

Consumer insights report 2024

Swedish consumers & sustainability

A research project conducted by Kantar Media



Words by Felix Kruth

With sustainability taking the spotlight in consumer mindsets and business strategies, the retail industry is evolving rapidly.

After years of unchecked consumption, costs are hitting hard, making sustainability a top priority for society, retailers, and everyday people. In the midst of all this, there are three key factors every retailer must grasp as we delve into Swedish consumer attitudes on this topic.



Felix Kruth,
CPO at Voyado

1. Cost concerns

Many consumers believe sustainable products are too expensive and struggle to discern what truly qualifies as sustainable.

2. Movement towards second-hand and repair

Consumers are increasingly turning to second-hand goods or opting to repair existing products, due to cost concerns and an increased awareness of environmental impact.

3. Shifting the burden of responsibility

There is a growing belief that retailers are responsible for sustainability rather than consumers.

These factors make it challenging for retailers to navigate a landscape where traditional consumption patterns are being questioned. However, these challenges also bring opportunities for retailers to improve and meet the changing needs of consumers. It's a chance to stay ahead and earn the loyalty of customers—today and tomorrow.

Let's explore some of the opportunities!

The importance of sustainability

Consumers are prioritizing sustainability. But to what extent? Are they willing to pay more for a more sustainable option when shopping? Well, this research says yes, and it's got some fascinating insights to share:

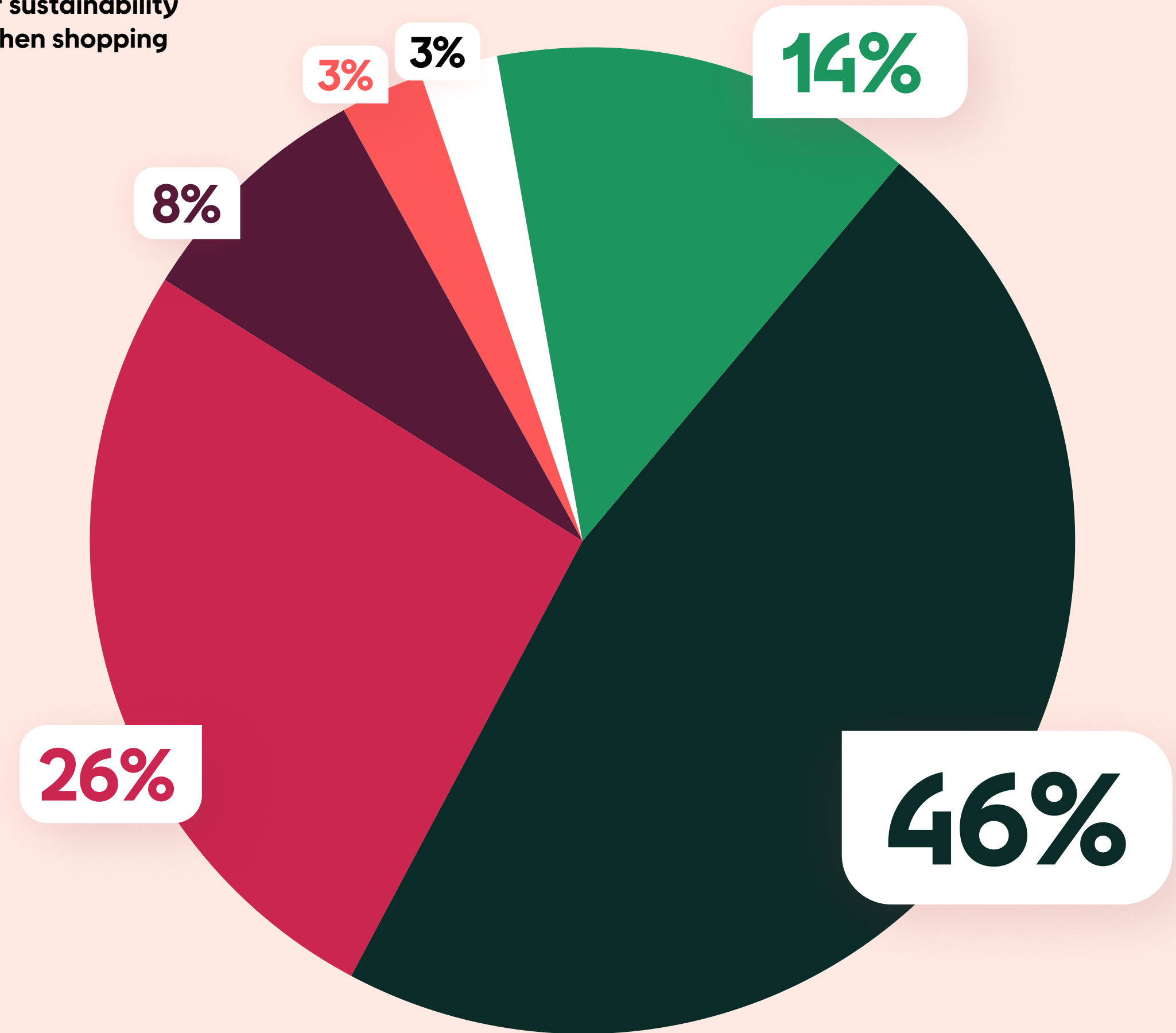
- 61% of Swedish consumers believe sustainability is important in retail, with 14% considering it very important.
- Only 3% of respondents think sustainability is not important at all.
- 55% of Swedish consumers are willing to pay more for a sustainable option.



Now, what does that mean in practice?

That's what we're unraveling in this report—so stick around!

The importance of sustainability when shopping



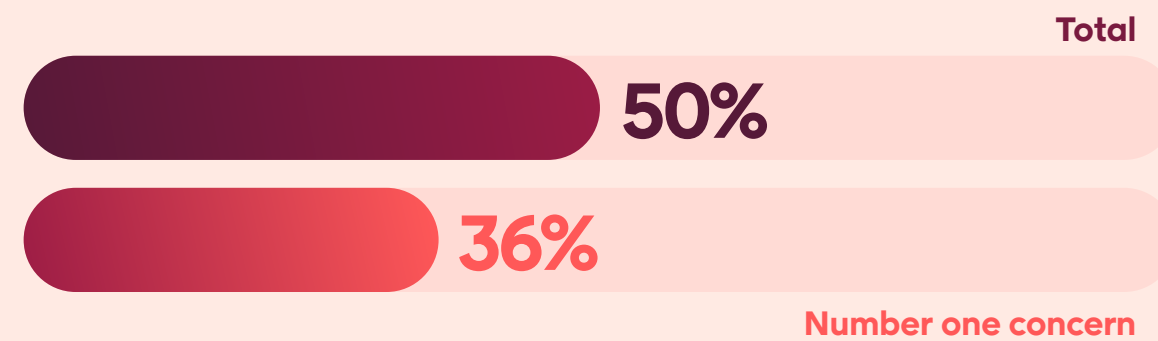
5 barriers to shopping sustainably

So, assuming consumers want to shop more sustainably, what stops them? A lot, it turns out. Shoppers meet several obstacles that complicate their journey toward sustainability.

Here are the most common ones:

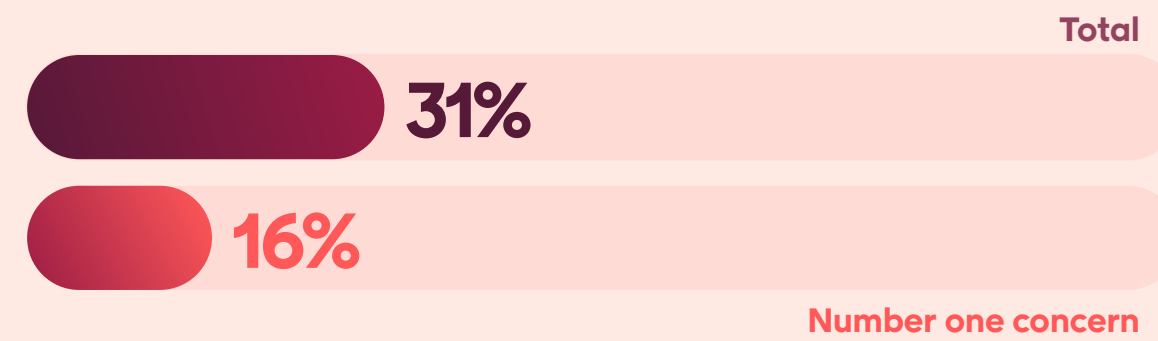
1. "It's too expensive"

Swedish consumers perceive sustainable shopping as too costly. Over 50% of respondents identified price as a significant obstacle, with 36% ranking it as their top concern.



