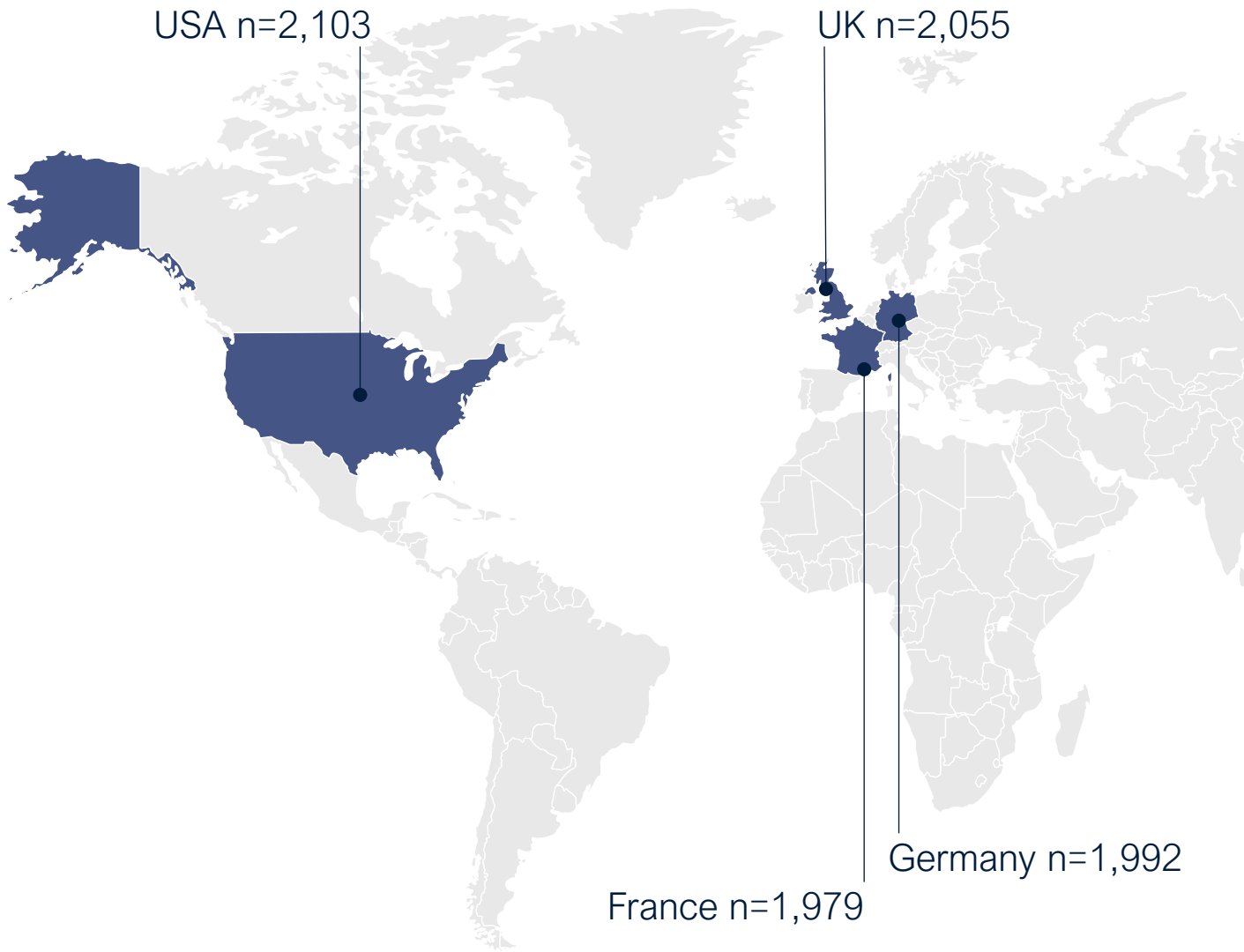
Ramifications of Rearmament

Building support for a defence-based industrial strategy

PUBLIC FIRST STONEHAVEN

Rearmament ramifications poll



We have produced this research analysis to help policy makers, corporations, trade bodies, financial services and the range of other institutions who will need to understand the instability and conflicts in public support for a defence-based industrial strategy in Europe.

We uncover:

1. Despite war in Europe, the European public do not prioritise defence spending increases, in a forced prioritisation exercise.
2. The defence sector's value proposition has eroded, according to the future talent it requires.
3. The reputational agenda for defence primes should revolve around better paid jobs, dispelling the myth that Europe has 'also-ran' defence contractors and creating innovation-based supply chains that help the taxpayer get more for less.
4. A segment of the European and US public remain opposed to the defence sector, despite deep worries about their own security, which creates a clear audience for communications in the years ahead, to bring long term funding and political stability to defence industrial strategy.
5. There is a correlation between the 'Trump Effect' and demands for European sovereign capability, both in manufacturing and joint military capabilities.

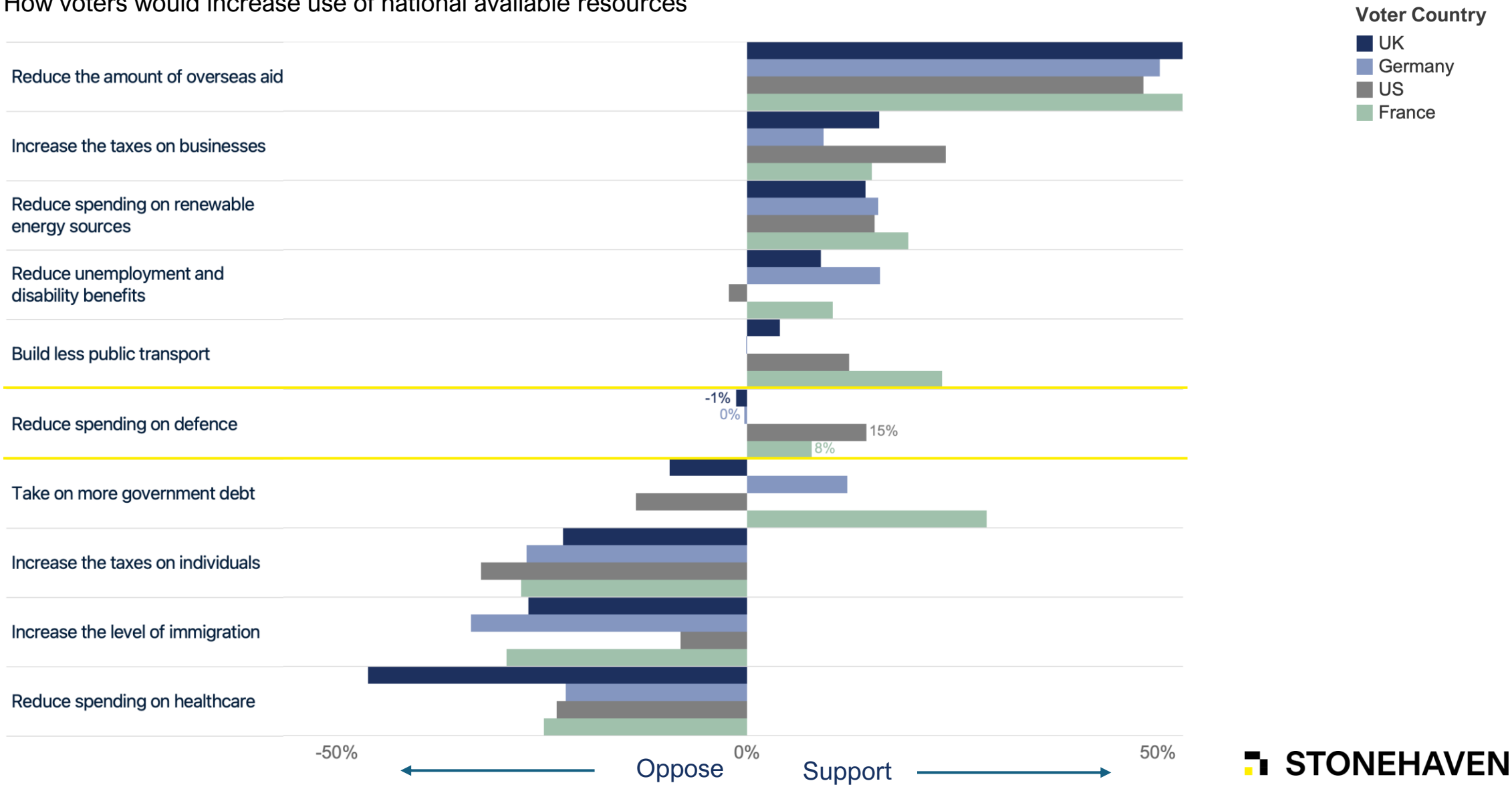
March '25

Fieldwork conducted 3rd – 10th March 2025

PUBLIC FIRST STONEHAVEN

In a trade-off world, voters do not choose increased defence spending. In France and the USA, they would cut it.

