

# South West: SE 2 SE trading and support

State of Social Enterprise 2021  
in the South West



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. 107 of these responses were for the South West region.

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 report<sup>1</sup>.

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

<sup>1</sup> <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

# South West Headline Findings

## Our research found that social enterprise in the South West were:

- Relatively cautious about growth. Overall, the South West was one of the less optimistic regions when it comes to expectations for social enterprise growth. Social enterprises here were less likely to anticipate growing turnover or staff numbers, compared both to social enterprises across the UK more widely – and compared to expectations in the region in 2019.
- More reluctant to apply yet more successful than other social enterprises across the UK at securing COVID-specific government-backed support.
- Not as likely to be small businesses as those in other regions. Although the average turnover for the region wasn't higher than the UK average, there were fewer social enterprises here turning over less than £50,000 per year.
- More likely to work with other social enterprises than in other regions. Social enterprises here were significantly more likely to support fellow social enterprises as part of their social/environmental mission than is the case for the UK as a whole. Social enterprises here were also more likely to generate revenue from other social enterprises, and significantly more likely to cite social enterprises as their main source of income compared to the UK average.
- Often paying the Living Wage. The proportion of social enterprises paying staff the Living Wage has declined less here than elsewhere and was higher than the UK average for social enterprises.
- Seeking finance, but not successful at securing it, and not the most confident in applying for it. There was a perception among social enterprises that there is insufficient finance available in the region. There was also higher appetite for grant funding in the South West than elsewhere.

## 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.**

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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

The South West region consists of the counties of Bristol, Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, Gloucestershire, Somerset, the Isles of Scilly and Wiltshire. Other major urban centres include Plymouth, Swindon, Gloucester, Bournemouth, Poole, Cheltenham, Exeter and Bath. Economically, the region is varied with Bristol and the M4 corridor providing diverse and strong economic performance, and parts of Cornwall – heavily reliant on tourism – among the country's most deprived areas.

There are some very successful leisure, heritage and culture social enterprises in the region, among others. The South West has some longstanding iconic social enterprises like the Eden Project. Plymouth is one of the leading social enterprise cities, with the university playing an important role, and Bristol is also a strong hub of activity, with investors such as Resonance, Bristol and Bath Regional Capital, Co-operative and Community Finance and Triodos being based in the city for example.

The South West is often seen as a hotspot for community shares and community business activity, food and

environmental social enterprises, and a number of social investors are based in, or focused on the region. Many of the large health and social care spin-out social enterprises are based in the South West. There is also significant support infrastructure in the region, and activity across Universities, Local Authorities and beyond.

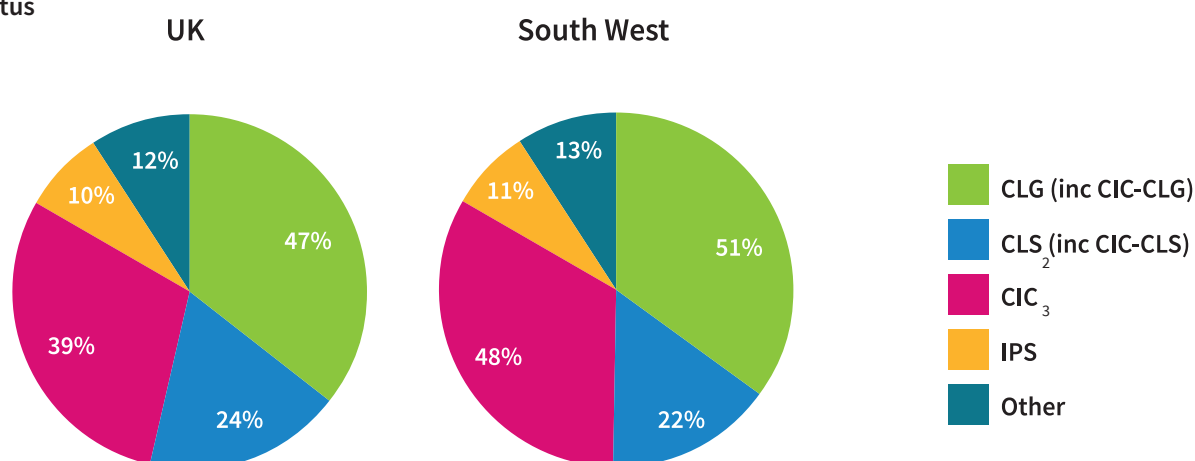
Parts of the South West have had long-standing access to EU grants and what the impact of Brexit and the delayed roll out of the Shared Prosperity Fund will mean for the region remains uncertain.

## Social Enterprise Demographics

Social enterprises in the South West have been trading for an average of 9 years (the overall UK average is 10 years), with 30% having been established in the last three years and 50% established in the last 4-10 years. 8% have been operating for over 20 years.

In terms of how social enterprises in the region are registered, there were more social enterprises taking the form of CICs in the South West than there are on average in the UK, and a slightly higher proportion of respondents here were registered as CLGs compared to elsewhere.

### Legal status

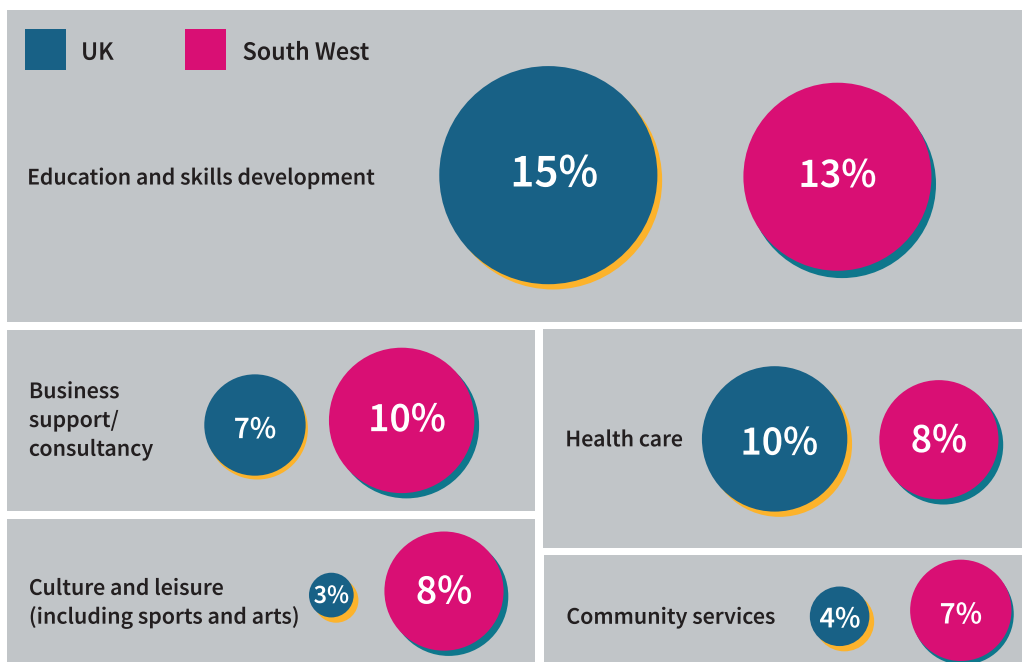


When it comes to the sectors of the economy in which social enterprises trade, there was a slightly more even split across the most commonly cited sectors than elsewhere. Education and skills development was the most common area, with more working in business support/consultancy, culture and leisure, community services and hospitality. Fewer social enterprises here worked in retail or the creative industries.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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

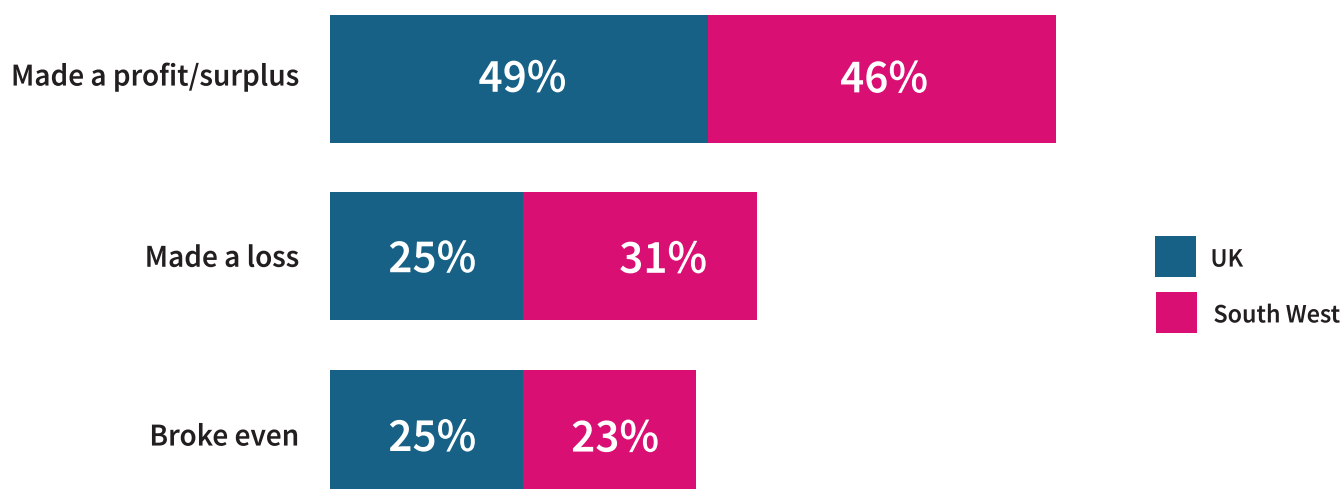
## Top five principal trading activities



The average turnover for a social enterprise in the South West was £2.1 million (compared to £2.2m on average UK-wide), although slightly fewer social enterprises here had a turnover of under £50,000 than the UK average. The median turnover figure was significantly lower, at £97,000 (compared to £100,000 nationally).

In terms of profitability, social enterprises in the South West were slightly less likely to have made a profit/surplus in the last year compared to the UK average, and slightly more likely to have made a loss. This might be due to regional reliance on tourism (including hospitality and culture, which are sectors heavily affected by the pandemic).

## Profit or surplus in the last financial year



# 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 responses to COVID and uptake of available support.

At the time of the survey, 9% of respondents in the South West told us that they had temporarily ceased trading.

