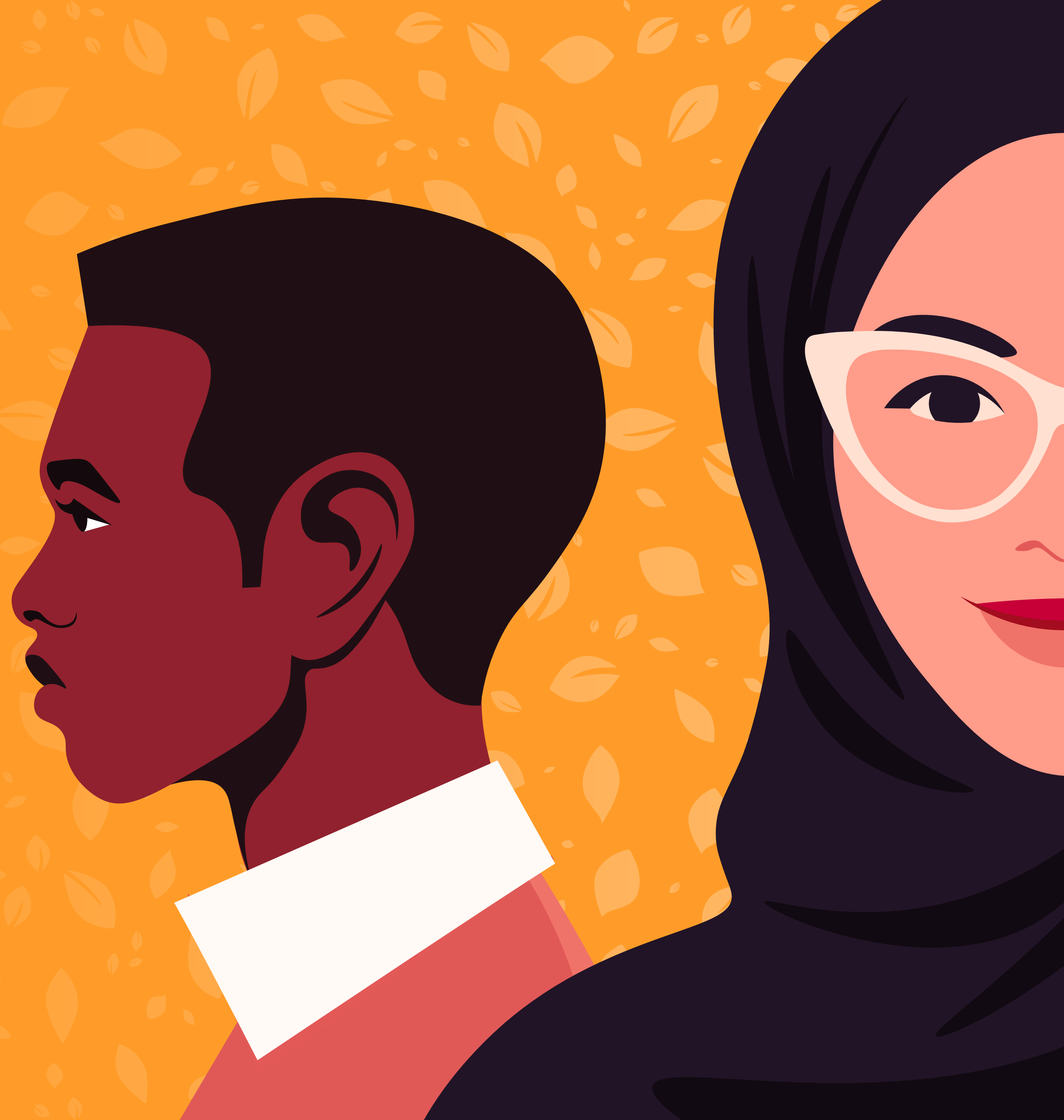




Your Voice Matters

A peer led research project to explore the experiences of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Scotland



Your Voice Matters

ستاسو غر مهم دی
دهنگی تو گرنگه

صوتك مهم

Tiếng nói của bạn quan trọng

دهنگوو تو مؤهیمما

صدای شما مهم است

A sua voz importa

Codkaaga ayaa muhiimah

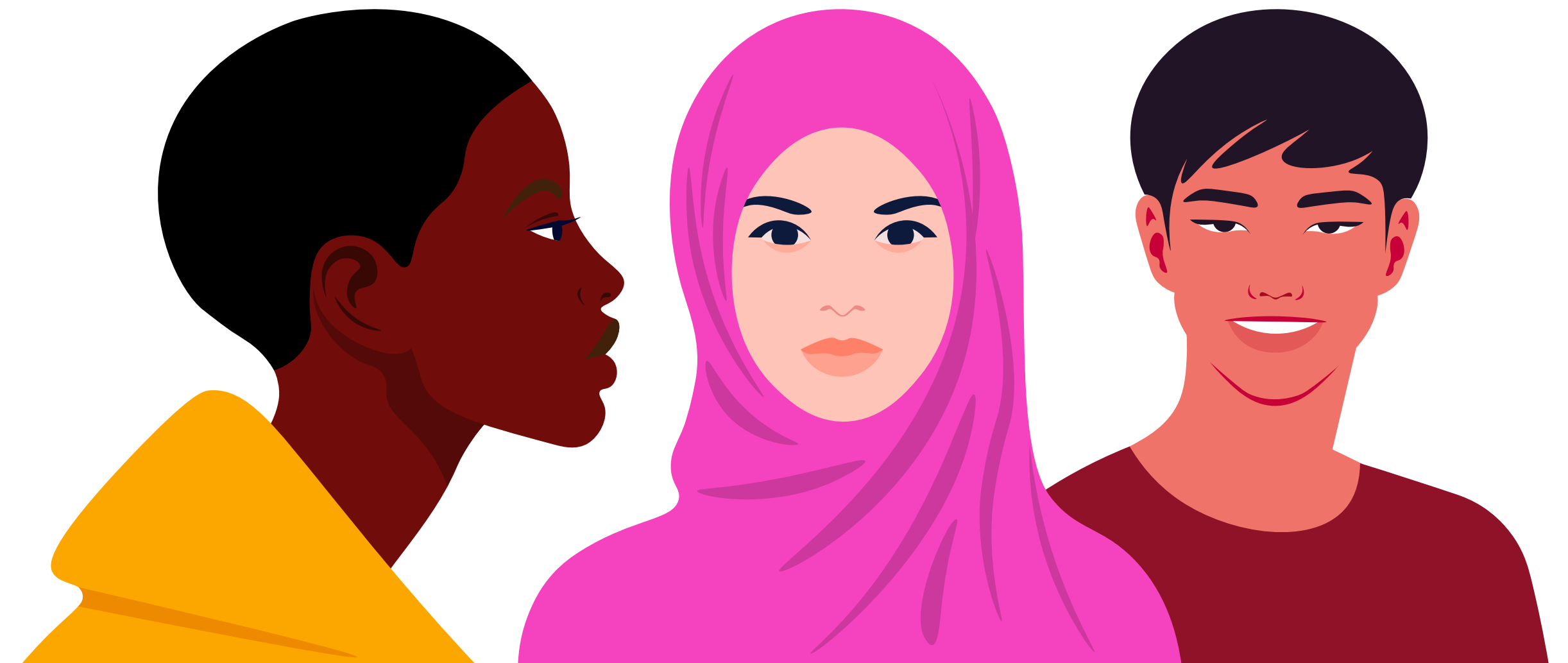
Contents

<u>Young People's Voices</u>	4	<u>Survey Topics</u>	14
<u>The Purpose</u>	5	<u>People Who Support Me</u>	15
<u>Methodology</u>	6	<u>Accommodation</u>	22
<u>Local Authority of Respondents</u>	7	<u>Money</u>	29
<u>Nationality of Respondents</u>	8	<u>Education</u>	33
<u>Demographics</u>	9	<u>Social Life and Activities</u>	37
<u>Stage of Asylum Claim</u>	10	<u>Our Recommendations</u>	40
<u>Gender</u>	11	<u>Acknowledgements</u>	43
<u>Age</u>	12		

Young People's Voices

We are a group of young people who are fighting for their rights and the rights of other unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people living in Scotland. We deliver the voices of young people to those who have power and influence.

We have been meeting since November 2021. Our group has members from Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, Eritrea, Iran, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. We meet in Glasgow, but our members live in various local authorities including Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow and North Ayrshire. As part of the engagement for the latest New Scots Integration Strategy, some of us travelled to different regions of Scotland with Guardianship staff to meet young people living in areas further from the central belt. These areas included Scottish Highlands, Moray, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.



The Purpose

Your voice matters and needs to be heard. As a group, we want to be able to represent as many young people from Guardianship as possible when we speak to the Government, local authorities, academics and other organisations.

Our goal is to speak up for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people across Scotland to try to improve life for young people like us.



Methodology

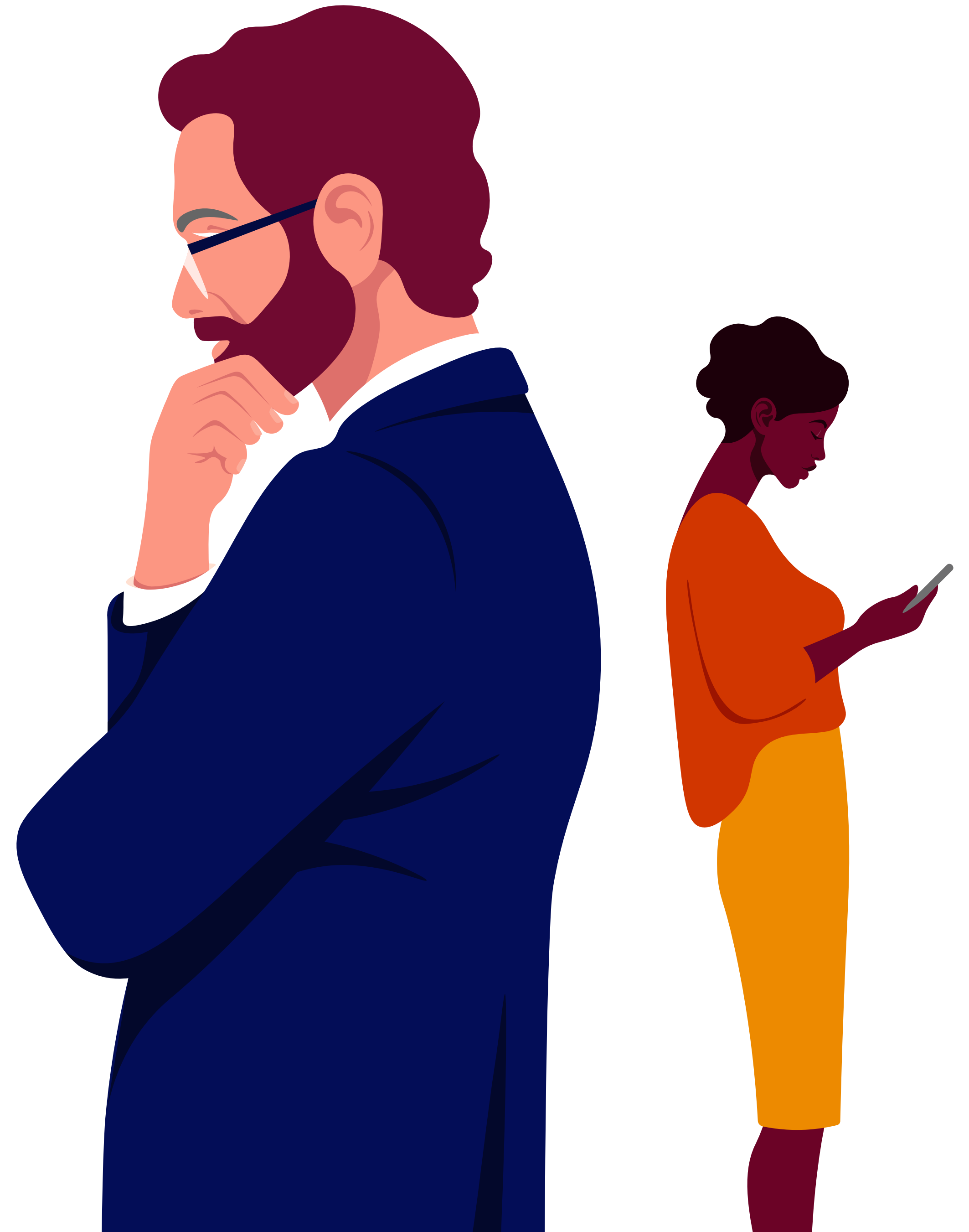
We met as a group to discuss the topics that are most important to us. From these discussions, we selected five key topics that we wanted to ask unaccompanied young people about and wrote questions to collect those views and opinions.

