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Attitudes Towards the RSPCA's Assured Scheme

Research Report

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Key findings

- 68% of people know of the RSPCA Assured scheme.
- 89% of people care strongly about the welfare of farmed animals.
- For 74% of people, concern about the welfare of farmed animals strongly influences what products they buy.
- 'Trust in the RSPCA to be transparent about how farmed animals are treated' erodes by a third after participants watch [this video](#).
- After watching investigation footage, 50% believe the RSPCA's continued endorsement of the Assured scheme contradicts its mission to prevent cruelty to animals.
- After watching investigation footage, almost a third (29%) believe the RSPCA Assured label should be dropped.
- 36% of people believe there is no truly kind way of farming animals.
- 30% of people believe we should stop farming animals altogether.
- 60% believe the best certification schemes can't ensure animal welfare.
- 35% of people believe the RSPCA should support a transition away from farming animals.
- 36% of people believe the RSPCA should support a transition to a plant-based future.
- 75% believe the RSPCA should protect the lives of farmed animals as much as it does dogs and cats.
- 80% of people believe welfare-washing is a serious issue (rising to 89% after watching investigation footage).
- 49% of people are considering reducing meat in their diet.
- 22% are considering eliminating meat completely from their diet.
- There's a 6% increase of people wanting to eliminate meat completely from their diet after watching the video.
- A plot of how much participants changed their attitude after watching the video, split by question, [can be found on page 8](#).

Demographic findings

- Little difference in attitudes between income brackets at pre-test, but watching the video had a much larger effect on improving attitudes as you go down income brackets - particularly for dropping the scheme.
- Political left are more influenced by the video to support dropping the scheme.
- There is an up-tick in support for plant-based eating/food transition amongst those on the furthest right of the political spectrum. (Needs further investigation.)
- No obvious differences between regions.

Method

Participants

A representative sample (based on age, sex, and political orientation) of 2,000 UK participants were recruited through Prolific.co. After removing participants who either could not play sound, or who did not pass the attention checks, we had a sample size of 1,979 participants for the analysis.

Procedure

At the start of the survey, we performed a check that participants were able to play sound through their computer. They were asked to play a video which contained the sound of a chicken, and to select which animal they were able to hear (from the options of: Dog, Cat, Cow, Sheep, Chicken). Participants who selected an incorrect animal were disqualified from proceeding.

Next, they were asked to rate their awareness of the RSPCA Assured scheme and of welfare-washing.

"Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers - please answer as truthfully as possible." Responses were made on a seven-point scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.

1. I have previously heard of the RSPCA Assured label.
2. I have previously heard of welfare-washing.
3. I care strongly about the welfare of farmed animals.
4. Concern about the welfare of farmed animals influences which products I buy.

Next, they answered some demographic questions about their income, region, and political orientation (left-leaning vs right-leaning).

They then rated their agreement with a series of questions about the RSPCA on a seven-point scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.

1. I trust the RSPCA Assured scheme to be transparent about how farmed animals are treated.
2. The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring farms where animals don't get to go outside.
3. The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring intensive farms.
4. The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring slaughterhouses.
5. There is no truly kind way to farm animals.
6. If the 'best' certification schemes can't ensure animal welfare, we should stop farming animals altogether.
7. Even the best certification schemes can't ensure animal welfare.
8. The RSPCA should support a transition away from farming animals.
9. The RSPCA should support a transition to a plant-based future.
10. The RSPCA's continued endorsement of the Assured scheme contradicts its mission to prevent cruelty to animals.
11. I believe the RSPCA Assured label should be dropped.
12. I am considering reducing meat in my diet.
13. I am considering eliminating meat completely from my diet.
14. The RSPCA should protect the lives of farmed animals as much as it does dogs and cats.
15. I believe that welfare-washing is a serious issue.

Next, they answered an attention check ("If you are paying attention, please select 'Agree' for this question"). Those who did not pass were disqualified from continuing.

After these questions, they then watched a 48-second video comparing RSPCA Assured scheme adverts to undercover investigation footage. The video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/embed/GVI5cmPL-Ow>.

