



Third Sector Employability Forum Research – No One Left Behind Analysis

August 2024

Introduction to TSEF

TSEF exists to facilitate dialogue and knowledge sharing between third sector employability providers across Scotland, as well as with central and local government bodies to help deliver a strong, vibrant and effective employability system.

We aim to raise the voice and profile of the third sector's diverse and collective contribution to employability outcomes in Scotland, and to inform employability policy so that it best meets the needs of people seeking support.

TSEF represents and engages a diverse membership - in scale, scope and geography.

If you are a third sector organisation interested in joining TSEF's free online community, please email helloTSEF@gmail.com



Introduction to Research

- **TSEF, alongside DeMontfort University, surveyed third sector employability organisations**
 - Over 100 questions about Third Sector Organisations (TSOs), their approach to employability, No One Left Behind (NOLB), Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs), service design, commissioning and good practice
 - Open to any TSO that considers employment and skills support as part of their remit
 - Survey opened in April 2024 and closed on 17 May 2024
 - 45 responses- 40 responses used in analysis (4 organisations submitted multiple responses -merged so only one response per organisation has been analysed)
 - 4 organisations submitted anonymous responses

Introduction to Research

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- Over 100 questions about Third Sector Organisations (TSOs), their approach to employability, No One Left Behind (NOLB), Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs), service design, commissioning and good practice
- Survey timeline April - May 2024
- 40 responses used in analysis (multiple responses from same organisations were merged)

No One Left Behind – positive progress

‘How you feel about employment policy in Scotland after today?’

Feedback from Third Sector Providers attending TSEF events in June 2023 and June 2024

