

# A Virtual Parliament?

Research by Message House

for The John Smith Centre for Public Service



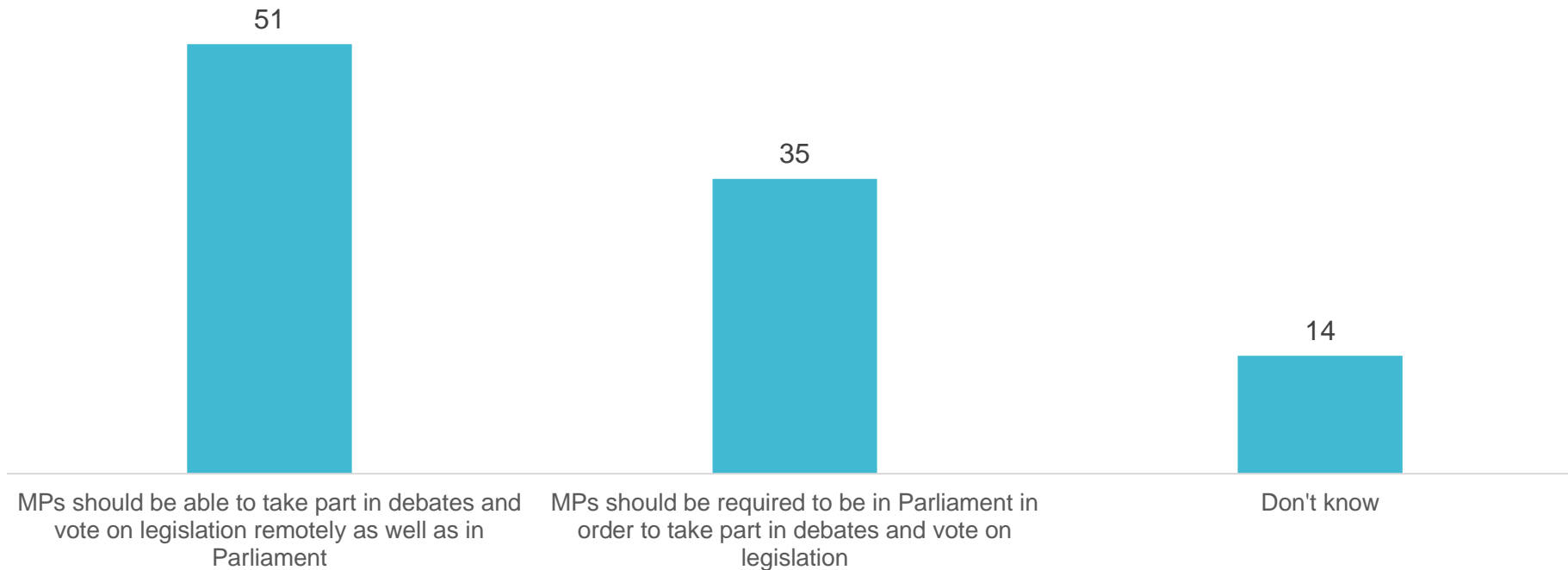
JOHN SMITH CENTRE  
PROMOTING TRUST IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

# Methodology

- Between 10-11<sup>th</sup> May, Message House conducted a nationally representative online survey amongst 2,099 members of the UK general public

# A majority of the UK public believe MPs should continue to be able to debate/vote remotely after COVID restrictions are lifted

