

A Political Profile of Taiwan's Youth:
Democratic Support, Natural independence, and
Commitment to Defense

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Three Concerns

- This analysis uses recent survey data to address three major concerns regarding recent Taiwan's democratic development and pay special attention to young people's political attitudes:
 - Democratic support
 - Preference on future cross-Strait relations
 - Commitment to defense

Some Images of Taiwanese Youth

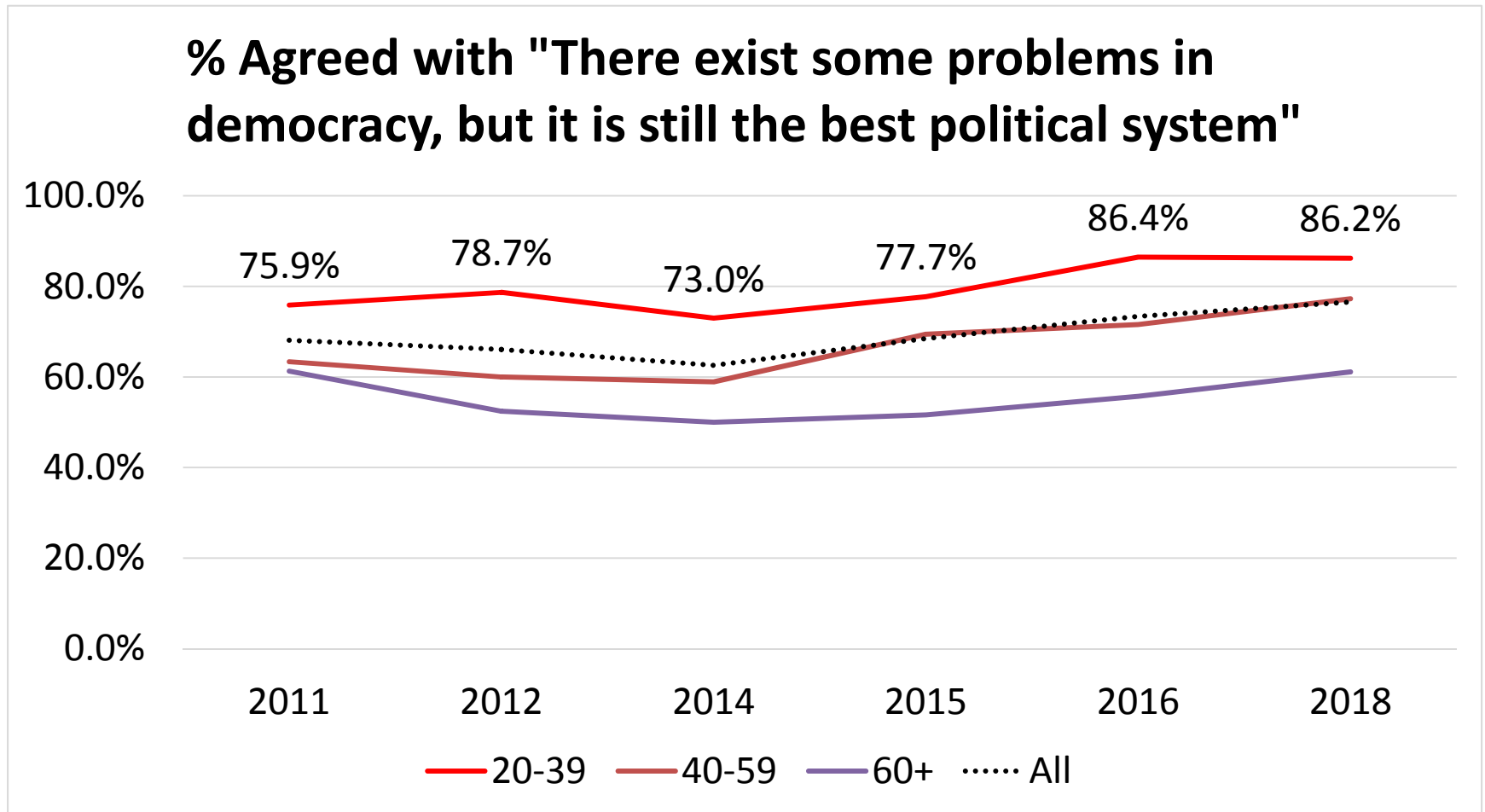
- The youth in the West are less committed to democratic values, how about the youth in Taiwan?
- Naturally pro-independence
- Strawberries: weak commitment to self-defense
- Are Taiwanese youth irresponsibly provocative while not committed in democracy?

Dataset

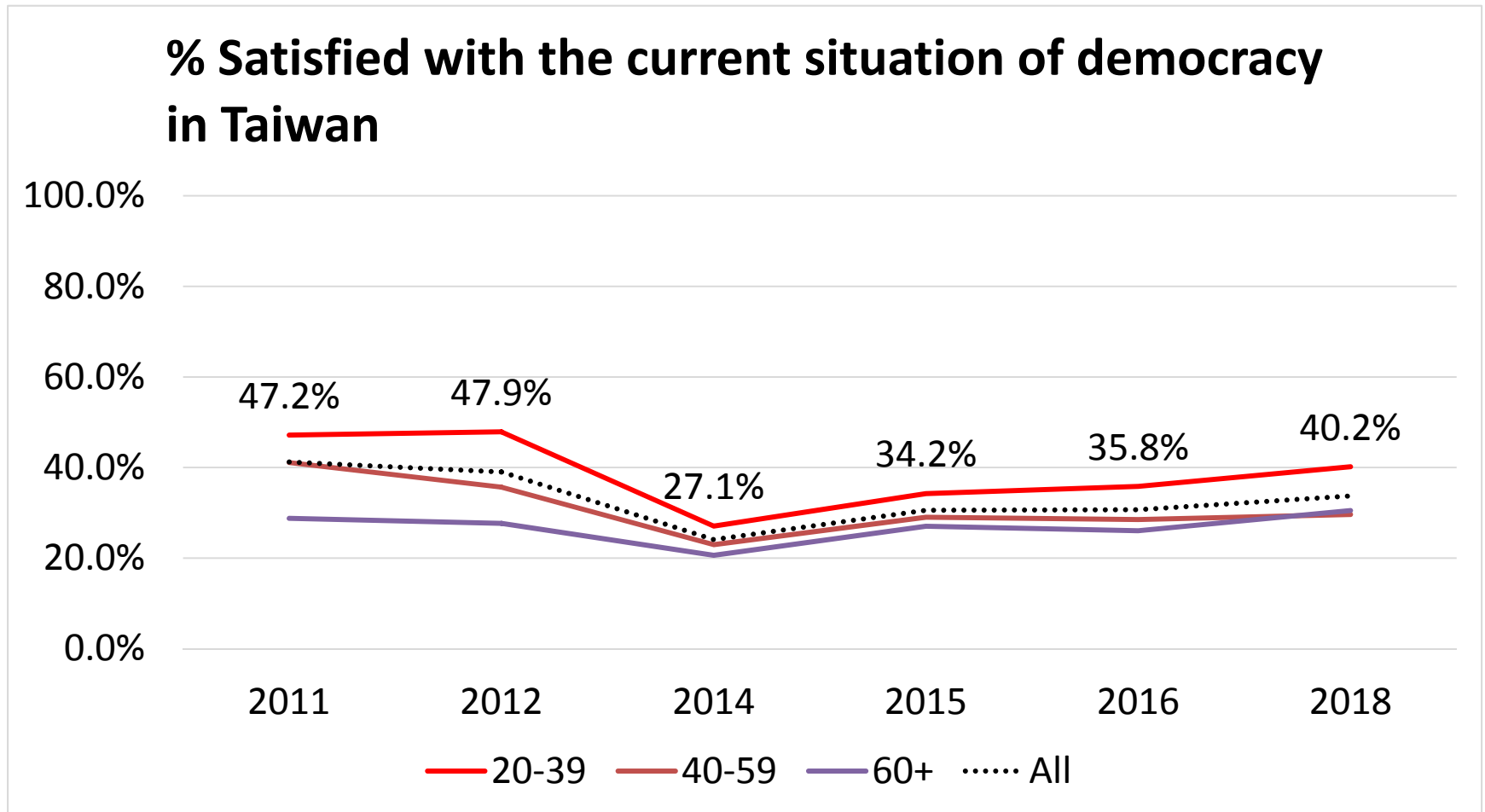
- Since 2011, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy has commissioned a series of surveys to academic survey institutes (such as Election Study Center at National Chengchi University) in order to understand Taiwanese attitudes toward democratic and social inequality issues.
- Except the most recent wave, all data have been released to the public.
- The most recent wave oversampled those ages under 39 so that we can easily compare two age cohorts:
 - Under 39 sample size: 825 (51.7%) (population 38%)
 - Over 40 sample size: 747 (46.8%) (population 62%)