We worked with an academic from Queen Margaret University to learn about research methods and how to form effective questions for a survey.

We made five versions of the survey; English, Pashto, Kurdish Sorani, Arabic and Vietnamese. These reflect the most commonly spoken languages at Guardianship. We used our own networks of friends at Guardianship, as well as Guardianship staff's contacts, to reach as many young people as we could. We shared the link with a short explanation about the survey via WhatsApp and used Google Forms to collect the information.

This report represents a mixture of the results from our survey and our observations from the engagement sessions with young people during the New Scots Integration Strategy consultations in Aberdeen, Glasgow and Inverness.

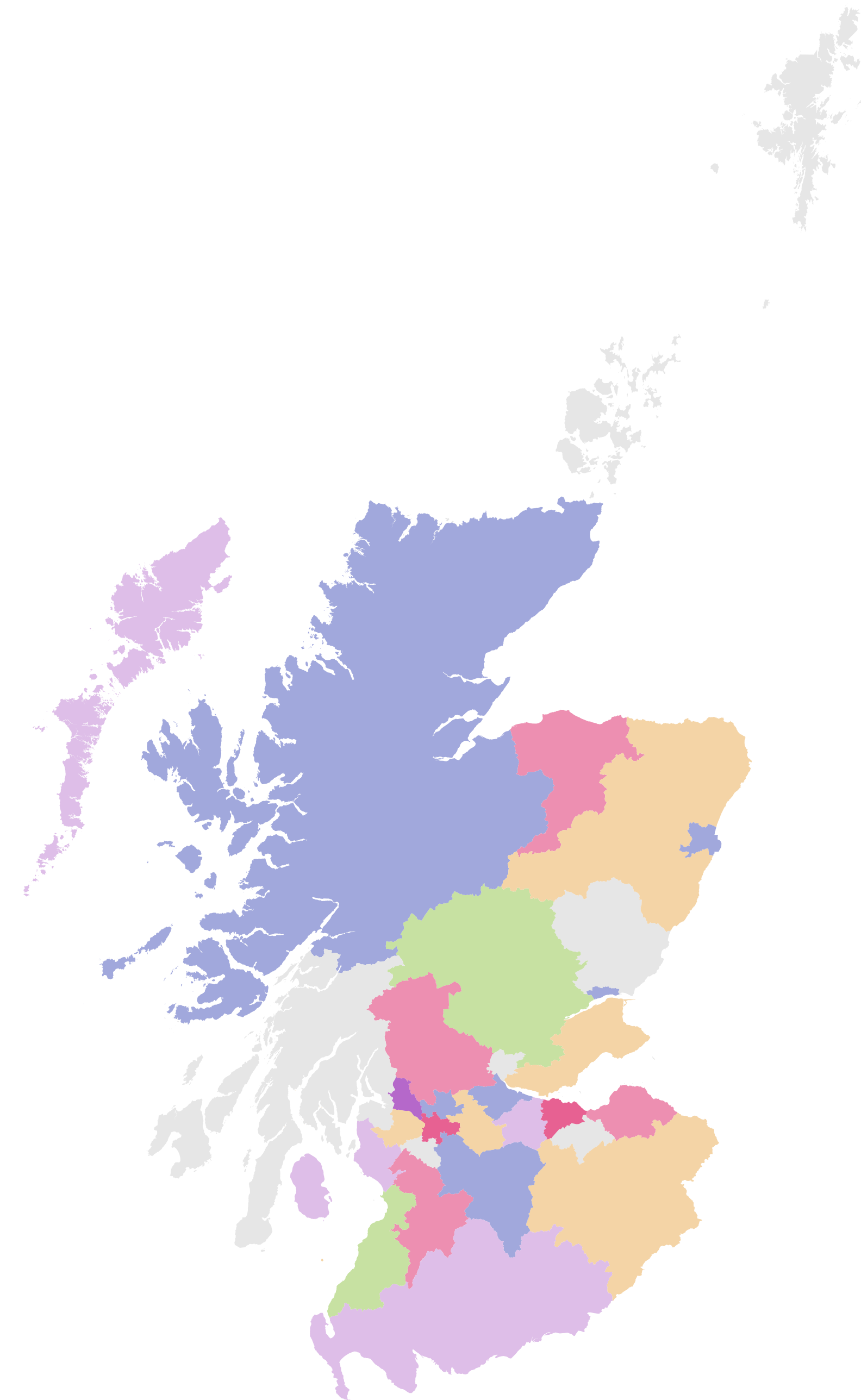
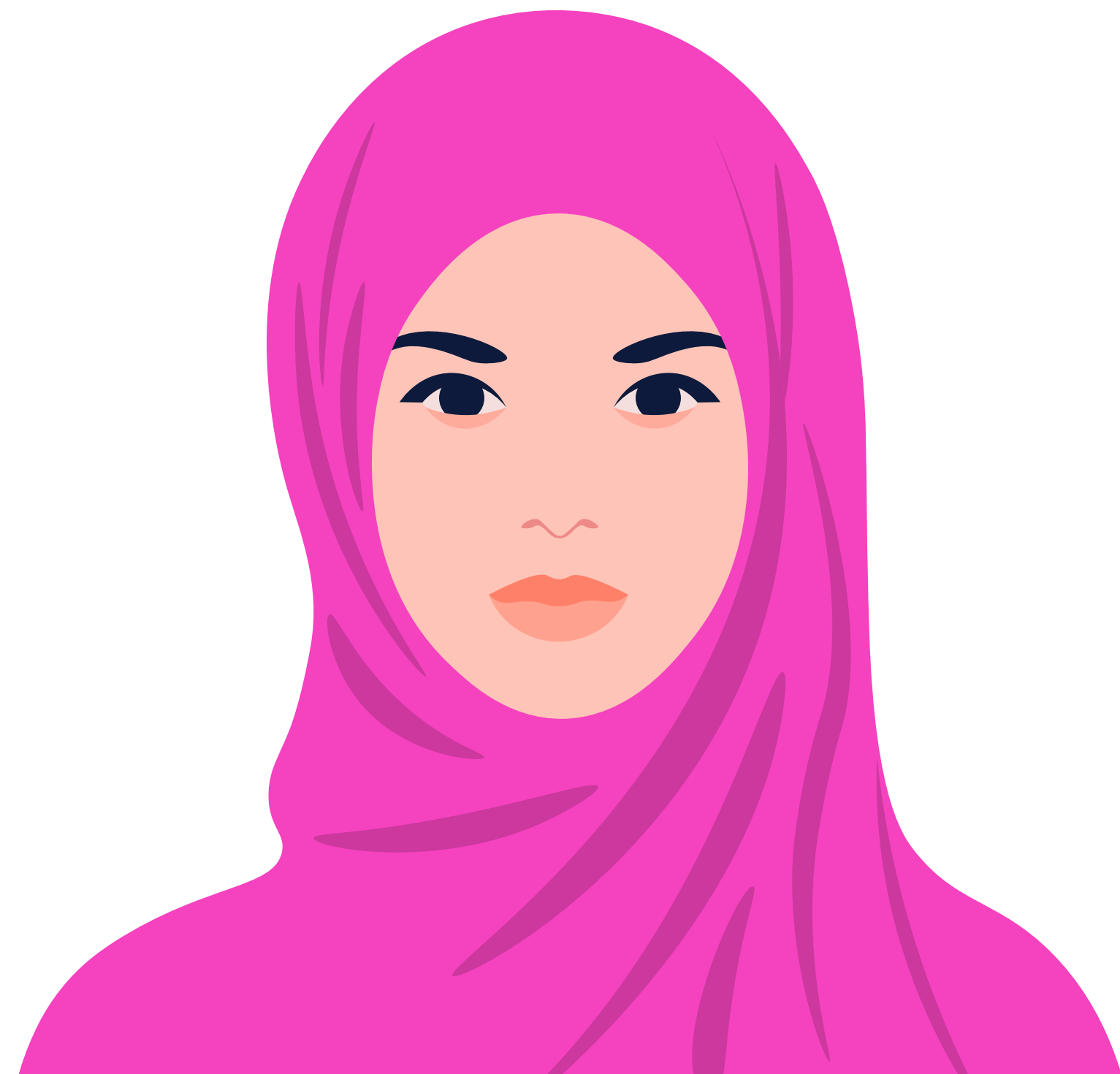
Although we identified mental health as another key issue, we decided not to ask specific mental health-related questions. We felt it was unsafe to ask young people about their mental wellbeing in an anonymous survey, potentially triggering traumatic thoughts or memories, without being able to provide support. Despite not specifically asking about it, some young people's responses in the free text box reflected their mental health struggles.



Local Authority of Respondents

There are currently unaccompanied young people living in 30 of the 32 Scottish local authorities.

