

The Impact of COVID-19 on British Society

United Kingdom



Advance notice:

More in Common will be releasing a major study on British society in the 2020s in October 2020 – the result of an 18 month project and conversations and surveys that have engaged over 10,000 people.

Ahead of that report, this study examines the impacts of COVID-19 on Britain, highlighting how it compares with the US and five major European countries.

<https://www.moreincommon.com/where-we-work/more-in-common-uk/>

About More in Common



More in Common is an international initiative set up in 2017 to unite divided societies.

Our UK team works alongside teams in the United States, France and Germany. Together, we have around 60 partnerships with a wide range of groups in civil society, politics, government, business, faith, education, philanthropy and the media.

In October 2020, we're releasing a groundbreaking report on British society in the 2020s. Ahead of that report, this 7-country study shows how Britain's response to COVID-19 compares to six other major democracies.

For more information please visit www.moreincommon.com or contact us at contact@moreincommon.com

About this study



COVID-19 has up-ended the lives of people across the world, causing untold suffering and dislocation, with a death toll expected to exceed one million within days. The impact of the coronavirus on our health, economy and society will re-shape the world of the 2020s. It could result in societies becoming more deeply divided along existing fault-lines, but that is not inevitable. This study shows that COVID-19 has unleashed hopes for change in many societies, especially those who have struggled most with the virus. It has also made us more aware of our shared humanity, the value of strong local communities and the importance of our connection to nature.

Many choices lie ahead as we grapple with the fallout of the pandemic. The decisions being made in the months ahead – in families, communities and nations – will have consequences for a generation. This is why More in Common has compiled this snapshot of public opinion in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands and the United States, with key findings on:

- The impact of the pandemic on personal health, family life, employment and finances
- How COVID-19 has impacted our societies – and people's feelings of togetherness, solidarity, empathy, trust and loneliness
- Whether people want a return to normal or wish to see significant change in the aftermath of the pandemic
- Whether countries need more European and international co-operation, or whether they should go it alone
- Views on political priorities and support for policies on issues such as the economy, jobs, the environment and taxation
- Hopes and fears for the future

Our snapshot combines a mix of country-specific and cross-country questions. We hope that the findings presented here, as well as the detailed national studies that form part of this project, will provide valuable insights into this once-in-a-generation moment. Most of all, we hope they will strengthen efforts to build more united and resilient societies.

Britain - Findings at a Glance (1)



COVID-19 is having a huge impact on Britain – but it has also inspired resilience and community

- Concern about a second wave of COVID-19 infections and lockdowns is higher in Britain than any other country.
- People in Britain have more directly experienced the impacts of COVID-19 than people in most other countries.
- Across all countries, around half report feeling alone in this crisis, and many perceive growing levels of division. While two in five in Britain also experience loneliness, this is lower than in any other country.
- Overwhelming majorities in all countries agree that the pandemic has reminded us all of our shared humanity.
- In Britain, a majority (significantly more than any other country) feel that COVID-19 has increased people's level of concern for each other. 58% feel we have become more aware of other people's living conditions.
- 54% in Britain feel worried that COVID-19 will have a worse impact on people who belong to racial, ethnic or religious minorities in the UK.

Findings at a Glance (2)



The UK shows a strong appetite for change rather than going back to normal. We asked what policies might bring people together around future challenges.

- The three highest policy priorities emerging from the pandemic are the NHS, the economy, and protection of the environment.
- The lockdown helped re-connected many people to nature and their local communities. 81% in Britain say they now feel more convinced that if we really want to improve our environment, we can.
- On wanting more done on the environment, Britain is ahead of other European countries. Just 5 per cent of people in Britain think the government is doing too much on the environment, and three quarters support a green new deal.
- At a time of declining faith in national governments, there is more confidence in the role of local governments, and support for recovery funds being spent through local as well as national governments.
- If companies receive state aid or recovery funds, nine in ten people in Britain expect commitments to society in return – including pay their fair taxes, reducing carbon emissions, onshoring jobs, paying fair wages and imposing salary caps on CEOs.

Findings at a Glance (3)



- In the UK, US, France, and Poland, people tend to feel deeply disappointed by their government's handling of the crisis so far, while Germans and the Dutch feel greater levels of pride.
- People in Britain make a distinction between competence and fairness – something we did not find in other countries. They judge the handling of COVID-19 in Britain as falling short on competence, but not fairness.
- In all 7 countries, people feel that medical staff, frontline workers, emergency personnel and medical researchers deserve gratitude for all that they did during the first phase of the pandemic.
- Across countries, people are split on whether the government is hiding information from the public. More than in any other country, people in Britain feel that the media has often pursued its own agenda during the crisis rather than just report facts.
- Commitment to social distancing measures is higher in Britain than any other country, yet 41 per cent of people in Britain think that most people have not been following the rules. This helps explain why Britain – like many other countries – has seen a decline in trust in others.
- Fewer people in Britain than any other country say that they would refuse a safe and effective vaccine.

Scope and Methodology



Scope

France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States

Methodology

- N=2,000 per country; margin of error +/- 2%
- Research partners
- France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: Kantar
 - UK and US: YouGov
- Fieldwork dates
 - France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: 1-8 July, 2020
 - UK: 19-28 June, 2020
 - US: 19-22 June, 2020
- Online survey using representative demographic quotas
- Due to space constraints, not all questions were asked in every country.

