



College of  
Policing

## Integrity programme

Data pack on public trust and  
confidence in the police

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# Scope of the data pack

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- This data pack provides an overview of the published national survey evidence on public trust and confidence in the police
- As there are few sources specifically exploring public perceptions of police wrongdoing, the pack inevitably focuses on general public trust and confidence in policing
- The pack draws on the following data sources:
  - Crime Survey of England and Wales (discussed [here](#))
  - IPCC public survey (discussed [here](#))
  - Standards in Public Life survey (discussed [here](#))
  - HMIC public survey (discussed [here](#))
- The survey methods are briefly discussed at the start of each section
- The pack does not examine other research on the subject
- References and links to the source material have been included at the end of the pack data ([here](#))

# Overall findings

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- Public confidence in their local police has seen a sustained increase – from 47% to 62% – between 2003/04 and 2011/12
- Victim satisfaction has improved by 12 percentage points between 2007/08 and 2011/12 from 59% to 71%
- Public perceptions of police fairness – which are crucial for police legitimacy – have remained largely stable over this period
- Compared to other professions, a relatively high proportion of people trust the police to tell the truth
- While complaints have increased, they are unlikely to reflect the totality of public dissatisfaction with the police
- A relatively high proportion of people appear not to complain because they do not think anything will happen as a result
- There is some evidence to suggest the public thinks police corruption is a problem, though direct experience appears to be relatively limited

# Crime Survey of England and Wales

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- The Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) is the most robust survey available on public perceptions of the police
- It draws on a large random sample of adults aged 16 and over (46,000 respondents in 2011/12)
- The results, therefore, have a small margin of error and are representative of the wider general public
- Some groups are under-represented in the sample (e.g. people living in shared accommodation)
- It does not routinely include people aged less than 16 years
- The survey is administered face-to-face in respondents' own home using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing)
- The survey asks about public trust & police complaints, but does not cover perceptions of police wrongdoing
- Some questions have been included since the first CSEW, meaning long term trend data is available

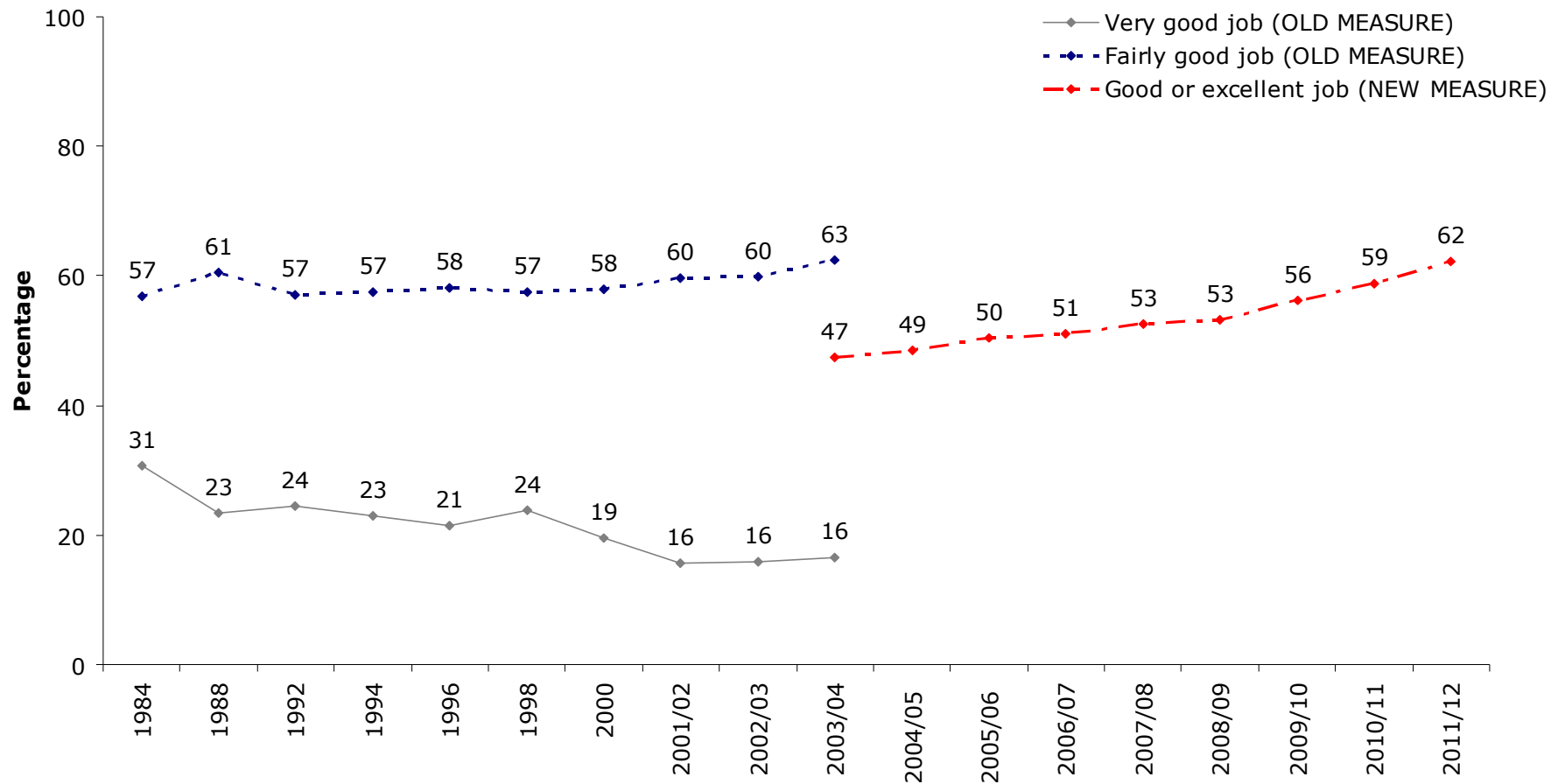
The CSEW has shown that **victim satisfaction** has increased by 12 percentage points since 2007/08. The reason for this improvement is not known, though a more consistent attempt by the police to implement a service-oriented approach may have had an effect. It is notable that satisfaction remained stable for much of the 2000s after a decline of around 10 percentage points in the late 1990s.



ONS 2012a, Table D45

There has been a sustained increase in **public confidence in the police**. The proportion of people who think the local police do a 'good' or 'excellent' job – the main measure of confidence – has increased by 15 percentage points since 2003/04. The cause of this increase cannot be established as it is a national trend, though the uptake of neighbourhood policing (from 2005) may have been a contributing factor.

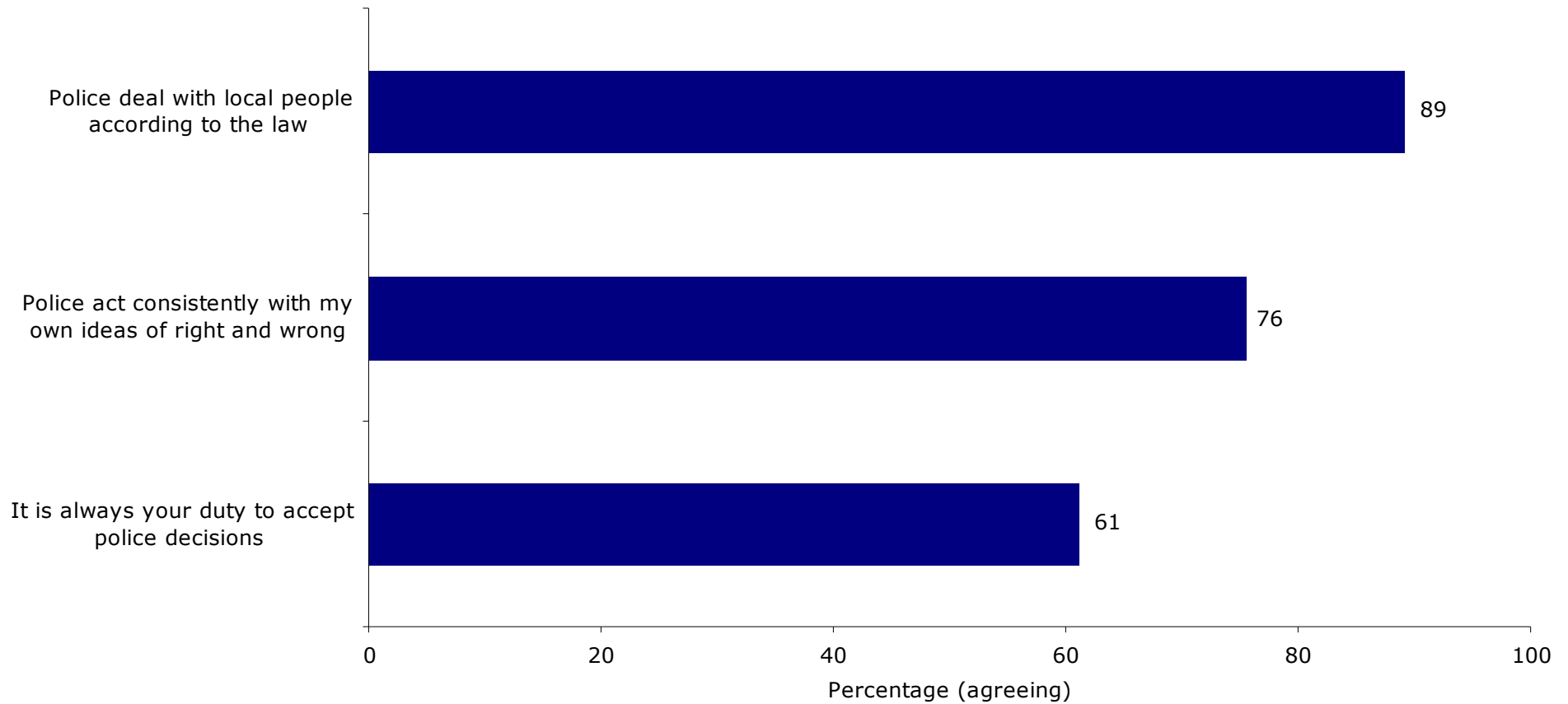
**Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing?**



ONS 2012a, Table A1

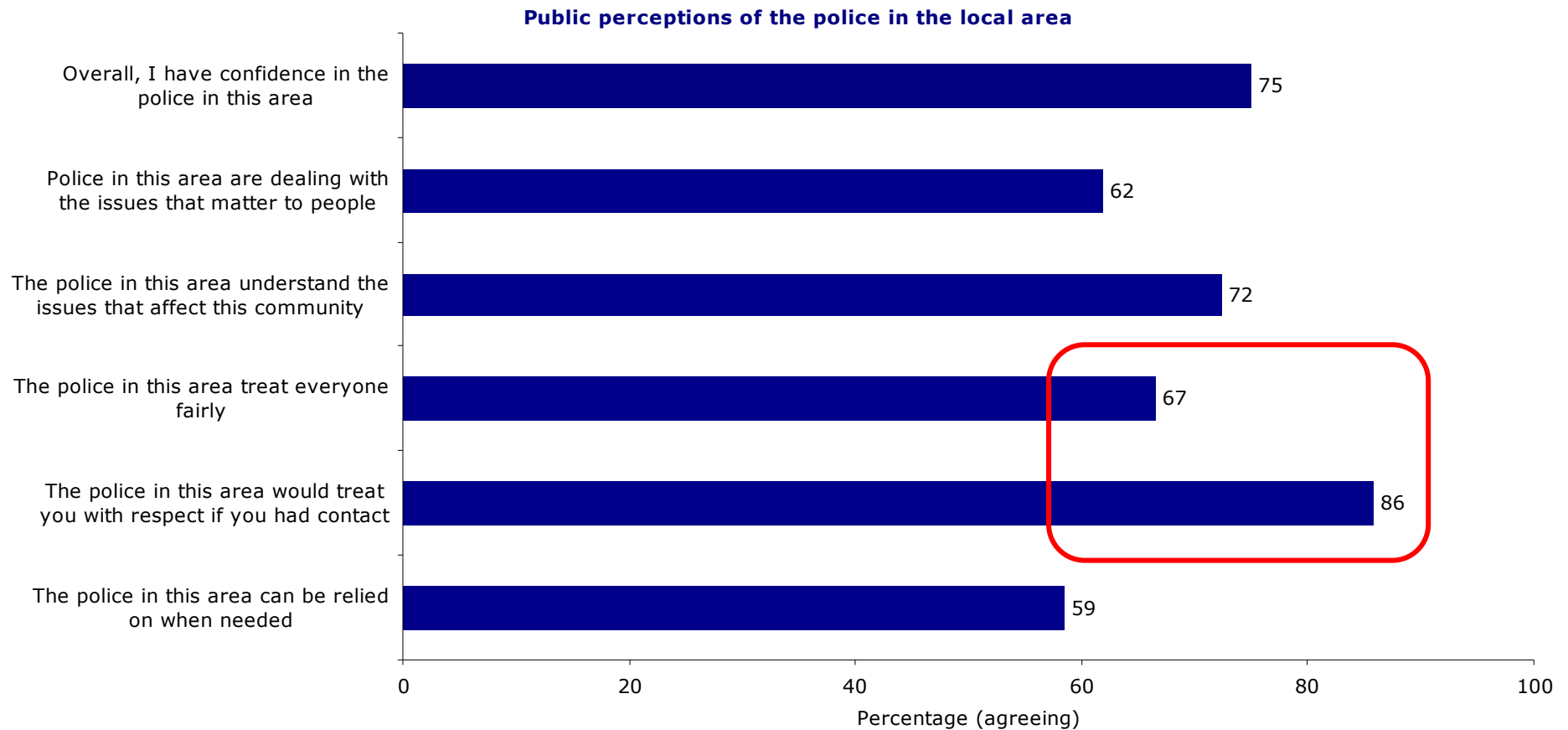
**Police legitimacy** is the idea that public accept police authority and believe the police are 'on their side'. Legitimacy is often measured in terms of whether the public: think the police act lawfully and share their values; and feel everyone should accept what the police say because they have a moral obligation to do so. The CSEW showed a large proportion of people viewed the police as legitimate, but that consent was not universal.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



ONS 2012b Figure 3

Research shows that police legitimacy is largely shaped by public perceptions of police fairness – principally **fair decision-making and respectful treatment**. However, while most people felt the local police would treat them with respect (86%), a significantly lower proportion felt the police would treat everyone fairly regardless of who they were (67%).