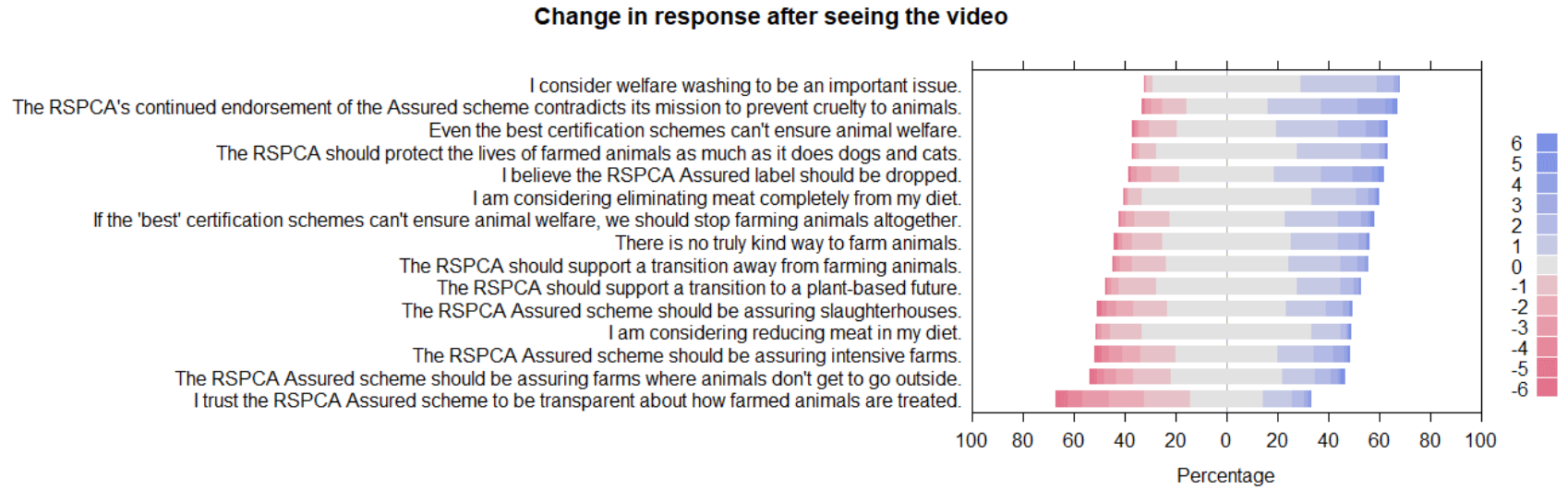
Finally, after watching the video, they were asked the same set of questions about the RSPCA Assured scheme as they had before watching the video, followed by another attention check.

Results

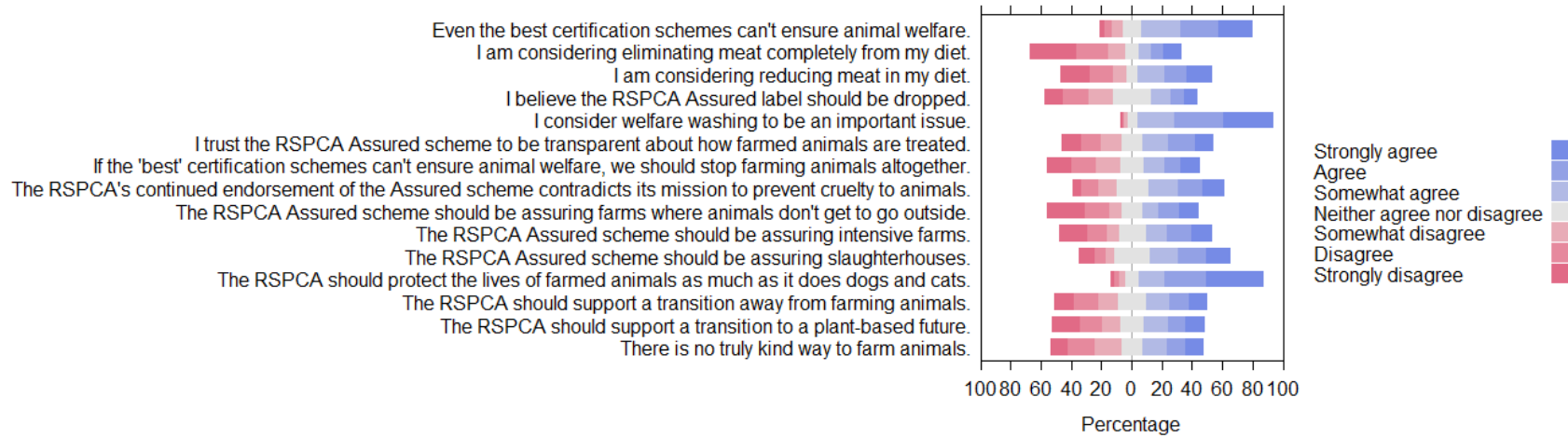
Percentage of participants who responded at least 'somewhat agree' with each statement.

