

Community Pulse, England

Understanding our members'
world – March 2022

Executive Summary

256
responses

The Community Pulse is a longitudinal study of Spotted 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.

This report provides an analysis of responses from respondents in England. Between **21–28 March 2022, 256 survey responses** were received from groups in Spotted's network in England. **127 responses were from groups in the bottom 30% areas of multiple deprivation.** This research builds on Community Pulse consultations throughout 2020 and 2021.

Spotted and its network

Spotted 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.

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

Key Findings

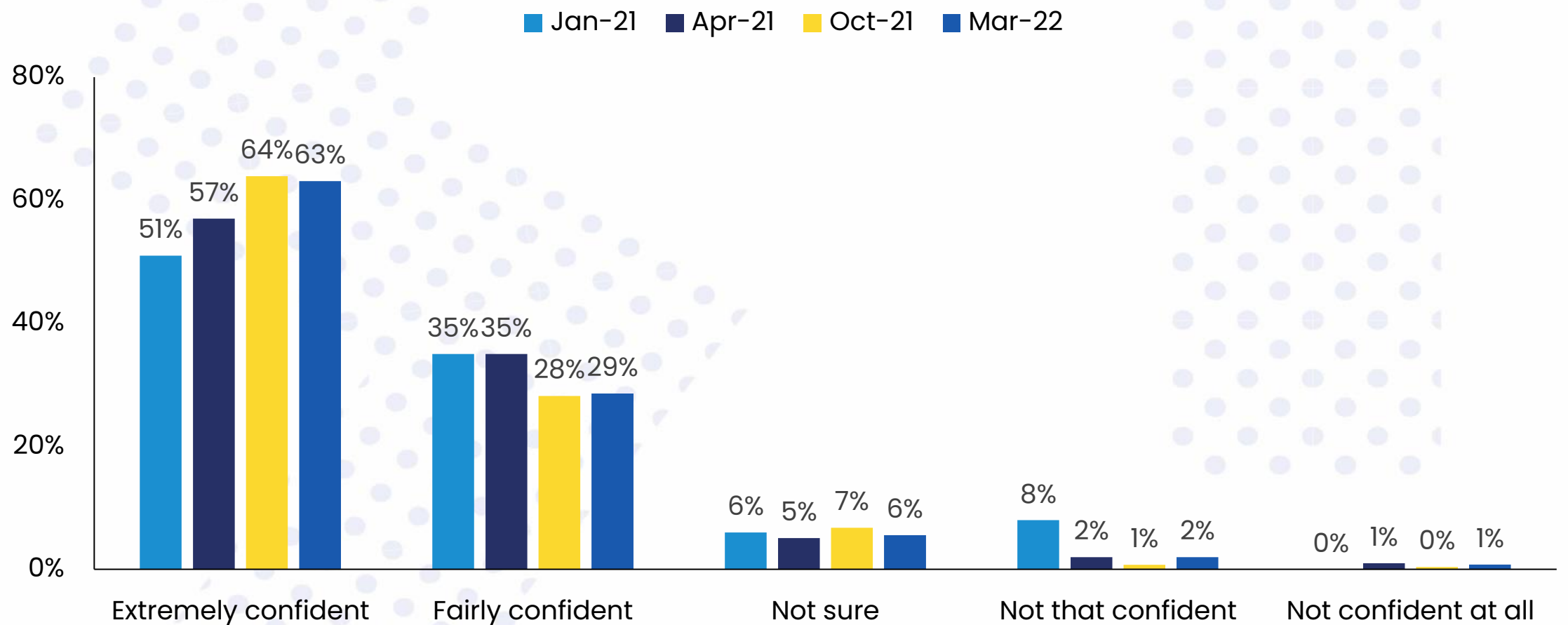
- **Confidence in organisational survival is high** – 92% of respondents are extremely or fairly confident in their group's survival in the next six months, including nearly two-thirds (63%) being extremely confident.
- **Health and wellbeing is the most common sport for development focus for groups in the year ahead** – 54% 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 was the most commonly cited priority for groups for the next six months** – 77% of respondents cited this as a priority, with engaging new participants also high on groups' agendas (73%).
- **Mental health was identified by group leaders as the most significant challenge young people are facing in communities** – 31% of respondents designated this as the most significant issue.
- **Respondents reported lower scores for their young people's mental health compared to their own and that of their group's volunteers/staff** – an average of 6.4 (out of 10) for young people compared with 7.5 and 7.3 for respondents and volunteers/staff respectively.
- **Over three-quarters of groups have participation levels below capacity and there are indications that participation has not recovered to pre-Covid 19 levels** – 80% of groups are running below capacity, of which over 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** – 82% are fairly or extremely confident of their knowledge of these issues and 86% 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 about the impact of cost of living increases on groups and their young people is very high** – 92% of respondents are extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their group, with 80% having these concerns for their young people.
- **Three-quarters of respondents (76%) reported their groups has made a change in response to cost of living increases** – the most frequent has been to provide free memberships for young people (34%).
- **Groups are mostly connected to other local community organisations/sport groups** – 100% of respondents reported some form of connection to these types of external organisations.

Survival and turnover

Survival

Confidence in organisational survival remains high, with 92% of respondents extremely or fairly confident in their group's survival in the next six months.

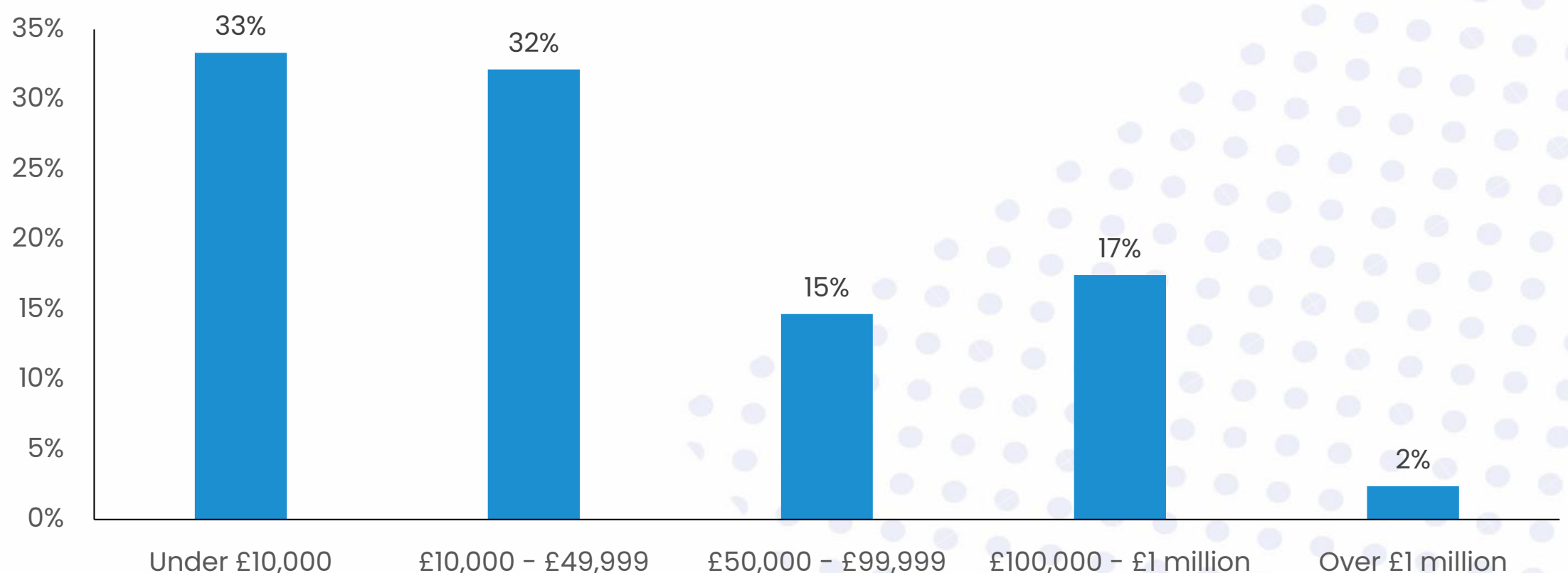
Confidence in organisational survival in the next six months



Turnover

Nearly two-thirds (66%) of groups responding to Pulse operated on an annual turnover of less than £50,000 for the 2021-2022 financial year. Most (33%) have a turnover of less than £10,000.

