TRAJECTORY

Optimism Index
May 2021

Pandemic Analysis

Sample Information and Methodology

- Every month, Trajectory survey a nationally representative sample of 1500 respondents on a variety of issues, including consumer confidence, personal choice and control, social trust, opportunities in technology, optimism and their place in the world.

- Due to current circumstances surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic, additional questions have been added in recent months examining both the current climate in general as well as the impact that the pandemic is having on certain views in relation to finances, confidence and spending, amongst others.

- All surveys were carried out online, with fieldwork this month taking place between **12th and 19th May.**

Key Findings

- Latest phase of reopening drives a decline in concerns relating to financial impact of pandemic
- Lessened concerns about impact on finances more prominent amongst men than women
- Appetite for leisure activities significantly higher than the first reopening of last summer
- Continued success of vaccine rollout dampens concerns over visiting public spaces
- Over 70s appear significantly less concerned over public spaces amidst rollout of two dose vaccines
- Reopening of leisure and hospitality sees consumers place greater focus on public health
- Gen Z remain the most pessimistic regarding impacts of the pandemic for their generation

Last Month's Key Events

16th April
Health officials confirm that 77 cases of a strain of COVID from India have been discovered in the UK

19th April
Boris Johnson cancels planned trip to India and country will be moved to red list from 23rd April due to spread of virus in the country

23rd April
COVID-19 pandemic costs mean government borrowing in the year to March reaches £303.1bn, the highest level since the end of World War II

26th April
Prime Minister Boris Johnson denies allegations that he said he would rather see "bodies pile high" than take England into a third lockdown

28th April
The Electoral Commission begins an investigation into the funding of Boris Johnson's Downing Street flat

30th April
All over 40s in England are now eligible to apply for their first vaccine dose

2nd May
Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab says the UK is "in a good position" to "get life back as close to normal as possible" in June

3rd May
Boris Johnson says there will be some "opening up" of foreign travel on 17 May and suggests a good chance of scrapping of social distancing by 21 June

6th May
The BBC reports that almost all 50 of the UK's biggest employers do not plan to return staff to the office full-time

7th May
A new traffic light system for international travel is published for England, with 12 countries added to a "green list" from 17 May,

10th May
Covid alert level reduced from four to three. Johnson announces that masks will no longer be required in schools and colleges from 17th May

12th May
Boris Johnson confirms that an independent inquiry into the government's handling of the COVID crisis will begin in Spring 2022

14th May
Boris Johnson and Chris Whitty provide an update on the Indian variant, warning that it could potentially delay the government's planned easing of lockdown restrictions on 21 June

15th May
The final Debenhams store is closed, after more than 240 years in business. The company continues to trade online

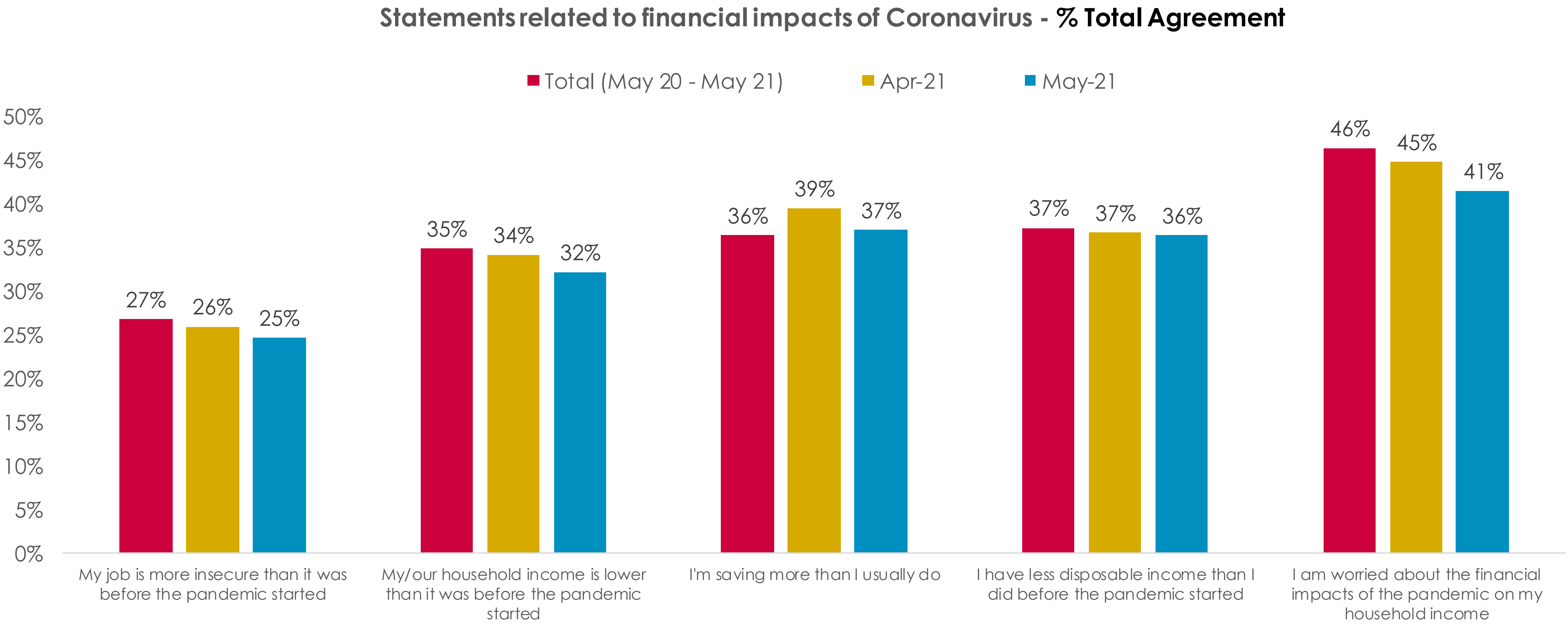
17th May
Matt Hancock confirms the Indian variant is now the dominant strain of the virus. Indoor mixing is now allowed amongst up to six people as indoor hospitality reopens

Fieldwork: 12th – 19th May

Financial Implications

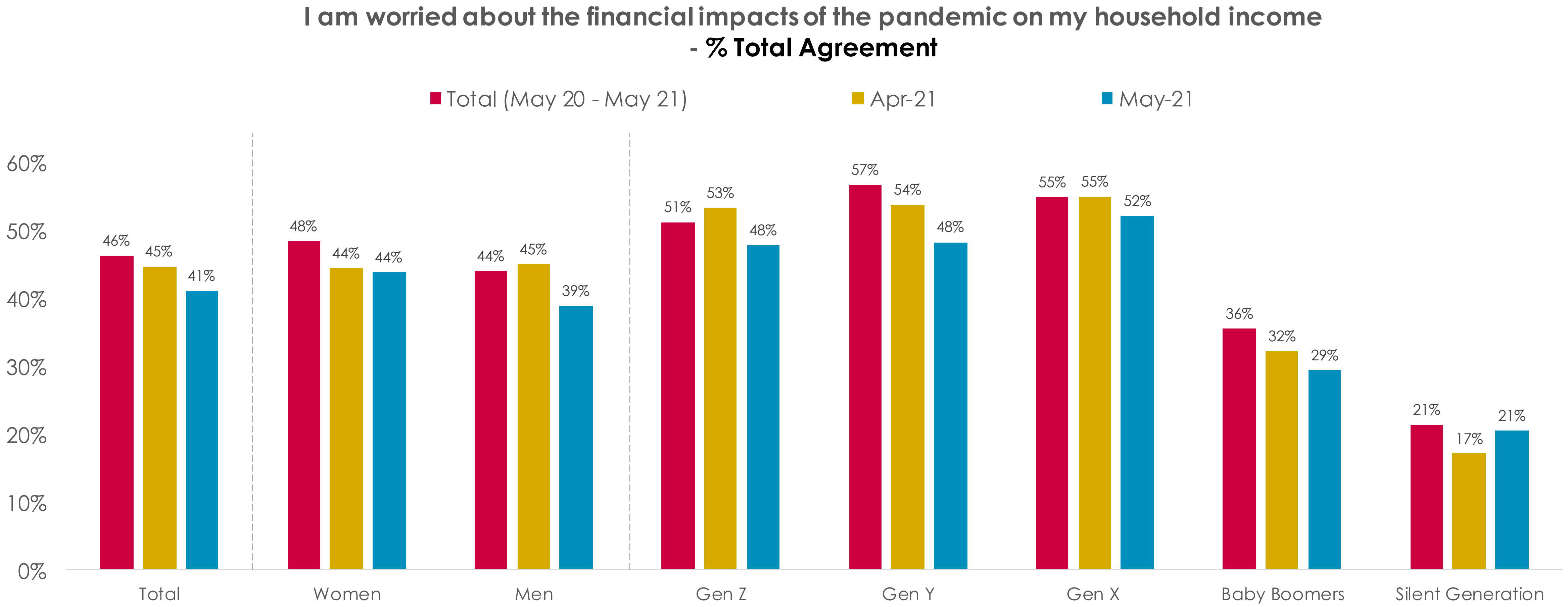
Latest phase of reopening drives decline in financial concerns