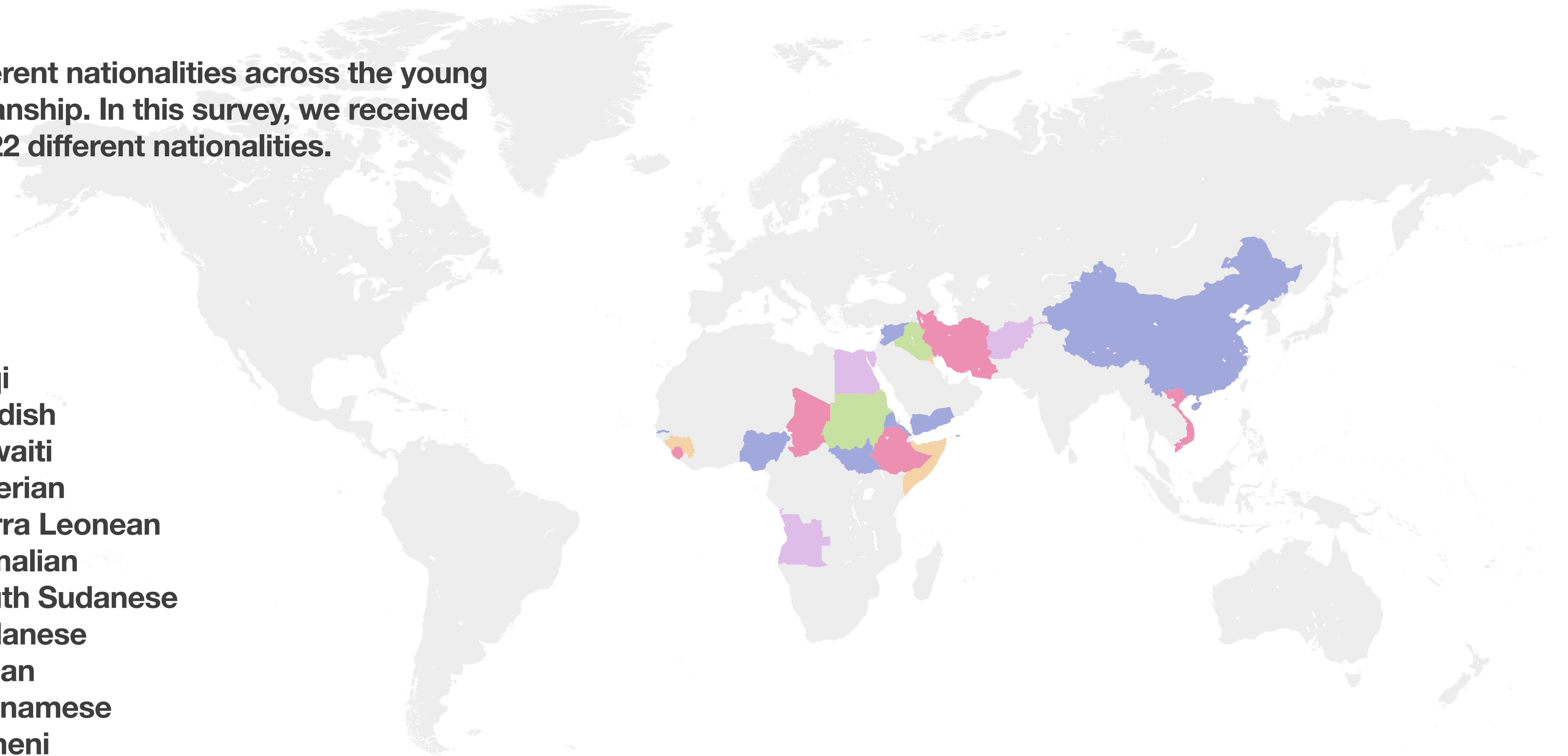
In this survey, we received responses from young people in the 24 local authorities shown opposite.



Nationality of Respondents

There are 42 different nationalities across the young people in Guardianship. In this survey, we received responses from 22 different nationalities.

Afghan	Iraqi
Albanian	Kurdish
Angolan	Kuwaiti
Chadian	Nigerian
Chinese	Sierra Leonean
Egyptian	Somalian
Eritrean	South Sudanese
Ethiopian	Sudanese
Gambian	Syrian
Guinean	Vietnamese
Iranian	Yemeni



Demographics

We began the survey with simple demographic questions, designed to capture some characteristics of the respondents. We asked their age, which local authority area they live in, their nationality, gender and how long they had been in Scotland.

We asked these questions to ensure respondents reflected the demographics of young people at Guardianship and that no group was ignored or underrepresented.



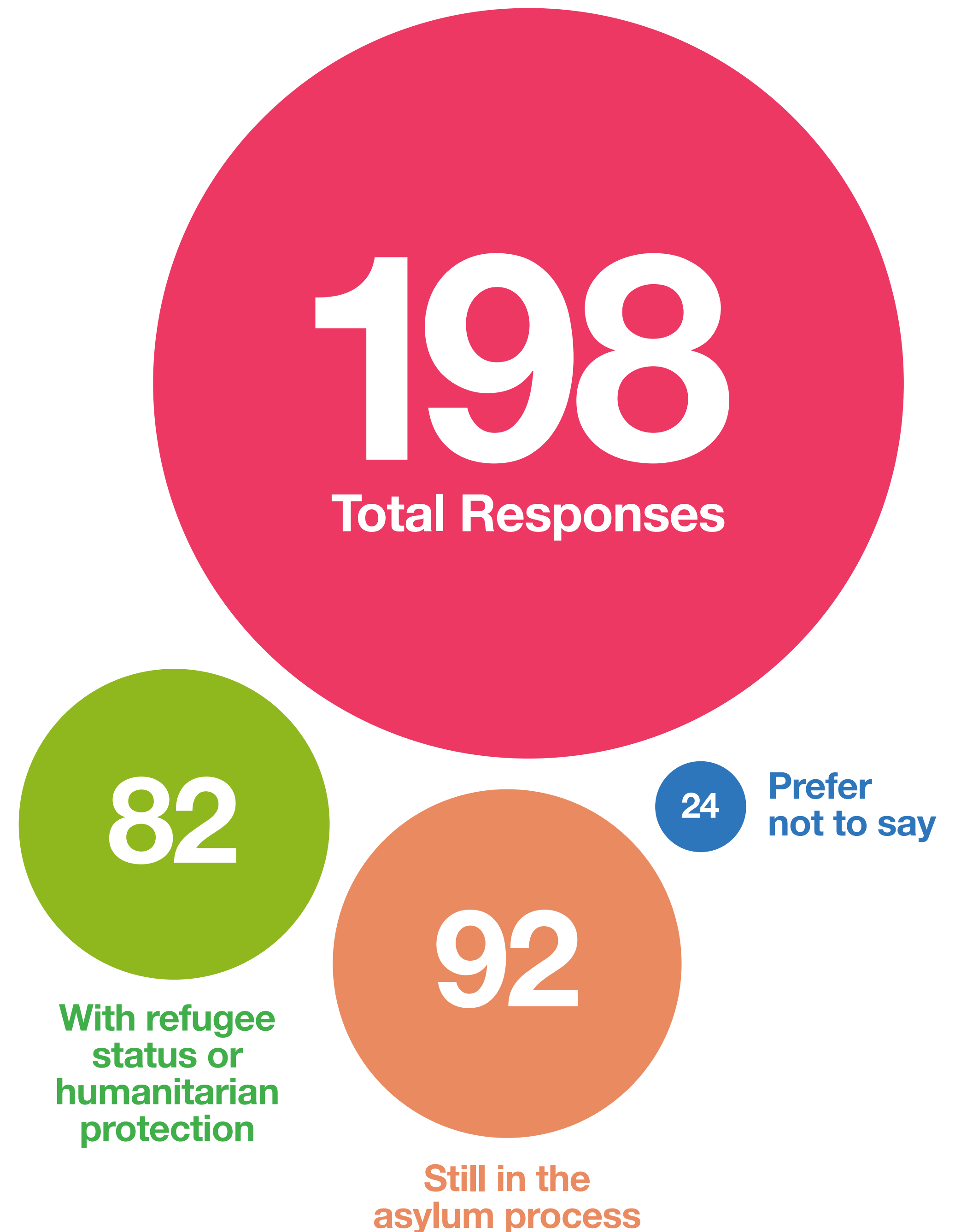
Stage of Asylum Claim

Throughout the survey we include results from two groups;

- The **198 total respondents**
- The 116 respondents **without refugee status, humanitarian protection** or who **preferred not to say**

The total respondents figure will come first, followed by a figure in brackets which excludes those with status. E.g. 198 (116).

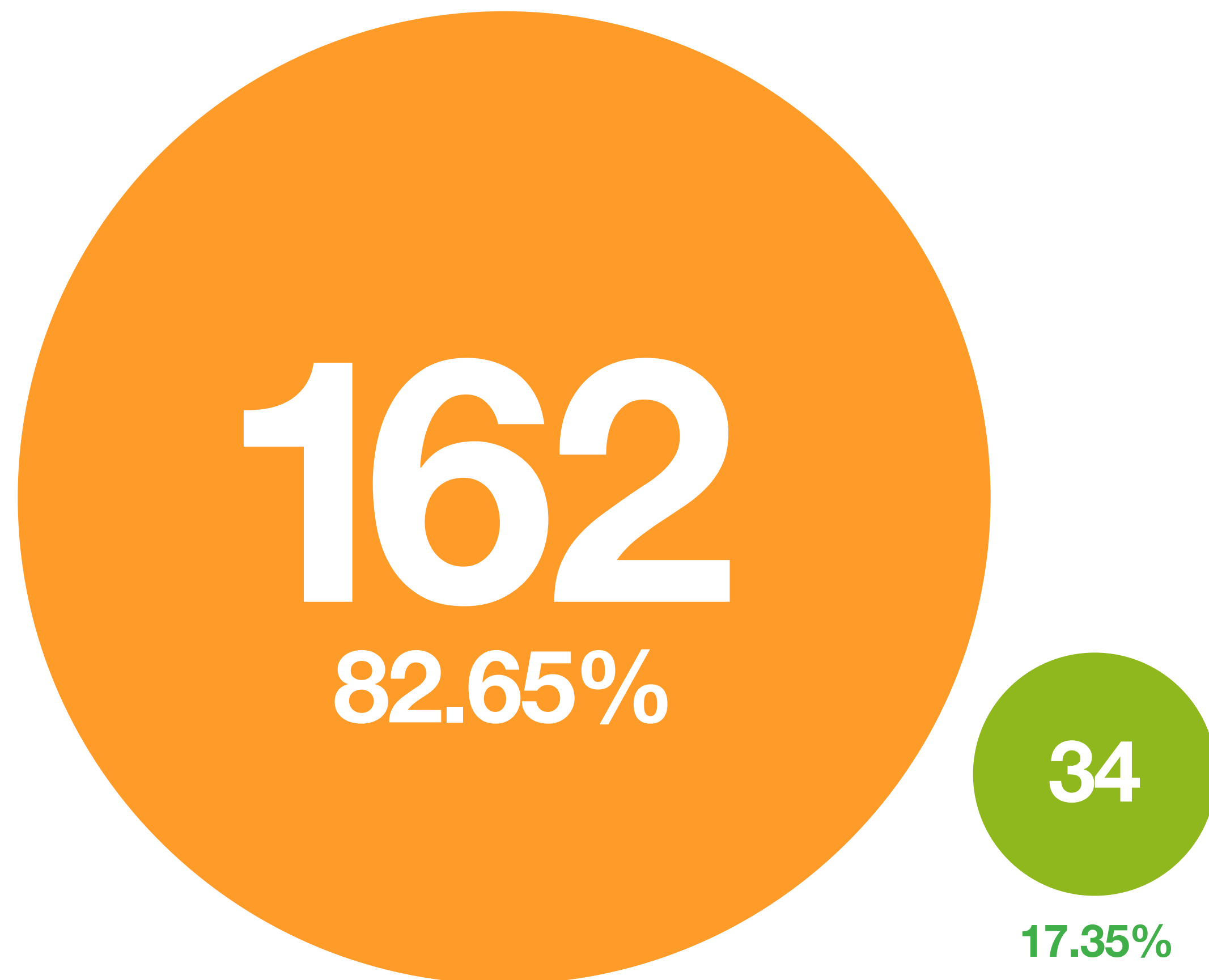
The reason for showing both figures, is to see how life changes for young people post-status, but also to highlight the circumstances of young people currently in the system who tend to rely more on the services provided by local authorities, Guardianship Scotland and third sector organisations.