How voters would increase use of national available resources

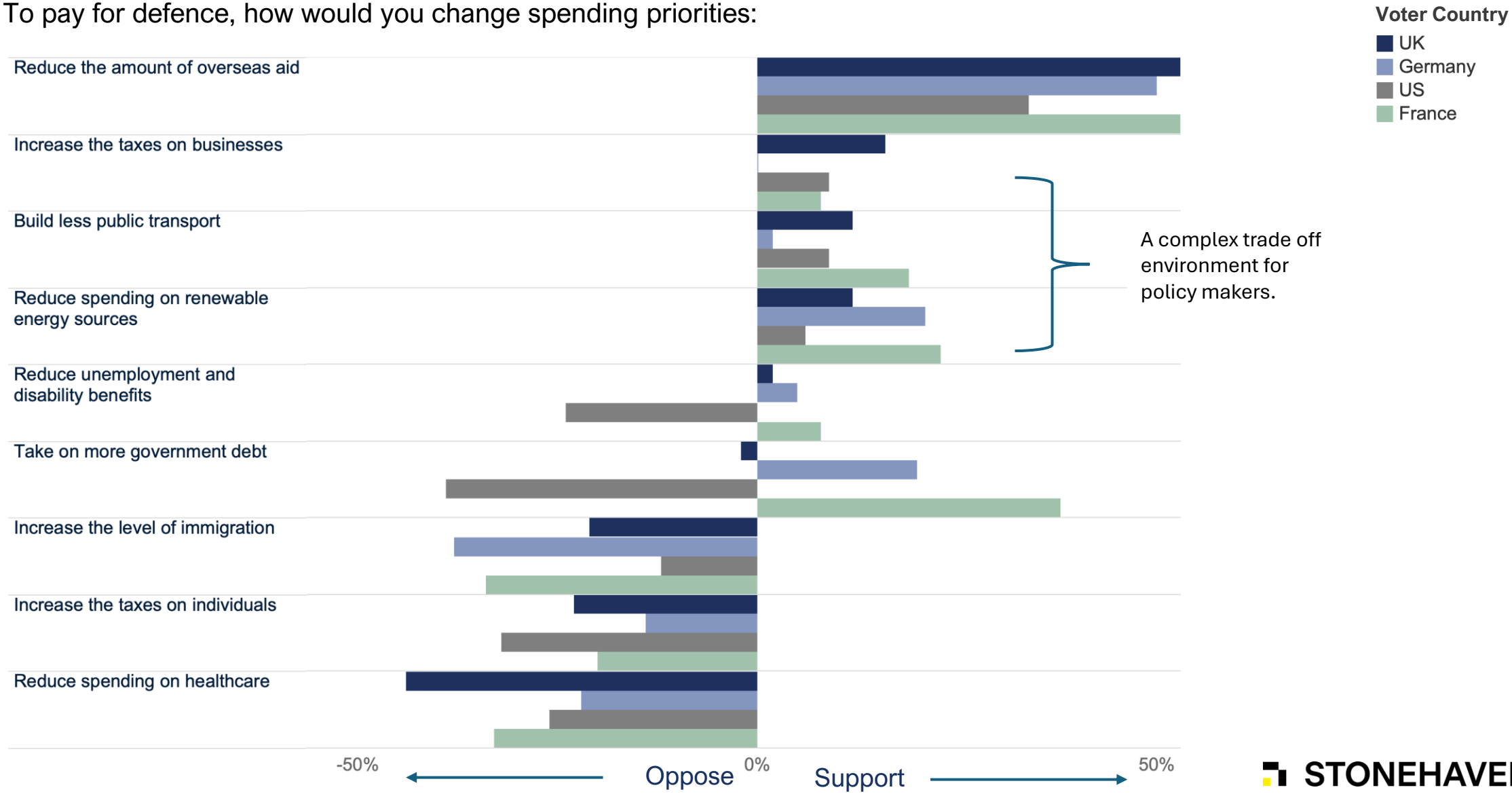


March '25

STONEHAVEN

In a forced trade-off where defence spending is mandated, voters want to see it funded by reducing aid, energy and transport investment.

To pay for defence, how would you change spending priorities:



March '25

STONEHAVEN

Is a defence-based industrial strategy politically stable?

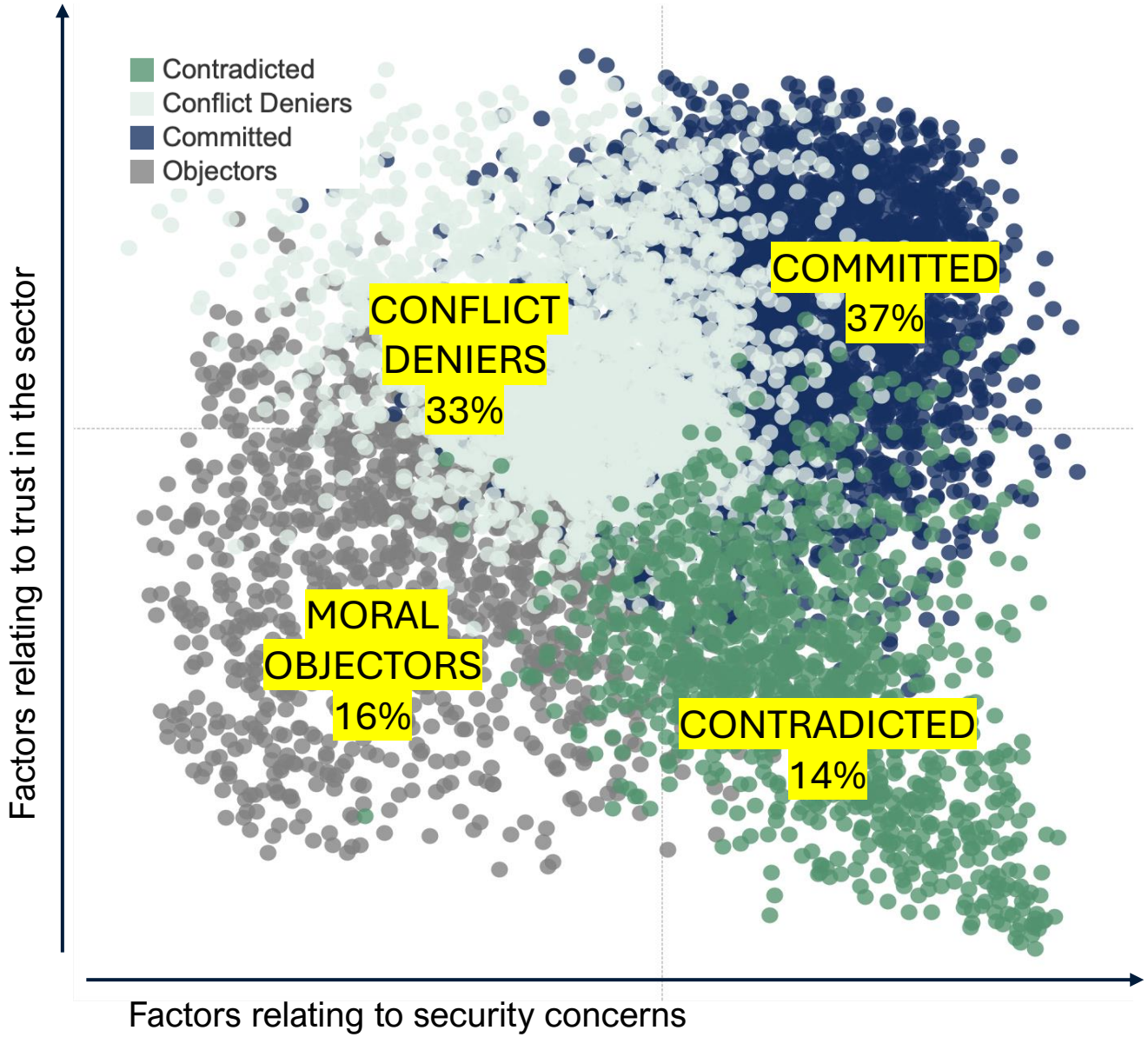
The audiences who matter in the long term to the sector's license to operate and invest

March '25

STONEHAVEN

Western countries surveyed divide into 4 segments, based on the key factors driving underlying sentiment

ALL VOTER SEGMENTATION, ALL COUNTRIES



The Trust Segmentation for Defence Industrial Strategy

Conflict Deniers
Support the defence sector somewhat, yet do not see spending as a priority. An important segment for governments that are changing industrial strategy "from green to grey."

