

Preferences for reporting rape

J17988CW

14.05.2026 - 20.05.2026

Methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 2000 UK Respondents (Nat Rep 18+). The data was collected between 14.05.2026 - 20.05.2026. Censuswide is a member of the Market Research Society (MRS) and the British Polling Council (BPC), and a signatory of the Global Data Quality Pledge. We adhere to the MRS Code of Conduct and ESOMAR principles

Background

Rape is at extremely high levels. 76,000 rapes were reported to the police last year, but according to the ONS that's less than 15% of all the rapes committed. This implies that there are over 500,000 rapes a year in the UK.

Fewer than 5% of survivors attend SARCs for a full forensic examination. Less than 2% of reported rapes end in conviction, 0.3% of estimated total rapes.

Last year in Avon & Somerset from an estimated 18,000 rapes there were 87 trials and 43 convictions.

From 616 Forensic examinations, 10 DNA samples were presented in court

Research objectives

1. Understand the public perception of the scale of rape and whether rapists can be identified
2. Perception of effectiveness of societal and government response
3. Awareness of existing support services
4. Preferences for alternative new provision

Executive Summary

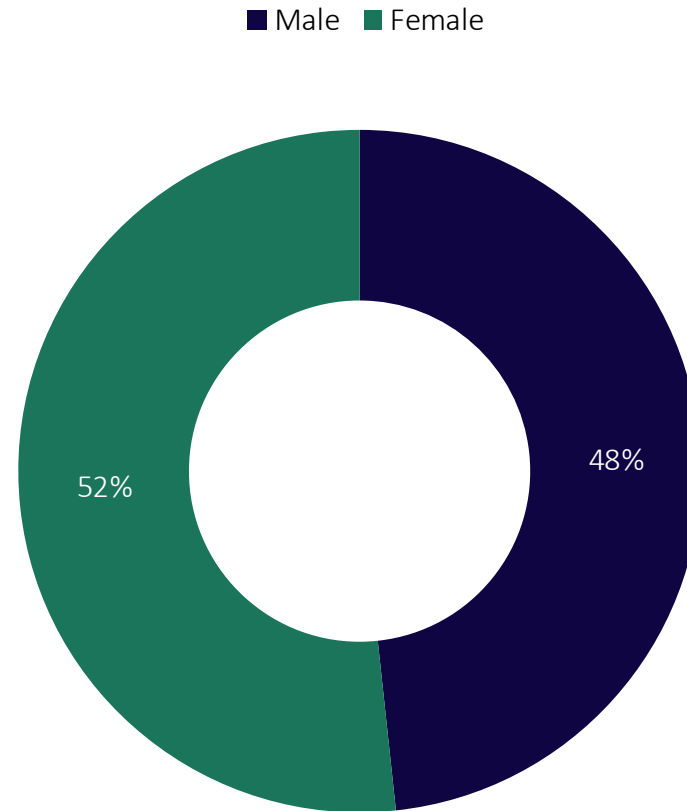
- **Society underestimates the prevalence of rape:** The largest proportion (33%) believe that there are 25,000 – 49,999 rapes in the UK per year. The best estimate is 500,000.
- **Society is not aware that the biggest risk is from someone you know, not a stranger:** The public believe almost half (48%) of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows (85% in reality)
- **False accusations are not common:** The public believe on average 8% of rape reports made each year are false (5% in reality.)
- **Society is not confident in our ability to prevent rape:** Almost half (49%) describe the Government's efforts to prevent rape as poor, and 42% rate the efforts of both the police and society as poor
- **Society is dissatisfied with the justice systems response to rape:** 37% are dissatisfied** with the way the criminal justice system in England and Wales currently deals with rape cases
- **The system dissuades people from coming forwards:** Almost three quarters (72%) of people agree* that the current reporting process for rape puts victims off coming forward
- **Shame, disbelief and being humiliated are the reasons people think women don't come forward:** They don't think they'd be believed (29%), fear of humiliation or embarrassment (27%), and belief the police would not help (11%).
- **Awareness of specialist services is very low:** 5% are aware of specialist rape or sexual assault services available in their local area. 0.8% of SARCs, 1.4% of Rape Crisis. Half (50%) said that if they were raped, they wouldn't know where to go to receive immediate medical care and forensic support, without having to involve the police.
- **Desire for self-reporting is high:** A majority (56%) of those asked said they would be likely to use a new online/at home service to report rape if it was available. Currently, 15% of survivors report to the police and 5% to SARCs. This would represent a 3-4x increase in reporting
- **More people could come forward who wouldn't otherwise report:** Nearly as many survivors would prefer to use an encrypted online platform as get to a police station and record their statement on video. More (37%) survivors would prefer to collect evidence using a high quality at home DNA kit than have a full forensic exam (32%). Over half (55%) of survivors would prefer to immediately start using state of the art online trauma recovery programmes with top specialists, than join a waiting list for therapy

*All 'unlikely' answers combined.

