

# Retail demand for sustainable financial products - Belgium

2DII – March 2023



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# Overview

This report is part of a series of six reports addressing the demand for green/sustainable financial solutions in six countries of the EU (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden)

Each report is the synthesis of national results gathered from several materials:

- ✓ A quantitative survey
- ✓ Qualitative interviews (bilateral or focus groups)
- ✓ An estimate of market potential for various green financial solutions in relation with attitudes expressed in the quantitative survey

Part I and Part II mix results from the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. Qualitative insights inform the variety of concerns expressed by participants in interviews across countries while quotes (displayed in orange), when available, are sourced from interviews in the studied country only.

Part III presents results of the market estimate.

# Presentation of materials

## Quantitative survey

- ✓ Survey conducted in November 2022 by the polling agency Kantar
- ✓ 1000 respondents or more per country
- ✓ Selection criteria:
  - ✓ minimum monthly savings (e.g., EUR 50 in Belgium, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands) or minimum financial wealth (e.g., EUR 900)
  - ✓ representativeness in terms of gender and age

## Qualitative interviews

- ✓ Interviews conducted between November 2021 and November 2022 via national subcontractors
- ✓ Between 20 and 30 individual interviews per country (for a total of 165)
- ✓ 1 or 2 focus groups per country involving 5/6 people each
- ✓ Selection criteria: none

Age range	Belgium	Spain	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Sweden	Average
18-24	10,6%	8,4%	8,5%	12,2%	7,9%	10,0%	9,6%
25-34	17,5%	16,8%	14,2%	18,4%	22,0%	20,1%	18,2%
35-44	17,0%	21,0%	17,7%	16,1%	23,0%	16,0%	18,5%
45-54	16,9%	20,5%	21,7%	17,1%	14,2%	16,6%	17,8%
55+	38,1%	33,3%	38,0%	36,2%	32,9%	37,3%	36,0%
Nb of respondents	1002	1052	1053	1000	1000	1000	/

# PART I: retail investors and sustainable finance

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# I. Interest in sustainable finance

# Interest in sustainable finance

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, around 50% of respondents declare an interest in sustainable finance solutions

## Country-specific:

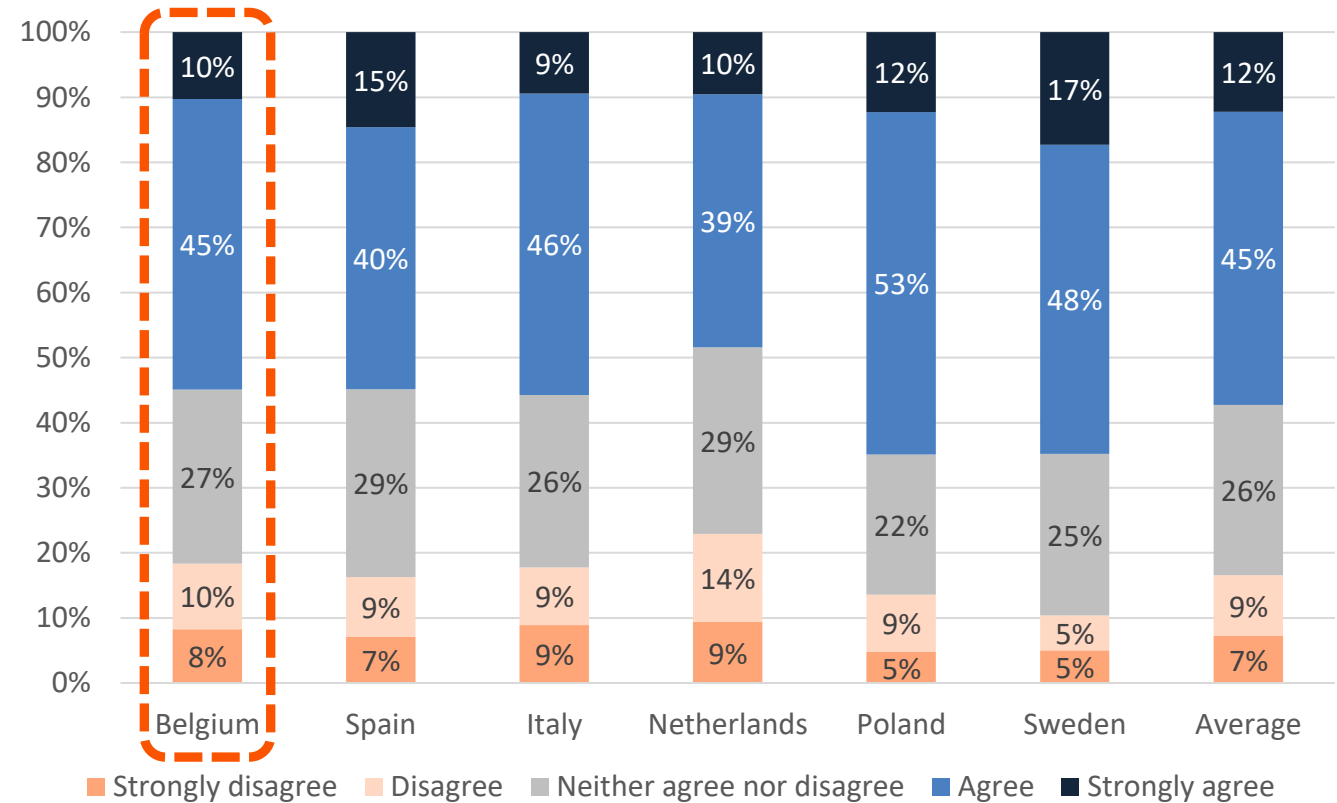
- ✓ In Belgium, interest is in line with the European average

## Qualitative insights:

In interviews and focus groups, participants quasi unanimously say they would like to know more about sustainable finance, by relying on various materials (articles, podcasts, books, etc.).

It mirrors their self-reported low level of knowledge.

I am interested in sustainable finance solutions



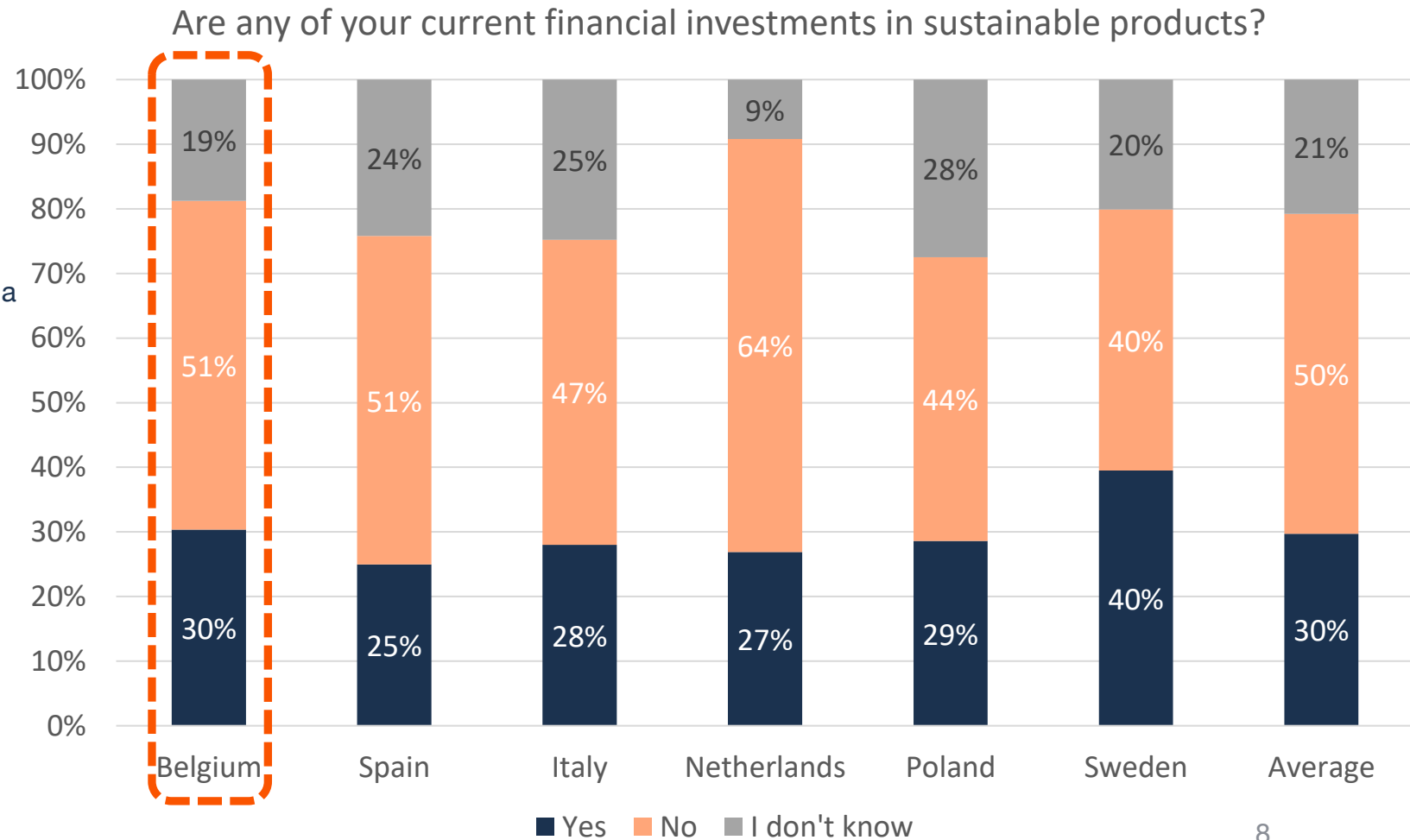
# Holding of sustainable financial products

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, only a minority of respondents say they already own sustainable financial products

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the situation is similar to most other European countries where less than a third of respondents already own sustainable investments





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# II. Beliefs about sustainable finance

# An appropriate way to express values?

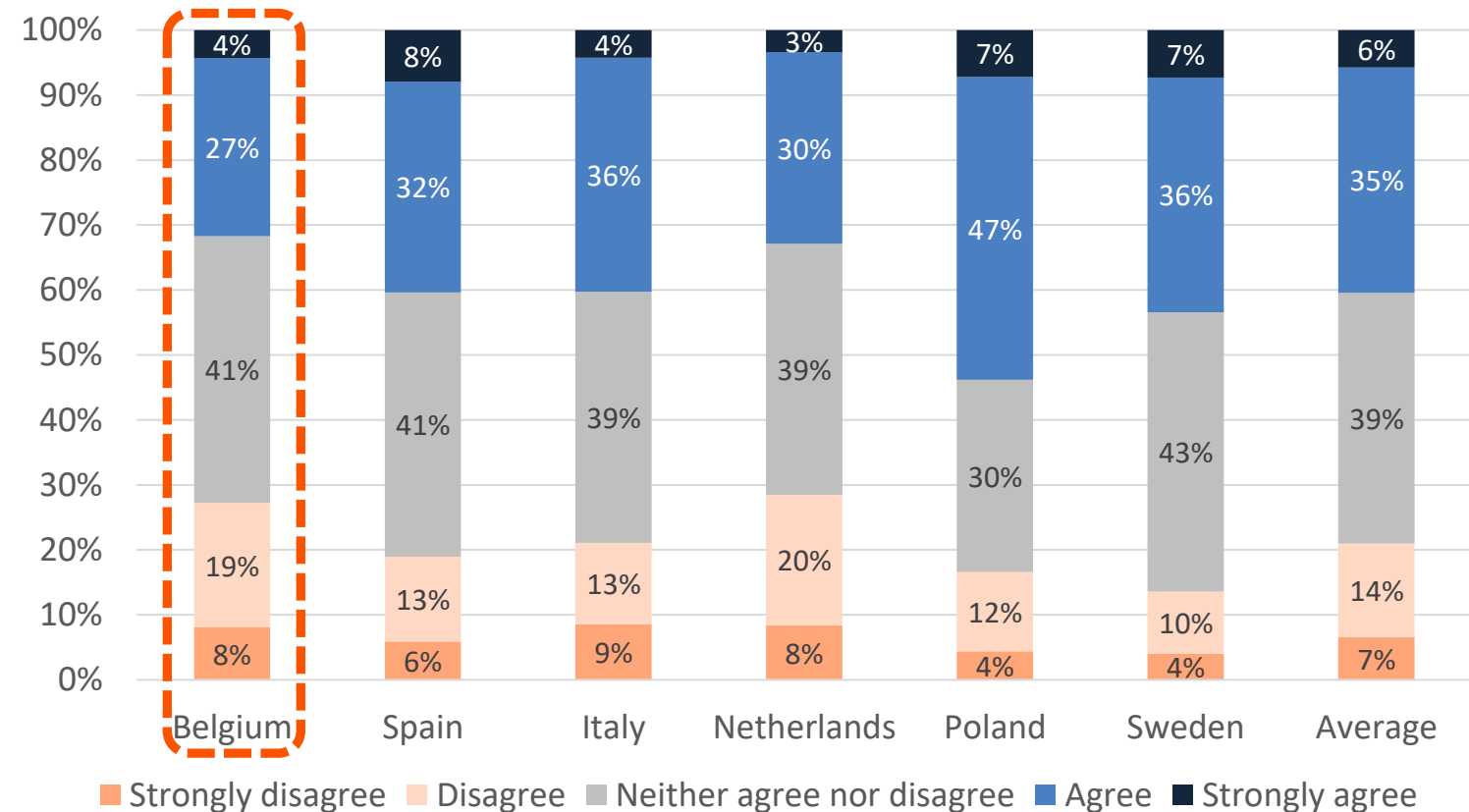
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, more respondents consider financial investments to be an appropriate way to express one's values than the opposite
- ✓ Across countries, a particularly high fraction of respondents (between 30% and 40%) does not have a clear idea about it

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the fraction that agrees is significantly lower than the European average

I believe that financial investments are an appropriate way to express one's values



# An efficient way to change the world?

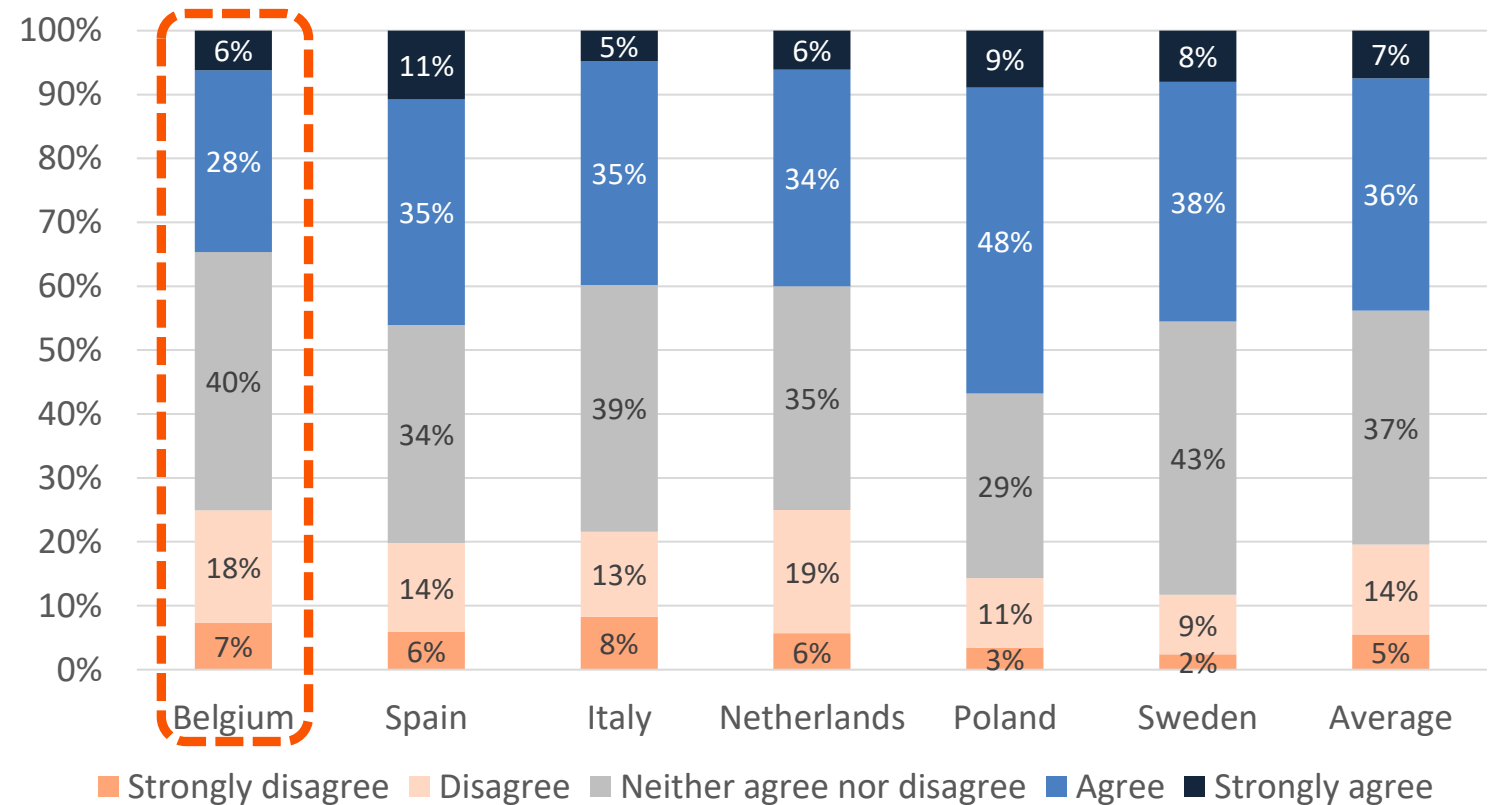
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, more respondents consider financial investments to be effective to make a difference than the opposite
- ✓ Across countries, a particularly high fraction of respondents (between 30% and 40%) does not have a clear idea about it
- ✓ Individual answers for expressing values and changing the world correlate strongly