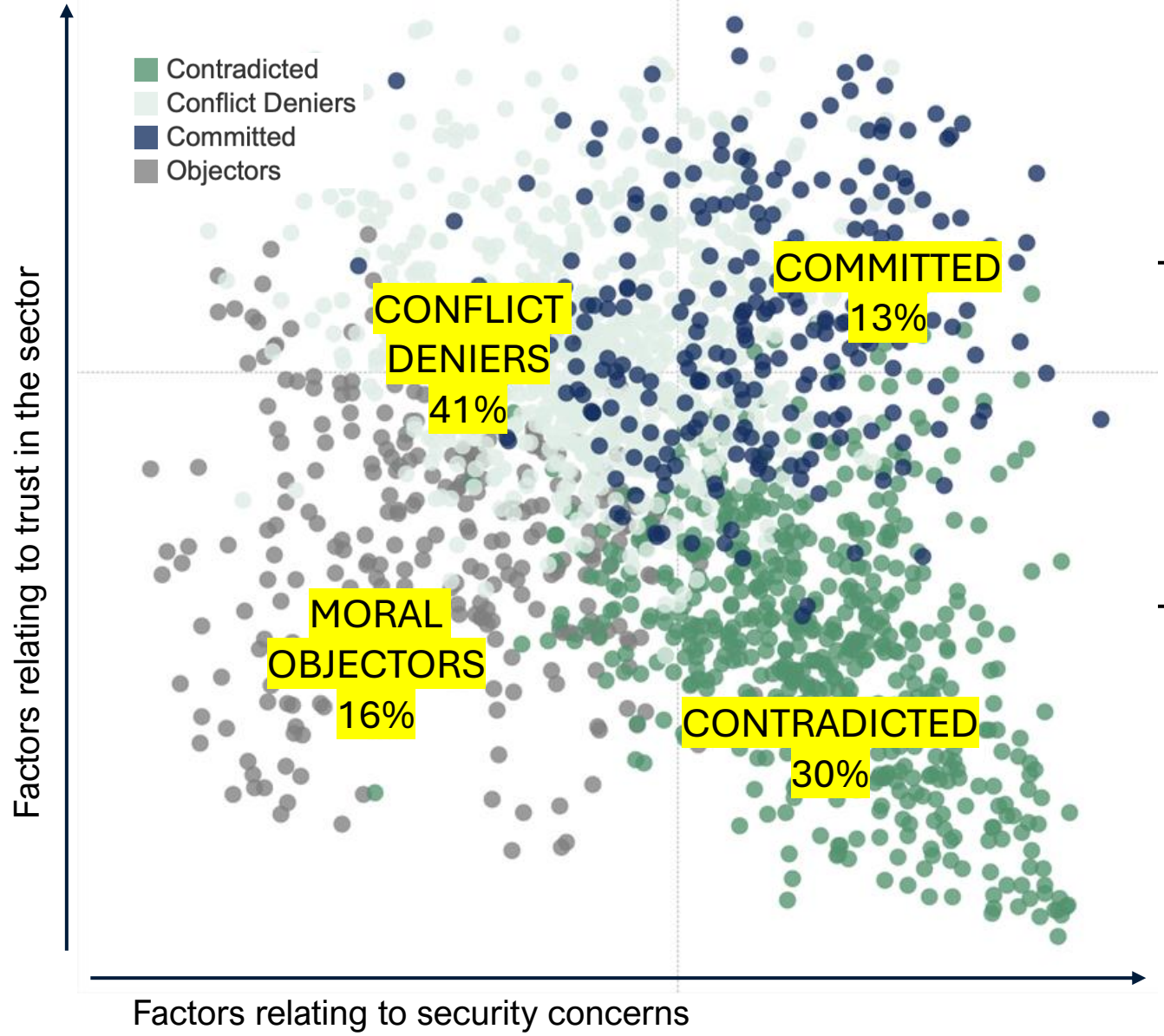
Moral Objectors
Do not want more spending, don't agree conflict is coming and dislike the defence industrial base.

Committed
Support the need to rearm, worried about conflict and willing to work for, champion and see the benefits of a defence industrial base.

Contradicted
Worry about security (particularly cyber), yet are often extremely negative about the motives and social stigma attached to the defence sector. A key segment for reputation stability.

Today's talent pipeline: Young people are **not** moral objectors to rearmament and security - they are specifically concerned about the defence sector.

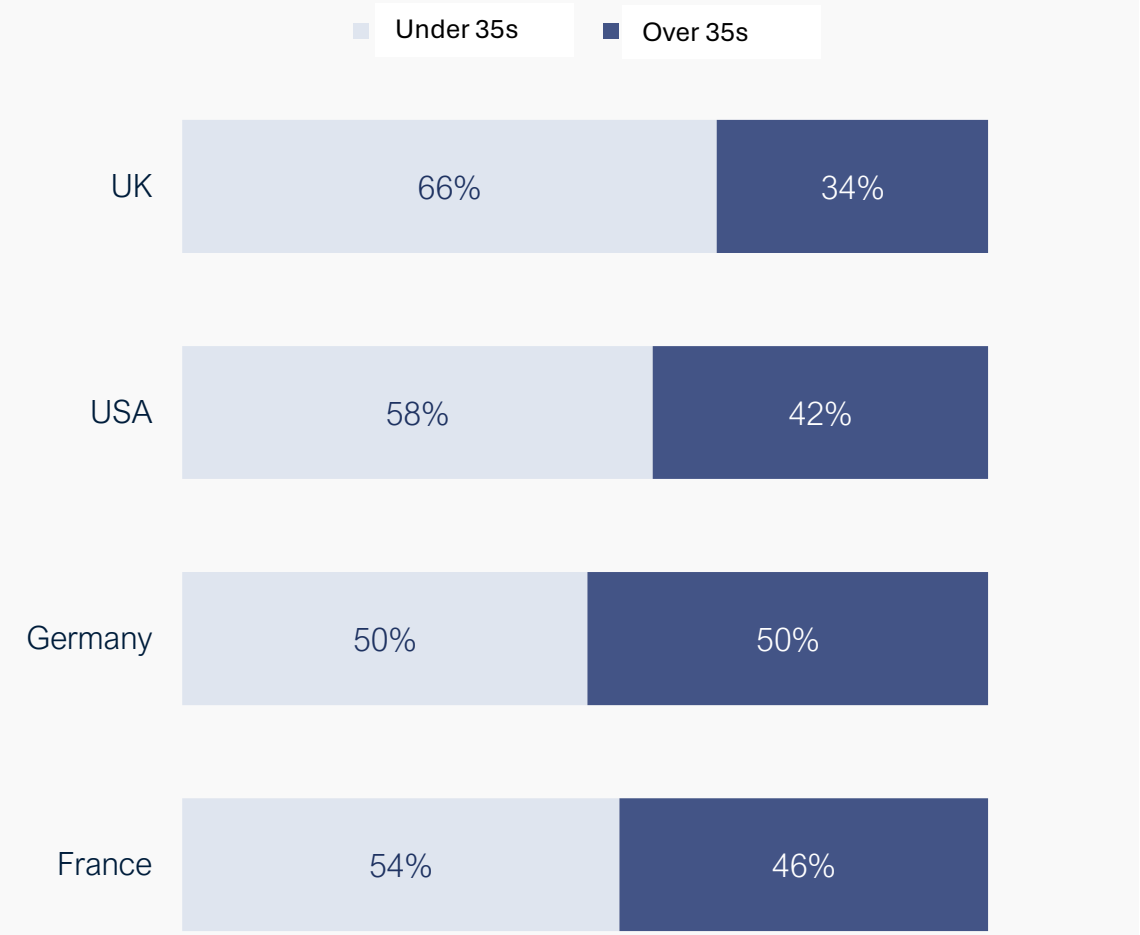
UNDER 25s ONLY

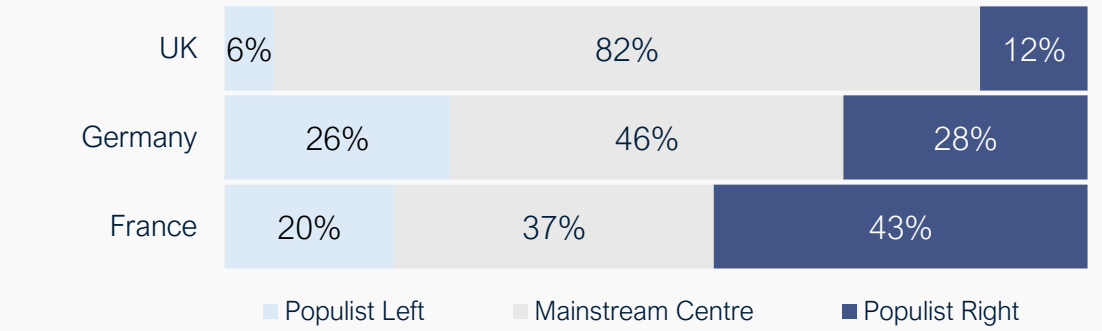


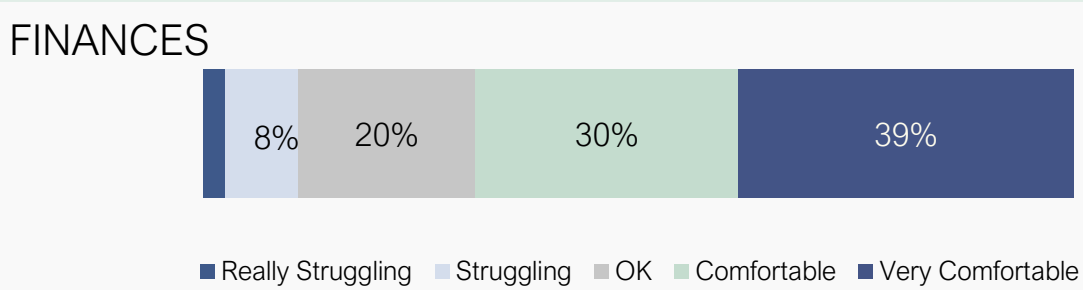
Young people are more likely to move to the "contradicted" segment than to become moral objectors.

