



Report of Consultation with key stakeholders to inform Louth Children and Young People's Plan 2025-27

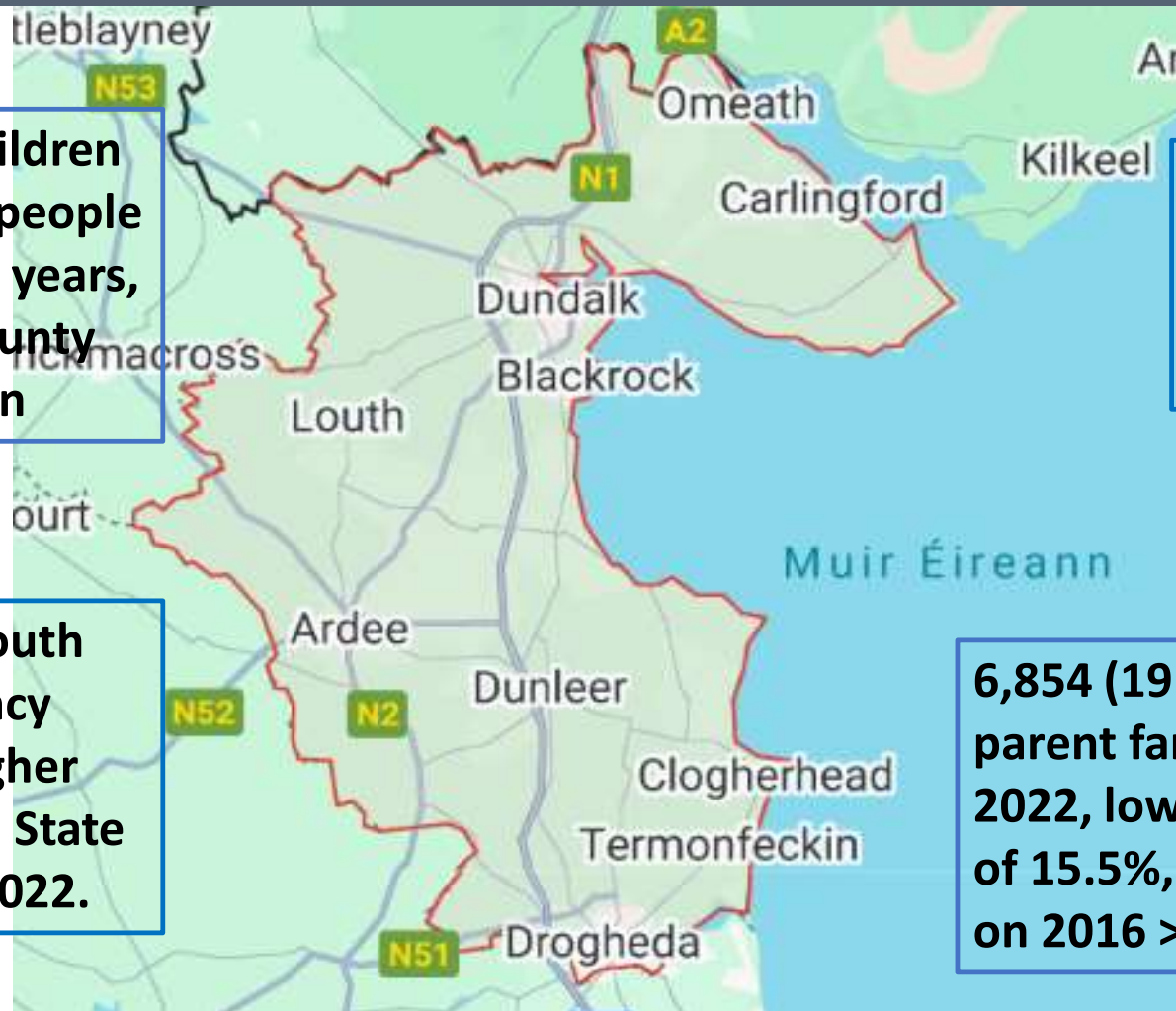
Dr Aisling McElearney, Independent Consultant
May 2025

**47,462 children
& young people
aged 0-24 years,
34% of county
population**

**At 30.1, Youth
Dependency
ratio is higher
average in State
(29.3) in 2022.**

**From 2016, 8%
population growth
in Louth, similar to
State of 8.1%**

**6,854 (19.4%) single
parent family units in
2022, lower than State
of 15.5%, +350 (+5.4%)
on 2016 > State (+0.5%)**



Young dependency is a ratio of the number of people aged under 15 compared with the working age population

Population	Number of children in 2022 (Change in number and % on 2016)				
	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20-24 years
Louth	8,260 (-1,213, -12.8%)	9,848 (-645, -6.1%)	10,986 (+1,287, +13.3%)	9,974 (+1,426, +16.7%)	8,394 (+1,316, +18.6%)
State	295,415 (-36,100, -10.9%)	342,670 (12,891, -3.6%)	374,202 (+54,726, +17.1%)	337,628 (+34,812, +11.5%)	307,143 (+33,507, +12.2%)

Increased child population in Louth in 2022 (+4.8%), driven by growth in young adult populations - in line with the increasing national trend (+4.7%), but at 1 and a half times the national rate among young adults.



SUMMARY

Consultation with children and young people, parents and professionals

CYPSC members voting on priorities for CYPP 2025-28

8 Issues selected in Top 5 priorities

Young people

1. Youth mental health (48.3%)
2. Anxiety experienced by young people (44.8%)
3. Impact of poverty (39.1%)
4. Housing & risk of homelessness (30.8%)
5. Self esteem around body image (29.7%)
6. Transport (28.2%)
7. Access to spaces for young people (28%)
8. School avoidance & low attendance (26.2%)

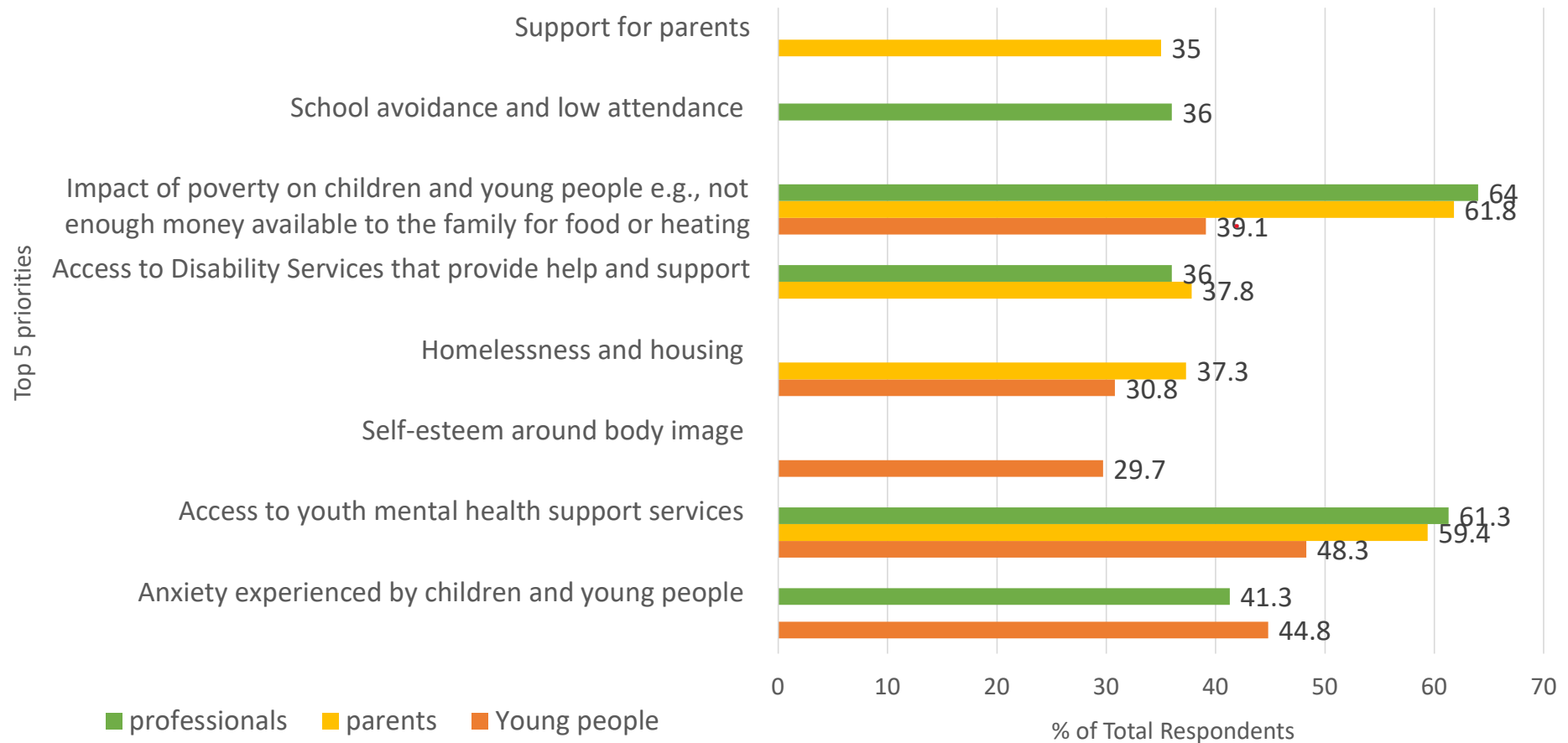
Parents

1. Child poverty (61.8%)
2. Youth mental health (59.4%)
3. Therapeutic support from Disability services (37.8%)
4. Housing & risk of homelessness (37.3%)
5. Support for parents (35%)
6. Access to childcare (35%)
7. Access to spaces for young people (34.1%)
8. Effect of Parental mental health on families (31.3%)

Professionals

1. Child poverty (64%)
2. Youth mental health (61.3%)
3. Anxiety experienced by young people (41.3%)
4. Therapeutic support from Disability services (36%)
5. School avoidance & low attendance (36%)
6. Housing & risk of homelessness (30.7%)
7. Impact of drug & alcohol misuse on families (29.3%)
8. Access to spaces for young people (24%)

Comparison of Issues identified in Top 5 priorities across groups



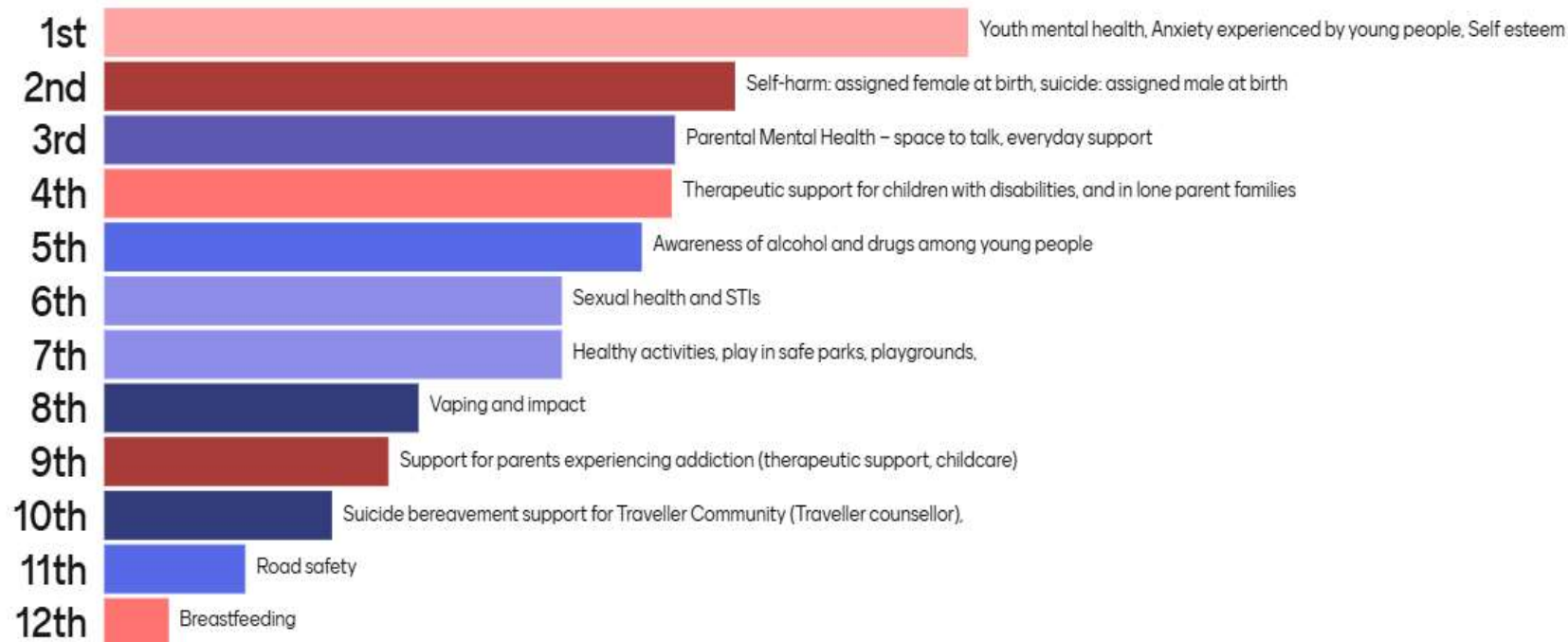
Priorities emerging from Consultation

National Outcome	Identified priorities
Outcome 1	<p>Anxiety experienced by young people, Youth mental health, Self esteem</p> <p>Parental Mental Health – space to talk, everyday support</p> <p>Impact of drug & alcohol misuse on families,</p> <p>Disability: Therapeutic support, Information on support, ASD awareness</p> <p>Suicide bereavement support for Traveller Community (Traveller counsellor),</p> <p>Healthy activities, play in safe parks, playgrounds,</p> <p>Awareness of addiction among young people, support for parents experiencing addiction (therapeutic support, childcare)</p>
Outcome 2	<p>School refusal and avoidance</p> <p>Quiet place to study & extra support when needed, develop resilience</p> <p>Support for parents: children's behaviour, screentime, online safety</p> <p>Accessibility of parent support and programmes (working parents), Awareness of websites, Access to childcare – waiting lists and cost</p>

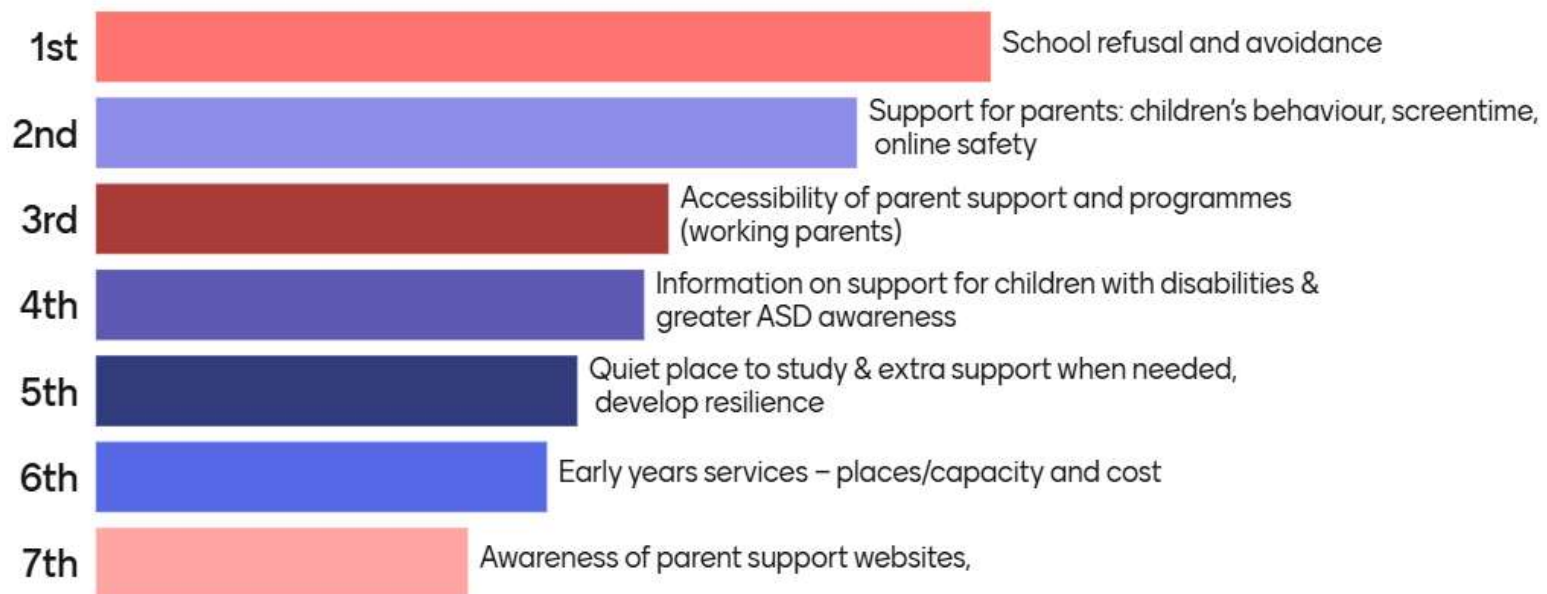
Priorities emerging from Consultation

National Outcome	Identified priorities
Outcome 3	Impact of domestic abuse, Impact of parental mental health Relationships: peer pressure Online safety, gaming and phones Spaces safe from criminality, Families in addiction interface with Tusla, reunification support
Outcome 4	Child poverty, families in areas of disadvantage, jobs for young people, cost of living, Housing & risk of homelessness, Traveller girls' access to further & higher education, Traveller education outreach to promote TY, apprenticeships, CE schemes
Outcome 5	Safe spaces for young people to socialise: evening cafes/clubs, inclusive recreational facilities & activities, Transport (gap in Cooley), inclusion anti-discrimination: LGBTQIA+ young people, Traveller young people, New communities, Young people want to be engaged in shaping services (86%),

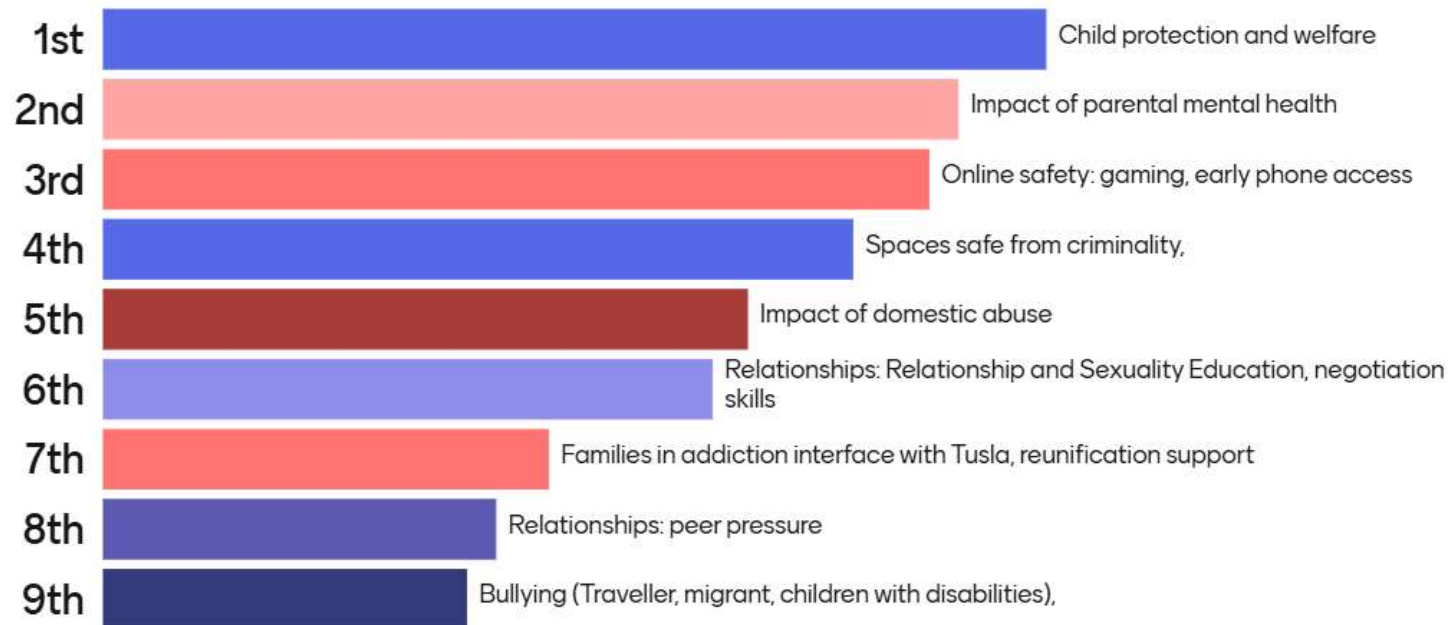
What 5 issues should be prioritised in Outcome 1 of the Plan?