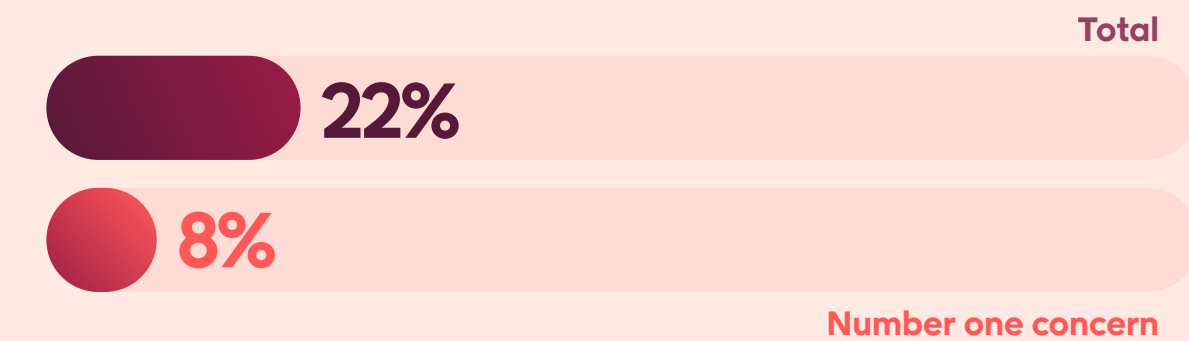
2. Insufficient product information

The second biggest obstacle is the lack of product details, with 31% struggling to find sufficient information, and 16% deeming it their top challenge.



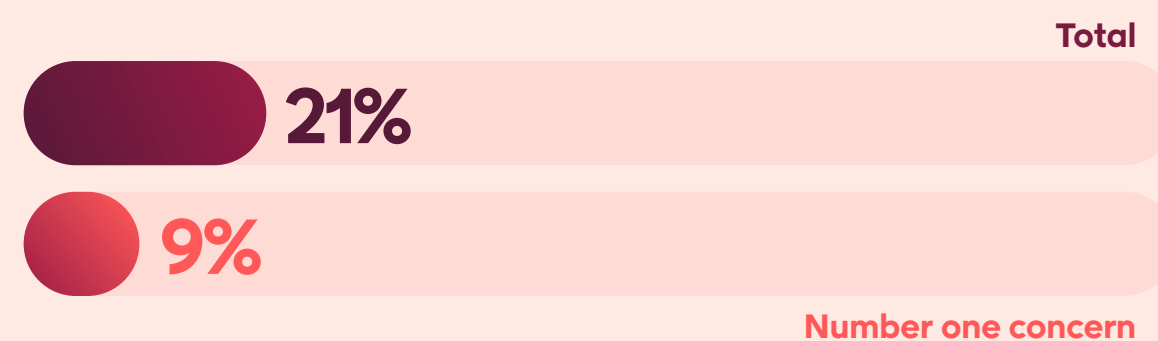
3. Confusing labels

Understanding eco-certifications is a hurdle for many, with 22% finding labels confusing, and 8% considering it their primary obstacle.



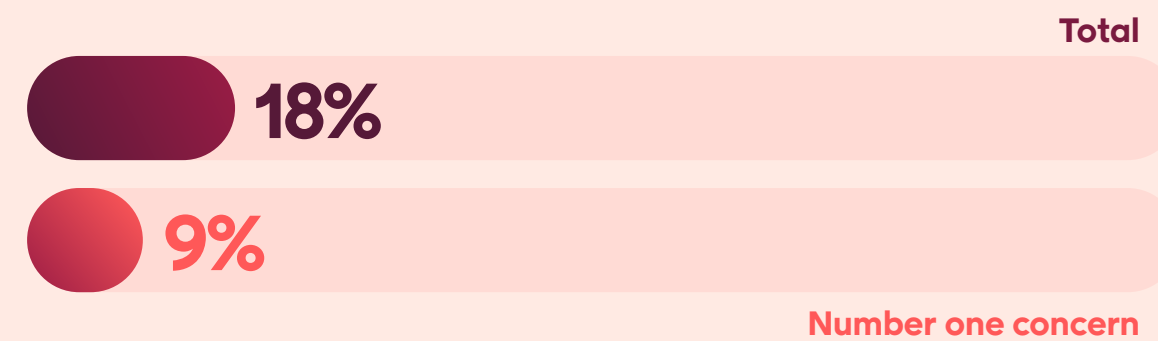
4. Lack of knowledge of what a sustainable product is

One-fifth of consumers feel unsure about what constitutes a sustainable product, with 21% lacking the knowledge to make informed decisions, and 9% considering it their number one concern.



5. Poor offering

A notable 18% are dissatisfied with the limited availability of sustainable products, with 9% ranking it as their main issue.



But wait, there's more!

Did you know that 16% of Swedish shoppers aren't putting sustainability at the top of their list when shopping for retail products? Yep, that's right. 9% of them even listed it as their number one reason.

Now, on the flip side, about 10% of respondents proudly stated that they're already on the sustainable shopping bandwagon.

4

**ways retailers can
guide consumers**

As a retailer, it's crucial to assist consumers in understanding and embracing sustainability. There are several ways to do this:



1. Reward sustainable choices

Let's face it, many shoppers think sustainable means expensive. You can help change this perception by communicating the benefits of sustainable choices or offering loyalty rewards for sustainable purchases. Also, consider creating campaigns to attract consumers who aren't yet prioritizing sustainability.



3. Educate your customers

Consumers may not fully understand what sustainability means for your products, so be their guide with handy educational resources. Think tips and tricks for making more sustainable choices, such as care guides to extend the lifespan of products.



2. Provide clear information

Ensure that product information is comprehensive and transparent regarding sustainability attributes. This will help guide consumers towards making more informed choices. You can also simplify eco-certifications and labels to make it easier for consumers to identify sustainable products.



4. Make sustainable options easy to find

Make sure sustainable options are easy to find, both in-store and online. This will help consumers make more sustainable choices without having to go out of their way to find them.

Do attitudes align with actions?

In this survey, we set out to uncover what sustainable actions consumers would consider and what they've actually done in the past year.

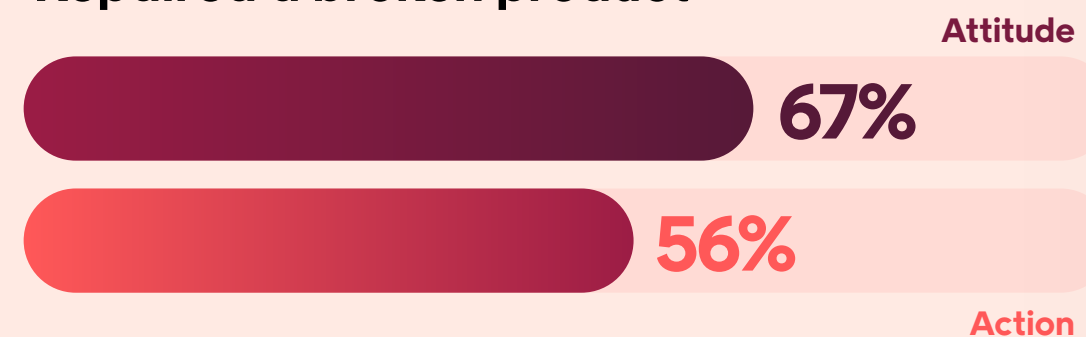
Our goal? To see if there's a gap between what people say and what they do when it comes to making sustainable choices.

Do attitudes align with actions?

Prolonging the life of products

One way to be more sustainable is simply for consumers to make the most out of what they already own. A whopping 67% of consumers are all for repairing products, but only 56% actually follow through, suggesting a notable drop-off when it comes to taking action.

Repaired a broken product



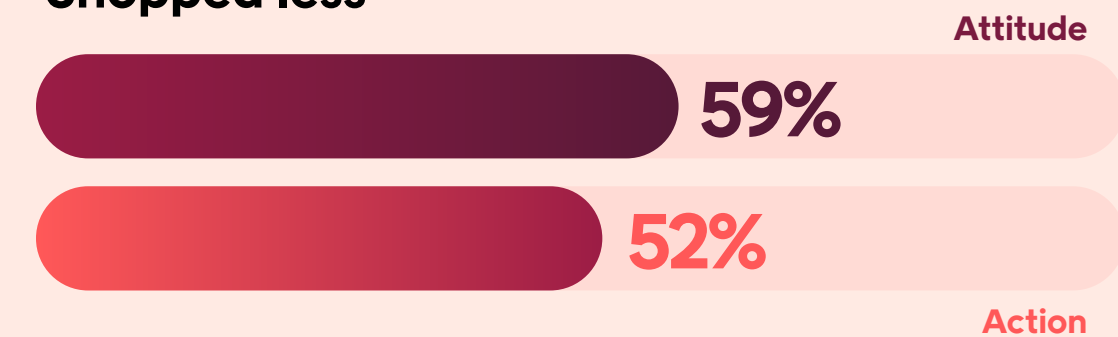
Adjusting shopping behavior

The best way for shoppers to become more sustainable is by changing how often they hit the stores or the way they shop. What about the attitude gap? In this case, attitudes and actions are aligned! A solid 59% of consumers are game for shopping less, and the numbers back it up, with a reported dip in shopping activity over the past year (52%) But whether it's driven by sustainability concerns or the global cost-of-living crisis, that is not for sure.

