Ruthless Research

Final report:

Youth Theatre Census 2024

December 2024

Submitted by:
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www.ruthlessresearch.co.uk

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About Ruthless Research

Ruthless Research is an Edinburgh-based independent research consultancy, through which Ruth Stevenson provides a range of qualitative and quantitative research solutions to organisations who work for the benefit of the community.

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Introduction

Background and context

The Youth Theatre Census was commissioned to understand what youth theatre currently looks like in England – where it's happening, who's doing it and what people need to make it even better.

This was the first time that such a survey has been undertaken in England since the National Association of Youth Theatre's State of the Sector report in 2011. It is notable that a similar survey has been run by Youth Theatre Arts Scotland in 2015, 2020 and 2023.

The census was funded by Arts Council England and created by freelance theatre director Ned Glasier (formerly the Artistic Director of Company Three) and independent researcher Ruth Stevenson, on behalf of a commissioning group of six youth theatres: 20 Stories High, Burnley Youth Theatre, Company Three, Mortal Fools, Prime Theatre, and Theatre Factory - working with Arts Council England.

A wider strategy group supported the development and distribution of the Census, comprising representatives of the groups above and the following groups: BarrowFull, Get Into Theatre, the National Association of Youth Theatres, National Theatre Connections, National Youth Theatre, National Youth Music Theatre, SOLT/UK Theatre and NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association).

The report that follows discusses the findings from the research, providing a snapshot of youth theatre provision in England in 2024.

Methodology

Independent researcher Ruth Stevenson was commissioned to design, manage and analyse the Youth Theatre Census. The Youth Theatre Census took around 20 minutes to complete in full and was available to complete online between 17th June and 1st August 2024. Those that met the following definition were eligible to complete the Census and are hereafter referred to as 'youth theatres':

- You deliver any activity that engages young people aged 5-25 as participants in theatre on a non-professional basis.
- You deliver some or all of these activities in England.

A time boundary was required to enable the collection of consistent, unambiguous and recent data. The Census focused on activity during 'the last financial year', defined as 'between April 2023 to March 2024', selected because it fit in most closely with the planned June launch.

The Census was cascaded out by project partners via email and social media. Following the first few weeks of fieldwork targeted communications were used to solicit responses in areas where low response was observed, and in some cases desk-based research and web searches were undertaken to inform this. Researcher Ruth Stevenson identified gaps or inconsistencies within the provided data, which was then followed-up with respondents and where possible corrected.

387 youth theatres completed the Census in full, and for completeness and consistency the analysis contained in this report is based on these 387 youth theatres. Some youth theatres only partially completed the census. In total 414 youth theatres completed the initial 'database' section comprising 396 who agreed to be included in a public database and 18 who did not agree to be included in a public database. The dataset contains the results of a focused search for youth theatre activities in England and every effort was taken to make this dataset as complete as possible. However, it is acknowledged that some youth theatres may have provided incomplete or incorrect information, and that others may not have filled in the Census at all.

Respondents included National Youth Theatre, which operates across the UK but is headquartered in London. In relation to this, please note:

National Youth Theatre is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and its Arts Council grant currently makes up around 8% of its total turnover. NYT has a headquarters and creative home for young storytellers in North London, and also regularly delivers activity at venues around the England, the UK and beyond. Its young members aged 14-25 (and up to 30 if d.Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent), come from and live all over the UK. For the purposes of this survey and in order to reflect this national work, in some key questions NYT's data has been split across the regions it takes place in rather than assigned to its HQ postcode. This is to provide a more representative national picture of where youth theatre is happening in this census and will be reported in different ways in other reports. NYT's activity varies from region to region each calendar year. Find out more about how NYT works in partnerships nationally: www.nyt.org.uk/impactreport

Please note that throughout the report:

- *Percentage totals may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding*
- *Percentages greater than 0 that cannot be rounded to 1% are represented by a **

Running a youth theatre in 2024

At the end of the Census we invited the youth theatres to tell us what it is like to run a youth theatre in 2024. Their words provide context for the data that follows.

The current economic situation is challenging

“Running a youth theatre in the current climate has been very challenging. The cost of living crisis means that what we do has become a luxury to a lot of parents.”

“It is a struggle to balance the books in our current structure, as room hire, bursaries and staff wipe out funds each term and we always worry that we won't make ends meet.”

“This year we have had our local authority contract significantly cut. We are struggling to make up the shortfall.”

“This last year has been particularly stressful in regards to staying afloat and affording hire hall costs and props and costumes etc...”

“We are finding it tough to keep paid spaces to an affordable cost and also offering bursary places and also paying our freelancers fairly. We can't cover our costs and are always looking for external funding.”

“The price of running youth theatre is ridiculously high and we are struggling to find sponsorship or funders and as such we are raising our fees which is driving members away.”

“Raising funds to continue to provide this as a much needed free service is very challenging.”

“We are always grafting for financial support and it never goes far enough.”

“It can feel precarious.”

Running a youth theatre is rewarding but difficult

“Running a voluntary youth theatre is a labour of love.”

“Hard! But always worth it.”

“It feels as vital as it ever was, but there are challenges from all directions making this harder.”

“The young people are endlessly inspiring and despite the frustrations and challenges I am so grateful to be able to have kept this young theatre going.”

“Running a youth theatre is the most rewarding thing I do. It is also painfully without recognition or celebration.”

“We know we're doing important work but it's the hardest thing any of us have ever done.”

Some youth theatre leaders feel isolated

“I am in my 11th year, it can feel very isolated.”

“It is quite an isolating position to hold to run a youth theatre.”

“I largely work on my own, which is usually fine, but I occasionally get real creative and emotional fatigue.”

Young people today are struggling

“Young people are finding the world harder than ever - most likely because lots of elements of the world are harder than ever.”

“We have seen a change in our young people since the pandemic with an increase in issues affecting mental health.”

“So many of our participants are struggling with mental health issues, schooling issues and social media. Life is hard for teens today, so much pressure on them.”

“We have found that more and more young people we are engaging with have high needs and/ or mental health issues/ anxiety etc.”

“It is challenging to meet the various demands from and for young people and our communities. Considering their needs, mental health, identity journeys, cost of living crisis.”

“Mental health issues are noticeably higher in recent years amongst our members and so our safeguarding and child support has to be a focus at all times.”

Young people need this safe space

“Our young people are facing so many immediate challenges, and they report back that this is their safe place where they feel they can be who they truly are and feel supported.”

“Recognising how difficult it is simply to live and attend school for many of our young people their model of a safe space where they can speak and be heard has growingly been our Youth Theatre.”

“Navigating poor mental health amongst our young people is the biggest factor we have to consider. They are often anxious to the point of being unable to enter the space. Our young people regularly tell us how they couldn't cope without our group, and it's actively keeping them alive.”

“The challenges young people face now and the pressures on them mean that youth theatre is more important than ever. I frequently have parents tell me that it saved their young person.”

Youth theatre makes a difference

"Youth theatre has never been more important."

"It's the right thing for us to be doing, the impact on participants is substantial."

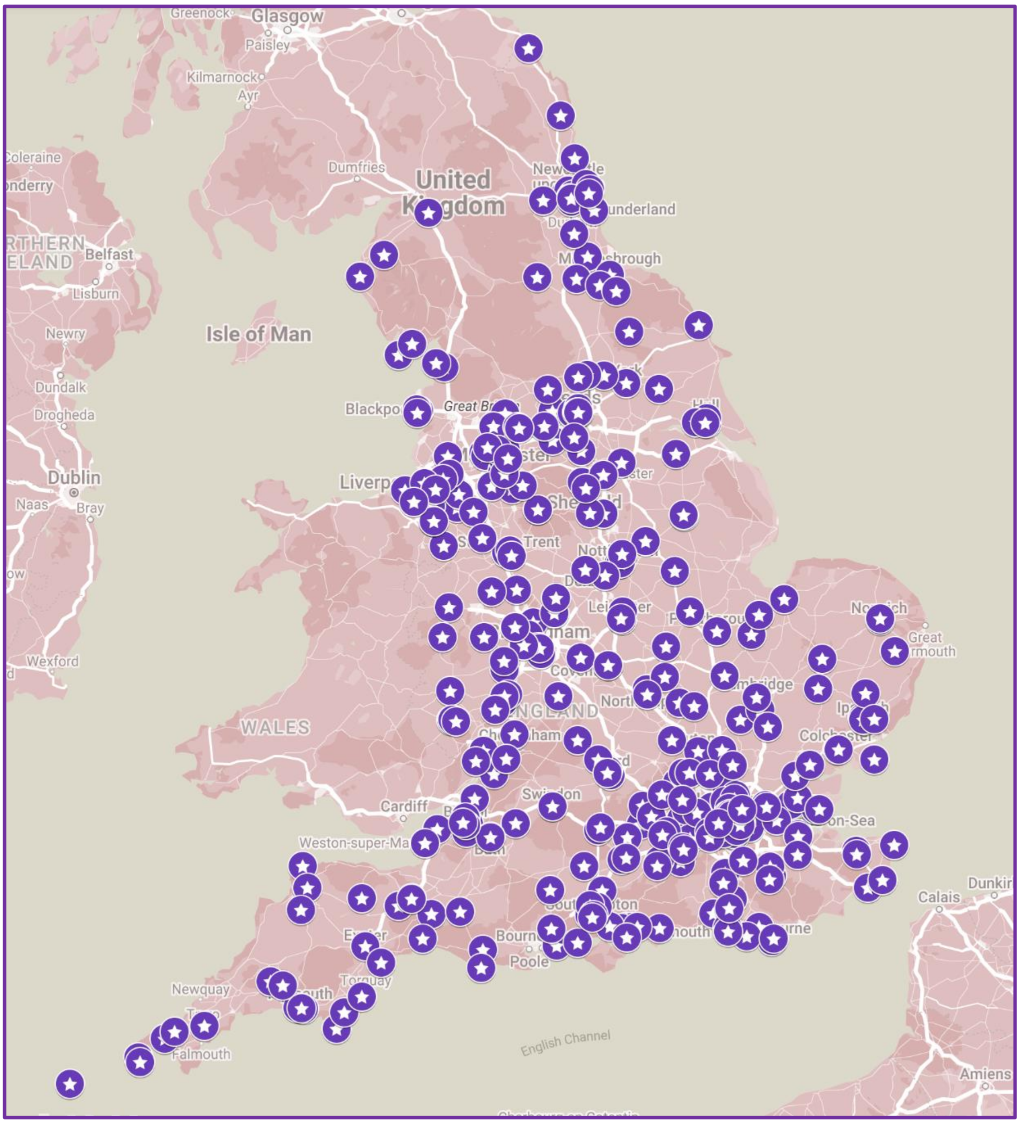
"We provide a vital and much loved service."

"In these current times, where the world is transitioning and we are desperately trying to understand the changes and respond with positivity, it is super important that we equip and prepare our leaders of tomorrow. Theatre and community are great ways of exploring some of the big questions we have around life and our part in it. It gives us the opportunity to confront, challenge, discover and change in hope of bringing about a better world."

The geography of youth theatres

We wished to attain a good geographic spread of youth theatres, and we prioritised filling any gaps to ensure that we received responses from youth theatres which were headquartered in or provided activities across all County Councils, Unitary Authorities, London Boroughs and Metropolitan regions. Ultimately we recorded youth theatre activity in 149 of 153 of these priority regions (97%), along with 63% of all District Council regions.

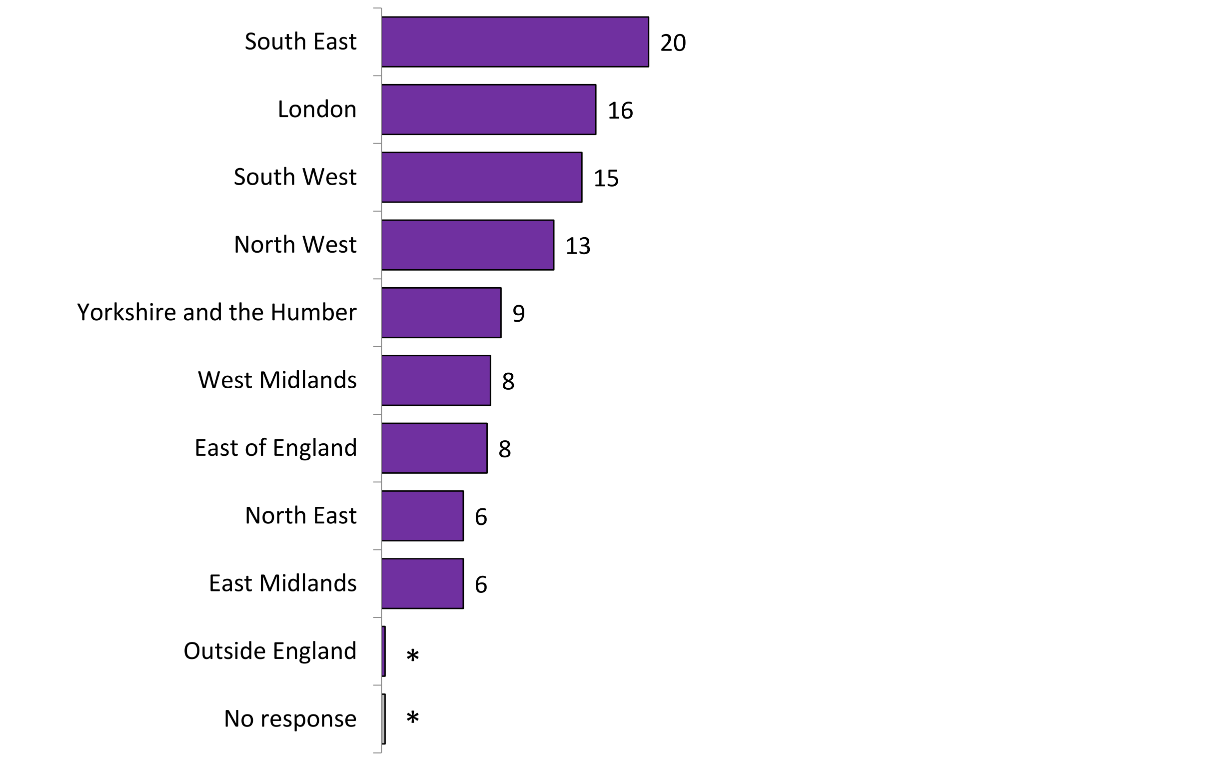
The following map shows the distribution of the 387 youth theatres across England based on the postcode of their main headquarters:



As an indicator of the urban/rural distribution of youth theatres we have calculated that:

- 41% of the youth theatres had their headquarters in major cities (based on being located in Metropolitan, London and City Council regions)
- 59% of the youth theatres had their headquarters in less urbanised areas (based in other Local Authority regions)

We asked the youth theatres to tell us the broad region in which their main headquarters is based, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Region where the main headquarters of your youth theatre is based.
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

The headquarters of the youth theatres were spread across England, with proportionally more based in the South East (20%), London (16%), South West (15%) and North West (13%) regions. Fewest were based in the North East (6%) and East Midlands (6%) regions.

More specifically, the headquarters of the youth theatres were based in 195 Local Authority regions across England, which is 62% of all 317 Local Authority regions.

The Local Authority regions from which we recorded the most youth theatre headquarters were Cheshire West and Chester Council and Leeds City Council (9 youth theatres each), and Cornwall Council, Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council and North Yorkshire Council (7 youth theatres each).

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether all their delivery was based within the same Local Authority region where their headquarters are located, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	**%**
Yes, we only deliver within the one Local Authority region	77
No, we deliver across multiple Local Authority regions	23
Don't know / no response	1

The Local Authority regions from which the most youth theatres delivered activities were Hampshire County Council (10 youth theatres delivered activities), Lewisham (7 delivered activities), Liverpool City Council (7 delivered activities) and Westminster (7 delivered activities).

The average number of Local Authority delivery regions per youth theatre was 1.3.

The youth theatres delivering across the most Local Authority regions were:

- National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (71 Local Authority regions)
- Fuel Productions (54 Local Authority regions)
- Wac Arts (11 Local Authority regions)
- Contact (11 Local Authority regions)

Acknowledging that National Youth Theatre is an outlier in this respect, we have re-distributed the National Youth Theatre figures regionally where useful throughout this report. This is described in the methodology section, and explicitly highlighted where it applies in the body of the report.

We also asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they had delivered any participatory activities outside England between April 2023 and March 2024, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	**%**
Yes, we also run participatory sessions outside England	3
Yes, we have taken our young people on trips outside England	2
No	94
Don’t know / no response	1

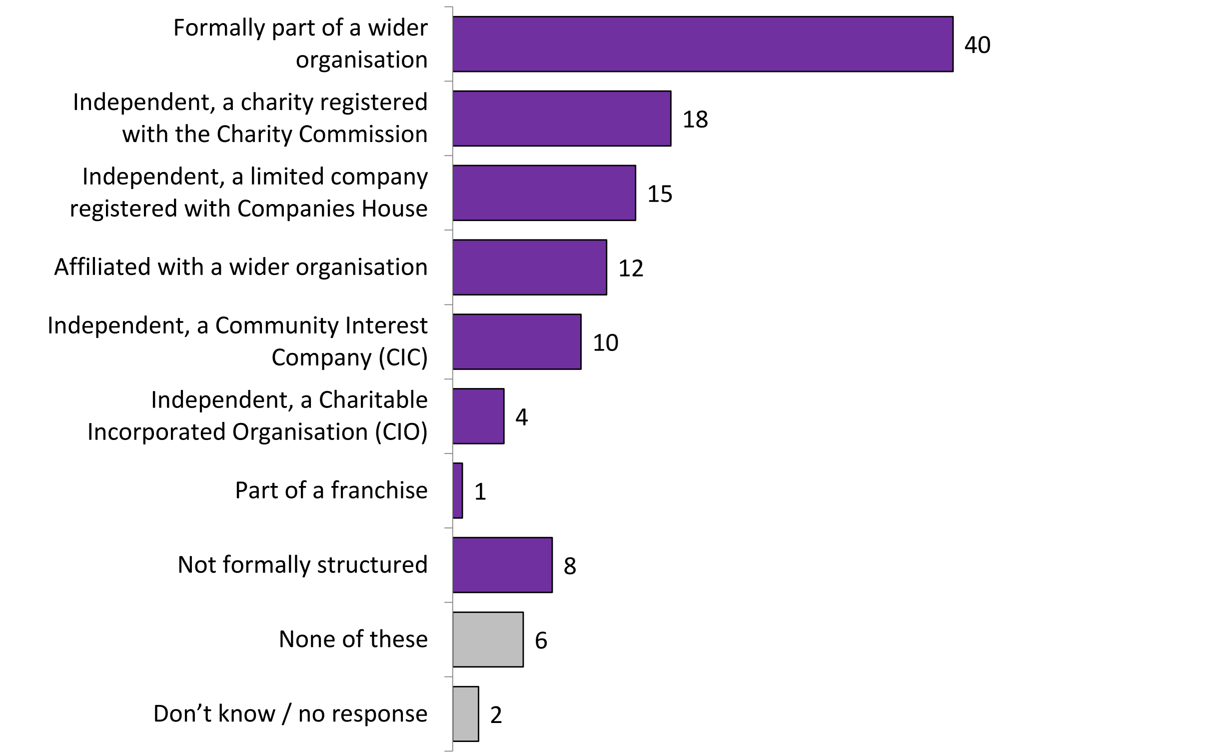
The vast majority of the youth theatres had not delivered any participatory activities outside England (94%).

3% had run participatory sessions outside England in the last year, and 2% had taken young people on trips outside England in the last year.

Youth theatre structures

Structure

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how their organisation is structured, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Is your youth theatre structured in any of the following ways? (please select all that apply)
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

86% of the youth theatres indicated that their youth theatre was formally structured in one of the ways listed above.

In addition to this, just under one in ten of the youth theatres (8%) indicated that they were not formally structured.

By a large margin, the greatest proportion of youth theatres indicated that they were formally part of a wider organisation (40%).

Only 1% of the youth theatres responding to the Census were part of franchises, and it is important to note that each of the three that responded were individual local branches of a franchise.

Affiliations

Overall, 52% of the youth theatres were in any way linked to or affiliated with a wider organisation, and 41% were independent.

We asked the youth theatres that were linked to a wider organisation to tell us what type of organisation they were linked to, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres linked to a wider organisation (203)	%
Theatre company / building	69
Adult Amateur Dramatics group	13
Community project	8
School or education body	7
Charity	6
Local Authority	3
Commercial franchise	1
Something else	5
Don't know / no response	1

The youth theatres that were linked to a wider organisation were by a large margin most often linked to a theatre / building (69%), followed by an adult amateur dramatics company (13%) or community project (8%).

We also asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they were an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) or part of an NPO, and findings are summarised in the table below:

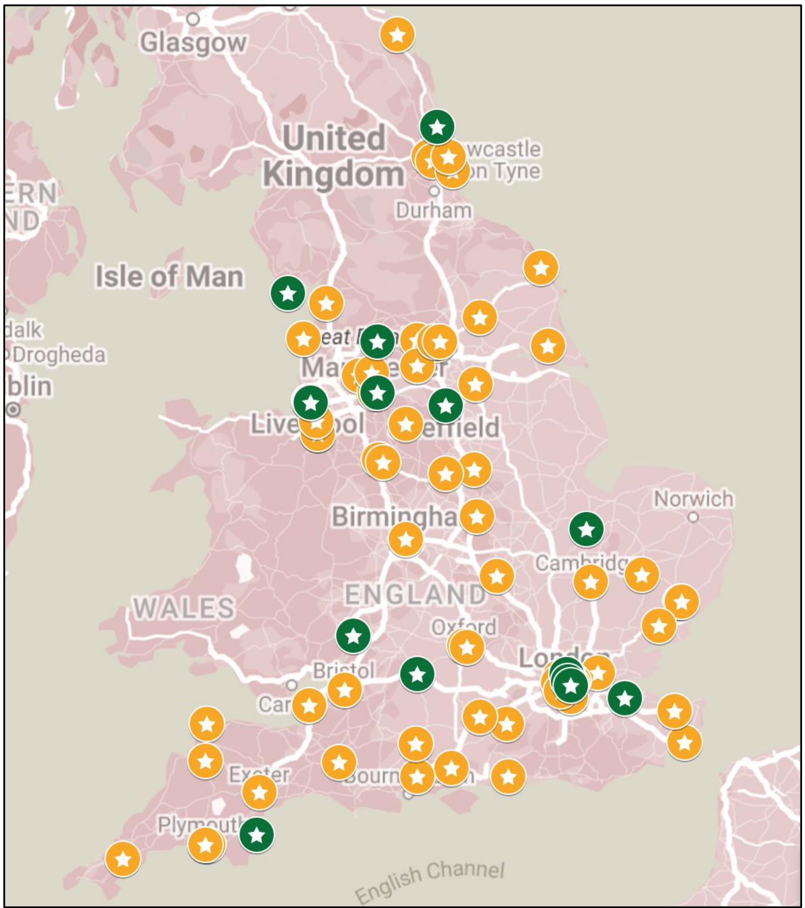
Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes, currently an NPO	4
Yes, part of a larger NPO	18
No, but we have been in the past	1
No	74
Don't know / no response	3

Around one in five youth theatres were currently NPOs, either independently (4%, 15 youth theatres) or as part of a larger NPO (18%).

