



High Court Enforcement  
Officers Association

# Public perception of enforcement in England and Wales





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# Contents

- Objectives
- Methodology
- Results
- Key themes and next steps





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# Objectives





# Objectives

- Ensure the Association and its members have a data driven understanding of how people in England and Wales perceive enforcement and enforcement agents
- Provide some insight into how people view specific issues like enforcement fees and body worn video cameras
- Have current data about public perception of enforcement that can be shared with stakeholders to help inform ongoing conversations about the future
- Obtain quantitative data to set a benchmark to measure and analyse changing perceptions over time





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# Methodology





# Independent implementation



To ensure fully independent results we engaged research company Norstat



Questions and answer options developed collaboratively



We talked specifically about enforcement *where people and businesses are owed money*



We used the terms “enforcement agent” and “bailiff”

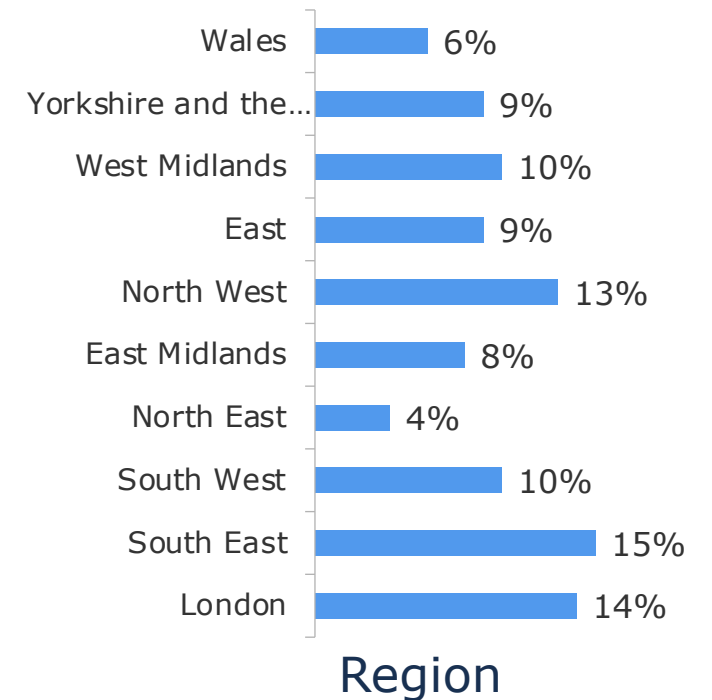
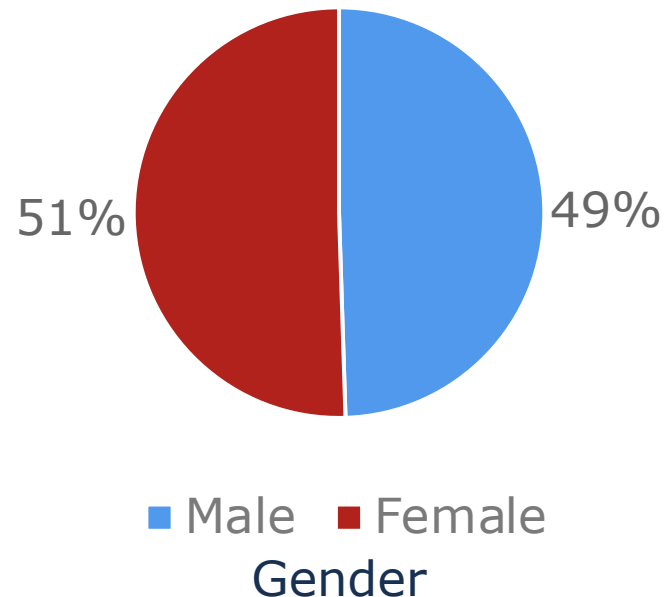
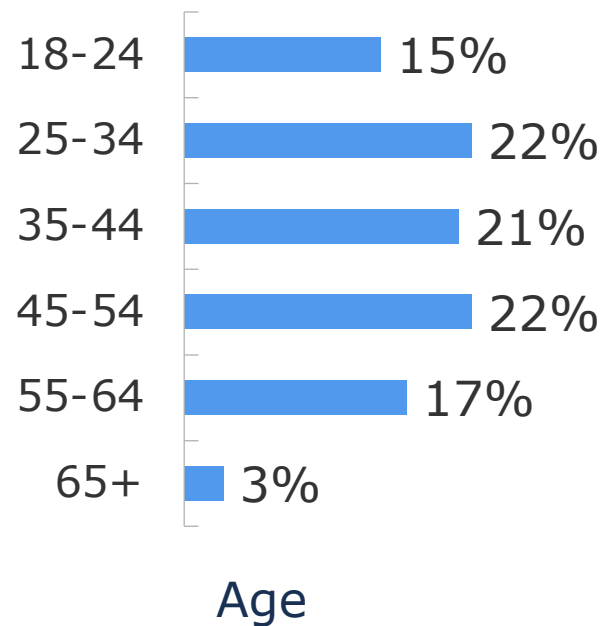