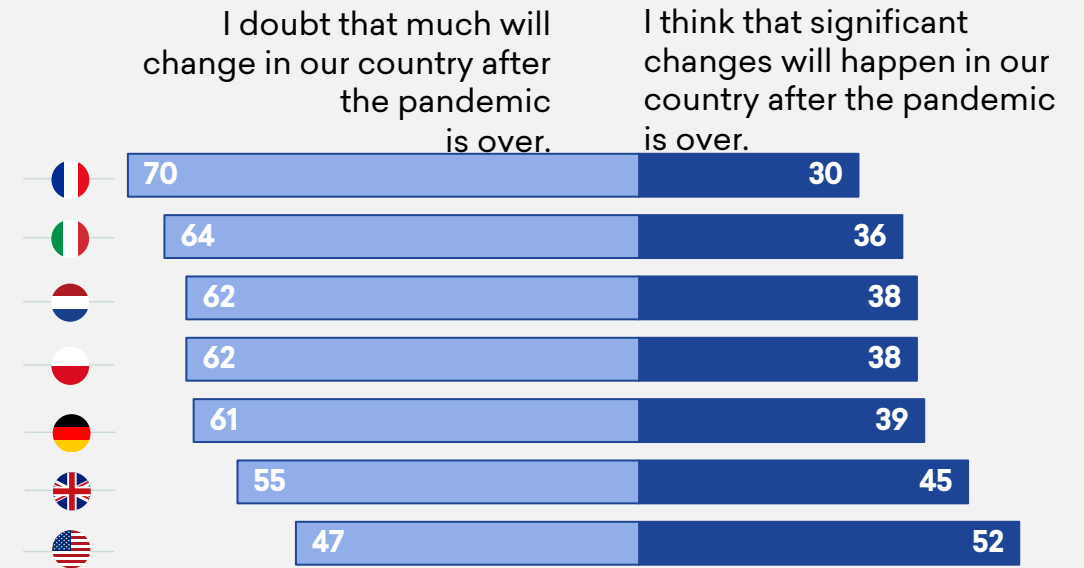
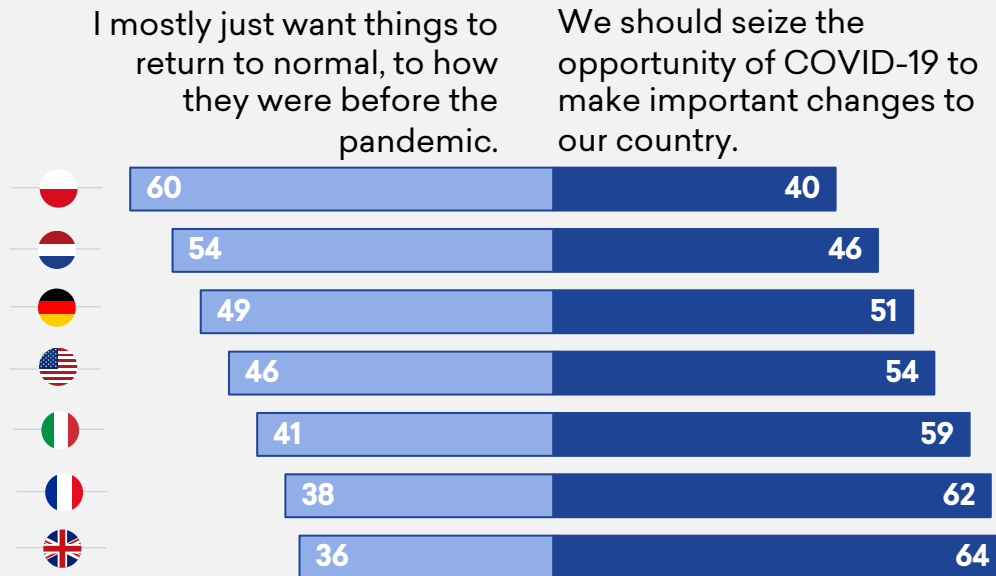
Please note: In few cases, numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Key Findings

Britain has the highest support for seizing the opportunity for change from COVID-19.



