# Community Pulse

Understanding our members' world - October 2021

SPORTED

# Executive Summary

The Community Pulse is a longitudinal study on the sustainability and needs of community groups throughout the UK. Created to capture and share the voice of community leaders, Sported wants this significant and timely feedback to drive the support members receive from us and other stakeholders.

Between **October 11th to October 18th 2021 437 survey responses** were completed by sports group leaders, providing insight on reopening post-pandemic. **51% of responses were from groups in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation**. This research builds on Community Pulse consultations throughout 2020 and recently in January and April 2021.

## Sported

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 thrive.

Over half of Sported's community sports groups are volunteer led, 44% have an income of less than £10,000 per year, and 45% are located in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation. Sported's community sports groups also work within complex local contexts, often tackling some of society's biggest challenges.

## Key Findings

- **Groups have mostly reopened –** 97% of groups have reopened and 92% of unopened groups expect to reopen in the next 6 months.

- **Young people are not returning in the same numbers as pre-pandemic –** Only 42% of groups stated that 80-100% of young people had returned with 30% of groups stating that less than 60% of their participants had returned since reopening.

- **Groups are finding it much harder to find facilities –** 43% of groups have found it harder and 25% have found it much harder to find facilities following the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Groups are confident about their digital capabilities but still want support** – 60% of groups are fairly/very confident , but 81% stated they would like support developing them.

- **Groups have received COVID-19 funding but require a lot more to meet needs –** 70% of groups received COVID-19 funding, with groups in areas of higher multiple deprivation reporting receiving funding more than groups in areas of lower multiple deprivation. However, 38% of groups reported needing over £25,000 to meet their needs.

- **Groups are prioritising planning for the future –** Almost 70% of groups reported that planning for the future was their top priority for the next 6 months.

- **Knowledge of funding opportunities is the support that groups see as most helpful now –** 59% of groups identified that support in knowledge of funding opportunities would be the most helpful.

- **Confidence in organisational survival is at the highest and anxiety is at the lowest so far this year –** with 68% of groups extremely confident their organisation will survive in the next 6 months and no groups not confident. Anxiety for themselves and their participants is also at the lowest compared to January and April 2021. around mental health, organisations, and participants is also at the lowest compared to January and April 2021.

- **Mental Health is the biggest challenge young people are facing in their communities at this time –** 27% identified mental health as the main challenge facing young people -  almost 2 times any other area of concern.
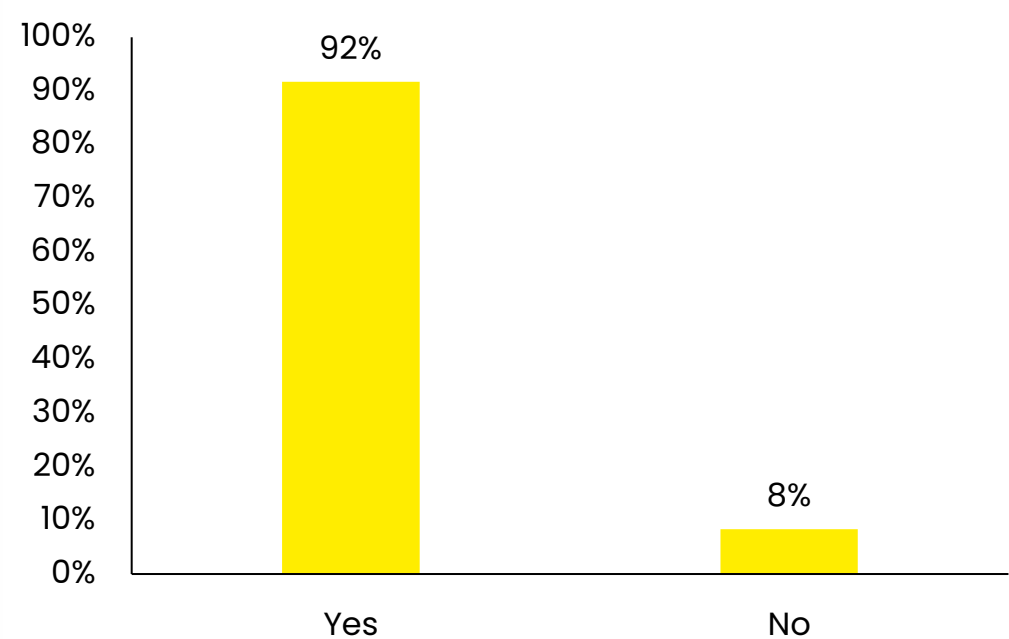
# Groups Reopening

**97%** of groups have reopened and **92%** of unopened groups expect to reopen in the next 6 months. Groups that have not reopened reported that **access to facilities** and **funding issues** were the main reason they were not able to reopen.

### % of groups who have reopened

| | |
|---|---|
| No | 3% |
| Yes | 97% |
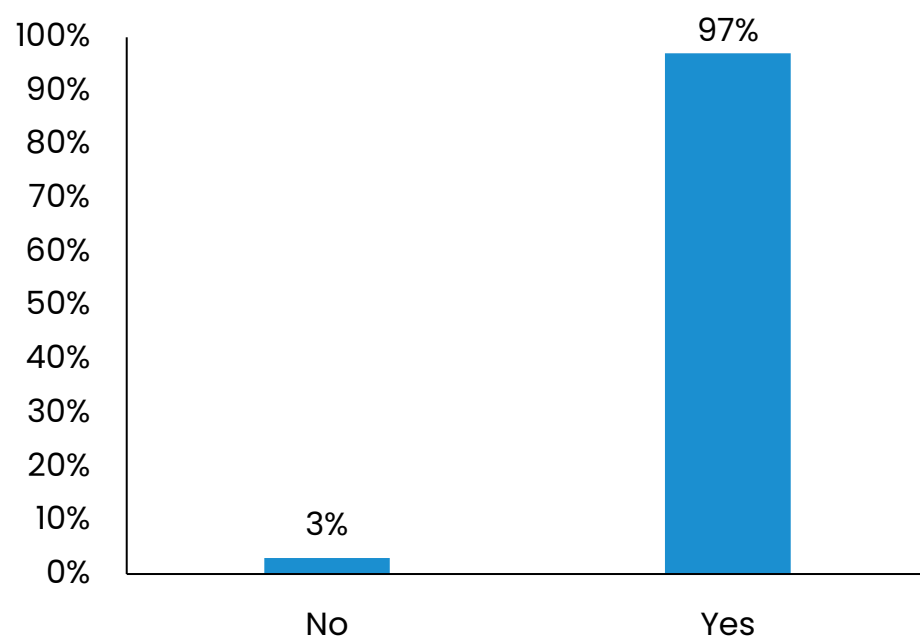
### % of unopened groups who plan to reopen in the next 6 months

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 92% |
| No | 8% |

## Groups NOT Yet Reopened

### Reasons groups identified for not yet reopening

| | |
|---|---|
| No access, or limited access to facilities | 33% |
| Funding issues | 28% |
| Other | 17% |
| Not enough staff or volunteers | 17% |
| Participants concerned about returning post COVID-19 | 6% |
| Lack of interest from participants | 0% |

