

Climate Matters in the Newsroom

National Association of Black Journalists
Member Survey, 2018



**Climate Matters in the Newsroom:
National Association of Black Journalists Member Survey, 2018**

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Introduction

This report provides the initial findings from an online census survey of National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) members conducted as part of the *Climate Matters in the Newsroom* project—a National Science Foundation-funded collaboration between George Mason University, Climate Central, NASA, NOAA, NABJ and other professional societies—the aim of which is to enable local, science-based reporting on climate change. This survey was designed to identify the needs of journalists who wish to report on climate change as a local issue and the challenges they face in doing so.

The findings presented in this report provide broad insights into NABJ members' views on journalism, climate change, and more specifically local climate change reporting. The survey findings include: (a) members' views about the role of journalists and their impacts on society; (b) understanding of climate change; (c) perspectives on and experience with climate change reporting; (d) obstacles to reporting on climate change; and (e) perspectives and practices of presenting opposing viewpoints in climate change stories. These survey findings will be used to guide the ongoing development and delivery of *Climate Matters* materials, a science-based, localized, informational resource originally developed to help TV meteorologists report on the local relevance of global climate change.

This survey was conducted in early 2018. All 3,491 NABJ members were invited to participate in this survey via an email sent on January 5th, 2018, and four additional requests to participate were sent throughout the month. By the end of January, when the survey closed, 620 NABJ members had participated in the survey, yielding a survey participation rate of 17.8%.

This survey and its findings are an important first step in producing localized climate change reporting resources for NABJ members and other journalists based in the United States. We would like to recognize the important contributions and partnership of NABJ board members and staff. Without their help, this survey would not have been possible. We would also like to sincerely thank the 620 NABJ members who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in this survey. We hope they will find the information in this report enlightening and useful.

Funding for this research was provided by NSF Award #DRL 1713450. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

Notes:

Due to rounding error, the figures in this report do not always total to 100%.

Open-ended responses will be coded and reported at a future date.

Key Findings

About Climate Change Reporting Practices:

- Nearly 3 out of 10 NABJ survey participants had reported on—or supervised journalists reporting on—a local climate change-related story in the prior 12 months. Of those, nearly two-thirds had covered four or fewer climate change-related stories, while one-third had covered five or more; 5% had reported or supervised more than 40 climate-related stories over the past 12 months.
- More than 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say they are at least slightly interested in reporting local climate impacts stories, with nearly a quarter saying they are very interested. Similarly, more than 8 out of 10 say they are interested in reporting on local climate solutions stories, with nearly 3 out of 10 saying they are very interested. The local climate stories they are most interested in reporting focus on human health, air quality, drought and water shortages, the economy, extreme heat events, hurricanes and storm surge, and extreme precipitation.
- Nearly half of NABJ survey participants receive—or expect—largely positive responses, or little response, from management when covering or supervising local climate stories. Conversely, nearly 2 out of 10 say the reaction is split equally between negative and positive responses, and 1 out of 10 say the reaction is mostly negative. The most common response, however, was that they don't know or are unsure—given by nearly one-quarter of participants.
- Nearly 4 out of 10 NABJ participants receive—or expect—largely positive responses, or little response, from their audience when covering or supervising local climate change stories, while nearly 3 out of 10 say the reaction is equally split between negative and positive, and 1 out of 10 say it is largely negative. More than 2 out of 10 say they don't know or are unsure what kind of response they would get.
- Nearly half of NABJ survey participants feel that reporting on climate change will be beneficial to their careers, while the other half said it will be neither beneficial nor detrimental. Only 2% say climate reporting will be detrimental.
- Nearly all NABJ survey participants say that reporting on climate change will be beneficial to society, with nearly 7 out of 10 saying it will be very beneficial.
- Three-fourths of NABJ participants identify lack of training in climate science to be an important obstacle to reporting on climate change. Around 6 out of 10 also point to important obstacles related to time—both in limited time for field work and difficulties in finding time/space to cover it in the news. Nearly half of participants cite a lack of role models for climate reporting as an obstacle. Several other barriers are identified by large minorities of participants, including lack of access to trusted scientific information, lack of news management support, lack of access to experts, lack of general management or owner support, lack of access to local sources, and lack of audience support.

- More than 6 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think downsizing in their news organization has created or exacerbated obstacles to reporting on climate change, with nearly 2 out of 10 saying downsizing has created or exacerbated obstacles “a lot” in their news organization.
- Six percent of NABJ survey participants say they have experienced at least one instance where management softened or censored a climate change-related story that they had personally reported or supervised, although nearly 3 out of 10 say they don’t know if this has happened to them or not. Similarly, 2% say they have seen management soften or censor a colleague’s climate change reporting, although nearly 4 out of 10 say they don’t know.
- NABJ survey participants overwhelmingly think climate change is relevant to all beats. The beats most likely to be seen as relevant are weather and environment, rated as very relevant by more than 9 out of 10. Energy, agriculture, and science and technology are considered very relevant by more than 8 out of 10. Large majorities also see food, politics, health and medical, business and finance, investigative reporting, and consumer news to be very relevant. Art and entertainment, sports, and religion are judged to be least relevant.
- Over half of NABJ survey participants are interested in a range of professional development activities related to climate change reporting. The professional development activities they are most interested in are learning about climate change solutions, learning about climate change impacts, learning how to craft local climate stories, and learning how to access credible sources for climate stories.
- NABJ survey participants tend to most trust the climate information provided by independent science organizations—including the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, professional science societies, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and universities and colleges. In comparison, relatively few trust partisan think tanks (both liberal and conservative) and business advocacy organizations.
- More than half of NABJ survey participants say their trust in U.S. government agencies as sources of information about climate change has decreased over the past 12 months, coinciding with the first year of the Trump administration; few say their trust has increased.
- Fewer than 1 out of 10 NABJ survey participants who had covered or supervised climate change stories in the past year say they purposively avoided using the terms global warming or climate change on at least one occasion.
- Nearly one-quarter of NABJ survey participants who had covered climate change stories during the prior year say they rarely or never presented an opposing view point (i.e., someone not convinced of climate change). Conversely, nearly 7 out of 10 say they do so sometimes, often, almost always, or always.

- While nearly all NABJ members are convinced that human-caused climate change is occurring, many feel that reporting two sides of a climate change story is helpful for one or more reasons. For example, around 8 out of 10 say that including opposing viewpoints allows them to acknowledge that different viewpoints exist, that such an inclusion is an essential part of objective journalism, and that it will help maintain their credibility. Similarly, nearly 7 out of 10 say that including an opposing viewpoint is important because the science of climate change is still being debated.

About Views on Climate Change

- Nearly half of NABJ survey participants feel they know the science of climate change somewhat, moderately, or very well; the other half feel they know the science only slightly well, or not well at all.
- Half of NABJ survey participants say that global warming and climate change mean the same thing to them, while more than 4 out of 10 say they mean different things.
- More than 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think global warming is happening, while less than 1% think it isn't; nearly 9 out of 10 say they are very or extremely sure.
- Nearly 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think that the global warming that has occurred in the past 50 years is due mostly or entirely to human activity, while nearly 2 out of 10 think it is caused equally by human activity and natural causes; few think it is mostly or entirely due to natural causes or hasn't been happening.
- Nearly 2 out of 10 NABJ survey participants are aware that 97% or more of climate scientists think human-caused global warming is occurring; more than 3 out of 10 say the scientific consensus is 90% or greater. Conversely, nearly 7 out of 10 say the consensus is less than 90%, and some say it is far less.
- Nearly 8 in 10 NABJ survey participants think that at least some amount of additional climate change can be averted over the next 50 years if mitigation measures are taken worldwide; nearly 7 out of 10 think a moderate or large amount of climate change can be averted.
- Nearly 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think at least some harm from climate change can be averted in the United States over the next 50 years if adaptation measures are taken, while nearly 7 out of 10 think a moderate or large amount of harm can be averted.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants agree with the statement "I have personally experienced the effects of global warming," with 4 in 10 strongly agreeing.
- Eight out of 10 NABJ survey participants say the climate in their region has changed over the past half century. Among them, more than 4 out of 10 say the impacts have been primarily or exclusively harmful, while 3 out of 10 say the impacts have been equally mixed

between beneficial and harmful. Nearly none say the impacts have been primarily or exclusively beneficial, although one-quarter say they don't know.

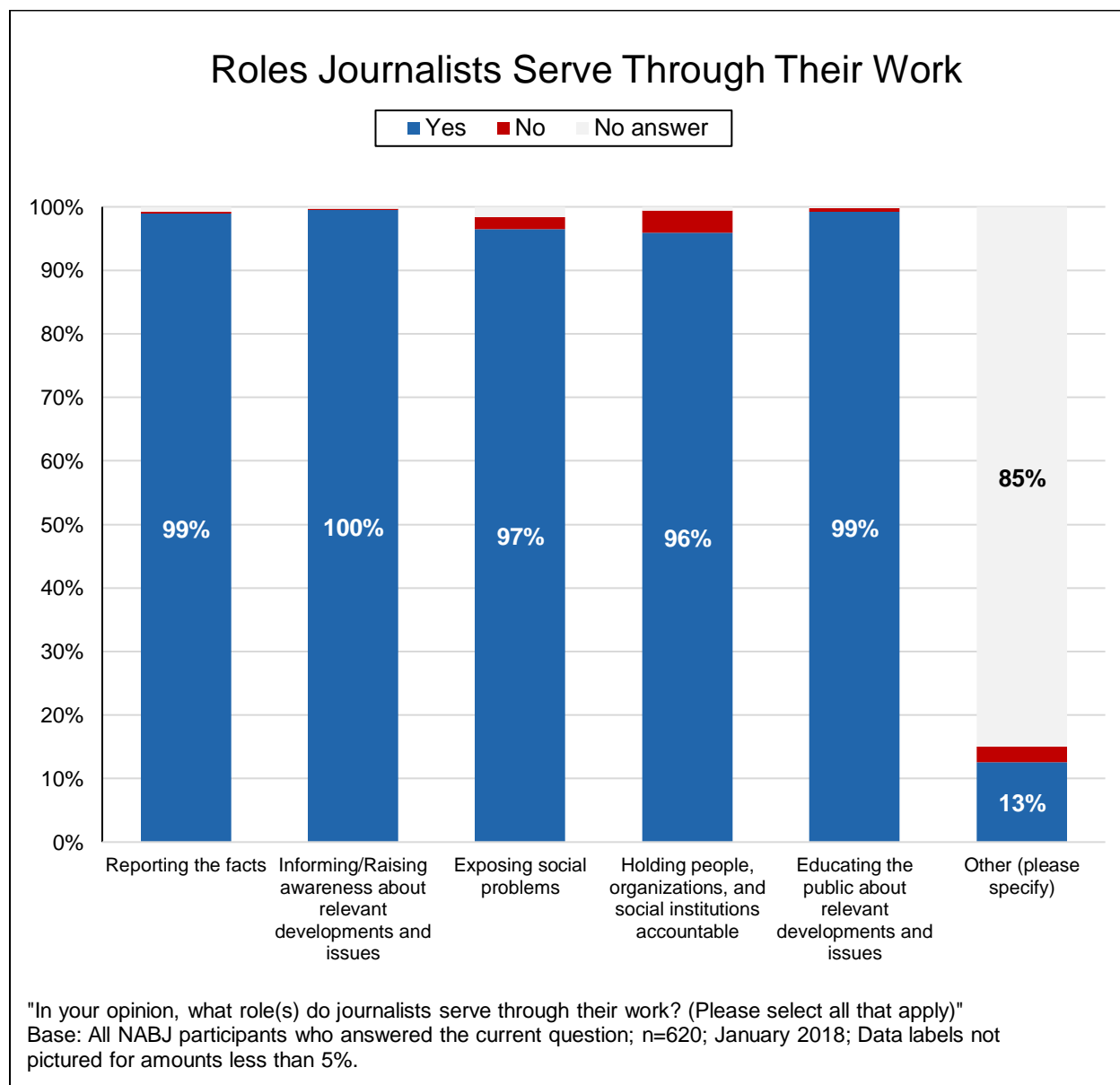
- NABJ survey participants who think there have been climate change impacts in their region—whether harmful or beneficial—and those who don't know were asked about the nature of those impacts. One-third to half of participants say there have been exclusively harmful impacts of climate change on a range of resources including water resources, coastal property, ecosystems or forests, infrastructure, agricultural resources, seasonal cycles, and human health. In addition, about 2 to 3 out of 10 think these same resources are experiencing both harmful and beneficial impacts.
- More than 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say the issue of global warming is at least somewhat personally important to them; nearly 6 out of 10 say it is very or extremely important to them.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say they are worried about global warming; more than 3 out of 10 say they are very worried.
- More than 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants feel they will be personally harmed by global warming; nearly 7 out of 10 feel they will be personally harmed a moderate amount or a great deal.

Roles of Journalists

The survey began with general questions about how participants see the role(s) of journalists in society.

Which Roles do Journalists Serve?

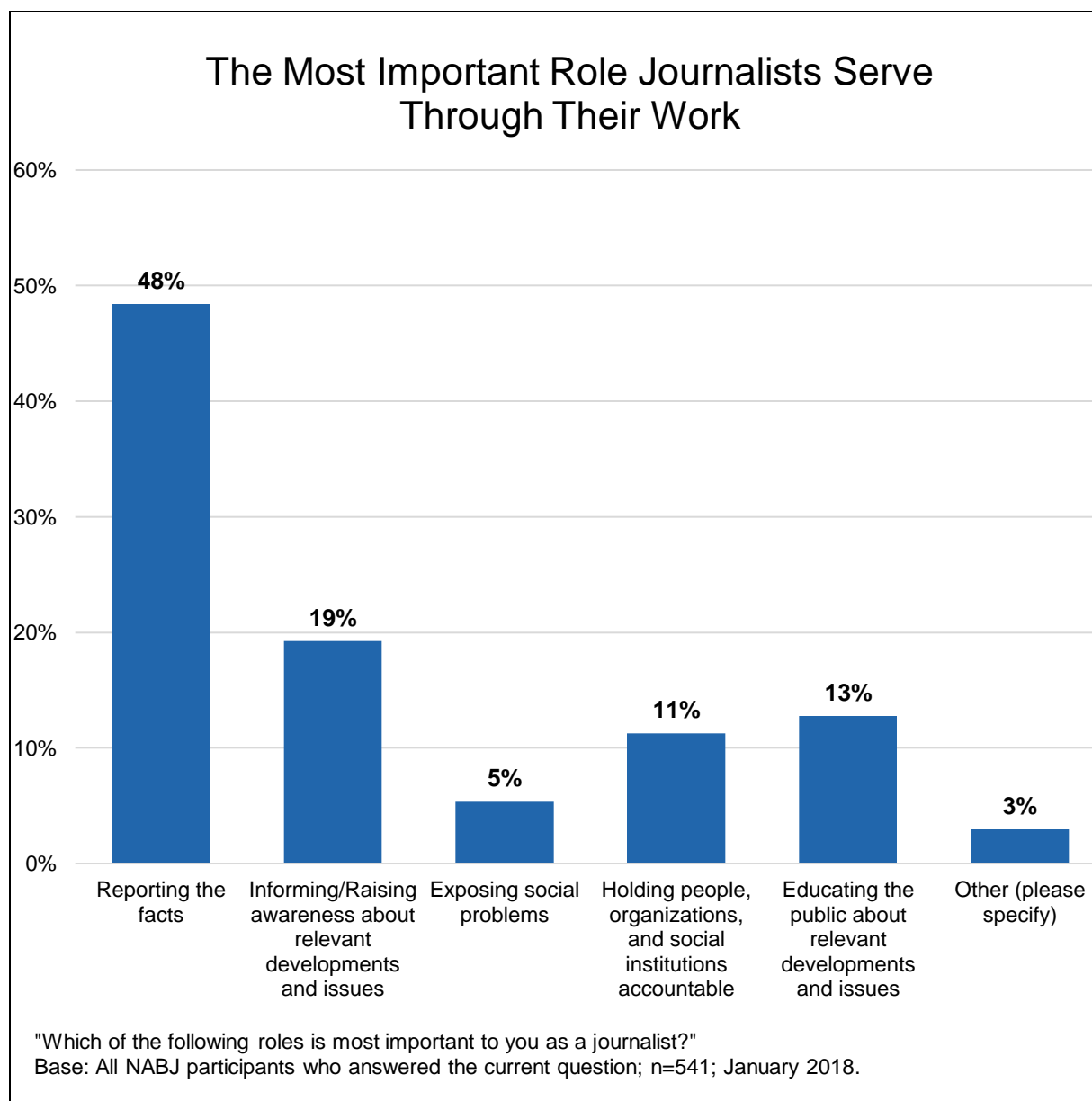
Nearly all NABJ survey participants feel that journalists serve society through a range of roles from reporting the facts to holding people, organizations, and social institutions accountable.*



* The additional roles that survey participants identified in response to the "Other (please specify)" are open-ended responses that will be coded and reported at a future date.

Which Role Is Most Important?

NABJ survey participants hold a wide range of views about which of the roles journalists play in society is personally most important to them. Half consider reporting the facts to be their most important function. Two out of 10 consider informing the public and raising awareness of issues to be their most important role, and more than 1 out of 10 most value the closely-related role of educating the public about relevant developments and issues. Nearly 2 out of 10 most value the more ambitious goals of holding people, organizations, and institutions accountable, or exposing social problems.

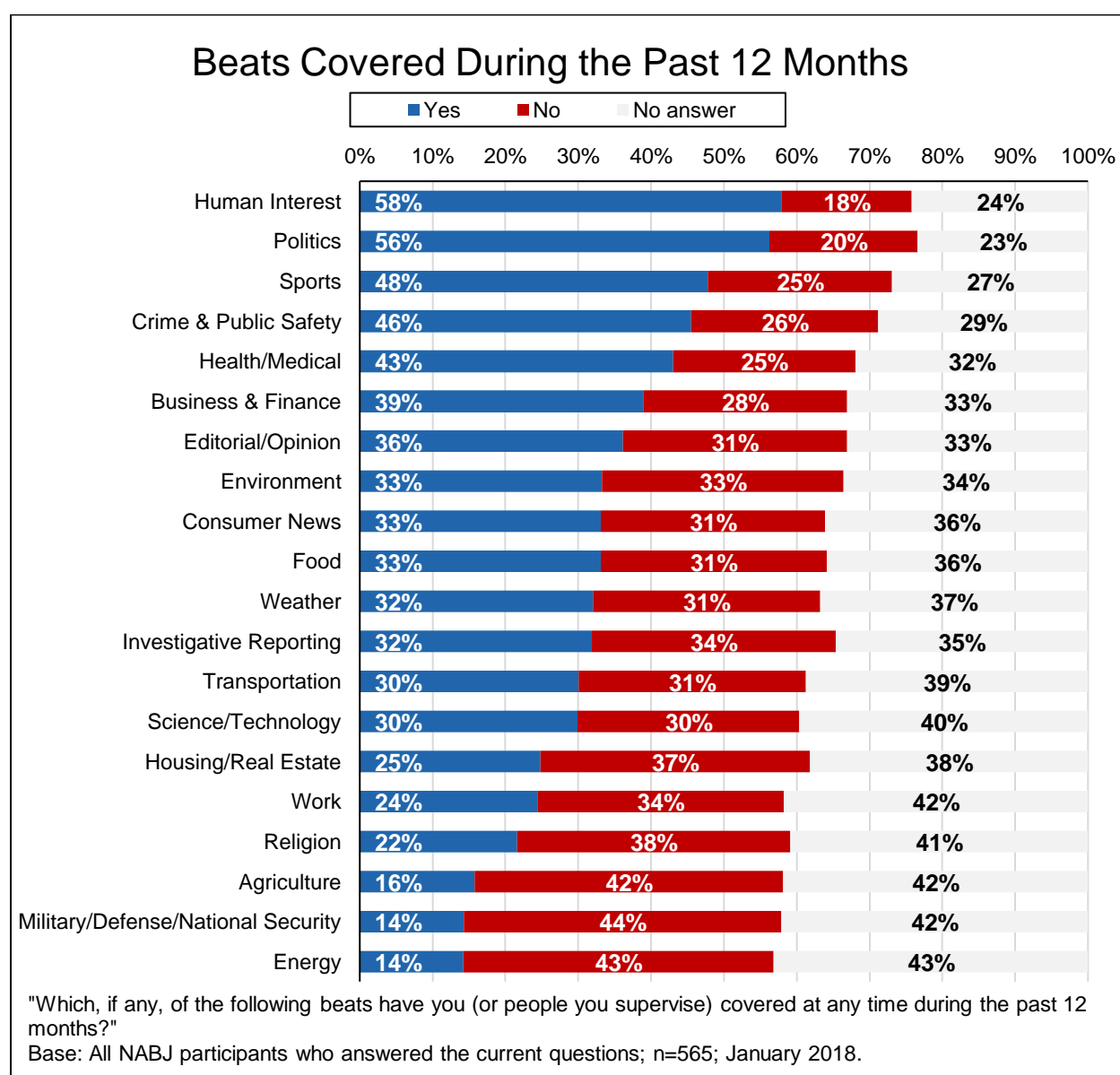


Beat Experience and Perceived Relevance of Climate Change

To get a sense of what kind of story climate change is seen as by journalists, we asked questions about participants' beat experiences, and about the relevance of climate change to various beats.

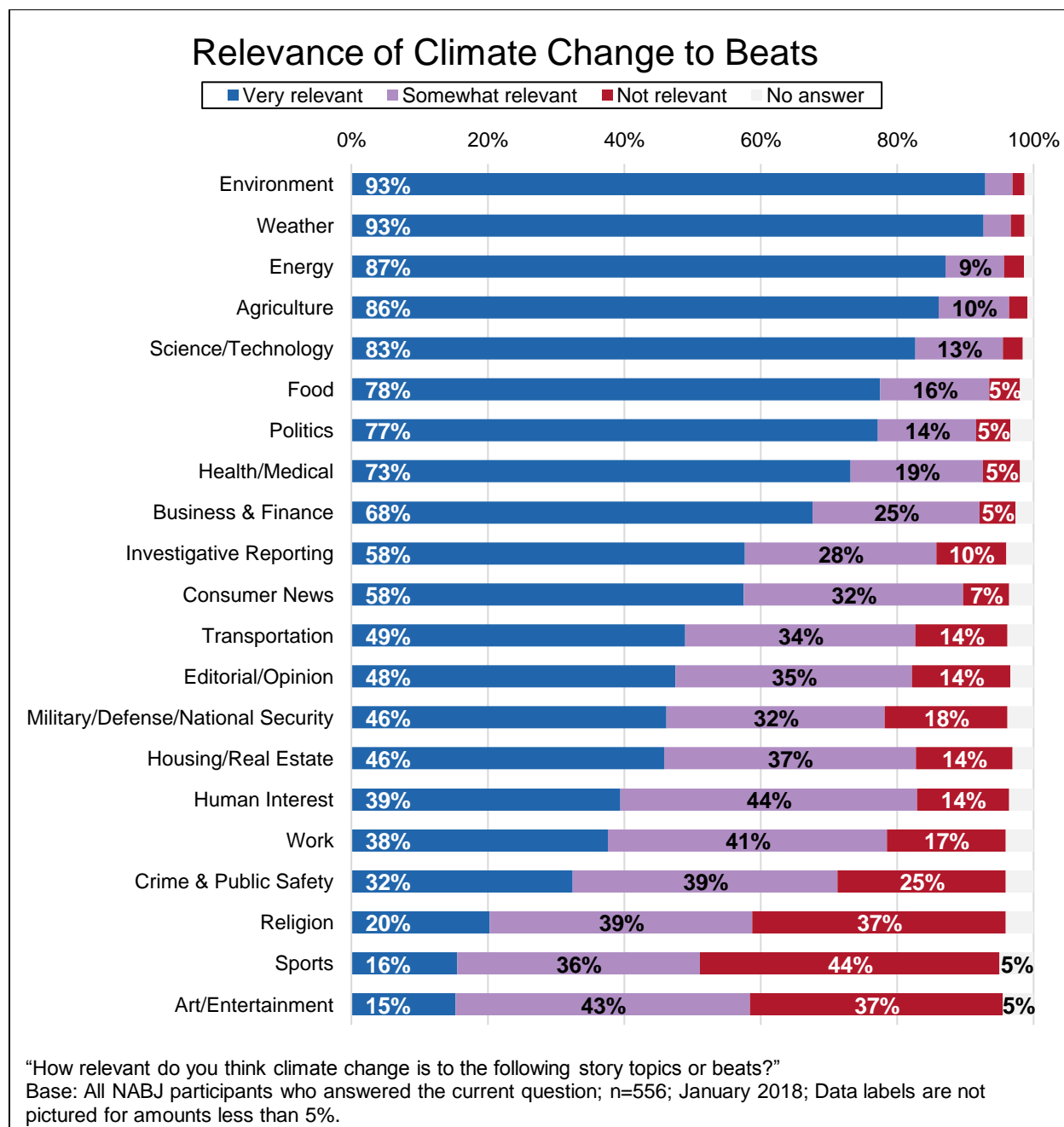
Experience Covering Beats

The most common beats were human interest stories and politics—each of which were covered by more than half of NABJ survey participants. Other common beats included sports, crime & public safety, and health and medical stories—each of which was covered by more than 4 out of 10 participants.