Statement	Agreement	
	Before video	After video
I have previously heard of the RSPCA Assured label.	68%	
I have previously heard of welfare-washing.	24%	
I care strongly about the welfare of farmed animals.	89%	
Concern about the welfare of farmed animals influences which products I buy.	74%	
I trust the RSPCA Assured scheme to be transparent about how farmed animals are treated.	68%	46%
The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring farms where animals don't get to go outside.	36%	36%
The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring intensive farms.	41%	43%
The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring slaughterhouses.	53%	53%
There is no truly kind way to farm animals.	36%	39%
If the 'best' certification schemes can't ensure animal welfare, we should stop farming animals altogether.	30%	36%
Even the best certification schemes can't ensure animal welfare.	60%	73%
The RSPCA should support a transition away from farming animals.	35%	39%
The RSPCA should support a transition to a plant-based future.	36%	39%
The RSPCA's continued endorsement of the Assured scheme contradicts its mission to prevent cruelty to animals.	21%	50%
I believe the RSPCA Assured label should be dropped.	8%	29%
I am considering reducing meat in my diet.	49%	48%
I am considering eliminating meat completely from my diet.	22%	28%
The RSPCA should protect the lives of farmed animals as much as it does dogs and cats.	75%	82%
I believe that welfare-washing is a serious issue.	80%	89%

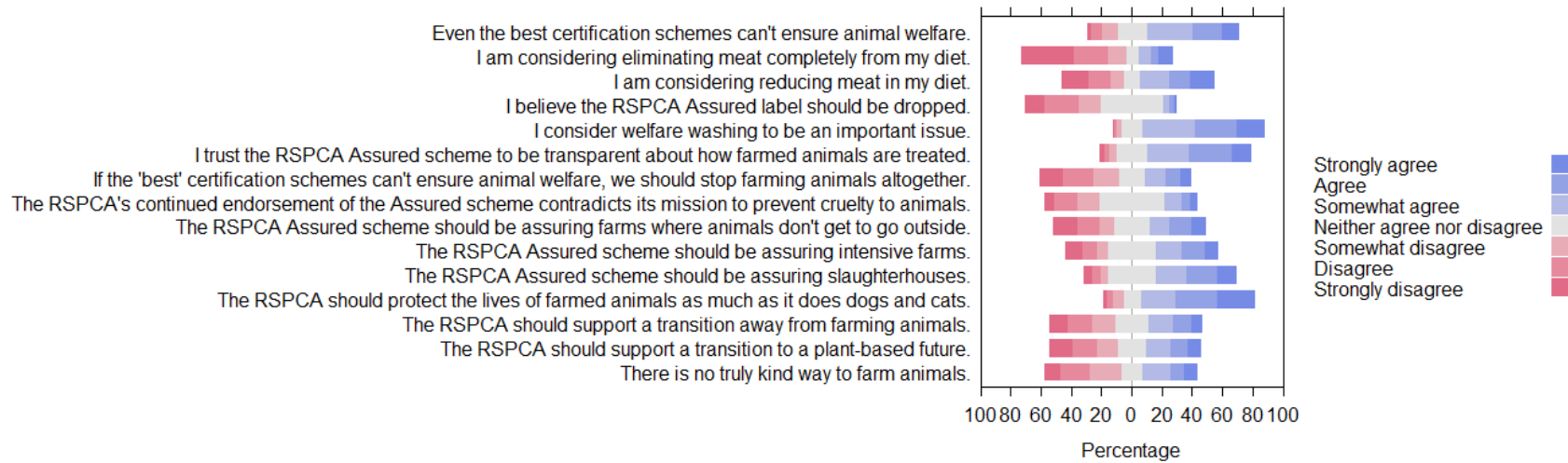
Change in response after seeing the video