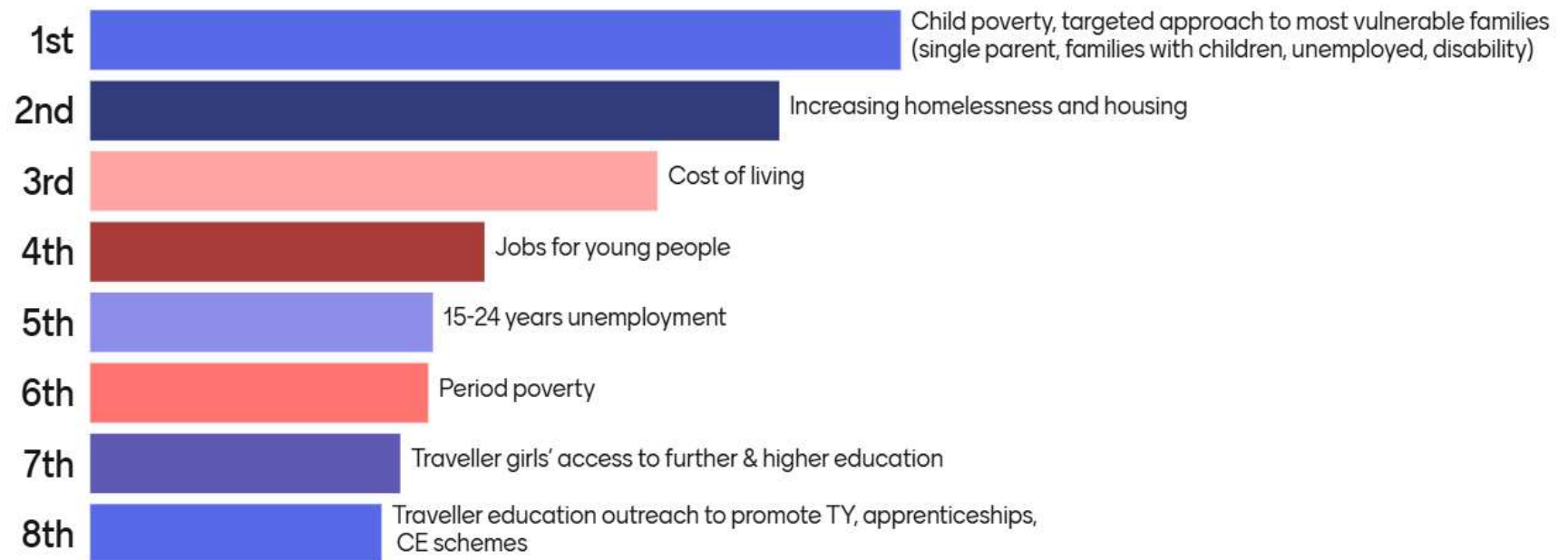
What 5 issues should be prioritised in Outcome 2 of the Plan?



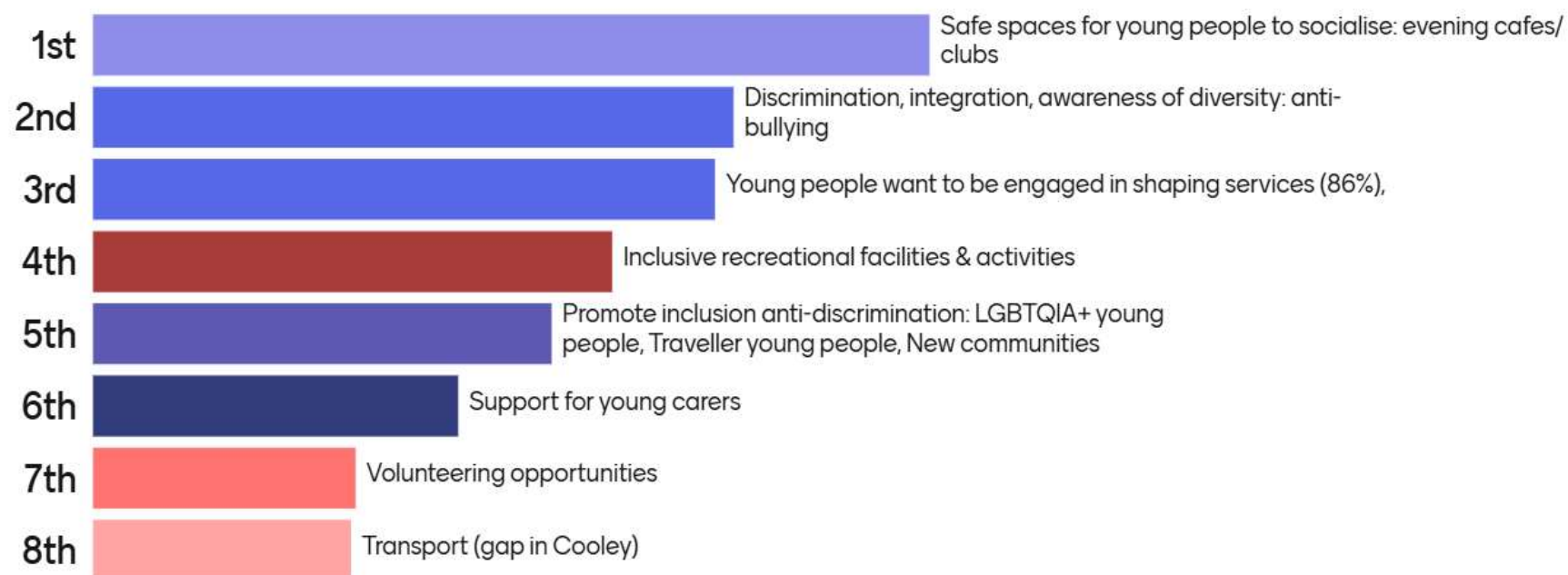
What 5 issues should be prioritised in Outcome 3 of the Plan?



What 5 issues should be prioritised in Outcome 4 of the Plan?



What 5 issues should be prioritised in Outcome 5 of the Plan?



Consultation with children and
young people, parents and
professionals

Methods & Findings



Consulting with children and young people, parents, professionals

Online surveys



75 professionals: 55 members &
20 collaborators
522 Young people (15-24 years)
217 Parents, guardians & carers

Focus groups, workshops & interviews




3 workshops (24 professionals)
2 Parent focus groups (12: Traveller
Steering Group, Turas Counselling)
2 online interviews (CYPSC Co-
ordinator, CYPSC Chair)

Creative age-appropriate workshops with children and young people



3 workshops (34 children, aged 3-13
years)



Consultation with children & young people

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Survey & creative workshops

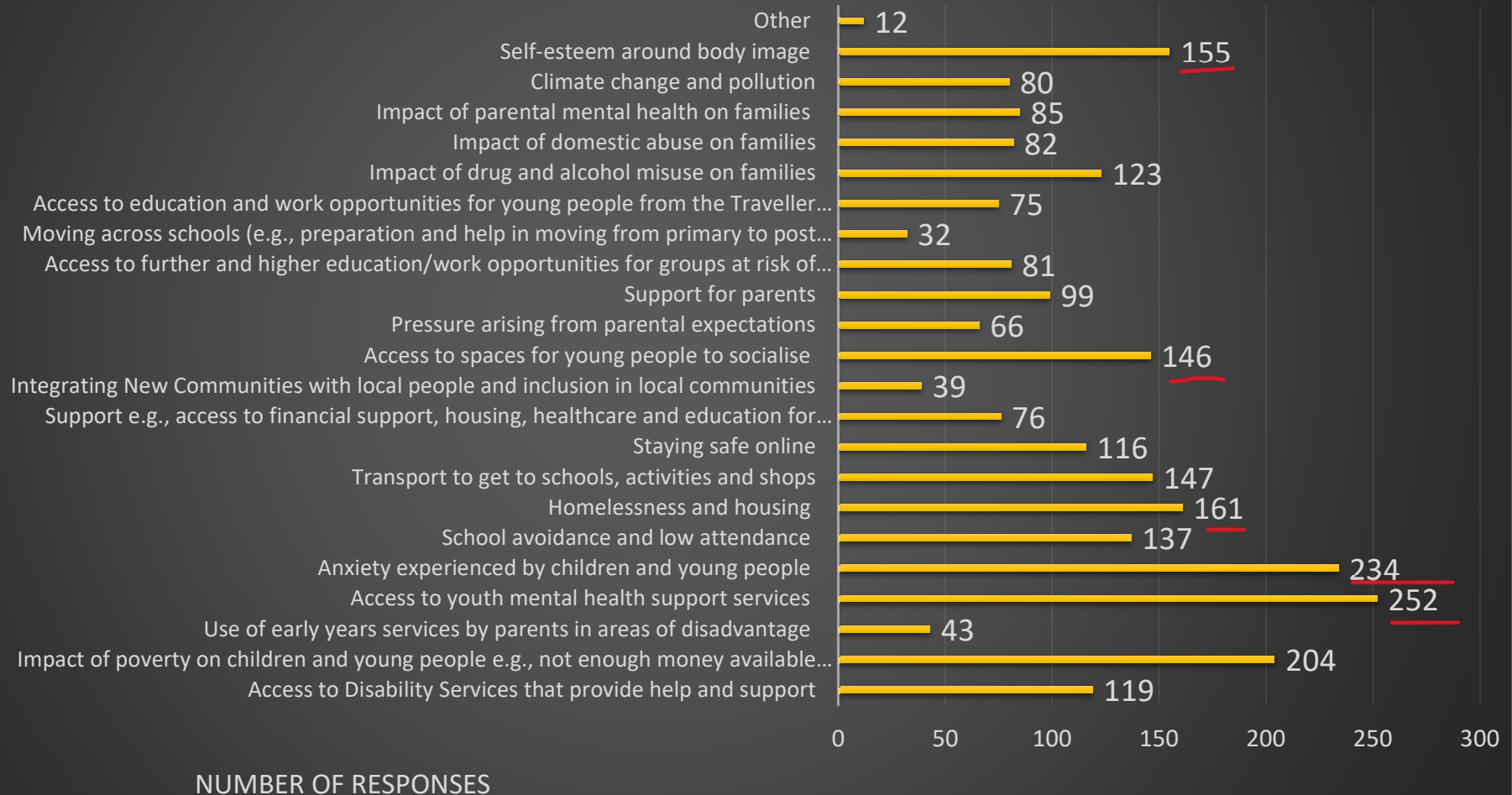


Survey

Older young people
15-24 years

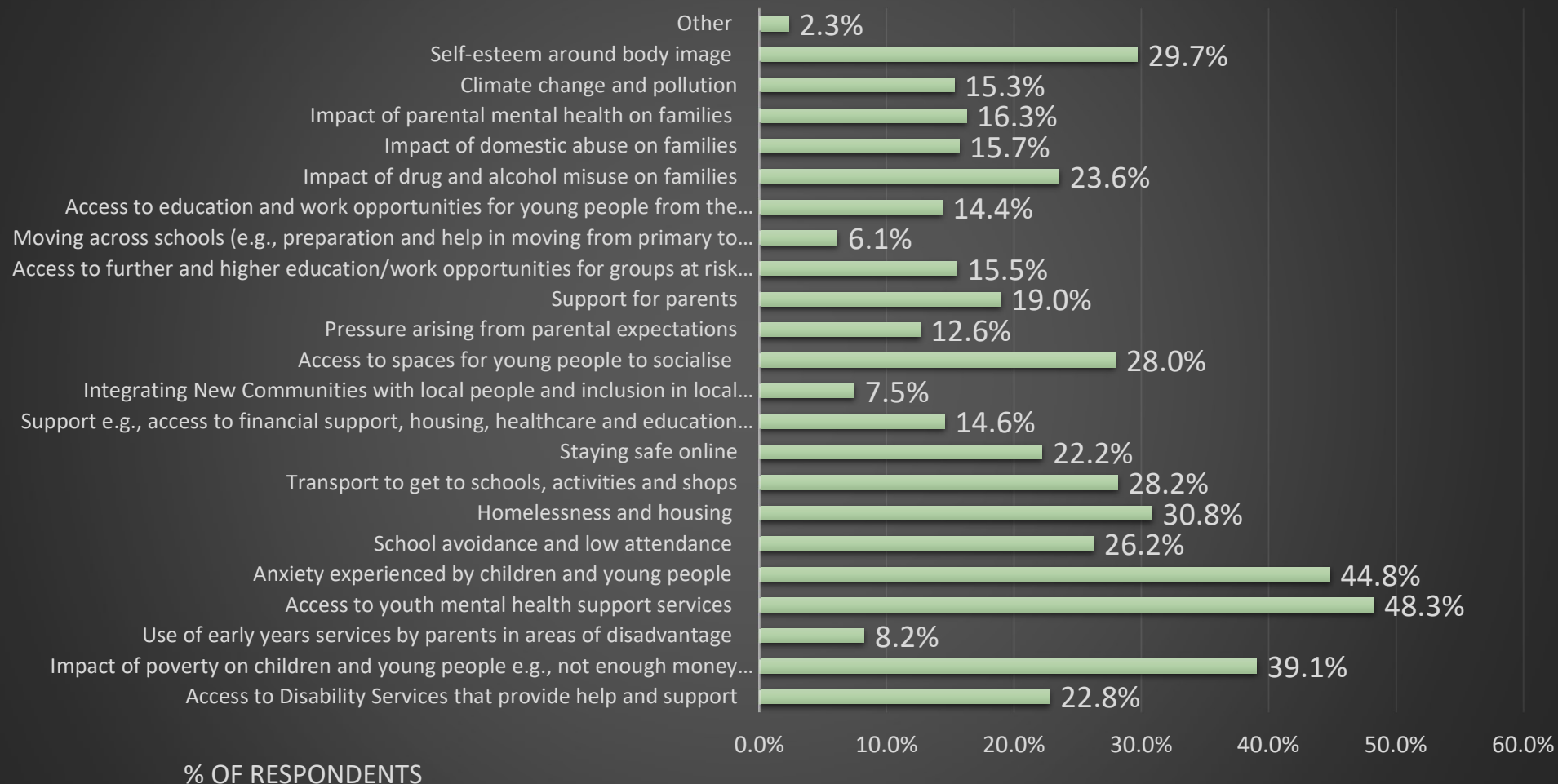
What are the 5 most important issues for you as a young person living in Co. Louth

5 MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

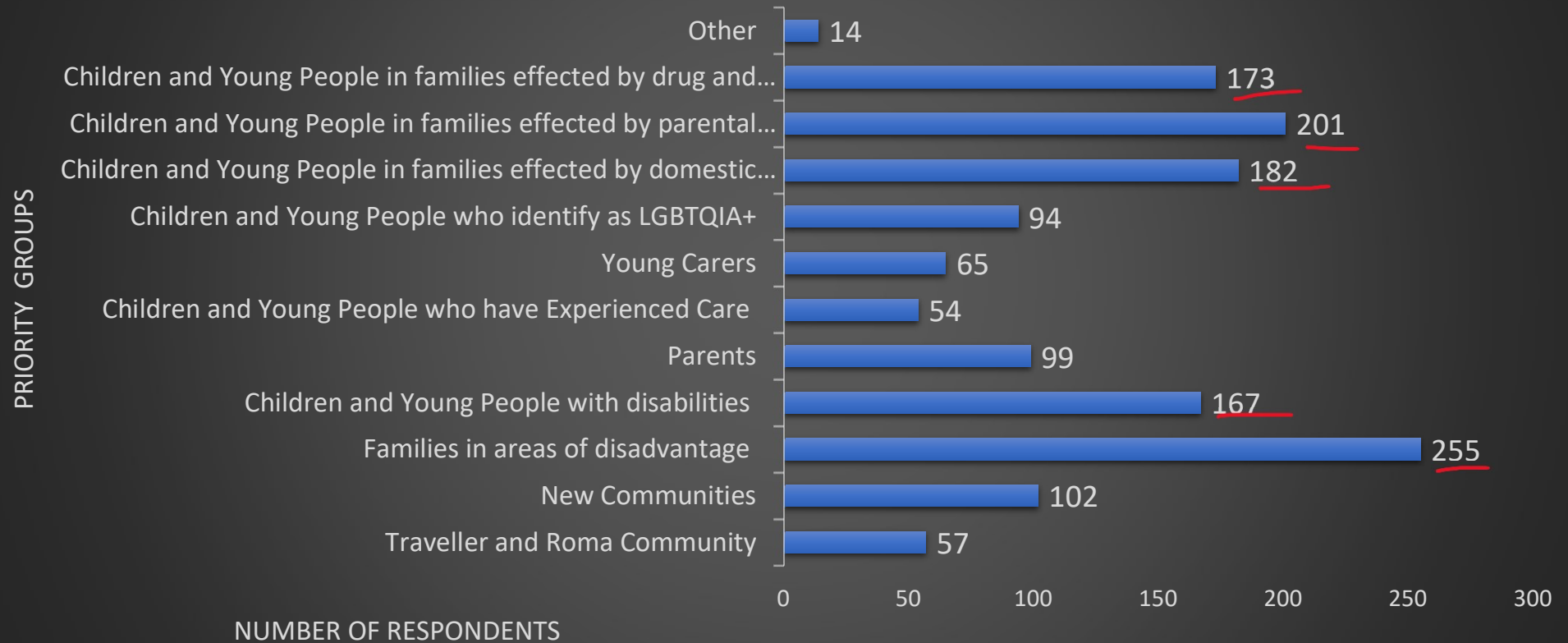


What % of respondents selected each issue within their 5 most important?

5 MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

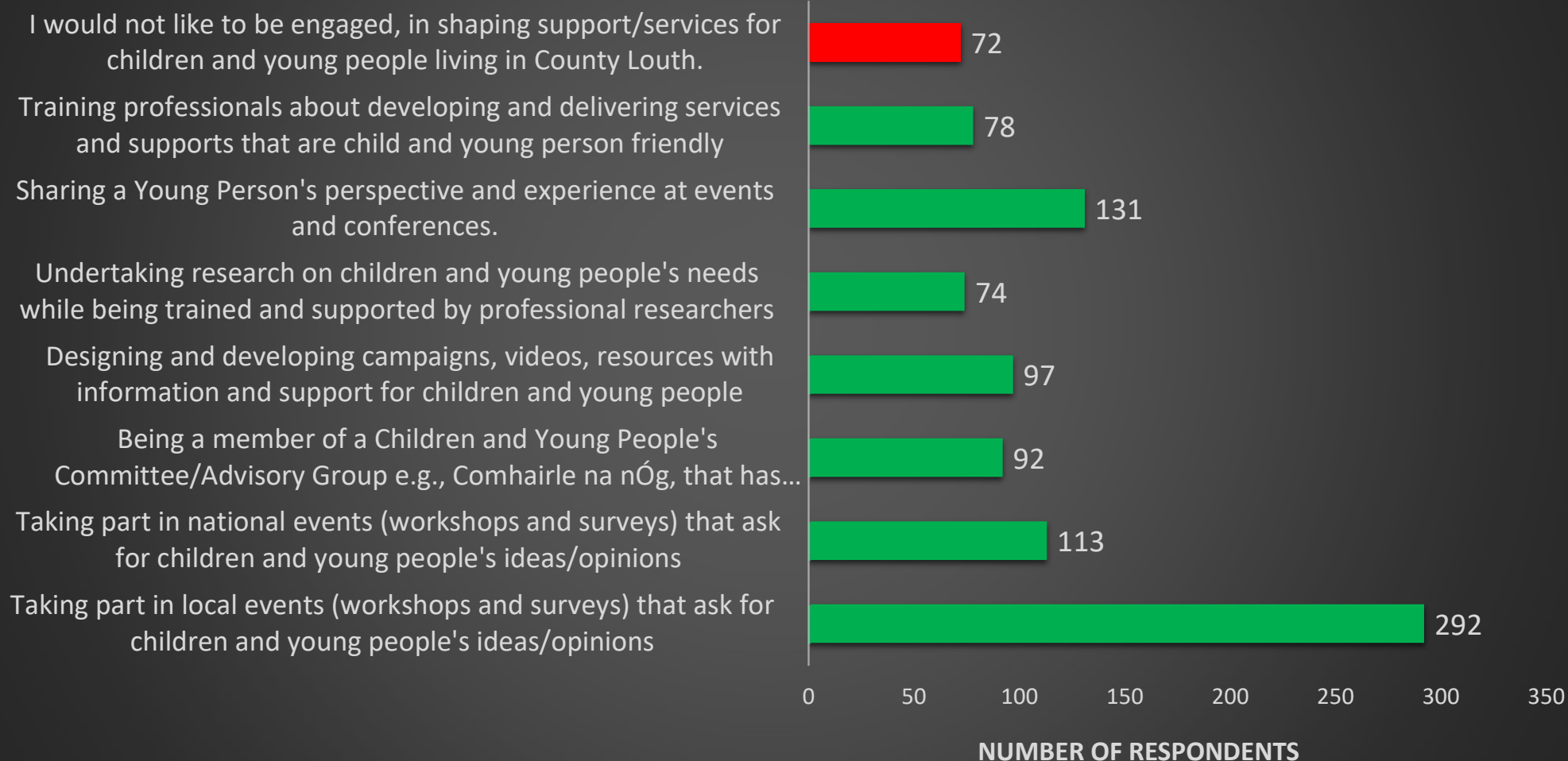


Which groups living in Co Louth should be a priority to receive support in the new 3-year plan?