## Country-specific:

- ✓ Respondents in Belgium are less confident than elsewhere in the ability of financial investments to make a change

I believe that financial investments in general are effective to change the world



# A positive effect on returns?

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In all countries, very diverse opinions regarding this question
- ✓ More respondents consider the effect on returns to be positive than the opposite

## Country-specific:

- ✓ Respondents in Belgium have a more nuanced/uncertain opinion of the effect on returns than respondents in other countries

## Qualitative insights:

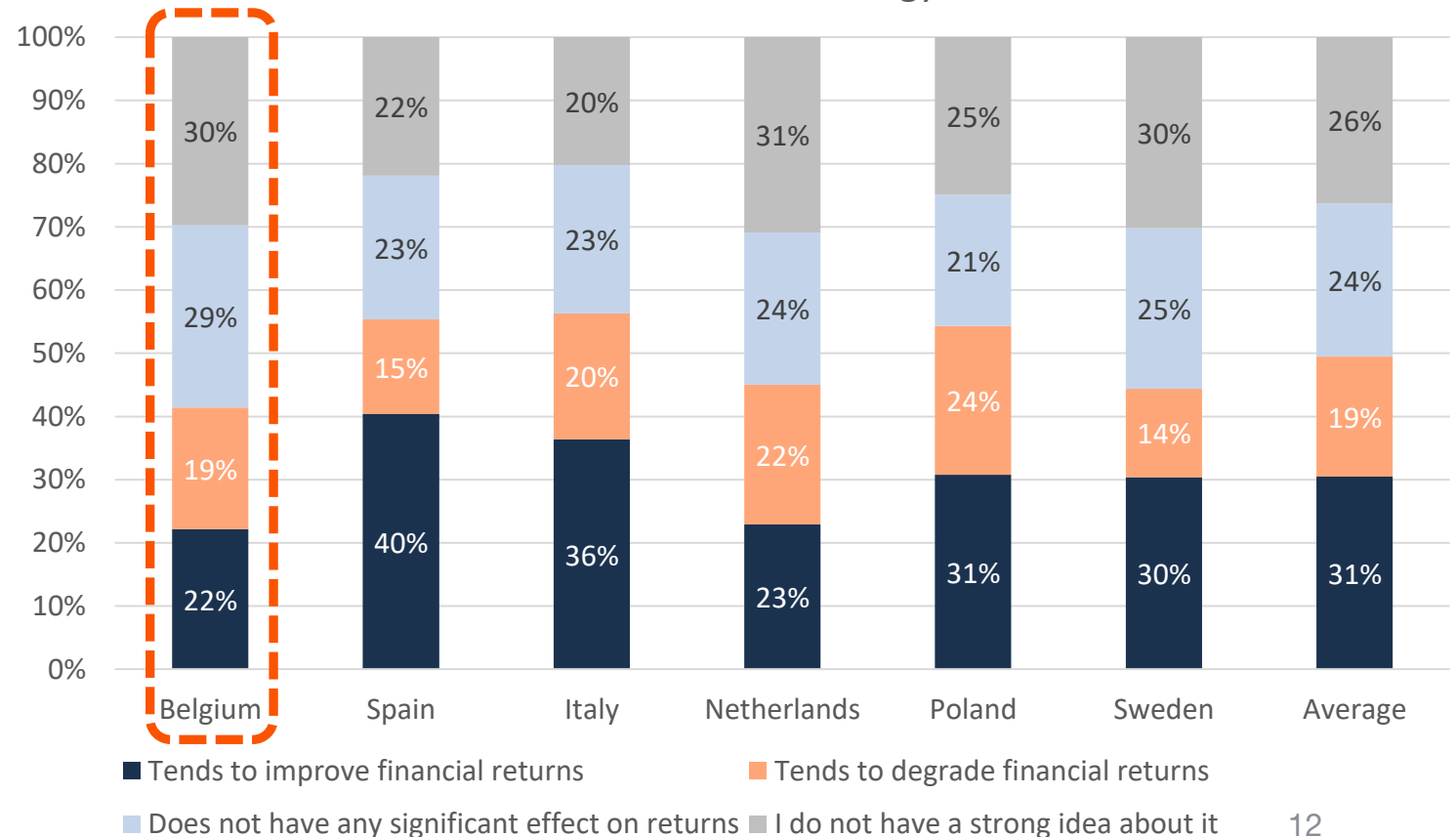
In interviews and focus groups, participants often highlight that the impact on returns shall depend on the time horizon.

In the short run, it might be negative due to increased costs of sustainability for companies while in the long run it should be positive by offering a competitive edge towards laggards and enabling leaders to benefit from supporting regulations.

*"Today the return will be lower, but the potential future gains can be really high. So as a long-term investment I would choose it over the conventional one."*

*"I think sustainable financial products have lower returns. They are going to make less profit because they have to pay attention to more things and also have highest costs".*

I believe that, in general, introducing sustainability factors into an investment strategy...



# An effective tool to fight climate change?

## Qualitative insights

Do you think sustainable finance is an efficient tool to contribute to the energy transition and fight climate change?

*“Yes, i think every little bit of money into something good is a positive sign and this can help the future.”*

And if we compare to other tools that can be used to contribute to the energy transition and fight against climate change, like bans of some economic activities or a carbon tax?

*“There are things you can't ban because then we can't live. But a ban is still more efficient than investing because this applies to everyone.”*

*“I think banning or something like that is putting a band-aid on the wound, it's better to start at the root of the problem. So, I'd rather invest in a sustainable future because I think this has a larger effect on the future”.*





# III. Sustainability motivations

# Importance of aligning savings with values

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, high stability of individual answers across saving goals
- ✓ Mild differences across countries

## Country-specific:

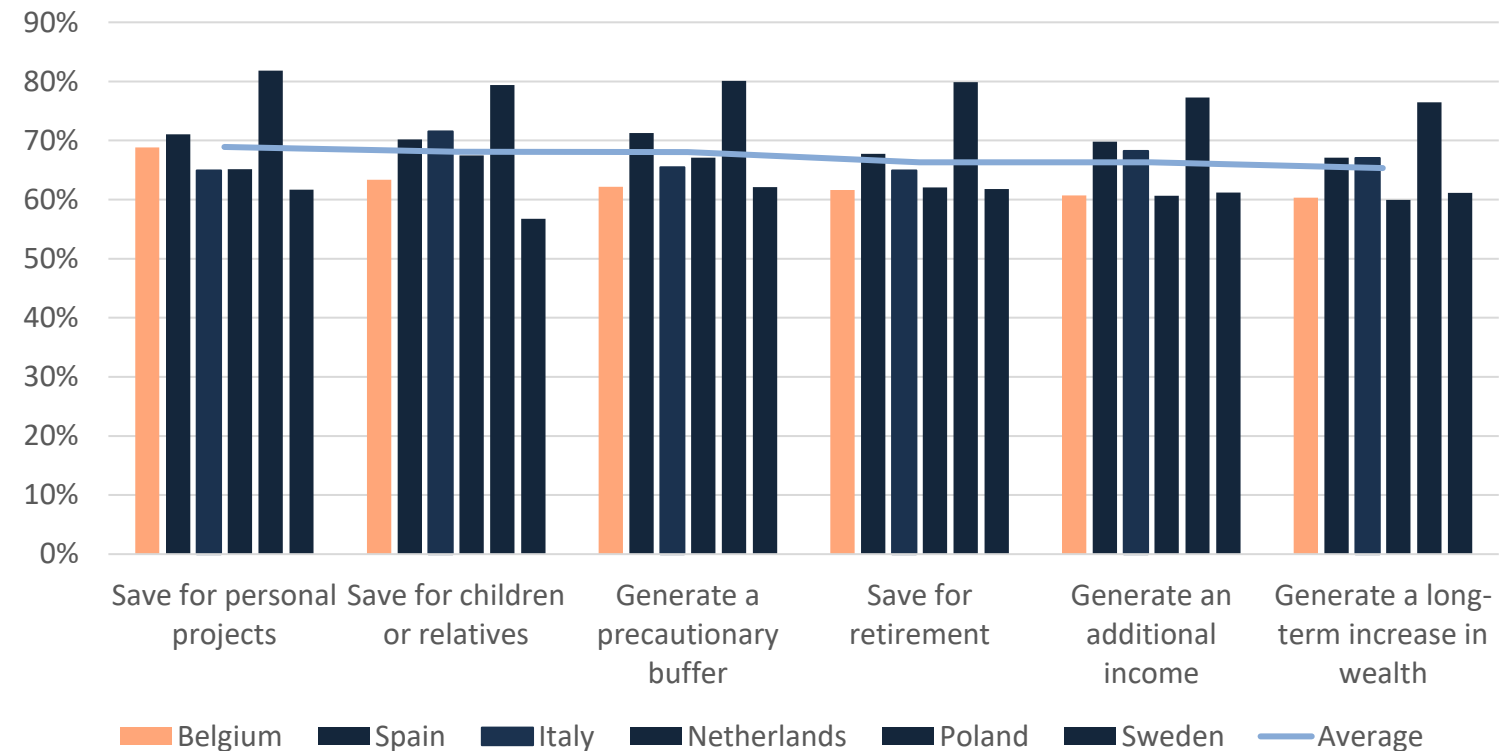
- ✓ In Belgium, the importance granted to that sustainability motivation is lower than the European average and does not significantly vary across saving goals

## Qualitative insights:

In interviews and focus groups, there is large consensus between participants in favour of investments that reflect investors' core values.

A few participants point towards an inconsistency between investing for returns and investing in line with values.

How is it important for you to align your savings with your personal values ? (% important or very important)



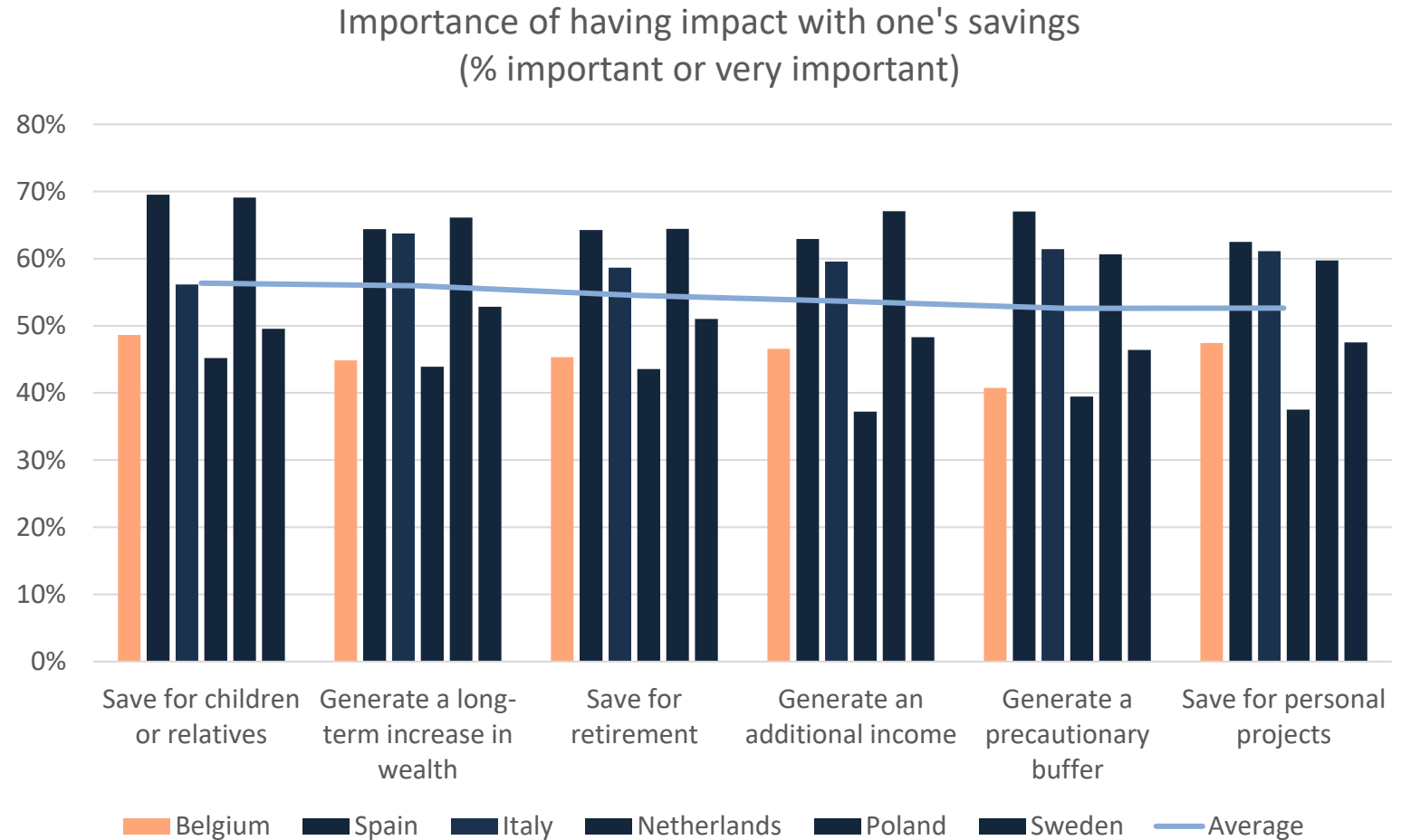
# Importance of having impact with one's savings

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, high stability of individual answers across saving goals
- ✓ Large differences across countries with two clearly identified groups
- ✓ Across countries and saving goals, having impact is systematically less important than aligning with one's values (see previous slide)

## Country-specific:

- ✓ Belgium, alongside Netherlands, is one of the countries where having impact with one's savings is the least important





# Introducing sustainability motivations

- ✓ In the quantitative survey, we asked participants a series of questions regarding their financial or sustainability goals for different practical financial goals attached to their savings (e.g., saving for retirement, generate a precautionary buffer, increase personal wealth, finance personal projects, etc.).
- ✓ We considered three types of overarching goals, one being purely financial (achieving maximum return for a certain level of risk) and two being related to sustainability. We build on two key motivations\* of retail investors to invest sustainably:
  - Aligning savings with one's values (Value Alignment)
  - Having an impact on the world (Impact)
- ✓ By averaging the answers for the various saving goals, we were able to generate a typology of seven “sustainability profiles”, either pure (focusing on one goal only) or mixed (caring for two or three goals) as displayed in the following slide.

