

MAYOR OF LONDON

2022 PLACESHAPING CAPACITY SURVEY

Results Report

Published March 2023

GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN

About the survey

To deliver Good Growth, local authorities need capacity to manage, create and plan built development in London. Capacity is also needed to shape and plan good growth in local areas and communities.

Since 2014, the Mayor of London has surveyed London boroughs every two years, to see what placeshaping capacity they have. The results have helped us to develop new programmes to support boroughs and programmes, such as Public Practice.

The survey goes beyond asking about capacity and asks about design review. This reflects the fact that design review is a key part of the National Planning Framework, as well as the London Plan, and aims to ensure the quality of built schemes.

Since the publication of the 2020 survey results (which were used to support the Greater London Authority's (GLA) response to the governments planning white paper), the team have been in discussion with Public Practice, Homes England and Department Levelling Up Housing and Communities who are devising their own surveys looking at similar placeshaping need in local authority.

The 2022 survey is overall shorter and more user friendly. Other key changes to the 2022 survey include further questions to reveal authorities emphasis on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Design review questions have been refined to focus on key metrics such as total number of applications, whether it applies the London Design Review Charter, and where the panel is representative of the area it covers; The impact of Covid-19 on placeshaping teams has been included in a broader topical challenges section which will make it easier to track trends of key issues; and Housing & Land have incorporated additional questions to understand skills and capacity issues specific to local housebuilding programmes.

The response rate is good with all but one borough responding (34/35 planning authorities in London).

The survey has been devised with input from colleagues across Planning and Regeneration, Housing and Land, Public Practice and Urban Design London.

What we mean by 'Placeshaping Team'

What is placeshaping?

Placeshaping is about designing the conditions for 'good growth'. It is the inconspicuous but indispensable background work of coordinating investment, shaping development, galvanising communities, and strengthening the character of a place.

Placeshaping and proactive planning enables good growth, allows better engagement and public support, provides greater certainty and a more efficient process for developers, allowing for coordination of investment. Together, these benefits are likely to result in a more productive use of limited resources.

For the purposes of this questionnaire 'placeshaping' teams are those that design policies, programmes and projects and does not include duties such as maintenance and permitting.

For the purposes of this survey placeshaping includes roles in:

- **Regeneration / economic development / high streets & town centres**
- **Development economics & viability**
- **Capital delivery, including procurement & management of council home building programmes**
- **Strategic property portfolio management staff**
- **Urban design / architecture / masterplanning**
- **Public realm expertise / street design**
- **Parks & open spaces / landscape architecture / green infrastructure**
- **Environmental sustainability/ zero carbon strategy & delivery skills**
- **Conservation / historic environment expertise**
- **Planning policy**
- **Planning development management**
- **Building control**
- **Transport / highways designer**
- **Infrastructure planning & delivery management**
- **Place focused digital and data**
- **Community engagement**
- **Inclusive design / accessible environment**

10 Key Insights Summary

1. Capacity is stretched

Team sizes have reduced in size since 2014 by 21% and have plateaued at this low level. Furthermore, this capacity is precarious with 93% of authorities finding it difficult to attract suitably qualified or skilled candidates, 90% of authorities finding the lack of funding towards placeshaping roles a challenge and 21% of placeshaping roles being temporary in nature.

2. Capacity is not aligned with areas of growth

Some of the authorities with the largest housing targets have relatively smaller planning development and regeneration teams than those authorities with smaller housing targets. Team sizes range from as large as 122 to as small as 23.

3. Specialist expertise is declining while planning development management rebounds

Statutory functions such as planning development control remain steady or even growing, at the detriment of non-statutory functions such as regeneration and highest streets and public realm expertise.

4. Authorities are most concerned about the economic crisis

Authorities are most concerned about economic impacts on their teams, projects and budgets. These issues include the impact of inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, the impact of Brexit and the expected downturn in the wider economy and impacts on high streets.

5. Sustainability expertise is in greatest need

Authorities listed environmental and sustainable skills and retrofit knowledge as the expertise they had greatest need for. Authorities list the challenges around climate change as the issue they feel least prepared to handle.

6. Skills to support high streets and economic regeneration have reduced

There has been a steady decline in the skills required to support high streets and local regeneration (45% since 2014), an important part of the response to economic challenges.

7. Dedicated inclusive design and accessible environment specialisms are under-resourced

Of an average placeshaping team of 70 there would be only 0.46 dedicated inclusive design and accessible environment experts. There are only 10 Full Time Employee (FTE) dedicated officers embedded in placeshaping teams across London.

8. There is huge demand for knowledge sharing and upskilling existing teams

Authorities value GLA resources that upskill or assist in knowledge sharing, notably Urban Design London, Good Growth by Design and Transport for London guidance.

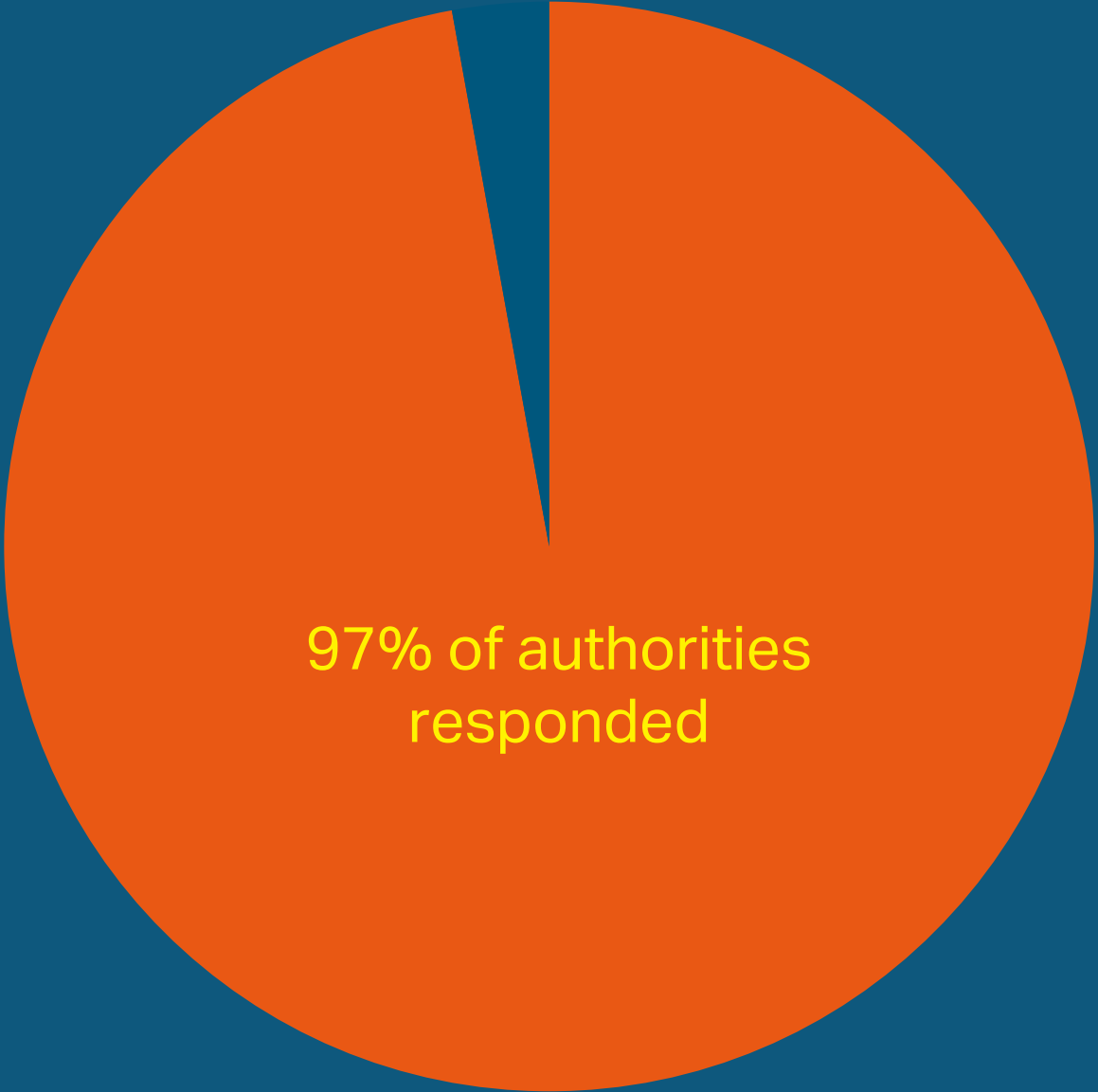
9. Gender and ethnicity pay gap data is improving but there is further progress to be made

While there is growing evidence of representation being paramount concern there is still a lack of data on the makeup of London's placeshaping teams. The gender and ethnicity pay gap responses shows many authorities are not communicating whether these are tracked.

10. London's design review sector is going from strength to strength

32/35 authorities now have or are in the process of establishing design review panels, up from 29/35 in 2020. Where there is no design review panel existing the London Review Panel can and has been used.

Response from Authorities



The Placeshaping Capacity Survey was carried out between July and December 2022, with responses from all but one authority (34/35). Responses are self-reporting, and so rely on the accuracy and knowledge of the particular respondent within the organisation.

Capacity by discipline, by authority

Each column is one authority

Regeneration / Economic Development / High Streets

Capital Delivery

Public Realm / Street Design

Urban Design / Architecture / Masterplanning

Conservation / Historic Environment

Parks & Open Spaces / Landscape / Green Infr.

Transport / Highways Design

Planning Policy

Planning Development Management

Development Economics & Viability

Environmental Sustainability / Zero Carbon

Strategic Property Management

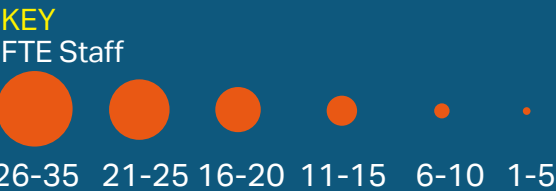
Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

