
Survey of Vermont Co-op Members

September 2010

Conducted by:



Toby Knox & Associates, LLC

and



DiagnosticsPlus

A Division of IntelliQ Research

Research Objectives

- The objectives of the Vermont Co-op Survey conducted for the Cabot Farmers' Cooperative Creamery include the following key issues:
 - To demonstrate the value, benefits and worth / contributions of co-ops in VT
 - To understand Vermont co-op members' perceptions of attitudes toward co-ops as an entity – test the co-op philosophy / mission / principles
 - To determine Vermont co-op members' attitudes, perceptions and behaviors / preferences to interacting with / purchasing from co-ops
 - To determine the perception of differing types of co-ops.
 - To have information that will be of interest to the media.

Methodology and Sampling

- Diagnostics Plus, a division of IntelliQ Research, used a random sample of Vermont residents. Only co-op members were interviewed.
- To qualify for the study respondents must live in Vermont, must be a member of at least one Vermont co-op, and must be at least 24 years-old.
- Telephone interviews were conducted with a total of 121 co-op members.
 - A total of 247 residents were screened. Ten individuals were excluded due to age requirements. Thirty-two individuals were not familiar with co-ops and 84 individuals were not participating members of co-ops.
- The survey has a margin of error of + / - 8.9% at the 95% confidence level.
- The questionnaire was developed by Toby Knox & Associates in consultation with Cabot, and Diagnostics Plus, a division of IntelliQ Research.
- Diagnostics Plus conducted the interviews from its data collection facility located in State College, Pennsylvania.
- Interviews were conducted from August 2, to August 10, 2010. The average interview length was 9 minutes.

Executive Summary

- Among co-op members interviewed, credit unions have more members than other types of co-ops.
- Credit unions have the longest membership tenure, followed by electric co-ops.
- Eighty-four percent of the respondents believe there are benefits to being a member of a co-op. Saving money and receiving higher quality products and services are viewed as the most important benefits of co-op membership.
- Co-ops members agree that cooperatives are voluntary and democratic organizations, that members contribute equitably to the financial resources of the cooperatives and that cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities.
- Seventy-eight percent of the respondents feel that purchasing from a co-op is important when making decisions about buying or obtaining products or services.
- Seventy-one percent of the co-op members are more likely to buy a product if they know it is from a Vermont cooperative.
- Members are more likely to buy a product or service from a co-op to support local businesses and to support a co-op and its members .
- Seventy-five percent of the respondents have purchased one or more products or services from a Vermont co-op within the past 30 days.

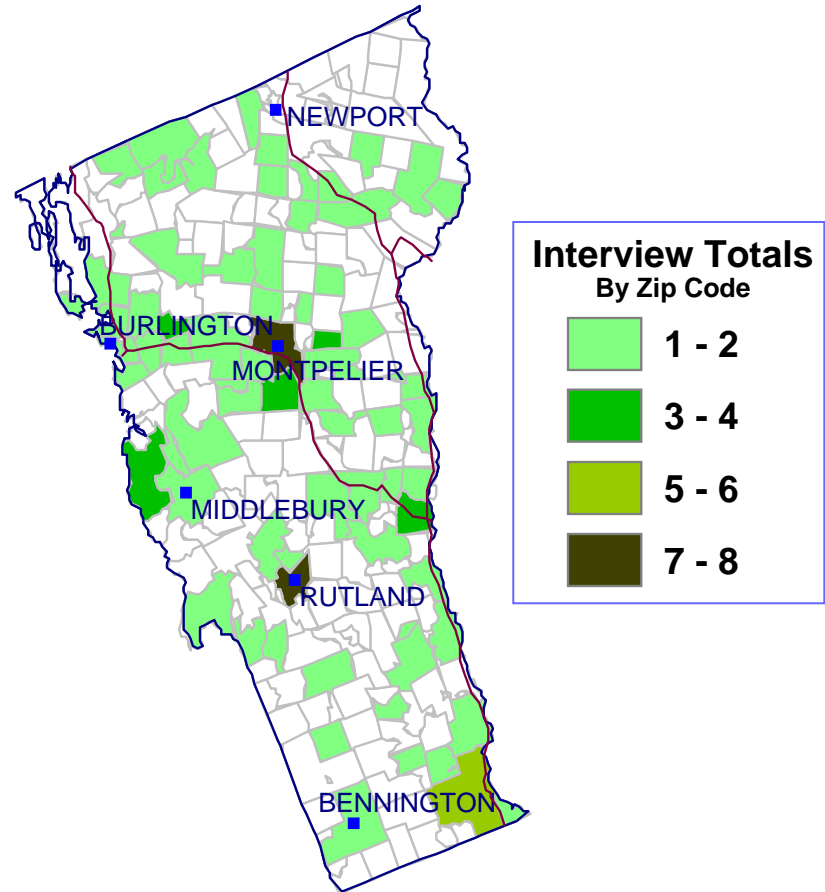
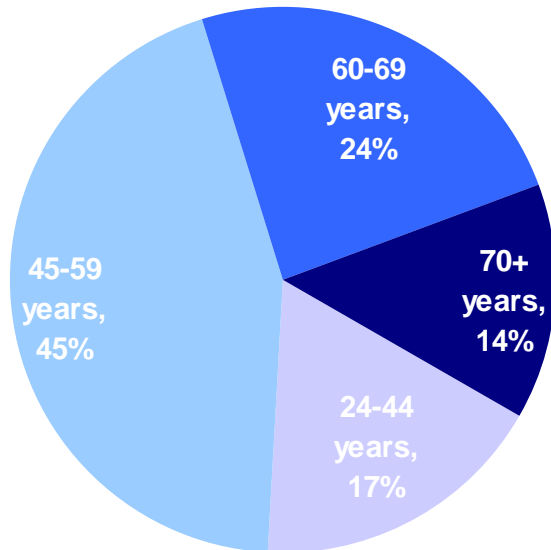
Executive Summary

- Eighty-nine percent of co-op members believe that the products and services available from Vermont cooperatives are of the same or higher quality than other businesses.
- Commitment to quality, focus on community and having products locally made or grown are the most frequently mentioned reasons members believe the products and services are of a higher quality.
- Eighty-eight percent of the respondents believe that Vermont co-ops provide the same or better level of customer service than non-cooperative businesses.
- Sixty-eight percent of members agree that co-ops can be counted on to meet their customers' needs.
- Seventy percent of the respondents agree that co-ops have the best interests of consumers in mind when conducting business.
- With the exception of housing, more than half of the respondents are more likely to buy from a dairy, food, electric, credit union, and/or worker co-op.

Description of Respondents

A total of 121 Vermont residents completed the telephone interview. Forty-five percent of the respondents were between 45-59 years old; 24% between 60-69 years; 17%, 24-44 year; and 14% were 70 years or older.

Age



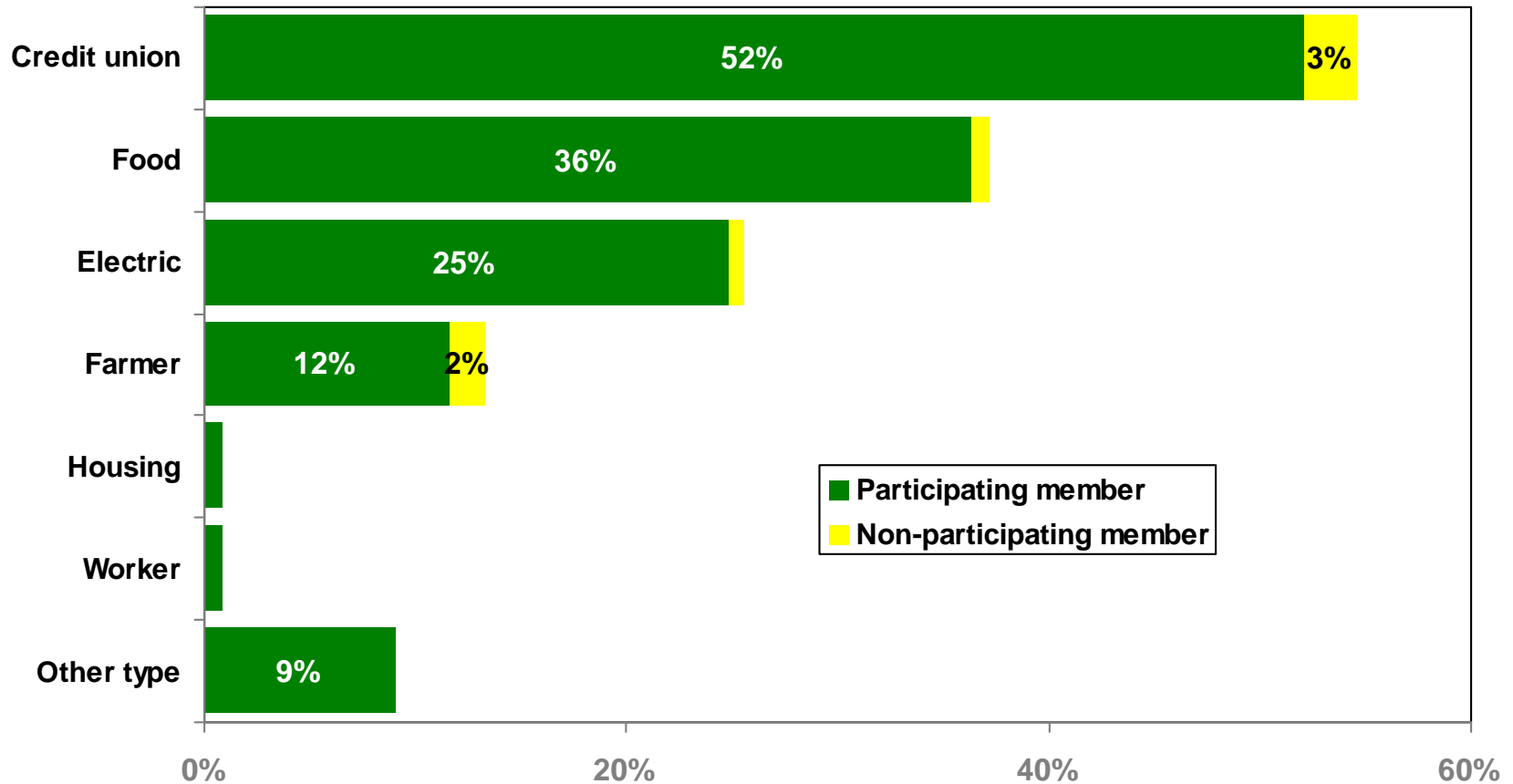
Co-op Membership and Participation

More than one-half of the respondents are members of credit unions. Housing and worker co-ops have the fewest number of members.

Q2. Are you or is your household currently a member of a Vermont co-op or cooperative?

Q2A. Are you a participating member of the co-op?

