INSIGHTS FROM THE YOUTH LEADERS ON THEIR NEEDS, PREFERENCES, AND CHALLENGES ON WHAT MOTIVATES AND TRAINS THEM TO GET ENGAGED IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE

COUNTRY REPORT: FRANCE

engage youth
New Horizons for kids, youth and community
EUROED
AWO International
Roudel
inex association for voluntary activities
Co-funded by the European Union

Title: National Report on the findings in France of the Youth Leaders' needs, preferences and challenges on what motivates and trains them to get engaged in democratic life.

Project: ENGAGE - Empowering Next Generation Advocates for Global Education
Programme: Erasmus+
Action Type: KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth (KA220-YOU)
Grant agreement number: 2024-1-RO01-KA220-YOU-000250540

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The present report is developed in the framework of the project ENGAGE - Empowering Next Generation Advocates for Global Education, co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme, KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth, Ref. no.: 2024-1-RO01-KA220-YOU-000250540.

The ENGAGE project addressing youth leaders (YL) fills an existing gap by providing them with an online course and training internationally and nationally on EU values, cultural diversity, inclusion, social justice, and civic engagement; it equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills that empower them to effectively guide and mentor young people in various aspects of personal development and active citizenship. The project is driven by a desire to educate knowledgeable, skilled, and socially responsible citizens through a holistic youth development approach.

The main aim of ENGAGE project is to develop resources and actions, providing youth leaders (YL) with the necessary knowledge, skills, methodologies, and tools to educate youth on democratic processes and European values, raise awareness of the diversity and role of inclusion in Europe, and ensure that all young people, including those with disabilities and those who are at risk, have equal access to opportunities.

The National Report is based on the findings of the research developed by the project consortium to define the base ground of the project. Even though the project application started with a solid motivation and needs identification, for the development of the project results, especially the involvement strategy, online course and direct actions with the target group, the partnership considered essential the need to implement in the beginning of the project research activities to involve the direct target group to identify Youth Leaders' needs, preferences and challenges related the topic.

Getting information about **their experience, knowledge, skills, training, the strategies they use to motivate young people, raise their awareness of inclusion and diversity or what topics they would like to do in the training course** suggested by the project **will help project partners to effectively design the training course to customize Youth leaders' needs.** This will also ensure that the topic, content, methodologies and inclusive strategies of the training course will be relevant, impactful and useful to youth leaders.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Objectives and research questions

The present research within the ENGAGE project aims to provide data and insights that support the project's main objective: to empower Youth Leaders (YLs) to become effective educators and facilitators of civic participation, social inclusion, and European values. Based on the research findings, the project will develop tools and methods that are relevant, impactful, and practical for youth work across Europe.

To ensure the quality and usefulness of project outcomes, **the key objectives of this research are to:**

1) Understand Youth Leaders' needs, preferences, and challenges in engaging young people in inclusive and democratic activities. These insights are essential for shaping training content and resources that respond to real-world contexts.

2) Explore young people's attitudes, motivations, and perceived barriers in getting involved in civic life, with a particular focus on youth programs and initiatives. Understanding youth perspectives is key to designing inclusive, participatory approaches.

3) Support the co-creation of a training course by integrating Youth Leaders' direct input. Their feedback ensures the course will reflect current challenges and interests in the field.

4) Inform the development of a strategic framework and practical tools for working with young people who face exclusion risks, helping to ensure that inclusive youth work becomes more widespread, intentional, and effective.

Key Research Questions

To respond to the first two objectives, the study explored the following overarching questions:

Q1.How can we better understand the current practices, challenges, and support needs of Youth Leaders in promoting civic participation, inclusion, and European values, in order to design training and tools that are relevant, impactful, and grounded in their realities?

Q2.What motivates and hinders young people's participation in civic life, and how do they perceive inclusion, representation, and support within their communities and youth programs?

These research questions were designed to capture a multi-perspective understanding of youth participation and engagement, in order to inform both the design of the ENGAGE training and the broader strategy for inclusive youth work.

In this way, the research contributes directly to the ENGAGE mission by identifying key areas of support and enabling youth leaders to make a lasting impact. Ultimately, the findings will guide not only the training program, but also the creation of advocacy resources, ethical communication codes, and inclusive engagement strategies at both national and European levels.

2.2 Methodology overview

This research followed a multiphase quantitative design, conducted through two online surveys: one targeting Youth Leaders (YLs) and another targeting young people (ages 13–30). The study aimed to generate comparative and actionable insights that would inform the ENGAGE project's training curriculum, communication strategies, and inclusive youth engagement practices.

The design of both questionnaires was a co-creation process within the ENGAGE consortium, grounded in the project's objectives and aligned with key European frameworks on youth participation, civic engagement, and inclusion. The tools were designed to be both evidence-generating and practical, ensuring their relevance across four diverse national contexts.

2.3 Sampling

The sampling was non-probabilistic, based on convenience and snowball sampling, and was tailored by each country partner to best reach Youth Leaders and youth locally. Neither of the samples is not representative at the national or European level, but includes a diverse range of respondents in terms of age, gender, location, and background.

Recruitment was done using multiple outreach channels, including internal databases, social media campaigns, collaboration with local organizations, direct engagement with youth workers and educators, and peer-to-peer sharing (especially to reach youth respondents via Youth Leaders).
While the youth sample showed slightly higher rates of non-response, especially in open-ended questions, the overall completion rate and data quality are considered robust for the project's goals.

A total of 477 Youth Leader and 415 Youth completed questionnaires were collected across Romania, France, Czech Republic, and Germany, resulting in a total of 892 questionnaires accross all countries.

The present study reports on the 109 Youth Leaders questionnaire collected in Germany.

Table 1. SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY

	YOUTH LEADERS SAMPLE	YOUTH SAMPLE	TOTAL SAMPLE
CZ	112	30	142
DE	102	79	181
FR	109	22	131
RO	154	284	438
TOTAL Sample	477	415	892

2.4 Data collection

Two distinct but complementary questionnaires were used:

Youth Leader questionnaire: Final version included 31 questions, of which 6 were open-ended, allowing for deeper qualitative insights.

Youth questionnaire: A shorter instrument with 23 questions, including 1 open-ended question, designed to reduce dropout and missing responses.

To ensure inclusivity and capture a broader range of experiences, most multiple-choice questions included an "Other" option, enabling respondents to reflect contexts not foreseen by the research team.

After validation in English, each partner translated and adapted the questionnaires into their national language to ensure cultural and linguistic relevance. Online distribution was facilitated using SurveyMonkey in all four countries, and the data collection took place over a 3–4-month period, starting in March 2025 and concluding by mid-August 2025.

2.5 Data Analysis

The analysis was primarily descriptive, focusing on trends, distributions, and cross-country comparisons. Quantitative data was processed using SPSS, and data visualizations were produced with Tableau to facilitate interpretation and reporting.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, open-ended responses were examined thematically, particularly for Youth Leaders, to extract insights about challenges, needs, and preferred approaches.

For each partner was produced a country-level report, and a comparative report summarizing and analysing cross-country findings will be developed as a final output.

2.6. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. No personal identifiers were collected, and respondents could withdraw at any time. Ethical principles of informed consent, data protection, and respect for participants were upheld across all stages.

Limitations of the research include:

1) The non-representative nature of the sample, limiting generalizability;

2) Self-selection bias, particularly among more engaged or motivated respondents;

3) Online distribution constraints, potentially excluding youth and youth leaders without digital access;

4) A relatively high non-response rate for the youth survey, possibly due to perceived complexity or survey length;

5) Use of some terminology from EU frameworks (e.g., “inclusion,” “civic engagement”) that may not be equally familiar across all respondent groups.

Despite these limitations, the research provides rich, context-sensitive insights that support the co-design of relevant and impactful tools for youth leaders across Europe.

III. YOUTH LEADERS- FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

3.1 RESPONDENT PROFILE

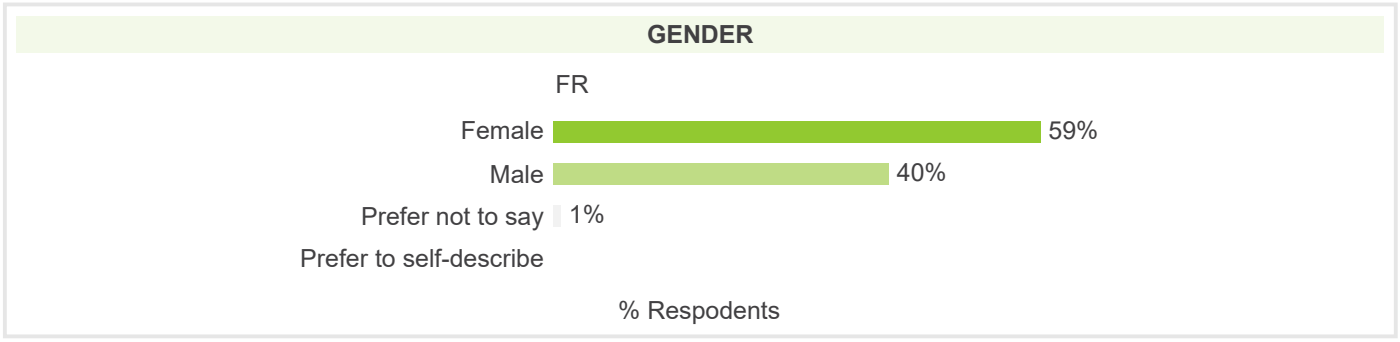
3.1.1 Demographic overview

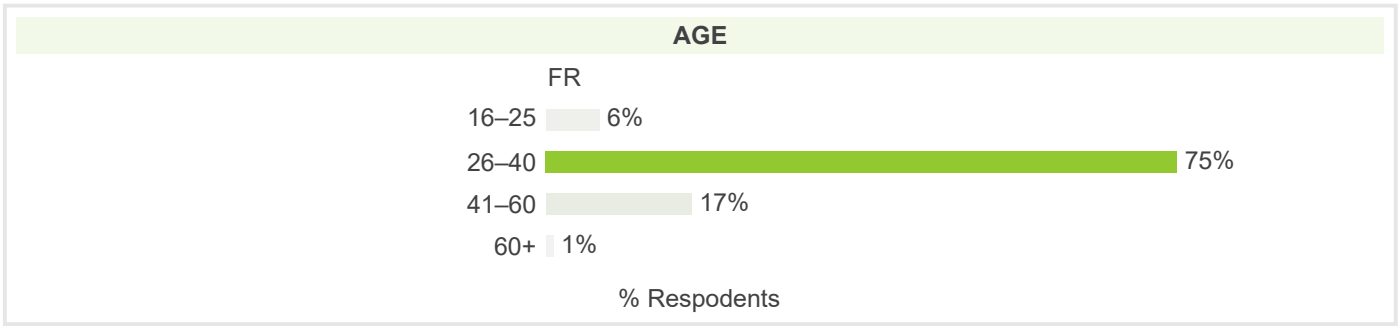
Out of a total sample of 109 completed responses, most youth leaders (46%) are located in large urban areas, and 27% live in medium-sized cities. The remaining participants are distributed across smaller towns and rural areas, accounting for 27%, in total.

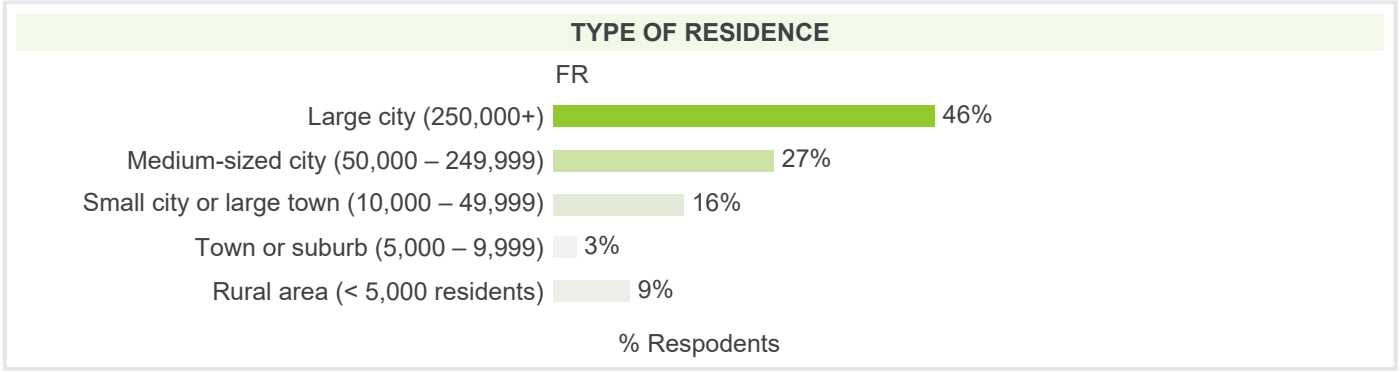
In terms of age, 75% of respondents are aged 26–40, 6% fall into the 16–25 age group, and 17% are between 41 and 60 years old.