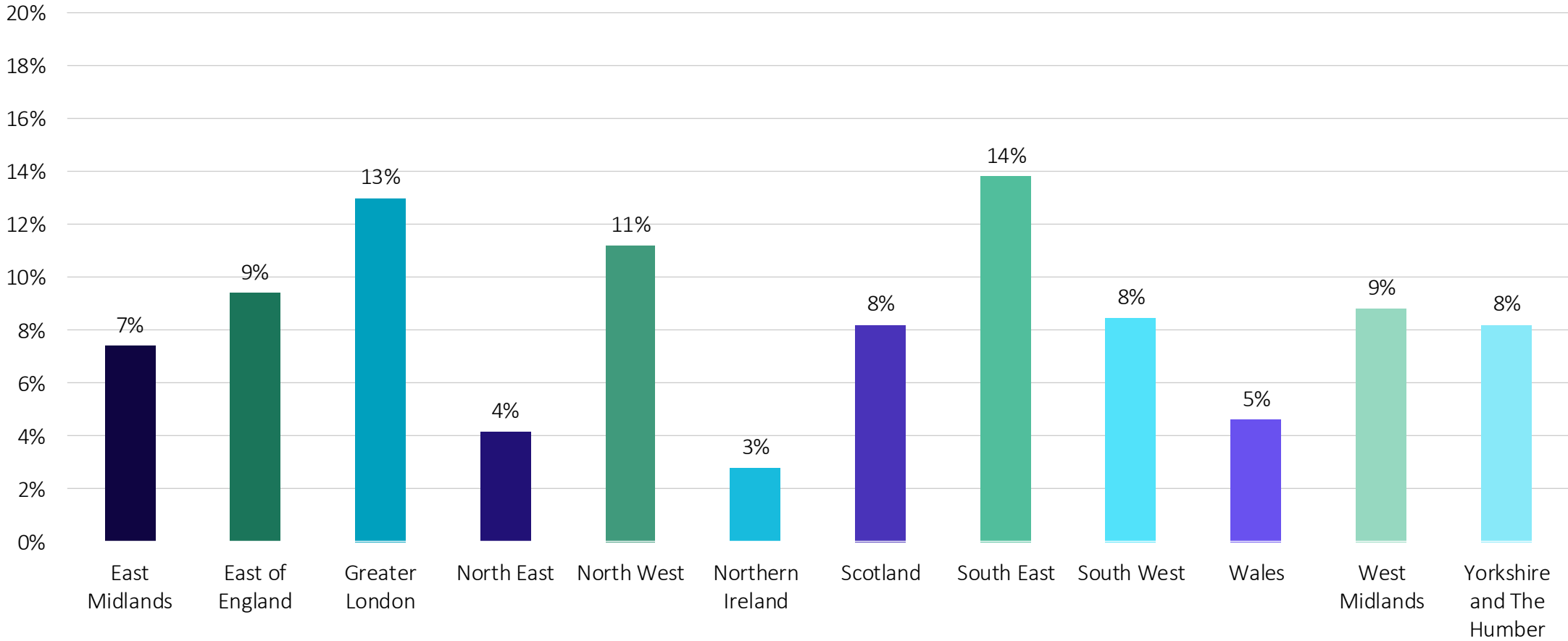
**All 'Dissatisfied' answers combined.

