

WACL's Diversity & Inclusion In the Workplace Club Debrief March 2022

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: FOR MEMBERS' EYES ONLY

(Quant fieldwork conducted online in two waves May/June & November/December 2021 by Opinium Research, supplemented by some qualitative interviews and listening groups conducted in November/December by Utopia, Jan Gooding & Merry Baskin)

“Leadership in branding for companies is about restlessness, constant renewal, innovation, and setting the agenda.

Those qualities are highly correlated with long-term value and influence in the commercial sector”

(Rita Clifton, Love your Imposter, WACL President 1996/7)

Why we conducted this survey

- Beyond delivering the 'day job', diversity and inclusion is one of the most important issues for leaders and managers in business today
- In 2021, D&I was introduced as an Exec position in WACL, with the intention of accelerating the Club's commitment to improving the diversity of our membership, our events and ensuring all our members feel welcome and included.
- Workplace surveys that seek to understand the diversity of workforces in terms of protected characteristics such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity and sexuality are common practice and are used to establish baselines to compare with industry and/or UK benchmarks and to set targets for areas where improvement is needed
- WACL's purpose is to accelerate gender equality in the industry. But to remain a credible voice on this issue, we need to ensure that we represent **all** women in the industry – whatever their ethnicity, sexuality, religious beliefs, etc .
- This is why it's important that we understand the diversity of our own membership and therefore the degree to which we can claim to support, inspire and campaign on behalf of all women in the industry.

How the survey fits in

The survey can be seen as part of a programme of ongoing change and evolution, the aim of which is to ensure that the Club remains influential and relevant within our industry

2017 – The ‘Nettles’ research and the change in the stated purpose of the Club ‘to accelerate gender equality in our industry through support, inspiration and campaigning’

2019 – Lifting the cap on membership numbers, reflecting the growing number of senior women in the industry and the need for the Club grow with them

2020 – Active outreach to women from more diverse backgrounds in the industry to encourage applications, resulting in three cohorts of new members, across 2 years with far more diverse representation

Notably, these activities also coincided with the Covid pandemic, which obviously had a significant impact on WACL’s ability to meet in person

2021 – The D&I Baseline project, which also highlighted ongoing other issues

2022 – Taking action as a result of the research and feedback received, to get the Club ship-shape for our next 100 years – financially, structurally, emotionally

2023 – Celebrating our Centenary year!

This document is therefore part debrief, part implications to ponder and part next steps. Read it in conjunction with the Nettles research and the presentation that was given at the Member breakfast on March 30th, 2022.

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Quantitative D&I survey

Amplified with some interview quotes and open-ended question responses from the listening groups and depth interviews conducted by Utopia, Jan Gooding and additional feedback given to Merry Baskin as part of the effort to boost the sample to the D&I survey.

Topline Summary

- The D&I survey has confirmed that the Club needs to continue to pay attention to diversity. Relative to both the All In Industry Census and the UK , we are more white, more middle class and more able-bodied.
- To address this, we should ensure the growing diversity of the membership is then reflected in the Club's leadership
- There is also significant work to do to on both 'belonging' and 'psychological safety'
 - i.e. to make the Club feel more welcoming, accepting and safe for all our members, not just those in full employment.
- While this survey has identified the extent of these issues (which may have been exacerbated by Covid, a time when the Club has been unable to meet very much in person and the growth in new members) it's important to note that many of these issues are perennial – similar themes have been around since 2004 and were particularly brought to the fore in 2017, when the Club did the 'nettles' research.
- This implies that these issues are not going to be easy to fix – it will require concerted and consistent efforts to address them – and we have plans in place to do so.

What will we do specifically as a result of the D&I research?

- Continue to compare the diversity of the Club to other relevant sources of data (e.g. the Ad Association's All In Census, the UK 2021 Census) in order to better understand if and where the Club could do better to improve its diversity.
- Try, as far as is possible, to ensure that all WACL committees and the Exec are proportionately diverse and reflect a broad diversity of lived experience
- Double down on activities that help us re-build our inclusive and supportive culture, that welcomes new members and provides relevant opportunities for longer tenure members to engage in the Club
- Use this 2021 data as a baseline against which we can monitor progress in future years

WACL's Diversity & Inclusivity Survey Objectives

To establish a baseline for the diversity of members in the Club against all societally relevant characteristics (ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, education level, disability, neurodiversity)

To establish a baseline measures for 'inclusivity' - i.e. members' sense of belonging, the degree to which they feel psychologically safe within the Club, etc.

Survey context (in more detail)

- The WACL D&I survey was first launched 25 May 2021 in the initial AGM mailing
- The initial sample response (125 out of 268) was not representative:
 - too small for any meaningful* sub-group analysis
 - too unrepresentative to be confident it represented an accurate reflection of the Club since it was skewed newer and younger members
 - Some design, flow and vocabulary issues with questionnaire which were subsequently addressed
- In November/December 2021 the sample was boosted and questionnaire wording amended
 - A further 50 respondents recruited, sample imbalance redressed to include more older members
- The two quantitative data sets have been merged to create one overall sample of 178 respondents, around 66% of the Club
 - *Sample size now sufficiently representative for a D&I survey and member response rate on par with previous WACL surveys
- Quant survey supplemented with some qualitative feedback:
 - Verbal feedback given to Merry Baskin as part of the work done to boost the original quant sample (69 telephone calls with (mostly) senior members)
 - The qualitative listening groups among 20 members, carried out by Utopia, on behalf of WACL

Where did we end up?

- The total sample is 178 people, roughly 66% of the membership.
- We are comfortable that this is a robust sample, which reflects the breadth of the Club in terms of age, type of membership, working status and tenure.
- However, the sample may include a higher proportion of 'engaged' members vs the total membership base (Engaged = those who have served on the Exec, sat on a committee or participated in mentoring programmes)
- We can't look at inclusivity by ethnicity or by sexual orientation because segments can only be reported on where there are in excess of 10 individual records to ensure no-one can be identified.
- Where there are significant differences between different member cohorts (e.g. full member vs associate or aged under 55 vs 55+) these have been reported
- Where available we have added comparisons vs other data sets:
 - The two main additional data sets are the AA All In industry census completed in and the 2011 UK Census (the data from the 2021 Census will be available from early summer 2022)
 - Note that these data sets are comparisons, not benchmarks. The All In Census reflects the current state of the industry (which is poor on at least some dimensions); the Census reflects the nation as a whole and the current data is now 10 years old

Who completed the survey?

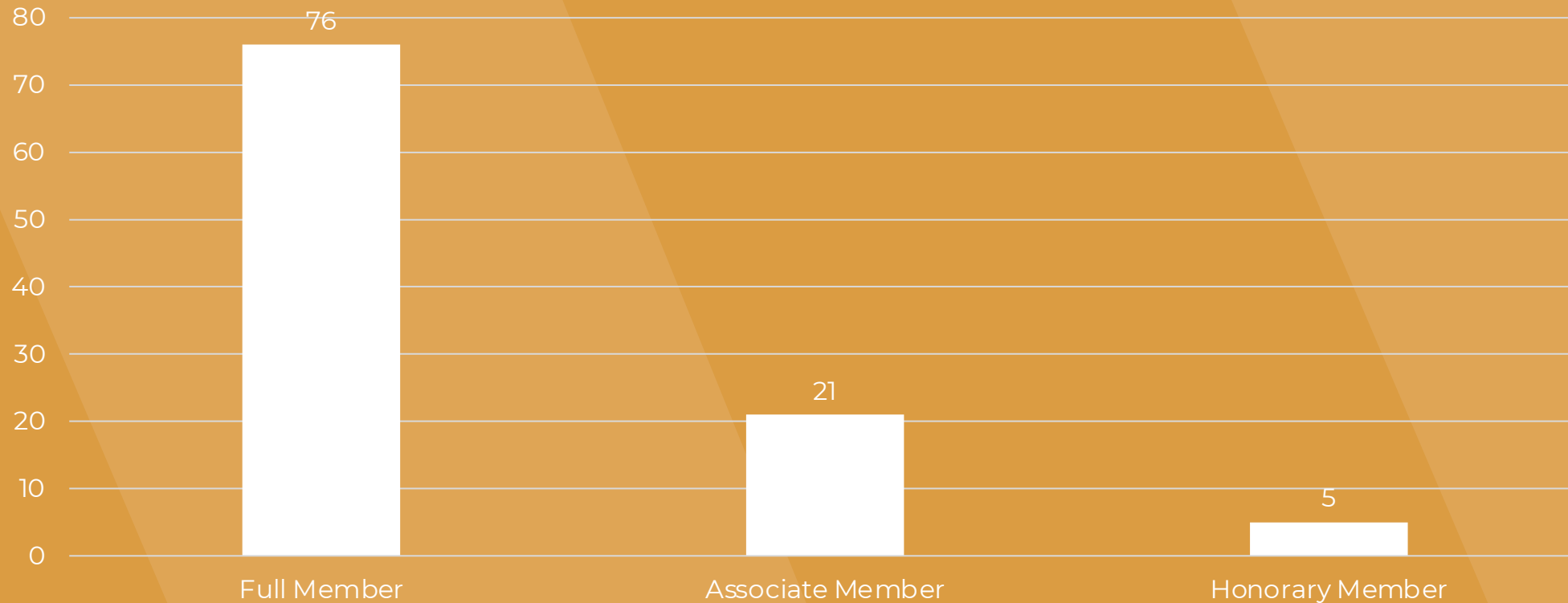
Final Quant* Sample: who filled it out?

- Type of member – 75% full members, around 25% Associates and Honorary members
- About 1/3 joined within past 5 years , 1/3 6-20 years and 1/3 21 over years
- About half are employed, a fifth are sole traders or running their own business, 11% are NEDs, and 12% are retired
- 40% agency, 23% client, remainder is made up of media owner, NGO/trade body and 'other'
- 50/50 age split for under 55s and over 55s
- Overall, a well balanced representation of our membership in November 2021 – see following charts

(*The amplifying fieldwork comprised 16 people participating in 3 'listening groups', 4 depths, 69 telephone 'interviews', plus 47 written responses to the open ended question on the quant survey)

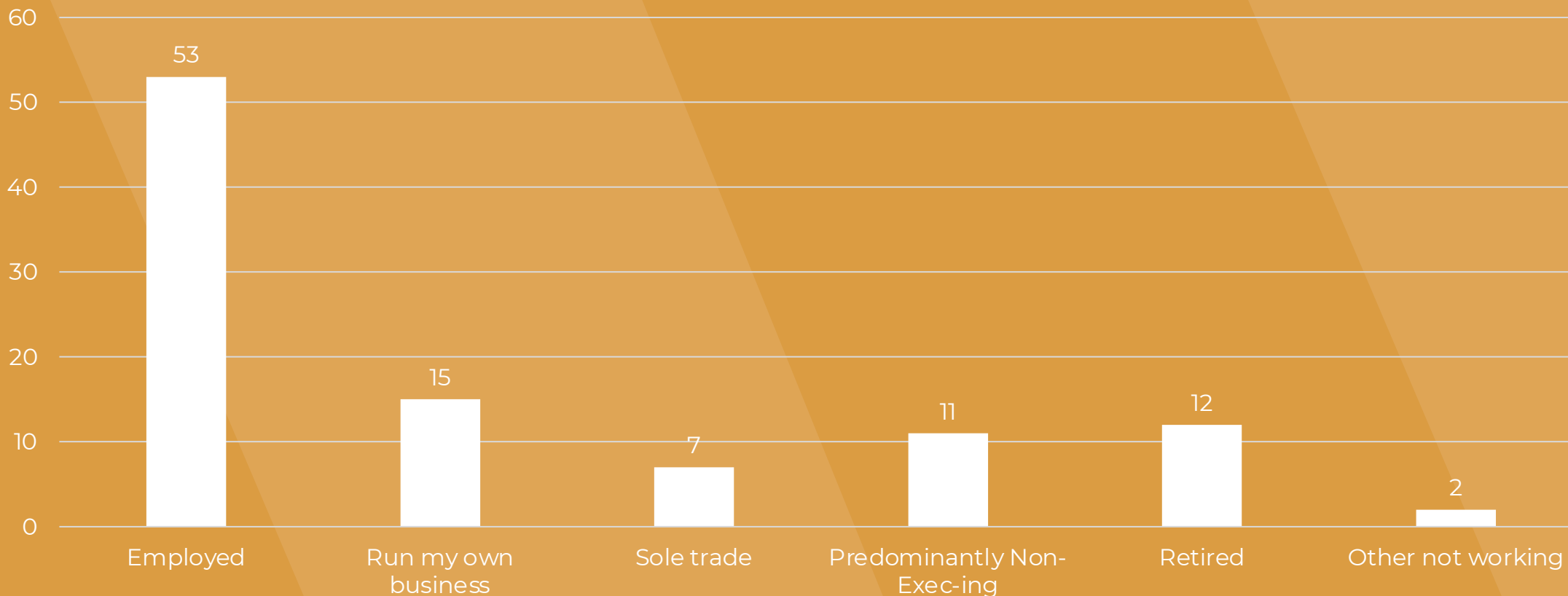
Sample profile is broadly in line Club profile with around 75% full members

Which of the following best describes your membership (%)?



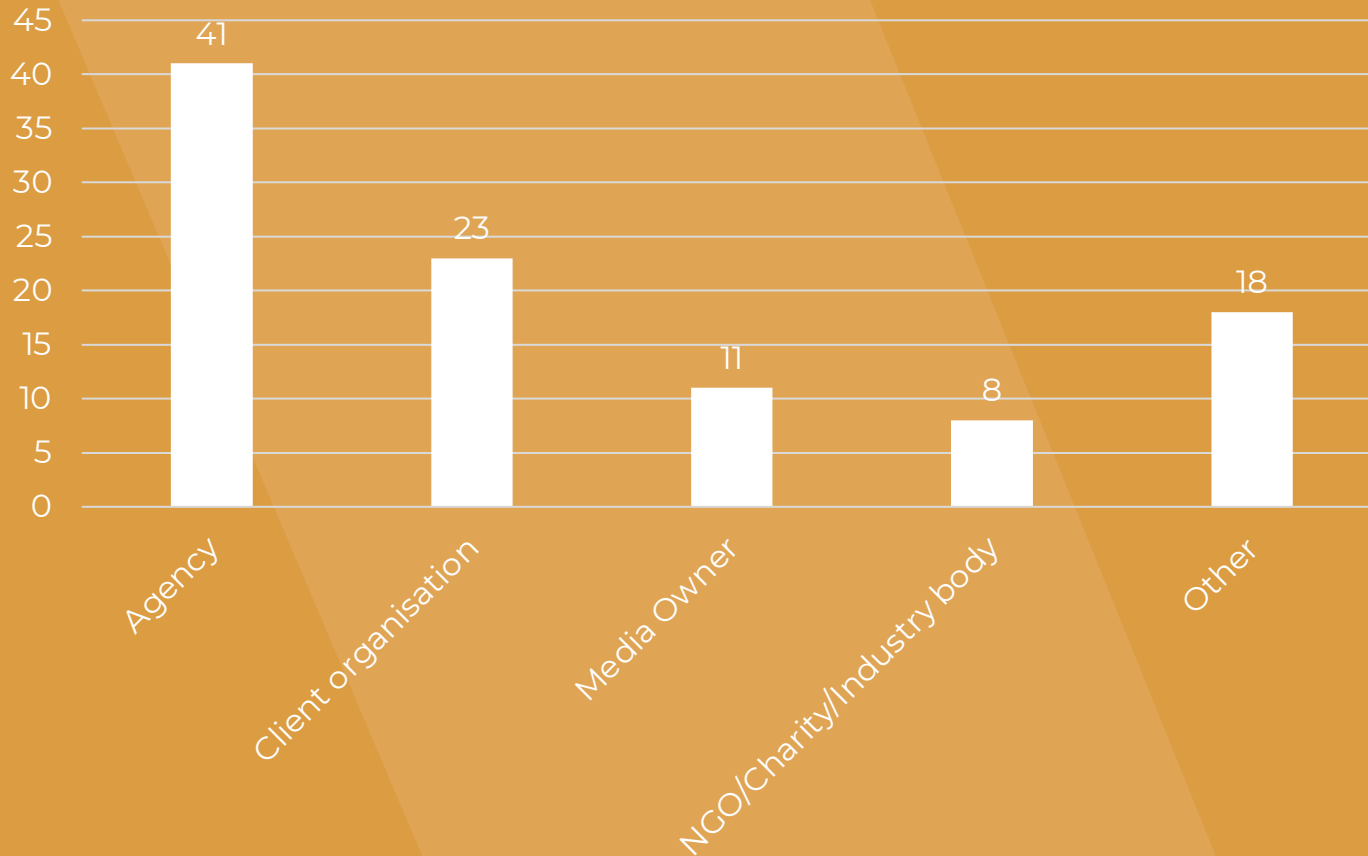
Around half the sample are not in 'traditional' full-time employment – note that around a fifth are 'independently' employed as sole traders or running their own business

How would you describe your employment status(%)?



Agency and client-side members make up two thirds of the sample

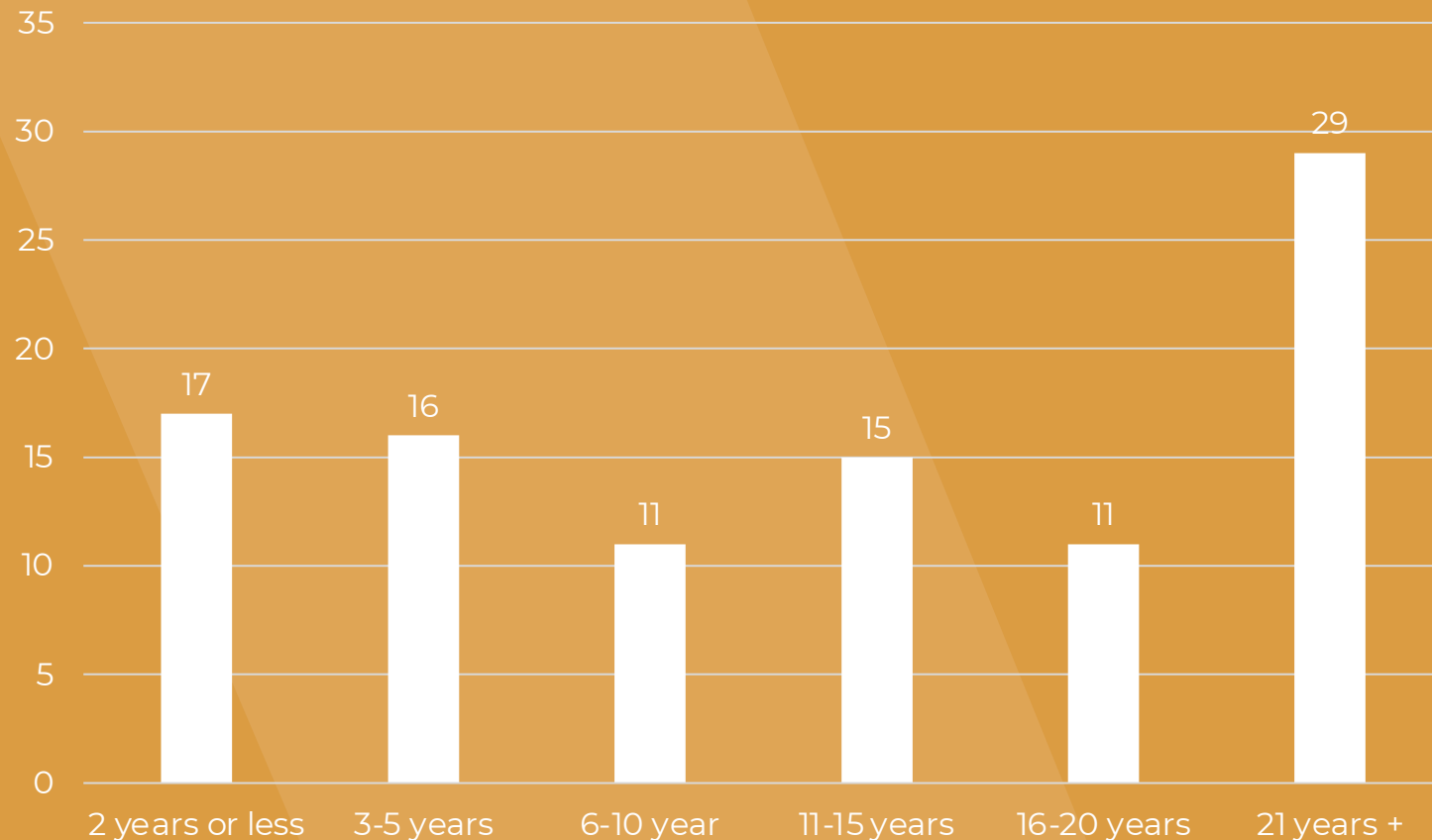
Where do you work (%)?