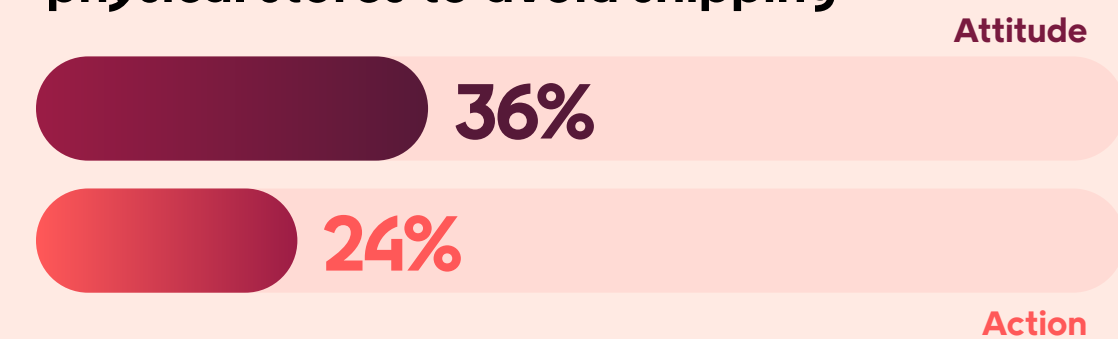
When it comes to sustainable shopping, there's more than one path to explore. The majority of shoppers are open to consolidating purchases to minimize the environmental impact of shipping (36%)—but far fewer have actually made this a regular habit (24%).

Then there's the allure of brick-and-mortar stores. A hefty 55% consider shopping or making returns in physical stores to sidestep the environmental impact of shipping. Yet only 39% have put this into practise.

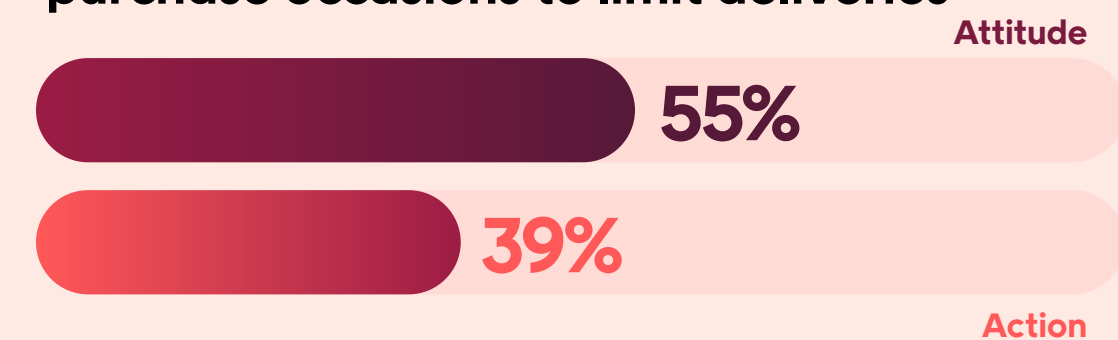
Shopped less



Shopped & returned items in physical stores to avoid shipping



Shopped more items on fewer purchase occasions to limit deliveries



Do attitudes align with actions?

Shopping second-hand

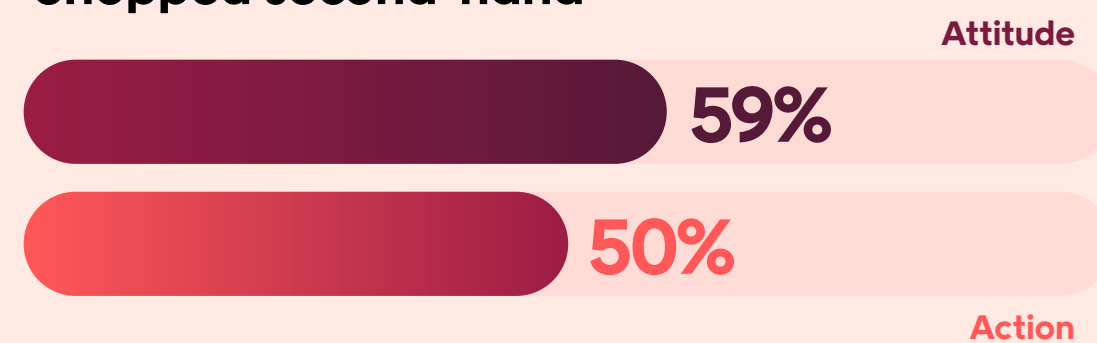
There's a gap between what consumers plan to do and what gets done when it comes to the second-hand market. While 74% are all for selling or donating items, the reality check shows that only 62% have actually taken the plunge in the past year.

And what about snagging second-hand treasures? 59% of consumers are keen on purchasing pre-loved items, but the numbers tell a slightly different story—about 50% have dived into the second-hand scene.

Sold or donated to second-hand



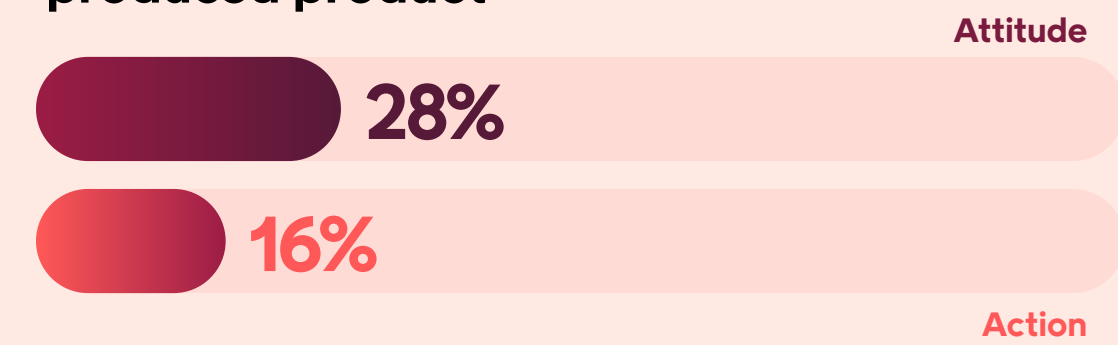
Shopped second-hand



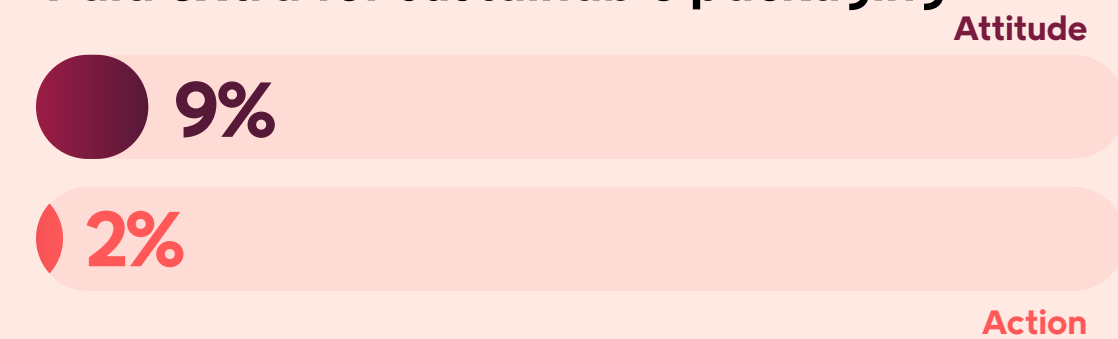
Paying extra for sustainable options

When it comes to choosing more sustainable options that require additional costs, consumers seem to hesitate. While some are willing to pay extra for sustainably produced goods (28%), environmentally friendly shipping options (15%), and sustainable packaging (9%), the numbers don't quite match up with actions. It's evident that while consumers have good intentions toward the environment, practical factors like cost and convenience play a big role in shaping their sustainable decisions.

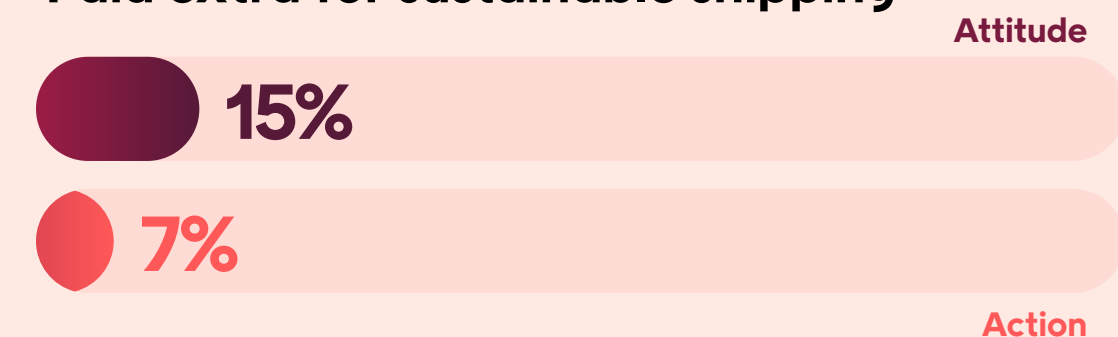
Paid extra for a sustainably produced product



Paid extra for sustainable packaging



Paid extra for sustainable shipping



Women are the sustainability champions



Women are more willing to pay for sustainable options—but are still mindful of the price tag.