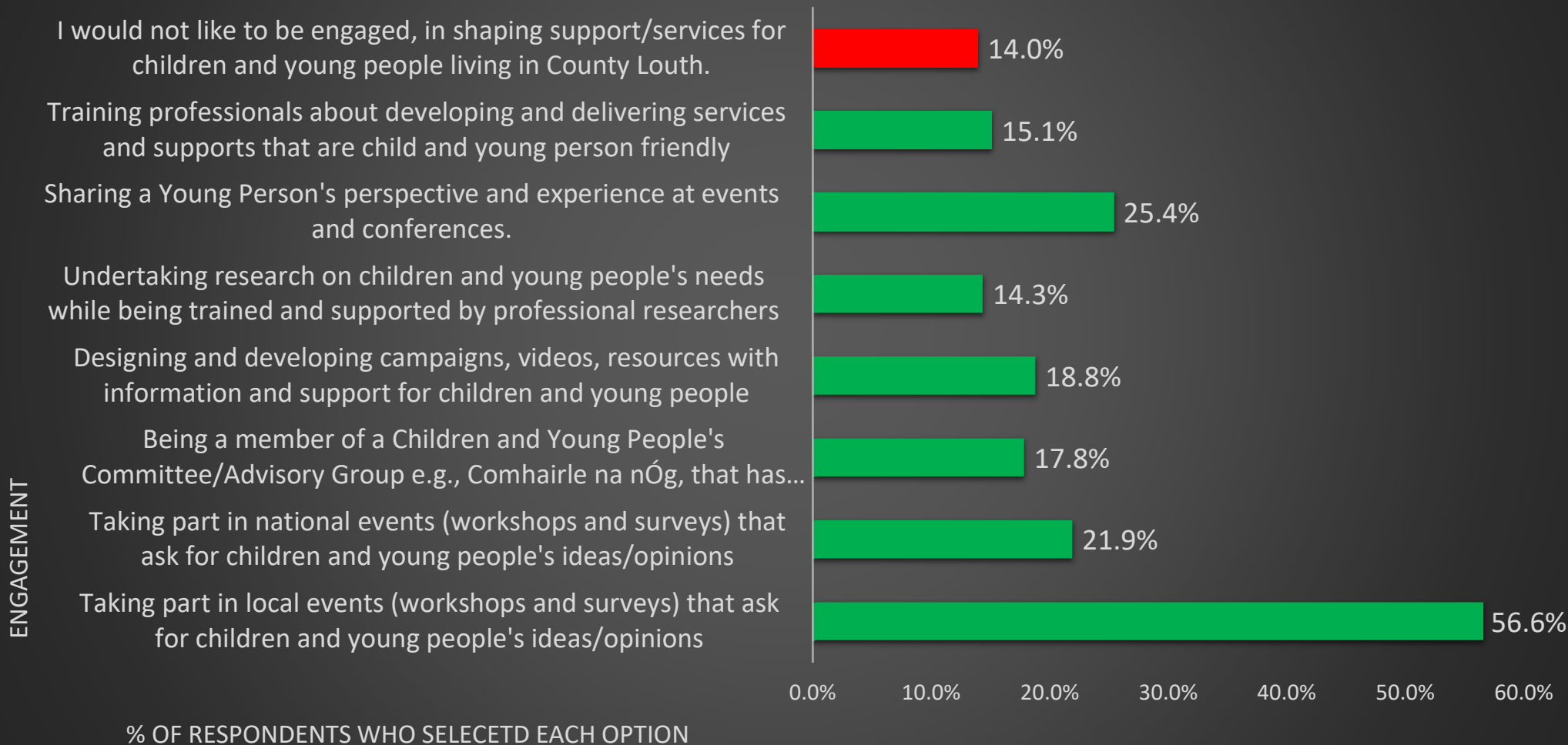


How would you like to be engaged in shaping support/services for children and young people in Co Louth?

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE




What % of respondents selected each option for how they would like to be engaged?



Describe the BIGGEST CHALLENGE for young people like you living in County Louth (223)

1. **Access to mental health support (34):** Lack of accessible support, counselling services for anxiety, depression, self-esteem, body image, stress. Long waiting lists for mental health services
2. **Safe social and recreational spaces to socialise with friends (33):** expressed need for more youth clubs, safe spaces to hang out with friends, sports, recreational facilities like bowling alleys, volleyball to reduce isolation
3. **Transport (21):** Reliability of bus services, better connections, long travel times
4. **Support in education (18):** Quiet places to study in town, extra support for those with learning difficulties including dyslexia, exam pressure, need for programmes to build resilience, school attendance, motivation, bullying

Describe the BIGGEST CHALLENGE for young people like you living in County Louth (223)

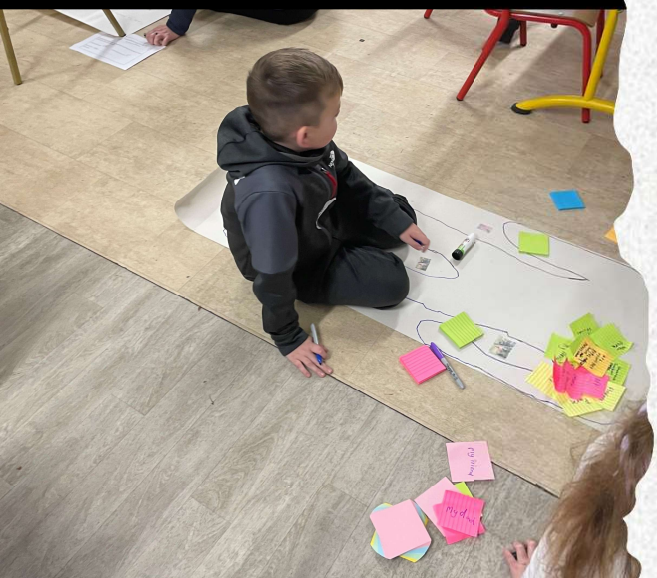
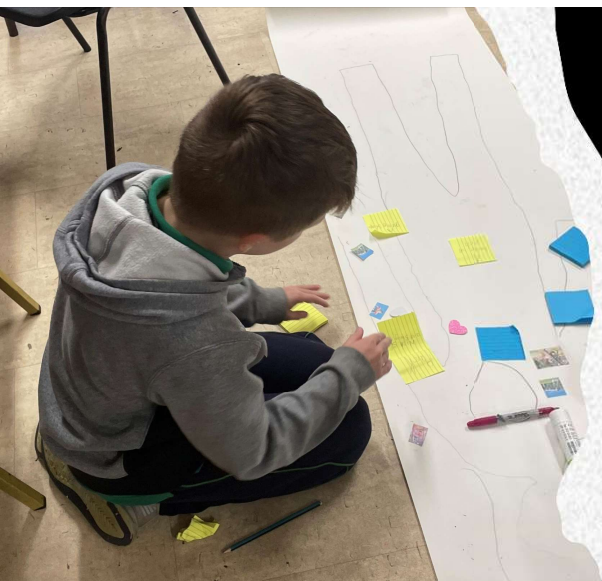
5. Access to support for young people with disabilities (8): Lack of support and accessible services, social groups for young people with disabilities, including physical disabilities
 6. Money and jobs (12): hard to find a job, poor conditions, cost of living and activities, employment support, student grants, high rents
 7. Services, support and safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ children and young people (6)
 8. Drug and alcohol misuse (6) Vaping
 9. Relationships: (6) Bullying, peer pressure, social media, peer relationships.
 10. Housing and homelessness(5)
 11. Discrimination: Traveller community (3)
 12. Domestic abuse (1)
- 



Creative workshops with Younger children
3-13 years

Needs and wishes trees





Body maps



Emerging themes – wishes and needs

1. **Younger preschool children aged 3-5 years:** activities, play outside, parks, playground, bikes and scooters, soccer, dancing, art and drawing , people and friends
2. **Children attending afterschool, aged 5-10 years - Needs and Wishes Tree:** houses, friendships, animals, safe park (no fires in bins), soccer, dancing, music, football, park, swimming, Technology and gaming: arcades, controllers, mouse, keyboard, fortnite, summer camps, library,
3. **Older children, aged 8-13 years:** Access to local shop, Saturday club, evening time activities for older children, Brownies & cubs, Evening youth café, summer camps, mobile library, new park with swings, skate park, basketball club, gaming shop, art, swimming, books, art, football,



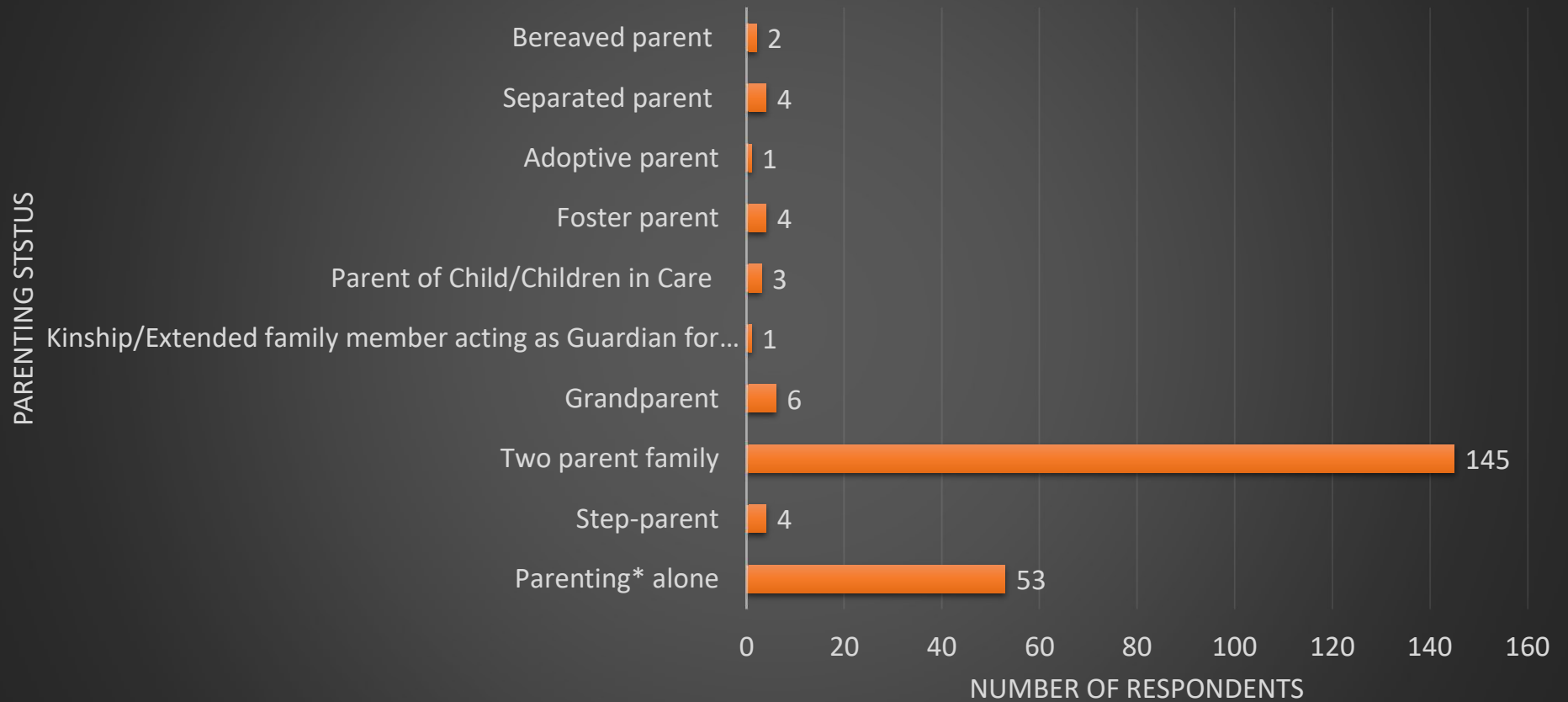
Consultation with
parents

Survey & focus groups

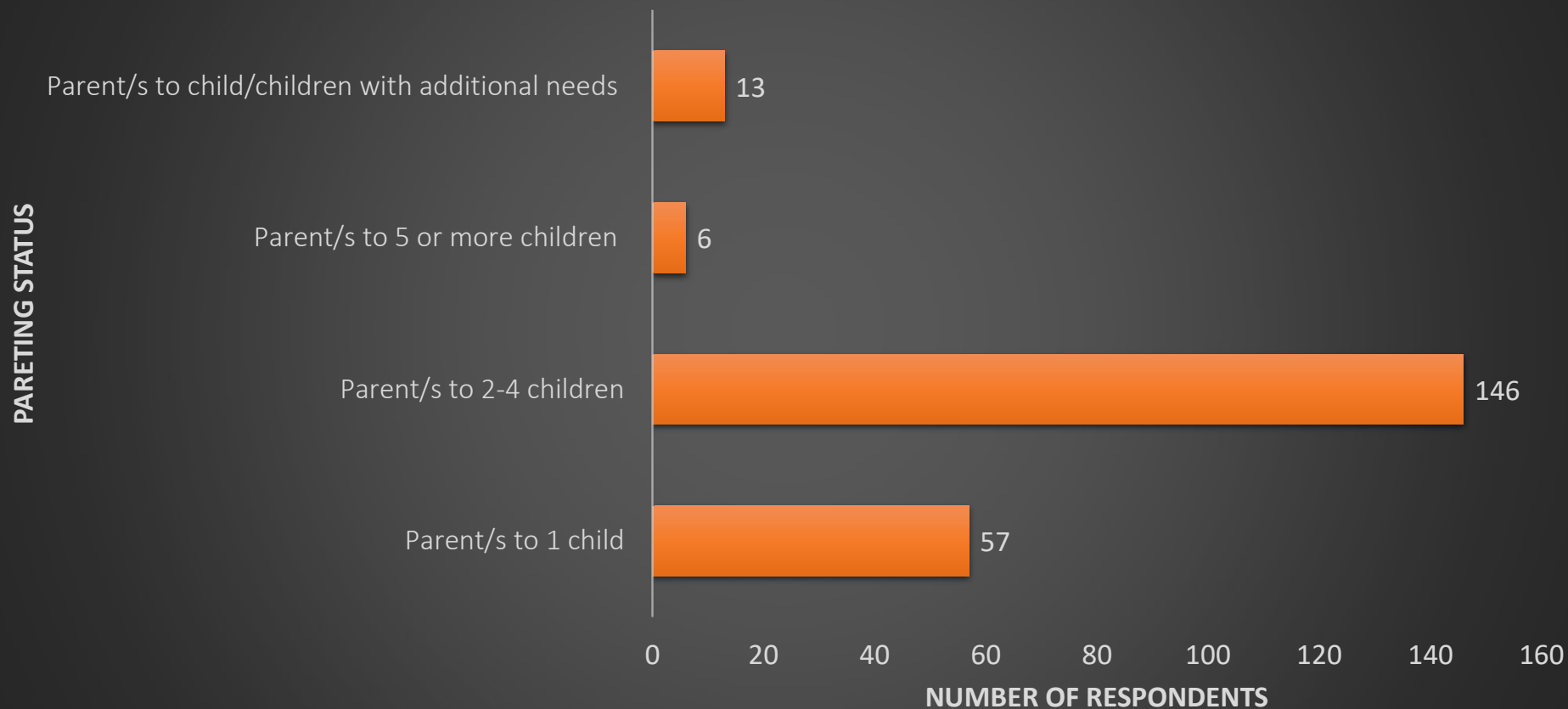


Survey

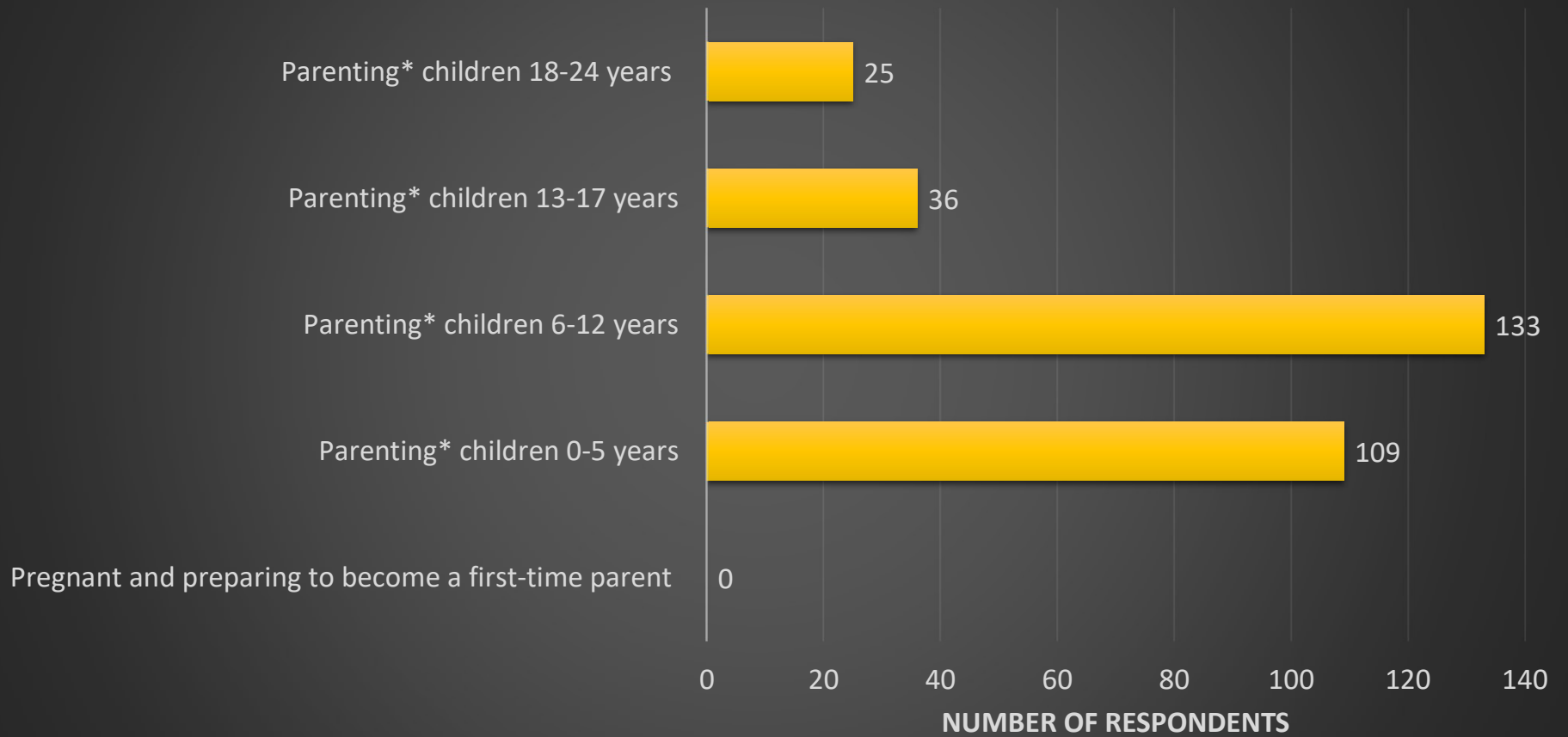
Which of the following best describes your parenting* status?



Which of the following best describes your parenting status ?