\* These two sustainability motivations have already been referenced by various stakeholders to clarify the underlying motivation of retail investors (see [ESAs \(2017\)](#); [Busch et al. \(2021\)](#); [Eurosif \(2022\)](#); [AMAS/SSF \(2022\)](#); [FCA \(2022\)](#); [ADEME/2DII \(2023\)](#)). 2DII used these categories to assess sustainability motivation across 14 European countries over the last three years (find our reports [here](#))

# Sustainability profiles

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In all countries, a majority of respondents have a mixed profile, combining various motivations
- ✓ On average, 53% of European respondents are willing to have impact with their savings
- ✓ In all countries, the “pure impact” profile is the least frequent while the most frequent one is the “value + impact + return” profile
- ✓ In all countries, less than a fifth of respondents do not have sustainability motivations beyond maximizing returns

## Country-specific:

- ✓ The distribution of profiles in Belgium resembles the European distribution with fewer respondents in the “value + impact + return” group

	Belgium	Spain	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Sweden	Average
Pure impact	1,8%	2,9%	2,8%	3,0%	1,7%	2,2%	2,4%
Pure values	6,9%	4,5%	4,7%	12,6%	3,9%	3,4%	6,0%
Pure return	15,2%	11,0%	9,4%	10,6%	7,7%	20,1%	12,3%
Mix of impact and return	3,2%	6,1%	5,7%	3,2%	5,1%	5,7%	4,8%
Mix of values and return	19,7%	9,2%	10,3%	20,0%	17,5%	17,7%	15,7%
Mix of values and impact	7,1%	7,6%	6,9%	8,6%	2,5%	5,0%	6,3%
Mix of values, impact and return	29,8%	48,3%	44,7%	24,3%	53,6%	35,5%	39,4%
No clear profile	16,4%	10,4%	15,5%	17,7%	8,0%	10,4%	13,1%

# Why having sustainability motivations?

## *Qualitative insights*

Across countries, we could observe in qualitative interviews and focus groups that participants often connect their sustainability motivations to specific concerns:

- ✓ Acting in an ethical/moral way
- ✓ Acting for the long-term or children
- ✓ Acting in a way that is modern or consistent with the latest stage of the technology
- ✓ Feeling good about themselves



# Trading off sustainability motivations

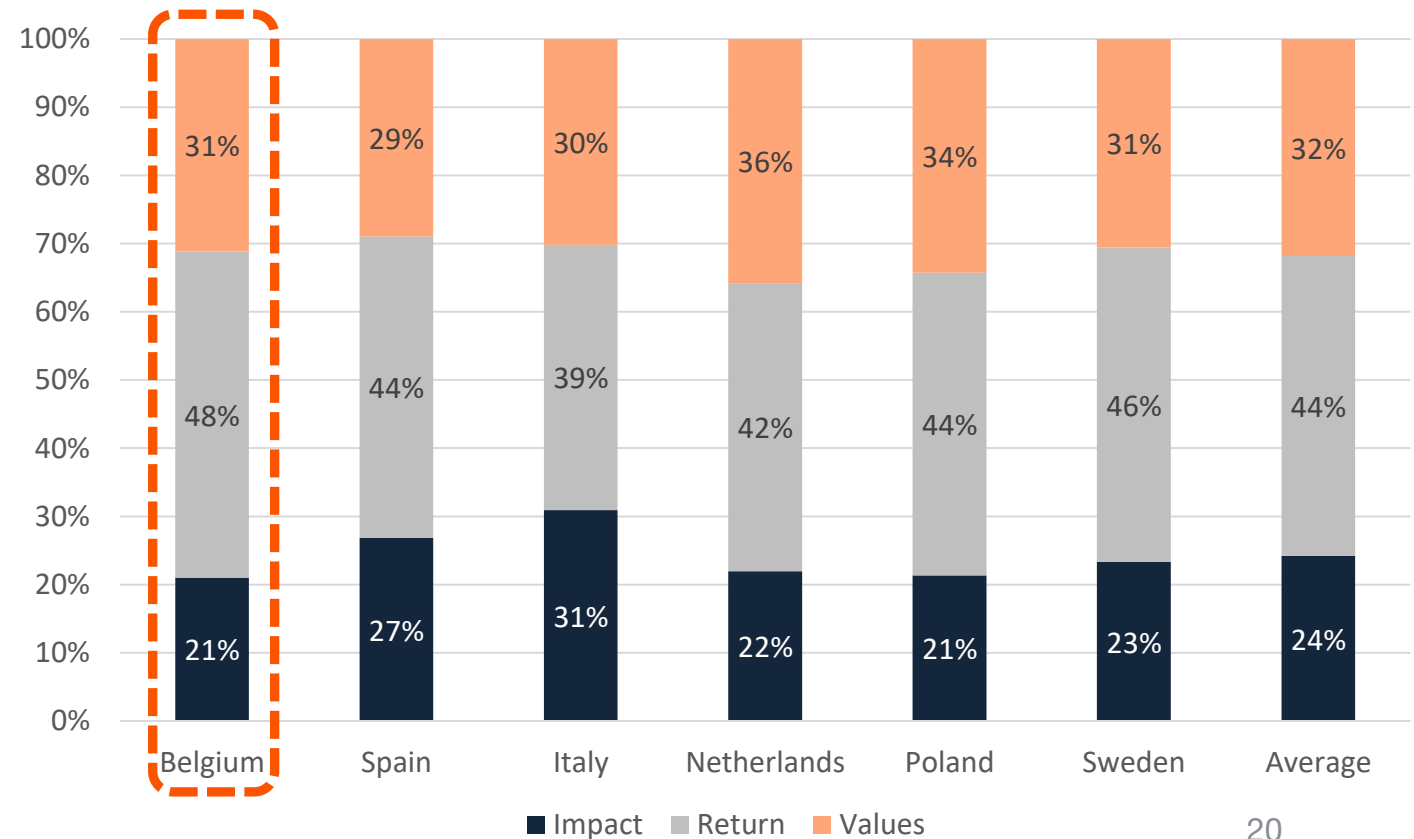
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In all countries, most respondents tend to favor returns in case of necessary tradeoffs between all sustainability motivations

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the way respondents prioritize is very similar to the European average

When respondents have all motivations at once, which one is prioritized? (all saving goals altogether)



# A concession on returns?

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, the proportion that chooses the climate fund falls rapidly when expected return is lower than for the standard fund
- ✓ Everywhere, only a handful of respondents (less than 12%) choose the climate fund when expected return is cut by half

## Country-specific:

- ✓ As in other countries, the fraction of respondents choosing the climate-oriented fund drops fast as the gap in returns broadens

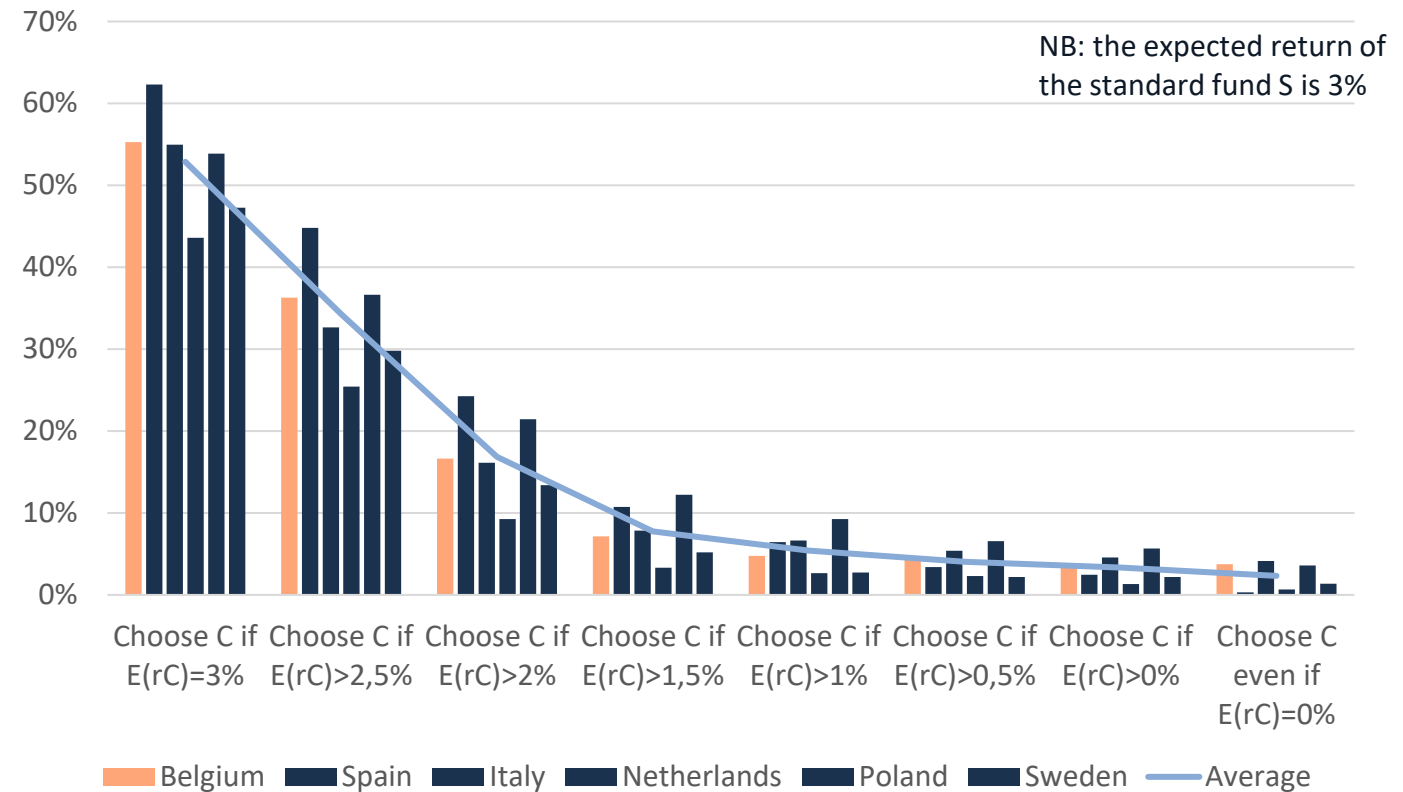
## Qualitative insights:

In interviews and focus groups, participants often claim they would tolerate lower returns for sustainable financial products in relation with higher fees but they'd do it with a dose of reluctance and suspicion. They require a high level of transparency on the reasons behind the higher fees.

*"If the higher fees are motivated, then yes. I would need to understand for which reason they are higher. If sustainable investments require more energy, specialization, knowledge, I will understand the higher fees."*

*"If the fees are higher, I would still invest in it but wouldn't be happy. Why would they require higher fees? Still, as I really want to act sustainably, a slightly elevated cost would not deter me."*

Proportion of respondents that choose a climate-oriented bond fund (C) vs a standard bond fund (S) depending on their respective expected returns



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# IV. Sustainability shareholder democracy

# Having voted at shareholder AGMs

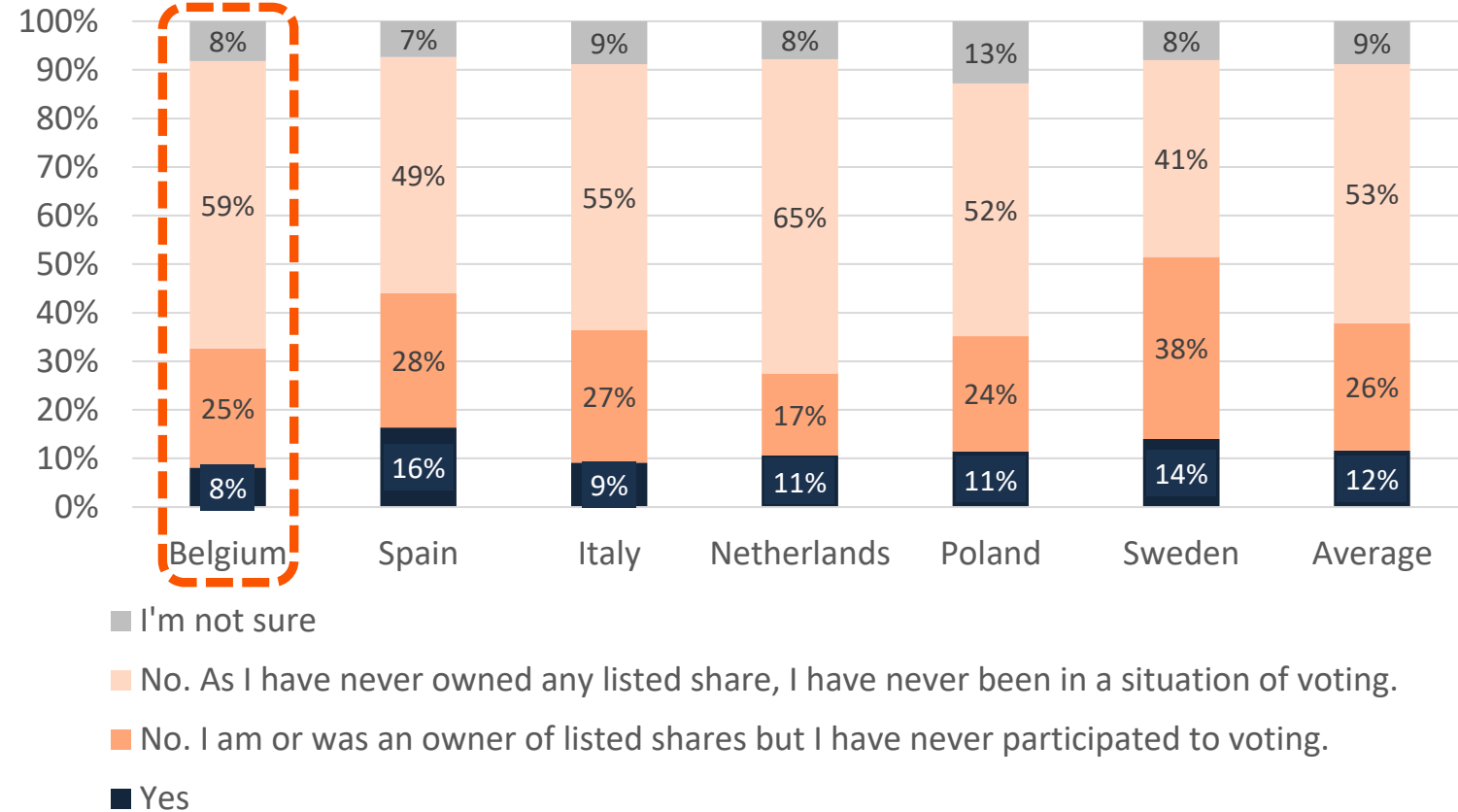
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, only a very small minority of respondents has already voted during an AGM
- ✓ It relates to the very limited ownership of stocks (in direct) in Europe

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the proportion of respondents that already voted is even lower than the (already very low) European average

As a shareholder, have you ever voted at an annual general meeting of a listed company?



# Expressing a shareholder view on climate

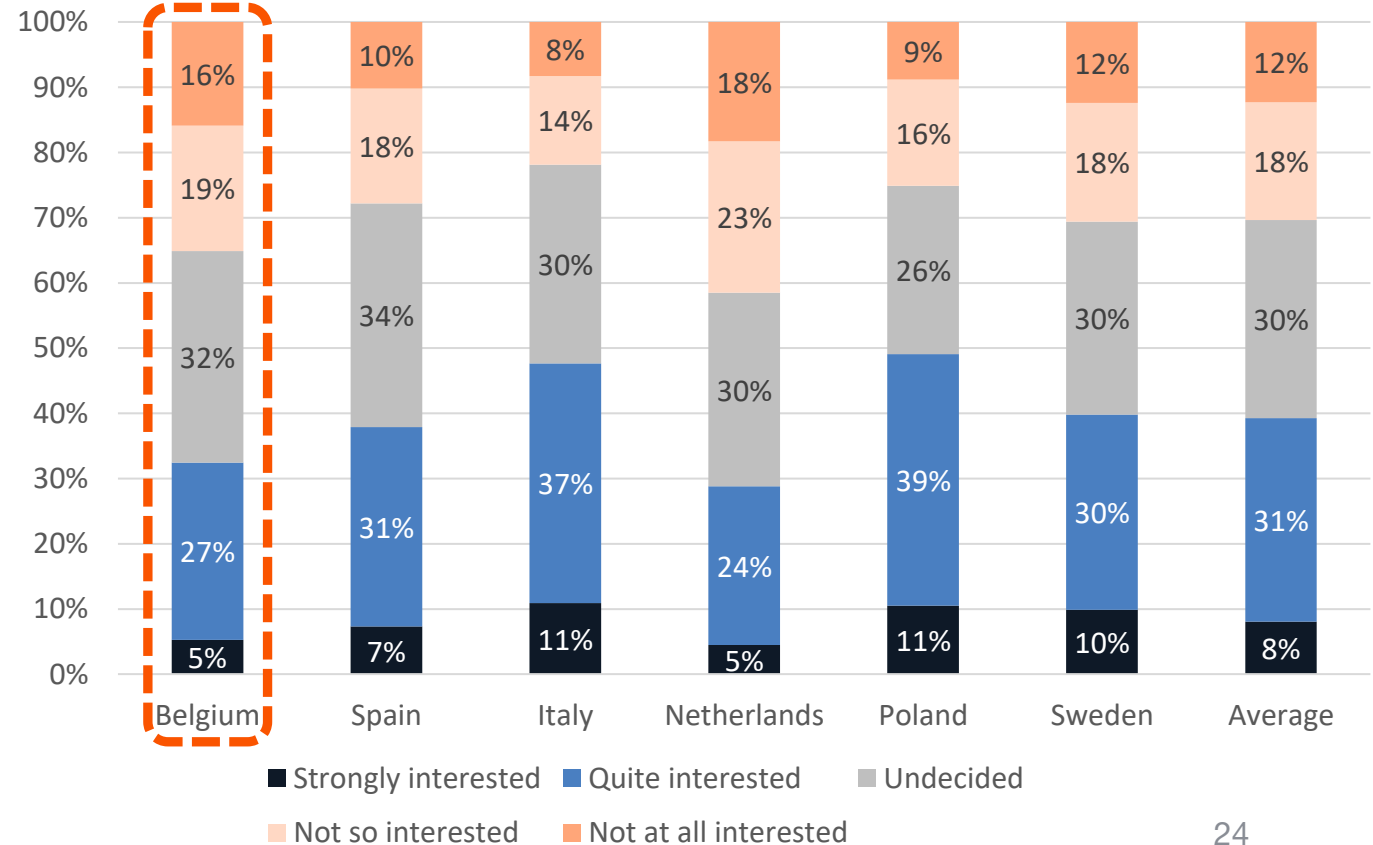
## Cross-country:

- ✓ There appears to be only a mild interest for voting on climate issues in AGMs

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the stated interest for voting is less pronounced than in most European countries

If made easy, would you be interested in expressing your view by participating to climate-related votes during annual general meetings of listed companies you are invested in?