- Note that the split used to be roughly 1/3 agency, 1/3 client, 1/3 media owner
- The change in profile probably reflects the growing complexity of the industry, e.g.
 - The higher proportion of agency members may represent growth in different types of agency specialism
 - 'Other' could include production, adtech, etc

Length of Club tenure splits a third < 5 years, a third 6-20 years, a third 21 years +

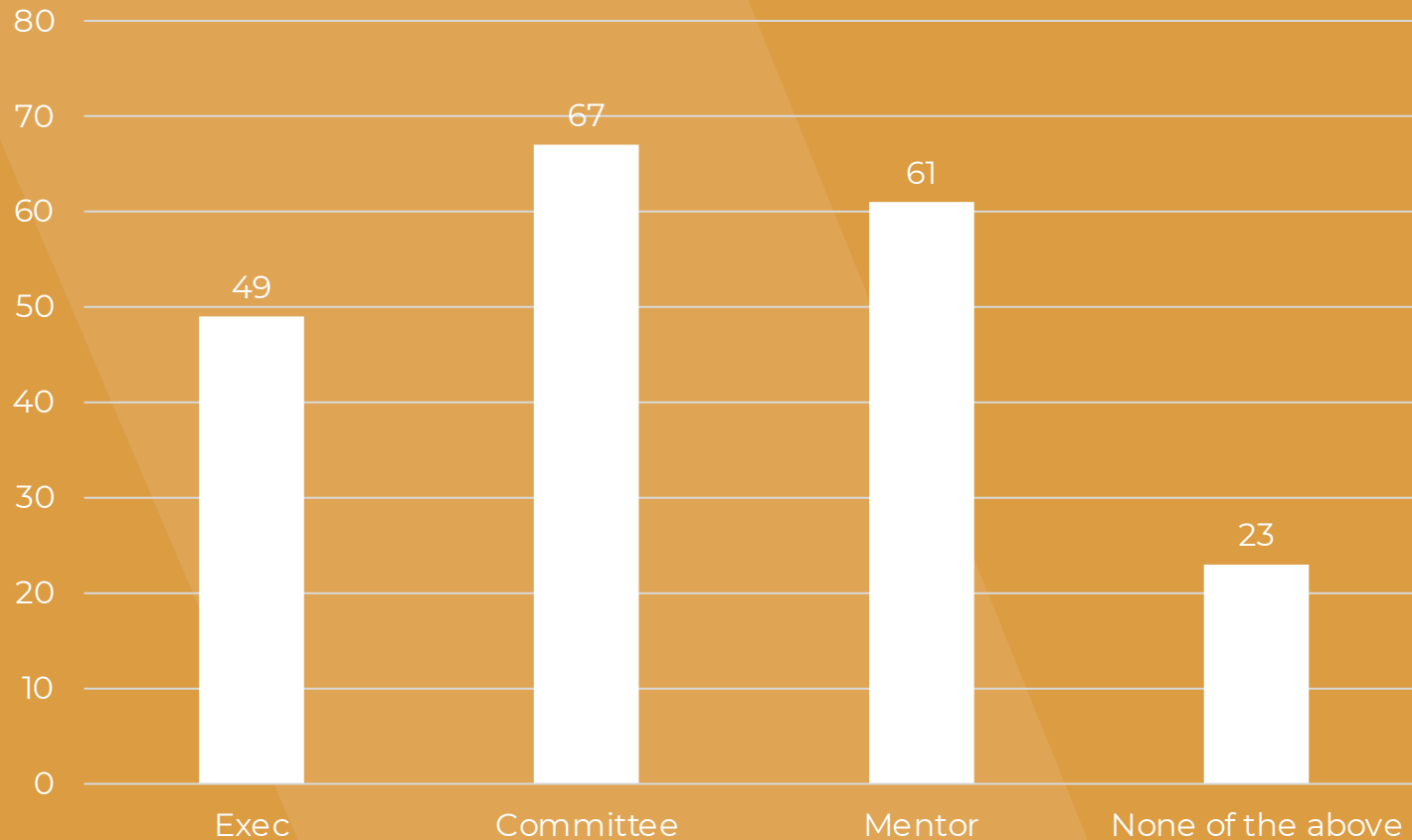
How long have you been a member of WACL (%)



- A more balanced representation of the membership, whose longevity reflects the heritage of the Club and our 2017 commitment to 'WACL for Life', as well as a healthy sample of newer members who are our future

Only 23% of the sample haven't served on the Exec, a Committee or been a mentor

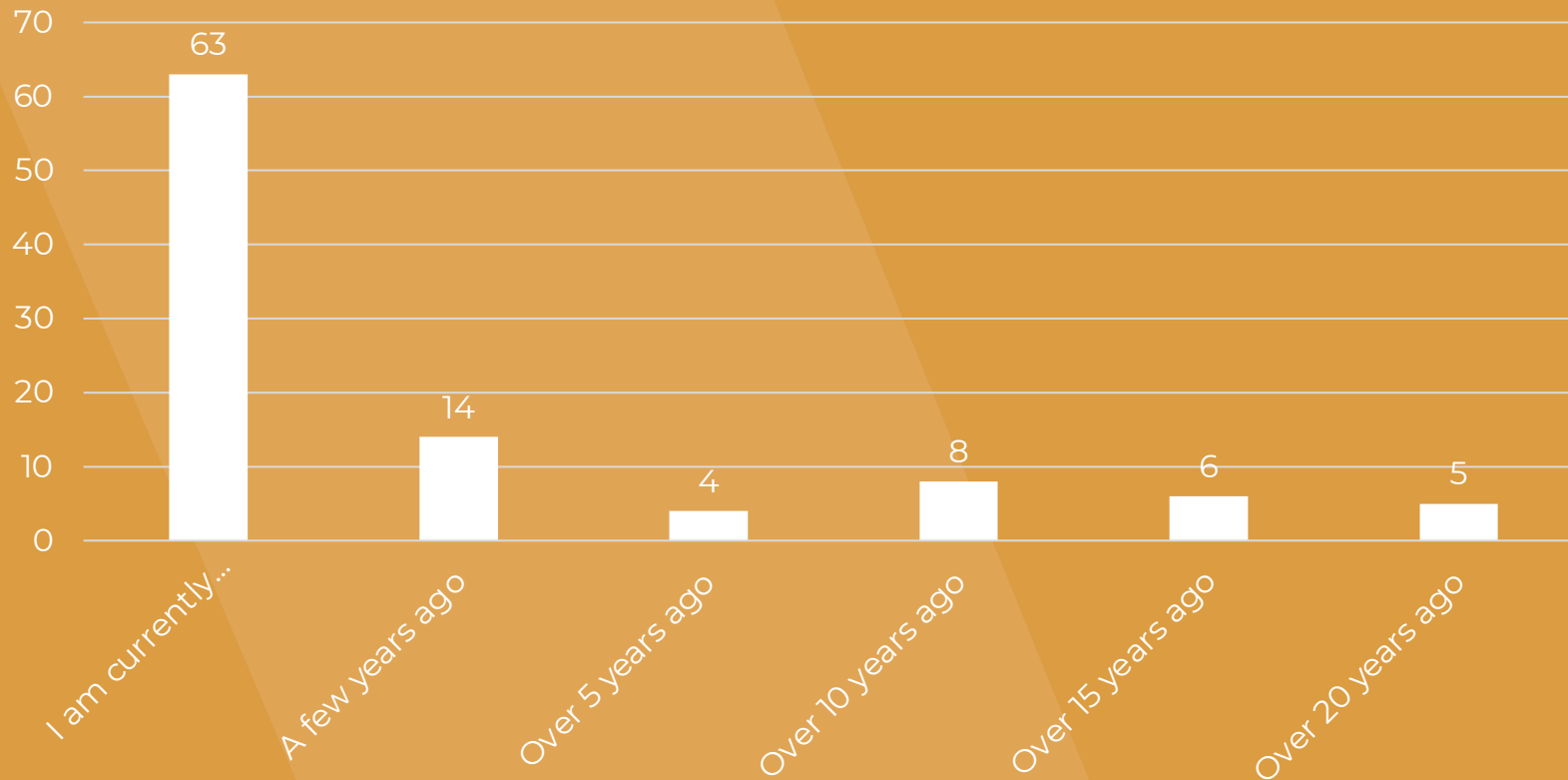
Have you ever served on any of the below (%)?



- This could be reflective of the age of the sample – the longer been in the Club, more likely to have contributed or engaged, OR indicative of a general lack of engagement among the missing third who did not participate in the survey

Three quarters of the sample have served on committees/the Exec, or mentored, within the last few years

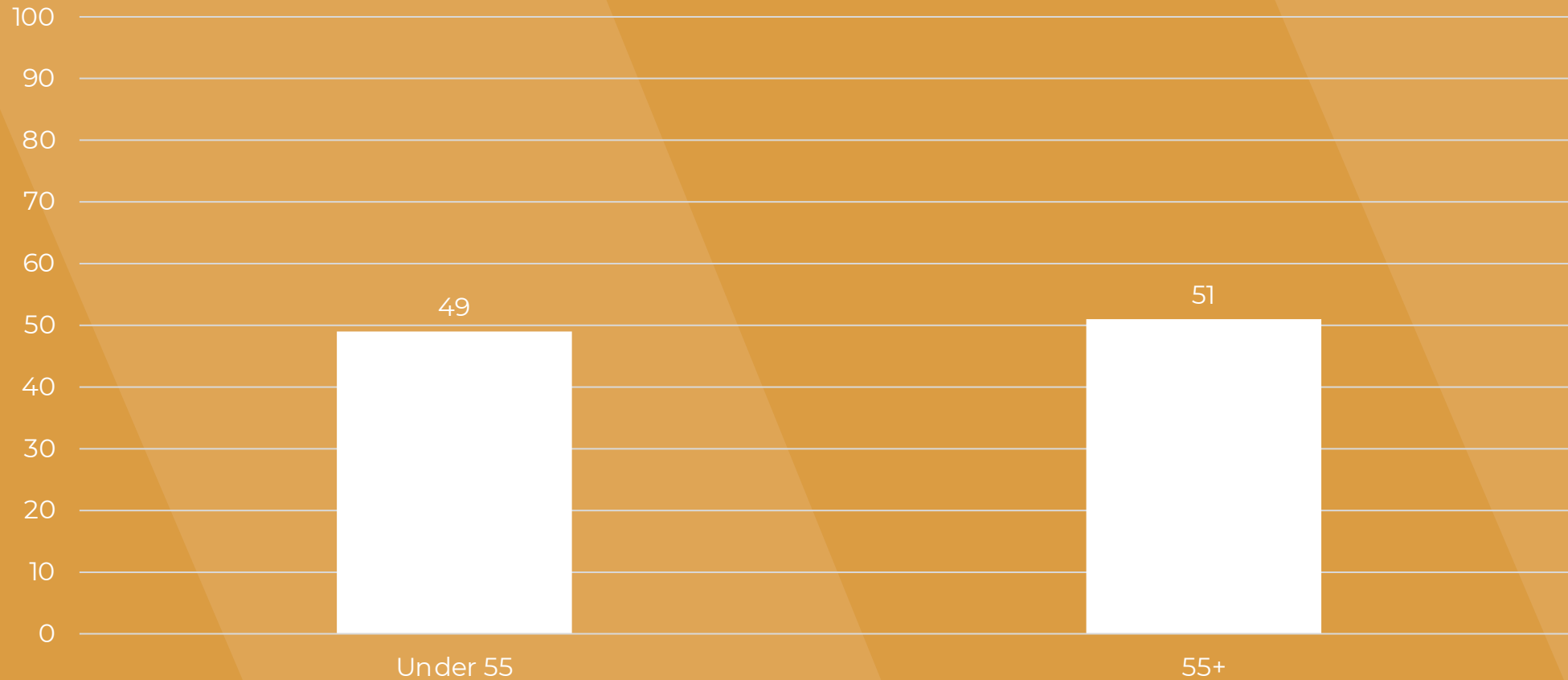
Have you ever served on any of the below.
Served on ANY by length of service (%)



- The high level of engagement may, in part, be a sampling issue (those who are more engaged are more likely to complete our questionnaire)
- Equally, as a volunteer-led organisation, it's likely that a high number of members have contributed in these ways, especially given recent mentoring expansion

The respondent age profile splits equally between those under 55 and those older

Please state your age (%)

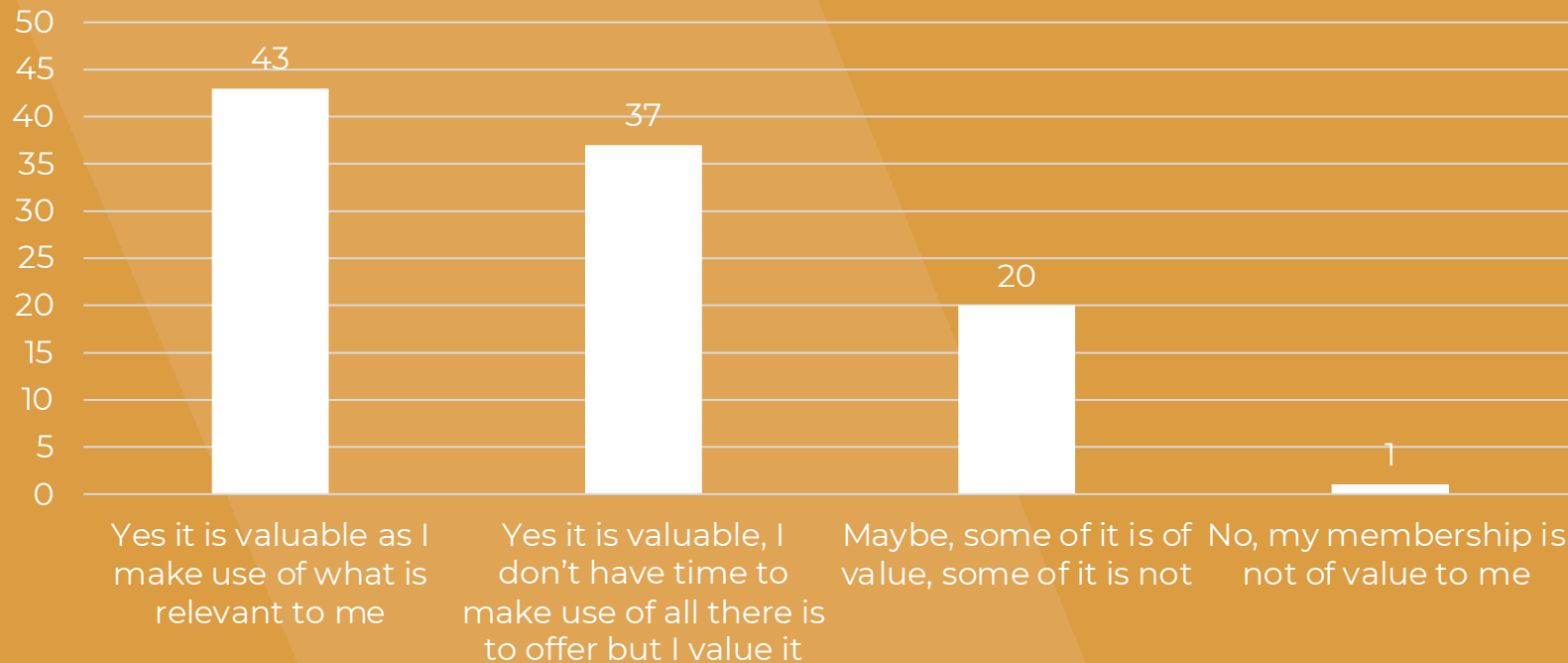


Valuing our WACL membership

WACL provides members with multiple benefits – long term friendships, professional and personal support, the change to create change within the industry and to ‘put something back’ into the industry we all love.

80% of members think they get good value from their membership, the remaining 20% are more ambivalent about their membership. Time is a barrier for 37%

Thinking about your membership - and the events, mentoring, networking, campaigning that is part of it - do you think your membership is of value to you (%) ?



- NB the concept of 'value' here is deliberately 'fat' – i.e. it's essentially up to the member to self-define if they feel it is emotionally or more rationally valuable to them
- 'Available time' is obviously not the only barrier to getting value

Diversity in WACL

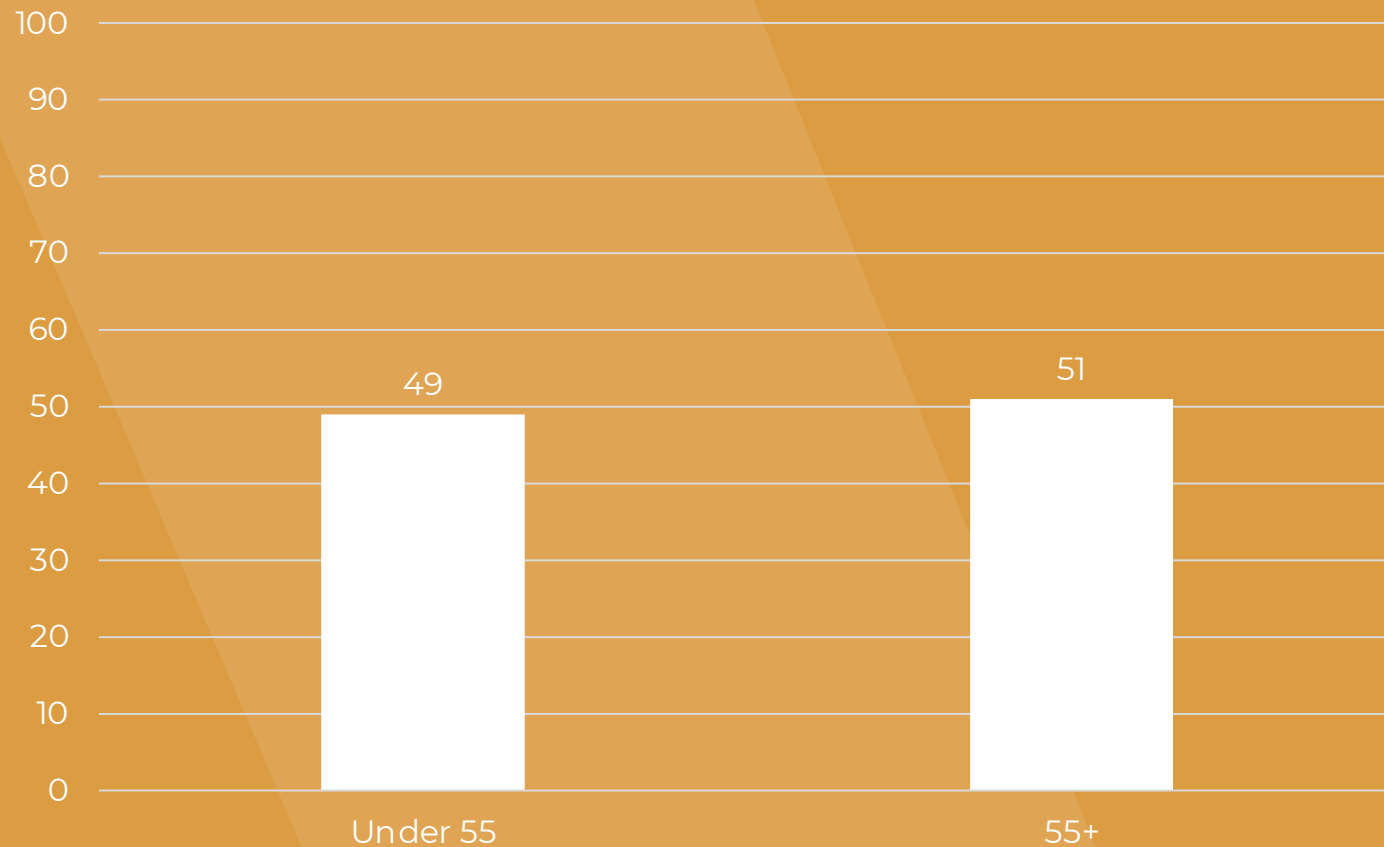
Respecting and appreciating what makes us different, in terms of age, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and neurodiversity.