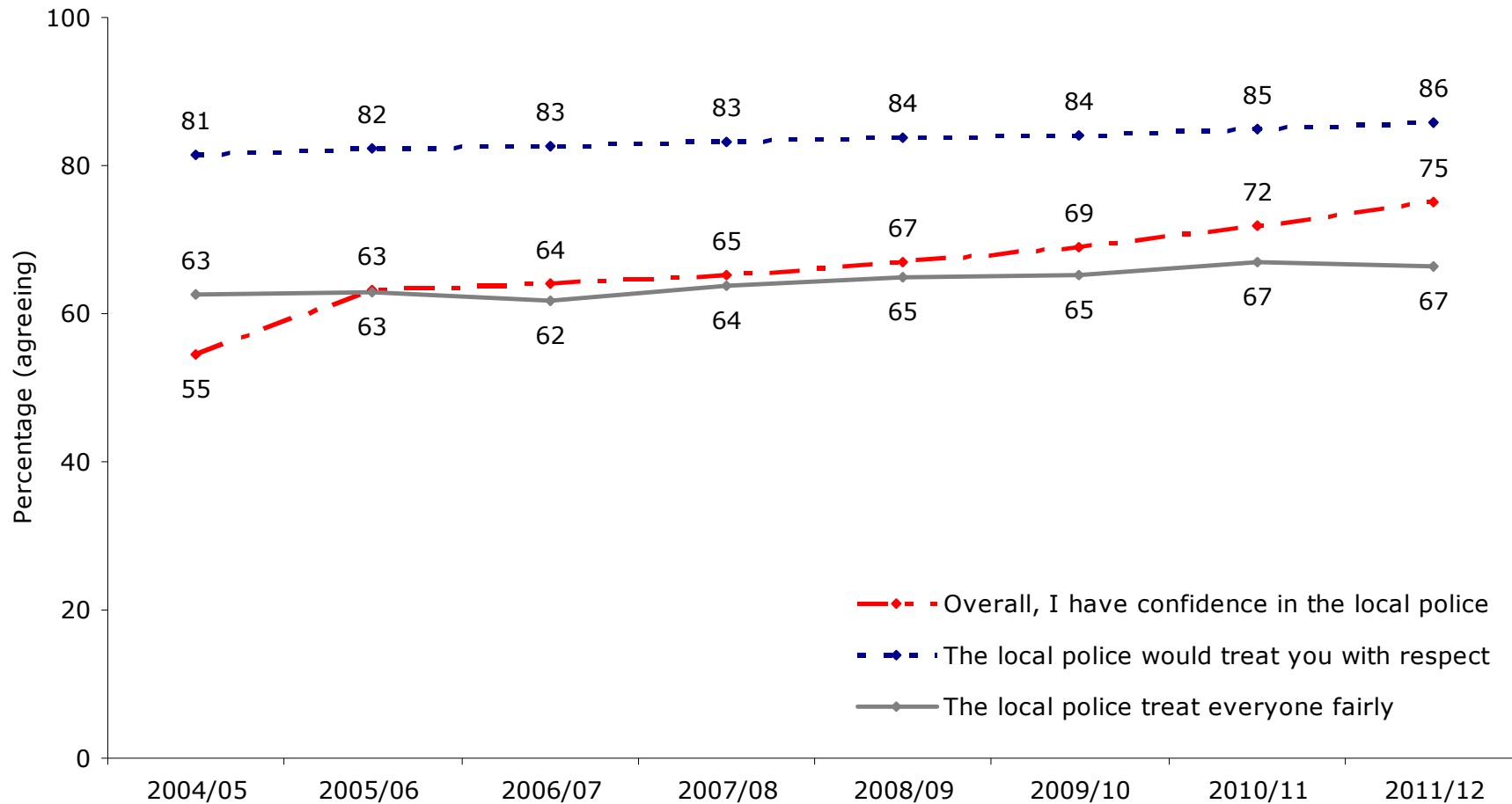


ONS 2012b, Figure 3



**Perceptions of police fairness** have been shown to be associated with public confidence in the police. However, while perceptions of fairness have seen a small significant increase, public confidence appears to have increased at a faster rate since 2004/05 (when the questions were introduced). This pattern might suggest that factors other than police fairness are behind the increases in confidence (e.g. reduced crime rates, neighbourhood policing).

### Public perceptions of the police in the local area



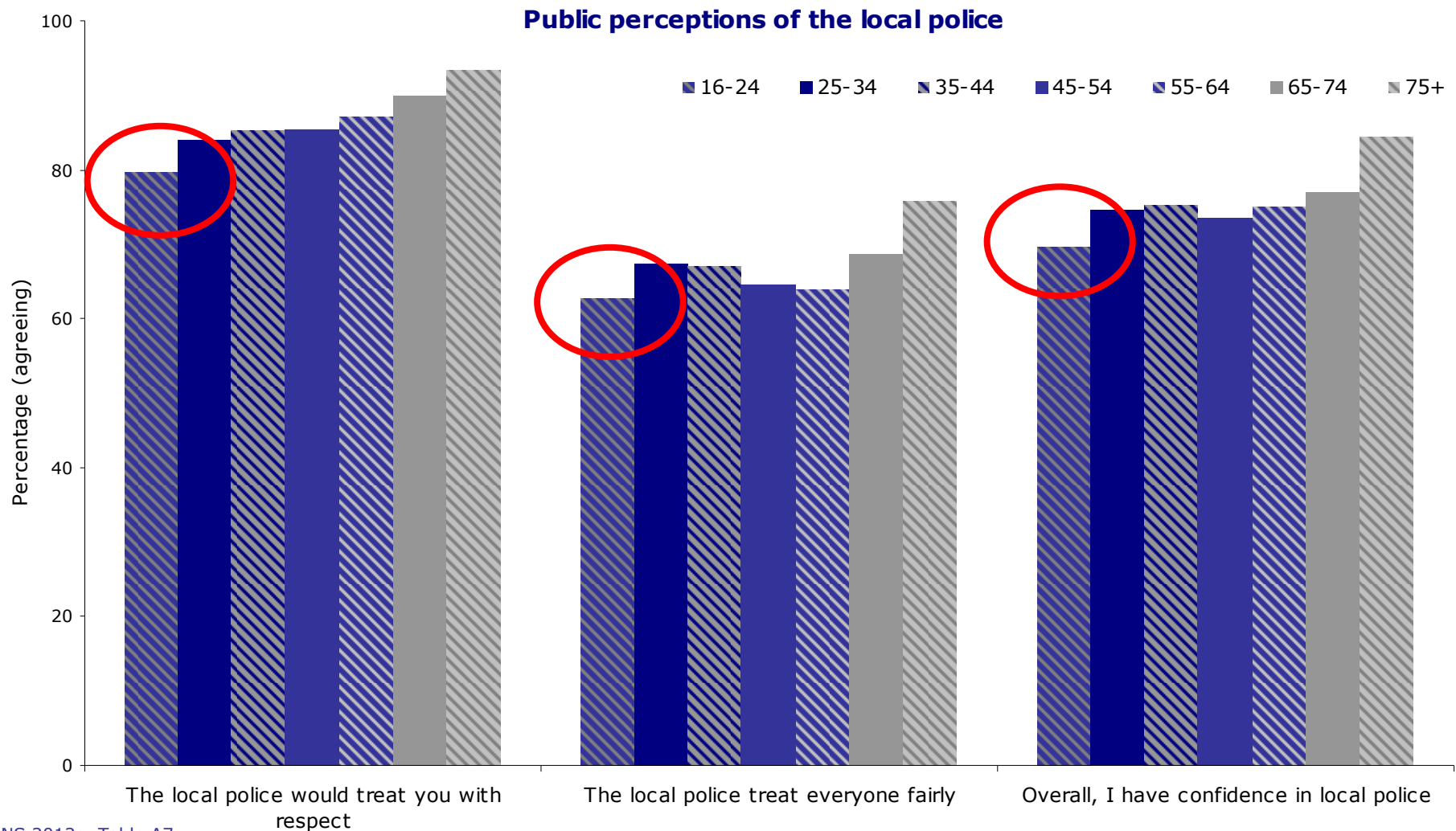
ONS 2012b, Table 1

Averages are likely to mask differences between subgroups. For example, a lower proportion of young people rated the police as 'good' or 'excellent' compared to other age groups. Often social characteristics are not independently associated with perceptions, which tend to be explained more by people's experiences in those groups (e.g. being searched).



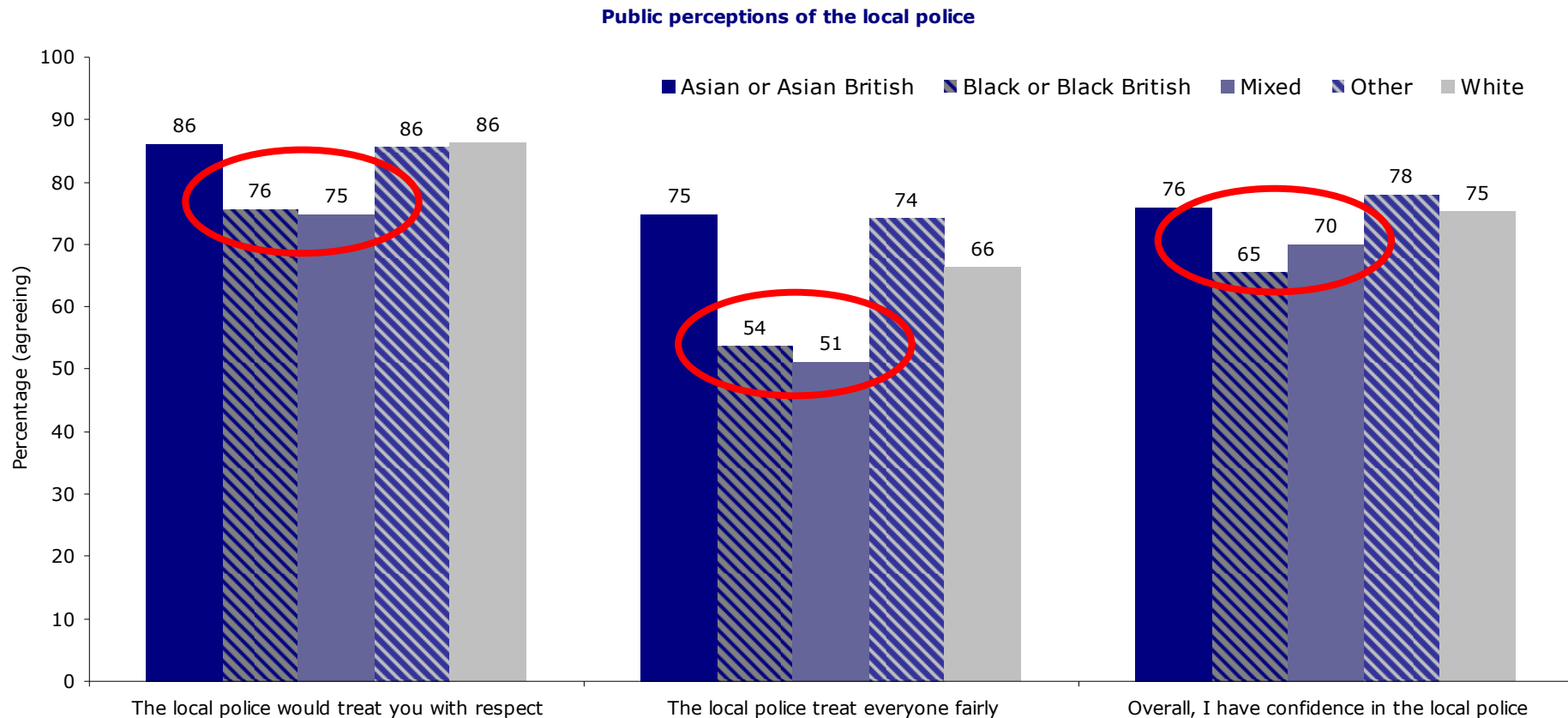
ONS 2012a, Table A9

A similar **age profile** was revealed for other public perception measures. On average, people aged 16-24 years old – compared to those in other age categories – had lower levels of confidence and were less likely to say the police would treat them fairly and with respect.

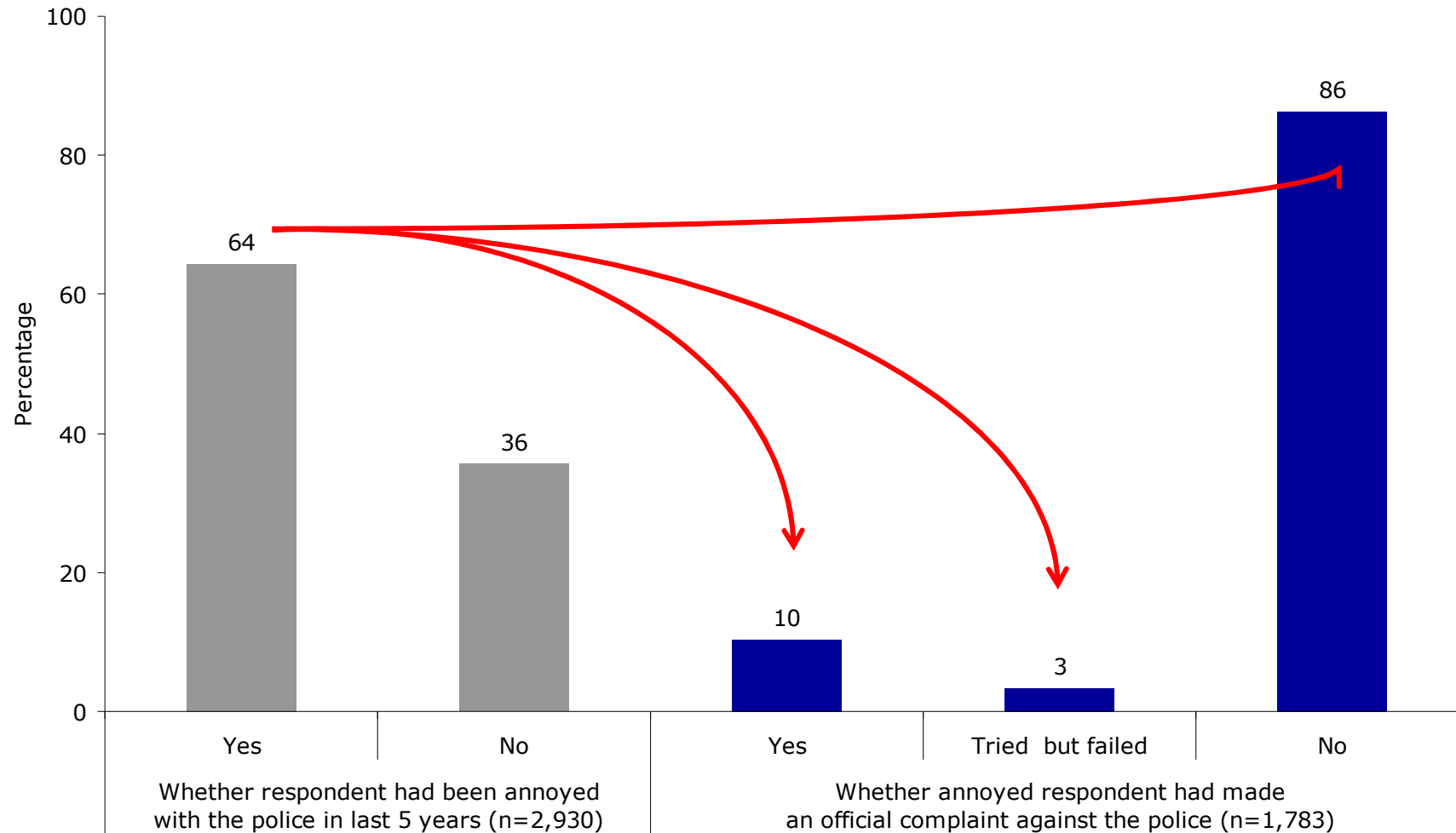


ONS 2012a, Table A7

There were also marked differences in perceptions about the police among different **ethnic groups**. Compared to people from other ethnic groups, a lower proportion of people who defined their ethnicity as 'Black / Black British' or 'Mixed' said they had confidence in the local police, and thought the police treated people fairly and with respect.