Democratic Support

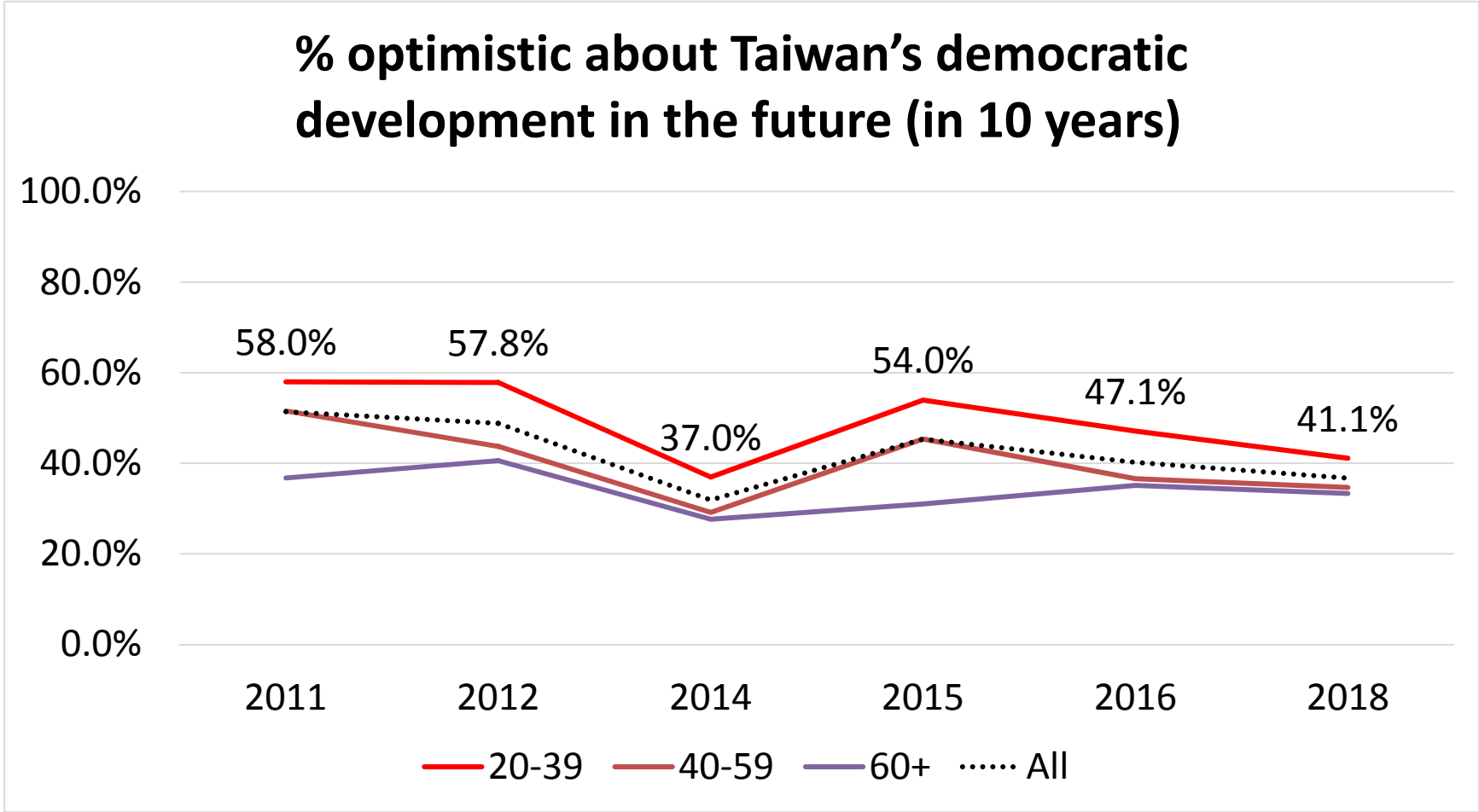
Democratic System Support (by Age)



Democratic Satisfaction (by age)

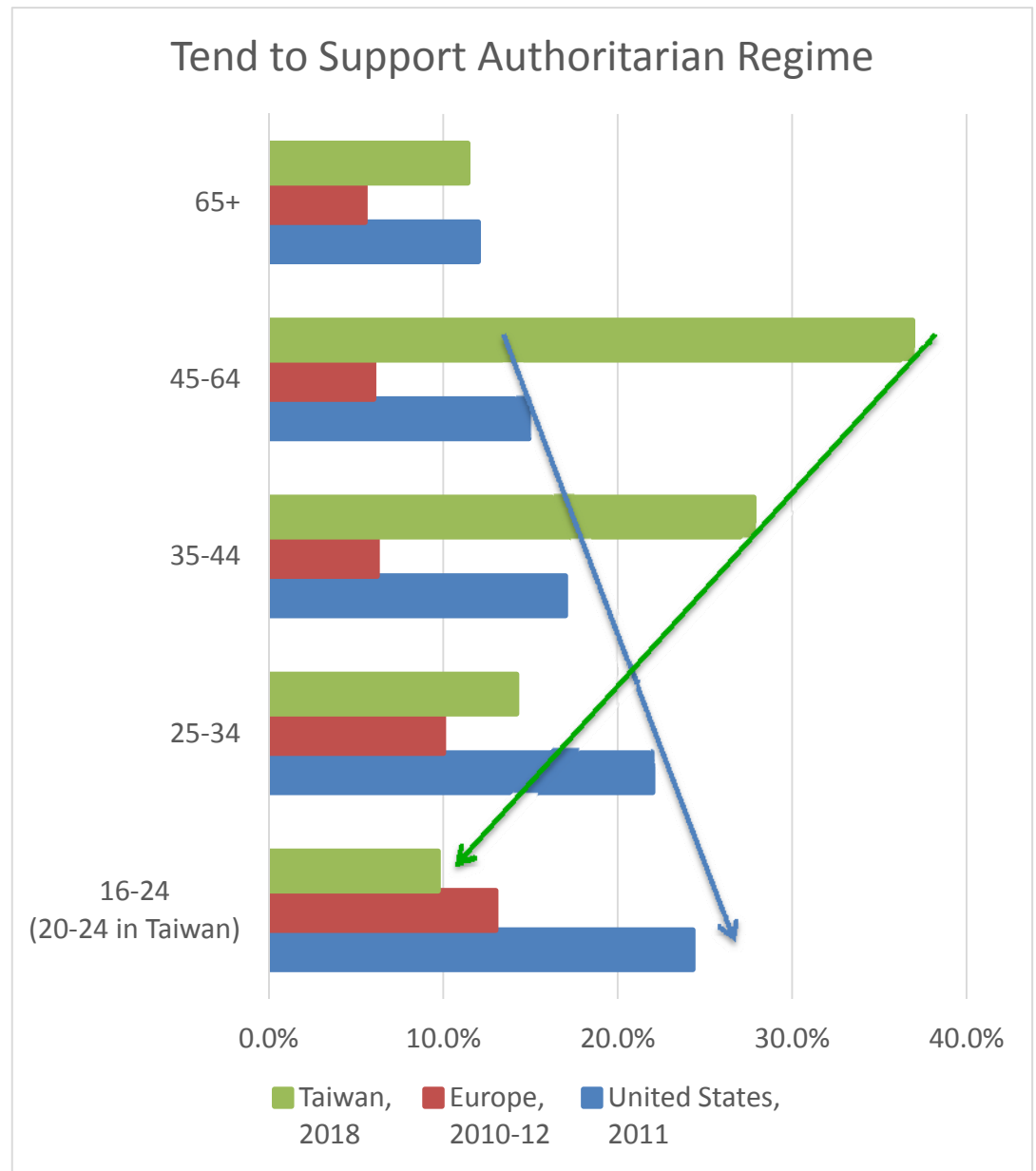


Democratic Optimism (by age)



A Comparison with Foa and Mounk (2016) *

- The question in U.S. and Europe is:
 - “Having a democratic political system is a bad or very bad way to run this country”
- The question in Taiwan is:
 - “Do you feel good or bad if we have a authoritarian regime in our country”. And the trend of Taiwan is the proportion of answering “Good”.