***All 'Agree' answers combined.

Gender

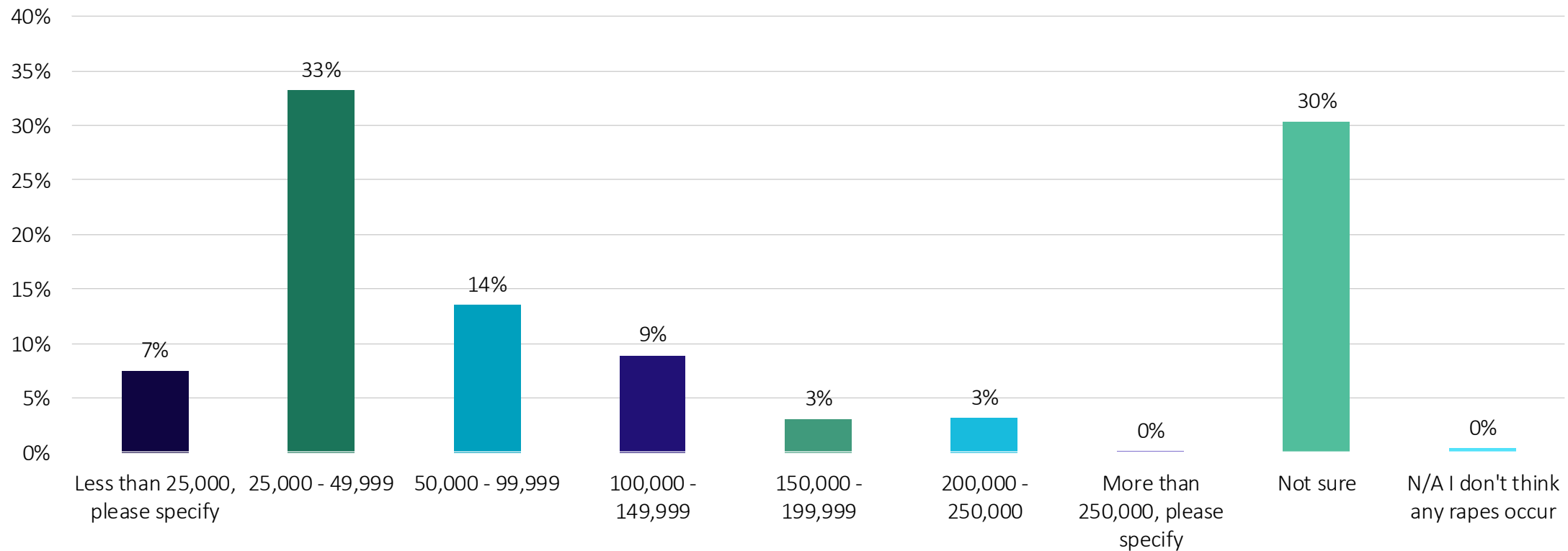


Region



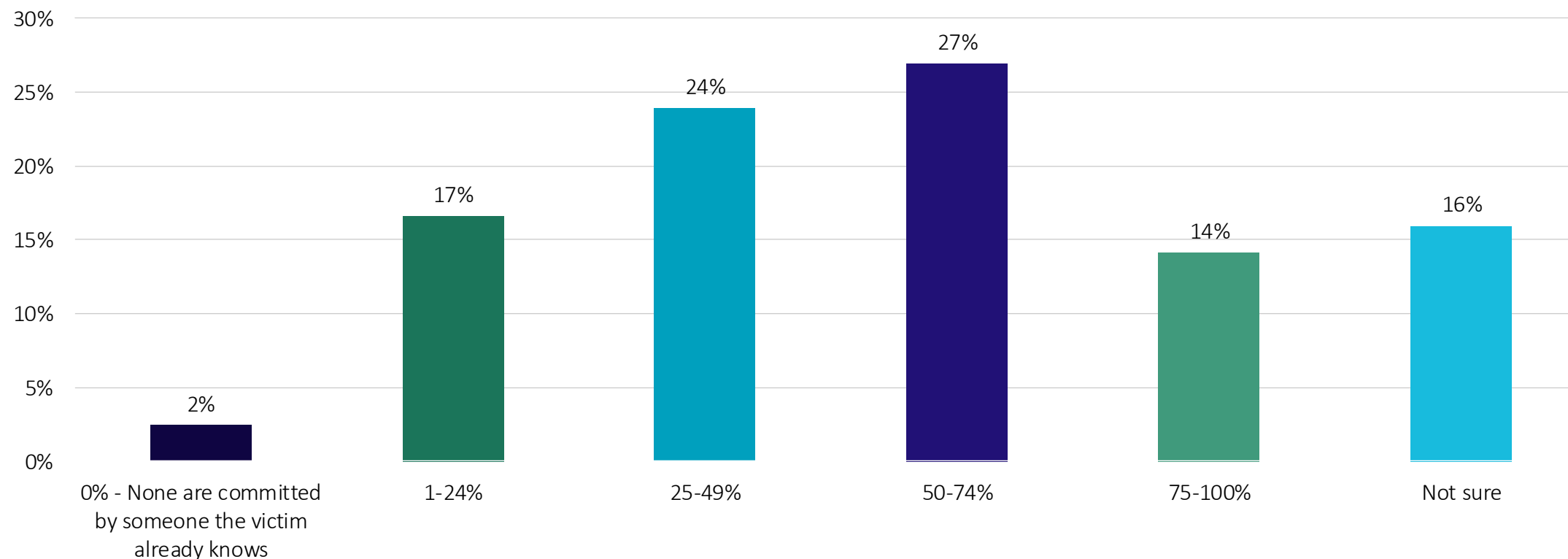
There are about 600 murders in the UK per year. How many rapes do you think occur in the UK per year?