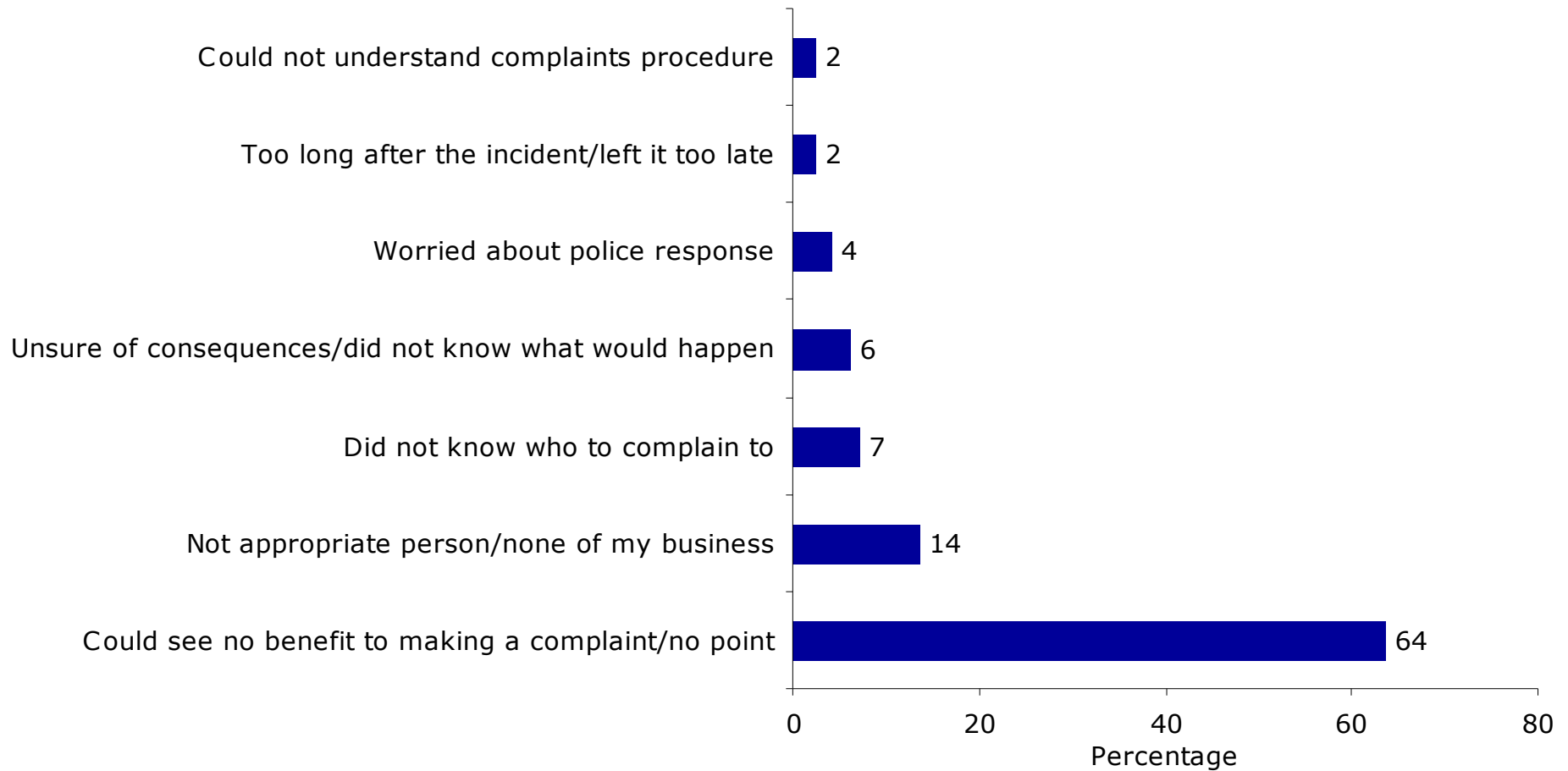
Respondents were asked if they had ever been **annoyed** with the way the police had behaved towards them or someone they knew, or with the way they had handled a situation. The reasons people gave were provided in free-text. Most people (64%) who had ever been annoyed had been so in the last 5 years. However, few said they formally complained (10%). This gap suggests **complaints** represent only a small proportion of public dissatisfaction.



ONS 2012a, 'Related data'

The principal reason **why people did not complain**, despite being annoyed, was that they did not see the point or saw no benefit in them doing so. Over 60% of people held this view. [See Slide 20 for related IPCC data.]

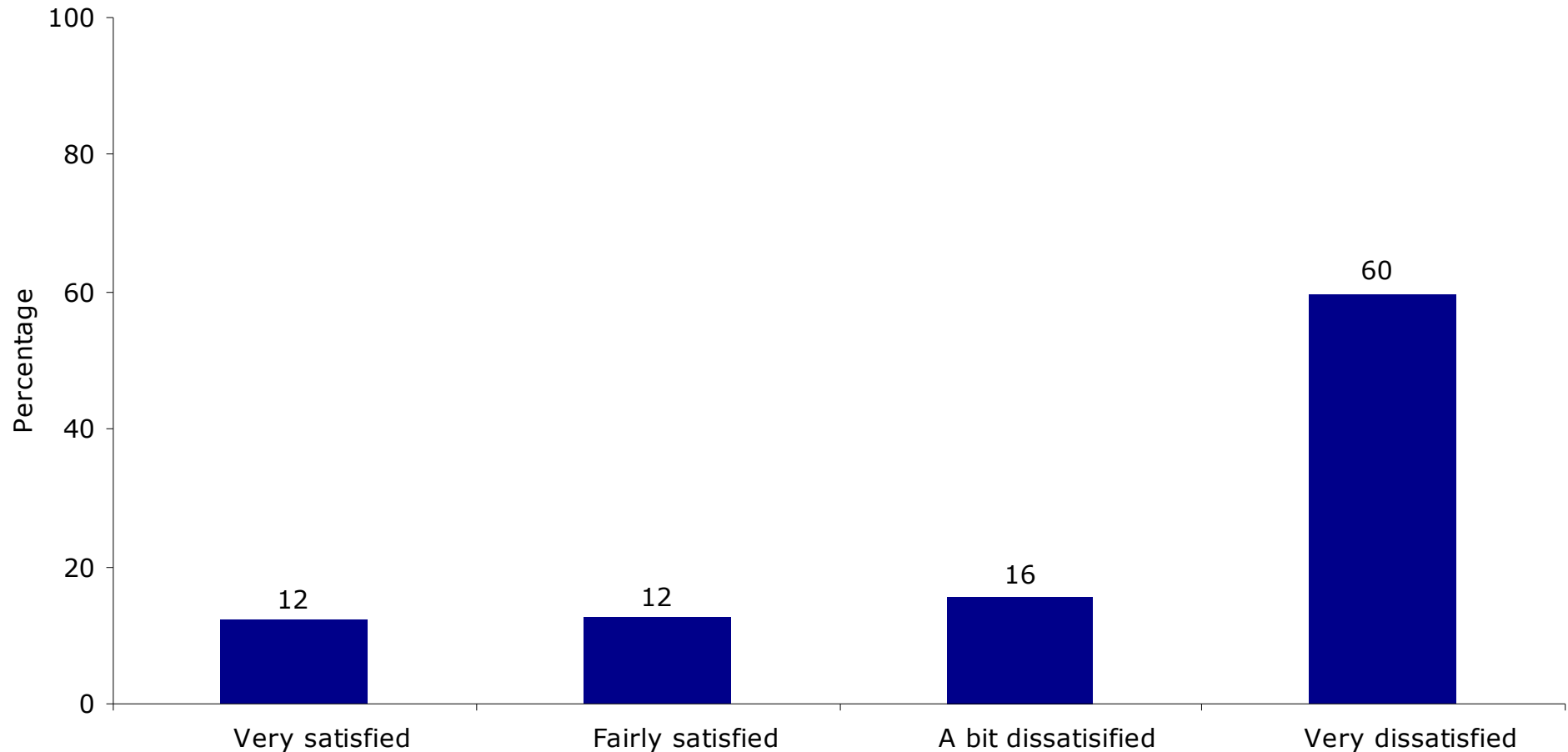
**Reasons why respondent did not make a complaint despite being annoyed (n=1,541)**



ONS 2012a, 'Related data'

Of the people who reported being annoyed with the police and making a complaint over the last five years, a high proportion (76%) said they were 'very' or 'a bit dissatisfied' with **the way their complaint was handled**.

**Satisfaction with the handling of the complaint against the police (n=243)**



ONS 2012a, 'Related data'

# IPCC public survey

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- Since 2004, the IPCC has included a series of questions in an annual omnibus survey of the general public in England & Wales
- In 2001, the survey achieved a large sample of respondents (circa 3,000)
- The wider omnibus survey, carried out by TNS-BMRB, uses a random sampling technique to identify households in order to secure a broadly representative sample of respondents
- As with the CSEW, some groups are likely to be under-represented in the final sample
- Respondents are interviewed face-to-face in their own homes using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing)
- Around 10% of all respondents are called back to validate and clarify their answers
- The survey includes questions about contact with the police, attitudes towards complaining & awareness of the IPCC

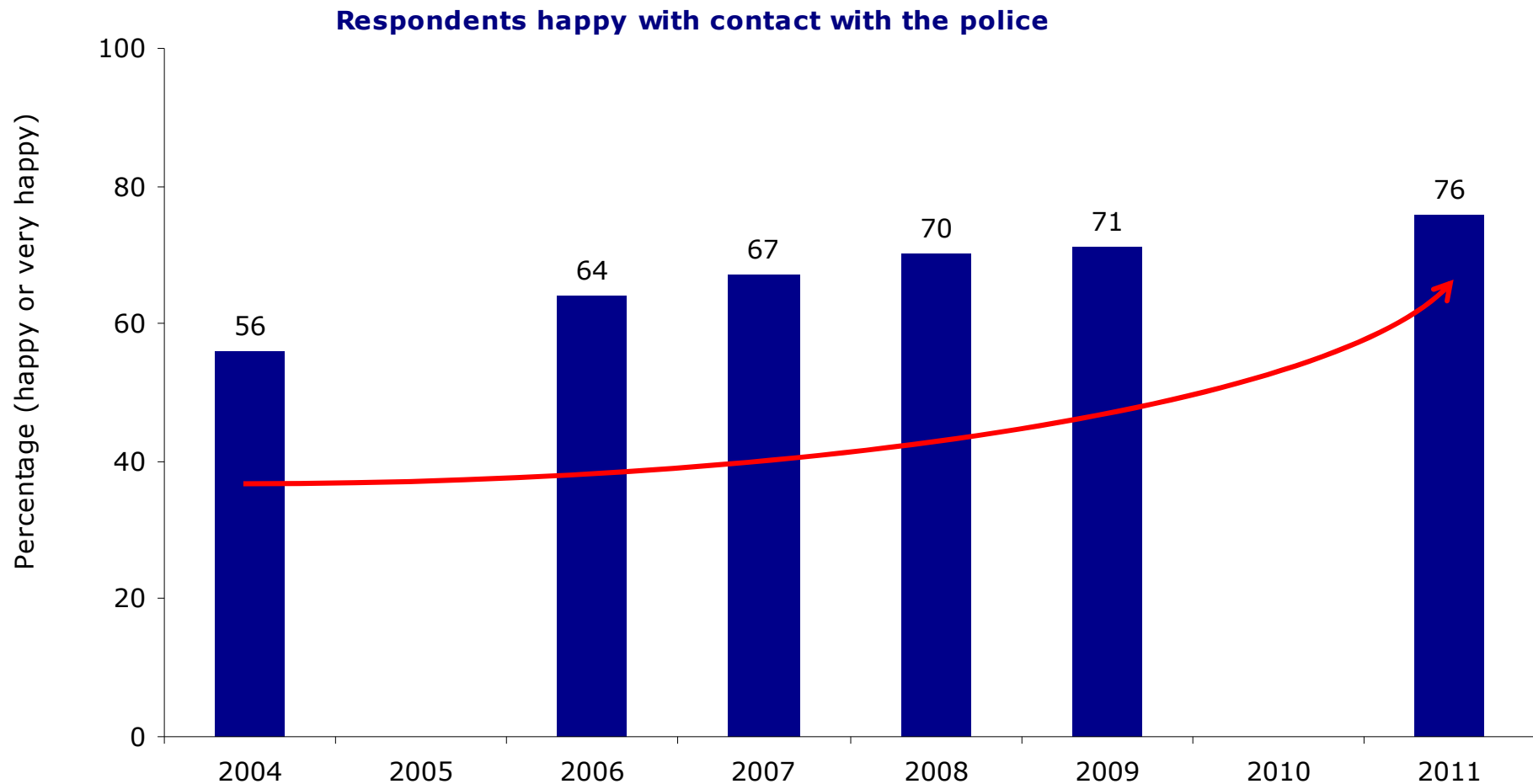


This IPCC survey showed that just over a quarter of people had **contact with the police** during the previous 12 months. This proportion was unchanged since 2004.