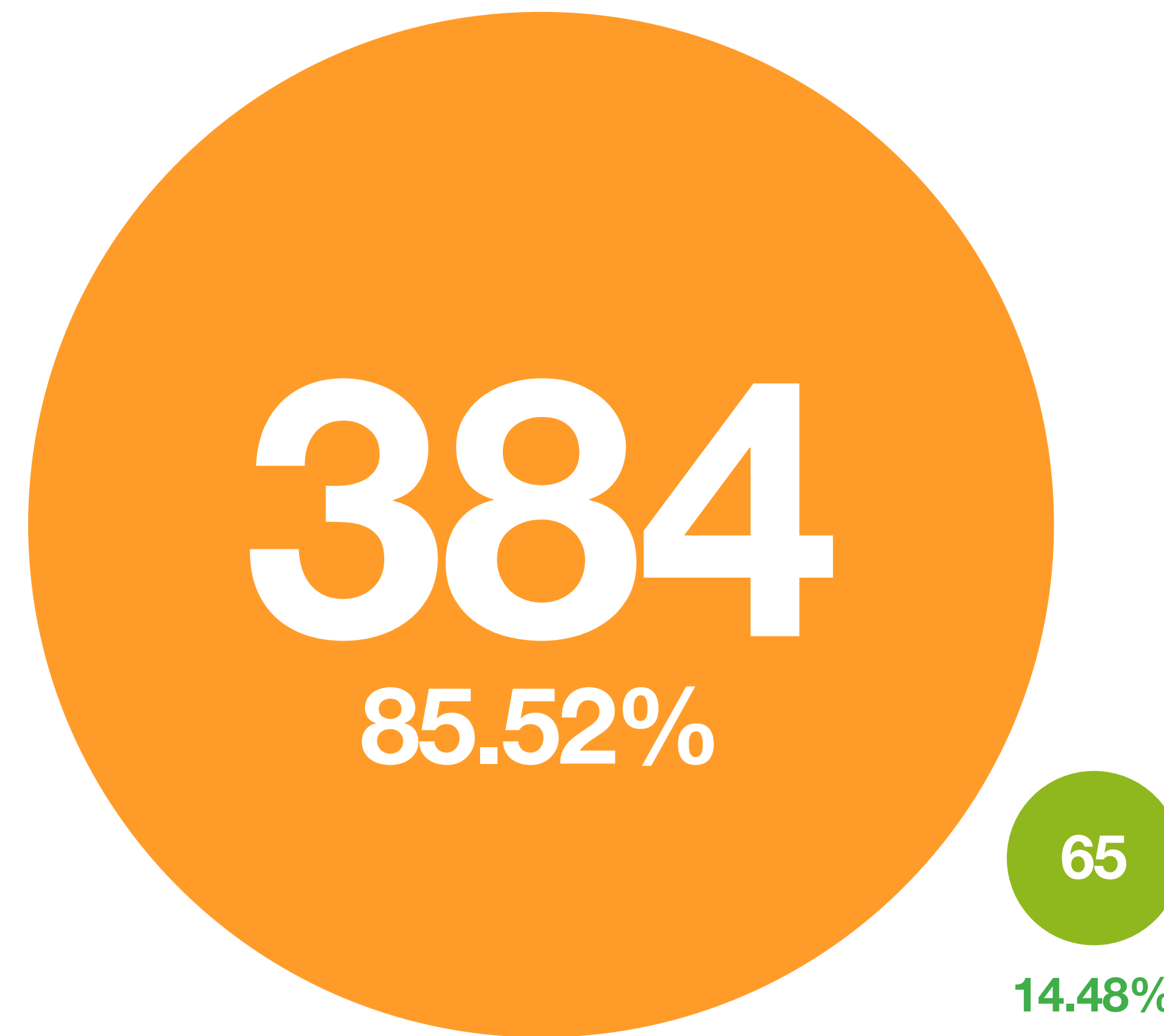
Gender



Survey Respondents

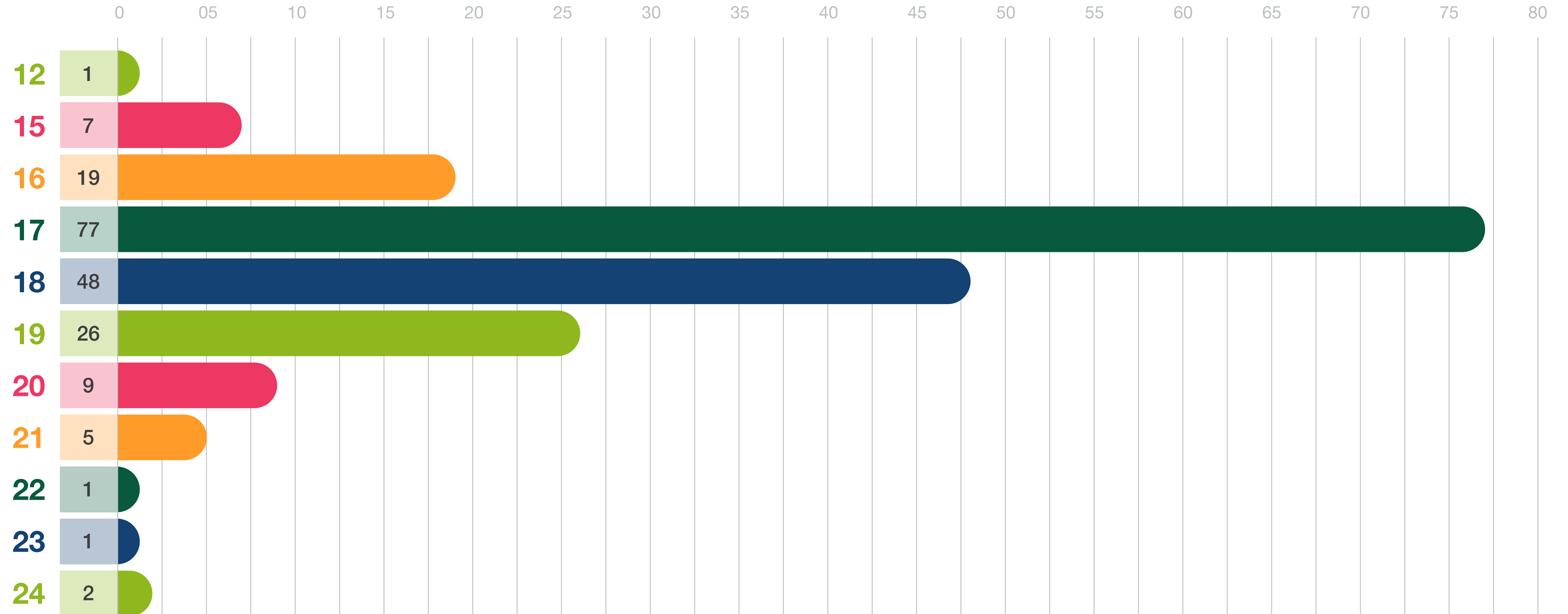


2023/24 New referrals into Guardianship Scotland



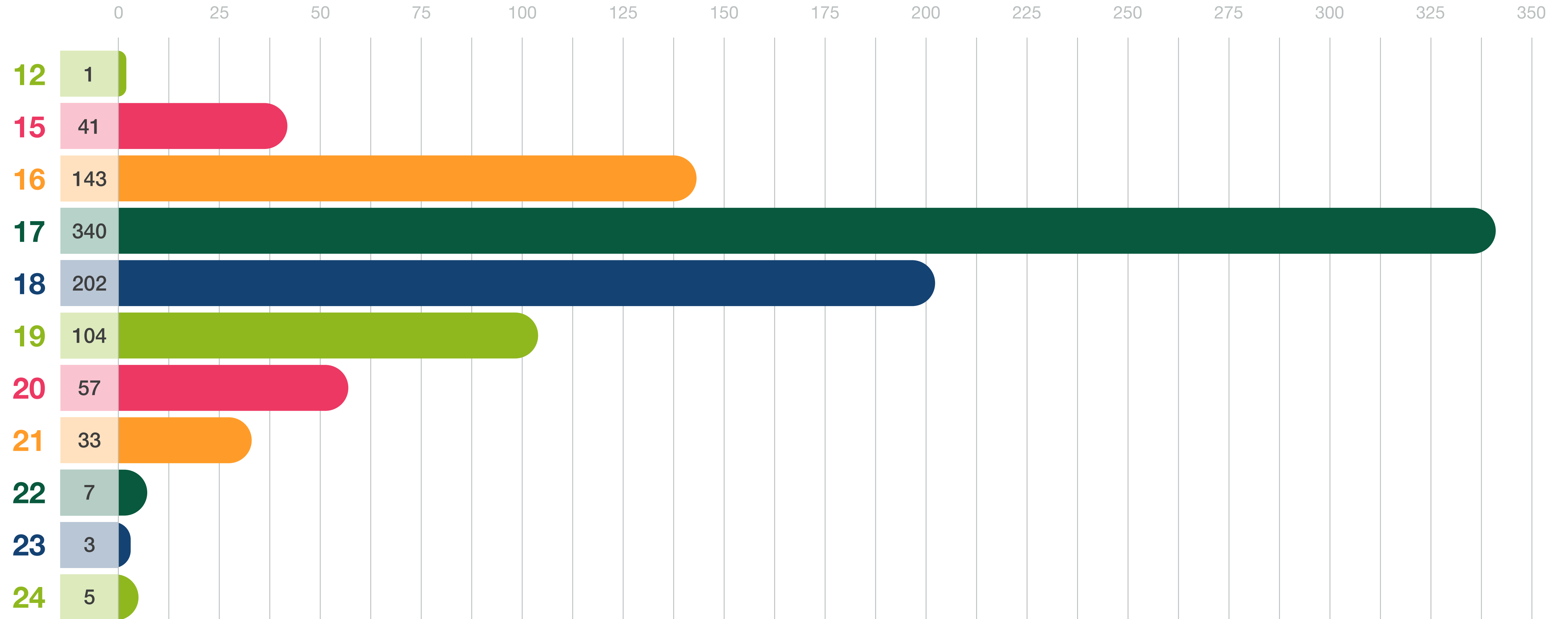
Age

Age Distribution of Survey Respondents



Age

Age Distribution of Guardianship in General



Survey Topics



**People who
Support Me**



Accommodation



Money



Education