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

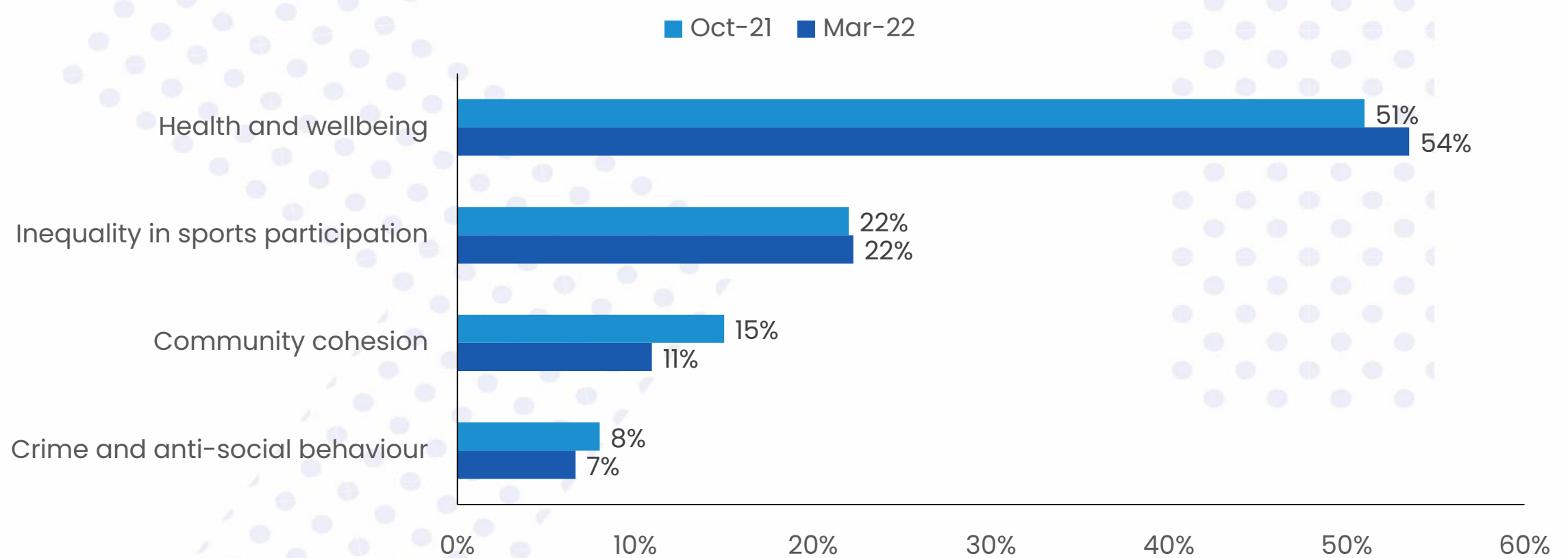


Sport for development focus and organisational priorities

Sport for development focus for the next year

Health and wellbeing (54%) was the most reported sport for development focus among groups for the year ahead. More than twice as many respondents reported this as their focus compared with the next most cited area of inequality in sports participation (22%).

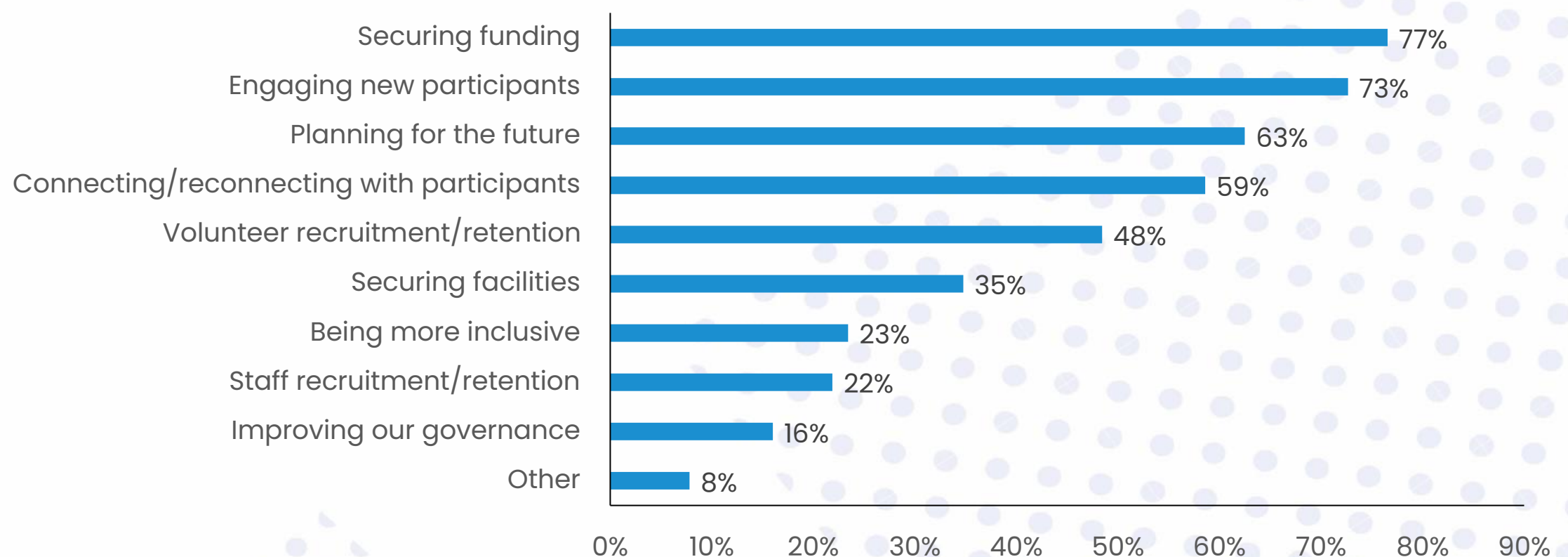
Sport for development primary focus for the next year



Top priorities over the next six months

The most common priorities for the next six months for groups are securing funding (77%) and engaging new participants (73%). Planning for the future (63%) and connecting/reconnecting with participants (59%) were also cited as priorities by more than half of respondents.