The eight question survey was sent out to Norstat’s independent panel by email and completed online between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024.



# 2,000 respondents from across England and Wales

- Nationally representative sample
- There were no major variations in results according to age, gender or location.





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# Results

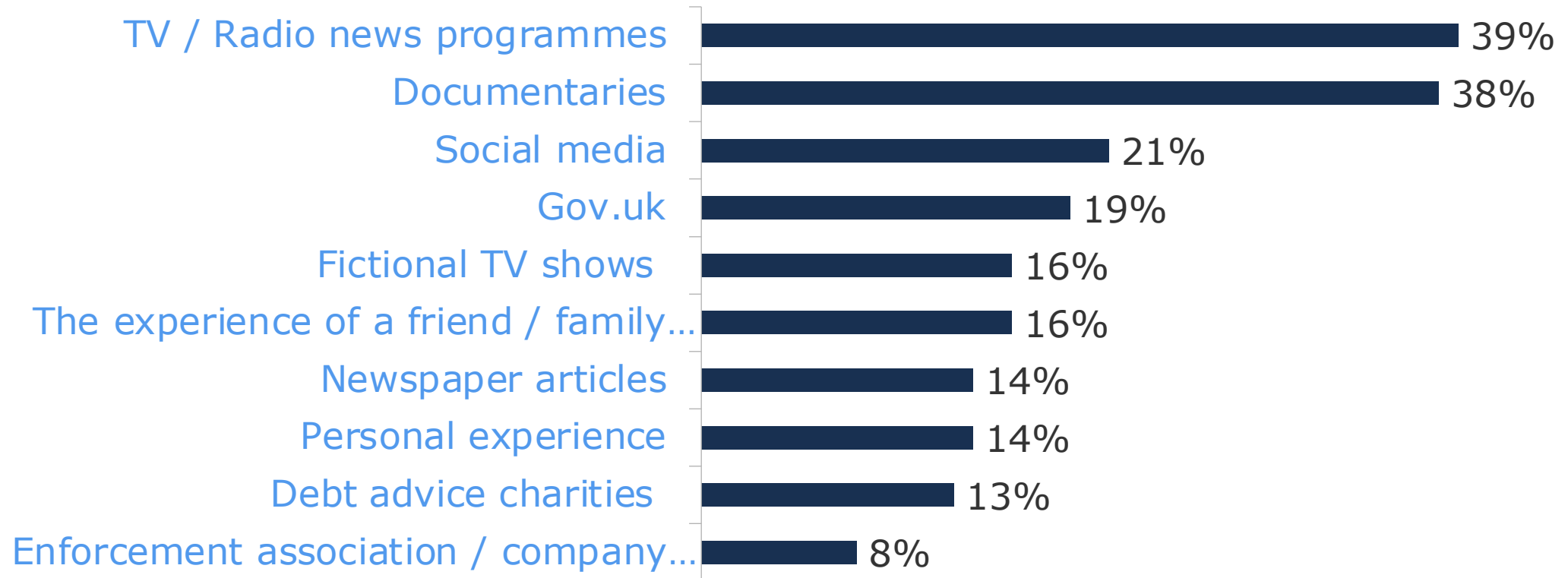






# Sources of information

Broadcast news and documentaries are most common sources of info



**Q.** Thinking about the information you know about enforcement agents (bailiffs) where did you learn about it?



# Three key themes

## Theme 1

strong support for 'fair and effective' enforcement

## Theme 2

the public expects an enforcement system that recognises and supports vulnerable people and is fair to everyone involved

## Theme 3

most people expressed confidence in the system and enforcement agents, but there is room for improvement





