

Public Opinion Survey on Equality in Northern Ireland 2021

Report prepared for the Equality Commission

January 2022

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Ipsos MORI



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1. **Executive summary**

Executive summary (1)

Equality: awareness, understanding, views on COVID-19 and experiences

Awareness and understanding

When asked what the term 'equality' means to participants, thinking specifically about Northern Ireland (NI), the most commonly cited response is that it means equal and fair treatment of all people (26%). Over one in ten (15%) hold a negative view of equality or feel that equality in NI is lacking.

Attitudes

Less than a third of participants agree that the term 'equality' is meaningless to them and not something they think about day to day (29%), this has stayed constant in the past year, where the figure stood at 29%.

Equality status and COVID-19

When asked what areas of life Covid-19

affected, participants identified social activities such as impacts on their social life and generally getting out (25%). The social impacts of Covid were followed by general impacts on work, such as lack of staff, support and being too busy (20%) and missing family members or affecting relationships (20%). Over one in ten (16%) reported feeling isolated, restricted and missing freedoms.

Personal experiences

The majority of all participants reported that they had not experienced a situation where they had not been treated with dignity or respect in their workplace, based upon their personal characteristics (85%).

It is more likely to be the case that participants have witnessed a situation in which others were not treated with dignity or respect in the workplace (23%).

Participants were also asked whether they have experienced a situation that they have not been treated with dignity or respect in the area that they live. One in ten (10%) confirmed that they had experienced this situation, and for just under one third of these (29%) the situation occurred in their street or the immediate area around their home. Twice as many (20%) witnessed such a situation, and this was also likely to happen in a street in their local area (29%) or at a shop (25%).

Executive summary (2)

Views on equality, access to technology, education, local area and public services

Views on equality

When considering how necessary equality and anti-discrimination laws are in Northern Ireland 81% agreed that they are necessary.

Slightly under six in ten (59%) agreed that workplaces in Northern Ireland are 'welcoming and inclusive', this is a significant increase on 2020-21 (54%).

Over half (52%) believed that workers are generally treated with dignity and respect, this is a slight decrease on 2020-21 (54%).

One third (33%) of participants were worried that laws to help protect from discrimination will not be as strong for others in Northern Ireland as a result of Brexit.

Access to broadband and technology

When asked whether the household had reliable access to broadband, the majority of

participants indicated that they had a reliable broadband connection (94%). The majority (93%) also indicated that they had reliable access to 'appropriate technology to undertake learning activities' (either a laptop or tablet).

Education

Over half (52%) agree that funding should be directed towards children whose education was worst affected during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than equally to all children. Slightly under one third (31%) disagreed with this statement.

Local area

Two thirds (66%) agree that they would consider participating in voluntary or community work, which marks a significant decrease on the previous year (73%).

The majority (88%) agreed that public spaces such as leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres are 'shared and open to all persons regardless of their personal characteristics'.

Public services

When planning public services, 56% of participants agree that the needs of different groups of people are taken into account, while 20% disagree. This is a significant rise on the previous year, at which time those in agreement with the same statement was 43%.

2.

Background to the research

Background

Research objectives

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a telephone survey measuring public opinion on equality in Northern Ireland (NI) among the general public in December 2022.

This is the fourth wave of the public opinion survey on equality. The survey was first undertaken in 2018/19 (December-January) and was undertaken again in November-December 2019. The third wave was undertaken in 2020/21 (December-January). Ipsos MORI has conducted all waves of this public opinion survey.

The purpose of the research is to:

- Understand the level of awareness of equality issues.
- Gather views on equality issues in Northern Ireland.
- Measure perceptions of Northern Ireland's performance on equality issues.
- Collect data that is comparable with the survey results from 2018, 2019 and 2021.

The findings from the research will be used to support ECNI's 2019-2022 corporate plan.

3.

Technical notes

Technical notes (1)

Guidance on the presentation of the data (1)

Corrective rim weighting has been applied to the data on the region, age, gender and social class quotas to ensure the findings are representative of the population in Northern Ireland. All bases within this report are weighted.

Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses. Where full scales differ from net figures (for example, strongly agree + tend to agree versus net agree), this is due to computer rounding.

Multiple response questions are indicated on the relevant charts by an asterisk (*).

The report contains topline findings and demographic breakdowns where statistically significant differences are found. Statistical significance testing was done using a Z-score, which is designed to test the difference between two proportions or test a single proportion against the total. The data has been tested to a 95% confidence level. Statistical significance is indicated in the report as follows:

When referring to the full report statistical differences between a variable and the average are denoted with a **solid green circle** or a **solid red circle**, indicating that a variable is significantly higher or lower than the overall result. For example, the chart on

page 22 shows that those aged 16-29 are significantly less likely to agree with the statement, “The term equality is meaningless to me in everyday life; it is not something I think about” (21%) than on average (29%).

Statistical differences between variables within a sub-group (such as age) are denoted with a **dashed green circle** or **dashed red circle**, indicating that one variable is significantly higher or lower than another variable within the same sub-group. Using the same example on page 22, those aged 30-44 are significantly more likely to agree with the statement than those aged 16-29.

Technical notes (2)

Guidance on the presentation of the data (2)

In some cases, a result may be both significantly higher or lower than the average and significantly higher or lower than other variables in the same sub-group.

As this is the fourth wave of the research, comparative data is shown where applicable.

Any significant differences between results in 2021 are highlighted, with **red** and **green** triangles indicating where a result is significantly higher or lower than a previous year. Please note that statistical tests were not applied to Q1 or Q3 as these are open-ended questions.

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE INDICATORS KEY



Result is significantly different to the average



Result is significantly different between sub-groups
(i.e. on the basis of age or gender)



Result is significantly different to a previous year

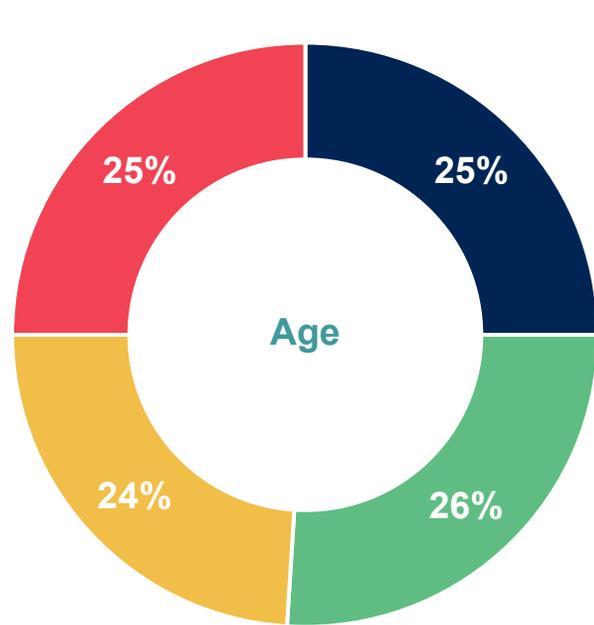
(Green = significantly higher; red = significantly lower)

4.

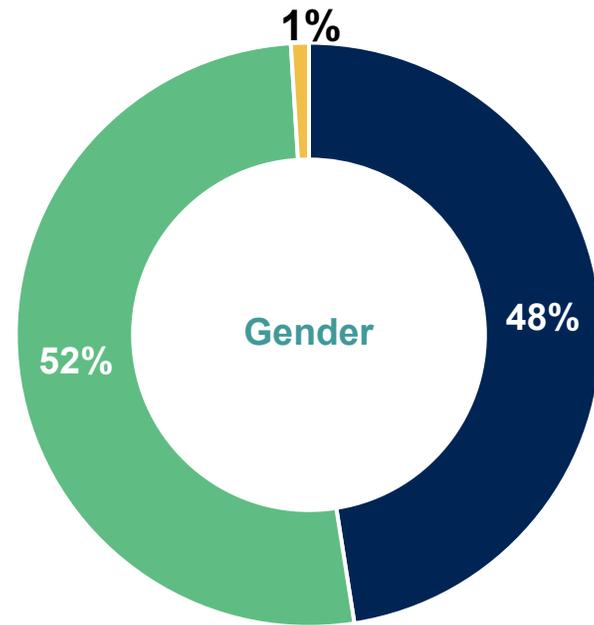
Demographics overview

Demographics (1)