June 2024



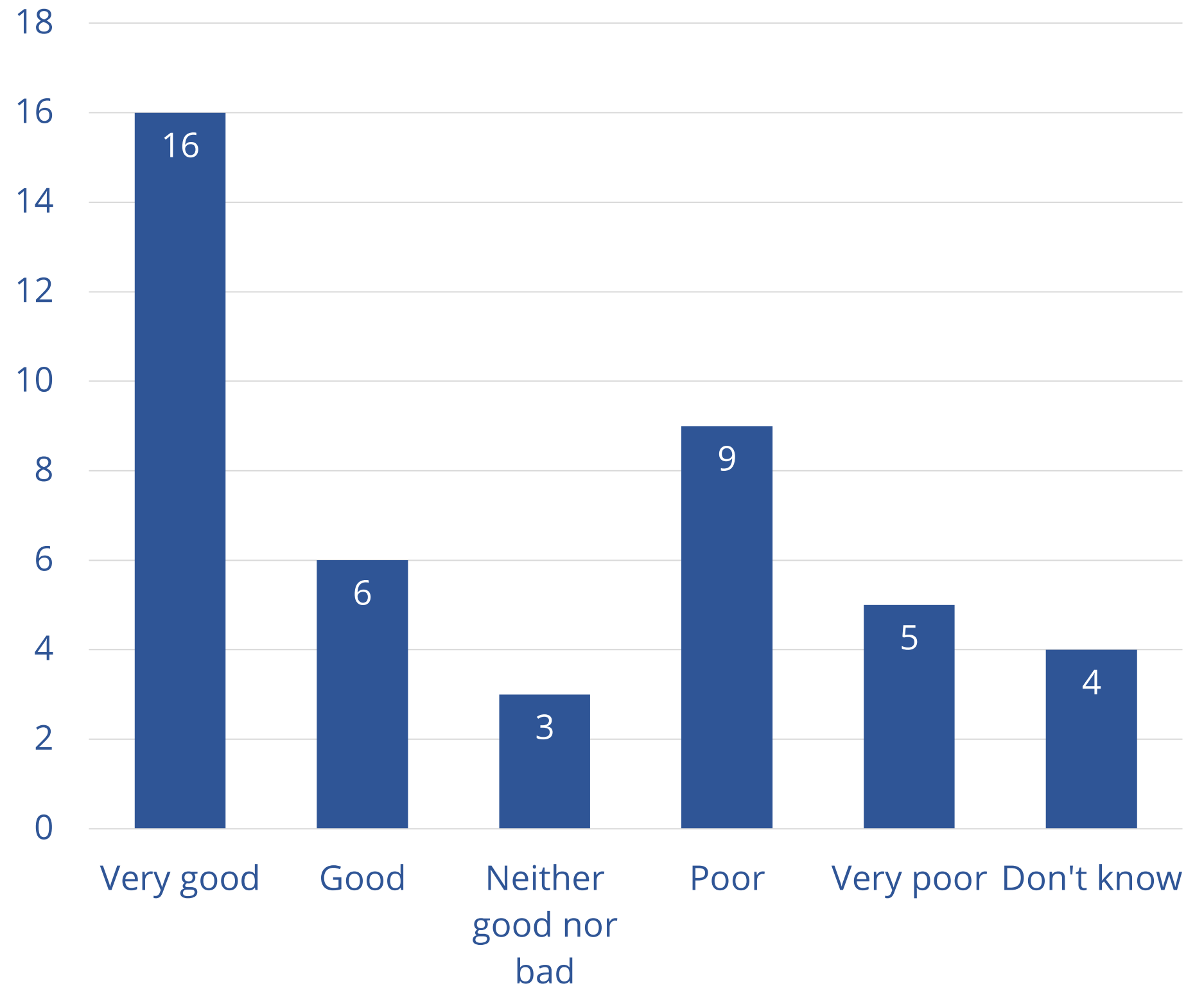
June 2023

Awareness of local employability partnerships

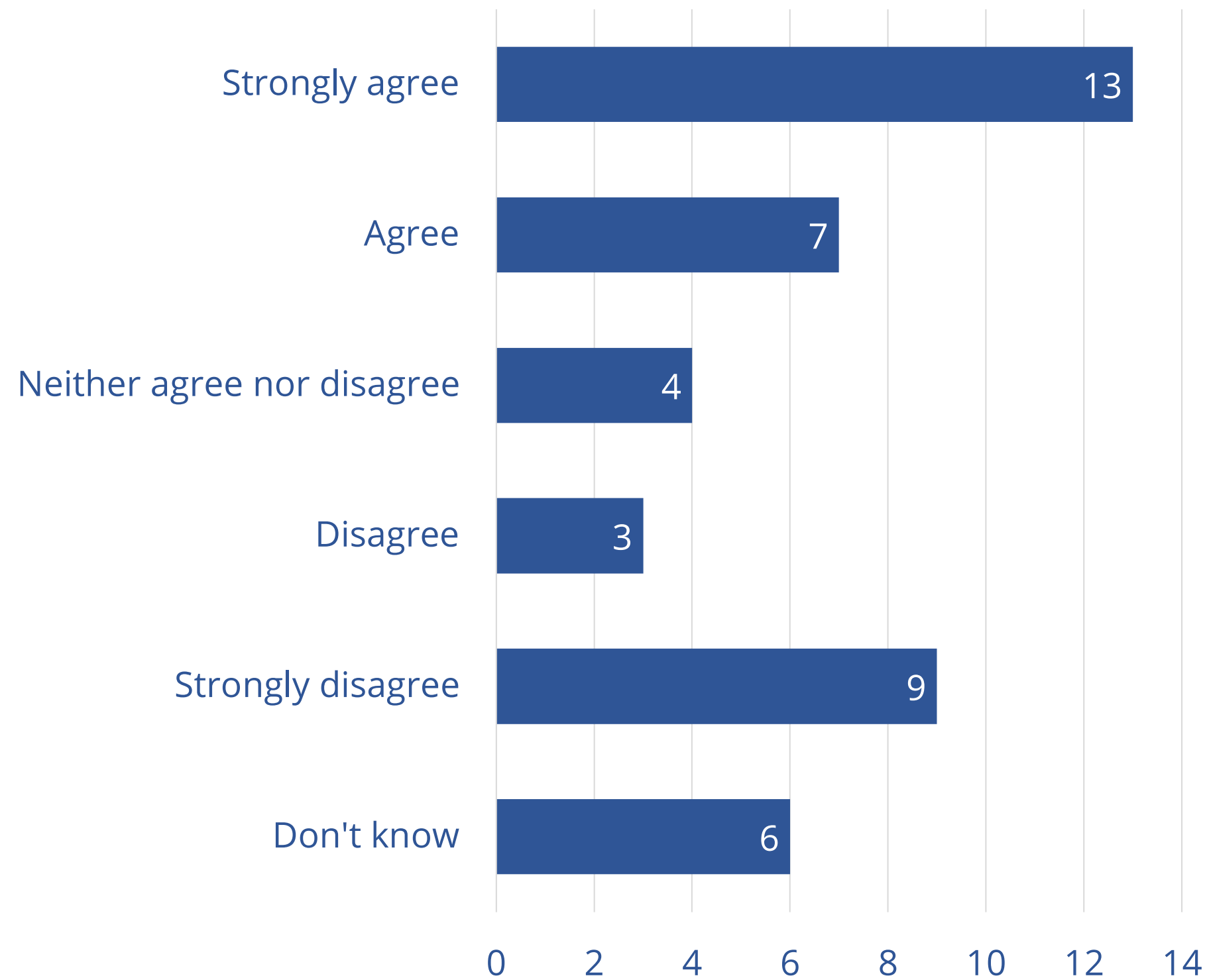
- **36 of the 40 responding organisations are aware of their local LEP (90%)**
 - Five organisations mentioned more than one LEP in their response
- **The LEPs in Edinburgh and Stirling had the most mentions (n=7; 19.4%)**
 - The LEPs in Dundee, Midlothian, and West Lothian were each mentioned three times (8.3%)
- **For just over half of the LEPs mentioned, the lead third sector organisation was highlighted (n=25; 52.1%)**
 - An additional four responses (8.3%) mentioned names of individuals, but not organisation names

LEP Communication and engagement

- **45.8% of LEP mentions rated the communications and engagement on issues relating to employability and the third sector as good or very good (n=22)**
- 29.2% rated the communications and engagement as poor or very poor (n=14)



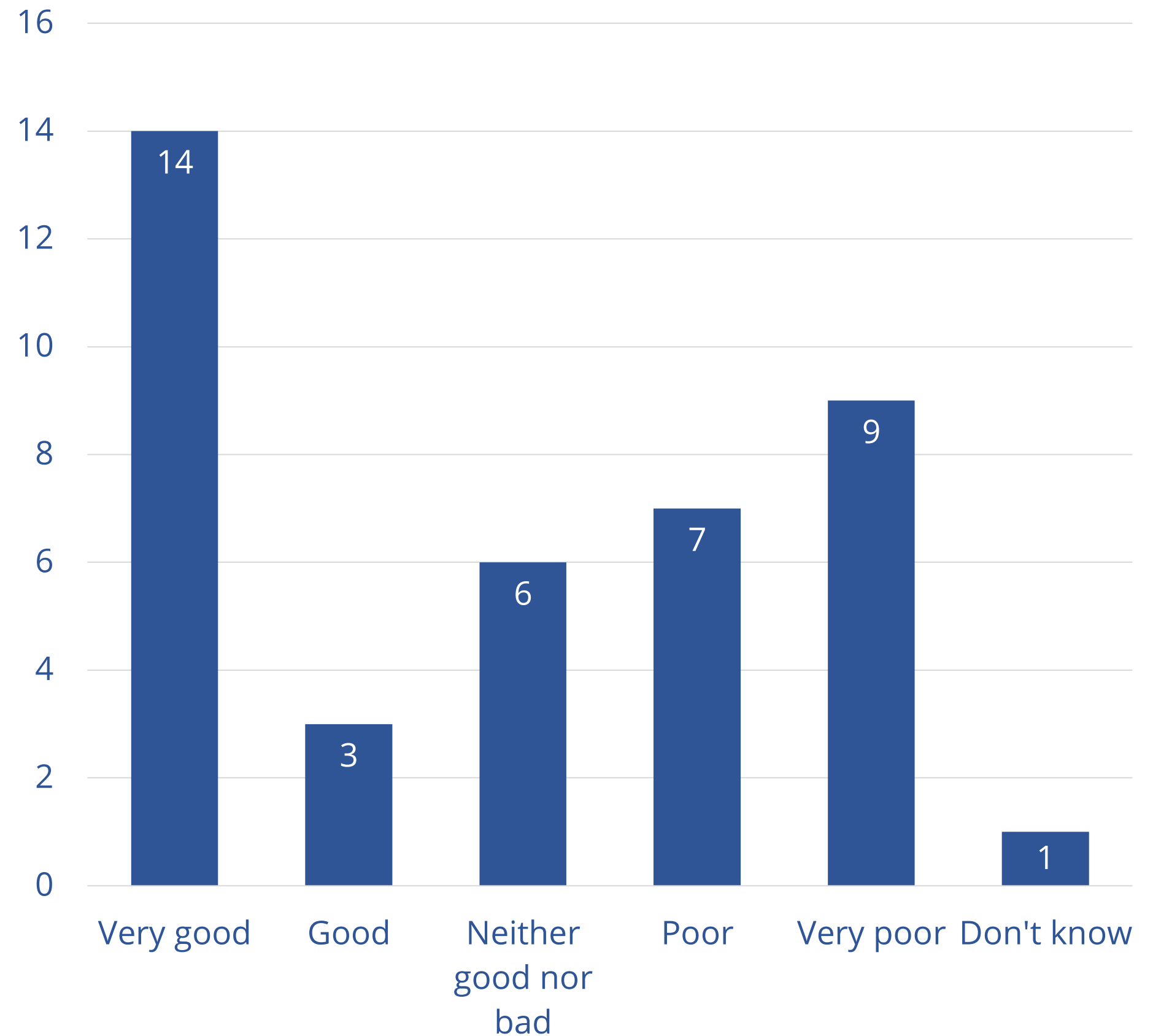
Representation and voice of third sector on LEP