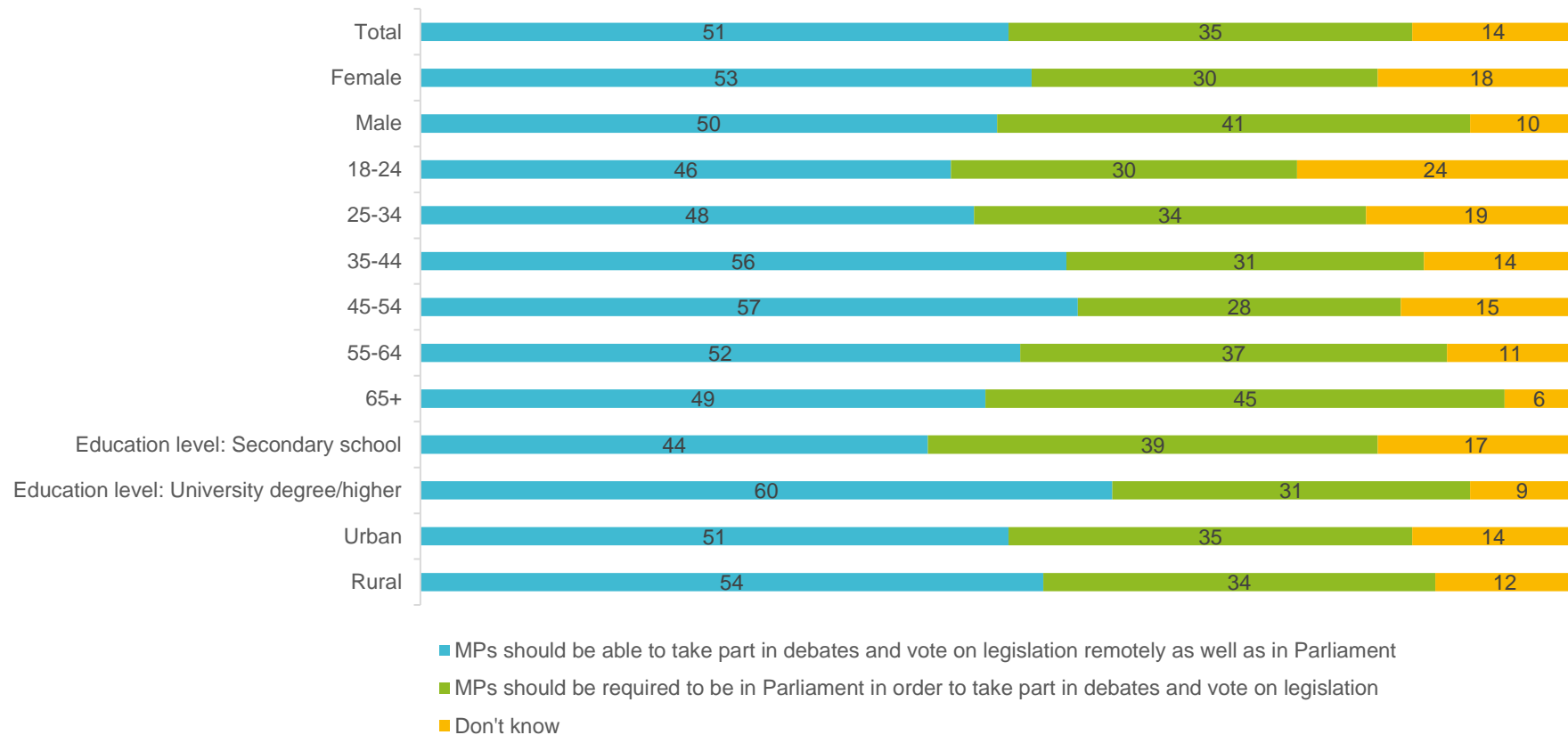
- 51% believe MPs should be able to take part remotely as well as in Parliament, with only just over a third believing MPs should be required to be in Parliament to take part



Q.1 Since April 2020, as a result of the COVID pandemic, the Parliament at Westminster has changed how it works, with Members of Parliament now able to take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely over the internet rather than having physically to be in Parliament. Once the COVID restrictions are lifted, which of the following statements is closest to your view: (%)