0%  5%  10%  15%  20%  25%  30%  35%
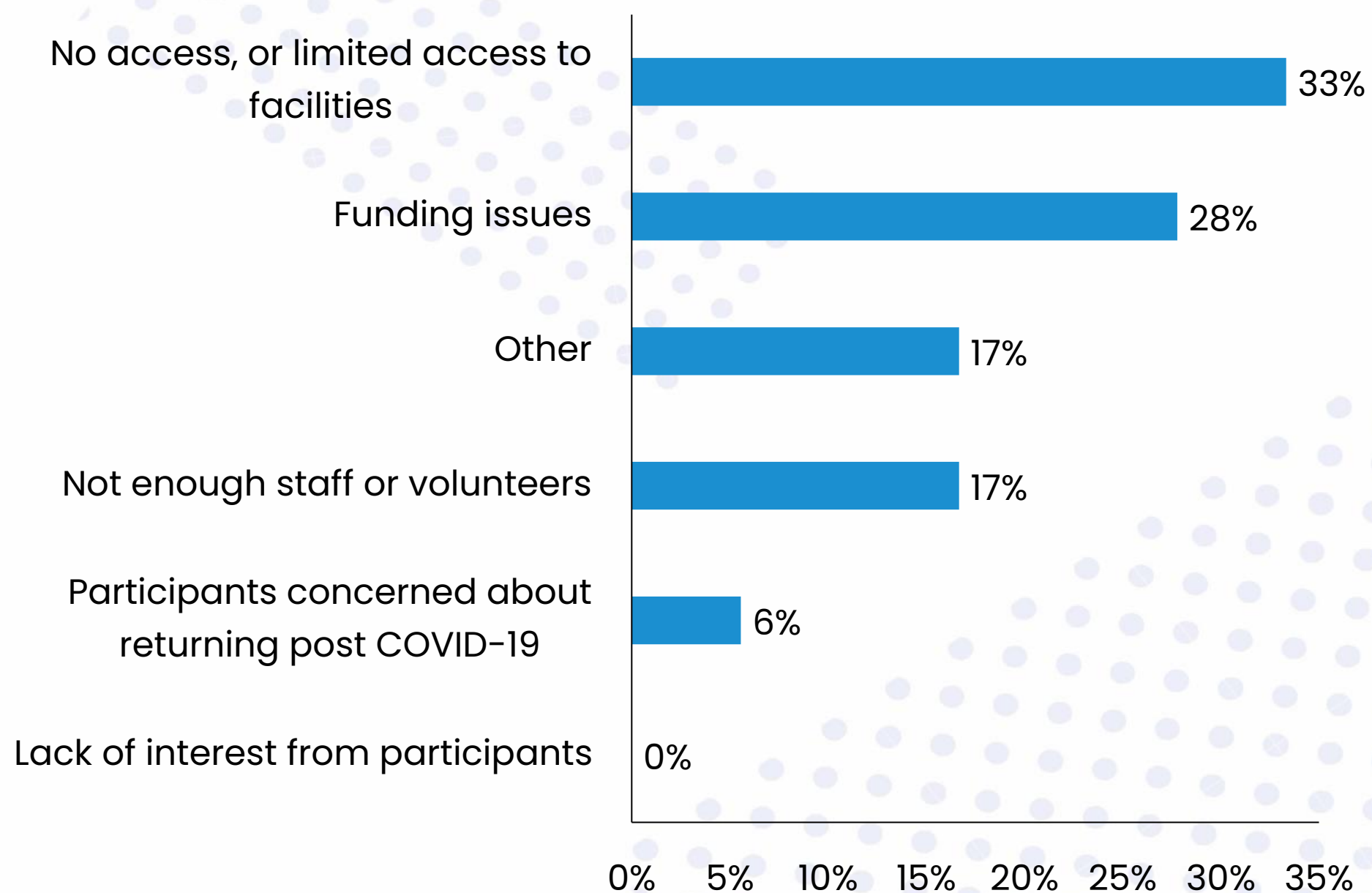
# Reopened Groups

## Challenges

Almost **50%** of groups identified that **funding issues was a main challenge when reopening**. Groups also identified challenges with **not enough staff or volunteers** and **access to facilities. 15%** of groups reported **not having any big challenges** reopening.

### Main challenges identified by groups reopening

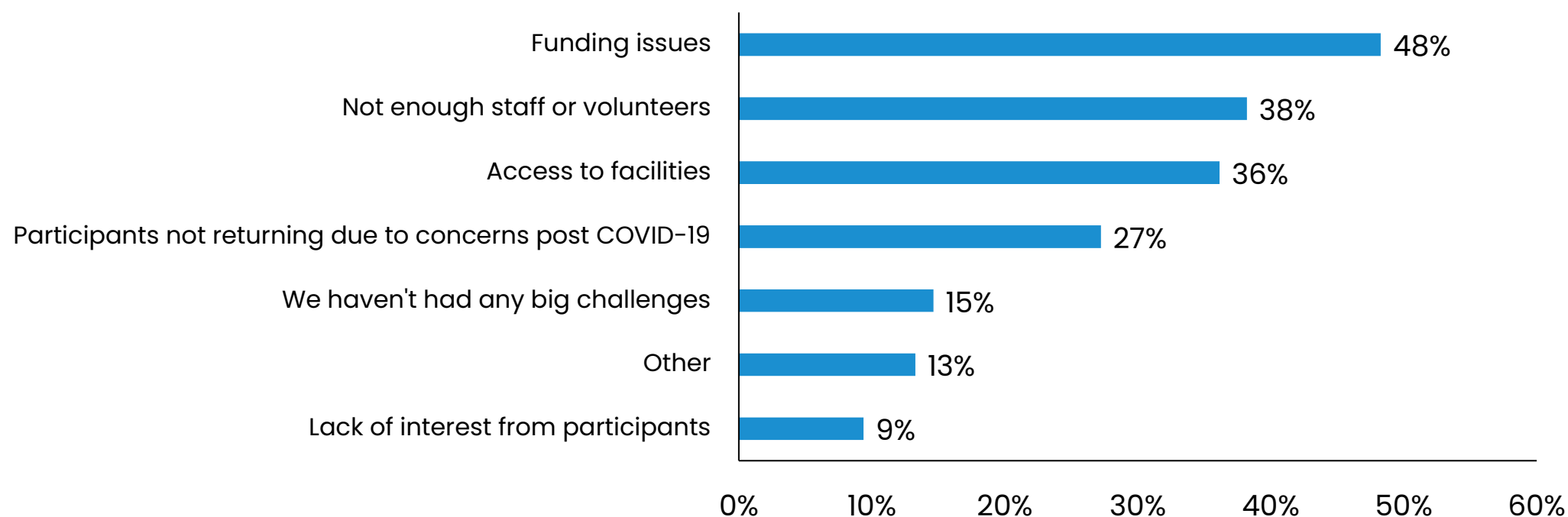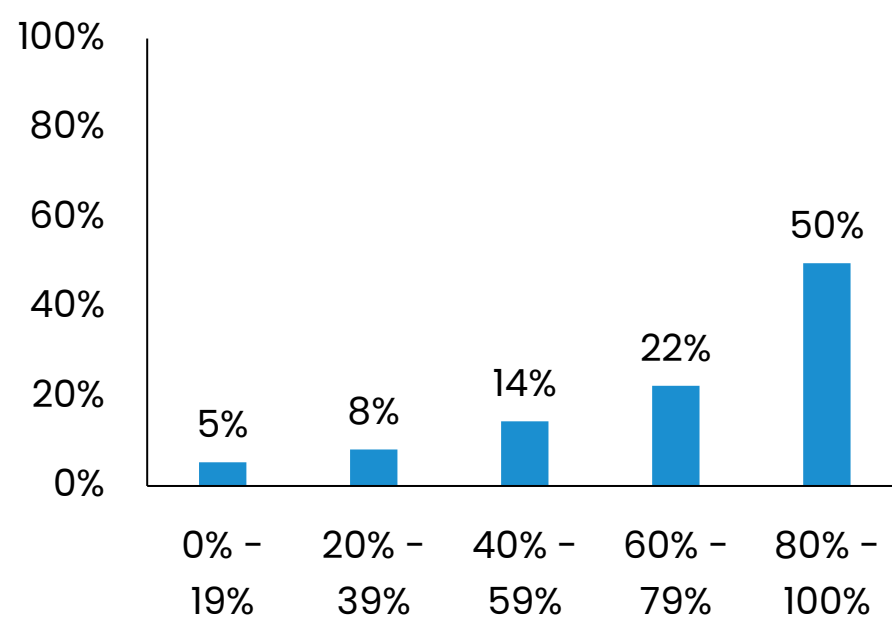| Challenge | % |
|---|---|
| Funding issues | 48% |
| Not enough staff or volunteers | 38% |
| Access to facilities | 36% |
| Participants not returning due to concerns post COVID-19 | 27% |
| We haven't had any big challenges | 15% |
| Other | 13% |
| Lack of interest from participants | 9% |

## Who has returned

**Only 42% of groups stated that 80-100% of young people had returned,** with 30% of groups stating that less than 60% of their participants had returned since reopening. These statistics were similar for staff/volunteers, with **27% of groups reporting that less than 60% of staff/volunteers had returned**.