- On average, the public believe 67,545 rapes occur in the UK per year.
- Based on ONS/Police data, it is estimated that there are 500,000 rapes per year



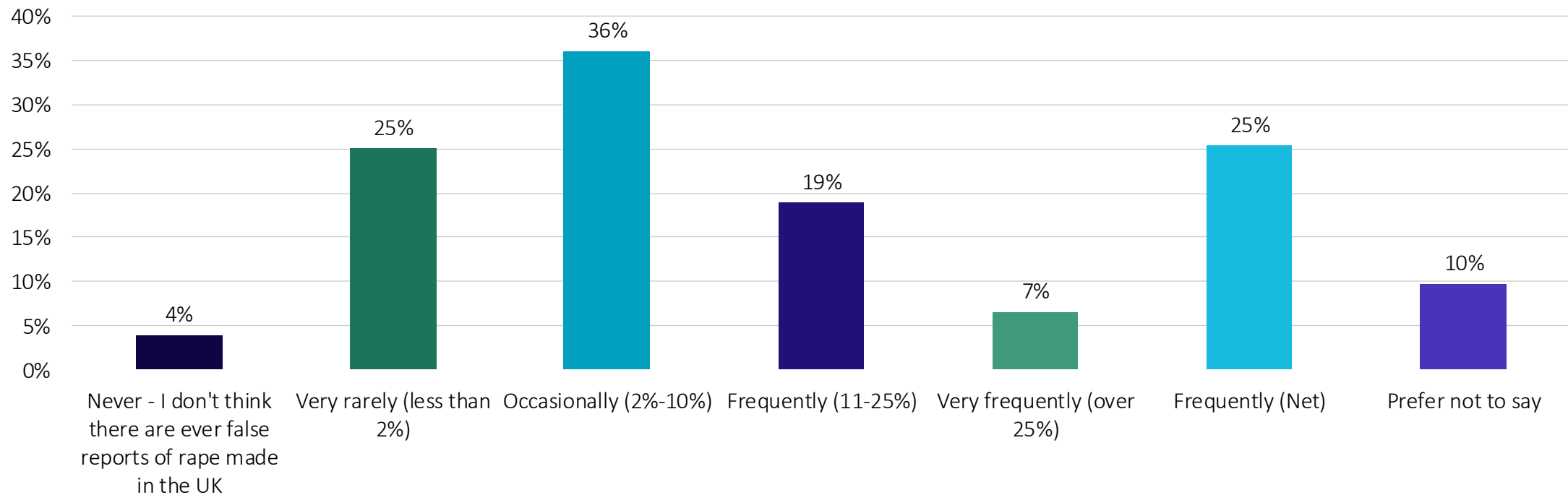
What proportion of rapes, if any, do you think are committed by someone the victim already knows (e.g. a partner, friend, or acquaintance)?

- On average, the public believe almost half (48%) of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows.
- ONS/Police data states that 85% of perpetrators are known to the victim



How often, if ever, do you think false reports of rape are made in the UK each year?

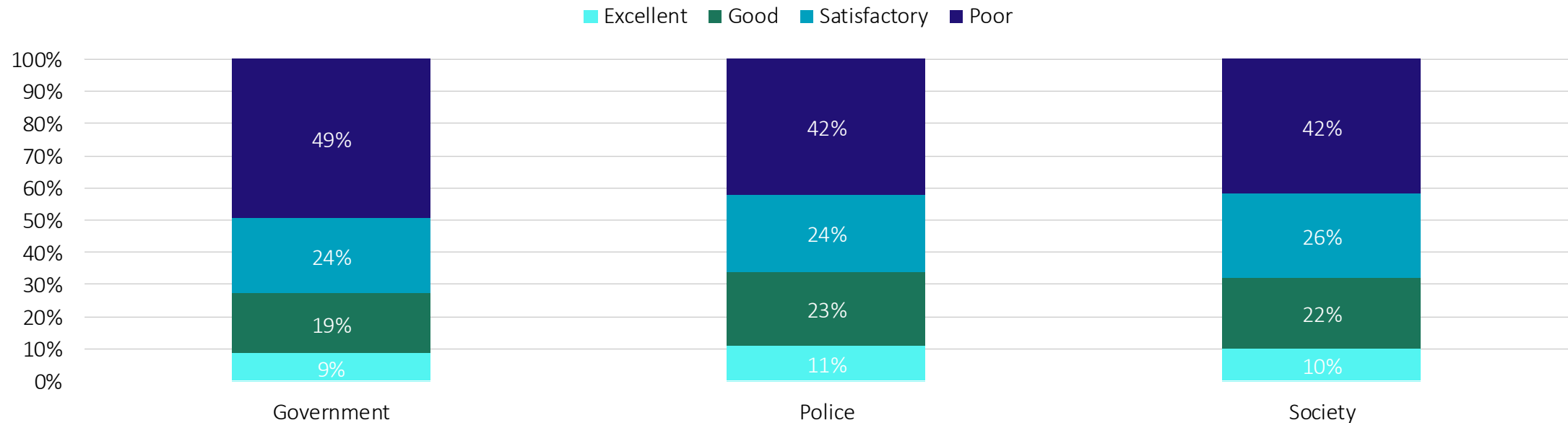
- On average, people believe that 8% rape reports made each year in the UK are false.
- The Home Office estimates that 5% of reported rapes, are false accusations; less than 1% of all committed rapes



**All 'Frequently' answers combined.*

How would you describe the government, police, and society's efforts to prevent rape?