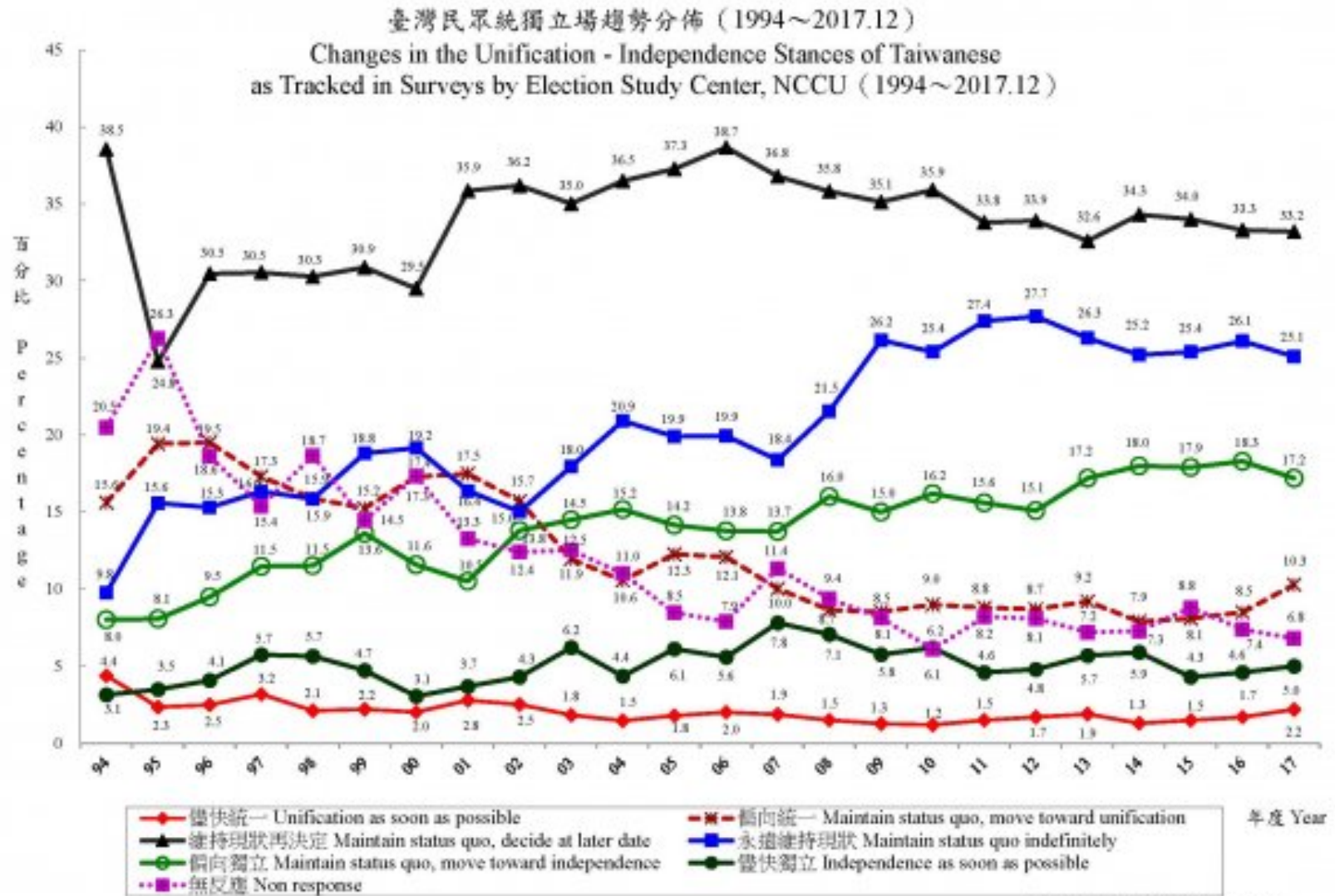
* Foa & Mounk (2016), “Democratic Disconnect,” JoD, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 5-17.

Attitudes toward Democracy in Taiwan

- Unlike in the West, support for democratic political system is always high
 - Even growing higher among youngsters
 - Low support for the authoritarian alternative
- Relatively low democratic satisfaction and democratic optimism
 - Yet, young people still have relatively high degree of satisfaction and optimism than their elder counterparts.

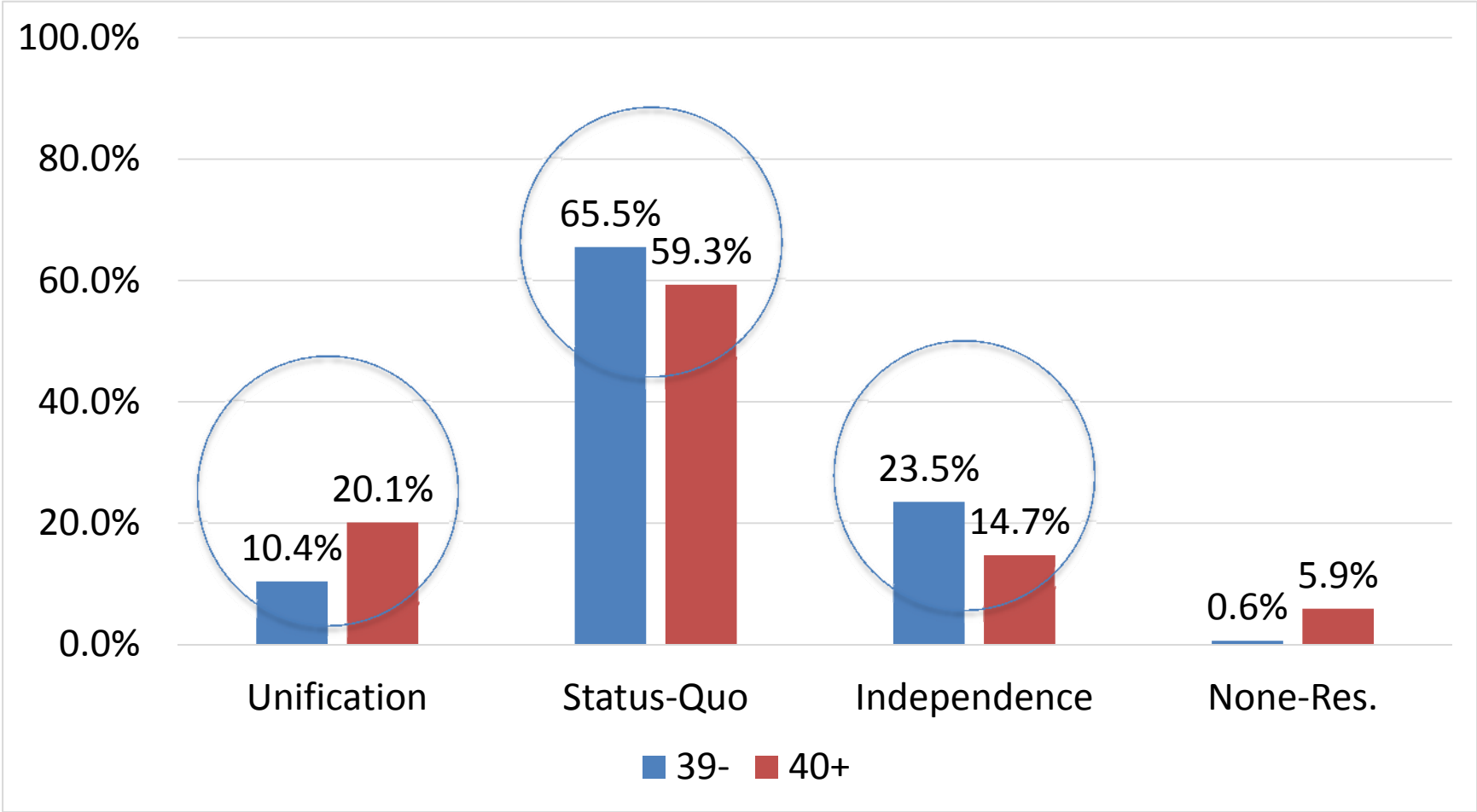
Future Cross-Strait Relations

Traditional 6-category measurement of people's attitude toward X-strait relations By the Center for Electoral Studies, National Chengchi University