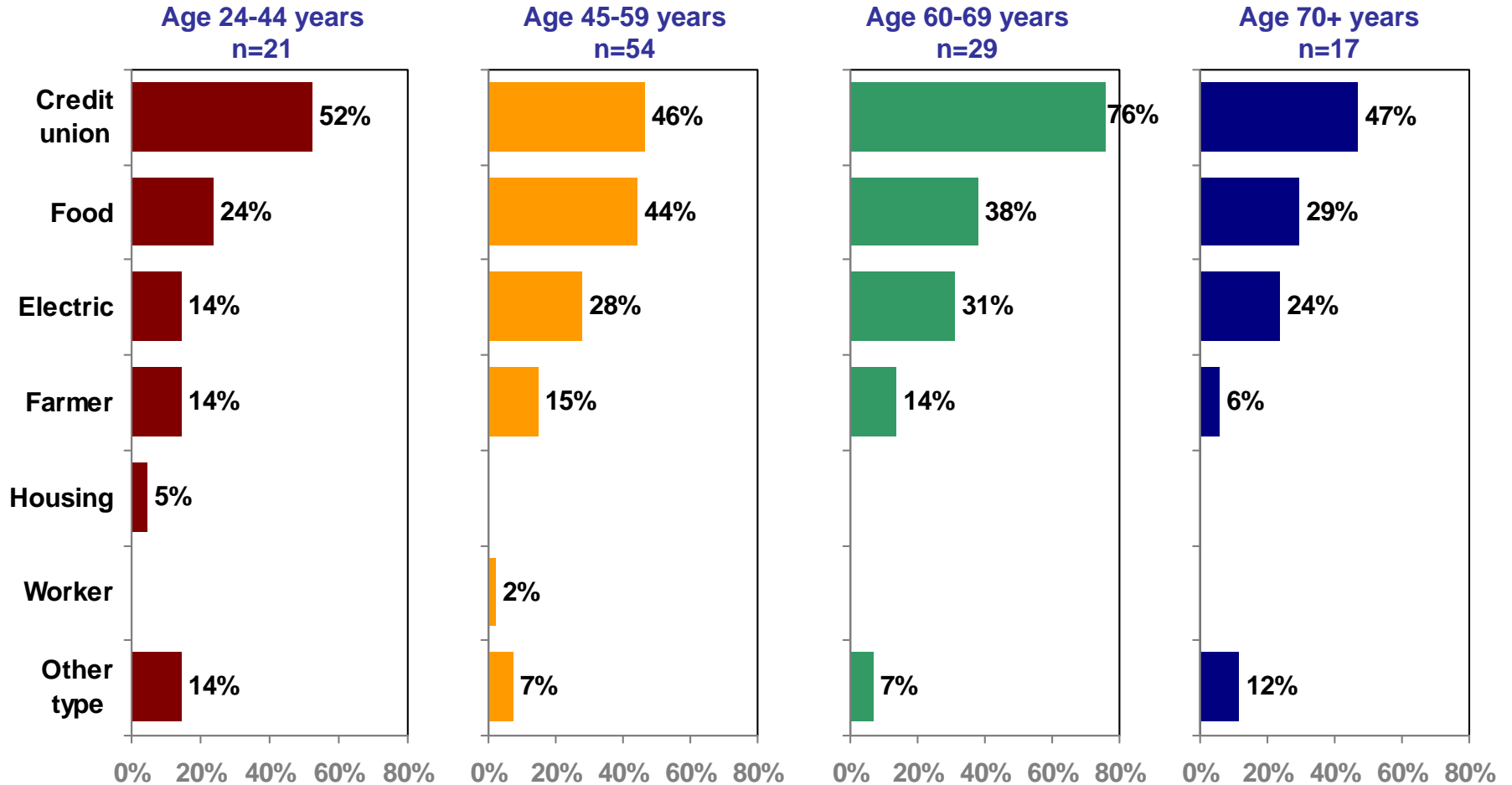
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Co-op Membership by Age Group

Credit unions are the most popular co-ops among all age groups; however, food co-ops are also very popular with respondents in the 45-59 age group.

Q2. Are you or is your household currently a member of a Vermont co-op or cooperative?

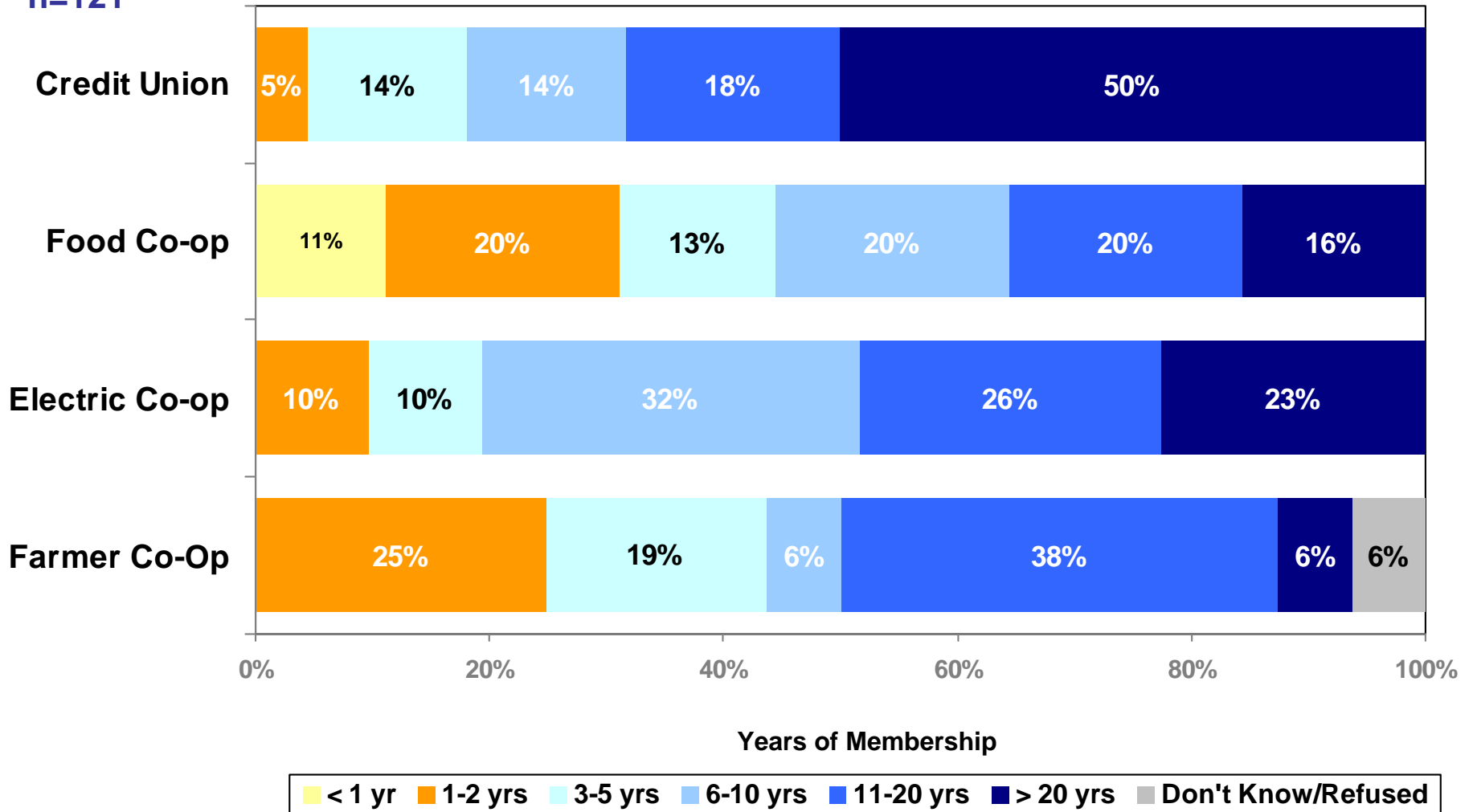


Years of Co-op Membership

Credit unions have the longest length of membership with half of the respondents indicating being members more than 20 years. Forty-four percent of the respondents have been members of a farmer co-op for 11 years or more.

Q2C. For how many years have you or your family been a member of the co-op?

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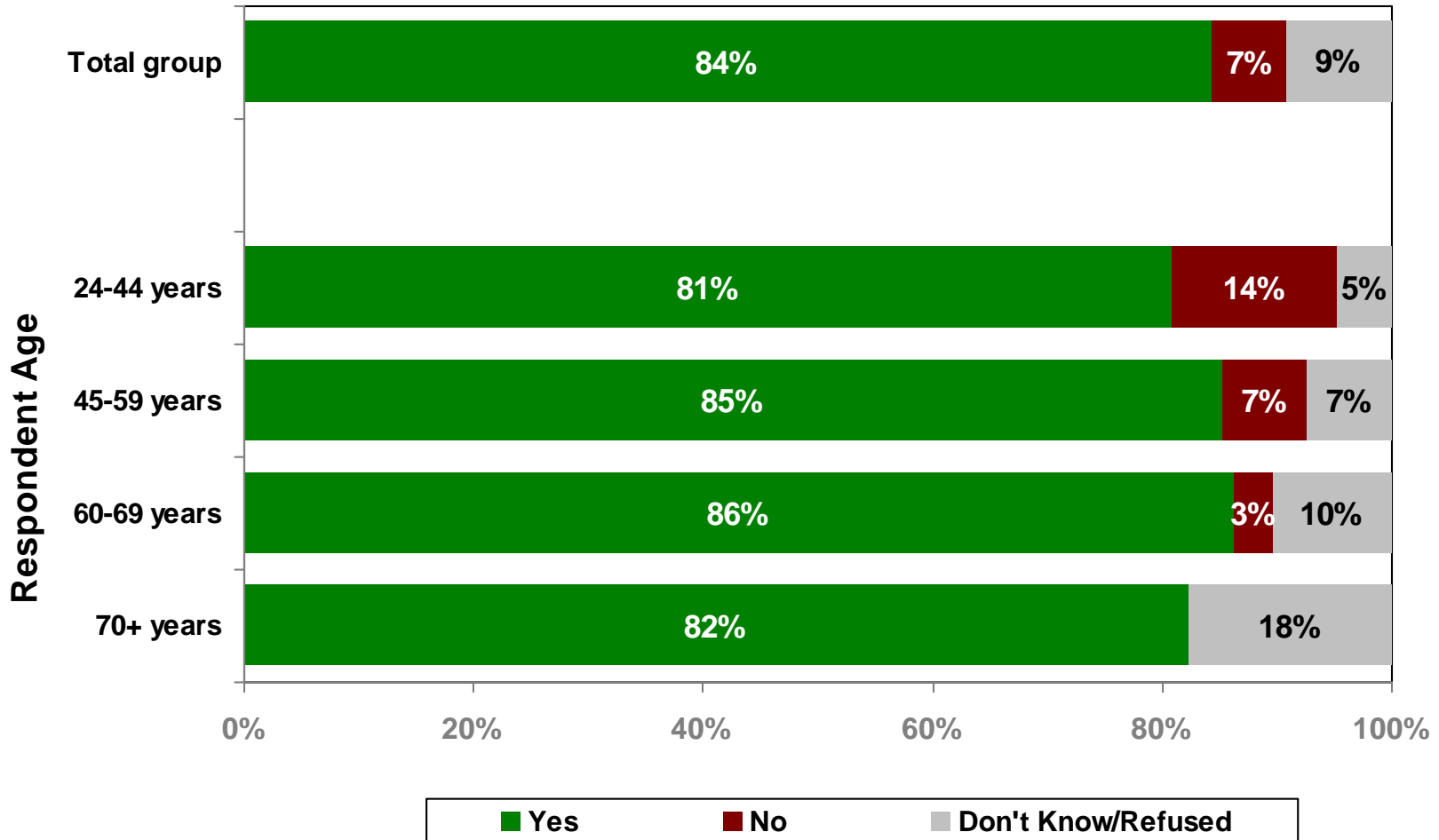


Is Co-op Membership Beneficial?

Eighty-four percent of the respondents believe there are benefits to being a member of co-ops.

Q3. Based upon what you know today about co-ops or cooperatives, do you think there are any benefits to being a member of a co-op or cooperative?

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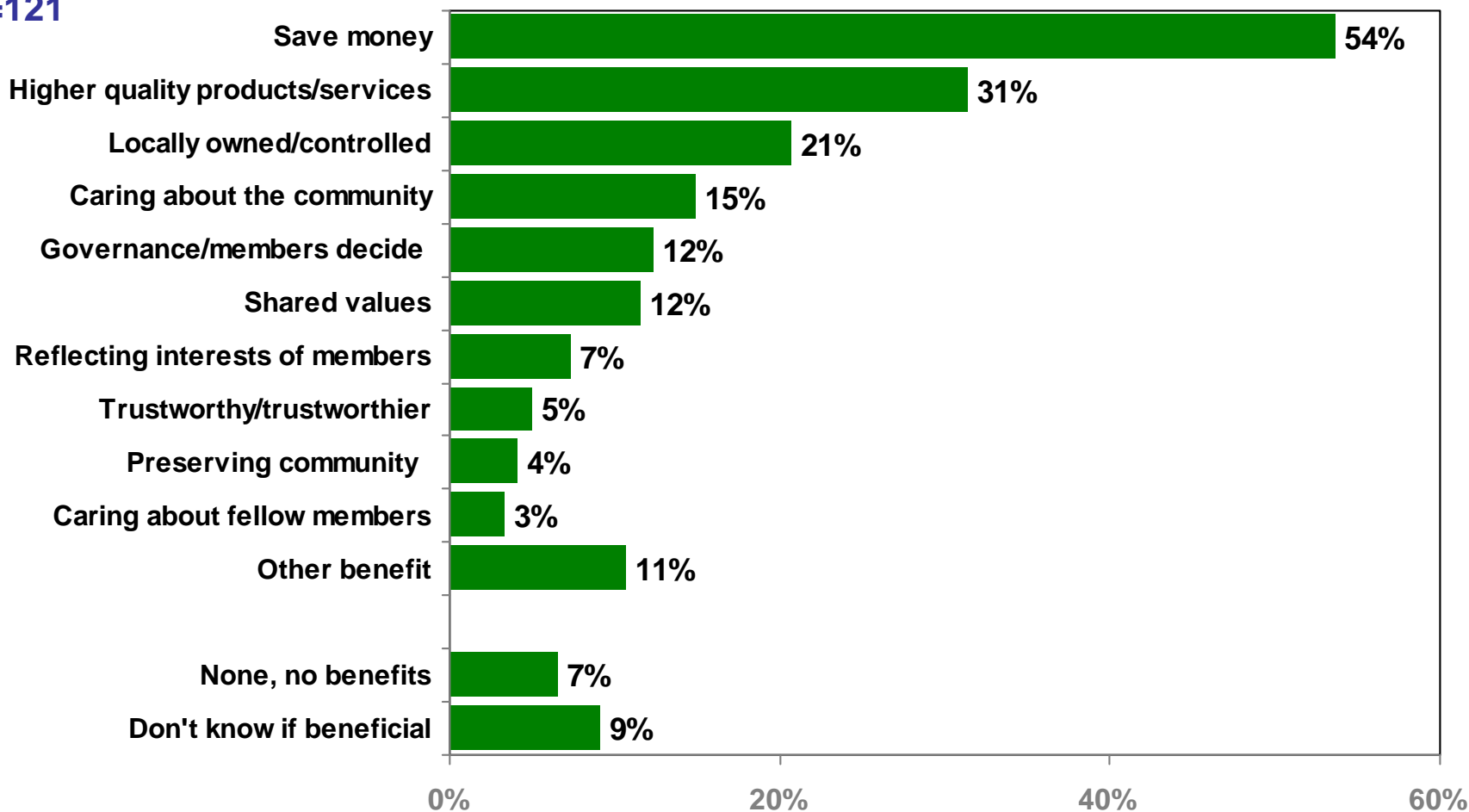


Benefits of Co-op Membership

Saving money and receiving higher quality products and services are viewed as the most important benefits of being a member of a Vermont co-op.