**Social Life
and Activities**

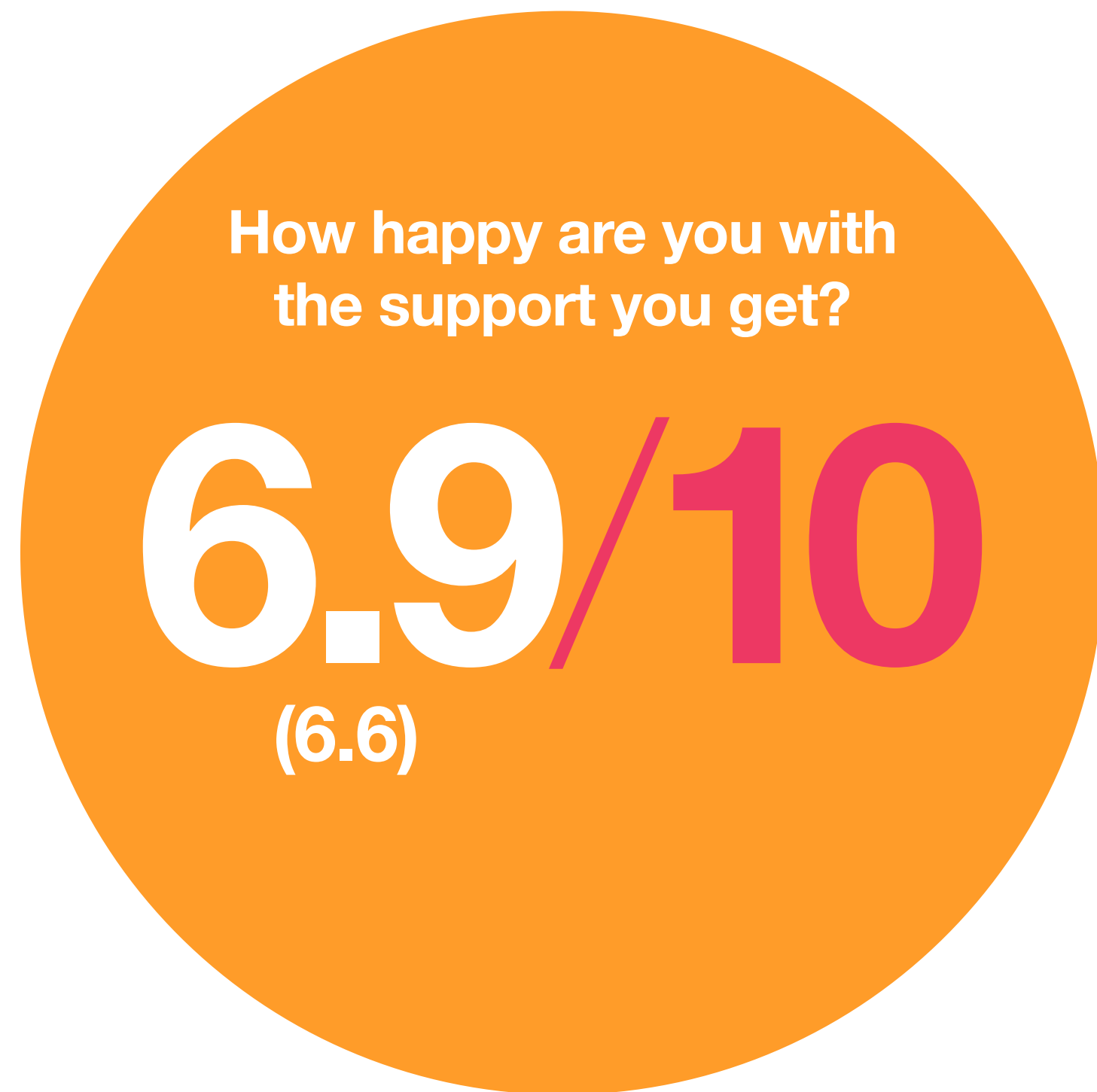


People Who Support Me

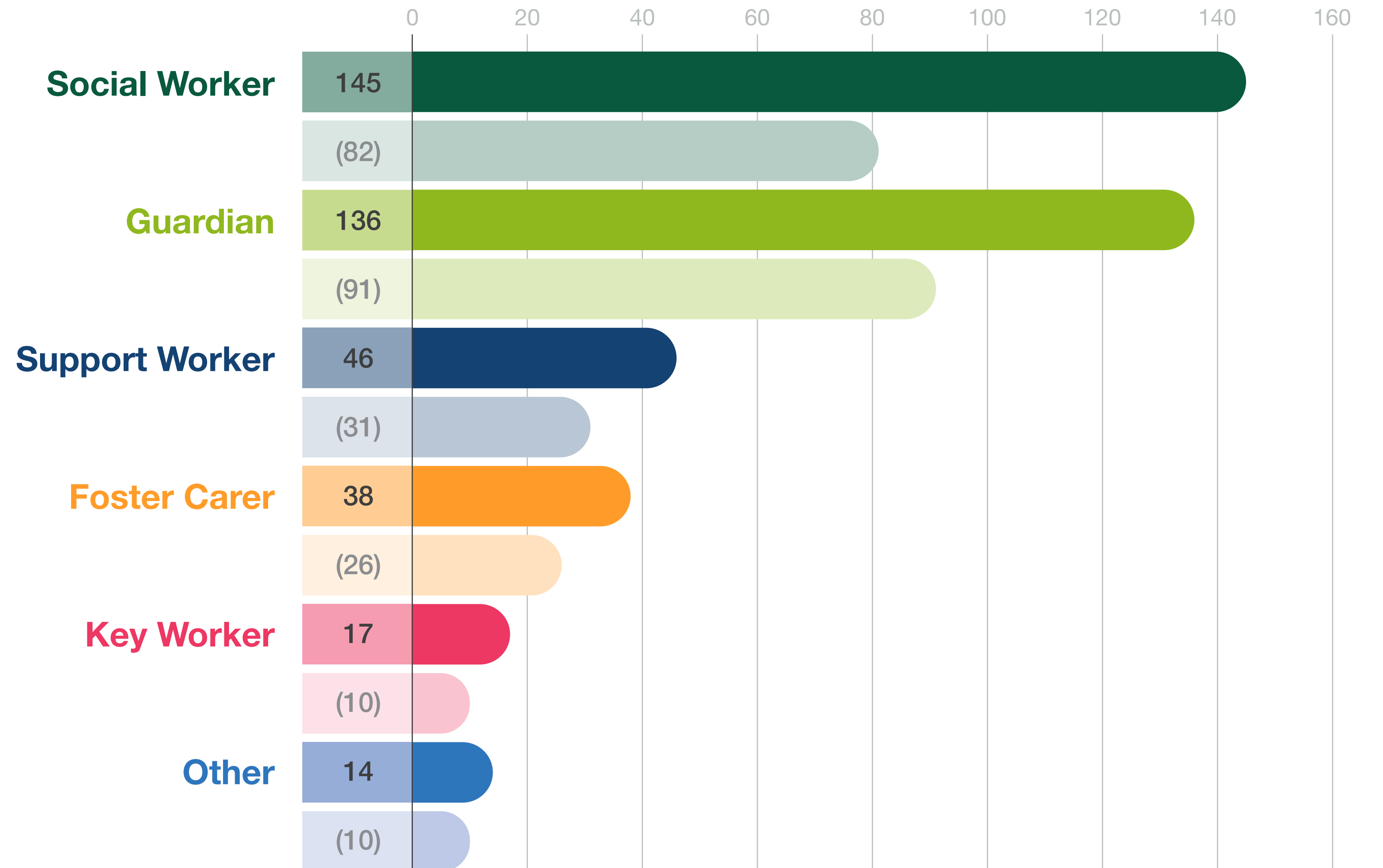


Support

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status



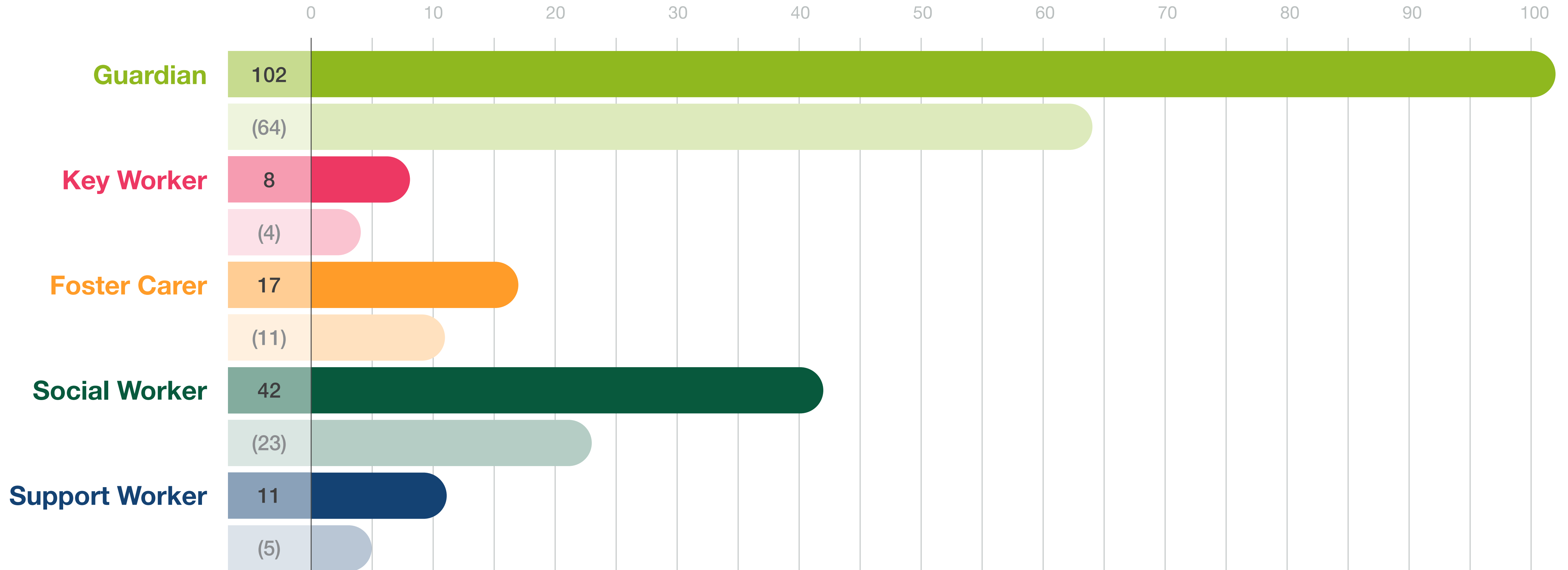
Which people support you right now?



Support

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

Who do you feel most comfortable speaking with?

