IF YOU DON'T CYCLE, BUT YOUR NEIGHBOURS DO, ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO SUPPORT CYCLING FOR TRANSPORT?

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Session: Cycling Beyond the Frame: Identities and Methods
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Cycling and Society
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CONTEXT

- Collective and individual benefits of cycling are well-documented
- Cities and regions are looking to increase the share of trips done by bicycle
- To achieve this: **we need well connected protected cycling infrastructure networks** e.g., Buehler and Dill (2016)







WHO SUPPORTS CYCLING POLICY ?

- **Bikelash can prevent or delay cycling infrastructure projects**
- **To what extent people think cycling for transport should be encouraged?**

Do only cyclists support cycling for transport?

- In most cities,
  - Cycling is not the dominant mode
  - Most people, do not cycle for transport: low descriptive social norms

For example, **in Montréal,**

- 57 % cycled at least once in 2020 (Vélo Québec, l'État du vélo, 2020)
- 39 % of our sample cycles for transport, 18 % do it at least weekly (our survey)

SOCIAL NORMS AND CYCLING

The role of social influence on transport choices

- Descriptive + subjective norms are highly influential to support mode shift
  Javaid, Creutzig & Bamberg (2020)'s review of reviews
- Descriptive norms, subjective norms and social support positively affect cycling behaviour Willis, Manaugh and El-Geneidy (2015) 's review
- Social acceptance of cycling can influence cycling both ways
  Willis, Manaugh and El-Geneidy (2015)'s review
- **Social approval** as one of 5 essential needs in Ralph (2025)
  deal breaker theory of cycling

→ Very little investigation of social influence on support for cycling policy

STUDY OBJECTIVES

What are the impacts of social influence on supporting pro-cycling policy?

Specifically, we are interested in the following norms:

- Descriptive social norms
- Subjective norms
- Do people around you talk about cycling?

METHODOLOGY

SURVEY DATA

Study area:
City of Montréal (1.8 M)
City of Laval (0.45 M)

N = 1187

Mobility Tools

Socio-demo

Attitudes
Perceptions
Norms

Behaviour and Intentions

Perceptions

Representativity:
Age x gender

KEY VARIABLES

MAIN OUTCOME

"Do you think the government should promote cycling for transport?" (5-point agreement scale)

INVESTIGATED EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

- **Descriptive norm #1:** "Many of my family and friends sometimes cycle for transport" (5-point agreement scale)
- **Descriptive norm #2:** "I see a lot of people travelling by bike in my neighbourhood" (5-point agreement scale)
- **Subjective norm:** "Most people that are important to me would support my choice to cycle for transport" (5-point agreement scale)
- **Social diffusion:** Do people around you talk about cycling?
  Yes, mostly in a negative way // Not really // Yes, mostly in a positive way

MODELLING APPROACH

Ordered logistic model of :

"Should the government promote cycling for transport?" (5-point agreement scale)

To investigate the 4 norm variables

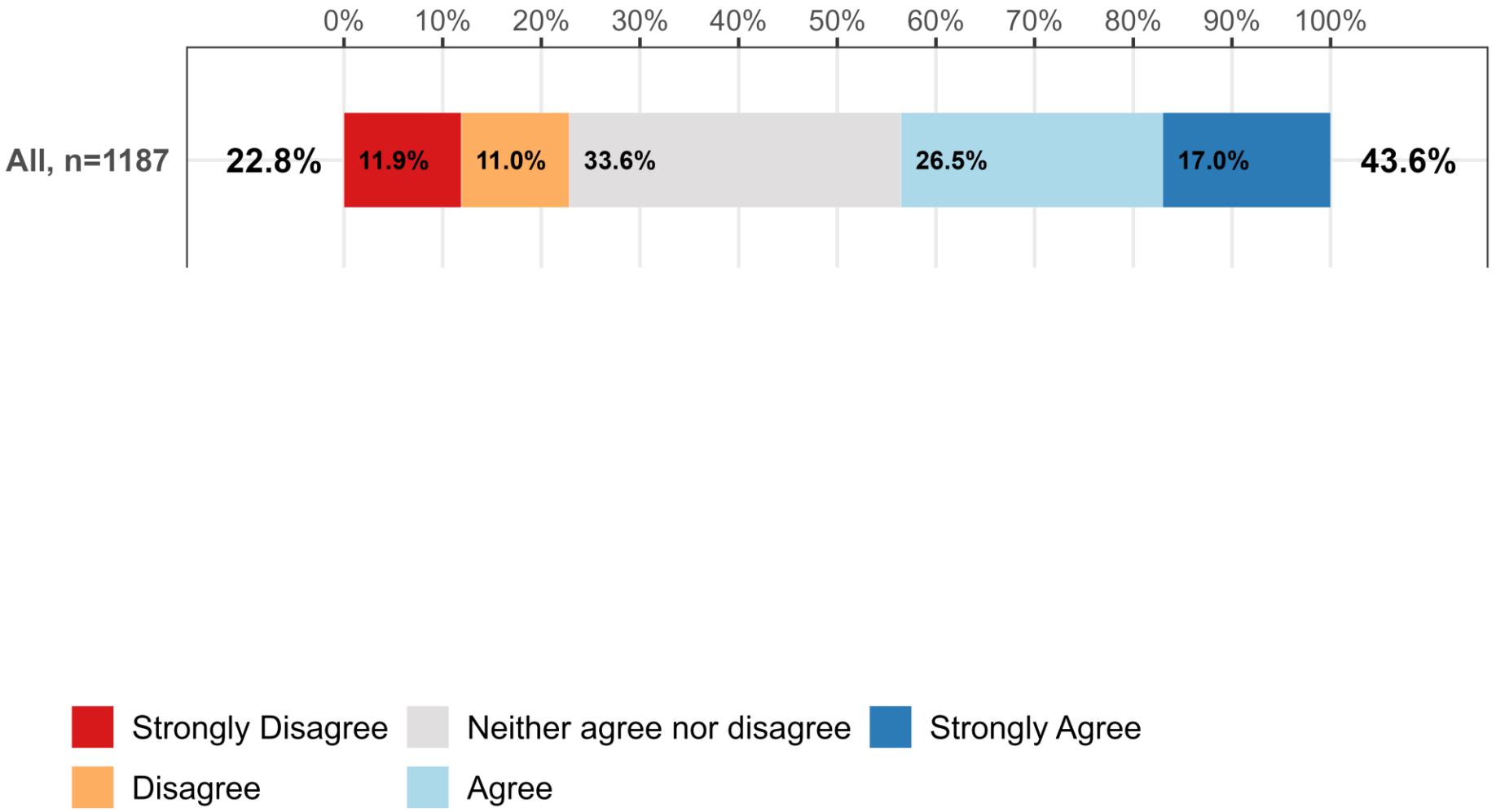
Controlling for:

- **Sociodemographics:** Age, Gender, Education, Income, Occupation, Immigrant to Canada
- **Mobility tools:** Car ownership, bicycle ownership, Transit SmartCard, Carsharing membership
- **Behaviour:** Frequency of cycling for transport
- **Built environment:** Population density, Can-BICS weighted km of bike infrastructure
- **Attitudes:** Cycling is enjoyable (5-point agreement scale)

RESULTS

N = 1187

SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT PROMOTE CYCLING FOR TRANSPORT?



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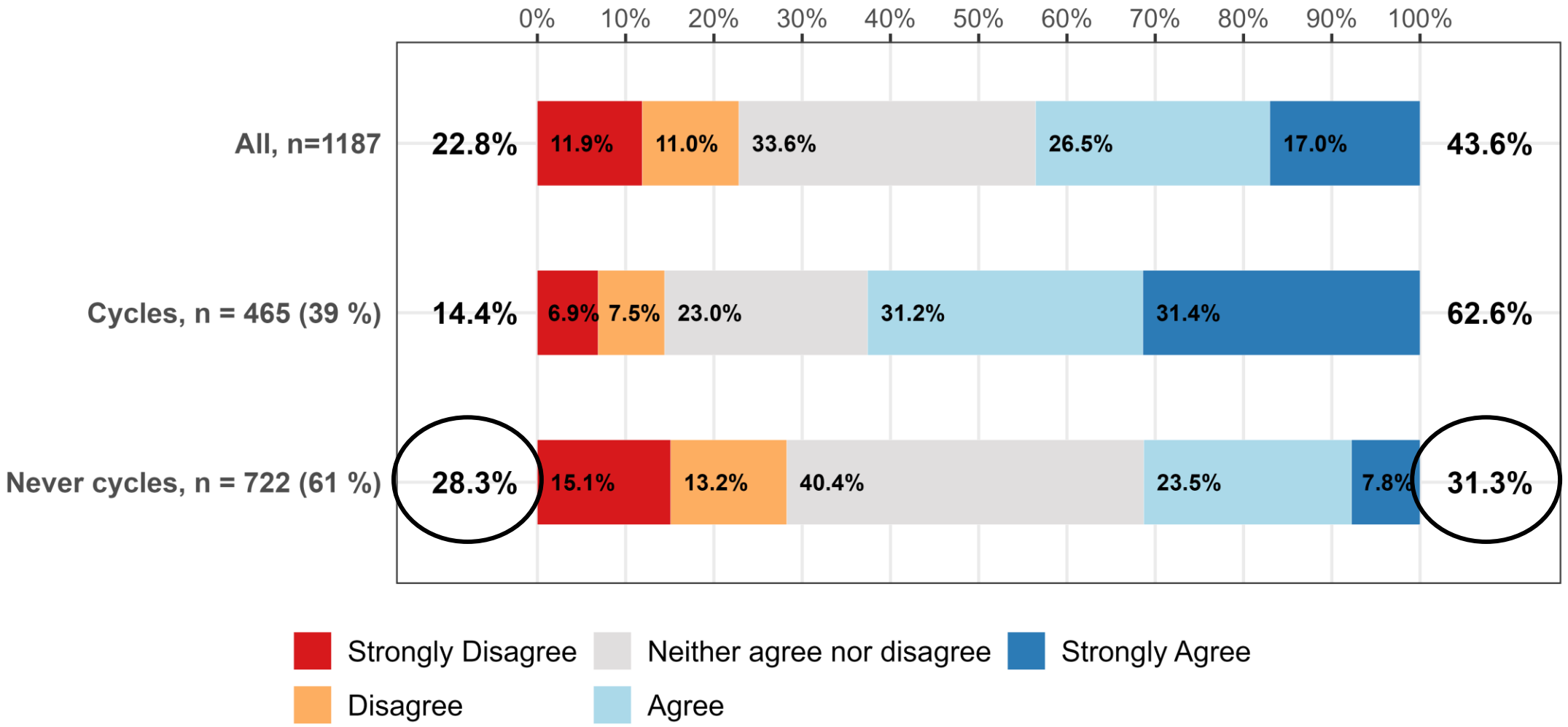
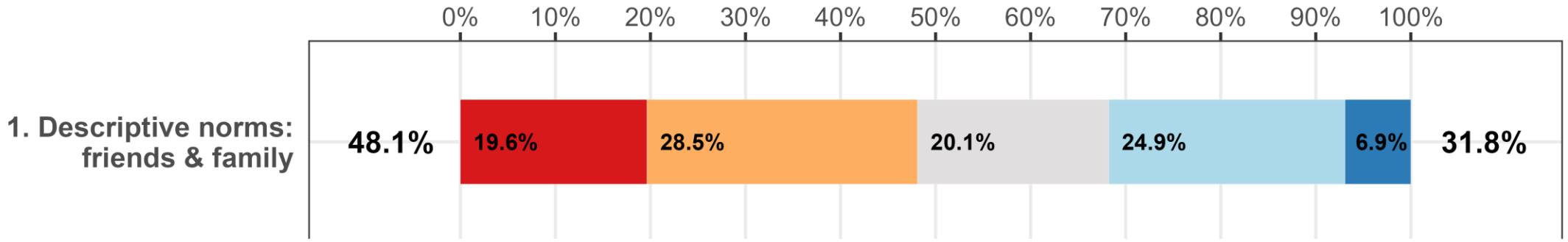
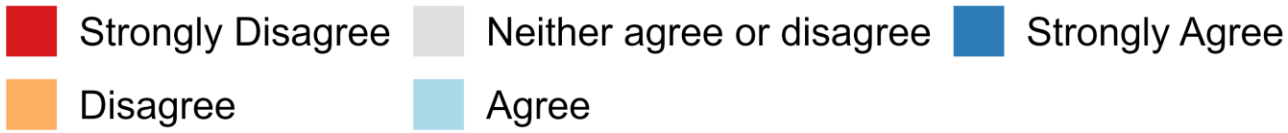


N = 1054,
Those who can't cycle did not answer

SOCIAL NORMS DISTRIBUTIONS





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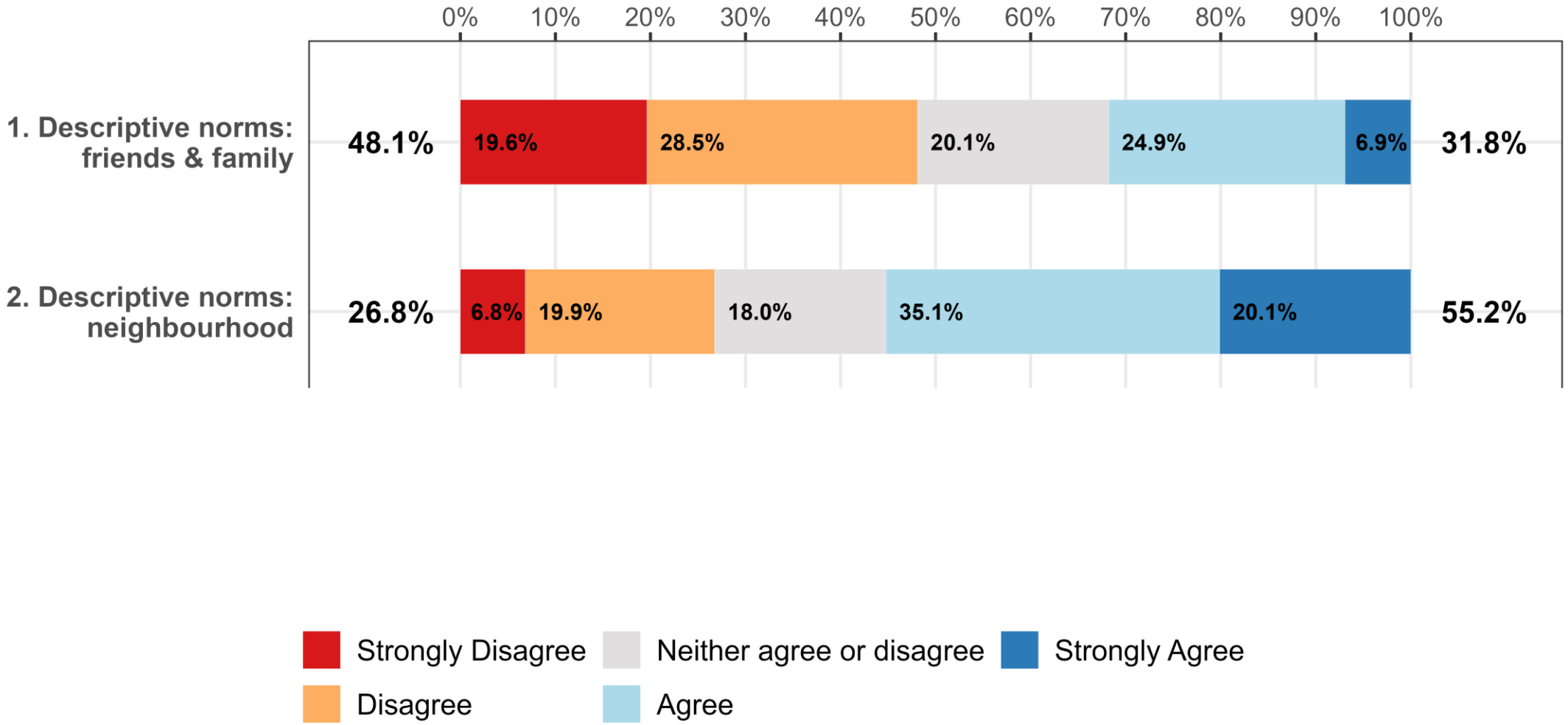

