



Framing Rural

How language can help or hinder the case for rural investment

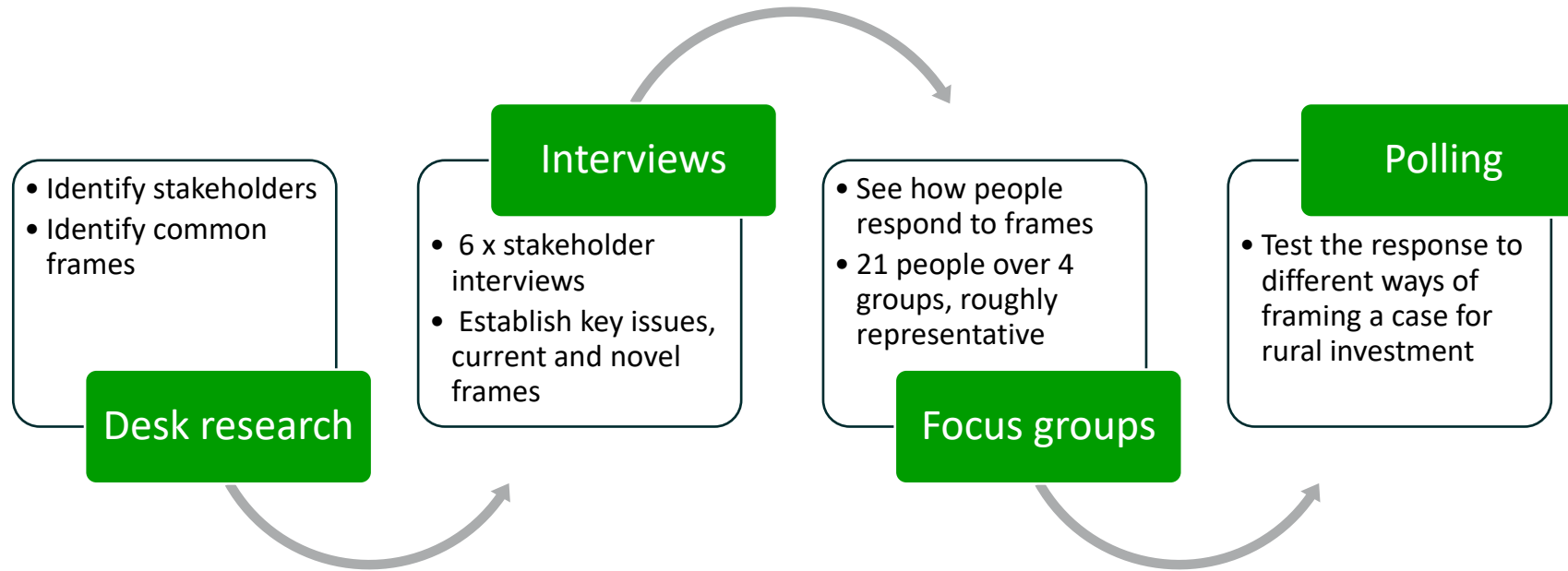
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LOVE

IS

LOVE



The Frames



A fair society



Unlocking
potential



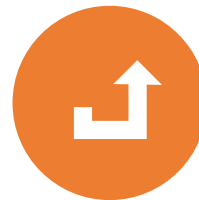
Countryside
custodians



Green powerhouse



Community action



Ahead of the curve

Focus group learnings; how to frame a case for rural investment

Use straightforward, accessible language

- ✘ People found overly emotive language, unsubstantiated opinions, and hyperbole manipulative.
- ✘ Anything that felt too 'political' raised suspicions.
- ✓ Sticking to open, straightforward language that gave the facts without trying to 'persuade' landed best.

State the problem and offer a solution

- ✘ When presented just with a problem, most people logically agreed but didn't connect emotionally.
- ✘ There also was not much connection when presented with just positivity.
- ✓ The best-received frames did not shy away from the issues but gave practical, measurable solutions too.

Focus group learnings; how to frame a case for rural investment

Clearly state who is responsible

- ✘ When people felt a frame laid responsibility on them, they tended to turn off.
- ✘ People also did not think responsibility should be laid on the community
- ✘ No one liked the sense of creating a divide between rural and urban communities:
- ✓ Clearly stating that the government had a responsibility to address the issues was important.
- ✓ But the most successful frames coupled government responsibility with examples of communities that are already helping themselves.

