

# Survey on International Humanitarian Law

Report Date: March 2011  
Research conducted by ORC International

# Background:

April 12, 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War, a terrible conflict that divided our nation, pitting brother against brother on the battlefield. Entire cities were torched, bystanders were killed and more than 400,000 were held prisoner.

Yet, amidst the carnage, the war produced examples of humanitarianism and concern for the vulnerable. Clara Barton, later the founder of the American Red Cross, brought medical supplies and comfort to the wounded throughout the war and led an effort to search for missing men afterwards. Medical personnel on both sides of the conflict worked tirelessly to treat the wounded under desperate circumstances. President Lincoln commissioned rules to provide basic treatment to prisoners of war and banned the use of poison as a weapon (the “Lieber Code”). These ideas and acts were so powerful that they still live in modern times.

Modern international humanitarian law (IHL) is the set of rules that seeks to restrict the means and methods of warfare while protecting civilians, prisoners of war and wounded soldiers. All nations, including the United States, have adopted the Geneva Conventions and therefore have a legal obligation to encourage the study of humanitarian law as widely as possible. The American Red Cross supports this mission by offering educational programs and IHL courses, and providing training for educators. Learn more at [www.redcross.org/ihl](http://www.redcross.org/ihl).

To mark this anniversary, the American Red Cross conducted extensive polling to better understand American attitudes and opinions about international humanitarian law.

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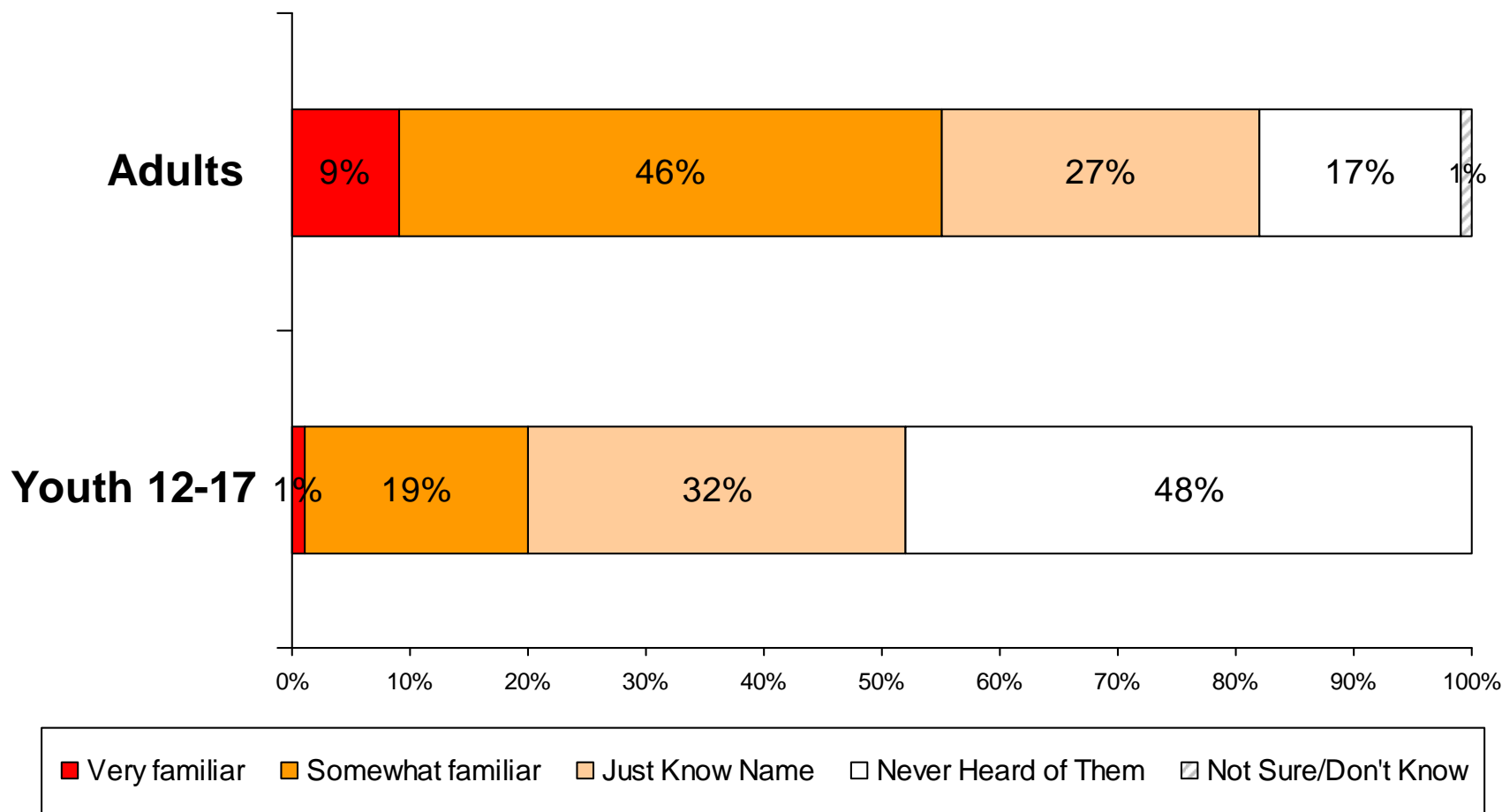
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## Methodology:

- This summary presents findings of two telephone surveys conducted among the following groups:
  - 1,019 U.S. Adults 18 years and older
  - 502 U.S. Youth 12-17 years old
- The adult and youth surveys were both conducted on February 24-27, 2011.
- Completed interviews were weighted by select variables to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total population of adults 18 years of age and older and the total population of youth 12 - 17 years old :
  - Adults: age, sex, geographic region, race, and education
  - Youth: age, sex, geographic region, and race
- Margin of error is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for adults and +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for youth.
- Results are shown separately for both the adult and youth sample. Statistically significant differences between youth and adults have been noted. In addition, statistically significant differences among sub-groups within each sample (e.g. gender, age, military experience) have been noted, where appropriate.

## Familiarity with Geneva Conventions and IHL

More than half of adults (55 percent) feel they are familiar with the Geneva Conventions and IHL. For youth 12-17 years old, one in five feel familiar with these rules and laws.