# Blockers of shareholder democracy

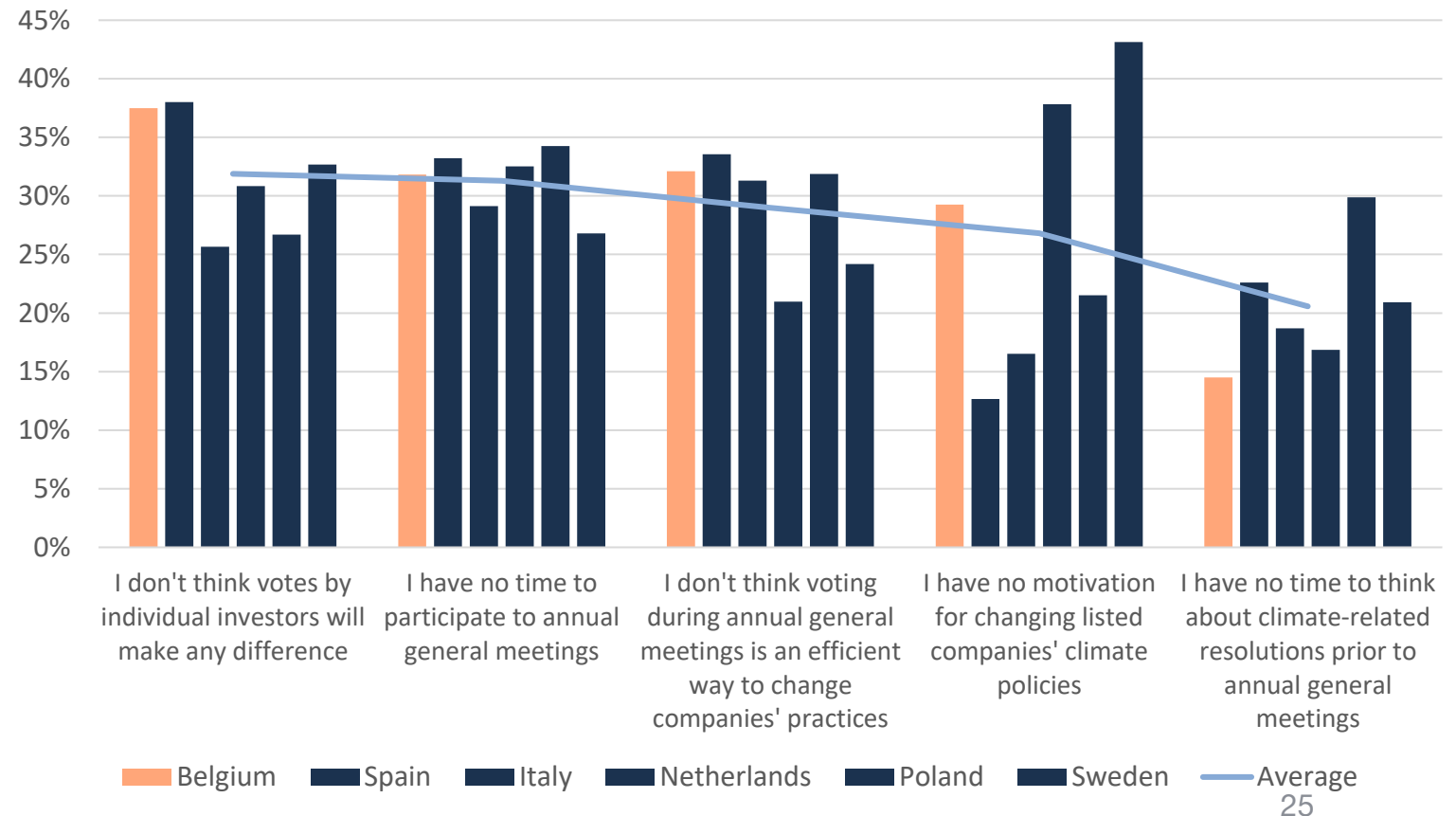
## Cross-country:

- ✓ Very diverse reasons for not being interested in voting during AGMs
- ✓ High heterogeneity across countries in the motivation to change companies' climate policies

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, respondents seem particularly suspicious about the capability to generate a change through voting at AGMs

Reasons for not being interested into voting at AGMs on climate issues (up to three)



# Facilitating shareholder democracy

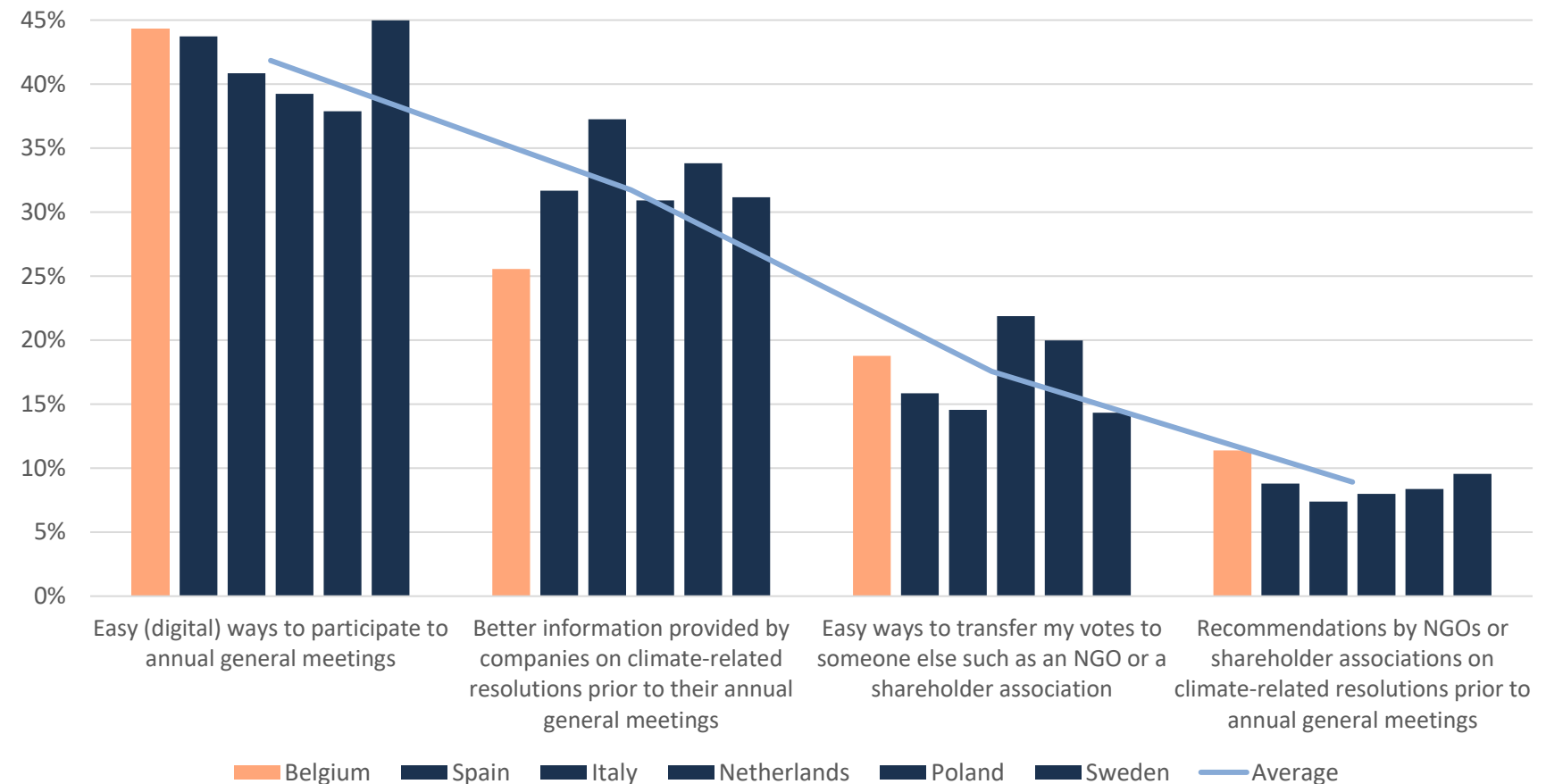
## Cross-country:

- ✓ Easiness to participate to votes and good information are considered to be effective facilitators
- ✓ Oppositely, getting information or transferring votes to NGOs/shareholder associations is not often asked for

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, respondents do not ask as often as elsewhere for more information prior to the AGMs

Which improvement will be the most important to make you participate to climate-related votes during annual general meetings of listed companies?



# PART II: retail investors and sustainable financial solutions



# I. Perception of sustainable strategies

# Exclusion as a sustainable strategy

When explained the strategy of exclusion, participants in interviews or focus groups report they find the strategy easy to understand and well-suited for aligning one's savings with one's personal values. Oppositely, it is often viewed as hard to implement and encompassing negative side effects, for instance by leaving more room to other non-sustainable investors to get financial returns and influence companies. And the strategy requires both self-awareness from investors and a good knowledge of companies' activities and processes.



*“Really good, because any company we exclude will feel the pain and be incentivized to change.”*

*“Exclusion is a complicated story because often retail investors decide on emotion more than on facts or understanding in full the complexity of a topic”.*

*“I want this approach to work but I don't think it will. For instance, if you exclude weapons how far will you go? Until there are no weapons? Also, I think it's hard to limit exclusions to a single product/company/country.”*



# Best-in-class as a sustainable strategy

When explained the best-in-class approach, respondents report conflicting views. While some consider it intrinsically illogical (why favoring companies that are already more advanced?), others find it a good way to emulate companies to adopt the most sustainable processes.

Financially-skilled respondents note that this strategy, unlike exclusions, enable the investors to hold portfolios that remain sector-diversified. But, at the same time, the strategy mechanically reduces the basket of invested companies, increasing specific risk.

In any case, as pinpointed by some respondents, the perceived relevance of the strategy lies on the trust in ESG ratings.



*"This is always a good strategy because you invest in companies that are already doing well so you know that your money is really used sustainably."*

*"Good approach to give your money to strengthen sustainable champions."*

*"I don't think this is a good approach because then you disadvantage companies that are not doing well in the field of sustainability, and ultimately you want to help them do better. With this approach, non-sustainable companies cannot make the transition to positive contributors!"*



# Thematic investment as a sustainable strategy

When explained the strategy of thematic investing, consider it to be a good way to express one's values and aspirations for people that already have strong views. For companies, it is a way to channel capital towards companies that contribute to the long-term objective. On the other hand, it implies that the portfolio will be concentrated on a few sectors only and, consequently, lack diversification. Therefore, it is well-suited for investors with low risk aversion.



# Engagement as a sustainable strategy

When explained engagement, participants in interviews or focus groups reported both an attraction and a suspicion about the promise to generate real-world impact.





# Profit-sharing as a sustainable strategy

When explained, profit-sharing (i.e., the mechanism of distributing part of the investor achieved returns to pre-defined charities), fuels mixed feelings in participants in interviews or focus groups. Some oppose the idea of mixing investing with charity donations or consider it an easy way to deal with investors' moral duties while others consider it interesting if certain conditions are fulfilled (e.g., a free choice of beneficiaries and the implementation of donation only if a certain level of returns is achieved)





## II. Perception of impact products

# Perception of impact investing as a sustainable strategy

When explained the strategy of impact investing, participants in interviews or focus groups reported both an attraction and a suspicion about the promise to generate real-world impact.

To buy products applying the strategy, they require an extensive view on the mechanisms of impact that are actioned and transparency on both past outcomes and methodologies to assess impact. Doubts are often raised about the capability to really evaluate impact ex ante or measure it ex post.



*"It is a really good approach as long as the predictions are right. I would want to see how accurate the predictions were (how much impact was actually achieved) in the past."*

*"Not so good because you only pick up companies with a lot of impact, but companies that don't have much impact actually remain bad in terms of sustainability. In the long run, I want every business to become sustainable".*

*"I see uncertainty in this approach. Words like "potentially" and "probably", therefore I'm not certain the claims of impact are really true."*



# Savings vs other means to have impact

## Qualitative insights

### Do you think you can personally have an impact on the society through your savings?

Across countries, we could observe in qualitative interviews and focus groups that participants generally consider that theoretically it could work but, in practice, it would be strongly **conditional to the size** of the investor.

Some add that, even if the real impact is negligible, it is still necessary to do one's part. In general, participants agree that they can make a big impact altogether.

*"If I say no because I don't have a lot of money to invest, then everyone can say no and nothing would happen. In my opinion, everyone has to do their part no matter the size. It will add up."*

*"I think that the single impact is negligible, but that it is necessary yet insufficient. I don't expect to make the difference, but I expect that what I do can be part of a difference. It works only if I bet a potential additional saving on the fact that more people contribute to the social and ethical objectives I set on society."*

*"I think the impact is reduced, but necessary like the vote in democracy."*

### Do you think you can achieve higher impact through your savings, your consumption, your donations, your job, or your votes? Why?

Across countries, participants in interviews or focus groups highlighted the pros and cons of the different actions. In particular, consumption was seen positively because of its direct effects, its universality (i.e., can be actioned by anybody) and its high visibility (that can generate positive spillovers). Job is perceived a having the maximum leverage as one can change the processes of large organizations. Voting is perceived ambiguously, positively as a symbolic market of one's implication within society and having a high potential impact on paper as politics set the game rules, and simultaneously with a lot of suspicion about the real functioning of democracy (inertia, lobbies' influence, etc.).



# What does “impact” mean for financial investments

## *Qualitative insights*

Across countries, we could observe in qualitative interviews and focus groups that participants had various interpretations of what the “impact” of financial investments would be, with

- ✓ The “**impact on wallet**” view, for which impact is the financial return
- ✓ The “**impact on society**” view, for which impact represents the effects on the external world
- ✓ The “**mixed impact**” view, which considers the two angles altogether

Those multiple interpretations suggest there is a crucial need to constantly qualify “impact” in order to avoid misunderstandings.



*“It means that you can see the impact after 50 years of investing.”*

*“It means that my investments help to make new sustainable solutions work. I really want to see change in the world.”*



# What impact funds are

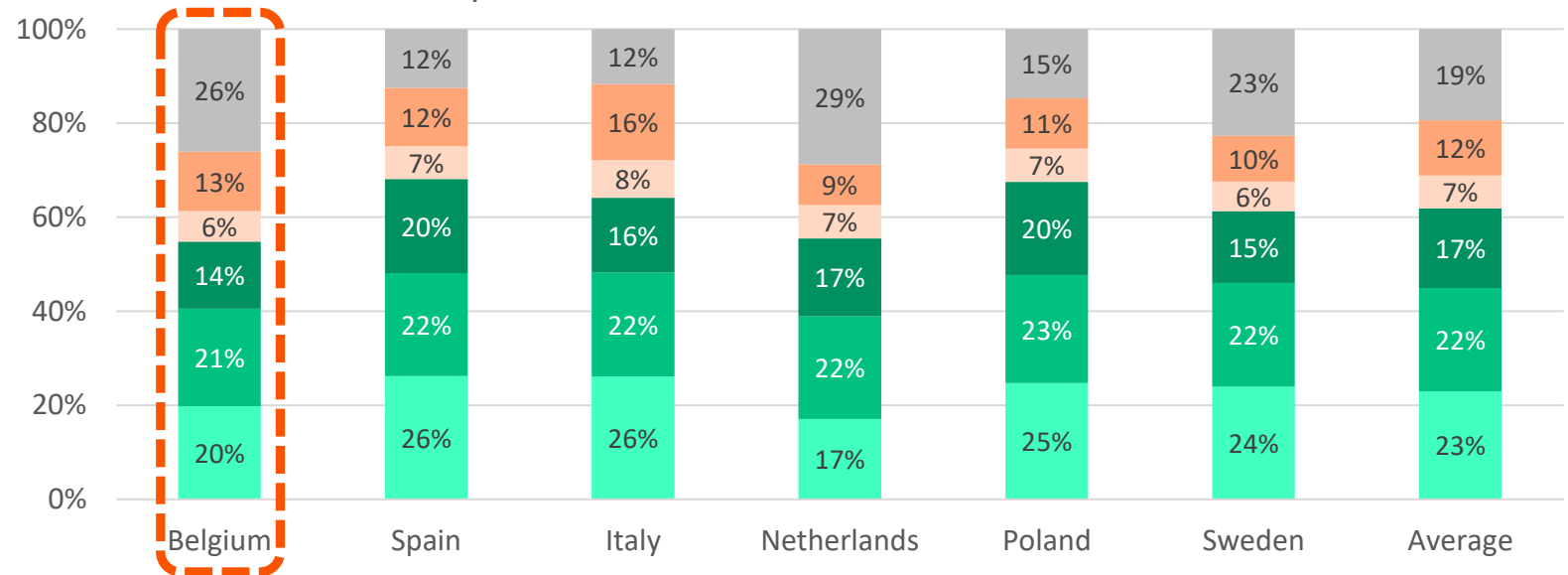
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In all countries, very diverse opinions regarding the question suggesting that the denomination is equivocal

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, perceptions are as diverse as in other European countries

How do you understand the functioning of a fund called "Environmental Impact Fund" based on this denomination?