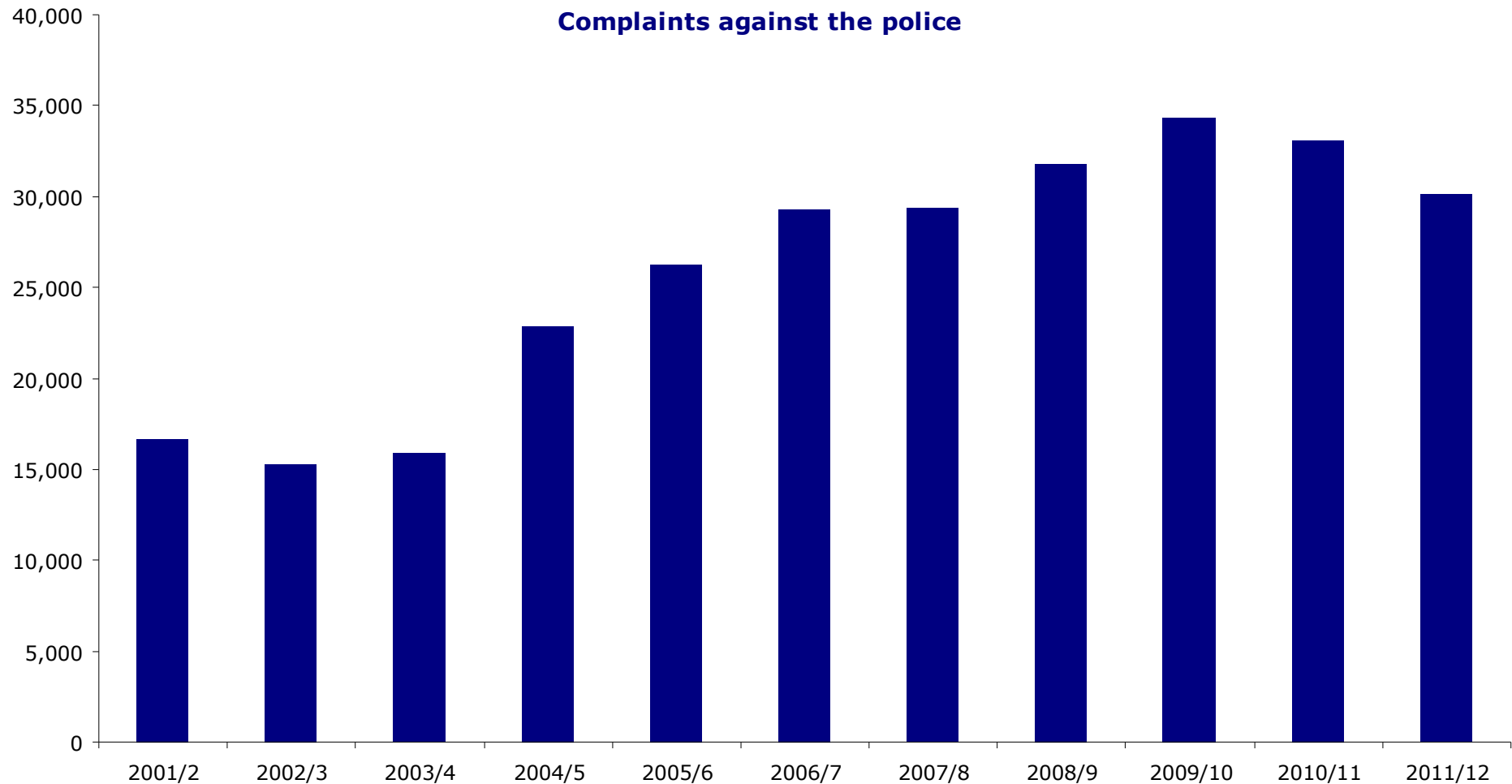
Inglis 2009 & 2011, Table 1 – data unavailable for 2005 & 2010

However, the survey also showed a 20 percentage point increase in the proportion of people who were reportedly 'happy' or 'very happy' with their **contact experience**. The reason for this increase is not known. Victim satisfaction (as measured by the CSEW) has also increased in recent years – a change that could be associated with improved public confidence and police attempts to improve quality of service (see Slide 5).



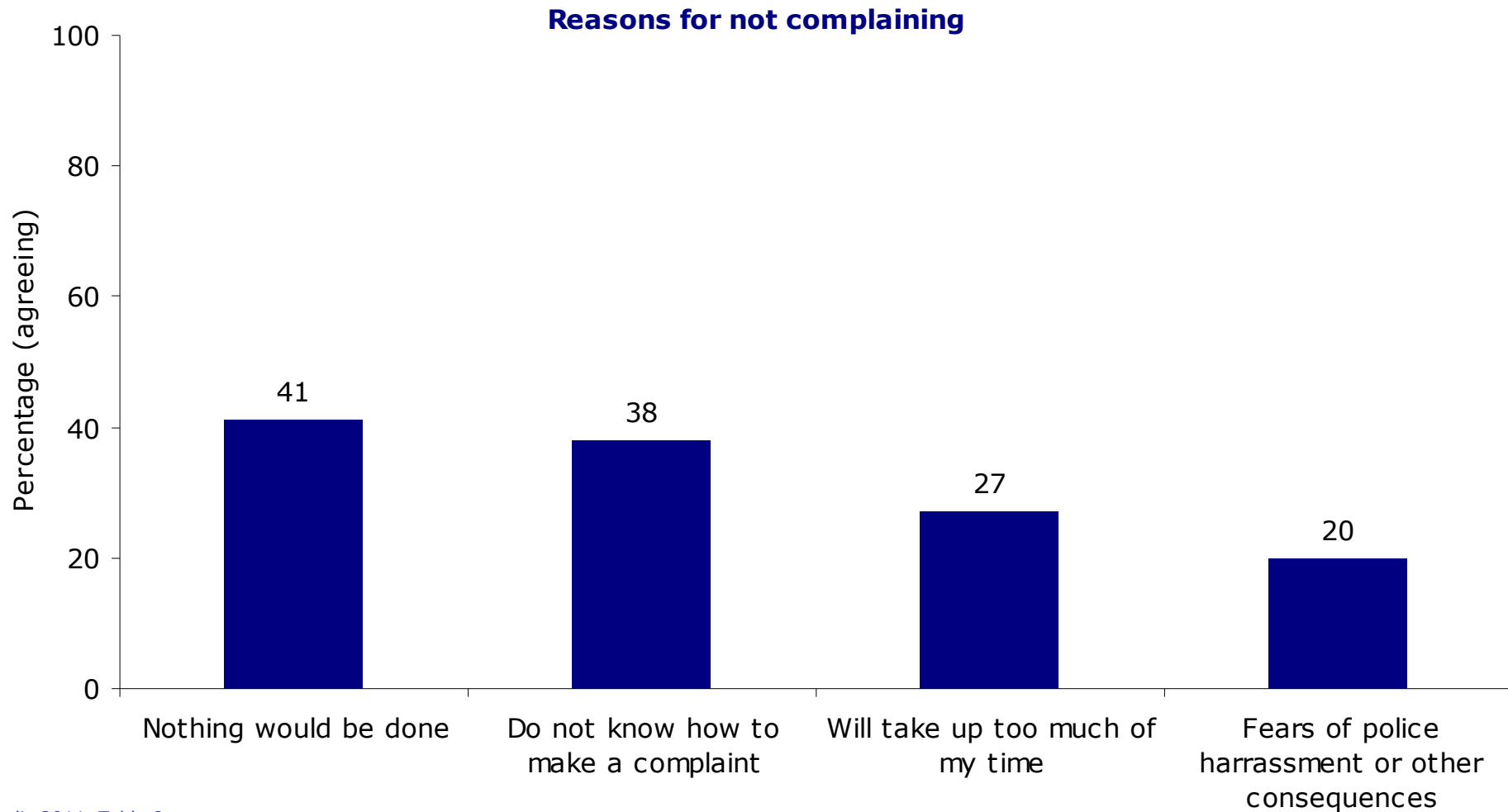
Inglis 2009 & 2011, Table 1 – data unavailable for 2005 & 2010

Despite people reportedly being more satisfied on average with their contact with the police, administrative data published by the IPCC points to a large increase in **public complaints**. Complaints more than doubled in the period between 2002/03 and 2009/10. The reason for this increase is not known. The increase, for example, could be due to increase trust in the complaints system and / or a rise in negative experiences.



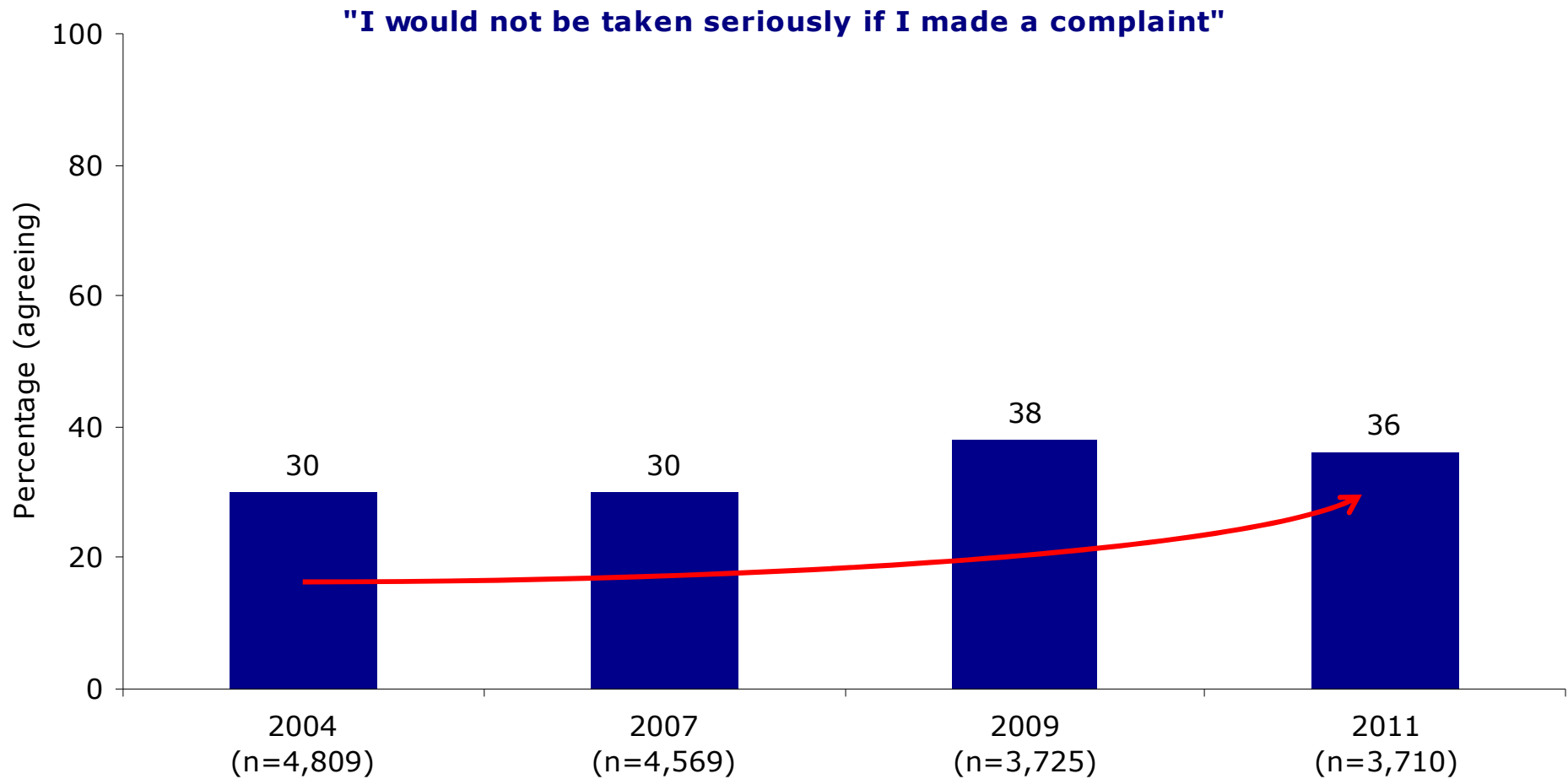
IPCC 2011 & 2012, Table 4

Like the CSEW, the IPCC survey also explored **why people did not complain** about the police. The most common reason for respondents not making a complaint was that they did not expect anything to happen as a result. However, the differences between this response and others in the IPCC survey were less marked than in the CSEW (see Slide 14).



Inglis 2011, Table 8

The proportion of people stating that **complaints made against the police would not be taken seriously** has increased 6 percentage points since 2007.



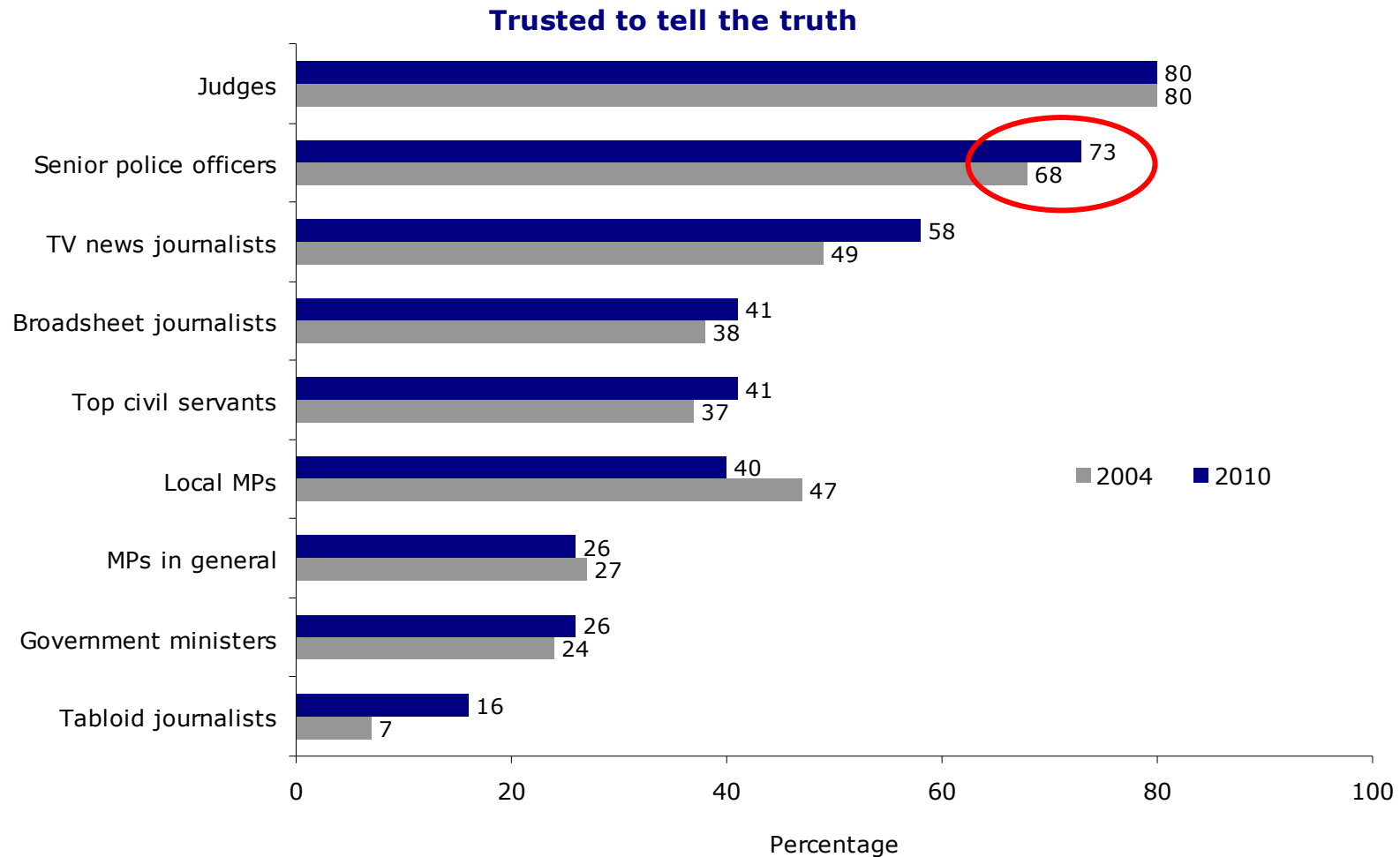
Inglis 2009 & 2011, Table 6

# Standards in Public Life survey

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- The Committee on Standards in Public Life has carried out a public attitudes survey every two years since 2004
- The survey explores public perceptions about the standards of conduct of those holding public office, though there are few questions specifically about policing
- The survey, carried out by TNS-BMRB, covered the whole of Great Britain
- The achieved sample in 2010 was around 1,500 respondents
- The most recent report contained limited information about how the survey was conducted, meaning its limitations are not known
- In previous years, a random sampling process was adopted (similar to the IPCC survey)

The survey showed a relatively high proportion of respondents **trust senior police officers to tell the truth** compared to a limited number of other professions, and that levels of trust have increased slightly for the police between 2004 and 2010. Previous sweeps of the survey have indicated that people trust the police in their local area slightly more than senior officers. [See Slide 25 for related HMIC findings.]



