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: GERMANY

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 Germany 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

Authors:
Bianca Balea, PhD., Fundatia Noi Orizonturi Lupeni, Romania – www.noiorizonturi.ro

Contributors
Fundatia EuroEd, Romania – www.euroed.ro
AWO International e.V:, Germany – www.awointernational.de
INEX- Sdruzeni Dobrovolnych Aktivit Z S, Czechia – www.inexsda.cz
Relais Ouverture Echanges Linguistiques, France - www.roudel.org

©Copyright: The consortium of Erasmus+ project ENGAGE - Empowering Next Generation Advocates for Global Education

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.

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Objectives and research questions
2.2 Methodology Overview
2.3 Sampling
2.5 Data Collection
2.6 Data Analysis
2.7 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

III. YOUTH LEADERS: FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

3.1. RESPONDENT PROFILE

3.1.1. Demographic overview
3.1.2. Education and field of study
3.1.3. Work experience and context of working with youth
3.1.4. Working with specific youth groups

3.2. KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

3.2.1. Link between training, practice and priorities in Youth Leadership
3.2.2. Confidence in educating youth on different thematics
3.3. Challenges in Working with Youth
3.3.1. Challenges youth face in Youth Leaders opinion
3.3.2. Barriers in working with youth
3.3.3. Methods in motivating youth
3.3.4. Challenges in promoting inclusion among youth
3.3.5. Methods in promoting inclusion among youth
3.3.6. Challenging youth groups to include in activities in Youth Leaders perception

3.4. TRAINING NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

3.4.1. Topics of interest
3.4.2. Preferred training formats and learning approaches
3.4.3. Preferred training content or activities
3.4.4. Barriers and incentives to access professional development
3.4.5. Interest in participating in international experiences and needs

3.5. KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

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 102 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

