FAMILY & CARE REFERENDUMS VOTER SURVEY

A Review of Findings

NEDS Pilot Study

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INTRODUCTION

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Background

Although Ireland has a substantial and well-regarded body of research on elections and electoral behaviour, to date it has not had a consistent and appropriately resourced National Election Study programme. Under the Electoral Reform Act 2022, An Coimisiún Toghcháin is mandated to conduct research on electoral policy and procedures.

The purpose of this research programme was to understand how and ***why*** voters voted as they did in the Family and Care Referendums, held on 8th March 2024. Specifically, the research sought to understand the following:

- How people voted in both the Family and Care referendums, and to identify the reasons and motivations for voting as they did;
- To measure overall understanding of the issues at hand;
- To determine the ease of the actual voting process;
- To understand what sources of information were used to inform the voting decision, and the trustworthiness of these sources of information;
- To gauge awareness of An Coimisiún Toghcháin and its work, along with interactions with An Coimisiún's communications materials;
- To measure perceptions of the current government's performance, and voting intentions if a General Election were held;
- To identify attitudes, beliefs and knowledge on a range of social issues drawing on best practice in election studies to facilitate future comparative research.

This particular survey is a pilot study and will form part of a longitudinal electoral study that will be implemented over the coming years.

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Methodology

- In total, 3,557 interviews were conducted among voters exiting polling stations, after casting their ballots in the 8th March 2024 Family and Care referendums.
- 185 polling stations were randomly sampled, with the sample of stations stratified by size of polling station. Some adjustments were made to ensure that the selected polling stations were spread evenly across constituency.
- Each selected polling station was assigned a 3 or 4 hour interviewing shift, with interviewing shifts spread throughout the day.
- At each polling station, the Ipsos B&A interviewer positioned themselves near the exit and randomly selected voters to participate in the survey using a 'very next person' technique.
- Approximately 20 interviews were conducted at each polling station.
- Each voter selected to participate completed a survey of approx. 8 minutes in length, administered by the Ipsos B&A interviewer via a CAPI (computer aided personal interviewing) device.
- The resulting data was subsequently weighted to adjust for the estimated flow of voters throughout the day and to reflect differential turnout by region. A further weight was included to account for lower numbers of interviews being achieved at smaller/rural polling stations.

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Interpretation of Survey Results

The methodology employed for this survey entailed the careful selection of polling stations through a stratified random sampling process, ensuring a balanced representation of all Irish constituencies as well as urban and rural areas. Throughout the polling day, voters were randomly selected for interview as they left the sampled polling stations.

In accordance with standard validation procedures, all data has undergone a comprehensive review to ensure the survey was completed to the highest standards.

Despite the robustness and validity of this approach, as evidenced by the accuracy of previous Exit Polls using this same methodology, the outcome of this voter survey does not correspond with voting proportions in the Yes and No referendums. Notably, the number of those who voted No was lower in the survey.

Sampling error does not explain the deviation between the survey findings and the actual result, because the magnitude of the deviation was outside normal statistical parameters. Furthermore, the demographic profile of those surveyed was as expected and the data weighting applied to the sample did not significantly impact the survey findings, which supports the view that sampling error does not explain the deviation observed.

Interviewer error does not explain the deviation observation. The under representation of No voters is across all regions, which is not consistent with individual interviewer error.

Non response bias is the likely explanation for the under representation of No voters, where No voters were more likely to refuse to take part in the survey than Yes voters.

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Questionnaire Content

Asked of all voters	• Vote cast in Family Referendum, and reasons for voting that way • Vote cast in Care Referendum, and reasons for voting that way • Rating of understanding of issues involved in these referendums • Voter knowledge of issues related to referendum • Sources of information used to form an opinion before voting	
Voters asked either split 1 or split 2 (selection controlled by polling station)	**Split 1** • Ease of voting process & assistance required • Awareness of An Coimisiún Toghcháin & understanding of its role • Whether or not received an information booklet and perceived helpfulness in informing vote	**Split 2** • Perception of government performance over past 4 years • Attitudes to social issues • Trust in information sources
Asked of all voters	• Likely first preference vote in a general election • Gender • Age • Education • Frequency of attendance at church or religious services	

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Analysis of Sample – All Voters

AGE		
18-24	6	7

	Unweighted %	Weighted %
POLLING STATION		
	4	
Small	18	17
	24	
Large	26	25
	28	
TIME		
7-1pm	36	25
1-5pm	31	30
REGION		
Dublin	30	26
	27	
	25	
	18	

Base: All Voters: 3,557

**Less than 0.5%*

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VOTER SURVEY FINDINGS

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Voter Behaviour & Characteristics

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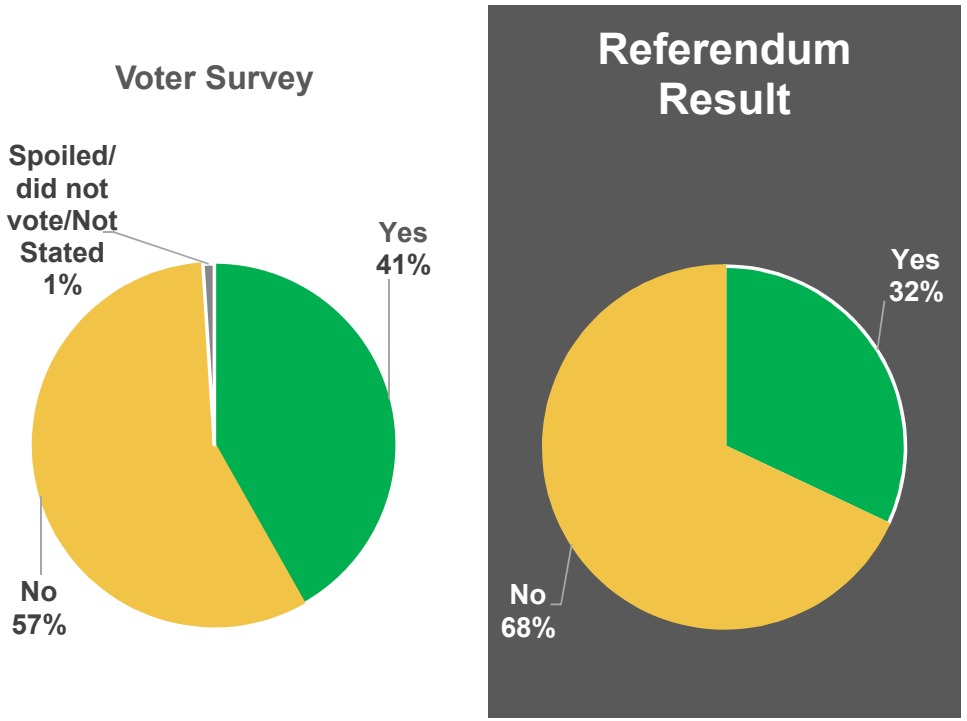
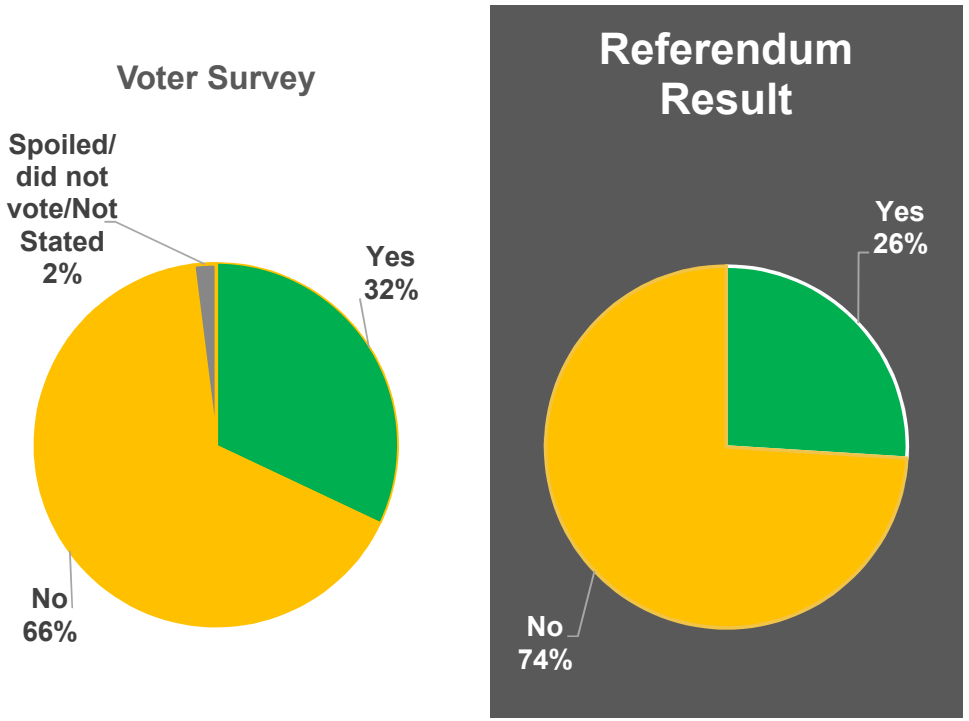
Voter Behaviour

