Public support for sufficiency policies in Ireland

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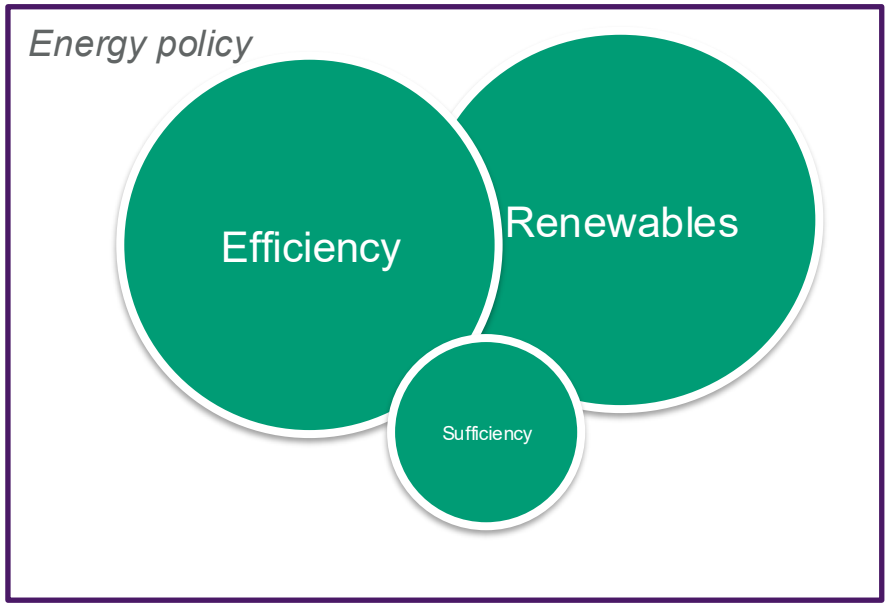
Background

- Aiming for 1.5°C
- Current policy focused on efficiency principle



- Sufficiency
  - "policy measures and daily practices which **avoid the demand for energy, materials, and natural resources** while delivering well-being for all within planetary boundaries."

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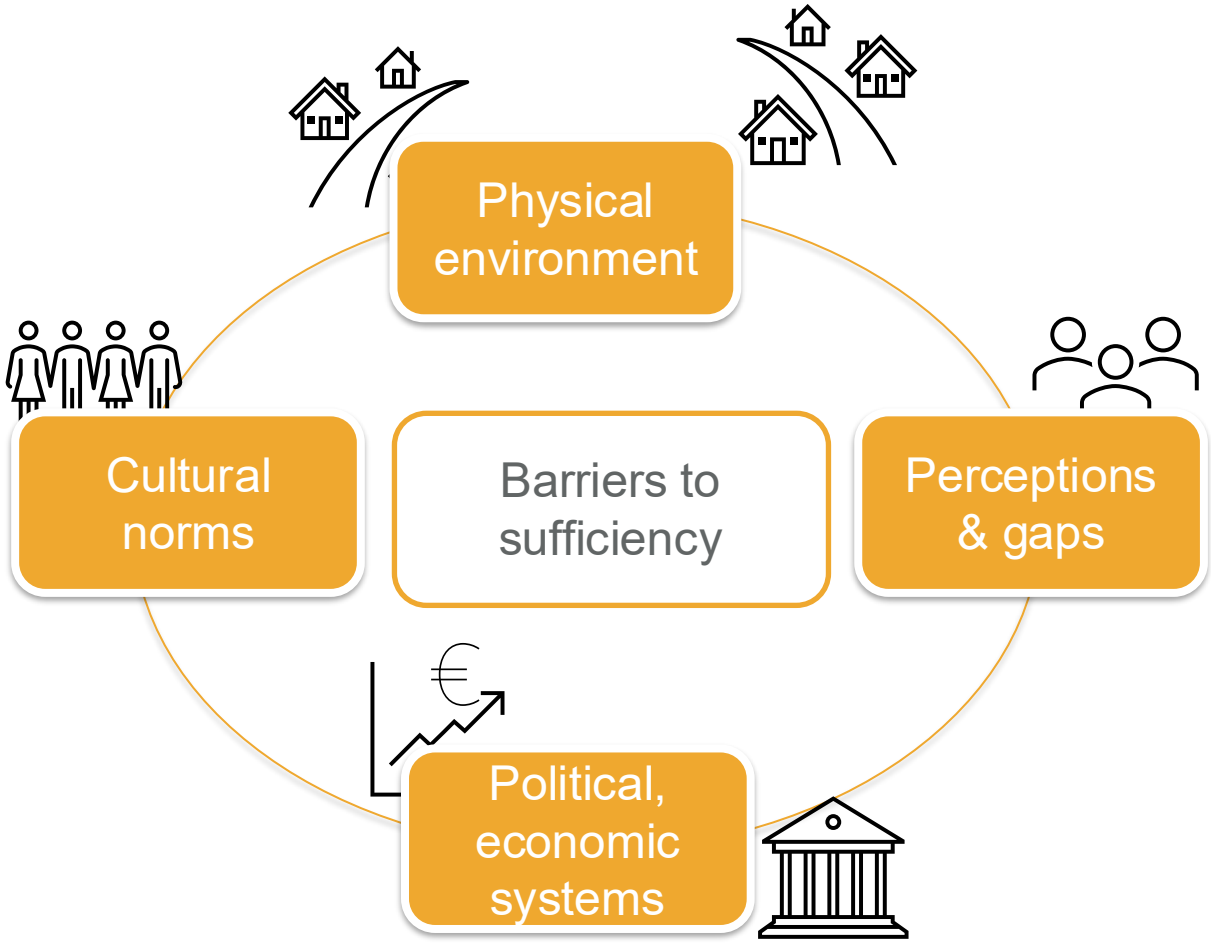
Exemplifying the addition of sufficiency

Example: heating in buildings

	Efficiency	Renewables	Sufficiency
Example measures	Insulation	Solar + heat pump	Reduced floor area
Outcome	Improve energy intensity	Reduce impact of demand	Avoid demand for energy & materials

Introduction to study



- Literature on policy attitudes
  - Wider climate policy support
    - Research mostly on intrinsic factors
  - Sufficiency acceptance understudied
    - Framing & rationale
    - Stating examples

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Questions addressed

1. Does the given rationale for policies (energy demand reduction vs (quality of life) co-benefits vs a combination of both) make a difference to support?
   b) Does effect of rationale depend on level of climate priority?

2. Does knowing that a policy has already been implemented elsewhere matter to support?

3. Do perceived levels of others' support match up to actual average support?

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Methods

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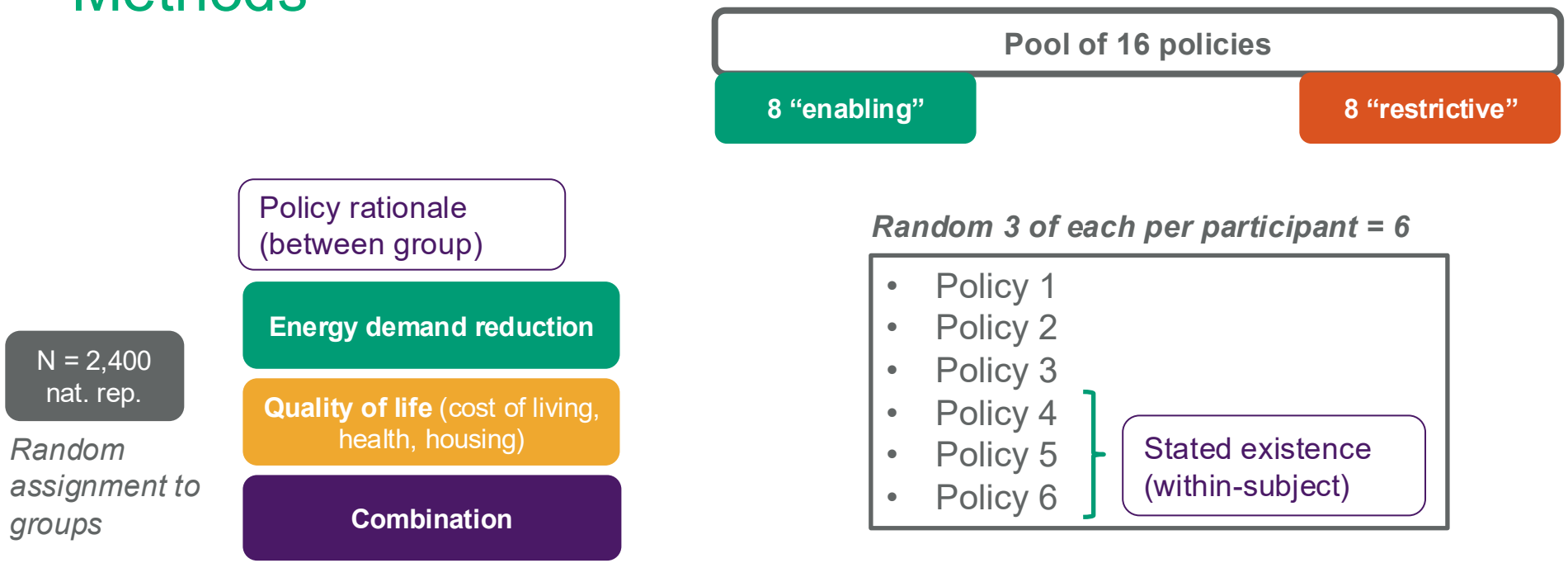
Methods