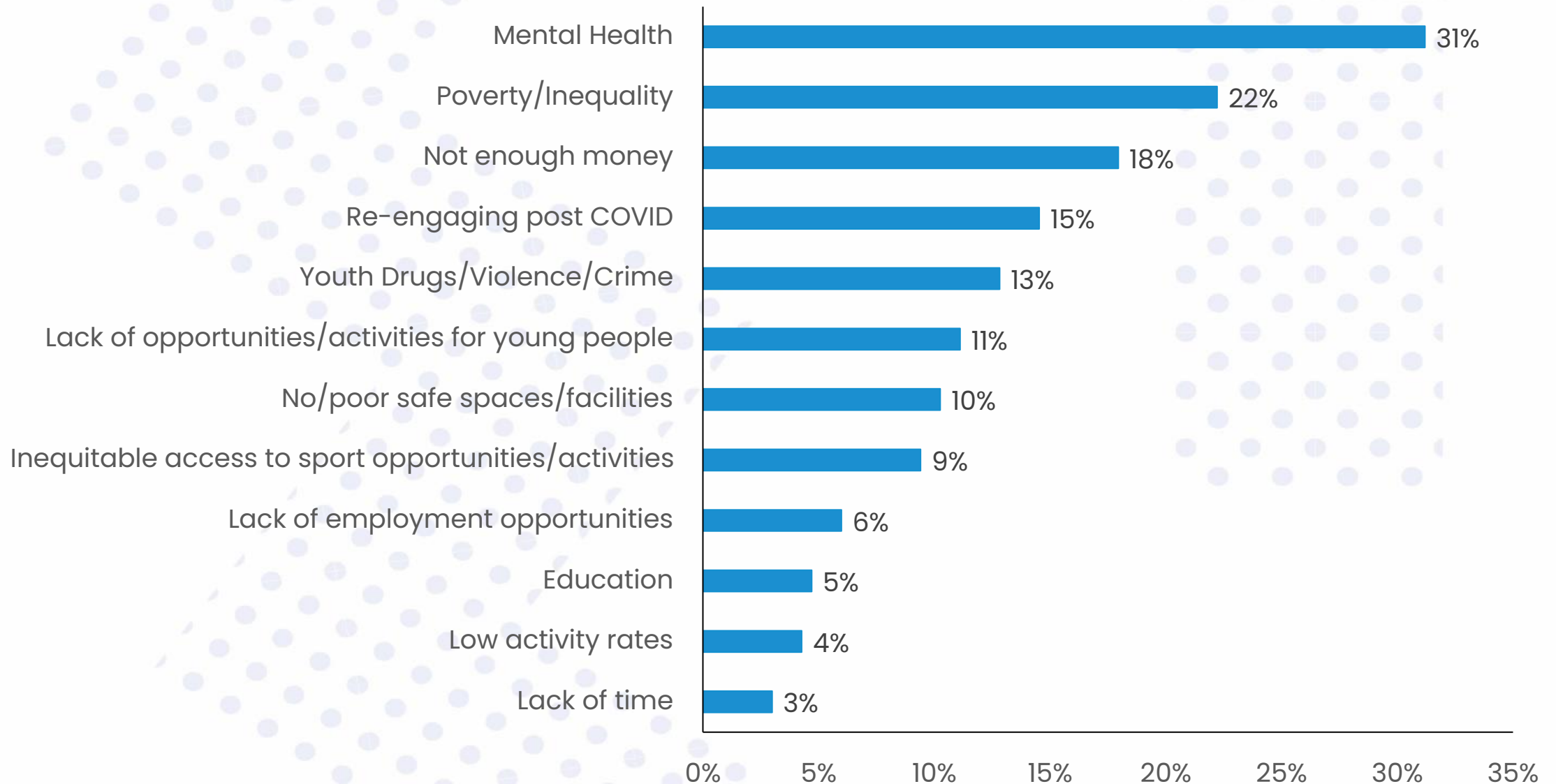
Top priorities over the next six months



Community challenges

Nearly a third of respondents (31%) identified mental health as the key challenge young people are facing in their communities. Concern about poverty/inequality was also identified as a significant issue by just over one-in-five respondents (22%).

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



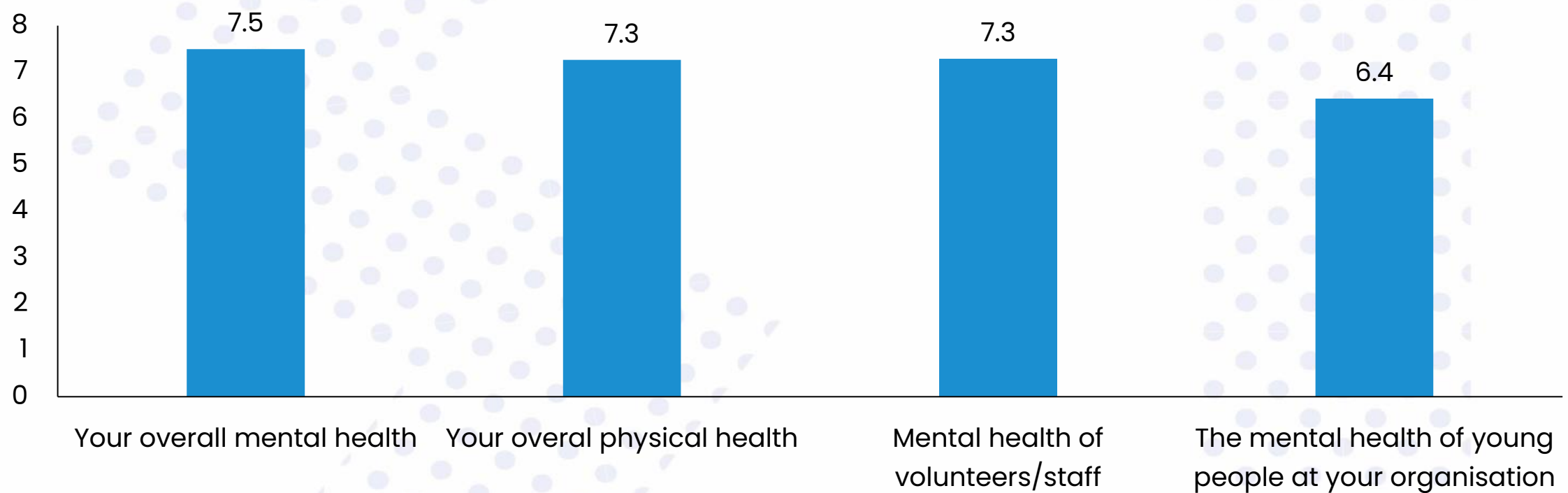
- 'Lack of funds. We are in the most deprived local authority area in England. Our families and club have very little money.' – survey respondent
- 'Social anxiety due to long term pressure of home schooling and Covid-19 impacting on mental health, and wanting to do outdoor activities.' – survey respondent
- 'Cost of living going up so some parents will take children out of sports clubs to save money.' – survey respondent
- 'There is a lack of guidance for young people and most are feeling lost, with no opportunities to access quality provision. Reports of ASB [anti-social behaviour] on the increase and young people devoid of support in many cases!' – survey respondent
- 'Lacking facilities which attract organisations to run events at cost effective prices which are also easy to access and get to.' – survey respondent

Health

Physical and mental health

Respondents reported lower scores for their young people's mental health compared to their own and that of their group's volunteers/staff – an average of 6.4 (out of 10) for young people compared with 7.5 and 7.3 for respondents and volunteers/staff respectively.

