

**SHEILA
MCKECHNIE
FOUNDATION**

**UNLEASHING
SOCIAL POWER**

SMK Campaigner Survey 2021: results

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About the results

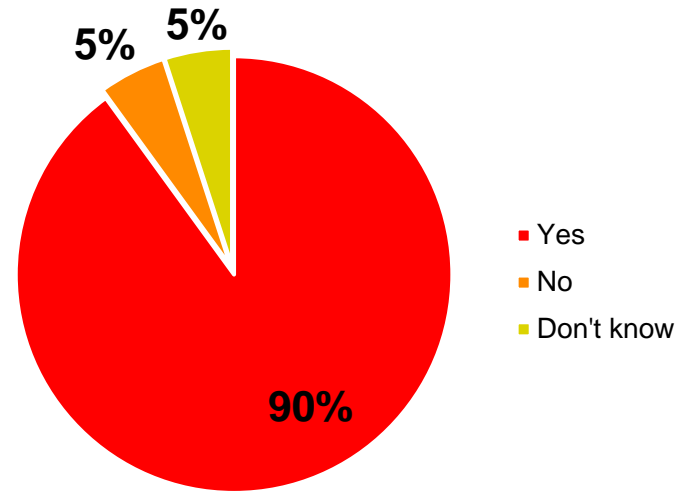
**Survey conducted between
18 October 2021 and
18 December 2021**

**118 respondents
(breakdown in final section)**

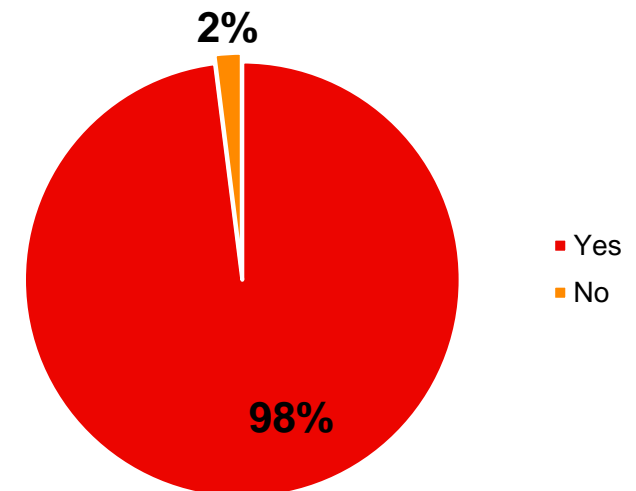
The campaigning environment

NB Percentages may not total 100% where figures have been rounded to one decimal place or where participants were able to select more than one answer

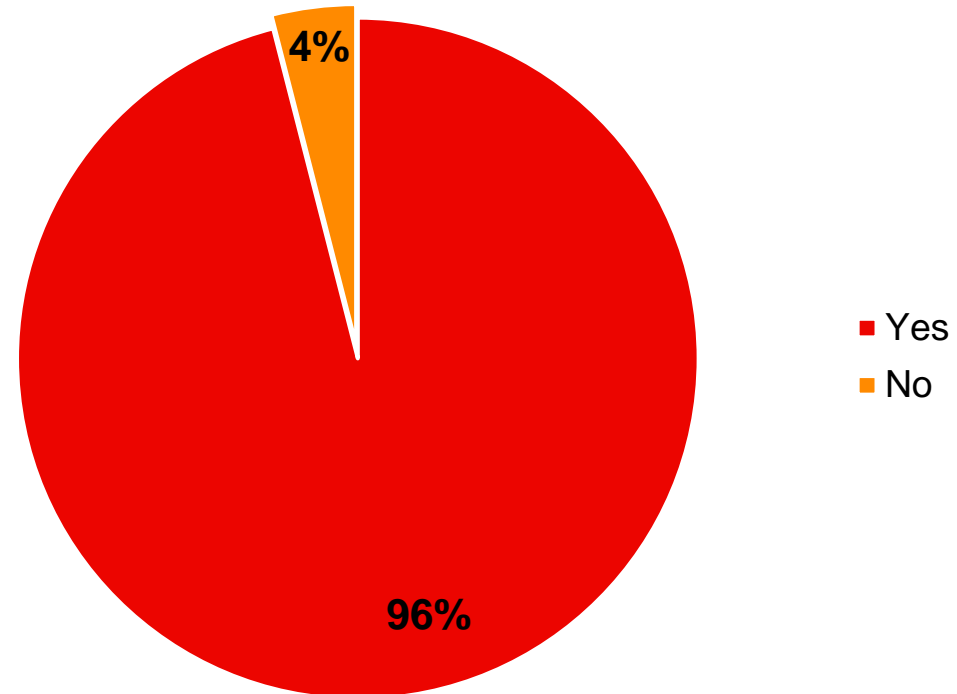
Does your organisation regard campaigning as a vital way to deliver its mission?



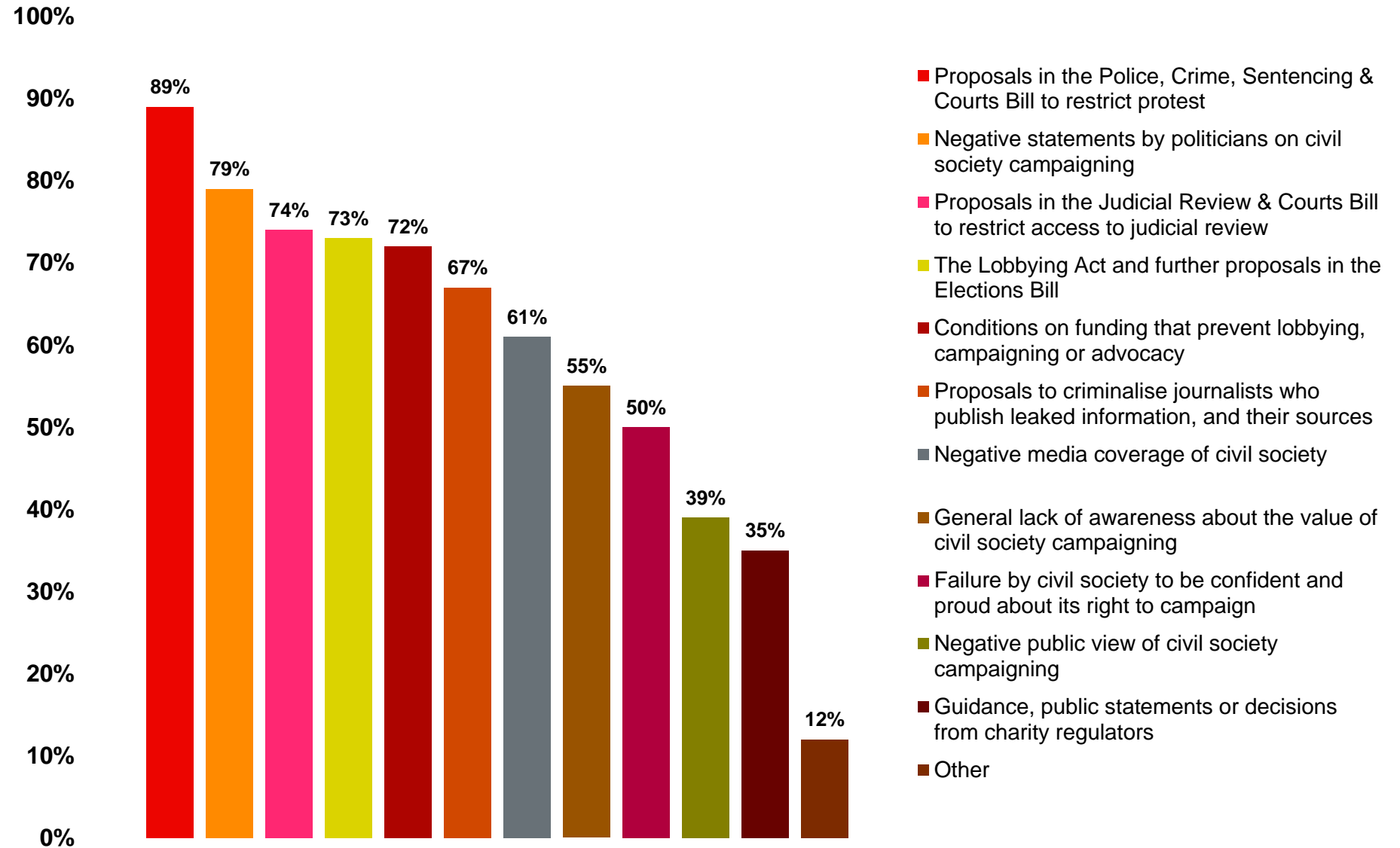
Do you believe that it's legitimate for civil society organisations, including charities, to campaign for changes to policy, law, attitudes and behaviours?



Do you think that there are threats, formal or informal, to the freedom to organise, speak out, or protest (otherwise called 'civic space')?

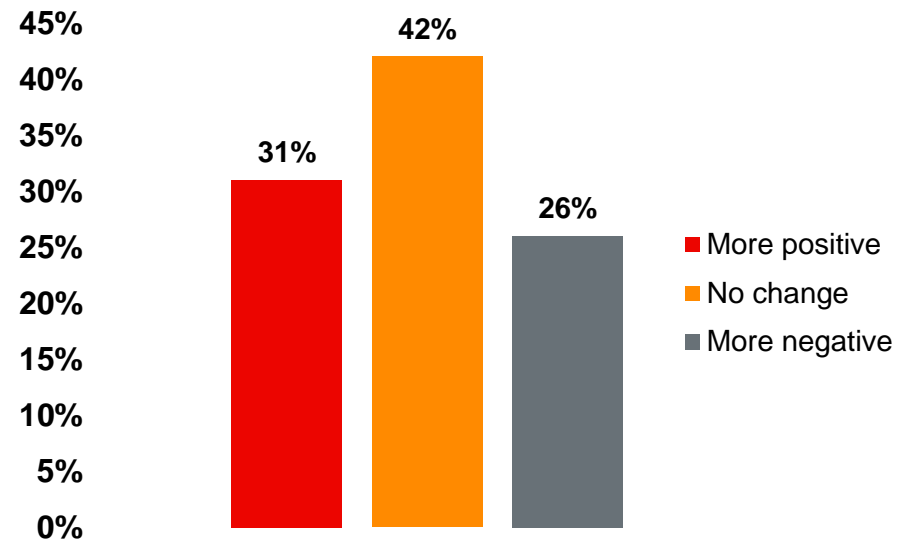


What factors do you think are threatening our civic space?

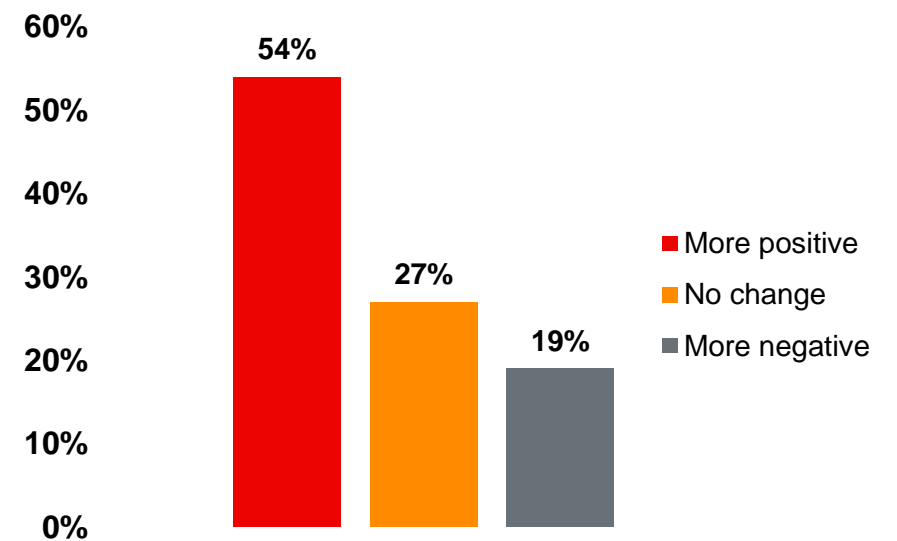


In the past year, have you noticed any changes in attitudes to civil society campaigning, amongst...?

The public, 2021

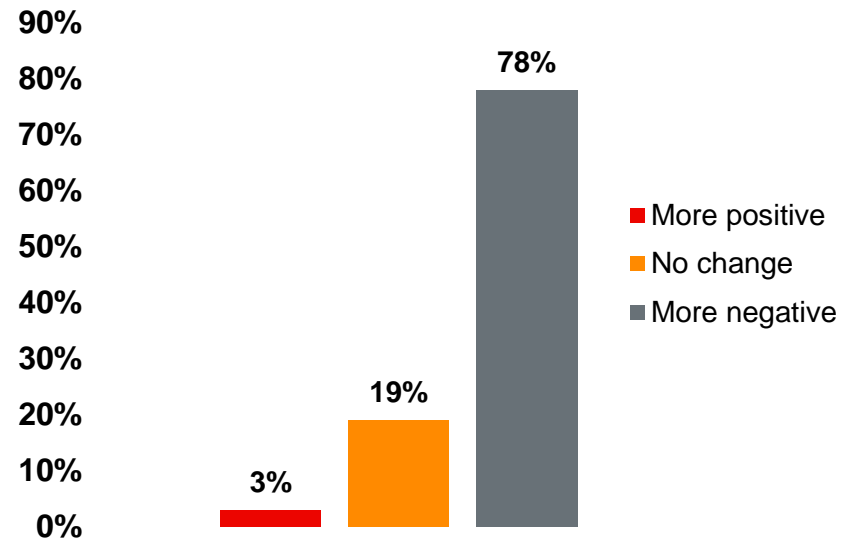


The public, 2020

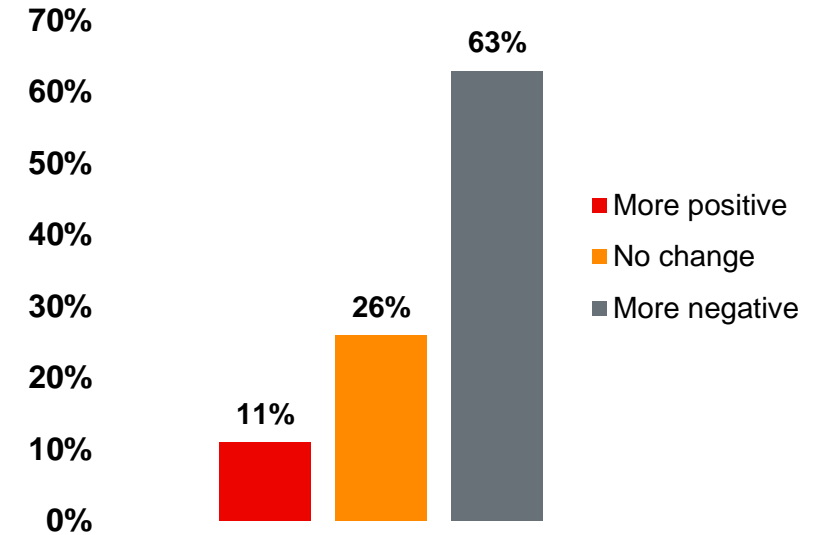


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Politicians, 2021

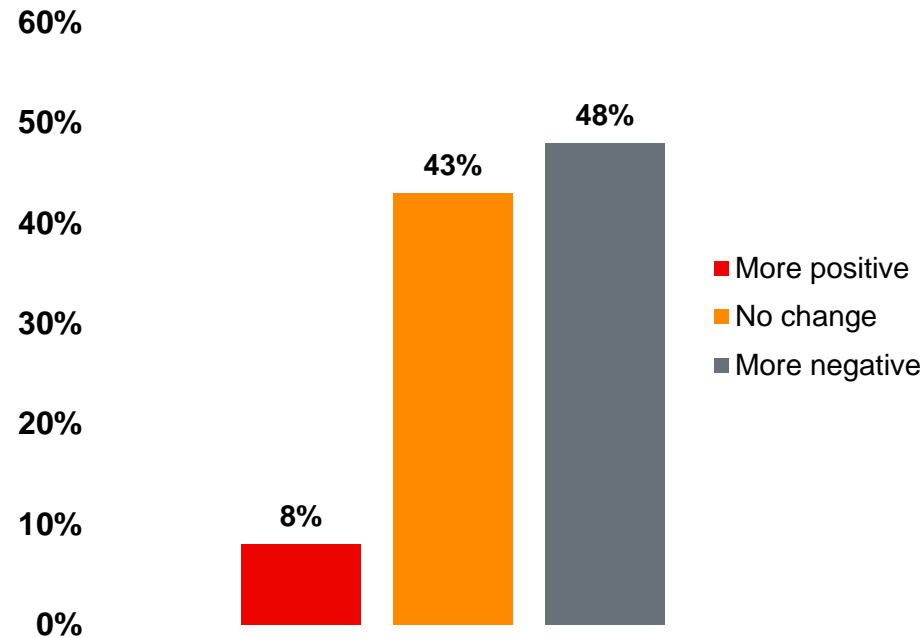


Politicians, 2020

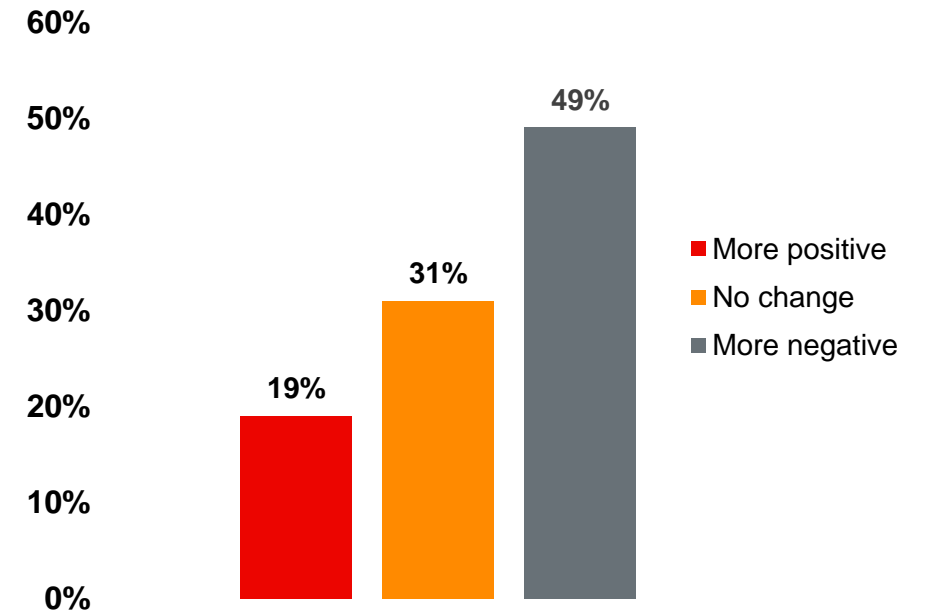


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Media, 2021

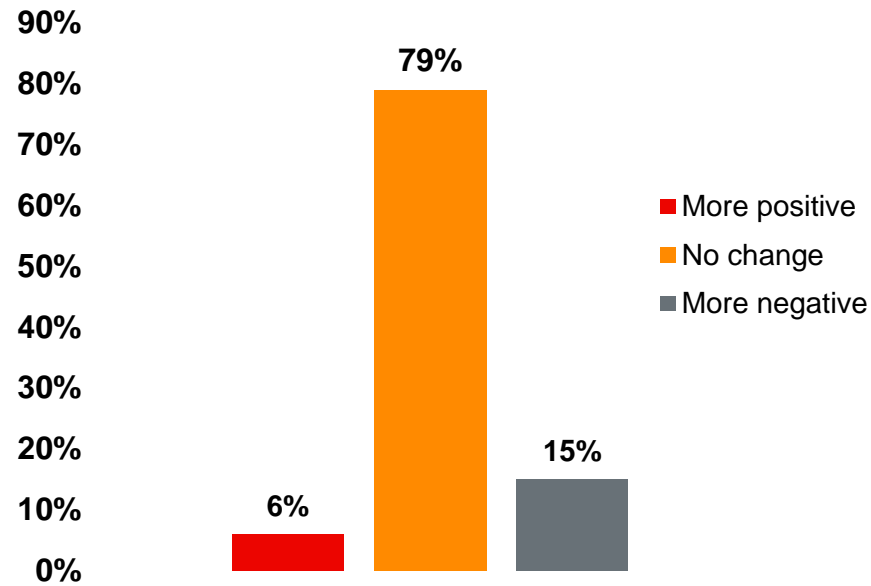


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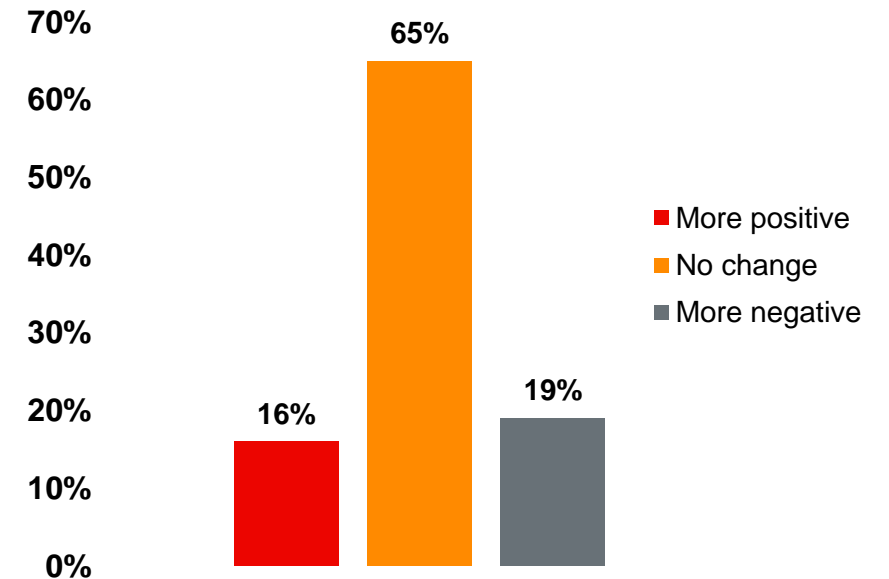