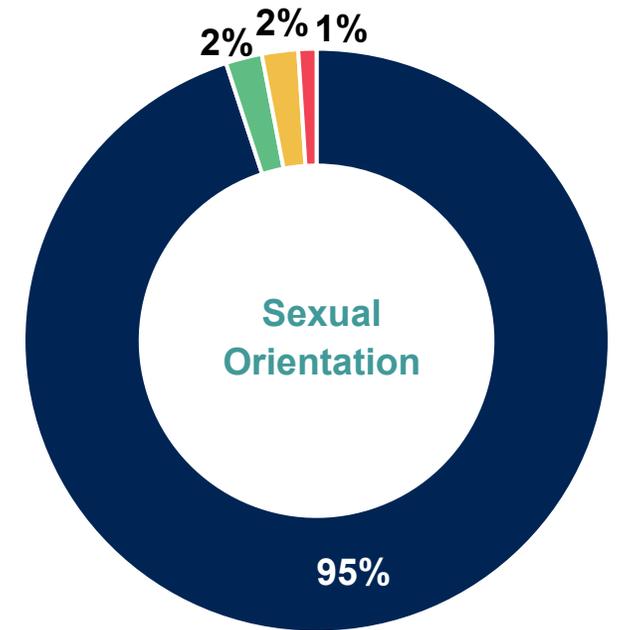
Age, gender and sexual orientation



■ 16-29 ■ 30-44 ■ 45-59 ■ 60+



■ Male ■ Female ■ In another way

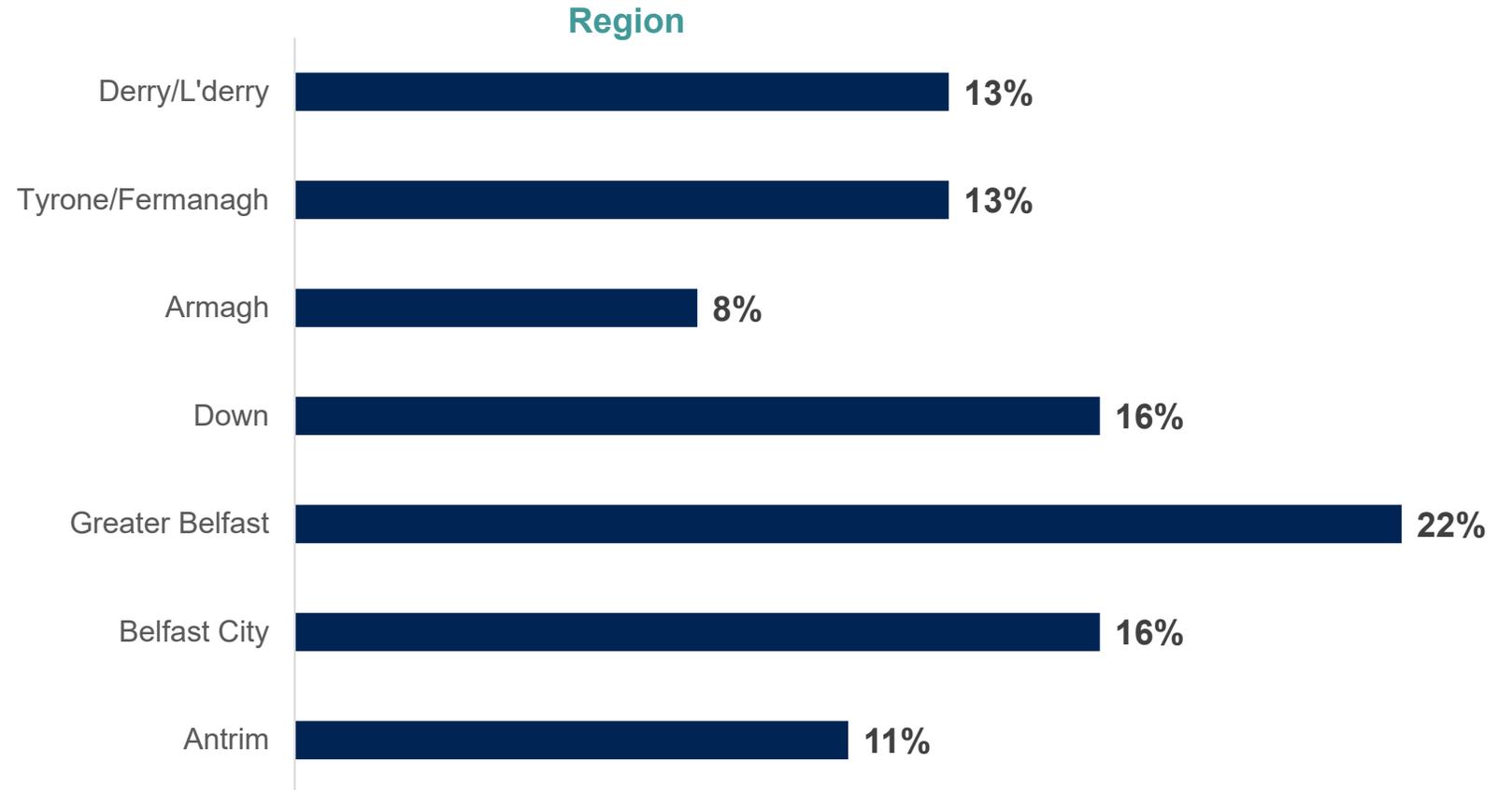
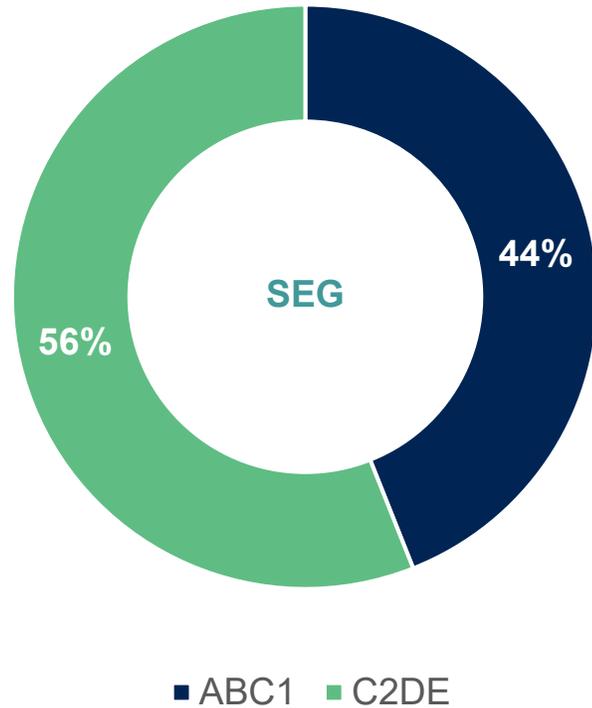


■ Heterosexual/straight
■ Gay or lesbian
■ Bisexual
■ Other

Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland

Demographics (2)

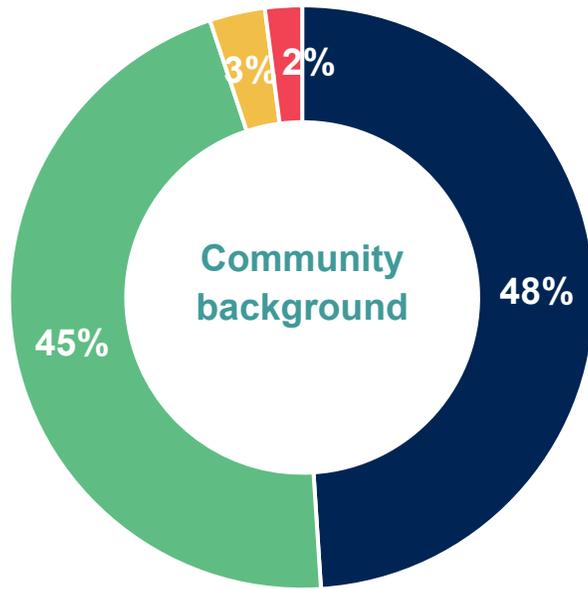
Socio-Economic Group (SEG) and region



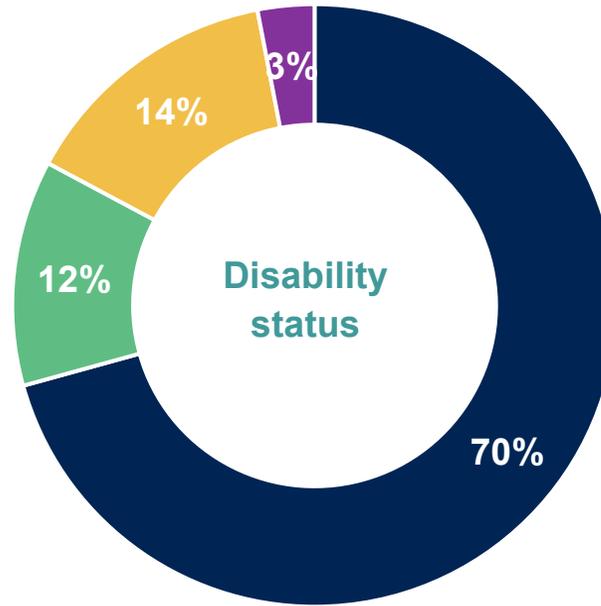
Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland

Demographics (3)

Community background, disability status and political views

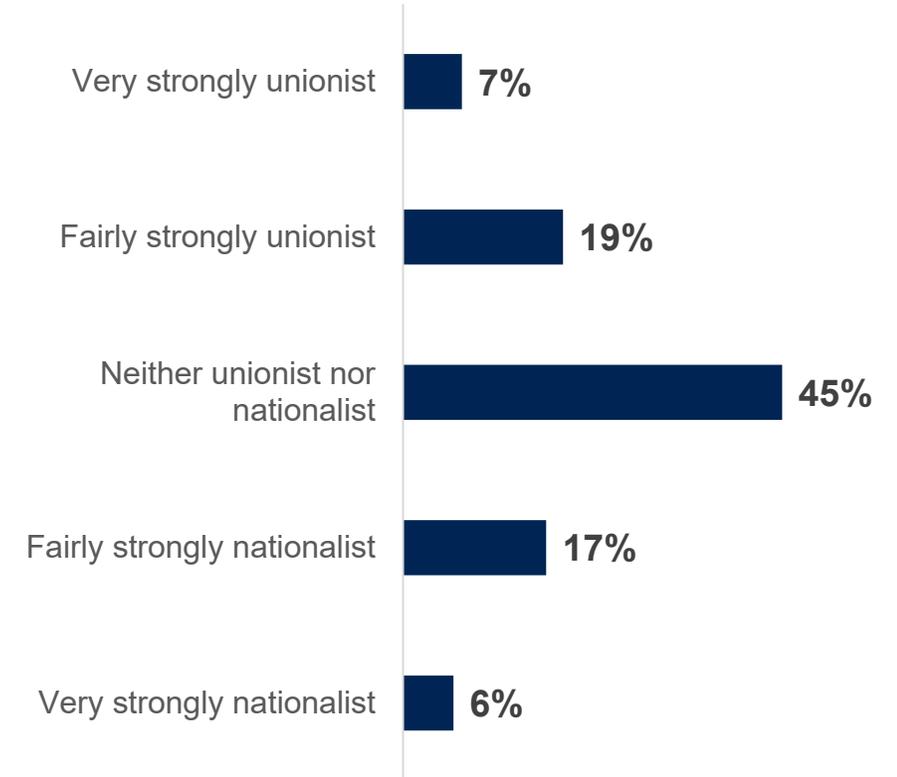


■ Protestant ■ Catholic ■ Other ■ None



■ No disability
 ■ *Long-standing disability or infirmity
 ■ *Long-standing illness
 ■ Long-standing illness AND disability or infirmity

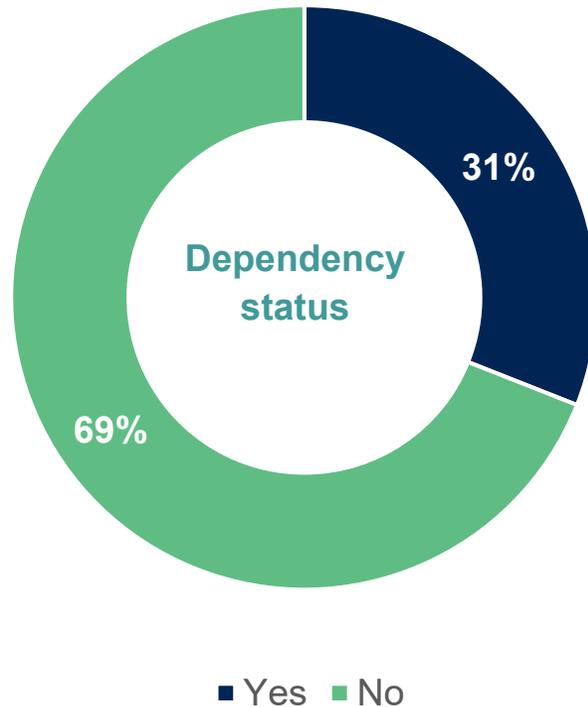
Political views



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland | *multiple response question | Community background results also included Refused 2% and Don't know 0% | Political view results also included Don't Know 3%, Other 2%, and Refused 2%

Demographics (4)

Dependency status



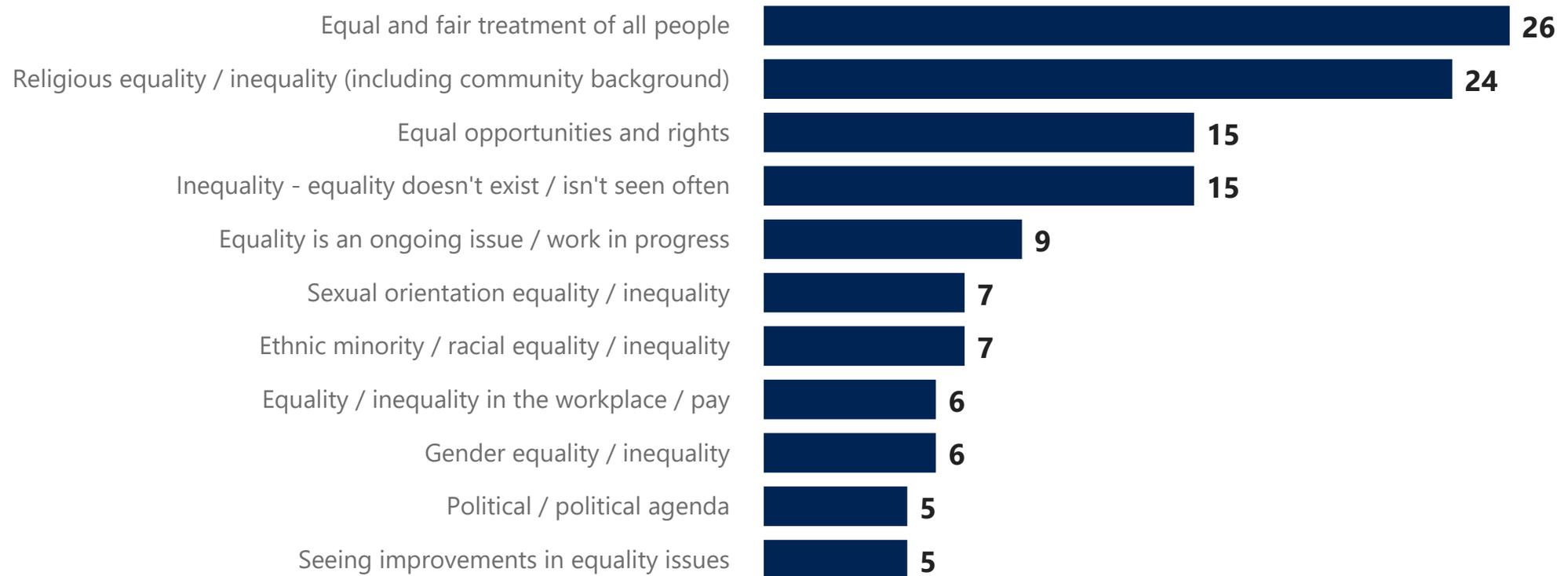
In 2021, an additional question was asked to determine the participant's dependency status. In this case, they were asked if they were personally responsible for any children of school age. This includes any children from primary one until year 14.