Standards in Public Life Survey 2010, Fig 2.3.1. The more recent 2013 report did not include numerical findings.

# HMIC public survey

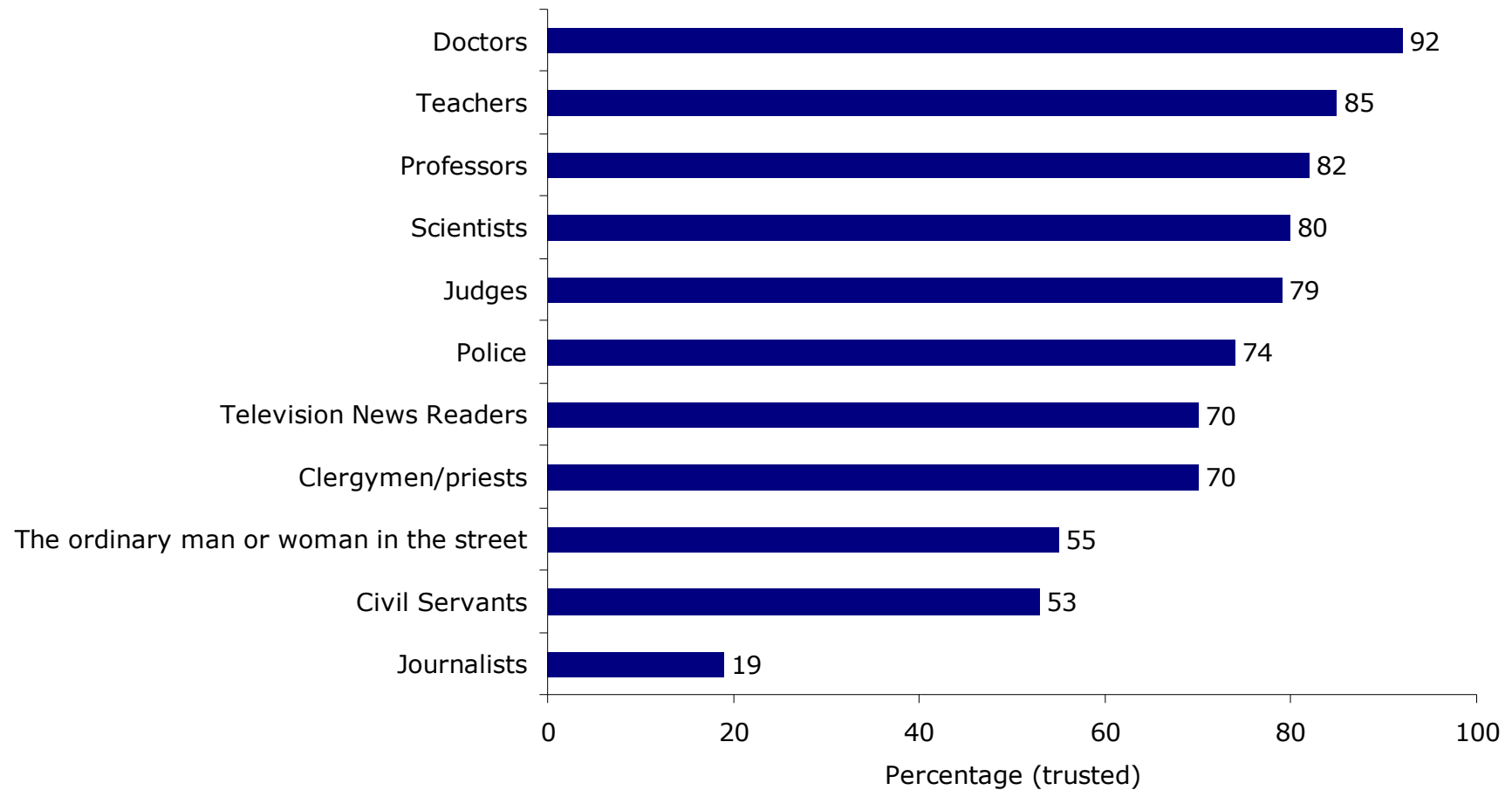
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- HMIC commissioned, as part of a follow-up review on police integrity, a survey to establish the public's view of the scale and nature of corruption in the police service
- The survey was carried out by ICM over the telephone, and achieved relatively large sample size (circa 3,500)
- The respondents were sampled through a process of random digit dialling with quotas for age, gender and religion
- The use of quota sampling means the results are only representative of those who participated in the survey rather than the wider population (though statistical weighting was applied)
- Unlike the other surveys, HMIC specifically asked about people's perceptions and experiences of police corruption
- Measuring perceptions of corruption is inherently problematic – the questions can be difficult for people to answer, and it is unclear what people understand by 'corruption' and how informed their views are



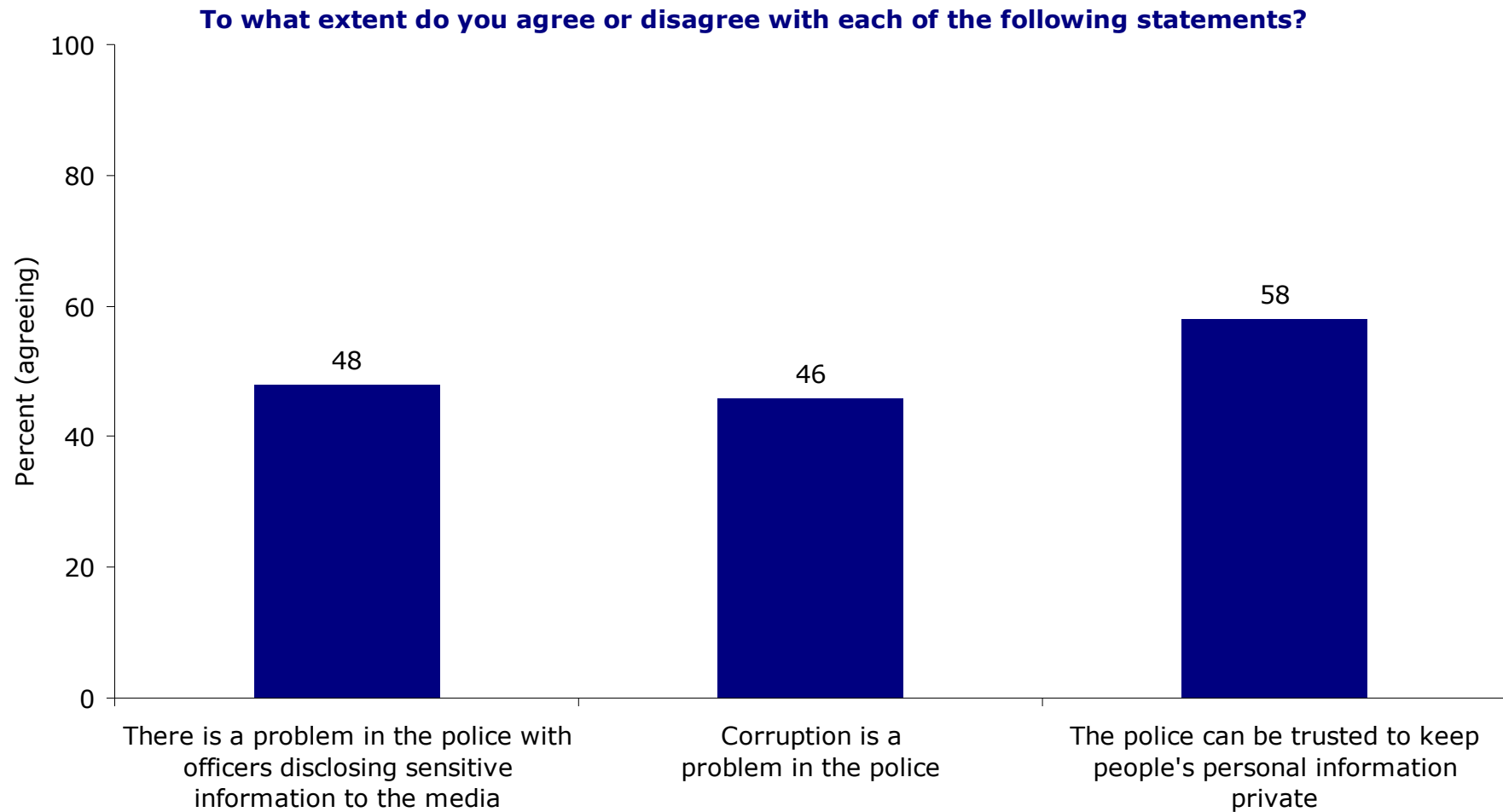
Like the Public Standards survey (see Slide 22), HMIC also asked respondents about whether they **trusted different professions to tell the truth**. A similar proportion of respondents said they trusted the police to tell the truth, although the HMIC included other professions that were found to be more trusted.

**For each (group) would you tell me if you generally trust them to tell the truth, or not?**



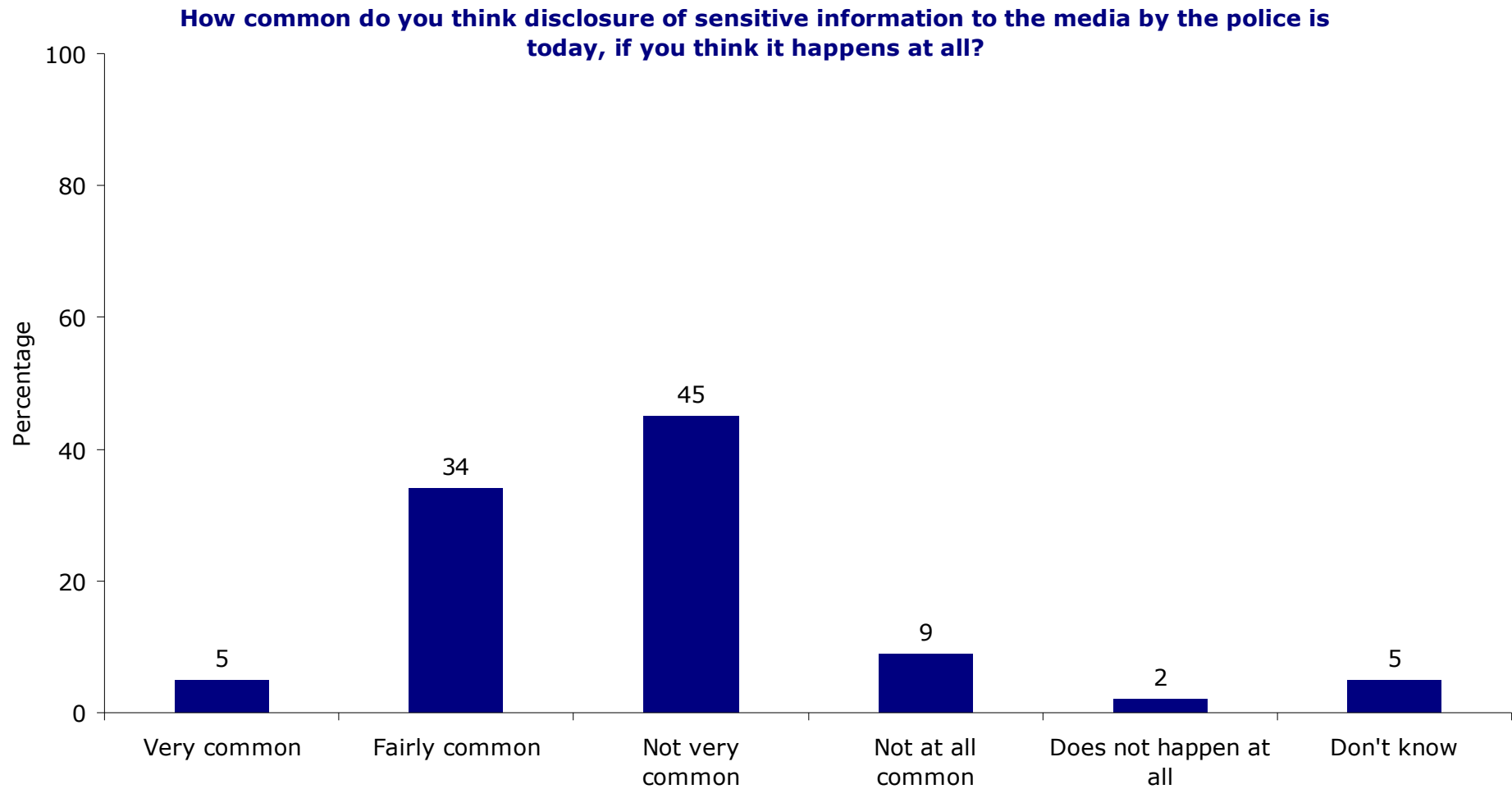
(HMIC 2012, Table 1: Q1)

Respondents to the HMIC survey were asked whether particular types of unethical behaviour were a problem in the police. The results highlighted public concern about the **handling of sensitive information**, largely in respect of disclosure issues.