Outcomes

For each policy: **Support** (1 Fully oppose – 7 Full support)
Others' support (Most people oppose; most are unsure/don't care; most support)
Willingness to express support (Keep to self; share with like-minded; share with anyone)
Fairness & effectiveness

Other measures: **Appropriate climate policy priority rating** (Low, medium, high, very high)
Knowledge
Sociodemographic, household, mobility variables &c.

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Policies – manipulation examples

High-density housing

Policy: Change planning rules to prioritise buildings with a high density of housing units that maximises the number of people that can live in a given space.

Policy rationale

Energy demand reduction [Energy]: High-density housing uses less energy for heating. It also means services are closer to more people, reducing transport emissions.

Quality of Life [QoL]: High-density housing means new homes can be provided for many more people, and it's easier to ensure services are close by.

Combination of both [Combination]: [merging of above]

Stated existence

Pre-existing example: High-density residential buildings are the norm in many countries.

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Policies – manipulation examples

Limit one-off rural housing

Policy: Limit the construction of one-off rural housing outside of established towns and villages, with some exceptions (e.g. people involved in agriculture).

Policy rationale

Energy demand reduction [Energy]: One-off rural housing increases reliance on cars rather than sustainable alternatives. Detached homes also use much more energy for heating than other types of home.

Quality of Life [QoL]: Building houses in towns or villages rather than one-off rural housing means people have more services near them and don't need to travel long distances.

Combination of both [Combination]: [merging of above]

Stated existence

Pre-existing example: High-density residential buildings are the norm in many countries.

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Policies

	Enabling	Restricting
Aviation	Sail & Rail subsidy	"Frequent flyer tax" (beginning 3rd flight)
Transport	Four day working week	More pedestrianisation + fewer parking spaces
	E-cargo bike grants	Vehicle mass tax
	Public transport strong investment	Congestion charges
Built environment	Prioritise high-density housing units	Limit one-off rural housing
	Waive stamp duty for downsizing	Max. heating temperatures in offices
Electricity	Mandate "rising block tariffs" provision	Ban new data centres until at least 2030
	Mandate air-drying clothes space	Remove all lit advertising billboards and reduce other public lighting

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Results

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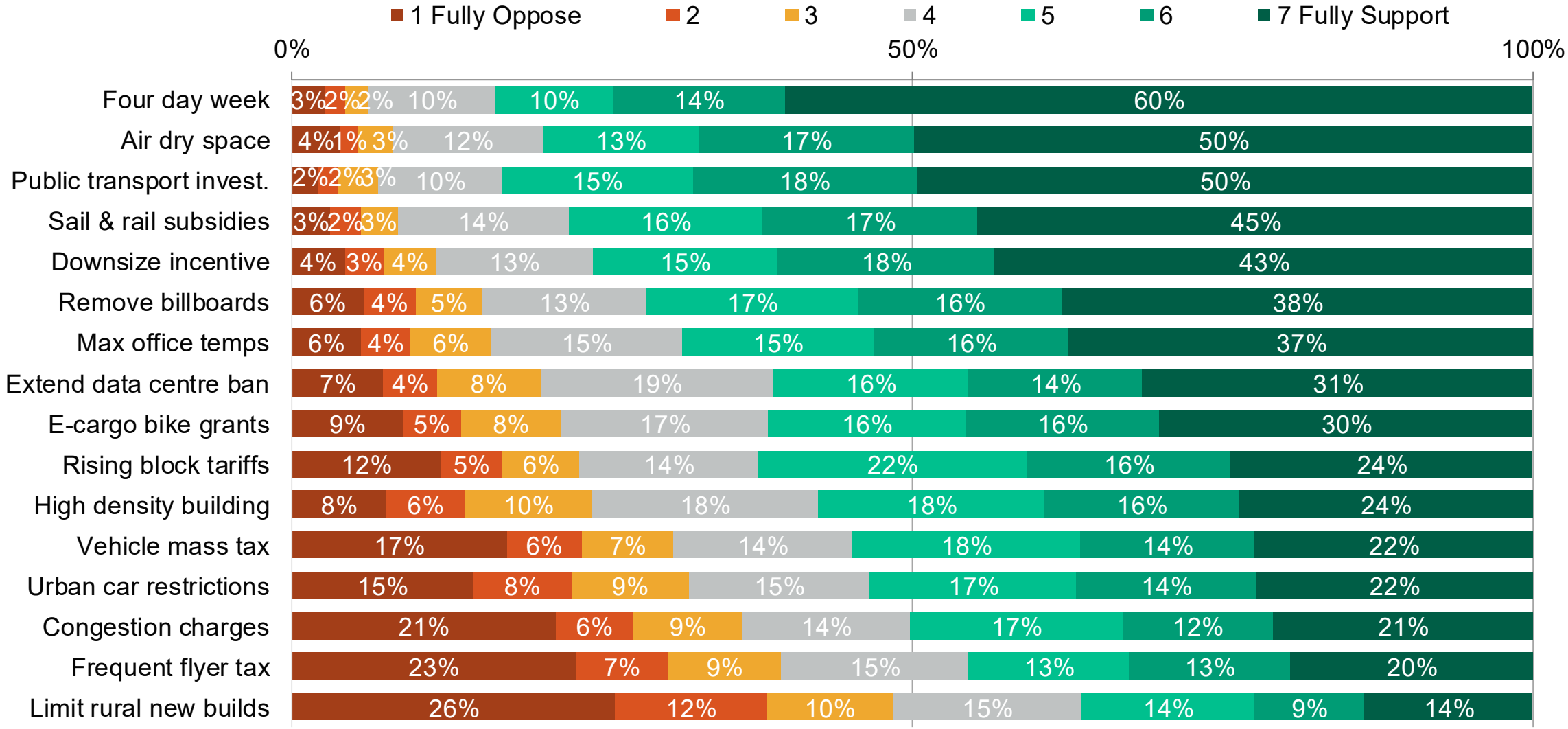
Ratings of support for each policy



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Effects of experimental conditions