- Proportion feeling worried about impact of pandemic on their household income down 4% this month from 45% to 41%
- This is paralleled by a 1% decline in those feeling their job is more insecure than before the pandemic (25%)
- Rise in leisure spending has coincided with a 2% decline in those feeling they are saving more than they usually do



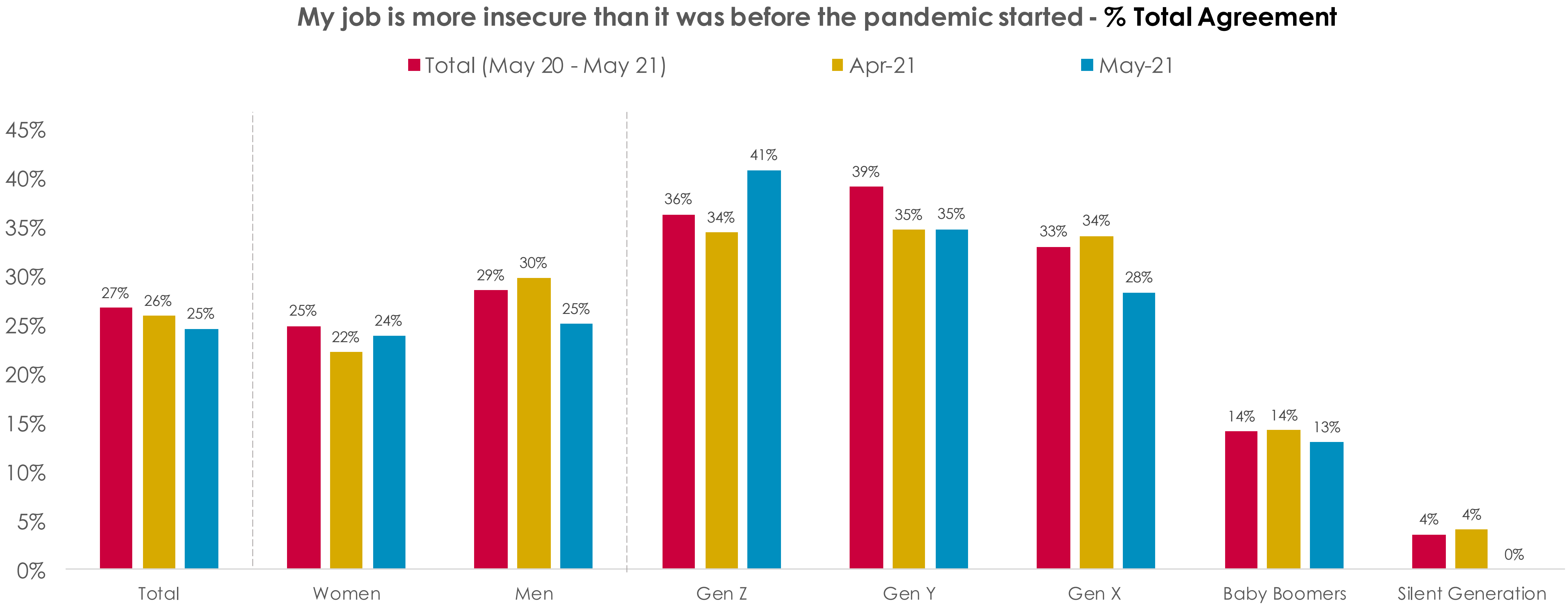
Men and younger cohorts main source of decline in financial concerns

- Whilst we see a 4% decline in financial concerns at a topline level, this rises to 6% amongst men this month
- Whilst older generations saw concerns remain more stable, both Gen Z and Gen Y saw at least a 5% decline



Men and Gen X drive decline in sense of job insecurity

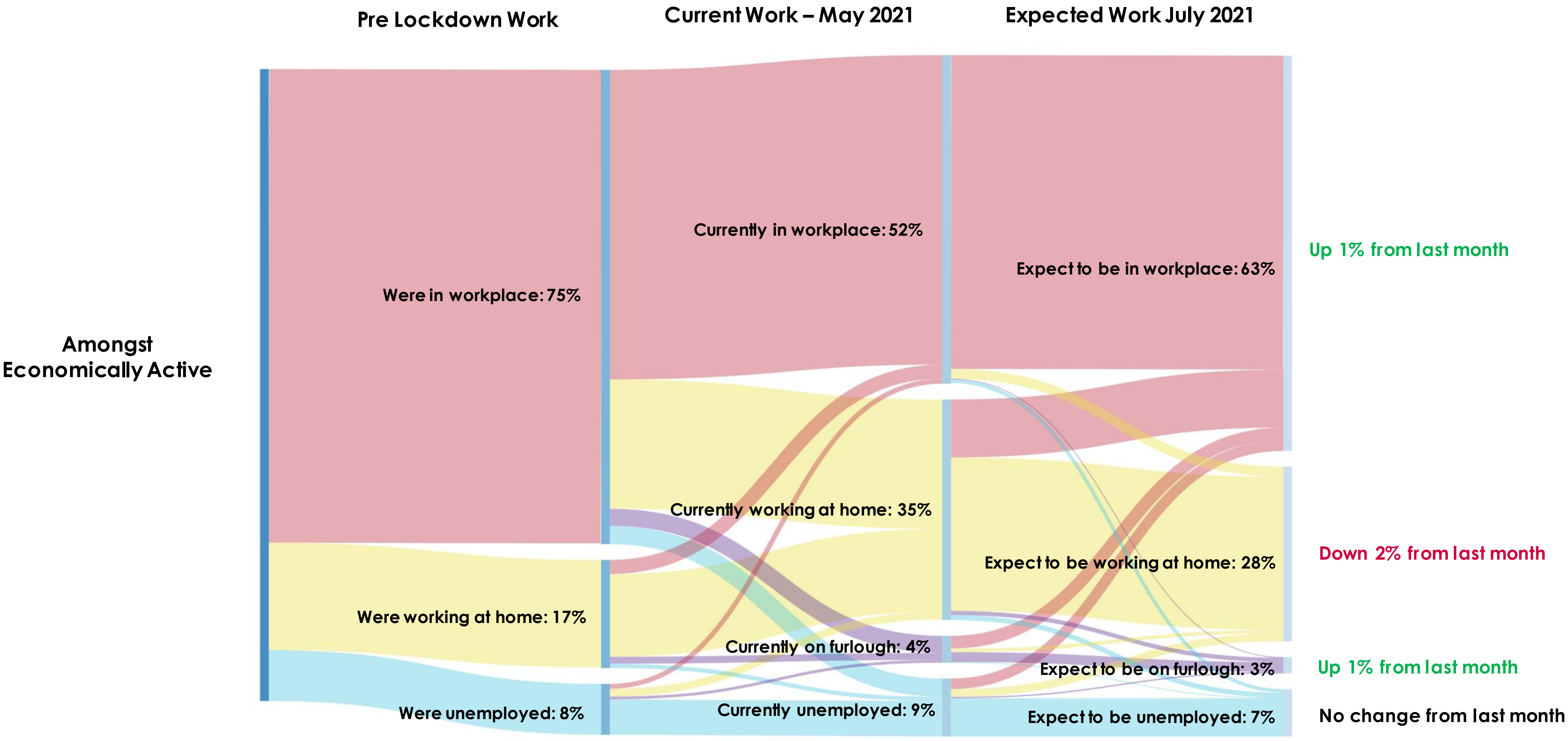
- Feels of insecurity diverge amongst men and women this month, with men seeing a 5% decline whilst women see a 2% rise
- Gen Z saw a sharp rise in feelings of job insecurity (up 7%) whilst all other generations saw a decline



	Total (May 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
Total	27%	26%	25%
Women	25%	22%	24%
Men	29%	30%	25%
Gen Z	36%	34%	41%
Gen Y	39%	35%	35%
Gen X	33%	34%	28%
Baby Boomers	14%	14%	13%
Silent Generation	4%	4%	0%