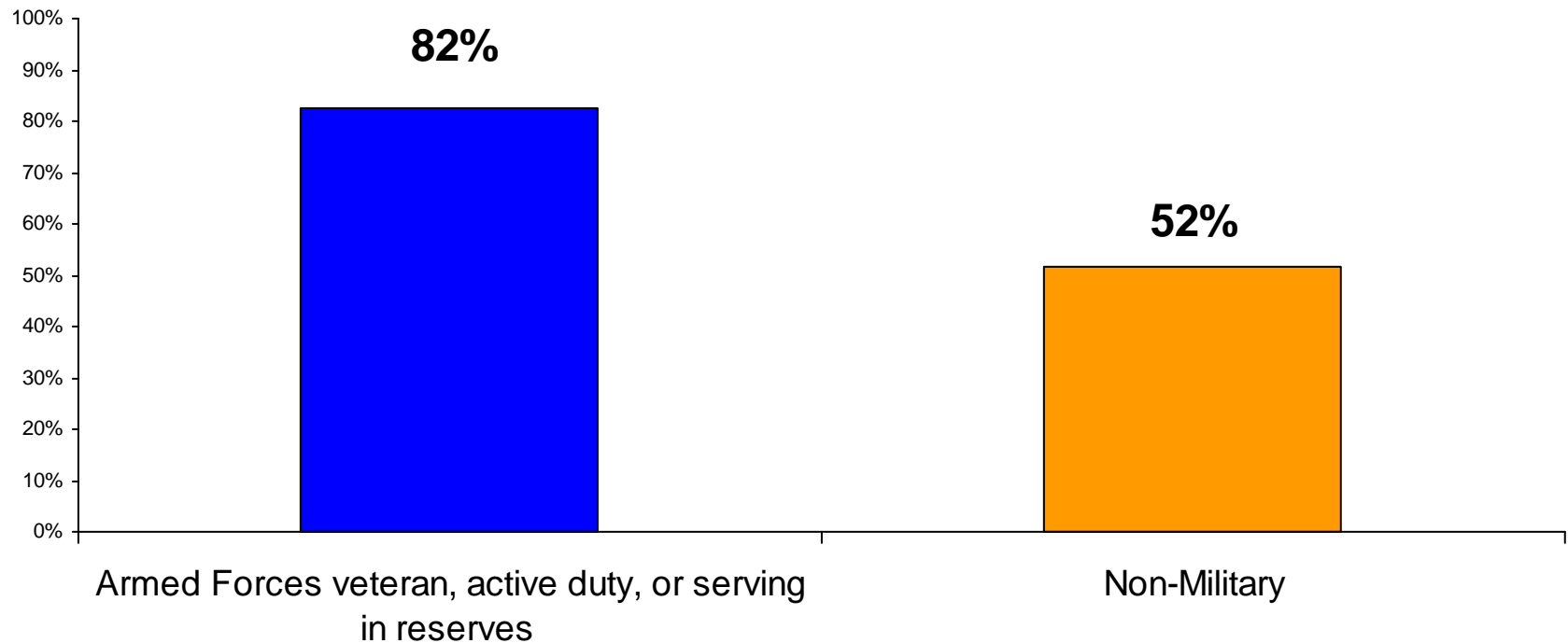


There is a body of law about how wars should be conducted, including the Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law. These laws have been adopted by every country in the world. How familiar are you with these rules and laws? Would you say you are . . .



# Variations in Familiarity: Military vs. Non-Military

**Veterans, reservists, or active duty military are more familiar with Geneva Conventions and IHL than those with no military experience.**

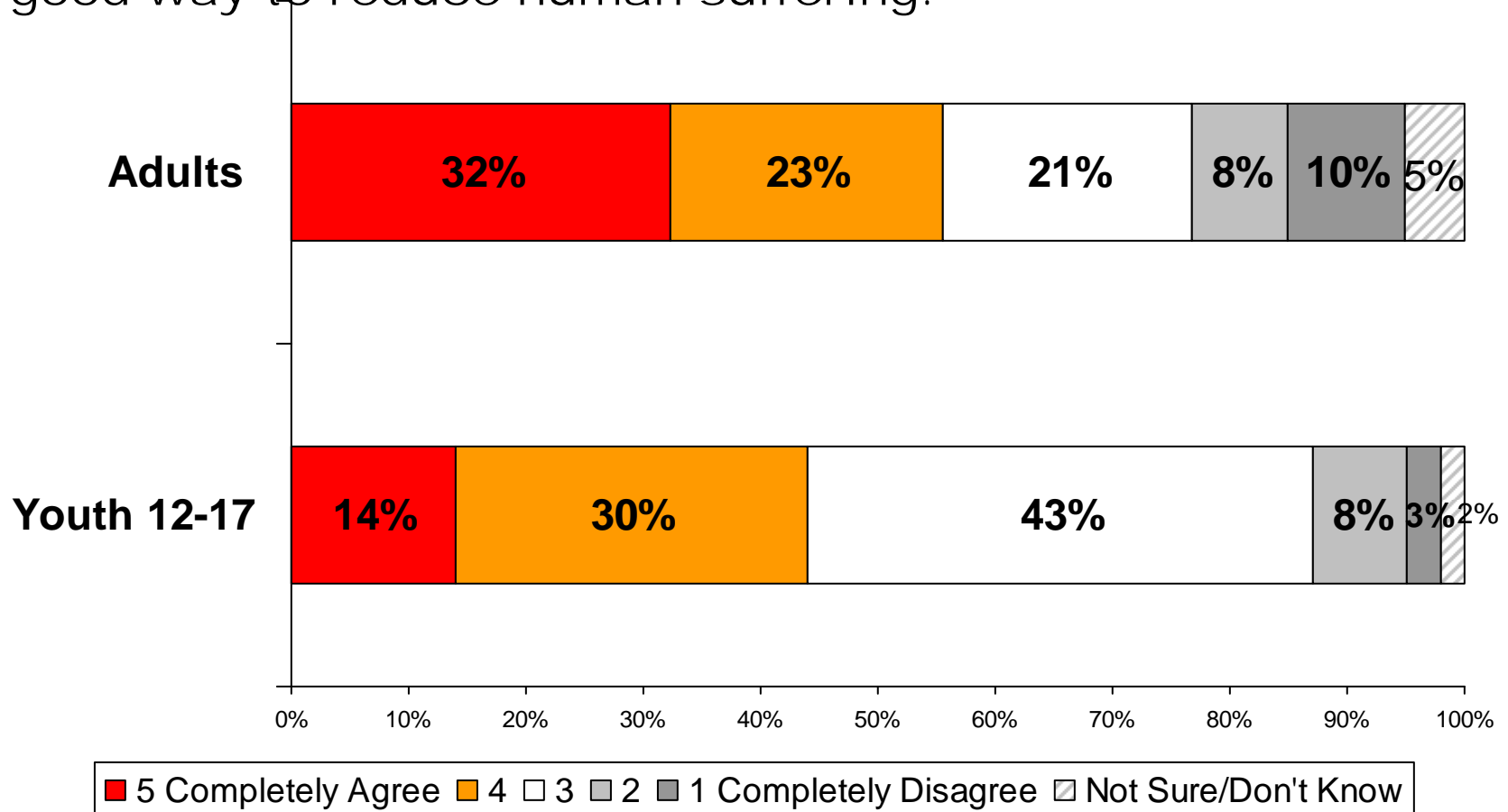


Note: Very/Somewhat Familiar (Adults Only)

There is a body of law about how wars should be conducted, including the Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law. These laws have been adopted by every country in the world. How familiar are you with these rules and laws? Would you say you are . . .