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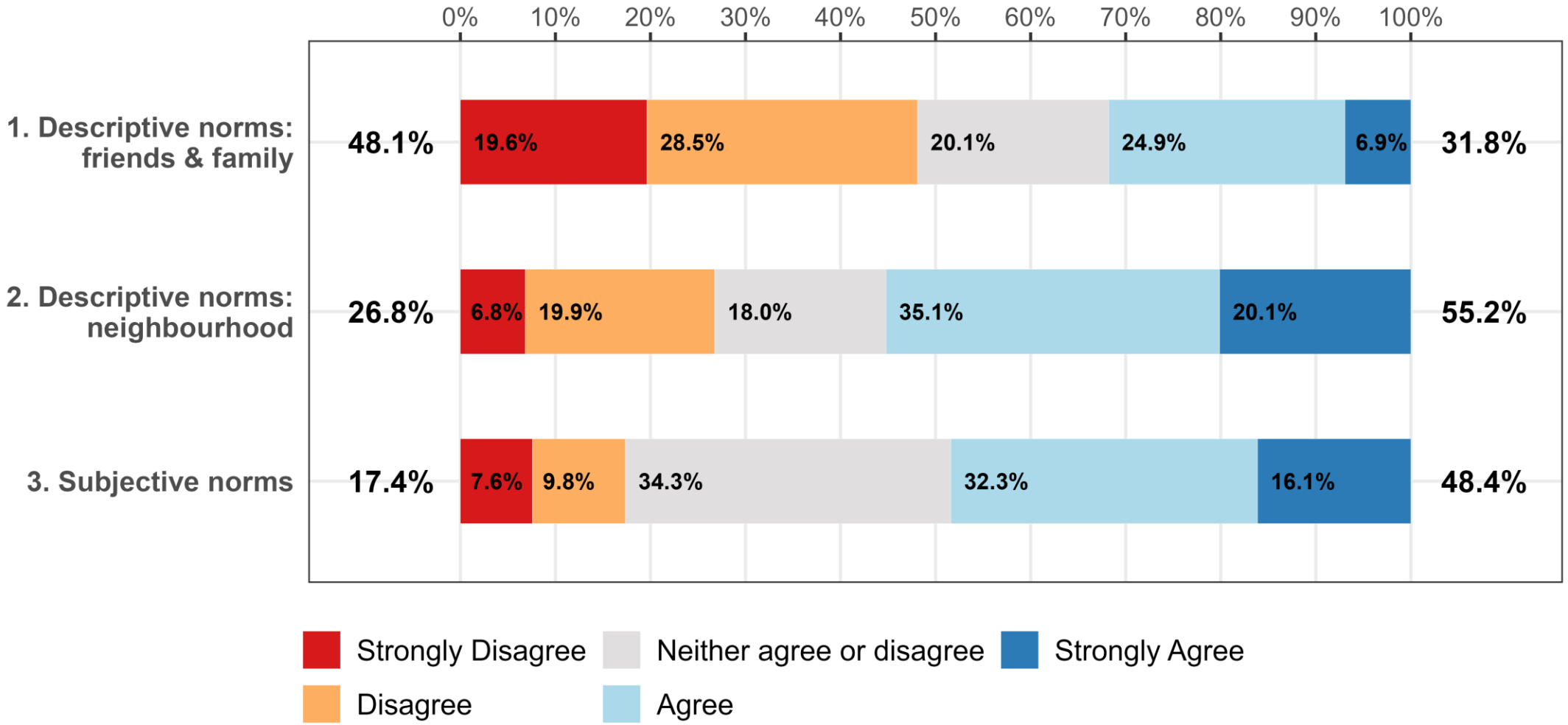