5.

Research findings

Awareness and understanding (1)

Q1. Thinking specifically about Northern Ireland, what do you think of when you hear the term 'equality'? (top responses %)



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland | *multiple response question

Awareness and understanding (2)

In 2021, the code frame used to code each open-ended response given in the survey has been updated to reflect the changing views of the Northern Ireland public. As such, comparisons to previous years have been drawn where appropriate. Data with no comparable codes from previous years have been omitted and are marked with a dash (-).

Q1. Thinking specifically about Northern Ireland, what do you think of when you hear the term 'equality'? (all responses)

Response	% 2021	% 2020-21	% 2019	% 2018-19
Equal and fair treatment of all people	26	22	29	24
Religious equality / inequality (including community background)	24	17	13	18
Equal opportunities and rights	15	11	11	9
Inequality – equality doesn't exist / isn't seen often	15	16	1	12
Equality is an ongoing issue and a work in progress	9	4	2	4
Sexual orientation equality / inequality	7	8	8	6
Ethnic minority and racial equality / inequality	7	6	4	2
Equality / inequality in the workplace / pay	6	6	3	2

Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (per year) | *multiple response question

Awareness and understanding (3)

Q1. Thinking specifically about Northern Ireland, what do you think of when you hear the term 'equality'? (all responses continued)

Response	% 2021	% 2020	% 2019	% 2018-1P9
Gender equality / inequality	6	8	6	6
Political / political agenda	5	4	5	2
Seeing improvement in equality issues	5	9	3	4
Not something I think about or talk about/not of interest to me	5	4	1	4
A contentious/sensitive issue with negative connotations	4	2	3	2
Don't know	4	4	6	6
Living together / Mixing with others / mixed community / accepting all people / Inclusion	3	-	-	-
It's good / no issue / positive connotations	3	-	-	-
Sharing everything / sharing the country / sharing of resources	2	3	1	2
Nothing / not a lot	2	2	6	6

Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (per year) | *multiple response question

Awareness and understanding (4)

Q1. Thinking specifically about Northern Ireland, what do you think of when you hear the term 'equality'? (all responses continued)

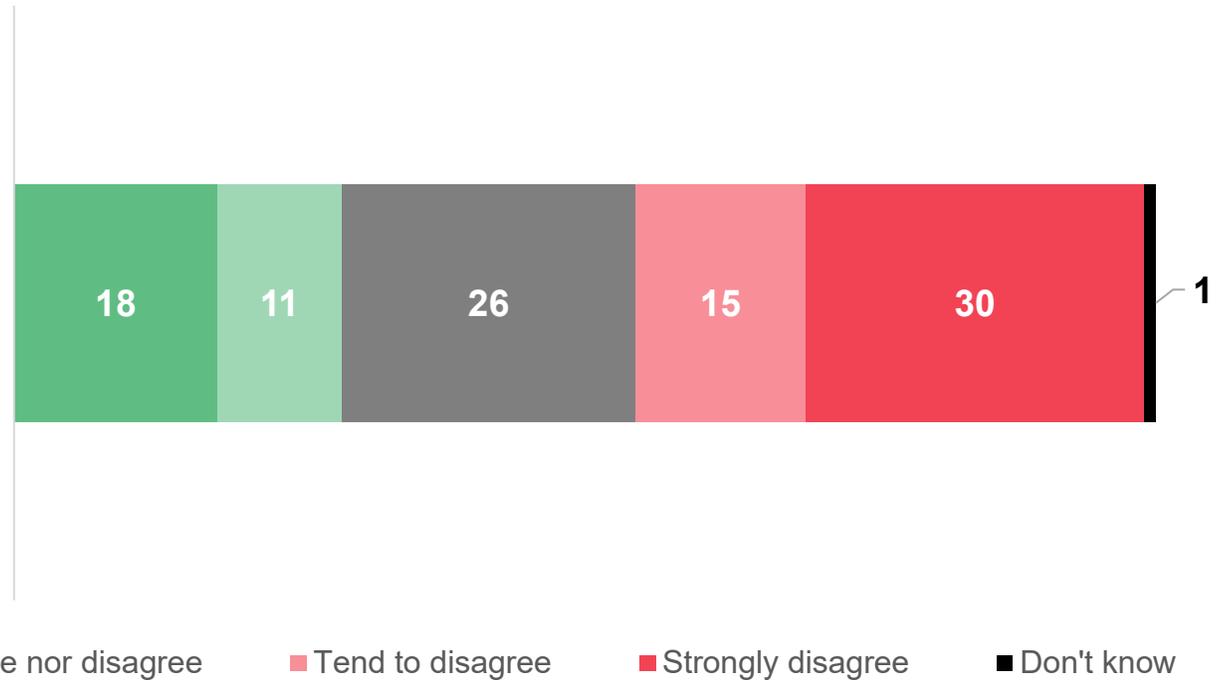
Response	% 2021	% 2020	% 2019	% 2018-1P9
Historical issues / addressing issues from the past	2	5	2	2
Disability equality / inequality	2	2	1	1
Respect all individuals	1	0	0	0
Equality laws / Equality Commission	1	1	1	1

Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (per year) | *multiple response question

Attitudes (1)

Q2. Thinking of yourself, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **Overall**

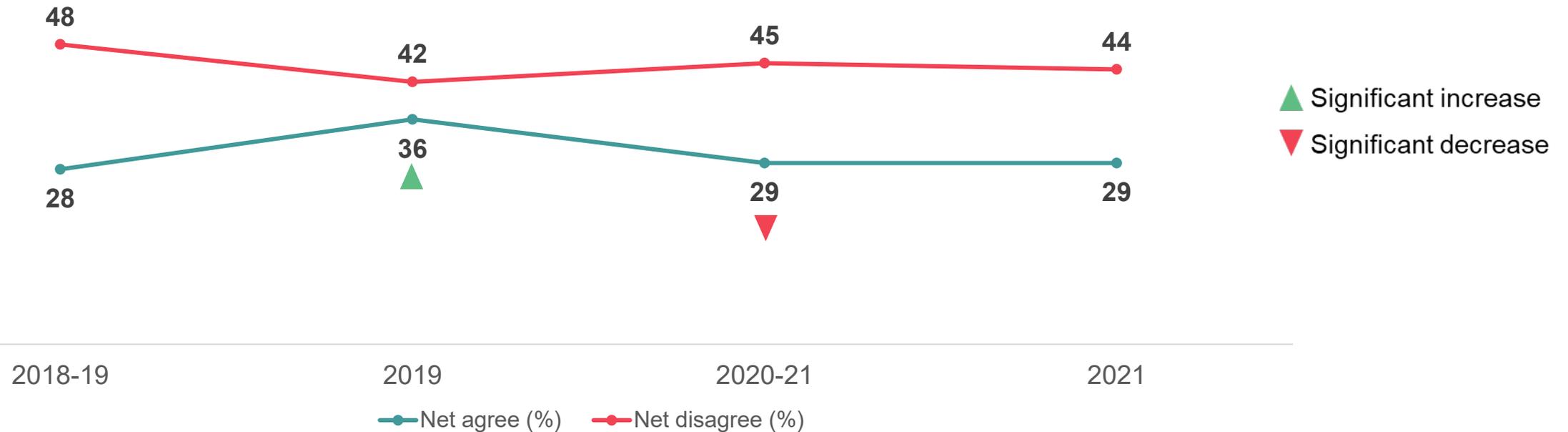
The term “equality” is meaningless to me in everyday life; it is not something I think about (%)



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland

Attitudes (2)

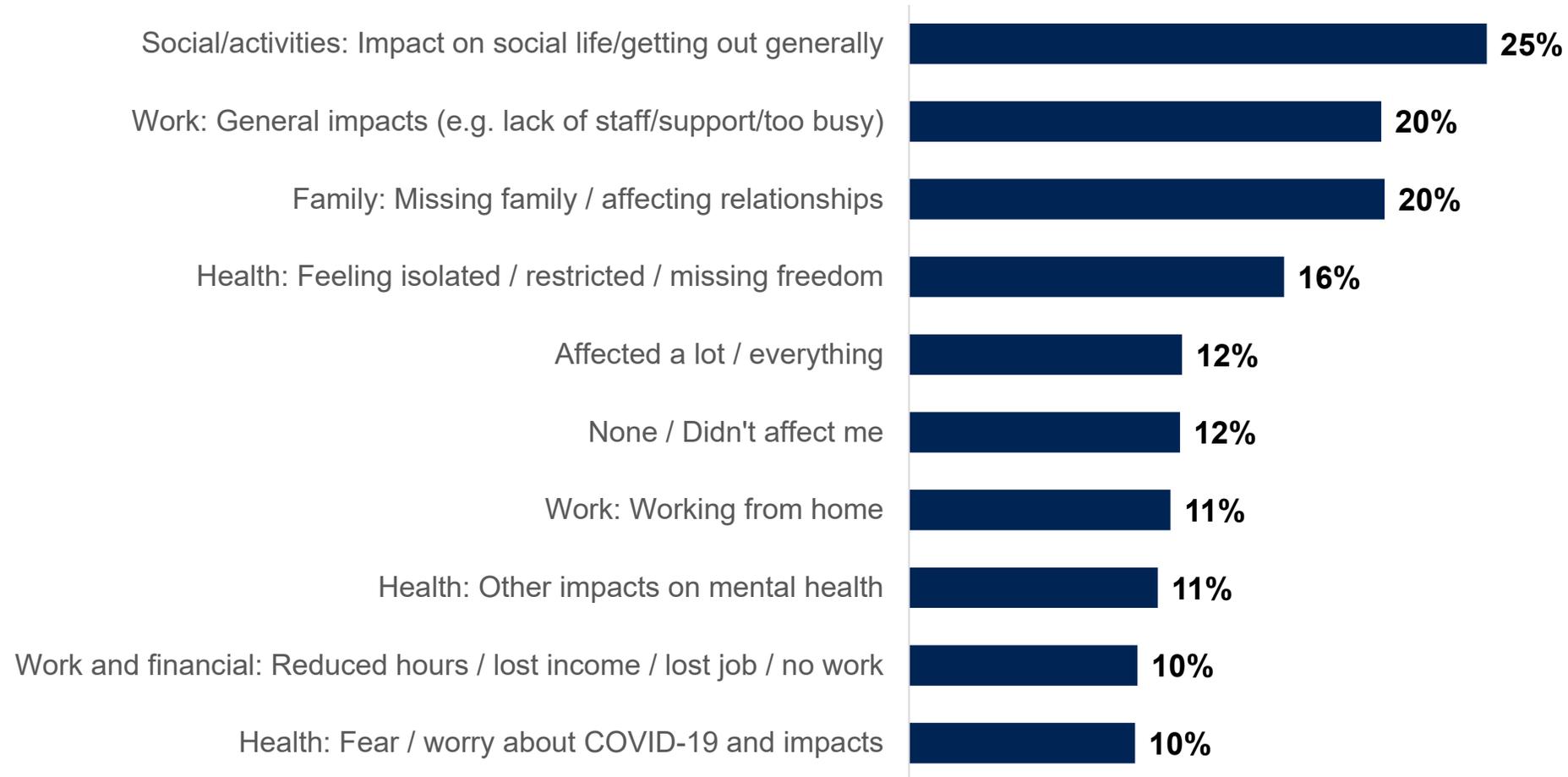
Q2. Thinking of yourself, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “The term equality is meaningless to me in everyday life; it is not something I think about” (trend)