Relevance of Climate Change

NABJ survey participants overwhelmingly think climate change is relevant to all beats. The beats most likely to be seen as relevant are weather and environment, rated as very relevant by more than 9 out of 10. Energy, agriculture, and science and technology are considered very relevant by more than 8 out of 10 of participants. Large majorities also see food, politics, health and medical, business and finance, investigative reporting, and consumer news to be very relevant. Art and entertainment, sports, and religion were judged to be least relevant by survey participants.



Difference Between Climate Change and Global Warming

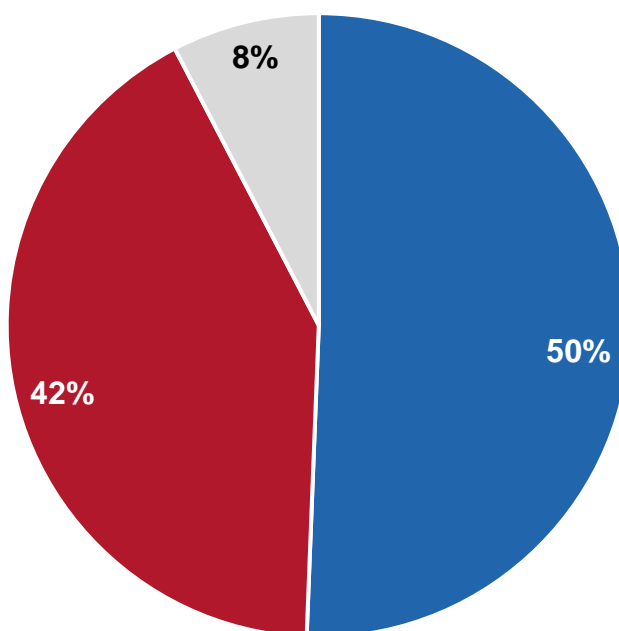
Polling research has shown that the terms global warming and climate change mean largely the same thing to some people, and different things to other people. We asked several questions to determine how NABJ members see these terms.

Is There a Difference?

Half of NABJ survey participants say that global warming and climate change mean the same thing to them, while more than 4 out of 10 say they mean different things. Those participants who see global warming and climate change as being different things were asked: "Briefly, how would you describe the difference in meaning between the terms "climate change" and "global warming"?" These open-ended responses will be coded and reported at a future date.

"Global Warming" and "Climate Change": Same or Different Things?

■ Same things ■ Different things ■ Don't know



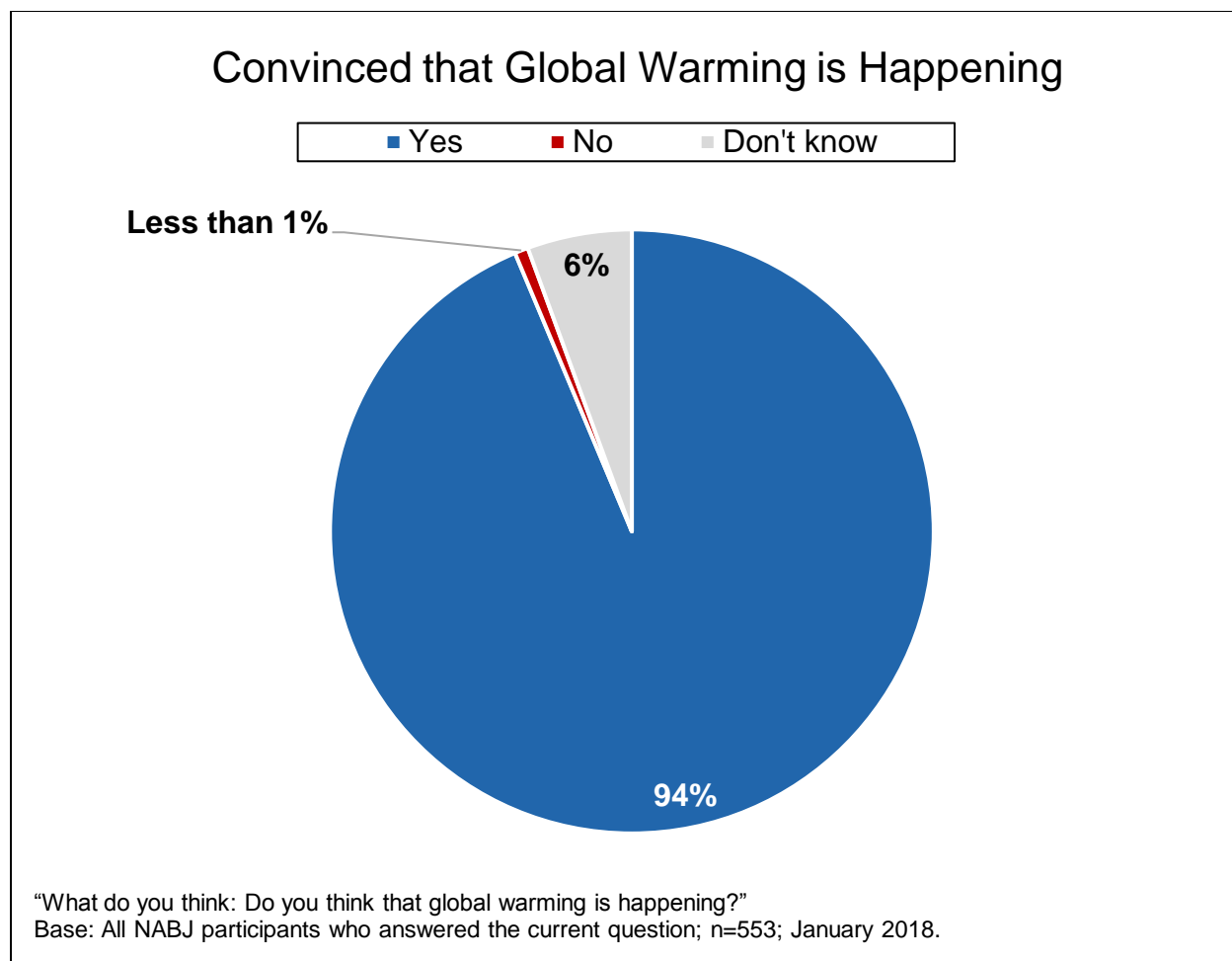
"For you, do the terms "climate change" and "global warming" mean the same thing or different things?"
Base: All NABJ participants who answered the current question; n=563; January 2018.

Convinced that Global Warming is Happening

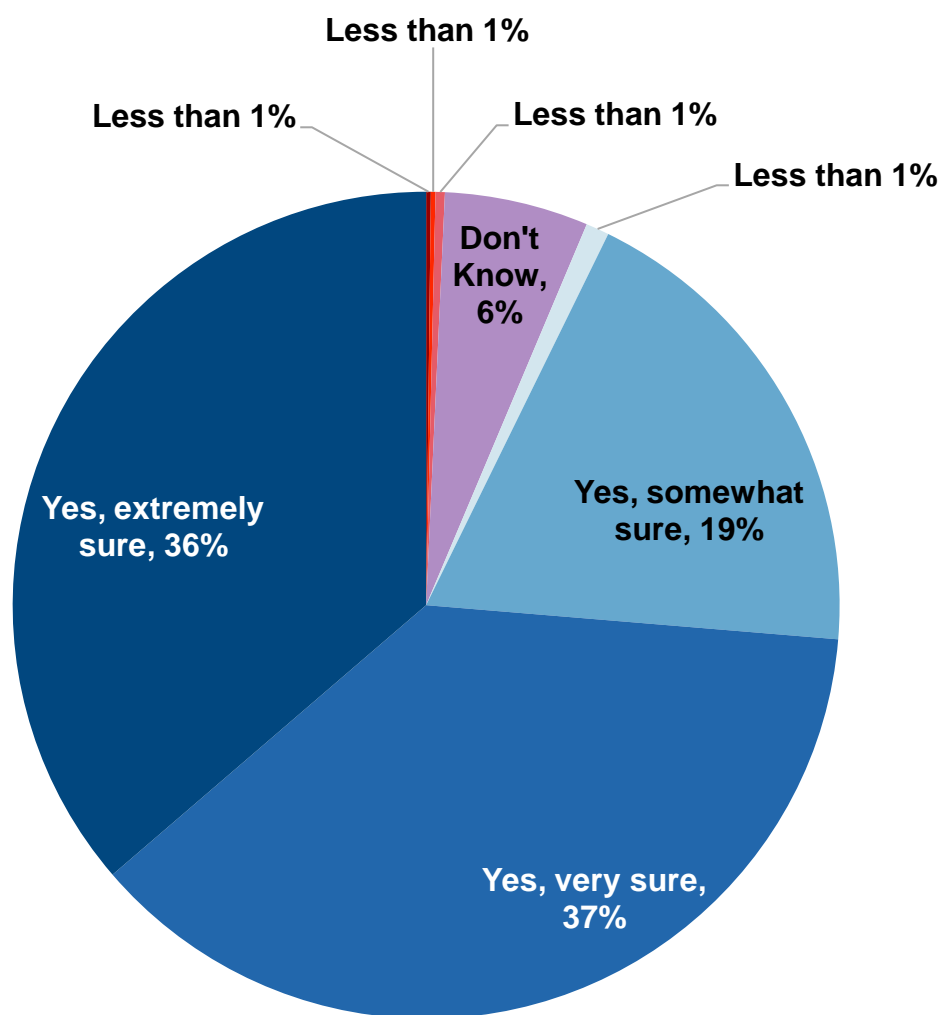
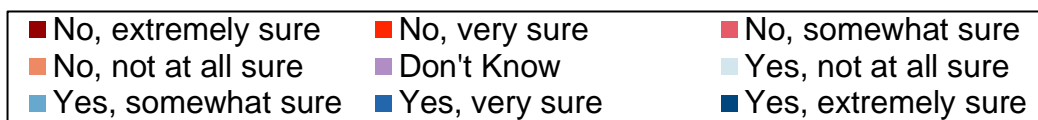
Research has shown that Americans hold a wide range of views about global warming. At various points throughout the survey, we posed questions to NABJ participants about some of their climate change views that might, or might not, influence their climate change reporting. The most basic of these views is whether or not they think that global warming is happening. Prior research has shown that the vast majority—97% or more—of climate scientists are convinced that human-caused climate change is happening. In fact, the 2014 U.S. National Climate Assessment found that a range of impacts from global climate change are already occurring in every region of the country.

Is Global Warming Happening? How sure are you?

More than 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think global warming is happening, while less than 1% think it isn't. In response to a follow-up question about how sure they are, nearly 9 out of 10 said they are either extremely or very sure that global warming is happening.



Certainty that Global Warming is Happening



"What do you think: Do you think that global warming is happening?"

"How sure are you that global warming is happening?"

"How sure are you that global warming is not happening?"

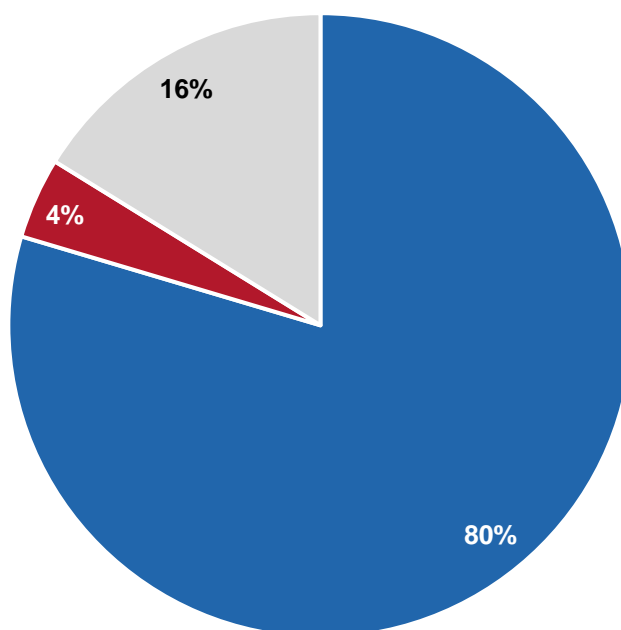
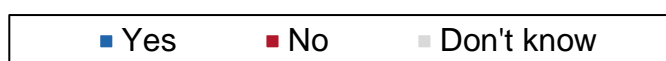
Base: All NABJ participants who answered the current question; n=551; January 2018.

Perceptions of Local Climate Change

Has the Climate Changed?

Eight out of 10 NABJ survey participants say the climate in their region has changed over the past half century.

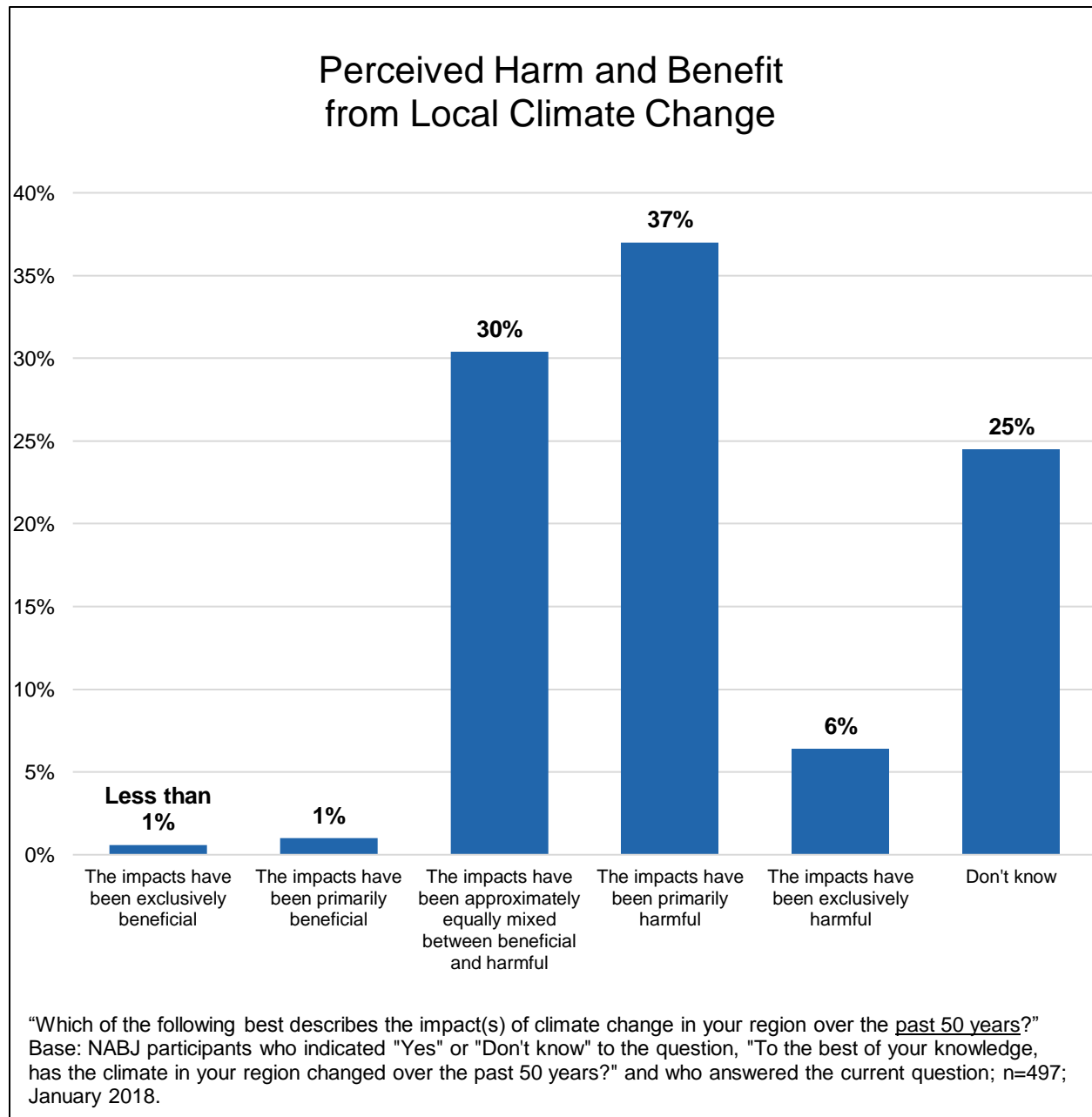
Perceived Local Climate Change Over the Past 50 Years



"To the best of your knowledge, has the climate in your region changed over the past 50 years?"
Base: All NABJ participants who answered the current question; n=554; January 2018.

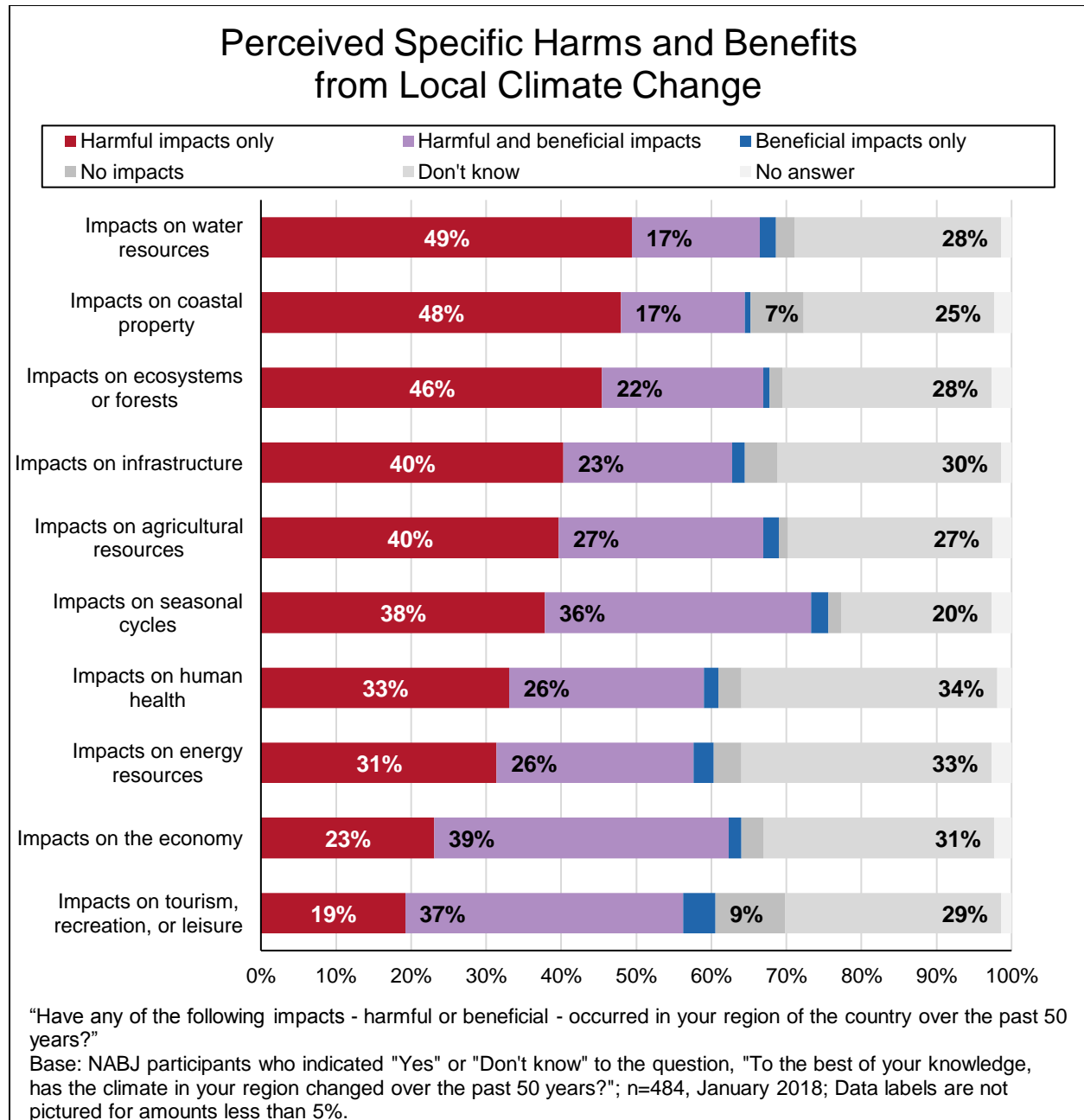
Description of Climate Change Impacts in Region

Among those NABJ survey participants who say the climate has changed in their region over the past 50 years, more than 4 out of 10 say the impacts have been primarily or exclusively harmful, while 3 out of 10 say the impacts have been equally mixed between beneficial and harmful. Nearly none say the impacts have been primarily or exclusively beneficial, although one-quarter say they don't know.



Harmful or Beneficial Impacts

NABJ survey participants who think there have been climate change impacts in their region—whether harmful or beneficial—as well as those who say they don't know were asked about the nature of those impacts. One-third to half of survey participants think there have been exclusively harmful impacts of climate change on a range of resources including water resources, coastal property, ecosystems or forests, infrastructure, agricultural resources, seasonal cycles, and human health. In addition, about 2 to 3 out of 10 think these same resources are experiencing both harmful and beneficial impacts.

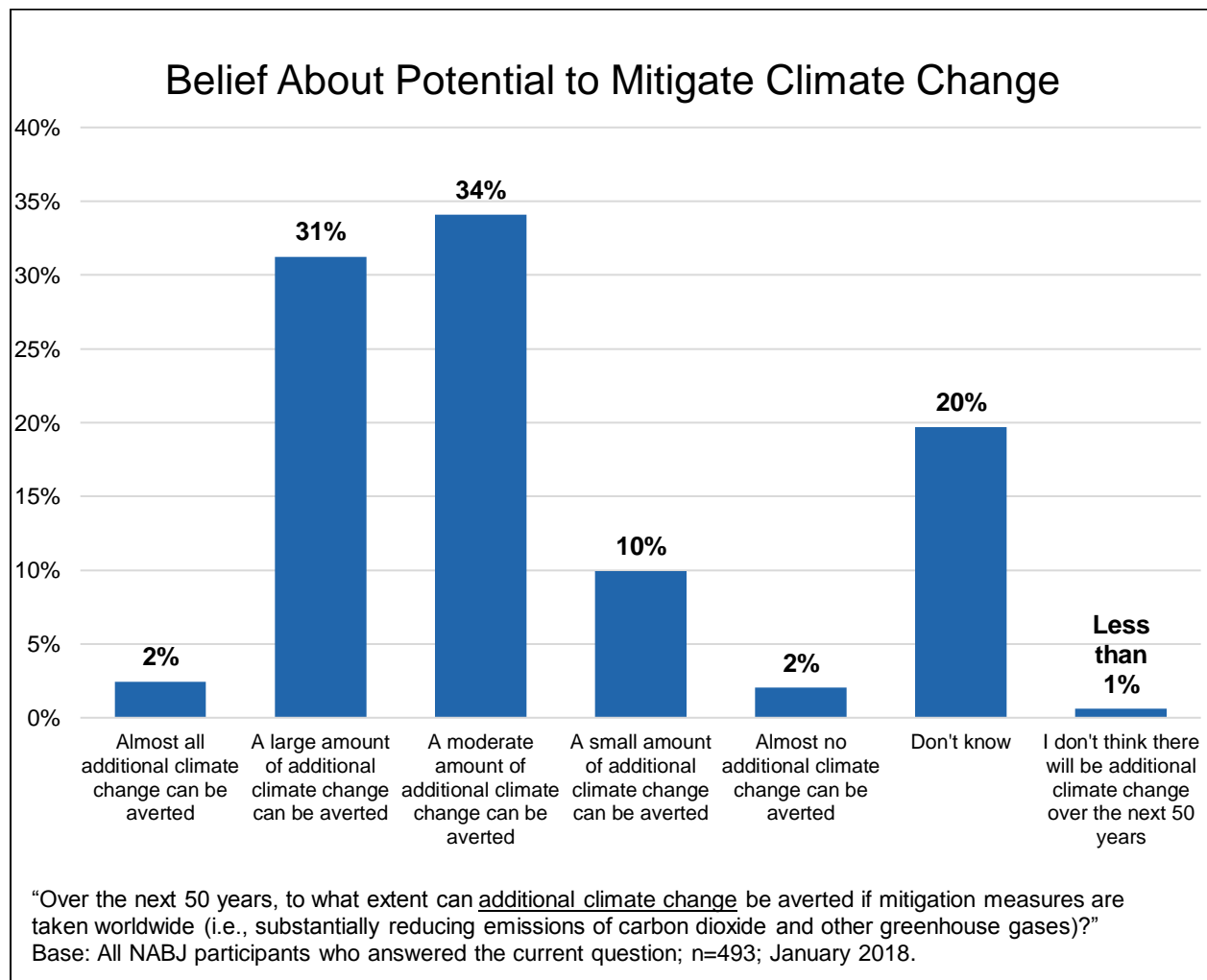


Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The current impacts of climate change are a matter of facts. Future impacts, however, are less certain and will be largely influenced by human decisions and actions going forward. We asked journalists for their views on the extent to which climate change can be prevented, and harm averted, if appropriate actions are taken.