■ I don't know

■ The fund only invests in companies that have a clear measured positive impact on the environment AND the fund ensures its investors a clear measured positive impact on the environment through their investments

■ The fund uses a specific investment strategy that may enable its investors to have a positive impact on the environment through their investments (but the actual impact of investments is not precisely measured)

■ The fund uses a specific investment strategy that ensures its investors a clear measured positive impact on the environment through their investments

■ The fund only invests in companies that may have a positive impact on the environment through their products and services (but the actual impact of invested companies is not precisely measured)

■ The fund only invests in companies that have a clear measured positive impact on the environment through their products and services

# What impact funds should be

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In all countries, pretty diverse opinions regarding the question
- ✓ In all countries, the most frequent answer applies to the most demanding (and protective) definition
- ✓ In all countries, the purely intentional definition is the least often selected

## Country-specific:

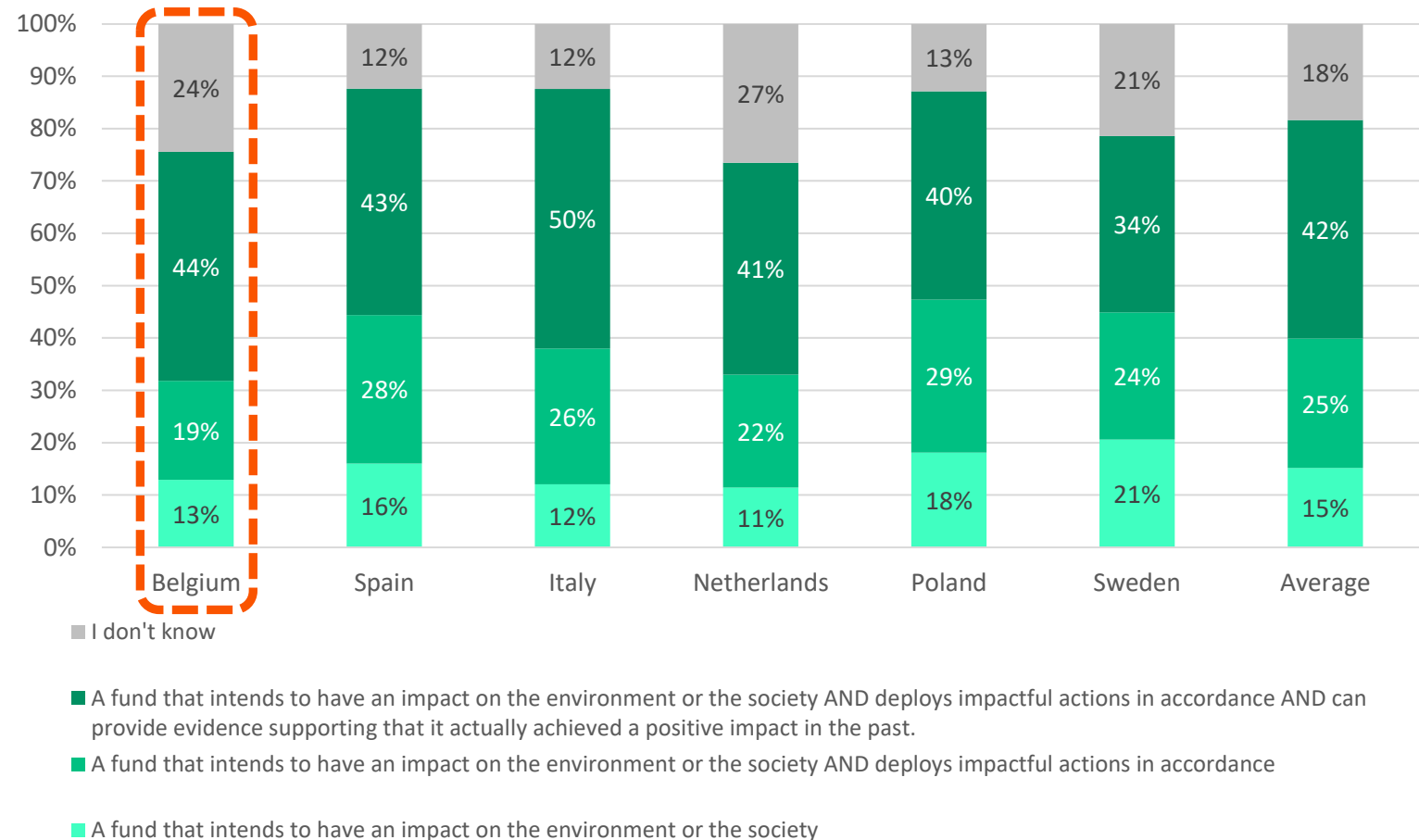
- ✓ Respondents in Belgium opted for the most protective definition as often as the European average

## Qualitative insights:

In interviews and focus groups, participants generally consider that measuring and disclosing one's impact is practically difficult for funds.

They are divided between those that see it as important to avoid greenwashing or impact-washing and others that perceive it as only a "nice-to-have". For the latter, it is enough to have evidence that the fund actively contributes to a collective movement towards sustainability or has a clear positive attitude towards a certain environmental or social issue.

What should be an Impact Fund in order not to mislead investors?



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# III. Investing to finance the energy transition



# Willingness to finance the green energy transition

## - sectors

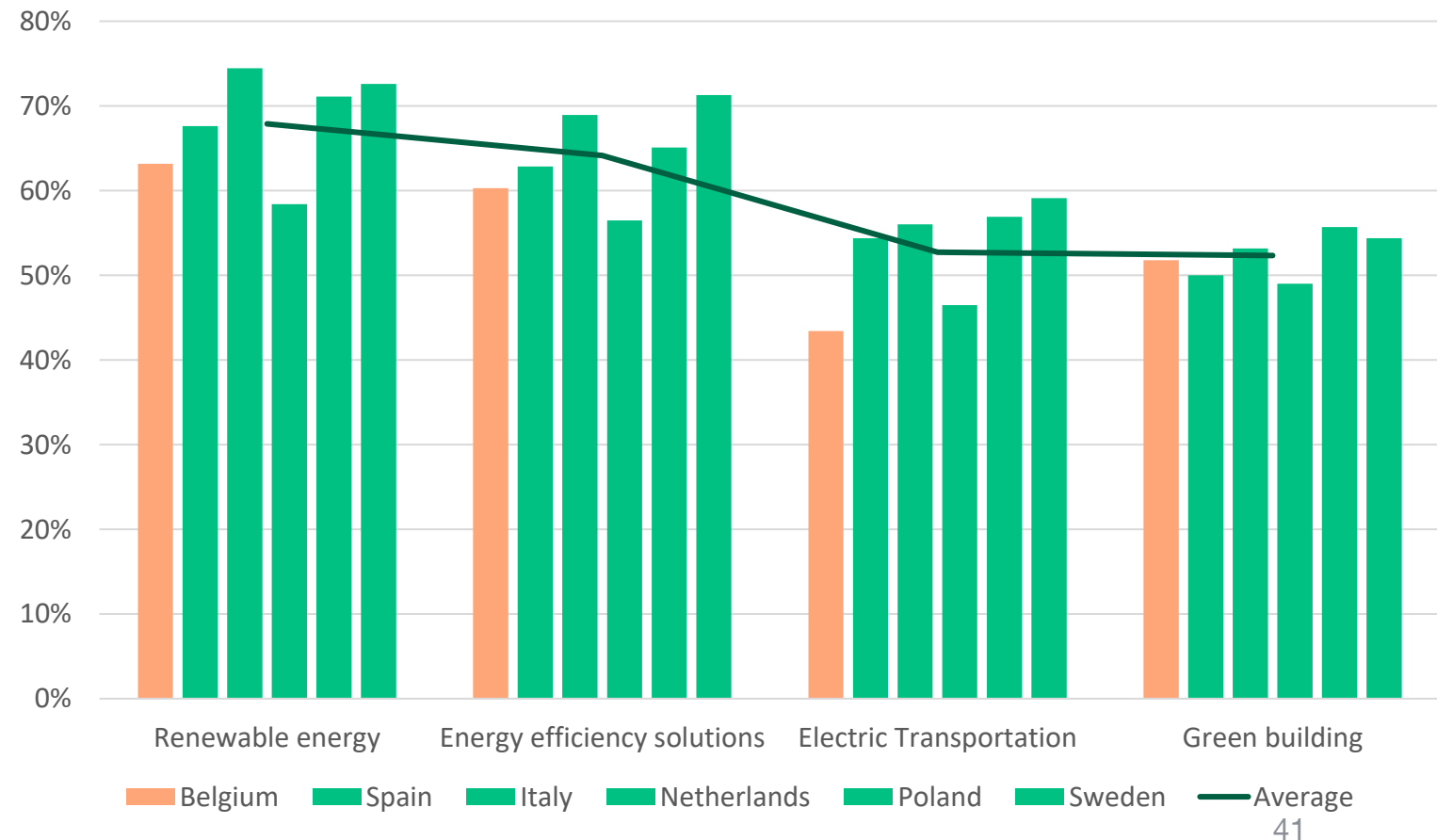
### Cross-country:

- ✓ An interest more pronounced when the question is specific than general (see previous slide for comparison)
- ✓ Proportion of potential funders increases by 10-20 pp when sectors are specified
- ✓ A clear preference for financing projects in renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors

### Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, respondents displayed a willingness to finance slightly inferior to the European average for all sectors

Willingness to finance energy transition projects in specific green sectors (% interested)



# Willingness to finance the green energy transition

## - economic agents

### Cross-country:

- ✓ Low variations across potential beneficiaries
- ✓ Financing projects for households appear to be slightly more appealing.
- ✓ This result advocates for new types of green financial solutions as current ones most often target (large) companies)

### Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the willingness to finance is lower than the European average for all types of economic agents
- ✓ In Belgium, the willingness to finance projects from large corporations is similar than for SMEs

### Qualitative insights:

In interviews and focus groups, some participants report a preference for financing (large or small) companies as they perceive them as more effective to allocate capital in an efficient way compared to administrations.

Small companies are also perceived to be more innovative and therefore have a higher impact potential while large companies are seen as less risky.

Willingness to finance energy transition projects for specific economic agents (% interested)



# Willingness to finance the green energy transition

## - geographical zones

### Cross-country:

- ✓ A clear preference for financing nationally or locally

### Country-specific:

- ✓ For all zones, respondents in Belgium are less inclined to contribute than the European average

### Qualitative insights:

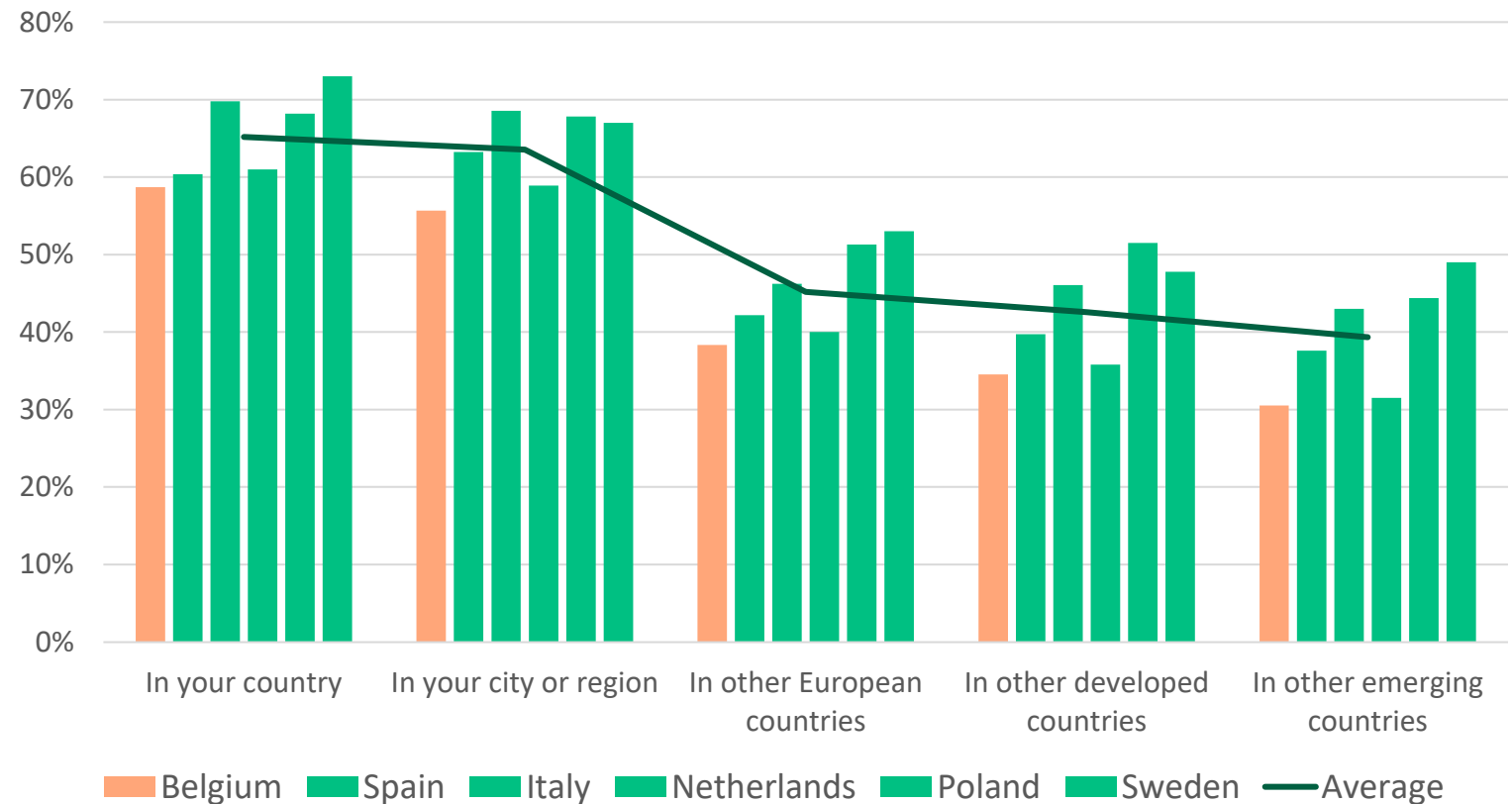
In interviews and focus groups, participants explain their preference for local/national projects by referring to a lower (perceived) risk or a higher transparency and easier access to information. They sometimes also connect it to an enhanced emotional salience and to the possibility to benefit from it.

Oppositely, and much less frequently, others prefer investing in developing countries as they consider the funding gap to be more pronounced there and observe that it is necessary to raise the bar everywhere to solve global issues.

A third category do not focus on the zone and consider the selection process should apply at the project level only.