Building Control

Community Engagement

Inclusive Design / Accessible Environment

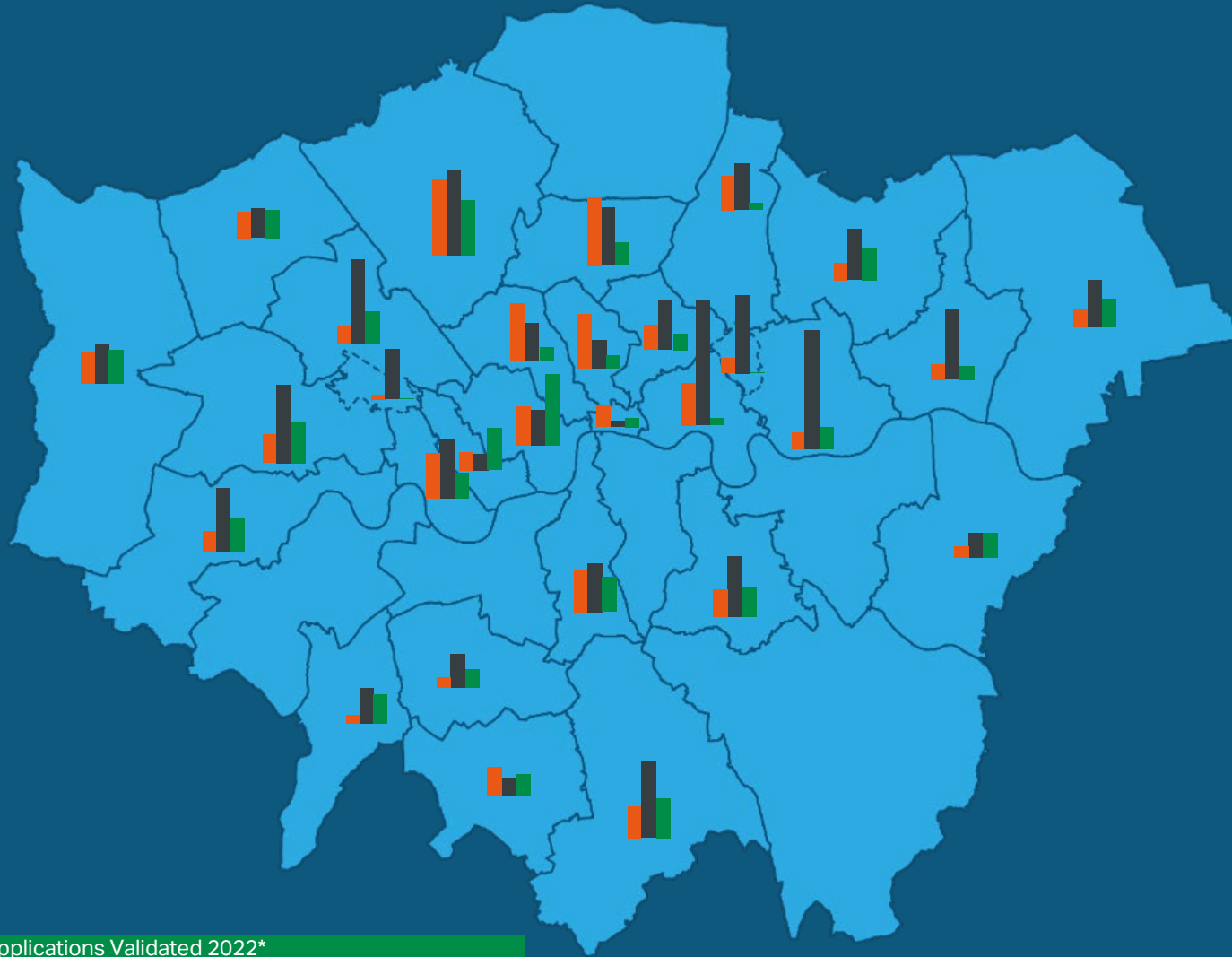
Place Focused Digital & Data



11 responses provided the numbers of staff in all areas of expertise listed. Responses where some expertise were listed as not known have been excluded from this graphic.

With each column representing an authority, **planning development** (processing planning applications) is generally the best resourced discipline, while a number of authorities recording no dedicated in house expertise in some areas, such as **inclusive design / accessible environments** and **place focused digital and data**.

Existing capacity versus housing target



Key

Planning Applications Validated 2022*

London Plan 10-Year Housing Target

Planning Development Management & Regeneration Capacity**

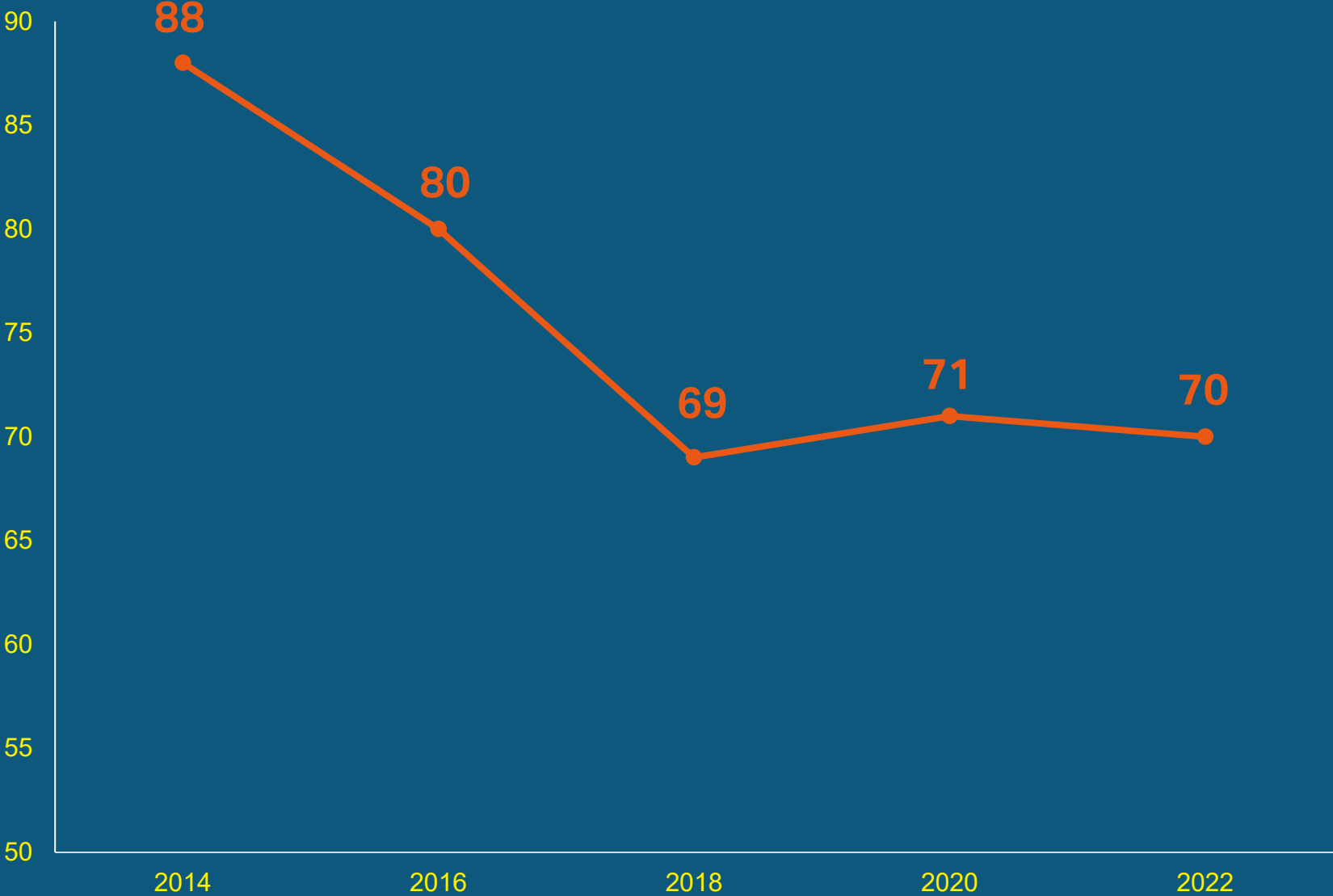
Capacity is not evenly spread across London and within teams, and not necessarily where most development pressure is.

When **Planning Development and Regeneration / Economic Development / High Streets & Town Centres** teams are mapped against the London Plan 10-year housing targets and the number of planning applications validated in 2022, the variance of capacity is notable, with some London authorities appearing comparatively under resourced when compared to others.

**<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/planning-london-datahub-applications>*

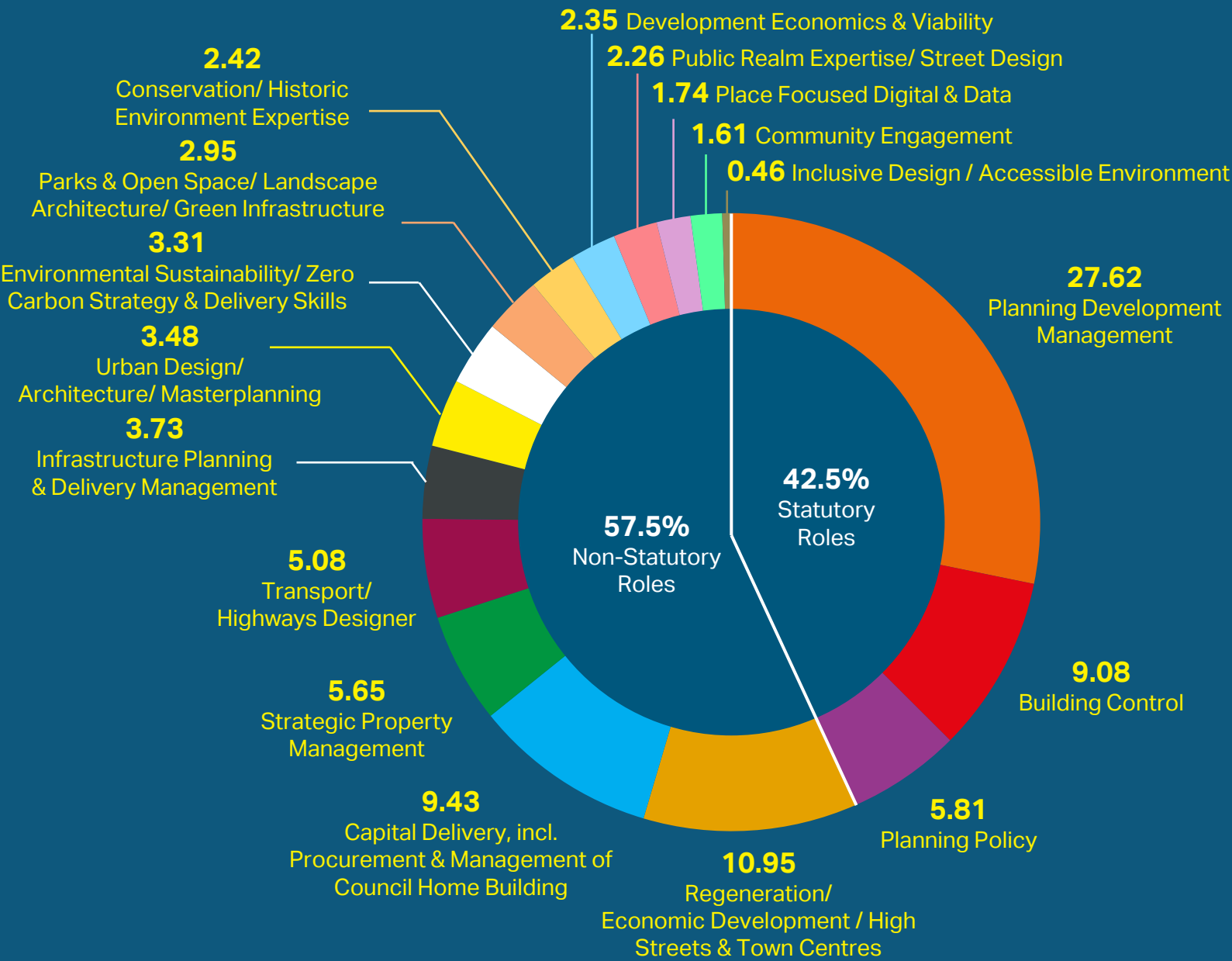
***Authorities where both Planning Development and Regeneration / Economic Development / High Streets & Town Centres teams were not given or known are not included in this graphic.*

Average authority placeshaping capacity, over time



Most disciplines tracked since 2014 have reduced in size, and overall, the average placeshaping service in authorities is 20.5% smaller (from complete responses and including only from those areas of expertise tracked since 2014).