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Funders (public), 2021

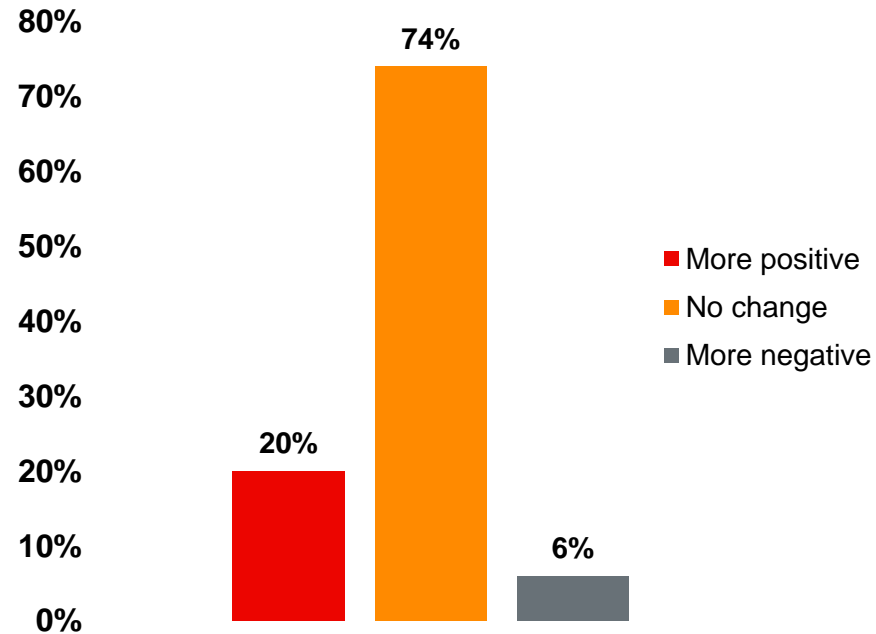


Funders (public), 2020

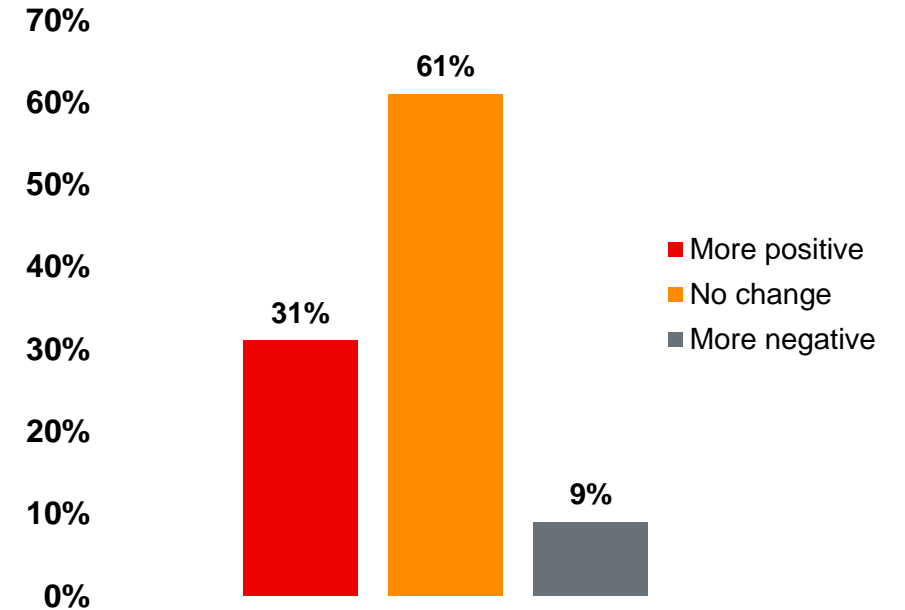


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Funders (independent), 2021

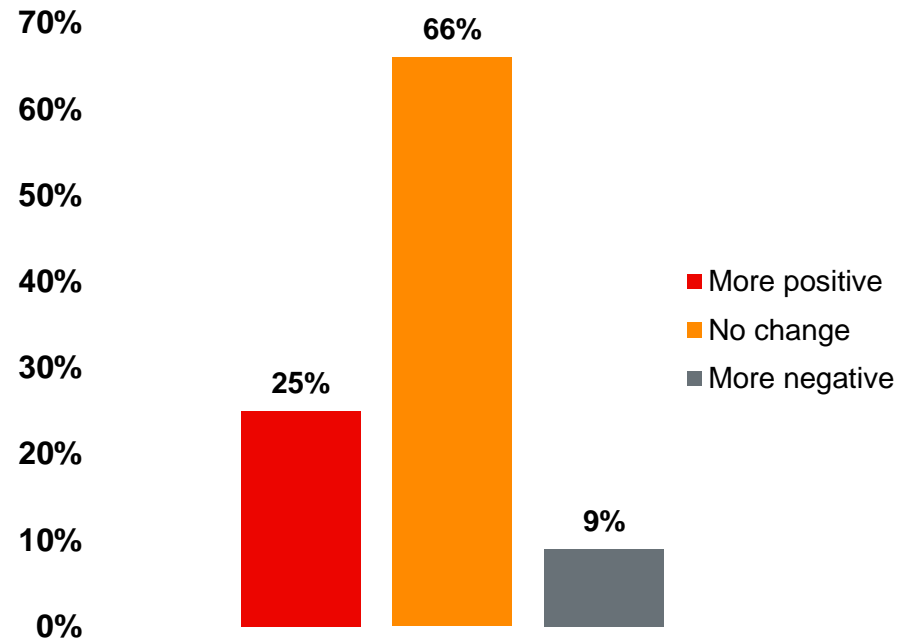


Funders (independent), 2020

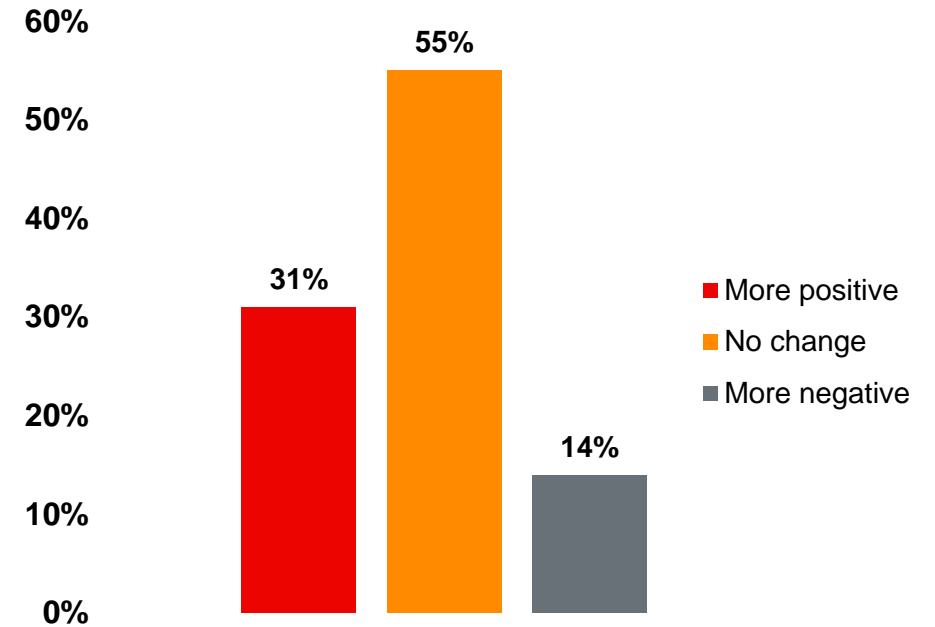


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Board & senior leaders, 2021

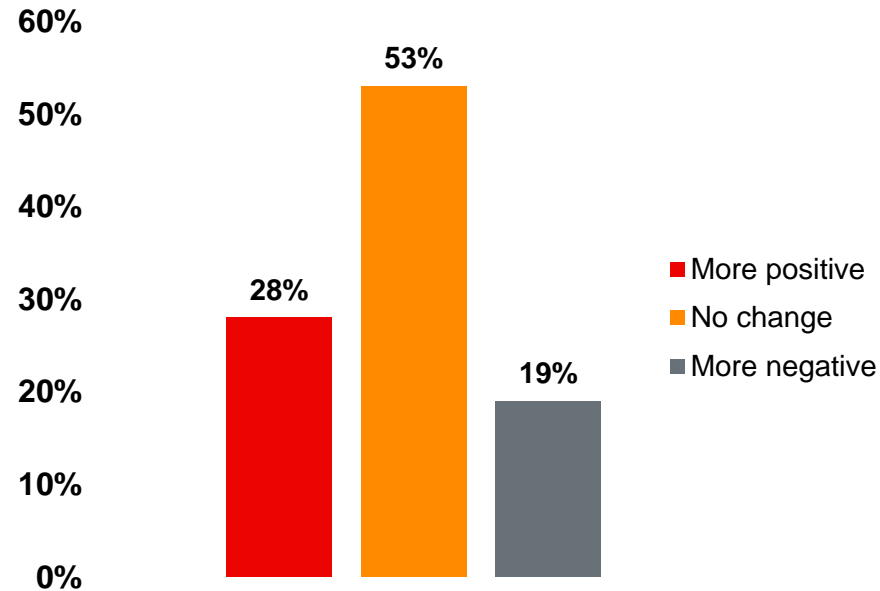


Board & senior leaders, 2020

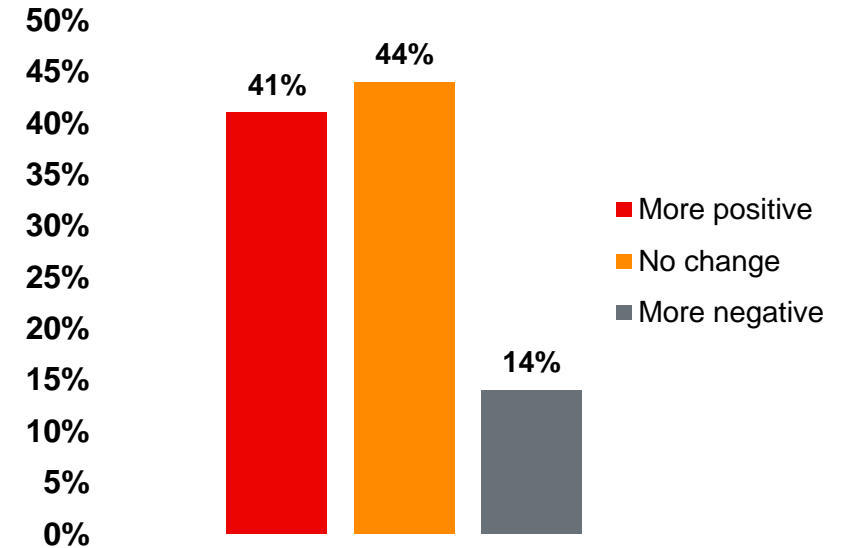


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Civil society more broadly, 2021

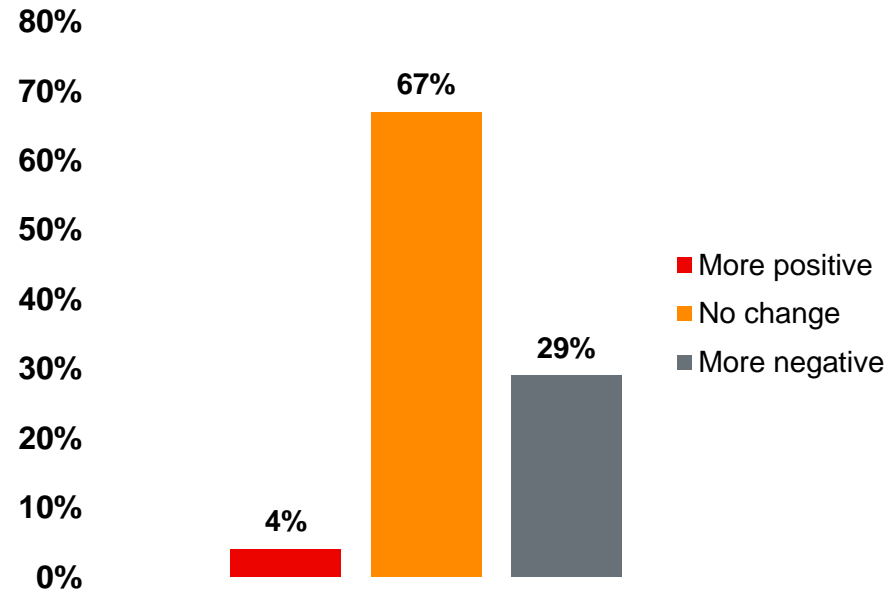


Civil society more broadly, 2020



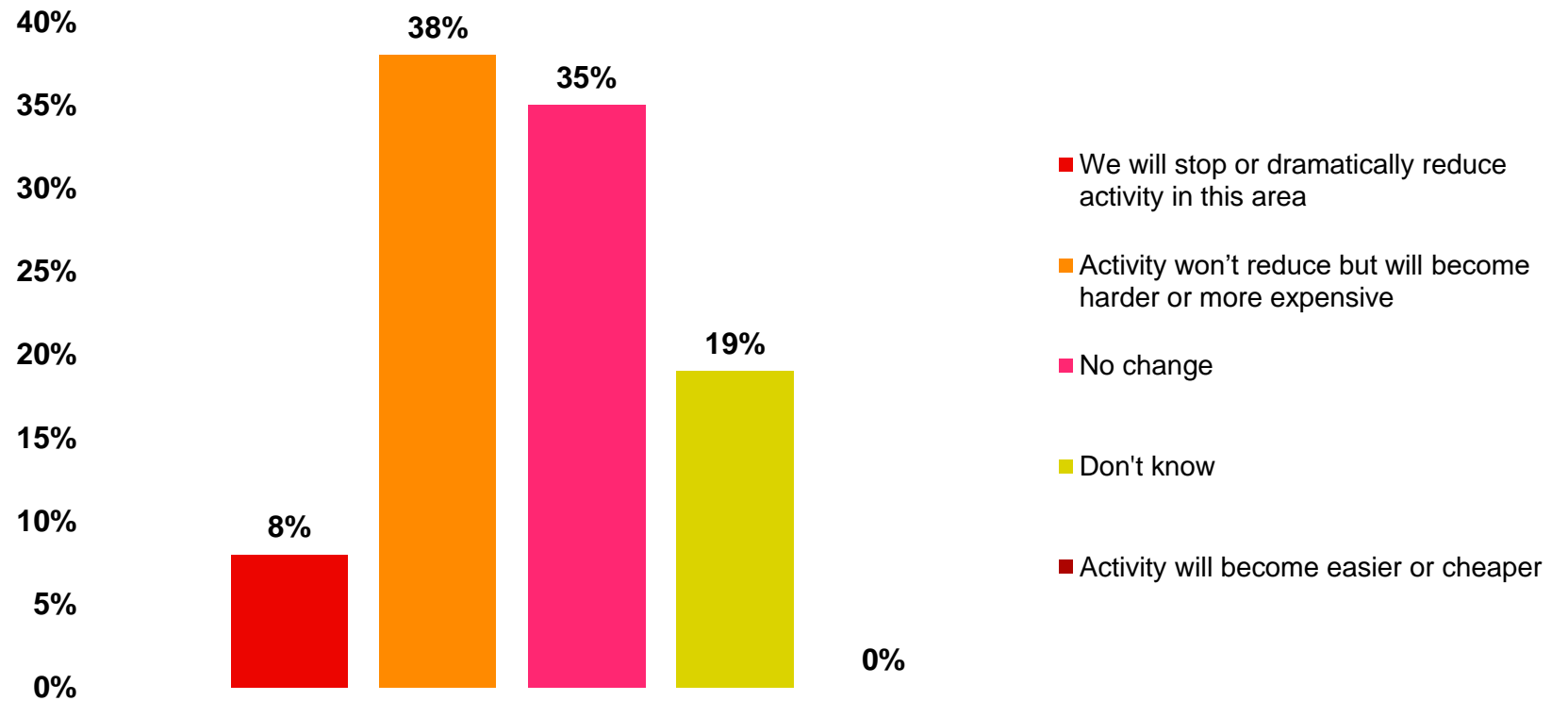
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Charity regulators (Charity Commissions or Scottish Charity Regulator), 2021



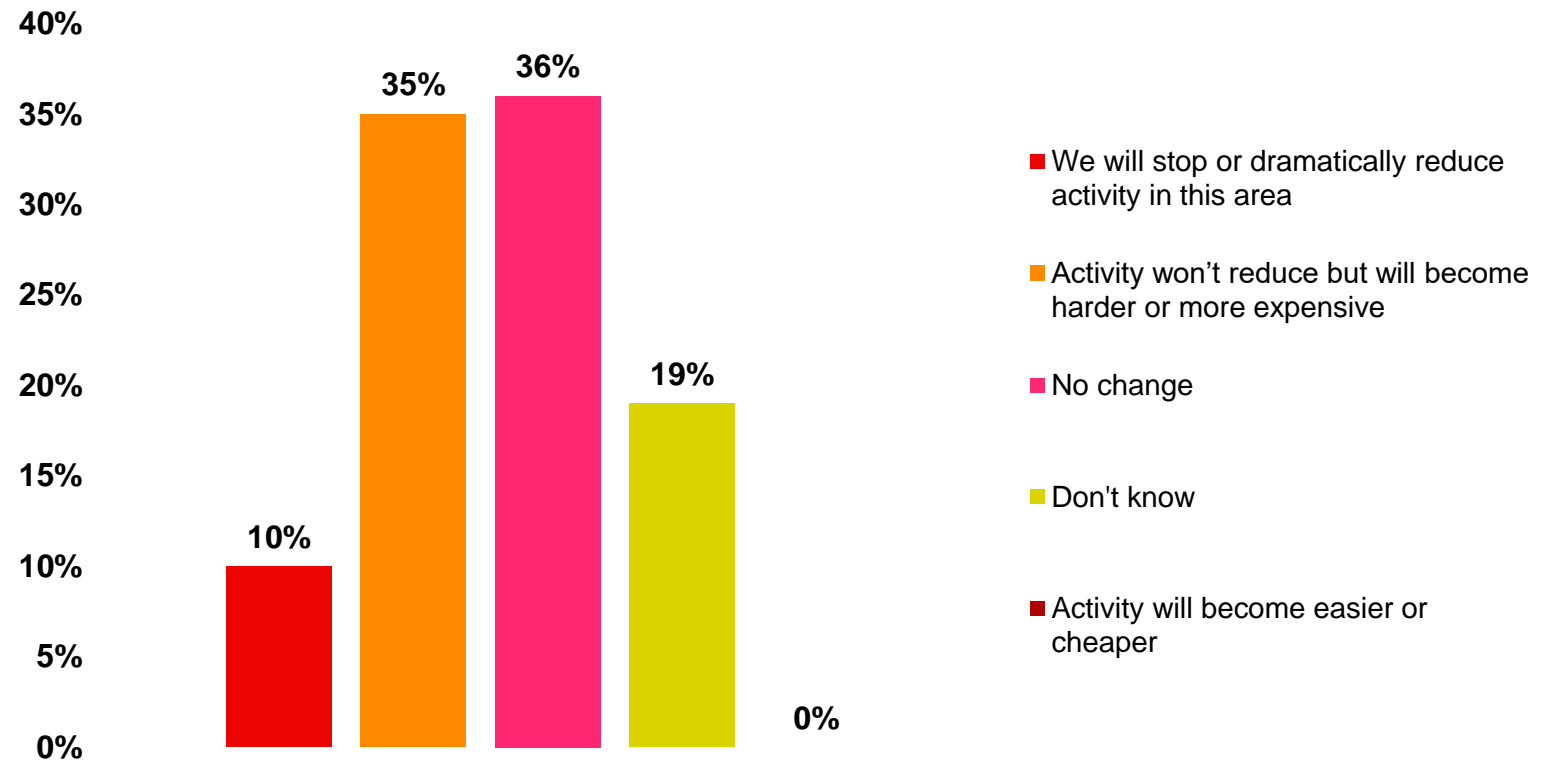
A number of legislative proposals have been introduced this year, which may directly affect your campaigning approaches or tactics. How far do you think they will affect the way you campaign?

Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill (conditions on protest)



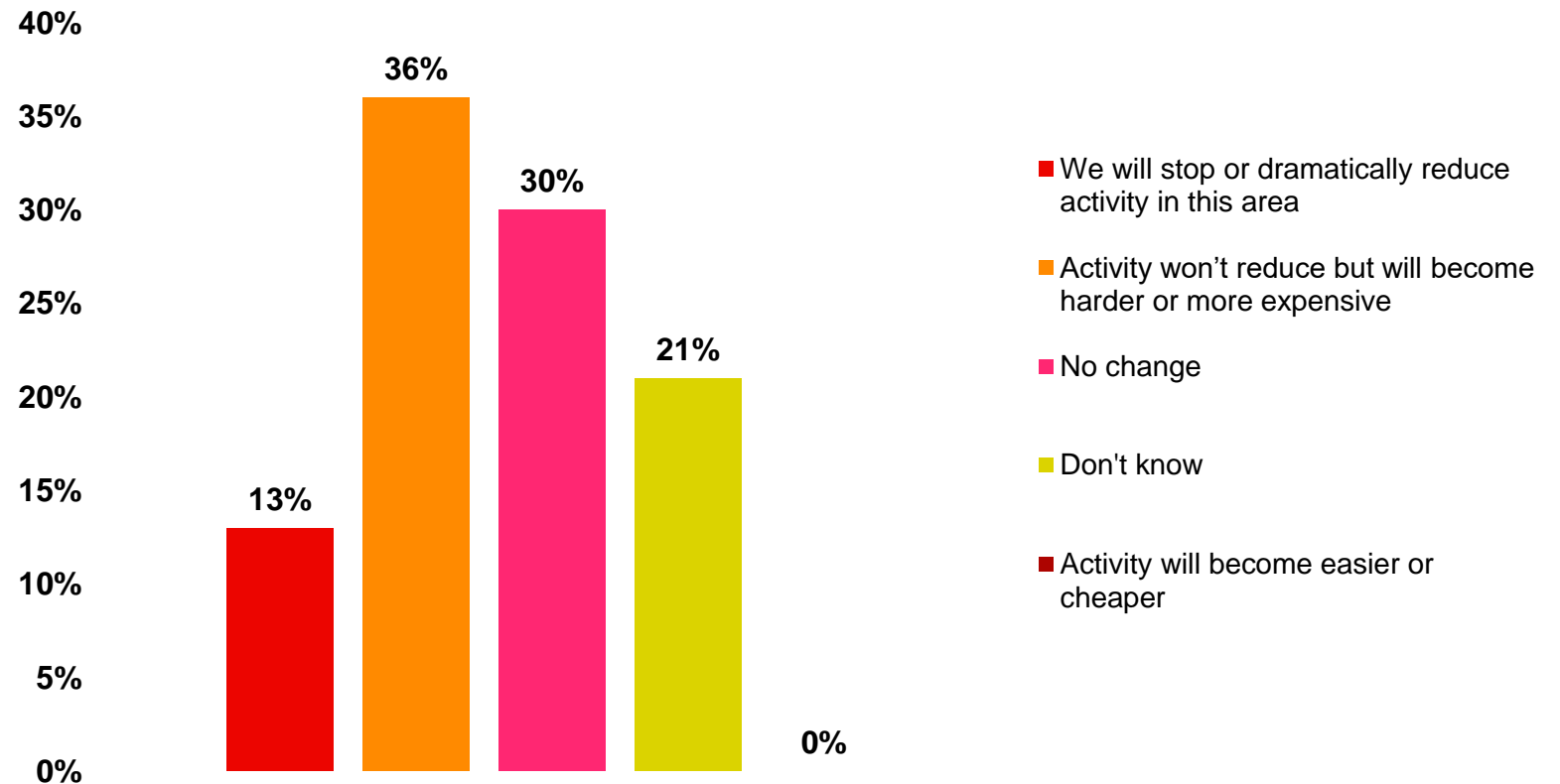
A number of legislative proposals have been introduced this year, which may directly affect your campaigning approaches or tactics. How far do you think they will affect the way you campaign?

Elections Bill (reduced spending thresholds for third-party campaigning)



A number of legislative proposals have been introduced this year, which may directly affect your campaigning approaches or tactics. How far do you think they will affect the way you campaign?

Judicial Review Bill (changes to which decisions may be judicially reviewed)



Likely impact of legislation (1)

Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill

- 8% said they expect to stop or dramatically curtail activity
- 38% said activity was likely to become harder or more expensive

Elections Bill

- 10% said they expect to stop or dramatically curtail activity
- 35% said activity was likely to become harder or more expensive

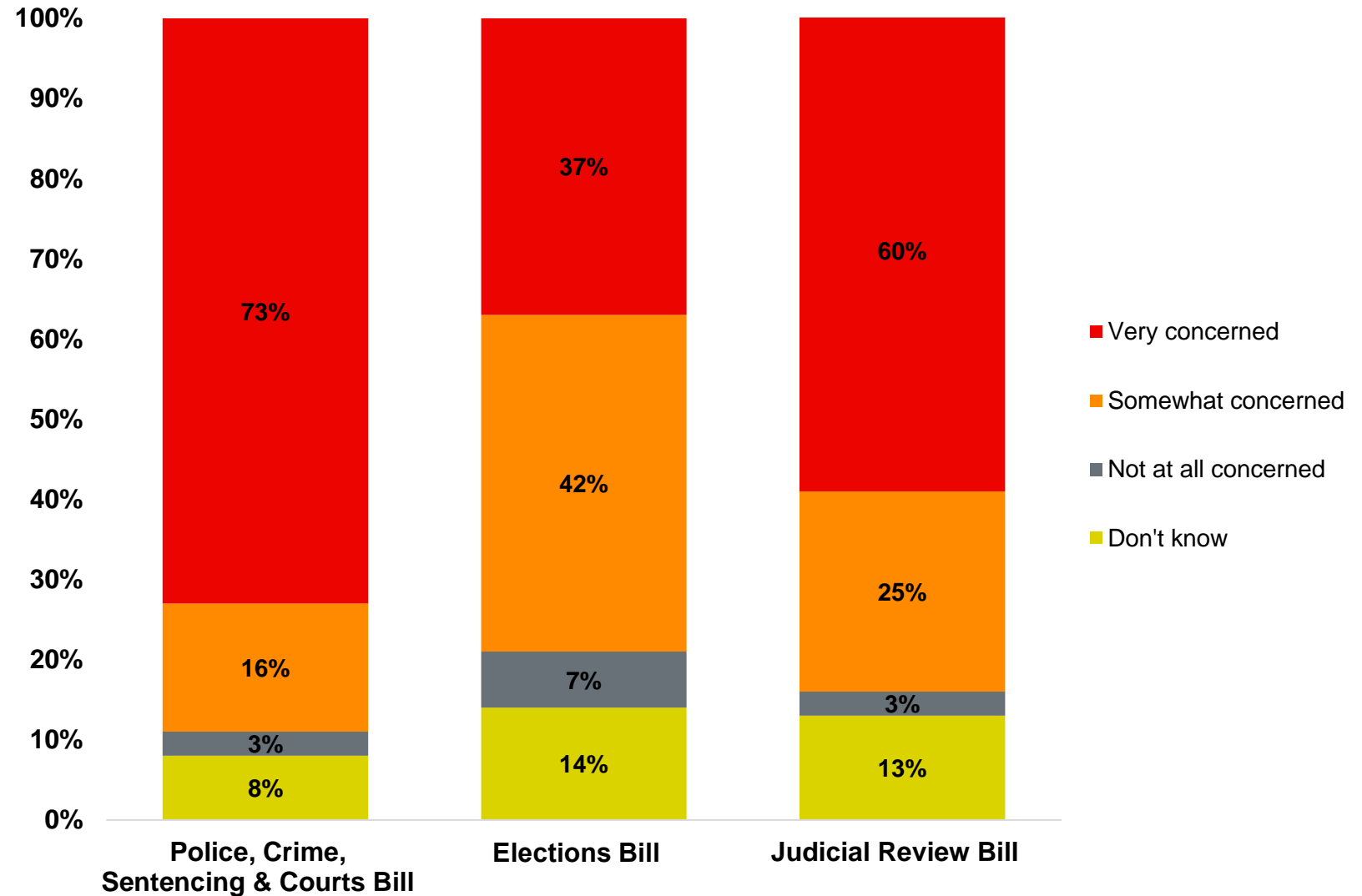
Judicial Review Bill

- 13% said they expect to stop or dramatically curtail activity
- 36% said activity was likely to become harder or more expensive

Not a single respondent said than any of the legislation would make it cheaper or easier to campaign.

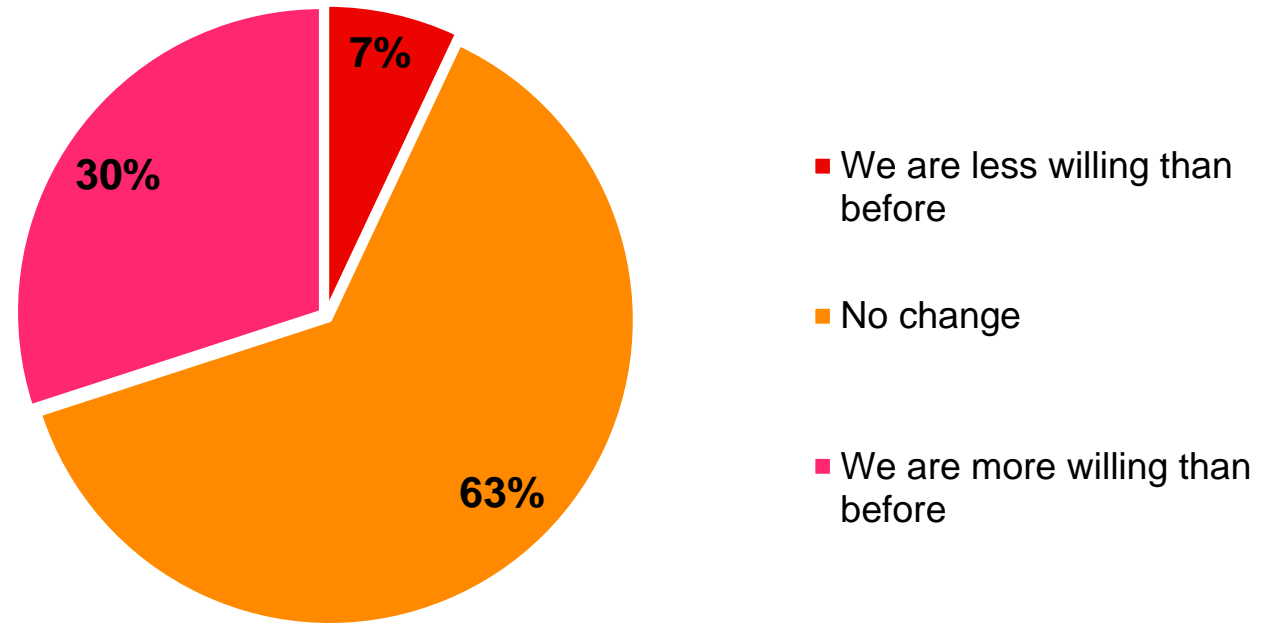


How concerned are you that they will 'chill' campaigning activity more broadly?



There have been a number of notable attacks by media outlets on charities that have expressed views, published analyses or delivered services that some don't agree with (these included the National Trust, Barnardo's, the Runnymede Trust and the RNLI, none of which have been found to have acted outside their mandate).

How have these media stories affected you or your organisation's willingness to speak out or act in ways that some might disagree with?



Response to media attacks

When asked to expand on their answer, comments included:

'Outpouring of positive public support for charities responding to hard-hitting negative headlines has been heart-warming.'

'They make me feel nervous. I carry these stories in my mind as I'm engaging with decision makers, feel the weight of them.'



Response to media attacks

The top three themes mentioned were:

- **becoming more determined/defiant**

“Fear followed by determination – we have good, brave leadership, currently”

- **paying greater attention to strategy and risk**

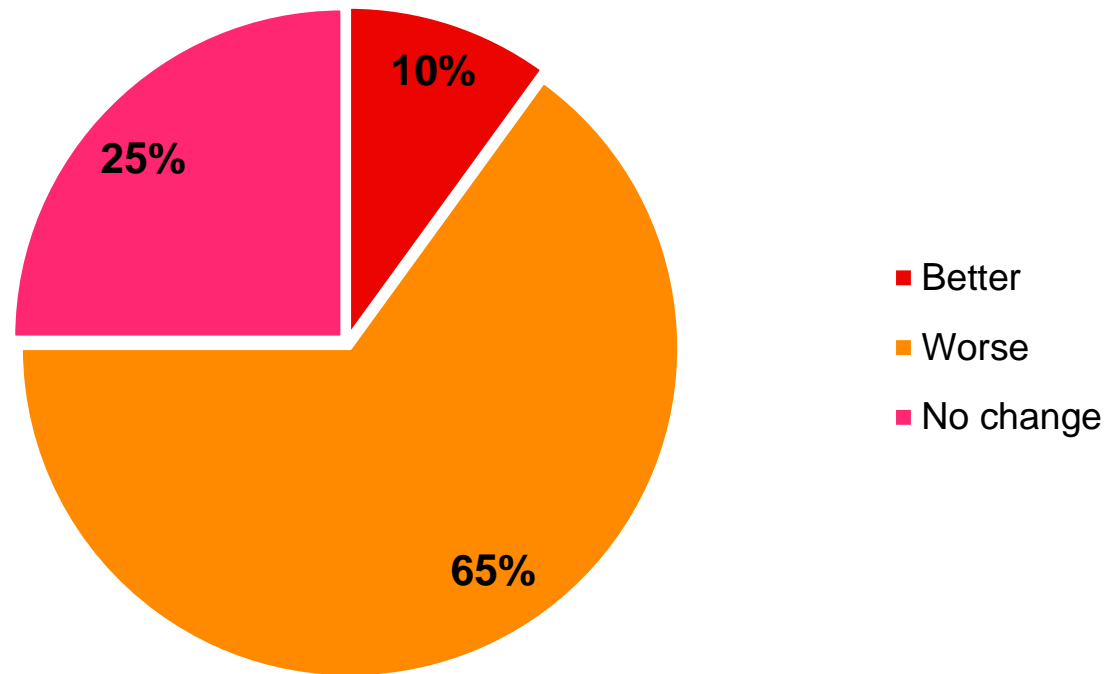
“The attacks have made us invest a lot of time in getting our engagement right, we felt like we were on a tightrope and some powerful people were willing us to fall. However, the strategic review that resulted probably made us more focussed and stronger.”

- **and the desire for greater solidarity**

“It has been positive to see sector leaders support each other against attack”



Overall, have things got better or worse in the last year for campaigning?



You answered 'better' to the above question, tell us a bit about why or how?

Top themes were:

Increased support from public

"...people's awareness of issues and the power of campaigning for positive change has increased (or at least more people are being vocal about this and taking action)."

Government open to expertise and recommendations

"...during the pandemic...both Ministers and Civil Servants reached out to charities and valued our expertise and policy recommendations and we saw these impact public policy."

More solidarity/mutual support

"People understood calls for policy change during a pandemic, even if they didn't agree. The temperature has already changed dramatically, however."

Sector more determined/mobilised

"There is wider recognition of campaigning as part of democracy, and diverse groups campaign, including anti-vaxxers, anti-Northern Ireland protocol, anti-woke. And, some campaigns have had a swift result, e.g. over sleaze, climate, racism."



You answered 'worse' to the above question, tell us a bit about why or how?

Top themes were:

Unwarranted or disproportionate attacks by politicians, by the media, and on social media

'The government legislation and media coverage has been overwhelmingly negative, which has impacted on campaigning. However, on the other hand, it feels like more public are pro-activism, which bodes well for the future.'

'More political pressure on our funder means more pressure on us not to not speak out.'

Legislative or regulatory restrictions

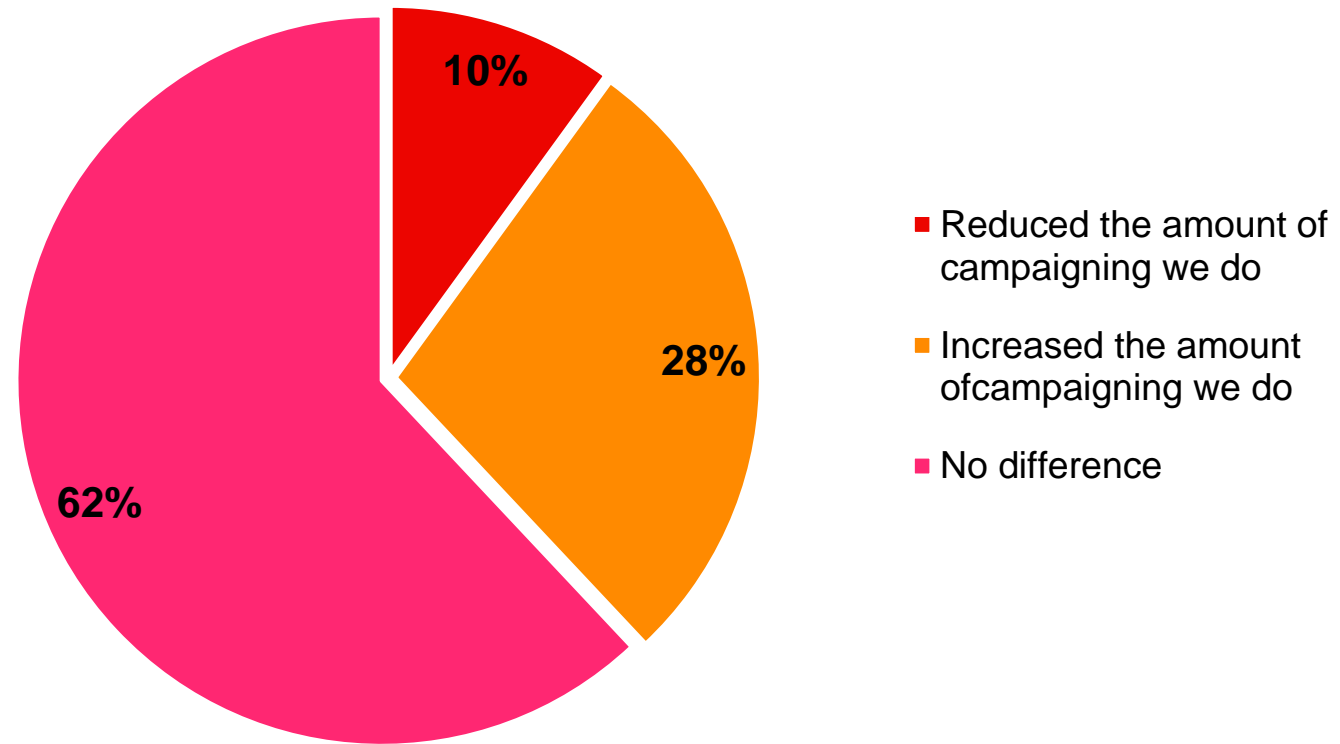
'The government has... introduced several policies and pieces of legislation that represent a huge threat to civil society campaigning and wider democracy, human rights and civil liberties.'