## Attitudes on adopting rules and laws

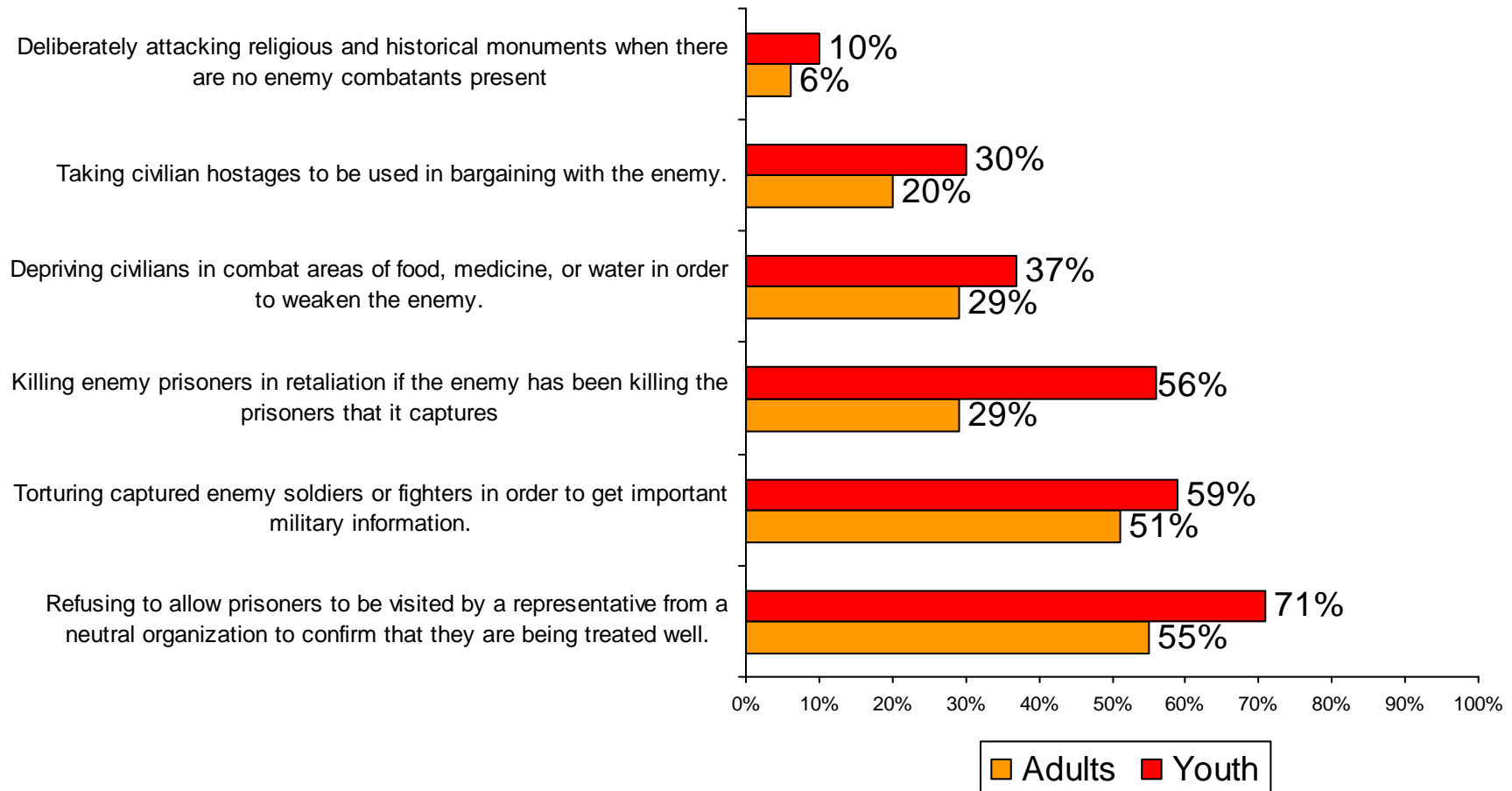
Adults (55 percent) are more likely than youth (44 percent) to believe that rules and laws governing actions in war are a good way to reduce human suffering.



Using a 5 point scale with 5 being completely agree and 1 being completely disagree, to what extent do you agree or disagree that adopting rules and laws to govern what actions are acceptable in war is a good way to reduce the human suffering caused by war?

## Acceptability of actions during war

Youth are more likely than adults to believe that these actions are always or sometimes acceptable.

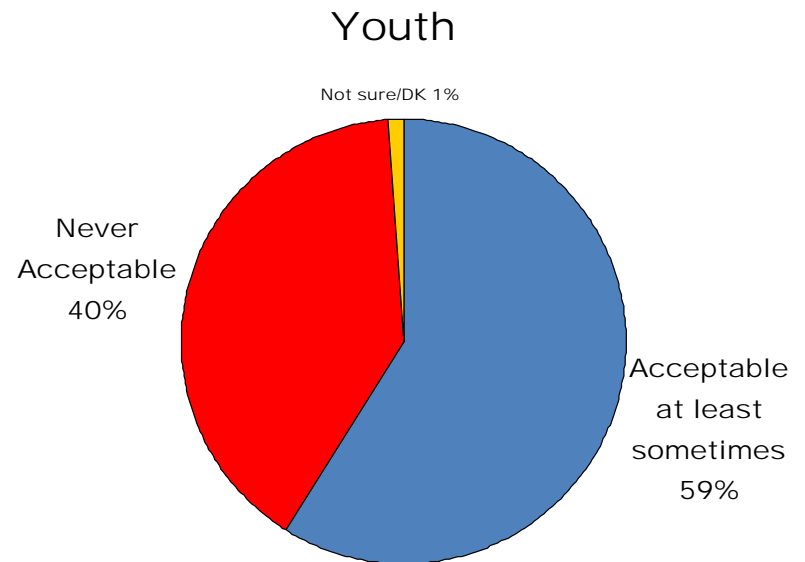
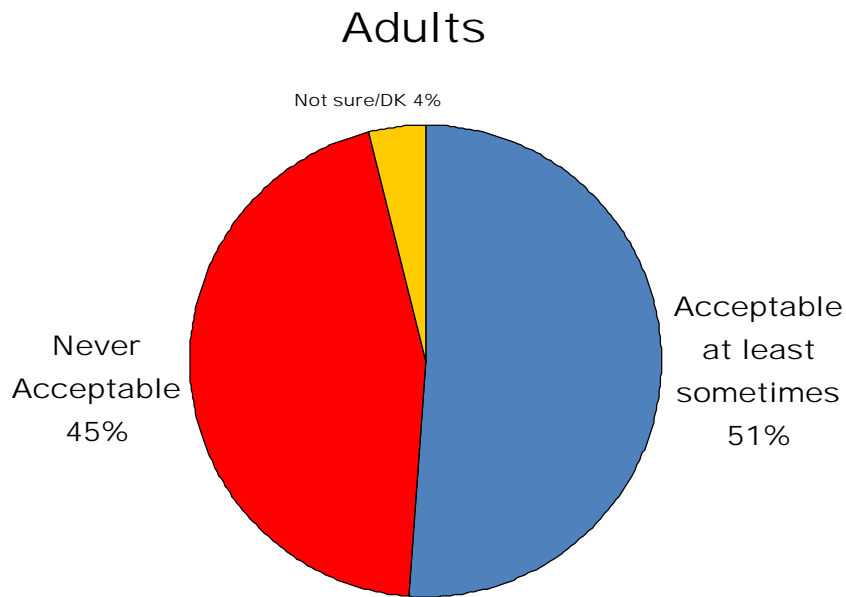


