

North East: diversifying into new markets and geographies

State of Social Enterprise 2021
in the North East



Social
Enterprise UK



Social Enterprise UK (SEUK), in association with Barclays, commissioned the State of Social Enterprise Survey 2021 (SOSE), gathering 890 responses via telephone interviews and online surveys from across the UK. 38 of these responses were for North East England.

This report is one of nine setting out findings from the SOSE 2021 survey for each of the English regions. It is supported by Big Society Capital and Access - the Foundation for Social Investment. In the report, data for each region is compared both with data for the region from 2019, and to findings from the national dataset. For detail of the national data, please refer to No Going Back, our 2021 SOSE report¹.

This report was written by Emily Darko (SEUK), with inputs from Shehan Perera (SEUK), Melanie Mills (Big Society Capital) and Kate Welsh (Social Enterprise Acumen).

Authors would like to thank BMG Research for their work to compile and analyse the data. Thanks to Katie Apps for design and to Melanie Mills and Olivia McLoughlin of Big Society Capital, and Niamh Goggin, Sarah Colston and Chloe Stables at Access for their help with the project, in addition to their sponsorship.

Most importantly, thanks to the social enterprises who gave their time to complete the survey.

¹ <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/No-Going-Back-State-of-Social-Enterprise-Survey-2021.pdf>

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A social enterprise:

- Has a primary social and/or environmental mission which is set out in governing documents
- Earns income from trading (for the purposes of SOSE, at least 25%)
- Is controlled or owned in the interests of the business
- Reinvests or gives away profits or surplus

North East Headline Findings

Our research found that social enterprises in the North East:

- Were slightly more likely than the UK average to be long-established, there was also a high proportion of start-ups here. Likely related to this, average turnover size and staff numbers were lower here than elsewhere in the UK.
- Doing well financially. Half of social enterprises in this region increased their turnover in the 12 months prior to this survey and just over half made a profit or surplus in the previous financial year. However, they were less likely than the UK average to be anticipating growth in both turnover and staff numbers in the 12 months ahead – even though their growth expectations were slightly higher this year than they were in 2019.
- Not as likely to be addressing climate through their core mission, but nonetheless they were more likely than the UK average to be prioritising social and environmental factors over cost and to have invested in energy efficiency measures.
- More likely to be in the retail sector, and correspondingly more likely to generate their revenue by selling products/assets. And a higher proportion generated most of their income from trading with the general public. This did not translate into greater concern about public awareness of social enterprise as a barrier to growth.
- Had staff teams and leadership that were as, if not more, representative of the community they served in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability. 59% of the workforce is female, as is 55% of leadership. 18% of leaders had a disability and 9% of leaders were people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (compared to 5% of the region's population).
- Where they applied for external finance, were likely to secure the amounts they sought. There was an increase in the proportion applying for finance here since 2019, from a low base.

Methodology

SEUK commissioned BMG Research to conduct fieldwork and initial data analysis for the State of Social Enterprise Survey 2021. They gathered a total of 890 responses via telephone interviews and online surveys between February and April 2021.

Please see the national report, [No Going Back](#), for details of the methodology, including sampling approach and analysis. Please note that not all percentages will total 100% due to rounding or due to a question allowing multiple responses.

This series of regional reports presents data from SOSE broken down by the nine English regions. Data in the main survey report is weighted by region and can be considered broadly representative. Regional data cannot be viewed as having the same degree of statistical representativeness, particularly for regions with lower response rates.

Regional evidence is mostly presented in comparison to the UK-wide dataset (including the region studied and the three devolved nations), and also in comparison to data for the region from 2019.

In addition to the data analysis, each regional report has been reviewed by a member of one of the Social Enterprises Places network within the region. In some instances, additional regional data has been made available and is discussed in the report.

Regional overview

Durham, Tyne and Wear, and Tees Valley. There are three cities in the region: Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland and Durham with Middlesbrough as the largest town in Tees valley.

A small region in geographical and population terms, the North East has the lowest GDP per capita in the UK and second lowest employment rate. Once a home of heavy industry, the North East has suffered more than most regions from post-industrial decline. Socio and economic disadvantage and geographical disconnection has led to a strong heritage of community activity alongside extensive grant funding.

Social enterprises here tend to be either newer and smaller, responding to the very local social needs in the region and often initially funded with grants. Many social enterprises have benefited from start up support through Local Authorities such as Gateshead, Northumberland and Redcar although this support has decreased in recent years. Social enterprise support specialist organisations have filled the gaps in other areas such as Social Enterprise Acumen CIC, Hartlepower CIC and Junction Point CIC while other Enterprise Agencies such as the North East Business and Innovation Centre (NE BIC) have established specialist

social enterprise teams within their wider enterprise support offer. The older/larger social enterprises are often well-established voluntary and community sector organisations that are restructuring their business models for increased sustainability or are long-standing co-operatives. Voluntary Organisation Network North East (VONNE) has taken a leading role in the nascent area of supporting engagement and education for Local Infrastructure Organisations around social investment through programmes and exploring how repayable finance can play a part. The North East introduced a regional social enterprise loan fund as part of the legacy from the Northern Rock Foundation through a Joint Venture with Big Society Capital, The North East Social Investment Company which has been stimulating the market.

Part of the region (Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland in the Tees Valley) was selected as one of the Local Access partners, developing a social investment fund (LARCH) fit for purpose in their place.

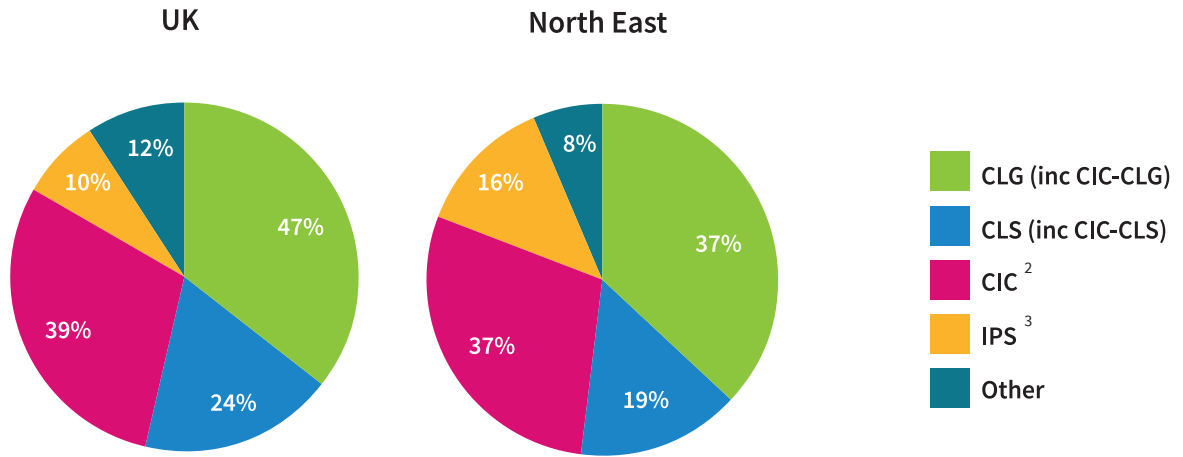
Social Enterprise Demographics

Social enterprises in the North East had been trading for an average of 11 years, with 13% trading for over 20 years. There was a high proportion of start-ups in the region too – 53% had been trading for less than three years. This correlates with findings from a study conducted by Social Enterprise Acumen in 2021 covering the North East region, which found that 43% of social enterprises had been running for less than three years and 14% had been trading for over 16 years. Anecdotally, this may be linked to the of concentration and

swing of work in the region e.g. VONNE's role in signposting and support, The North East Social Investment Company and the New Leaf/New Life Connect Programme, amongst others.

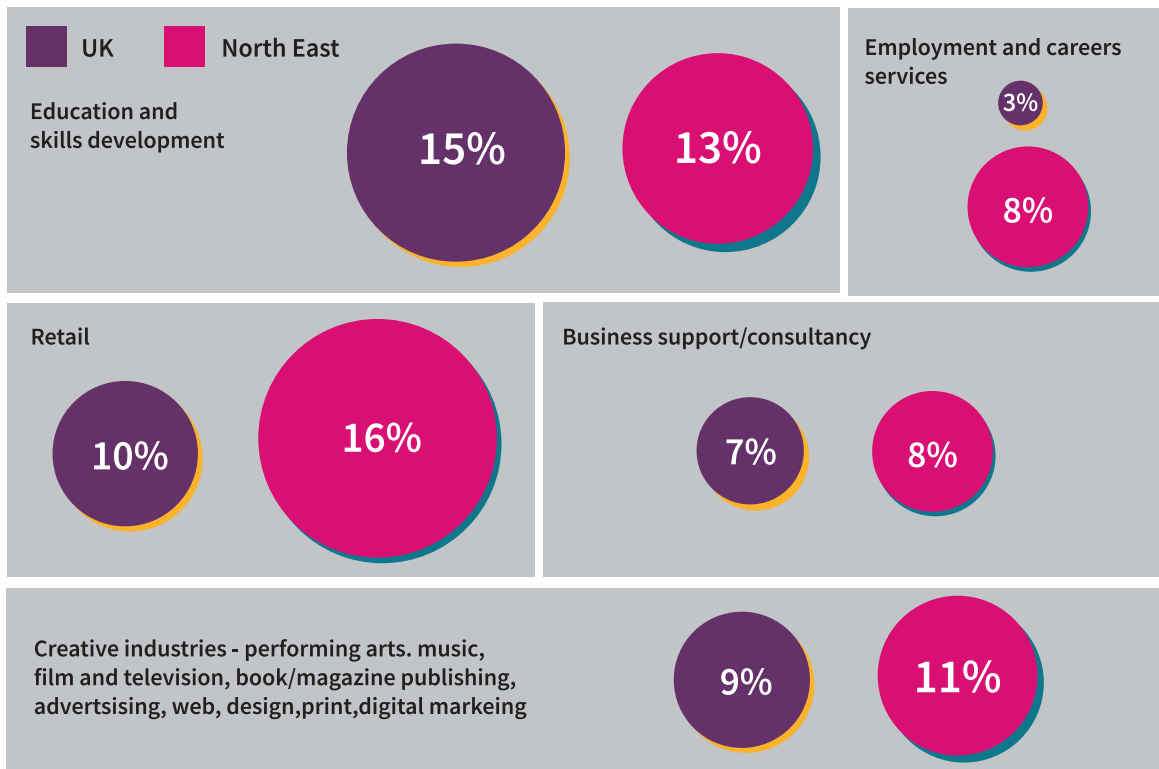
In terms of the legal form under which social enterprises operated, there were slightly fewer companies limited by shares amongst social enterprises in the North East, and slightly more cooperatives compared to the UK averages.