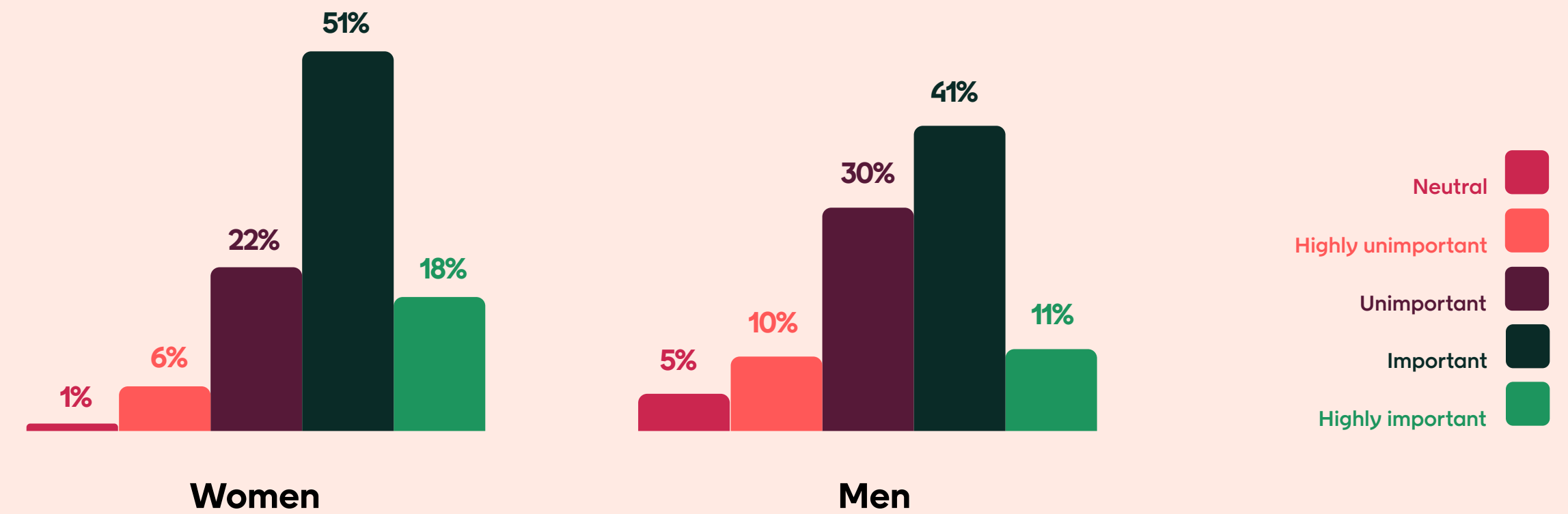
They adapt by altering their shopping habits, while men are likelier to open their wallets wider for the cause. As a retailer, you can tackle the variations in how genders approach sustainability.

How? Keep reading!

When it comes to sustainability, women are leading the way!

Our findings reveal that 69% of women consider sustainability important or very important, compared to 52% of men.

While just 1% of women consider sustainability unimportant, 5% of men hold this view. Interestingly, more men (30%) seem unsure or neutral compared to women (22%).



The importance of sustainability

58%
women ♀

52%
men ♂

58% of women say they are willing to pay more for a more sustainable shopping option, compared to 52% of men.

Price-concern more common among women

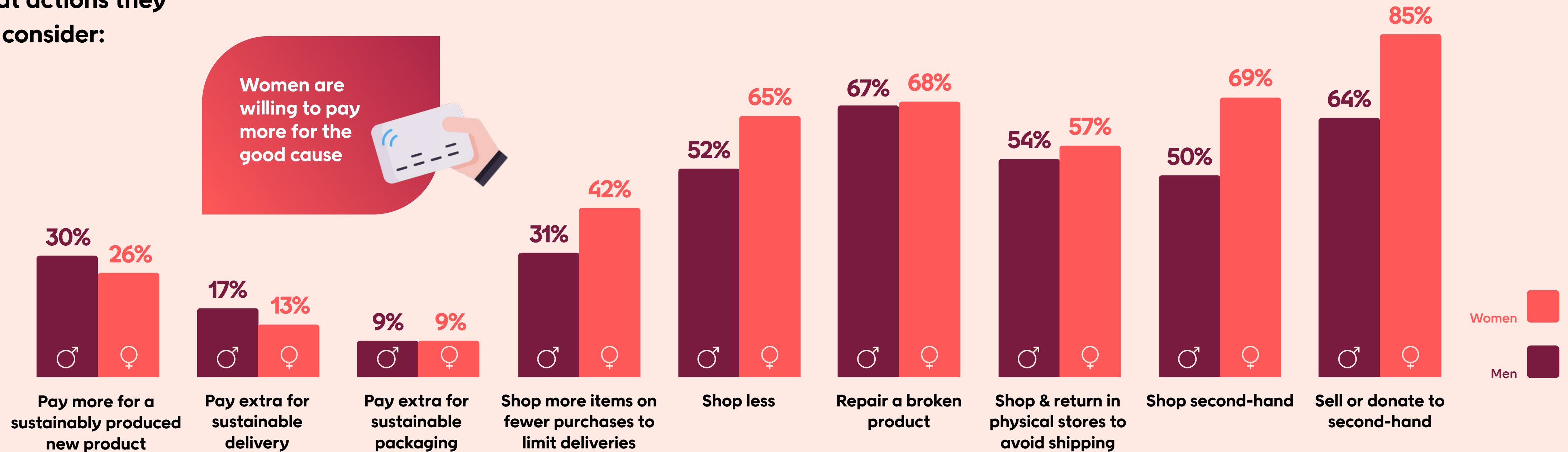
Despite women being more willing to pay more for sustainable options, price remains their primary concern.

In general, women are more prone to changing their behavior and making sacrifices to contribute to sustainability compared to men. This includes shopping less frequently, buying more items per trip, and opting for in-store shopping to minimize shipping impacts.

There is a gender difference in terms of willingness to take action for sustainability. Women are more likely than men to take action without additional cost, while men are more willing to pay extra for sustainability.

To a higher degree, men would engage in actions such as accepting a higher price for sustainable production or paying extra for sustainable shipping.

Consumer attitudes on what actions they would consider:



How retailers can bridge the gender gap in sustainability

To address the differences in sustainability preferences between genders, retailers should consider the following strategies:



1. Personalized messaging

Craft messages that strike a chord with women's values-driven approach to sustainability, while highlighting men's emphasis on the impact of their purchases.



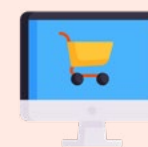
3. Showcase impact

For men, underscore the immediate positive effects of sustainable choices, perhaps aligning with status and technological advancement.



2. High value

Emphasize long-term savings and quality for women who are eager to change their behavior for sustainability.



4. Diverse offerings

Provide a range of products that appeal to different motivations, from cost-effective to premium sustainable options.

Variations across generations

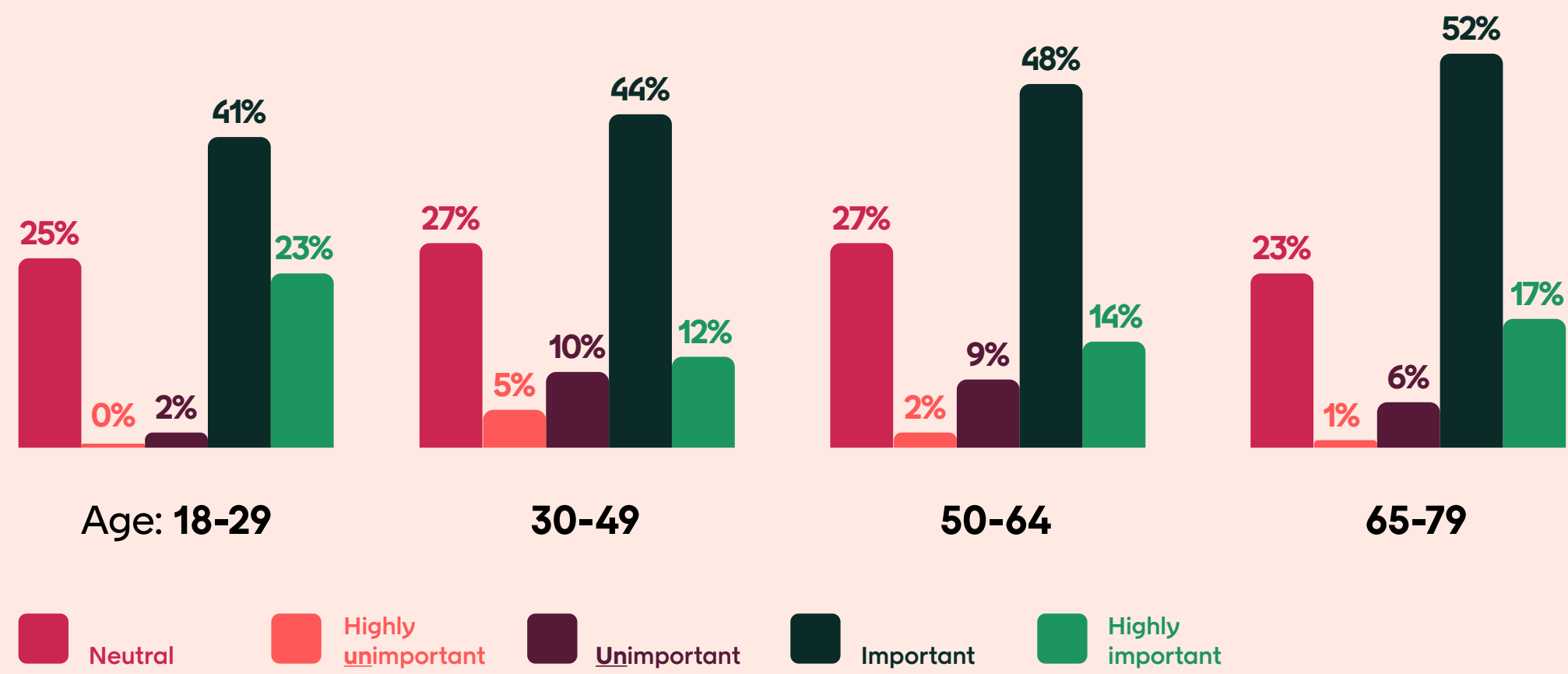
The young ones take the lead in making sustainability a priority in retail.