The majority of respondents identify as female (59%), while 40% identify as male, and 1% preferred to self-describe.

These patterns should be kept in mind when designing future training, especially the need to tailor content for both experienced facilitators and emerging peer leaders, and to expand outreach beyond dominant urban and gendered profiles.





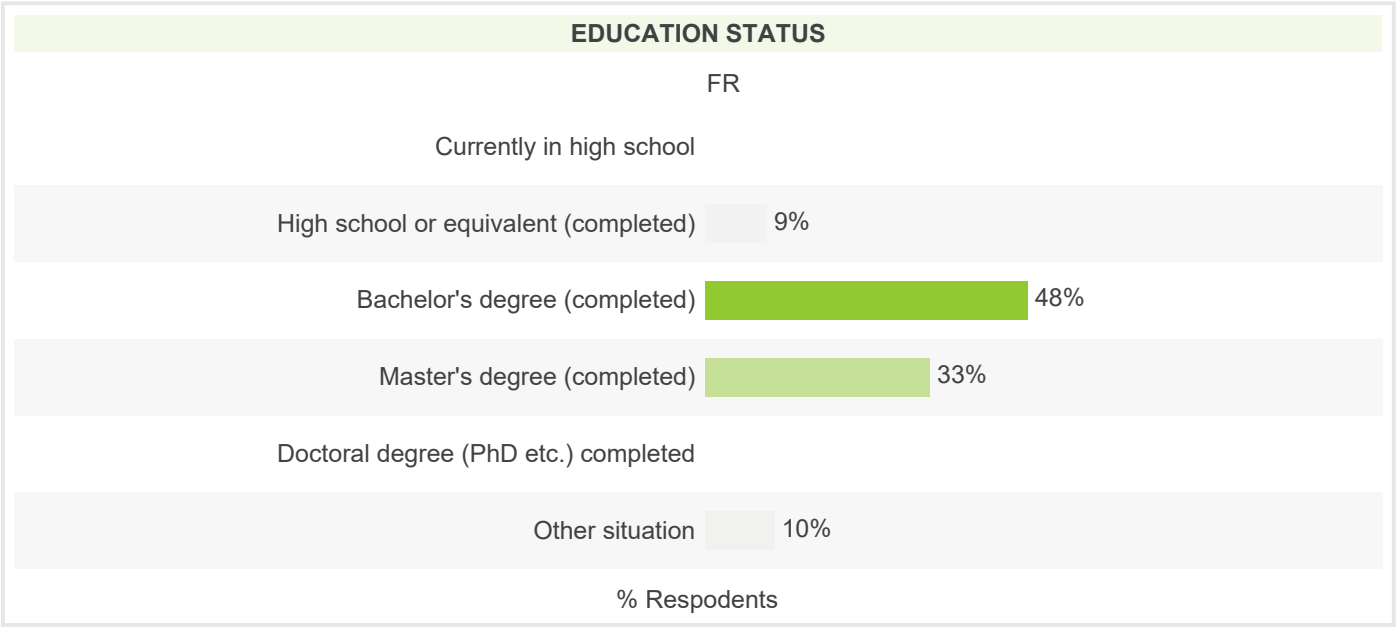


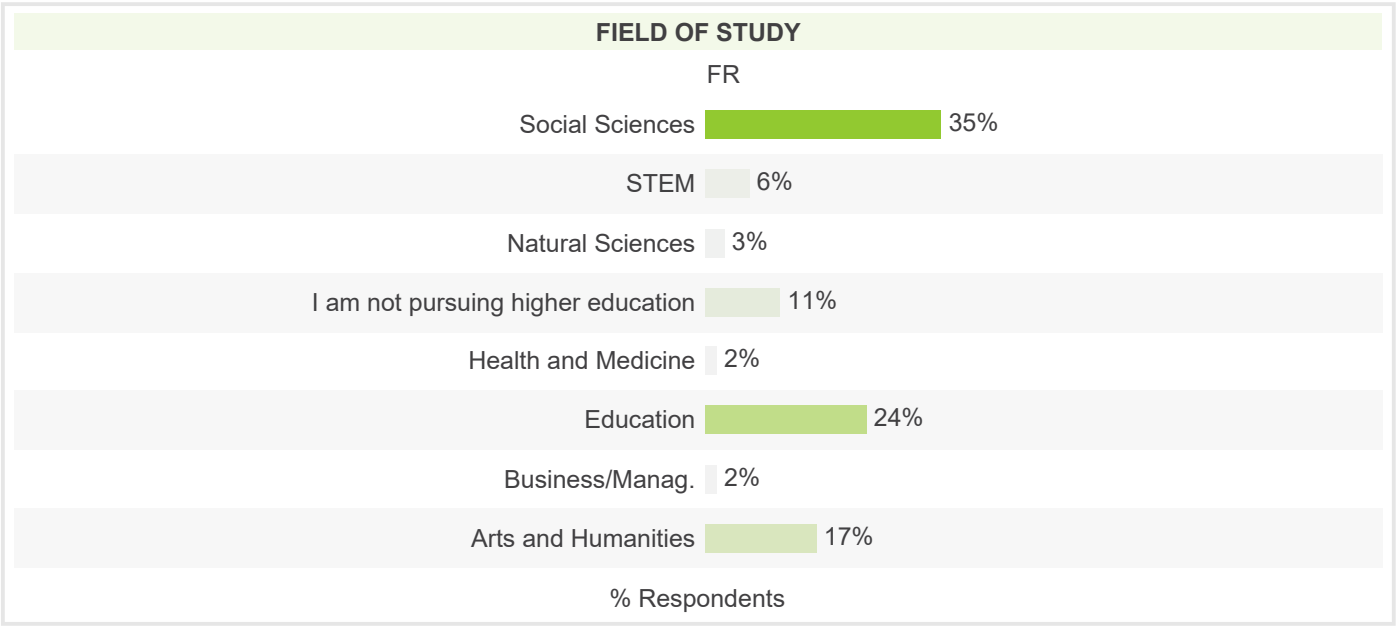
3.1.2 Education and field of study

French YL respondents show a relatively even educational distribution, 48% completed a bachelor's degree, 33% a master's degree, and 9% high school. No one is currently in high school, and 10% selected "other situation" (e.g bachelor degree, currently in masters etc.)

The field of study is dominated by social sciences (35%), with additional representation from education sector (24%), arts and humanities (17%), and STEM (3%). Around 11% are not pursuing higher education.

Social sciences and education remain the main academic fields, offering a base for participation-oriented training, but training design should also account for those with alternative backgrounds or less formal educational pathways.





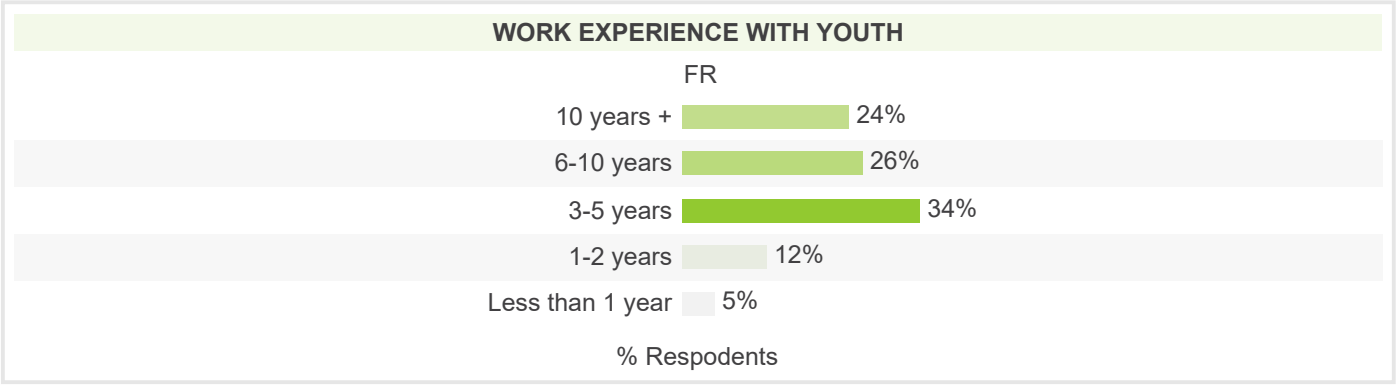
3.1.3 Work experience and context of working with youth

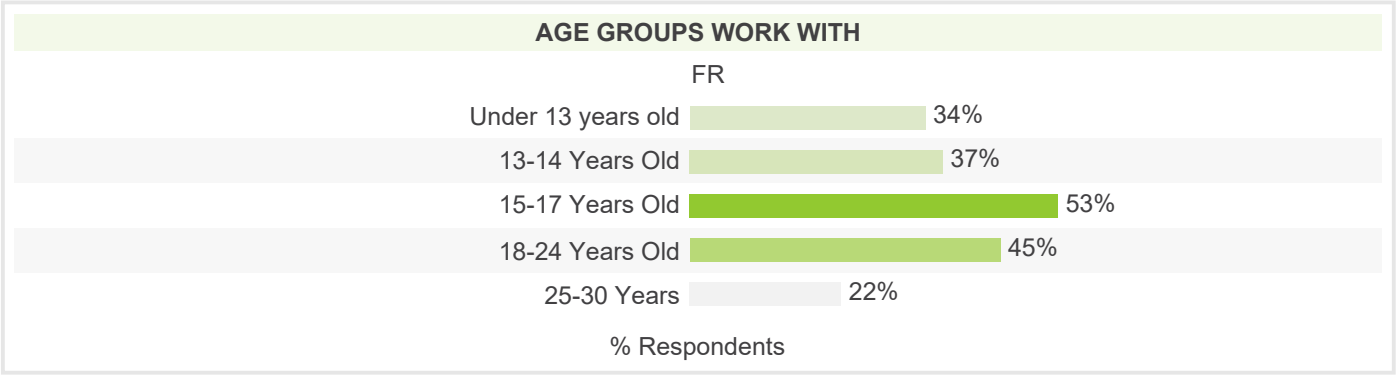
Although there is a core group of experienced professionals, with 24% active for 10+ years, it's worth noting that 47% of youth leaders have less than five years of experience in youth leadership. This includes 4% with less than one year, 12% with 1–2 years, and 31% with 3–5 years.

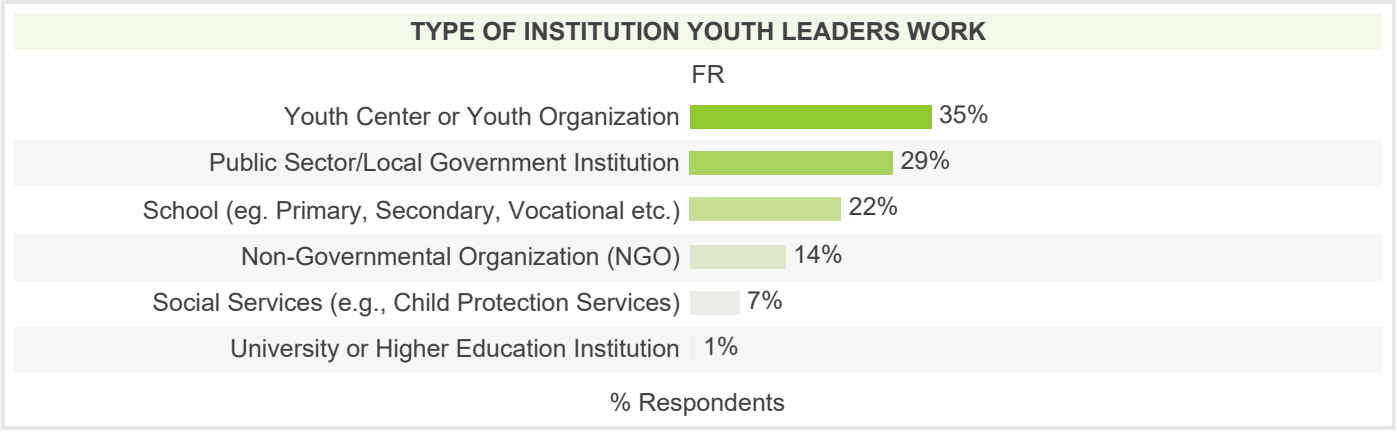
Most youth leaders in France report working with adolescents and young adults, particularly those aged 15–17 (53%) and 18–24 (45%). More than one third, 37%, work with 13–14-year-olds, and/or engage with children under 13 (34%). Engagement with the 25–30 age group is less frequent (22%).

