

Community Pulse

Understanding our members'
world – March 2022



Executive Summary

363
responses

The Community Pulse is a longitudinal study of Sported members on the sustainability, needs, and ambitions of community groups throughout the UK. It aims to inform the sport for development sector about the issues and opportunities facing community sports groups, as well as increasing awareness of funding and resources available for such organisations. It also seeks to help stakeholders make more-informed decisions in relation to grassroots community sport in the UK.

Between **21–28 March 2022**, **363 survey responses** were received from groups in Sported’s network. **49% of responses were from groups in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation**. This research builds on Community Pulse consultations throughout 2020 and 2021.

Sported and its network

Sported is the UK’s largest network of community groups supporting half a million young people to overcome barriers to reach their full potential. Our role is to empower the local heroes running these groups by providing much needed professional expertise, resources and operational support, free of charge, to help their group survive and young people thrive.

Sported’s groups work within complex local contexts, often tackling some of society’s biggest challenges. 47% of our groups are located in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation, and many are volunteer-led and operating on limited budgets – in this Pulse survey, 34% reported an annual turnover of less than £10,000.

Key Findings

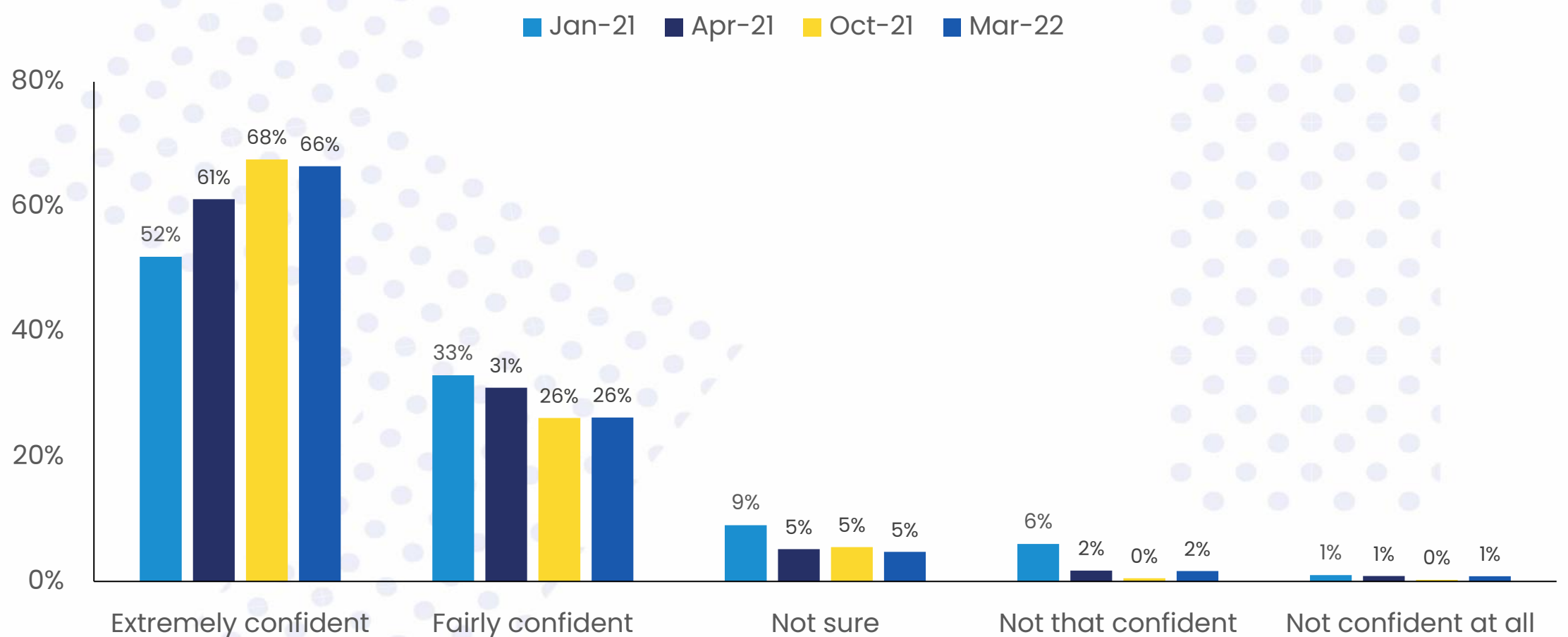
- **Confidence in organisational survival is high and remains at a level close to six months ago** – 92% of groups are extremely or fairly confident in their group’s survival, including 66% being extremely confident.
- **Health and wellbeing is the most common sport for development focus for groups in the year ahead** – 55% of groups have designated this as their focus (more than twice the number compared to the next most cited focus of inequality in sports provision).
- **Securing funding and engaging new participants are groups’ top priorities for the next six months** – 77% of respondents are seeking to secure funding, with 74% looking to engage new participants.
- **Mental health is again identified as the most significant challenge young people are facing in communities** – 30% of responses from groups designated this the most significant issue, a 3% increase from our last Pulse.
- **Respondents reported lower scores for their young peoples’ mental health in comparison to their own and that of their group’s volunteers/staff** – an average of 6.5 (out of 10) for young people compared with 7.6 and 7.3 for respondents and volunteers/staff respectively.
- **The majority of groups have participation levels below capacity and there are indications that participation has not recovered to pre-Covid 19 levels** – 74% of groups are running below capacity, of which more than half (56%) report levels being reduced from pre-pandemic levels.
- **Groups are most confident in their knowledge of the challenges facing, and their support for, women and girls** – 80% are fairly or extremely confident of their knowledge of these issues and 84% are fairly or extremely confident in supporting women and girls.
- **Groups are least confident in their knowledge of issues facing young people in the LGBTQ+ community and their support for young people with disabilities** – there are also higher levels of uncertainty among groups around how to support young people in these areas.
- **Concern around the impact of cost of living increases on young people and groups is very high** – 88% of respondents are extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their organisation and its young people.
- **Two-thirds of groups have made a change in response to cost of living increases** – of such changes, the most frequent are to provide free membership for their young people (47%) and to reduce fees for their young people (36%).
- **Groups are mostly connected to other local community organisations/sport groups** – 98% of respondents reported some form of connection to these types of external organisations.

Survival and turnover

Survival

Confidence in organisational survival is at a level close to that of six months ago, with **66% of groups extremely confident their organisation will survive in the next six months**. There are very few respondents who are not that confident, or not confident at all, in the survival of their group.

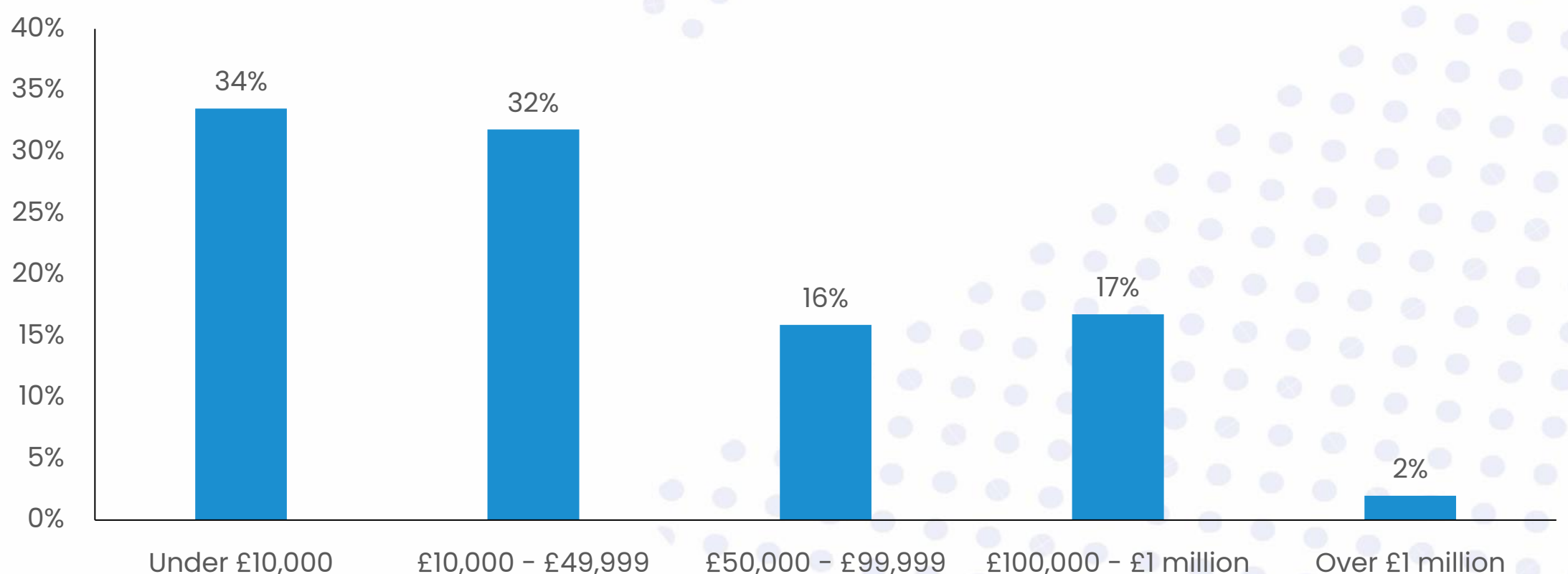
Confidence in organisational survival in the next six months



Turnover

Two-thirds of groups who responded to Pulse are operating on an annual turnover of less than £50,000 for the current financial year, with **most (34%) having a turnover of under £10,000**.

