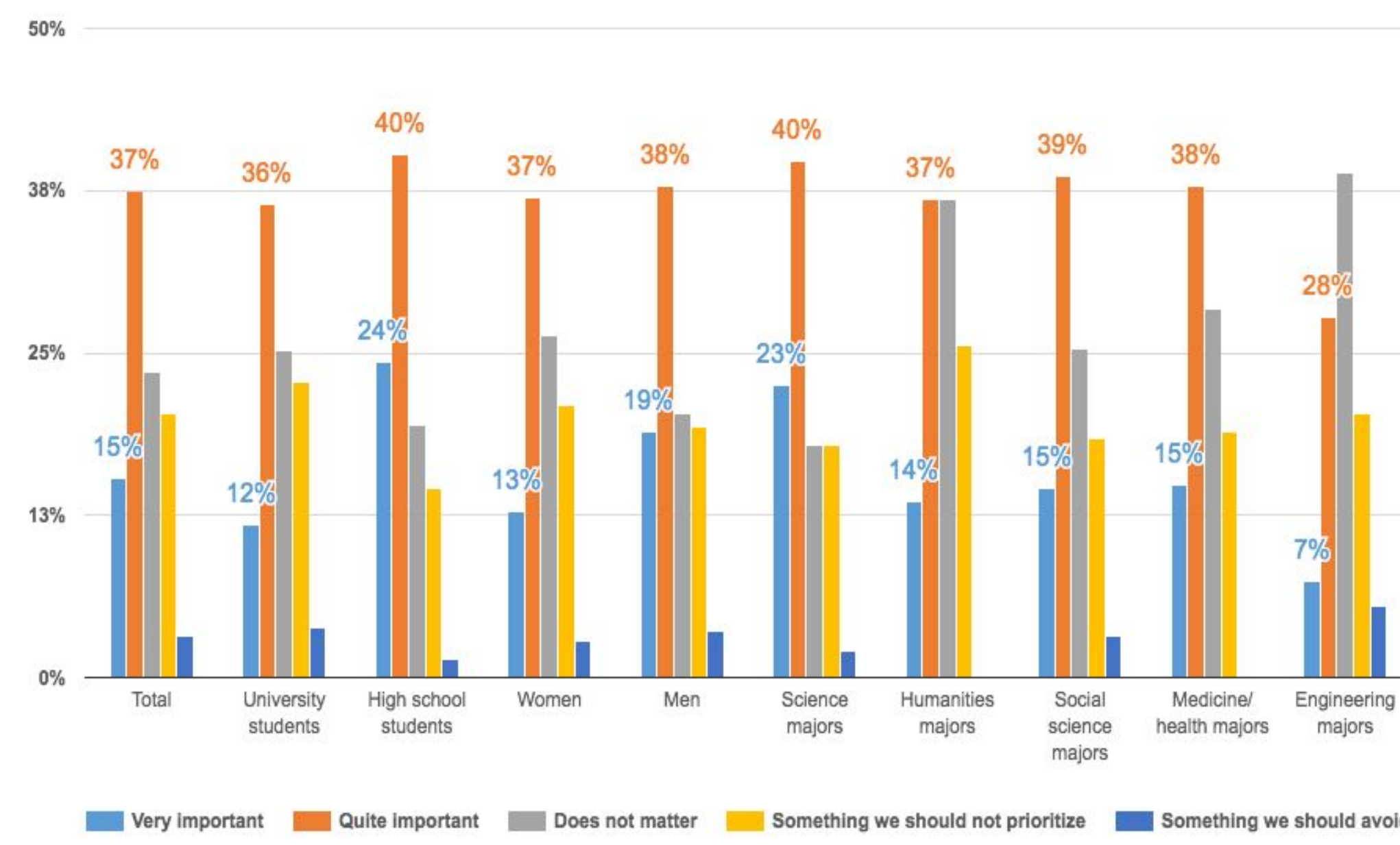


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(b) Is the search for extraterrestrial life important?



### AIMS OF THE STUDY

1. Present an indication of the attitudes towards the scientific search for extraterrestrial life among high school and university students;
2. Bring insights into how students perceive the discipline, its research questions, importance, and subject area in general;
3. Understand how scientific enquiries shape public opinion and attitudes towards a given branch of knowledge;
4. Assess the level of interest in the discipline.

### RESEARCH METHODS

Questionnaire was distributed to high schools (Europaskolan, Filbornaskolan) and universities (Lund, Linköping, Malmö, The Royal Institute of Technology, KTH, Stockholm) in Sweden.

