CONSTRUCTIVE INSTITUTE
Journalism for tomorrow

Epinion

Participation in the public debate

A comparative study on attitudes to news and journalism

Epinion for Constructive Institute, June 2022

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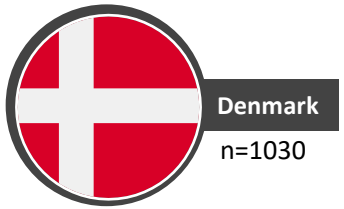
Background and methods

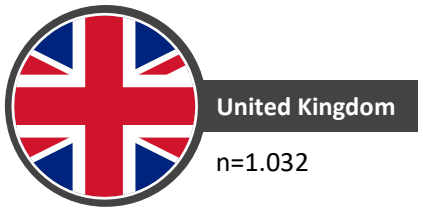
This report investigates the public in Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark's attitudes towards news and journalism. It looks specifically at people's experience of the debate culture, how they participate themselves, and how the media should moderate political debates. The report aims to gauge people's attitudes towards news, and it prompts new discussions about journalism and debate formats.

The study has been conducted by the Danish analytics company Epinion based on a questionnaire developed in collaboration with Constructive Institute. All data collection and analysis in the report has been made by Epinion, who is also responsible for writing up the report.

Web survey
The study builds on 3.101 interviews in total with citizens aged 18 or above. There has been collected 1,030 interviews with Danes, 1,032 interviews with British people, and 1,039 interviews with Germans. Interviews were gathered online using Epinion's panel partners from May 18 to 25, 2022.

To ensure representativeness, the distribution of respondents in each country is compared to the population with respect to age/gender, level of education and region.





Weighting
After the data collection the data was weighted to improve the representativeness of the sample. The survey weights ensure that the weight given to respondents in the sample reflect the distribution in the general population in each country when it comes to age, gender, region and education. The weights were calculated using the method raking. All results throughout the report are calculated using the survey weights.

Statistical uncertainty
We have not interviewed all Danes, Germans, and British people. What we have is a sample. Hence, statistical uncertainty should be taken into consideration. The maximum margin of error to the estimated proportions are +/-3%.

Methods
The survey contains two choice-based experiments:

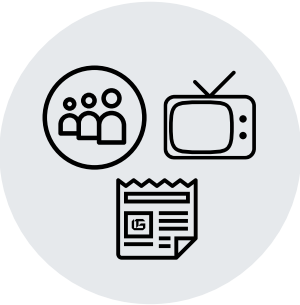
1. In section 1, *The current state,* we conducted an experiment in which respondents were asked to read two fictional TV debate format descriptions, where one is based on constructive news ideals and the other on non-constructive principles. To avoid any preconceptions about constructive journalism, the descriptions were not labelled as either constructive or non-constructive for the respondents, but for analytical purposes we make this distinction in the report. Furthermore, the descriptions varied on two parameters: The role of the host and the purpose of the show. The experimental stimuli and the descriptions are reported in more detail in section 1. There were three pair of TV-show descriptions, and the respondents were randomly assigned one of them.

2. In section 1, *The current state*, we also conducted a max-diff choice experiment in which respondents were assigned to read some constructive and conventional news headlines and choose which one the wanted to read the most and the least. To avoid any preconceptions about constructive journalism, the headlines were not labelled as either constructive or non-constructive for the respondents, but for analytical purposes we make this distinction in the report. The experiment stimuli and the news headlines are reported in more detail in section 1.

Furthermore, we also conducted linear regressions with control for background variables (age, gender, education, and region) to calculate correlation between barriers for participation in the public debate and news avoidance.

Epinion

Executive summary



A widespread belief that news is biased towards negativity and dominated by extreme opinions – leaves a **demand for a more constructive news coverage** both when it comes to TV-shows and news articles.

The public experience **multiple barriers** for participating in the public debate such as **the tone in the debate, concerns about the debate not leading anywhere, and lack of knowledge** – and a great amount of the public avoid news

There is a demand for some constructive news ideals. In all three countries, the public believes that **the media should encourage a sober tone in the debate**. There is, however, cross country differences in perceptions on **how great a responsibility the media has in moderating the public debate**

Executive summary

The current state

- A widespread belief that **news is biased towards negativity** and dominated by extreme opinions.
- However, there is a **demand for a more constructive news coverage** both when it comes to TV-shows and news articles.
- When presented with a choice between a constructive and a non-constructive description of a TV-show format, the public in all three countries would be **most inclined to watch the constructive show**. This applies across all variations.
- More than half of the public would also **prefer to read more of an article when presented with a constructive news headline** rather than a conventional news headline. The share is not different across the three countries; however, Danish people seem most mature for consuming constructive news.

The consequences

- There are differences across the three countries as to **how the public participate in the public debate**. Also, the public in all three countries experience multiple barriers for participating in the public debate.
- The biggest barriers for Danish and German people are the **tone in the debate** while **concerns about the debate not leading anywhere** is the biggest in the UK.
- **The tone in the political debate** is deterring the public in all three countries from participating in the public debate.
- The **feeling of not being competent** or not having **anything to contribute** with can also be a barrier for participation.
- More than 40% in both UK and Germany **periodically avoid news**. In Denmark, it is 29%, who periodically avoid news.

The space for action

Some of the constructive news ideals are popular in all three countries. However, **British people have a higher demand for constructive ideals than Danish and German people.** The reason for this might be that British people has a greater experience of the British media being biased than Danish and German people have of their media.

In all three countries, the public believes that **the media should encourage a sober tone in the public debate and a way to increase the public participation** in the debate could be to encourage sober debates online. There are, however, cross country differences in perceptions on how great a responsibility the media has in moderating the public debate.

1 in 3 Danish people believe that the public debate is **dominated by extreme opinions.** The **tone in the debate** is one of the primary barriers for participation.

29% of Danish people periodically avoid news. News avoidance is more pronounced among young people.

Danish people are the most reluctant to participate in the public debate online as 60% agree that they would be hesitant to comment on a post if they disagree with the message.

43% of Danish people believe that the media intervening in the public debate is a limitation to free speech. 34% believe the media has a responsibility to moderate the public debate.

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British people has **the lowest level of trust in the media** – only 1 out of 3 trusts the media to paint a fair picture of the world, and 3 out of 4 believe that the media exaggerates stories. Furthermore, 45% of British people periodically avoid news.

British people **have the highest demand for constructive elements** in news reporting out of the three countries.

74% of British people think that the public debate often consists of people verbally fighting. Additionally, 40% of British people are **concerned about participating in the public debate because of personal attacks.**

52% of British people are of the opinion that the media has a responsibility to moderate the public debate to diminish discrimination and racism by deleting posts on social media.

Epinion

52% of German people report that **they trust what they see in conventional media**. Furthermore, 52% believe the media is portraying the world accurately.

Relative to the other countries, **German people feel that the media focus on problem solving.** 44% feel that news about problems often leaves them with a feeling that you can find a solution to the problems.

Half of German people has a high perceived self efficacy. However, **44% of German people periodically avoid news.**

69% of German people think the media should make a comment if a user makes hateful remarks in the comments.

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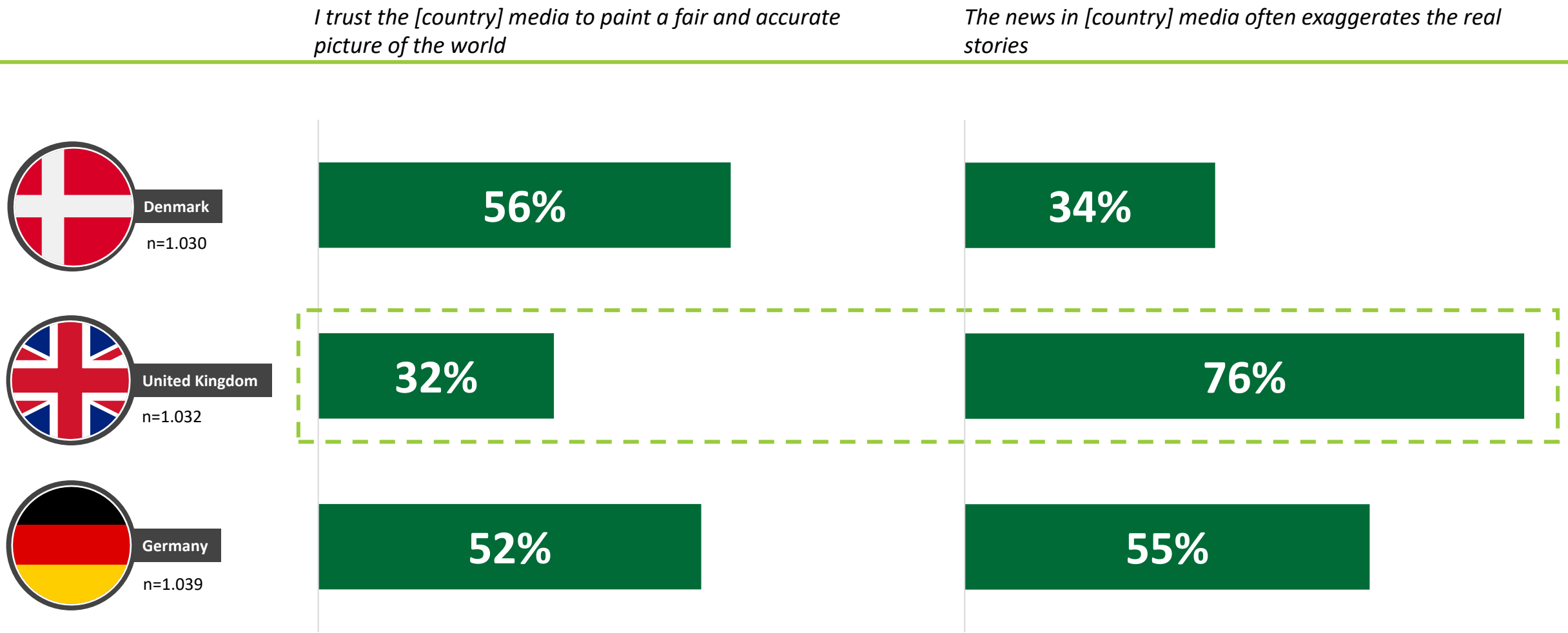
The current state

Epinion

More than half of Danish and German people trust that the media paints an accurate picture of the world. More than 3 out of 4 British people have the perception that the media exaggerates the real picture of the world



Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statements

Epinion

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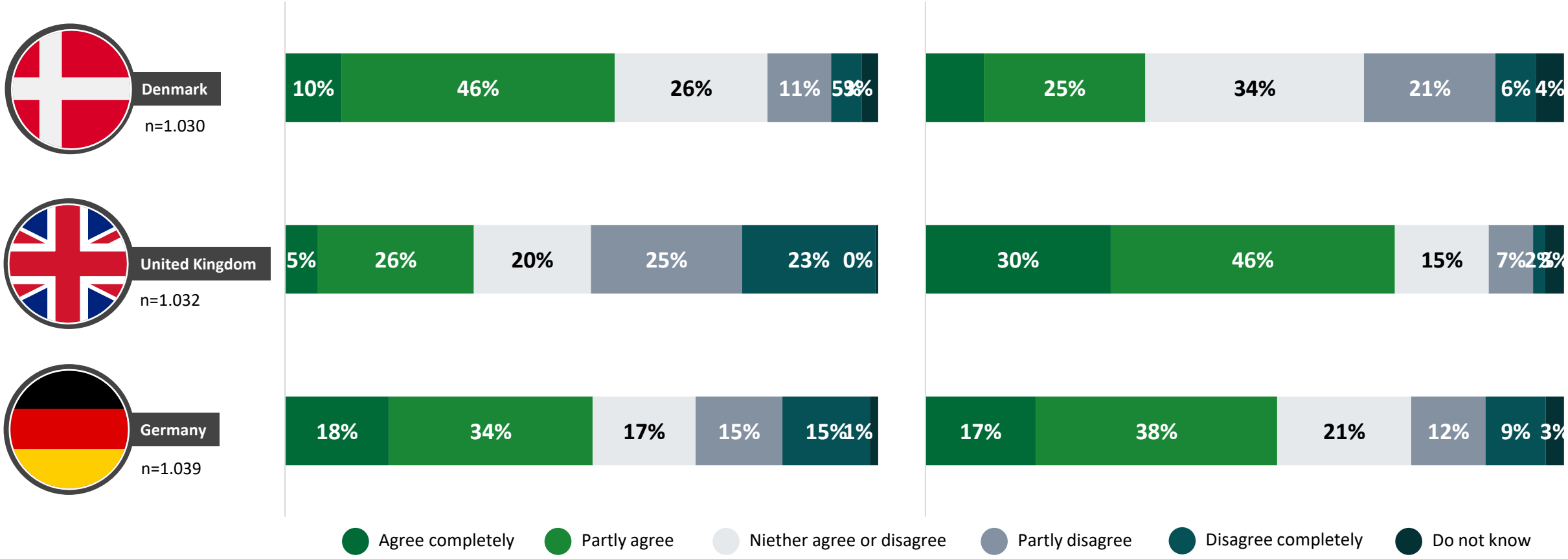
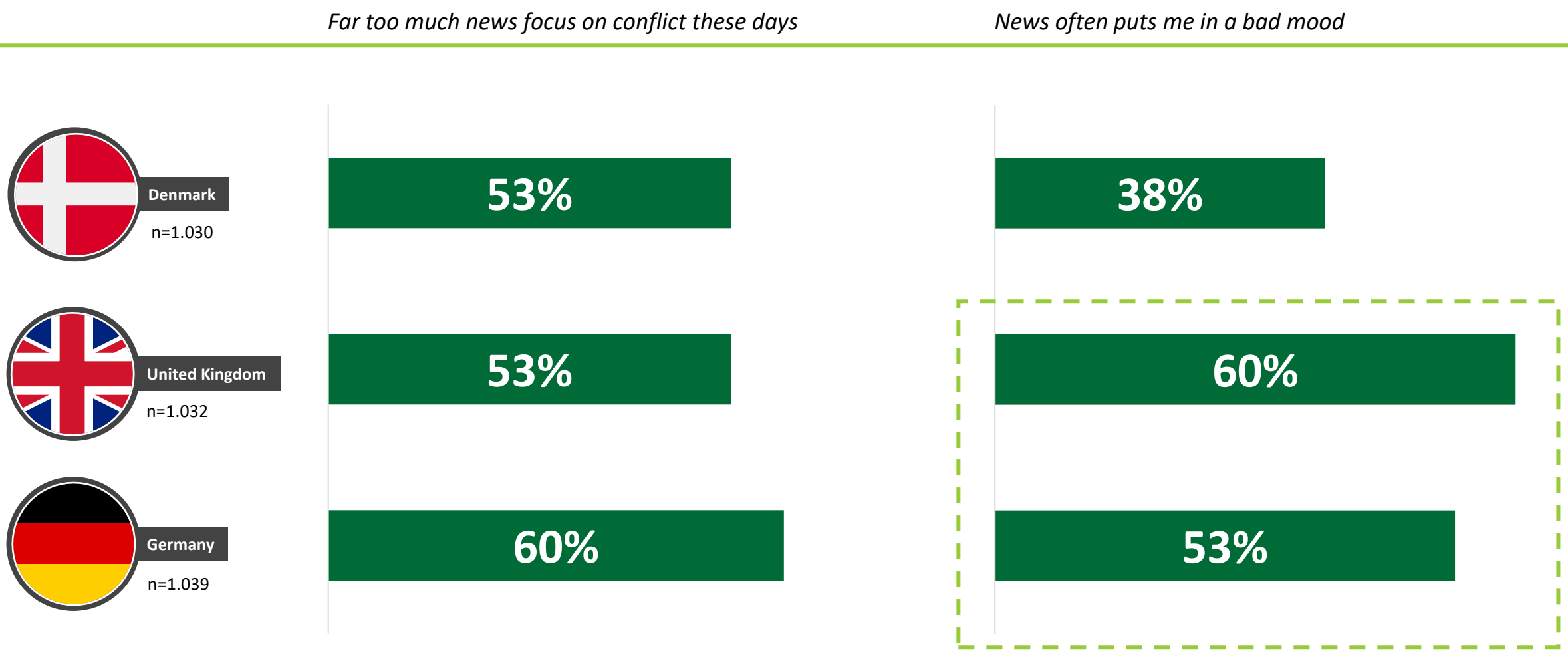
I trust the [country] media to paint a fair and accurate picture of the world

The news in [country] media often exaggerates the real stories



Epinion

There is a widespread belief that news is biased towards negativity. More than half of the public believes that news media focus too much on conflict and especially German and British people indicate that news often puts them in a bad mood



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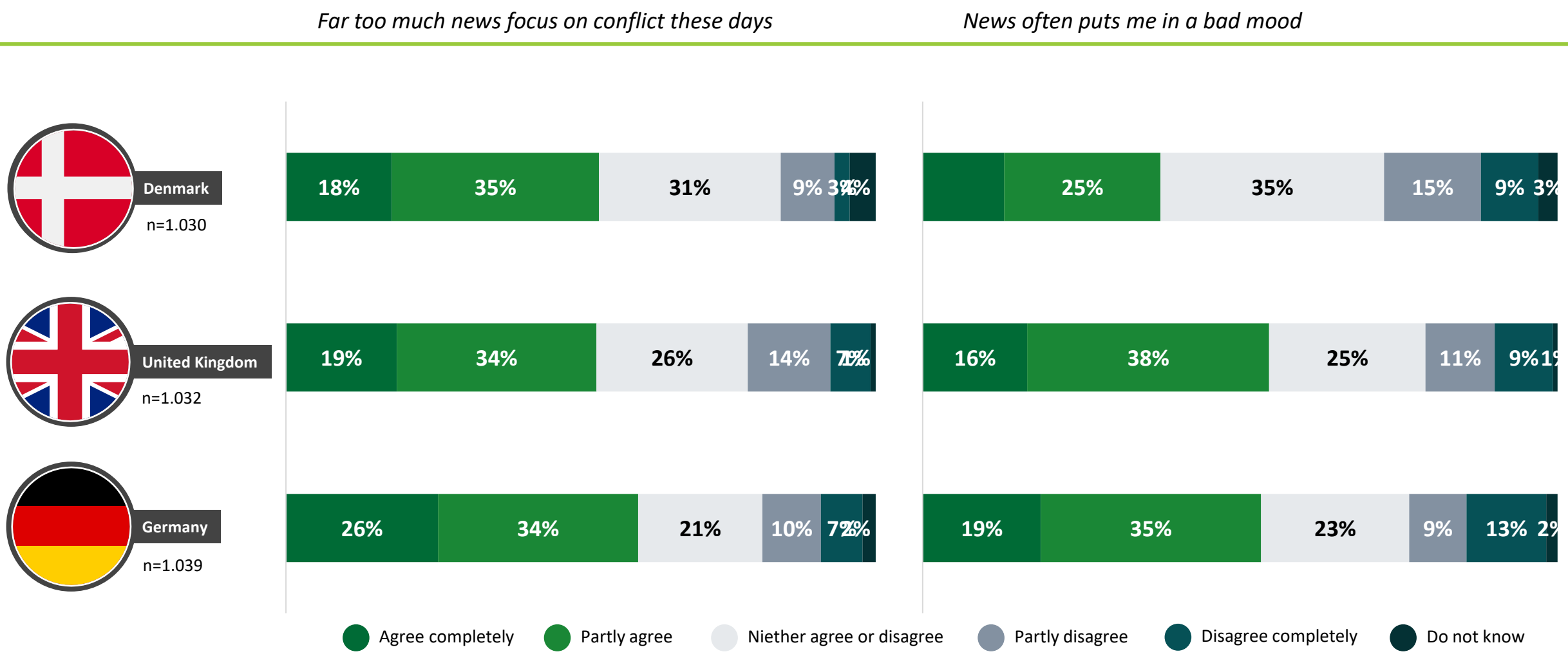

Epinion

More than half of British and Danish people do not believe that the media's news coverage is balanced. The share is smaller among German people

News focuses as much on the positive as the negative things in the world

51%

of **Danish people** disagree completely or partly

60%

of **British people** disagree completely or partly

46%

of **German people** disagree completely or partly

Note: The numbers represent the share of the respondents who indicated that the disagree completely or partly disagree with the statement

