



MOST
TRUSTED
BRANDS
2020

SPECIAL REPORT:
THE STATE OF CONSUMER TRUST



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INTRODUCTION

Distrust is rippling through the country, and it is particularly potent when concerning major institutions and concentrations of power.

Today, less than a quarter of Americans have a lot of trust in their neighbors or labels on food packaging, while less than one in 10 say the same about the news media or U.S. government. Just four percent put a lot of trust in either Wall Street or Hollywood.

However, for brands looking to build and maintain relationships with their customers, there's a silver lining.

Despite a number of high profile corporate scandals in recent years, most major brands have maintained high levels of confidence from consumers. Top performing brands, including Google and Amazon, are more well-trusted than any major institution, save the military.

But while brand trust is relatively strong today, there is a generational challenge facing brands in the future. Younger consumers are generally more skeptical of corporate America and hold higher ethical standards for brands.

As the new decade begins, Morning Consult's *Most Trusted Brands – The State of Consumer Trust* is the first look at how today's societal forces are shaping a new era of trust. Based on interviews with thousands of consumers, the report provides actionable intelligence into how companies can earn and deepen trust with customers.



- 1 Levels of distrust are high in America:** Distrust is particularly high when it comes to institutions and major concentrations of power.
- 2 But consumers tend to trust most major brands:** Looking at 100 major brands, the average is trusted by 59 percent and distrusted by just 13 percent.
- 3 USPS, Amazon, and Google are the Most Trusted Brands:** Google is the top-performing brand with Gen Z and Millennials; USPS is number one with Gen X and Boomers.
- 4 Reliability is the key driver of brand trust:** 69 percent say it's very important brands deliver consistently on what they promise when considering trust.
- 5 Gen Z and millennials hold brands to a higher standard:** Young Americans are generally more skeptical of brands, and put greater emphasis on ethical matters.



METHODOLOGY

About the data in this report:

The Most Trusted Brands rankings were determined using surveys conducted online among a national sample of adults. The surveys were conducted from 9/3/19 through 12/3/19, with an average of 16,700 interviews per brand for nearly 2,000 brands.

All other data is drawn from a survey conducted 12/3/19 – 12/5/19 among a nationally representative sample of 2,200 U.S. adults.

About Morning Consult Brand Intelligence:

The data used to determine the Most Trusted Brands comes from Morning Consult's flagship brand tracking platform, [Brand Intelligence](#). Brand Intelligence is the most comprehensive brand tracking platform available, using thousands of daily surveys on more than 3,000 brands to help marketing and communications executives measure brand reputation in real-time.

1

Trust in Brands

THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

Despite widespread societal distrust, brands remain largely well trusted by consumers. Three quarters of Americans trust the average major company to consistently deliver on what it promises. Furthermore, top-performing brands including Amazon and Google are far more well trusted than many other institutions, public figures, and ideas.

Levels of general distrust are high in America



Broad societal distrust is having an impact on matters both large and small. From news anchors to labels on food packaging, few ideas, people, or institutions command broad trust from the American public. More than two thirds of respondents say that, in general, Americans have become less trusting in recent years.



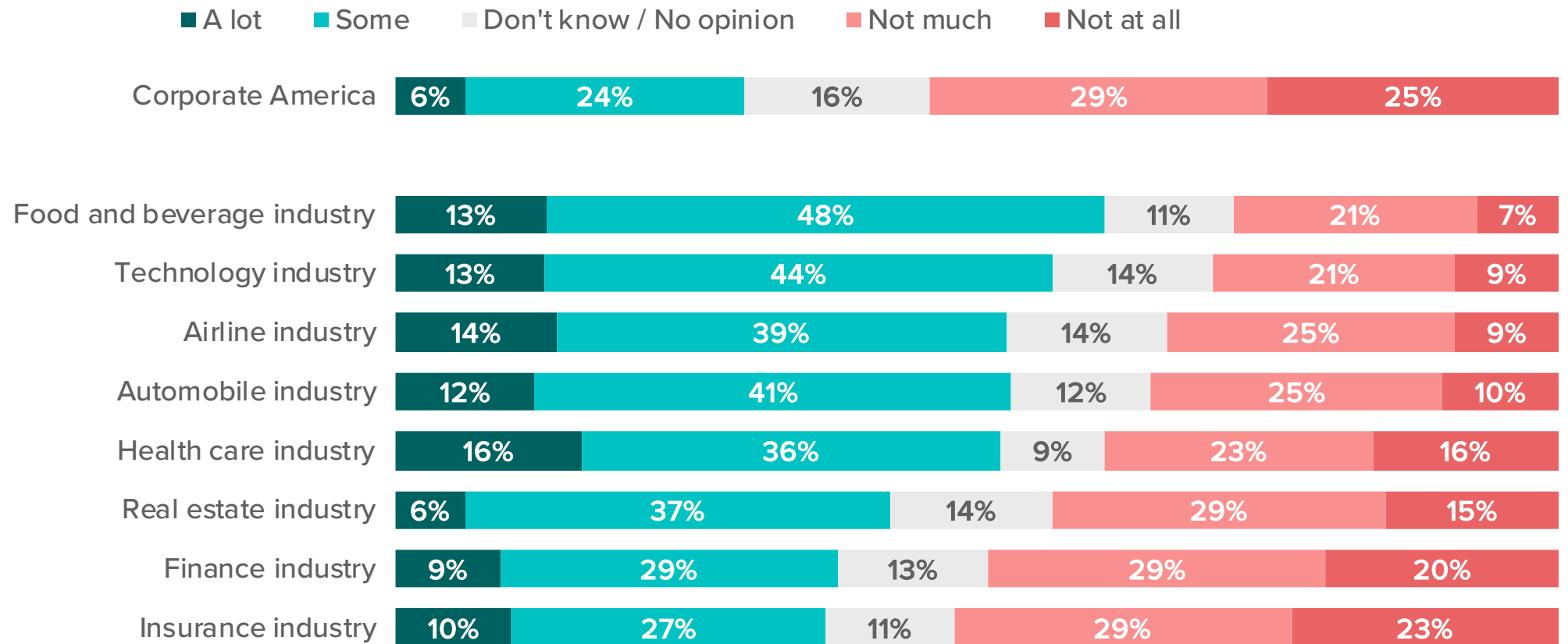
Most don't trust the news, and few find it easy to determine what is factual. Only eight percent of Americans have a lot of trust in the news media, while just 15 percent say it's very easy to know whether information about current events is factual.