Annual turnover for the current financial year (2021-2022)

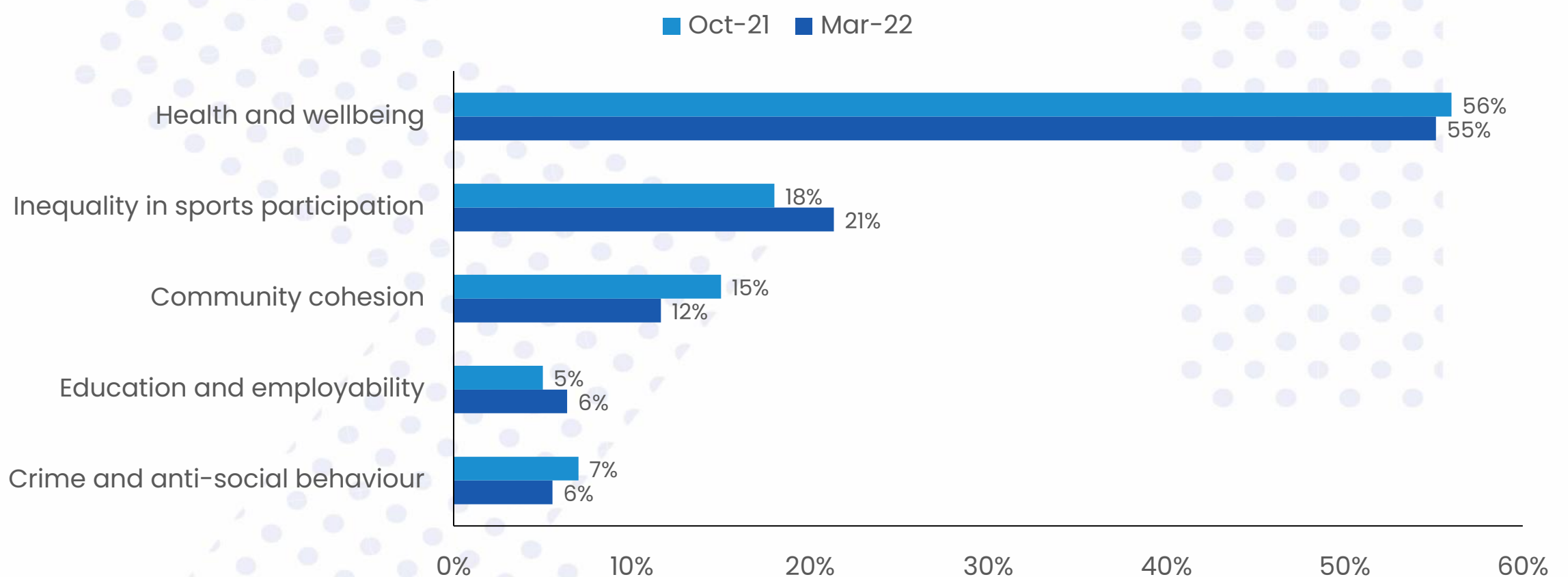


Sport for development focus and organisational priorities

Sport for development focus for the next year

Health and wellbeing (55%) is the most reported sport for development focus among groups for the year ahead. This is more than twice that of the next most common primary focus of inequality in sports participation (21%).

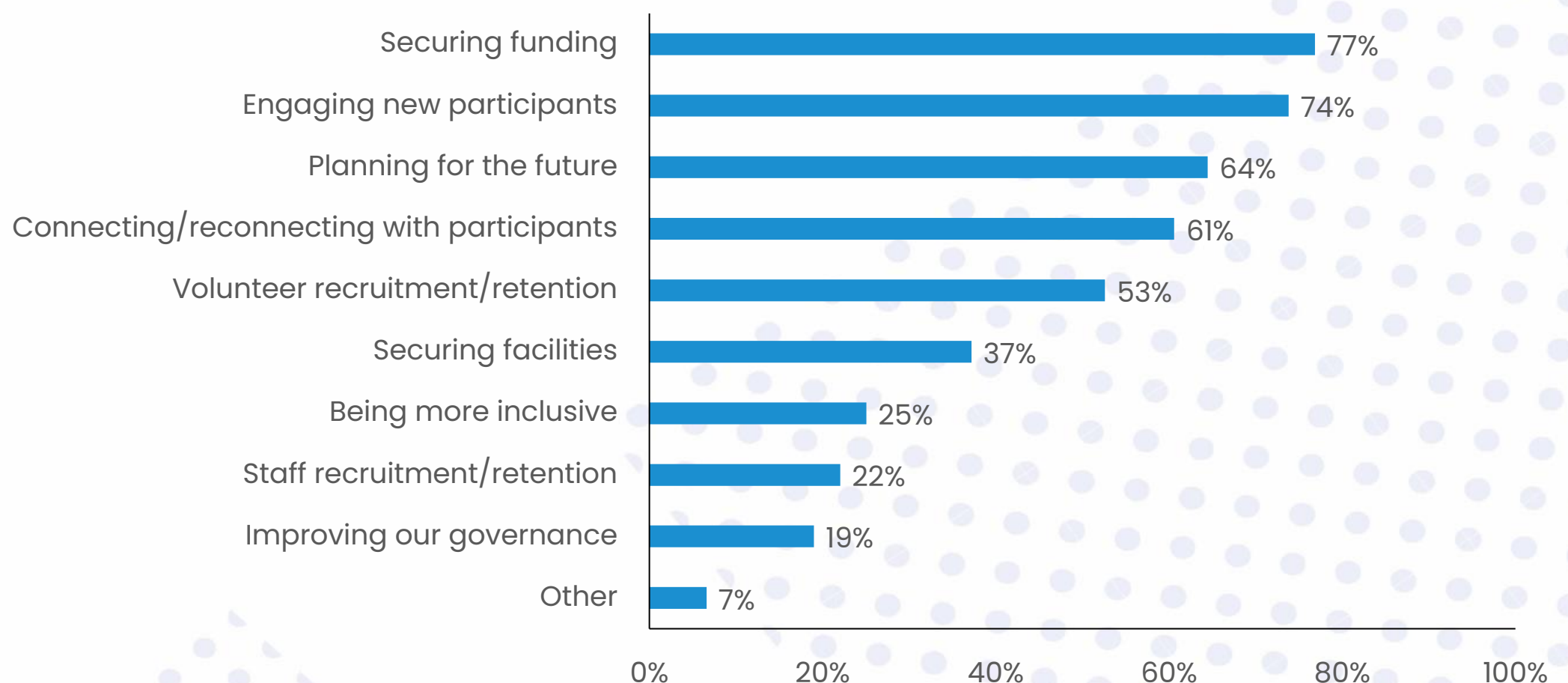
Sport for development primary focus for the next year



Top priorities over the next six months

The most common priority for the next six months for groups is securing funding (77%), followed by engaging new participants (74%).