How do you (self) identify? – 14 questions

1. Age
2. Member of an ethnic group
3. Religion
4. Gender/Transgender
5. Sexual Orientation/Part of the LGBTQIAP community
6. Disability
7. Neurodivergence
8. Family status
9. Carer status
10. Education level attained
11. University generation
12. Type of secondary school
13. Mental health
14. Mental health symptoms

On age, we are in line with the population but (obviously) far older than the industry

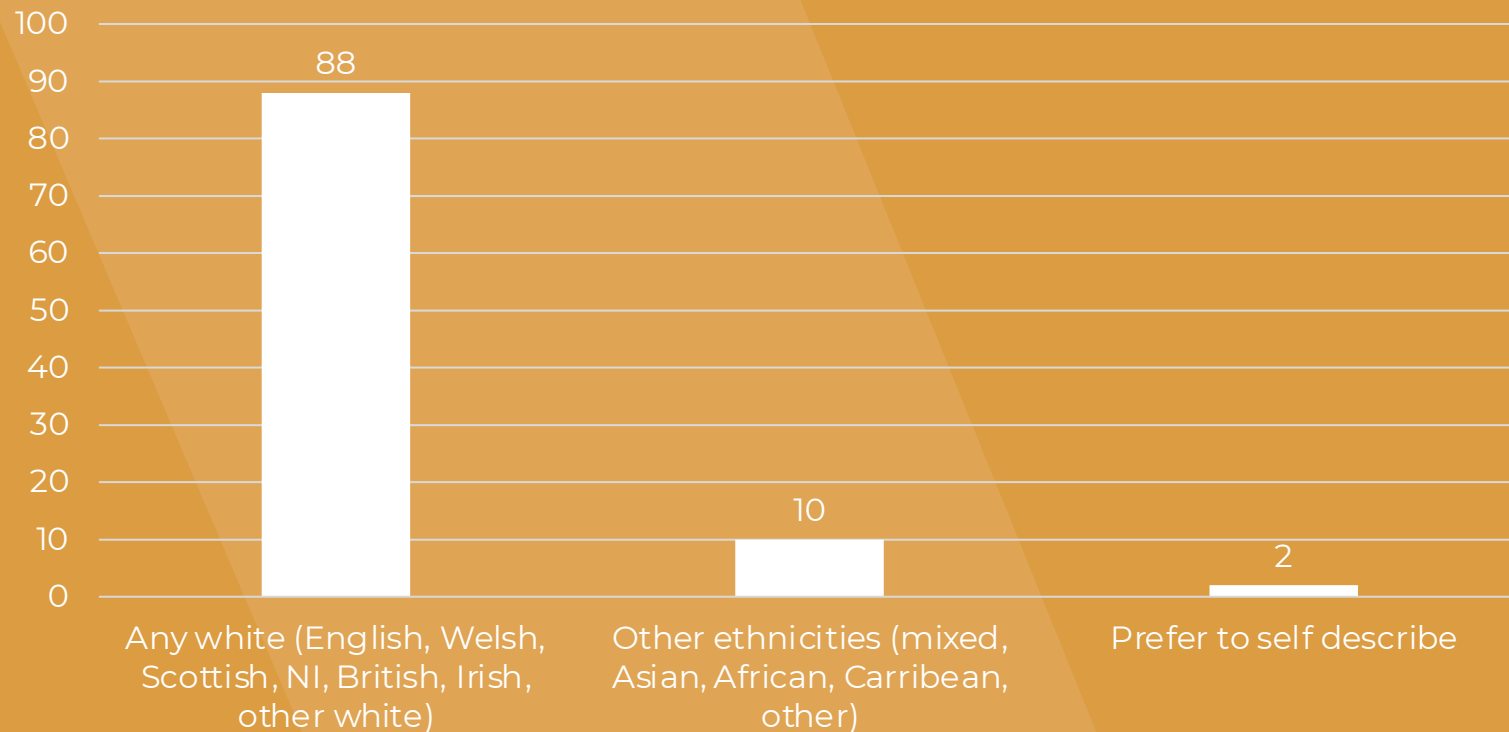
Please state your age (%)



- This age profile is broadly in line with the population -57% over 55 (source Census 2011) but obviously significantly older than the industry - where just 7% are over 55 – (source All In Census 2021)

Around 88% of the Club identify as white with 10% from other ethnicities

Do you think of yourself as a member of any particular ethnic group (absolute numbers unless otherwise stated)?

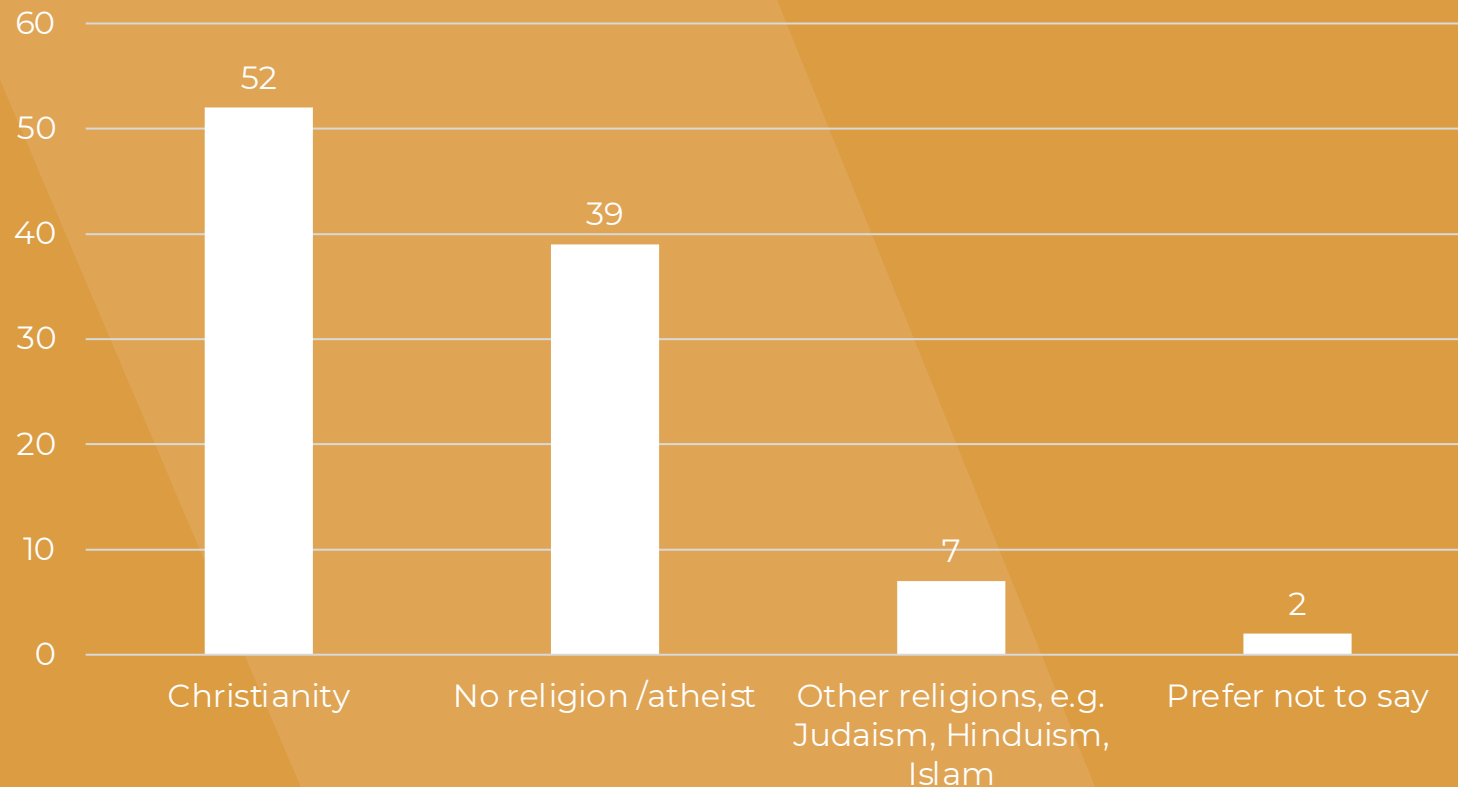


- NB Numbers too small to report specific ethnicities
- Broadly in line with 2021 Census data, but less diverse than the wider industry where 16% (vs 10% for WACL) are from an ethnically diverse background (source All In census 2021)

Do you think of yourself as a member of any particular ethnic group? The below options are based on the ONS UK approved list which we feel is the most useful list available in the UK today. If you feel uncomfortable answering this question, please feel free to select 'prefer not to say'. If you do not feel any of the options are relevant to you please select the 'prefer to self describe' option.

52% of the Club describe themselves as Christian, 39% as atheist or with no religion

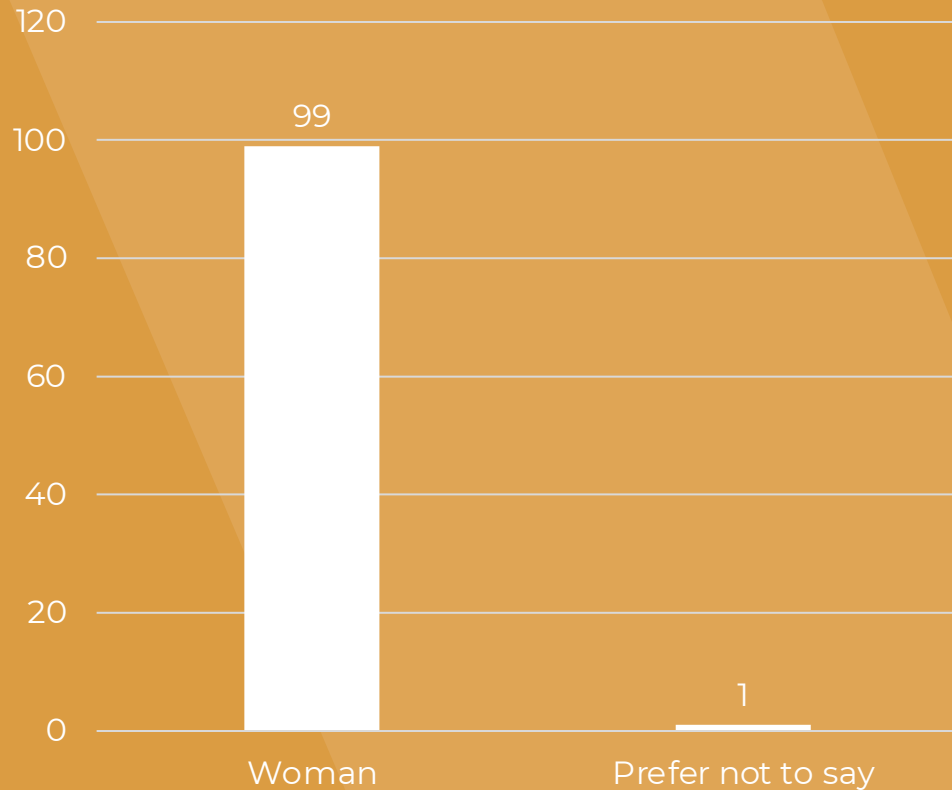
Do you identify with any of the following religions (%)?



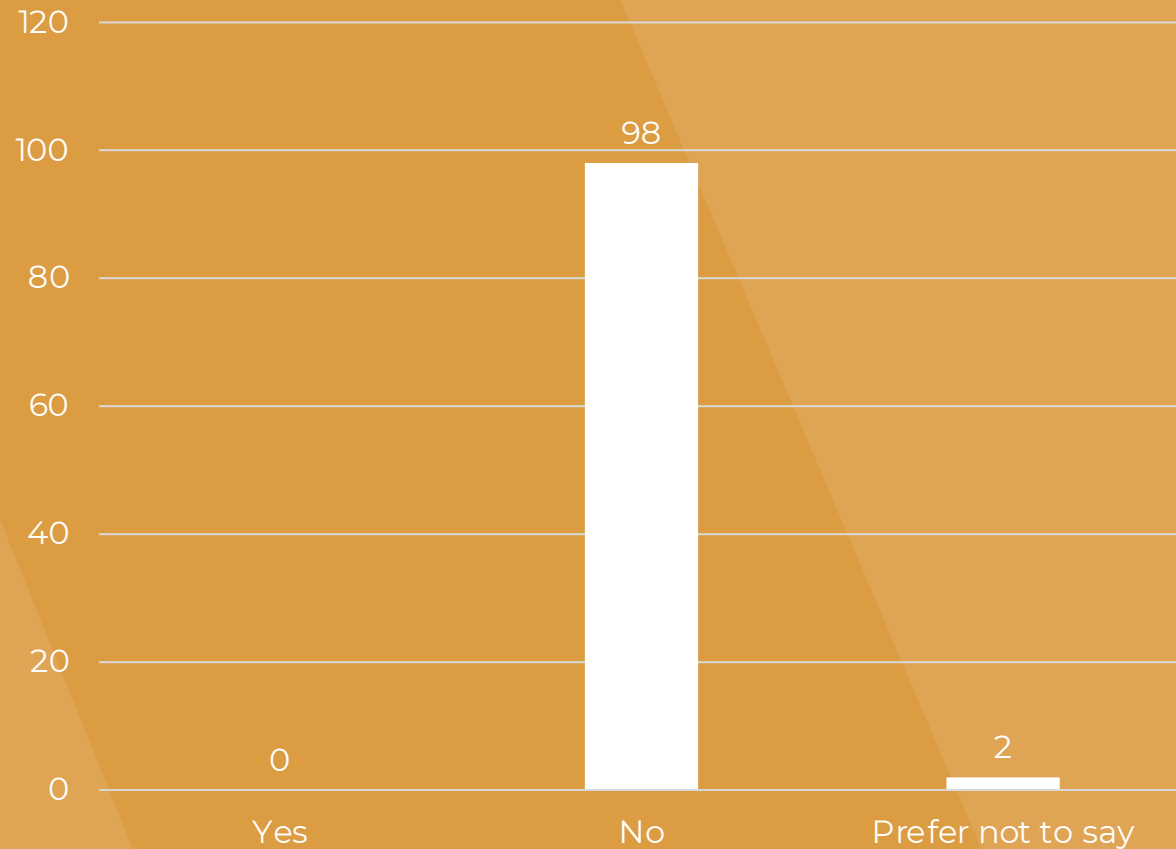
- Numbers too small to report on all the religions our members identified with
- WACL profile is broadly similar to UK Census data

99% of the Club identify as women

What gender do you identify with?



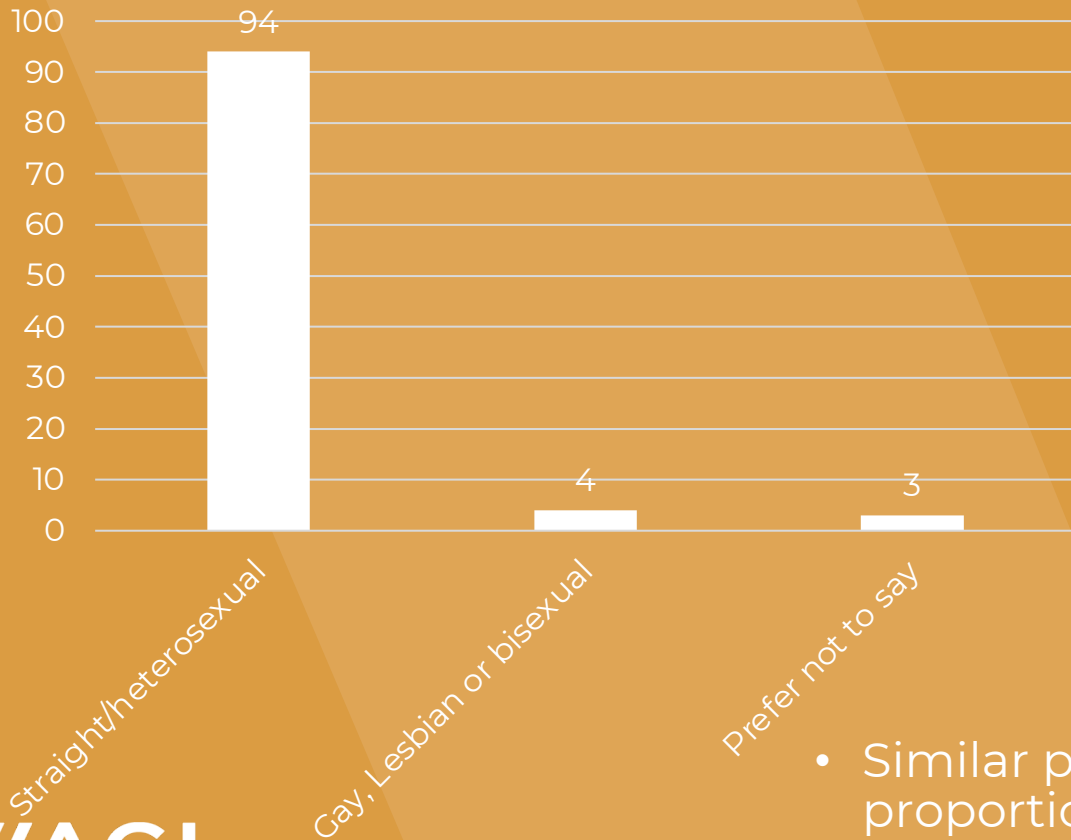
Do you identify as transgender?



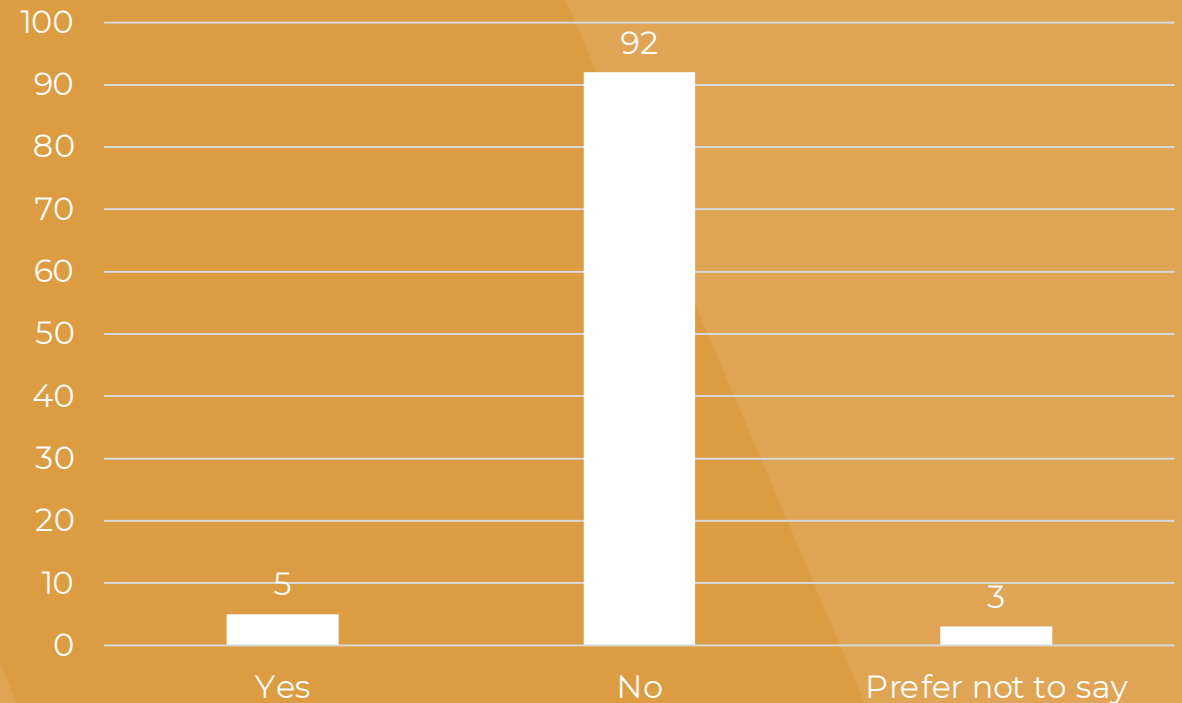
“Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to people whose gender identity, expression or behaviour is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Other identities considered to fall under this umbrella can include non-binary, gender fluid, and genderqueer – as well as many more.”