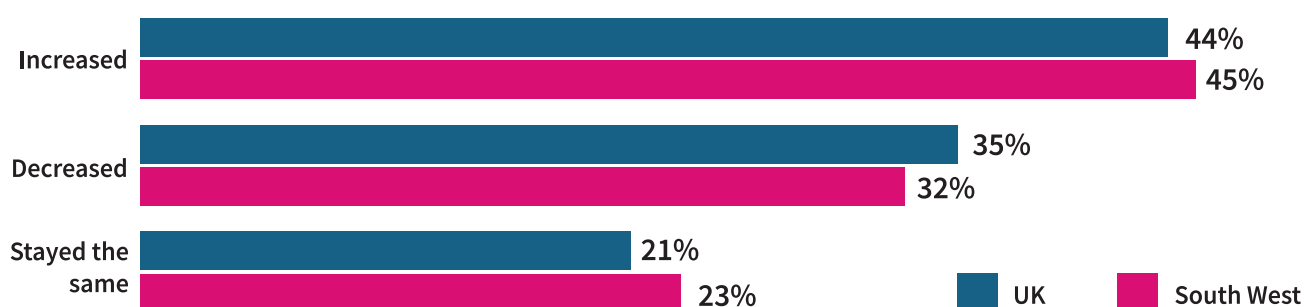
Due to the combination of the availability of additional grant funding and restricted opportunities for many social enterprises to secure income through their usual trading routes during the pandemic, we explored the impact this has had on

the proportion of income generated through trading.

Social enterprises in the South West generated 78% of their income through trading last year, on average, down from 82% in 2019.

Nonetheless 45% of social enterprises in the region increased their turnover in the 12 months prior to the survey.

**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. 46% of social enterprises in the South West furloughed staff during the pandemic (compared to 39% of social enterprises nationally, and 65% of small and medium sized businesses as a whole <sup>4</sup>) and 17% made staff redundant (9% of social enterprises UK-wide, 14% of SMEs).

Social enterprises in the South West were also more likely than the national social enterprise averages to have increased or decreased staff working hours, provided remote working facilities, and to have moved staff to different roles or asked them to take on additional tasks.

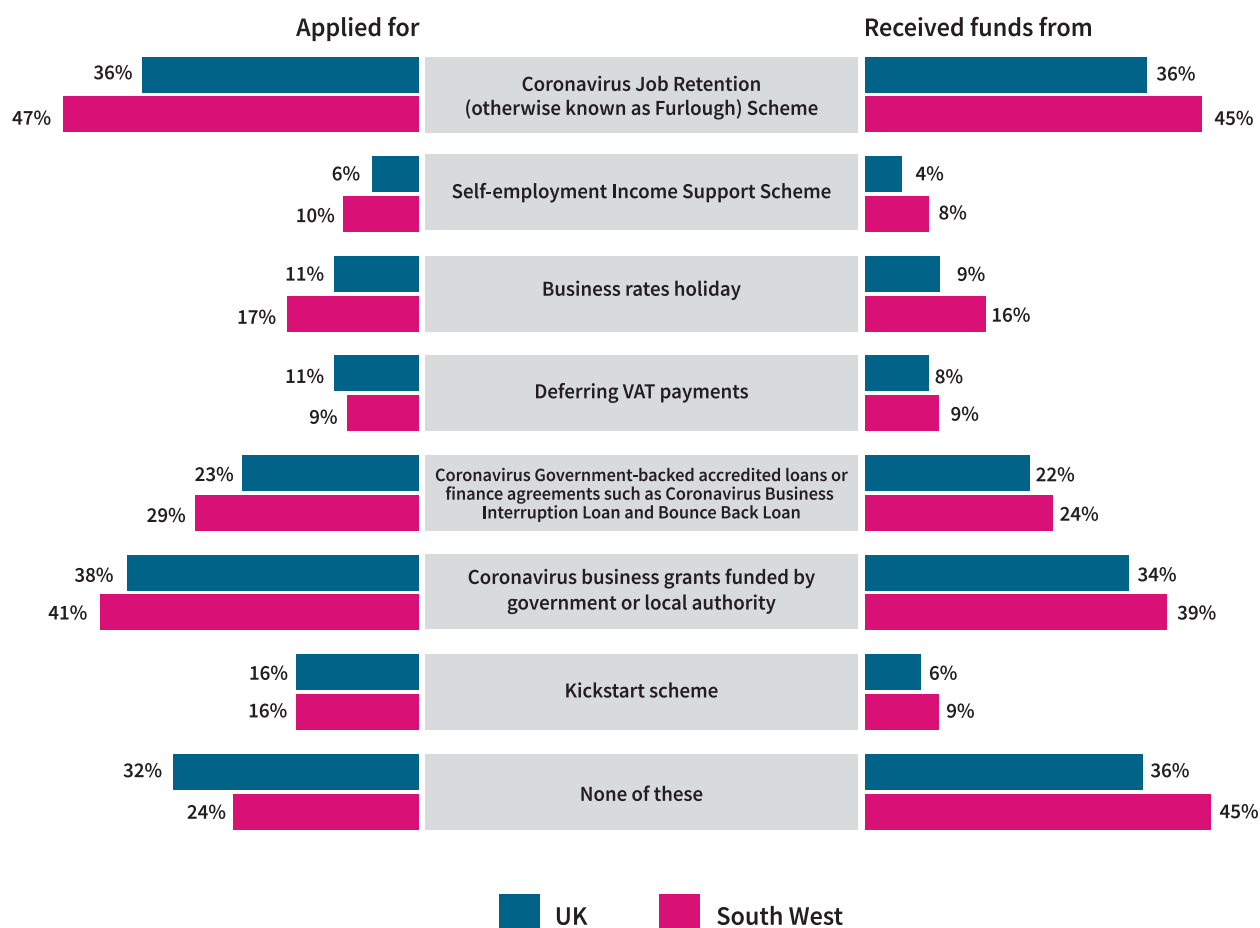
In terms of operational changes social enterprises made in response to the crisis, 74% of social enterprises in this region changed processes and ways of working in response to the

crisis, the same as the national average. 24% increased borrowing (22% nationally) and 30% drew on reserves (less than the national average, 36%). Social enterprises here were more likely than the UK average to have postponed investment.

We also asked whether social enterprises had applied for COVID-19 support schemes. Overall, social enterprises in the South West were slightly more likely to say they had applied for schemes – and also more likely to have been successful in receiving funds when they did apply - compared to the UK average. Social enterprises in the South West were more likely to have accessed all the forms of support we asked about than their counterparts elsewhere in the UK. 47% applied to the furlough scheme, 41% applied for grants and 29% applied for government-backed loans.

<sup>4</sup> <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/efa5133a-ad72-47a3-aef9-b4f8ab385a0c/small-business-survey>

## Coronavirus COVID-19 schemes applied to/accessed



## Reach and Local Participation

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

In the South West, 51% of social enterprises had representatives of the local community that are not employed by the business on their Boards (compared to 48% on average across the UK). Social enterprises here were also more likely than the national average to have employees (43% - +5%) and service users (28% - +4%) on their Boards.

In terms of the widest geographic area they cover, on average social enterprises in the South West were most likely to be operating across England (25%), with a slightly higher proportion than the UK average operating at a regional or multi-regional level (e.g. several counties), and slightly fewer operating both hyper-locally and internationally. Only 16% were exporting goods or services (compared to 22% for the UK as a whole).

91% of staff at social enterprises here came from the local area (where the majority of activity for the social enterprise takes place) compared to 85% on average UK-wide.

We asked social enterprises who their three most important providers of external support were. For social enterprises in the South West, grant providers and local government were particularly important. Compared to the UK average, more social enterprises here cited national membership bodies as being one of their top three most important providers of support – and local support organisations were comparatively far more important here. Mentors were less likely to be cited here compared to elsewhere – 17% said they were a top three source of support, compared to 23% on average nationally.

Three most important providers of external support (n=63, highest 6 reported) <sup>5</sup>

	UK	South West
Grant providers	36%	38%
Local government	27%	37%
National membership bodies	39%	32%
Peer networks	30%	29%
Local membership/support bodies	13%	21%
Friends and family	19%	21%

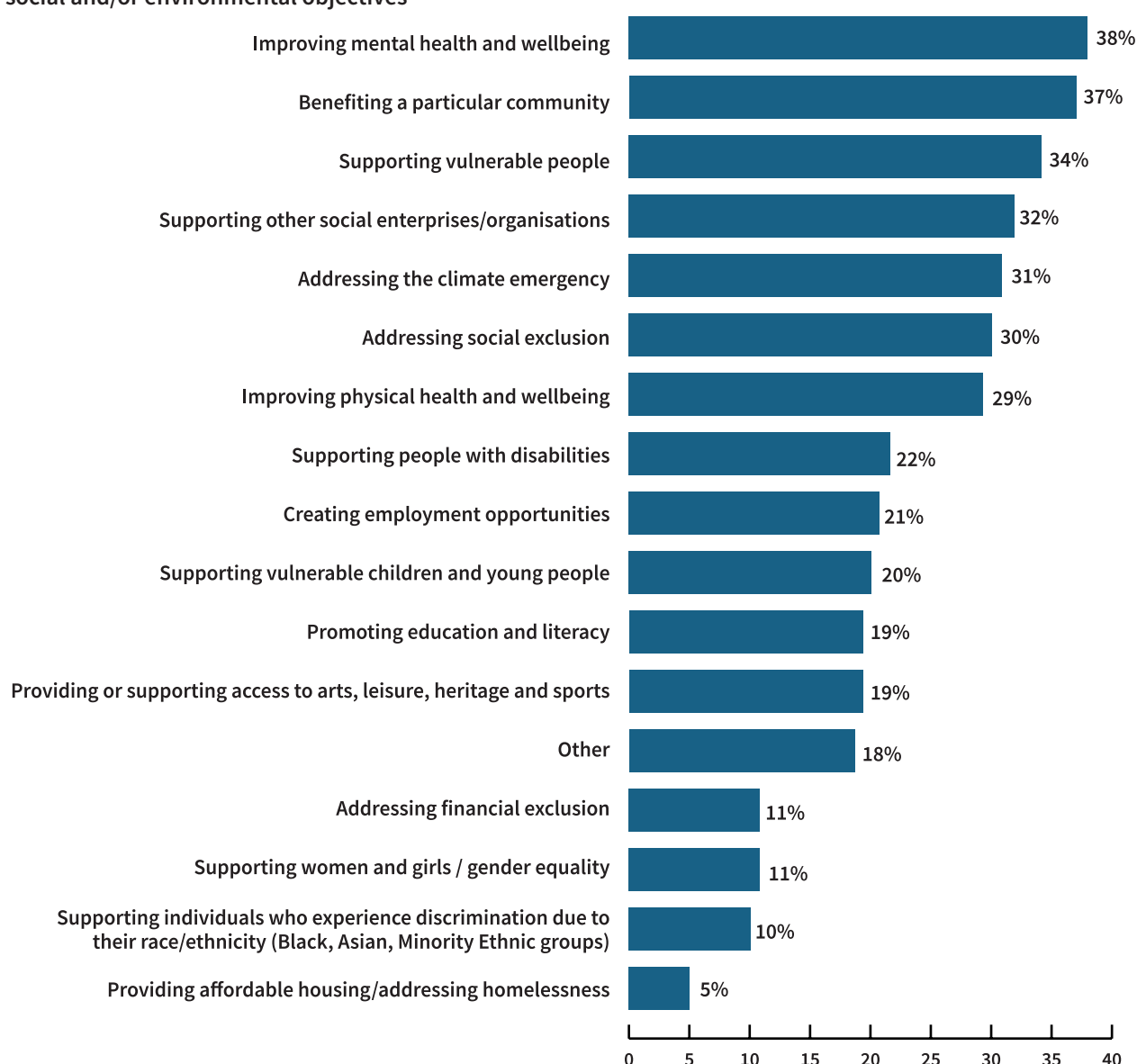
## Social and Environmental Impact

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

Almost a third of social enterprises in the South West supported other social enterprises as (one of) their main objective(s), compared to just one in five based on UK averages. Social enterprises here were also more likely to be focused on the climate emergency – 31% have this as their main mission (20% UK-wide).