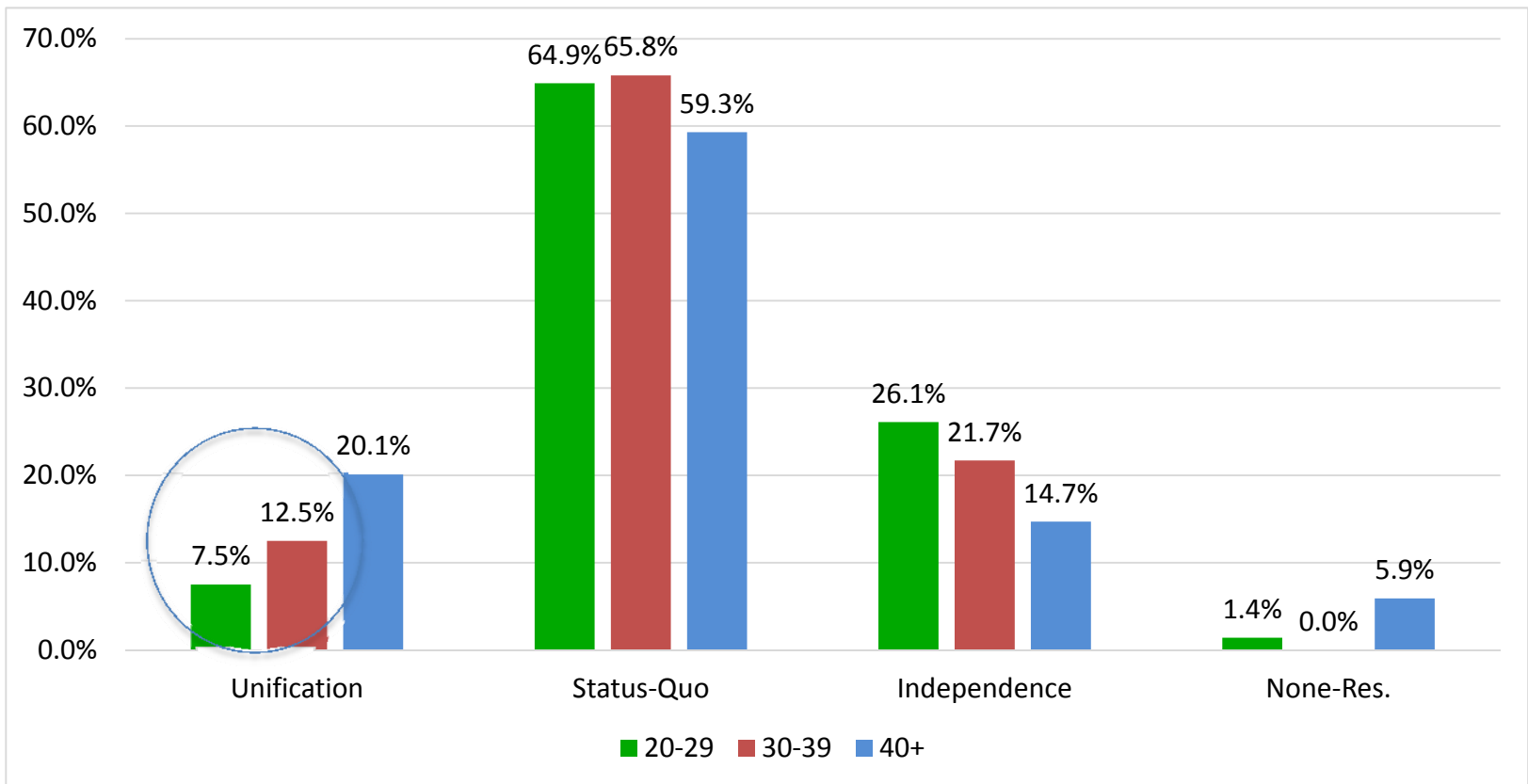


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Unification, SQ, and Independence (by age)*



“Naturally Independent Generation”? (20-29 vs. 30-39)* Unification/SQ/Independence

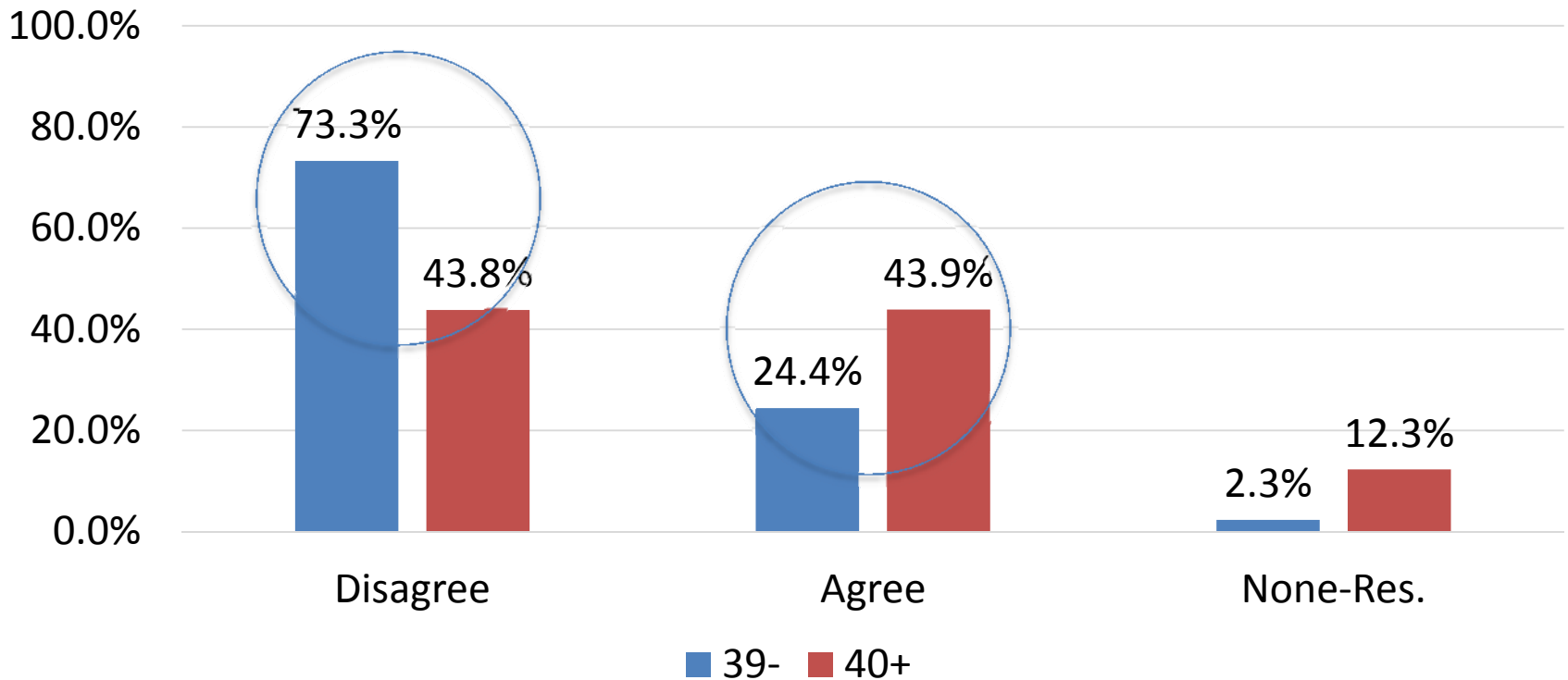


Alternative measurement of attitude toward independence / unification

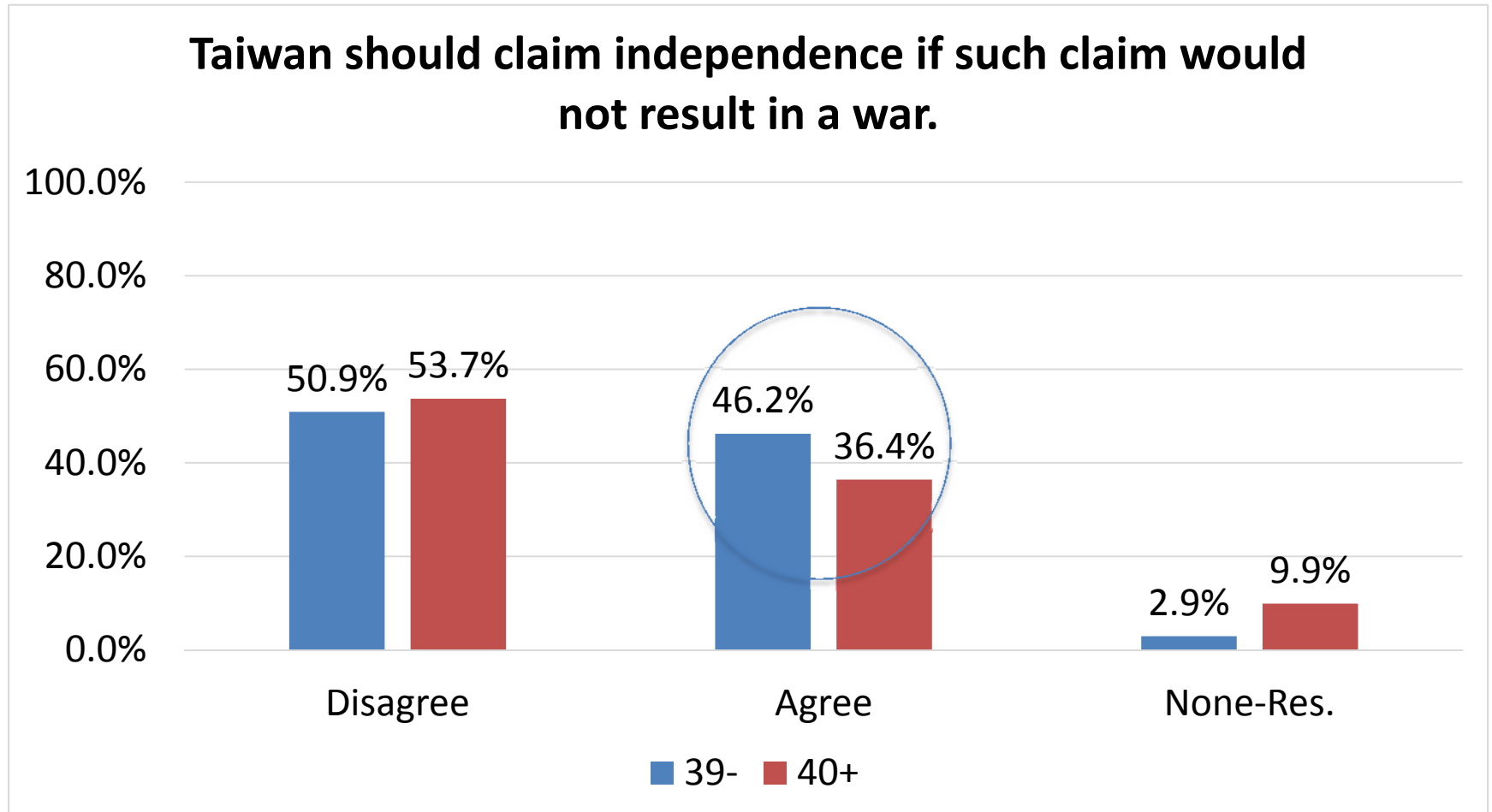
- Nai-te Wu (2005), “Bread and Love: A Preliminary Exploration of Taiwanese National Identity,” Taiwan Journal of Political Science, 9, 2, 5-39.
- The two sides should be unified if China becomes a democratic country
- Taiwan should claim independent if such claim would not result in a war.