But this passion transcends age, with over half of the Swedish consumers expressing similar sentiments. However, each generation faces unique challenges, from price sensitivity to a lack of sustainability knowledge.

Sustainability's role in shopping

With 23% of the younger generation (aged 18-29) ranking sustainability in commerce as "very important", it's evident that they're the driving force behind the push for sustainability in retail. Meanwhile, among those aged 30-49, 14% consider sustainability as unimportant or highly unimportant, reflecting a marked contrast.

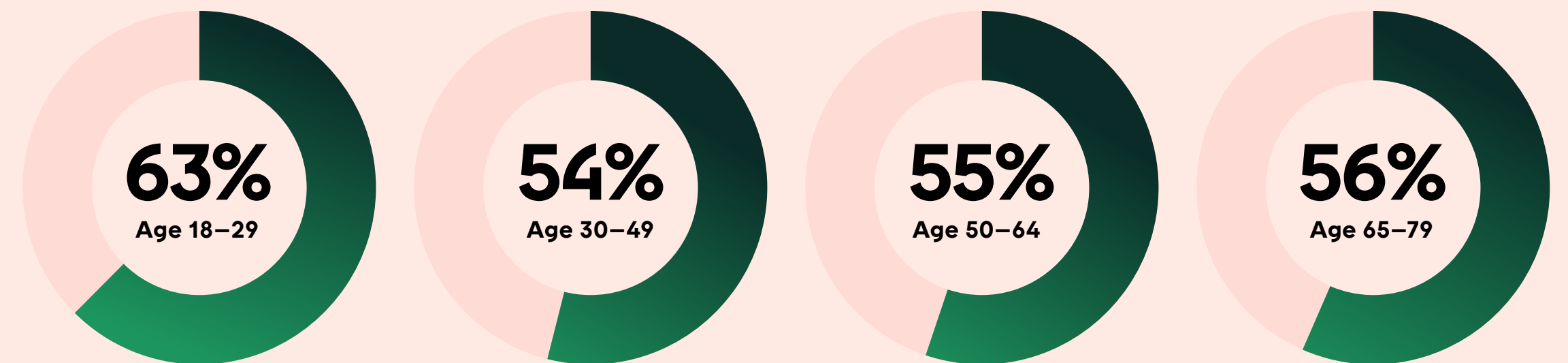
The importance of sustainability when shopping, by age group:



Consumers' readiness to open their wallet

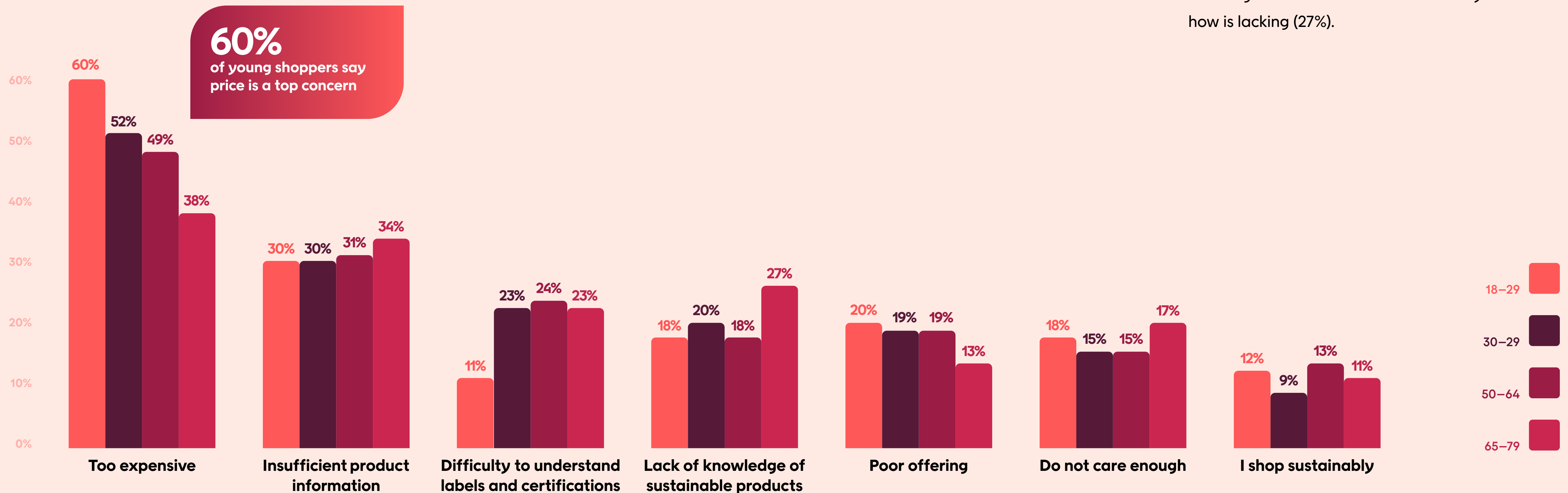
But who's stepping up to spend more for a more sustainable choice? The answer lies with the youth! Despite potentially being early in their careers and having less disposable income, 63% of young consumers are open to paying extra for sustainability. However, more than half of all Swedish consumers (55%), spanning all age groups, express a willingness to invest more in sustainable options.

Consumers willingness to pay more for a sustainable option, by age group:



Different obstacles for different generations

Obstacles consumers face—multiple options:



Young shoppers are price-sensitive

When it comes to sustainability, price stands tall as the reigning hurdle for shoppers of all ages. But generally, the younger the consumers, the more significant this obstacle appears to be. Among 18-29-year-olds, 60% pinpoint price as their top concern, compared to consumers aged 65-79, where only 38% share this sentiment.

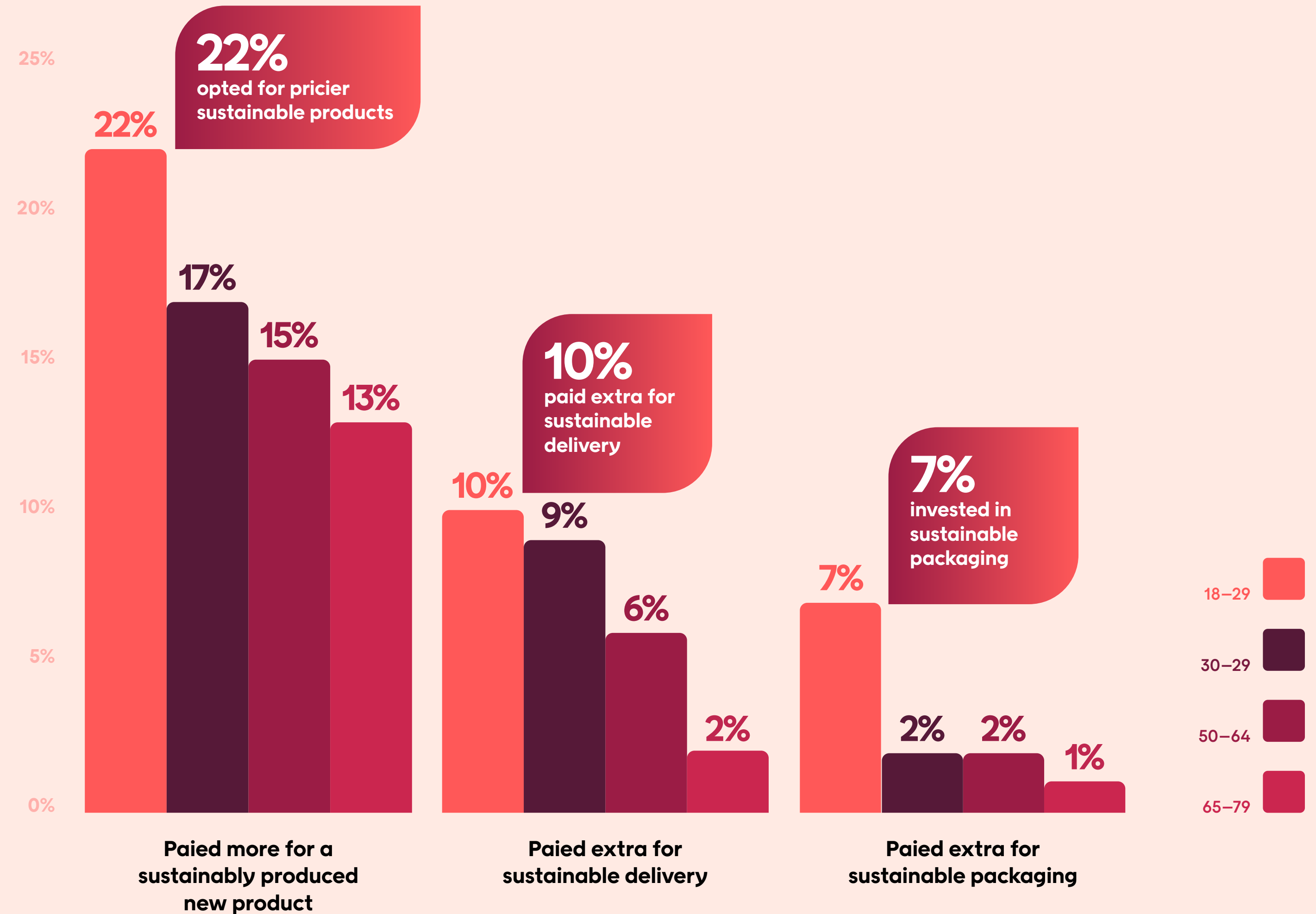
Older consumers lack knowledge

Now, let's talk knowledge. While our younger shoppers may be more price-sensitive, they showcase a higher level of knowledge regarding sustainability while shopping. Only 11% find labels and certifications confusing, while more than twice as many of the older consumers say it's a hurdle. Speaking of which, nearly a third of those aged 65-79 feel their sustainability know-how is lacking (27%).