There was also more focus on social exclusion here and on the arts, leisure, heritage and sports, but less emphasis on employment creation in the South West than across the UK as a whole.

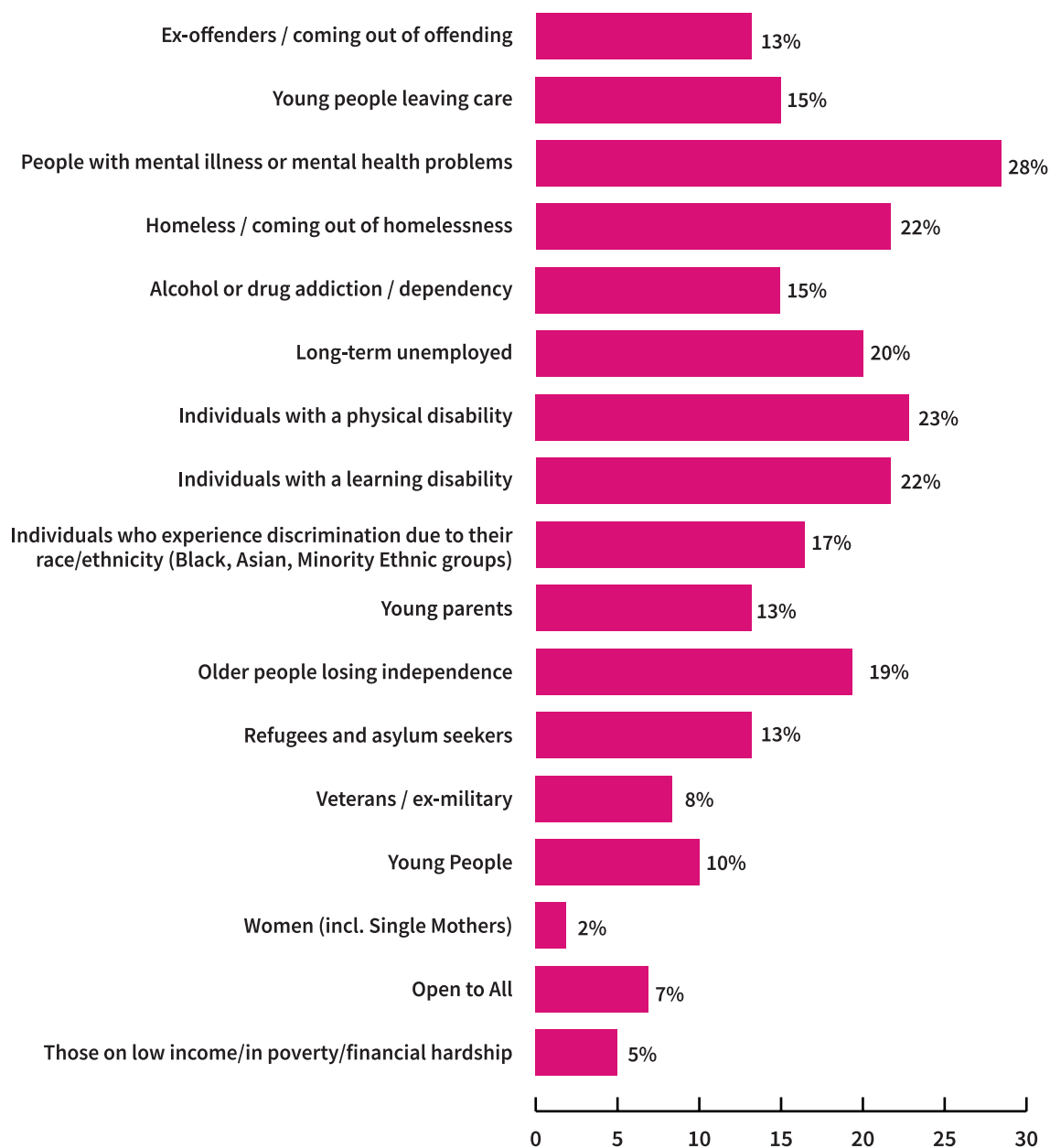
### Main social and/or environmental objectives



<sup>5</sup> This data was collected through a top-up survey conducted with SOSE 2021 respondents in September 2021

We also asked respondents to which groups and individuals they provide services or benefits. Compared to the rest of the UK, more social enterprises in the South West were focused on supporting older people and people who experience homelessness/issues with affordable housing. A slightly lower proportion here were working with people with mental health issues and on long-term unemployment.

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



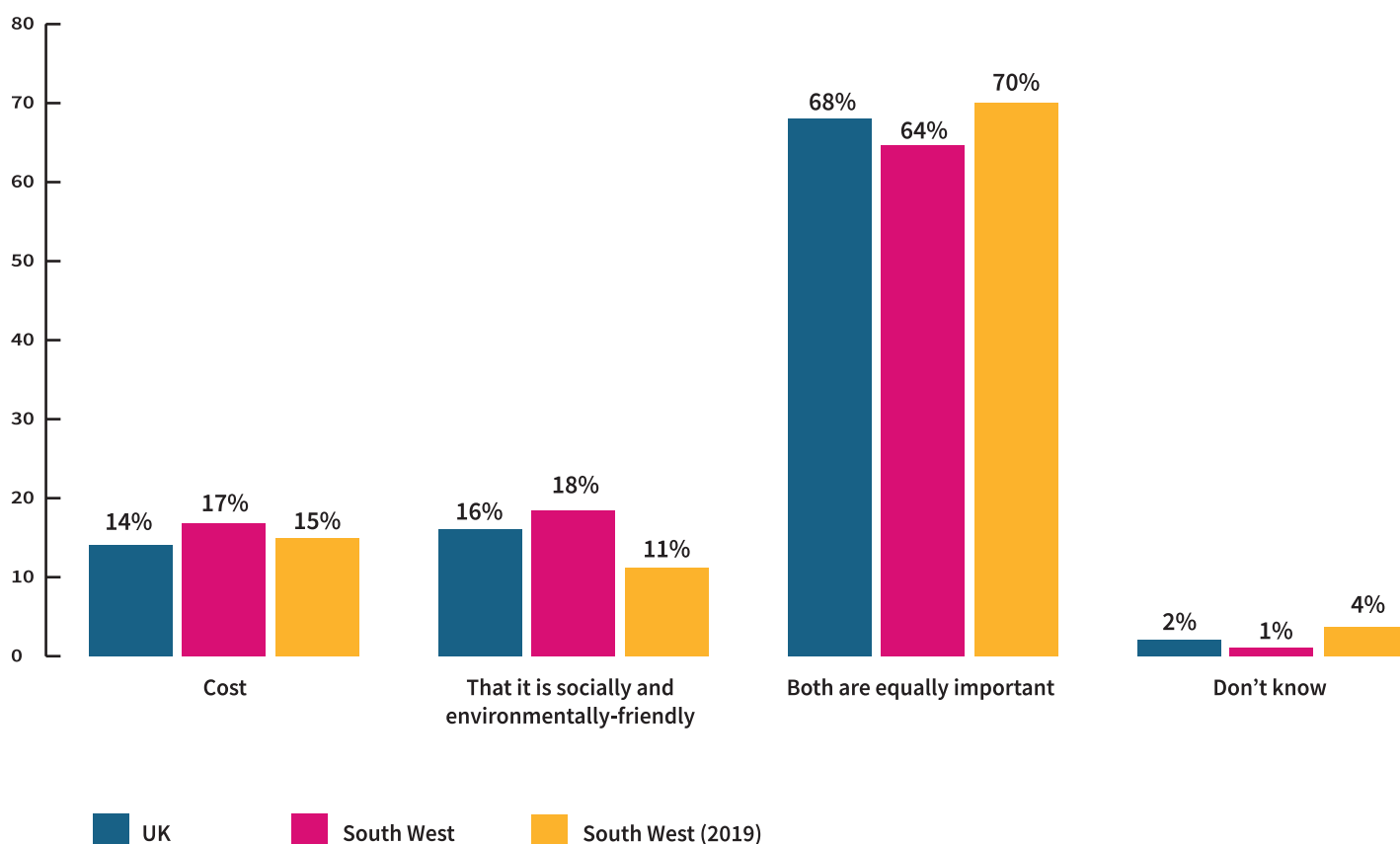
Although there was less focus on employment overall, similar numbers of social enterprises here are seeking to support people from disadvantaged groups into employment. In particular, 20% were seeking to employ people who experience discrimination due to their race/ethnicity and 19% looked to employ people with mental illness or mental health problems. Social enterprises in the South West were more likely than social enterprises elsewhere in the UK to be seeking to employ people who are young parents and veterans/ex-military.

## 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.

Although the proportion of social enterprises in the South West that prioritised cost over social/environmental factors in procurement is higher than the rest of the UK, and had not decreased since 2019, a higher proportion of social enterprises here would now prioritise social/environmental factors than was the case two years ago.