Of the 15 youth theatres who were independently NPOs: 8 were independent entities, 6 were part of a theatre company / building, 1 was a community project, and 1 was a charity.

The vast majority of the youth theatres were not and never had been NPOs (74%).

The following map shows the distribution of responding NPO youth theatres across England based on the postcode of their main headquarters:



Green=NPOs, Orange=part of a larger NPO

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they are currently a member of, or affiliated with, any national organisations or programmes, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
National Theatre Connections or other national programmes	19
National Association of Youth Theatres	15
National Operatic and Dramatic Association	13
Other	8
None	51
Don’t know / no response	6

Just under half of the youth theatres (43%) indicated that they were currently a member of, or affiliated with, any national organisations (with some crossover – those that selected any selected an average of 1.3 national organisations from the list). 19% of the youth theatres participated in National Theatre Connections or were part of other national programmes, 15%

were members of the National Association of Youth Theatres, and 13% were members of National Operatic and Dramatic Association.

8% of the youth theatres wrote in 'other' responses but these were most often local networks.

We also asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they hope to apply for NPO status in the next round (2027), and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes	31
No	37
Don't know / no response	32

Around a third of the youth theatres told us that they hoped to apply for NPO status in the next round.

Analysing this by current NPO status:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Currently NPO (84) %	Not currently NPO (291) %
Yes	82	17
No	5	46
Don't know / no response	13	37

Unsurprisingly, current NPOs indicated that they intended to apply for NPO status in the next round more often than those that were not currently NPOs (82% for current NPOs, compared to 17% for not currently NPOs).

Sources of income

We asked the youth theatres to tell us from which sources they had generated income in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below:

Three quarters of youth theatres told us that their sources of income in the last year included participation fees (75%), and key sources of income included box office income for 63% of youth theatres.

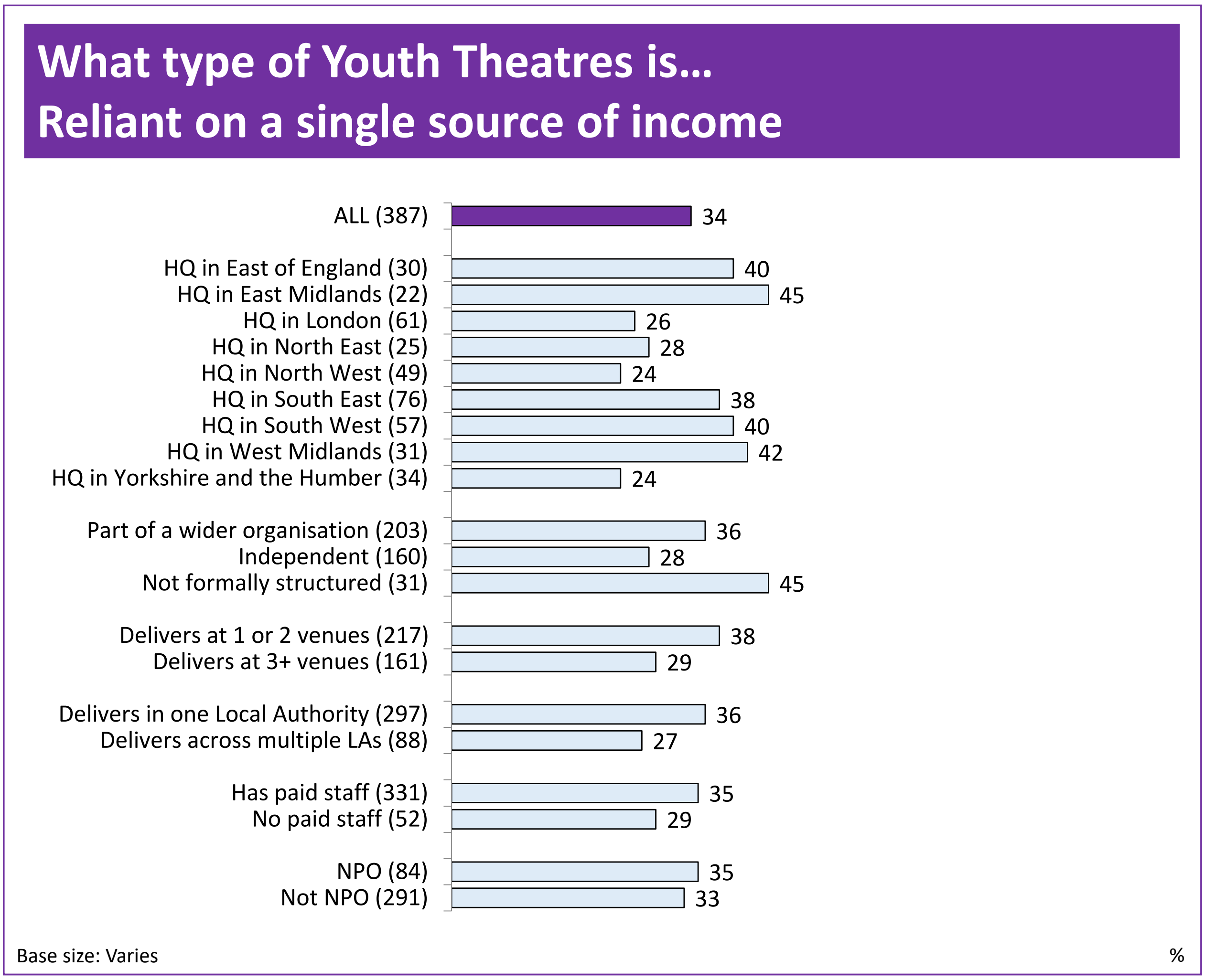
The average number of sources of income per youth theatre was 3.0, indicating that youth theatres had typically generated income from multiple sources in the last year.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether their youth theatre has been primarily reliant on a single source of income in the last year, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes	34
No	50
Don't know	16

Around a third (34%) of the youth theatres had been primarily reliant on a single source of income in the last year. These sources of income were most often participation fees (63%), box office income (11%) and Arts Council England / NPO (8%).

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues[1]:



The types of youth theatre most often reliant on a single source of income were: youth theatres that are not formally structured (45%), youth theatres based in East Midlands (45%) and youth theatres based in West Midlands (42%).

Turnover

We had an almost complete response to our closed questions but the 'write in' questions were not completed by all youth theatres, which may be because they did not have the data available or to hand, because they felt that this was classified information, or because this was a complex issue for their youth theatre. 249 youth theatres (64% of all responding youth theatres) provided turnover information. Whilst this is a strong absolute number of youth theatres it is important to note that it is an incomplete set within the sample. The true turnover for our sample of responding youth theatres is therefore likely to be significantly higher than we can report on.

[1] Please note that this graph (and the other similar graphs interspersed through this report) are intended to as a way to identify at-a-glance differences and patterns between potentially interesting sub-groups. There is certainly cross-over in sub-groups, and in some cases base sizes (the number of responses in that sub-group, shown in brackets) are small and should be treated with caution.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us their turnover in the last year, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that provided turnover information (249)			
Total turnover of responding youth theatres	£18,501,382.18		
	Lowest	**Mean**	**Highest**
Turnover	£0.00	£74,302.74	£3,508,799.00

In total 249 youth theatres (64% of all responding youth theatres) provided their turnover in the last year, and the total turnover of these youth theatres was £18,501,382.18.

The mean turnover per youth theatre was £74,302.74, with the lowest turnover last year being £0 (for 13 youth theatres[2]) and the highest turnover being £3,508,799. National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was an outlier, as all other youth theatres had a turnover under one million pounds. If we exclude the outlying National Youth Theatre the mean turnover per youth theatre was £60,453.96. To put this in further perspective, around seven in ten youth theatres (71%) had a turnover under £50k, just over half (51%) had a turnover under £20k, and around a third (31%) had a turnover under £10k.

Using this figure and adding in NYT separately, we can estimate that the total turnover for our sample of 387 youth theatres would be £23,335,228.56

Analysing total turnover by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	**Total turnover £**	**%**
East of England	£256,400	1
East Midlands	£587,249	3
London	£8,611,701	47
North East	£612,759	3
North West	£1,702,046	9
South East	£2,642,091	14
South West	£1,917,447	10
West Midlands	£587,033	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	£1,571,363	8
Outside England / no response	£13,293	*
GRAND TOTAL	**£18,501,328**	**100**

Almost half of the total turnover of all responding youth theatres was recorded by youth theatres with headquarters in London (47%) and it is notable that the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is headquartered in London. The lowest proportion of total turnover came from youth theatres with headquarters in East of England (1%), North East (3%), East Midlands (3%) and West Midlands (3%).

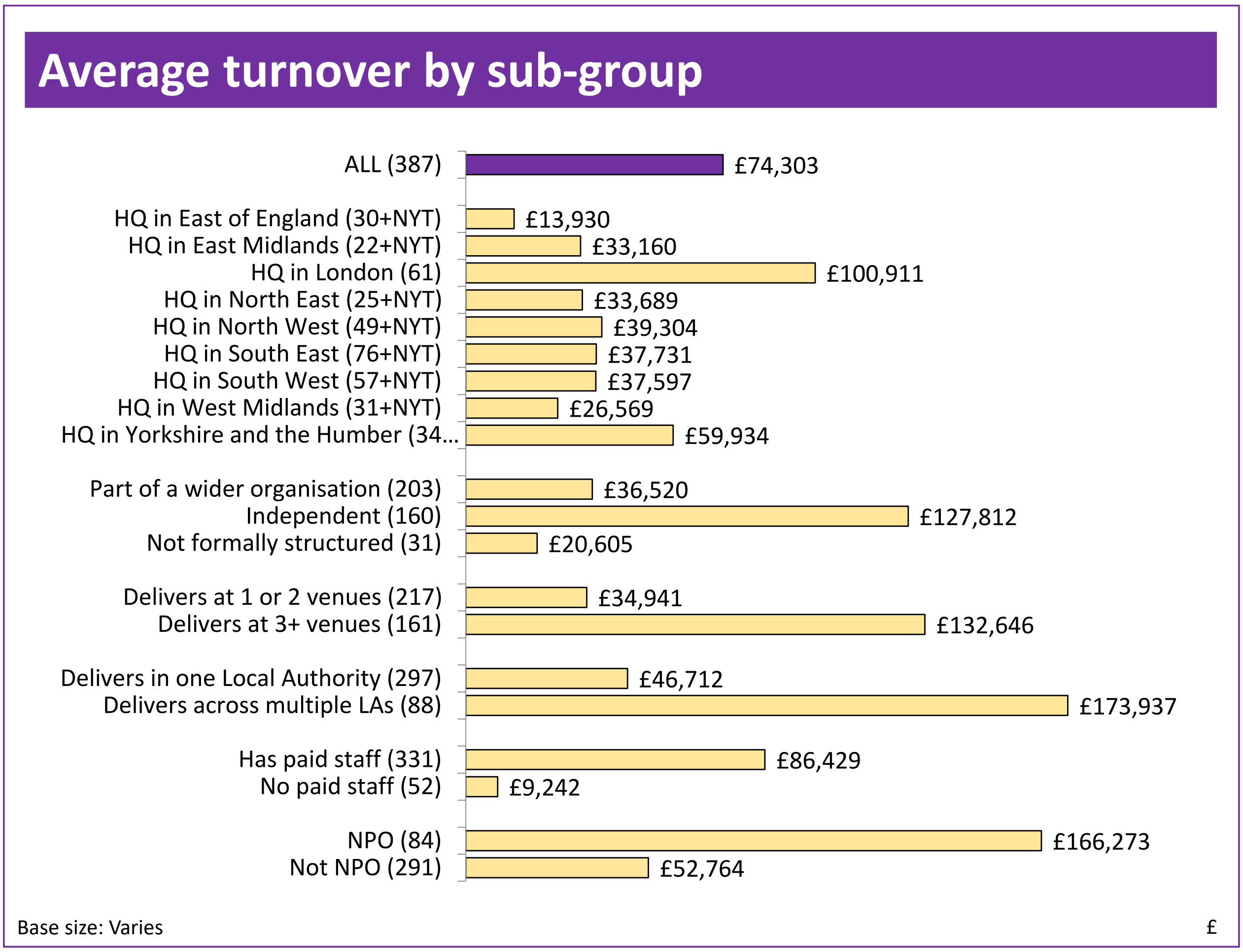
[2] Where specified to be zero, as opposed to leaving the question blank. These may include youth theatres that are new and were not yet operating in the 2023-24 financial year, or youth theatres on hiatus.

If we re-distribute only the turnover of National Youth Theatre so that it represents where their work is delivered, the total turnover by region is as follows:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total turnover £	%
East of England	£431,840	2
East Midlands	£762,689	4
London	£6,155,542	33
North East	£875,918.90	5
North West	£1,965,206	11
South East	£2,905,251	16
South West	£2,180,607	12
West Midlands	£850,192.90	5
Yorkshire and the Humber	£2,097,683	11
Outside England / no response	£276,452.90	1
GRAND TOTAL	**£18,501,328**	**100**

By calculating it in this way, a third of the total turnover of all responding youth theatres was recorded by youth theatres in London (33%, compared to 47% above) with rises of 1 to 3 percentage points across the other regions.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues[3]:



The types of youth theatres with the highest average annual turnover were: youth theatres that deliver across multiple Local Authorities (£173,937) and NPOs (£166,273).

Youth theatres delivering across 3+ venues or multiple Local Authorities had a higher average annual turnover as compared to youth theatres delivering across 1 or 2 venues or a single Local Authority.

Youth theatres with paid staff had a higher average annual turnover as compared to youth theatres with no paid staff.

NPOs had a higher average annual turnover as compared to non-NPOs.

Independent youth theatres had a higher average annual turnover as compared to youth theatres that are part of a wider organisation or are not formally structured.

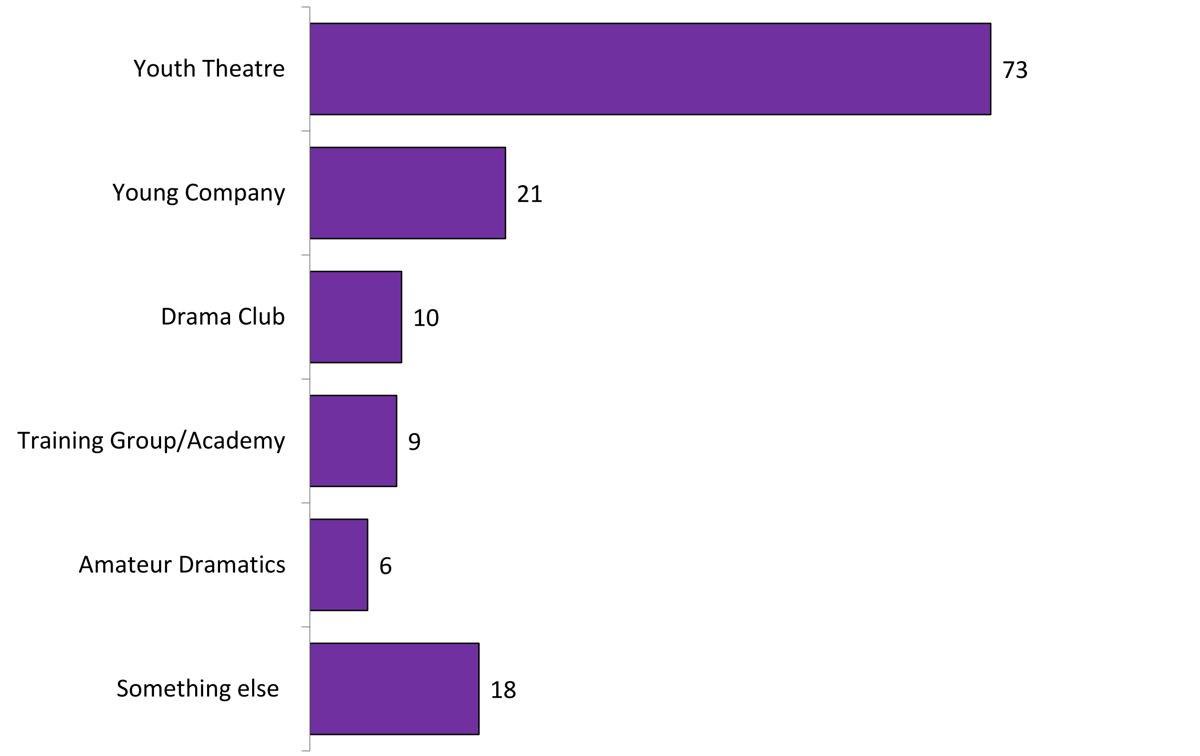
[3] Note that regions are based on re-distributed National Youth Theatre data, as described above.

Youth theatre operations

Describing youth theatres

All of those responding to the census agreed they met our definition of a 'youth theatre' as it was a condition of completing the survey and one of the early screening questions.

However we also asked the youth theatres to tell us how they typically refer to themselves, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q How does the group or organisation that you represent typically refer to itself?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

Around three quarters of the youth theatres (73%) typically referred to themselves as youth theatres, indicating that around a quarter (27%) do not usually use this terminology.

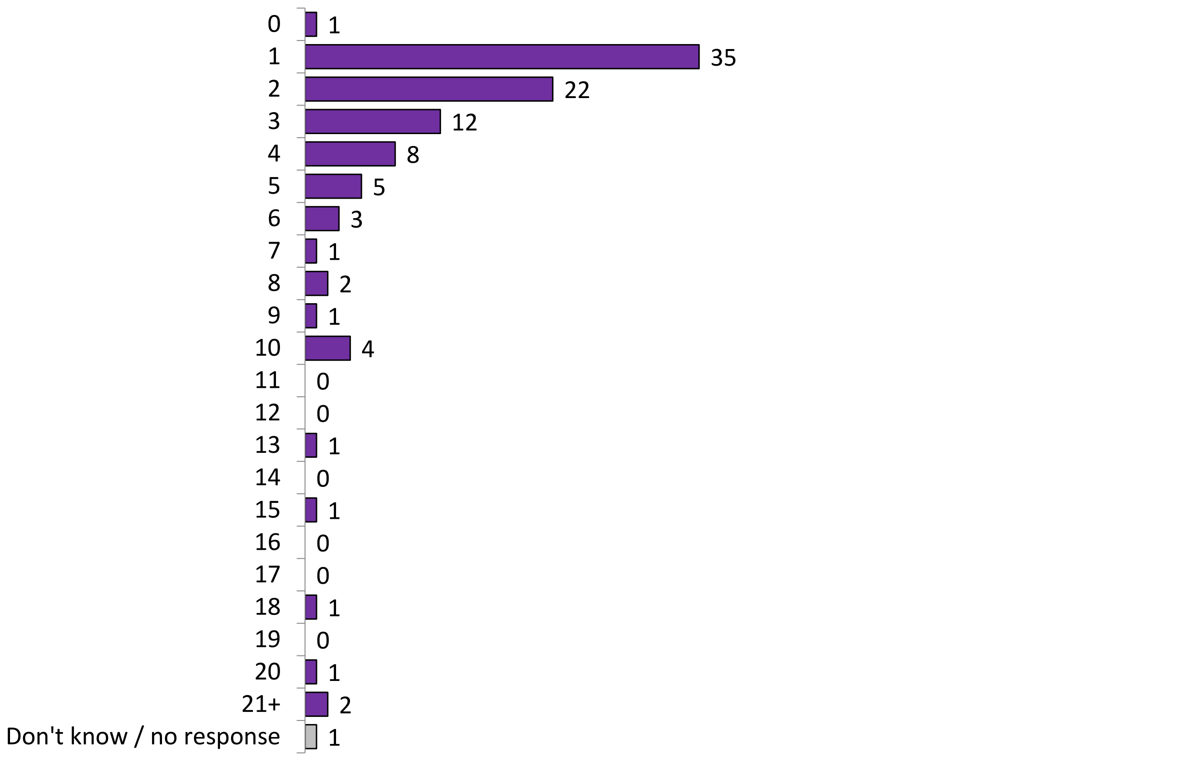
The next most often used term was young company (21%).

The youth theatres selected an average of 1.4 terms from the list, indicating that some describe themselves using multiple terms.

18% of the youth theatres said that they used terms not listed, and these included: Inclusive Theatre Company, Young Person's Arts Organisation, Makers, Youth Arts Organisation, Performing arts school, Children's Theatre, Creative Youth Group, Theatre Company and Drama Group.

Venues

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many delivery venues they had used in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Across how many separate venues in England has your youth theatre delivered sessions for young people between April 2023 and March 2024?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

The average number of delivery venues was 4.5 per youth theatre, with 35% delivering in one venue only, and 2% delivering in 21+ venues.

The total number of delivery venues across all youth theatres was 1,757 (although it is likely that in reality there is crossover as multiple youth theatres could deliver in some of the same venues).

The youth theatre delivering across the most venues was National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (150 venues, 9% of all recorded venues). Excluding National Youth Theatre, the average number of delivery venues was 4.1 per youth theatre.

Analysing the number of venues used by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	68	4
East Midlands	69	4
London	478	27
North East	62	4
North West	190	11
South East	445	25
South West	259	15
West Midlands	89	5
Yorkshire and the Humber	95	5
Outside England / no response	2	*
GRAND TOTAL	**1,757**	**100**

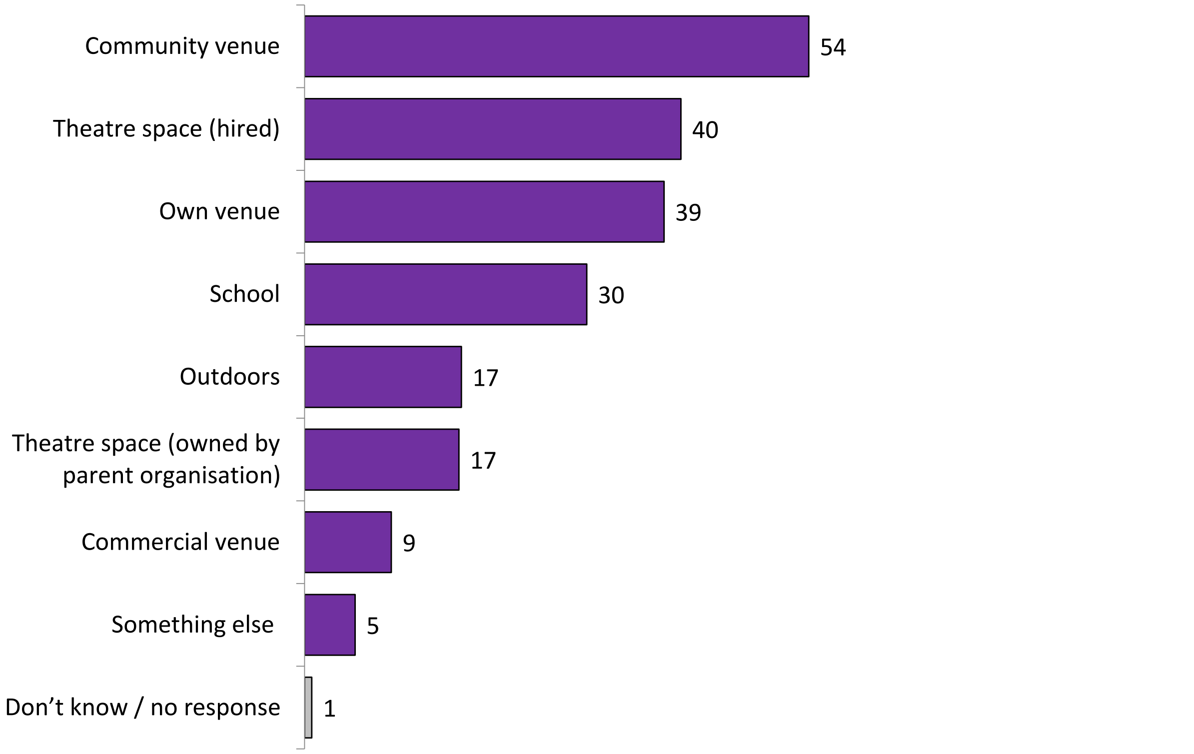
Just over a quarter of all venues (52%) were recorded by youth theatres with headquarters based in London (27%) and the South East (25%). Fewest venues were recorded by youth theatres with headquarters based in East of England (4%), East Midlands (4%) and North East (4%).