*"I would invest everywhere because not only Belgium needs to get better at sustainability. The whole world needs to do better and we can help fund the change."*

Willingness to finance energy transition projects in specific zones (% interested)



# Holding of products financing the green energy transition - specifics

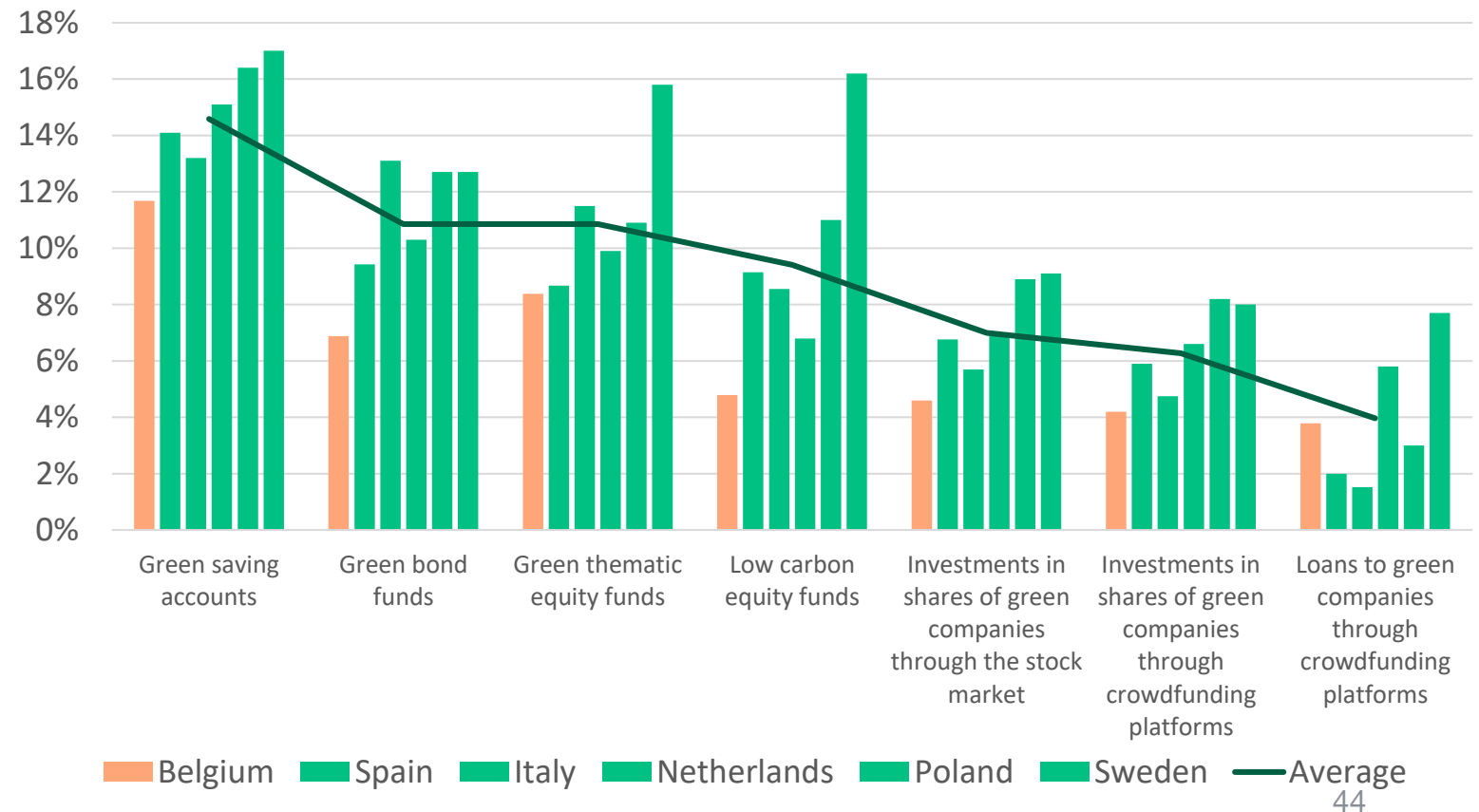
## Cross-country:

- ✓ Among different green financial products, green saving accounts and in a lesser extent green funds are the most often owned
- ✓ Oppositely, direct investments through the stock exchange or crowdfunding platforms are less common

## Country-specific:

- ✓ Respondents in Belgium lag the European average regarding the holding of specific green financial solutions

Holdings of specific financial products contributing to the financing of the green energy transition



# An attitude-behavior gap

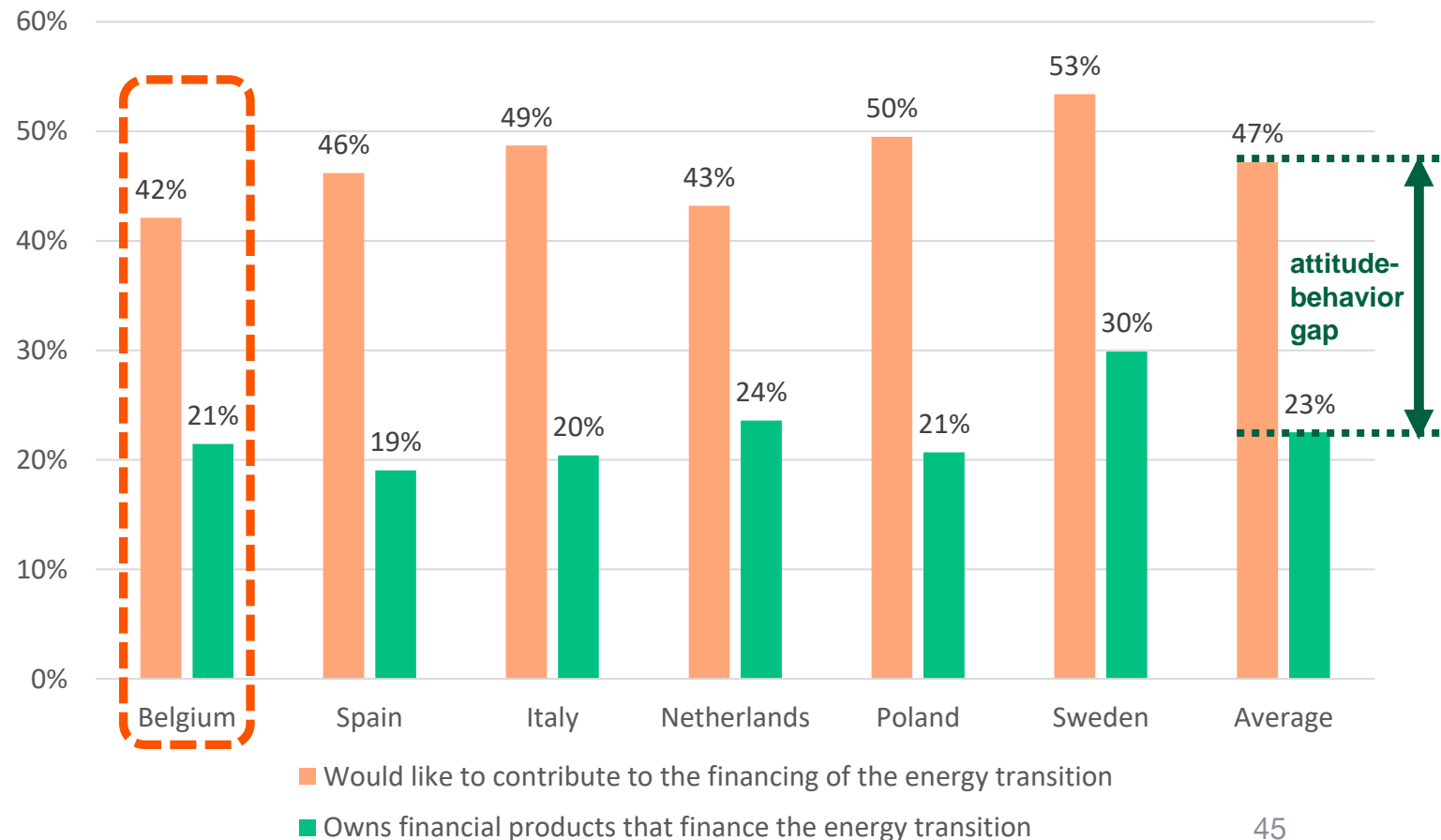
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, there are 20%-30% of respondents that would like to finance the energy transition but do not own financial products doing that
- ✓ It means there is an untapped potential for green financial products

## Country-specific:

- ✓ The attitude-behavior gap in Belgium is in line with the European average

Attitude-behavior gap regarding the financing of the green energy transition



# Blockers preventing the financing of the green energy transition

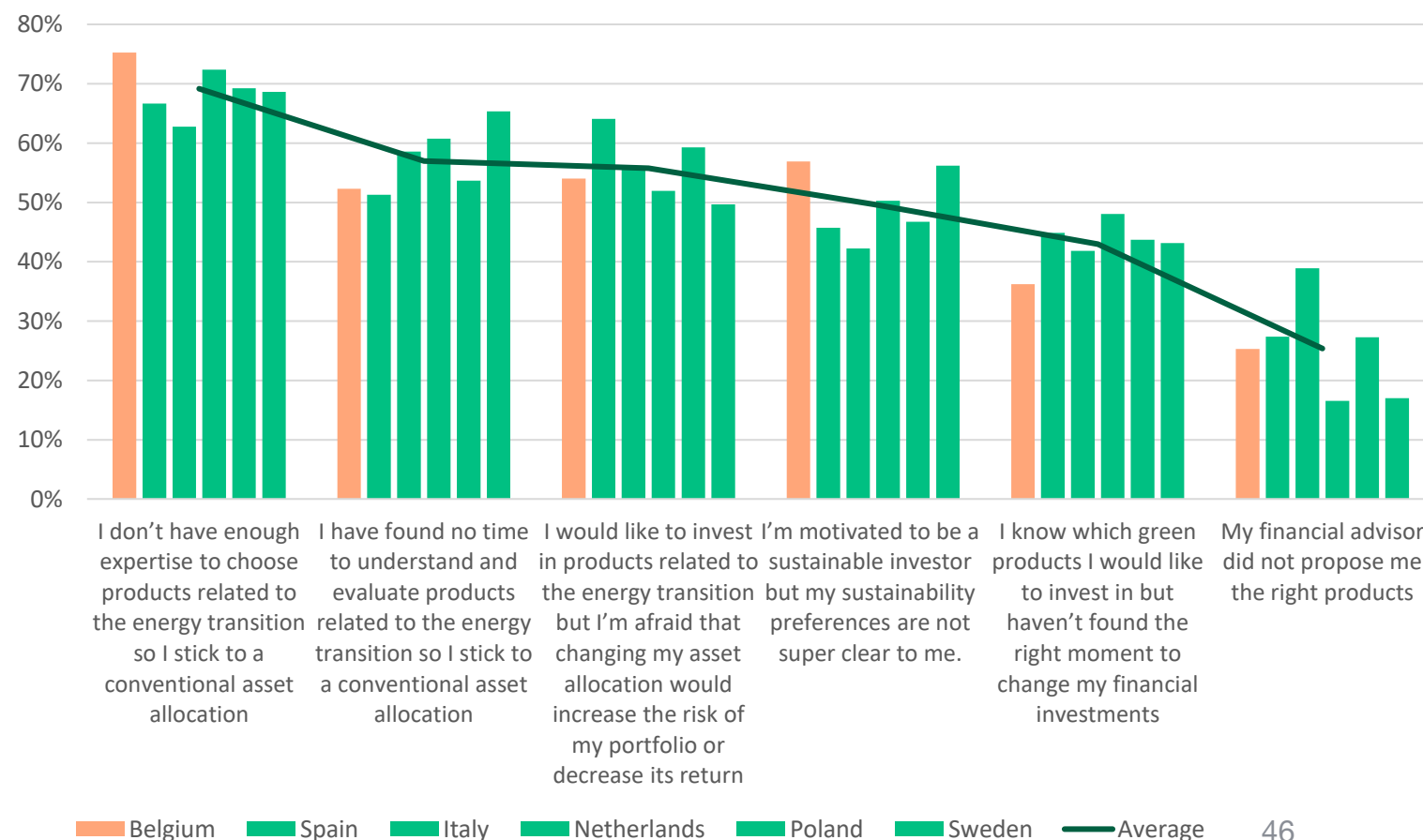
## Cross-country:

- ✓ A lack of time and expertise rather than a lack of available options explains the difference between intentions to finance the energy transition through savings and the actual behaviors

## Country-specific:

- ✓ Respondents in Belgium highlight the lack of knowledge as a main issue more often than elsewhere

Reasons behind the respondent's intention-behavior gap (up to three reasons)





# IV. Interest for green financial products

# Interest for green alternatives to conventional financial products

## Cross-country:

- ✓ For all types of conventional products, a majority of respondents declares to be interested into switching to the proposed greener alternative
- ✓ Thematic equity funds are the most appealing alternatives while green saving accounts are the least ones

## Country-specific:

- ✓ The interest in switching is lower in Belgium than the European average

## Qualitative insights:

In interviews and focus groups, respondents not interested explain it by displaying a low trust/knowledge about those products and fear a “green bubble” that would lead to poor returns in the future.

*“The green savings account is something I’m interested in because it’s accessible for everyone and the conventional one doesn’t give a lot of return anyway.”*

*” My trust in the products has to be earned.”*

Interest in switching to green alternatives to conventional financial products  
(% strongly or quite interested)





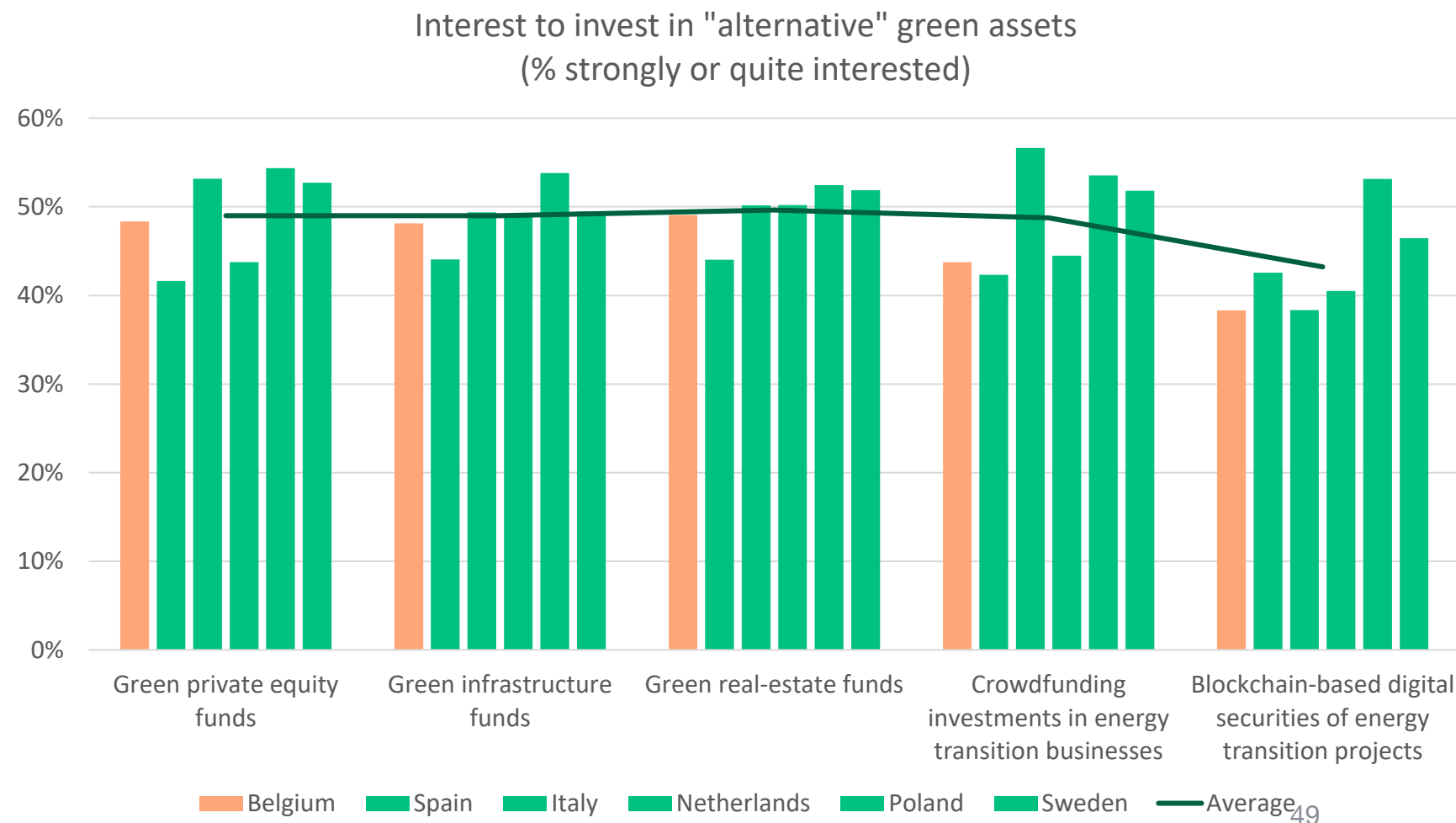
# Interest for investing in “alternative” green assets

## Cross-country:

- ✓ Roughly 50% of respondents are interested into investing in the various “alternative” green assets
- ✓ There is no major difference in answers across assets at respondent level – the interest/absence of interest is transversal
- ✓ Digital securities appear to be less attractive than other alternative assets

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, crowdfunding and digital securities are less appealing than elsewhere