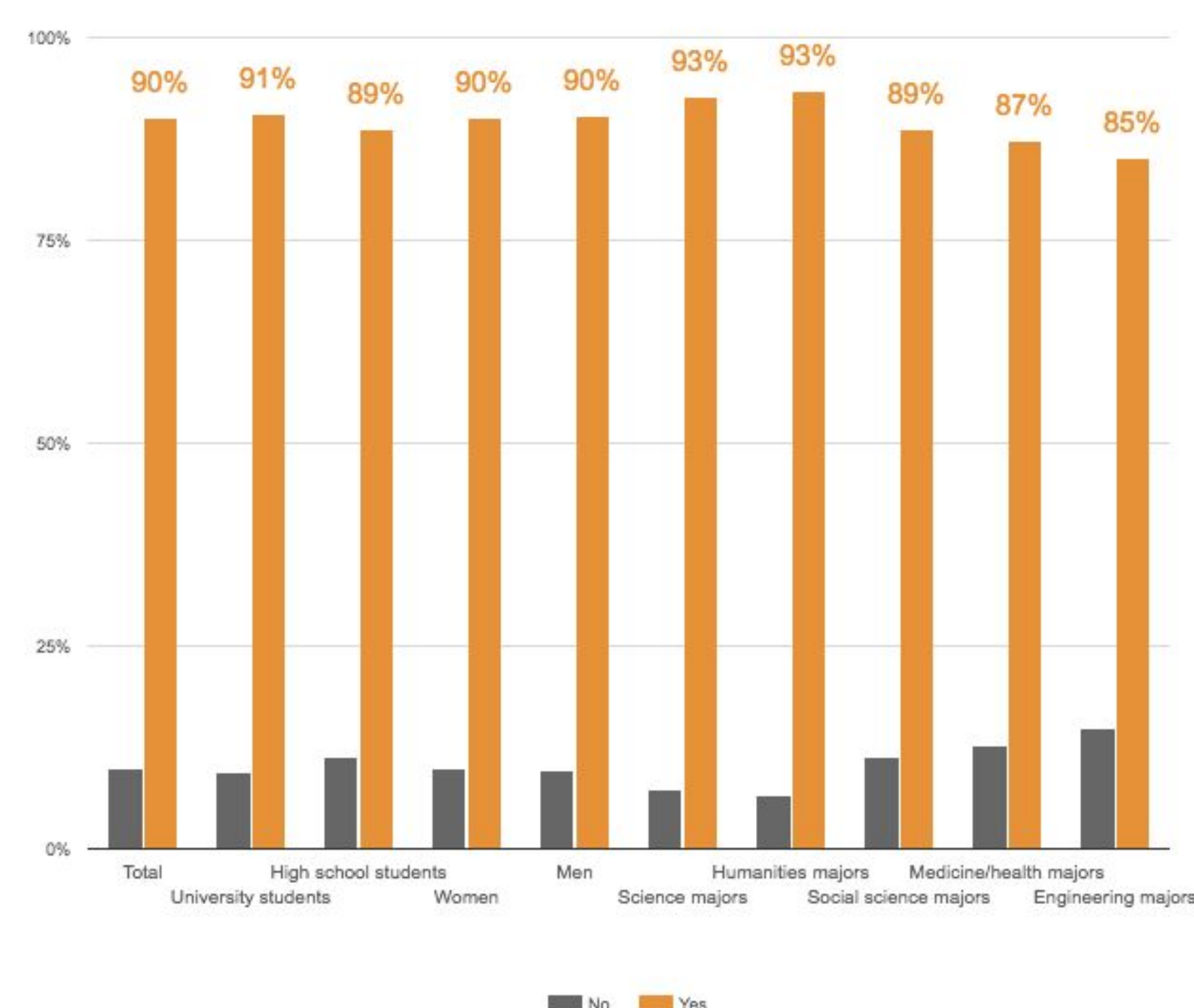
### SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Total number of participants: 512. Gender distribution: 284 female and 222 male. Major area of study: 154 science majors, 125 humanities majors, 158 social science majors, 74 medicine/health majors, 55 engineering majors.

### THE RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

- A better understanding of students' attitudes to astrobiology has **repercussions for astrobiology as well as other disciplines** (e.g. funding allocations, recruitment of future students).
- There is a **shortage of studies targeting students' attitudes towards astrobiology** (Hansson & Redfors, 2013). Most studies explore public attitudes to space research in general but not much work has been done regarding students' attitudes towards astrobiology.
- Astrobiology approaches some of the oldest and most **intriguing questions to the human mind** and hence the public understanding of, and social engagement with, astrobiology, are of high importance.

(a) Is there life outside our own planet?



**CONCLUSIONS (a)** 90% believe there is life outside our planet; **(b)** most students think that to search for life is quite important; **(c)** very few students think that search for extraterrestrial life is something we should avoid; **(d)** interest is the most common motive for assigning a high priority to search for life;

**(e)** the most common motive for assigning a low priority to search for life is the opinion that such knowledge would not be useful or that the money would be better spent elsewhere; **(f)** most students do not think they are very well informed regarding the scientific search for extraterrestrial life.

(f) How informed are you regarding the scientific search for extraterrestrial life?

