

West Midlands: Locally embedded and making profit

State of Social Enterprise in the West Midlands



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. 69 of these responses were for the West Midlands 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 report¹.

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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

West Midlands Headline Findings

Our research found that social enterprises in the West Midlands:

- Had fared comparatively well over the last year – they were more likely than the UK average to have made a profit or surplus and more likely to have increased turnover.
- Had a slightly higher average turnover than social enterprise nationwide – and significantly smaller staff teams on average.
- Were less likely to seek government and other sources of COVID-19 related support compared to the UK as a whole – although more social enterprises here secured income from grants, and this perhaps in turn helps explain why the proportion of income earned through trading was lower here than for the UK as a whole.
- Were more likely to be registered as CICs. The Community Interest Company (CIC) legal form was particularly popular in the West Midlands, as it was in 2019.
- Were embedded in the region – they were more likely to have representatives of their local communities on organisation Boards, to operate at a regional level, but were less likely to apply for finance from their local authority than is the case elsewhere.
- Were more likely to be led by women, particularly so if they were based in Birmingham. By contrast, they had slightly fewer women in their workforce than the UK average for social enterprises.
- Had slightly less overall commitment to environmental issues. Social enterprises here were less likely to have embedded tackling the climate emergency in their constitution/articles of association, or to have prioritised social/environmental factors over cost in procurement. However, social enterprises in the region were more likely to have implemented energy efficiency measures in the last year.
- Are less likely than they were two years ago to be paying the living wage. This is also below the UK average for social enterprises.
- Anticipated significant innovation in the coming year, with almost 4 out of 5 expecting to create new products or services. Aligned to this is a far higher intention to use finance raised for development capital. There were also higher expectations to increase prices and seek to reduce costs and improve efficiency, compared to other UK social enterprises. Less finance was sought to cover working capital or to sustain operations in difficult times compared to that sought for development capital, and compared to the national averages.
- Were slightly less likely to seek external finance. Where they did, they sought far more than social enterprises elsewhere. They secured more too – but significantly less than they applied for.
- Were more likely to have applied to social banks and social investors for external finance compared to social enterprises 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.

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 West Midlands region comprises the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands metropolitan county and Worcestershire.

It also includes the social enterprise city of Birmingham, with its social enterprise quarter in Digbeth, and the social enterprise city of Coventry.

There is a lot of start-up activity in the region and strong specialist support and growth programmes established by the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which are run through their Growth Hub at Aston University (the Initiative for Social Enterprise is a delivery partner). There is also a big focus on social

procurement in Birmingham. Seven anchor institutions from the public sector are working in an initiative led by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to bring local social enterprises into the public sector supply chain.

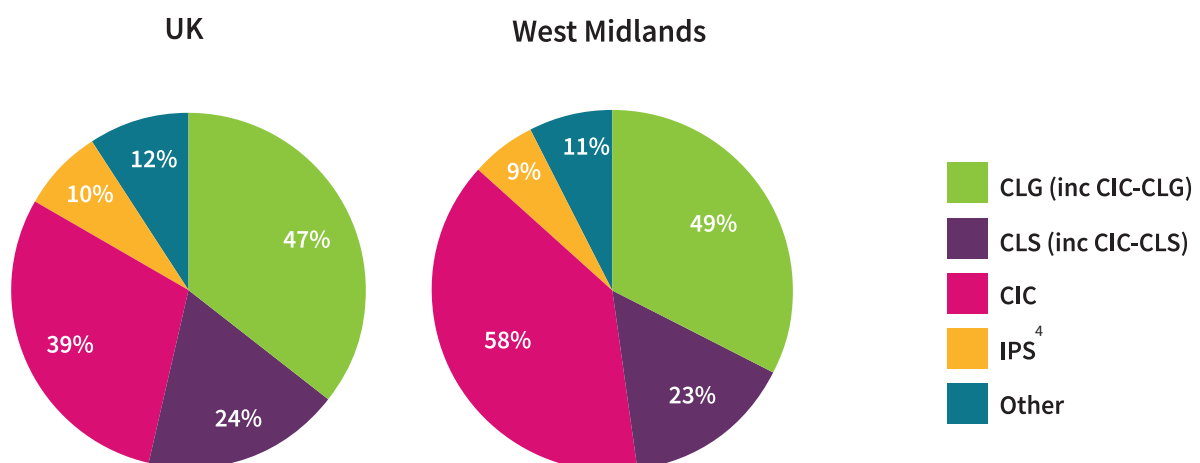
The West Midlands Combined Authority has been working for some years to bring the social economy together. It published a paper in 2021 containing a 10-year plan for the social economy, with a significant focus on social enterprise.²

Social Enterprise Demographics

Social enterprises in the West Midlands were an average age of nine years old – slightly less than the UK average of 10 years. 23% had been operating for under three years, so there weren't as many start-ups in the region as in other parts of the UK (34% nationwide). 14% had been operating for over 15 years – a similar proportion of established social enterprises to elsewhere.

The Community Interest Company (CIC)³ was more popular in the West Midlands, in terms of the legal form under which social enterprises operate. 19% more social enterprises here used this status than the UK-wide average.

Legal status



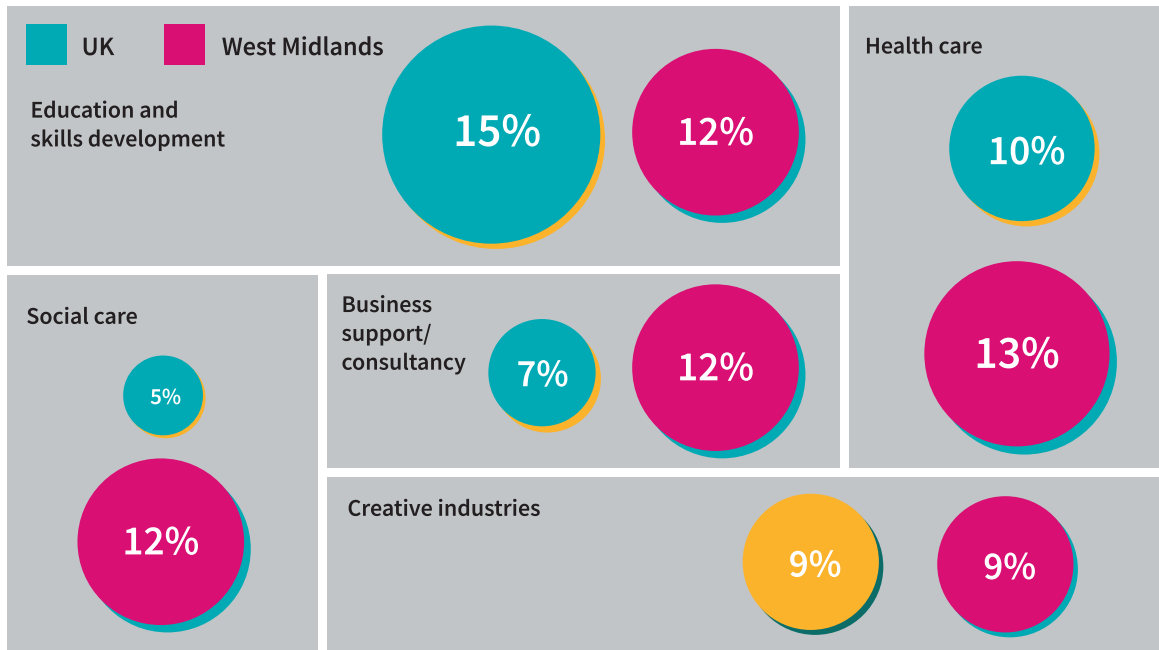
Looking at the sector of the economy that social enterprises trade in predominantly, proportionately more social enterprises reported that they operate in the healthcare, social care and business support/consultancy sectors in the West Midlands than in the UK as a whole.

² <https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/launch-of-new-strategy-to-help-create-a-better-place-for-everyone-across-the-west-midlands/>

³ 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.

⁴ 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

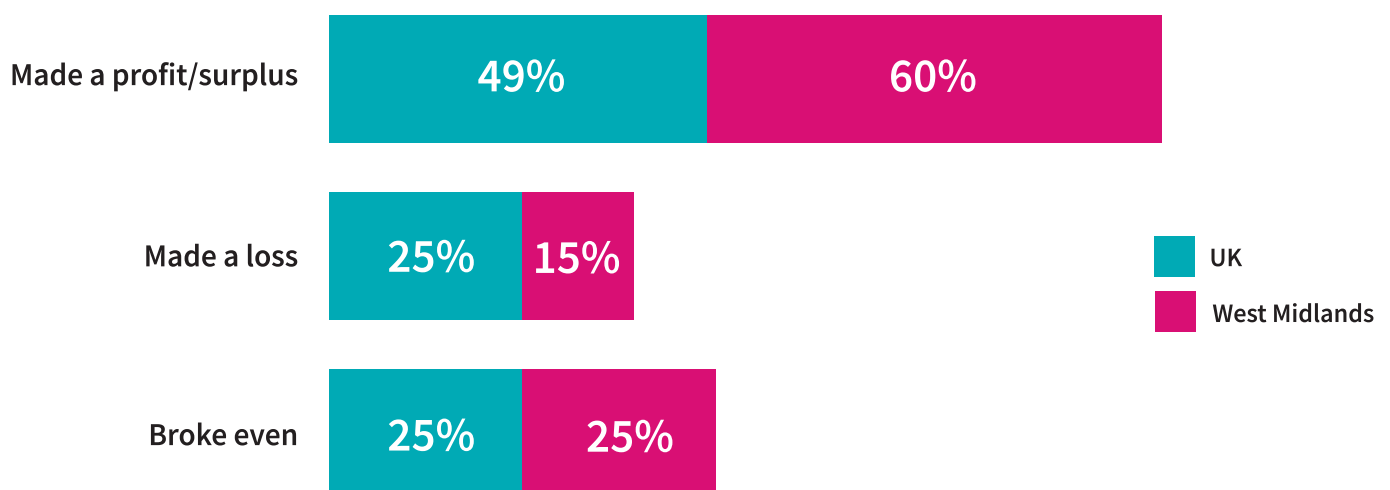


The average turnover for a social enterprise in the West Midlands was £2.9 million (compared to £2.2 million UK-wide), with slightly fewer (-5%) generating under £85,000 income than nationally and marginally more (+3%) generating over £5 million.

significantly more likely to have made a profit/surplus in the last financial year compared to figures for the UK overall. West Midlands social enterprises were also less likely to have made a loss. The proportion of health and social care providers in the region may explain this, at least in part.

