

INDEPENDENT OFFICE FOR POLICE CONDUCT (IOPC)

# **IOPC Public Perceptions Tracker Summary Report, Waves 5.1 – 5.3**

May 2022

**.YONDER**

# **Aims and approach**

# Methodology & research objectives

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## Tracking the public's perceptions towards the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

- + Yonder (formerly Populus) has conducted regular online surveys among adults in England and Wales since 2017. These are nationally representative with sample sizes of approximately 1800–3000 depending on the wave.
- + The most recent wave was conducted between 30-31 March 2022 (Wave 5.3). Some slides display aggregated data across Waves 5.1 (July 2021), 5.2 (November 2021) and 5.3 (March 2022).
- + The numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) respondents and respondents aged 18-24 were boosted in Wave 5.3 to at least 500 each.
- + The survey is repeated at regular intervals.
- + The results are also available to view in the IOPC/Yonder dashboard.
- + The research objective for this project is to track and explore public perceptions relating to the IOPC and the police complaints system, against the backdrop of news stories and events.



# **Executive summary**

# Executive summary (1/2)

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## **Awareness of the IOPC among the public has increased. At the same time, confidence in the IOPC has decreased**

In the last year, awareness has increased from half of the public having heard of the IOPC in July 2021, to almost two thirds in March 2022. Despite this increase, the majority of the public do not know enough about the IOPC to say what it does. The proportion who say they are confident in the IOPC has decreased, the proportion who say they are not confident has increased, and the proportion who say they don't know has stayed roughly the same. However, the public remain slightly more confident than not.

## **Confidence in the police's ability to deal fairly with complaints has also decreased**

Half of the public are now not confident that the police deals fairly with complaints, overtaking those who are confident for the first time since 2017.

## **Recent news stories are likely to have impacted public opinion about policing and police accountability**

Sarah Everard's murder, the handling of the parties at Downing Street during lockdown, Cressida Dick's resignation, and a number of news stories about police misconduct (e.g. Child Q, racism, misogyny, photos of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, misuse of stop and search) have been widely noticed by the public and are highly likely to have impacted how the public feel towards the police and by extension the IOPC. The effect on young people and Black and Asian people has been strong, with these groups feeling less positive towards the police compared to last year.

# Executive summary (2/2)

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## **A perception of racism and sexism within the police has contributed to increased negative sentiment towards the police**

A quarter of those who are negative towards the police say that the reason they feel negatively towards the police is due to racism and sexism within the police. Other reasons include the police not dealing with enough crimes, and police being involved in law breaking, misconduct or abuse of power.

## **Almost a fifth say that an increased police presence in communities will help improve confidence in policing**

Other suggested improvements include tackling racism, sexism and bias, increased accountability and transparency, and implementing better recruitment, screening and training processes within the police.

## **The majority of the public would report violence against women and girls to the police and would make a complaint if unsatisfied with the response**

However, Black people and women are less likely to report violence against women and girls than the general public if the offender was a police officer.

# The findings in context

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**Taken together, the findings from the most recent waves represent the biggest shift in public opinion since the tracker began in 2017.**

**How does this shift compare with changes in public opinion in other sectors or in Yonder's broader experience?**

It is difficult to compare the different measures used to track public trust and confidence by different organisations across different sectors, but we can provide the following general context.

It is rare for awareness of an organisation (or campaigns or initiatives) to increase as much as awareness of the IOPC has increased in the past year, though we should bear in mind that this awareness remains surface-level.

It is also rare, but not unprecedented, for levels of distrust/lack of confidence to increase as much as we see in this data in relation to the police's ability to handle complaints and the overall job done by the IOPC.

A few other examples of sectors or institutions that have faced serious declines in public trust come to mind: the charity sector between 2014-2018 (following various governance scandals), politicians post-2009 (following the expenses scandal), or the banking sector between 2008-2013 (following the financial crisis). In each case, trust/confidence has recovered, but sometimes not fully, and only after several years. Our data suggests that the growing lack of confidence in policing is at risk of entering the same ballpark.

Given what we know about how closely perceptions of the IOPC are tied to perceptions of the police, there is therefore also a serious risk to long-term confidence in the IOPC.

**Awareness of the IOPC and broader context**



**AWARENESS OF THE IOPC**

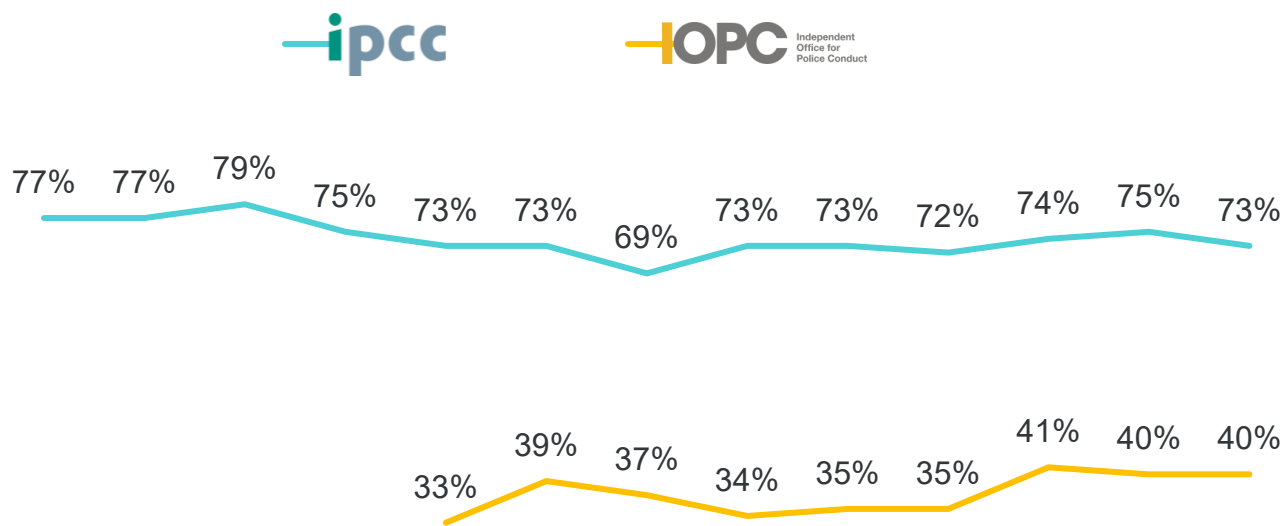
**Awareness of the IOPC has increased significantly in the last year, with two thirds of respondents saying they have heard of the IOPC. But knowledge remains surface level, with small numbers able to say anything about what the IOPC does.**

# Awareness of the IOPC has increased considerably in the last year

Old measure

Q. Have you heard of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) before today? [% saying 'yes']

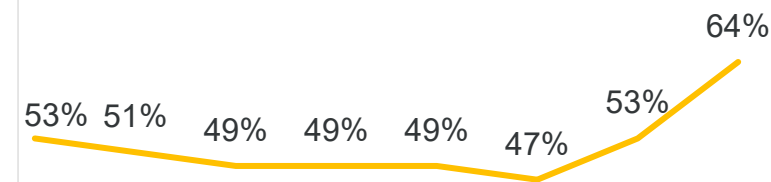
Q. Have you heard of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) before today? [% saying 'yes']



New measure

Q. Have you heard of the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)? [% saying 'yes']

- a) Yes – and I could say a lot about it
- b) Yes – and I could say a little about it
- c) Yes – but I only know the name
- d) No – I don't think I have heard of it before