8 To what extent is it acceptable for soldiers and fighters to take the following actions in war? For each action, please tell me if it is always acceptable, is acceptable in some circumstances, or if it is never acceptable.



## Variation in acceptability of torture of enemy soldiers

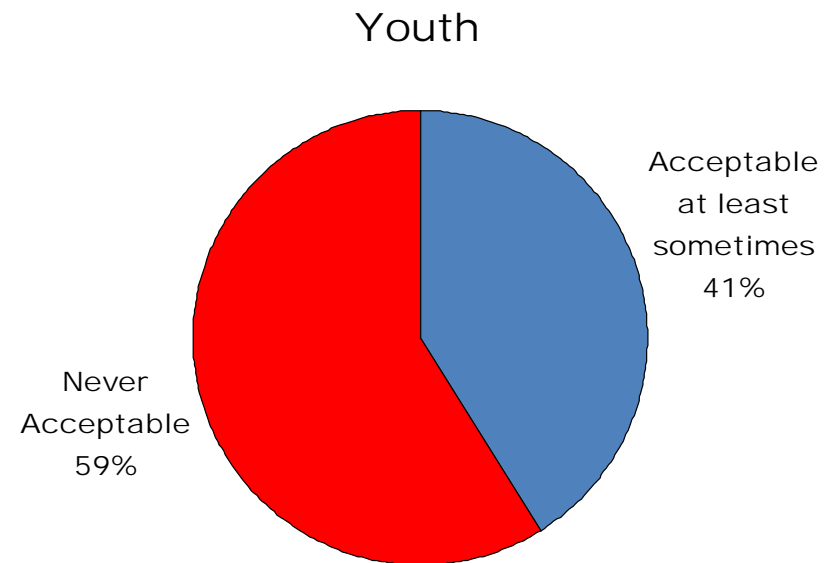
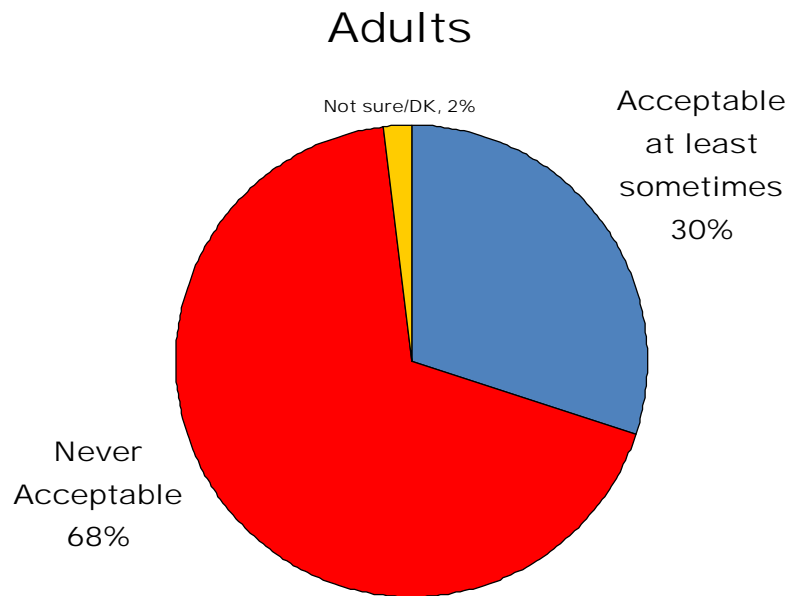
Youth are more likely than adults to believe that torturing captured enemy soldiers is either always acceptable or acceptable in some circumstances.



To what extent is it acceptable for soldiers and fighters to take the following actions in war? For each action, please tell me if it is always acceptable, is acceptable in some circumstances, or if it is never acceptable. *Torturing captured enemy soldiers or fighters in order to get important military information*