Top priorities over the next six months

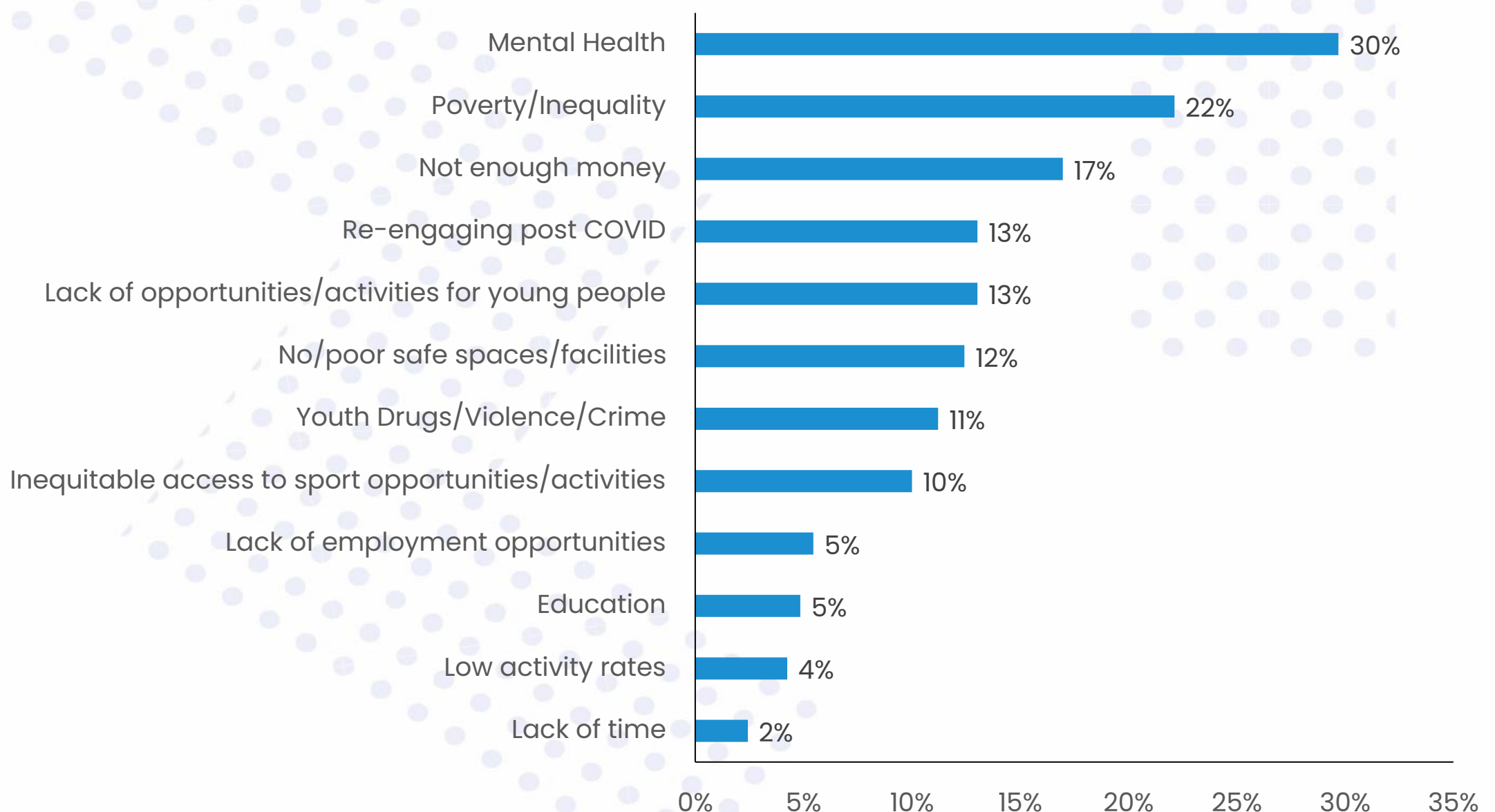


Community challenges

Mental health remains the most significant challenge that groups report young people are facing in their communities. 30% of responses from groups included concerns about mental health, a 3% increase from our October 2021 Pulse.

Concerns around poverty (22%) and not enough money (17%), which in turn affects young people's ability to access opportunities for sport and physical activity, were also major challenges facing young people according to groups. These concerns have increased since our last Pulse. In October 2021, 11% of respondents identified poverty as the most significant challenge facing young people in their community, with 14% citing not enough money.

Key challenges young people are facing in members' communities at this time



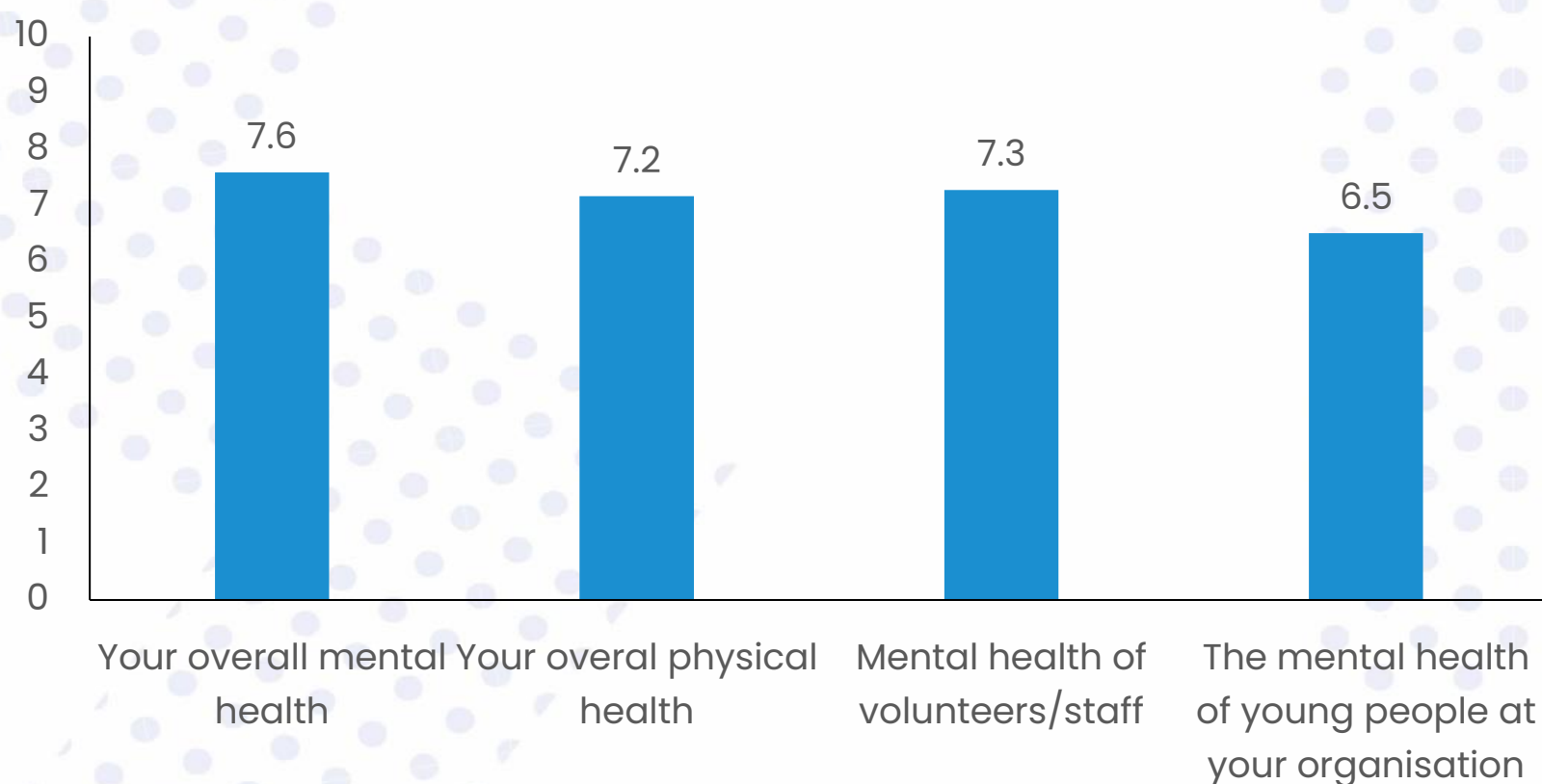
- 'There's a lack of exercise and outdoor activity. Covid restrictions and social media have had a massive impact on the health and wellbeing of young people. The challenge is to reconnect with these people and help create a healthier lifestyle.' – survey respondent
- 'Following the pandemic young people became far more isolated and vulnerable and where professionals were absent, less positive influences stepped in. The challenge will be for young people to rebuild trust in professionals including school settings and break ties with negative environments.' – survey respondent
- 'Young people are feeling the repercussions of social isolation more so than anyone else. The mental health issues are varied. It has made it difficult for them to get back into society and is having an effect on their social skills. Having a safe outdoor space is important for them especially as the summer is approaching.' – survey respondent
- 'The pandemic has negatively affected LGBTQI+ young people who were already suffering with mental health issues, anxiety and isolation. This has been exacerbated greatly during the past two years.' – survey respondent

Health

Physical and mental health

Respondents reported lower scores for their young peoples' mental health (6.5) in comparison to their own (7.6) and that of their group's volunteers/staff (7.3).