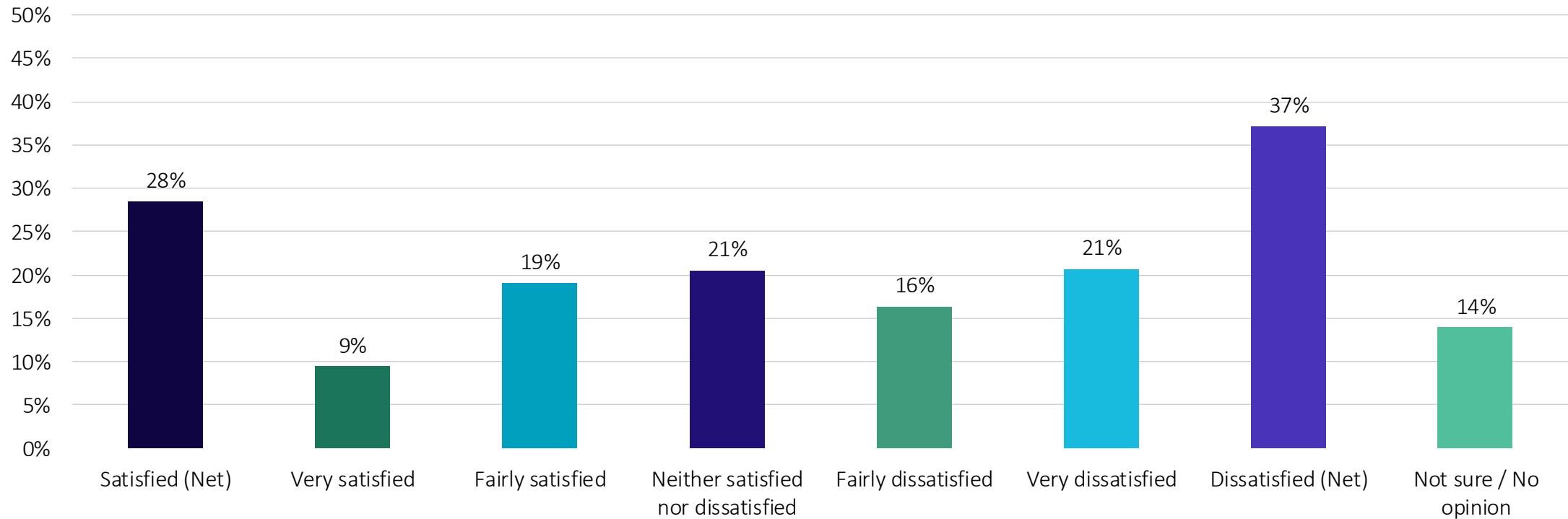
- Almost half (49%) describe the Government's efforts to prevent rape as poor, and 42% rate the efforts of both the police and society as poor



**'Excellent' and 'Good' answers combined.*

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the criminal justice system in England and Wales currently deals with rape cases?

- Almost 2 in 5 (37%) Brits are dissatisfied** with the way the criminal justice system in England and Wales currently deals with rape cases, with over a fifth (21%) who are very dissatisfied.