Unification if China Democratizes (by age)*

The two sides of the Strait should be unified if mainland China becomes a democratic country.



Independence without Cost (by age)*

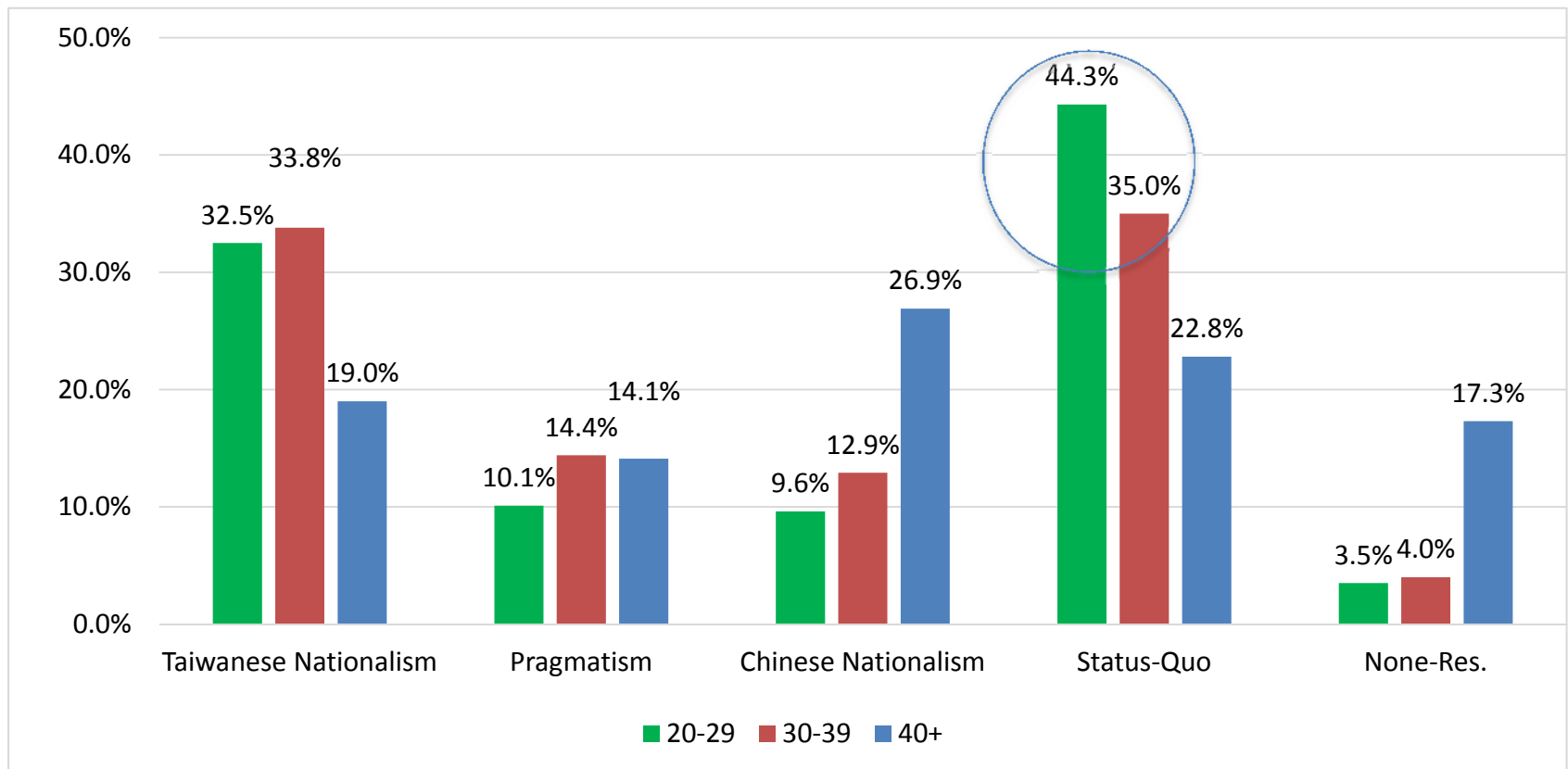


Wu's Classification

Conditional Independence	Conditional Unification			Total
	Agree	Disagree	No Response	
Agree	209 (13.1%) Pragmatism	424 (26.5%) Taiwanese Nationalism	29 (1.8%)	662 (41.5%)
Disagree	298 (18.7%) Chinese Nationalism	500 (31.3%) Status Quo Recognition	34 (2.1%)	832 (52.1%)
No Response	24 (1.5%)	26 (1.6%)	53 (3.3%)	13 (6.4%)
Total	531 (33.2%)	950 (59.5%)	116 (7.3%)	1,597 (100.0%)

“Naturally Independent Generation”?