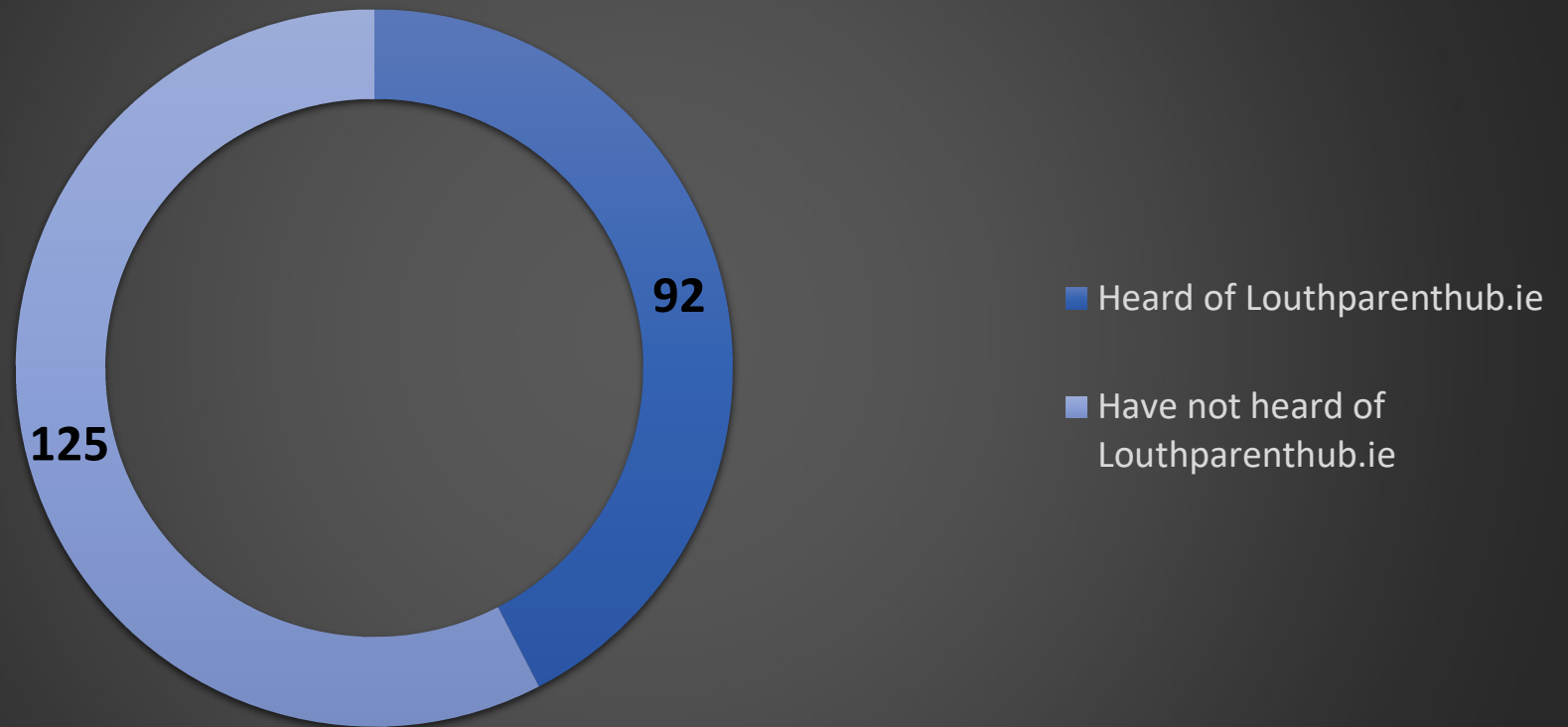
PARENTING STATUS



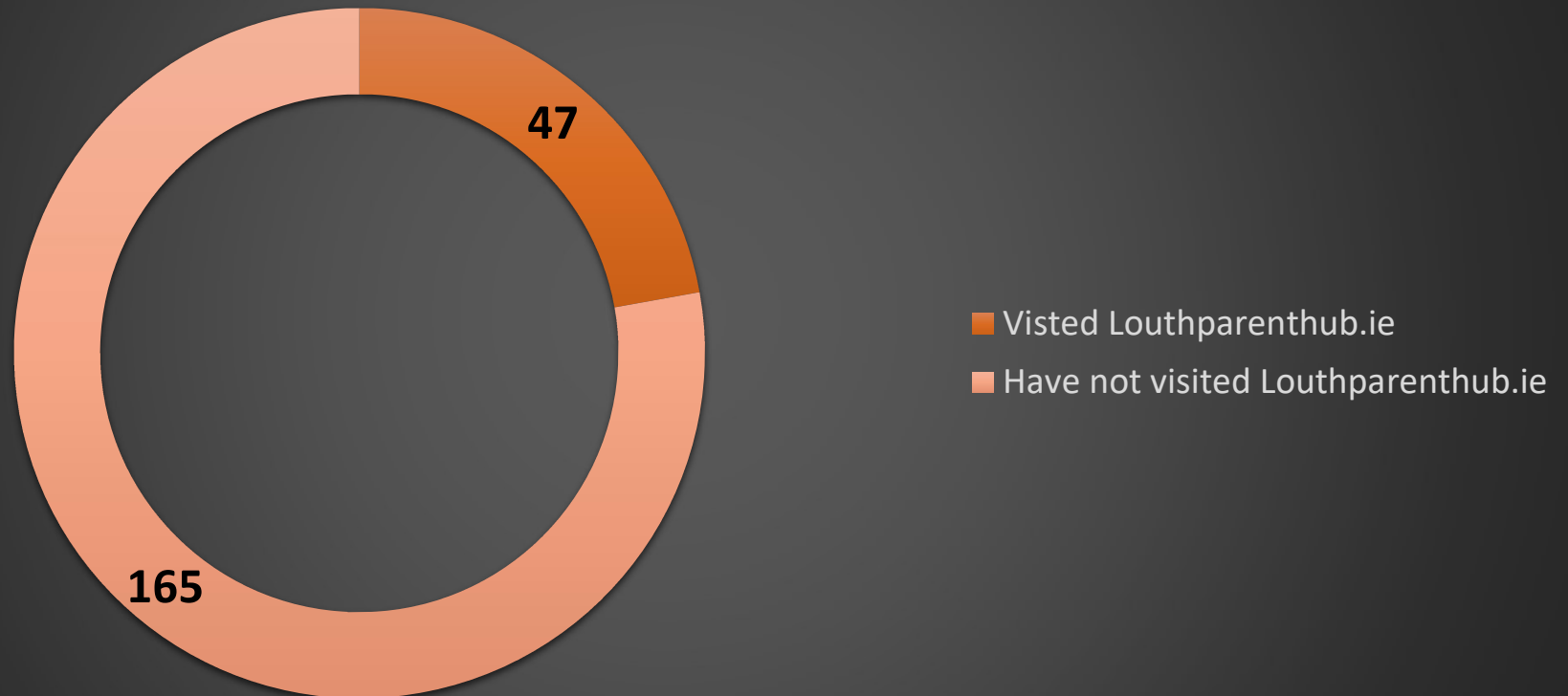
Awareness and access of existing parenting supports

Survey

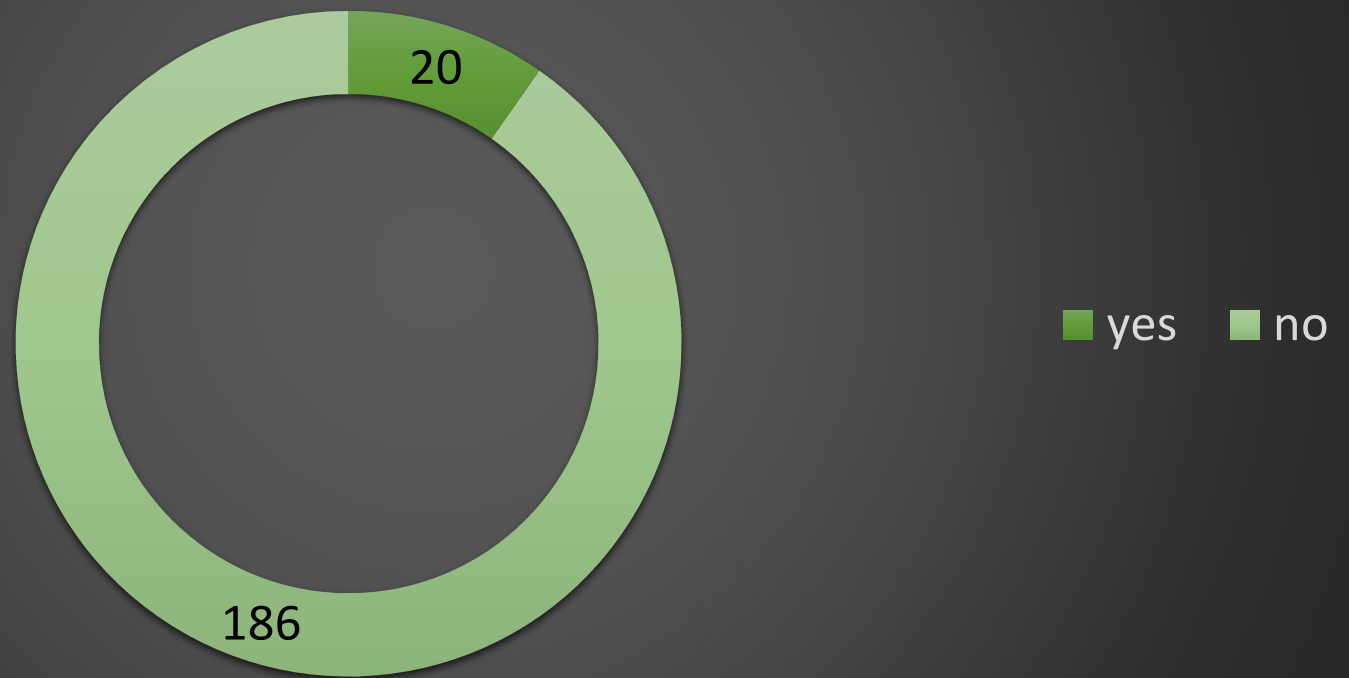
Have you heard of the Louthparenthub.ie website?



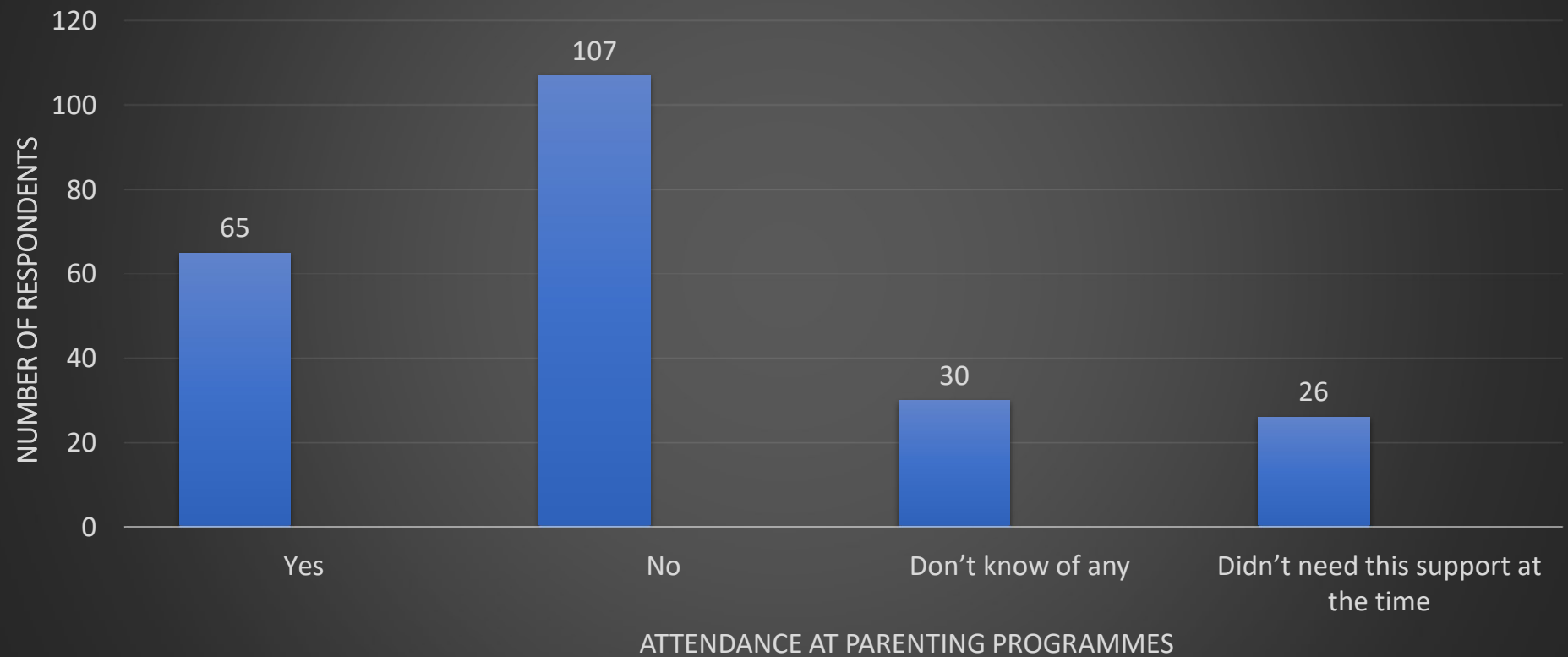
Have you visited Louthparenthub.ie in the last 12 months?



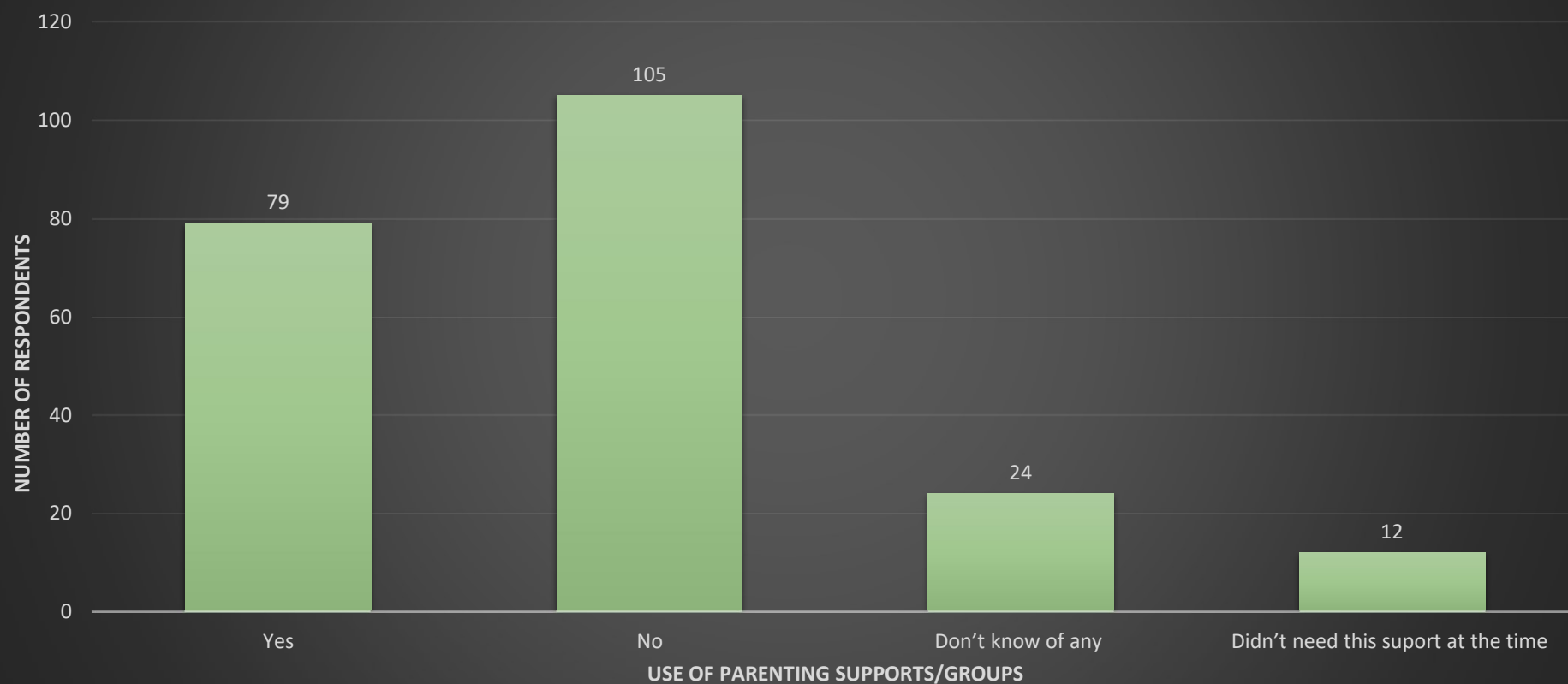
Have you visited another parenting website e.g.
parenting24seven.ie in the last 12 months?



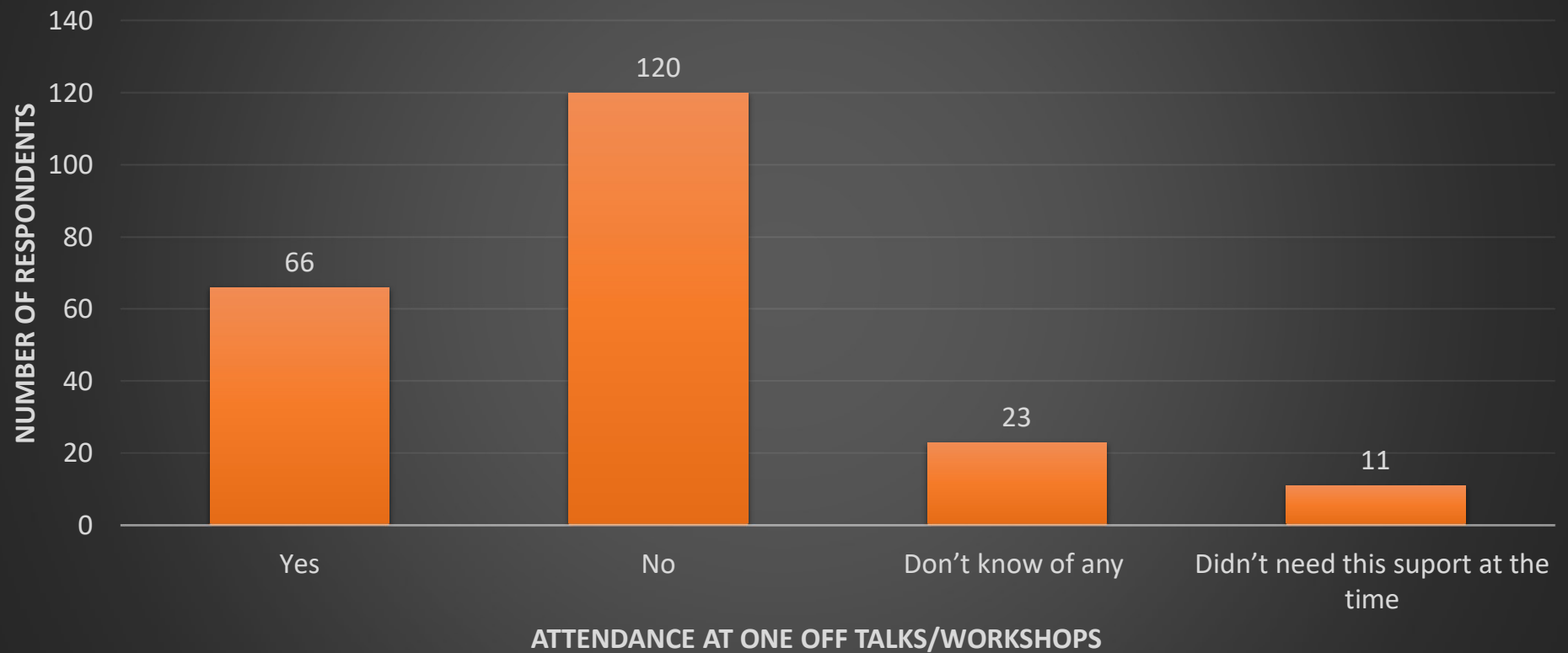
In the last 12 months, have you attended any parenting programmes that run over a number of weeks?




In the last 12 months, have you used any other parenting supports /groups?



In the last 12 months, have you attended any one-off talks or workshops for parents?



Challenges, issues, need for support
Survey

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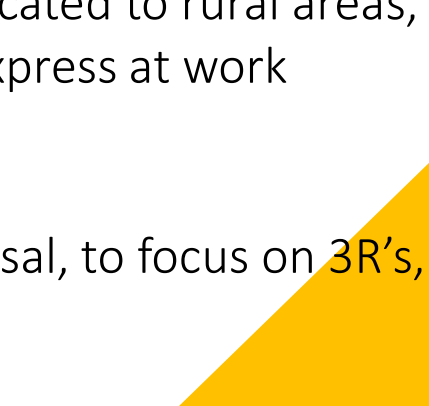
What are the most important parenting* challenges that parents, guardians and carers living in County Louth need support with?