When it comes to the institutional picture, the range of institutions in which youth leaders work is wide, with most respondents affiliated with youth centres (35%) or NGOs (14%), while schools (22%), public institutions (29%), and social services (7%) are also present.

Overall, data suggest that there are many youth leaders that are building their practice. Trainings should provide not only advanced tools for experienced professionals but also strong foundational elements and practical resources for those newer to the field.







3.1.4 Working with specific youth groups

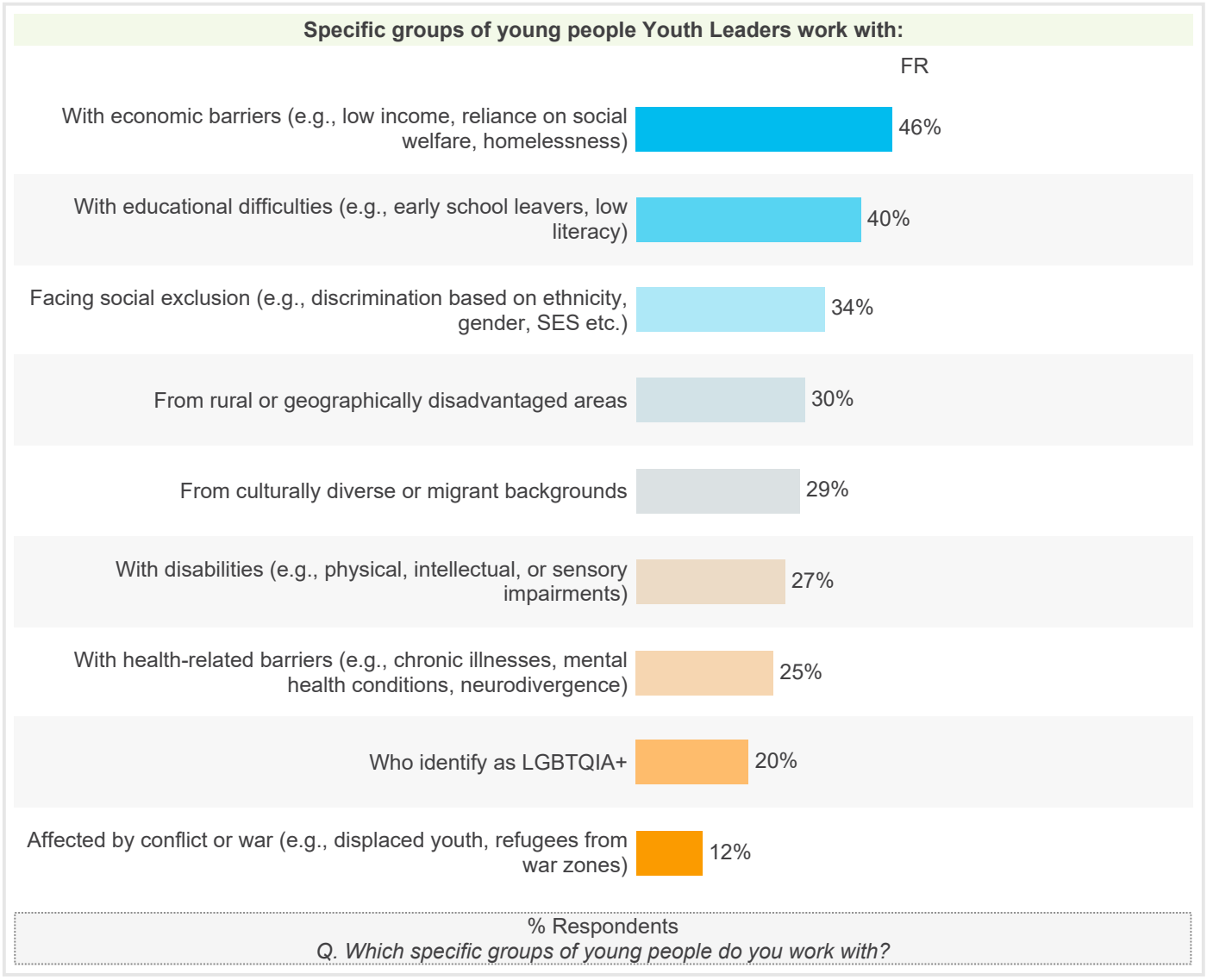
Youth leaders in France engage with a large variety of structurally disadvantaged youth groups.

The most common are youth facing economic barriers, mentioned by 46% of respondents, followed by those with educational difficulties (40%) and youth experiencing social exclusion (34%).

Almost one third of the youth leaders participating in this study engage with youth from rural or geographically disadvantaged areas (30%) and those from culturally diverse or migrant backgrounds (29%). Engagement with youth with disabilities (27%) and those with health-related barriers (25%) is slightly above the overall average.

Youth leaders that work with youth identifying as LGBTQIA+ (20%) and those affected by conflict or war (12%) are the least represented.

The data on the French sample shows a consistent focus on economic hardship, education, and social exclusion, while other groups such as LGBTQIA+ youth or those affected by war are less present.



3.2 KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

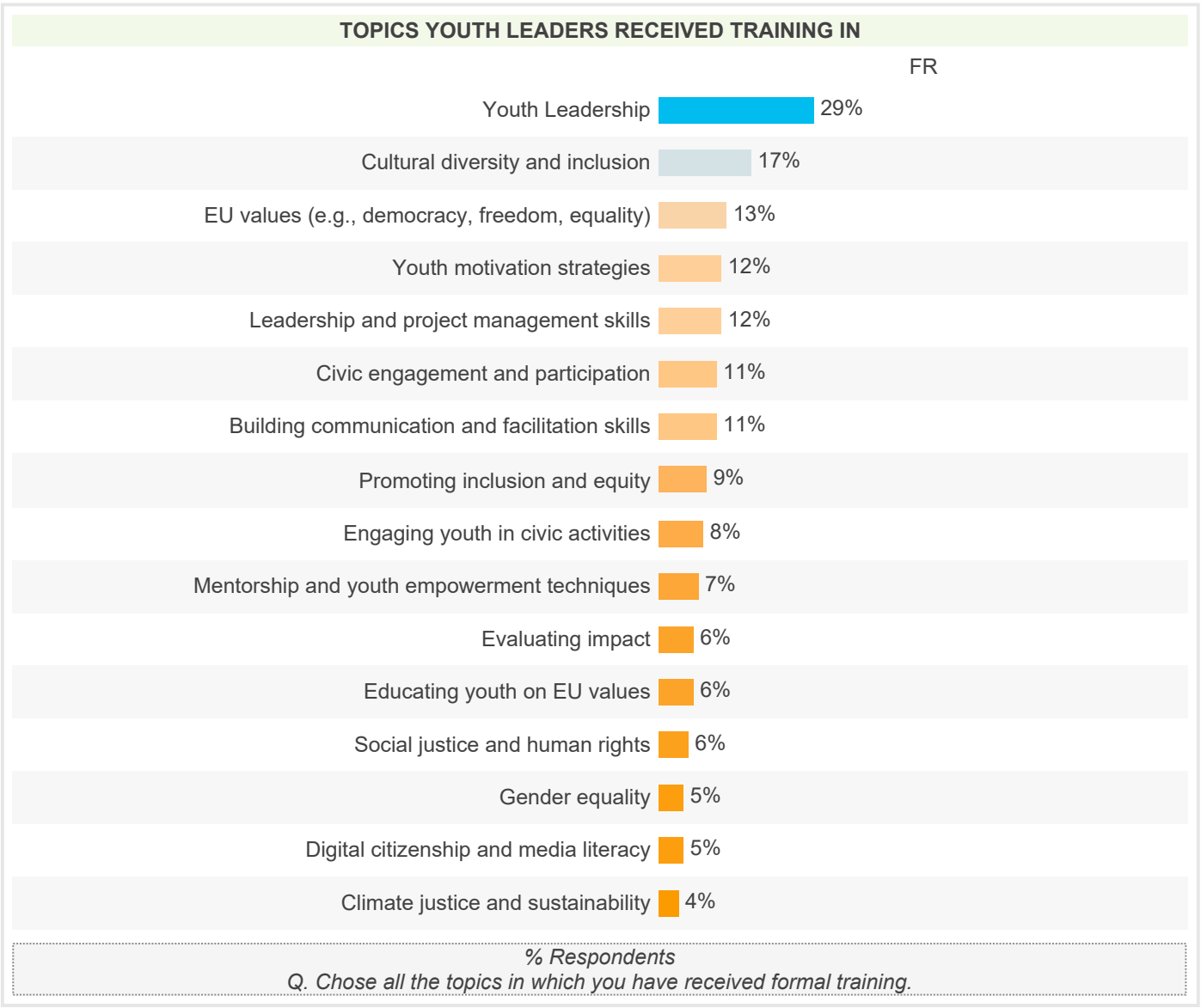
3.2.1 Link between training, practice and priorities in Youth Leadership

When we look at training topics that youth leaders are educated in, France youth leaders report moderate training rates with variation across topics. The most common areas of training are youth leadership (29%), cultural diversity and inclusion (17%).

While some respondents mention experience in gender equality (5%), social justice and human rights (6%) and climate justice (4%), training levels remain limited across most categories.

A small number of leaders report exposure to communication and facilitation (11%) domains, leadership and project management (12%), or inclusion and equity (9%), suggesting a need for formal education in these areas.

The figures suggest that French youth leaders have a moderate but uneven training background, with coverage concentrated in leadership and inclusion, but gaps in emerging areas such as digital literacy, sustainability, and impact evaluation.