Social enterprises in the West Midlands performed well in the last year regarding revenue generation. They were

Profit or surplus in the last financial year



COVID Impact

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

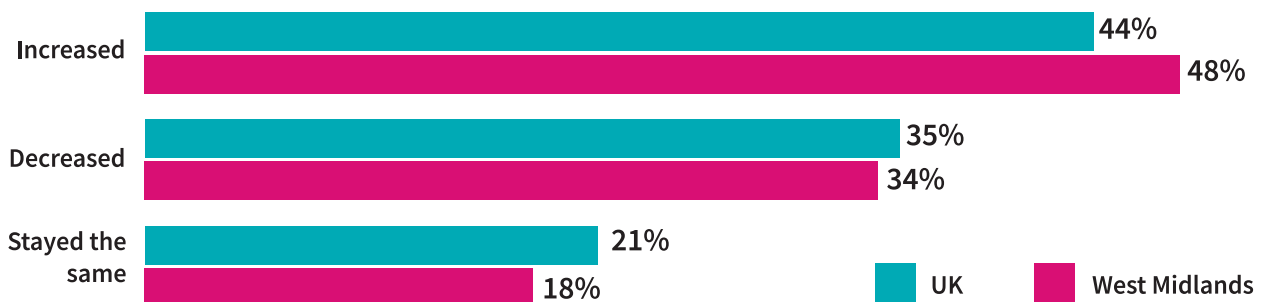
Knowing that the combination of additional grant funding and restricted trading routes for many social enterprises during the pandemic, we explored the impact this has had on the proportion of income generated through trading.

The proportion of income generated from trading was more than 5% lower in the West Midlands than the average for social enterprises nationally, with 12% fewer (59%, compared to 67% UK-wide) generating 75% or more of their income through

trading. In turn, this may have influenced staff pay levels and the need for working capital.

Despite this, social enterprises in the West Midlands reported being 4% more likely than the UK average to have increased their turnover in the 12 months prior to the survey (compared to the 12 months before that).

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 ⁵. In the West Midlands, social enterprises were slightly more likely to have changed the services or products they provided (52% had, compared to 49% nationally). Social enterprises in the West Midlands were less likely to have changed selling methods (32%, compared to 38% UK-wide) and were less likely to have increased borrowing in general as a coping strategy (15%, compared to 22%).

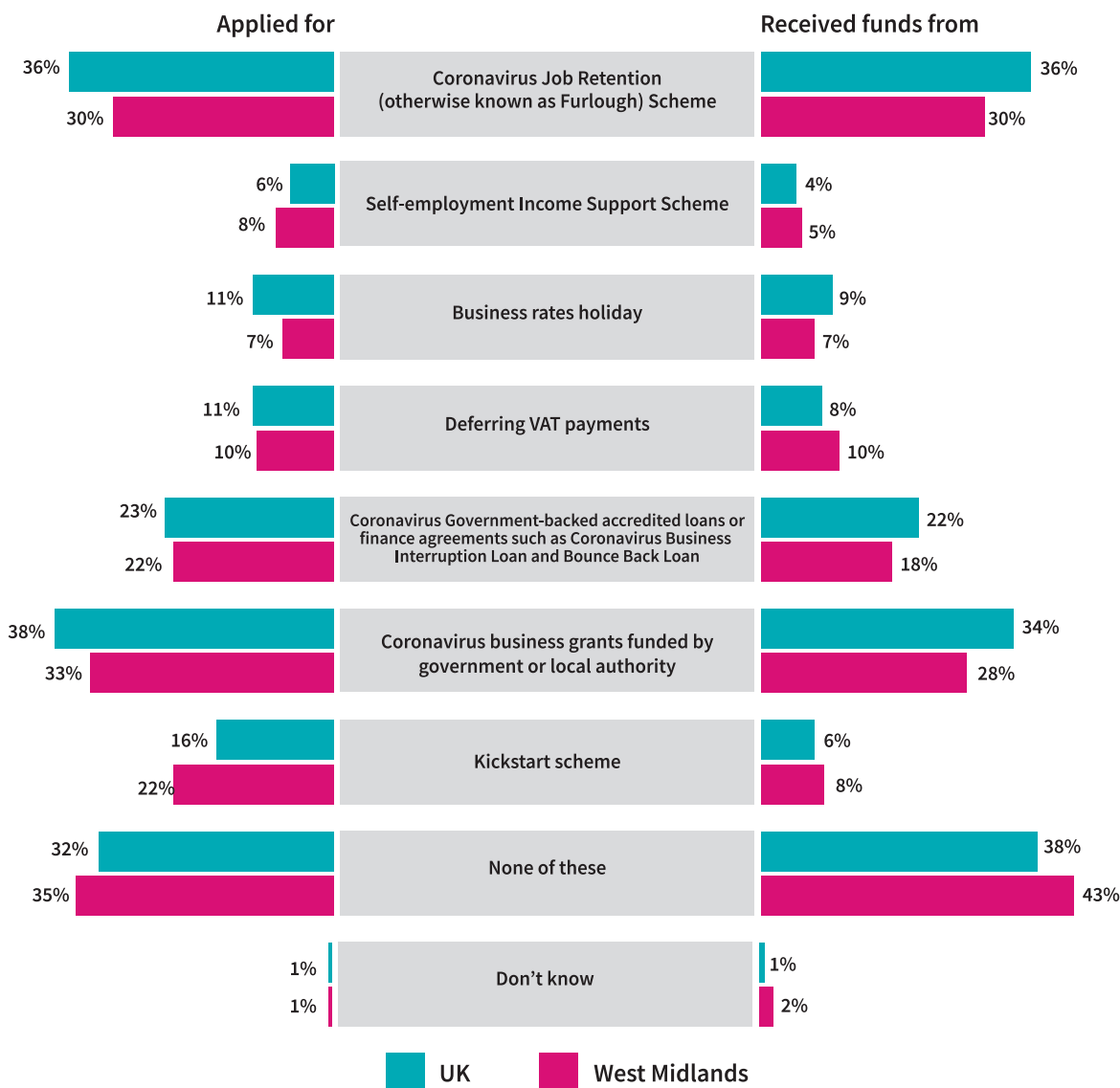
The survey asked about measures taken to cope with the pandemic that affected workforce. Social enterprises in the West Midlands were less likely to have furloughed staff than

the national average (33%, compared to 39%). They were correspondingly less likely to have recruited staff for the short or the long term, and they were more likely to have moved staff to new or different roles.

We also asked whether social enterprises had applied for COVID-19 support schemes. Overall, social enterprises in the region were less likely than the national average to apply for these schemes, with the exception of the youth employment Kickstart Scheme. West Midlands social enterprises were also less successful than the UK average in obtaining grants from government or local authorities.

⁵ 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 engaged with their local communities.

In the West Midlands, social enterprises were significantly more likely to have local community representatives (not employed by the business) on their boards (14% more than the UK collectively).

Social enterprises here were also more likely to operate at a regional level (12% more than the national average), with fewer

operating UK-wide (-5%) or internationally (-7%).

We asked social enterprises about their three most important providers of external support. In this region, national membership bodies were seen as more important than elsewhere in the UK (39% – national average). There was less reliance on mentors (-4%) but more on family and friends (+6%).

Three most important providers of external support (n=36, highest 6 reported) ⁶

National membership bodies	50%
Peer networks	33%
Grant providers	33%
Friends and family	25%
Local government	22%
Mentors (formal/informal)	19%

Social and Environmental Impact

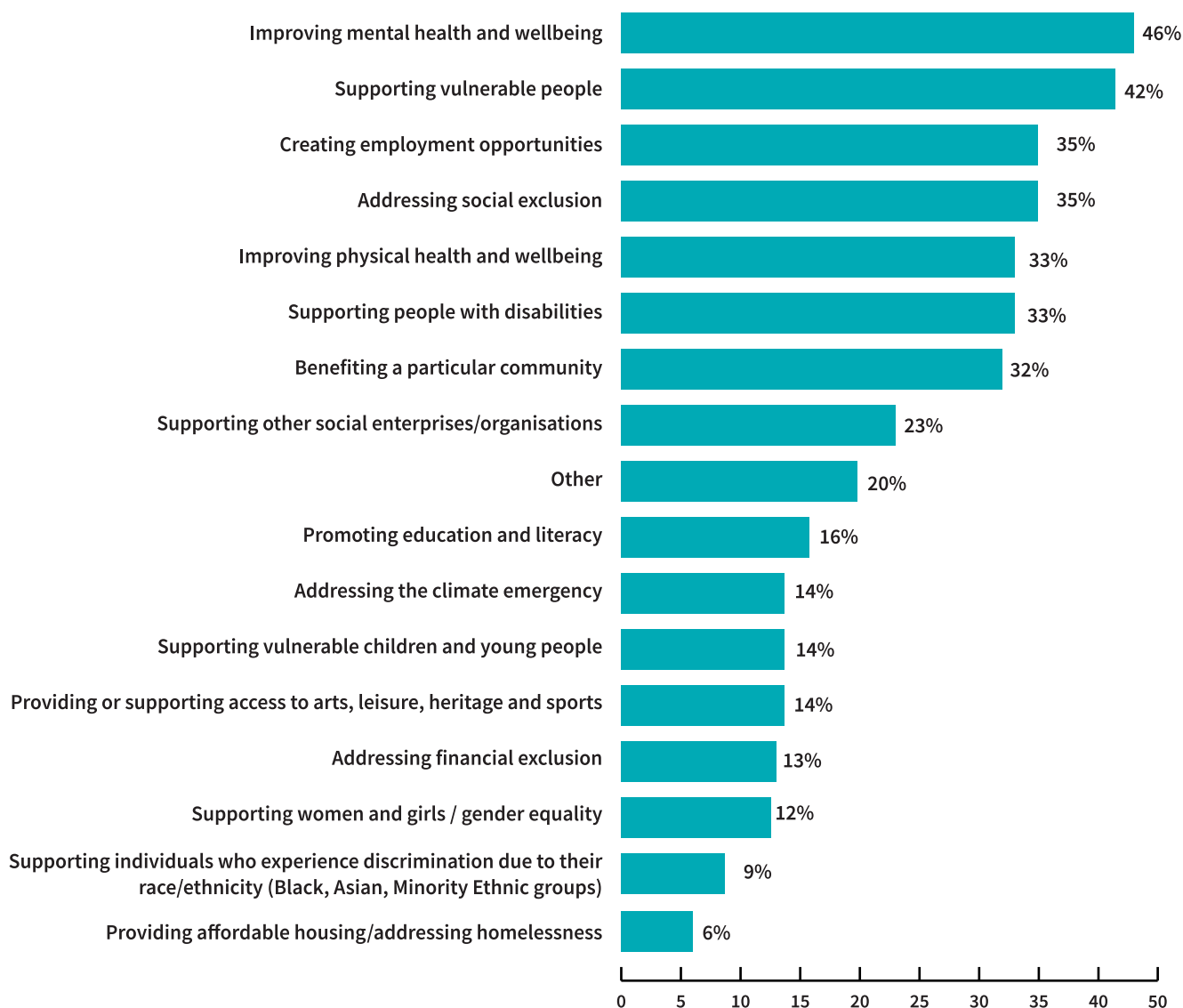
The survey captured information about the social and environmental impact of social enterprises.

Looking at the social and environmental mission of social enterprises in the West Midlands, mental health was the prominent mission, as elsewhere in the UK, where it was the most-cited objective – although only cited by 36% of social enterprises. Creating employment opportunities (+7%), addressing social exclusion (+10%) and supporting people with

disabilities (+14%) were more frequently cited objectives here than in the UK as a whole.