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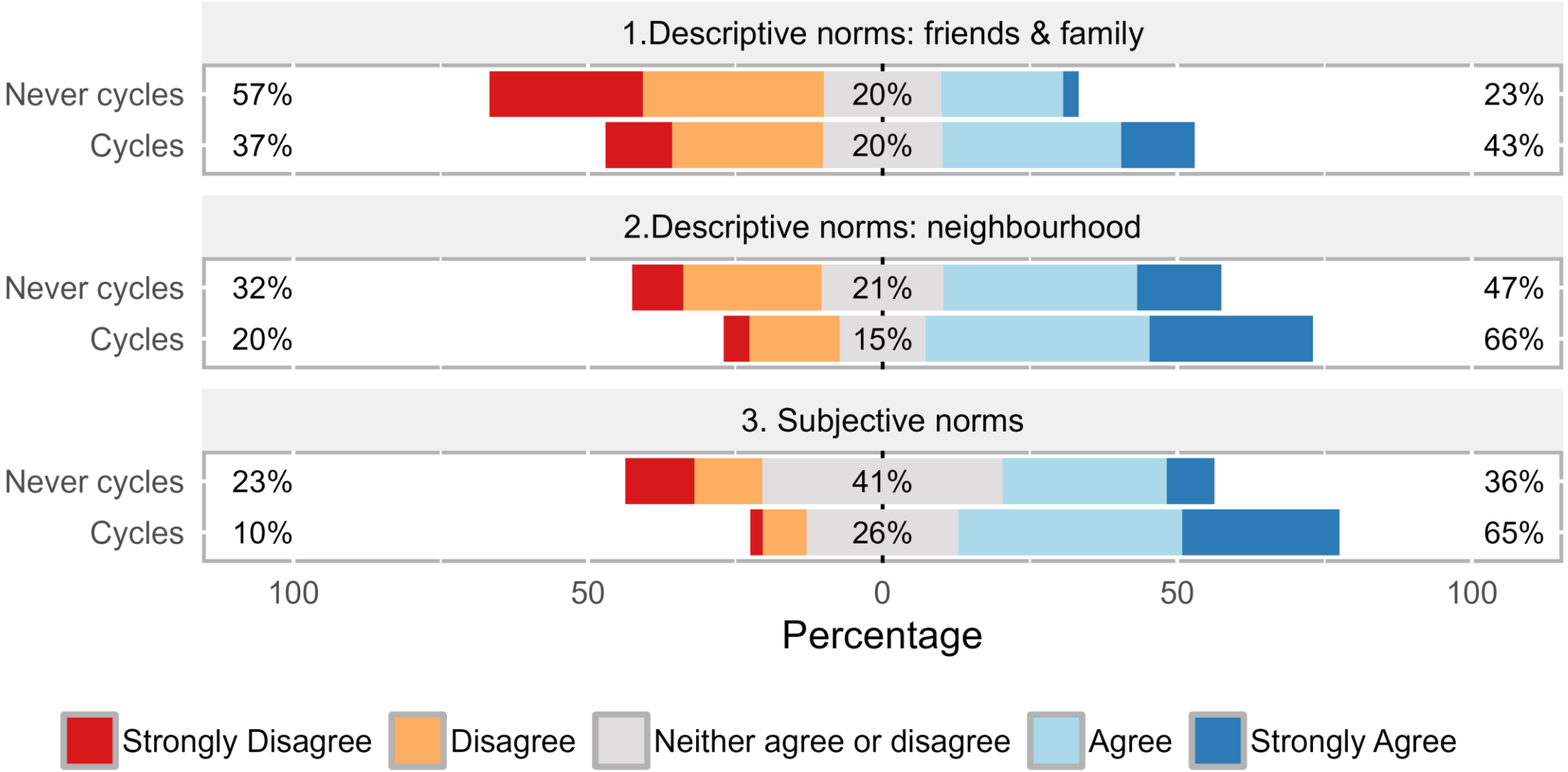