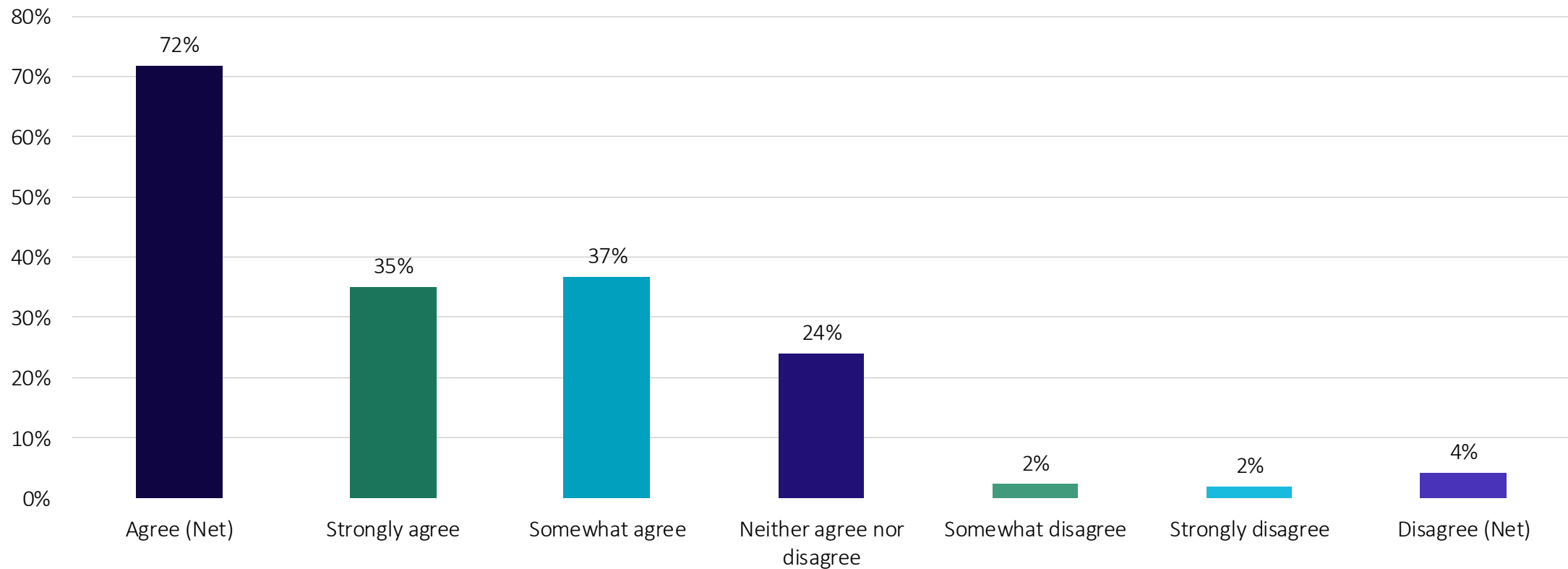


*All 'Satisfied' answers combined.

**All 'Dissatisfied' answers combined.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "The current reporting process for rape puts victims off coming forward."

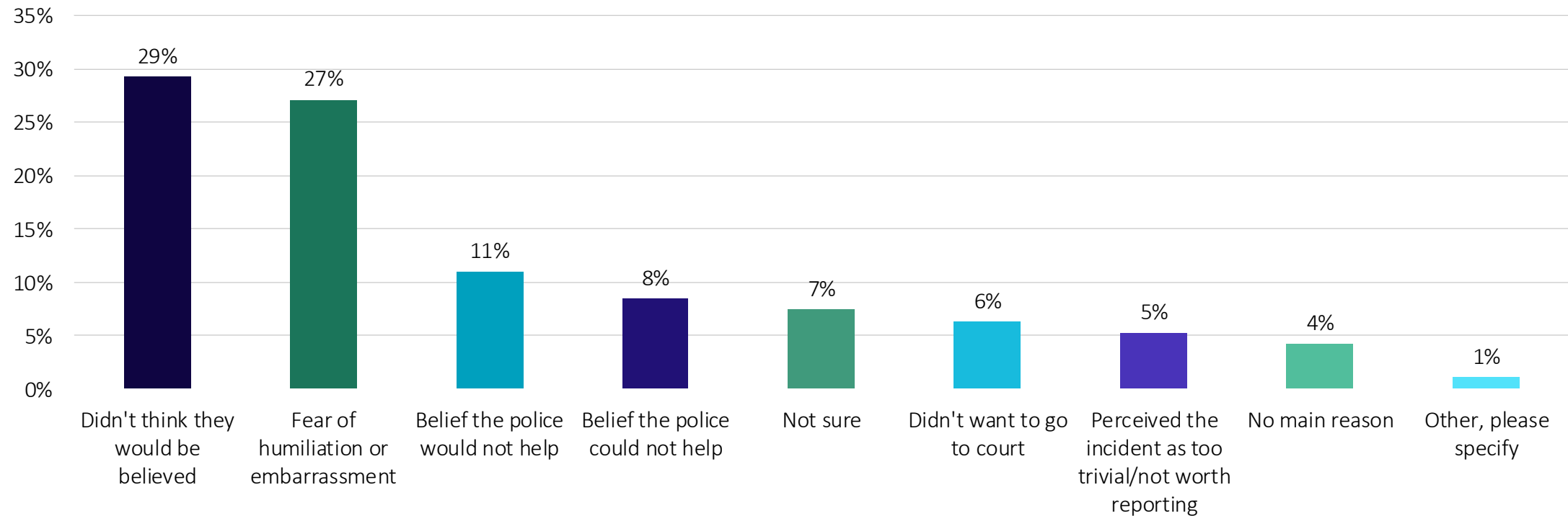
- Almost three quarters (72%) of Brits agree* that the current reporting process for rape puts victims off coming forward, with over a third (35%) who strongly agree with this.



**All 'Agree' answers combined.*

What do you think the main reason most women do not report rape to the police is, if any?