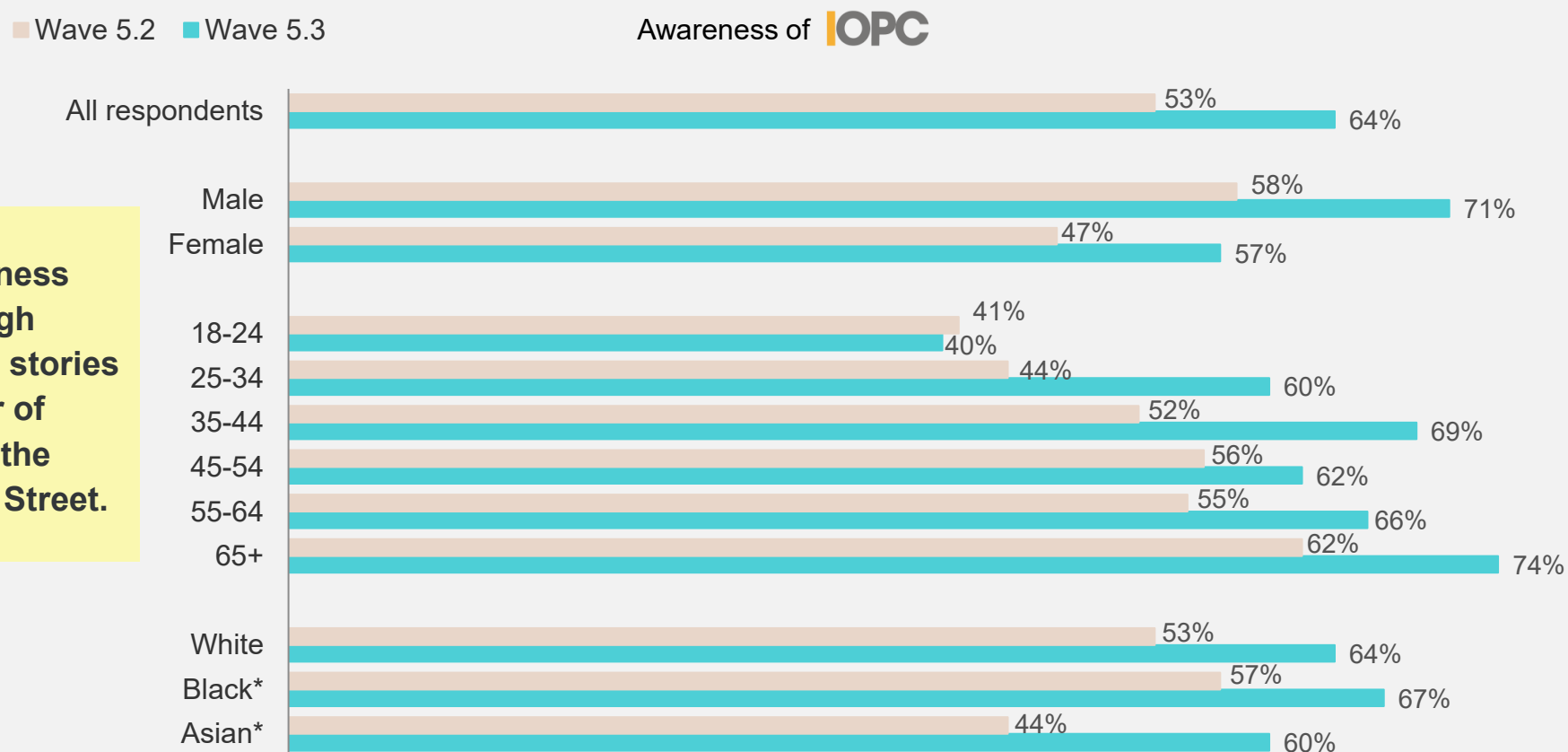


Wave 1.1 June 2017 Wave 1.2 Aug 2017 Wave 1.3 Oct 2017 Wave 1.4 Dec 2017 Wave 1.5 Jan 2018 Wave 1.6 Mar 2018 Wave 2.1 Jun 2018 Wave 2.2 Aug 2018 Wave 2.3 Oct 2018 Wave 2.4 Dec 2018 Wave 2.5 Feb 2019 Wave 2.6 Mar 2019 Wave 3.1 July 2019

Wave 3.2 Jan 2020 Wave 3.3 Mar 2020 Wave 4.1 July 2020 Wave 4.2 Nov 2020 Wave 4.3 Mar 2021 Wave 5.1 July 2021 Wave 5.2 Nov 2021 Wave 5.3 Mar 2022

# Awareness has increased across demographics since November 2021

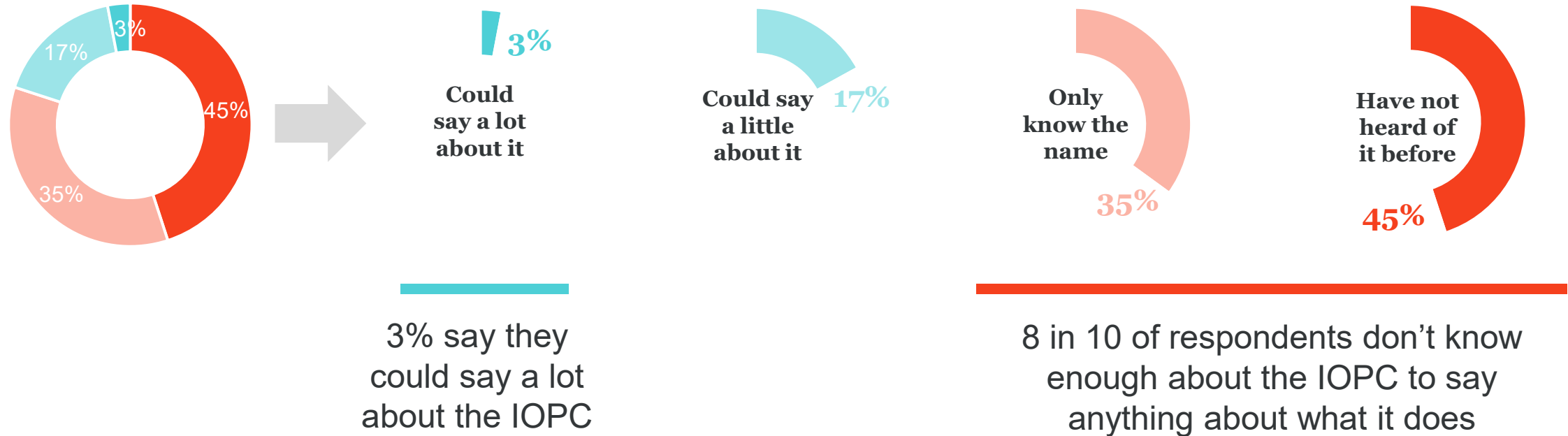
Q. Have you heard of the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)? (NET: Yes)



Increases in awareness correspond with high awareness of news stories such as the murder of Sarah Everard and the parties at Downing Street.

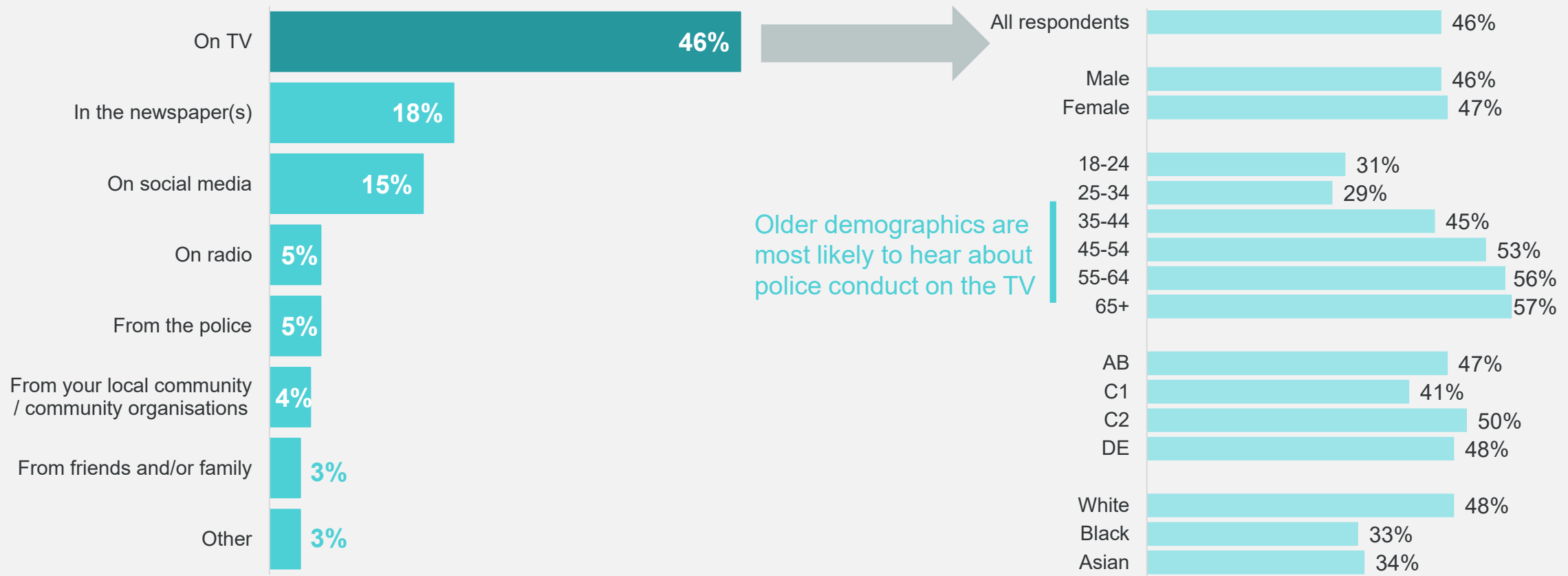
# Despite increases in awareness, knowledge remains surface level

Q. Have you heard of the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)?



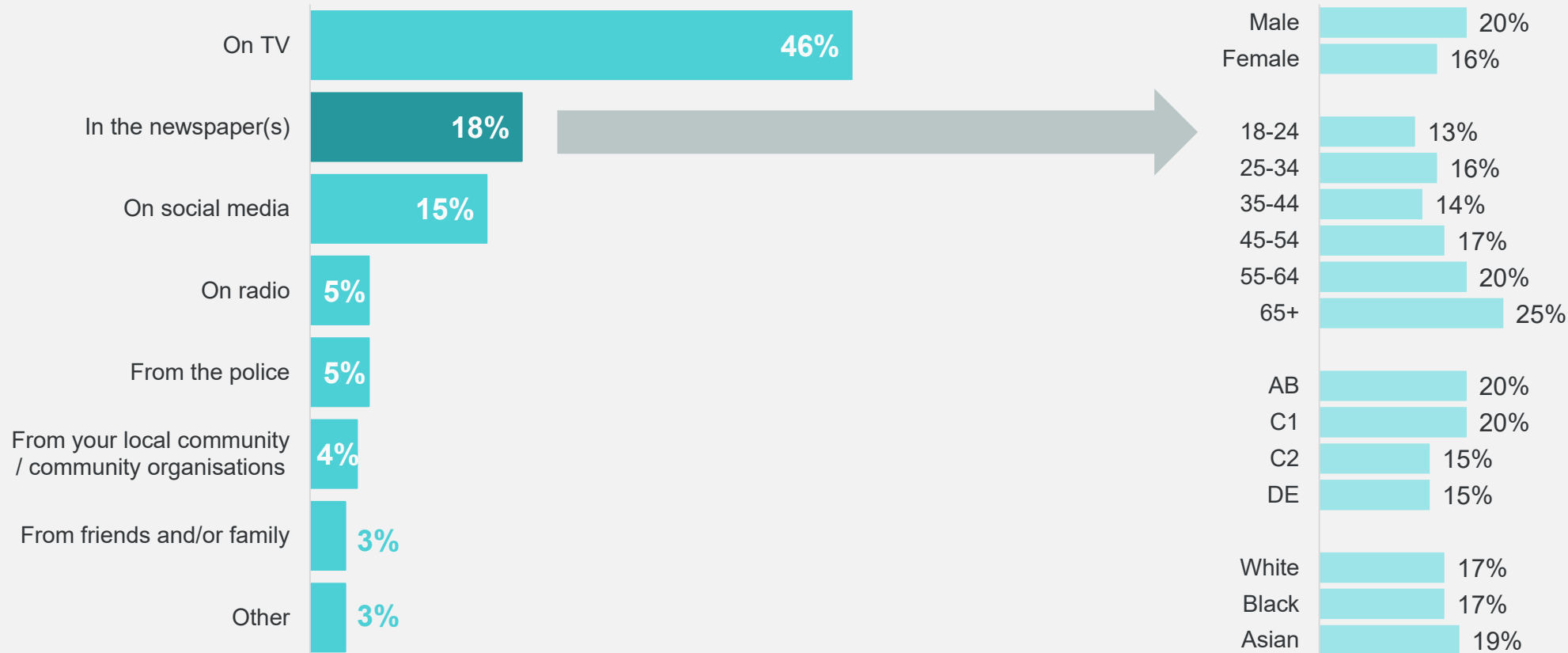
# Respondents are most likely to hear about police conduct or the IOPC on TV

Q. Where do you think that you personally would be most likely to see or hear information or news stories about police conduct or the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)?