- **41.7% of responses agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The third sector has strong representation and voice on the Local Employability Partnership" (n=20)**
- 25% (n=12) disagreed with the statement

LEP support of third sector

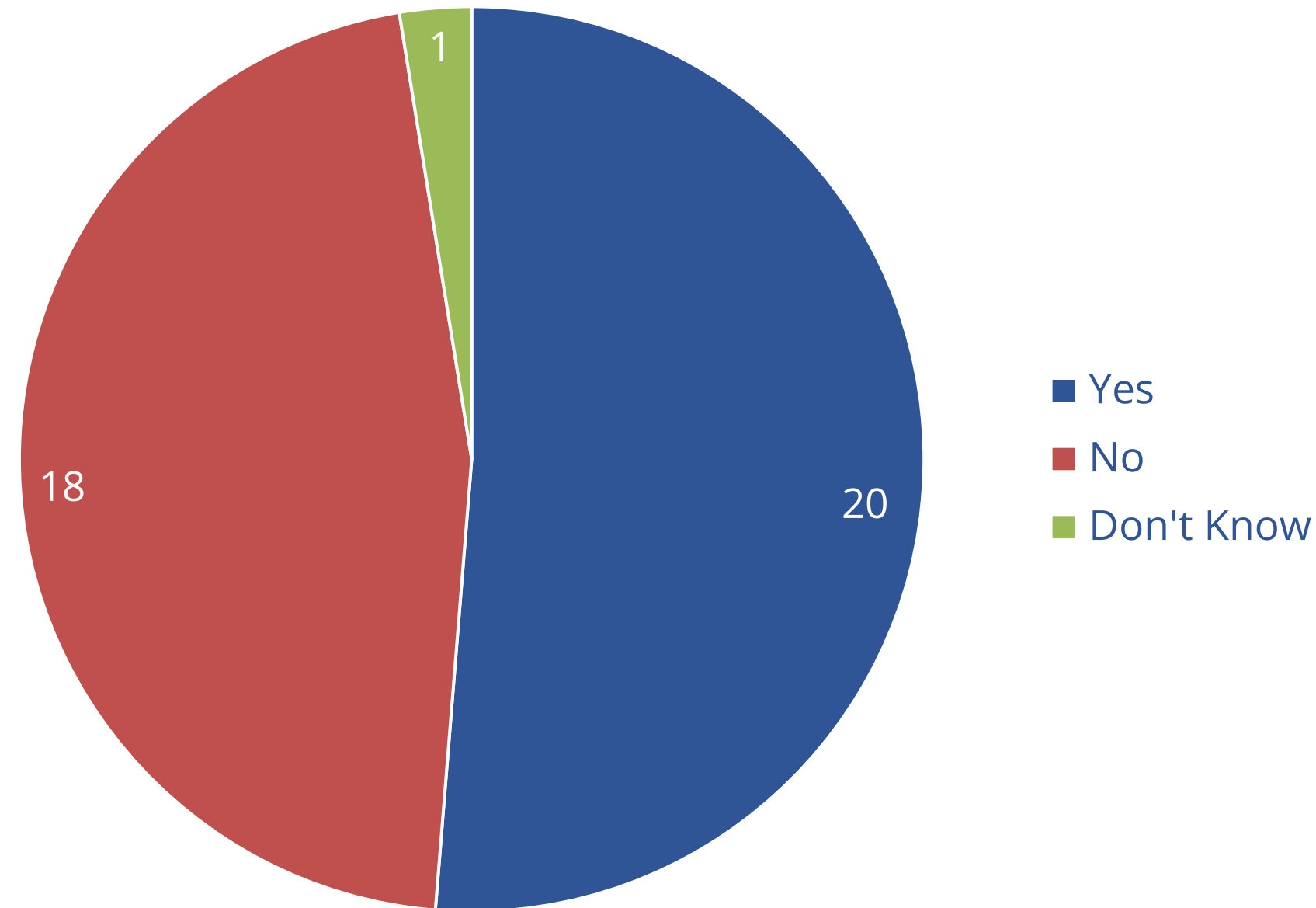
- **35.4% of responses would describe the LEPs efforts to support third sector engagement in commissioning and delivery of employability services in their area as good or very good (n=17)**
- 16 responses (33.3%) would describe the LEP efforts as poor or very poor



Other recommendations from LEP comments

- Foster genuine partnership between the LA, LEP, and TSOs
- Ensure fair and balanced representation of TSOs within the LEP
- Develop a more holistic approach to employability that considers both short-term and long-term needs and draws on future skills needs/LMI
- Recognise the unique challenges and opportunities of rural and island communities
- By addressing these issues, stakeholders can work together to create a more effective and inclusive employability support system

