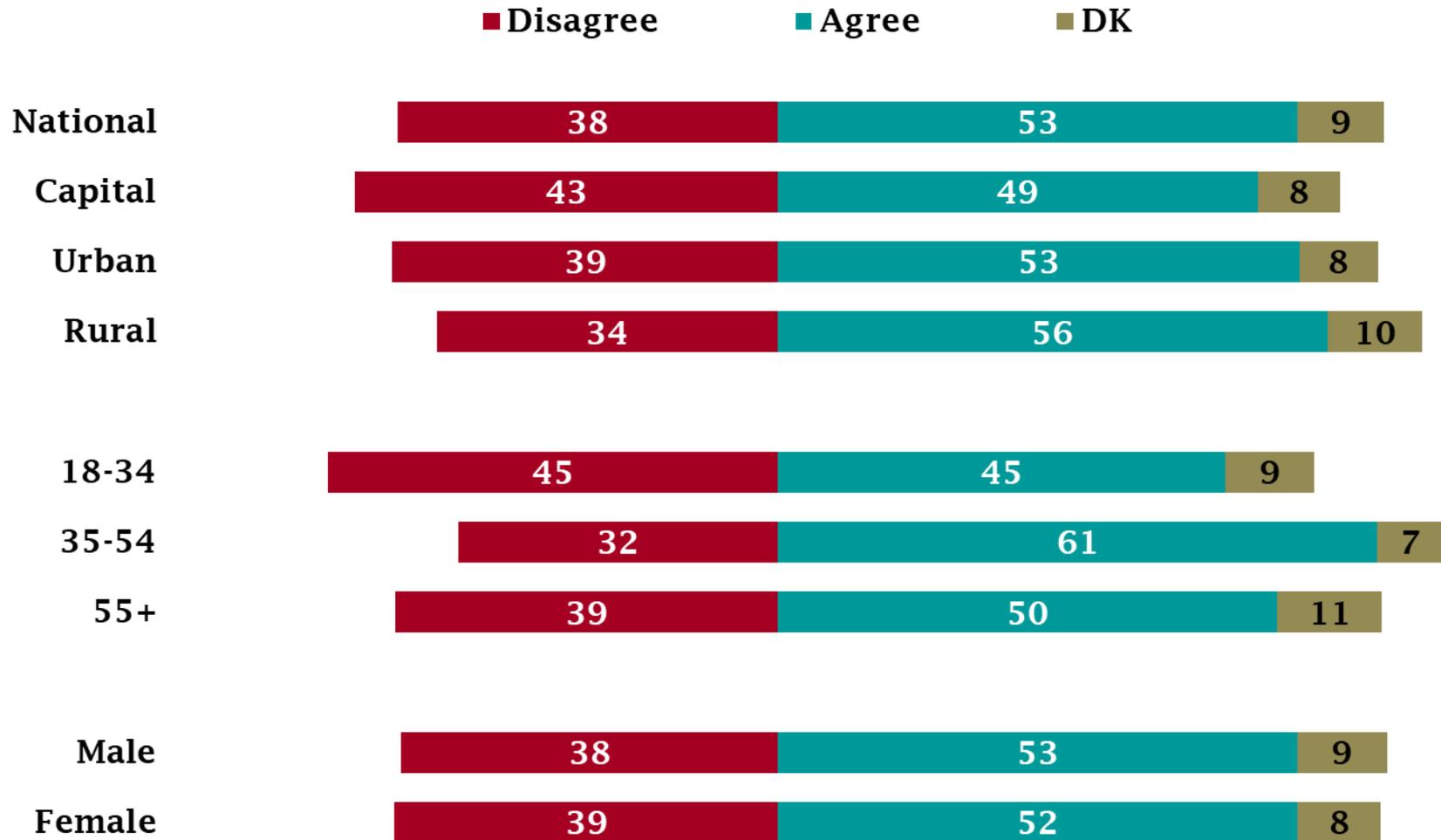
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Faith protects believers of my religion from getting infected with the
Covid-19”? (q19)

Only 10% of Orthodox Christians
reported that they attended
Easter service in the church.



Faith and Covid-19

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Faith protects believers of my religion from getting infected with the Covid-19”? (q19 X Settlement, Age, Gender)



Faith and Covid-19

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Faith protects believers of my religion from getting infected with the Covid-19”? (q19 X How often do you attend religious services?) - of the 97% who say they belong to a specific religious denomination

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ DK ■ RA

Those who attend religious services at least once a month or more often (35%)

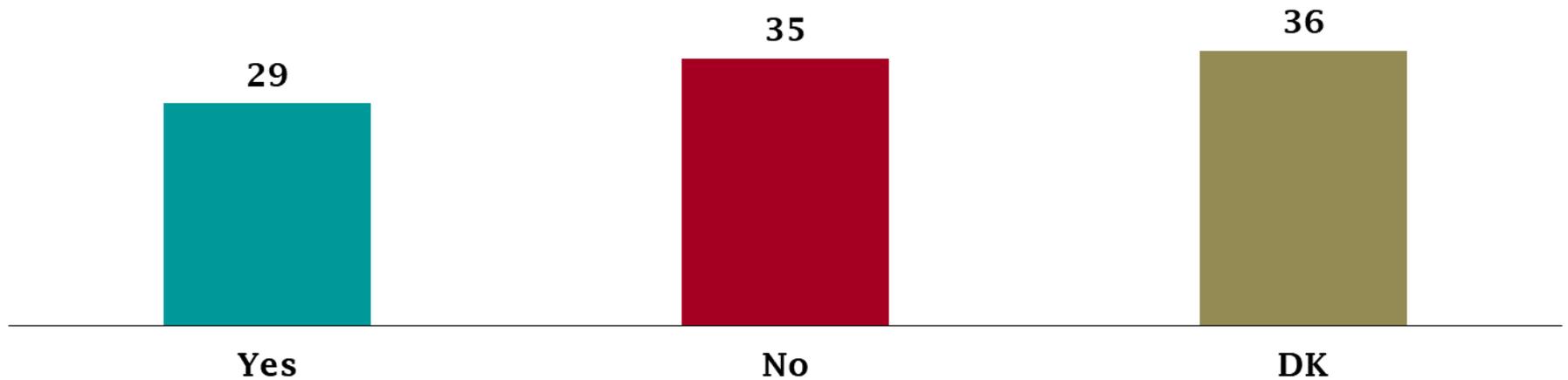


Those who attend religious services less often or never (65%)