94% identify as heterosexual with 5% identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community

What is your sexual orientation (%)

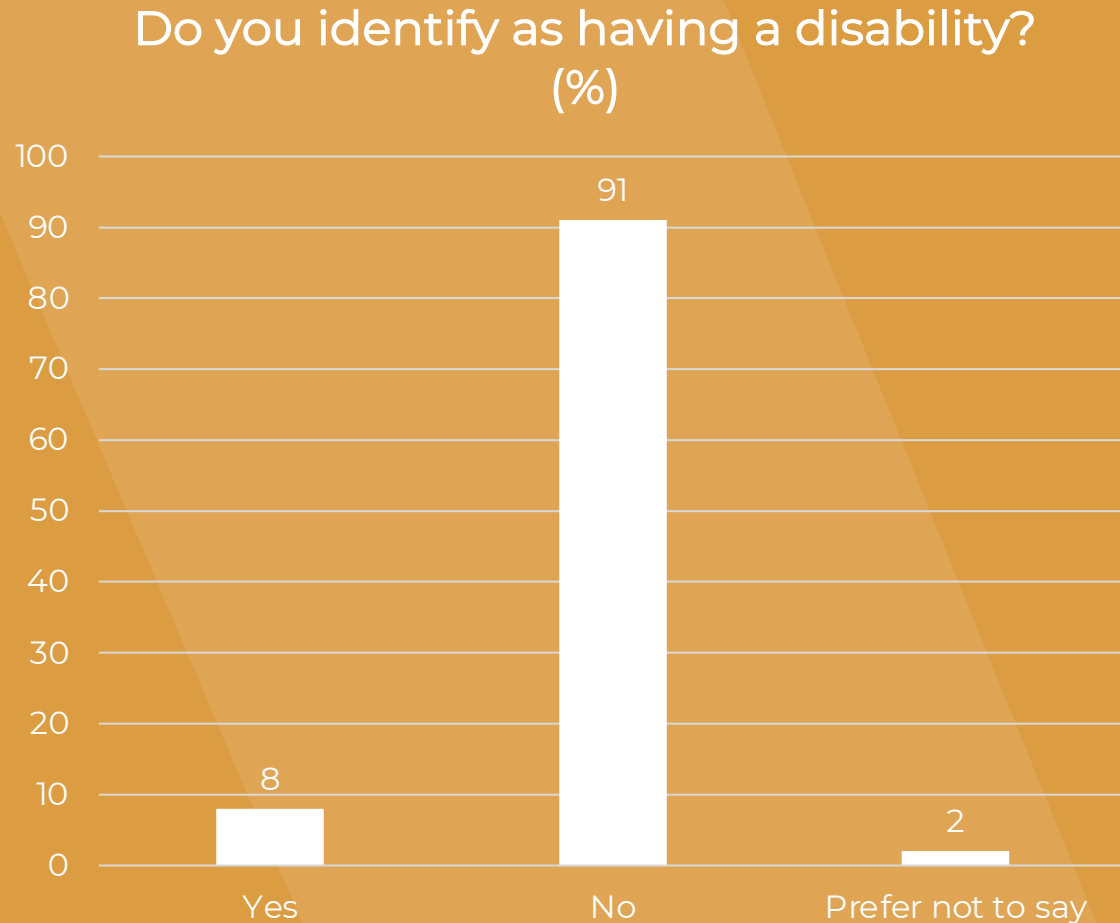


Do you consider yourself a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual (LGBTQ+) community (%)?



- Similar profile to the UK Census but a slightly higher proportion (8%) identify as LGBTQ+ in the wider industry (All In census)

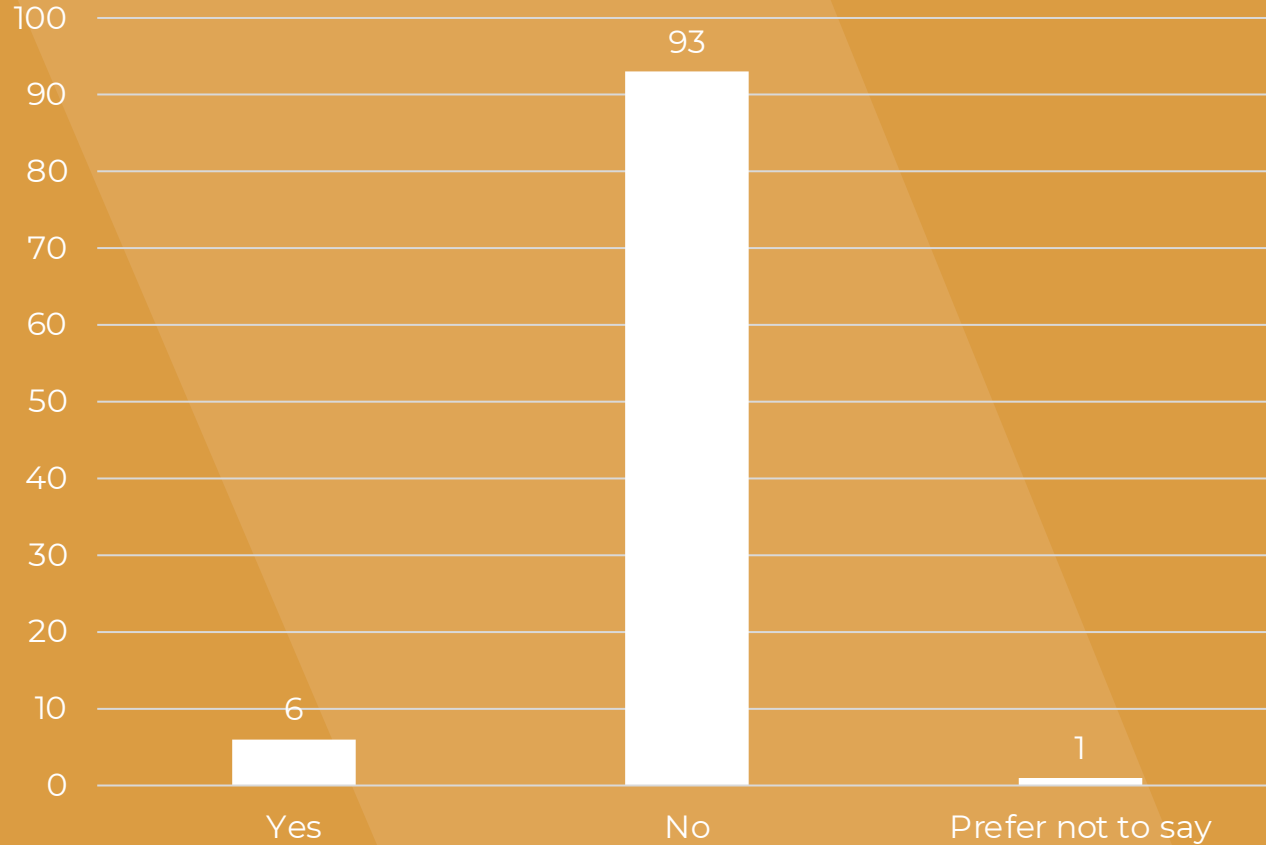
8% of the Club identify as having a disability – fewer than in both the wider industry and the UK



- Scope estimates that 19% of the working population and 46% of the retired population of the UK are living with a disability
- Within the industry, 10% identify as having a disability (All In Census)
- NB Numbers too small to report by type of disability

6% identify as neurodivergent

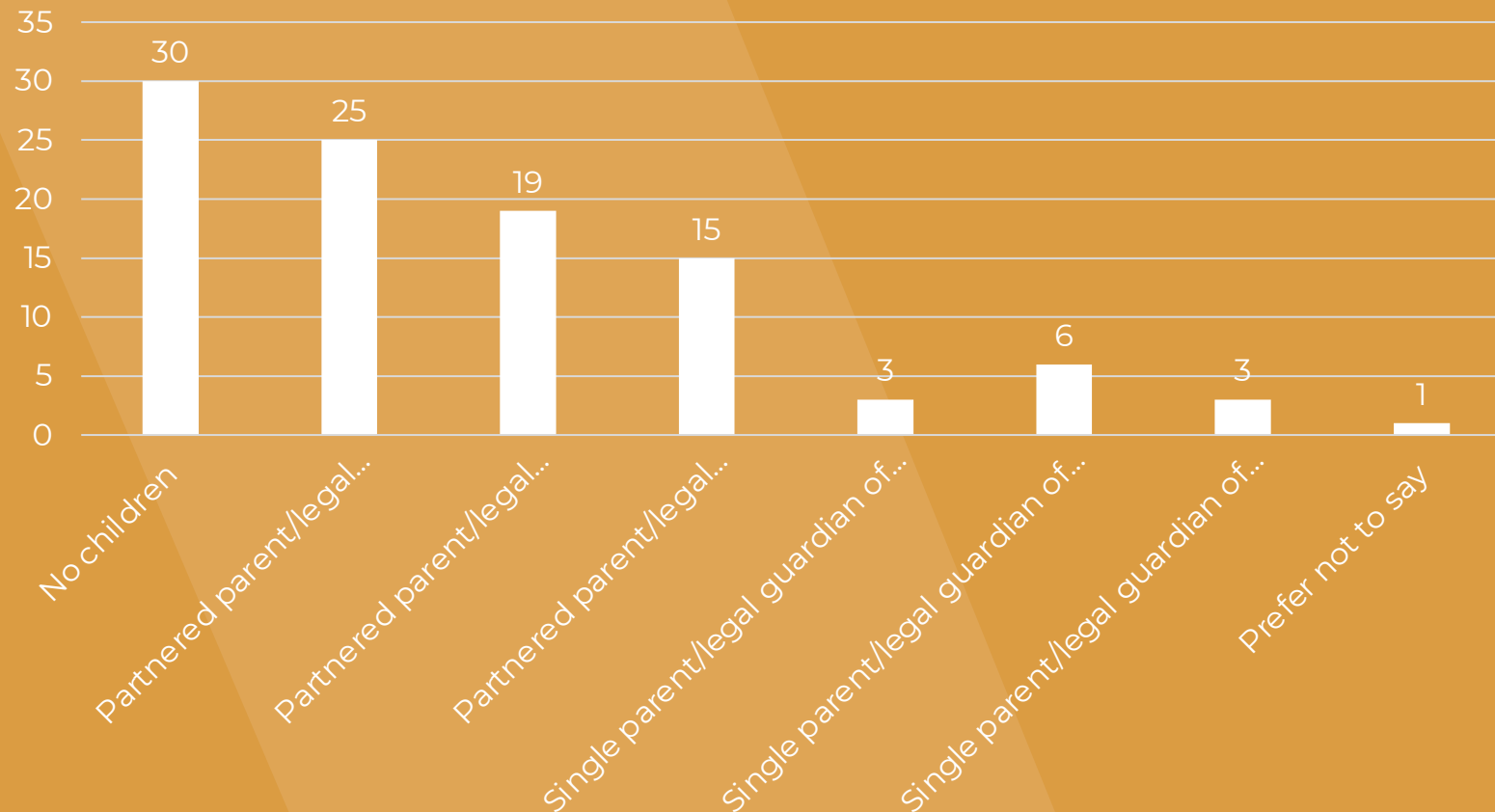
Do you identify as neurodivergent*? (%)



- Population-wide *estimate* of neuro-divergence is c15% - The UK Census asks: 'do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?'
- NB WACL numbers are too small to report by type of neuro divergence

59% of the Club are partnered with children, 12% are single parents and 30% do not have children

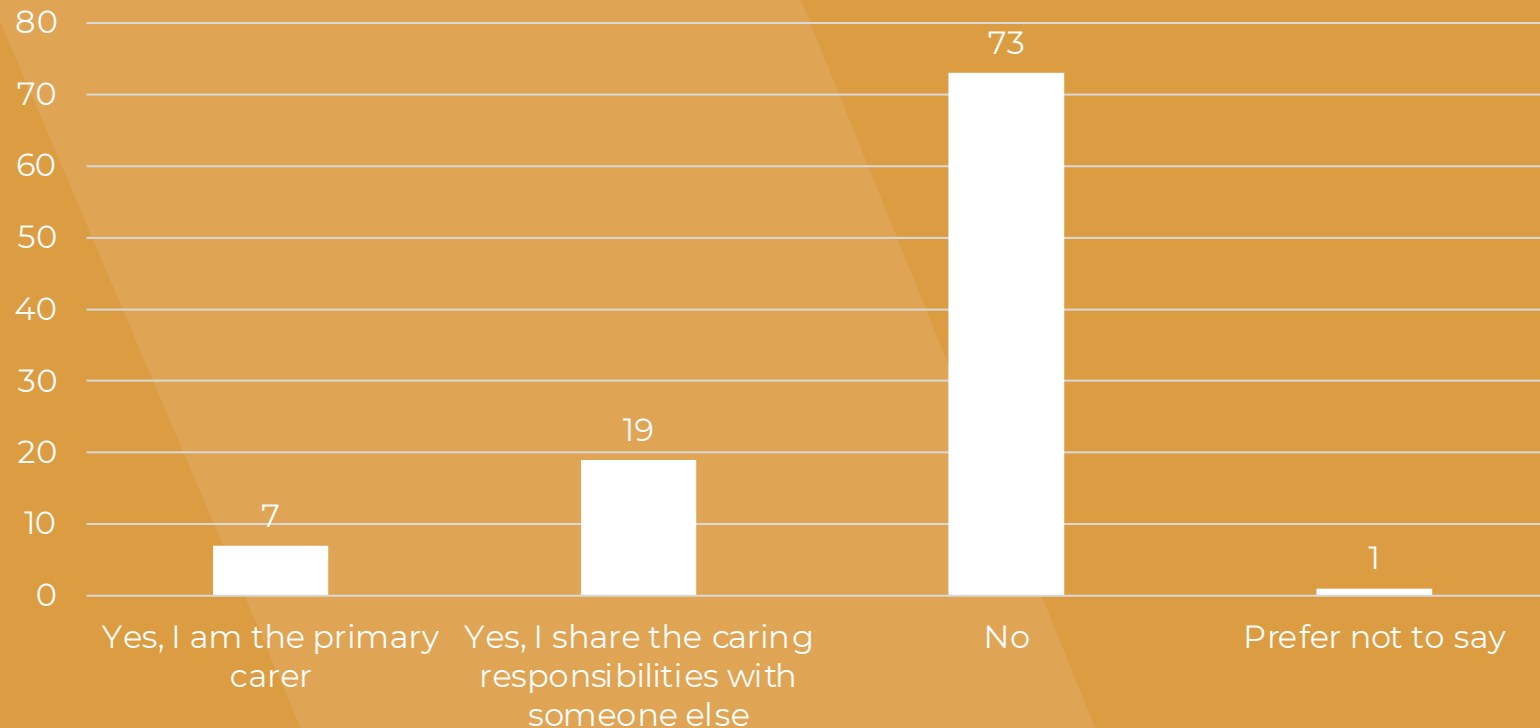
What is your family status?



- ONS estimate is for 70% of families with children – exactly the same as within WACL.
- 11.5% of the sample are lone parent families
- The proportion of members over 55 without children is 38% (vs 22% for under 55)
- This may reflect the culture that existed in the industry that forced women to choose between career and family

Around a quarter of the Club has additional caring responsibilities

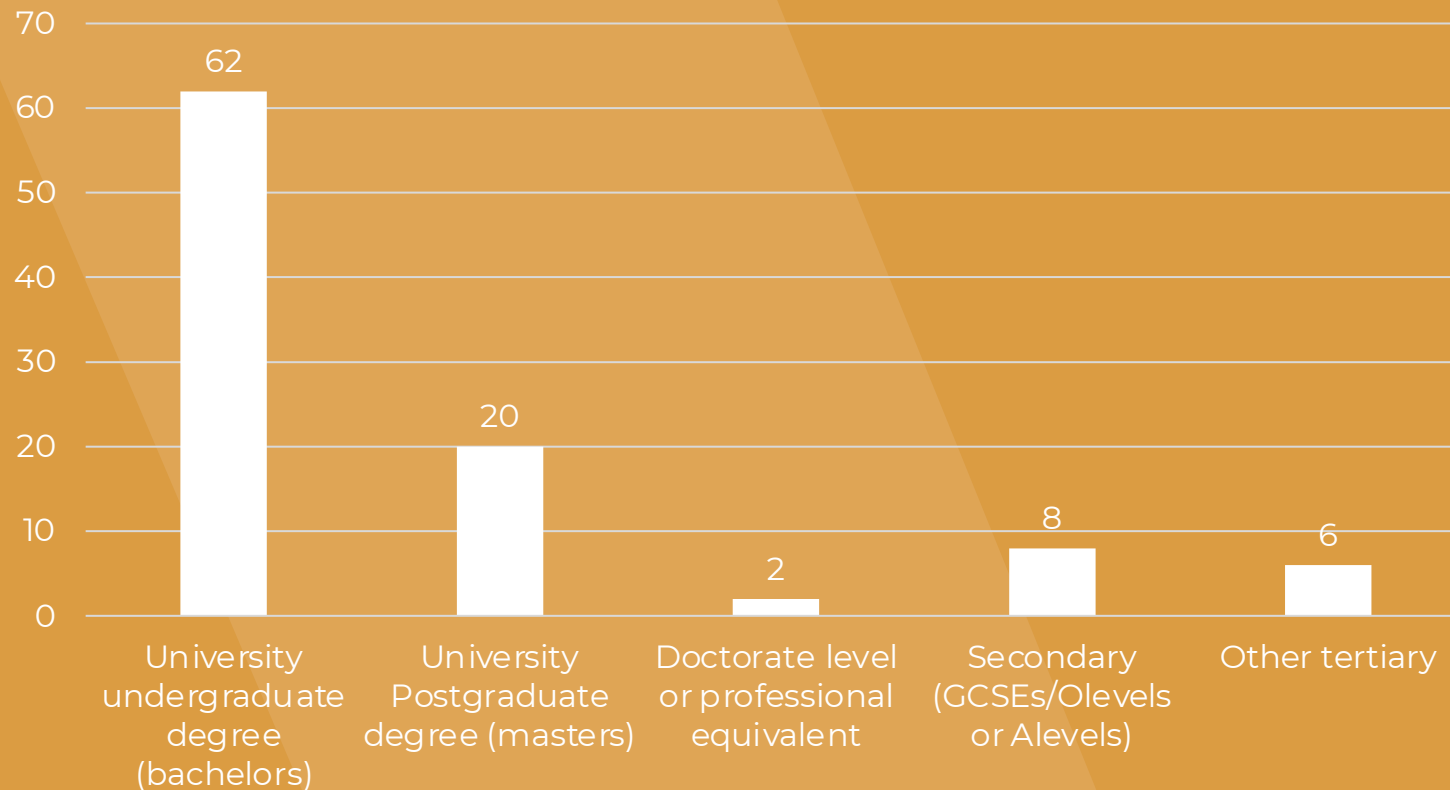
Are you a primary or joint carer for somebody who is not a child? For example a partner, parent, or other relative?