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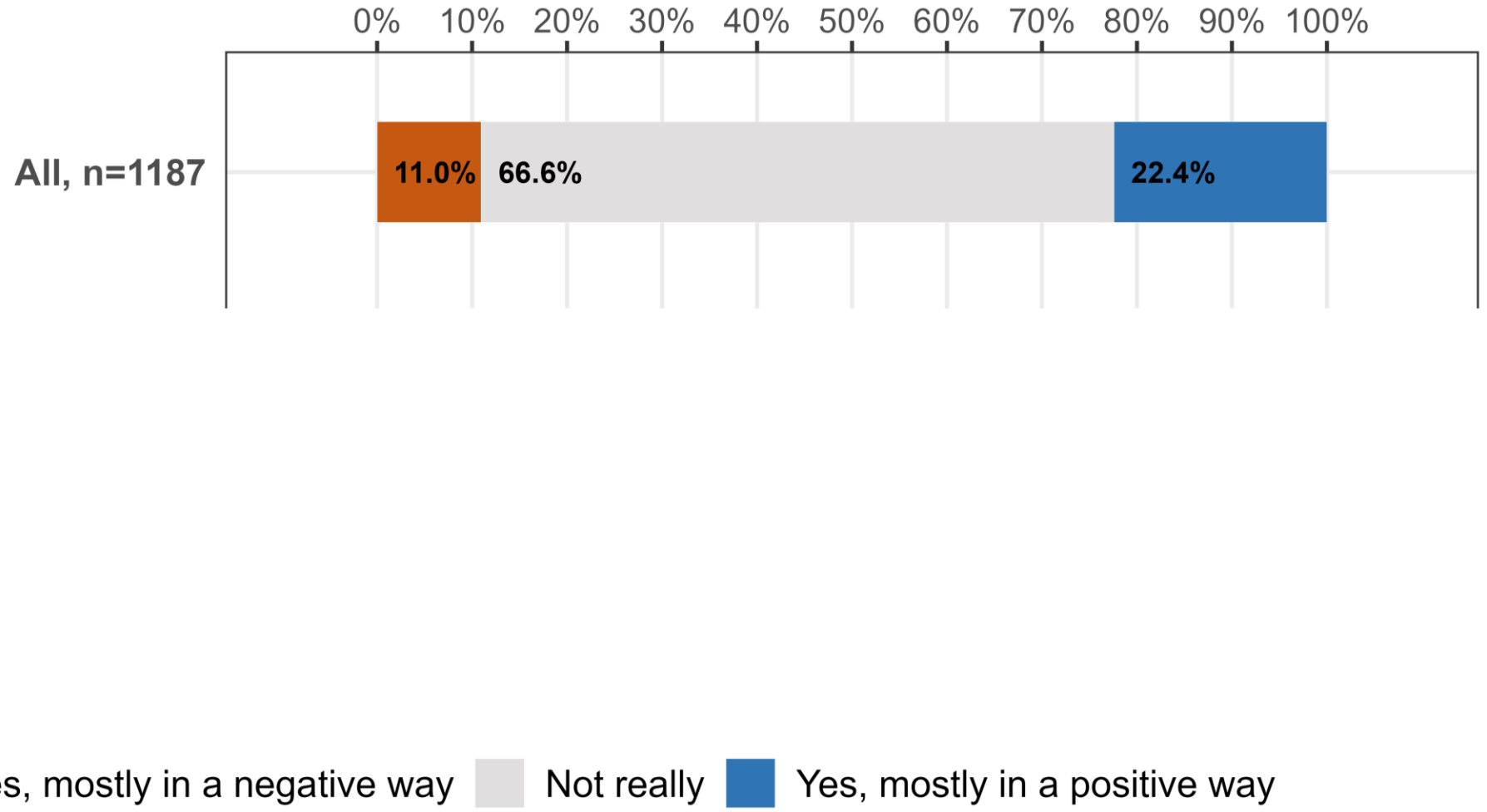
DO PEOPLE AROUND YOU TALK ABOUT CYCLING?



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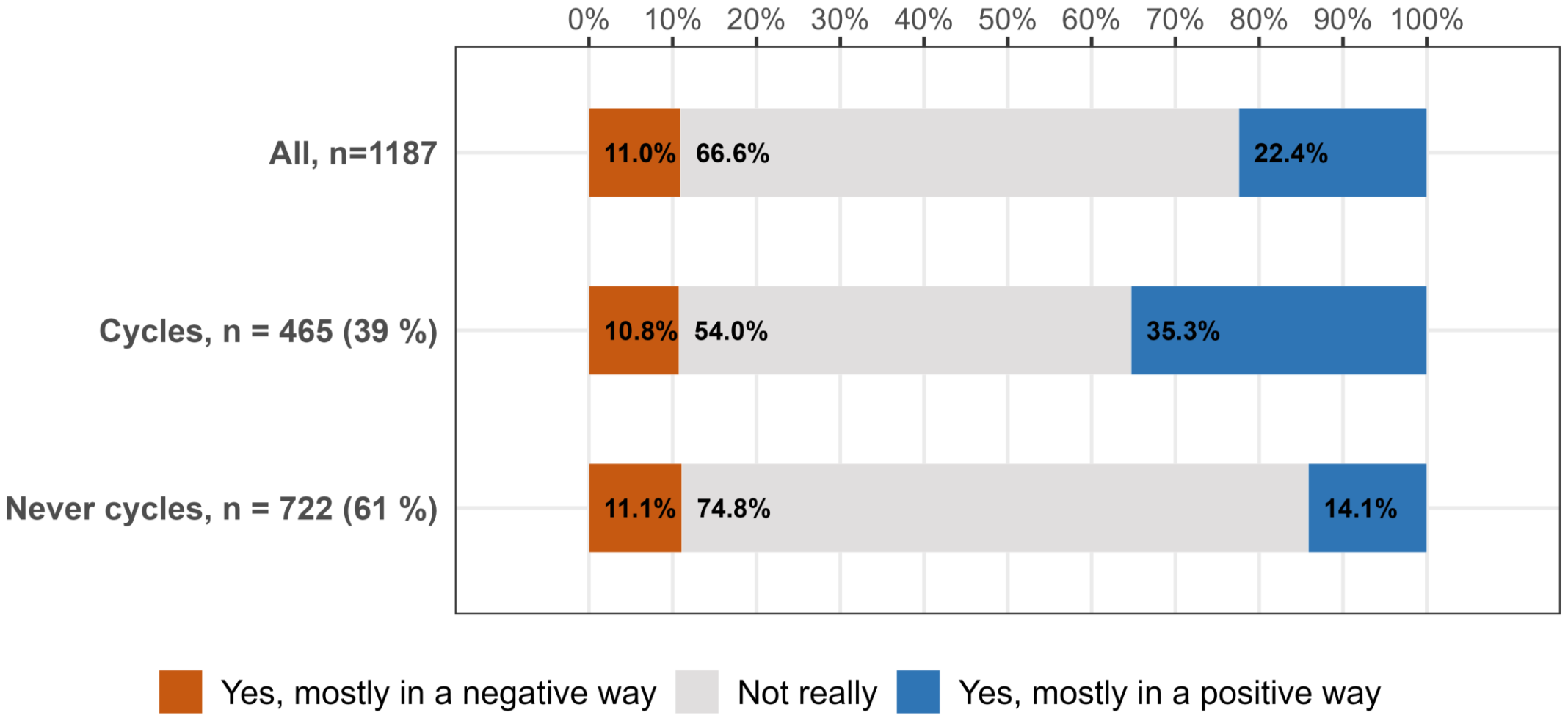