post-test



pre-test



Factor analysis

The next stage of the analysis was to look at the effect of demographics variables (income, political orientation, and region). In order to reduce the complexity of the analysis, we performed a factor analysis, which reduced the number of variables down to four key factors: Support for dropping the scheme (dropAssured), attitudes towards the type of farms that should be assured (assureFarms), compassion towards animals (animalCare), and attitudes towards plant-based eating to avoid animal harm (plantBased). The following lists the scale items with absolute factor loading of at least 0.4 on each factor.

Support for dropping the Assured scheme

1. I trust the RSPCA Assured scheme to be transparent about how farmed animals are treated.
2. The RSPCA's continued endorsement of the Assured scheme contradicts its mission to prevent cruelty to animals.
3. I believe the RSPCA Assured label should be dropped.

Attitudes towards the type of farms that should be assured

1. The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring farms where animals don't get to go outside.
2. The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring intensive farms.
3. The RSPCA Assured scheme should be assuring slaughterhouses.

Compassion towards animals

1. The RSPCA should protect the lives of farmed animals as much as it does dogs and cats.
2. I believe that welfare-washing is a serious issue.

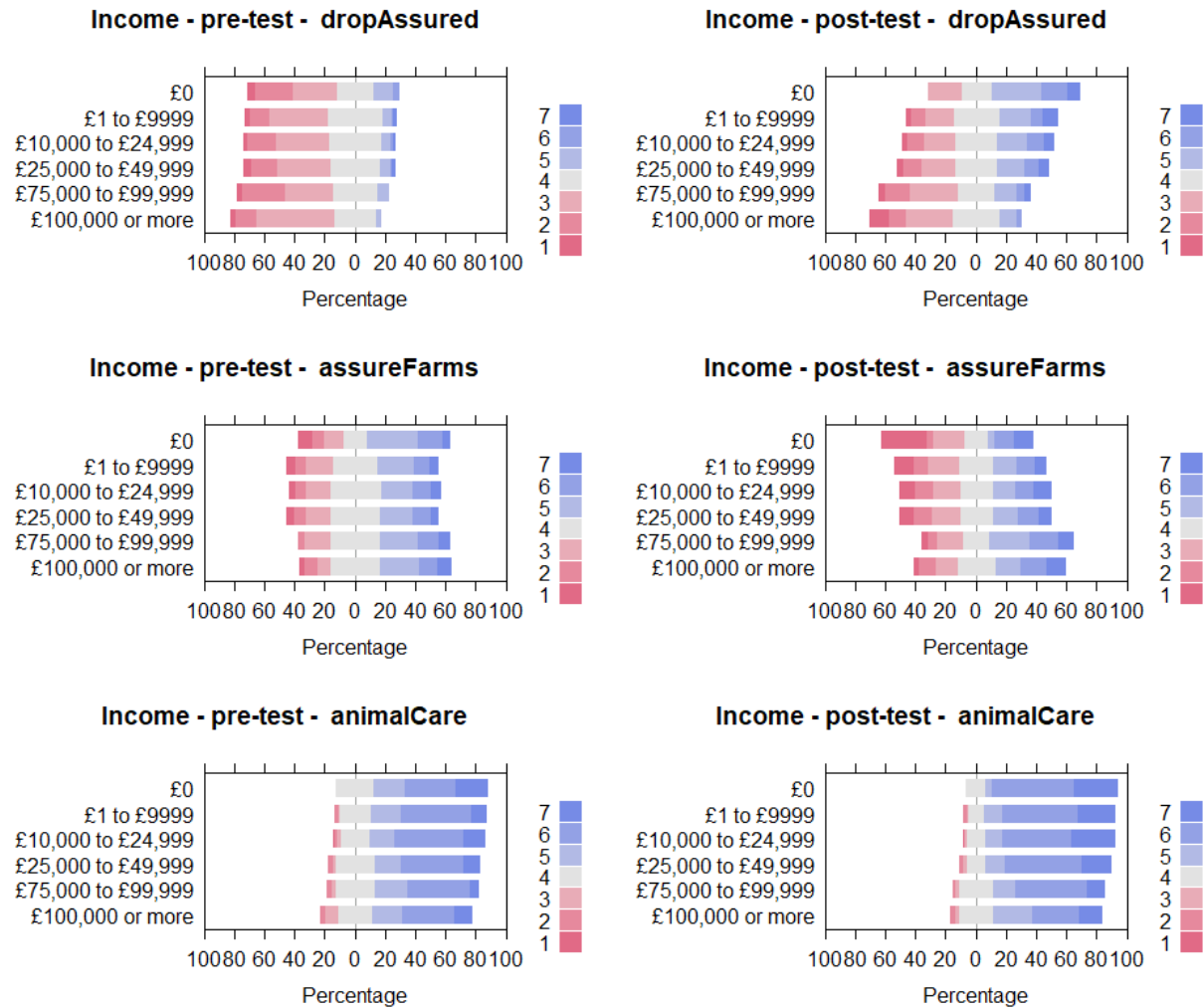
Attitudes towards plant-based eating to avoid animal harm