- Under 55s are significantly more likely to have additional caring responsibilities than 55+ (26% vs 12%)
- The 'sandwich' generation - caring for children and parents at the same time?
- According to Carers UK, 1 in 8 adults (12.5%) are carers

84% of the Club have university-level education or higher

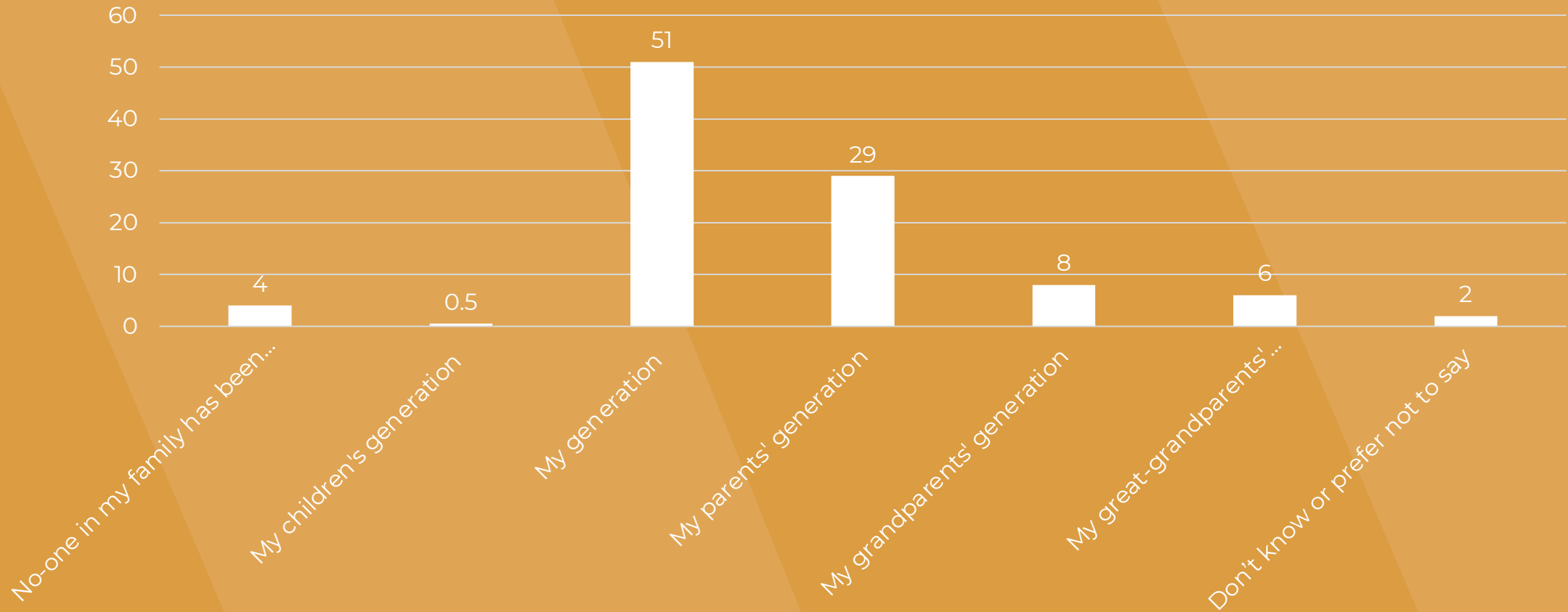
What is the last level of formal education you completed (%)?



- The latest release from ONS (2017) suggests that 42% of UK adults hold a university degree

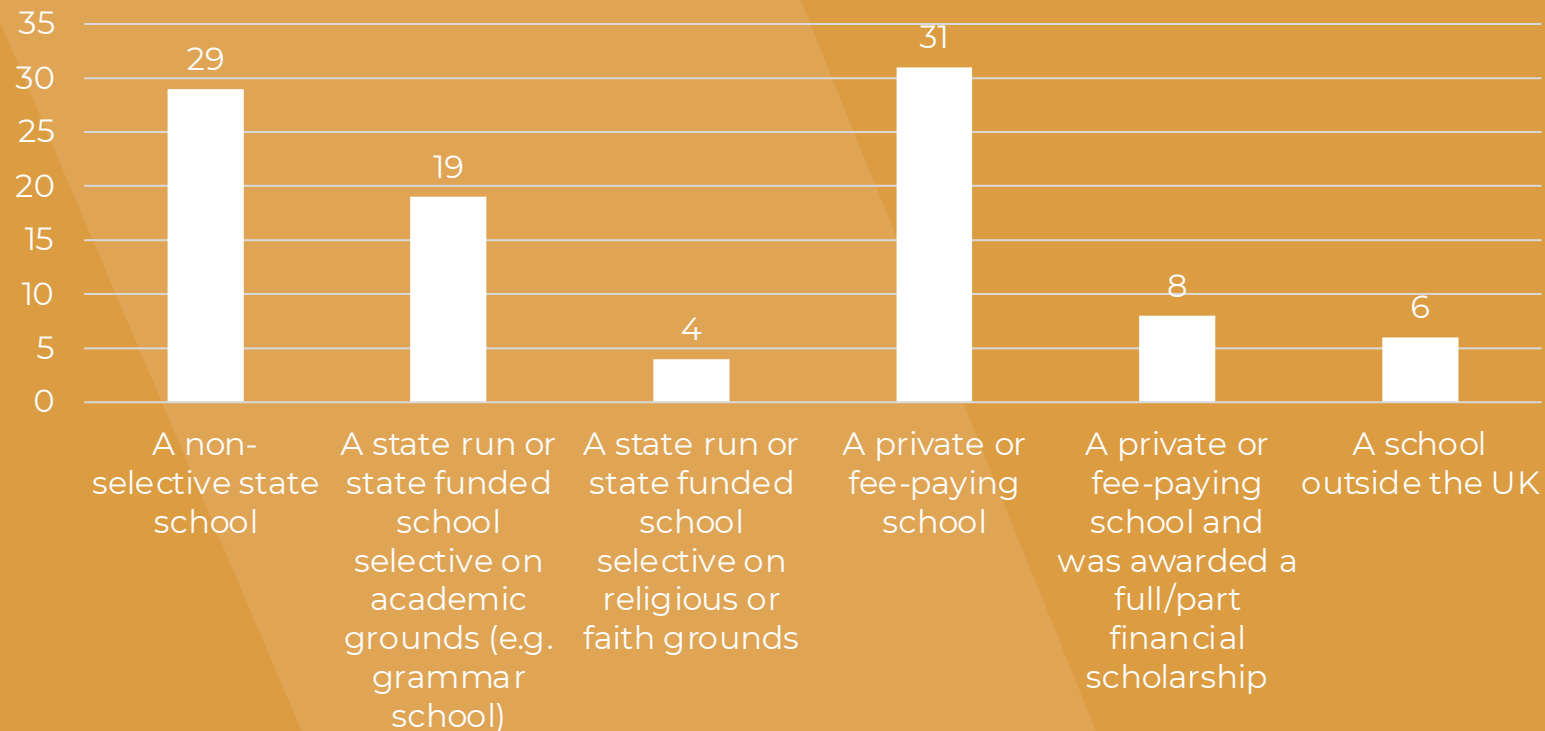
Most Club members come from families where they or their parents were the first generation to go to university

Which generation of your family was the first to go to university (%)?



39% of the Club were privately educated at secondary school level

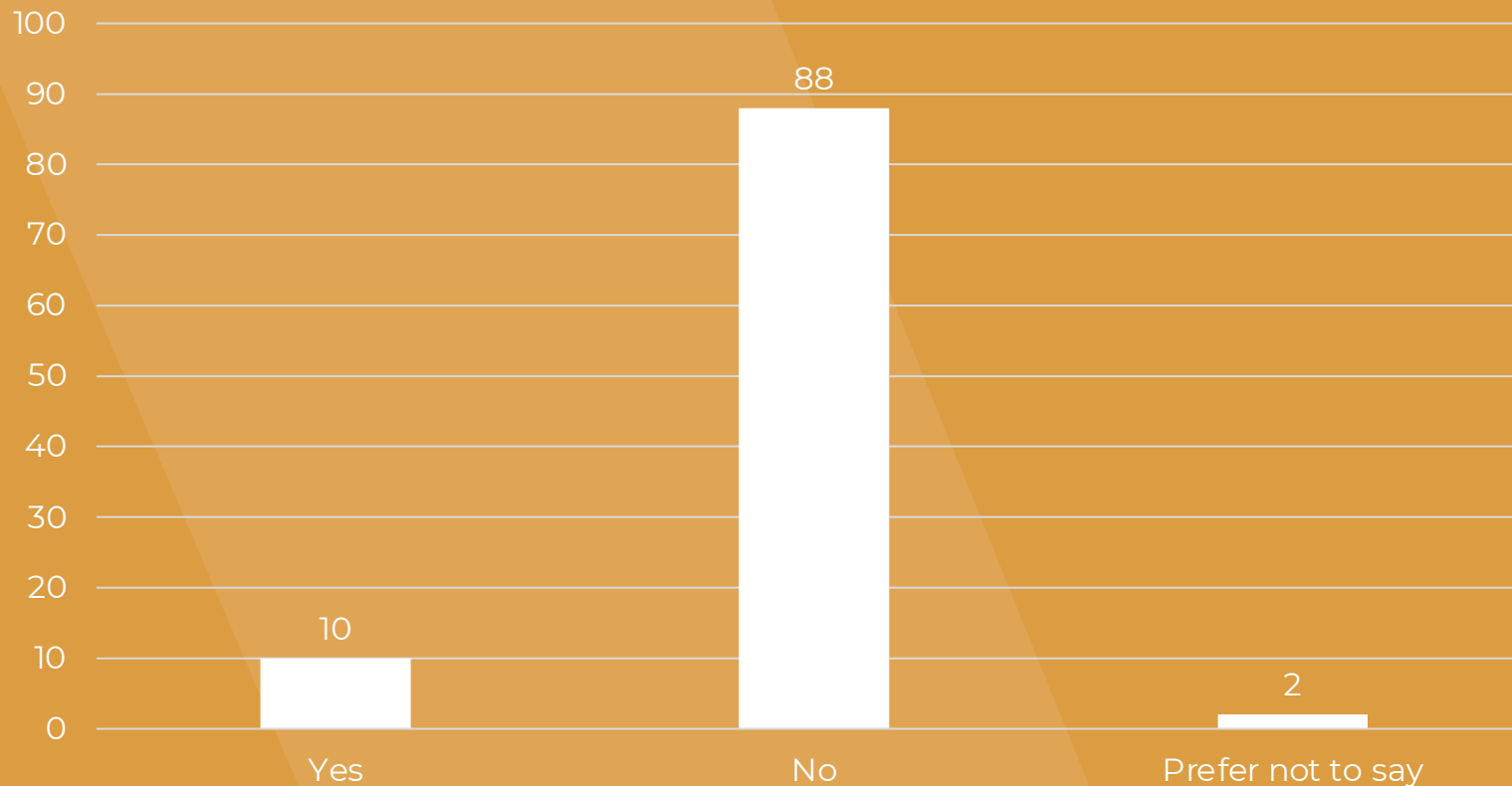
What type of secondary school did you attend? If you attended more than one school, please select the type of school that you mainly attended (%).



- 39% of members went to fee-paying schools - an identical proportion to those in 'top positions' in UK business/ institutions
- By contrast, 7% of the total UK population has been educated privately

One in ten of the Club identify as having a mental health condition

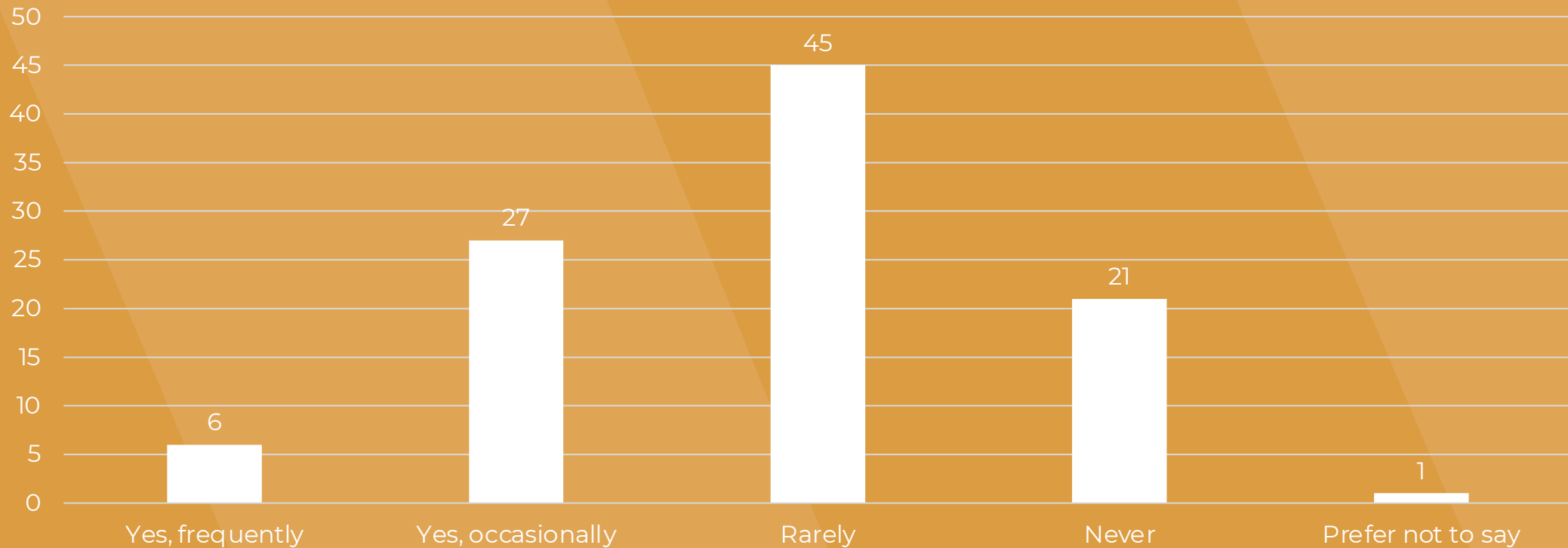
Do you consider yourself to have a mental health condition?



- According to Mind, 25% will experience a mental health problem in a year, and 1 in 6 (17%) report experiencing a common mental health problem in any given week

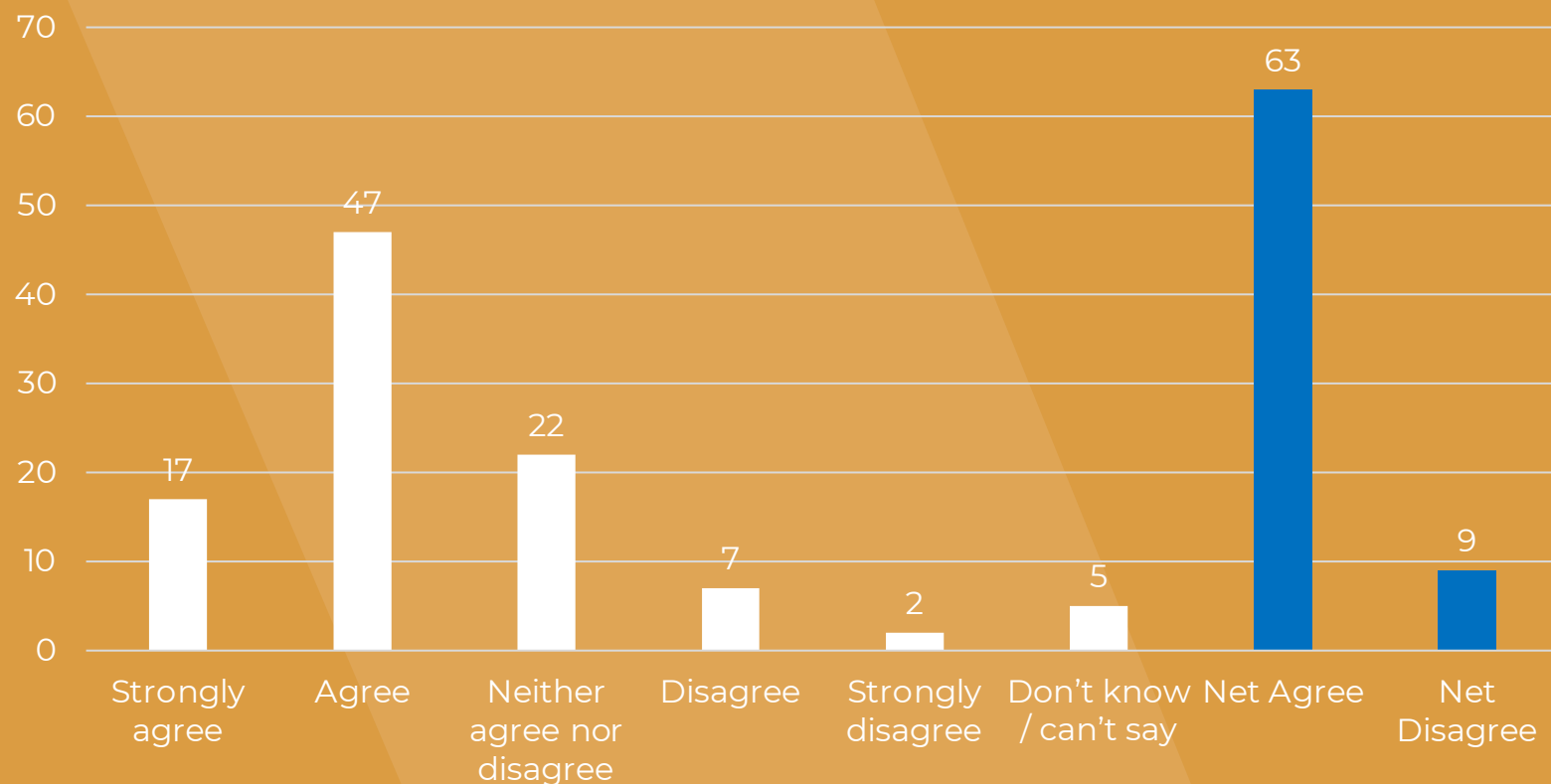
Around a third of the Club suffer from symptoms associated with poor mental health and 80% have suffered some symptoms at some point

Do you suffer from symptoms associated with poor mental health such as depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, continual tiredness, or other symptoms (%)?



Around 2/3 of the Club believe we should be doing more to increase Club diversity, one in ten disagree and a fifth aren't sure

WACL should be doing more to increase Club diversity (%)



- The answers to this question highlight the differences of opinion, and perhaps some confusion around the definition of 'diversity' and, in particular, what it means for WACL as an all female professional club

Verbatim quotes illustrate the breadth of opinion on diversity

I don't feel there are issues about diversity...but the club has got a bit 'public school girl love in' over the last 8 years or so.... It doesn't feel like a professional woman's organisation, more a girlie love club

Associate members should be re-named to reflect age and experience. I believe the club to be ageist

I believe everyone is making the best effort to be inclusive and make change

I feel that the inclusion and diversity conversation has taken over the club

As a feminist organisation I think we need to have a broader discussion in a safe environment to explore some of the really challenging issues and differences of opinion about trans women

The whole (D&I) thing has become overblown. I am not qualified to express an opinion

I'm very supportive of the move to increase diversity in the Club: it keeps us relevant and influential in our industry

I believe that WACL has worked hard within the parameters of its membership criteria to make the Club more diverse and it has been active in promoting the Club as a welcoming place for people of all walks of life

I 100% agree that we need to be more diverse

I am a sound believer in diversity, so where are the disabled members?

These were not words used in my active days at WACL. We accepted everyone and didn't question members

Verbatim quotes illustrate the breadth of opinion on diversity

I joined 25 years ago and in that time the world has changed. I don't want to learn how to lead because I'm not doing it anymore. But I have a huge interest in diversity and what women want

I sit on boards these days, I hope that I'm an ally and an advocate for all things to do with inclusion, diversity, but I don't necessarily connect with a position or a platform that WACL has adopted. I think we could have some nuanced and interesting debates about what the right interventions are.

'I definitely felt as an odd woman out in terms of being a woman of colour and being foreign, and again, not having the deep and long standing histories and relationships with others in the room. I only went to a handful of events. But I really felt that really consistently at those events.'

Diversity also includes age. XXX says we are doing things for older people because we just ran a thing on the menopause. Well, that's great – but that was years ago for me. I'm 70!