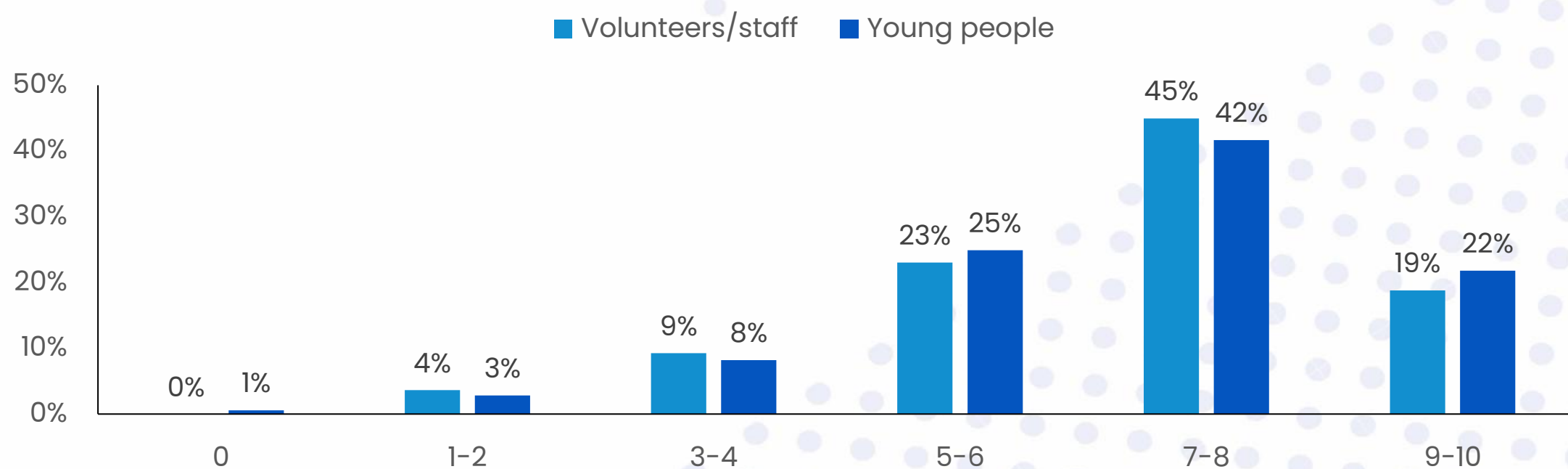
Respondents' rating (scale: of 0 – 10, where 0 is not at all good and 10 is excellent)



Capacity to support mental health

More than half of groups reported a score of 7 or above for their capacity to support the mental health of their volunteers/staff (64%) and young people (64%). Respondents most commonly reported a score of 7-8 out of 10 for their capacity to support volunteers/staff (45%) and young people (42%).

Respondents' rating (scale: of 0 – 10, where 0 is not at all good and 10 is excellent)



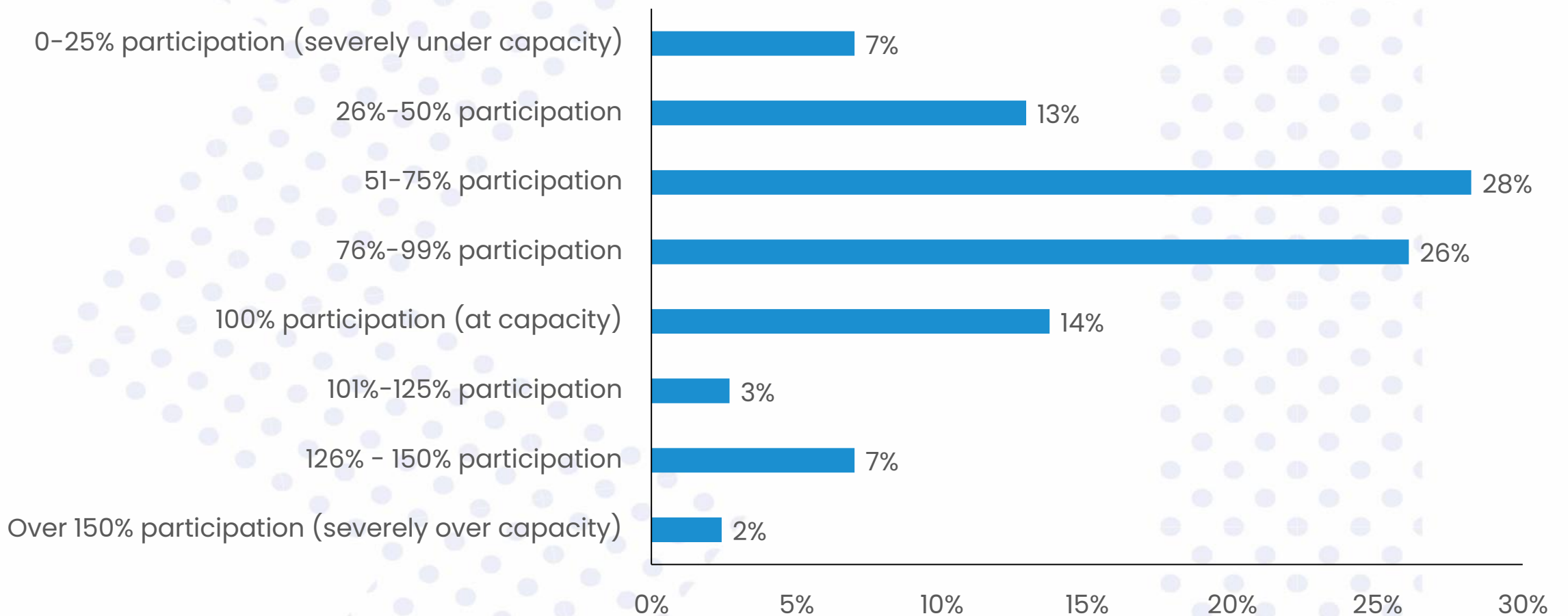
Participation and capacity

Current participation levels

Nearly three-quarters of groups (74%) have participation levels below capacity, with most (28%) seeing participation levels of 51-75% of their capacity.

12% of groups are currently oversubscribed, with participation levels above their organisational capacity.