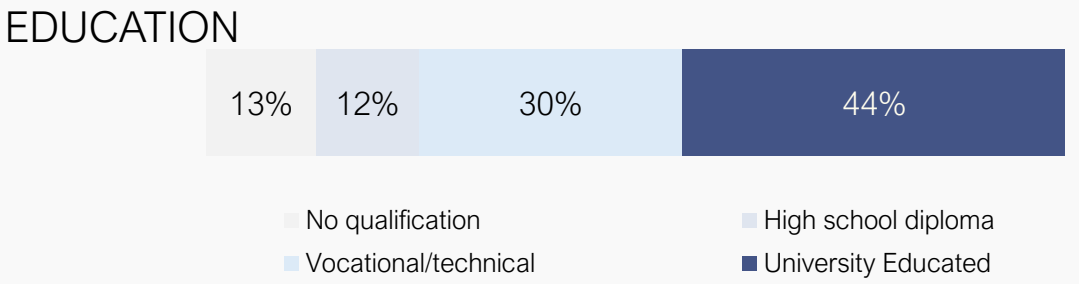
STONEHAVEN

The Contradicted: Overwhelmingly young, educated and well paid; likely to work in finance, consulting, tech and professional services.





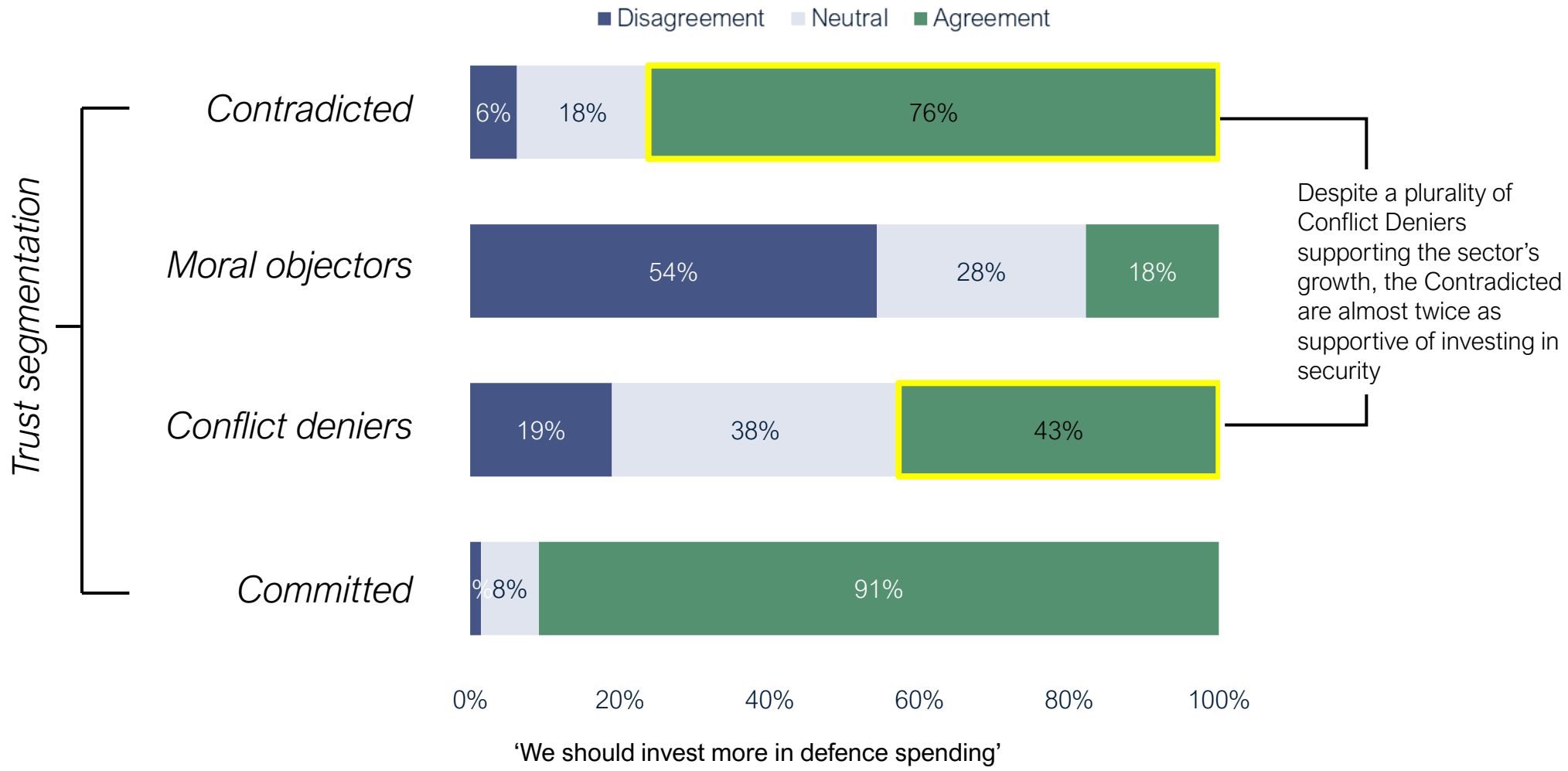




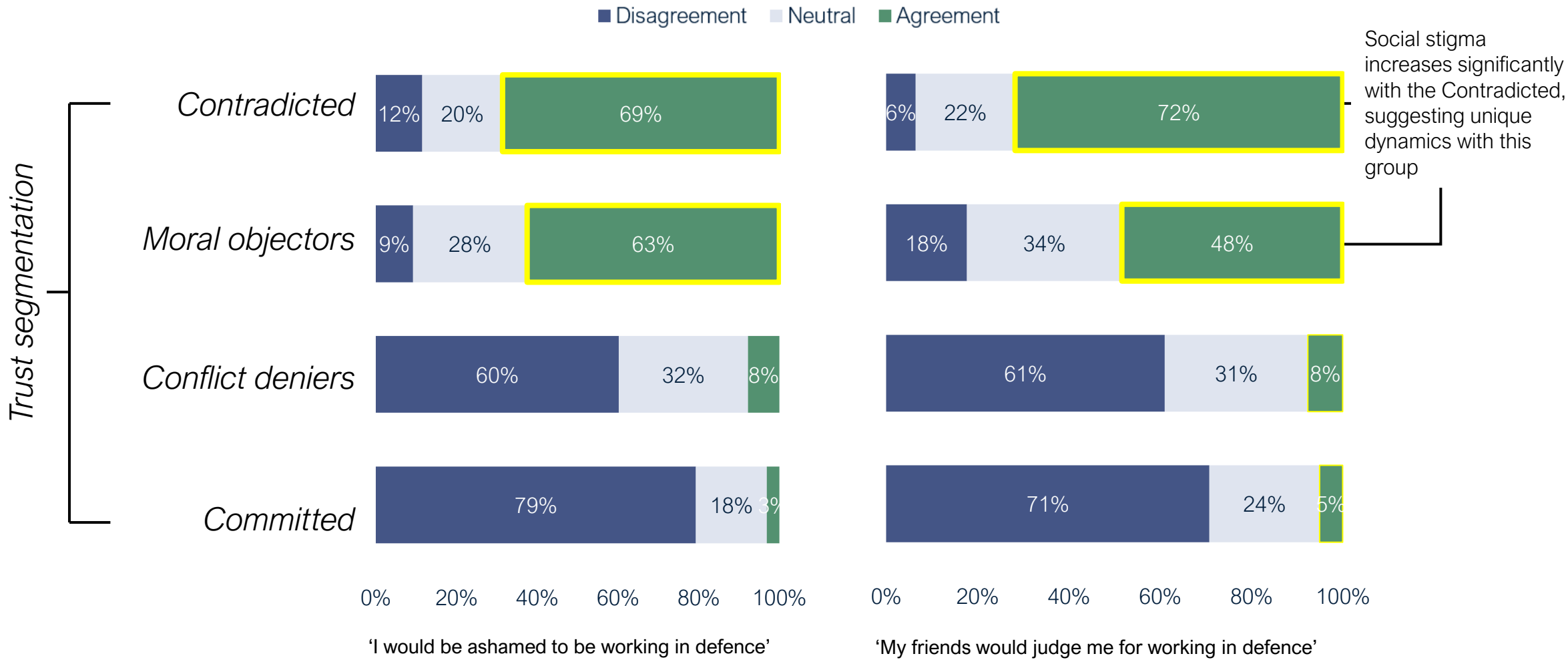
March '25

STONEHAVEN

The Contradicted: agree the world is dangerous and want to see more defence industrial investment – more than most other segments.