...but a majority does not expect much will change

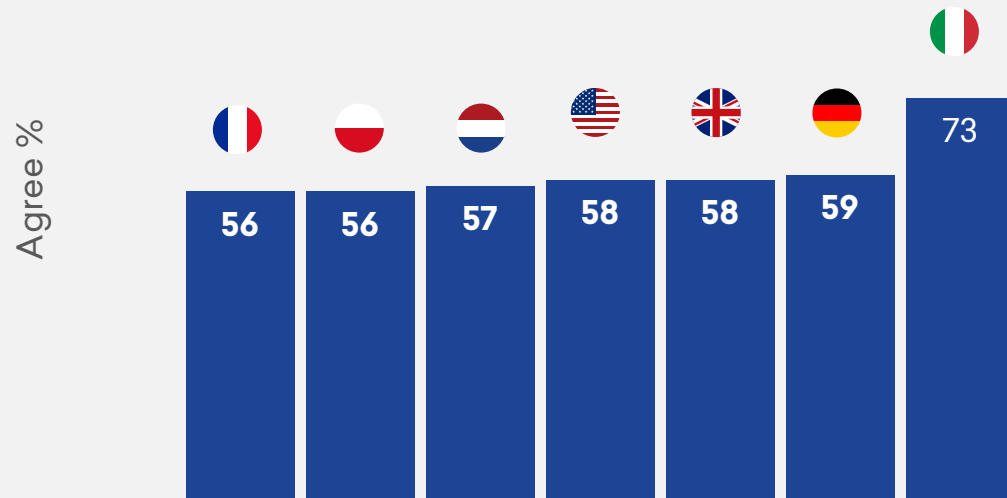


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

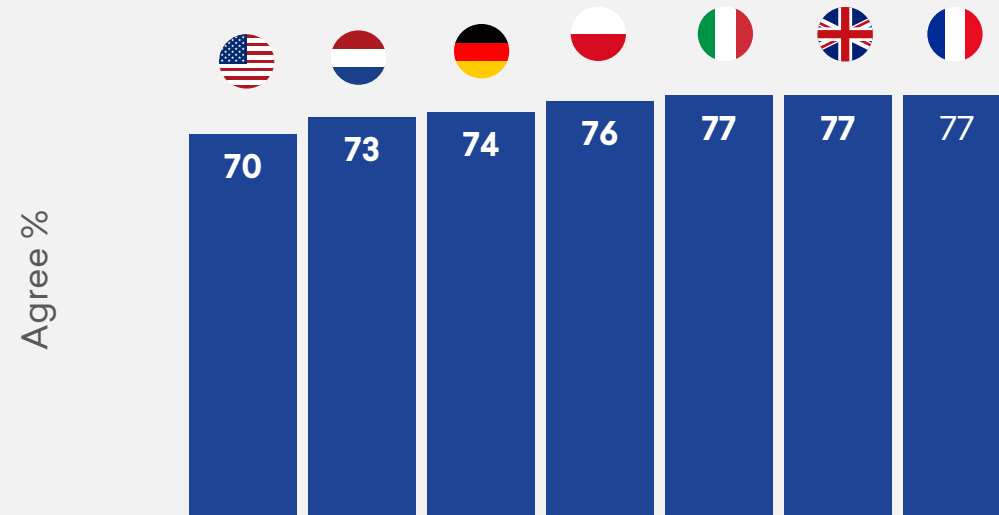
COVID-19 has made people more aware of inequality and our shared humanity.



“The COVID-19 pandemic has made me more aware of the living conditions of other people in this country.”

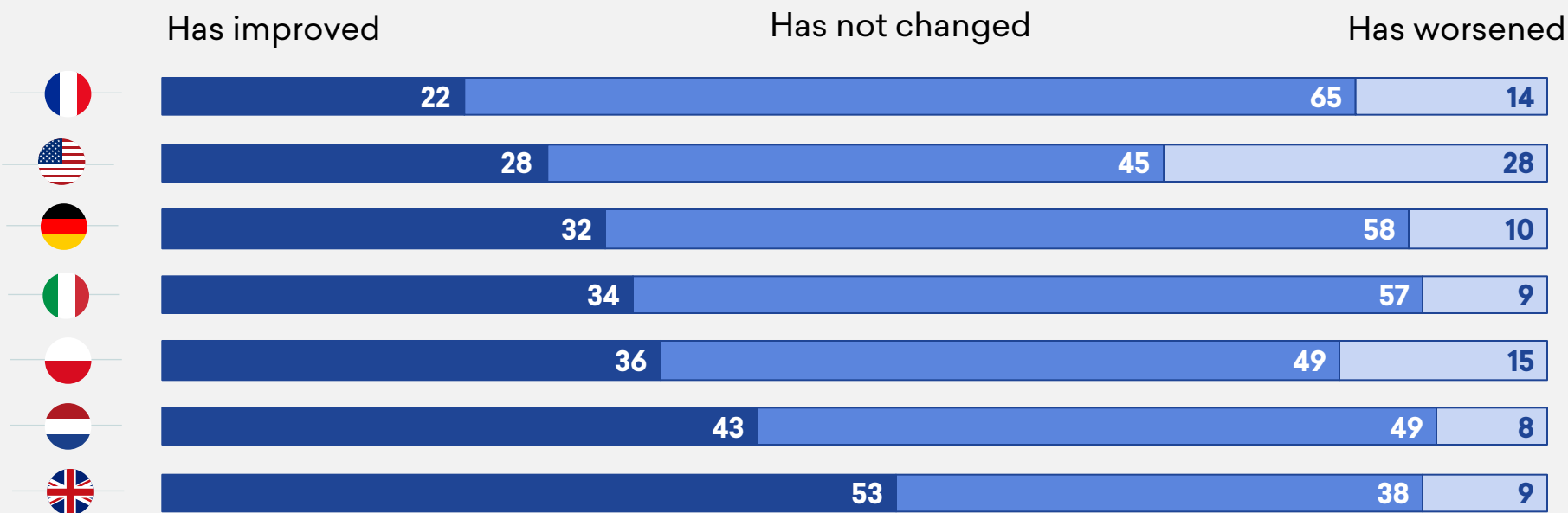


“The COVID-19 crisis has reminded us that no matter where we are from, as humans we are fundamentally the same.”



Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

More than any others, Britain feels that COVID-19 has made us more caring.



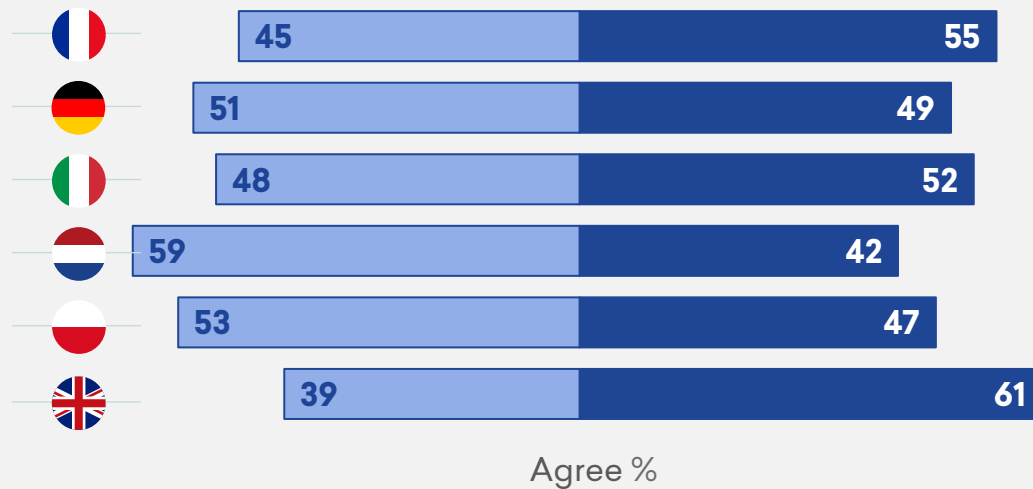
People's concern for each other

While many have felt alone, Britain is stronger on care and support than other countries.