### % of young people who have returned

| Range | % |
|---|---|
| 0% - 19% | 6% |
| 20% - 39% | 10% |
| 40% - 59% | 14% |
| 60% - 79% | 28% |
| 80% - 100% | 42% |
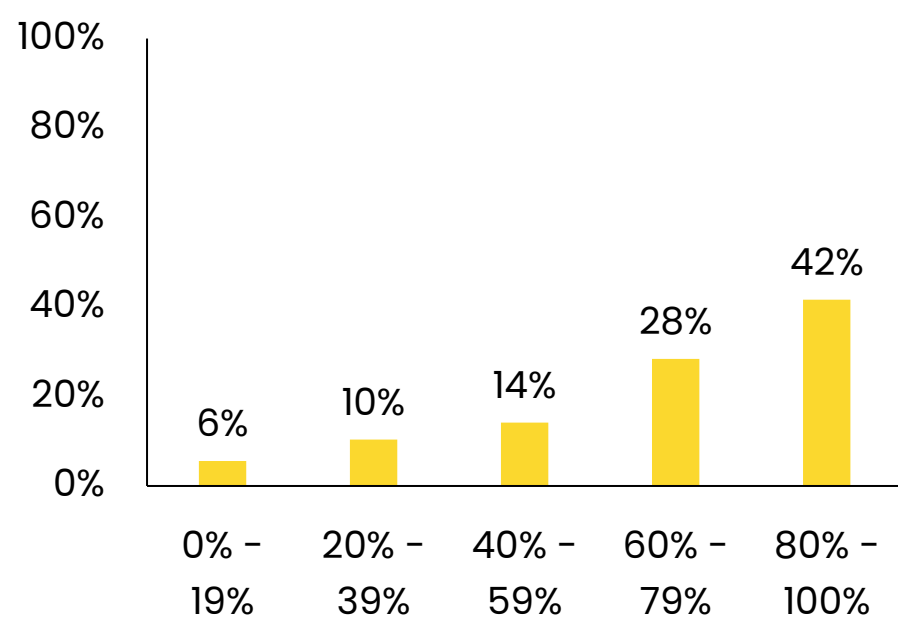
### % of staff/volunteers who have returned

| Range | % |
|---|---|
| 0% - 19% | 5% |
| 20% - 39% | 8% |
| 40% - 59% | 14% |
| 60% - 79% | 22% |
| 80% - 100% | 50% |

Groups reported young people from the bottom 30% of areas of multiple deprivations had returned at a lower rate than groups from the top 30% of areas of multiple deprivation. **Only 38% of groups from the bottom 30% of areas of multiple deprivation said over 80% of their participants had returned.**

### % of young people who have returned by areas of multiple deprivation

| Range | Top 30% of areas of multiple deprivation | Bottom 30% of areas of multiple deprivation |
|---|---|---|
| 0% - 19% | 2% | 4% |
| 20% - 39% | 6% | 14% |
| 40% - 59% | 12% | 17% |
| 60% - 79% | 24% | 28% |
| 80% - 100% | 55% | 38% |
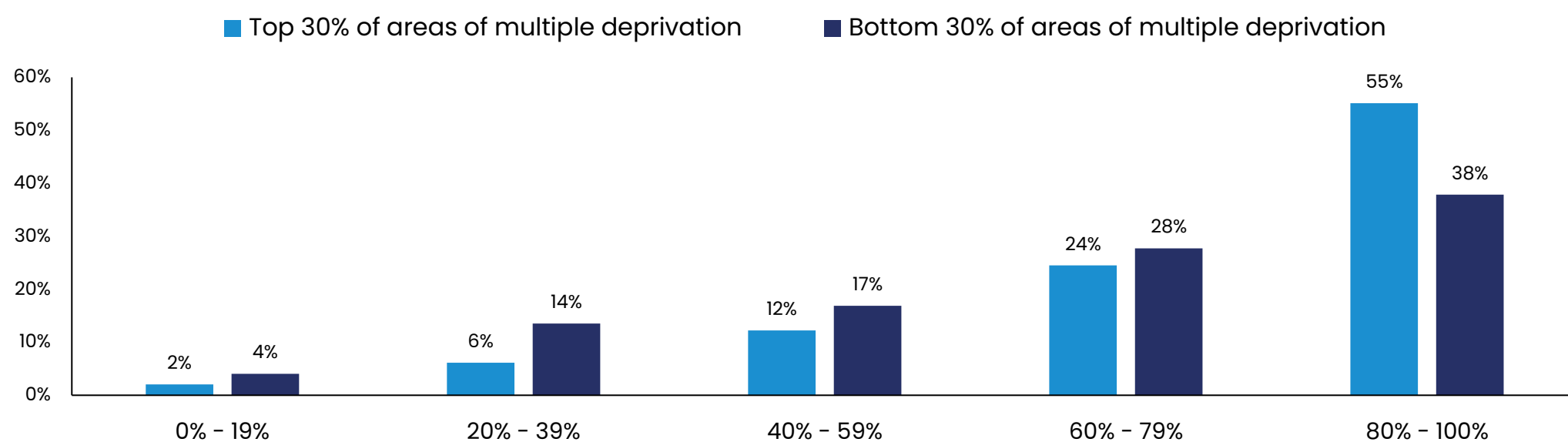
# Facilities and Funding

## Facilities

**43% of groups have found it harder** and **25% have found it much harder** to access facilities following the COVID-19 pandemic.