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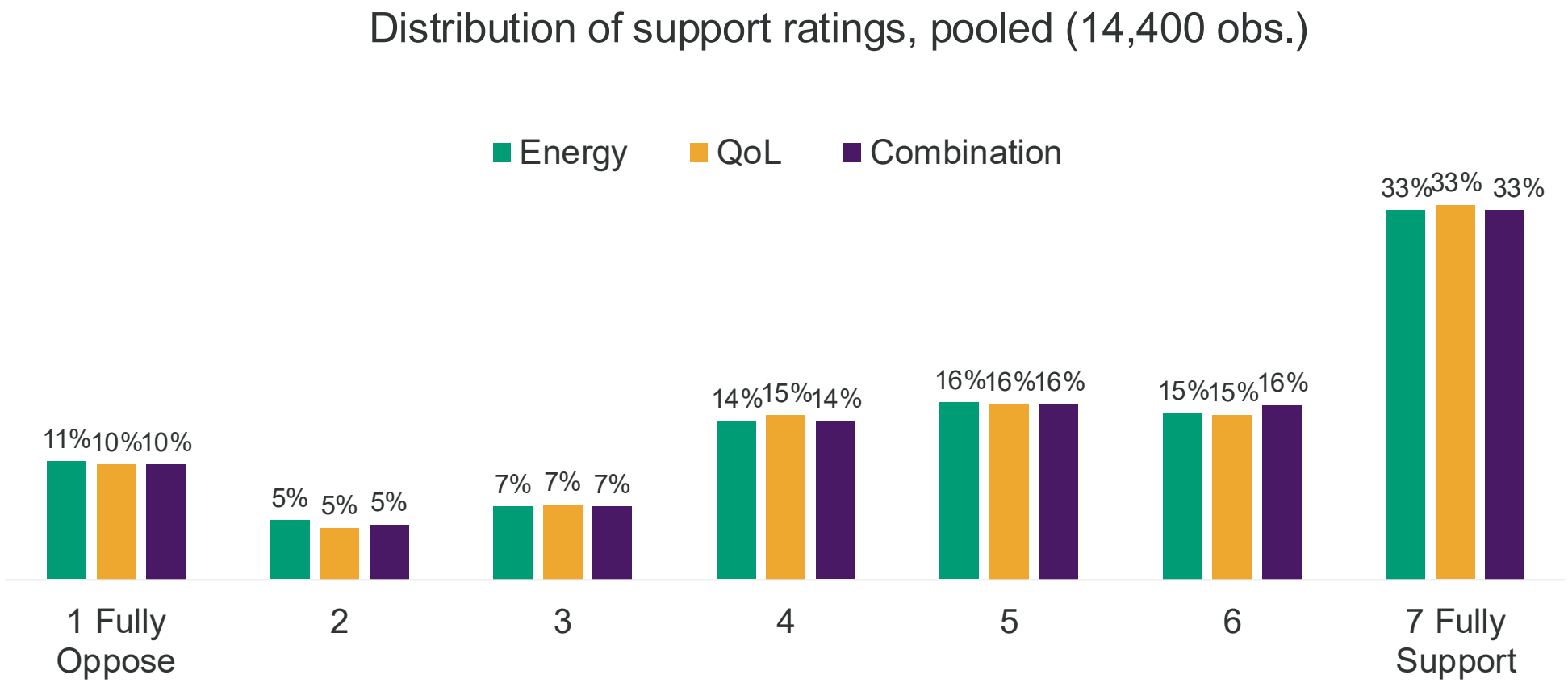
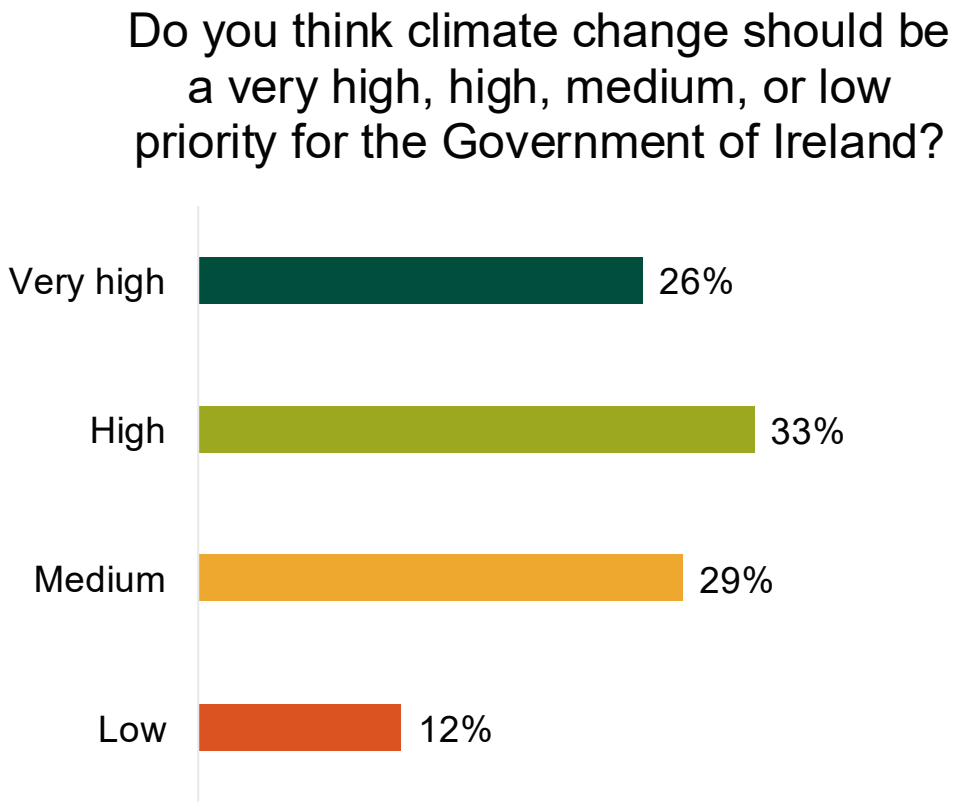
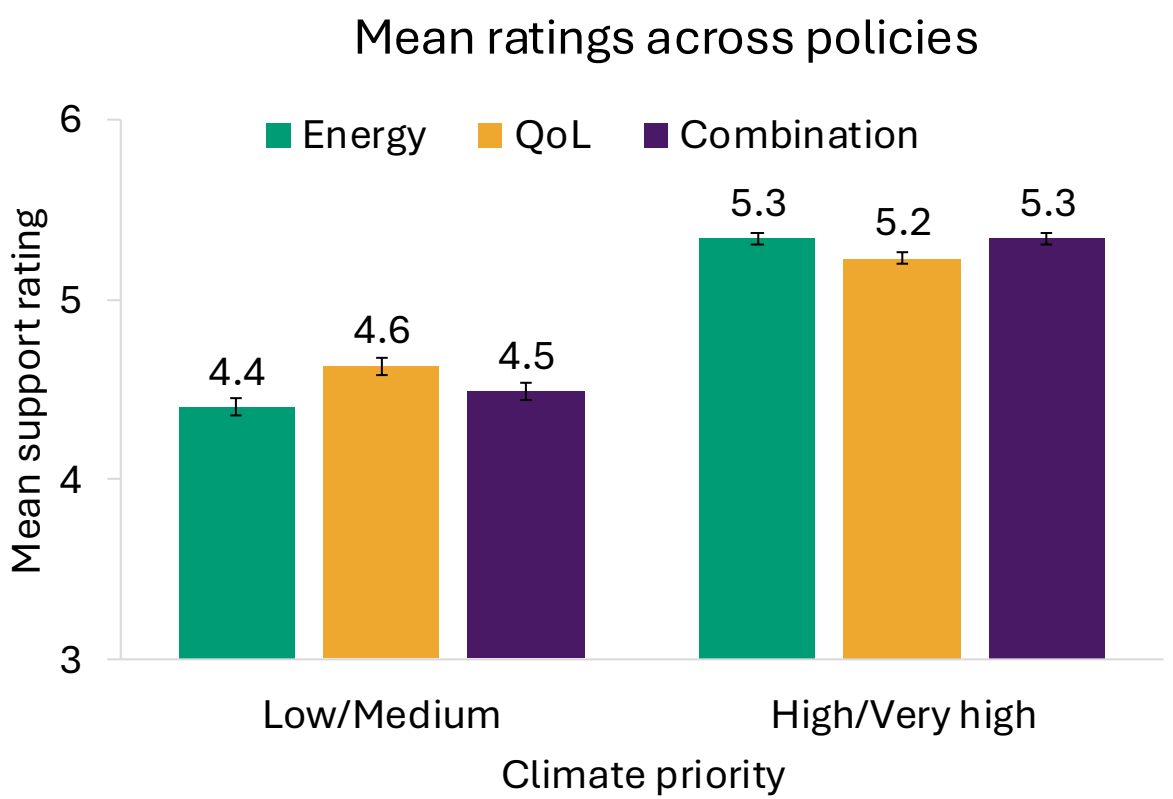
Policy rationale framing