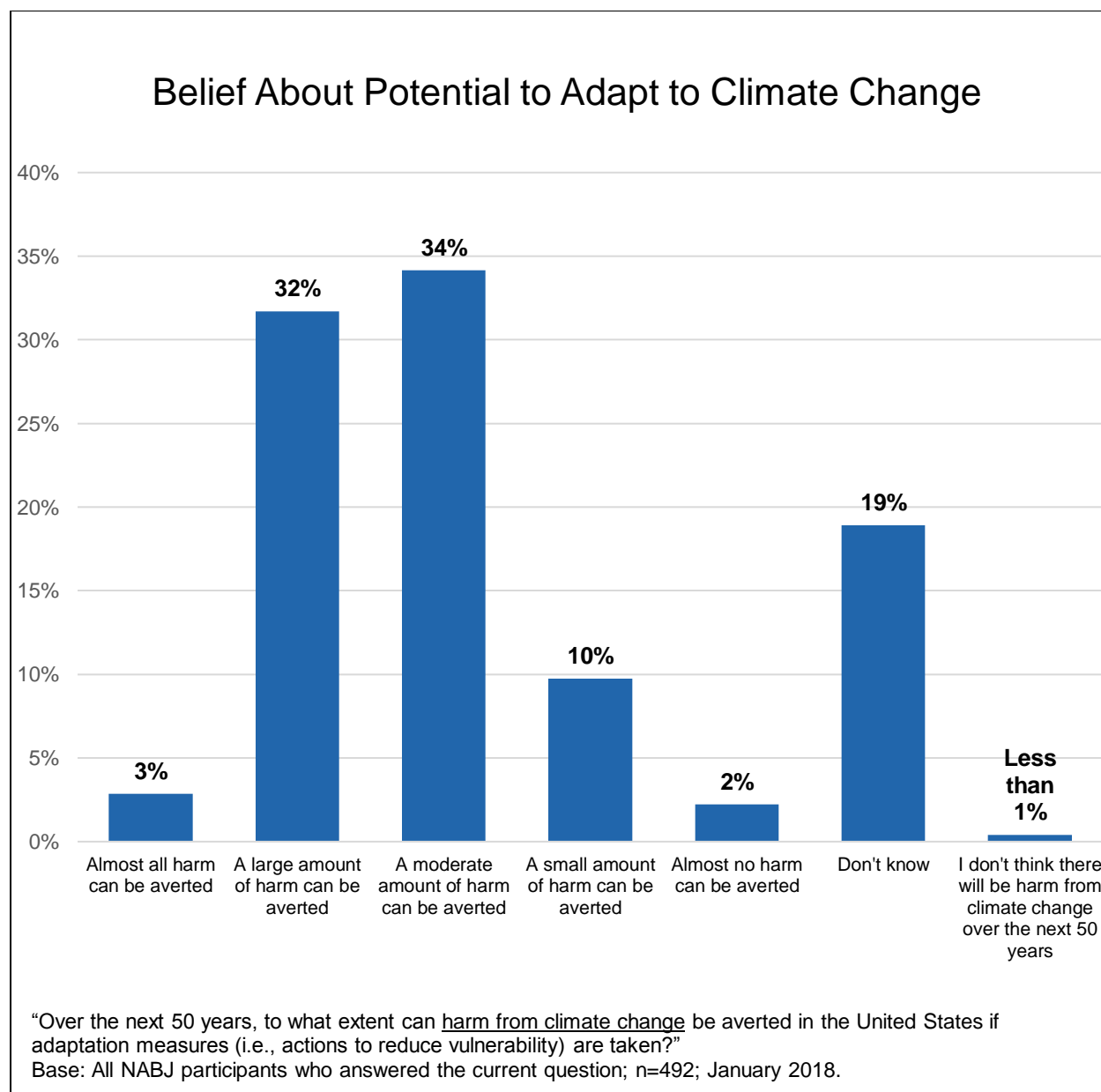
Averting Additional Climate Change

Nearly 8 in 10 NABJ survey participants think that at least some amount of additional climate change can be averted over the next 50 years if mitigation measures are taken worldwide; nearly 7 out of 10 think a moderate or large amount of climate change can be averted.



Averting Harm from Climate Change

Nearly 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think that at least some harm from climate change can be averted in the United States over the next 50 years if adaptation measures are taken, while nearly 7 out of 10 believe a moderate or large amount of harm can be averted.

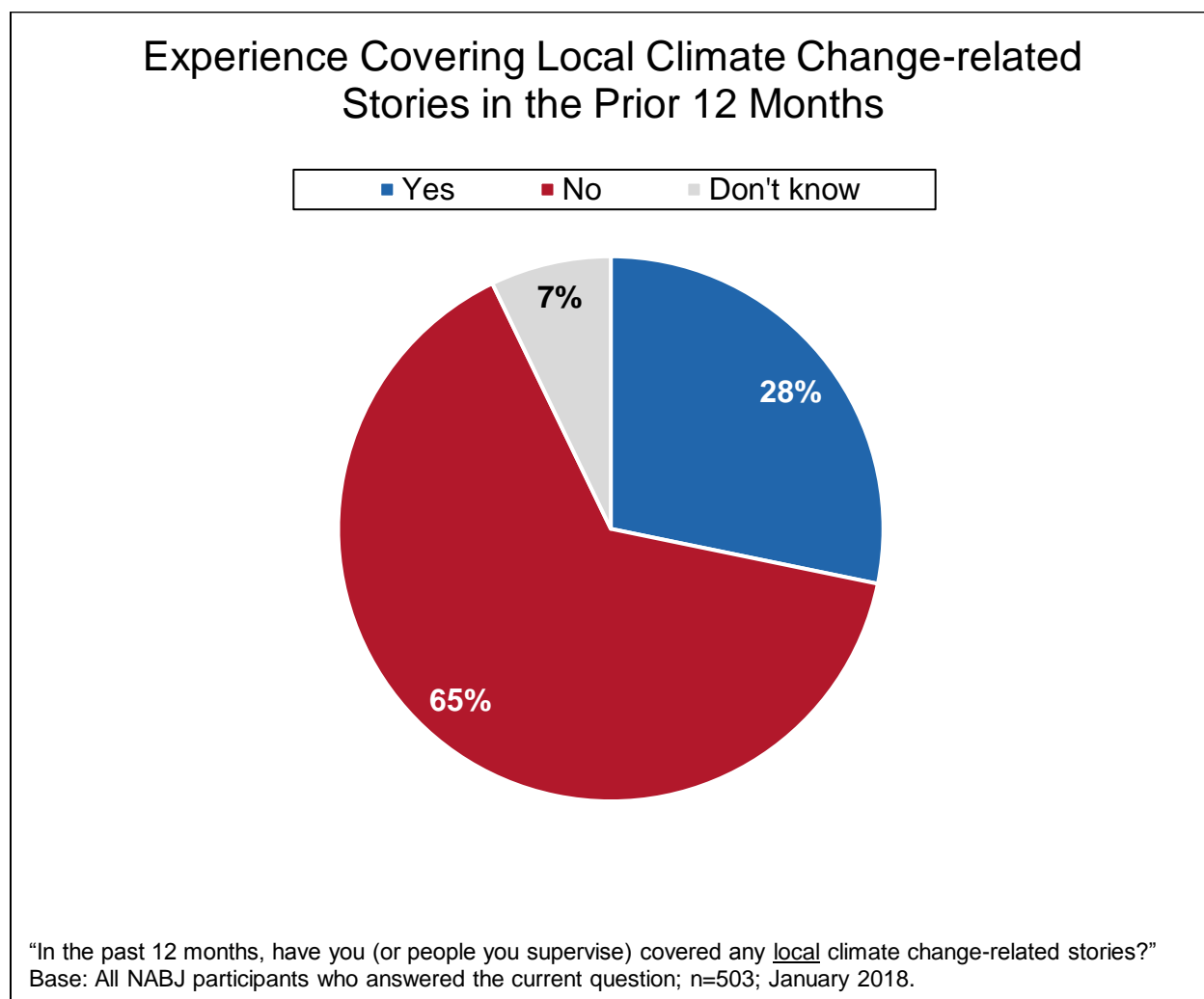


Local Climate Change Coverage: Experience, Interest, and Expectations

Surveys of the public reveal that most Americans don't read or hear much about climate change in the media. Central to the purpose of our survey is determining NABJ members' level of interest in reporting on climate change, and how much they are currently doing. To that end, we asked a number of questions about NABJ members' experiences, interests, and expectations regarding climate change reporting, especially local stories.

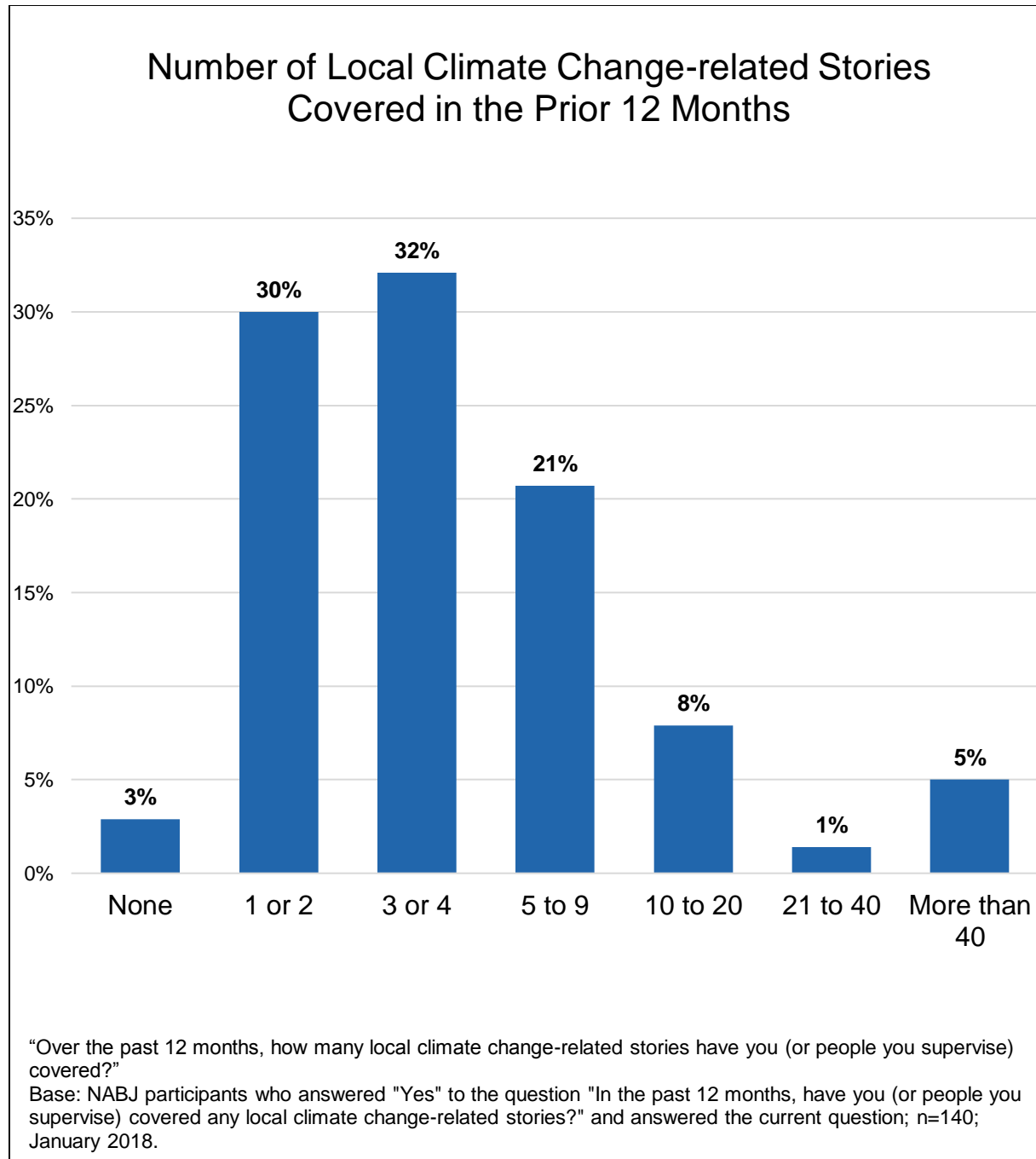
Experience Covering Local Climate Change

Nearly 3 out of 10 NABJ survey participants had reported on—or supervised journalists reporting on—a local climate change-related story in the prior 12 months.



Frequency of Covering Local Climate Change

Of those NABJ members who had reported or supervised at least one local climate change-related story in the past 12 months, nearly two-thirds had covered four or fewer climate change-related stories, whereas another third had covered five or more; 5% had reported or supervised more than 40 climate-related stories over the past 12 months.



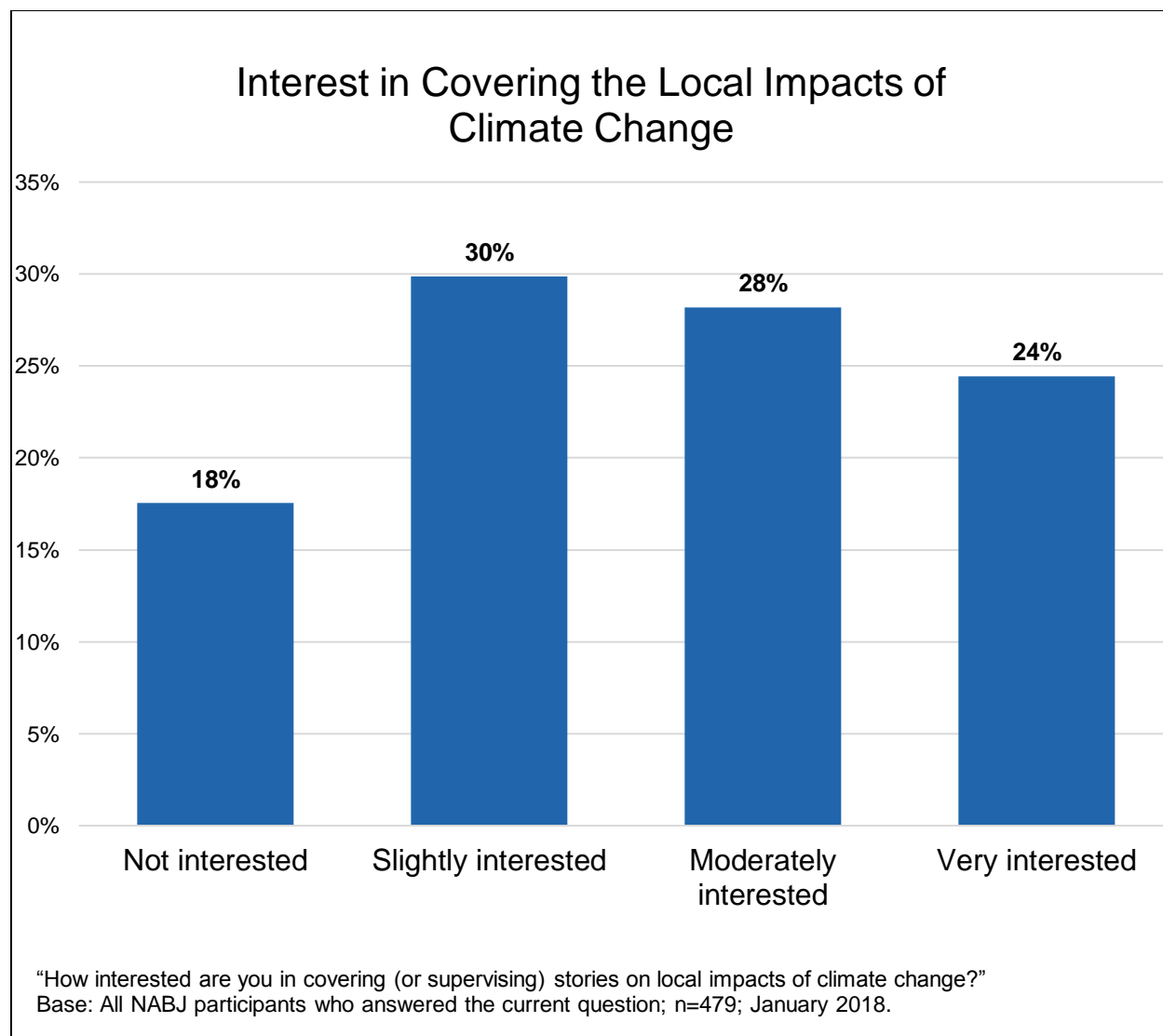
Describing Local Climate Change-related Stories

Of the 140 NABJ survey participants who indicated they had covered at least one local climate change-related story in the past 12 months, 116 provided a description of their most recent story. These story descriptions were subsequently categorized by our research team; descriptions that identified more than one story focus were counted in multiple categories.

Nearly half of the stories (45%) focused on an extreme weather event or on other severe impacts of climate change such as flooding and wildfires; the most frequently reported topic pertained to hurricanes, accounting for 17% of all stories. Approximately one-third (35%) of the stories focused more generally on climate change and its ecosystem impacts such as impacts on wildlife or ocean acidification. And approximately one-third (36%) of the stories focused on human impacts or responses such as impacts on agricultural production or the responses of government to the threat of climate change.

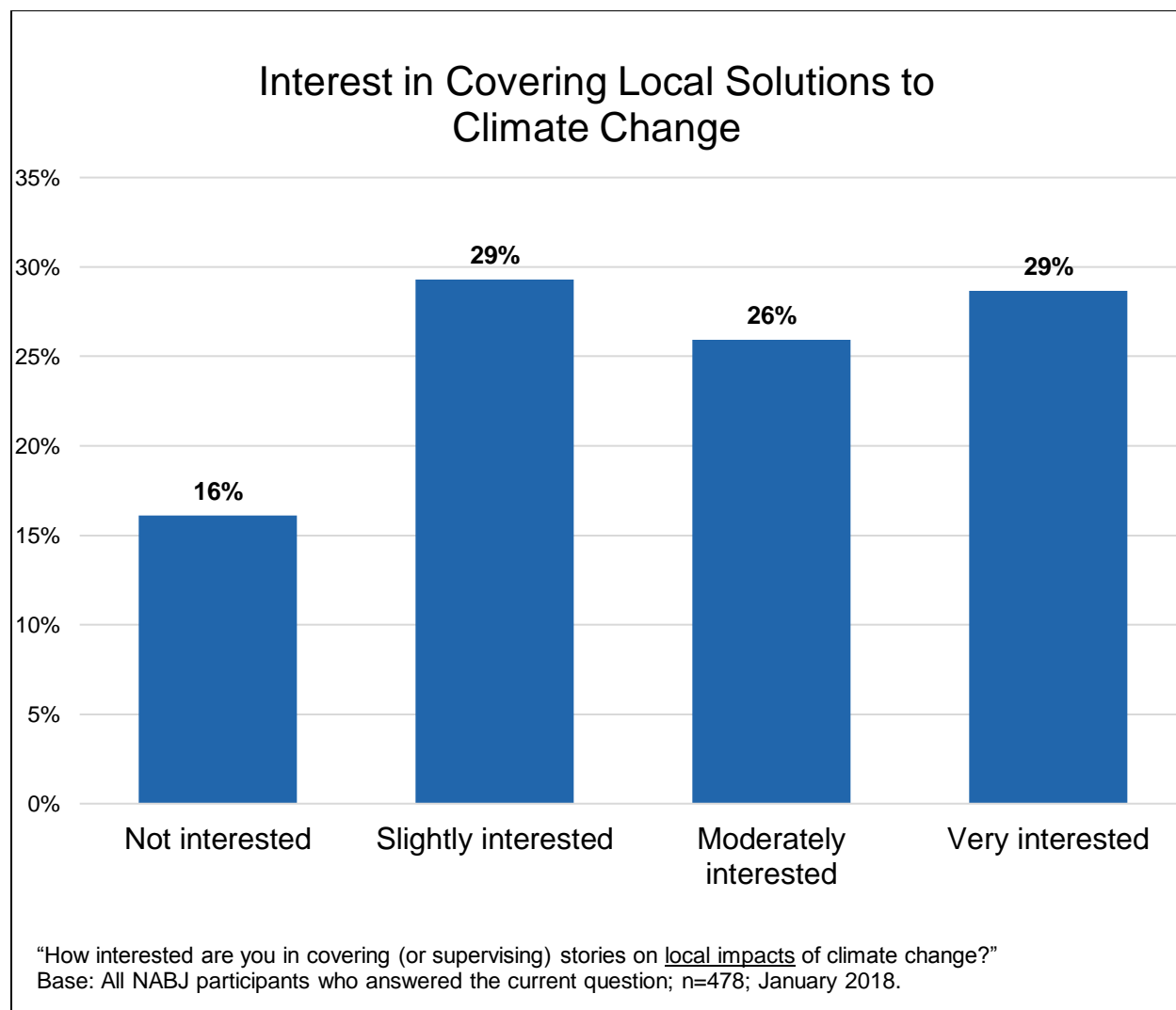
Interest in Reporting on Local Impacts of Climate Change

More than 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants said they are at least slightly interested in reporting local climate impacts stories, with nearly a quarter of participants saying they are very interested.