Knowledge of SAtSD, co-design, or co-production



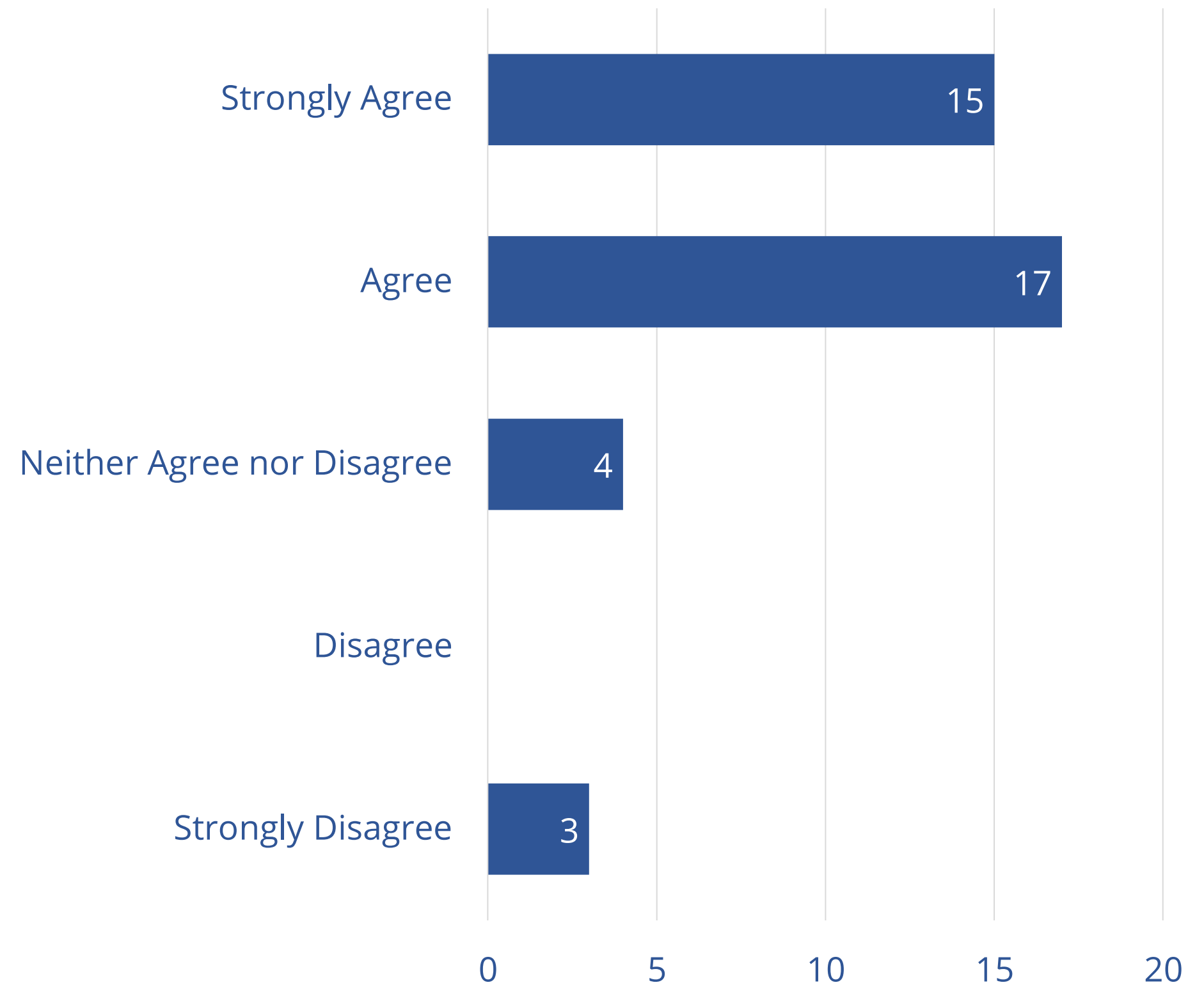
- **Half of the responding organisations (n=20; 50.0%) said that they had heard of the Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtSD), co-design, or co-production**
- Only two less (n=18, 45.0%) said that they previously had not heard of SAtSD, co-design, or co-production

Examples of good practice in employability

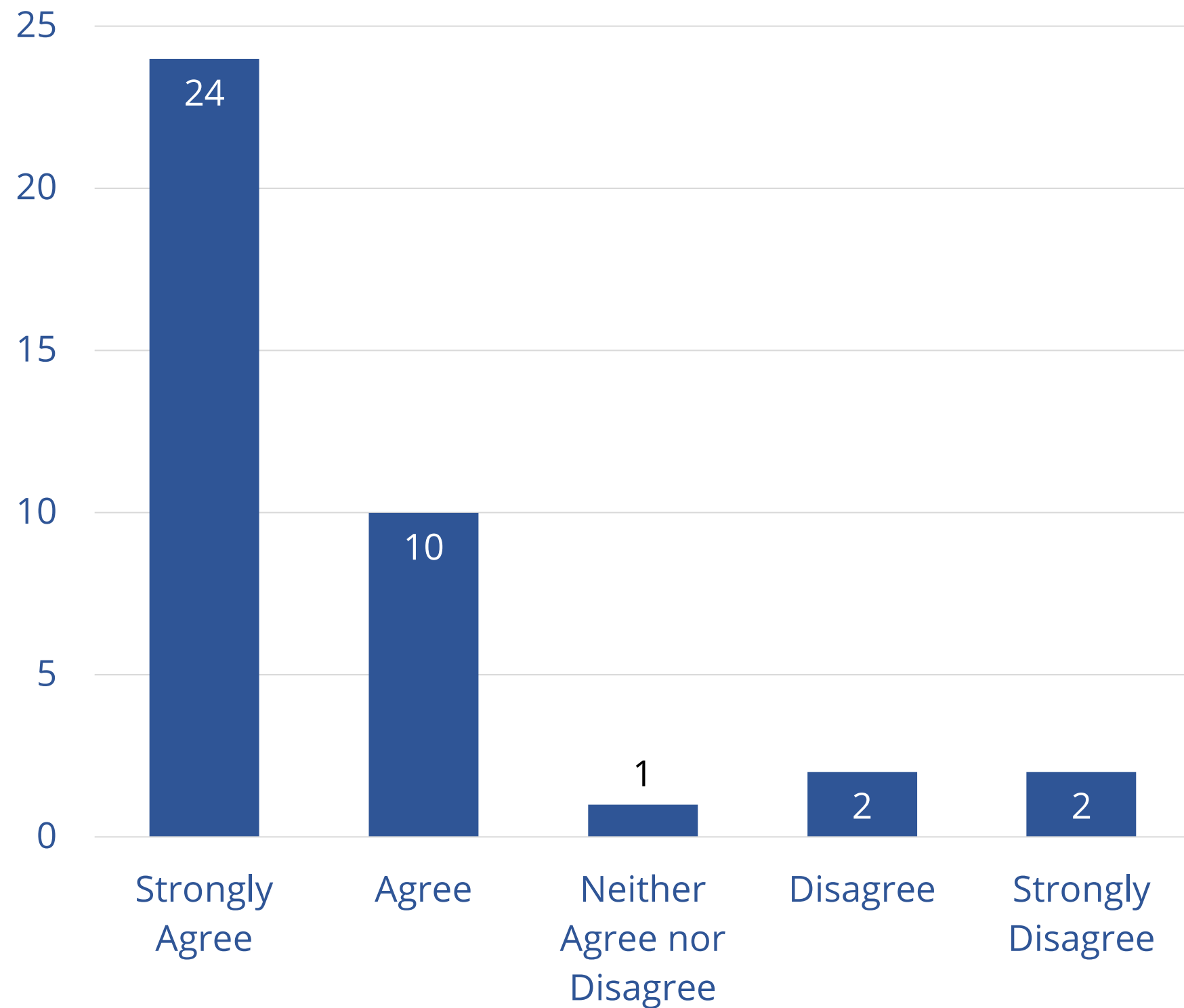
- Promotion of co-production and user involvement in service design and delivery across all areas
- Local Authorities offer longer-term funding and contracts for TSOs
- Ensure fair compensation for TSO contributions in service delivery
- Improve communication and transparency in commissioning processes
- By adopting these recommendations, stakeholders can create a more collaborative and effective system for delivering employability services