Again, it is important to acknowledge National Youth Theatre as an outlier. If we re-distribute only the National Youth Theatre venues so that it represents where their work is delivered, the total participation by region is as follows:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	76	4
East Midlands	77	4
London	373	21
North East	73	4
North West	201	11
South East	456	26
South West	270	15
West Midlands	100	6
Yorkshire and the Humber	117	7
Outside England / no response	14	1
GRAND TOTAL	**1,757**	**100**

By calculating it in this way, only one in five of the total venues for all responding youth theatres was recorded by youth theatres in London (21%, compared to 27% above) with rises of 0 to 1 percentage point across the other regions.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us what type of delivery venues they had used in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q In what type of venues has your youth theatre delivered participatory sessions for young people between April 23 and March 24?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

The youth theatres had most often delivered participatory sessions at community venues (54%), hired theatre spaces (40%) and their own venues (39%).

Recruitment

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how they recruit young people into their youth theatre, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Open access	85
Referral	28
Audition	23
Work within a fixed cohort (e.g. a youth club, project or class)	14
Nomination	5
Don't know / no response	1

By a large margin the youth theatres most often recruited young people via open access (85%), with around a quarter utilising referral (28%) or audition (23%).

The youth theatres selected an average of 1.6 recruitment methods from the list, indicating that some use multiple methods of recruitment.

Participation fees

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether their young people paid a fee to participate in the last year, and findings are summarised in the table below:

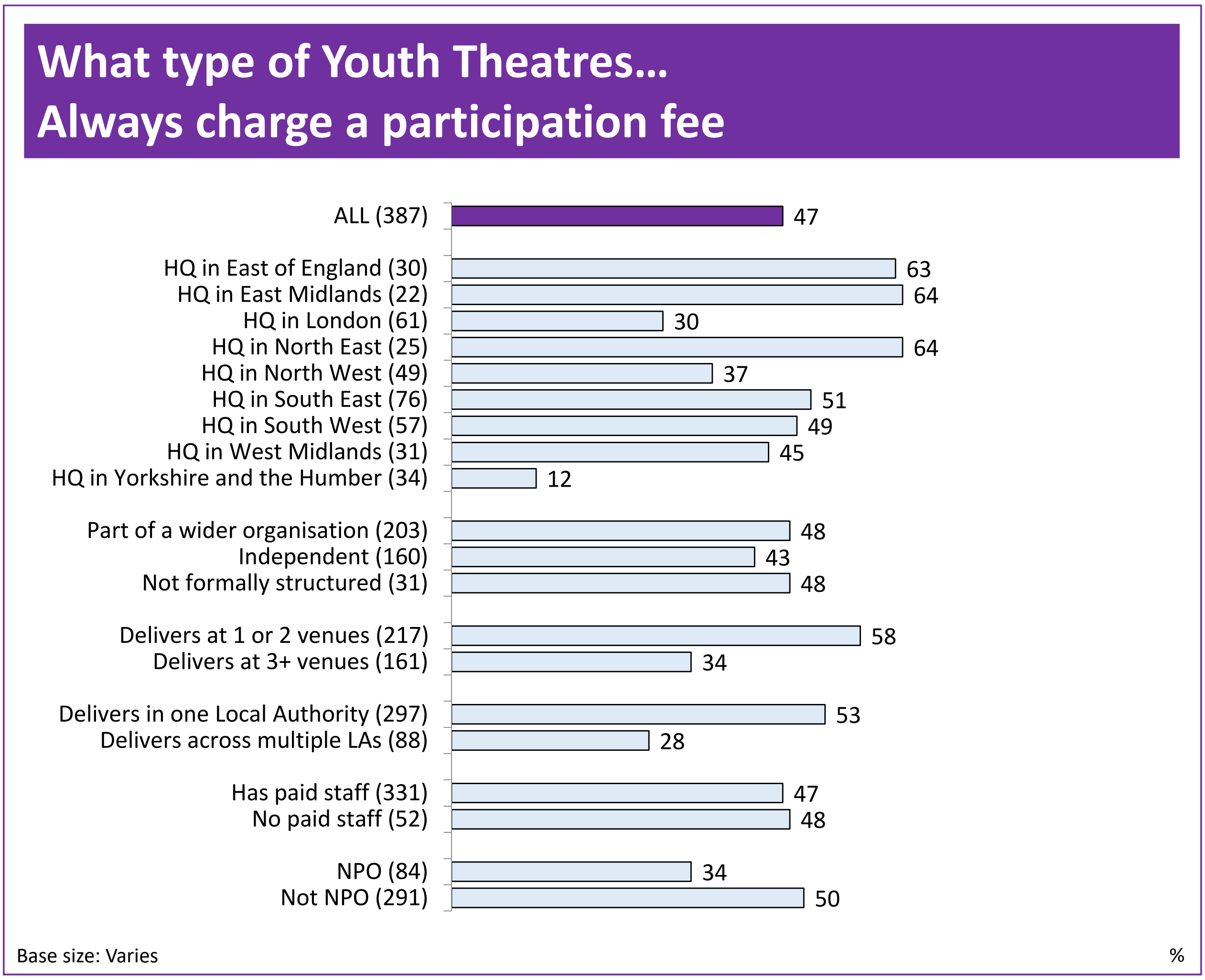
Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes, for all activities	47
Yes, but only for some activities	29
Yes, but on a donation or pay what you decide basis	4
No	20
Don't know / no response	0

Eight in ten youth theatres (80%) charged participation fees in some form or other.

Around half of the youth theatres charged a fee for all activities (47%), with a further 29% charging a fee for some activities and 4% taking donations or fees on a pay what you decide basis.

Participation was always free for young people at only 20% of the youth theatres.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:

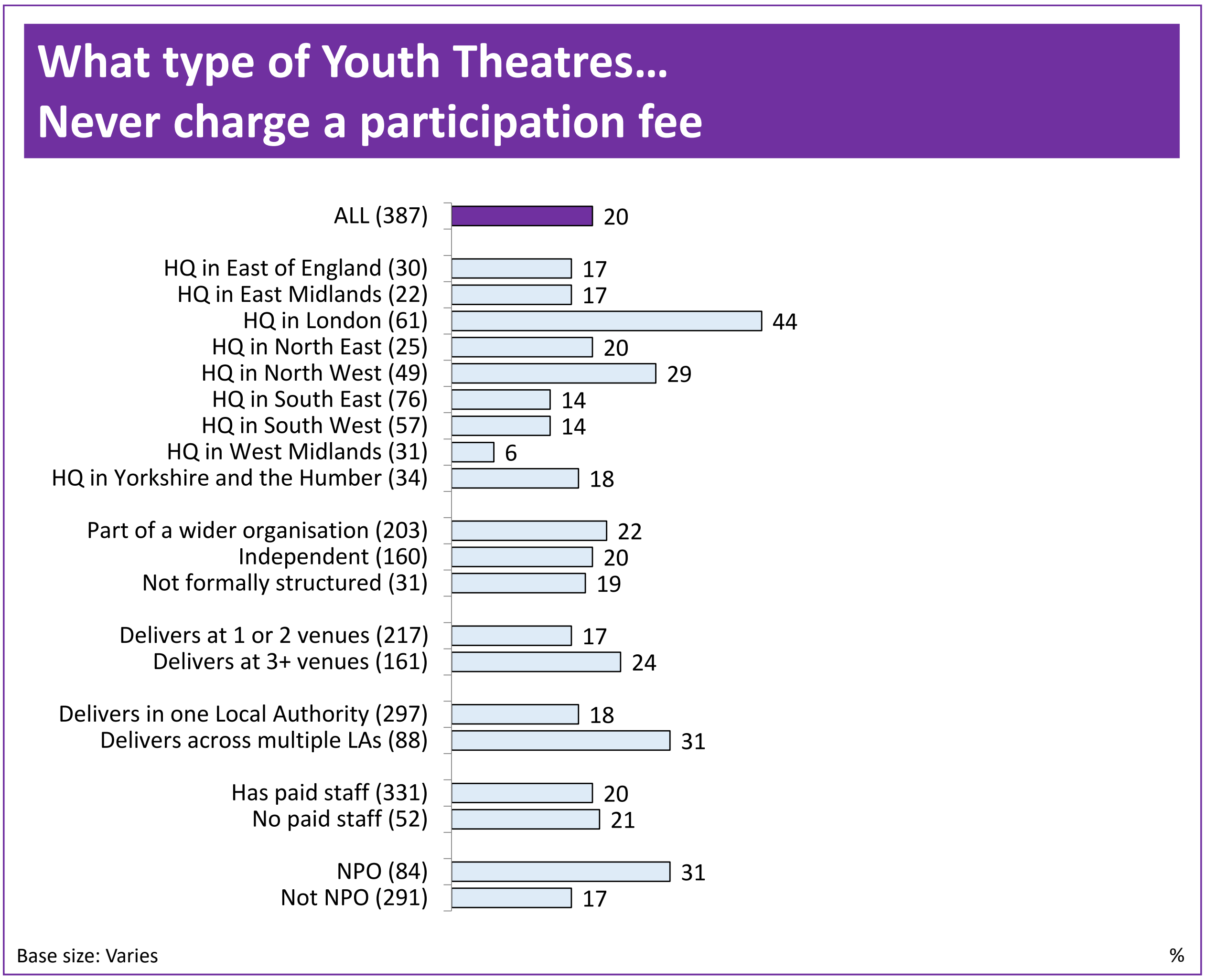


The type of youth theatres that most often always charge a participation fee were: youth theatres based in North East (64%), East Midlands (64%) and East of England (63%).

Youth theatres delivering across 1 or 2 venues or a single Local Authority were much more likely to always charge a participation fee as compared to youth theatres delivering across 3+ venues or multiple Local Authorities.

Non-NPOs were much more likely to always charge a participation fee as compared to NPOs.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:

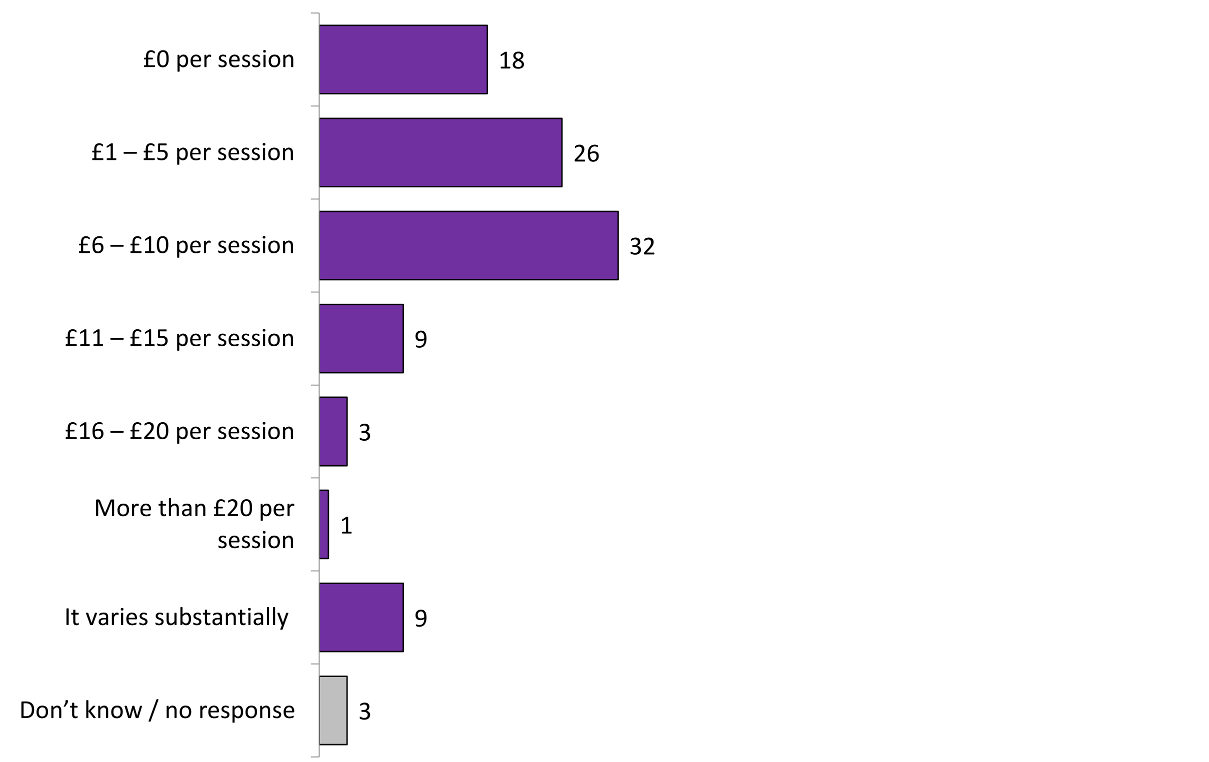


The type of youth theatres that most often never charge a participation fee were: youth theatres based in London (44%), youth theatres that deliver across multiple Local Authorities (31%) and NPOs (31%).

Youth theatres delivering across multiple Local Authorities were much more likely to never charge a participation fee as compared to youth theatres delivering across a single Local Authority.

NPOs were much more likely to never charge a participation fee as compared to non-NPOs.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how much their young people paid (on average) to participate at their youth theatre in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Between April 2023 and March 2024, how much did young people pay (on average) to participate at your youth theatre?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387) %

Broadly consistent with the previous question, the average participation fee was £0 per session at 18% of the youth theatres.

The average participation fee was between £1 and £10 for just over half of the youth theatres (58%, with 26% costing £1-5 on average and 32% costing £6-10 on average).

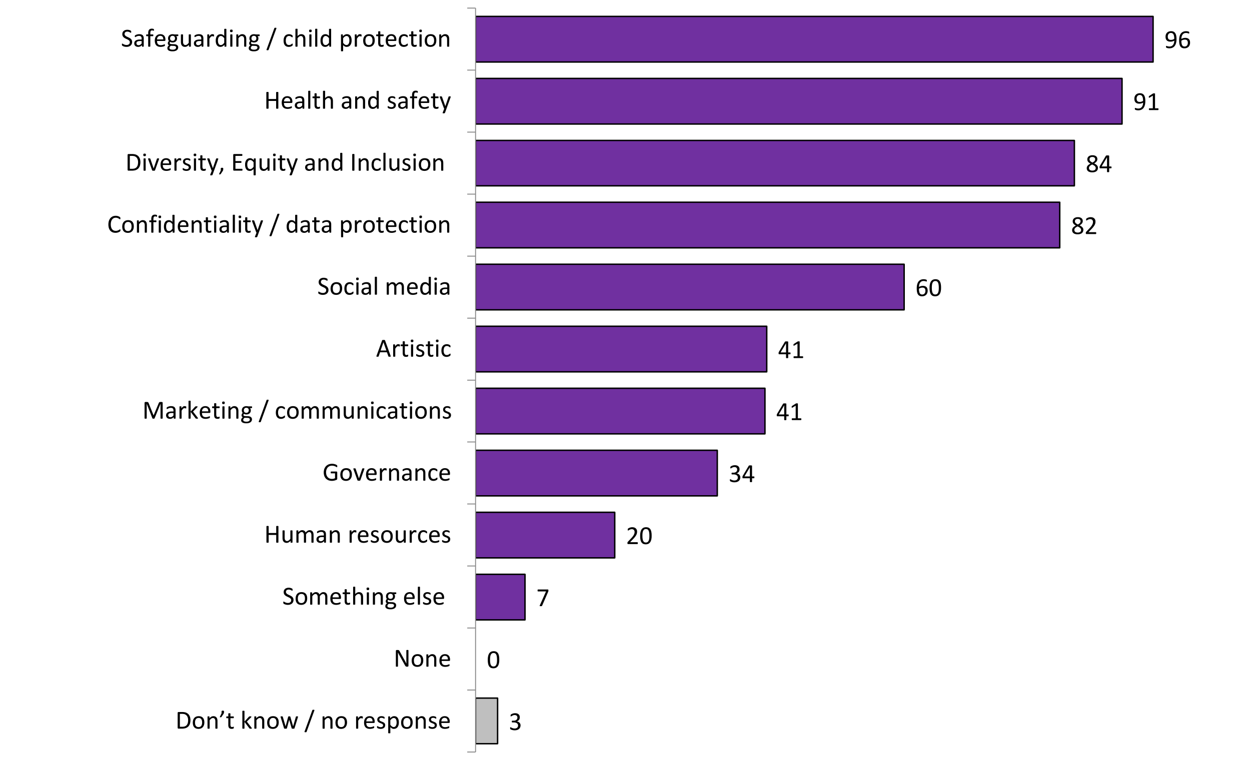
The average participation fee was £11 or more for 13% of the youth theatres (with 9% costing £11-15 on average, 3% costing £16-20 on average, and 1% costing more than £20 on average).

Around one in ten youth theatres (9%) told us that their average participation fee per session varies substantially and thus they felt unable to select an average fee from the list.

More information about bursaries is provided later in this report.

Policies

We asked the youth theatres to tell us which policies they have adopted, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Which of the following policies has your youth theatre adopted?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

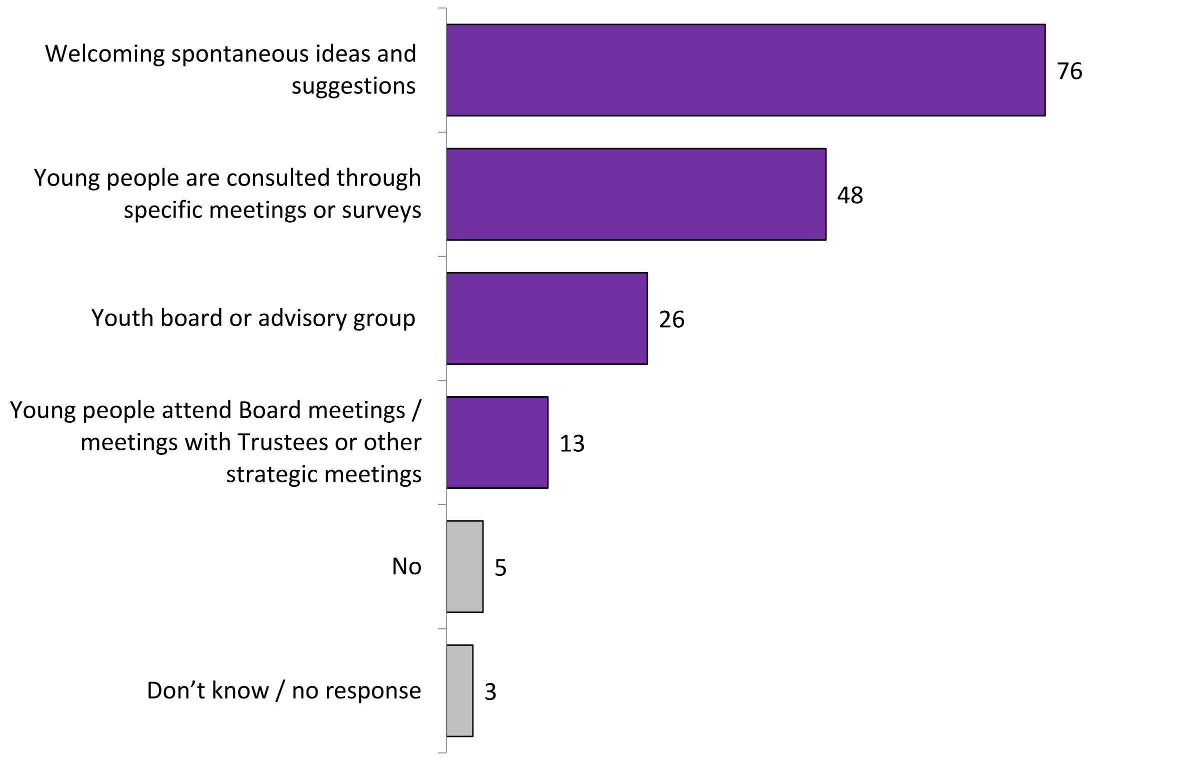
Overall 97% of the youth theatres indicated that they had policies in place, and no youth theatres indicated that they had none.

The youth theatres most often had safeguarding / child protection policies (96%), health and safety policies (91%), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies (84%), and confidentiality / data protection policies (82%).

7% of the youth theatres said that they had policies not listed, and these included: anti-bullying policies, complaints policies, environmental policies, e-safety policies, lone working policies, and recruitment policies.

The youth theatres selected an average of 5.6 types of policy from the list, indicating that many had multiple policies in place.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us the ways in which they involve young people in decision-making about their youth theatre, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



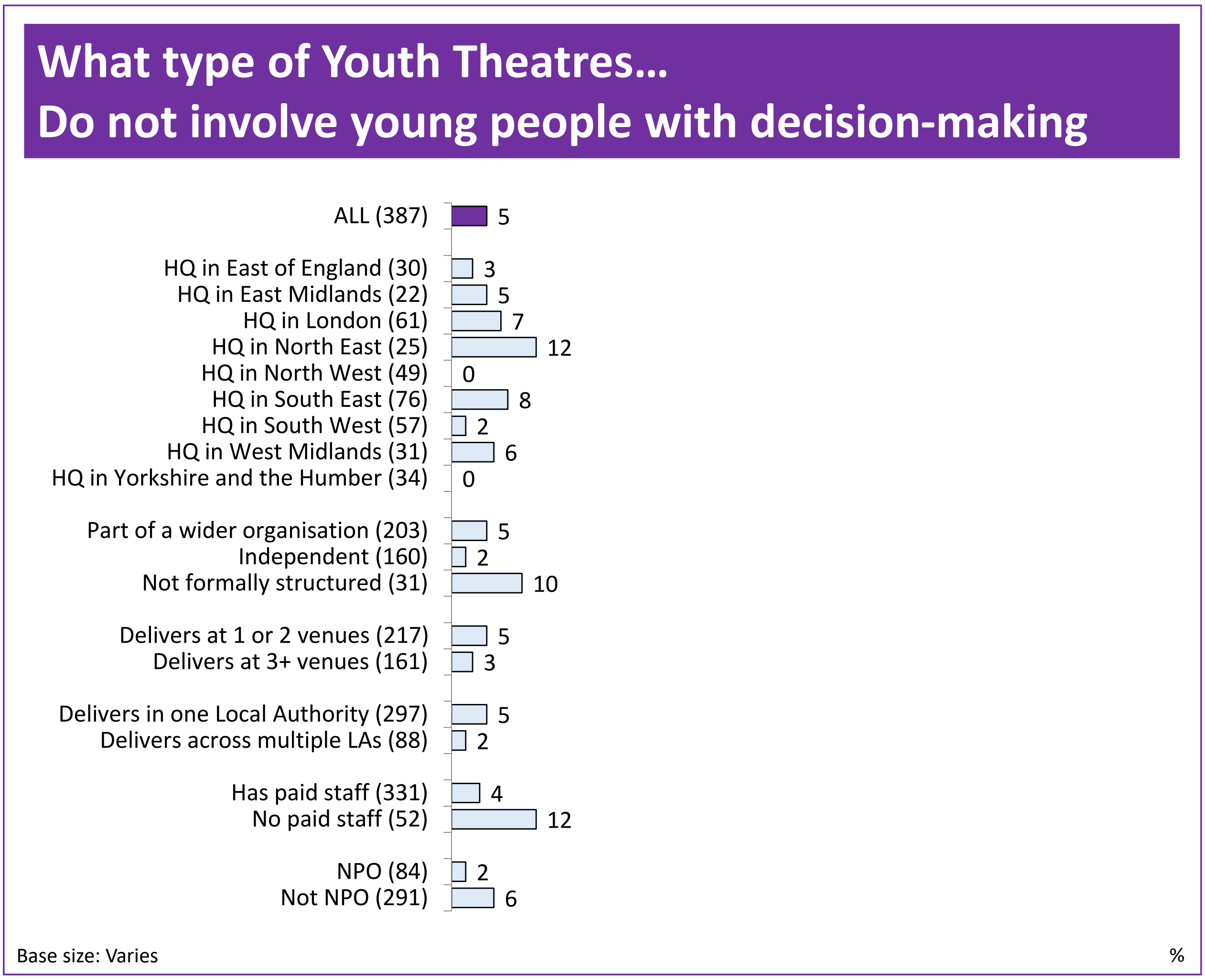
Q Do you involve young people in decision-making about your youth theatre's future plans or activities in any of the following ways?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

Overall 92% of the youth theatres indicated that they involve young people in their decision-making.