Focus group learnings; how to frame a case for rural investment

Deal with stereotypes and misconceptions head-on

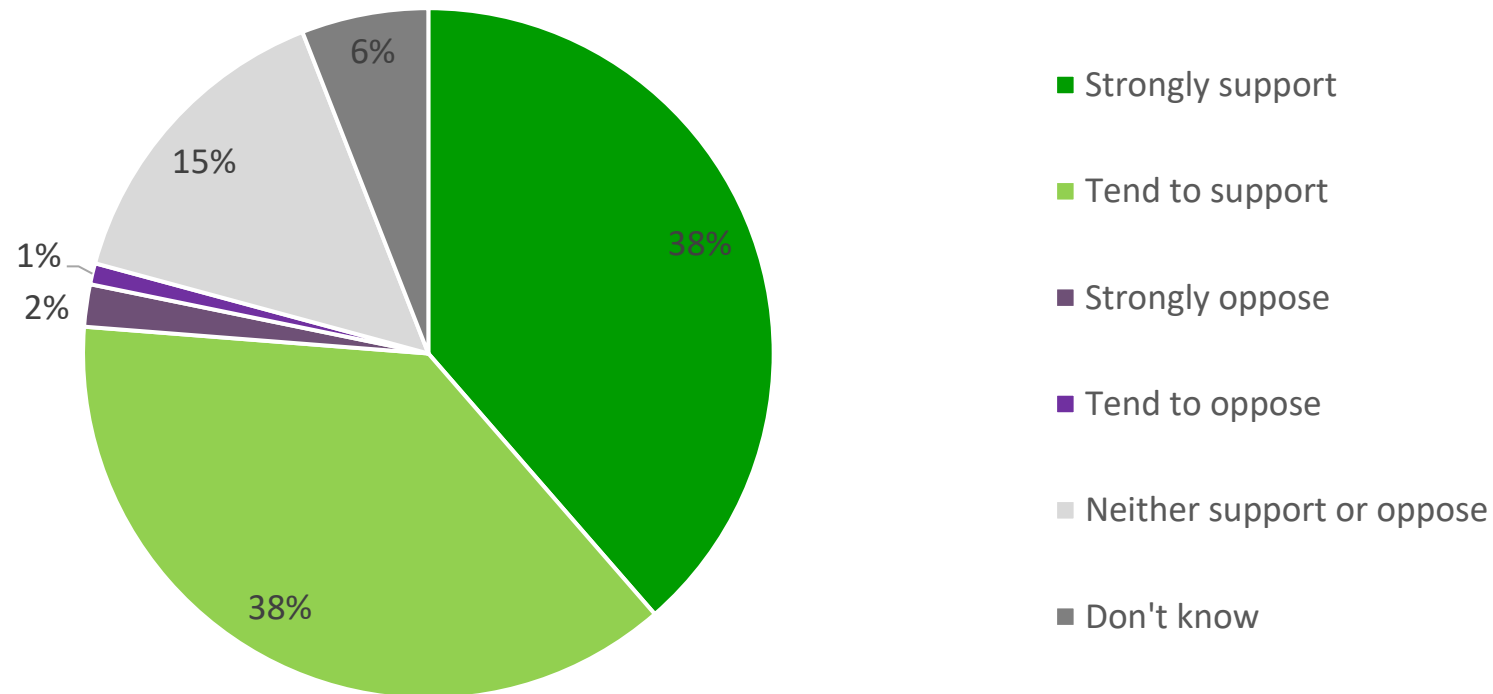
- ✘ People found that stating the opposite of a commonly held belief, without acknowledging doing so, was defensive and inaccurate.
- ✘ People seemed intrinsically mistrustful of statistics, especially on an issue that goes against their beliefs.
- ✘ Using examples was important to bring the statements to life, but risked being seen as an exception proving the rule.
- ✓ The most successful way of convincing people was to acknowledge that a belief exists and that it is sometimes based on reality while explaining that it is not the whole picture.