Legal status



Looking at the sector of the economy that social enterprises traded in predominantly, 16% of social enterprises in the region were in the retail sector – the only region where this was the most-cited sector. There were slightly more social enterprises here, proportionately, than the UK average who were in the housing sector. There were fewer, however, in both health and social care.

Top five principal trading activities



The average turnover for a social enterprise in the North East was £222k (compared to £2.2m UK-wide), and a far higher proportion of social enterprises here have turnovers under £30,000 than is the case nationally. There were also no social enterprises in the £5-50m bracket in this region who responded to this survey. Research conducted by Social Enterprise Acumen CIC in the region in 2021 confirms that the proportion of social enterprises with a turnover of this size is small.

Social enterprises in the North East fared comparatively well in terms of profit over the previous financial year, with 53% making a profit or surplus (compared to 49% nationally) and 25% making a loss. In 2019, just 38% of social enterprises in the North East reported having made a profit/surplus.

² Community Interest Companies – a legal form established in 2005 which allows businesses to embed mission in their memoranda or articles of association. CICs can be limited by guarantee or by share; those limited by share are subject to a dividend cap.

³ Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) community benefit society (Bencom), a legal form for cooperatives and community benefit societies regulated under the Cooperatives and Community Benefit Societies Act of 2014.

COVID Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching implications for social enterprises, many of which it is too early to fully understand. We asked questions specifically about the sector's response to COVID and the uptake of available support.

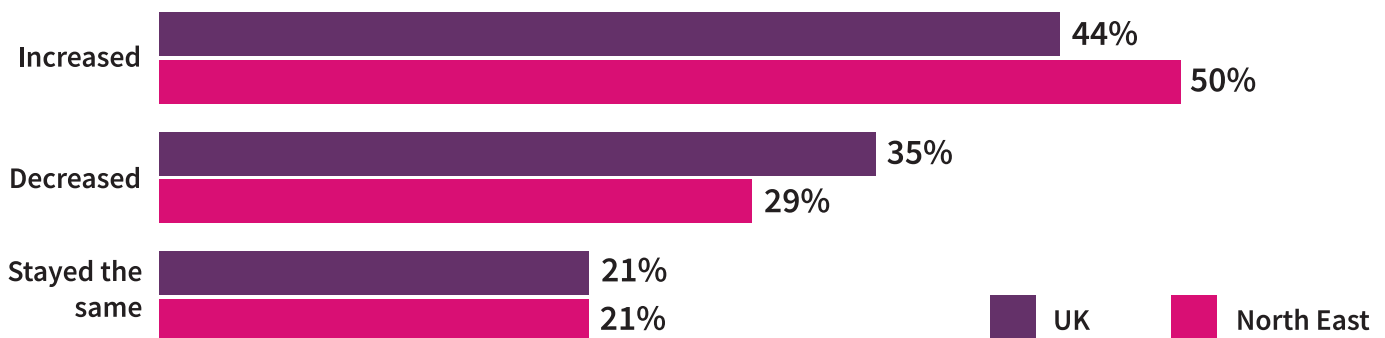
At the time of the survey, 13% of respondents in the North East had temporarily ceased trading – 7% more than was the case for UK social enterprises as a whole.

Knowing the combination of additional grant funding and restricted opportunities for many social enterprises to secure income through their usual trading routes during the pandemic, we explored the impact this has had on the proportion of income generated through trading. Social enterprises in the

North East generated, on average 74% of their income through trading activities in the last year, down from 82% in 2019.

However, 50% of social enterprises in this region increased their turnover in the 12 months prior to this survey, compared to the previous year. This is down by 7% compared to 2019. On average 44% of social enterprises increased their turnover across the UK.

Compared with the previous 12 months, has your turnover in the past 12 months increased, decreased, or stayed roughly the same?



Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, we asked some additional questions about how social enterprises had coped ⁴. In the North East, 75% of social enterprises said that they changed their processes and ways of working in response to the crisis, 56% changed their methods of selling and 50% changed the products and/or services they provided. Social enterprises in the North East were less likely than the UK average to have drawn on reserves or to have increased borrowing.

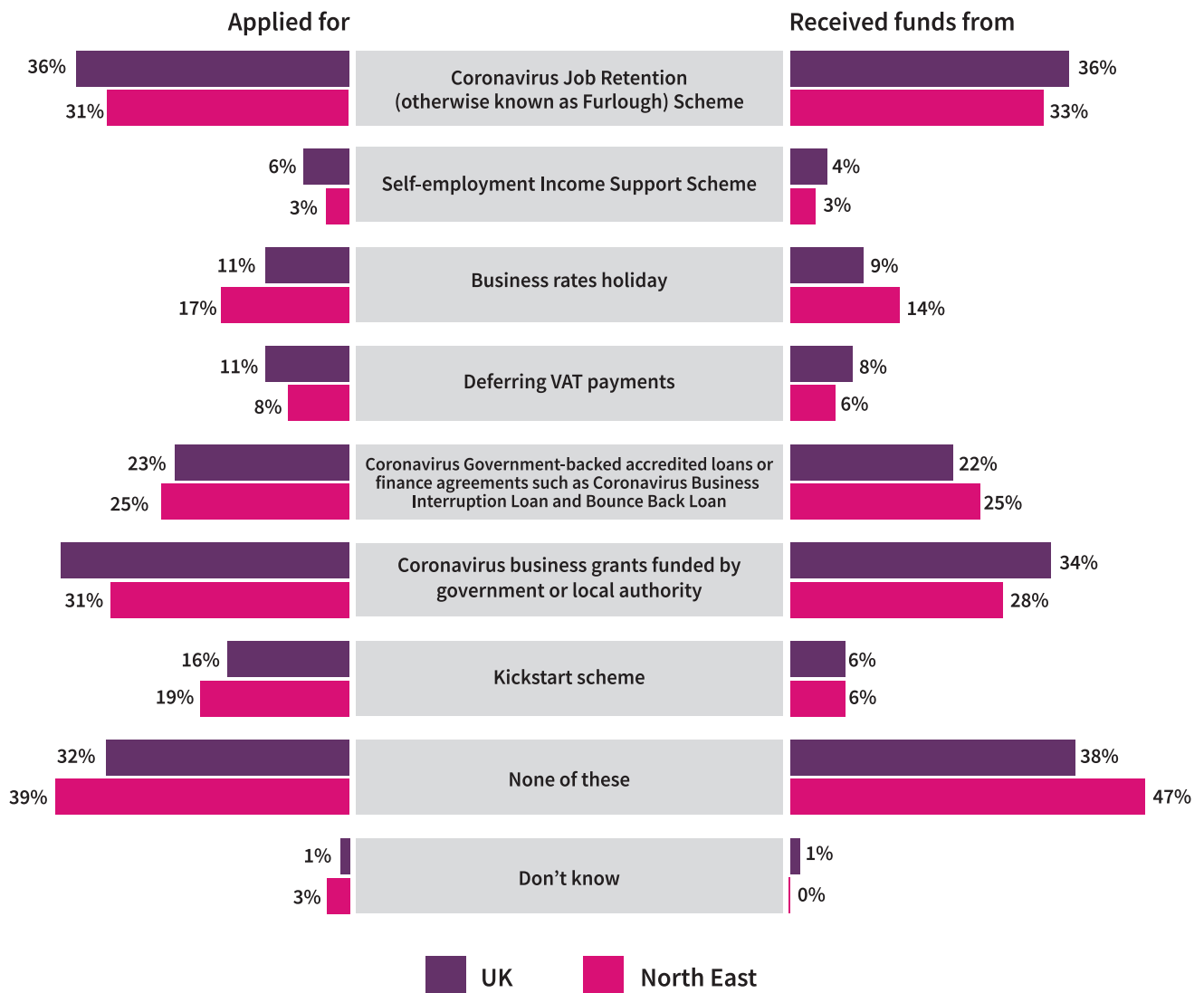
The survey asked about measures taken to cope with the pandemic that affected workforce. 47% of social enterprises in the North East provided facilities to staff for remote working and 42% reduced staff working hours – more than was the case elsewhere in the UK. 39% of staff were furloughed and

6% made redundant (slightly fewer than the UK average). Staff were less likely to be moved to different roles or asked to take on additional tasks here. However, they were also less likely to be offered additional training to upskill them (e.g. on new online service provision).

We also asked whether social enterprises had applied for COVID-19 support schemes. Overall, social enterprises in the North East were slightly less likely to have applied for government support than the UK average, and significantly less likely to have received funds. 33% received money from the furlough scheme and 28% secured business grants, with a further 25% securing government-backed loans.

⁴ Respondents were given the option to opt out of these questions, so there is a smaller respondent sample size.

Coronavirus COVID-19 schemes applied to/accessed



Reach and Local Participation

We used the survey to look at how social enterprises engage with their local communities.

In the North East, almost half of social enterprises had representatives of the local community that are not employed by their business on their organisation's Board. 68% actively involve external stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries and members of the local community) in organisational decision-making. Social enterprises here were more likely to be operating at a regional or sub-regional level than the UK average, and less likely to be operating nationally or internationally.

We asked social enterprises who their three most important providers of external support are. In this region, 11% more social enterprises than the UK average said that national membership bodies were their main source of external support. Mentors were also more popular here than elsewhere, whereas social enterprises in the region were less likely than the UK average to cite that social investors, grant providers or their Local Enterprise Partnership were an important source of external support.