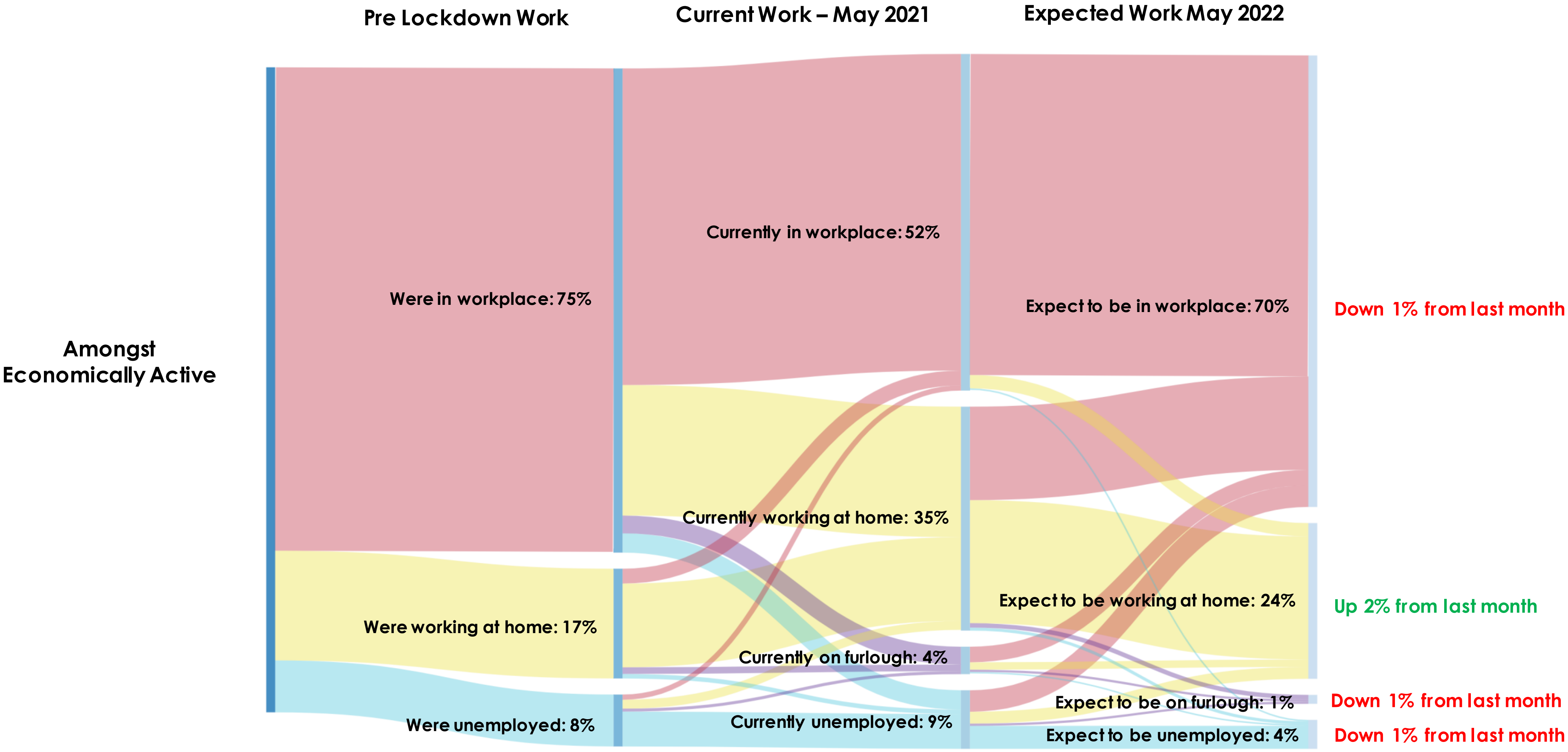
More than half of respondents now back in the workplace

- 52% say they are in workplace, whilst more than one in three remain working remotely (35%)
- Expectations for work in the short term remain positive, with a 1% rise in those expecting to be in workplace by July, up to 63%



Longer term work expectations continue to improve

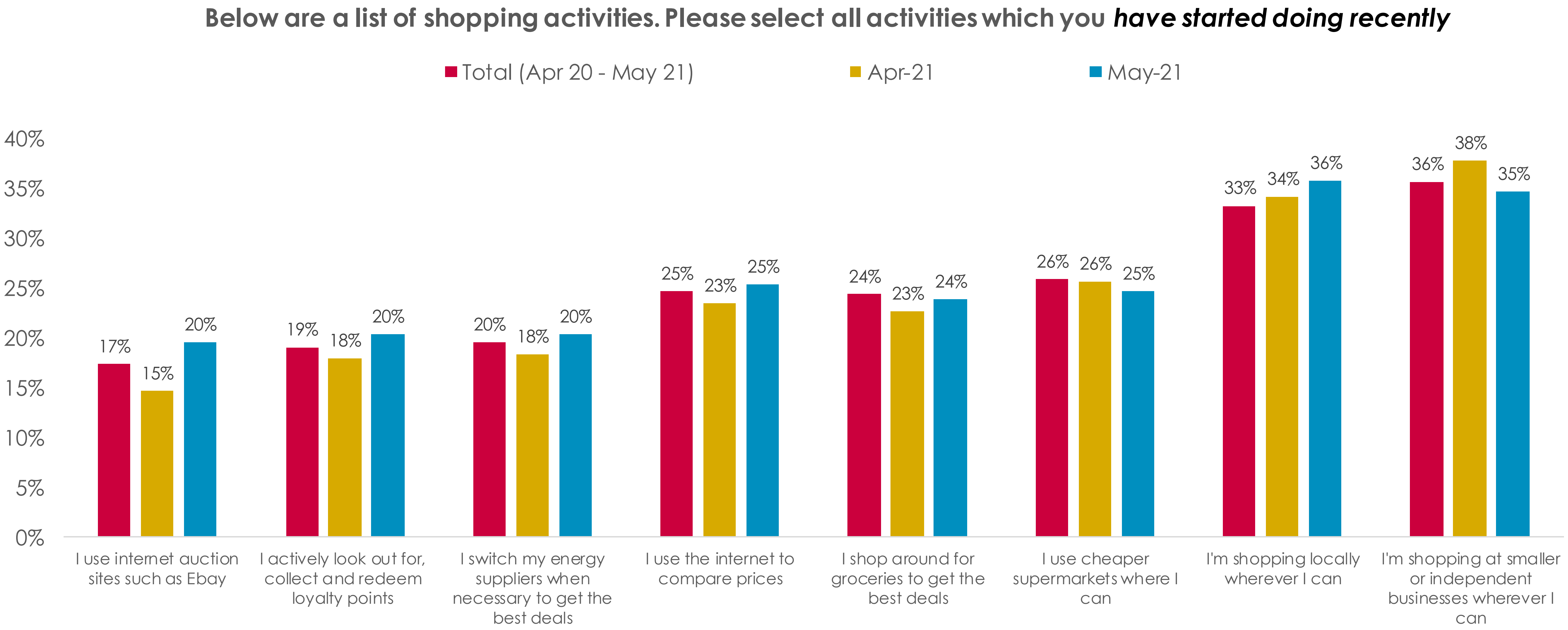
- Just one in twenty now expect to be either unemployed (4%) or on furlough (1%) by this time next year
- Expectations to be in the workplace remain consistent with recent months, still falling short of pre-pandemic levels



Impacts on Shopping Habits

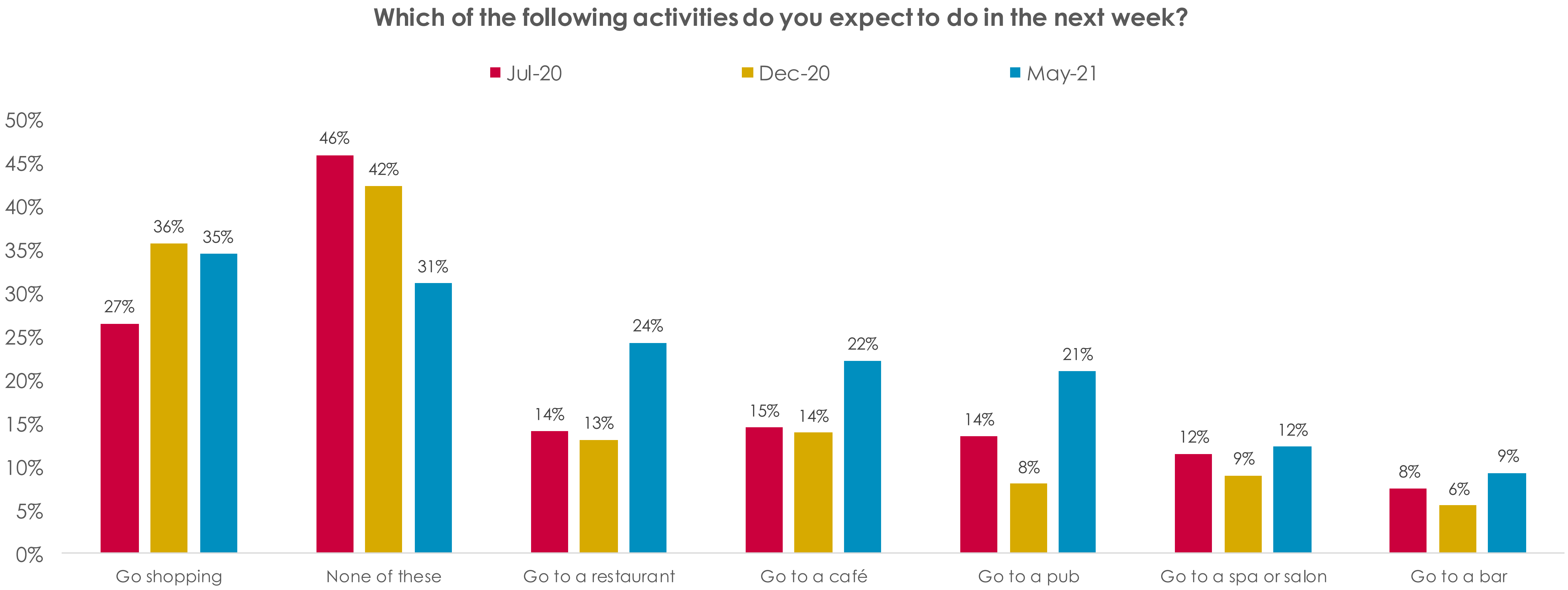
Support for small independent businesses already losing traction