Fewer West Midlands social enterprises were addressing the climate emergency than the UK average (-6%). There was also a slightly lower focus on supporting children and young people (-3%).

Main social and/or environmental objectives

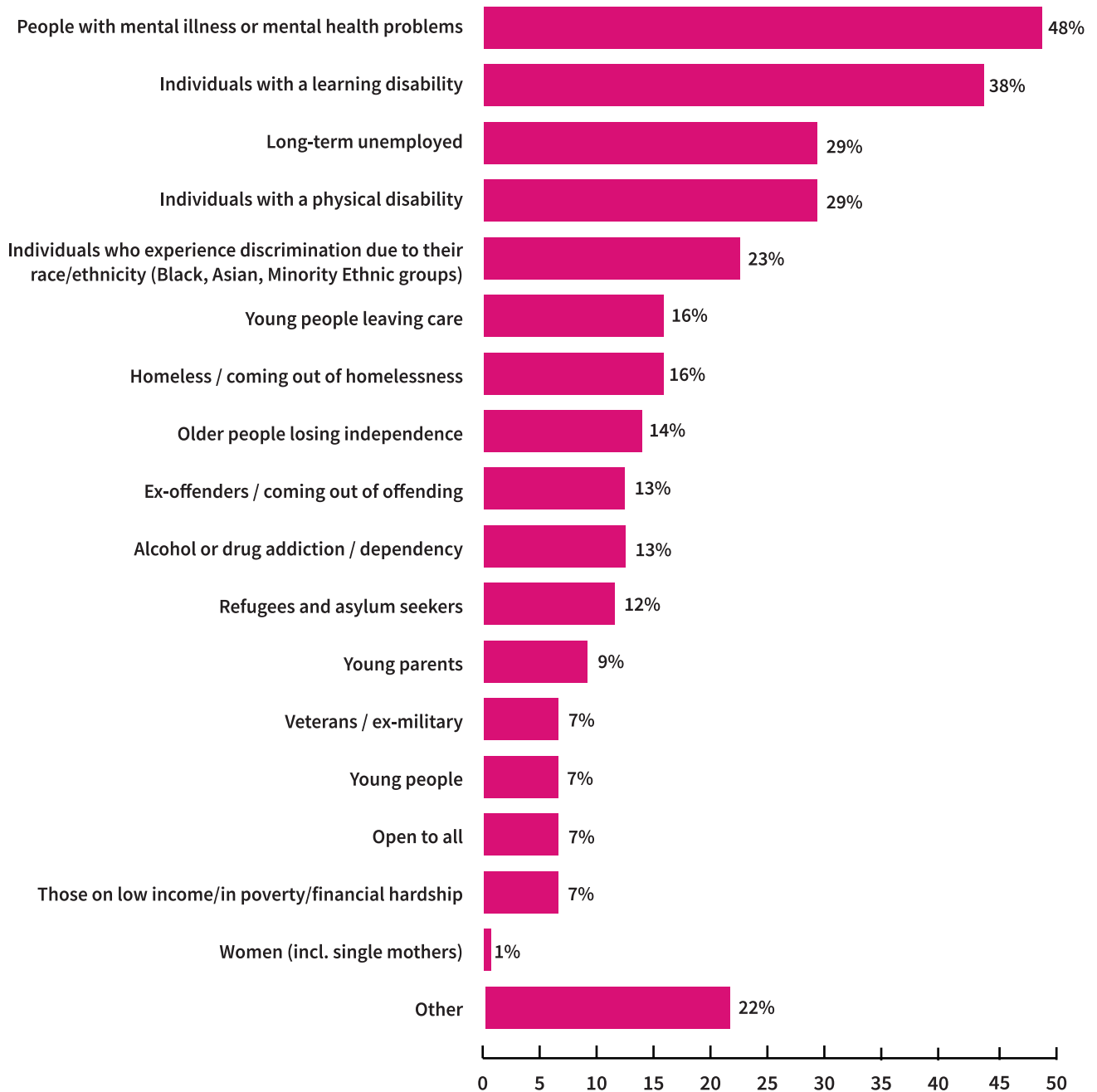


⁶ This data was collected through a top-up survey conducted with SOSE 2021 respondents in September 2021

As could be expected, given that almost half of respondents in the West Midlands had improving mental health and wellbeing as an objective, a similarly high proportion were providing products and services to people with mental illness or mental health problems (and to a greater degree than the national average of 32%).

West Midlands-based social enterprises were also more likely to provide products or services for individuals with learning disabilities (+13%) and people who experience discrimination due to their race/ethnicity (+4%) than the UK-wide average.

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

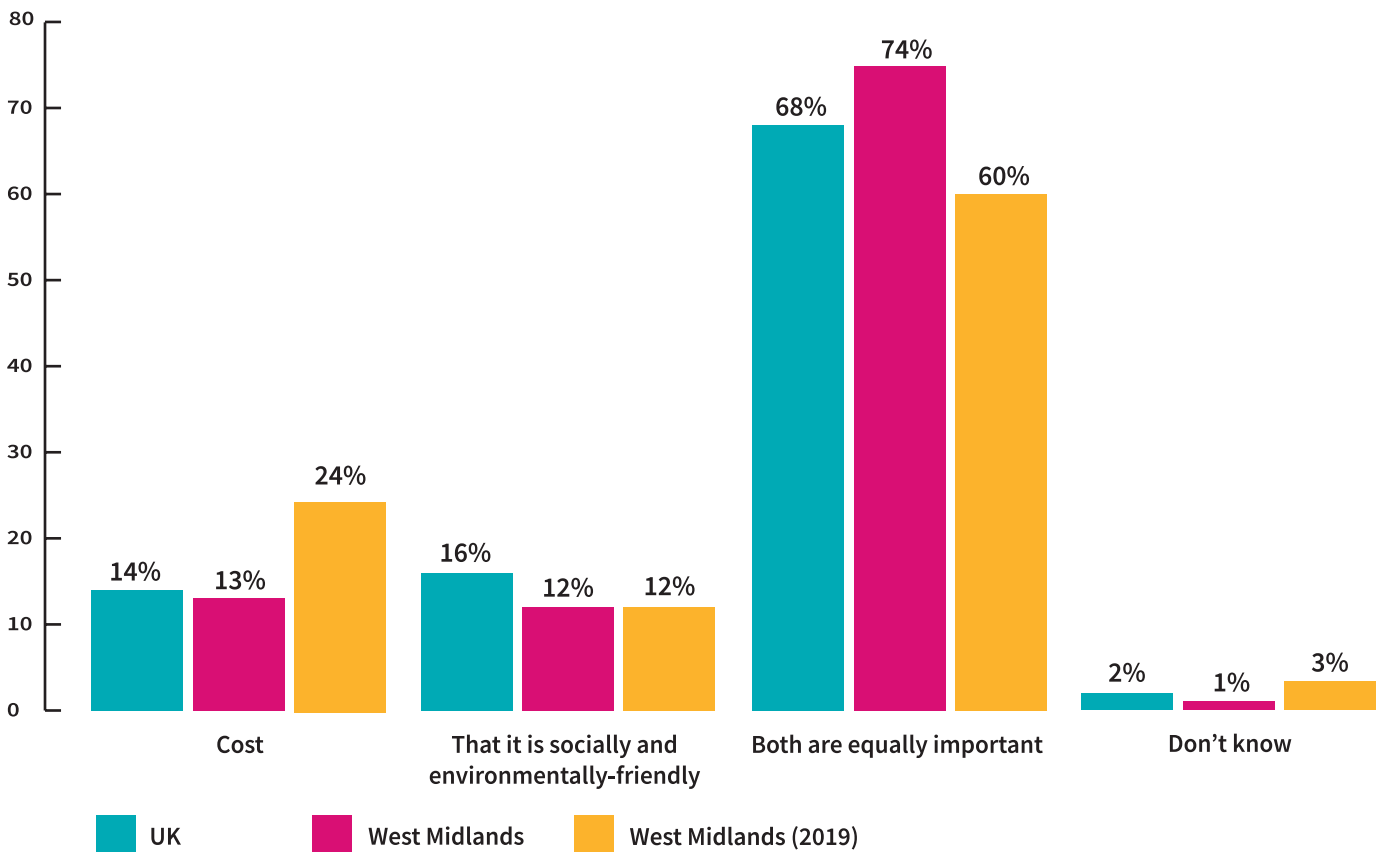


Environmental impact

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

In the West Midlands, social enterprises were slightly less likely than the national average to prioritise social/environmental factors in procurement, although they didn't prioritise cost more. Although the proportion that prioritised environmental factors hadn't shifted since 2019 in the region, significantly more social enterprises here were seeing both cost and impact as important – and significantly fewer were prioritising cost.

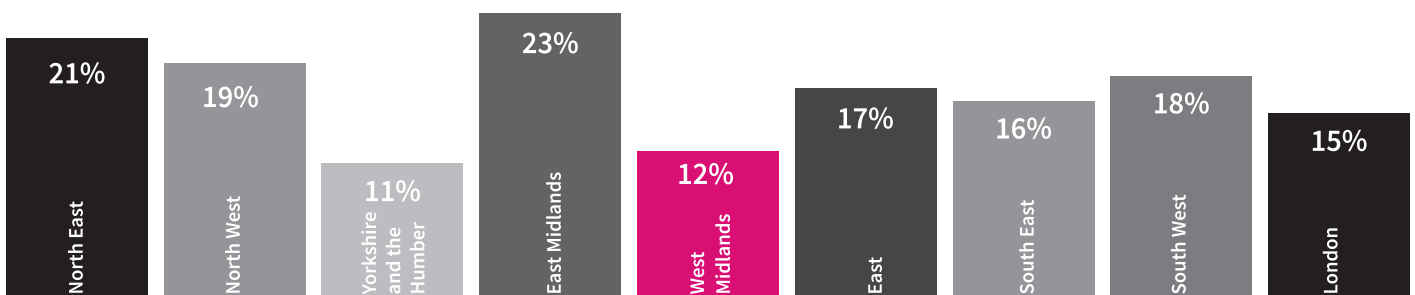
Procurement prioritisation



For the first time in 2021, we asked social enterprises if they had embedded – or were considering embedding – tackling climate change into their constitution/articles of association. West Midlands social enterprises were less likely to have already done this (25%, compared to 35% UK-wide), and more had no plans to (+5% compared to the national average). However, 35% were considering it, and a further 17% had a commitment to net zero and/or a climate strategy.

In terms of practical actions taken, 39% of social enterprises in the region had installed energy efficiency measures in the last 12 months (9% more than the UK average).