Lack of capacity (increased demands, staff burnout, donor fatigue, unwillingness to fund campaigning)

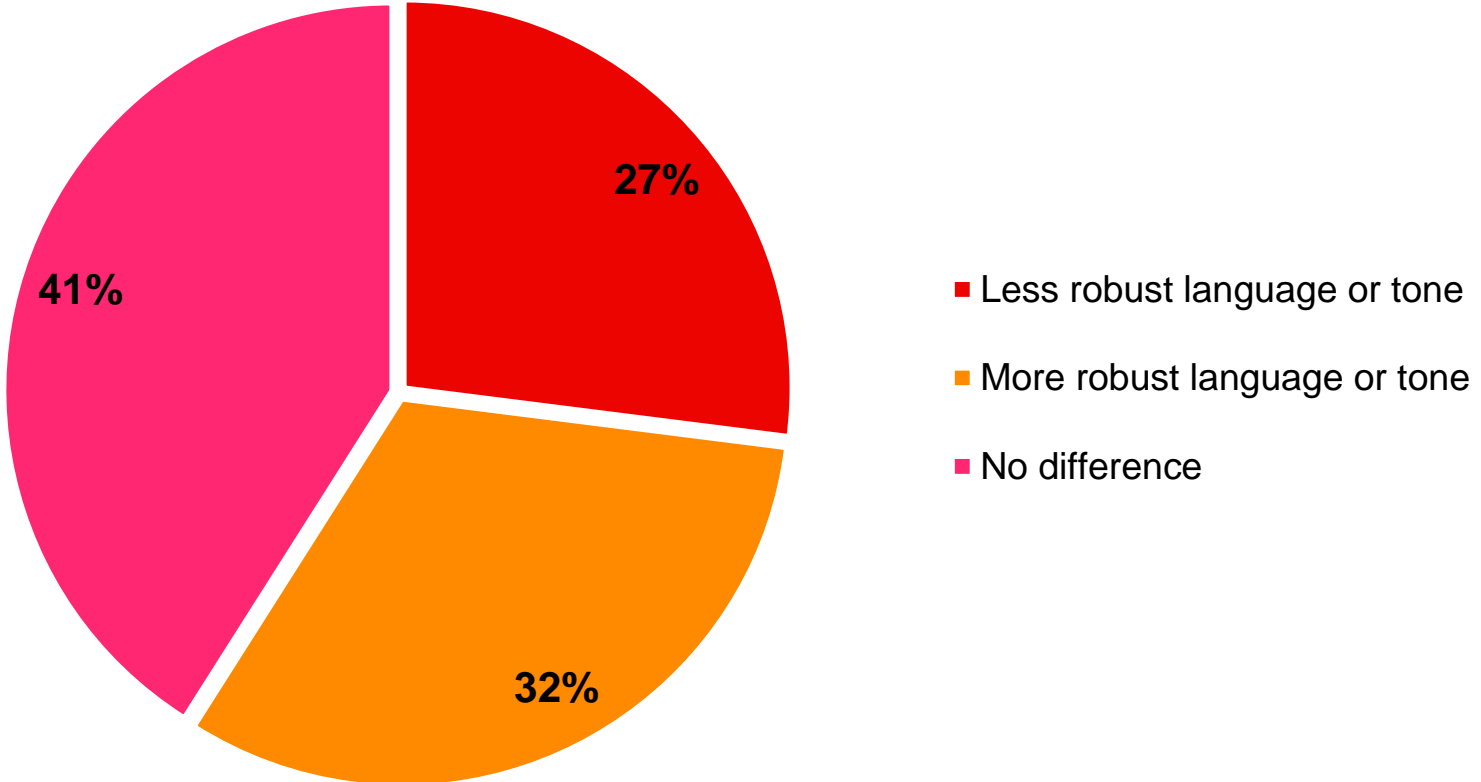
'...the pace of post-Brexit legislation and related consultations is absolutely relentless - we are all exhausted with no respite in sight.'



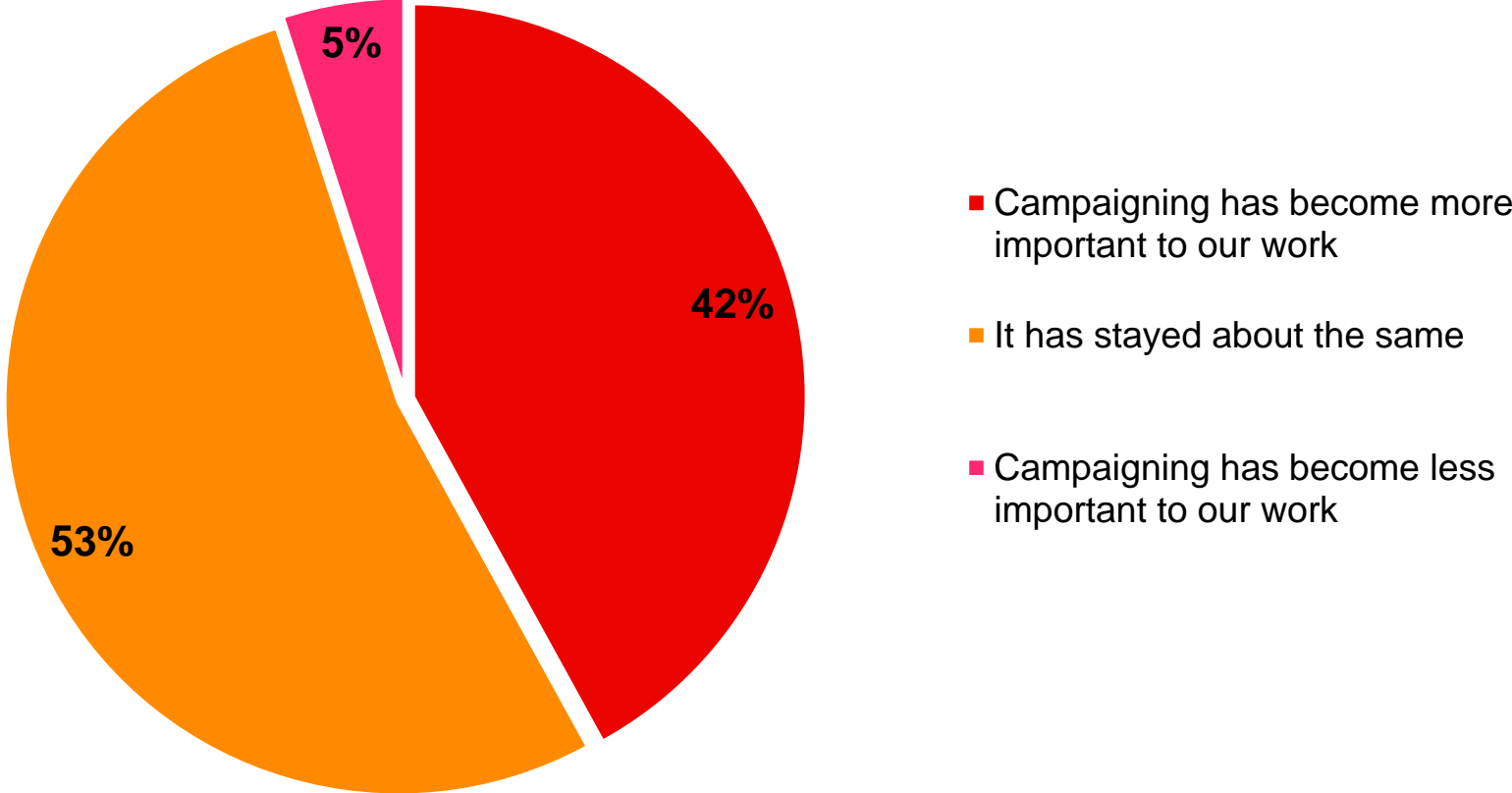
Thinking about the past three years, how have attitudes to campaigning affected the AMOUNT of campaigning your organisation does?



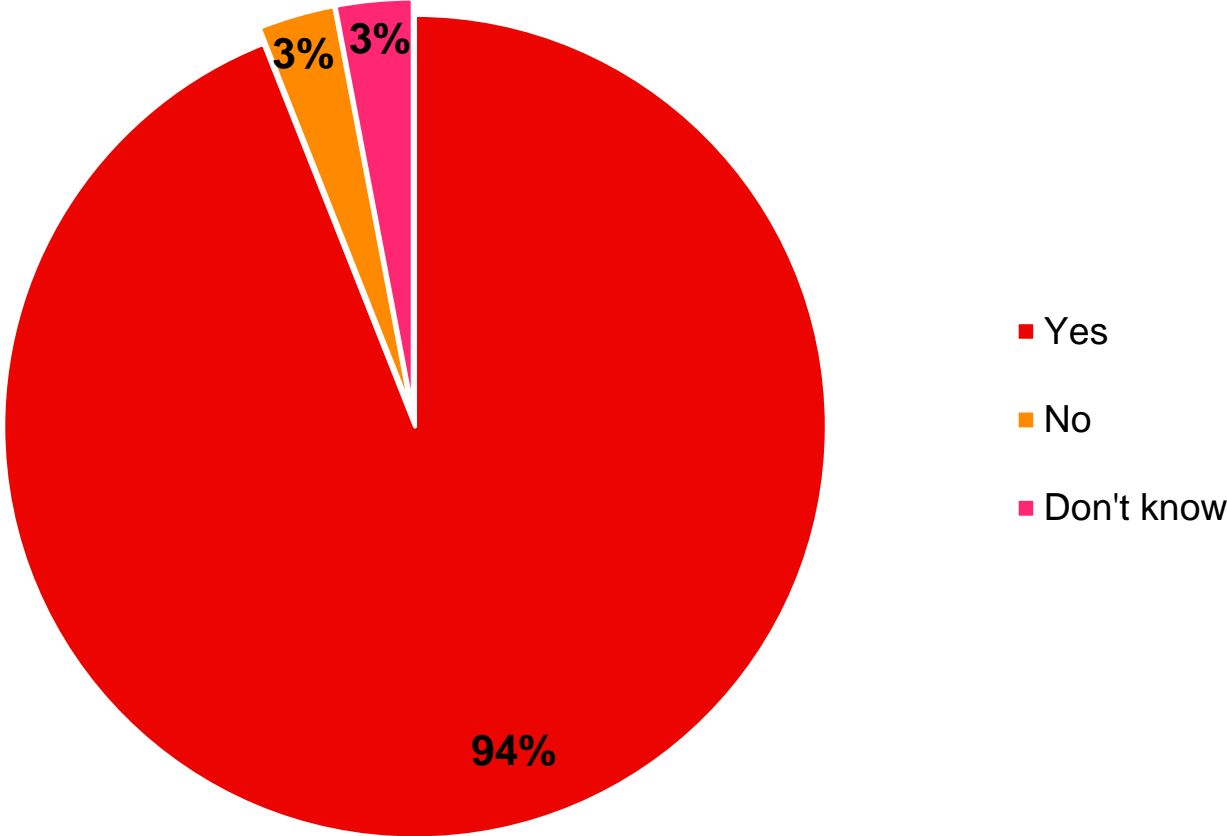
Thinking about the past three years, how have attitudes to campaigning affected the TONE of your campaigns?



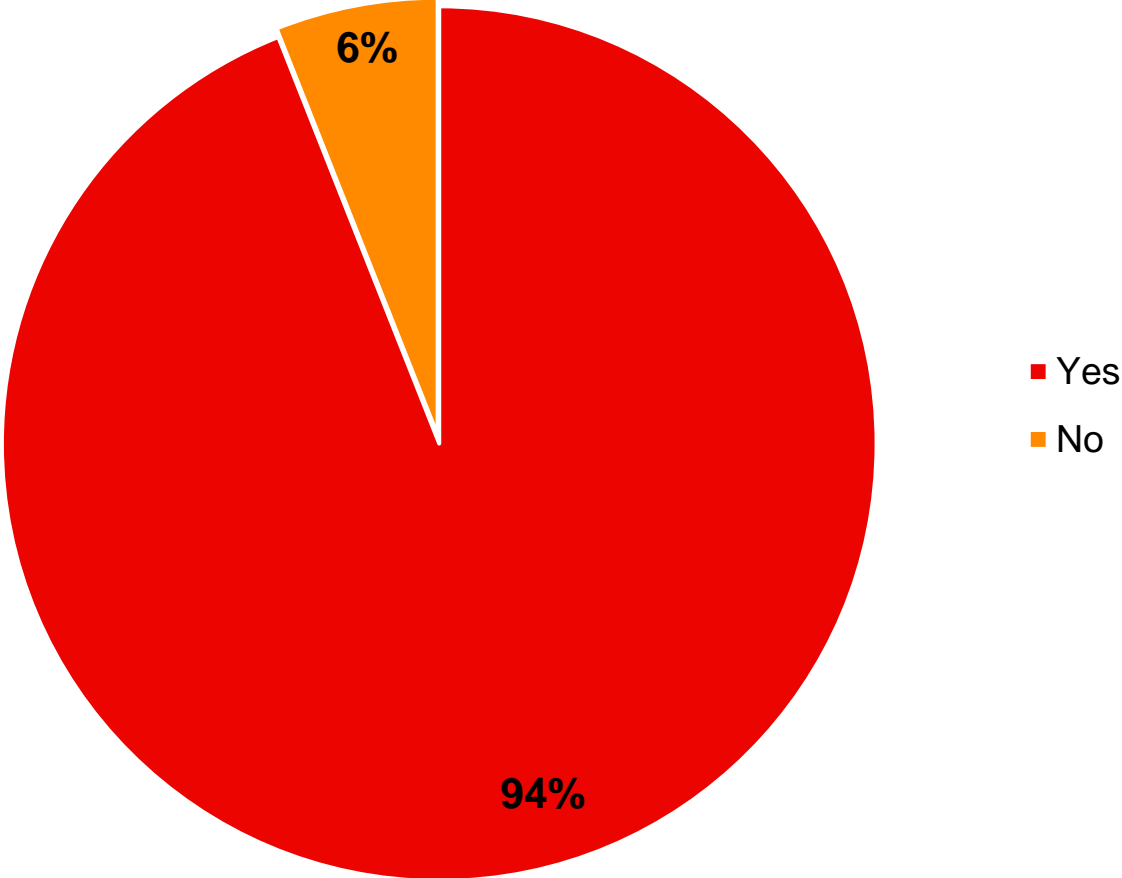
Has the Covid-19 pandemic affected how your organisation prioritises campaigning?



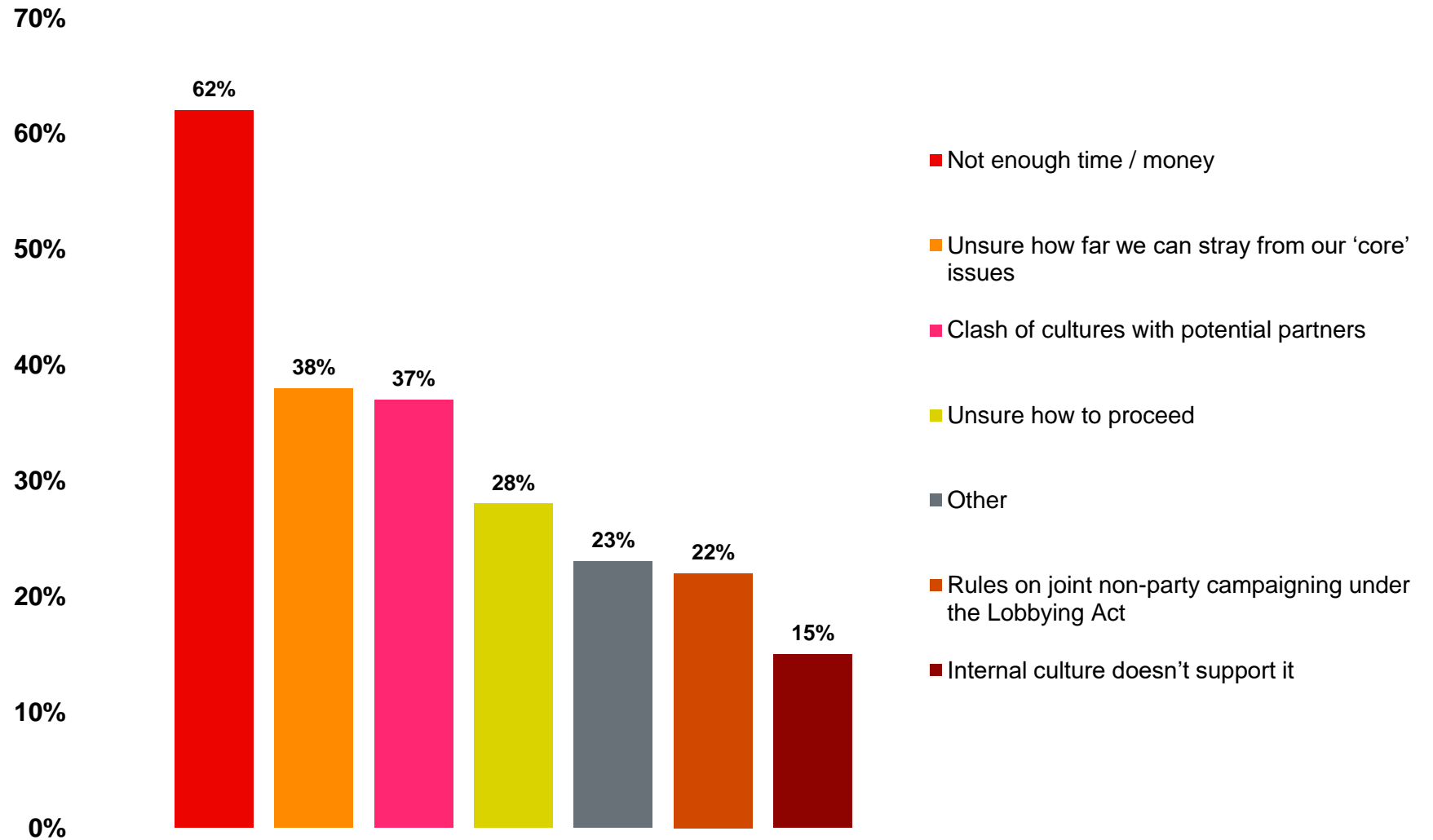
Do you think that there will be a need for more campaigning by civil society in the next 12 months?



Would you like to collaborate more on campaigning with other civil society organisations?



You answered 'yes' when we asked if you wanted to collaborate more with other organisations on campaigning. What do you think is getting in the way now?



Tactics and trends

NB Percentages may not total 100% where figures have been rounded to one decimal place or where participants were able to select more than one answer

Tell us about any ideas or opportunities you encountered during the past year that you think improved your campaigning.

Top themes:

- **More online working opened up new opportunities** to work with communities, organisations, decision-makers, and other campaigners
- **More collaboration across civil society** and better relationships between organisations
- **Responding to Covid meant doing things differently**, which sometimes turned out to be better
- **COP26 created a focal point** for campaigners to coalesce around all aspects of environmental breakdown



Tell us about any barriers or problems you encountered during the past year that you think made campaigning harder.