1. There is no truly kind way to farm animals.
2. If the 'best' certification schemes can't ensure animal welfare, we should stop farming animals altogether.

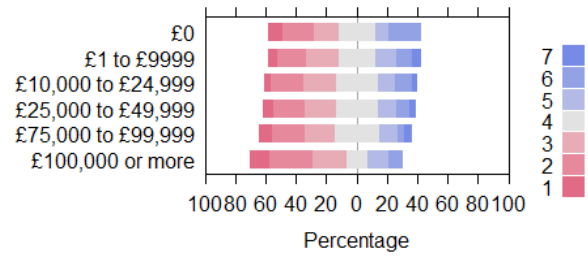
3. The RSPCA should support a transition away from farming animals.
4. The RSPCA should support a transition to a plant-based future.
5. I am considering reducing meat in my diet.
6. I am considering eliminating meat completely from my diet.

Split by income

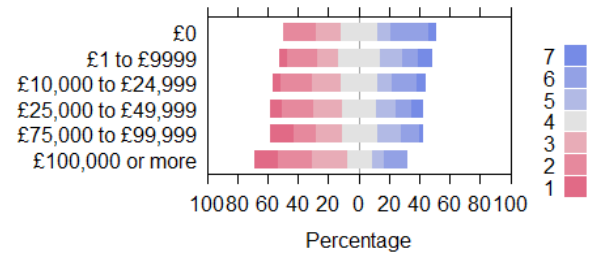
The following shows factor scores on each of the four factors, measured either at pre-test (left) or post-test (right)