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

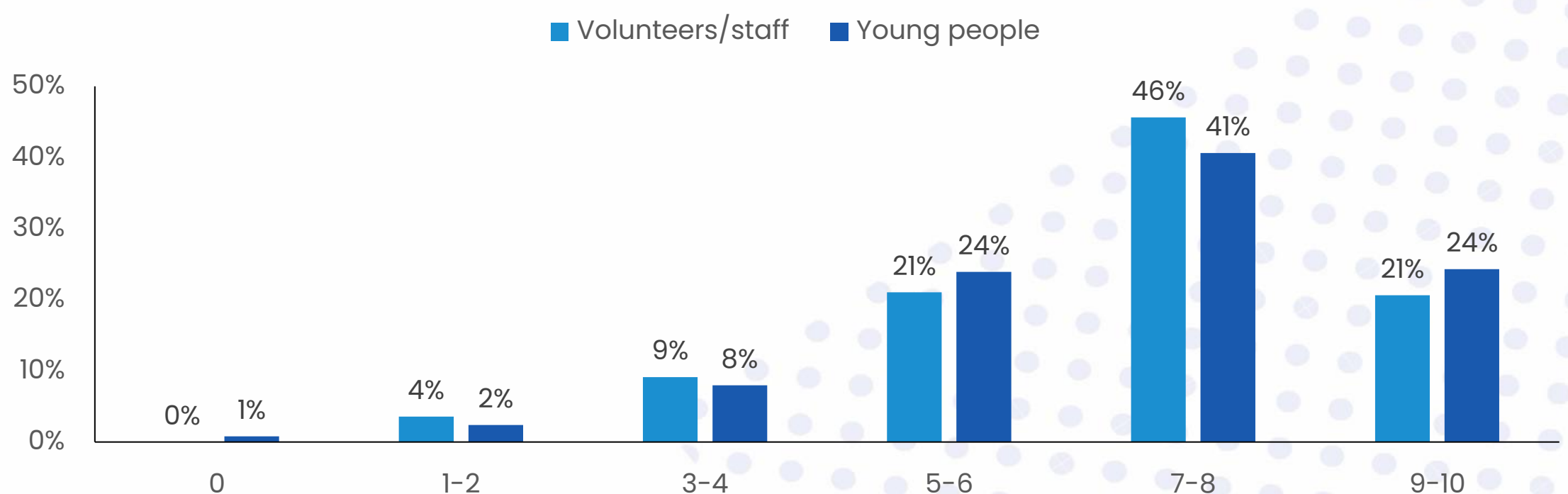


Capacity to support mental health

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) reported a score of 7 or above for their capacity to support the mental health of their volunteers/staff.

Confidence in capacity to support their young people was similar, with 65% of respondents giving a score of 7 or more on this issue.

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



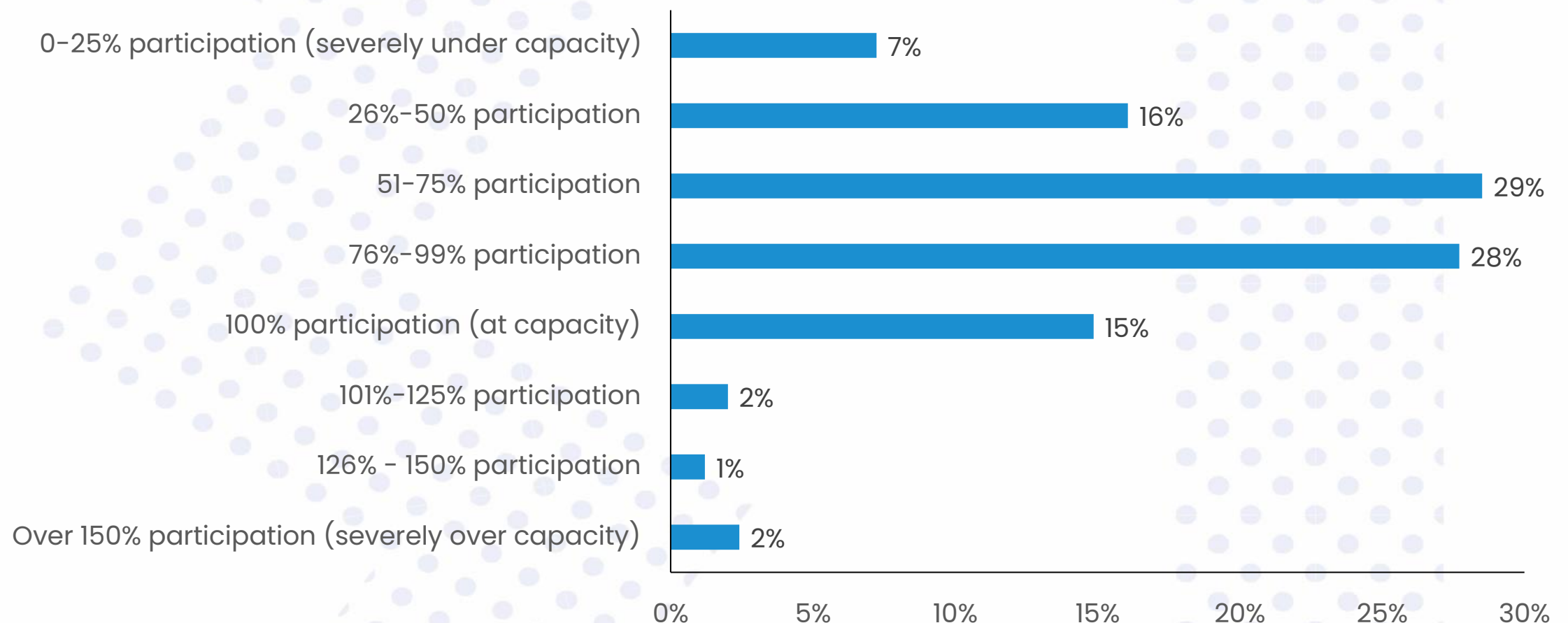
Participation and capacity

Current participation levels

A large majority of groups (80%) have participation levels below capacity, with most of these (29%) seeing participation levels at 51-75% of their capacity.

A small number of respondents (5%) reported being oversubscribed, with participation levels above their organisational capacity.