## Variation in acceptability of torture of American soldiers

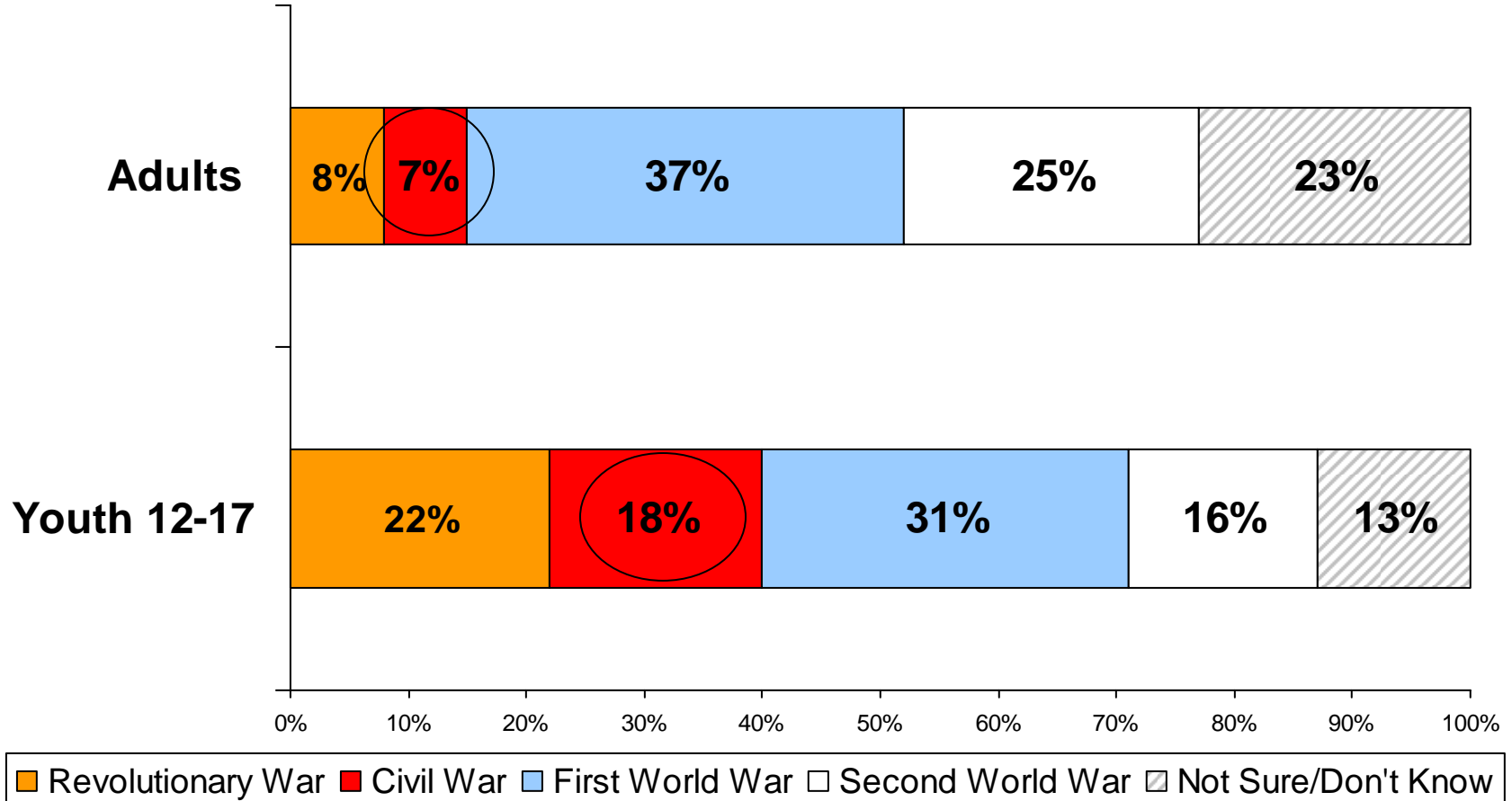
Youth are more likely than adults to believe that the torture of a captured American soldier is either always acceptable or acceptable in some circumstances.



From what you know, if an American soldier who has important military information is captured, is it acceptable for enemy soldiers to torture the soldier to get that information? Would you say it is. ..

## Knowledge of origins of Geneva Conventions/IHL

About 1 in 5 youth (18 percent) and 7 percent of adults knew that the U.S. first adopted rules limiting how wars should be conducted during the American Civil War.

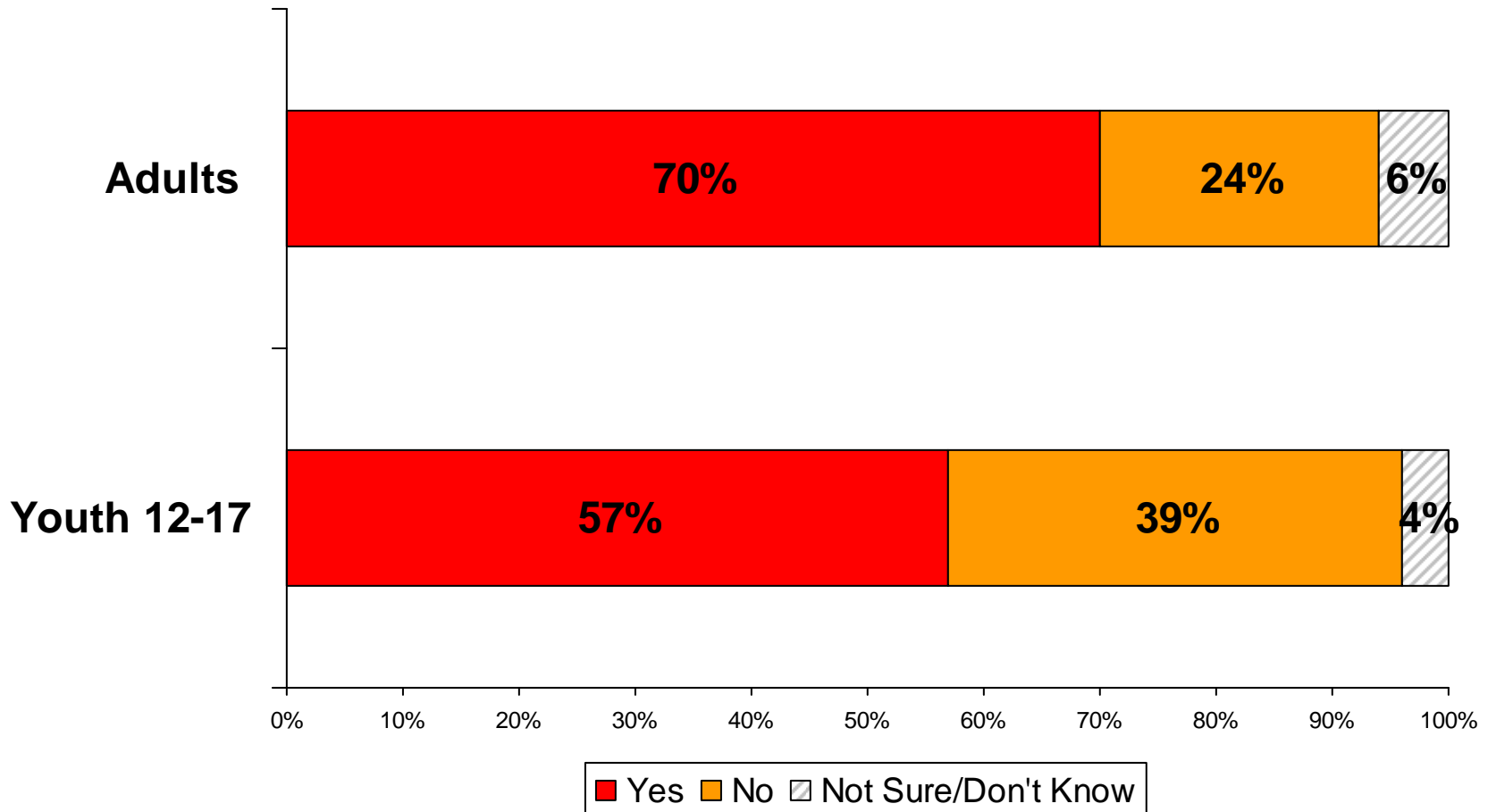


From what you know, when did the U.S. government first adopt rules imposing limits on how wars should be conducted? Was it during...