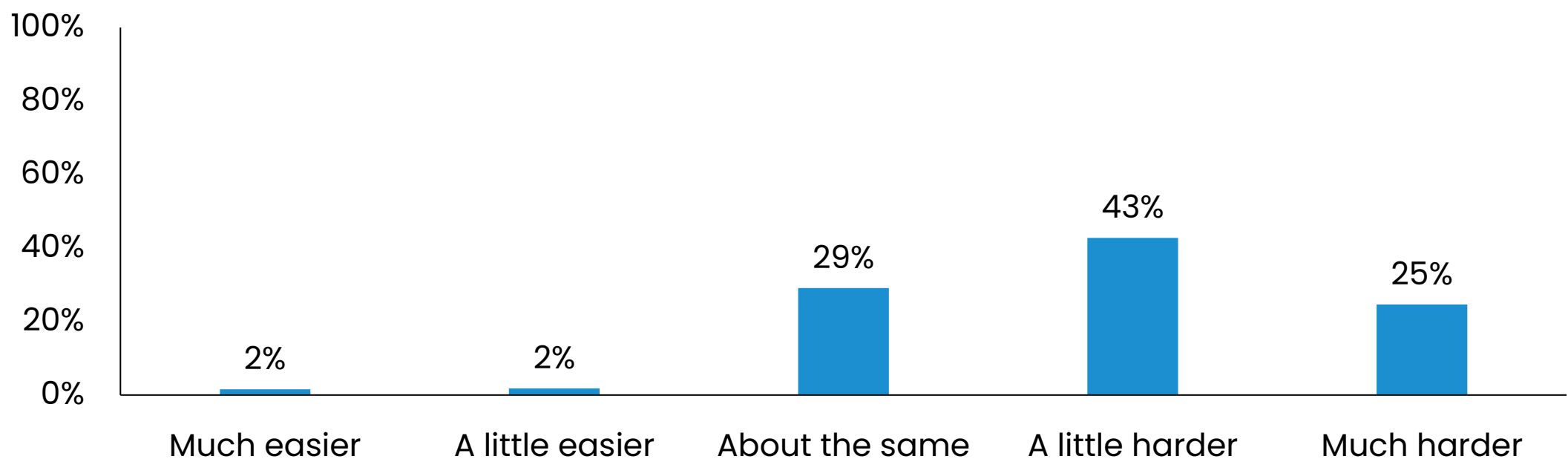### % of groups who have found it easier or harder to access facilities since the COVID-19 pandemic
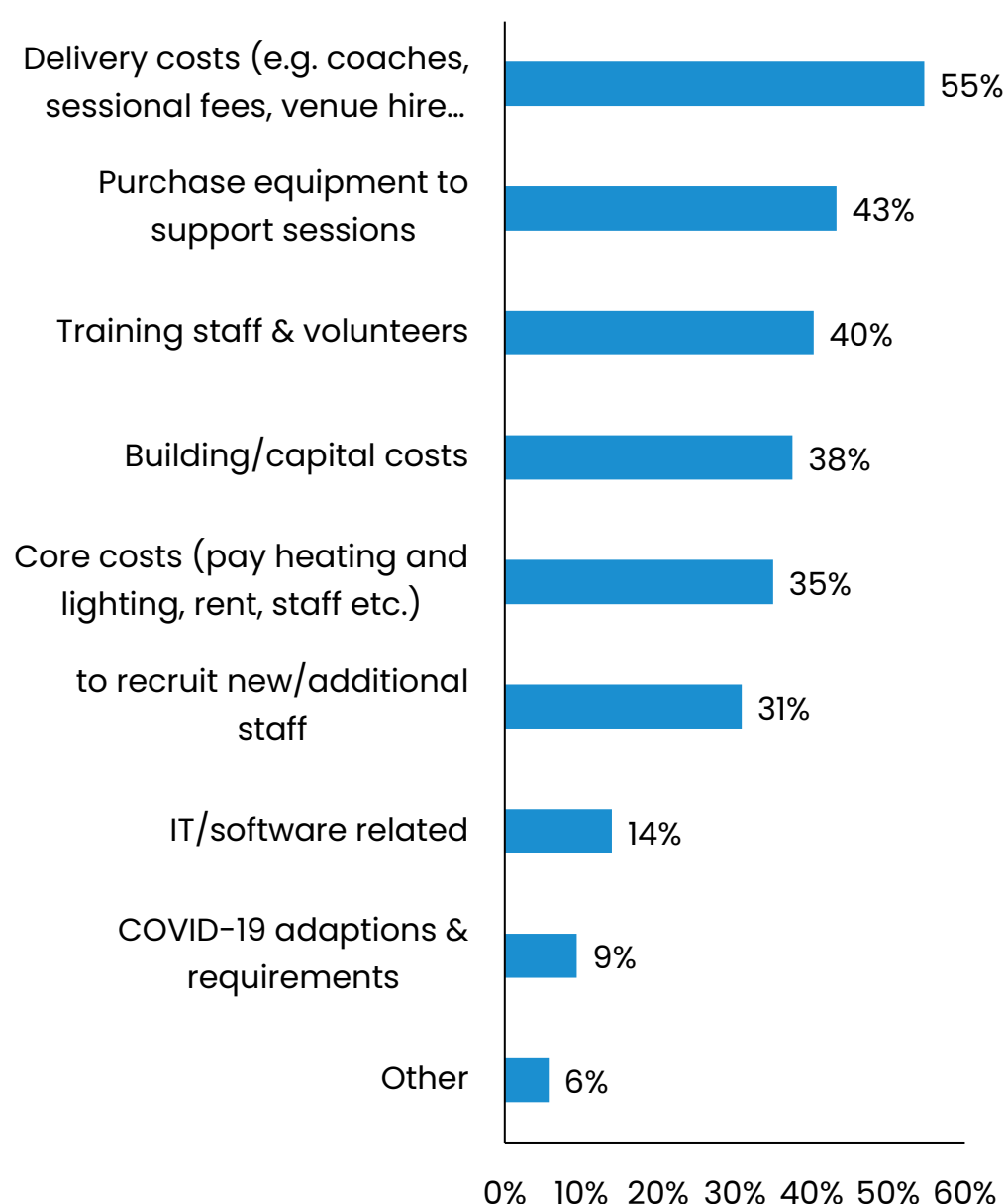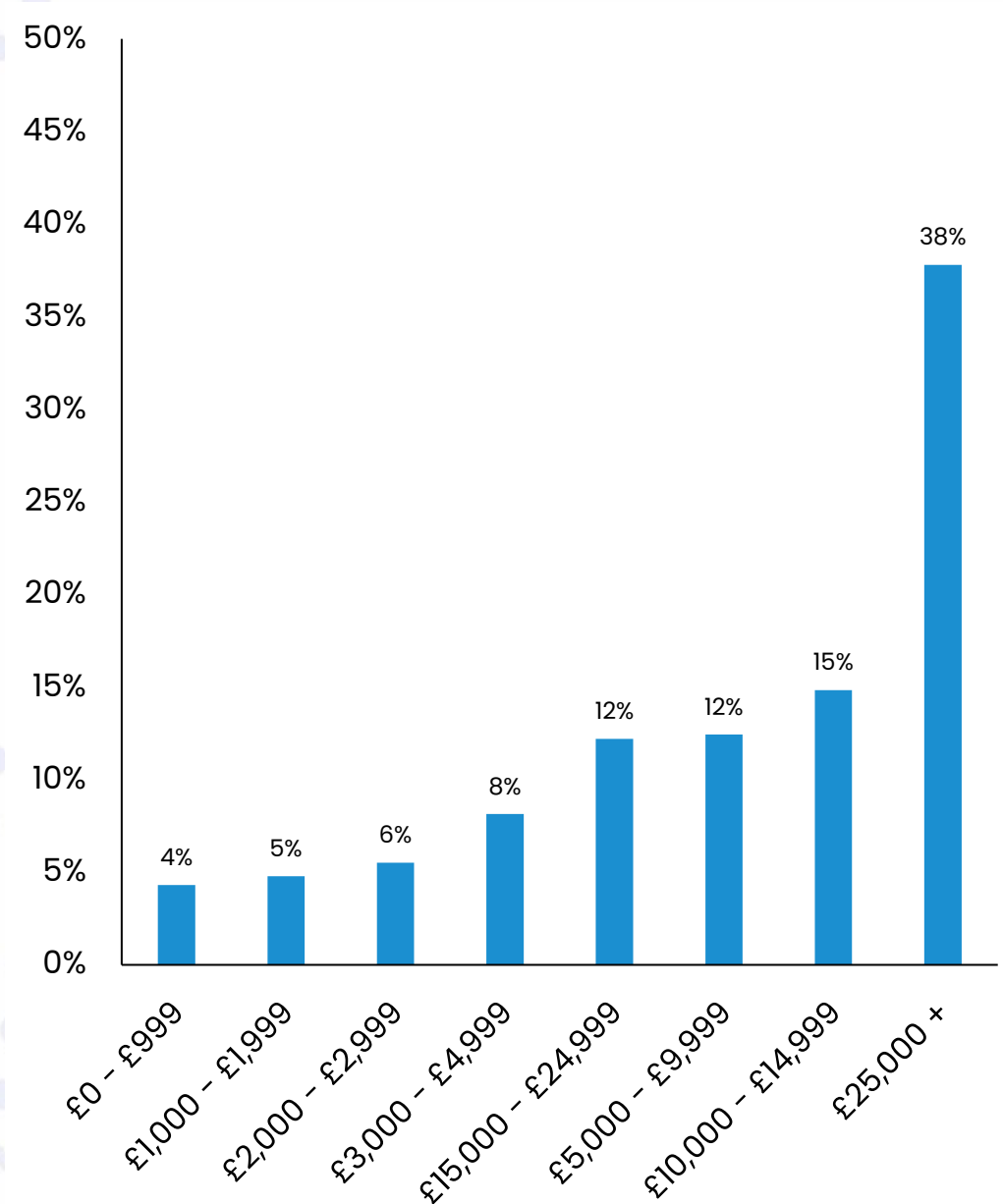
| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Much easier | 2% |
| A little easier | 2% |
| About the same | 29% |
| A little harder | 43% |
| Much harder | 25% |

## Funding

Groups highlighted that **delivery costs**, **purchasing equipment to support sessions,** and **training staff and volunteers** were their current priorities for future funding.

**70% of groups received COVID-19 funding**, with groups in areas of higher multiple deprivation reporting receiving COVID-19 funding more than groups in areas of lower multiple deprivation. However, **38% of groups reported needing over £25,000 to meet their needs**.