# V. Green borrowing

# Experience with green loans

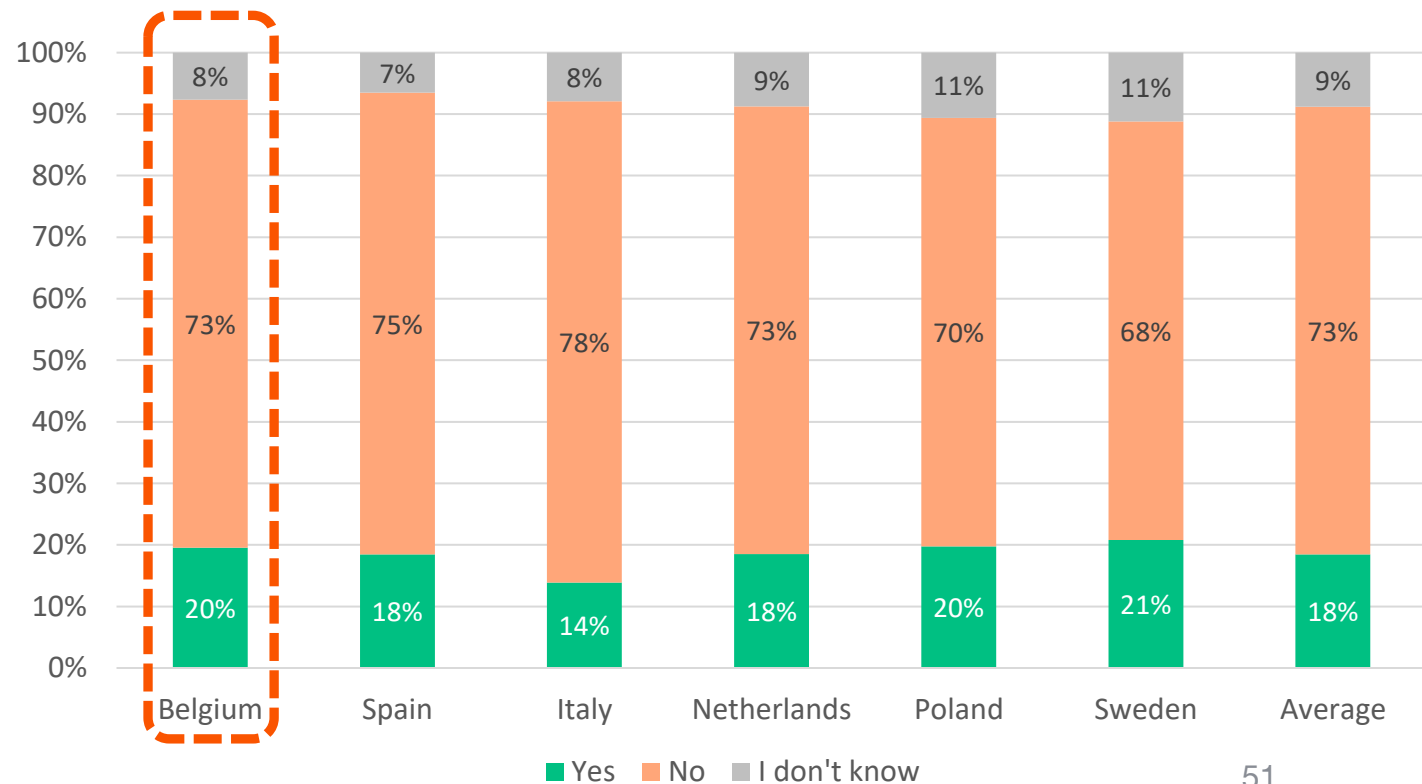
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, only a minority of respondents has already used green loans to finance purchases with environmental benefits
- ✓ Very small differences across countries

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the use of green loans is as uncommon as elsewhere

I have already used green loans to finance personal projects with environmental benefits (e.g., purchase of an electric car, installation of solar panels)



# Blockers preventing the use of green loans

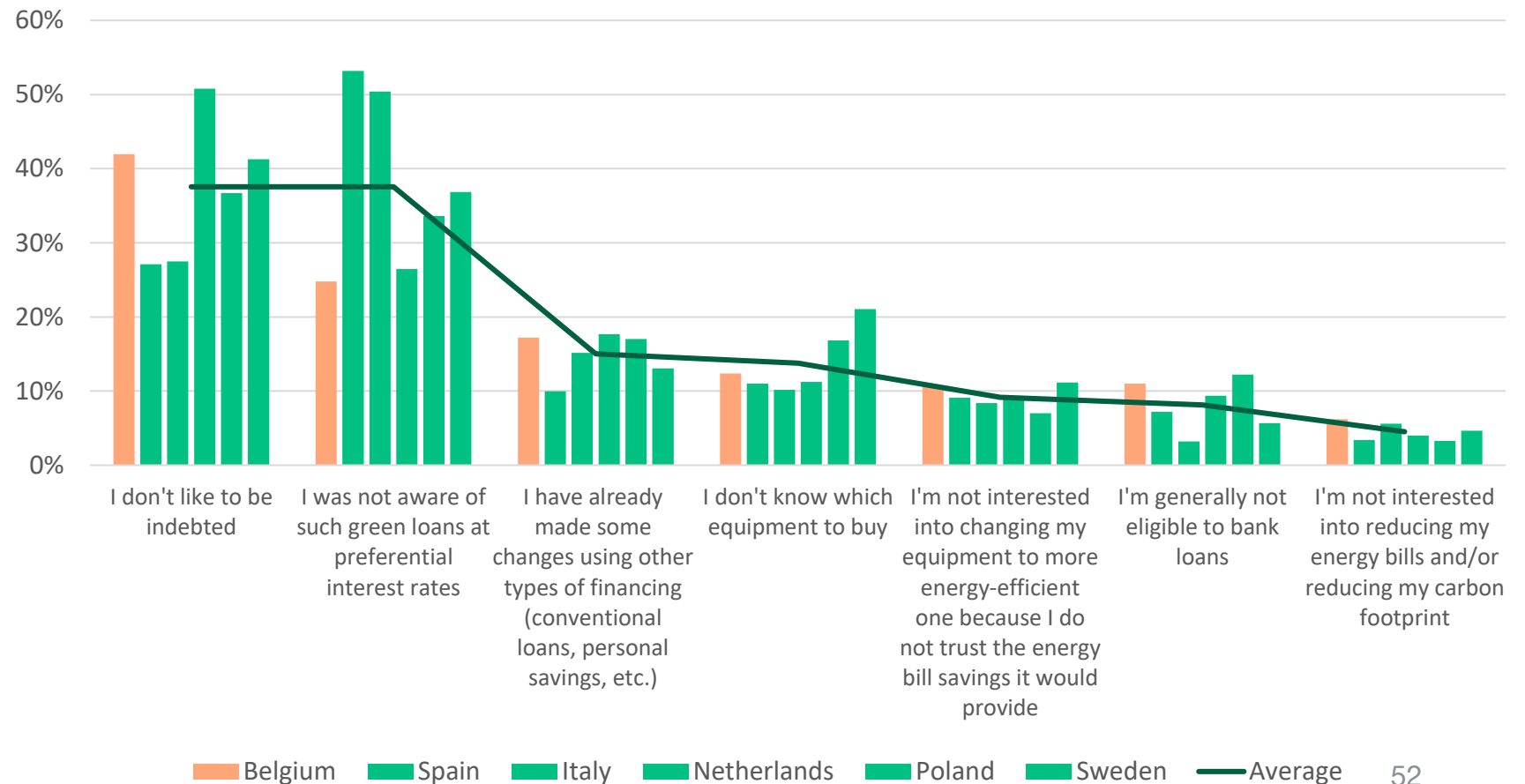
## Cross-country:

- ✓ In each country, the reluctance to be indebted and the lack of information are, by large, the most often cited reasons
- ✓ Improving information appears to key for scaling up the use of green loans by households

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the limited use of green loans is less connected with a lack of awareness of that financial solution than elsewhere

Reasons for not using green loans  
(up to three)



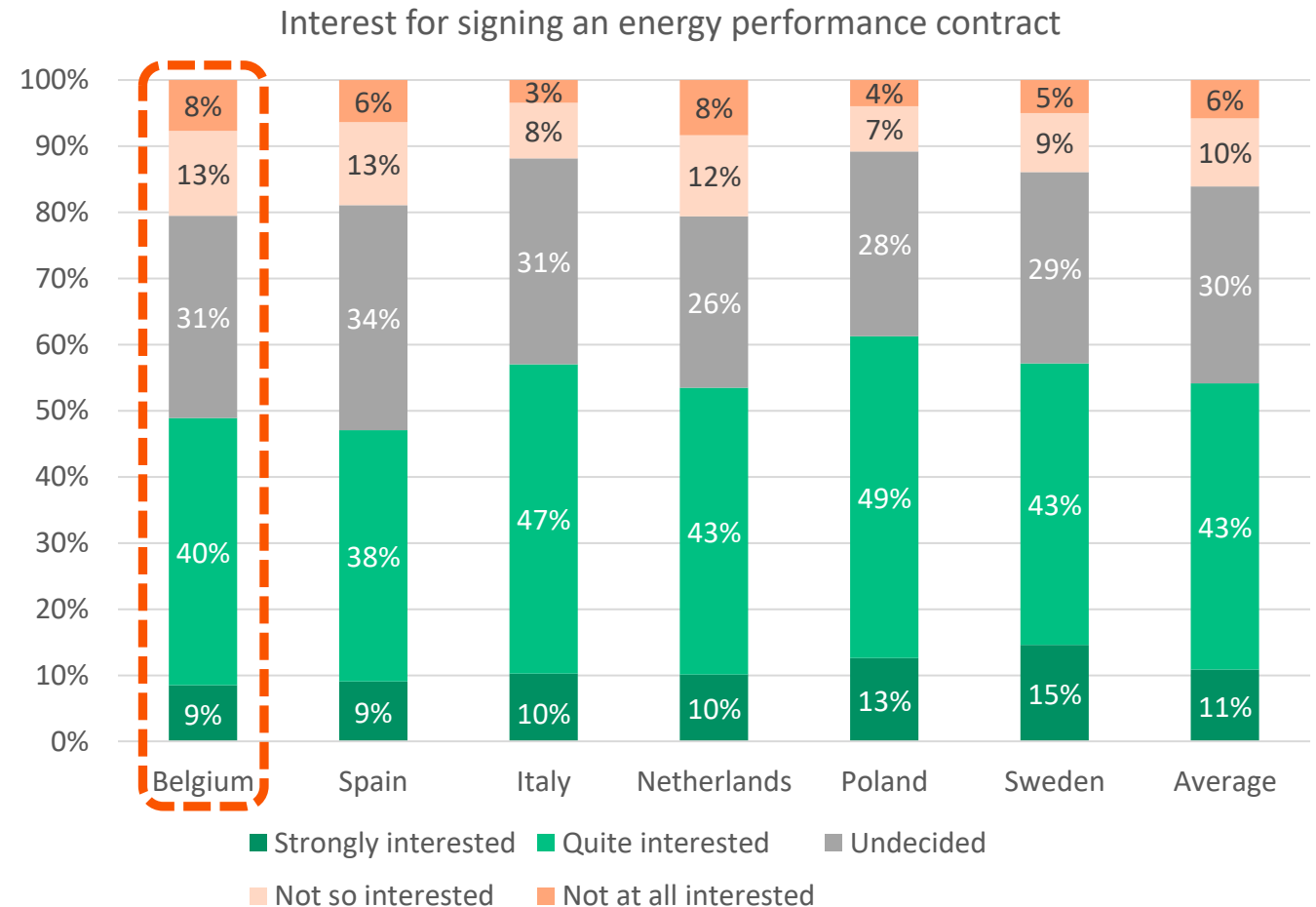
# Interest for Energy Performance Contracts

## Cross-country:

- ✓ In all countries, a majority of respondents are interested into Energy performance Contracts that make energy service companies finance a change/purchase of energy device in exchange of rights on future energy bills
- ✓ It shows a high potential for this uncommon and largely unknown financing scheme

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, the interest for EPCs is slightly less pronounced than in most other countries



# PART III: Estimating market sizes for sustainable finance products

# Estimating market sizes for green financial products

## *Methodology*

- ✓ Based on interest for sustainable finance products stated in our quantitative survey and holdings of financial products by European households, we propose in this section an estimate of the market potential for various green financial solutions.
- ✓ We distinguish market potential for products held i) in direct, ii) through investment funds or via iii) life insurance or iv) pension funds.
- ✓ For the last two categories, it is important to note that the calculations imply that the fund managers reflect in their asset allocation the sustainability preferences of their beneficiaries. This supposes that those preferences are carefully collected.
- ✓ When the granularity of data regarding the asset allocation of financial assets held directly or indirectly by households was insufficient, we had to make assumptions.
- ✓ The following four slides display the data that could be gathered from official sources (ECB, EIOPA, OECD) and their (lack of) granularity
- ✓ The assumption made to overcome the lack of granularity for holdings of households via investment funds is the following:
  - ✓ The asset allocation of household holdings of investment funds is the same as the overall asset allocation of (non-money market) investment funds of the country (as documented by Eurostat/ECB)
- ✓ The assumptions made to overcome the lack of granularity for holdings of households via pension funds are the following:
  - ✓ Real estate, private equity and infrastructure account for respectively 35%, 25% and 15% of “other investments” by pension funds
  - ✓ Sweden, for which look-through data is missing for holdings via investment funds, is assumed to apply the same asset allocation as the average of the other five EU countries

# Financial assets of European households

In Bn euros (as of end 2021)	Currency and deposits	Debt securities and loans	Listed shares	Unlisted shares	Investment fund shares	Life insurance and annuities entitlements	Pension entitlements	Others	Total
<b>Belgium</b>	469.664	28.820	90.947	173.323	272.599	193.837	124.784	186.768	1,540.741
<b>Spain</b>	1,017.315	11.286	109.037	132.120	410.739	188.584	188.423	588.241	2,645.745
<b>Italy</b>	1,588.402	240.636	137.770	623.448	763.328	886.679	258.934	545.381	5,044.578
<b>Netherlands</b>	529.272	4.820	49.377	300.453	111.910	186.716	1808.025	81.445	3,072.018
<b>Poland</b>	306.159	15.871	21.931	23.398	31.411	14.616	50.630	138.562	602.578
<b>Sweden</b>	241.202	5.090	169.343	261.094	181.434	129.426	588.904	398.040	1,974.533

As % of total household financial assets	Currency and deposits	Debt securities and loans	Listed shares	Unlisted shares	Investment fund shares	Life insurance and annuities entitlements	Pension entitlements	Others	Total
<b>Belgium</b>	30.5%	1.9%	5.9%	11.2%	17.7%	12.6%	8.1%	12.1%	100%
<b>Spain</b>	38.5%	0.4%	4.1%	5.0%	15.5%	7.1%	7.1%	22.2%	100%
<b>Italy</b>	31.5%	4.8%	2.7%	12.4%	15.1%	17.6%	5.1%	10.8%	100%
<b>Netherlands</b>	17.2%	0.2%	1.6%	9.8%	3.6%	6.1%	58.9%	2.7%	100%
<b>Poland</b>	50.8%	2.6%	3.6%	3.9%	5.2%	2.4%	8.4%	23.0%	100%
<b>Sweden</b>	12.2%	0.3%	8.6%	13.2%	9.2%	6.6%	29.8%	20.2%	100%

Source: ECB, Eurostat



# Asset allocation in investment funds

Non-money market funds (as of end 2021)	Currency and deposits	Loans and debt securities	Listed shares	Unlisted shares	Investment fund shares	Others	Total
<b>Belgium</b>	2.5%	15.9%	46.0%	0.0%	34.9%	0.8%	100.0%
<b>Spain</b>	10.8%	34.2%	17.6%	3.9%	32.1%	1.4%	100.0%
<b>Italy</b>	10.5%	44.8%	19.7%	5.4%	18.9%	0.6%	100.0%
<b>Netherlands</b>	1.4%	24.4%	48.8%	5.8%	18.2%	1.4%	100.0%
<b>Poland</b>	5.2%	49.1%	13.5%	2.2%	6.1%	23.9%	100.0%
<b>Sweden</b>	3.4%	16.1%	73.4%	0.4%	5.5%	1.2%	100.0%