FAMILY REFERENDUM



CARE REFERENDUM



Base: All Voters: 3,557

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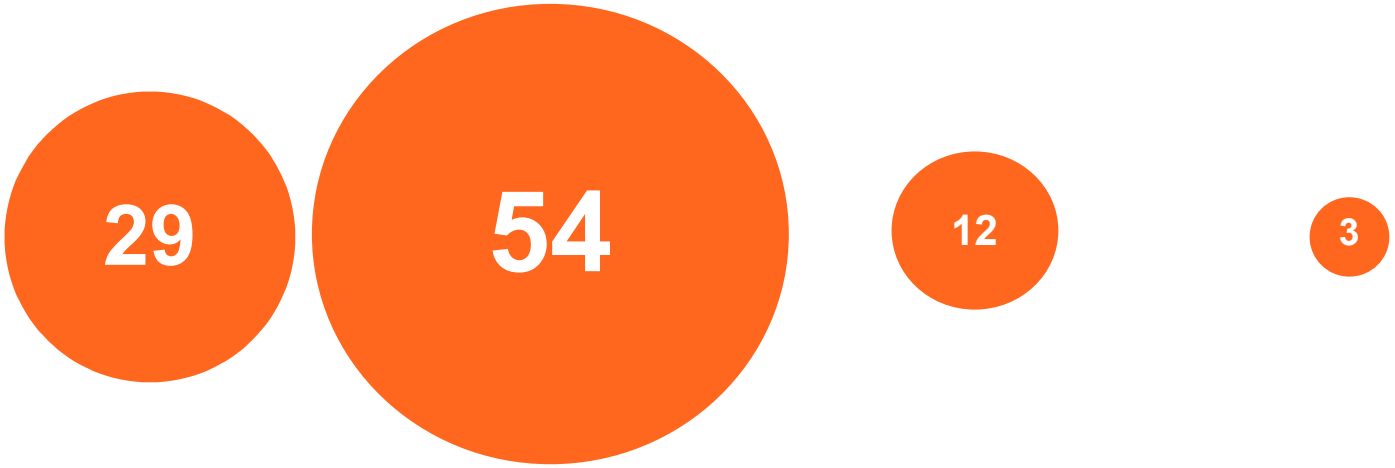
Voting Correlations*

FAMILY REFERENDUM	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
CARE REFERENDUM	**Yes**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**

% of all voters*



*** This analysis is based on survey results rather than referendum results**

Base: All Voters: 3,557

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Voting Correlations* X Demographics

		GENDER		AGE					
	Total (3,557) %	Male (1,545) %	Female (1,988) %	18 24 (224) %	25 34 (487) %	35 44 (648) %	45 54 (714) %	55 64 (631) %	65+ (837) %
Yes/Yes	29	32	26	23	23	29	27	31	35
No/No	54	54	54	53	53	51	59	55	52
Yes (Family)/No (Care)	12	8	15	19	20	15	9	9	8
No (Family)/Yes (Care)	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	3

*** This analysis is based on Survey results, and not the actual Referendum results**

Base: All Voters: 3,557

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Voting Correlations* X Demographics

		REGION				LIKELY GENERAL ELECTION VOTE						
	Total (3,557) %	Dublin (1,076) %	Rest of Leinster (947) %	Munster (895) %	Conn/ Ulster (639) %	S.F. (607) %	F.G. (558) %	F.F. (437) %	Social Democrats (143) %	Greens (125) %	Labour (117) %	Inds/ Others (600) %
Yes/Yes	29	32	28	32	22	15	43	36	43	61	43	15
No/No	54	47	54	55	62	67	42	53	20	24	40	72
Yes (Family)/No (Care)	12	16	12	10	11	14	10	7	31	9	14	9
No (Family)/Yes (Care)	3	3	4	2	3	2	4	3	4	4	2	2

*** This analysis is based on Survey results, and not the actual Referendum results**

Base: All Voters: 3,557

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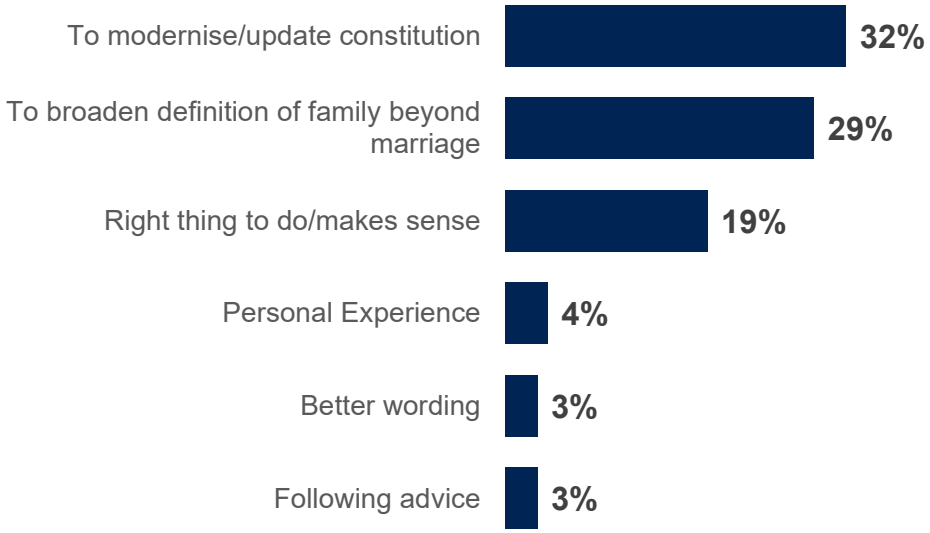
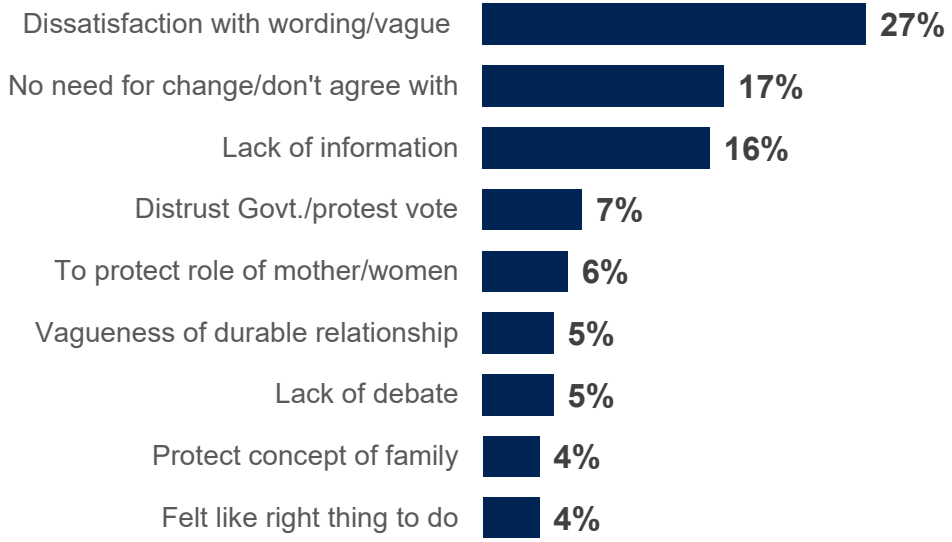
Reasons For Vote In Family Referendum

Those Voting Yes (1,506)



*Others at <3%

Those Voting No (1,999)