Epinion

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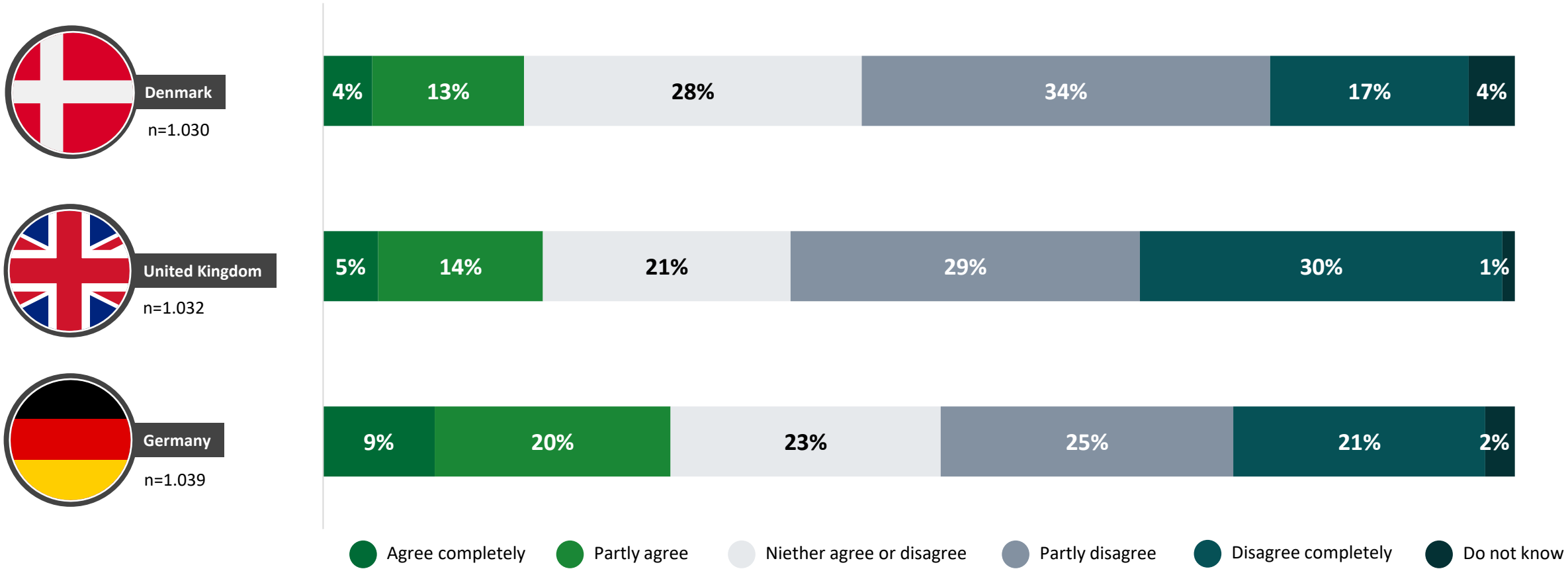
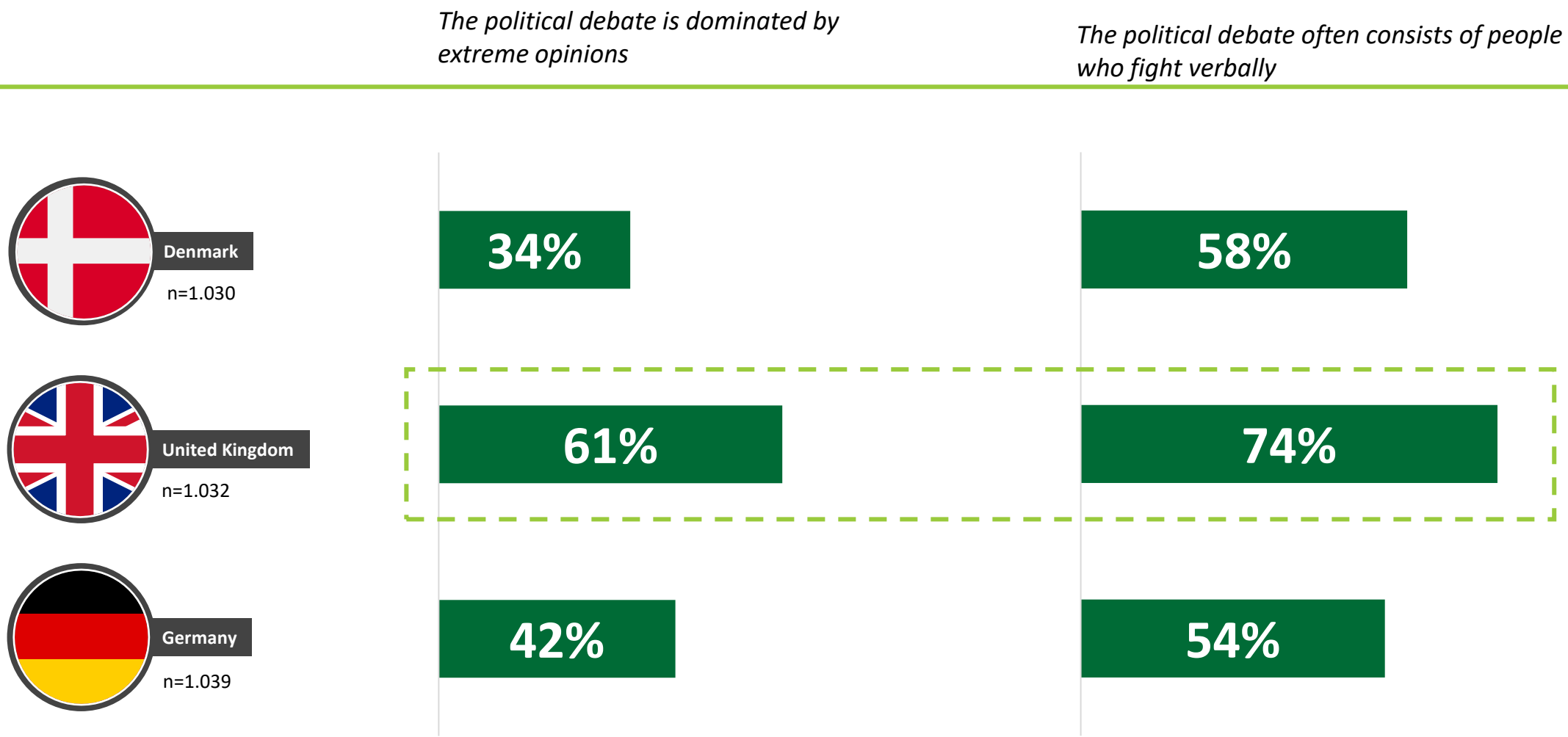
News focuses as much on the positive as the negative things in the world



Epinion

A larger share of British people report that the public debate is dominated by extreme opinions and verbal fights than in Denmark and Germany



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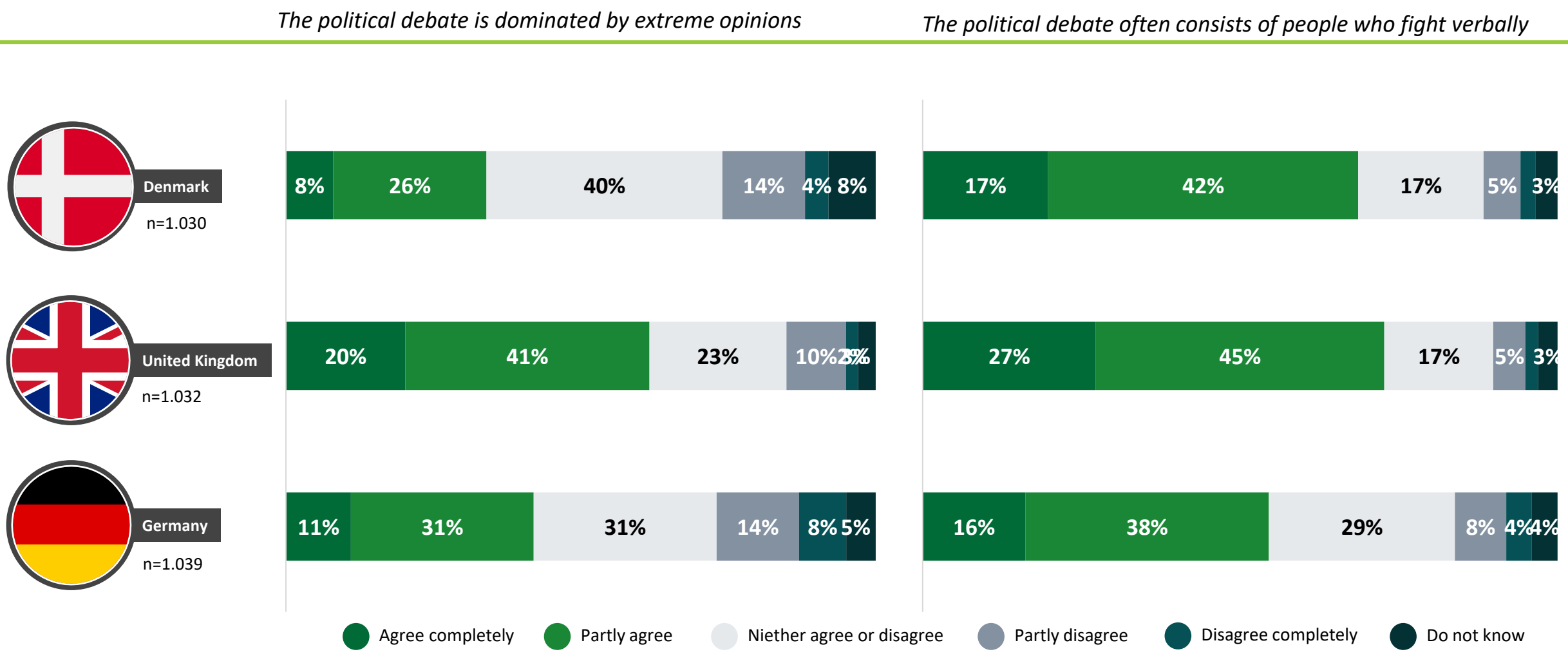
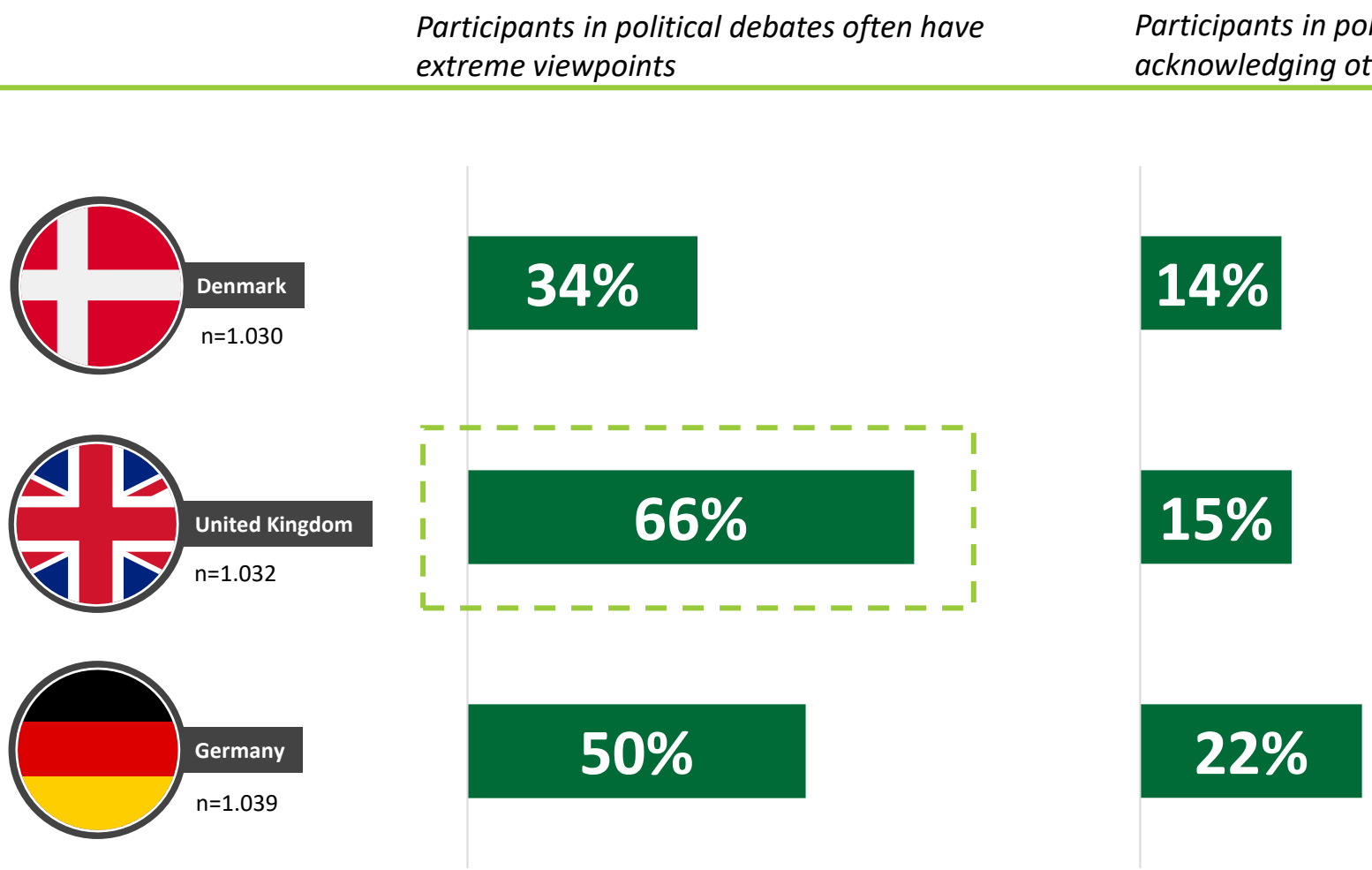


Epinion

2 out of 3 of British people find that participants in political debates often have extreme viewpoints



British people believe to a larger extent than Danish and German people that the political debates are polarised and dominated by extreme viewpoints (66%) and opinions (61%).

Furthermore, almost 3 out of 4 British people experience that the people participating in the debates fight verbally with each other. This experience is smaller among Danish (54%) and German (54%) people.

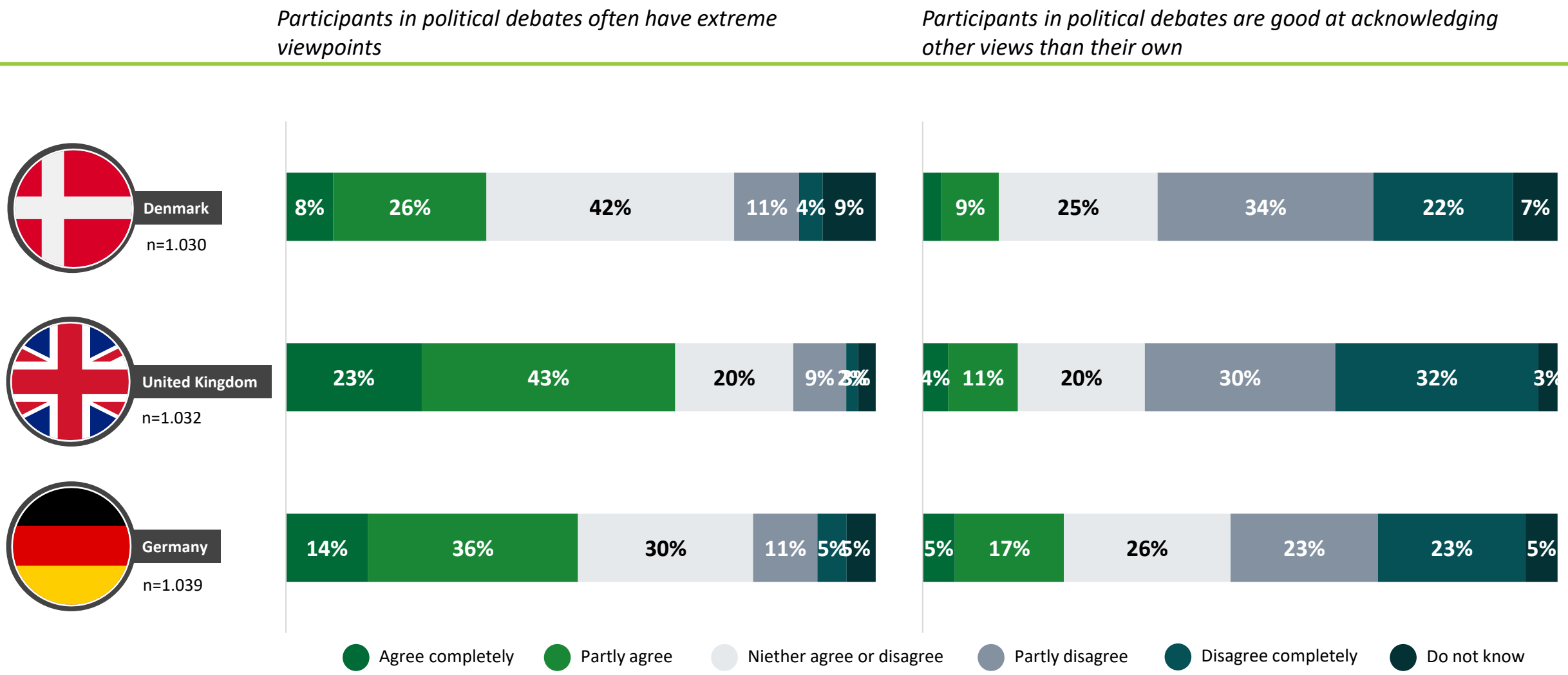
On the other side, only 14% of Danish people and 15% of British people believe that the participants in the debates are good at acknowledging other point of views than their own. The share is a bit larger among German people (22%).

This indicates that there are cross-country differences in the perception of the political debate culture.

Note: The graphs show the share of the resppndents who indicated that the agree completely or partly agree with the statements

Epinion

2 out of 3 of British people finds that participants in political debates often have extreme viewpoints



Epinion

Choice experiment: The respondents were presented with one out of the three pair of TV debate formats (one is non-constructive and the other constructive) and asked to choose which one they would prefer

1 Confrontational and entertaining

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***debate*** important decisions for society. The program format is designed to be ***confrontational***. The host will interrupt if the politicians fail to answer questions. It is intended to be ***entertaining*** and heated.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. The host will ***interrupt*** if the participants fail to answer the questions. The program is intended to be entertaining and it can get ***heated*** between the participants.

2 Dialogue and informative

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***discuss*** important decisions for society. The program format is designed to encourage ***dialogue***. The host is trying to ***clarify opinions*** so the viewers can understand the disagreements and different ***ideologies***. The aim is to provide viewers with knowledge and understanding.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. The host will try to ***clarify*** the different opinions so the viewers can understand the disagreements and different ideological viewpoints. It is intended to provide the viewers with new ***knowledge*** and ***understanding***.

1 Confrontational and blame-game

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***debate*** important decisions for society. The program format is designed to be ***confrontational***. We look at problems in society and ask politicians if they are to ***blame***.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. We look at current societal problems and the host confronts the politicians and holds them ***accountable*** for their actions and the reasons for them.

2 Dialogue and solution-oriented

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***discuss*** important decisions for society. The program format is designed to encourage ***dialogue***. We look at the problems but also ask politicians to find ***solutions***.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. We look at current societal problems and the host asks the politicians to discuss these and find solutions – even if it means that the politicians have to ***compromise*** on their own views.

1 Confrontational and competitive

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***debate*** important decisions for society. The program format is designed to be ***confrontational***. Watch while we debate the big political issues, who has the best soundbites and punchlines and who emerges as ***winner***.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. The viewers are invited to a debate about current political issues in a duel about ***the strongest arguments***. The debater with the sharpest opinions can shut their opponent up and emerge as winner of the debate.

2 Dialogue and consensus-seeking

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***discuss*** important decisions for society. The program format is designed to encourage ***dialogue***. Watch while we have a ***conversation*** about searching for the core of the issue and gain a better ***understanding*** of one another.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. The viewers are invited to a debate about current political issues. The debaters will have a conversation about the big political dilemmas and are encouraged look at their ***opponent's point of view*** in order to gain a better understanding of one another.

Epinion

When presented with a choice between a constructive and a non-constructive TV debate format, the public in all three countries would prefer to watch the constructive format

Which of the TV-shows below would you be most inclined to watch?

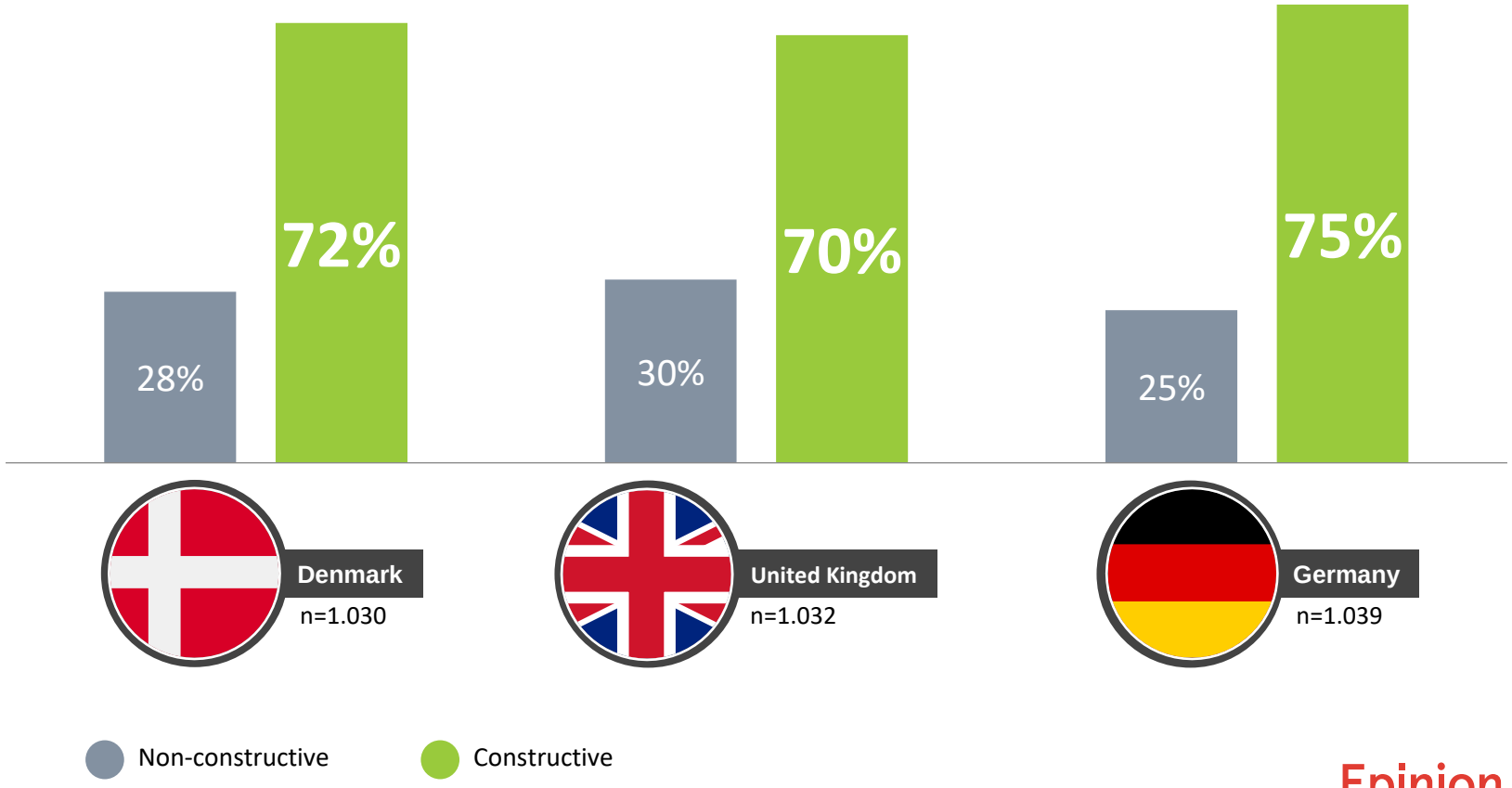
Methodological note

We conducted an experiment in which respondents were asked to read two fictional TV debate format descriptions, where one is based on constructive news ideals and the other on non-constructive principles. To avoid any preconceptions about constructive journalism, the descriptions were not labelled as either constructive or non-constructive for the respondents, but for analytical purposes we make this distinction in the report. Furthermore, the descriptions varied on two parameters:

1. *The role of the host:* Confrontational vs. dialogue-seeking
2. *The purpose of the show:* Entertaining vs. informative, blame-game vs. solution-oriented, and competitive vs. consensus-seeking

Thus, there were three pair of TV debate format descriptions, and the respondents were randomly assigned one of them. After having read each description, we asked the respondents to choose which one they would prefer to watch.