- Whilst consumers appeared willing to support independent business amidst the initial reopening, this has fallen 3% this month
- Consumers appear to be growing more savvy, with a rise in those comparing prices online and shopping around for the best deals



Appetite for leisure activities significantly higher amidst latest reopening

- Less than a third of respondents (31%) expect to do none of the activities listed within the next week, down from 42% in December
- Sharpest rise in demand for restaurants (13% to 24%), cafes (14% to 22%) and pubs (8% to 21%), with little change in those expecting to go shopping

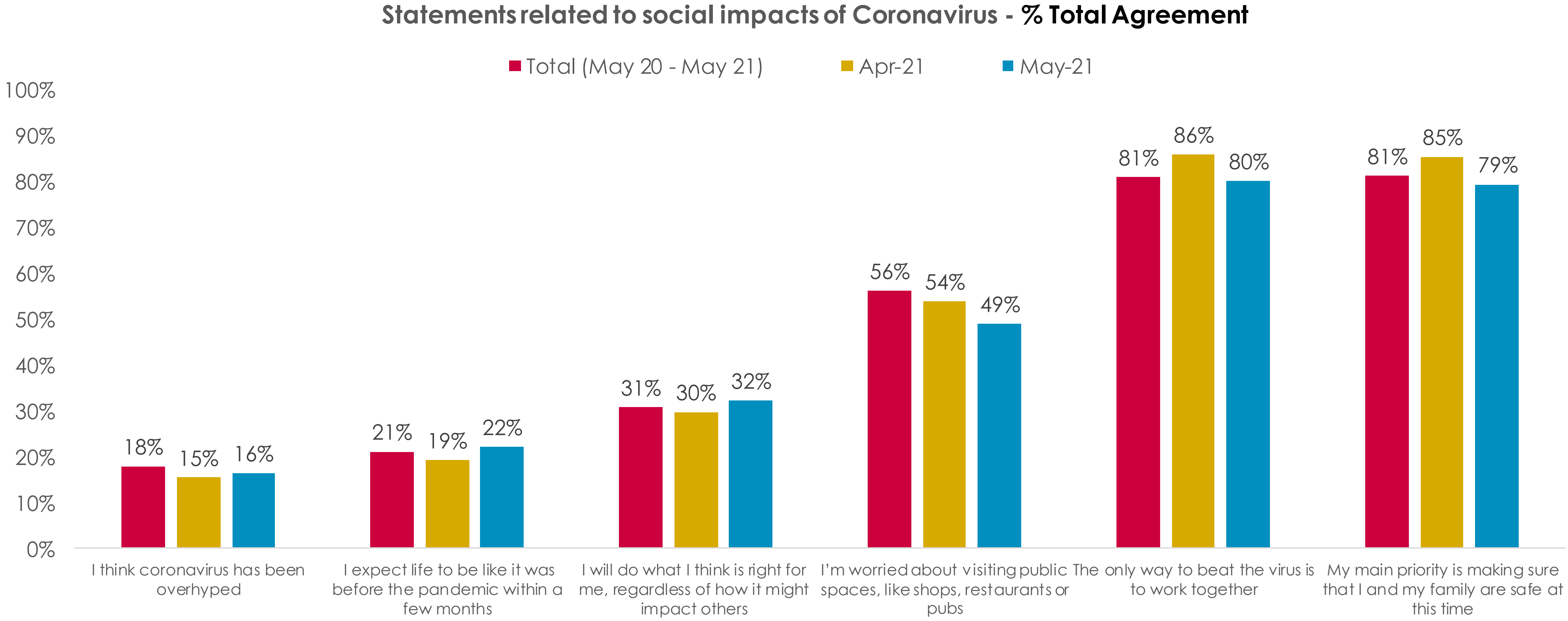


	Jul-20	Dec-20	May-21
Go shopping	27%	36%	35%
None of these	46%	42%	31%
Go to a restaurant	14%	13%	24%
Go to a café	15%	14%	22%
Go to a pub	14%	8%	21%
Go to a spa or salon	12%	9%	12%
Go to a bar	8%	6%	9%

Social Implications

Vaccine rollout further dampens concerns over public spaces

- This month significantly marks the first occasion since the start of the pandemic where less than half (49%) feel worried about public spaces
- Declines in such concerns have been paralleled by a 3% rise in those expecting life to return to pre-pandemic normality within a few months

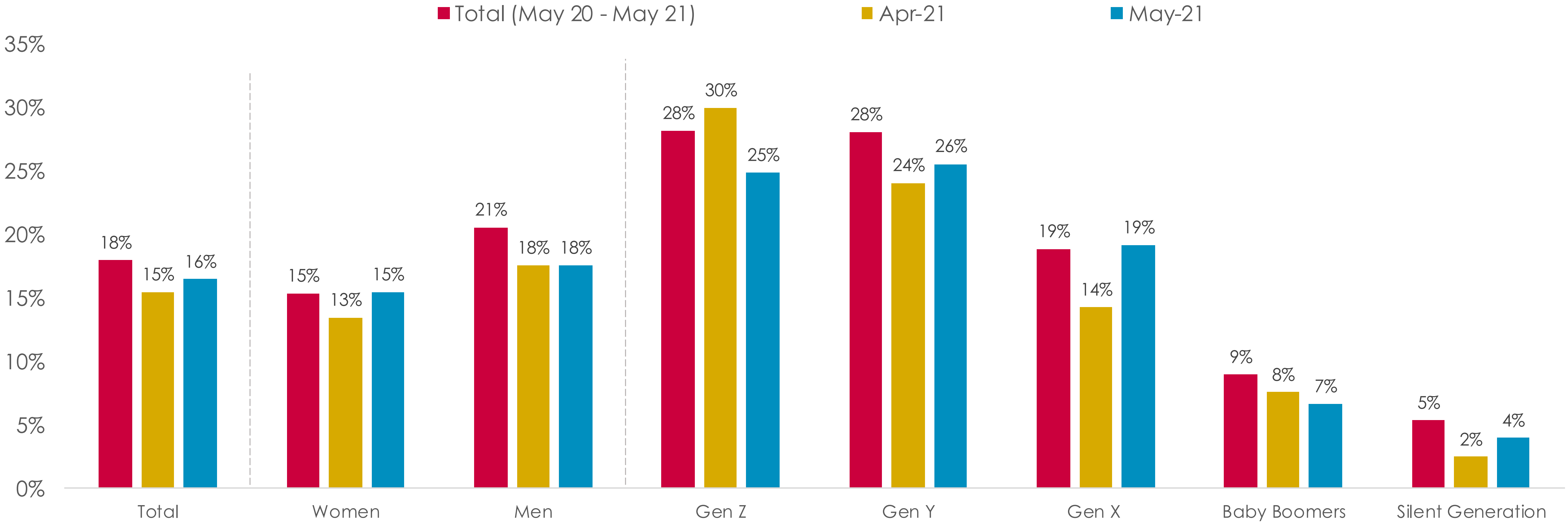


	Total (May 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
I think coronavirus has been overhyped	18%	15%	16%
I expect life to be like it was before the pandemic within a few months	21%	19%	22%
I will do what I think is right for me, regardless of how it might impact others	31%	30%	32%
I'm worried about visiting public spaces, like shops, restaurants or pubs	56%	54%	49%
The only way to beat the virus is to work together	81%	86%	80%
My main priority is making sure that I and my family are safe at this time	81%	85%	79%