Polling

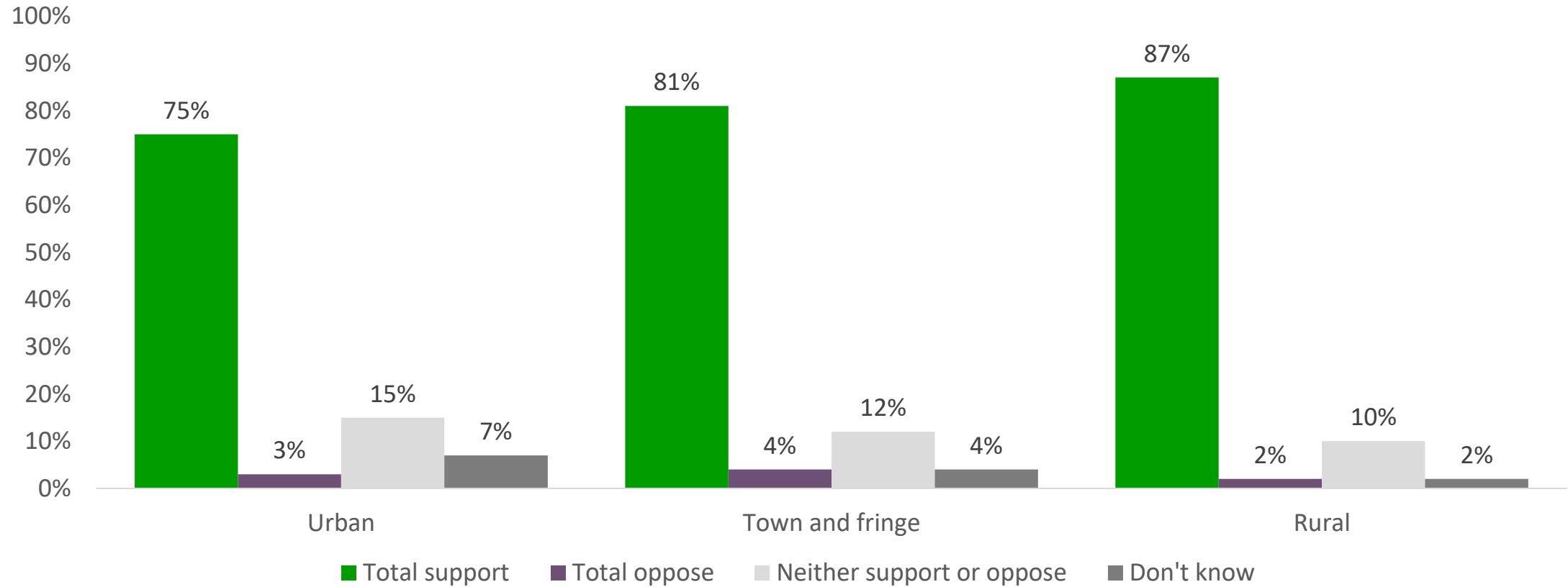
- YouGov polled a representative sample of 3,359 people in England on the 25th and 26th January 2024
- Each person was shown one of four frames, focused on fair access to services, economic opportunity, heritage and community enterprise.
- The frames were informed by the focus group findings to be as convincing as possible.

“Rural England is home to one in five of us, and we all rely on rural businesses for far more than food and green energy. A strong rural economy benefits the whole country. Most people in the countryside like where they live. Yet rural communities have higher costs, lower wages, less access to services and support, and pockets of hidden deprivation. Rural local authorities also receive less investment, despite the higher costs of delivering services. It is not right that people are disadvantaged due to where they live. It will help people have the same opportunities wherever they live in this country if government invests in affordable housing, broadband and transport in rural areas.”

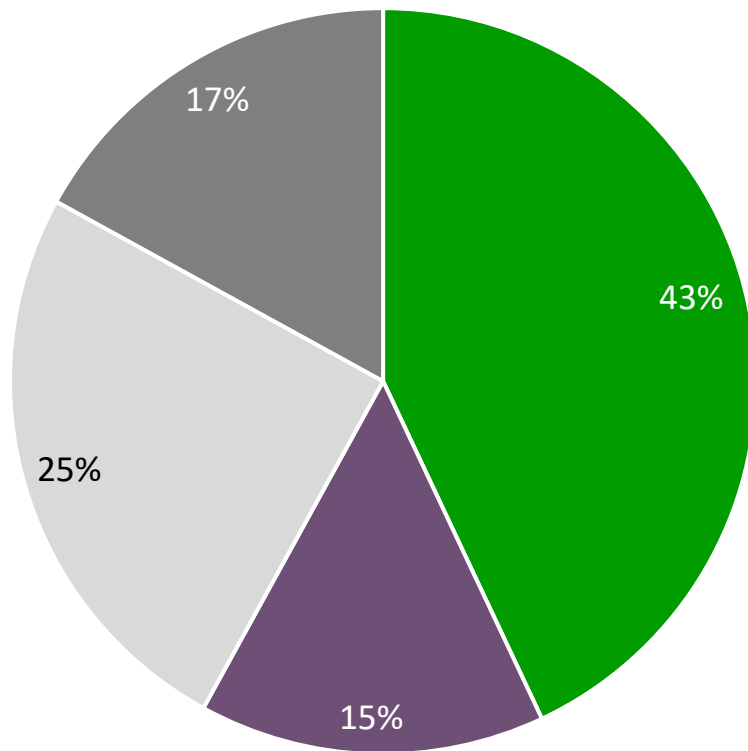
Q1.a. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the government investing more resources in rural areas of England than it currently does?