# Age and level of education reveal the biggest differences in attitude

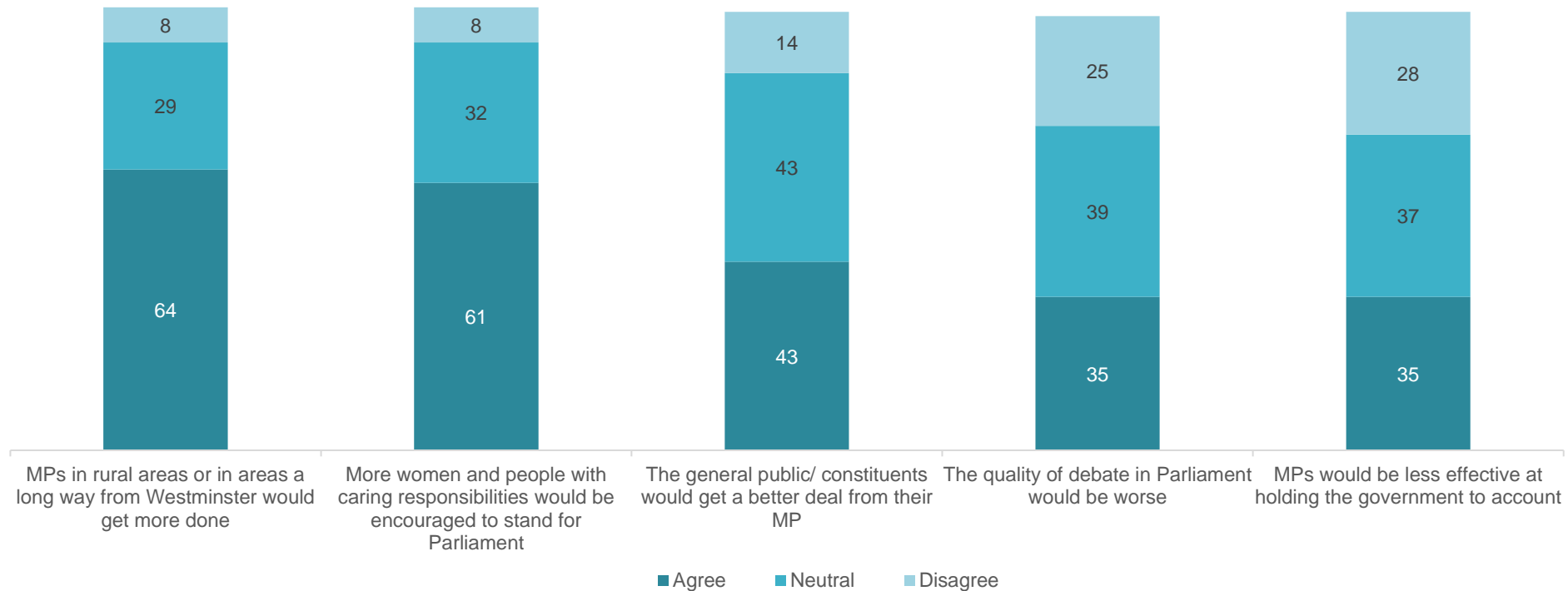
- 35-54s and those with a degree show the strongest support for remote debates/voting



Q.1 Since April 2020, as a result of the COVID pandemic, the Parliament at Westminster has changed how it works, with Members of Parliament now able to take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely over the internet rather than having physically to be in Parliament. Once the COVID restrictions are lifted, which of the following statements is closest to your view: (%)

# The idea of remote votes/debate is seen to help MPs far from Parliament to get more done and to make Parliament more accessible

- However there's uncertainty about the impact of MPs working remotely on the quality of Parliamentary debate and the ability of Parliament to hold the government to account