Covid cynicism remains far more prominent amongst younger cohorts

- Despite a 5% decline this month, one in four Gen Z respondents continue to feel that the pandemic has been overhyped
- This contrasts with both Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation, amongst whom less than one in ten feel this degree of cynicism
- Whilst women saw a 2% rise in feelings that the pandemic has been overhyped, men remain more likely to feel this way

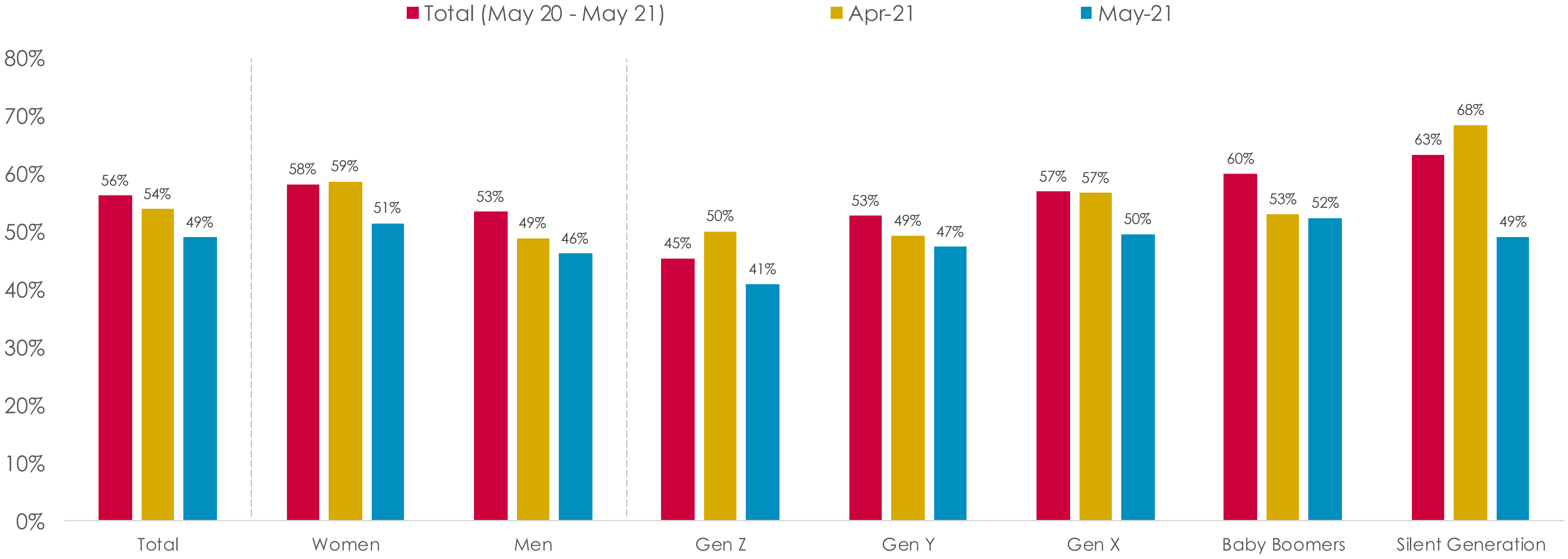
I think Coronavirus has been overhyped - **% Total Agreement**



Two dose vaccines drive substantial decline in concerns amongst over 70s

- Less than half of the Silent Generation (49%) now feel worried about visiting public spaces, down 19% from last month
- Generations now less polarised regarding concerns about public spaces than they have been throughout the pandemic
- Women remain more concerned about public spaces than men despite seeing a sharper decline this month

I'm worried about visiting public spaces like shops, restaurants and pubs - **% Total Agreement**



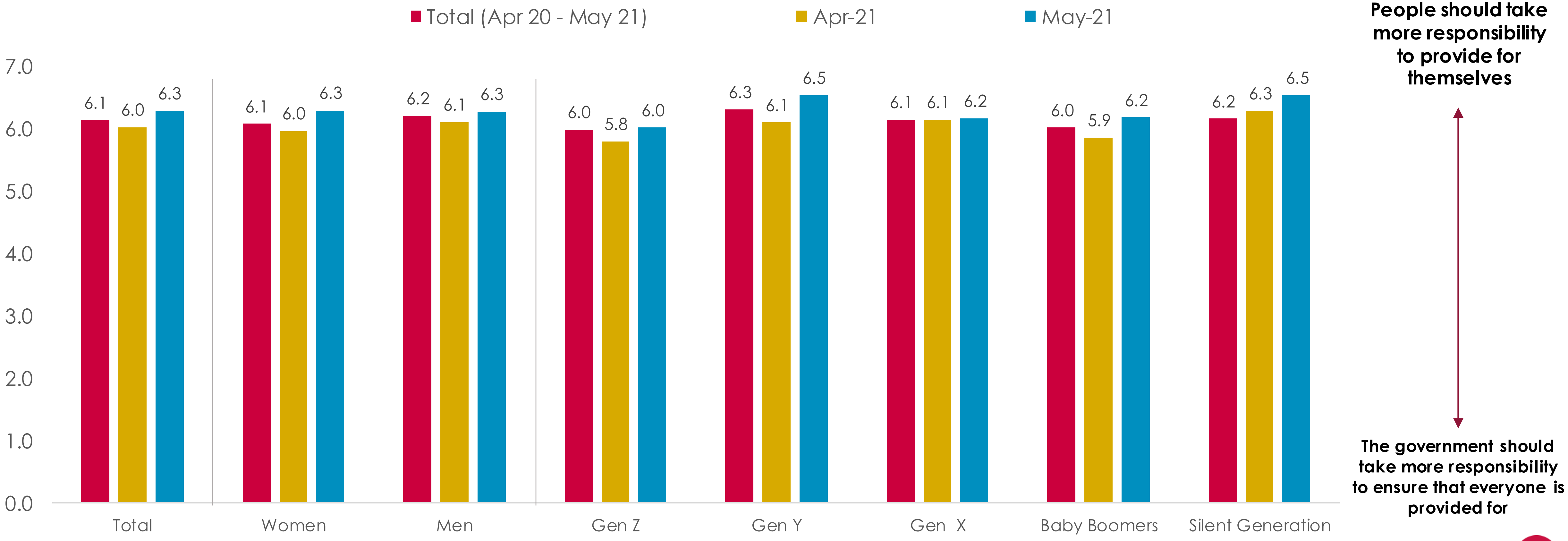
	Total (May 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
Total	56%	54%	49%
Women	58%	59%	51%
Men	53%	49%	46%
Gen Z	45%	50%	41%
Gen Y	53%	49%	47%
Gen X	57%	57%	50%
Baby Boomers	60%	53%	52%
Silent Generation	63%	68%	49%

Government Priorities

Sense of Government responsibility dampened as normality edges closer

- Overall average score rose by 0.3 this month, suggesting consumers feel people should take more responsibility for themselves
- Increase relatively consistent across generations, with Gen Y seeing the sharpest rise (up 0.4)
- Both men and women now equally as likely to feel that people should take responsibility for themselves

On a scale from 1 to 10, please indicate to what extent you feel it is the Government's responsibility to ensure everybody is provided for *[Average Response]*



	Total (Apr 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
Total	6.1	6.0	6.3
Women	6.1	6.0	6.3
Men	6.2	6.1	6.3
Gen Z	6.0	5.8	6.0
Gen Y	6.3	6.1	6.5
Gen X	6.1	6.1	6.2
Baby Boomers	6.0	5.9	6.2
Silent Generation	6.2	6.3	6.5