% of groups by current participation rates compared to organisational capacity

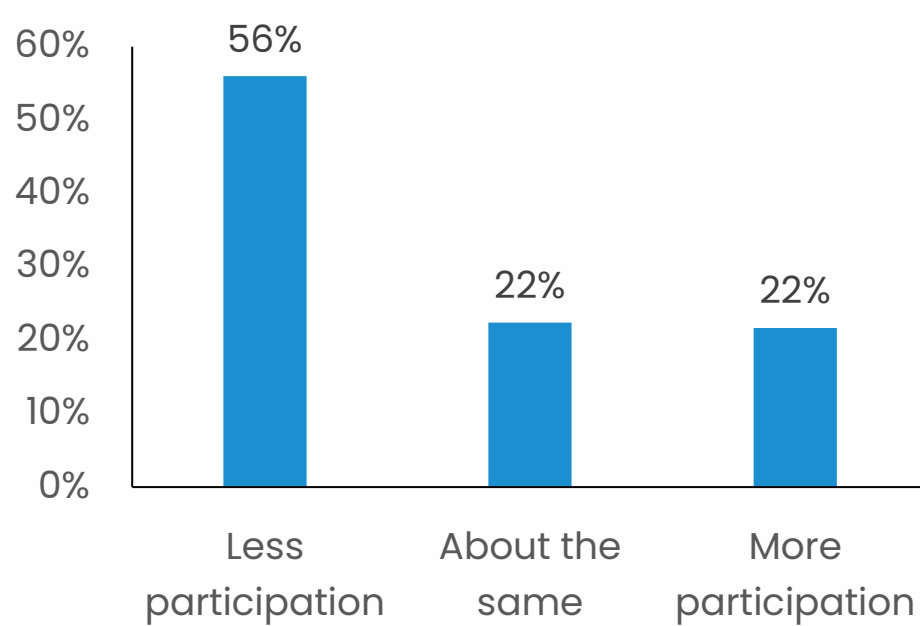


Participation levels compared to pre-Covid

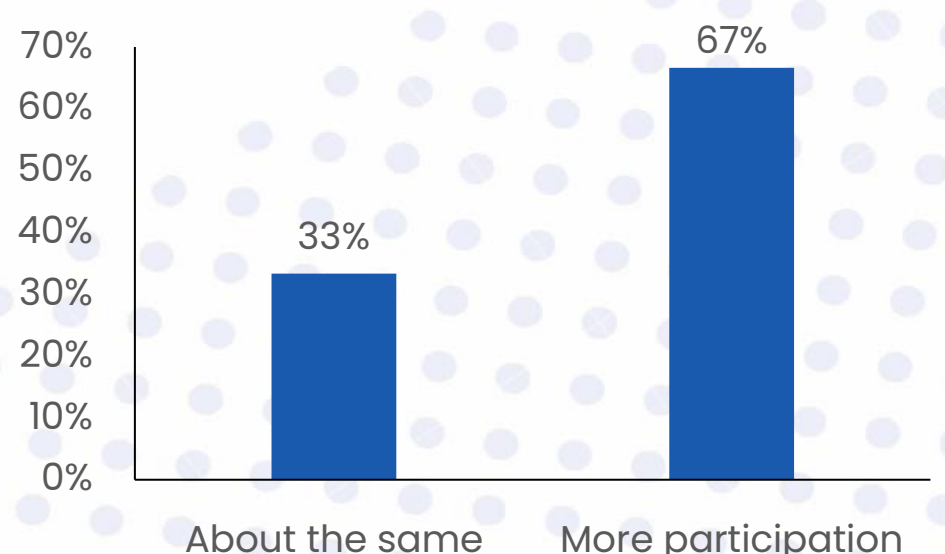
More than half (56%) of groups that currently have participation levels below capacity report participation is lower than before the pandemic, indicating participation levels are yet to fully recover from before the pandemic.

Two-thirds of groups (67%) who are currently seeing participation levels above their capacity report that participation is now higher than before the pandemic.

Groups with current participation below capacity



Groups with current participation above capacity

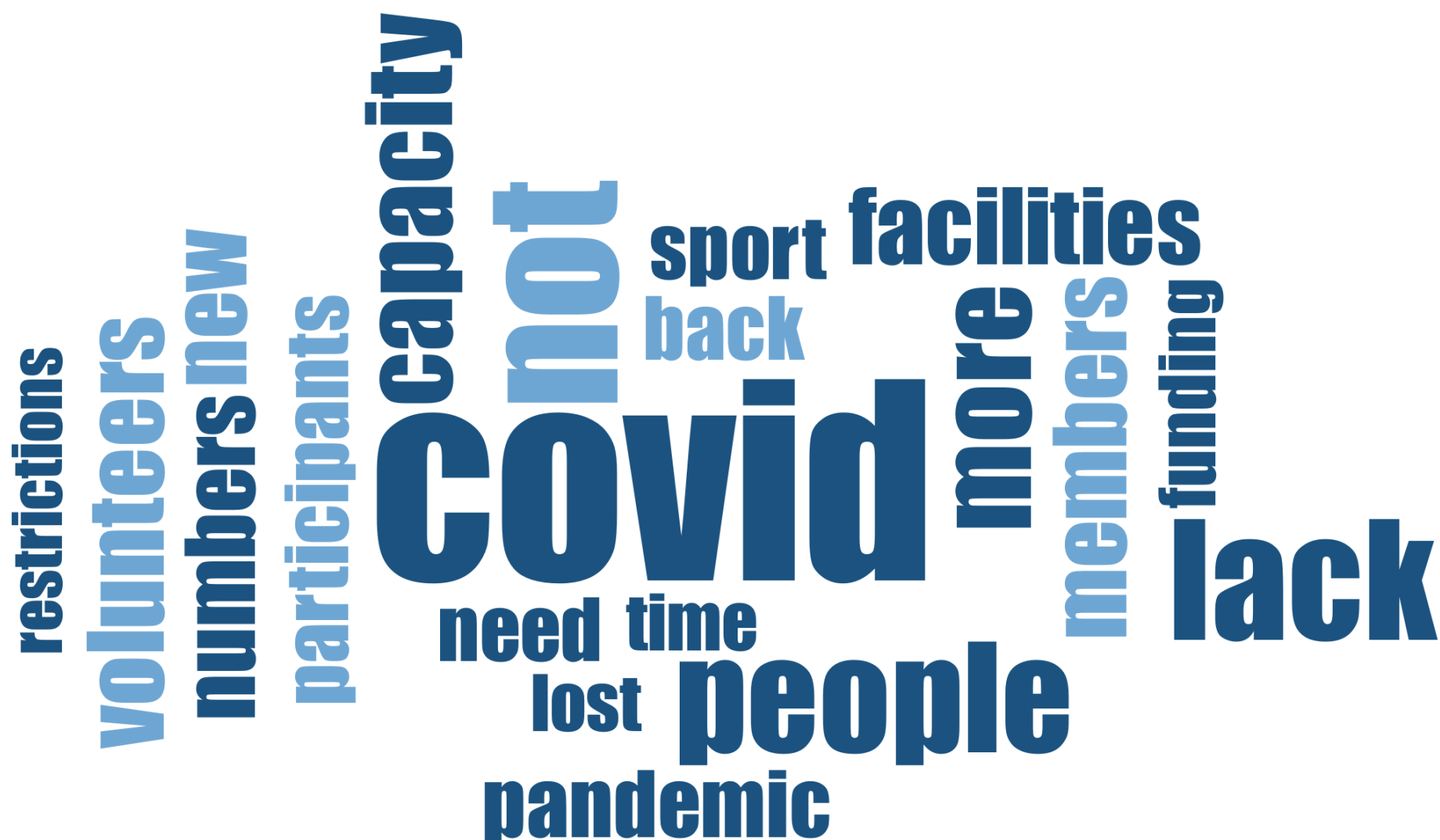
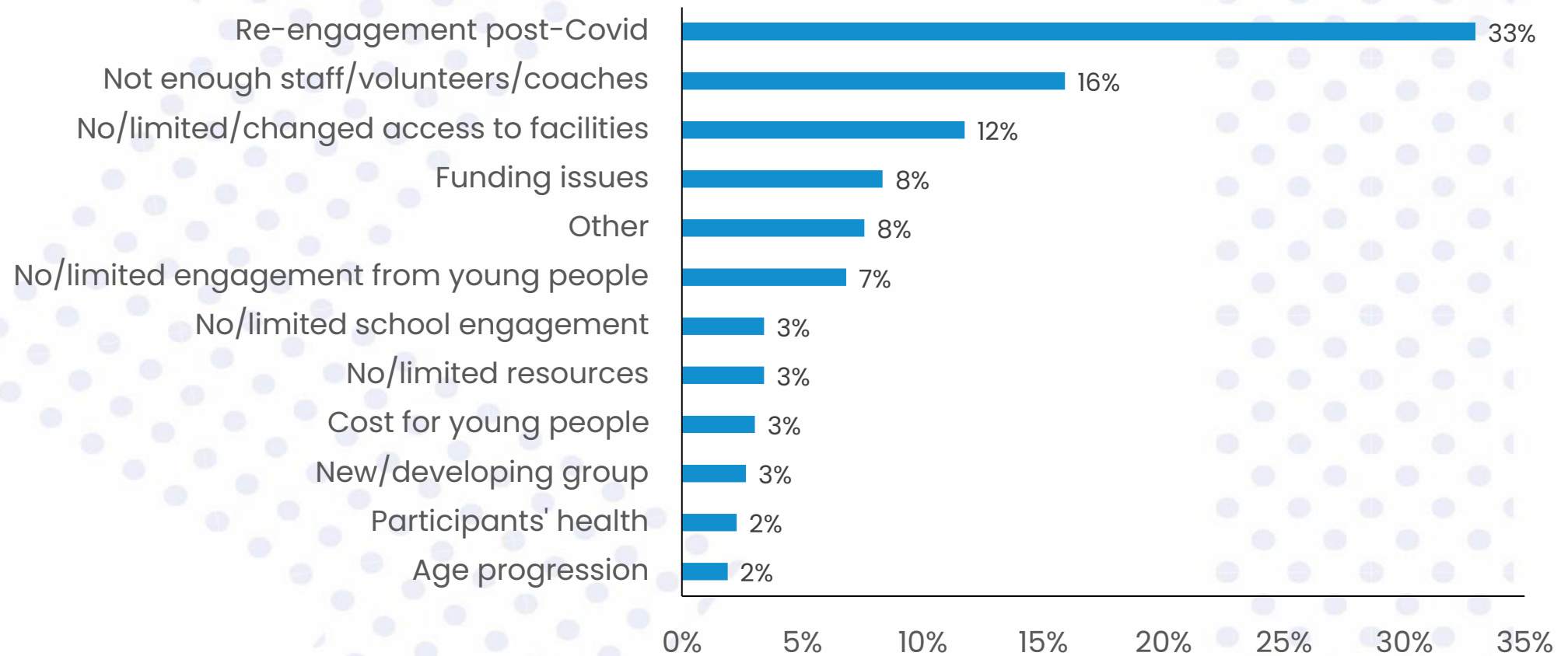


Participation and capacity

Why are participation levels down?