Three most important providers of external support (n=16, highest 6 reported) ⁵

North East

National membership bodies	50%
Local government	31%
Peer networks	31%
Mentors	31%
Grant providers	19%
Friends and family	19%

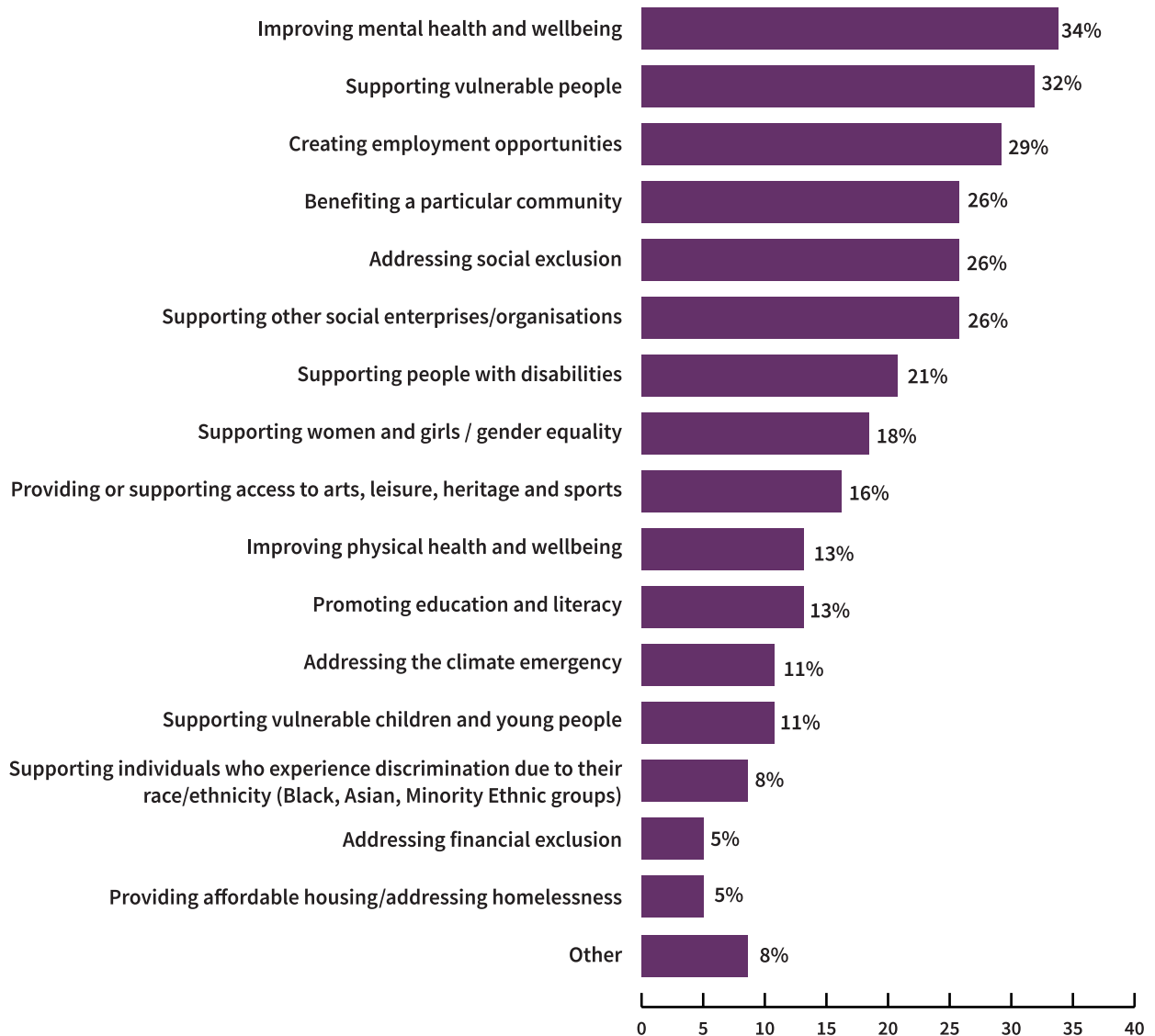
Social and Environmental Impact

The survey captured information about the social and environmental impact of social enterprises.

As across the UK, mental health was the most-cited objective. Compared to the UK averages, social enterprises in the North East were more likely to be supporting women and girls and supporting other social enterprises. They were less likely to

be focused on physical health and wellbeing, education and literacy, children and young people or financial exclusion. They were also less likely to be addressing the climate emergency or tackling racism than the UK average.

Main social and/or environmental objectives

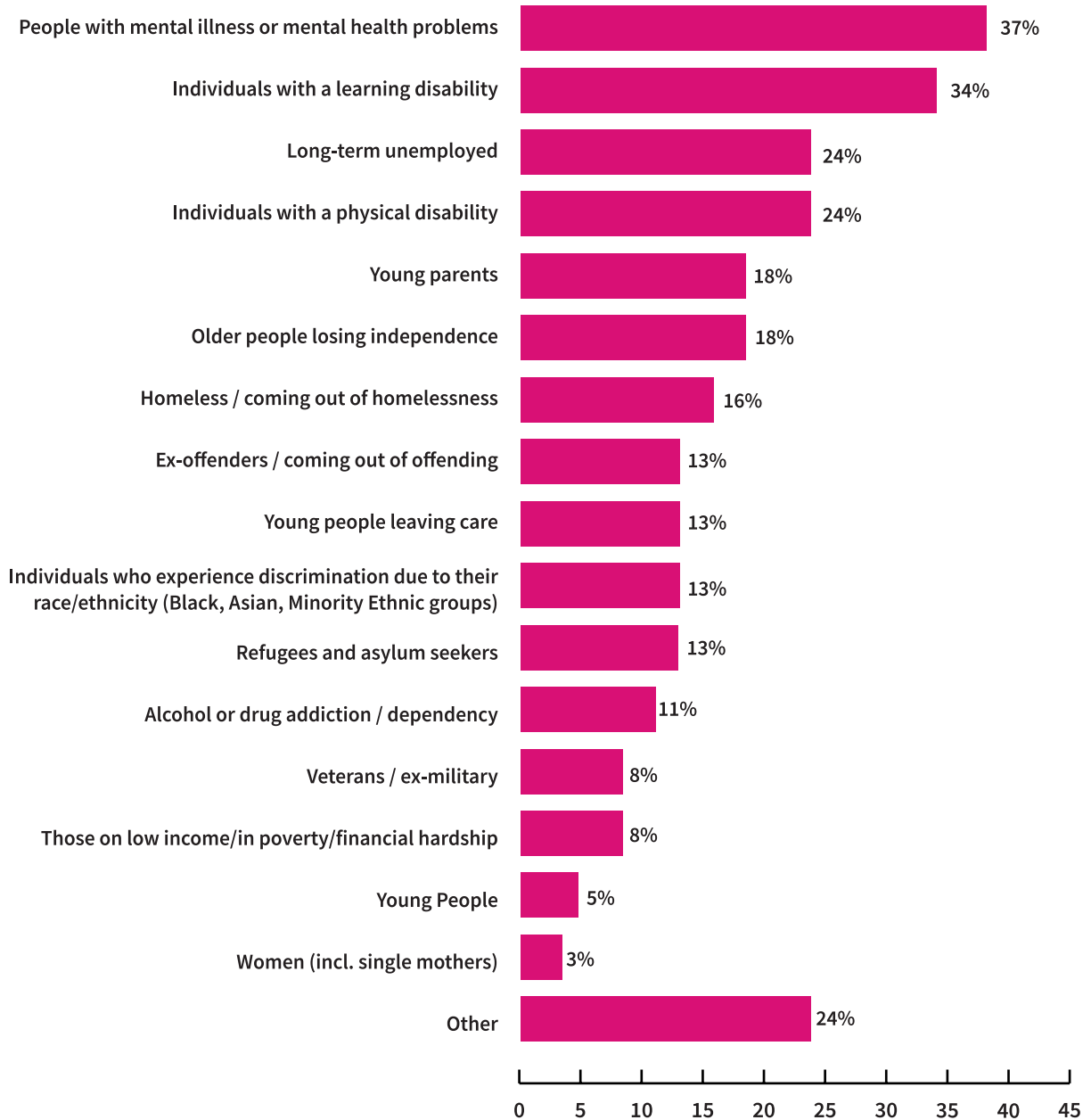


⁵ This data was collected through a top-up survey conducted with SOSE 2021 respondents in September 2021.

In terms of who social enterprises were seeking to support through services or benefits, in the North East the most cited group of people was those with mental illness or mental health problems, followed by people with learning disabilities. Social enterprises in the region were less likely

than the national average to be working with people from racialised communities, or young people. They were more likely than the UK average to work with young parents, however.

Disadvantaged groups or individuals with specific issues to which social enterprises provide services or benefits

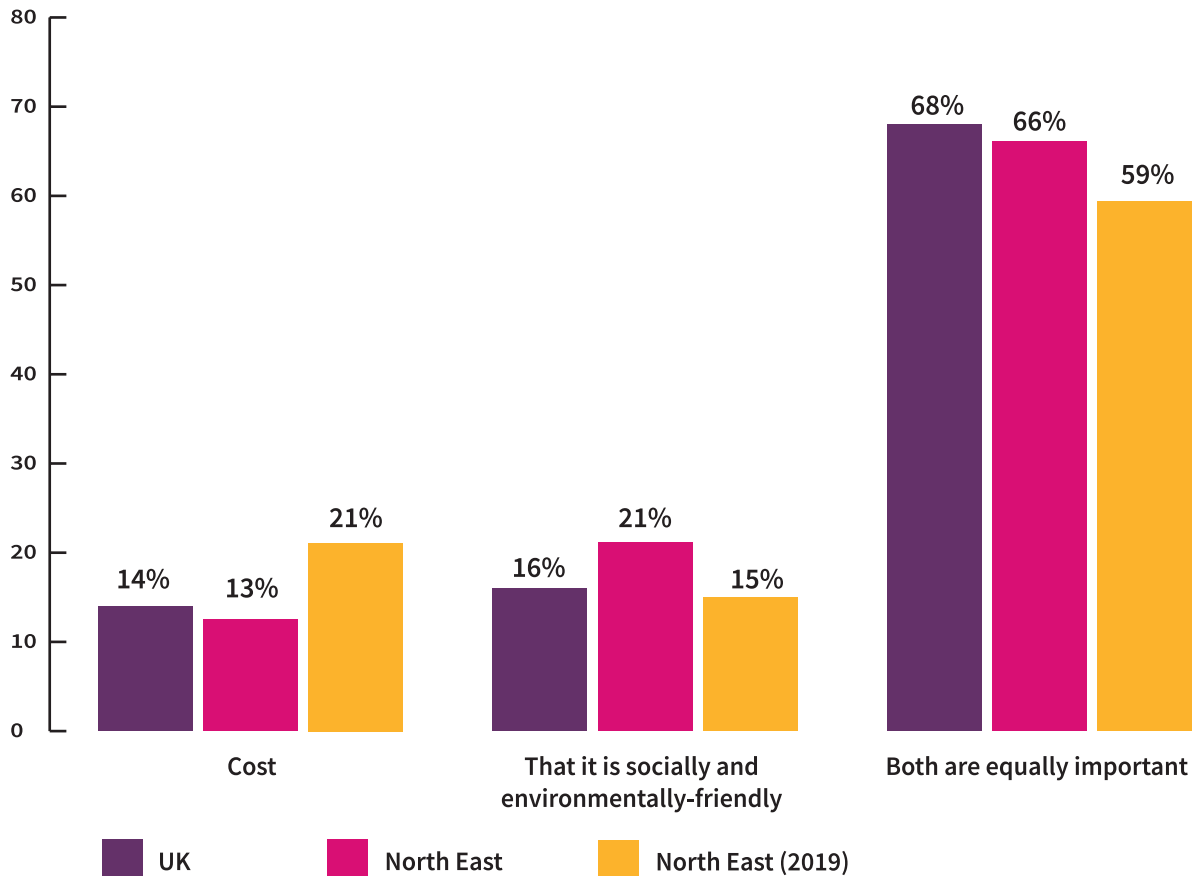


Environmental impact

As the climate emergency looms ever larger on the horizon, we explored the extent to which social enterprises are engaging with environmental change.