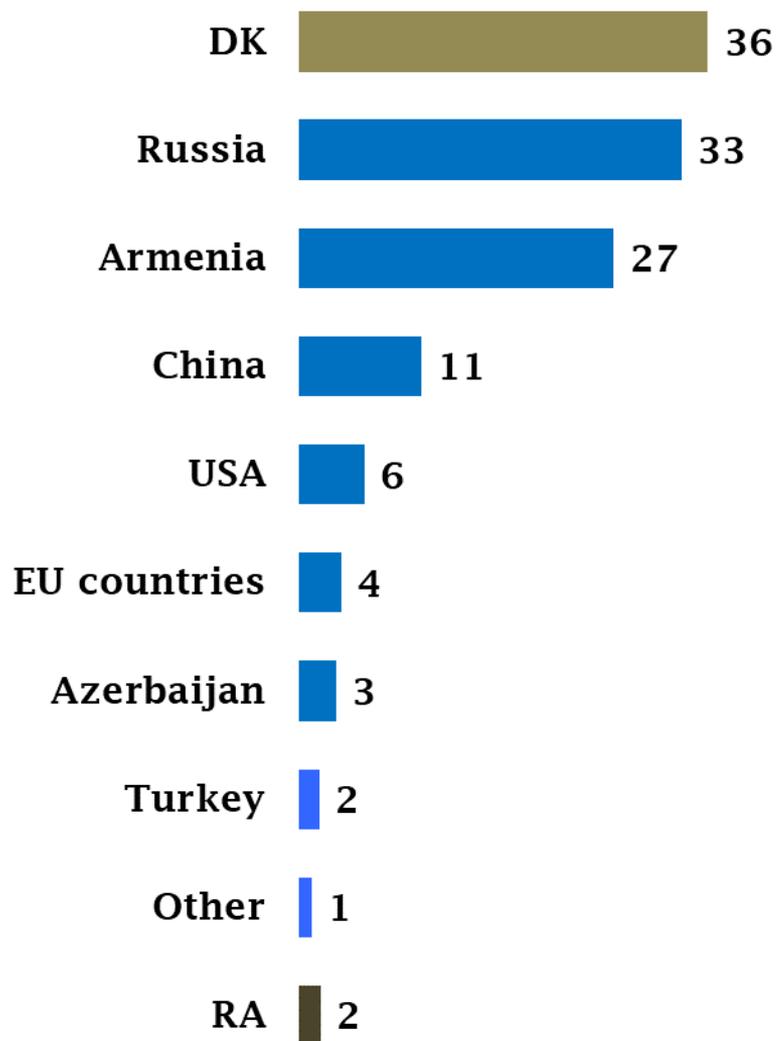
Spreading disinformation

Do you think that a certain foreign country is intentionally spreading false information/disinformation about Covid-19 in Georgia? (q20)



Spreading disinformation

If yes, which country? Accept all answers (q21) - of the 29% who think a certain foreign country is spreading disinformation about coronavirus in Georgia



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (q22)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ DK ■ RA

EU has abandoned its member countries in fight against Covid-19



Russia is handling the Covid-19 pandemic situation better than USA



Russia is handling the Covid-19 pandemic situation better than EU countries

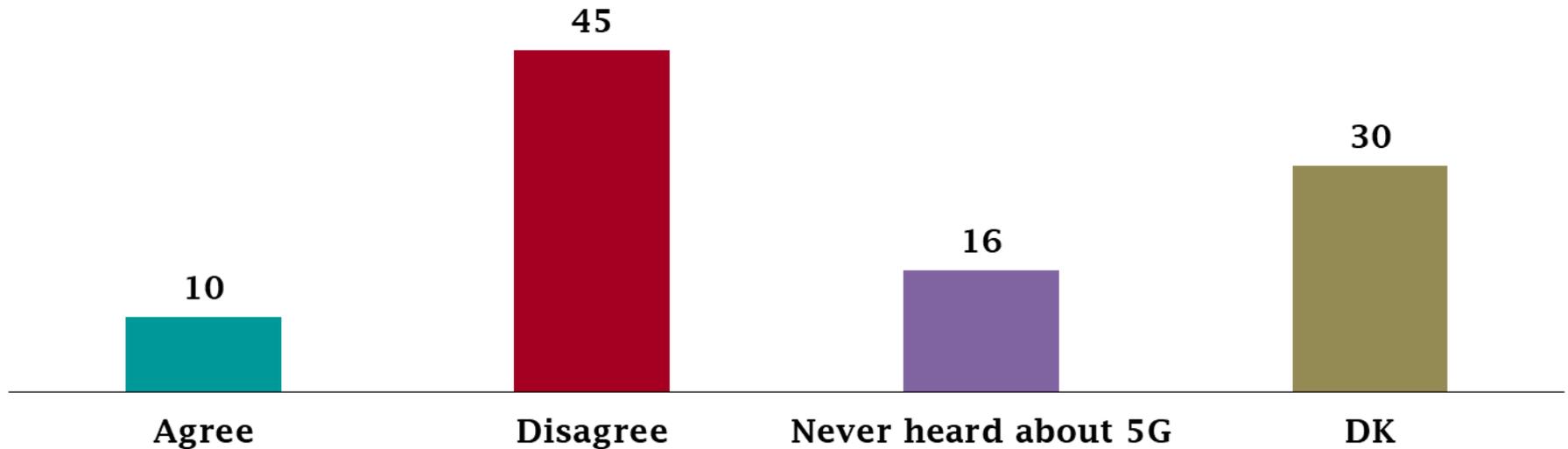


Biological weapons against Russia are being developed at Lugar lab



5G and Covid-19

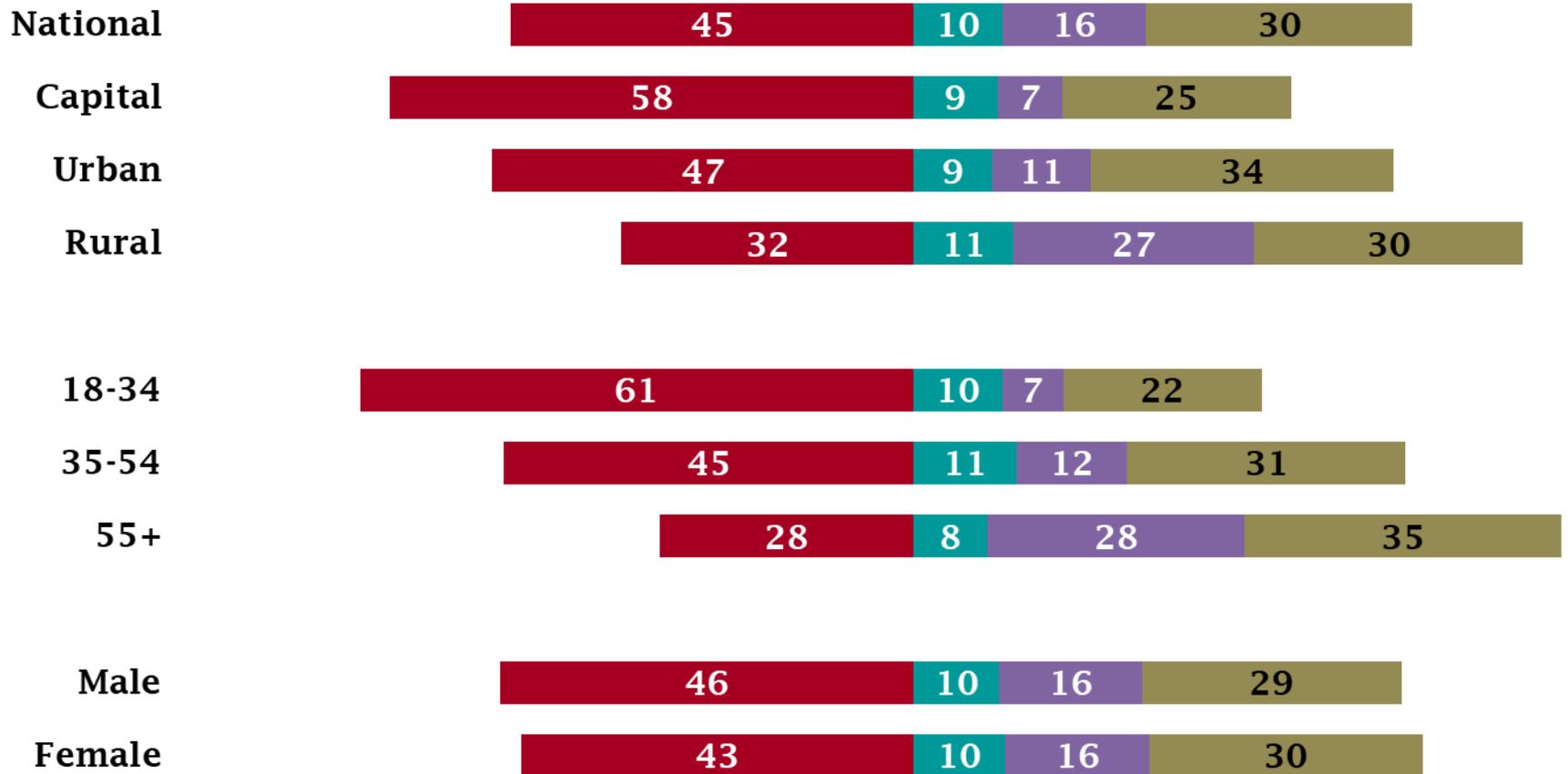
There is news circulating regarding the 5G technologies and Covid-19. Do you agree or disagree that 5G internet infrastructure is linked to the spread of Covid-19? (q25)



5G and Covid-19

There is news circulating regarding the 5G technologies and Covid-19. Do you agree or disagree that 5G internet infrastructure is linked to the spread of Covid-19? (q25 X Settlement, Age, Gender)

■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Never heard about 5G ■ DK



5G and Covid-19

There is news circulating regarding the 5G technologies and Covid-19. Do you agree or disagree that 5G internet infrastructure is linked to the spread of Covid-19? (q25 X Education)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Never heard about 5G ■ DK ■ RA

Secondary or lower (46%)



Secondary technical (21%)



Higher than secondary (33%)



Focus group highlights

5G conspiracy was the most heard myth, however most participants didn't believe it.