Income - pre-test - plantBased

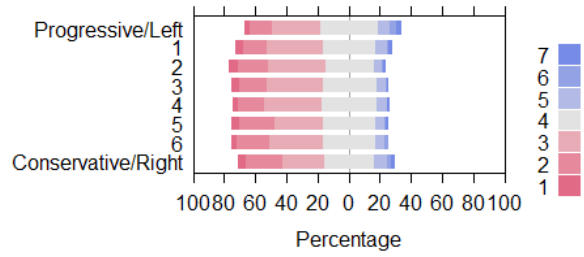


Income - post-test - plantBased

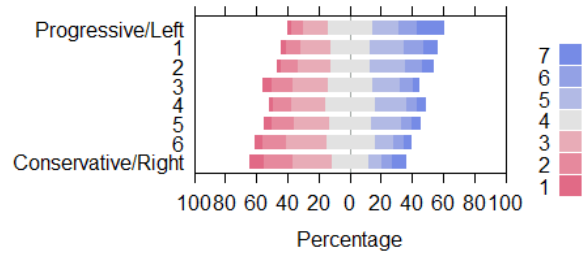


Split by political orientation

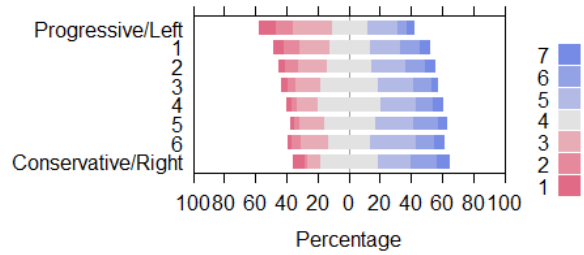
Pre-test - dropAssured



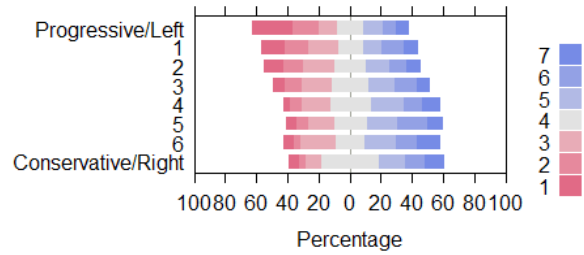
Post-test - dropAssured



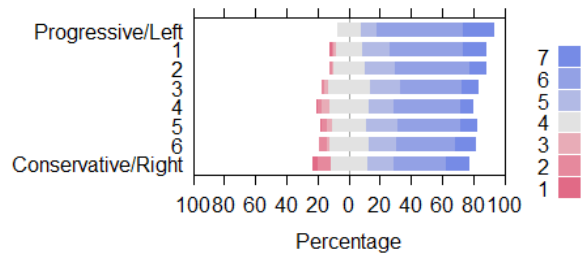
Pre-test - assureFarms



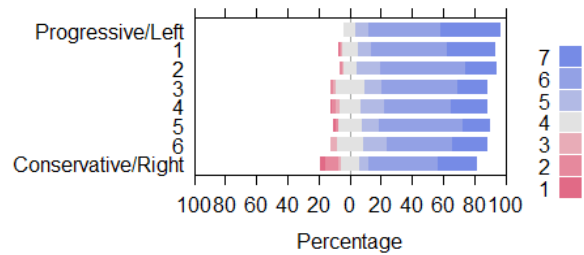
Post-test - assureFarms



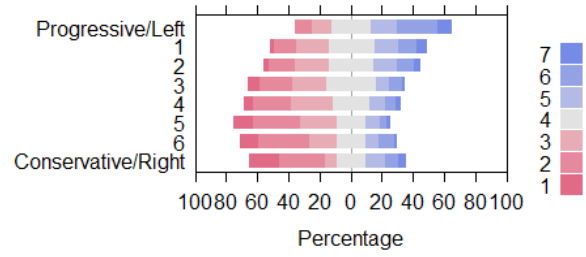
Pre-test - animalCare



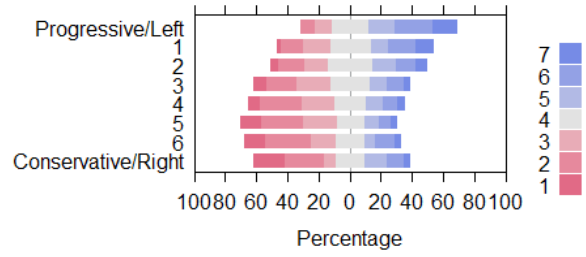
Post-test - animalCare