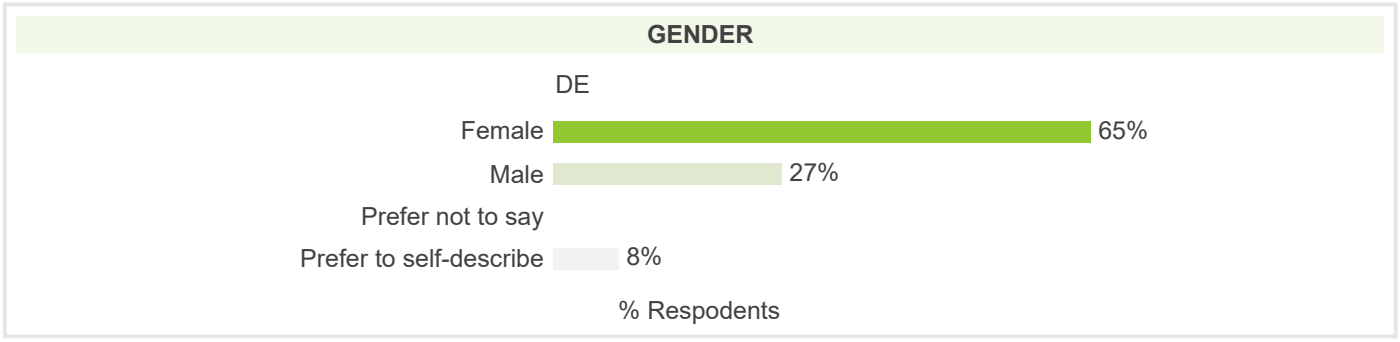
3.1.1 Demographic overview

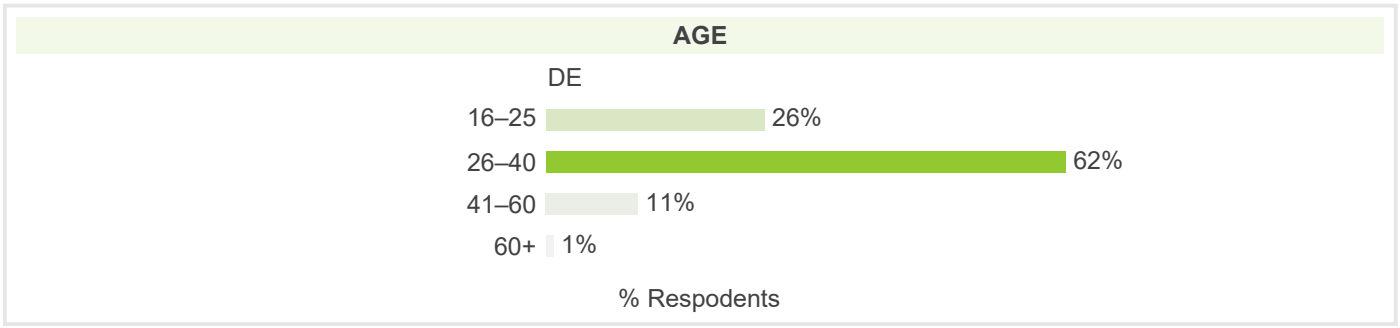
Out of a total sample of 112 completed responses, most youth leaders (53%) are located in large urban areas, and 24% live in medium-sized cities. The remaining participants are distributed across smaller towns and rural areas, accounting for 23% in total.

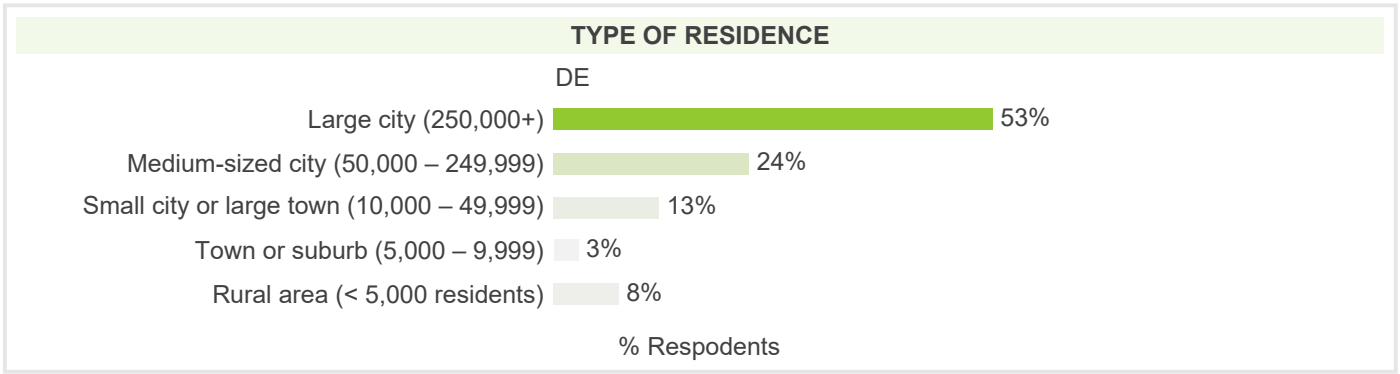
In terms of age, 62% of respondents are aged 26–40, 26% fall into the 16–25 age group, and 11% are between 41 and 60 years old.

The majority of respondents identify as female (65%), while 27% identify as male, and 8% 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.