I think the trans thing is really difficult. I'm chair of x steering committee and it dominates all dialogue at the moment and is incredibly toxic and divisive. Everybody's unhappy but I'm not sure we can do anything about that. So, I would urge caution on that one

I would like to include age diversity into our inclusion and diversity plan. WACL should be a club for all ages .

Diversity section - summary

- WACL is (unsurprisingly) older than the ad industry but broadly in line with UK
- We are more white and more able-bodied than the industry and the UK
- In terms of sexual orientation and religious belief, WACL is more closely aligned to the UK, although more of the industry identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community than within WACL
- Around 70% of members are a parent/legal guardian (exactly the same as ONS estimate) and 25% are caring for another adult (vs 12.5% estimated for UK adults)
 - A significantly higher proportion of older members have no children than younger members
 - Significantly more under 55s have additional caring responsibilities
- Where WACL is most different from the UK norm is in terms of education: 85% have a degree (vs 42% UK adults) and 39% went to a fee-paying school (vs 7% of UK pop)
- 10% declare a mental health condition but around a third experience symptoms of mental ill health, which is lower than UK stats from Mind
- 6% are neurodivergent (vs. c15% pop wide)
- Two thirds of members believe WACL should do more to improve diversity within the Club

Inclusivity in WACL

Inclusive cultures make people feel culturally and socially welcomed, respected and valued for who they are as an individual, regardless of their background. 11 questions were asked about 'belonging' and 'psychological safety' regarding membership

7 (Belonging) questions asked on a 5 point agree/disagree scale 'How you feel being a member...'

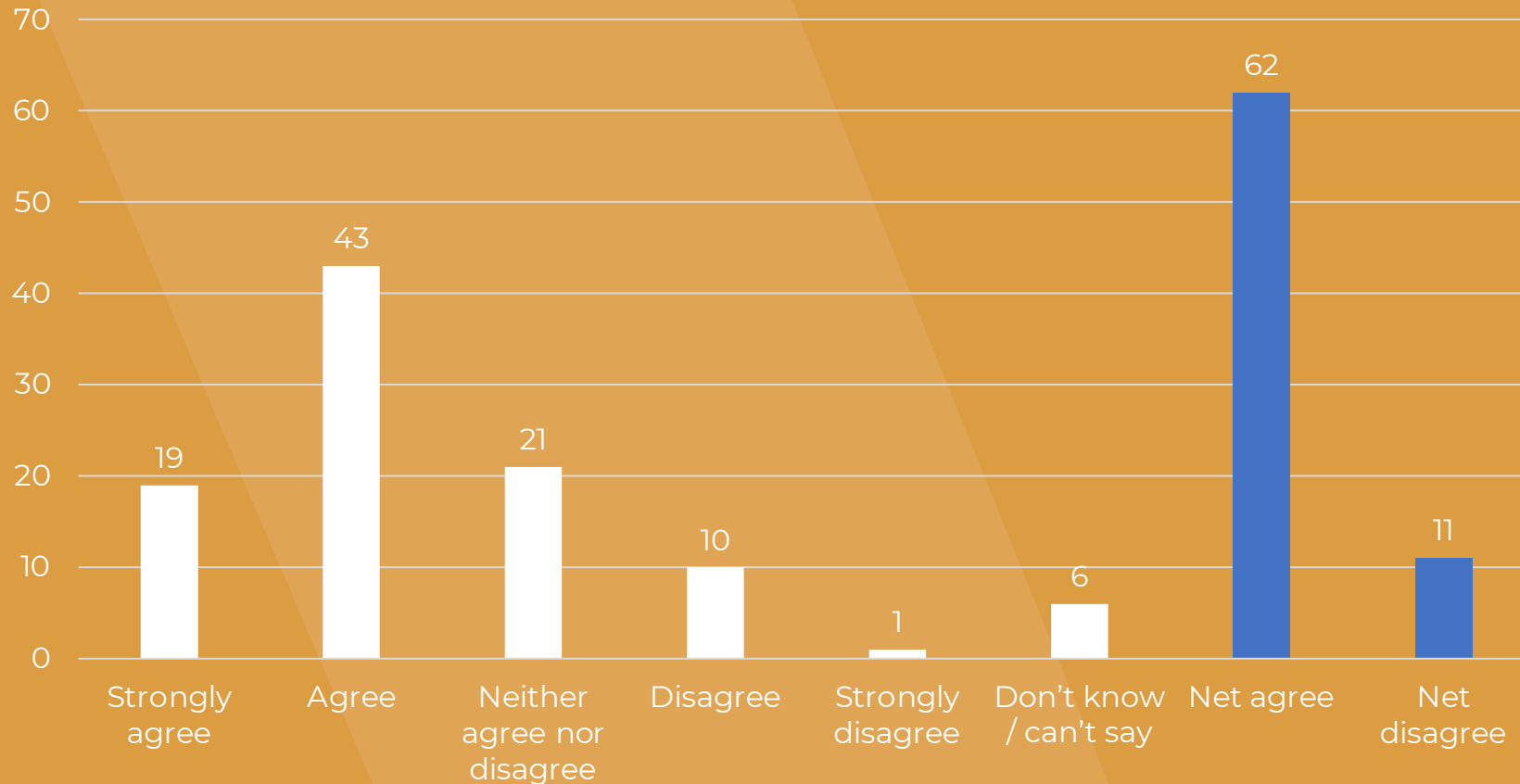
1. I feel like I belong at WACL
2. I often feel like I am "the only one" at WACL
3. At WACL, I can disclose my whole identity to other members. I do not mask or downplay any aspect of my physical, cultural, spiritual or emotional self at work.
4. I have experienced discomfort based on my identity (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation etc) in my time as a member of WACL
5. People at WACL sometimes reject others for being different.
6. People at WACL have to fit a certain mould to thrive in the Club
7. Being a member of WACL, my (unique) skills and talents are valued and recognised

4 (Psychological safety) questions asked on a 5 point agree/disagree Scale . 'Your WACL Experience is...'

8. No one at WACL would deliberately act in a way that undermines me
9. I would feel comfortable intervening when I witness inappropriate behaviour at WACL (e.g., harassment, discrimination, prejudice, micro aggression etc.) without fear of rejection
10. It is safe to take a risk at WACL
11. It is easy to voice a contrary view at WACL

In terms of overall 'belonging', 62% feel they belong , with 1 in 10 disagreeing and around a quarter unsure

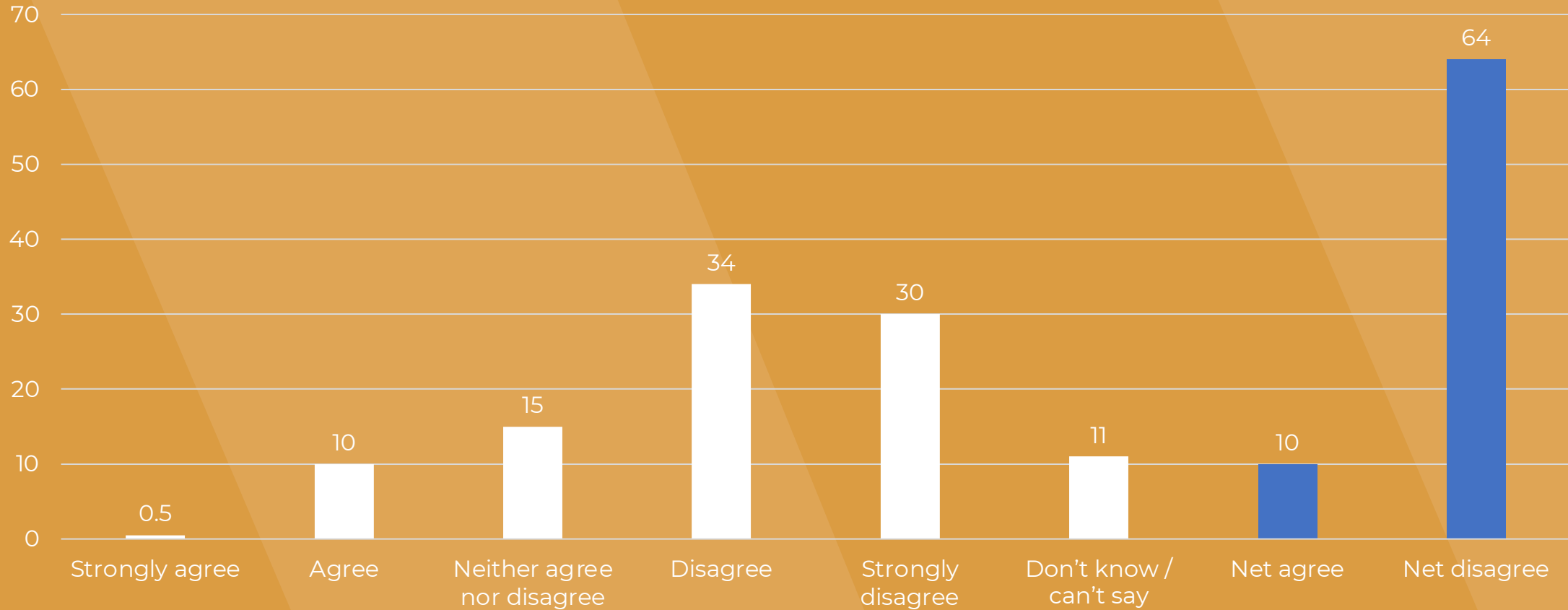
I feel like I belong at WACL (%)



- There were no statistically significant differences between Club members on this question – either by age, length of tenure or type of membership

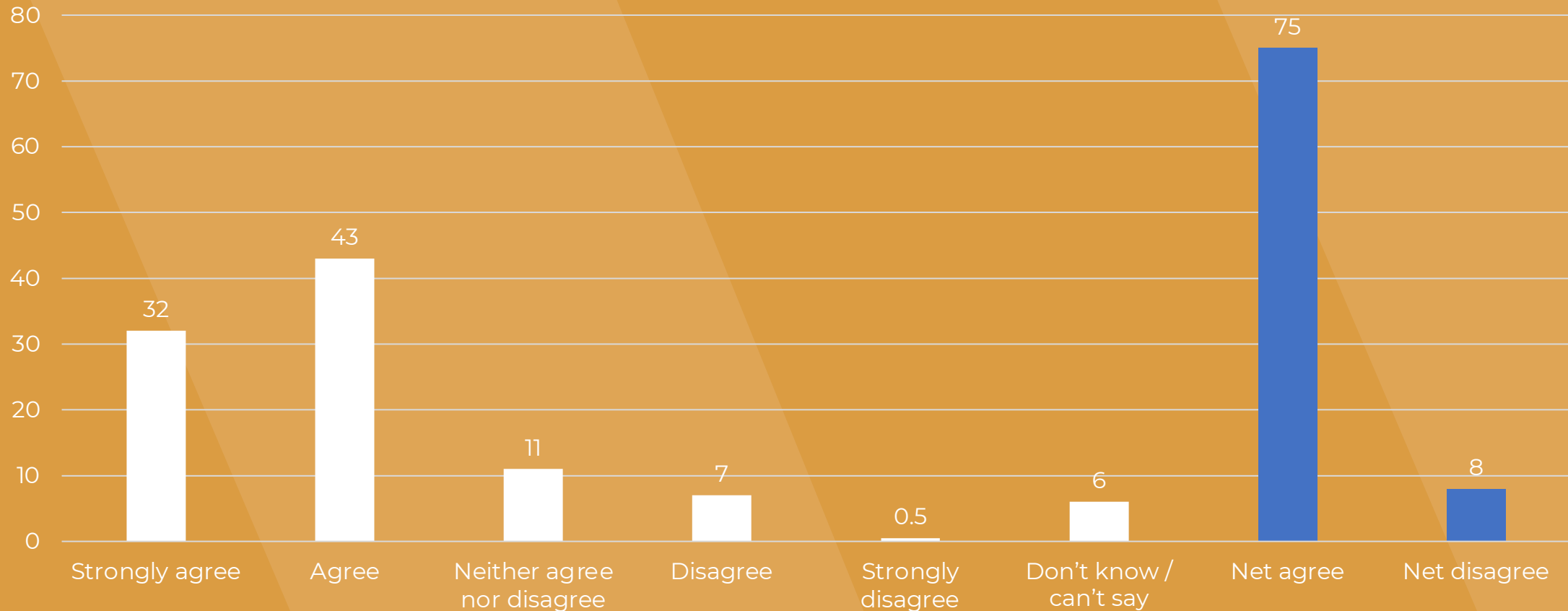
Similarly, 64% do not feel they are 'the only one' within WACL, with just one in ten feeling they are, and a quarter unsure

I often feel like I am 'the only one' at WACL(%)



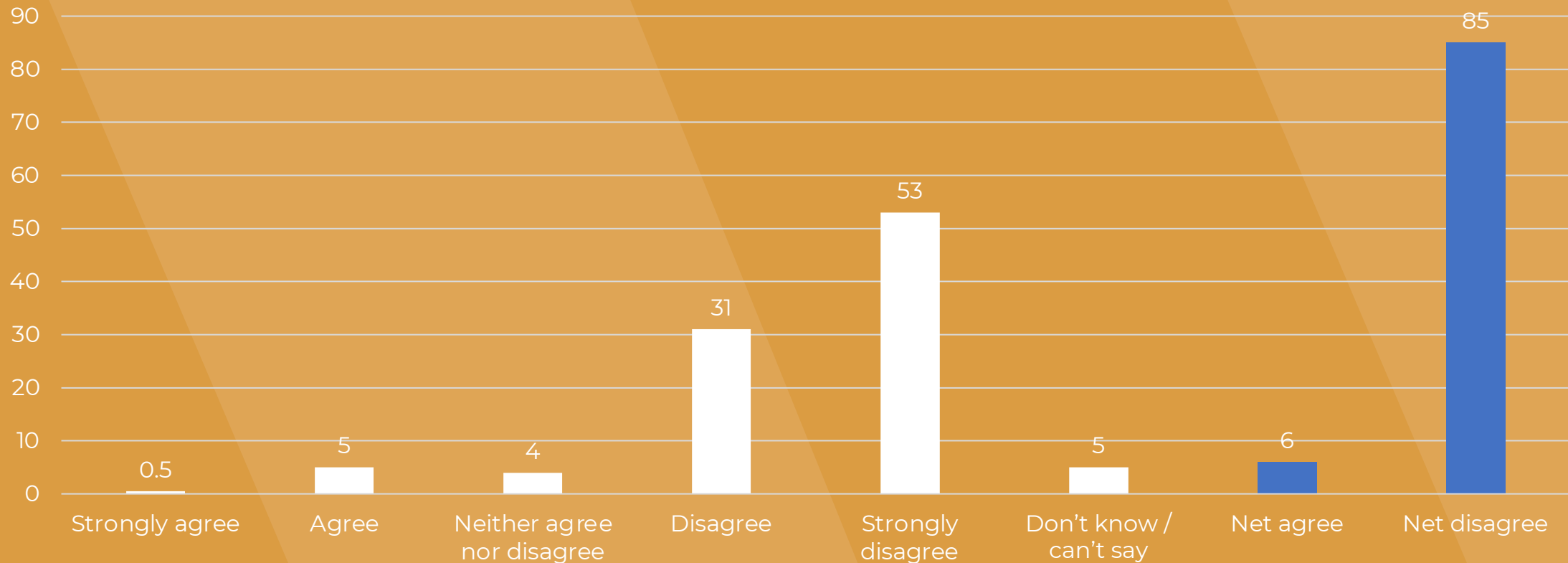
On the other hand, a higher proportion – 75% – feel comfortable disclosing their identity, although 8% disagree and 17% are unsure

At WACL I can disclose my whole identity to other members* (%)



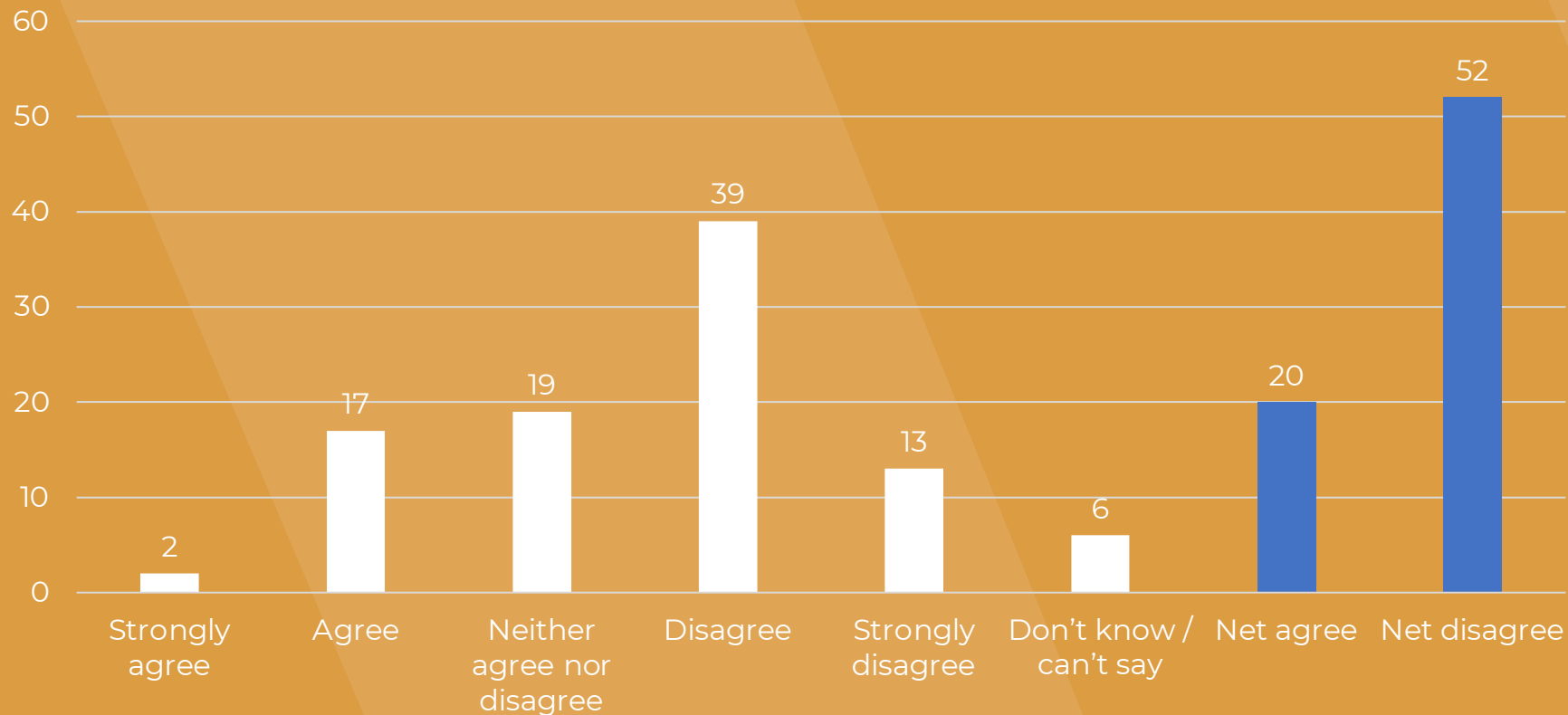
Only 6% have felt discomfort based on their identity, 85% have not

I have experienced discomfort based on my identity* in my time as a member of WACL (%)



However the *perception* that people may be rejected is three times the declared reality with one fifth believing people are sometimes rejected for their difference and a further 25% unsure