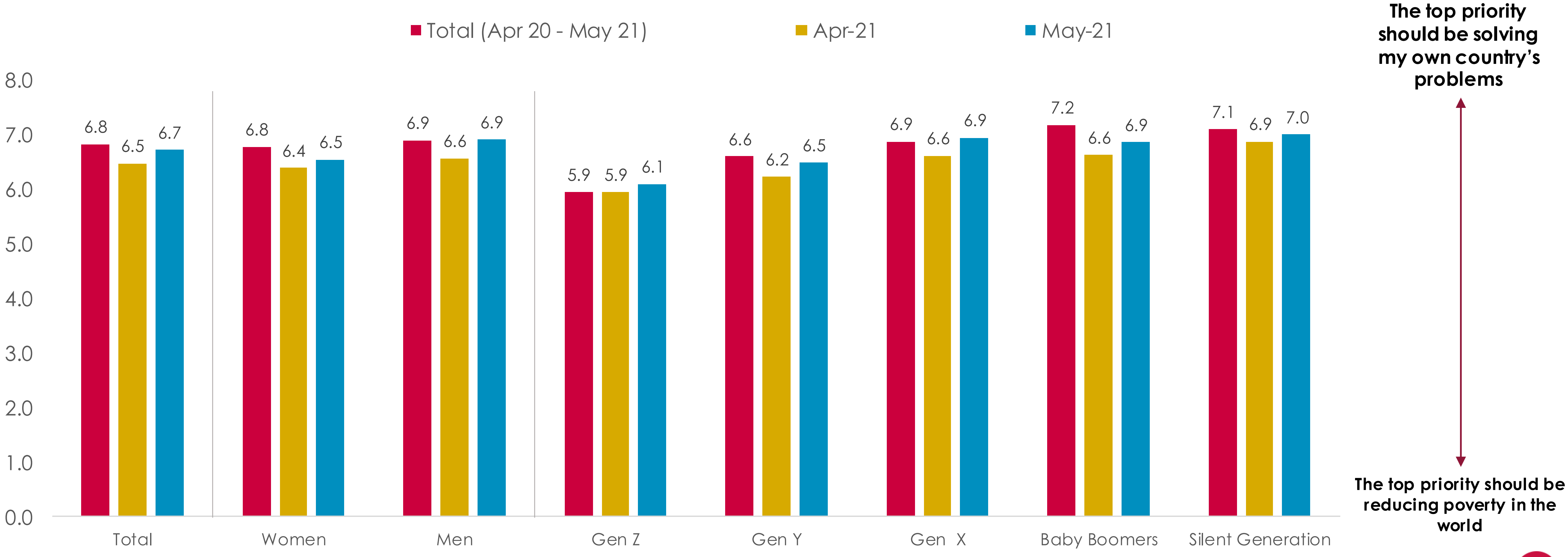
People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves

The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for

Spread of Indian variant potential source of greater focus on domestic issues

- For all generations, and amongst both men and women, this month sees consumers place greater focus on prioritising domestic problems
- Preferences towards reducing world poverty remain more likely amongst younger consumers and women
- Men saw a sharper rise in such feelings this month, rising by 0.3 compared to a rise of just 0.1 for women

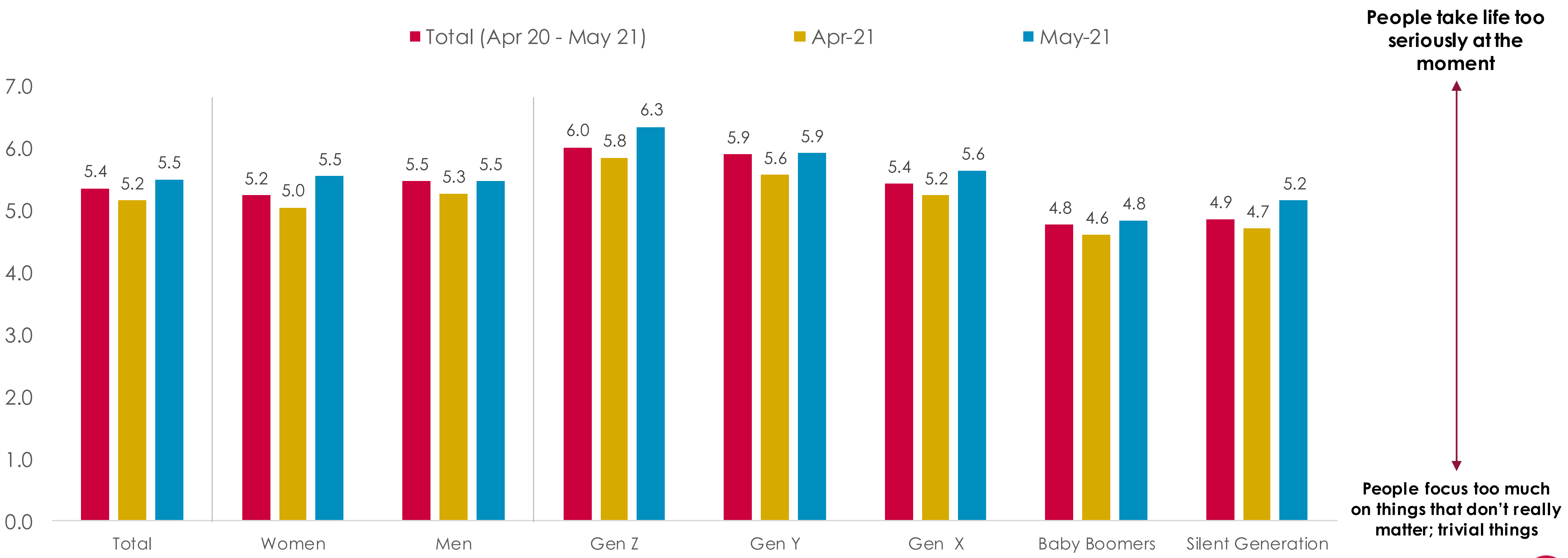
On a scale from 1 to 10, please indicate what you feel the top priority for the UK Government should be *[Average Response]*



	Total (Apr 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
Total	6.8	6.5	6.7
Women	6.8	6.4	6.5
Men	6.9	6.6	6.9
Gen Z	5.9	5.9	6.1
Gen Y	6.6	6.2	6.5
Gen X	6.9	6.6	6.9
Baby Boomers	7.2	6.6	6.9
Silent Generation	7.1	6.9	7.0

Sense of new seriousness dampened by easing of restrictions

- This month sees a 0.3 increase amongst the total sample, suggesting consumers are less inclined to feel a degree of new seriousness
- Women see a larger increase than men this month, bringing both groups to the same score of 5.5
- Despite seeing similar increases to younger consumers this month, older generations remain more likely to feel sense of new seriousness



	Total (Apr 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
Total	5.4	5.2	5.5
Women	5.2	5.0	5.5
Men	5.5	5.3	5.5
Gen Z	6.0	5.8	6.3
Gen Y	5.9	5.6	5.9
Gen X	5.4	5.2	5.6
Baby Boomers	4.8	4.6	4.8
Silent Generation	4.9	4.7	5.2

Optimism Index April 20 – May 21

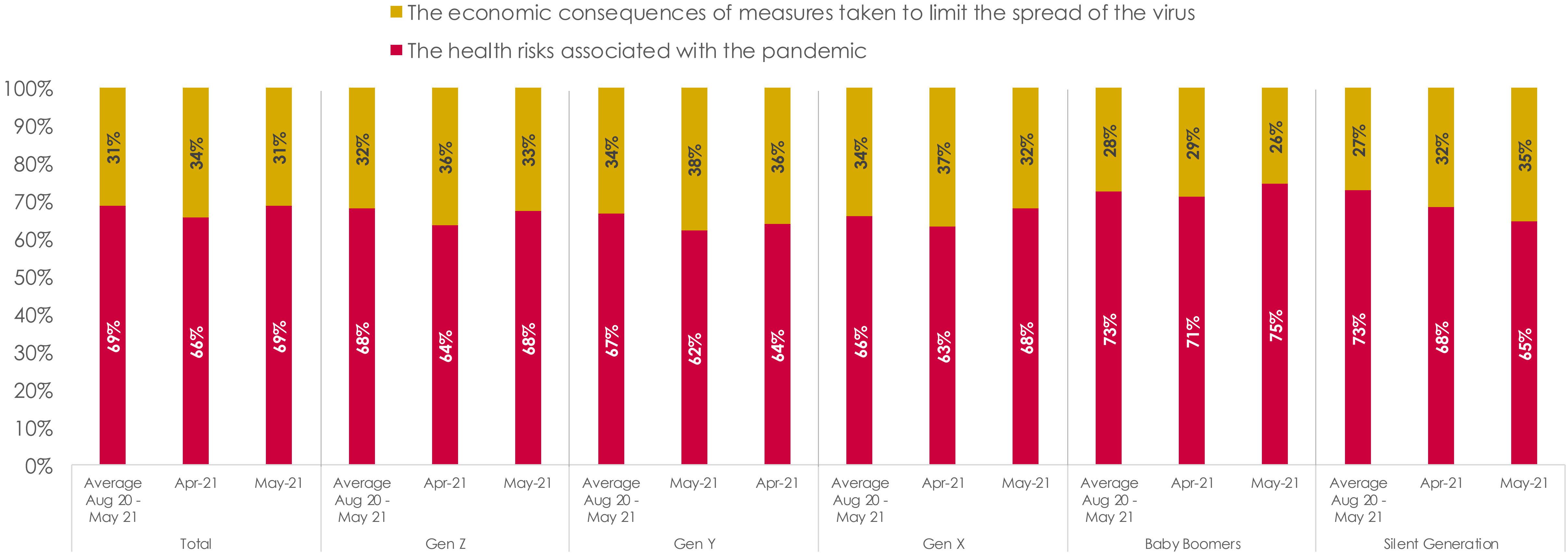
Reopening of indoor hospitality switches focus back towards public health

- This month sees a 3% rise in those who feel the health risks of the pandemic are a greater concern that the consequences of lockdown

- Worth noting is that the Silent Generation are now amongst the most likely to prioritise the economy over public health

-

If you had to choose, which of the following two options would you say is your biggest concern at the moment?