### Procurement prioritisation



For the first time in 2021, we asked social enterprises if they had embedded – or ere considering embedding – tackling climate change into their constitution/articles of association. Social enterprises in this region were slightly more likely to be committed to addressing the climate emergency than the UK on average. 42% of social enterprises in the South West said that they had done this already, with a further 32% planning to and another 12% having a commitment to net zero and/or a climate strategy. 13% had no plans to codify their commitment on climate, slightly fewer than is the case UK-wide.

We also asked if social enterprises had installed energy efficiency measures in the last 12 months. 25% had in the South West – less than the 30% who have on average across the UK, but significantly more than the 9% average for small and medium sized businesses as a whole <sup>6</sup>.

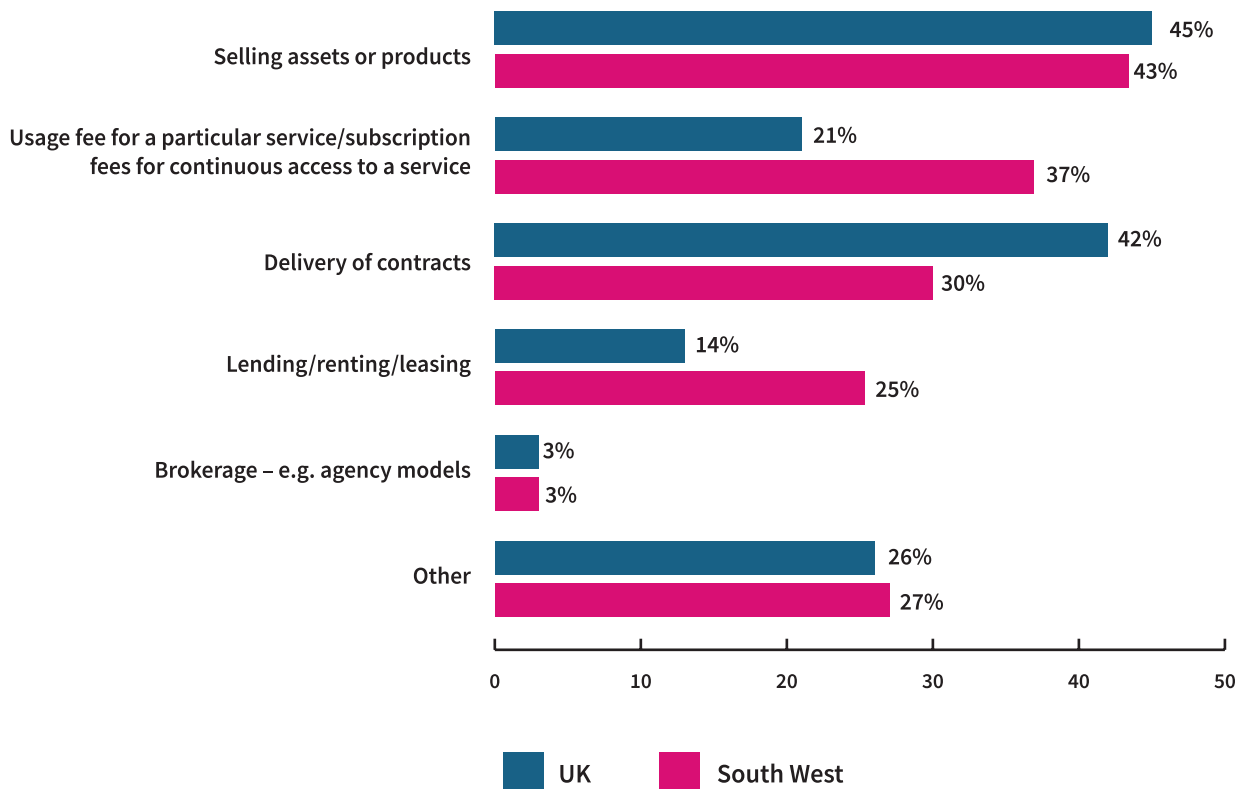
<sup>6</sup> <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/efa5133a-ad72-47a3-ae9-b4f8ab385a0c/small-business-survey>

# 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.

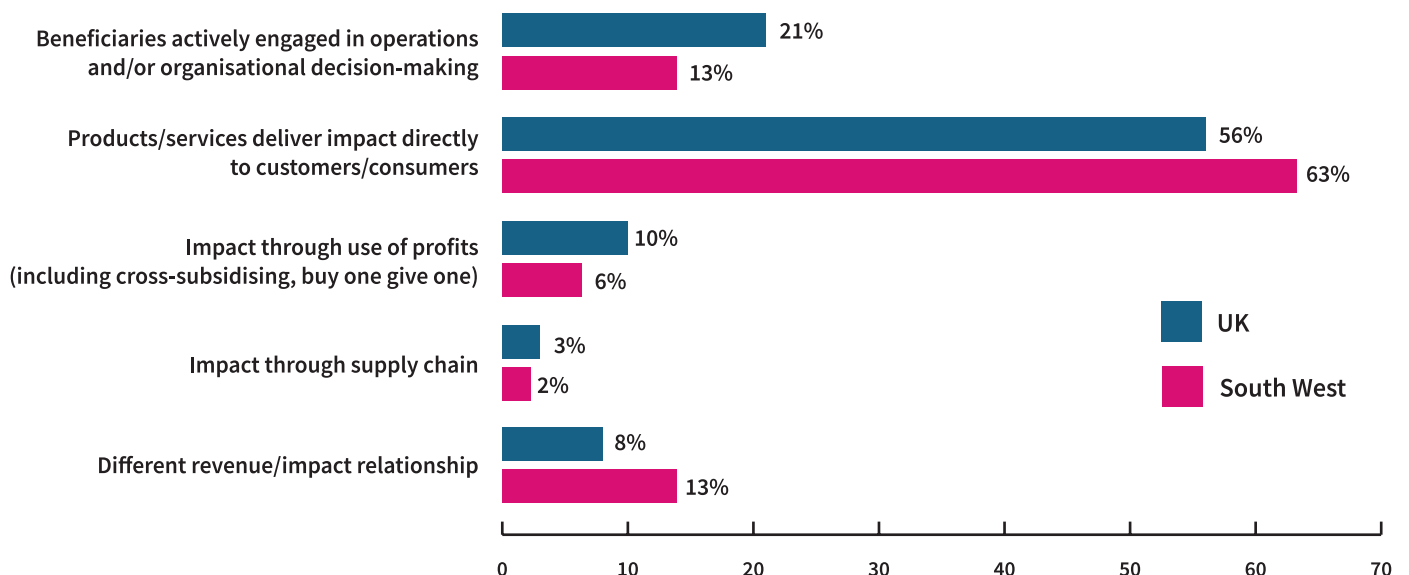
In the South West, 43% of social enterprises said that they sell assets or products as their main source of income generation. 37% charged a usage fee for services (rather than physical products) and 30% earned income from the delivery of contracts.

## Revenue generation model



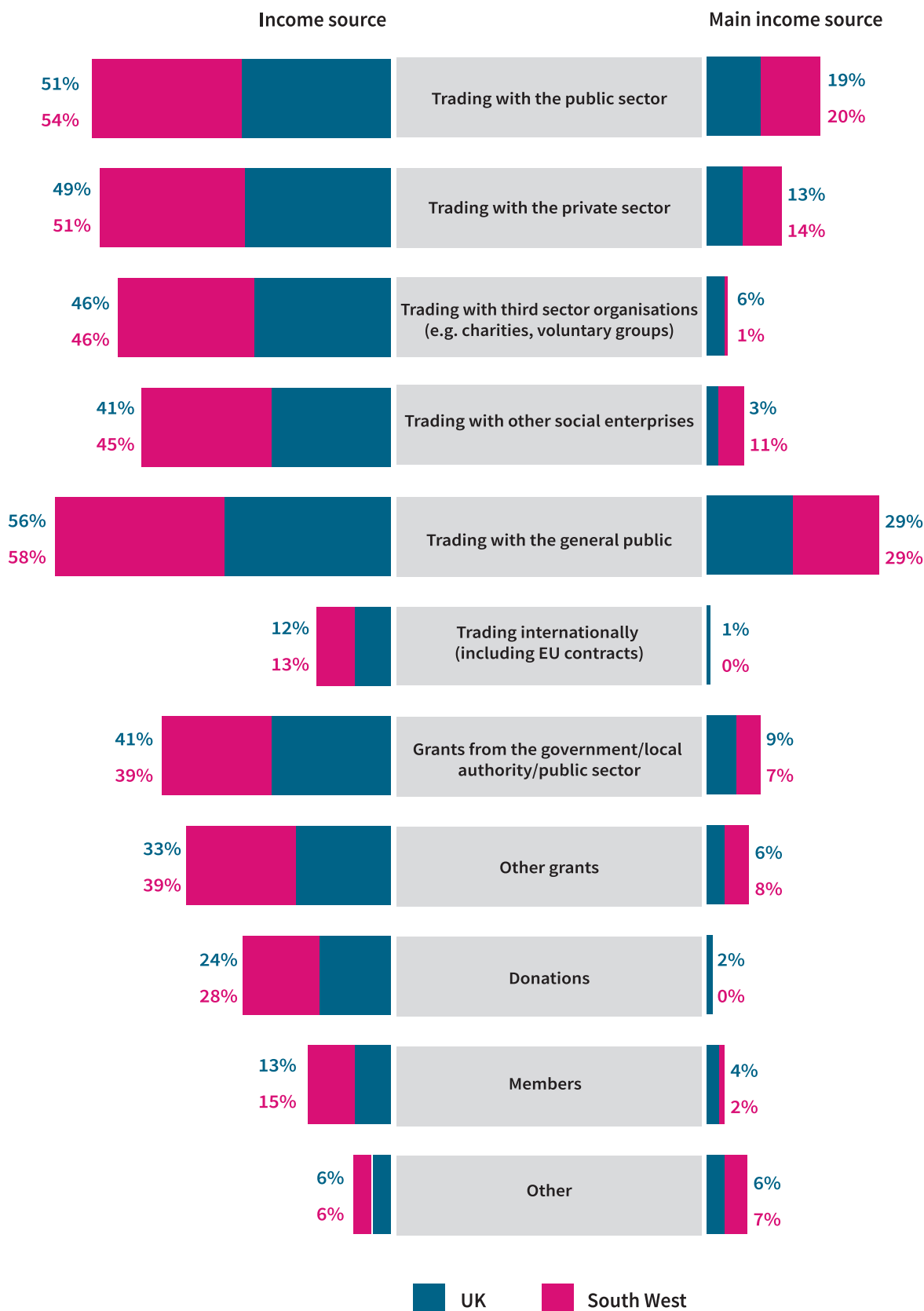
In terms of the relationship between revenue generation and mission, nearly two-thirds of social enterprises in the South West had products and/or services that delivered impact directly to customers/consumers, with just 6% delivering impact primarily through use of profits rather than their products or services.