Do beliefs translate into behavior?

When it comes to young consumers, there's a bit of a mismatch between what they say and what they do—especially when it comes to price. While the 18-29 age group seems pretty price-sensitive regarding sustainability, they've during the last year paid more for newly produced sustainable products (22%), chosen sustainable shipping despite the added cost (10%), and even gone for sustainable packaging with a higher price tag. (7%).

Young consumers surprised with their actions over the last year:



Embracing the circular economy

Consumers are generally positive about engaging in the second-hand market.

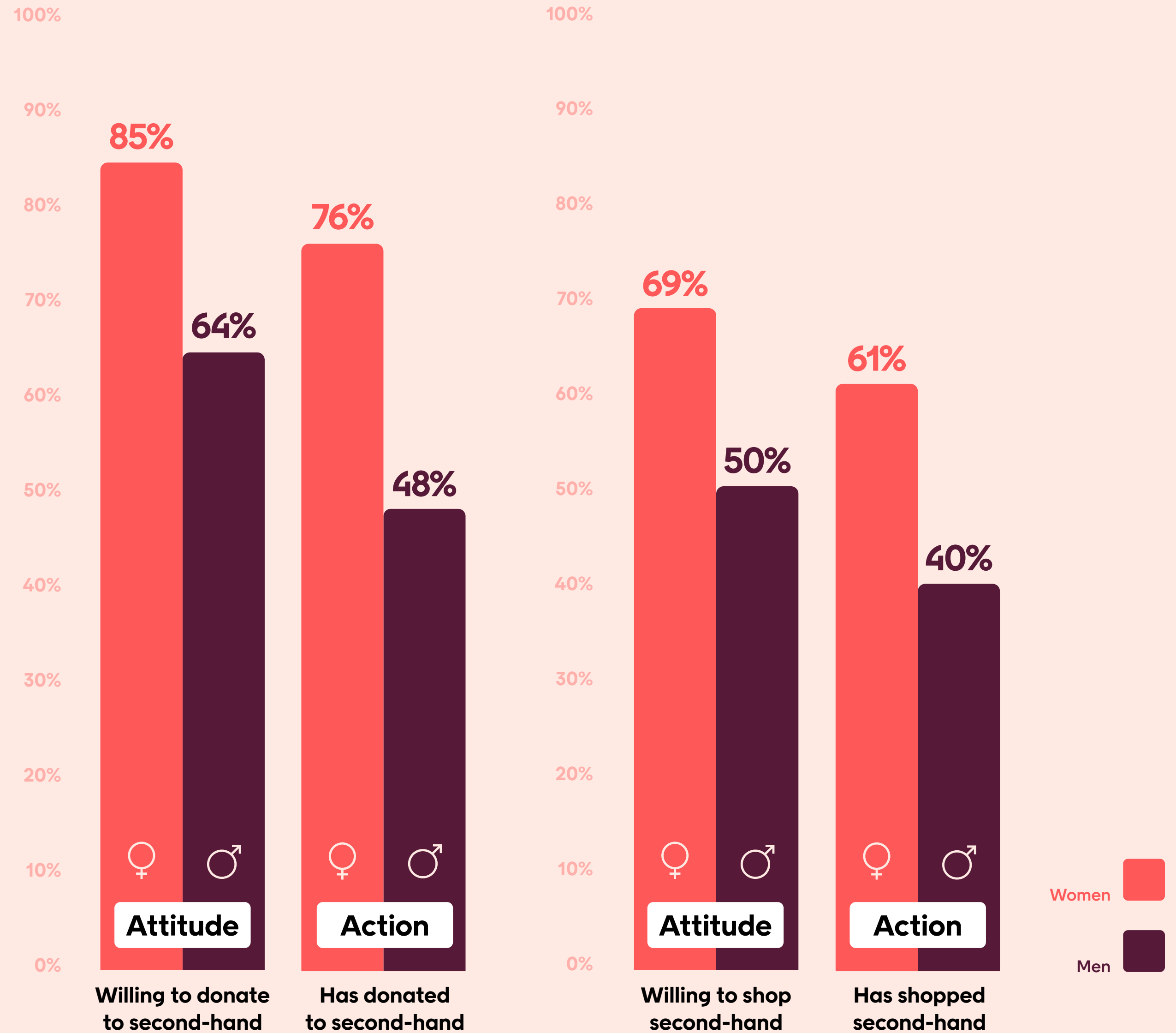
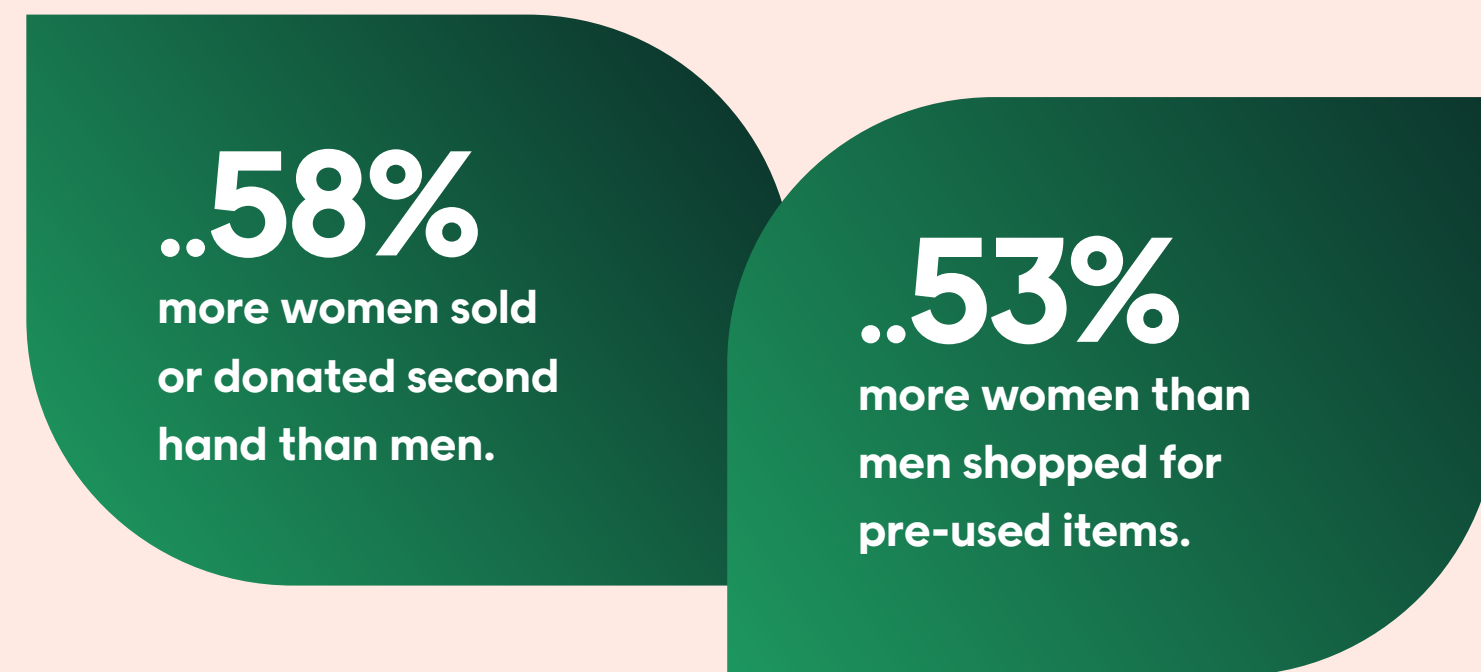
But here's the twist: while 74% are game for selling or donating their belongings second-hand, the enthusiasm for shopping pre-loved items isn't quite as high, coming in at 59%. This attitude reflects actions, as half of the Swedish consumers have purchased a second-hand item over the last year, while 62% say they have donated or sold their items.

Women lead the way

Looking closer at gender differences, it is clear that women are second-hand superheroes.