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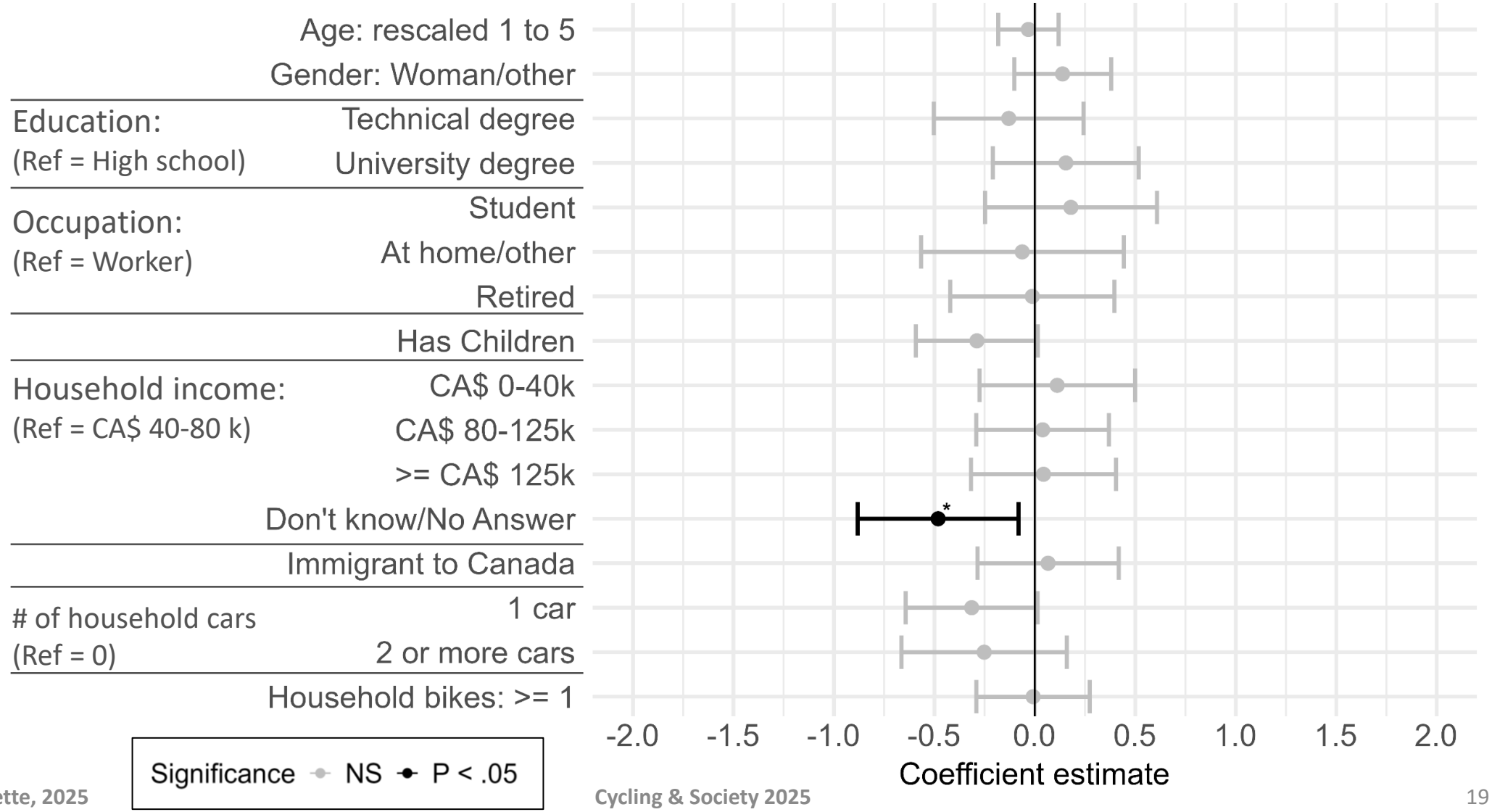
MODEL: SHOULD THE GOV. PROMOTE CYCLING FOR TRANSPORT?