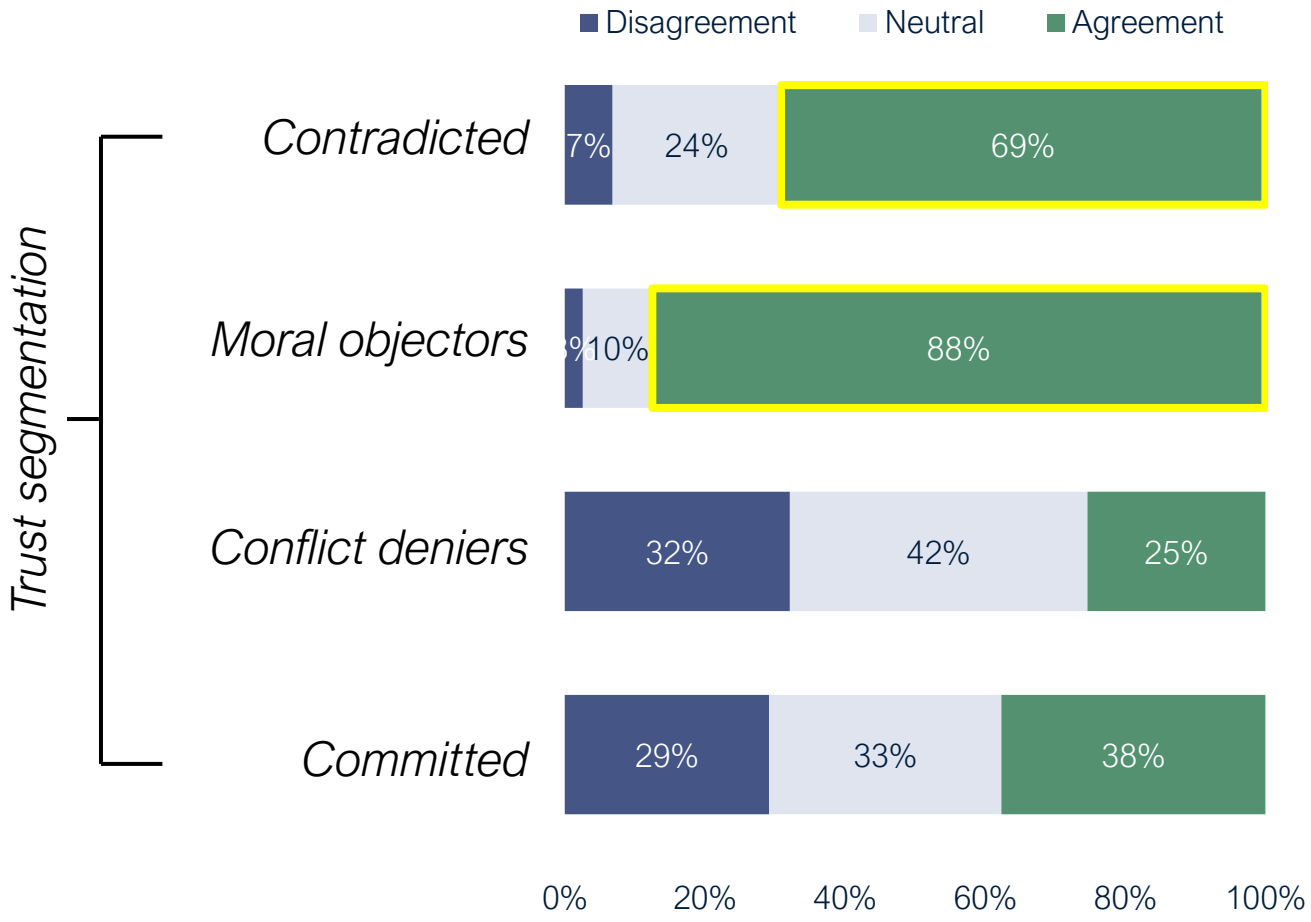
The Contradicted: But, they are more opposed to participating personally in a defence industrial strategy than any of the other segments.



March '25

STONEHAVEN

Why is this? Lack of clear purpose or narrative for the sector (which needs to be shaped by Governments and Primes) & an eroded employee value proposition?



'The defence industry profits from destruction'

The sector's historic employee value proposition has become eroded for todays' talent pipeline.

Respondents in different age groups believe a job in the defence sector is….