*Others at <4%

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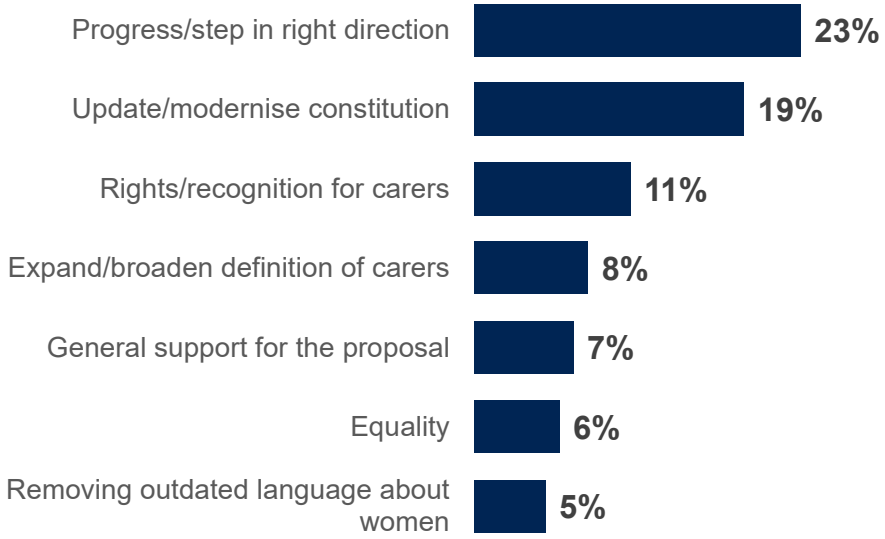
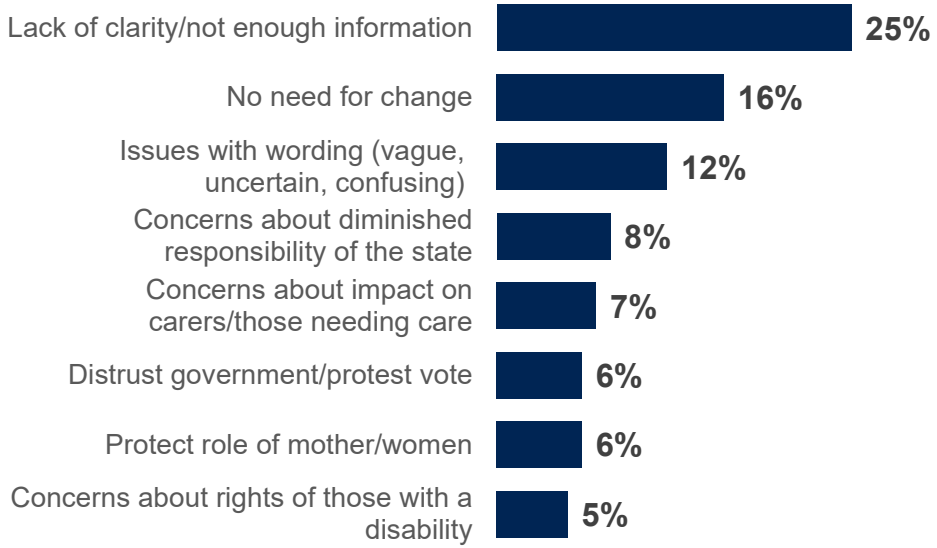
Reasons For Vote In Care Referendum

Those Voting Yes (1,179)



Others at <5%

Those Voting No (2,318)



Others at <5%

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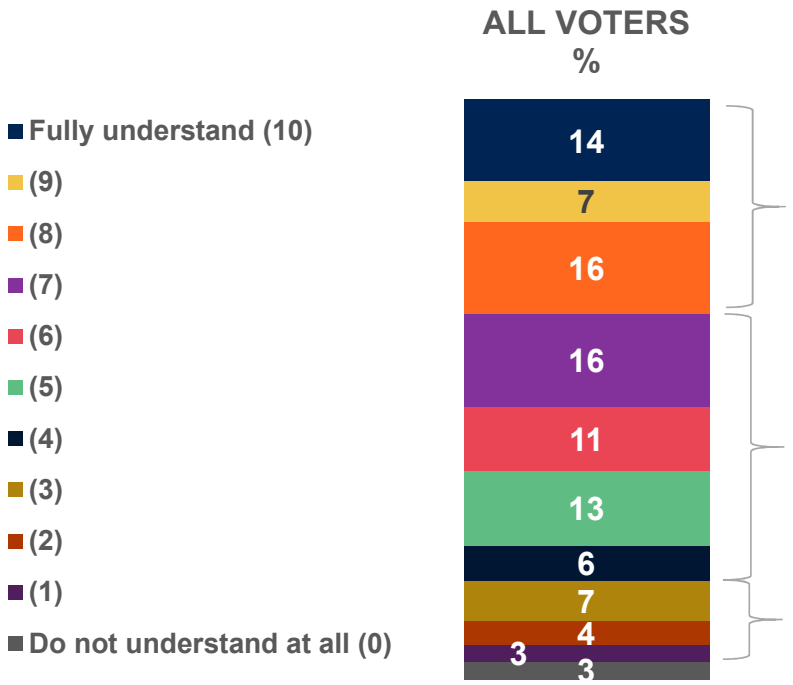
Understanding of the Issues



		FAMILY REFERENDUM		CARE REFERENDUM	
	Total	Voted Yes	Voted No	Voted Yes	Voted No
Base:	3,557	1,506	1,999	1,179	2,318
Rating of understanding	%	%	%	%	%
8-10	37	45	31	49	31
4-7	53	51	55	48	56
0-3	10	4	14	3	13

Q.5 Out of 10, how would you rate your understanding of the issues involved in these referendums where 0 means 'do not understand at all' and 10 means 'fully understand'?
Base: All Voters: 3,557

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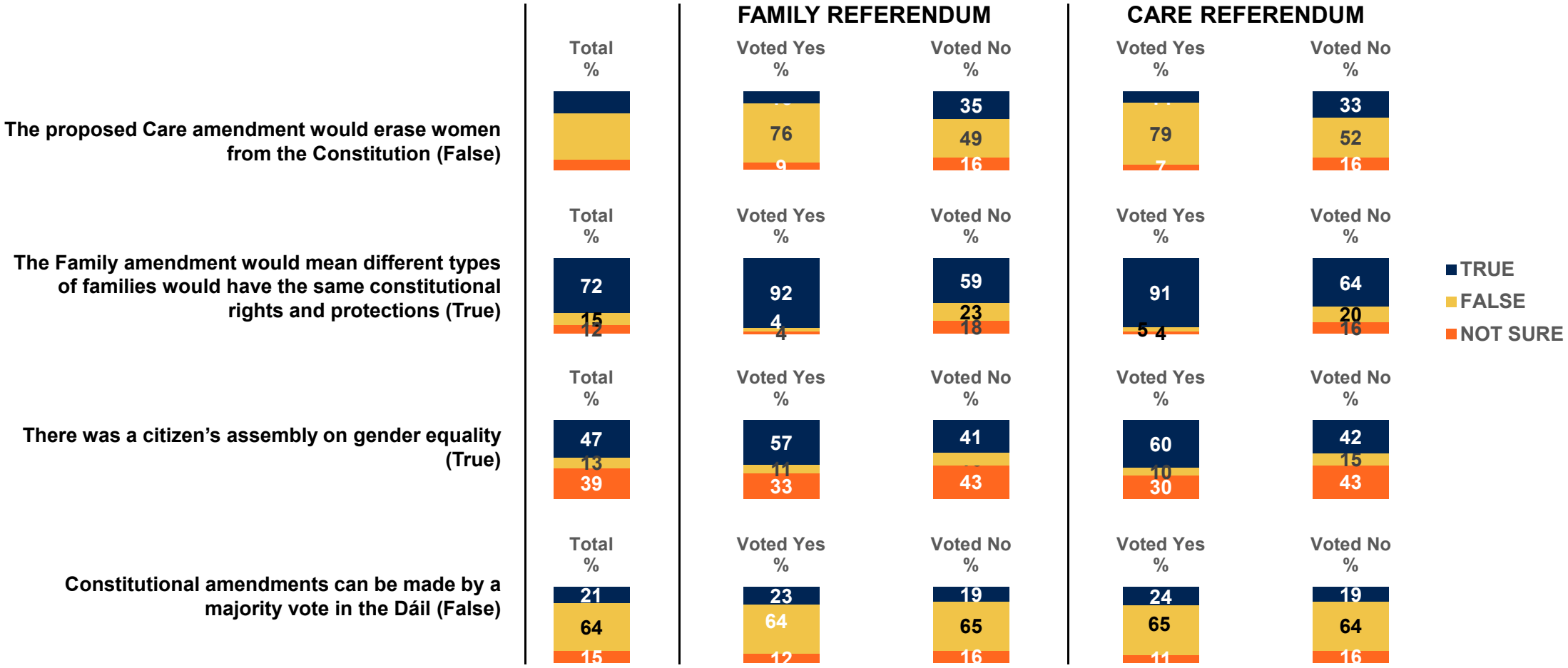
Awareness & Knowledge



Base: All Voters: 3,557. Those who voted Yes to Family referendum: n=1,506. Those who voted No to Family referendum : n=1,999. Those who voted Yes to Care referendum : n=1,1179. Those who voted No to Care referendum : n=2,318