They are actually 33% more likely than men to champion the act of donating or selling items, while they outshine men by a staggering 38% in their enthusiasm for shopping second-hand. And these attitudes aren't just talk—they're backed by action over the last year, showing that women are better at backing up their intended behavior with actions:

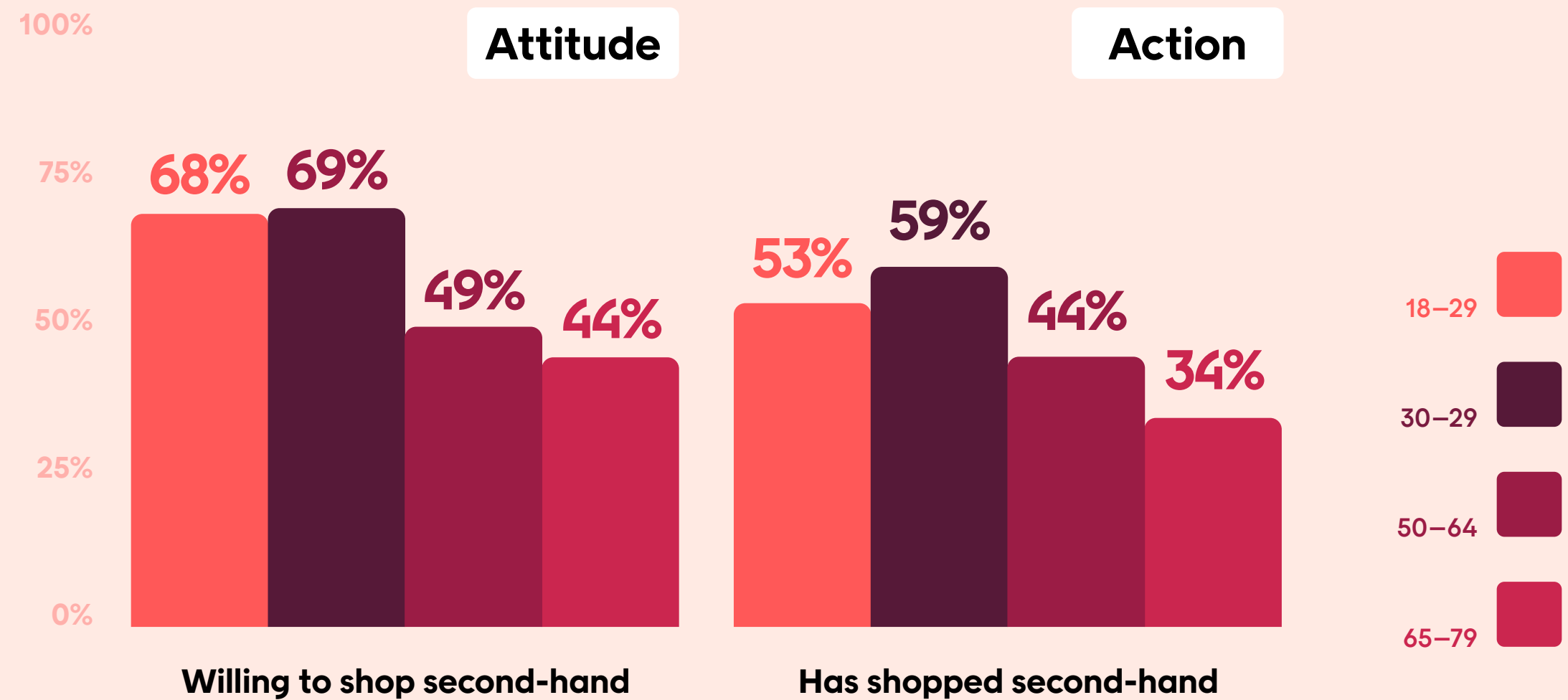
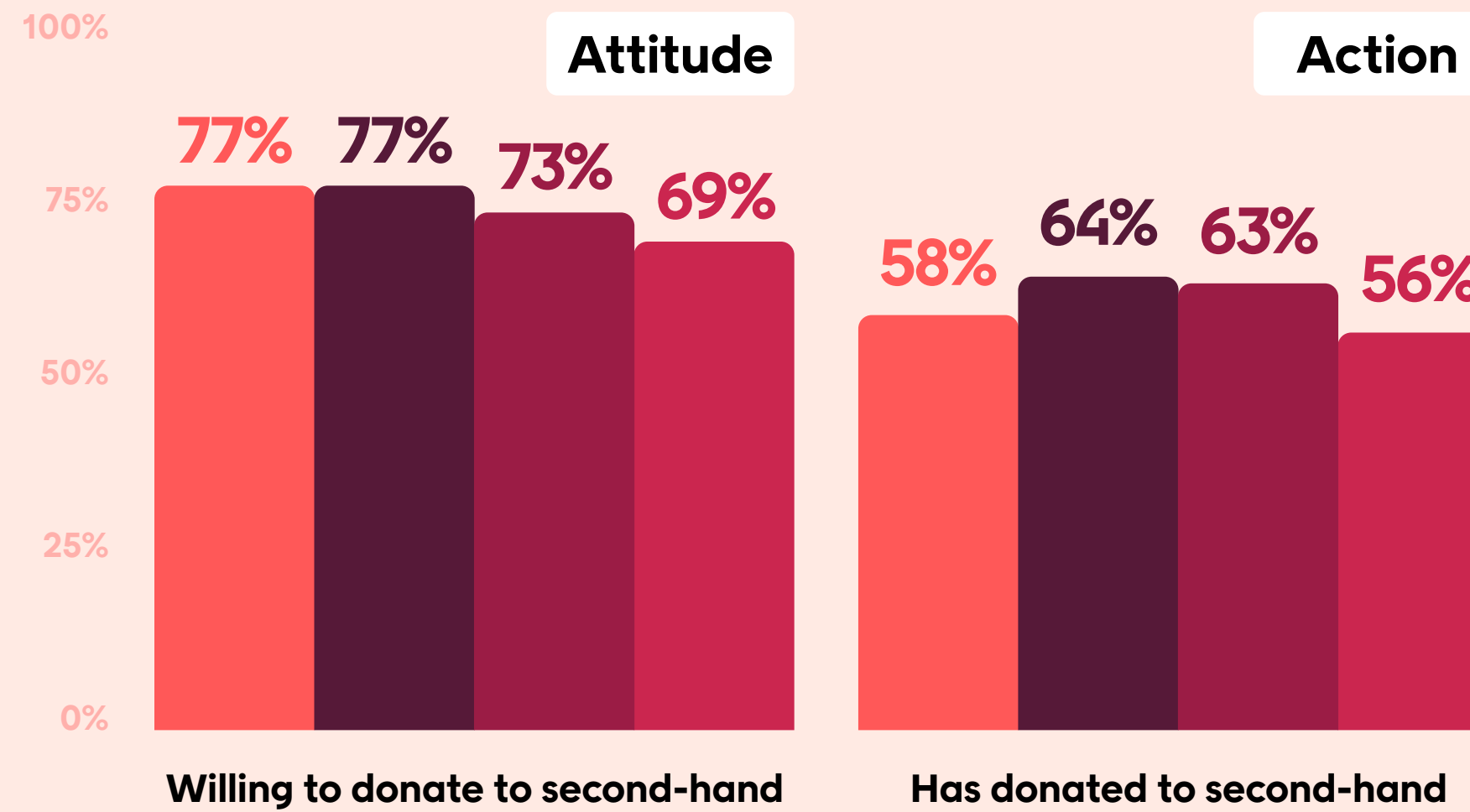
Over the last year..



Young prefer second-hand over older

Younger consumers, aged 18-49, embrace second-hand treasures more than their older counterparts. While all generations share similar sentiments toward selling or donating items, there's a distinct disparity in purchasing habits.

For those aged 50 and above, the allure of second-hand wares fades, with less than half considering such purchases. The 18-29 age bracket stands out as being the only generation that is even more positive about shopping second-hand than selling or donating.



How retailers can break down barriers across generations

To broaden the appeal of second-hand shopping across generations, retailers should enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of their offerings.

While younger shoppers are already drawn to the allure of second-hand in retail, there's a vast untapped market among older consumers, who often lean towards donating rather than purchasing.

Retailers can captivate audiences of all ages by curating a diverse array of quality second-hand items, emphasizing their timeless value, nostalgic charm, and unbeatable

quality. Moreover, crafting an inviting and user-friendly shopping environment—whether online or in-store—will work wonders in enticing older shoppers to explore the second-hand scene.

By doing this, retailers can capitalize on the growing demand for second-hand goods to enhance their brand image as providers of high-quality, durable products. This strategy also opens up new revenue streams and strengthens connections with consumers.



Who has the greatest responsibility?

The call for sustainability in retail echoes louder and change looms on the horizon, but the pressing question remains: who will step up as the champion for change?

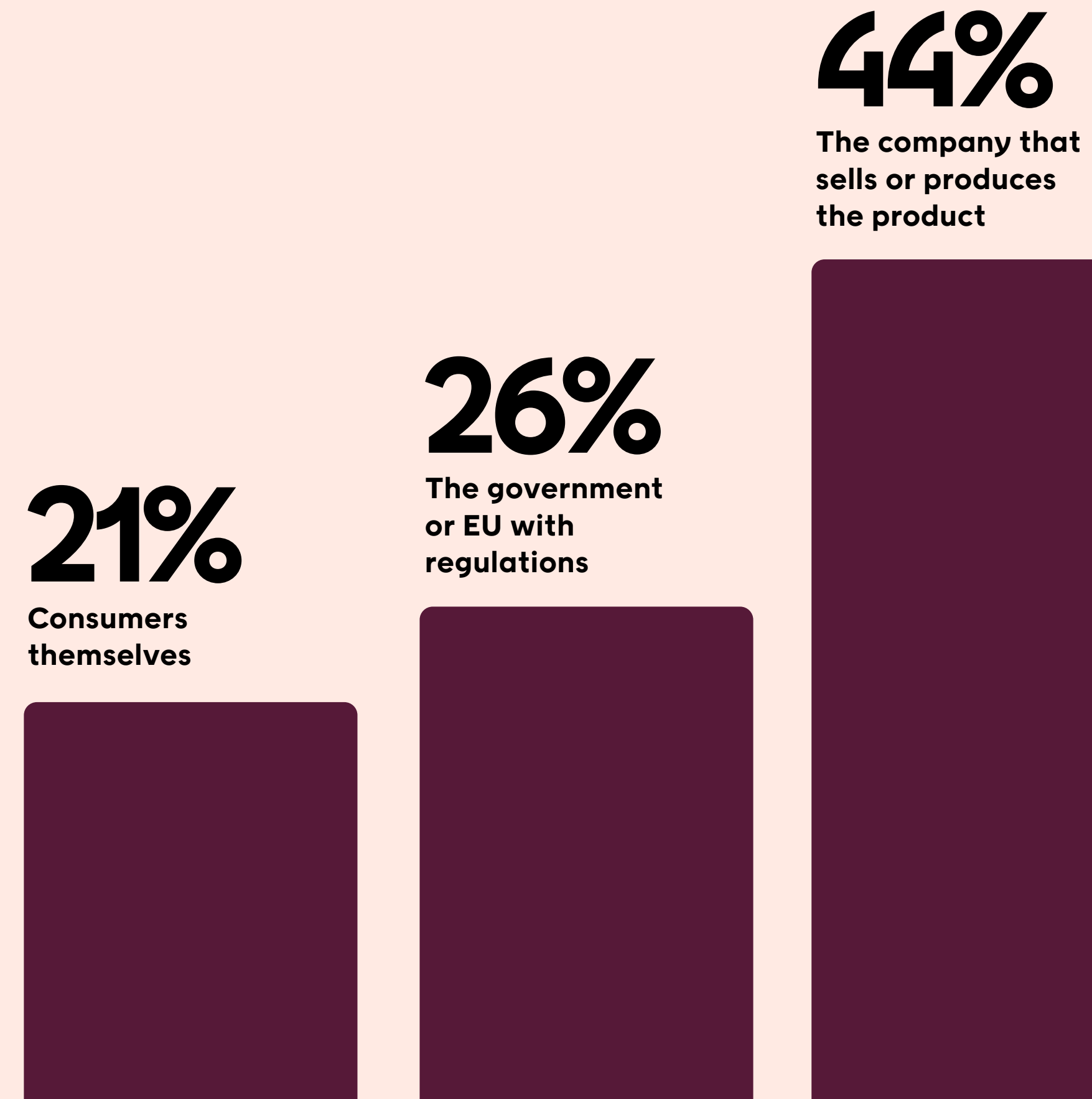
Who has the greatest responsibility?

The hierarchy of responsibility is crystal clear

According to Swedish consumers, the chain of accountability is evident—and it looks like this:

The company that sells or produces the product (44%) shoulders the greatest responsibility, followed by the government or EU with regulations (26%), and finally, consumers themselves (21%).

Who has the greatest responsibility?



However, the question of who is responsible differs greatly between generations.

Older consumers tend to place the greatest responsibility on the companies behind the products, followed by consumers, and lastly, regulations. In contrast, younger generations flip the script, with only 4% stating that consumers bear the greatest responsibility.

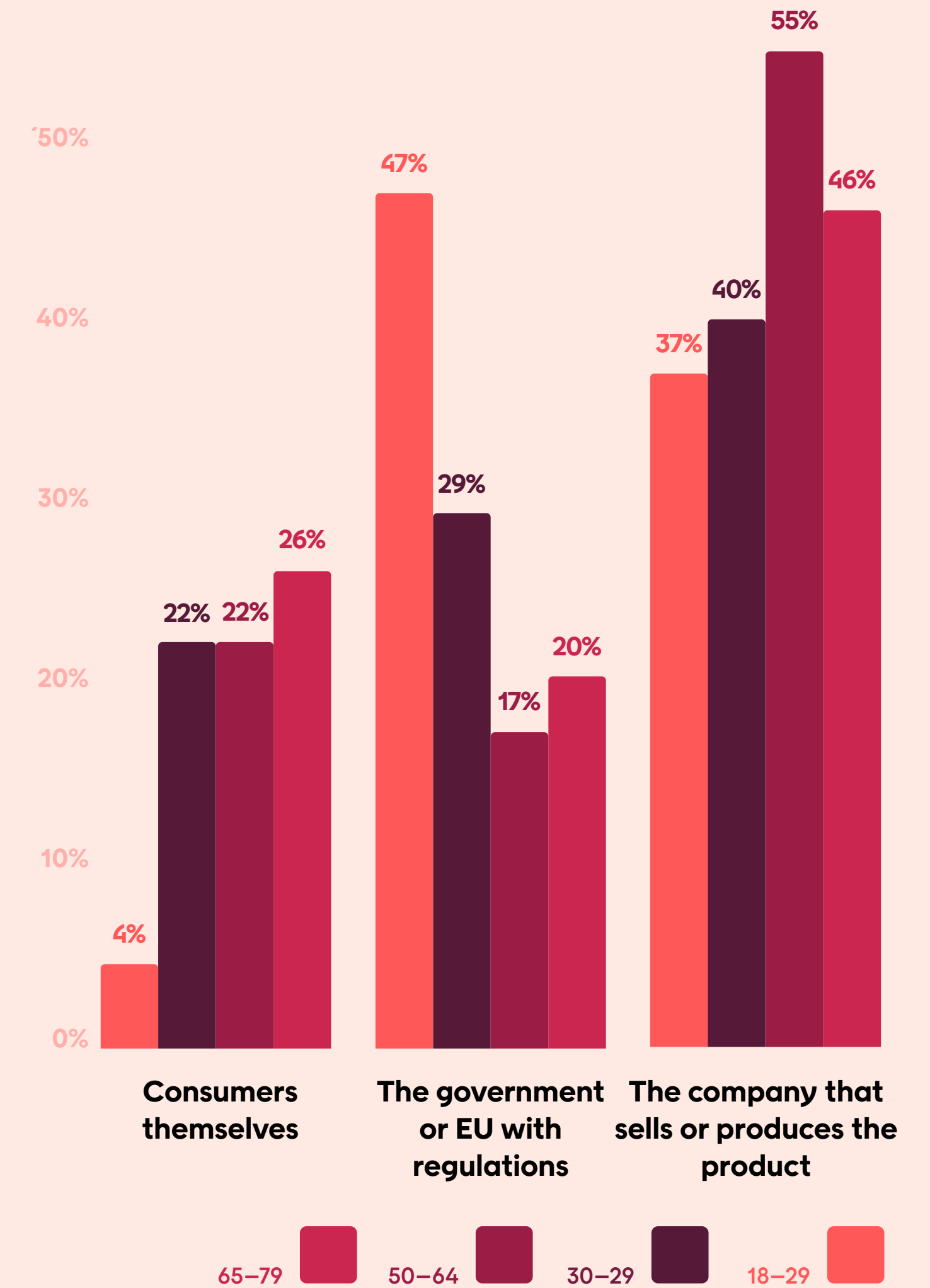
This dichotomy highlights a big shift in societal attitudes towards sustainability, especially among younger folks who see companies and government as the central drivers of change. This generation thinks of sustainability as something everyone needs to work on together, not just something for individuals to worry about. In light of these findings, Felix Kruth, CPO at Voyado, emphasizes the need for comprehensive action.

He states, **“The sense of urgency around climate change is also being felt within the retail sector, particularly among younger consumers. Our research underscores a critical belief: while individual actions matter, real change can only come from companies and policymakers taking the reins for sustainability.**

It’s not about liberating consumers of responsibility; it’s about demanding comprehensive, systemic change. To earn credibility with this demographic, retailers must showcase authentic, verifiable sustainable practices.”

— Felix Kruth, CPO at Voyado

Who has the greatest responsibility?



About the survey

Kantar Media conducted this survey on behalf of Voyado, and it was finalized in February 2024. 1051 Swedes, 18-79 years old, from a national representative selection have answered questions on sustainability connected to retail.

Voyado is a SaaS company helping retail brands create hyper-relevant shopping experiences, increase customer loyalty, and drive business growth.

Their AI-powered customer experience platform includes a product discovery engine with deep product knowledge to predict and respond to visitors' intentions on e-commerce websites, and a multichannel marketing platform that offers invaluable insights and campaign tools for delivering automated and personalized shopping experiences.

Headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, the company has more than 300 employees around Northern Europe, growing rapidly with customers around the world. For more information, visit voyado.com.

Voyado makes brands easy to love.