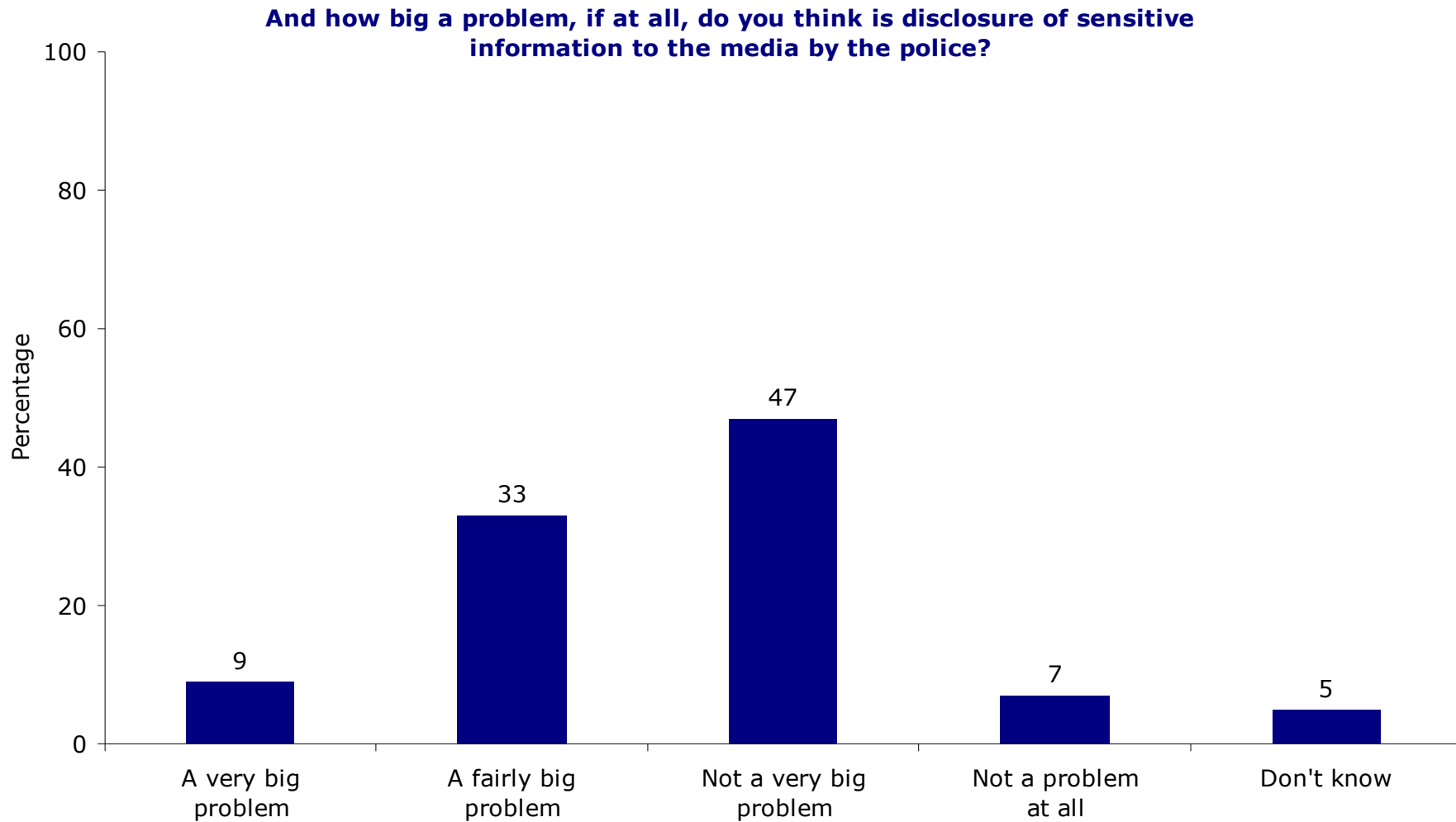
(HMIC 2012, Table 7: Q4)

Respondents to the HMIC survey were asked **how common** they thought it was for the police to **disclose sensitive information to the media**. Overall, 39% said that disclosure of sensitive information to the media was a 'very' or 'fairly common'. The survey was carried out soon after the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry which, in part, looked at the relationship between the police and the press.



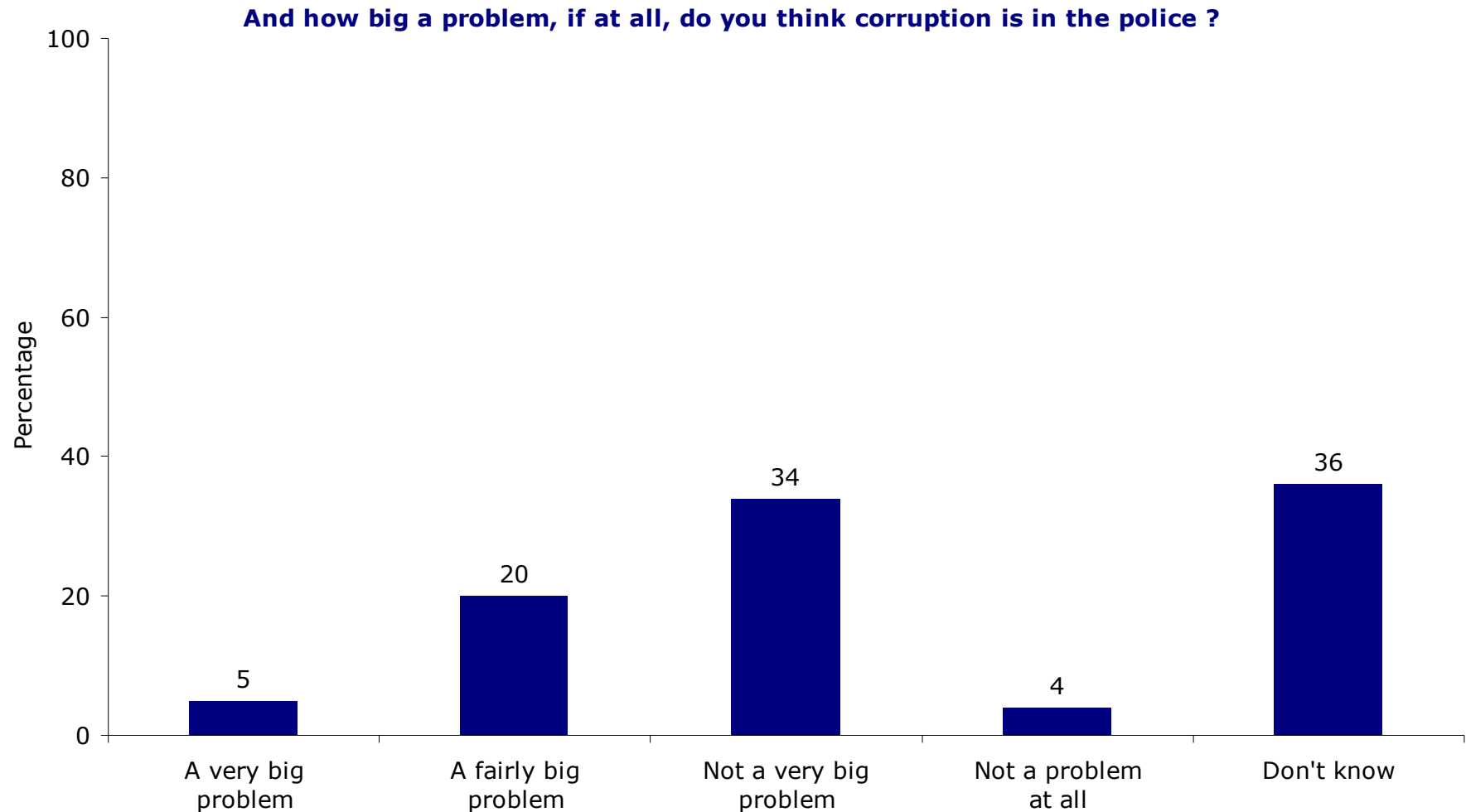
(HMIC 2012, Table 17: Q4c)

Respondents were also asked **how much of a problem** they thought the **disclosure of sensitive information to the media** was by the police. Overall, 42% thought it was a 'very' or 'fairly big problem'.



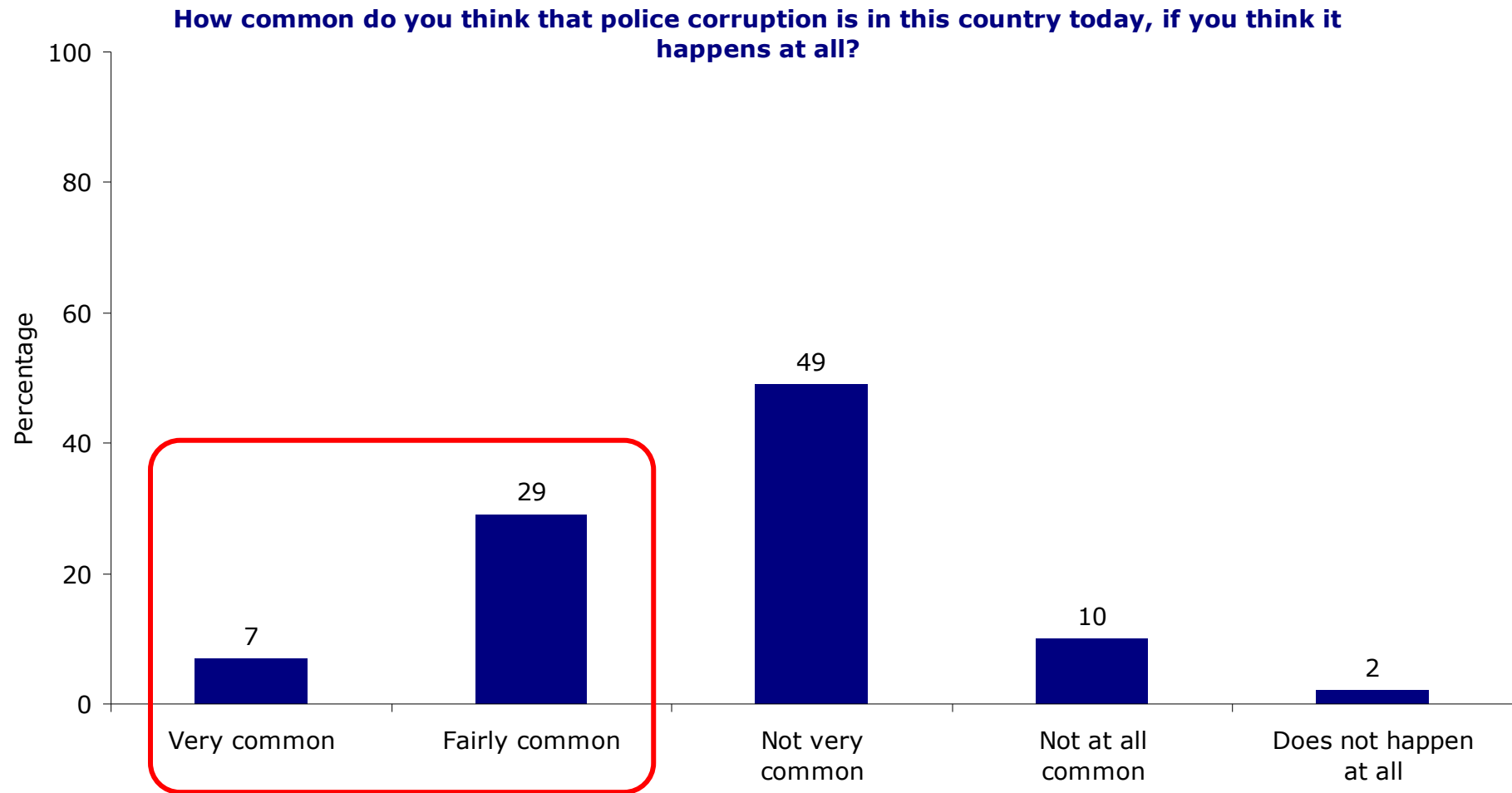
(HMIC 2012, Table 18: Q4D)

Respondents to the HMIC survey were asked **'how big a problem' corruption was** within the police. Overall, 25% said that corruption was a 'very' or 'fairly big problem'. The largest proportion of people (36%) said they did not know.



(HMIC 2012, Table 15: Q4B)

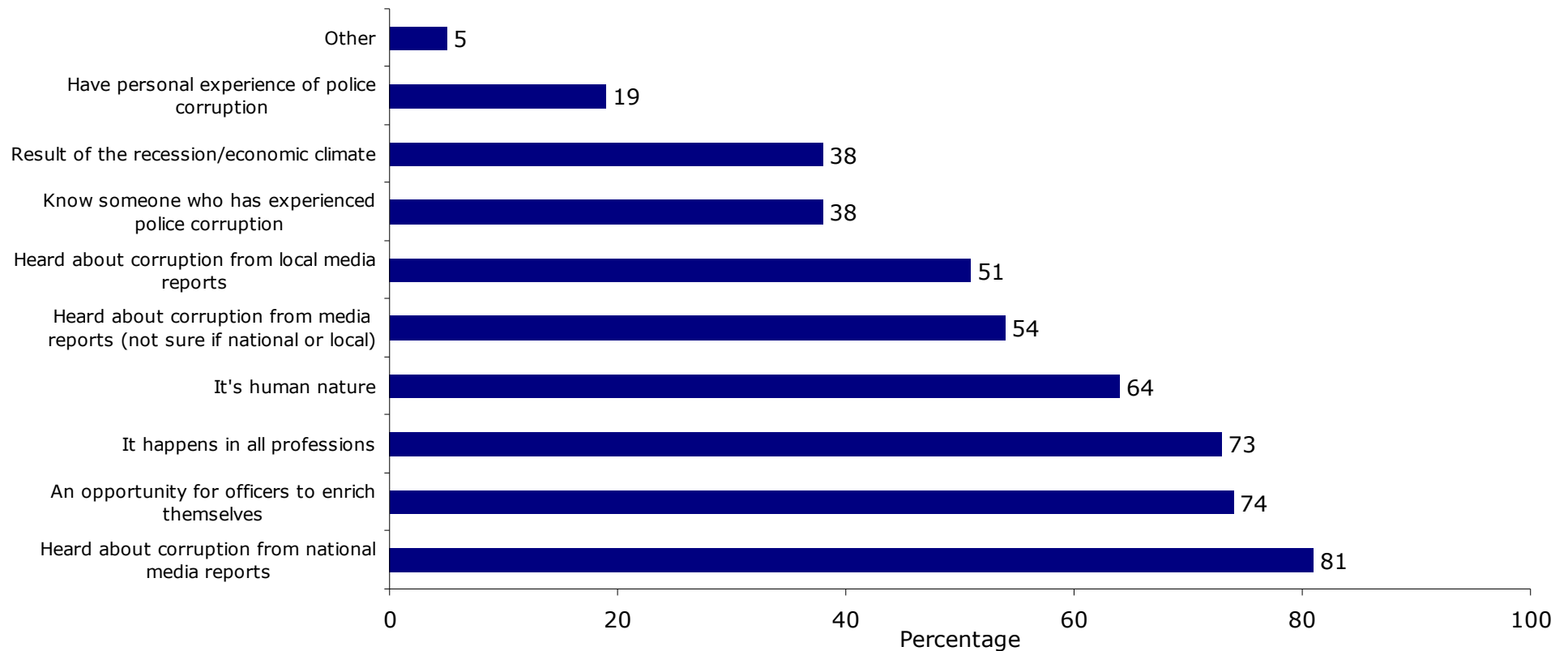
Respondents to the HMIC survey were asked **how common** they thought **corruption in the police service** was. To some extent, respondents may have been 'primed' by the questions that came before it in the questionnaire. Overall, the survey found that just over a third thought police corruption was 'very' or 'fairly common'.