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Sources of Information

	Total (3,557)	
	Source of information	Not a source of information
	%	%
Newspapers and news websites	69	31
TV and radio	83	17
Online videos and discussion forums (e.g TikTok, Youtube, Reddit)	41	59
Social Media	50	50
Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat)	27	73
Electoral Commission Information (e.g. booklet, website, information videos)	67	33
Posters	23	77

	FAMILY REFERENDUM				CARE REFERENDUM			
	Voted Yes (1,506)		Voted No (1,999)		Voted Yes (1,179)		Voted No (2,318)	
	Source of information	Not a source of information	Source of information	Not a source of information	Source of information	Not a source of information	Source of information	Not a source of information
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Newspapers and news websites	72	28	67	33	73	27	67	33
TV and radio	84	16	83	17	85	15	82	18
Online videos and discussion forums (e.g TikTok, Youtube, Reddit)	40	60	41	59	36	64	43	57
Social Media	48	52	51	49	44	56	53	47
Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsAPP, Telegram, Snapchat)	29	71	26	74	27	73	27	73
Electoral Commission Information (e.g. booklet, website, information videos)	74	26	62	38	76	24	63	37
Posters	26	74	21	79	26	74	21	79

Q.7 For each of the following sources of information, please tell me if you use them a lot, a little or not at all to help you form an opinion before voting?
Base: All Voters

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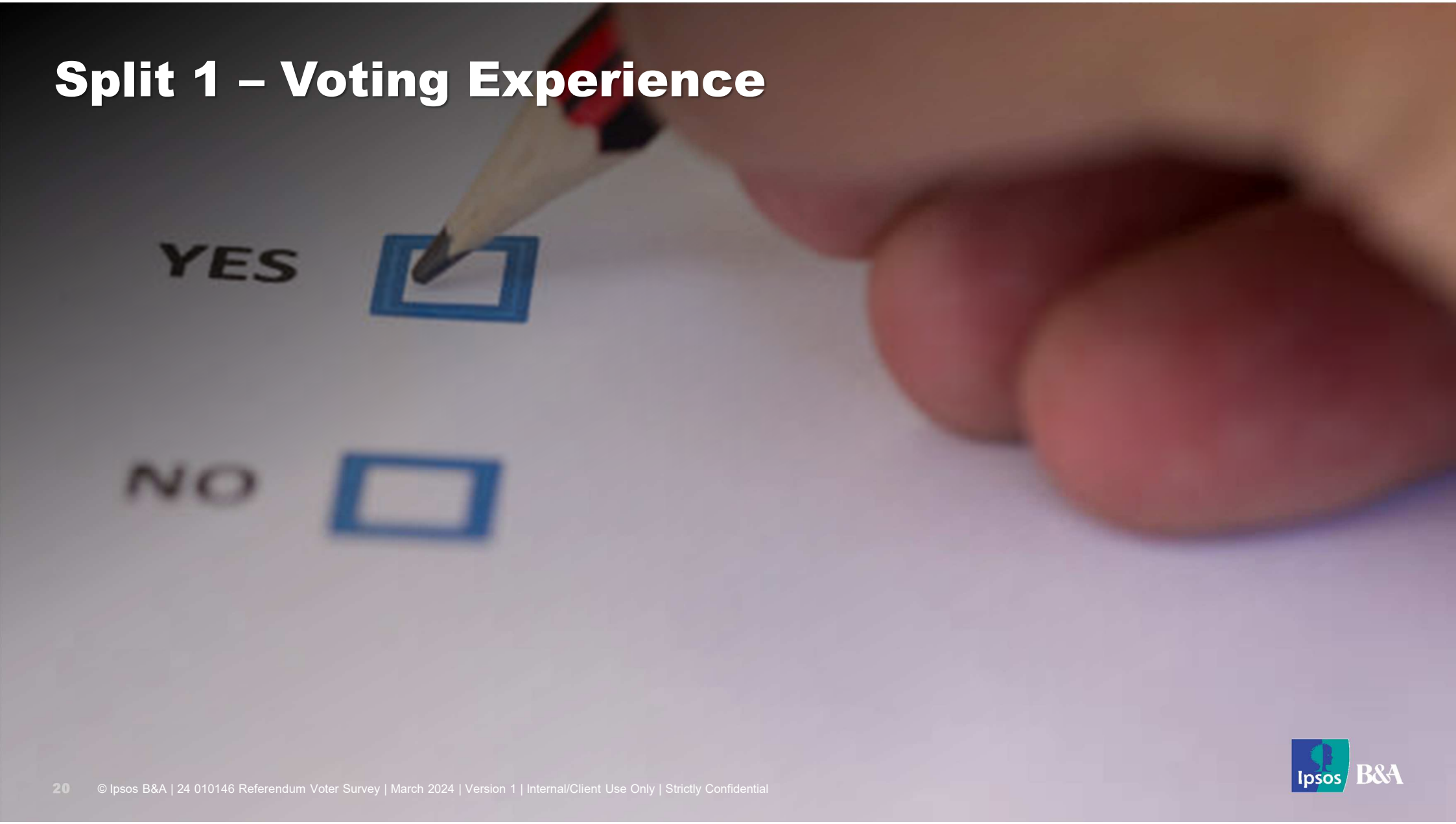
Split 1 – Voting Experience



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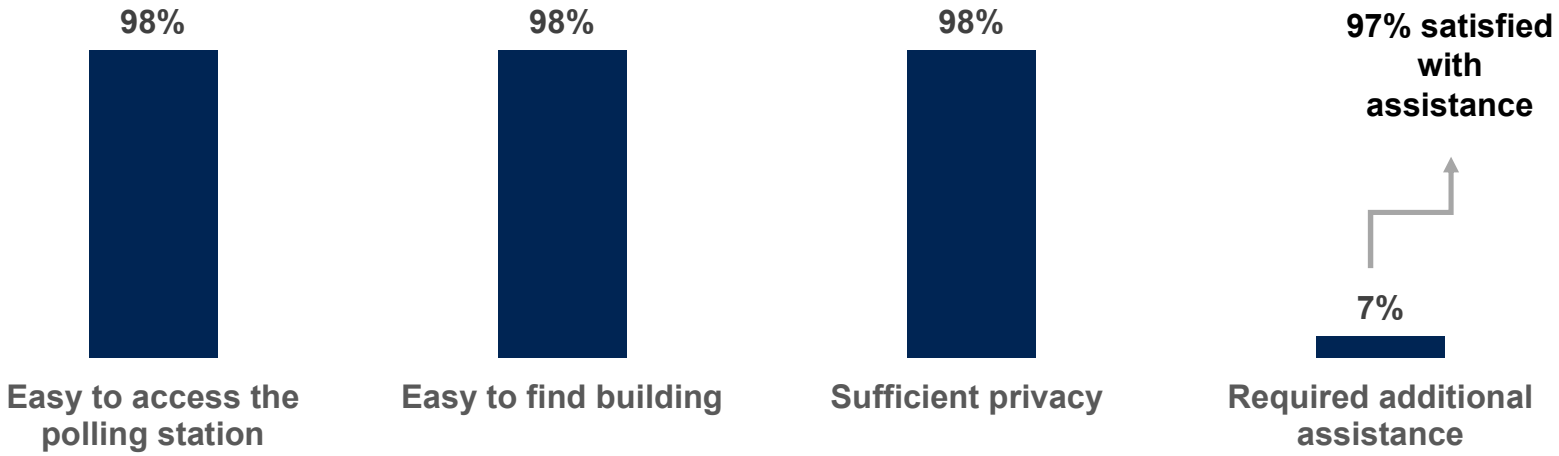
Voting Experience



Family – Voted Yes	**98%**	**98%**	**98%**	**8%**
Care – Voted Yes	**98%**	**98%**	**99%**	**7%**

Q.8a Thinking of when you got here today to cast your vote. Was it easy or not easy to access the polling station?
Q.8b Was it easy to find where in the building you needed to go to vote?
Q.8c Did you feel you had sufficient privacy or not when casting your vote?
Q.8d Did you require any additional assistance from any of the staff working here?
Base: Split 1 Voters: 1,874