## Attitudes on use of land mines

The majority of both youth and adults believe that land mines should be banned, though nearly 2 in 5 youth oppose a ban.

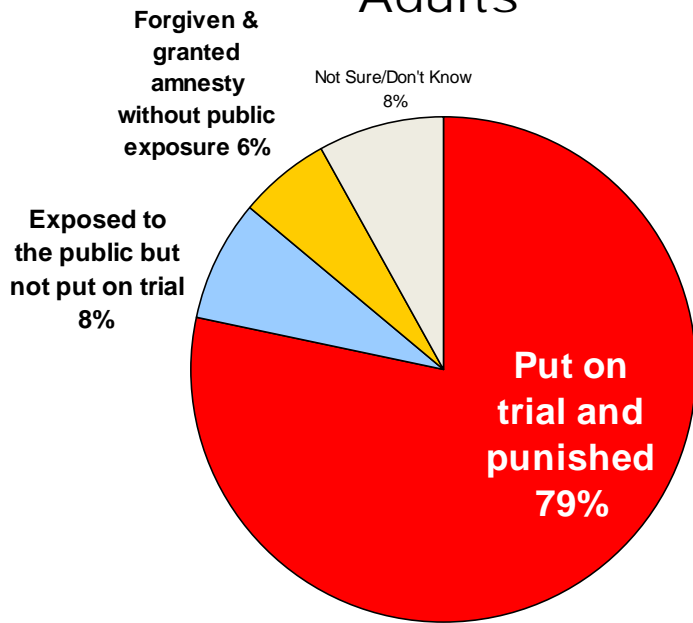


In your opinion, should government leaders ban the use of land mines because they have great potential for hurting civilians and for preventing use of the land long after the war is over?

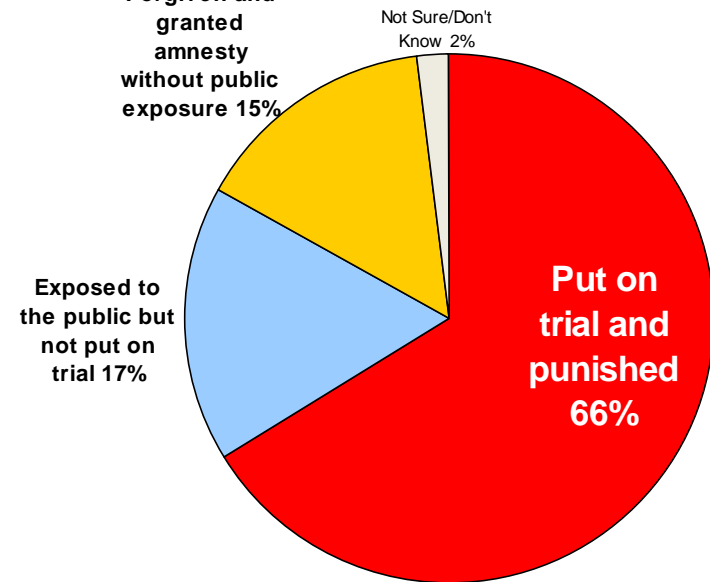
## Attitudes on punishment for violators

Adults are more likely than youth to believe that those who break the rules of war should be put on trial and punished.

Adults



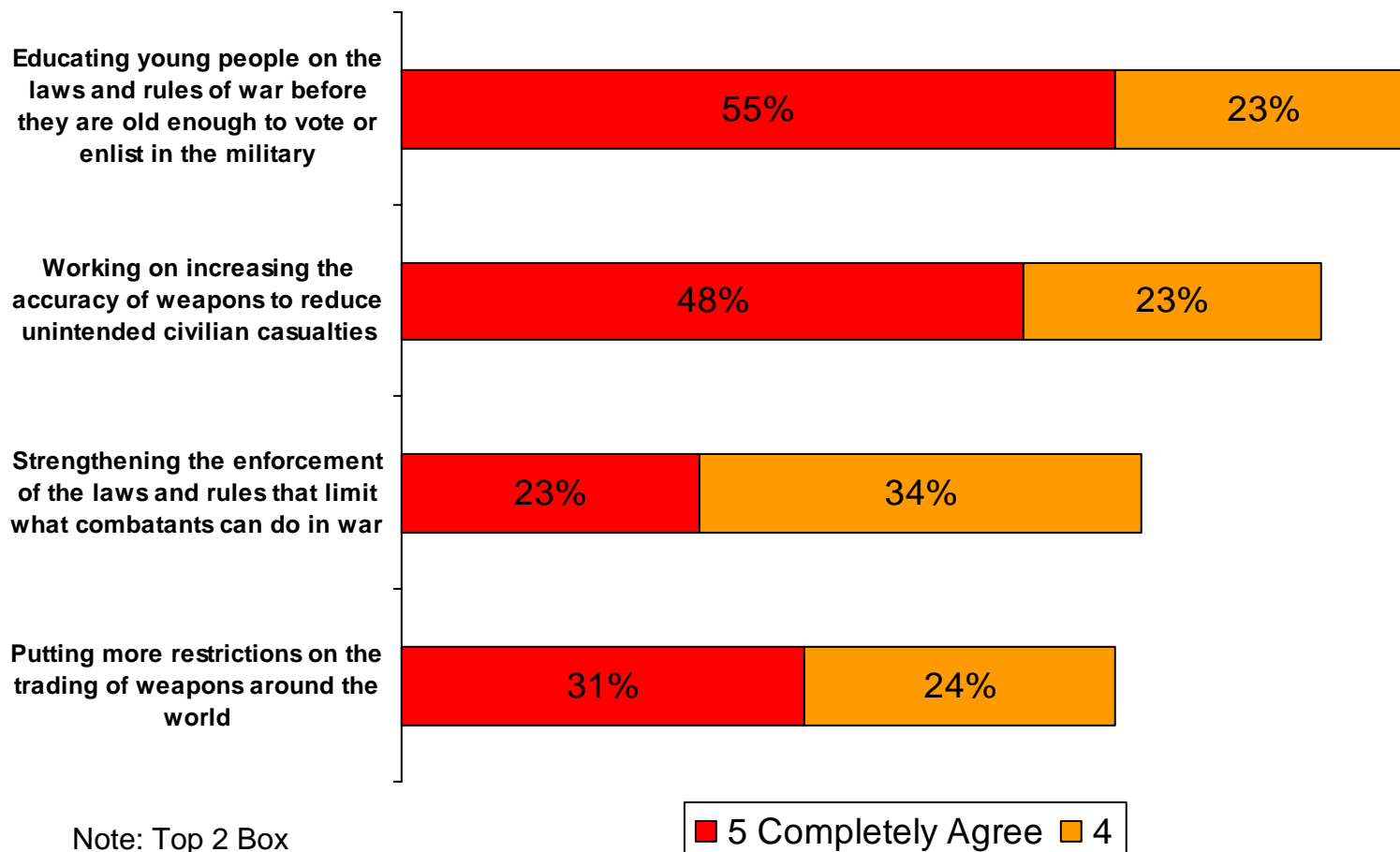
Youth



When a war is over, how should those people who broke the rules of war be treated? Should they be . . .