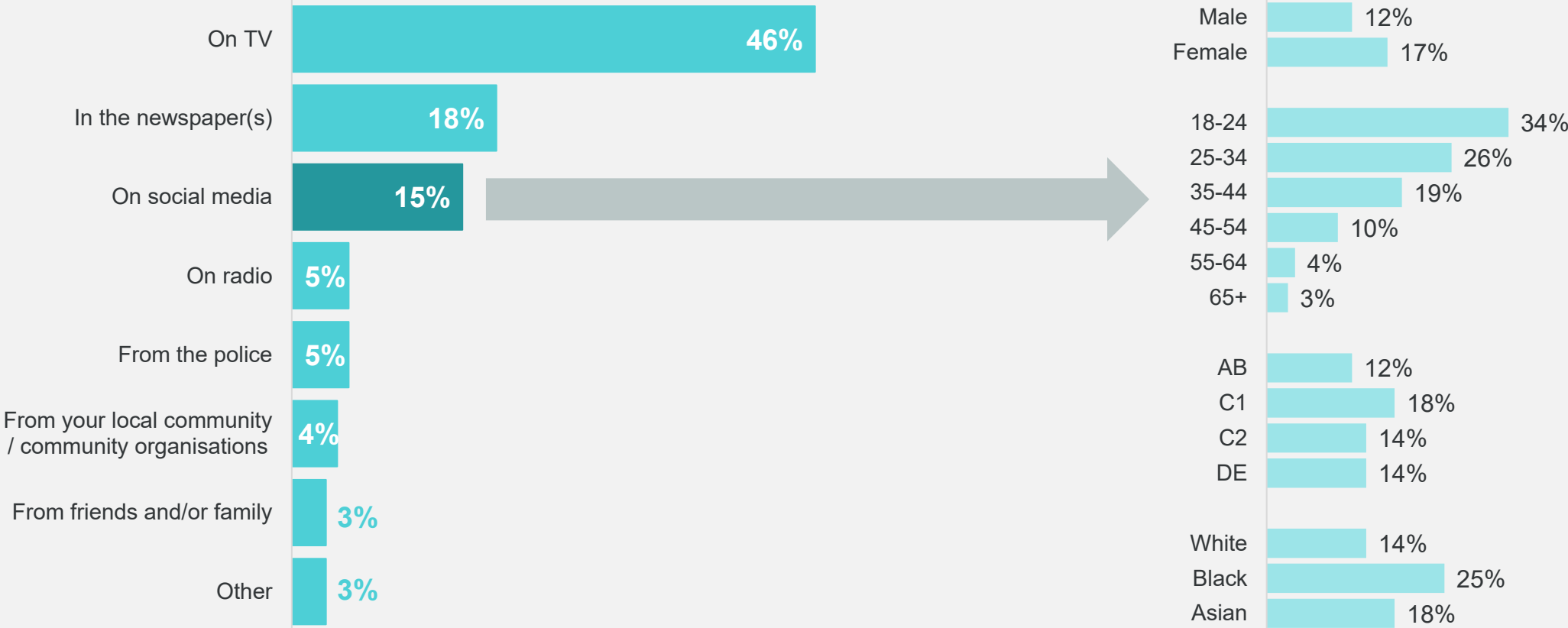
# Older demographics are more likely to hear about the IOPC in the newspaper than other groups

Q. Where do you think that you personally would be most likely to see or hear information or news stories about police conduct or the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)?



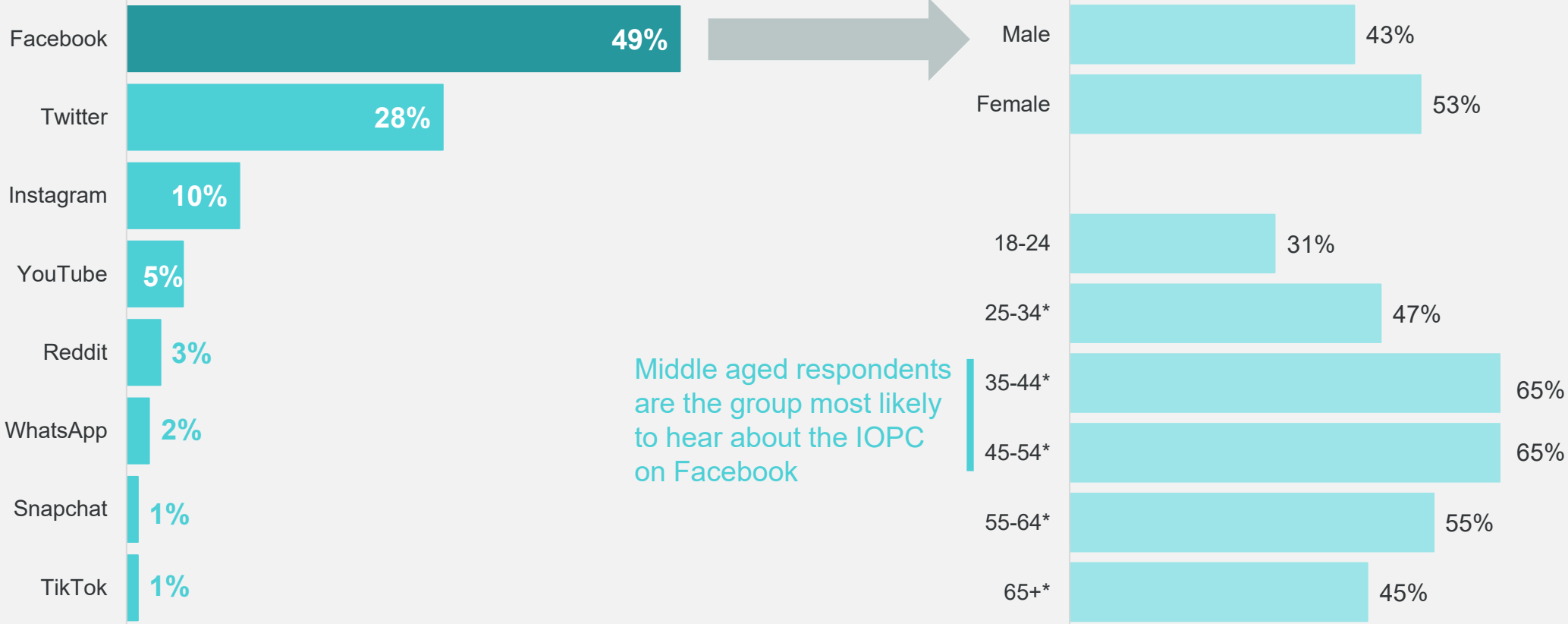
# Young and Black respondents are more likely to hear about the IOPC on social media than other groups

Q. Where do you think that you personally would be most likely to see or hear information or news stories about police conduct or the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)?



# The social media platform that respondents are most likely to see information about the IOPC on is Facebook

Q. You said you would be most likely to see further information about the IOPC on social media. Which social media platform would you most likely see or hear this on?





# Summary: top 3 likely channels for IOPC information

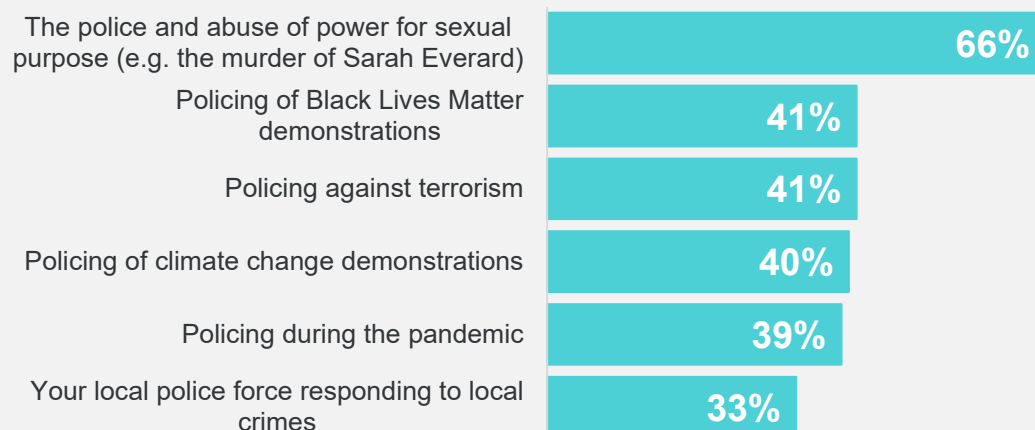
Q. Where do you think that you personally would be most likely to see or hear information or news stories about police conduct or the IOPC (the Independent Office for Police Conduct)?