This allows for an aggregate estimate of the demand for TV formats with a constructive approach to news coverage across the different variations as seen to the left. However, it also allows one to break down the relative importance of each chosen constructive news principle based on the estimate for each of the variations.



Epinion

In all three countries, more than 2/3 prefer a constructive TV-show aimed at being informative with a mediating host that encourages dialogue instead of a non-constructive show aimed at being entertaining with a confrontational host

Which of the TV-shows below would you be most inclined to watch?

1 Confrontational and entertaining

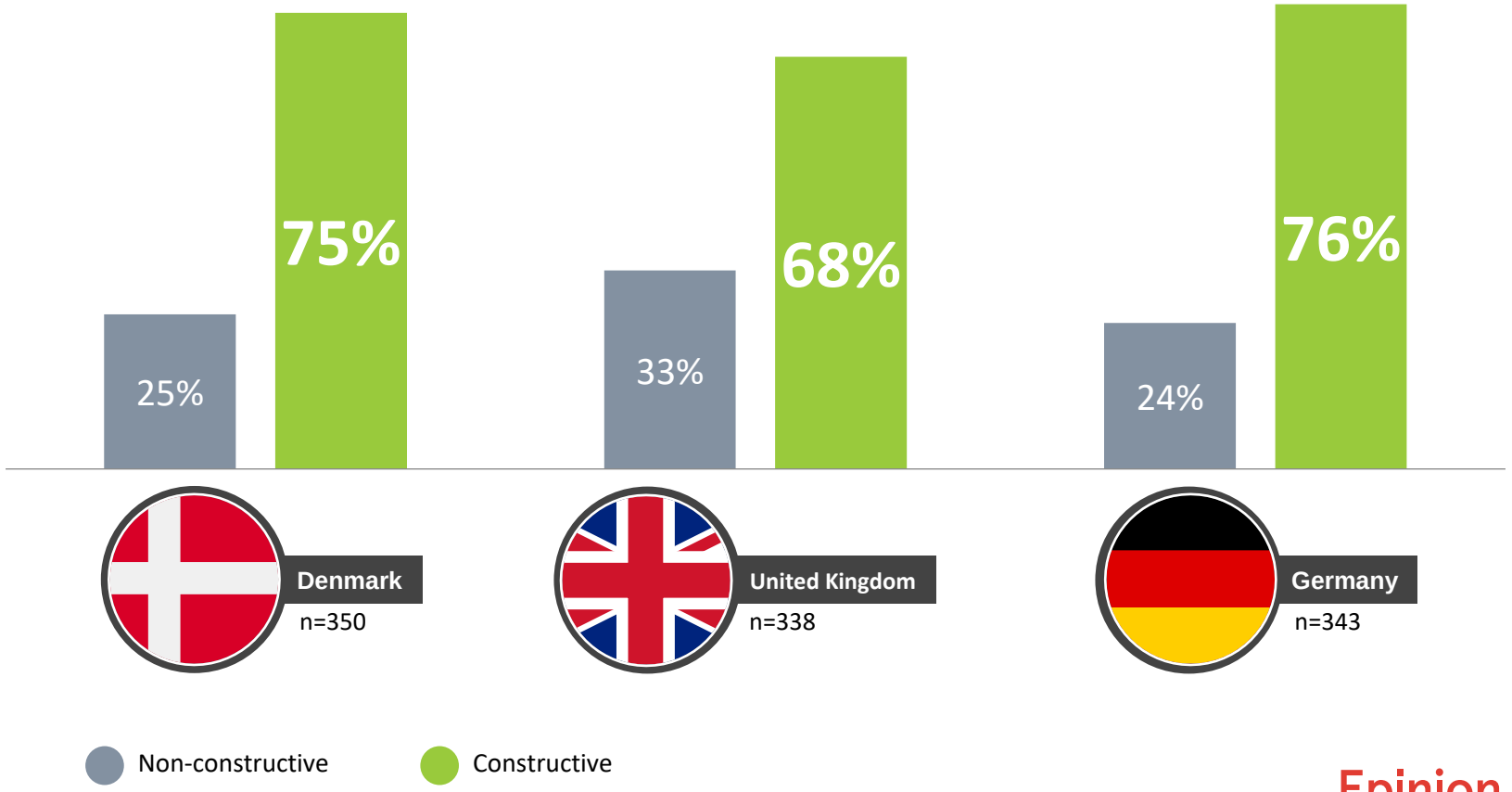
We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***debate*** important decisions for society. The programme format is designed to be ***confrontational***. The host will interrupt if the politicians fail to answer questions. It is intended to be ***entertaining*** and heated.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. The host will ***interrupt*** if the participants fail to answer the questions. The program is intended to be entertaining and it can get ***heated*** between the participants.

2 Dialogue and informative

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***discuss*** important decisions for society. The programme format is designed to encourage ***dialogue***. The host is trying to ***clarify opinions*** so the viewers can understand the disagreements and different ***ideologies***. The aim is to provide viewers with knowledge and understanding.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. The host will try to ***clarify*** the different opinions so the viewers can understand the disagreements and different ideological viewpoints. It is intended to provide the viewers with new ***knowledge*** and ***understanding***.



Epinion

German people has the strongest preference for the constructive TV-show with a focus on the future and seeking compromises with a solution-oriented host instead of a non-constructive show with a confrontational host and a blame game focus

Which of the TV-shows below would you be most inclined to watch?

1 Confrontational and blame-game

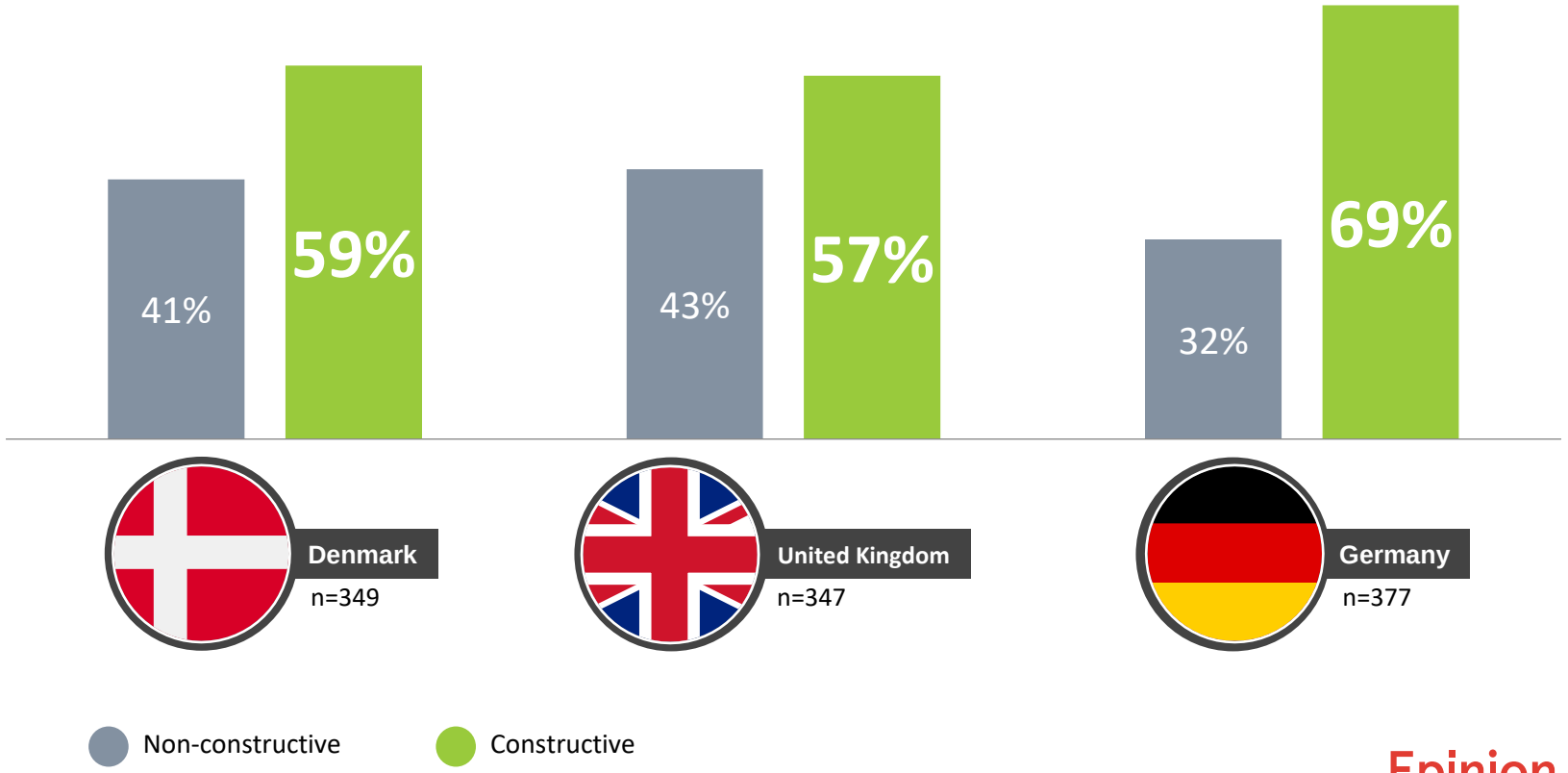
We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***debate*** important decisions for society. The programme format is designed to be ***confrontational***. We look at problems in society and ask politicians if they are to ***blame***.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. We look at current societal problems and the host confronts the politicians and holds them ***accountable*** for their actions and the reasons for them.

2 Dialogue and solution-oriented

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***discuss*** important decisions for society. The programme format is designed to encourage ***dialogue***. We look at the problems but also ask politicians to find ***solutions***.

We meet to debate important societal issues once a week when we invite significant politicians, opinionmakers, and other experts to the studio. We look at current societal problems and the host asks the politicians to discuss these and find solutions – even if it means that the politicians have to ***compromise*** on their own views.



Epinion

Overall, more than 80% prefer a constructive TV-show with a focus on the core of the problem and aimed at being informative and consensus-seeking instead of a non-constructive show focused on polarising arguments and finding a winner of the debate

Which of the TV-shows below would you be most inclined to watch?

1 Confrontational and competitive

We invite well-known politicians, opinionmakers and other experts to ***debate*** important decisions for society. The programme format is designed to be ***confrontational***. Watch while we debate the big political issues, who has the best soundbites and punchlines and who emerges as ***winner***.

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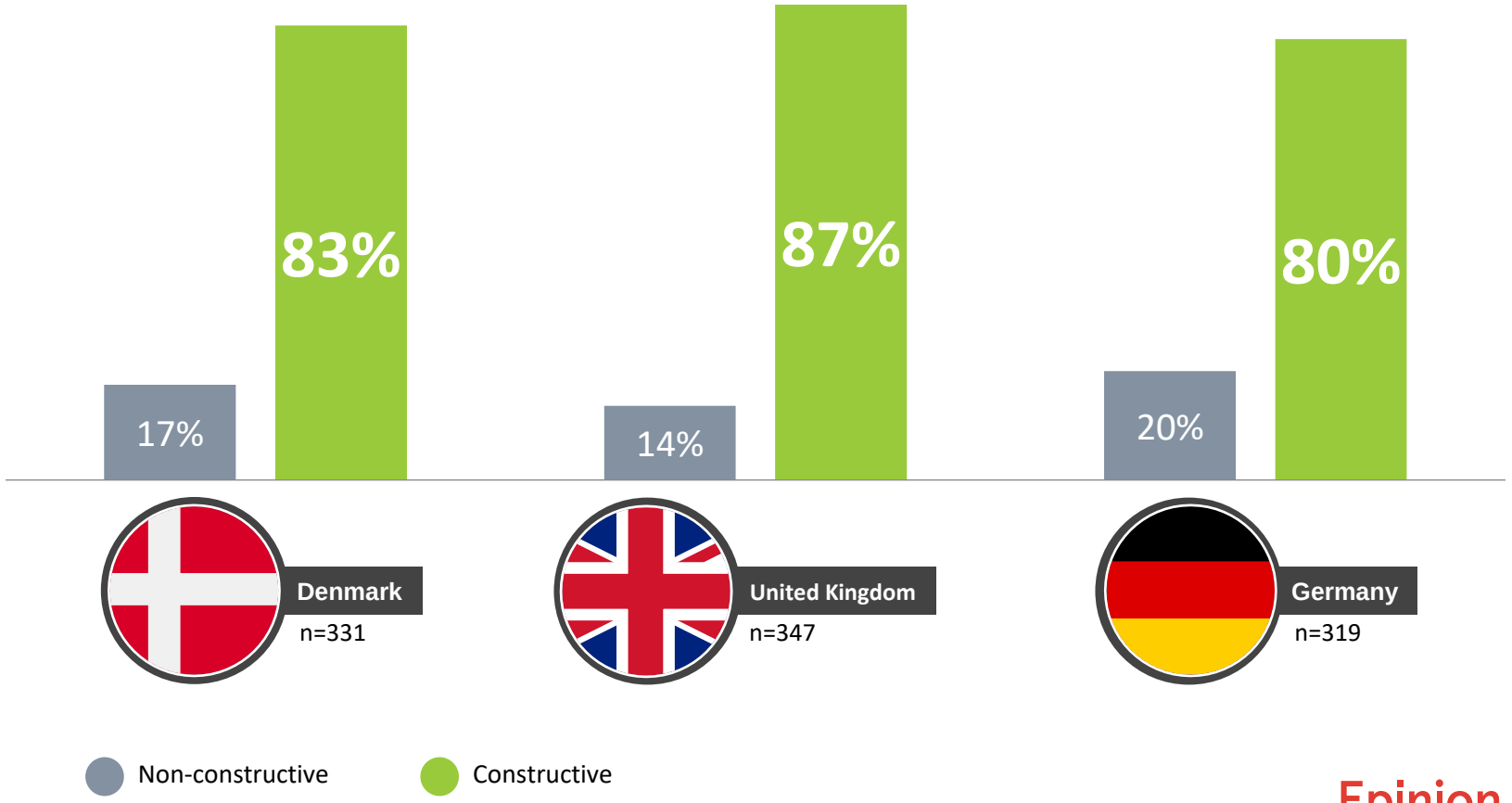
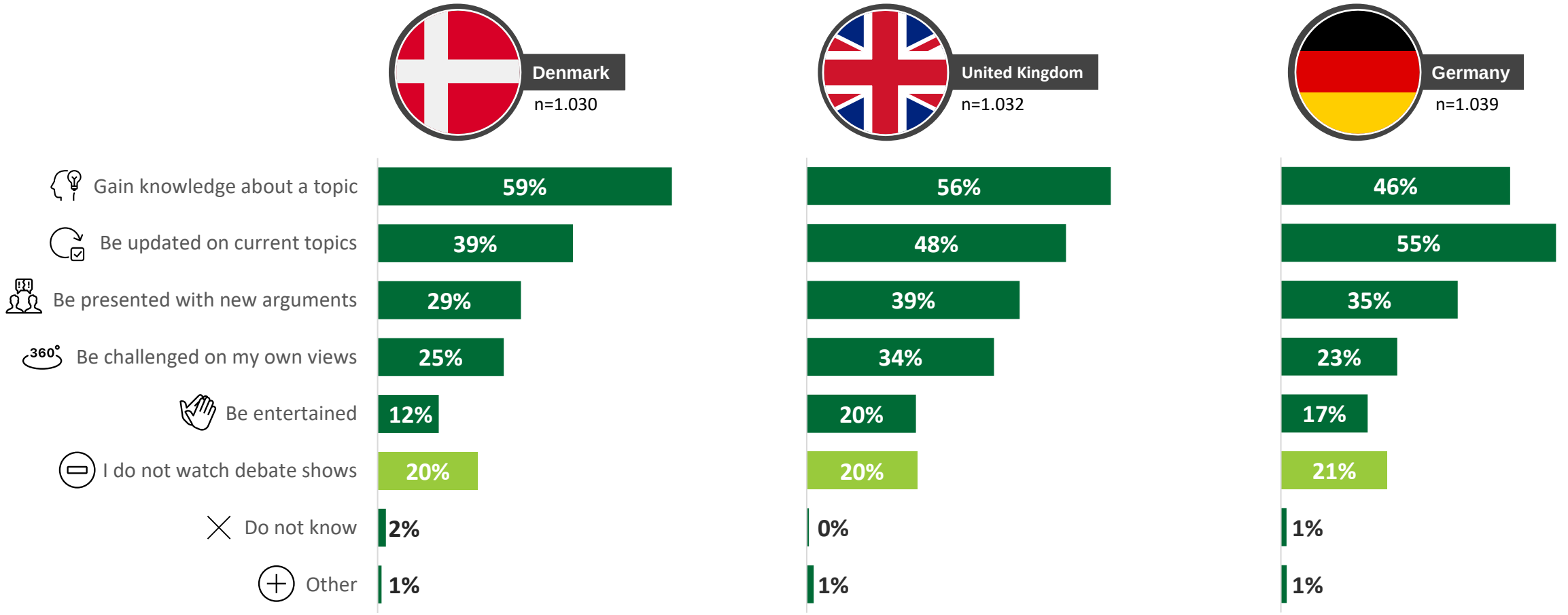


Epinion

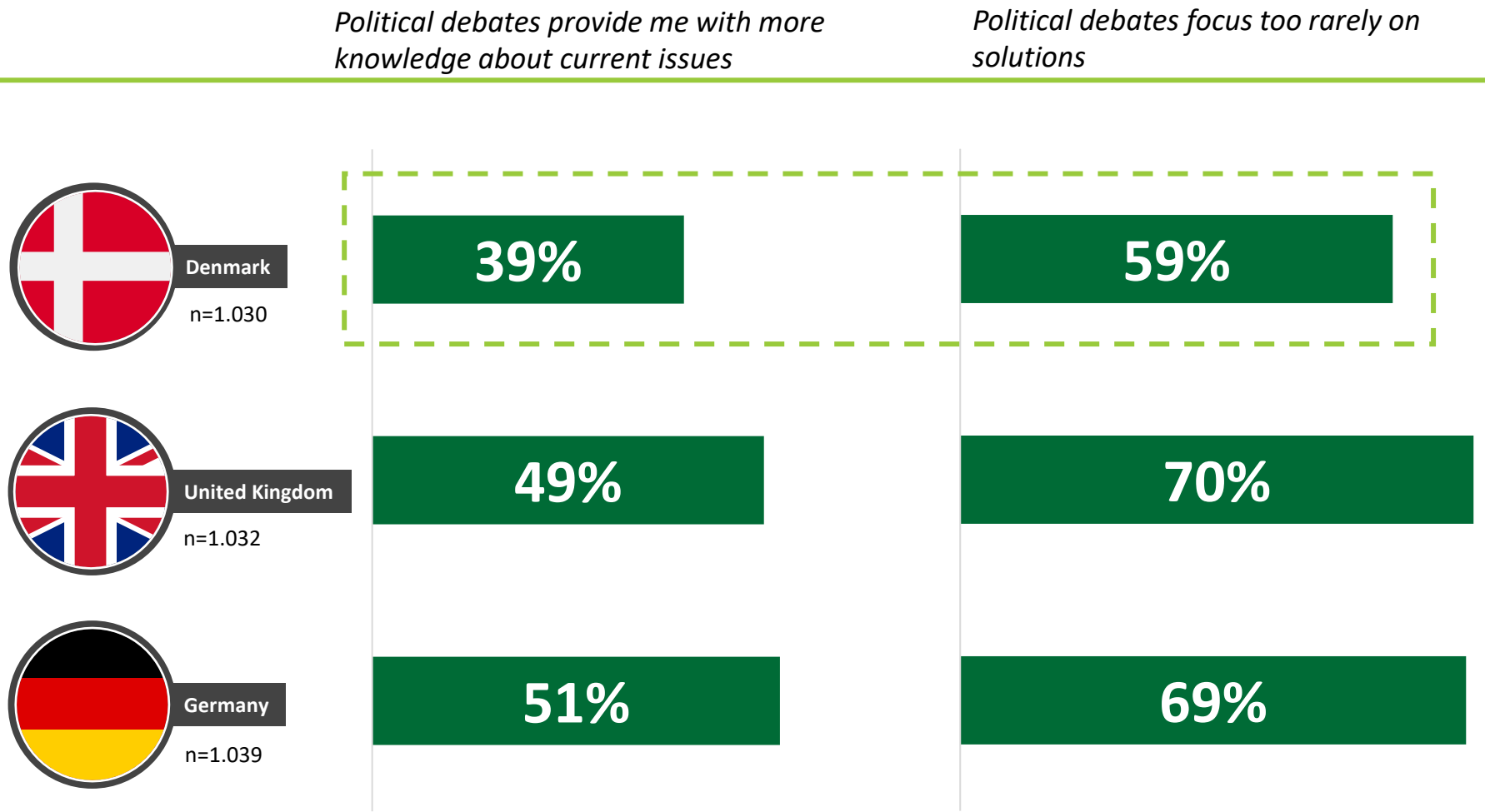
20% in all three countries indicate that they do not watch debate shows at all. However, the share of the public that does watch debates do it to gain knowledge, be updated, and be presented with new arguments

I watch debate shows to…



Epinion

Fewer than 40% of Danish people say that political debates give them new knowledge – the share is larger among German and British people



Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statements

The three most common reasons for watching debate shows among Danish, German, and British people are to gain knowledge on a topic, be updated on current issues, and be presented with new arguments.

Whether the public finds that the political debate provide this is expressed in the extent to which they agree with the statement *"Political debates provide me with more knowledge about current issues".* Only 39% of Danish people agree, but almost half of German (49%) and British (51%) people agree. Still, it seems to be a gap to fill for the media and the participants in the debates in order to live up to the desired standards by the public.

Also, a large share of both Danish (59%), German (69%) and British (70%) people believe that there is not enough focus on solutions to the problems in the political debates.