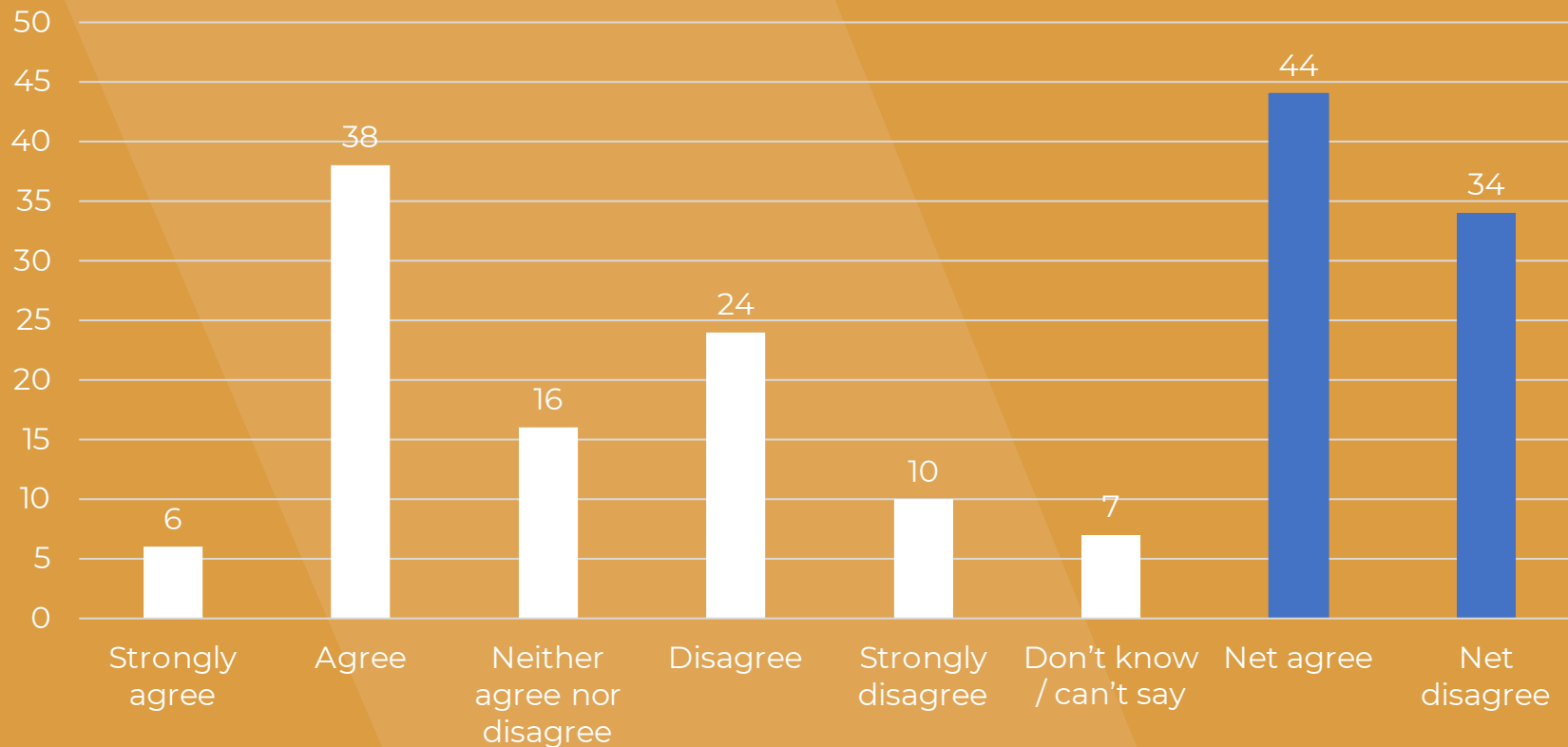
People at WACL sometimes reject others for being different (%)



- Note that while there is concern from a fifth of members about potential rejection based on difference, this is much higher than the reported level (see slide 47) reflecting a perception vs reality gap?
- There may also be a questionnaire effect - this statement is less absolutist than others?

More people believe that members have to fit a certain mould to thrive (44%) than disagree (34%) and a quarter are not sure

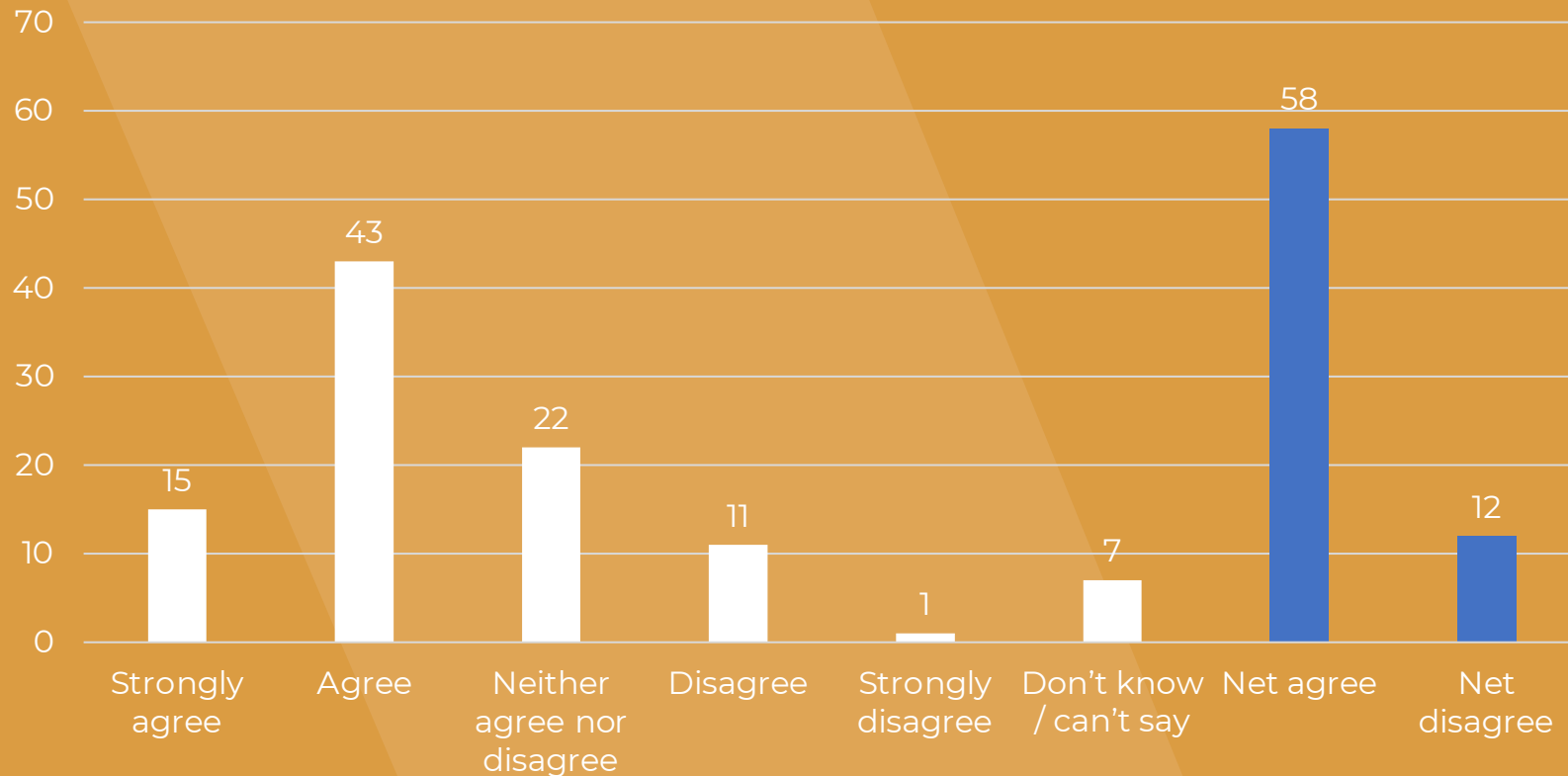
People at WACL have to fit a certain mould to thrive in the Club (%)



- The response to this question reflects the persistent and perennial view of WACL's 'cliques'

3/5^{ths} of the Club feel their skills and talents are valued and recognised, but this is lower among members over 55 (2/5^{ths})

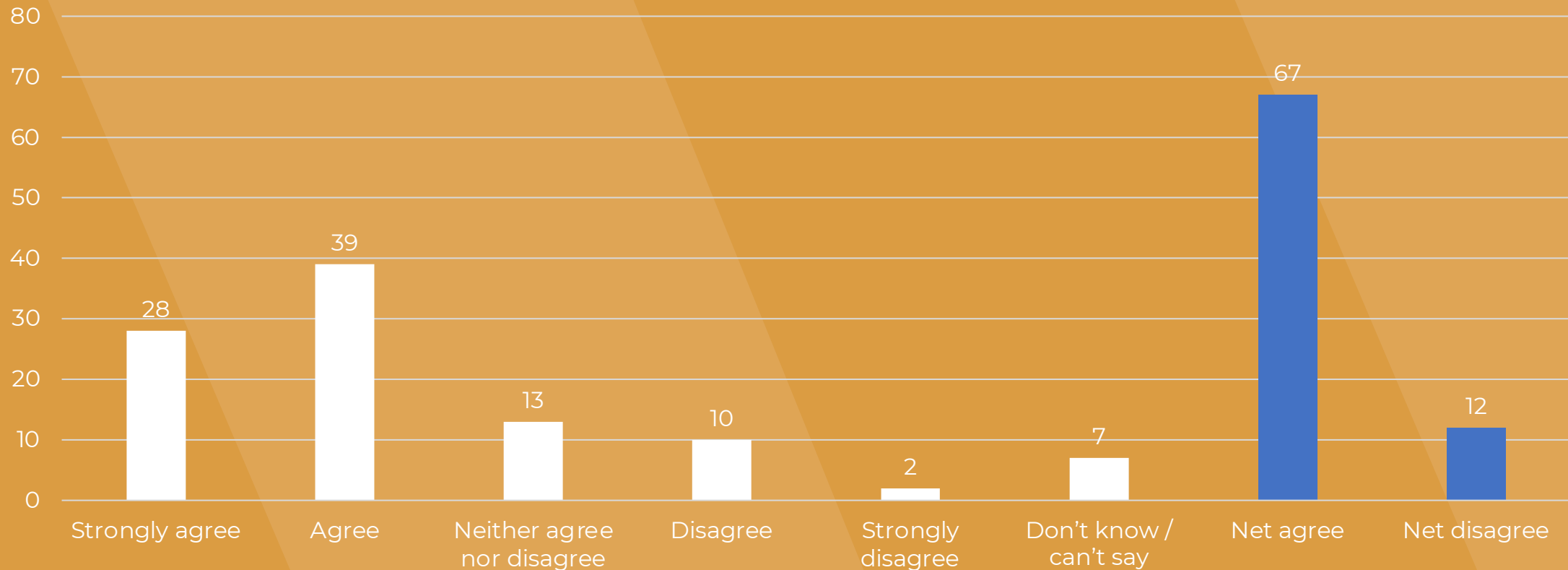
Being a member of WACL, my skills and talents are valued and recognised (%)



- There are significantly* higher levels of agreement among under 55s (64%) to this statement vs over 55s (41%).
- However, there is no difference in levels of active disagreement
- *stat sig

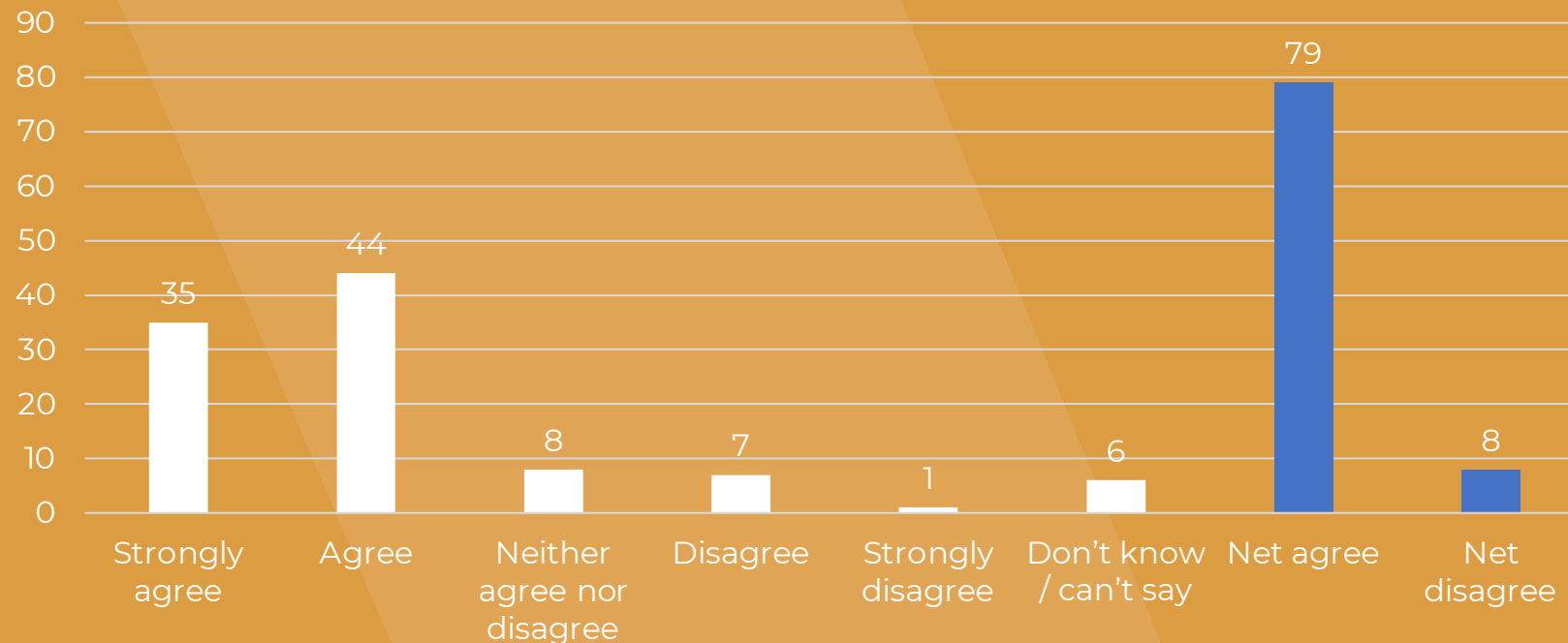
Two thirds agree no one would deliberately undermine them; while 12% disagree, 20% are unsure or don't know

No-one at WACL would deliberately act in a way that undermines me (%)



Nonetheless, 79% of the Club would feel happy intervening if they witnessed inappropriate behaviour

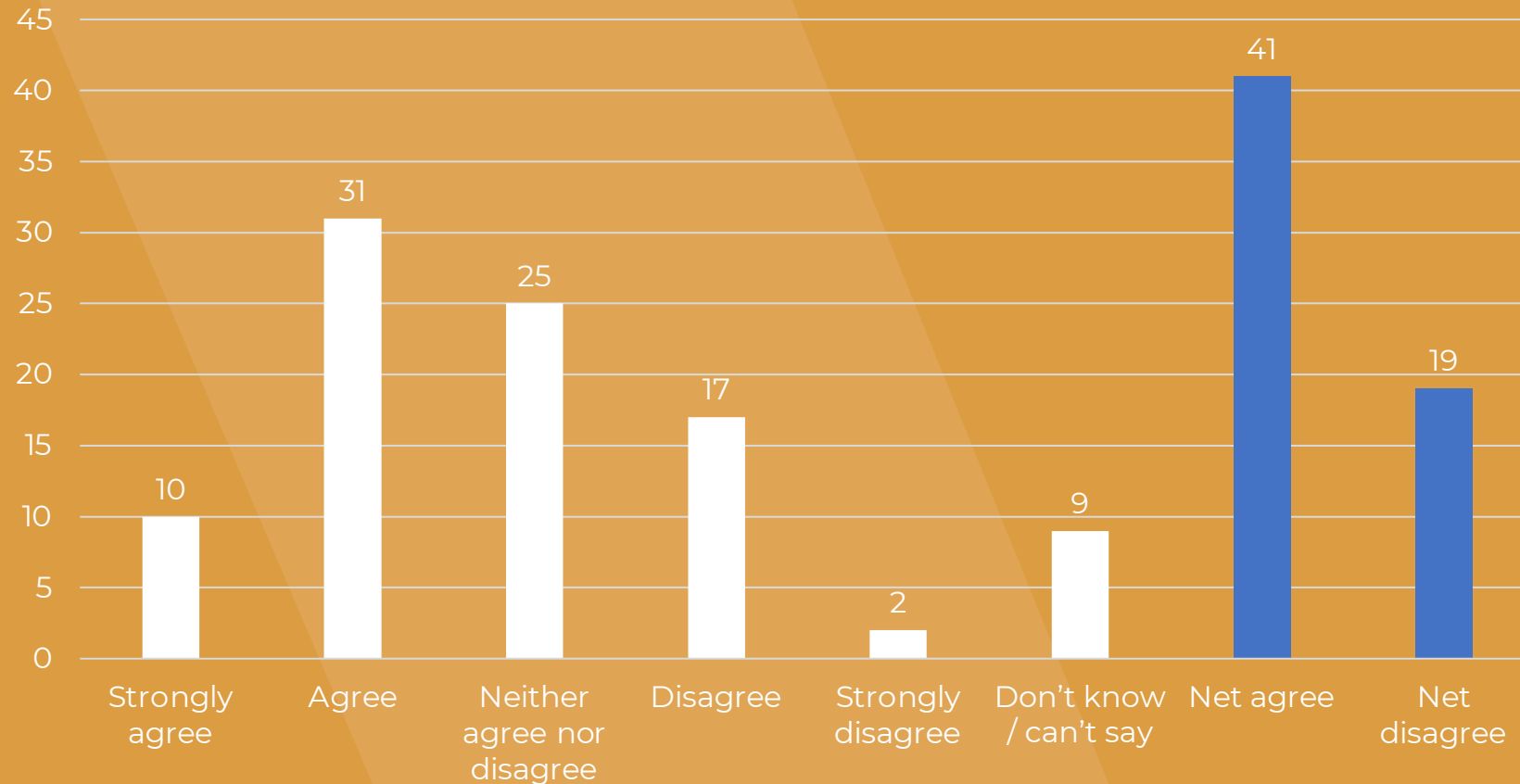
I would feel comfortable intervening when I witness inappropriate behaviour at WACL (e.g., harassment, discrimination, prejudice, microaggression etc.) without fear of rejection (%)



- While inappropriate behaviour between members is not an issue for the majority, it's heartening that an even bigger majority would feel comfortable to intervene should it ever happen

Two fifths agree that it is safe to take a risk at WACL, and one fifth disagree. A quarter are not sure

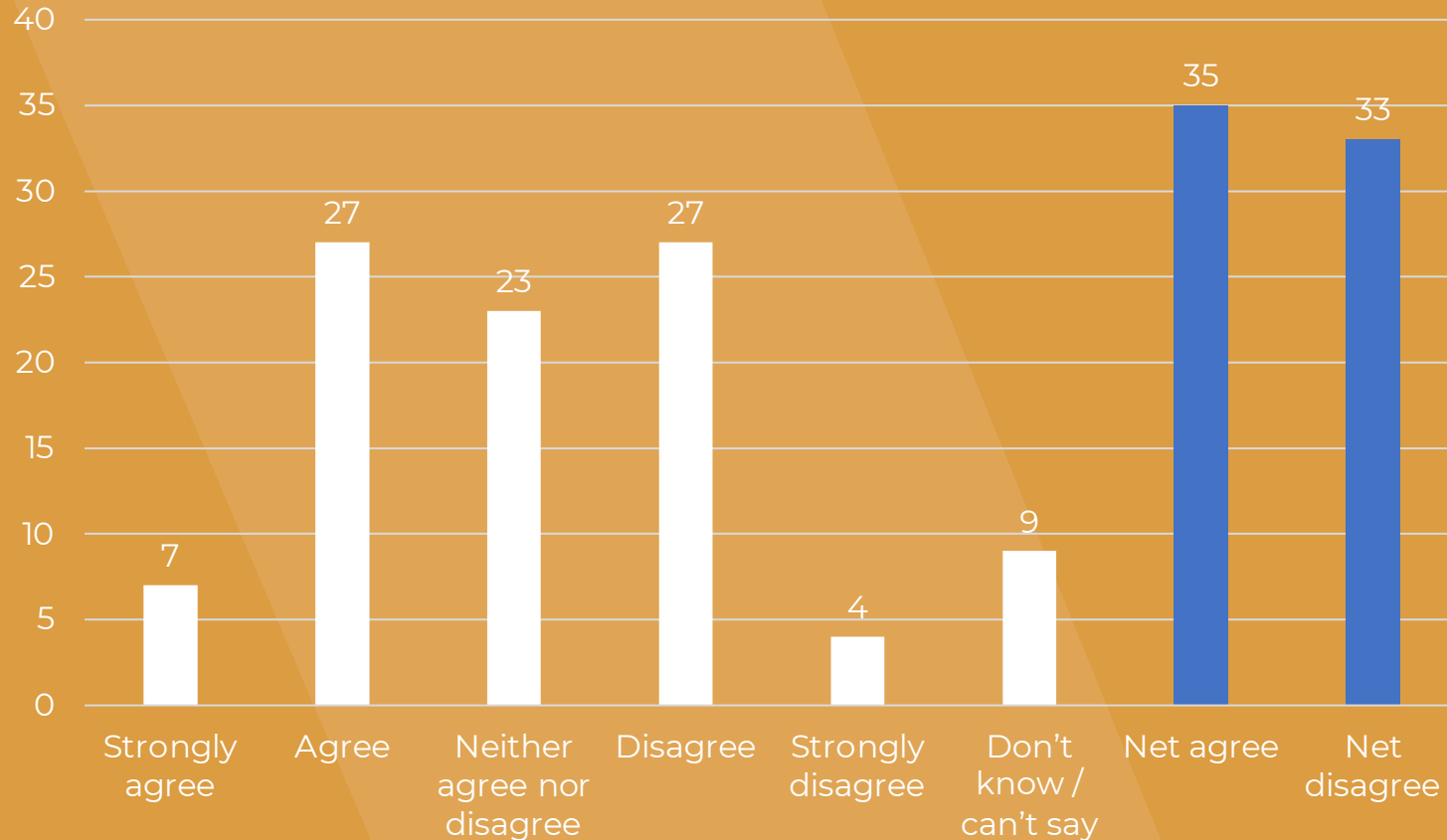
It is safe to take a risk at WACL (%)