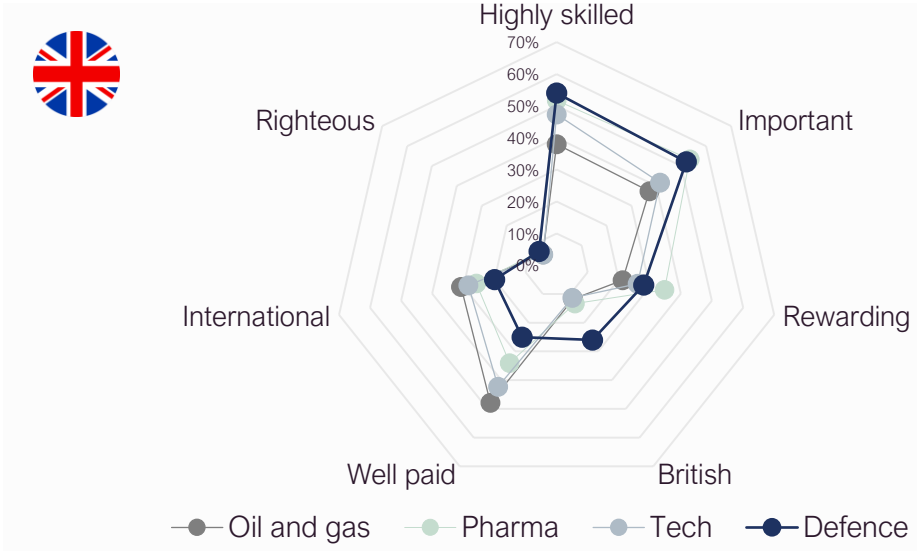


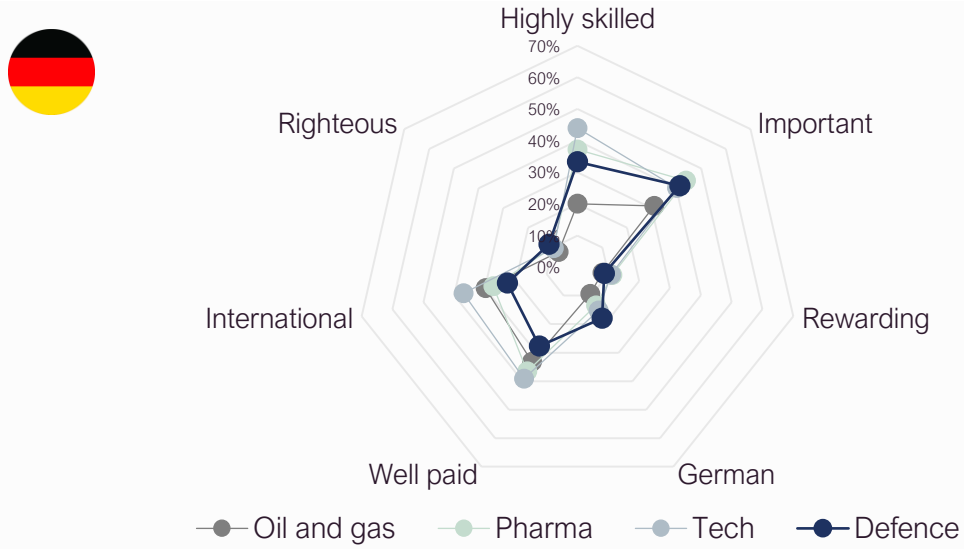


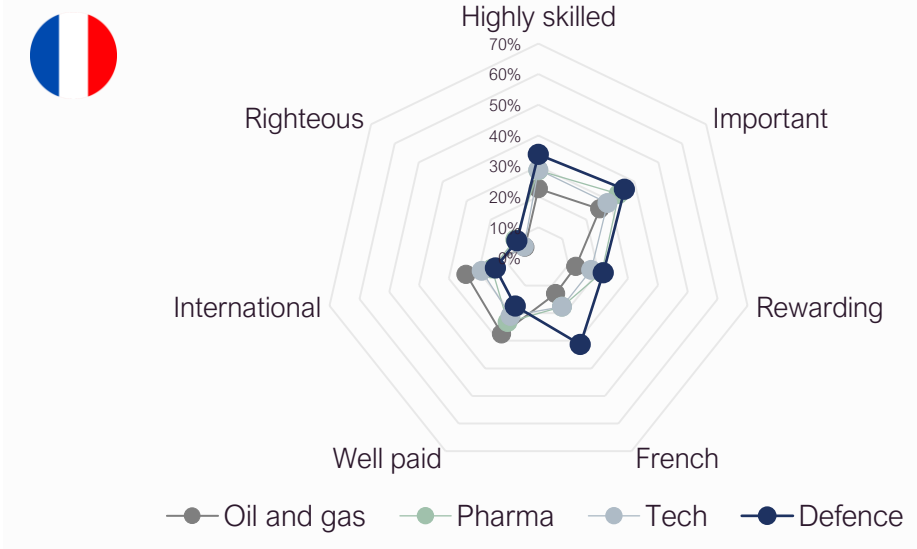
STONEHAVEN

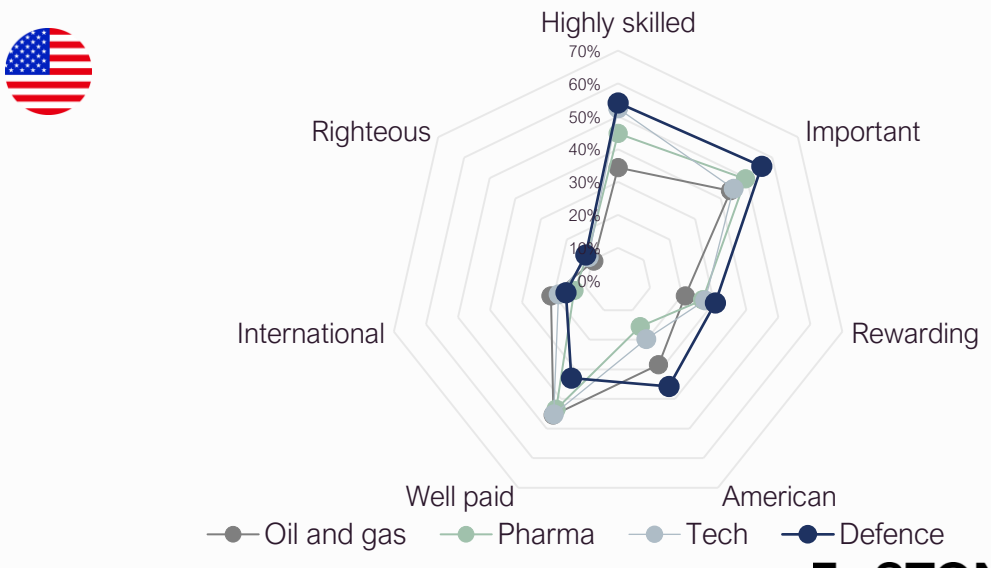
Voters may also think a defence-based industrial strategy means governments are backing lower paid jobs - rather than higher paid jobs in other sectors

Respondents in different countries believe a job in the defence sector is….







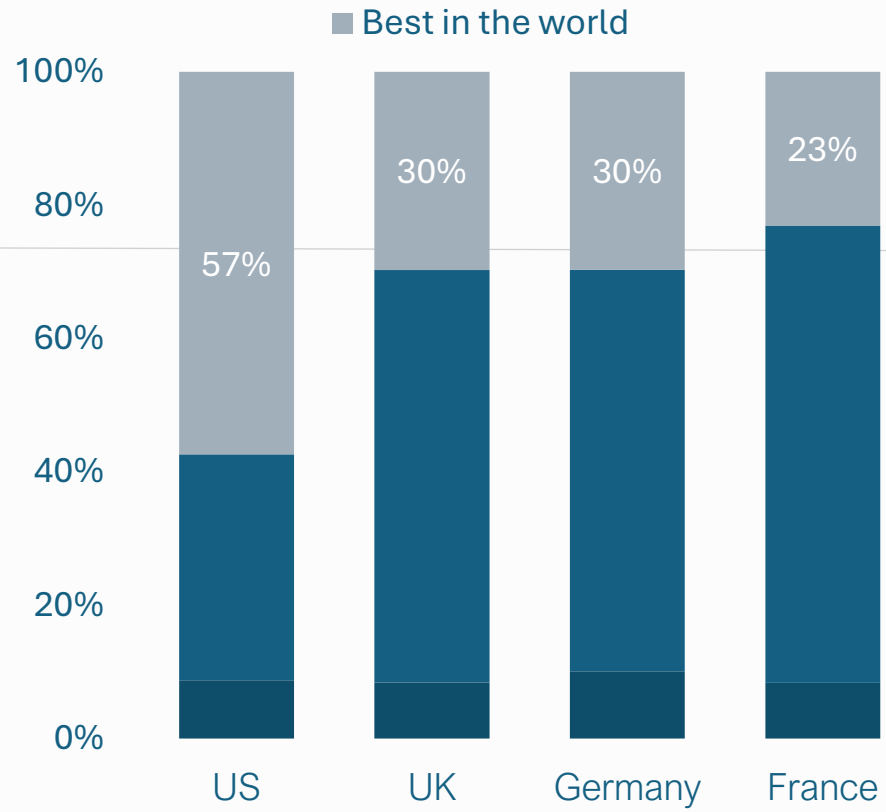


March '25

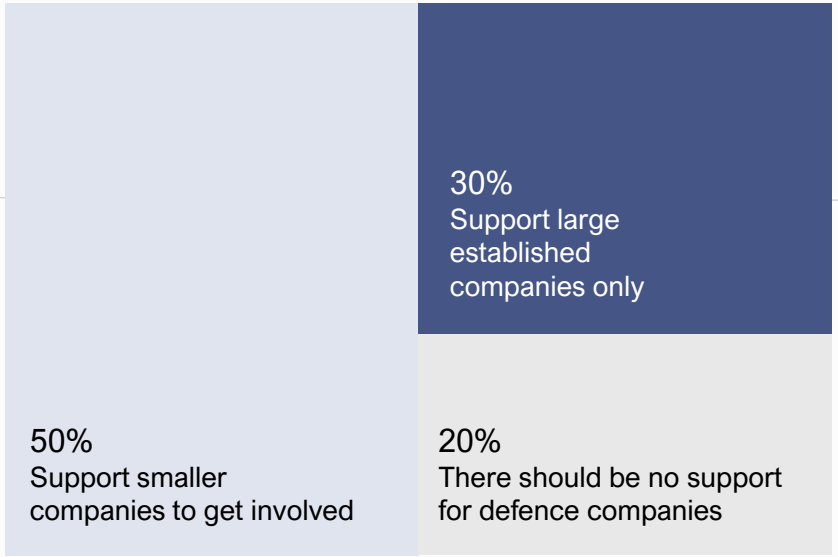
STONEHAVEN

A new narrative around the sector could also dispel the perception that Europe's companies are second tier.

Unlike Americans, Europeans are less likely to consider their defence firms as "the best in the world"



And overall, voters wish to see government investments & subsidies directed to smaller companies, new entrants and challengers.



Q: "Where should government direct tax breaks, subsidies and support to encourage new defence investment and jobs?"

March '25

STONEHAVEN

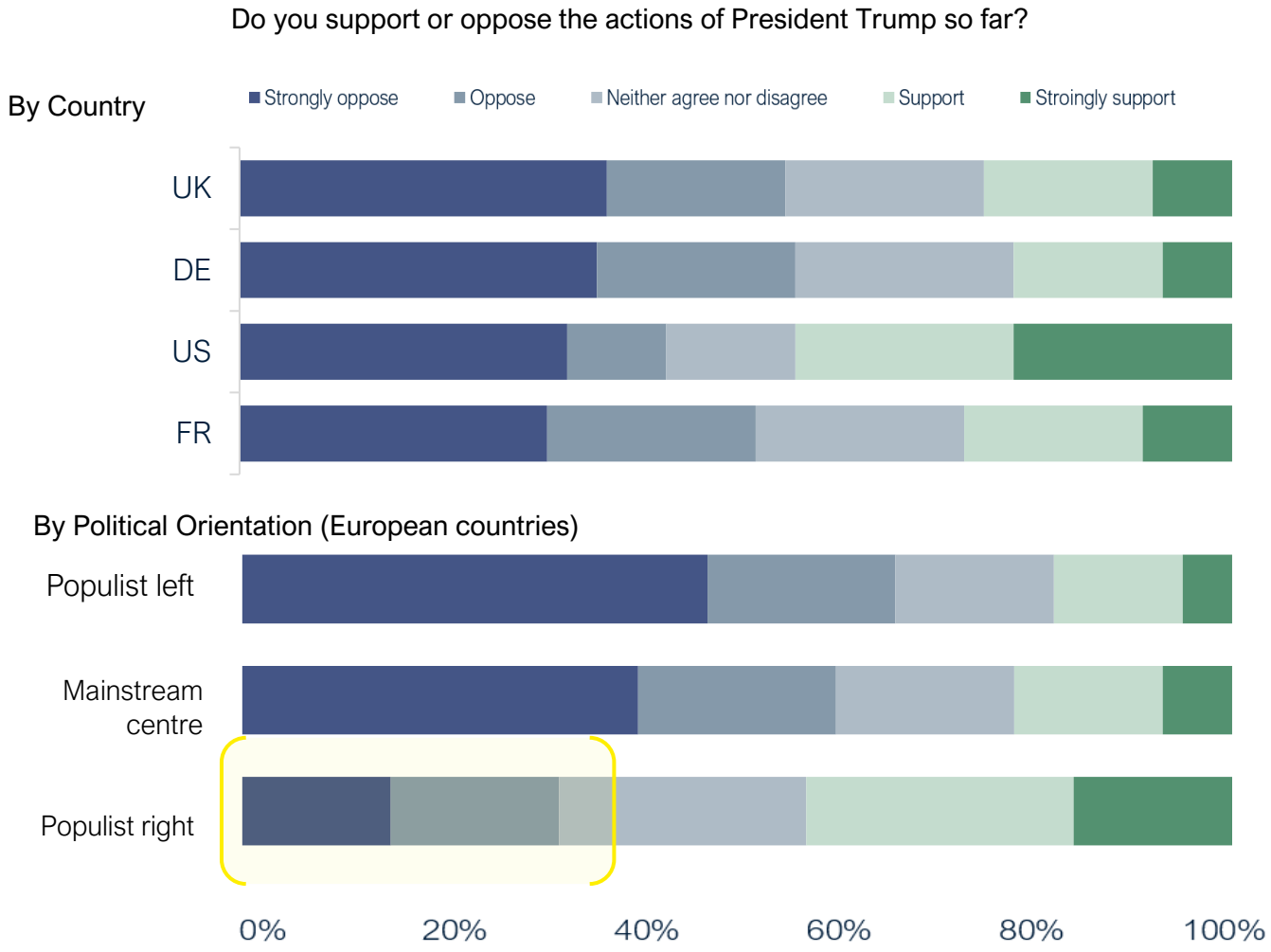
The ‘Trump Effect’