- Wu’s Classification

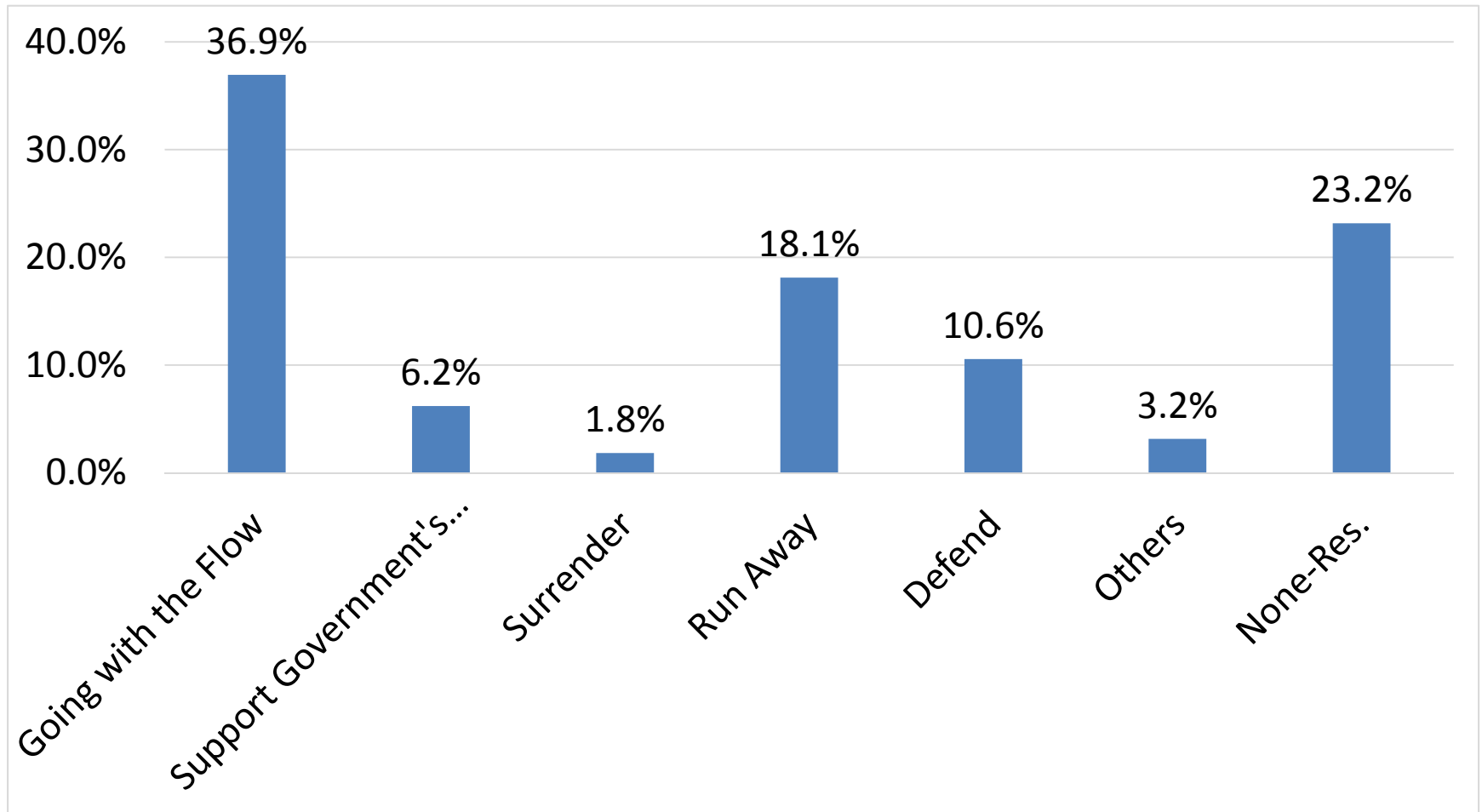


Attitude toward Cross-strait relations

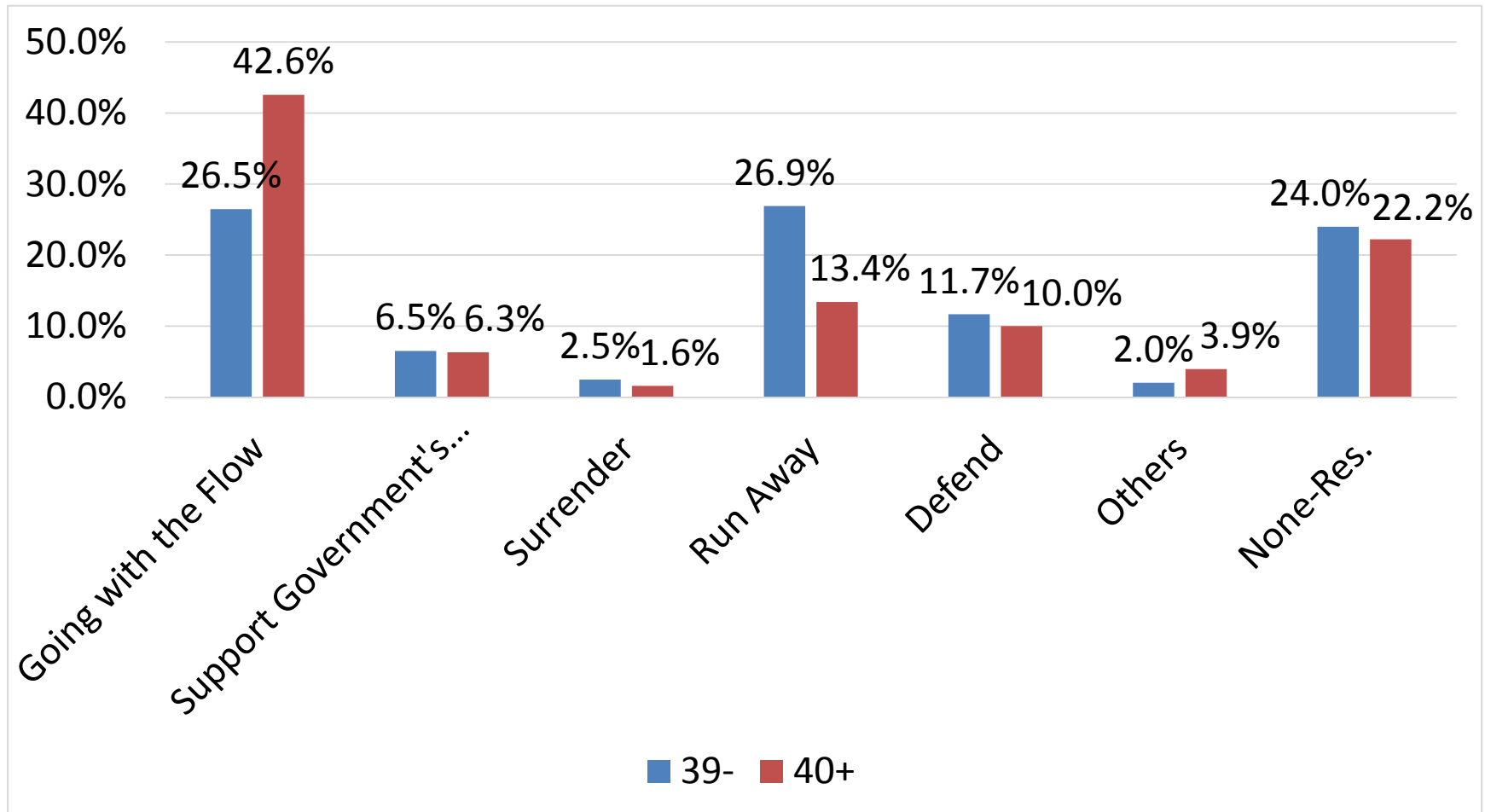
- Taiwanese youth under 40, like the older age cohort, are predominantly pro-status-quo.
- Taiwanese youth under 40 are significantly less pro-unification than the older cohort.
- With Nai-te Wu's classification, the Taiwanese youth under 40 :
 - have significantly stronger Taiwan nationalism
 - have significantly weaker China nationalism
 - are significantly pro status quo
- However, the cohort under 30 are significantly more pro status quo than the cohort of 30-40.

Commitment of Self-defense

“If Taiwan and mainland China go to war, what would you do?” (Niou 2017)

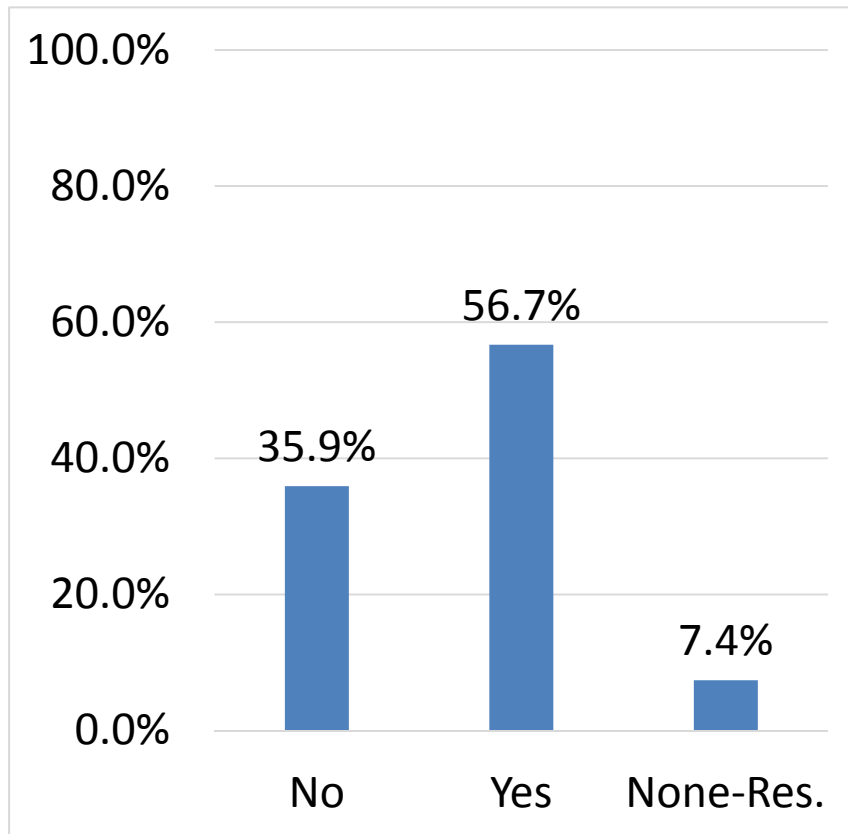


“If Taiwan and mainland China go to war, what would you do?” (by age)

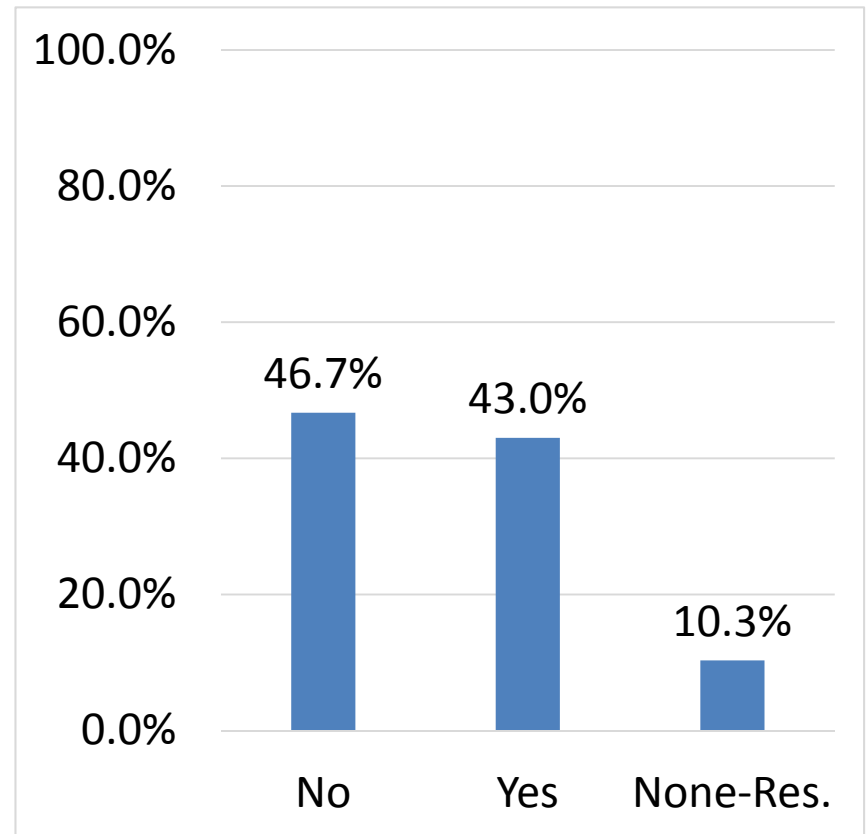


Conditional Self-defense Determination (if Taiwan Independence)

Would you fight for Taiwan if Taiwan formally announce independence that causes the mainland China to use force against Taiwan?