Q1 .a. Average of results over the four frames, showing split by whether respondents' postcode falls into an urban, town or fringe, or rural area

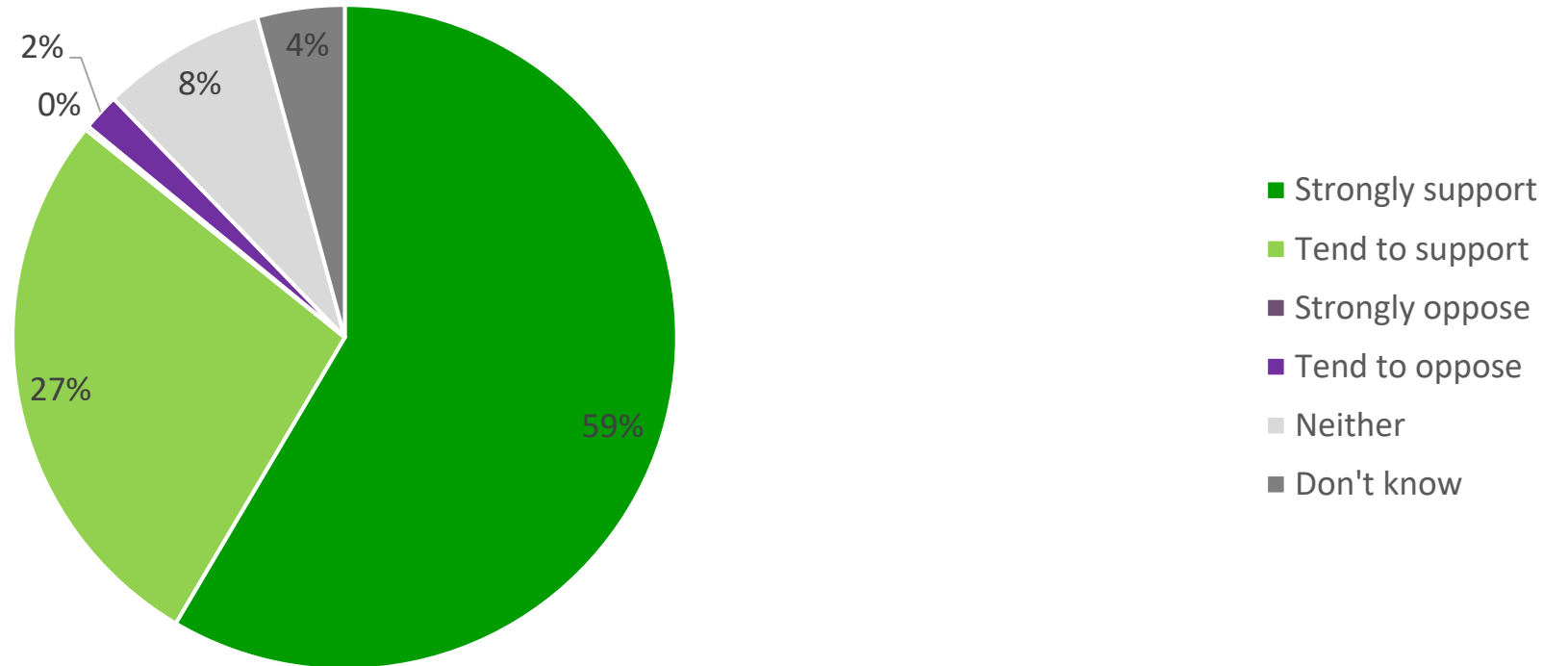


Q2. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? Average of results over the four frames.



- The government should increase investment in rural areas, even if that money would benefit more people if it was instead invested in urban areas
- If money would benefit more people in urban areas then it should be invested there, even if it means decreasing investment made in rural areas
- Neither
- Don't know

Q1.b. The government making a commitment to providing the same basic services of healthcare, education, water and broadband everywhere in England, regardless of whether you live in an urban or rural community.
Average of results over the four frames.



What we learnt

- Be aware of how your framing might be received
- Use straightforward, accessible language
- State the problem and offer a solution
- Clearly say who is responsible
- Address stereotypes and misconceptions head-on
- ‘Levelling up’ could be more successful than ‘singling out’
- Showing common cause with urban places may also strengthen the case

And if we get it right, people in both rural and urban places are receptive to a case for rural investment



Thank you!

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