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



We also asked about where social enterprises generate income, as well as how. Social enterprises in the South West were most likely to trade with the general public, followed by the public sector then the private sector. A higher proportion than the UK average cited their main income source as being another social enterprise (11%). Social enterprises here had slightly more diversified income than the national average, with 65% coming from the main source (69% UK wide).

## Income generation



# Workforce Demographics and Staff Engagement

Social enterprises in the South West have, on average, 88 paid employees (compared to the UK average of 128). As was the case in other regions, there were a couple of significant outliers here – many social enterprises have small staff teams. Just over one in ten social enterprises in the region had no paid employees and just under one in ten have 50-249 employees. There were, on average, 45 full-time staff at social enterprises in the South West and 7 temporary/casual staff (compared to the national average of 17).

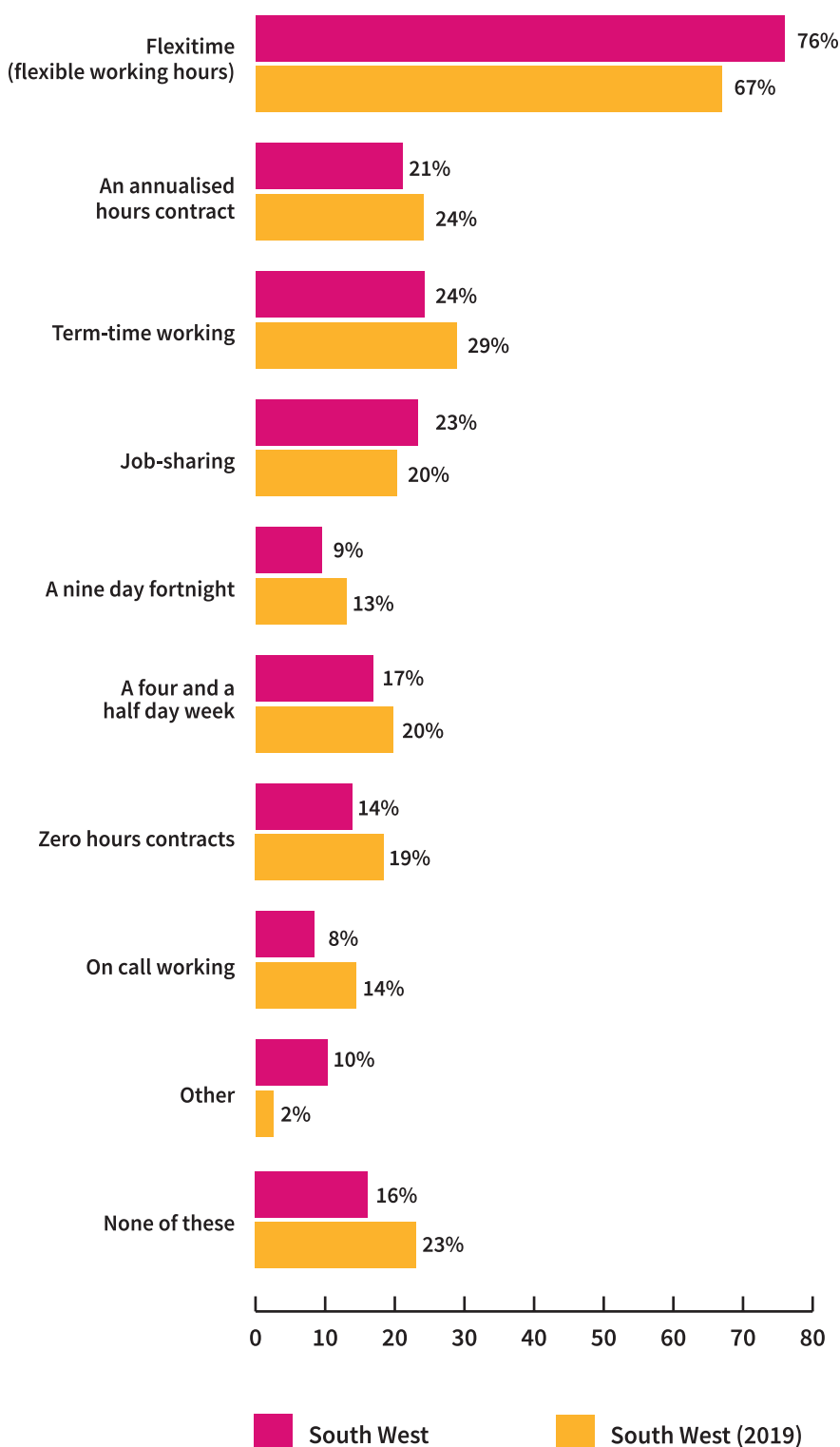
In terms of the make-up of the workforce at social enterprises in the region, 58% of staff were female (61% on average, UK-wide) and just 2% of social enterprises had no female staff (4% UK-wide).

11% of staff at South West social enterprises were people from Black, Asian and other ethnic groups that are a minority in the UK (people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds make up approximately 5% of the region's population, see footnote 7) and 45% of social enterprises here had at least one person from one of these groups on their staff team. On average, 16% of the workforce at South West social enterprises were disabled people.

Flexible working arrangements have become significantly more prominent during the pandemic. Social enterprises in the South West were slightly less likely, overall, to offer flexible working options to their staff compared to the UK average. They were, however, more likely than the national average to offer term-time working and annualised contracts. They were also more likely to offer zero hours contracts.

Overall, compared to 2019, flexible working options had increased in the region, particularly for flexitime, term-time working and job-sharing.

Working hours arrangements for employees

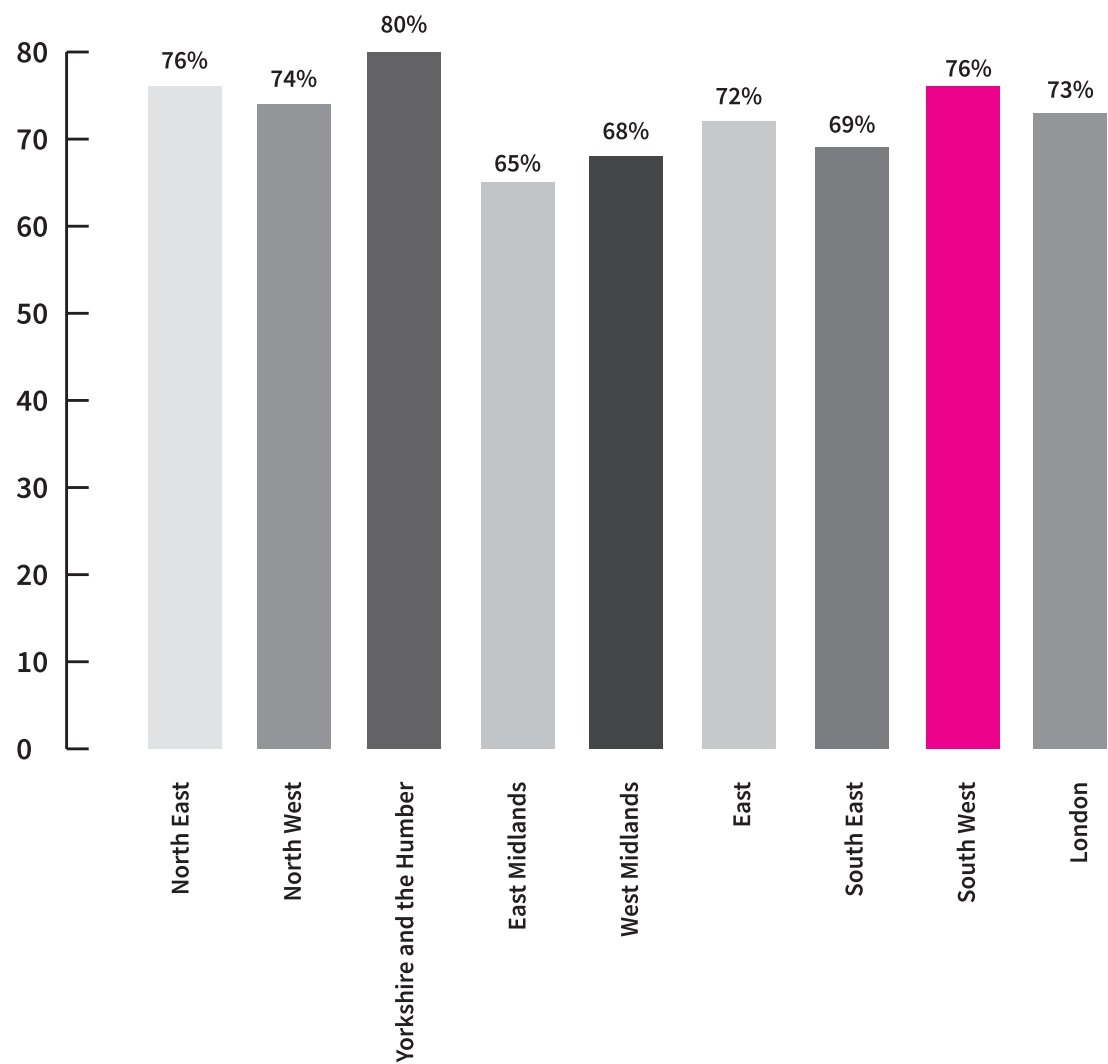


Social enterprises in the South West were slightly more likely than the UK average to pay the Living Wage <sup>7</sup> to their staff, and in the top three compared to the proportion of social enterprises across the English regions, although slightly fewer organisations were paying the Living Wage here now compared to two years ago.