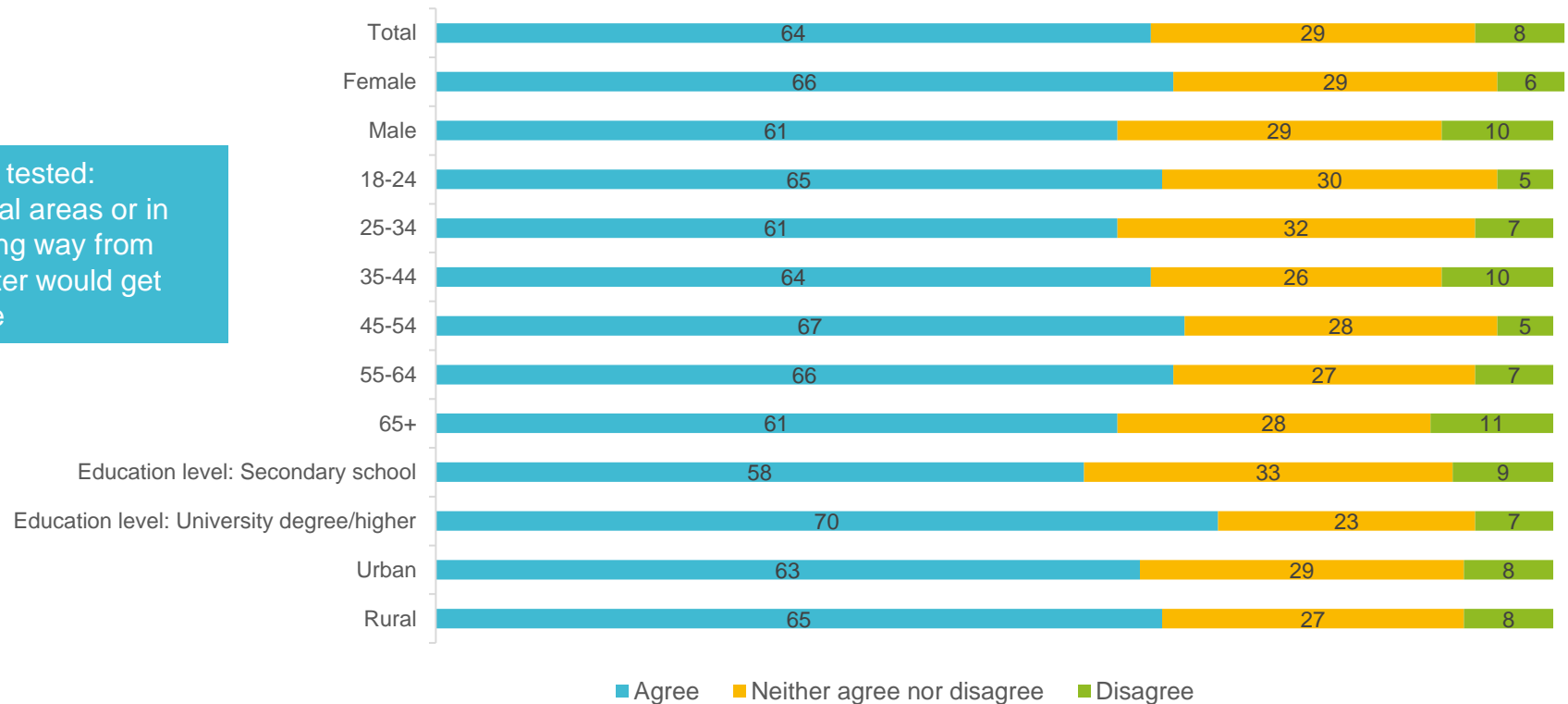


Q.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If MPs could take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely as well as in Parliament: (%)

# Changing to more remote working is seen to help MPs who live a long way from Westminster to get more done

- There's a fairly consistent response to this question across the audience segments, including amongst both the urban and rural public

Statement tested:  
MPs in rural areas or in areas a long way from Westminster would get more done