Building trust in a defence industrial strategy

March ‘25

STONEHAVEN

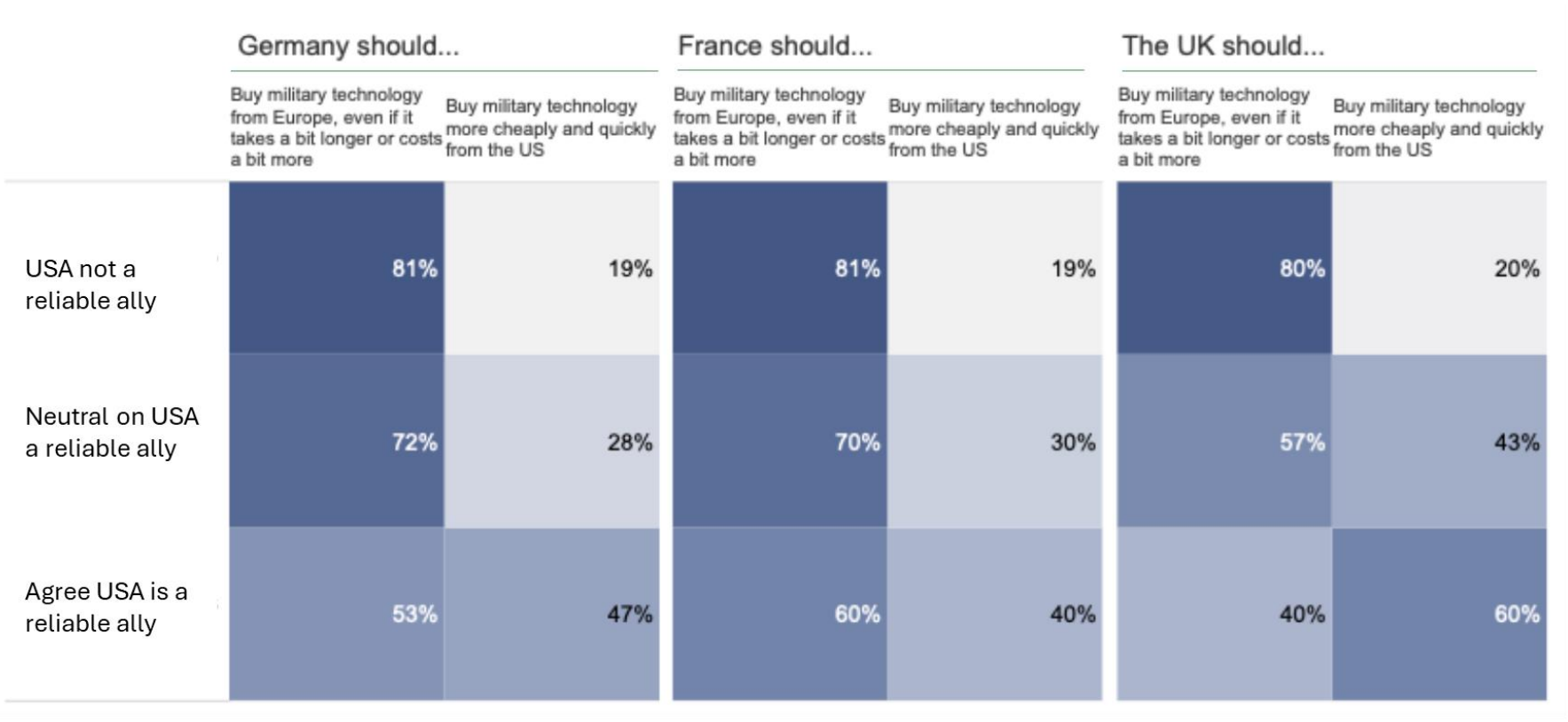
The ‘Trump Effect’ is creating concern across European voters, and splitting the populist right in Europe



March ‘25

STONEHAVEN

And the ‘Trump Effect’ is creating a new landscape for European and American defence contractors alike



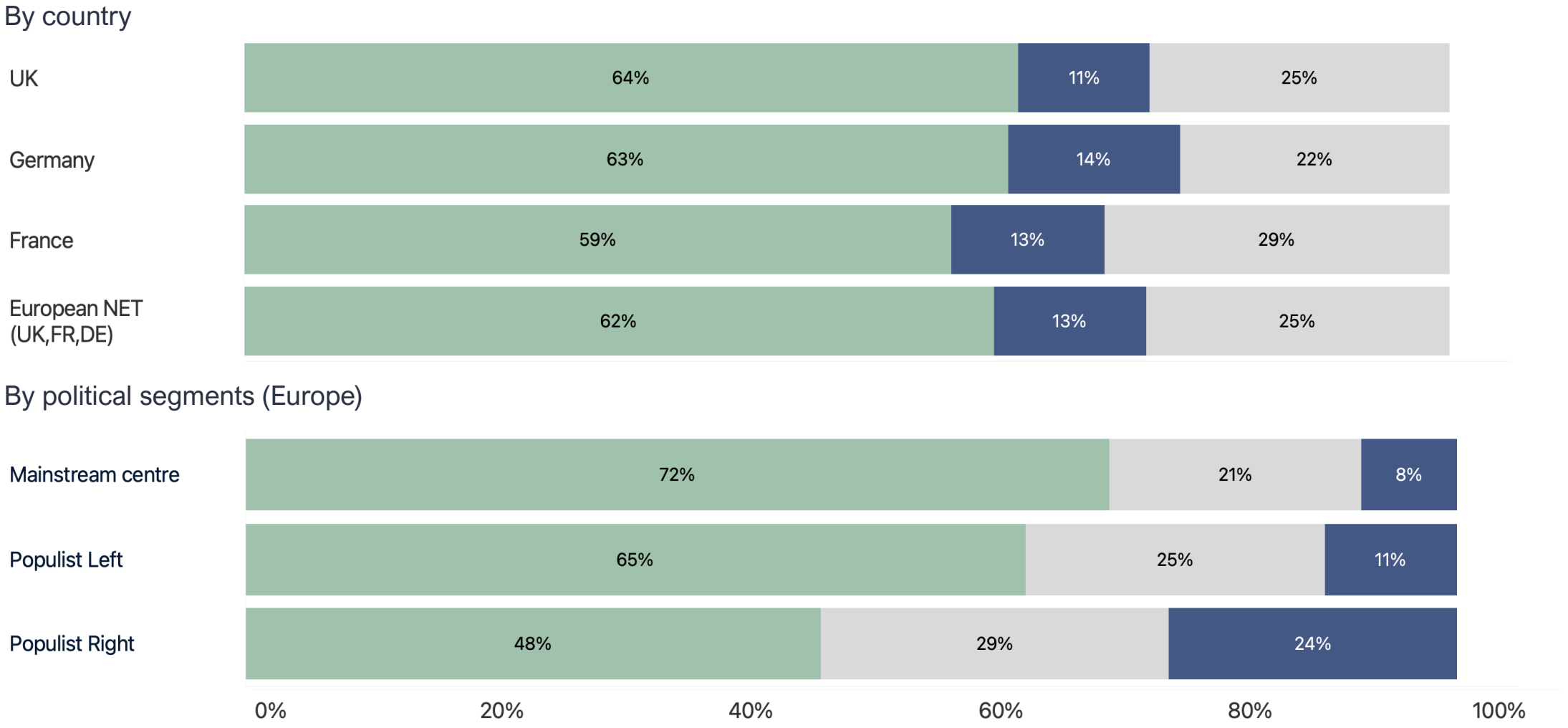
	Germany should...		France should...		The UK should...	
	Buy military technology from Europe, even if it takes a bit longer or costs a bit more	Buy military technology more cheaply and quickly from the US	Buy military technology from Europe, even if it takes a bit longer or costs a bit more	Buy military technology more cheaply and quickly from the US	Buy military technology from Europe, even if it takes a bit longer or costs a bit more	Buy military technology more cheaply and quickly from the US
USA not a reliable ally	81%	19%	81%	19%	80%	20%
Neutral on USA a reliable ally	72%	28%	70%	30%	57%	43%
Agree USA is a reliable ally	53%	47%	60%	40%	40%	60%

March ‘25

STONEHAVEN

The ‘Trump Effect’ is shifting the Overton Window on European military and security alliances

Proportion who support/oppose their country joining a cross-European armed force in response to U.S. defence reductions