Proportion of Social Enterprises Paying the Living Wage



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



<sup>7</sup> 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

Nearly half of social enterprises in the South West were led by women and 15% were led by disabled people. 83% of leaders are from White British backgrounds, which is slightly fewer in proportion to the region's population. Yet the proportion of social enterprise leaders from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds was about the same as the latest data for the region's population (2011), which may now mean a slight under-representation given how demographics may have shifted since 2011.<sup>8</sup>

## Leadership demographics

	UK	South West	FTSE100 <sup>9</sup>	SMEs
Male	47%	43%	94%	79%
Female	47%	49%	6%	16%
White British	74%	83%		84%
White Other	7%	2%		6%
Asian or Asian British	4%	2%		2%
Black or Black British	6%	2%		*%
Other including Mixed heritage	2%	5%		3%
ALL racialised communities	14%	9%	6% (2020)	5%
16 to 24	1%	3%		
25 to 44	32%	24%		
45 to 64	53%	60%		
65+	8%	7%		
Disability	11%	15%	0%	No data
No disability	82%	77%	100% <sup>10</sup>	No data

The median salary of the highest earner in an organisation was £30,000 here, compared to £28,000 for the UK as a whole.

<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing the latest available ethnicity data for UK regions is the 2011 census. White British people comprised 92% of the population of the South West, people of Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic background comprised 5%. <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>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/ftse-100-executive-pay-report\\_tcm18-82375.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/ftse-100-executive-pay-report_tcm18-82375.pdf)

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

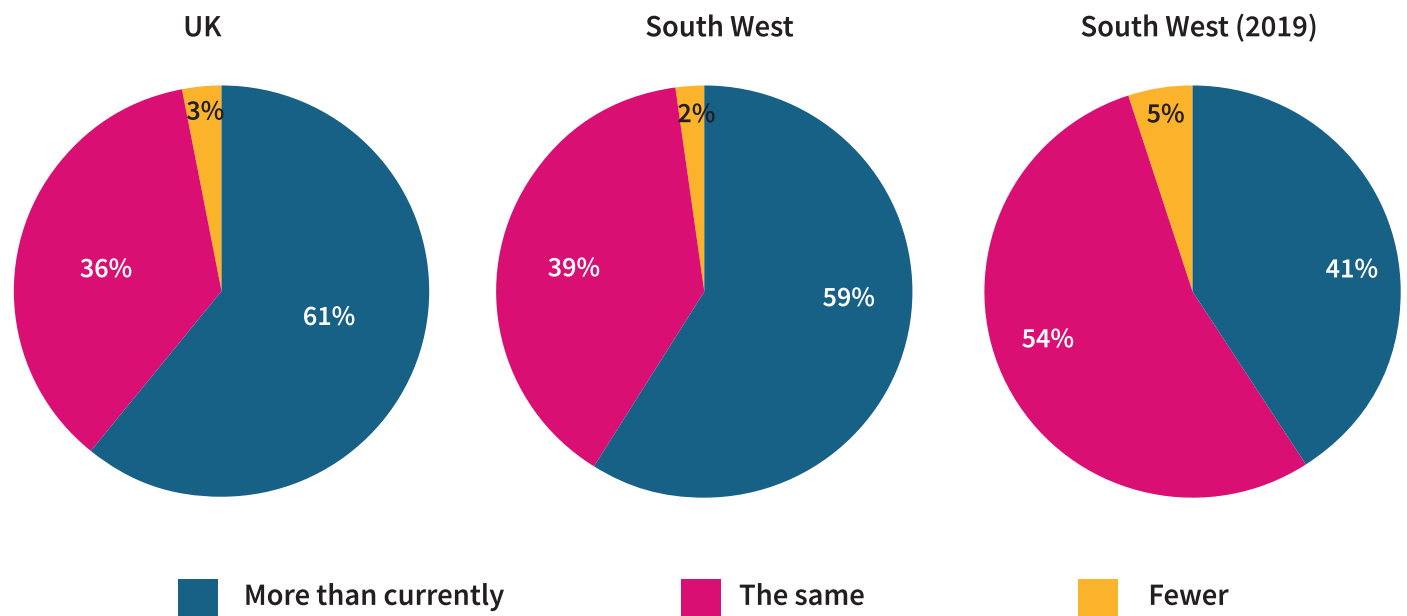
# Growth trends

We asked questions about growth trends. Overall, the South West is one of the less optimistic regions when it comes to social enterprise growth.

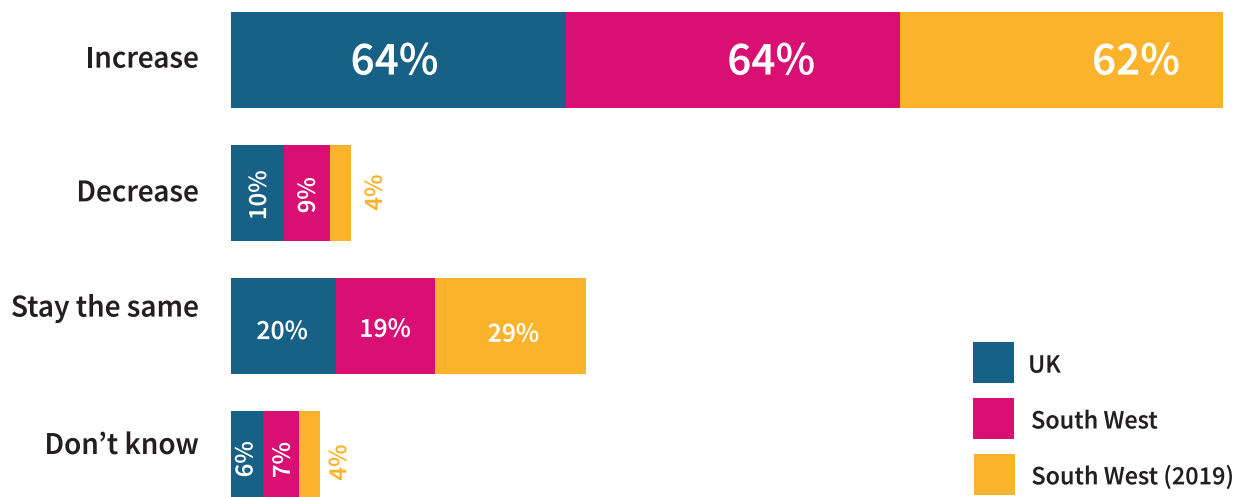
In terms of expectations around growing their workforce, social enterprises in the South West were slightly more likely than the national average to expect their workforce to stay the same size over the coming 12 months. They were slightly less optimistic than the UK average – but significantly more optimistic than when asked in 2019. This could be related to there having been comparatively higher levels of redundancy in the region in response to the pandemic.

In terms of turnover growth, numbers for the South West were very close to the UK-wide averages. More social enterprises in the region anticipate that their turnover will decline in the next 12 months than was the case in 2019.

## Workforce size expectations for the next 12 months



## Turnover expectations for the next 12 months

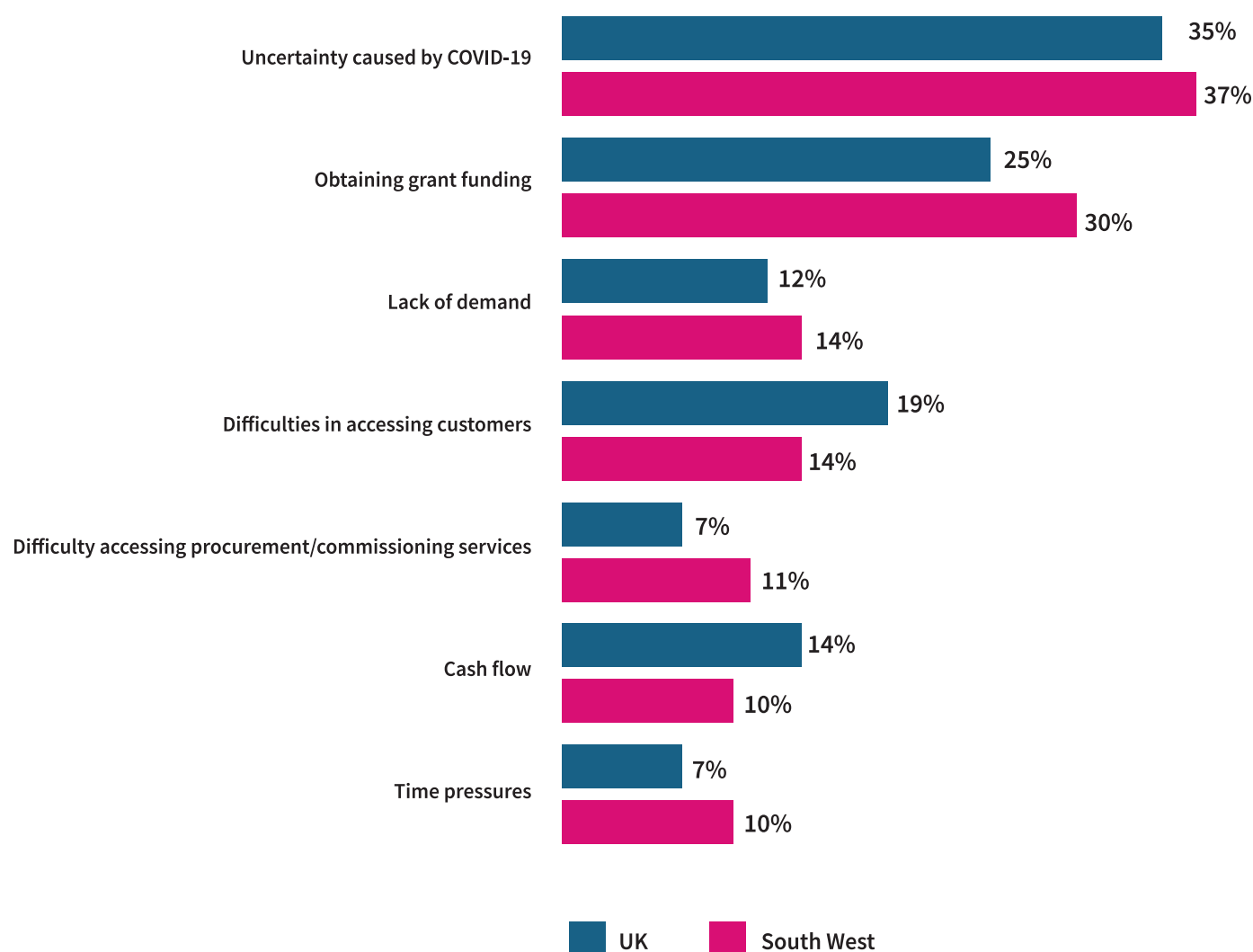


We asked social enterprises what actions they have taken in the previous 12 months to sustain and grow their businesses. In the South West, over half of social enterprises diversified or expanded into new geographic or different customer markets in the last year and 61% developed products and/or services that were new to their organisation. Compared to the UK average, social enterprises here were more likely to have invested in staff recruitment and training (55%, compared to 49% UK-wide) – and less likely to have increased marketing or advertising.

56% of social enterprises in the South West provided products/services free or at reduced cost in direct response to COVID-19 related needs.

The survey asked what social enterprises see as their top three barriers to sustainability and/or growth. As elsewhere, COVID-related uncertainty was the biggest concern. Grant funding was more of a worry to social enterprises in the South West than elsewhere and there was less concern about accessing customers or about cash flow.

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

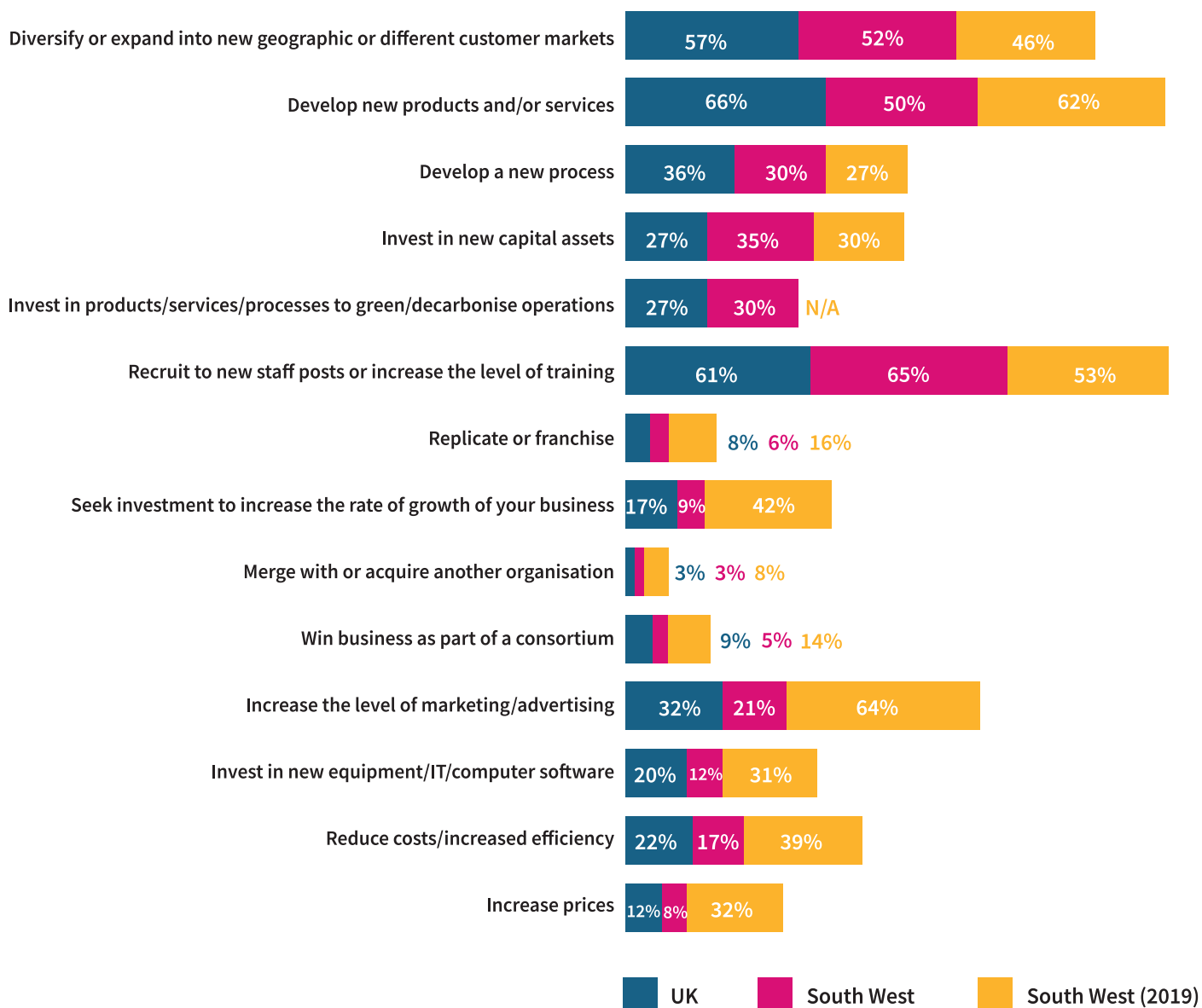


In terms of future growth, respondents who expected their turnover to grow were asked how they envisage achieving this. A slightly higher proportion of social enterprises in the South West said they would recruit staff or invest in training than the national average. Given that a slightly lower proportion of social enterprises here expected their workforces to have grown by next year, we can assume there is more emphasis on training. Social enterprises in the region were less likely to be planning to develop new products/

services than counterparts elsewhere. They were also less likely to be planning to seek investment to grow their business.

Appetite for investment has decreased significantly since 2019, when 42% of respondents said they would use this as a route to growth. There was also significantly less interest in marketing/advertising and in investing in new equipment.

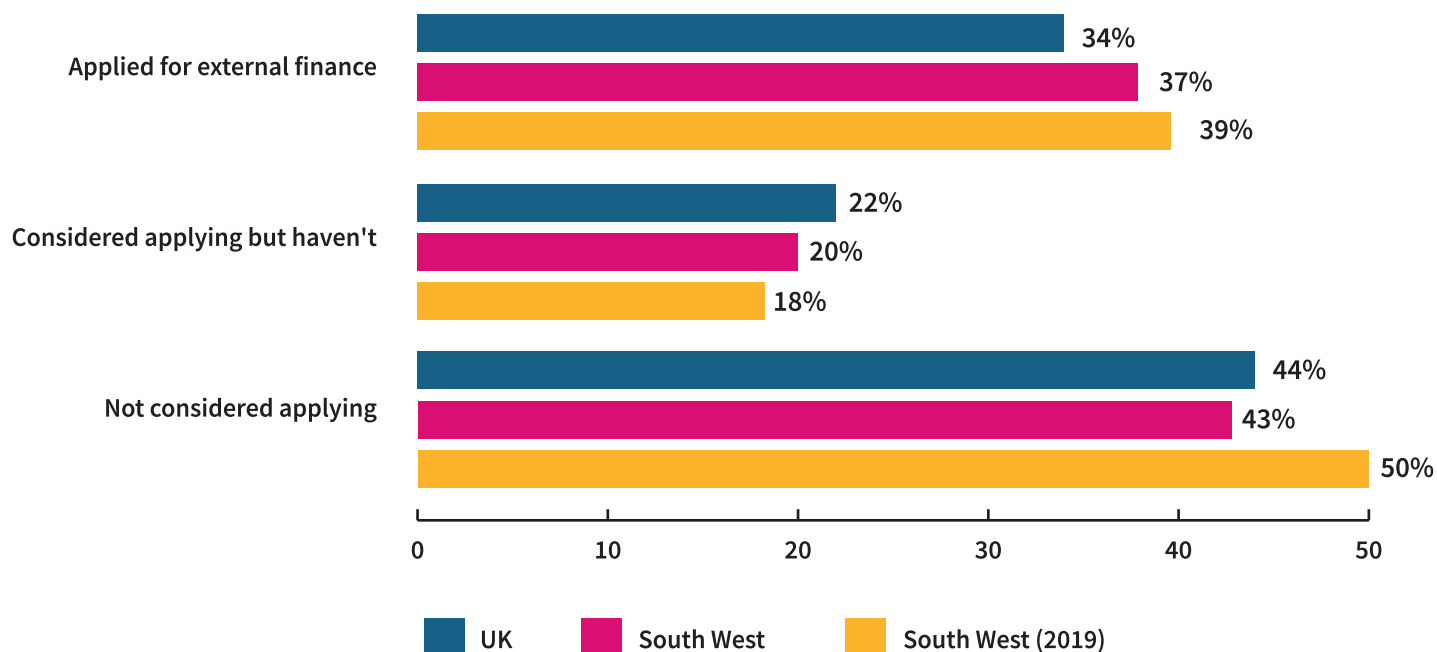
## Growth plans



# Finance

The final set of survey questions relate to funding and finance. In terms of appetite for finance, just over a third of social enterprises in the South West applied for finance in the last year and almost half did not consider applying – overall slightly fewer than the proportion that did not seek or consider finance in 2019.

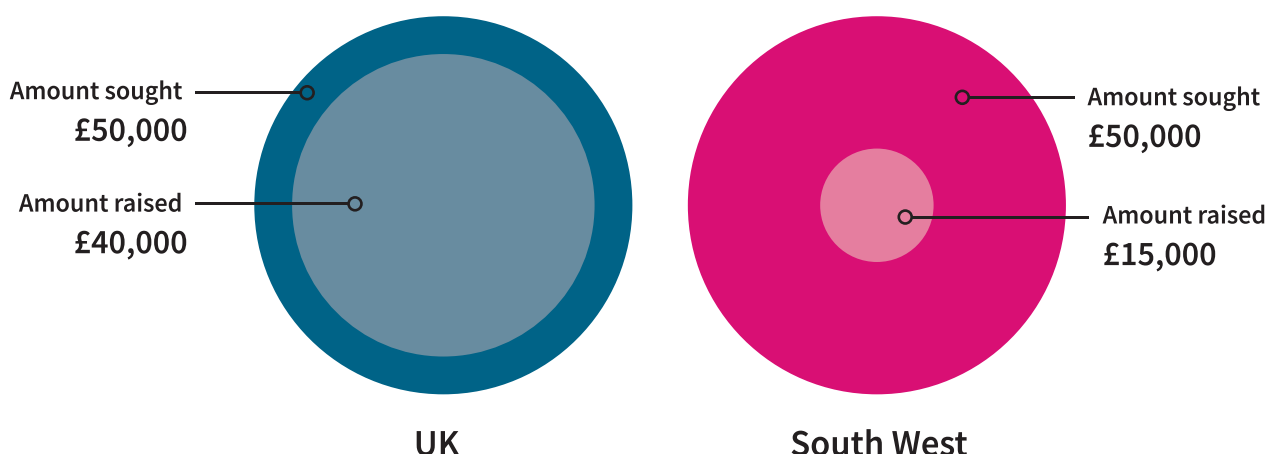
## Summary of interest in external finance



Of those that decided not to apply for finance, time pressures or lack of resources was the most-cited reason for not doing so – followed by lack of confidence and skills to take on finance. Significantly fewer social enterprises here said that the reason they did not apply for finance was because they didn't need it, or that they or their Boards did not want to take on additional risk, although they were more concerned than the UK average about finding appropriate finance – and about decisions taking too long and the process being overly complex.