Most participants believed in conspiracy theories about the origin of the virus, namely that it was created and spread **intentionally**.

Participants heard most of the myths and fake news **“from people they know”**, rather than from a specific news source.



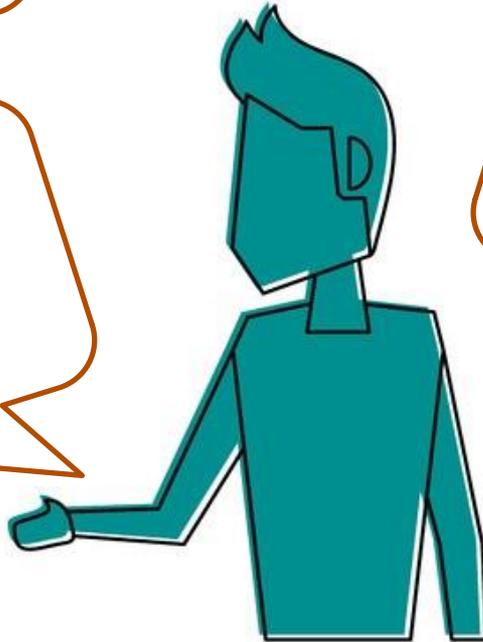
Other fake news proactively shared by focus group participants (which they did not believe):

“I heard Italy wants to leave EU”

“Old people are a burden and the virus was created to eliminate them”

“Russian media says, vaccine will contain the micro-chip”

“There was a Chinese person who was going to crowded places, trying to infect people on purpose!”



Foreign assistance

To the best of your knowledge, did the following countries provide help to Georgia to fight Covid-19? (q24)

■ Yes ■ No ■ DK ■ RA

USA



EU countries



China



Russia



Results of in-depth analysis

**Age, income and education are the best
predictors for identifying resilience
towards fake news in Georgia**

NARRATIVE

Who's more likely to believe it?

Covid-19 was developed in a lab and spread intentionally

- Men
- People with lower income

The faith protects religious people from getting infected

- Older people
- Active church goers
- People with lower income

Georgia's success during the pandemic is due to Georgians' gene and religion

- Active church goers
- People with lower income

There's a link between 5G and the spread of Covid-19

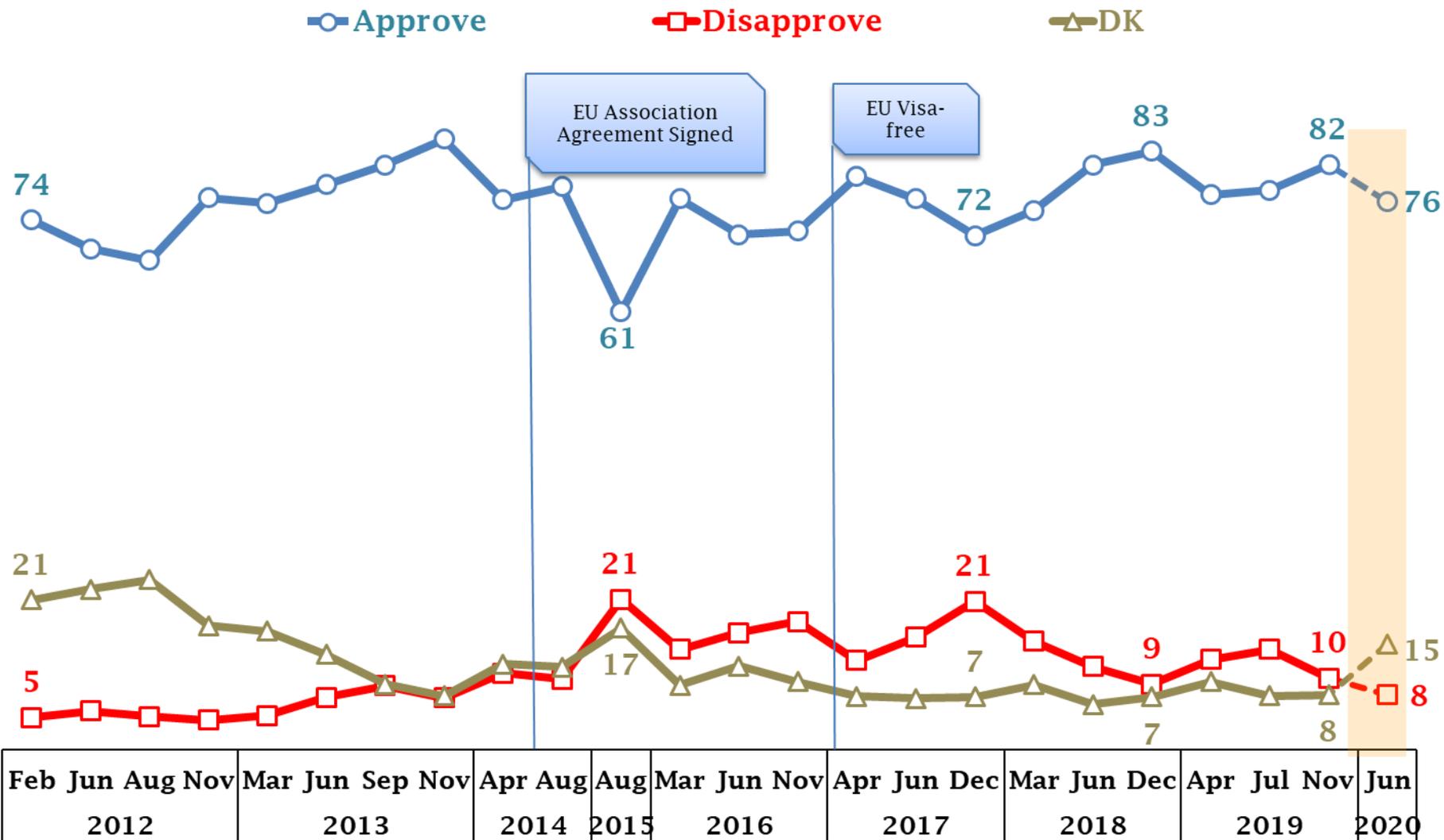
- People with lower level of education
- People living in rural areas