# Three key themes

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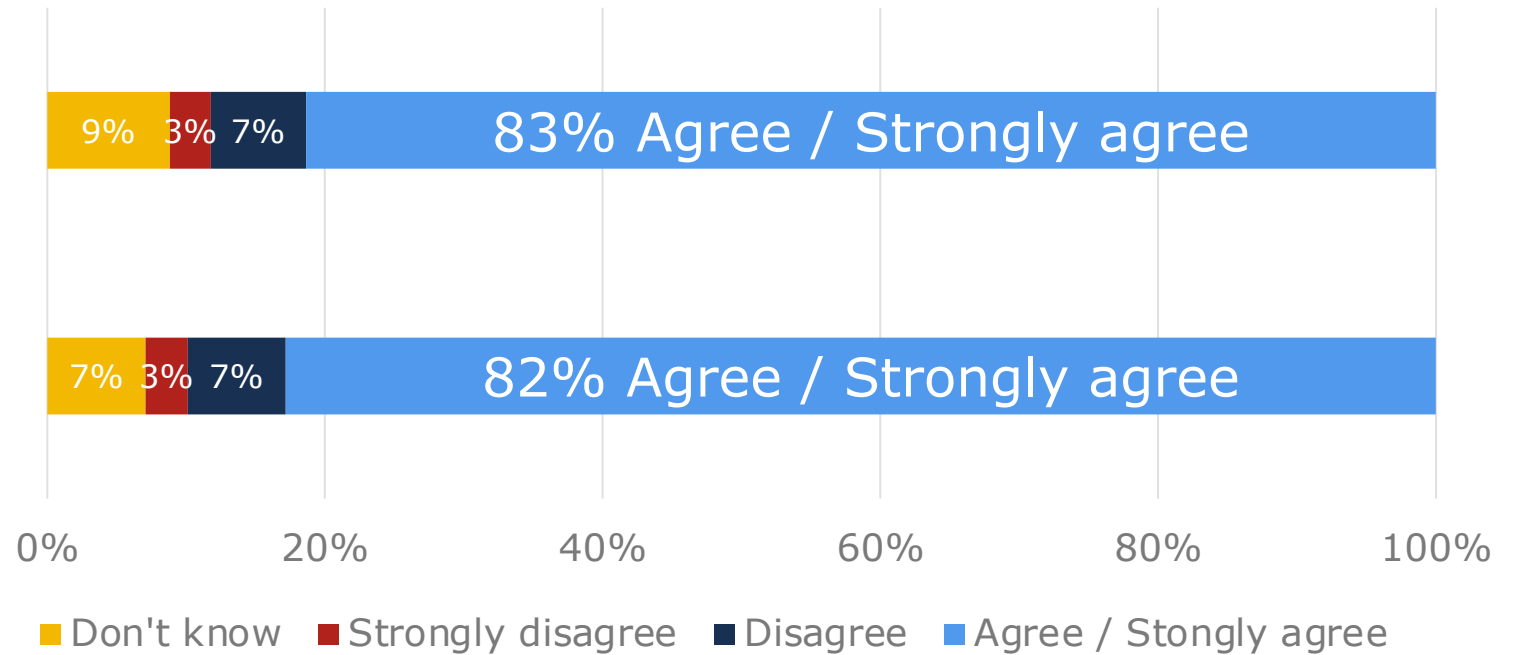




# Strong support for 'fair and effective' enforcement

Enforcement is a necessary part of the justice system

Enforcement provides an important service for people and businesses to recover debts when people don't pay

