

A close-up photograph of a person's arm. A blue, rounded rectangular sticker with the white text 'HPV' is placed on the skin. A hand is resting on the person's shoulder, suggesting support or care. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

All-Can

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour related to the human papillomavirus (HPV), its link to cancer and HPV-vaccination in the Belgian population - research report

January 2026

INDI ville

Purpose



Purpose of the study

The main goal of this research was to investigate the state of knowledge, behaviour and attitudes surrounding the HPV-virus, its link to the development of certain types of cancer and vaccination against the HPV-virus in the Belgian population.

Among other things, the results will serve as input for a PR campaign.

To this end, between December 15th, 2025 and January 6th, 2026 a quantitative study was conducted on a representative sample of the Belgian population aged 18 and older. The respondents completed an online questionnaire and were recruited from the Bpact and Dynata online panels. After data cleaning, 1 160 respondents who completed the questionnaire were retained for analysis.

The data were weighted using RIM-weighting for age, gender, region, language and educational level based on the most recent population figures from Statbel.



1 160
respondents



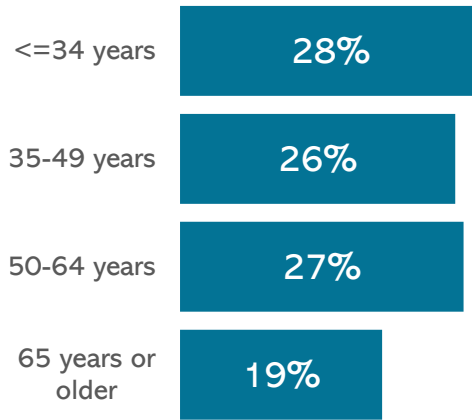
online
8'40"



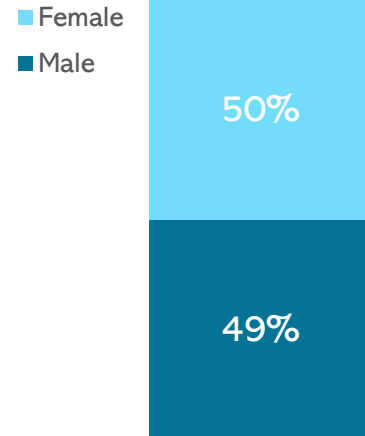
Maximum error
Total: $\pm 2.88\%$

Sample description

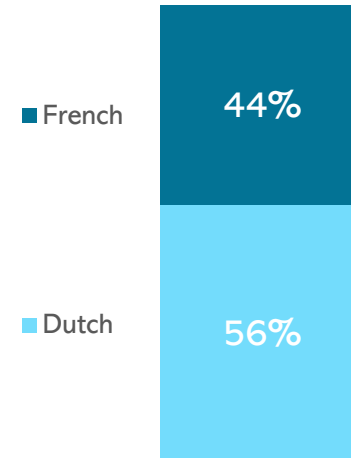
Age



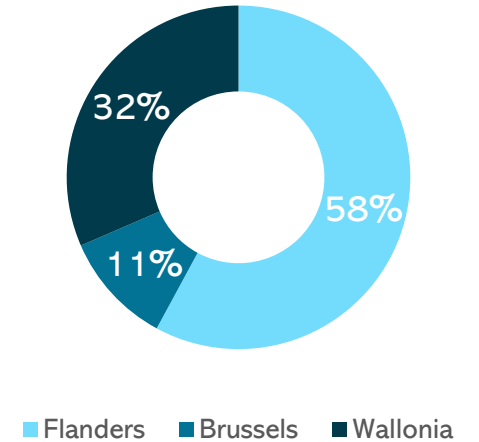
Gender



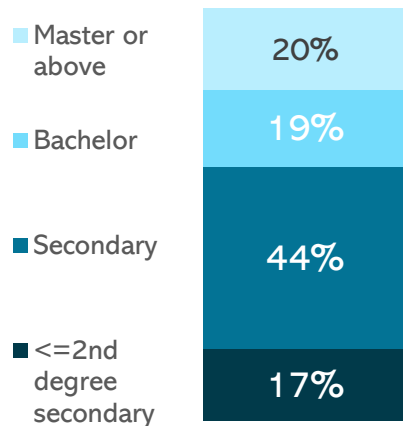
Language



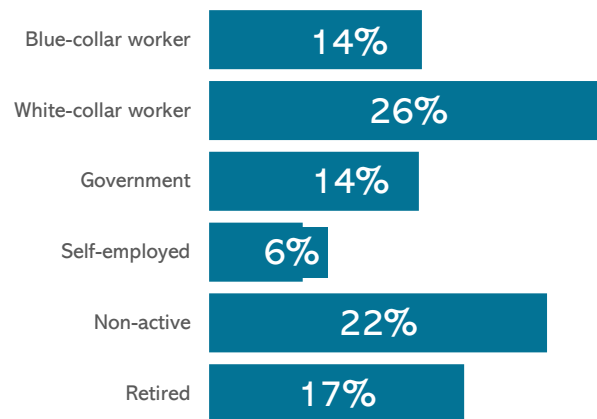
Region



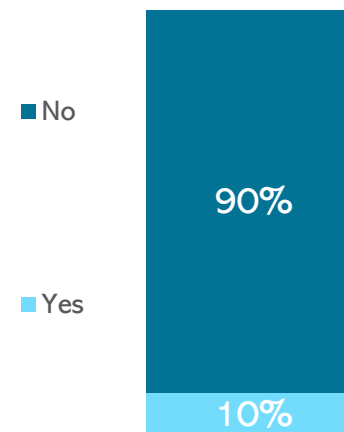
Educational level



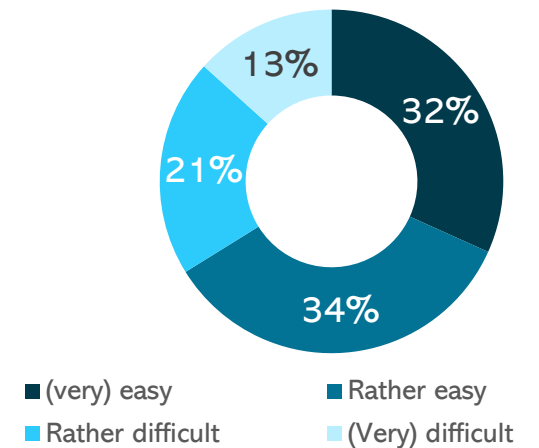
Professional activity



Working in healthcare

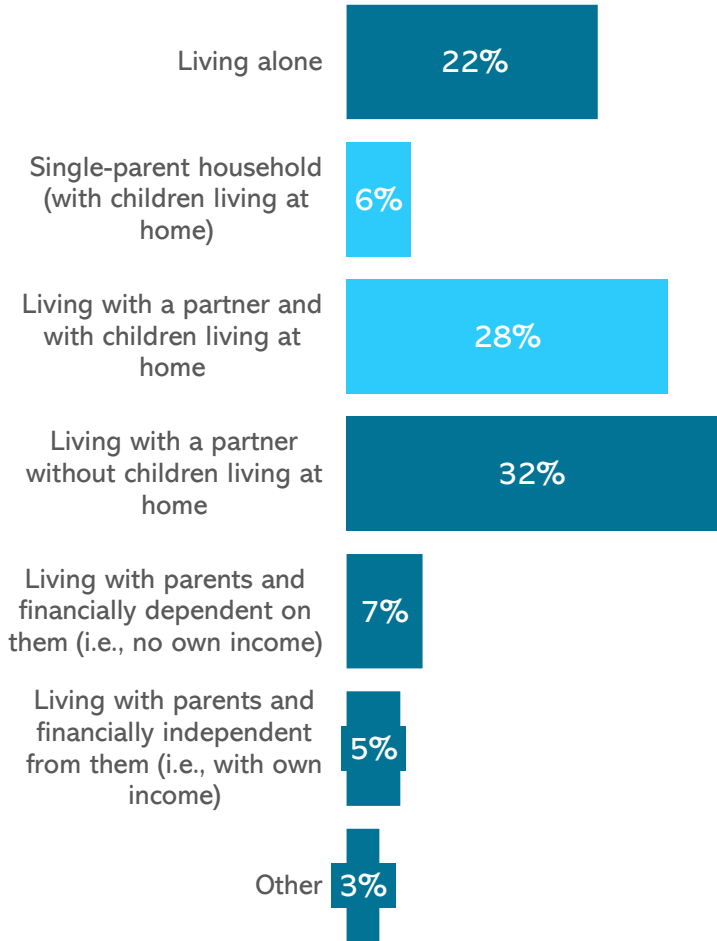


Managing on family income



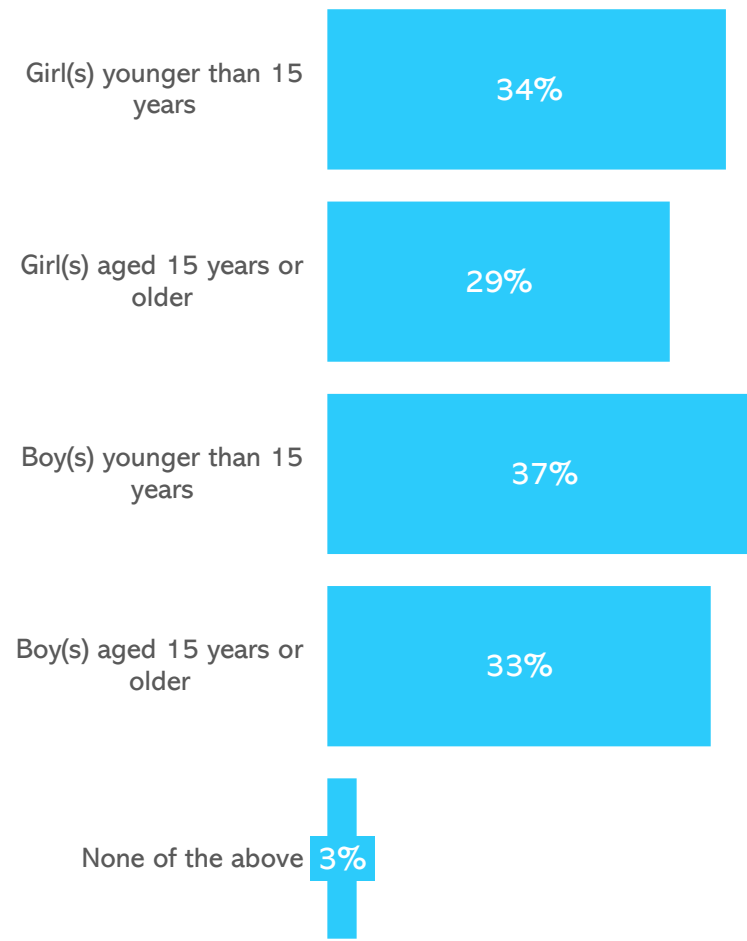
Sample description

Household situation

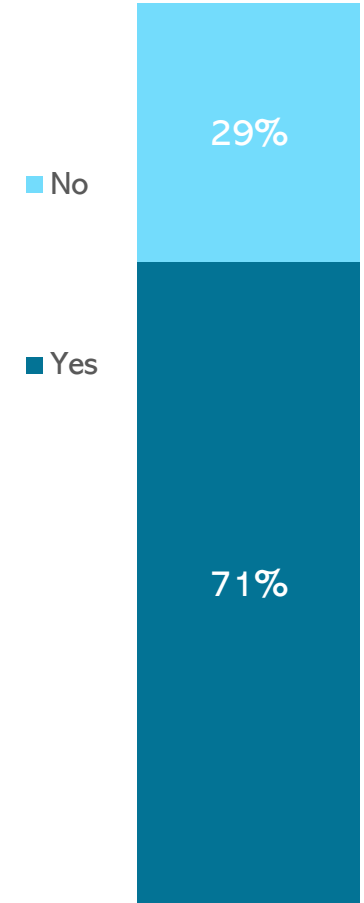


n=384

Age of children living at home



In a relationship



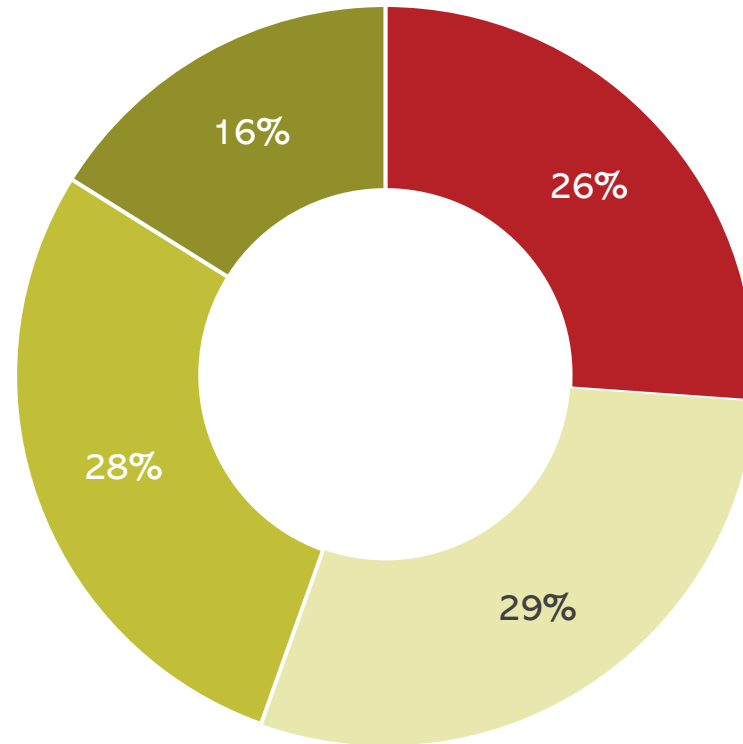
Knowledge of HPV



Knowledge of HPV

Have you ever heard of HPV (human papillomavirus)?

- No, I had never heard of HPV before
- Yes, I have heard of it, but I don't know what it is or what the symptoms and risks are.
- Yes, and I have a general idea of how you can become infected and what the risks are.
- Yes, I am very well informed about the possible causes and risks of HPV infection.



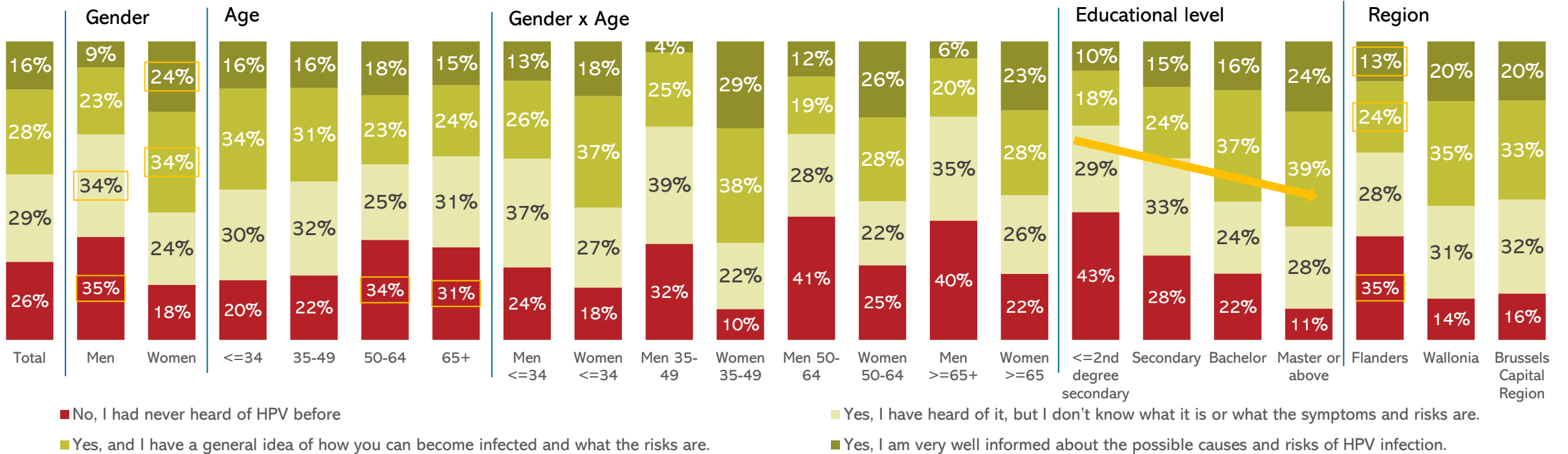
26% indicate that they had not heard of HPV prior to participating in this study.

Of the 74% who had already heard of HPV, 29% indicate only having heard the name, 28% have basic knowledge of how the virus is transmitted and what the risks of becoming infected are and only 16% consider themselves to be (very) well informed about the causes and risks of an HPV infection.

In summary, more than half of the Belgian population (55%) is either unaware of HPV or has merely heard of it, without further knowledge of causes, symptoms or risks.

Knowledge of HPV

Have you ever heard of HPV (human papillomavirus)?



(Depth of) HPV knowledge is higher in women than in men, knowledge levels highest in women 35-49, lowest in men <=65+ and men 50-64; almost one in five (18%) women <=34 have not heard of HPV.

Knowledge of HPV is also lower in the age group 50+; the difference between men and women in being unaware of HPV is smaller in the youngest age group, indicative of a diminishing knowledge gap regarding HPV between men and women in the younger generations.

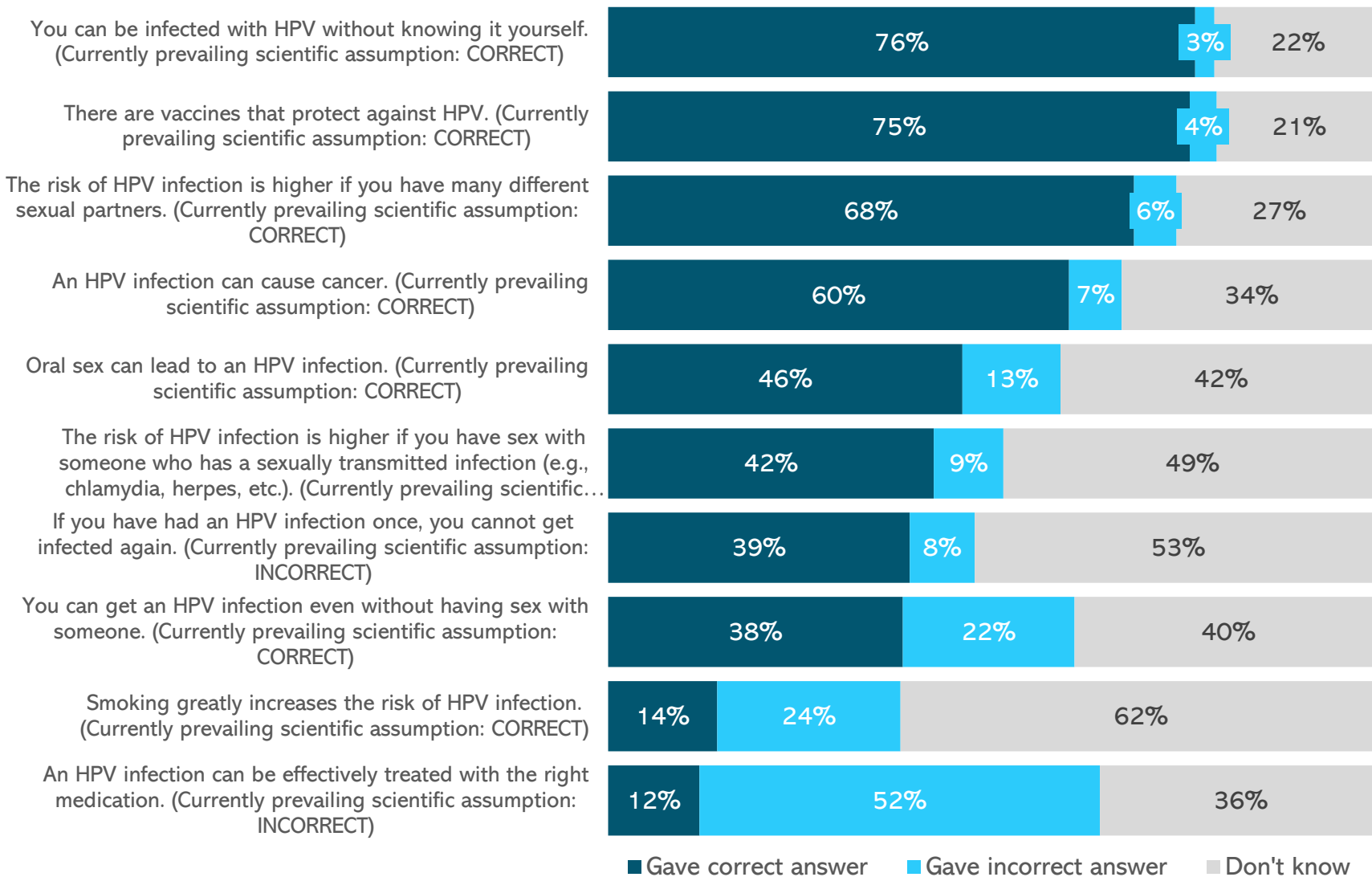
(Depth of) HPV knowledge increases as educational level increases. Contrary to expectations, the (depth of) HPV knowledge is significantly lower in Flanders than in Brussels and Wallonia.