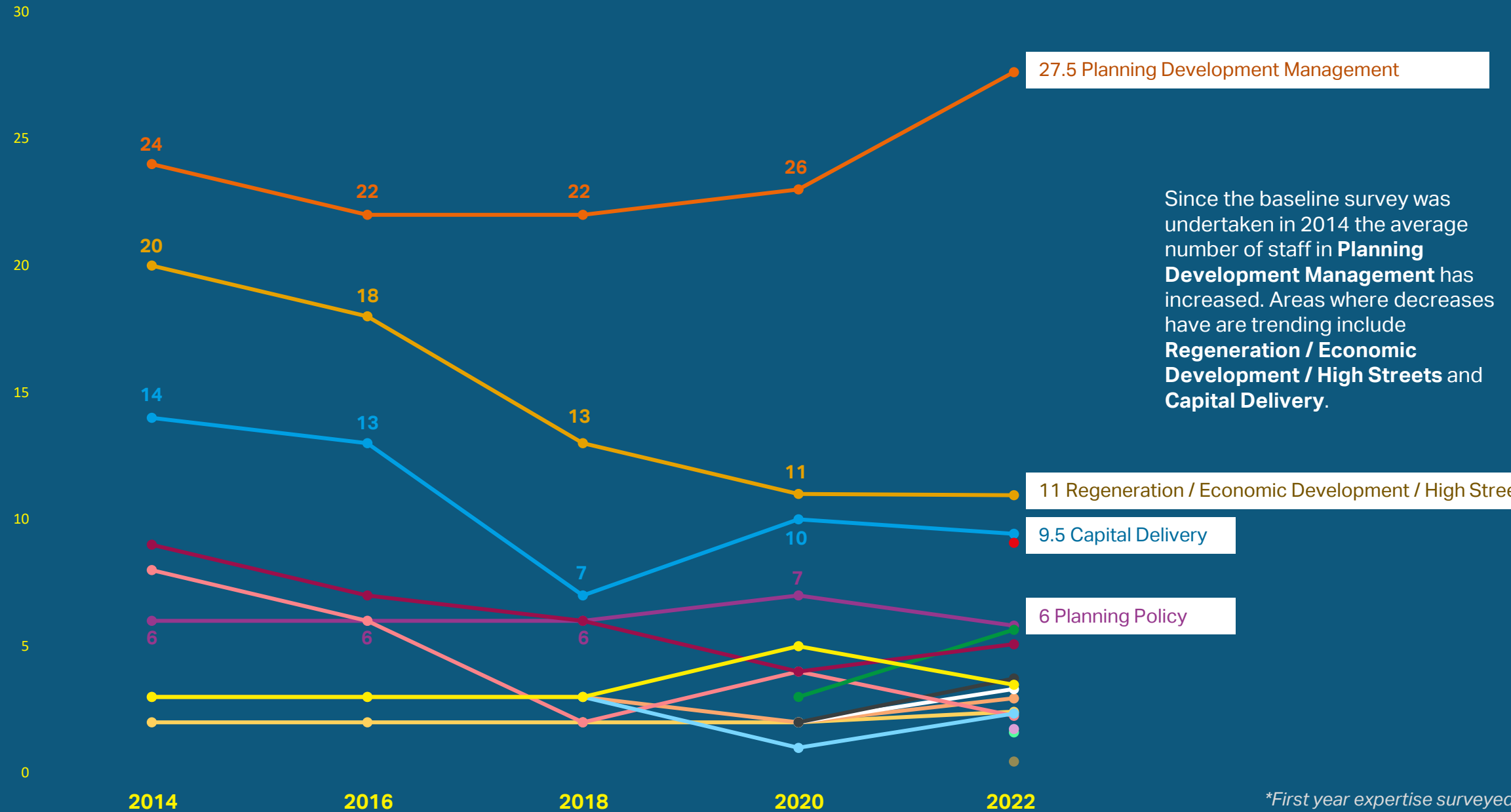
Average capacity (FTEs) by discipline



Placeshaping teams range in size from 23 to 121.5 people (from complete responses only).

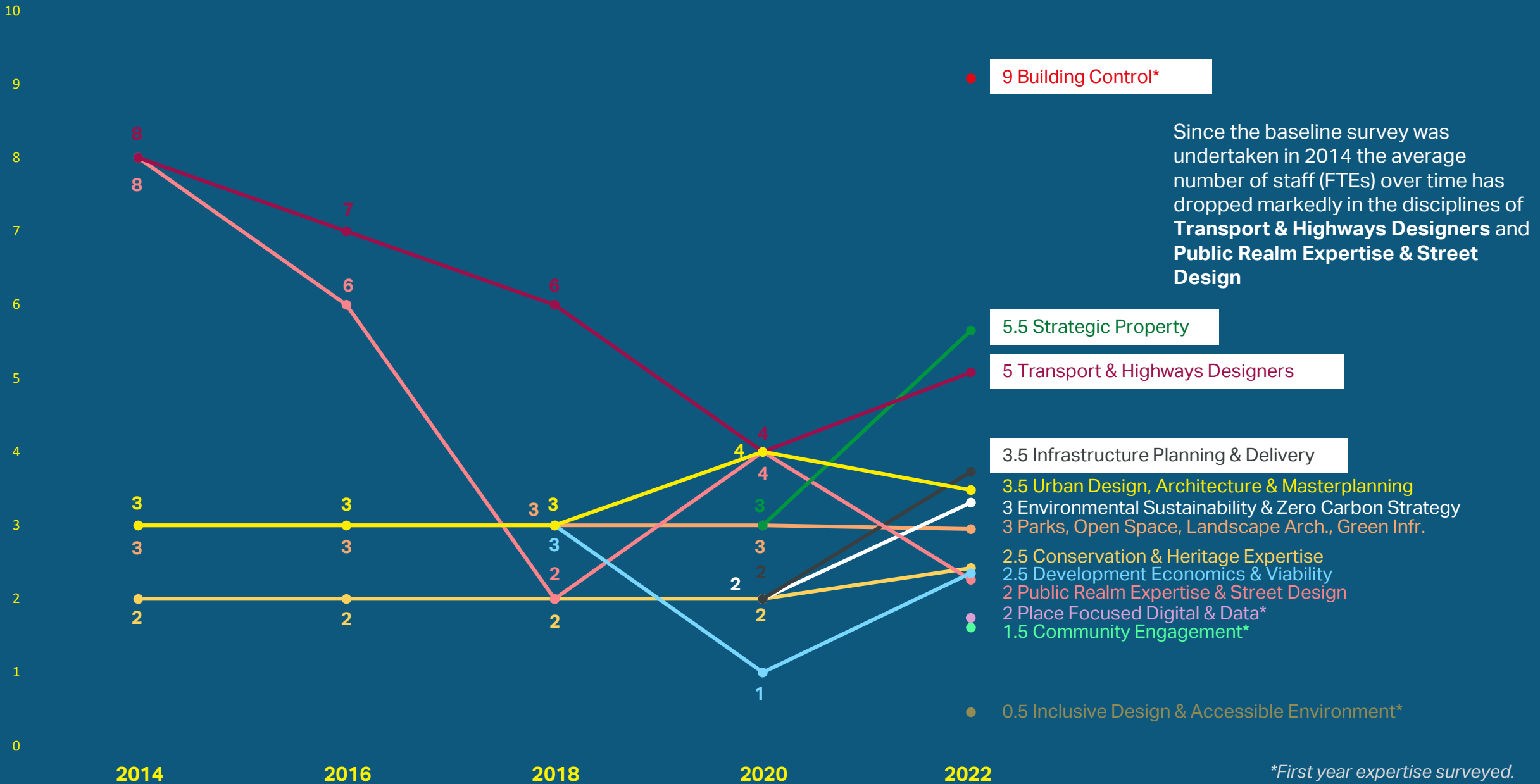
Expertise within placeshaping teams are weighted towards the statutory planning system, with some of the disciplines such as **Inclusive Design and Accessible Environment** being very thinly resourced.

Change in capacity over time, per average discipline size (part 1)



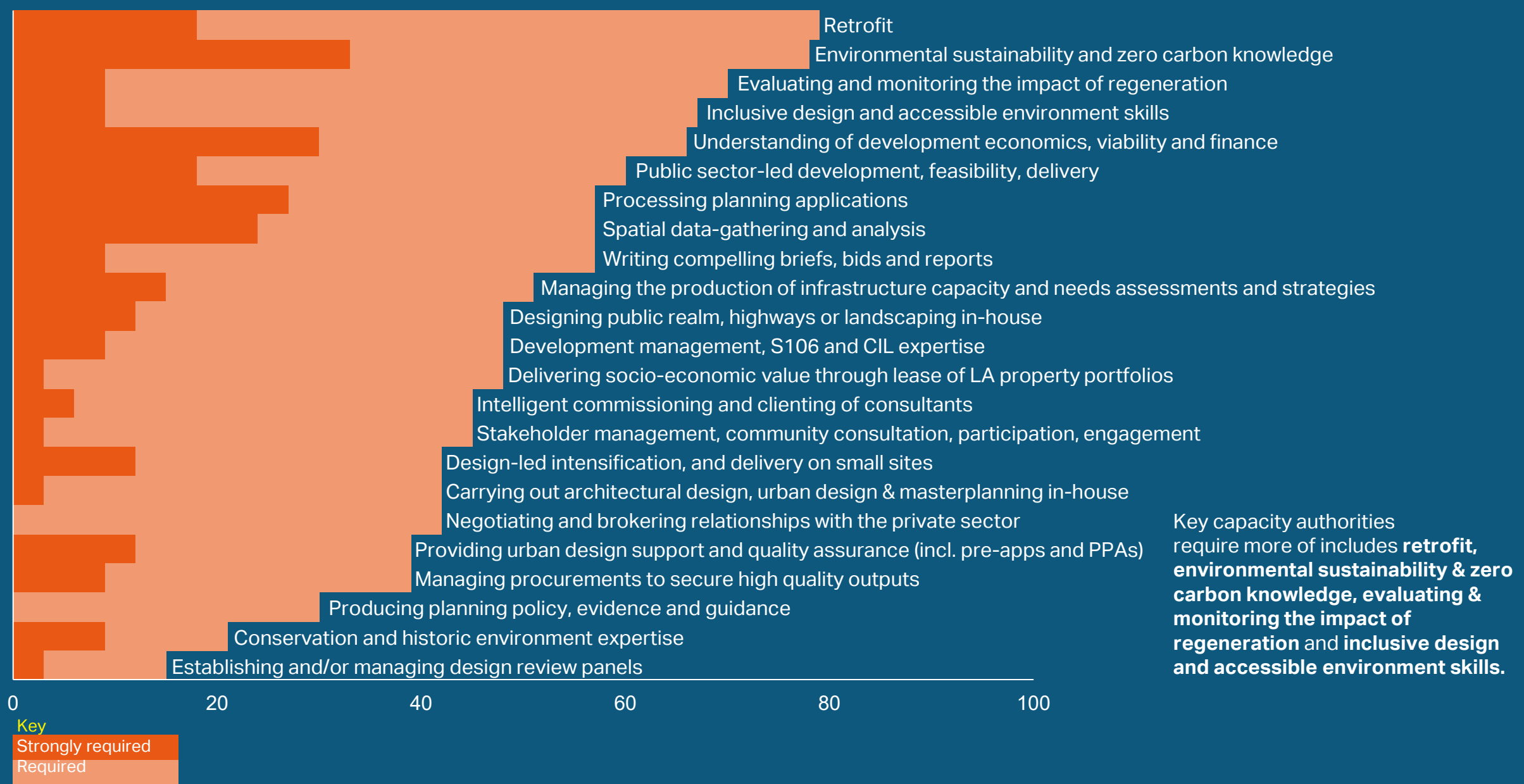
**First year expertise surveyed.
Figures rounded to nearest 0.5*

Change in capacity over time, per average discipline size (part 2)



*First year expertise surveyed.
Figures rounded to nearest 0.5

Authority capacity needs



Barriers to meeting capacity needs



Respondent's main barriers to meeting capacity needs were finding the appropriately skilled candidates and lack of available funding.