### Areas groups identified as current priorities for future funding needs

| Area | Value |
|---|---|
| Delivery costs (e.g. coaches, sessional fees, venue hire… | 55% |
| Purchase equipment to support sessions | 43% |
| Training staff & volunteers | 40% |
| Building/capital costs | 38% |
| Core costs (pay heating and lighting, rent, staff etc.) | 35% |
| to recruit new/additional staff | 31% |
| IT/software related | 14% |
| COVID-19 adaptions & requirements | 9% |
| Other | 6% |

### Amount identified for groups to meet funding needs

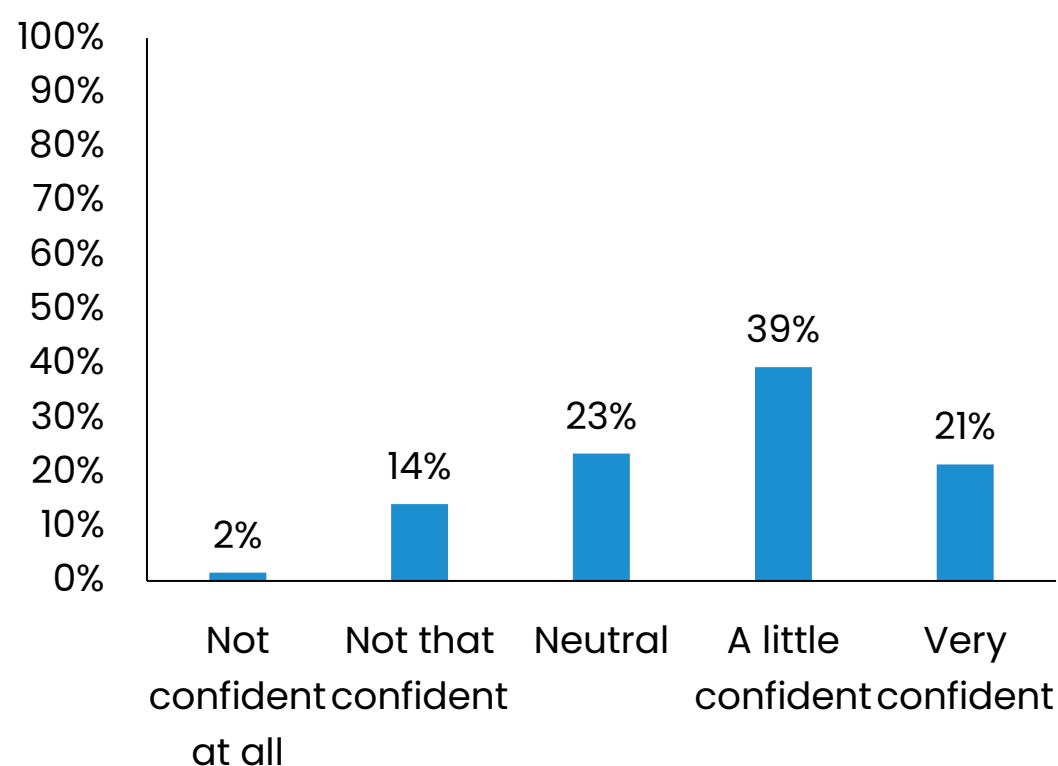| Amount | Value |
|---|---|
| £0 – £999 | 4% |
| £1,000 – £1,999 | 5% |
| £2,000 – £2,999 | 6% |
| £3,000 – £4,999 | 8% |
| £15,000 – £24,999 | 12% |
| £5,000 – £9,999 | 12% |
| £10,000 – £14,999 | 15% |
| £25,000 + | 38% |

# Digital Capabilities

## Digital Confidence

**60% of groups reported being a little confident or very confident** in their organisation's general digital capabilities. However, **81% of groups reported that they would like support** developing their digital capabilities further.

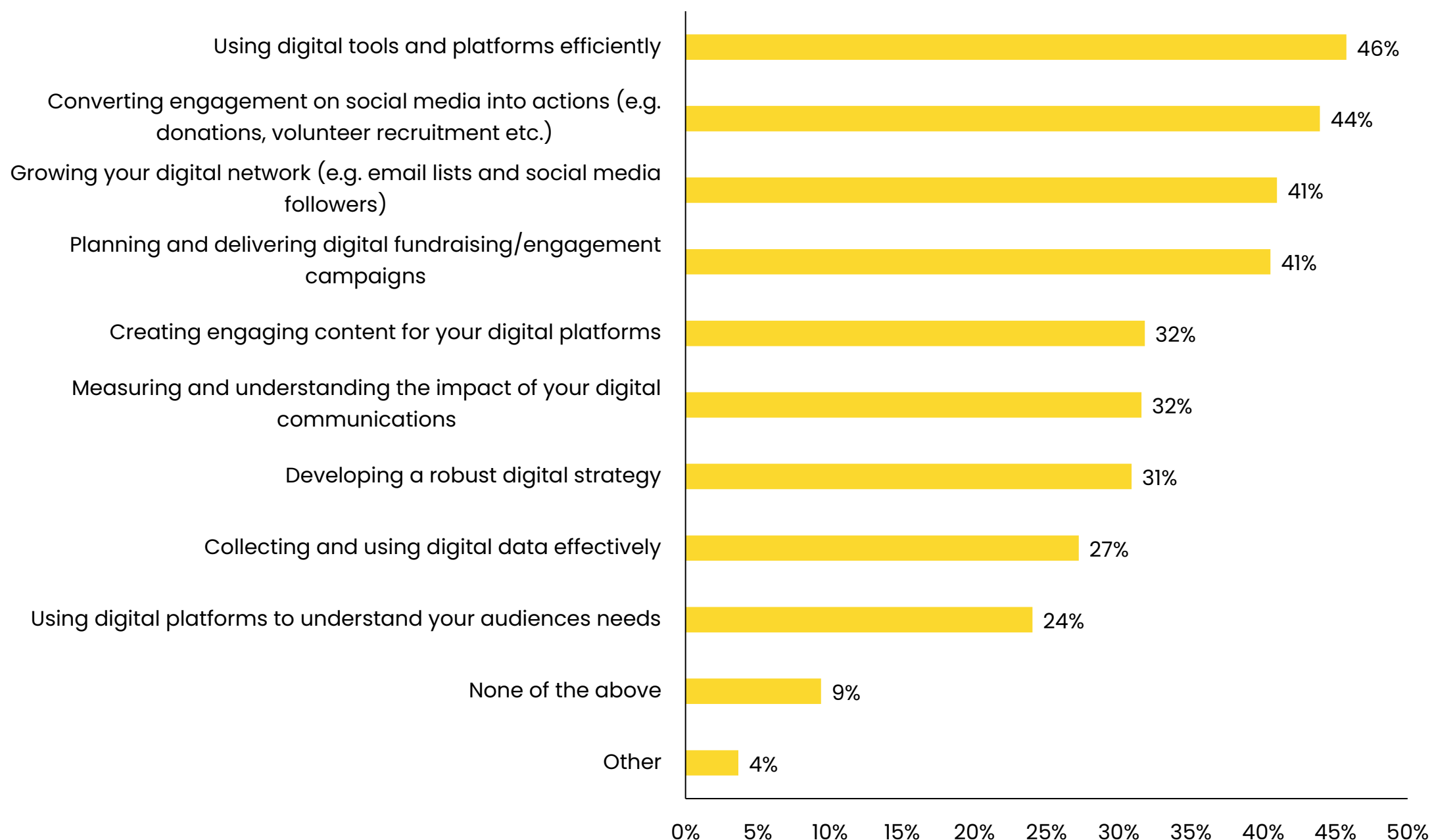### Confidence in groups' general digital capabilities

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Not confident at all | 2% |
| Not that confident | 14% |
| Neutral | 23% |
| A little confident | 39% |
| Very confident | 21% |

### % of groups who would like support developing digital capabilities

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Yes | 81% |
| No | 19% |
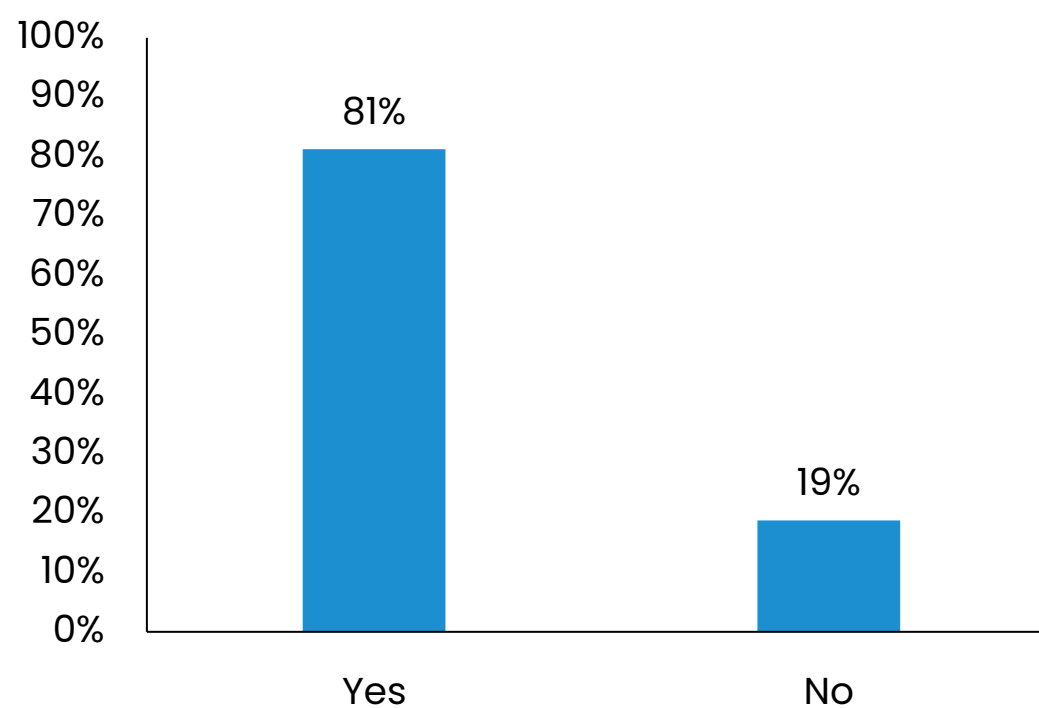
## Digital Development

**Using digital tools and platforms effectively, converting engagement on social media into actions, growing your digital network,** and **planning and delivering digital fundraising/engagement campaigns** were the key areas groups identified for support with digital development.