Social enterprises in the North East were more likely to prioritise social and environmental factors over cost in procurement, and to a greater extent than was the case for the UK on average. The proportion of social enterprises that prioritised cost has dropped by 8% since 2019.

Procurement prioritisation



For the first time in 2021, we asked social enterprises if they have embedded – or are considering embedding – tackling climate change into their constitution/articles of association. 34% had already done so in the North East and a further 29% planned to or were considering it. Of those that weren't, 18% had a commitment to net zero or a climate strategy. These figures are closely aligned with national averages.

In terms of practical actions taken, 34% of social enterprises in the North East installed energy efficiency measures in the last year, compared to 30% of social enterprises on average UK-wide, and just 13% for business as a whole⁶.

⁶ <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/efa5133a-ad72-47a3-ae9-b4f8ab385a0c/small-business-survey>

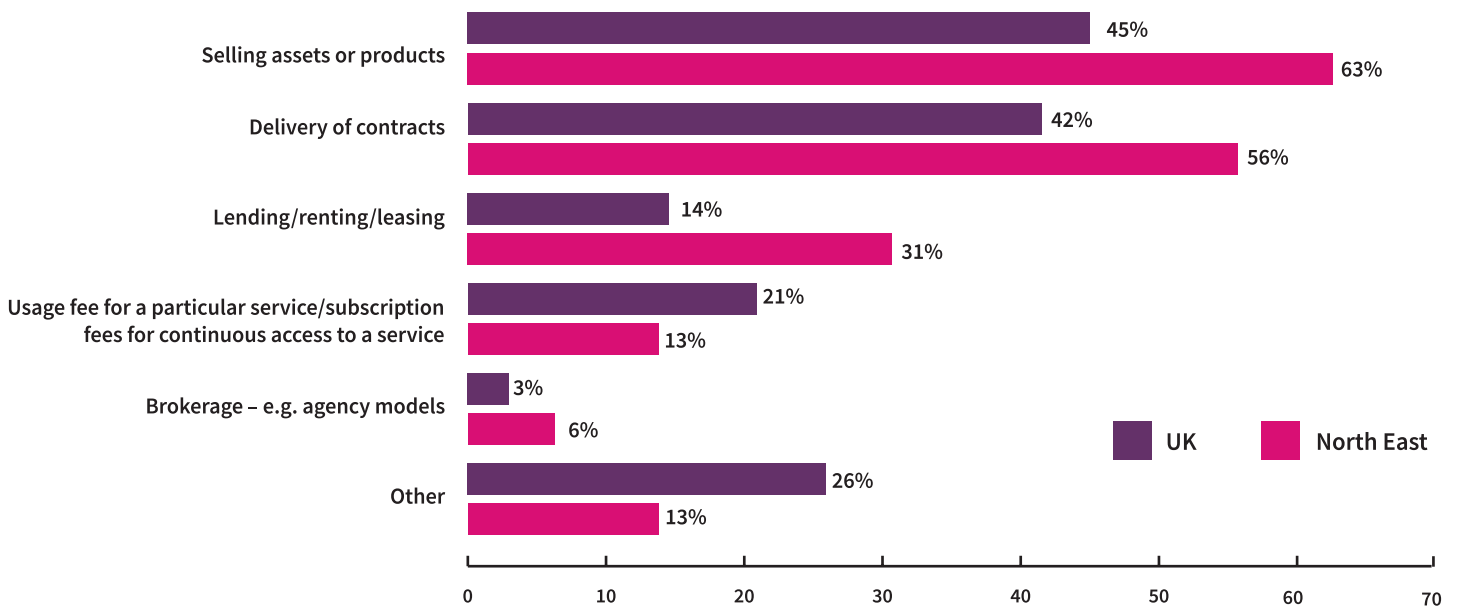
Business Model: Income and Trading

This year we asked for the first time about social enterprises' revenue generation models and the relationship between revenue generation and social/environmental mission.

In the North East, 63% of respondents said that their main revenue generation model is selling assets or products – this is in line with the higher proportion of retail social enterprises in the region. More social enterprises here generated income through contract delivery compared to the national average, which is perhaps more surprising given the most-

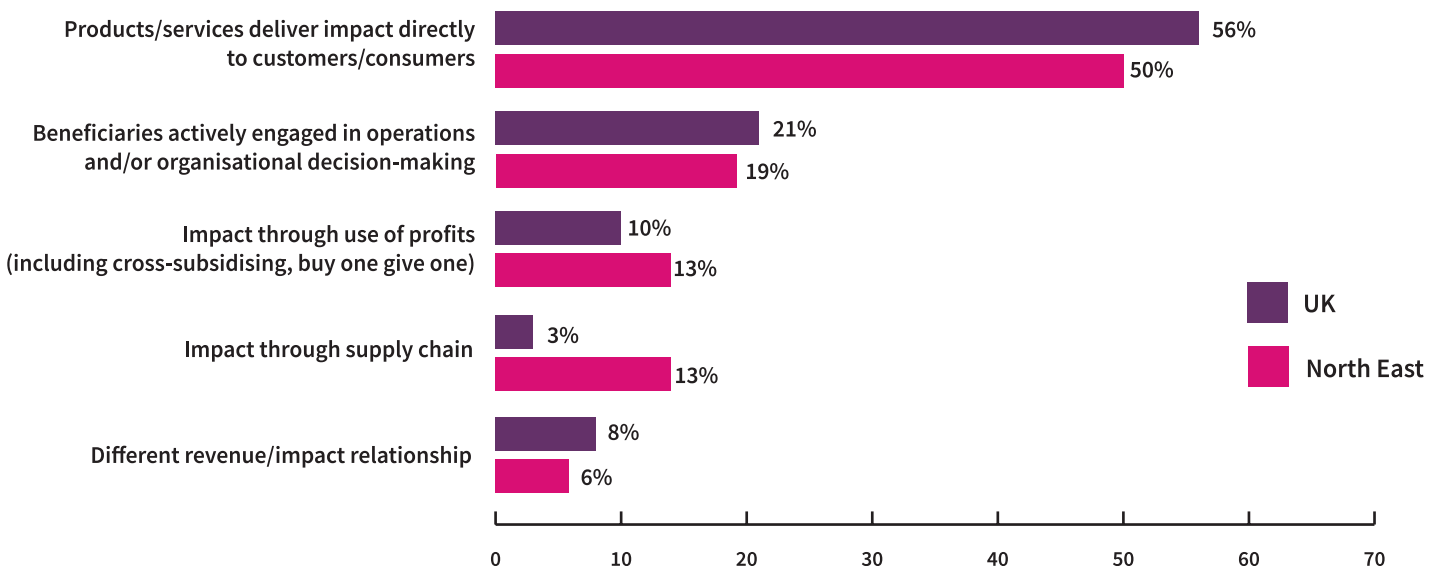
cited sectors here don't include areas traditionally reliant on contract delivery such as health and social care – but aligns to anecdotal information and other research in the region that doesn't recognise as many product-based social enterprises.

Revenue generation model



In terms of the relationship between revenue generation and mission, half of social enterprises here delivered impact directly to customers/consumers through their products or services. 13% (10% more than the UK average) delivered impact through their supply chain and the same proportion deliver impact through use of profits.

Main relationship between your organisation's revenue generation and your social/environmental mission