| 18-24                                  | 25-34                                  | 35-44                                  | 45-54                                  | 55-64      | 65+        |
|--|--|--|--|------------|------------|
| Social media<br>(Twitter,<br>Facebook) | TV                                     | TV                                     | TV                                     | TV         | TV         |
| TV                                     | Social media<br>(Facebook,<br>Twitter) | Social media<br>(Facebook,<br>Twitter) | Newspapers                             | Newspapers | Newspapers |
| Newspapers                             | Newspapers                             | Newspapers                             | Social media<br>(Facebook,<br>Twitter) | Radio      | Radio      |

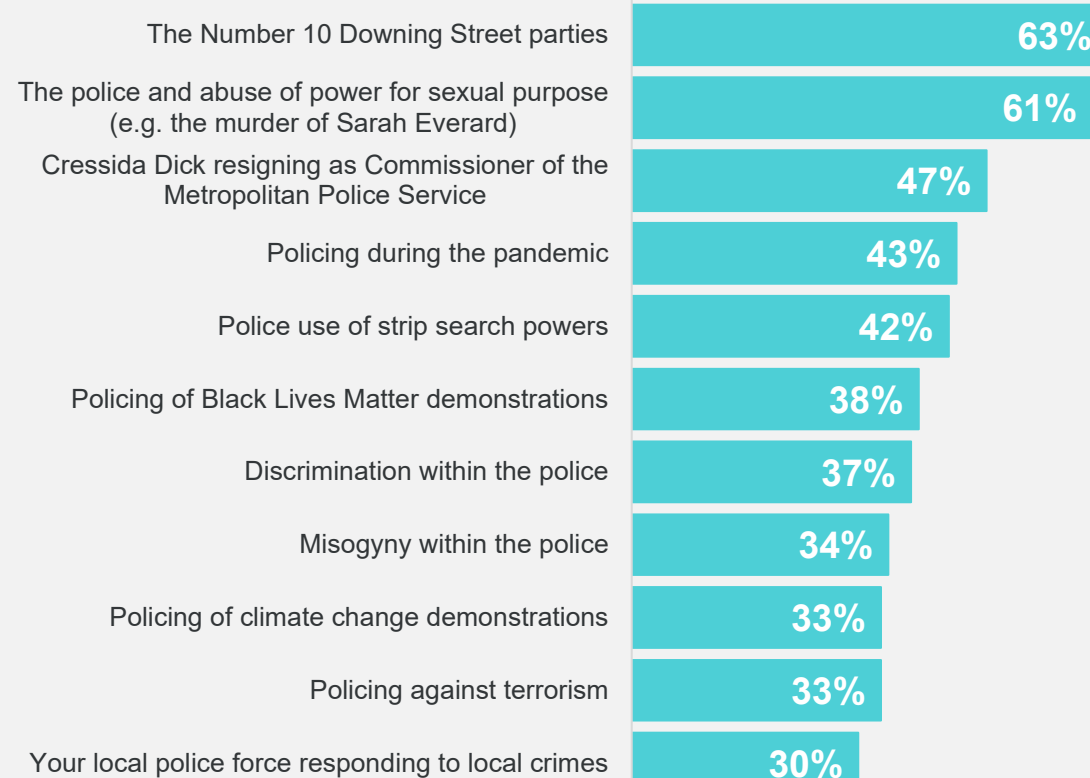
# Partygate and stories about abuse of power for sexual purpose are the most noticed police news (when prompted)

Q. How closely have you followed any of the following news stories surrounding the police, if at all? [SUM: closely]

## Wave 5.2, November 2021



## Wave 5.3, March 2022



# Abuse of power for sexual purpose has led to negativity towards the police

News stories about the police and abuse of power for sexual purposes have resulted in respondents feeling more negatively towards the police.

Over a third (35%) say seeing news stories about the police and abuse of power for sexual purposes has made them feel more negatively towards the police.

Other reactions include having less trust and confidence in the police (27%) and stories confirming an existing negative view of the police (6%). A tenth (10%) say that stories show that a small number of police officers have committed crimes, but they cannot taint the perception of the police force overall.

## Feel more negative about the police

*“**Incredibly negatively.** How am I meant to feel safe going to the police if something happens to me when there are predators in their midst. I know there are still good officers, but the **bad apples ruin the whole barrel.**”*

## Confirmed an existing negative view of the police

*“It didn't affect my view too much as **I have a negative view of them anyway,** and this was just another thing to throw on to the pile.”*

## Less trust and confidence in the police

*“Definitely **damaged trust in the police** and makes me worried that they won't help me properly against crimes if they are committing them themselves”*

## The entire police force can't be blamed for the actions of a small number of officers

*“Although I am aghast at these stories I feel **it is an extremely small percentage of police officers** so it does not alter my belief that we have a good Police Service overall.”*

# When unprompted, similar negative news stories were noticed by the public

Q. What news stories involving the police have you noticed recently, if at all? Please name any and all stories you can think of.

17% of respondents had noticed news stories around Sarah Everard's murder



16% of the public had noticed news about the parties at Downing Steet during lockdown, and another 14% noted the news in relation to Cressida Dick's resignation

# **Attitudes towards and perceptions of the IOPC**

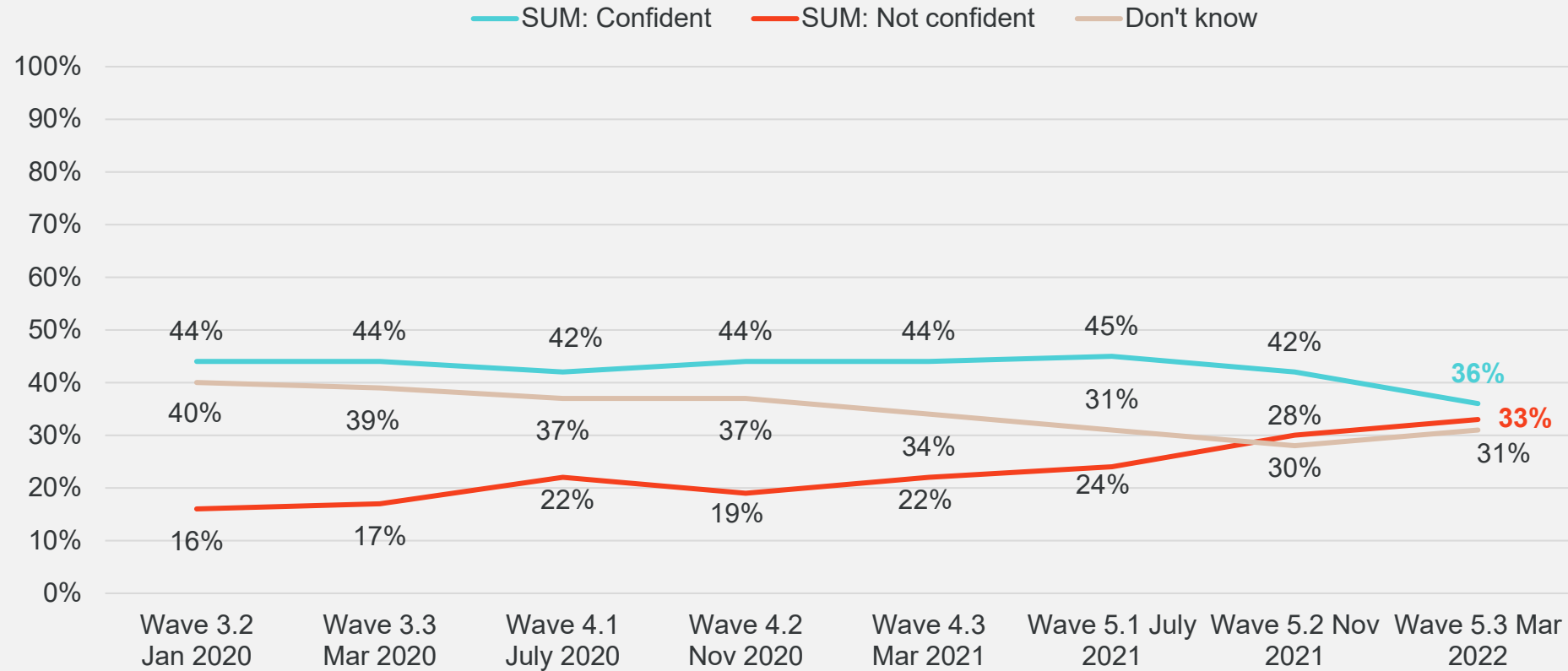
**Confidence that the IOPC does a good job has decreased across all demographics.**