Where they were looking for finance, social enterprises in the South West sought a median amount of £50,000, the same as the national average. However, they were far less successful in obtaining the amounts of money they sought indicating a significant issue with capacity to raise finance in the region, that may be related to availability of appropriate finance or skills and resource available.

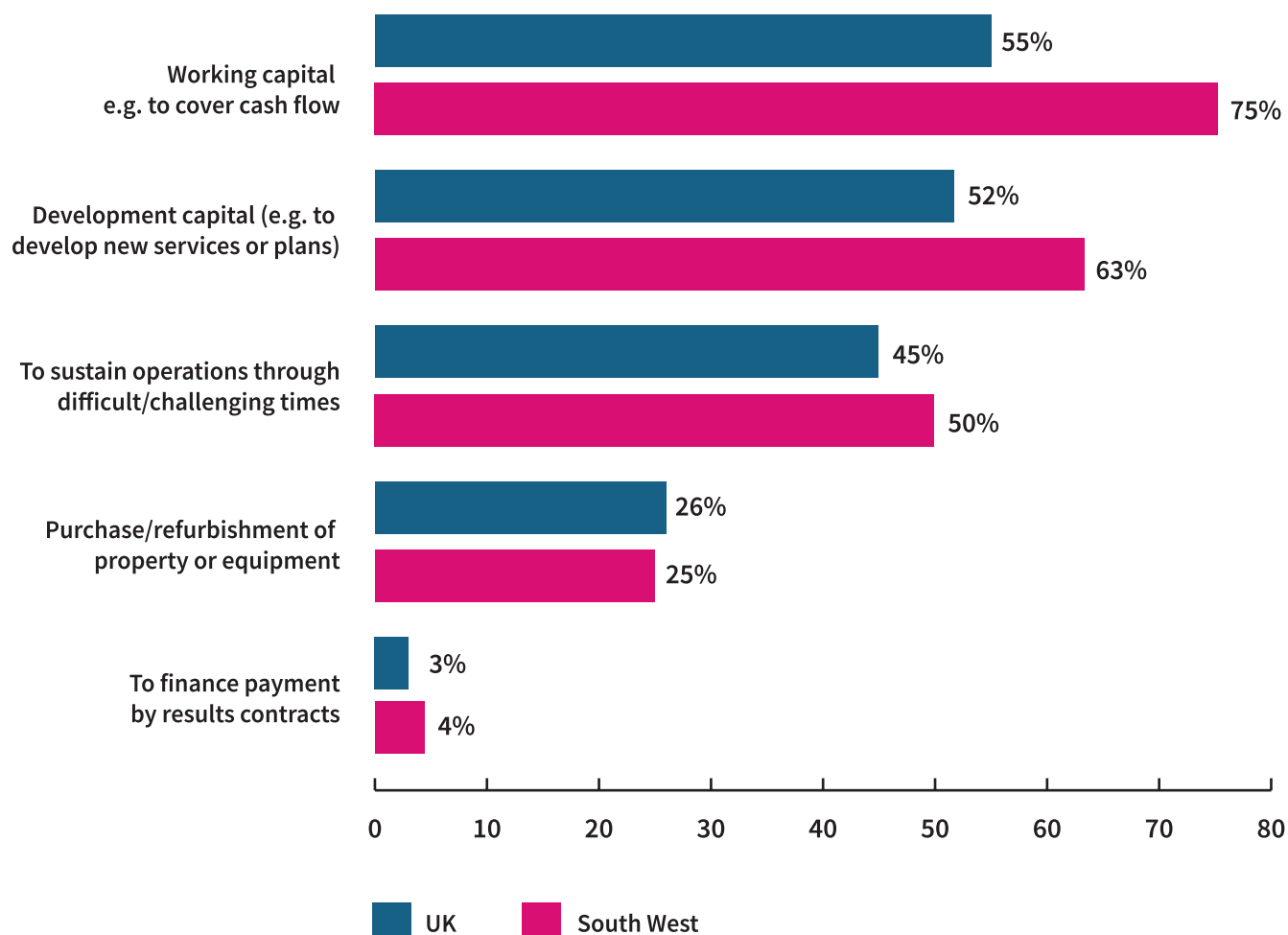
## Amounts of external finance (excluding grants) sought and raised



In terms of who they sought finance from, South West social enterprises were less likely than the UK average for social enterprises to have approached banks, or their local authority. They were more likely to have applied to social investors (perhaps due to the presence in the region of Resonance, Triodos bank, Bristol and Bath Regional Capital (BBRC)) <sup>11</sup>. They were also more likely to have applied to government, to grant-making trusts or foundations – and also to venture capitalists (8% said they did so). Peer-to-peer and crowdfunding was more popular in the South West too, whereas borrowing from friends and family was less common.

The most common reason for seeking finance for social enterprise in the South West, by a significant margin, was for working capital, followed by development capital.

#### Purpose of finance or capital sought



Overall, 41% of social enterprises in the region think that the amount of external finance available to their organisation was insufficient – a higher proportion than the UK average. 63% think they didn't have the financial, marketing and business skills required to obtain external finance and investment.

<sup>11</sup> Although the proportion of social investment flowing to the region appears not to be matched by the presence of specialist investors in the region, as seen in the SOSE data and the Adebawale report into Social Investment <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Reclaiming-the-Future-Commission-on-Social-Investment-Report.pdf>

## Deep Dive: Plymouth

Plymouth is a hotspot for social enterprise activity in the UK and has been a Social Enterprise Place since 2013. It has one of the most active social enterprise networks in the country and Plymouth University has played an important role in helping develop social enterprises in the city. There are now around 200 social enterprises in the city working across a wide range of sectors including in education, health, arts, environment, food, finance, housing, business support, sport, social care and more. Collectively these businesses employ around 9,000 people and bring in an income of over £580 million. There are mega-social enterprises such as the University, Plymouth Community Homes and Livewell South West and there is also a burgeoning economy of smaller social enterprises.

Of those that shared location data, 21 of the survey respondents were based in the Plymouth (PL) postcode area. We have looked at questions where at least the majority of these 21 responded to give a summary of social enterprise activity in Plymouth.

A slightly lower proportion of income was generated through trading in Plymouth (72%) compared to the South West region as a whole. However, social enterprises in the city

were far less likely to say that their turnover had decreased in the previous 12 months and 67% said that they made a profit in the previous year, compared to 46% in the region as a whole. At just over £1million, the average turnover size here was lower than the regional average.

Social enterprise respondents in Plymouth had been trading for an average of 11 years and had an average of 19 members of paid staff (including a couple of outliers with higher numbers of staff). Just 38% expect to grow their workforce in the year ahead, compared to 59% in the region as a whole, which implies that higher profits and turnover here may not translate directly into staff jobs.

There is a slightly higher codified commitment to addressing the climate emergency in Plymouth compared to the rest of the region – just 10% had no plans to embed or articulate climate plans in their organisation's legal documentation or organisational plans compared to 13% in the wider region. All SOSE respondents in this area were in the three most deprived quintiles and 61% of social enterprises here are led by women, compared to 49% in the wider SW and 47% in the wider UK.

## Case Study: Real Ideas Organisation

At the heart of the Plymouth social economy is Real Ideas Organisation – a CIC based in the city which works across the Southwest and beyond. Its mission is to solve problems and create opportunity for individuals, organisations and communities. It does this through a variety of programmes centred on helping young people into careers and employment, supporting the growth and development of social enterprises and acting as a hub for community, business, and cultural activity.

Real Ideas is based in the Guildhall in Devonport, a part of the city that, following decades of deindustrialisation, became one of the poorest parts of the country. Devonport Guildhall, a magnificent Regency era building, became symbolic of this decline gradually falling into disrepair. Real Ideas took ownership of the building in 2007 in a community asset

transfer from Plymouth City Council, securing £1.8 million to refurbish the hall from the Community Assets Fund. This was no ordinary building restoration. The social enterprise took ownership of the Grade I listed Guildhall to turn it into a space that gives back to the local community.

Devonport Guildhall reopened in 2010 as a space for social innovation – a place which brings people and businesses together to help build a sustainable and inclusive economy in the city. It has incubated a number of local community sector organisations, is home to a few established ones too, and has helped new food businesses to set up and grow during the pandemic by sharing access to the commercial kitchens and bakery facilities there.

As well as Devonport Guildhall, Real Ideas also runs Ocean



Studios – a space for arts, culture and making, with resident artists, shared making spaces and creative co-work. Ocean Studios hosts regular events and exhibitions throughout the year from pottery to portraiture and everything in between.

Most recently, Real Ideas renovated the Grade II listed Market Hall in Devonport, a £7.6million project which opened in the summer of 2021 as a new space for immersive technologies, complete with contemporary co-work and a 360-dome environment.

The Real Ideas campus stretches into Cornwall too, with bases in Liskeard and Redruth. The Grade II listed Library in Liskeard is the next renovation project for the Real Ideas team to tackle.

In addition to reimagining community buildings, Real Ideas is the Arts Council's Bridge Organisation for the Southwest of England and works with schools, youth and cultural organisations to connect young people with art and culture.

A core part of Real Ideas' work is growing the local social economy through the development of community business. Its Empowering Places Programme, funded by Power to Change, has supported over 15 community businesses to start-up and thrive through a mixture of hands-on business support, training, tailored expert support and seed funding. The programme has developed a focus on renewing high streets as well as in protecting parks and green spaces.

Real Ideas has also supported thousands of young people take the next steps towards their future career, delivering employability projects in Cornwall funded by ESF, ERDF, National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Environmental sustainability is woven into the business' operations, underpinning Real Ideas' One Planet Living' approach. It runs a range of programmes with this focus. For example, the Enrich programme, part of the Plymouth Green Estates Management Solutions Project (GEMS), specifically looks at how social enterprises and community businesses can be used to find positive solutions to sustaining the city's parks and Green Thinkers works to get young people interested in and skilled up to progress into green jobs. An equal focus is given to diversity, equity and inclusion, with Real Ideas championing more diverse approaches across the board and CEO Lindsey Hall co-chairing Plymouth's Inclusive Growth Group.

In 2020, at the very start of lockdown, Real Ideas launched a membership in a bid to build a community of people and organisations interested in creating change and positive social and environmental impact. To date there are over 3,000 members of Real Ideas accessing spaces, joining conversations, participating in social action and creating change. This community continues to grow, creating a community for change and underpinning a sustainable business model for Real Ideas.

<https://realideas.org/>