March ‘25

STONEHAVEN

Ethics and ESG in the Defence Industrial Strategy

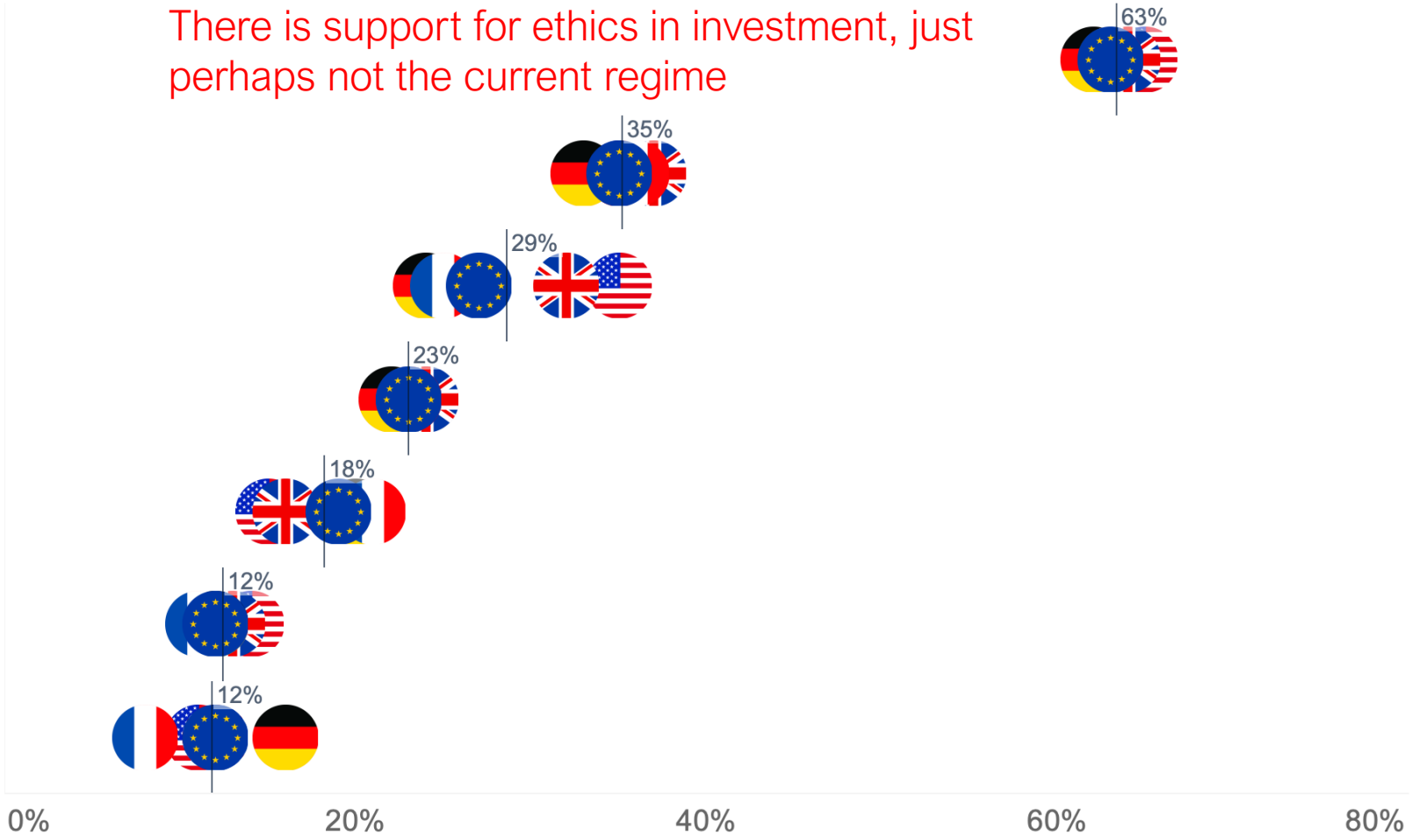
The case for continuing to engage

March '25

STONEHAVEN

As defence industrial strategies crowd in on previous green industrial strategies, the sector cannot ignore support for responsible business

Some banks have ethical rules on what they can invest in. Which of the following, if any, do you think these ethical rules should include?

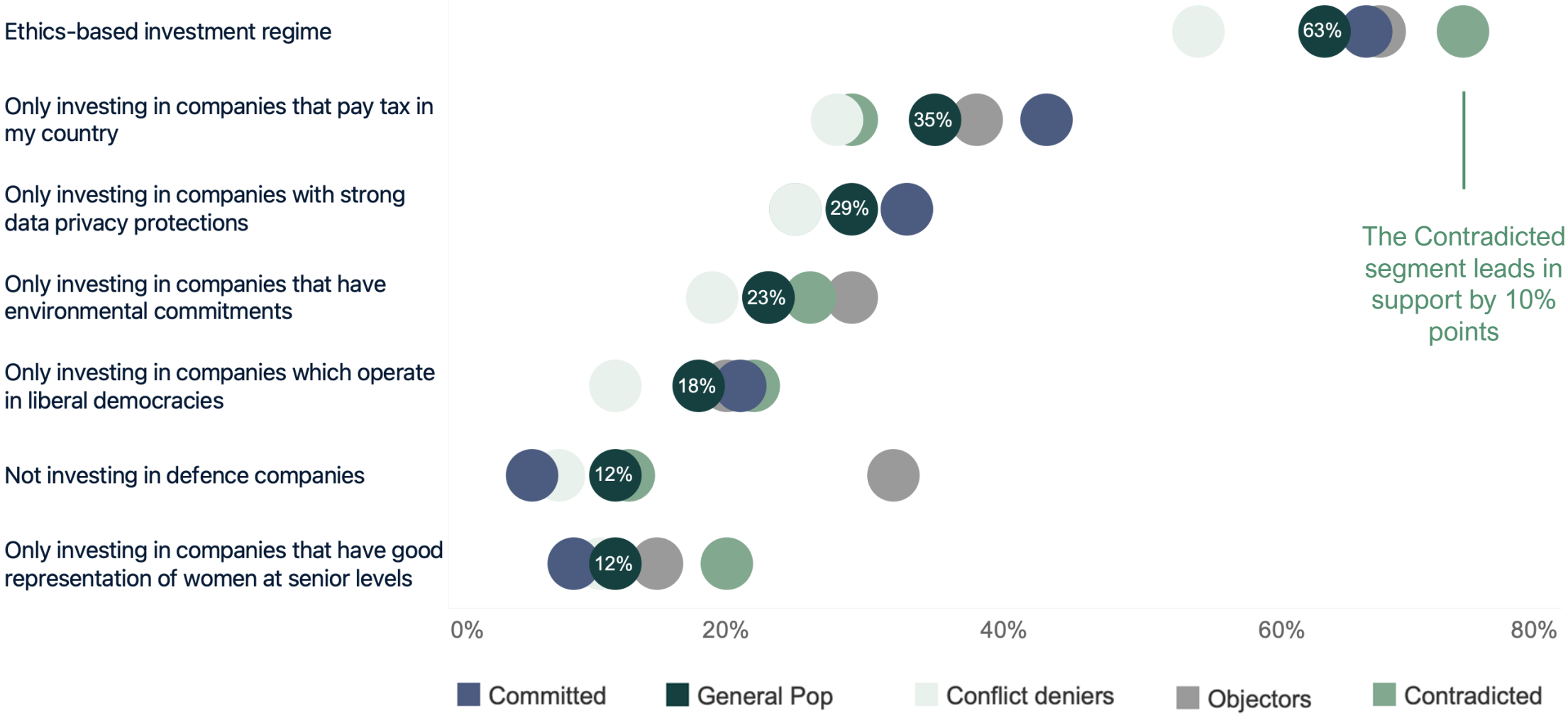


March '25

STONEHAVEN

Embracing and continuing to shape the responsible business agenda will help with trust building across key segments

Some banks have ethical rules on what they can invest in. Which of the following, if any, do you think these ethical rules should include?



March '25

STONEHAVEN

5 initial takeaways

1. This is not a politically stable funding round for European defence. But it is an opportunity to make it so, over the next few years.

1. Further understanding the ‘contradicted’ segment is required. They seem to hold the key to a more sustainable reputation and workforce proposition for the sector. This group will also likely be working in the financial institutions central to funding and expanding Europe's defence industrial capabilities.

2. Primes should look to harness the backing they have from European voters, but also do much more to showcase their world-leading innovations, alongside involving their supply chains in more distinct innovation programs, capable of obtaining political and financial support.

3. The political stability around this moment of increased defence spending is questionable. Lessons from Net Zero suggest that chasing spending targets while ignoring public sentiment is not sustainable. This means the defence industrial sector should be bold, innovative and ambitious not just in increasing spending, but in making the most of it.

4. Ethical investment and responsible business has not gone away, but there is an opening to prove the civic and societal value of defence. As the European defence sector takes center stage in industrial renewal, the sector should move to being more front-footed on its approach to ethics. This might mean moving beyond the ESG agenda, to our own pan-European responsible business agenda. This could also help unlock support from the ‘Contradicted’ segment.

To discuss the findings or to receive future reports, please get in touch.

Peter Lyburn, Founder, Stonehaven

plyburn@stonehaven.uk.com

Luke Betham, Head of Data Science, Stonehaven

lbetham@stonehaven.uk.com

Seb Wride, Partner | Head of Opinion Research, Public First

seb@publicfirst.co.uk