Q3A. What do you think are the benefits of being a member of a Vermont co-op or cooperative? *

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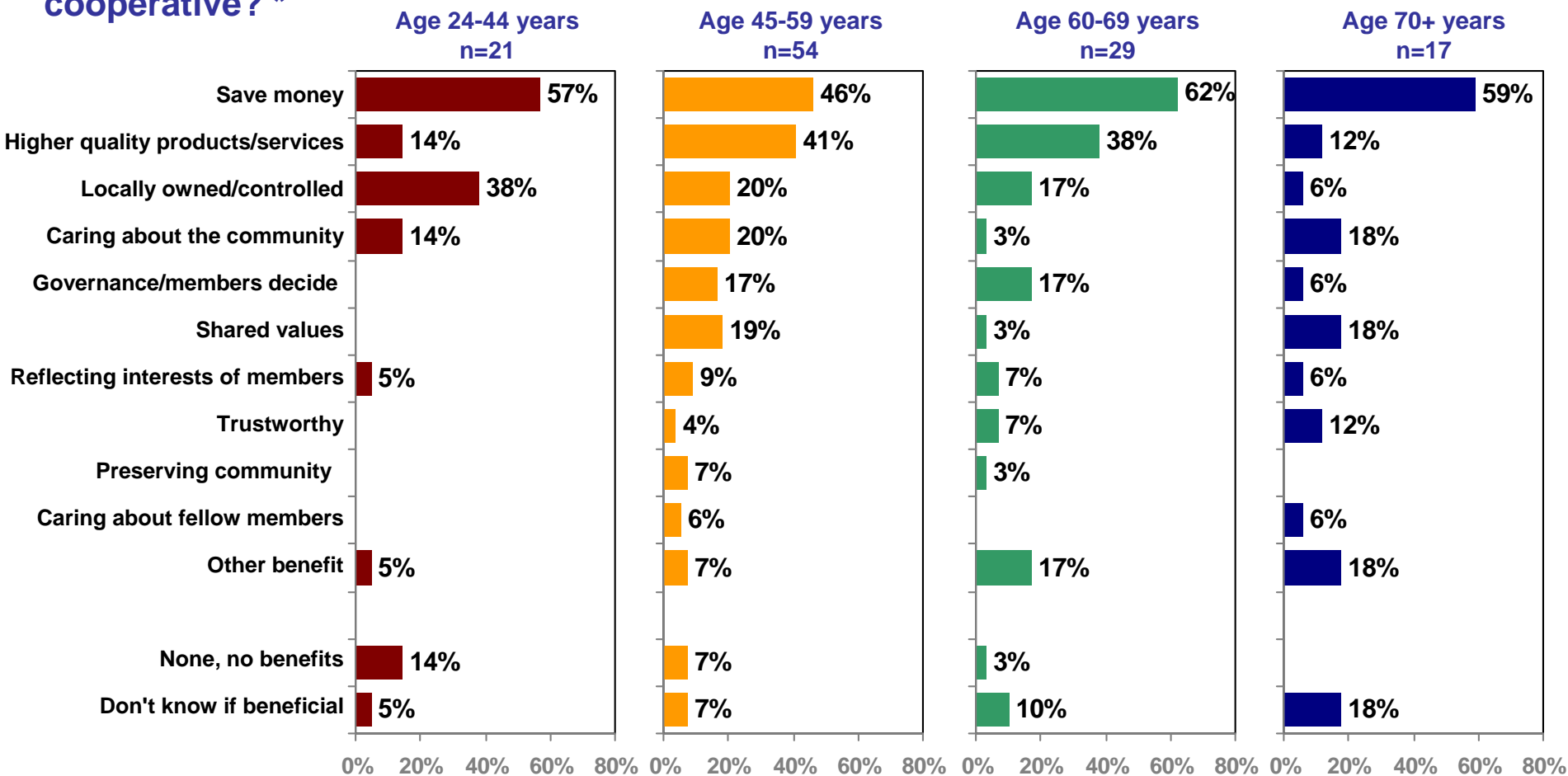


*Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Benefits of Co-op Membership by Age Group

Saving money is seen as the most important benefit among all age groups; however, being locally owned is also important for the 24-44 age group. Among respondents in the 45-69 age group, receiving higher quality products and services is also an important benefit of being a member of a co-op.

Q3A. What do you think are the benefits of being a member of a Vermont co-op or cooperative? *

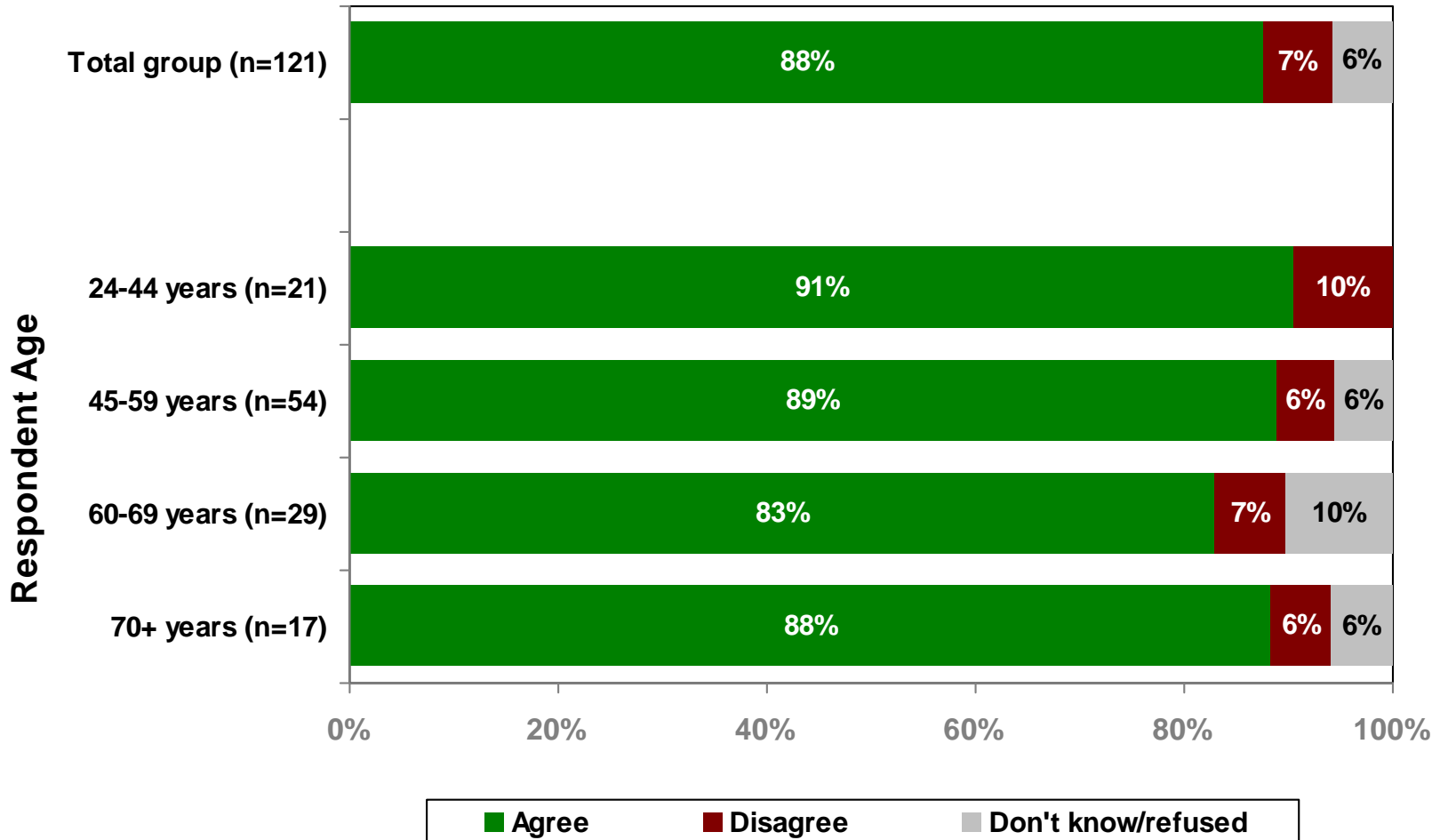


*Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Voluntary Organizations

Eighty-eight percent of co-op members agree with the statement that cooperatives are voluntary organizations.

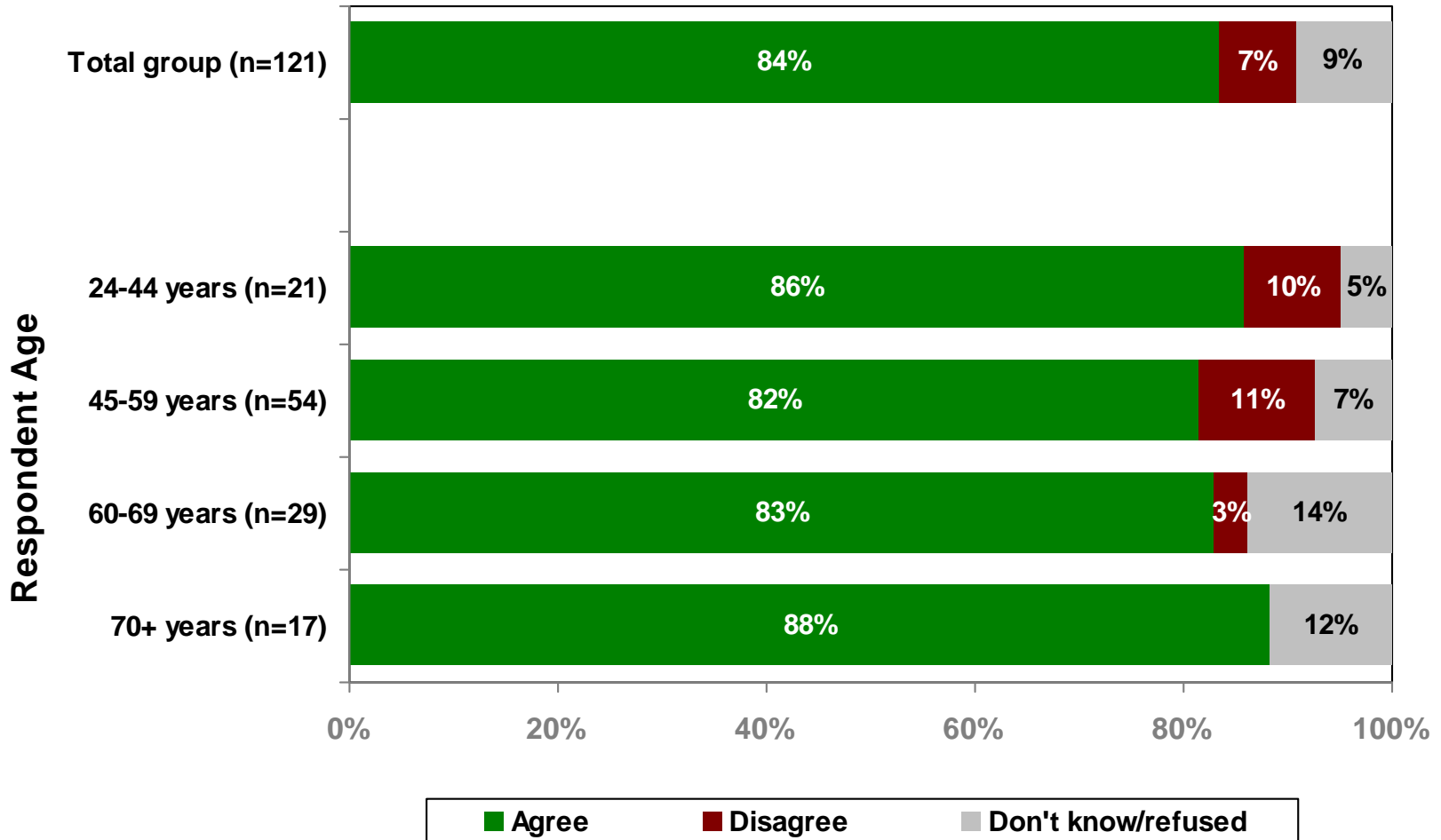
Q4a. Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.