Including experience in service design

- **80.0% of respondents agreed that it is essential to include those with experience of unemployment and employment support in service design**
- Only three organisation (7.5%) disagreed with the statement



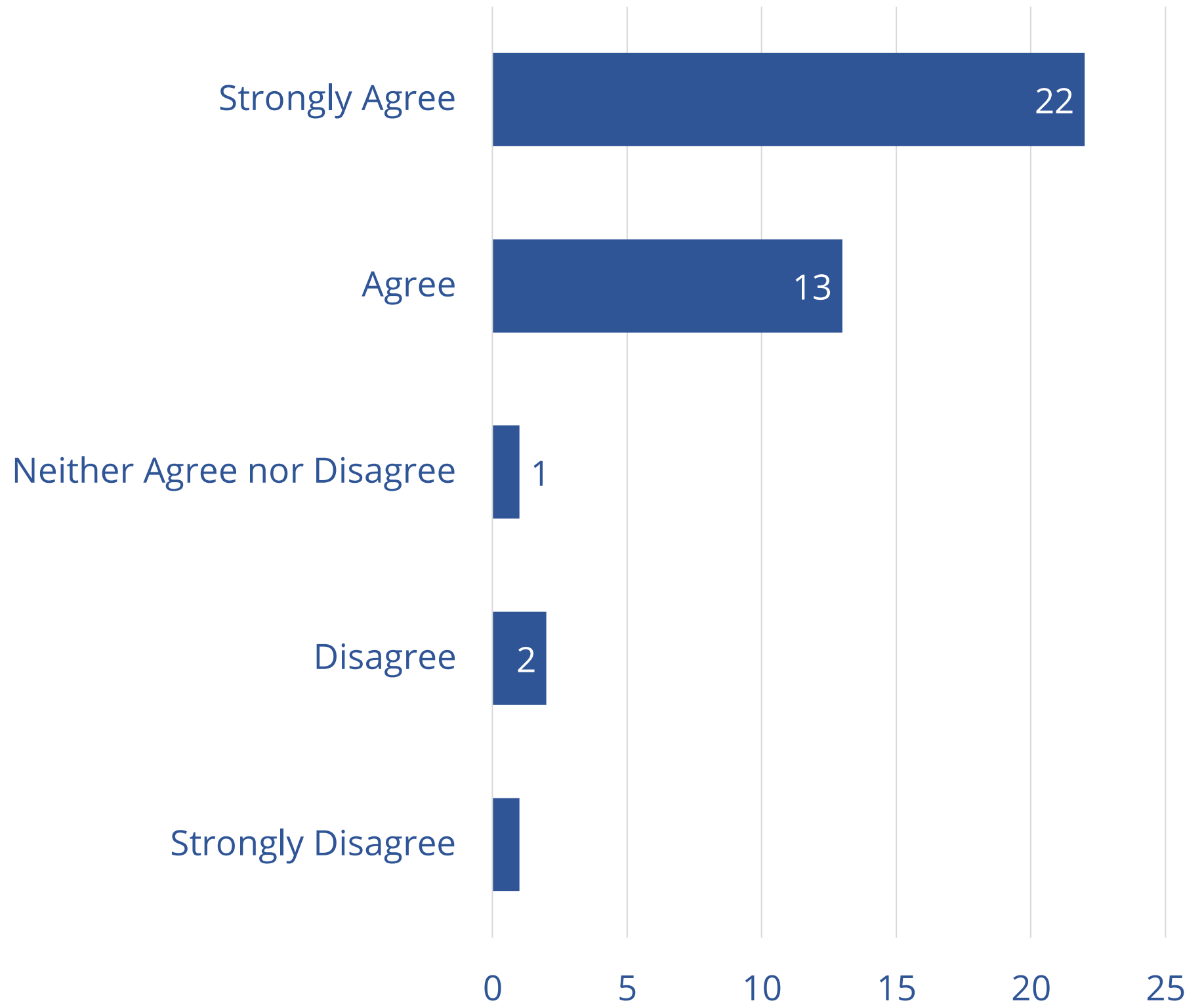
The need for holistic approach



- **34 organisations (85.0%) agreed with the statement that 'employment support only works when it takes a holistic approach to understand service user needs'**
- Two organisations (5.0%) disagreed with the statement, and two organisations (5.0%) strongly disagreed