## Attitudes on role of U.S. government in reducing war casualties

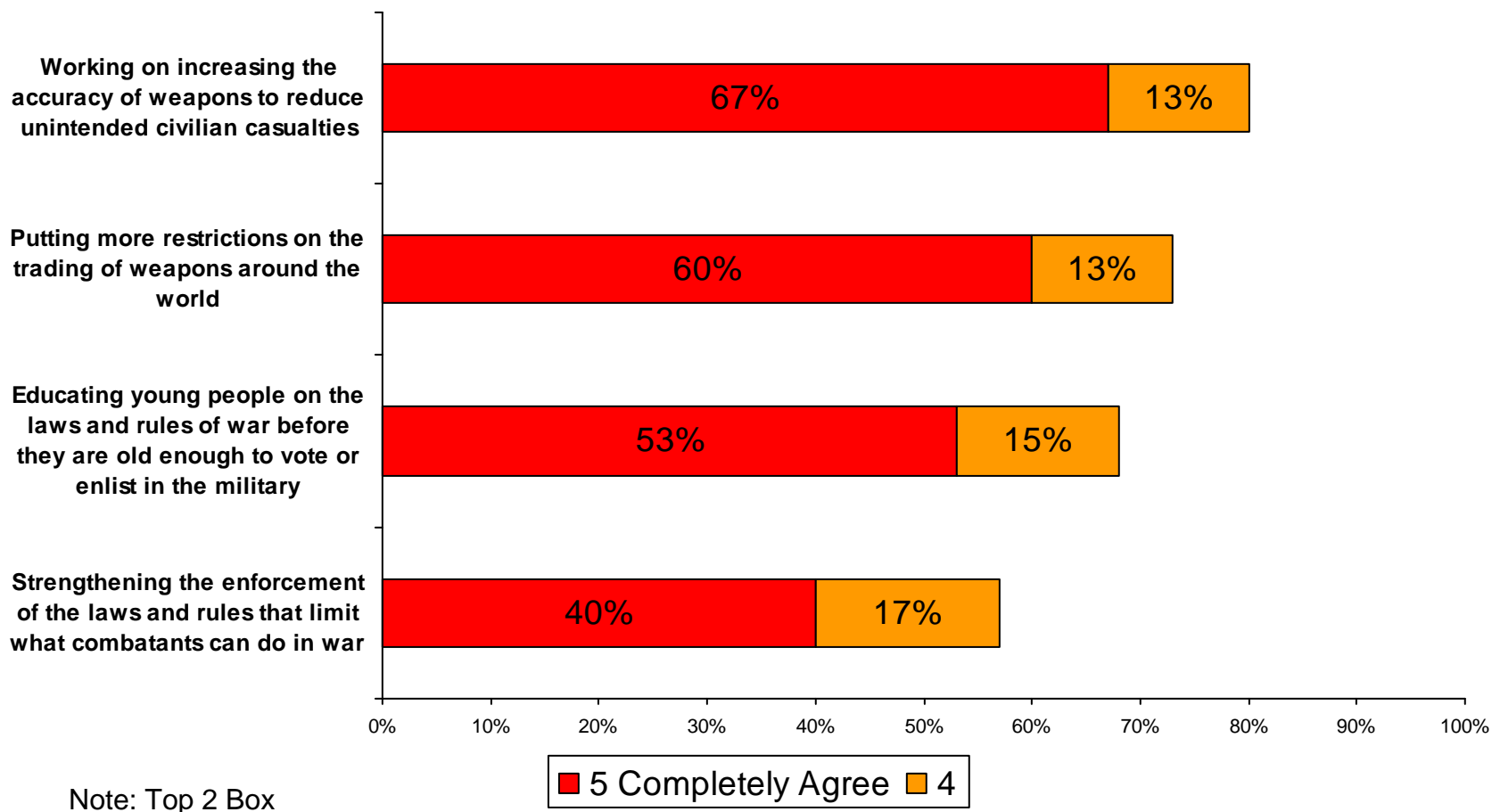
Youth: Nearly 8 in 10 believe that the U.S. should educate youth on the laws and rules of war.



Using a 5 point scale with 5 being completely agree and 1 being completely disagree, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the U.S. government should take the following actions to