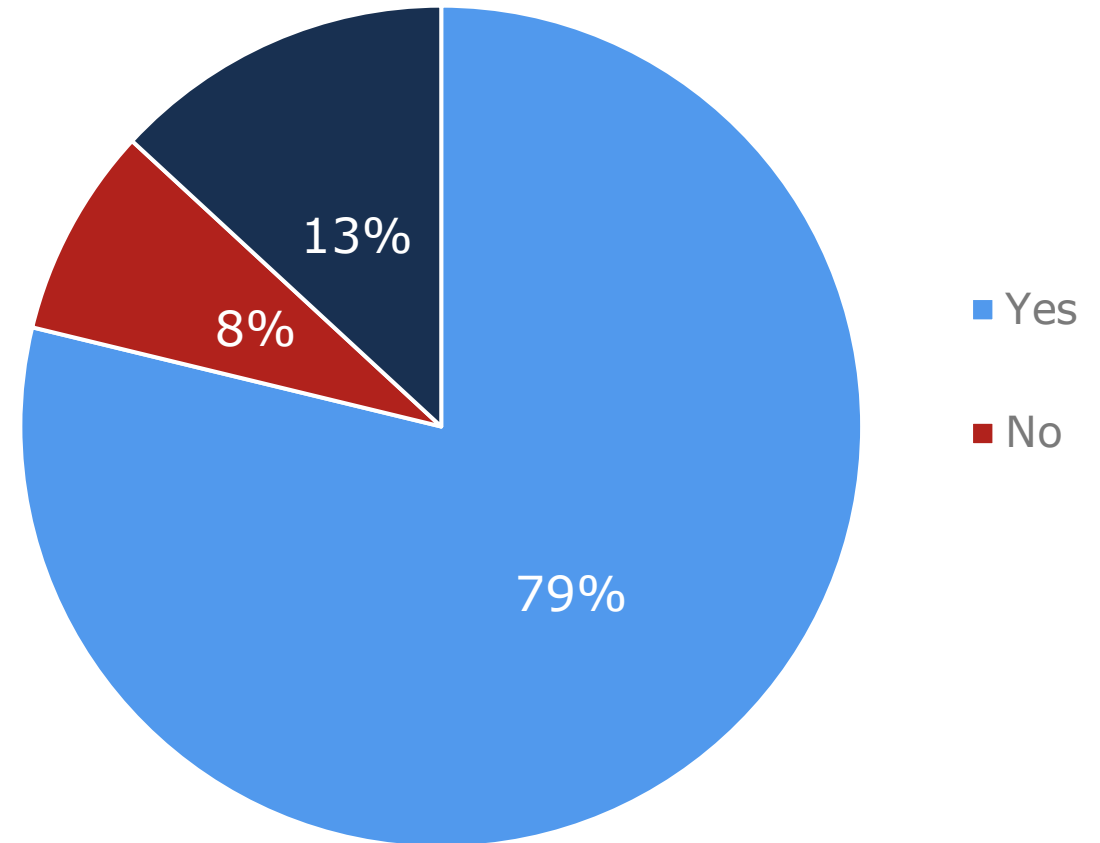




# Strong support for a regulated enforcement system

**Q.** Should people and businesses who are owed money be able to use a regulated enforcement system to legally and responsibly recover debt from those who haven't paid?

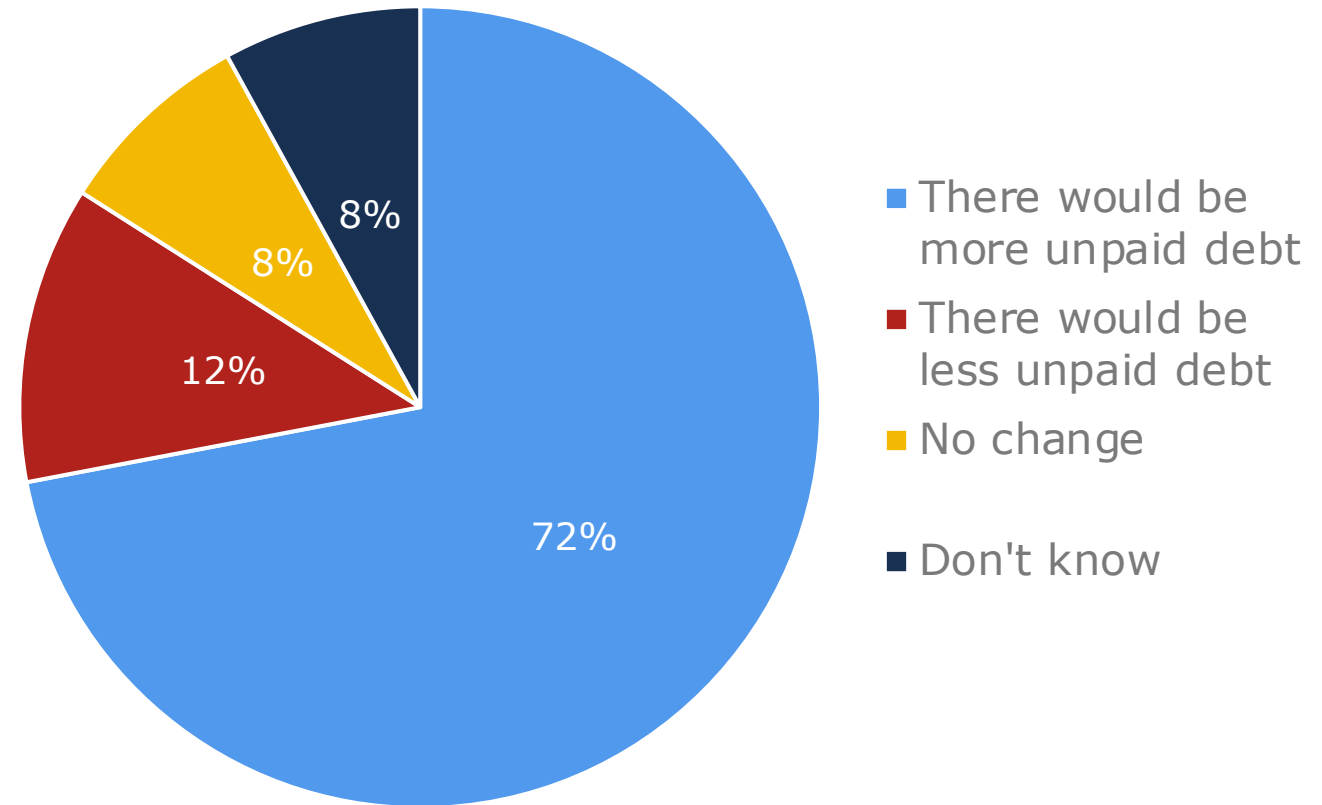
Almost 80% of respondents said that people and businesses who are owed money should be able to use a regulated enforcement system to recover debt from those who haven't paid.