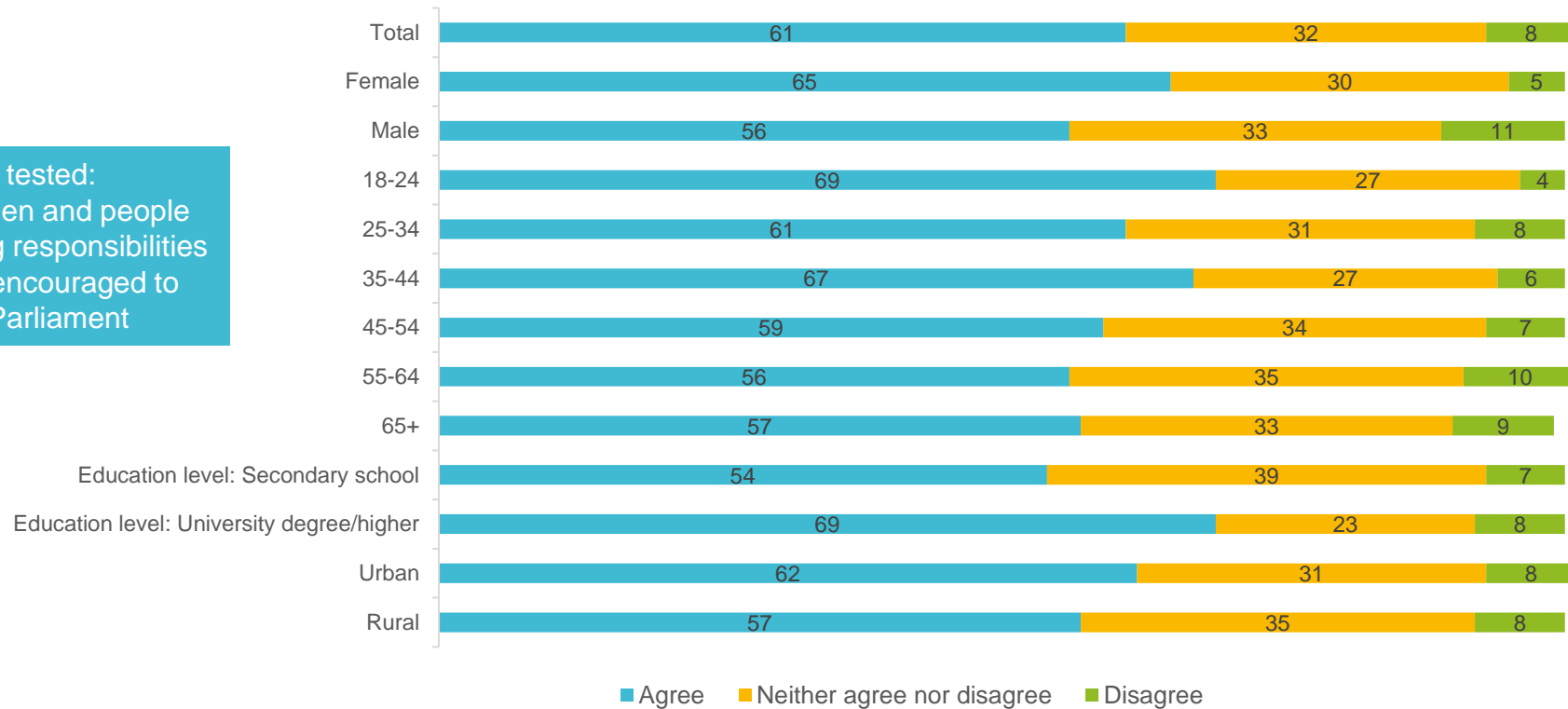


Q.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If MPs could take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely as well as in Parliament: MPs in rural areas or in areas a long way from Westminster would get more done (%)

# Over 60% of the public think remote working will help increase the accessibility of Parliamentary careers for women/carers

- Women and younger age groups were most likely to agree with this, along with those with a degree

Statement tested:  
More women and people with caring responsibilities would be encouraged to stand for Parliament