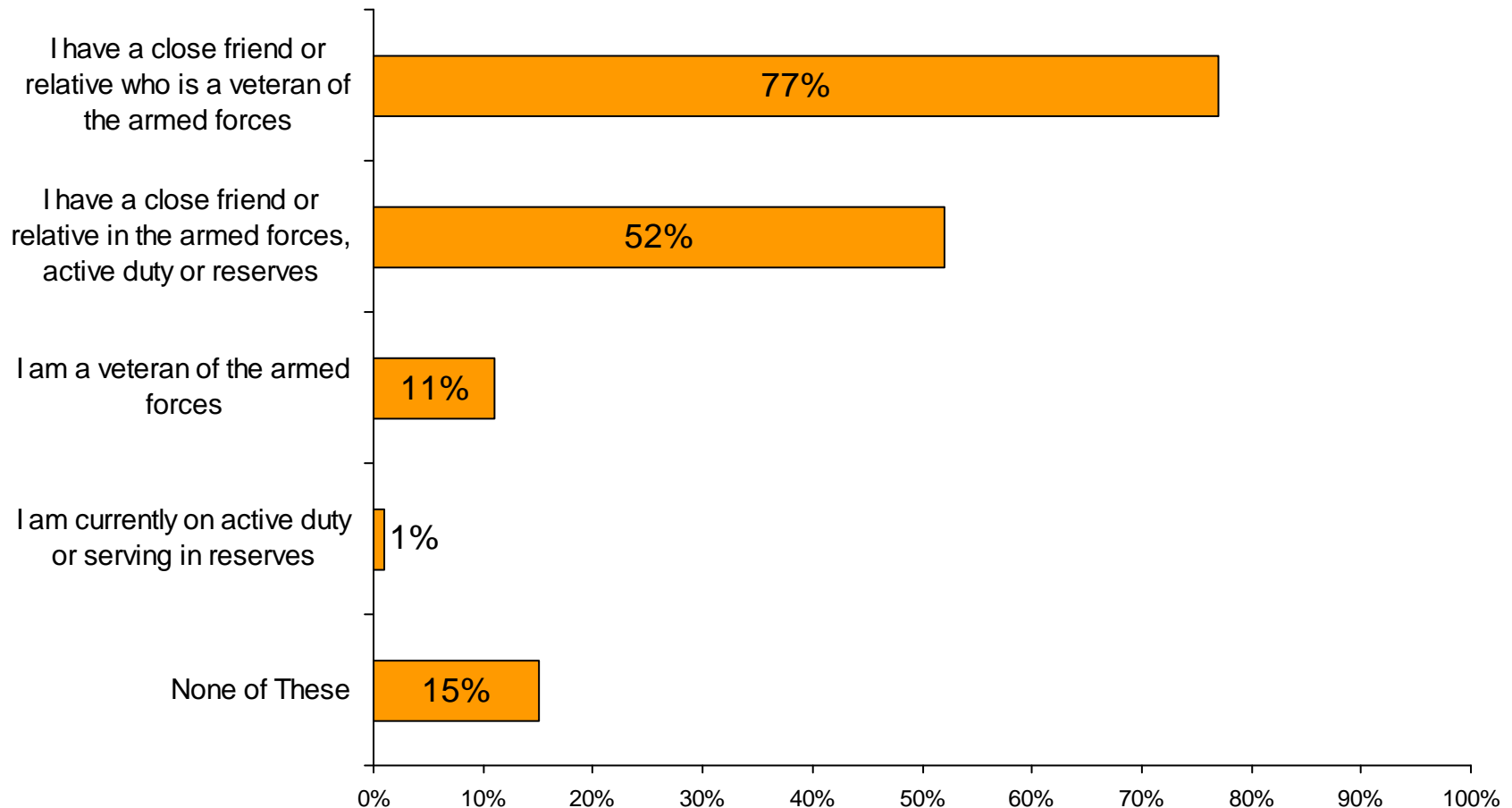
## Attitudes on role of U.S. government in reducing war casualties

Adults: 8 in 10 believe that the U.S. should increase the accuracy of weapons to reduce unintended casualties.



Using a 5 point scale with 5 being completely agree and 1 being completely disagree, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the U.S. government should take the following actions to reduce the number of civilians who are hurt in war?

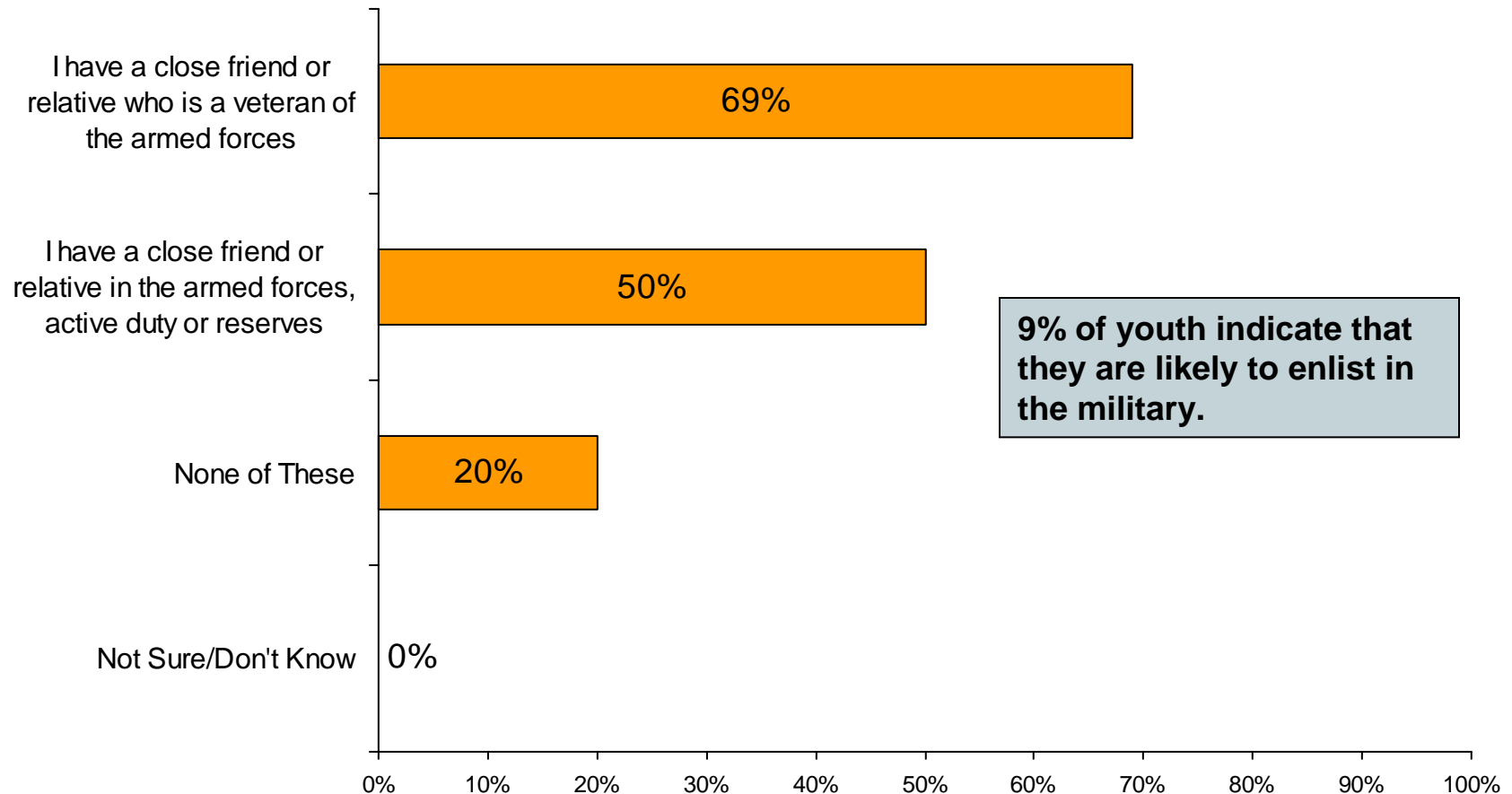
Adults: More than 3 in 4 have a close friend or relative who is a veteran of the armed forces.



Which of the following statements, if any, applies to you?



Youth: Nearly 7 in 10 have a close friend or relative who is a veteran of the armed forces.



Which of the following statements, if any, applies to you?