Distrust is particularly potent when concerning institutions and concentrations of power. Less than one in 10 Americans have a lot of trust in the U.S. government. Just four percent put a lot of trust in either Wall Street or Hollywood. Religious leaders, major industries, the public education system, and other important foundations of society are also met with varying degrees of skepticism.

A majority of Americans distrust “corporate America”

How much do you trust the following to do what is right?



But Americans give individual brands the benefit of the doubt



74%

Trust the average major company to deliver consistently on what they promise.

Just 20 percent say they don't trust brands to deliver on what they promise.



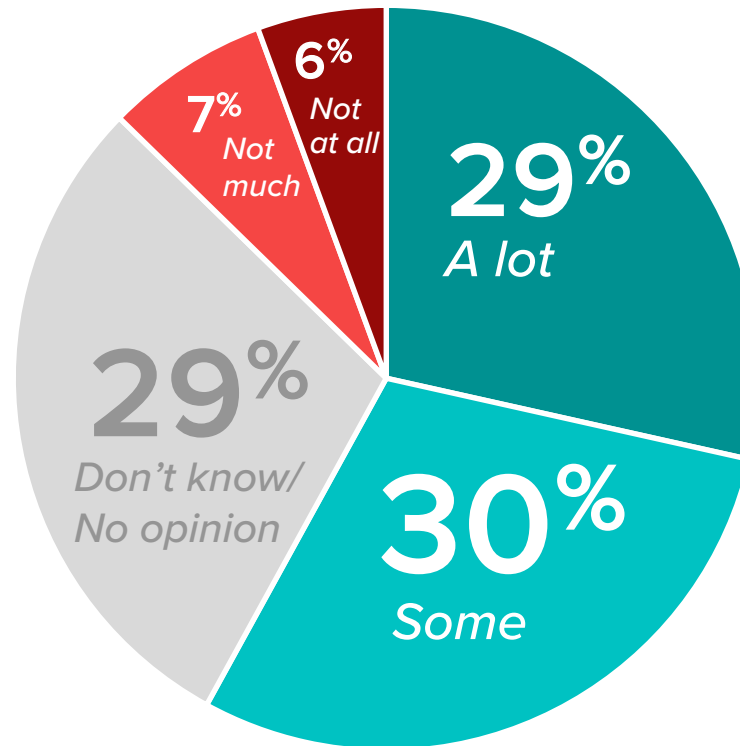
55%

Say they tend to trust the average American company, and that companies have to do something wrong to lose trust.

Just 28 percent stated they tend to not trust the average American company.

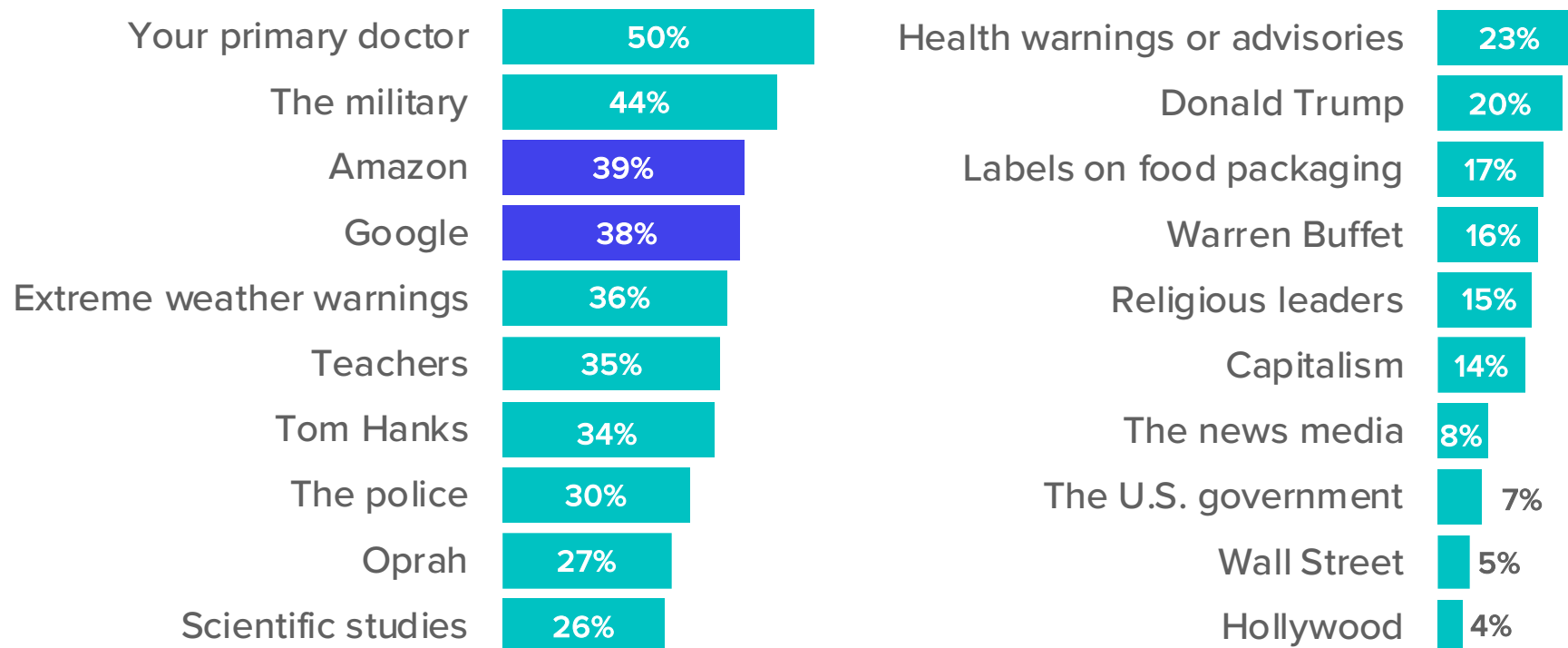
The average major brand has a positive trust rating