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Significant differences shown represent year on year changes

Impact of COVID-19 on areas of life (1)

Q.3 In what areas of your life did the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic affect you? (top 10 responses %)



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland | *Multiple response question

Impact of COVID-19 on areas of life (2a)

Q.3 In what areas of your life did the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic affect you? (all other responses)

Response	% 2021
Family: Negative impact on health and wellbeing of family members/friends / concern for family	8
Children: children missing school / impacts of home-schooling	7
Health: Contracted COVID-19	7
Travel: No travel / holidays	6
Work: Furlough / partner furloughed	4
Children: general impacts (e.g. social / learning / mental health)	3
Health: Other impacts on physical health	3
Study / education: Impact on university / college / school teaching	3

Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (per year) | *multiple response question

Impact of COVID-19 on areas of life (2b)

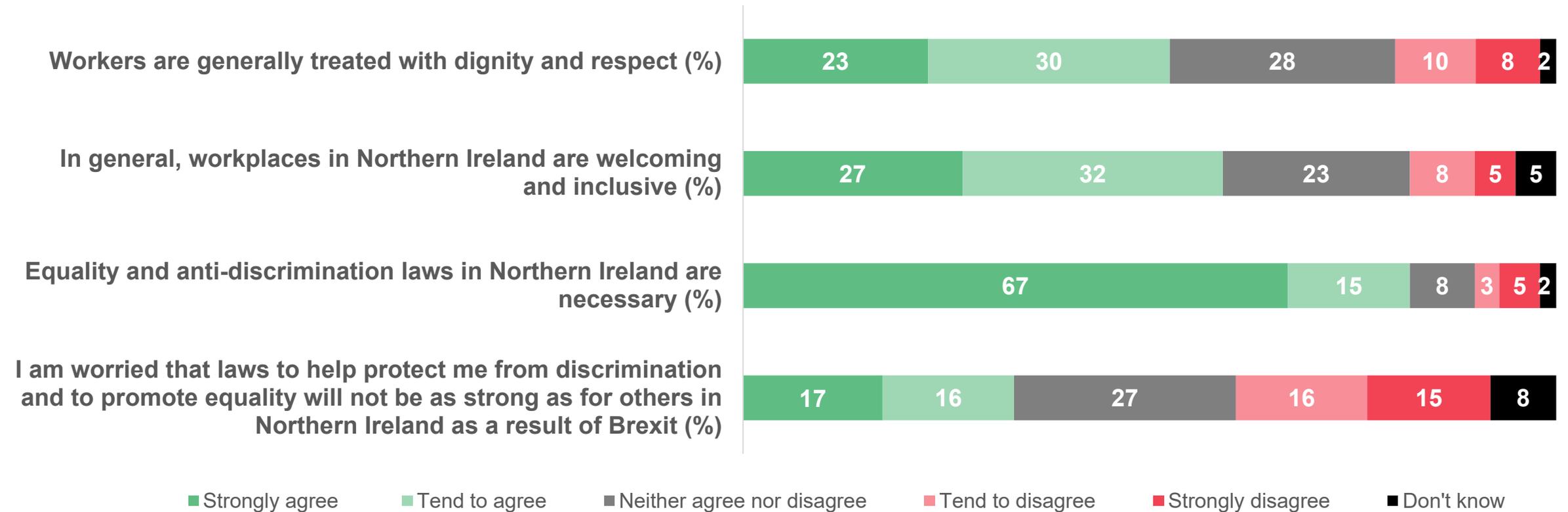
Q.3 In what areas of your life did the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic affect you? (all other responses)

Response	% 2021
Health: Missing appointments / lack of access to healthcare / pressure on health service	3
Family: Missing life events / family events	2
General negative	2
General positive	2
Social/activities: Impact on shopping / business closures	1
Other: People not following rules / guidelines	1
Social/activities: Impact on church services	1

Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (per year) | *multiple response question

Views on equality in Northern Ireland (1)

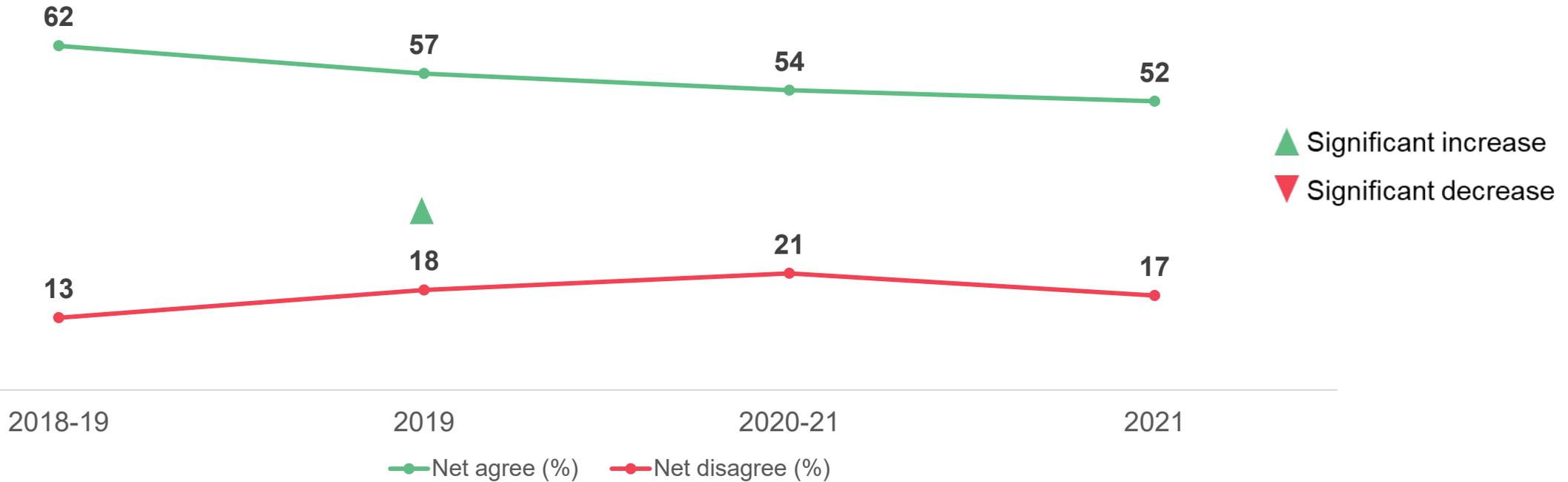
Q5. Thinking about Northern Ireland today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Overall



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland

Views on equality in Northern Ireland (2)

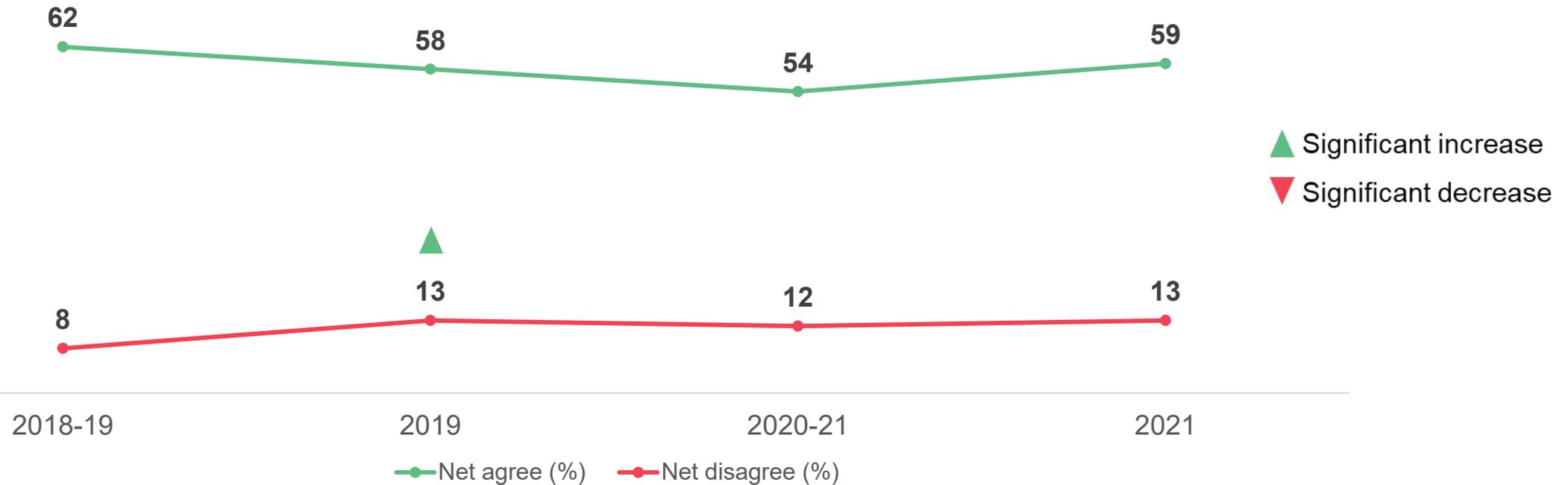
Q5. Thinking about Northern Ireland today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **“Workers are generally treated with dignity and respect”** (trend)



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Significant differences shown represent year on year changes

Views on equality in Northern Ireland (3)

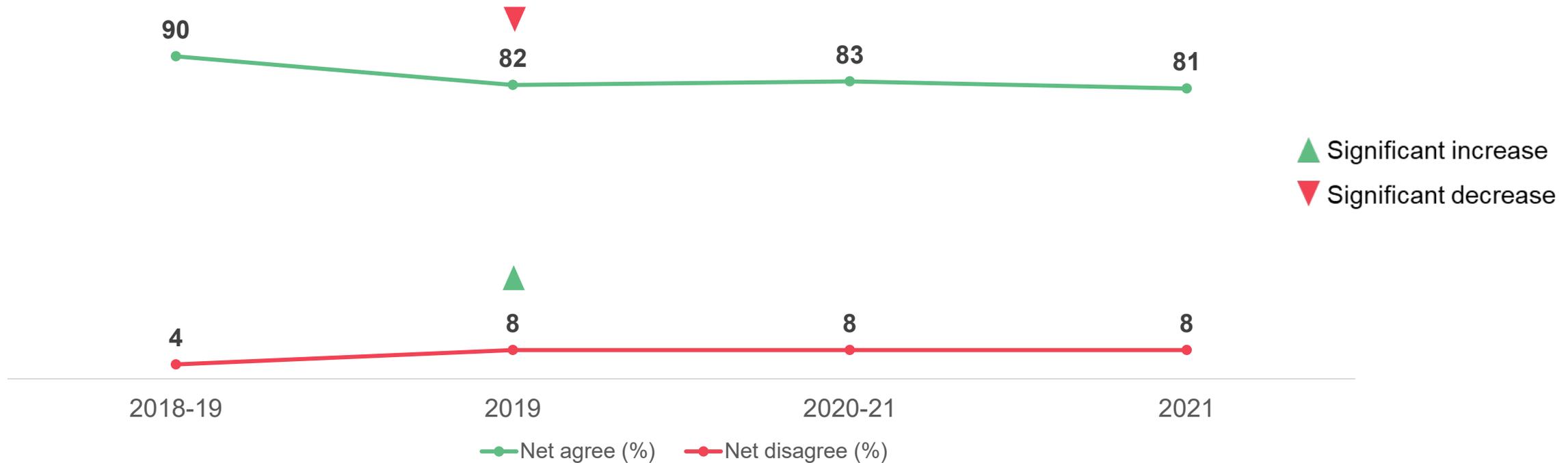
Q5. Thinking about Northern Ireland today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? “In general, workplaces in Northern Ireland are welcoming and inclusive” (trend)



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Significant differences shown represent year on year changes

Views on equality in Northern Ireland (4)