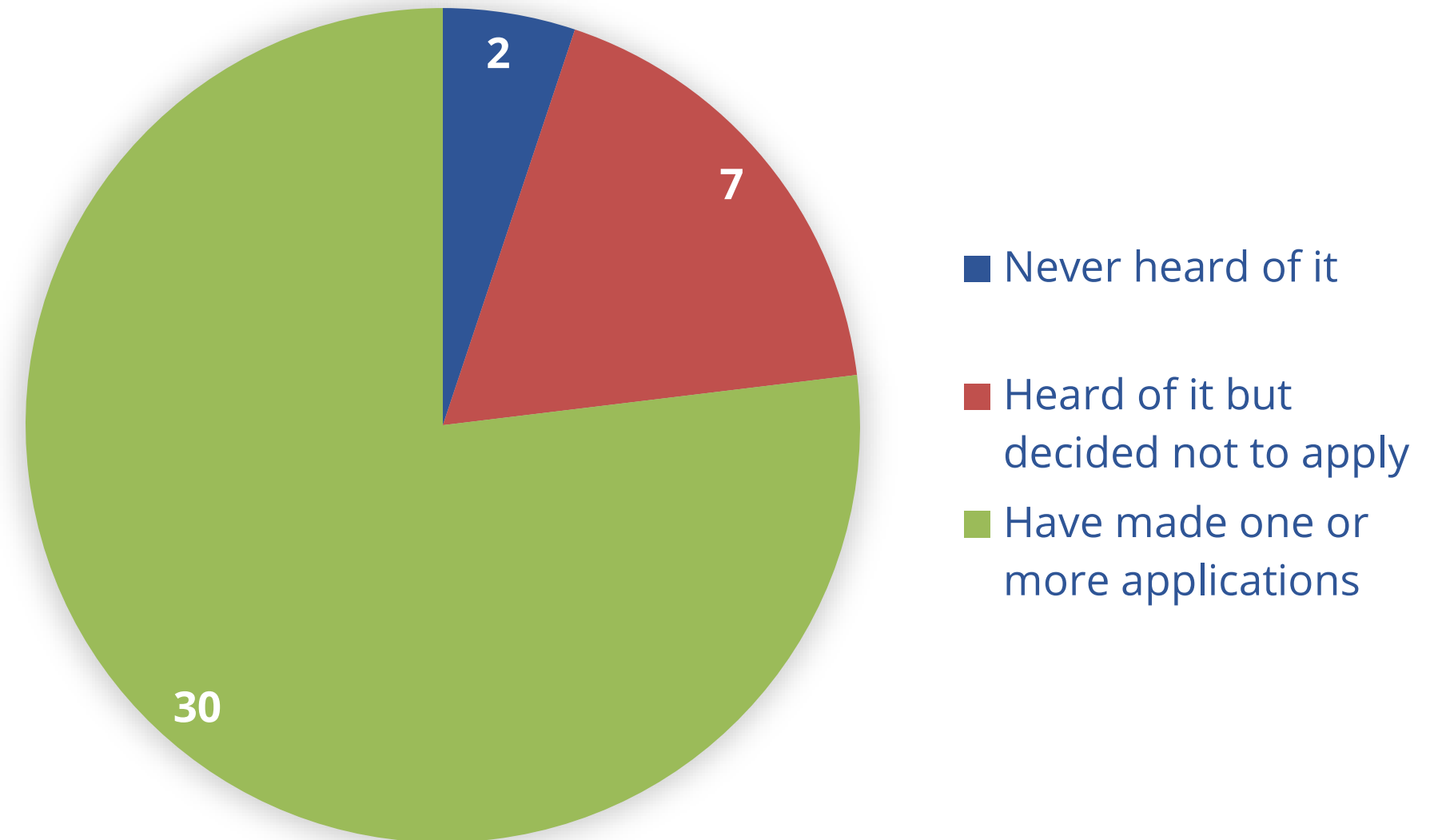
Service is tailored to client needs

- **22 organisations (55.0%) strongly agreed that services need to be tailored to meet a client's needs**
 - 32.5% of organisations (n=13) agreed with the statement
 - Three organisations (7.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement

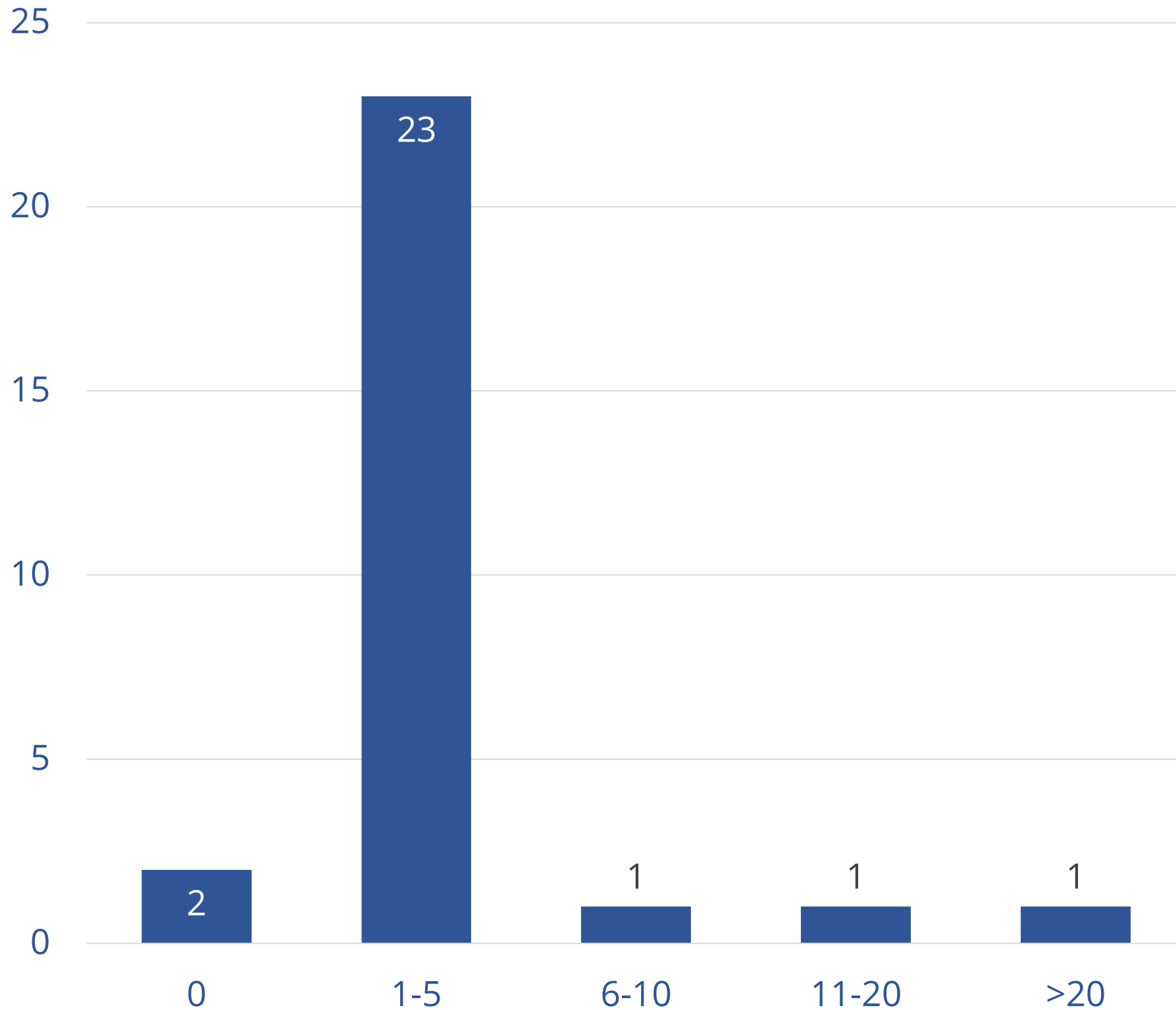


Awareness of No One Left Behind

- When questioned on their awareness of and engagement with No One Left Behind (NOLB), three-quarters of respondents (n=30; 75.0%) have made at least one application to NOLB
- Two organisations (5.0%) said that they have never heard of NOLB