% of groups by current participation rates compared to organisational capacity

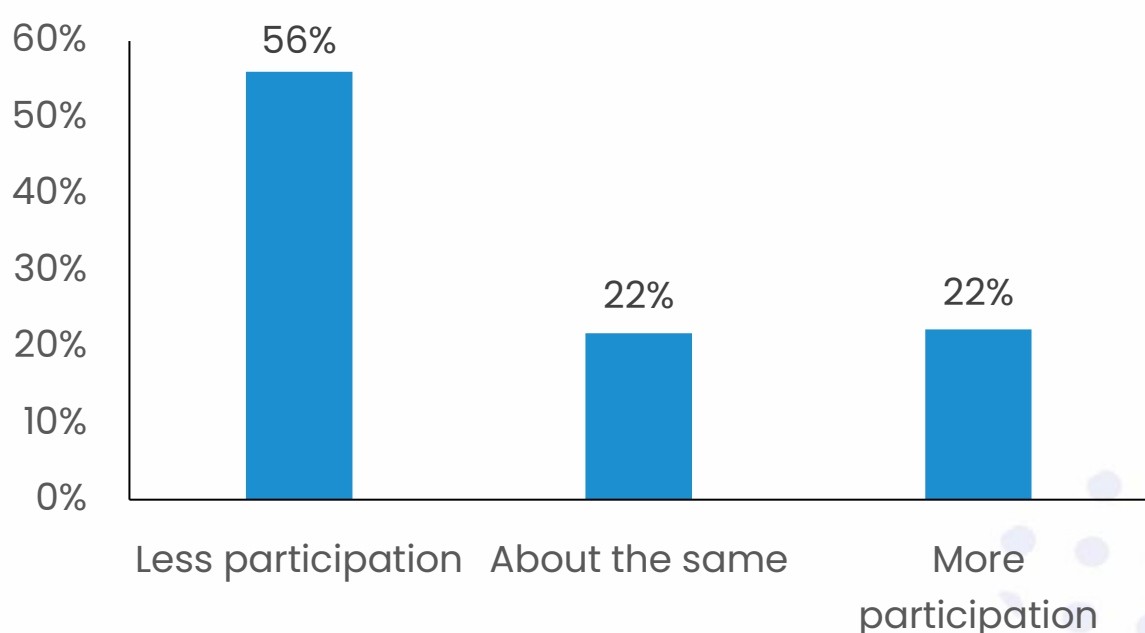


Participation levels compared to pre-Covid

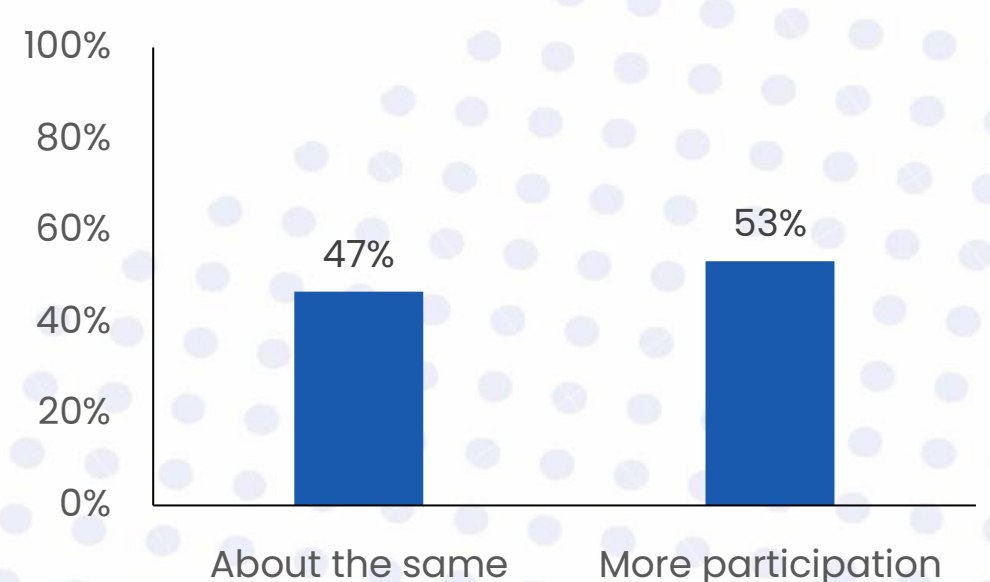
Over half (56%) of groups that currently have participation levels below capacity report participation is lower than before the pandemic, indicating participation levels are yet to fully recover from before the pandemic.

For the handful of groups who are currently seeing participation levels above their capacity, **a slight majority reported current activity levels as being higher than before the pandemic (53%).**

Groups with current participation below capacity



Groups with current participation above capacity

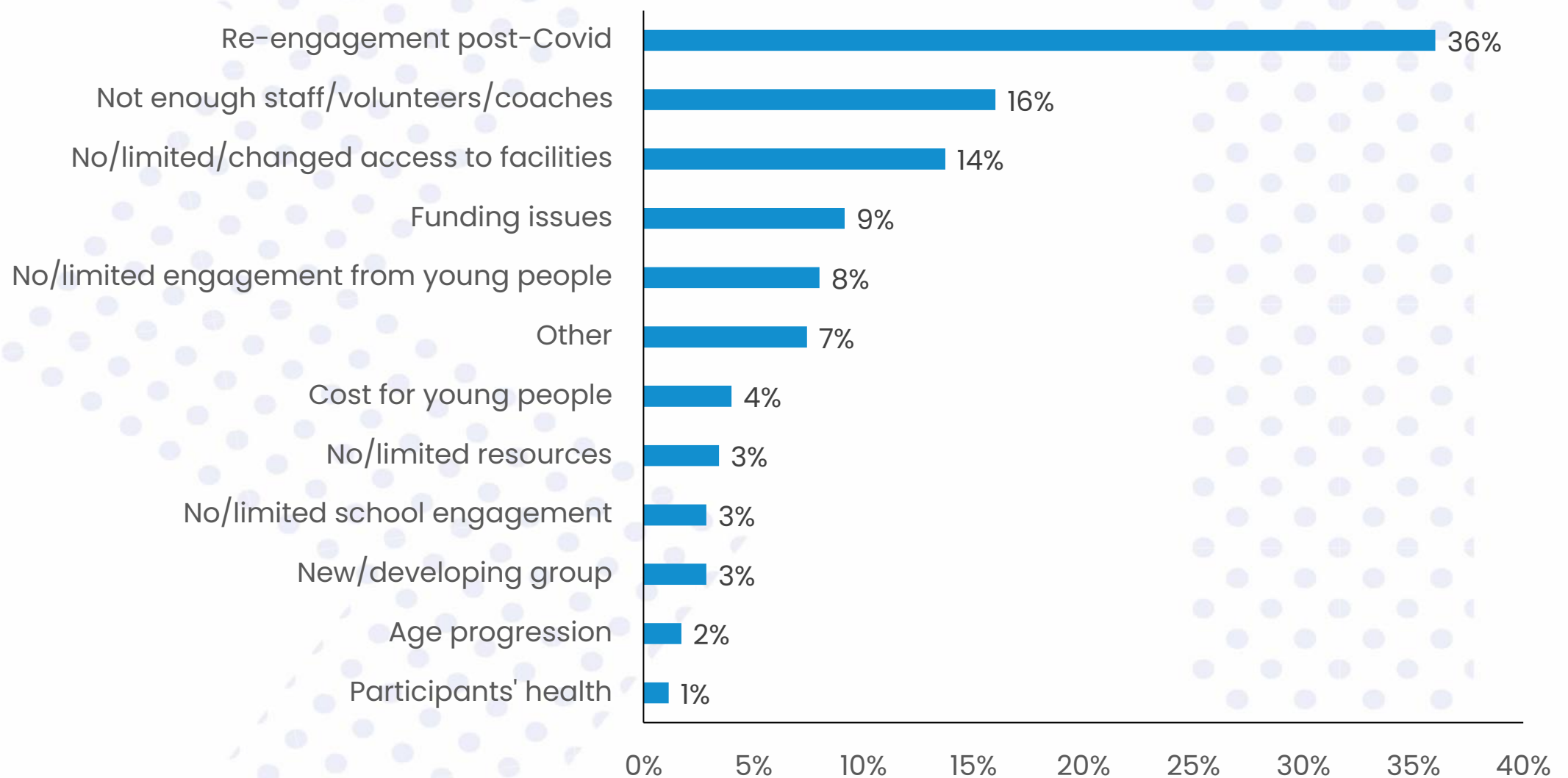


Participation and capacity

Why are participation levels down?

For groups reporting lower levels of participation than before the pandemic, **re-engaging after the pandemic (36%)** was cited as the most common reason for reduced numbers. Other concerns included not having enough staff/volunteers/coaches (16%) and no/limited/changed access to facilities (14%).