Around three quarters of the youth theatres said that they did this through welcoming spontaneous ideas and suggestions (76%), with other more structured mechanisms for involvement most often being consultation through specific meetings or surveys (48%) and having a youth board or advisory groups (26%).

The youth theatres selected an average of 1.6 types of involvement from the list, indicating that some have multiple involvement mechanisms in place.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often did not involve young people in decision-making about their youth theatre were: youth theatres with no paid staff (12%), youth theatres based in the North East (12%) and youth theatres that are not formally structured (10%).

Youth theatre staffing

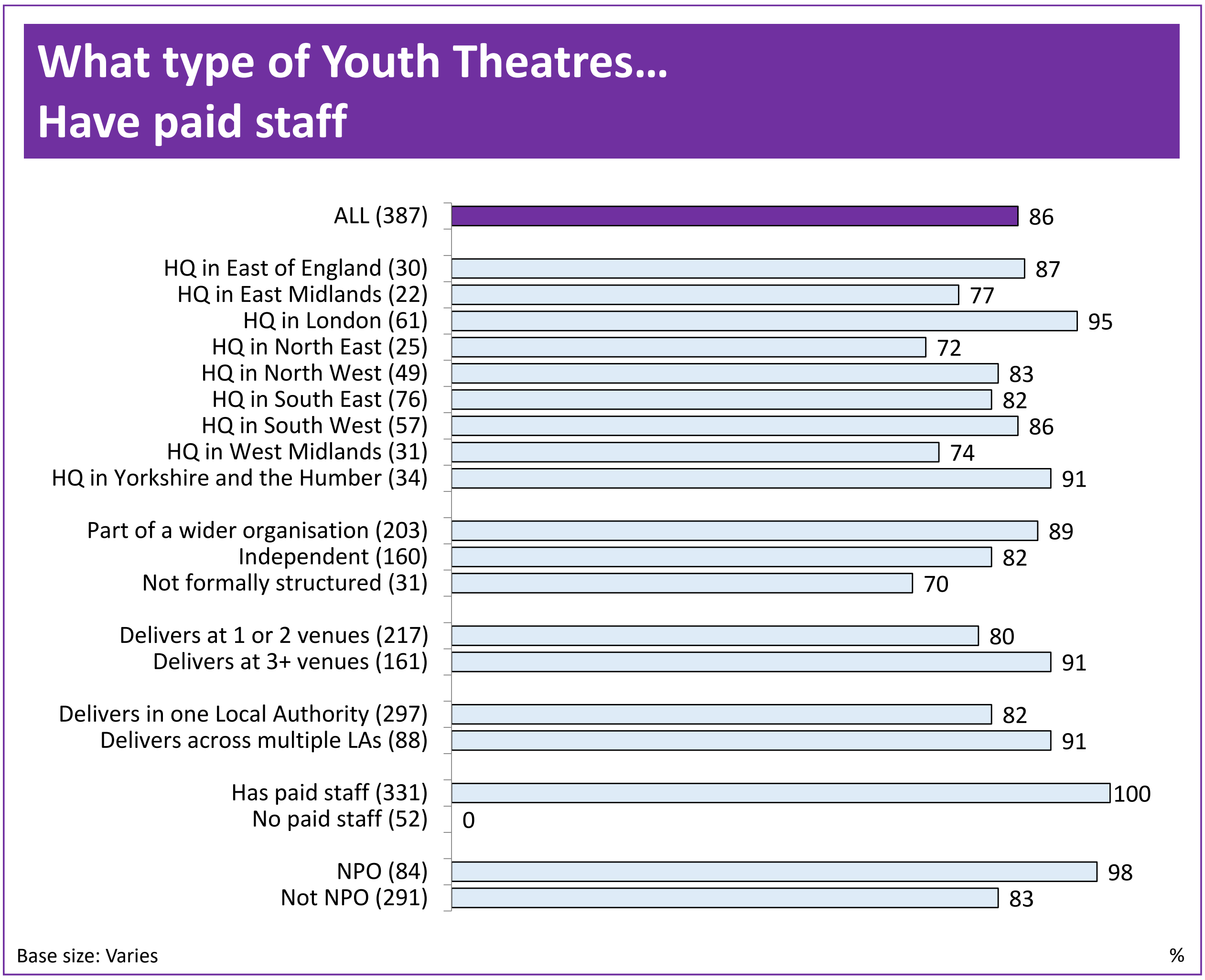
Type of staffing

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether any paid staff (salaried or freelance) had contributed to the operation of their youth theatre in the last year, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes	86
No	13
No response	1

86% of the youth theatres had employed paid staff (including salaried or freelance staff) to operate their youth theatre in the last year, and 13% had not.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres most likely to have paid staff (including salaried or freelance) were: NPOs (98%), youth theatres based in London (95%) and Yorkshire & the Humber (91%), youth theatres that deliver across 3+ venues (91%) and youth theatres that deliver across multiple Local Authorities (91%).

Understanding the data that follows

We had an almost complete response to our closed questions but the 'write in' questions were not completed by all youth theatres, which may be because they did not have the data available or to hand, or because they felt that this was classified information, or because this was a complex issue for their youth theatre

Around the issue of staffing, 373 youth theatres (96% of all responding youth theatres) provided any staffing figures. This being the case, we can assume that the dataset around staffing is relatively complete.

Salaried staff

We asked how many salaried staff are currently on their payroll, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that have salaried staff and provided information about current salaried staff (245)			
Total number of salaried staff currently on the payroll	1,097		
	Lowest	**Mean**	**Highest**
Salaried staff currently on the payroll	1	4.5 *(those with staff)* 2.8 *(all)*	96

In total 245 youth theatres (63% of all responding youth theatres) had salaried staff and provided information about their current salaried staff, and therefore as outlined at the start of the section it is reasonable to assume that approximately 63% of youth theatres had salaried staff.

9 of the youth theatres (2%) were <u>only</u> operated by salaried staff and a further one was only operated by salaried staff and Trustees.

The total number of salaried staff currently contributing to the operation of these youth theatres was 1,097.

The mean number of current salaried staff amongst those that had salaried staff was 4.5 per youth theatre, with the lowest being 1 and the highest being 96.

If we include those that have no salaried staff and make the assumption that those who provided no data have no salaried staff, the mean number of current salaried staff across all responding youth theatres was 2.8.

As an indicator of change we also asked the youth theatres to tell us how many individual salaried staff members in total had contributed to the operation of their youth theatre between April 2023 and March 2024. The total number of salaried staff members across all youth theatres, amongst those that specified, was 1,161 indicating some staff turnover.

Analysing the number of current salaried staff roles by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	52	5
East Midlands	53	5
London	294	27
North East	143	13
North West	129	12
South East	164	15
South West	118	11
West Midlands	74	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	70	6
Outside England / no response	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	**1,097**	**100**

The greatest proportion of salaried staff were reported by youth theatres with headquarters in London (27%), and the fewest were recorded by youth theatres with headquarters in East of England (5%) and East Midlands (5%).

We asked the youth theatres to tell us the combined Full Time Equivalency of their current salaried staff, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that have salaried staff AND provided FTE details (217)	Lowest	Mean	Highest
Combined Full Time Equivalency of their current salaried staff	0.1	3.3	52.0

The mean Full Time Equivalency of current salaried staff was 3.3, equivalent to just over three full-time staff members per youth theatre that had salaried staff.

With the mean number of salaried staff per youth theatre being 4.5, this indicates that some salaried staff work part time.

Indeed, in total 81 youth theatres (37% of responding youth theatres that have salaried staff AND provided FTE details) currently had a Full Time Equivalency of one or fewer (i.e. equivalent to one full-time staff member or fewer), and 30 youth theatres (14% of responding youth theatres that have salaried staff AND provided FTE details) currently had a Full Time Equivalency of five or more (i.e. equivalent to five full-time staff members or more).

Freelancers

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many freelancers had contributed to the operation of their youth theatre between April 2023 and March 2024, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that have freelancers and provided information about freelancers (293)			
Total number of freelancers	3,307		
	Lowest	**Mean**	**Highest**
Number of freelancers	1	11.3 *(those with freelancers)* 8.5 *(all)*	475

In total 293 youth theatres (76% of all responding youth theatres) had worked with freelancers in the last year and provided information about their freelancers, and therefore as outlined at the start of the section it is reasonable to assume that approximately 76% of youth theatres had worked with freelancers. 25 of the youth theatres (6%) were <u>only</u> operated by freelancers and a further four were only operated by freelancers and Trustees.

The total number of freelancers that had contributed to the operation of these youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 was 3,307. The mean number of freelancers amongst those that had worked with freelancers was 11.3 per youth theatre, with the lowest being 1 and the highest being 475. If we include those that worked with no freelancers and make the assumption that those who provided no data worked with no freelancers, the mean number of freelancers that had contributed to the operation of these youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 across all responding youth theatres was 8.5.

Analysing the number of freelancers worked with between April 2023 and March 2024 by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	**Total number**	**%**
East of England	117	4
East Midlands	133	4
London	1,321	40
North East	195	6
North West	317	10
South East	407	12
South West	487	15
West Midlands	108	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	218	7
Outside England / no response	4	*
GRAND TOTAL	**3,307**	**100**

The greatest proportion of freelancers were reported by youth theatres with headquarters in London (40%), and the fewest were recorded by youth theatres with headquarters in West Midlands (3%), East of England (4%) and East Midlands (4%).

Again, it is important to acknowledge National Youth Theatre as an outlier. If we re-distribute only the National Youth Theatre freelancers so that it represents where their work is delivered, the total participation by region is as follows:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	141	4
East Midlands	157	5
London	987	30
North East	231	7
North West	353	11
South East	443	13
South West	523	16
West Midlands	144	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	288	9
Outside England / no response	40	1
GRAND TOTAL	**1,757**	**100**

By calculating it in this way, only 30% of the total freelancers for all responding youth theatres were recorded by youth theatres in London (compared to 40% above) with rises of 0 to 2 percentage point across the other regions.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us what rate they typically paid freelance workers delivering participatory activities for young people. Acknowledging that different youth theatres have different arrangements for paying their freelancers at different levels we provided six headers and invited the youth theatres to provide information only as fits their setting.

304 youth theatres provided freelance fee information, which is marginally higher than the 293 youth theatres that used freelancers in the last year. This being the case, we can assume that the dataset around freelance fees provides a good illustration of freelance fees within the sample.

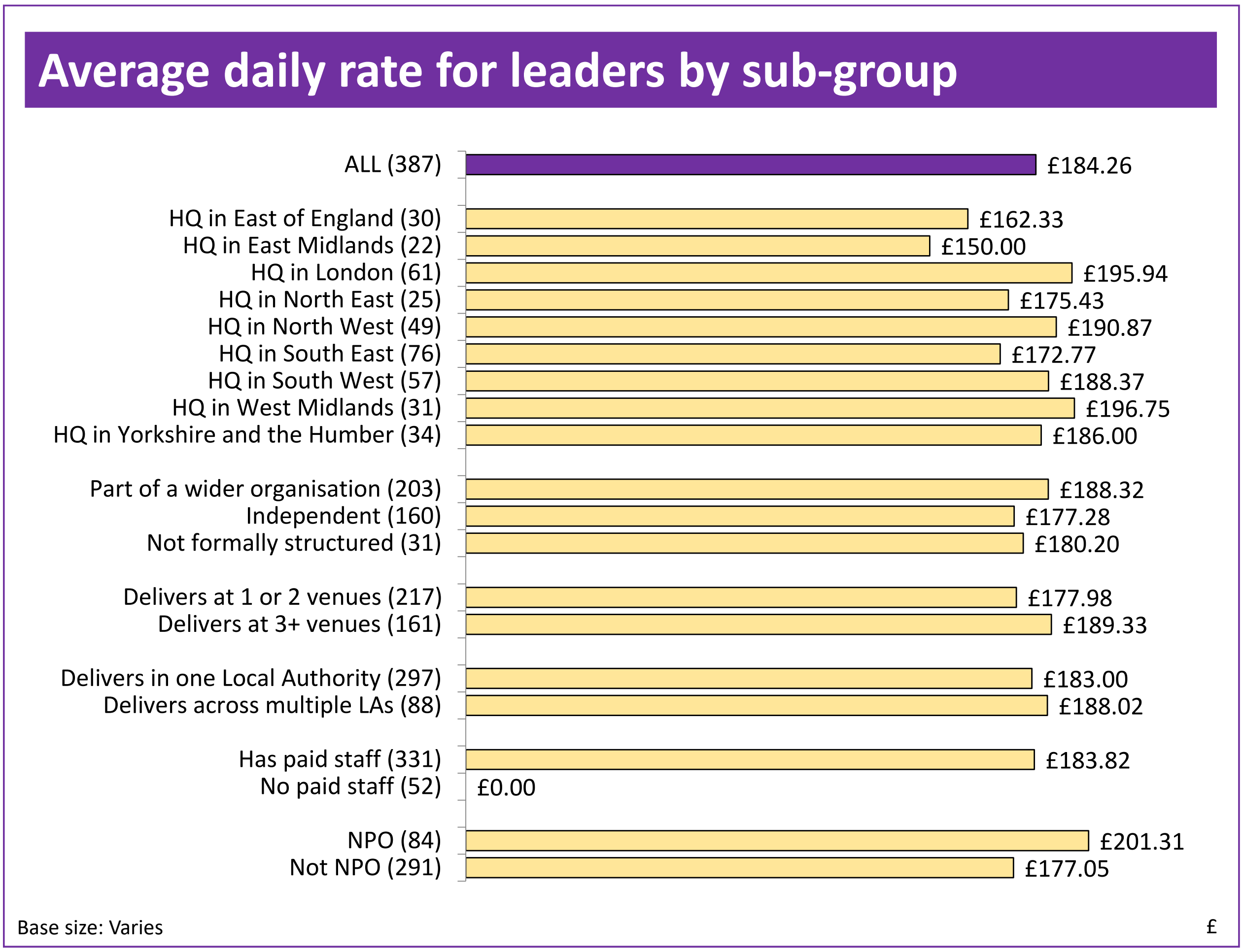
Findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that operate using freelance staff AND provided fee details (304)	Lowest £	Mean £	Highest £
Hourly rate for leaders / facilitators	£10.00	£30.27	£100.00
Hourly rate for assistant roles	£5.00	£16.05	£75.00
Sessional rate for leaders / facilitators	£10.00	£95.77	£300.00
Sessional rate for assistant roles	£10.00	£55.15	£160.00
Daily rate for leaders / facilitators	£45.00	£184.26	£500.00
Daily rate for assistant roles	£35.00	£111.67	£256.00

The average hourly rate across all youth theatres was £16.05 for assistant roles and £30.27 for leaders / facilitators, and the range of rates contributing to these averages was wide.

Sessional rates equated to approximately three hours at the hourly rate or a half day at the daily rate, and daily rates equated to approximately twice the sessional rate. This is therefore broadly internally consistent.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The types of youth theatres with the highest average daily rate for leaders were: youth theatres with headquarters in West Midlands (£196.75) and London (£195.94), and NPOs (£201.31).

The types of youth theatres with the lowest average daily rate for leaders were: youth theatres with headquarters in East Midlands (£150.00) and East of England (£162.33).

Trustees

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many registered Trustees they currently have, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that have Trustees and provided information about currently registered Trustees (138)			
Total number of currently registered Trustees	899		
	Lowest	Mean	Highest
Currently registered Trustees	1	6.5	23

In total 138 youth theatres (36% of all responding youth theatres) had Trustees and provided information about their currently registered Trustees, and therefore as outlined at the start of the section it is reasonable to assume that approximately 36% of youth theatres had Trustees. The total number of Trustees currently contributing to the operation of these youth theatres was 899.

The mean number of current Trustees amongst those that had Trustees was 6.5 per youth theatre, with the lowest being 1 and the highest being 23.

If we include those that have no Trustees and make the assumption that those who provided no data have no Trustees, the mean number of current Trustees across all responding youth theatres was 2.3.

As an indicator of change we also asked the youth theatres to tell us how many individual Trustees in total had contributed to the operation of their youth theatre between April 2023 and March 2024. The total number of individuals across all youth theatre, amongst those that specified, was 1,003 indicating some Trustee turnover.

Volunteers

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many volunteers (not including Trustees) had contributed to the operation of their youth theatre between April 2023 and March 2024, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that have volunteers and provided information about volunteers (247)			
Total number of volunteers (not including Trustees)	3,382		
	Lowest	Mean	Highest
Number of volunteers (not including Trustees)	1	13.7	411

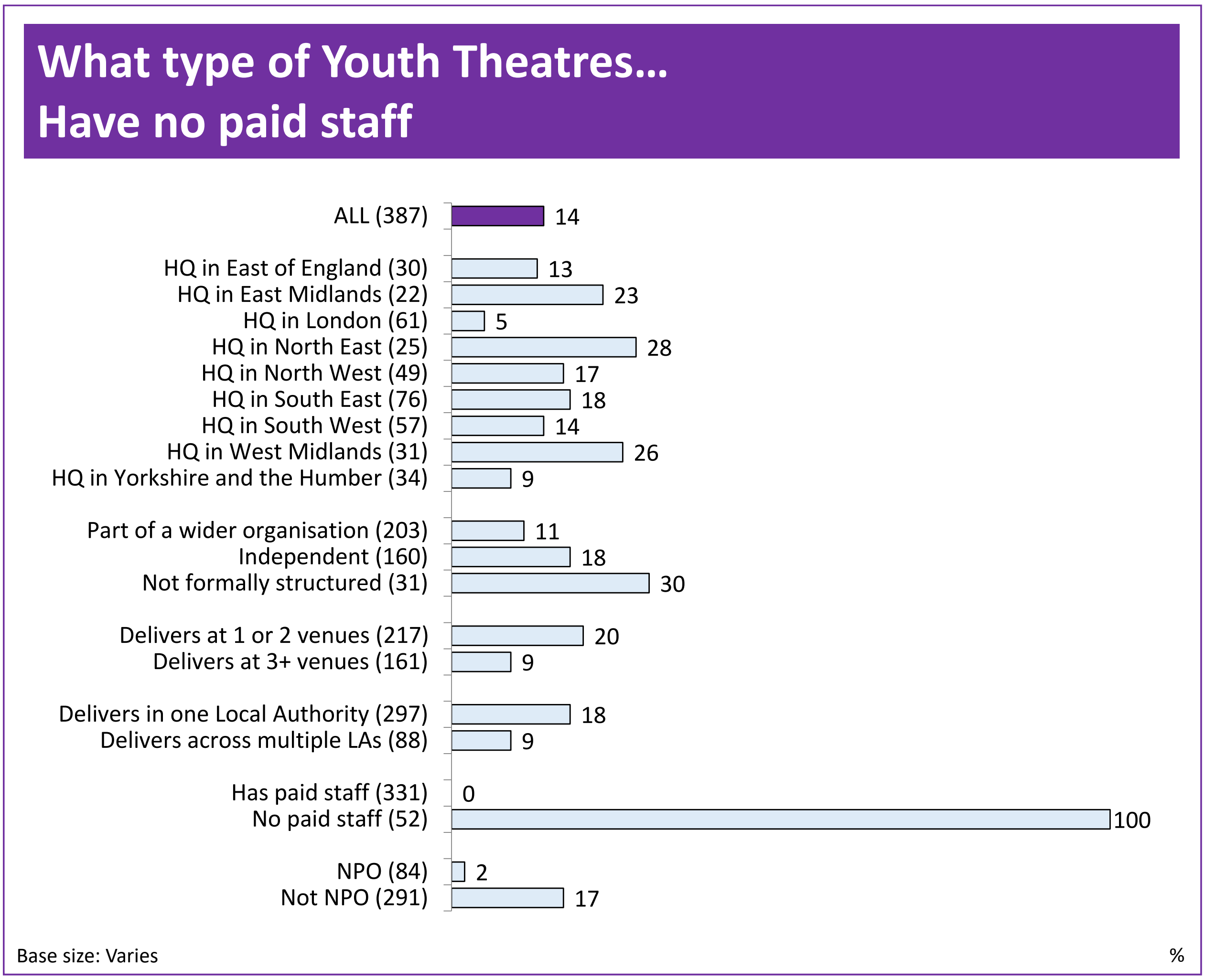
In total 247 youth theatres (64% of all responding youth theatres) had worked with volunteers in the last year and provided information about their volunteers, and therefore as outlined at the start of the section it is reasonable to assume that approximately 64% of youth theatres had volunteers.

The total number of volunteers that had contributed to the operation of these youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 was 3,382.

The mean number of volunteers amongst those that had worked with volunteers was 13.7 per youth theatre, with the lowest being 1 and the highest being 411. If we include those that worked with no volunteers and make the assumption that those who provided no data worked with no volunteers, the mean number of volunteers that had contributed to the operation of these youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 across all responding youth theatres was 8.7.

52 of the youth theatres (13%) were only operated by volunteers and Trustees.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres most likely to have no paid staff (including salaried or freelance) were: youth theatres that are not formally structured (30%), youth theatres based in North East (28%), West Midlands (26%) and East Midlands (23%).