The average trust rating for the 100 most prominent brands tracked in Morning Consult Brand Intelligence, as determined by the total share of Americans who register an opinion (whether positive or negative).



Top-performing brands including Amazon and Google are more well-trusted than most other institutions, public figures, and ideas

The share of Americans who say they trust each of the following “a lot” to do the right thing.



2

The Most Trusted Brands

THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

USPS, Amazon, and Google are the Most Trusted Brands. Google is the top-performing brand among Gen Z and millennials, while USPS is number one with Gen X and boomers. Netflix also overperforms with younger generations.



THE MOST TRUSTED BRANDS

The data used to determine the Most Trusted Brands comes from Morning Consult's flagship brand tracking platform, [Brand Intelligence](#). Brand Intelligence is the most comprehensive brand tracking platform available, using thousands of daily surveys on thousands of brands to help marketing and communications executives measure brand trust and reputation in real-time.

The rankings here are based on the largest data set of its kind to date, with an average of 16,700 interviews per brand for nearly 2,000 brands.

Explore the full ranking of the top 25 Most Trusted Brands overall and by generation:

VIEW THE RANKING

morningconsult.com/most-trusted-brands/

THE MOST TRUSTED BRANDS



USPS, Amazon, and Google are the Most Trusted Brands

The share of Americans who say they trust each of the following “a lot” to do the right thing.

1



USPS

Score: 42.0%

2



Amazon

38.8%

3



Google

37.9%

4



PayPal

36.5%

5



Weather
Channel

36.3%

6



Chick-Fil-A

36.2%

7



The Hershey
Company

36.1%

7



UPS

36.1%

9



Cheerios

35.9%

10



M&M's

34.8%

Google is the Most Trusted Brand among Gen Z and Millennials

The share of Americans who say they trust each of the following “a lot” to do the right thing.

GEN Z



Google
Score: 47.1%



Netflix
47%



Amazon
46.6%



YouTube
41.9%



PlayStation
39.2%

MILLENNIALS



Google
Score: 44.2%



USPS
43%



Amazon
42.3%



PayPal
40.7%



Netflix
40.4%

USPS is the Most Trusted Brand among Gen X and Boomers

The share of Americans who say they trust each of the following “a lot” to do the right thing.