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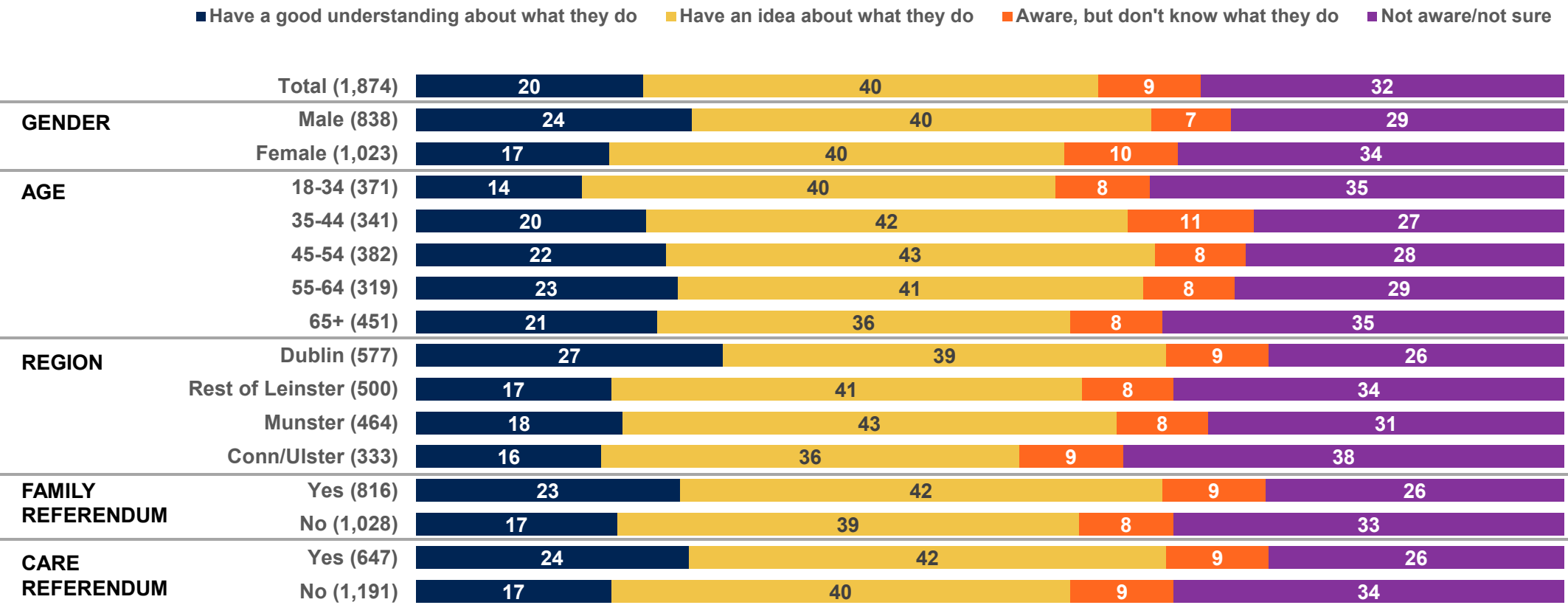
Awareness & Knowledge of An Coimisiún Toghcháin



Q.9a Before today were you aware or not aware of the organisation An Coimisiún Toghcháin ("On Commish-oon Tow-coin") - The Electoral Commission?
Q.9b And which of these best applies to you?
Base: Split 1 Voters: 1,874

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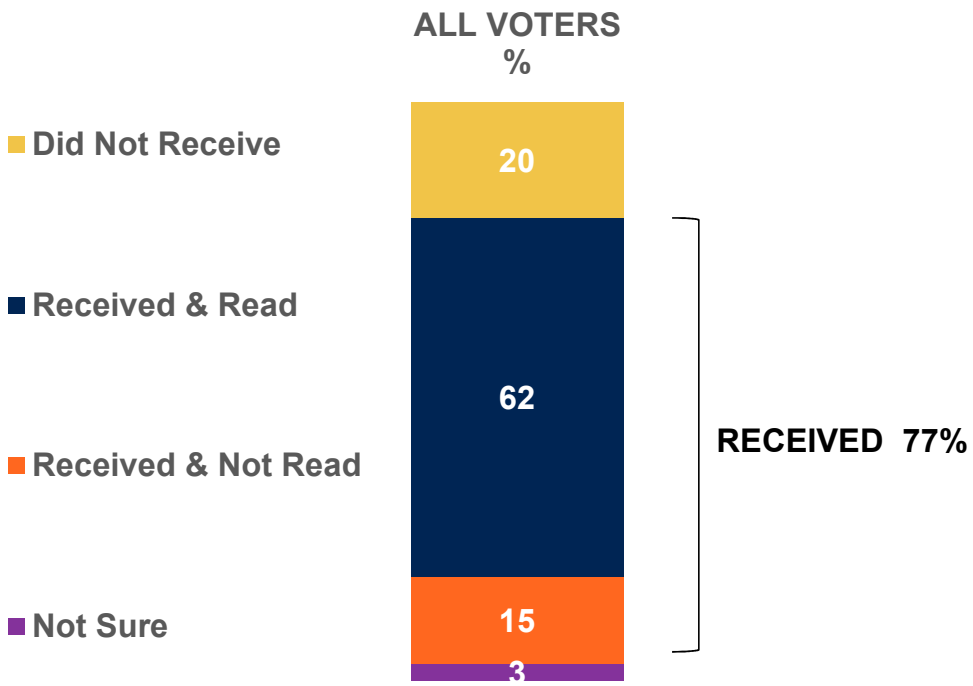
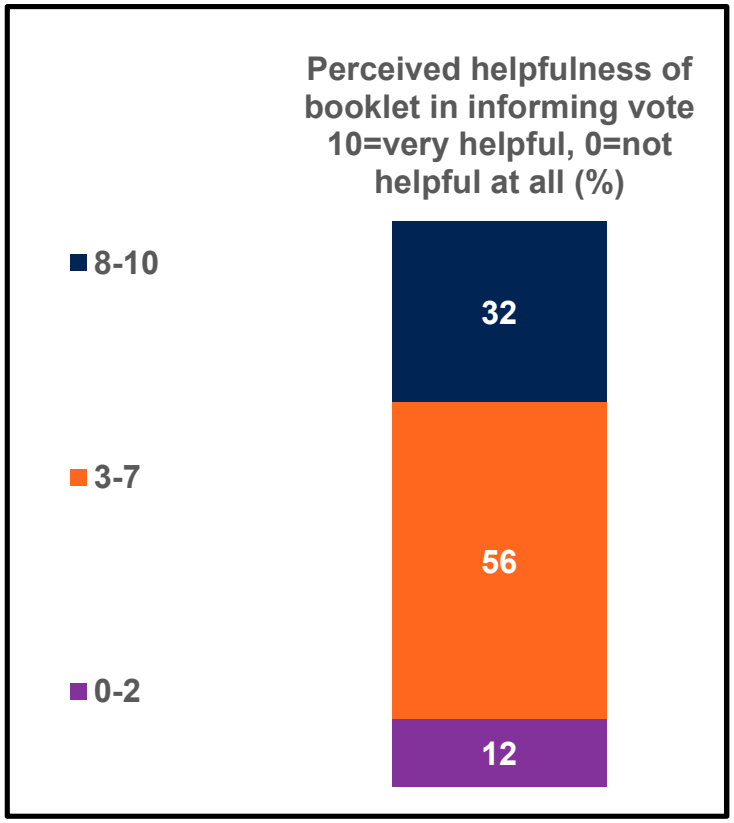
Experience with Printed Booklet*

***Note: This question was asked of the individual, whereas booklets were delivered to households**





Q.10a Did you receive a printed information booklet on the upcoming referendums from An Coimisiún Toghcáin (The Electoral Commission)"?
Q.10b Did you read the booklet?
Q.10c Out of 10, how would you rate how helpful the booklet was in informing your vote today, where 0 means not helpful at all, and 10 means very helpful?
Base: Split 1 Voters: 1,874 /Read Booklet: 1,186