Policy rationale framing & climate priority level





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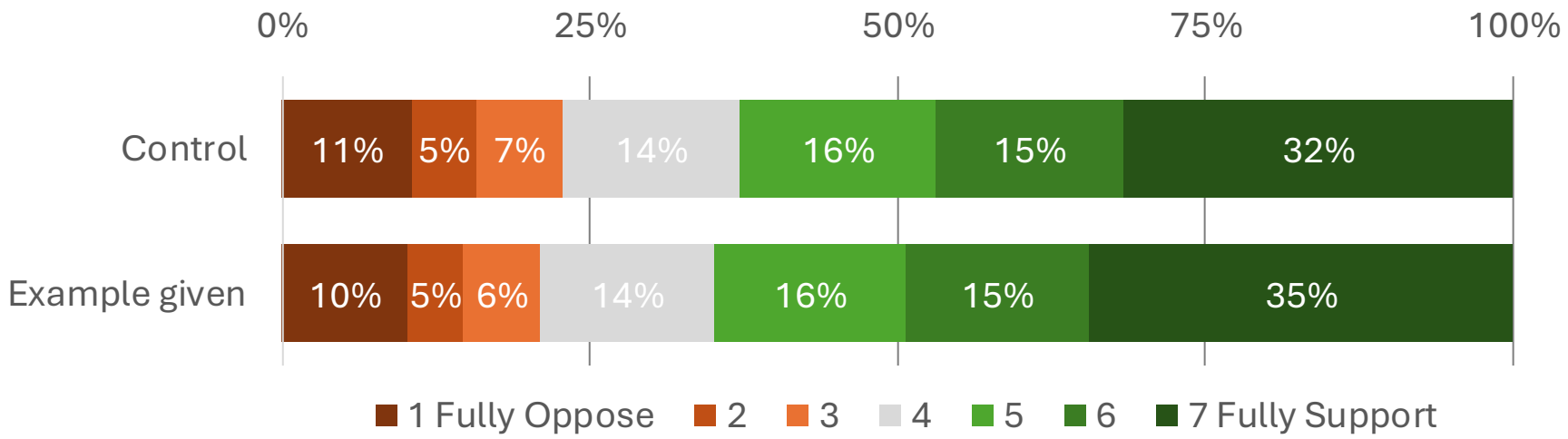
Effect of stating example



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Other factors influencing support

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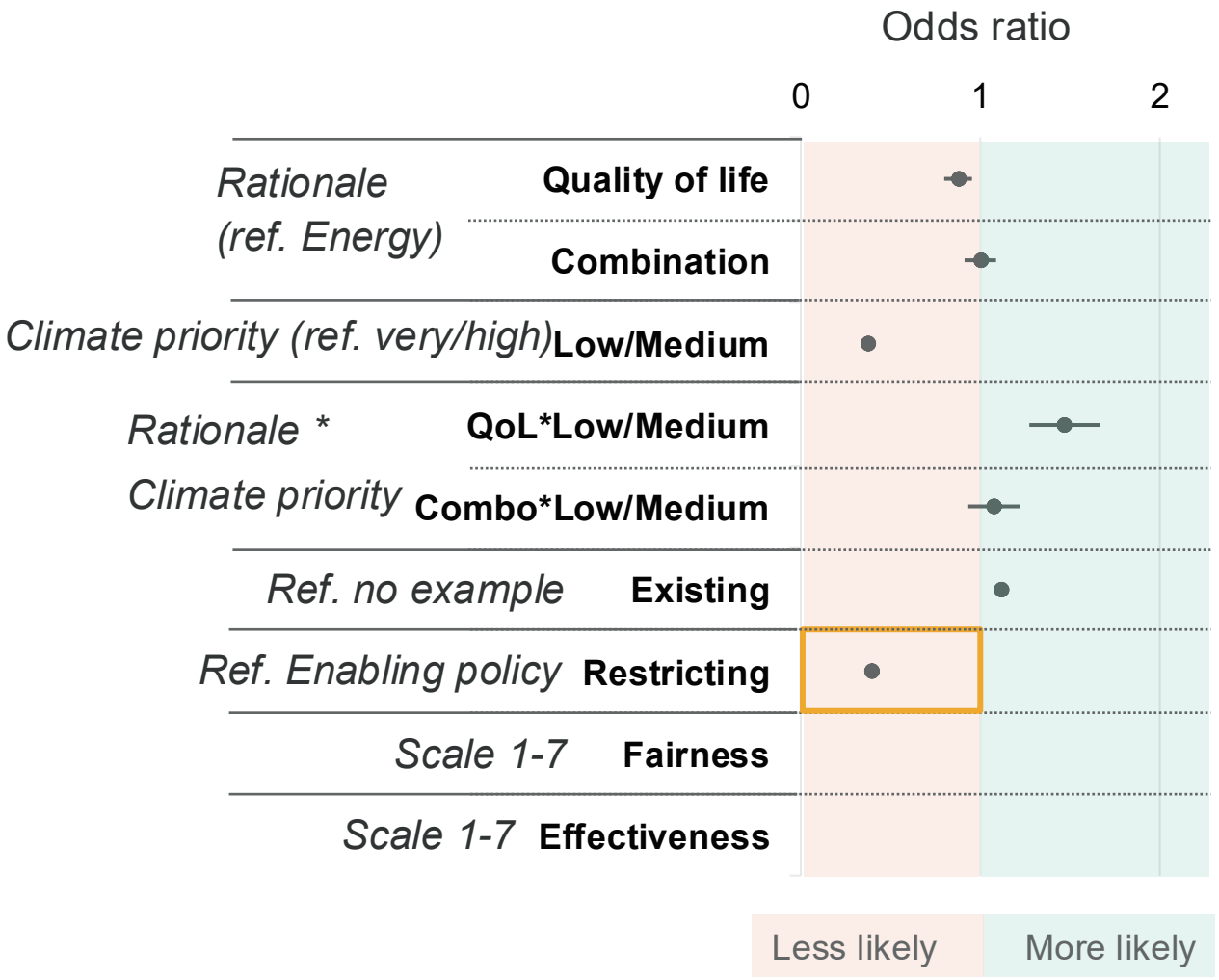
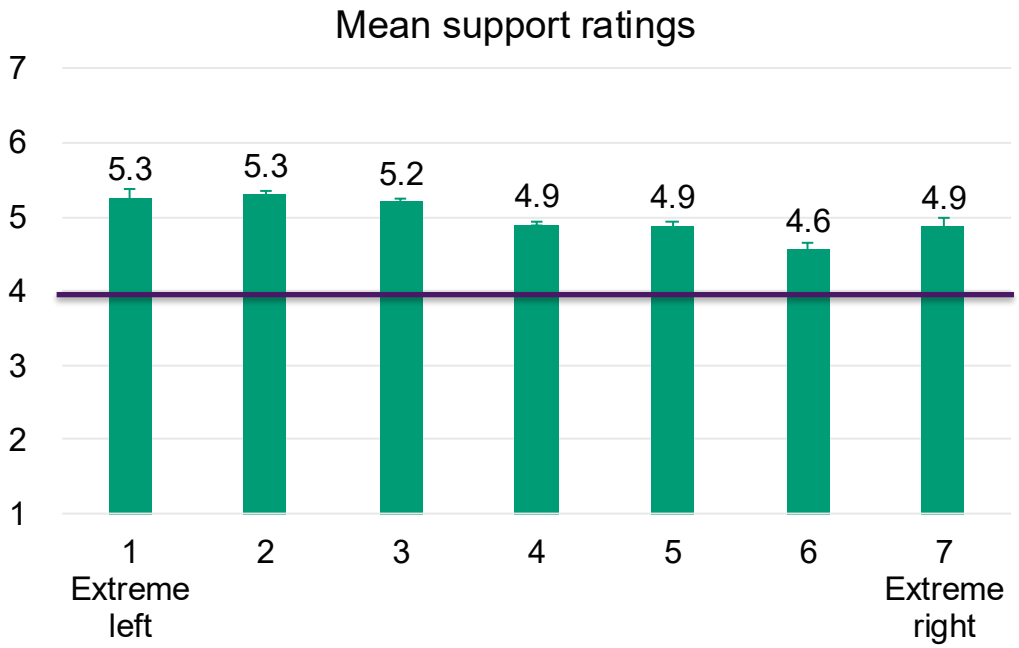
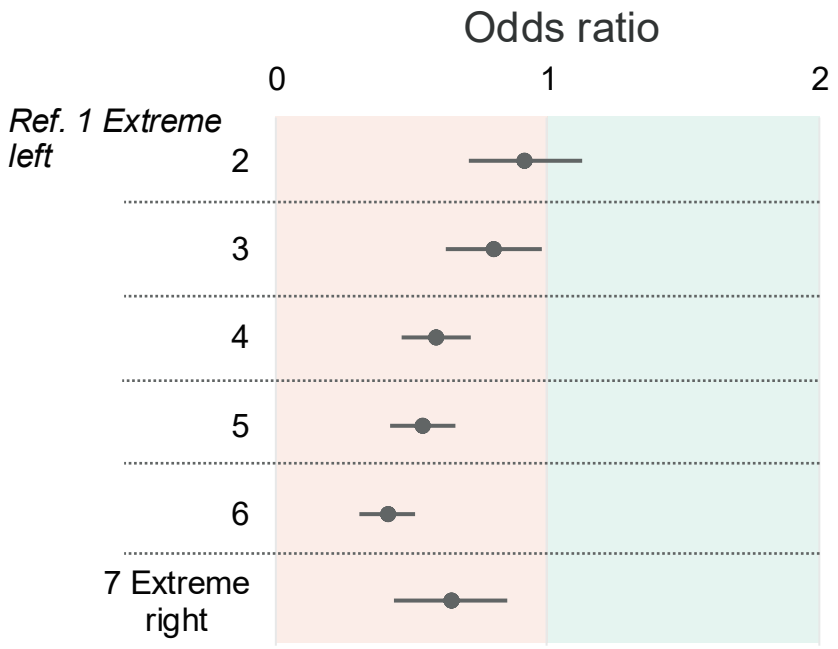
Restrictiveness, fairness, effectiveness