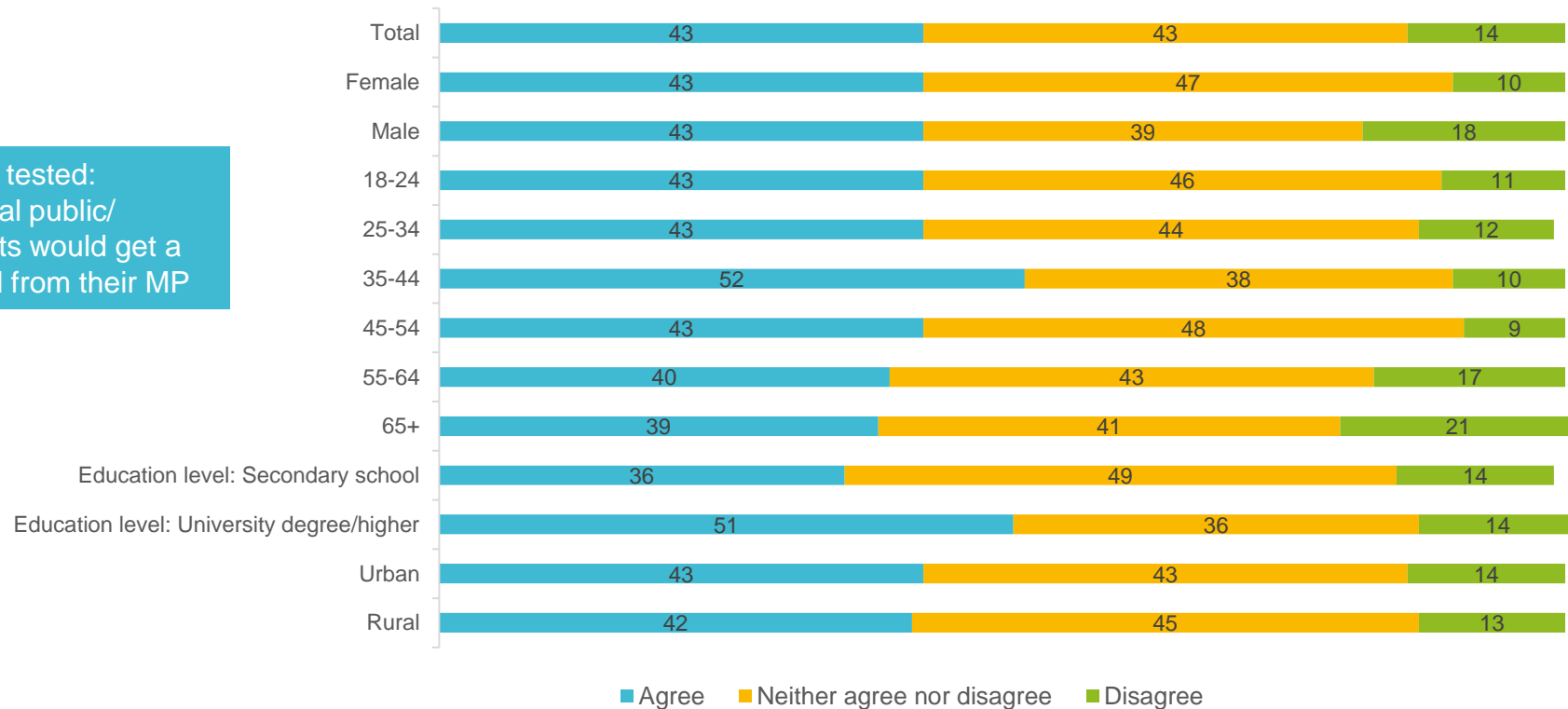


Q.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If MPs could take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely as well as in Parliament: More women and people with caring responsibilities would be encouraged to stand for Parliament (%)

# While over 4 in 10 agree that remote working would help MPs provide a better deal for the public, a sizeable group aren't sure

- As many say they are neutral on this question as say they agree, suggesting the public need convincing how the change would directly benefit them as constituents

Statement tested:  
The general public/  
constituents would get a  
better deal from their MP