Other differences: % unaware of HPV is higher

- in women who (almost) never have Pap smears taken or wait too long between Pap smears (cf. also further on; almost never: 28%; waits too long: 22%; correct interval: 13%)
- as respondents seek less regularly for health-related information ('almost never': 40%)

Myths and beliefs about HPV

Below are some statements about HPV. Please indicate for each statement whether you think it is true or false.



Three out of four respondents are aware that you can be infected with HPV without knowing it yourself and that vaccines exist that protect against HPV. 68% correctly assumes that the risk of HPV infection is higher if one has many different sexual partners. 60% is aware that an HPV infection can cause cancer, but one in three (34%) does not know whether HPV can lead to cancer. 7% think there is no link between HPV and cancer.

For most other beliefs there are as many or even more respondents who do not know the answer as there are respondents who answer correctly, indicating a fairly limited knowledge and understanding of HPV infections, transmission and risks.

The biggest misunderstanding concerns the belief that HPV can be treated by medication: more than half of the respondents (52%) incorrectly think this is true.

Furthermore, 24% thinks smoking is unrelated to risk of HPV infection and 22% incorrectly assumes that you cannot get infected with HPV without having sex.

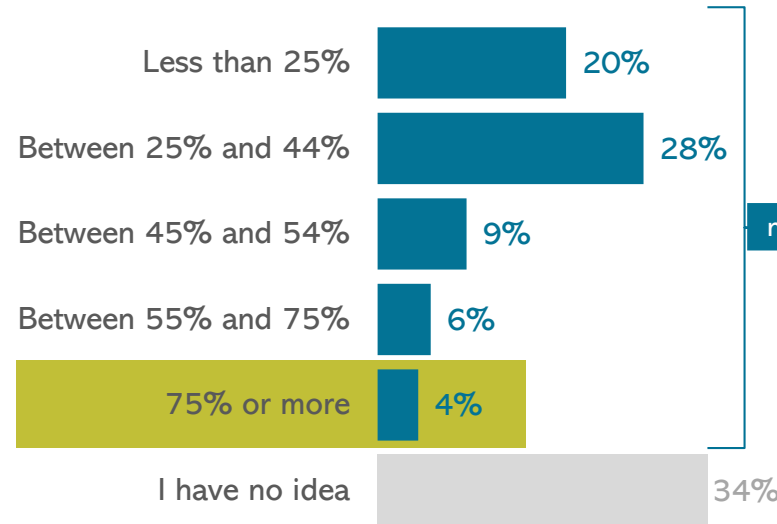
Estimated incidence of HPV infection

Over 75% of the Belgian population will at some point in their life be infected with the HPV-virus.

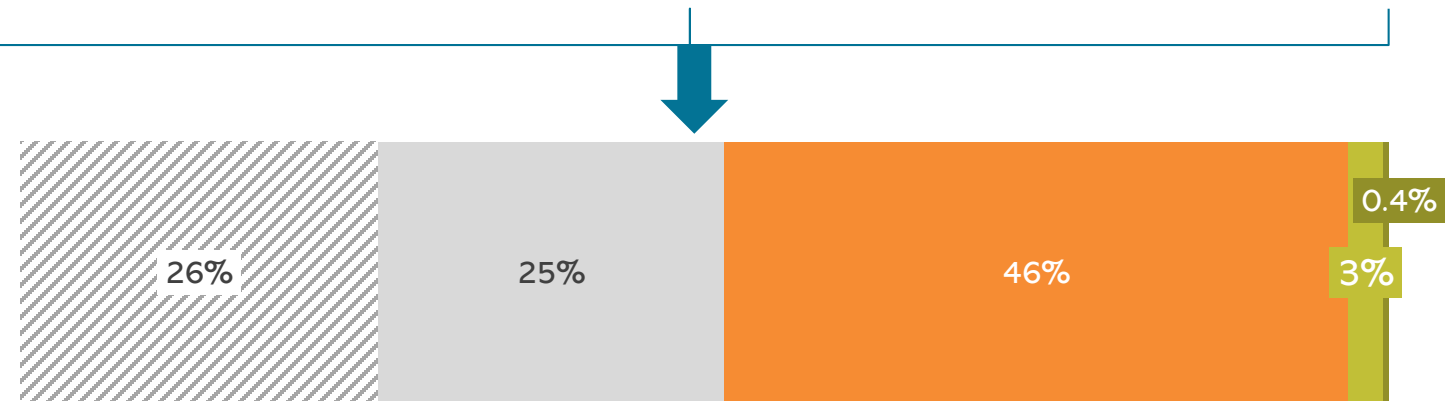
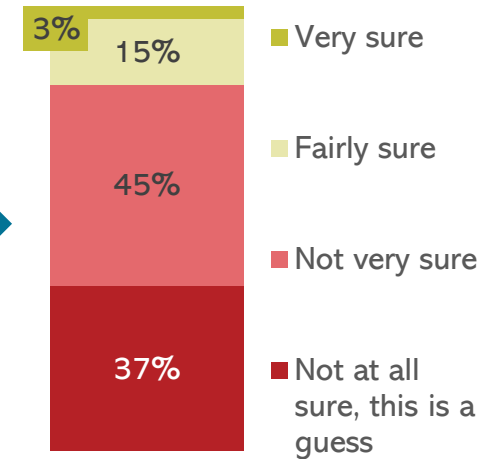
When asked how common HPV is, only 4% of Belgians who had already heard of HPV estimate this correctly. Furthermore, the large majority is not very sure of their answer. Approximately a third cannot answer the question, and of those who do answer, the majority indicate that they are not sure whether their answer is correct.

If these numbers are calculated taking all respondents into account, **only 3,4% of Belgians correctly estimate the incidence rate of HPV and are (reasonably) sure that their answer is correct.**

How common do you think HPV infection is in Belgium? In other words, what percentage of the population do you think will ever be infected with HPV? (n=857)



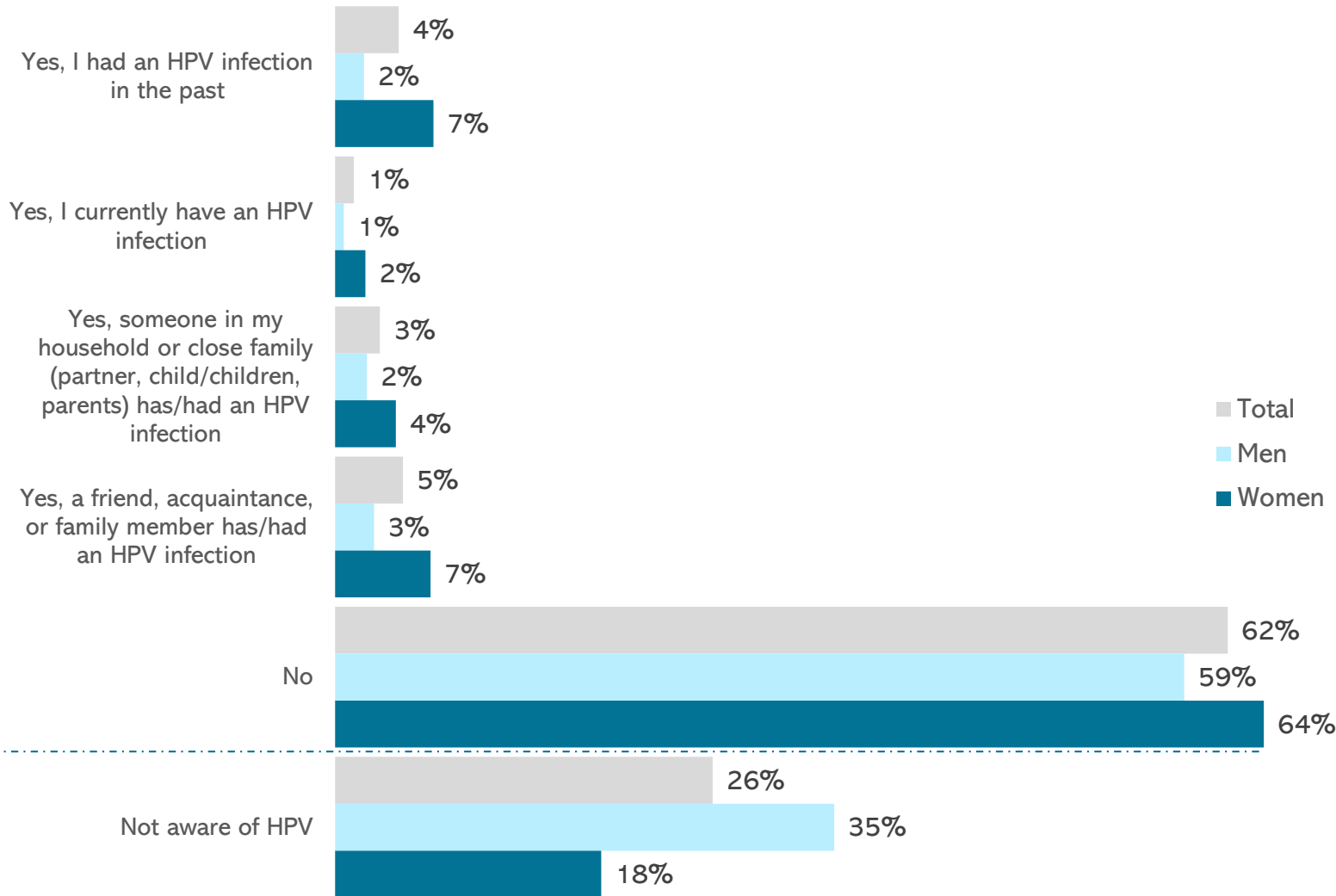
How sure are you that your answer is correct?



- ▨ Not aware of HPV
- Has heard of HPV, but cannot estimate the incidence rate (IR)
- Has heard of HPV, but underestimates the incidence rate (IR)
- Has heard of HPV, estimates the incidence rate (IR) correctly, but is guessing / not sure
- Has heard of HPV, estimates the incidence rate (IR) correctly and is confident

HPV infection history

To your knowledge, have you ever been confronted with an HPV infection in your life?



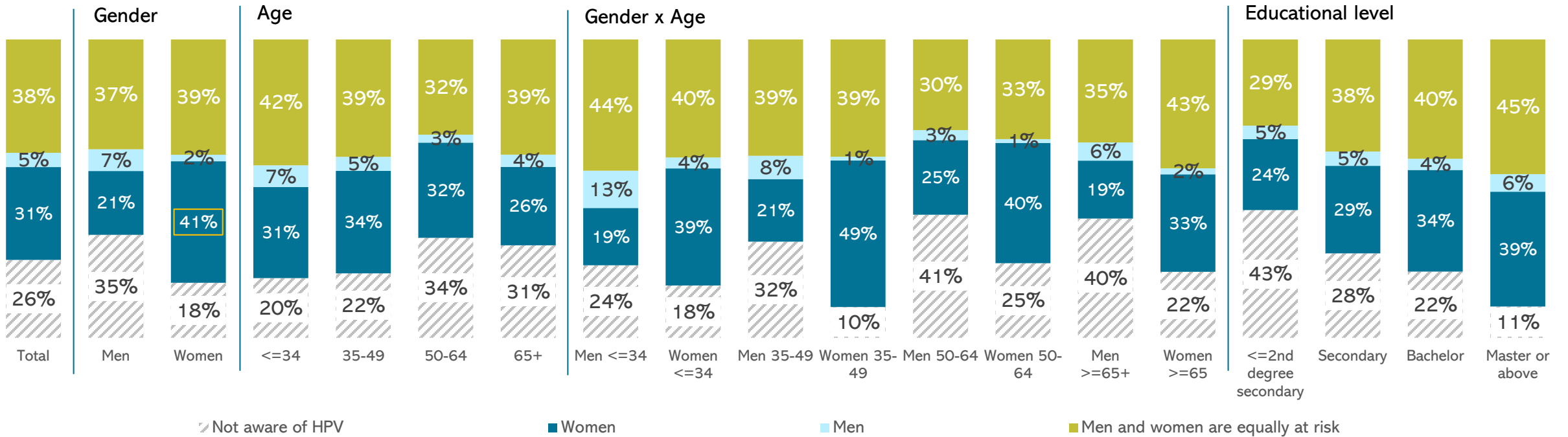
This gross underestimation of the incidence of HPV is reflected in the answers to the question whether respondents have been confronted with HPV-infections personally or in their (close) vicinity.

Overall, 62% indicate not having been confronted with HPV up until now, in addition to the 26% who is not aware of HPV.

Women indicate more than men that they have been infected in the past or are currently infected with HPV and/or that they know of friends or family members that have/had an HPV infection, but the numbers are low.

Who is more at risk of HPV - Gender

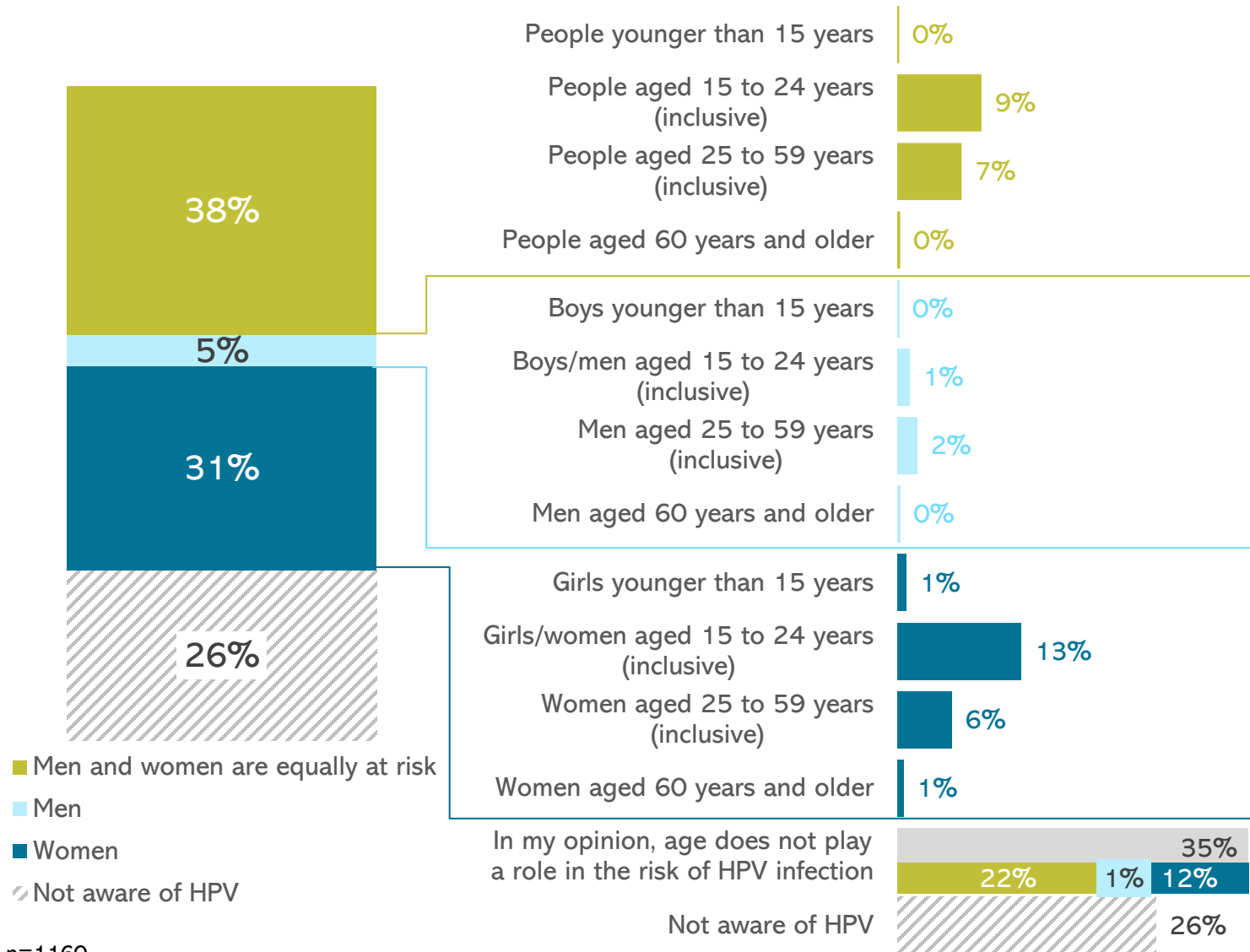
Who do you think is at greatest risk of HPV infection?



38% of Belgians correctly believe that men and women are equally at risk of contracting HPV, which is slightly more than the 31% believing that women are at greater risk. This indicates that even though a fairly large group is well informed on this point, the faulty conviction that HPV is primarily contracted by women still persists. Remarkably, women themselves believe more than men that women are more likely to contract HPV.

Who is more at risk of HPV – Gender x age

Which of the groups below do you think is at greatest risk of HPV infection?

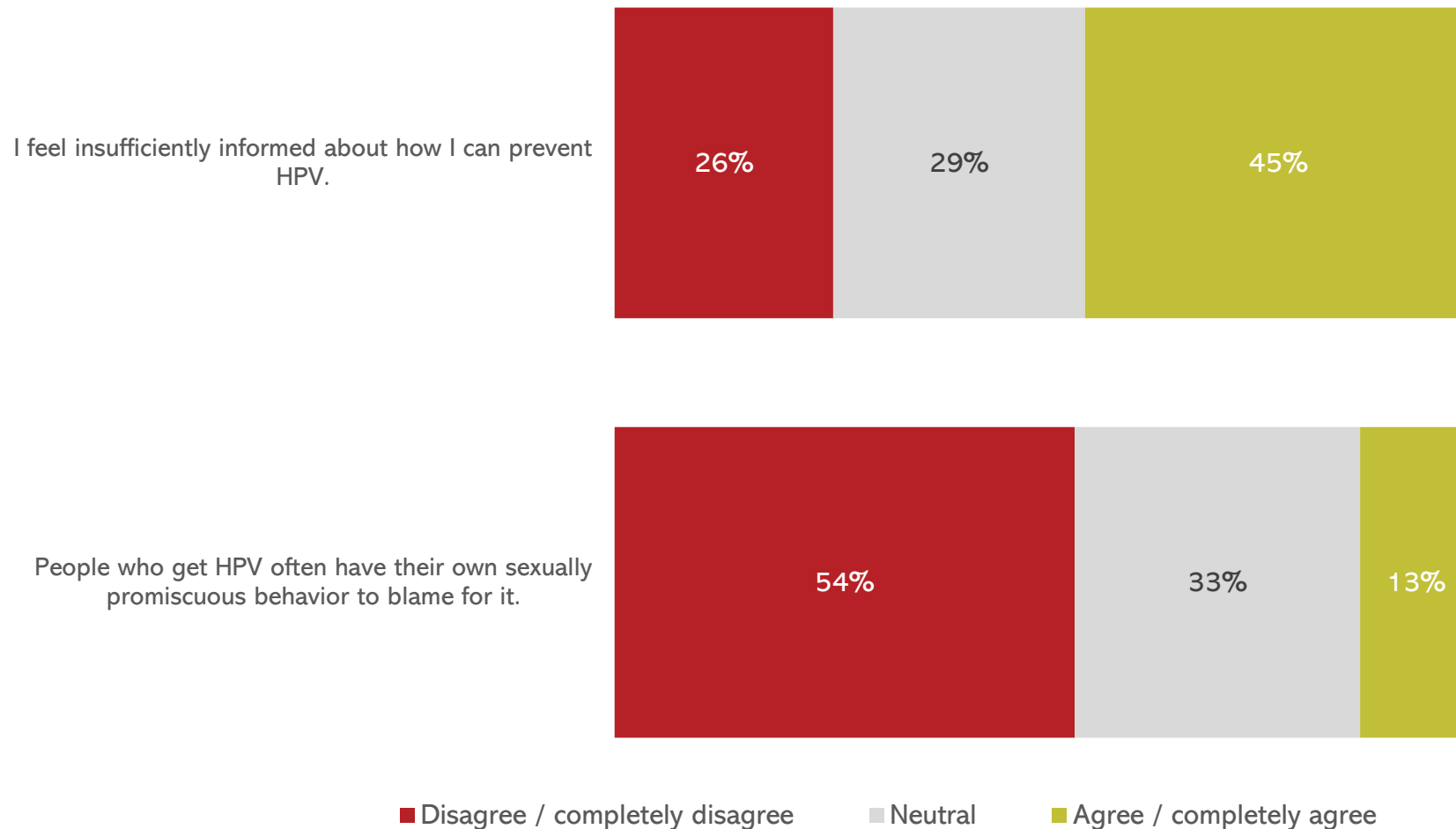


35% of Belgians is of the opinion that age does not play a role in the risk of HPV infection.