Tell us about any particular needs you may have as a parent (58)

1. **Parenting supports and groups (12):** Emotional regulation for parents & children, how to talk to children about bullying, managing screen time, parenting styles, Circle of Security at weekends/evenings for working parents, support for bereaved parents, support for parents engaged with Tusla involved in reunification processes, parents who have experienced Domestic Abuse, LGBTQIA+ parents (support -social activities, education, legal)
2. **Cost of living (8)**
3. **Childcare and after school activities (7):** Affordable, for children with additional needs, after schools, to suit working parents, playgroups, rural communities
4. **Activities including outside activities (6):** Affordable, inclusive, after-schools, children's interests - programming, greener, cycling, health lifestyle
5. **Mental Health Support (5):** For children and parents, including school refusal


Tell us about any particular needs you may have as a parent (58)

6. Access to services for children with additional needs and support for their parents (5): No access to respite due to long waiting lists, waiting lists for access to OT, SLT, psychology, inclusive childcare and after school provision
 7. Supportive spaces for parents (4): Address isolation experienced by particular groups of parents – new mothers, parents who have re-located to rural areas, parents engaged with Tusla, spaces to breastfeed, or to express at work
 8. Parents in New Communities and access to childcare (4)
 9. Support parents parenting in addiction (3)
 10. Education (1): Inclusion for LGBTQIA+ families, school refusal, to focus on 3R's,
 11. Online safety (1)
 12. Housing (1)
- 
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What type of support do parents need that is not provided now? (150)

1. **Better understanding of and access to information, support and services for families with children with additional needs (30):** information for parents on pathways to access support, OT, SLT, physical therapy, physio, psychology etc support for children, autism assessment, school places, community groups, after schools and activities, long waiting lists, access to professional led services for children, Dyslexia, ADHD,
2. **Childcare and after schools (28):** affordable, community based, accessible and includes children under 2 years, pick up & drop off to after schools to suit working parents needs
3. **Access to mental health support for parents and children (28):** Counselling, parental mental health, parenting through addiction, parents and children who have experienced domestic abuse, single parents, face to face provision not online, information on services available, accessible services, LGBTQIA+ parents
4. **Low-level parenting support, and advice for parents (24):** Someone to talk to, general coping skills, easy to access support with day-to-day issues, peer support, spaces, parenting programmes at weekends or evenings (children's emotional needs, bullying, social media, fussy eating).

What type of support do parents need that is not provided now? (150)

5. **Cost of living (13):** Everyone not just disadvantaged families, budgeting, free school lunches and books, fuel, access to interventions, carers not means tested, grandparents
 6. **Activities and playgrounds (7):** inclusive, sport, for parents and children together, spaces to play
 7. **Carers (4)** access to respite, of adult children with poor mental health,
 8. **Schools (4):** places including for children with additional needs, schools not based on religion, funding for non-DEIS to support children with additional needs, school refusal and disruptive behaviour, language for children from New Communities
 9. **Transport (2):** school bus, gap in Cooley
 10. **Social media, smart phones in school (2)**
 11. **Drugs and Alcohol (1), Suicide and bereavement (1), Bullying (1) Participation in community (1)**
- 

Pick the 5 most important issues that should be a priority in the new Louth Children and Young People's Plan


MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES



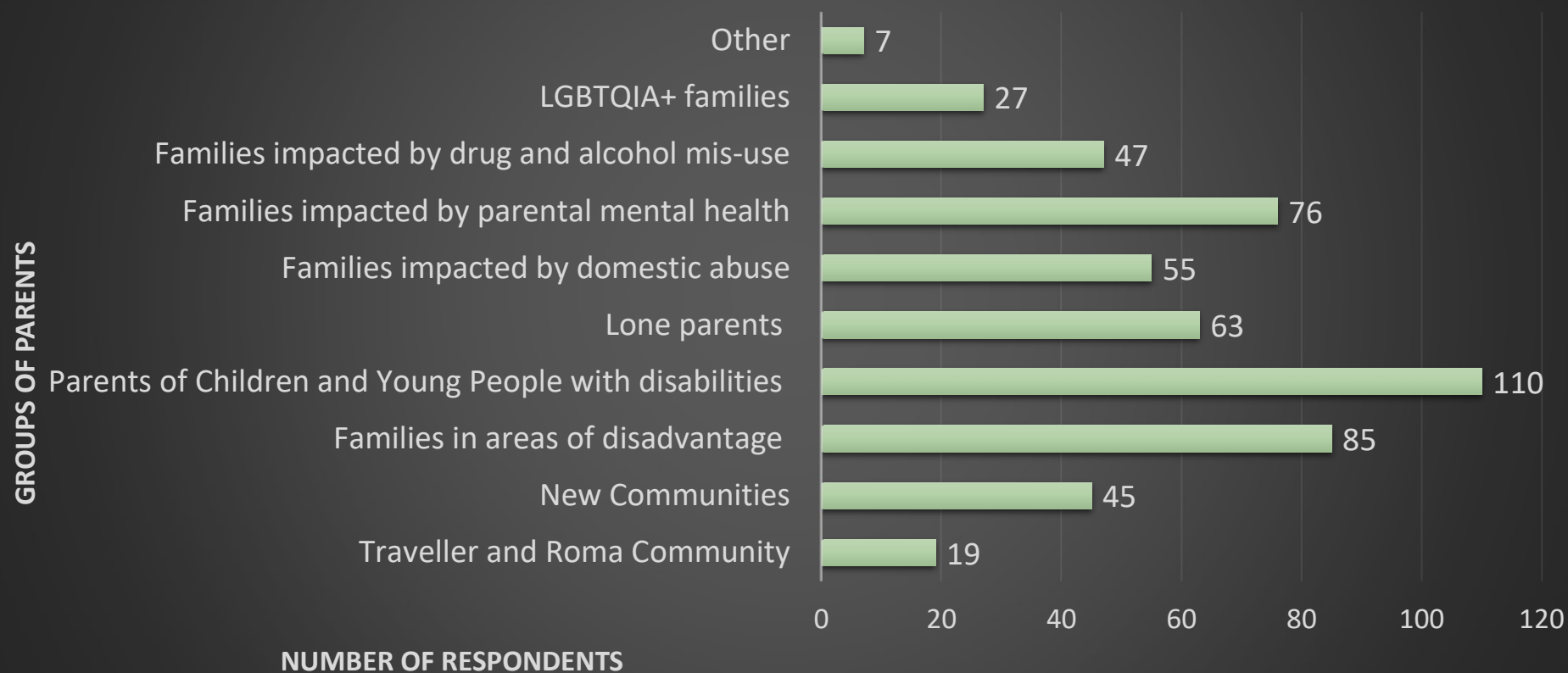
What other important issues should be a priority in the new plan? (31)

1. **Supporting LGBTQ+ Parents and families (11):** Recognising families as a family unit in a diverse Irish society and education system, support to integrate in rural schools and communities, support for LGBTQ+ parents, their children and LGBTQ+ children and young people
2. **Availability and Affordability of childcare (6):** Finding childcare and wraparound (before/after school) that meets needs of working parents, in their local rural community, cost
3. **Access to Healthcare and Support Services (4):** Access to GPs and emergency healthcare. Lack of services: occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, special needs assistants, support for children with aggressive behaviour.
4. **Parenting Support (3):** Access to parenting courses for parents who work full-time and are not available for daytime courses, support needed for single parents, parents of children displaying aggressive behaviour

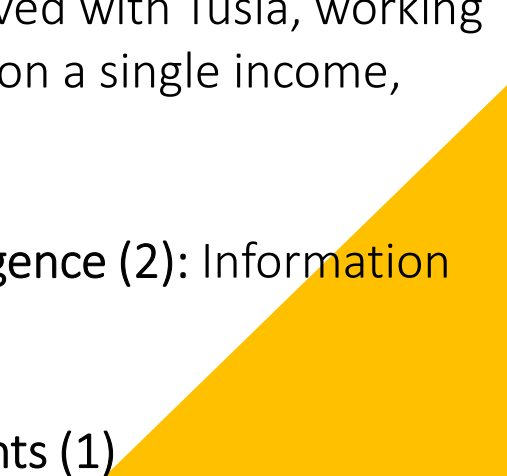
What other important issues should be a priority in the new plan? (31)

5. **More Community Facilities and Activities for children and families (3):**
Community playgrounds, adventure playground, inclusive after-school activities e.g. painting, sports, swimming, drama, art for children with autism and additional needs. Gap in Dundalk
 6. **Safe Environment (2):** Neighborhood free from drugs, dogs, road safety.
More green spaces for families
 7. **Availability and impact of Vapes (1)**
 8. **Domestic Abuse (1):** Lack of adequate support for parents dealing with domestic abuse and its impact on children
 9. **Homelessness (1)**
 10. **Life Skills Education for children and young people (1):** Manage finances, DIY and maintenance
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Which groups of parents living in County Louth should be a priority to receive support in the next 3 years?



What other groups of parents should be a priority? (13)

1. **All Parents and All families (4):** Universal support recognising that not all needs will be visible, and parents outside of disadvantaged groups require support
 2. **Specific groups identified (7):** Parents of neurodivergent children, parents of children with ADHD, Autism, single parents, Parents involved with Tusla, working parents just above threshold for support, families relying on a single income, parents relocating to rural areas with young children
 3. **Greater awareness and understanding of ASD, neurodivergence (2):** Information on what resources exist and where to seek help
 4. **Promote LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusion among all parents (1)**
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Focus groups

Emerging themes: supporting families experiencing addiction

Significant gaps in support for families experiencing addiction:

- Barriers in accessing therapeutic support (Be clean)
- Therapeutic support when available: young people mixed with adults, males and females mixed, lack of family services
- Lack of awareness of where and how to get support, stigma
- Needs of distinct groups: Parents with addiction, Parents of Kids with addiction, children who are living with addiction, parents and co-parents of those with addiction,
- Lack of childcare for parents accessing therapeutic support: barrier to mother seeking help
- Young people, parents, professionals lack knowledge and awareness of addiction-need for awareness campaigns, talks in schools, social media messaging, involve those in recovery

Emerging themes: supporting Traveller families

Traveller parents report that **schools lack awareness and understanding of Traveller cultural norms and expectations** and how this impacts their children's engagement with school and activities.

- Includes absences to attend funerals and weddings
- girls' ability to complete homework due to caring and household responsibilities
- girls' ability to go on overnight school trips which can leave them feeling excluded.

Traveller parents highlighted a need to raise awareness of Traveller culture in post primary schools.

Mental health is a significant issue for young people. Needs for **support following the trauma of suicide within extended families and the community**, and for young men who are reared in line with traditional masculinity ideals of being tough, not showing vulnerability and not asking for help. Expressed **need for bereavement counselling support for the Travelling community with specific understanding of Traveller culture.**

Emerging themes: supporting Traveller families

Education and employment:

- Barrier to progression to **further and higher education for Traveller girls and women.**
- Need for a **Traveller outreach worker to be employed to raise awareness** among TY students from the Traveller community on availability of opportunities for trades, apprenticeships and work experience.
- Traveller Community Employment schemes and Traveller Men's Shed were proposed as positive ideas to be implemented.

County **Louth does not have a Traveller project** to provide support and develop a hub/ projects & groups specifically for the Traveller community. Reported experience of poor engagement from local statutory service providers.

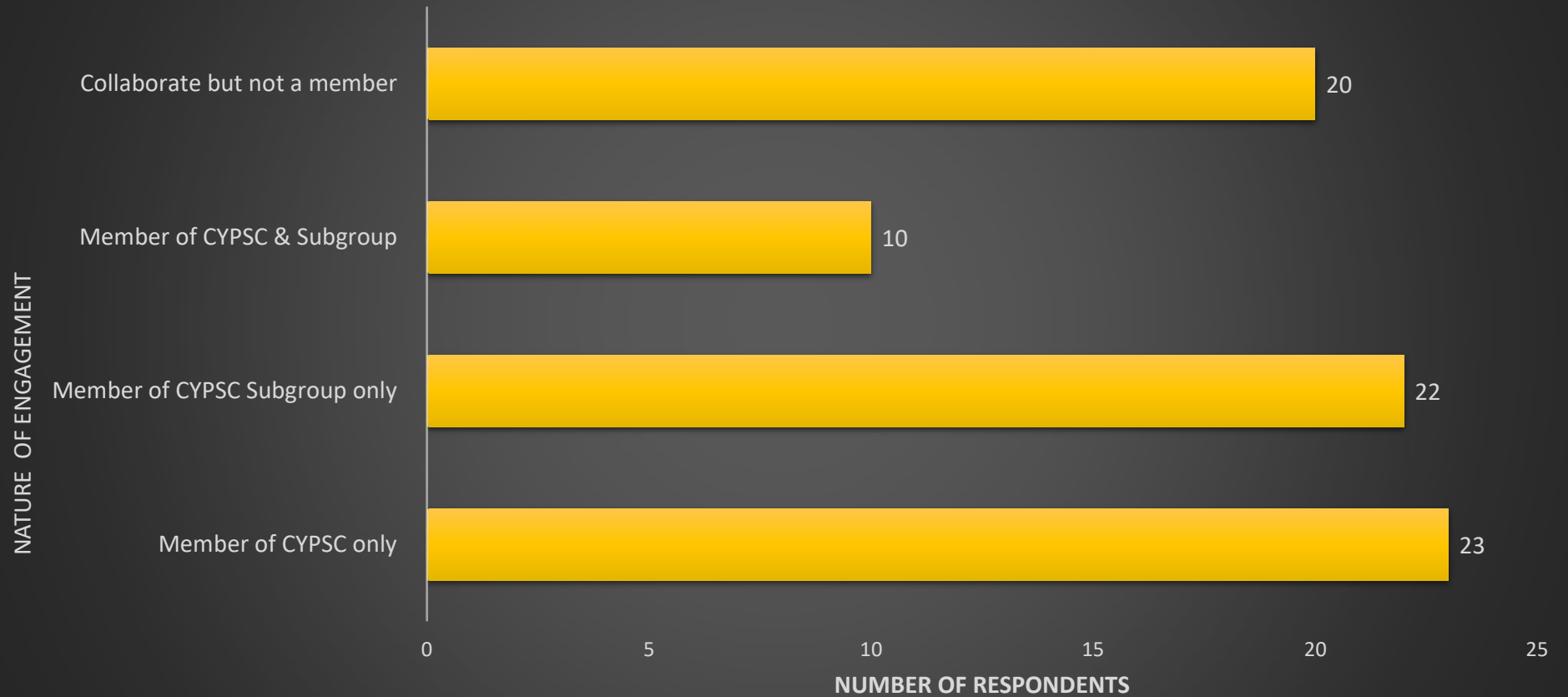


Consultation with professionals

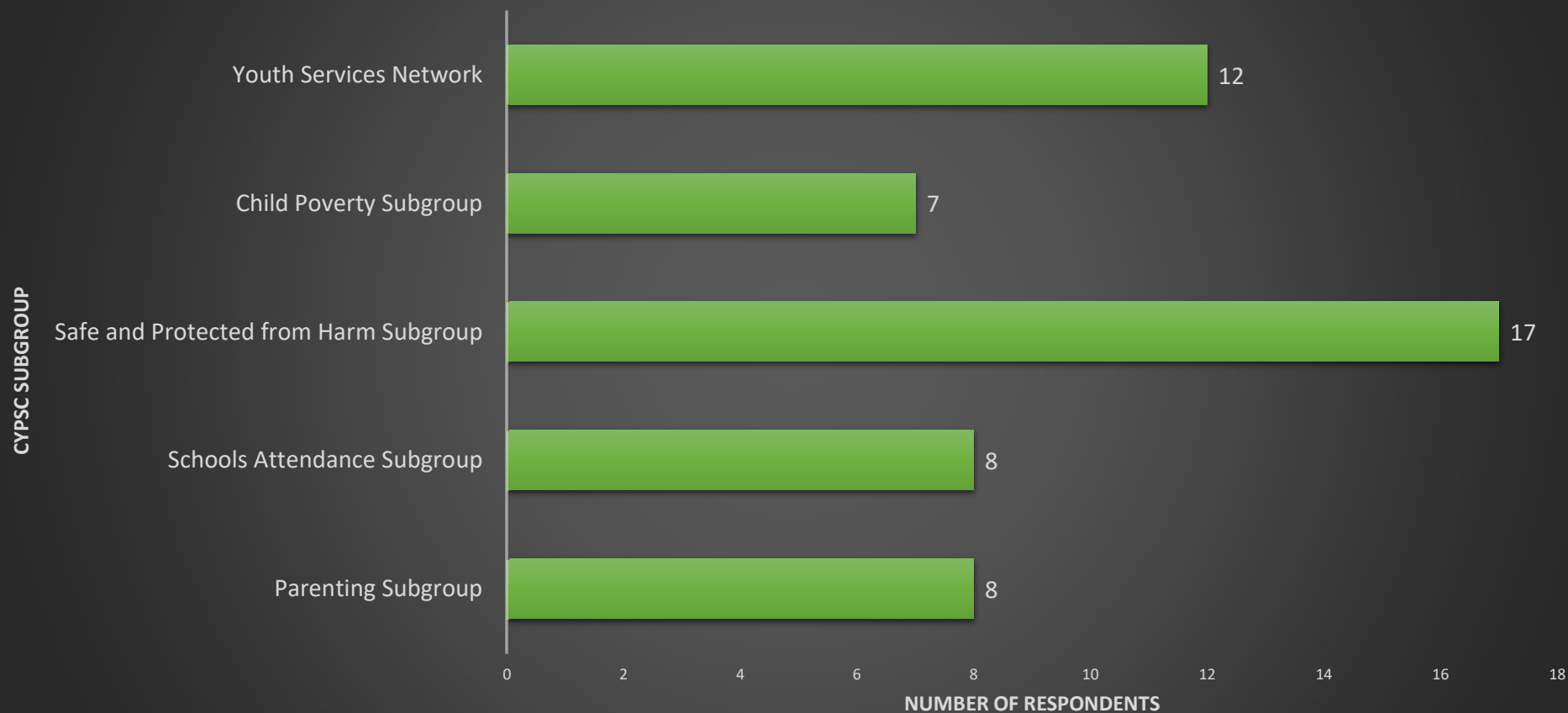
Online survey



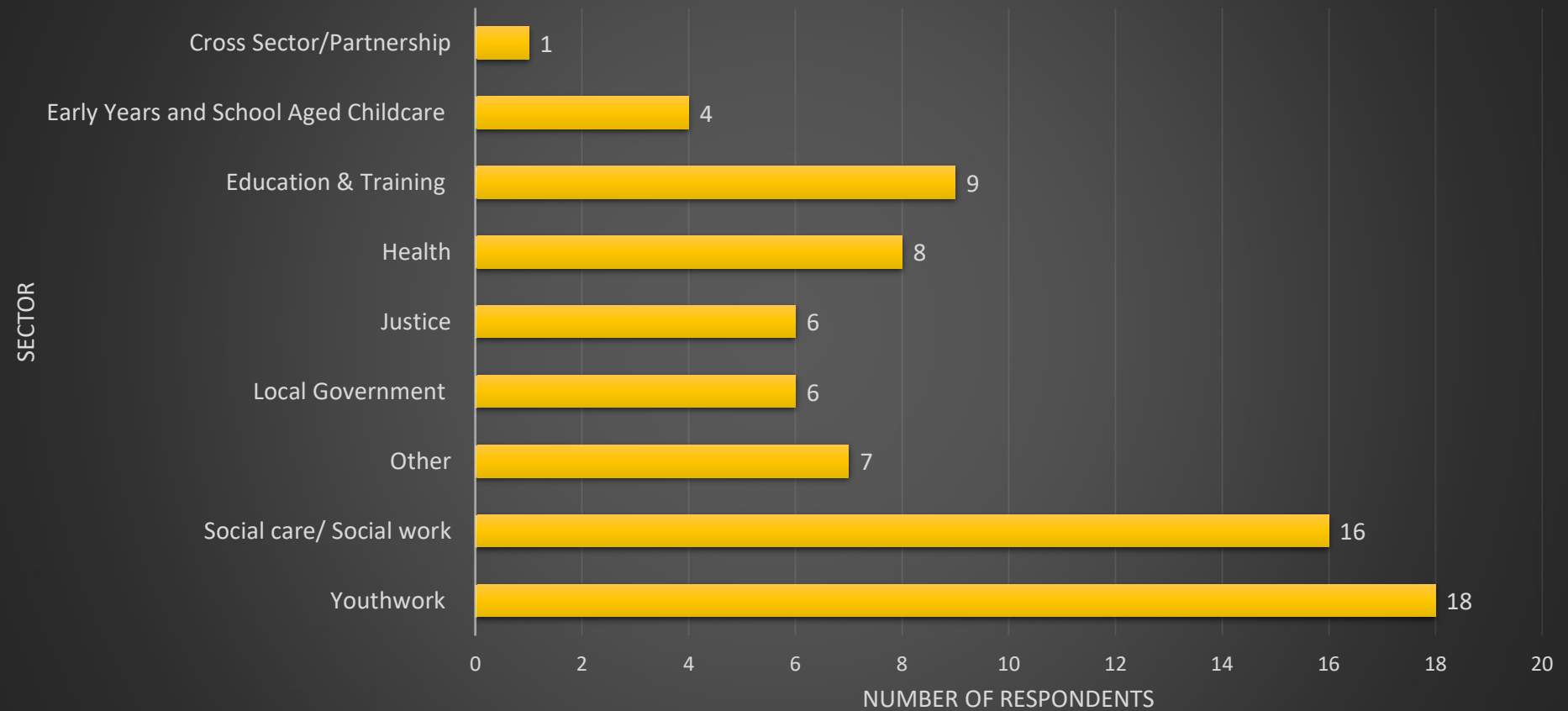
How does your organisation engage with Louth CYPSC?