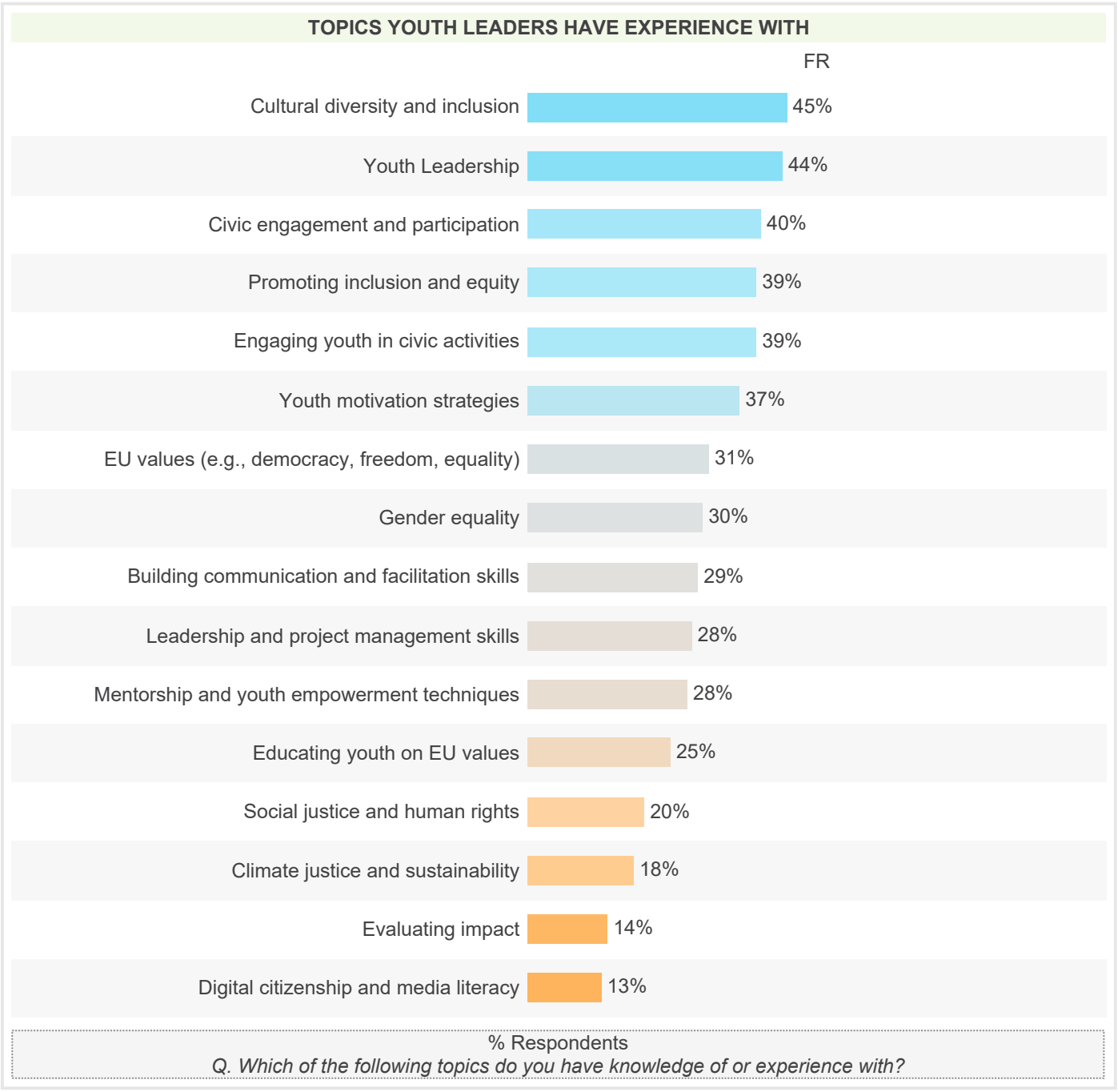
Experience with different topics

When it comes about their practical experience with several topics, data show moderate levels of experience in civic engagement and participation (40%), engaging youth in civic activities (39%), and youth leadership (44%). These figures highlight that civic practice is present but not consistently strong.

Organizational competencies such as leadership and project management (28%) and communication and facilitation (29%) are weaker, reported by less of a third of youth leaders.

By contrast, cultural diversity and inclusion (45%) and promoting inclusion and equity (39%) appear as relative strengths. Youth motivation strategies (37%) and mentorship (28%) remain moderate. Rights-based topics show uneven results. Gender equality (30%) and EU values (31%) are somewhat higher, but social justice (20%) and climate justice (18%) are low.

Educating youth on EU values (25%) and evaluating impact (14%) are among the least developed areas. These results underline the need for stronger organizational skills and broader exposure to rights-based themes.



Importance of the topics for their role

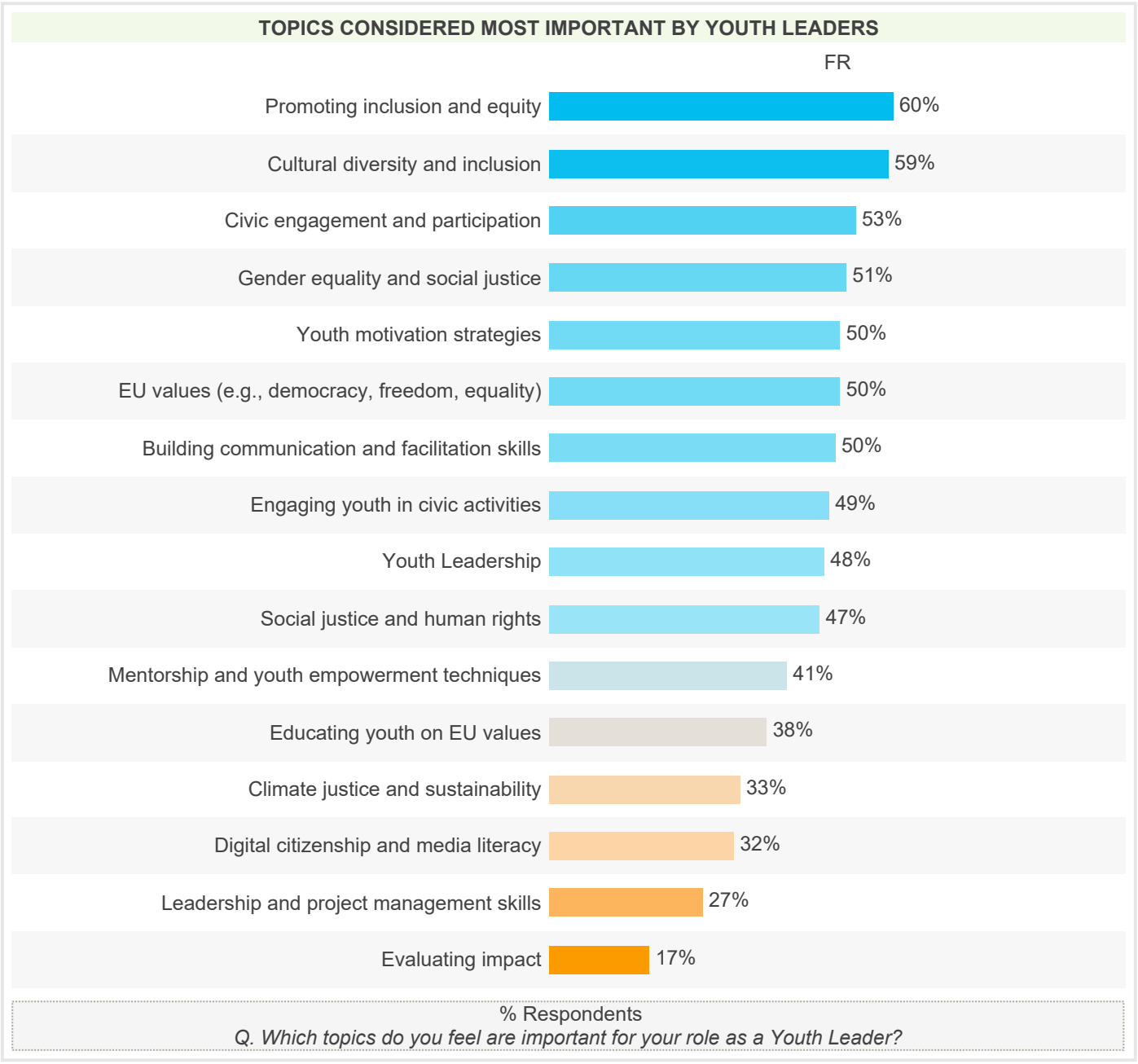
Asked about the topics that are important for their role, youth leaders place the highest importance inclusion: cultural diversity and inclusion (59%), promoting inclusion and equity (60%), and gender equality and social justice (51%) as key areas of importance.

Civic themes are also valued, with civic engagement and participation (53%) and engaging youth in civic activities (49%) both reported by around half of respondents.

Youth leadership (48%), communication and facilitation (50%), and youth motivation (50%) are moderately represented, but organizational skills such as project management (27%) are given less importance.

Rights-based themes such as EU values (50%), social justice and human rights (47%), and climate justice (33%) are uneven, while evaluating impact (17%) remains the least prioritized.

These results show that French youth leaders place strong emphasis on inclusion and equity, alongside civic engagement, but give less weight to organizational skills and evaluation.



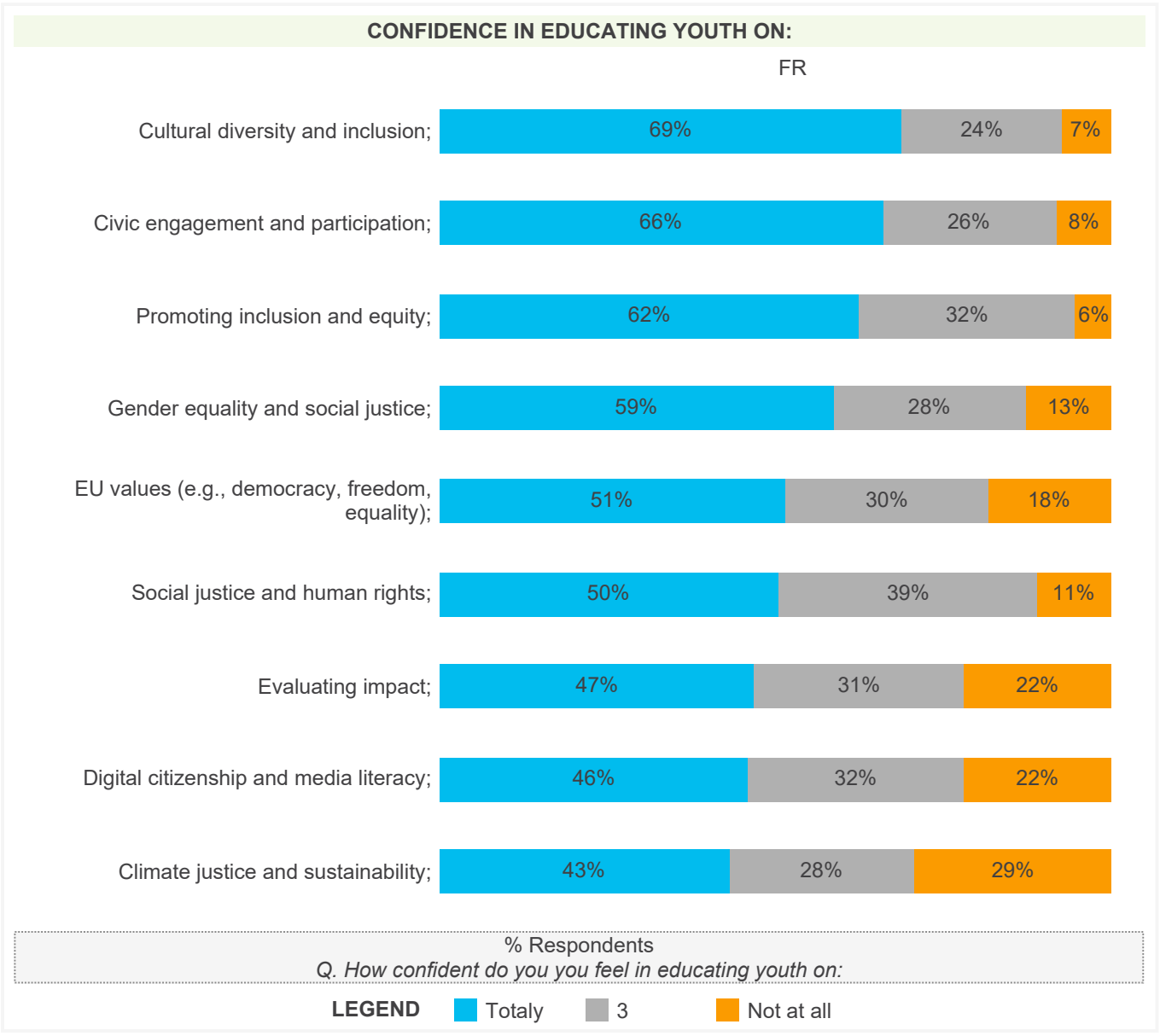
3.2.2 Confidence in educating youth on different thematics

When questioned about confidence in educating youth on diffrent topics, French youth leaders report their highest confidence in cultural diversity and inclusion (69%), civic engagement and participation (66%), and promoting inclusion and equity (62%). These results highlight that participation and inclusion are at the center of their practice.

Other themes are moderately represented. Half of youth leaders participating in this study are confident in social justice and human rights (50%), and EU values (51%), while gender equality (59%) shows slightly stronger confidence.

Climate justice (43%) and digital citizenship (46%) remain moderate, pointing to less engagement with newer or technical issues. Evaluating impact (47%) is also among the lowest-scoring topics.

Overall, French youth leaders emphasize confidence in participation and inclusion, but data suggest weaker skills in evaluation and themes such as sustainability.