Analysing the number of volunteers worked with between April 2023 and March 2024 by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	267	8
East Midlands	161	5
London	1,003	30
North East	59	2
North West	437	13
South East	492	15
South West	574	17
West Midlands	244	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	139	4
Outside England / no response	6	*
GRAND TOTAL	**3,382**	**100**

The greatest proportion of volunteers were reported by youth theatres with headquarters in London (30%), and the fewest were recorded by youth theatres with headquarters in Yorkshire & the Humber (4%) and East Midlands (5%).

Again, it is important to acknowledge National Youth Theatre as an outlier. If we re-distribute only the National Youth Theatre freelancers so that it represents where their work is delivered, the total participation by region is as follows:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	288	9
East Midlands	182	5
London	713	21
North East	90	3
North West	468	14
South East	523	15
South West	605	18
West Midlands	275	8
Yorkshire and the Humber	201	6
Outside England / no response	37	1
GRAND TOTAL	**3,382**	**100**

By calculating it in this way, only 21% of the total volunteers for all responding youth theatres were recorded by youth theatres in London (compared to 30% above) with rises of 0 to 2 percentage point across the other regions.

Total resourcing

Total resourcing across all youth theatres is summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number
TOTAL paid staff roles	**4,404**
- *Current salaried staff*	*1,097*
- *All freelancers*	*3,307*
TOTAL Volunteer roles	**4,281**
- *All volunteers (not including Trustees)*	*3,382*
- *Current Trustees*	*899*
GRAND TOTAL	**8,685**
Mean number of paid staff roles / volunteer roles per youth theatre	22.4

In total the youth theatres told us that 8,685 individuals had contributed to the operation of their youth theatre between April 2023 and March 2024, including 4,404 paid staff members and 4,281 volunteers. This is an average of 22.4 individuals per youth theatre.

It is important to note that this figure represents roles in the sector rather than separate individuals working in the sector, as it is highly likely that some individuals concurrently work across multiple youth theatres.

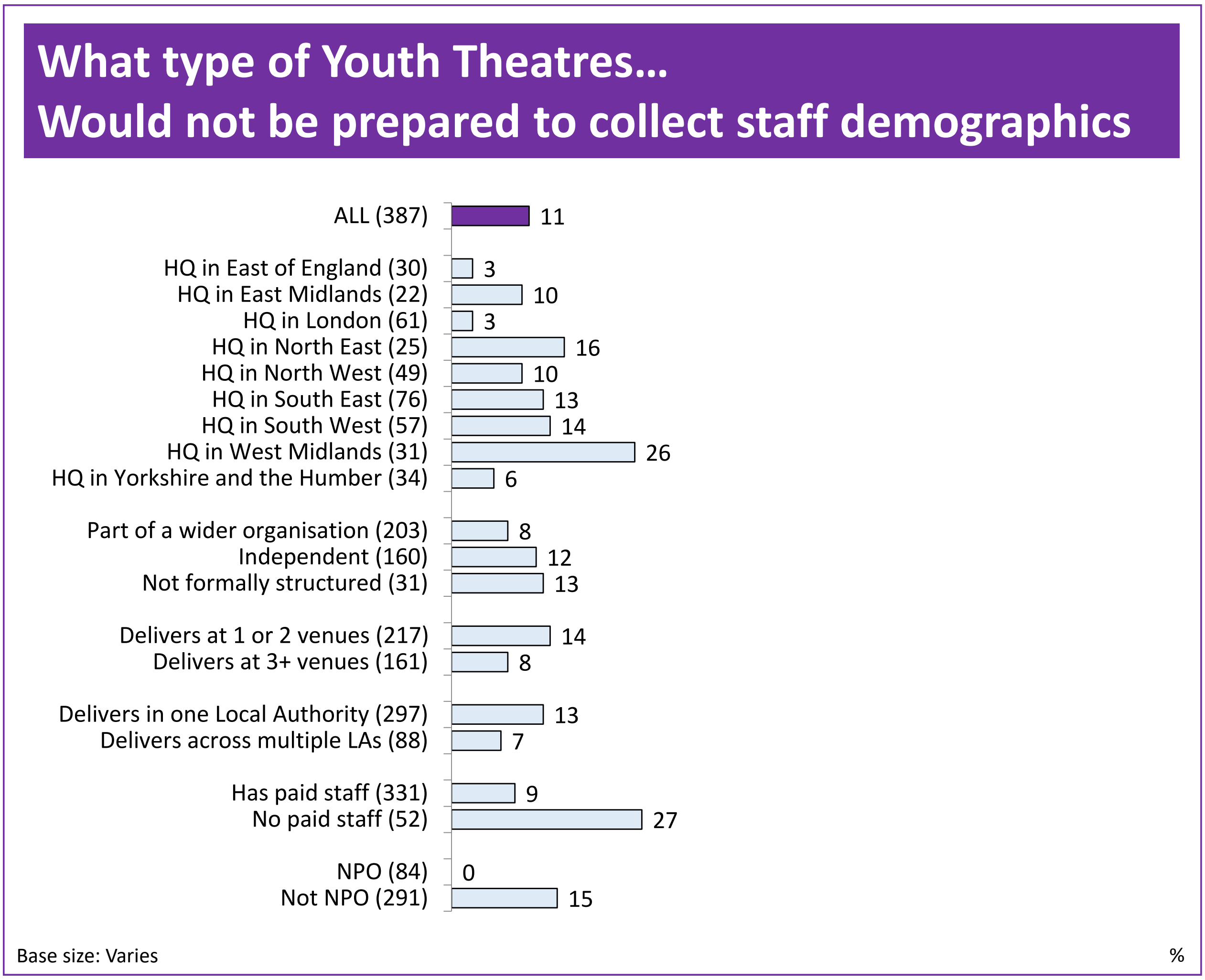
Staff demographics

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether their youth theatre collects demographic data relating to staff and volunteers, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes	39
No, but we would be prepared to collect it in the future	41
No, and we would not be prepared to collect it in the future	11
Don't know / no response	9

Around four in ten youth theatres (39%) currently collect demographic data relating to their staff and volunteers. In total 52% of youth theatres do not currently collect demographic data relating to their staff and volunteers, of which 41% would be prepared to collect it in the future and 11% would not be prepared to collect it in the future.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often would not be prepared to collect demographic data relating to staff and volunteers were: youth theatres based in West Midlands (26%) and North East (16%), and youth theatres with no paid staff (27%).

Youth theatres with no paid staff were much more likely to say that they would not be prepared to collect demographic data relating to staff and volunteers as compared to youth theatres with paid staff.

Non-NPOs were much more likely to say that they would not be prepared to collect demographic data relating to staff and volunteers as compared to NPOs.

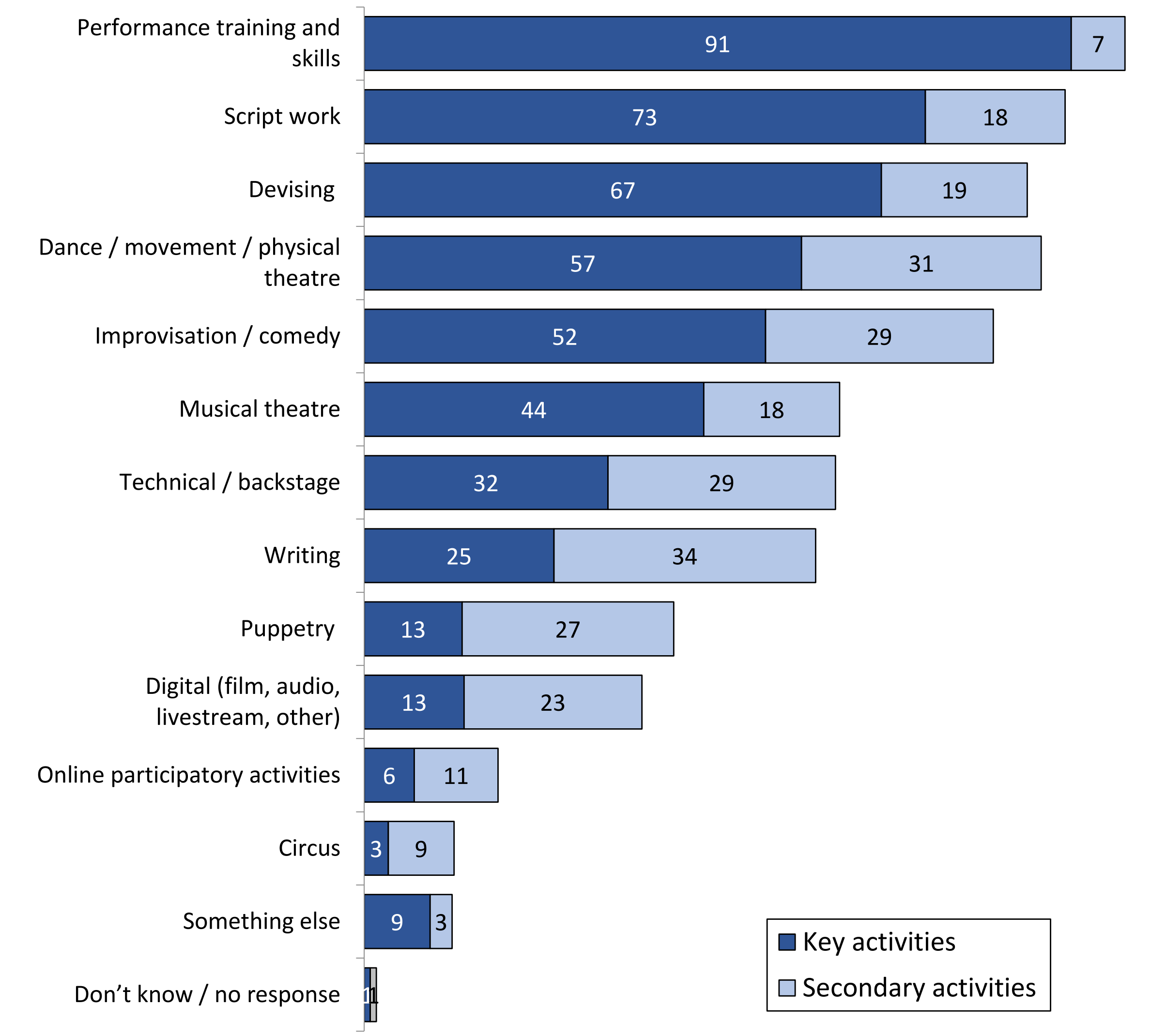
Youth theatre provision, activities and participation

Provision

The total number of youth theatres that responded to the census was 387. With an English aged 6 to 25 population of 13,653,799[4], this amounts to one youth theatre for every 35,281 members of the English population aged 6 to 25. It is however understood that further provision is available in England amongst youth theatres that did not complete the Census.

Activities

We asked the youth theatres to tell us about the activities that they offered in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below (and sorted by key activities):



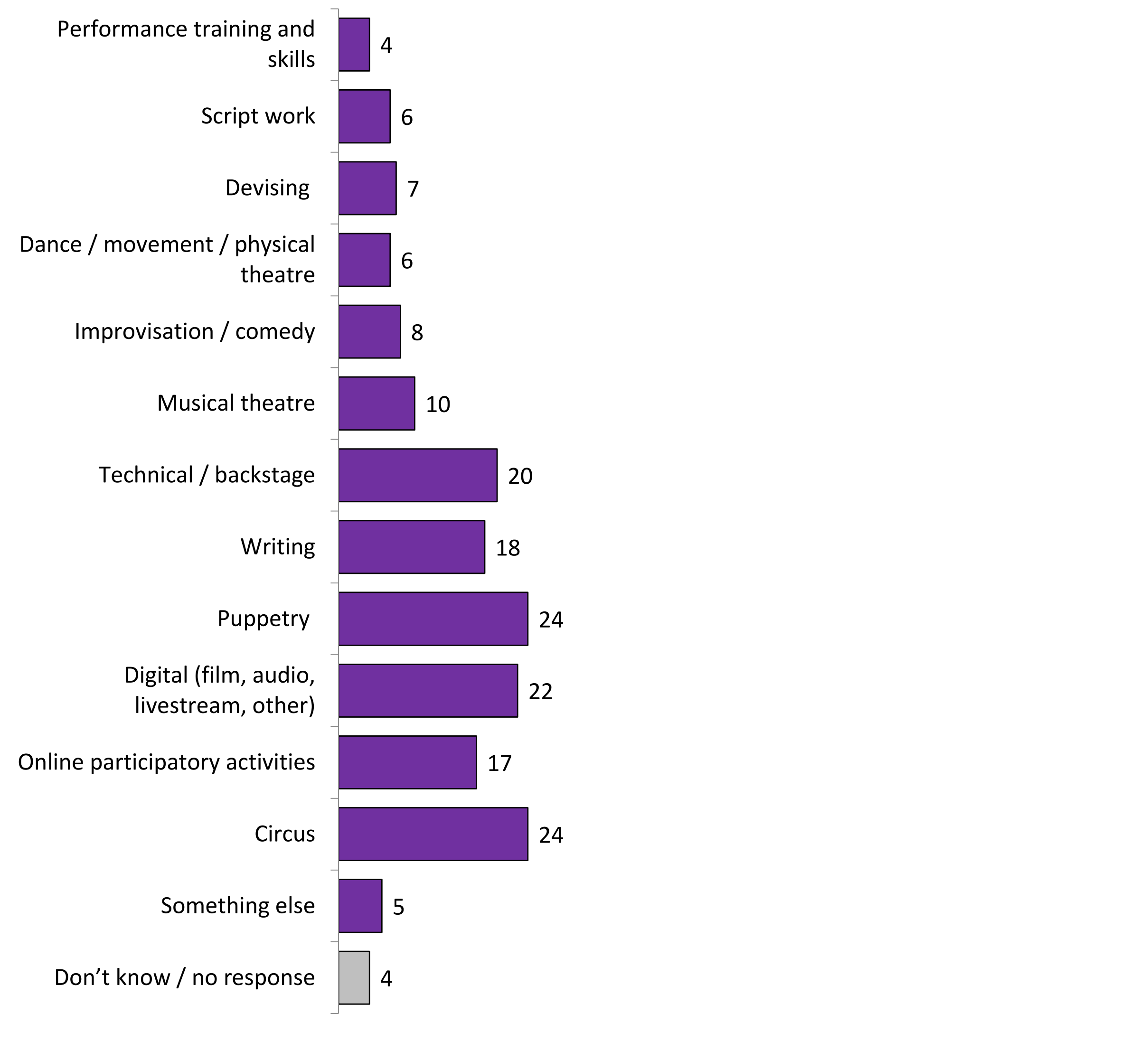
Q Which of the following activities did you offer to young people between April 2023 and March 2024?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387) %

[4] Mid-population estimates 2022
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/latest

The key activities offered by the youth theatres in the last year were performance training and skills (91%), script work (73%), devising (67%) and dance / movement / physical theatre (57%). The youth theatres had offered an average of 4.7 types of activities, indicating that they typically offered multiple types of activities.

In addition, the secondary activities most often offered by the youth theatres in the last year were writing (34%), dance / movement / physical theatre (31%), improvisation / comedy (29%) and technical / backstage (29%).

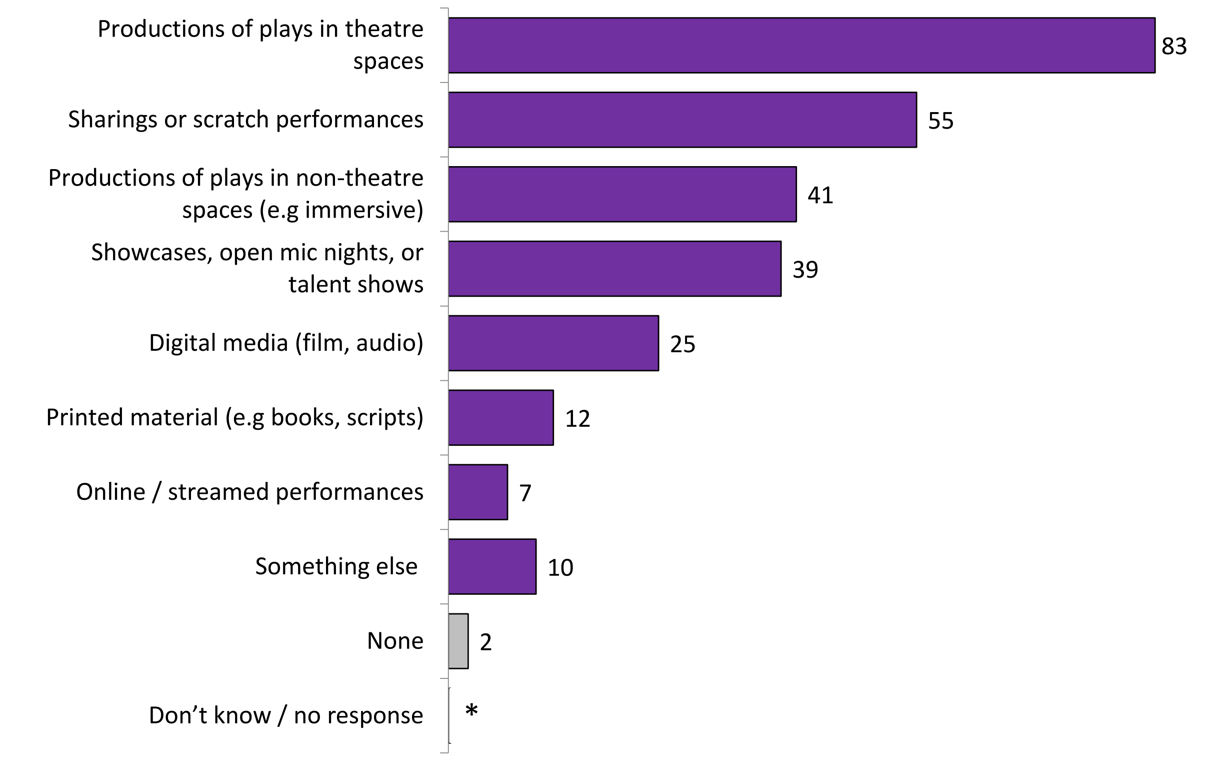
We also asked the youth theatres to tell us about the activities that they felt they were likely to offer in the future, and findings are summarised in the graph below: To put the findings into context this graph has been sorted in the same order as the previous graph, as it shows which activities are likely to offered in the future in addition to those current offered:



Q Which of the following activities did you offer to young people between April 2023 and March 2024?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387) %

The activities that the youth theatres most often felt that they were likely to offer in the future were circus (24%), puppetry (24%), digital (22%) and technical / backstage (20%).

We asked the youth theatres to tell us about the outputs that they created in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Which of the following have you created between April 2023 and March 2024? (please select all that apply)
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

The majority of the youth theatres (83%) had created productions of plays in theatres spaces in the last year. In addition, the youth theatres had most often created sharing or scratch performance (55%), productions of plays in non-theatre spaces (41%) and showcases (39%).

The average number of types of outputs created in the last year was 2.7 per youth theatre, indicating that youth theatres typically had varied creative outputs.

We also asked the youth theatres to tell us what other activities they had offered in the last year, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Theatre trips	59
Social events for young people	51
Youth theatre artist development	36
Training for teachers or theatre makers	31
Youth activism activity	18
Research or advocacy	11
Residentials	8
Something else	13
None	11
Don't know / no response	3

More than half of the youth theatres had offered theatre trips (59%) and social events for young people (51%).

The average number of other activities was 2.3 per youth theatre, indicating that youth theatres typically offered multiple activities in addition to their core programme.

Patterns in delivery

Around the issue of delivery, 360 youth theatres (93% of all responding youth theatres) provided delivery figures. This being the case, the true delivery figures for our sample of responding youth theatres is likely to be slightly higher.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many separate participatory sessions[5] for young people they ran between April 2023 and March 2024, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full AND provided delivery figures (360)			
Total number of separate participatory sessions	71,415		
	Lowest	Mean	Highest
Number of separate participatory sessions	0	198.4	5,160

[5] 'Session' was defined in the questionnaire text as follows: "In this section we define a session as anything up to a half day (3.5 hours). If you have run longer sessions than that (e.g. a whole day), please count it as two sessions."

The total number of sessions recorded by the youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 was 71,415 sessions. The mean number of sessions per youth theatre was 198.4 sessions with a range from 0 (for five youth theatres[6]) to 5,160.

Analysing delivered sessions by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	3,272	5
East Midlands	4,164	6
London	18,199	25
North East	2,219	3
North West	7,507	11
South East	18,593	26
South West	8,016	11
West Midlands	2,376	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	6,993	10
Outside England / no response	76	*
GRAND TOTAL	**71,415**	**100**

Over half of recorded sessions were delivered by youth theatres with headquarters in London (25% of all sessions) and the South East (26% of sessions). It is notable that the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has its headquarters in London.

Fewest sessions were delivered by youth theatres with headquarters in North East (3%) and West Midlands (3%).

Patterns in participation

Acknowledging that participation figures were recorded by different youth theatres in different ways, we allowed the youth theatres to provide participation figures as either:

- Total number of individuals across the last financial year
- OR total cumulative number for all attendances

In total 370 youth theatres (96% of all responding youth theatres) provided <u>any</u> participant figures, which is a relatively complete dataset.

However, more specifically, 306 youth theatres (79% of all responding youth theatres) provided the total number of individual participants, 64 youth theatres (17% of all responding youth theatres) provided cumulative attendances, and 4 youth theatres provided both. The table overleaf is based on individual participants – being the more useful figure for analysis purposes – and therefore true participation figures for our sample of responding youth theatres is likely to be <u>higher</u>.

[6] Where specified to be zero, as opposed to leaving the question blank. These may include youth theatres that are new and were not yet operating in the 2023-24 financial year, or youth theatres on hiatus.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many individual young people participated in their activities between April 2023 and March 2024, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full and provided participation figures about individual participants (370)			
Total number of individual young people	100,883		
	Lowest	Mean	Highest
Number of individual young people	0	329.7	14,700

The total number of individual participants recorded by the youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 was 100,883 individual participants. The mean number of individual participants per youth theatre was 329.7 individual participants with a range from 0 (for five youth theatres[7]) to 14,700.

288 youth theatres also noted the typical number of participants in each session, and the mean typical session size was 27.8 participants.

In addition, 304 youth theatres noted the maximum number of participants in each session, and the range was 1 participant to 313 participants.

Analysing participation by region of headquarters:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	19,474	19
East Midlands	13,635	14
London	32,732	32
North East	2,418	2
North West	5,739	6
South East	12,995	13
South West	6,987	7
West Midlands	2,836	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	3,971	4
Outside England / no response	96	*
GRAND TOTAL	**100,883**	**100**

The greatest proportion of participants was recorded by youth theatres with headquarters in London (32% of all participants), followed by East of England (19%). Fewest participants were recorded by youth theatres with headquarters in North East (2%) and West Midlands (3%).

[7] Where specified to be zero, as opposed to leaving the question blank. These may include youth theatres that are new and were not yet operating in the 2023-24 financial year, or youth theatres on hiatus.