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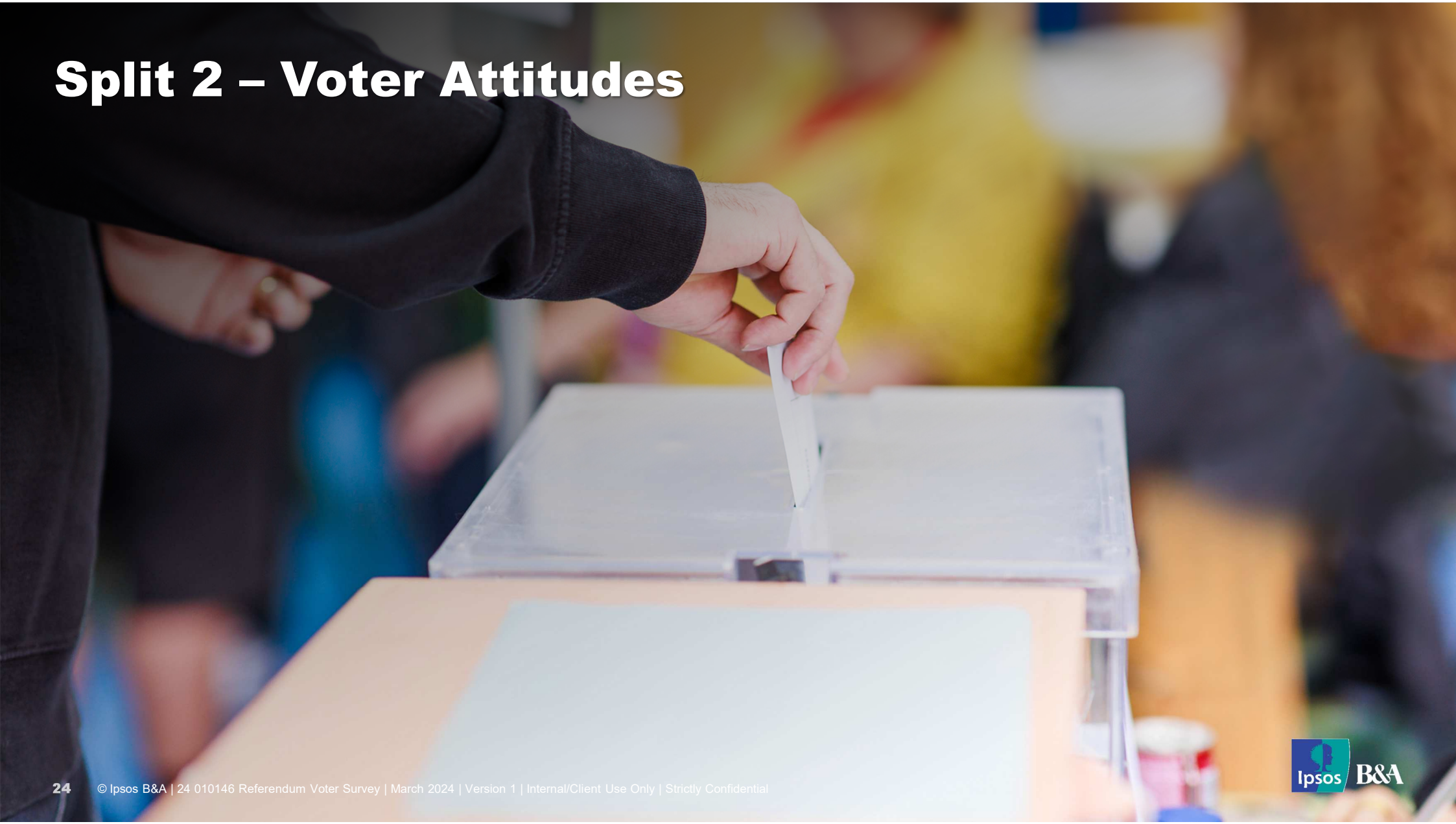
Split 2 – Voter Attitudes



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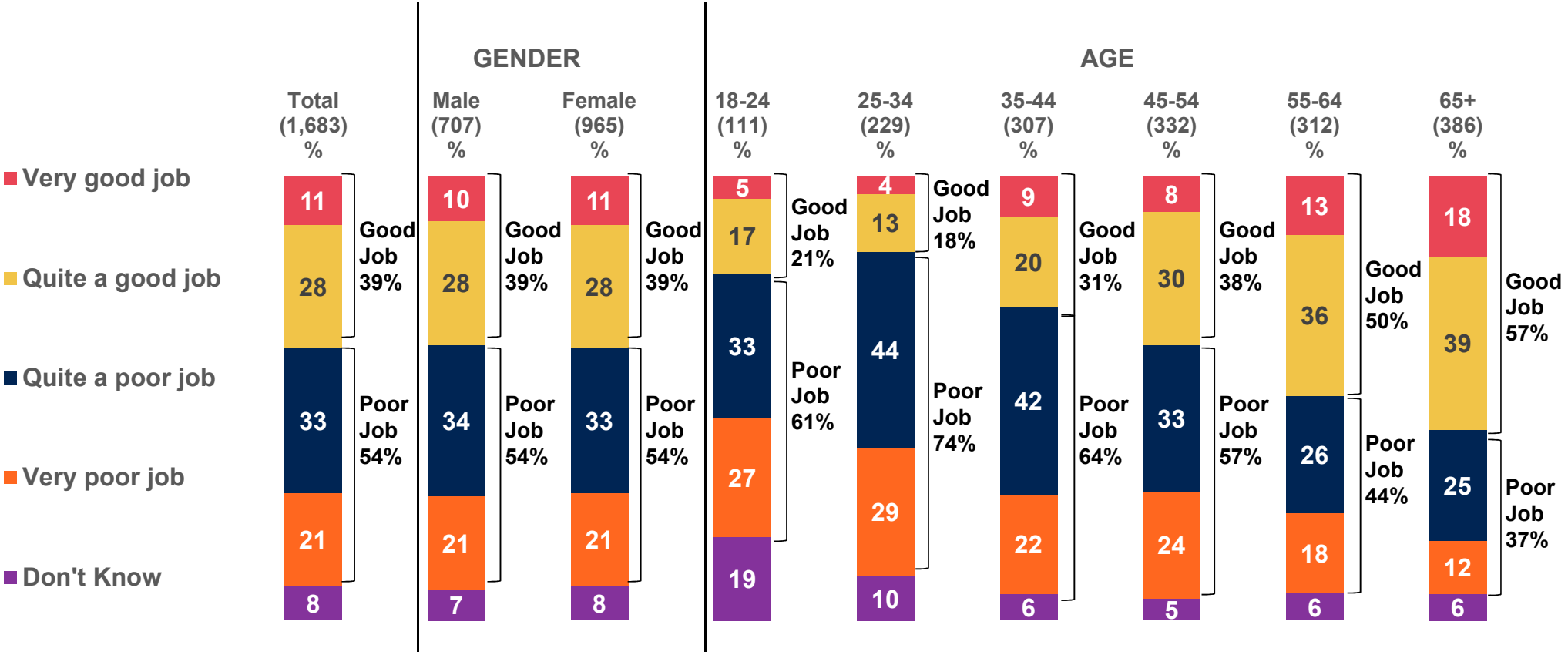
Opinion of Government Performance



Q.11 Thinking about the performance of the government in general, do you think the government has done a good job or a poor job over the past four years?
Q.11b And would you say they have done a very good job or quite a good job?
Q.11c And would you say they have done a very poor job or quite a poor job?
Base: Split 2 Voters: 1,683

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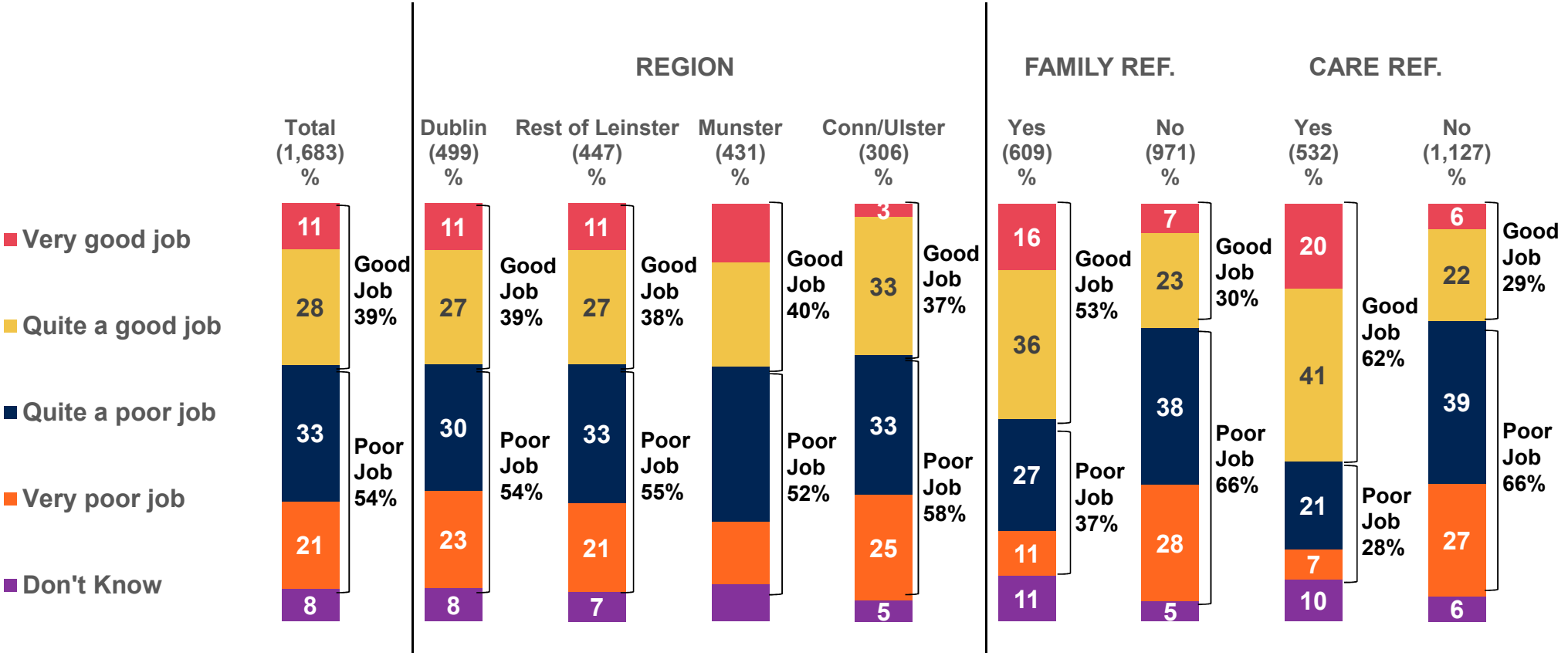
Opinion of Government Performance