Reasons for participation below pre-Covid levels



- 'Classes are busy but no one can afford to pay for them .' – survey respondent
- 'Numbers have not recovered post lockdowns. The spike in the winter forced us to withdraw from face to face sessions which impacted on recovery.' – survey respondent
- 'We have the capacity to deliver more sessions, but certain sessions have remained closed due to the venues used not accepting our previous block bookings, due to other priorities.' – survey respondent
- 'We've reduced the amount of nights we run and frankly, a lot of our students didn't come back after COVID. We now find ourselves back to around 5 years ago so we are rebuilding.' – survey respondent
- 'Covid has had a big impact on how we run, to help volunteers and to keep prices down we run a scheme of a few weeks training with one week off. Also to help us and everyone with expenses we no longer run at school holidays.' – survey respondent

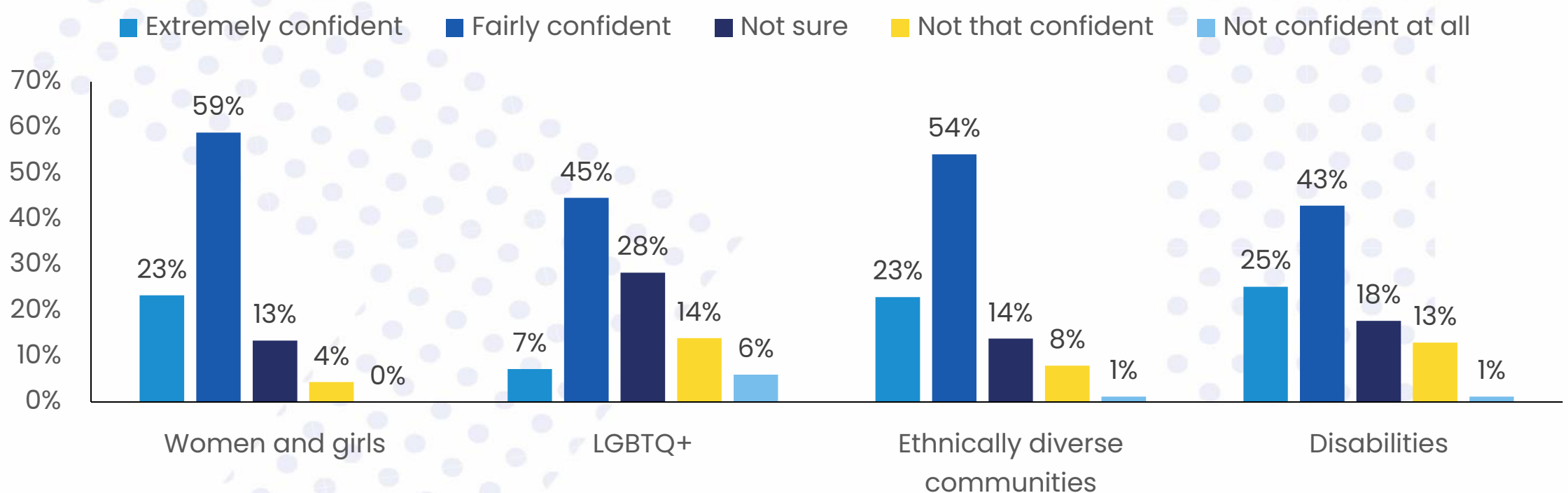
Tackling inequalities

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** (82% are extremely or fairly confident in this area).

Confidence is **lowest with regard to knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues**: 20% of groups are not that confident, or not confident at all in their knowledge of the challenges in this area. There is also a higher proportion of groups that are not sure about their knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (28%).

Group confidence in their knowledge of challenges facing young people

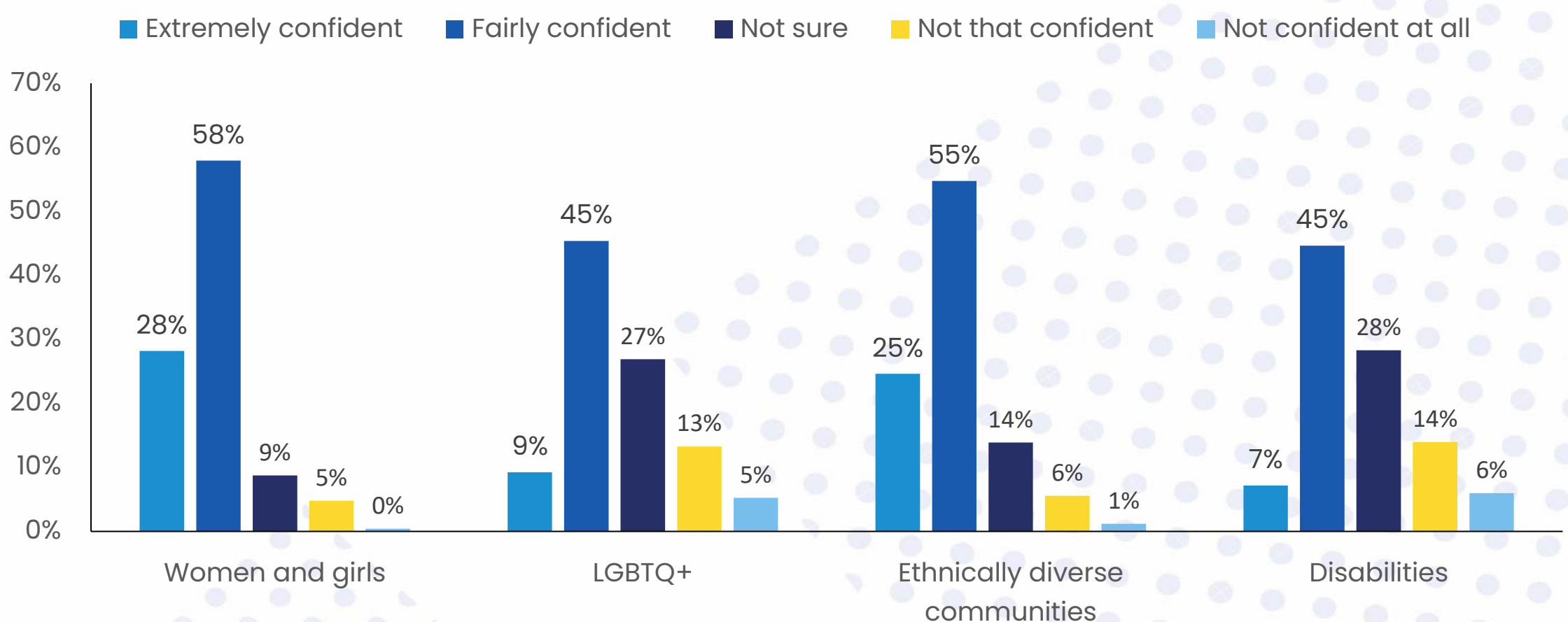


Support for young people in these areas

Groups are **most confident in supporting women and girls**, with 86% being extremely or fairly confident in this area. Groups were **least confident in supporting young people in the area of disabilities** (20% being not that confident or not confident at all).

Over a quarter of respondents were not sure in their confidence in supporting young people around LGBTQ+ issues (27%) and those with disabilities (28%).