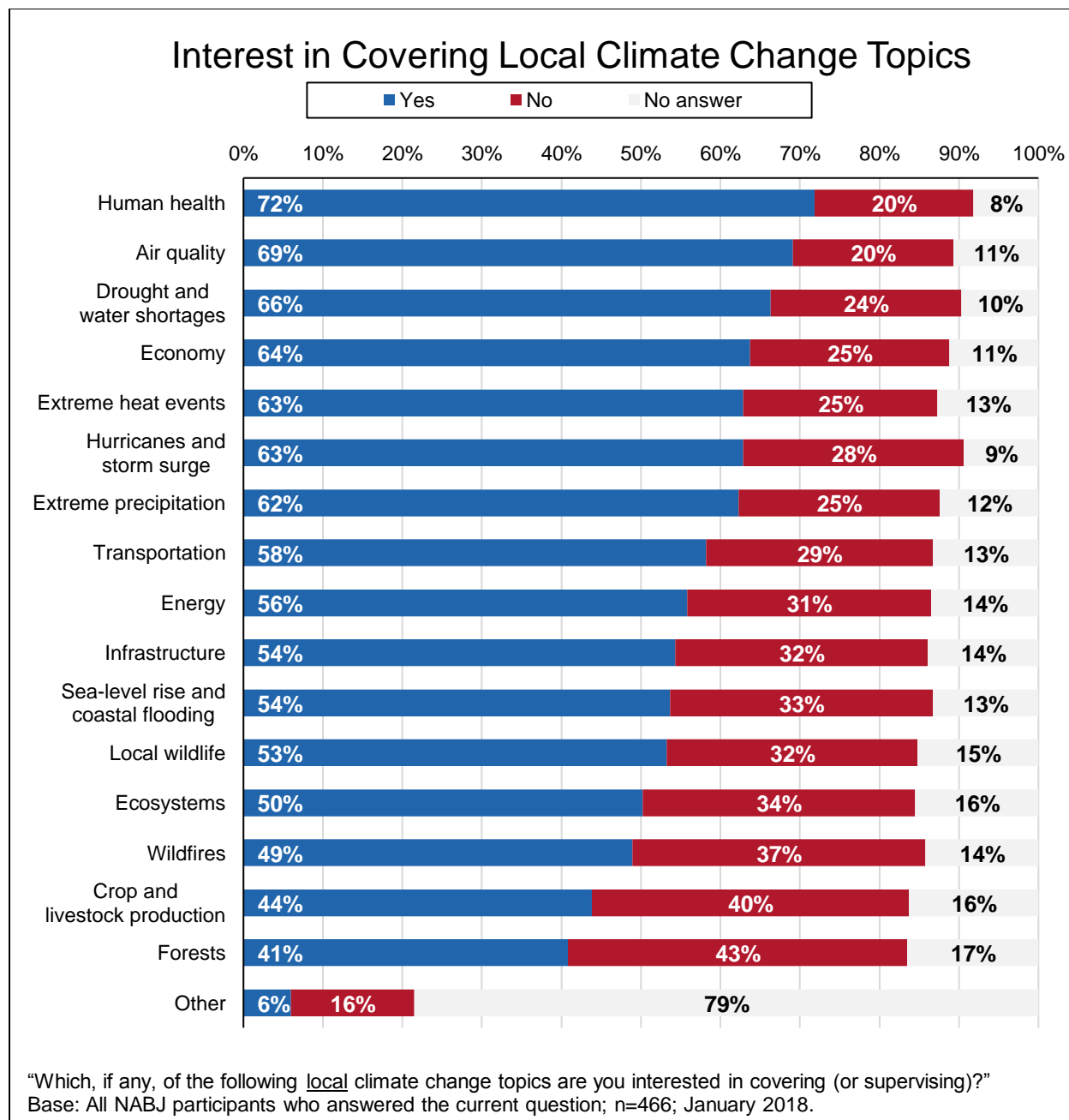
Interest in Reporting on Local Solutions to Climate Change

More than 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say they are interested in reporting on local climate solutions stories, with nearly 3 out of 10 saying they are very interested.



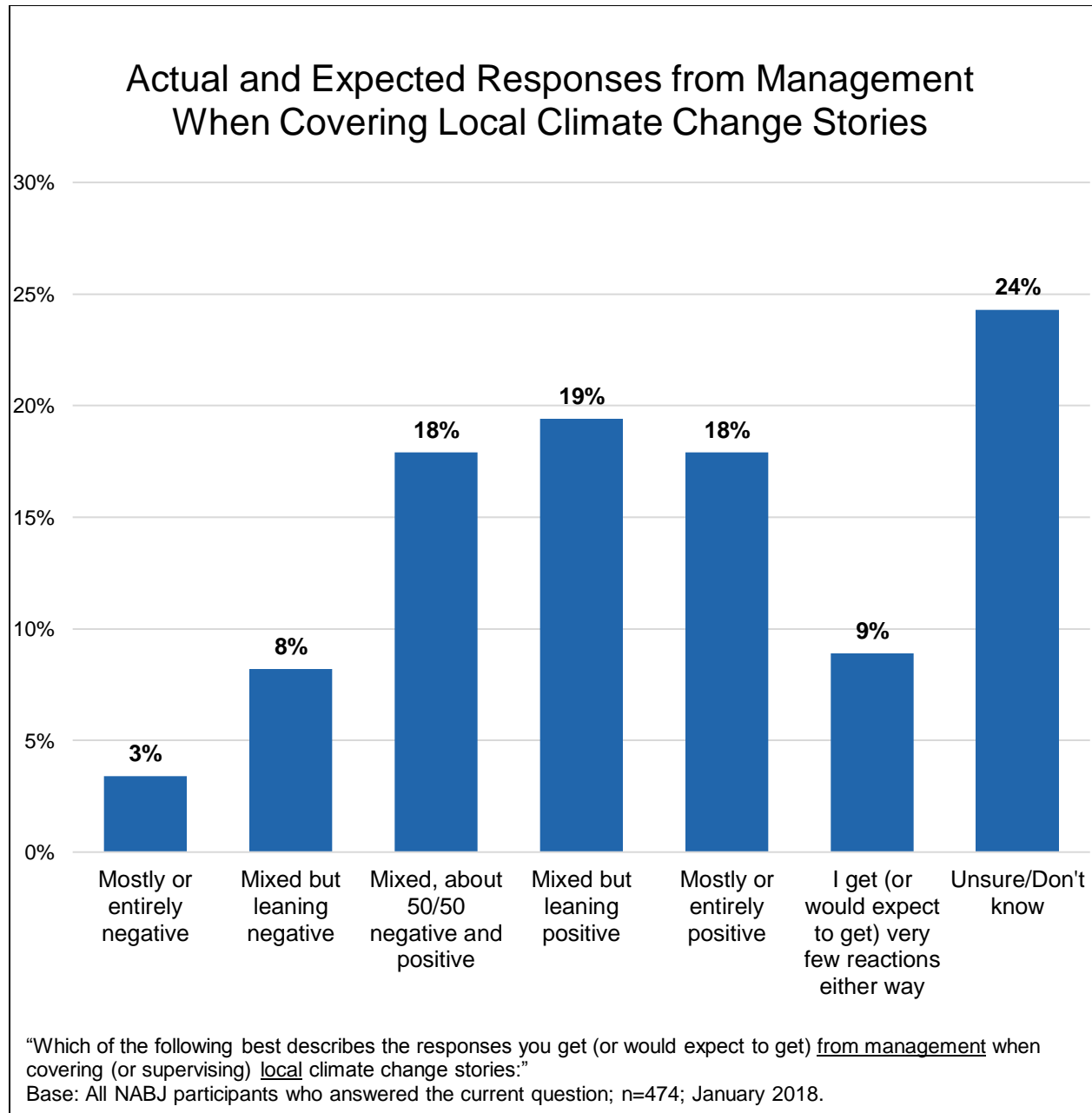
Interest in Local Climate Change Topics

A majority of NABJ survey participants say they are interested in covering or supervising a wide range of local climate change stories. The highest level of interest is for stories focused on human health, air quality, drought and water shortages, the economy, extreme heat events, hurricanes and storm surge, and extreme precipitation—with more than 6 out of 10 expressing interest in reporting on these topics.



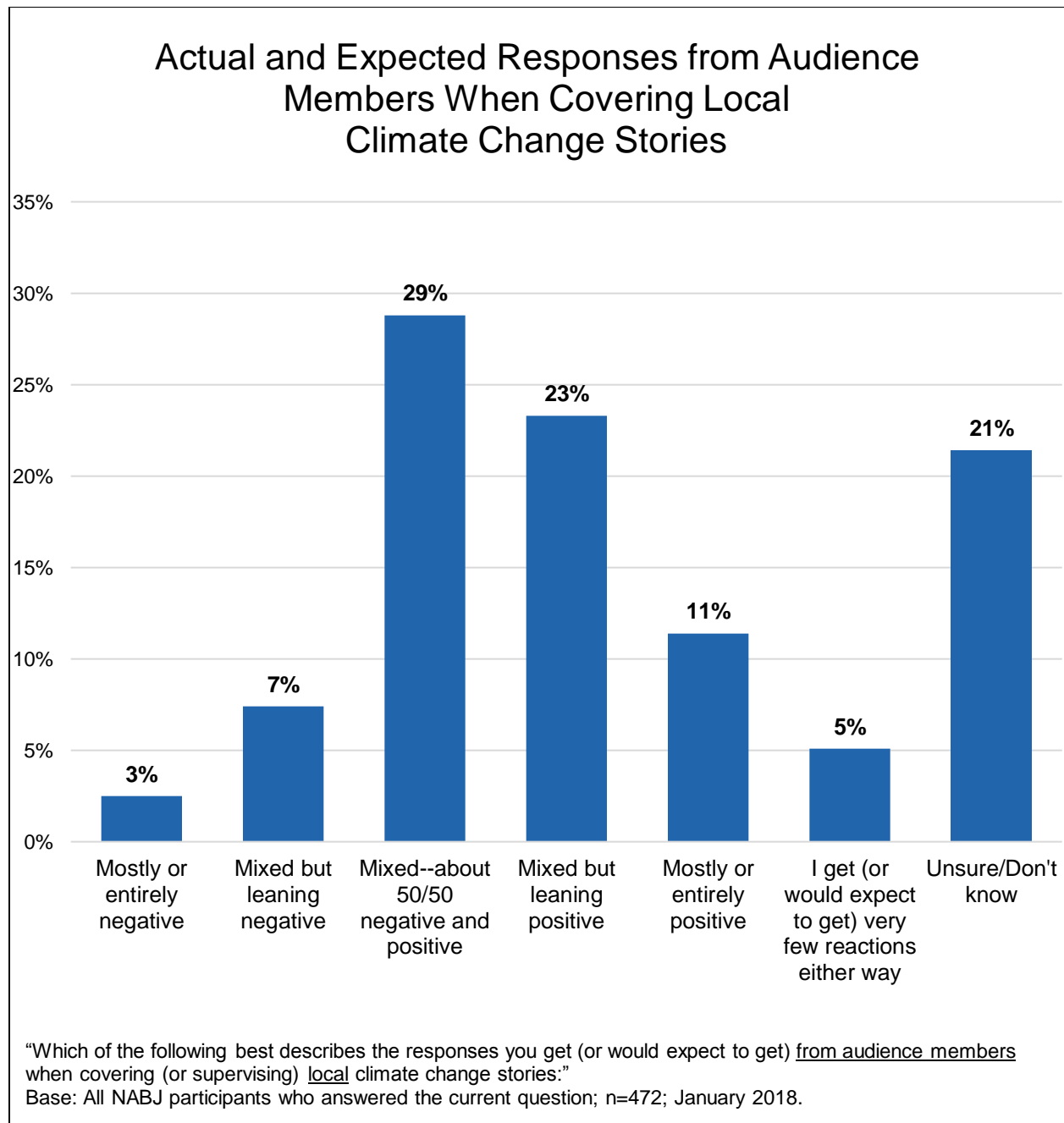
Expected Responses from Management

Nearly half of NABJ survey participants receive—or expect—largely positive responses, or little response, from management when covering or supervising local climate stories. Conversely, nearly 2 out of 10 say the reaction is split equally between negative and positive responses, and 1 out of 10 say the reaction is mostly negative. The most common response, however, was “unsure/don’t know”—given by nearly one-quarter of participants.



Expected Responses from Audience

Nearly 4 out of 10 NABJ participants receive—or expect—largely positive responses, or little response, from their audience when covering or supervising local climate change stories, while nearly 3 out of 10 say the reaction is equally split between negative and positive, and 1 out of 10 say it is largely negative. More than 2 out of 10 say they don't know, or are unsure, what kind of response they would get.

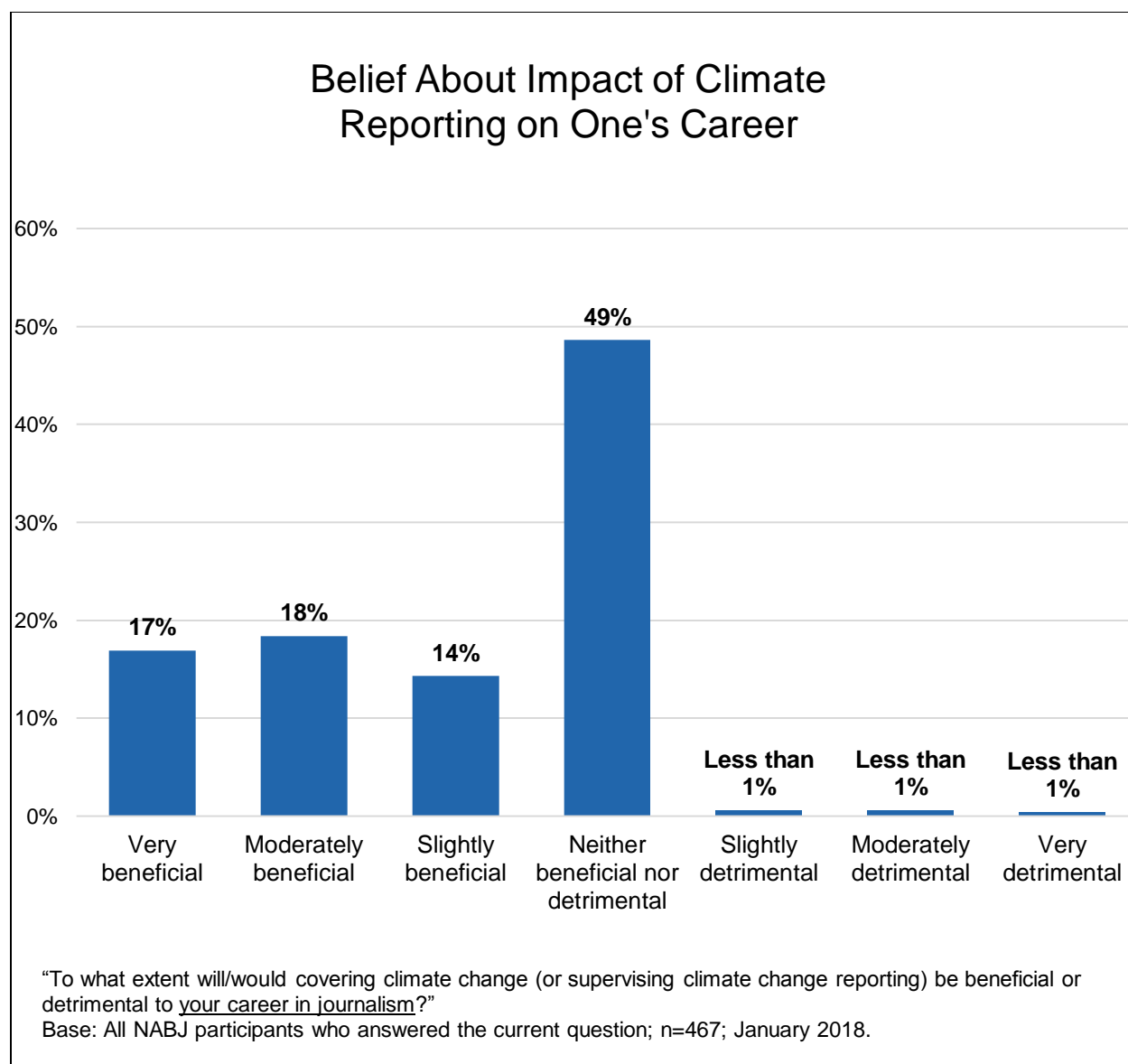


Impacts of Covering Climate Change

Journalists—like all professionals—are likely to consider the impact of their work decisions on both their own careers and on the broader community of which they are a part. We asked NABJ members what they saw to be the likely consequences of reporting on climate change.

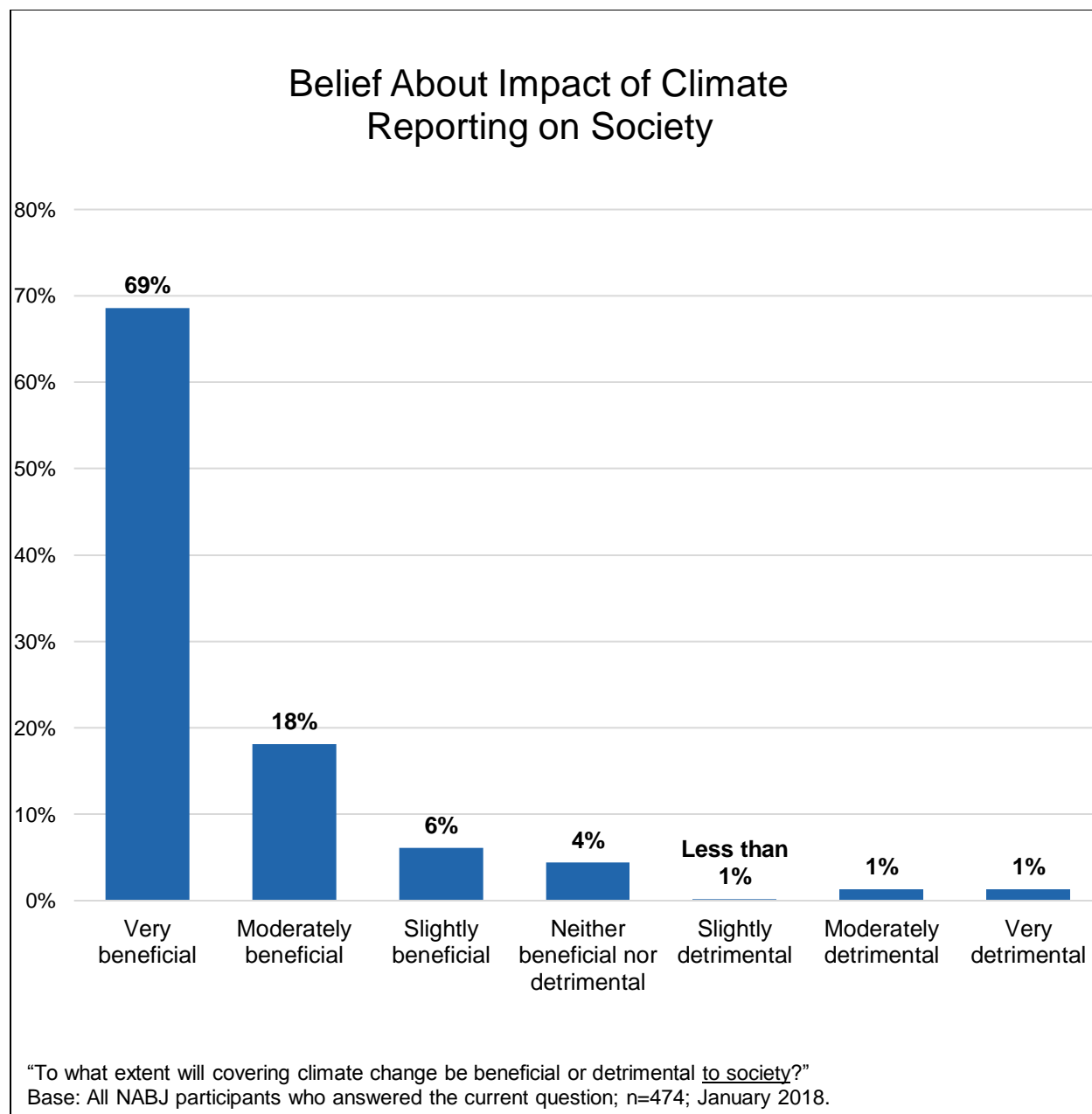
Impact on Respondents' Career

Nearly half of NABJ survey participants feel that reporting on climate change will be beneficial to their careers, while the other half said it will be neither beneficial nor detrimental to their career. Only 2% of NABJ survey participants say climate reporting will be detrimental.



Impact on Society

Nearly all NABJ survey participants say that reporting on climate change will be beneficial to society, with 7 out of 10 saying it will be very beneficial.



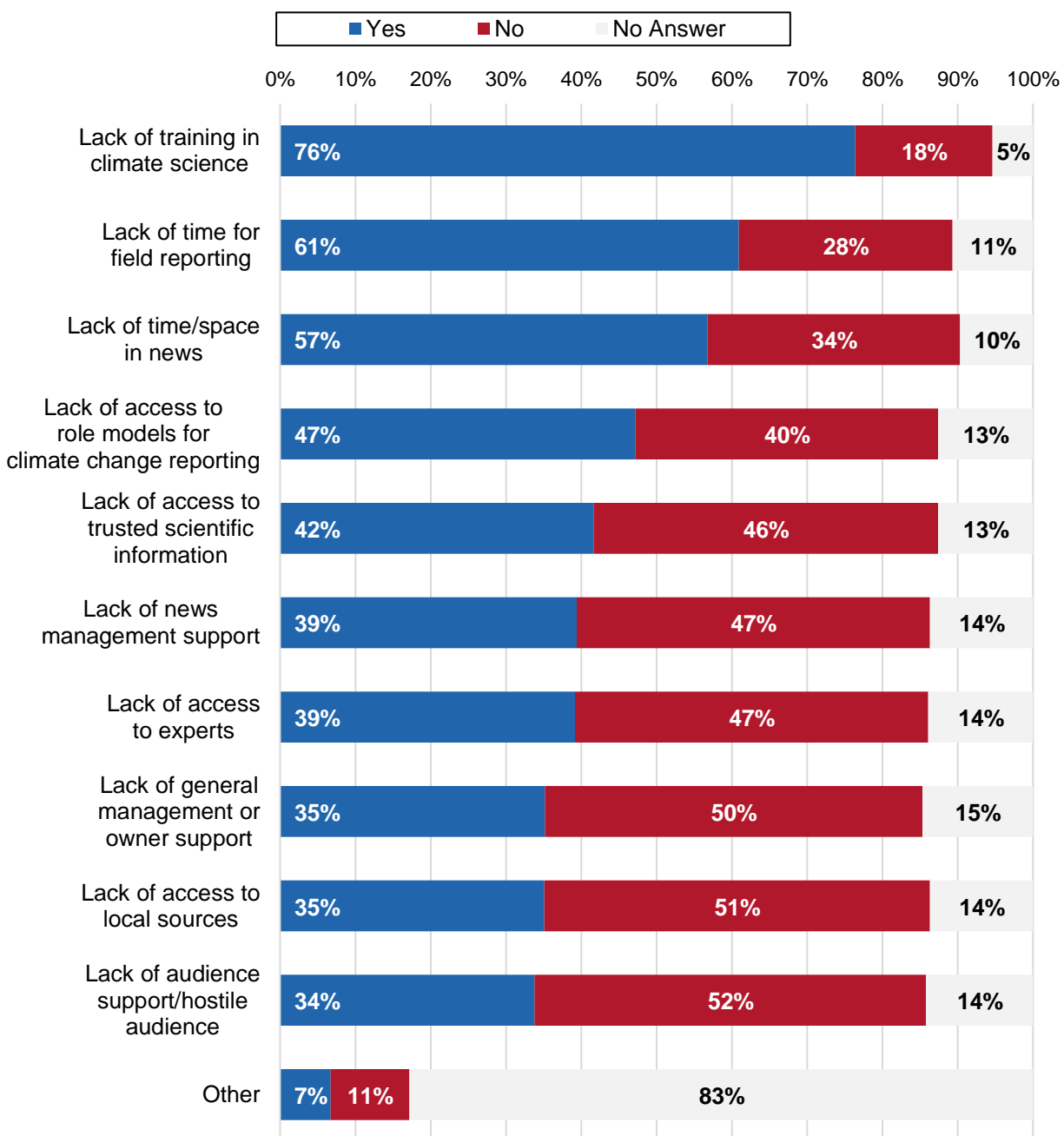
Obstacles to Covering Climate Change

Behavioral science research consistently shows that—across a broad range of beneficial behaviors—many people fail to perform beneficial behaviors not because they don't see value in them, but rather because they find the behaviors to be difficult to perform. Identifying what makes a behavior difficult to perform—that is, identifying the obstacles to behavioral performance—can lead to important insights about how to design resources that make the behavior easier to perform.

Most Frequent Obstacles to Covering Climate Change

Three-fourths of NABJ participants identify lack of training in climate science to be an important obstacle in reporting on climate change. Around 6 out of 10 also identify important obstacles related to time—both in limited time for field work and difficulties in finding time/space to cover it in the news. Nearly half of participants cite a lack of role models for climate reporting as an obstacle. Several other barriers are identified by large minorities of participants, including lack of access to trusted scientific information, lack of news management support, lack of access to experts, lack of general management or owner support, lack of access to local sources, and lack of audience support.