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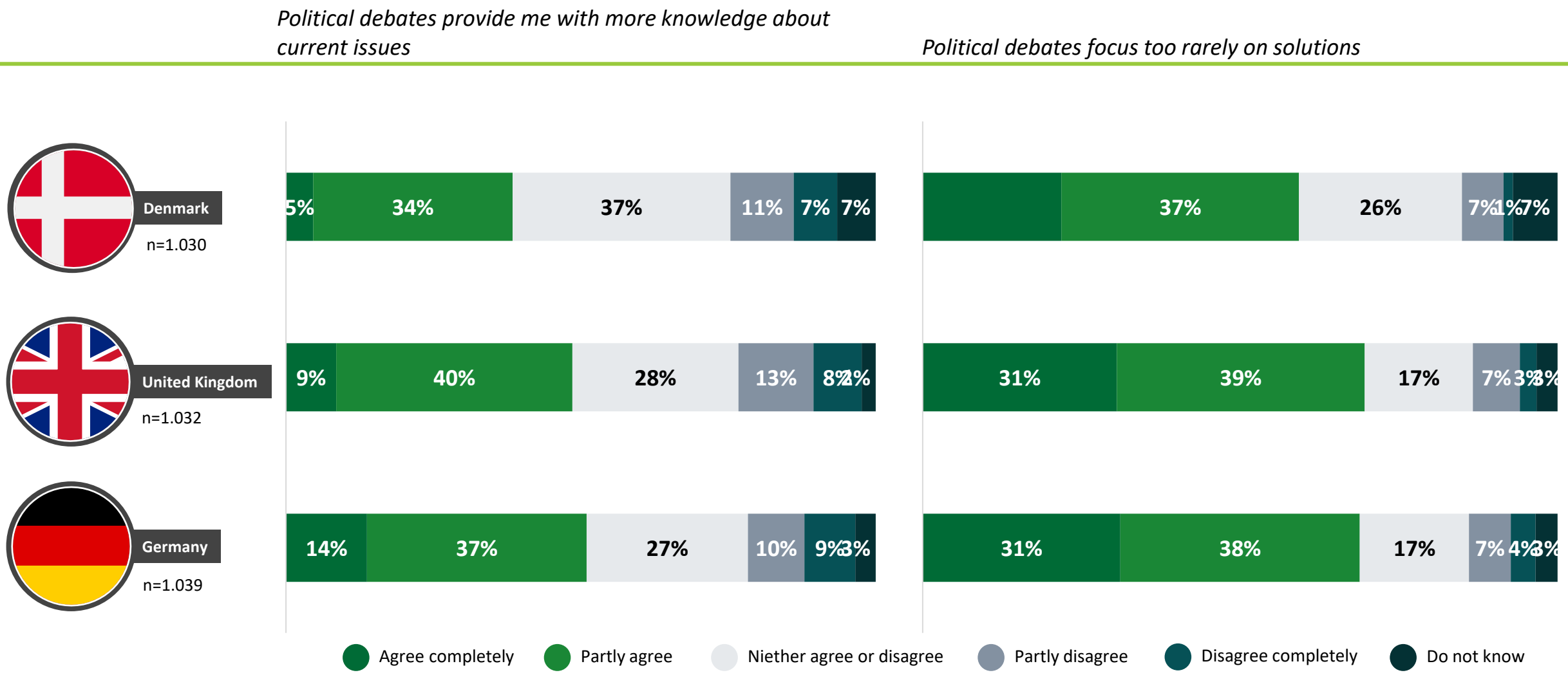


Epinion

The demand for constructive news based on a max-diff choice experiment

Methodological note

The demand for constructive and conventional news was measured indirectly by using a max-diff choice experiment with eight iterations. In the experiment we repeatedly presented the respondent with five fictional newspaper headlines. Each time we asked the respondent to choose the one they would like to read the most and the least. Beforehand, ten news issues had been selected based on Danish news articles and ten constructive headlines and ten conventional headlines were written – one of each covering the ten issues. The 20 headlines are shown to the right.

The result of the max-diff experiment is a continuous scale of preferences, where all alternatives – the 20 headlines – are placed on the scale based on the probability that the respondents would choose each news headline as their preferred option. 'Low preference' means that the respondents to a low extent would choose the news headline, whereas 'high preference' means that the respondents to a high extent would choose it.

The results should be interpreted relative to the other alternatives and to ease the interpretation, the values are placed on a scale that summarizes to 100. The relative preferences and ranking of each of the 20 news headlines are presented for each country on the next slides.

	Conventional	Constructive
Anxiety	The number of children suffering from anxiety has doubled in the last ten years	A new treatment has been found to help children suffering from anxiety
Doctor shortage	30% of the population live in areas threatened by a shortage of doctors	Shortage of doctors in decline: More medical students want to be GPs
Tuberculosis	Tuberculosis kills 1,6M people globally each year	Danish scientists have found the first vaccine against tuberculosis in 100 years
ADHD	Dramatic rise in the number of children with ADHD	Parents can reduce ADHD in children through play and praise
Youth drinking	Binge drinking: Danish young drink twice as much as the European average	Iceland has the solution: How to get the young to give up alcohol
Robbery	Gang of five responsible for 26 home invasions	Burglaries have almost halved since 2009
School performance	Pupils do even worse than earlier in science	The work put in by pupils in reading and math gets top marks in the EU
Depopulation	25 smaller islands have been abandoned over the last 50 years	Small islands have succeeded in stopping depopulation
Vocational education	Young women abandon vocational training	How to get more women into vocational training
Immigration	Half of non-western immigrants and descendants do not work	Half of non-western immigrants and descendants are now employed

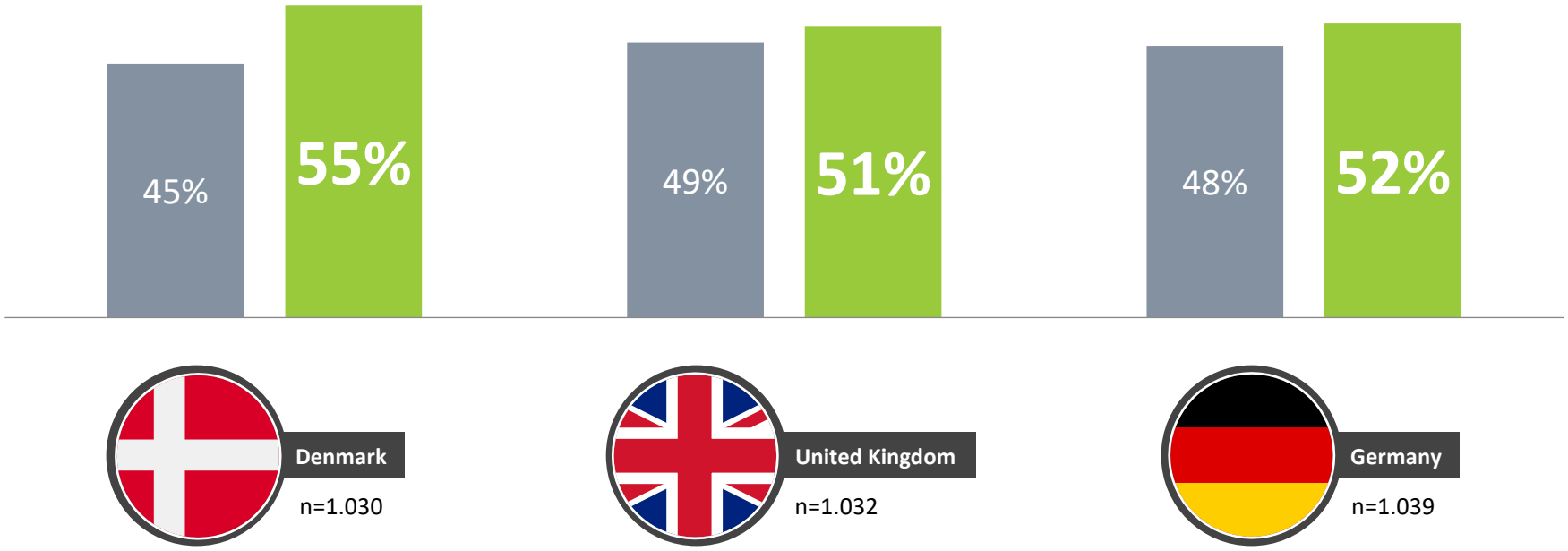
The share preferring to read more of an article when presented with a constructive news headline rather than a conventional one are not different across the three countries. However, Danish people seem most mature for consuming constructive news

Percentage of people who prefer constructive and conventional news

The results from the max-diff choice experiment suggest that the public prefer constructive news to conventional news on some issues and there are some cross-country differences.

Across all three countries, however, it is issues such as tuberculosis, youth drinking and anxiety where the public to a large extent have a higher preference for the constructive headlines.

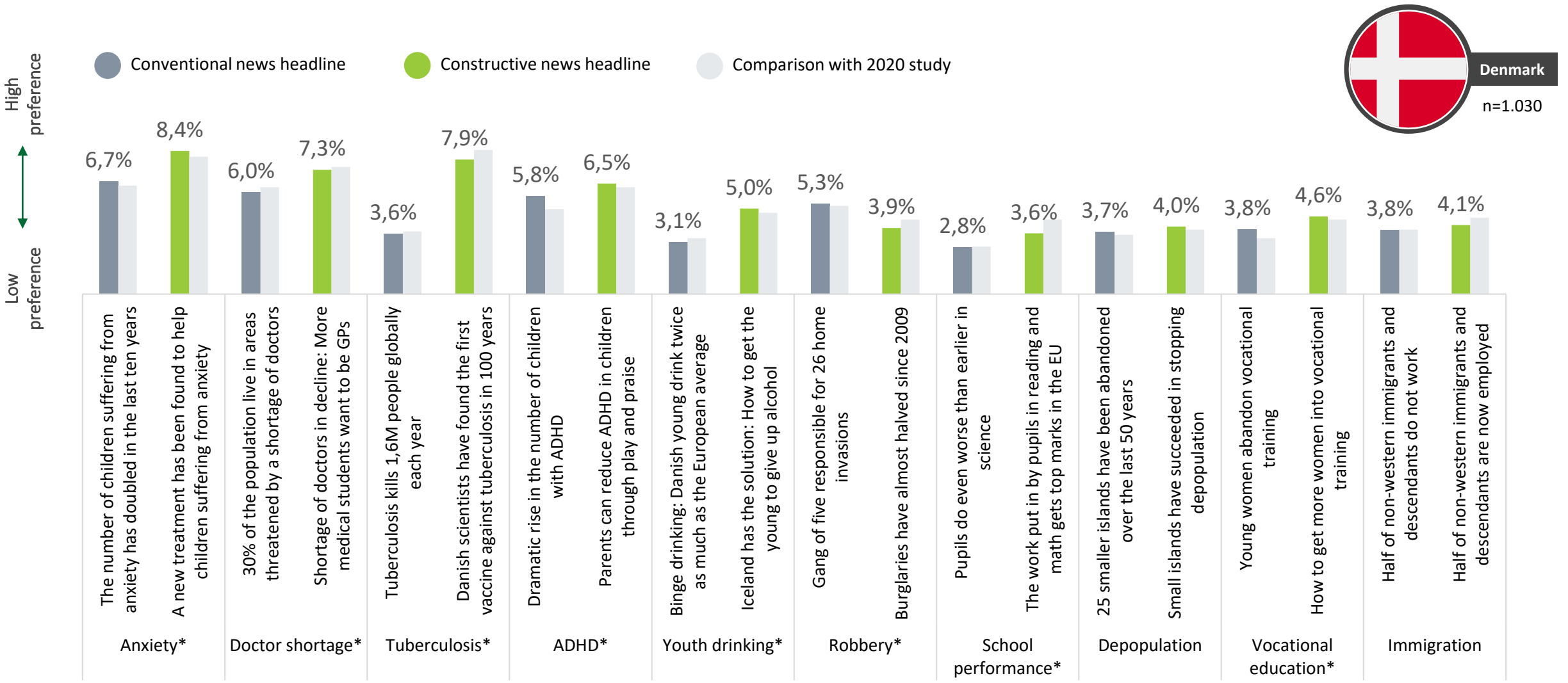
However, the experiment did not present the respondents with all possible news topics or even a random sample of news. It is possible that British, German, and Danish people prefer constructive news on some issues and conventional news on others.



Note: The graph shows the aggregated results of each max-diff analysis conducted. It does, however, not show if the results are significant since it is an aggregated measure. For this, please see page 30-32, where the results of the three individual max-diff experiments are displayed. Here it is indicated on which issues there are significant differences between the preference for conventional and constructive news headlines.

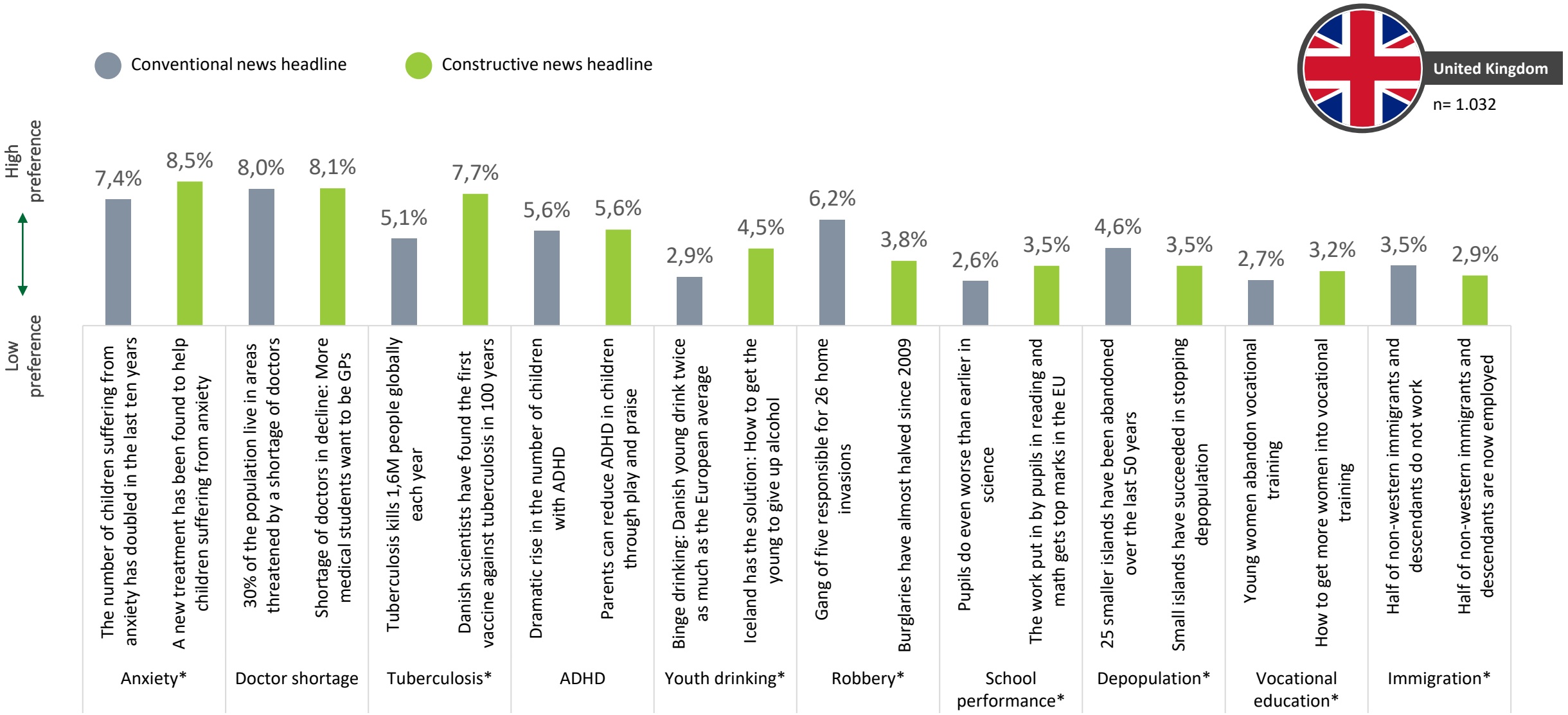
Epinion

The preference for constructive news has not changed over times among Danish people. They prefer constructive headlines covering anxiety, tuberculosis, and youth drinking over the conventional headlines



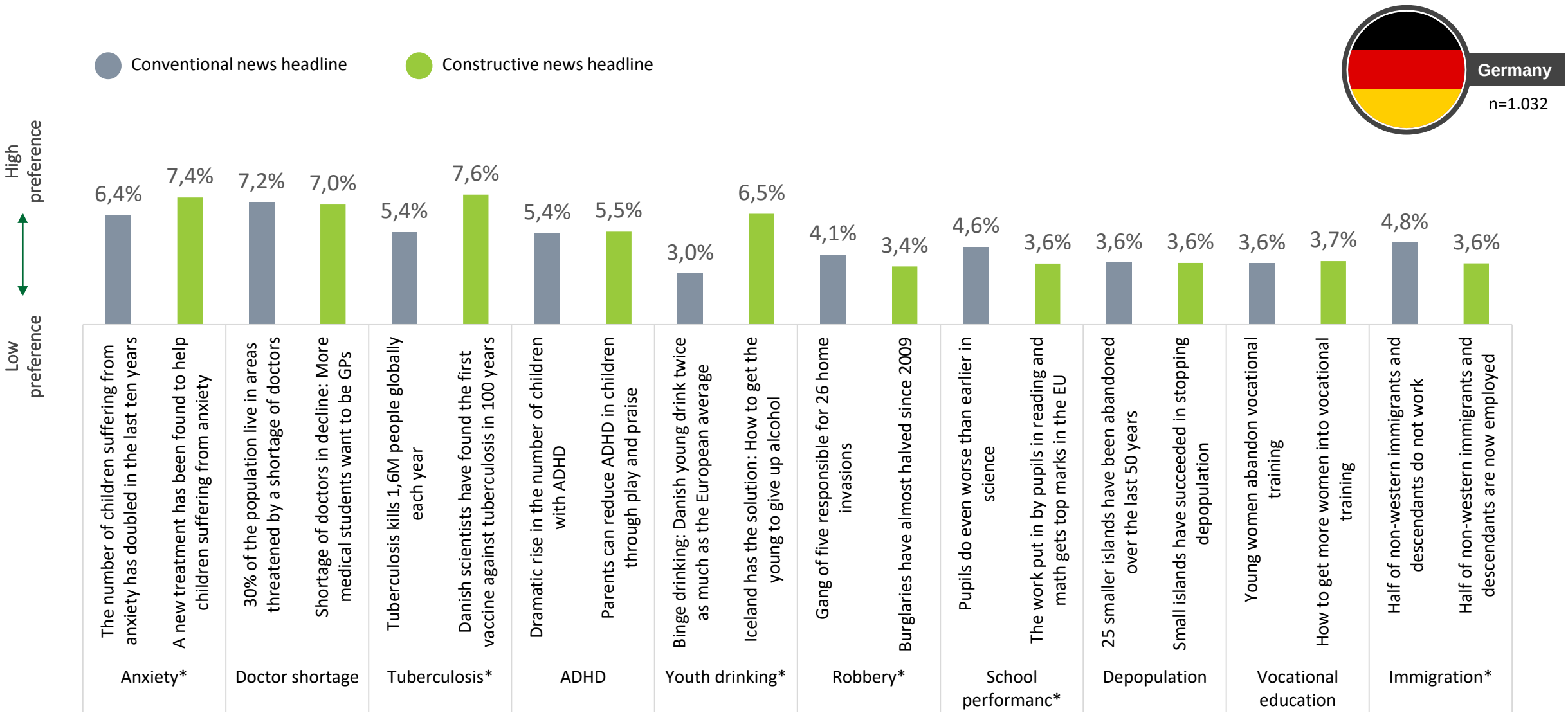
Note: * Marks results where the difference between constructive and conventional news are significant in this study. The light grey columns represent the Danes' preferences for constructive and conventional news in 2020 (n=2014) based on a previous study Epinion has made for Constructive Institute ("News Experiences and Opinions in Denmark 2020"). The same topics are covered in the study from 2020, which allows for a comparison over time. However, some of the headlines in the 2020 study were a bit more country specific so one should be aware of that in the comparison over time.

British people prefer to read articles with constructive headlines over conventional covering topics as tuberculosis, youth drinking, and anxiety. However, in most cases they still prefer articles with a conventional headline



Note: * Marks results where the difference between constructive and conventional news are significant.

German people prefer to read articles with constructive headlines over conventional covering topics as tuberculosis, youth drinking, and anxiety. It is only when it comes to immigration a conventional headline is more clearly preferred than a constructive



Note: * Marks results where the difference between constructive and conventional news are significant.

The consequences

British people are less trusting of conventional media than Danish and German people

In general, would you say that one can trust:

	What you see, hear, or read in media such as TV, Radio, and Newspapers?	*What you see, hear, or read on social media?*
Denmark n=1.030	54%	13%
United Kingdom n=1.032	38%	17%
Germany n=1.039	52%	22%

More than half of Danish and German people believe that they can trust what they see, hear, or read in conventional media. This is the case for 38% of British people which is significantly lower than Danish and German people.

Looking at the trust in the information on social media, the picture is quite different. Danish people are the ones who trust what they see, hear, or read on social media the least (13%) while German people are the most trusting out of the three countries (22%).

Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statements

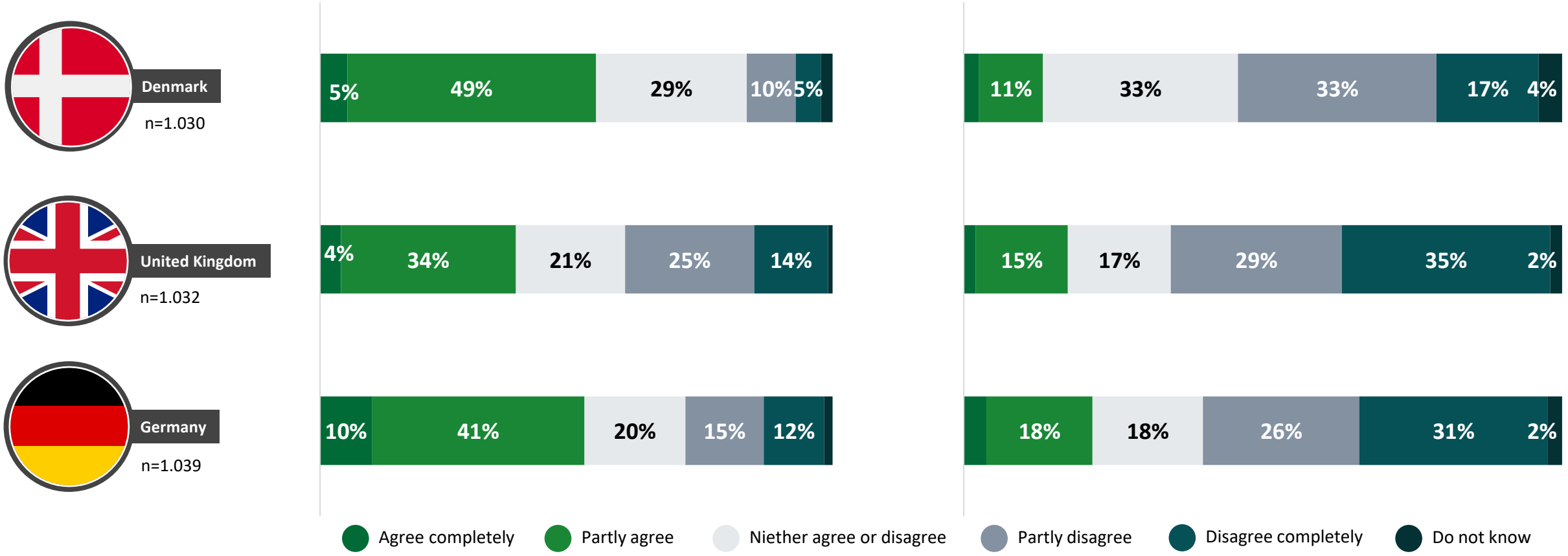
Epinion

British people are less trusting of conventional media than Danish and German people

In general, would you say that one can trust:

What you see, hear, or read in media such as TV, Radio, and Newspapers?