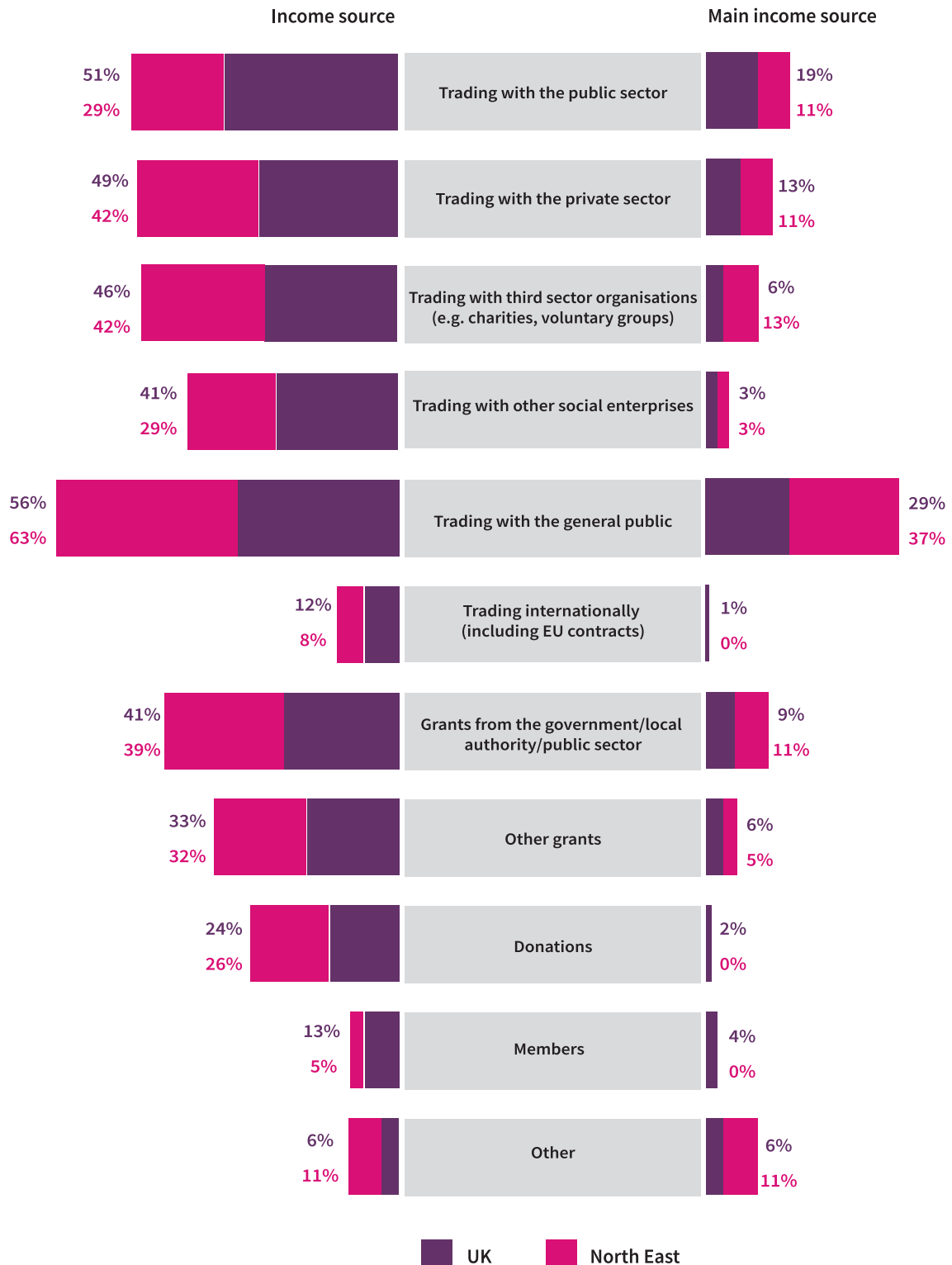
63% of social enterprises generated income through trading with the general public – this was the most-cited source of income for the region and the main source for 37%. Social enterprises in the North East were far less likely than the national average, however, to trade with the public sector (likely linked to the higher proportion of start-ups and comparatively smaller size of social enterprises here). They were also slightly less likely to trade with the private sector, with third sector organisations and with other social enterprises.

average on their main source of income, with an average of 59% of income coming from their main source in the region – compared to an average of 69% for social enterprises as a whole across the UK.

For those social enterprises in the North East that did trade with the public sector, it was most likely to be with their local authority (72%), followed by central government (50%). Just 9% of social enterprises here said that the amount of paid work they did with the public sector had increased over the last year (compared to 22% UK-wide), and 24% (compared to 20% UK-wide) had seen public sector income decrease.

Social enterprises in the North East relied less than the UK

Income generation



Workforce Demographics and Staff Engagement

Social enterprises in the North East were small in terms of staff numbers.

They had, on average, 16 paid employees (compared to the UK average of 128). 21% had no paid staff at the moment (meaning over a fifth are precluded from public sector contracts), and just 19% had more than 10 staff (compared to 28% of social enterprises UK-wide). Of those social enterprises in the region with paid staff, they had on average 10 full-time staff and 4 temporary or casual staff members.

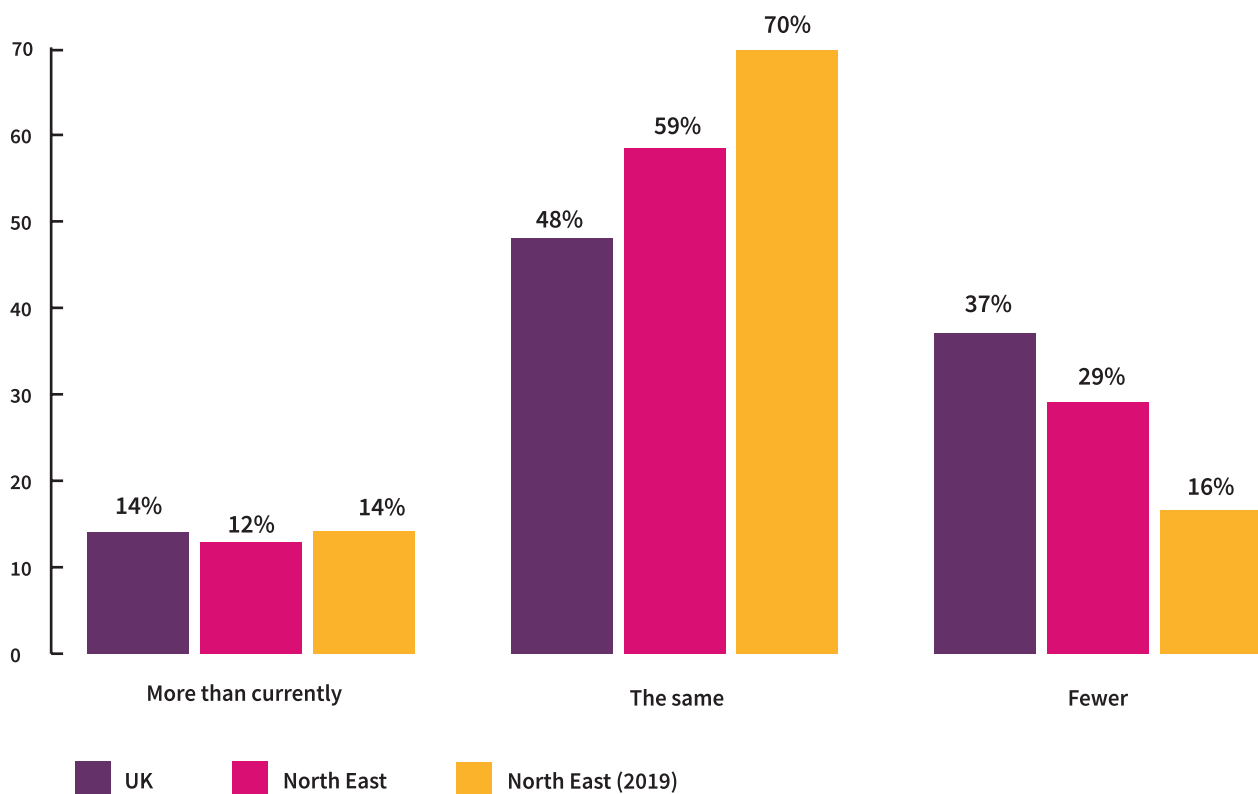
87% of the workforce in the region came from the area local to the social enterprise. 59% of the North East social enterprise workforce was female and all of the respondents to the survey had at least one female member of staff. 5% of the workforce here were people from Black, Asian and other

Minority Ethnic backgrounds, which is in line with the latest available data on regional population ethnicity⁷.

18% of the workforce of social enterprises in the North East were disabled people – higher than the average for social enterprises of 13%.

We asked social enterprises whether their staffing levels had changed compared to 12 months ago. Nearly 60% of social enterprises in the North East had seen static staff levels over the last year, with nearly 30% having lost staff, which is significantly higher than was the case in 2019.

Staff compared to 12 months ago



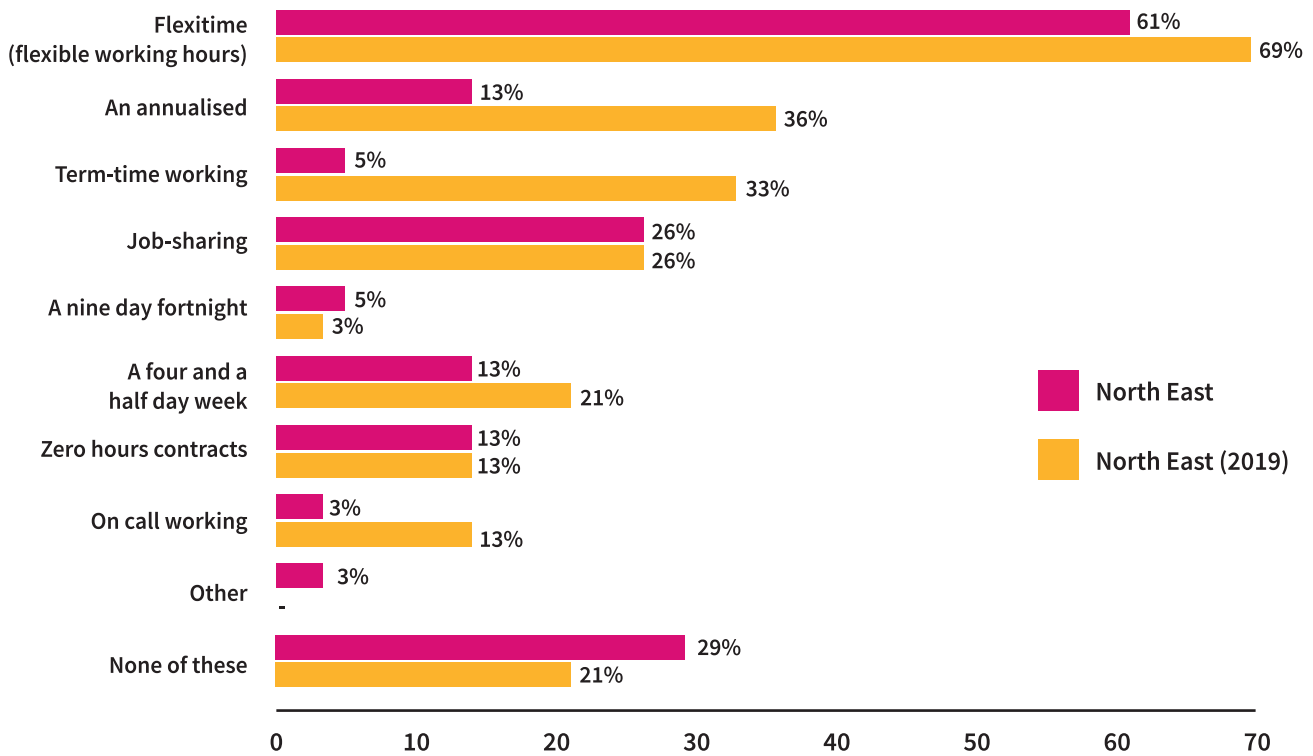
In terms of treatment of staff, 82% of social enterprises in the North East actively involved staff in operational decision-making (slightly fewer than the UK average). 68% said that they invested in staff training and development – this is 13% fewer than the UK average.