Democratic Organizations

Eighty-four percent of the members believe that cooperatives are democratic organizations.

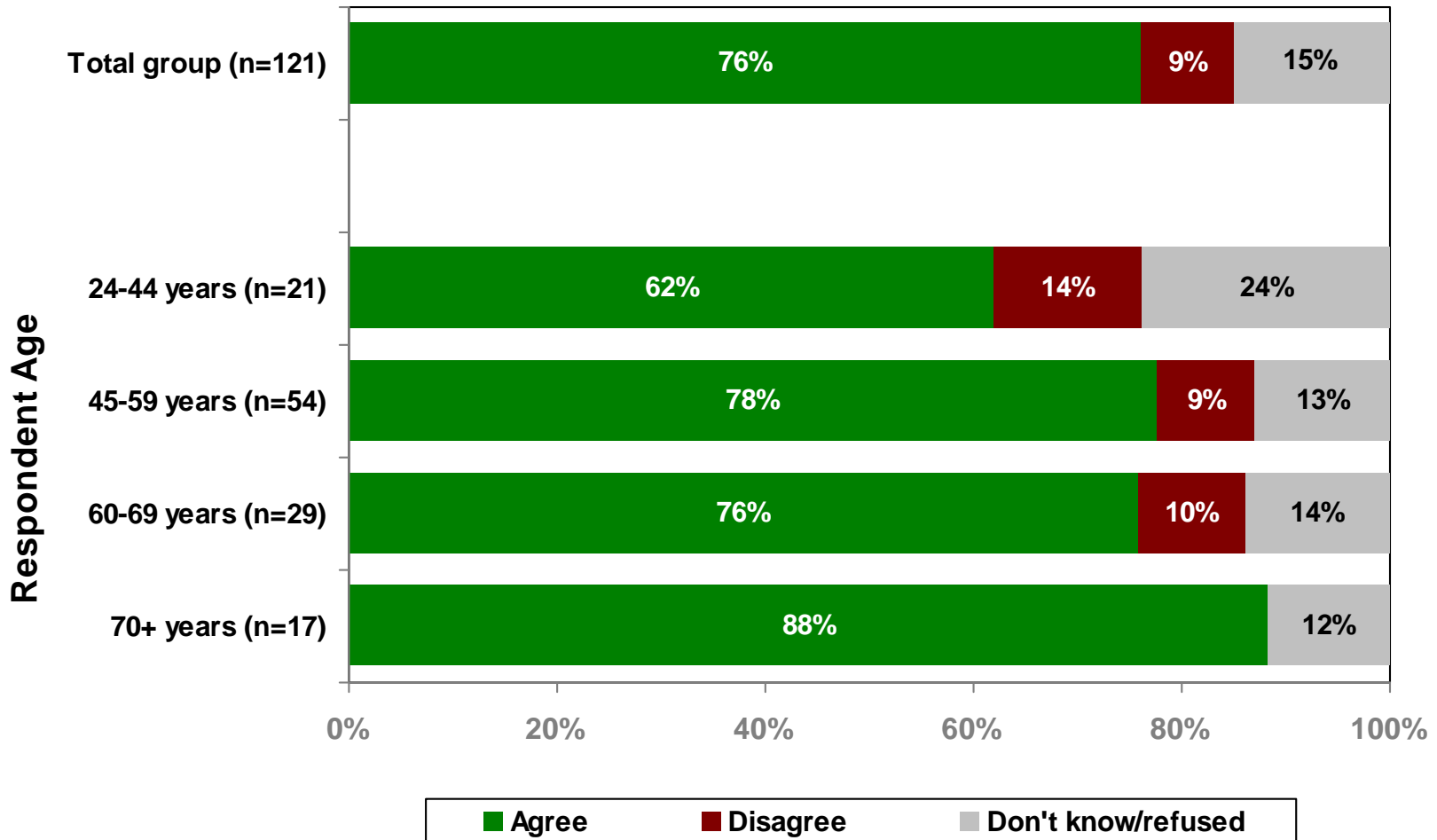
Q4b. Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.



Member Contributions

Three-quarters of all respondents agree that members contribute equitably to the financial resources of the cooperatives. Co-op members over 70 years of age are more likely to agree with this statement than younger respondents.

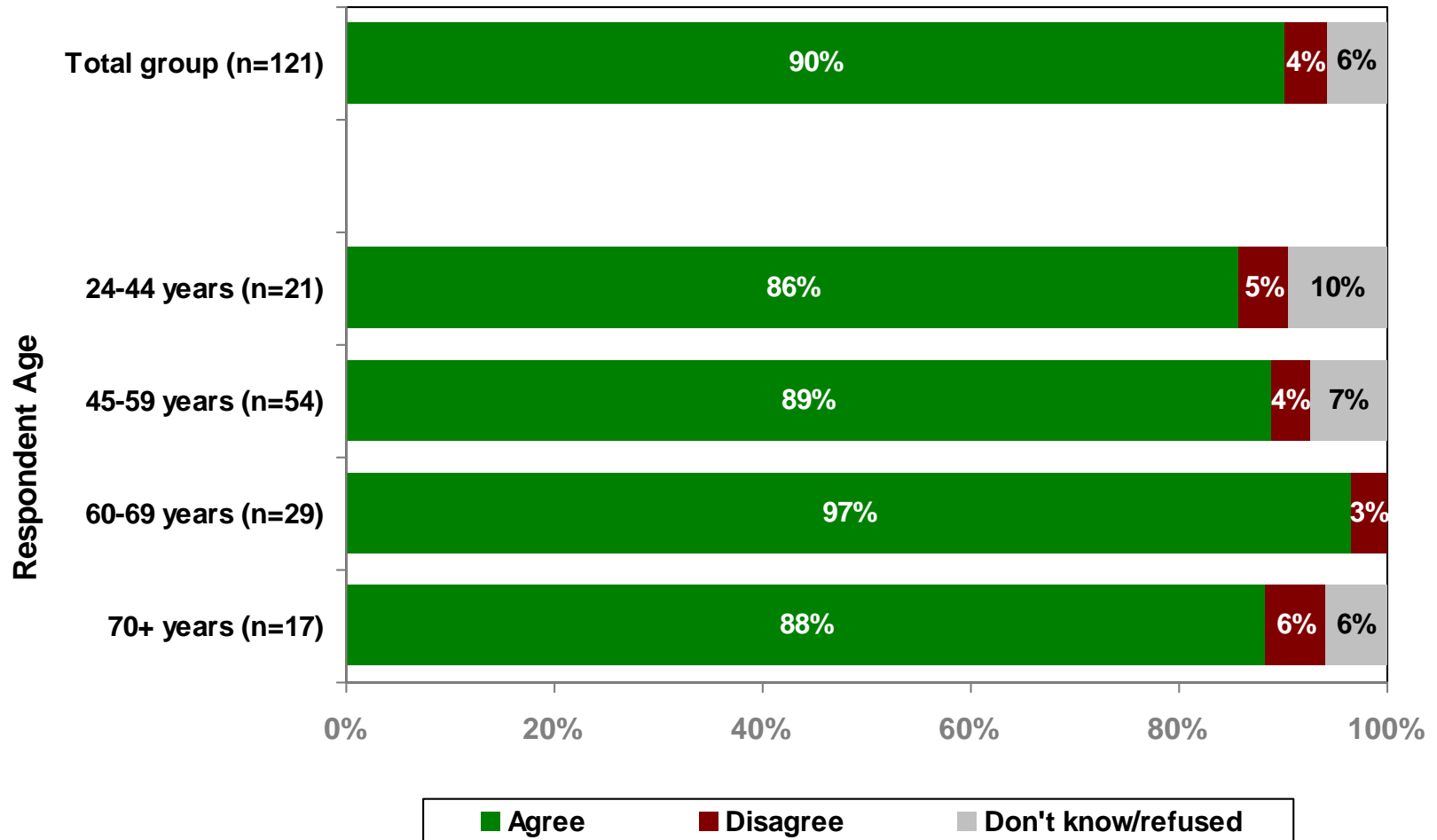
Q4c. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the financial resources of their cooperatives.



Sustainable Development

Ninety percent of the members agree that cooperatives work for sustainable development of their communities.

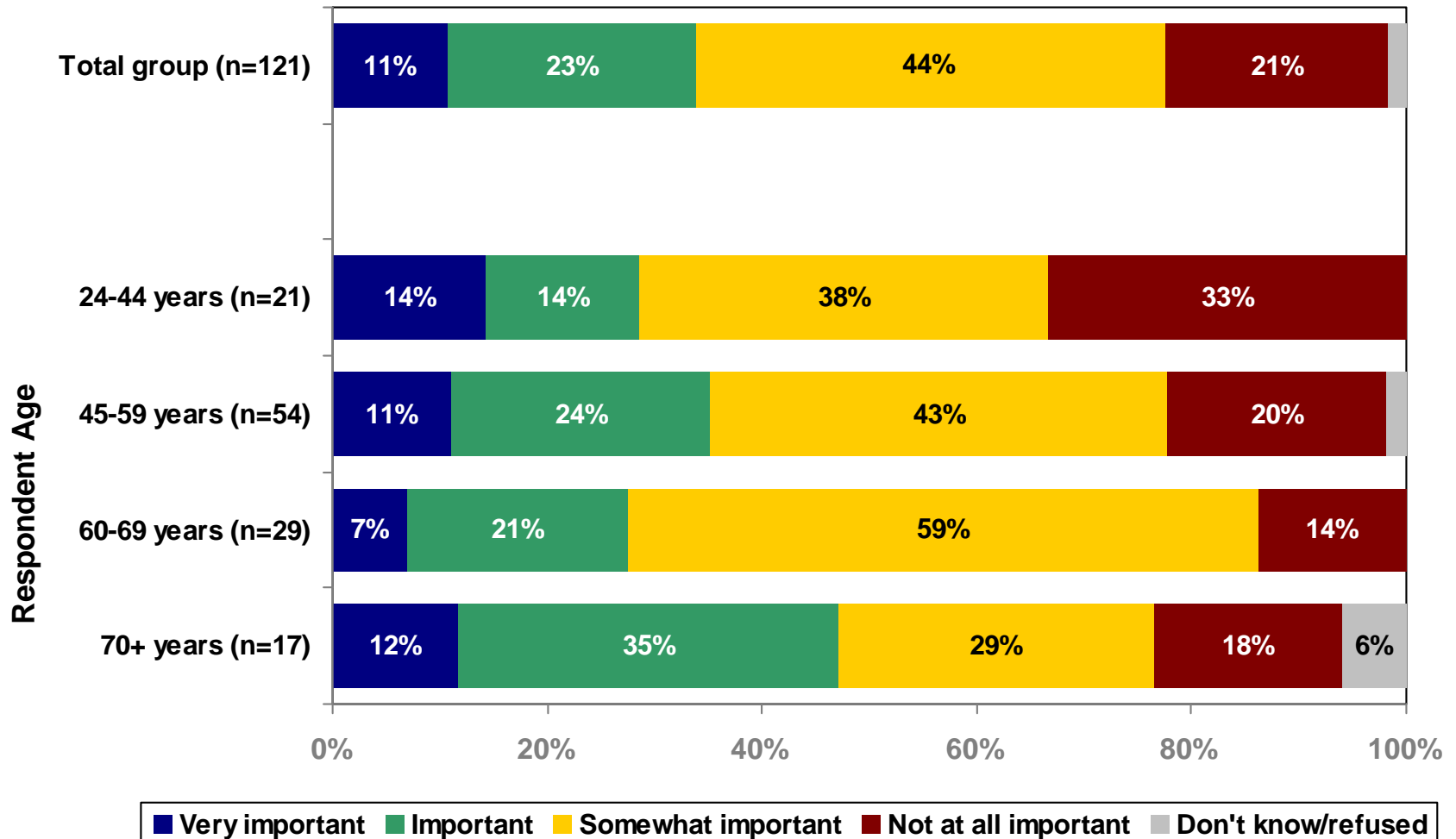
Q4d. While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.