Social enterprises that prioritise social/environmental factors over cost in procurement

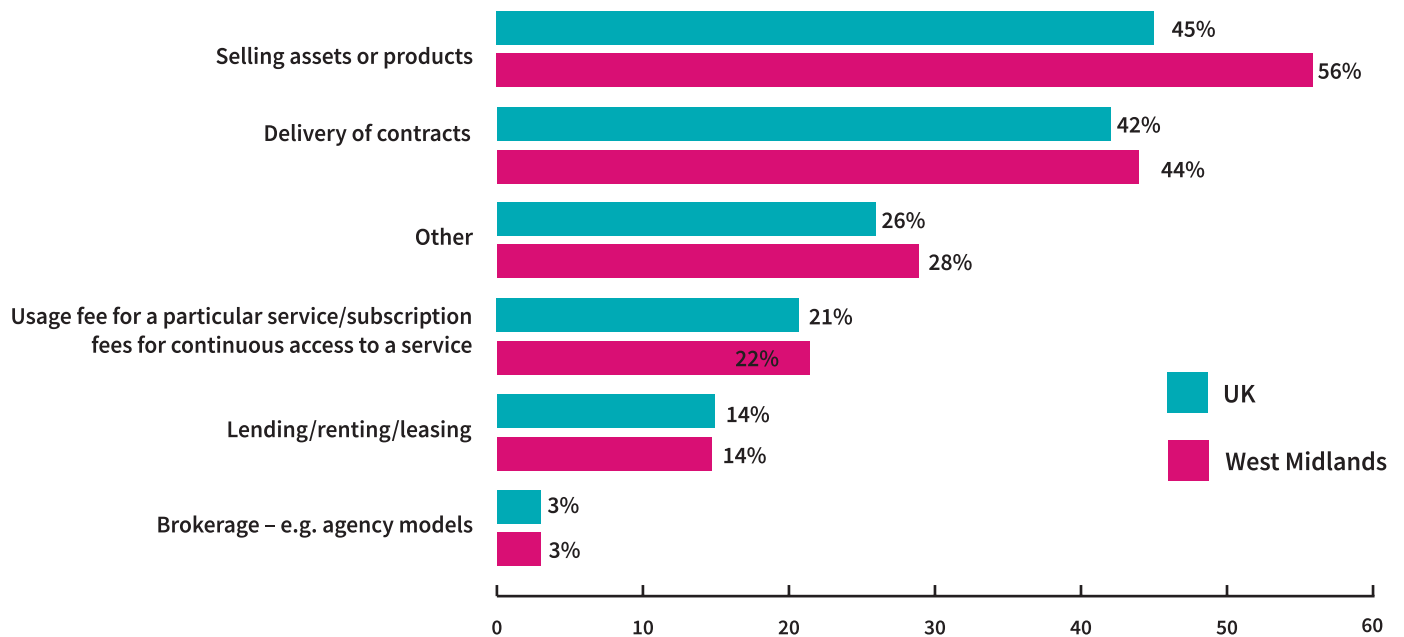


Business Model: Income and Trading

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

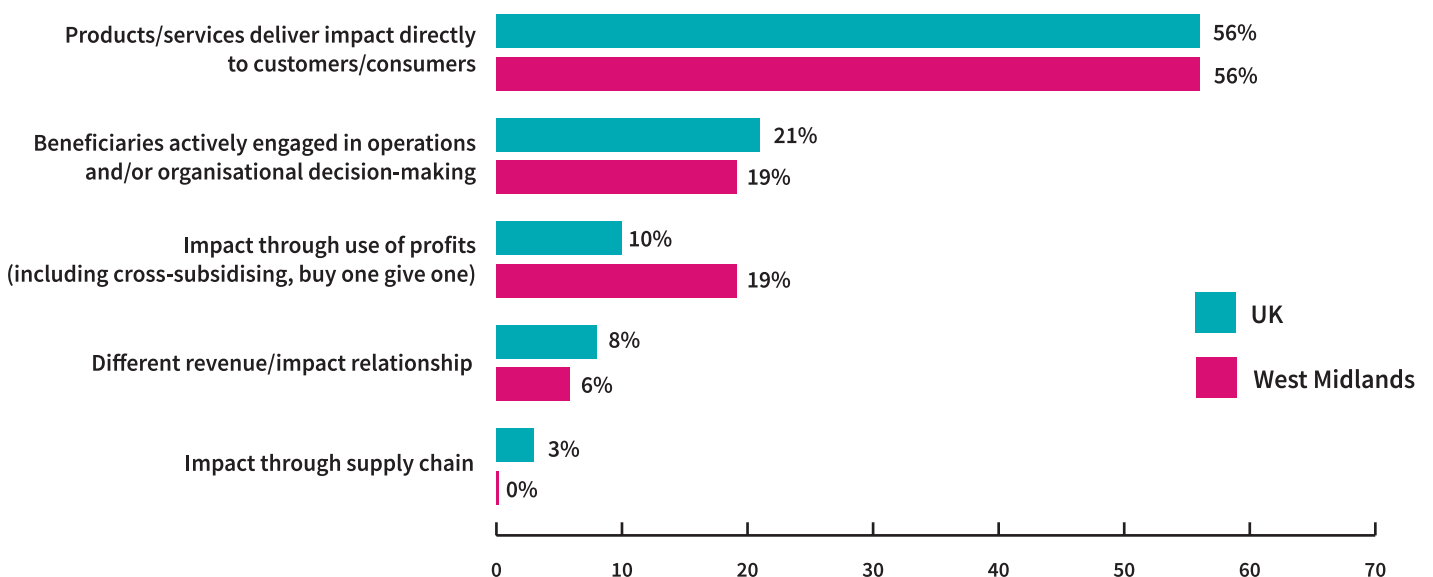
In the West Midlands, over half of social enterprises sold assets or products to generate income (significantly more than across the UK as a whole). Just under half delivered contracts to generate income.

Revenue generation model



When looking at the relationship between revenue generation and mission, over half of social enterprises in the West Midlands (as across the UK as a whole) stated that they achieved their mission through products/services that delivered impact directly to customers/consumers. West Midlands social enterprises were more likely to deliver impact through the use of profits, but none cited using their supply chain to deliver impact.

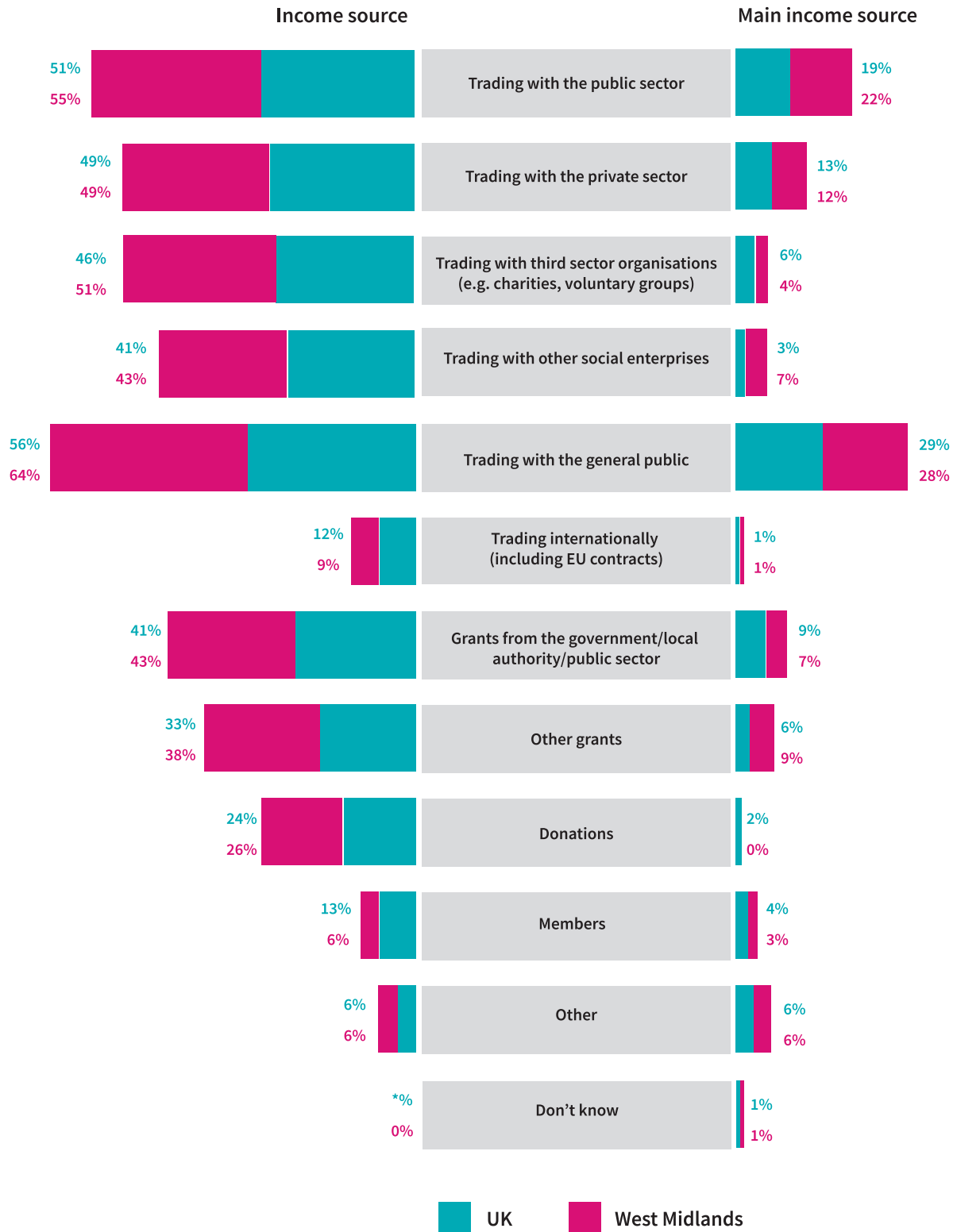
Main relationship between your organisation's revenue generation and your social/environmental mission



Social enterprises in the West Midlands were more likely to trade with the general public than the UK average, they were also more likely to trade with the public sector, with third sector organisations and to secure non-governmental grants. In terms of main sources of income, patterns were much

more closely aligned to the UK average, although slightly more social enterprises in the West Midlands got their main income from the public sector (22%, compared to 19%) or from trading with other social enterprises (7% compared to 3%) than the national average.

Income generation



Workforce Demographics and Staff Engagement

Social enterprises in the West Midlands had, on average, 69 paid employees (compared to the UK average of 128). 14% of social enterprises in the region didn't have paid staff, while 4% had over 250 staff (similar to the national averages).