### Key digital areas organisations identified as wanting to develop

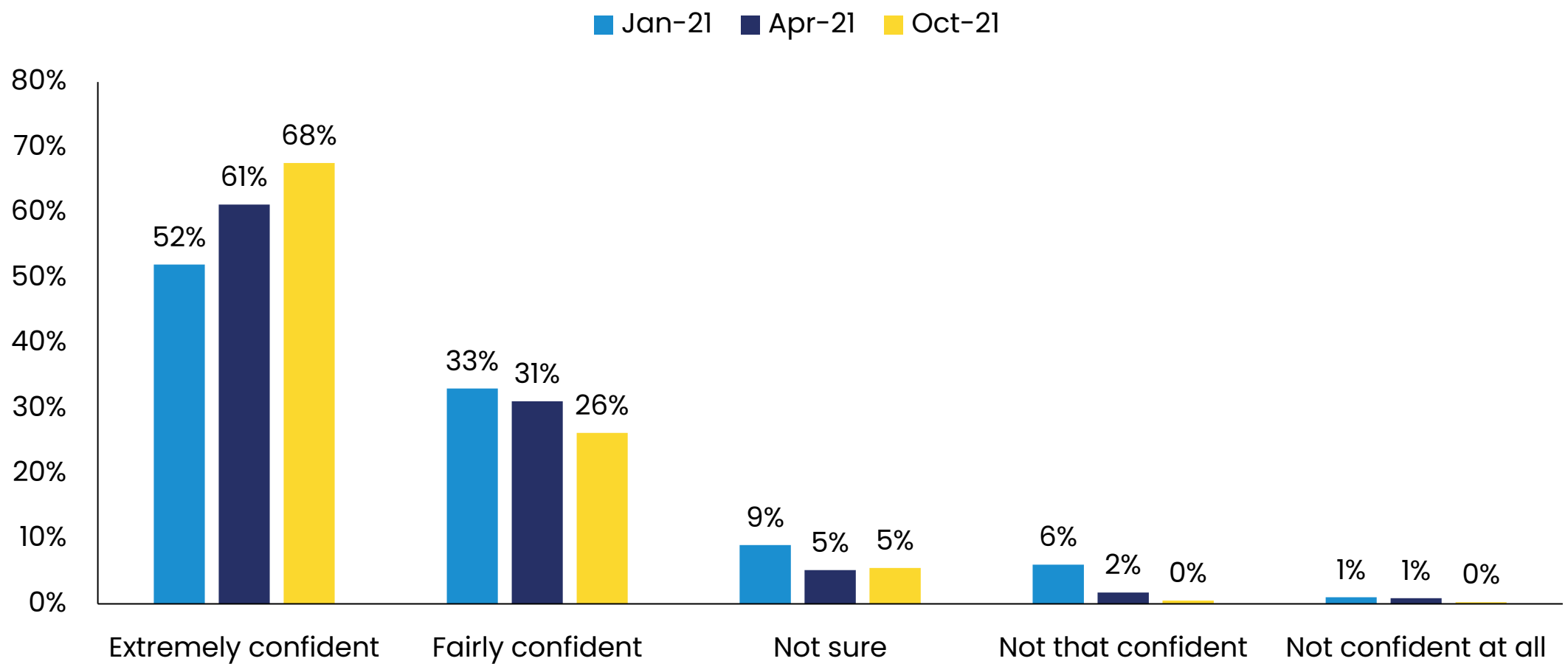| Area | Value |
|---|---|
| Using digital tools and platforms efficiently | 46% |
| Converting engagement on social media into actions (e.g. donations, volunteer recruitment etc.) | 44% |
| Growing your digital network (e.g. email lists and social media followers) | 41% |
| Planning and delivering digital fundraising/engagement campaigns | 41% |
| Creating engaging content for your digital platforms | 32% |
| Measuring and understanding the impact of your digital communications | 32% |
| Developing a robust digital strategy | 31% |
| Collecting and using digital data effectively | 27% |
| Using digital platforms to understand your audiences needs | 24% |
| None of the above | 9% |
| Other | 4% |

# Survival and Anxiety

**Confidence in organisational survival is at the highest point so far this year,** with 68% of groups extremely confident their organisation will survive in the next 6 months and 0% of groups not that confident or not confident at all.

## Survival

### How confident groups are that their organisation will survive in the next 6 months

■ Jan-21  ■ Apr-21  ■ Oct-21

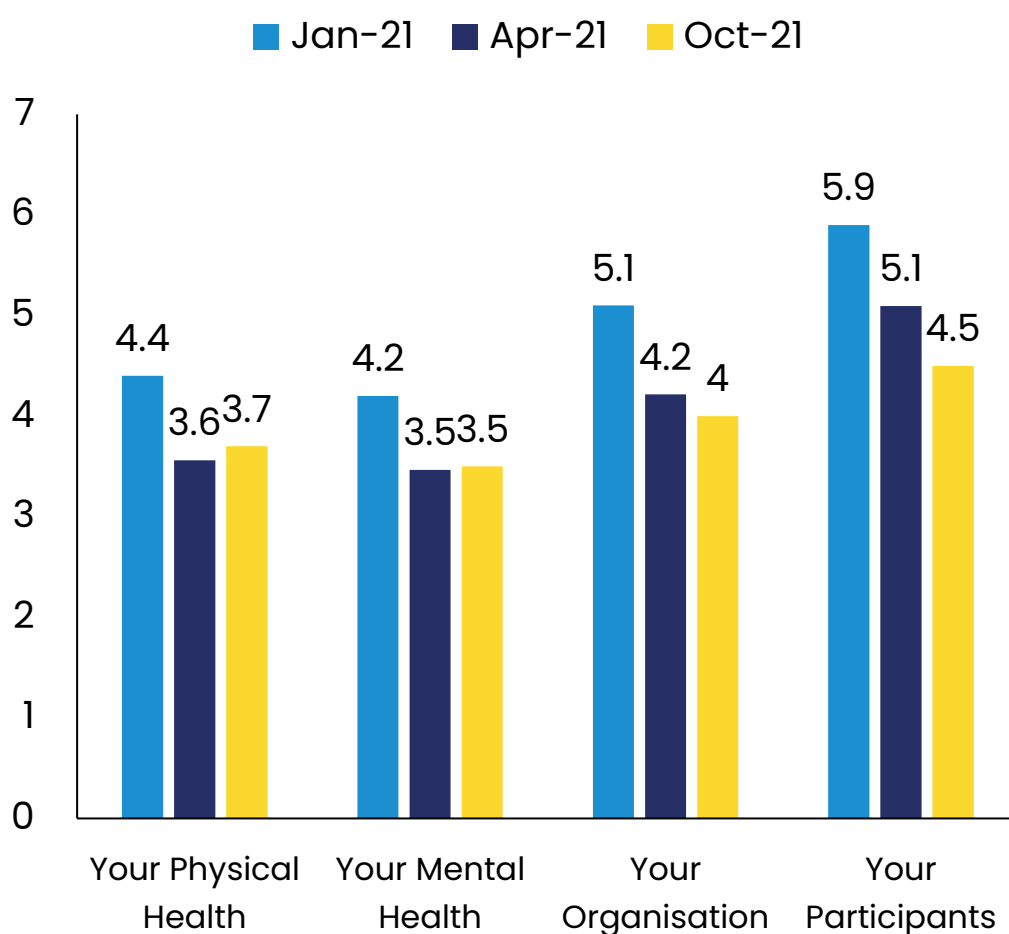| | Jan-21 | Apr-21 | Oct-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Extremely confident | 52% | 61% | 68% |
| Fairly confident | 33% | 31% | 26% |
| Not sure | 9% | 5% | 5% |
| Not that confident | 6% | 2% | 0% |
| Not confident at all | 1% | 1% | 0% |

## Anxiety

**Anxiety around mental health, organisations, and participants is also at the lowest compared to January and April 2021**. Anxiety around physical health is slightly higher compared to April but still significantly lower than January 2021.