Perceived Obstacles to Reporting on Climate Change

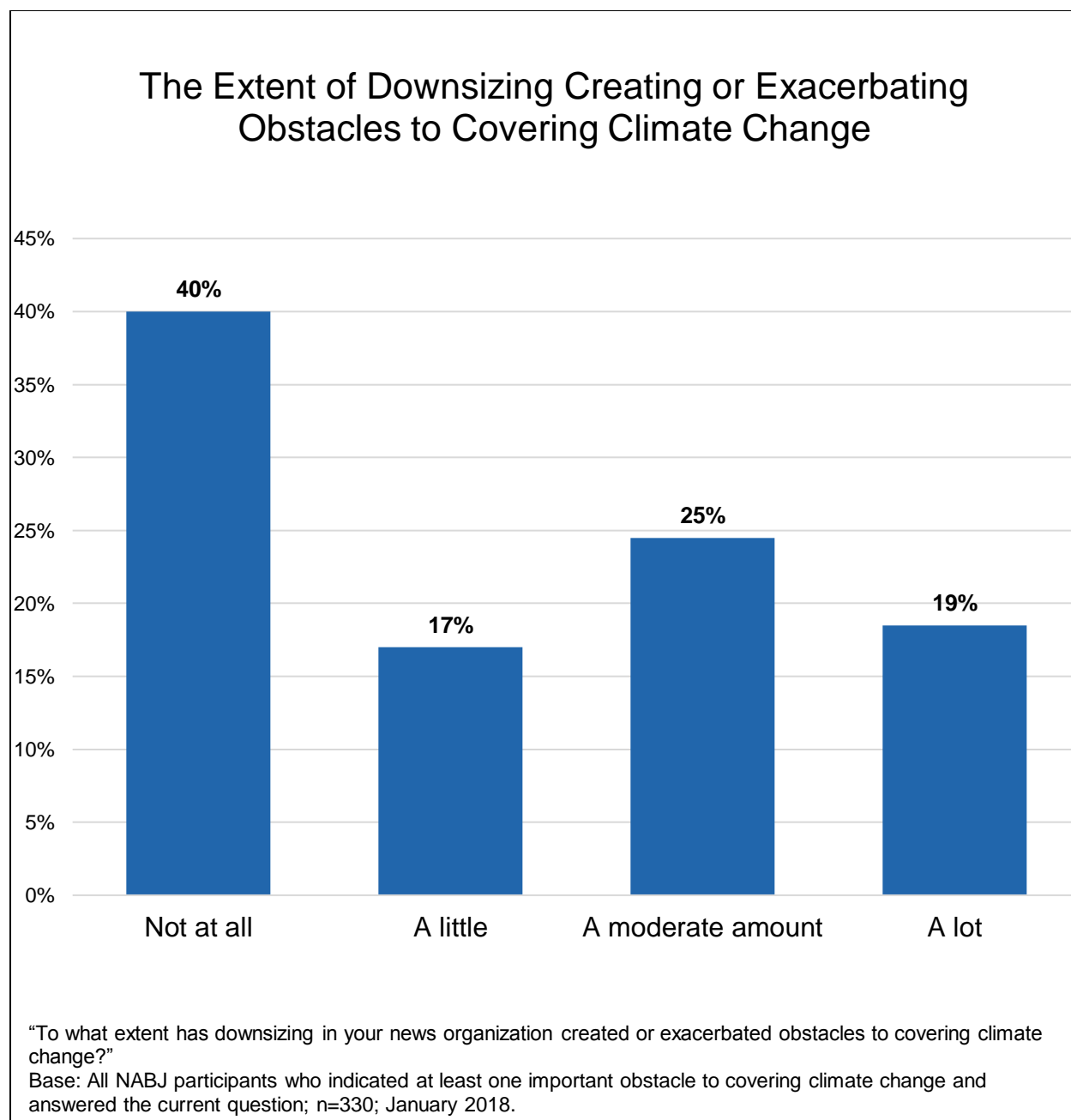


"Which of the following, if any, are important obstacles for you in covering climate change (or supervising others)?"

Base: NABJ participants who have covered (or supervised) a local climate change-related story in the past 12 months, or who indicated interest in reporting on local impacts or solutions to climate change and who answered the current question; n=373; January 2018.

Is Downsizing an Obstacle?

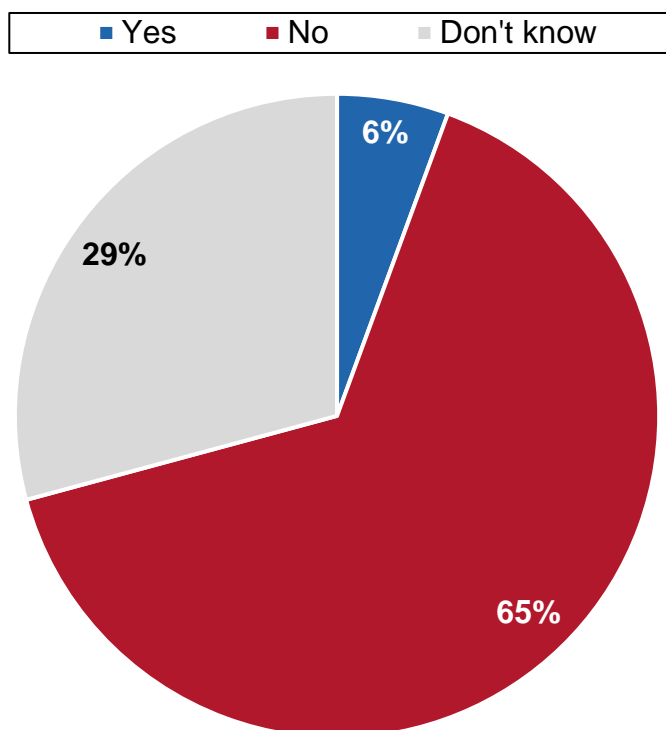
More than 6 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think downsizing in their news organization has created or exacerbated obstacles to reporting on climate change, with nearly 2 out of 10 indicating downsizing has created or exacerbated obstacles “a lot” in their news organization.



Is Management an Obstacle?

Six percent of NABJ survey participants say they have experienced at least one instance where management softened or censored a climate change-related story that they had personally reported or supervised, although nearly 3 out of 10 say they don't know if this had happened to them or not. We asked a follow-up question to those who had this experience: "In what way(s) has management ever softened or censored a story you covered (or supervised) related to climate change?" These open-ended responses will be coded and reported at a future date.

Management's Censorship and Softening of Climate Change-related Stories

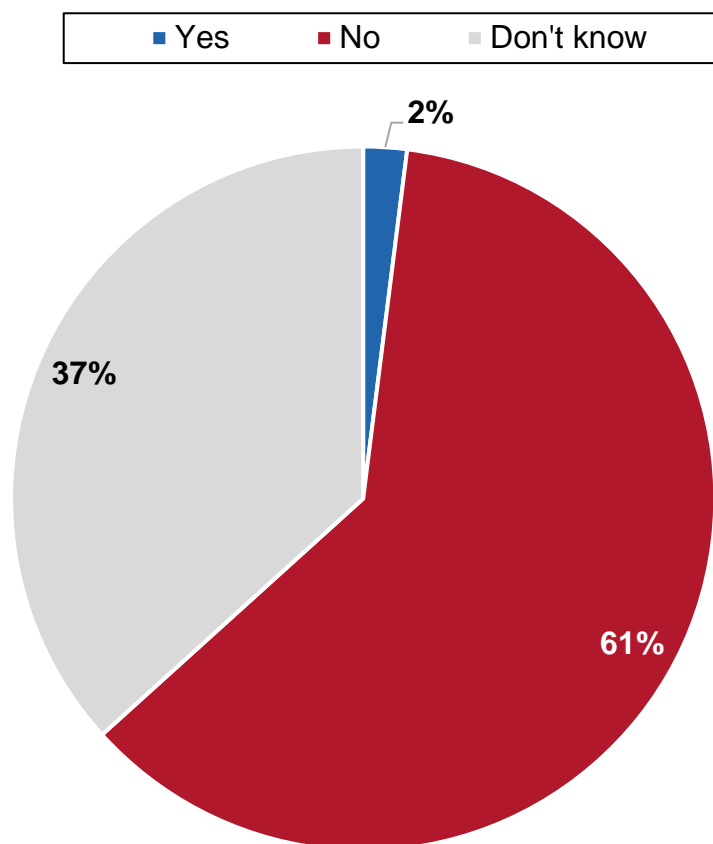


"Has management ever softened or censored a story you covered (or supervised) related to climate change?"
Base: All NABJ participants who indicated a lack of support from news management, general management, or owner as an obstacle to climate reporting, and who answered the current question; n=161; January 2018.

Is Management an Obstacle for Colleagues?

Two percent of NABJ survey participants say they have seen management soften or censor a colleague's climate change reporting. We asked a follow-up question to those who had: "In what way(s) has management ever softened or censored a story a colleague covered (or supervised) related to climate change?" These open-ended responses will be coded and reported at a future date.

Management's Censorship and Softening of Colleague's Climate Change-related Stories

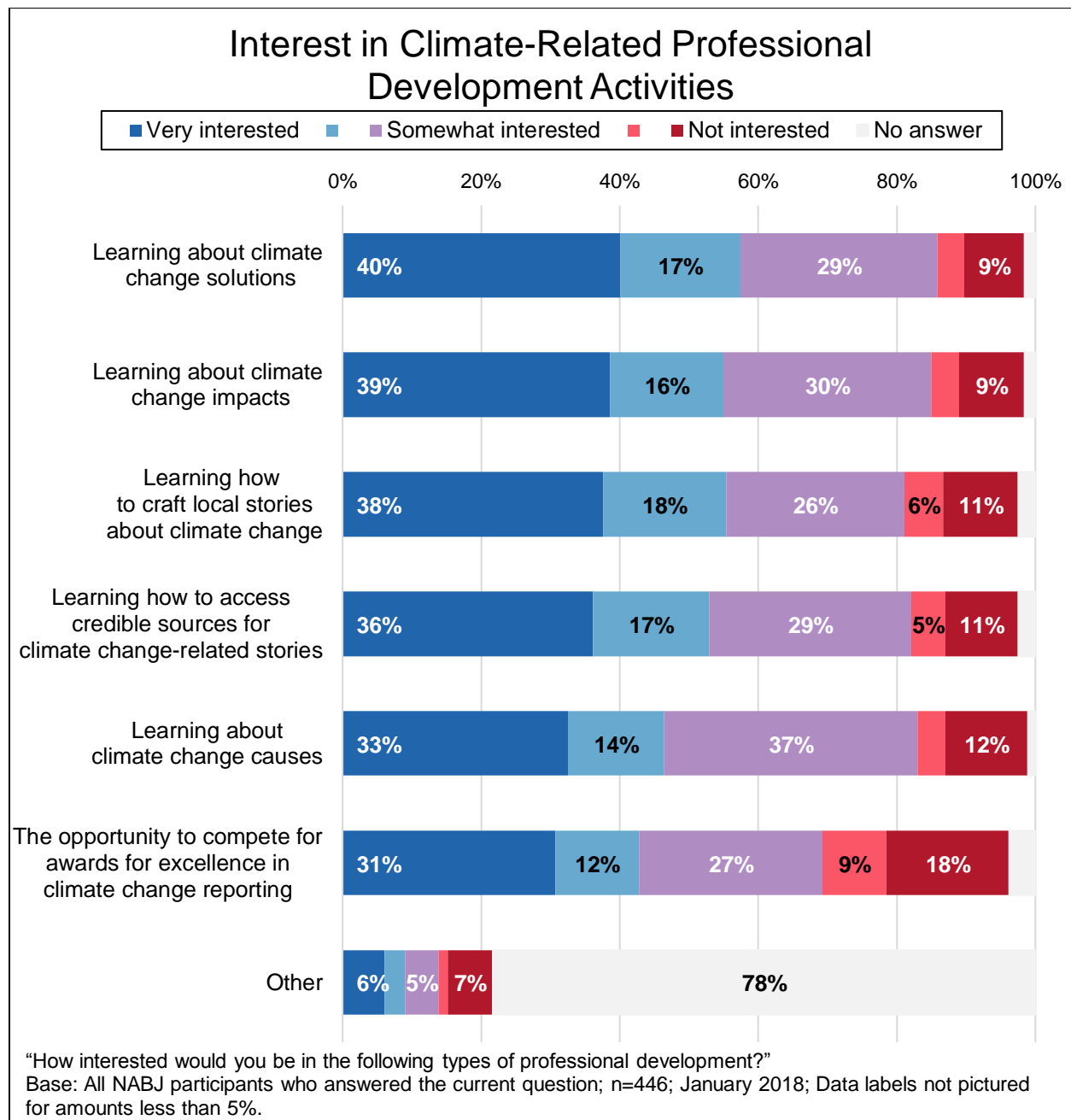


"Have you seen management soften or censor a story a colleague covered (or supervised) related to climate change?"

Base: All NABJ participants who indicated lack of general management or owner support or lack of news management support as an obstacle and have not personally experienced management softening or censoring a story related to climate change, and who answered the current question; n=150; January 2018.

Professional Development on Climate Change

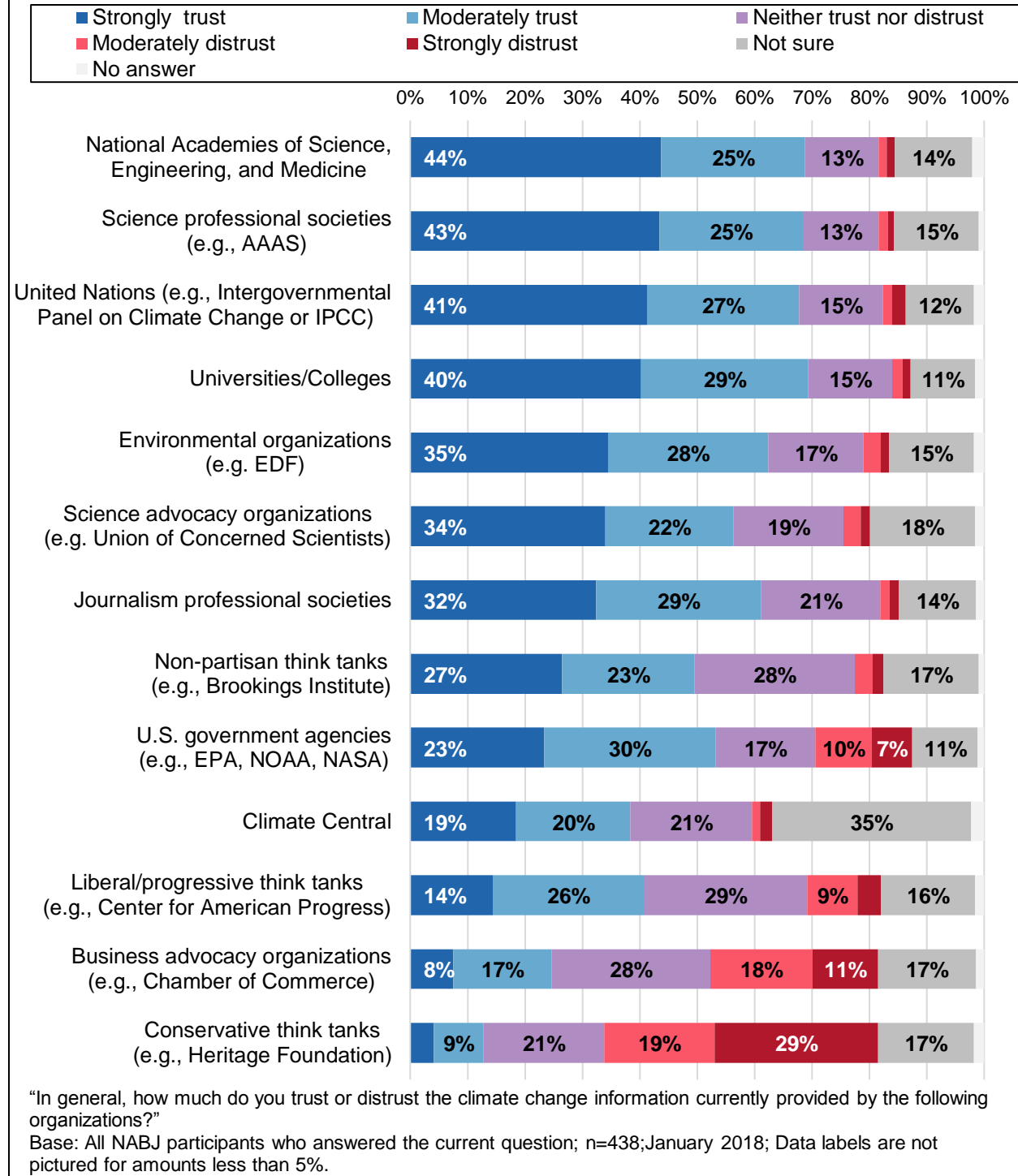
Over half of NABJ survey participants are interested in a range of professional development activities related to climate change reporting. The professional development activities they are most interested in are learning about climate change solutions, learning about climate change impacts, learning how to craft local climate stories, and learning how to access credible sources for climate stories.



Trust in Sources of Climate Change Information

NABJ survey participants tend to most trust the climate information provided by independent science organizations—including the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, professional science societies, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and universities and colleges. In comparison, partisan think tanks (both liberal and conservative) and business advocacy organizations are least trusted.

Trust in Sources of Climate Change Information

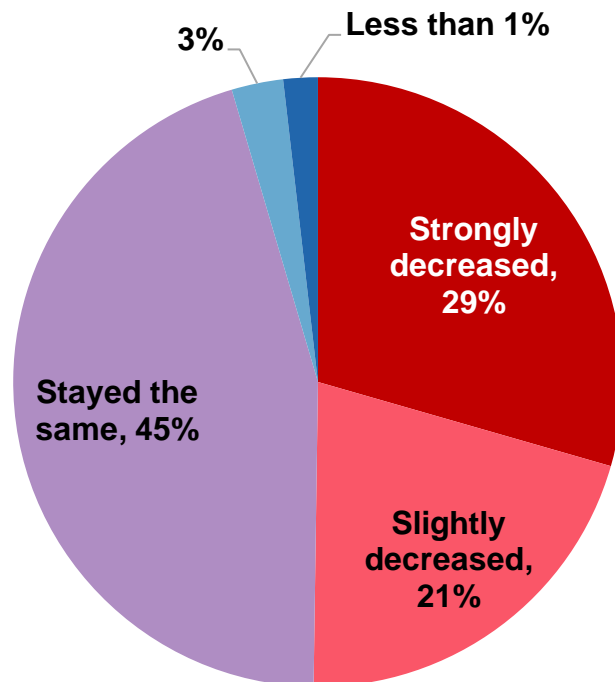


Change in Trust of Government Institutions?

More than half of NABJ survey participants say their trust in U.S. government agencies as sources of information about climate change has decreased over the past 12 months, coinciding with the first year of the Trump administration; few say their trust has increased. Those participants who say their level of trust has changed were asked: "Did your trust in these sources decrease (increase) slightly or strongly?"; by a 3 to 2 margin, participants say their trust has decreased strongly.

Change in Trust of U.S. Government Agencies as Sources of Climate Change Information

■ Strongly decreased ■ Slightly decreased ■ Stayed the same
■ Slightly increased ■ Strongly increased



"In the past 12 months, has your trust in U.S. government agencies (e.g., EPA, NOAA, NASA) as sources of information about climate change increased, decreased, or stayed the same?"

"Did your trust in these sources increase slightly or strongly?"

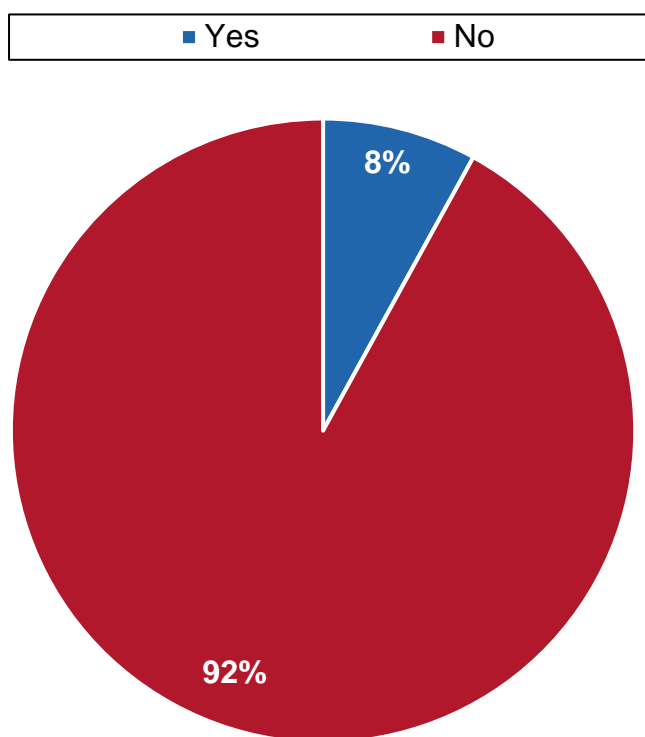
"Did your trust in these sources decrease slightly or strongly?"

Base: All NABJ participants who answered any of the following questions: "In the past 12 months, has your trust in U.S. government agencies (e.g., EPA, NOAA, NASA) as sources of information about climate change increased, decreased, or stayed the same?" "Did your trust in these sources increase slightly or strongly?" or "Did your trust in these sources decrease slightly or strongly?"; n=438; January 2018.

Avoidance of the Terms Global Warming and Climate Change

Fewer than 1 out of 10 NABJ survey participants who had covered or supervised climate change stories in the past year said they purposively avoided using the terms global warming or climate change on at least one occasion. In a follow-up question, we asked them why they did so. These open-ended responses will be coded and reported at a future date.

Avoiding the Terms "Global Warming" and "Climate Change" When Covering Climate Change Stories



"When you covered (or supervised) climate change stories in the past 12 months, did you ever purposefully exclude the terms 'global warming' or 'climate change'?"

Base: NABJ participants who covered or supervised local climate change-related stories in the past 12 months and who answered the current question; n=125; January 2018.

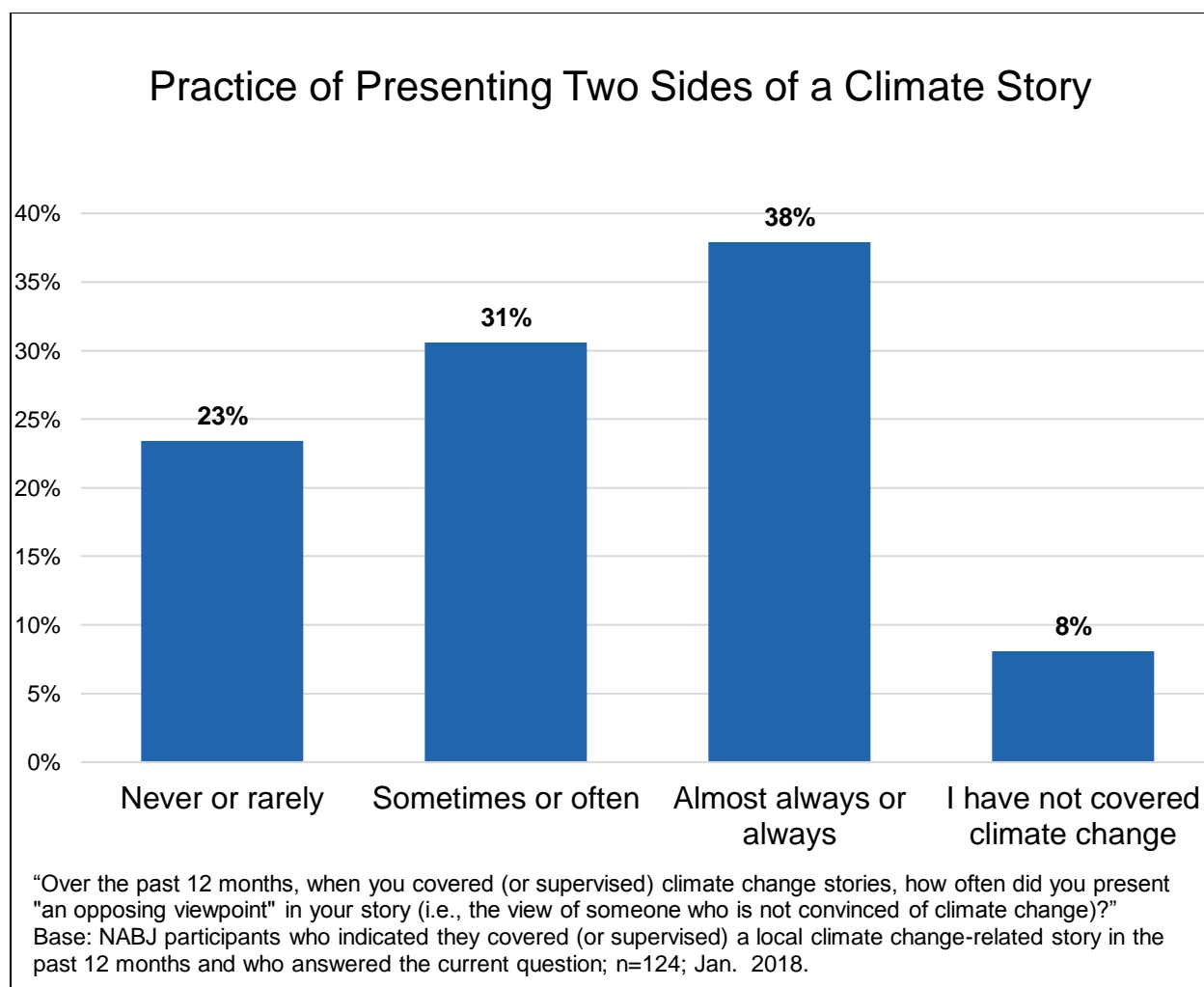
Presenting Opposing Viewpoints: Practices and Attitudes

Balance is the professional norm used by some journalists to ensure their reporting remains objective, by including spokespersons on conflicting sides of a debate and by giving equal time and weight to both sides of a story. A ‘false balance’ occurs when this approach is taken despite a weight of evidence strongly favoring one side over another. In effect, this ‘false balance’ has the potential to perpetrate an information bias. Scholars suggest that journalistic accounts of human-caused climate change that include an opposing viewpoint are presenting a false balance.

The Practice of Presenting Opposing Viewpoints

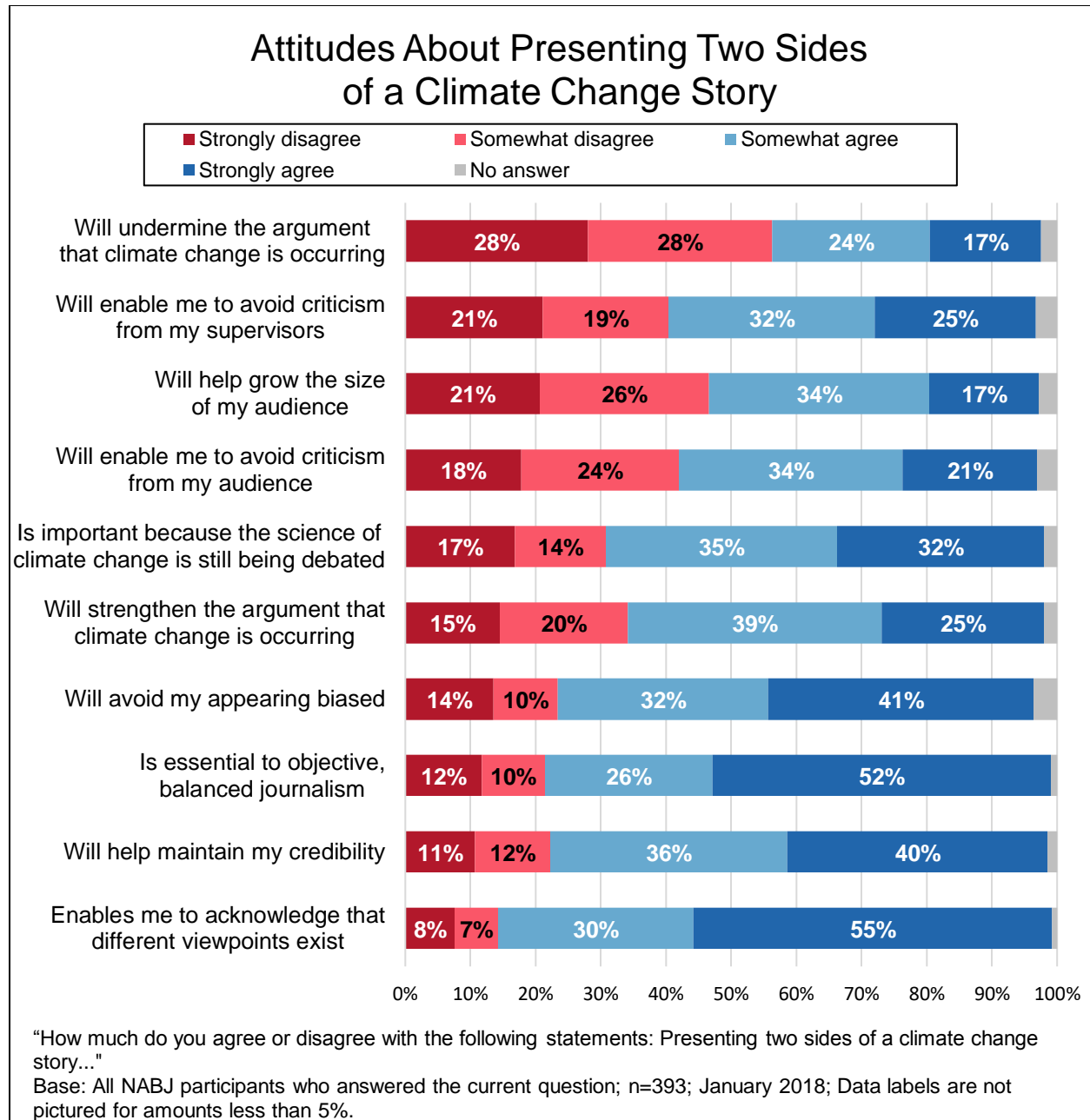
Nearly one-quarter of NABJ survey participants who had covered climate change stories during the past year say they rarely or never presented an opposing view point (i.e., someone not convinced of climate change). Conversely, nearly 7 out of 10 say they do so sometimes, often, almost always, or always. In a follow-up question, we asked survey participants why they included opposing viewpoints.

Of the 85 NABJ survey participants who had reported an opposing viewpoint in a climate change story in the past 12 months, 62 described their reason for doing so. More than 8 out of 10 (81%) said they included an opposing viewpoint because it is essential to objective, balanced journalism or to acknowledge that other viewpoints exist. For example, one participant wrote: “Out of an obligation to fairness throughout all of our reporting — even if those skeptics are incredibly wrong, their opinions are valued and should always be heard.” A much smaller set of participants (13%) said they included an opposing viewpoint in order to avoid the appearance of bias in their reporting, or to avoid criticism.



Attitudes about Presenting Two Sides to a Climate Change Story

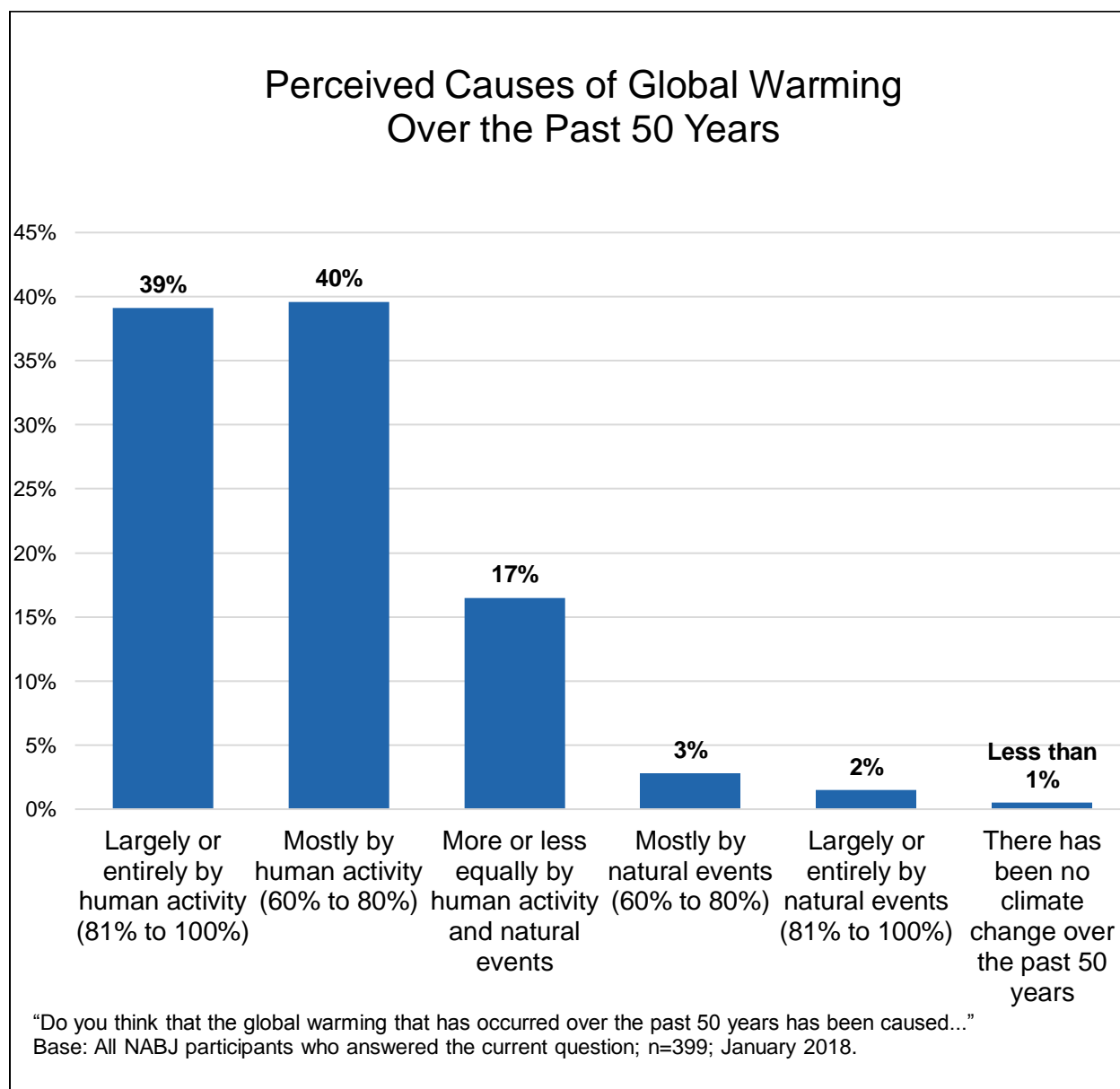
While nearly all NABJ members are convinced that human-caused climate change is occurring, many feel that reporting two sides of a climate change is helpful for one or more reasons. For example, around 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say that including opposing viewpoints allows them to acknowledge that different viewpoints exist, that such an inclusion is an essential part of objective journalism, and that it will help maintain their credibility. Similarly, nearly 7 out of 10 say that including an opposing viewpoint is important because the science of climate change is still being debated.



Additional Beliefs, Attitudes and Experiences with Global Warming

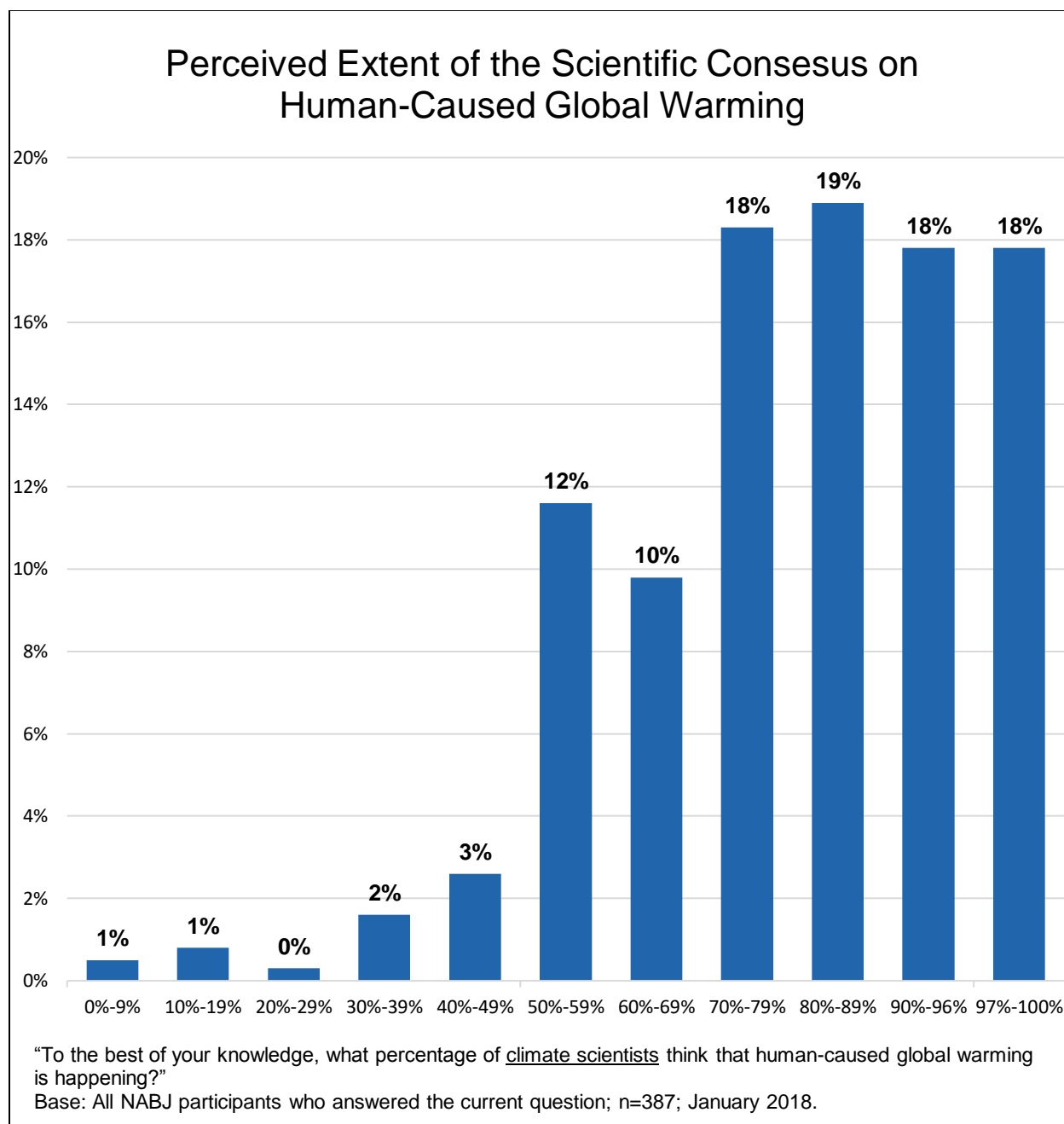
Human Activity or Natural Events

Nearly 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants think that the global warming that has occurred in the past 50 years is due mostly or entirely to human activity, while nearly 2 out of 10 others think it is caused equally by human activity and natural causes. Few believe global warming is mostly or entirely caused by natural events or hasn't been happening in the past 50 years.



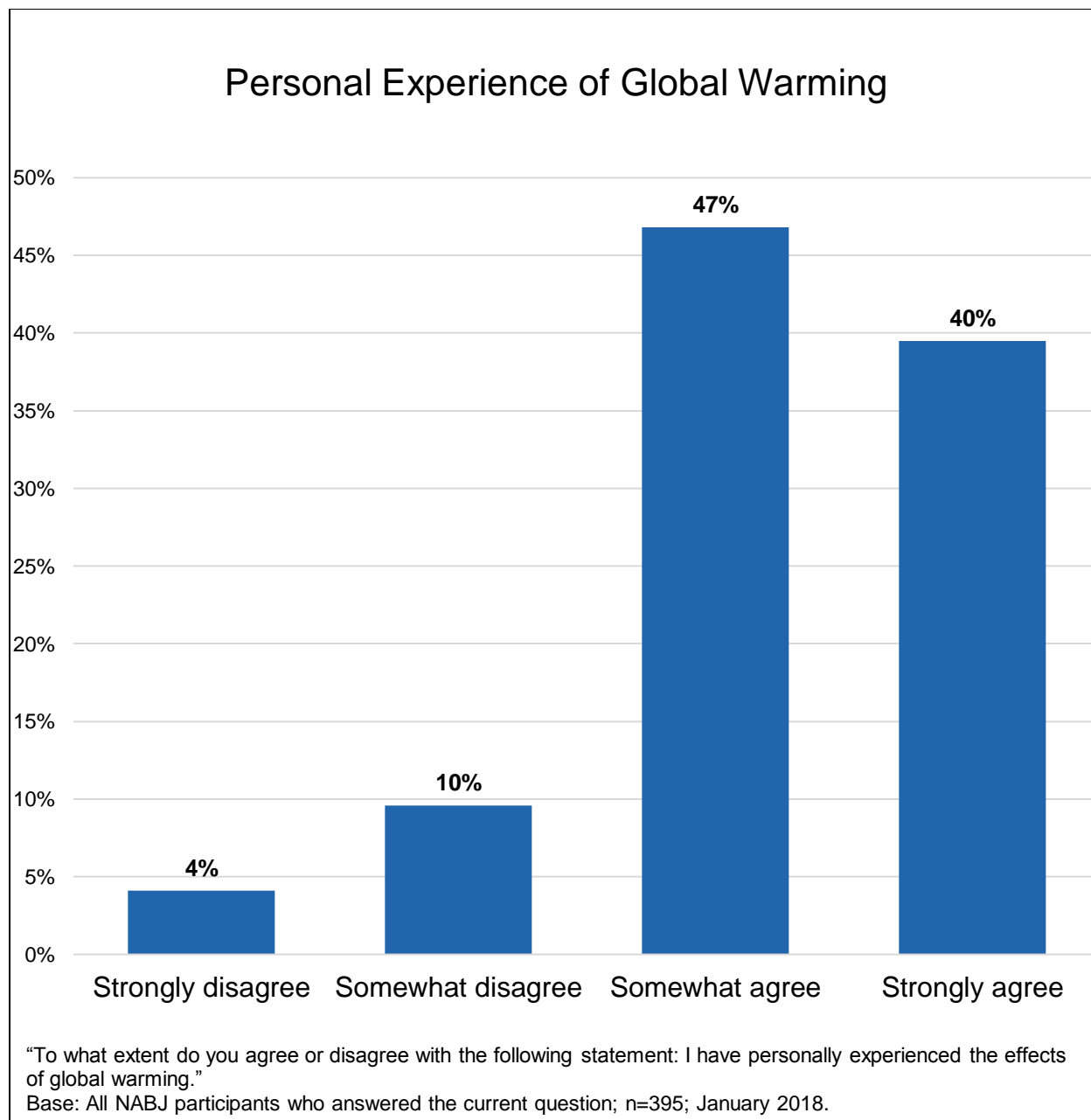
Perceived Scientific Consensus about Human-Caused Global Warming

Nearly 2 out of 10 NABJ survey participants are aware that 97% or more of climate scientists think human-caused global warming is occurring, while more than 3 out of 10 say the scientific consensus is 90% or greater. Conversely, nearly 7 out of 10 say the consensus is less than 90%, and some say it is far less.



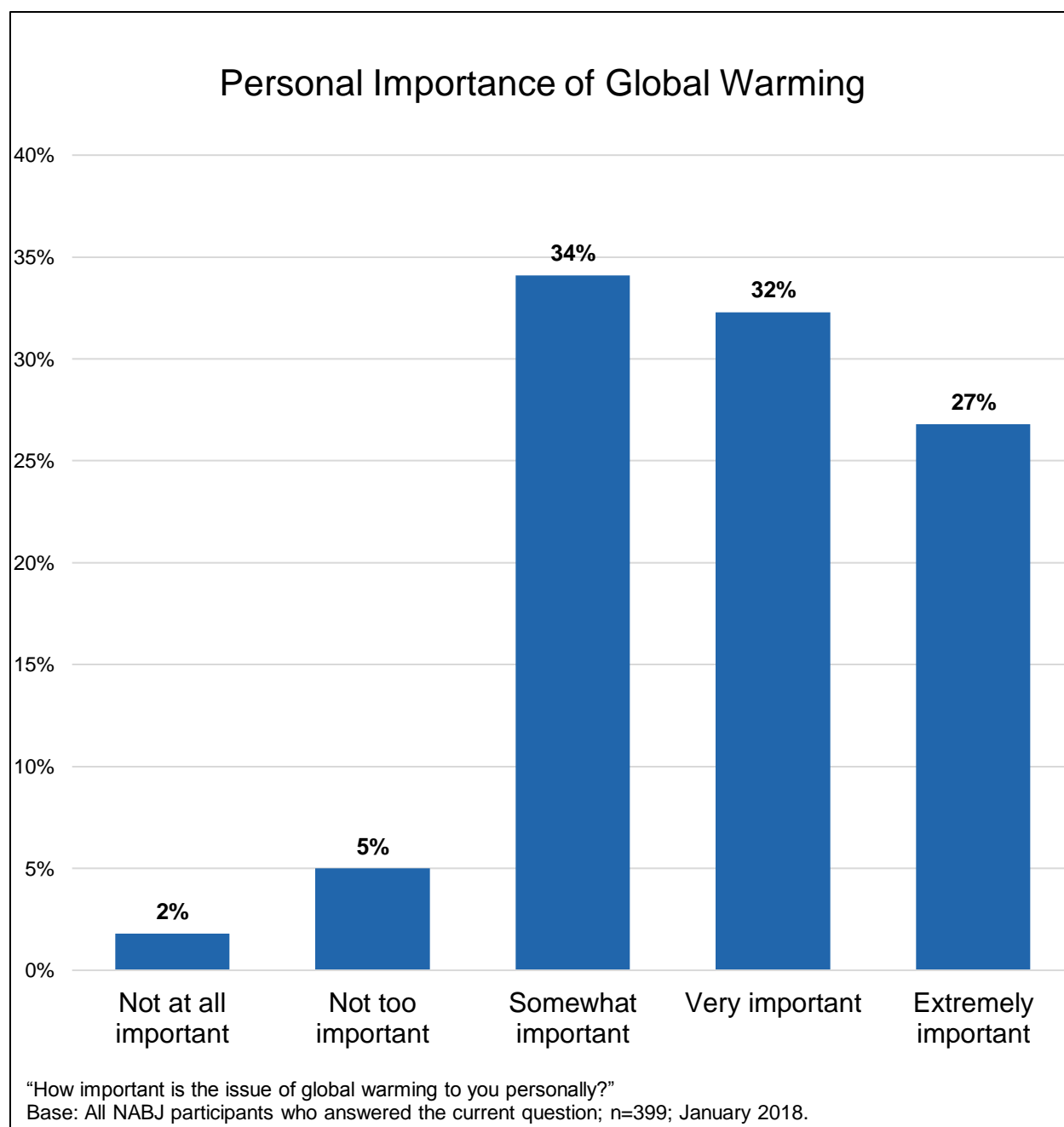
Personal Experience of Global Warming

Nearly 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants agree with the statement, “I have personally experienced the effects of global warming,” with 4 in 10 strongly agreeing. In a follow-up question, we asked these participants “In what way(s) have you personally experienced global warming?” These open-ended responses will be coded and reported at a future date.