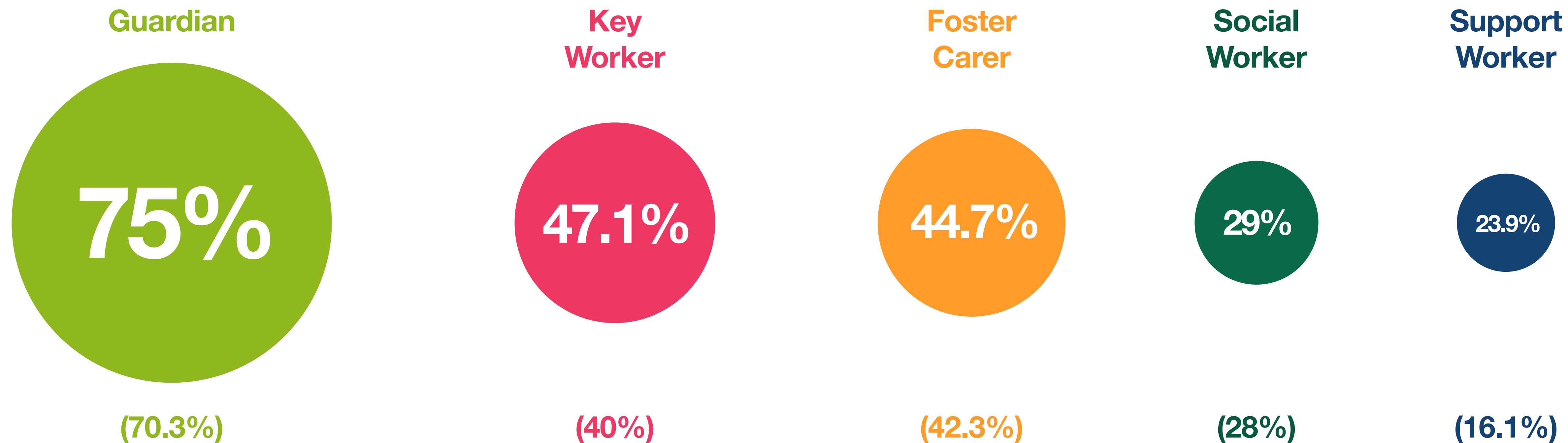


Support

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

Who do you feel most comfortable speaking with? Shown as a percentage.

E.g. Only 17 young people reported having a key worker, but 8 (47.1%) said that the key worker is the person they feel most comfortable speaking to.



Experiences of Social Work

Glasgow was the most represented local authority in the survey due to the high numbers of young people they support. We received 92 survey responses and 7 out of the 9 participants in one consultation were supported by Glasgow. A prominent issue that arose was the high caseloads of social workers. We spoke with both young people living in Glasgow and those in the surrounding local authorities. The young people in Glasgow reported having far less contact with their social workers.

Not everyone has friends and they are isolated. We need some more regular contact with our social workers. That's missing in student accommodation. When I lived in supported accommodation, the staff used to check on me all the time...

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow

My social worker doesn't contact me. I have no family here, just Guardianship. We need more support in the community as well as from social work.

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow

Social workers should be checking more. I haven't heard from my social worker for more than a month.

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow

Ongoing Support

Young people highlighted that often support is reduced as they get older but feel like they aren't always ready for it.

We need more education in life skills. For example, many young people struggle to phone the GP. When we are in supported accommodation, we get help from key workers or support workers. We need support to learn to do these things ourselves after we move out.”

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow

My support worker told me that because I'm over 18, I can do things myself now. But I still feel like I need help. I need support with language and with understanding how things are done here in Scotland.

New Scots Consultation — Inverness

Guardianship Scotland

Young people highlighted the importance of Guardianship as a place to make friends and build confidence.

Guardianship is very important to us. It helps us to meet other young people and build our confidence.

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow

Group night is good for practising English and it helps us not to be shy. We all feel welcomed and loved at Guardianship.

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow

Our Guardians use interpreters which is very important.

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow



Accommodation



Accommodation

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

Young people live in a variety of different accommodation types

Foster Placement

36 (23)

Hotel

4 (3)

House/Flat on your own

31 (17)

Shared flat with other young people (no staff)

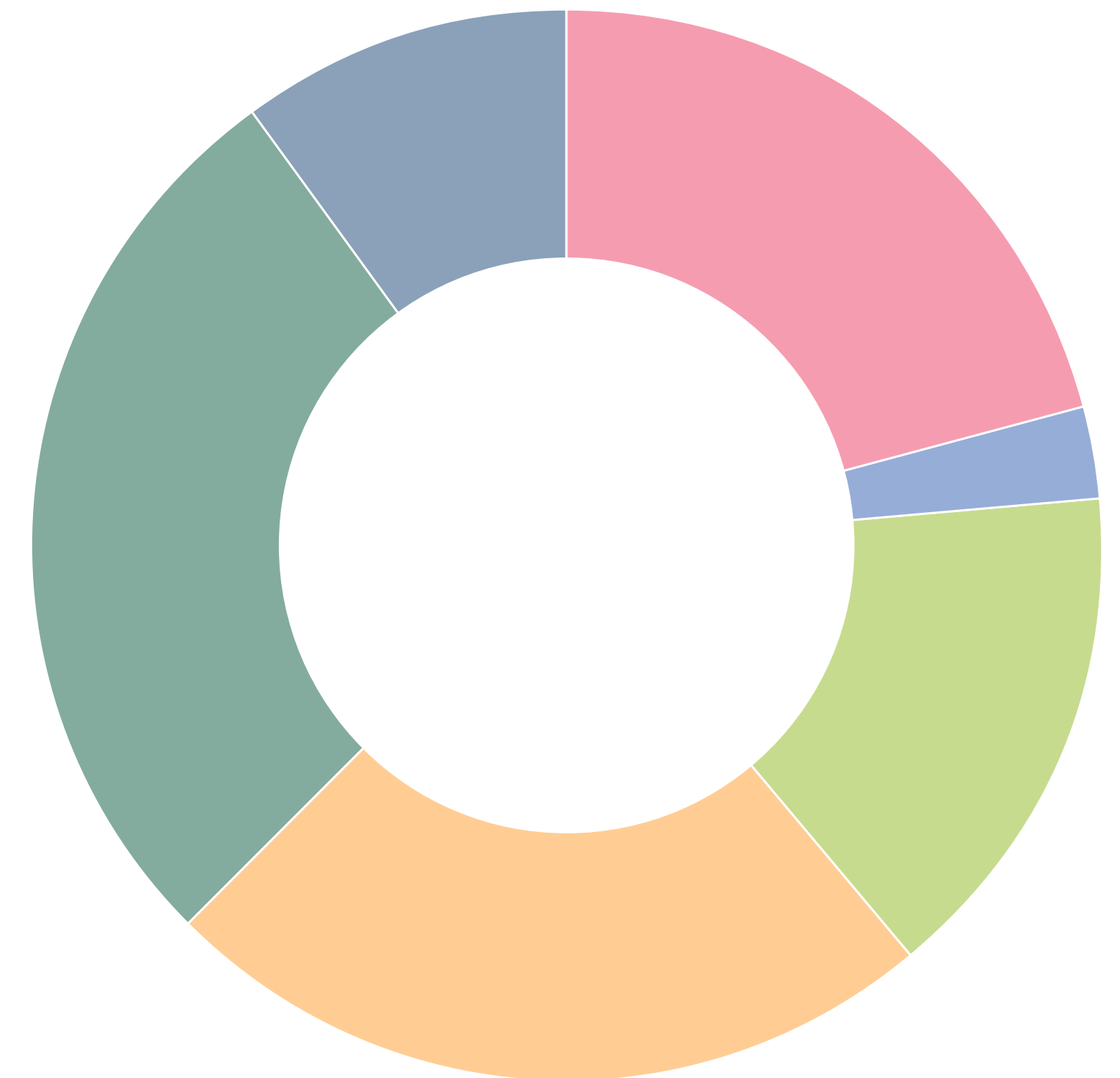
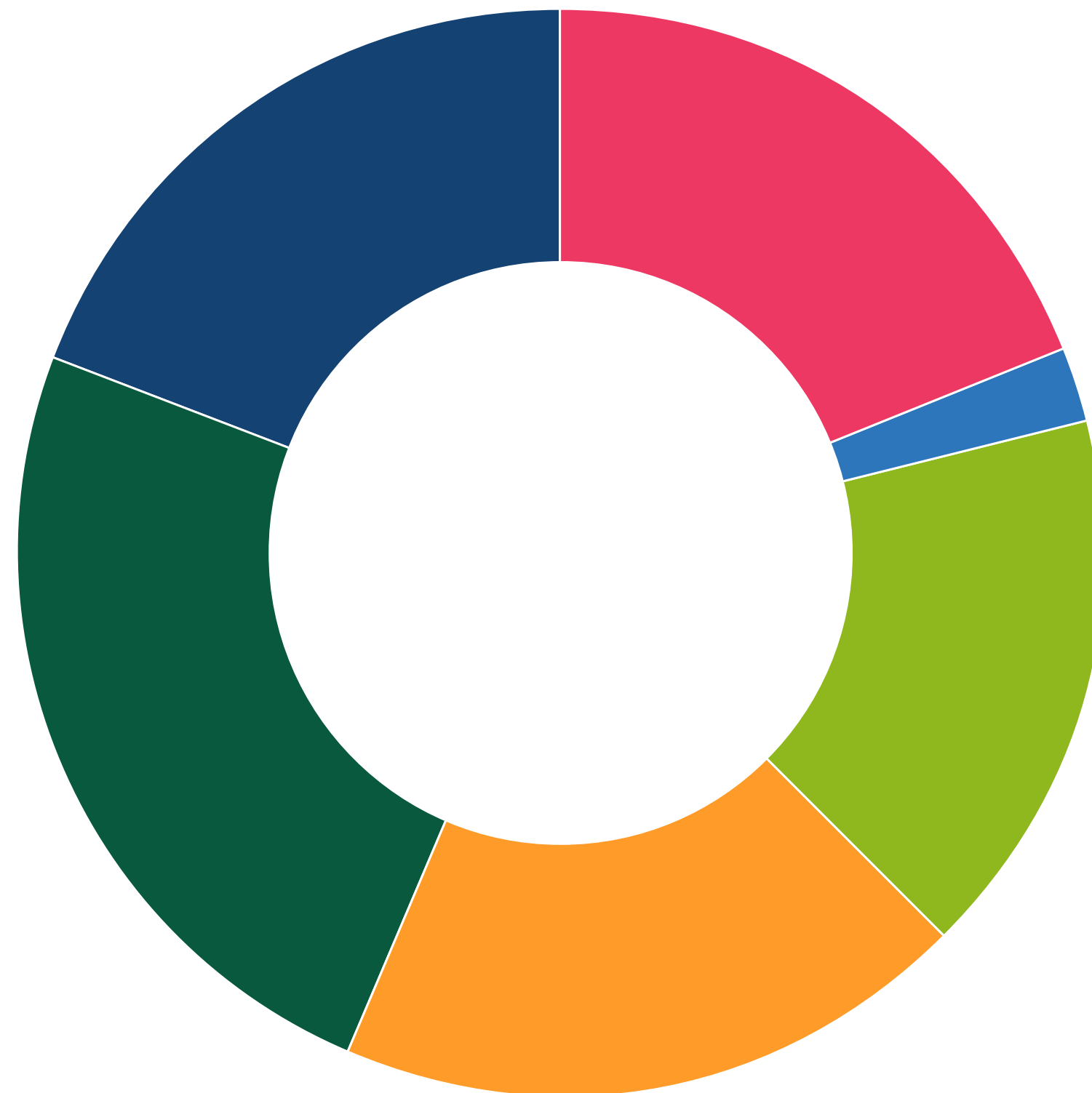
36 (26)

Supported Accommodation

46 (30)