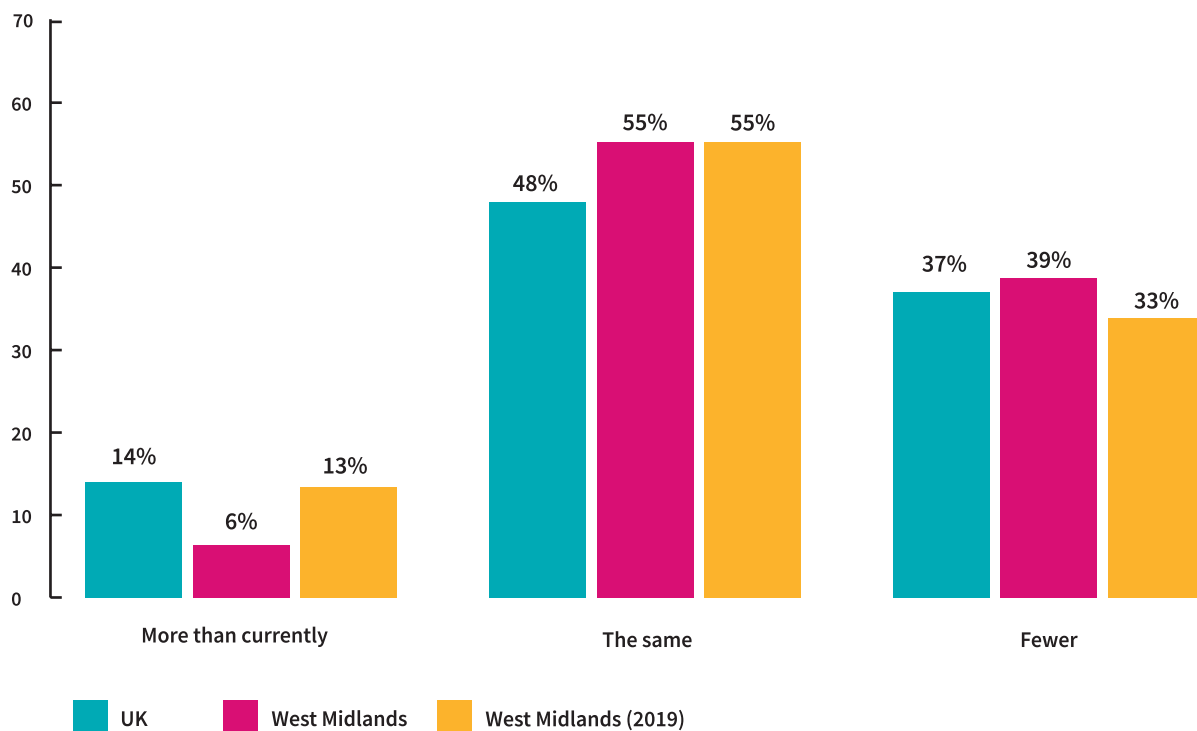
West Midlands social enterprises were more likely to have temporary or casual paid staff, with an average of 24 per organisation, compared to 17 on average UK-wide. 44% of social enterprises in the region had at least one temporary or casual staff member.

In terms of the make-up of the workforce in the region, West Midlands social enterprises had slightly less female staff (58% of staff, compared to 61% nationally). On average, 20% of staff were from Minority Ethnic backgrounds (compared to 18% nationally), and 18% had disabilities (13% nationally). 47% of all social enterprises in the West Midlands had at least

one member of staff with disabilities on their teams, slightly more than the national average of 44%.

We asked social enterprises whether their staffing levels had changed compared to the 12 months prior. Social enterprises in the West Midlands were significantly less likely to have decreased staff numbers in the last 12 months than the national average, and compared to 2019. They were also more likely to have seen static staffing levels than national averages. This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a positive impact on job creation in the region.

Staff compared to 12 months ago

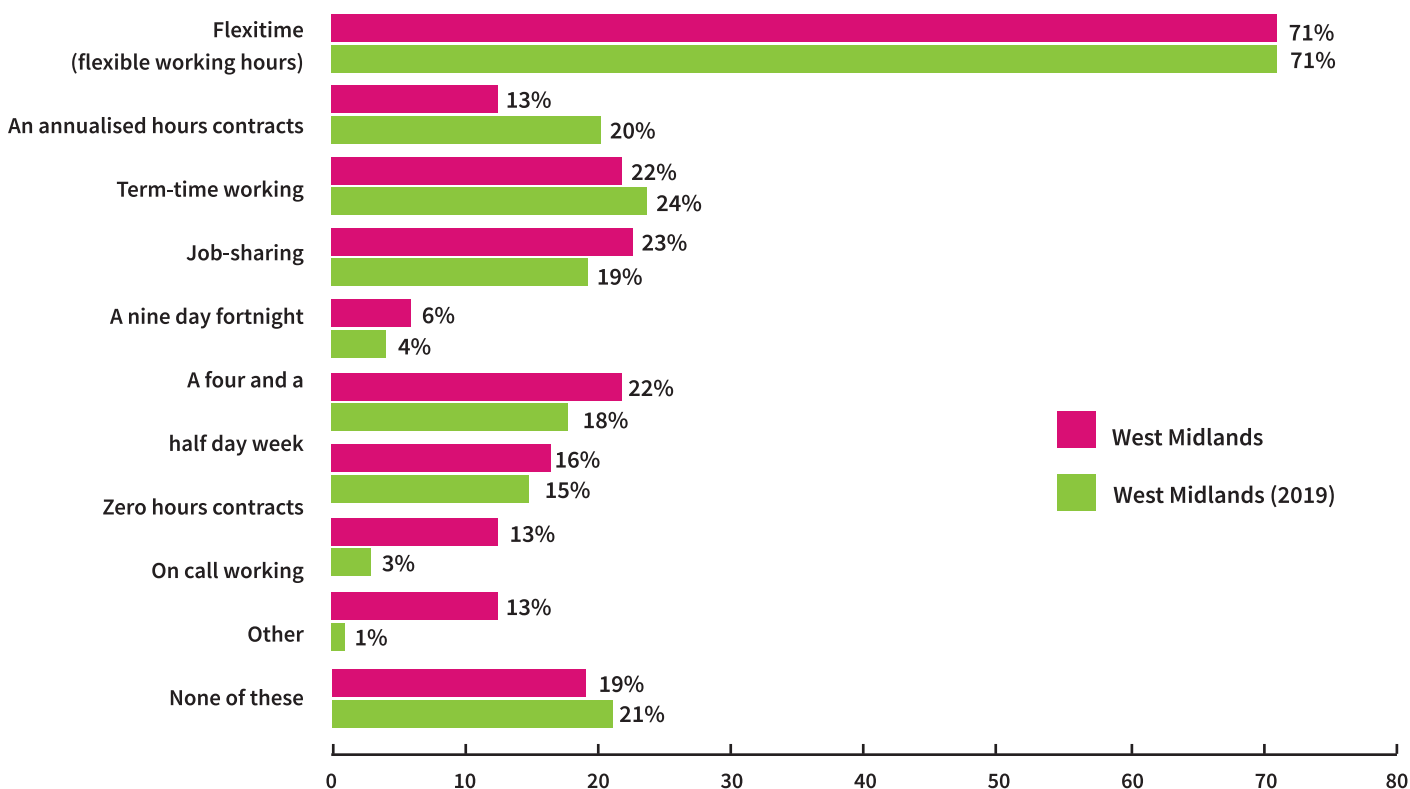


In terms of investing in staff, West Midlands social enterprises were slightly more likely than the national average to invest in staff training and development (84%, compared to 81% UK-wide). They were investing more than they did in 2019 (72%).

Flexible working arrangements have become significantly more prominent due to the pandemic. In the West Midlands,

on-call working and a nine-day fortnight were more likely to be offered to staff than for social enterprises elsewhere on average. There was slightly less use of most other flexible working forms here than the UK averages. Since 2019, the major changes had been increased job-sharing, four-and-a-half-day weeks and on-call working.

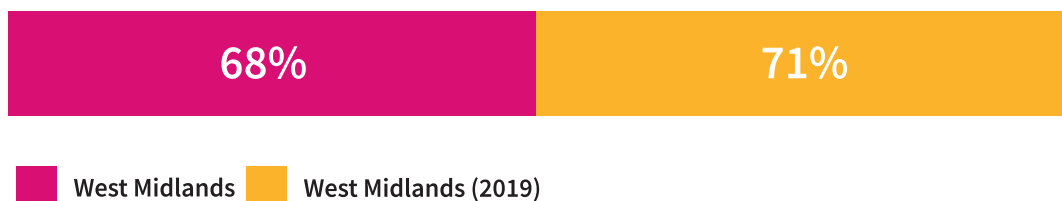
Working hours arrangements for employees



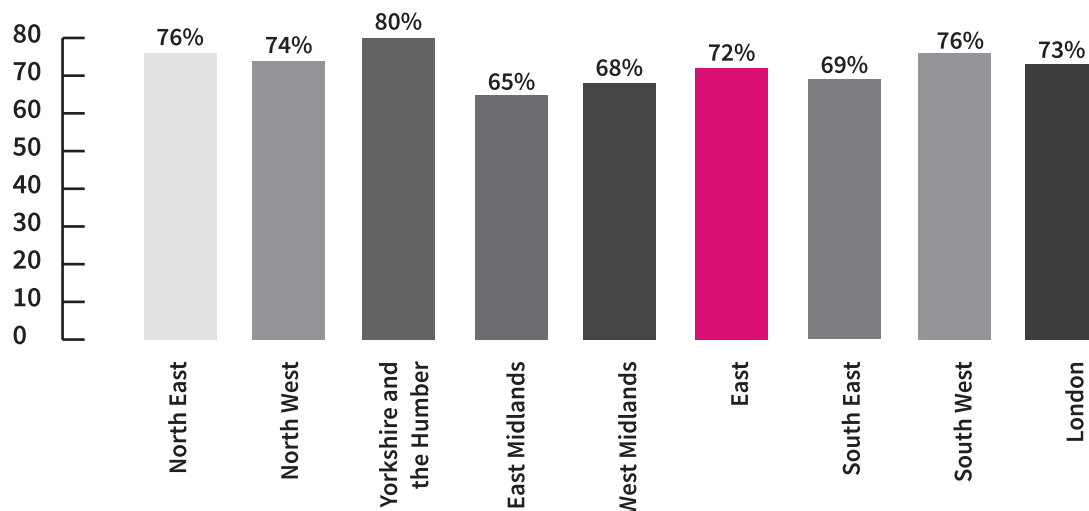
The proportion of social enterprises paying the Living Wage⁷ to staff in the West Midlands has decreased since 2019. This proportion was also below the UK average of 72% – and one of the lowest across the UK, along with the East Midlands and South East. Living Wage payment has decreased

across the entire economy in the last year. However, we can estimate from SOSE data that for all regions of the UK, social enterprises were still more likely to provide Living Wage jobs than other types of business.⁸

Proportion of Social Enterprises Paying the Living Wage



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



⁷ 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 the survey, the Living Wage Foundation rates were £9.30 for the UK, except London where it was £10.75. <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>

⁸ <https://livingwage.org.uk/news/4.8-million-jobs-uk-pay-below-real-living-wage>

Leadership Demographics

Social enterprises in the West Midlands were more likely to be led by a woman, a person from a Black or Asian background, or a person with a disability than their

counterparts elsewhere in the UK. They were also more likely to be led by someone under 44 years old or by someone over 64 years old.