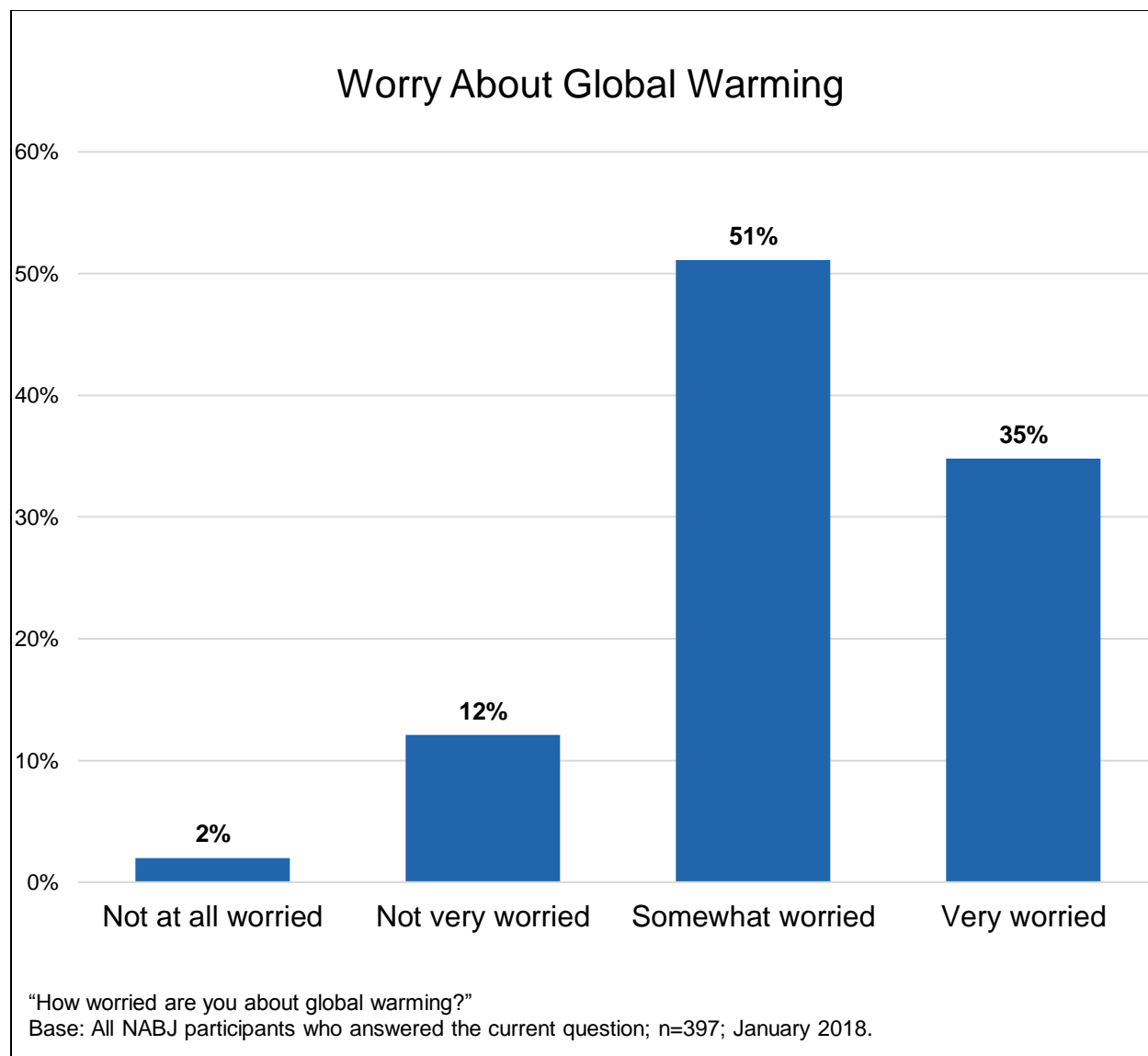
Personal Importance of Global Warming

More than 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say the issue of global warming is at least somewhat personally important to them; nearly 6 out of 10 say it is very or extremely important to them.



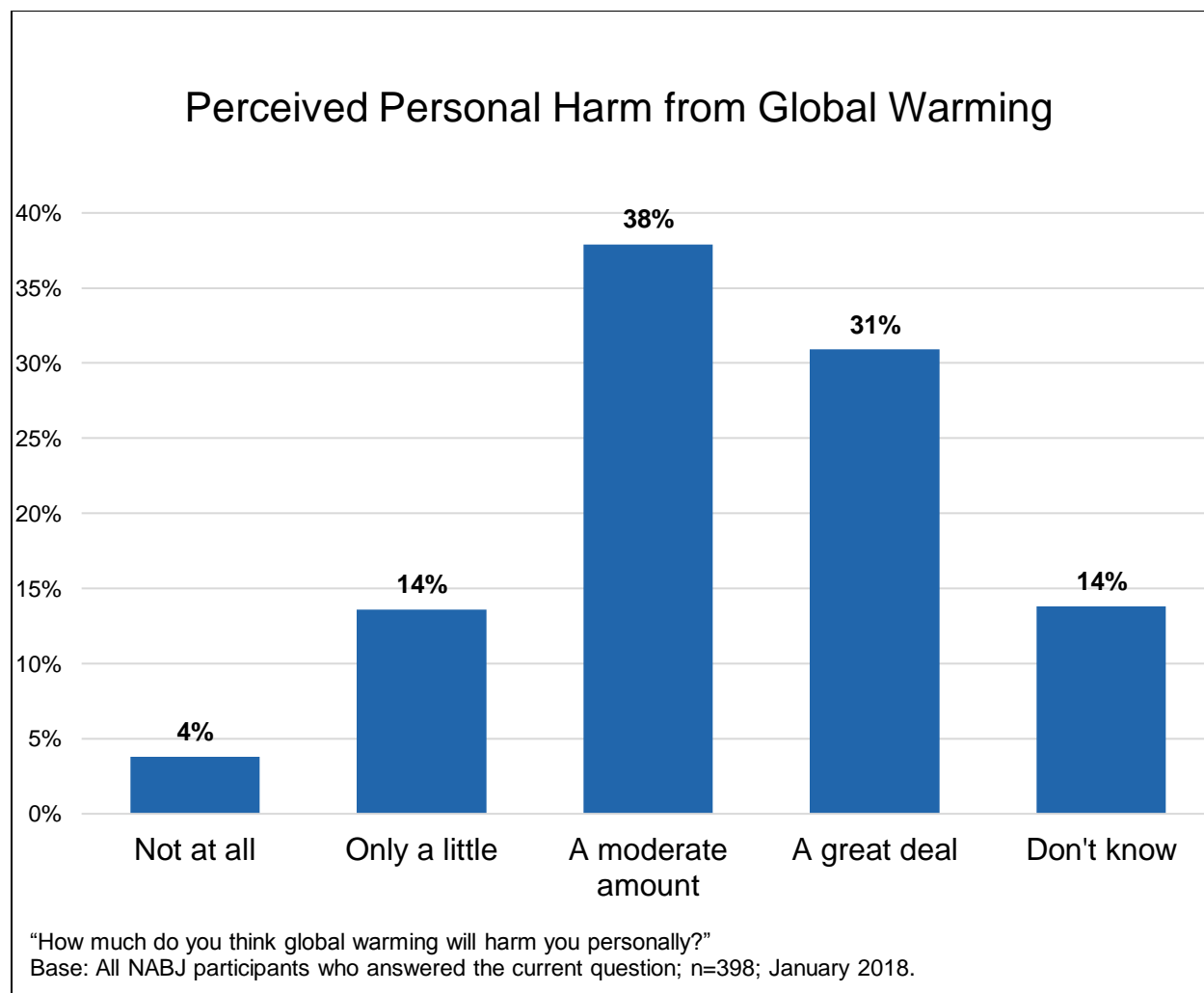
Worry About Global Warming

Nearly 9 out of 10 NABJ survey participants say they are worried about global warming; more than 3 out of 10 say they are very worried.



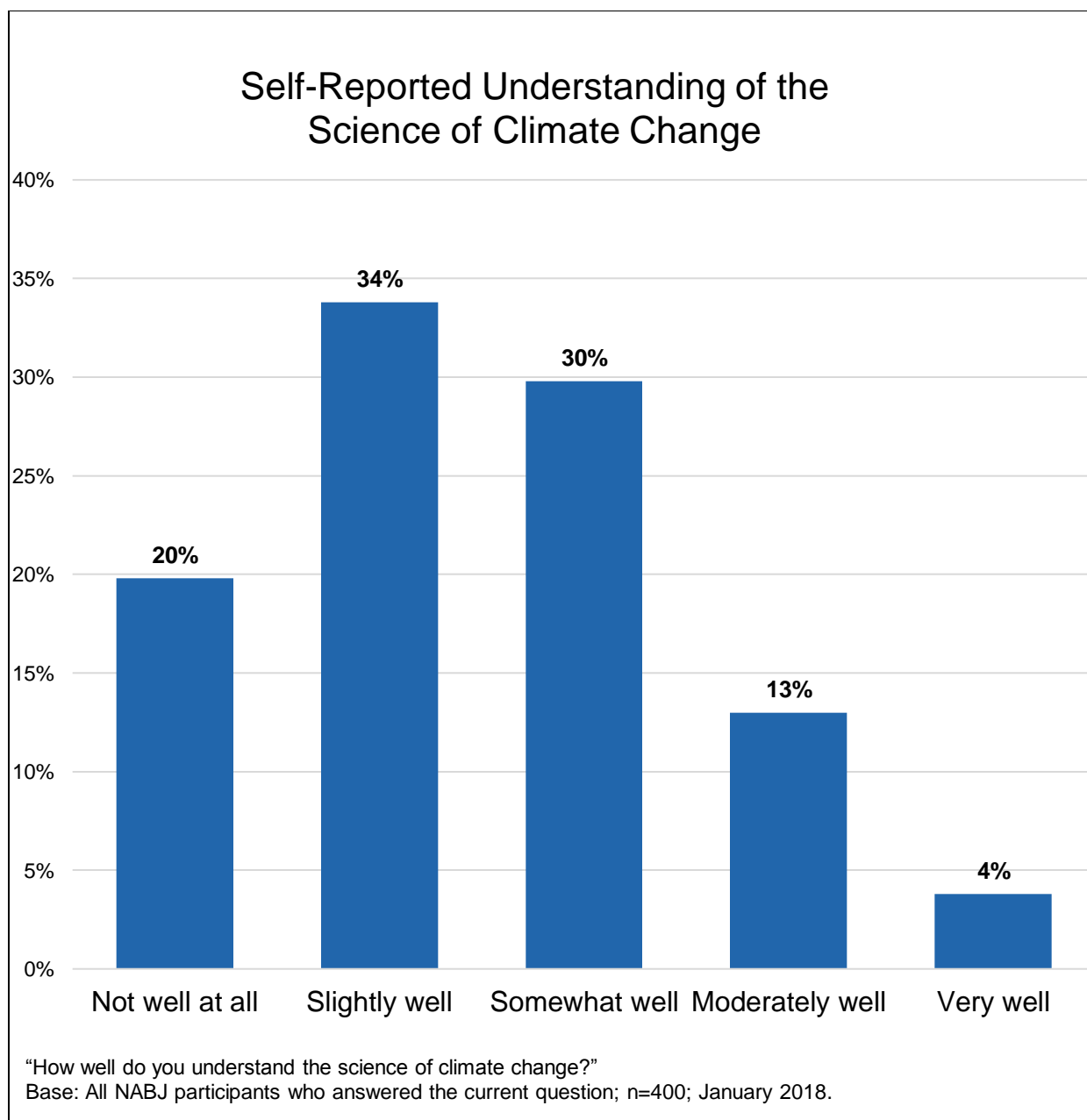
Personal Harm from Global Warming

More than 8 out of 10 NABJ survey participants feel they will be personally harmed by global warming; nearly 7 in 10 think they will be personally harmed a moderate amount or a great deal.



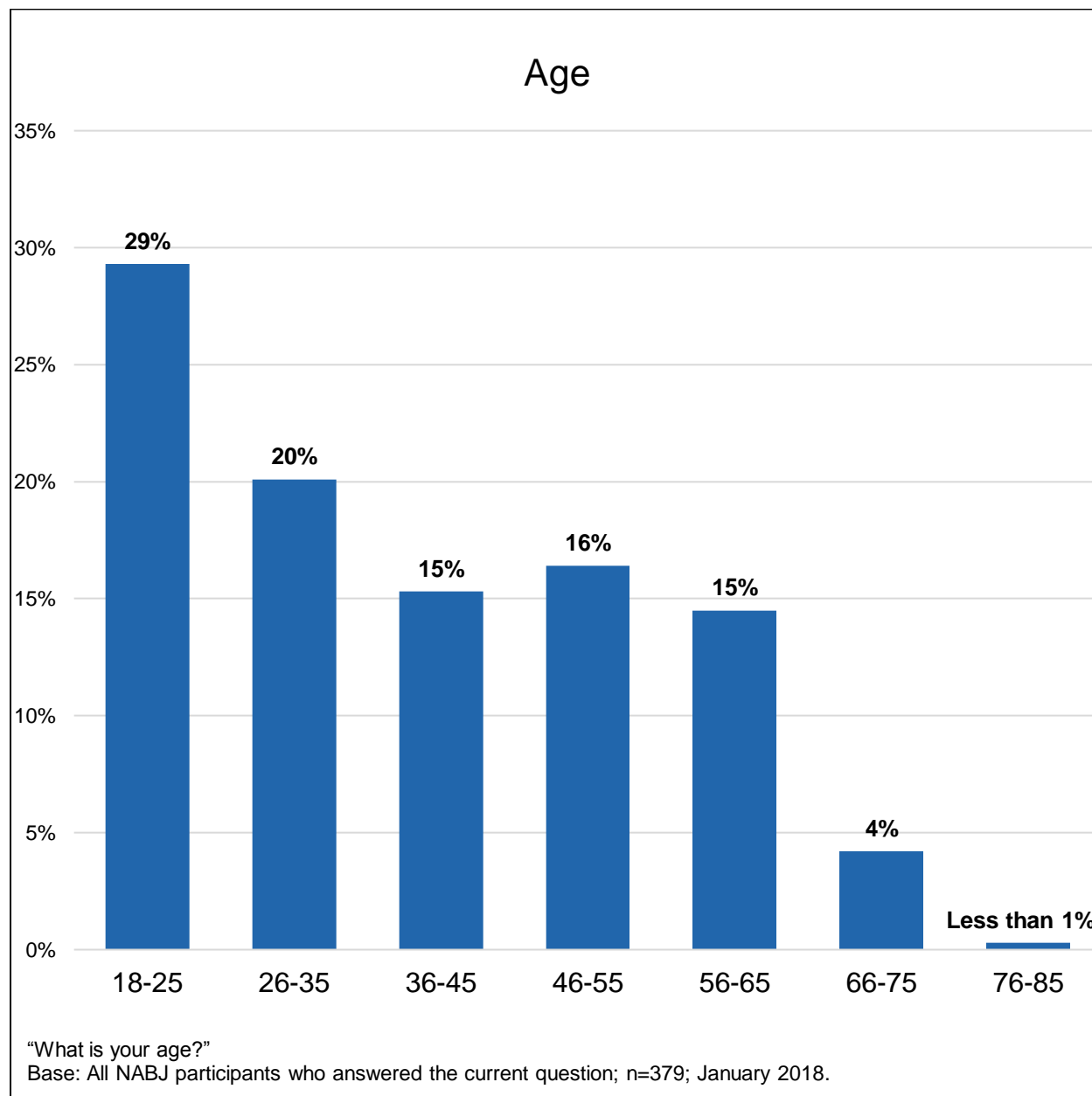
Understanding the Science of Climate Change

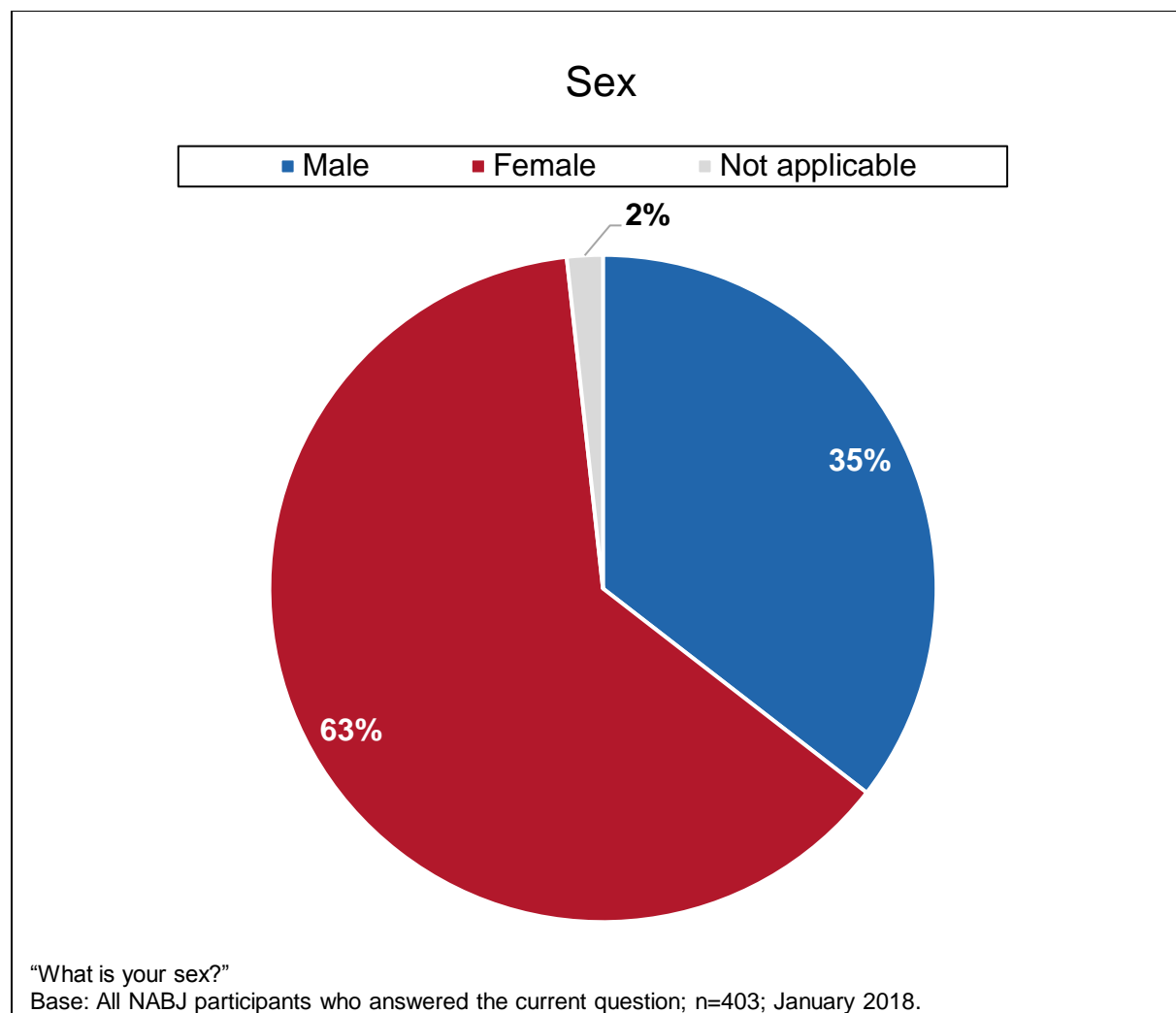
Nearly half of NABJ survey participants feel they know the science of climate change somewhat, moderately, or very well; the other half feel they know the science only slightly well, or not well at all.