**The confidence of Black respondents and women has dropped noticeably.**

**Perceptions of the IOPC's independence have also declined, but to a lesser extent.**

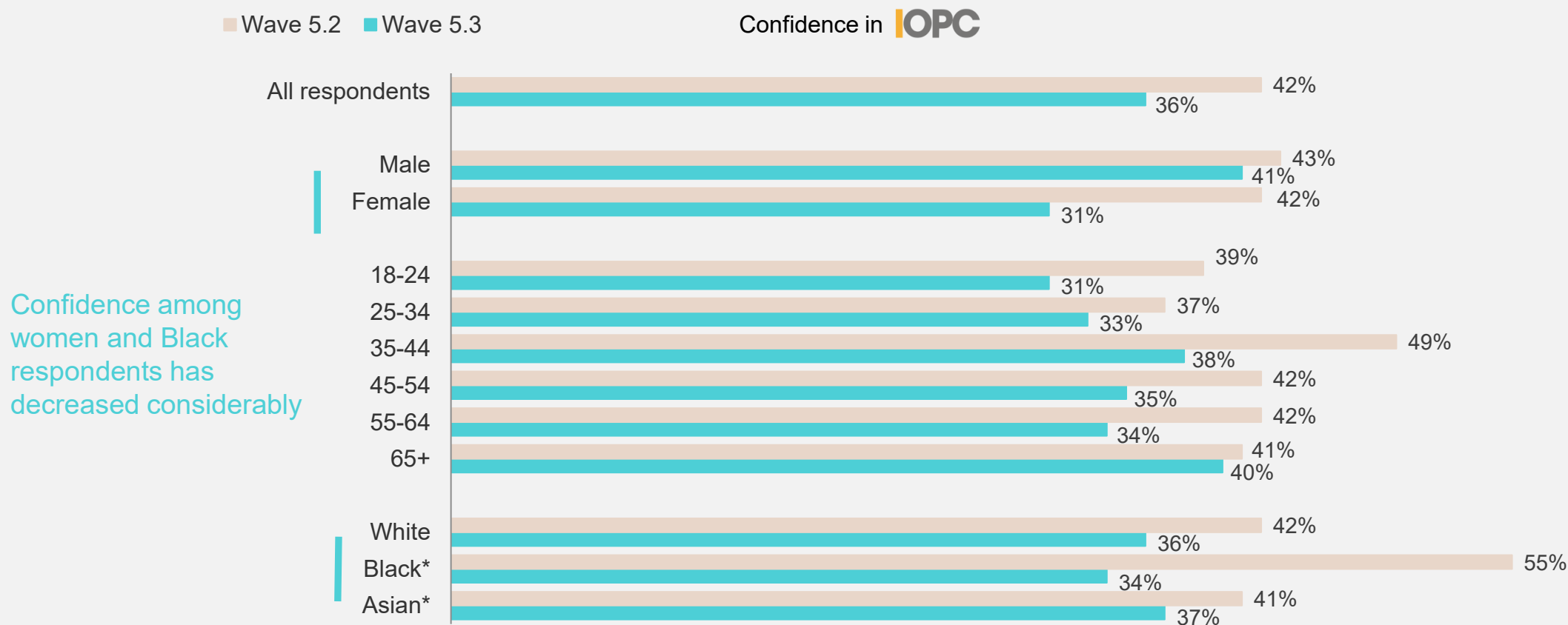
# Confidence that the IOPC does a good job has decreased

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job?



# Since November 2021, confidence in the IOPC has reduced, particularly among women and Black respondents

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job? (NET: Confident)



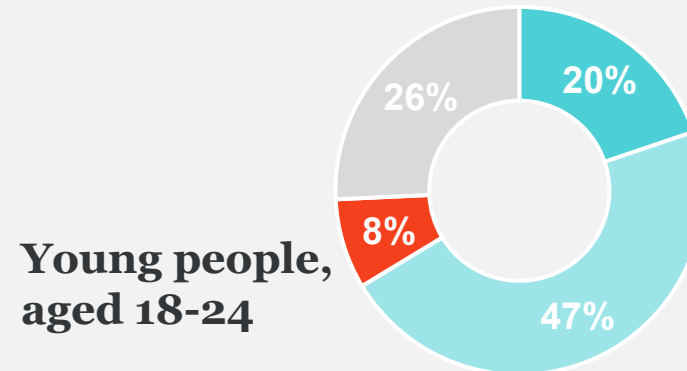
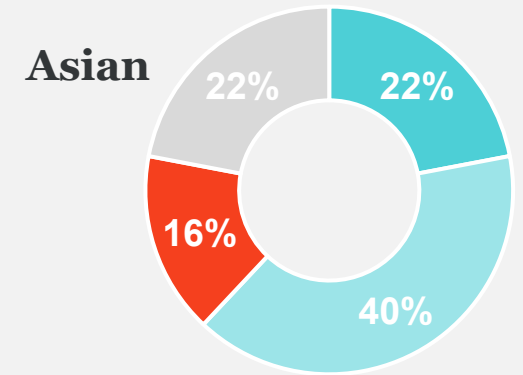
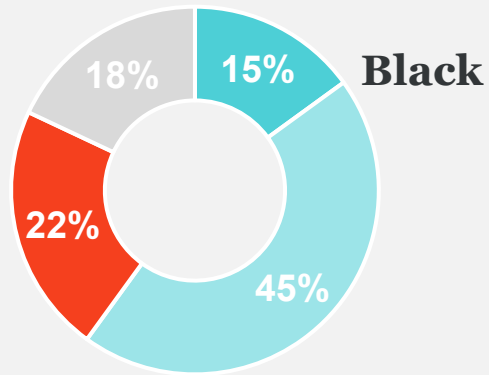
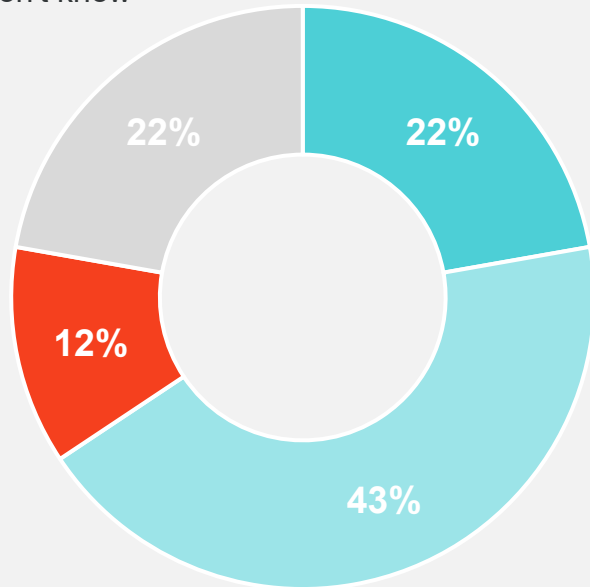


# Less than a quarter think the IOPC is completely independent of the police

Q. Do you think that the IOPC is independent of the police?

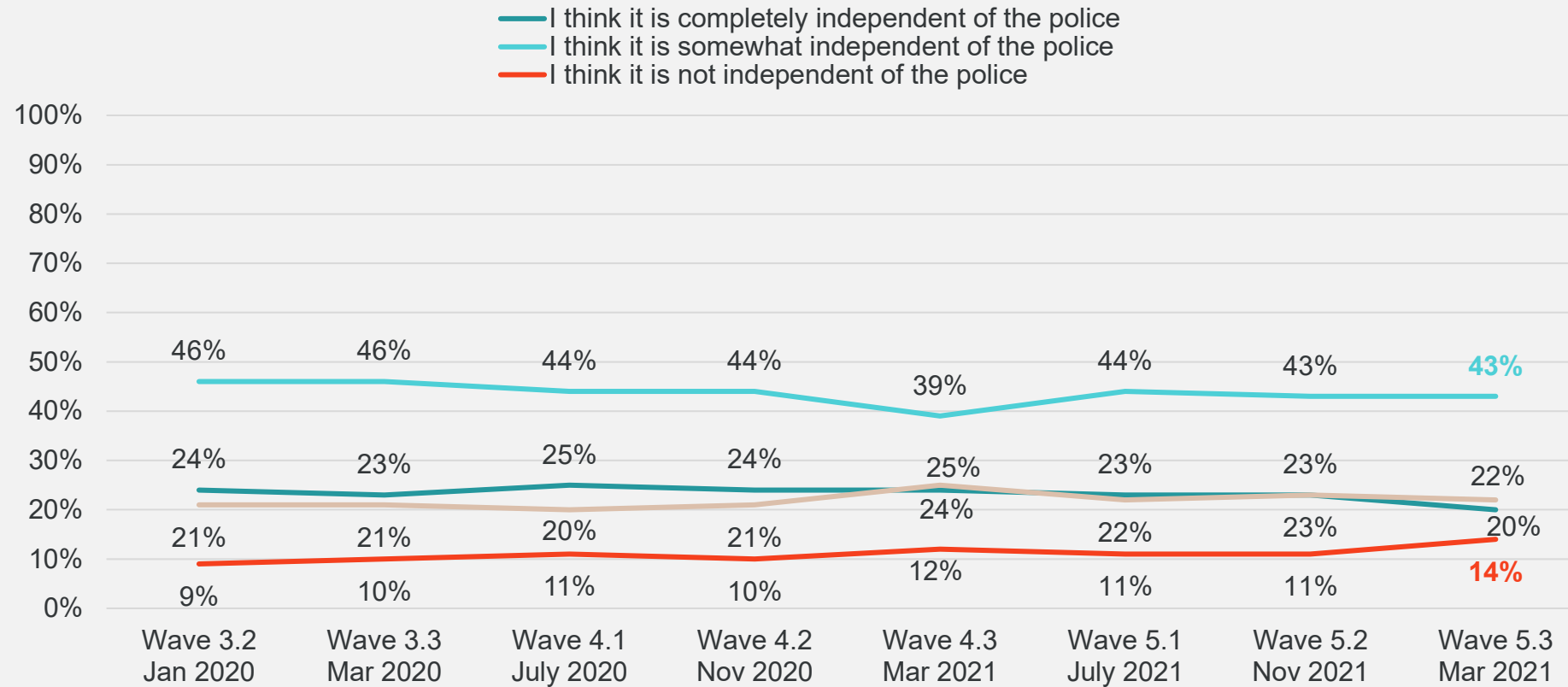
- I think it is completely independent of the police
- I think it is somewhat independent of the police
- I think it is not independent of the police
- Don't know