GEN X



BOOMERS



3

How to Build and Deepen Trust with Customers

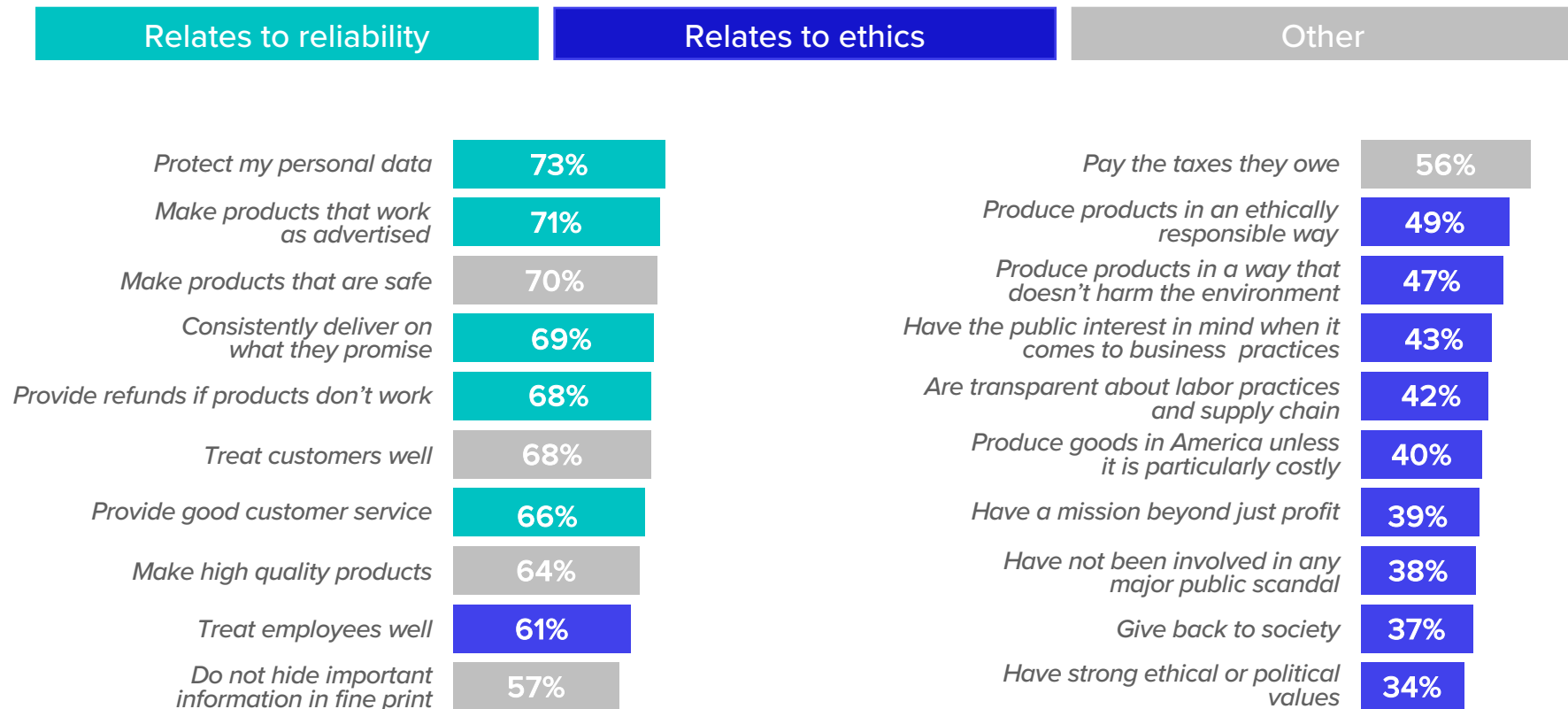
THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

Issues relating to reliability are more important to developing consumer trust than any others, including ethical or political concerns. Morning Consult has also identified three key areas (data privacy, no fine print, and strong employee treatment) where brands can boost their trust rating.



When it comes trust, factors relating to reliability are far more important to consumers than ethics

The share of respondents who say each is “very important” when considering whether to trust a company



Reliability is the key to understanding why Americans trust both USPS and PayPal

To better understand the driving forces behind the Most Trusted Brands, we picked two of the top-ranking brands - USPS and PayPal - and asked consumers who say they trust each brand to use their own words to explain why. Far and away, the most common responses related to reliability for both brands.

A selection of representative responses:

USPS

"They are reliable."

"I have never had a bad experience with them."

"They always delivers the mail no matter the weather."

"Aside from a few returns, I trust the post office to deliver important mail even when there is a slight indifference within the address location."

PayPal

"I have never had a bad problem with them."

"Because of their security measures."

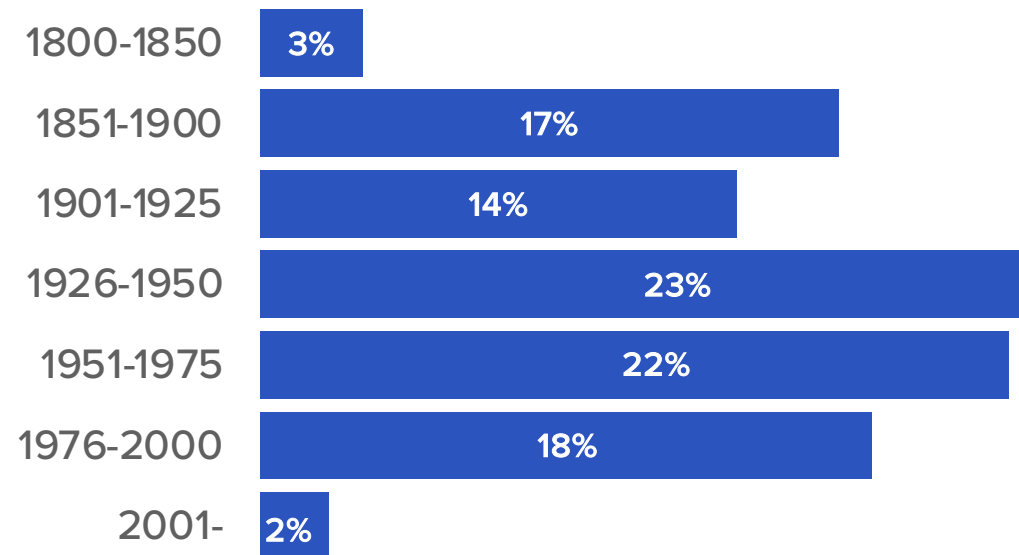
"They are reliable."

"Because you are guaranteed to get what you order."

"I have used [PayPal] for many years and have never had a moment when I felt I could not trust them."