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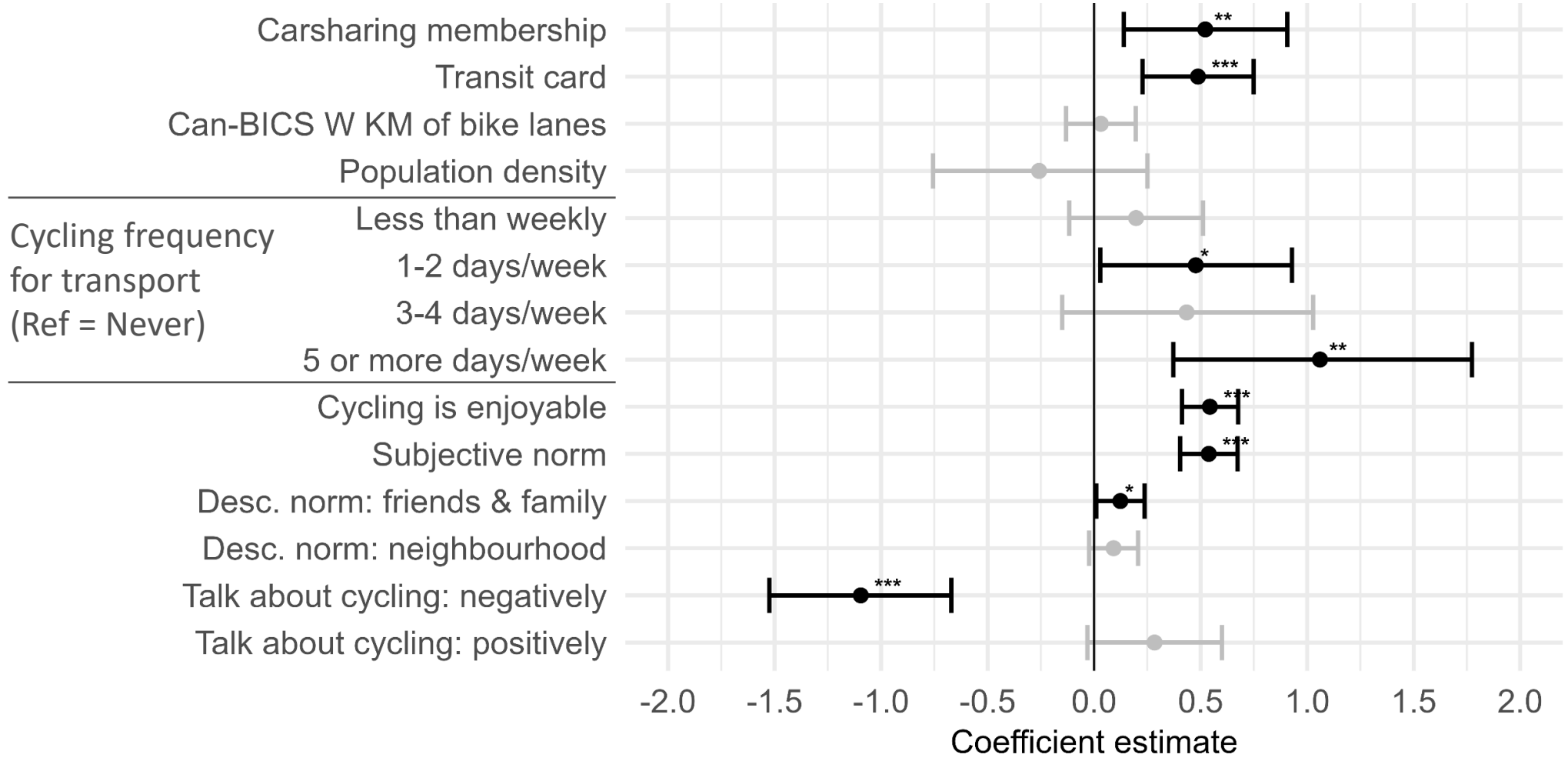

CONCLUSION

Take aways

- More people agree that cycling should be supported than not (44 % vs 23 %)
- Cyclists are twice as likely to agree than non-cyclists
- Only 28% of non-cyclists disagree

About norms:

- *Subjective norms* has a high **positive (++)** influence
- *Descriptive norms: friends & family* matter **(+)**, not the *neighbourhood*
- *Negative talks about cycling* has a high negative (--) influence

Implications

- Good news for building support for more cycling-oriented cities
- Campaigns to change perception of cycling in society
- **How to minimize the impact of negative talks about cycling?**

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Questions?

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