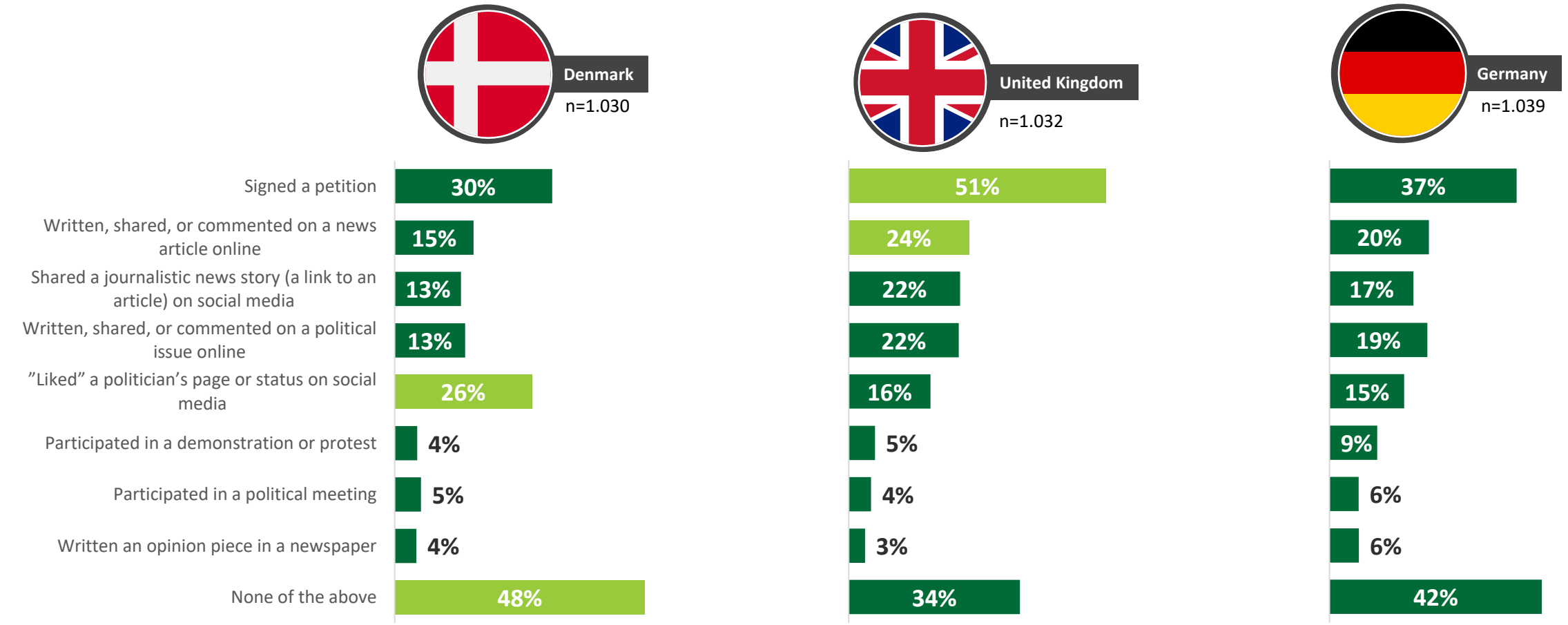
What you see, hear, or read on social media?



Epinion

The most common form of participation in all three countries is signing a petition - over half of British people have signed one while it is the case for 30% of Danish people and 37% of German people

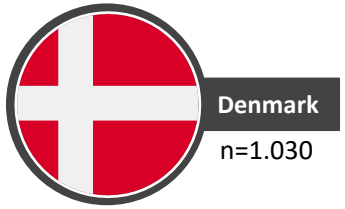
If you think back on the past 6 months, which of the following actions have you partaken in ? You can choose multiple.



Epinion

The tone in the debate concerns Danish and German people the most, while concerns about the debate not leading anywhere concerns British people the most - concerns about personal attacks is more prevalent among British people compared to Danish and German people

Which of the following factors would potentially make you withdraw from the public debate? You can choose multiple



Denmark
n=1.030

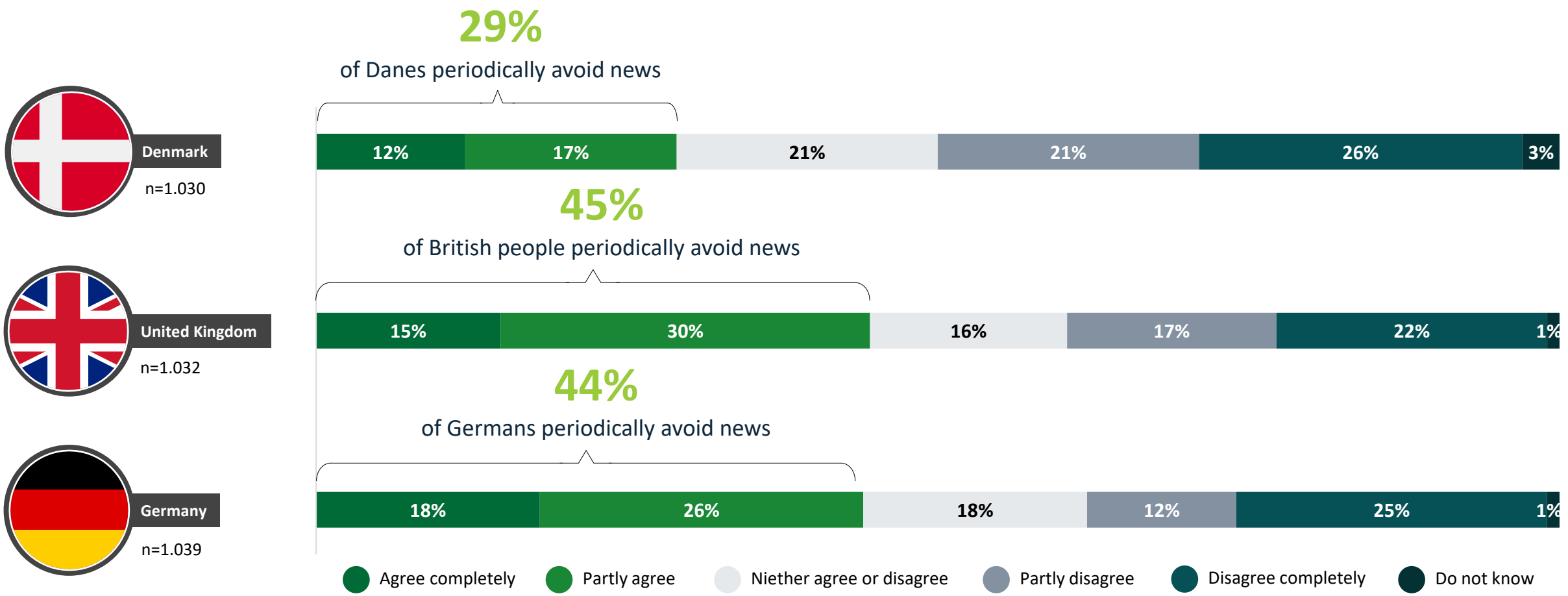
United Kingdom
n=1032

Germany
n=1.039

	Denmark	United Kingdom	Germany
The tone in the debate	46%	40%	47%
I do not feel that my participation will make a difference	34%	43%	39%
Lack of interest in what the debate is about	33%	42%	40%
Concerns about personal attacks in the debate	32%	40%	34%
Concerns about the debate not leading anywhere	32%	44%	44%
Lack of knowledge about what the debate is about	31%	43%	39%
Lack of time or energy	25%	31%	30%
Other	3%	2%	2%
average number of barrieres chosen	2.3	2.9	2.7

More than 40% of German and British people periodically avoid news - the share of news avoiders is smaller in Denmark

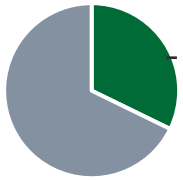
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – I periodically try to avoid news



Epinion

Who are the news avoiders? Across all three countries, the share of women who avoid news is larger than the share among men – especially young women avoid news

Below is a characteristic of the news avoiders in each country on selected demograpichs. The tables indicate the share of news avoiders among each gender respectively, across each gender and age group, as well as across education groups. If the percentage share for a demographic group is higher than the percentage shown in the piechart in the top, it indicates that the demographic group is overrepresented among news avoiders. For instance, on average 29% of Danish people can be characterized as news avoiders. But among Danish women the share of news avoiders is 36%.



29% of Danish people are news avoiders

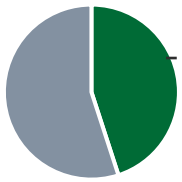
n=298

Gender and age	36%	23%
18-34	56%	35%
35-55	40%	26%
Above 55	20%	12%

Highest level of education

High school/ Higher education — 32%

Primary school/ Technical education — 28%



45% of British people are news avoiders

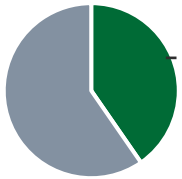
n=456

Gender and age	49%	40%
18-34	51%	50%
35-55	50%	38%
Above 55	46%	35%

Highest level of education

High school/ Higher education — 44%

Primary school/ Technical education — 45%



44% of German people are news avoiders

n=462

Gender and age	50%	40%
18-34	60%	47%
35-55	53%	35%
Above 55	42%	40%

Highest level of education

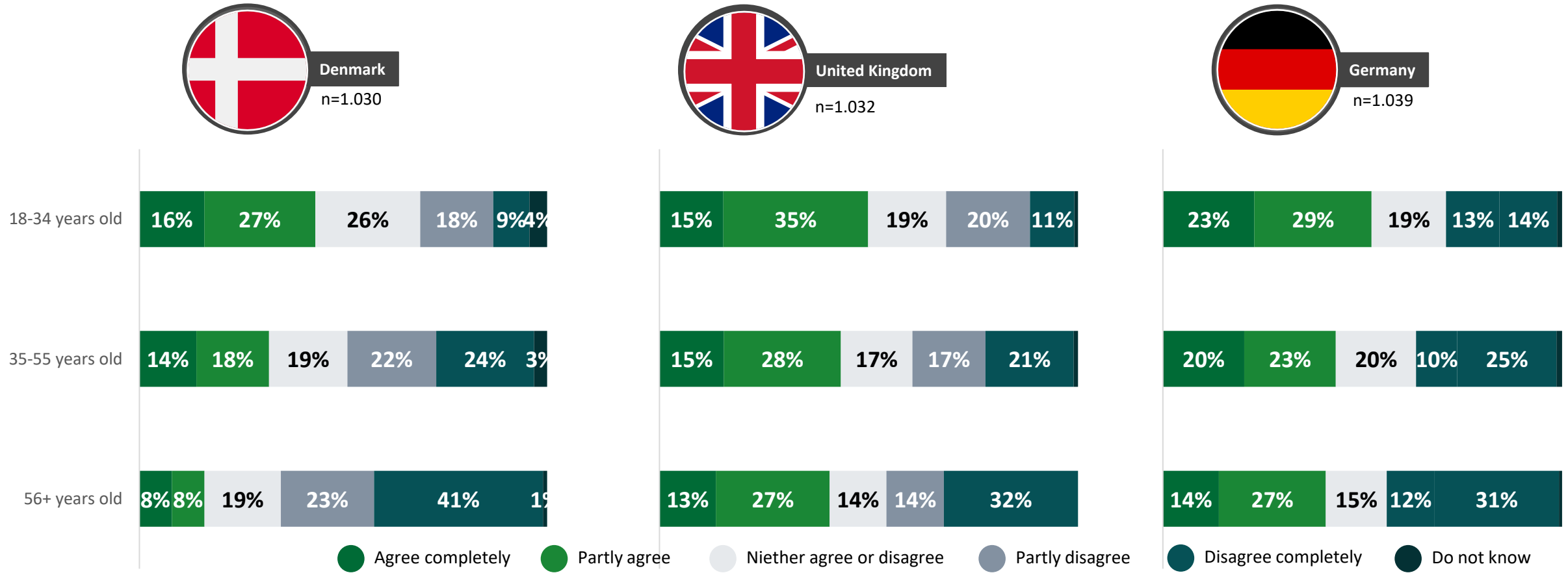
High school/ Higher education — 48%

Primary school/ Technical education — 44%

Note: News avoiders are defined by the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statement *"I periodically try to avoid news"*

News avoidance is more pronounced among young people compared to the other age groups in both Denmark and Germany – in the UK, however, news avoidance is almost equally evident across all three age groups

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? – I periodically try avoid news

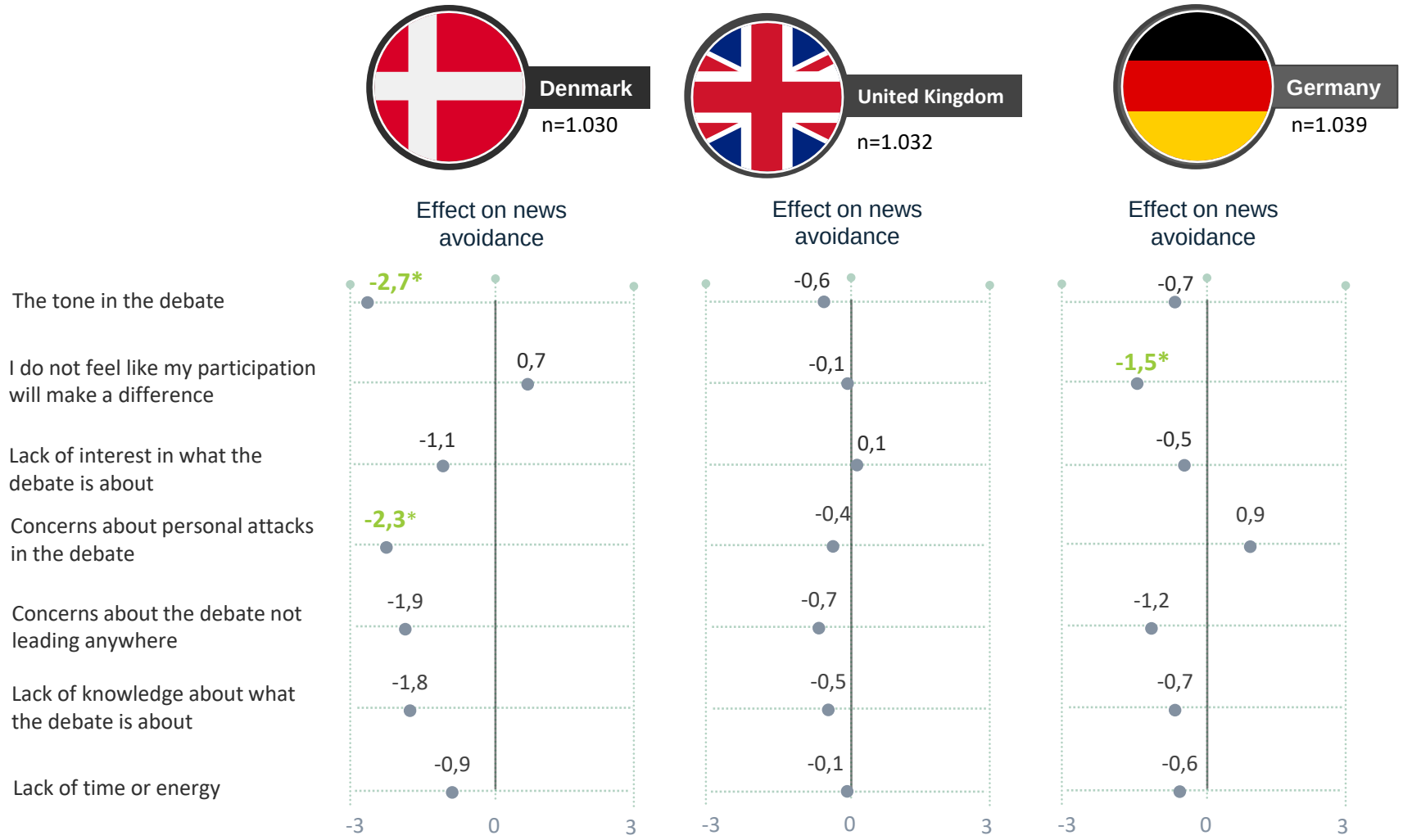


Epinion

Danish people that either choose the tone or concerns about personal attacks as barriers for participating in the public debate are also more likely to be news avoiders. In Germany, the ones likely to be news avoiders are those who choose the feeling of not making a difference as a barrier

Methodological note
The estimates in the graphs report the effect of having chosen the respective factor as a barrier on the inclination to avoid news.

News avoidance is measured based on the respondents answer to the question *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? – I periodically try to avoid news*, where 1 is agree completely and 5 is disagree completely. A negative estimate means that if one have chosen the respective factor as a barrier, they will be more inclined to periodically avoid news. A positive estimate indicates that that if one have chosen the respective factor as a barrier, they will be less inclined to periodically avoid news.



Note: * Marks significant results with a p<0.05.

Self efficacy: Definition and construction of index

Definition

Self efficacy is in the literature defined as "the belief in one's capacity to complete a task, rather than the relevant skills possessed."[1]

The concept is used in numerous contexts and with different purposes. In this study, rather than measuring one's general belief in one's own capacity to complete a task, we have adapted and operationalized self efficacy in relation to political tasks, which relates to one's capacity to participate in the political and public debate. This capacity has three dimensions:

1. Opinions on how to solve societal challenges
2. Understanding of political issues and political questions
3. Ability to contribute when discussing politics with friends and family

Methodological note

The dimensions of self efficacy have been operationalized in the following three questions, where the respondents were asked to evaluate their own abilities based on the three questions on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1) agree completely to 5) disagree completely with an option to answer do not know[2]:

1. "I have an opinion on how to solve societal challenges."
2. "It is easy for me to understand most political issues and questions."
3. "I have something to contribute with when politics is discussed among friends and family."

Construction of self efficacy index

In order to construct a reflexive index to measure political self efficacy, we went through a three-step process:

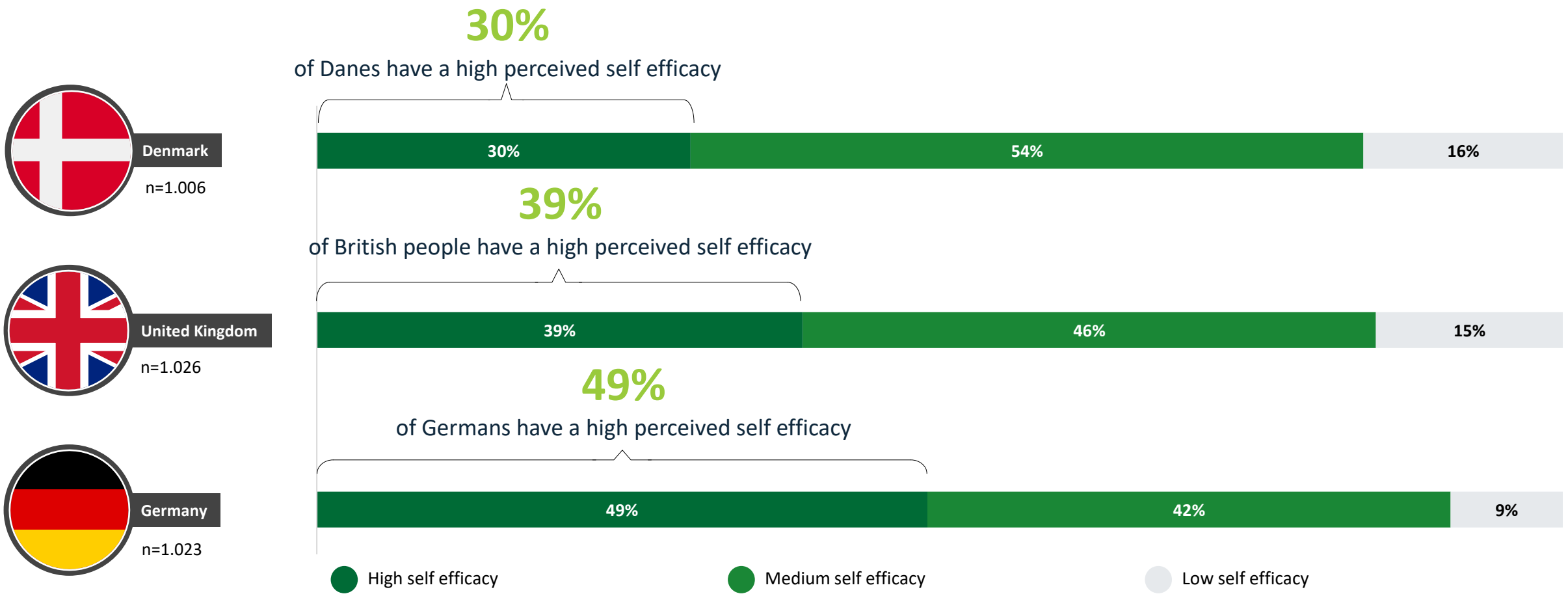
1. Inter-item correlation analysis
2. Factor-analysis
3. Reliability test

The inter-item correlation analysis showed a high level of correlation between the items. The factor-analysis reported that the dimensions measure the same underlying concept – political self efficacy. The reliability test showed a high level of reliability above the conventional level (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7).

Note: [1] See Bandura (1997). [2]The respondents who have given a "do not know" answer to at least one of the questions (n=46) is not included in the analyses involving the measure of self efficacy.