Average **anxiety levels for groups in the bottom 30% of areas of multiple deprivation was higher in all areas** compared to those in the top 30% areas of multiple deprivation.
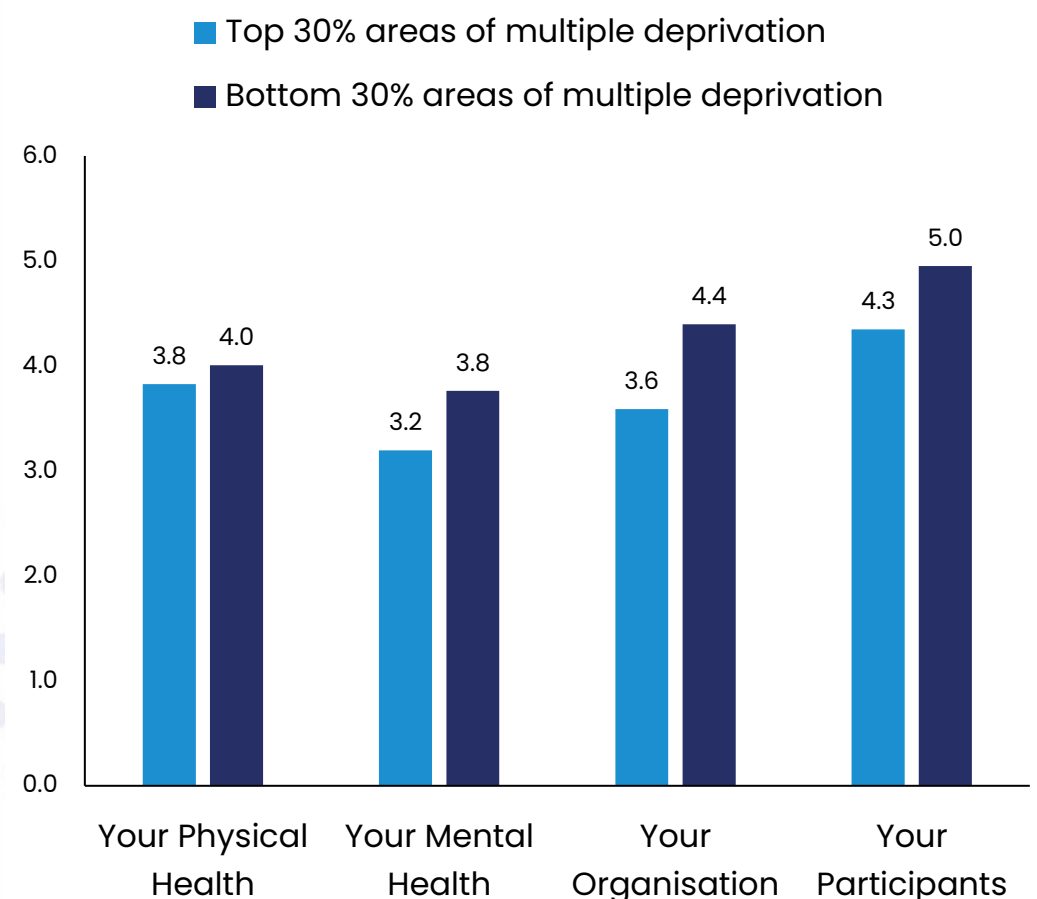
### Average reported levels of anxiety, in relation to different aspects

Based on ONS measure [0 = not at all anxious, 10 = completely anxious]

■ Jan-21  ■ Apr-21  ■ Oct-21

| | Jan-21 | Apr-21 | Oct-21 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Your Physical Health | 4.4 | 3.6 | 3.7 |
| Your Mental Health | 4.2 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| Your Organisation | 5.1 | 4.2 | 4 |
| Your Participants | 5.9 | 5.1 | 4.5 |

### Average reported levels of anxiety, in relation to different aspects by areas of multiple deprivation

Based on ONS measure [0 = not at all anxious, 10 = completely anxious]

■ Top 30% areas of multiple deprivation
■ Bottom 30% areas of multiple deprivation

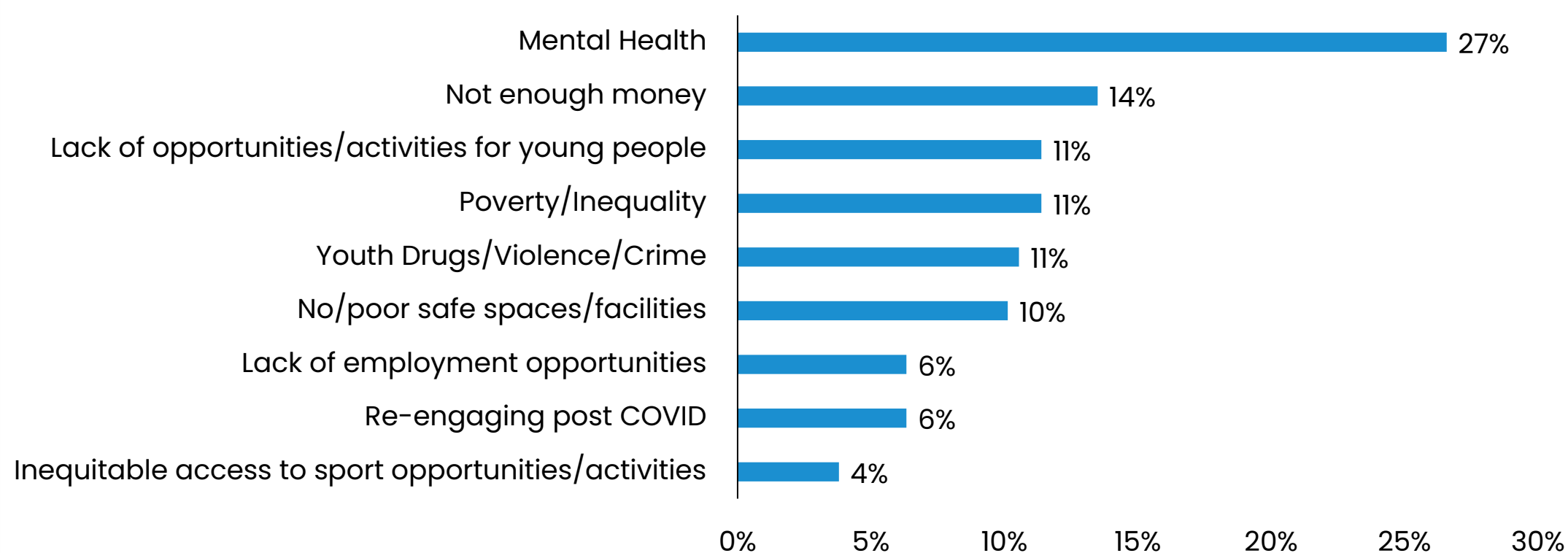| | Top 30% areas of multiple deprivation | Bottom 30% areas of multiple deprivation |
|---|---|---|
| Your Physical Health | 3.8 | 4.0 |
| Your Mental Health | 3.2 | 3.8 |
| Your Organisation | 3.6 | 4.4 |
| Your Participants | 4.3 | 5.0 |

# Community Challenges

**Mental health** was identified as the **most significant challenge young people are facing in communities at this time**. 27% of responses from group leaders included concerns about mental health, almost double any other area mentioned.

Groups are responding to this challenge with **56% focussing on health and wellbeing** as their sport for development priority for the next year.