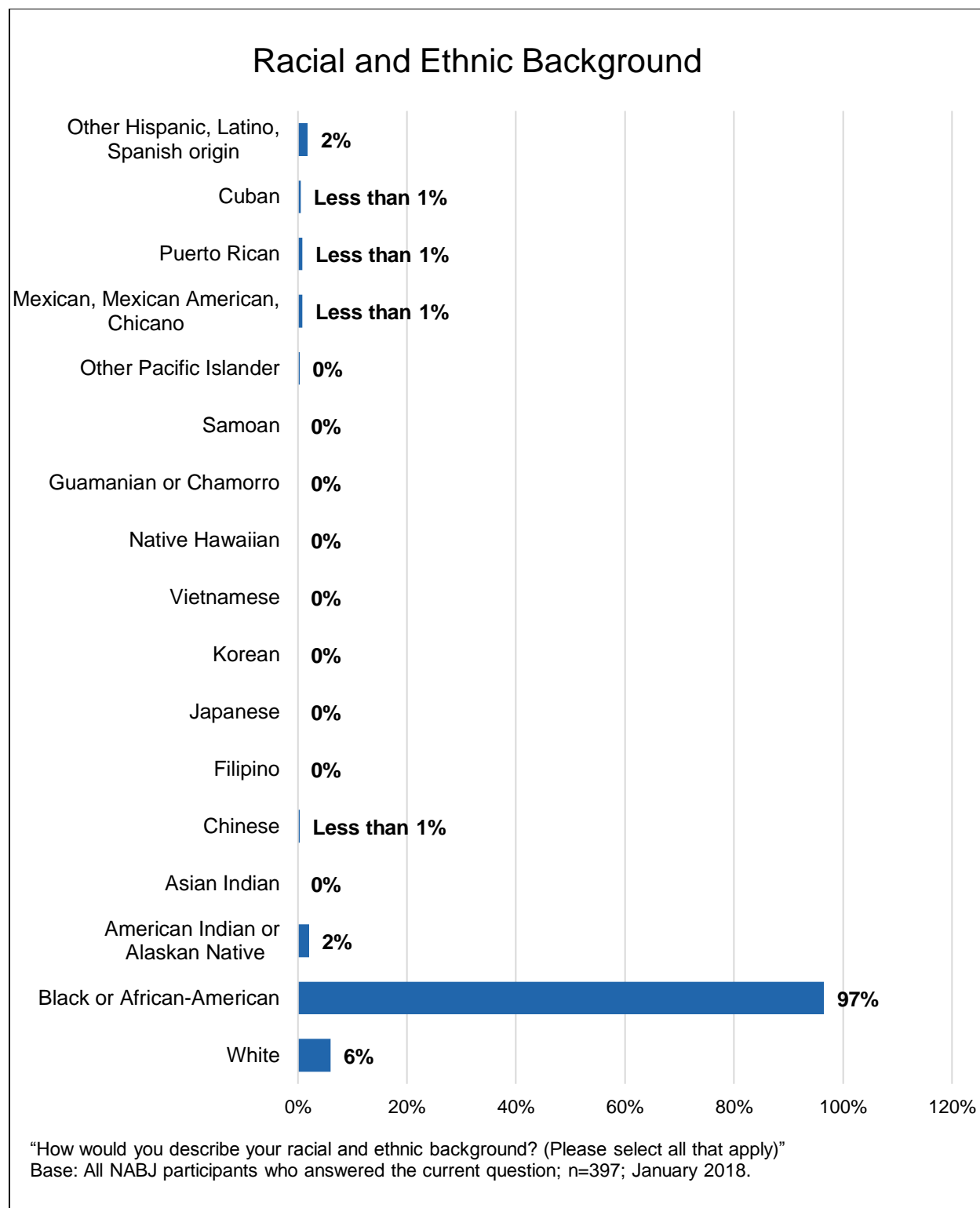


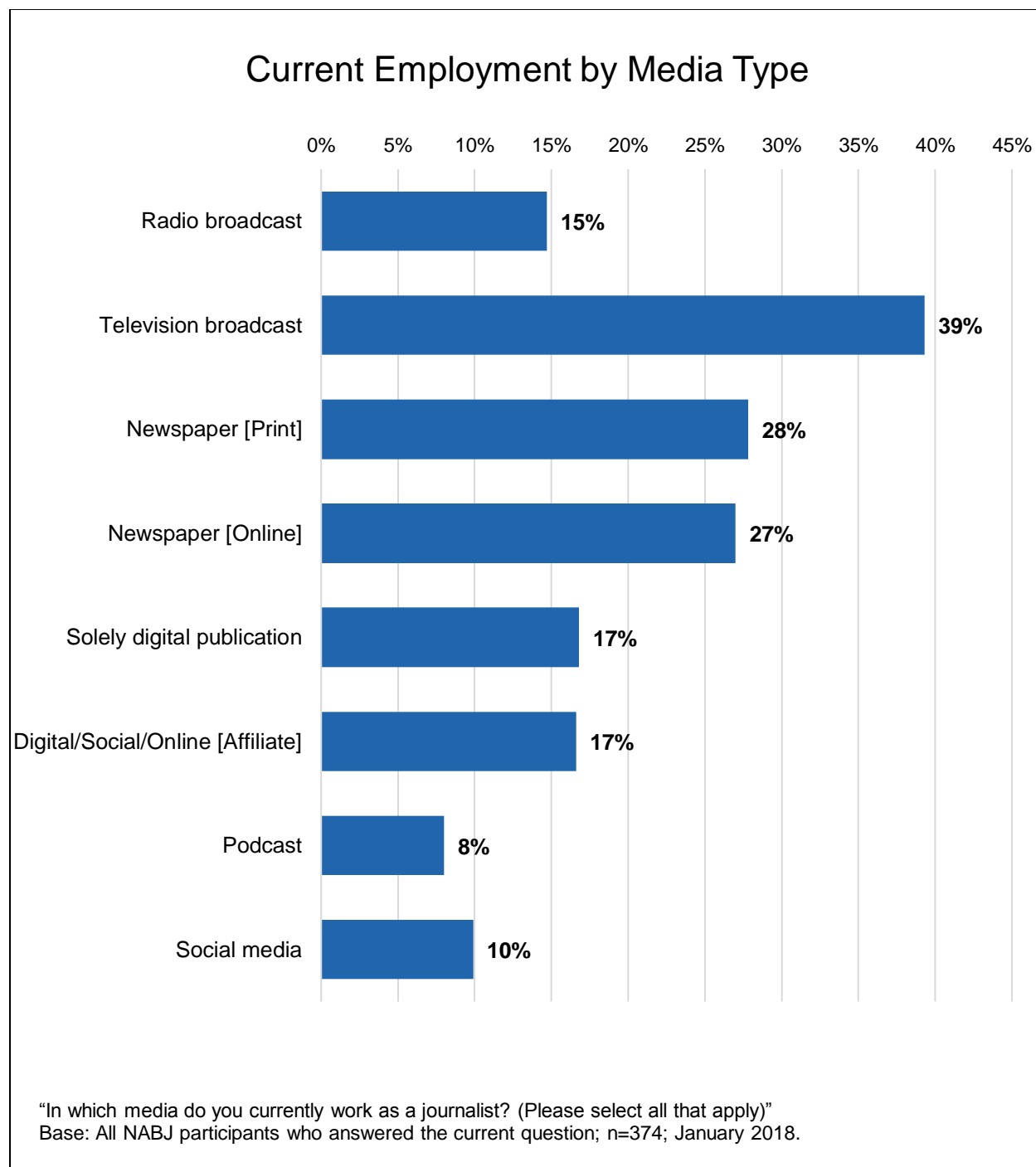
Personal Characteristics

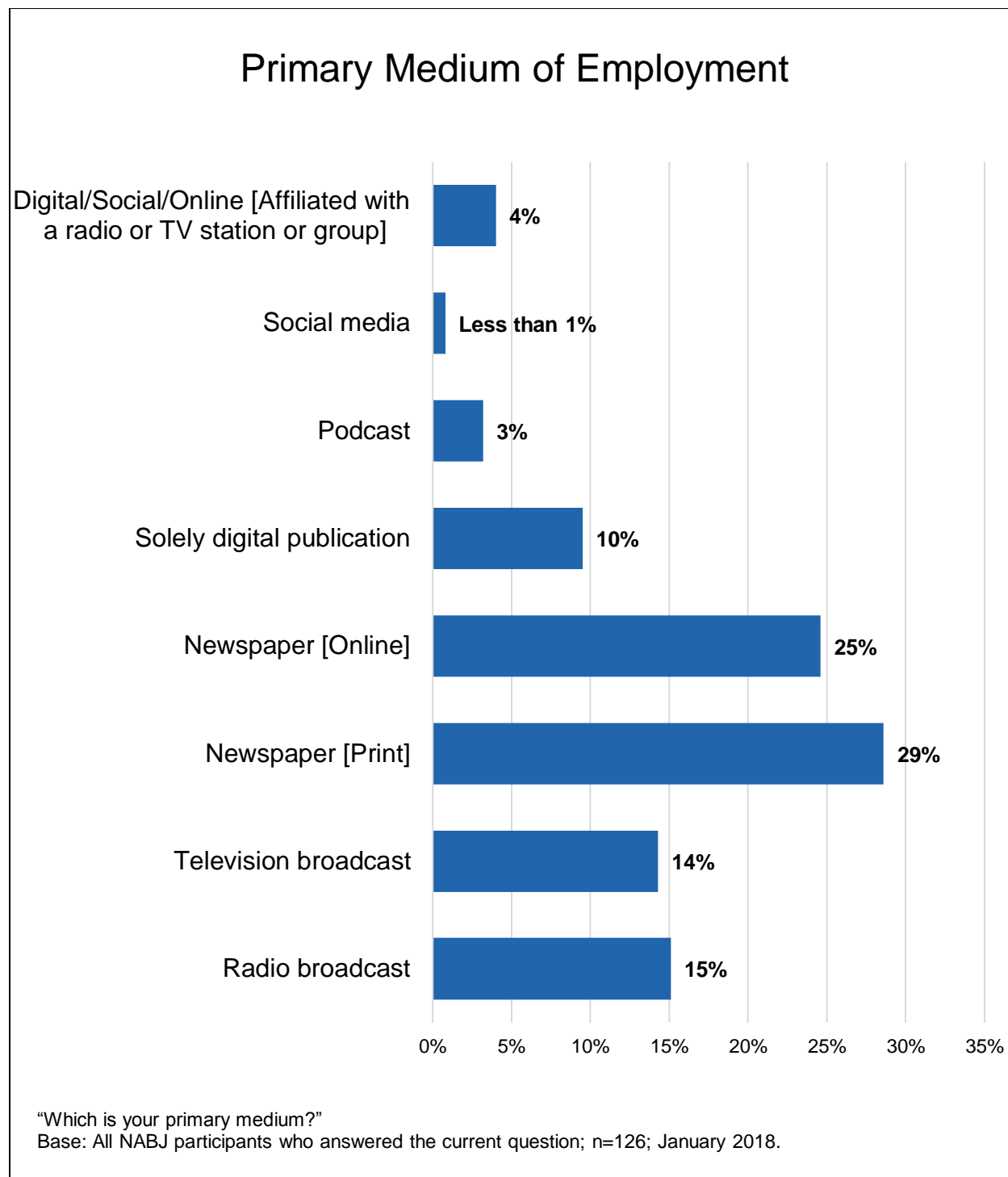
Age of Respondents

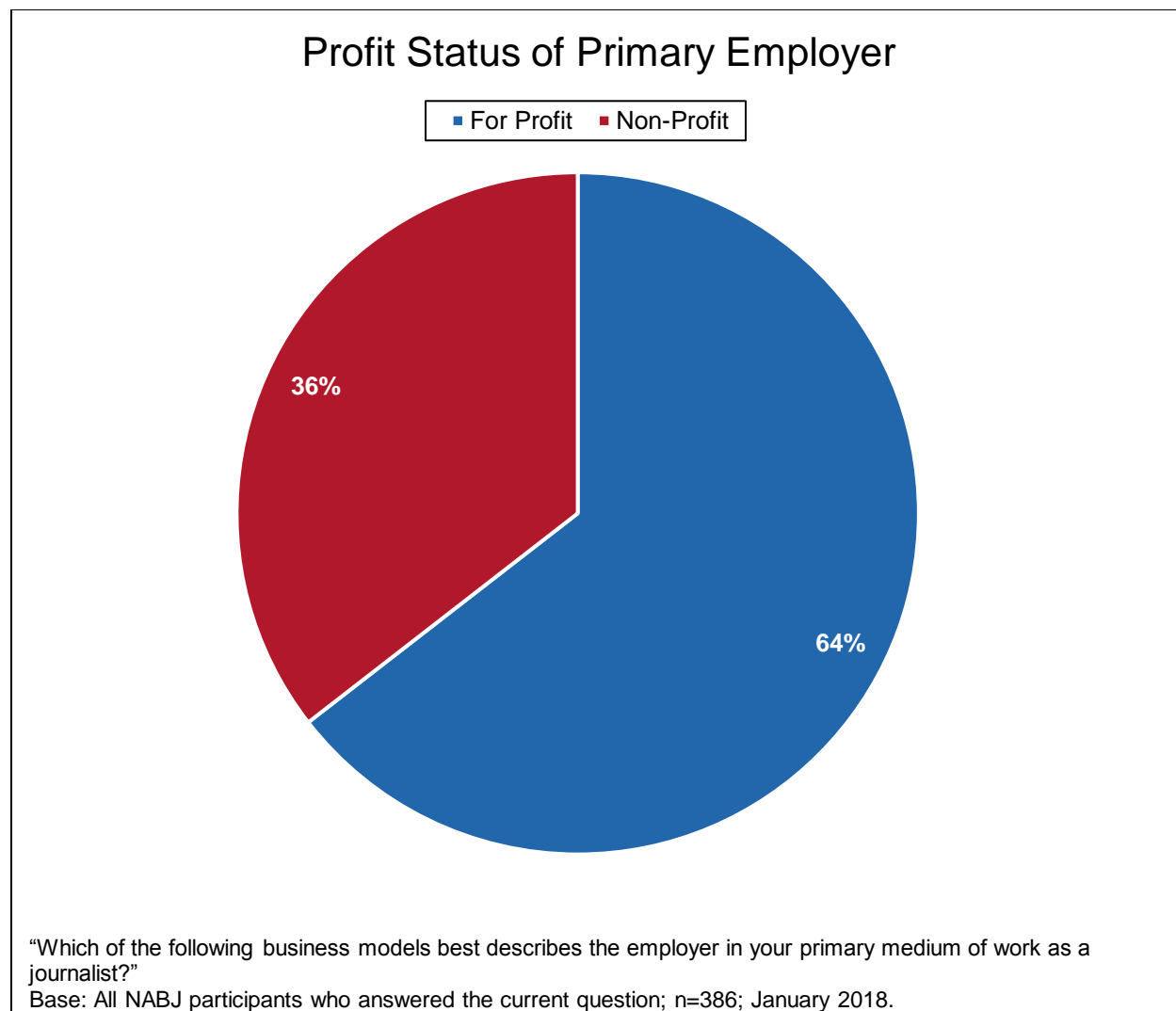


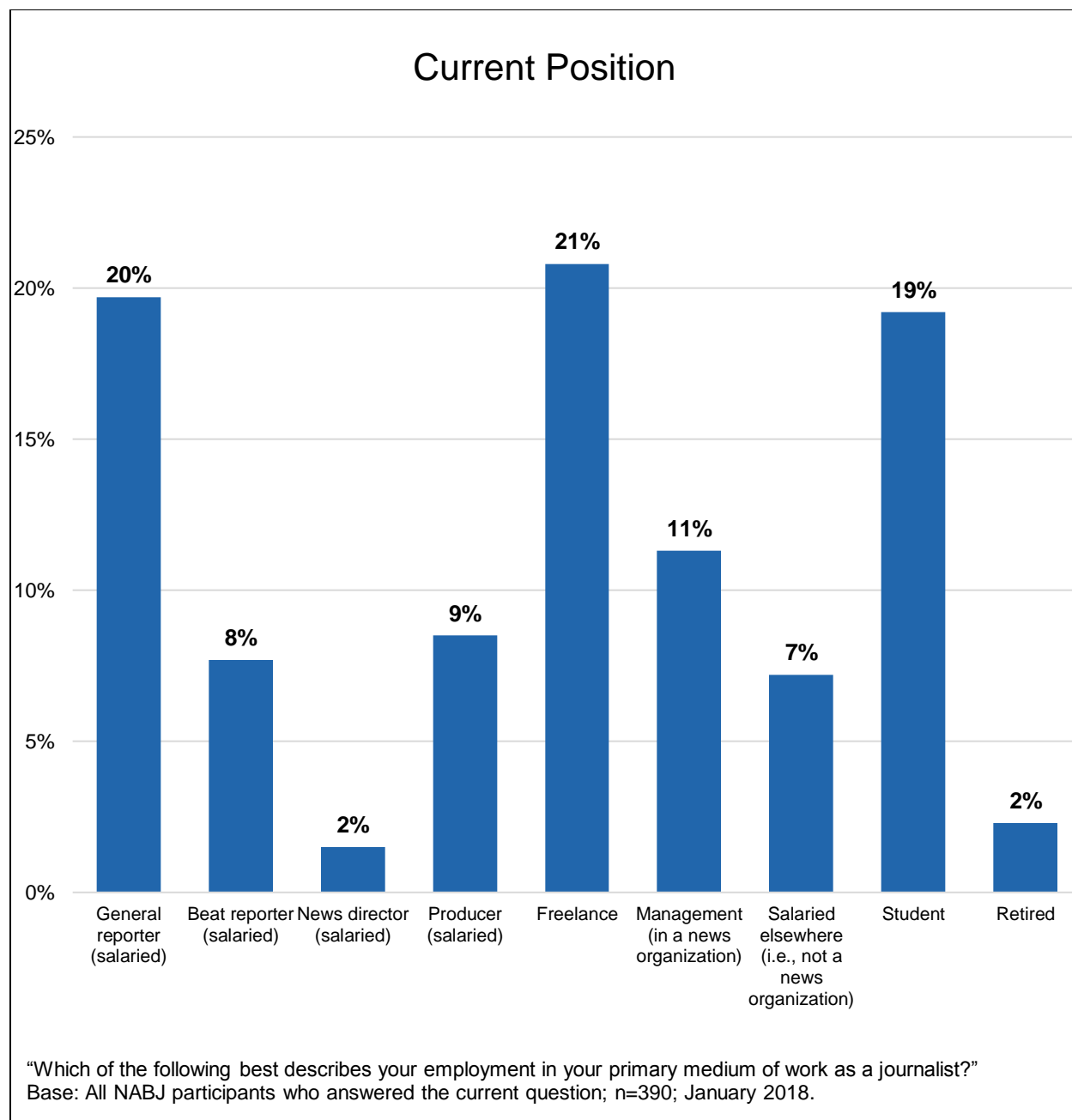
Sex of Respondents

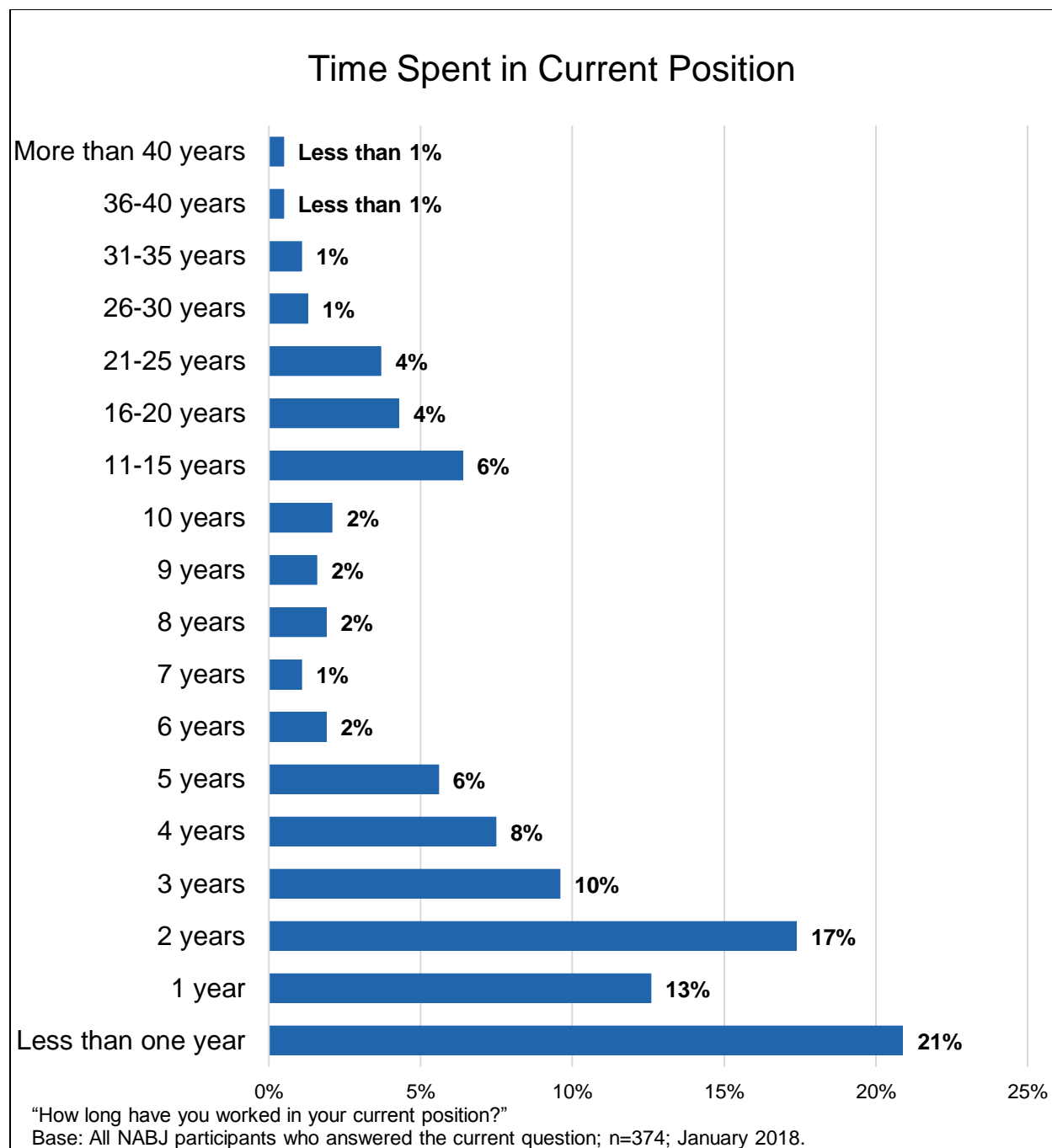
Race and Ethnicity of Respondents

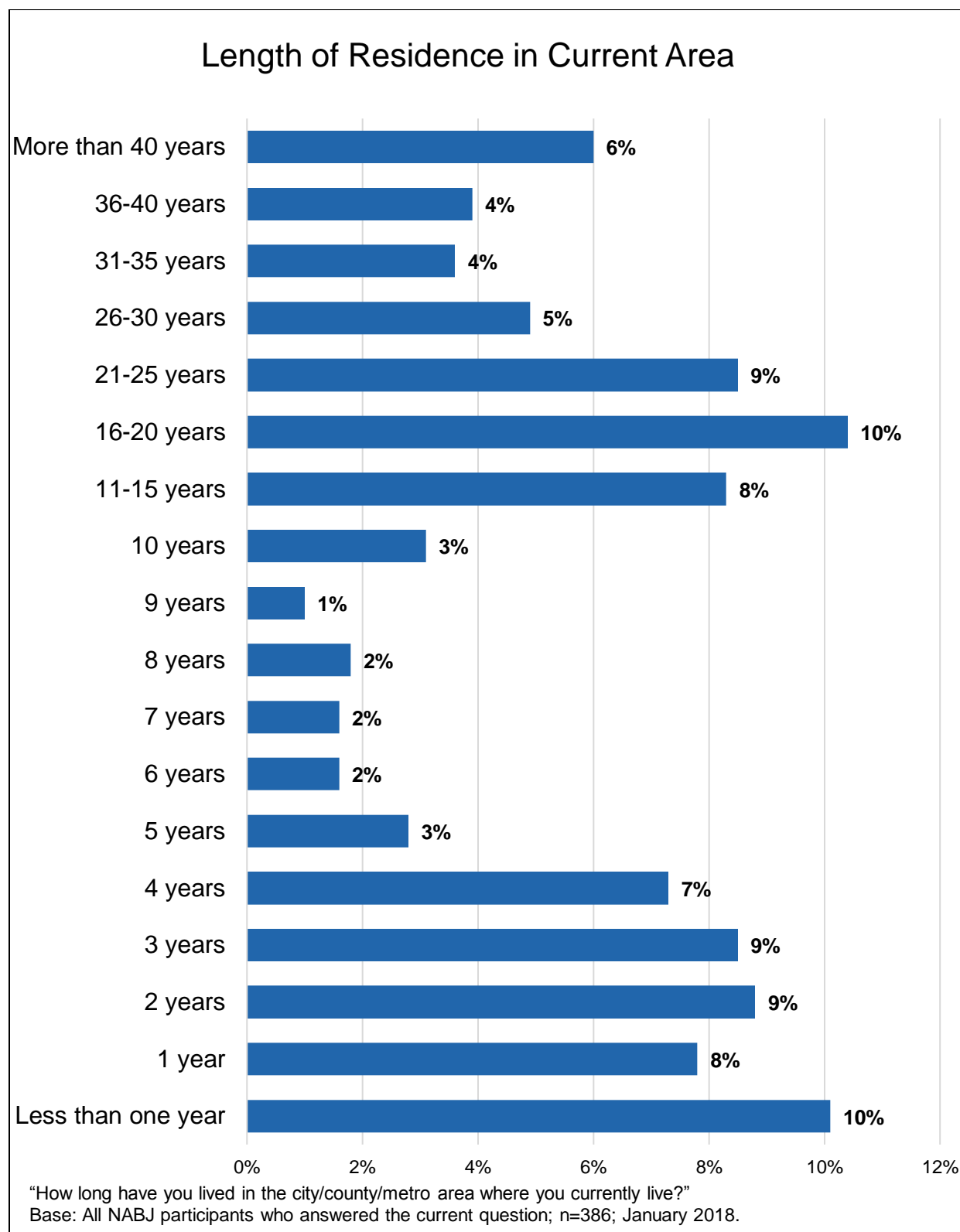
Current Employment by Media Type

Primary Medium

Profit/Non-Profit Status of Primary Place of Employment

Current Position

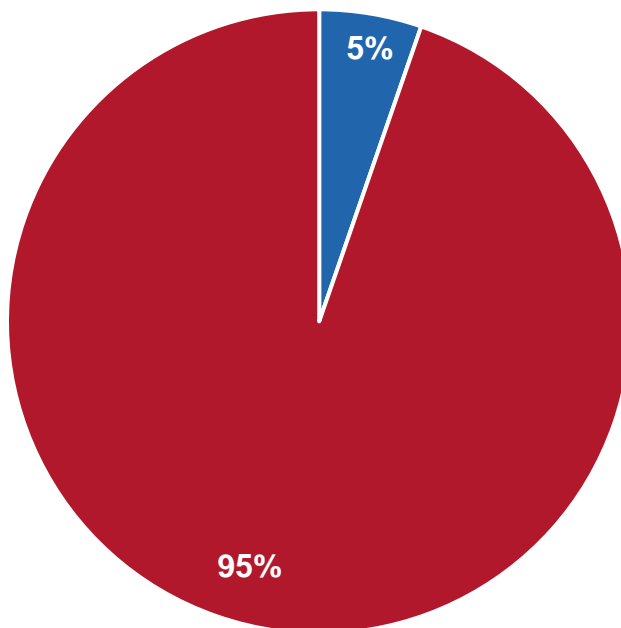
Time Spent in Current Position

Length of Residence in Current Area

STEM Training

Formal Education (Major or Minor) in STEM Discipline

■ Yes ■ No



"Did you major or minor in a STEM discipline (science, technology, engineering, or math) in college or graduate school?"

Base: All NABJ participants who answered the current question; n=399; January 2018.

Appendix I: Survey Method

This survey of National Association of Black Journalists members aimed to investigate members' feelings, experience, and opinions of climate change and climate change reporting. The survey's sampling frame was NABJ's membership base for whom they had email addresses. This provided contact information for 3,491 NABJ members. The survey was administered online using Qualtrics, a web-based survey system.

Several days prior to receiving an email from the Principal Investigator that included a formal invitation to participate and a personalized link to the survey, NABJ members received an email from NABJ leadership encouraging them to participate. The formal invitation was emailed via Qualtrics on January 5th. Over course of the following four weeks, NABJ members who did not complete the survey were sent up to four reminders to participate. The survey was closed February 2nd. In total, 620 NABJ members participated in the survey, yielding a participation rate of 17.8%, and 414 survey participants completed the survey, a completion rate of 11.9%. The survey took participants a median time of 17 minutes to complete.

The survey instrument was designed by Edward Maibach, Richard T. Craig, William Yagatich, Kristin Timm, Shaelyn Patzer, and Josh Murphy of George Mason University. The survey instrument is available upon request.