EU & NATO support

EU membership support

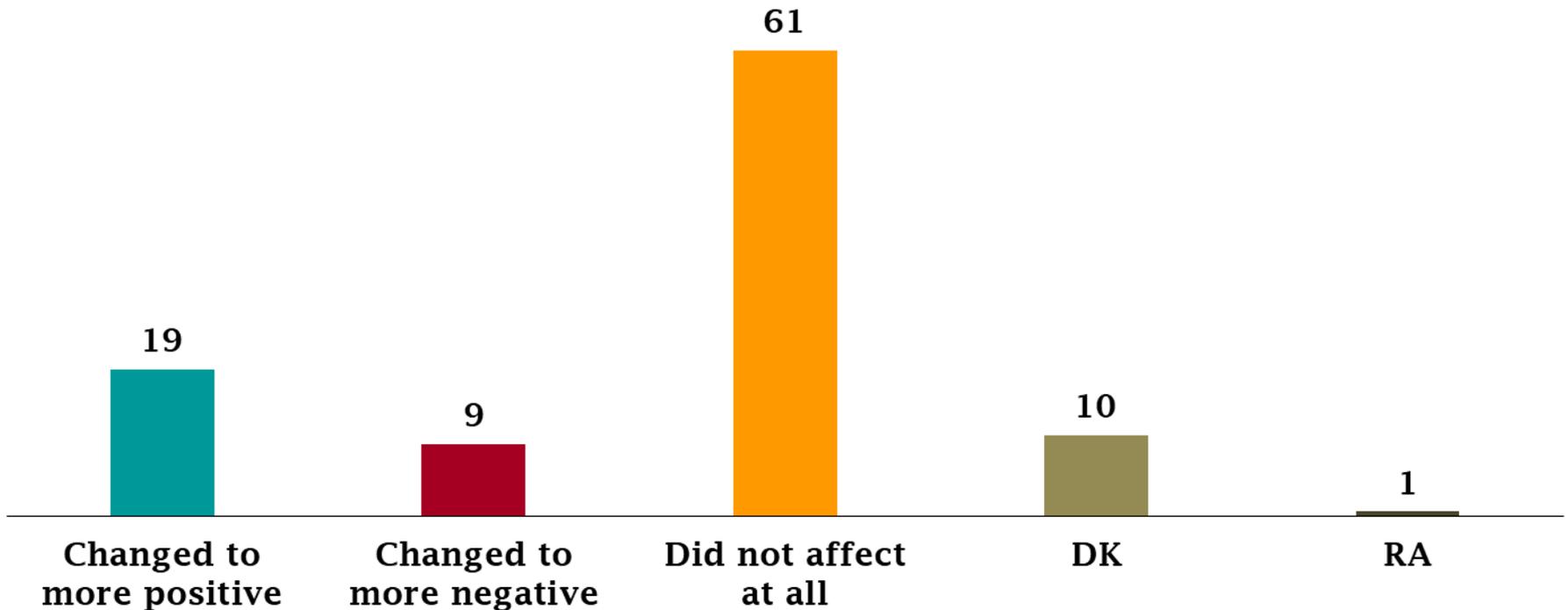
Do you approve or disapprove of Georgian government's stated goal to join the EU? (q12)

*Dashed line indicates change in method from face-to-face to telephone



EU support and the pandemic

Thinking about the coronavirus pandemic, how did the pandemic change your attitudes towards EU? (q13)



Quotes

From focus groups

“EU didn't do a great job at helping out Italy or Spain. Don't get me wrong, I am not a “Russophil”, but Russia was the first to lend a helping hand to Italy and send help over there. My attitude towards EU worsened a lot.”

Woman, self-employed, Tbilisi

“My attitude towards EU remains the same - very positive. Its a very good organization and helps everyone as much as they can.”

Woman, 22 y/o, employed, Marneuli

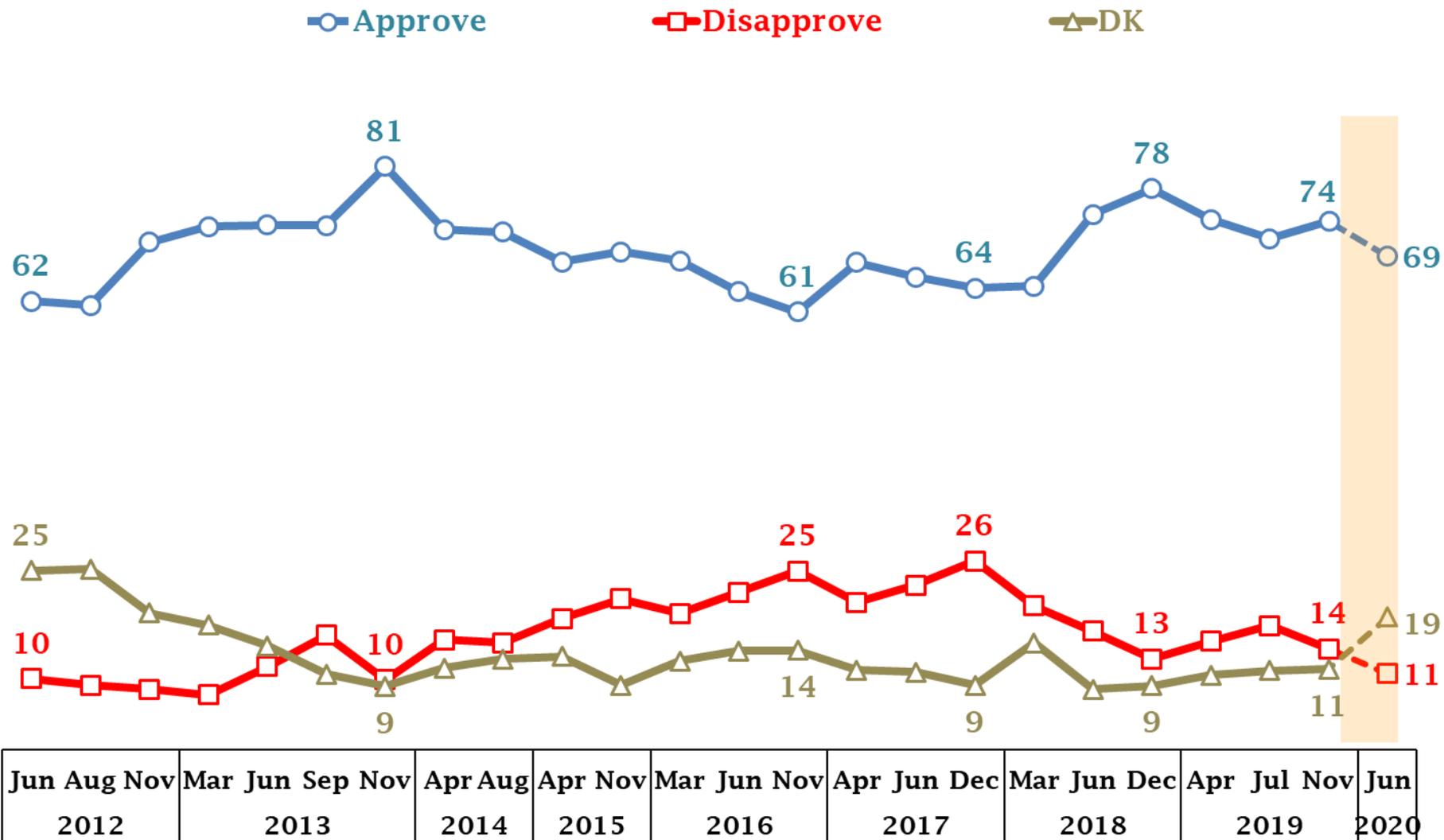
“I have always had a positive attitude towards EU and I haven't changed my mind. When we talk about rapid spread of the virus, we need to consider that EU countries have massive amount of tourists and then there is the issue of open borders - we have to consider all this before we talk about the EU's “weaknesses””

Man, 20 y/o, employed, Zugdidi

NATO membership support

Do you approve or disapprove of Georgian government's stated goal to join the NATO? (q14)