## Areas of key challenges young people are facing in members' communities at this time

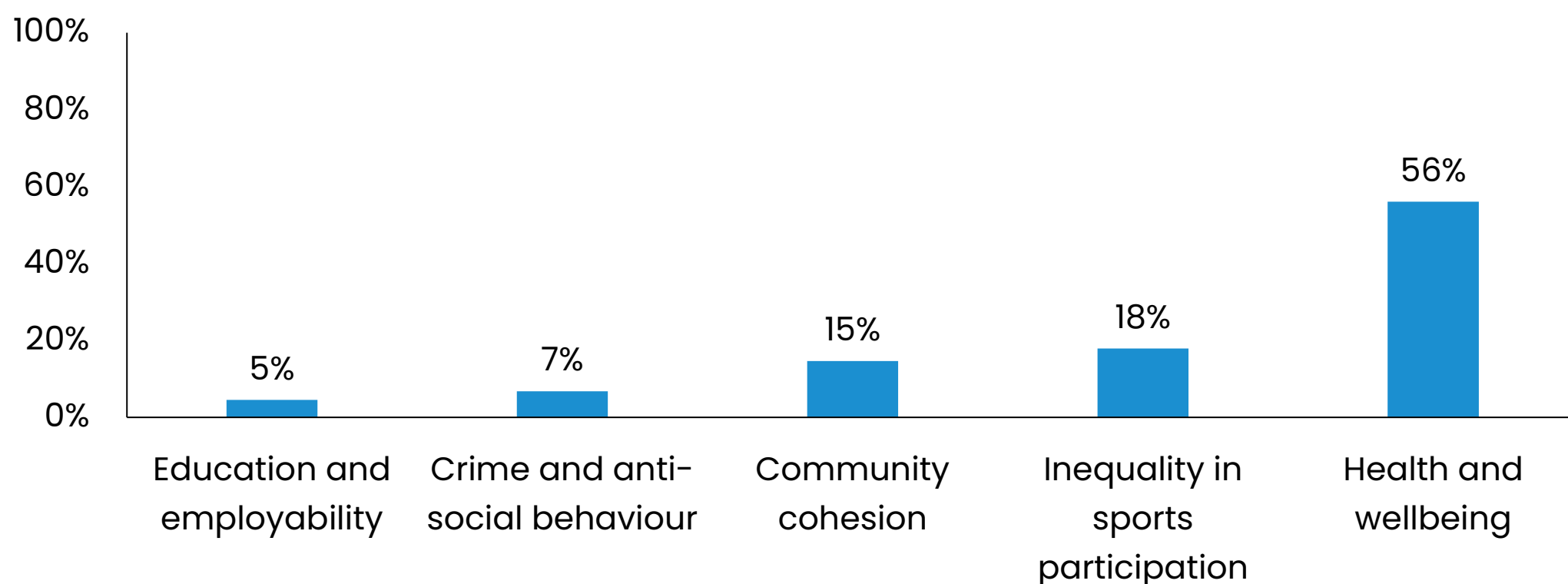| Challenge | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Mental Health | 27% |
| Not enough money | 14% |
| Lack of opportunities/activities for young people | 11% |
| Poverty/Inequality | 11% |
| Youth Drugs/Violence/Crime | 11% |
| No/poor safe spaces/facilities | 10% |
| Lack of employment opportunities | 6% |
| Re-engaging post COVID | 6% |
| Inequitable access to sport opportunities/activities | 4% |

"Definitely mental health and the lack of sporting facilities is a massive barrier. That's why we feel it's so urgent for us to bring back our programming. Especially since we work with a particular marginalised group (Muslim women) who often experience loneliness and social isolation, we are really working hard to start up our sessions again." – survey respondent

"Young people have had their financial, emotional, and vocational wellbeing inordinately affected by the pandemic. In addition to job losses, educational disruption and financial pressures, young people have also experienced increased family strain, heightened anxiety, and exacerbated mental health issues as a result of the pandemic. These areas are interlinked, and further compounded by the overall uncertainty of employment prospects." – survey respondent

"For some young people things to do in the evenings. For others, to say no to a life of crime and find a job. Sadly, YP are often enticed and seduced into a world of organised crime." - survey respondent

"A lot of local clubs for young people have closed leaving them with nothing to do." – survey respondent

## Sport for development priorities of groups for the next year

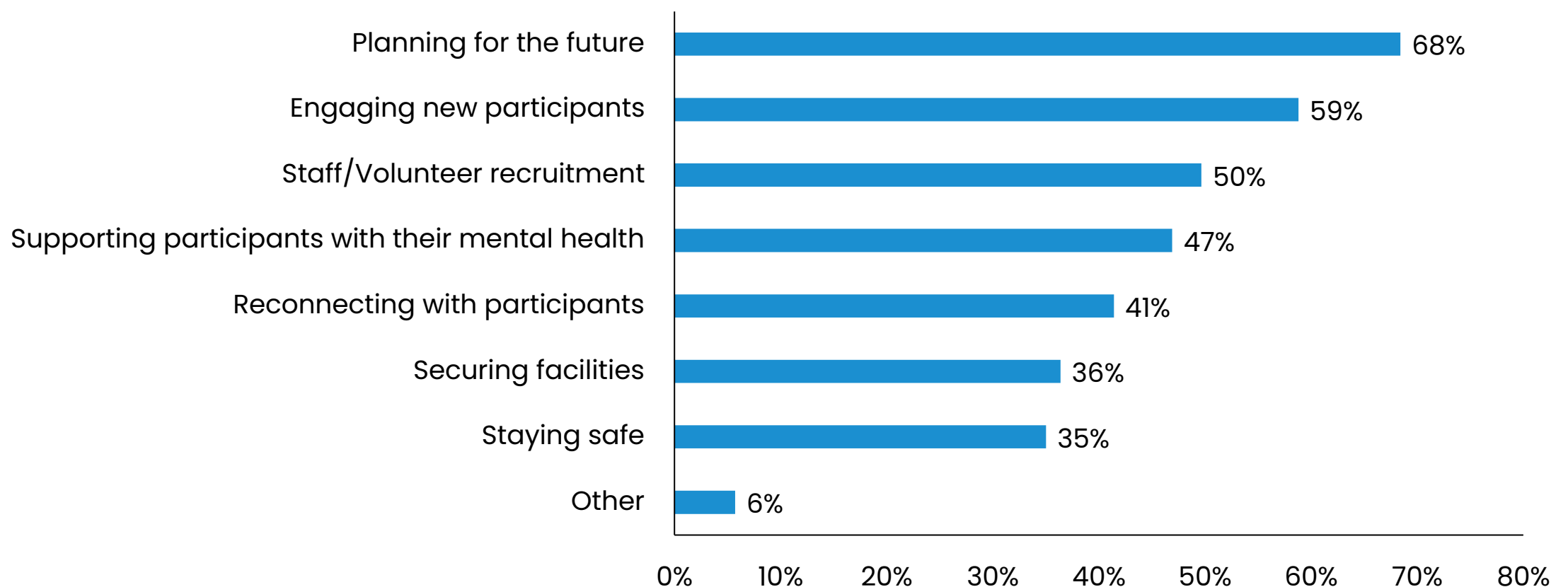| Priority | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Education and employability | 5% |
| Crime and anti-social behaviour | 7% |
| Community cohesion | 15% |
| Inequality in sports participation | 18% |
| Health and wellbeing | 56% |

# Priorities and Support

Almost **70% of groups reported that planning for the future was their top priority** for the next 6 months. Other top priorities included engaging new participants (59%), staff/volunteer recruitment (50%), and supporting participants with their mental health (47%).

**59% of groups identified that support in knowledge of funding opportunities would be the most helpful now**. This support was selected 1.6 times as much as all other areas of support. Despite mental health being a key priority for groups, **mental health support for participants was the lowest selected area for support at 19%.**

## Priorities

### Areas groups identified as their top priorities over the next 6 months

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Planning for the future | 68% |
| Engaging new participants | 59% |
| Staff/Volunteer recruitment | 50% |
| Supporting participants with their mental health | 47% |
| Reconnecting with participants | 41% |
| Securing facilities | 36% |
| Staying safe | 35% |
| Other | 6% |

## Support

### Areas groups identified where support would be most helpful now

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Knowledge of funding opportunities | 59% |
| Volunteer/staff recruitment | 37% |
| Attracting new participants | 34% |
| Building organisational sustainability | 31% |
| Funding | 29% |
| Better links with local partners | 26% |
| Planning and revisioning strategy | 20% |
| Mental health support for participants | 19% |
| Other | 2% |