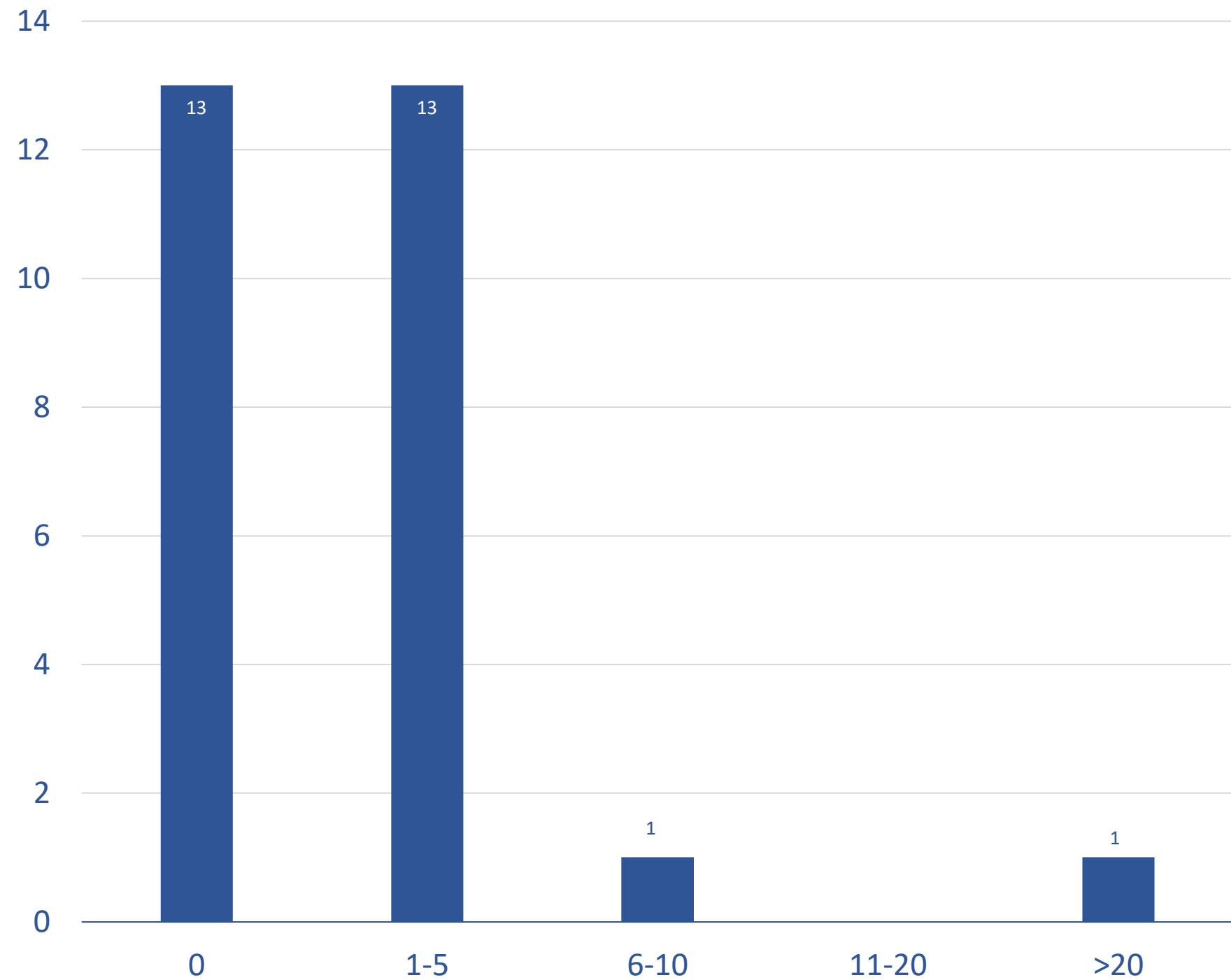


Successful NOLB applications



- **23 of the organisations that had made applications for NOLB funding have been successful between one and five times**
- One organisation has had success 11-20 times, and one organisation has had more than 20 successful NOLB applications

Unsuccessful NOLB applications



- **28 organisations had made unsuccessful applications for NOLB funding**
 - One organisation had been unsuccessful over 20 times
 - There were 13 organisations with no unsuccessful applications, and the same number with 1-5 unsuccessful applications

Why did you not apply for NOLB

Focus on targets

- Providers feel the fast-employment targets are too strict and conflict with a holistic approach to support individuals

Exclusion of key groups

- It is felt that the tender process can exclude organisations that prioritise individual needs over unrealistic expectations

Bureaucracy and red tape

- Some felt that the application process for NOLB can be overly complex and time-consuming
- The focus on paperwork can overshadow client outcomes

Inadequate funding

- It was felt that the funding is insufficient for delivering high-quality services
- Some felt the funding structure is fragmented and lacks strategic direction

What is going well – NOLB management & commissioning

Focus on local needs

- Allows funding to be directed towards specific community needs, such as rural areas
- Opportunities for collaboration and partnership between organisations

Positive experience with local authorities – some local authorities were highlighted as having

- Straight forward application processes
- Supportive and responsive management teams
- Effective grant delivery reaching those most in need

What could be improved – NOLB management & commissioning (1)

Short-term funding

- Creates instability for organisations and hinders long-term planning
- May negatively impact on service delivery and client outcomes
- Make it difficult to employ staff using fair work practices

Administrative burden

- Excessive reporting requirements are time-consuming and deter participation
- The application process can be complex and inaccessible for smaller organisations
- Data collection may be intrusive and discourage client engagement

What could be improved – NOLB management & commissioning (2)