*Dashed line indicates change in method from face-to-face to telephone



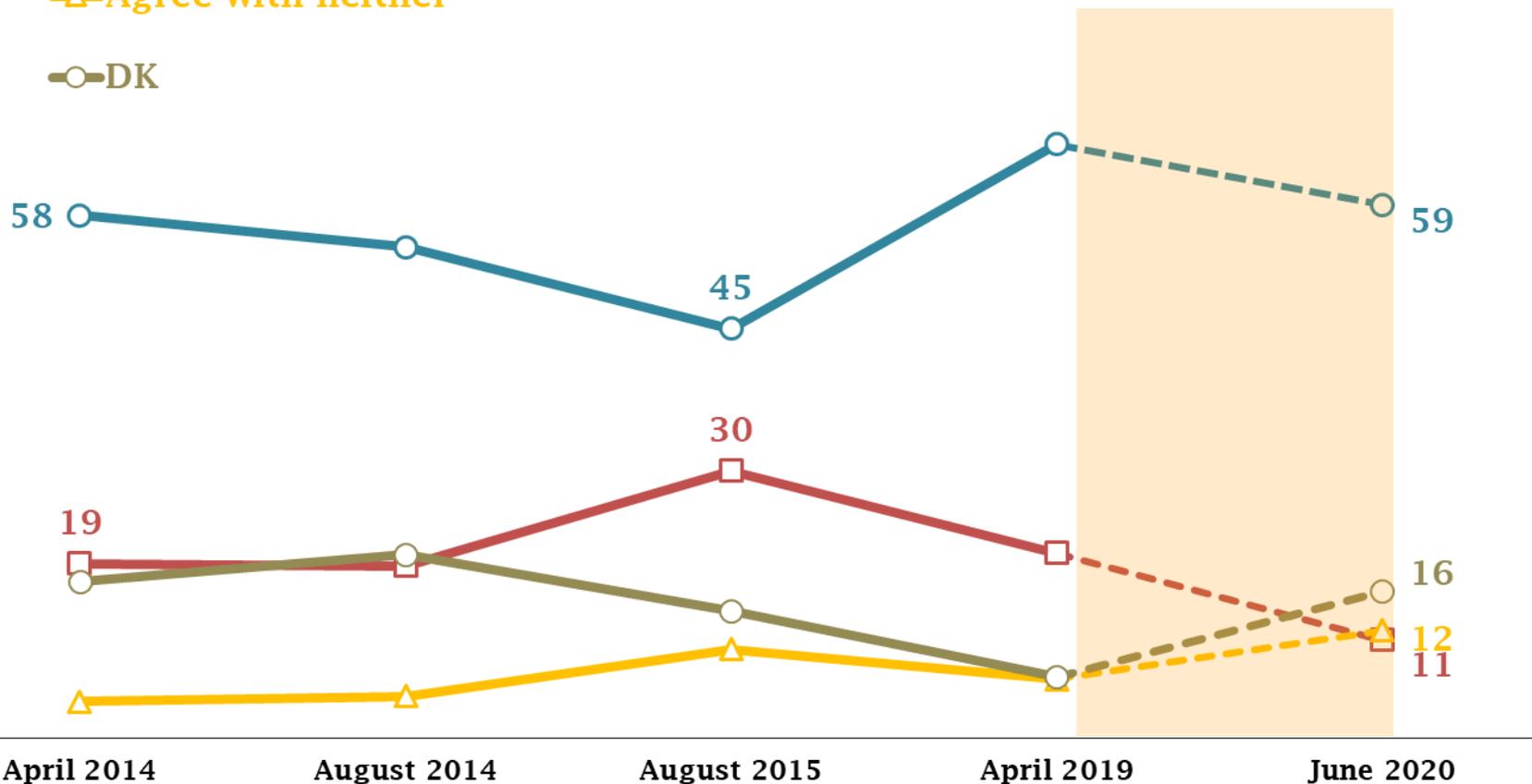
EU vs Russia benefits

Please tell me which of the following statements do you agree with? (q15)

*Dashed line indicates change in method from face-to-face to telephone

- Georgia will benefit more from European and Euro-Atlantic integration (joining EU and NATO)
- Georgia will benefit more from abandoning European and Euro-Atlantic integration in favor of better relations with Russia
- △ Agree with neither

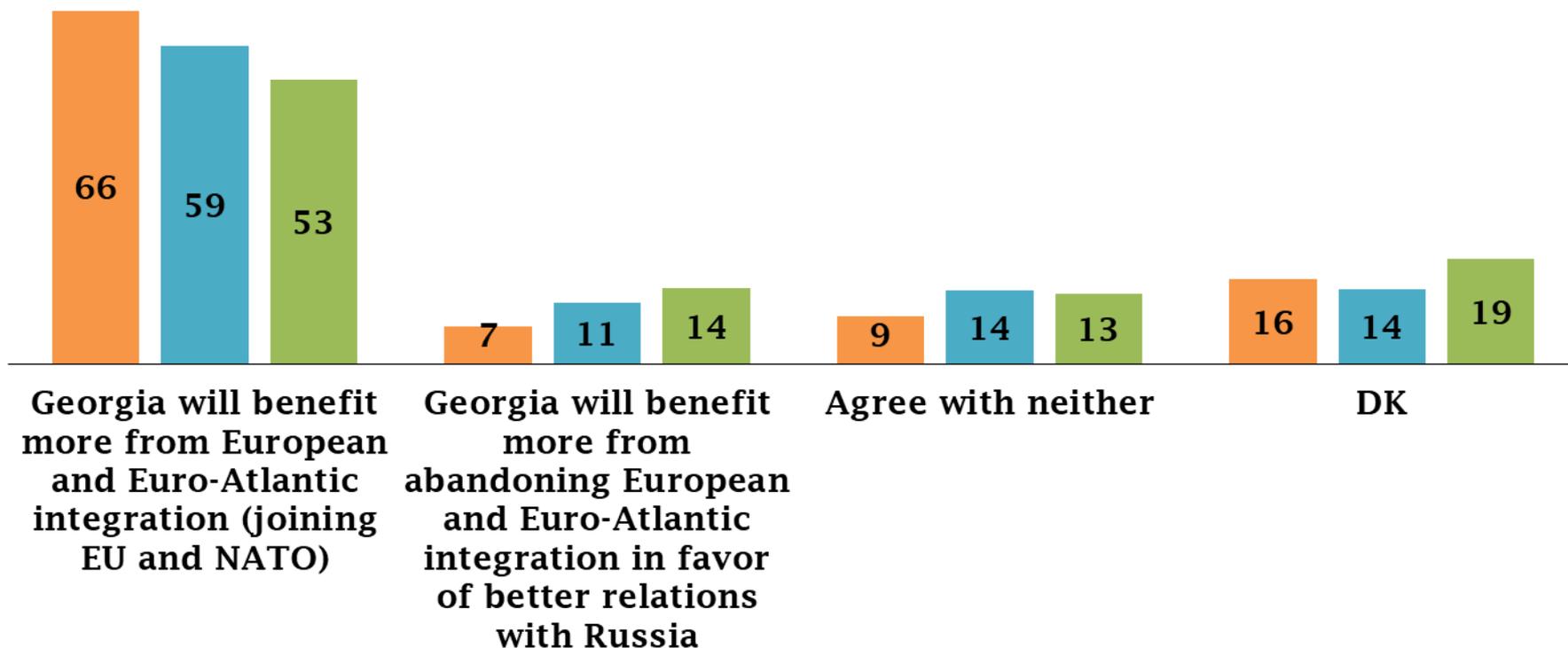
○ DK



EU vs Russia benefits

Please tell me which of the following statements do you agree with?
(q15 X Age)