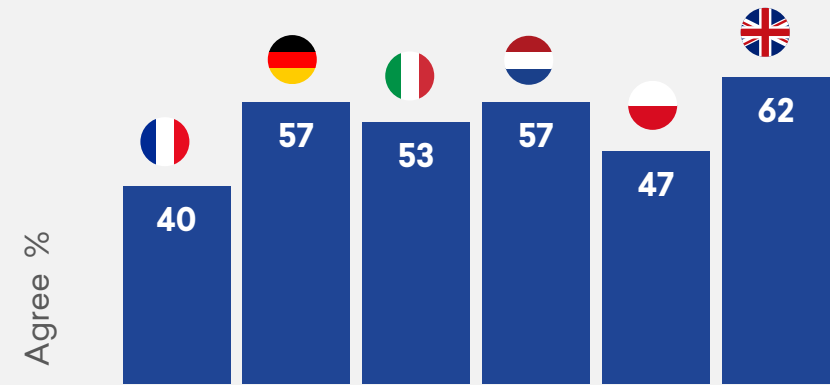


In this crisis, I have felt like I am mainly on my own.

In this crisis, I have felt the support and care of others.

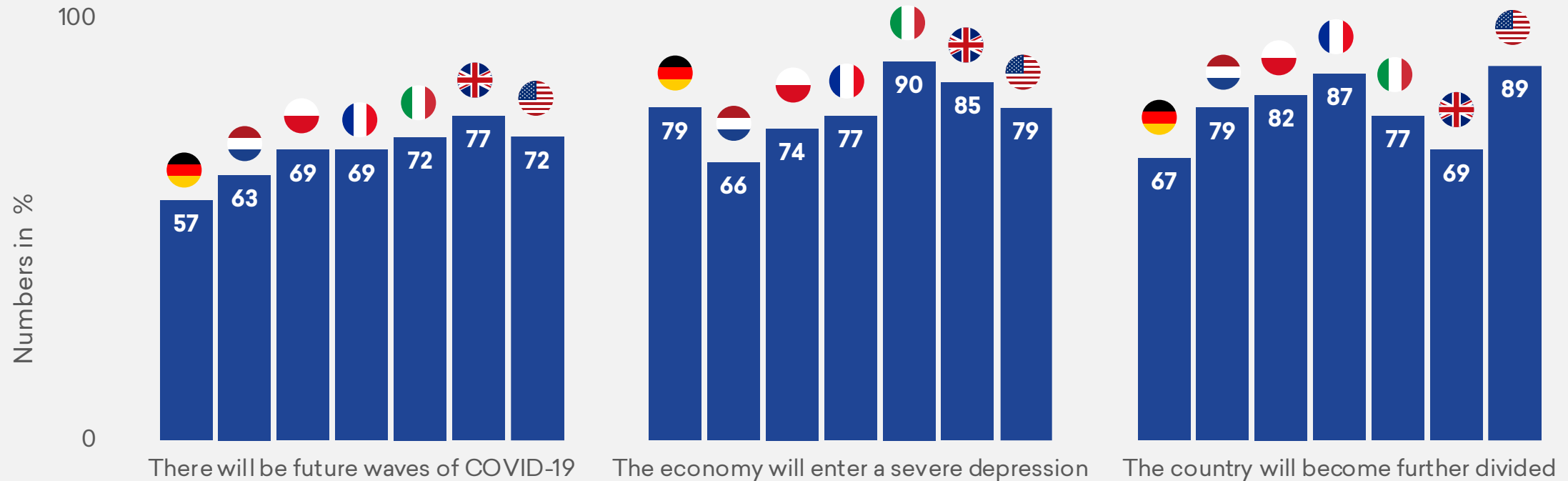


"The COVID-19 pandemic has shown me that most people in our country care about each other"



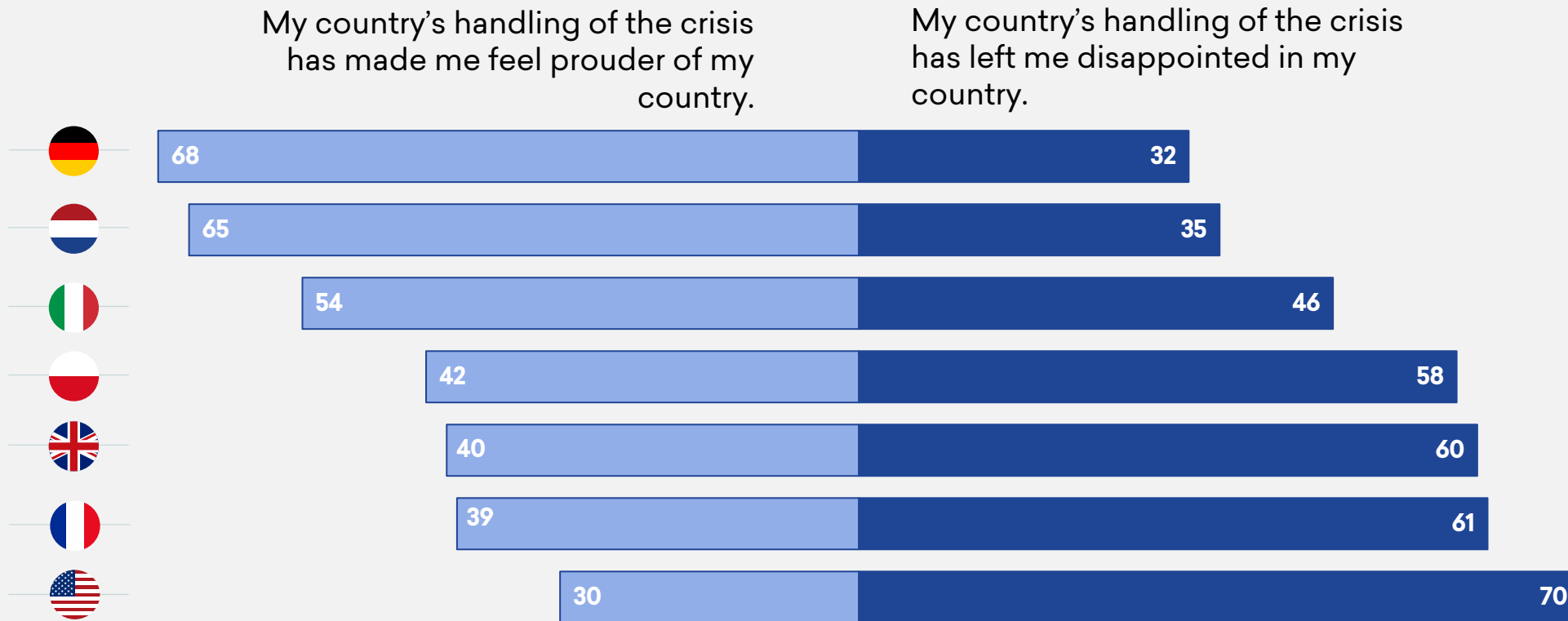
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?; To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Britain is more anxious than most on health and economy, but less anxious on division.



Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....?

Britain's handling of the COVID-19 crisis has left most feeling disappointed in their country.

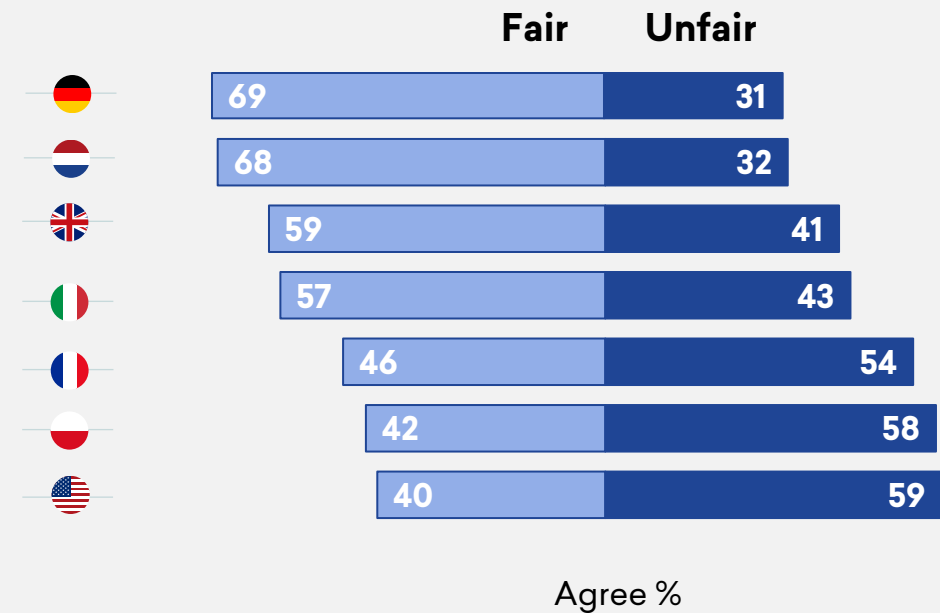
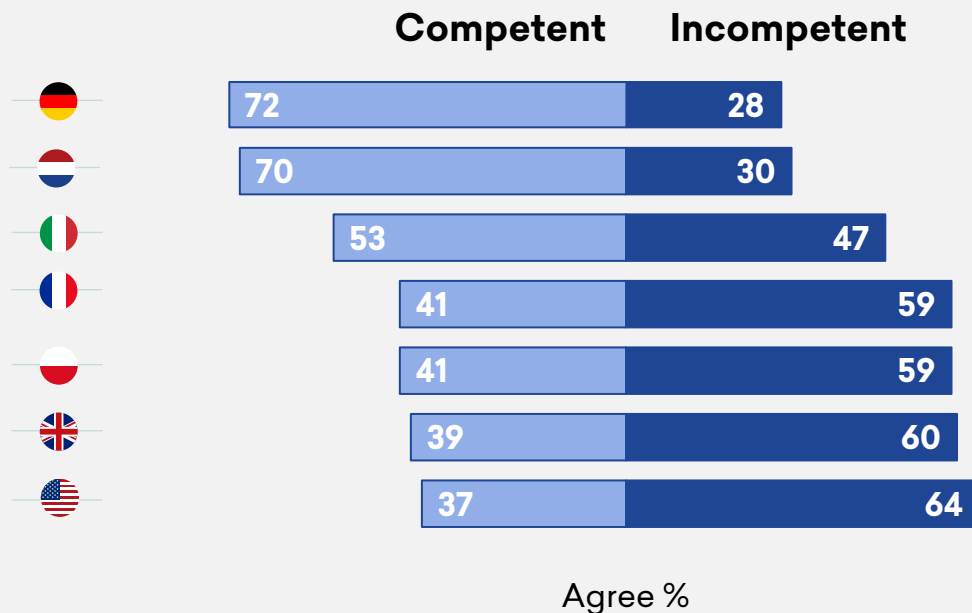


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?