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Base: Split 2 Voters: 1,683

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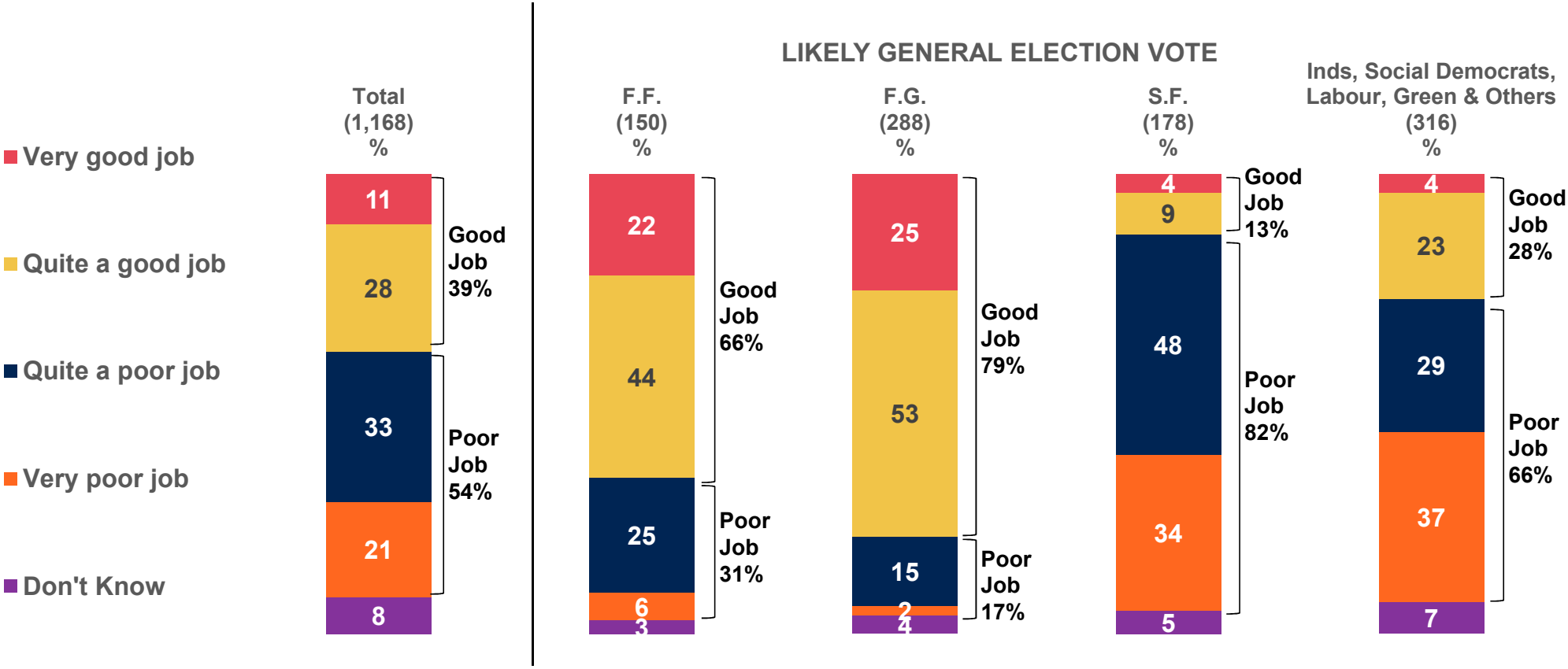
Opinion of Government Performance



Q.11 Thinking about the performance of the government in general, do you think the government has done a good job or a poor job over the past four years?
Q.11b And would you say they have done a very good job or quite a good job?
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Base: Split 2 Voters: 1,683

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Societal Attitudes

	TOTAL	FAMILY REFERENDUM		CARE REFERENDUM	
	(1,683)	Voted Yes (690)	Voted No (971)	Voted Yes (532)	Voted No (1,127)
	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
I would welcome a traveller as a member of the family	46%	50%	44%	46%	46%
All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job	31%	24%	36%	22%	35%
Men should take as much responsibility as women for home and children	94%	96%	93%	96%	93%
Immigrants are good for Ireland's economy	64%	78%	55%	79%	58%

Q.12 Please tell me whether you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with each of the following statements?
Base: Split 2 Voters 1,683

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Trust in Information Sources – Scored 8, 9 or 10 out of 10

	SCORED 8, 9 OR 10 OUT OF 10				
	ALL VOTERS (1,683)	FAMILY		CARE	
	%	Yes (690) %	No (971) %	Yes (532) %	No (1,127) %
Electoral Commission Information (e.g. booklet, website, information videos)	36	50	26	56	27
TV and radio	26	30	23	36	22
Newspapers and news websites	20	24	17	27	17
Posters	6	8	6	9	5
Social Media	6	6	5	3	7
Online videos and discussion forums (e.g. TikTok, YouTube, Reddit)	5	6	5	4	6
Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat)	3	3	2	3	3

Q.13 To what extent do you trust each the following sources of information to form an opinion before voting, rating each out of 10 where 0 means don't trust all, and 10 means trust completely?
Base: Split 2 Voters 1,683

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Likely General Election Vote (including Undecideds)

	FAMILY REFERENDUM		CARE REFERENDUM	
	Voted Yes (1,506) %	Voted No (1,999) %	Voted Yes (1,179) %	Voted No (2,318) %
Sinn Fein	12	21	9	21
Fine Gael	20	13	23	12
Fianna Fáil	13	12	15	11
Social Democrats	7	2	6	3
Green Party	6	2	7	2
Labour	5	2	5	3
Aontú	1	3	1	3
Solidarity - People Before Profit	2	1	1	2
Independents	7	18	8	17
Don't know/refused	26	25	25	26
Would not vote	-	1	-	1

Q.14 If there was a General Election tomorrow, to which party or independent candidate would you give your first preference vote?
Base: All Voters Excluding Don't Know/ No Opinion/ Would Not Vote

*Less than 0.5%

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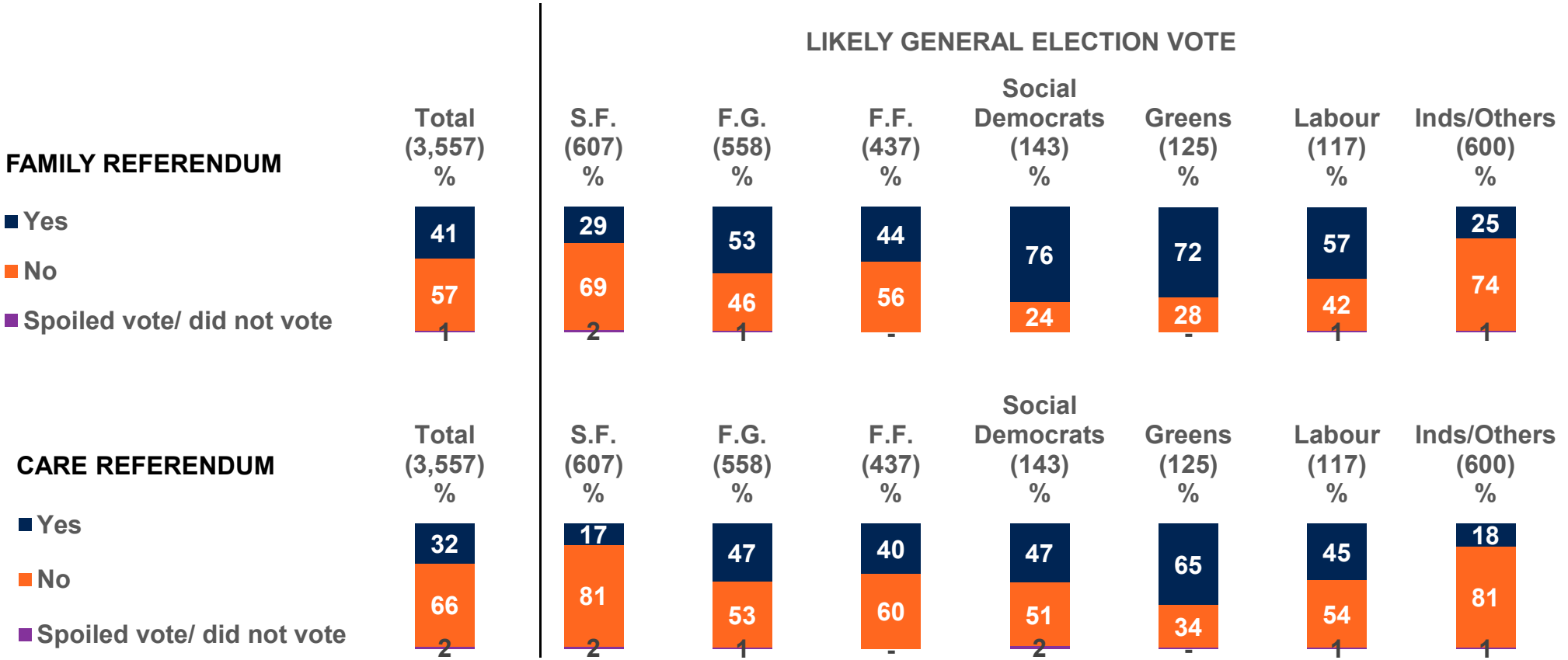
Voter Behaviour X Party Support