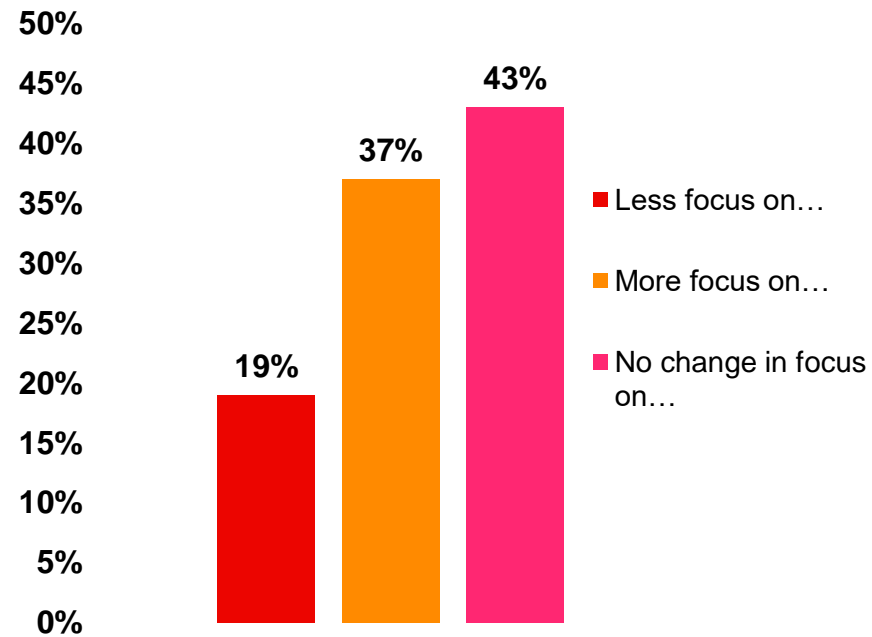
Top themes:

- **An environment hostile to campaigning** created by the negative comments of some politicians and media outlets, as well as concern about legislative and regulatory pressures
- **Loss of capacity was a huge issue** – it included time, funding, staff absence, and general fatigue
- **Covid placed huge pressure on people and organisations** – particularly the loss of face-to-face contact

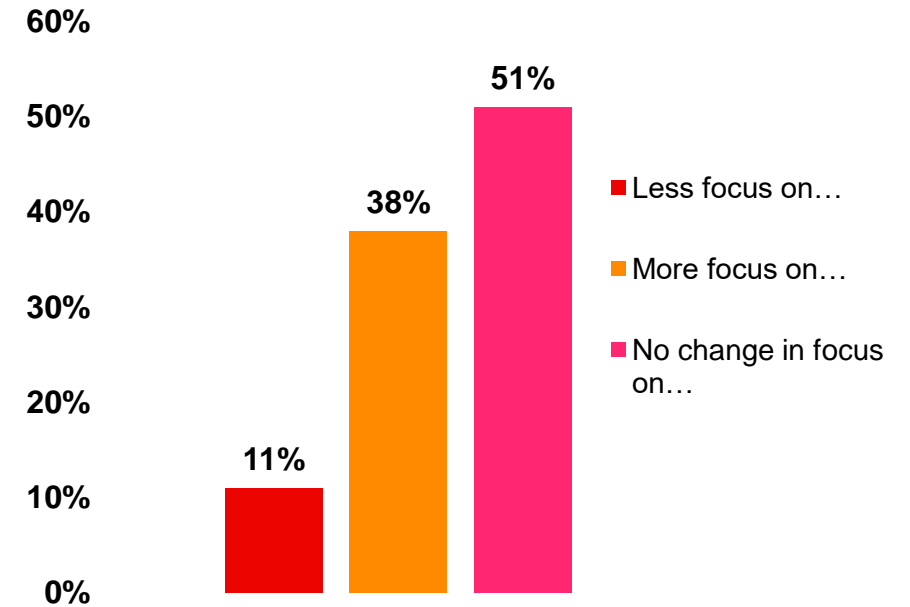


Thinking about the past three years, have the targets or focus of your campaigning changed?

UK Central Government

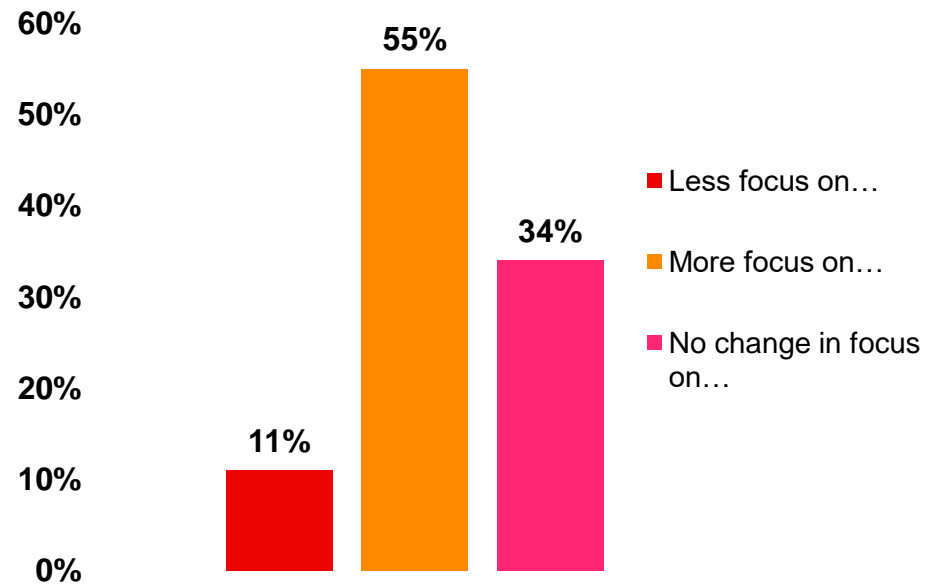


Devolved national administrations

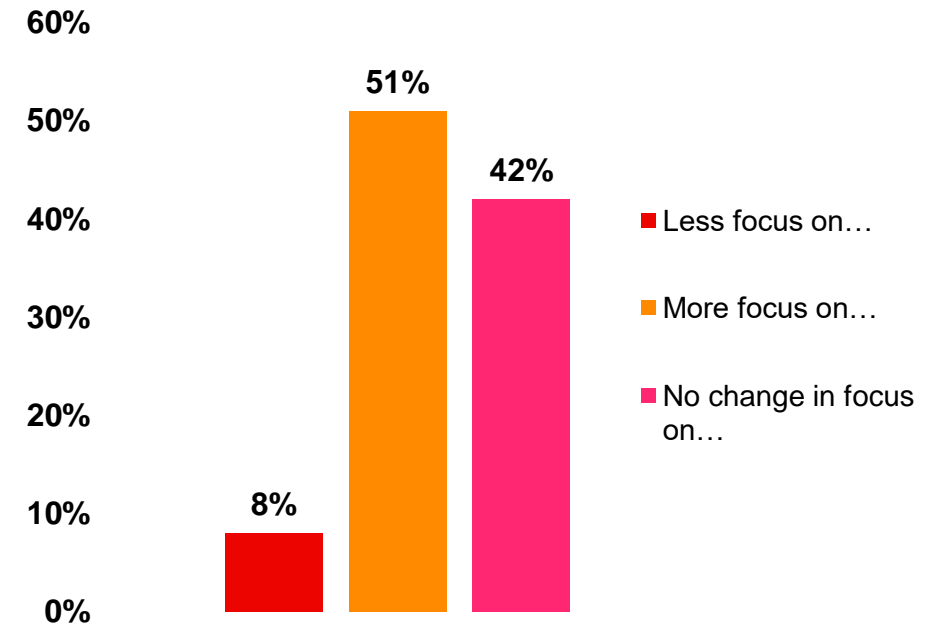


Thinking about the past three years, have the targets or focus of your campaigning changed?

Local/regional govt (inc. metro mayors)

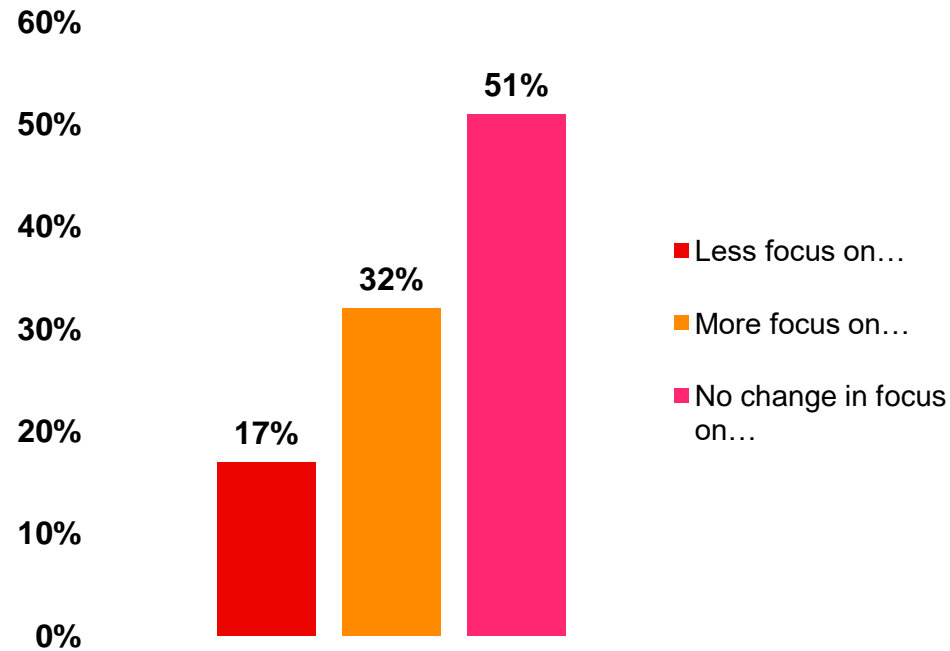


Public attitudes or behaviours



Thinking about the past three years, have the targets or focus of your campaigning changed?

Business practices

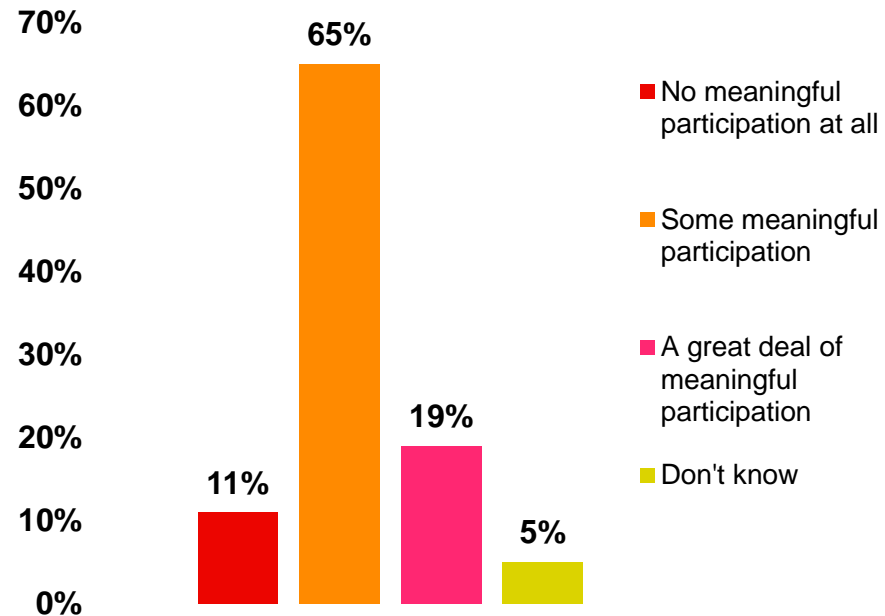


Civil society and the 'national conversation'

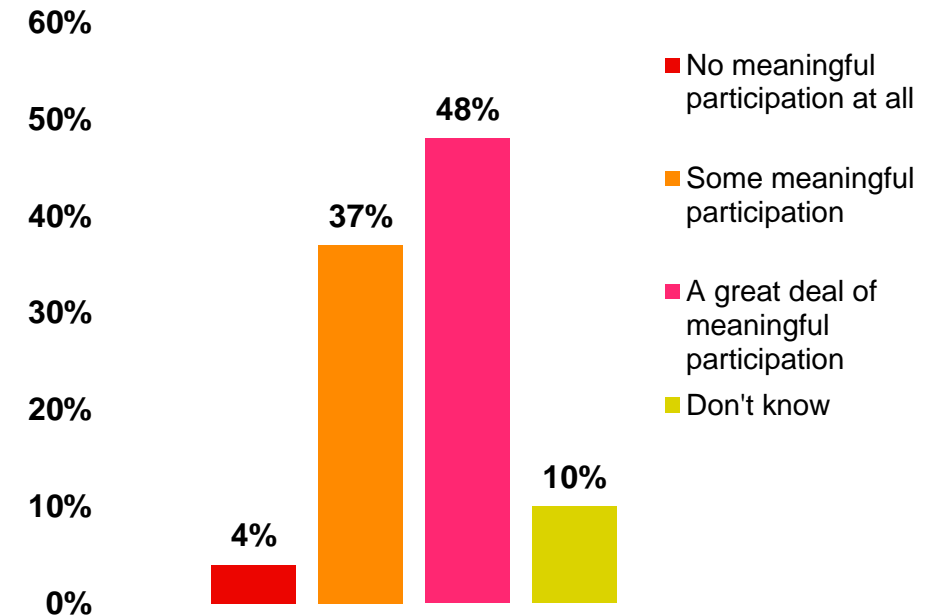
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Thinking about the specific issues on which you campaign, how far do you feel you are able to participate meaningfully through the following channels?

Debate at public events run by third-parties

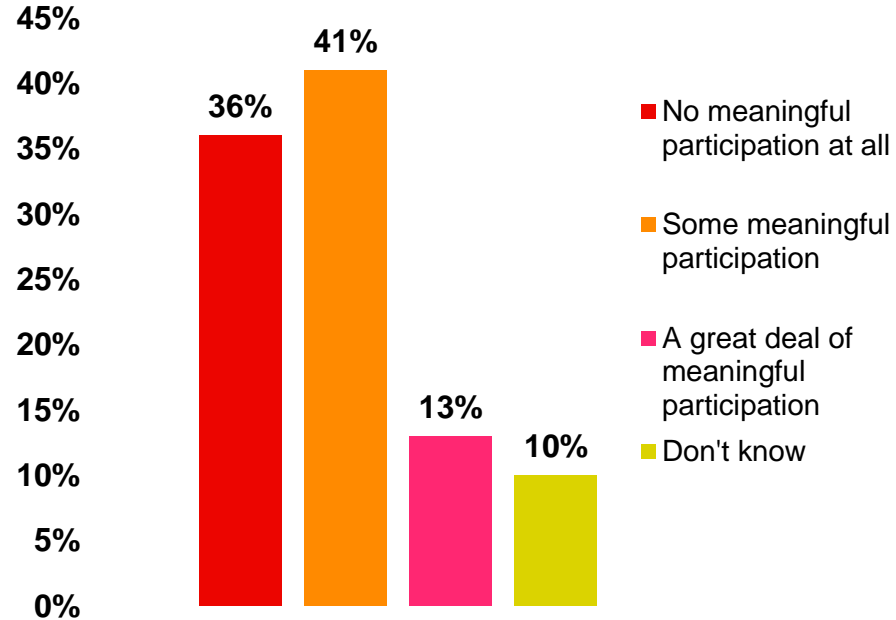


Debate at public events created by you

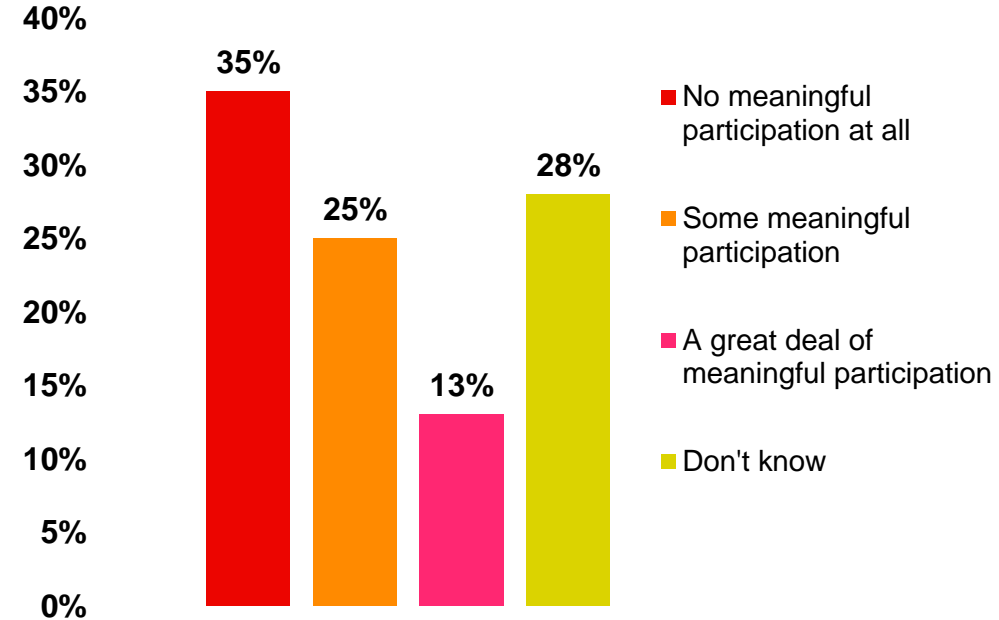


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Debate in UK Parliament

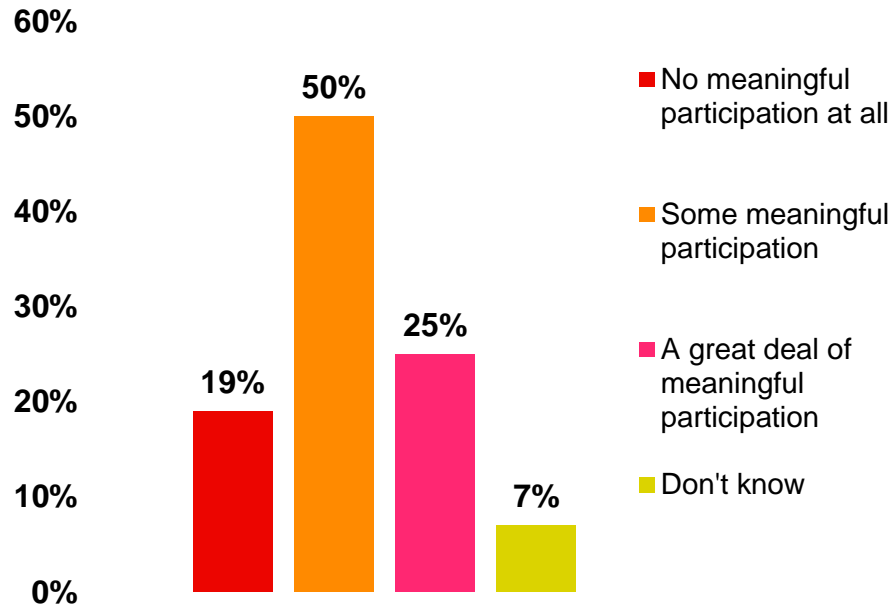


Debate in elected chambers in the Senedd, Holyrood or Stormont

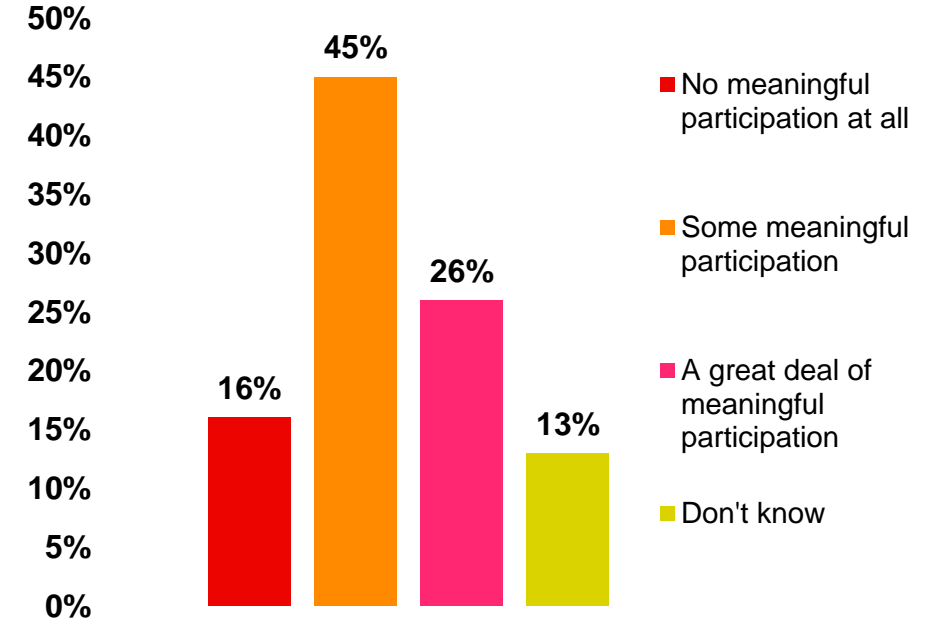


Thinking about the specific issues on which you campaign, how far do you feel you are able to participate meaningfully through the following channels?