**Q.** If people and businesses couldn't use enforcement agents or bailiffs to collect money owed to them, what do you think would happen?

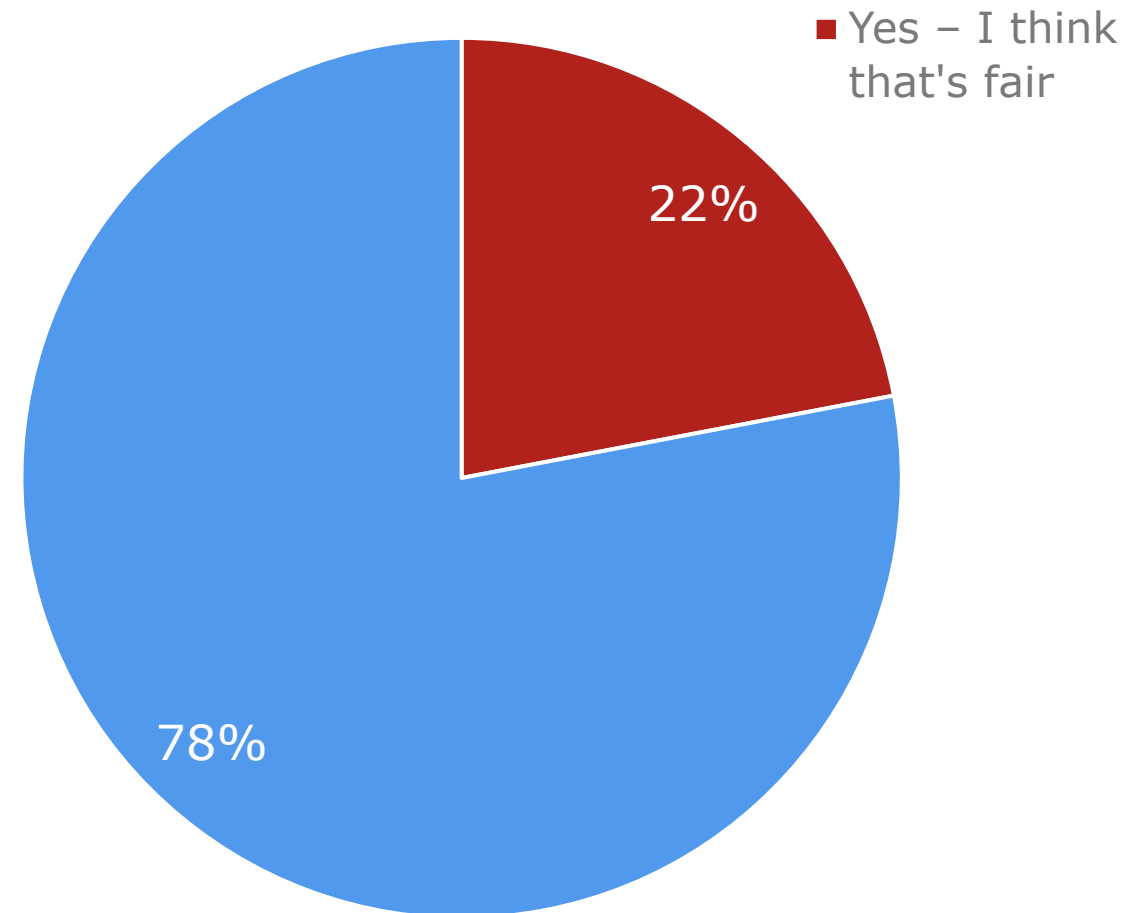
72% of respondents believe that unpaid debt would increase if individuals and businesses were unable to instruct enforcement agents or bailiffs to undertake debt collection