Student Accommodation

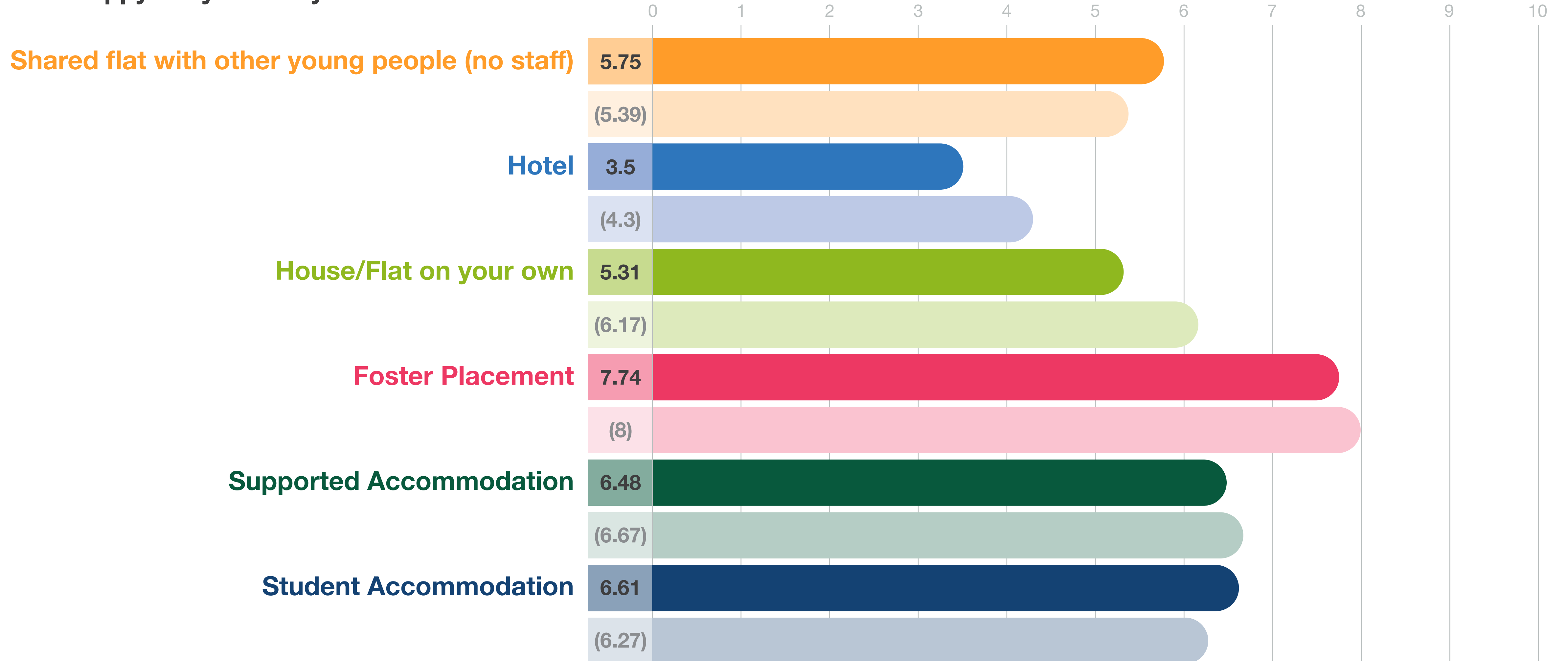
36 (11)



Accommodation

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

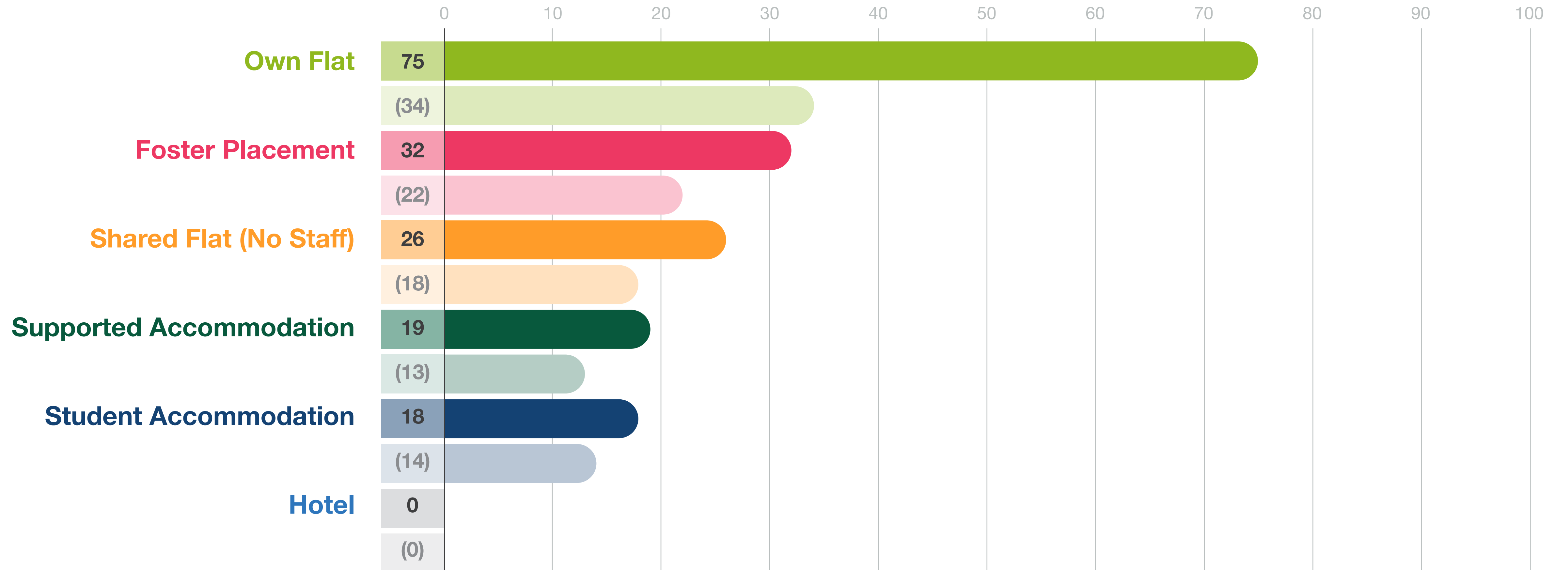
How happy are you with your accommodation?



Accommodation

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

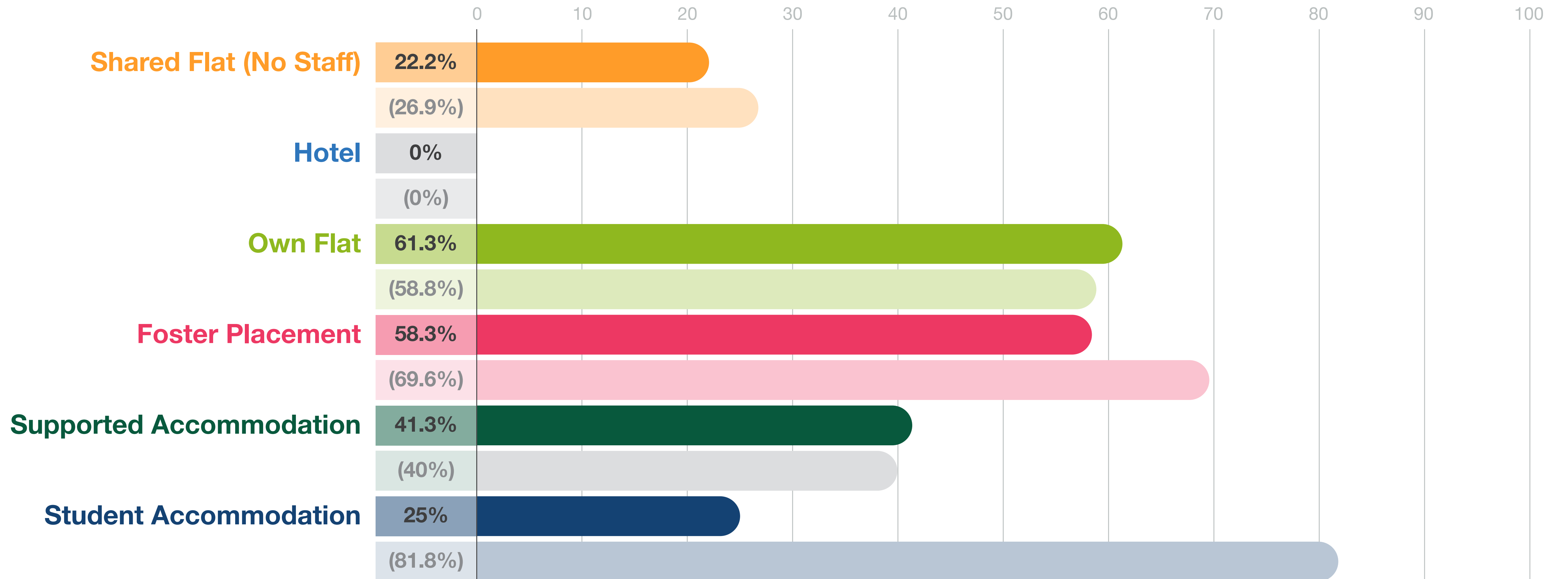
Where would you like to live?



Accommodation

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

Percentage who stated that the type of housing they would like to live in is the same as where they currently live.



Location

Since the National Transfer Scheme became mandated in 2022, unaccompanied young people have been accommodated in local authorities all across Scotland. Many young people we spoke to in both the survey and the consultation, highlighted the location and lack of choice about where they live as a key issue.

The place where I live it's quite (sic) place and I don't like it. Moreover, my college is far from my home it probably takes 2 hours to get there. I do this 3 days in a week and please help me to get home in Aberdeen which where I study.

New Scots Consultation — Aberdeen

Living in a small town is difficult, I want to move to Glasgow or Inverness, where there are other people who look like me. Where I live now, everyone stares at me.

New Scots Consultation — Inverness

I want to move to Glasgow but I cannot.

Survey

Peterhead is too small and very boring. There are no jobs, only the fishing factory.

New Scots Consultation — Aberdeen

Hotels

In many parts of Scotland, unaccompanied young people are living in hotels. Sometimes it is because local authorities use hotels when no suitable accommodation is available. In other instances, it is due to children being wrongly assessed as adults by the Home Office and placed in adult asylum hotels.

It is really difficult to be in a hotel and it has a massive impact on your mental health. A lot of people really struggle.

New Scots Consultation — Aberdeen

I need to change my flat because, I do not like to stay in the hotel, I stayed in hotel for 10 months now.

Survey

They keep telling us we will move but you lose hope because it never happens.

New Scots Consultation — Aberdeen

Staying in a hotel is hard, there is nowhere to wash your clothes, nowhere to cook your own food, the hotel food is cold.

Young People's Voices Member



Money



Money

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

While the average rating was 5.02 (5.25), in one local authority it was as high as 9.25 and in another, as low as 2.47.

We found that how much money young people get, changed depending on their local authority. This was reflected in the very different ratings when filtered by local authority.

How happy are you
with the money you get?

5.02 / 10
(5.25)



Money

The young people I met in Inverness were happy with their money, and they don't have to pay bills. However, the young people noticed during our discussion that they got different amounts in Highlands and Moray. In my own [rural] local authority, we get £80 a week but we must pay for gas, electricity, internet and food. The amount young people get depends on their local authority and that is not fair.

Young People's Voices Member

Money

How happy are you with the money you get?



The young people we spoke to, also highlighted the varying cost of living between different locations:

I get £67 per week. When I lived in Inverness this was enough to buy all my food. Now I live in [village] it is more difficult because they don't have Lidl or Aldi, only a Co-op which is more expensive.