Political associations with support





Perception gaps

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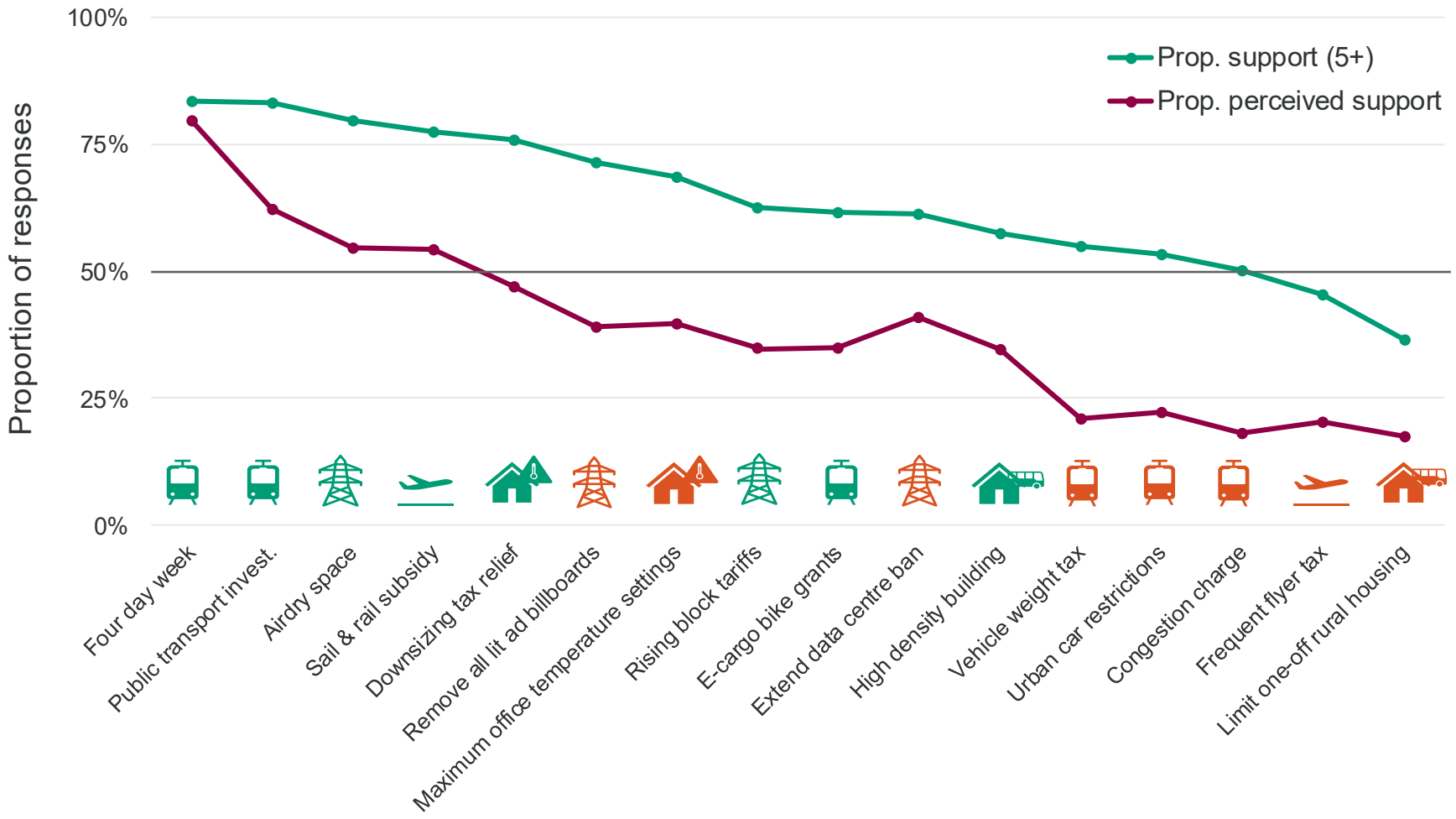
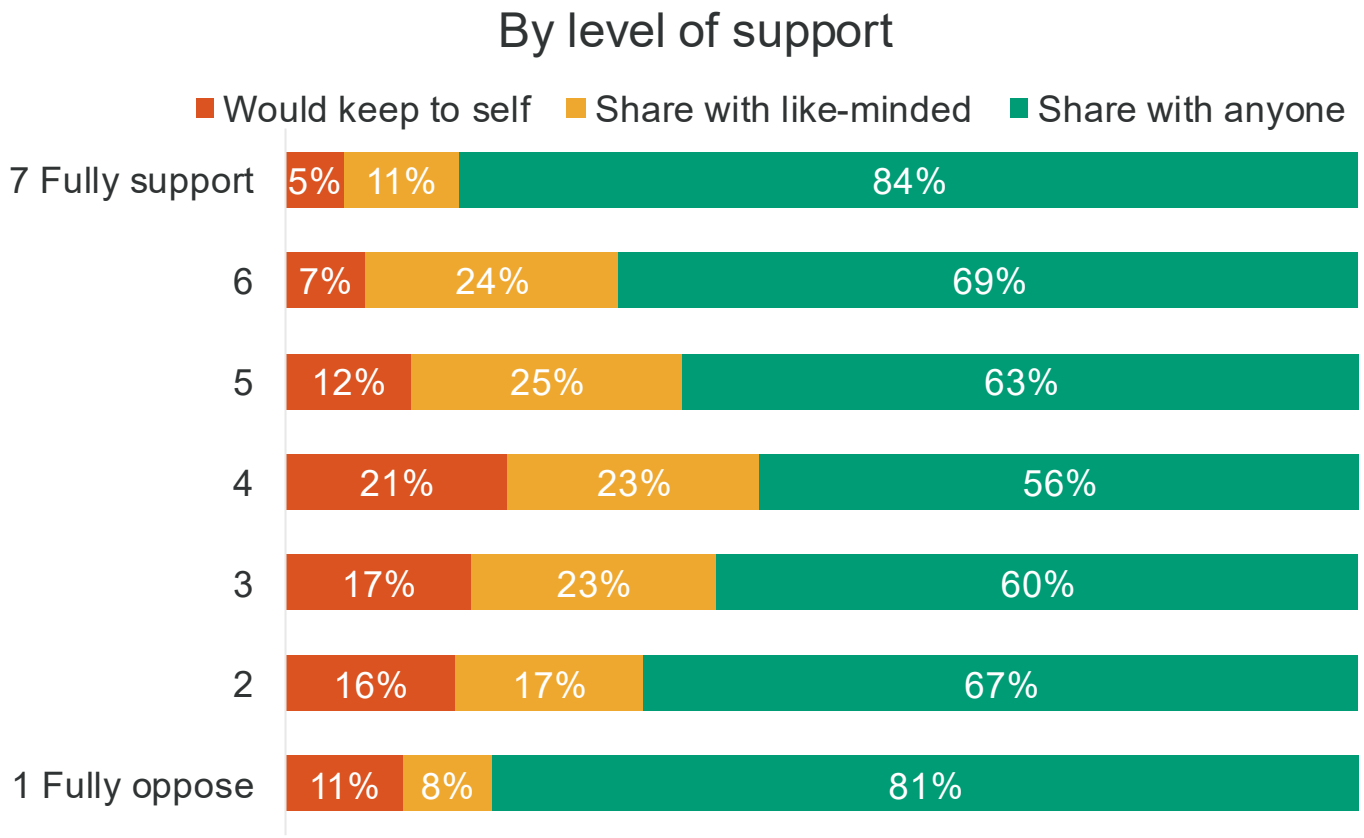
Actual vs perceived support



Willingness to share views



People a lot less likely to share a view they don't think others hold.