Group confidence in how they feel supporting young people

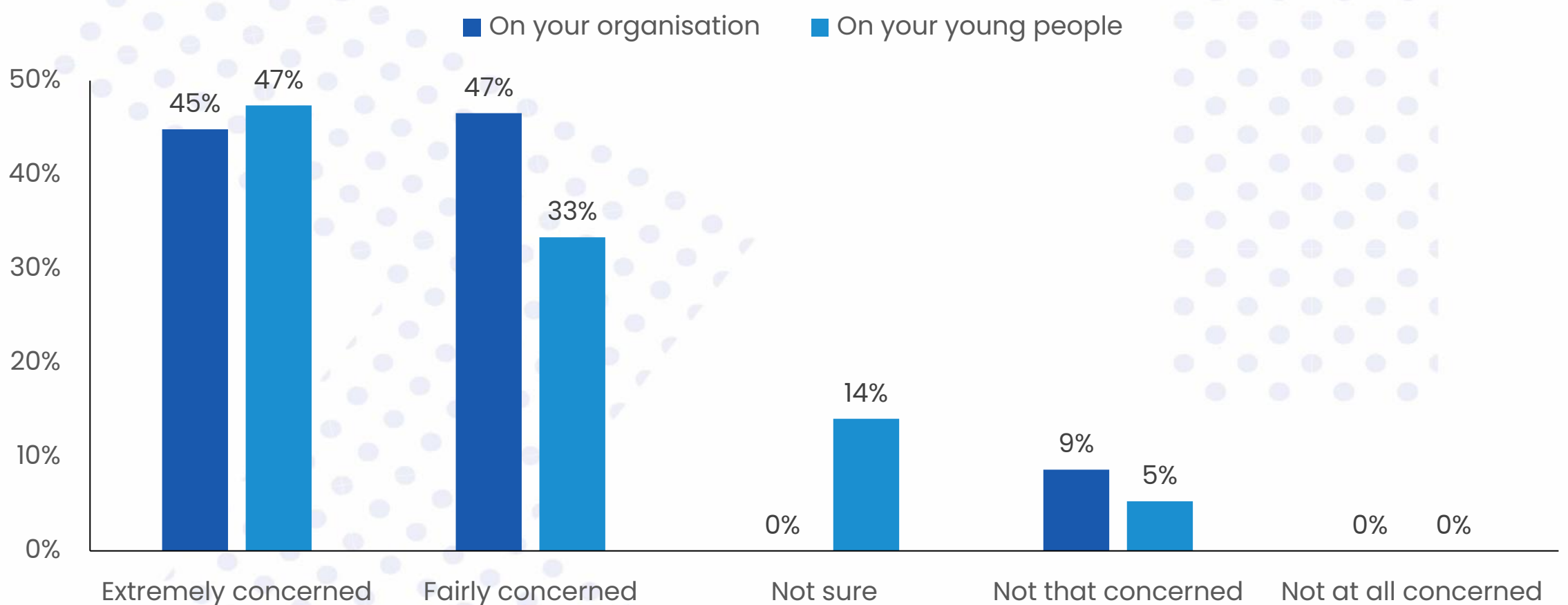


Cost of living increases

Impact on groups and their young people

There are high levels of concerns about the impact of cost of living increases on organisations and their young people – 92% of respondents are extremely or fairly concerned about this impact for their groups, with 80% concerned for their young people.

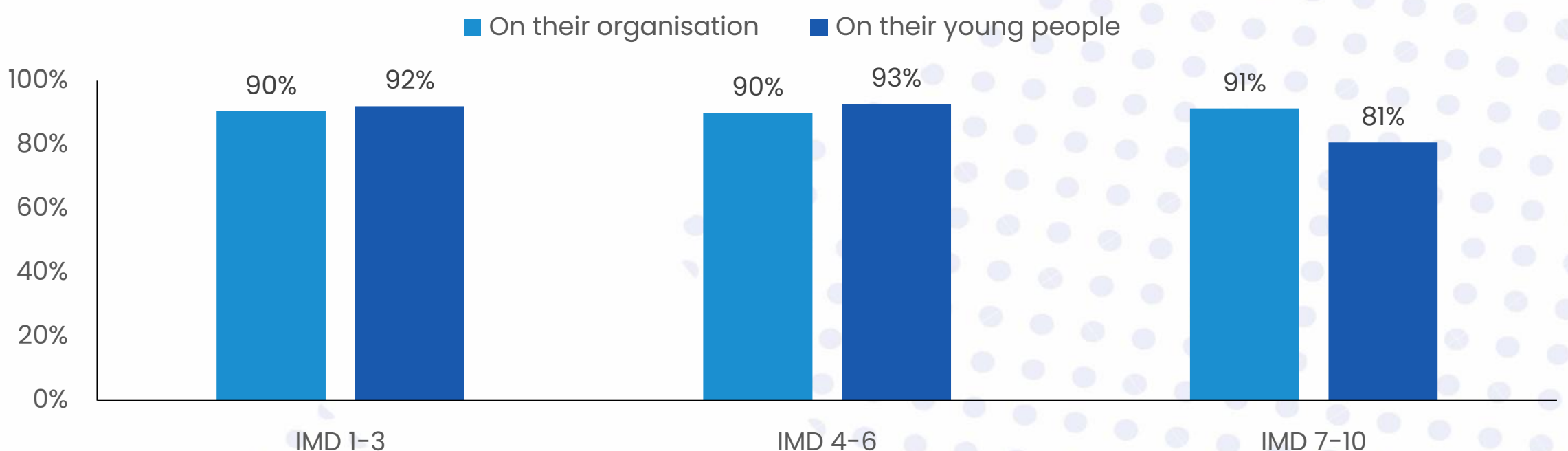
Concern about the impact of cost of living increases



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 and young people across all areas of multiple deprivation.