All



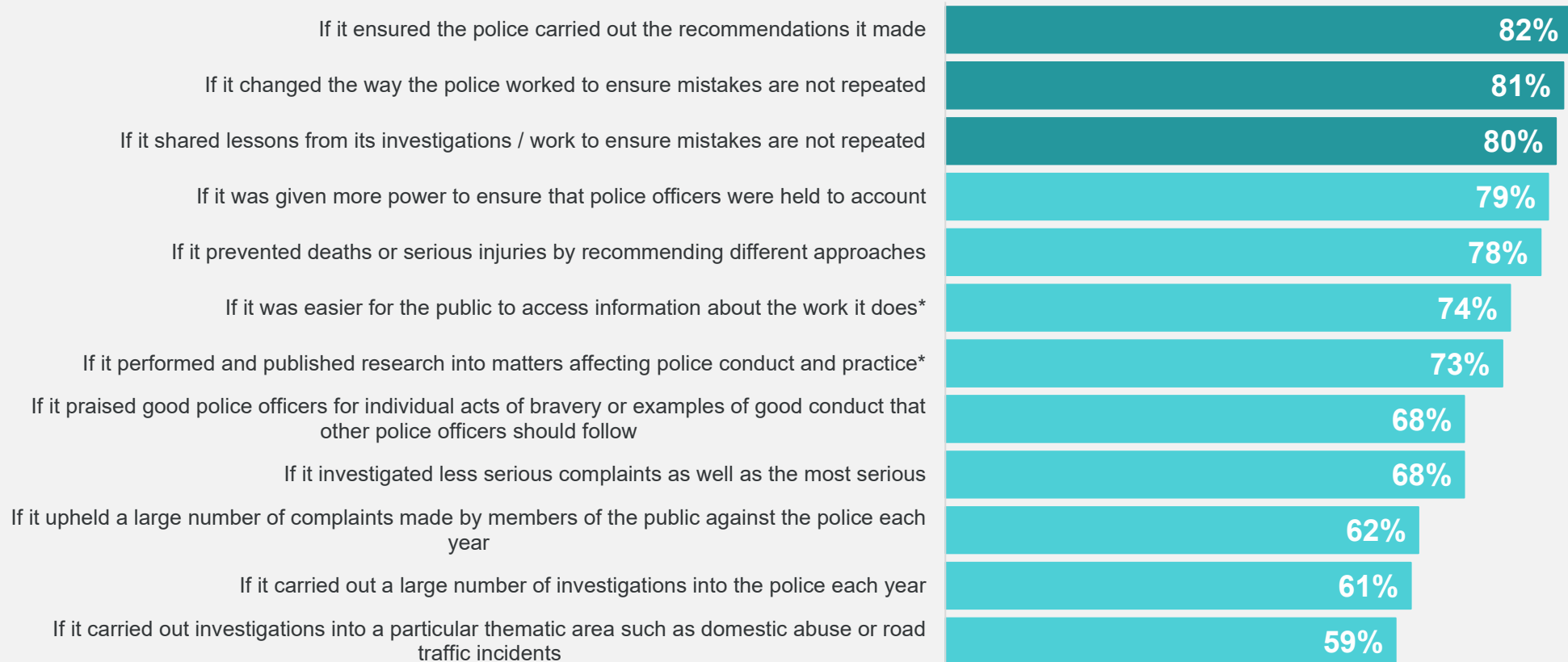
# Perceptions of the IOPC's independence have declined slightly

Q. Do you think that the IOPC is independent of the police?



# The factors that would increase positivity towards the IOPC the most relate to ensuring mistakes are not repeated

Q. To what extent would each of the below make you think more positively or more negatively about the IOPC? [% saying 'positive']



# **Attitudes towards the police and the police complaints system**

**The public continue to feel more positive towards the police than negative, but positivity has decreased.**

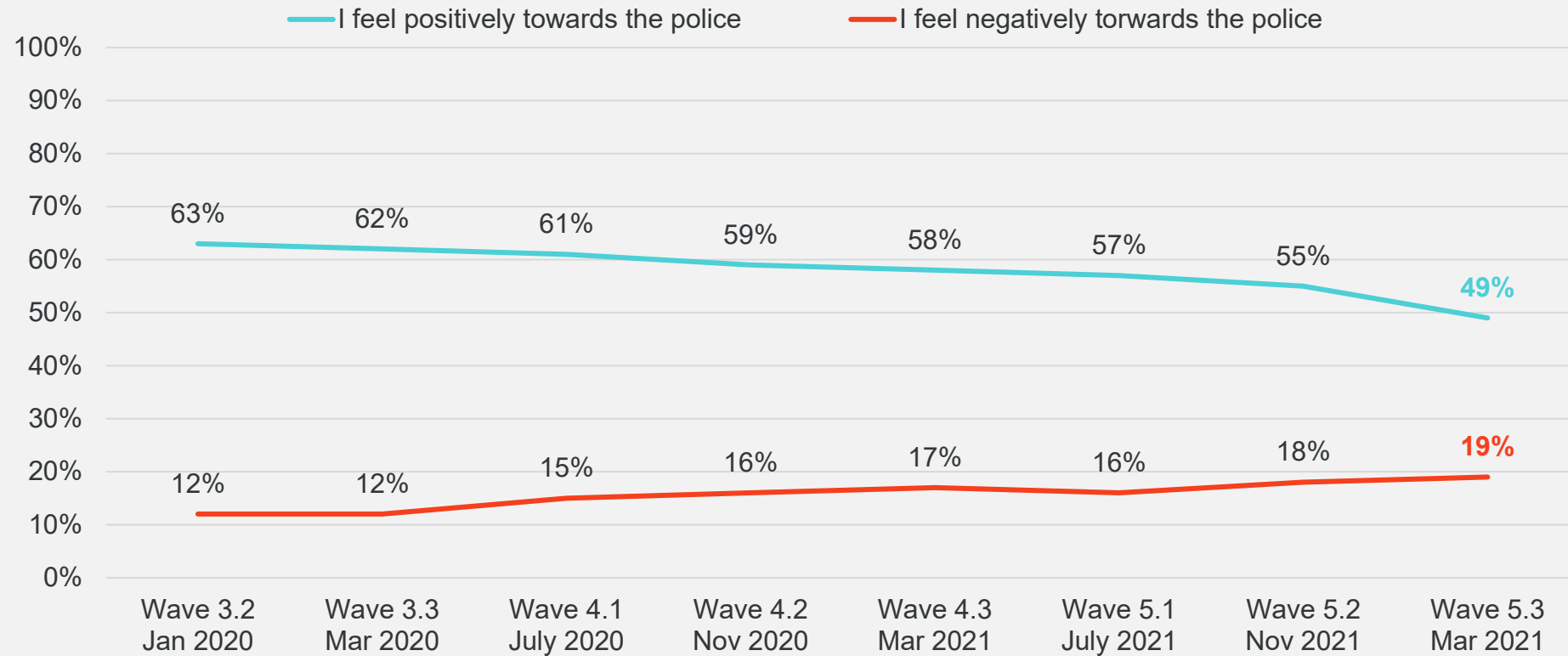
**Black and Asian respondents feel less positive towards the police compared to last year.**

**Police misconduct and negative news stories about the police have contributed to the decline in positivity.**

**Confidence that the police deal fairly with complaints has also decreased.**

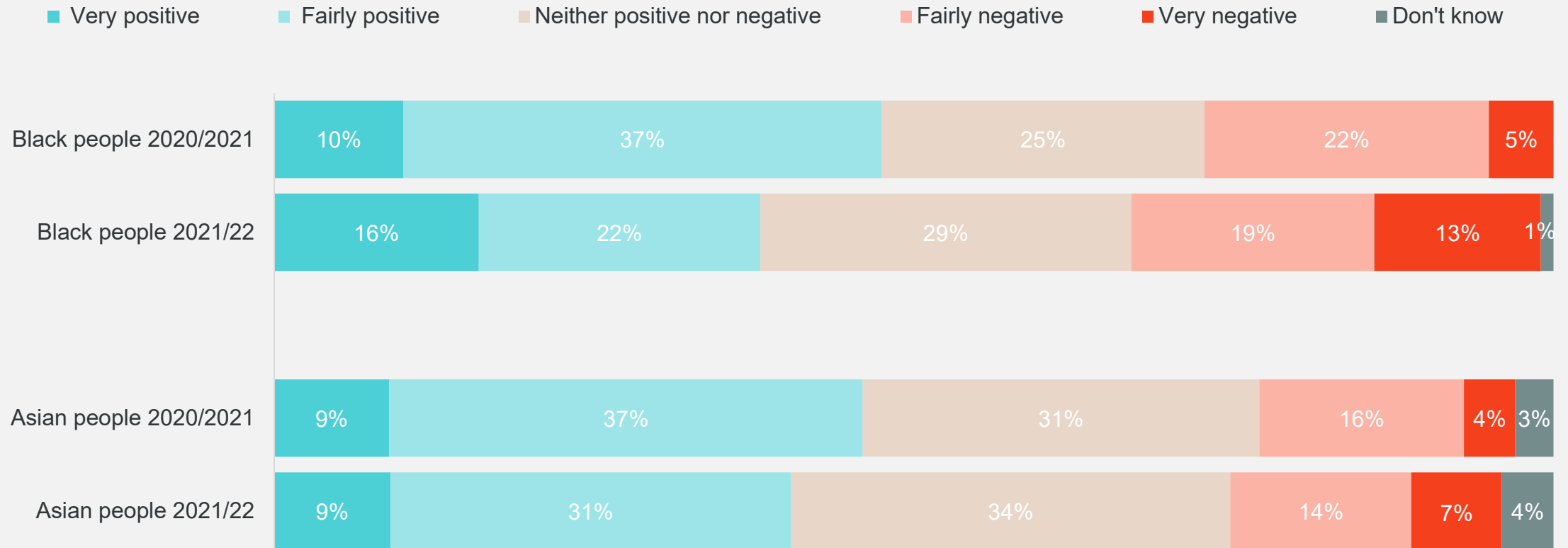
# Positivity towards the police has declined over the past year

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards the police?