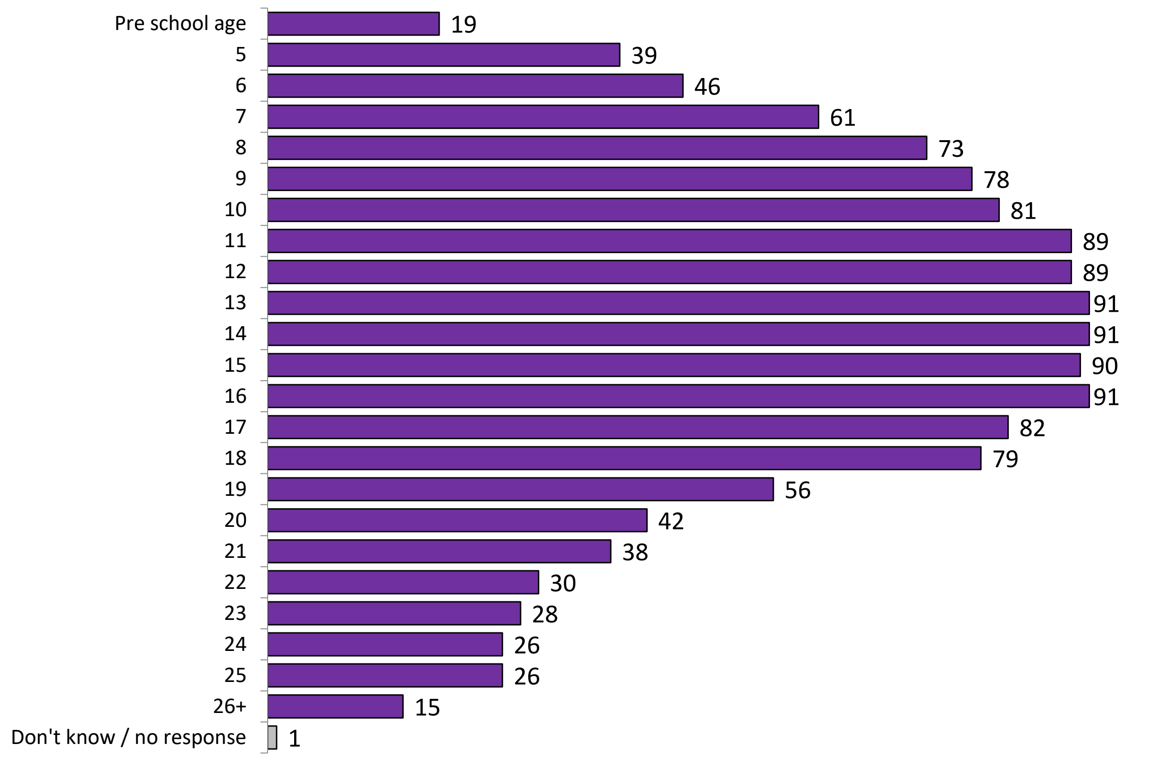
Again, it is important to acknowledge National Youth Theatre as an outlier. If we re-distribute only the National Youth Theatre participants so that it represents where their work is delivered, the total participation by region is as follows:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	Total number	%
East of England	20,344	20
East Midlands	14,505	14
London	20,550	20
North East	3,723	4
North West	7,044	7
South East	14,300	14
South West	8,292	8
West Midlands	4,141	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	6,581	7
Outside England / no response	1,403	1
GRAND TOTAL	**100,883**	**100**

By calculating it in this way, only one in five of the total participants for all responding youth theatres was recorded by youth theatres in London (20%, compared to 32% above) with rises of 1 to 3 percentage points across the other regions.

About the young people

We asked the youth theatres to tell us what ages they worked with in the last year, and findings are shown in the graph below:



Q Which of the following have you created between April 2023 and March 2024? (Please select all that apply)
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

The youth theatres selected an average of 13.6 ages from the list, indicating that most work across a very wide spectrum of ages.

The data within the graph above has been broadly summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Pre school age	19
Primary school age (5 to 11)	89
- Infant (5 to 7)	61
- Junior (8 to 11)	89
Secondary school age (12 to 16)	96
Sixth form / college age (17 to 18)	85
Young adults (19 to 25)	57
Adults (26+)	15

The greatest proportion of youth theatres worked with the secondary school age group (96%), and comparatively fewer youth theatres worked with the youngest age groups (61% worked with infants) and oldest age groups (57% worked with young adults). Falling outside our definition of youth theatre, 19% of youth theatres also worked with pre school aged children, and 15% also worked with adults.

Audience

Around the issue of audience, 351 youth theatres (91% of all responding youth theatres) provided audience figures. This being the case, the true audience size for our sample of responding youth theatres is therefore likely to be slightly higher.

We asked the youth theatres to tell us how many audience members attended their performances between April 2023 and March 2024, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full AND provided audience details (351)			
Total number of audience members	470,469		
	Lowest	**Mean**	**Highest**
Number of audience members	0	1,340	33,785

The total audience recorded by the youth theatres between April 2023 and March 2024 was 470,469 audience members.

The mean audience per youth theatre was 1,340 audience members with a range from 0 to 33,785.

Diversity and inclusion

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they provide activities “designed for young people who share a particular identity or come from a particular demographic group (e.g. Disabled young people, young women and girls, young people from low-income backgrounds)”, and youth theatres were given the closed response options as detailed in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes, we have a primary target group (or groups) for our youth theatre	16
Yes, we have some activities and sessions aimed at specific groups	24
No	59
Don’t know	2

Four in ten of the youth theatres (40%) provided activities designed for young people who share a particular identity or come from a particular demographic group, including 16% for whom this was the primary target group of their youth theatre and 24% for who offered some activities and sessions aimed at specific groups. 59% of the youth theatres did not work with target groups in this way.

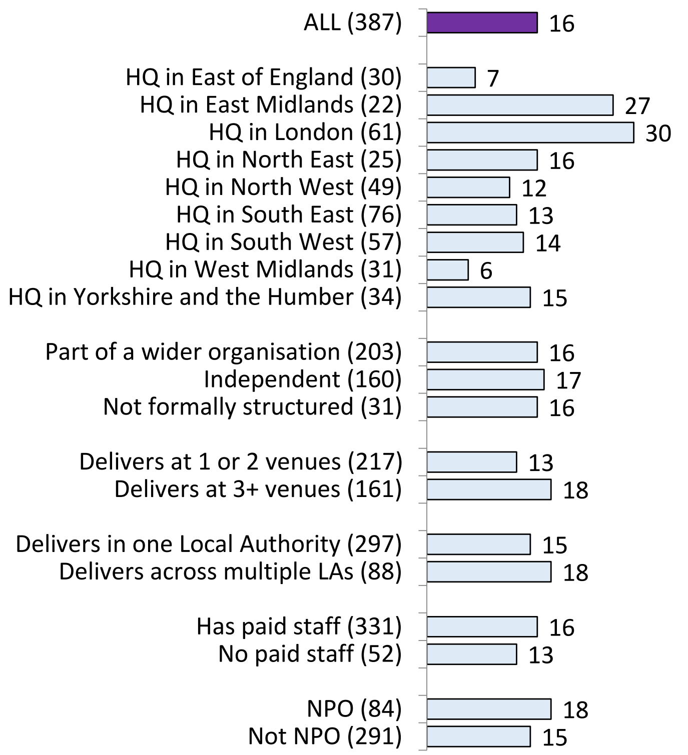
We asked the youth theatres to tell us about the particular identities or demographic groups that they worked with in these specifically targeted groups (using the language that they use within their organisation). This was an open question, and findings have been grouped and are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
SEND / Neurodiversity	16
Low-income families / areas	13
Disability	9
Geography / locality	6
Asylum seeker, refugee and migrant backgrounds	5
LGBTQI+	5
Global majority	3
NEET / risk of exclusion	3
English as an additional language	2
Home educated	2
Poor mental health	2
Young carers	2
Girls	1
Care experienced children	1
Traveller community	*

The youth theatres most often worked with young people experiencing SEND / neurodiversity (16%), young people from low-income families / areas (13%) and disabled young people (9%).

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:

What type of Youth Theatres… Have a primary target group



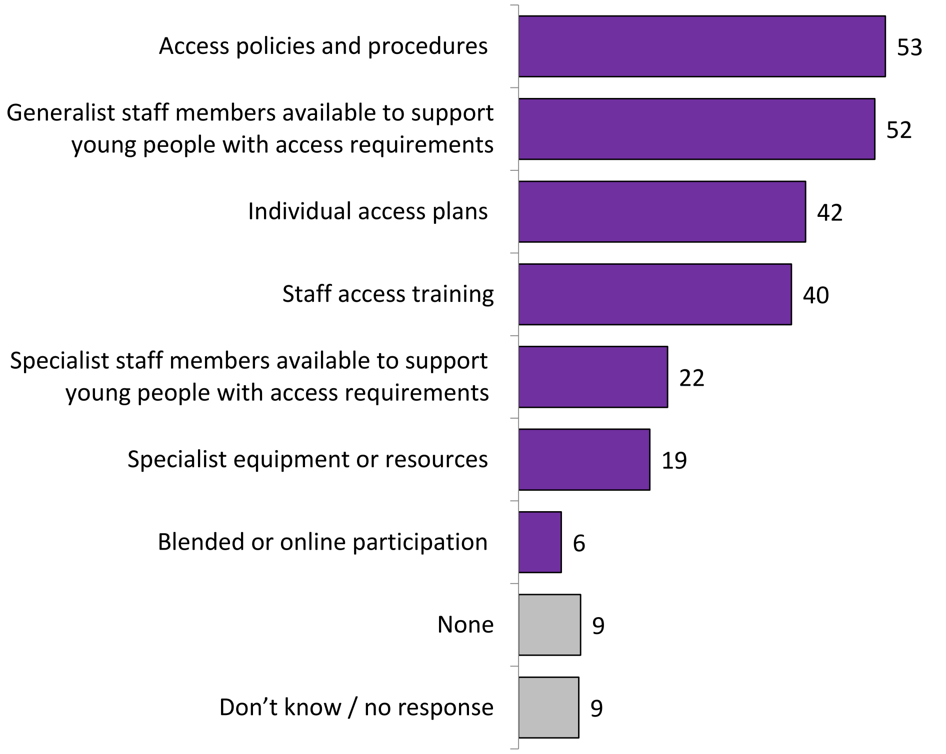
Base size: Varies %

There was substantial regional variation in the youth theatres that have a primary target group.

The type of youth theatres that most often have a primary target group were: youth theatres based in London (30%) and East Midlands (27%).

The type of youth theatres that least often have a primary target group were: youth theatres based in West Midlands (6%) and East of England (7%).

We asked the youth theatres to tell us which initiatives they had in place to ensure access for Disabled young people, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Which of the following initiatives does your youth theatre have in place to ensure access for Disabled young people?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387) %

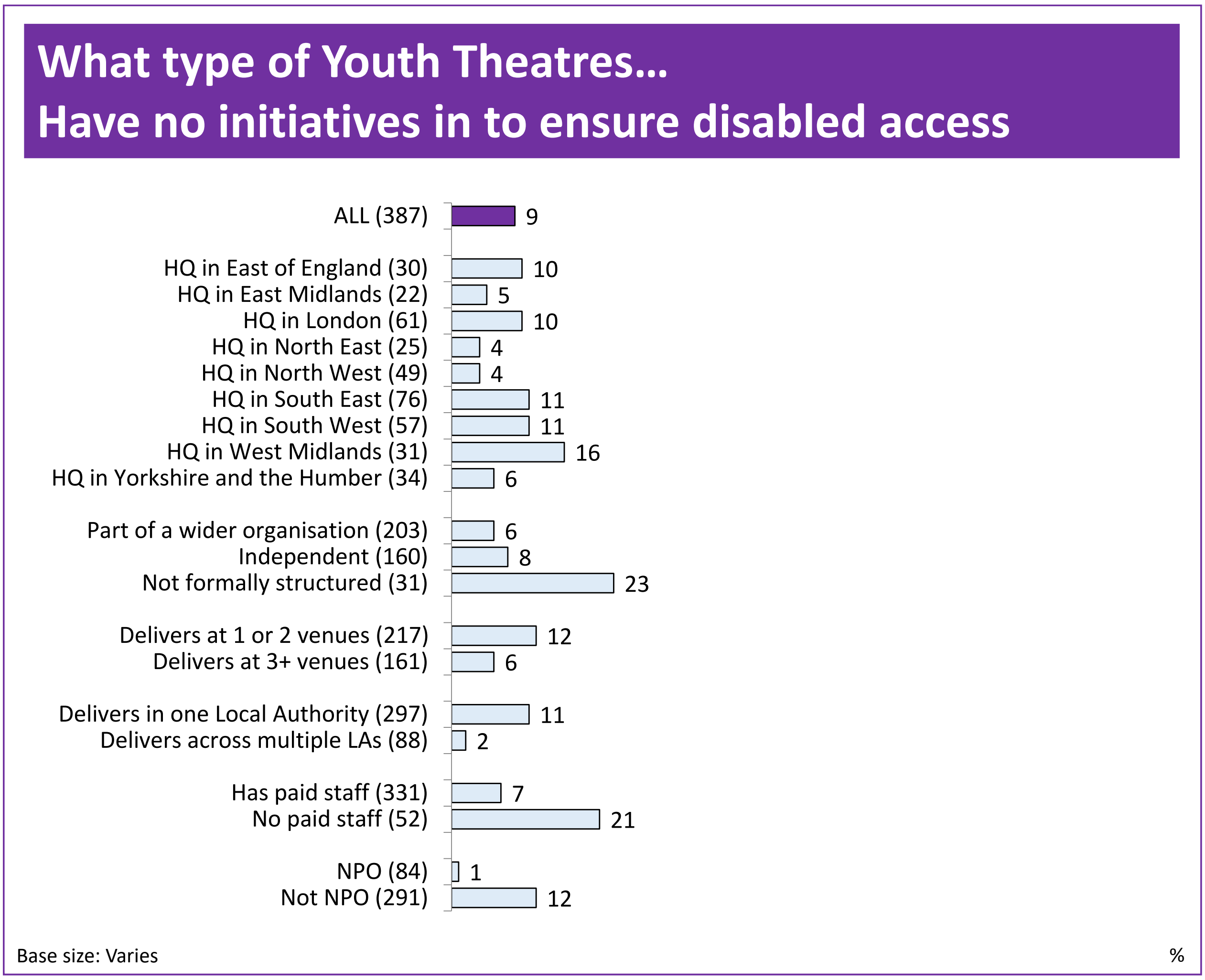
Overall 82% of the youth theatres indicated that they had initiatives in place to ensure access for Disabled young people, with 35 individual youth theatres stating that they had none.

The youth theatres most often had access policies and procedures (53%), generalist staff members available to support young people with access requirements (52%), individual access plans (42%) and staff access training (40%).

The youth theatres selected an average of 2.3 types of initiatives from the list, indicating that some have multiple initiatives in place.

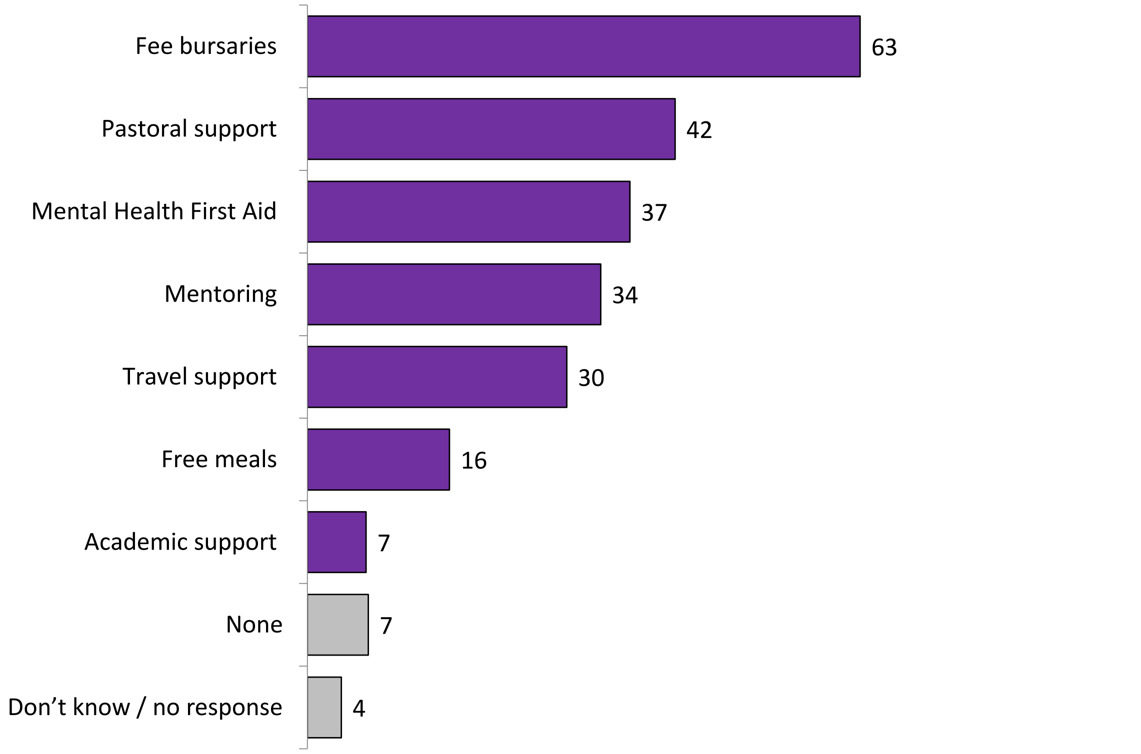
Early in the survey we asked the youth theatres to tell us "Does your youth theatre have policies and/or initiatives to ensure Disabled young people are able to access your programme? (e.g additional, trained or specialist staff, resources or equipment, policies and procedures)". This was a simple yes/no question for inclusion within the public database, and we asked for more detail later in the survey as above. It is notable that 33 youth theatres told us that 'no' they did not have any of these policies and/or initiatives in place but later in the survey were able to select policies and/or initiatives from a prompted list. This indicates that some youth theatres may not recognise or acknowledge the support for Disabled young people that they currently offer.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often had no initiatives in place to place to ensure access for Disabled young people were: youth theatres that are not formally structured (23%), youth theatres with no paid staff (21%) and youth theatres based in the West Midlands (16%).

We asked the youth theatres to tell us which initiatives they had in place to remove barriers that might prevent young people from participating, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q Which of the following initiatives does your youth theatre have in place to remove barriers that might prevent young people from participating in your programme?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)

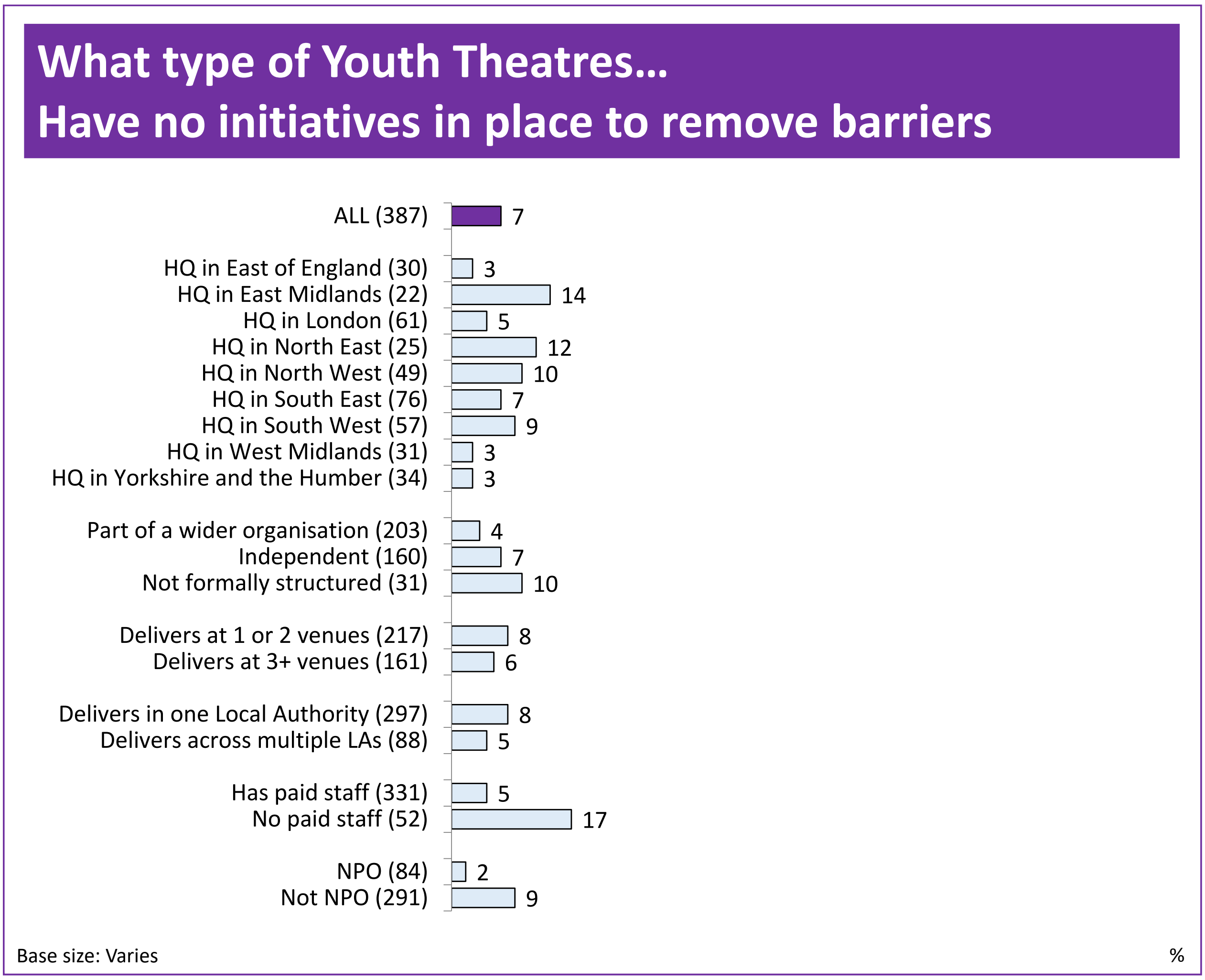
Overall 89% of the youth theatres indicated that they had initiatives in place to remove barriers that might prevent young people from participating, with 27 individual youth theatres stating that they had none.

By a large margin the youth theatres most often offered fee bursaries (63%), followed by pastoral support (42%), Mental Health First Aid (37%), mentoring (34%) and travel support (30%).

The youth theatres selected an average of 2.9 types of initiatives from the list, indicating that many have multiple initiatives in place.