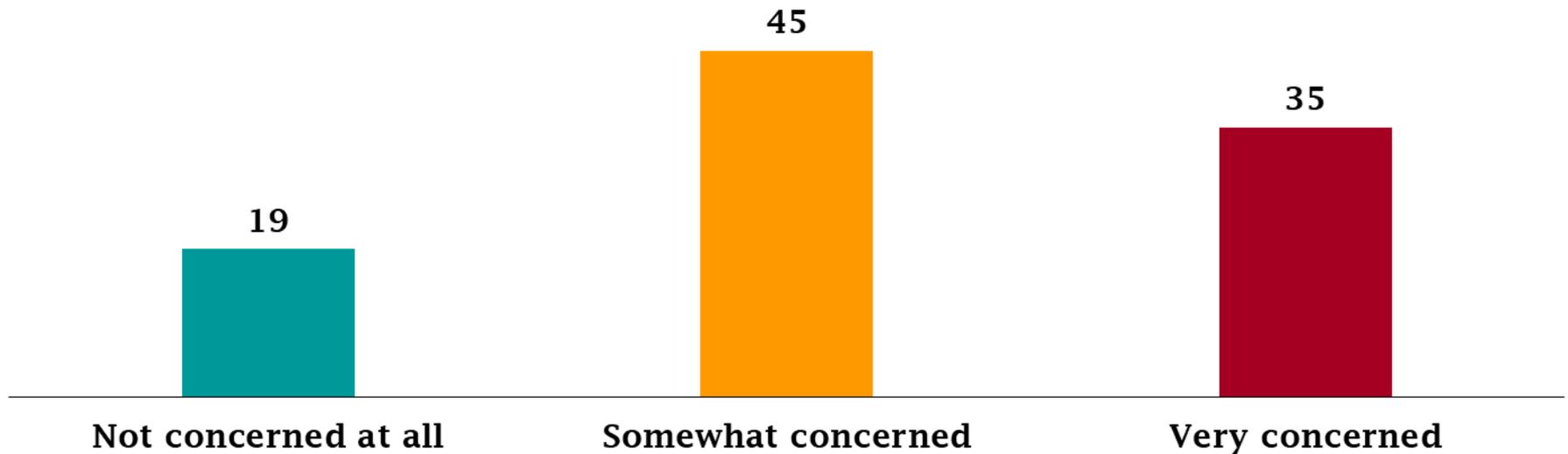
■ 18-34 ■ 35-54 ■ 55+



Future ahead

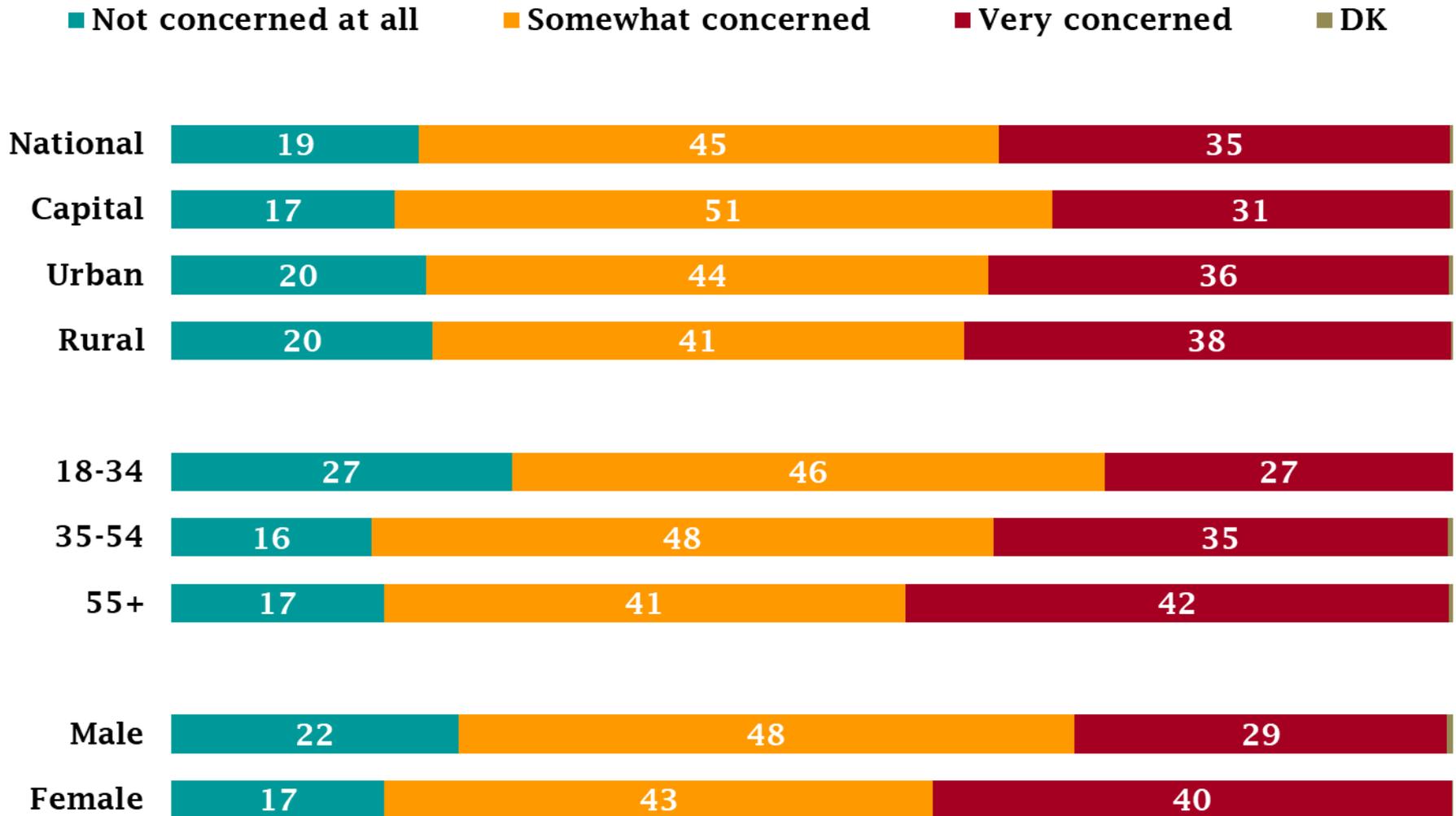
Concerns about the future

How concerned are you that you or someone related to you will be infected with Covid-19? (q26)



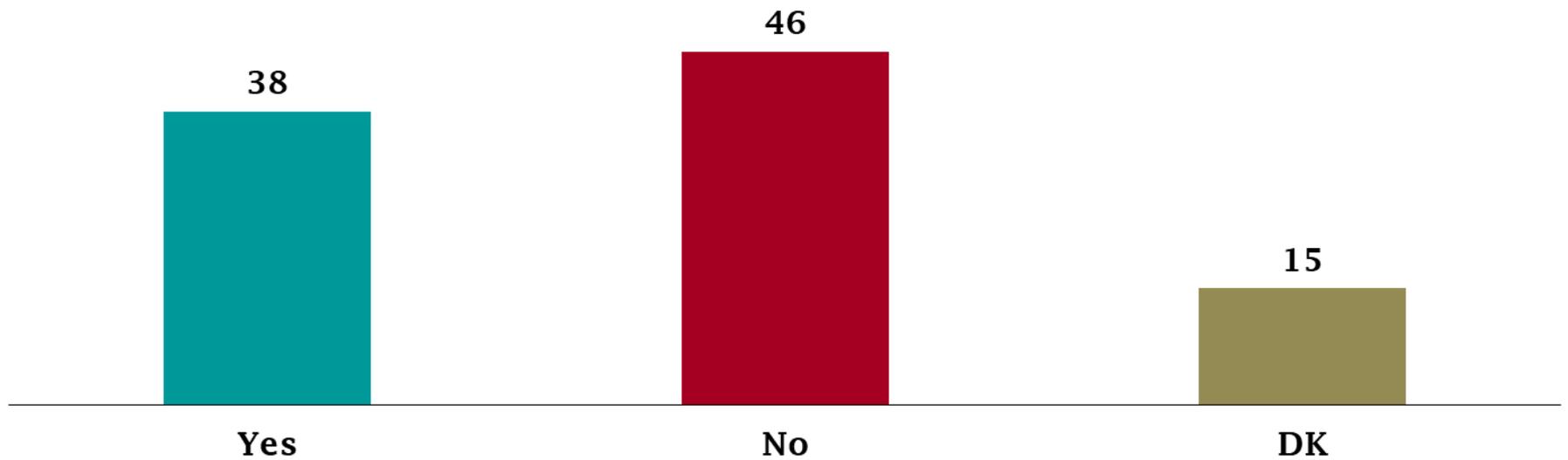
Concerns about the future

How concerned are you that you or someone related to you will be infected with Covid-19? (q26 X Settlement, Age, Gender)



Covid-19 vaccine

If Covid-19 vaccine existed, would you vaccinate yourself and your kids?
(q27)



Why are they against vaccine?