# Black and Asian respondents feel less positive about the police compared to last year

Q. How positive or negative do you feel towards the police?



# Reasons for negativity: allegations of racism and sexism, as well as a general desire for more active policing of crime

Racism, sexism and homophobia within the police are the main reasons that respondents feel negatively towards them.

A quarter (25%) say the reason they feel negatively about the police is due to discrimination against people of colour, women and LGBT+ groups.

Other reasons for feeling negative about the police include the police not dealing with enough crimes (13%), police misconduct (13%), corruption within the police (9%), and the police abusing their position of power (8%).

## ‘The police is institutionally racist, sexist, and homophobic’

“They’re a **racist institution** and it needs to be changed. I also **don’t like the attitude towards women** [..]. Even if it’s not all police, they don’t speak up so they’re just as bad.

## ‘The police are too often involved in misconduct and law breaking’

“A lot of **police officers have been charged and convicted of different criminal offences**, as has been reported on the news and it is difficult to trust them”

## ‘The police don’t deal with enough crimes’

“Because they’re **never there when you need them** and unless it’s a severe crime they don’t seem to care about it”

“They **don’t even come out for crimes anymore** so provide no support or assurance”

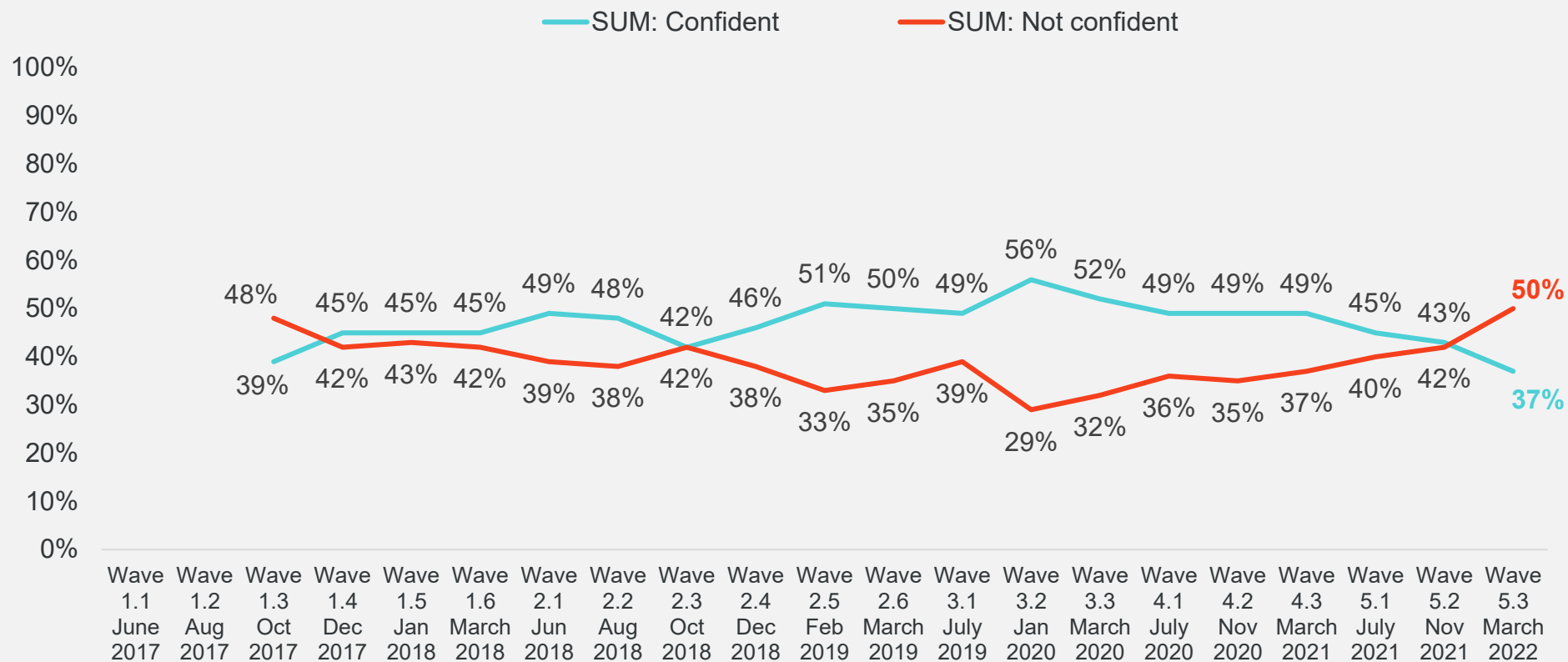
## ‘The police abuse their position of power’

“They **don’t follow their own rules** and completely abuse power. **They think they’re above the law**. I’ve witnessed racism, homophobia and sexism from the police”



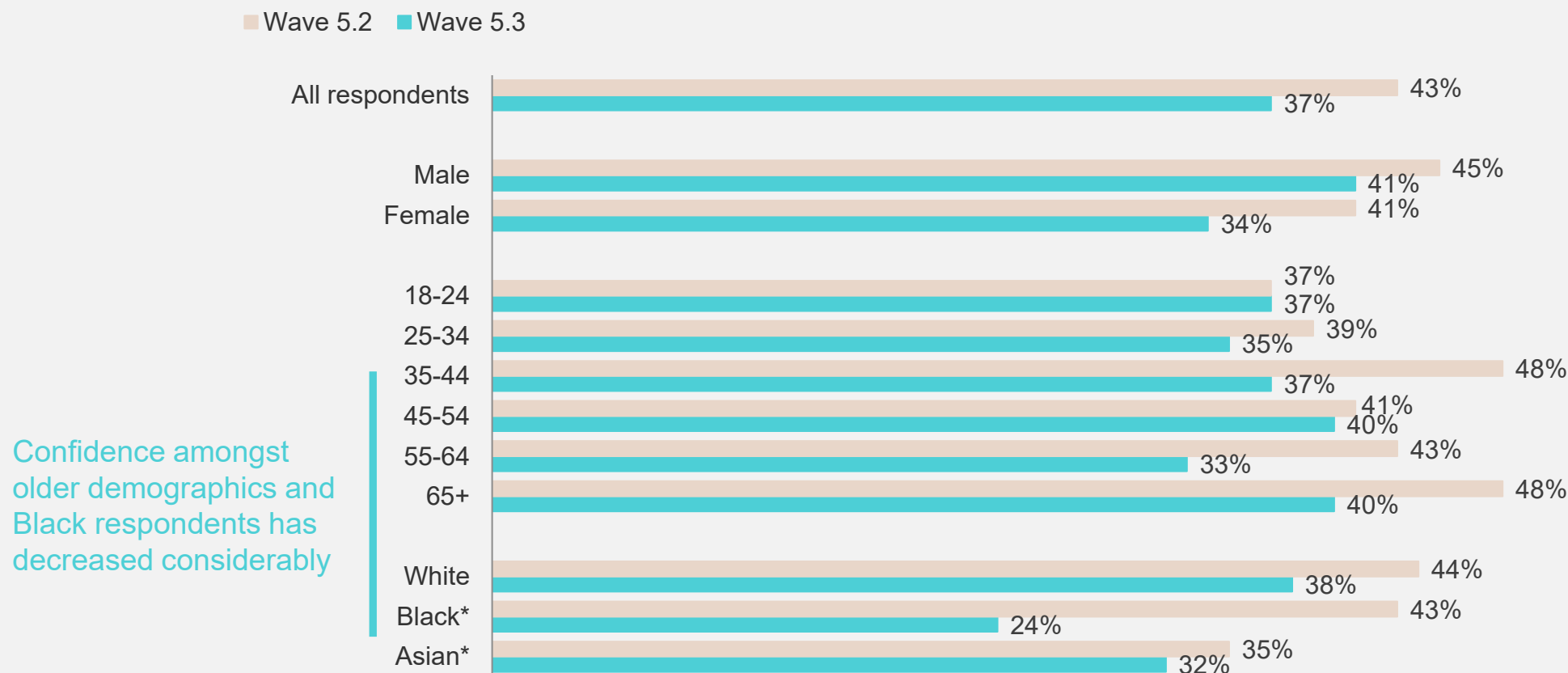
# Confidence that the police deal fairly with complaints has decreased since March 2021

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?