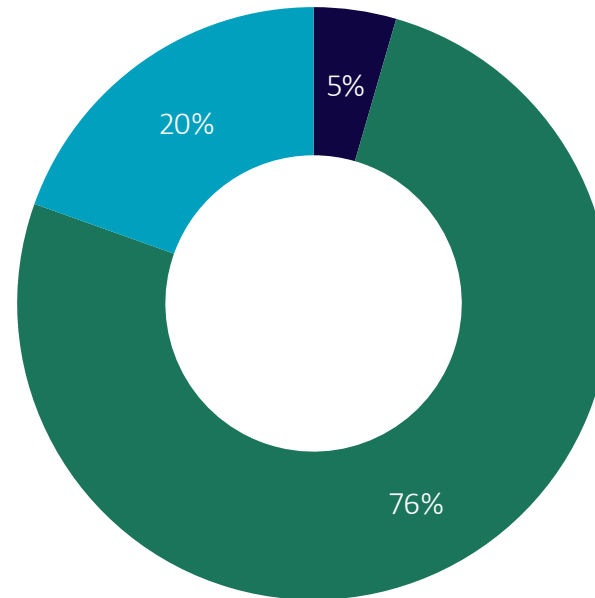
- The three main reasons people believe most women do not report rape to the police are: they don't think they'd be believed (29%), fear of humiliation or embarrassment (27%), and belief the police would not help (11%).



Are you aware of any specialist rape or sexual assault services available in your local area?

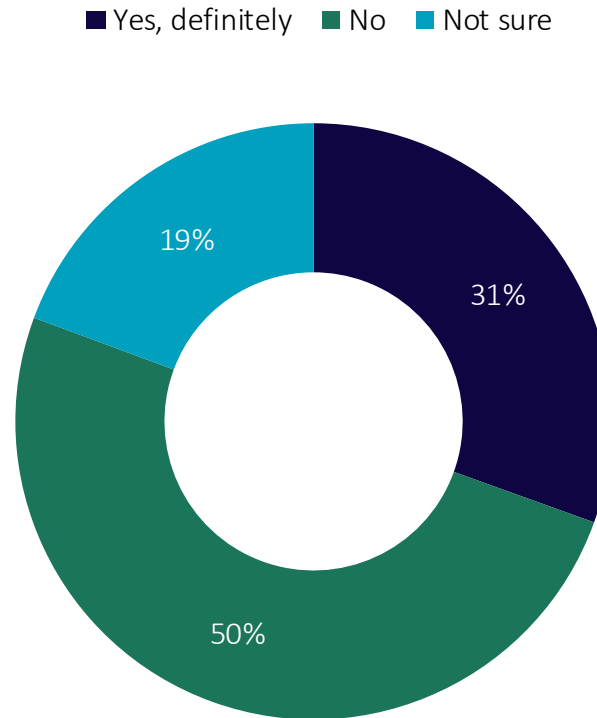
- Only 5% of people are aware of specialist rape or sexual assault services available in their local area.
- 0.8% can specify SARC's, 1.4% specify Rape Crisis

■ Yes, please specify the support services you are aware of ■ No ■ I don't know



If you were raped, would you know where to go to receive immediate medical care and forensic support, without having to involve the police?

- 50% said that if they were raped, they wouldn't know where to go to receive immediate medical care and forensic support, without having to involve the police.



Read this concept for a new way to report rape

A new way to report rape

Until now if you or someone you love were raped, you had the difficult choice of whether to report to the police
Most people just want to stop their perpetrator doing it again, but reporting means giving an official statement, perhaps having a forensic medical examination lasting 3-4 hours, collecting samples and evidence from your body
And after all that, only 3% make it to court, usually years later

Well now there's a new way

Report quickly and privately on an encrypted independent online platform, creating a permanent time stamped record, accessible only by you, and share an anonymous statement on the platform's viral socials to create immediate deterrence

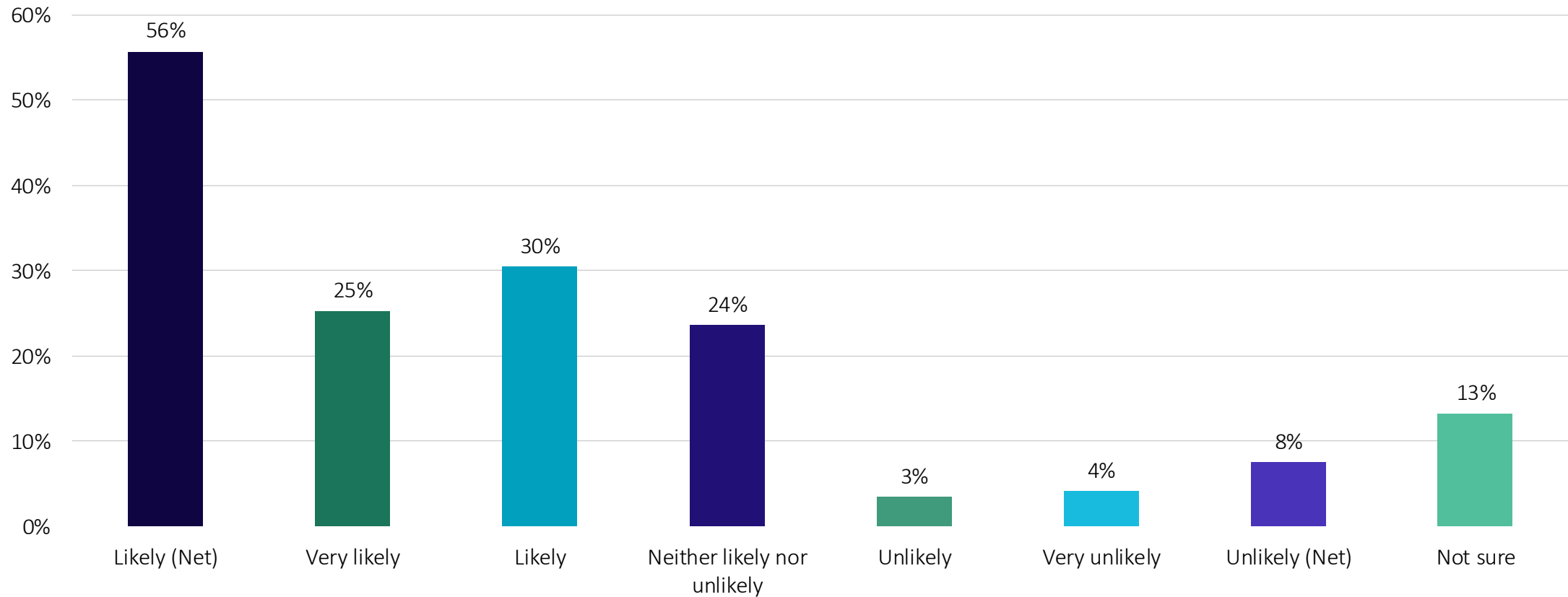
If you wish, quickly collect the perpetrators DNA from your own body in private, using a small free kit available to everyone.
Post to the lab and get results in 48hours