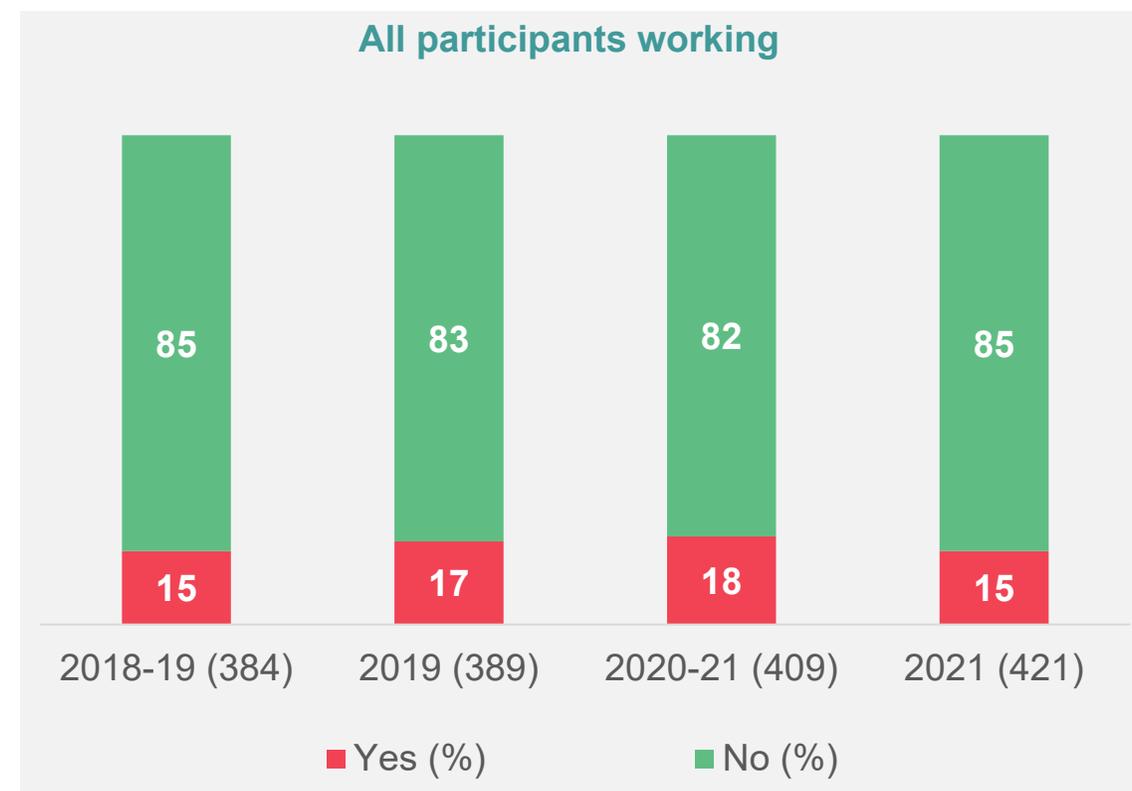
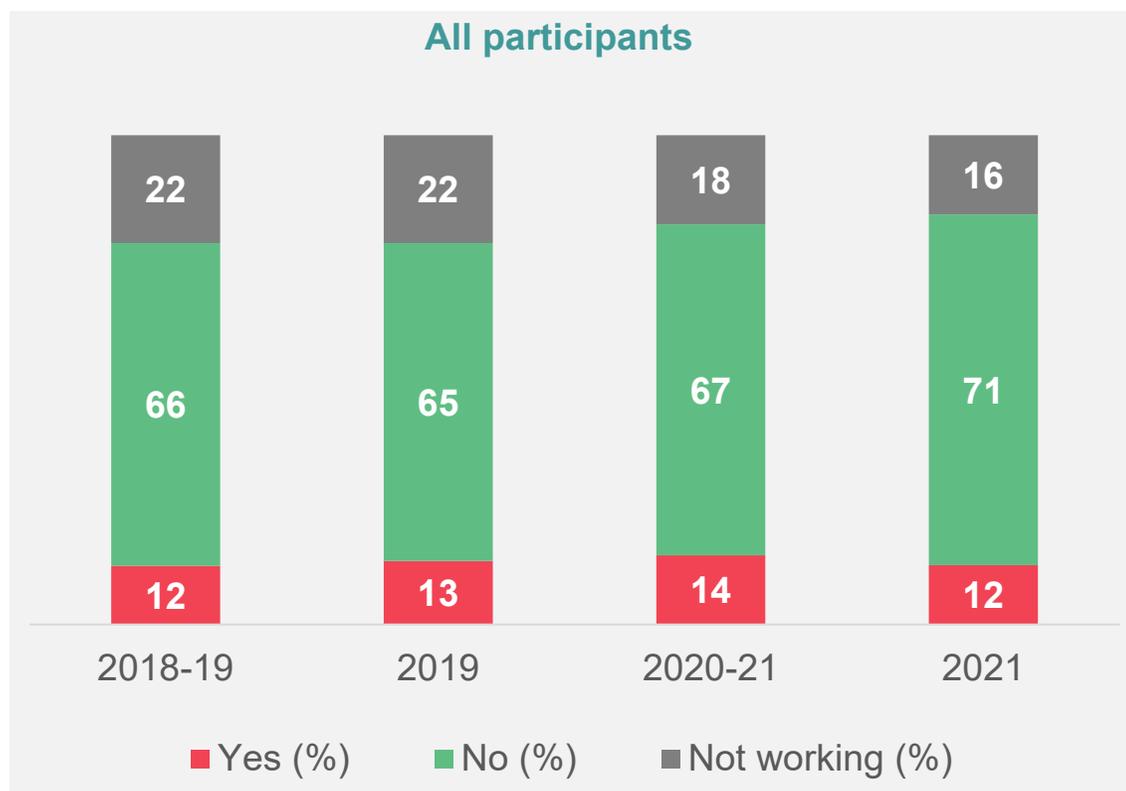
Q5. Thinking about Northern Ireland today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? “Equality and anti-discrimination laws in Northern Ireland are necessary” (trend)



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Significant differences shown represent year on year changes

Personal experiences of unwanted behaviour (1)

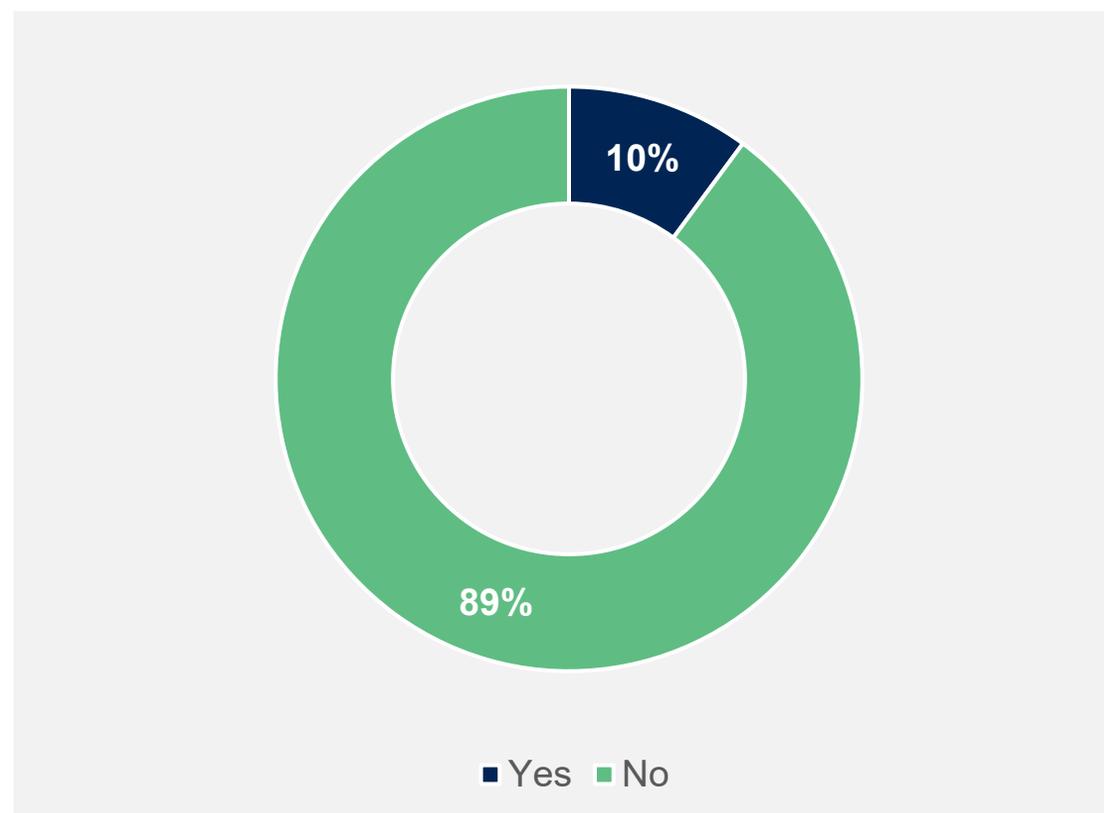
Q6. During the past 12 months, have you personally experienced a situation where you were not treated with dignity and respect, based upon your personal characteristics **AT WORK?** Overall, and all those working



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year (left chart) | NI adults who have been employed within the last 12 months (bases per year in chart)

Personal experiences of unwanted behaviour (2)

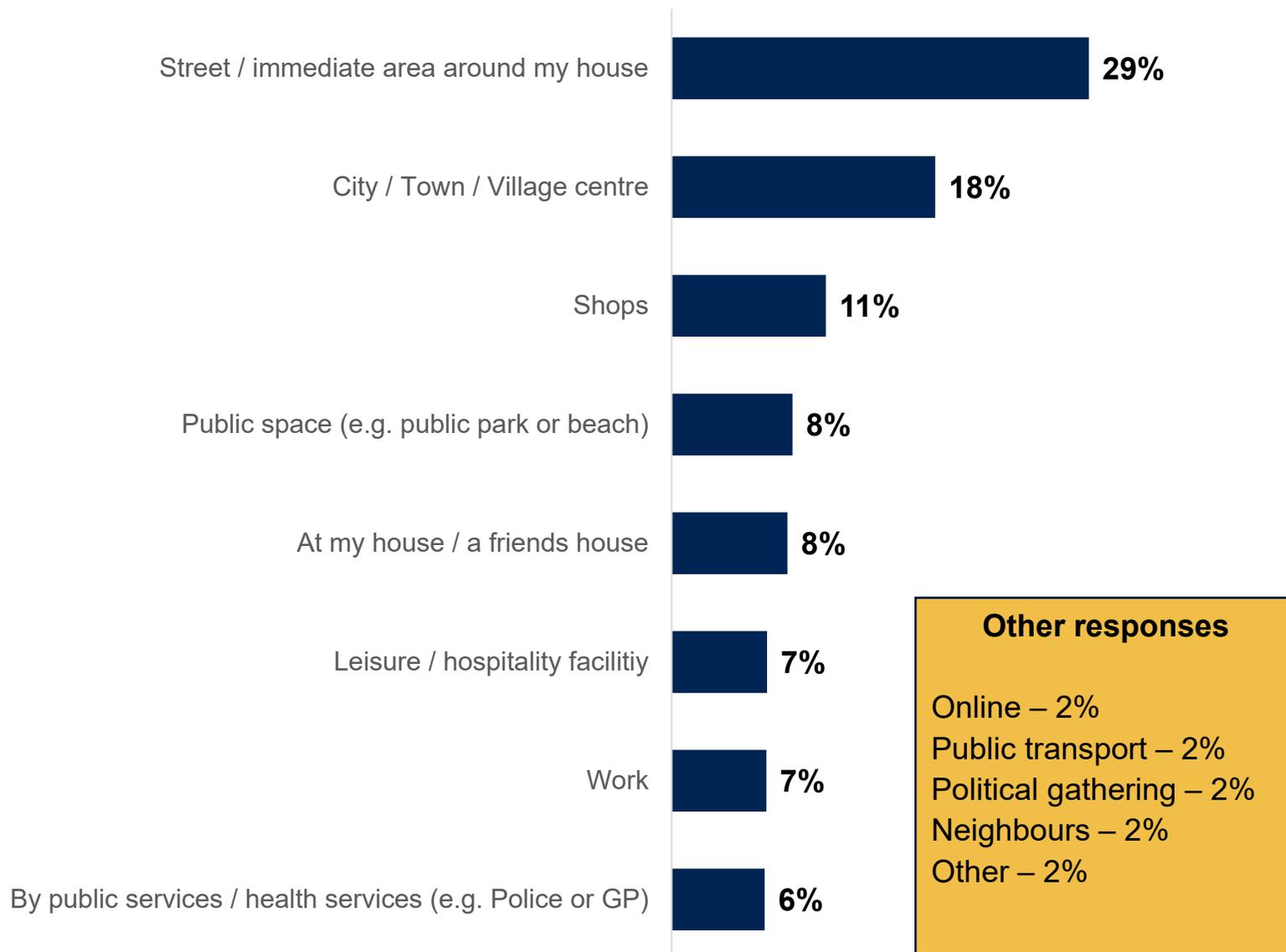
Q6. During the past 12 months, have you personally experienced a situation where you were not treated with dignity and respect, based upon your personal characteristics IN THE AREA YOU LIVE?