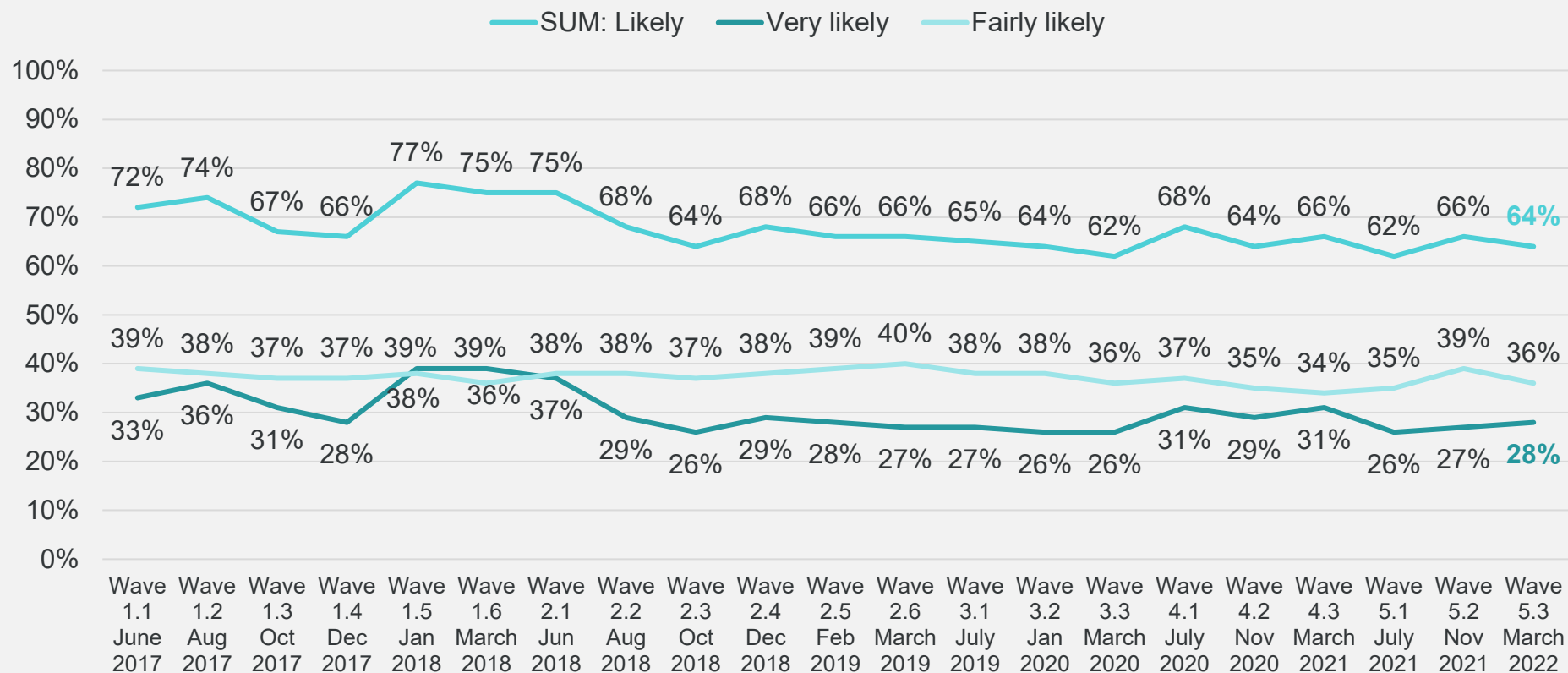
# Confidence that the police deal fairly with complaints has decreased across demographics

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police? (NET: Confident)



# Likelihood to complain has remained consistent across the last year

Q. If you were really unhappy about how a police officer behaved towards you, OR handled a matter in which you were involved, how likely would you be to complain?



# Increased police presence in communities is the most commonly proposed improvement

Increased presence of police on the streets is the most common response to the question of how to improve confidence in policing in the UK.

Almost a fifth (18%) say the one thing that would improve their confidence in policing is having an increased police presence on the streets.

Other responses include tackling racism, sexism and bias within the police (9%), increasing accountability and transparency within the police (9%), and better police recruitment, screening and training processes (7%).

## Increased police presence

*“**More police visible on our streets** like many years ago in public areas including local neighborhoods and shopping areas. It would make people feel safer with a police presence and no doubt keep more public order.”*

## Have better recruitment, screening and training process

*“For the police to carry out **reassessment of their existing officers** to confirm that they still meet the required standards of behaviour and attitudes. If not then they should be recommended for retraining or [...] dismissal from the service. **Ensuring that all applicants are checked fully** in respect of background checks, criminal records and social/ racial attitudes.”*

## Tackle racism, sexism and bias in the police

*“If I felt the police, in particular the Met, were **truly committed to being less racist and less misogynist**. There have been some horrific incidents over the past few years. There needs to be far more accountability”*

## More transparency and police accountability

*“Make sure that all **police officers breaking the law are dealt with correctly** and ensure that there is more inclusion throughout the force. **More transparency in how incidents of misconduct are dealt with.**”*

# **Violence against women and girls**

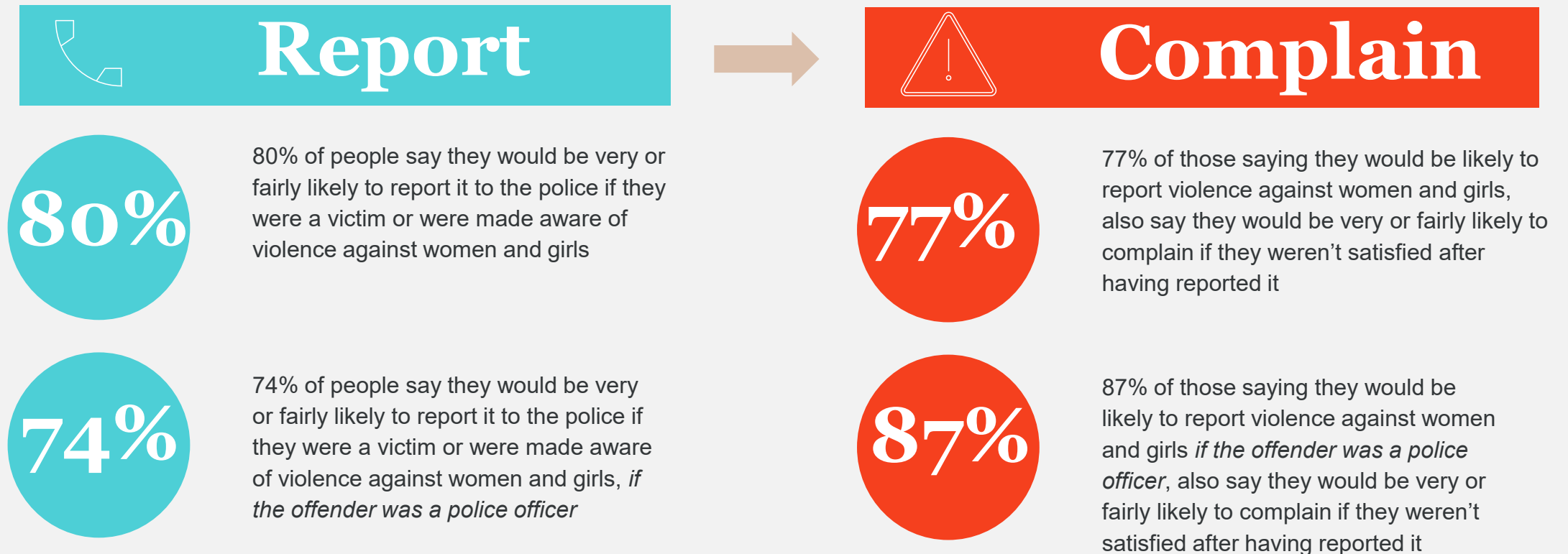
**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

**A majority of the public would report violence against women and girls to the police and would make a complaint if unhappy with the response.**

**There is no significant difference between men, women and Black people in reporting violence against women and girls, but Black people and women are slightly less likely to report violence against women and girls if the offender was a police officer.**

# Most say they would report violence against women and girls, and also make a complaint if unhappy

Q. If you were a victim yourself OR were made aware of violence against women and girls (eg. stalking, harassment, abuse, assault) [where the offender was a police officer], how likely would you be to report it to the police? You said you would be likely to report violence against women and girls to the police if you were a victim yourself or made aware of incidents of it [where the offender was a police officer]. If you weren't satisfied with the response after reporting this, how likely would you be to make a complaint? [Net: Likely]



# Women are slightly less likely than men to say they would report if the offender was an officer

Q. If you were a victim yourself OR were made aware of violence against women and girls (eg. stalking, harassment, abuse, assault) [where the offender was a police officer], how likely would you be to report it to the police? You said you would be likely to report violence against women and girls to the police if you were a victim yourself or made aware of incidents of it [where the offender was a police officer]. If you weren't satisfied with the response after reporting this, how likely would you be to make a complaint? [Net: Likely]

## Men



# Report

81%

81% of men say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were made aware of violence against women and girls

77%

77% of men say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were made aware of violence against women and girls, *if the offender was a police officer*

VS

## Women



# Report

79%

79% of women say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of violence against women and girls

71%

71% of women say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of violence against women and girls, *if the offender was a police officer*



# Black people are less likely to report violence against women and girls if the offender is a police officer

Q. If you were a victim yourself OR were made aware of violence against women and girls (eg. stalking, harassment, abuse, assault) [where the offender was a police officer], how likely would you be to report it to the police? You said you would be likely to report violence against women and girls to the police if you were a victim yourself or made aware of incidents of it [where the offender was a police officer]. If you weren't satisfied with the response after reporting this, how likely would you be to make a complaint? [Net: Likely]

## All



80% of people say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of violence against women and girls



74% of people say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of violence against women and girls, *if the offender was a police officer*

VS

## Black respondents



81% of Black respondents say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of violence against women and girls



67% of Black respondents say they would be very or fairly likely to report it to the police if they were a victim or were made aware of violence against women and girls, *if the offender was a police officer*

# A belief that complaining wouldn't change anything is the main reason people wouldn't complain

A belief by respondents that nothing would change as a result of complaining is the main reason that people wouldn't complain after feeling unsatisfied with a response to reporting an incident of violence against women and girls.

Almost two fifths (39%) say they wouldn't complain because it wouldn't change anything.

Other responses include believing that their complaint wouldn't be taken seriously (11%), a lack of trust in the police to deal with the complaint in an appropriate manner (10%), not knowing how to complain (8%), and complaining not being worth the hassle (7%), or the emotional trauma (7%).

## Complaining wouldn't change anything

*"I would feel like the police would have already dismissed the case and that **a complaint would not result in justice anyways**. It would most likely be a **waste of time** and not allow me/the victims to work towards overcoming the trauma"*

## Wouldn't be taken seriously

*"**I don't think my complaint would be taken seriously** and I don't think anything would come of it, so I would not take it further. I also have a bad view of the police so **I don't trust that they would handle the matter in the way I would like them to.**"*

## Don't know how to complain

*"**I wouldn't know how to complain** and wouldn't feel confident it would be taken seriously."*

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