According to focus groups

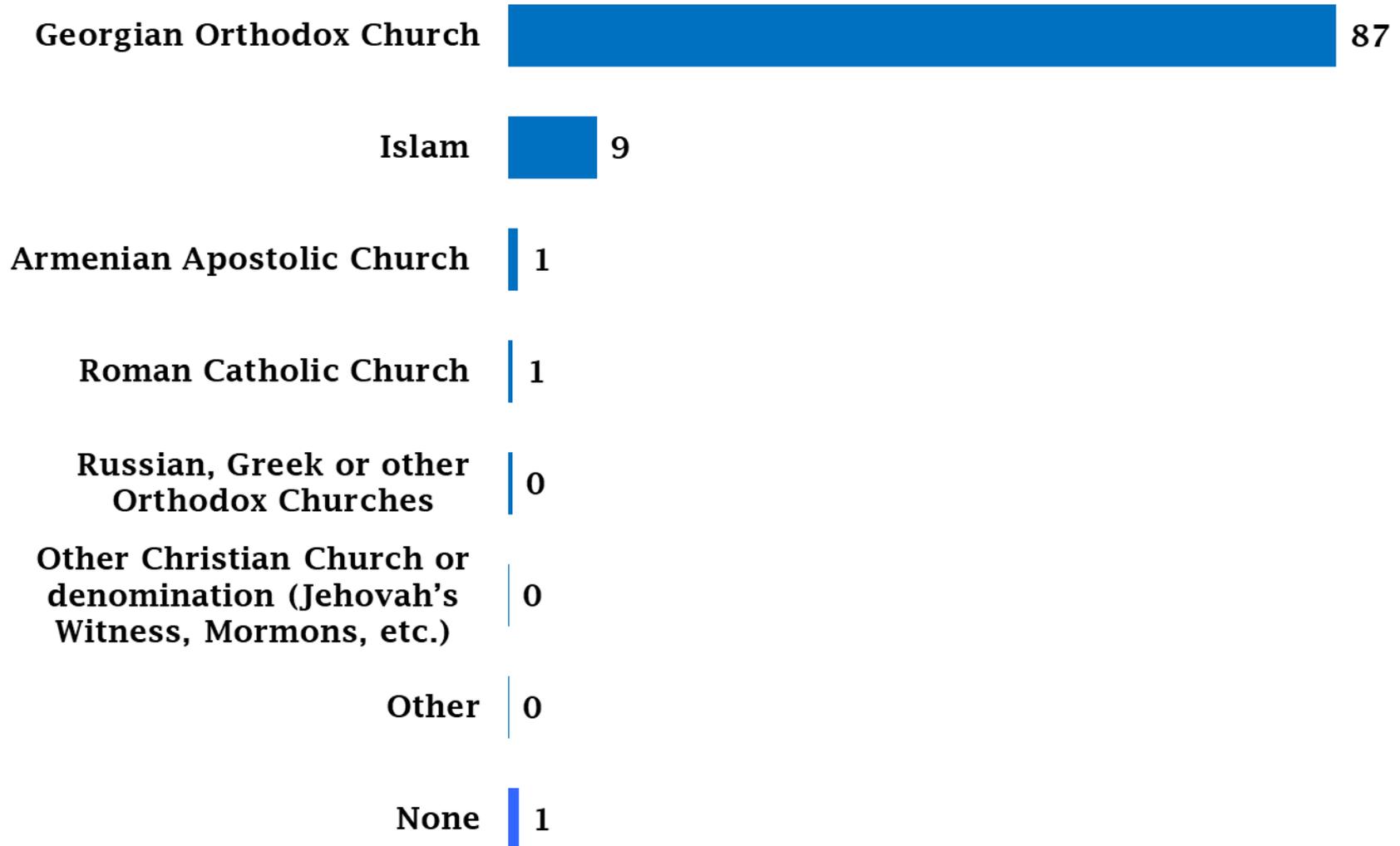
According to focus group participants:

- ❖ “It all depends on the **quality of the vaccine**, on the origin of the vaccine”;
- ❖ “If the pandemic slows down, there will be **no need for vaccine**”;
- ❖ “Unless vaccination is **mandatory**, people will be reluctant”;
- ❖ “I will **wait and observe**. I am afraid of being vaccinated with a brand new vaccine, which hasn’t been around for long”.

Demographics

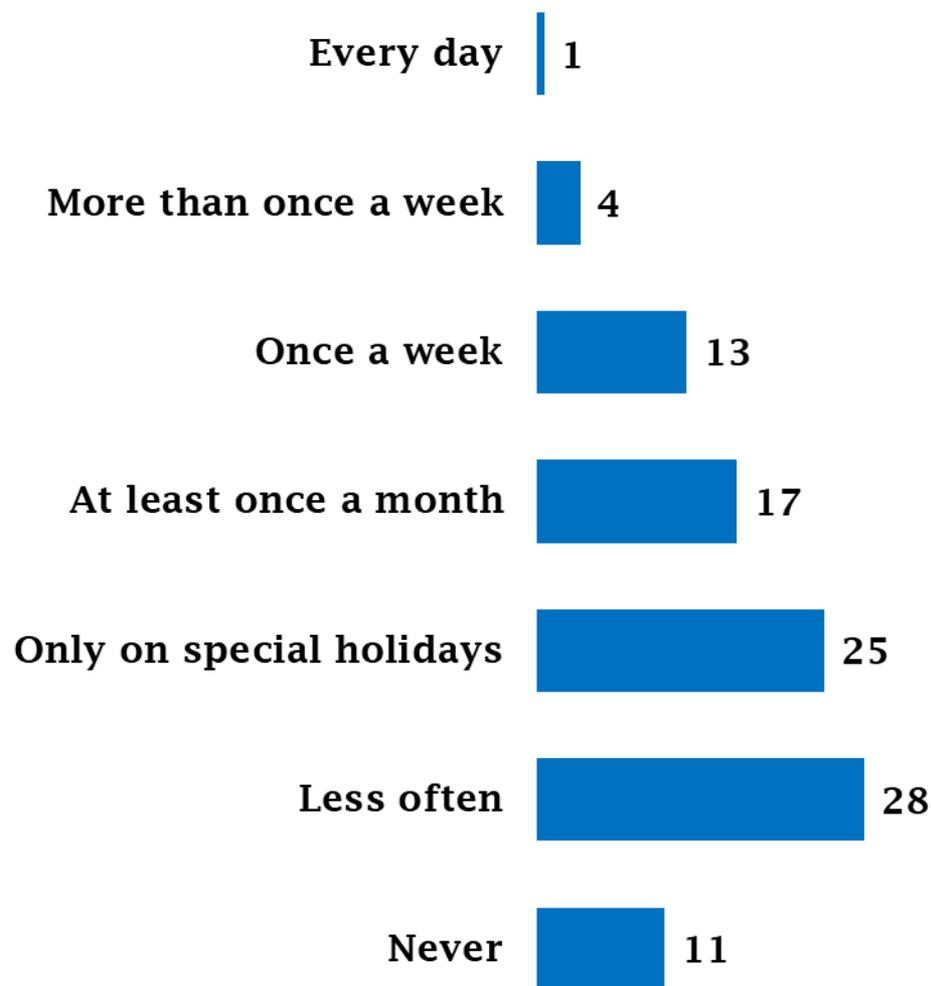
Religion

Which religion or denomination, if any, do you consider yourself as belonging to? (q31)