Trust takes time to build: Of the 100 Most Trusted Brands, just two were founded after 2000

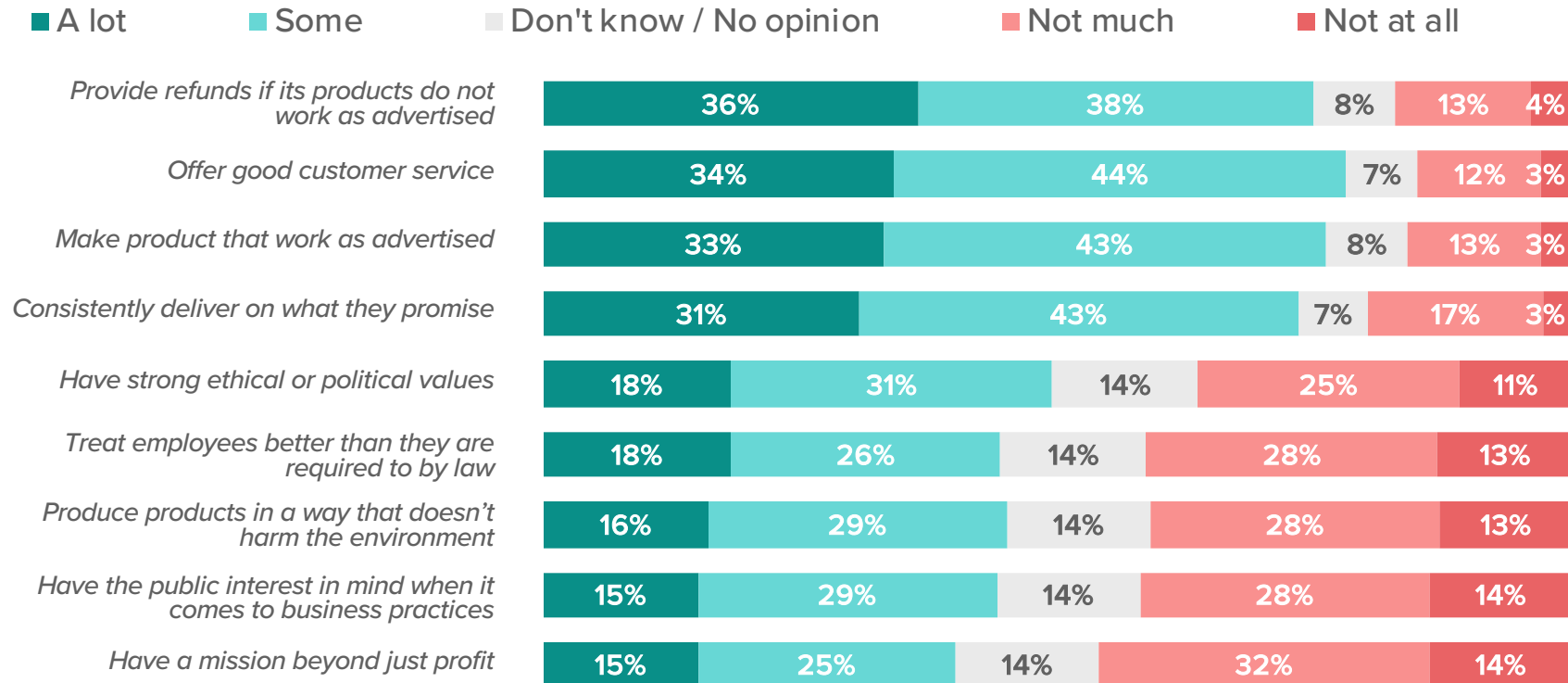
A review of the 100 brands that rank highest in terms of trust shows how important an established reputation is. The vast majority of brands were founded at least 50 years ago, and just two – Android and YouTube – were founded after 2000. The chart below shows the percent of brands founded in each era.





While most Americans trust brands to deliver on the basics, far fewer trust them to go above and beyond

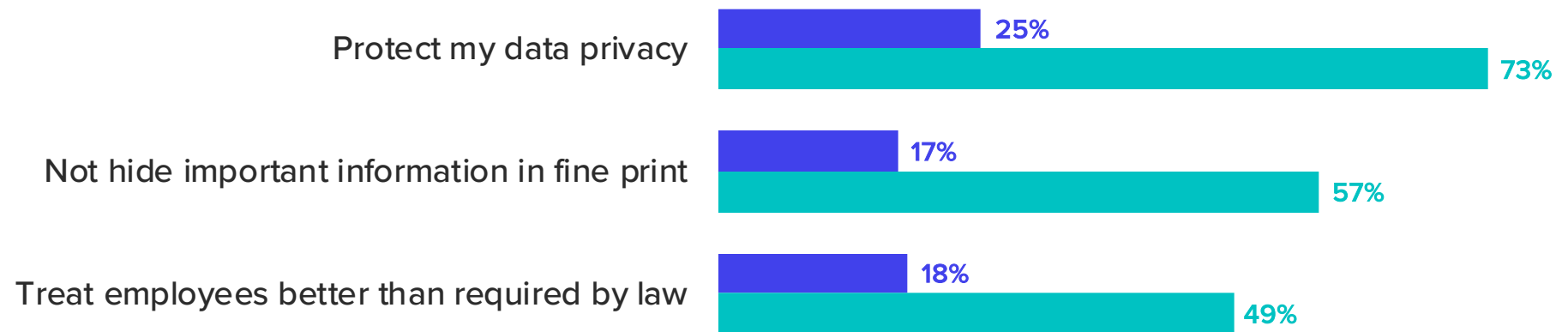
In general, how much trust do you trust the average major company to do the following?



Three areas where brands have opportunities to win trust: data privacy, fine print, and employee treatment

Morning Consult has identified three areas of distrust that present opportunities for brands to deliver on issues that are important to consumers. If applicable, brands could consider messaging campaigns to help consumers understand their efforts in each area to build trust.