For groups reporting lower levels of participation than before the pandemic, **the most common cause is difficulties with re-engaging after the pandemic (33%)**. Groups also raised concerns about too few staff/volunteers/coaches(16%), and issues brought about by no/reduced/changed access to facilities (12%).

Reasons for participation below pre-Covid levels



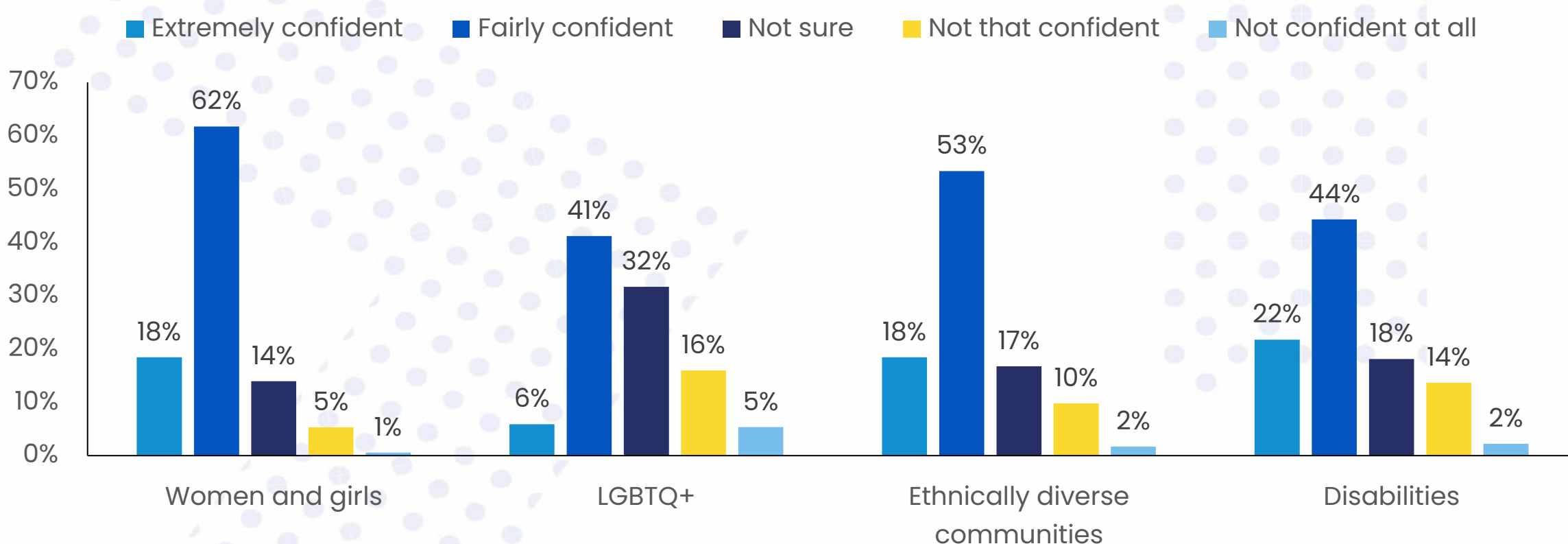
Tackling inequalities

Knowledge of challenges facing young people

When thinking about tackling inequalities, groups are **most confident in their knowledge of the challenges facing women and girls** (80% are extremely or fairly confident in this area).

Confidence is **lowest with regard to knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues**: 21% of groups are not that confident, or not confident at all in their knowledge of the challenges in this area. There is a noticeably higher proportion of groups that are not sure about their knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (32%).

Group confidence in their knowledge of challenges facing young people

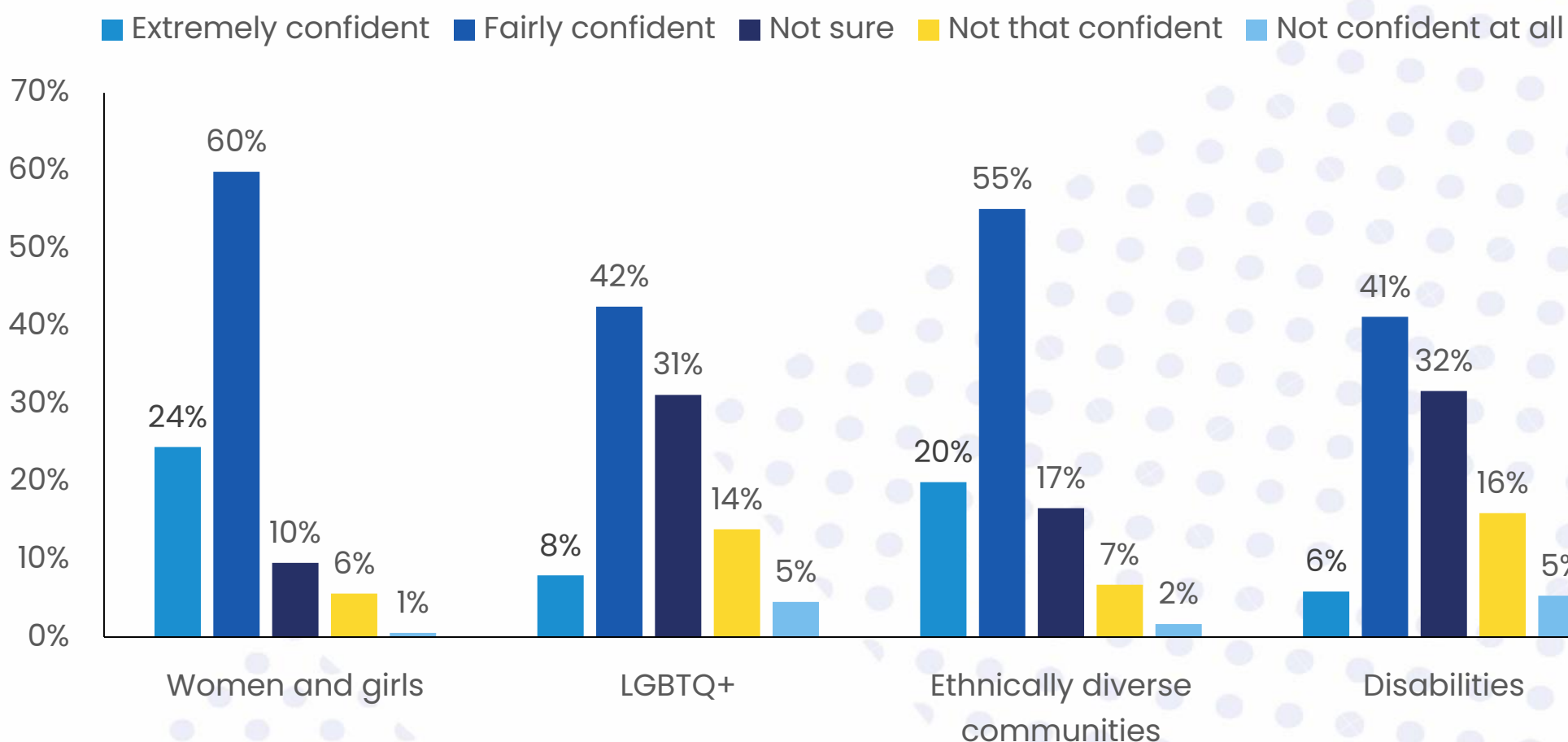


Support for young people in these areas

Groups are **most confident in supporting women and girls**, with 84% being extremely or fairly confident in this area.

Nearly a third of groups are unsure of their confidence in supporting young people with disabilities (32%) and **those within the LGBTQ+ community** (31%).