Source: ECB, Eurostat

# Asset allocation in life insurance

In % of total assets (as of end 2022)	Belgium	Spain	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Sweden
<b>Government bonds</b>	16.6%	46.6%	32.8%	17.0%	37.7%	1.3%
<b>Corporate bonds</b>	21.3%	22.8%	14.3%	10.8%	2.4%	4.9%
<b>Equity</b>	13.1%	2.2%	2.4%	6.4%	4.4%	22.4%
<b>Collective Investment Undertakings</b>	21.7%	16.8%	47.0%	29.3%	44.1%	63.2%
<b>1 Equity funds</b>	1.8%	6.9%	18.8%	5.2%	12.3%	27.8%
<b>2 Debt funds</b>	8.0%	2.2%	15.8%	7.3%	19.7%	7.1%
<b>3 Money market funds</b>	1.2%	1.7%	2.2%	0.9%	2.9%	0.7%
<b>4 Asset allocation funds</b>	0.1%	4.3%	4.1%	8.8%	7.9%	17.7%
<b>5 Real estate funds</b>	0.2%	0.1%	2.3%	3.8%	0.3%	0.1%
<b>6 Alternative funds</b>	0.0%	0.3%	1.5%	0.1%	0.1%	1.0%
<b>7 Private equity funds</b>	0.1%	0.8%	0.3%	0.9%	0.0%	0.2%
<b>8 Infrastructure funds</b>	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>9 Others</b>	10.3%	0.3%	1.4%	1.9%	0.8%	8.5%
<b>Structured notes</b>	0.2%	4.8%	1.1%	0.0%	1.9%	0.6%
<b>Collateralised securities</b>	0.0%	0.5%	0.6%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Cash and deposits</b>	4.4%	5.0%	1.3%	4.8%	3.6%	6.2%
<b>Mortgages and loans</b>	19.9%	0.6%	0.3%	26.8%	4.7%	1.5%
<b>Property</b>	2.8%	0.7%	0.1%	1.6%	1.1%	0.0%
<b>Other investments</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

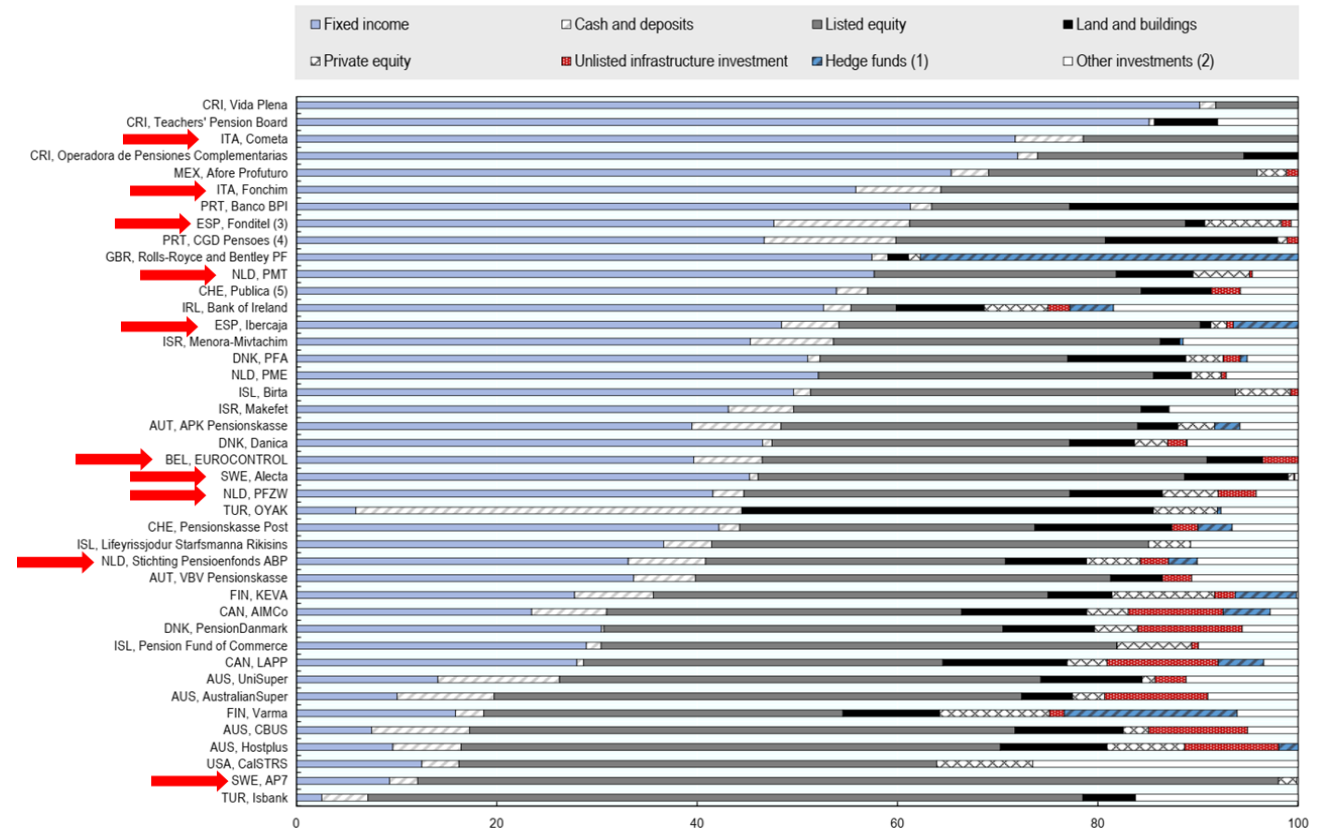
# Asset allocation in pension funds

In % of total assets (as of end 2021)	Equities	Bills and bonds	Cash and deposits	Collective Investment Schemes (when look-through unavailable)	Other
<b>Belgium</b>	49.7	43.2	2.4	..	4.7
<b>Spain</b>	31.9	48.4	7.5	..	12.2
<b>Italy</b>	25.1	42.7	6.1	..	26.1
<b>Netherlands</b>	30.9	42.9	2.0	..	24.2
<b>Poland</b>	91.0	6.0	1.6	0.0	1.3
<b>Sweden</b>	13.8	9.1	0.7	73.1	3.3

Source: OECD Global Pension Statistics

Figure 1. Asset allocation of selected LPFs based in OECD countries, 2020

As a percentage of total investment

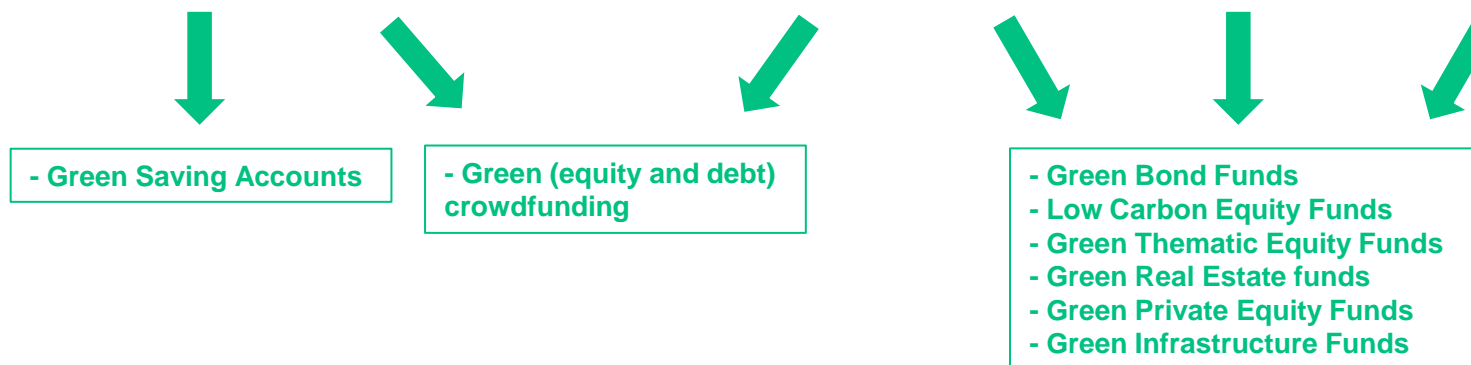


Source: OECD calculations based on responses to the OECD Survey of LPFs and PPRFs.

# A mapping of green financial alternatives

As % of total household financial assets	Currency and deposits	Debt securities and loans	Listed shares	Unlisted shares	Investment fund shares	Life insurance and annuities entitlements	Pension entitlements	Others	Total
<b>Belgium</b>	30.5%	1.9%	5.9%	11.2%	17.7%	12.6%	8.1%	12.1%	100%
<b>Spain</b>	38.5%	0.4%	4.1%	5.0%	15.5%	7.1%	7.1%	22.2%	100%
<b>Italy</b>	31.5%	4.8%	2.7%	12.4%	15.1%	17.6%	5.1%	10.8%	100%
<b>Netherlands</b>	17.2%	0.2%	1.6%	9.8%	3.6%	6.1%	58.9%	2.7%	100%
<b>Poland</b>	50.8%	2.6%	3.6%	3.9%	5.2%	2.4%	8.4%	23.0%	100%
<b>Sweden</b>	12.2%	0.3%	8.6%	13.2%	9.2%	6.6%	29.8%	20.2%	100%

Green alternatives for the existing assets held by European households



# Market potential for green retail financial products held in direct or through investment funds

**Methodology:** to estimate the market potential for green financial solutions, we compute the product of the holdings of conventional financial products by the percentage of people interested in switching to the relevant green alternatives according to the quantitative survey (see figures in section IV.2)

In Bn euros	Assets held in direct		Assets held via investments funds					TOTAL
	Deposits in green saving accounts	Green (equity and debt) crowdfunding	Green bond funds	Low carbon equity funds	(RE thematic equity funds)*	Green real estate funds	Green PE funds	
<b>Belgium</b>	251.706	88.437	43.915	92.398	(19.487)	2.835	1.512	480.803
<b>Spain</b>	533.848	60.691	112.252	67.024	(14.749)	4.188	8.548	786.551
<b>Italy</b>	897.530	489.465	256.983	129.695	(27.612)	4.743	24.609	1803.025
<b>Netherlands</b>	263.048	135.802	18.854	33.395	(7.708)	924	3.141	1378.24
<b>Poland</b>	181.858	21.017	10.892	3.300	(661)	2.125	0.413	219.605
<b>Sweden</b>	144.721	137.903	21.795	88.968	(19.558)	0.871	0.568	394.826
<b>TOTAL EU-6</b>	<b>2,272.711</b>	<b>933.315</b>	<b>464.691</b>	<b>414.780</b>	<b>(89.775)</b>	<b>15.686</b>	<b>38.791</b>	<b>4,139.974</b>

## Cross-country:

- ✓ Green deposits have by far the highest potential due to the importance of deposits within household wealth. They could represent up to EUR 2272 billion across the six countries.
- ✓ The potential for green crowdfunding may be significantly upwardly biased due to the probable significant fraction of holdings of unlisted shares that relate to professional wealth and, could not be swapped for crowdfunding equity
- ✓ The potential for green bond funds held in direct is strong but still lower than its potential within life insurance and pension funds. In total, it amounts to
- ✓ Despite a superior popularity, green thematic equity funds are constrained in their deployment compared with low carbon equity funds because of the limits posed by their lack of sector diversification. According to our estimates, they could reach a total of EUR 89 billion versus EUR 415 billion for low-carbon funds.

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In Belgium, market potential for green financial products through investment funds is lifted by the relatively large fraction of total household financial wealth held through investment funds (17%)
- ✓ A more granular analysis shows that the market potential for green bond funds is constrained by the limited fraction of debt securities in investment funds

**Remark:** renewable energy thematic equity funds are capped at 20% of total allocation to stocks due to their lack of sector diversification. Their market potential overlaps with that for low carbon equity funds. Consequently, they do not participate to the sum of total market potential.

# Market potential for green retail financial products held through life insurance

**Methodology:** to estimate the market potential for green financial solutions, we compute the product of the holdings of conventional financial products by the percentage of people interested in switching to the relevant green alternatives according to the quantitative survey (see figures in section IV.2)

In Bn euros	Assets held via life insurance						TOTAL
	Green bonds (in direct or via funds)	Low carbon equity funds	(RE thematic equity funds)*	Green real estate (in direct or via funds)	Green PE funds	Green infrastructure funds	
<b>Belgium</b>	50.290	17.301	(3.649)	2.880	0.076	0.058	70.605
<b>Spain</b>	80.677	10.249	(2.255)	0.622	0.649	0.172	92.369
<b>Italy</b>	363.213	125.550	(26.729)	11.060	1.592	2.403	503.818
<b>Netherlands</b>	35.711	11.860	(2.737)	5.017	0.767	0.306	53.661
<b>Poland</b>	5.921	1.662	(0.333)	0.105	0	0	7.688
<b>Sweden</b>	11.432	42.374	(9.315)	0.088	0.167	0.002	54.063
<b>TOTAL EU-6</b>	<b>547.244</b>	<b>208.995</b>	<b>(45.019)</b>	<b>19.772</b>	<b>3.252</b>	<b>2.941</b>	<b>782.204</b>

## Cross-country:

- ✓ Across countries, green bonds exhibit the strongest potential in relation to the dominance of bonds in life insurance portfolios
- ✓ Then come listed equity solutions
- ✓ Alternative investments (real estate, PE and infrastructure) have constrained potential due to their limited current weighting in life insurance portfolios

## Country-specific:

- ✓ Despite a higher fraction of financial wealth held through life insurance, market potential for green products in Belgium remains limited due to a lower willingness than the EU-6 average to opt for green alternatives to conventional assets

**Remark:** renewable energy thematic equity funds are capped at 20% of total allocation to stocks due to their lack of sector diversification. Their market potential overlaps with that for low carbon equity funds. Consequently, they do not participate to the sum of total market potential.

# Market potential for investments held through pension funds

**Methodology:** to estimate the market potential for green financial solutions, we compute the product of the holdings of conventional financial products by the percentage of people interested in switching to the relevant green alternatives according to the quantitative survey (see figures in section IV.2)

In Bn euros	Assets held via pension funds						TOTAL
	Green bond funds	Low carbon equity funds	(RE thematic equity funds)*	Green real estate funds	Green PE funds	Green infrastructure funds	
<b>Belgium</b>	30.500	37.210	(7.848)	1.007	0.709	0.423	69.849
<b>Spain</b>	54.469	35.957	(7.912)	3.543	2.393	1.519	97.881
<b>Italy</b>	72.077	43.461	(9.253)	11.864	8.982	5.006	141.39
<b>Netherlands</b>	422.041	307.043	(70.868)	76.868	47.856	32.273	886.081
<b>Poland</b>	2.054	31.476	(6.302)	0.121	0.089	0.053	33.793
<b>Sweden</b>	137.204	173.051	(38.042)	16.035	11.641	6.553	344.484
<b>Total EU-6</b>	<b>718.344</b>	<b>628.198</b>	<b>(140.225)</b>	<b>109.437</b>	<b>71.671</b>	<b>45.828</b>	<b>1,573.478</b>

**Remark:** renewable energy thematic equity funds are capped at 20% of total allocation to stocks due to their lack of sector diversification. Their market potential overlaps with that for low carbon equity funds. Consequently, they do not participate to the sum of total market potential.

## Cross-country:

- ✓ Across countries, in pension funds market potential are of the same magnitude for green bonds and listed equity green solutions
- ✓ Total market potential for alternative green investments represent around a third of such a potential

## Country-specific:

- ✓ In total, Belgium only represents a minor fraction (less than 5%) of the overall market potential for green products through pension funds due to a combination of low appetite for green assets and a low fraction of financial wealth held through pension funds (compared with Sweden or the Netherlands)

A faint, light-colored outline map of the United States is visible in the background of the top half of the slide.

# Wrap-up message



# Wrap-up message

## Cross-country

- ✓ A general lack of knowledge but an interest for and a positive attitude towards sustainable finance (solutions)
- ✓ A high level of heterogeneity in beliefs and motivations across people, with some regularities:
  - ✓ Between 40% and 60% of retail investors want to have impact
  - ✓ The most common profile is the “I want it all” profile
- ✓ A limited ownership of green financial solutions
- ✓ A very frequent attitude-behavior gap regarding the financing of the green energy transition, to be connected to the lack of knowledge, information costs and a low level in trust
- ✓ A large variety of perceptions of what “impact funds” are but a more consensual perception about what they should be
- ✓ Despite the recent takeoff, an untapped potential for many green retail investment or borrowing solutions
  - ✓ Due to current asset allocations of financial investments held in direct or via intermediaries, market potentials are most often highest for deposits in green saving accounts and green bond funds

## Country-specific

- ✓ We could clearly identify a less positive attitude towards sustainable finance in Belgium than in most countries (excluding the Netherlands). Respondents are:
  - ✓ Less convinced that financial investments are an appropriate way to express one’s values
  - ✓ Less interested into trying to have impact
  - ✓ Less willing to finance the green energy transition and to switch to greener financial alternatives
  - ✓ Less interested in the possibility of voting on climate issues at shareholder annual general meetings
- ✓ Respondents in Belgium also report owning green assets less frequently than the EU-6 average
- ✓ The market estimate shows a limited potential for green financial products through life insurance and pension funds in Belgium due to the current breakdown of household financial wealth (tilted towards investment funds) and a lower appetite for green alternatives

# Thank note

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**Author: Mickael Mangot**

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