In direct discussion with national politicians

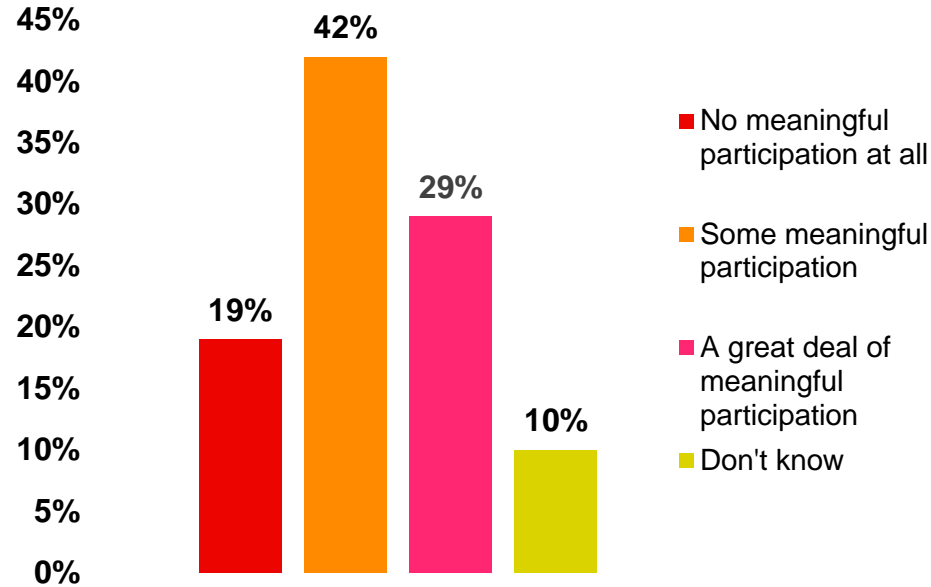


In direct discussion with local politicians

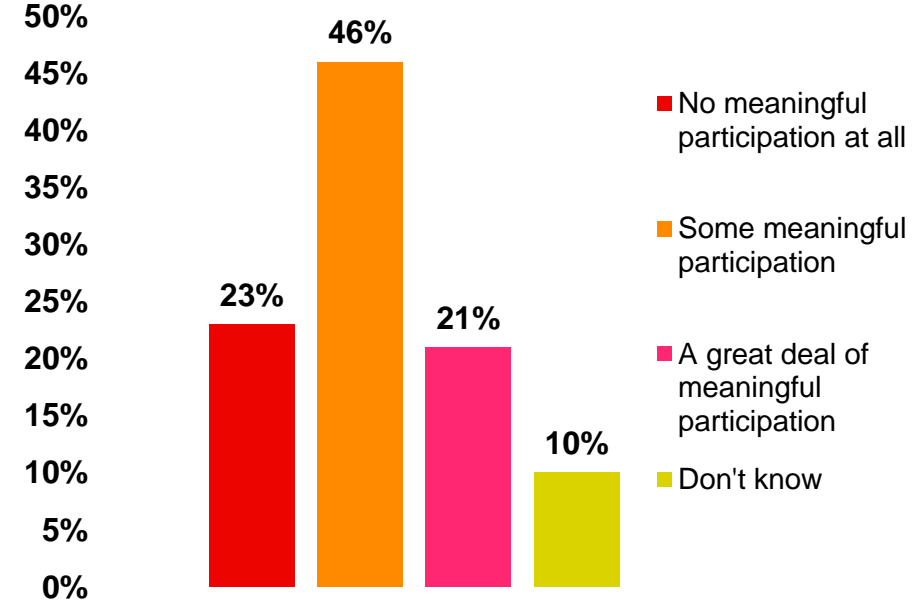


Thinking about the specific issues on which you campaign, how far do you feel you are able to participate meaningfully through the following channels?

In direct discussion with civil servants and/or officials

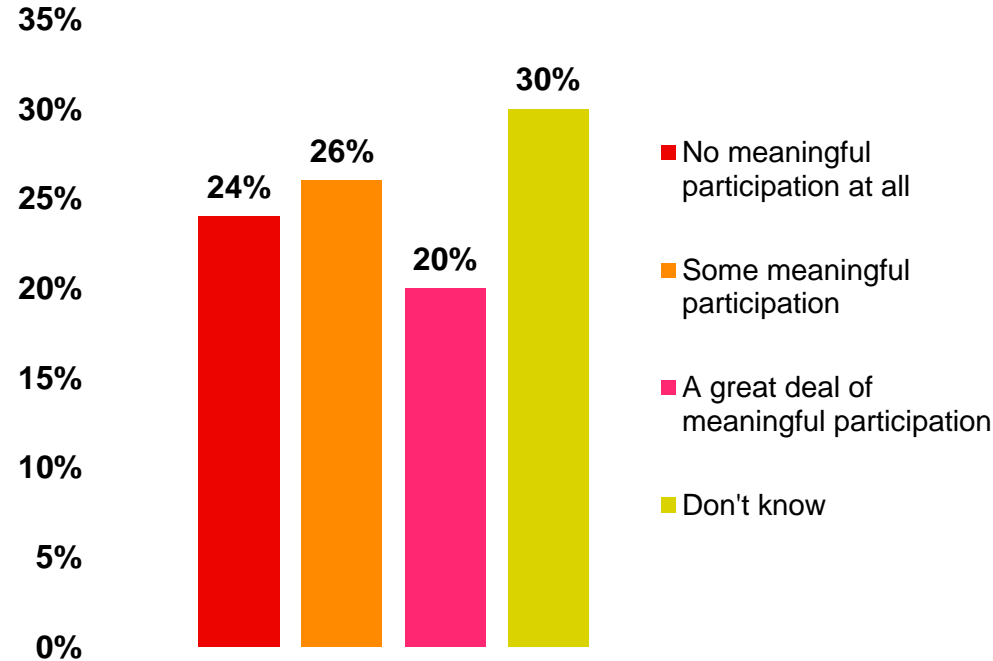


UK Government consultations on future policy and legislation

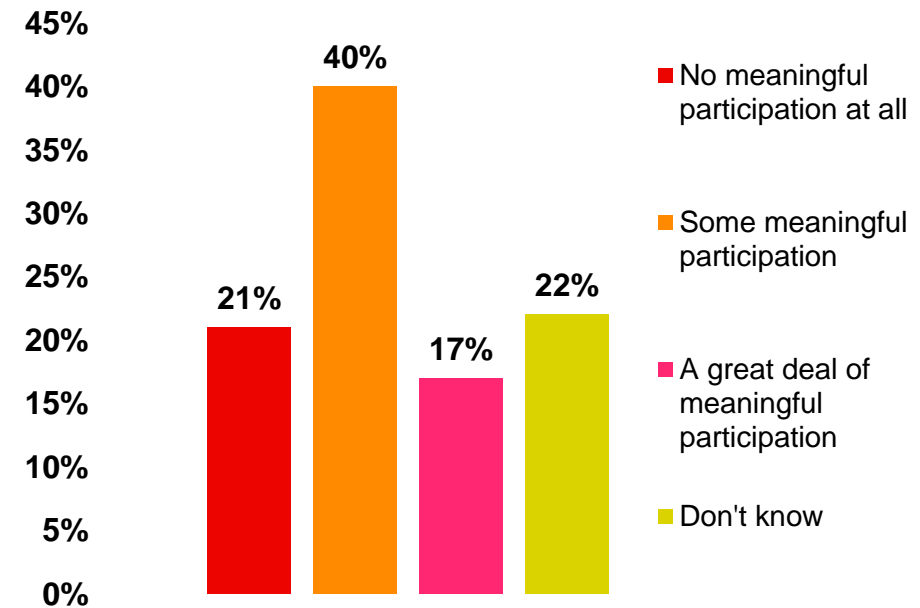


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Devolved administration consultations on future policy and legislation

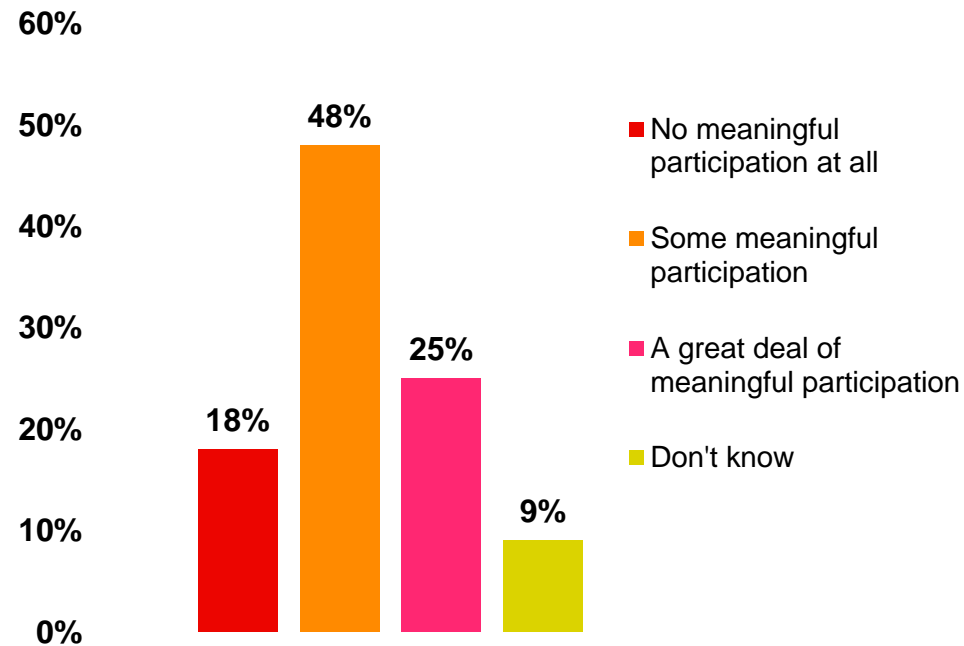


Local/regional consultations on future policy and decisions

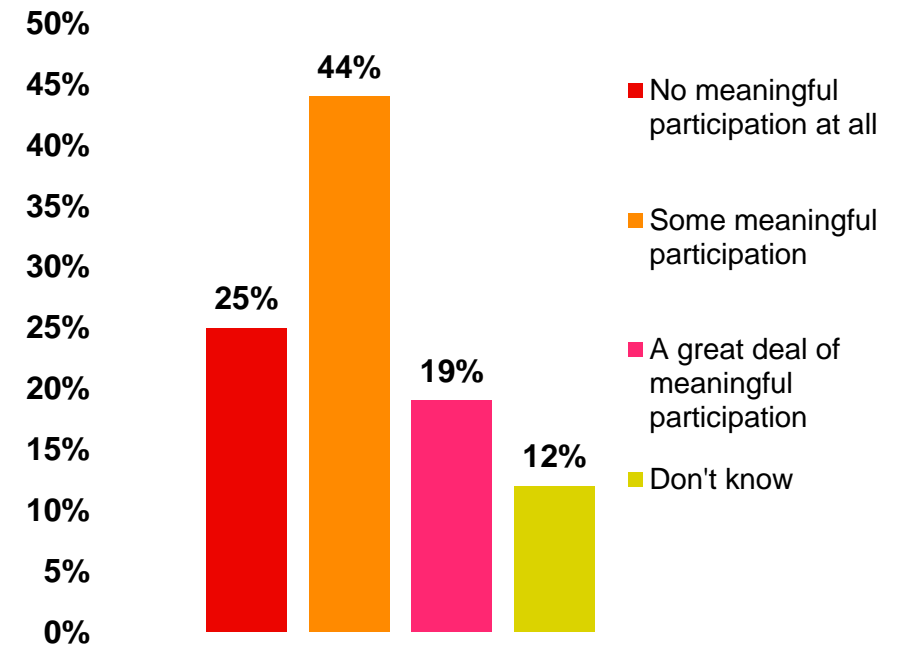


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In the national media (print/online)

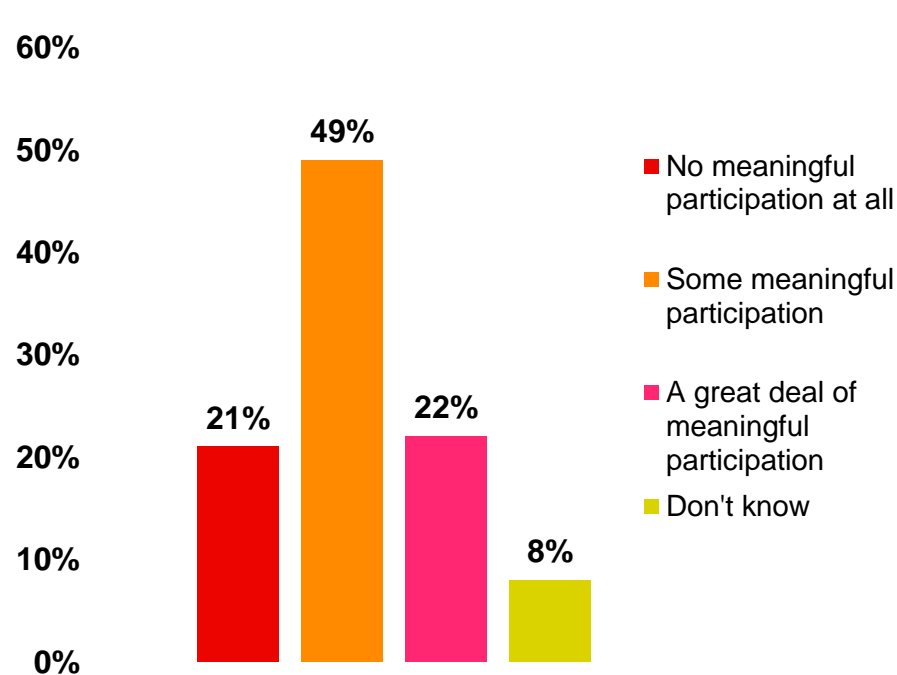


In the national media (broadcast)

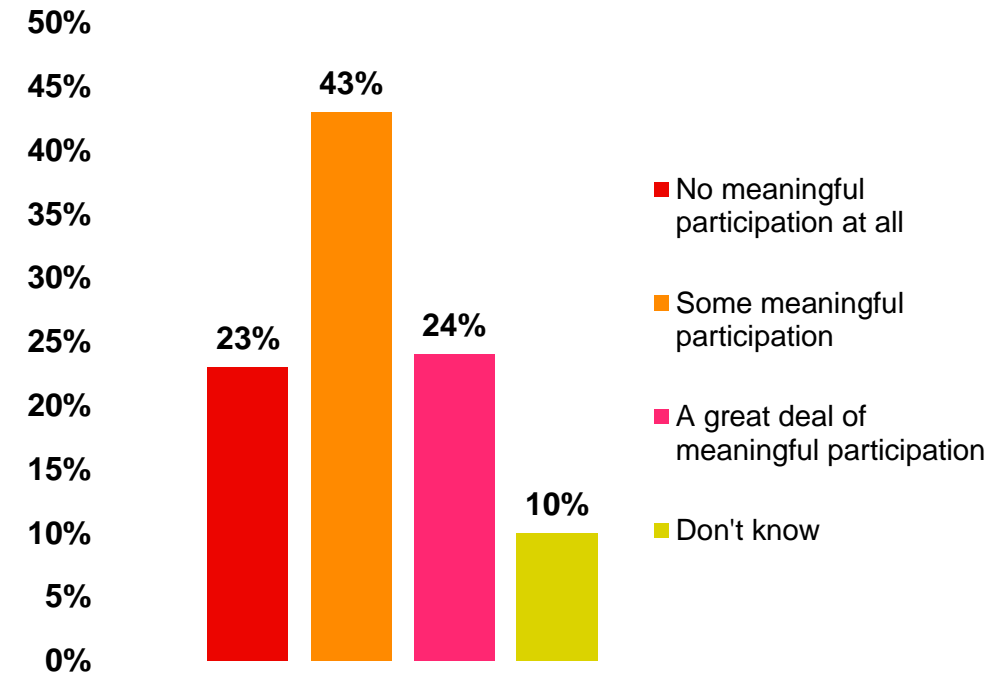


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In the local media (print/online)

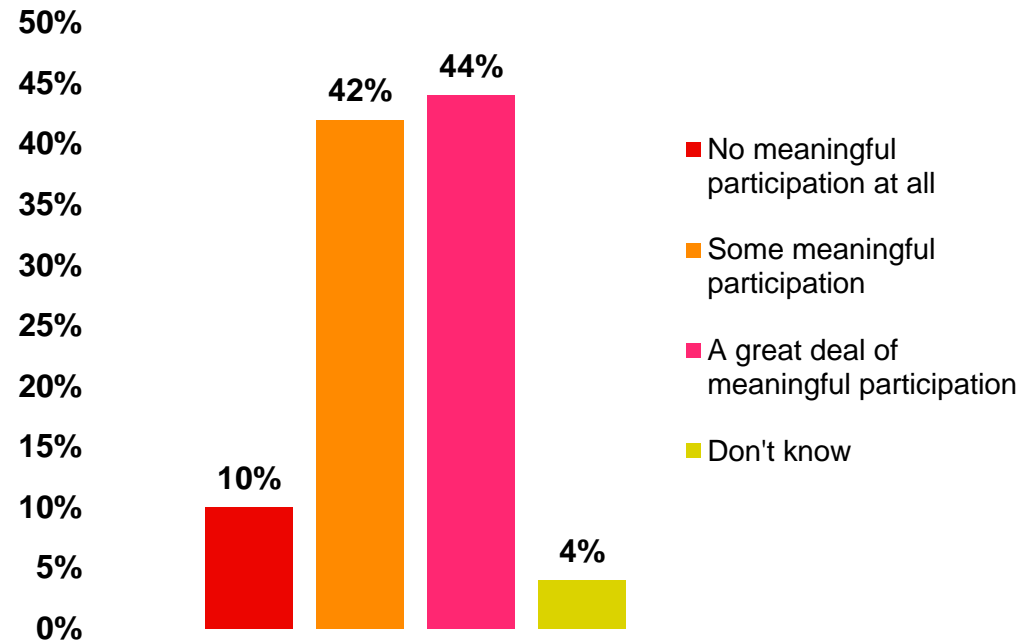


In the local media (broadcast)



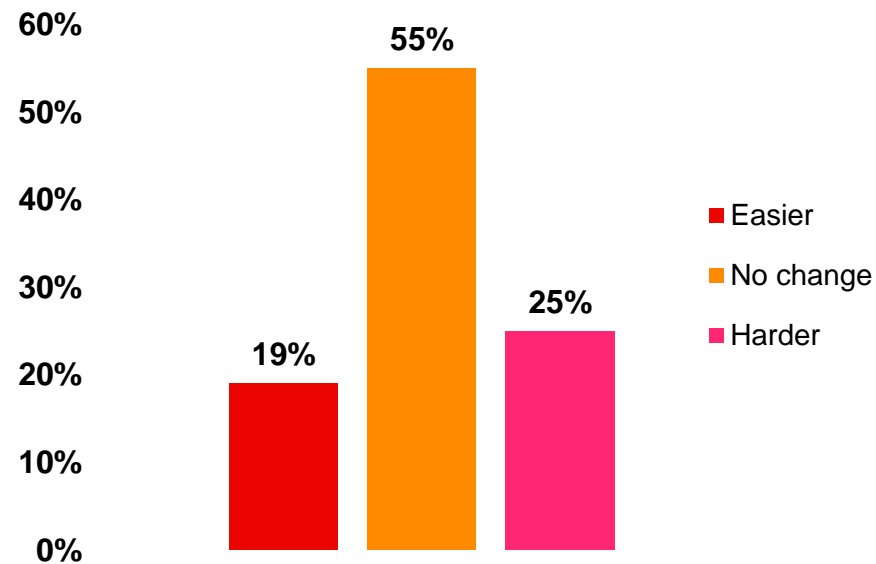
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On social media

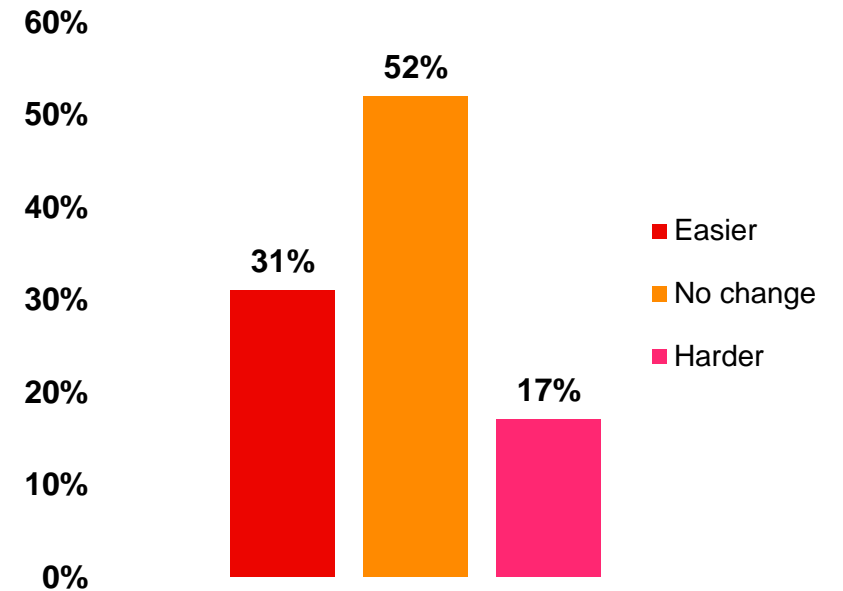


Thinking about the same channels, over the past three years, has it become easier or harder to have your voice heard meaningfully?