Importance of Buying from a Co-op

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents indicate that buying products and services from a co-op is somewhat to very important.

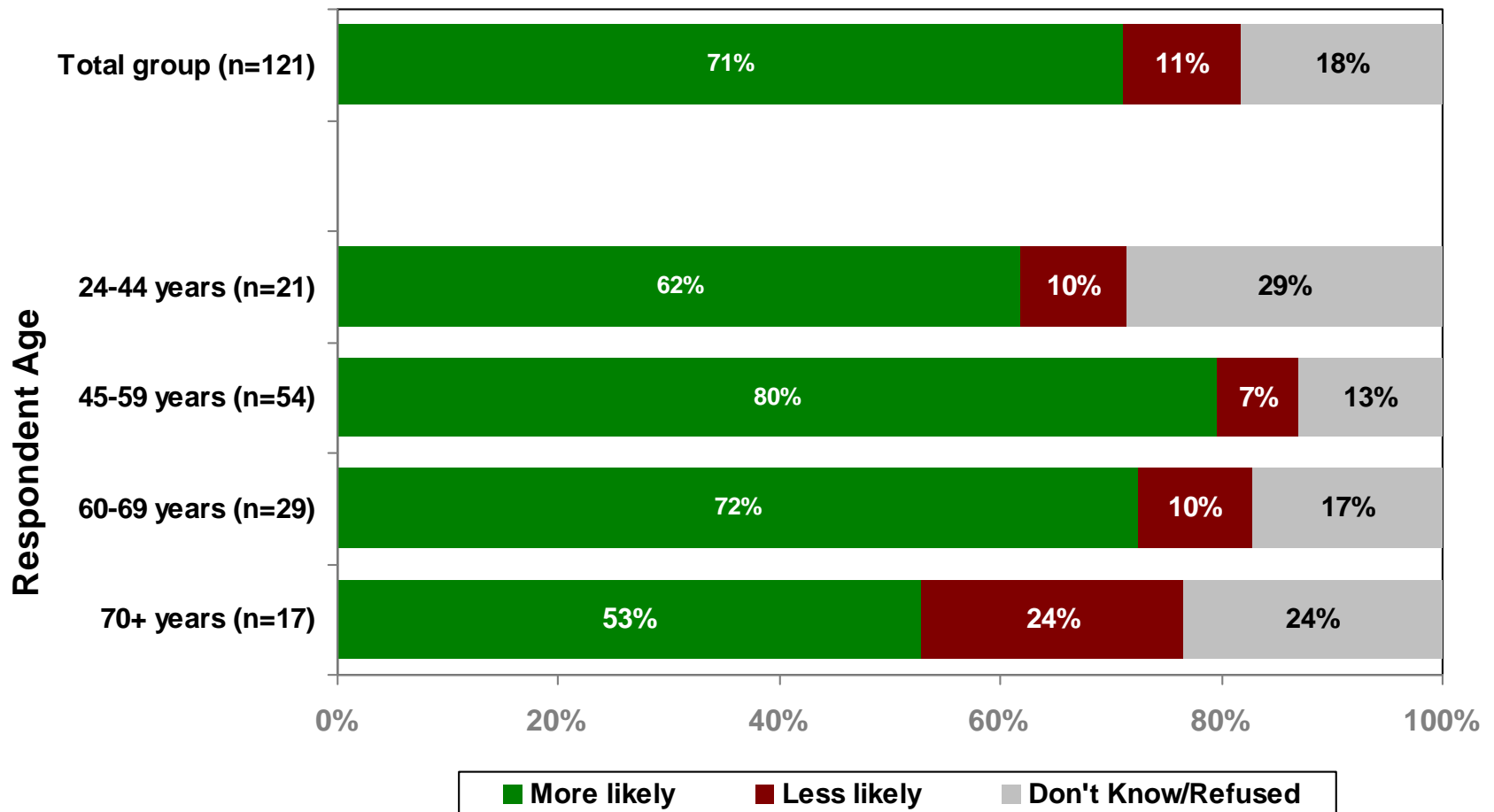
Q5. When you are making decisions about buying or obtaining products or services you need or want, how important is it that you get them from a cooperative?



Likelihood to Buy from a Co-op

Overall, 71% of all respondents are more likely to buy a product or service if it is from a Vermont co-op. Respondents 45-59 years are more likely to buy a product or service if it is from a Vermont co-op than respondents in the other age groups.

Q6. Are you more or less likely to buy or obtain a product or service if you know it is from a Vermont cooperative?

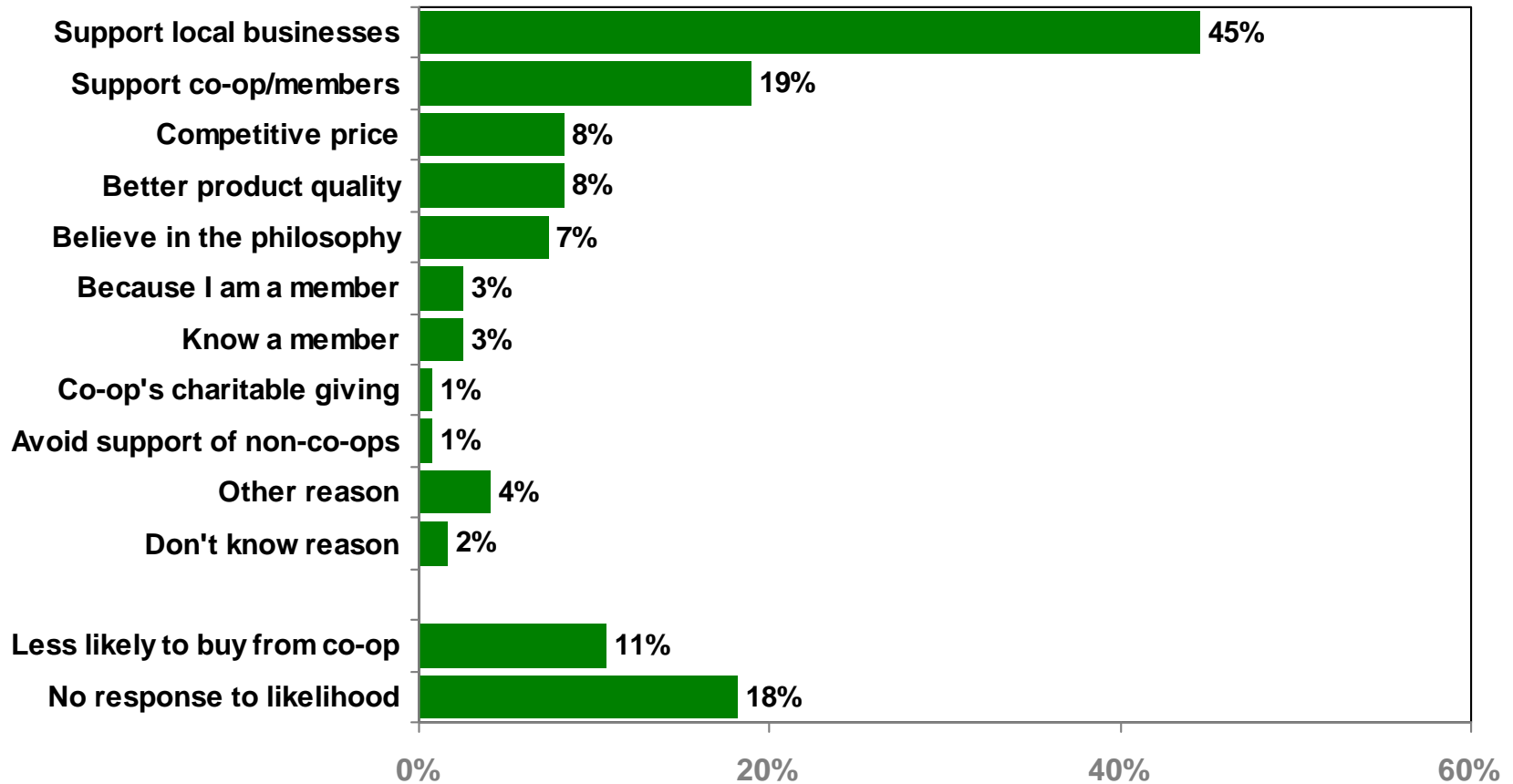


Reasons for Buying from a Co-op

Co-op members are more likely to buy a product or service from a Vermont co-op to support local businesses.

Q6A. Why are you more likely to buy or obtain a product or service if you know it comes from a Vermont cooperative?*

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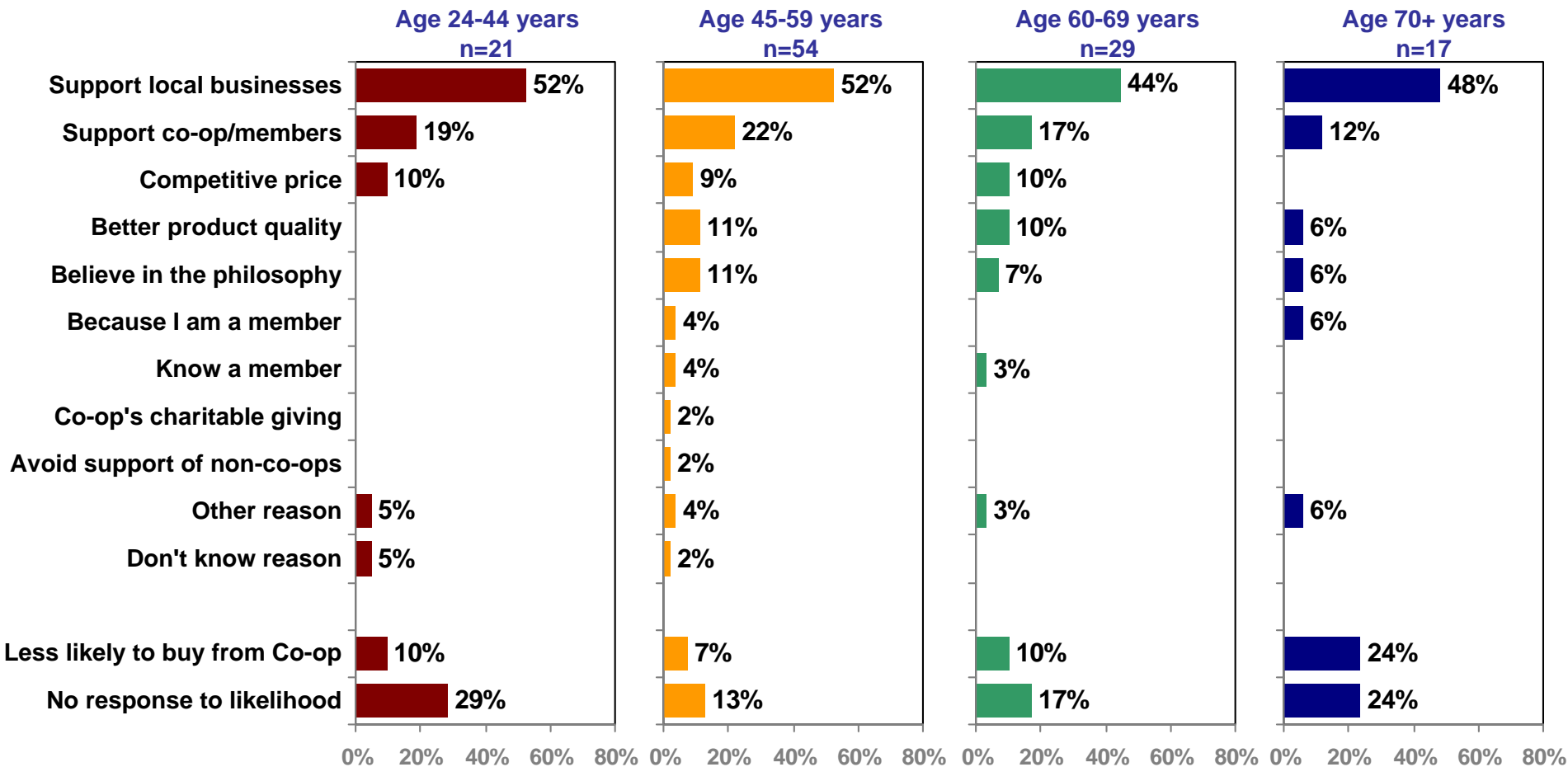


*Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Reasons for Buying from a Co-op by Age Group

Supporting local businesses is the most frequently mentioned reason for buying from a co-op across all age groups.

Q6A. Why are you more likely to buy or obtain a product or service if you know it comes from a Vermont cooperative? *

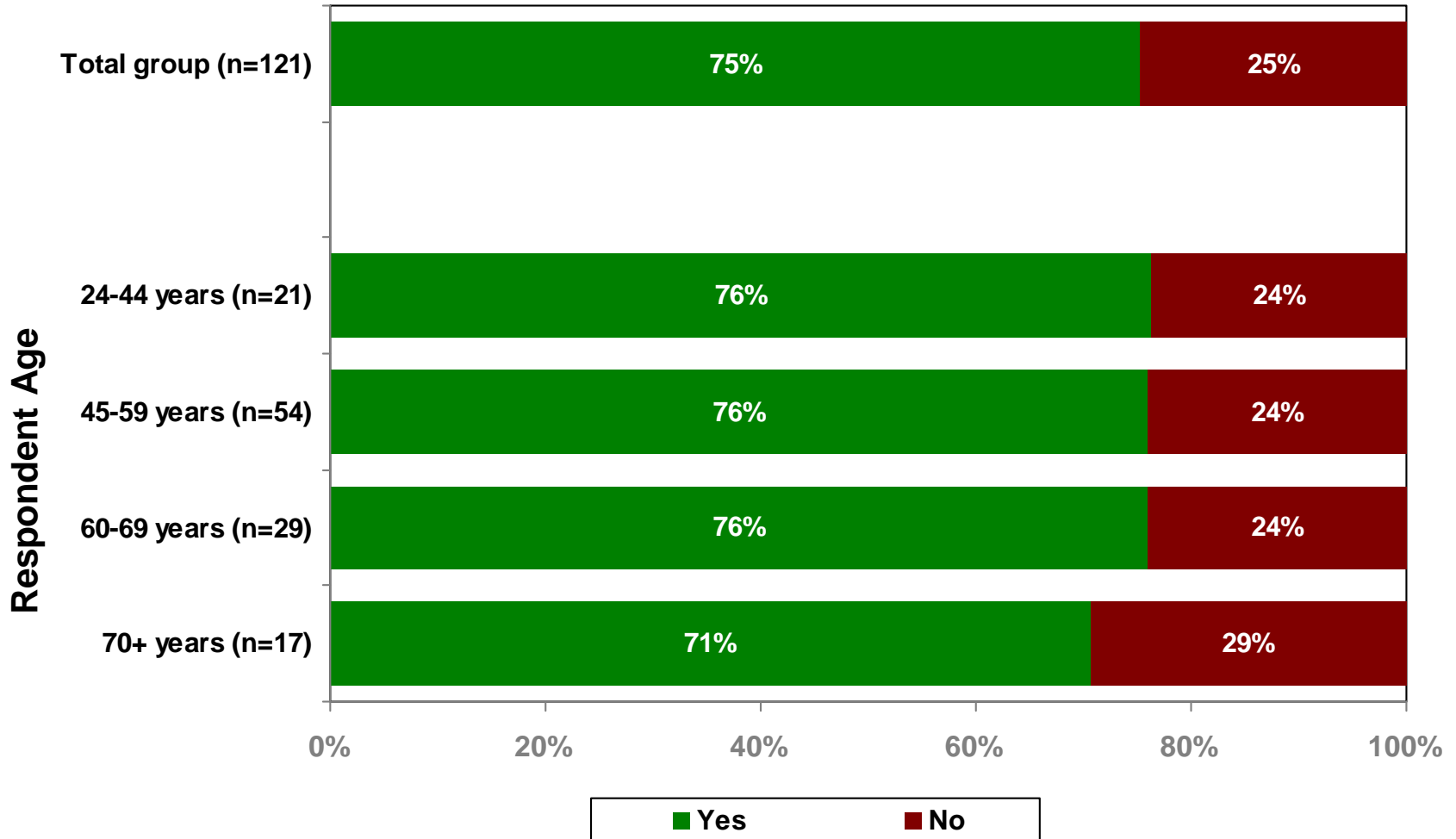


*Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Recent Purchases from a Co-op

Three-quarters of the co-op members interviewed have purchased products or services from a Vermont co-op within the past 30 days.

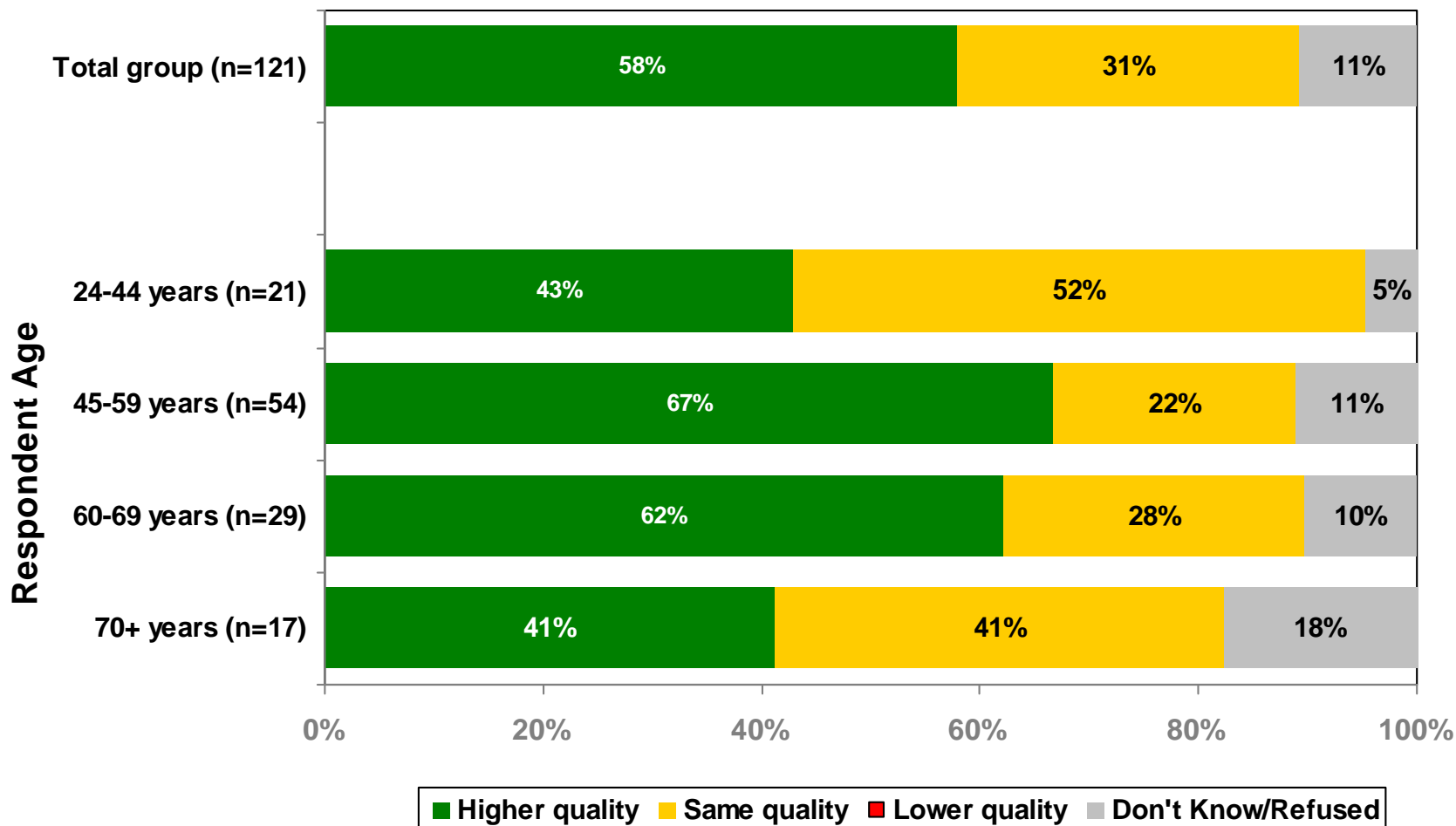
Q7. Within the past 30 days, have you purchased or obtained one or more products or services from any Vermont cooperative?



Quality of Products/Services from Vermont Co-ops

Eighty-nine percent of the respondents believe that the products and services available from Vermont co-ops are of the same or higher quality than other businesses.

Q8. Do you believe that the products or services that are available at or from a Vermont cooperative are of a higher, same or lesser quality than if you obtained them from a non-cooperative business or company?

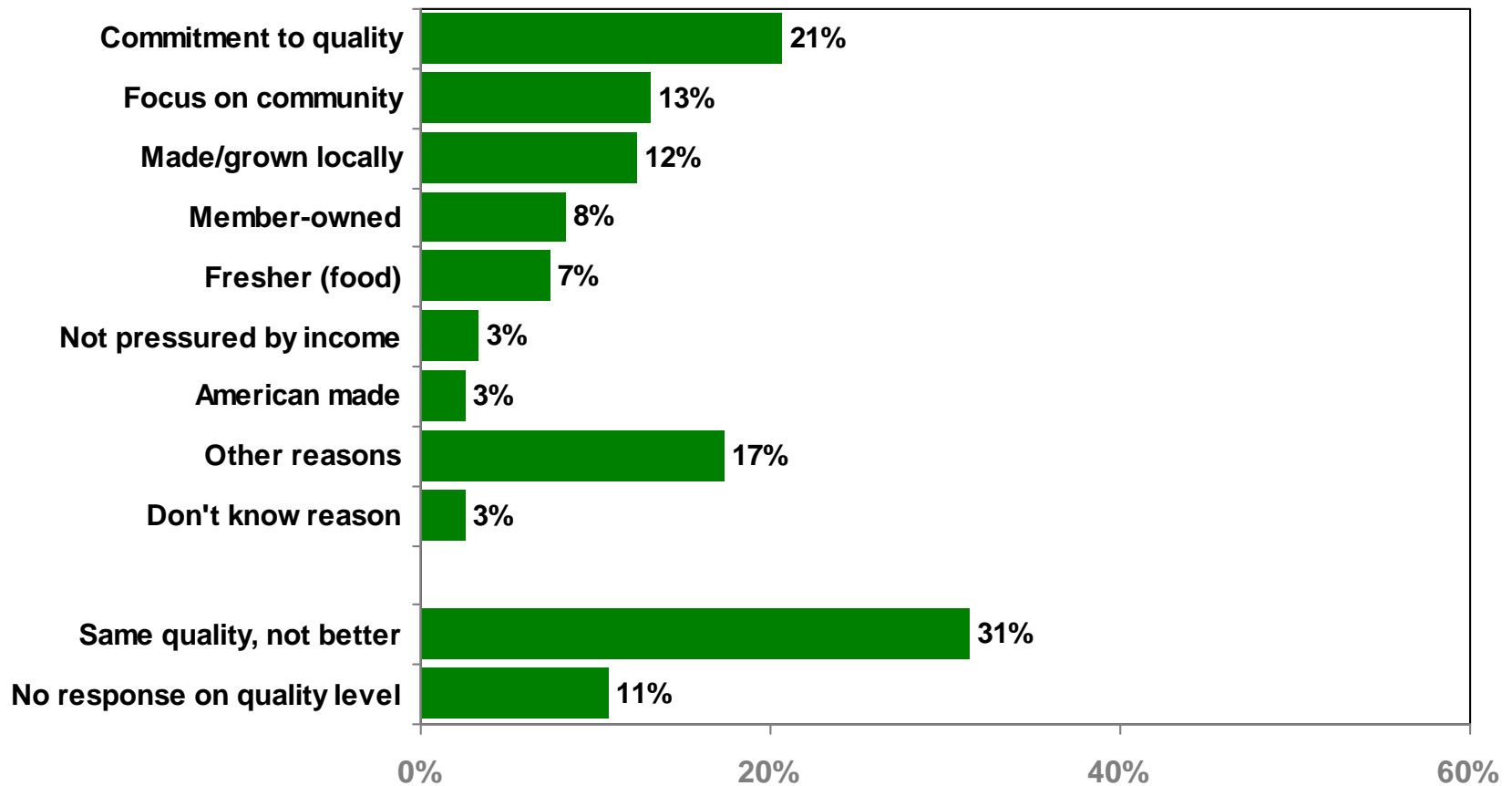


Why Co-op Products/Services are Better

Among the respondents indicating products and services provided by a Vermont co-op are of a higher quality, commitment to quality is the most frequently mentioned reason.

Q8A. Why do you feel that the products or services are of a higher quality if they come from a cooperative? *

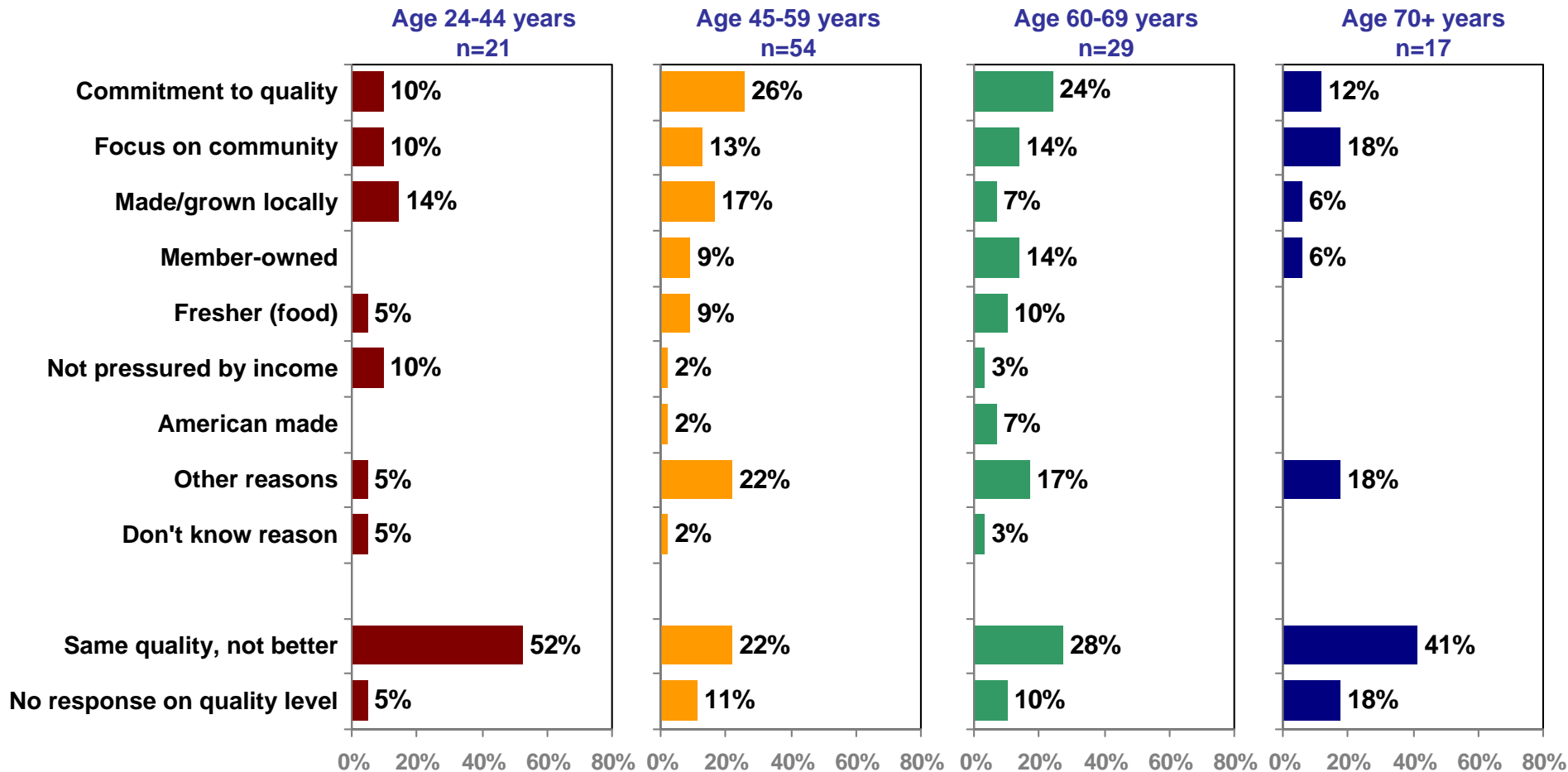
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*Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Why Co-op Products are Better by Age Group

Respondents in the 45-69 age range are twice as likely than those in other age groups to report commitment to quality as a reason that products and services provided by a Vermont co-op are of a higher quality. Half of the co-op members in the 24-44 age group feel that the quality of the products and services offered by co-ops is the same as those offered by non-cooperative companies.

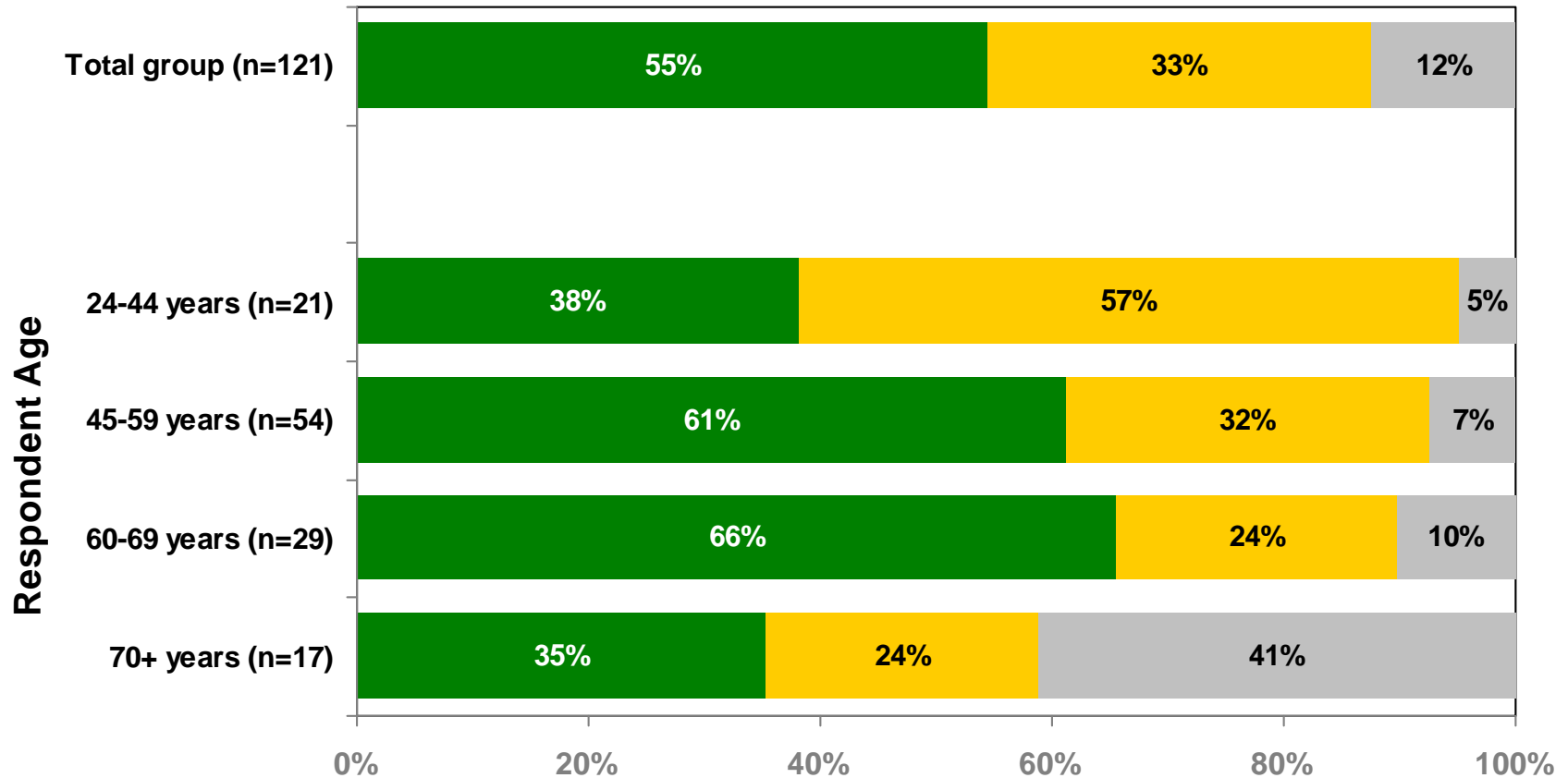


*Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Level of Service from a Co-op

Overall, 88% of the respondents feel they receive the same or better service from co-ops than from non-cooperative companies. Respondents between 45 and 69 years of age are more likely than other age groups to feel they receive a better level of customer service from co-ops.

Q9. Please tell me if you think that Vermont co-ops provide a better, same or lesser level of customer service than other non-cooperative, Vermont businesses or companies?

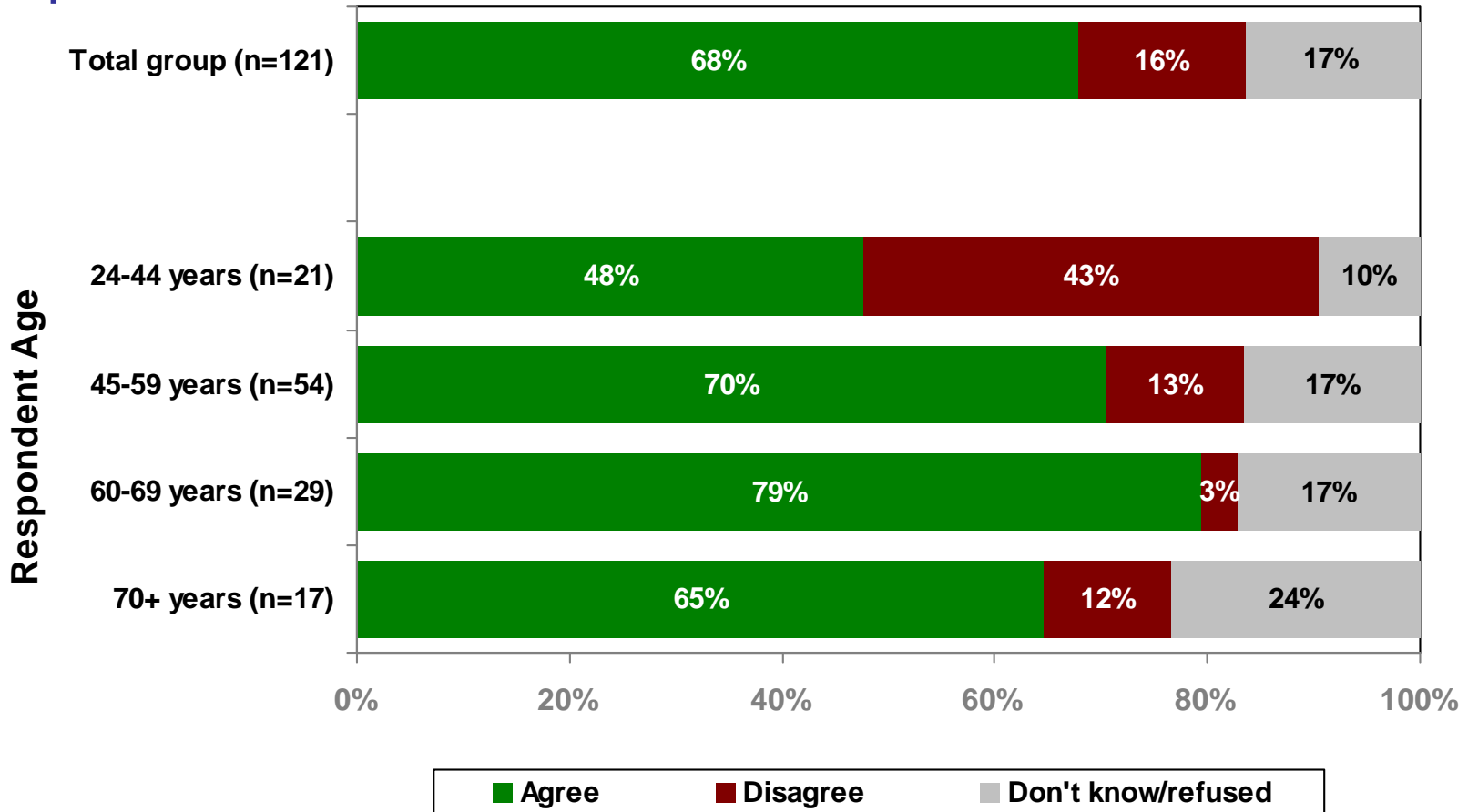


■ Better level of customer service ■ Same level of service ■ Lesser level of customer service ■ Don't Know/Refused

Meeting Customer Needs

Sixty-eight percent of all co-op members interviewed agree that co-ops can be counted on to meet their needs. Co-op members 24 to 44 years of age are less likely to agree that co-ops meet customers' needs better than non-cooperative business.