- Share who have "a lot" of trust in the average major company to do each of the following
- Share who say it is "very important" for each when it comes to their trust in a brand



4

Gen Z and Millennial Brand Trust

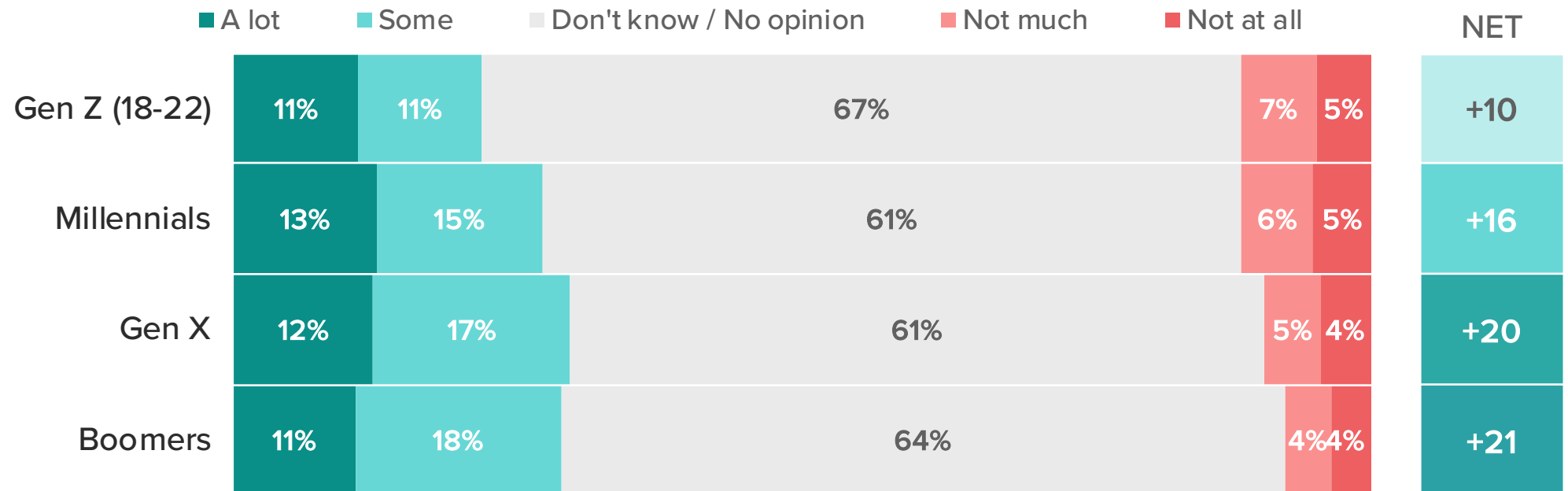
THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

Gen Z and Millennials are less likely to trust the average company and are more likely to say that companies have to make active efforts to gain their trust. Additionally, while reliability is still king for younger Americans, they also place more value on ethical matters such as how a company treats its employees or how they produce products.



Gen Z and millennials are notably less trusting of the average brand

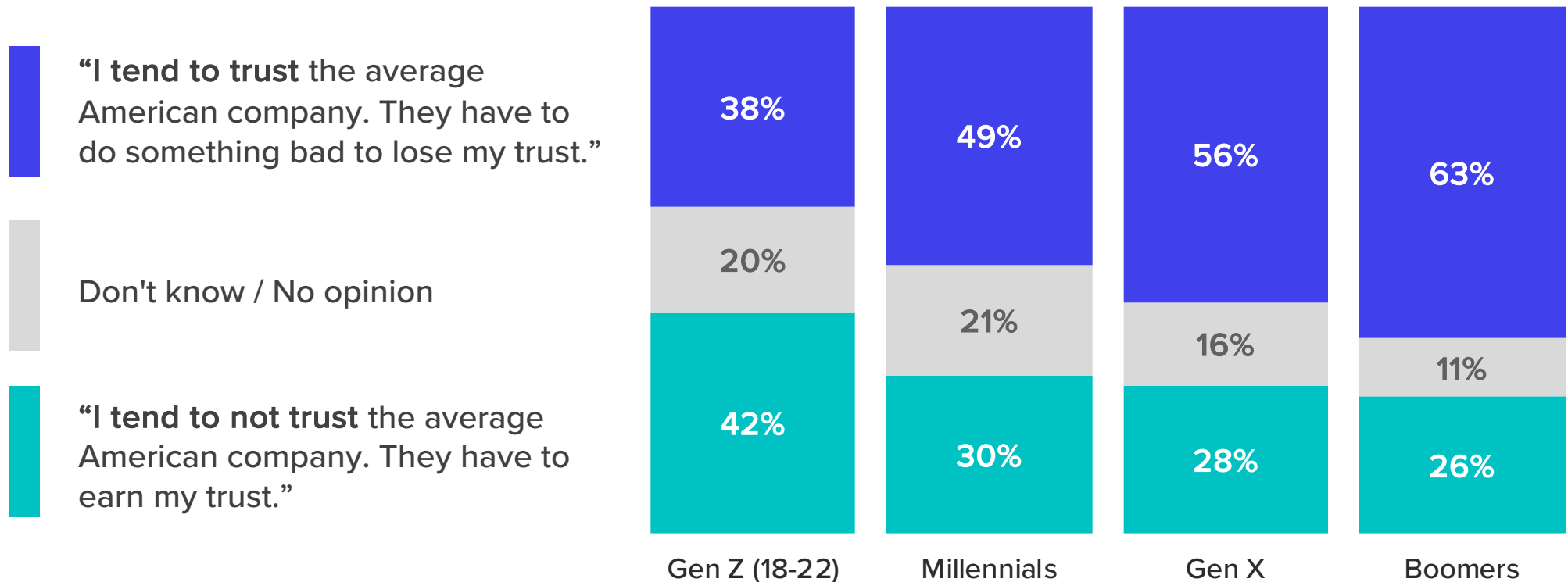
A review of the average trust rating for the nearly 2,000 brands tracked in Morning Consult Brand Intelligence shows younger Americans are more distrusting of brands across the board.