Group confidence in how they feel supporting young people

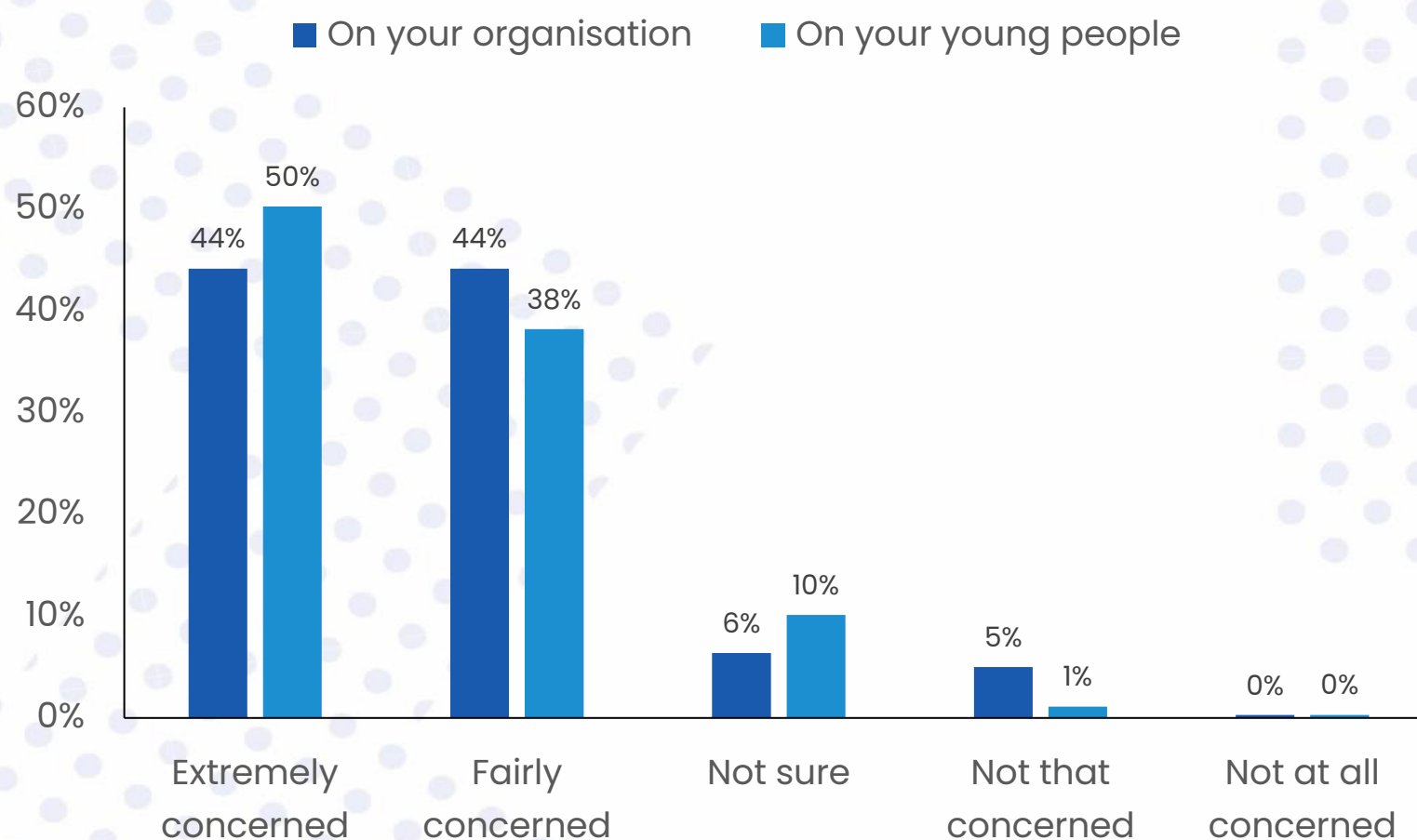


Cost of living increases

Impact on groups and their young people

88% of respondents have concerns (being either extremely or fairly concerned) about the impact of cost of living increases on both their organisation and its young people. Groups have the highest levels of worry for their young people, with 50% stating they were extremely concerned for their young people, compared to 44% for their group.

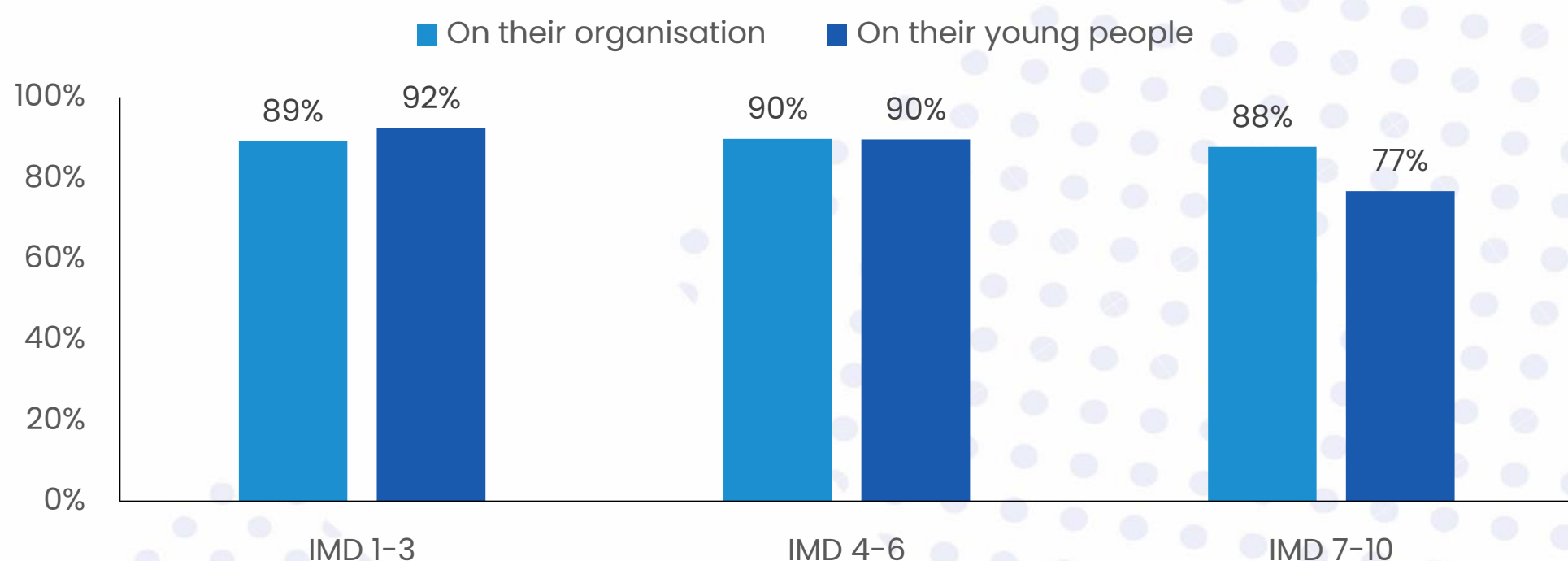
Concern about the impact of cost of living increases



Impact on groups and their young people by IMD

There are **consistently high levels of concern about the impact of cost of living increases on organisations across all areas of multiple deprivation.** Concern around the impact on young people is very high among groups working in the lowest 30% and middle 30% of areas of multiple deprivation. For groups working in the highest four deciles of deprivation, concern levels remain high but are reduced.