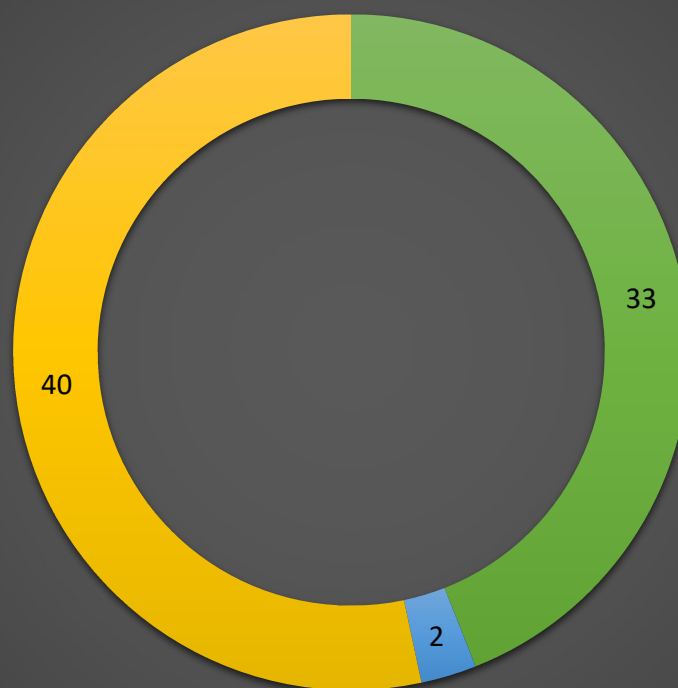
Which CYPSC Subgroups are you a member of?



What sector best describes the work of your organisation?



Which of the following best describes your organisation type?



■ Community and voluntary organisation ■ Other ■ Statutory

How long has your organisation been represented on Louth CYPSC or its Subgroups?

Less than 1 year	1	1.8%
1-3 years	4	7.3%
4 or more years	41	74.5%
I am not sure	8	14.5%
Not answered	1	1.8%
Total members	55	100

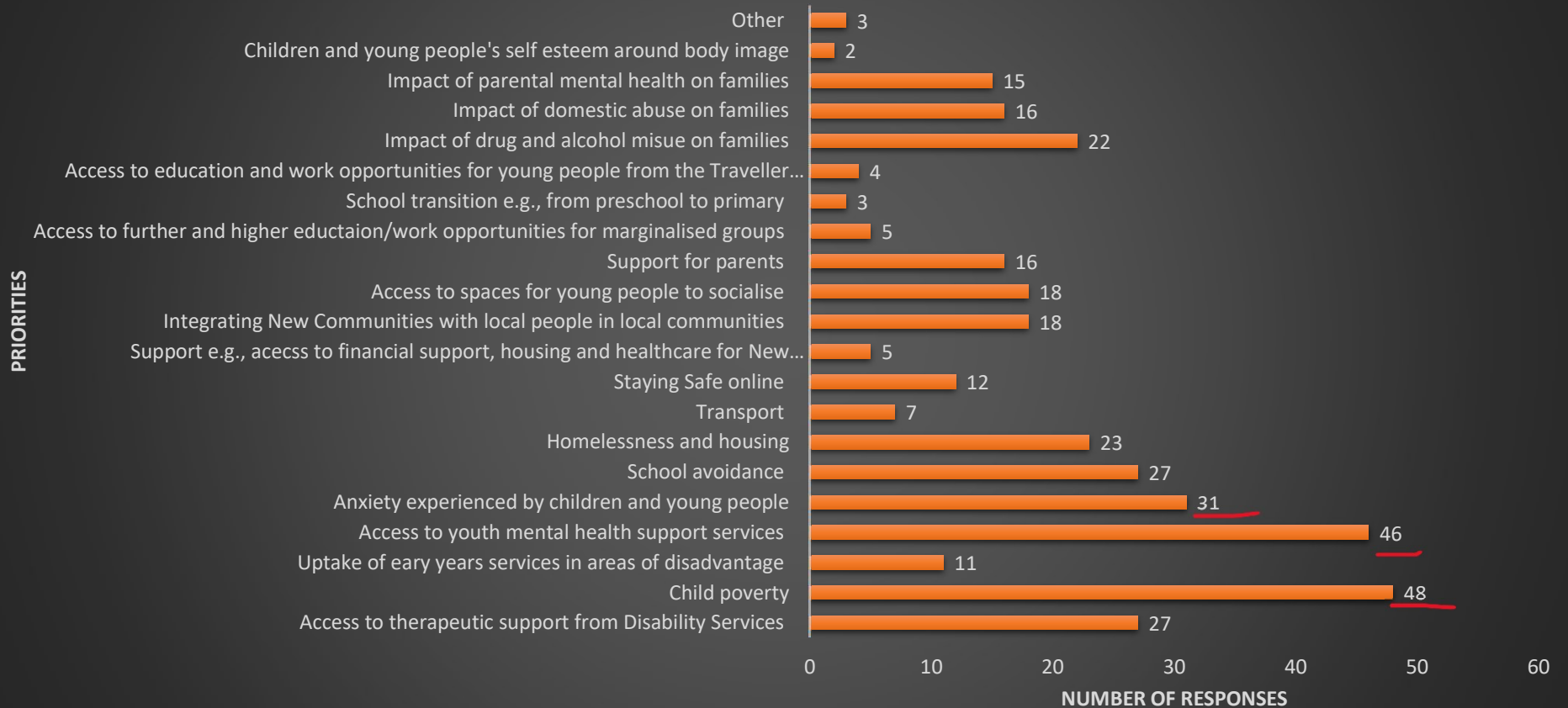
How long have you been a member of Louth CYPSC or its Subgroups?

less than 1 year	8	<u>14.5%</u>
1-3 years	23	<u>41.8%</u>
4 or more years	24	43.6%
Total members	55	100.0%

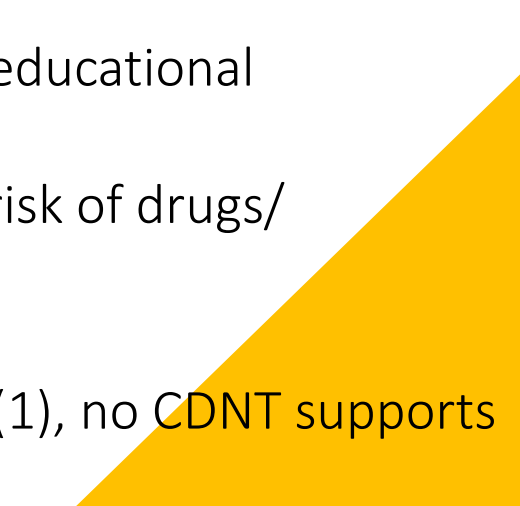
Issues, needs and priority groups

Survey

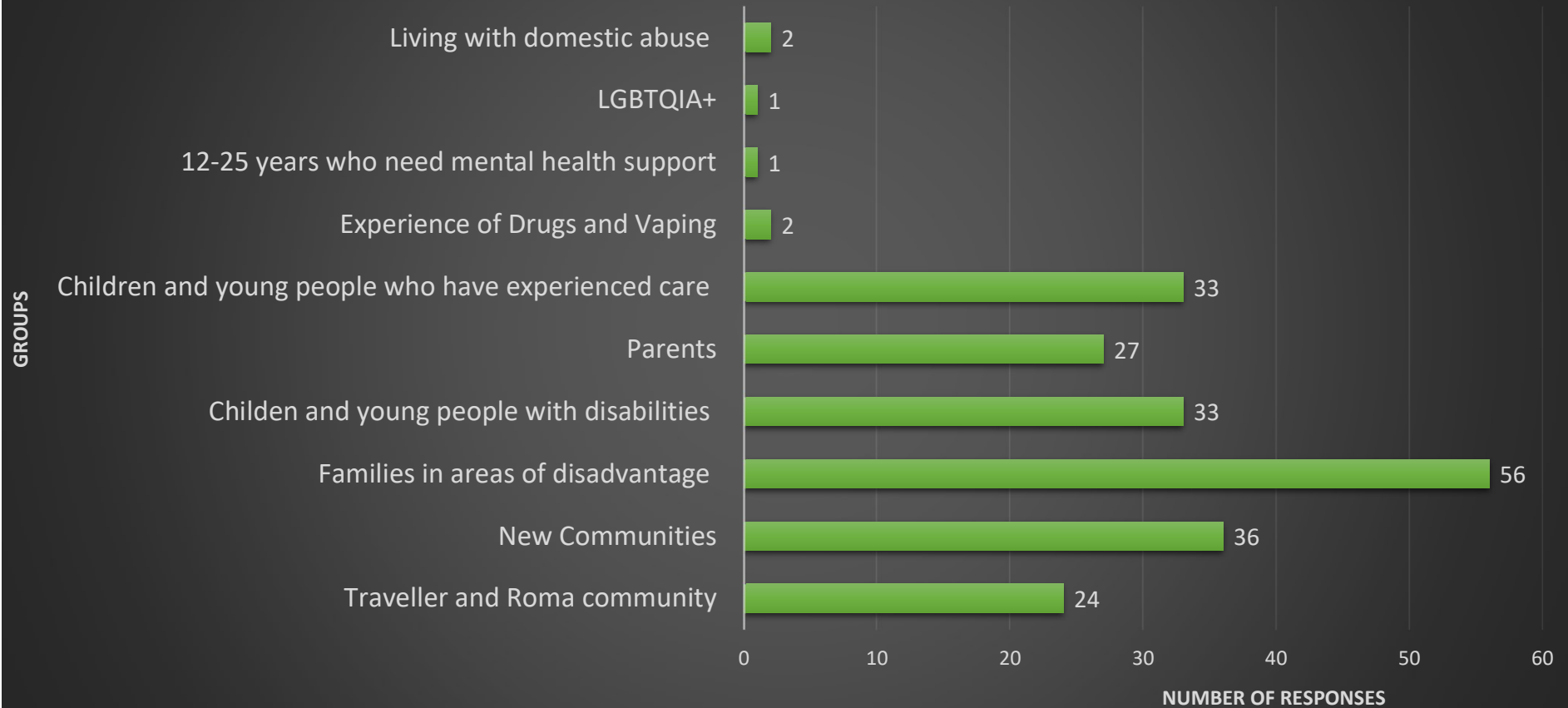
What are the top 5 issues that should be prioritised?



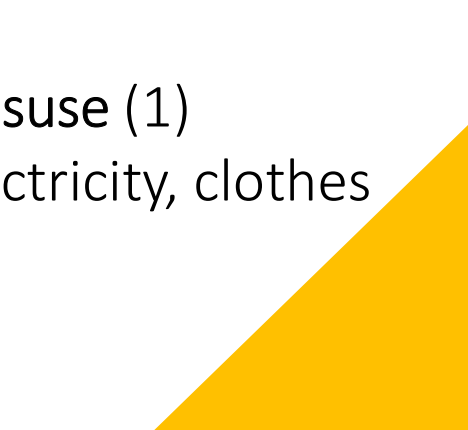
What other issues should be a priority in the new plan? (9)

1. Mental Health (3): Access, LGBTQIA+ children and young people, young people at risk of drug misuse and involvement in criminality
 2. Child poverty (2)
 3. School avoidance and refusal (2): support for parents, schools, children
 4. Treatment options for parents in addiction (1)
 5. Traveller children and young people (1): discrimination, educational attainment
 6. Safe spaces for young people to socialise (1): Free from risk of drugs/ criminality
 7. Supporting children living with domestic abuse (1)
 8. Supporting families with children with additional needs (1), no CDNT supports
 9. CYPSC to address gaps (1)
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Which groups should be prioritised?

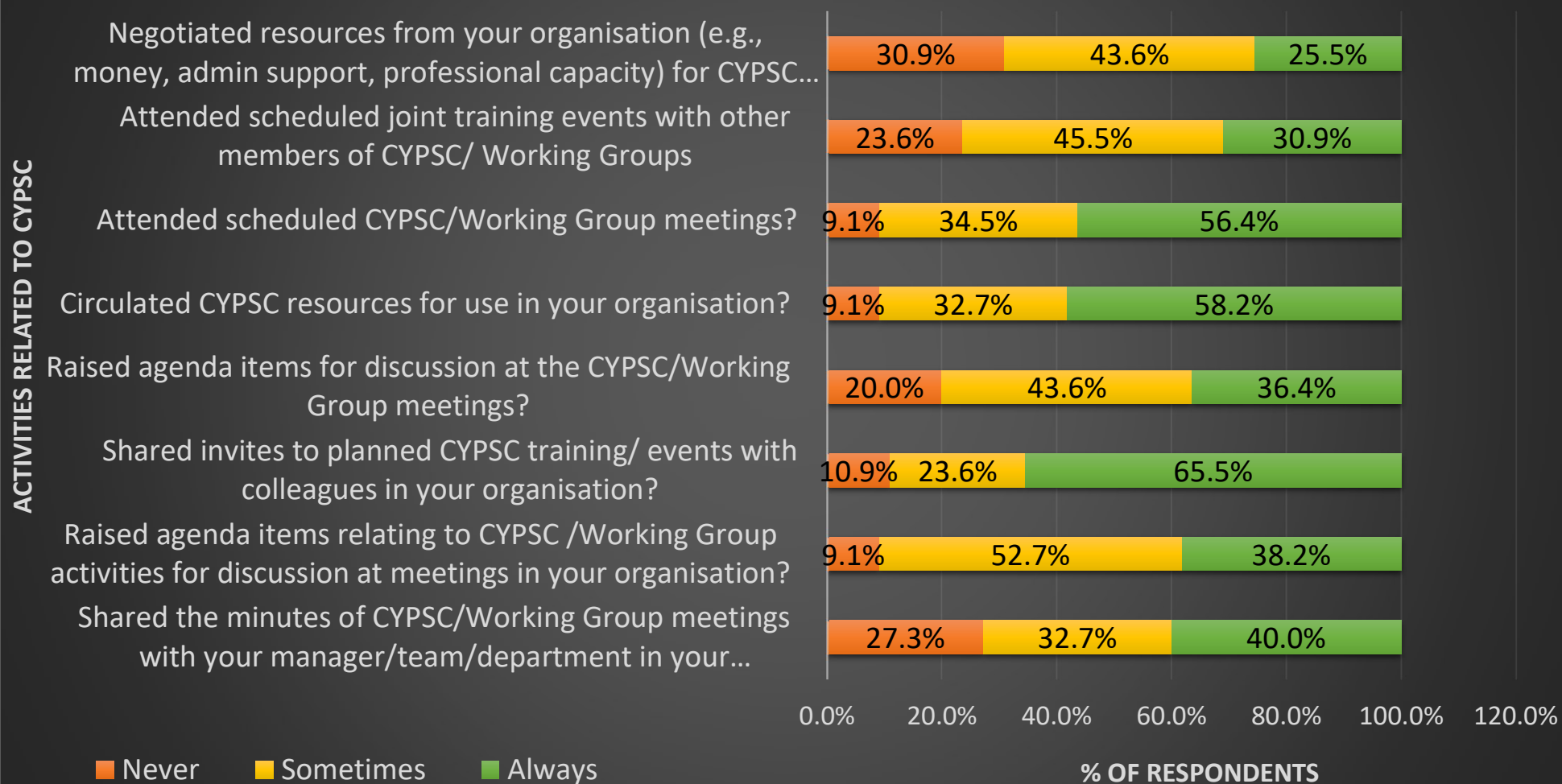


What other groups should be a priority in the new plan? (8)

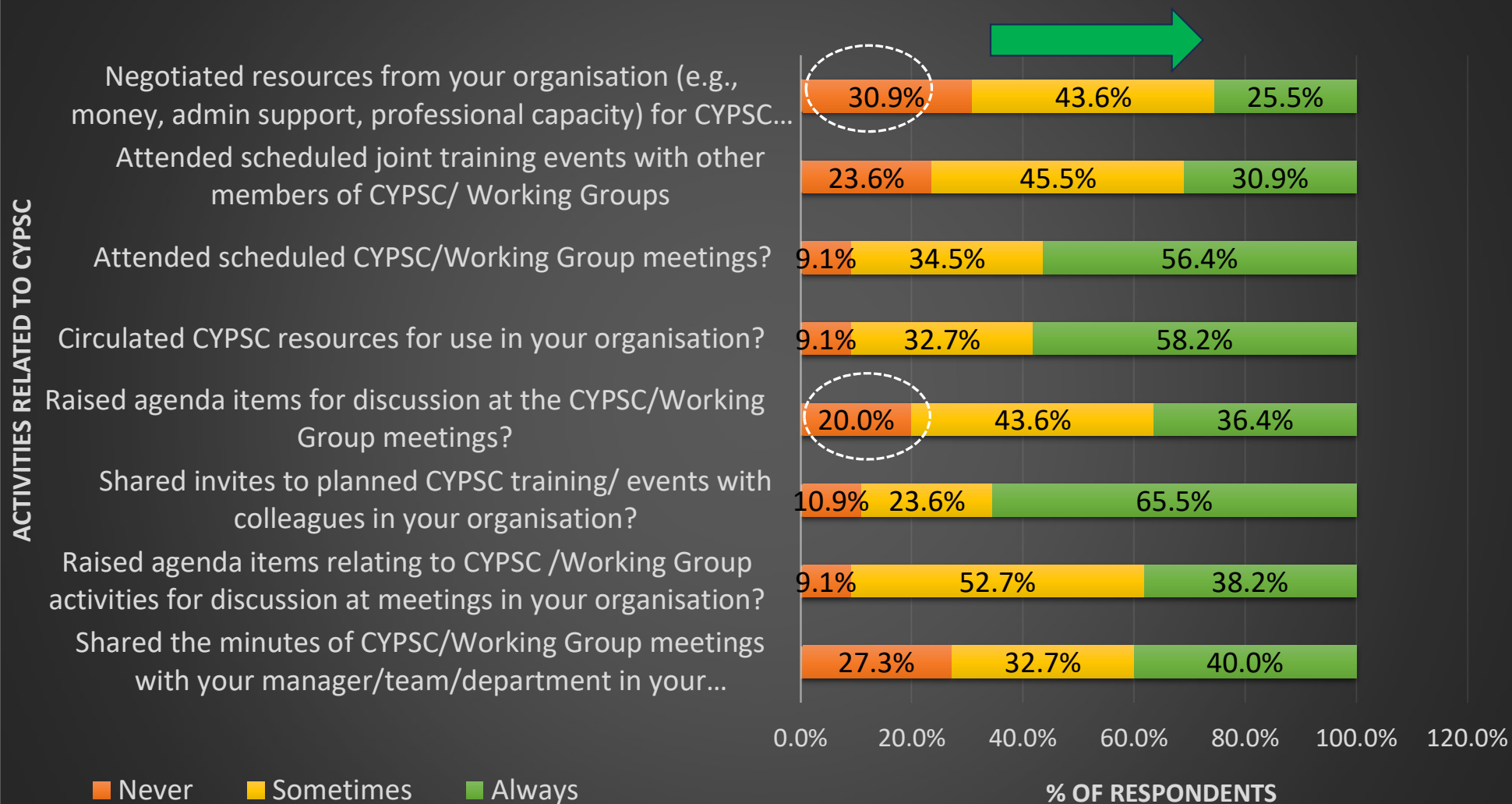
1. Families impacted by Domestic Abuse (2): Have not sought help, living in abusive homes
 2. Young people aged 12-25 (1): Access to early intervention mental health support
 3. Families and communities impacted by drug misuse (1)
 4. Families struggling financially (2): Gas, food, electricity, clothes
 5. Families in areas of disadvantage (1)
 6. New communities (1)
 7. All families: all experiencing need
- 
- A large yellow triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.