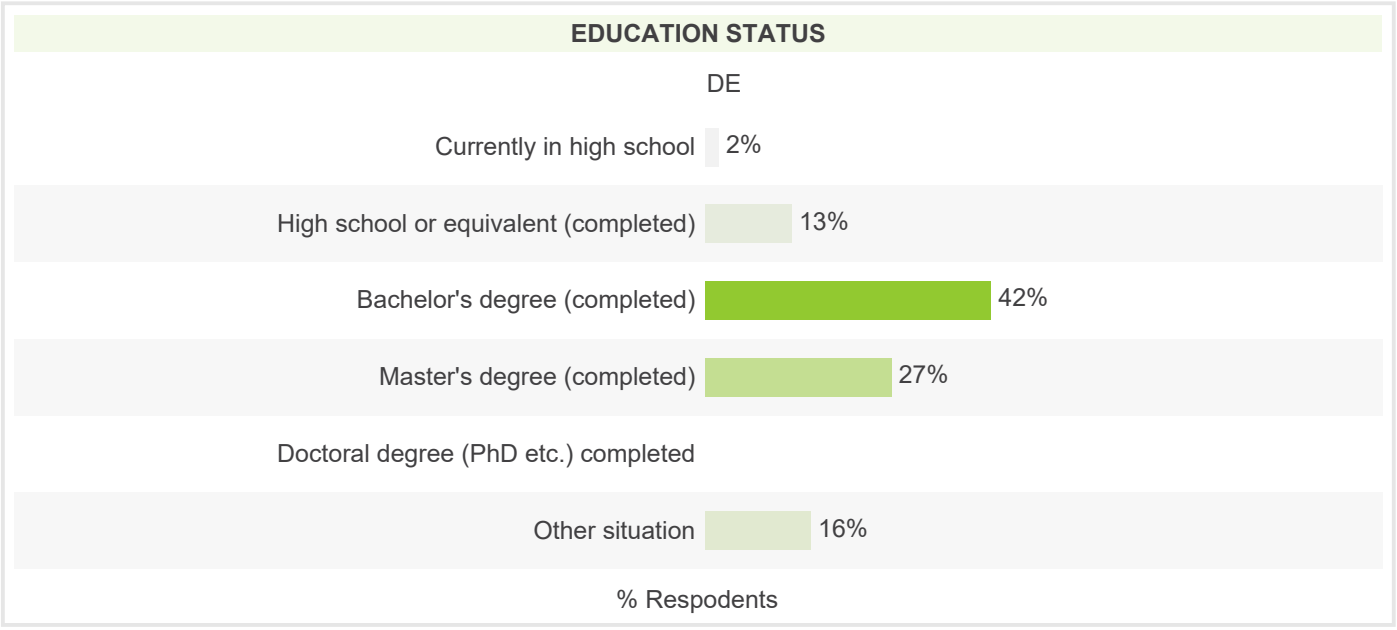


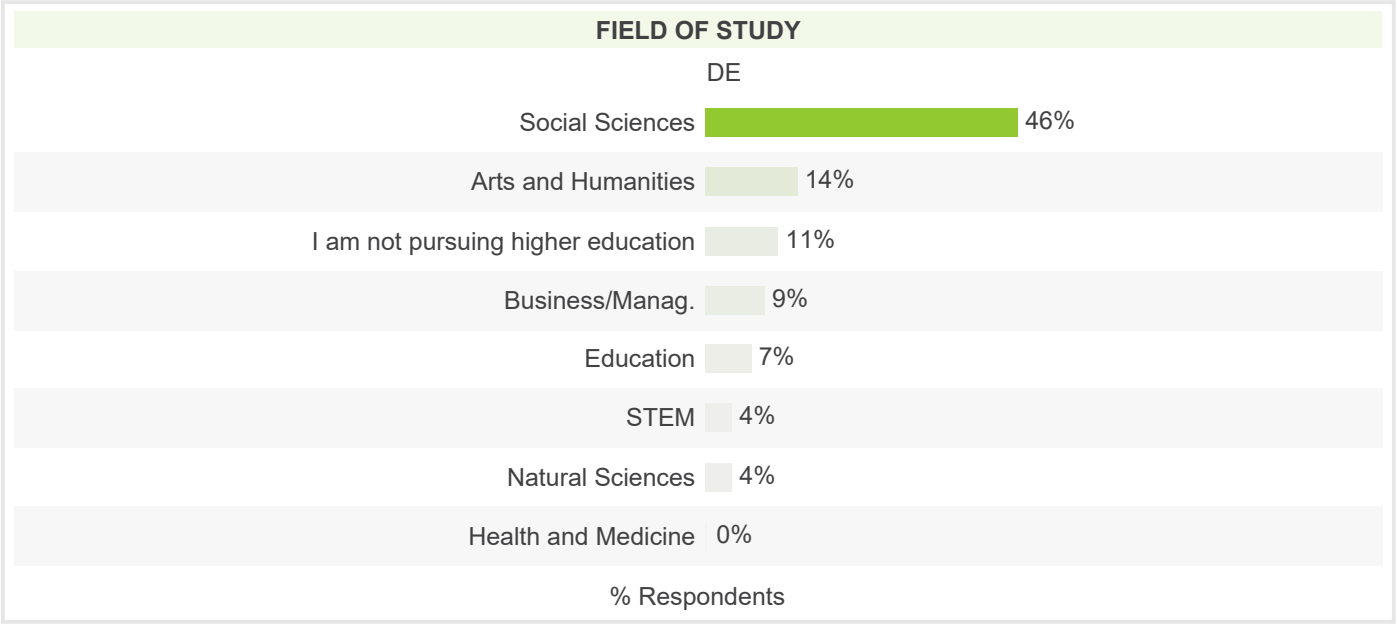
3.1.2 Education and field of study

Youth leaders that responded to the questionnaire in Germany show a relatively even educational distribution, with 42% having completed a bachelor's degree and 27% a master's degree. Smaller shares completed high school (13%) or a doctoral degree (3%), while 2% are still in high school.