The share of the public that have a high self efficacy – that is that they perceive themselves as capable of participating in the political debate – is highest in Germany, then the UK, and smallest in Denmark

Distribution of self efficacy in each country

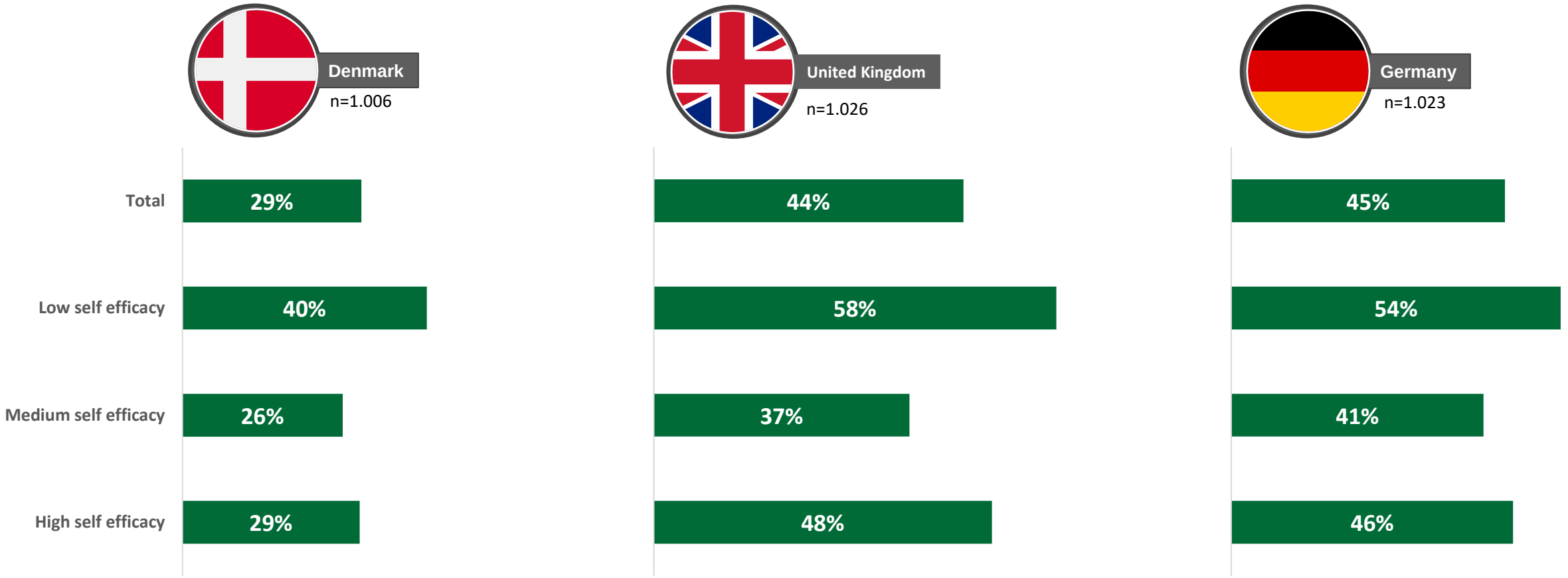


Note: For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 38

Epinion

News avoidance is most pronounced among the share of the public that have low self efficacy. This is evident across all three countries

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – I periodically try to avoid news

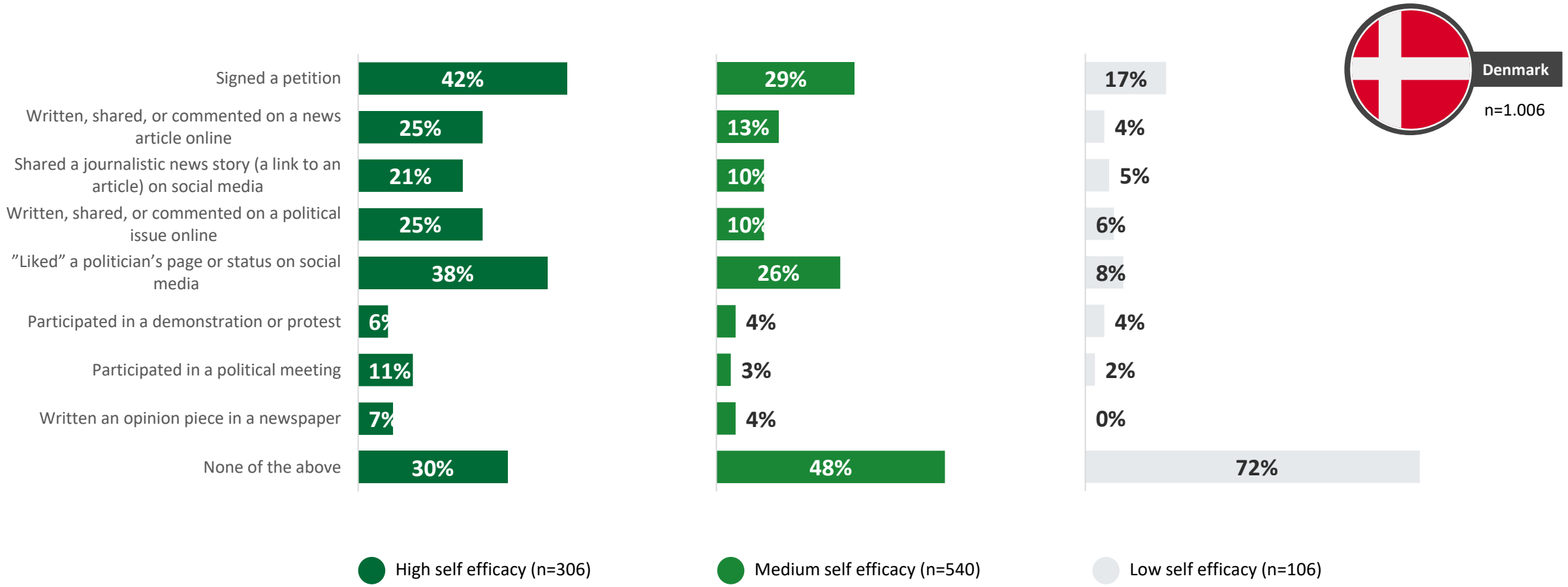


Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statement. For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

Epinion

The participation in the public debate is lowest among the share of Danish people, which indicate that they have a low perceived self efficacy – 72% report that they the past 6 moths have not taken part in any of the actions described

If you think back on the past 6 months, which of the following actions have you partaken in? You can choose multiple.

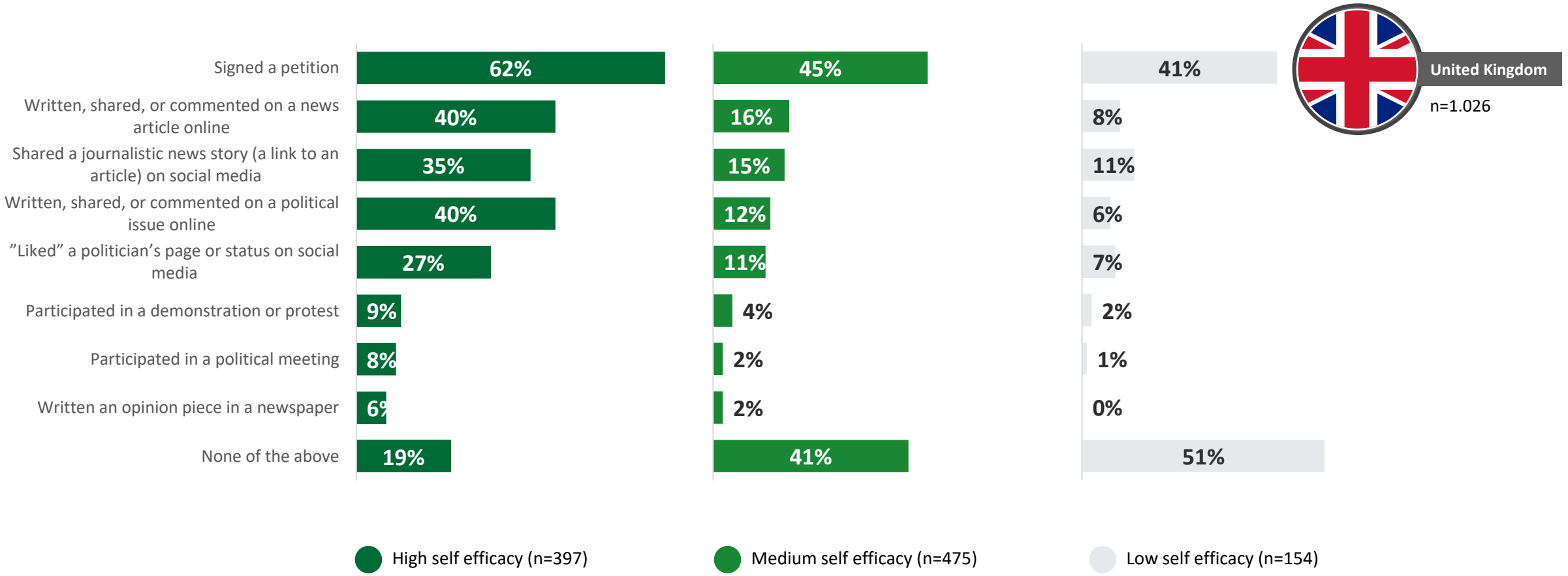


Note: For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

Epinion

51% of British people with low perceived self efficacy indicate that they have not participated in the public debate the past 6 months. Across all three groups, signing a petition is the most popular way to participate

If you think back on the past 6 months, which of the following actions have you partaken in? You can choose multiple.

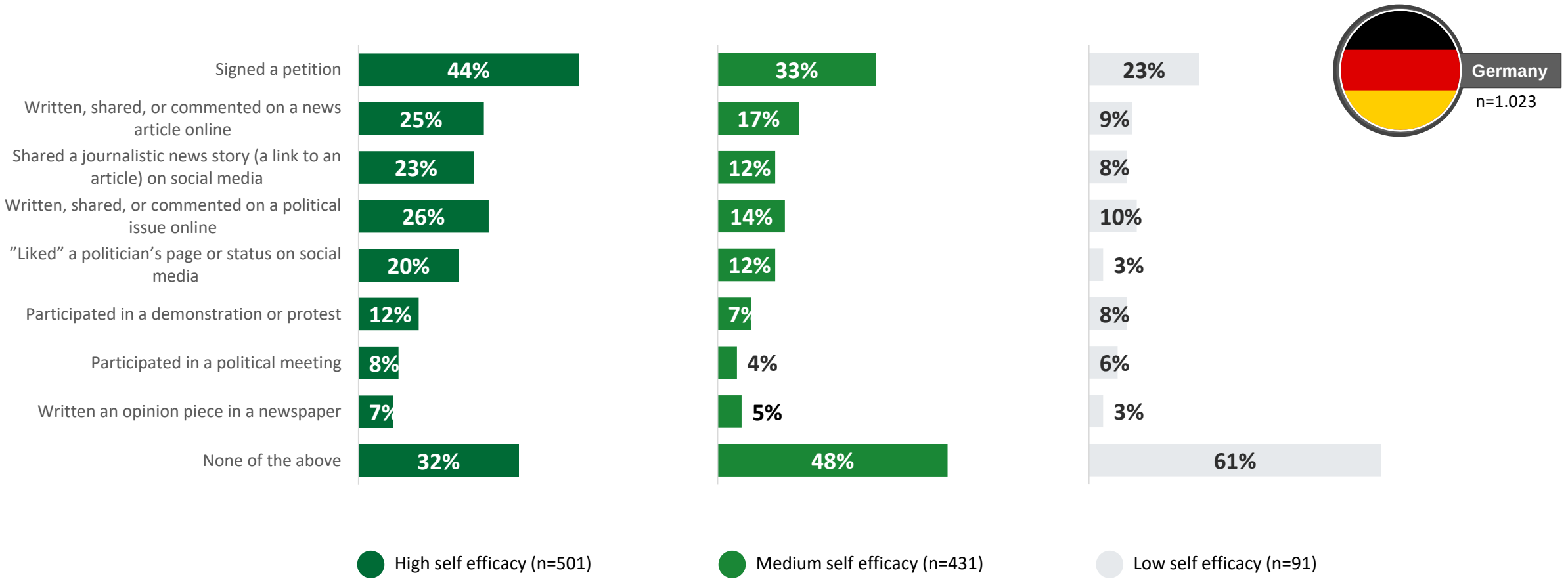


Note: For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

Epinion

The participation in the public debate is lowest among the share of German people, which indicate that they have a low perceived self efficacy – 61% report that they the past 6 months have not taken part in any of the actions described

If you think back on the past 6 months, which of the following actions have you partaken in? You can choose multiple.



Note: For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

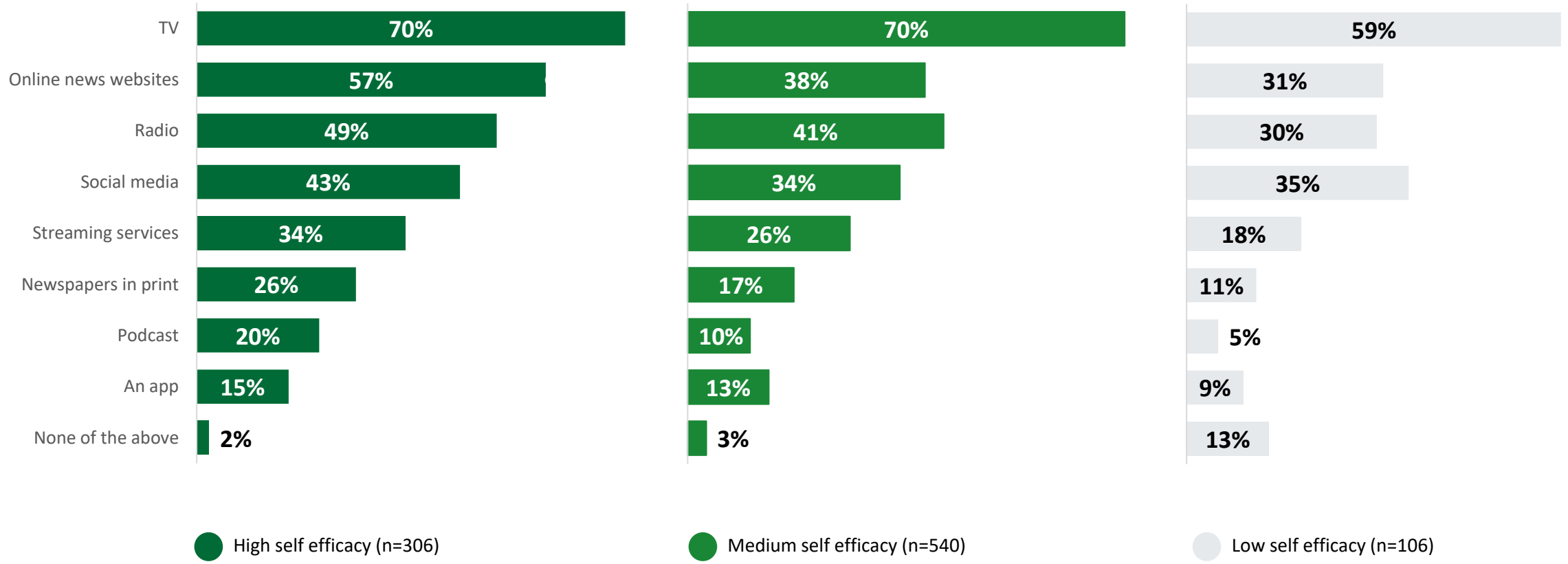
Epinion

The media habits across the different levels of self efficacy diverge – Danish people with high perceived self efficacy consume news from more various sources compared to the people with medium and low perceived self efficacy

Denmark

n=1.006

Think about this past week. Which of the following media, if any, have you used to listen to/read/watch news the last week?



Note: The graphs do not include the results for the options ”do not know” and ”do not wish to answer”. For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

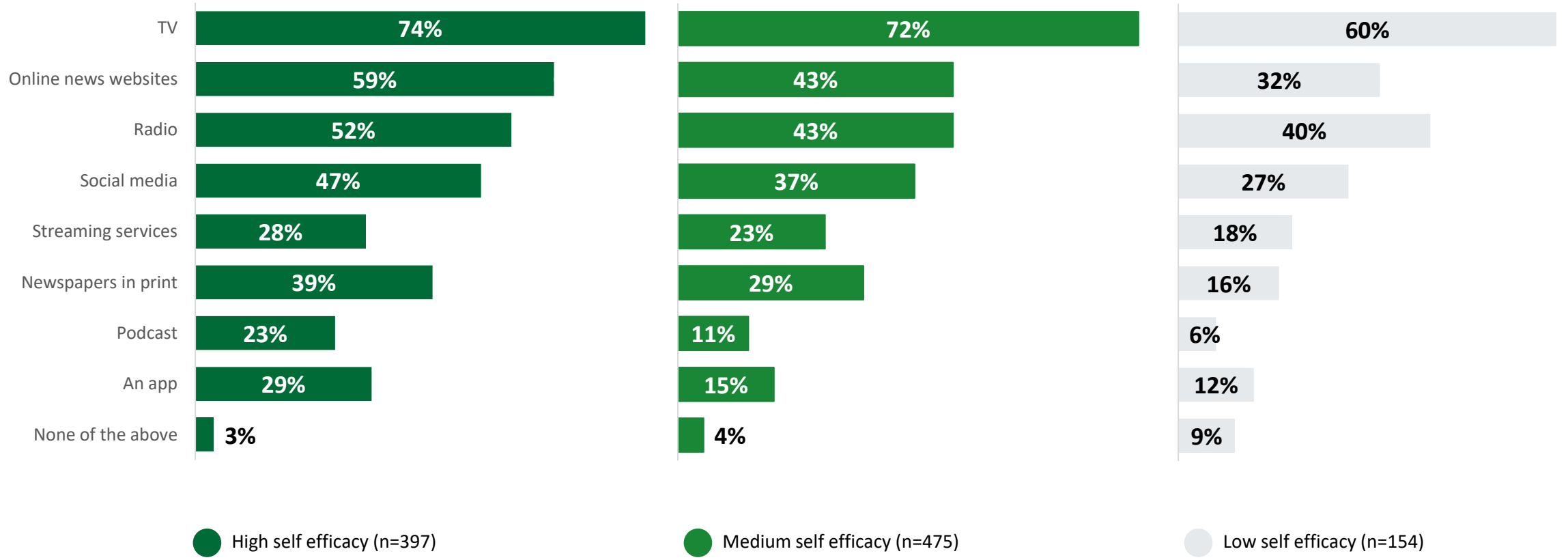
Epinion

The media habits across the different levels of self efficacy diverge – British people with high perceived self efficacy consume news from more various sources compared to the people with medium and low perceived self efficacy

United Kingdom

n=1.026

Think about this past week. Which of the following media, if any, have you used to listen to/read/watch news the last week?



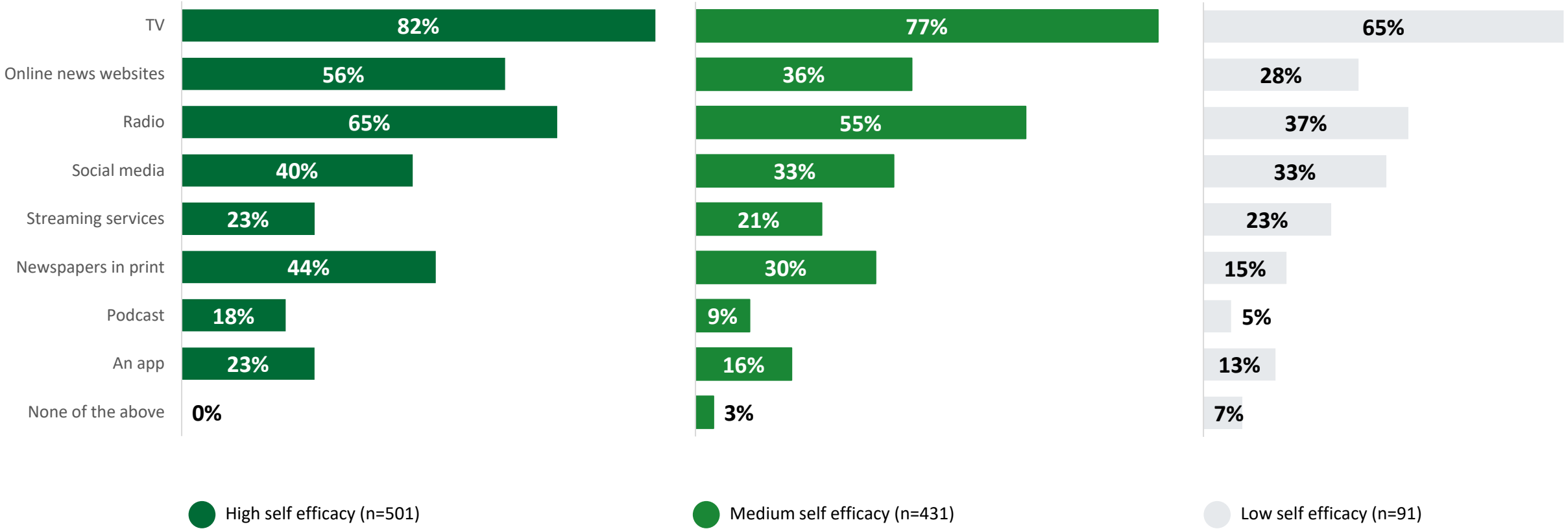
Note: The graphs do not include the results for the options ”do not know” and ”do not wish to answer”. For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

Epinion

The media habits across the different levels of self efficacy diverge – German people with high perceived self efficacy consume news from more various sources compared to the people with medium and low perceived self efficacy

Germany
n=1.023

Think about this past week. Which of the following media, if any, have you used to listen to/read/watch news the last week?



Note: The graphs do not include the results for the options ”do not know” and ”do not wish to answer”. For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

Epinion

There is a big difference between the three countries when it comes to commenting on social media if you see a post you disagree with: The majority of Danish people would not, while this is the case for 39% of German people

A

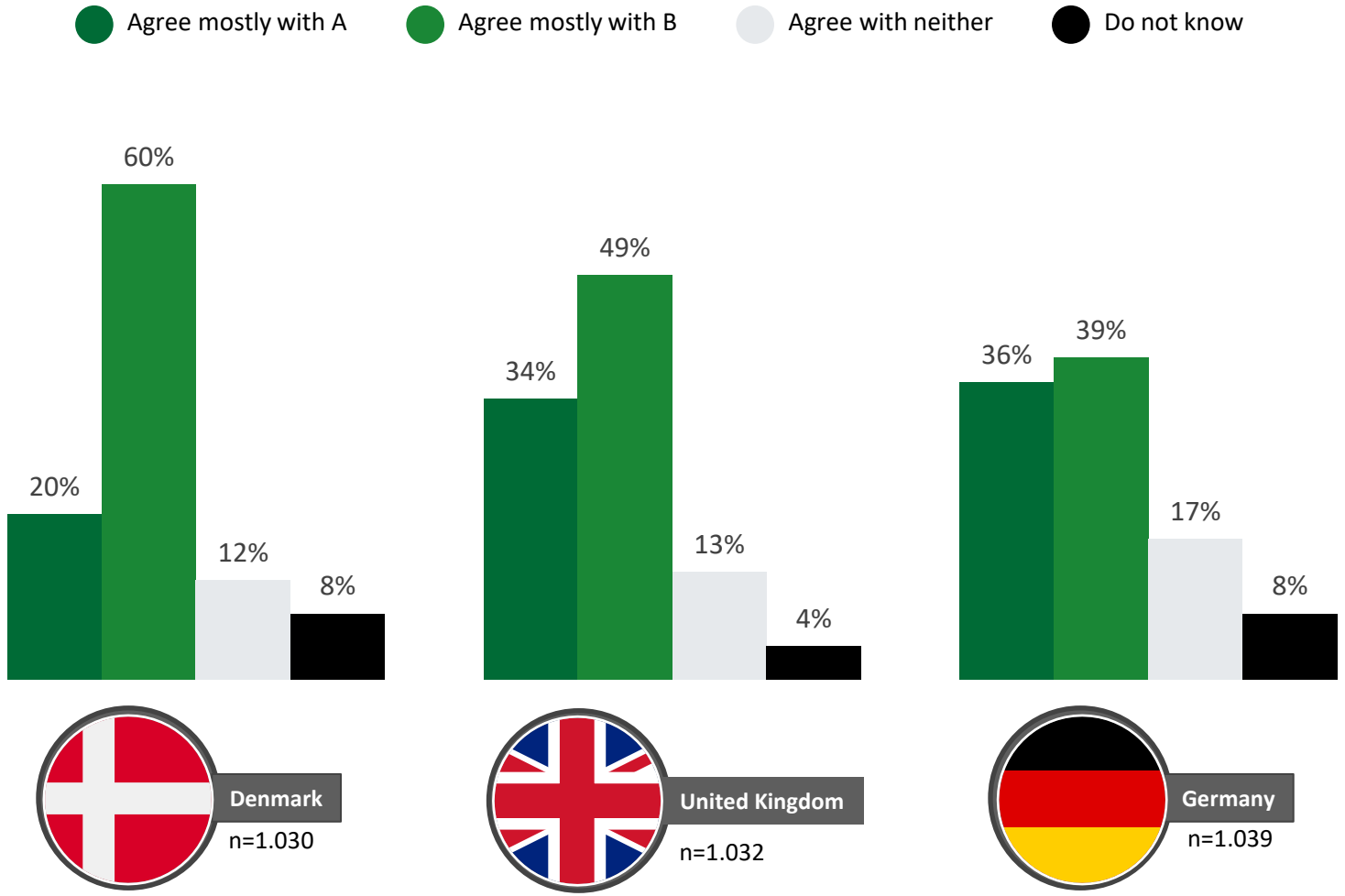
Person A

If I saw a post on social media that I disagreed with and wanted to comment on, then I would leave a comment.

B

Person B

If I saw a post on social media that I disagreed with, I would be reluctant to comment on it, even though I wanted to voice my opinion.



Epinion

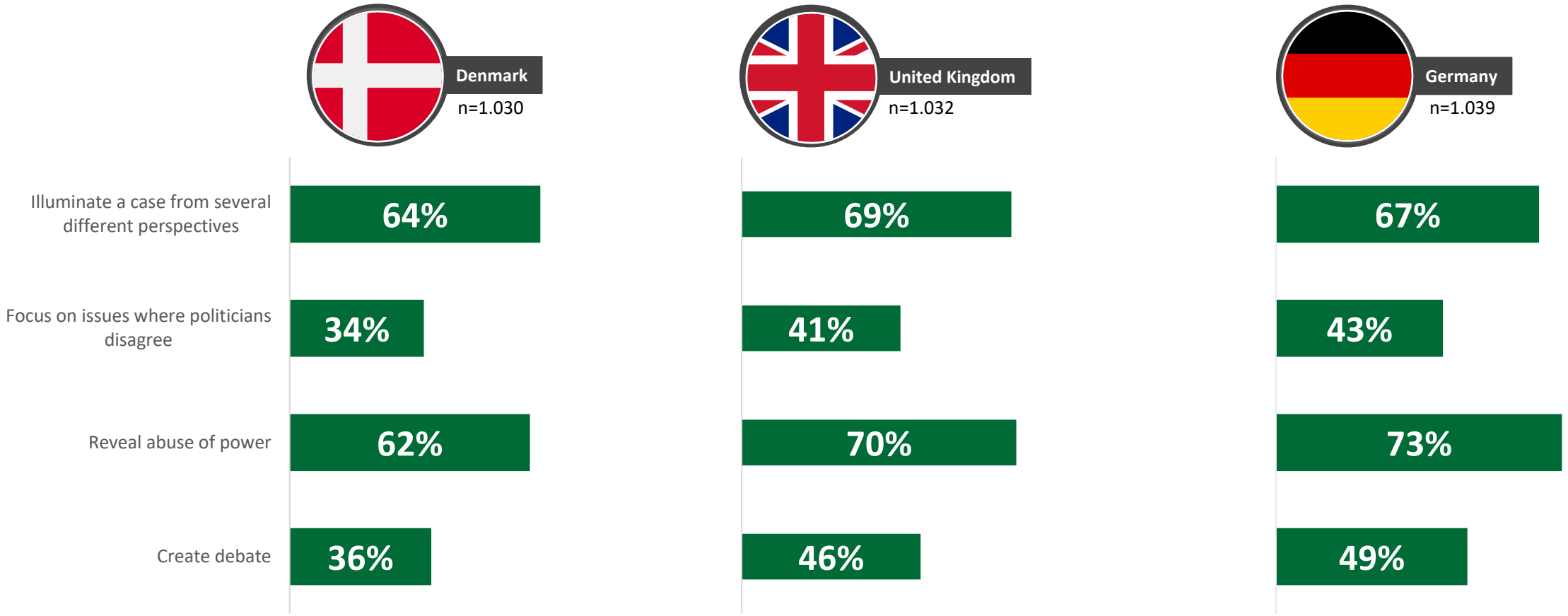
CONSTRUCTIVE INSTITUTE
Journalism for tomorrow

The space for action

Epinion

Illuminating a case from several different perspectives and revealing abuse of power are the most sought after news principles that the media should do more of. This is evident across all three countries

If you were free to choose, which actions should the news do more, less or the same of?



Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they think the media should do a lot more or more than they do today

Epinion

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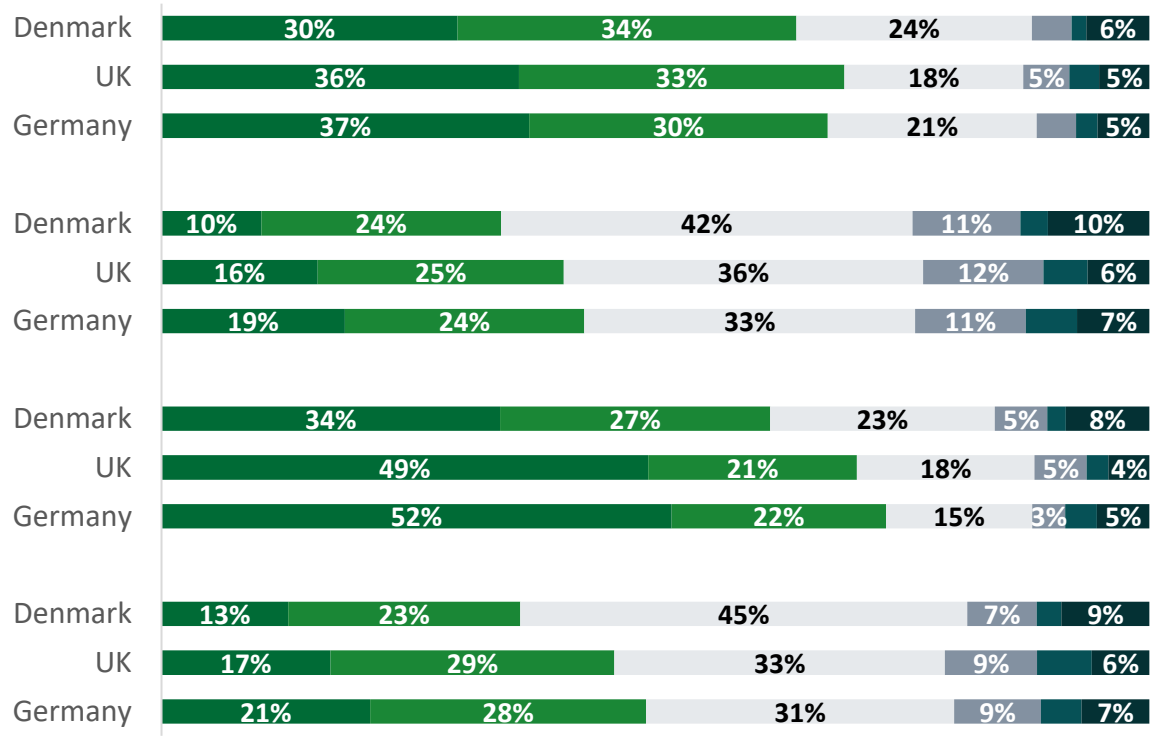


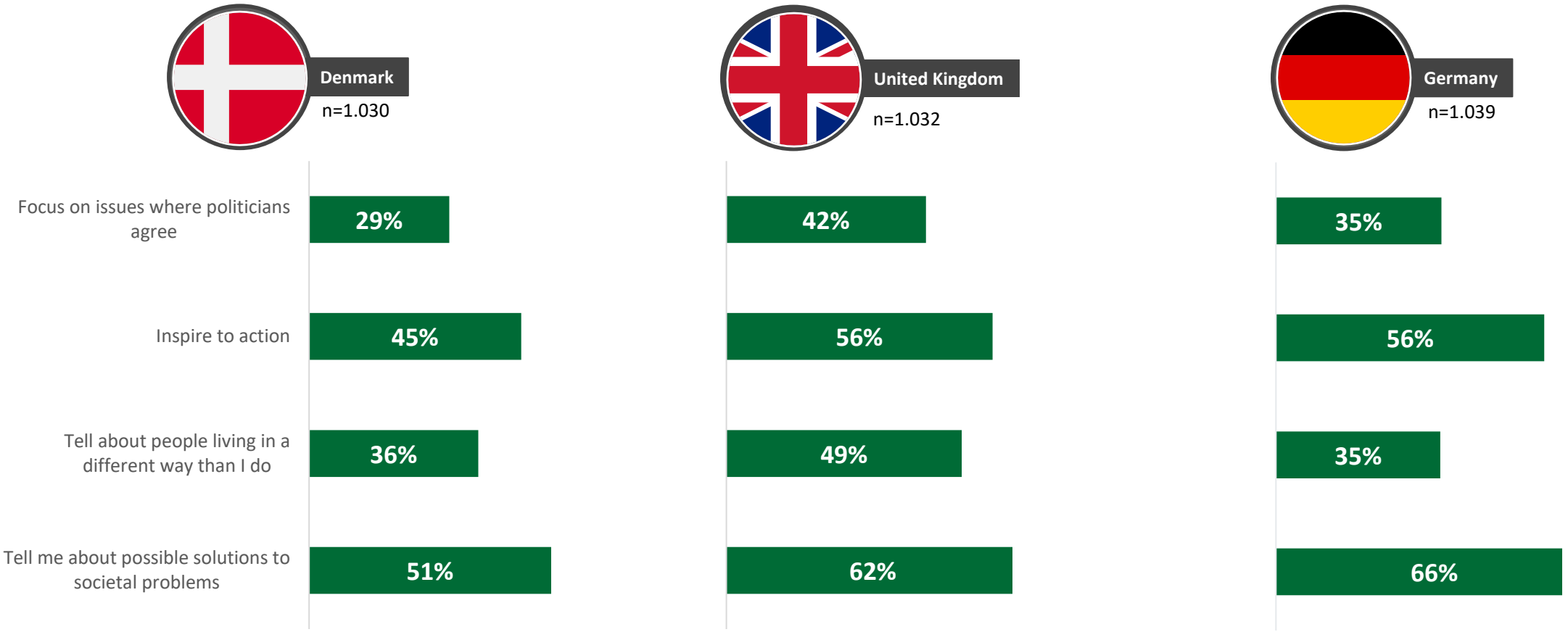
The principles most desired by the population in all countries are illuminating a case from several different perspectives and reveal abuse of power. Over 60% in all three countries are of the opinion that the media should do a lot more or a bit more of the aforementioned.

45% of Danish, 33% of British, and 31% of German people are of the opinion that the media should continue to do the same when it comes to create debate. When it comes to focus on issues where politicians disagree, 42% of Danish, 46% of British, and 33% of German people believe that the media should do the same as today. This could indicate that the media is already focusing on these principles in their news coverage, which is why the demand is not as high as for the other two principles.

Do a lot more than today | Do a bit more than today | Do the same as today | Do a bit less than today | Do a lot less than today | Do not know

There is also a demand for some constructive news ideals in all three countries. The public would especially like the media to inspire to action and tell about possible solutions. Overall, British people have a higher demand for constructive news principles than the Danish and German public

If you were free to choose, which actions should the news do more, less or the same of?



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Epinion

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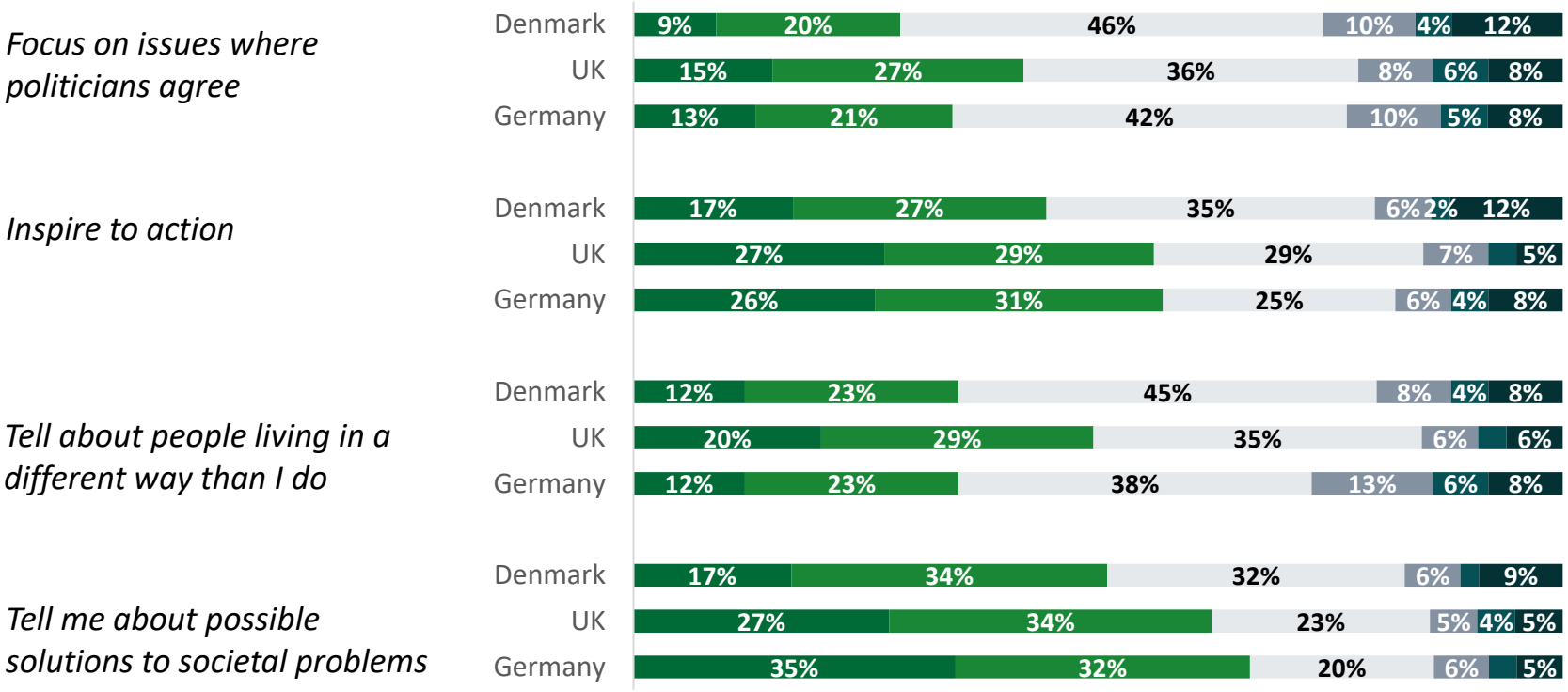


Albeit UK and Germany to a higher degree seems like they want constructive elements in news reporting there are a few considerations to take into account when interpreting these numbers.

As shown above, the attitude towards the UK media is more negative than in Denmark. A lot of Danish people answer that they want the media to the same as today which indicates that the media in Denmark are already incorporating constructive elements in their news reporting. Naturally, the distributions does not take into account the conditions and the state of the current media landscape.

Even though news in general leaves over half of German and British people in a bad mood, 44% of German people and 32% of British people believe that they can find solutions after seeing news about problems. Therefore, German people have the most positive outlook, followed by British people, and lastly Danish people

News about problems often leaves me with a feeling that you can find a solution to the problems

25%

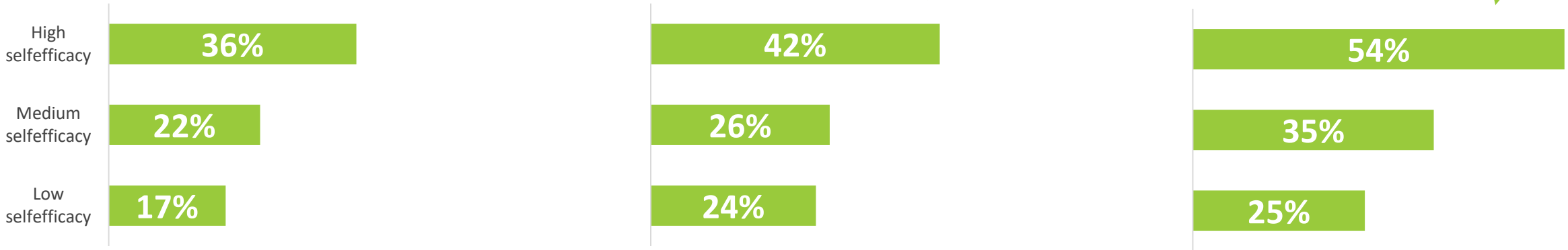
of **Danish people** agree completely or partly

32%

of **British people** agree completely or partly

44%

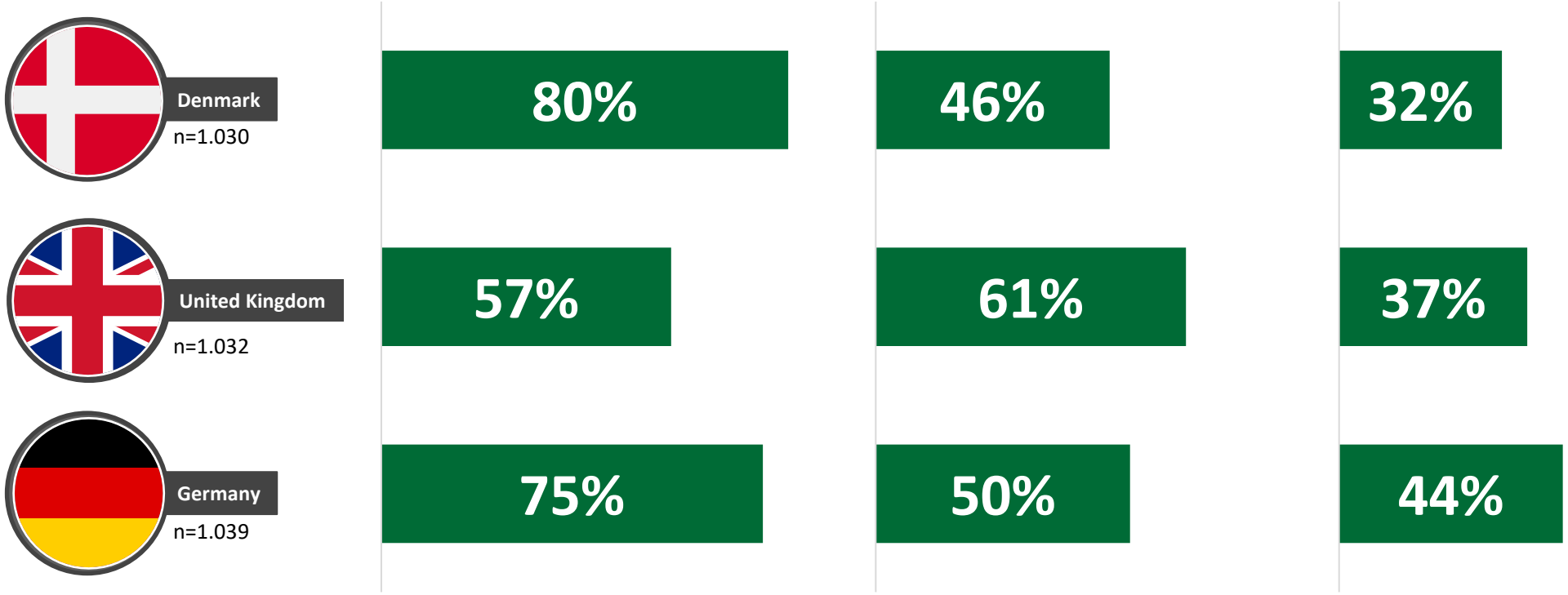
of **German people** agree completely or partly



Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statements

Epinion

It is a widespread belief that the media should encourage a sober tone – more than half of both German and British people also think that the media should have a moderator of the debate at all times