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year

Personal experiences of unwanted behaviour (3)

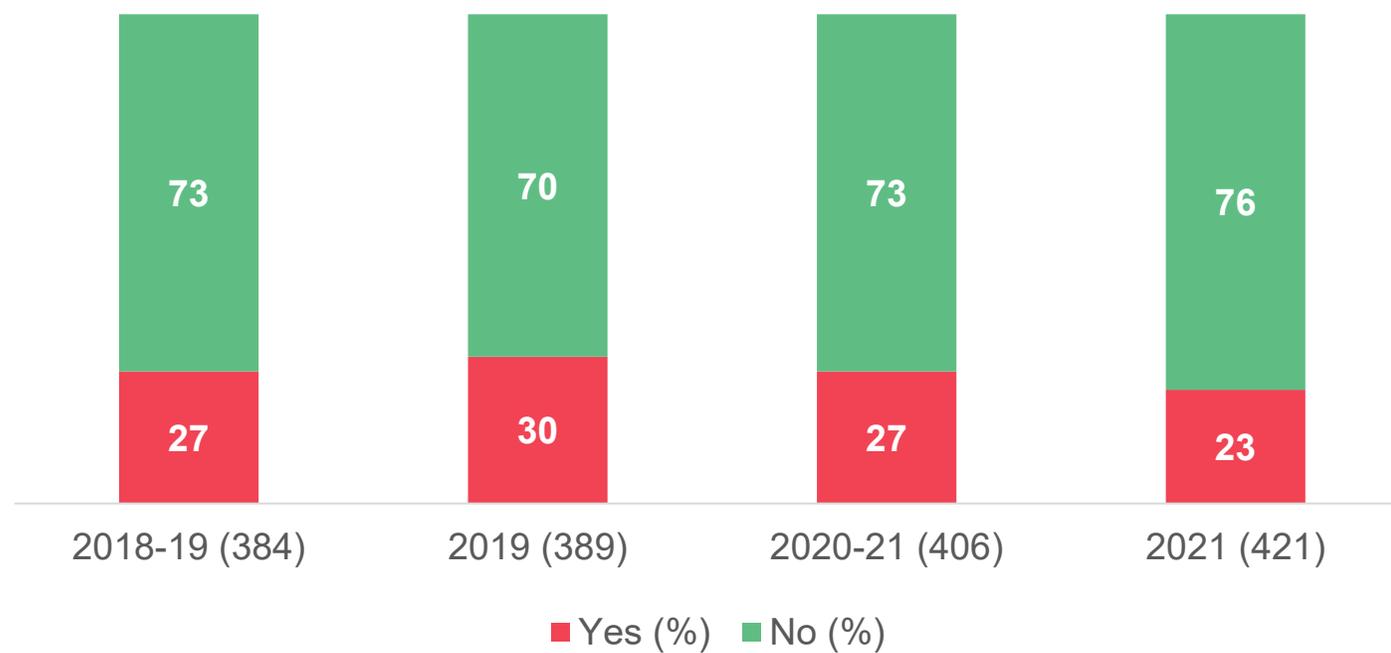
Q6b. You mentioned that you have personally experienced a situation where you were not treated with dignity and respect in the area that you live. Where in the area that you live did this happen? (top responses %)



Base: 51 adults living in Northern Ireland. Caution: low base

Personal experiences of unwanted behaviour (4)

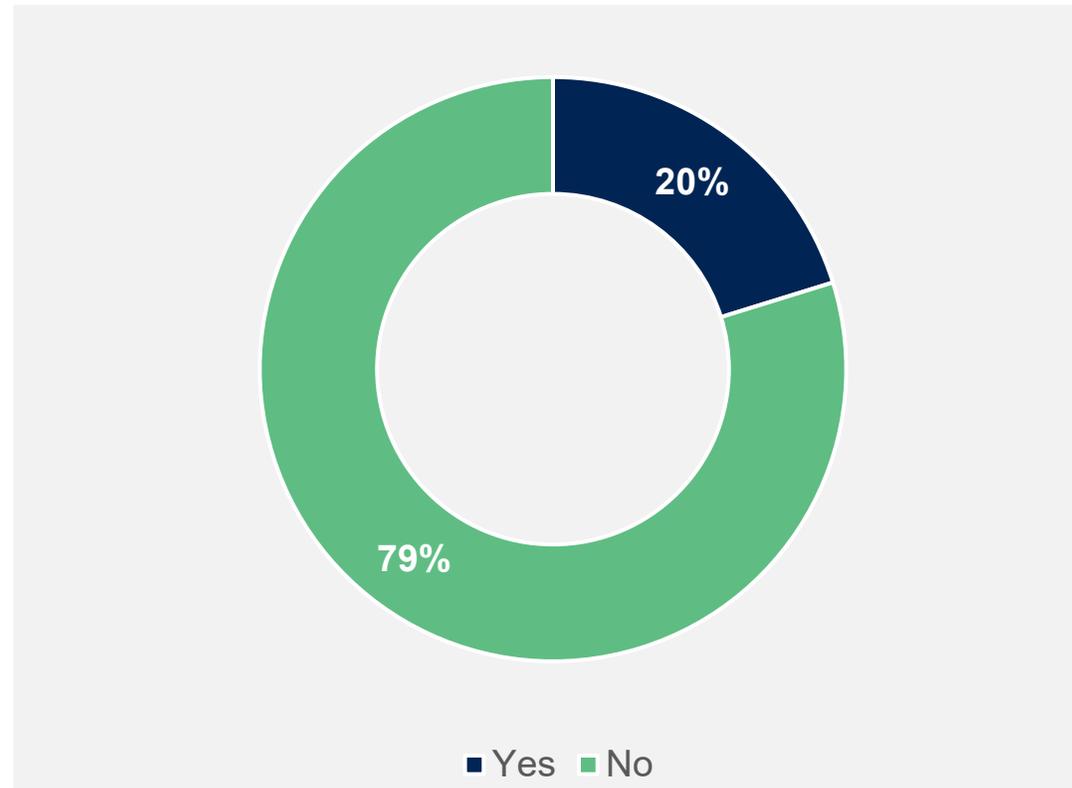
Q7. And likewise, during the past 12 months, have you witnessed a situation where others were not treated with dignity and respect based on their personal characteristics **AT WORK**? Overall (all those working)



Employed adults living in Northern Ireland (bases in chart)

Personal experiences of unwanted behaviour (5)

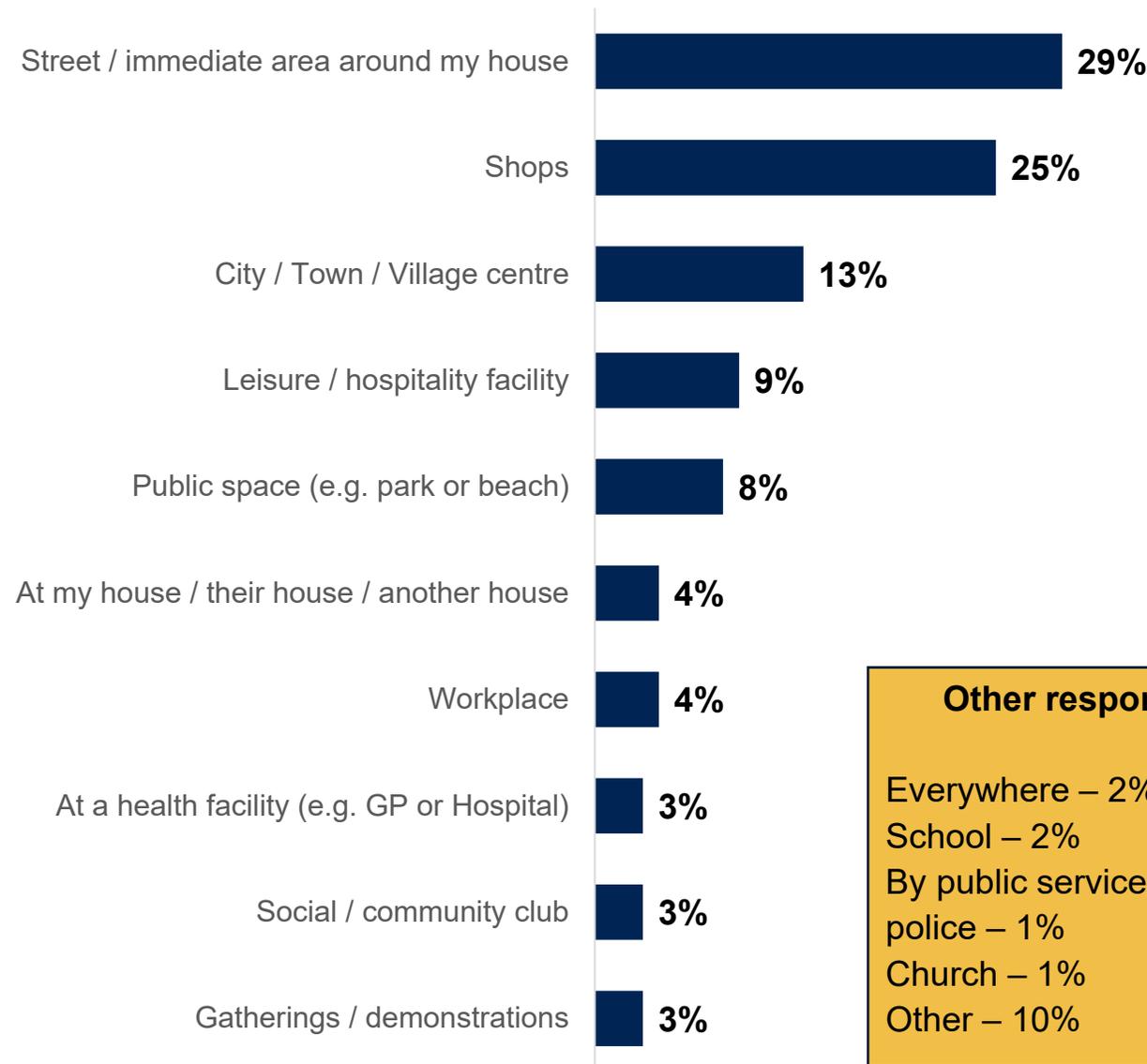
Q7. And likewise, during the past 12 months, have you witnessed a situation where others were not treated with dignity and respect based on their personal characteristics IN THE AREA YOU LIVE?



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Responses also included Don't know 1%.