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



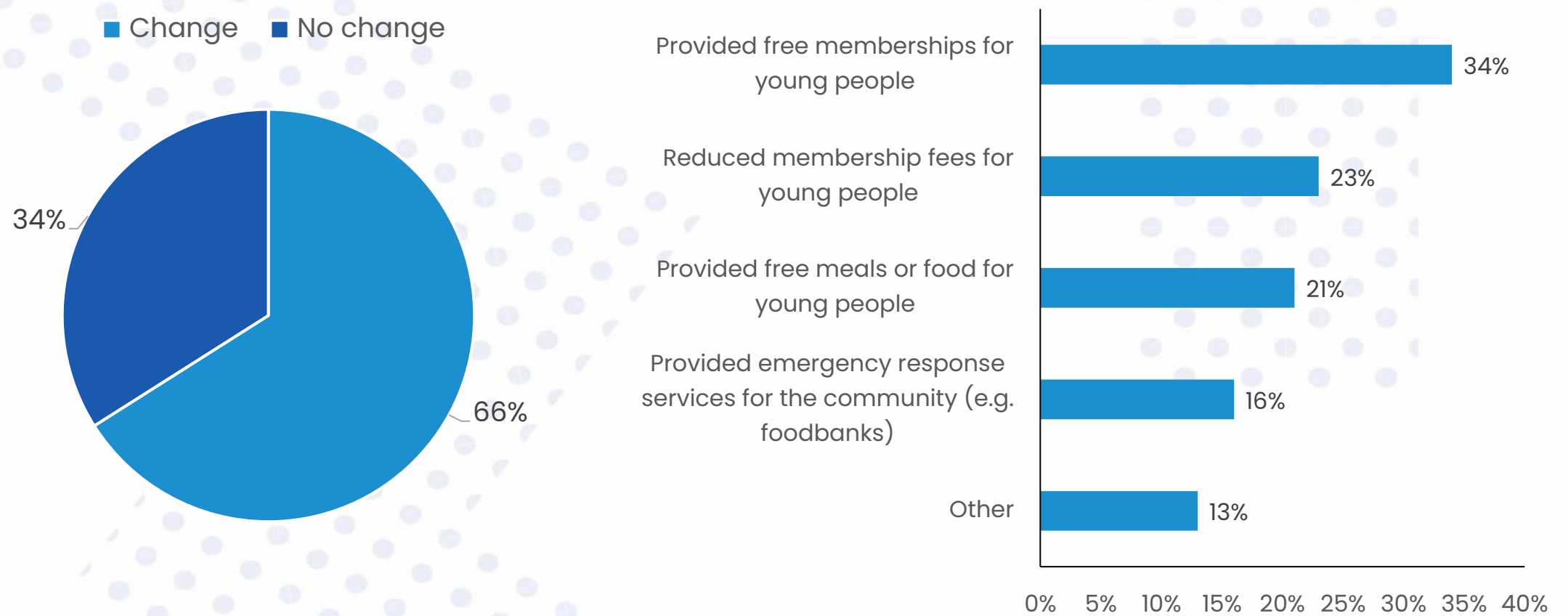
Cost of living increases

Groups' responses to the increases

Three quarters of respondents (66%) reported they have made a change to their organisation in response to the cost of living increase. A number of groups also indicated that they haven't made changes because their provision has been, and continues to be based around free or low-cost activity provision for young people.

Where changes were made, the most frequently made change has been to **provide free memberships for young people (34%)**.

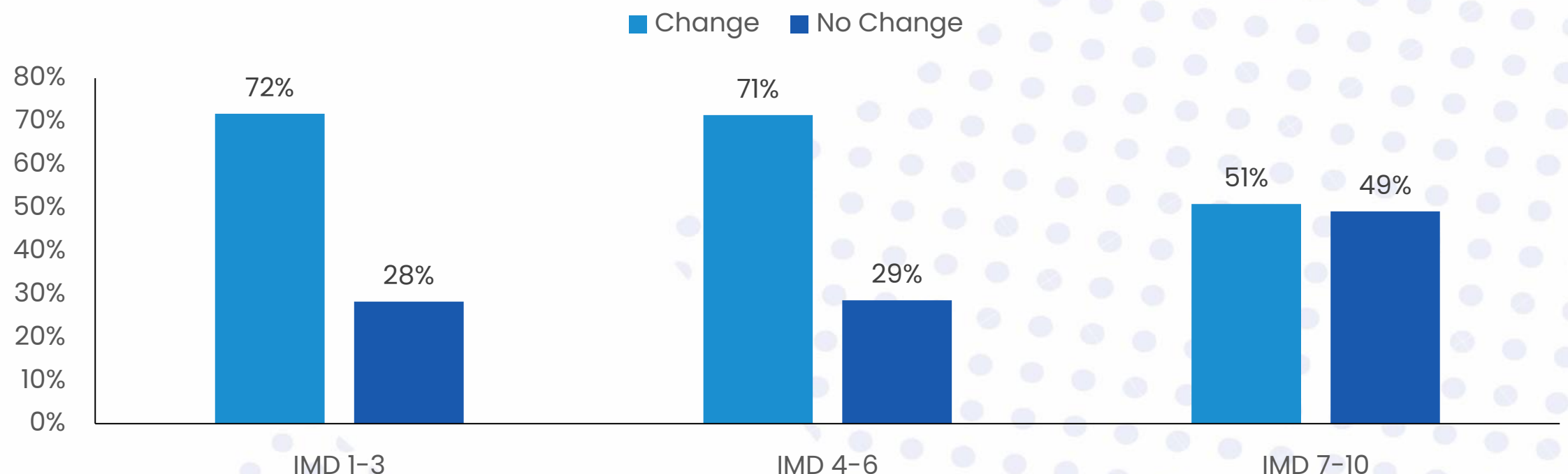
Changes made in response to cost of living increases



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 the **bottom 1-3 and middle 4-6 deciles of multiple deprivation**. Nearly three quarters of groups in these areas have made a change (72% for the 1-3 deciles and 71% for 4-6).

Changes made in response to cost of living increases (by IMD)

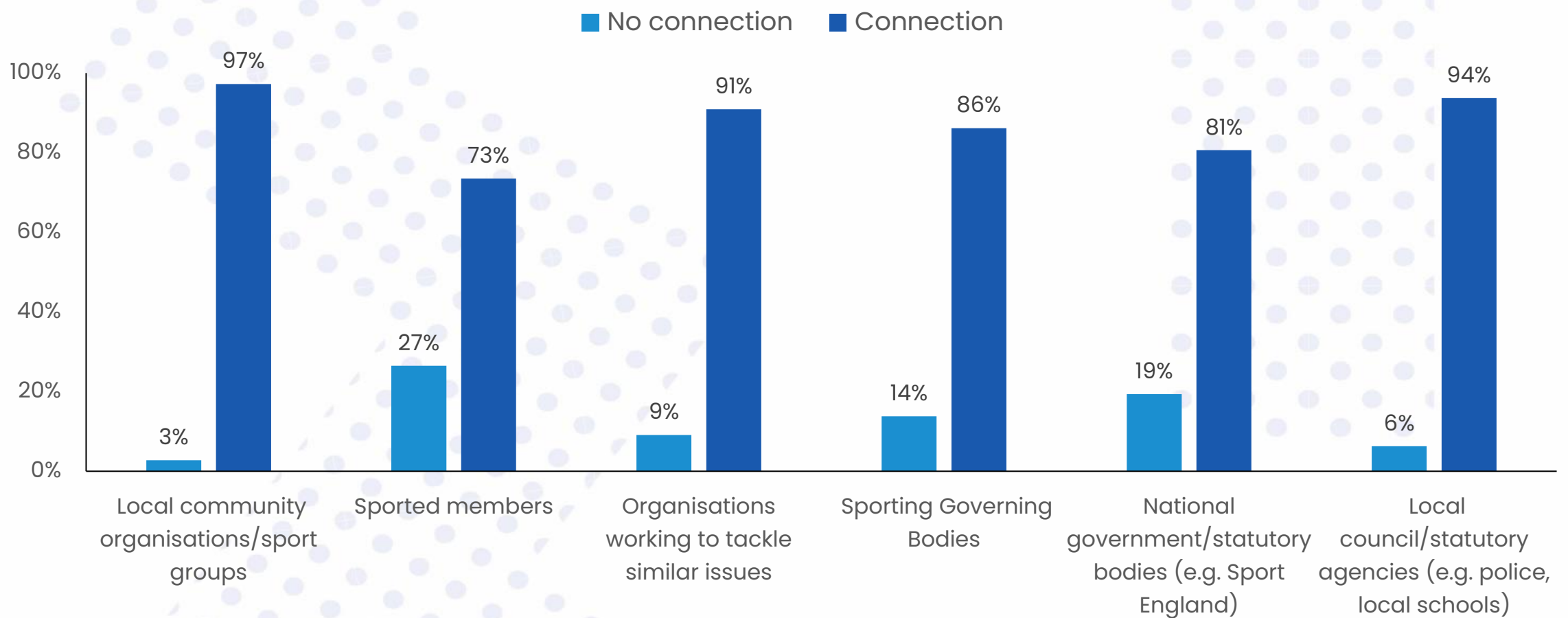


Connected communities

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 (97%), followed by local councils/statutory agencies (94%), and organisations working to tackle similar issues (91%).**

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