Flexible working arrangements have become significantly

more prominent due to the pandemic. Social enterprises in the North East were less likely to offer all forms of flexible working compared to the UK averages. 61% offered flexible working hours, compared to 72% on average across the UK and just 5% offered term-time working, compared with 27% UK-wide. The proportion offering flexible working has significantly declined since 2019.

⁷ The latest data available at the time of writing is the 2011 census. 5% of the population of the North East was from Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups, 94% was White British. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest#areas-of-england-and-wales-by-ethnicity>

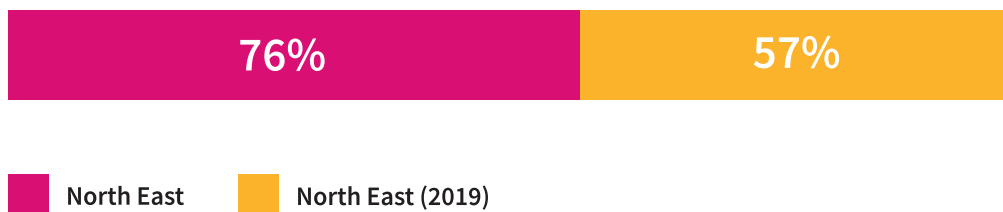
Working hours arrangements for employees



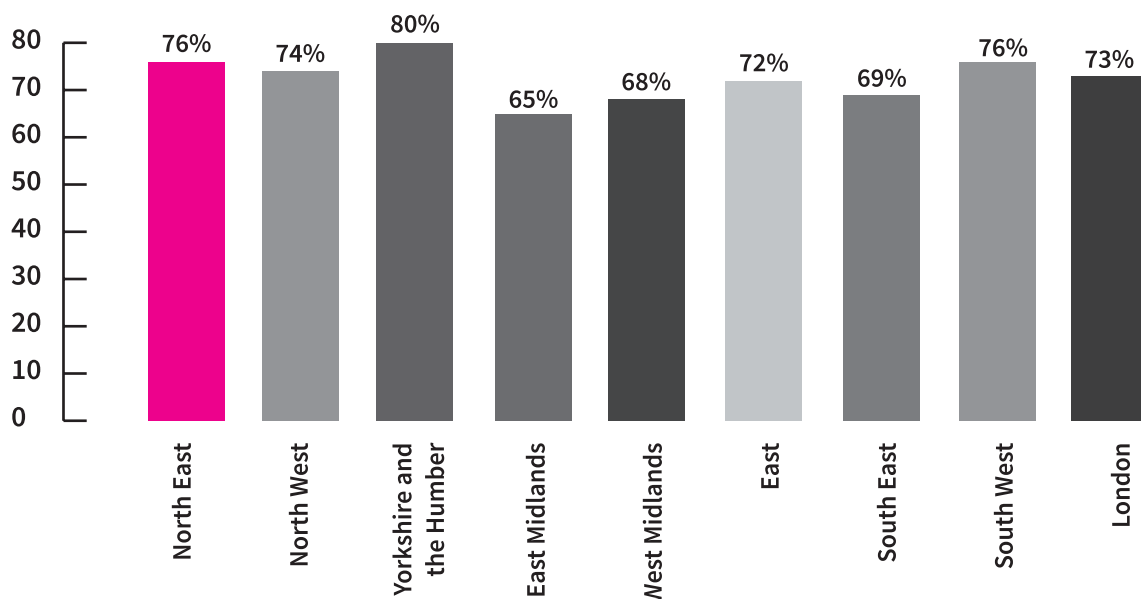
Staff at social enterprises in the North East might not be offered the most flexibility, but they were amongst the most likely to be paid the national Living Wage⁸. The proportion of social enterprises paying the living wage to staff in the North East was 76%, compared to the national average of

72%. There has been a big jump in the proportion of social enterprises here that pay the living wage over the last two years of almost 20%. Anecdotally, the role of Citizens Tyne and Wear pressuring Local Authorities on Living Wage could have played a role in this.

Proportion of Social Enterprises Paying the Living Wage



Proportion of social enterprises that pay the living wage, by region



⁸ The Living Wage is an hourly wage calculated based on the cost of living. It is higher in London, to reflect the higher cost of living in the capital. At the time of writing, the living wage was £9.90 for the UK, except London where it was £11.05. <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>

Leadership Demographics

Social enterprise leadership in the region was slightly more diverse than the population in terms of gender and ethnicity. 55% of social enterprises in the North East were led by women, 7% more than the UK average. 81% were led by people from a White British background, 9% were led by people from Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

Social enterprise leaders here were also slightly younger than the UK average, with 42% aged 44 or younger, compared to the national average of 33% in this age group.

13% of leaders of social enterprises in the North East were disabled people.

Leadership demographics

	UK	North East	FTSE100 ⁹	SMEs
Male	47%	32%	94%	79%
Female	47%	55%	6%	16%
White British	74%	81%		84%
White Other	7%	3%		6%
Asian or Asian British	4%	3%		2%
Black or Black British	6%	3%		*%
Other including Mixed heritage	2%	3%		3%
ALL racialised communities	12%	9%	6% (2020)	5%
16 to 24	1%	0%		
25 to 44	32%	42%		
45 to 64	53%	45%		
65+	8%	6%		
Disability	11%	13%	0%	No data
No disability	82%	77%	100% ¹⁰	No data

Social enterprise leaders in the North East earned the least on average, compared to figures across the English regions, with just Northern Ireland and Wales having the same median salaries for their highest earners. The median salary of the highest earner in an organisation was £22,500 here, compared to £28,000 for the UK as a whole.

⁹ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/ftse-100-executive-pay-report_tcm18-82375.pdf

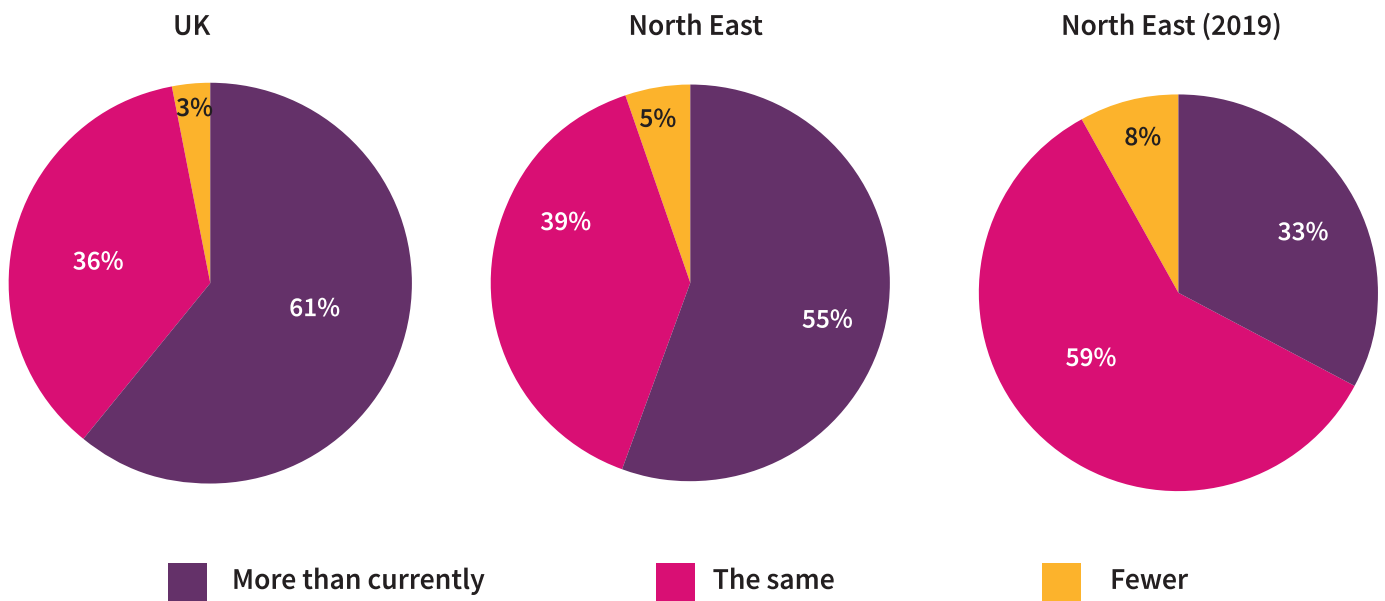
¹⁰ <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/no-ftse-100-executives-or-senior-managers-have-disclosed-a-disability#graf>

Growth trends

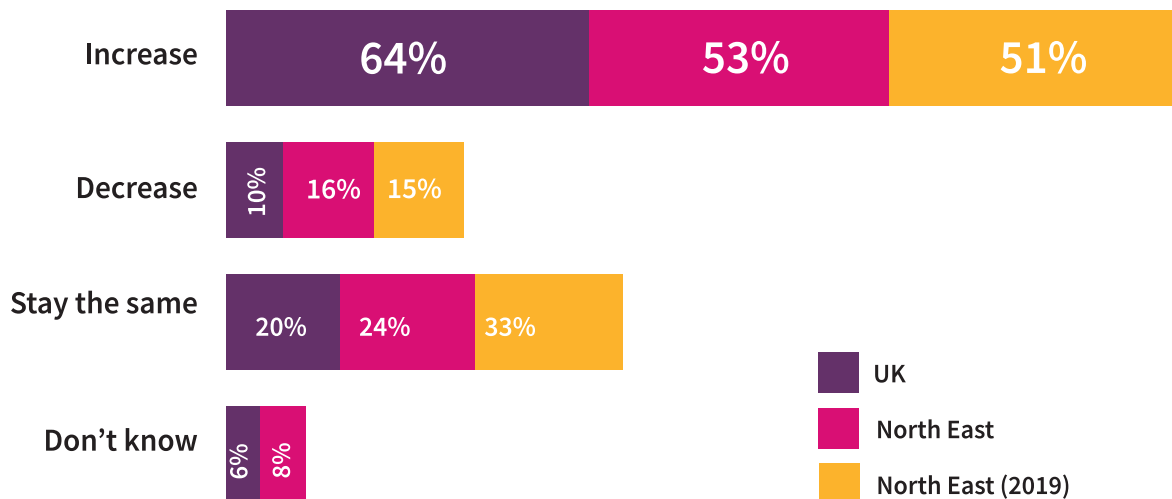
We asked a number of questions about growth trends through the survey.