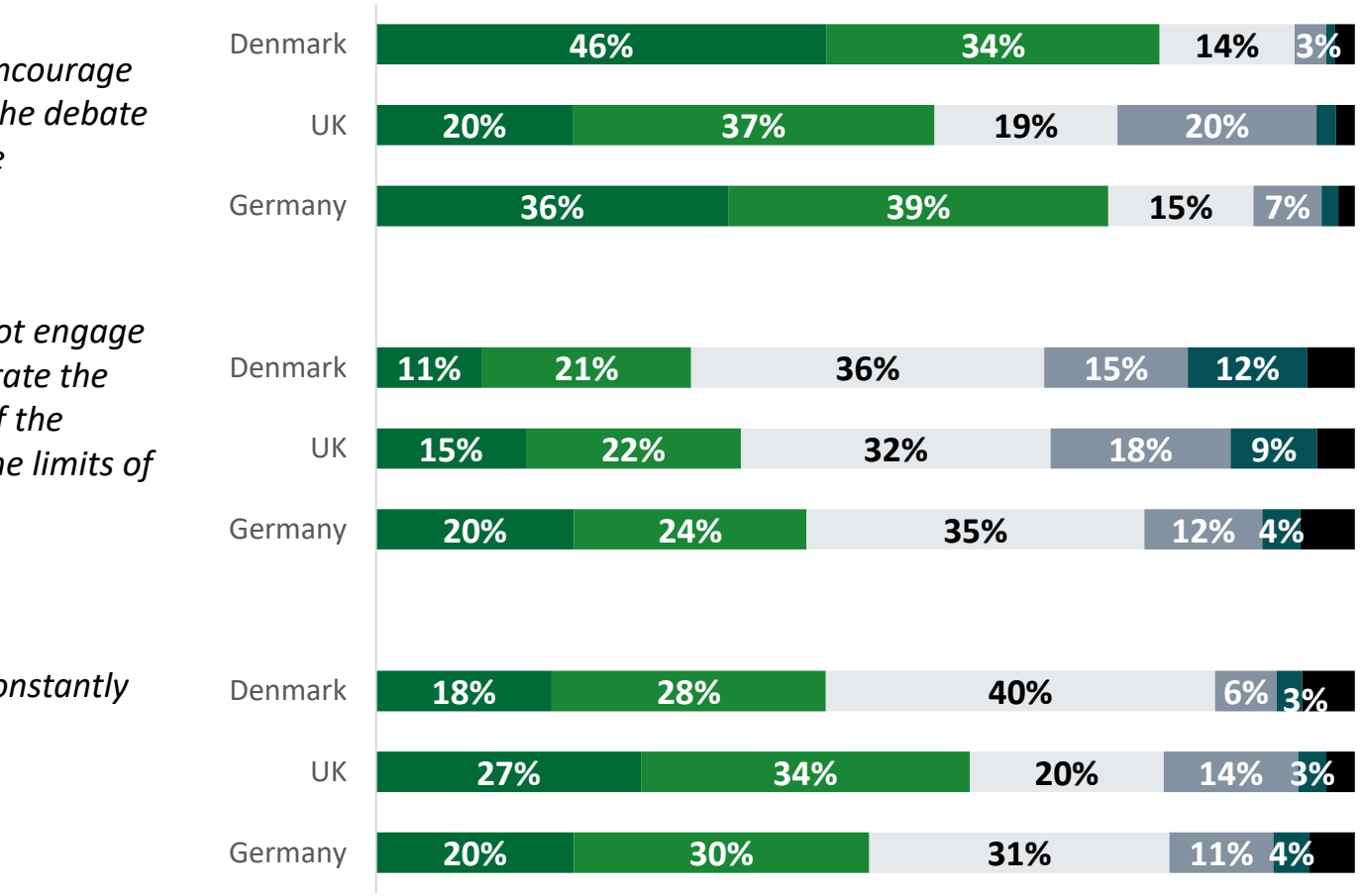


Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statements

Epinion

It is a widespread belief that the media should encourage a sober tone – more than half of both German and British people also think that the media should have a moderator of the debate at all times

To what extent do you think that…

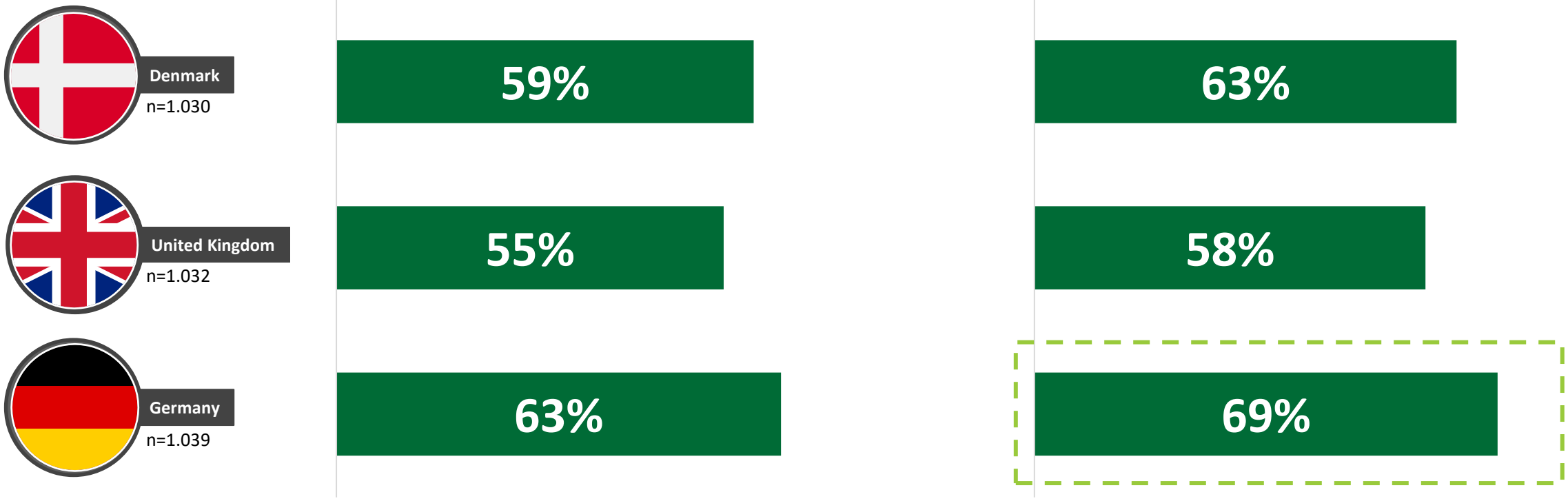


Moderation of the public debate can take many forms and can be done to different extends. In any cases over half of the population in each country, even more pronounced in Denmark and Germany, have the opinion that the media to a very high or high degree should encourage a sober tone when participating.

In the same way, over half of the population in each country answer to a very high or high degree to the statement "*The media should constantly have a moderator*". Even though many think a constant moderator is a good idea, around 1 in 3 answers to a very high or high degree that the moderator should not engage in the debate if it lies within the limits of the law.

Epinion

It is a widespread belief that the media should moderate the debate online



Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated 'To a very high degree' or 'To a high degree'

Epinion

The majority in all three countries believe that participants in the public debate who encourages illegal acts in violation of the guidelines should be excluded from the current debate. This is applies significantly more to British poeple when compared to Danish people

A

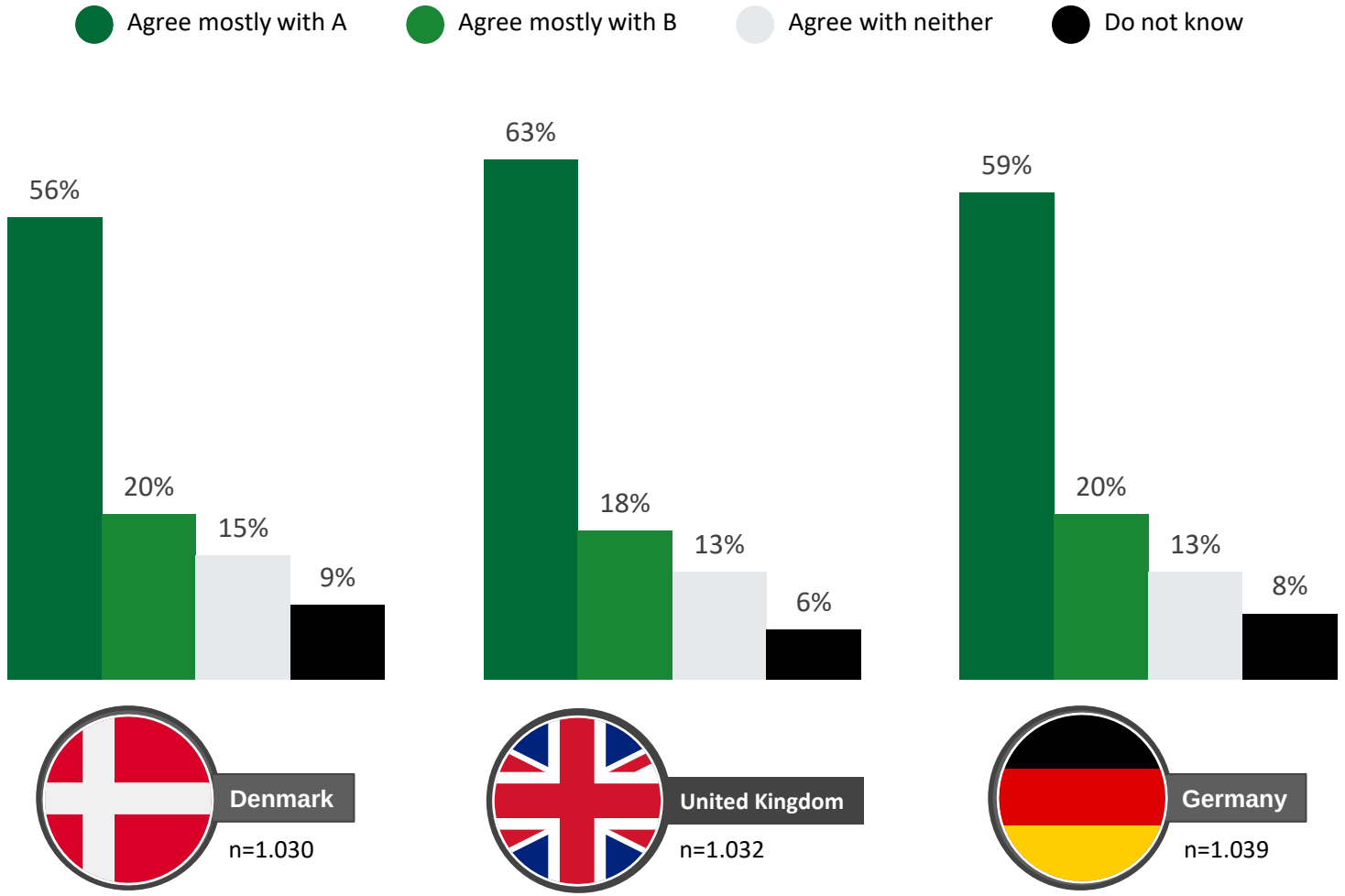
Person A

If a participant in a debate or in the comments encourages to illegal acts in direct violation of the guidelines, the person should be excluded from the current debate.

B

Person B

The media should not censor a participant in a debate or in the comments even though the person encourages to illegal acts or something that is in direct violation of the guidelines.



Epinion

When asked about the media's role in moderating the public debate in general, German and British people place a larger responsibility on the media than Danish people does

A

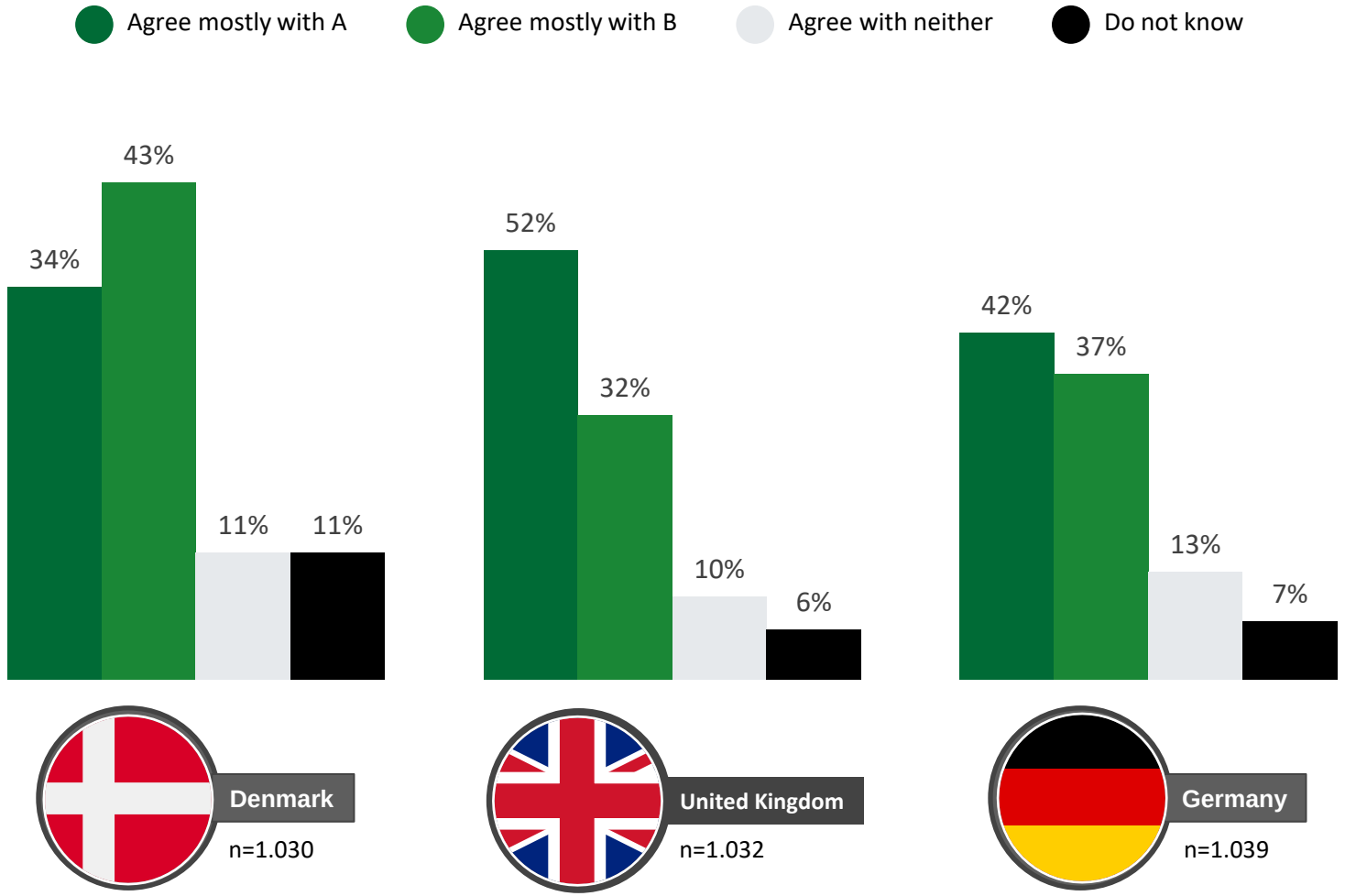
Person A

The media has a responsibility in moderating the public debate to diminish hate, discrimination, and racism by either removing posts or edit, which remarks appear in the comments.

B

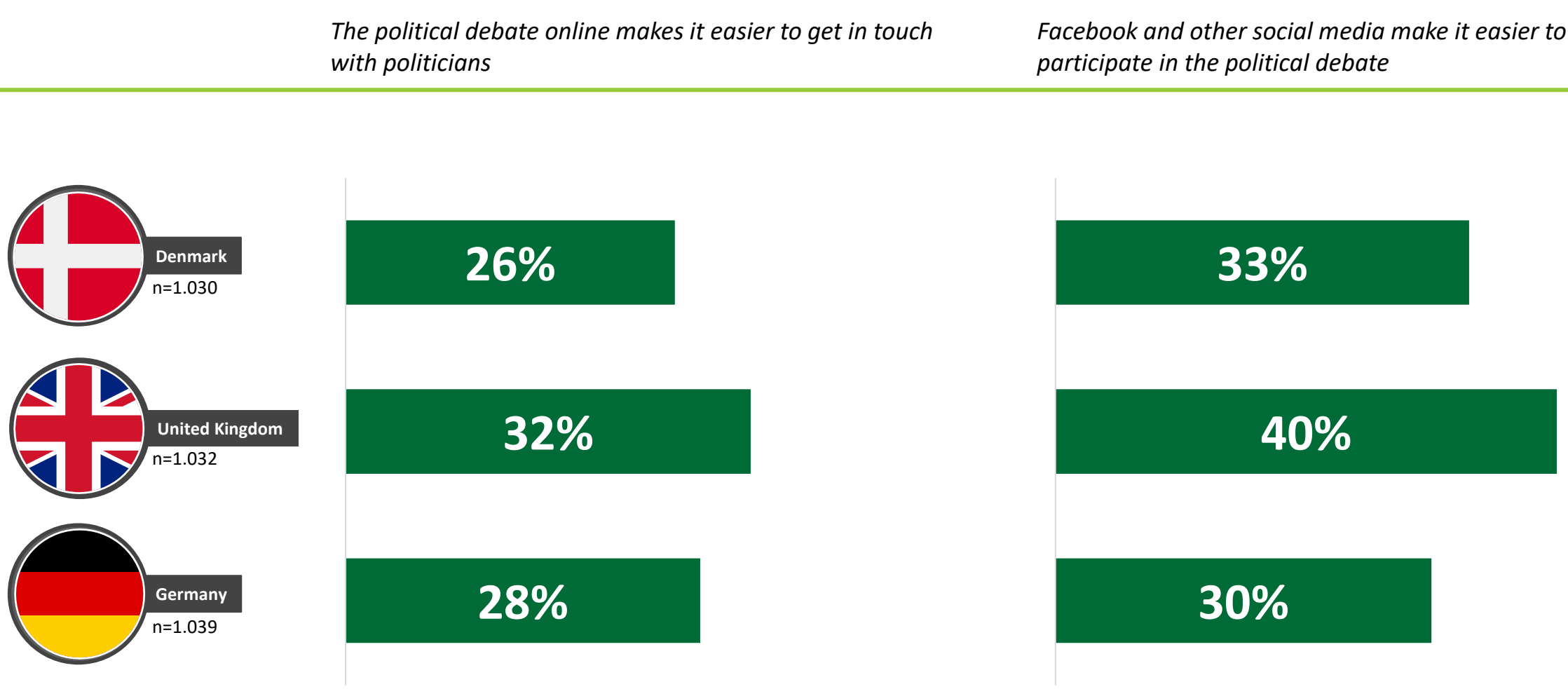
Person B

Moderating the public debate is a restriction of free speech. When you participate in the public debate, one needs to accept opinions and remarks that one disagrees with.



Epinion

In all three countries, more than 1 out of 4 experience that the debate online gives easier access to politicians

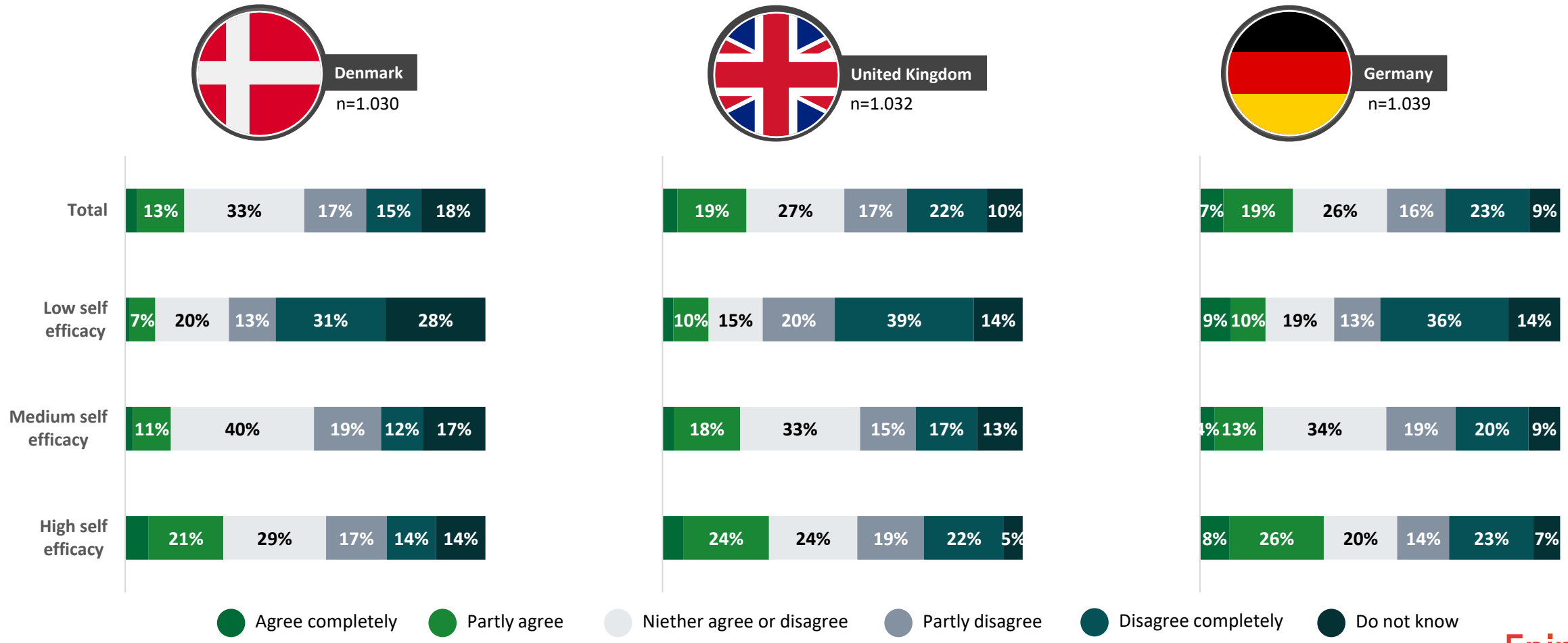


Note: The graphs show the share of the respondents who indicated that they agree completely or partly agree with the statements

Epinion

People with high self efficacy believes to a higher extent that they can influence the political debate by participating in online debates - this is seen across all three countries

I can influence the political debate by participating in the debate online



Note: For definition and explanation on self efficacy, please see page 41

Epinion

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Journalism for tomorrow