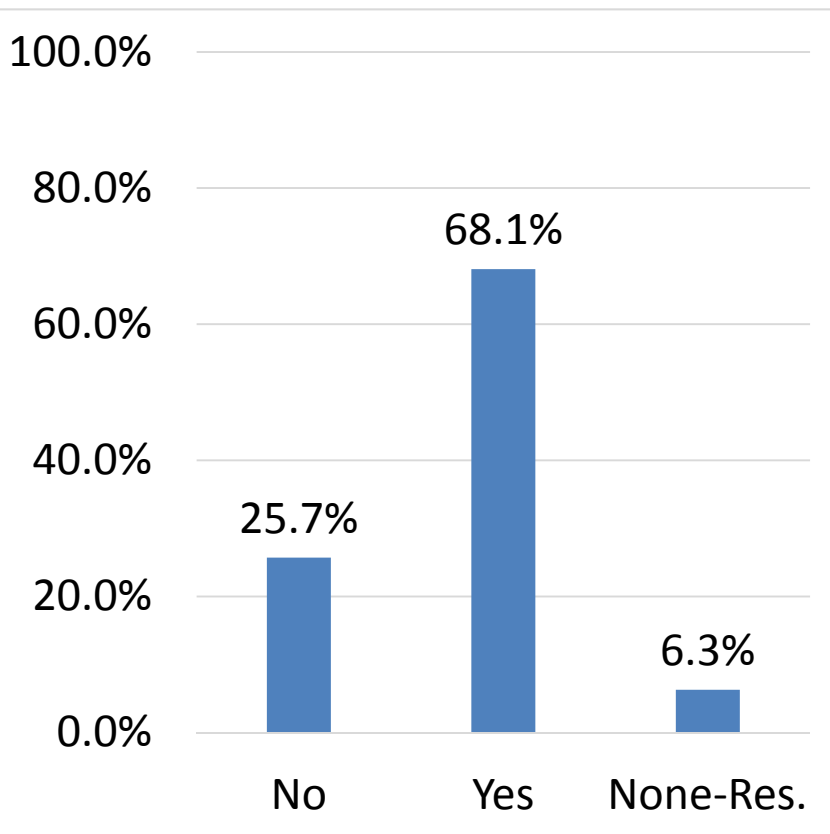


Then how do you think most people in Taiwan would do?

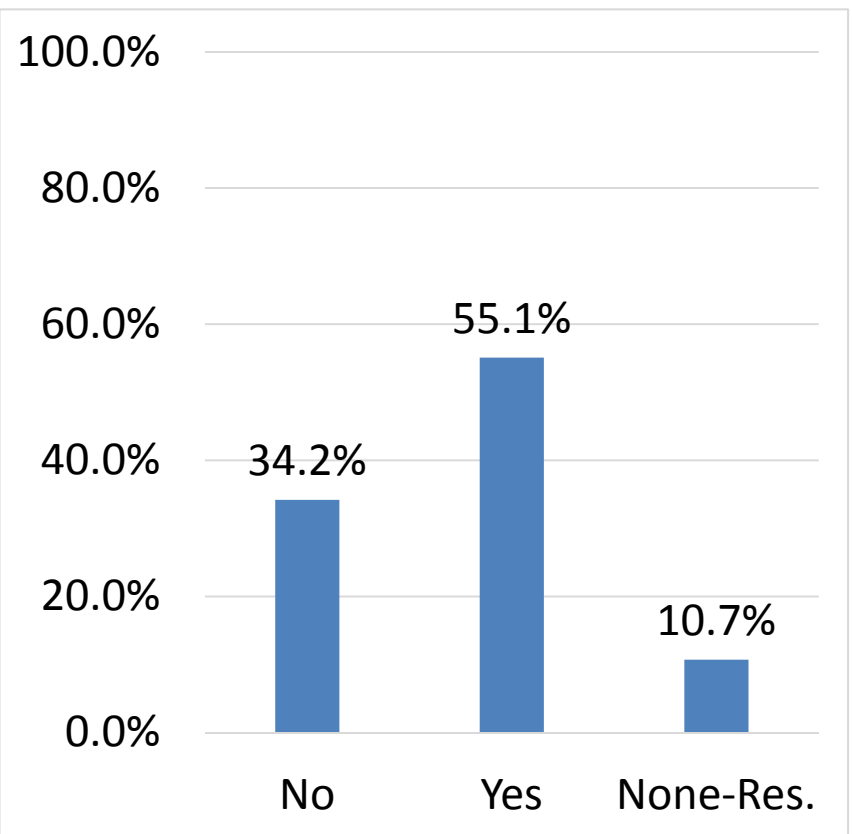


Conditional Self-defense Determination (if unification by China's Coercion)

Would you fight for Taiwan if the mainland China uses force against Taiwan for unification?

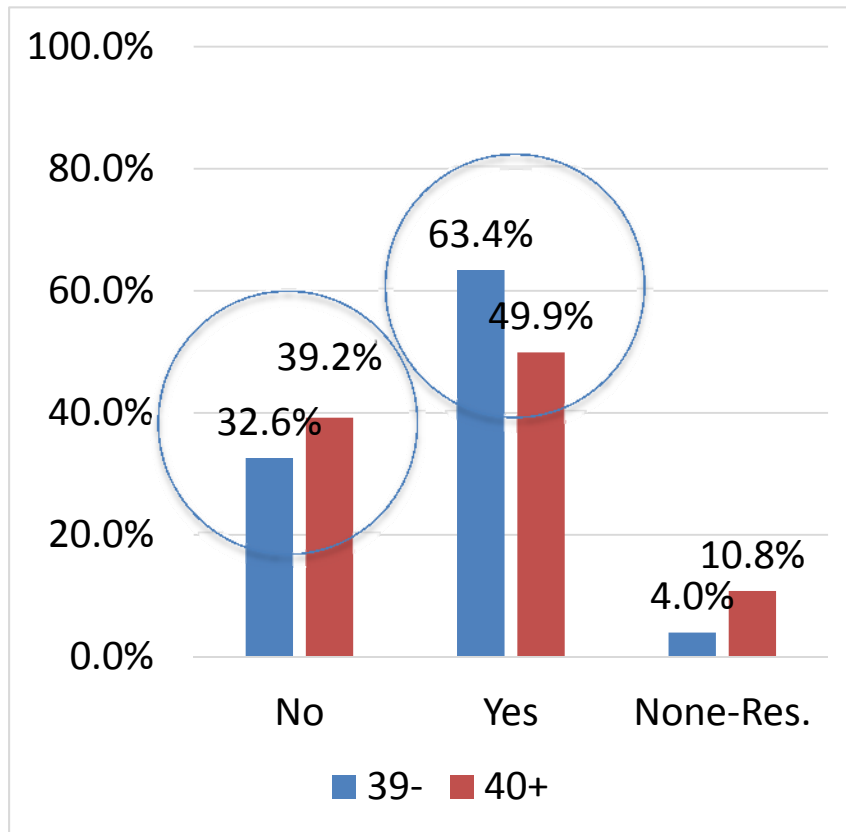


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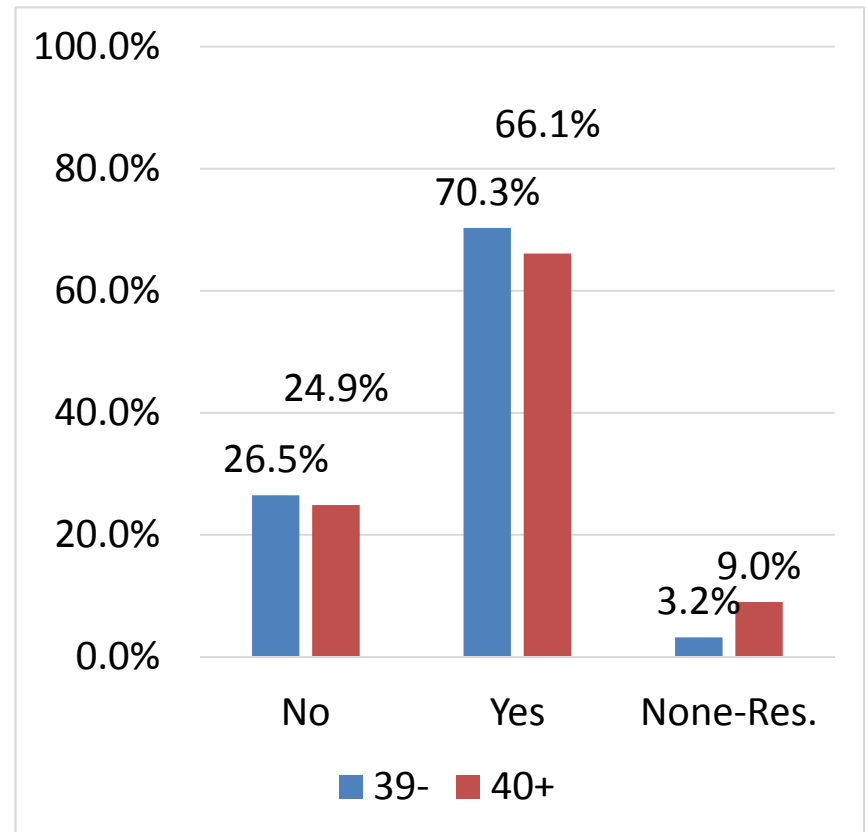