Personal experiences of unwanted behaviour (6)

Q7b. You mentioned that you have witnessed a situation where others were not treated with dignity and respect in the area that you live. Where in the area that you live did this happen? (top responses %)



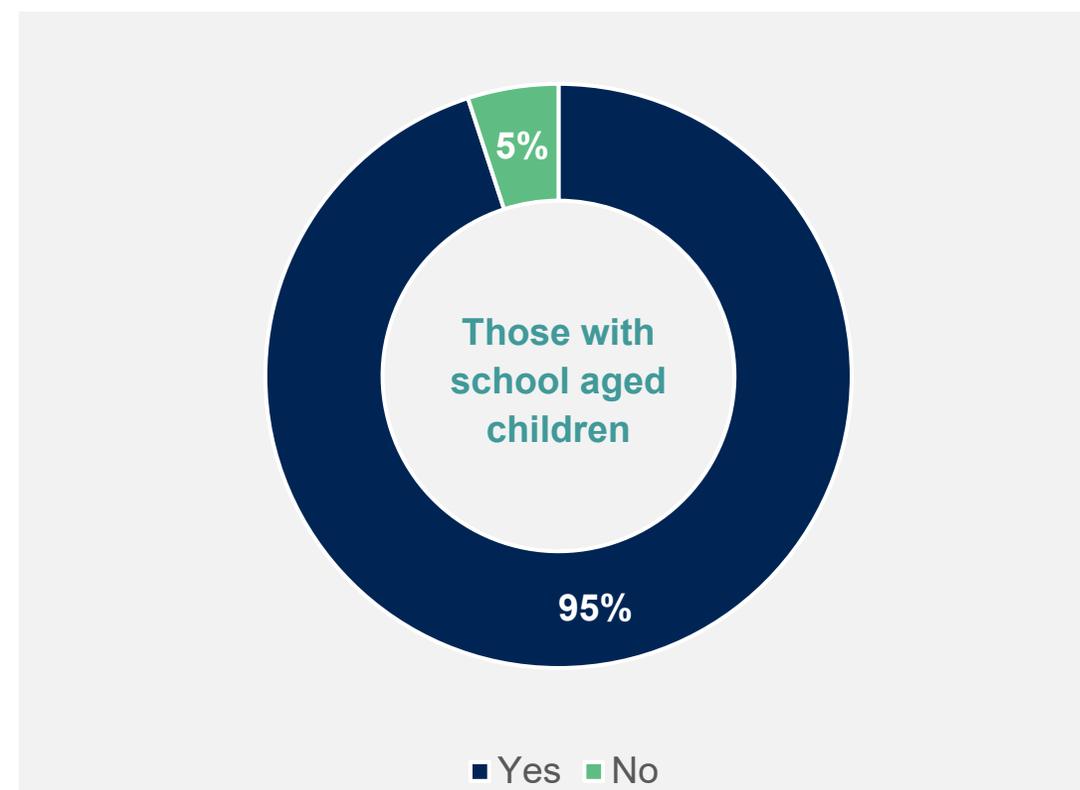
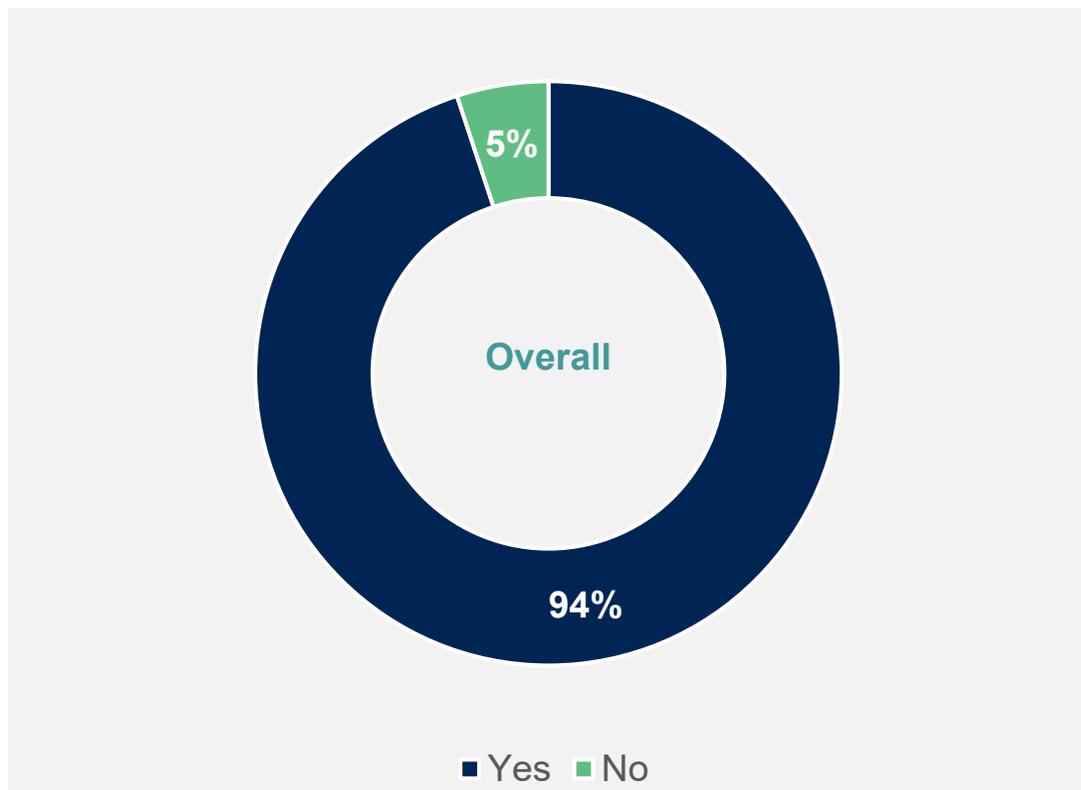
Other responses

- Everywhere – 2%
- School – 2%
- By public services (e.g. police – 1%
- Church – 1%
- Other – 10%

Base: 98 adults living in Northern Ireland. Caution: low base

Broadband access (1)

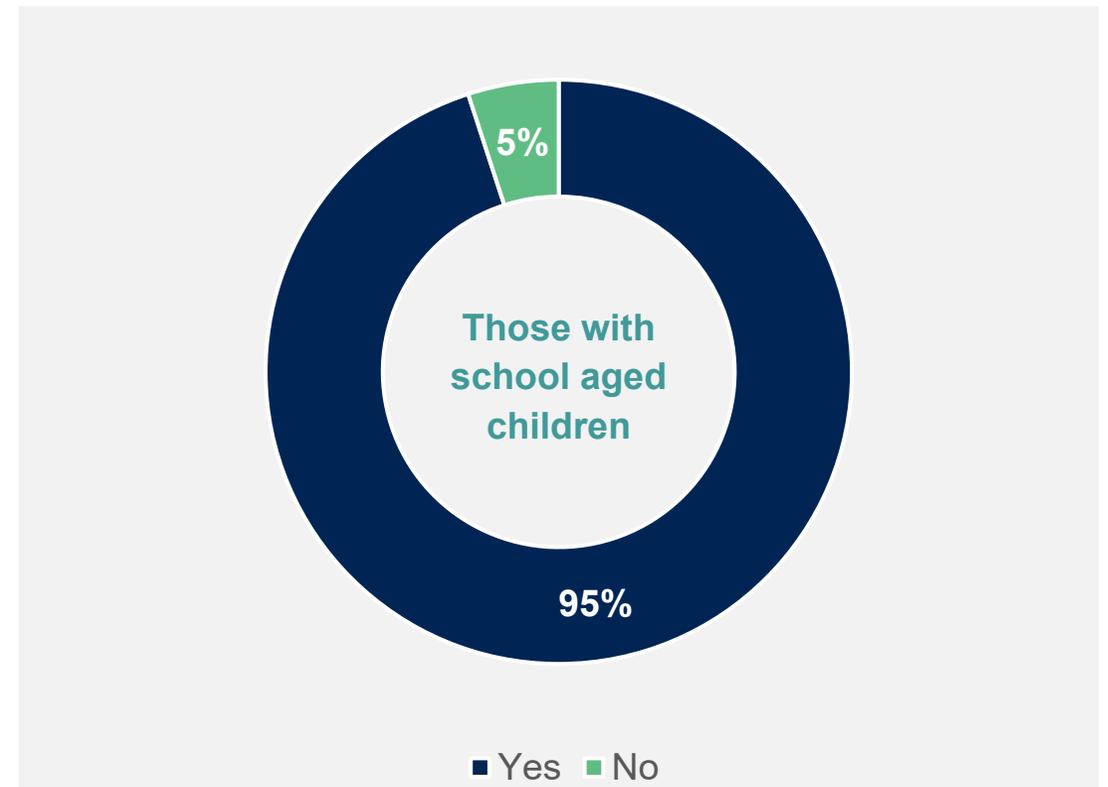
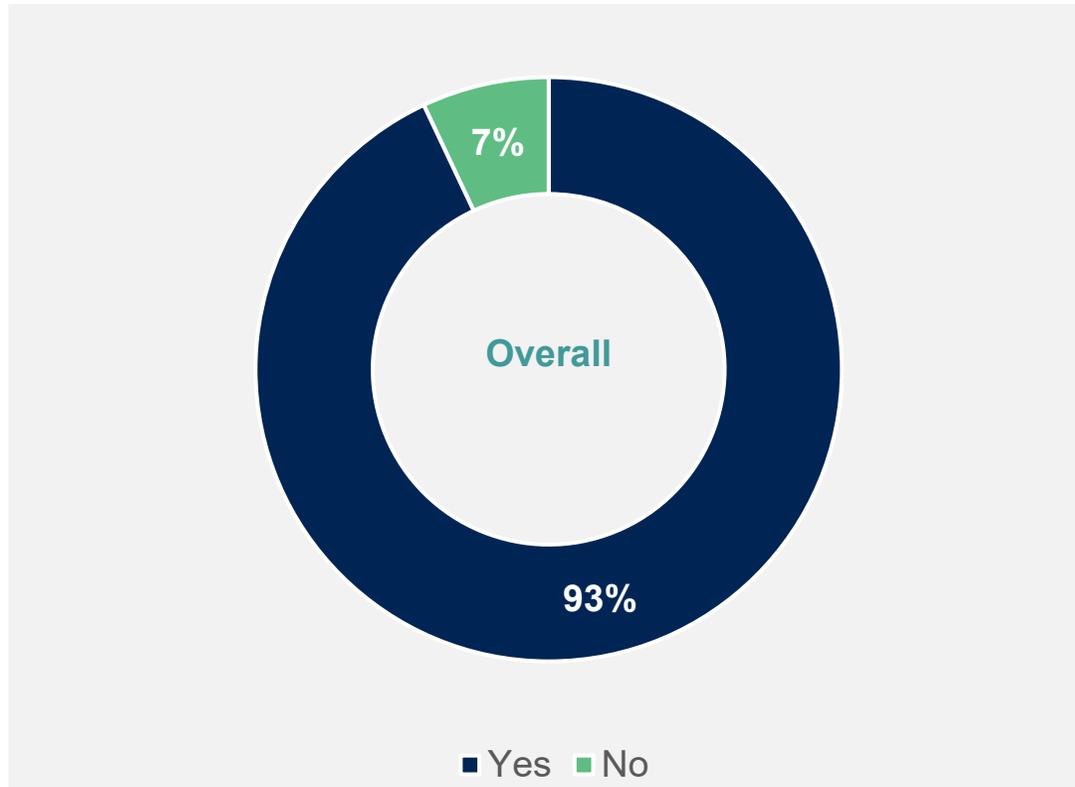
Q9a. Do you, and your household, have reliable access to broadband. (A wired connection to your house)? Overall, and by dependency status



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (chart on left) | Base: 157 who are personally responsible for school aged children (chart on right)

Access to technology (1)

Q9b. Do you, and your household, have reliable access to the appropriate technology (laptop or tablet) to undertake learning activities (for you now, and if you have them, your children)? Overall, and by dependency status

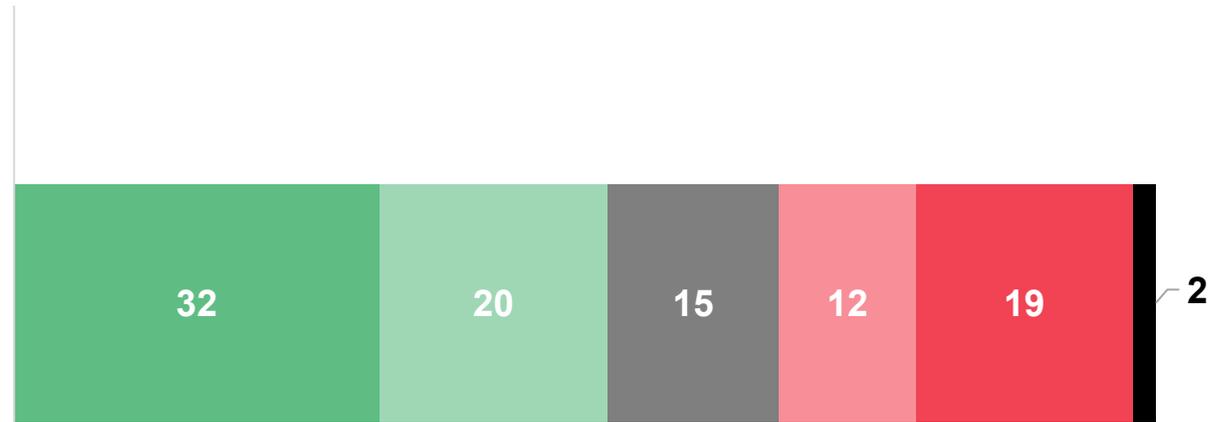


Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland (chart on left) | Base: 153 who are personally responsible for school aged children (chart on right)

Aspects of life in Northern Ireland (1)

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about education in Northern Ireland?