Younger generations are less likely to say their default position is to trust the average American company

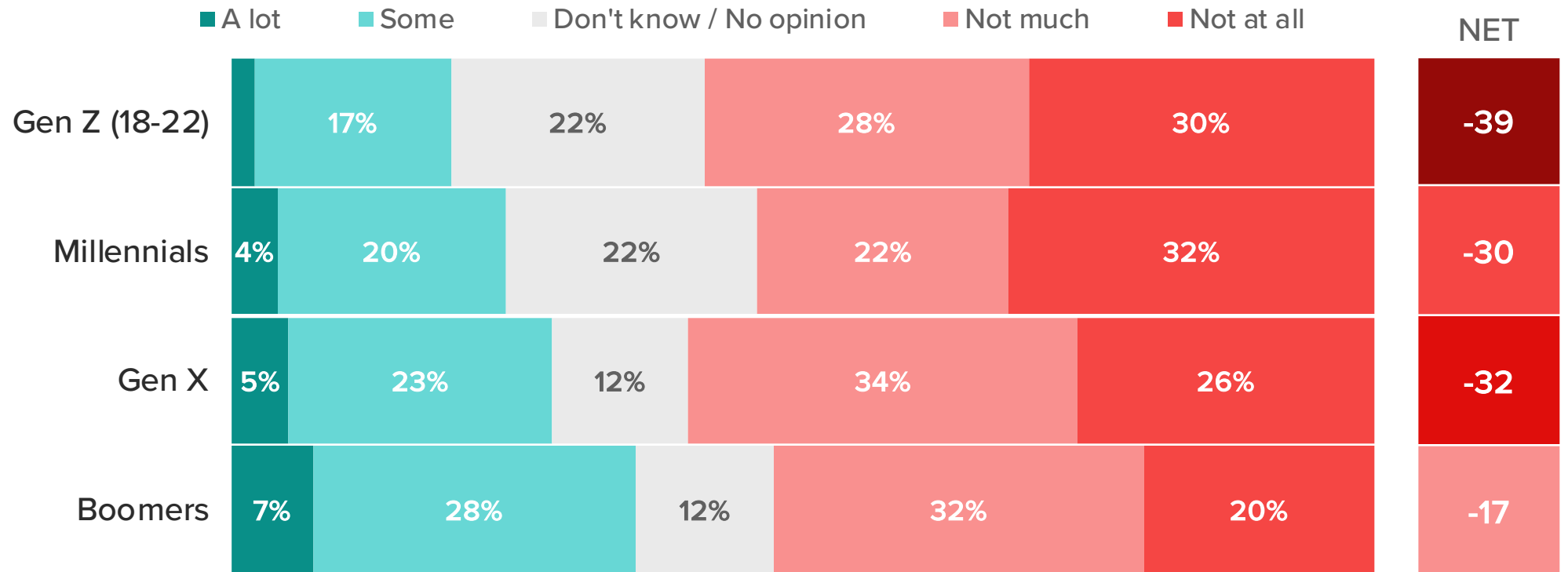
Which of the following do you agree with more?





And they are less likely to trust corporate America

How much trust do you have in corporate America to do what is right?





Younger Americans are more likely to prioritize ethical matters when considering which brands to trust

Survey respondents were asked how important a series of factors are when considering whether to trust a brand. The below factors are the ones that most differentiate 18-29 year-olds from all adults. For example, 18-29 year-olds are 5 points more likely than all adults to say it is “very important” a company has strong ethical or political values.

Issues young Americans are more likely to prioritize

They have strong ethical or political values (+5)

They treat employees better than they are required to by law (+5)

They produce products in an ethically responsible way (+3)

They treat employees equally, regardless of factors like race or gender (+3)

Issues young Americans are more likely to not prioritize

They pay the taxes they owe (-14)

They make high quality products (-13)