(HMIC 2012, Table 8: Q4A)

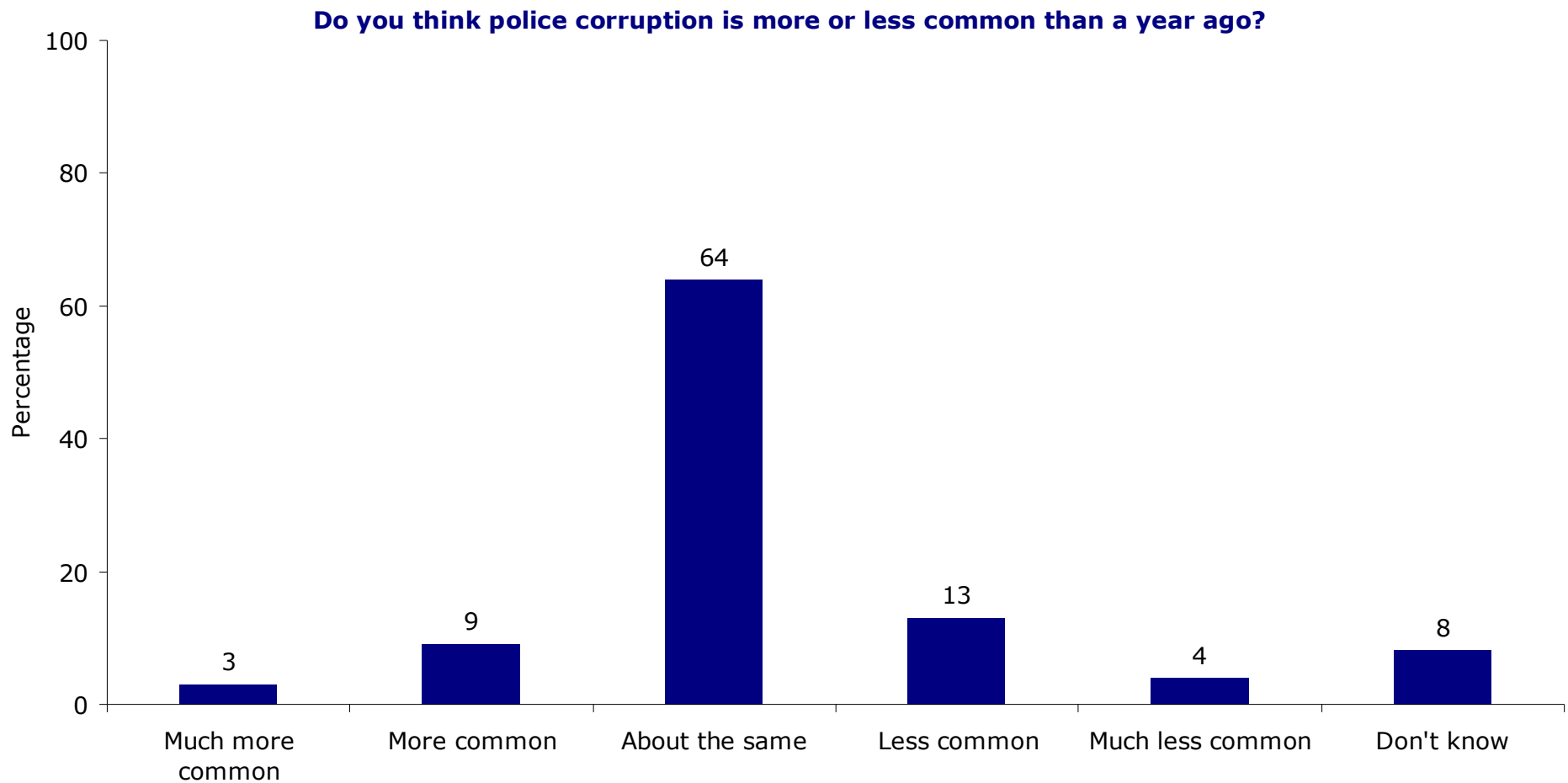
**However, the opinion of most respondents was not based on personal experience.** Their views seemed to be based more on media reports and assumptions. Overall, a relatively small proportion of respondents said they had direct or experience of corruption, or knew people who had had experience (19% and 38% respectively).

**Why do you think police corruption is common? (n=853)**



(HMIC 2012, Table 9: Q4AA)

Most respondents to the HMIC survey felt that the **level of police corruption** had not changed over the last 12 months. The proportion of respondents thinking corruption had become more or less common was fairly evenly balanced.

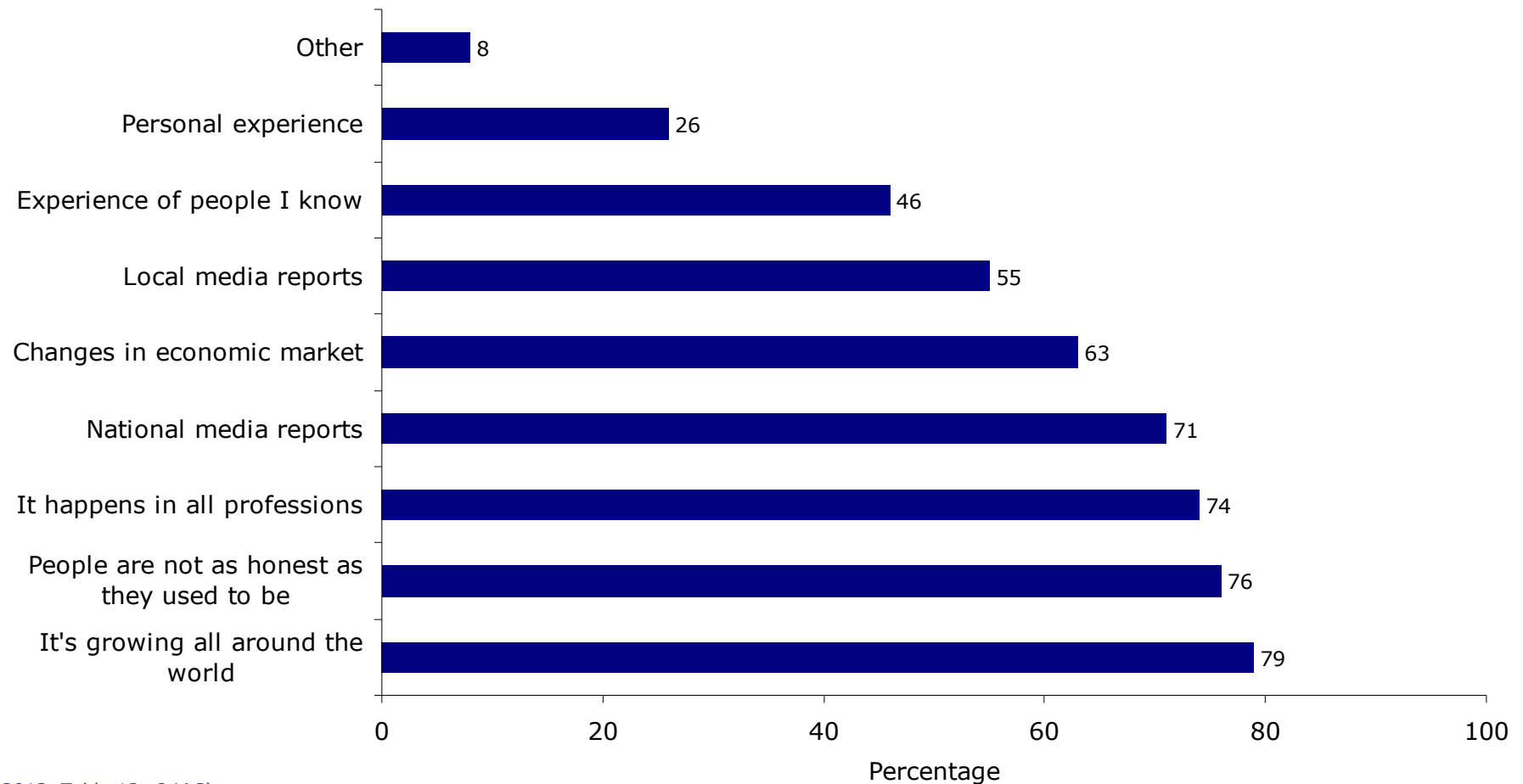


(HMIC 2012, Table 10: Q4AB)



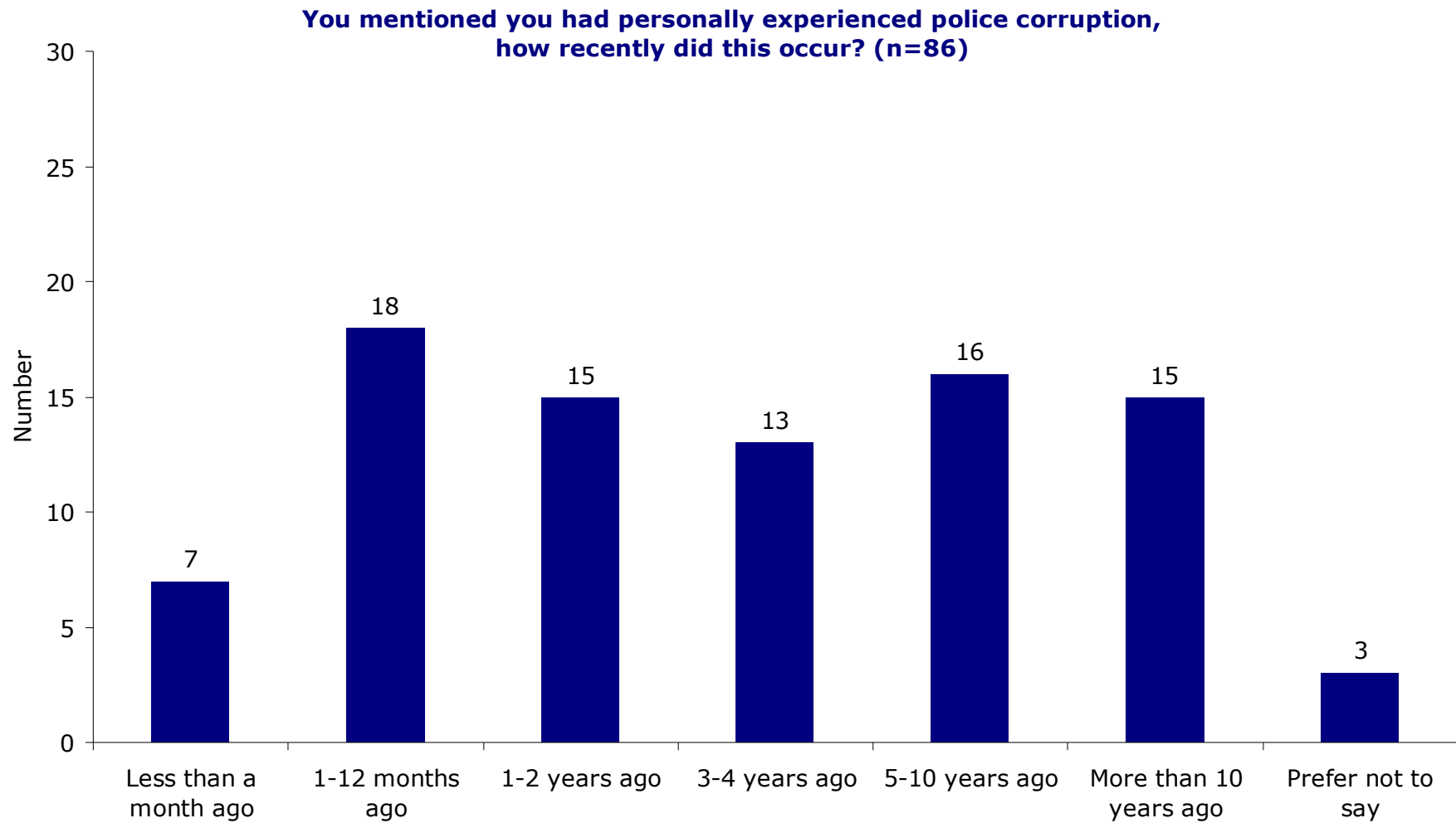
Perceptions of an increase in police corruption were more likely to be influenced by general opinion and national media reports than by personal experience.

**Why do you think that the frequency of police corruption is more common? (n=273)**



(HMIC 2012, Table 12: Q4AC)

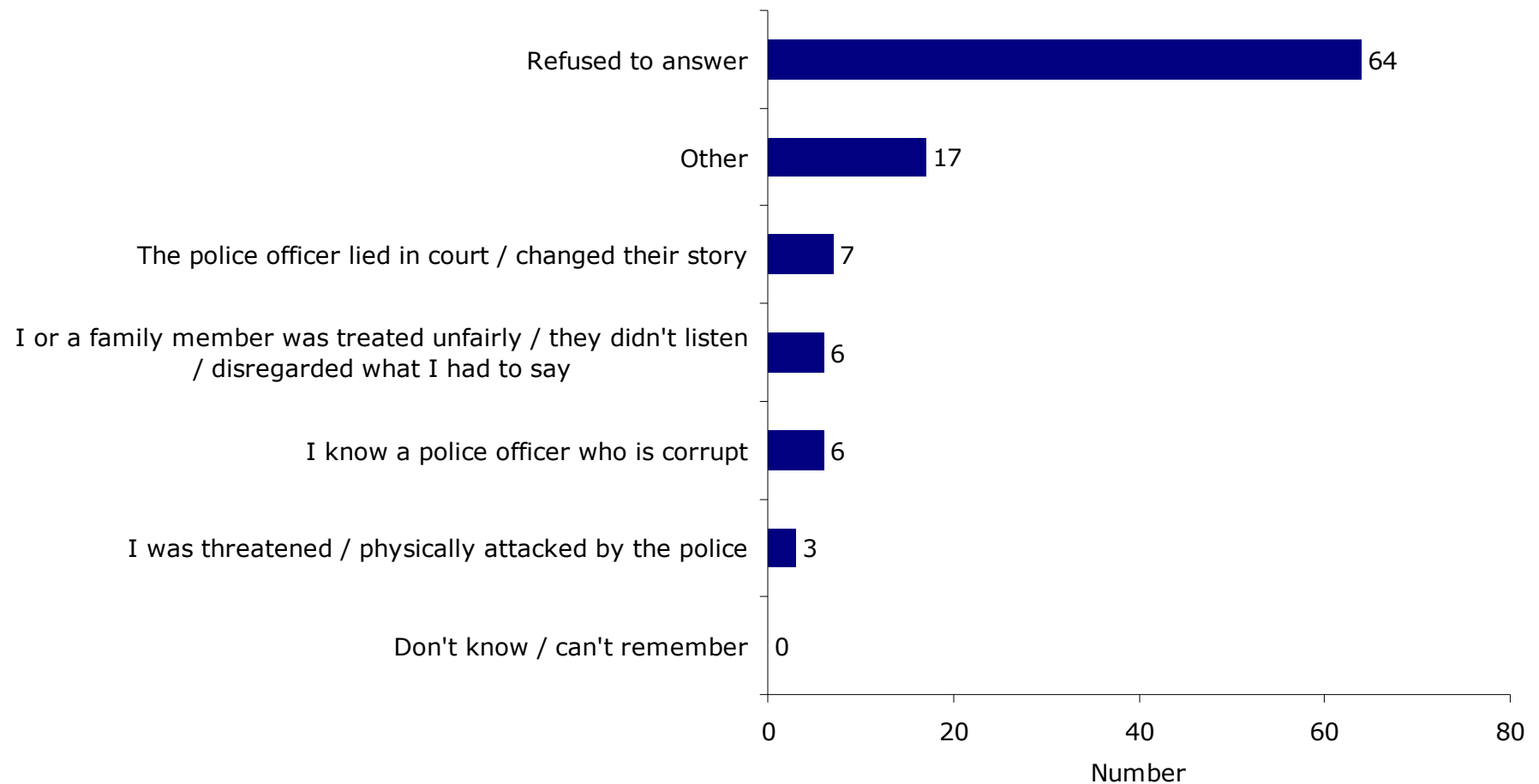
Of the 86 respondents who said they had **personal experience of police corruption**, 18 said their experience was within the last 12 months. Others' experience was more historical – 31 said that their experience occurred at least five years ago.