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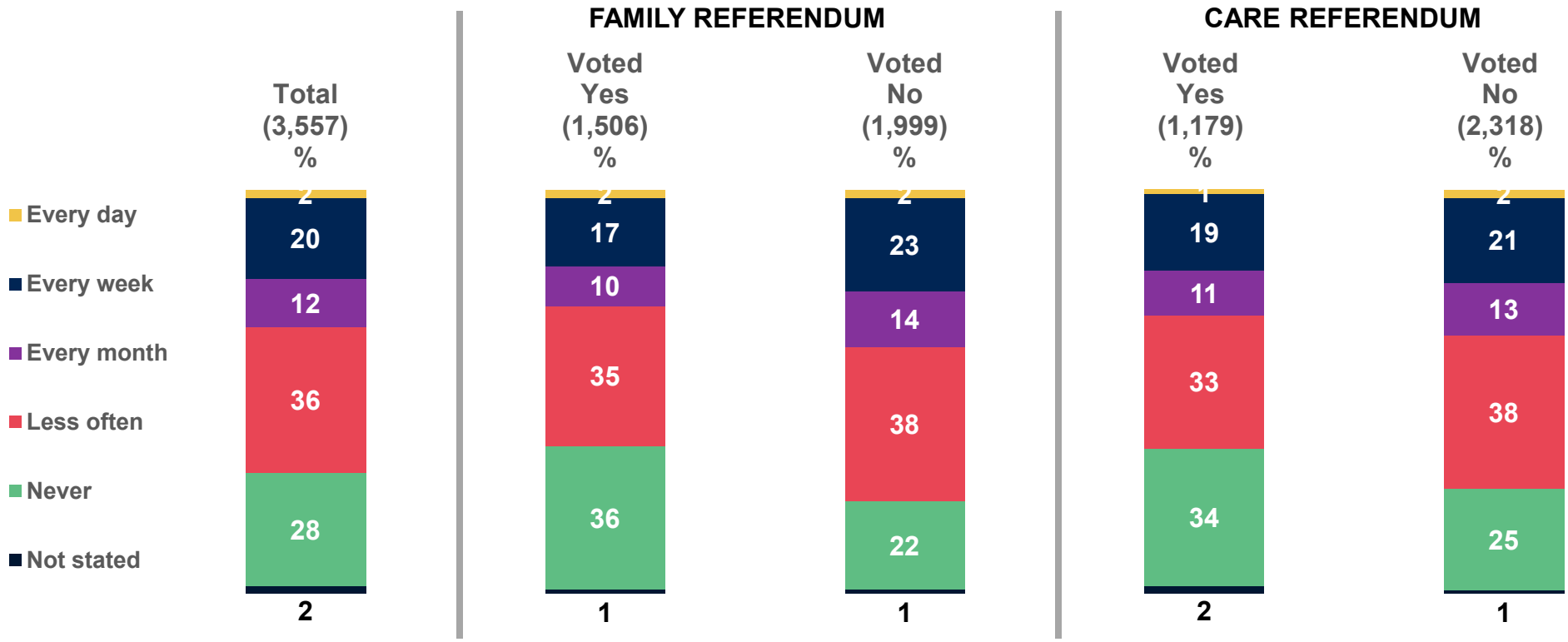
Frequency of Attending Church/Religious Services



Q.18 How frequently, if at all, do you attend any form of church or religious service?
Base: All Voters

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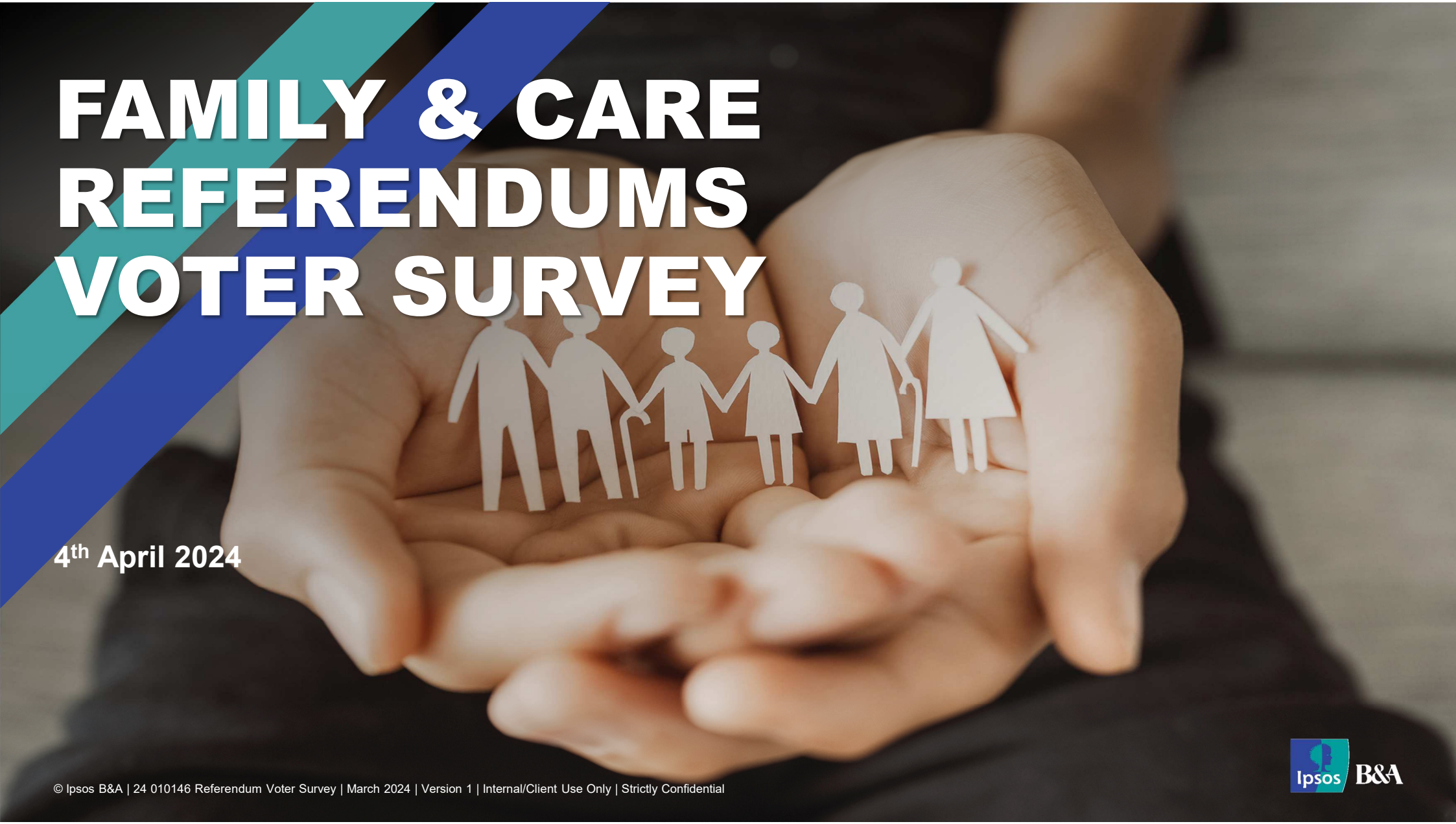
FAMILY & CARE REFERENDUMS VOTER SURVEY



4th April 2024

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