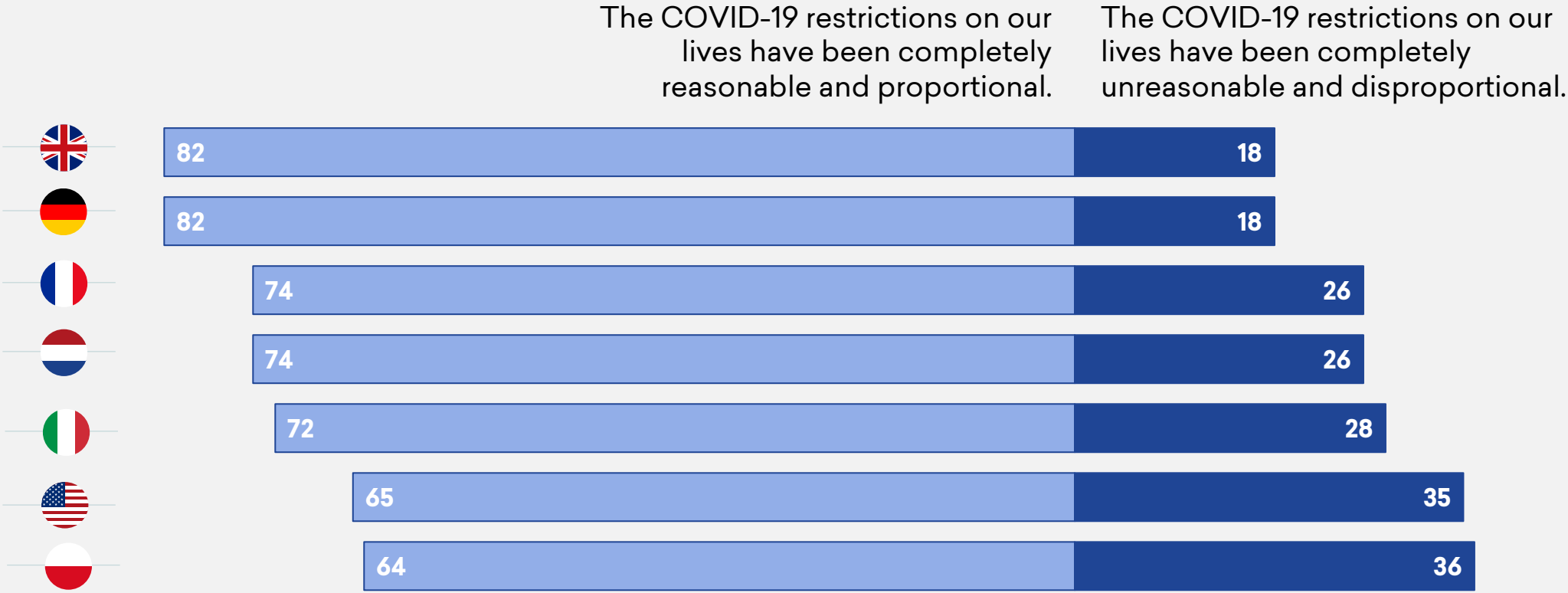
The British public sees the handling of COVID-19 as incompetent but not unfair.

The UK is the only country where the public makes a big distinction between competence and fairness



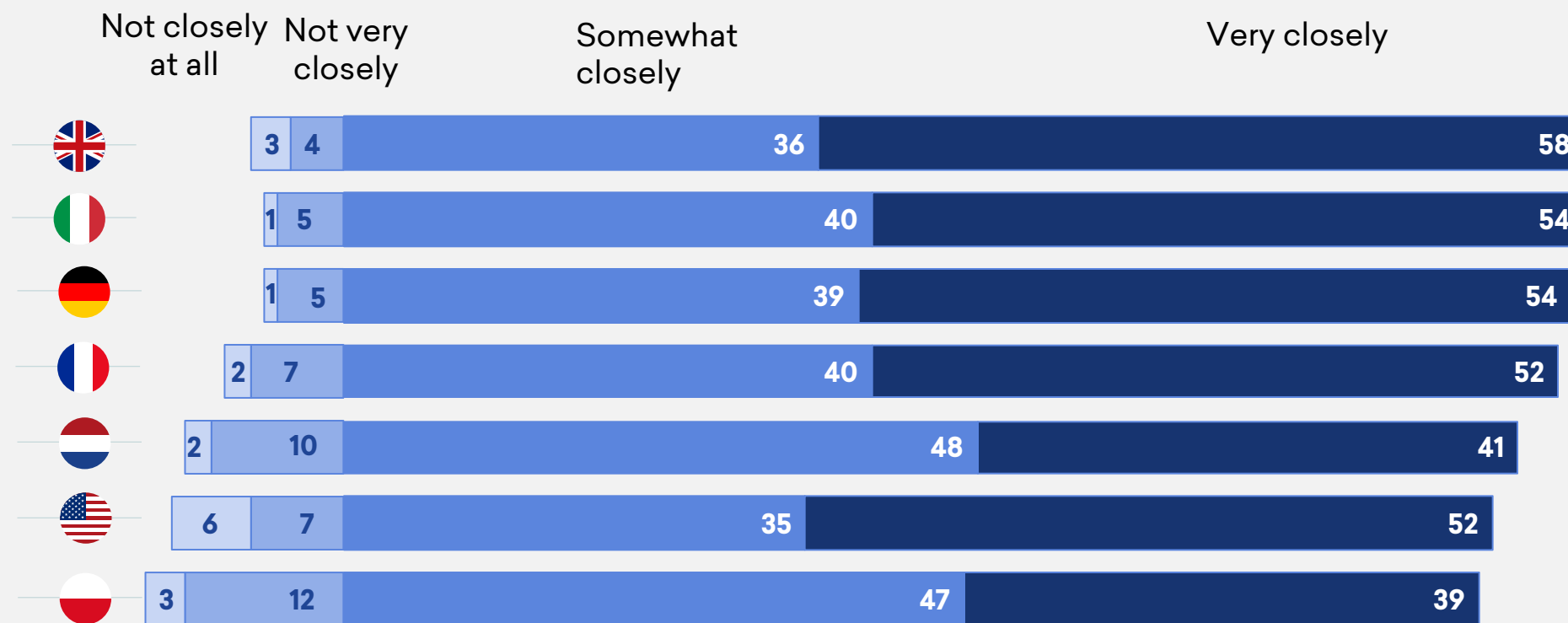
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

UK ranks highest for public trust that COVID measures are reasonable and proportional.