**Q.** If a business needs to increase the prices of its goods or services to cover the cost of people not paying, do you think it is fair that some people have to pay more whilst others don't pay?

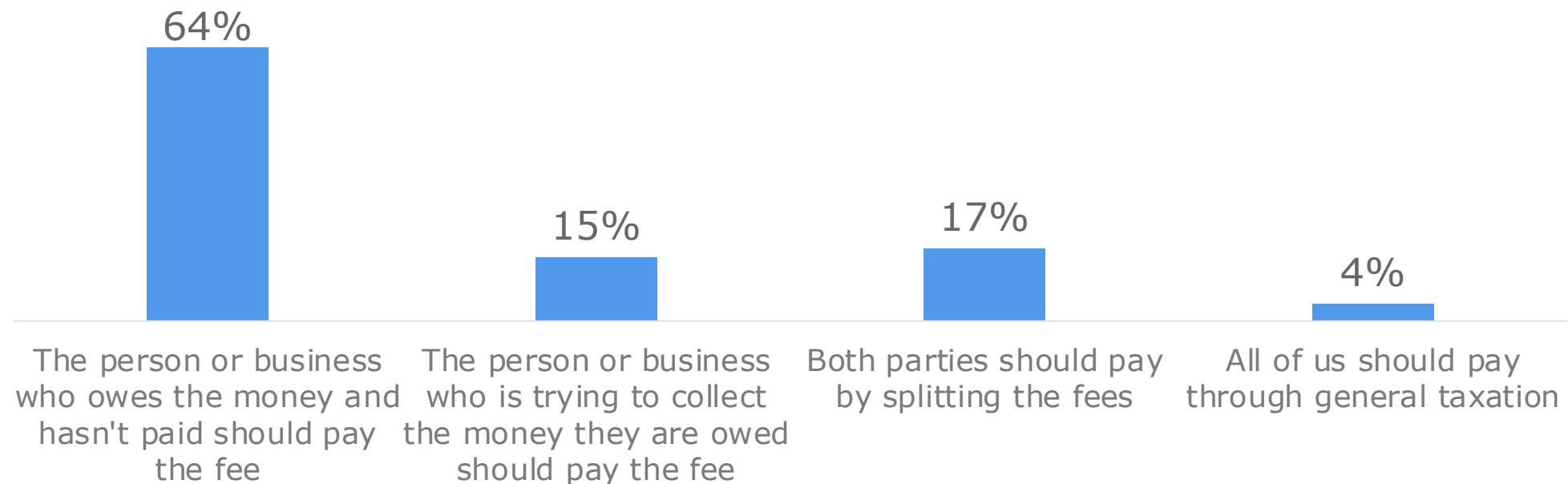
Almost 80% of respondents think is unfair that people who do pay have to pay more for goods and services to cover the extra costs incurred by some people not paying





# A large majority believe the debtor should pay the enforcement fee

- 64% said the debtor should be solely responsible for paying the fee
- Just 4% said the costs should be paid for through general taxation







# Impact on property rental market

A majority of respondents believe that without an enforcement system there would be more people living in properties illegally or without paying rent

It would be harder for landlords to remove people who haven't paid their rent or are living in a property illegally



There would be an increase in the number of people renting who didn't pay their rent