Over half of social enterprises in the North East expected their staff numbers to grow in the year ahead, significantly more than was the case in 2019. And over half of social enterprises here expected turnover to grow too, albeit that this is a smaller proportion than the UK average. It could be that social enterprises here exceeded their own growth expectations and are, again, cautious to predict here growth.

Workforce size expectations for the next 12 months



Turnover expectations for the next 12 months



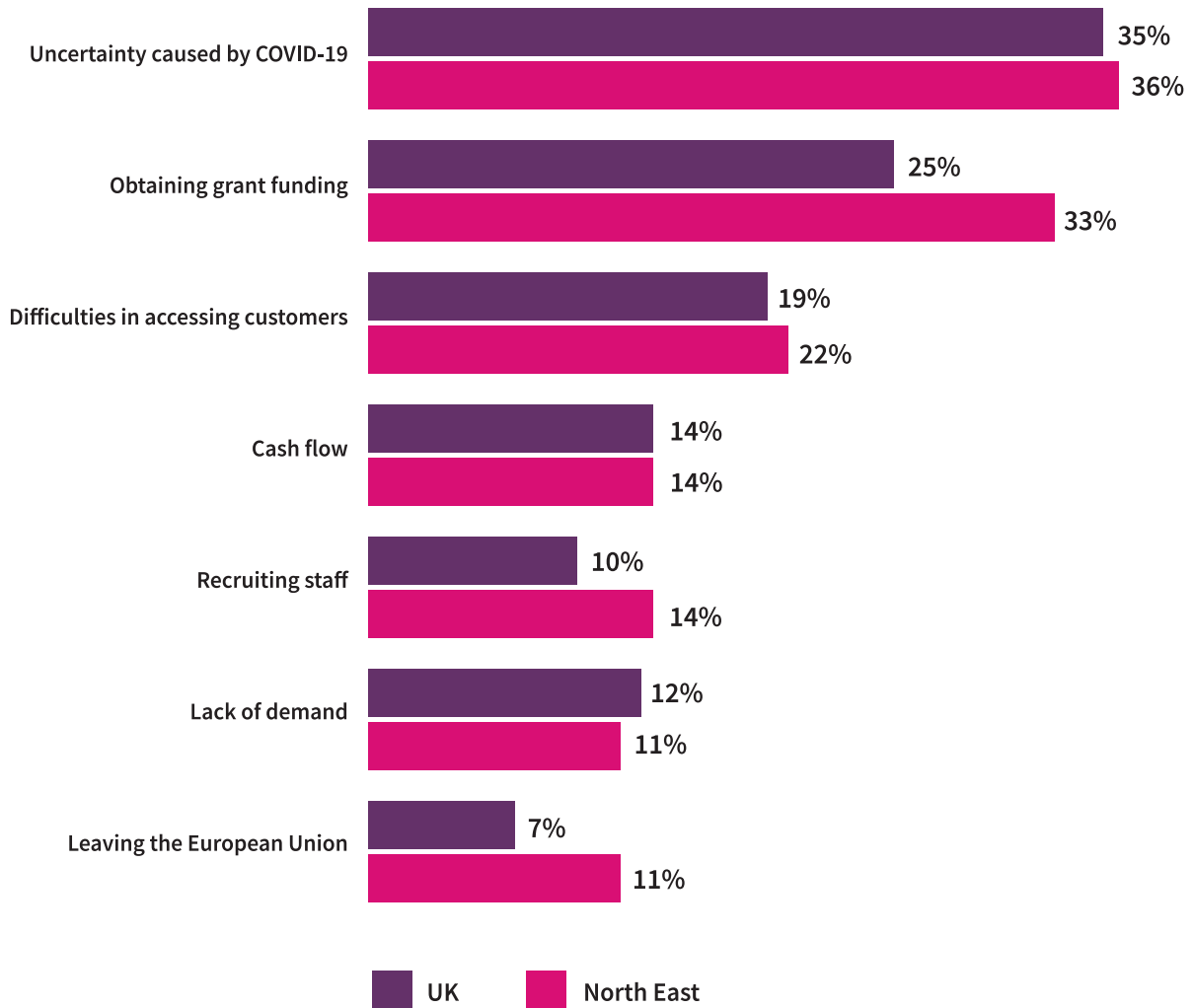
We asked social enterprises what actions they had taken in the previous 12 months to sustain and grow their businesses. 63% developed products and/or services new to their organisation, and 63% invested in IT, equipment and computer software – 12% more than the UK average. Social enterprises here were more likely than the UK average to have reduced costs or invested in new capital assets. They were less likely to have diversified or expanded into new geographies or different customer markets, or to have recruited staff or increased training compared to the UK average.

58% of social enterprises in the region provided products/ services free or at reduced cost in direct response to COVID-19

related needs, in many cases using grant funding. The survey asked what social enterprises see as their top three barriers to sustainability and/or growth. In the North East, grant funding is a bigger concern than it is on average elsewhere (there is greater reliance on grants here than elsewhere), as is accessing customers, recruiting staff and dealing with Brexit-related change.

Fewer social enterprises here cited poor understanding of/ awareness of social enterprise as a barrier to growth, and none cited concerns about finance as one of their top three barriers to growth (cost, terms or availability of finance).

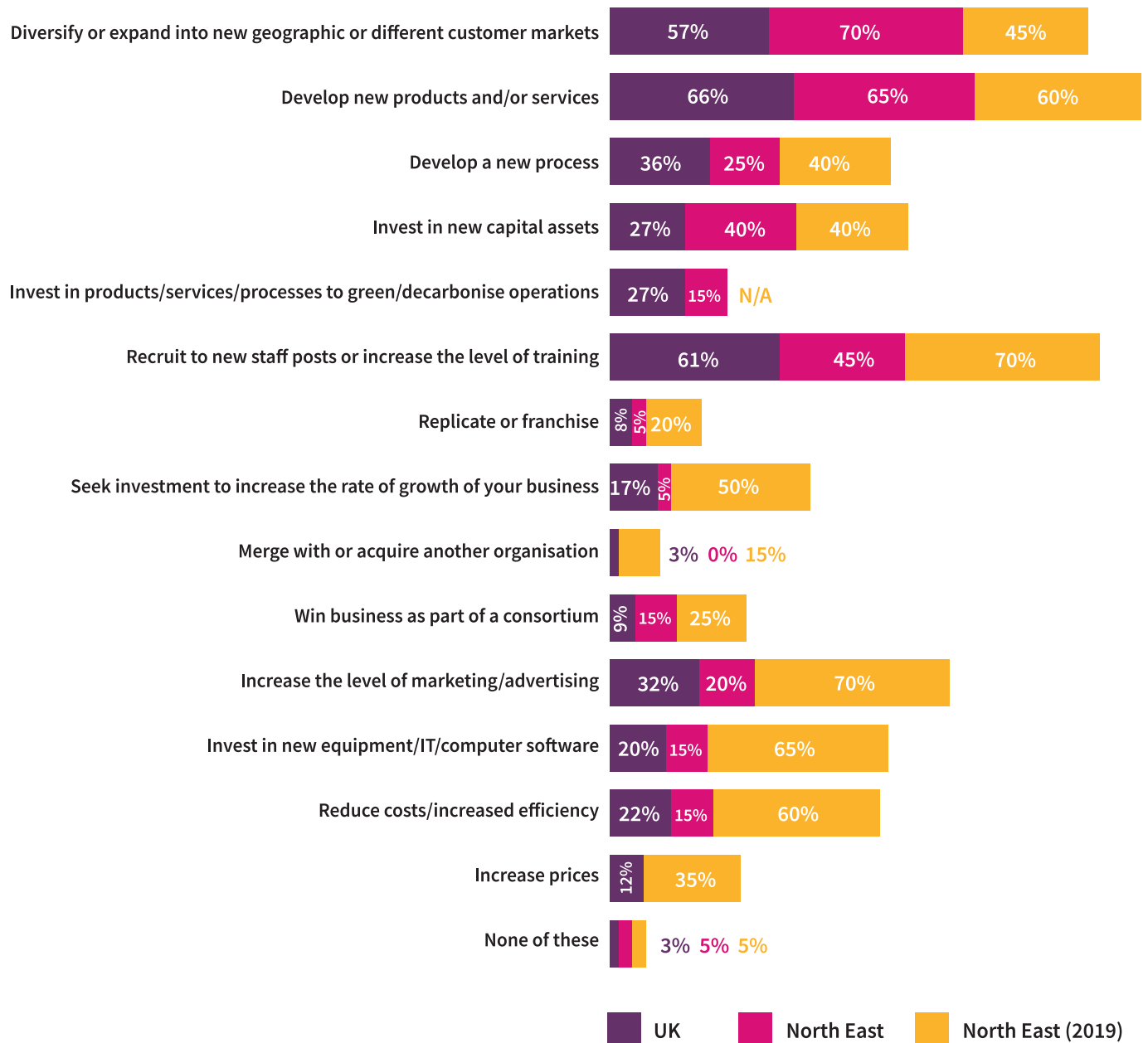
Three most significant barriers to your organisation’s sustainability and/or growth (responses that attracted 10%+ response rate)



In terms of future growth, respondents who expected their turnover to grow were asked how they envisage achieving this. 70% of respondents in the North East anticipated diversifying or expanding into new geographies or different

customer markets, and 65% expected to innovate with new products or services. 45% were planning to recruit staff or increase training – this is significantly lower than the national average and compared to intentions in 2019 for the region.

Growth plans



Finance

The final set of survey questions related to funding and finance. A third of social enterprises in the North East applied for external finance in the year preceding the 2021 survey, with a further third considering it but not applying and another third not considering it. This marks a significant increase in finance applications and consideration of finance from 2019 and puts the region in line with national averages.