Their fields of study are dominated by social sciences (46%), followed by arts and humanities (14%) and education (7%). STEM (4%) and non-higher education routes (11%) are also present

The prevalence of social science backgrounds supports a foundation for civic and social education, but training content should consider how to include STEM-oriented approaches or practice-based content for a broader pool of youth workers.





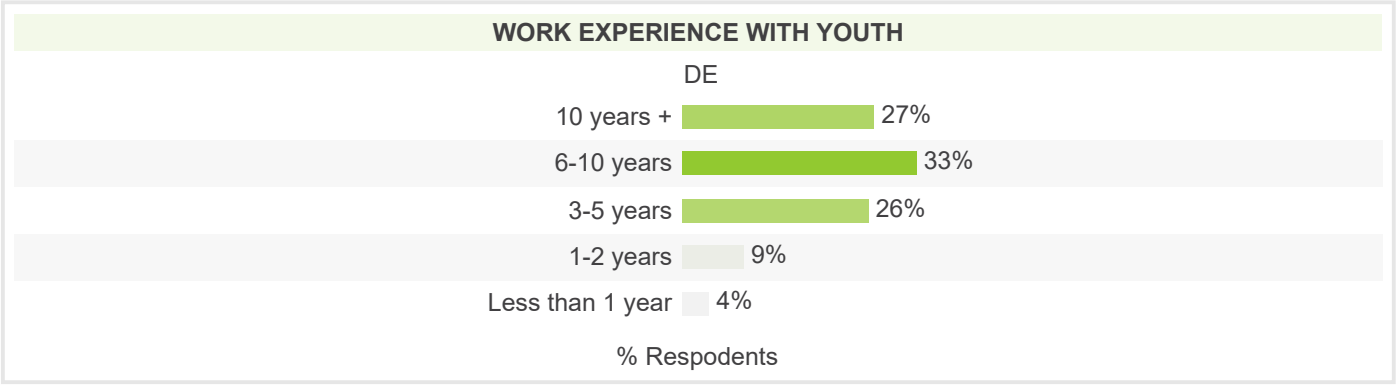
3.1.3 Work experience and context of working with youth