3.3 CHALLENGES IN WORKING WITH YOUTH

3.3.1 Challenges youth face in Youth Leaders opinion

Across the open-ended responses, youth mental health emerged as the most urgent challenge, with many mentions of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and social isolation. Further, an important number of youth leaders note that access to psychological support for youths is limited, especially for young people with fewer resources. Youth leaders also mention about the pressure of school, work, and social comparison on digital platforms that only worsens the situation.

At the same time, rising social inequality and exclusion are seen as important concerns, while the rise of far-right extremism and a general distrust of political institutions leave many young people feeling disconnected and stigmatized. Barriers in employment and housing further deepen the challenges that youth face.

"Youth mental health is increasingly fragile, with more cases of anxiety, depression, and stress at school. Many young people feel isolated and lack confidence in themselves and in society. On top of that, inequality is widening, depending on where they live, their background, or their resources, some have access to opportunities while others are left behind. Too many feel excluded, stigmatized, or powerless in the face of politics and the economic system. This combination, mental health struggles, social inequalities, and political exclusion, makes it extremely difficult for them to project themselves into a positive future."
YL, France, 2025

CHALLENGES YOUTH FACE

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<table>
<tr><td>Digital Media Pressure and Disinformation
“addiction to social media”, “disinformation”, “lack of media literacy”, “impact of digital media on self-esteem”</td><td rowspan="3">Lack of Inclusion and Participation
“lack of inclusion”, “low civic participation”, “lack of recognition of youth work”, “low volunteering”, “not listened to by politics”</td><td rowspan="3">Mental Health and Wellbeing
“mental health”, “low self-esteem”, “isolation”, “anxiety and depression”, “lack of psychological support”</td><td rowspan="3">Political Extremism and Distrust
“rise of far-right”, “fascism”, “polarization”, “loss of trust in institutions”, “disengagement from politics”</td></tr>
<tr><td>Education System Gaps
“school dropout”, “mismatch with job market”, “education not adapted”, “lack of inclusive education”</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employment and Housing Barriers
“youth unemployment”, “difficult access to housing”, “lack of professional integration”, “unstable jobs”</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Social Inequality and Exclusion
“economic inequality”, “poverty”, “marginalization”, “discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia)”, “social exclusion of minorities”</td></tr>
</table>

Q. Thinking about the youth generation in your country, what is the biggest challenge they are currently facing?

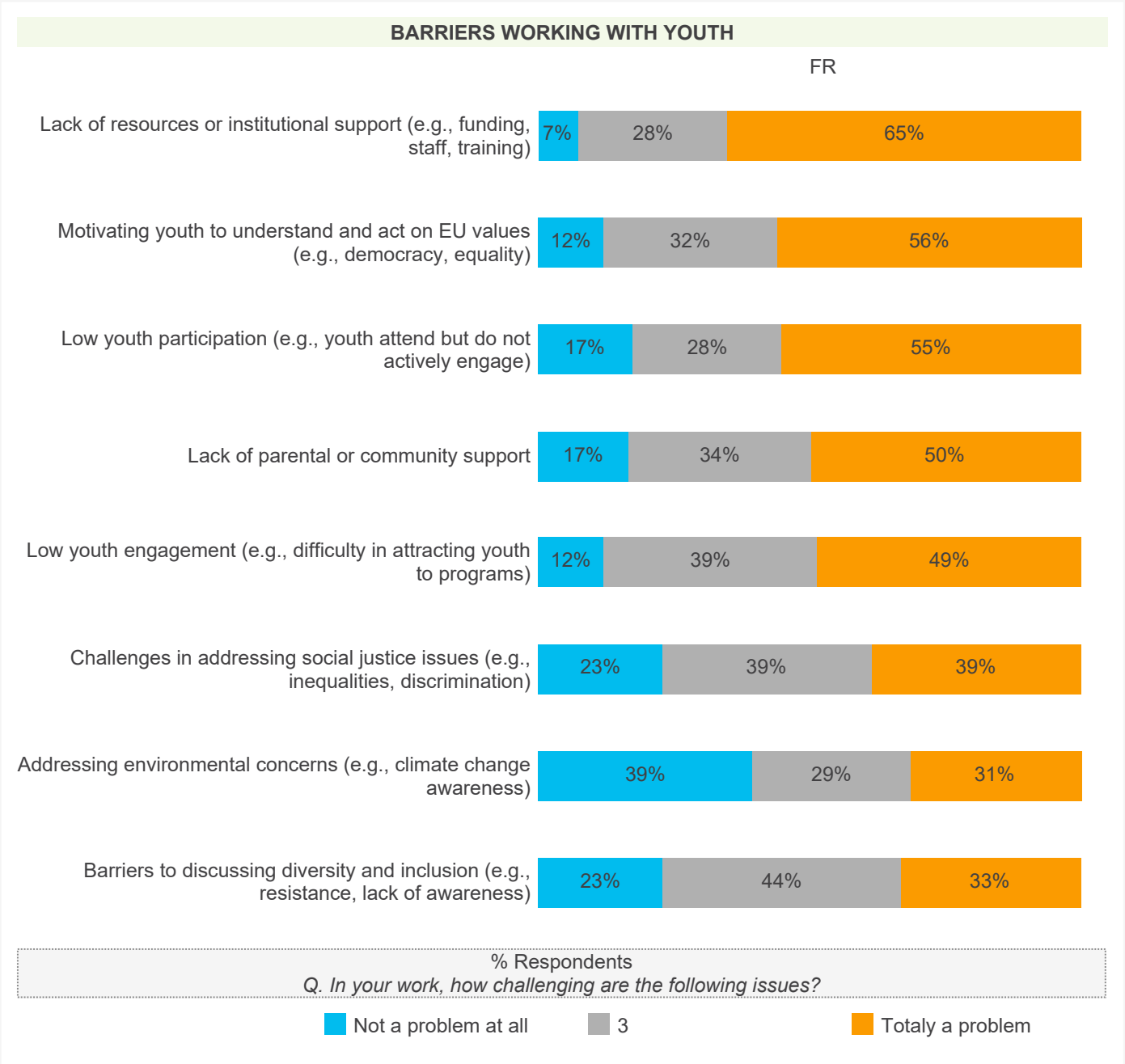
3.3.2 Barriers in working with youth

When working with youths, for the youth leaders in France participating in this study, 65% of them report lack of institutional resources as a major barrier, with another 28% seeing it as moderate. Low participation is also common, with 55% saying youth attend but do not actively engage.

Parental and community support is reported as a problem by 50% of respondents, while 49% identify difficulties in attracting youth to activities. Challenges in motivating young people around EU values also stands out, with 56% marking it as a major issue.

Other areas such as social justice (39% major), inclusion (33% major), and environmental issues (31% major, 29% moderate) are less frequently highlighted.

Overall, the data suggest that resource limitations, participation, and EU values are the key challenges for French youth leaders.



3.3.3 Methods in motivating youth

When asked how they engage and motivate youth, French youth leaders describe a variety of tools for engaging youth, with a strong emphasis on outreach and peer-based approaches. Going directly to young people in their communities, using peer mentoring, and creating spaces for dialogue and trust were among the most frequently cited methods.

Social media and digital platforms were also central in their open-ended responses: awareness campaigns, intercultural events, and civic workshops were mentioned as ways to both engage and educate.

Recognition of youth contributions and providing tangible opportunities such as mobility programs, internships, and community projects, were also mentioned. Leaders stressed that motivation improves when activities are inclusive, accessible, and adapted to different needs.

Training curricula could integrate outreach strategies and peer mentoring, to help youth leaders foster motivation through trust, accessibility, and participation.

METHODS AND TOOLS USED TO MOTIVATE YOUTH

FR

<table>
<tr><td>No Methods / I Don’t Know
“I don’t know”; “I don’t use any”</td><td rowspan="2">Recognition and Opportunities
Recognition of youth engagement (CV valorization, symbolic rewards); opportunities through mobility programs</td><td rowspan="2">Trust, Dialogue and Safe Spaces
Building trust and communication; active listening; youth co-creation; group debates</td></tr>
<tr><td>Non-formal Education and Civic Activities
Awareness campaigns; intercultural events; workshops on citizenship and EU values; volunteering projects</td></tr>
<tr><td>Peer and Community Approaches
Peer-to-peer mentoring; local outreach; street-level engagement; community clubs</td><td colspan="2">Use of Digital Tools and Media
Social media (WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn); newsletters; online platforms; podcasts, videos</td></tr>
</table>

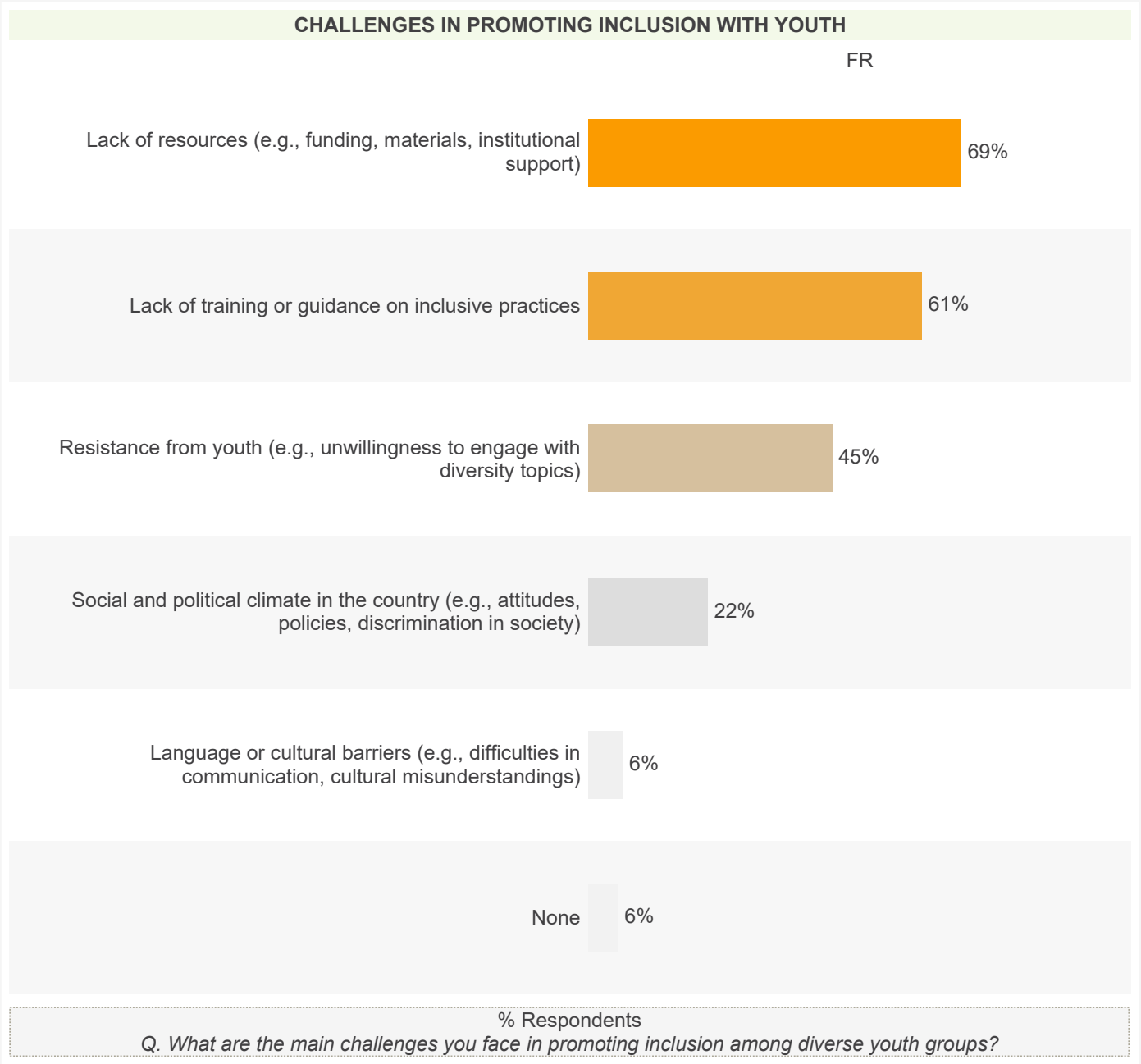
Q. What tools or methods do you use to engage and motivate youths?

3.3.4 Challenges in promoting inclusion among youth

The most common barrier cited by youth leaders in France in promoting inclusion is lack of resources, reported by 69% of youth leaders. This is followed by lack of training on inclusive practices (61%), pointing to capacity gaps in how leaders approach diversity.

Resistance from youth is also significant, mentioned by 45% of respondents, while the social and political climate is cited by 22%. Language or cultural barriers are rarely reported (6%), suggesting they are not perceived as a major issue in this context. A small share (6%) report no challenges.

Overall, the data suggest that French youth leaders experience a combination of structural and attitudinal barriers, with resources, training, and youth resistance standing out most clearly.



3.3.5 Methods in promoting inclusion among youth

When asked how they support the inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities, French youth leaders most often pointed to inclusion through financial accessibility and adapted support. Many responses highlighted small scale fees, symbolic contributions, or full cost coverage for activities, as well as the importance of working with families, social workers, and institutions to make participation realistic.

Mentoring and individualized support also was mentioned frequent. Leaders described one-to-one support, peer mentoring, and creating welcoming environments where young people felt safe and recognized.

Group workshops, intercultural activities, and awareness campaigns are also seen to foster belonging and reduce stigma.

Youth leaders also spoke about partnerships with local institutions as a shared way to support young people, not as isolated actions. Working together with schools, NGOs, youth centers, and programs such as Erasmus+ are seen as key to creating continuity and opening up more opportunities for those with fewer chances. Many underlined that trust and open dialogue are essential, stressing that young people engage more when they feel listened to and respected.

Digital tools were mentioned as a complement, including adapted online platforms, translation into multiple languages, and campaigns against discrimination. These are seen as ways to reduce digital exclusion and spread information about opportunities.

A noticeable number of leaders responded “I don’t know” or “I don’t use any methods,” pointing to a lack of systematic knowledge in inclusive practice.

“We work upstream with partners to identify what makes participation difficult, whether it’s money, health, or lack of support. Then we adapt everything: costs, schedules, activities, even meals and pauses. The idea is not to expect too much at once, but to accompany them step by step, so that every young person feels they can belong.”
YL, France, 2025

INCLUSION SUPPORT METHODS AND TOOLS

FR

Support through Partnerships Collaboration with schools, NGOs, social workers; local networks; European programs (Erasmus+)	**Individualized Accompaniment** Personalized mentoring; one-to-one counseling; adapted programs; safe welcoming spaces	**Inclusion through Diversity and Anti-discrimination** Awareness campaigns; anti-discrimination training; inclusive cultural/sport activities
Adapted Formats and Accessibility Inclusive groups; adapted schedules; free or itinerant activities; accessible formats (language, digital, physical)	**Financial and Material Support** Sliding scale fees; symbolic contributions; covering costs (food, housing, transport, equipment)	**No Methods / I Don’t Know** “I don’t know”; “I don’t use any”

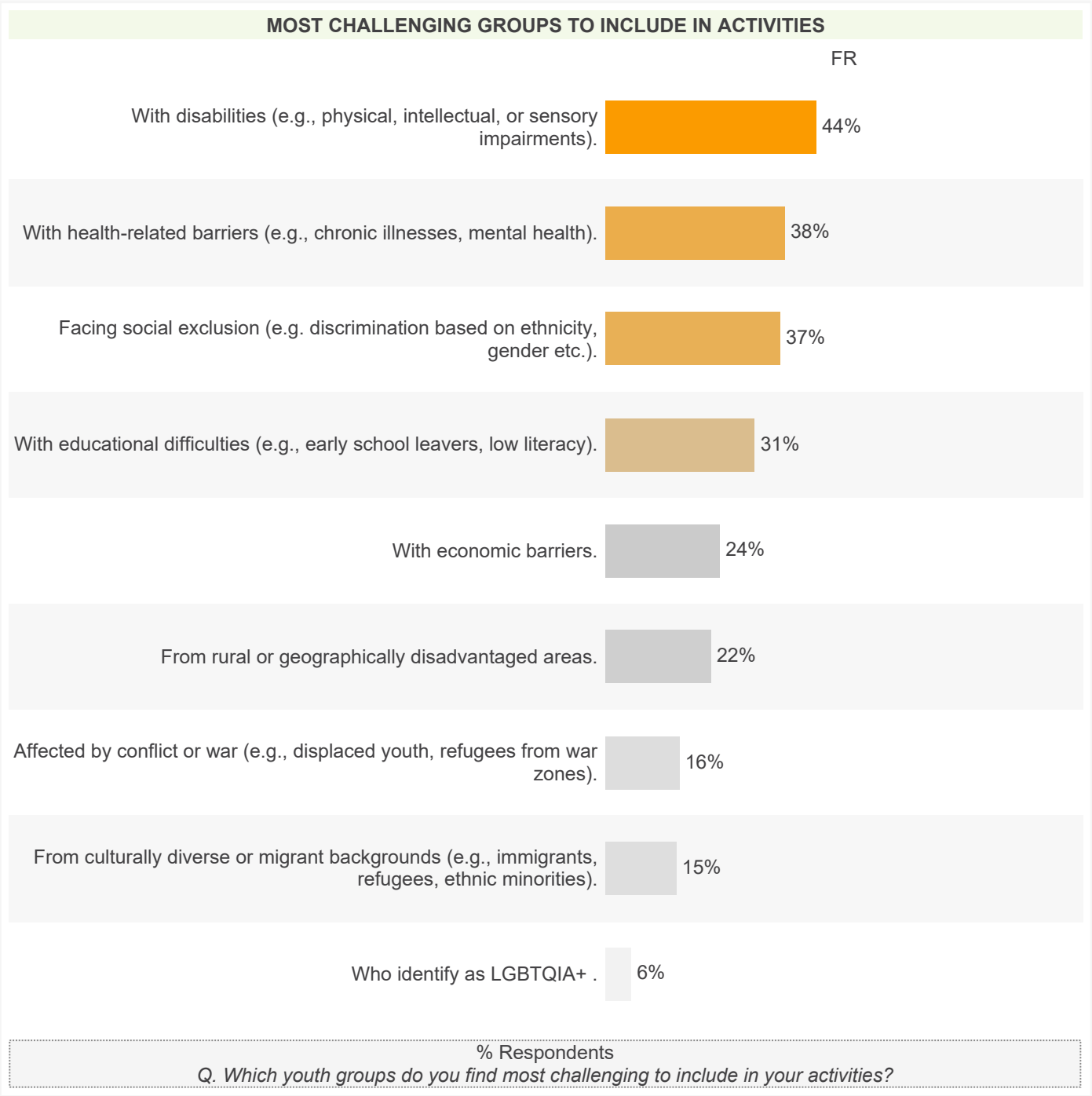
Q. What tools or methods do you currently use to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (e.g., youth facing economic, social, educational, or health-related barriers)?

3.3.6 Challenging youth groups to include in activities in Youth Leaders perception

When asked which groups of young people are most challenging to include in activities, youth leaders in this study most often pointed to young people with disabilities (53%) and young people who face educational difficulties (51%). Health-related barriers are also widely noted (46%).

Other circumstances appear at lower but notable levels: youth facing economic hardship (39%), culturally diverse or migrant backgrounds (35%), coming from rural or geographically disadvantaged areas (26%), and youth affected by conflict or displacement (26%). Social excluded group is cited by 20%, and LGBTQIA+ young people by 4%.

Taken together, the figures indicate a broad distribution of reported challenges, with the highest shares concentrated on disability, education, and health.



3.4 TRAINING NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

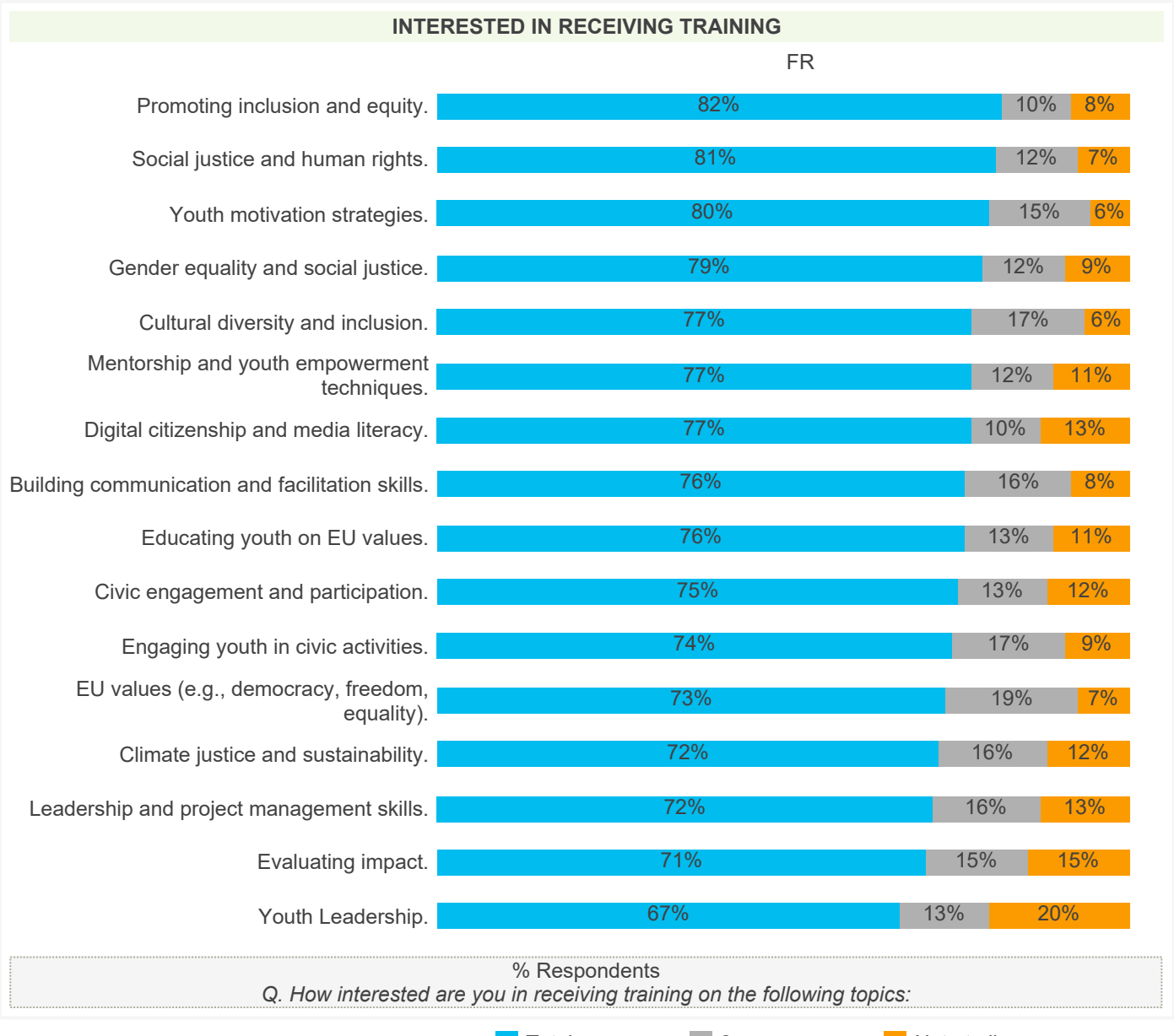
3.4.1 Topics of interest

Youth leaders in France express the strongest interest in training on promoting inclusion (82%), youth motivation (80%), and mentorship (77%), aligning closely with areas they perceive as essential for their role. High interest is also shown in communication (76%) and civic action (74%).

Topics like gender equality (79%), social justice (81%), and climate justice (72%) also generate high demand, indicating openness to social and value-driven dimensions of youth work.

Although slightly lower, interest in EU values (67%) and evaluation (71%) remains notable.

Overall, French youth leaders appear to prioritize engagement and inclusion topics.



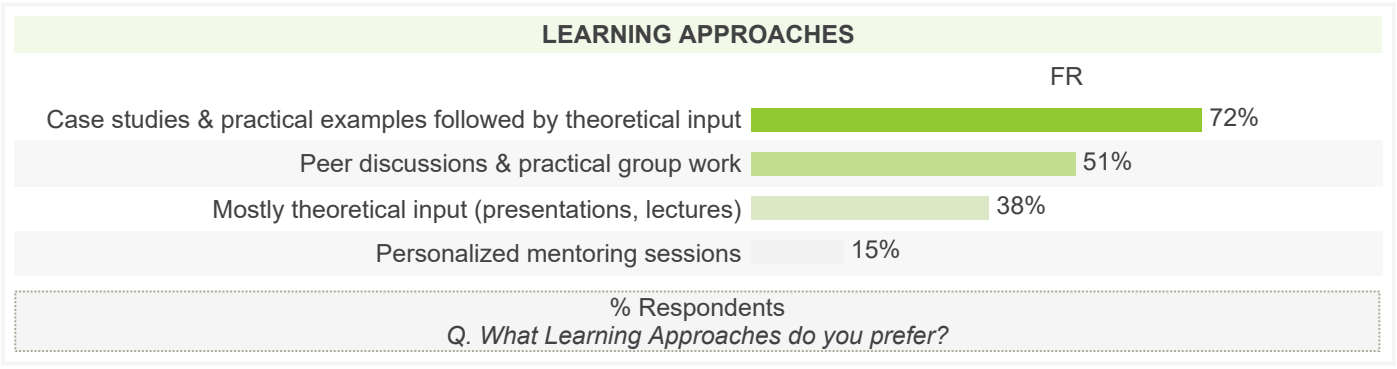
3.4.2 Preferred training formats and learning approaches

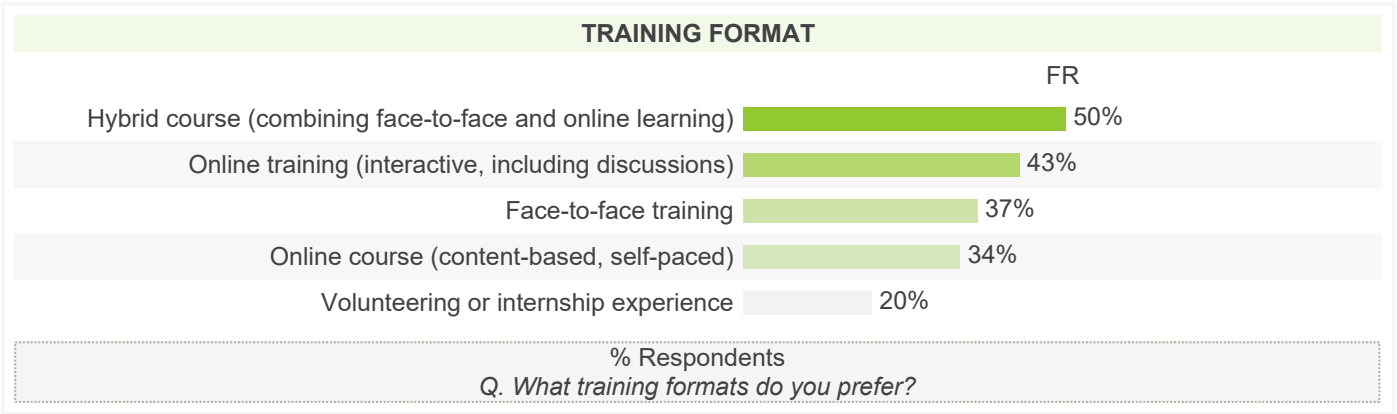
When it comes to training preferences, youth leaders in France participating in this study show a clear preference for participatory learning environments. Working with case studies and practical examples is a preferred approach for 72% of respondents, followed by peer discussions and group work (51%). Traditional lectures are chosen by 38%, showing a moderate appetite for theoretical input.

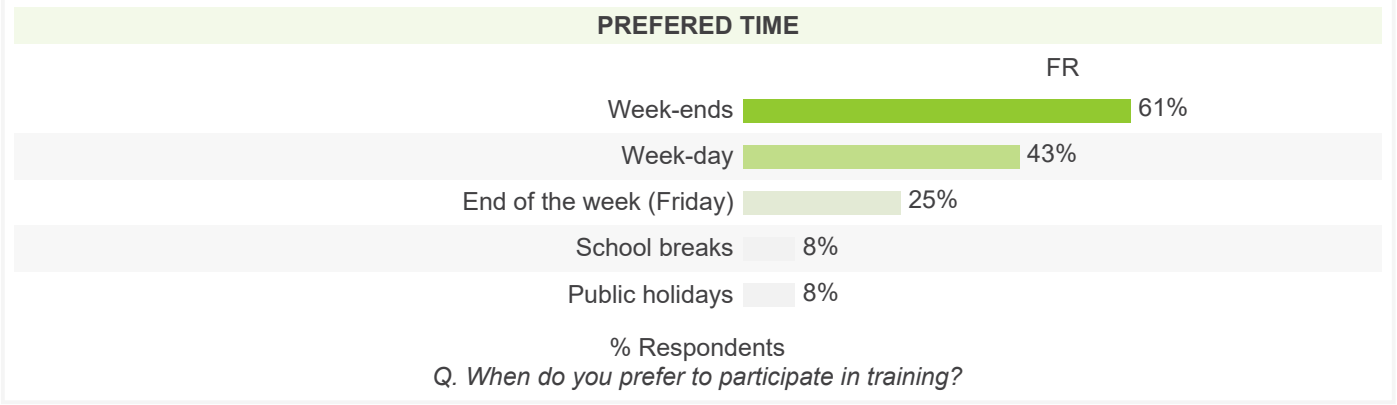
Training formats are fairly balanced, with 50% preferring hybrid formats and 43% choosing online interactive sessions. In-person training is selected by 37%, and fewer respondents opt for self-paced courses (34%) or volunteering experiences (20%), suggesting a general openness to blended and digital formats.

Weekends are the preferred time for most (61%), with school breaks (33%) and weekdays (43%) also mentioned. Only 8% prefer public holidays.

These findings suggest that French youth leaders value participatory learning in hybrid or online formats that allow flexibility, ideally timed on weekends or during less intensive periods.







3.4.3 Preferred training content or activities

French youth leaders ask for training that is concrete, relevant, and adaptable to their day-to-day challenges. The most frequently cited request was for case studies, real-life examples, and practical resources that move beyond theory to direct application.

Interactive methods were also highlighted, with strong interest in group discussions, role plays, simulations, and collaborative workshops. Flexibility of format was seen as important, with several stressing the need for short, accessible modules, as well as hybrid online/in-person options.

When content was considered, youth leaders point mostly to youth participation and civic engagement, inclusion and diversity, mental health, intercultural communication, and digital tools. Recognition of learning, through certificates or digital badges, was also seen as motivating.

Overall, the emphasis was on training that is accessible, interactive, and linked to the realities of French youth work, helping leaders to not only learn but also to apply strategies that address pressing issues like inclusion, discrimination, and mental wellbeing.

"The training should provide concrete and directly applicable content. We need real examples, interactive activities, and practical tools we can use with young people. It must be accessible and flexible, so that every participant leaves with something useful for their daily work."
YL, France, 2025

PREFERRED CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES

FR

Civic Engagement and EU Values "citizenship participation", "European values and democracy", "anti-discrimination workshops"	**Interactive and Practical Methods** "group discussions", "role play", "forum theatre", "debates", "hands-on workshops"	**No Specific Preference** "I don't know", "nothing in particular"	**Project Design and Leadership** "project management", "leadership exercises", "entrepreneurship", "funding opportunities"
Digital Tools and Media Literacy "digital tools for youth work", "using social media", "fighting disinformation", "digital accessibility"	**Mental Health and Wellbeing** "mental health", "emotional intelligence", "stress management", "peer support"		
Flexible and Accessible Formats "short, flexible modules", "hybrid format (online + in-person)", "downloadable resources"	**Mentoring and Peer Learning** "peer mentoring", "mentoring programs", "sharing testimonies from youth and professionals"	**Recognition and Certification** "certification recognized in Europe", "digital badges for skills", "recognition of informal learning"	
Inclusion and Diversity "working with youth in precarious situations", "intercultural communication", "inclusion of youth with disabilities"	**Networking and Exchange** "exchange with professionals", "network spaces with other participants", "sharing best practices"	**Theory and Case Studies** "theory and case studies", "real-life examples", "European and French contexts"	

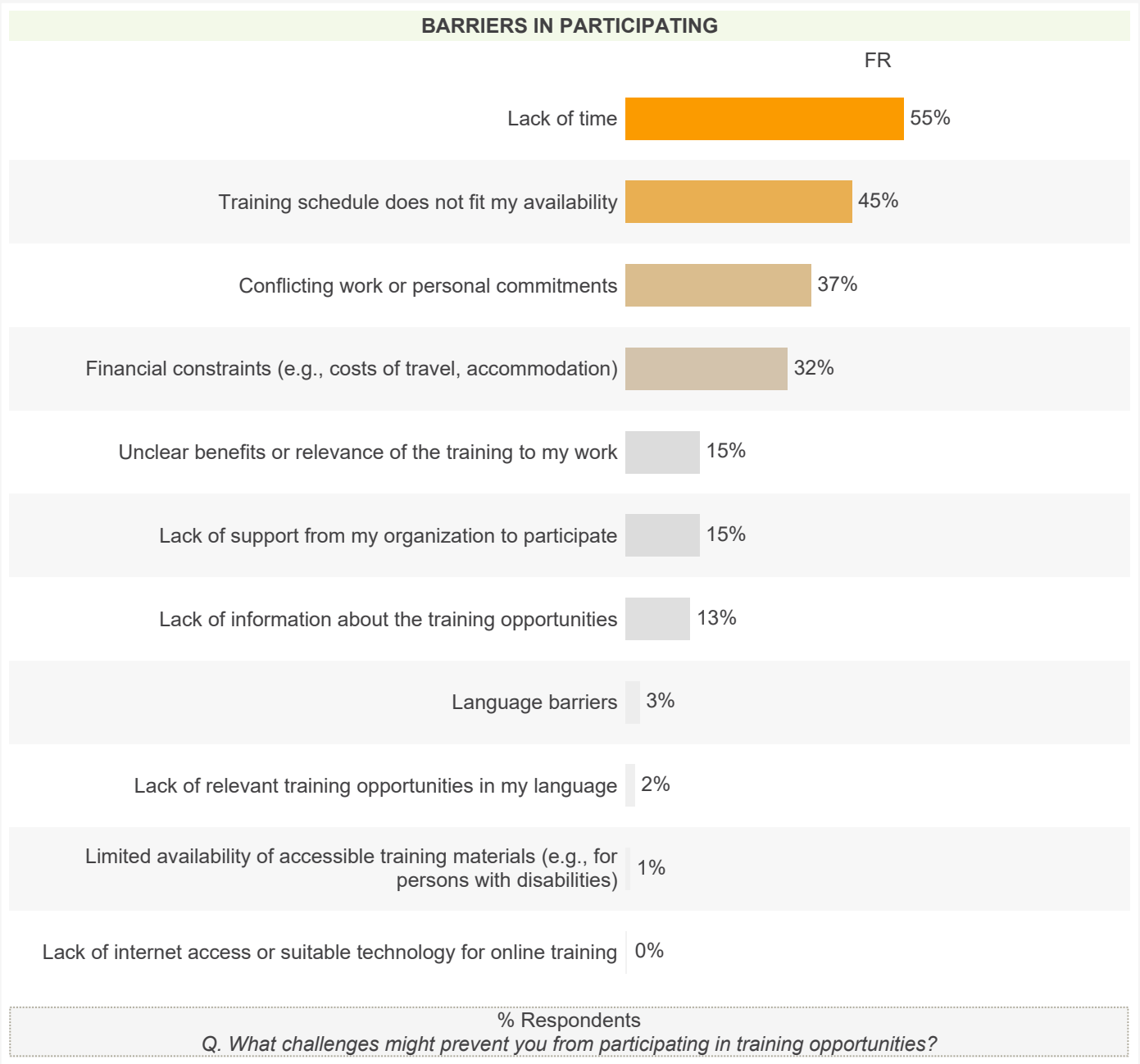
Q. What content or activities should be included in the training course for you to participate?
Open Q

3.4.3 Barriers and incentives to accesing professional development

Youth leaders report barriers that prevent them in accessing professional development opportunities that are largely logistical and time-related. The most common challenge is lack of time (55%), followed by disparities with work or personal obligations (37%) and scheduling difficulties (45%).

Financial constraints (32%) are also reported, though at lower levels than in other countries. Only 15% cite unclear relevance as a reason not to attend training, and just 13% say they lack information about what is available.

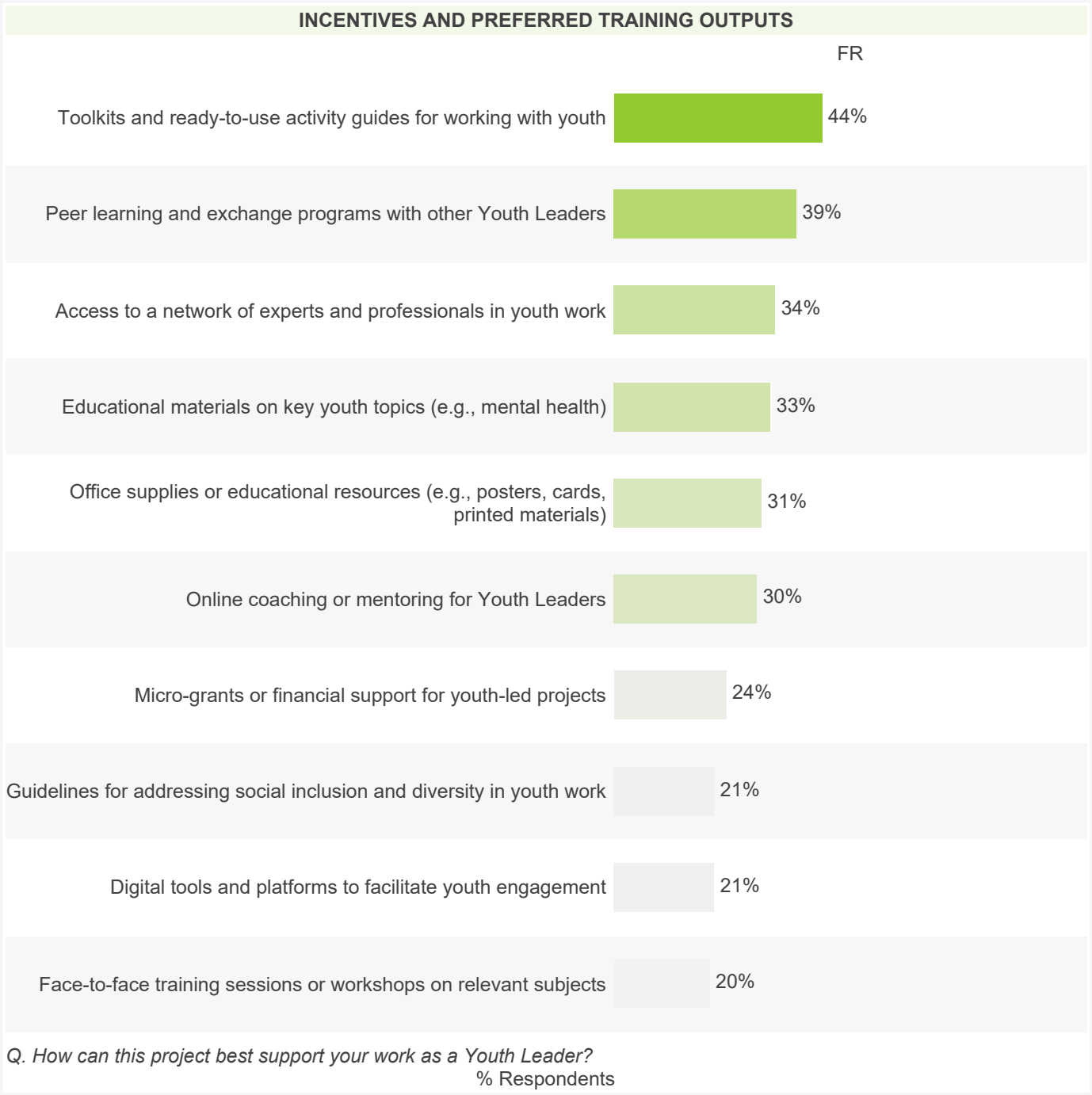
Support from their organization is missing for some (15%), while language, accessibility, and tech issues are rarely mentioned (3% or below). Overall, offering well-timed, low-cost training with clear added value could help boost participation among youth leaders in France.



When asked what types of outputs or incentives would be most valuable, the respondents expressed a preference for a mix of content-based and community-building outputs. Toolkits and ready-to-use materials were selected by 44% of respondents, followed by educational materials on youth topics like mental health (33%) and digital tools (21%).

Peer learning exchanges (39%) and access to expert networks (34%) also featured strongly, suggesting that collaborative environments and professional learning communities are valued support mechanisms.

Face-to-face workshops (20%) and micro-grants (24%) were mentioned less frequently, while interest in printed resources (31%) was higher than in most countries, possibly reflecting greater reliance on tangible learning aids.



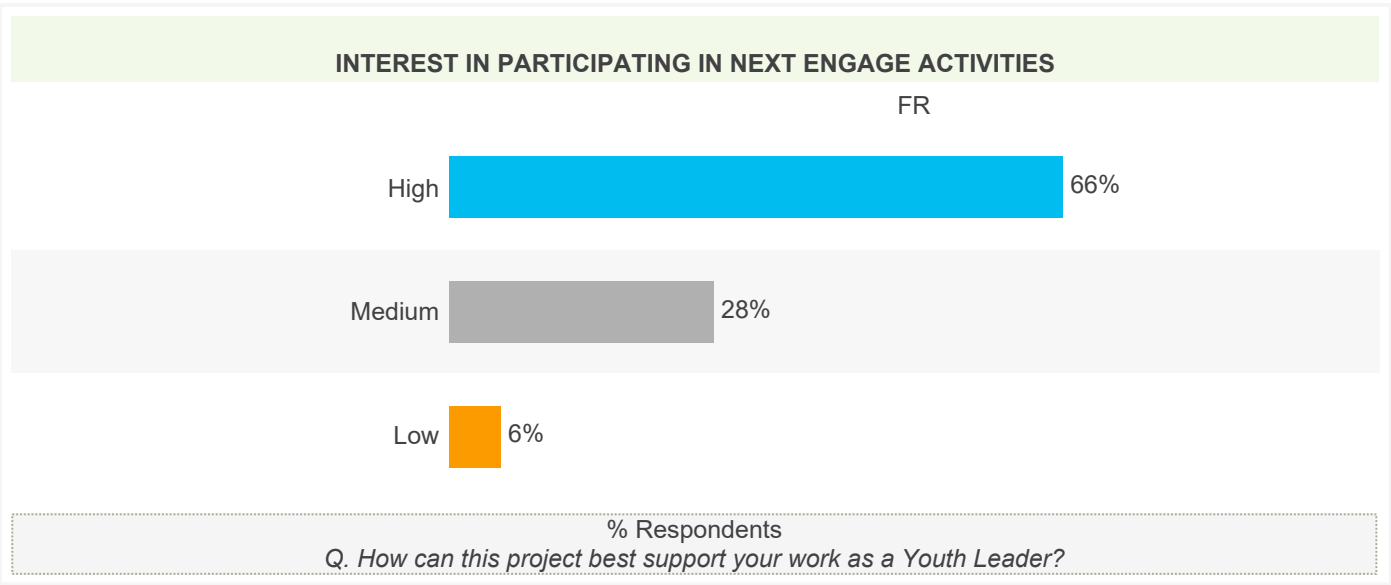
3.4.4 Interest in participating in international experiences and needs

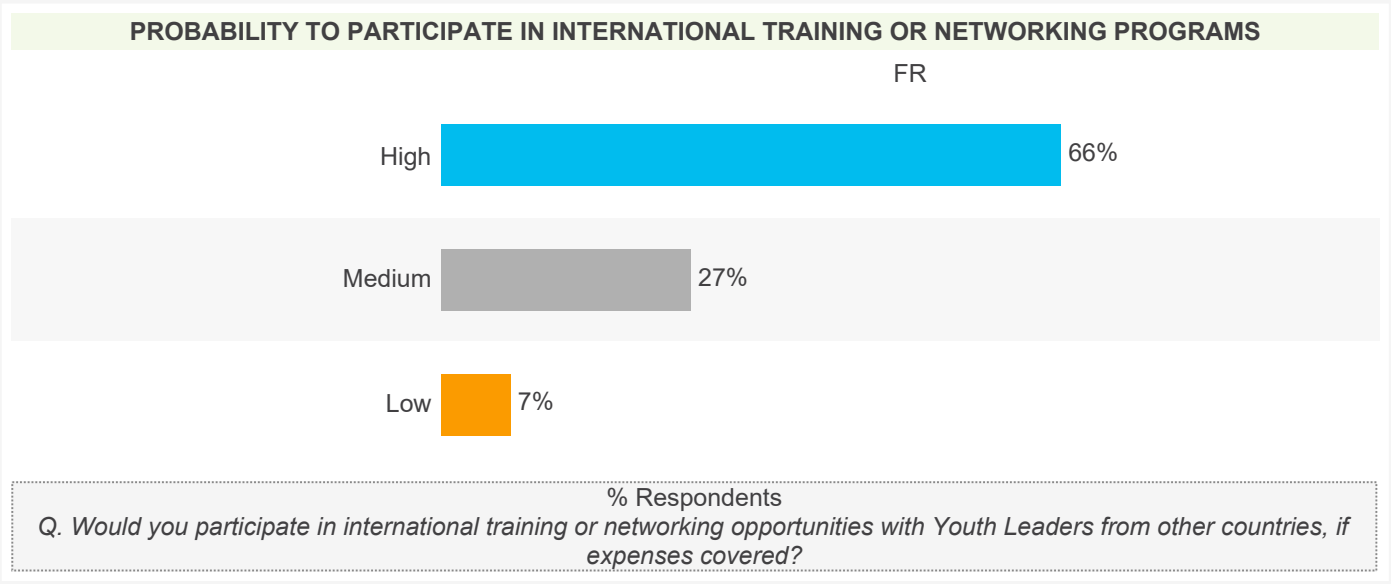
In France, 66% of youth leaders participating in this study express strong interest in future ENGAGE activities, and 66% also report high willingness to join international training or networking opportunities if expenses are covered.

Respondents see such engagement as a way to refresh their perspectives, enhance creativity in youth programs, and understand how inclusion and civic values are approached in different countries.

Participants mention that while international collaboration comes with logistical challenges, the long-term benefits in terms of peer learning, project visibility, and professional growth make it worthwhile.

French youth leaders perceive international opportunities as a source of professional renewal, strategic insight, and community connection, especially relevant for those working in isolated or resource-limited contexts.





3.5 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The profile of youth leaders in France shows a diverse group, with many respondents active in NGOs, community organizations, and youth services. Women form the majority, and most are based in urban areas. Their professional experience varies, but many combine formal training with practical involvement in youth work.

Training, practice, and priorities reveal both strengths and gaps. French youth leaders prioritize civic engagement, participation, and inclusion, but training is uneven across thematic areas. Confidence is strongest in civic education and inclusion, while gaps remain in climate justice, and gender equality. Digital and media literacy are increasingly relevant but not consistently addressed as a need for training.

Youth leaders identify pressing challenges for young people in France: mental health, rising social inequality, exclusion of marginalized groups, and distrust in political institutions. Far-right extremism and polarization were also highlighted as growing concerns.

Perceived barriers in youth work include limited resources, lack of consistent funding, and the difficulty of reaching young people in precarious or marginalized situations.

To motivate and include youth, French leaders rely on trust-building, and peer approaches, peer mentoring, and dialogue-based activities are frequently used. Non-formal and intercultural education, awareness campaigns, and civic workshops also feature prominently. I

nclusion strategies often combine financial accessibility (reduced or symbolic fees) with partnerships involving schools, NGOs, and families. Creating safe and welcoming spaces was emphasized as essential.

Training preferences are strongly oriented toward practical, concrete, and accessible content. Case studies, real-life examples, and downloadable resources were requested, alongside short, flexible, hybrid formats.

Some respondents also asked for recognition of learning through certificates or digital badges. Content priorities include inclusion, anti-discrimination, mental health, digital tools, and project management.

French youth leaders also express strong interest in international cooperation, particularly Erasmus+ and European networks, which they see as a way to expand opportunities and learn new strategies.