Men, older, better paid more willing to tell others their opinion.

Modelling individual policies

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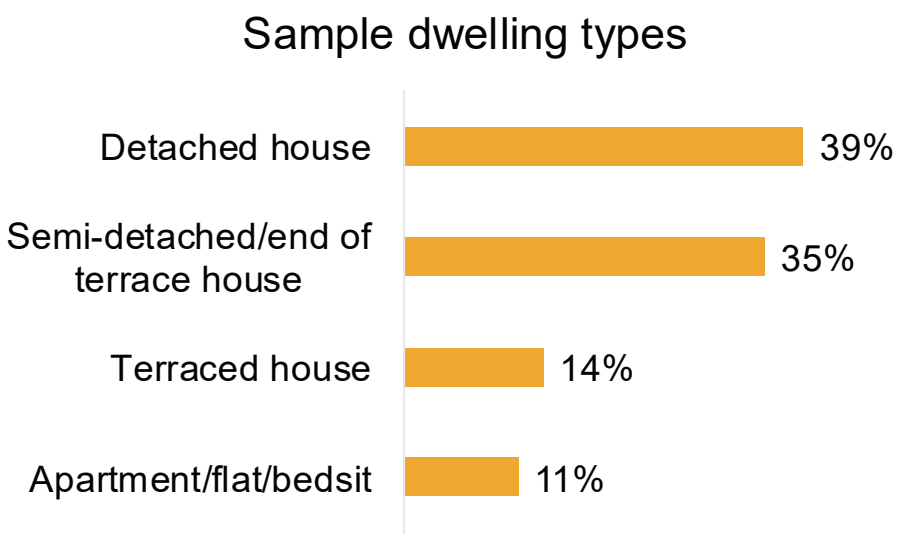
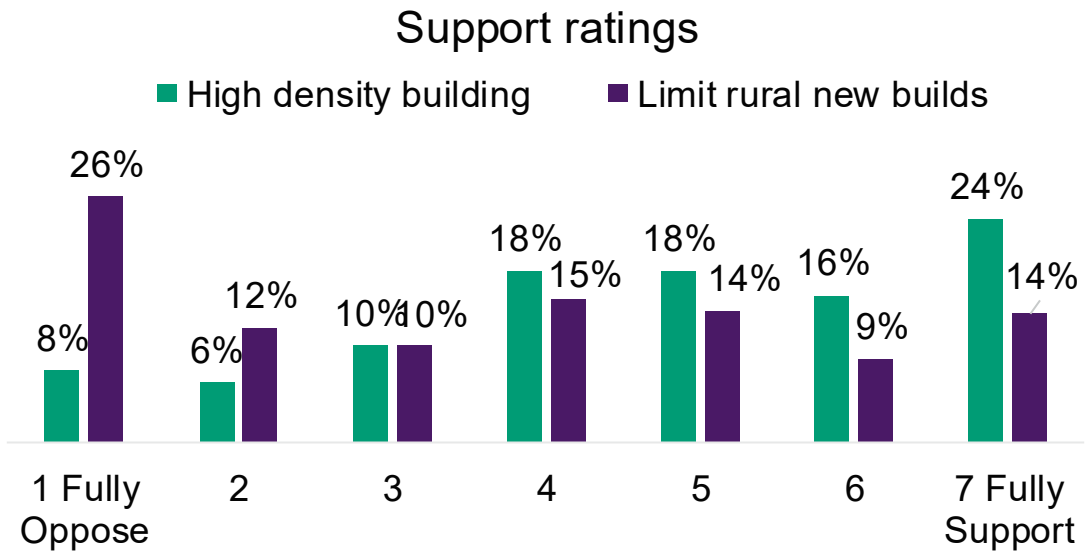
High-density planning Vs. Limits on rural single buildings

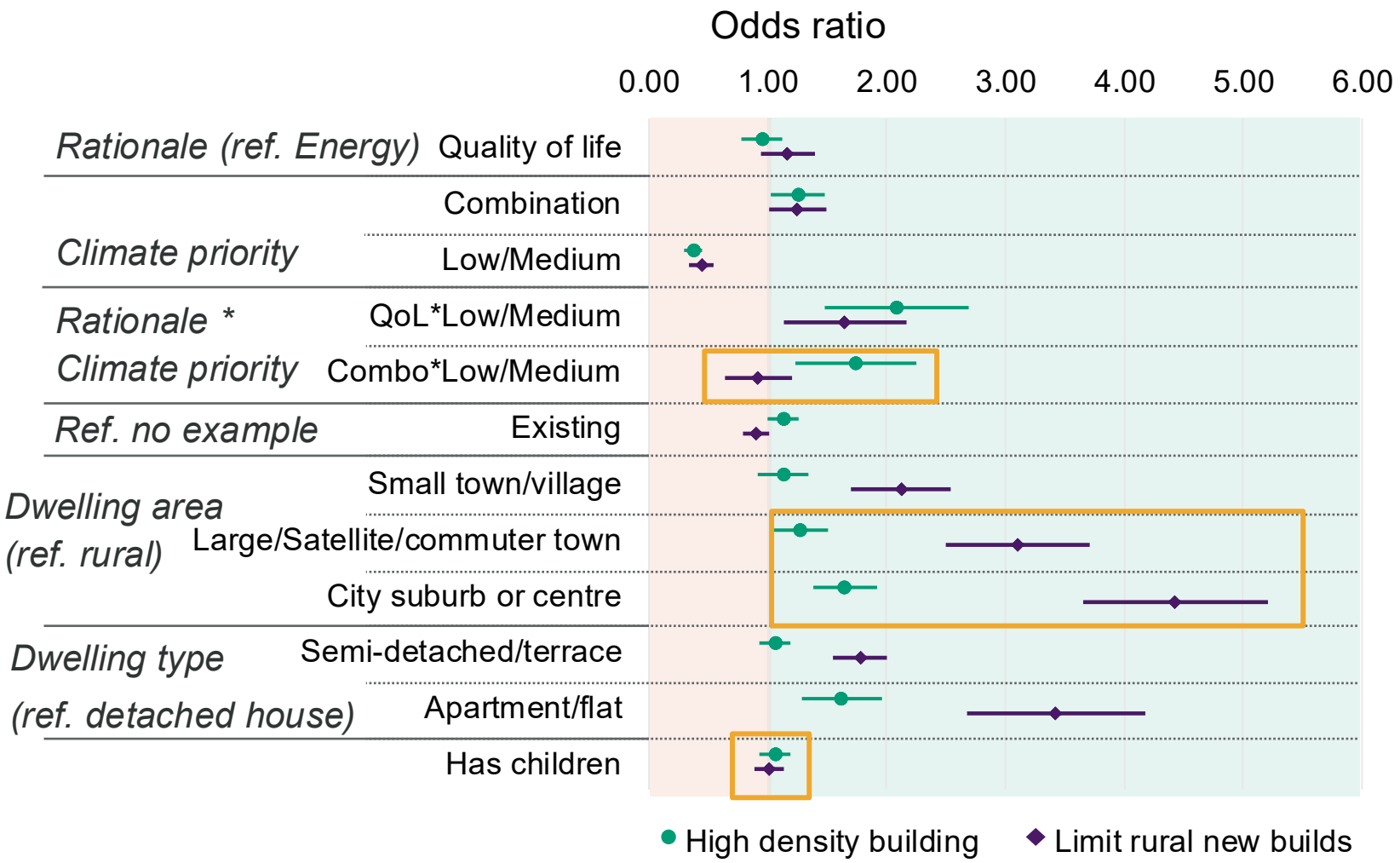
Dispersed housing patterns
Agricultural important economically, traditionally