Groups who are extremely/fairly concerned about the impact of cost of living increases by IMD (0-10)

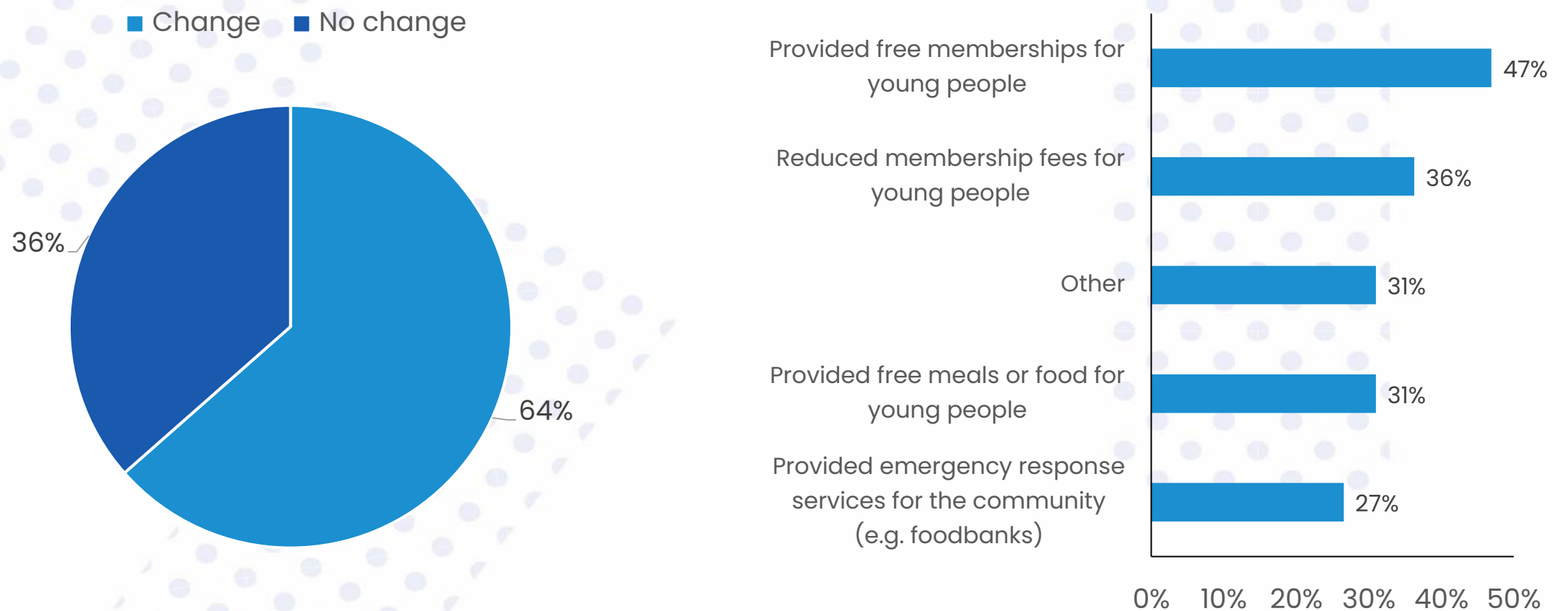


Cost of living increases

Groups' responses to the increases

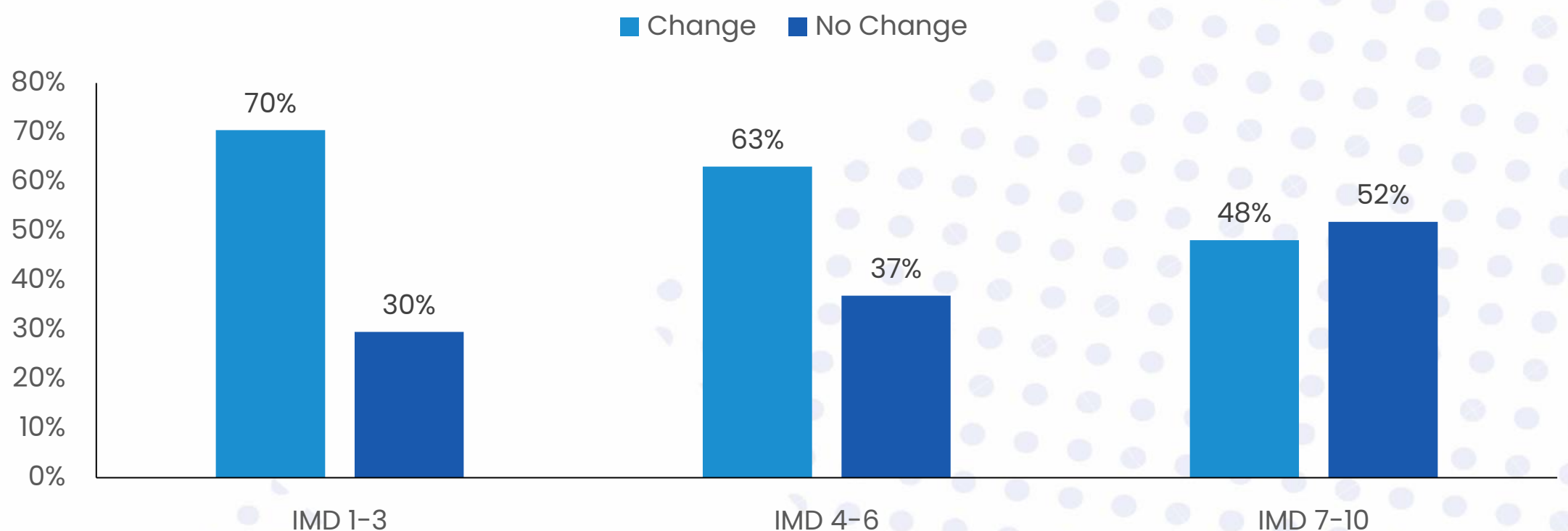
Almost two-thirds of groups (64%) have responded to the cost of living increase by making a change to their operation. The most frequently made changes have been to provide free membership for their young people (47%) and to reduce fees for their young people (36%).

Changes made in response to cost of living increases



Groups' responses to the increases by IMD

Groups were more likely to have made changes in response to cost of living increases if based in areas of higher deprivation. 70% of groups in the lowest three deciles for areas of multiple deprivation have made a change, compared with 63% for the middle three deciles, and 48% for the highest four deciles.

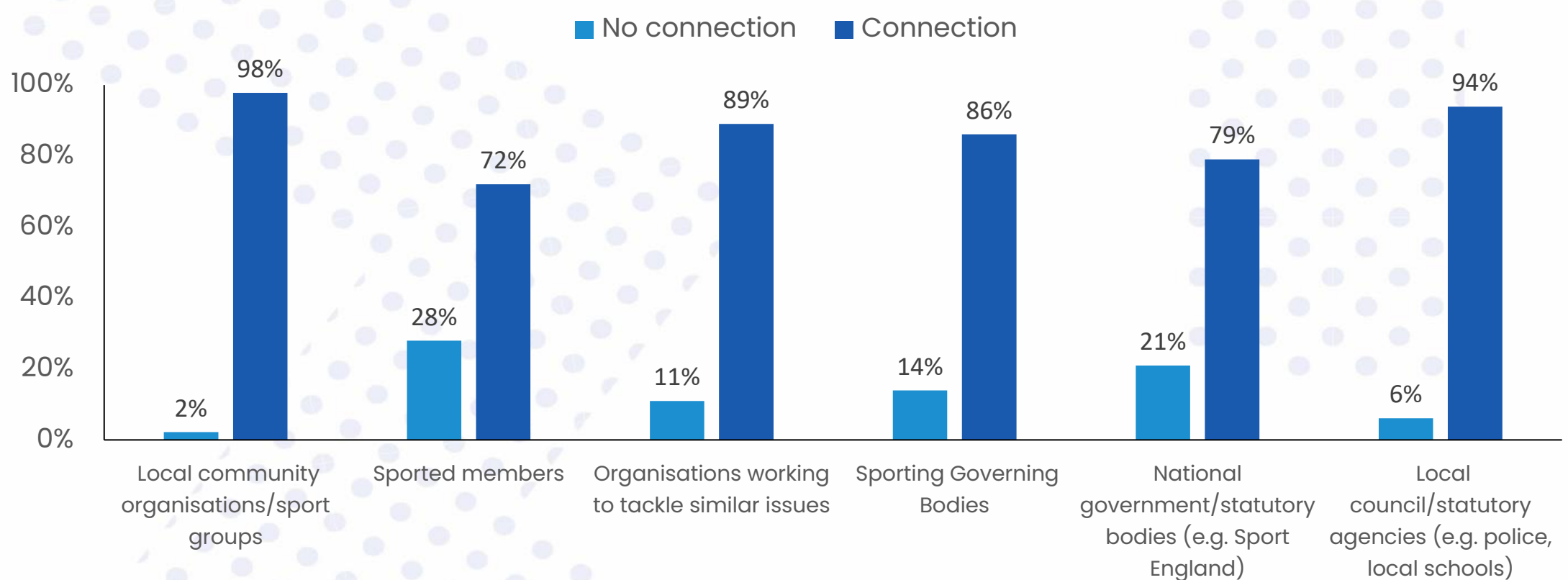


Connected communities

Groups' connections to other organisations

Groups report high degrees of connection with other organisations and agencies, **with the most frequent being local community organisations/sport groups (98%) and local councils/statutory agencies (94%).**

Connection to other organisations



Where groups report a connection to another organisation, **active collaboration occurs most frequently with local community organisations/sport groups (30%).**

Extent of connections to other organisations