Early in the survey we asked the youth theatres to tell us "Does your youth theatre have policies and/or initiatives to remove other barriers that might prevent young people from participating in your programme? (e.g. bursaries, travel support, pastoral support)". This was a simple yes/no question for inclusion within the public database, and we asked for more detail later in the survey as above. It is notable that 25 youth theatres told us that 'no' they did not have any of these policies and/or initiatives in place but later in the survey were able to select policies and/or initiatives from a prompted list. This indicates that some youth theatres may not recognise or acknowledge the ways in which they are currently removing barriers for young people.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



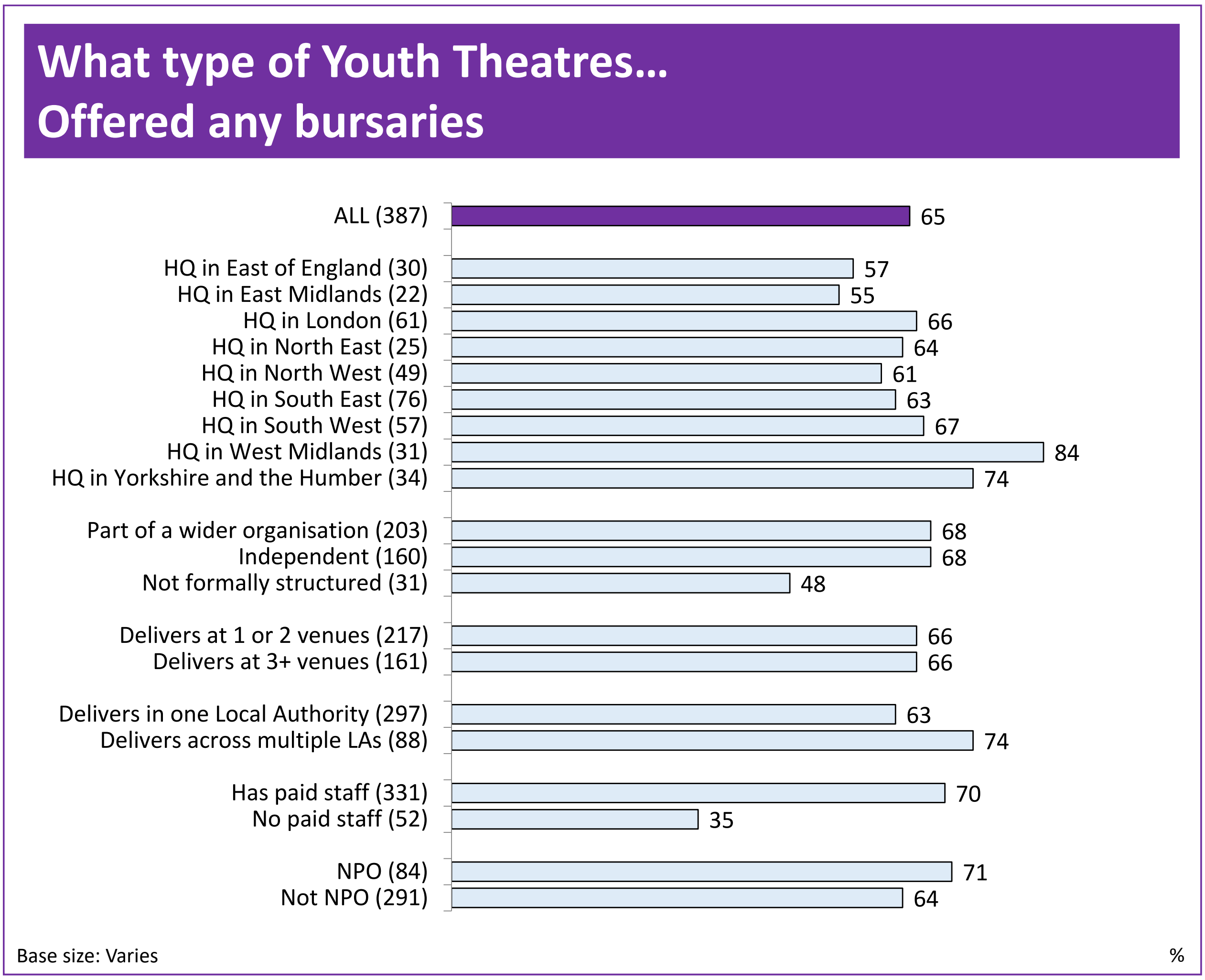
The type of youth theatres that most often had no initiatives in place to remove barriers were: youth theatres with no paid staff (17%) and youth theatres based in the East Midlands (14%) and North East (12%).

We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they offered any bursaries or subsidies for participating young people last year, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	%
Yes, for all of our participants	11
Yes, for some of our participants	54
No	30
Don't know / no response	5

Overall, around two thirds of the youth theatres (65%) offered any bursaries or subsidies for participating young people last year, including 11% who offered this for all participants and 54% who offered this for some participants.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often offered any bursaries were: youth theatres based in West Midlands (84%) and Yorkshire & the Humber (74%), youth theatres that deliver across multiple Local Authorities (74%), NPOs (71%) and youth theatres with paid staff (70%).

Youth theatres with paid staff were much more likely to offer any bursaries as compared to youth theatres with no paid staff.

The type of youth theatres that least often offered any bursaries were: youth theatres with no paid staff (35%) and youth theatres that are not formally structured (48%).

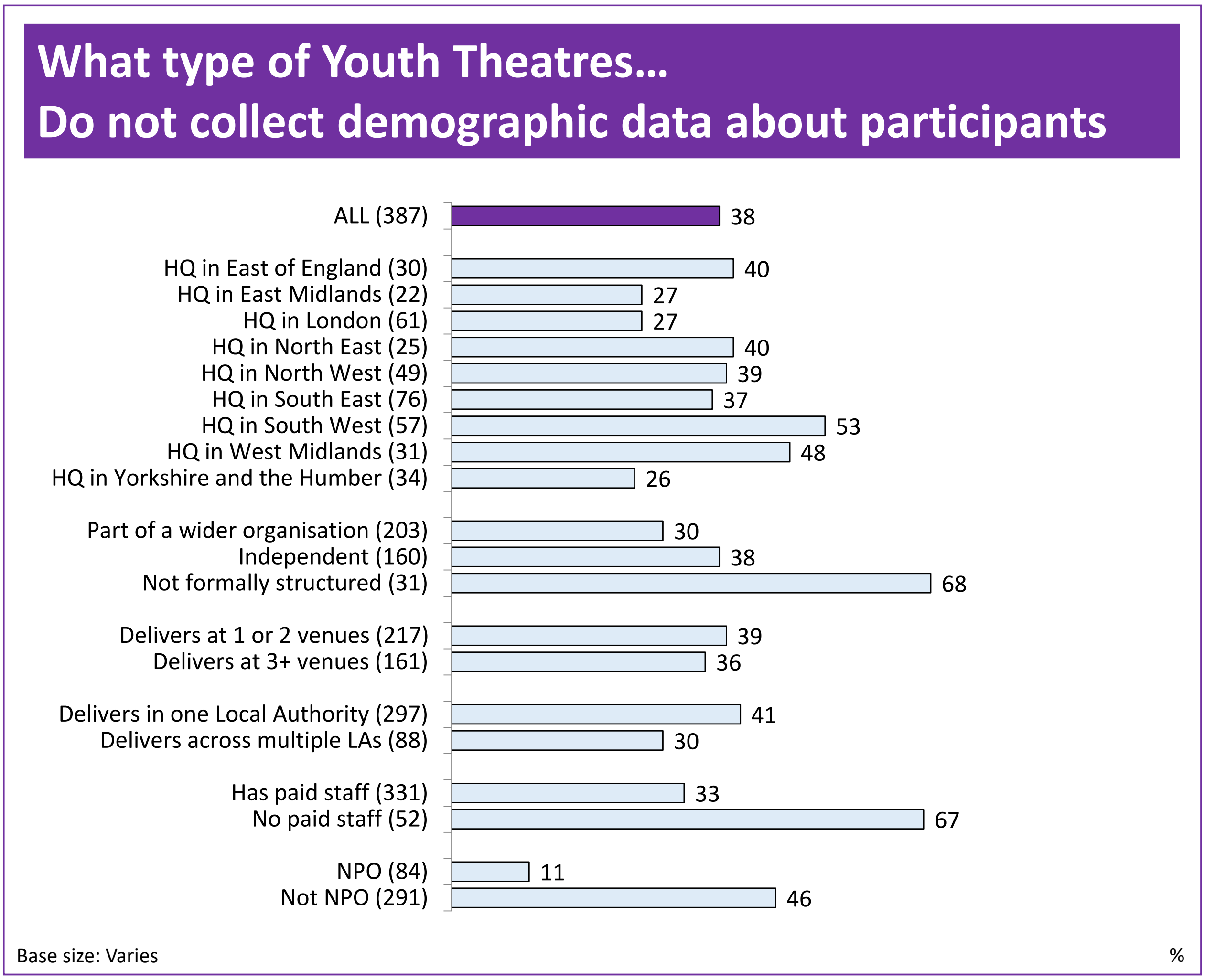
We asked the youth theatres to tell us whether they collected demographic data relating to the young people that participate, and findings are summarised in the table below:

Base: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387)	**%**
Yes, we routinely collect a broad range of demographic data	22
Yes, we collect some demographic data	35
No, as we do not have the capacity or infrastructure to do so	13
No, as we choose not to collect it	9
No, but we would be prepared to collect it in the future	16
Don't know / no response	4

Overall, just over half of the youth theatres (57%) collected demographic data relating to the young people that participate, including 22% who routinely collected a broad range of demographic data and 35% who collected some demographic data.

Around four in ten youth theatres (38%) did not collect demographic data relating to the young people that participate, including 13% who did not have the capacity or infrastructure to do so, 9% who chose not to collect it, and 16% who did not currently do this but would be prepared to collect it in the future.

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



Less formally structured and resourced youth theatres were most likely to say they did not collect demographic data relating to the young people that participate.

The type of youth theatres that most often do not collect demographic data relating to the young people that participate were: youth theatres that are not formally structured (68%), and youth theatres that have no paid staff (67%).

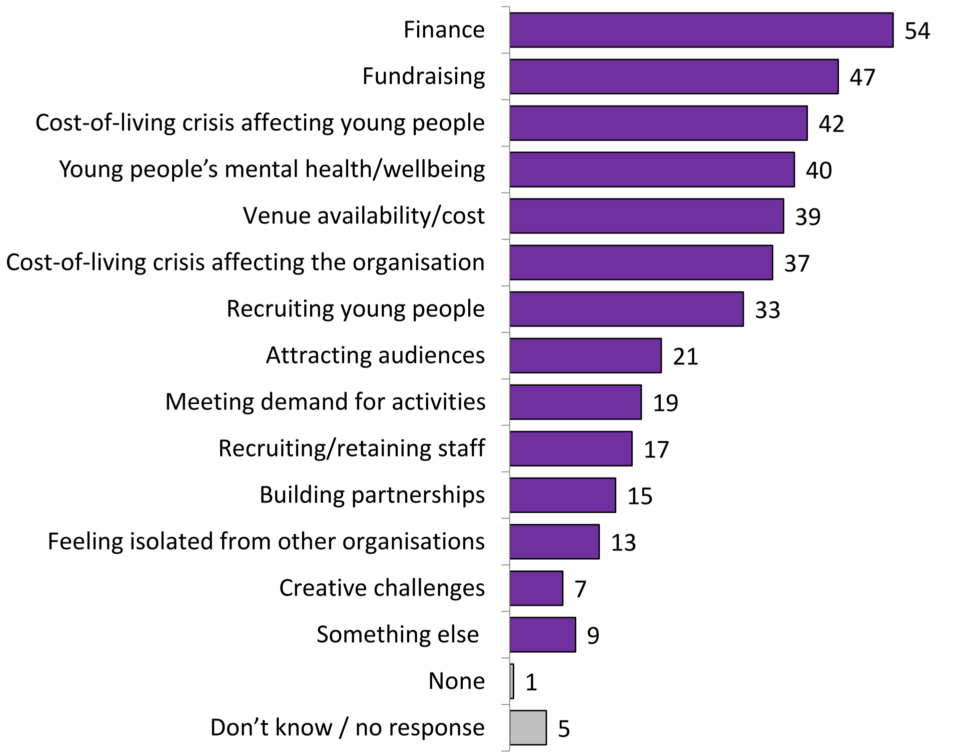
Youth theatres with no paid staff were much more likely to say they did not collect demographic data about the young people as compared to youth theatres with paid staff.

Non-NPOs were much more likely to say they did not collect demographic data about the young people as compared to NPOs.

Only 11% of NPOs do not collect demographic data relating to the young people that participate.

Challenges facing youth theatres

We asked the youth theatres to tell us the biggest challenges for their youth theatre in the last year, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q What have been the biggest challenges for your youth theatre between April 2023 and March 2024?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387) %

Overall 94% of the youth theatres indicated that they had experienced challenges in the last year, with only two individual youth theatres stating that they had not experienced any challenges.

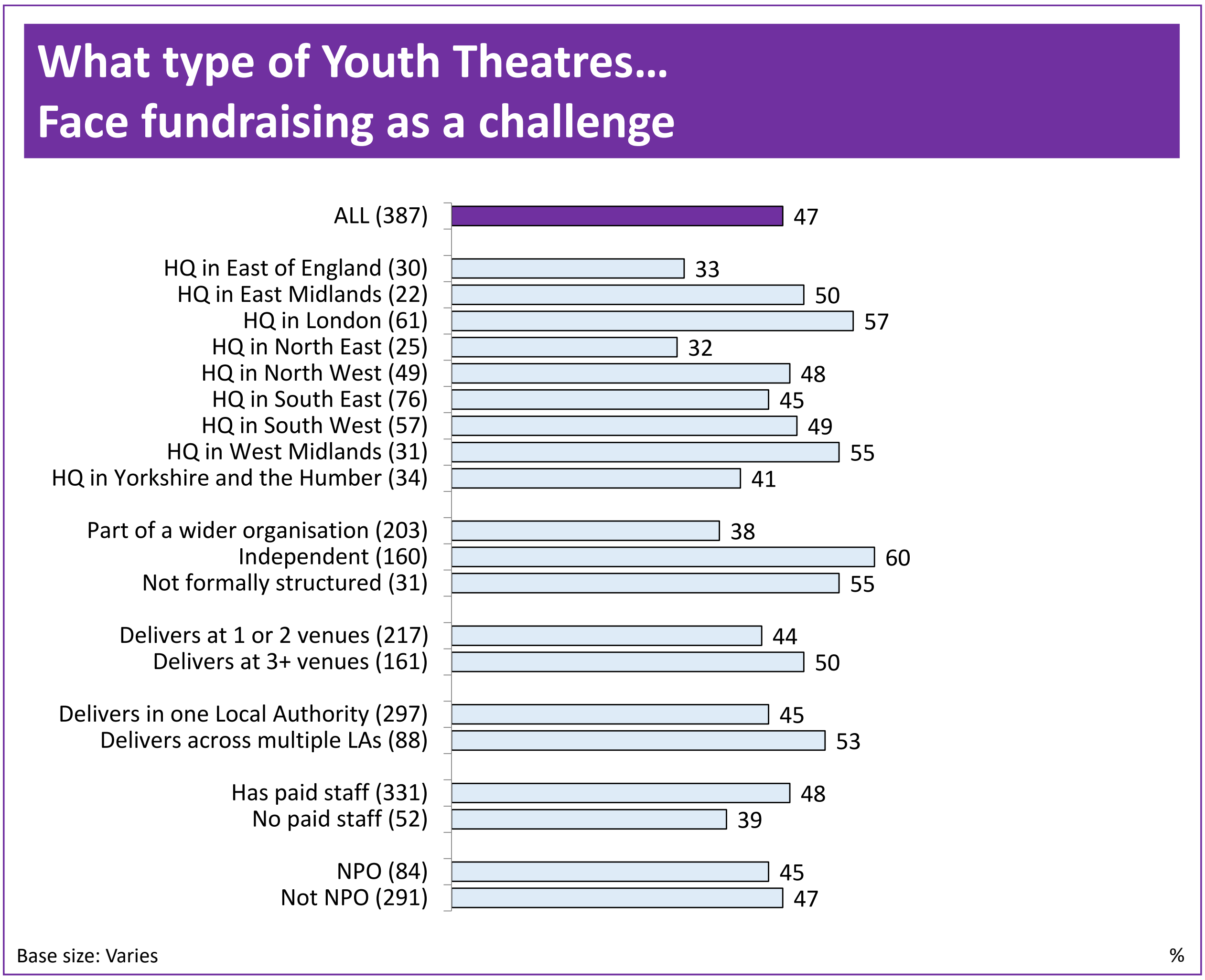
The challenges most often faced by the youth theatres were finance (54%), fundraising (47%), the cost-of-living crisis affecting young people (42%) and young people's mental health and wellbeing (40%).

Seven in ten youth theatres (70%) had faced either finance or fundraising as a challenge.

Other challenges written in by multiple youth theatres were: balancing diverse needs and priorities, participant retention, and having enough time.

The instruction for this question suggested that youth theatres select up to five challenges from the list. The youth theatres selected an average of 3.9 challenges from the list, indicating that most have faced multiple challenges.

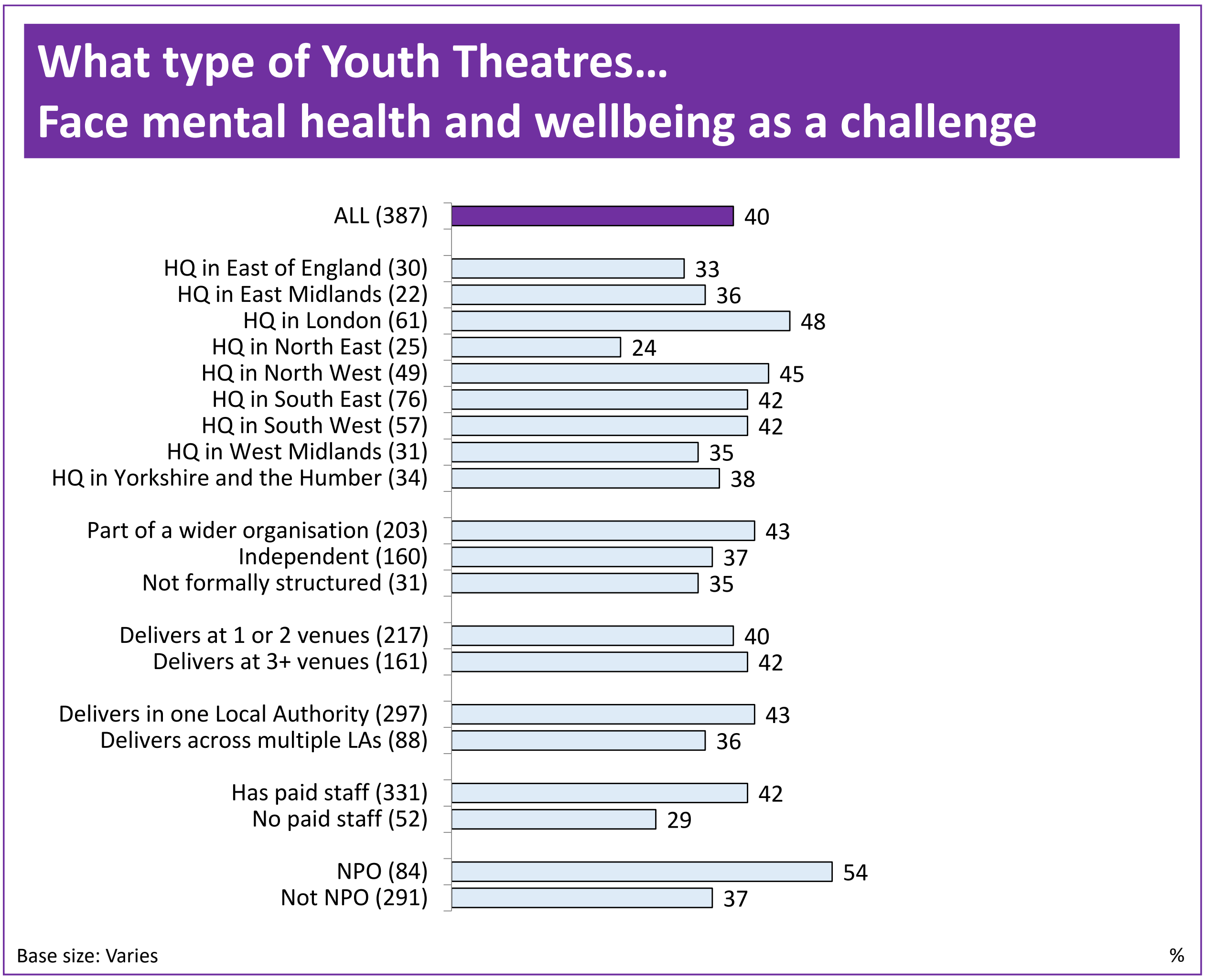
The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often face fundraising as a challenge were: Independent youth theatres (60%), youth theatres based in London (57%) and West Midlands (55%), and youth theatres that are not formally structured (55%).

The type of youth theatres that least often face fundraising as a challenge were: youth theatres in North East (32%) and east of England (33%), and youth theatres with no paid staff (39%).

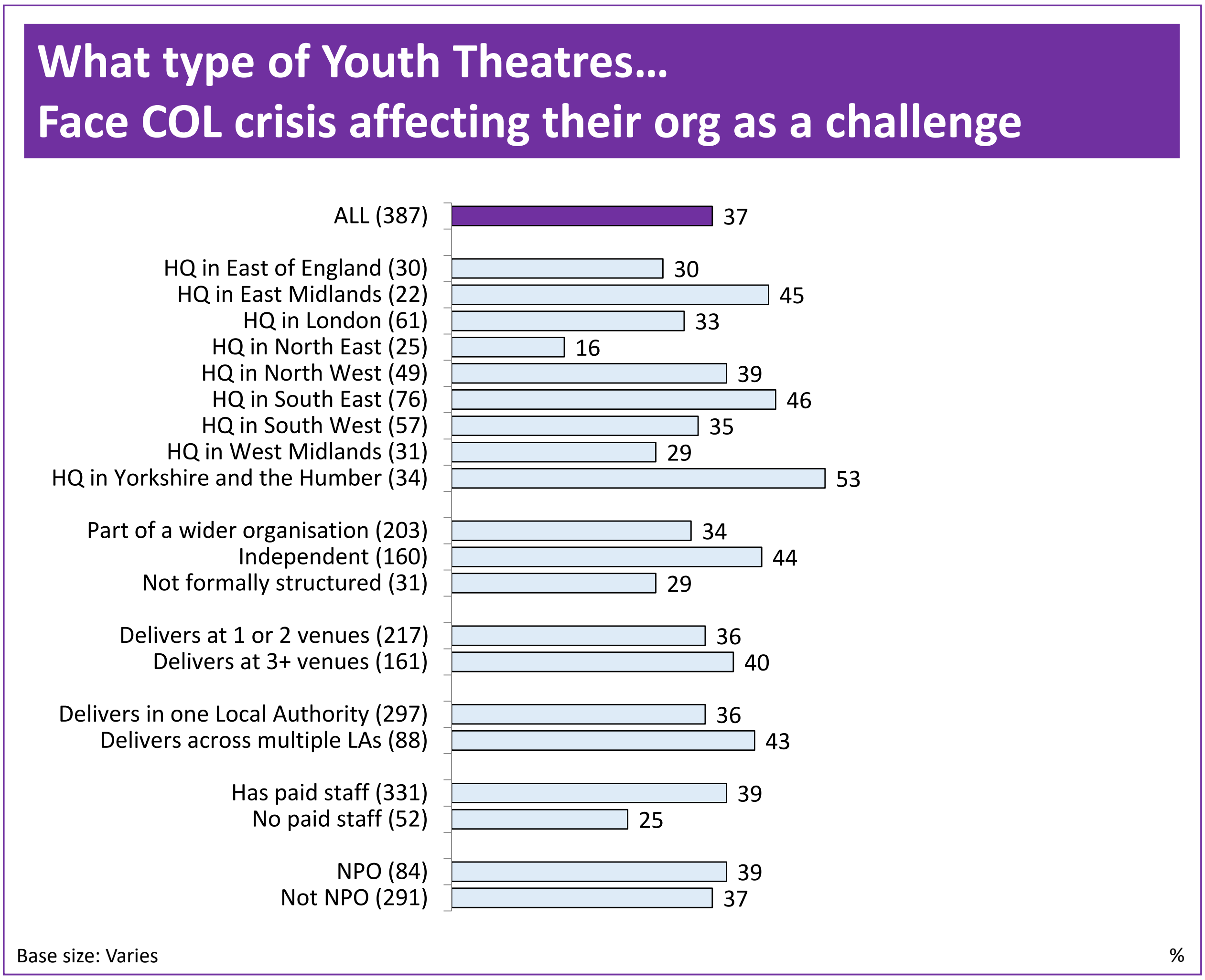
The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often face young people's mental health and wellbeing as a challenge were: NPOs (54%), youth theatres based in London (48%) and North West (45%).