- A key question here is what members perceive as 'taking a risk' within an organisation like WACL
 - Suggesting new ideas?
 - Disagreeing with what they perceive to be the prevailing wisdom
 - Expressing a contrary opinion?
 - (see next chart)

The Club is evenly split on the ease or discomfort of expressing a contrary view

It is easy to voice a contrary view at WACL (%)



- This is the one 'inclusivity' question where there is a clear difference between under and over 55 cohorts, with older members significantly more likely to agree that it is easy (42% vs 28%)
- NB Answers to this question could depend on what topic and to whom the opinion is expressed (verbatim feedback)

Observations on inclusivity in WACL

From the outset and for many years as an observer, it does feel like there is a certain type of woman who would fit in best; however that is changing and it's the experiences of lots of new members who will determine whether or not WACL is inclusive

I get the feeling that there's an "in crowd", which I believe the club is aware of - in a way this is to be expected because of the strong friendships/relationships, however it does mean that the club could work harder on making everyone feel an equal sense of belonging

By nature of its membership, WACL is and always has been inclusive. A group of intelligent fun women helping one another, doing a lot for the next generation, networking, building relationships and having fun along the way! Please let it stay that way!

I think this questionnaire proves what I now feel as a longstanding member of WACL. It has become far too much a campaigning organisation and has become rather dreary. The fun and camaraderie has gone out of this. Too much trying to be on message.

I think we need to ensure people from different class background are also made to feel comfortable - the Savoy effect could be daunting as a first impression of the club

I found these questions difficult to answer because in some instances, the answers depend entirely which WACL President, or Exec or Member one is talking to.

The organisation is trying to change. However, when you look at the people at the top they are all of a type. It's extremely cliquey

Observations on inclusivity in WACL

I'm very supportive of the move to increase diversity in the Club: it keeps us relevant and influential in our industry

More to come, but I applaud the steps that have been, and are being taken to date (including this survey)

It's the class background issue that's sometimes made me feel I don't quite belong - assumptions that we all went to private school, have educated families etc

This is obviously a very important topic for WACL, as it is for so many organisations. It also feels very important to address this topic in a warm, inclusive and supportive way for all members (vs angry and divisive)

I think more engagement amongst established WACLers would be productive. The pace of change and recognition of the need for greater diversity and inclusion in society - and in our club - means we need to involve all members in recognising and importantly understanding, what we can do to champion the very premise upon which our organisation was created

I'd like to say that WACL has improved hugely on D&I. I remember being warned by a member never to talk about my sexuality as it wouldn't go down well. That's certainly not the case now.

WACL has a narrow focus because of the gender bias, the professions it draws from and its history, I imagine we are still more intimidating than we would like and strangers can feel isolated I expect, however only a small effort is required to be welcomed and it's a deeply supportive and friendly environment with that small effort

Observations on inclusivity in WACL

It's fine to feel that you can offer your opinion. Perhaps we're all at a stage in our careers where we feel quite happy to challenge. But the important thing in terms of inclusion is how much your voice feels listened to. It's not about whether you feel happy to say something it's whether it's been whether you're being listened to'

As we drive diversity within WACL we need to think more broadly about inclusion and whether some of our activity is outdated and exclusive

When I was an active member, I felt that WACL was possibly the one place in the advertising industry where I felt "safe" from judgement

We have a deliberate 'diversity' issue - it's a networking and gender equality campaigning club for senior women, FGS. As the Club has recently got SO much bigger, combined with Covid isolation, we now have even more of an 'inclusivity' issue between the generations - new members with imposter syndrome, dismissing the older generation as being out of date and the older generation feeling they're surplus to requirements, with nothing relevant to offer and nobody caring. I certainly don't want to become an Associate and have my voice ignored, thank you. Even the name sounds second class, and those women are all pioneers

I wonder if its people who don't feel comfortable with campaigning and feel maybe there's an agenda they have slightly different views on? It's interesting that one of the roles of the peer mentoring is to create psychological safety and some of the issues raised have been D&I orientated

Inclusivity summary 1- 'Belonging'

- Around 1 in 10 feel they don't belong in WACL, that they are sometimes 'the only one' or that they feel uncomfortable disclosing their full identity. However, fewer (6%) have experienced discomfort as a result of their identity.
- *Perceptions* that people may be rejected for difference are higher – at around 20% - suggesting a perception-reality gap.
- Furthermore, 44% believe you have to fit a certain mould to thrive with only a third disagreeing
- Across these belonging questions between 15-25% are unsure – either 'don't know' or 'neither agree nor disagree'. This may reflect uncertainty in how to answer, or unfamiliarity with the topic, possibly due to recency of joining, or a more general sense of ambivalence.
- As a result of this 'unsure' group, levels of agreement with some of these belonging-related questions are lower than ideal – with 62% feeling they belong and 64% disagreeing that 'they often feel they are the only one', for example.
- One underlying issue that may be driving some of these beliefs and perceptions is the feeling for a third of members that their skills and talents aren't recognised or appreciated.
 - This belief increases to 41% of over 55s
- Overall, it is clear that there is more that we could and should be doing to help members feel welcome, able to express their identity, feel like they belong in WACL and that anyone can thrive in WACL

Inclusivity summary 2 - 'Psychological safety'

- Two thirds agree that no one would deliberately undermine them and while fewer than 10% disagree, 20% are unsure
- Nonetheless, 80% would intervene if they saw inappropriate behaviour
- A fifth disagree that it is ok to 'take a risk at WACL', with only 40% agreeing
- The Club is evenly split a third/third/third between those who feel able to express a contrary view, those who are unsure or don't know and those who disagree that it is easy to do so
 - There is a significant difference between older and younger members, with over 55s being more likely to find it easy to express a contrary view – perhaps confidence that comes with age or with longer tenure within the Club (and what that brings; familiarity and friendships)
- It is clear that there is more to be done to build a culture where all members feel confident and safe to express and debate different ideas and opinions

Summary of issues highlights in listening groups

Four listening groups were conducted with members from different cohorts. Many of the issues that emerged were similar to those touched on in the D&I survey.

Five key themes that emerged from the listening groups

- A need for increased clarity on the Club's purpose
 - Driven by the fact that the Club has grown and changed at pace
 - And by growing complexity of gender equality as a topic
- We need to do more to help members connect and feel they belong
 - The pandemic has made people feel disconnected
 - Getting more involved in the Club helps people feel they belong, but can also fuel perceptions of cliquy-ness
- Navigating the Club is a challenge for newer members
 - Lots of information and tricky to know what to prioritise
 - Too many communications channels adds to the confusion
 - Having a say is not always safe
 - Is the Club fair, transparent and democratic?
- Affordability
 - Paying personally (rather than on a corporate account) influences attitude to pricing, and by extension, to engagement
- Member lifecycle
 - There is a significant concern among Associate members that their status is 'second class' and they are not as valued as 'full' members

Example quotes that bring these themes to life – clarity of purpose

'I think there are also issues around, you know, what it's for now? For me networking was what it was all about. It was an opportunity to meet lots of women who are working and build a network where you could share experiences and get to know each other. I'm not sure at the moment whether that's the primary reason people join?'

I do think that we are in transition, really, and that the full move from being a dining club at its heart to a campaigning organisation. It's not going to happen overnight and there will be some bumps along the road, because we are taking a stand on things

'I think maybe what WACL needs to do is sort out what it's for, and people can then decide how they belong to that. Maybe it's the absence of that, that makes us all feel we're not really quite sure whether we belong or not?'

'I am sure there are some who feel their organisation is not on board with some of the things WACL stands for. They find it difficult or a bit wimpy to say 'I know this is our line but I actually can't do that at work because they're not quite there yet.'

'And I find that the club is kind of campaigning on a position. And so it's a bit like being part of a political party where nobody's really consulted on a manifesto.'

Example quotes that bring these themes to life – connection and belonging

'I would say that one of the difficulties sometimes for new members is there is an embedded sort of core group of people who know each other very well and have worked together for decades. Understandably, when the events happen, many people haven't seen each other for ages so they sort of gravitate towards one another. I think that it creates a sense of being an outsider to an even greater extent. So even as you're starting to get to know people through committees or otherwise, this core group continues to sort of, you know, spend their time together.'

'I have felt that if you are on the Exec, then you feel pretty powerful and stuff. When you are not on the Exec then you do feel a bit excluded about what's going on.'

"It's been an extraordinary 2 years. Whatever people are saying about connections it's been an odd time. There has been a natural disconnect. I have never been so removed from WACL.'

'My experience has been you definitely get more out of it if you are on a committee and you have a little crew around you. I sat on the Christmas Committee when I first joined and had an absolute blast. I got to know loads of people, that probably even now are my core of friends at WACL. I felt like I was in it and doing what was expected of me.'

Example quotes that bring these themes to life – navigating the Club

'Even with amazing buddy support, it's still incredibly difficult to navigate so much information and to really have a sense of what's right for you or how to prioritise. I still find that a little bit overwhelming.'

'I've been too scared to say what I think about certain things other than in small groups. I find the sort of the collective, you know, gather at the gathering at the end of the year, or when we're all sort of together, and people can sort of stand up and be quite feisty, I find that utterly terrifying. There's always that sort of idea of, you know, put my hand up, I'm going to be the only one that thinks something like that. And then of course, you discover that everybody else feels quite similar.'

'I find that there are so many internal and external communications going on, maybe some from the comms group, some from mentoring and from different parts of WACL and I get very confused. I probably also share the feeling that I'm not sure which to prioritise. It seems like they have loads going on, but at the same time it's a bit scattered as well.'

'You don't want to bother people, but you do want to have answers. People stay schtum because they think they are not going to listen, and it doesn't really matter. What's the point? Because when these things have been raised in the past, they have either been steamrollered or ignored'

Example quotes that bring these themes to life – affordability

I hope the tickets for the events are not too expensive. As someone who is self-employed, sometimes I find that the tickets are a little bit pricey because I don't have any sponsor.

In a practical sense, when you are working for yourself, or when you are in a role which has greater public scrutiny or board scrutiny, its super hard to justify the expense at points. You end up paying for it yourself and its quite a lot of money. Its quite hard to justify the time. So how can you make a contribution and feel included without having to give lots of money or just having to give lots of time? The value of the Club is still absolutely huge, I think.'

'On that point on expenses, I think it's only going to get worse coming out of the pandemic. Even in the bigger companies. I work for a bigger company and the first budgets that were cut were travel and expense and they aren't going to come back fast. So, I don't think I can expense it either. I think we all have to accept that. That world doesn't really exist anymore and probably won't.'

'When you are a client you don't go to as many of those things. I can't use my client budget for WACL stuff or entertaining. Everything has to be paid 100% myself personally. Occasionally agencies who are also WACL will invite me to things which is absolutely lovely.'

Example quotes that bring these themes to life – member lifecycle

'I have no intention of retiring. But I do want to work differently. I want to work more flexibly. I want to be very specific about what I do. But I also want to be still connected to my community which I do see as WACL. You know, I grew up in it.'

'I think there is a strong sense that if you are not in charge of a big budget, or a big agency, you are irrelevant. To be honest you aren't much use to us because you aren't going to provide a raffle prize. But I think one's subs are as good as anybody's. The fact that you have accumulated wisdom and time to give back to the Club should be as valuable as whether you control a lot of someone else's money, the corporate budgets.'

'I think its difficult for WACL to manage the sort of ebbs and flows of its members ever shifting lifetime experiences. Because at times you want the big fat welcome and the fanfare and the gala. That's super fun, especially if you are organising it. And then you want to feel part of the campaigning, which is more of a community feel....It feels a bit binary. A bit all or nothing sometimes. I want to make a useful contribution without giving loads of time. I think the need to make people feel welcome all the time, its important to reconnect and to enable people to reconnect. It's really hard to keep that consistency when everyone is volunteering their time.'

'Some of the retired associates are still incredible women. It's wasted. I don't think its malicious. I think they just don't see it. Older people are seen as more disposable.'

Overall conclusions and implications

Overall conclusions and implications

- This research has confirmed that the Club needs to continue to pay attention to diversity – to continue to encourage women from different backgrounds to apply for membership and to ensure this is reflected in the Club's leadership and across all the activities of the Club.
- There is also significant work to do on both 'belonging' and 'psychological safety' aspects of inclusion – themes that were also underpinned by the qualitative interviews and listening groups.
- Importantly, many of these issues are not new – similar themes were highlighted in both the 2017 Nettles research and in an even earlier study from 2004.
- It is clear that these issues are not going to be easy to fix – it will require concerted and consistent effort to address them.
- This raises the significant question of how WACL – with its volunteer-led model and growing membership base – can best manage its resource to do this effectively.

Many of these themes are not new

Ten 'Nettles' the Club needs to grasp (2017)

- Defining the Club's purpose
- Adding a WACL Voice (to that purpose)
- Valued benefits of membership: different people derive value in different ways
- Issues surrounding charity fundraising
- Concerns about membership size/growth
- Role and purpose of Associate members
- Introducing and inducting new members
- Engagement with, and contributing to, the Club: "3 event rule"
- "Cliquesy-ness"
- Recruitment to, and roles of, the Executive and Sub-Committees

When WACL does not live up to expectations (2004)

- Difficult for new members under 5 years to 'break in' - criticism of cliques
- Perceptions of a tiered system of membership
- Feeling that the club does not accommodate or facilitate changes in member working status
- The language and attitudes of the club can seem (ad) agency focussed
- The charity emphasis can overwhelm the true purpose of the Club
- Criteria for the club membership unclear and can appear subjective
- Some feel the club recruits the job title not the person
- Too few opportunities to network
- While there are many great things about the club there is an underlying feeling that it needs: to evolve; to embrace the needs of the broader membership; to become more professional as a club in and of itself

While we need to the specifics raised by the 2021 research, there is clearly also still work to do to fully address the ‘Nettles’ from 2017

- **Club purpose:** There is still some confusion over the purpose, pointing to the need for some further clarifications, particularly around the campaigning agenda
- **WACL Voice:** WACL is developing a ‘louder’ external voice through its campaigning – a key reason for joining for some newer members, but the public nature of campaigning can also cause some discomfort for others,
- **WACL membership value:** Most WACL members value their membership, but many find it hard to express exactly why.
- **Charities/fundraising:** Issues surrounding charity fundraising – there remains some questions about which charities and why.
- **Size of Club:** We took the cap off membership in 2019 and now need to work through the implications of how we manage the growth of the Club.
- **Associates:** If WACL is ‘for life’ we have much work to do to create belonging for the entire lifecycle
- **New members:** We need to support new members better to help them navigate the Club, understand where to find key information and get to know other members inducting new members
- **3 dinner rule/ engagement:** We need to clarify what Club engagement looks and feels like and ensure that engagement is affordable (it’s definitely no longer the ‘3 dinner rule!’)
- **Cliquey-ness :** perceptions of cliques persist: we need to create more ways to encourage members to get to know each other and to ‘mix things up’
- **Recruitment and roles of Exec/Committees:** We will how best to structure the Exec, recruit key roles and ensure stability

How we are planning to address these challenges

The following slides are based on those used for the presentation that was shared first at the member breakfast on 30th March 2022

The plan has four key elements

- Align our efforts based on some key principles
- Pause some activities to give the Club a chance to breathe and reflect
- Introduce some relatively easy and quick changes designed to address the issues
- Set up some working groups to address the biggest issues

The core principles

- We remain committed to our purpose to accelerate gender equality
- Gender equality is only meaningful if it is for all women, so we must keep paying attention to diversity and inclusion in our membership and in our activities
- Always member-first: we are a Club not an organisation and we recognise that it is the friendships forged and the support networks created that make the Club unique

Pause, breathe, reflect

- We will pause any further recruitment of new members until Rania's year
- We will not launch any further new campaigns until Rania's year
- We will take more time to consult on any proposed changes to the Constitution

Some easy-ish and quick-ish changes

- We will ratify one member, one vote at the next AGM
- We will support a change in name of 'Associates' to 'WACL Fellows' (or equivalent/better) to better reflect the contribution and legacy of these members to the Club and the industry
- We will commit to a on-going programme of members-only affordable events
- We will rationalise our comms channels (double down on email, FB group and website for member comms, wjhile)
- We will clarify our campaigning model and create a more formal engagement process, ensuring members are consulted on any major proposed campaigns
- We are conducting some work to clarify our membership proposition

We have set up 4 working groups to address the biggest issues

New members

Louise Johnson

How do we manage growth in the future?

Is the existing process right?

How do we ensure everyone understands it?

How do we improve the induction programme?

Finance and funding model

Rachel Bristow

Can we create more funds to support admin and infrastructure?

How do we put the Club on a firmer financial basis as we head into our next 100 years

Kate &
Rania

Governance

Rania Robinson

Are our appointment processes fit for purpose?

How do we create consistency from year to year?

How should the Exec be structured?

How should all this be reflected in the Constitution?

Comms and consultation

Lori Meakin

How do we ensure that everyone is aware of and understands any recommendations for change and feels their voice has been heard?

How you can engage with the process

Now

Read the full research debrief and member FAQs on the website.

(AND PLEASE GET YOUR PROFILE UP TO DATE!)

April /May

Look out for more formal consultation opportunities as our working groups share their recommendations

AGM (July 5th)

Have your say.
Use your vote.

Whatever actions we take next, our aim should be to do more of what WACL does best

“There is no peer group pressure. There's none of that corporate stuff going on. You just get together, it's very supportive and you have a great time”

Rita Clifton CBE, members' directory

“WACL is an amazing organisation. Women coming together in support of other women creates a very special environment. The members are always fun, interesting, and honest. I've gotten so much out of the club over the years”

Syl Saller CBE, members' directory

“WACL inspires, supports and campaigns for all women. It provides an essential network and example to everyone in the industry”.

Cilla Snowball CBE, members' directory

If you want to find out more

- Get in touch with the President, Kate Waters (kate.waters@itv.com /07867904942)
- Contact any of the WACLers running the working groups – Rania Robinson (Governance), Lori Meakin (Consultation), Rachel Bristow (Finance), Lou Johnson (New Members)
- Read the member FAQs on the website which you can find [here](#) - these aim to clarify the most common misunderstandings/ areas of confusion for members. Let us know if you have a question that isn't answered and we'll add it to the list.