(HMIC 2012, table 13: Q4AD)

Those who reported having personal experience of police corruption were asked to describe the circumstances in more detail. Overall, it is unclear what specific 'corrupt' behaviours most respondents were referring to when they were talking about their own experiences. Over three-quarters refused to answer the question or referred to a behaviour in the 'other' category.

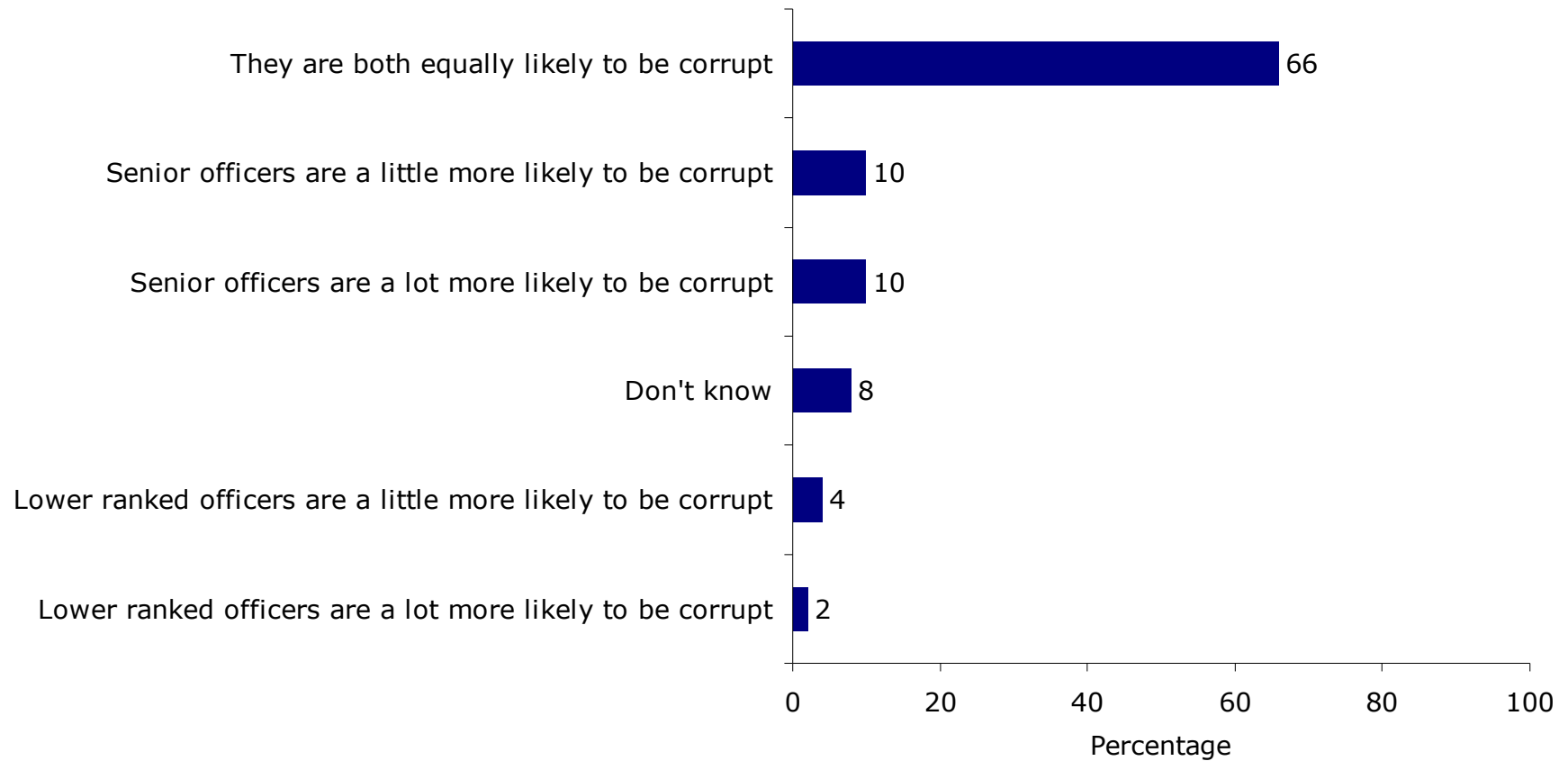
**Can you tell me a bit more about the circumstances in which you personally experienced police corruption? (n=86)**



(HMIC 2012, Table 14: Q4AE)

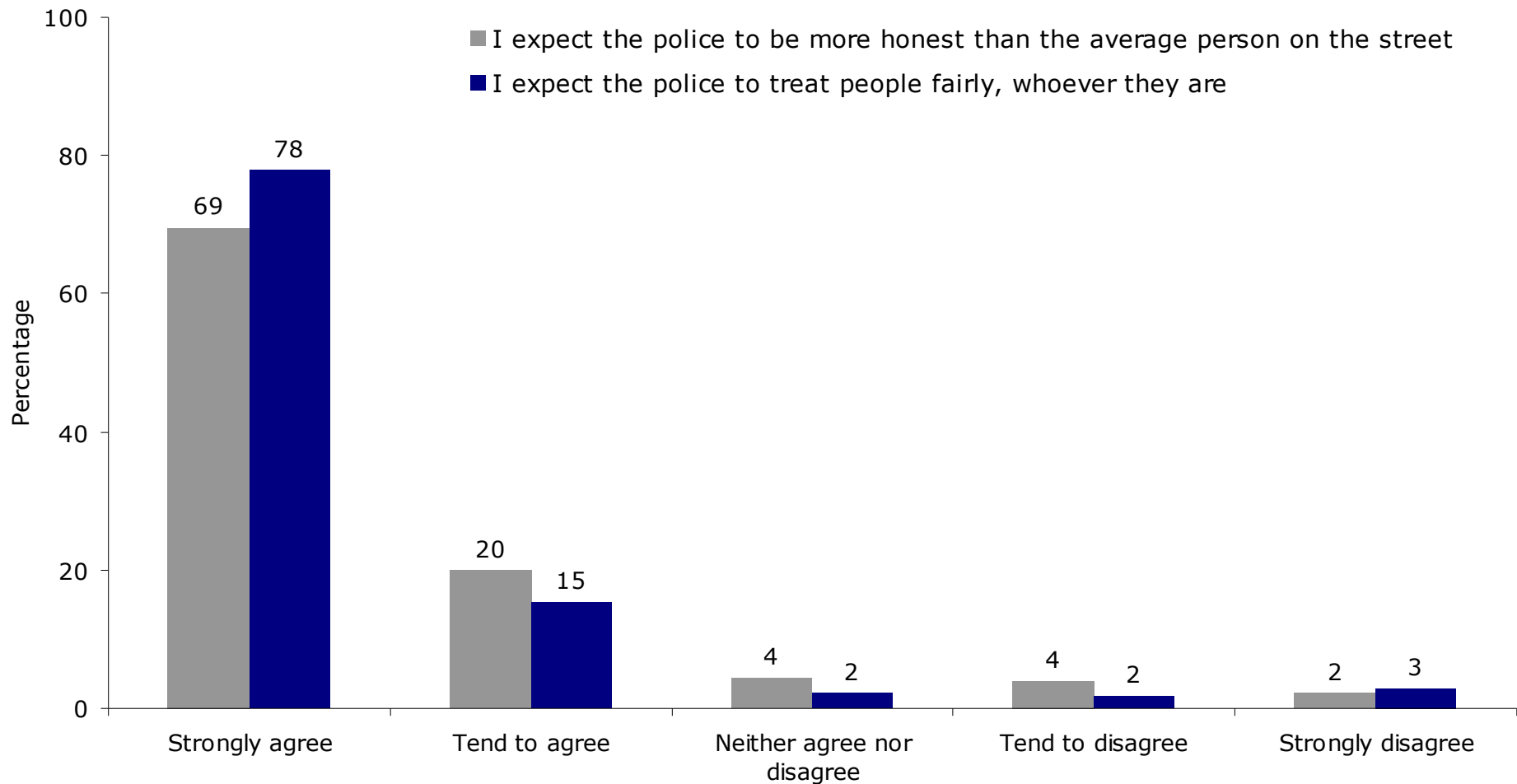
The results of the HMIC survey indicated that most respondents felt **senior officers and frontline officers were equally likely to be corrupt.**

**Do you think that senior officers or lower ranked police officers are more likely to be corrupt, or do you think they are both equally likely?**



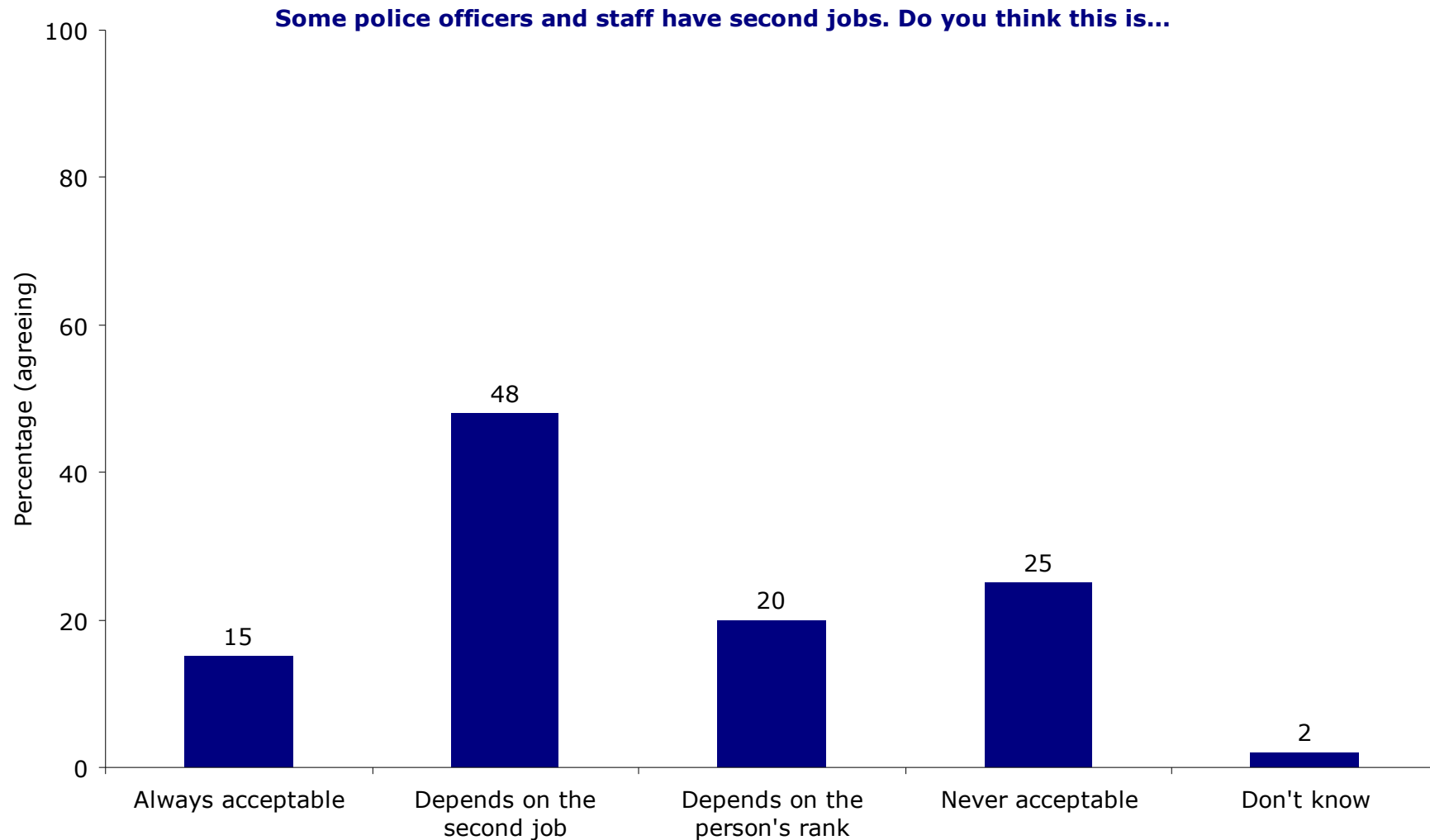
(HMIC 2012, Table 16: Q4ba)

The results of the HMIC survey indicated that respondents expected **high standards of ethical behaviour** from the police. Overall, 89% agreed that the police should be more honest than the average person in the street, and 93% expected the police to treat people fairly regardless of who they were.



(HMIC 2012, Table 21:Q4E)

Respondents to the HMIC survey were asked their opinions about whether they thought it was acceptable for police officers and staff to have **second jobs**. The results suggested their views were fairly nuanced. Most respondents said that it depended on the nature of the second job (20%) and on the rank of the officer or member of staff (20%).



(HMIC 2012, Table 24:Q8)

# References and source material

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## **CSEW**

- Office for National Statistics (2012a) Police Contacts and Complaints. Crime Survey of England and Wales 2010 to 2011-12. [Link](#) and [related data](#)
- Office for National Statistics (2012b) Focus on Public Perceptions of Policing. Findings from the 2011/12 Crime Survey for England and Wales. [Link](#)

## **IPCC**

- Inglis, G. (2009) IPCC Confidence in the Police Complaints System: A Survey of the General Population in 2009. BMRB / IPCC Research and Statistics Series Paper 17. [Link](#)
- Inglis, G. (2011) IPCC Confidence in the Police Complaints System: A Survey of the General Population in 2011. BMRB / IPCC Research and Statistics Series Paper 20. [Link](#)
- IPCC (2011B) Police Complaints: Statistics for England and Wales 2010/11. [Link](#)
- IPCC (2012) Police Complaints: Statistics for England and Wales 2011/12. [Link](#)

## **Standards in Public Life**

- Ipsos MORI / Committee on Standards in Public Life (2010) Survey of Public Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life. [Link](#)

## **HMIC**

- HMIC / ICM (2012) Trust in Police Survey. [Link](#)