+ 38% living rurally/small town/village

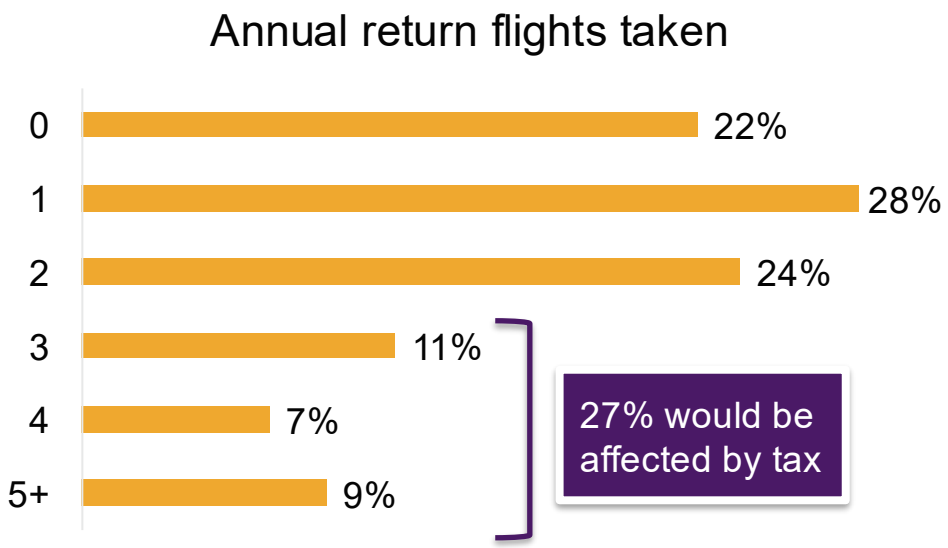


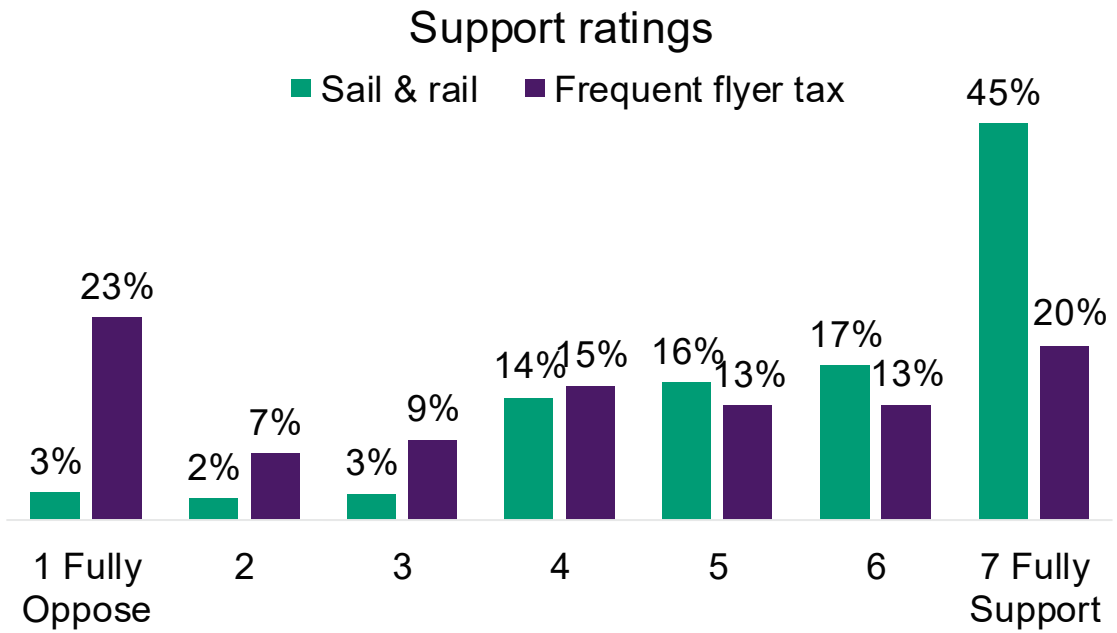
High-density planning Vs. Limits on rural single buildings



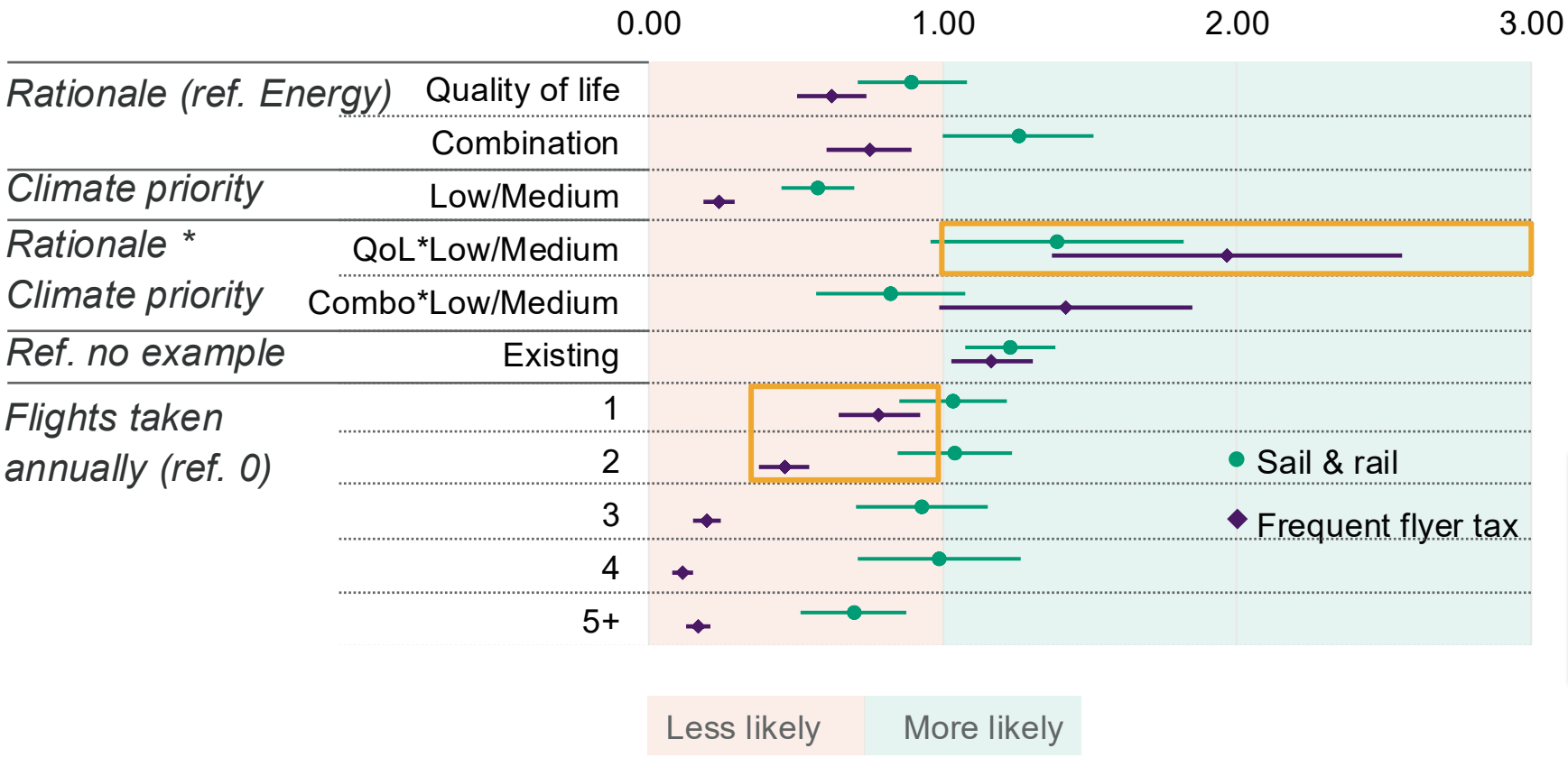
Sail & rail subsidies vs Frequent flyer tax