Leadership demographics

	UK	West Midlands	FTSE100 ⁹	SMEs
Male	47%	38%	94%	79%
Female	47%	60%	6%	16%
White British	74%	67%		84%
White Other	7%	10%		6%
Asian or Asian British	4%	7%		2%
Black or Black British	6%	12%		*%
Other including Mixed heritage	2%	0%		3%
ALL racialised communities	12%	19%	6% (2020)	5%
16 to 24	1%	0%		
25 to 44	32%	36%		
45 to 64	53%	50%		
65+	8%	12%		
Disability	11%	14%	0%	No data
No disability	82%	81%	100% ¹⁰	No data

When looking at salary, social enterprise leaders in the West Midlands earned less than the average across the UK. The median salary of the highest earner in an organisation was £24,000 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

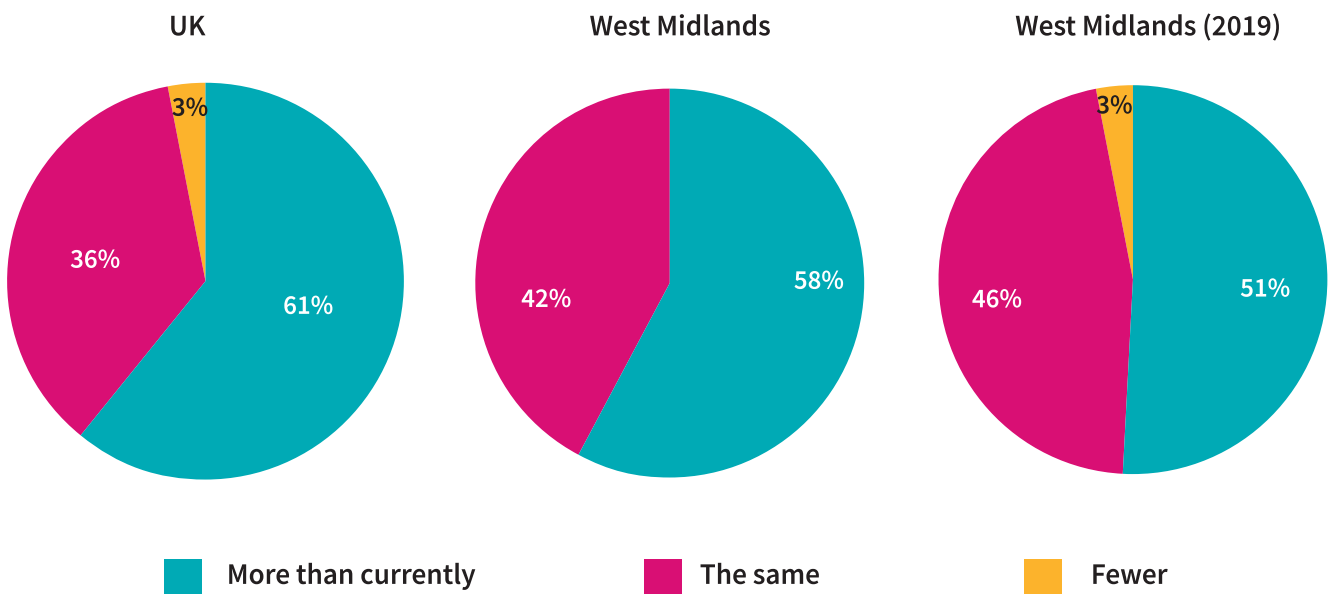
¹⁰ <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/no-ftse-100-executives-or-senior-managers-have-disclosed-a-disability#gref>

Growth trends

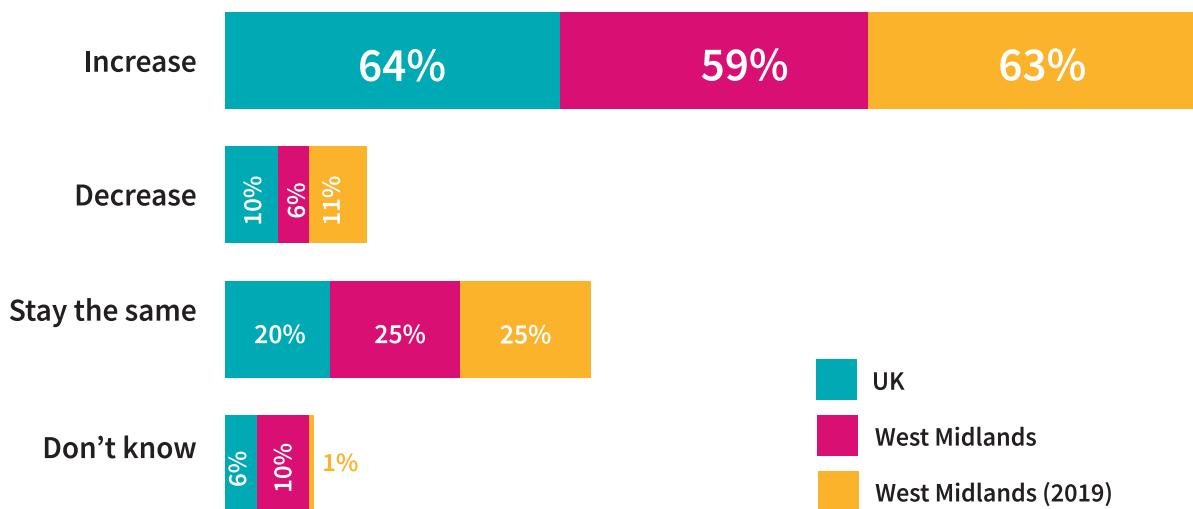
We asked a number of questions about growth trends through the survey.

More than half of social enterprises in the West Midlands expected to grow both turnover and staff numbers in the next 12 months, and few expected turnover to decrease (none expected staff numbers to decrease). However, social enterprises in the region were less optimistic about growing their turnover and staff numbers than social enterprises UK-wide.

Workforce size expectations for the next 12 months



Turnover expectations for the next 12 months

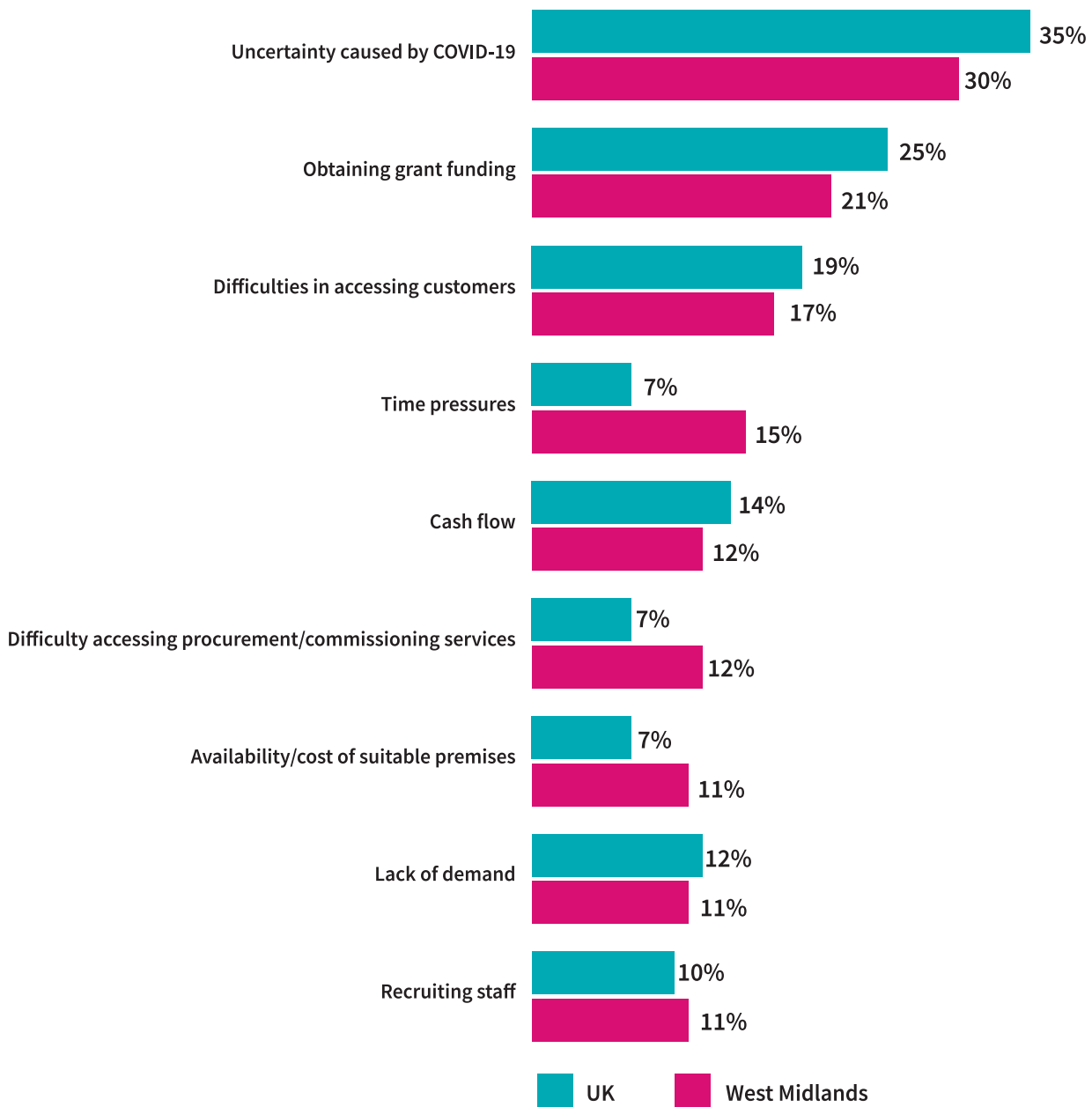


We asked social enterprises what actions they had taken in the previous 12 months to sustain and grow their businesses. In the West Midlands, social enterprises were most likely to have developed new products and/or services that were new to their organisation (more than the UK average – 65%, compared to 61%). They were also particularly likely to have developed a new process (52%) and recruited new staff/increased training (49%). Social enterprises in this region were 5% more likely to have won business as part of a consortium. They were less likely to have increased marketing/advertising or invested in new equipment/IT/computer software than the national averages. They were also slightly less likely to say that they'd reduced costs or increased efficiency.

Over half (52%) provided products/services free or at reduced cost in direct response to COVID-19 related needs during the last year – this was slightly fewer than the national average (57%).

The survey asked what social enterprises saw as their top three barriers to sustainability and/or growth. In this region, uncertainty caused by COVID-19 was the most-cited concern – although slightly less so than for the UK as a whole (30%, compared to 35%). Accessing grant funding was a primary concern for 21% of social enterprises, followed by difficulty accessing customers (17%) and time pressures (15%).