Funding should be targeted towards children whose education was worst affected during school closures due to COVID-19, rather than equally to all children



■ Strongly agree

■ Tend to agree

■ Neither agree nor disagree

■ Tend to disagree

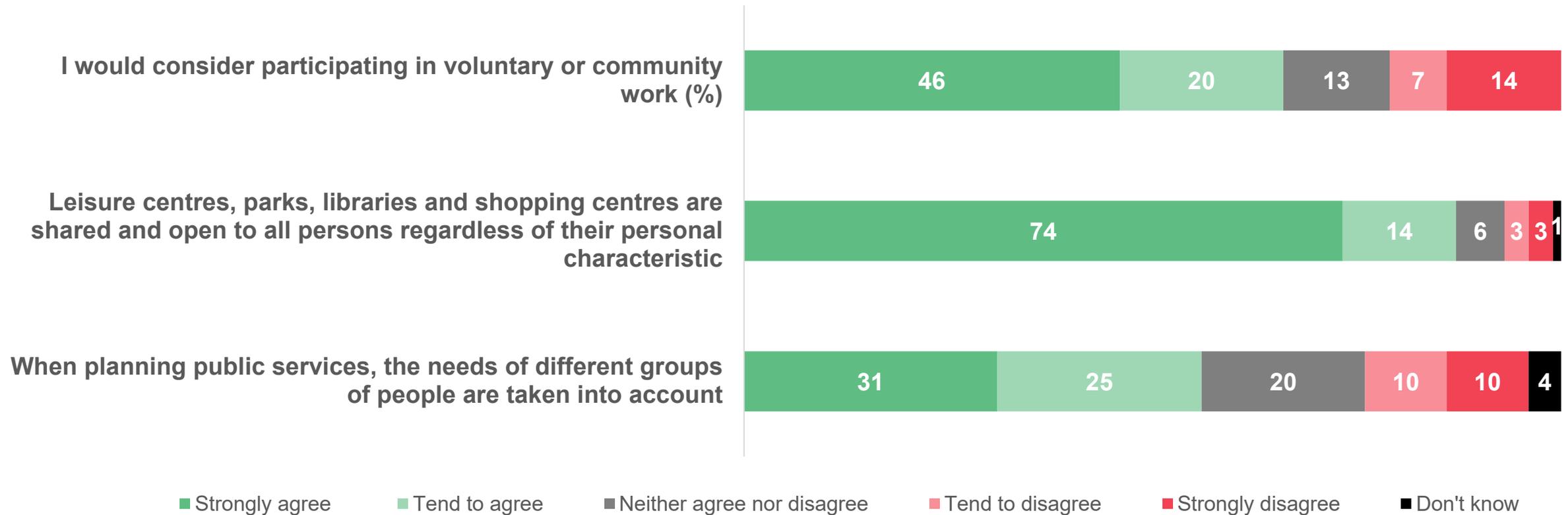
■ Strongly disagree

■ Don't know

Base: 500 NI adults per survey year

Aspects of life in Northern Ireland (2)

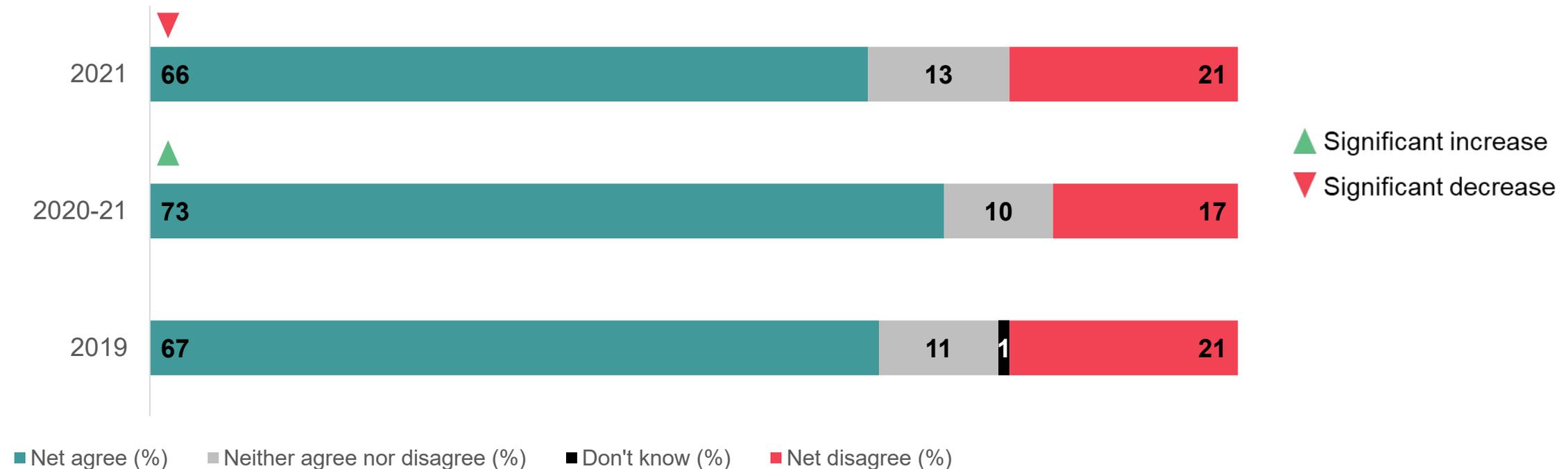
Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local area in Northern Ireland? Overall



Base: 500 adults living in Northern Ireland

Aspects of life in Northern Ireland (3)

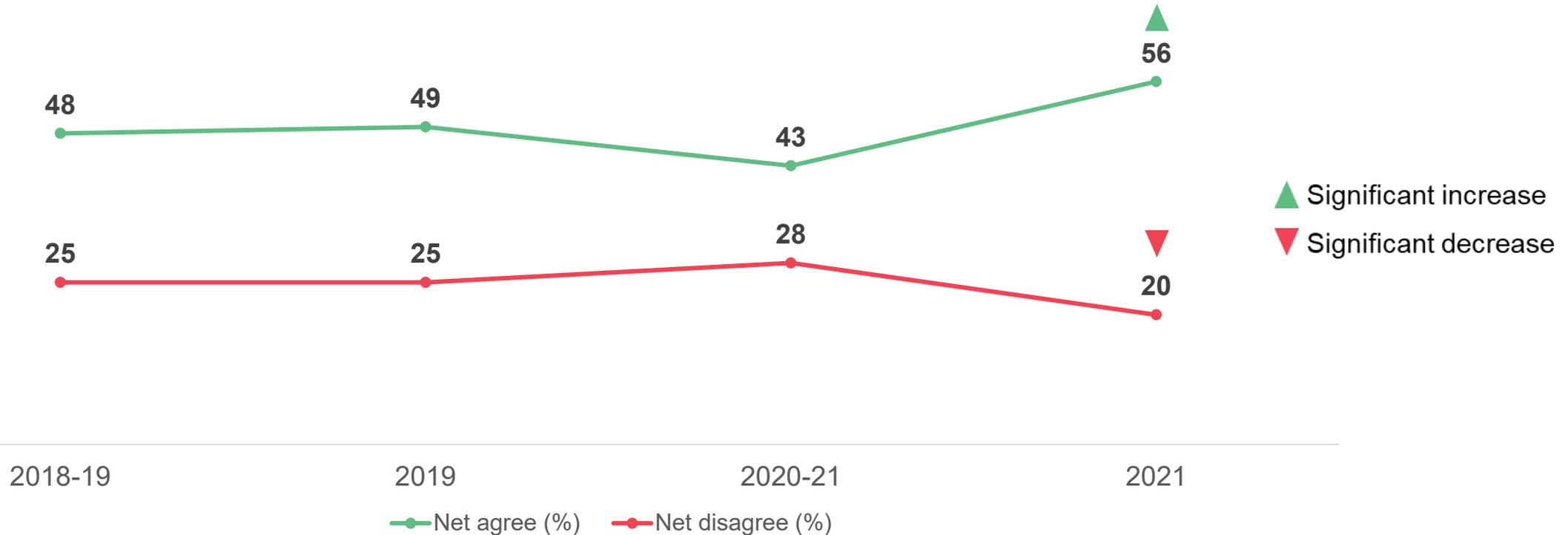
Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local area in Northern Ireland? ? “I would consider participating in voluntary or community work” (trend)



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Significant differences shown represent year on year changes

Aspects of life in Northern Ireland (4)

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local area in Northern Ireland? ? “When planning public services, the needs of different groups of people are taken into account” (trend)



Base: 500 NI adults per survey year | Significant differences shown represent year on year changes

6.

Methodology

Methodology (1)

In order to meet the objectives of the research, Ipsos MORI conducted a telephone survey among a representative sample of people living in Northern Ireland. All interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) from our Belfast-based telephone centre. In total, 500 interviews were conducted with people from across Northern Ireland. The telephone survey lasted 12 minutes on average.

A quota-based sampling approach was applied to the telephone survey to ensure the results are representative of the Northern Ireland population. The demographic breakdown of participants is provided on pages 12-15.

Ipsos MORI purchased a contact database containing 33,765 records for Northern Ireland, of which 14,263 were not used resulting in a used sample of 19,502 records. Therefore, a response rate of 3% was achieved from this sample. A summary of sample outcomes is provided in the table below:

Sample outcome	Count	% of sample
Completed interview	500	3%
Refused	1,323	7%
Unusable	4,128	21%
Other (i.e. no answer, maximum tries, quota reached)	13,552	69%

Ipsos MORI's Standards & Accreditations

Ipsos MORI's standards & accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Moreover, our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.



ISO 20252 – is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911 / MRQSA & incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme); it covers the 5 stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



MRS Company Partnership – By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos MORI endorse and support the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commit to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation & we were the first company to sign our organisation up to the requirements & self regulation of the MRS Code; more than 350 companies have followed our lead.



ISO 9001 – International general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994 we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



ISO 27001 – International standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos MORI was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) & the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) – Ipsos MORI is required to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Data Protection Act; it covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.

Ipsos MORI is an active member of **EphMRA** and **BHBIA**.



HMG Cyber Essentials – A government backed and key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos MORI was assessment validated for certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.



Fair Data – Ipsos MORI is signed up as a 'Fair Data' Company by agreeing to adhere to ten core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252.

Thank you

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