Debate at public events run by third-parties

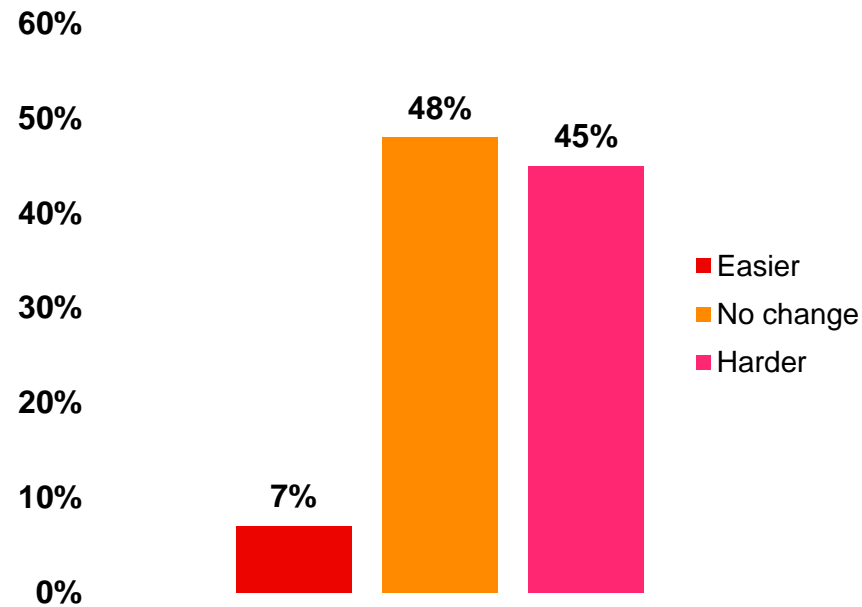


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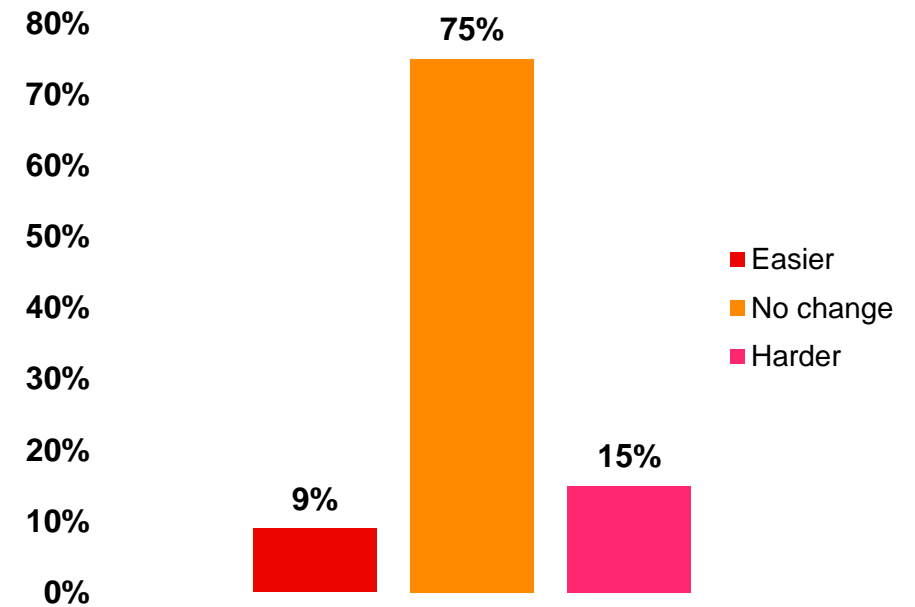


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Debate in UK Parliament

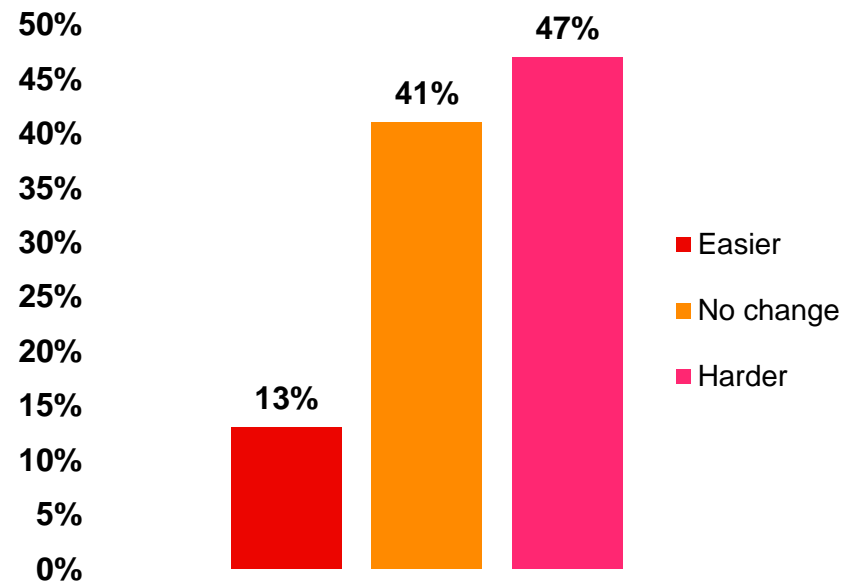


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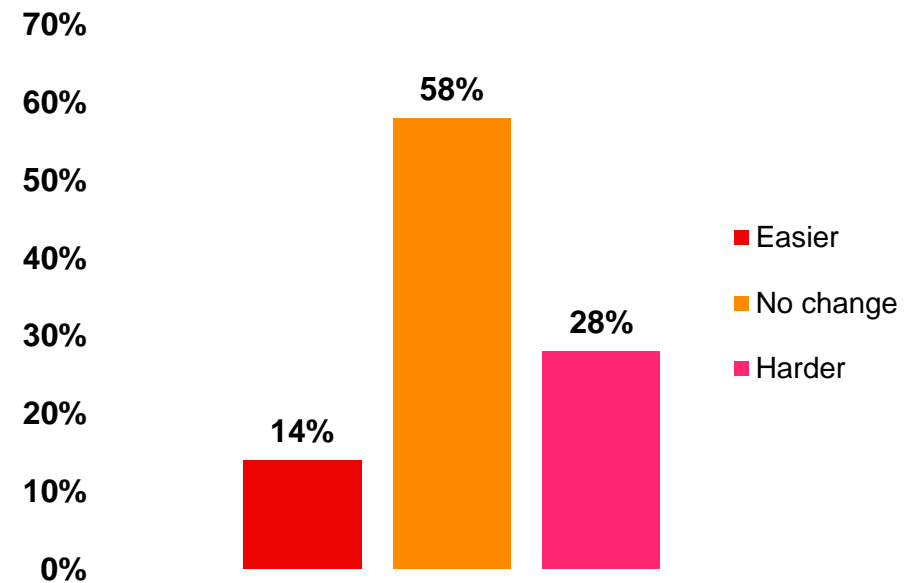


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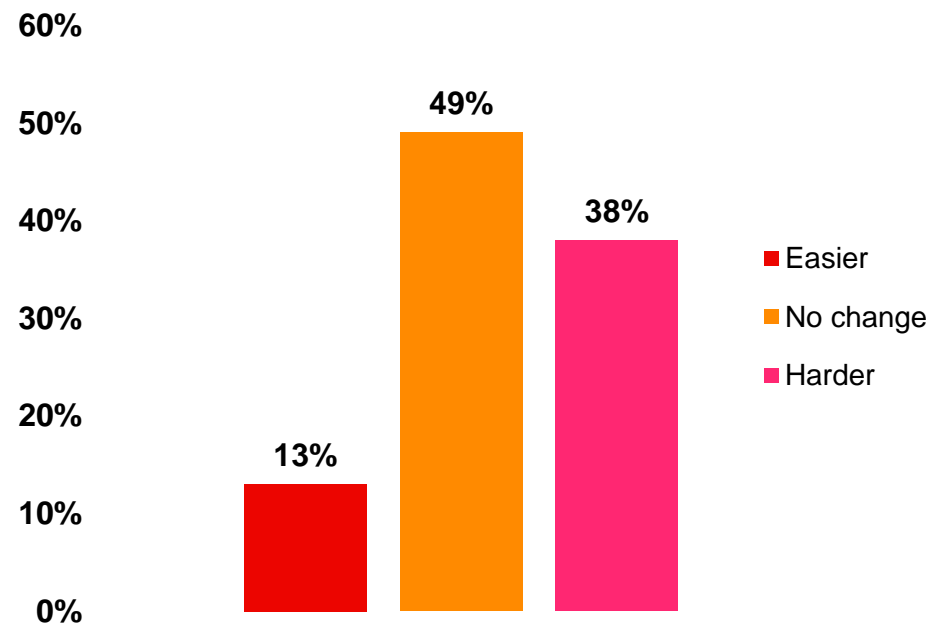


In direct discussion with local politicians

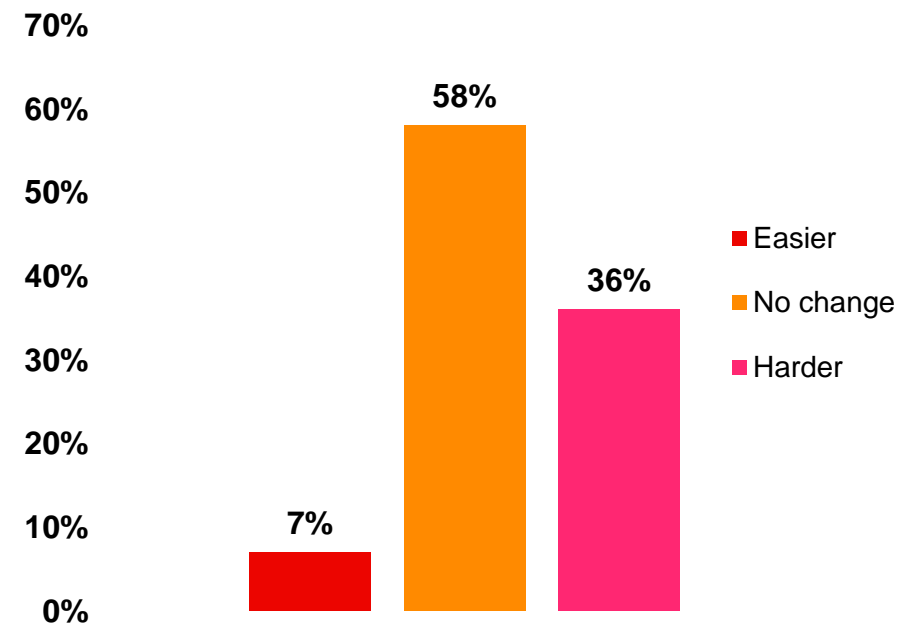


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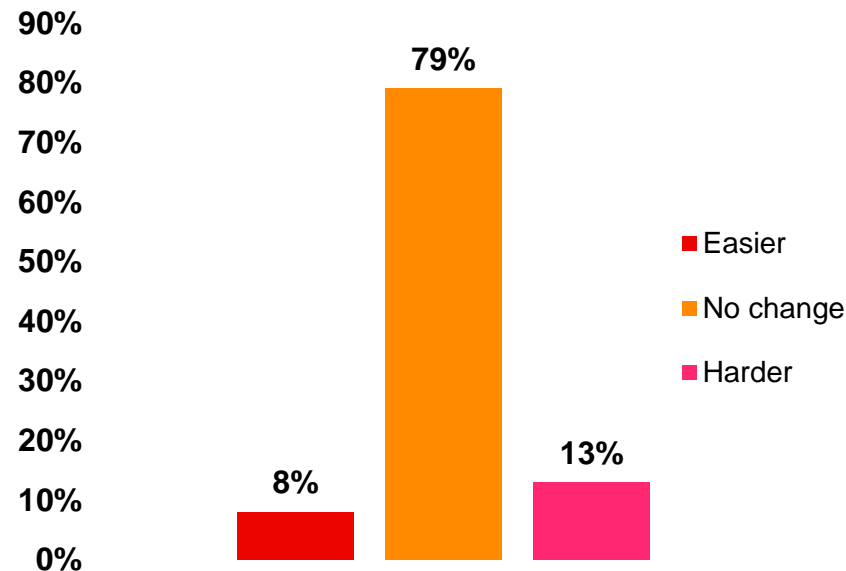


UK Government consultations on future policy and legislation

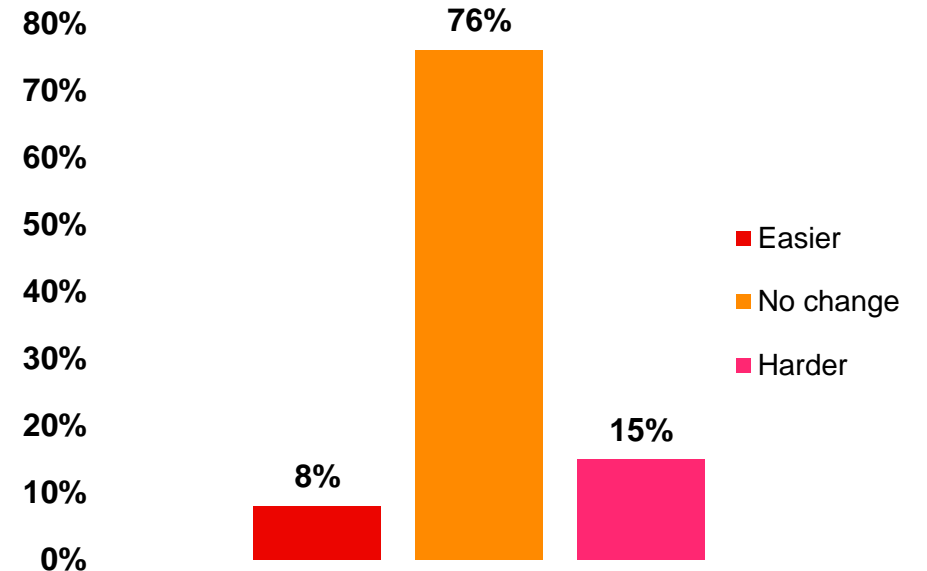


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Devolved administration consultations on future policy and legislation

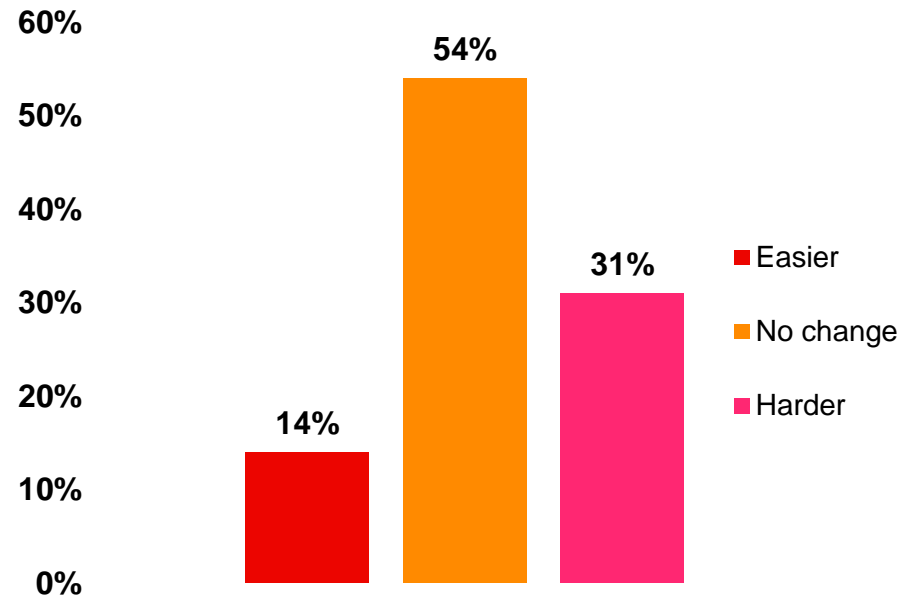


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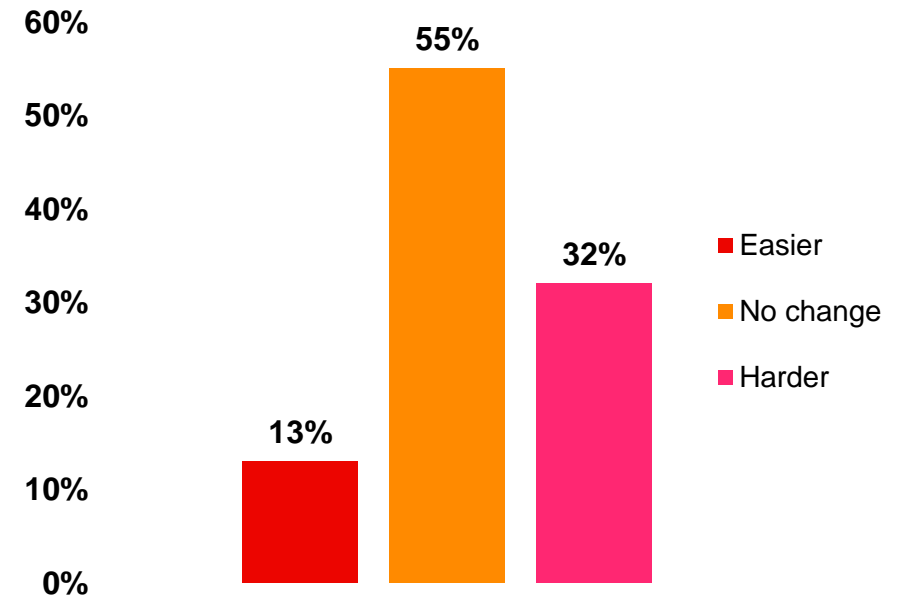


Thinking about the same channels, over the past three years, has it become easier or harder to have your voice heard meaningfully?