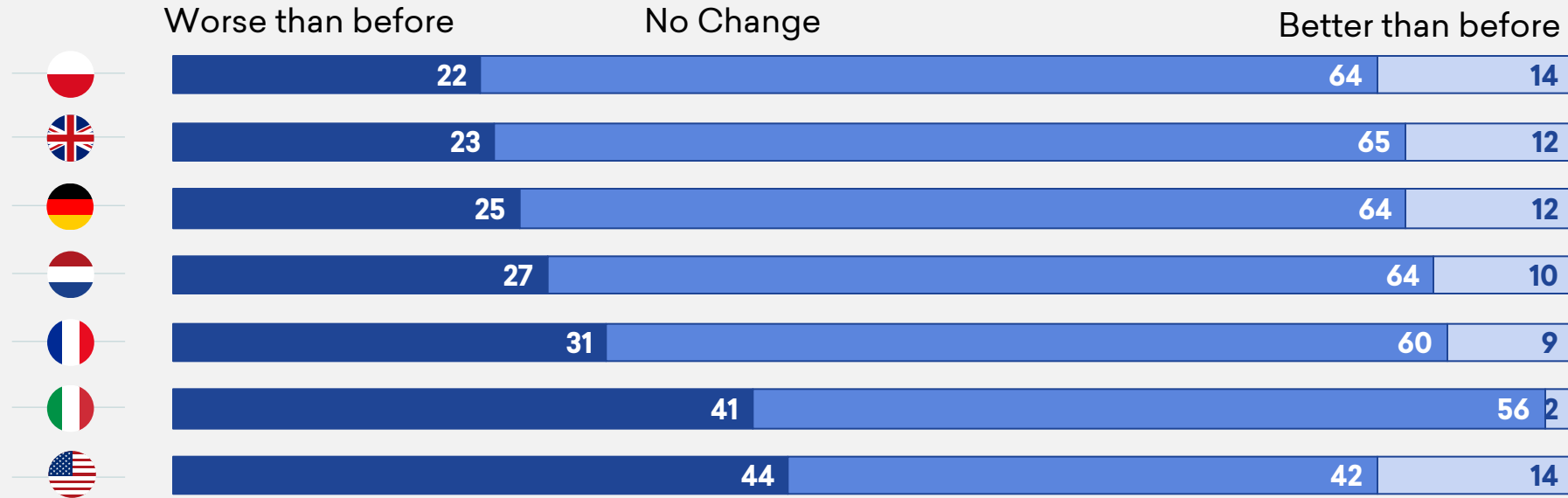
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

No country reports higher numbers of people following COVID-19 rules than Britain.



Question: When it comes to the COVID-19 social distancing rules that have been put in place in your area (wearing a mask, staying home, etc.), would you say that you have followed the rules...?

Social trust has held up better in Britain, but it has still been eroded.

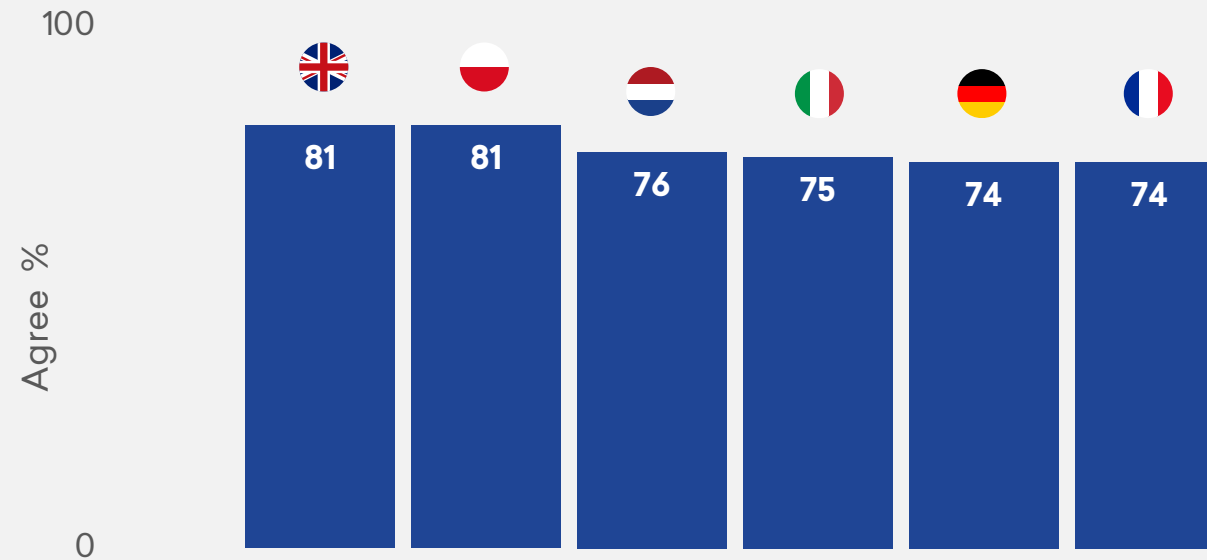


Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

More than others, lockdown has made Brits more aware of our role in the natural environment.