Collaboration and inter-agency working

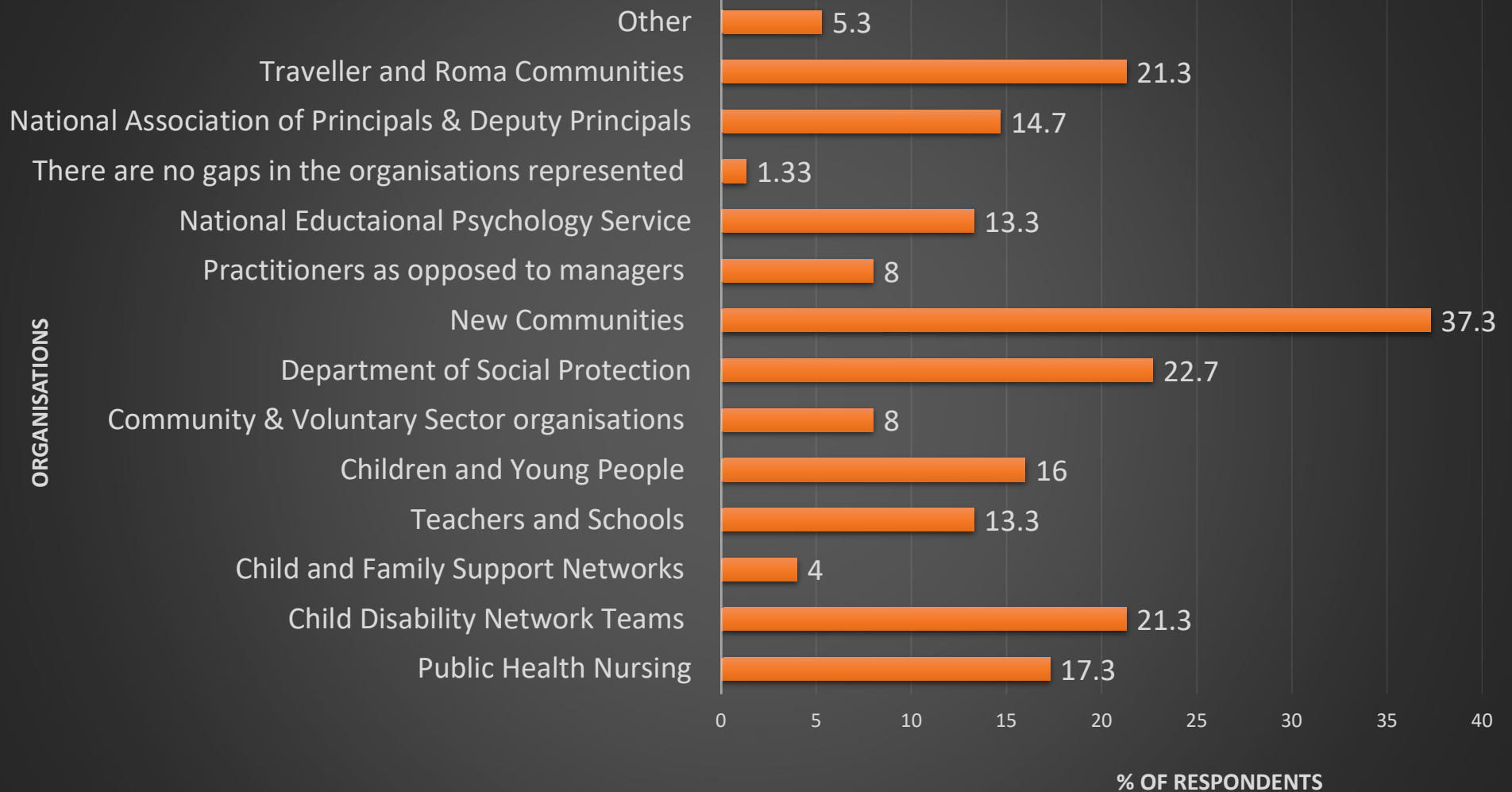
Nature of engagement with CYPSC and its Subgroups over the last year



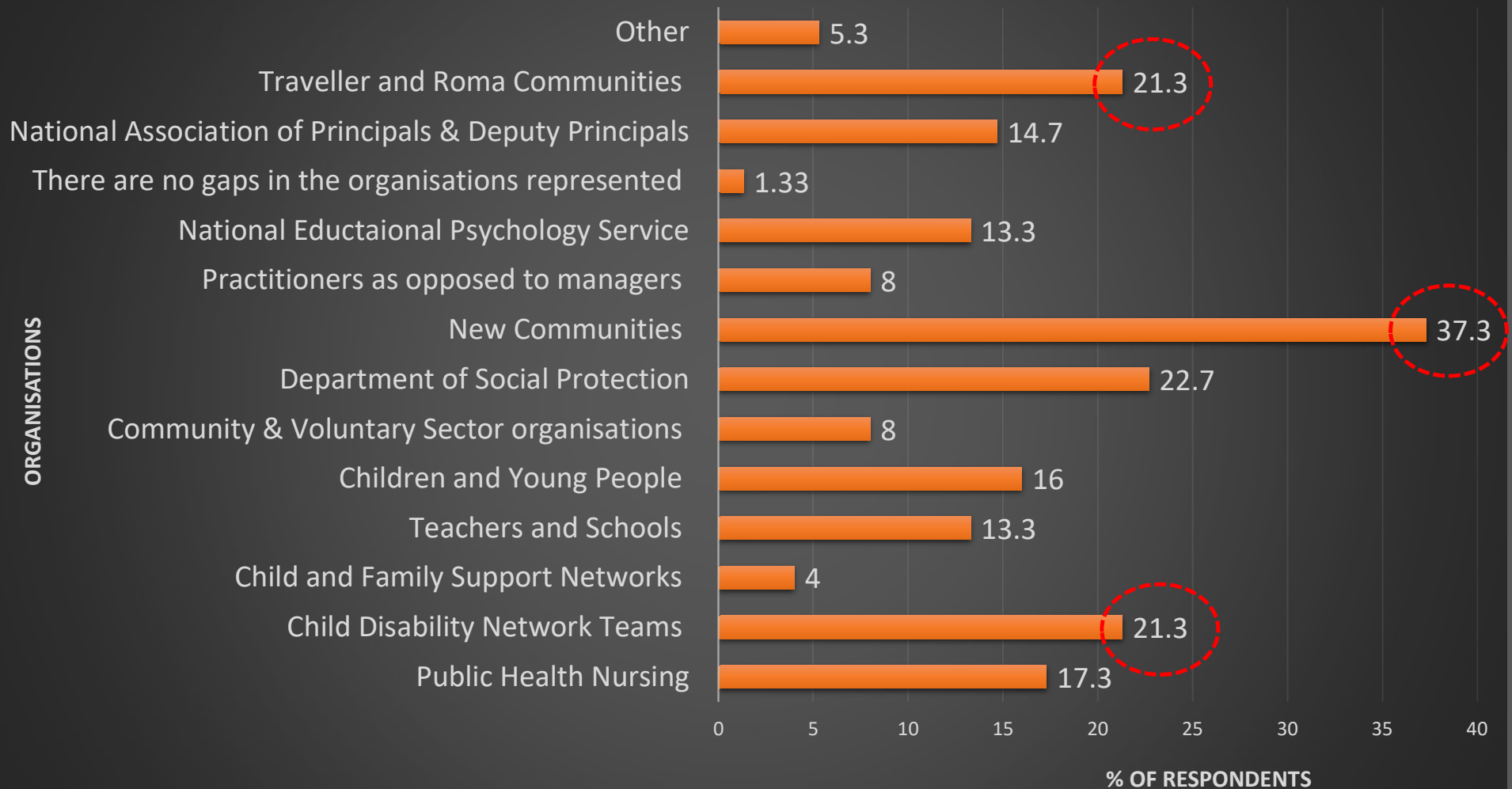
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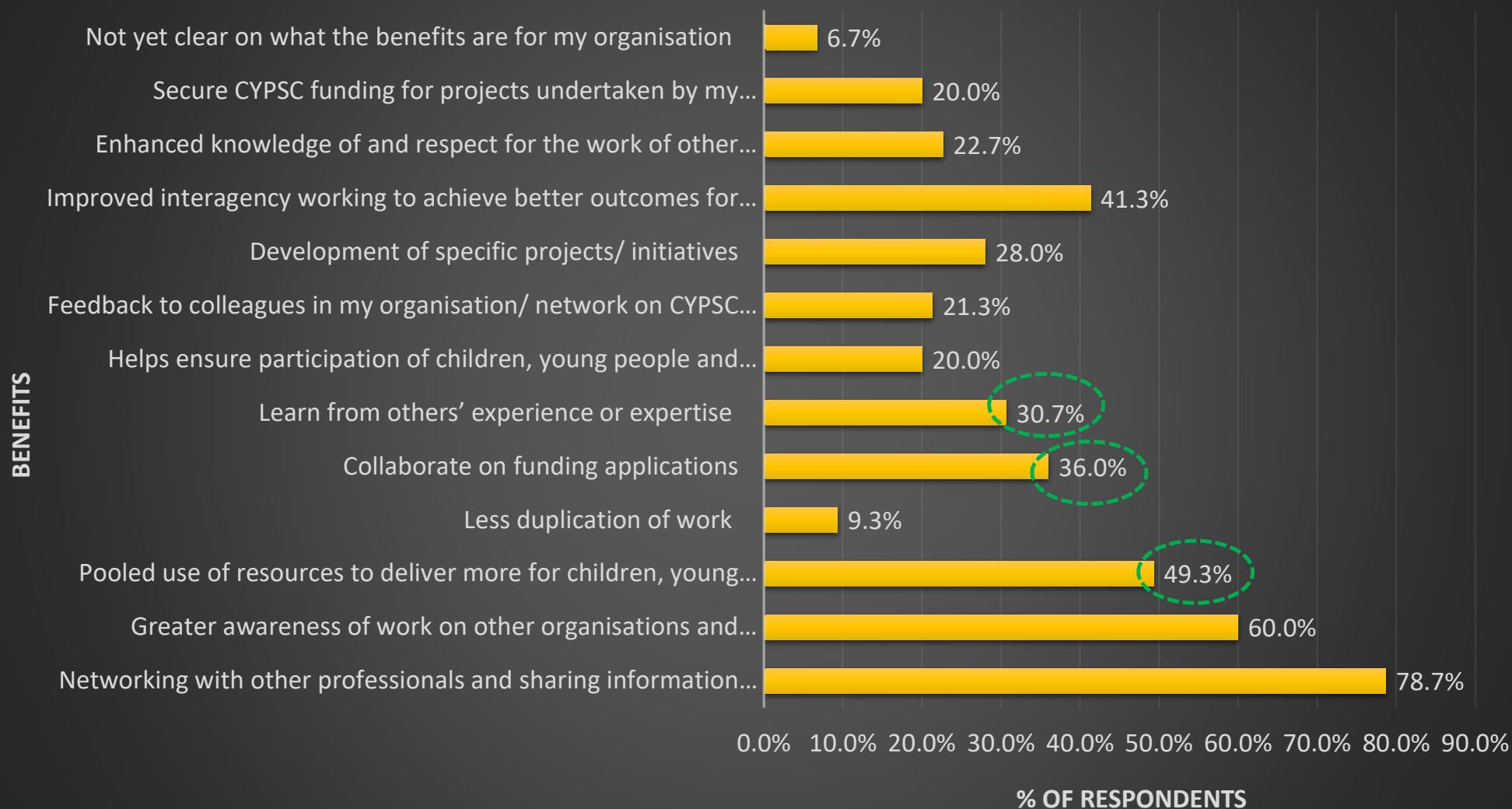
What are the gaps in organisations represented on CYPSC and its Subgroups?



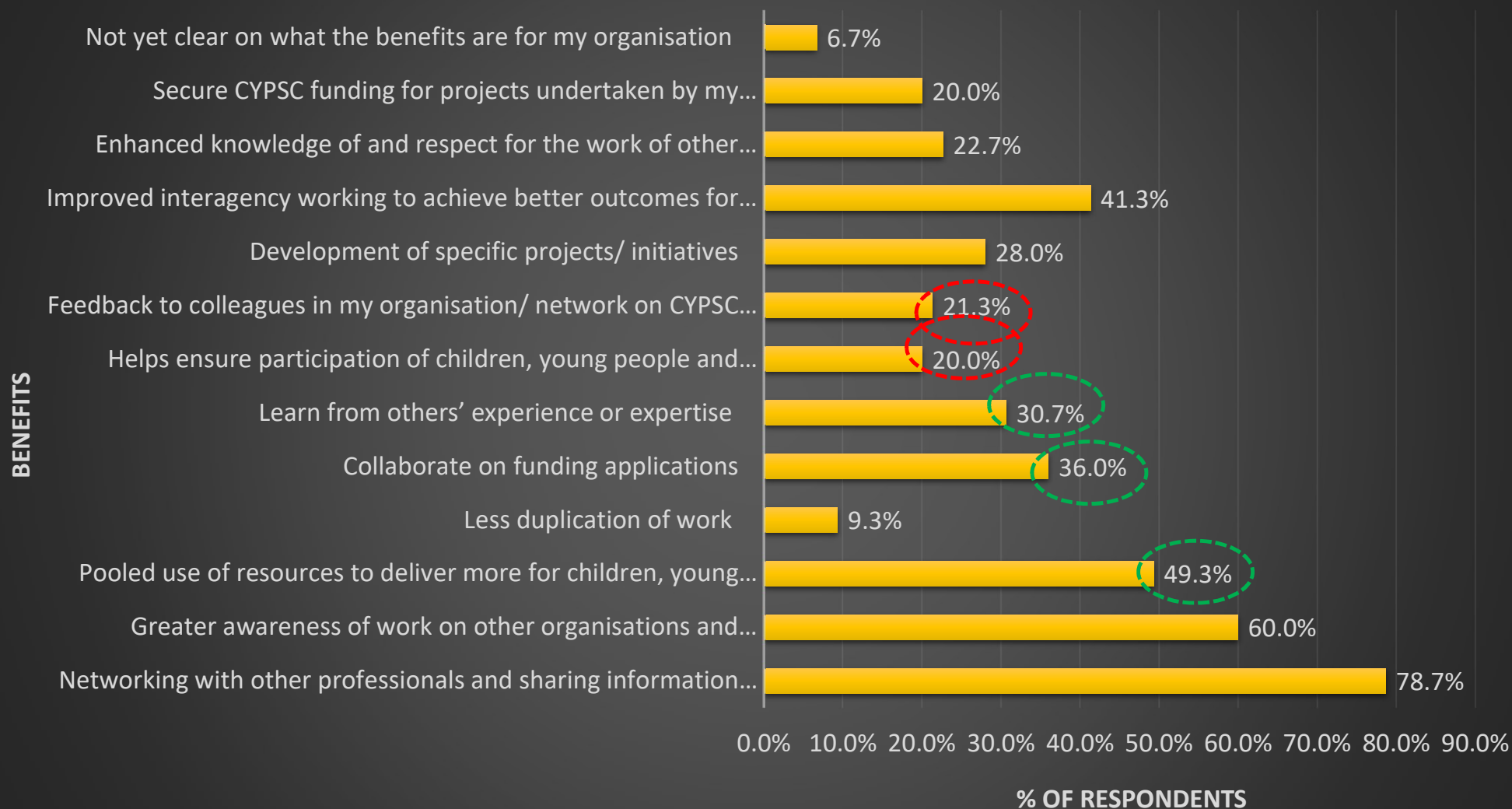
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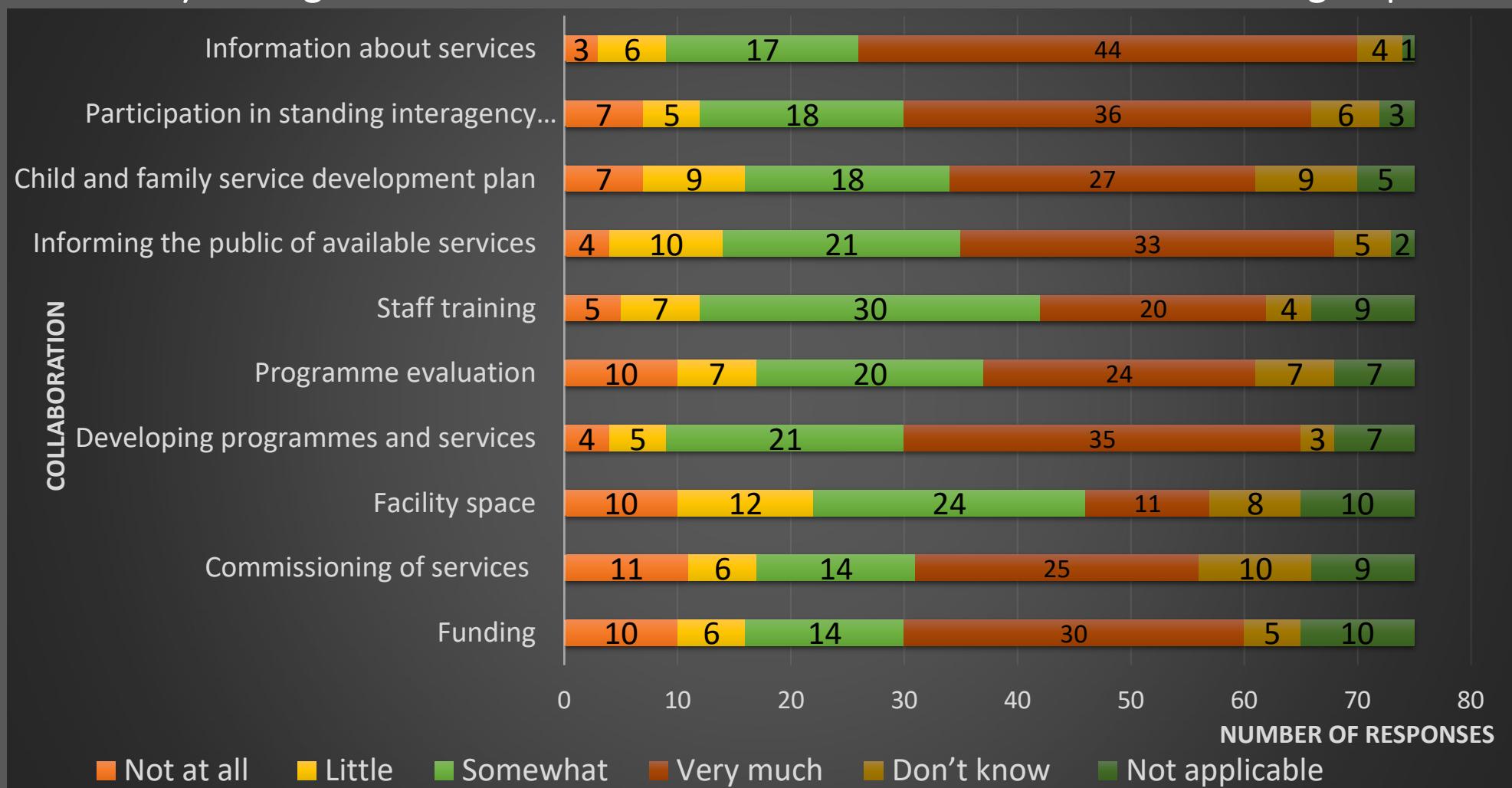
Does your organisation benefit from membership of CYPSC and its Subgroups ?