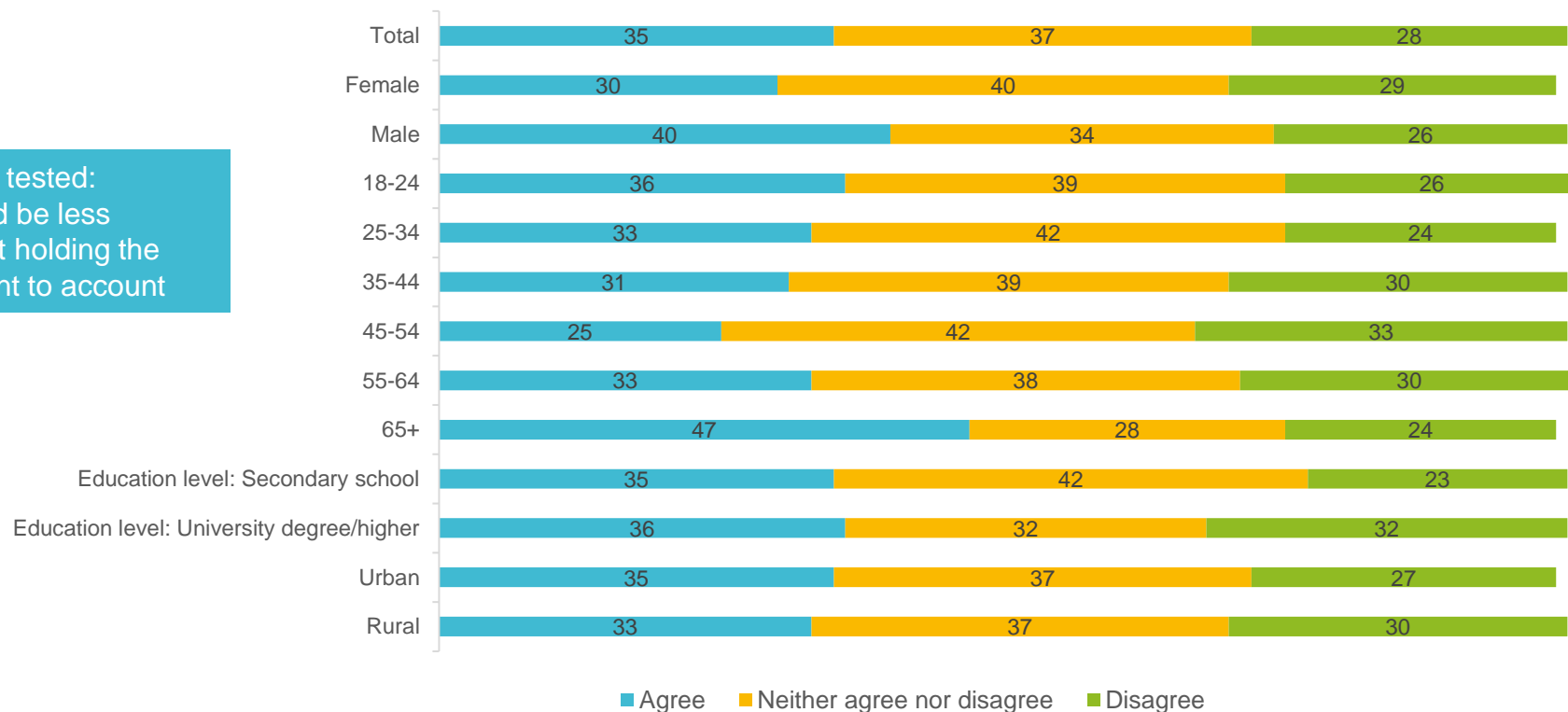
Q.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If MPs could take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely as well as in Parliament: The general public/constituents would get a better deal from their MP (%)



# More agree than disagree that remote working would mean MPs would be less effective at holding the government to account

- The over 65s are much more strongly of this view, whereas those aged 35-54 are less likely to agree

Statement tested:  
MPs would be less effective at holding the government to account