New Scots Consultation – Inverness



Education



Education

Figures in brackets exclude those with refugee status

Young people's experiences of education vary greatly depending on where they live.

When broken down by local authority, the average ratings ranged from 4.7 to 10.

4.7

10

Are you happy with your education in Scotland at the moment?

8.2/10
(8.1)



Education

For young people living in Glasgow, the rating for education was quite high (8.3). However, in many other areas there isn't sufficient ESOL provision and young people travel to Glasgow for classes.

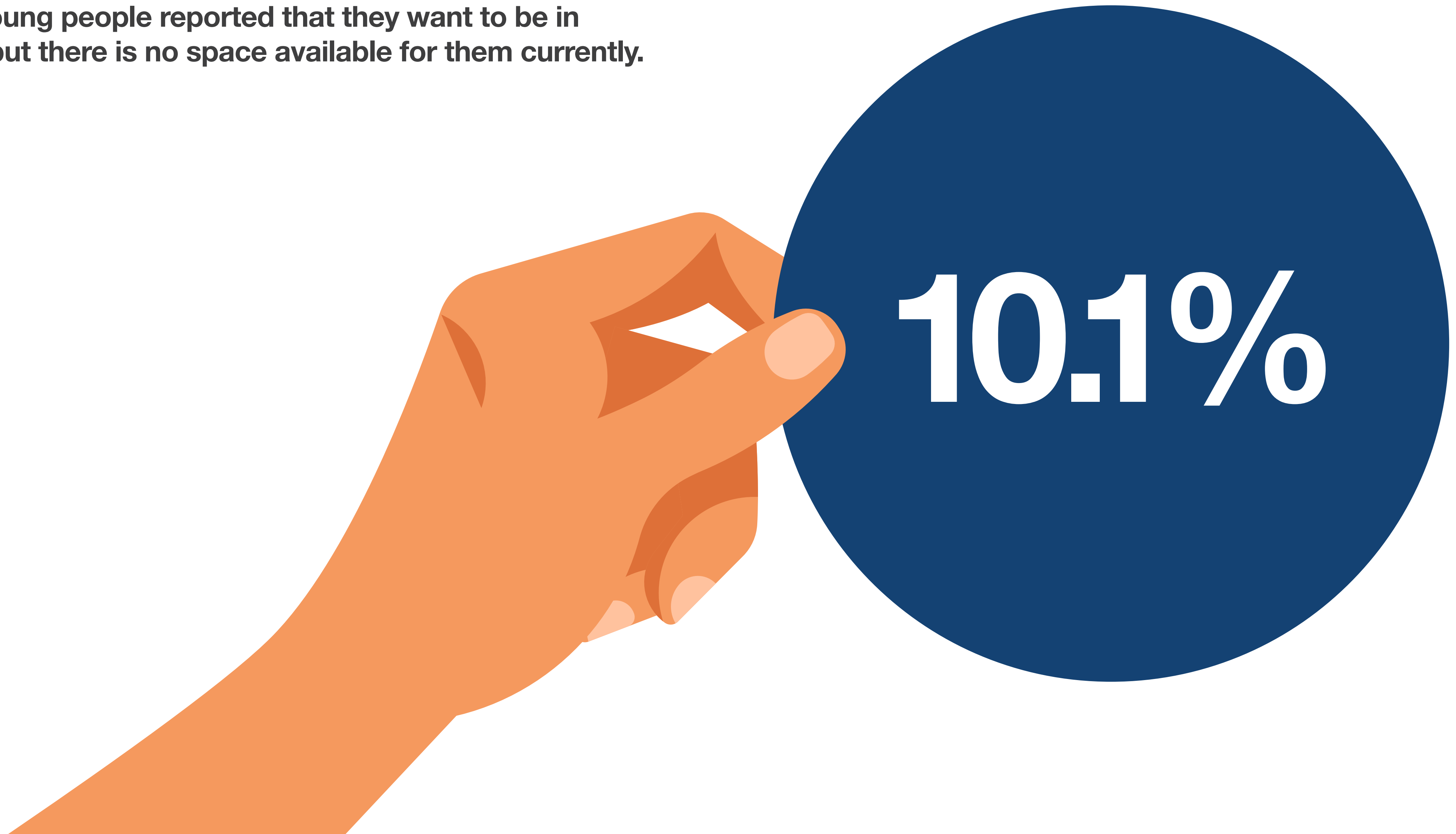
Education in my local authority is not that good, all the young people are complaining about it. The college teaches one day a week and only at higher levels. They keep saying the college doesn't have funding. The young people with lower levels of English study at a community centre and they don't have a curriculum. From August, the majority of the young people here are going to study in Glasgow. We have to travel a long way but there are many colleges that teach English in Glasgow.

Young People's Voices Member



Education

10.1% of young people reported that they want to be in education but there is no space available for them currently.





Social Life and Activities



Social Life and Activities

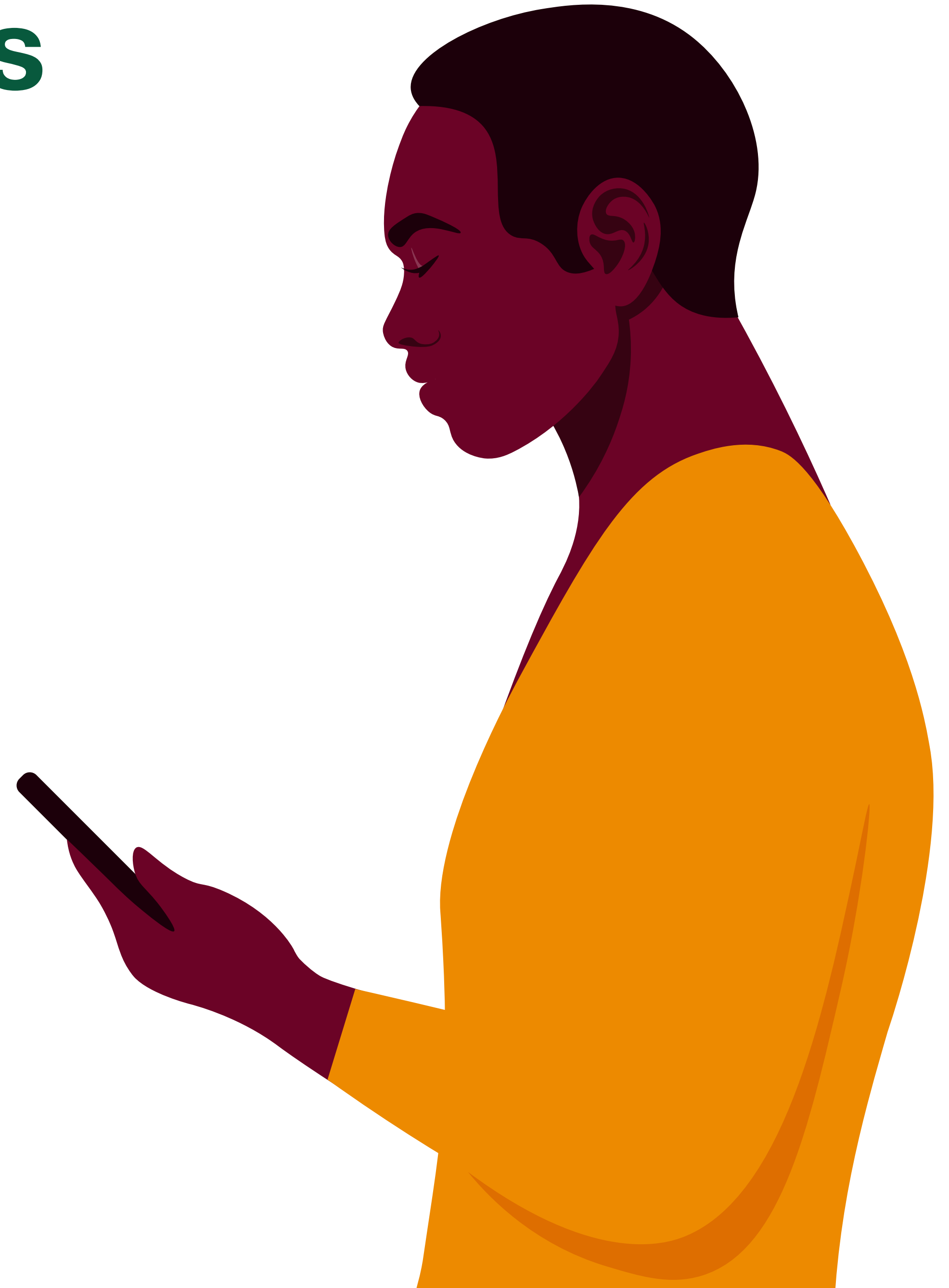
We have many interests and talents. Here are what young people said in the survey that they enjoy doing.



Social Life and Activities

Activities are important for us because at home we just sit on our phones or watch TV. We need space to meet people and take part in activities.

New Scots Consultation — Glasgow



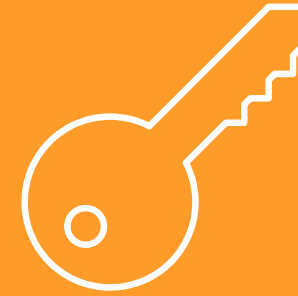


Our Recommendations

Our Recommendations



There should be equality across Scotland in how much money unaccompanied young people receive and how much we are expected to pay for bills. This money should be enough for us to live happily and comfortably. It shouldn't be determined by the local authority we live in.



Unaccompanied young people shouldn't be placed in communities before the infrastructure exists to support us. We need access to education, health, support and activities, without having to travel long distances.

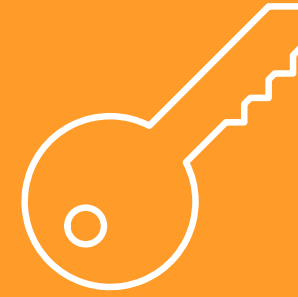


Social work teams need to provide enough staff to properly support us. Social workers and support workers shouldn't have unmanageable caseloads that affect their wellbeing as workers and our access to the support and positive relationships we need.

Our Recommendations



Education is very important to us. Some of us have never been to school before and we all have different talents and interests. Education should be a right for all of us and should consider our specific needs, skills and future plans.



We should have some choice about the type of accommodation we live in. Some of us would like to live in foster placements or supported accommodation and some of us prefer more independent living. Hotel use must be ended.



We need activities to keep us busy. They are good for our mental wellbeing, help us to make friends and to grow our confidence. We should be supported to access gyms, libraries and to join groups such as sports teams.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by staff at Scottish Refugee Council as part of Guardianship Scotland, a specialist statutory service which provides Independent Child Trafficking Guardians to young people who arrive in Scotland without their families. Guardianship Scotland is delivered in partnership by Scottish Refugee Council and Aberlour Children's Charity on behalf of the Scottish Government.

We are grateful to the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Scottish Government for supporting the survey and consultations which form part of this report.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors (Young People's Voices) and not necessarily of Scottish Refugee Council, Aberlour Children's Charity or the funders. We would like to thank all young people who participated in this project for their generosity in sharing their thoughts and experiences. We would also like to thank the organisations and staff who supported young people to complete the survey and to attend the consultations.





YPV
YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES