

Public Attitudes to Disability in Ireland: Evidence from Experiments

ESRI Webinar

19th April 2023

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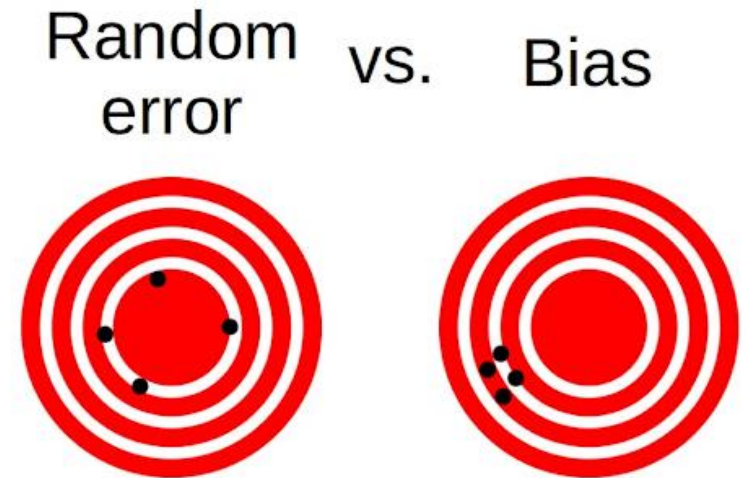
Background and Motivation

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) – Article 8 *Awareness-Raising*
- NDA regularly commissions surveys to investigate public understanding and attitudes (2001, 2006, 2011, 2017)
- Positive trend in attitudes towards disabled people over time and decrease in perception that disabled people are treated fairly
- But some scepticism over the reliability of the results:
 - Are people responding positively just because they think they should?
 - Do people consider the implications of supporting costly policies?



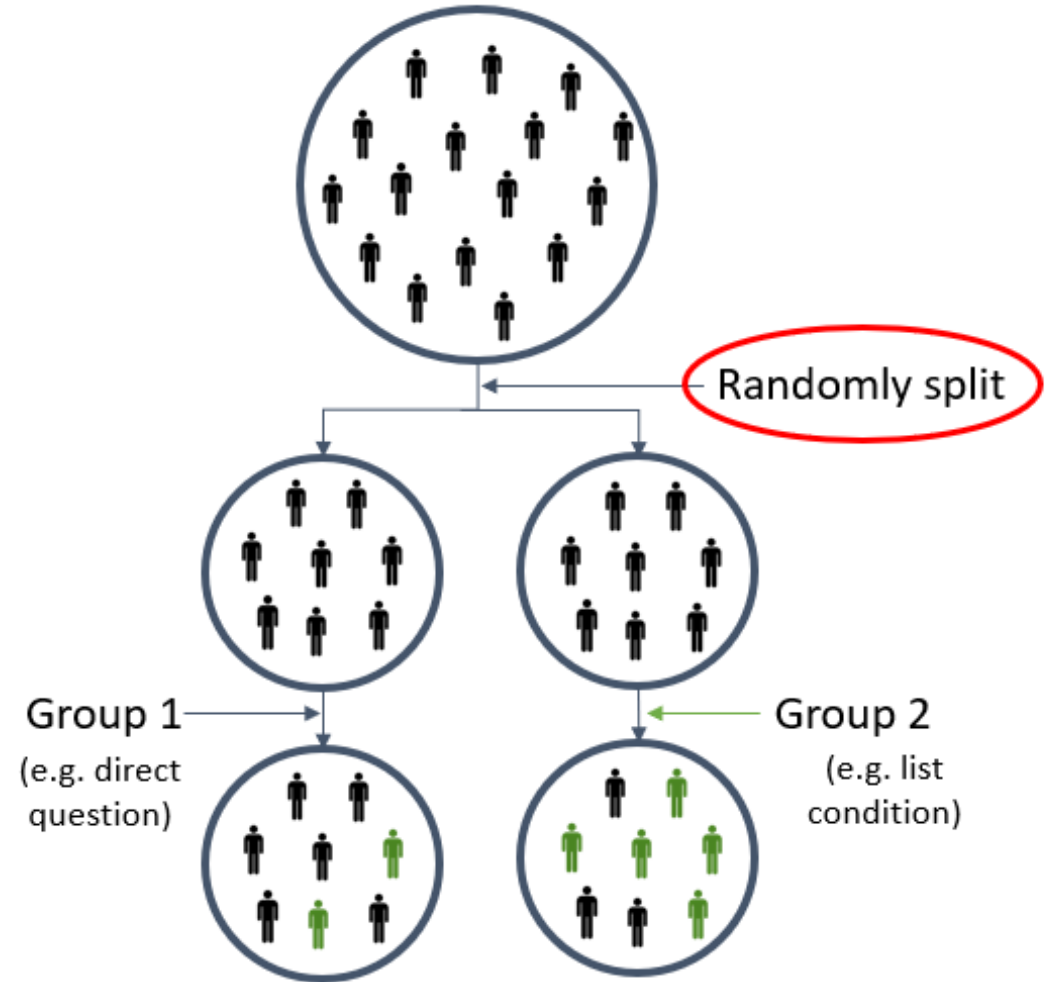
Social Desirability in Survey Responses

- Survey respondents:
 - May want to make themselves look good in terms of prevailing social or cultural norms
 - May tell researchers what they think they want to hear
- So surveys may overestimate support for policies that help people with disabilities
 - Support dwindles when policies are to be enacted
 - Some subgroups may exhibit greater bias than others, leading to inaccurate inferences



Study Overview

- Large, nationally representative sample (N=2000)
- Recruited from panel held by a market research agency
- Materials informed by Disability Advisory Board
- Study completed online with multiple experimental stages



Study Overview



Stage 1: List Experiment

List Group

How many of the following do you agree with?

The Government should:

- Do more to address the cost of living crisis
- Raise taxes on meat
- Hold a referendum on a United Ireland
- The Government should increase welfare payments for disabled people

I support [0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4] policies

Control Group

How many of the following do you agree with?

The Government should:

- Do more to address the cost of living crisis
- Raise taxes on meat
- Hold a referendum on a United Ireland

I support [0 – 1 – 2 – 3] policies

All else equal, so differences in the average response give “fully anonymous” support for the target question

Stage 1: List Experiment

List Group

How many of the following do you agree with?

The Government should:

- Do more to address the cost of living crisis
- Raise taxes on meat
- Hold a referendum on a United Ireland
- The Government should increase welfare payments for disabled people

Direct Question Group

How many of the following do you agree with?

The Government should:

- Do more to address the cost of living crisis
- Raise taxes on meat
- Hold a referendum on a United Ireland

Do you agree with the following?

- The Government should increase welfare payments for disabled people

Below is a list of 4 things that you may or may not agree with.

Please select **how many** you agree with - you don't need to select which ones, just how many.

I believe the Government should:

- Decriminalise illicit drug use
- Prioritise disabled people for social housing
- Do more to tackle climate change
- Make COVID-19 boosters mandatory, including for children

I agree with

of the above statements.

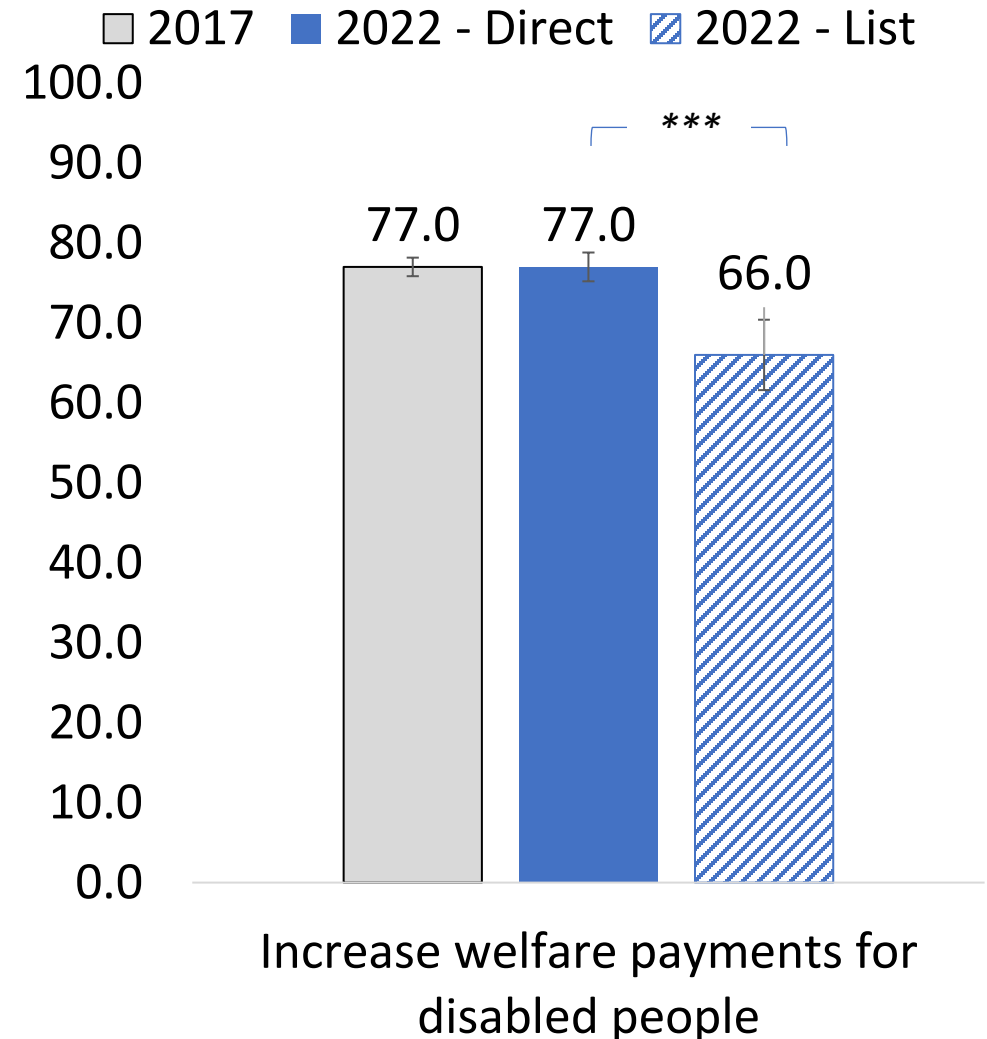
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List Experiment 1: Welfare Payment Increase

The Government should

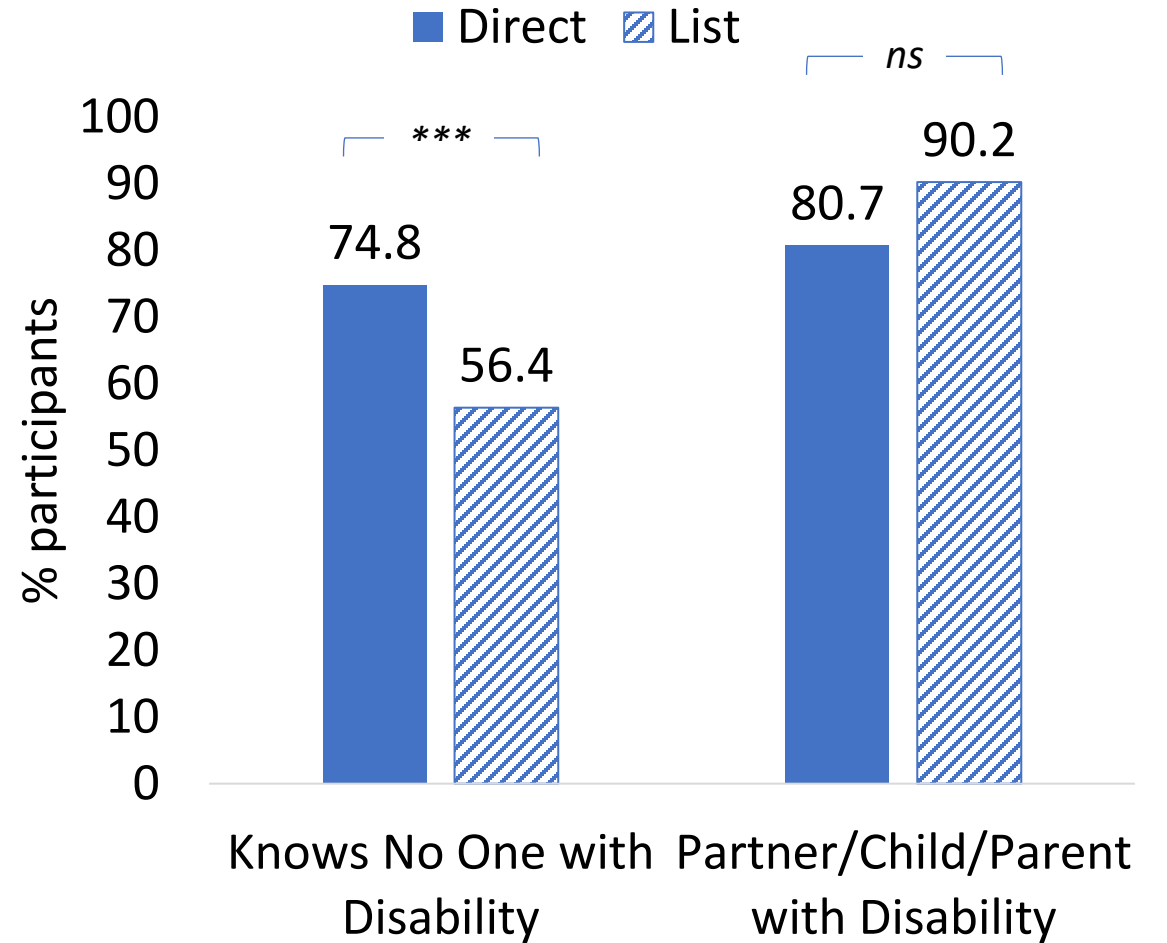
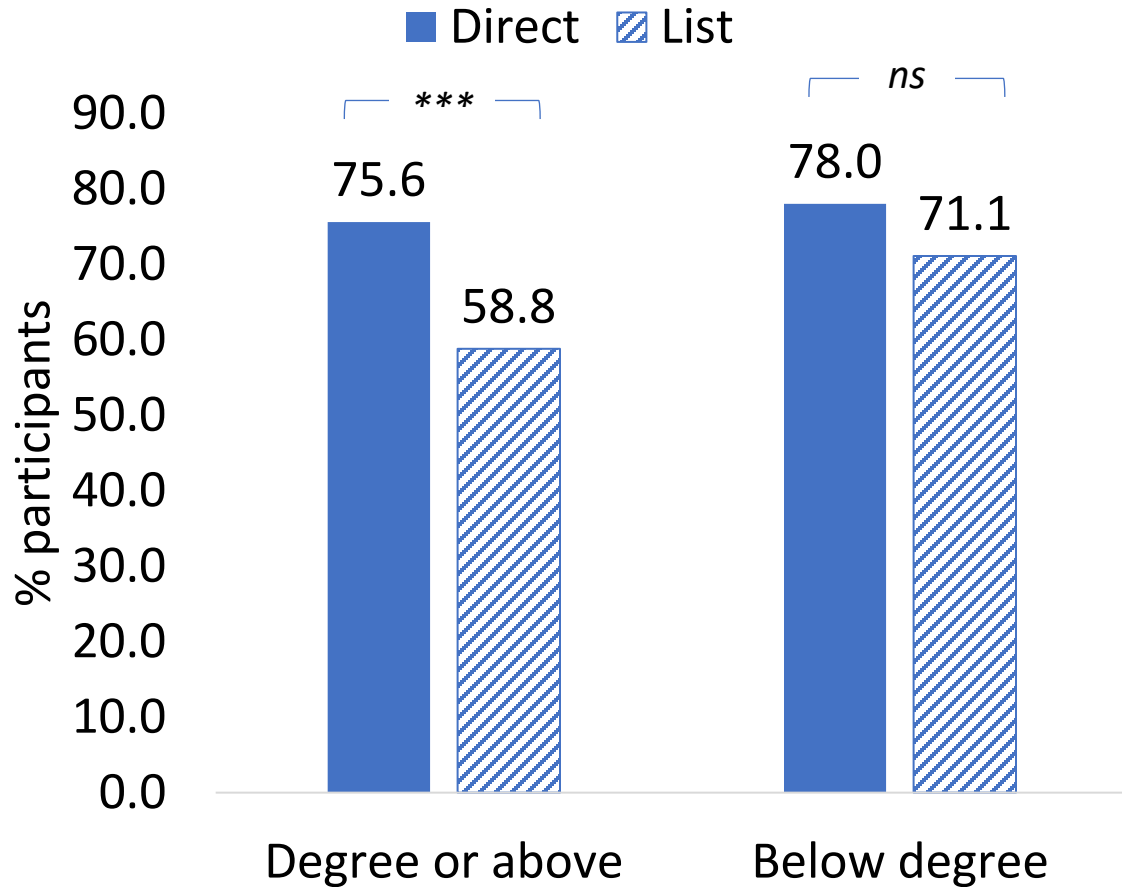
- Do more to address the cost of living crisis
- Raise taxes on meat
- Hold a referendum on a United Ireland
- **Increase welfare payments for disabled people**

1 in 7 who state support in standard surveys withdraw it when given more anonymity



*** $p < .01$

Welfare Payment Increase: Sociodemographic effects

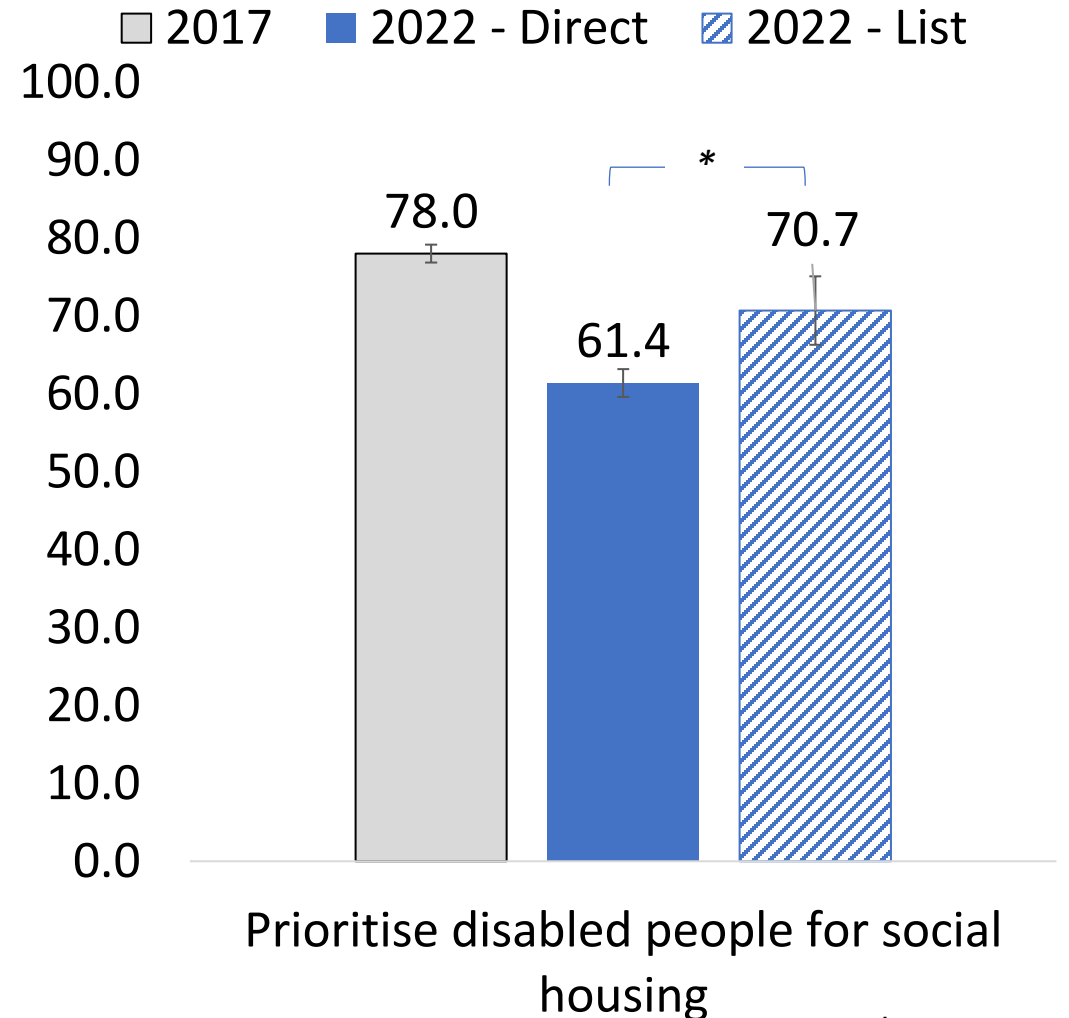


List Experiment 2: Social Housing

The Government should

- Decriminalise illicit drug use
- Do more to tackle climate change
- Make the COVID-19 boosters mandatory, including for children
- **Prioritise disabled people for social housing**

Support for social housing priority *higher* when more anonymous



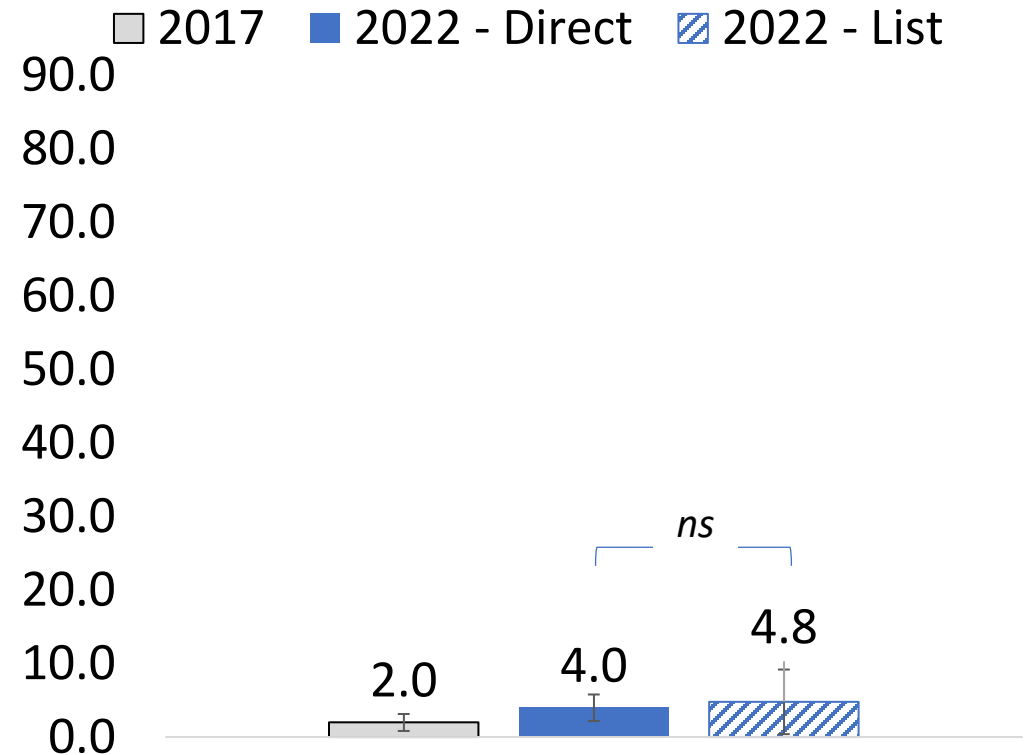
* $p < .10$ 11



List Experiment 4: Parking

- I have broadband internet in my home
- I refused the first dose of my COVID-19 vaccine
- I regularly attend religious services
- **I have parked in a disabled spot without a permit**

~1 in 20 report parking in an accessible parking spot without a permit

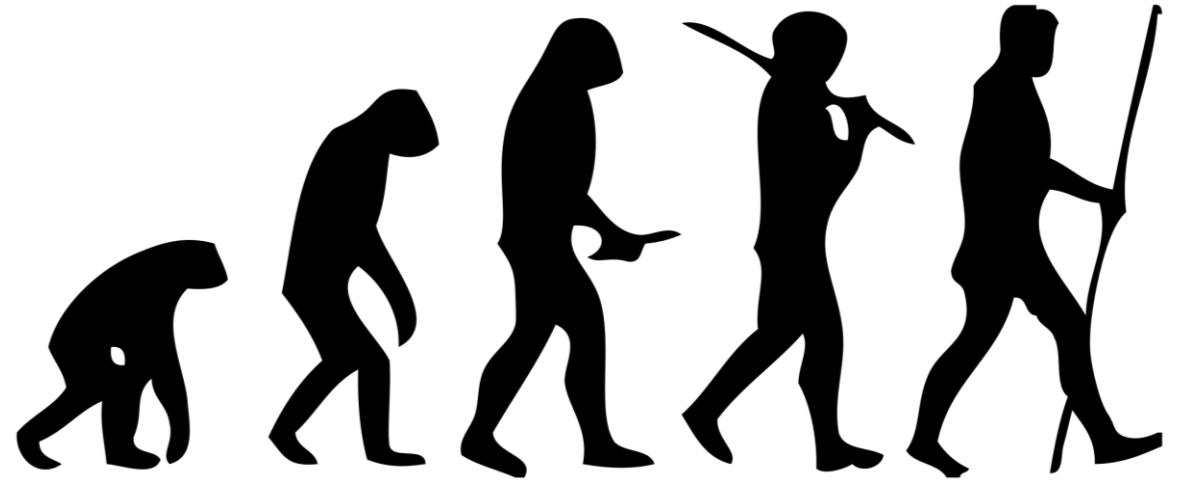


I have parked in a disabled spot without a permit*

**reduced sample of 1,674 drivers*

Stage 3: Inattention to Implications

- Survey Qs aim to be simple but people are “cognitive misers” / “rationally inattentive” (Sims, 2003; Taylor & Fiske, 1978)
- Where policies are costly to enact (e.g. increasing welfare supports), support may be stated in principle but not in practice



“The rule human being seems to follow is to engage the brain only when all else fails - and usually not even then”

- Hull (2001)

Inattention to Implications: Policy trade offs

More should be done to support disabled people in meeting the extra costs of living related to having a disability.

More of the Government's budget should be allocated...

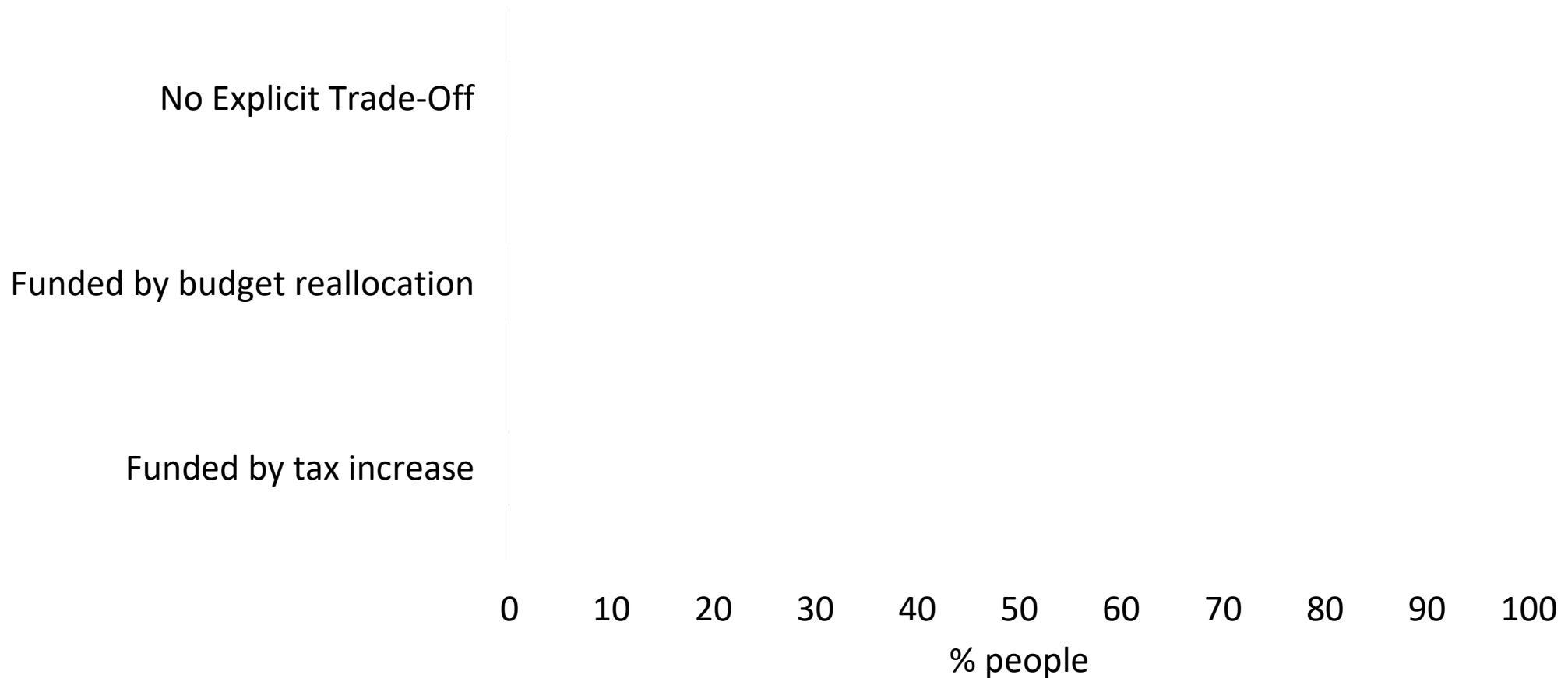
A tax increase should be used...



Policy Trade-Offs: Support with cost of living

More support in meeting extra cost of living

■ Yes ▨ No ■ Don't Know

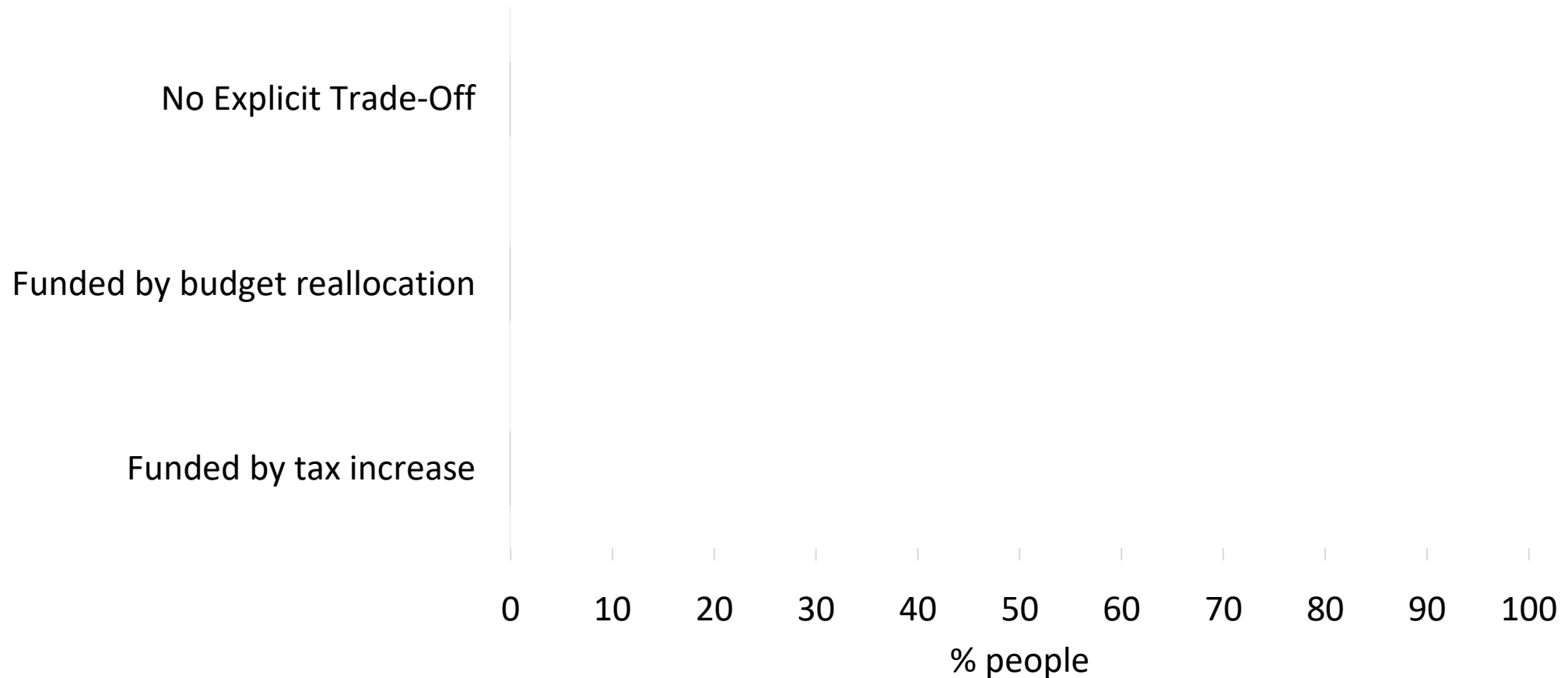




Policy Trade-Offs: Support for children with disabilities

Supports needed for children with disabilities

■ Yes ▨ No ■ Don't Know





Policy Trade-Offs: Wheelchair accessible infrastructure

Local councils should build more wheelchair accessible infrastructure

■ Yes ▨ No ■ Don't Know

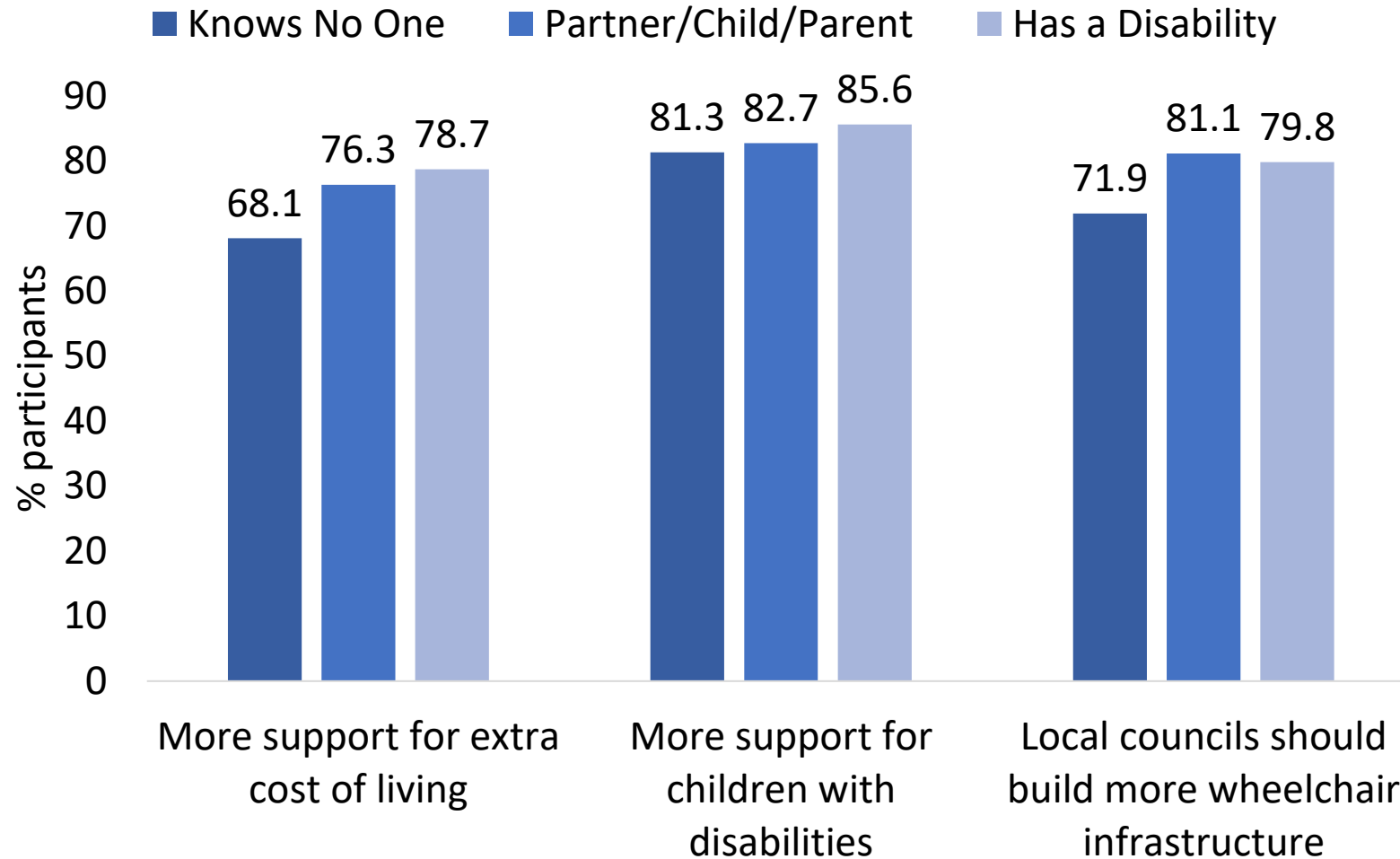
No Explicit Trade-Off

By removing parking infrastructure

Instead of cycling infrastructure



Policy Support and Familiarity with Disability





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Policy Support: Summary

- **1 in 7** estimated to **withdraw support** for increased disability welfare payments **when afforded greater anonymity**.
- **Substantial decline in support** for increased disability welfare **when costs are made explicit**, particularly for tax increases.
- **Support** for prioritising disabled people **for social housing higher** when provided more anonymity.
- **1 in 20** drivers admit to **parking** in a disabled spot **without a permit**.
- **Majority support most policies** and particularly robust among those closer to someone with a disability.





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Implications

Thank you!

- Support for policies that favour disabled people is generally high in Ireland, but some people conceal negative attitudes
- Findings about familiarity suggest that inclusion in workplaces and communities and greater awareness on the challenges of disability may help
- Important to consider different types of disability in different social situations (Stage 2 paper)
- Experimental approaches useful for overcoming survey limitations
- This project is part of a research programme with the NDA: <https://www.esri.ie/current-research/joint-research-programme-on-the-experiences-of-persons-with-disabilities-across>