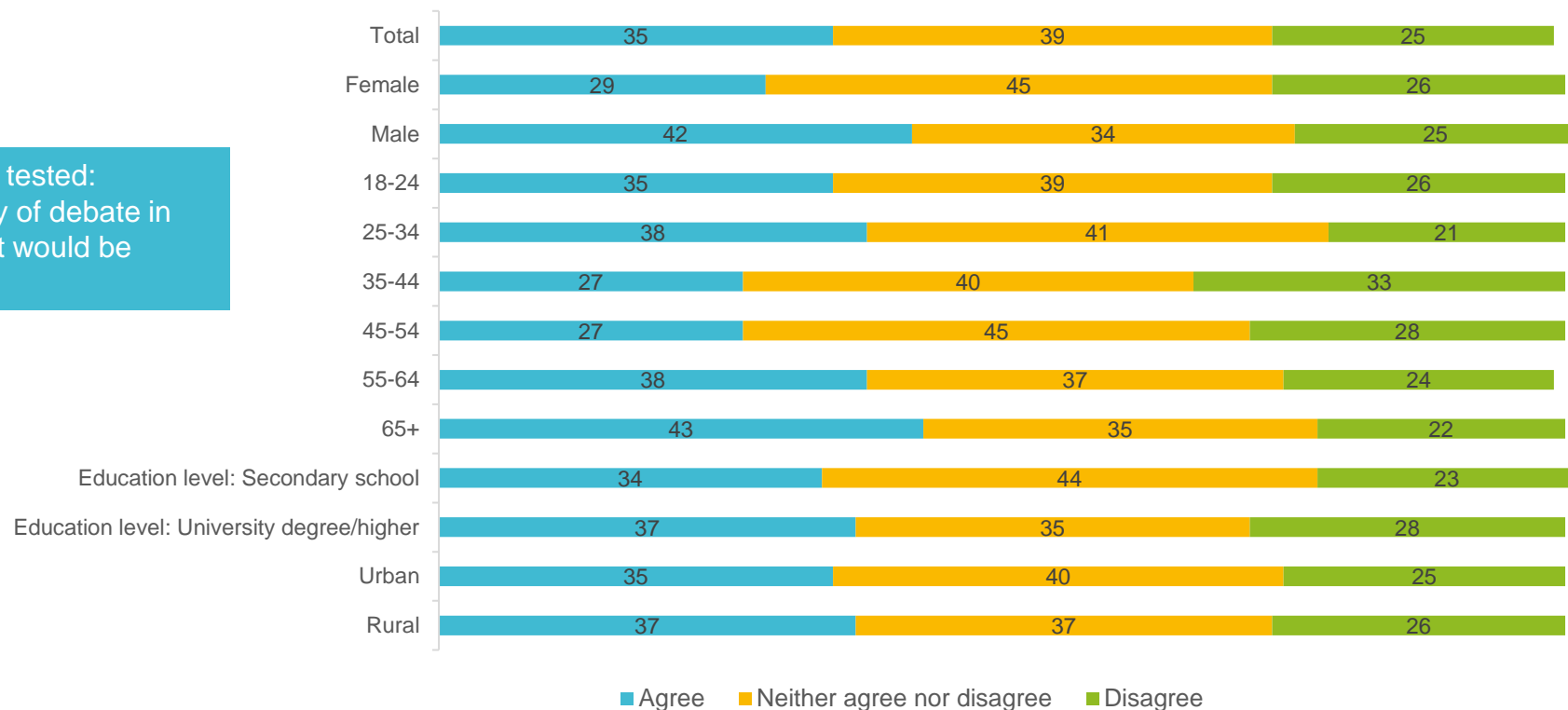


Q.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If MPs could take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely as well as in Parliament: MPs would be less effective at holding the government to account (%)

# Opinion is split on the impact of MPs working remotely on the quality of the debate

- Over a third think the quality of debate would decline and another 39% are neutral, suggesting the public need some convincing on how it would work in practice

Statement tested:  
The quality of debate in Parliament would be worse



Q.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If MPs could take part in debates and vote on legislation remotely as well as in Parliament: The quality of debate in Parliament would be worse (%)

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