Funding distribution

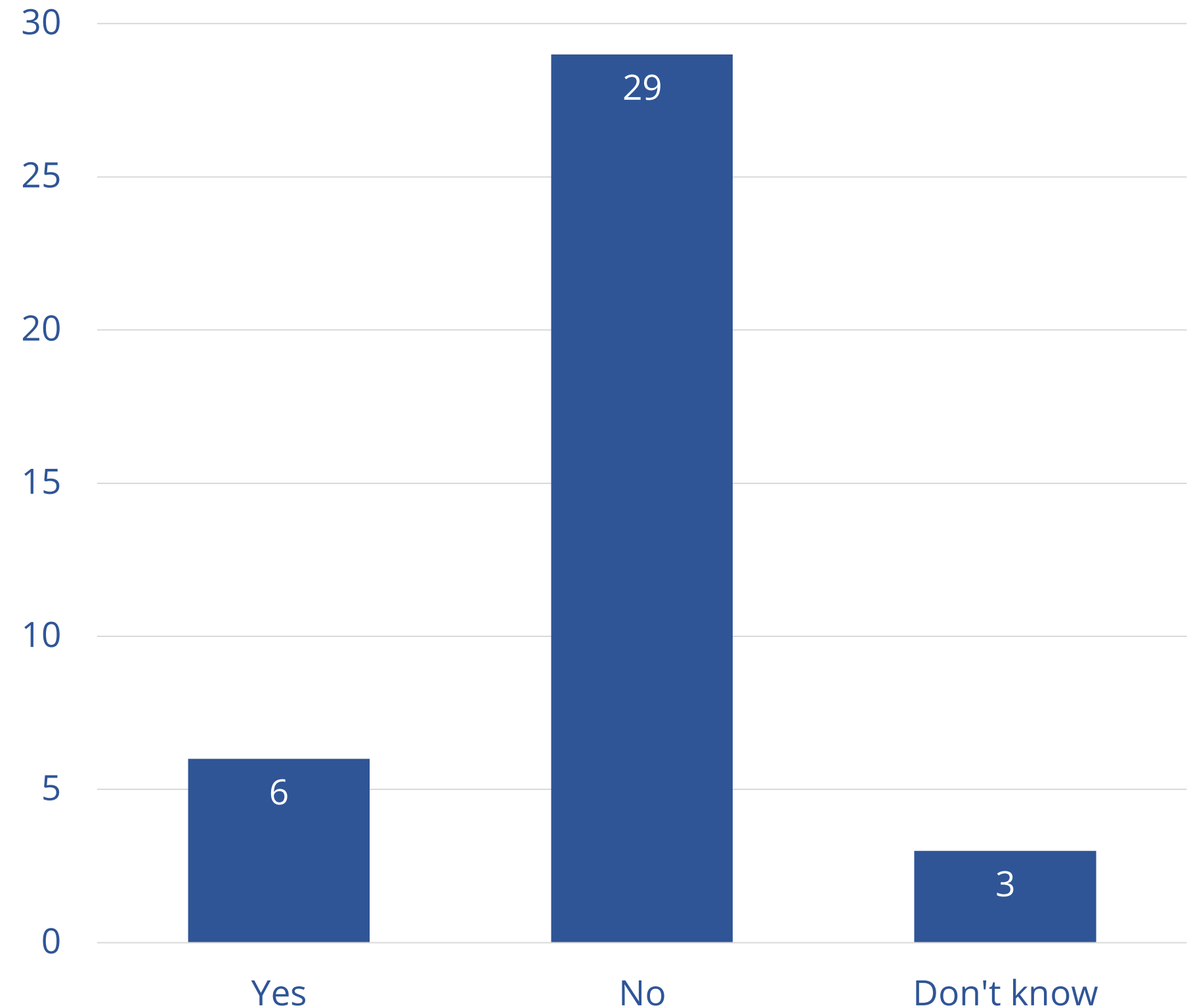
- Lacks transparency and may not reflect actual community needs
- Potential for bias towards established providers or geographical areas
- Difficulty for organisations service specific populations, such as women returners or young people

Communication and delays

- Delays in grant announcements create uncertainty and disrupt operations
- Inconsistent communication from LEPs leads to confusion amongst providers
- Limited involvement of the third sector in the design and commissioning of NOLB

Is organisation at risk of closure?

- **29 organisations (72.5%) stated that their organisation is not at risk of closure in the next 12 months**
- Six organisations said that their organisation was at risk of closure in the next 12 months
- Three responses did not know if their organisation was at risk of closure



Why is your organisation at risk of closure?

Business model

- Social enterprises highlighted that their business model doesn't fit neatly into traditional funding categories

Exclusion from funding opportunities

- It was highlighted that current commissioning processes can overlook the needs of certain groups

Funding instability and sustainability issues

- Organisations are reliant on multiple funding sources which creates uncertainty and hinders long-term planning
- Loss of funding threatens job security and service delivery
- Difficulty in securing suitable and affordable workspace further limits sustainability

Challenges (1)

Limited funding and sustainability

- Short-term funding creates uncertainty and hinders long-term planning
- Difficulty securing sufficient funding to cover service delivery costs
- Reliance on multiple funding sources is administratively burdensome

Exclusion of young people with additional needs

- Current systems may not address the specific challenges faced by this group
- Young people with disabilities may be overlooked in program design and funding allocation

Challenges (2)

Focus on job placement

- Limited support for addressing underlying barriers and 'softer skills'
- Importance of volunteering and community integration may be undervalued

Lack of trust and collaboration

- TSOs feel that their expertise and experience are not fully utilised
- Limited involvement in program design and service delivery decisions

Final comments

- Allocate funding based on needs assessments and ensure equitable access for young people with disabilities
- Expand support beyond job placement to include holistic development, 'softer skills', and community integration
- Foster stronger collaboration between TSOs, government agencies, and local authorities
- Involve TSOs in program design, service delivery decisions, and equality impact assessments
- Consider 'full cost recovery' funding models that recognise the value of services beyond frontline work
- Invest in capacity building for TSOs to attract and retain qualified staff

Key Messages & Recommendations

TSOs are ambitious to be part of an effective solution to delivering high quality services through NOLB

Continue to improve transparency and communication from LEPs

Clear guidance to LEPs to ensure a nationally consistent approach and engagement with third sector providers

- Ensure Third Sector member on LEPs has sufficient experience and capacity to represent TSOs
- Work closer with local authorities with less resource to support their ability deliver a mixed economy provision through NOLB

Fairer, long term funding to create a stable, sustainable environment for providers, their staff and most importantly, users

Key Messages & Recommendations

Improved alignment of Policy & Budgets to ensure a joined up approach to employability

Create a more collaborative and effective system for delivering employability services

- Encourage commissioning practice that benefits from meaningful TSO and service user involvement in service design
- Establish clear standards for service commissioning/procurement
- More flexible and straightforward funding models that cater for rural and diverse needs
- Transparent reporting of all NOLB spend, Impact & VfM

Ensure reporting requirements are proportionate, streamlined and accessible for all employability partners

- Recognising importance of return on investment and accountability