Summary of interest in external finance

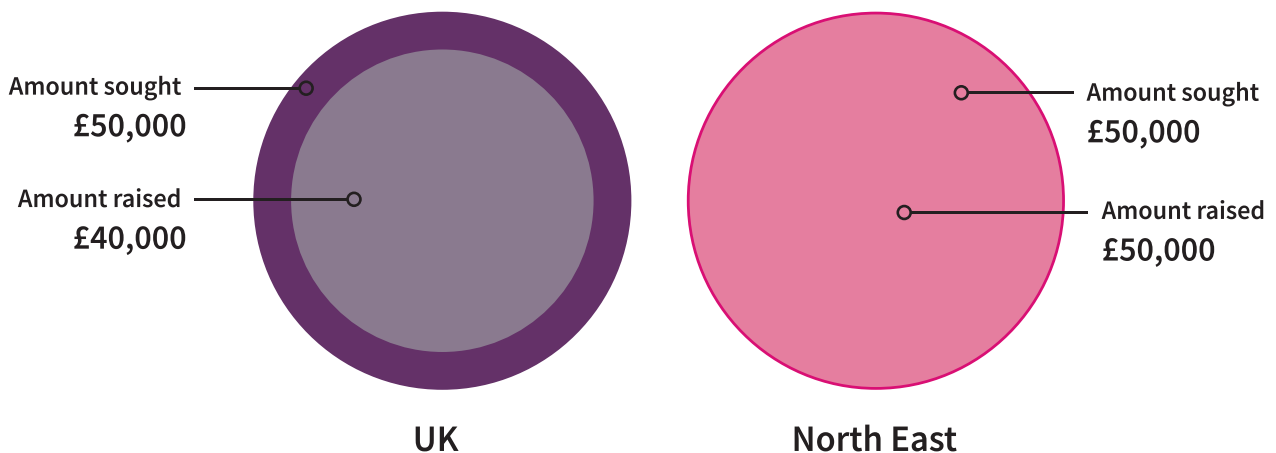


Of those that decided not to apply for finance, fear of rejection was the most-cited reason – almost two-thirds of respondents said that this was a factor, compared to just 15% of social enterprises on average nationally. Concern that the process would take too long or be too much hassle was a factor for 23% and 15% said restrictions on legal form were a factor¹¹ (compared to 3% UK-wide). Social enterprises here were less likely than the national average, however, to be

concerned about cost, risk of social mission being diluted or time pressures and lack of resource.

Where they were looking for finance, social enterprises in the North East sought a median amount the same as the UK average, and they were more likely to be successful in raising the amount they sought.

Amounts of external finance (excluding grants) sought and raised

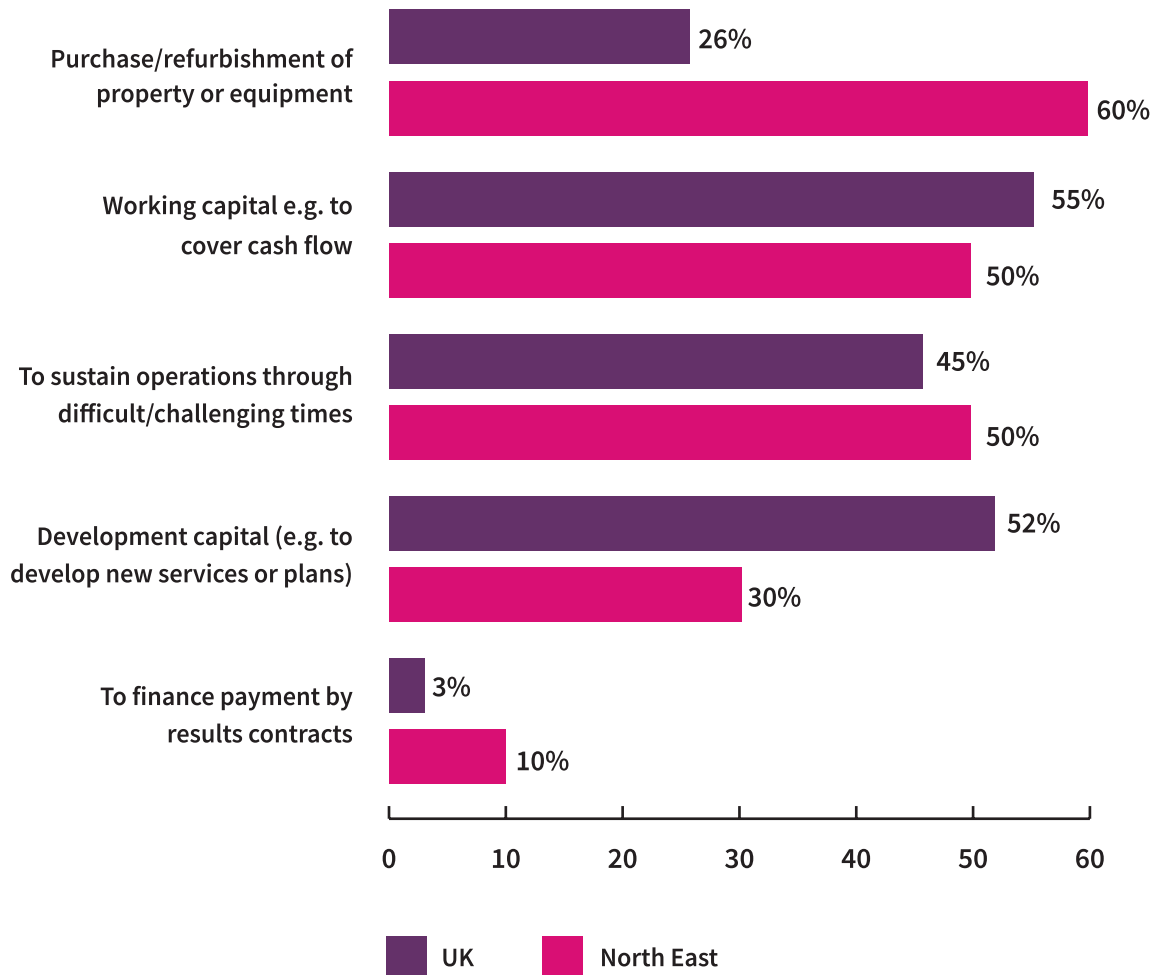


¹¹ Anecdotally, this could be related to the IPS/BenCom legal form as there have been few community share issues in the region, which is a preferred source finance for them. There are also people who have looked for loans but want to own property as a private person or company and that is challenging in social finance.

In terms of who they sought finance from, just under a third of social enterprises in the North East went to a bank – slightly more than the national average. They were slightly less likely to go to social investors or government funds, but slightly more likely to apply to their local authority and to grant making trusts and foundations.

In the North East, the most common reason for seeking finance was the purchase or refurbishment of property or equipment and more social enterprises here looked for finance for payment by results contracts.

Purpose of finance or capital sought



42% of social enterprises in the region thought that there was insufficient finance available to their organisation, 45% thought that the finance available wasn't suitable to their organisation and 12% think that they didn't have the financial, marketing and business skills required to obtain external finance and investment. These figures are broadly in line with national averages.

Case Study: Climate Action North



Climate Action North – SOSE Regional Case Studies North East

Across the North East, 34% of social enterprises had already embedded the urgent need to tackle the climate emergency into their constitution or articles of association. Around a further third plan on doing so, showing a willingness from social enterprises to be held to account for their actions.

But where does a business start when it comes to taking meaningful action on the climate crisis?

Climate Action North is a social enterprise based in Sunderland and operating across the North of England which, in the words of co-founder Sharon Lashley, has been set up with the goal of “making climate change real for people but also to make climate action easier”. In early 2022, the social enterprise created a Business Action Toolkit specifically to support small businesses to get the support and guidance they need to embed positive environmental actions into their operations. Based on a series of questions, the toolkit helps organisations navigate their journey towards net zero and identify climate-related issues such as risks from severe weather events, skills shortages and supply chain issues. Tailored support is then given to each business based on their answers. The toolkit is just one of the ways Climate Action North seeks to educate and support people take steps to address the climate emergency.

Climate Action North was set up in February 2017 by three women with years of experience working on environmental

issues across renewable energy, education and campaigns. They pooled their “resources, skills, knowledge, confidence, and optimism to inspire people to act on climate change” and set up a social enterprise dedicated to climate action.

At the core of their work is a desire to offer simple actions that empower people and organisations to do their bit to ensure a sustainable future.

The business runs a series of practical and engaging programmes with schools, community organisations and both public and private sector organisations.

The Pollinator Parks Programme, supported by the North East Business Innovation Centre (BIC), aims to rewild 30% of business parks in the North of England by 2030 through planting native ‘pollinator-friendly’ wildflowers to grow the insect population and increase biodiversity. Climate Action North also runs a Global Wilders programme working with schools to encourage children to plant trees, raising the profile of the climate emergency in the classroom.

Climate Action North is now about to go on-tour – spreading its One Small Change message at events and festivals across the North of England.

At the height of the pandemic, Community Action North created the Green Recovery Action Network to promote a green COVID recovery centred on economic and

environmental fairness. The network brings together representatives from across the private, public and social sectors and now consists of 80 members including housing associations, local authorities, community groups and specialist businesses such as solar panel manufacturers alongside a whole range of other interested businesses. They meet monthly to share knowledge, discuss ways of working together and have formed a support network of organisations dedicated to taking climate action.

Climate Action North has noticed a real shift in attitudes to the climate emergency as it started to filter into mainstream news more in the last year. However there is still much work to do, and the social enterprise wants to make sure that everyone is engaged in the conversation, including businesses, organisations and people who are sceptical about the need to act or unsure where to start. The goal is to ensure no one is left behind.

Climate Action North works with major players in the North East economy including key local authorities,

private businesses and some of the area's largest housing associations. From being set up at a time when climate change was hardly on the public radar, Climate Action North has helped galvanise communities to come together and take meaningful action. Their work has never been more urgent. As Sharon puts it "we can't cope with another ten years of doing nothing."

When asked about the wider support eco-system for social enterprise in the North East, Sharon and Jennifer believe that there is a very supportive network, at least in Sunderland where they are based. They cited the Business Innovation Centre in the city in particular, which has its own social enterprise team that works closely with the area's social enterprises.

Based on an interview with Sharon Lashley, Managing Director and Jennifer Clair Robson, Content Director at Climate Action North

<http://www.climateactionnortheast.org.uk/>