Willingness to Fight (by age)*

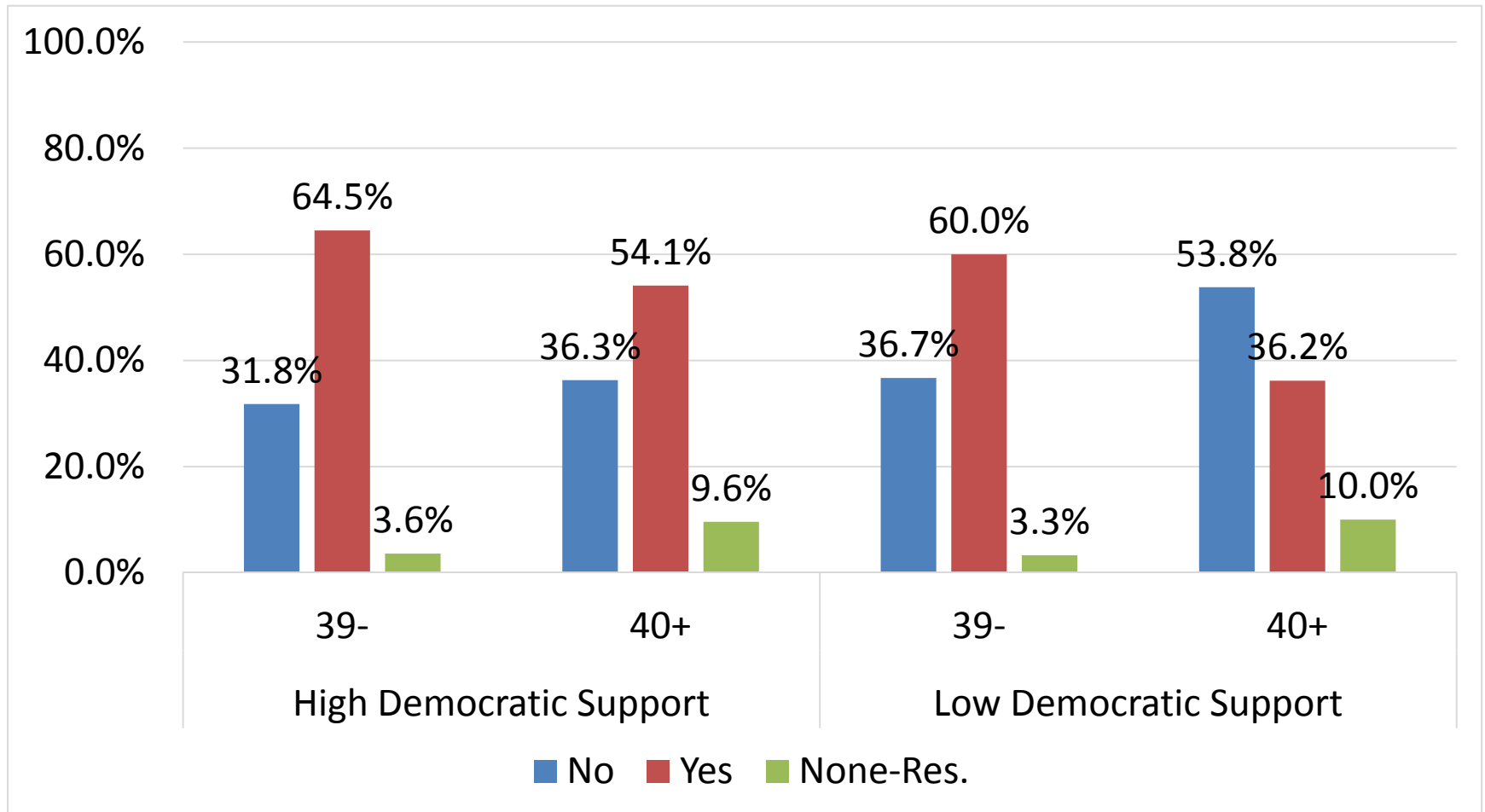
Would you fight for Taiwan if Taiwan formally announce independence that causes the mainland China to use force against Taiwan?



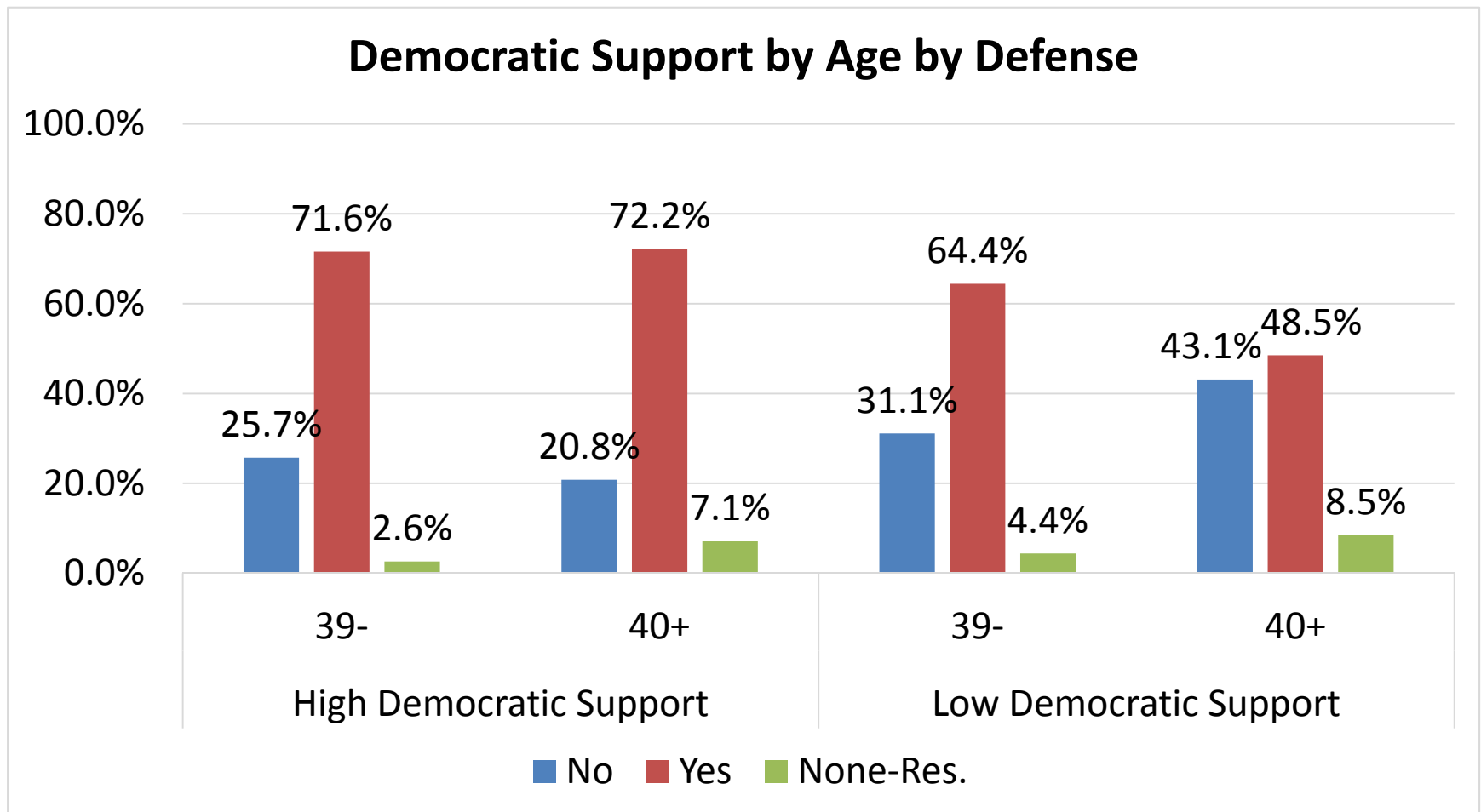
Would you fight for Taiwan if the mainland China uses force against Taiwan for unification?



Fight for Independence (by age & democratic support)



Fight for China's Coercion (by age & by democratic support)



Attitude toward Self-Defense Determination

- Almost 70% of the respondent are willing to fight if China uses force to coerce unification.
- There is no difference between the old and young in being willing to fight if China use force to coerce unification.
- Commitment to democratic value helps the commitment to fight against China's threat of coercive unification.

Conclusion

- Taiwanese youth are not irresponsible provocative . They have strong commitment to democratic value and self-defense.
- Taiwanese youth have stronger Taiwan nationalism. But the 20-29 age cohort has stronger tendency to maintain status quo than other age cohort.
- Among the youth of 20-29, more identify with maintaining status quo than Taiwan nationalism.
- The essence of “natural independence” actually is “anti unification.”
- In facing China’s military threat for coercive unification, around 70% of Taiwanese are committed to fight.
- Democratic values help Taiwanese people to fight against the threat from China.