In the national media (print/online)

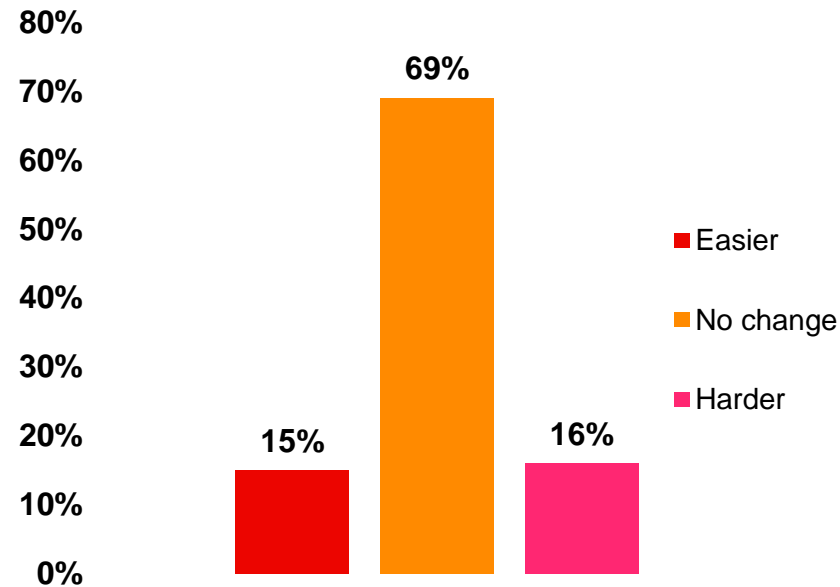


In the national media (broadcast)

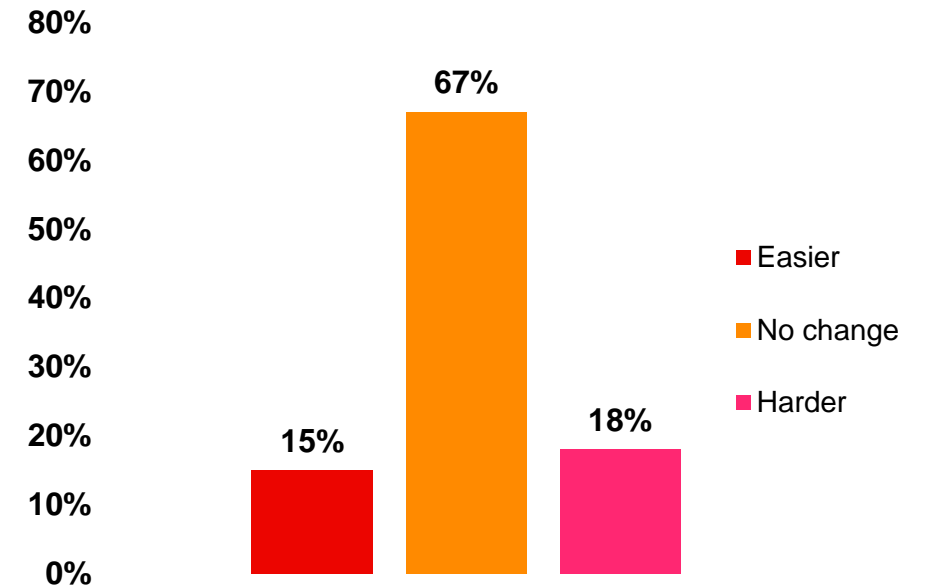


Thinking about the same channels, over the past three years, has it become easier or harder to have your voice heard meaningfully?

In the local media (print/online)

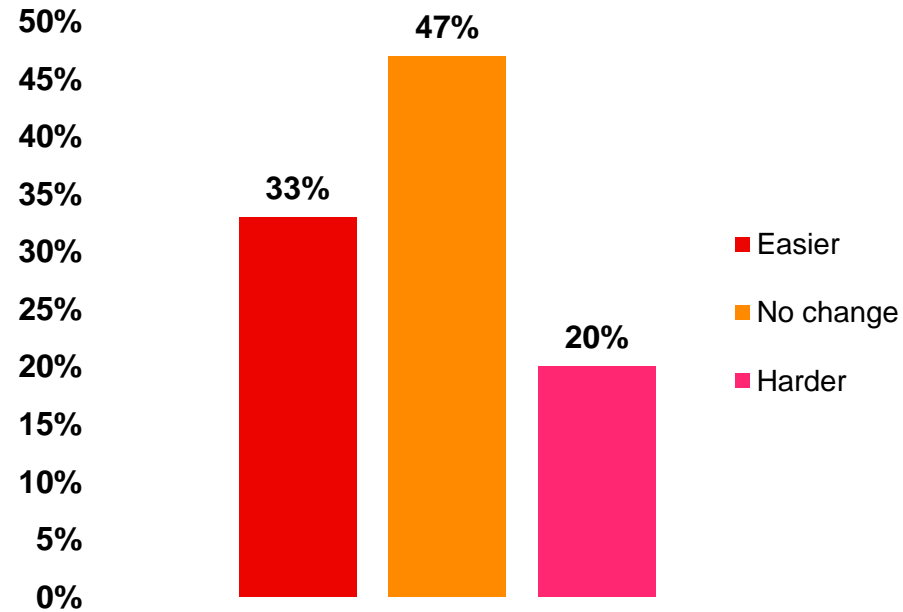


In the local media (broadcast)



Thinking about the same channels, over the past three years, has it become easier or harder to have your voice heard meaningfully?

On social media



Do you have any views about how civil society organisations take part in our national debate?

Top themes:

- **We need to be confident that it's part of our core purpose**

'...they should be unafraid to stand up for their values and for what they are established to do.'

- **We need greater solidarity across civil society and to share our platforms, especially with smaller and community or user-led organisations**

'...robustly defend sector players who are aggressively singled out'

'A more balanced playing field which allows for smaller, specialist organisations to take part is urgently needed.'

- **We need to better connect with the experiences we advocate about (e.g. staff profile, how we work with people, how we share platforms)**

'...empower the [people] that we benefit to take part in campaigning and local or national debate - ordinary people understanding how they can make a difference.'



About you

Who responded?

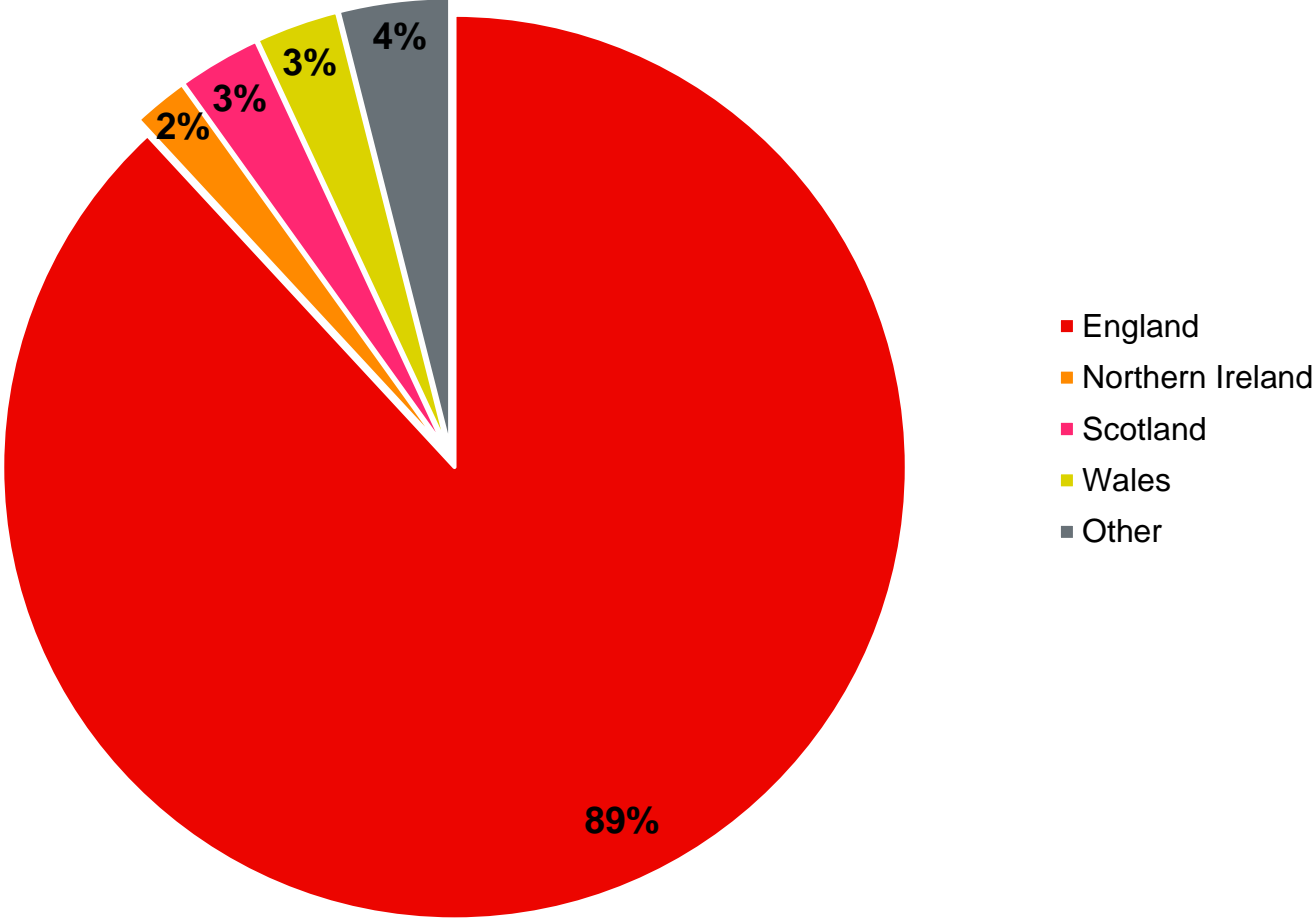
118 respondents

NB Percentages may not total 100% where figures have been rounded to one decimal place or where participants were able to select more than one answer

Do you think of yourself as a campaigner, a change-maker, an activist, or something else?

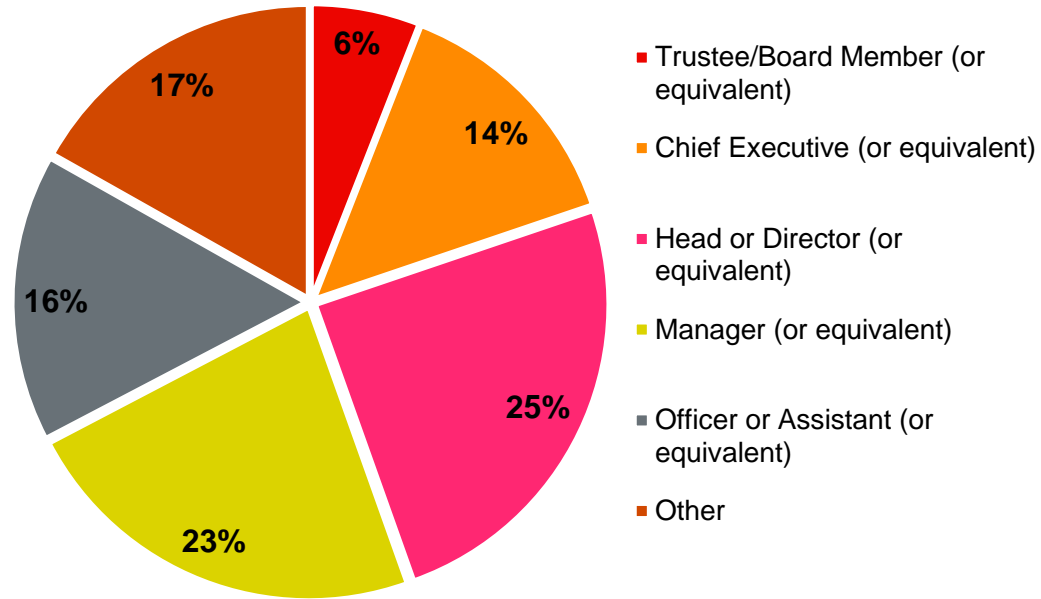


Where are you based?

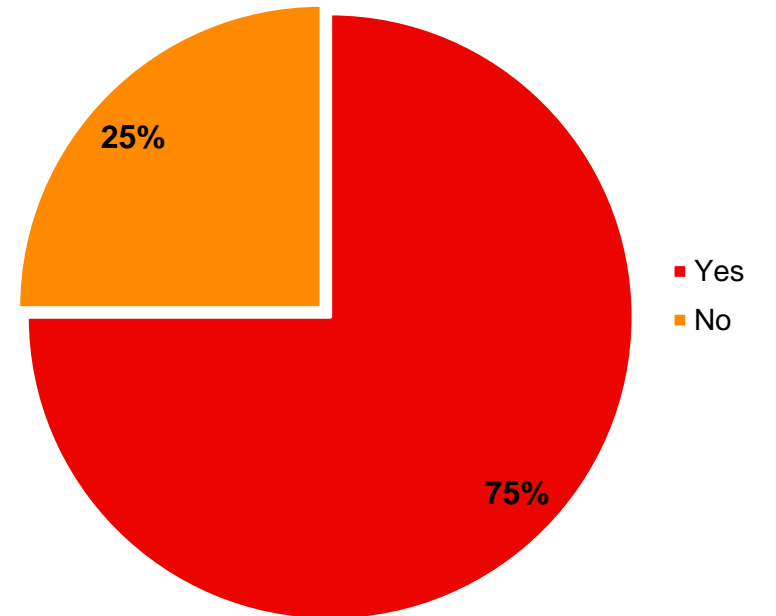




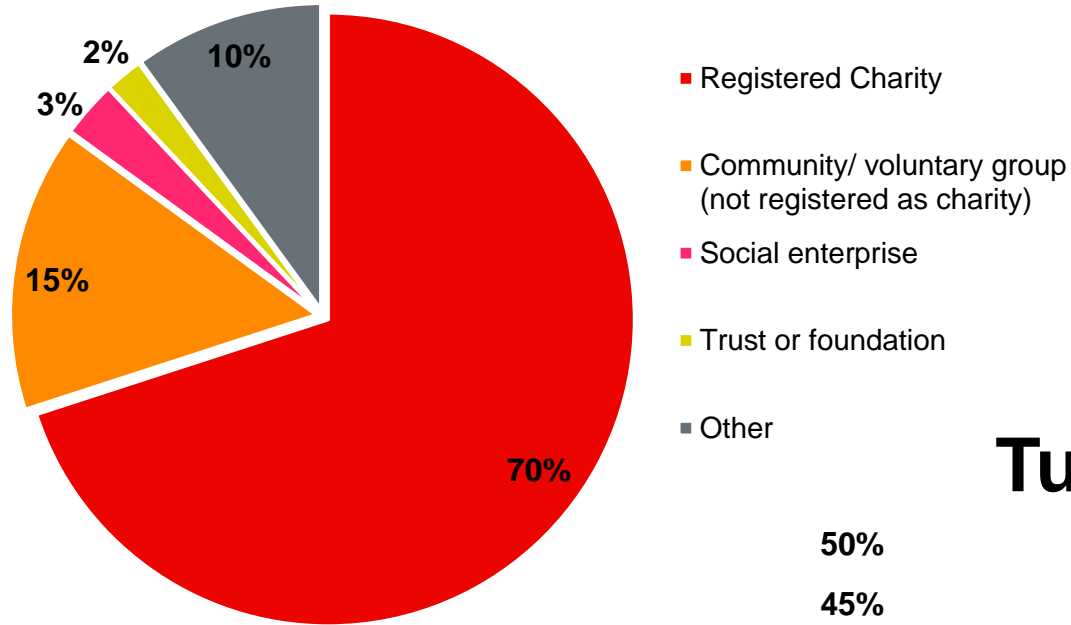
Job title



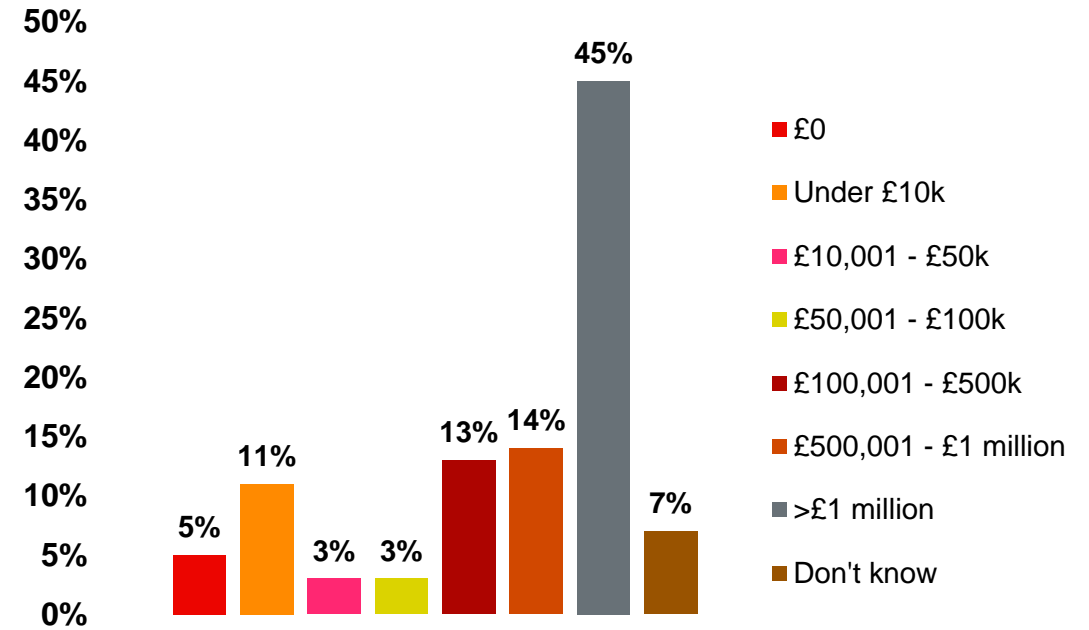
Are you paid for this role?



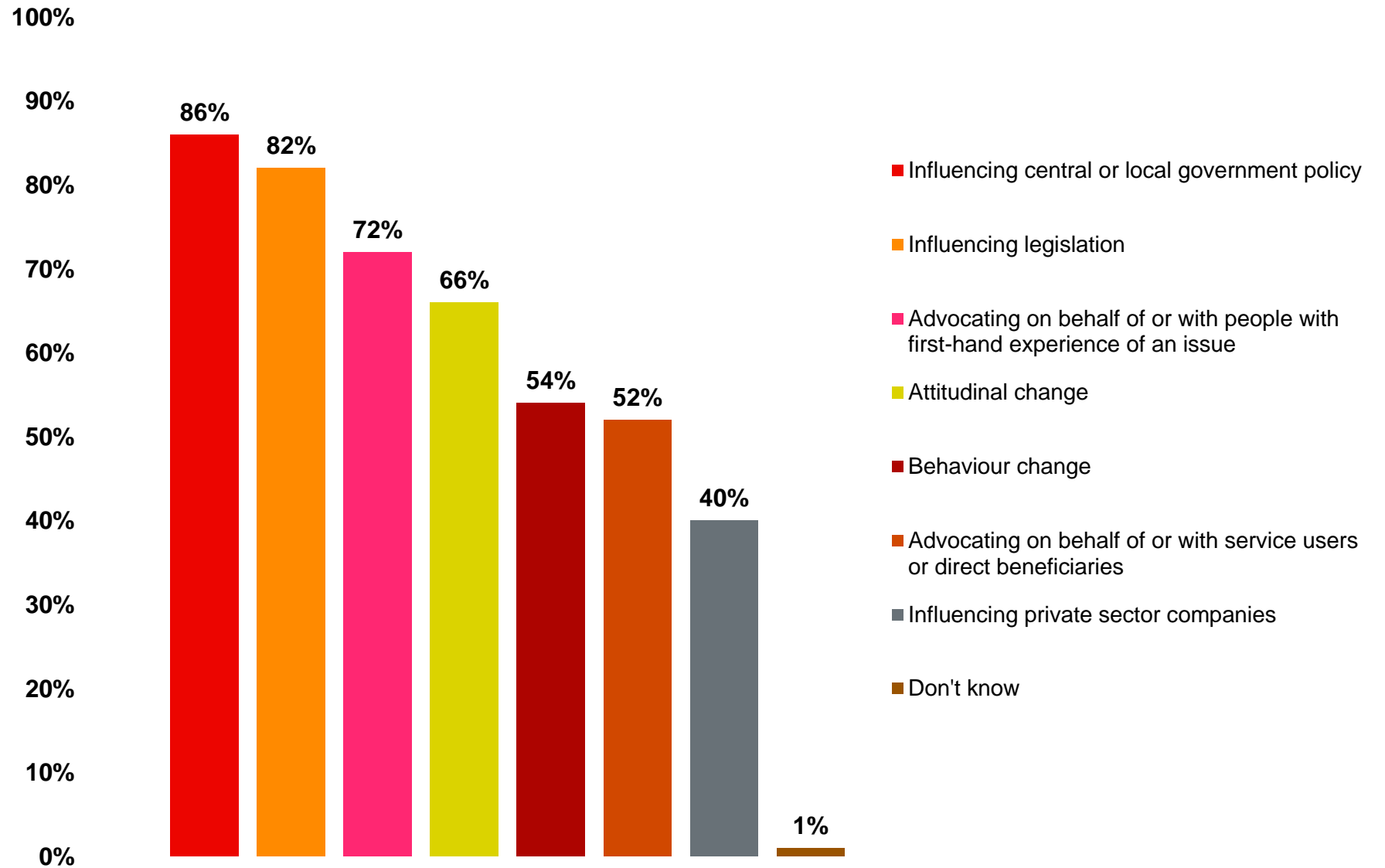
Type of organisation



Turnover of organisation



Organisations' campaigning activities



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