Pre-test - plantBased

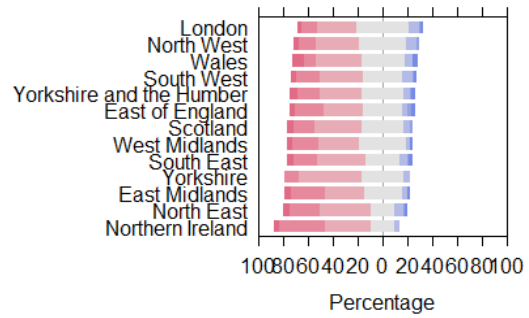


Post-test - plantBased

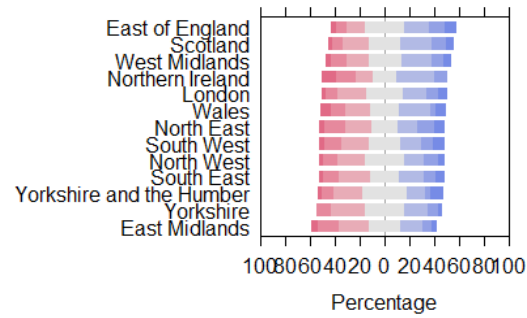


Split by region

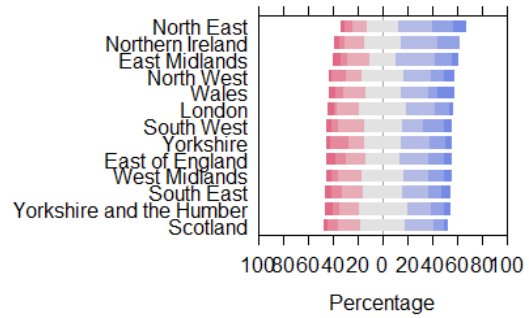
Pre-test - dropAssured



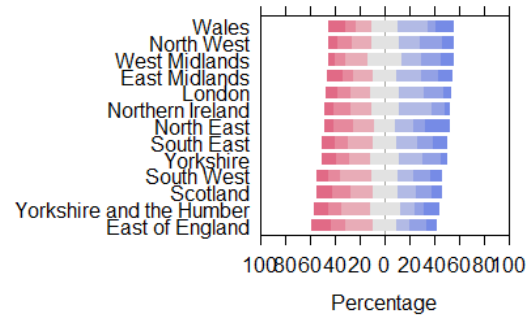
Post-test - dropAssured



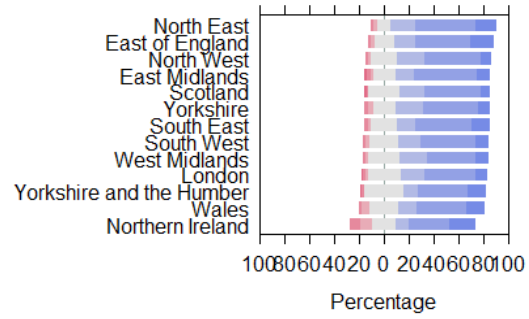
Pre-test - assureFarms



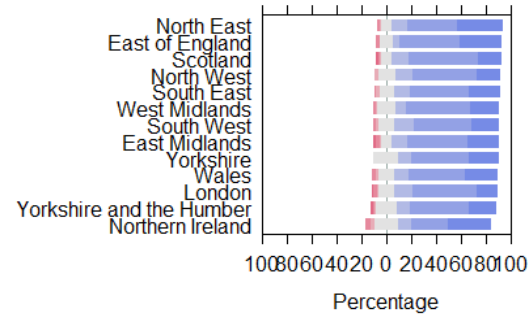
Post-test - assureFarms



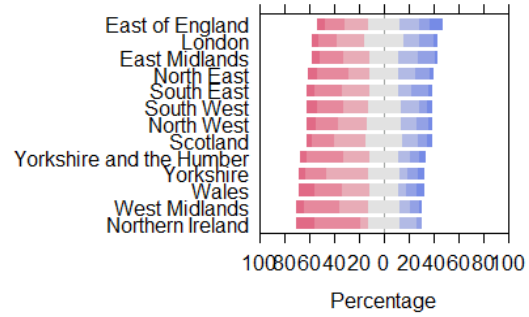
Pre-test - animalCare



Post-test - animalCare



Pre-test - plantBased



Post-test - plantBased