Dublin-London (second/) busiest route in Europe
About half Ireland - England capacity London-based





Sail & rail subsidies vs Frequent flyer tax



Frequent flyers less likely to support tax, but no difference on sail rail

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Conclusions & policy recommendations

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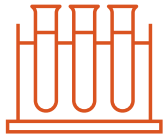
Conclusions

Strong support across all groups

Focusing on co-benefits often beneficial
Stating examples less so but does no harm



Require tests with harder policies

Systematic perception gaps

Fairness crucial in policy design and messaging

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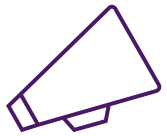
Policy recommendations

Focus on co-benefits, but test



Give examples of where policies exist,
& evidence that people support

Avoid assuming low support

User-Centred Energy Systems

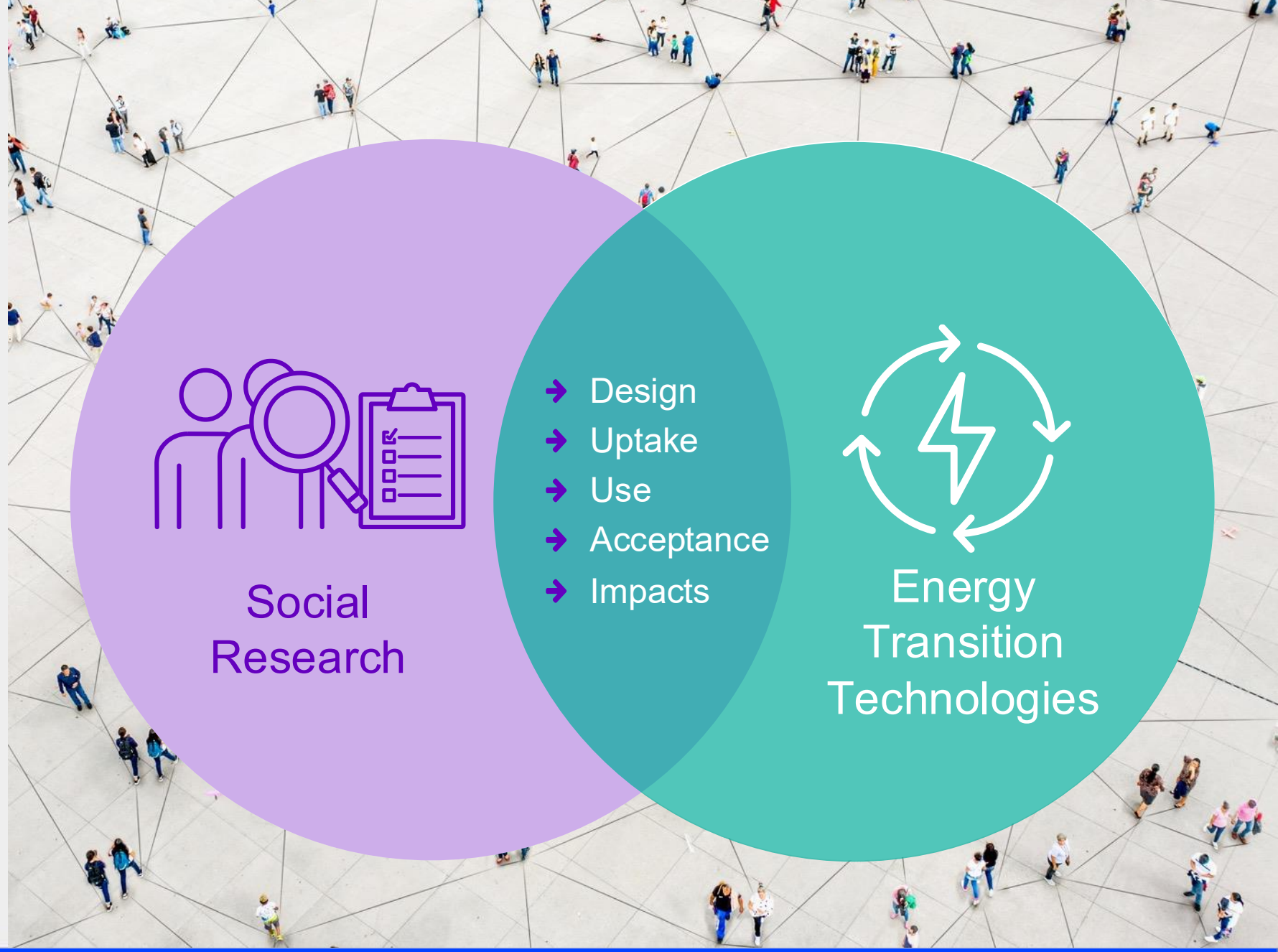
A Technology Collaboration Programme by IEA

Technology Collaboration Programme
by IEA

UsersTCP

What we do

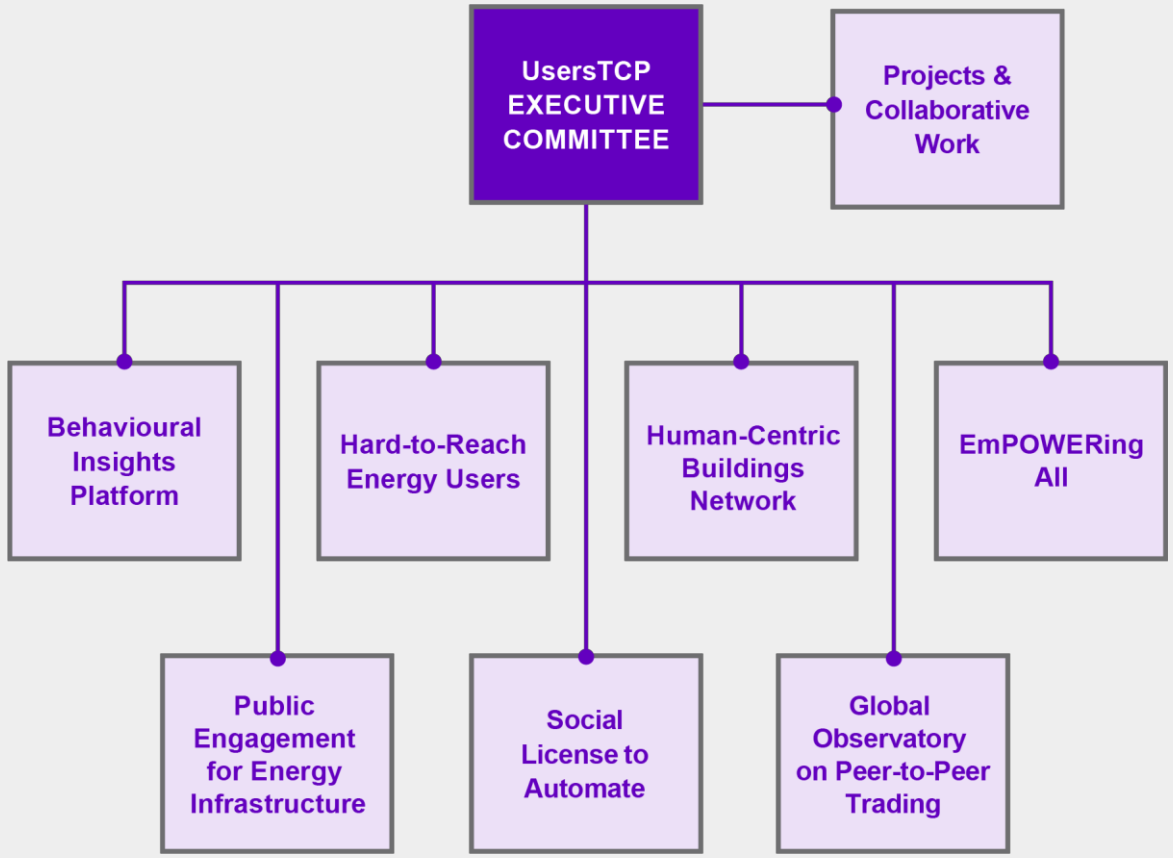
Social research to support energy transition policy goals



UsersTCP

Structure

The Users TCP's Tasks are the main international collaborative mechanisms through which we deliver on our strategy.



UsersTCP

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