TALENT

Significant barrier

Occasional barrier

FUNDING

Significant barrier

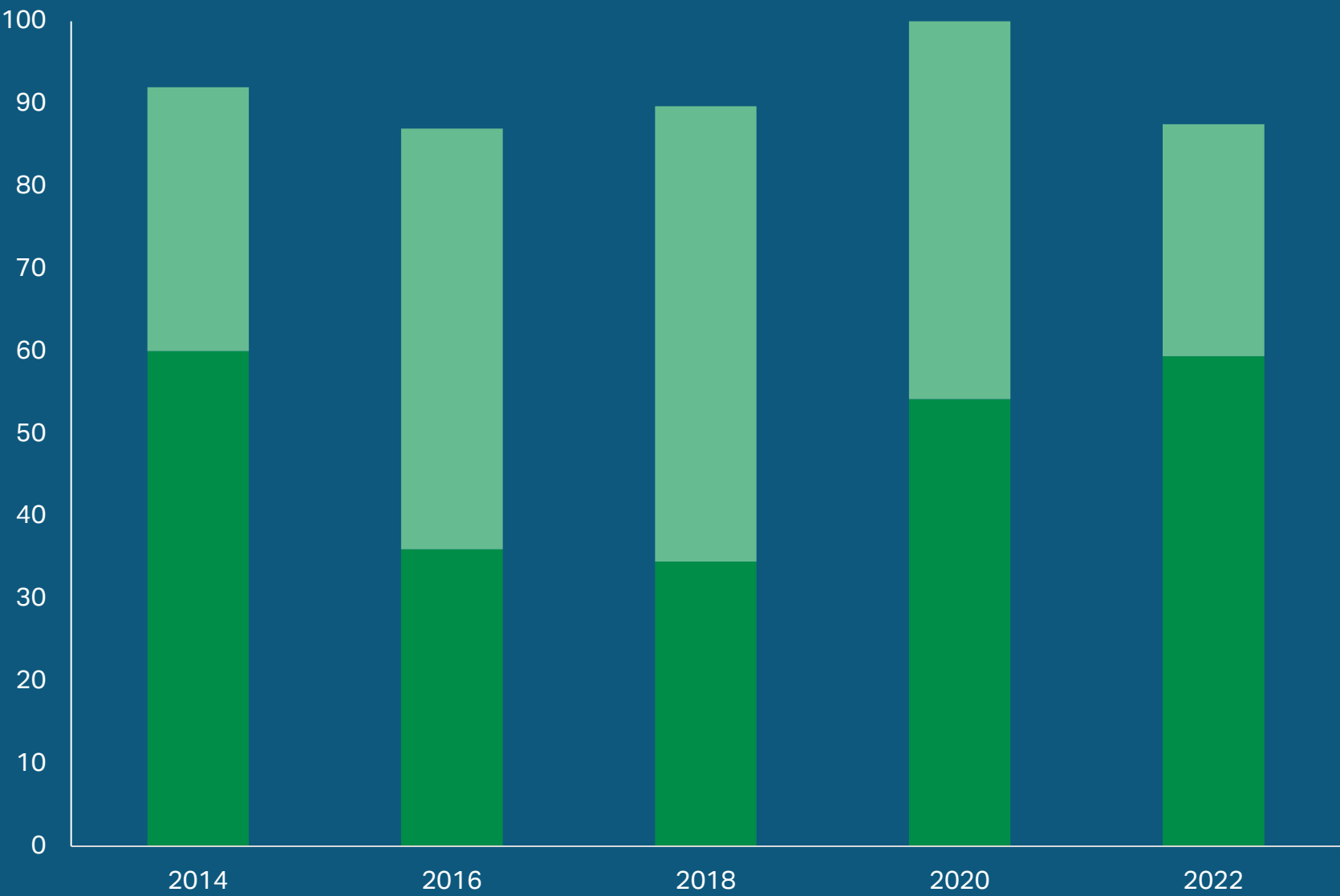
Occasional barrier

PROCESSES

Significant barrier

Occasional barrier

Uncertainty over funding



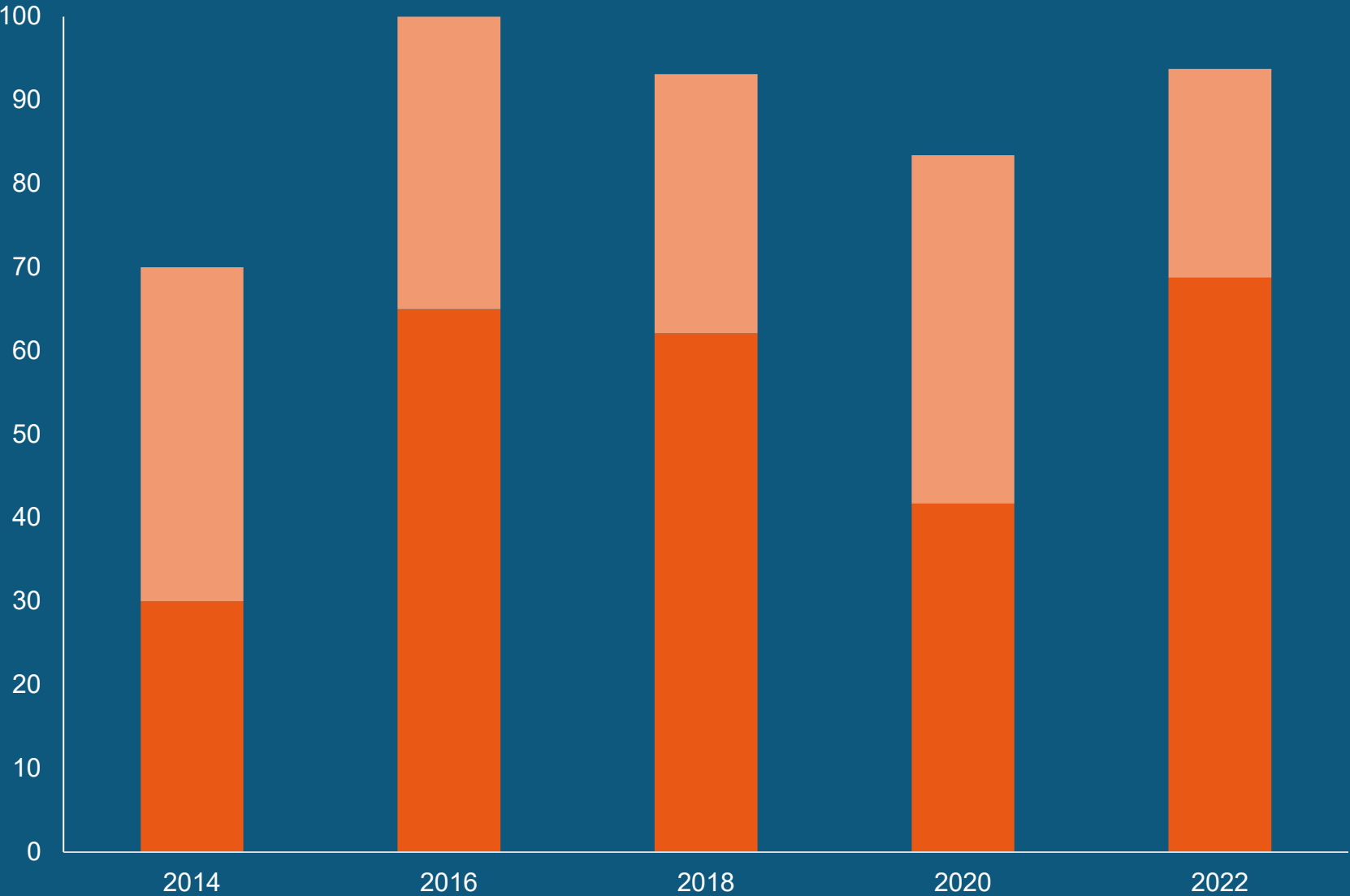
Uncertainty over funding has remained consistently high since 2014. 88% of respondents saw this as a barrier to placeshaping capacity.

KEY

Significant barrier

Occasional barrier

Difficulty attracting candidates



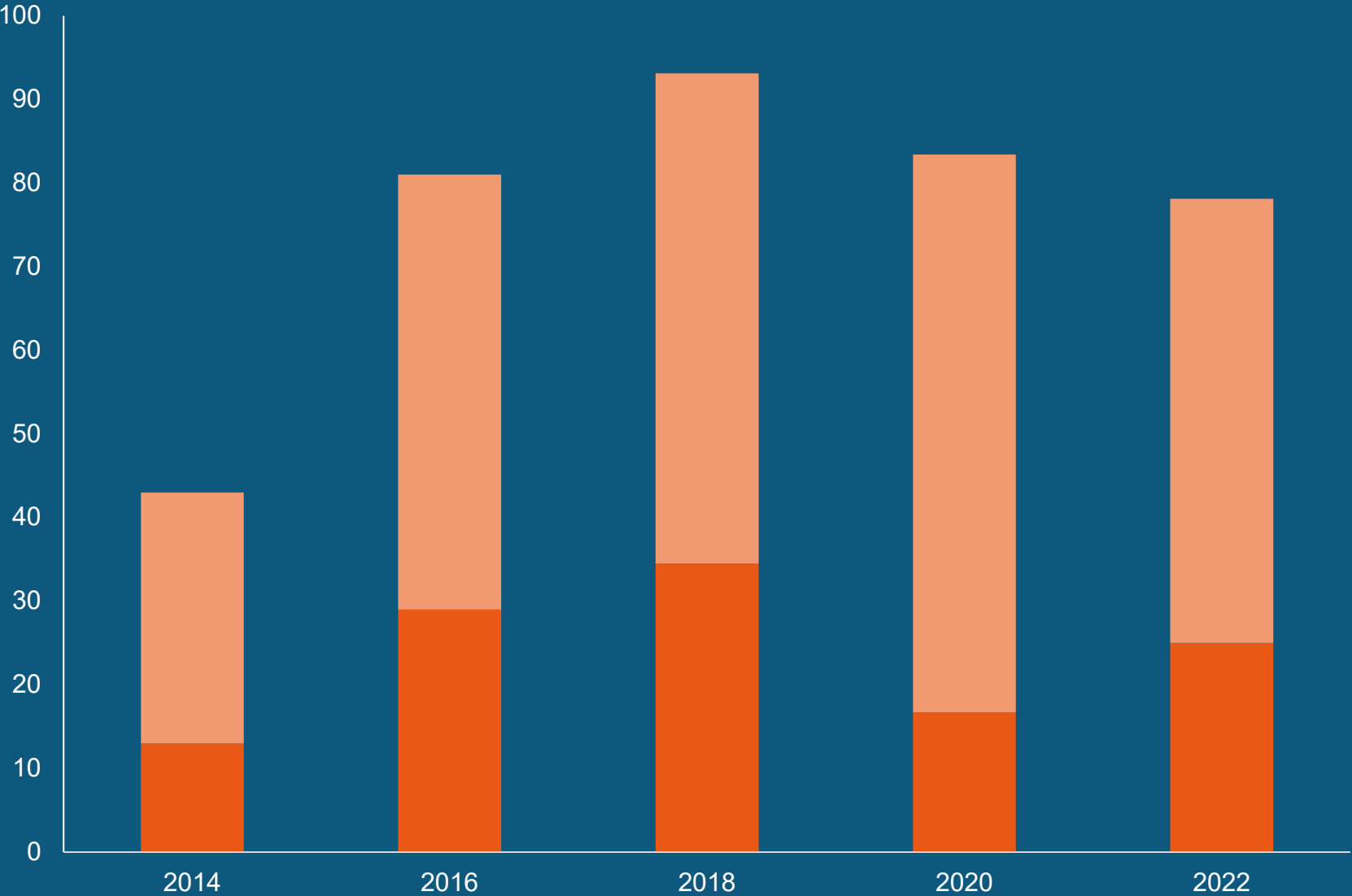
Attracting suitably skilled or qualified candidates has increased as an issue for authorities in comparison with previous years to become the largest barrier to addressing capacity needs. 68.75% of respondents see this as a significant barrier, the largest percentage since the baseline survey in 2014.

KEY

Significant barrier

Occasional barrier

Difficulty retaining staff



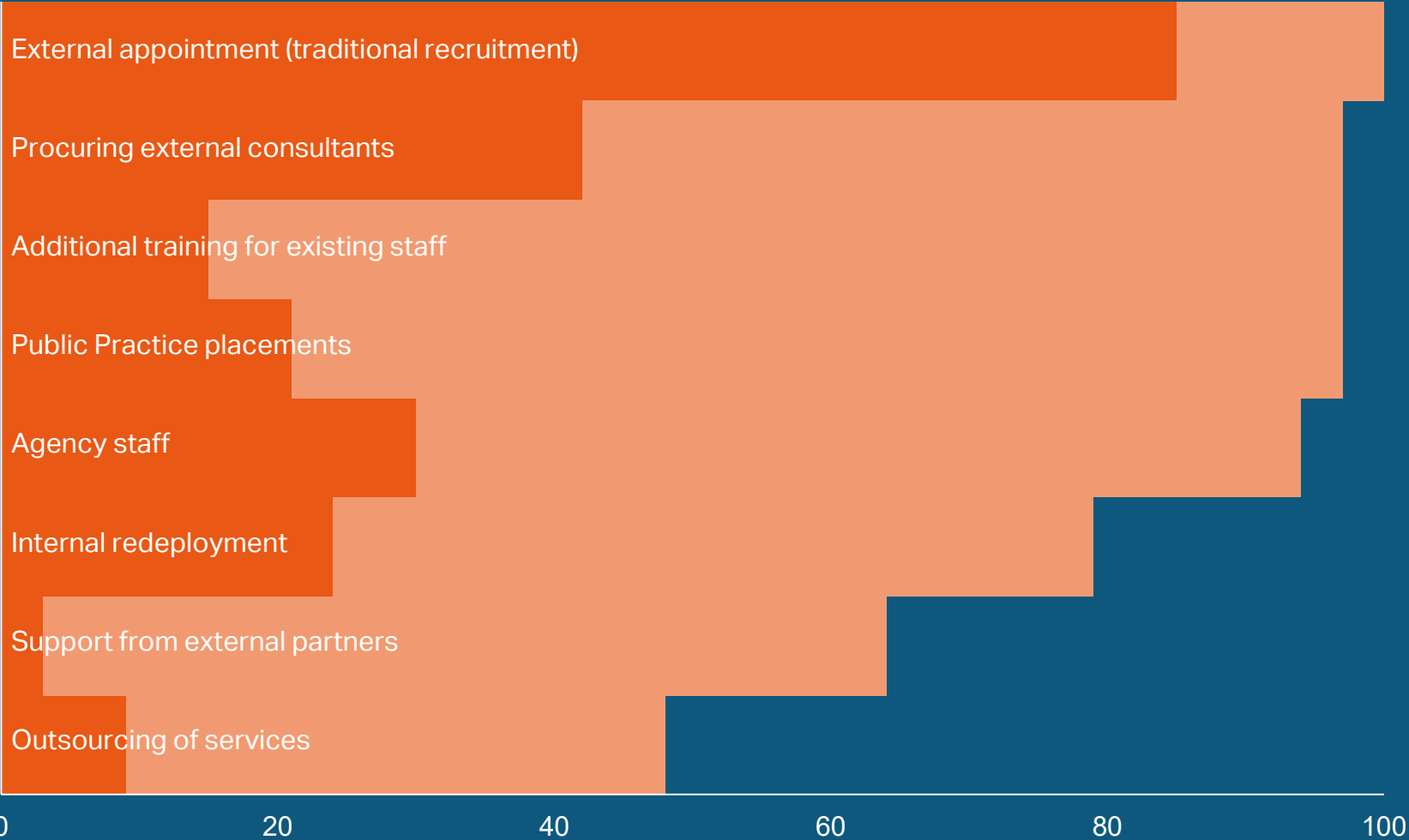
While this has dropped from the last survey in 2020, 78% of respondents still see retaining staff as a barrier to meeting placeshaping capacity needs.

KEY

Significant barrier

Occasional barrier

Meeting capacity needs



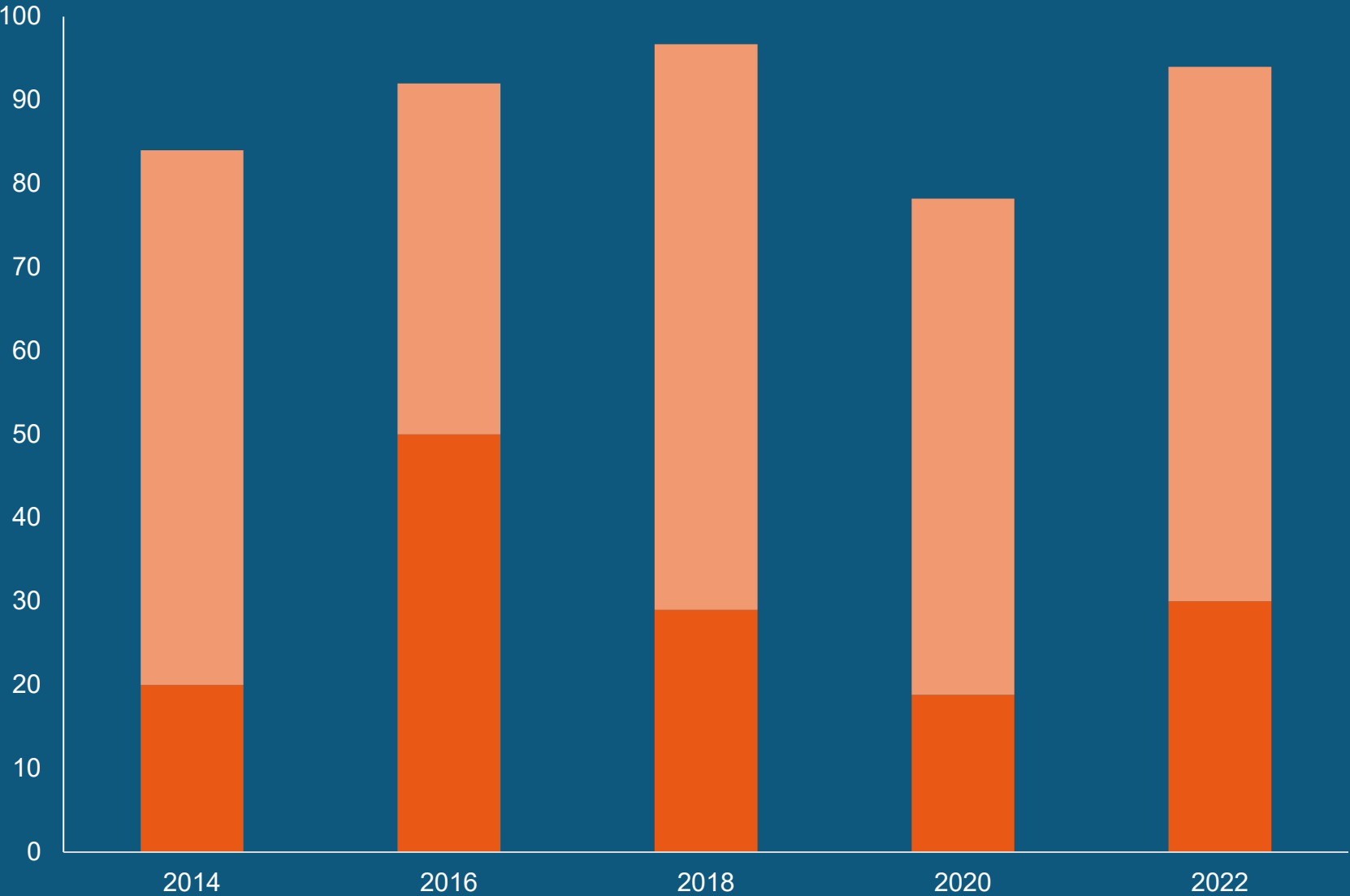
A range of methods are used to meet capacity needs, with external appointments most popular. Since the last survey, uptake of Public Practice has increased from 70%, with 97% of London authorities responding have made Public Practice placements.

KEY

Routinely

Sometimes

Use of agency staff over time



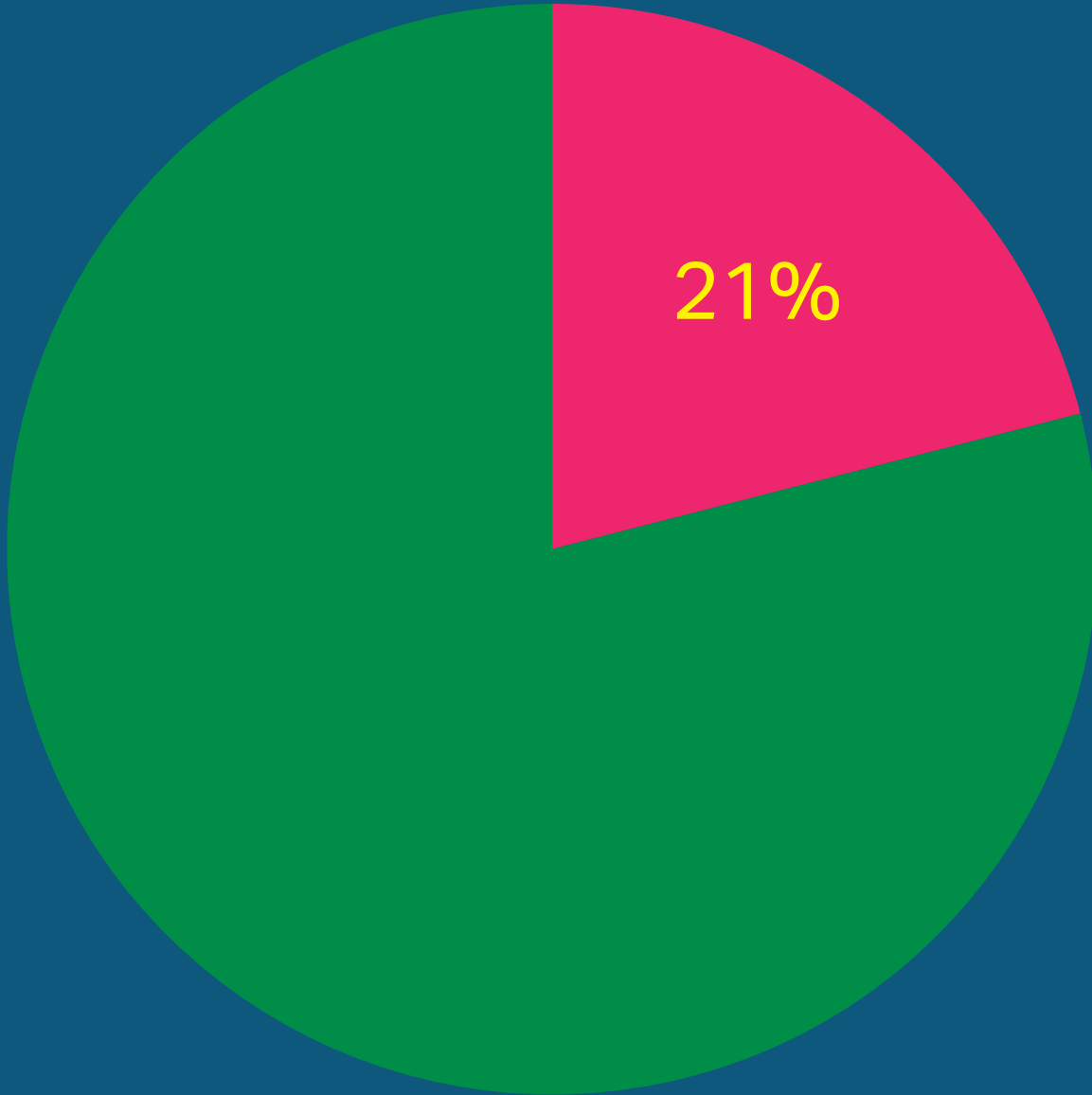
The trend for using agency staff to resolve capacity issues has increased this year following a drop in 2020. The figure remains high, with 94% of respondents using agency staff as a means of filling capacity across their placeshaping teams.

KEY

Routinely

Sometimes

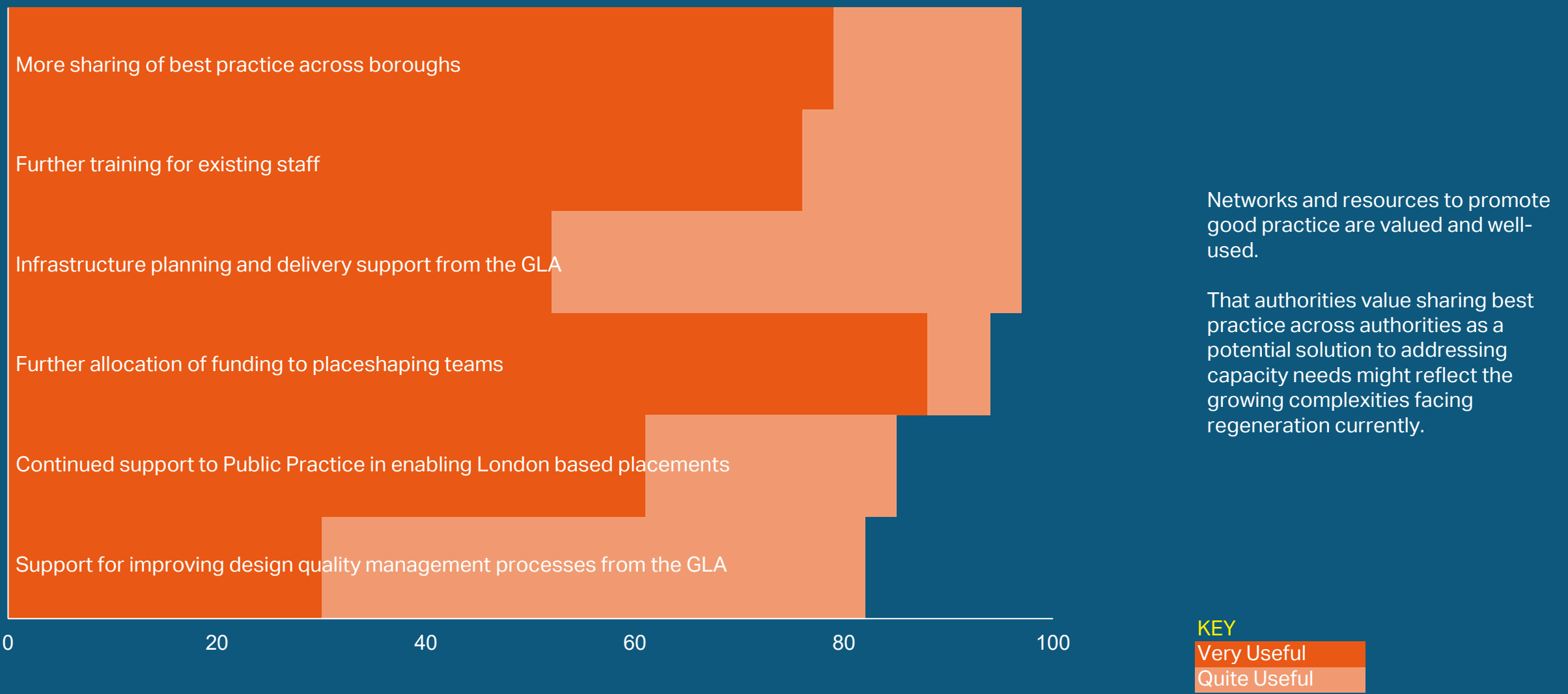
Proportion of placeshaping staff in temporary roles



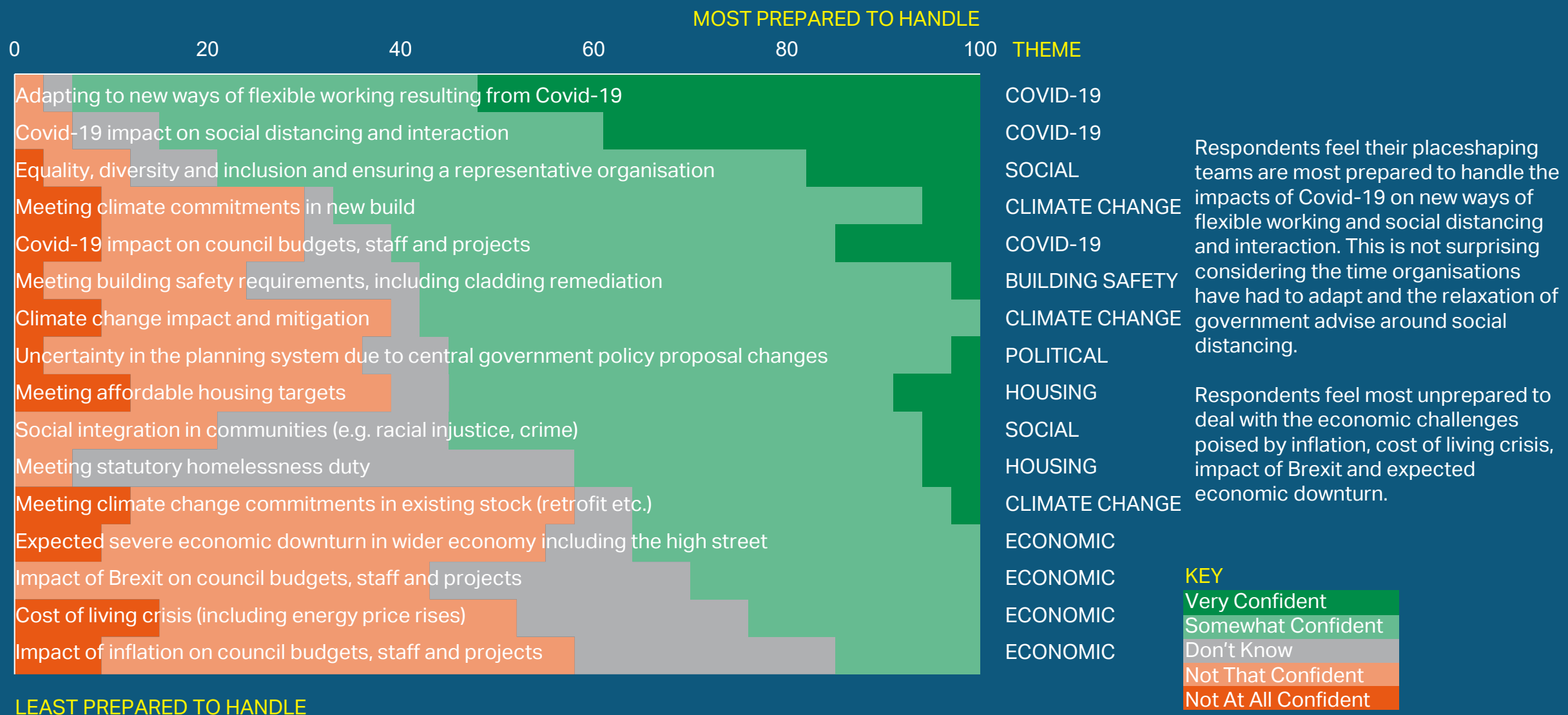
21% of placeshaping roles are temporary roles (i.e., fixed term contracts / agency staff). This compares to 6.4% of all Londoners using data from October 2021-September 2022*.

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/temporary-job-rate-in-London>

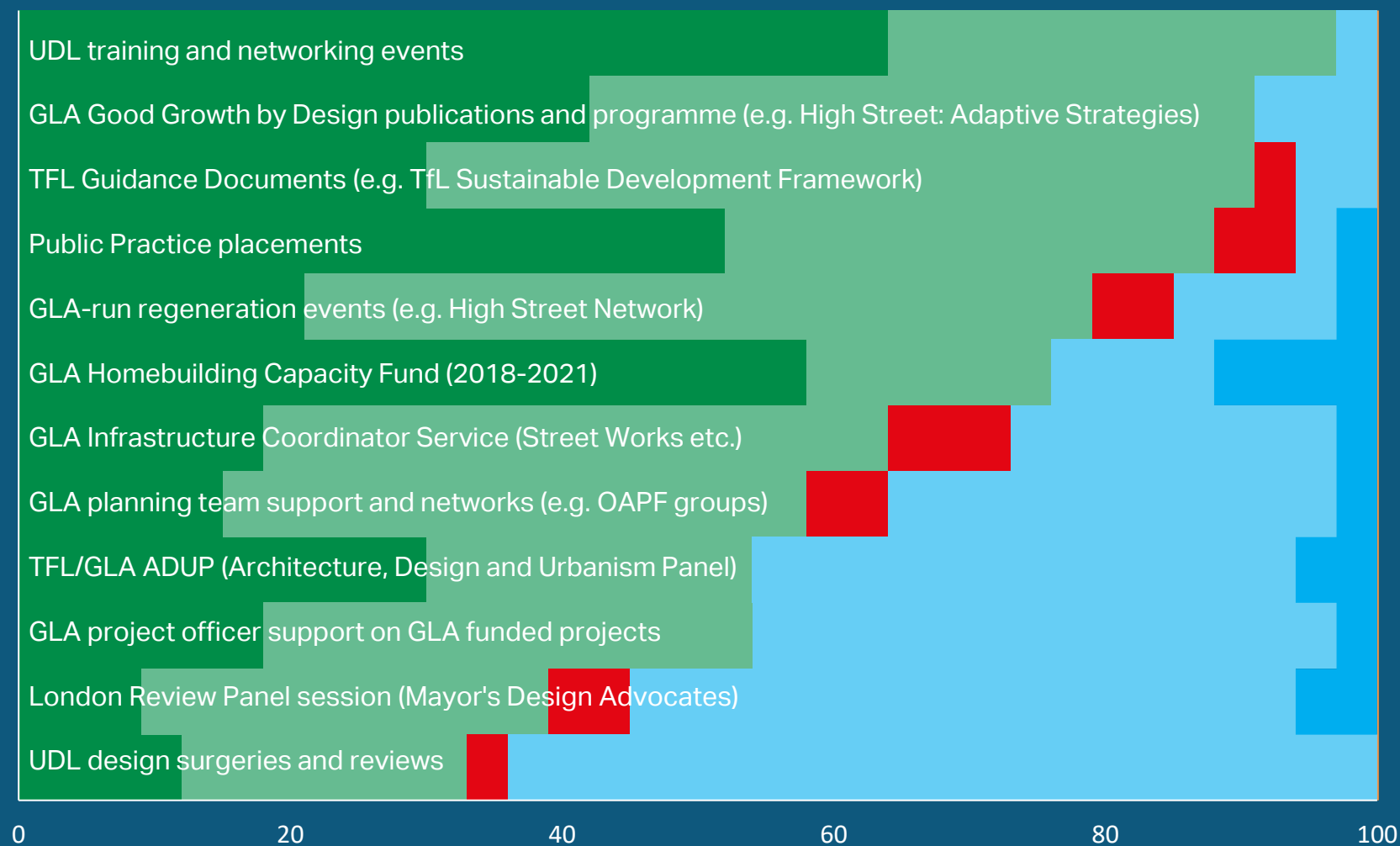
Potential solutions to capacity needs



Preparedness of placeshaping teams to handle challenges



What GLA resources are most useful to placeshaping projects



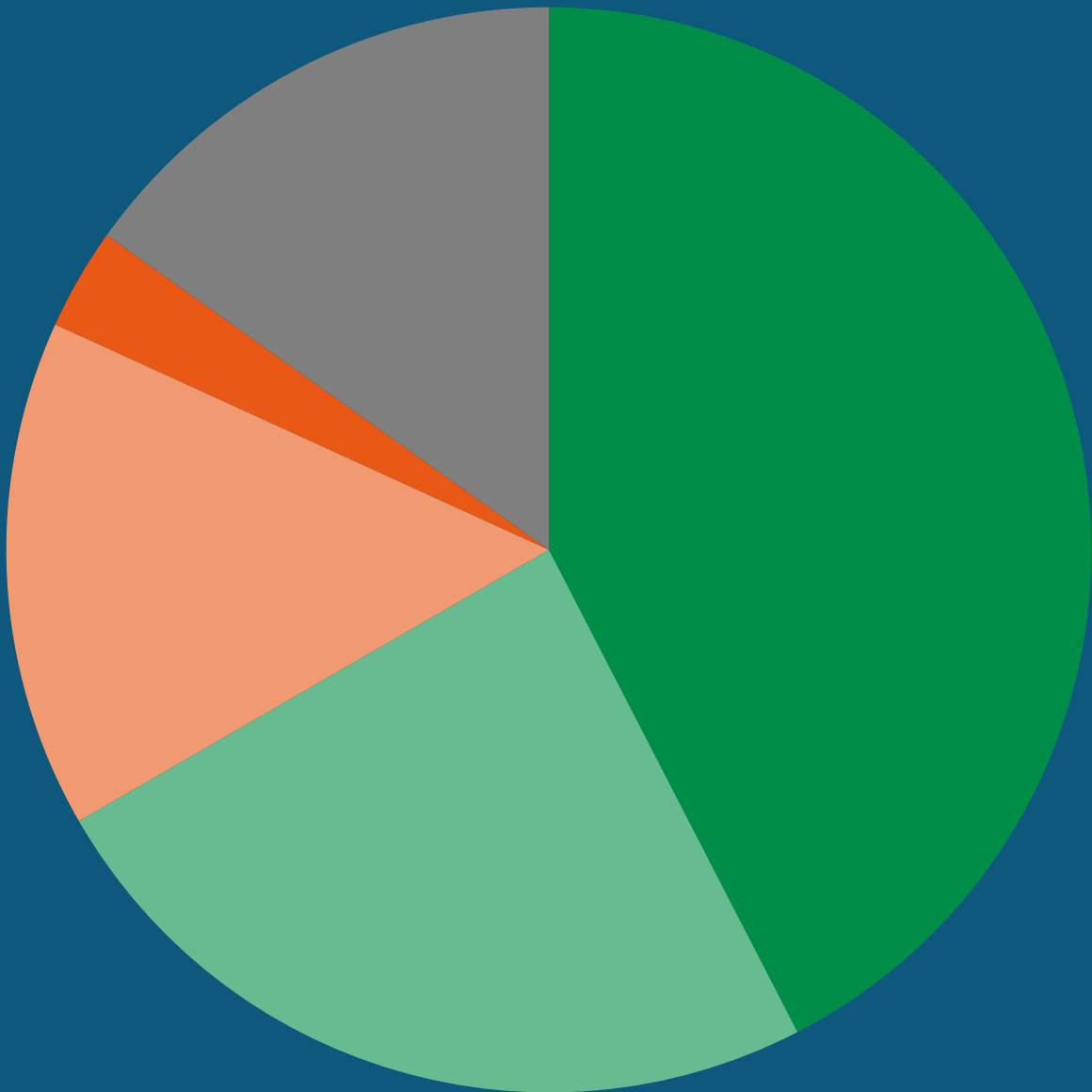
Authorities strongly value UDL training and networking events and the GLA Good Growth by Design programme. These are the most used GLA resources as well as all respondents having heard of them and finding them useful.

Overall, for respondents who have used GLA resources the vast majority found them useful.

KEY

- Very Useful
- Quite Useful
- Not Useful
- Haven't Used
- Haven't Heard Of

Importance of placeshaping staff being reflective of local population



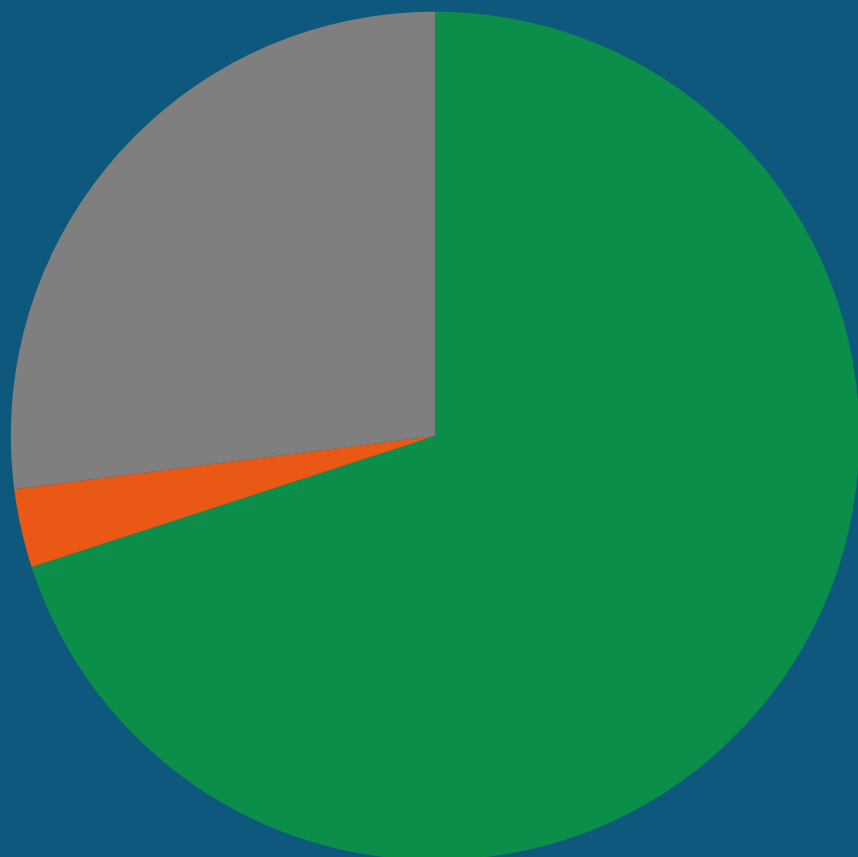
66% of respondents thought that having their placeshaping staff being reflective of the local population was a priority for their organisation.

15% did not know and 18% did not think this a priority for their organisation.

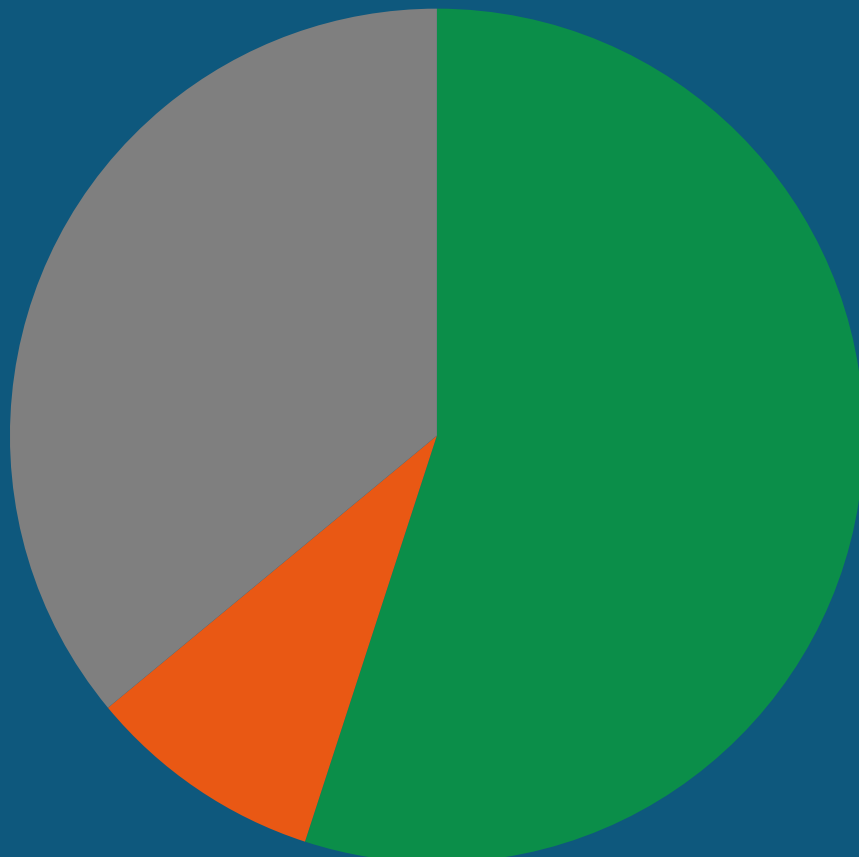
KEY

A Great Deal
Somewhat
Not That Much
Not At All
Don't Know

Monitoring of gender and ethnicity pay gaps



Does your organisation track the gender pay gap?



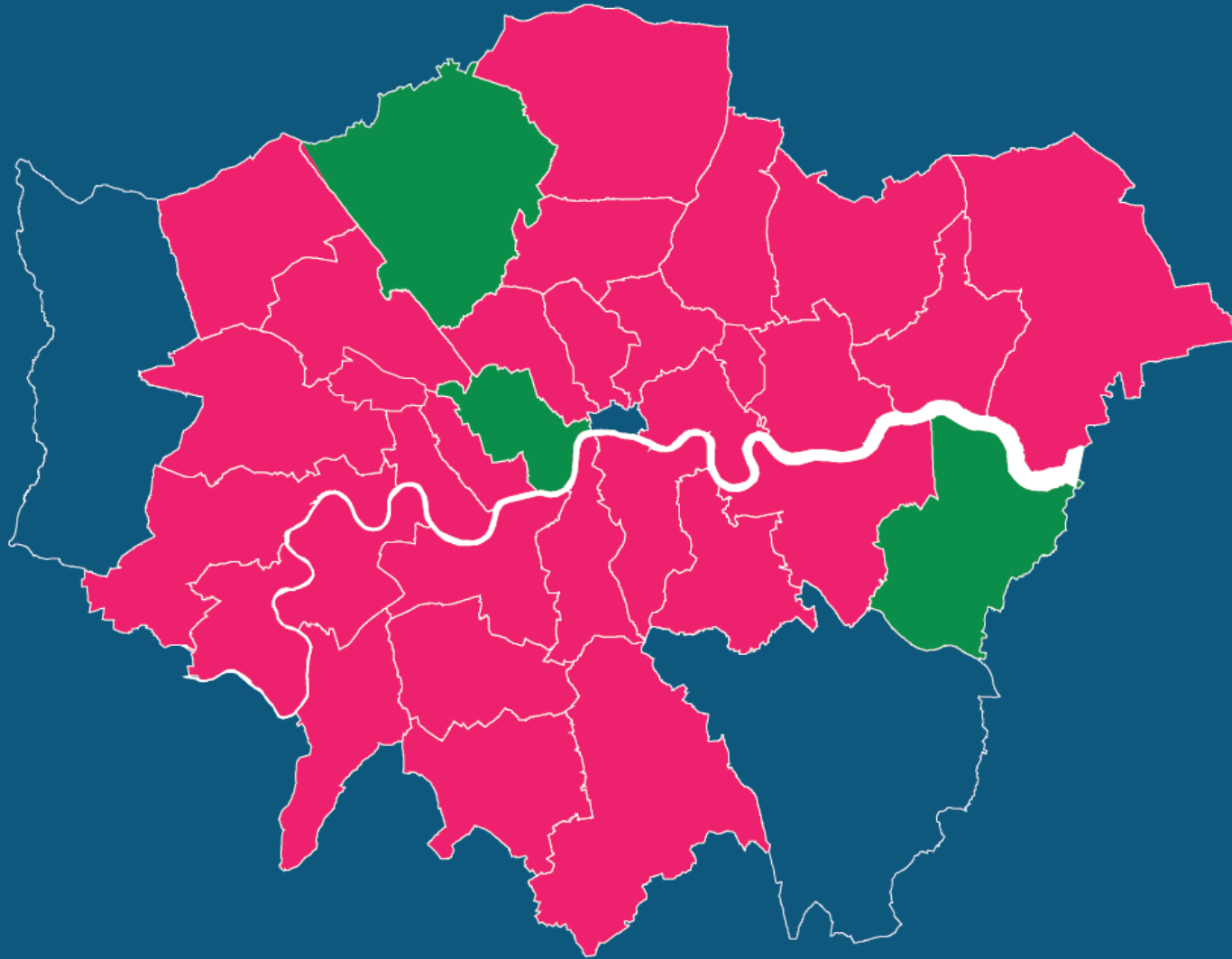
Does your organisation track the ethnicity pay gap?

55% of respondents knew their organisation tracked ethnicity pay gap and 70% knew their organisation tracked the gender pay gap.

KEY

Yes
No
Not known

Changes in design review provision in London



Design Review Panels across London - 2022

The provision of Design Review panels has remained high over the last two years. Three additional boroughs are planning to establish a panel meaning 92% of authorities either have, or are about to set up, a panel at authority level, up from 86% at the last survey.

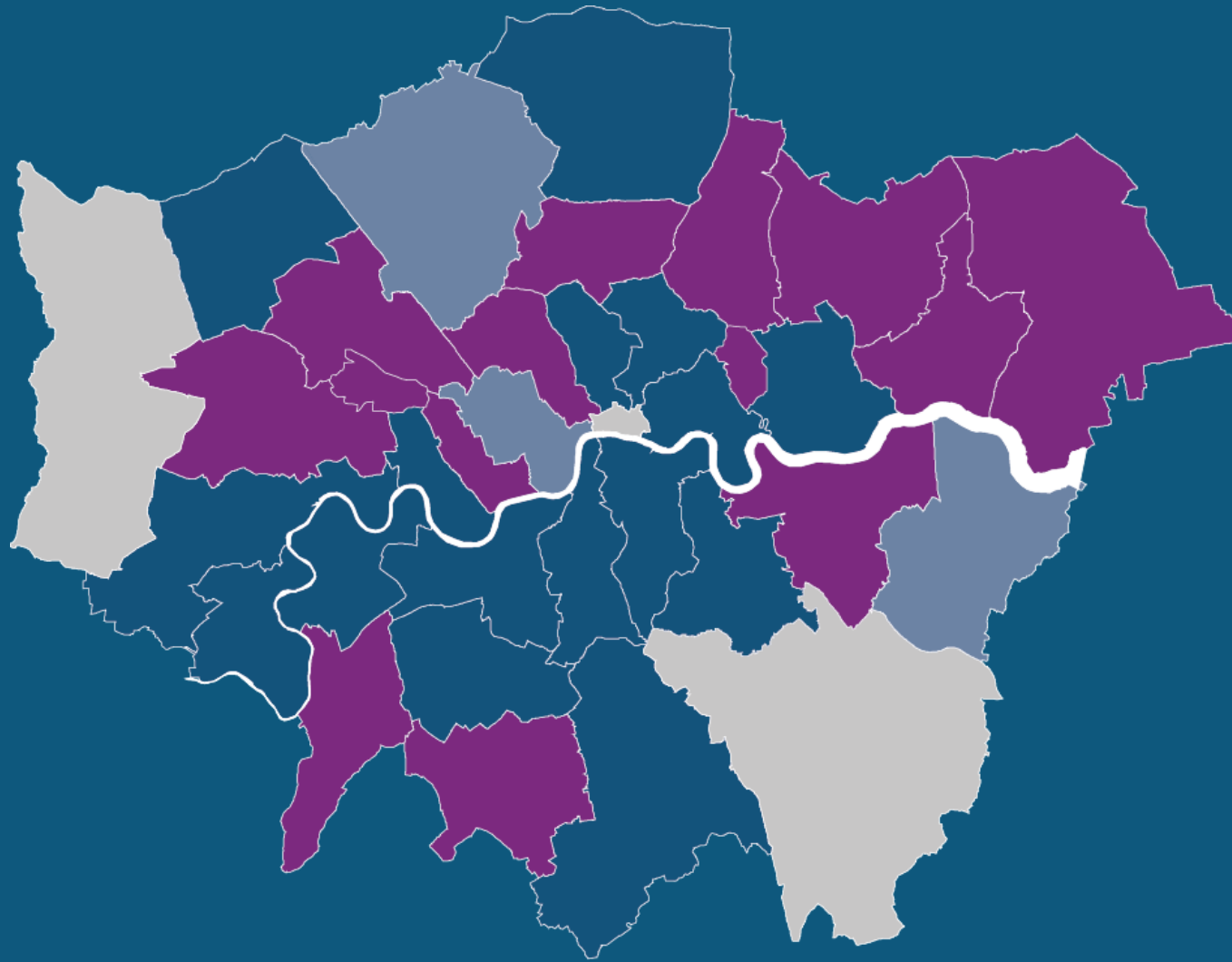
KEY

Established Design Review Panel

In Development, Not Yet Operational

No Design Review Panel

Delivery of design review services



Design Review Panels Management

Of the 28 operational design review panels, 15 (56%) are managed in-house and 13 (44%) are managed by external providers.

KEY

Design Review Panel Managed In-House
Design Review Panel Managed by External Provider
Design Review Panel in Development
No Design Review Panel

Is your design review panel signed up to The London Design Review Charter?



63% of existing respondents self report they are compliant with the London Design Review Charter. The charter sets out core principles for design review panels to support a high quality and consistent service across London and invites panels to sign-up to these principles.

KEY

Yes and meets all principles

Yes, but does not meet all principles

No / Did not answer / No panel

Do you feel panel members are representative of the people in the area it serves?



33% of respondents report their panels are not representative of the communities they serve, 30% that their panel's are representative and 36% don't know.

KEY	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

About Good Growth by Design

The Mayor's Good Growth by Design programme seeks to enhance the design of the built environment to create a city that works for all Londoners. This means development and growth should benefit everyone who lives here. As such, it should be sensitive to the local context, environmentally sustainable and physically accessible.

The programme calls on all involved in London's growing architectural, design and built environment professions to help realise the Mayor's vision. Good Growth by Design uses the skills of both the Mayor's Design Advocates and the wider sector. This includes teams here at City Hall, the London Boroughs and other public bodies.

The programme covers six pillars of activity:

1. SETTING STANDARDS & INFORMING DELIVERY

Undertaking design research and identifying best practice in architecture, urban design and place-shaping, to support the development of clear policies and standards, and improve the quality of London's built environment.

2. ENSURING QUALITY

Ensuring effective design review across London, including through the London Review Panel.

3. BUILDING CAPACITY

Enhancing the GLA Group's and borough's ability to shape new development that will deliver good growth.

4. SUPPORTING DIVERSITY

Working towards a more representative sector and striving for best practice while designing for diversity.

5. COMMISSIONING QUALITY

Ensuring excellence in how the Mayor and other public- sector clients appoint and manage architects and other built environment professionals.

6. CHAMPIONING & LEARNING

Advocating for the sector and for best practice and evaluating the programme's impact.

THE MAYOR'S DESIGN ADVOCATES

The Mayor's Design Advocates are 42 built environment professionals. They were chosen for their skill and experience to help the Mayor support London's growth through the Good Growth by Design programme. They are independent and impartial, and provide support, advice, critique and expertise on London's built environment. The group includes practitioners, academics, policy makers and those from community-led schemes. Fifty five percent of the advocates are women, and forty five percent are from a black, asian or minority ethnic background.

For more information visit www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/shaping-local-places/advice-and-guidance/about-good-growth-design