Respondents who think women and men are equally at risk of contracting HPV, are mostly convinced that age also does not play a role in the risk of HPV infection (22%), a further 9% believe that men and women between 15 and 59 are most at risk. Respondents who think women are more at risk, predominantly either believe that girls/women aged 15 to 24 are most at risk (13%) or that age does not play a role (12%).

HPV related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

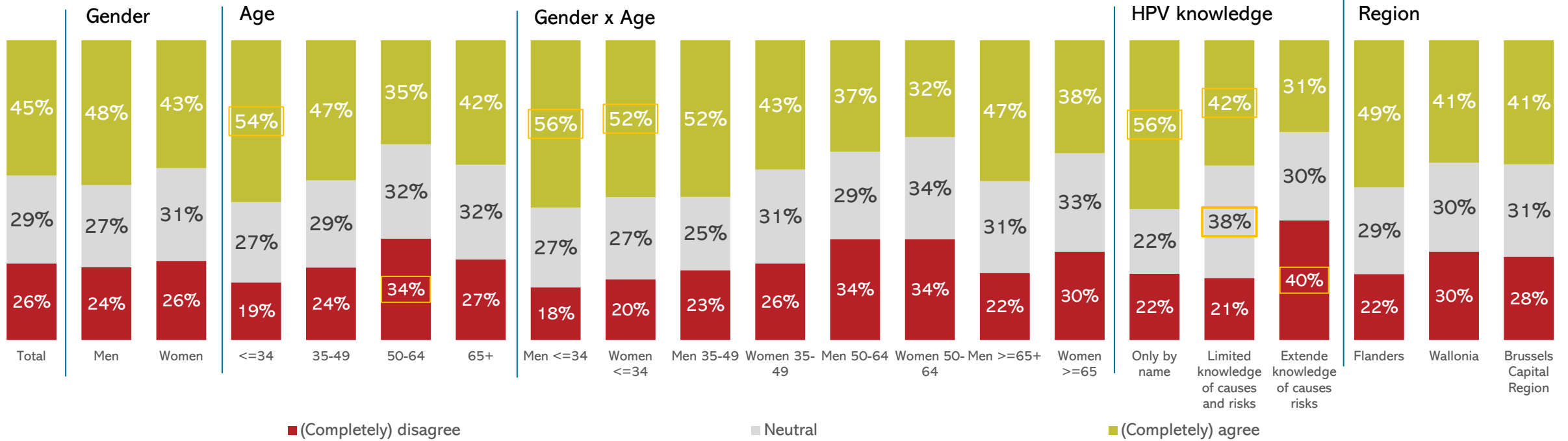


Previous results in this study already indicated a rather limited knowledge and understanding of HPV. Almost half of the respondents (45%) who are aware of HPV acknowledge this to some extent, agreeing with the statement that they feel insufficiently informed about how to prevent HPV; only 26% of respondents explicitly disagree with this statement, 29% is neutral.

More than half of the respondents who are aware of HPV do not agree that people who contract HPV have their own sexually promiscuous behaviour to blame; 13% explicitly do agree with this statement, the rest (33%) is neutral.

HPV related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - I feel insufficiently informed about how I can prevent HPV.

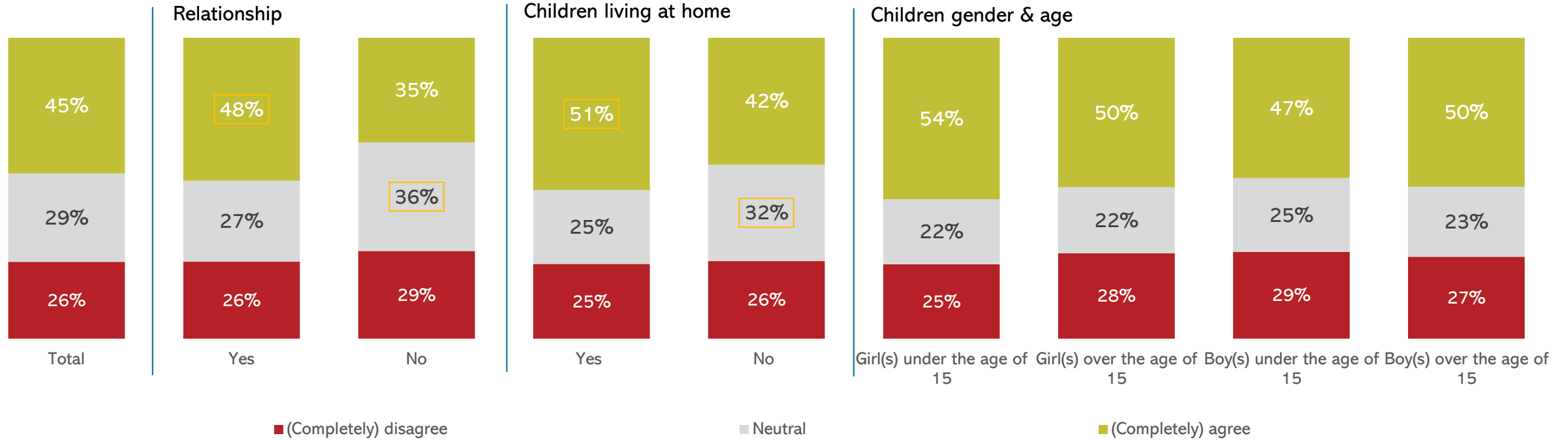


Both men and women younger than 35 (aware of HPV) indicate a greater lack of knowledge on how to prevent HPV than older respondents. As expected, respondents with a more in-depth knowledge of HPV feel better informed about HPV prevention; still almost one in three (31%) of respondents well known with HPV causes and risks feel insufficiently informed about preventing HPV.

Within the group of respondents who are aware of HPV, the difference in feeling informed about HPV prevention between Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia is still somewhat there, albeit not statistically significant.

HPV related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *I feel insufficiently informed about how I can prevent HPV.*

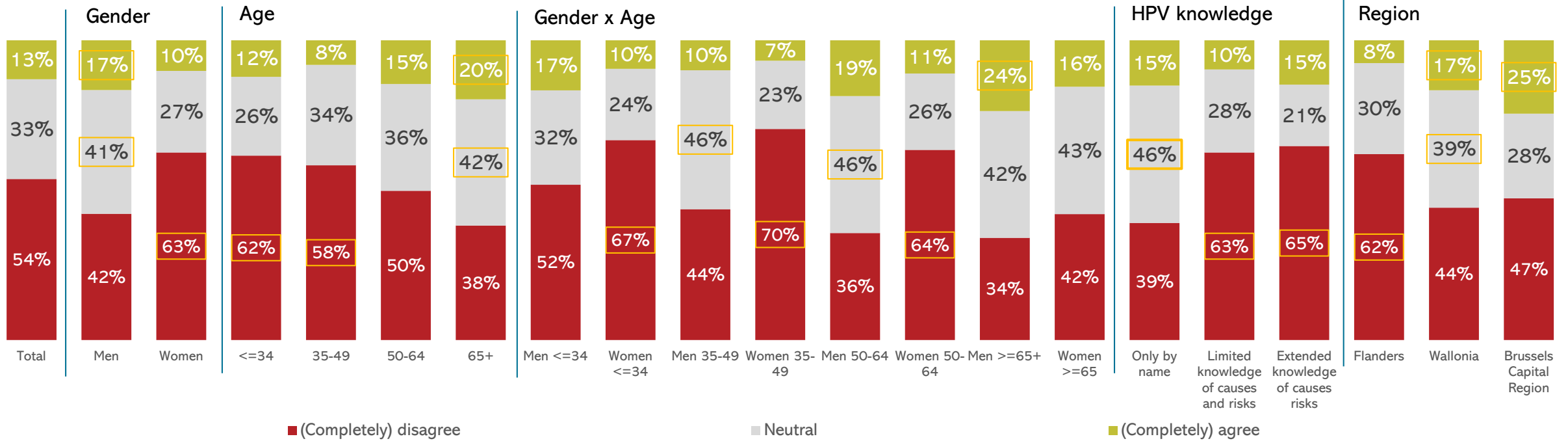


Respondents aware of HPV and in a relationship feel somewhat more insufficiently informed about HPV prevention, as do respondents with children living at home; remarkably (?), no differences exist with regard to the age or gender of the children that are part of the household.

Significantly higher/lower (X²-test; z-test; p<.05)

HPV related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *People who get HPV often have their own sexually promiscuous behaviour to blame for it.*

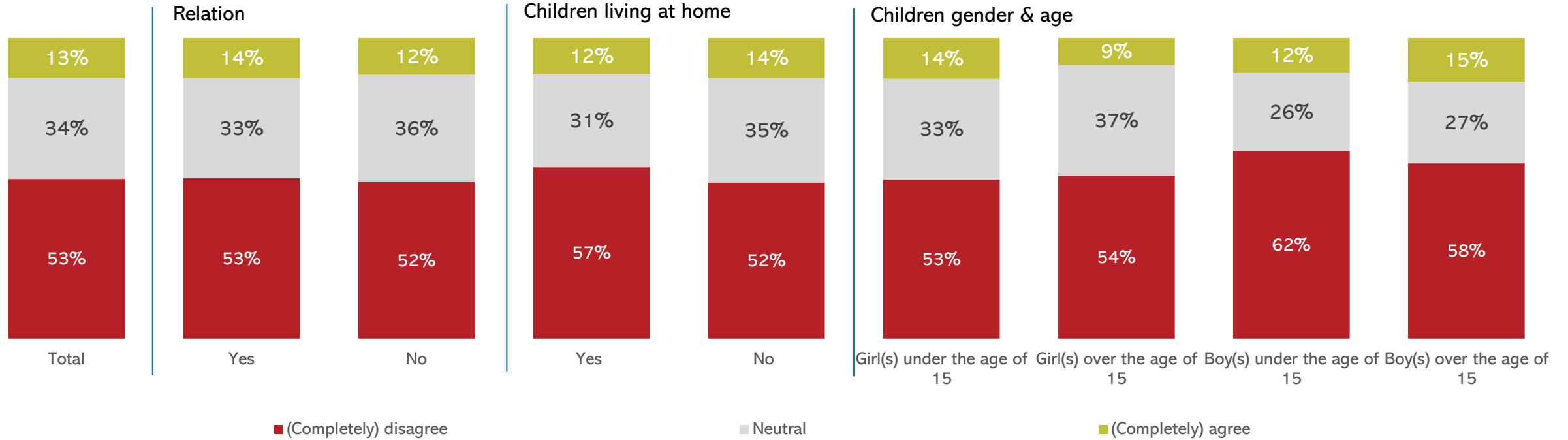


Men (aware of HPV) disagree less and agree more than women with this statement. This difference persists throughout all age groups. Overall, respondents younger than 50 agree less with this statement than older participants. More in-depth knowledge HPV is associated with less agreement with this statement.


Remarkably, agreement with this statement is significantly higher in Wallonia and Brussels than in Flanders.

HPV related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *People who get HPV often have their own sexually promiscuous behaviour to blame for it.*



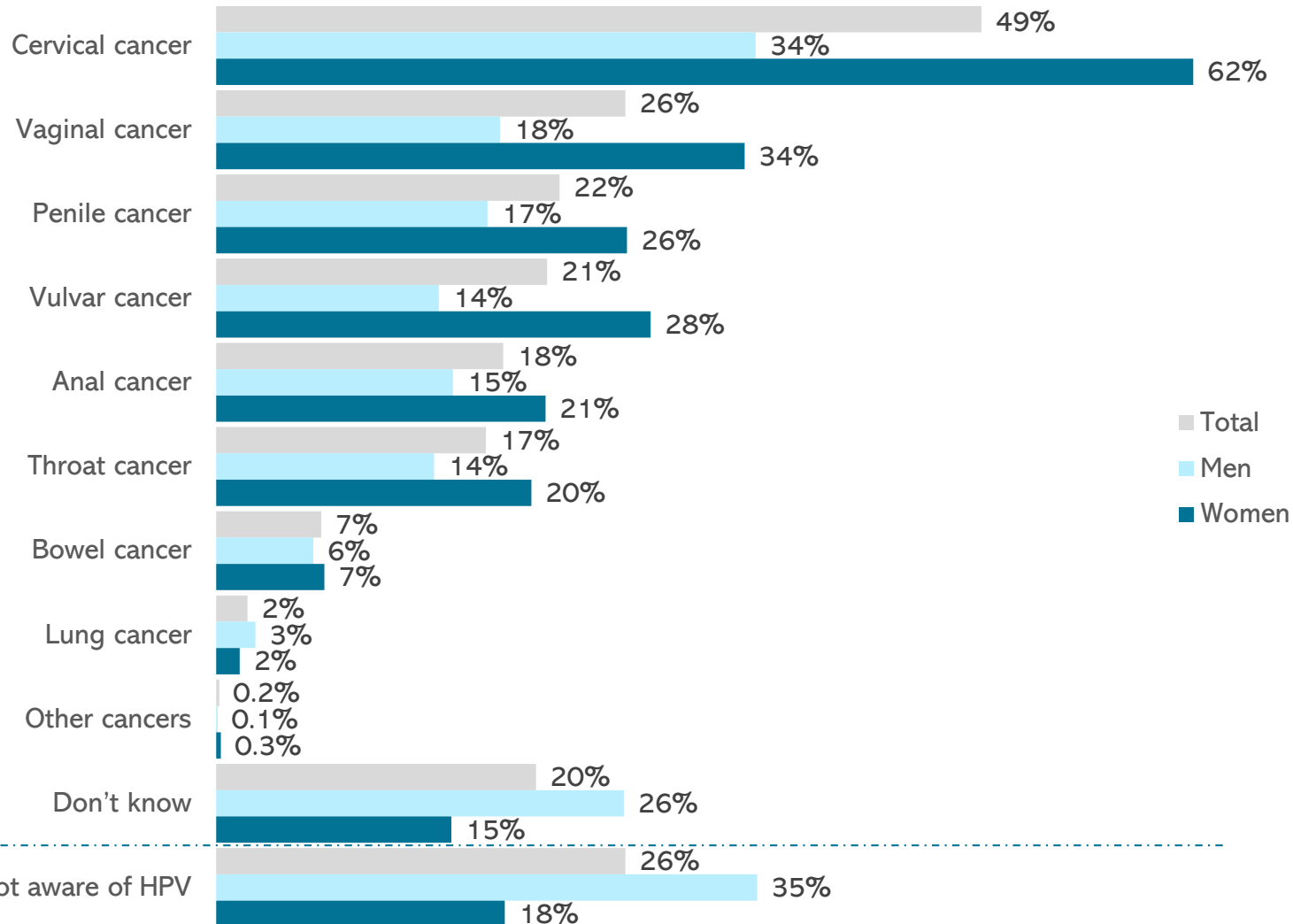
Results are not related to being in a relationship or having children (of a certain age and gender) at home.



HPV and its link with cancer

HPV infection and link with different types of cancer

An HPV infection can lead to cancer. Which of the cancers in the list below do you think an HPV infection can lead to?



About half (49%) of the Belgians know that an HPV infection can lead to cervical cancer. Not unexpected, women associate HPV more with cervical cancer (62%) than men (34%); still, this means almost 40% of women are not aware that an HPV infection can lead to cervical cancer.

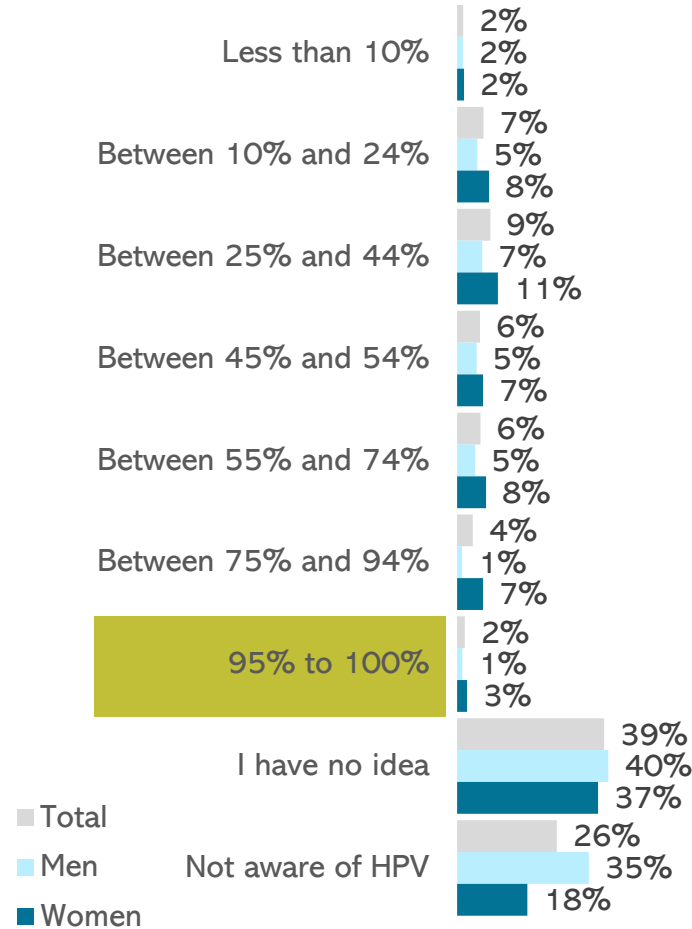
As expected, the link with other types of cancer is made far less. Women, who in general have more in-depth knowledge of HPV than men, associate all cancers that can be related to HPV more with HPV infection than men.

Probability of (cervical) cancers being caused by HPV infection

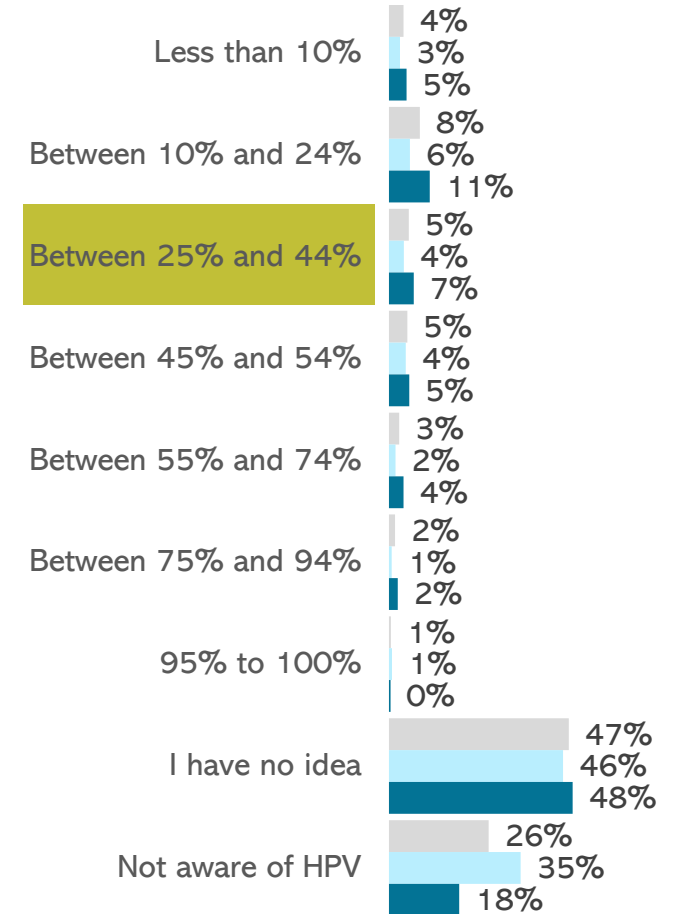
Almost 100% of primary tumors in cervical cancer are attributable to an HPV infection. This almost perfect causal link is strongly underestimated, both by women and men. Only 2% of Belgians indicate that 95% to 100% of cervical cancers can be attributed to a previous HPV infection.

Around 40% of other types of possibly HPV-related cancers can effectively be attributed to an infection with HPV. 5% of Belgian correctly think that between 25 to 44% of HPV-related cancers are effectively caused by a prior HPV infection. Almost half (47%) have no idea, in addition to the 26% who are unaware of HPV.

What percentage of cervical cancers do you think can be attributed to a previous HPV infection?

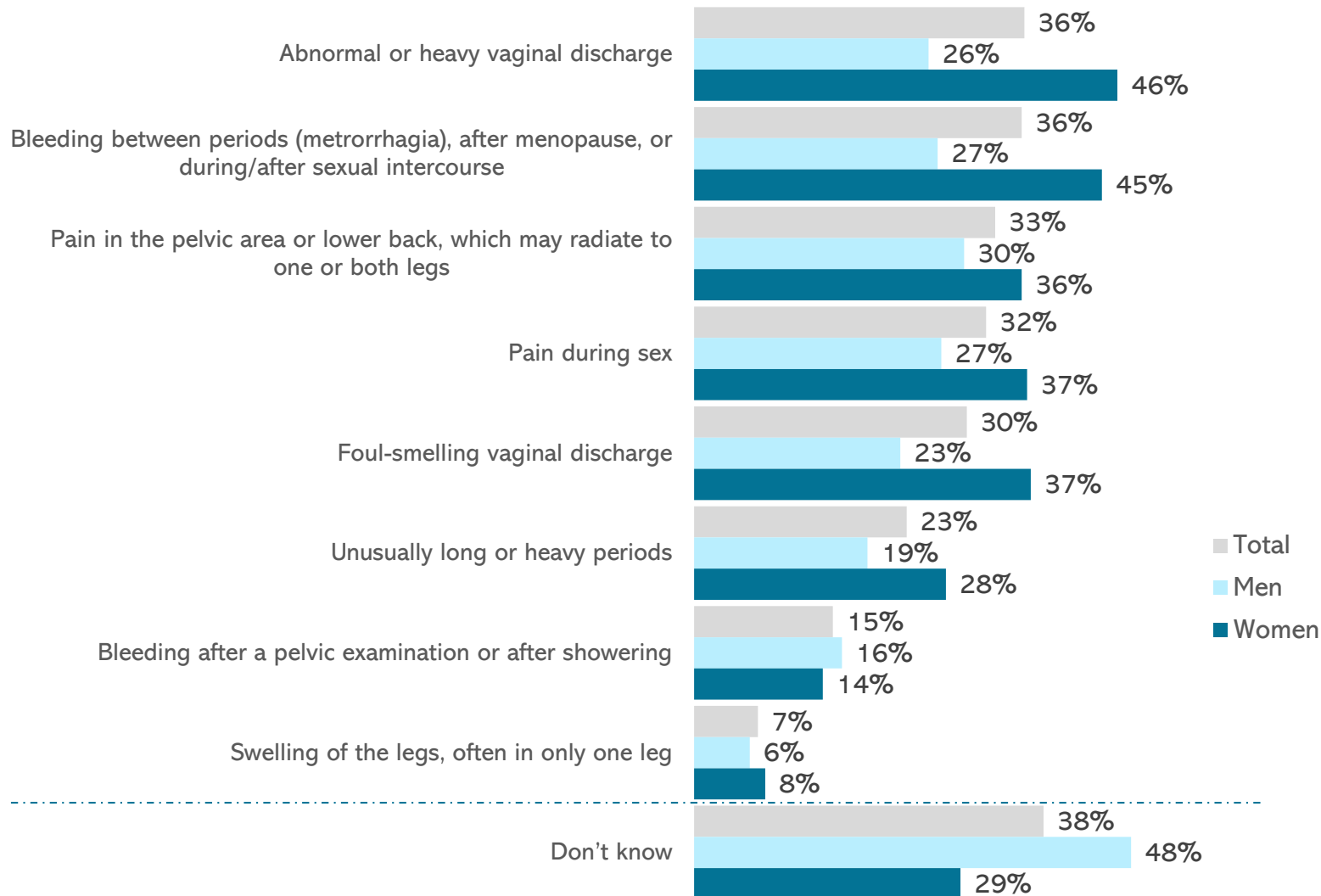


What percentage of other cancers linked to HPV do you think are also directly caused by an HPV infection?



Knowledge of symptoms related to cervical cancer

Which of the following symptoms could possibly indicate cervical cancer, in your opinion?



Both male and female respondents were asked whether they recognize possible symptoms of cervical cancer, since it can also be relevant to recognize these symptoms as a partner.

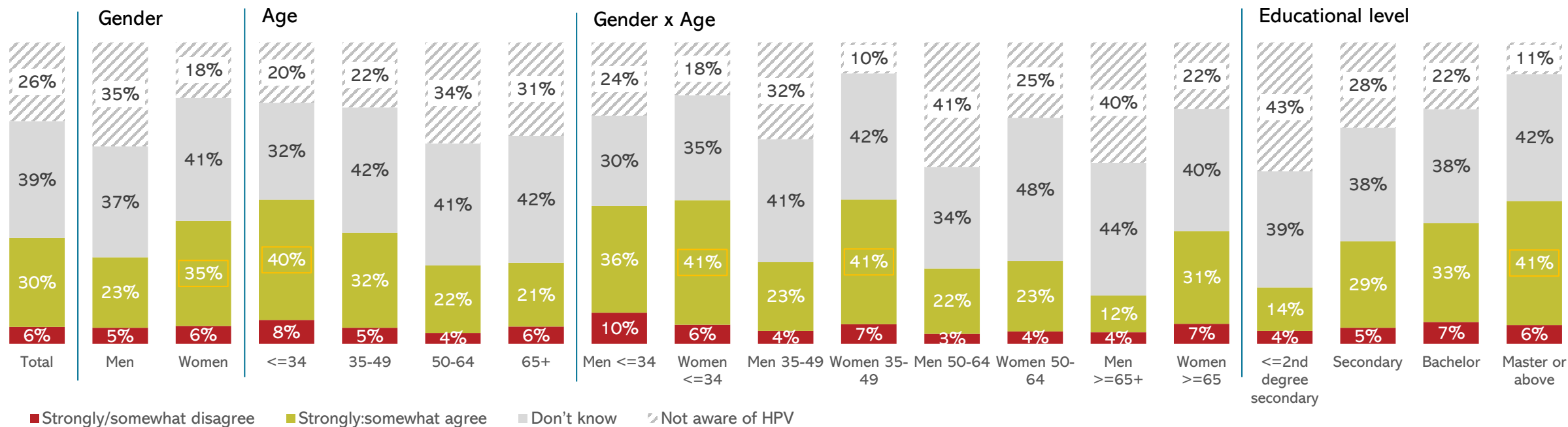
As expected, women are more aware of possible symptoms than men, with almost half of the men (48%) reporting no knowledge of possible symptoms; still, 29% of women said they did not know if any of the listed symptoms could be related to cervical cancer.

None of the listed symptoms is recognized by half of the women in the sample. The two symptoms most recognized by women are abnormal or heavy vaginal discharge (46%) and irregular bleeding (45%).

These results indicate a fairly limited knowledge of the symptoms of cervical cancer.

Knowledge of HPV

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "An HPV infection can also cause cancer in men."

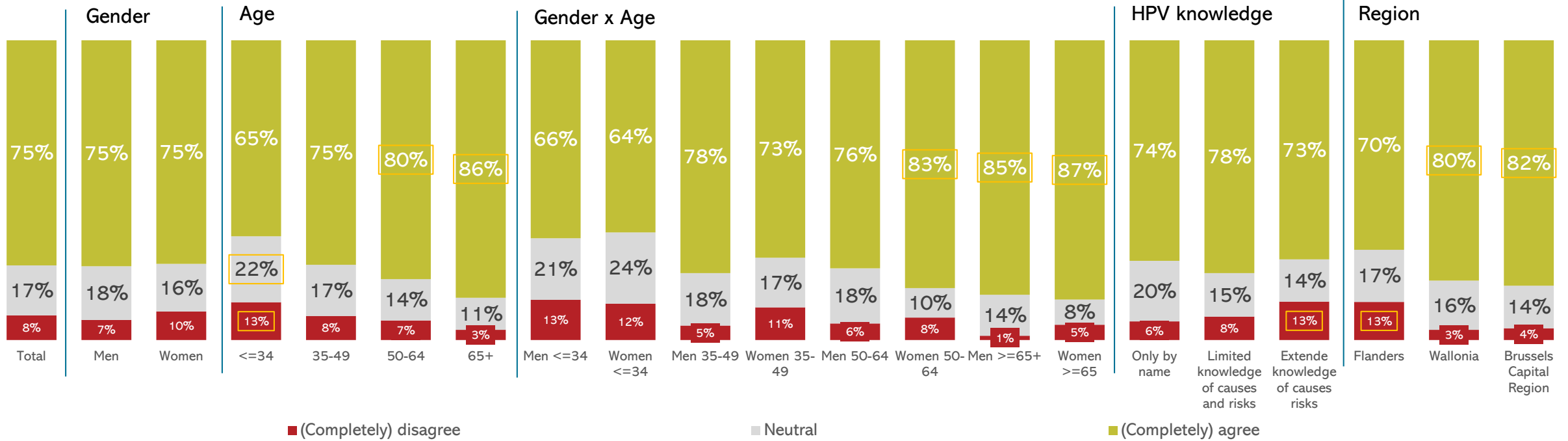


30% of Belgians agree that HPV can cause cancer in males.

Women agree more with this statement than men, respondents younger than 35 agree more than older age groups, as does the most highly educated group.

HPV-cancer related attitudes

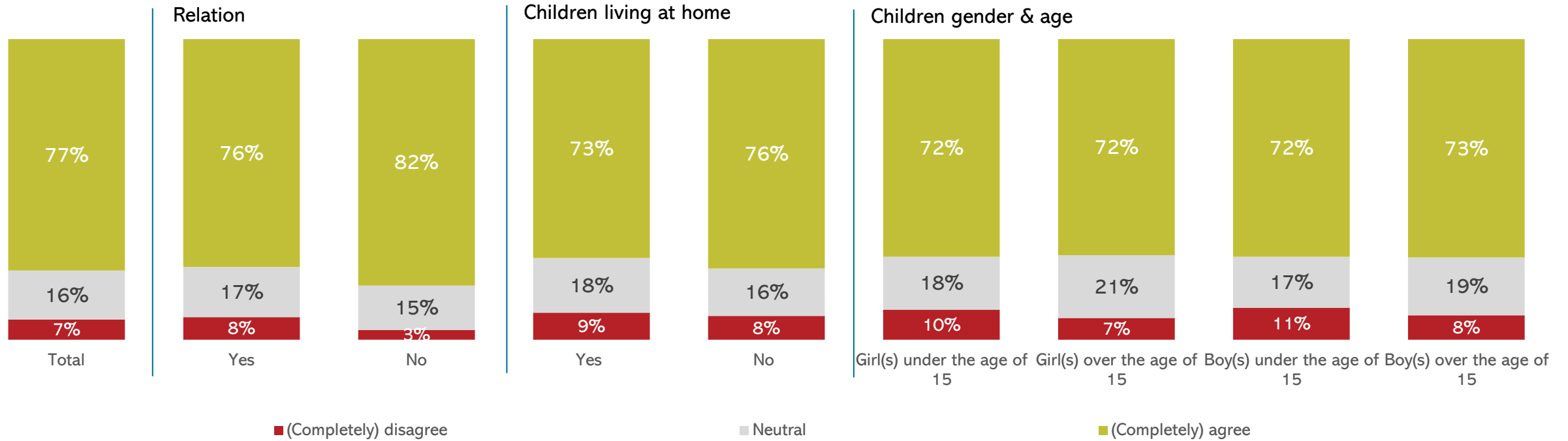
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *It does not matter what the cause of an HPV infection is; we mainly need to make sure it does not lead to cancer.*



Overall, 75% of respondents aware of HPV agree that preventing HPV from leading to cancer is the priority, regardless of what causes HPV; 17% is neutral, 8% disagrees with this statement. Remarkably, disagreement is somewhat stronger in younger respondents, both women and men, in respondents with in-depth knowledge of HPV causes and risks and in Flanders.

HPV-cancer related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *It does not matter what the cause of an HPV infection is; we mainly need to make sure it does not lead to cancer.*



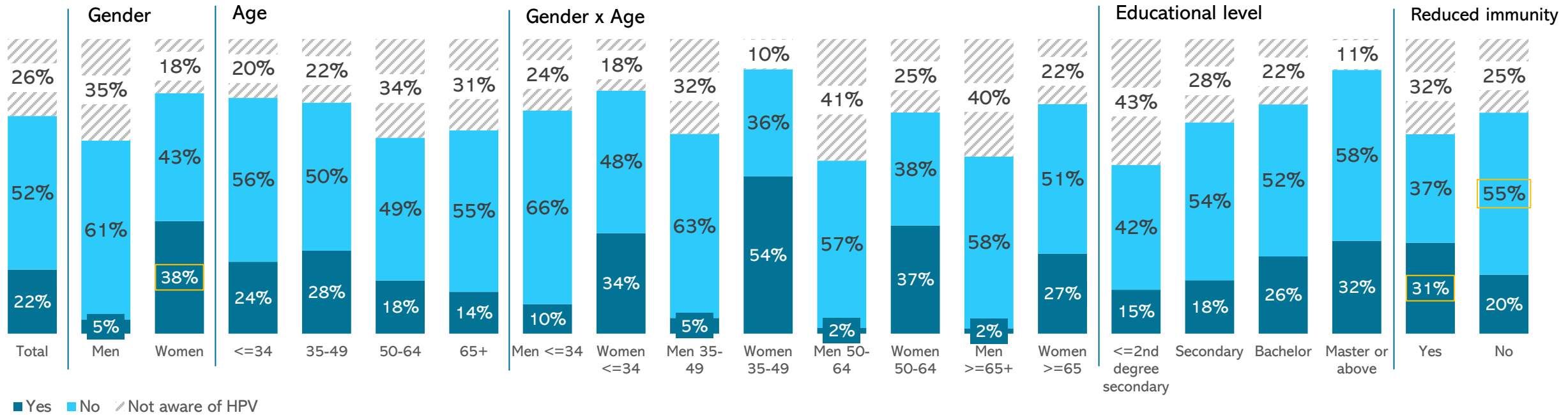
Results are not related to being in a relationship or having children (of a certain age and gender) at home.

HPV-related behaviour



Testing for HPV

Have you ever been tested for an HPV infection by your doctor or gynaecologist?

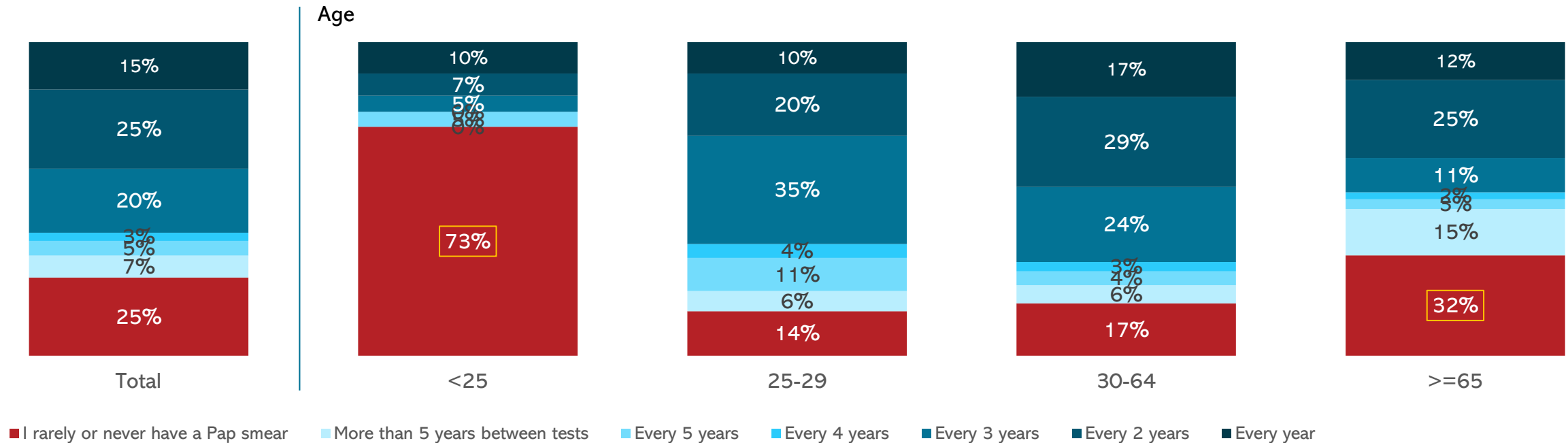


In general, about one in five (22%) respondents indicate they have already been tested for an HPV infection. Women report significantly more already having been tested than men. Differences in HPV tests between educational levels are entirely attributable to the differences in awareness of HPV.

Respondents who in the past 12 months were being monitored for conditions associated with reduced immunity are more likely to that they have already been tested for HPV.

Pap smear frequency

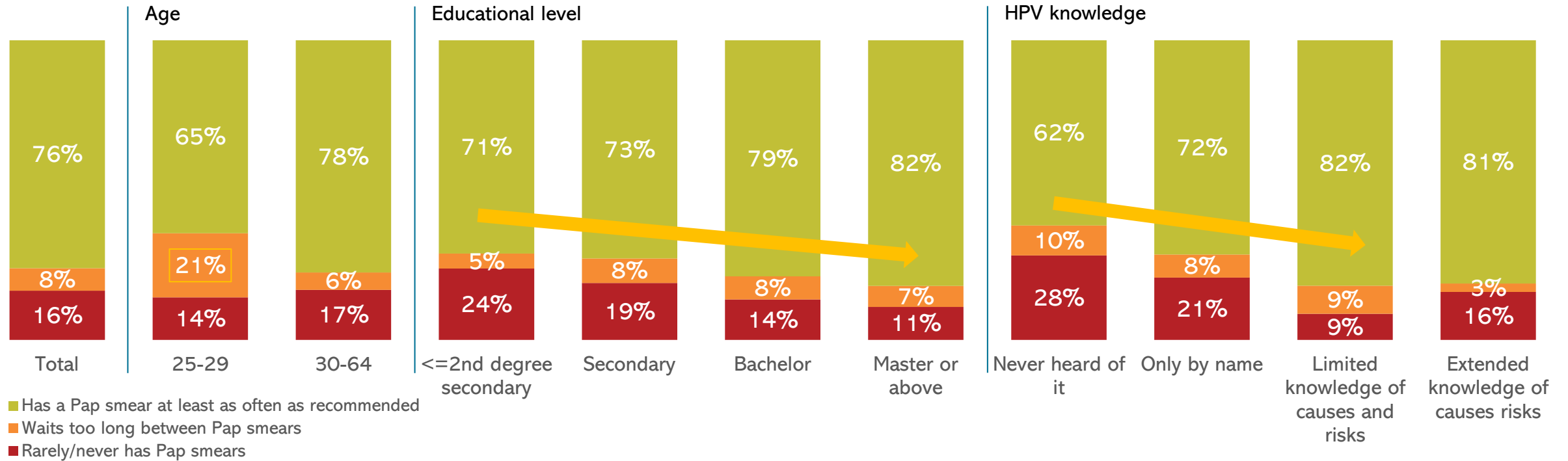
How often (every how many years) do you have a Pap smear taken by your GP or gynaecologist?



25% of the women in the sample rarely or never have a Pap smear taken; they are mostly women younger than 25 (73%) and older than 64 (32%). Even so, 14% of women aged 25-29 and 17% of women aged 30-64 rarely or never have a Pap smear taken.

Correct Pap smear frequency

How often (every how many years) do you have a Pap smear taken by your GP or gynaecologist?

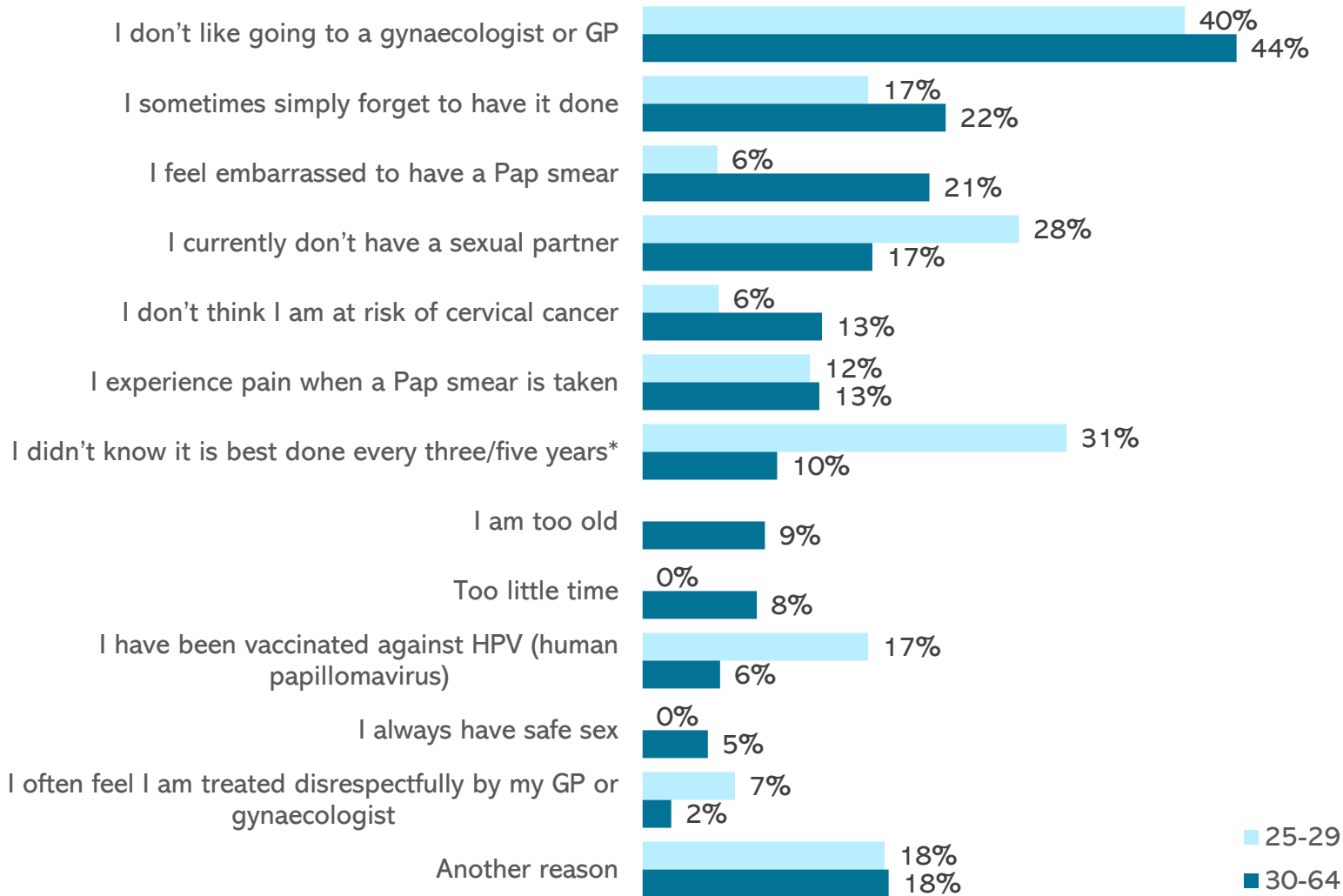


Three out of four (76%) women aged 25-64 have a pap smear at least as often as recommended for their specific age group (25-29: at least every 3 years; 30-64 at least every 5 years). Correct test frequency is lower in the age group 25-29, where 35% either waits too long between tests (21%) or does not have pap smears taken (14%). In the age group 30-64 this is 6% and 17%, respectively.

Even though statistically not significant, it appears as though correct test frequency is higher as educational level increases. As knowledge depth of HPV decreases, the likelihood decreases that women have a Pap smear at least as often as recommended for their age group.

Reasons for incorrect Pap smear frequency

You have a Pap smear taken less often than once every three/five* years by your GP or gynaecologist. What are the main reasons for this? - * exact wording depended on respondents' age



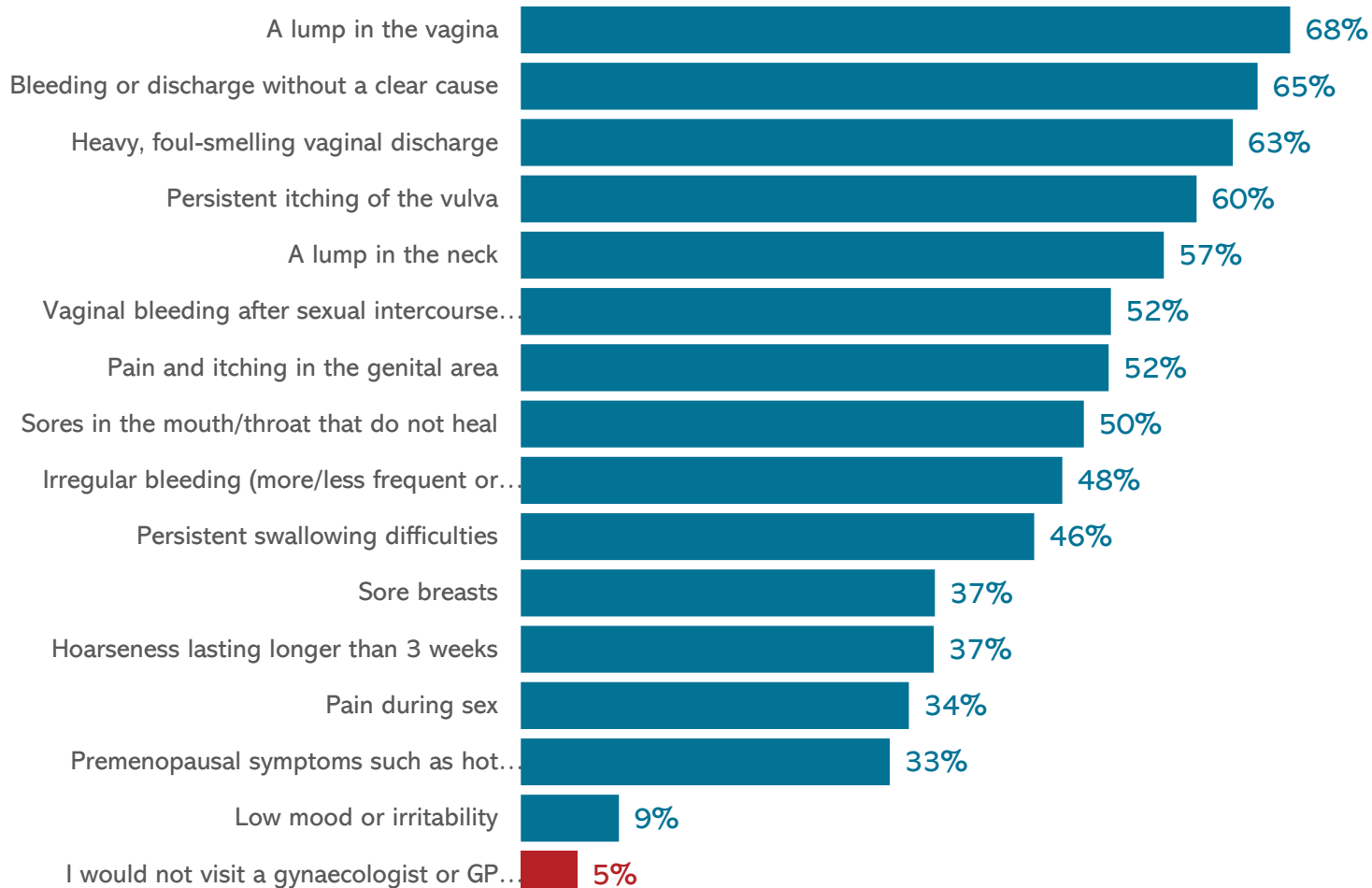
Regardless of age, dislike of visiting gynaecologist or general practitioner is the predominant reason for waiting too long between having Pap smears taken or not having them taken at all.

For women 30-64, this is followed by simply forgetting to have it done (22%) and embarrassment at having a Pap smear taken (21%).

The three main reasons in women aged 25-29 are completed by not knowing that it is recommended to have a Pap smear taken every three years (31%) and currently not having a sexual partner (28%). Even though it should be kept in mind that only 15 women aged 25-29 had to answer this question, this once more points to a **misunderstanding and fairly limited knowledge of the causes and prevention of cervical cancer.**

Consulting a health professional with possible symptoms of HPV-related cancers - women

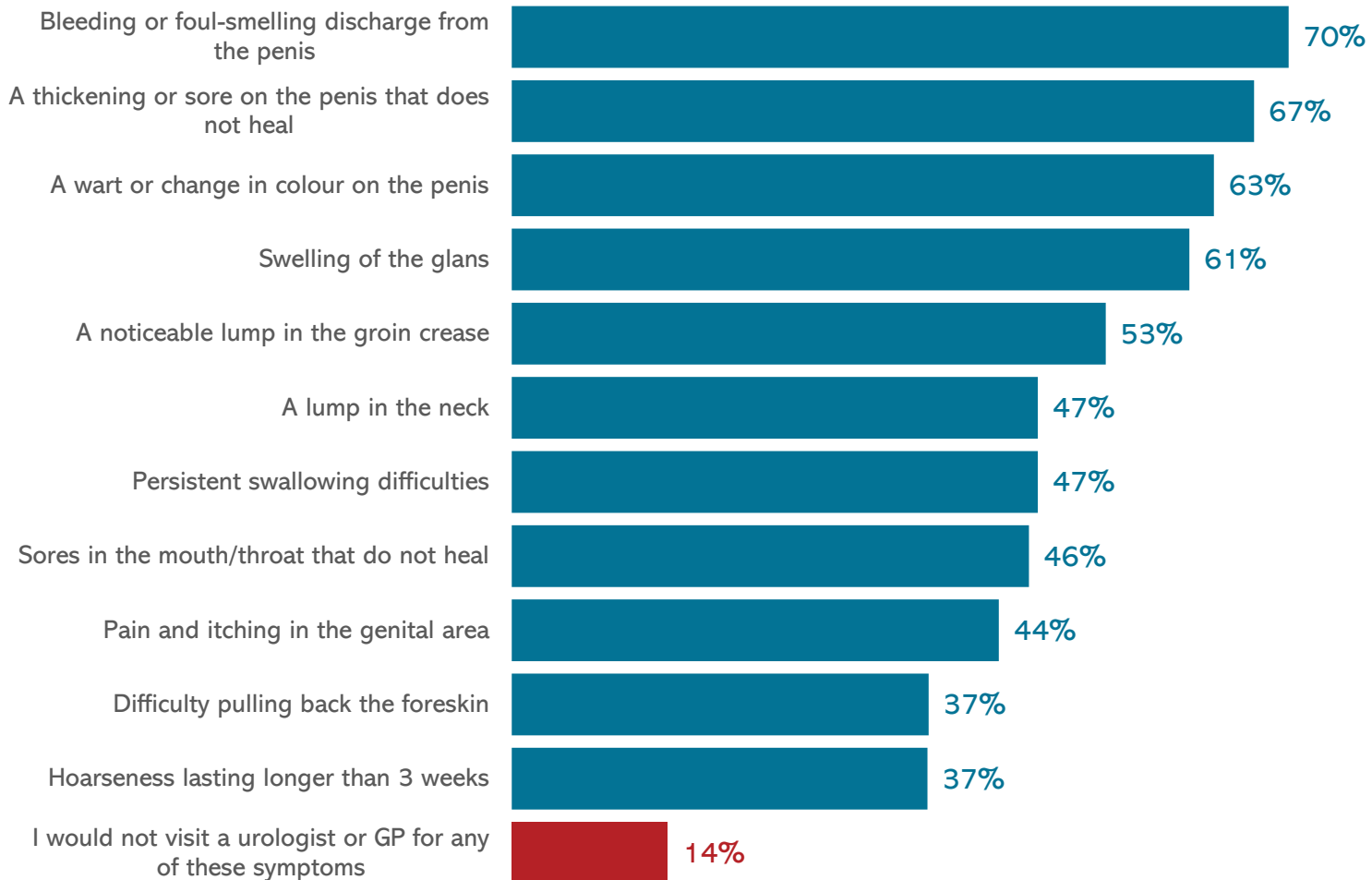
For which of the following symptoms would you contact your gynaecologist or GP to check that everything is OK, if you experienced them yourself?



Confronted with a number of possible symptoms of HPV-related cancers, most women would contact their GP or gynaecologist if they experienced one or more of these symptoms. Even so, even for the symptoms most commonly seen as a reason for contacting a health professional, approximately one in three women would not consult with one.

Consulting a health professional with possible symptoms of HPV-related cancers - men

For which of the following symptoms would you contact your urologist or GP to check that everything is OK, if you experienced them yourself?

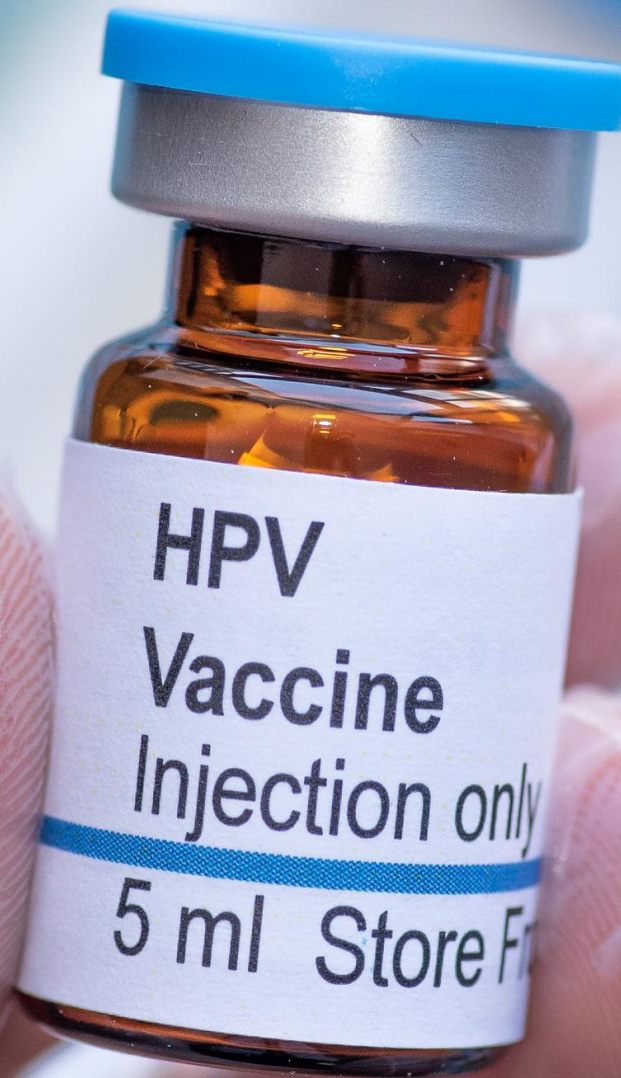


Confronted with a number of possible symptoms of HPV-related cancers, most men also would contact their GP or gynaecologist if they experienced one or more of these symptoms. Even so, even for the symptoms most commonly seen as a reason for contacting a health professional, 30% to 40% of men would not consult with one.

The percentage of men who would not visit a urologist or GP for any of these symptoms is significantly higher in men with the lowest educational level (28%).

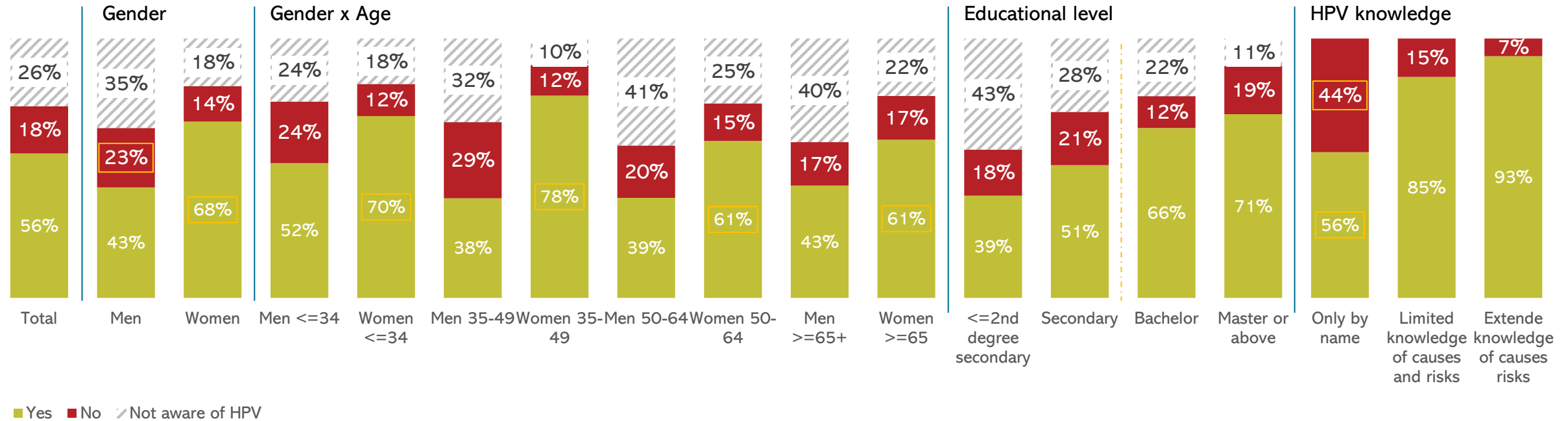
This is also the case for men in a precarious financial situation (no savings to compensate for possible loss of income: 29%; (very) difficult to make ends meet with the available household income: 31%) These differences are not present in the female sample.

HPV-vaccination Knowledge & attitudes



Knowledge of HPV vaccine

Do you know that vaccines exist that protect against HPV infections?



Overall, more than half (56%) of the Belgian population 18+ knows that HPV vaccines exist, 44% are either unaware of these vaccines (18%) or of HPV itself (26%). Women are more aware of the existence of HPV vaccines than men.

Knowledge of the existence of HPV vaccines is also (somewhat) higher in respondents

- with a bachelor or master (or above) degree
- as in-depth knowledge of HPV increases
- with daughter(s) aged older than 15 in the household

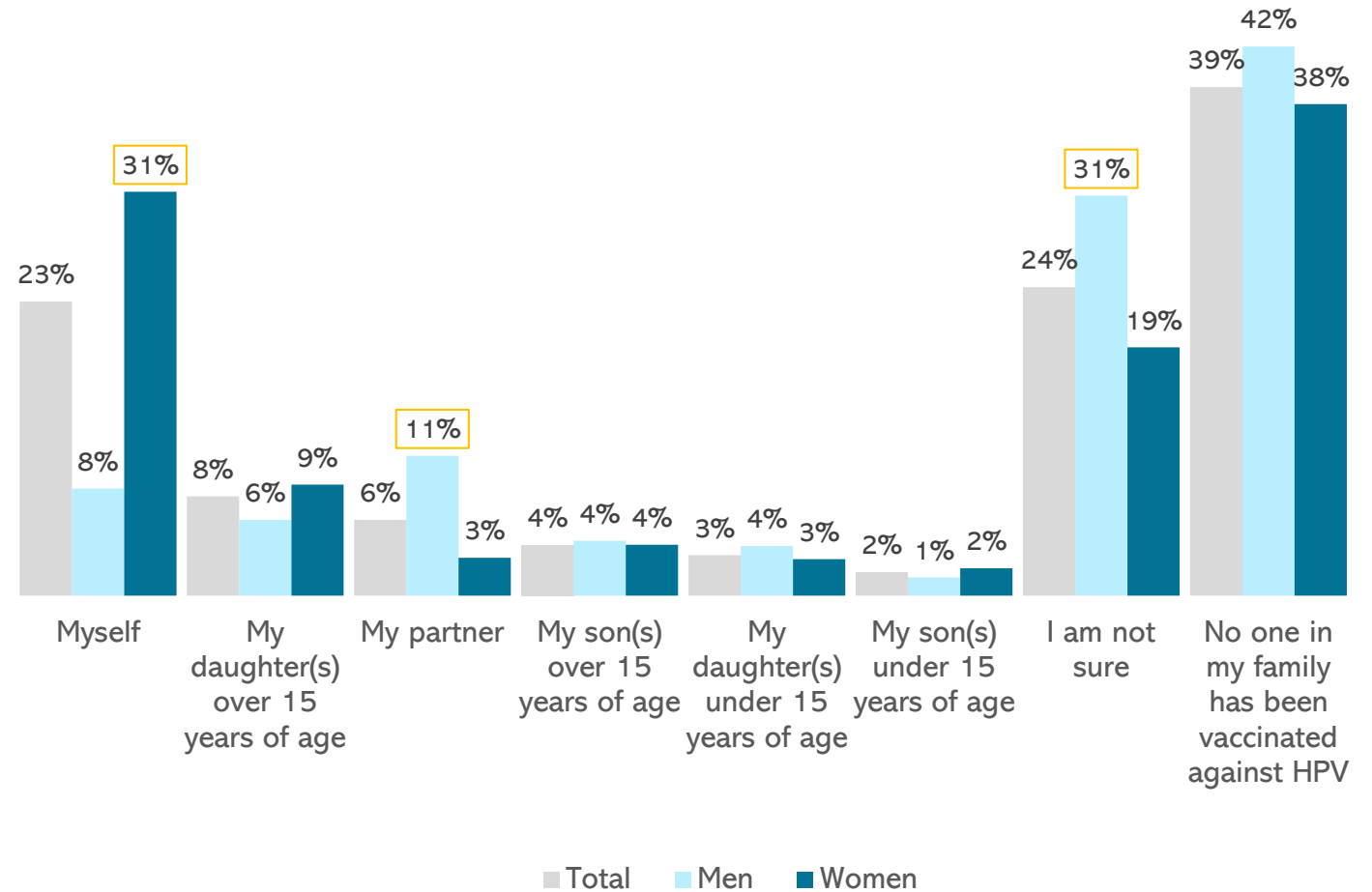
HPV vaccine status

39% of respondents aware of HPV and the existence of HPV vaccines indicate that no one in their household –including themselves- has been vaccinated against the HPV virus. 24% is not sure (a percentage that is significantly higher in men (31%) than women (19%)).

Women indicate more than men that they have been vaccinated, also reflected in the percentage of male respondents who indicate that their (probably predominantly female) partner has been vaccinated, which is significantly higher than the percentage of female respondents indicating that their (probably predominantly male) partner has been vaccinated.

If there are daughters over the age of 15 in the household, they are somewhat more often vaccinated than daughters under 15 or sons regardless of age.

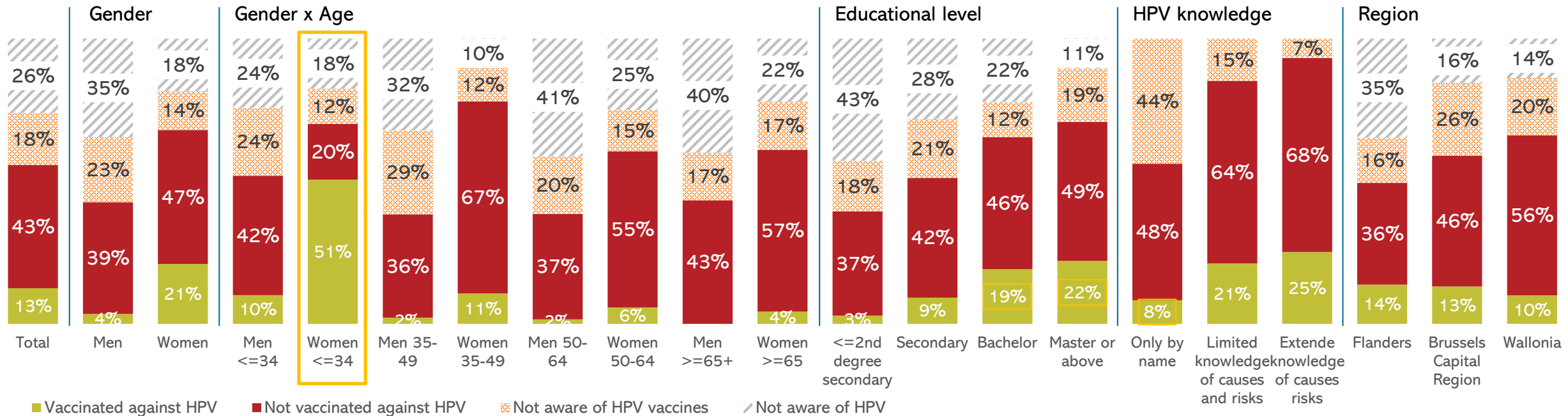
Who in your family has already been vaccinated against the HPV virus?*



Significantly higher/lower (X²-test; z-test; p<.05)

n=646 base: had already heard of HPV prior to this study + knows HPV vaccine exists. *answering options conditional on household composition and relational status

Respondents' HPV vaccination status



Overall, 13% of the Belgian population 18+ has at least been vaccinated once against HPV, 43% are aware of these vaccines but have not been vaccinated, 18% is unaware that such vaccines exist and 26% is unaware of HPV itself (26%).

A higher percentage of women than of men has been vaccinated; Vaccination rates are especially higher in women under the age of 35, reflective of more recent vaccination programmes and overall awareness of HPV in society. Still, men under the age of 35 lag far behind.

Effective HPV vaccination is also (somewhat) higher in respondents

- with a bachelor or master (or above) degree
- with more in-depth knowledge of HPV than merely having heard of it

Relationship with geographical region is complicated, with lower awareness of HPV in Flanders, but higher awareness of HPV vaccines in Flanders than in Brussels and a somewhat higher chance of not being vaccinated in Wallonia. However, differences in effective vaccination between regions are statistically not significant within this sample.

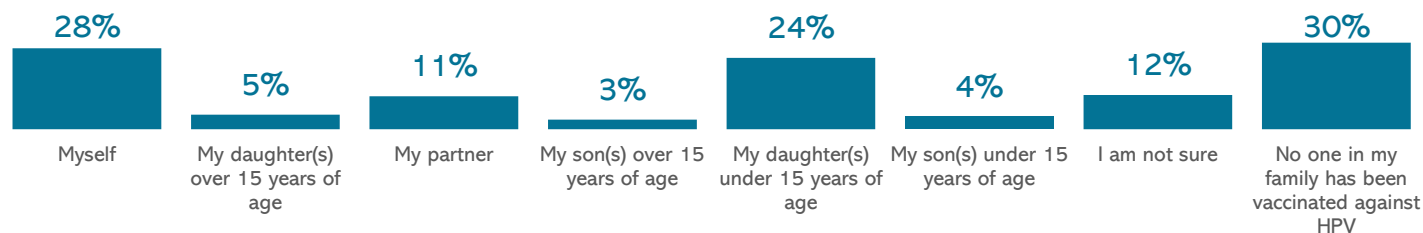
Knowledge and status of vaccine

Among families with girls under 15, 24% say their daughters of that age group are vaccinated. This percentage increases among families with girls over 15 to 66%. Obviously also families with one-year old girls are in the first group, which explains the lesser vaccination status.

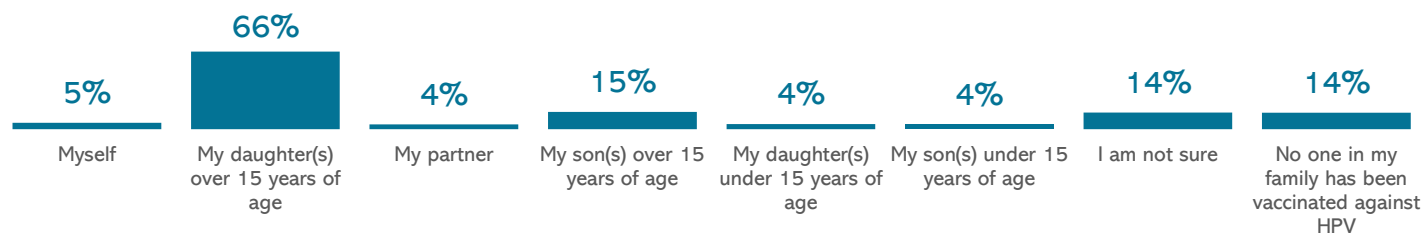
The above numbers are approximately halved when taking families with boys into consideration. Also, more people indicate they don't know the HPV vaccination status.

Strikingly an age effect emerges in the "Myself" category. Families with children under 15, report more that they themselves are vaccinated than families with children above 15. This is possibly a cohort effect of a more elaborate vaccination programs starting in 2007. Making that age group now in their thirties and potentially parents.

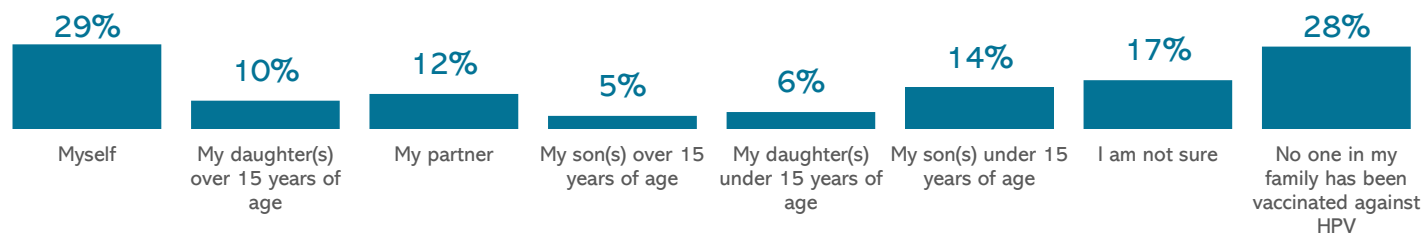
Families with girl(s) under the age of 15



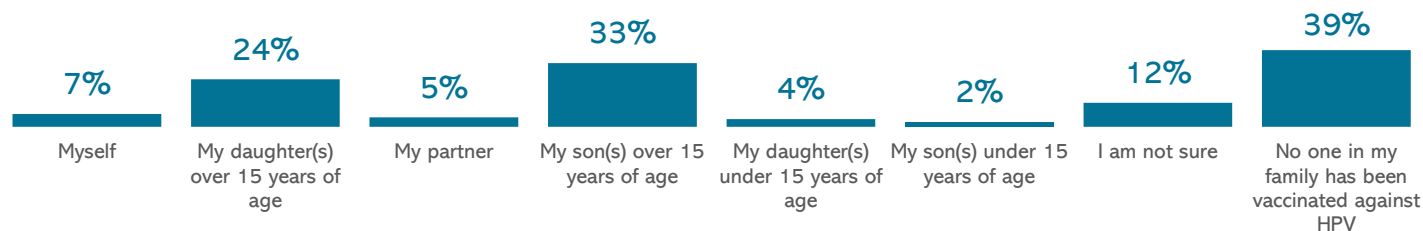
Families with girl(s) over the age of 15



Families with boy(s) under the age of 15

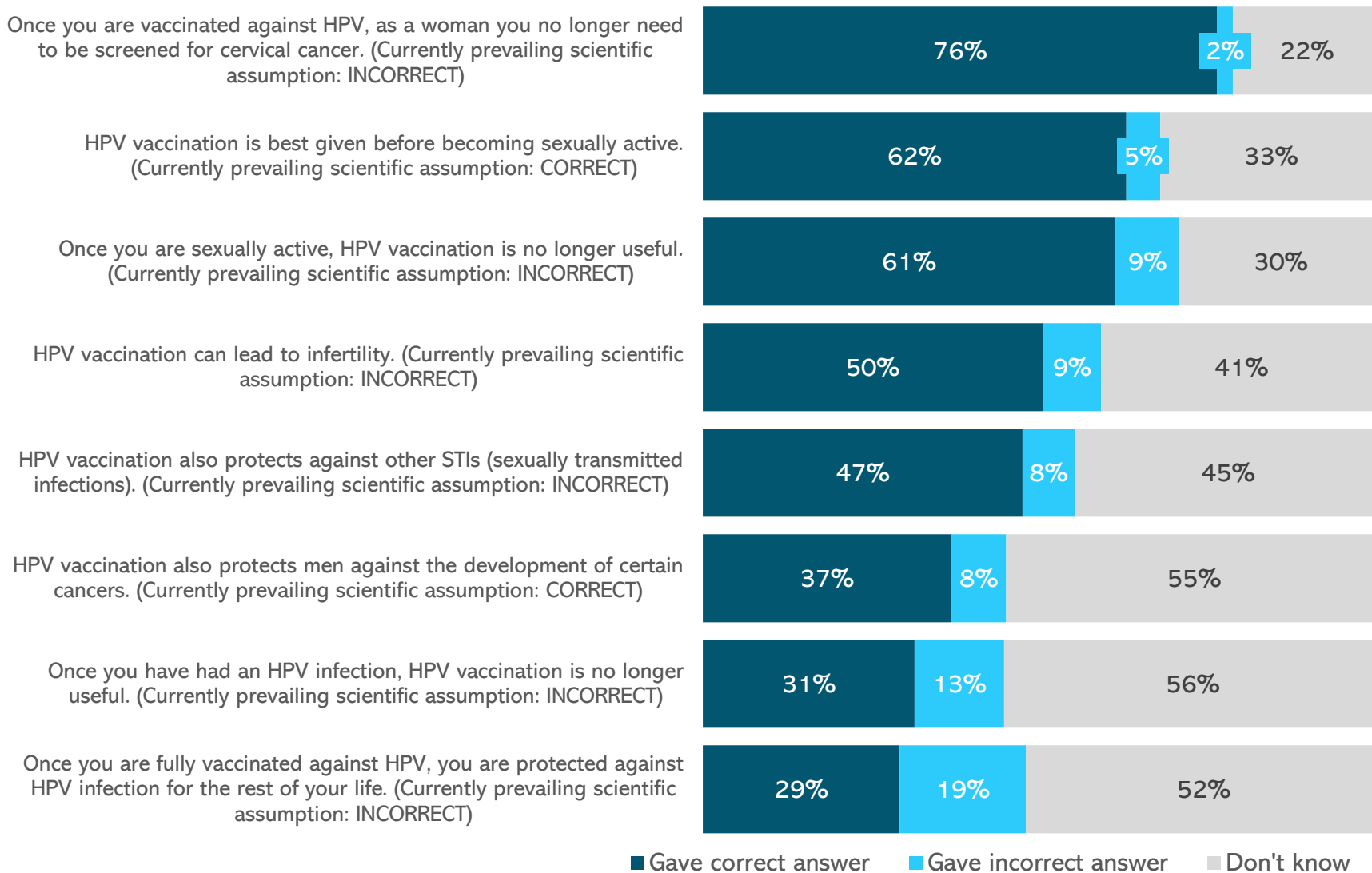


Families with boy(s) over the age of 15



Myths and beliefs about HPV vaccination

Below are some statements about HPV. Please indicate for each statement whether you think it is true or false.



Overall, a majority of respondents answer each statement correctly. However, a substantial share of respondents indicate that they do not know which statements are correct. For the lower-ranked statements, this uncertainty rises to more than half of respondents. These gaps are potentially problematic: misunderstandings about men's risks may lead to underestimation of their vulnerability, lack of awareness about the usefulness of vaccination after infection may discourage adult women from getting vaccinated, and insufficient knowledge about the fact that vaccination does not provide lifelong protection may create a false sense of security.

Women generally demonstrate a more accurate level of knowledge about HPV-vaccination than men, which is also reflected in lower "don't know" responses.

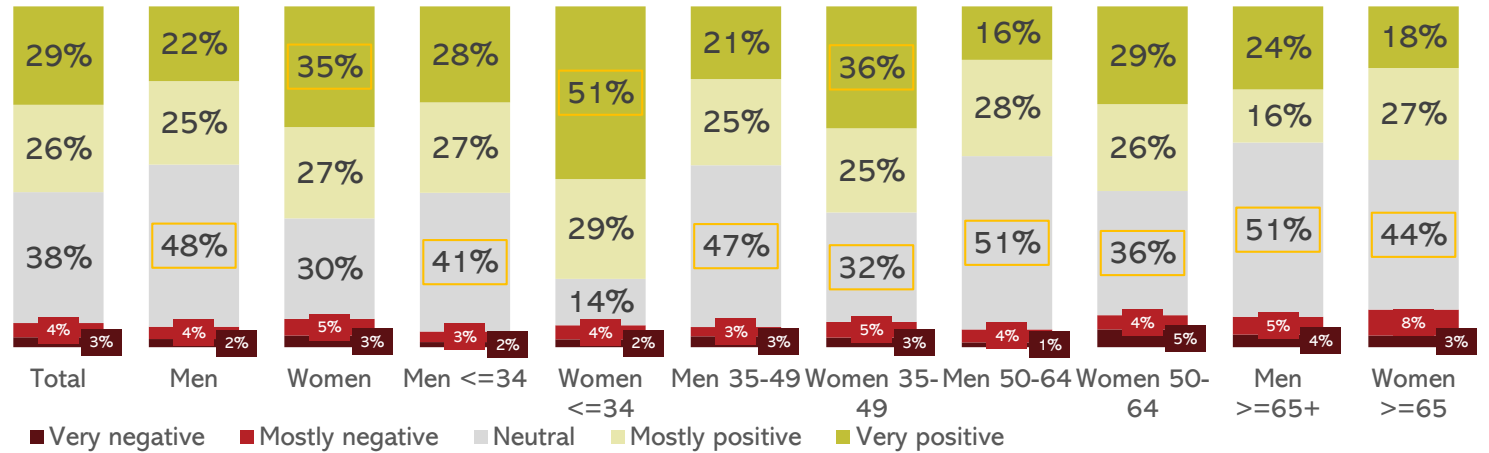
However, this gender difference disappears for two specific statements. The first concerns the belief that HPV vaccination is no longer useful after having had an HPV infection: women provide the same responses as men here, with a particularly high proportion of "don't know" answers. The second relates to the usefulness of vaccination after becoming sexually active: in this case, the share of incorrect answers among women (12%) is twice as high as among men.

Evaluation of vaccine

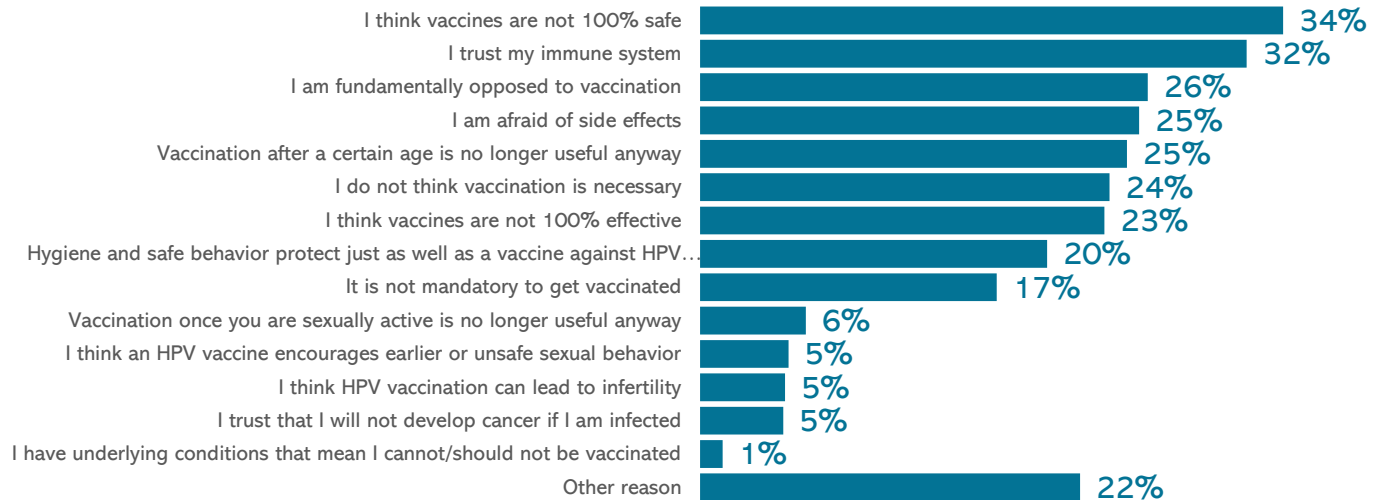
Overall, not a whole lot of negativity exist around the HPV-vaccination. Women are generally more positive than men. For men this does translate into a more neutral stance rather than a negative one.

Reasons for being negative are a mix of anti-vax sentiments (top 3) and scapegoat arguments for various reasons. Only 1% indicates they have underlying conditions. Around 5% gives answers directly related to HPV related issues.

How do you feel about vaccination to protect against HPV for yourself?



Why are you negative about getting vaccinated against HPV infection yourself? (n=83 | when negative)



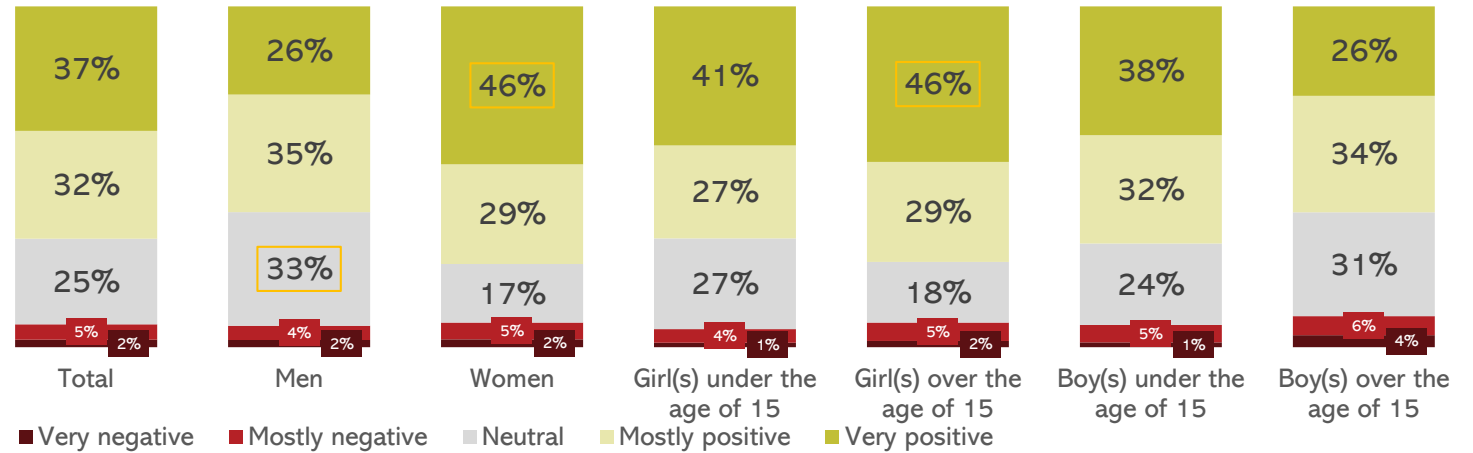
Significantly higher/lower (X²-test; z-test; p<.05)

Evaluation of vaccine for children

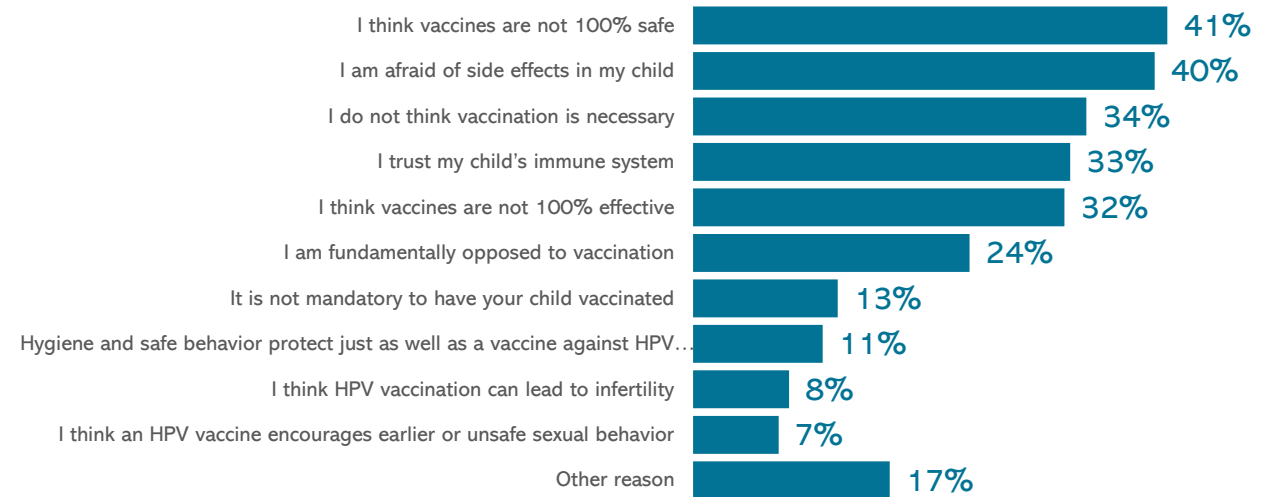
When looking at vaccination of their children, people are even more positive than for themselves. This is mainly due to a younger age group of parents we are looking at (previous slide: 80% of women under 35 are positive about vaccination for themselves).

The minority that is negative is worried about the safety of the vaccine. One quarter is fundamentally opposed to vaccines.

How do you feel about vaccination to protect against HPV for your children?



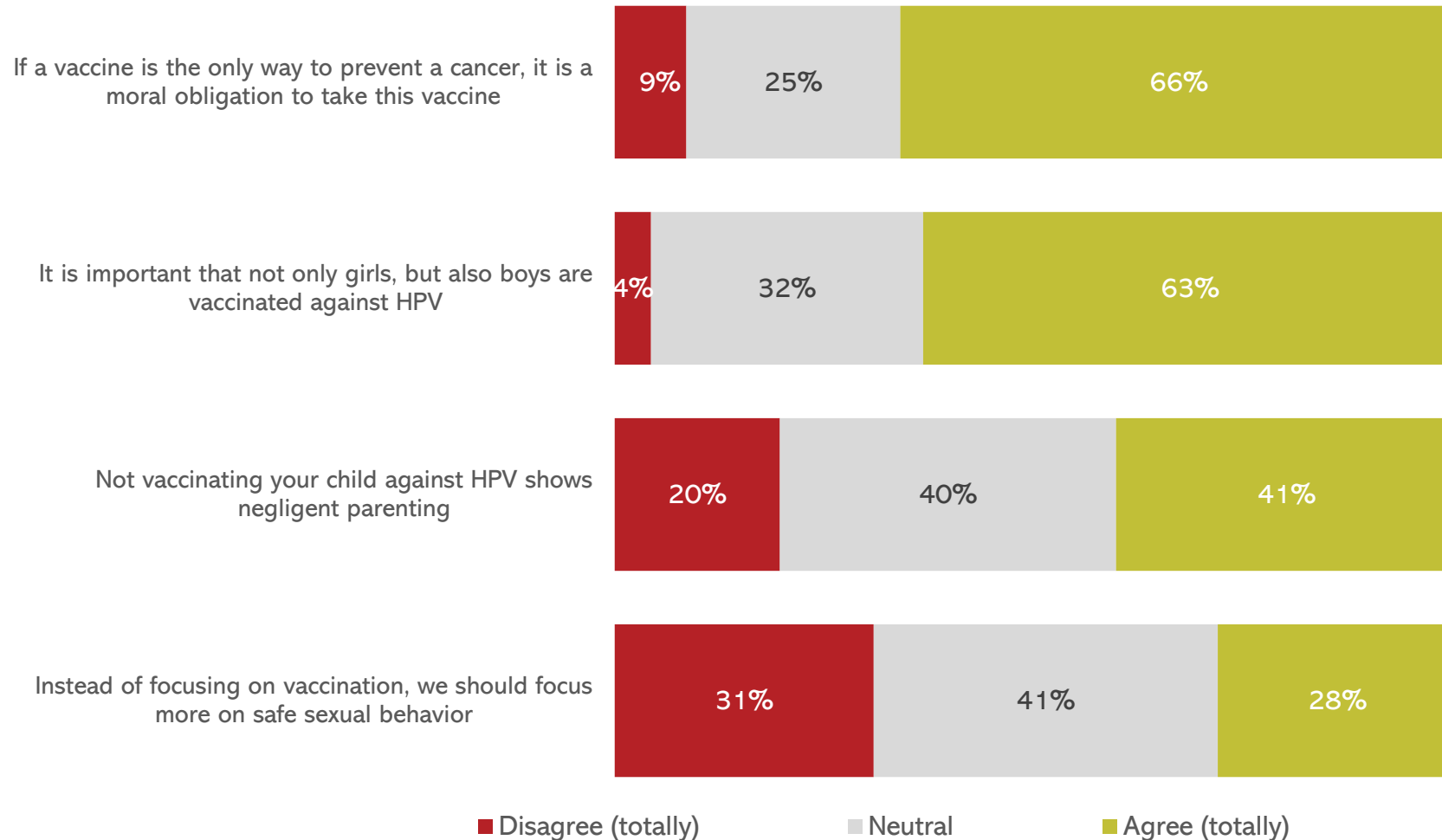
Why are you negative about vaccinating your child(ren) against HPV infection? (n=26 – low count | when negative)



Significantly higher/lower (X²-test; z-test; p<.05)

HPV vaccination related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?



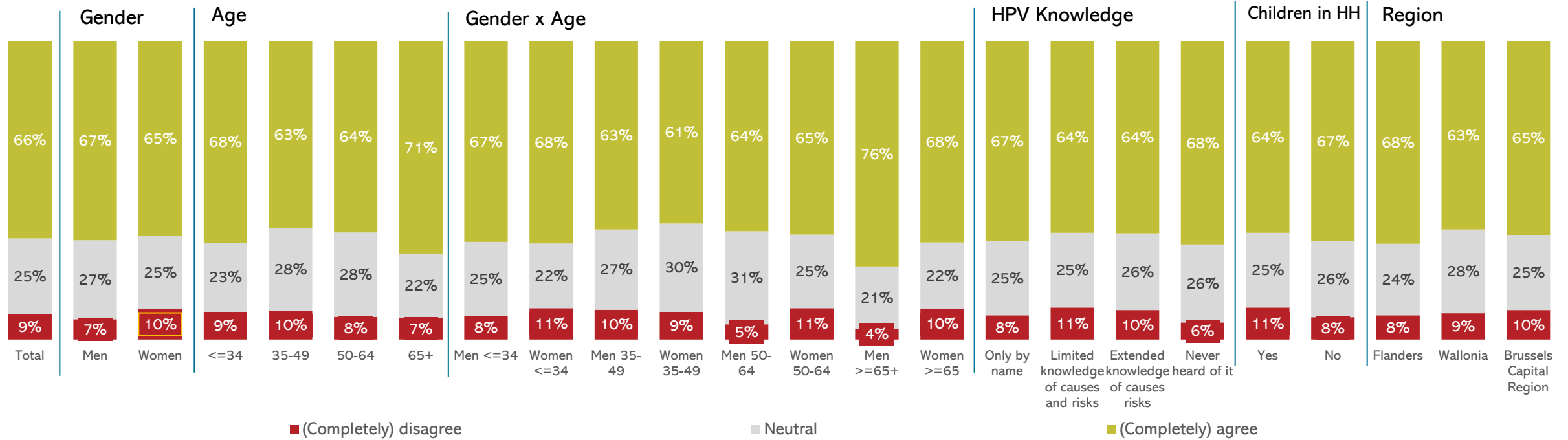
Overall, attitudes toward HPV vaccination are largely positive when the focus is on prevention and inclusivity. A clear majority agrees that vaccination is important for both girls and boys, and many respondents endorse the idea of vaccination as a moral obligation when it is the only way to prevent cancer.

However, consensus weakens when statements become more judgmental or contrast vaccination with other preventative strategies. Opinions are divided on whether not vaccinating a child constitutes negligent parenting, with a large neutral group indicating hesitation toward moral framing.

Similarly, the statement prioritizing safe sexual behaviour over vaccination reveals substantial ambivalence, suggesting that many respondents do not see these approaches as mutually exclusive but struggle to position vaccination within a broader prevention framework.

HPV vaccination related attitudes

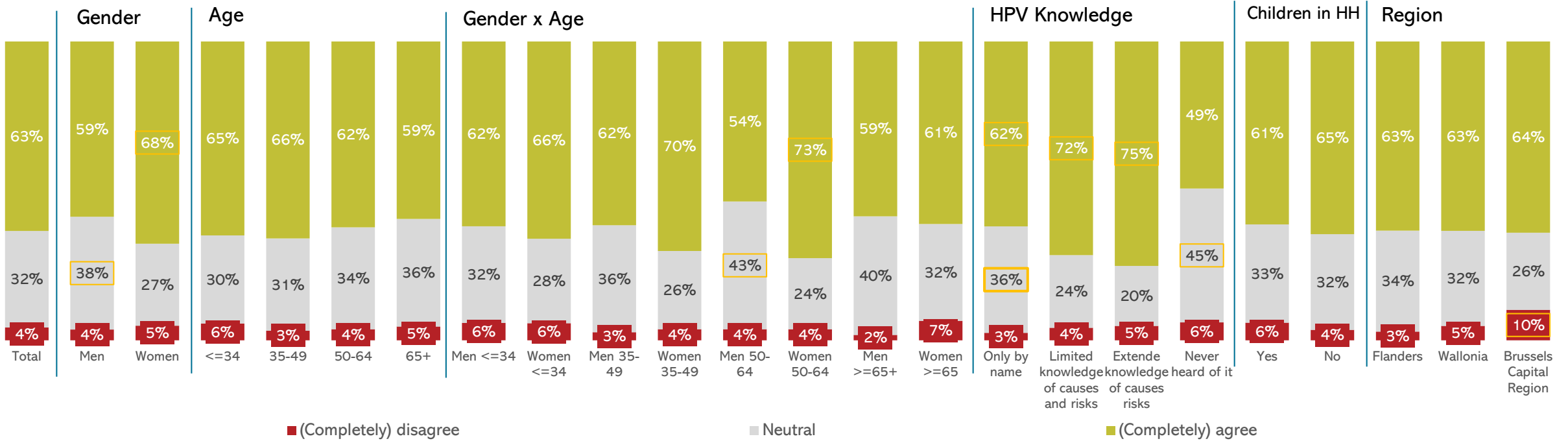
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *If a vaccine is the only way to prevent a cancer, it is a moral obligation to take this vaccine.*



Support for the statement *“If a vaccine is the only way to prevent cancer, it is a moral obligation to take this vaccine”* is broad across all target groups.

HPV vaccination related attitudes

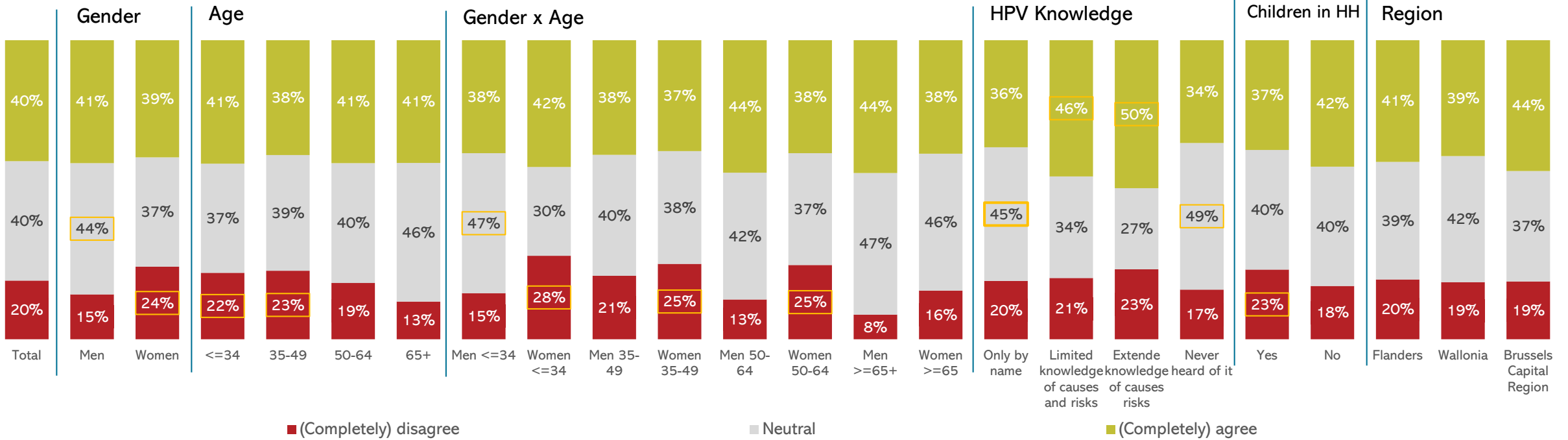
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *It is important that not only girls, but also boys are vaccinated against HPV.*



Agreement with the statement *“It is important that not only girls, but also boys are vaccinated against HPV”* is higher among women overall, particularly women aged 50–64, and among respondents with higher levels of HPV knowledge.

HPV vaccination related attitudes

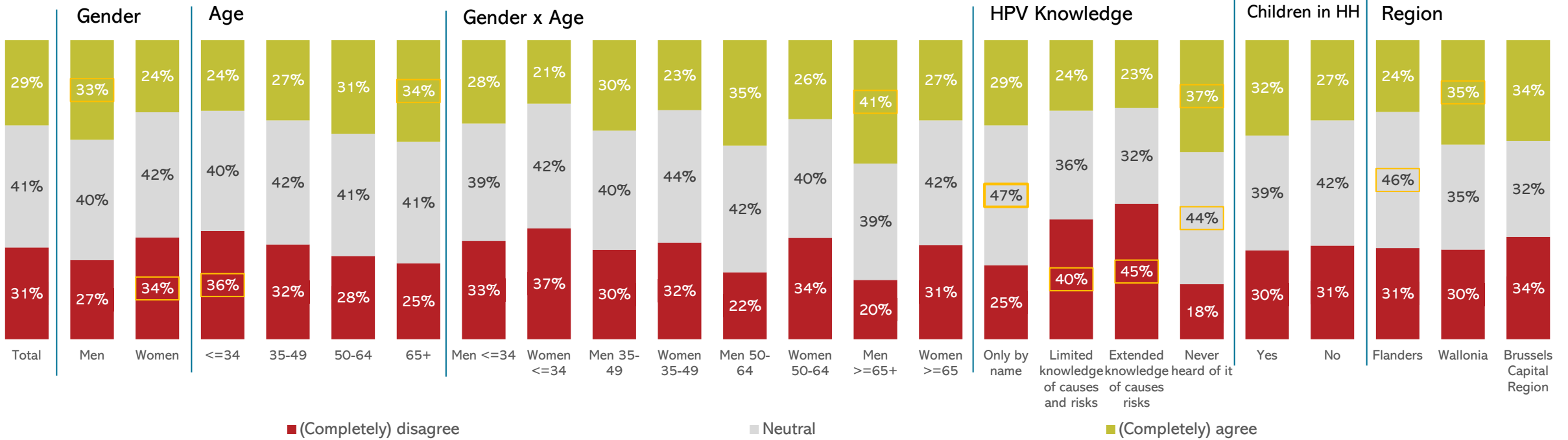
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *Not vaccinating your child against HPV shows negligent parenting.*



Agreement with the statement *“Not vaccinating your child against HPV shows negligent parenting”* is higher among respondents with greater knowledge about HPV. In contrast, disagreement is more prevalent among people under 50, particularly women under 65 and parents.

HPV vaccination related attitudes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - *Instead of focusing on vaccination, we should focus more on safe sexual behaviour.*



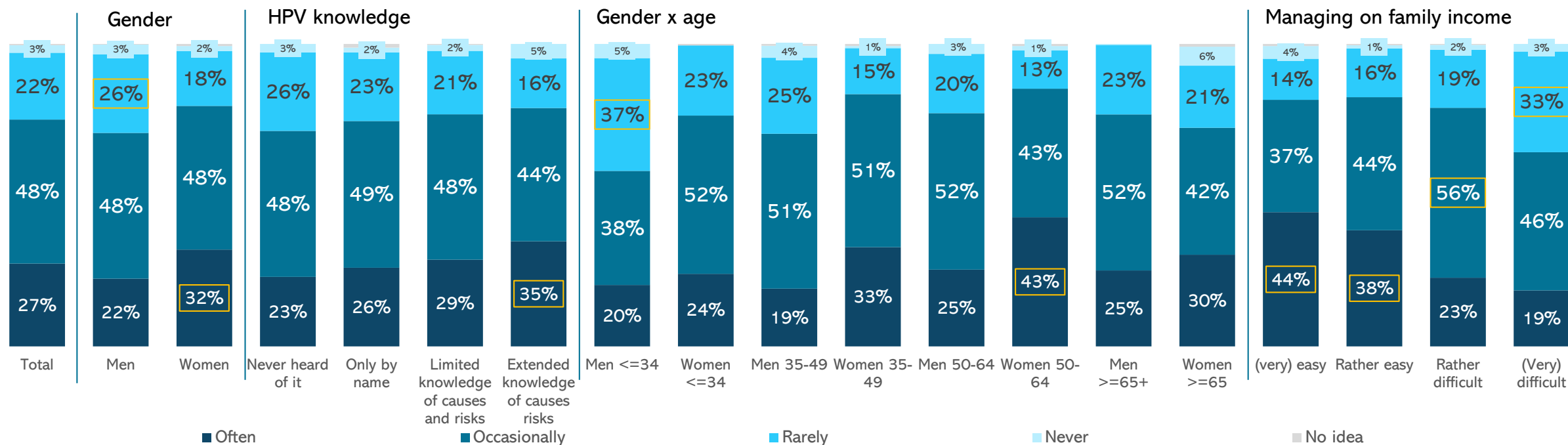
Agreement with the statement *“Instead of focusing on vaccination, we should focus more on safe sexual behaviour”* is higher among men, respondents aged 65 and older, people who have never heard of HPV, and respondents in Wallonia.

A close-up photograph of a person meditating in a lotus position. The person is wearing a white tank top and light-colored shorts. Their hands are in a mudra (gesture) on their lap. The background is a solid, bright blue color. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Health

Concern about your own health

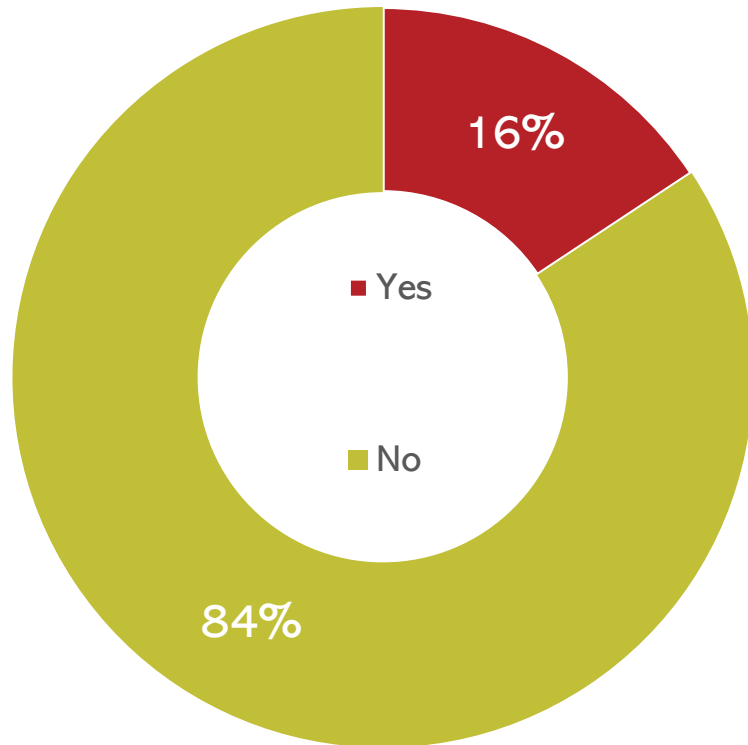
How often do you worry about your physical health?



Women, respondents with a high level of knowledge about HPV, women over 50, and people with a higher socioeconomic status report greater concern about their physical health compared with other groups.

Reduced immunity

In the past 12 months, have you been monitored by a doctor or other healthcare professional for one or more conditions related to reduced immunity?

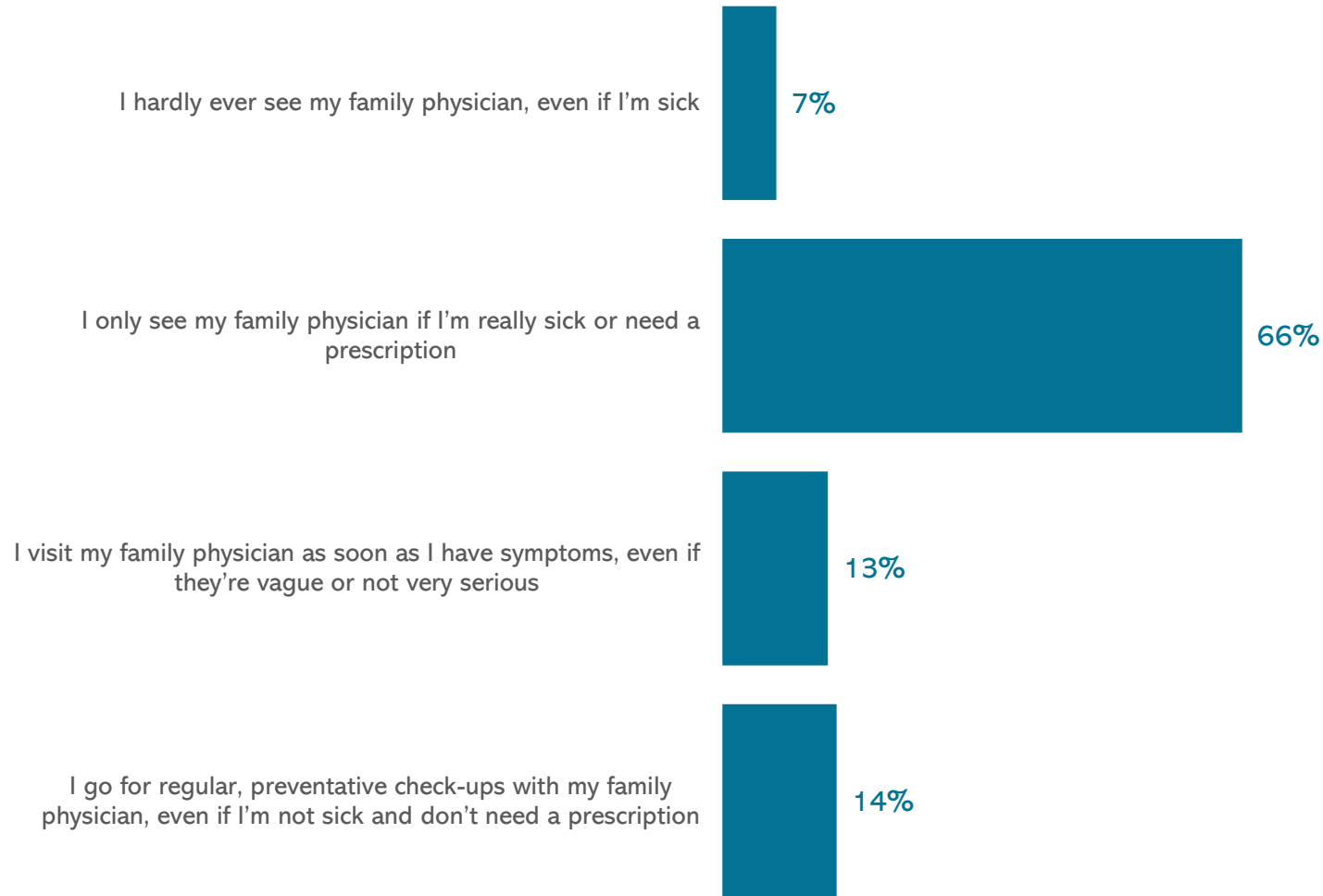


Since reduced immunity makes persons more vulnerable to HPV-infections, respondents were asked whether they had been monitored by a health professional for one or more conditions related to reduced immunity.

This was the case for 16% of respondents.

Visits to the family physician

Which of the following statements best describes the way you visit your family physician?



Less than one in ten almost never visit the family physician, even if they feel sick.

Two thirds only visit the family physician if they are really sick or need a prescription.

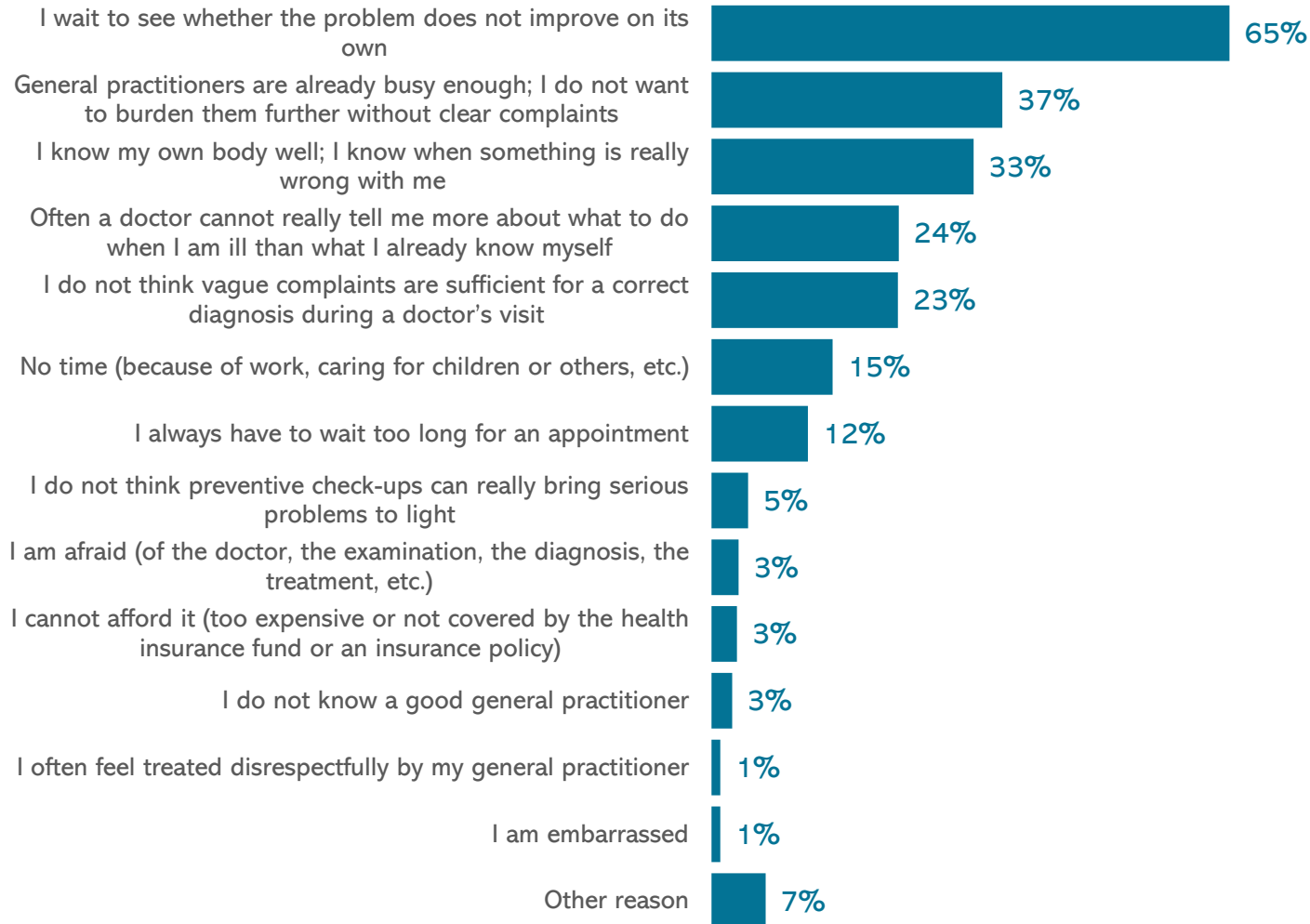
13% go as soon as they have symptoms, 14% as a preventative measure. That figure rises to 21% among 55 to 64-year-olds and to 27% among people over 65.

Strikingly, although men seem to worry less about their physical health than women, they seem to visit their doctor more for preventative checks than women from a certain age:

- 50-64: men 25% / women 16%
- 65+: men 39% / women 16%

Reasons not to visit the family physician

You hardly ever visit the family physician, or only if you're really sick. What are the most important reasons for you not to visit the family physician sooner or as a preventative measure?



The main reason to wait before visiting the family physician is because people prefer to see whether the problem will get better on its own.

More than a third state that family physicians are already busy enough, and don't want to put them under more pressure without clear symptoms.

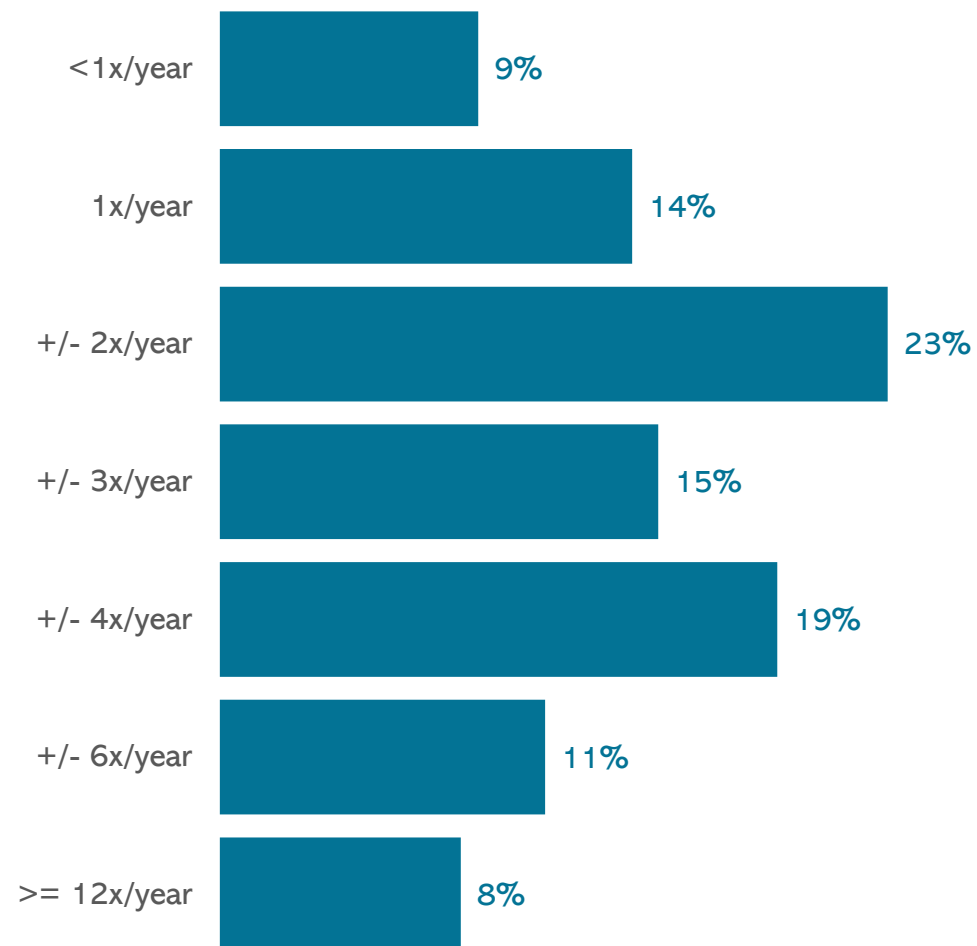
33% state that they know when something's really wrong.

A quarter state that a doctor can't usually say much more than what they already know themselves, and another quarter state that vague symptoms are insufficient for a correct diagnosis.

5% don't believe in preventative check-ups, 3% are afraid of the doctor, 3% are afraid of medical consequences, 3% state that they cannot afford to see the doctor and another 3% say they don't know a good doctor.

Visits to the family physician

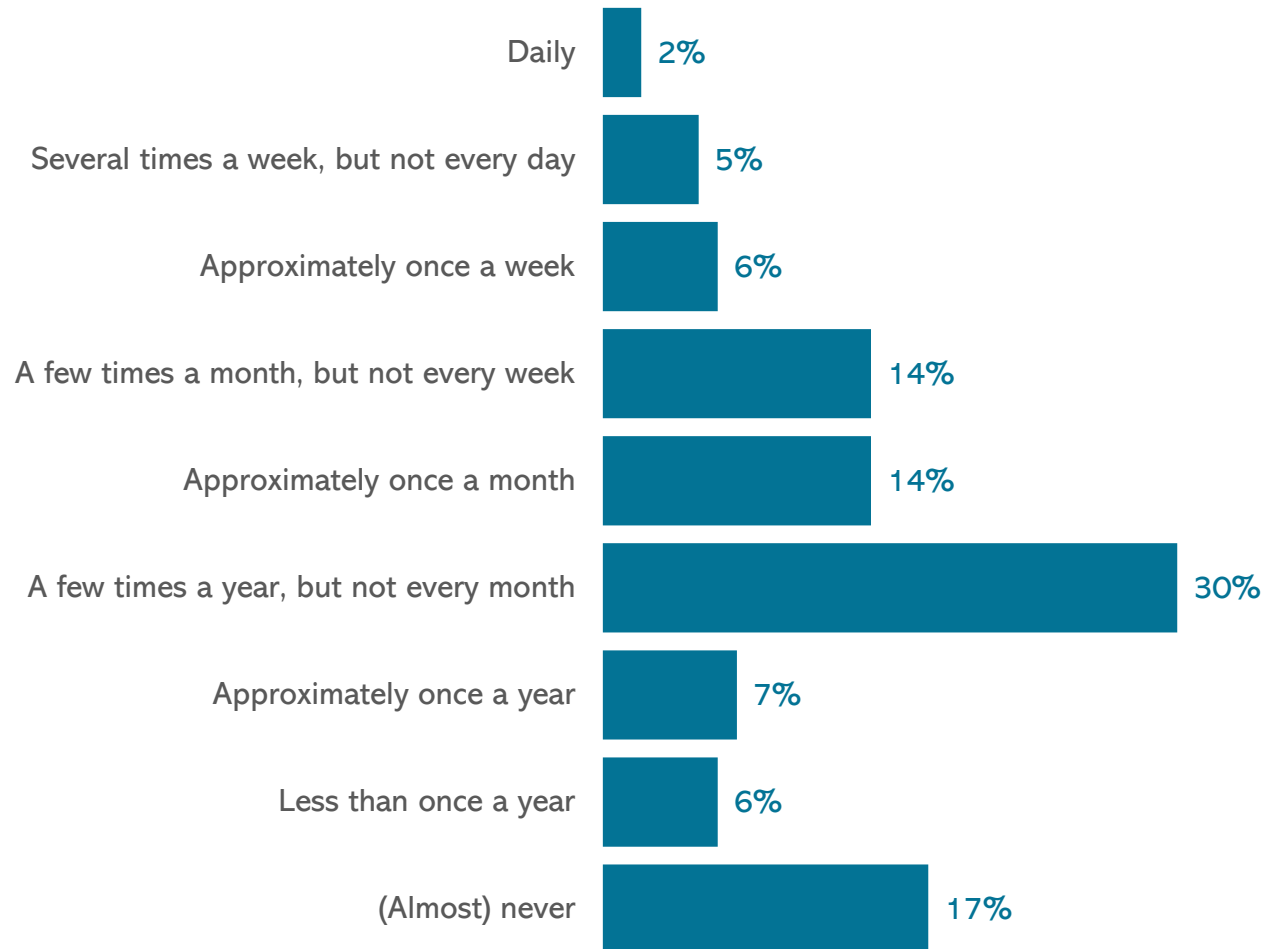
On average, how often do you see your family physician?



Around a quarter (23%) see their family physician no more than once a year. One in ten (9%) do so less than once a year. 15% go three times a year; 19% go every three months and 11% go every two months. 8% visit their family physician at least once a month.

Looking up health-related information

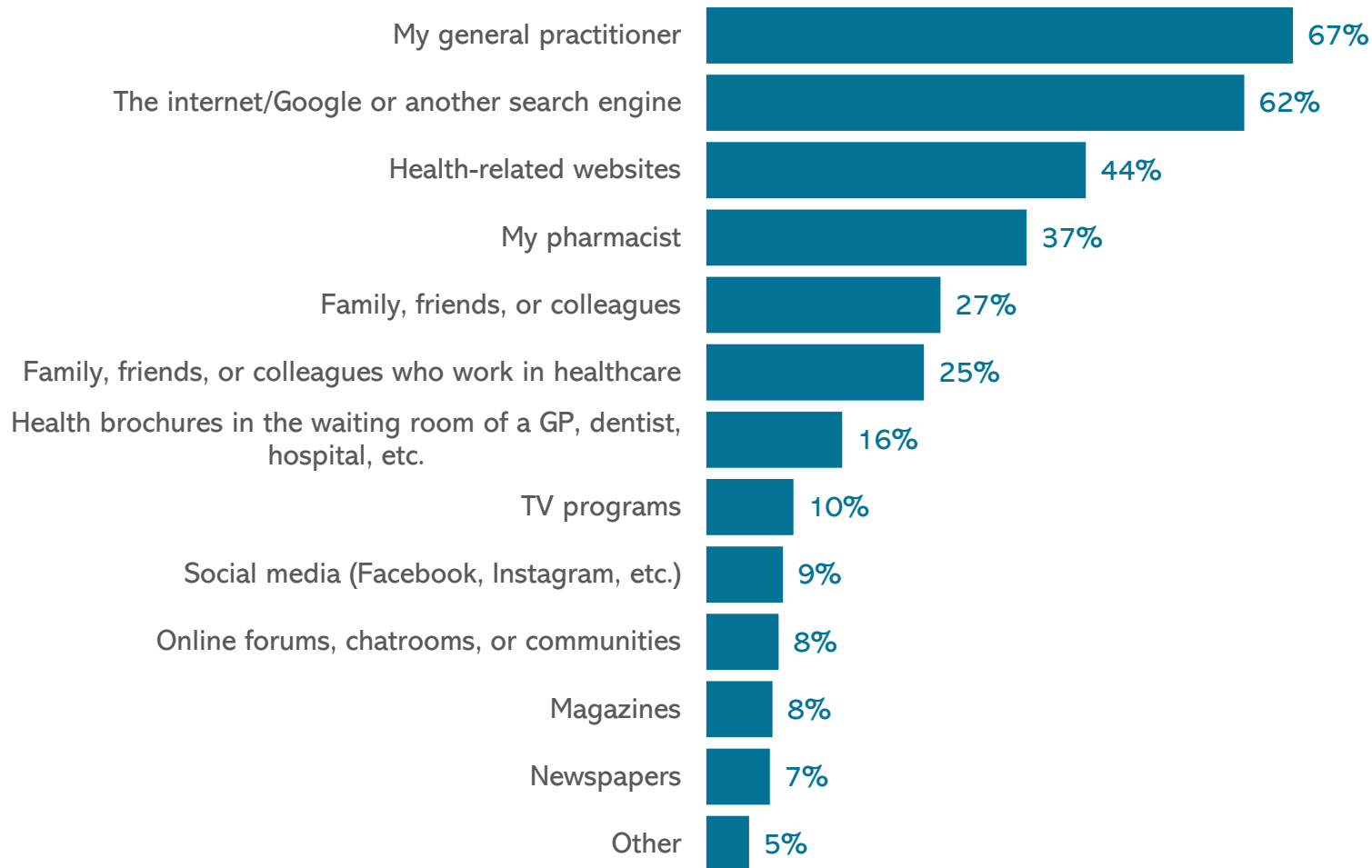
How often do you look up health information?



41% look up health information at least once a month. 30% do so no more than once a year.

Information sources

Which of the sources of health information below have you consulted in the past year to search for or obtain information about your health?



Young people consult more websites / family, friends or coworkers in general / family, friends or coworkers in healthcare / social media / online forums and websites

Highly educated people consult more friends or coworkers in general / family, friends or coworkers in healthcare

INDI ville

COLLECTIVE FOR
RESEARCH AND
ADVICE ON
SOCIETY, POLITICS
AND MEDIA

*Anne Borgers | Stéphanie Busschaert | Sarah Degrande
Robin Lagrou | Jurgen Minnebo | Denis Rochat
Wouter Samyn | Colin Sanders | An Katrien Sodermans
Jo Steyaert | Adélien Van den Bossche | Jan Verbelen
Marlies Lievens*