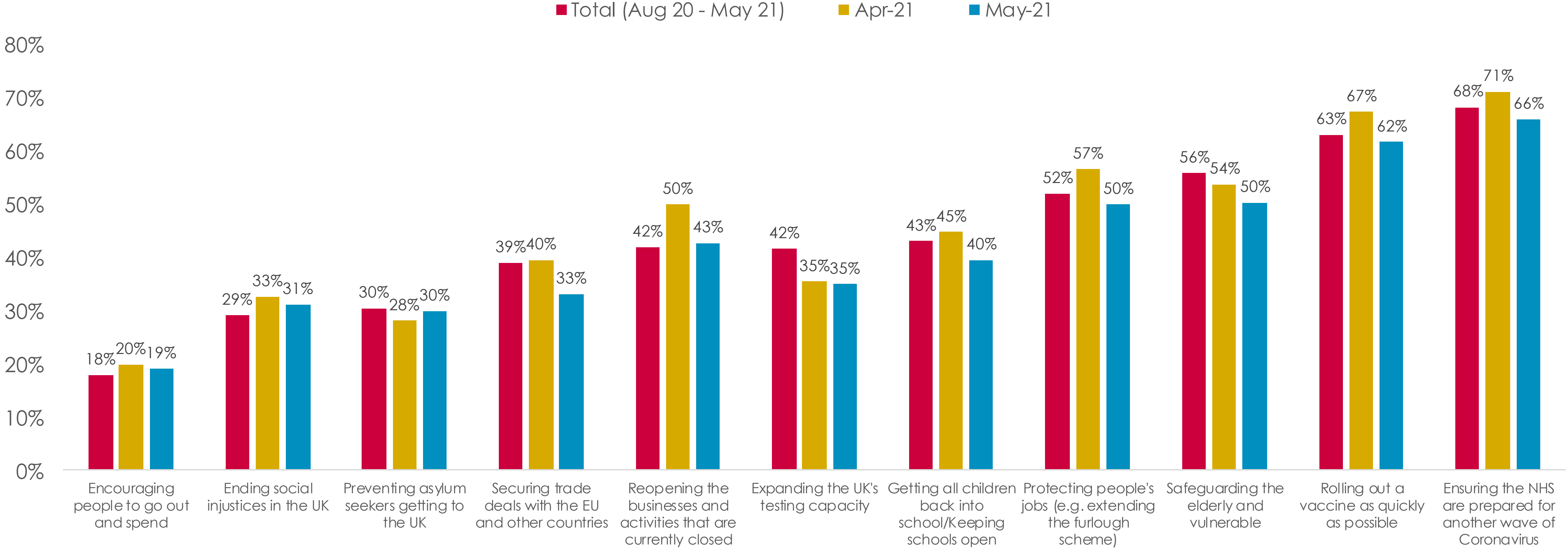


Movements towards normality drive decline in focus on pandemic priorities

-Consumers grew less likely to feel the Government should focus on impacts of the pandemic this month, both in relation to public health, such as protecting the NHS, rolling out vaccines and safeguarding, as well as in relation to the economy, such as protecting jobs and reopening businesses

- Respondents however remain more likely to feel the Government should focus on impacts to public health

Which, if any, of the following do you think should be priorities for the government over the next few months?

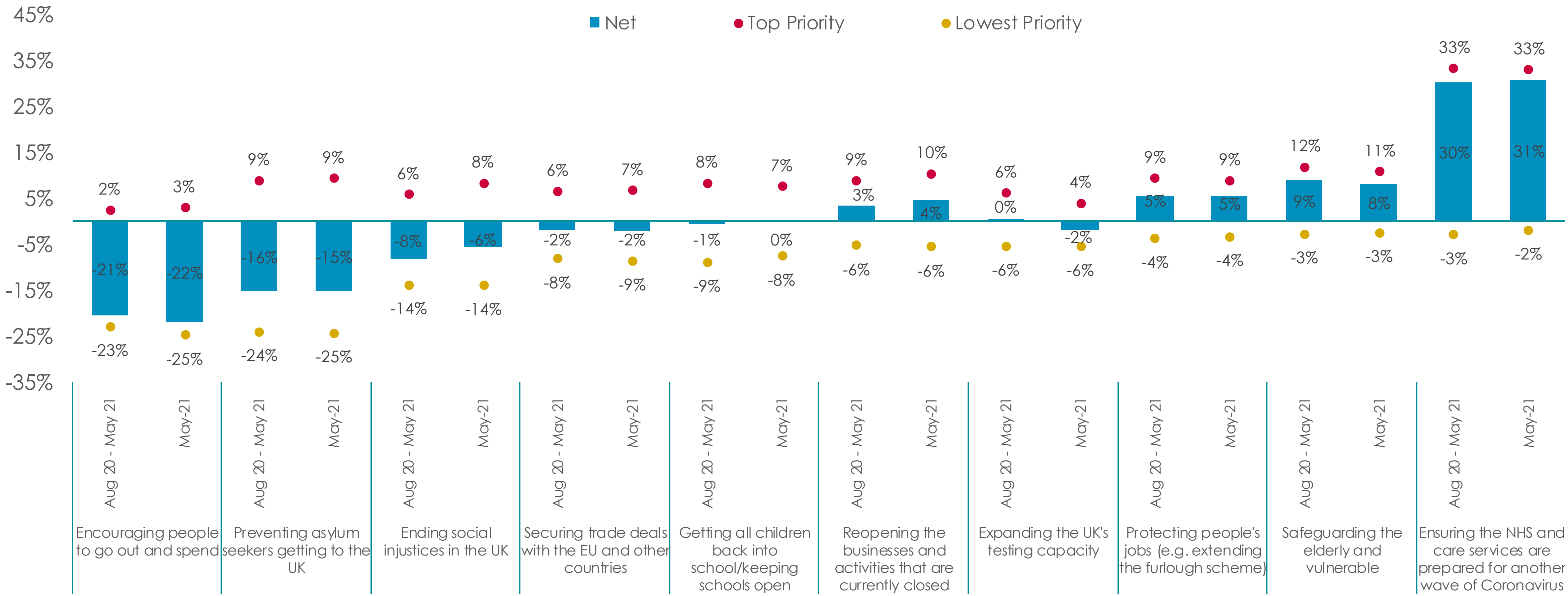


	Total (Aug 20 - May 21)	Apr-21	May-21
Encouraging people to go out and spend	18%	20%	19%
Ending social injustices in the UK	29%	33%	31%
Preventing asylum seekers getting to the UK	30%	28%	30%
Securing trade deals with the EU and other countries	39%	40%	33%
Reopening the businesses and activities that are currently closed	42%	50%	43%
Expanding the UK's testing capacity	42%	35%	35%
Getting all children back into school/Keeping schools open	43%	45%	40%
Protecting people's jobs (e.g. extending the furlough scheme)	52%	57%	50%
Safeguarding the elderly and vulnerable	56%	54%	50%
Rolling out a vaccine as quickly as possible	63%	67%	62%
Ensuring the NHS are prepared for another wave of Coronavirus	68%	71%	66%

Personal priorities see little change, with key focus remaining on NHS

- One in three respondents felt their top priority remained ensuring the NHS was prepared for another wave of Coronavirus
- A quarter felt that encouraging people to go out and spend was their lowest priority, despite the reopening of indoor hospitality

If you had to choose, which of the following is your top priority and which is your lowest priority?