The whole thing is done in private in a few minutes , and you could be informed when and if your perpetrator has been identified by another survivor.

At any time in the future, if you want to, you can download your report and provide your DNA sample to the police

How likely or unlikely would you be to use this service?

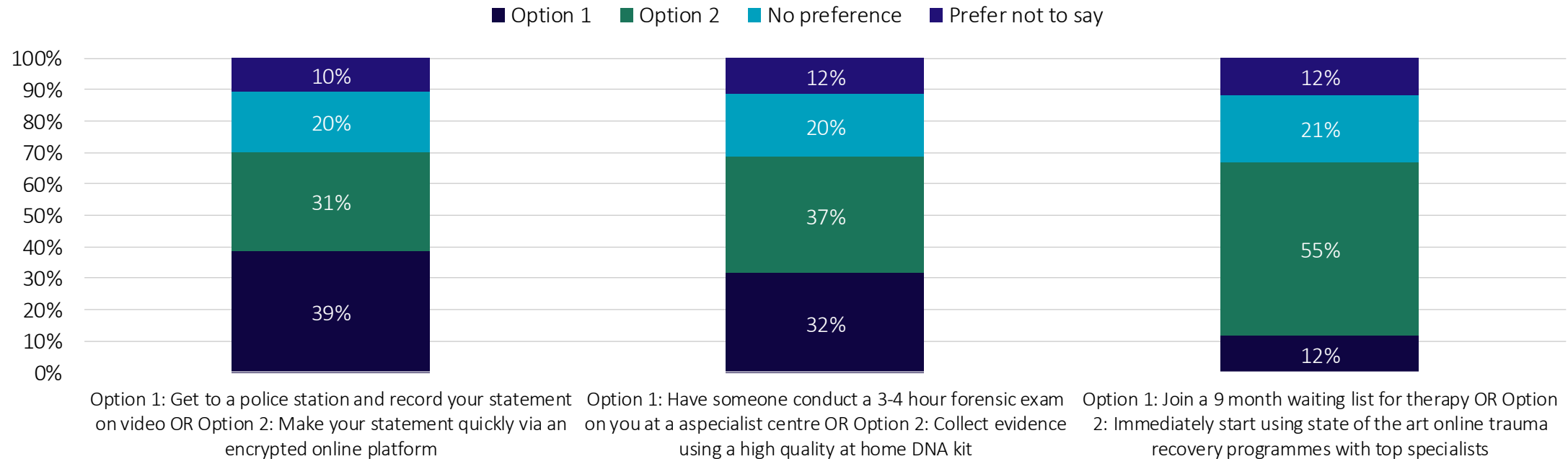
- A majority (56%) of Brits said they'd be likely* to use this service, with a quarter (25%) who would be very likely to do so.
- 15% of survivors currently report to the police and 5% to SARCs. This would represent a 3-4x increase in reporting



**'Very likely' and 'Likely' answers combined.*

What options, if any, would you rather use if you were raped?

- Nearly as many survivors would prefer to use an encrypted online platform as get to a police station and record their statement on video.
- More (37%) survivors would prefer to collect evidence using a high quality at home DNA kit than have a full forensic exam (32%).
- Over half (55%) of survivors would prefer to immediately start using state of the art online trauma recovery programmes with top specialists, than join a waiting list for therapy



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