Less people would want to be landlords



People would pay more rent as prices would go up



Most people renting a property would still pay on time and follow the law



People would pay less rent as prices would go down



More people would want to be landlords

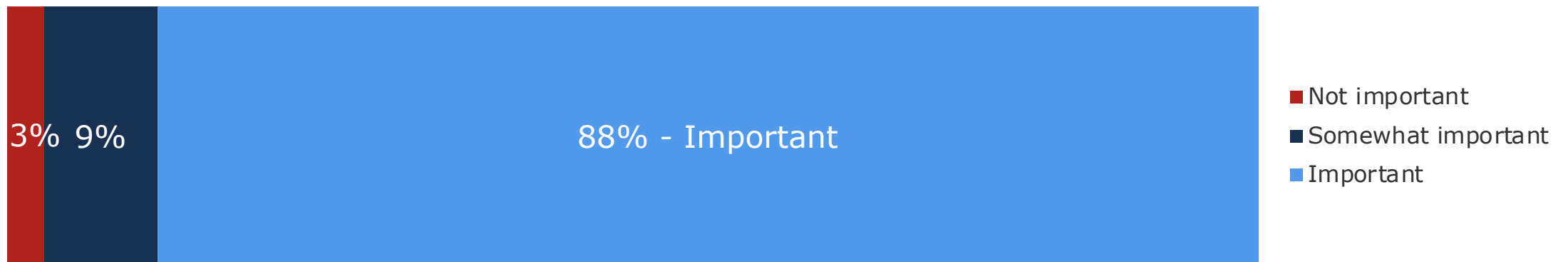


**Q.** What do you think would happen if landlords weren't able to use a legal enforcement system to remove people illegally living in their properties?



# BWV is popular with the majority of respondents

- 88% think it's important that all enforcement agents should use body worn video cameras



**Q.** Please state how important you think the below are to ensure we have an enforcement system that is fair to everyone involved: All enforcement agents (bailiffs) should wear body worn cameras.



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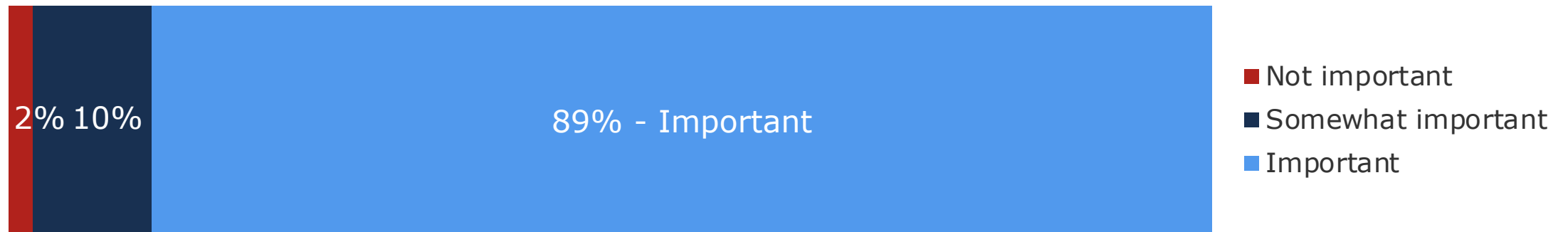
most people expressed confidence in the system and enforcement agents, but there is room for improvement





The public expects an enforcement system that recognises and supports vulnerable people and is fair to everyone involved:

- 89% think it's important that repayment plans are offered to debtors who can't afford to pay their debts

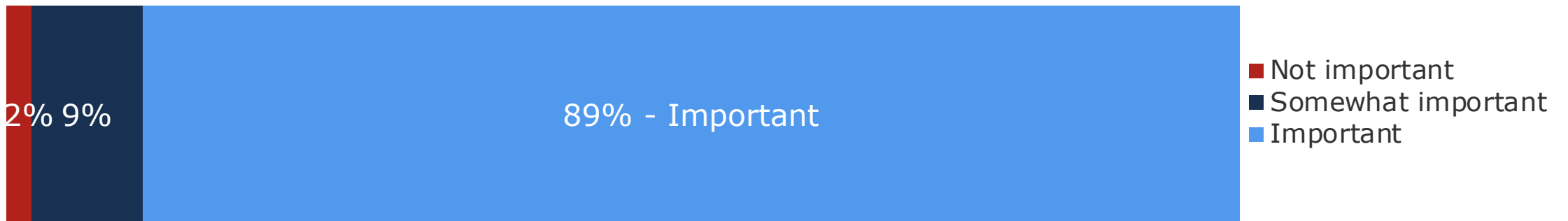


**Q.** Please state how important you think the below are to ensure we have an enforcement system that is fair to everyone involved: Repayment plans should be offered to all debtors who can't pay their debts.