The type of youth theatres that least often face young people's mental health and wellbeing as a challenge were: youth theatres in North East (24%) and youth theatres with no paid staff (29%).

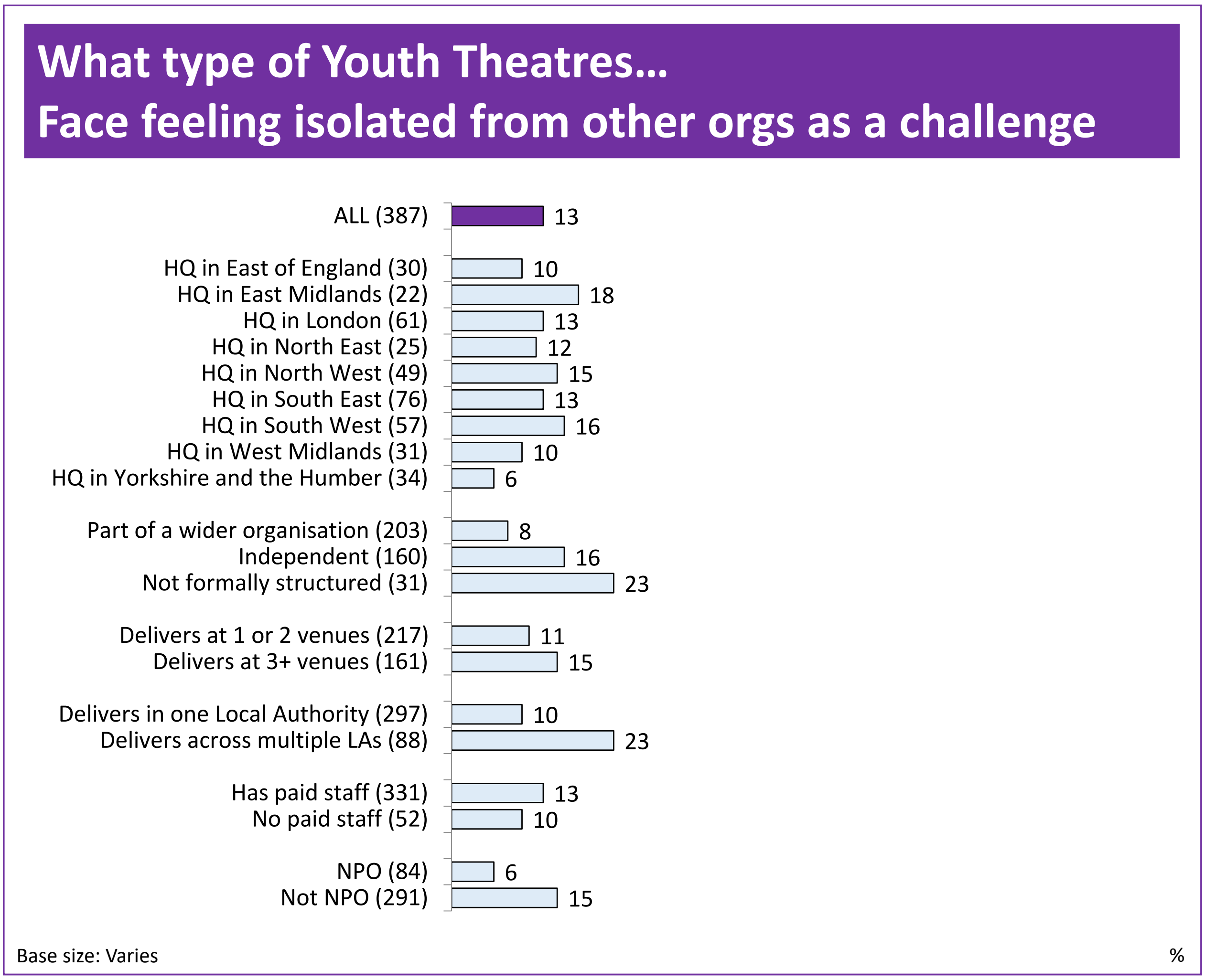
The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often face the cost-of-living crisis affecting their organisation as a challenge were: youth theatres based in Yorkshire & Humber (53%), South East (46%) and East Midlands (45%), and independent youth theatres (44%).

The type of youth theatres that least often face the cost-of-living crisis affecting their organisation as a challenge were: youth theatres in the North East (16%) and West Midlands (29%), and youth theatres with no paid staff (25%).

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:

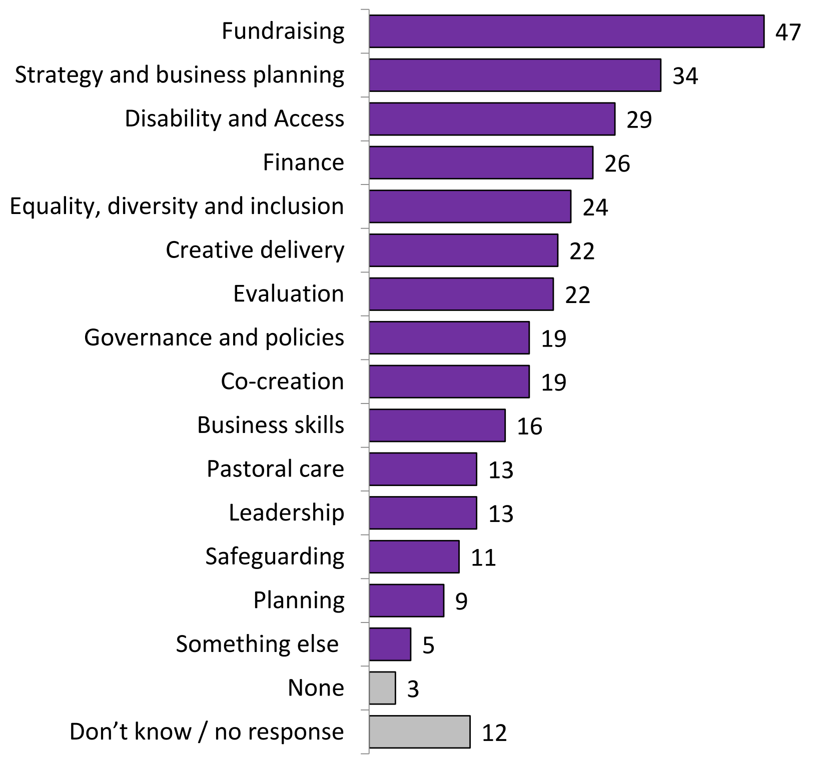


The type of youth theatres that most often face feeling isolated from other organisations as a challenge were: youth theatres that deliver across multiple Local Authority regions (23%), youth theatres that are not formally structured (23%), and youth theatres based in the East Midlands (18%) and South West (16%).

The type of youth theatres that least often face feeling isolated from other organisations as a challenge were: youth theatres in Yorkshire & the Humber (6%), NPOs (6%), and youth theatres that are part of a wider organisation (8%).

Training and development needs

We asked the youth theatres to tell us where their youth theatre would most benefit from training and development, and findings are summarised in the graph below:



Q In which of the following areas would your youth theatre most benefit from training and development?
Base size: All Youth Theatres that completed the Census in full (387) %

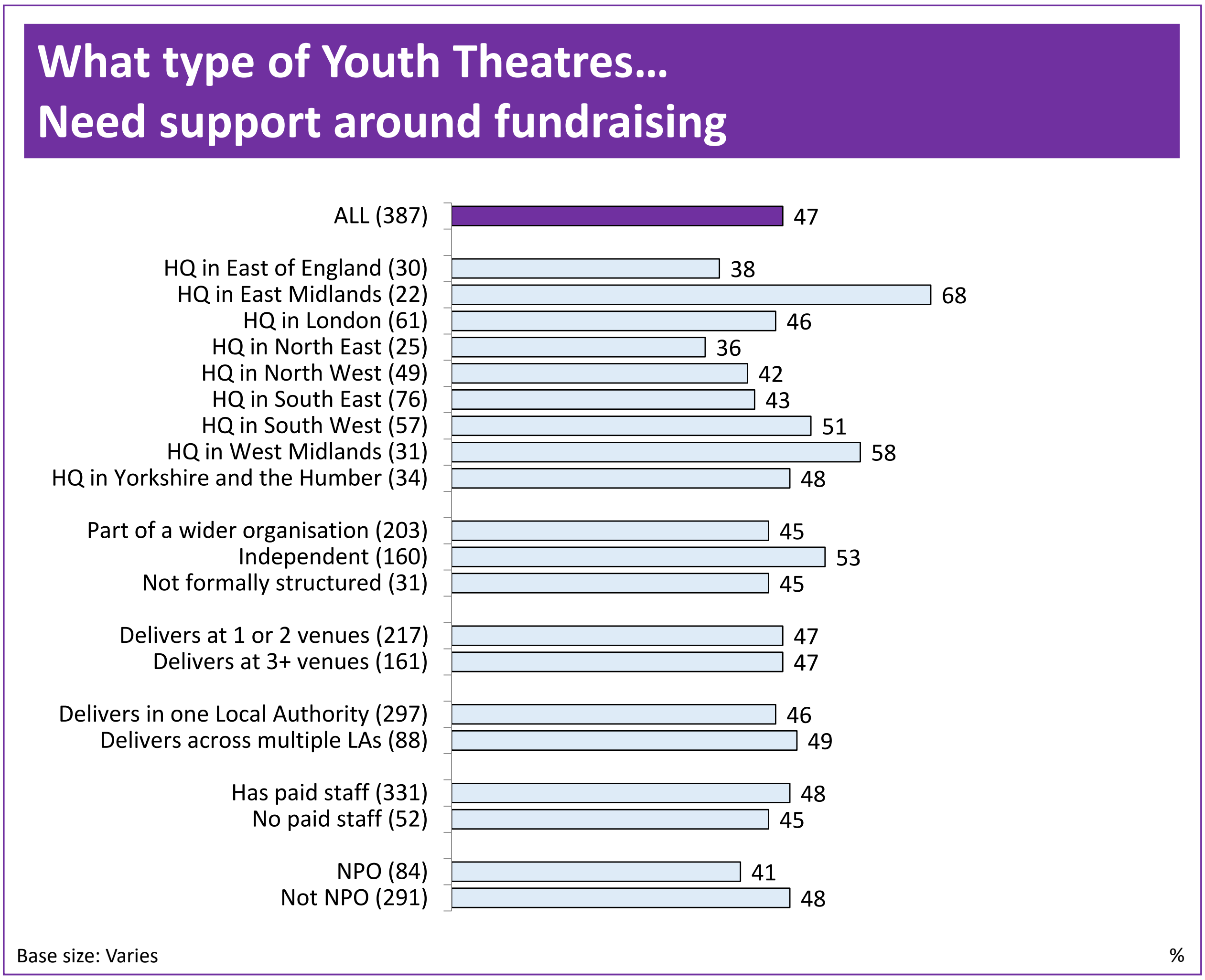
Overall 85% of the youth theatres indicated areas in which they would benefit from training and development. Notably, more than one in ten youth theatres (12%) felt unable to answer this question, giving a don't know response or leaving it blank.

The training and development needs most often selected by the youth theatres were fundraising (47%), strategy and business planning (34%), disability and access (29%) and finance (26%).

Other training and development needs written in by multiple youth theatres were: marketing, social media and digital skills, and recruitment.

The instruction for this question suggested that youth theatres select up to five training and development needs from the list. The youth theatres selected an average of 3.1 training and development needs from the list, indicating that most have multiple training and development needs.

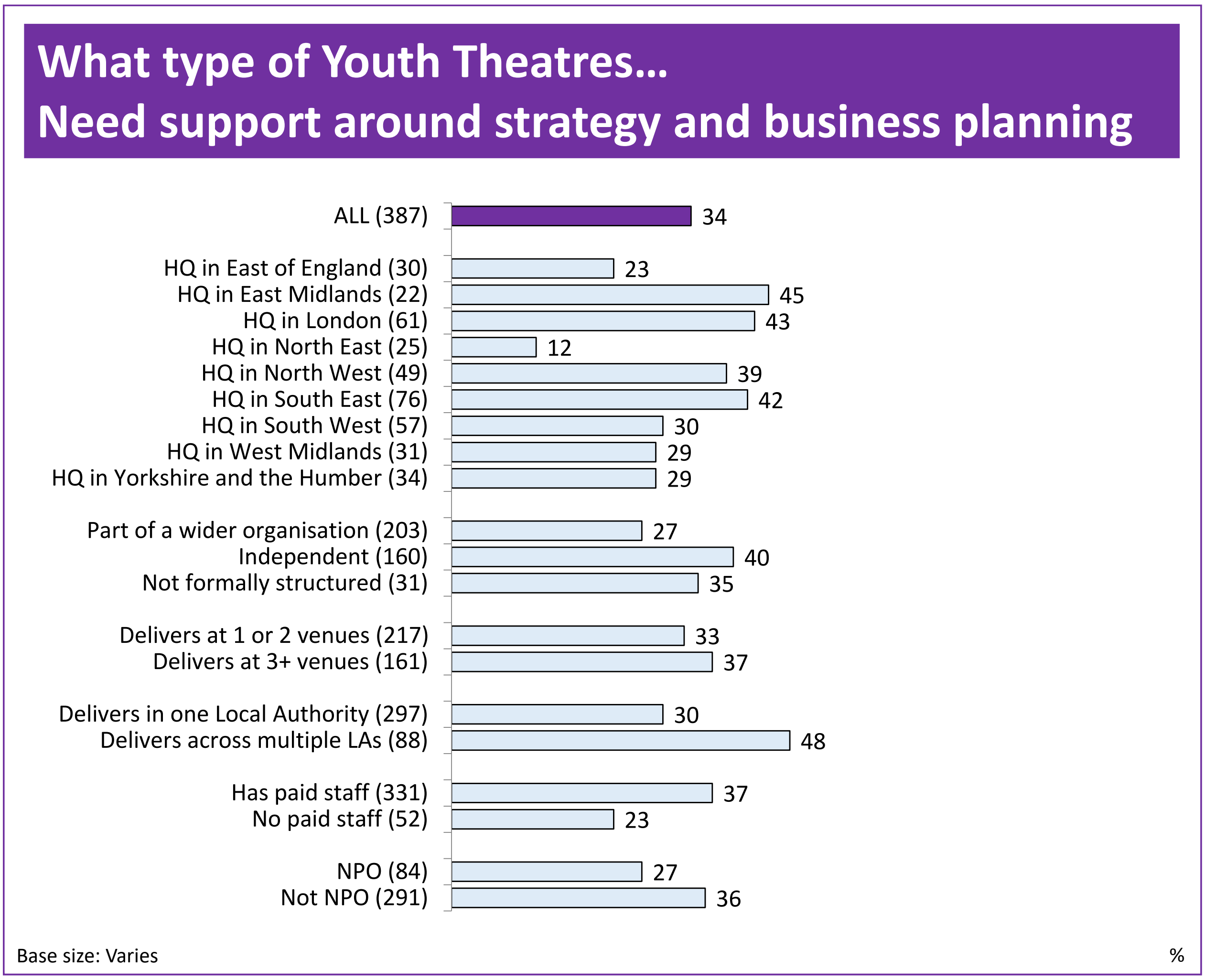
The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often had training and development needs around fundraising were: youth theatres based in the East Midlands (45%) and West Midlands (58%) and independent youth theatres (53%).

The type of youth theatres that least often had training and development needs around fundraising were: youth theatres in the North East (36%) and East of England (38%), and NPOs (41%).

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:

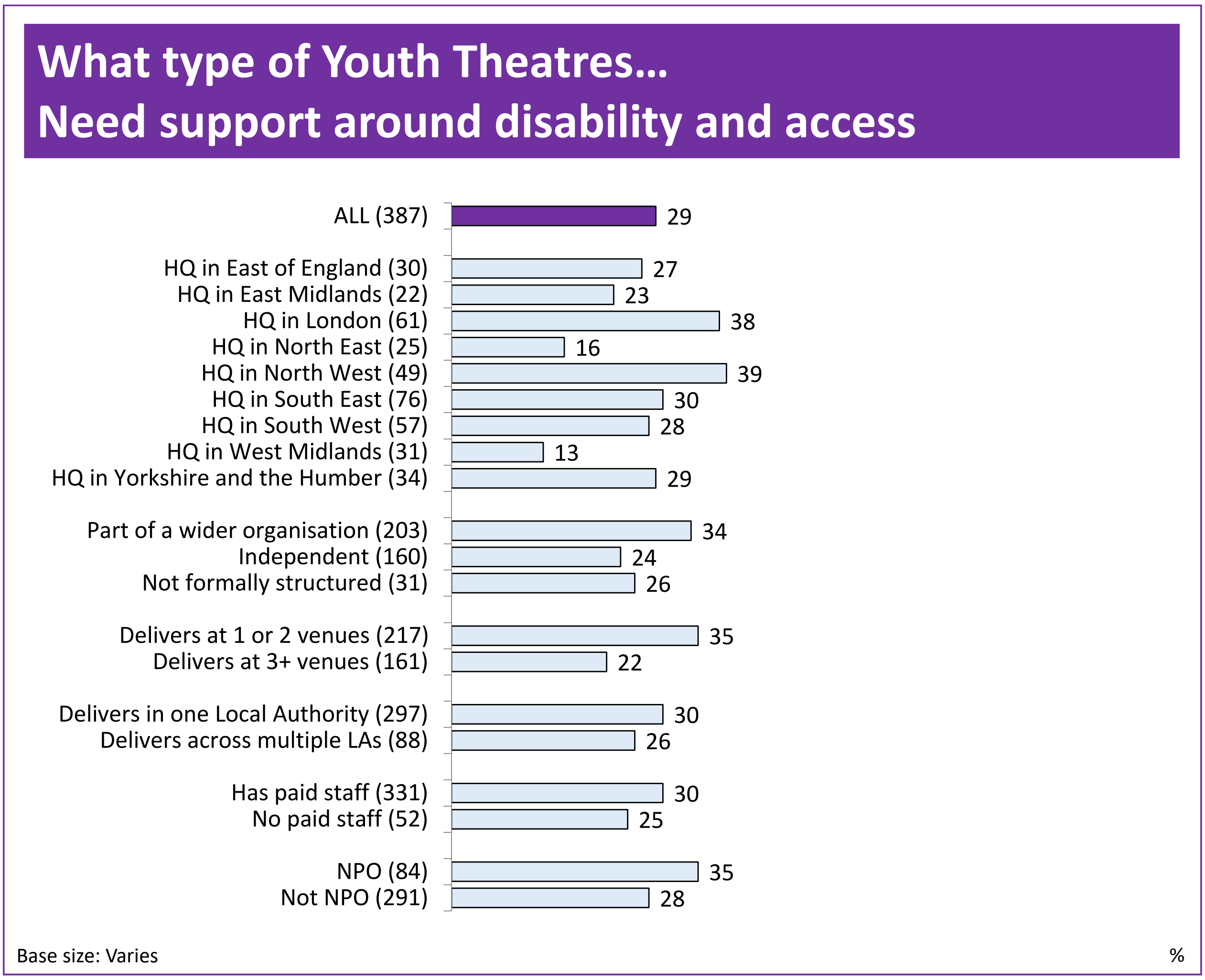


Less formally structured and resourced youth theatres were most likely to have training and development needs around strategy and business planning.

The type of youth theatres that most often had training and development needs around strategy and business planning were: youth theatres who deliver across multiple Local Authorities (48%), youth theatres based in the East Midlands (45%), London (43%) and South East (42%) and independent youth theatres (40%).

The type of youth theatres that least often had training and development needs around strategy and business planning were: youth theatres in the North East (12%) and East of England (23%), youth theatres with no paid staff (23%) and NPOs (27%).

The following graph provides a summary of responses by sub-groups, as an opportunity to understand which types of youth theatre are most affected by key issues:



The type of youth theatres that most often had training and development needs around disability and access were: youth theatres based in North West (39%) and London (38%), youth theatres that deliver at one or two venues (35%) and youth theatres that are part of a wider organisation (34%).

The type of youth theatres that least often had training and development needs around disability and access were: youth theatres in West Midlands (13%) and North East (16%), and youth theatre that deliver across 3+ venues (22%).

Database of youth theatres

396[8] youth theatres consented to be included in a public database.

We asked the youth theatres to provide information about their organisation which was then transferred into a database. The contents of this database are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that consented to be included in a public database (396)	%
% provided a main contact name	99
% provided an email address	99
% provided a web address	91
% provided a phone number	88

Overall, 99% of the youth theatres provided a contact name and email address. Additionally, 91% provided a web address and 88% provided a phone number.

We asked the youth theatres to provide information about their social media handles. These are summarised in the table below:

Base: All responding youth theatres that consented to be included in a public database (396)	%
% provided an Instagram handle	85
% provided a Facebook handle	84
% provided an X / Twitter handle	51
% provided a YouTube handle	36
% provided a TikTok handle	27
% provided a LinkedIn handle	22

Overall, 93% of the youth theatres provided at least one social media handle.

The social media handles most often provided were Instagram (85%) and Facebook (84%).

The mean number of social media handles provided was 3.1, indicating that most youth theatres were active across multiple social media platforms.

[8] Some youth theatres completed the Census but did not consent to be included in the database, and some youth theatres only completed the first part of the Census and did consent to be included in the database.

Concluding remarks

The data described within this report provides a snapshot of youth theatre in England in 2024.

We now have recent evidence about the scope and breadth of youth theatre operations, delivery and participation across England which can be used to understand the sector and advocate for sectoral needs.

Whilst is it acknowledged that we have not identified all youth theatres in England, our wide spread of 387 youth theatres is a strong sample.

It is notable that this process has identified significant regional variations, with around half of current identified provision headquartered in London and the South East.

The economic environment for running a youth theatre has been challenging in 2024, with issues around finances, fundraising and the cost-of-living crisis causing problems for many which has had far-reaching consequences across their operations, staffing, and delivery. Ultimately, this can only be a negative thing for young people who could potentially benefit from participating in youth theatre.

This is of paramount importance, because many of the youth theatres told us about the difficult circumstances facing their young people at the moment, and how vital their youth theatre is in providing a safe space for struggling young people.

Our findings indicate that youth theatres in the following circumstances may benefit from additional support to navigate this challenging environment:

- Youth theatres based in the North, the Midlands and the East of England
- Youth theatres that are not formally structured
- Youth theatres with no paid staff.

The youth theatre sector should consider these findings and work together to identify key areas of support need, areas requiring more in-depth examination or discussion, and next steps.

It is also recommended that further sectoral snapshots should be taken periodically to monitor changes in the sector over time, using this Census as a baseline.