

Scams Research 2021

Chart pack

Produced by: Ofcom

Data: Yonder

Fieldwork: 18 – 19 September 2021

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Background and Objectives

This research aimed to provide Ofcom with an up-to-date understanding of consumers experiences regarding suspicious calls and messaging

Specifically, the research aimed to establish:

- Consumers' ability to correctly identify suspicious messages
- Incidence of receiving suspicious messages
- Incidence of reporting suspicious messages
- Incidence of falling foul to suspicious messages
- Knowledge and use of tools to help screen for suspicious messages
- Knowledge of who to report such messages to
- Knowledge of where to go to for help in the event of falling foul to suspicious messages

The research focused on three types of suspicious message received on mobile and/or landline:

- **Text messages** sent to your mobile
- **Live voice calls** (when you answer your mobile or landline phone and there is a live person on the end of the line who you can have a conversation with)
- **Recorded messages** (when you answer your mobile or landline phone and you hear a recorded message rather than a person on the end of the line)

Methodology

Sample

- 2,000 respondents aged 16+ in the UK

Data collection

- Online panel
- Conducted by Yonder
- Fieldwork from 18th – 19th September 2021

Data reporting

- Online panel weighted to be nationally representative of the UK
- Data available in pdf tables (aggregated) and CSV (respondent level)
- Significance testing applied at the 95% confidence level

Summary

The majority of UK adults have been exposed to some form of suspicious messaging/calls

Texts are the most common form; incidence of suspicious calls is lower, with the quantity received on mobile and landline similar

Whilst most adults are confident they won't fall victim to a suspicious message/call, receiving such contacts causes feelings of annoyance, frustration and worry (particularly for family and friends)

Most people block and delete suspicious messaging, with wider reporting less common

When a suspicious message is received, most people either hang up as soon as they realise the nature of the call, delete the message and/or block the number

A lack of awareness of the resources available could be a factor behind lower rates of reporting, as whilst the majority of adults agree reporting is helpful in preventing future scams, most mobile customers do not know how to report suspicious activity

Most don't look to external bodies, the company the message is claiming to come from is the go-to

Most people who have a landline and/or mobile are not signed up to any groups that give warnings of suspicious activity – when looking for advice regarding possible suspicious messages and calls, most people will contact the company it looked like the message had come from

When asked what format they would like advice about suspicious messages/calls, online advice was most popular. Generational differences exist, as direct contact (e.g., from the bank/ broadband providers) was more important for older customers whereas social media was the preferred format for younger people

Section 1: Incidence of suspicious calls/messages

Section Summary

The majority of UK adults have been exposed to some form of suspicious messaging

Texts are the most common form; incidence of suspicious calls is lower, with the quantity received on mobile and landline similar

Frequency of receipt of these messages is regular as, on average, 49% of adults who had received at least one suspicious call/message in the three months prior to the survey, received such messages at least once a week

Most people block and delete the suspicious message, with wider reporting less common

When a suspicious message is received, most people either hang up as soon as they realise the nature of the call, delete the message and/or block the number

Many people who do report say they do so to help tackle scams, with most contacting their landline or mobile provider

Whilst the majority do not follow the instructions of suspicious messaging, 2% of those who had received a suspicious message over the past three months had done so, which we have estimated equates to 900k of the population*

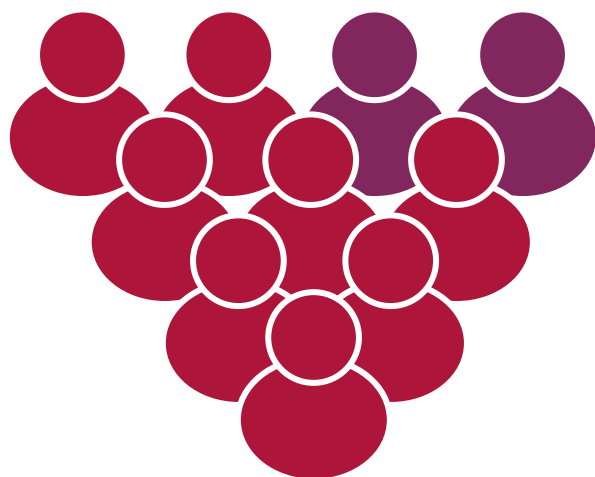
Suspicious messages are a source of personal annoyance and concern for loved ones

People feel annoyed, angry and worried when they receive suspicious messages/calls

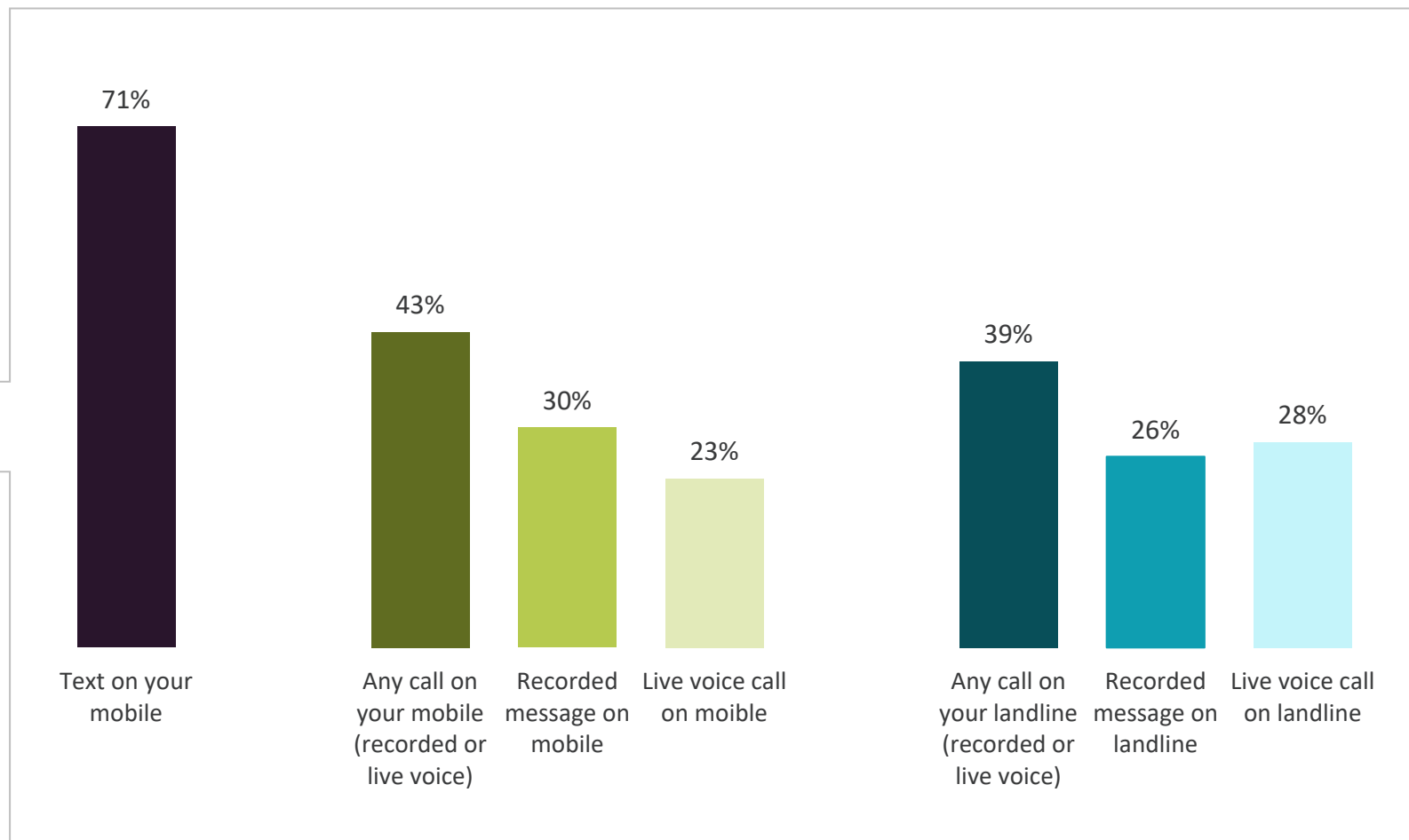
The majority of UK adults have friends or family who have expressed concern about suspicious calls/texts

The majority of UK adults have been exposed to some form of suspicious messaging
Texts are most common and the prevalence of suspicious calls to mobiles and landline is similar

8 in 10 UK adults



have received some form of suspicious messaging over the past three months*



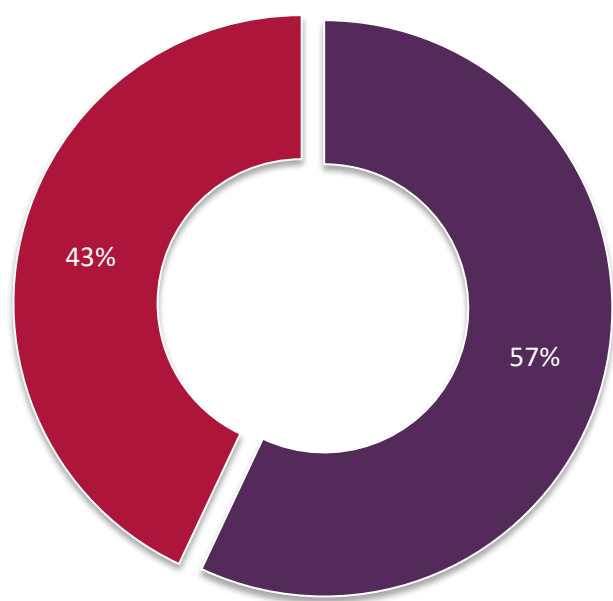
Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q1: Thinking about the last three months, have you received any of the following types of suspicious texts or calls on your mobile or landline phone?

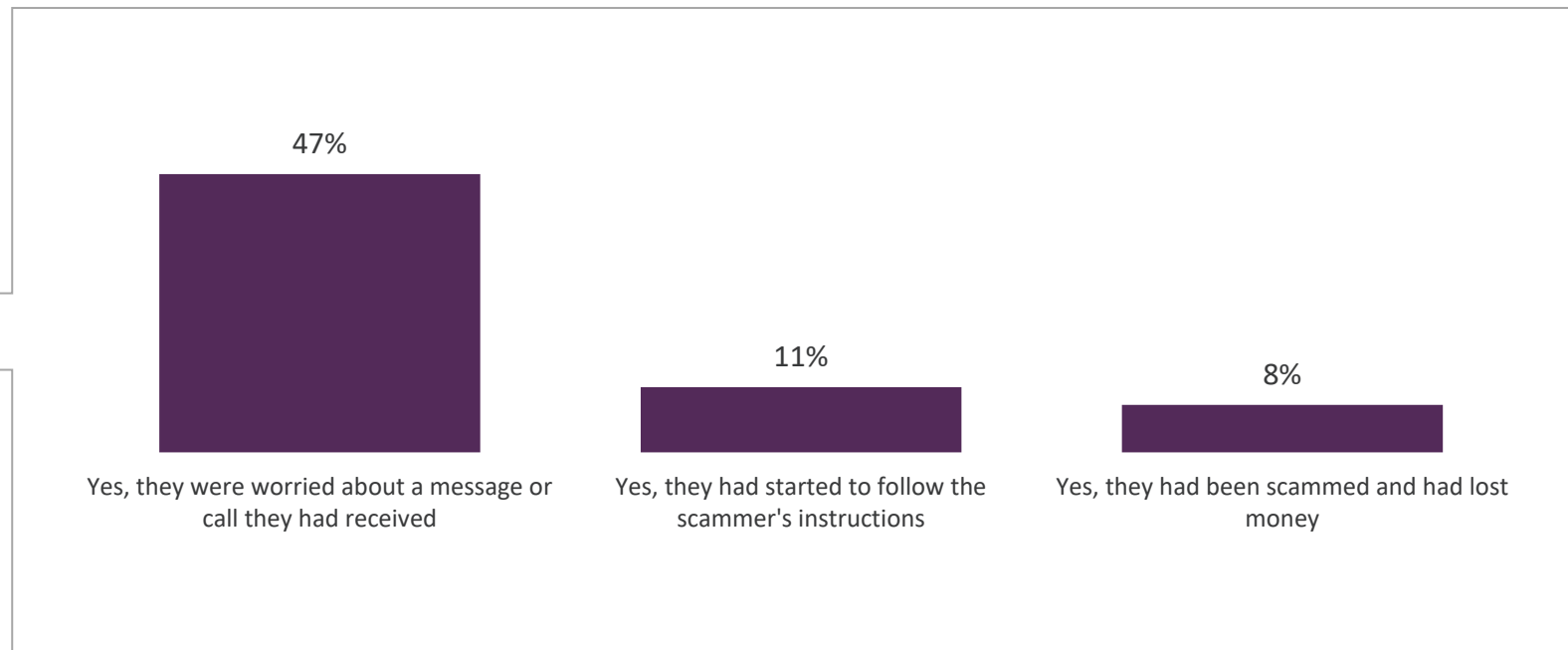
Base: All respondents, n=2124

Incidene, Total: 82%, equating to an estimated 44.6m of the population (+/-900k) / Text: 71%, equating to an estimated 38.8m of the population (+/-1,100k) / Mobile call: 43%, equating to an estimated 23.4m of the population (+/-1,200k) / Landline call: 39%, equating to an estimated 21.3m of the population (+/-1,100k)

More than half of our sample have loved ones who have expressed concern about suspicious messaging; 8 in 10 say they have friends or family who have been scammed and lost money



■ Yes ■ No

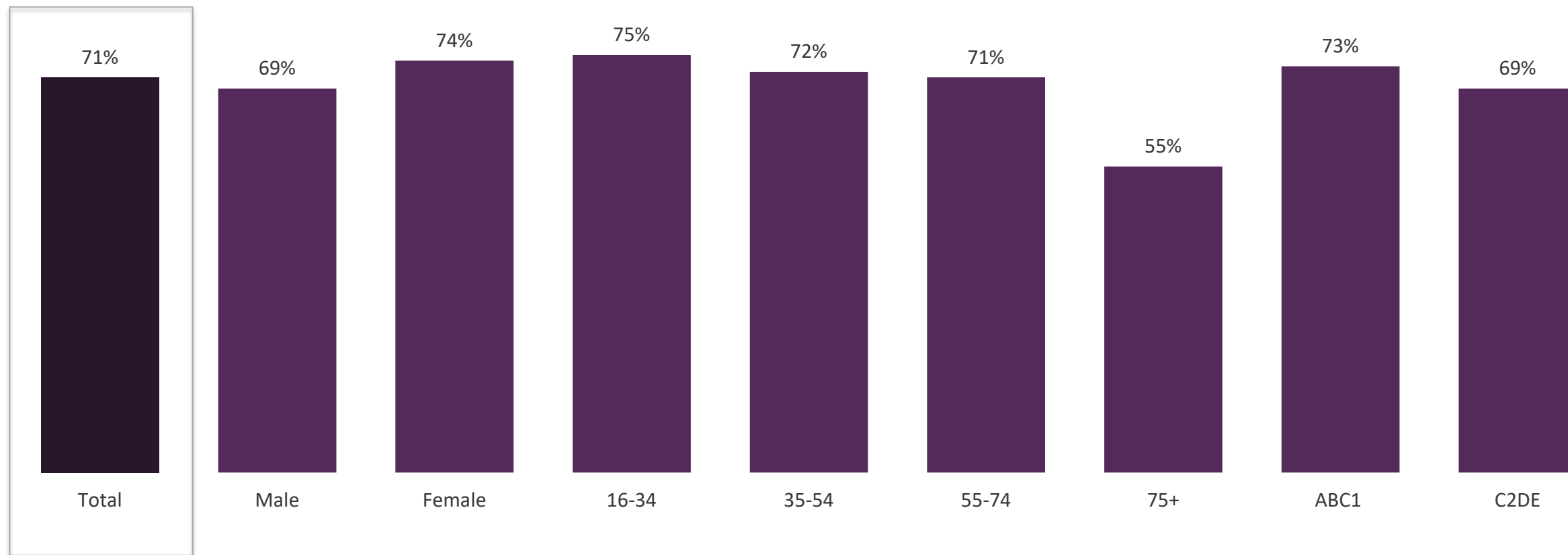


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q8: Have any of your friends or family ever talked to you about being worried about a possible suspicious call/message or actually fallen victim to one?

Base: All respondents with a mobile or landline, n=2080

Receiving suspicious text messages is more common for those aged under 75



Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

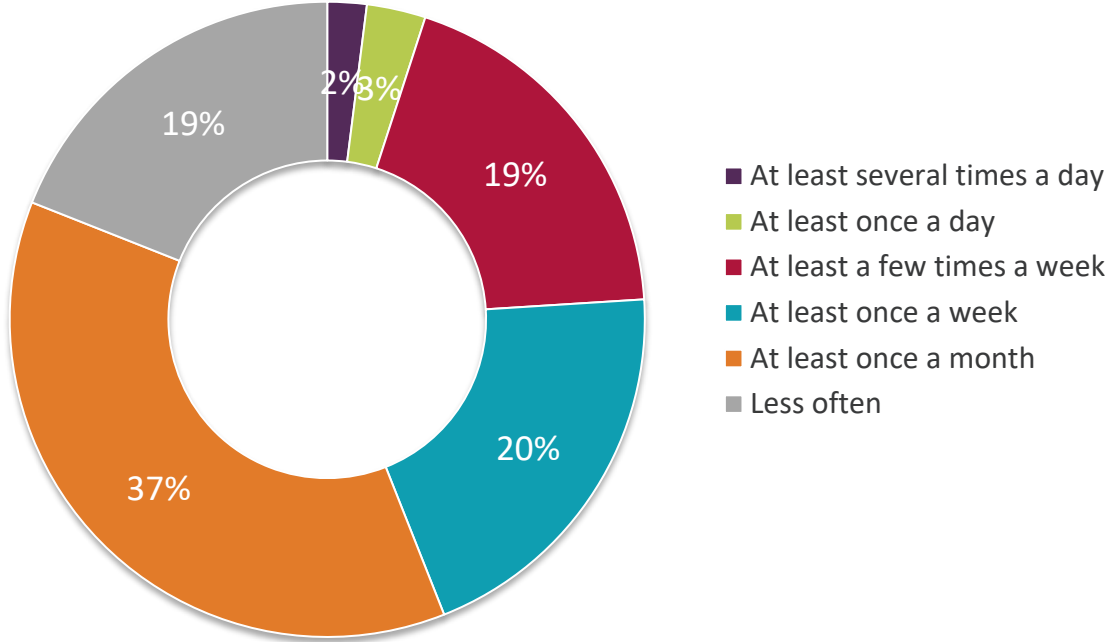
Q1: Thinking about the last three months, have you received any of the following types of suspicious texts or calls on your mobile or landline phone? Texts on your mobile

Base: All respondents. UK adults aged 16+ (2124), Male (1054), Female (1070), 16-34 (629), 35-54 (712), 55-74 (643), 75+ (140), ABC1 (1150), C2DE (974)

Among those who had received a suspicious text message in the past 3 months, it was a fairly regular occurrence with many getting them at least weekly

44%

of people who had received at least one suspicious text message over the past three months had done so at least once a week

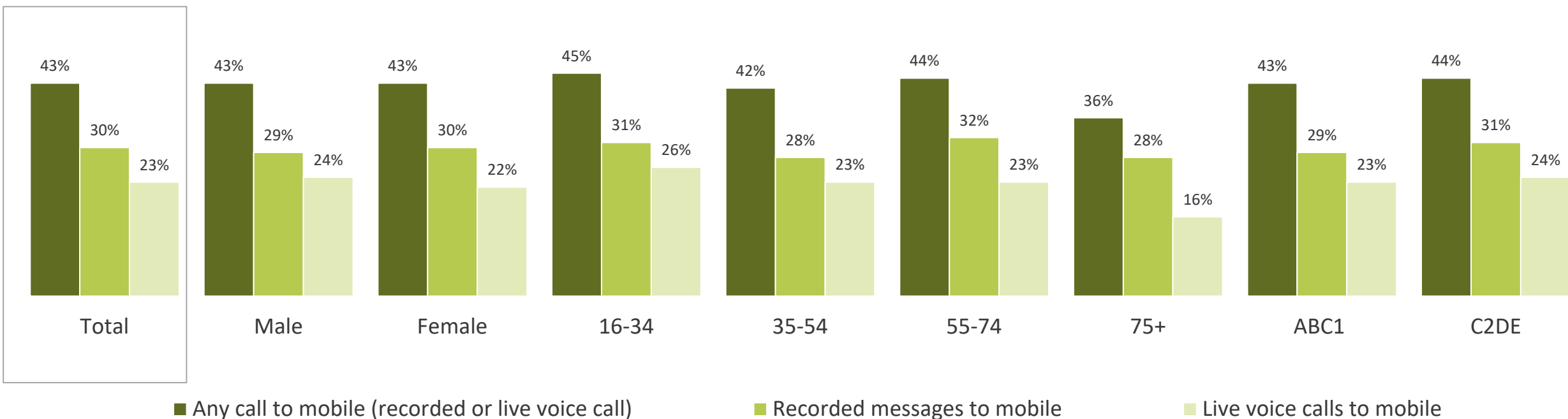


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q2a: Thinking about suspicious text messages, how often have you received these types of message in the last three months?

Base: All who have received a suspicious text in the past three months, n=1519

Similarly as with texts to mobile, suspicious calls to mobile is more common for under 75s



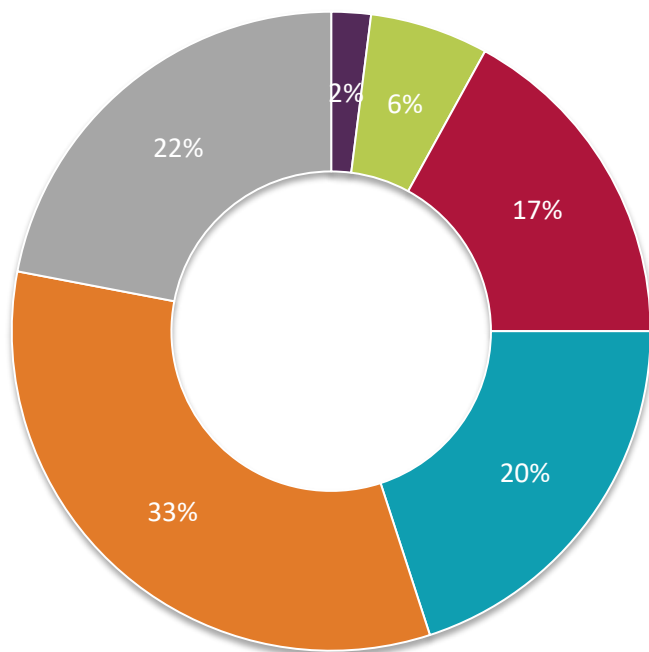
Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q1: Thinking about the last three months, have you received any of the following types of suspicious texts or calls on your mobile or landline phone? Calls to mobile

Base: All respondents. UK adults aged 16+ (2124), Male (1054), Female (1070), 16-34 (629), 35-54 (712), 55-74 (643), 75+ (140), ABC1 (1150), C2DE (974)

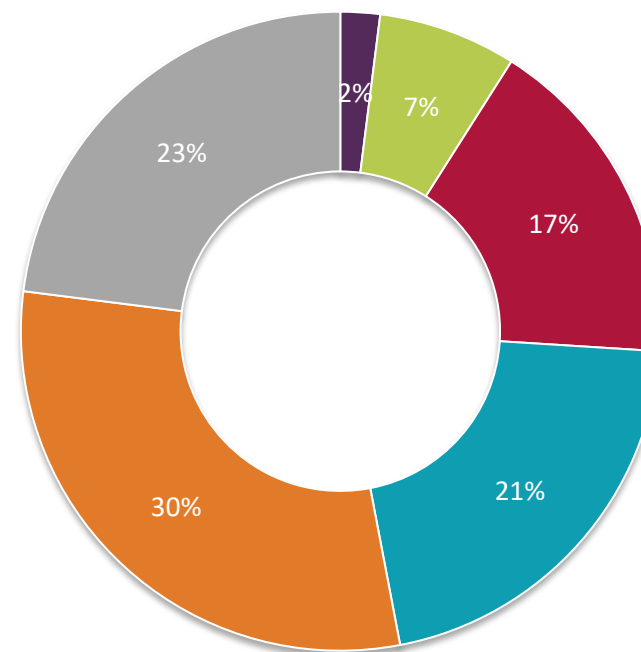
As with texts, of those who were receiving suspicious calls to their mobiles, it was a regular occurrence with many getting them at least weekly

Recorded messages on mobile



45% of those who had received at least one suspicious recorded message over the past three months received such messages at least once a week

Live voice calls on mobile

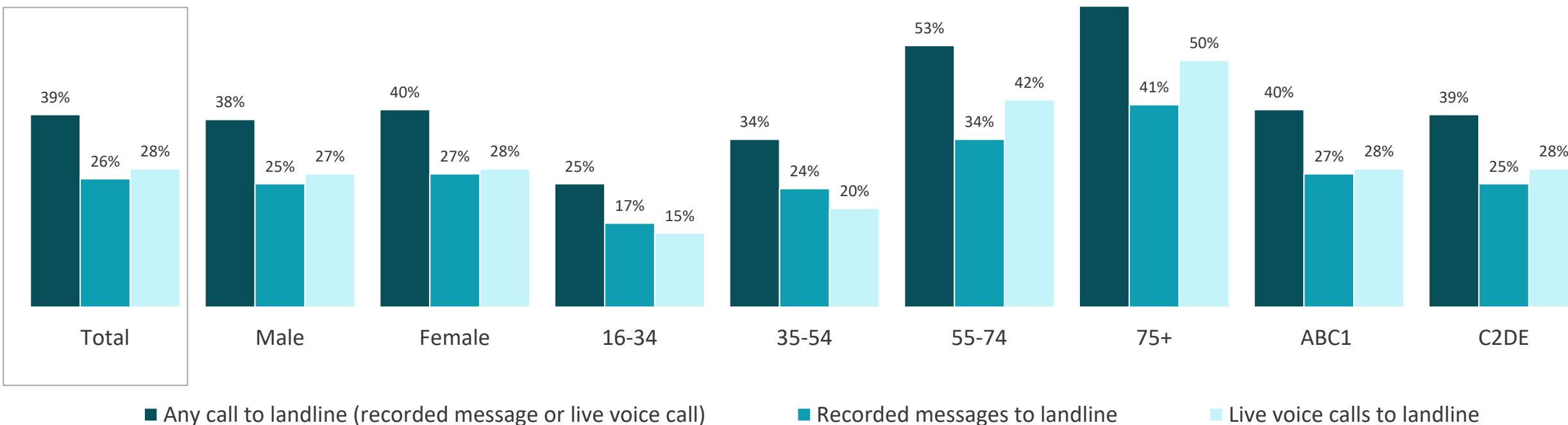


47% of those who had received at least one suspicious live voice call over the past three months received such messages at least once a week

- At least several times a day
- At least once a day
- At least a few times a week
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Less often

Incidence of suspicious calls to landline is more prominent for over 75s

Live voice calls are more common than recorded messages for those aged over 55



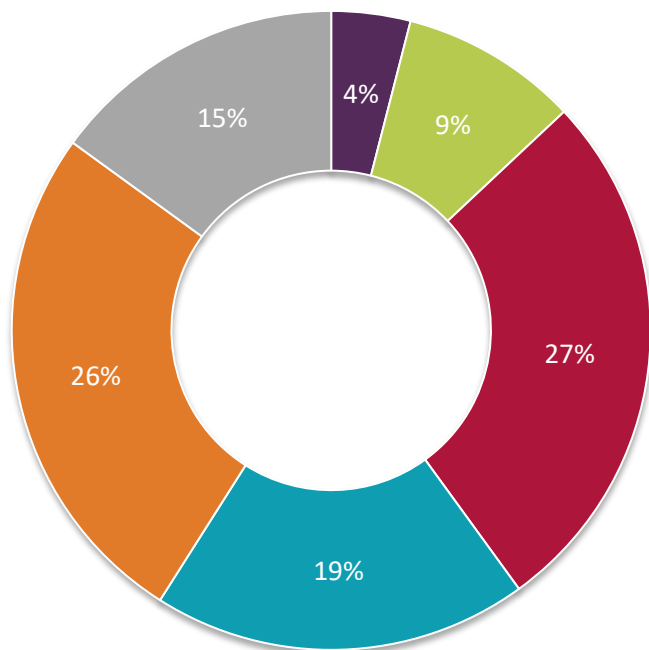
Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q1: Thinking about the last three months, have you received any of the following types of suspicious texts or calls on your mobile or landline phone? Calls to landline

Base: All respondents. UK adults aged 16+ (2124), Male (1054), Female (1070), 16-34 (629), 35-54 (712), 55-74 (643), 75+ (140), ABC1 (1150), C2DE (974)

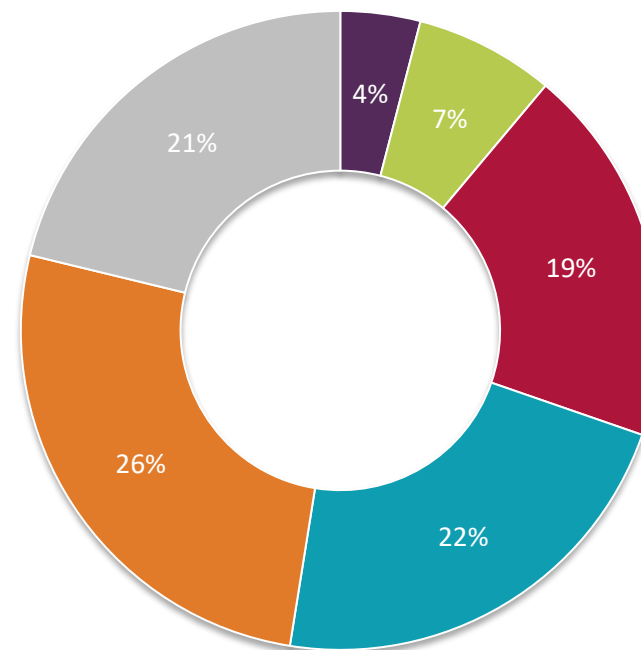
Of those who were receiving suspicious calls to their landline, again it was a regular occurrence with more than half getting them at least weekly

Recorded messages on landline



59% of those who had received at least one suspicious recorded message over the past 3 months received such messages at least once a week

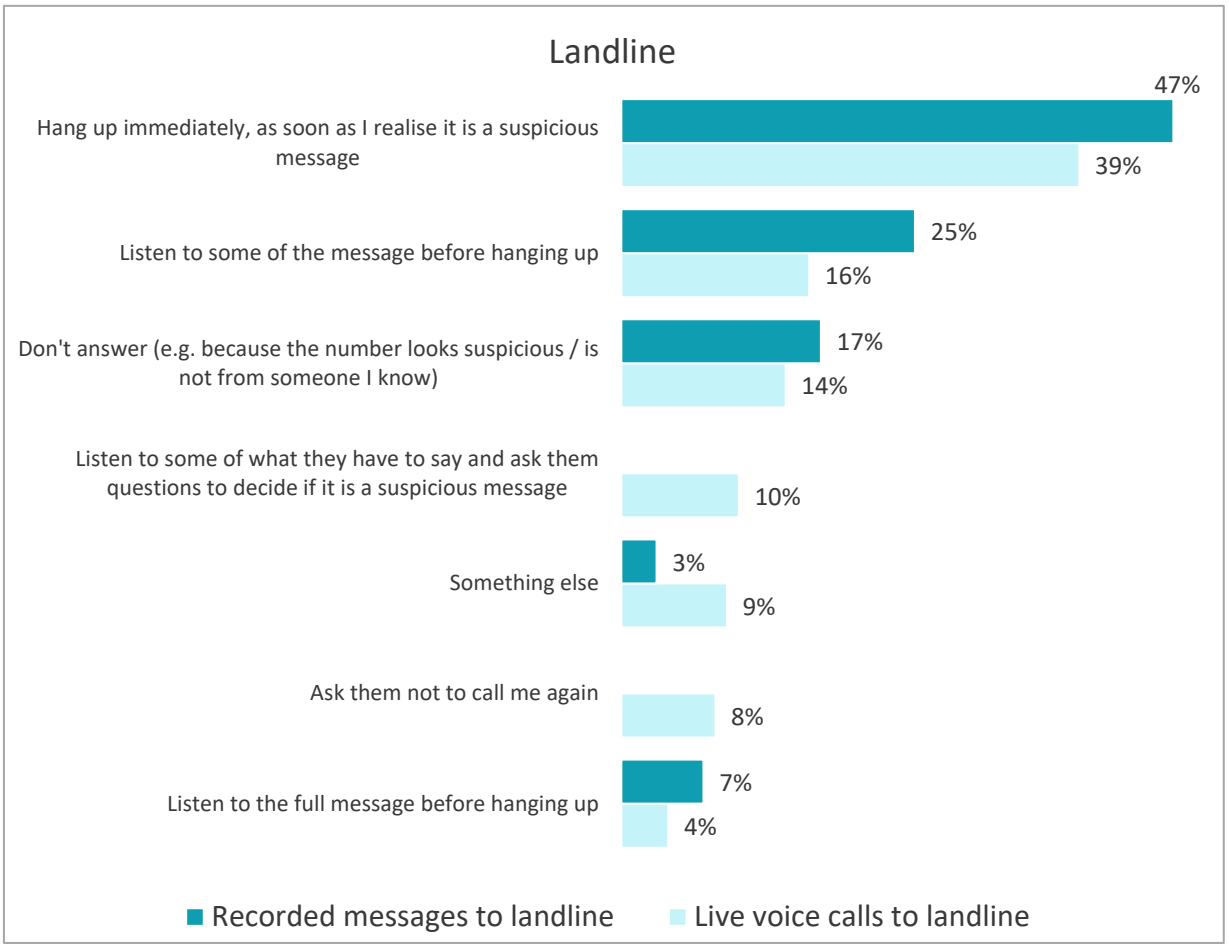
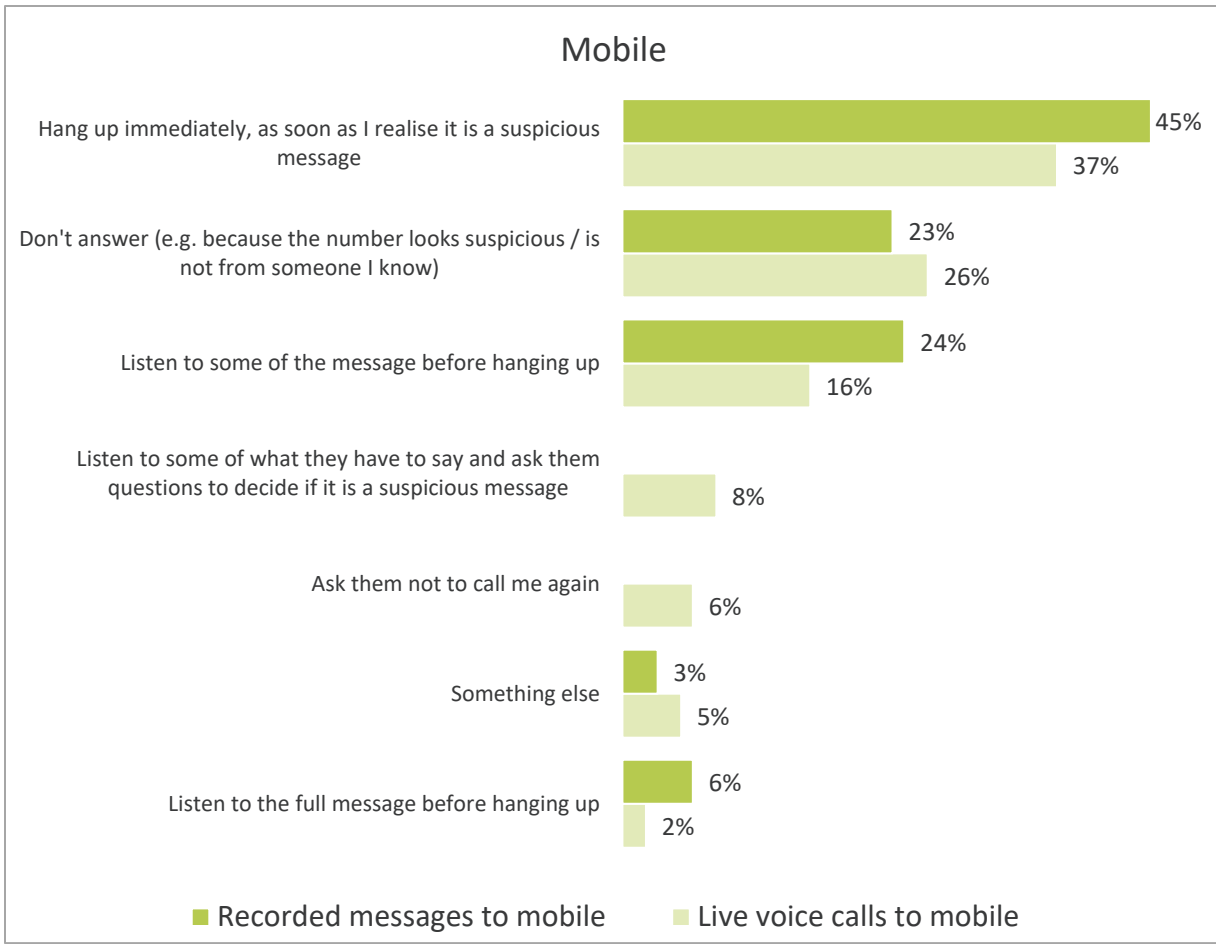
Live voice calls on landline



53% of those who had received at least one suspicious live voice call over the past 3 months received such messages at least once a week

- At least several times a day
- At least once a day
- At least a few times a week
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Less often

When a suspicious call is received, most people hang up as soon as they realise the nature of the call

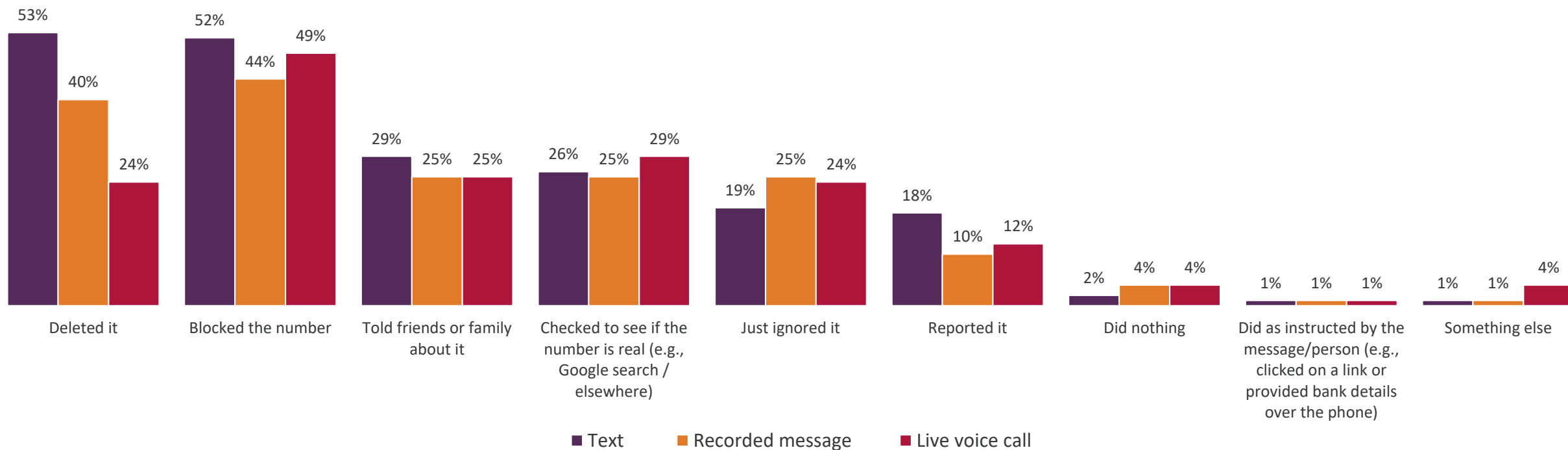


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q3: What do you usually do when you receive a suspicious recorded message or live voice call like this?

Base: All who have received suspicious recorded messages to mobile (n=633), live voice calls on mobile (n=496), suspicious recorded messages to landline (n=526), live voice calls on landline (n=563)

On receiving suspicious messages and calls, the most common action is to block the number and/or delete the message



Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

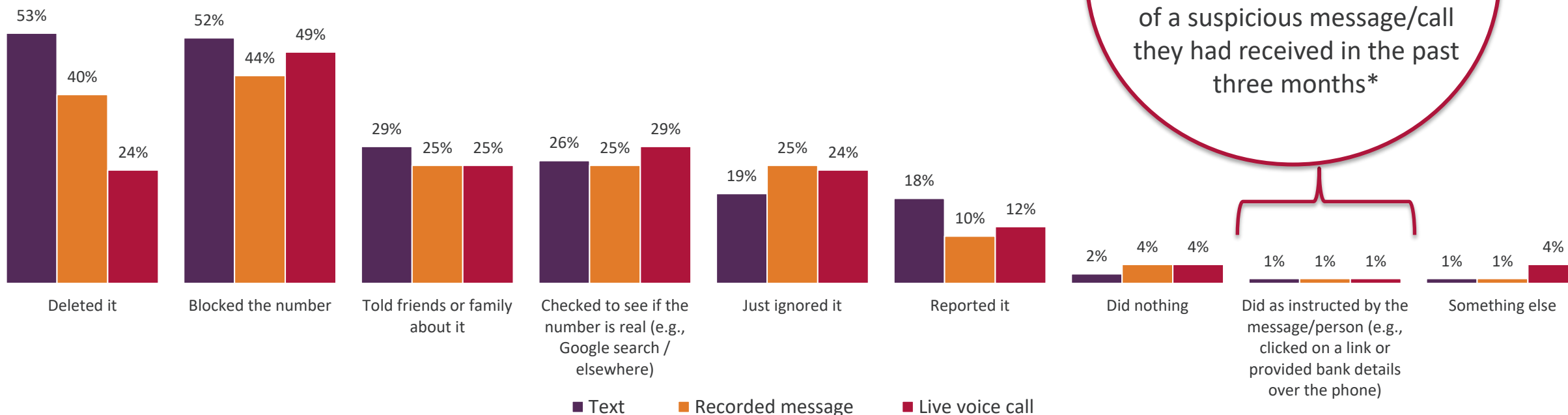
Q4: Which, if any, actions have you taken as a result of receiving these suspicious calls/messages?

Base: All who have received a suspicious text (n=1519), recorded message (n=917), live voice call (n=842)

Reporting: Text: 18%, equating to an estimated 6.8m of the population (+/-1,000k) / Recorded message: 10%, equating to an estimated 2.3m of the population (+/-600k) / Live voice call: 12%, equating to an estimated 2.7m of the population (+/- 700k)

Those who followed the instructions of a suspicious message were in the minority (2%) but we have estimated this still accounts for 900k of the population*

900k
Of the population (estimated) had followed the instructions of a suspicious message/call they had received in the past three months*



Please note there is insufficient sample of those who followed the instructions of a suspicious message to look at the specific action taken and other harms that were experienced

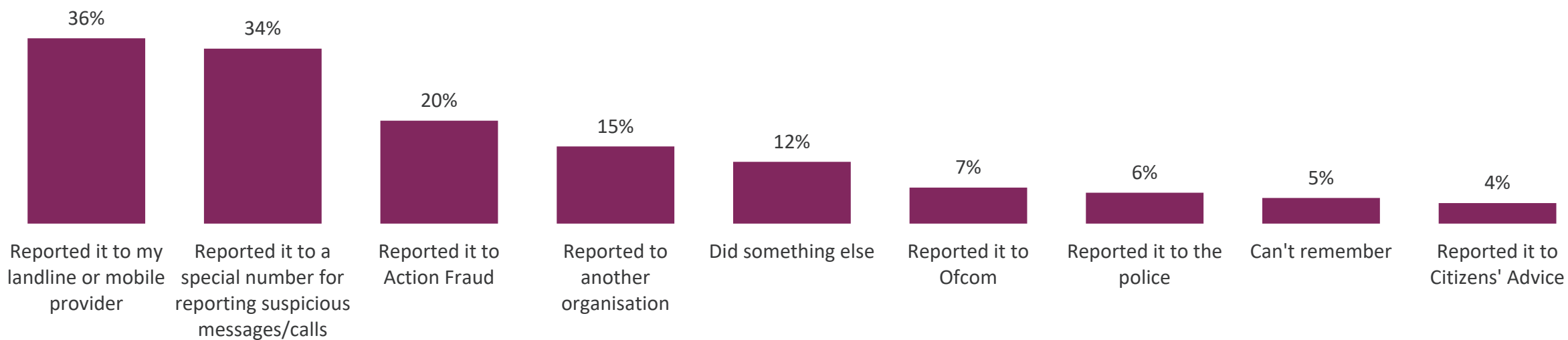
Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Question: Which, if any, actions have you taken as a result of receiving these suspicious calls/messages?

Base: All who have received a suspicious text (n=1519), recorded message (n=917), live voice call (n=842)

*Population estimate confidence interval: +/- 300k. 2% is the proportion of adults who followed the instruction of any type of suspicious message (text, recorded message or live voice call); incidence per type of message is shown in the table at 1% respectively

Of those who had reported a suspicious message/call, most either contacted their landline or mobile provider or used a special number for reporting such suspicious activity

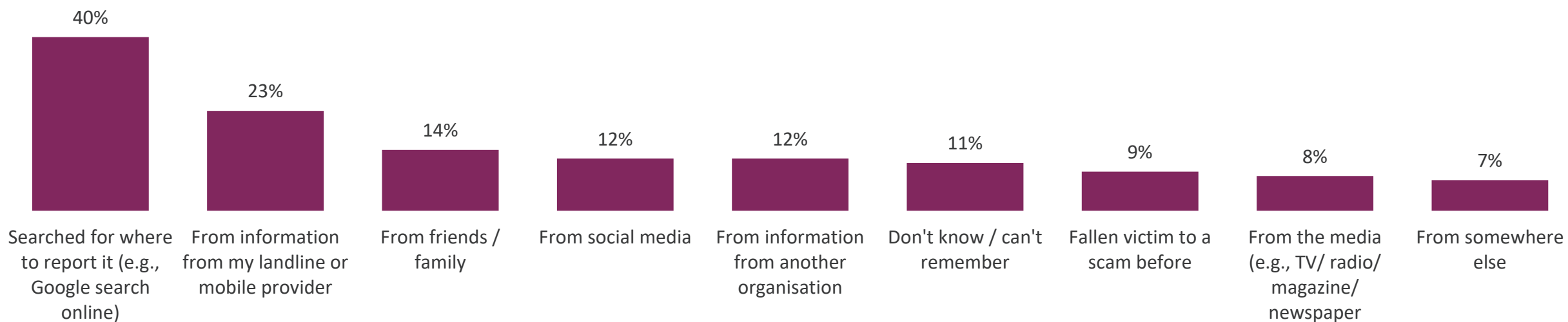


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q5a: How did you report the suspicious message/call?

Base: All who have reported a suspicious message/call, n=328

Of those who reported a suspicious message or call, 4 in 10 had to search online for information on what to do

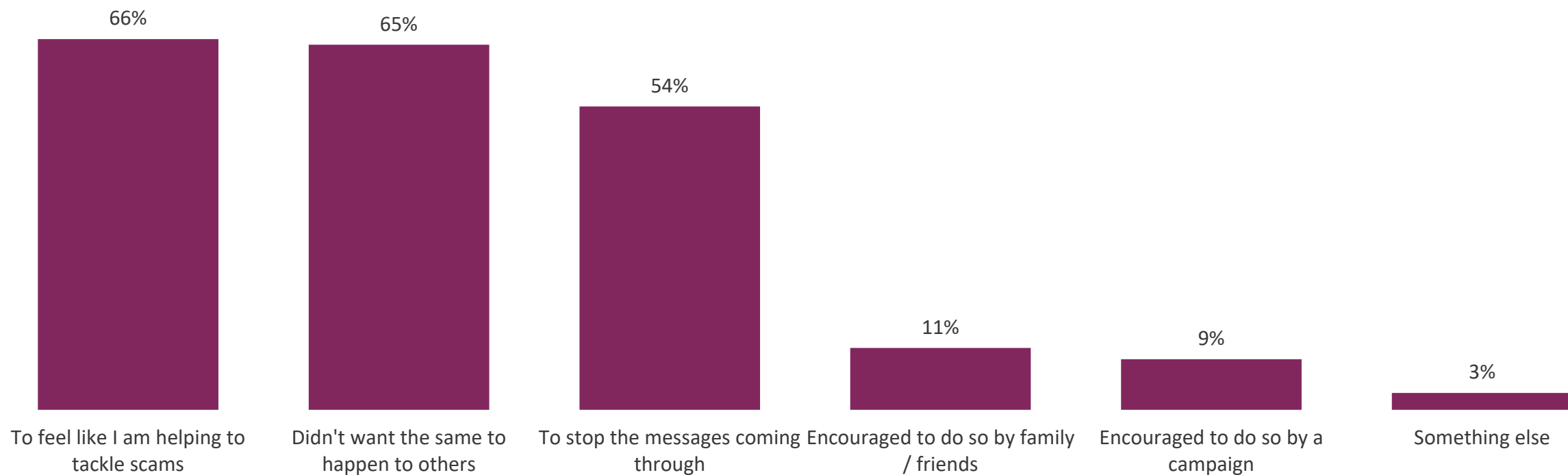


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q5b: How did you know where to report the suspicious message/call?

Base: All who have reported a suspicious message/call, n=328

Eagerness to help tackle scams and prevent others from being harmed were the main reasons behind why people decided to report suspicious messages/calls



Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q5c: Why did you decide to report the suspicious message/call?

Base: All who have reported a suspicious message/call, n=328

Section 2: Screening services for landlines and mobiles

Section Summary

The majority of landline/phone owners are not aware of the services available to help protect them

Take up of screening services among landline users is mixed, with just less than a third using caller display but a similar proportion not using any screening service (despite being aware they exist)

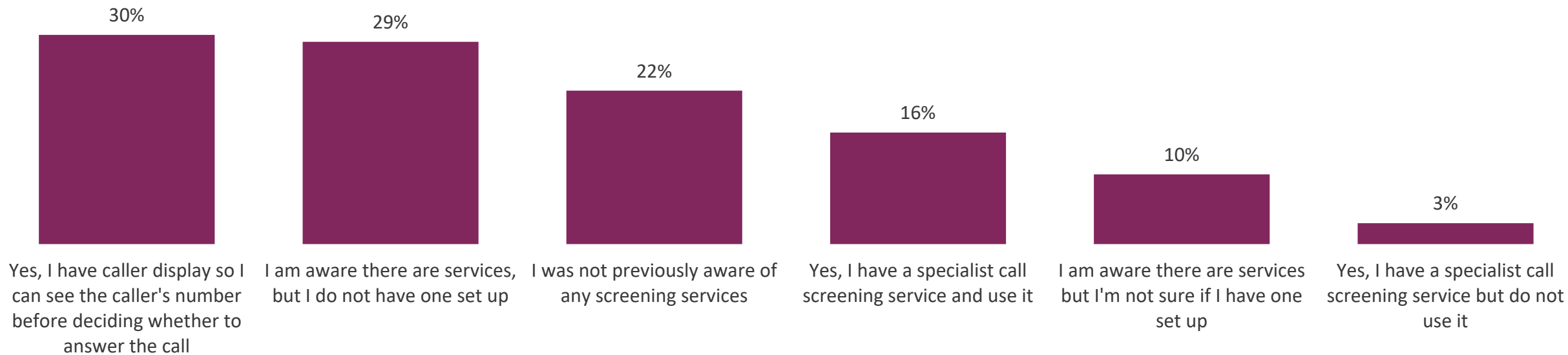
The majority of mobile phone owners are not aware there are services available to help screen potential suspicious texts and calls and do not have a service installed

Most mobile customers do not know how to report suspicious activity

The majority of mobile and/or landline owners agree that reporting suspicious activity (such as to special numbers like 7726) is helpful in preventing people being scammed in future

However, knowledge of how to do so is limited – 68% of those with a mobile phone do not know how to report a text message or call they suspect to be suspicious and 79% are not aware of 7726

Take up of screening services among landline users is mixed. Just less than a third use caller display but a similar proportion don't use any screening service despite being aware they exist

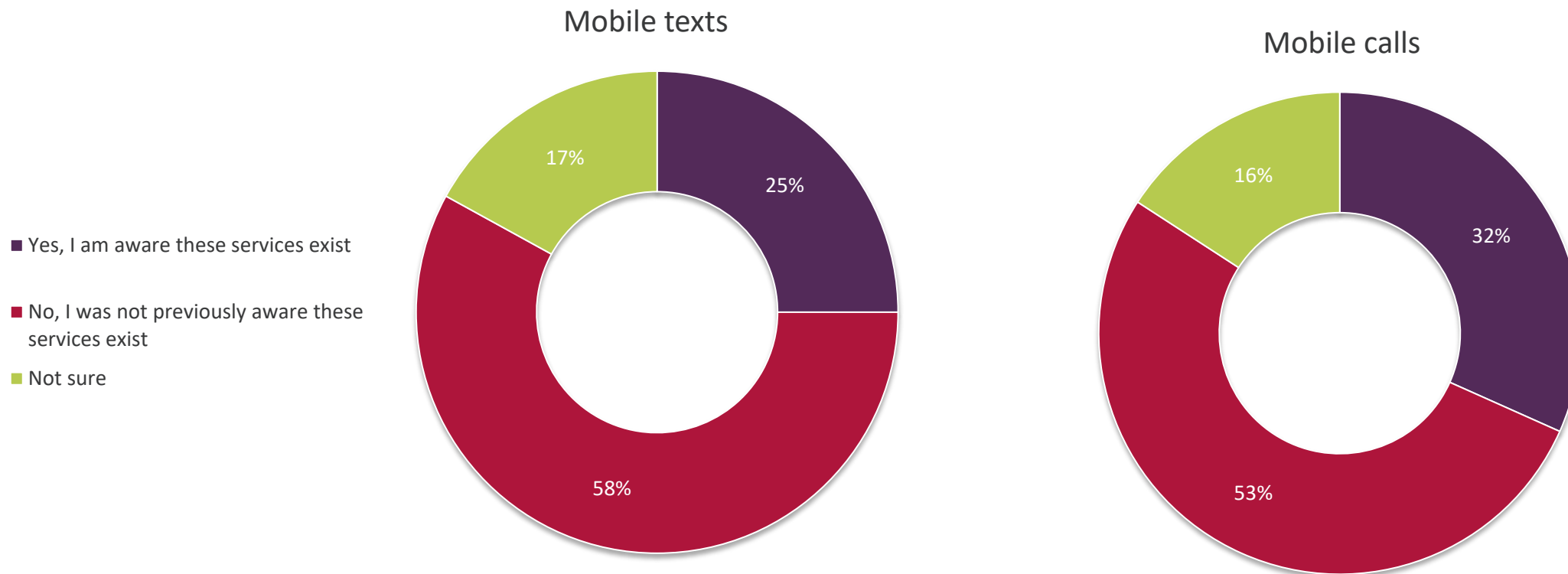


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q9a: Do you have a service on your landline to help you screen incoming calls?

Base: All with a landline, n=1456

The majority of mobile phone users are not aware there are services available to help screen potential suspicious texts and calls



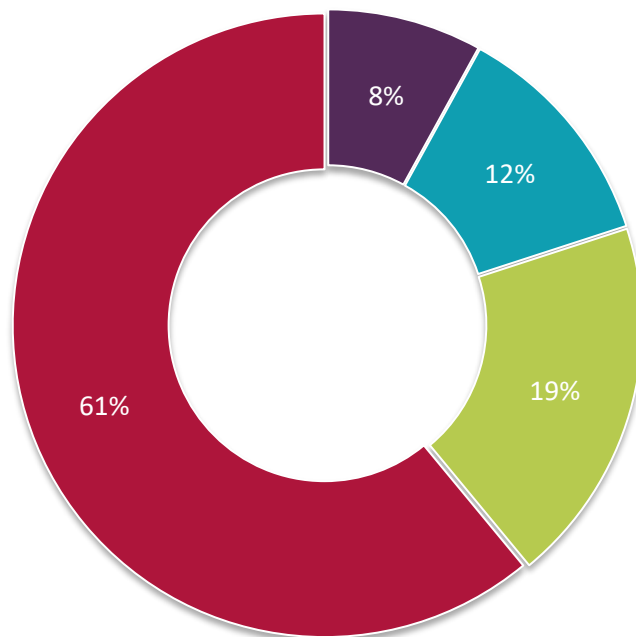
Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q10: Are you aware of any services you can install on your mobile phone to help you identify whether texts/calls you receive are possibly suspicious?

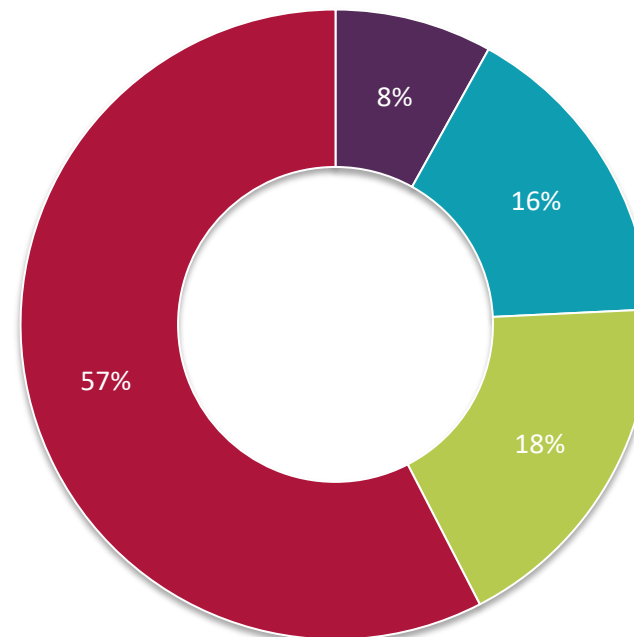
Base: All with a mobile, n=2040

The majority of mobile phone users do not have a service installed to help screen potential suspicious texts and calls

Mobile texts



Mobile calls



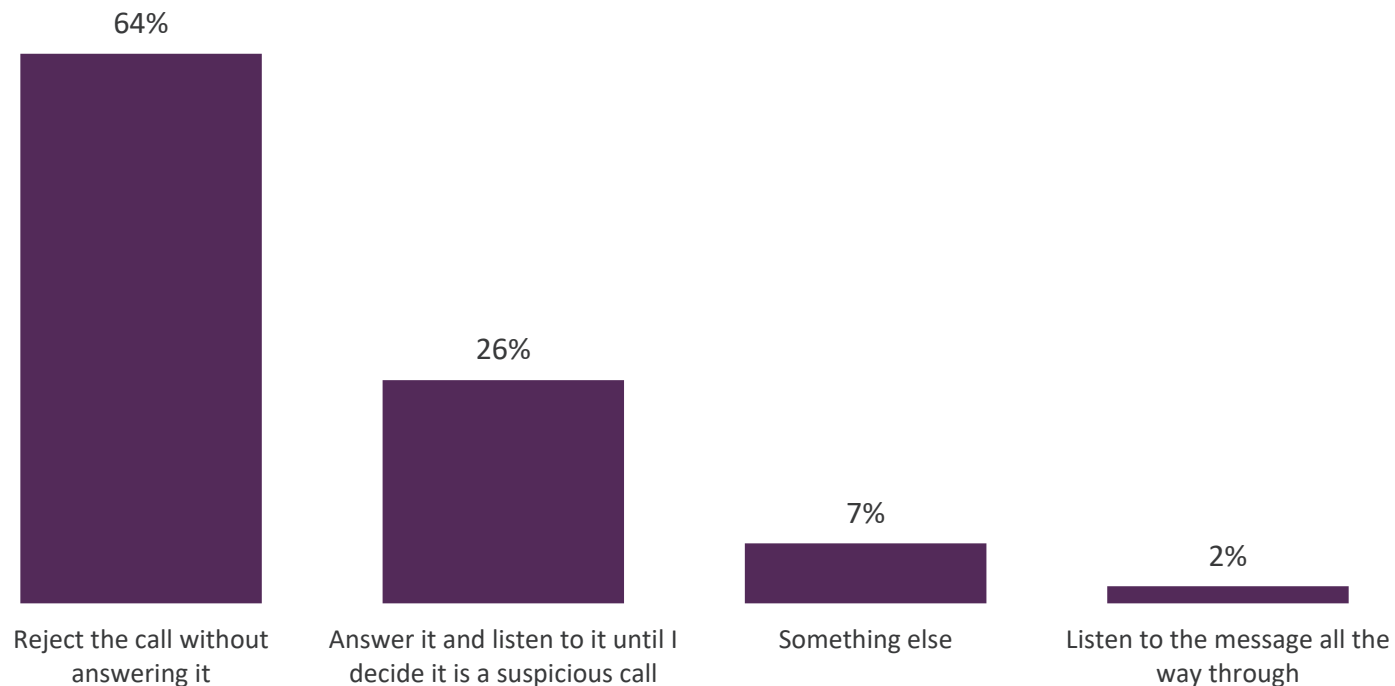
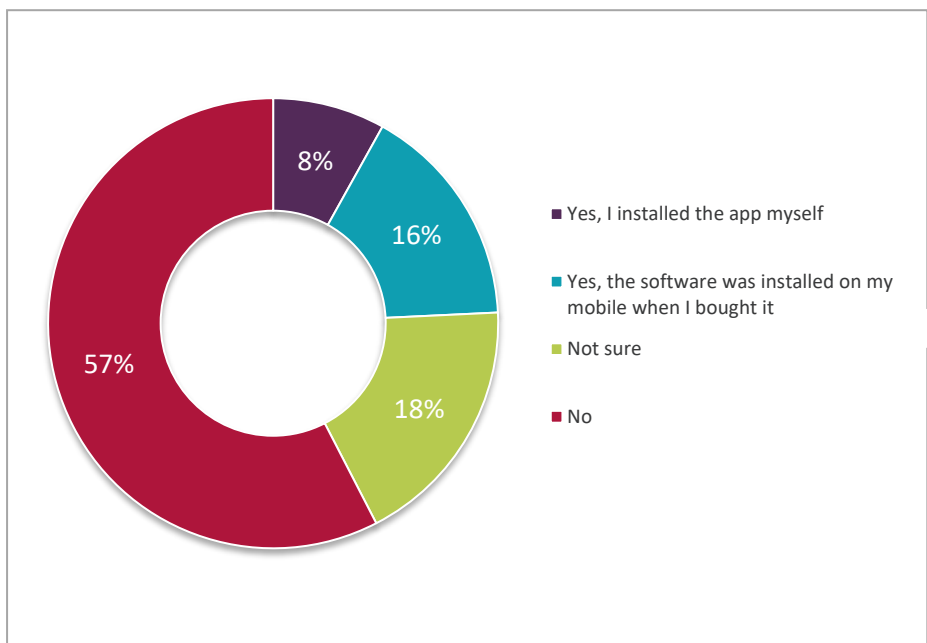
- Yes, I installed the app myself
- Yes, the software was installed on my mobile when I bought it
- Not sure
- No

Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q11a/b: Do you have a service on your mobile that helps you identify whether texts you receive are possibly suspicious? / Do you have a service on your mobile that helps you identify whether incoming calls are possibly suspicious?

Base: All with a mobile, n=2040

Of those who do have a mobile screening service for calls, the majority reject the call without answering it if they suspect it to be suspicious

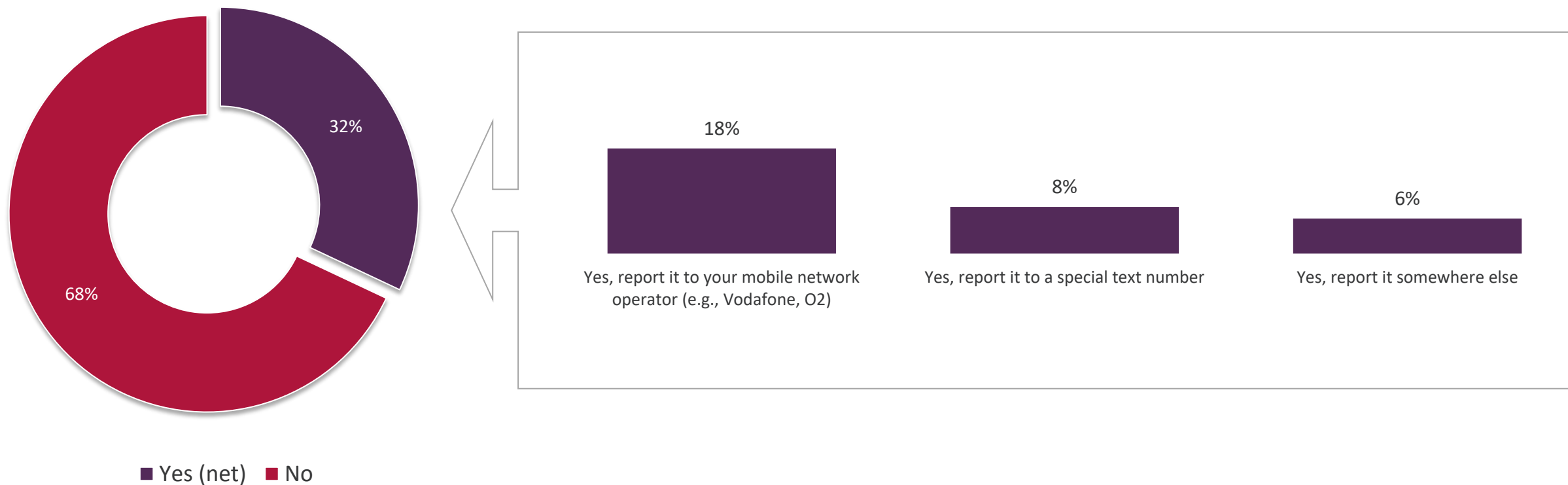


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q12: What do you usually do when you see that an incoming call may be suspicious?

Base: All with a mobile screening service for calls, n=514

Over two thirds of mobile phone users do not know how to report a text message or call they suspect to be suspicious, which we have estimated accounts for 35m of the population*



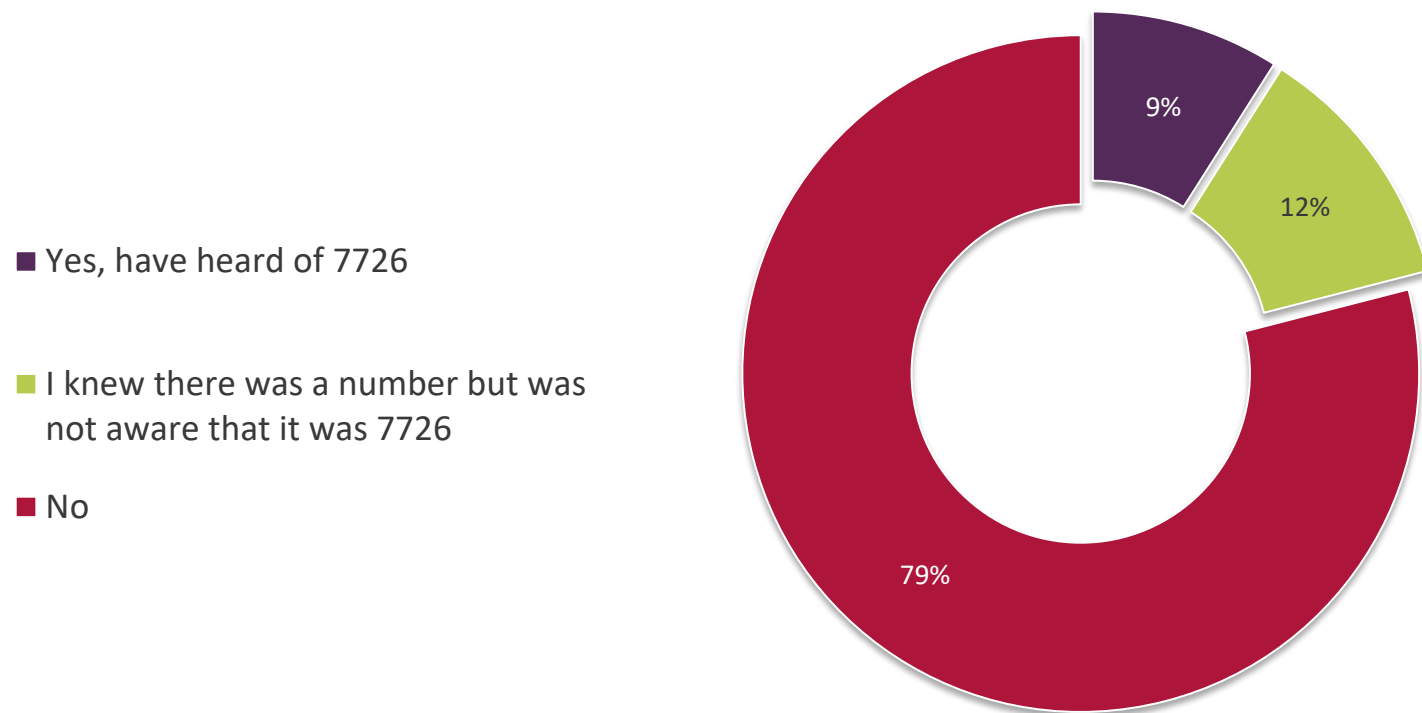
Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q13a: Do you know how to report a text message or call to your mobile that you suspect is suspicious?

Base: All respondents with a mobile, n=2040

*Population estimate confidence interval: +/- 1,400k

The majority of mobile phone users are not aware of the special text number 7726 for reporting suspicious texts and calls

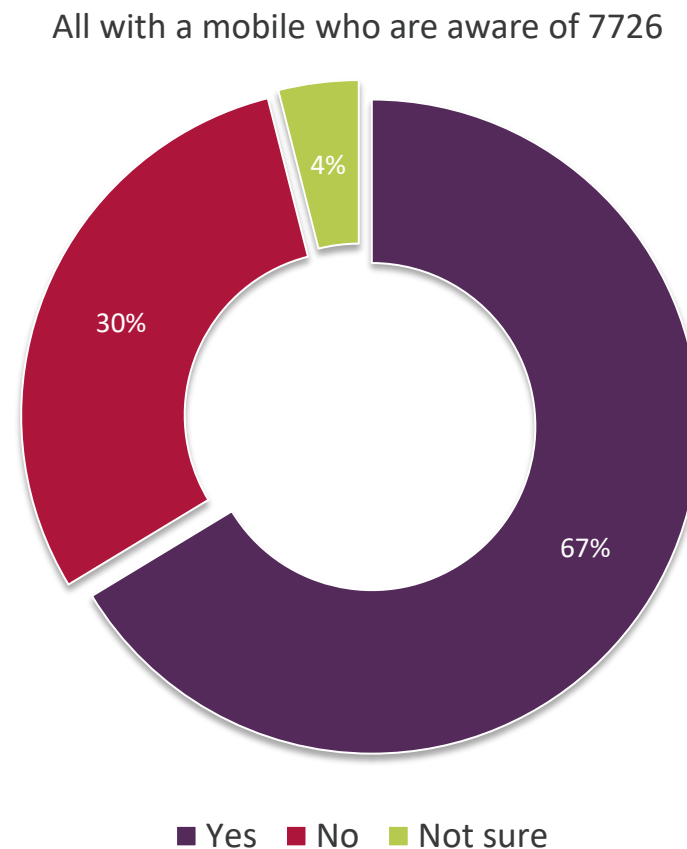
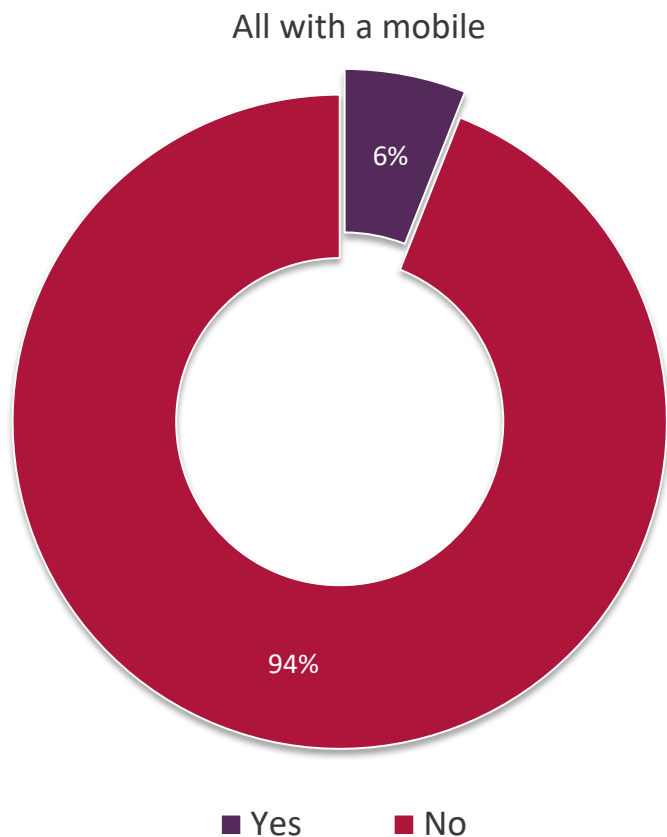


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q14a: Have you heard of the special text number [7726] that you can use to report a suspected suspicious text or call?

Base: All with a mobile phone, n=2040

Whilst the minority of mobile phone users have not reported a suspicious message/call to 7726, the majority of those who are aware of the number are using it

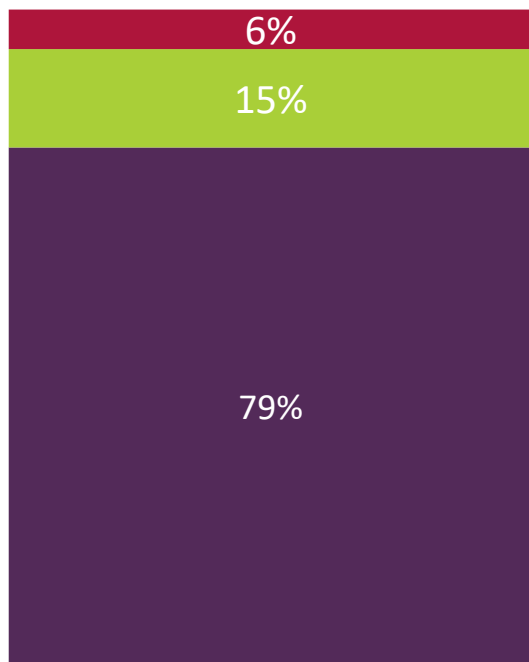


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

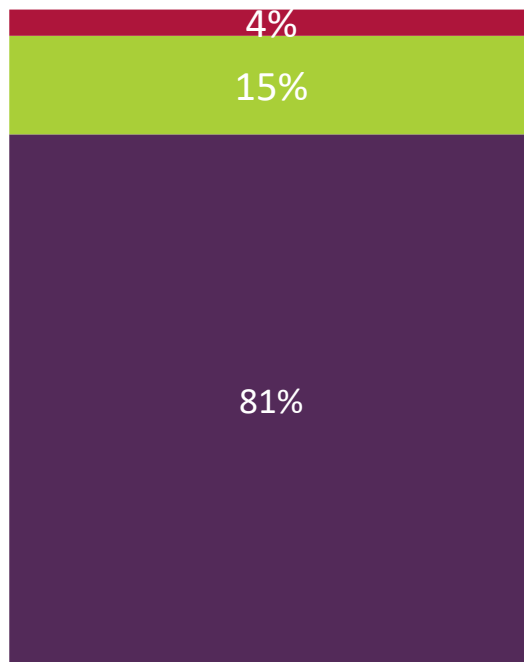
Q14b: Have you ever reported a text or call using the 7726 number?

Base: All respondents with a mobile, n=2040 / All mobile phone owners who are aware of 7726, n=174

The majority of our sample agreed that reporting suspicious activity (such as to special numbers like 7726) is helpful in preventing people being scammed in future



I believe that if more people report suspicious calls/messages then more can be done to prevent them



Reporting possible suspicious texts/calls to a special number (e.g., 7726) is helpful in preventing people being scammed in future

- Disagree (NET)
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree (NET)

Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q19 / Q15a: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'I believe that if more people report suspicious calls/messages then more can be done to prevent them' / To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: 'Reporting possible suspicious texts/calls to a special number (e.g., 7726) is helpful in preventing people being scammed in future'

Base: All with a mobile and/or landline, n=2080 / All with a mobile, n=2040

Section 3: Sources for information about suspicious calls and messages

Section Summary

There is a lack of engagement in preventing suspicious messaging

Most people who have a landline and/or mobile are not signed up to any groups that give warnings of suspicious messages and calls

This could be due to the lack of concern around falling victim to a suspicious message (most mobile phone and/or landline users are confident they will not fall victim to a suspicious message of any format) or a lack of awareness of the resources available

There are generational preferences in where people look to for advice on suspicious messaging

When looking for advice regarding possible suspicious messages and calls, most people will contact the company it looked like the message had come from

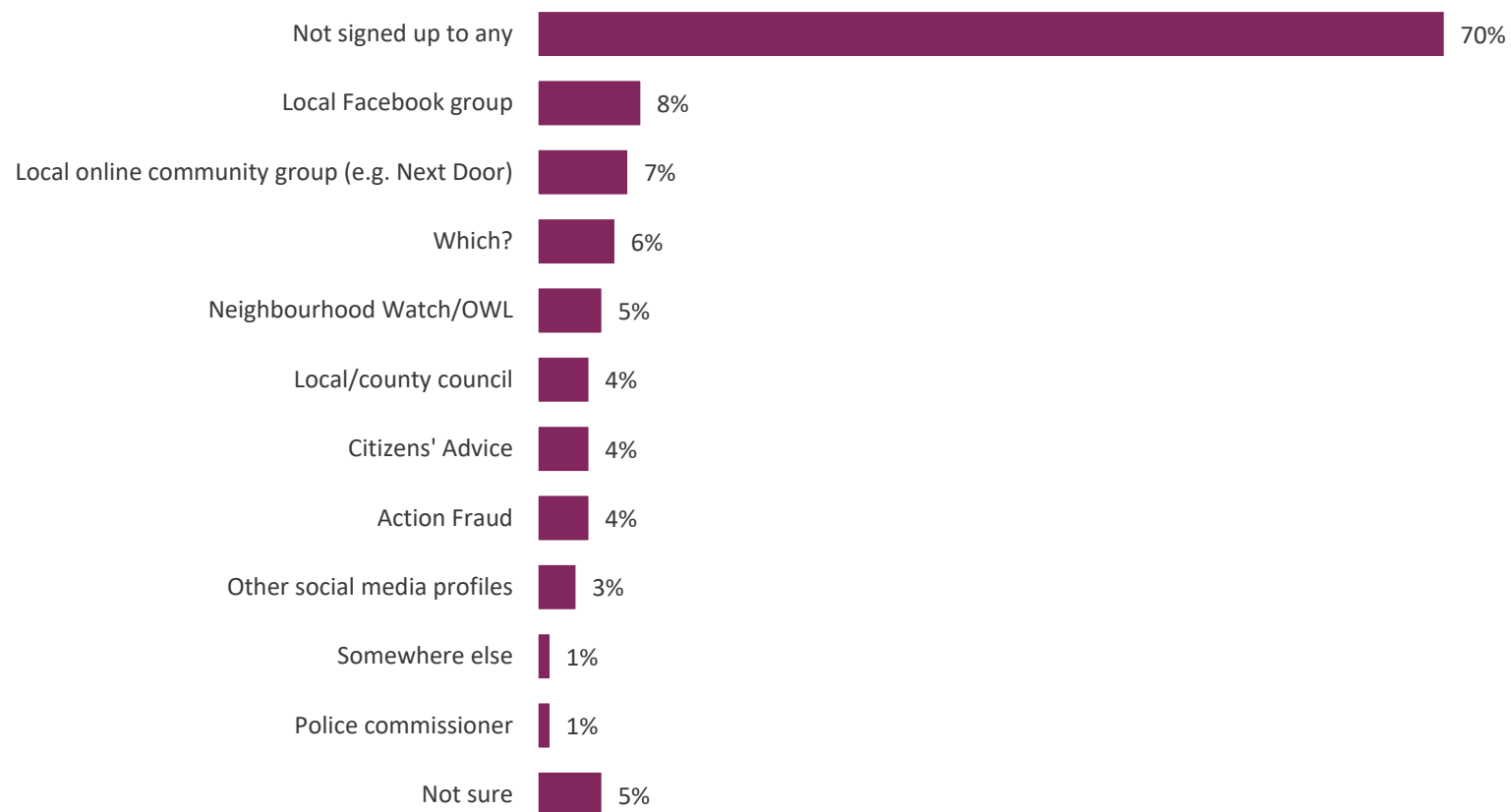
Younger people will more likely talk to friends and family for advice on potential suspicious messaging, whereas over 55s are more likely to contact the bank

Clear online information is key for informing about suspicious messaging

People most like online advice regarding suspicious calls and messages (55%)

Direct contact (e.g., from the bank/ broadband providers) is more important for older customers whereas social media is the preferred format for younger people

Most people who have a landline and/or mobile are not signed up to any groups that give warnings of suspicious messages and calls

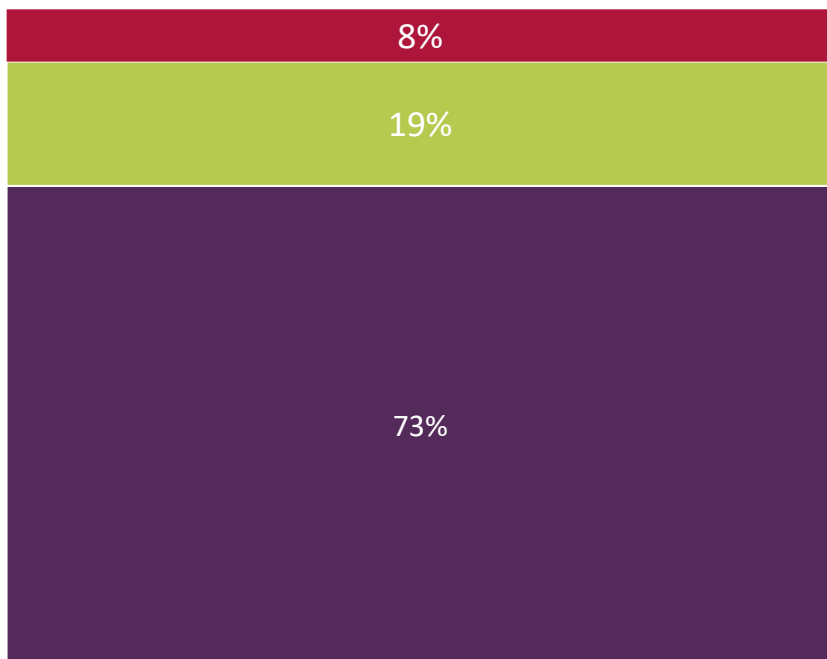


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

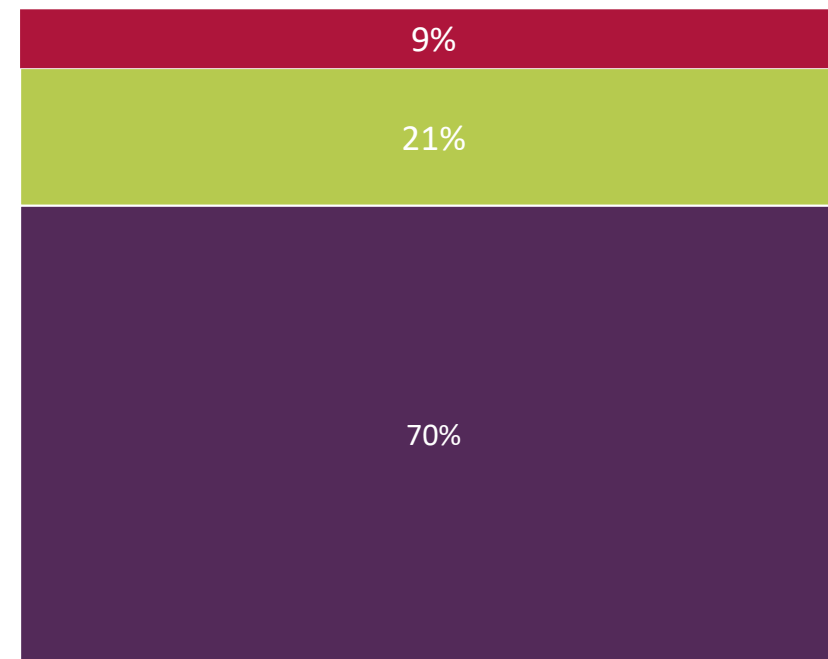
Q18: Have you signed up to any of the following organisations or groups that may provide warnings of suspicious messages/calls?

Base: All respondents with a mobile and/or landline (n=2080)

Most mobile phone and/or landline users are confident they will not fall victim to a suspicious message of any format



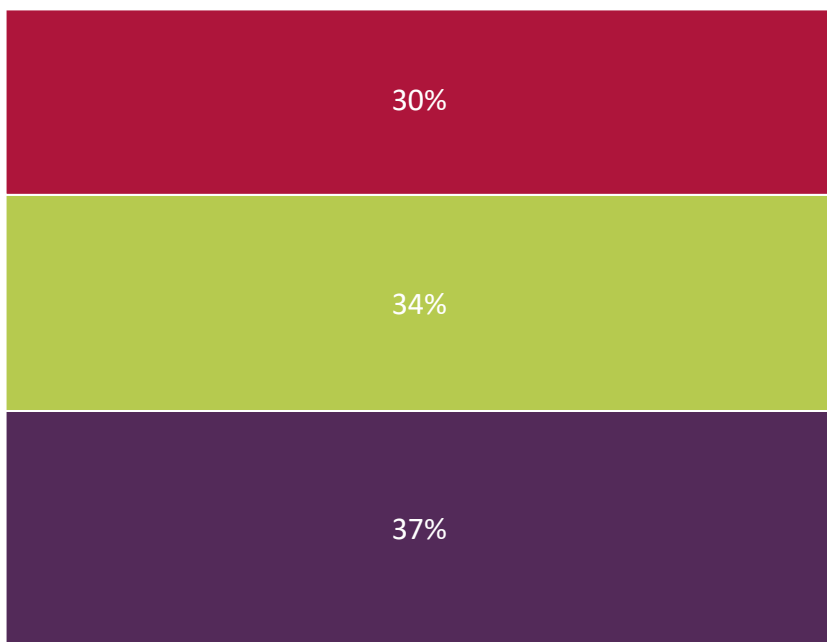
I am confident that I will not fall victim to a suspicious live voice call or recorded message



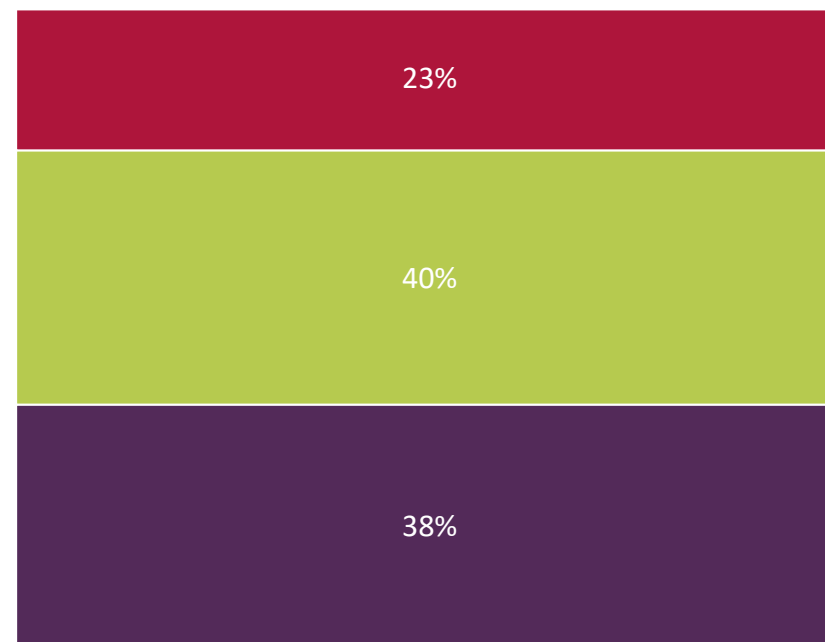
I am confident that I will not fall victim to a suspicious message sent by text

■ Agree (NET) ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree (NET)

The majority of people do not have a strong opinion on the amount of information available about suspicious messaging or the ease of reporting suspicious activity



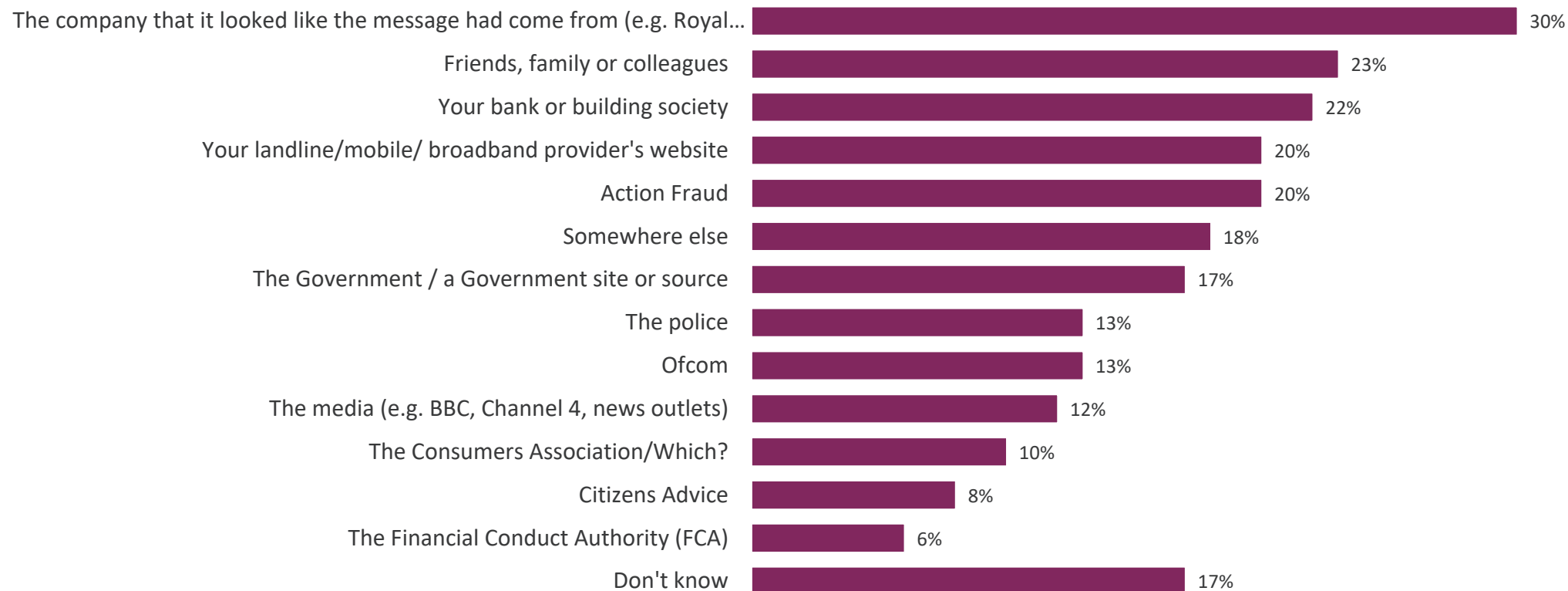
There is already plenty of information about how to identify and avoid suspicious calls/messages



It is easy to report suspicious calls/messages

■ Agree (NET) ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree (NET)

When looking for advice regarding possible suspicious messages and calls, most people will contact the company it looked like the message had come from

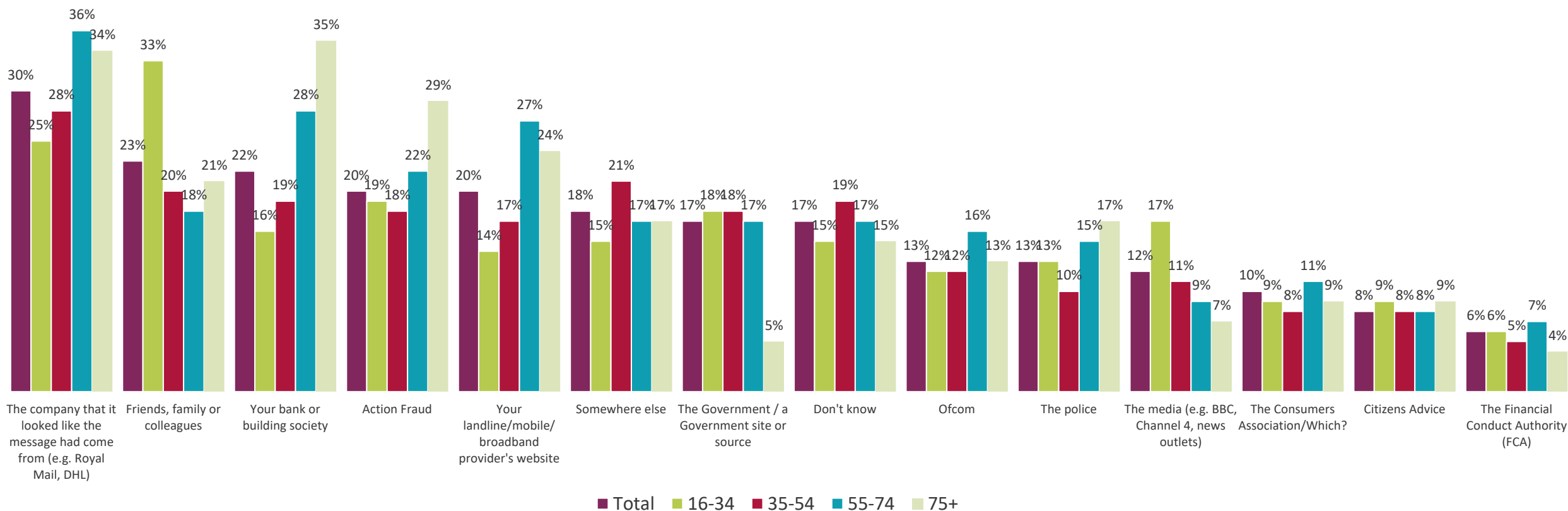


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q16: Where would you look for advice about suspicious messages/calls, for example to check whether a message you suspected to be suspicious was genuine or not or to find out what to do if you suspected you had been scammed?

Base: All respondents with a mobile and/or landline (n=2080)

Younger people will more likely talk to friends and family for advice on potential suspicious messaging, whereas over 55s are more likely to contact an authority (such as the bank)

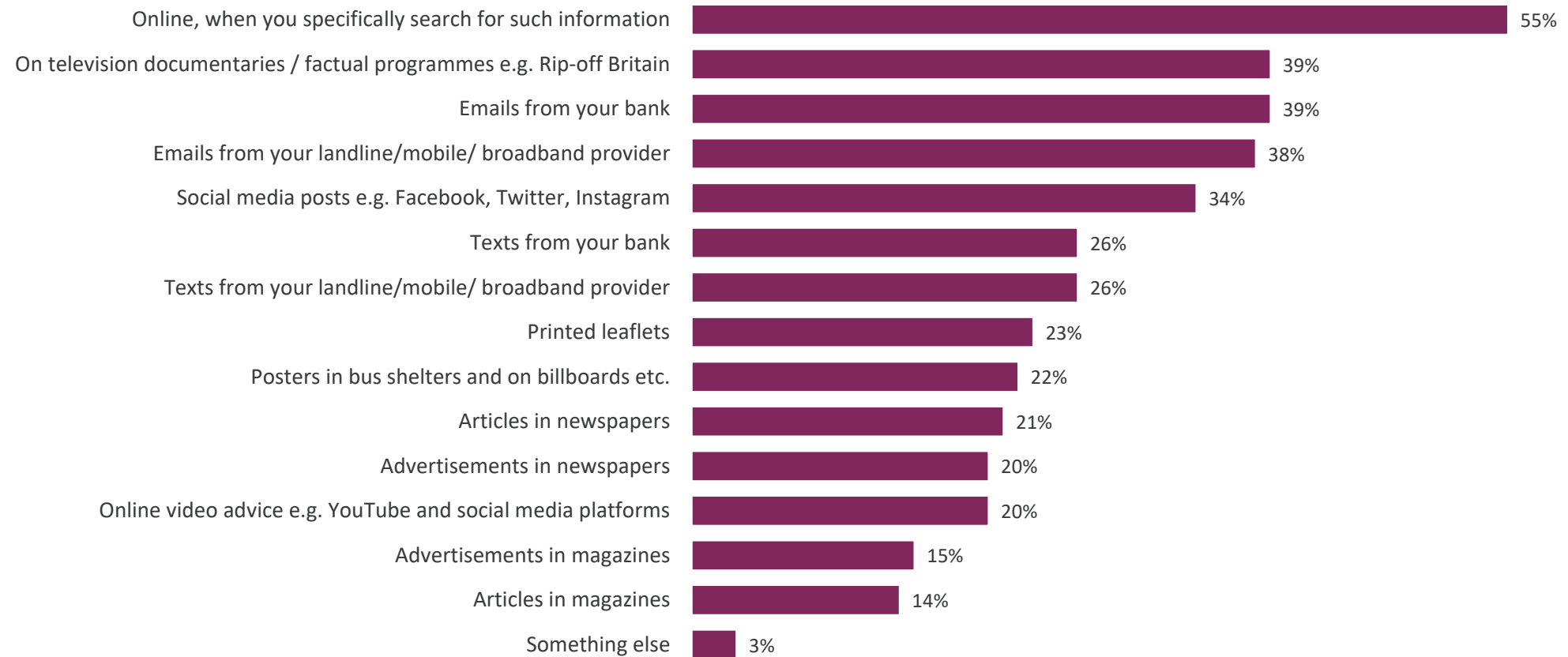


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q16: Where would you look for advice about suspicious messages/calls, for example to check whether a message you suspected to be suspicious was genuine or not or to find out what to do if you suspected you had been scammed?

Base: All respondents with a mobile and/or landline, All: n=2080, 16-34s: n=617, 35-54s: n=690, 55-74s: n=635, 75+: n=138

Online is the most popular format for how UK adults with a mobile and or/landline would like to see advice for suspicious calls and messages

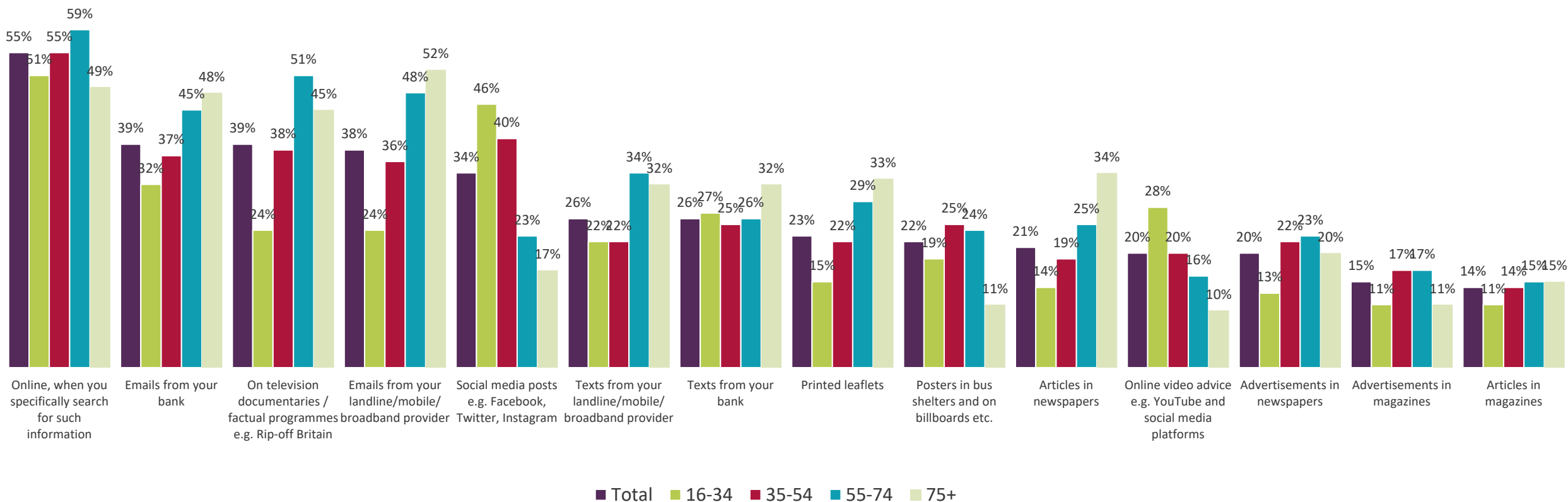


Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q17: In what format would you like to see advice about suspicious messages/calls and how to avoid them?

Base: All respondents with a mobile and/or landline (n=2080)

Older people prefer more 'official' sources and traditional communication methods whereas social media is the preferred format for younger people



Source: Scams Research 2021, Yonder

Q17: In what format would you like to see advice about suspicious messages/calls and how to avoid them?

Base: All respondents with a mobile and/or landline, All: n=2080, 16-34s: n=617, 35-54s: n=690, 55-74s: n=635, 75+: n=138