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



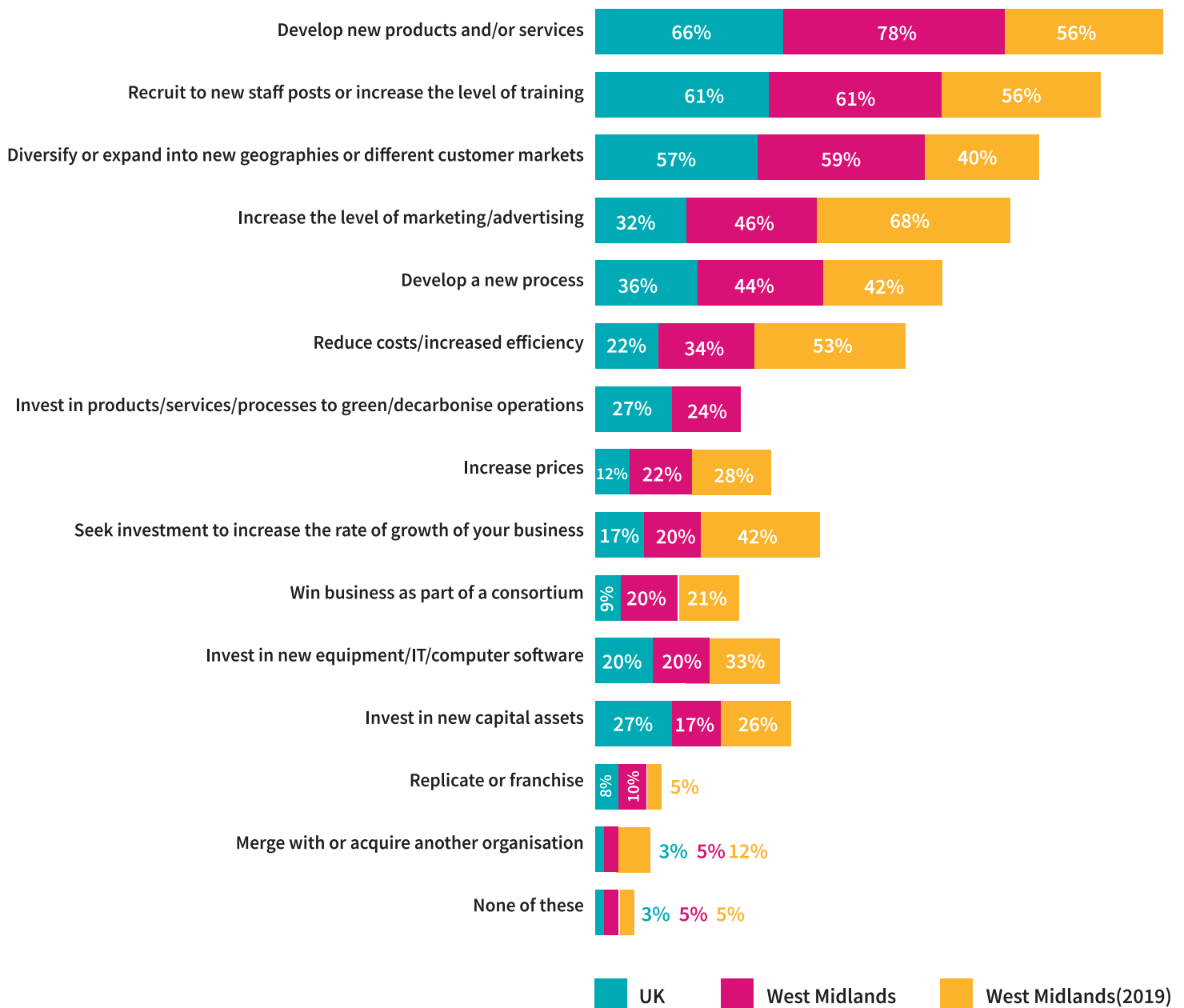
The survey asked respondents who expected their turnover to grow how they envisaged achieving this. Developing a new product and/or service was a significant focus. Almost four out of five social enterprises in the West Midlands expected this to be part of their growth plans (far more than the UK average, and more than was the case in the region in 2019).

Recruitment and training were more important in the West Midlands than in 2019, as was expanding into new geographies or customer markets. Price increases were

more likely in this region than elsewhere in the UK, as were reducing costs and increasing efficiency. West Midlands social enterprises were also significantly more likely than the UK as a whole to anticipate winning business as part of a consortium in the coming year.

Social enterprises in this region were slightly less likely to be planning investment in products/services/processes to green or decarbonise operations than the UK average. They were also less likely to be planning to invest in new capital assets.

Growth plans



Lastly, we asked social enterprises about the dynamics of trading income from the public sector. Social enterprises in the West Midlands were 10% more likely than the UK average (which was 22%) to have said that the amount of paid work they did with the public sector had increased in the last 12 months. In turn, fewer social enterprises in the region had seen public sector income decline (15% compared to 20% on average in the UK nationally).

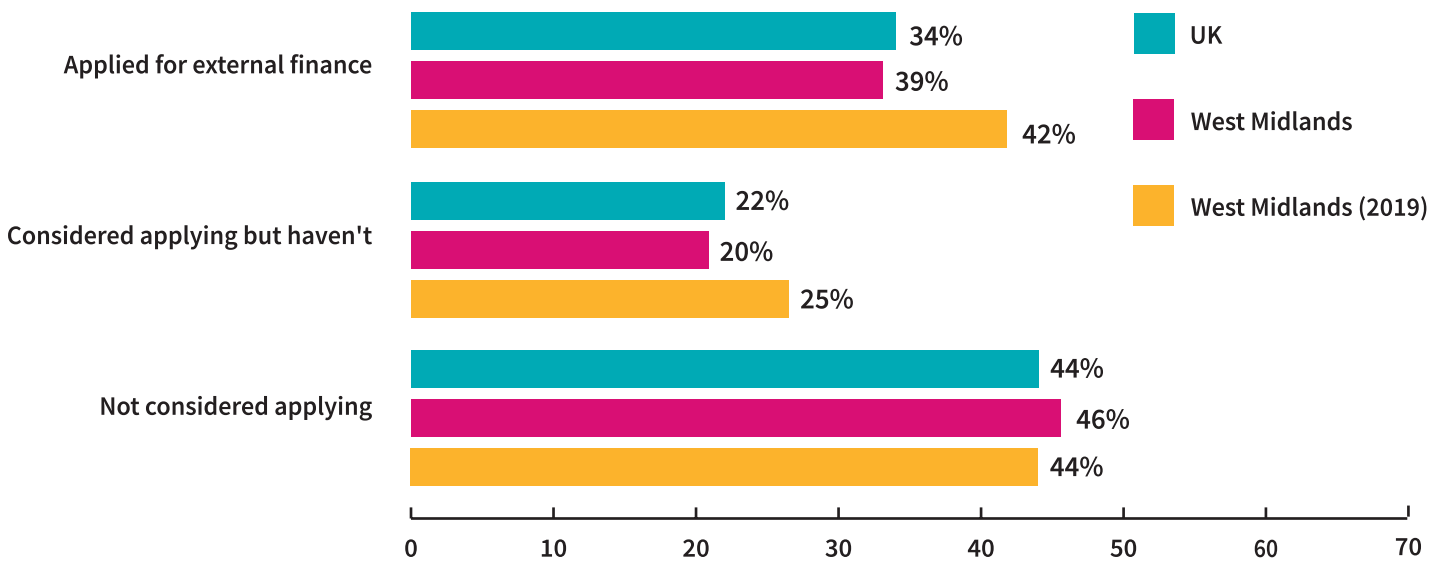
Finance

The final set of survey questions related to funding and finance. Social enterprises in the West Midlands were slightly less likely to apply for or consider applying for finance,¹¹ but when they did, they asked for and secured more than social enterprises UK-wide. The proportion that applied decreased by 9% since 2019 too.

There has also been more reliance on social investors in this region compared to elsewhere. Increased confidence with finance, and social investment in particular, may be linked to increased investor presence in the region, as well as the impact of 'role model' social enterprises in the region, such

as Citizen Coaching and Miss Macaroon. Another factor could be that the Resonance West Midlands Social Investment Tax Relief Fund has invested most of its capital in the last two years.

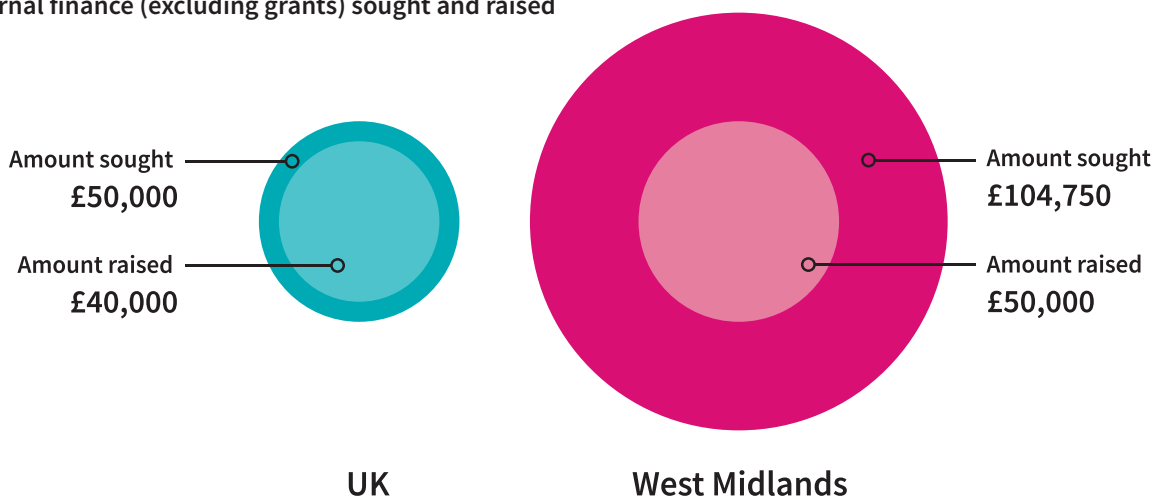
Summary of interest in external finance



Of those that decided not to apply for finance, cost was the primary reason cited (by 29% of respondents, compared to just 11% on average for the UK), followed by lack of suitable terms or suitable product (21%, compared to 13% nationwide). A further 21% said they didn't require finance (slightly lower than the UK average of 25%), and 21% said it was the wrong timing (compared to 14% UK-wide).

Where they were looking for external (non-grant) finance, social enterprises in the West Midlands applied for significantly more than social enterprises elsewhere in the country and in turn, they secured higher amounts of finance – although they were proportionately not so successful in terms of raising the amounts sought.