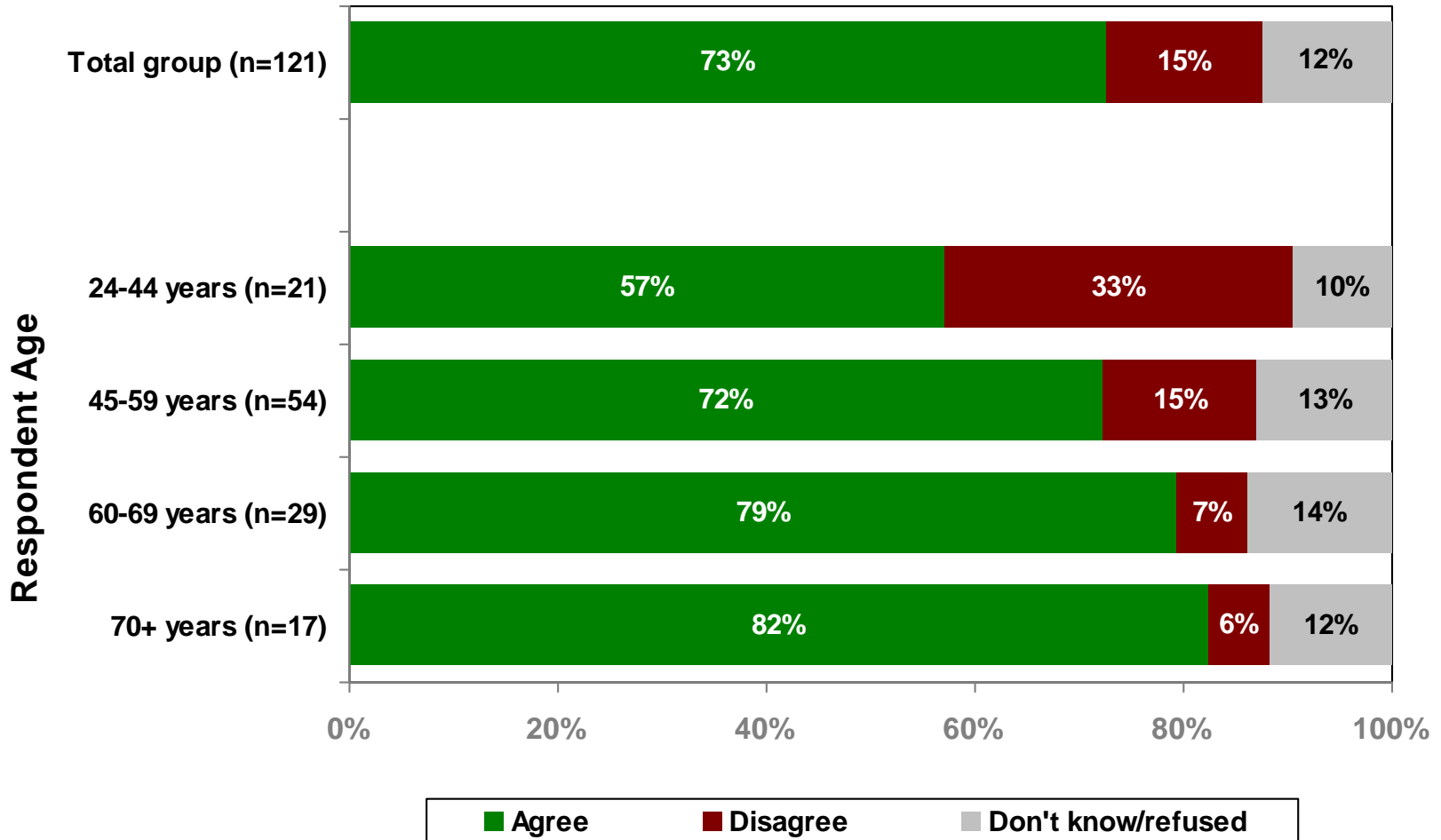
Q10. Co-ops in Vermont can be counted on to meet their customers' needs in a more satisfactory way compared to other non-cooperative, Vermont businesses or companies.



Consumers' Best Interests

Three quarters of the respondents report that co-ops have the best interests of consumers in mind; however, one-third of the respondents 24-44 years old disagree with this statement.

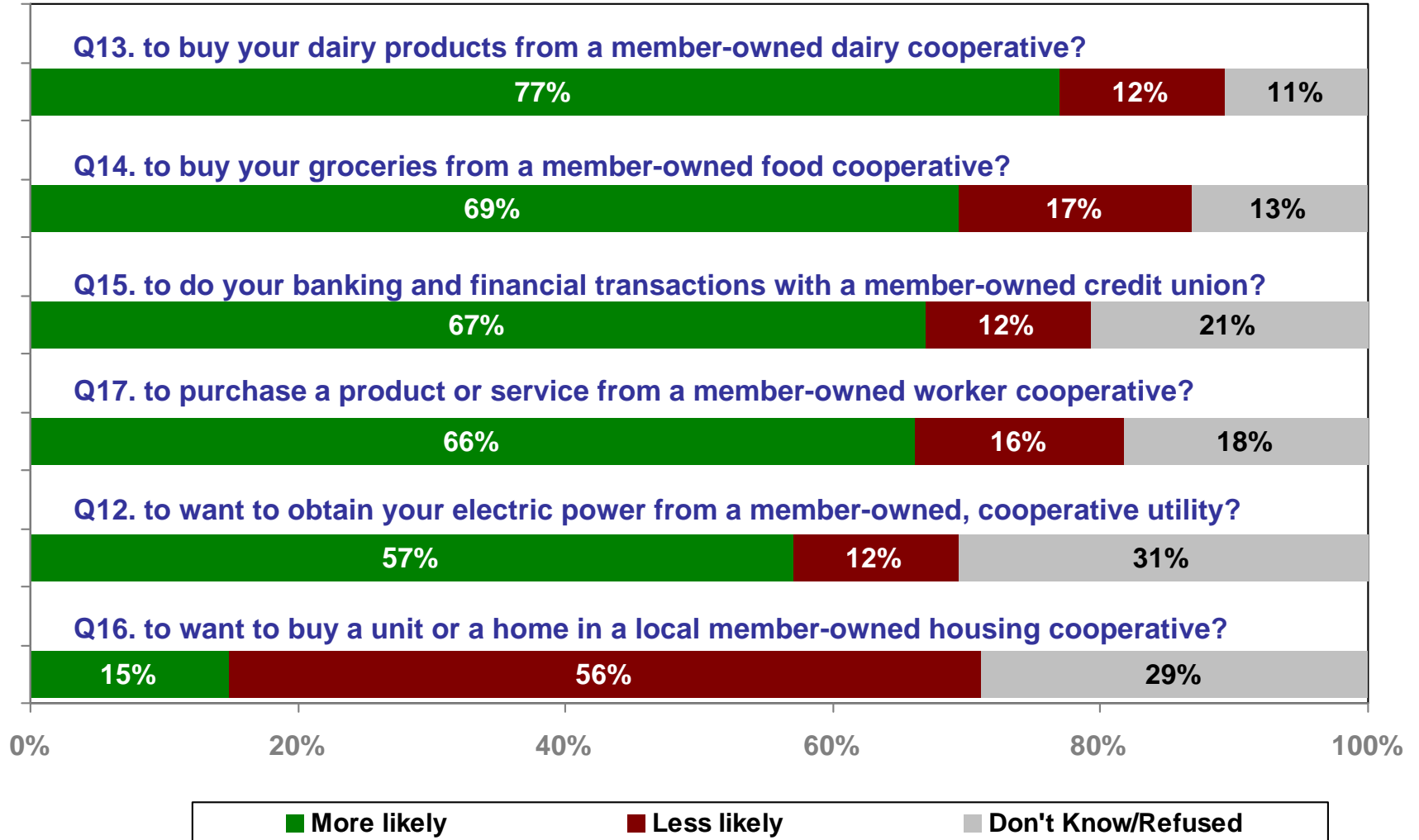
Q11. Co-ops in Vermont have the best interests of consumers in mind when conducting business compared to other non-cooperative, Vermont businesses or companies.



Willingness to Buy from Specific Co-op Types

With the exception of a housing cooperative, most respondents are more likely to purchase products/services from a member-owned cooperative.

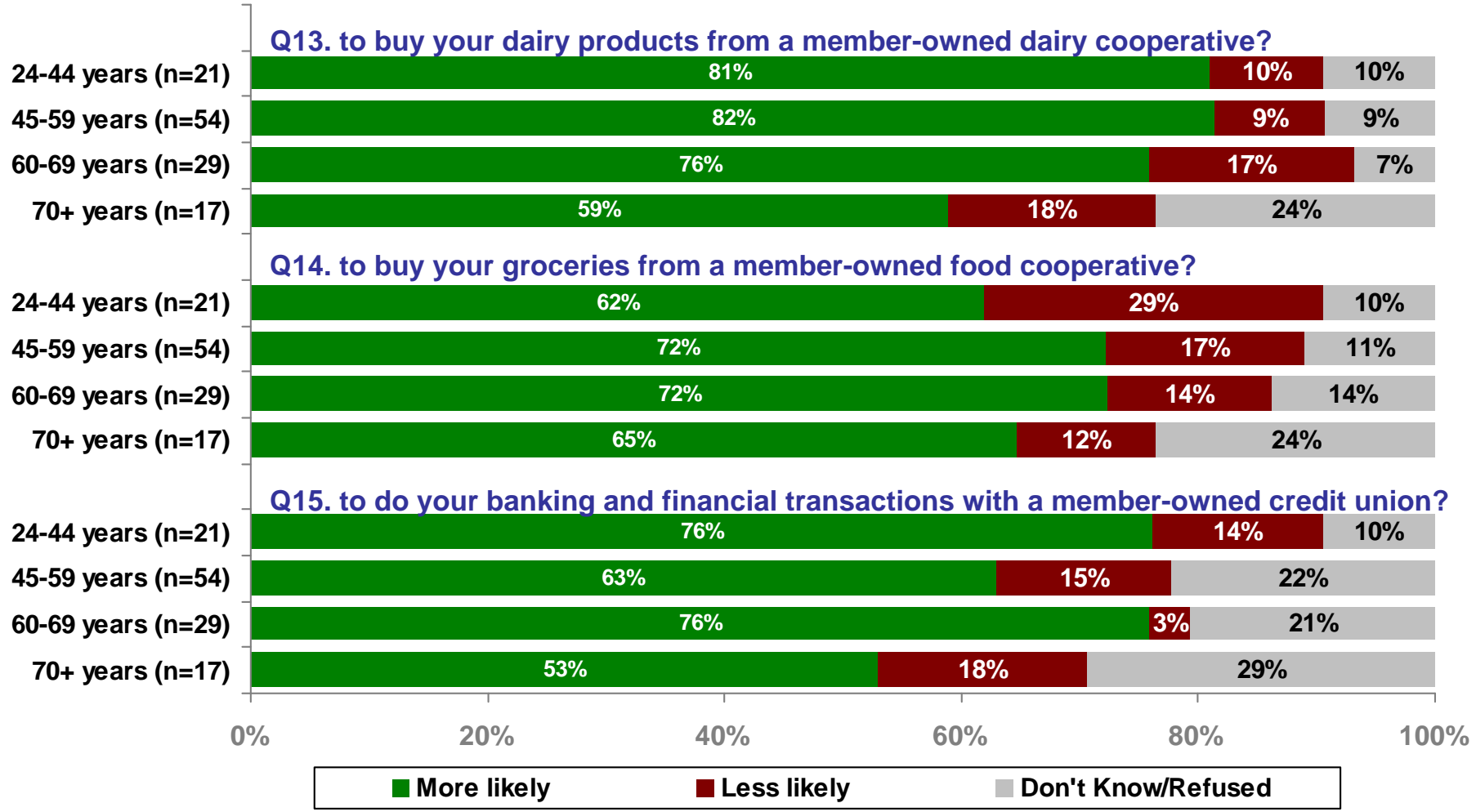
Would you be more or less likely ...
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Willingness to Buy from Specific Co-op Types by Age (1 of 2)

Respondents in the 70+ age group are less likely to buy dairy products from a member-owned dairy co-op than other age groups. Respondents in the 24-44 age group are less likely to buy groceries from a member-owned food co-op but more likely to do banking with a credit union.

Would you be more or less likely ...



Willingness to Buy from Specific Co-op Types by Age (2 of 2)

Respondents in the 60-69 age group are more likely to want to obtain electric power for a co-op than other age groups. Seventy-six percent of the respondents in the 45-59 age group are more likely to purchase a product or service from a co-op.

Would you be more or less likely ...