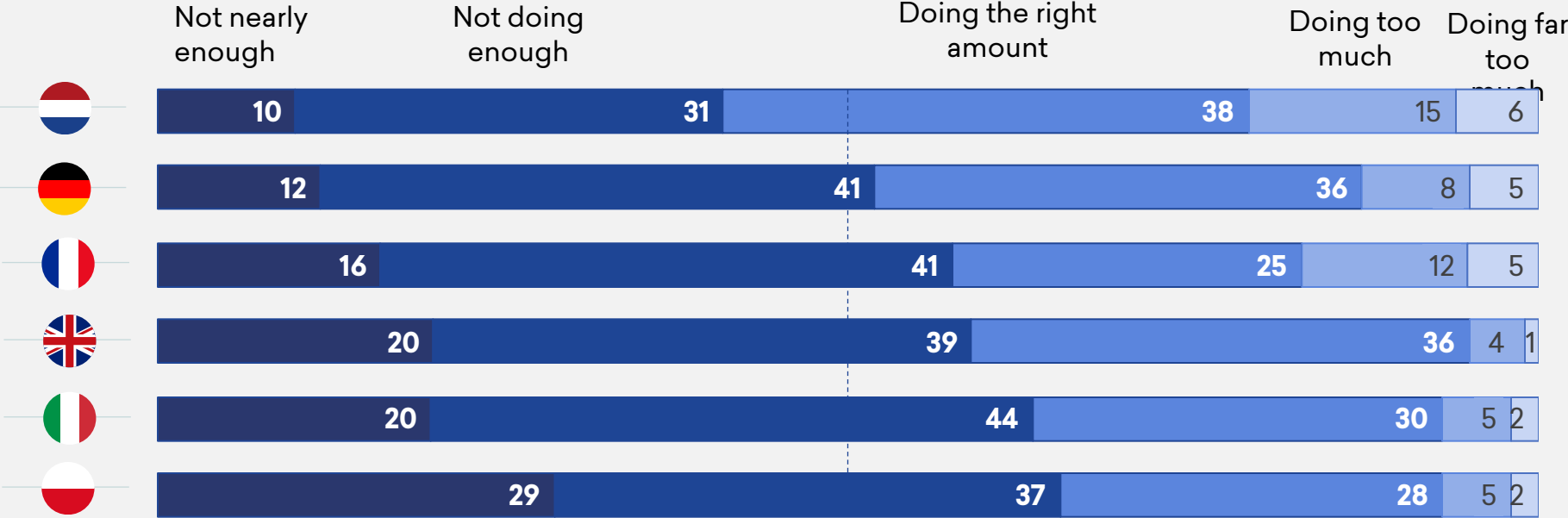


“The drop in carbon emissions that was seen during the COVID-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to.”



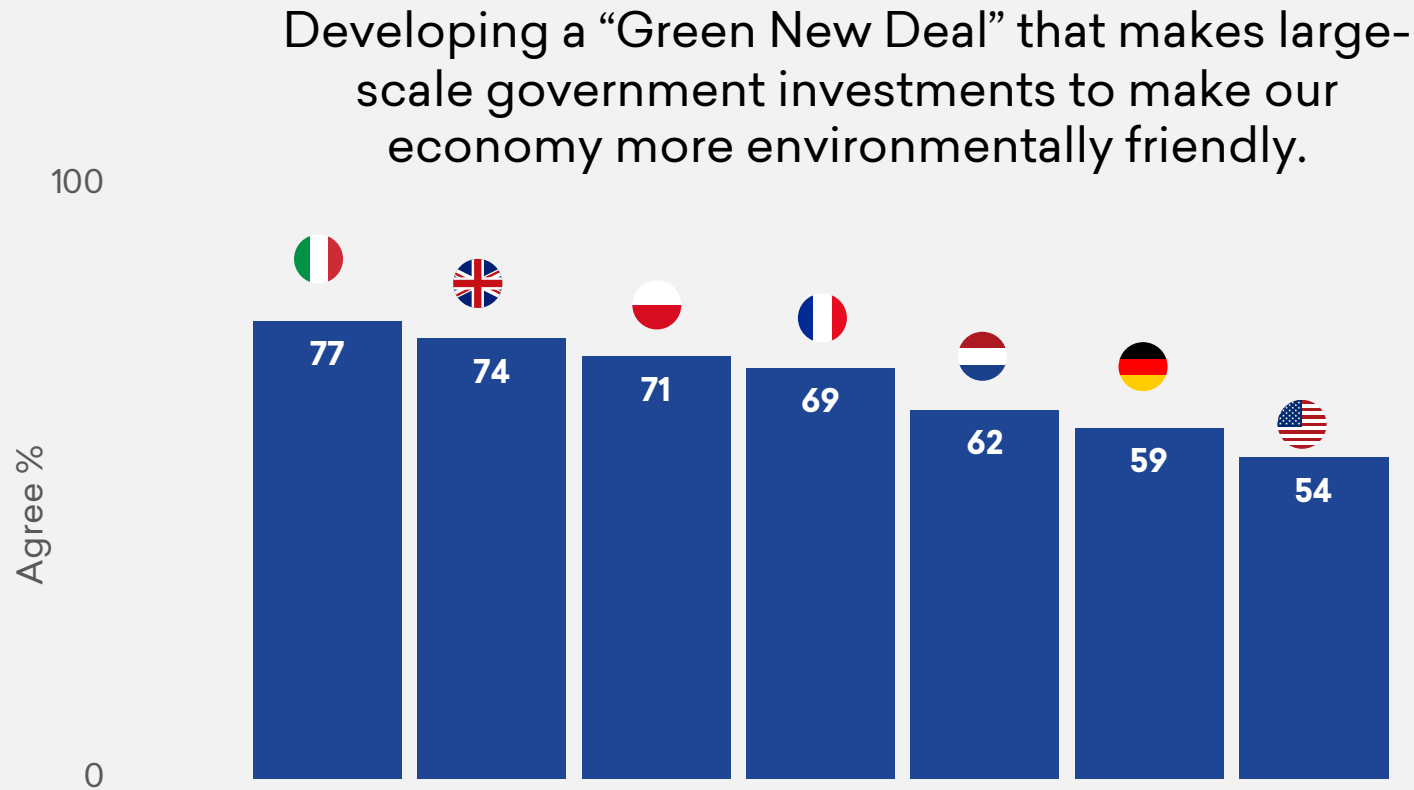
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Public sentiment favours more action to protect the environment – only 1 in 20 in Britain thinks we are doing too much.



Question: Thinking about the current situation, which of the following statements do you agree with most? On the environment, the government is...

Strong support for the Green New Deal, and even a majority in the US



Question: There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposals?

Detailed findings

For a set of detailed findings comparing the UK with the other six countries in this study, download the Comparative 7-country Report from www.moreincommon.com/newnormal



Thank you

www.moreincommon.com

For general enquiries, please contact

contact@moreincommon.com

For media enquiries please contact

media@moreincommon.com

Twitter: @MiC_Global



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