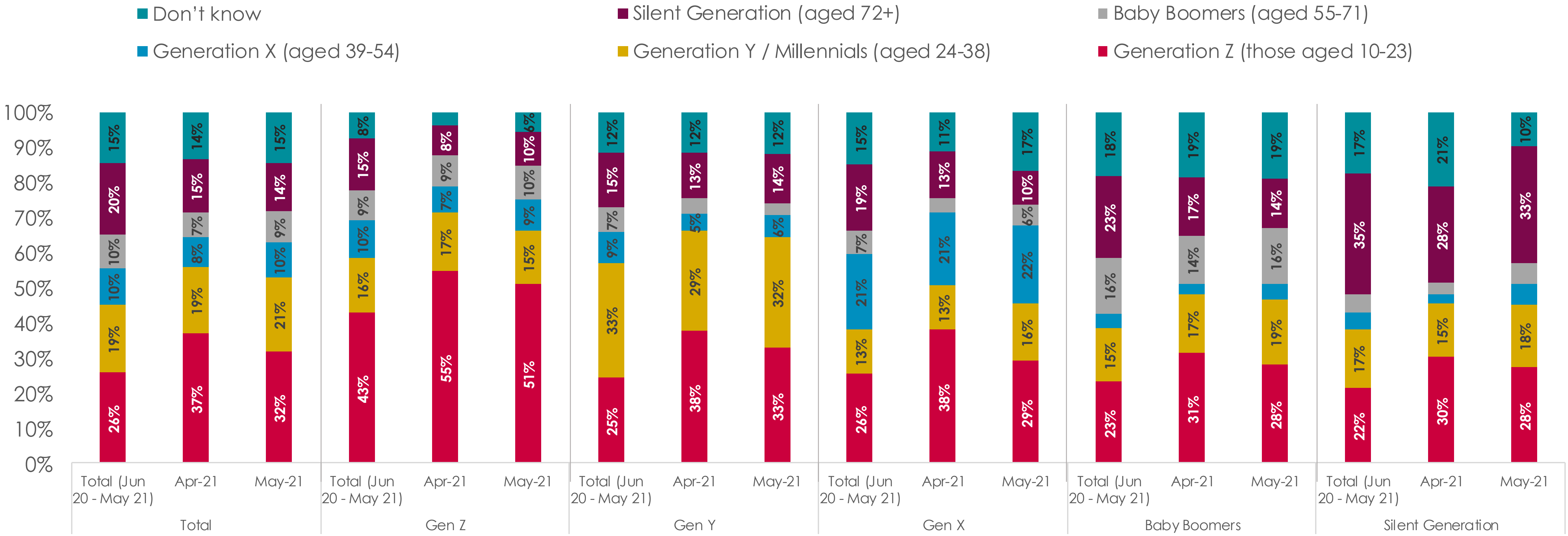
Optimism Index August 20 – May 21

Generational Impacts

Latest reopening sees consumers grow less likely to feel Gen Z worst affected

- With further steps taken to reopen economy, we see a 5% decline in those feeling that Gen Z are worst affected by the pandemic
- Despite this, more than half of Gen Z themselves feel they will be the worst affected generation, at least 15% higher than any other group

Which generation do you think will be most negatively affected by the coronavirus pandemic, all things considered?

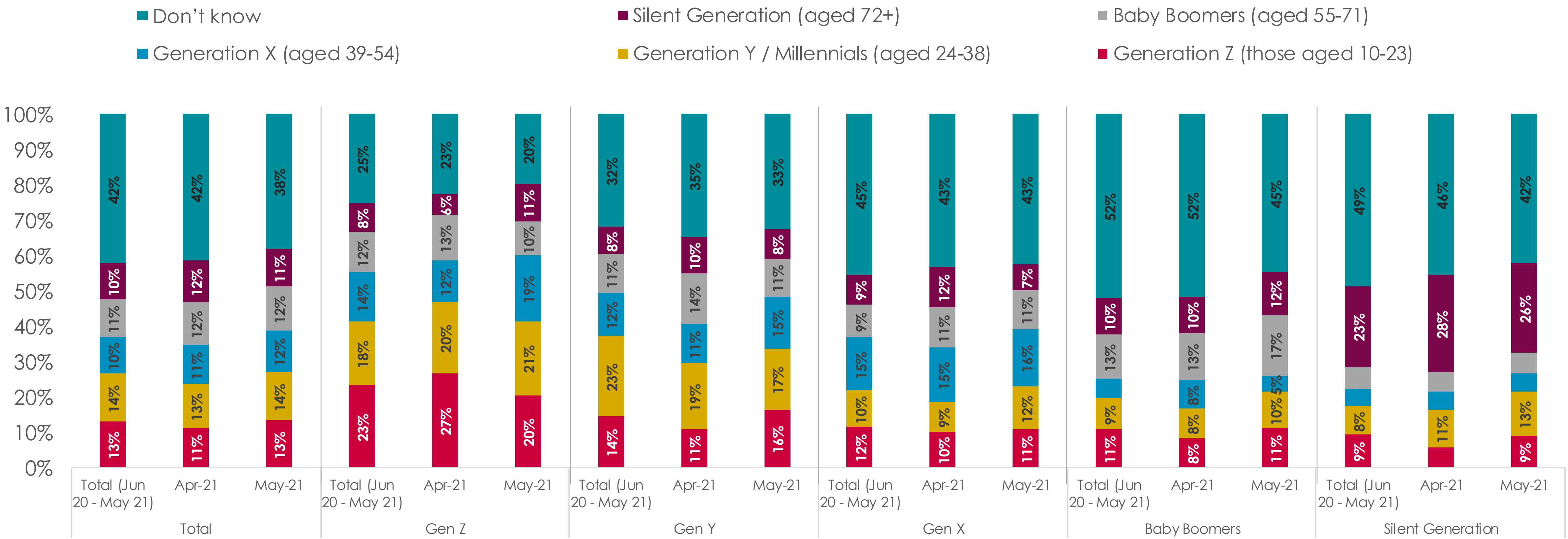


Optimism Index June 20 – May 21

Significant proportion remain unsure as to who will benefit most from pandemic

- More than a third were unsure about which generation will be most positively affected, with uncertainty rising with age
- Gen Z grew less likely to feel their generation will be the most positively affected, down to just 20% this month
- Despite a 2% decline this month, more than a quarter of Silent Generation feel they will benefit most from the pandemic

Which generation do you think will be most **positively** affected by the coronavirus pandemic, all things considered?

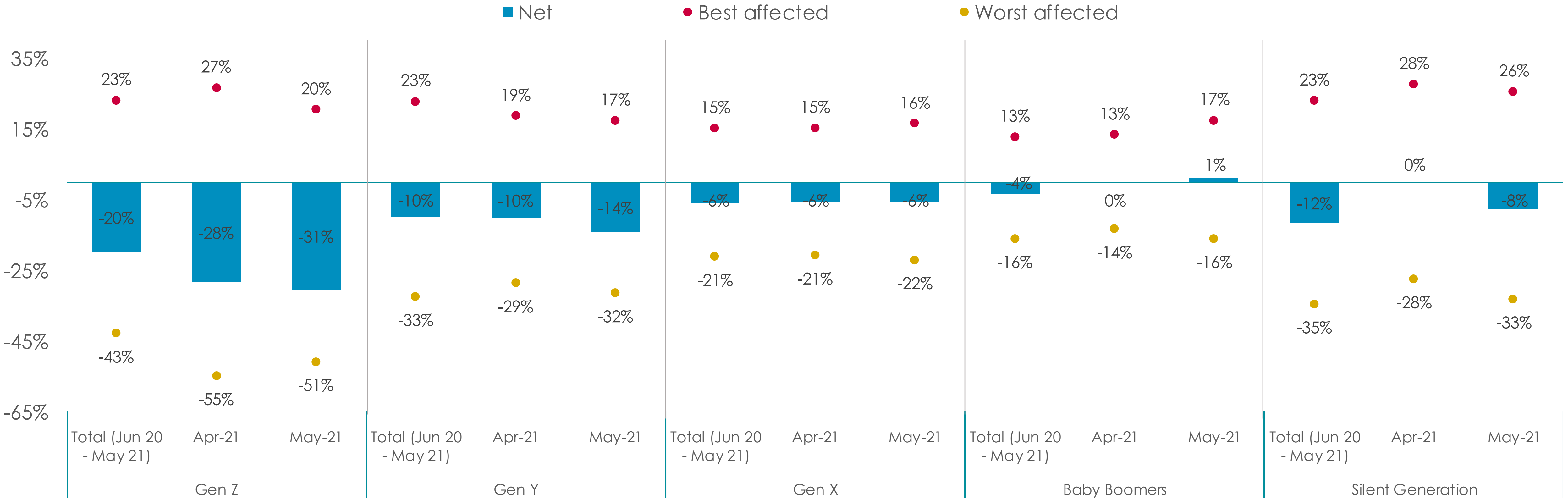


Gen Z remain the most negative about impacts of pandemic for their generation

- Net proportion saying they will be best minus worst affected fell by 3% this month amongst Gen Z (-28% to -31%)
- Other generations remain more polarised, most notably amongst Baby Boomers, whilst Silent Generation saw an 8% decline (0% to -8%)

Which generation do you think will be most affected by the coronavirus pandemic, all things considered?

[Net % saying their own generation will be best *minus* worst affected]



TRAJECTORY

Each month Trajectory survey 1500 adults in the UK on a range of issues including consumer confidence, personal choice and control, social trust, opportunities in technology, optimism and their place in the world.

This data is analysed and produces The Optimism Index. The data presented here is a snapshot of the full data, which can be used for bespoke analyses on request – including time-series analysis (from 2011 onwards) and global comparisons.

Enquiries: info@trajectorypartnership.com

Trajectory
www.trajectorypartnership.com
@TrajectoryTweet