Amounts of external finance (excluding grants) sought and raised

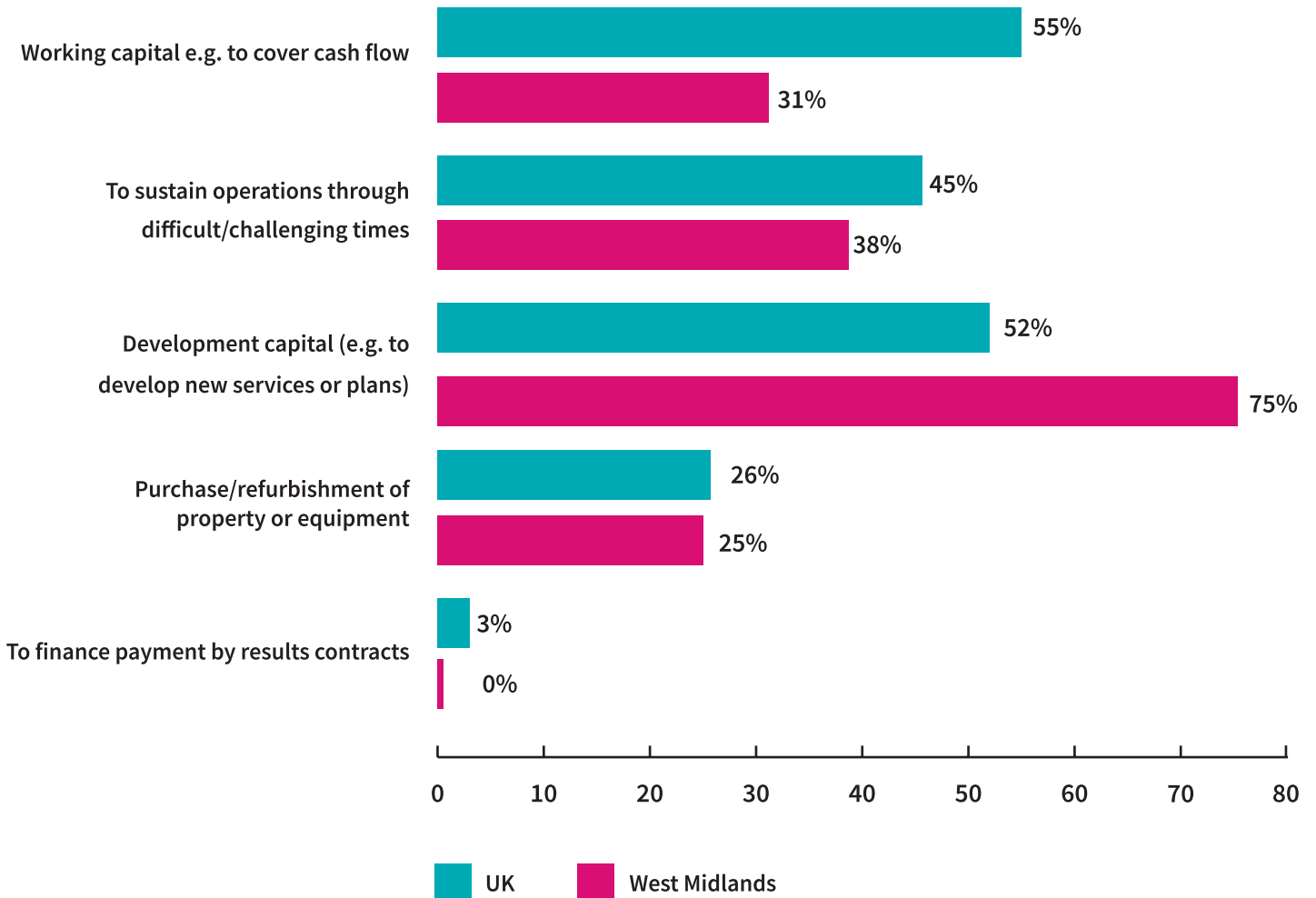


¹¹ Anecdotally, it is possible that lower appetite for finance amongst some social enterprises in the region is related to lower levels of entrepreneurialism and to being risk adverse so preferring grants or non-repayable income.

Compared to the UK average, West Midlands social enterprises were less likely to apply to traditional banks (-10%) and more likely to apply to social banks (+7%) and specialist social investment organisations (+7%). They were also more likely to apply to government funds (+9%), but less likely to apply to their local authority (-11%) or to ask friends or family (-6%).

Development capital was the most common reason for seeking finance in the region, by a significant margin. Compared to the national average, West Midlands social enterprises were less likely to seek finance for working capital or to sustain operations through difficult/challenging times.

Purpose of finance or capital sought



In terms of who they sought finance from, 31% of social enterprises in the region applied to grant making trusts or foundations (compared to 42% on average UK-wide). Social enterprises here were more likely to go to their local authority and to venture capitalists. They were less likely, compared to the national average, to apply to banks, government funds and particularly less likely to apply to social investors (only 7% did so, compared to the national average of 19%).

61% of social enterprises here thought that they had the financial, marketing and business skills required to obtain external finance and investment, a slightly lower proportion than the UK average, which indicates that although the region is relatively confident about finance, there are a number of social enterprises here that feel less well equipped to secure the money they need.

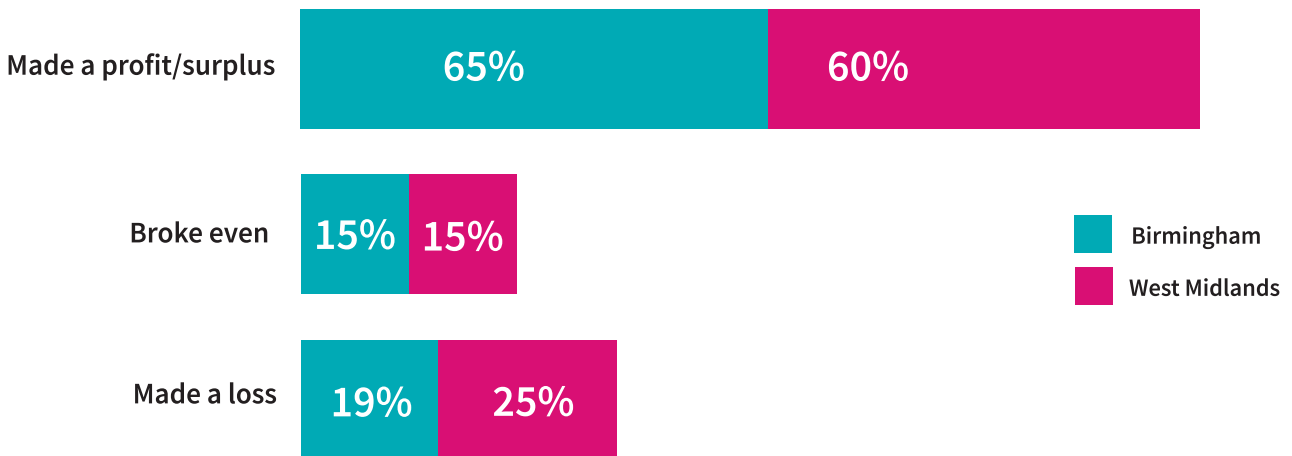
Deep Dive: Birmingham

Of those that shared location data, 27 survey respondents were based in a Birmingham postcode area. We have looked at questions where at least the majority of these 27 responded to give a brief summary of social enterprise activity in Birmingham.

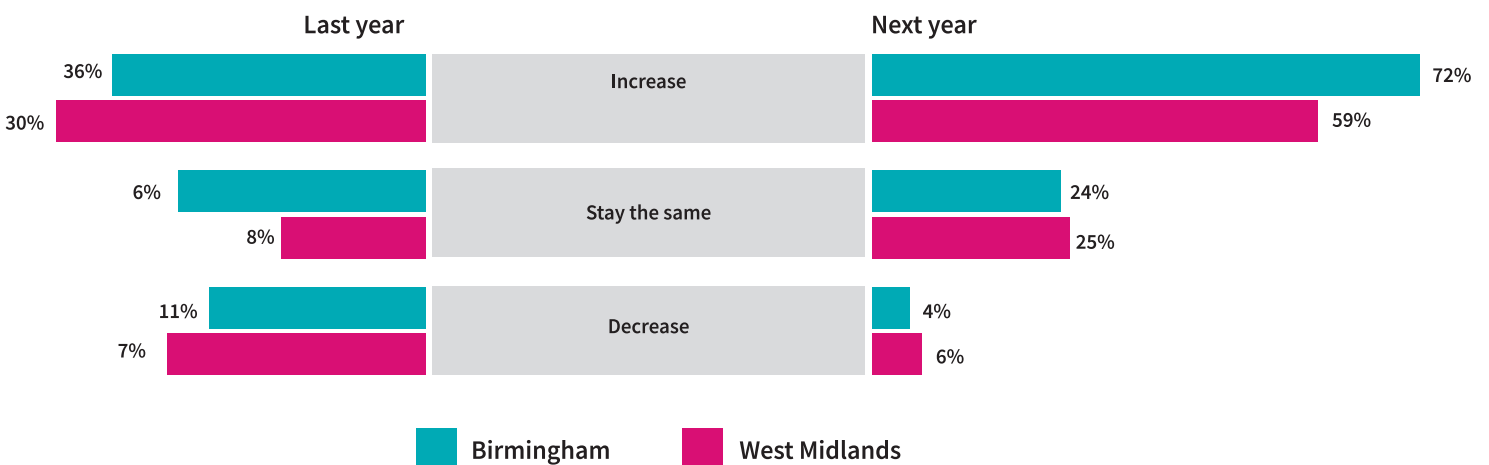
Social enterprises in Birmingham were smaller than those across the West Midlands as a whole. Their average number of paid staff was 29 and their average annual turnover was £1,222,549.

Birmingham social enterprises were more likely to have made a profit or surplus last year – and less likely to have made a loss than their peers in the region. In the previous year they were less likely to have increased their turnover, but turnover expectations in Birmingham were much more positive than for the rest of the region – 72% expected to grow turnover, compared to 59% across the region as a whole.

Profit/surplus in last 12 months



Turnover



Two-thirds (65%) of Birmingham social enterprises were female-led and 50% were located in areas of most deprivation (compared to 11% for the West Midlands region as a whole).



Case Study: Rising Star Property Solutions

La'Toyah Lewis came up with the idea of setting up a business to give people a second chance, after her personal circumstances led to it being difficult for her to find work. She gained a strong awareness of the barriers faced in entering the workforce and how poverty and a lack of opportunity keep people out of work.

She wanted to create a business dedicated to supporting disadvantaged groups including ex-offenders, people with mental health issues, single parents and those experiencing long-term unemployment.

Rising Star Property Solutions is now the largest third sector property service company in the Midlands, managing a portfolio of over 60,000 properties.

Unlike other property service businesses, Rising Stars are “social value and people led” with a mission to provide work experience, training and employment opportunities to disadvantaged groups. The business primarily works with the social housing sector offering four main services – cleaning, clearance, gardening and construction. All of its money is earned through trading and profit is put back into training, employing and supporting more people.

La'Toyah is passionate about providing people with the relevant skills, experiences and training to help them succeed. In order to work on UK construction sites, workers need to meet certain accreditations and Rising Stars helps

people do so. For example, the “Kickstart” project run with HMP Hewell Prison and Sudbury Prison supports people into employment through training both whilst they are in custody and on release. Participants complete a four week-training programme to achieve level 1 certificates that equip them to enter the construction industry. Since March 2019 66 people have completed the course.

Rising Stars main work consists of commercial property clearance. Showing the innovation so common within the social enterprise community, Rising Stars set up a Community Shop which sells second-hand items received from the properties the business clears out. Working in an area of high deprivation, the shop ensures that all household items are sold at an affordable rate with a policy that no item is sold for more than £70.

Based on an interview with La'Toyah Lewis
<https://www.risingstarspropertysolutions.com/>