The public expects an enforcement system that recognises and supports vulnerable people and is fair to everyone involved:

- 89% think it's important that there are clear rules and regulations in place to protect vulnerable people

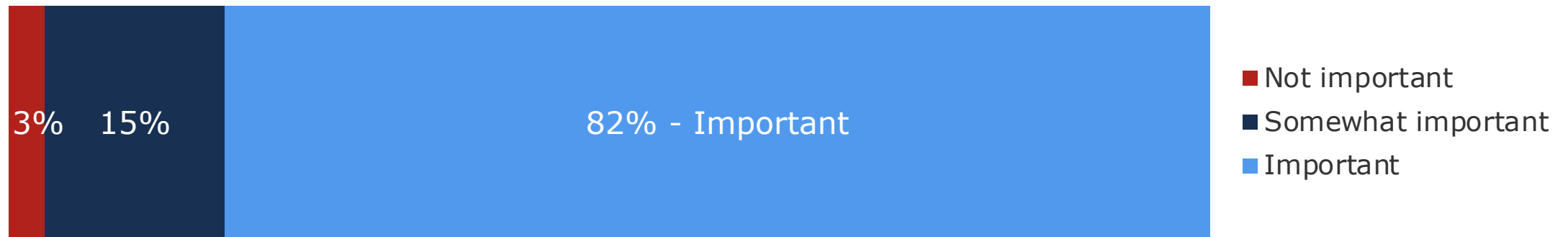


**Q.** Please state how important you think the below are to ensure we have an enforcement system that is fair to everyone involved: There are clear rules and regulations in place to support vulnerable people.



And a similar majority think it is important that creditors should receive the full amount they are owed

- 82% think it's important that the person or business owed money should receive the full amount on their court order



**Q.** Please state how important you think the below are to ensure we have an enforcement system that is fair to everyone involved: The person or business owed money should receive the full amount outstanding on their court order.



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# The majority (58%) of the public understand there is a set fee structure

However, 42% of respondents either disagreed with the statement “there are strict rules in place that cover the fees enforcement agents can charge” or said they didn’t know whether these rules and regulations existed.

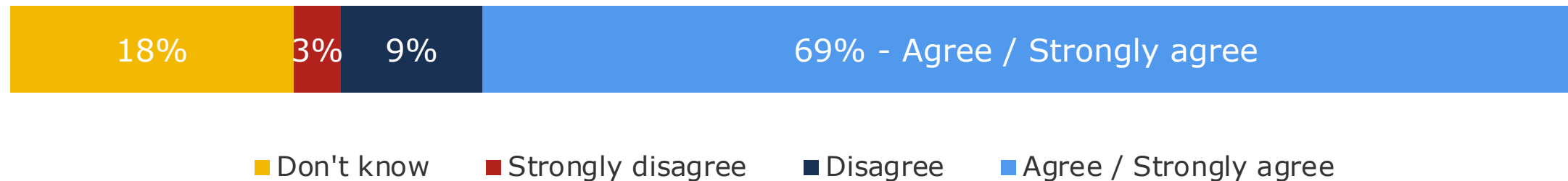






# 69% of the public agree there are rules and regulations in place around how agents operate

30% of respondents either disagreed with the statement “there are strict rules in place to govern the actions of enforcement agents” or said they didn’t know whether these rules and regulations existed





# 61% trust enforcement agents to follow the law

The majority of the public trust enforcement agents to follow the law but there is opportunity to improve this % as 39% don't know or disagree.

- 61% of respondents agreed with "I trust enforcement agents to follow the law as they carry out their work"
- 25% of respondents disagreed – effectively saying they don't trust enforcement agents (bailiffs) to follow the law
- 14% said they didn't know



■ Don't know  
■ Disagree

■ Strongly disagree  
■ Agree / Strongly agree

**Q.** Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements: I trust enforcement agents (bailiffs) to follow the law as they carry out their work

A decorative border surrounds the central text, composed of various geometric shapes including squares, circles, and semi-circles. The colors used are blue, red, yellow, dark blue, and black, arranged in a repeating pattern.

# Public perception of enforcement in England and Wales

May 2024