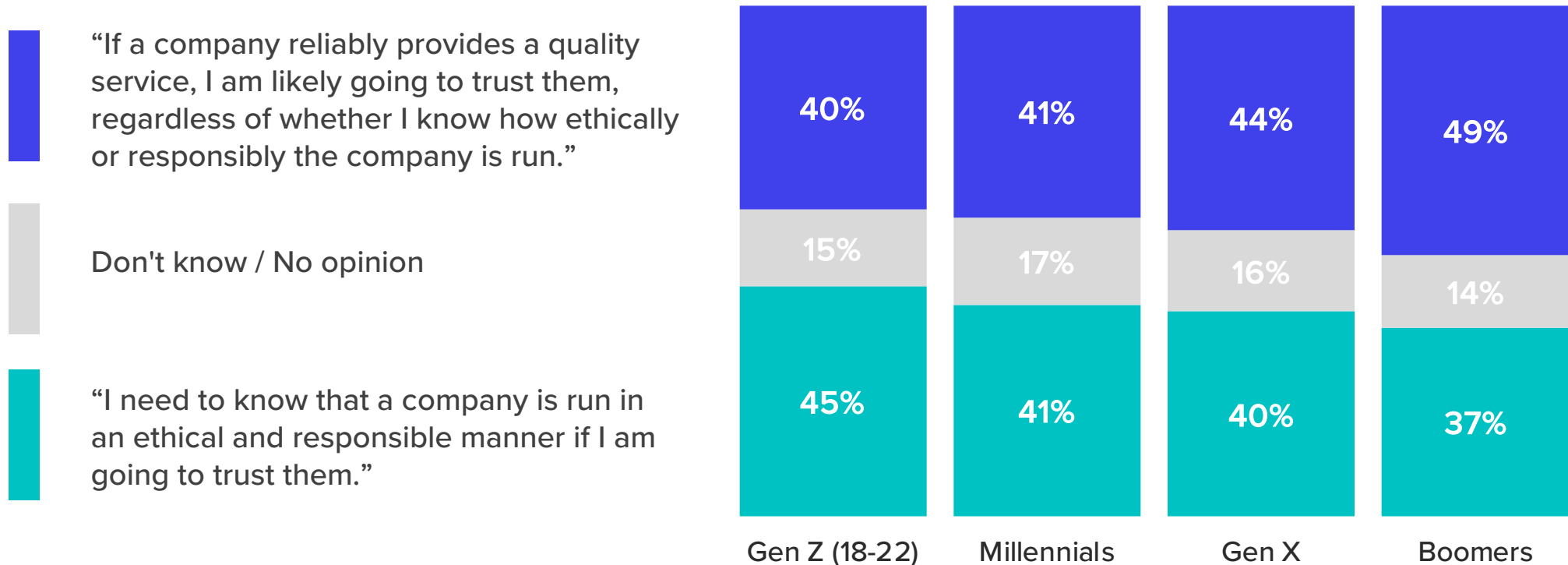
They protect my personal data (-9)

They provide refunds if its products do not work as advertised (-7)



Gen Z and millennials are less likely to purchase from brands if they are aware of ethical issues

Which of the following do you agree with more?

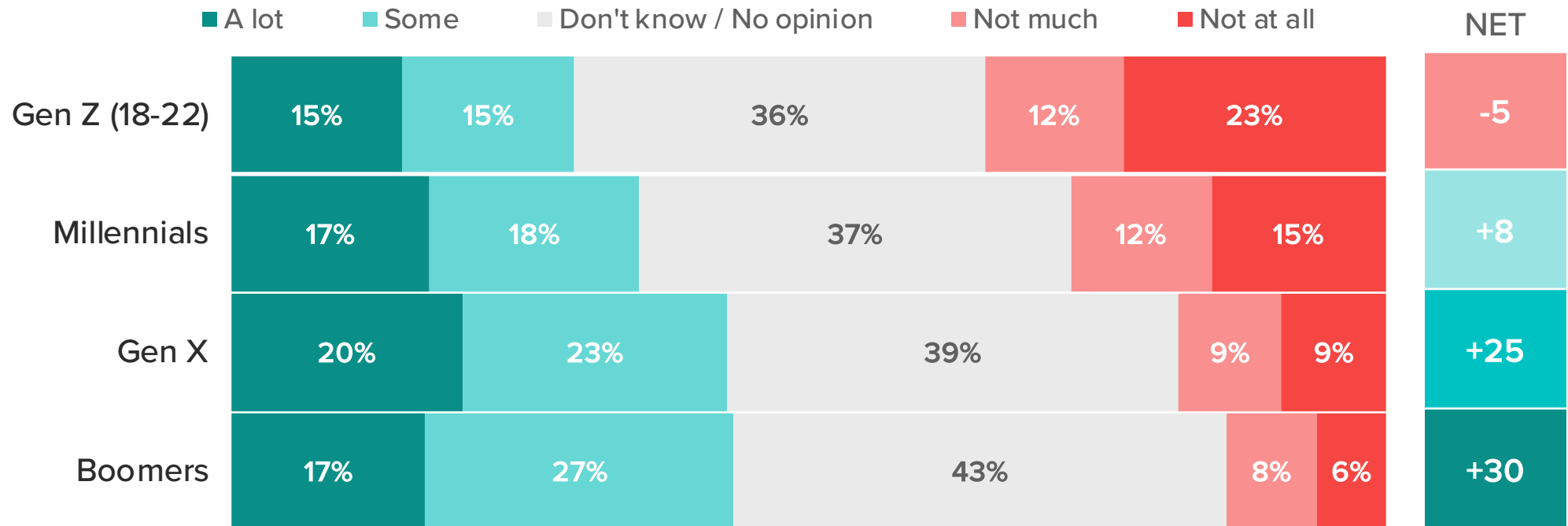




Example: Gen Z and millennials are far less trusting of SeaWorld

In 2013, SeaWorld drew intense scrutiny following the release of the documentary “Blackfish.” Brand tracking data shows younger generations hold more negative views.

How much trust do you have in SeaWorld to do the right thing?



BRAND INTELLIGENCE

Morning Consult empowers marketing, communications and brand insights leaders to make data driven decisions around their brand. **Over 60 Fortune 500 brands rely on Morning Consult to deliver accurate measure of how their brand is trusted nationally and globally.**

- Tracking over 3,000 brands in 12 countries everyday
- Conducting over 10,000 interviews daily across over 100 demographic variables
- Measuring industry and competitor benchmarks daily
- Streaming over 100 million social media posts to aggregate social media, news, and economic data

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