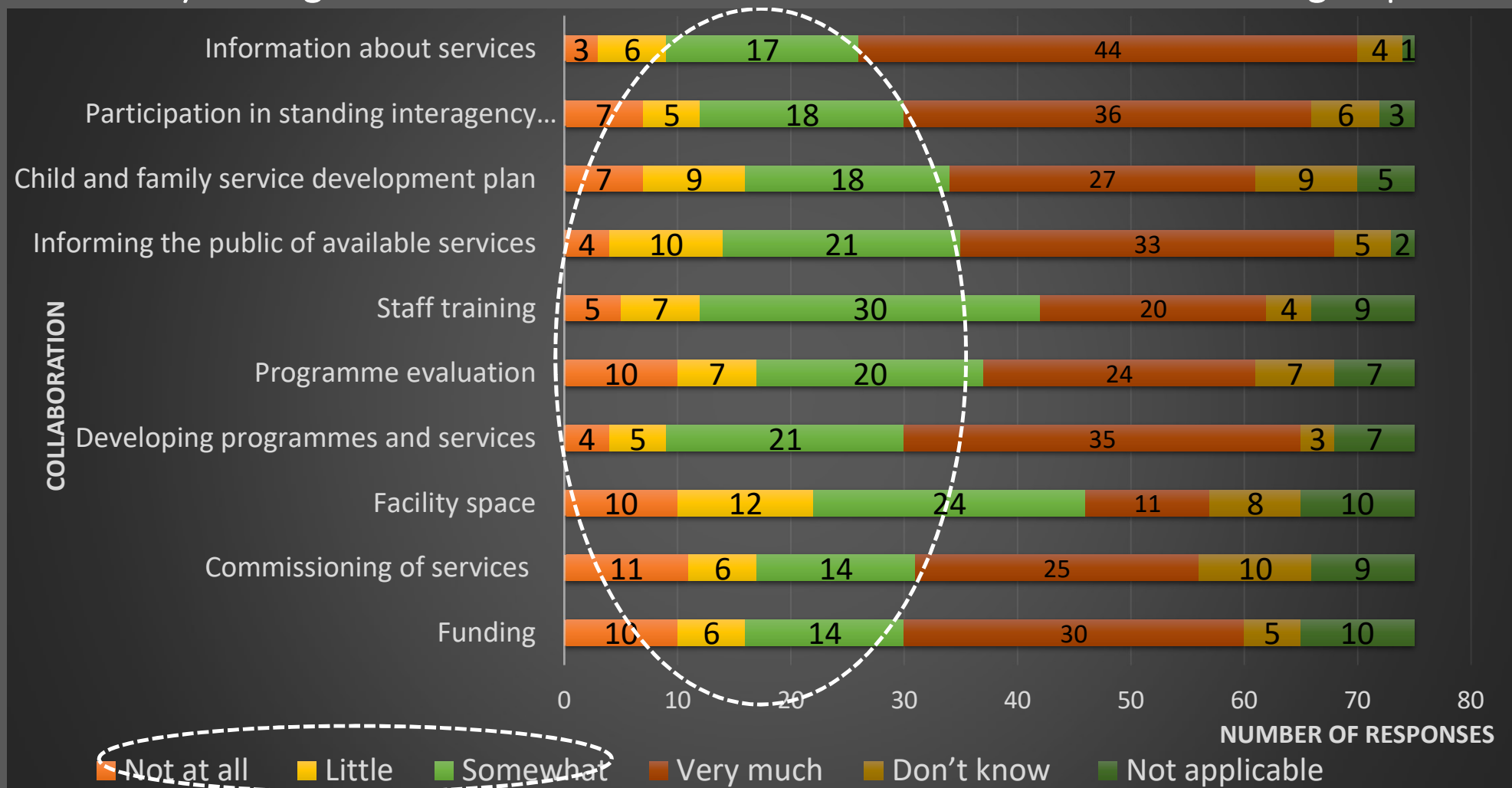
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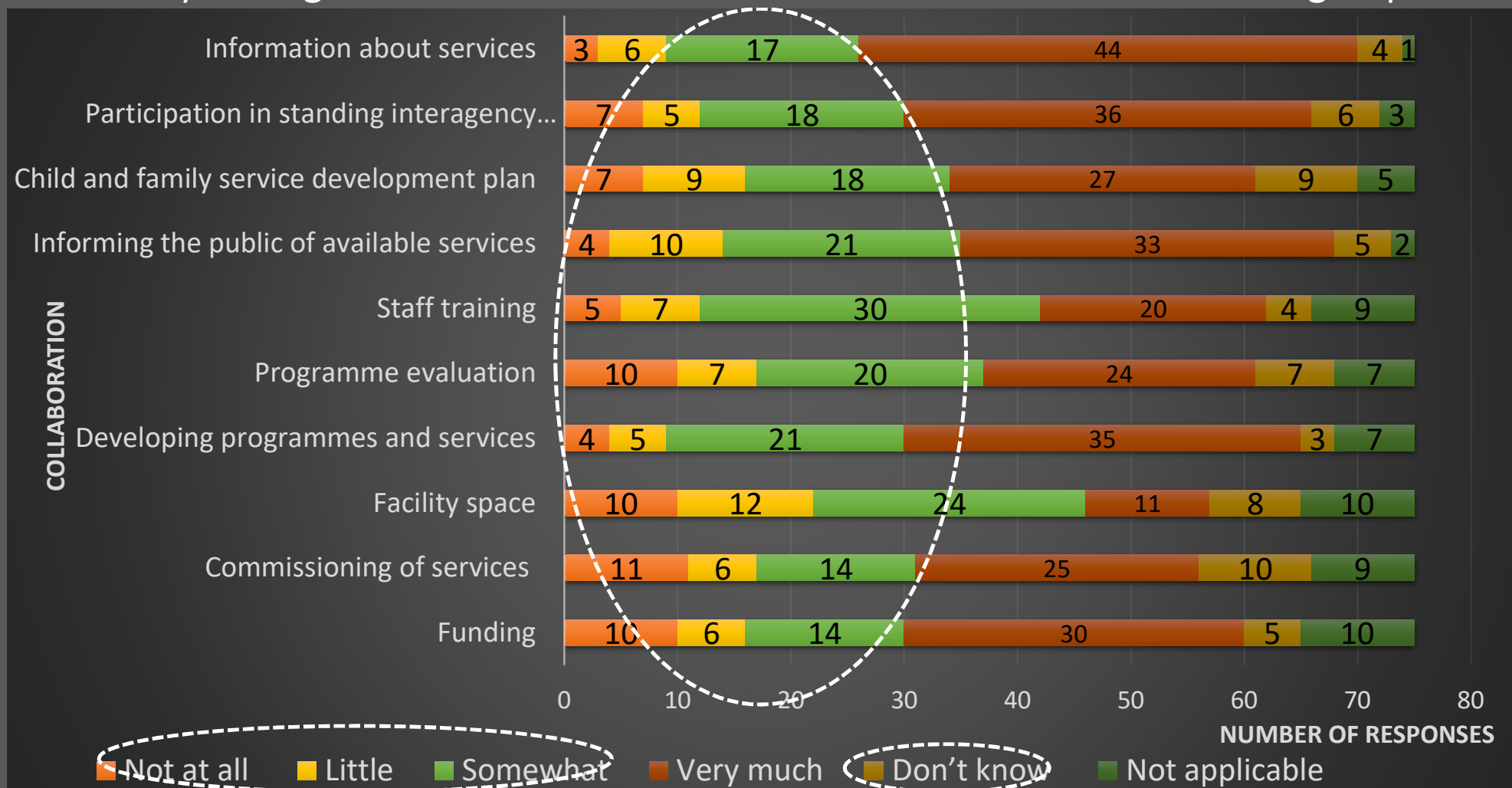
How does your organisation share with other members of CYPSC and its Subgroups?



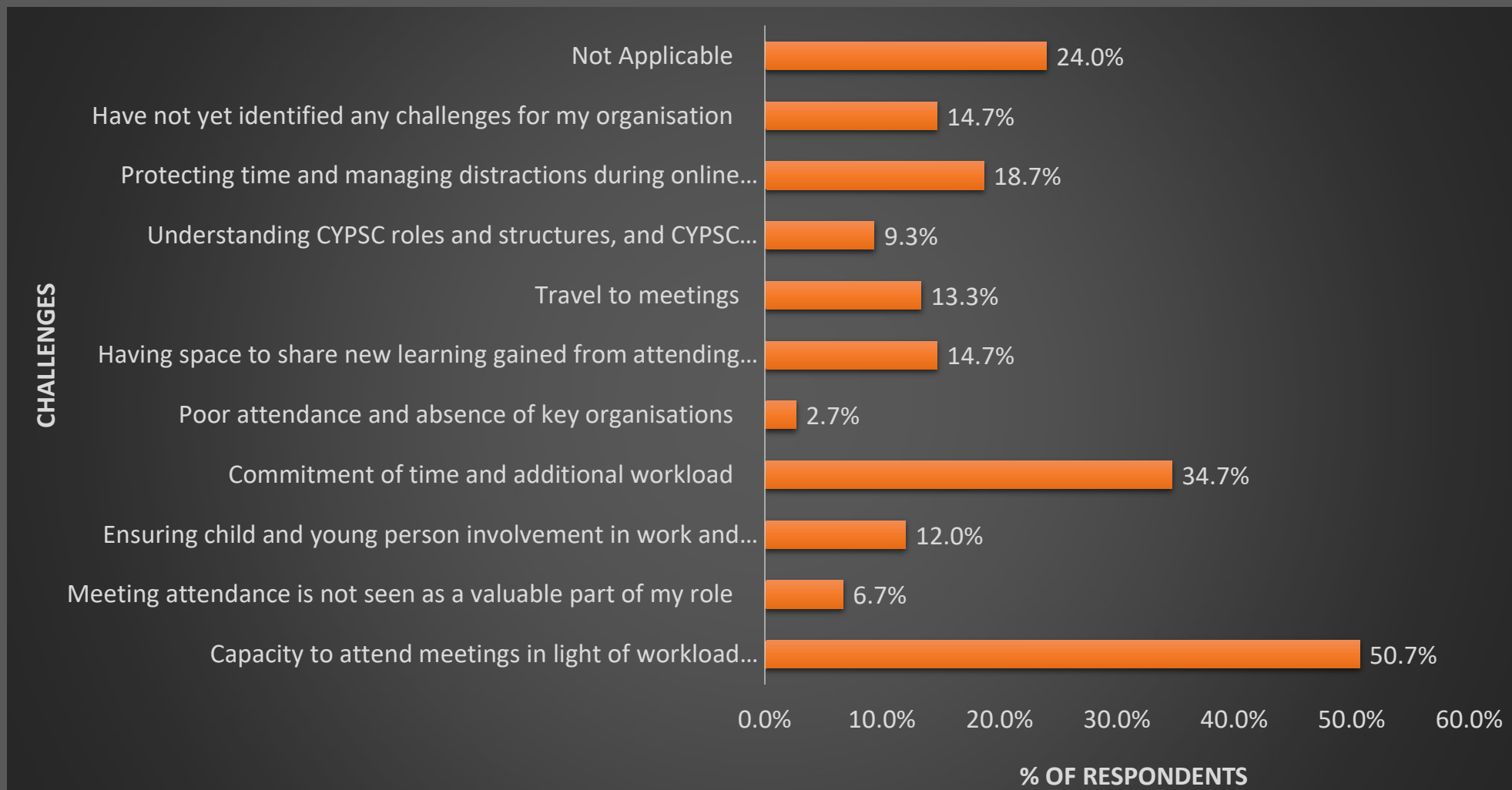
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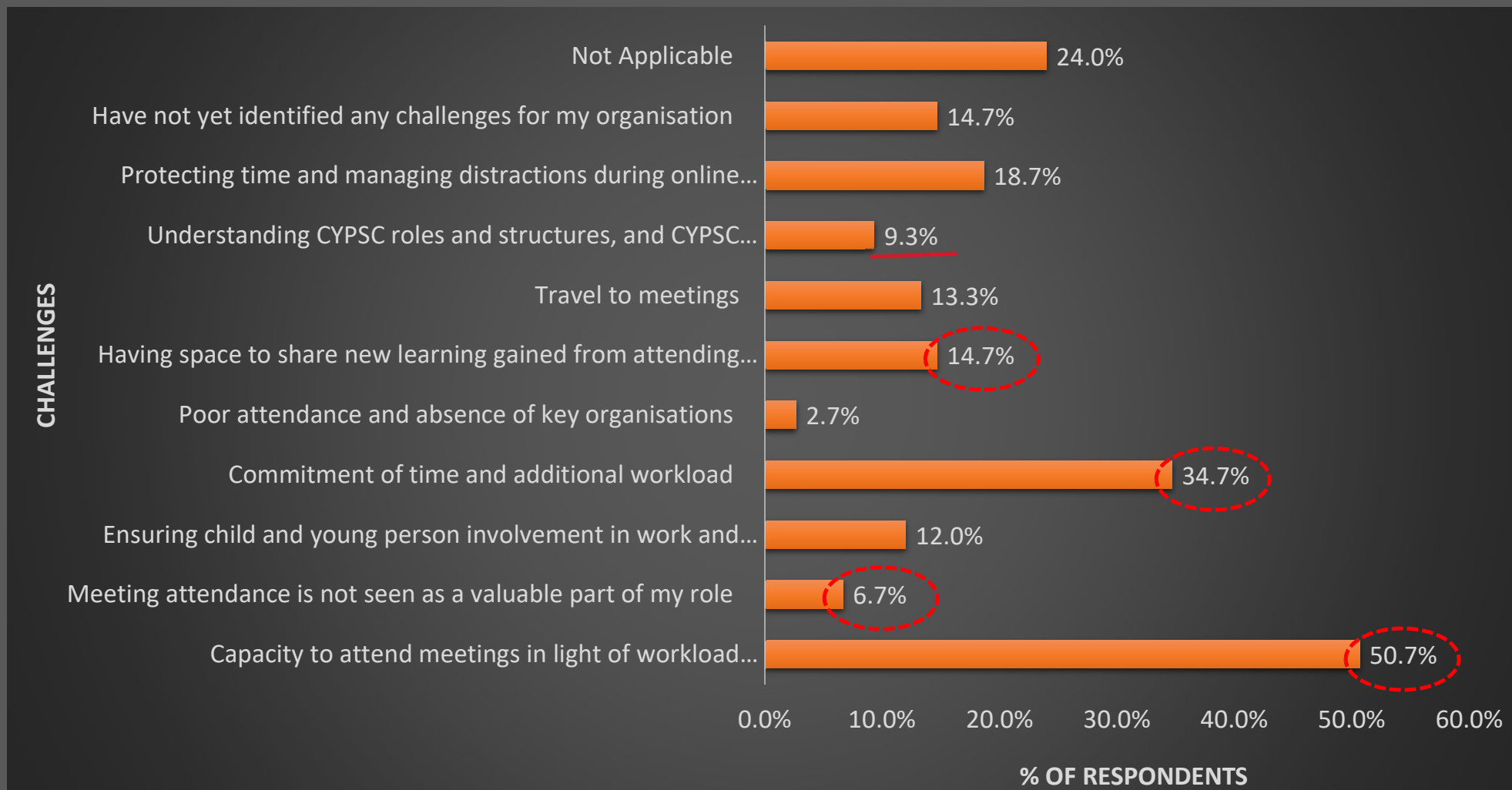
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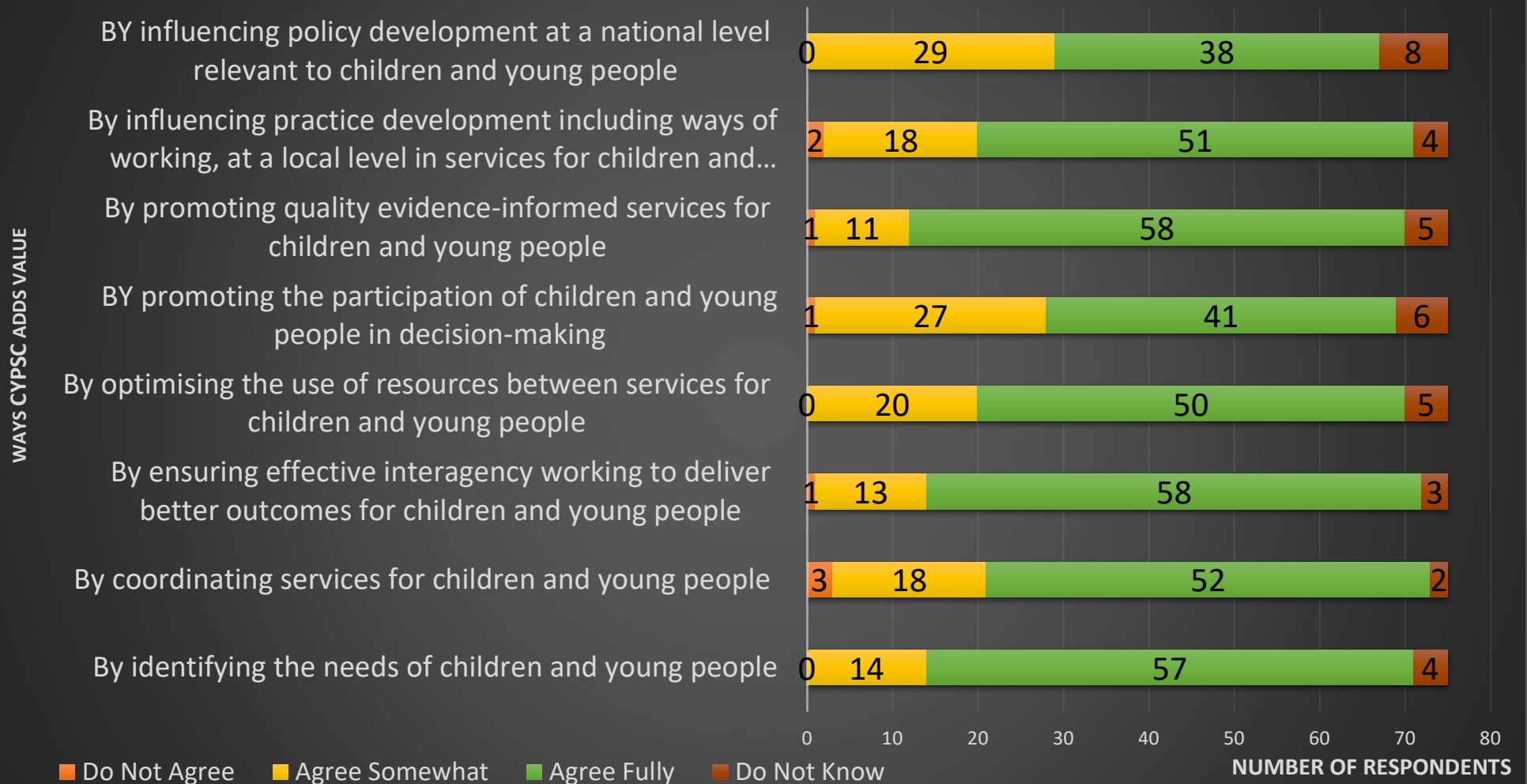
Does membership of CYPSC and its Subgroups present a challenge for your organisation?



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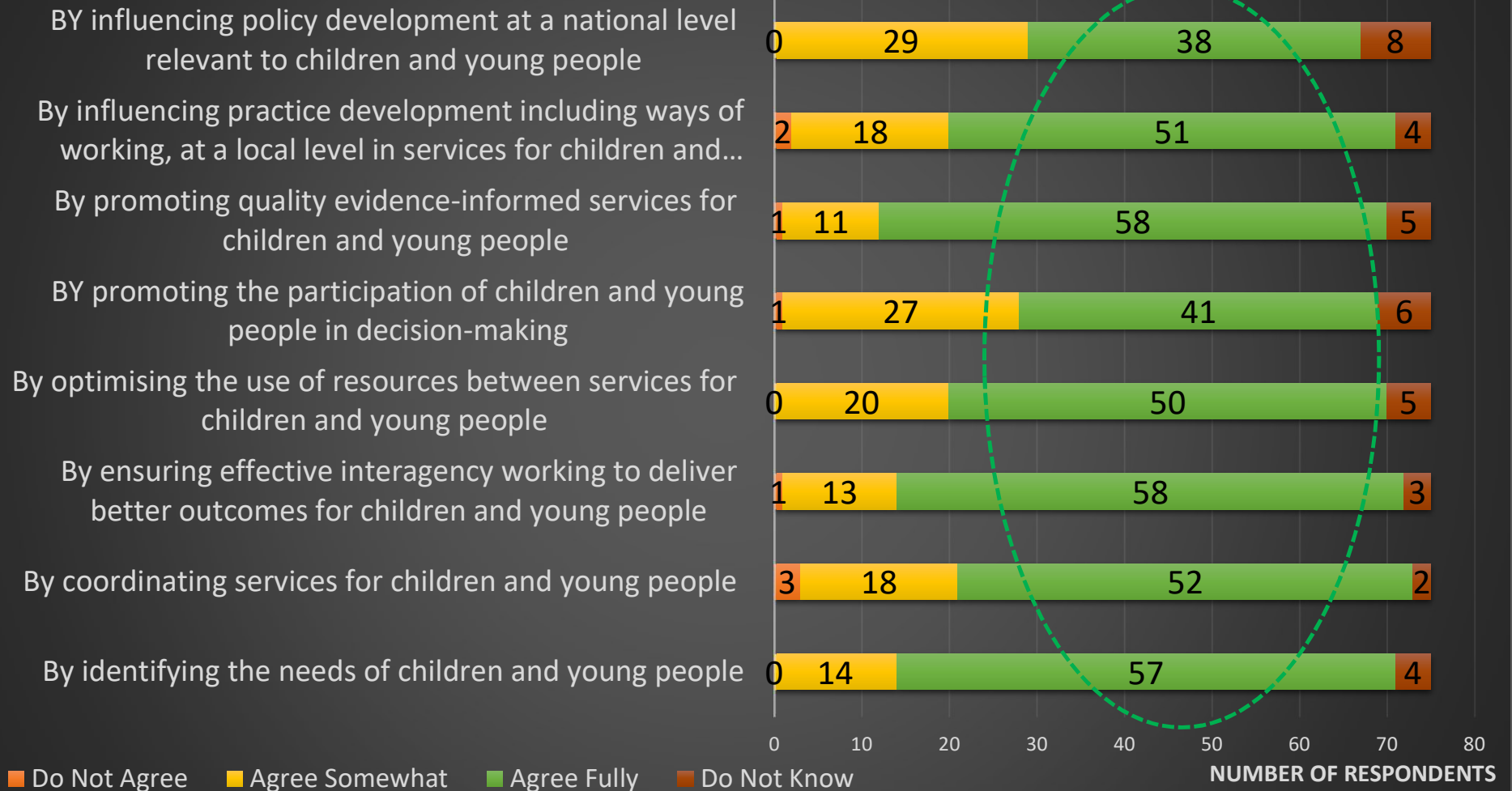


How CYPSC adds value?



How CYPSC adds value?

WAYS CYPSC ADDS VALUE





Thank you