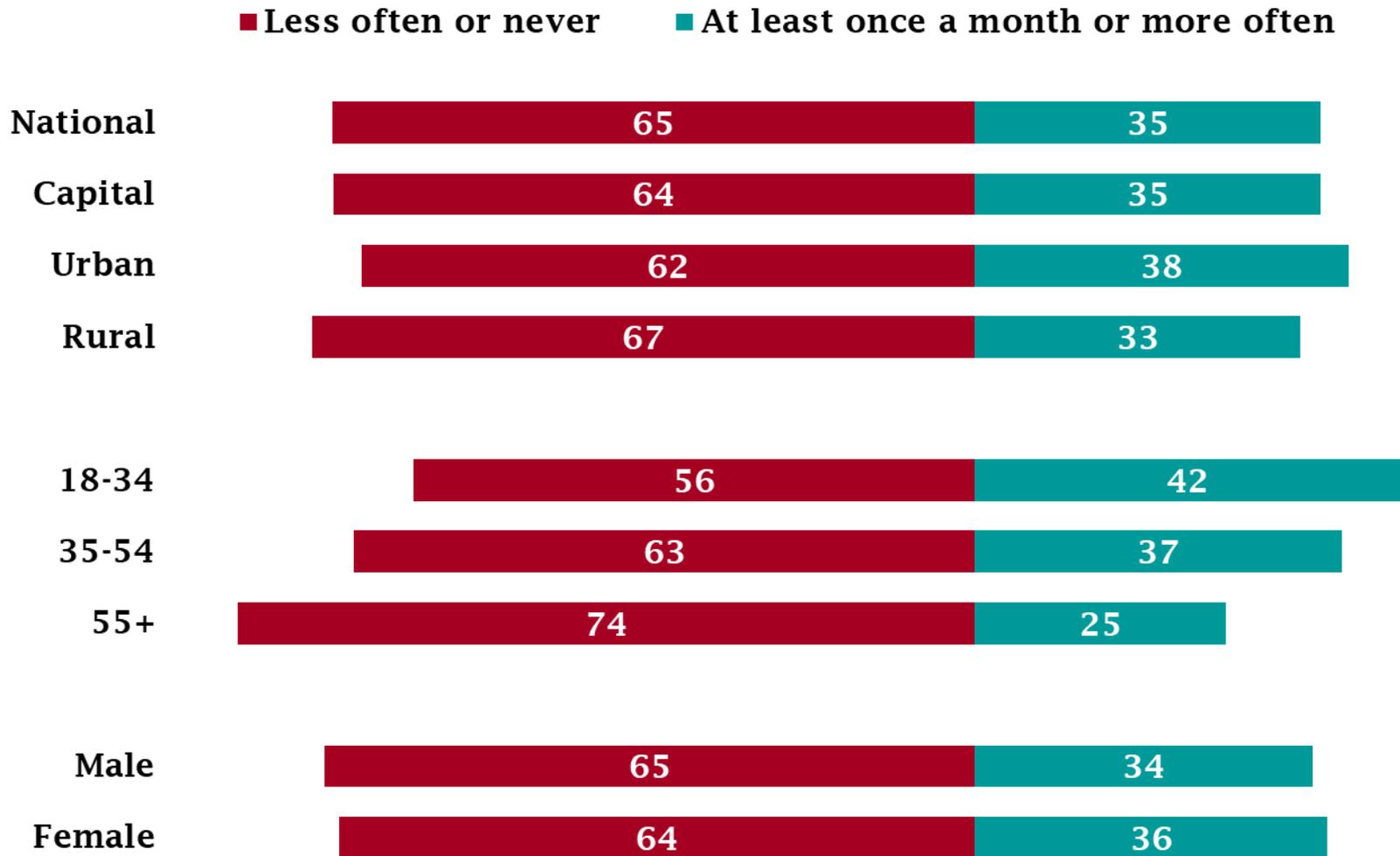
Attending religious services

Using this card, apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services? (q32) - of the 97% who say they belong to a specific religious denomination



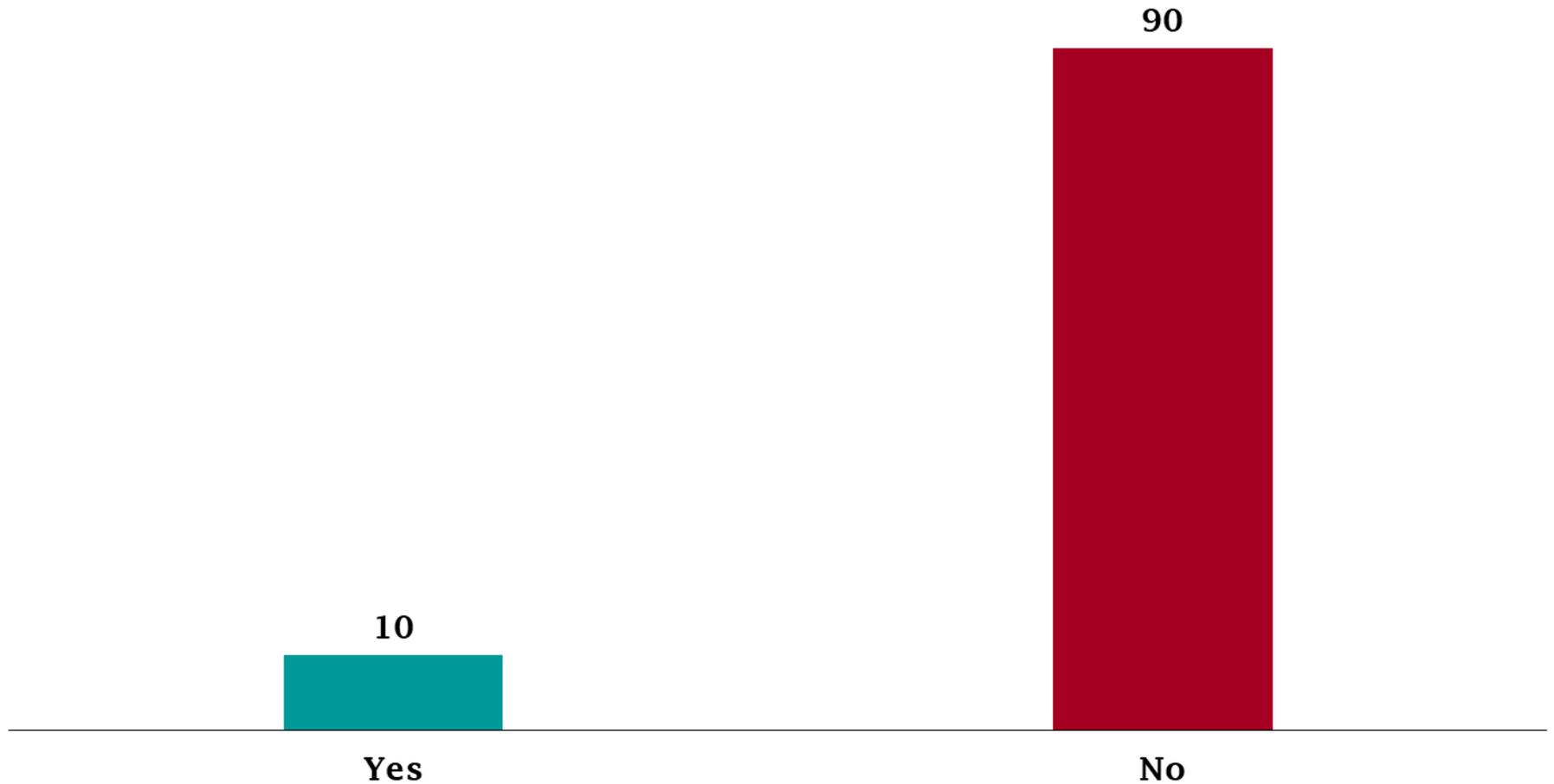
Attending religious services

Using this card, apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services? (q32 X Settlement, Age, Gender)
- of the 97% who say they belong to a specific religious denomination



Attending Easter service

Did you attend Easter service in church? (q33) - of the 88% who belong to any of the Christian denominations



Employment

Which of the following best describes your situation? Please tell me about the activity that you consider to be primary. (q34)



Knowledge of languages

Please tell me which one of these levels best describes your ability in the following: (q30)

■ Advanced ■ Intermediate ■ Beginner ■ No basic knowledge ■ DK ■ RA

Russian



English



Turkish



Georgian (asked only when interview was not in Georgian)



NDI-CRRC POLLS AVAILABLE AT:

- www.ndi.org/georgia-polls
- ww.caucasusbarometer.org