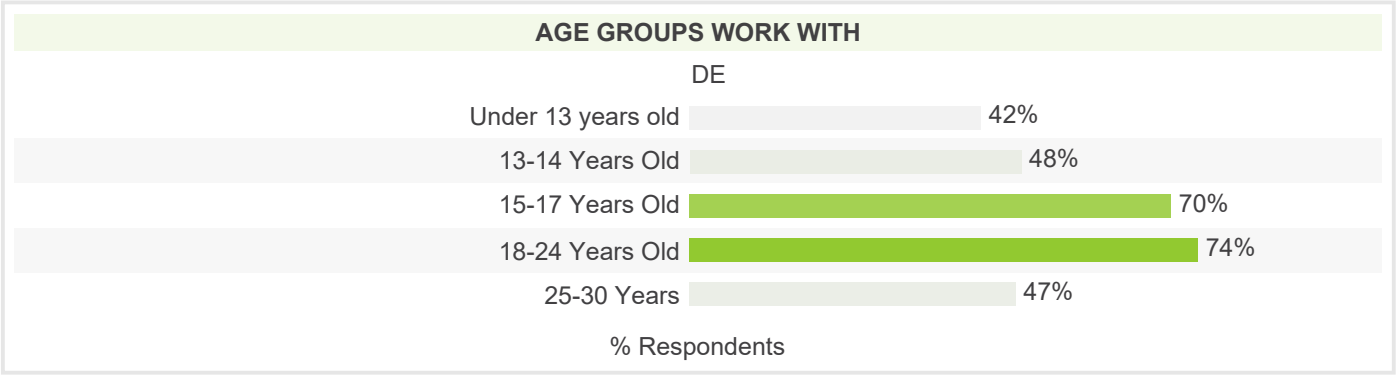
Although there is a core group of experienced professionals, with 27% active for 10+ years, it's worth noting that 39% of youth leaders have less than five years of experience in youth leadership. This includes 4% with less than one year, 9% with 1–2 years.

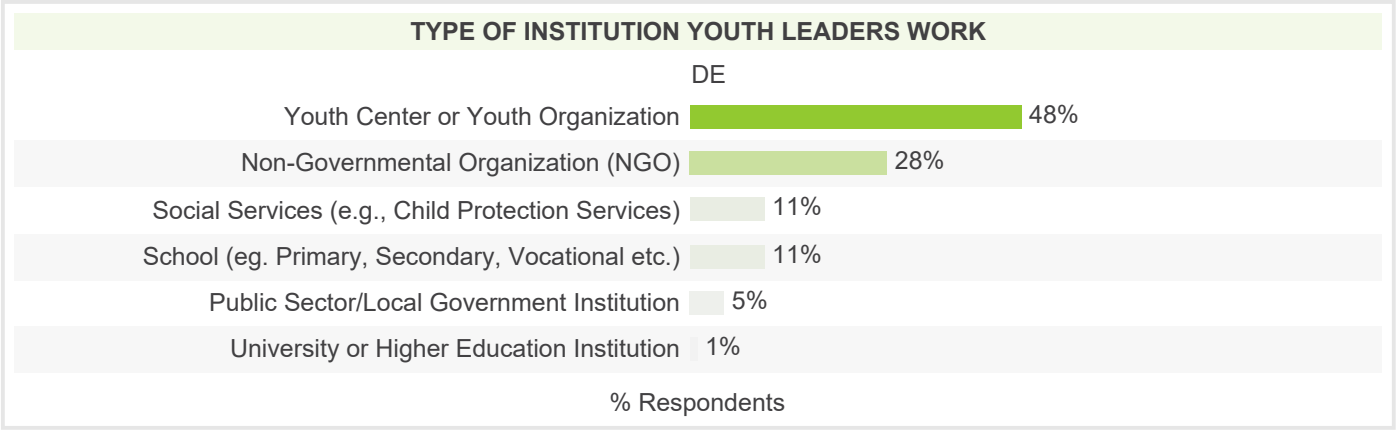
Most youth leaders in Germany report working with adolescents and young adults, particularly those aged 15–17 (70%) and 18–24 (74%). A smaller proportion, 48%, work with 13–14-year-olds, and 42% engage with children under 13. Engagement with the 25–30 age group is also relatively high at 47%.

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 (48%) or NGOs (28%), while schools (11%), social services (11%), and public institutions (5%) are less common.

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







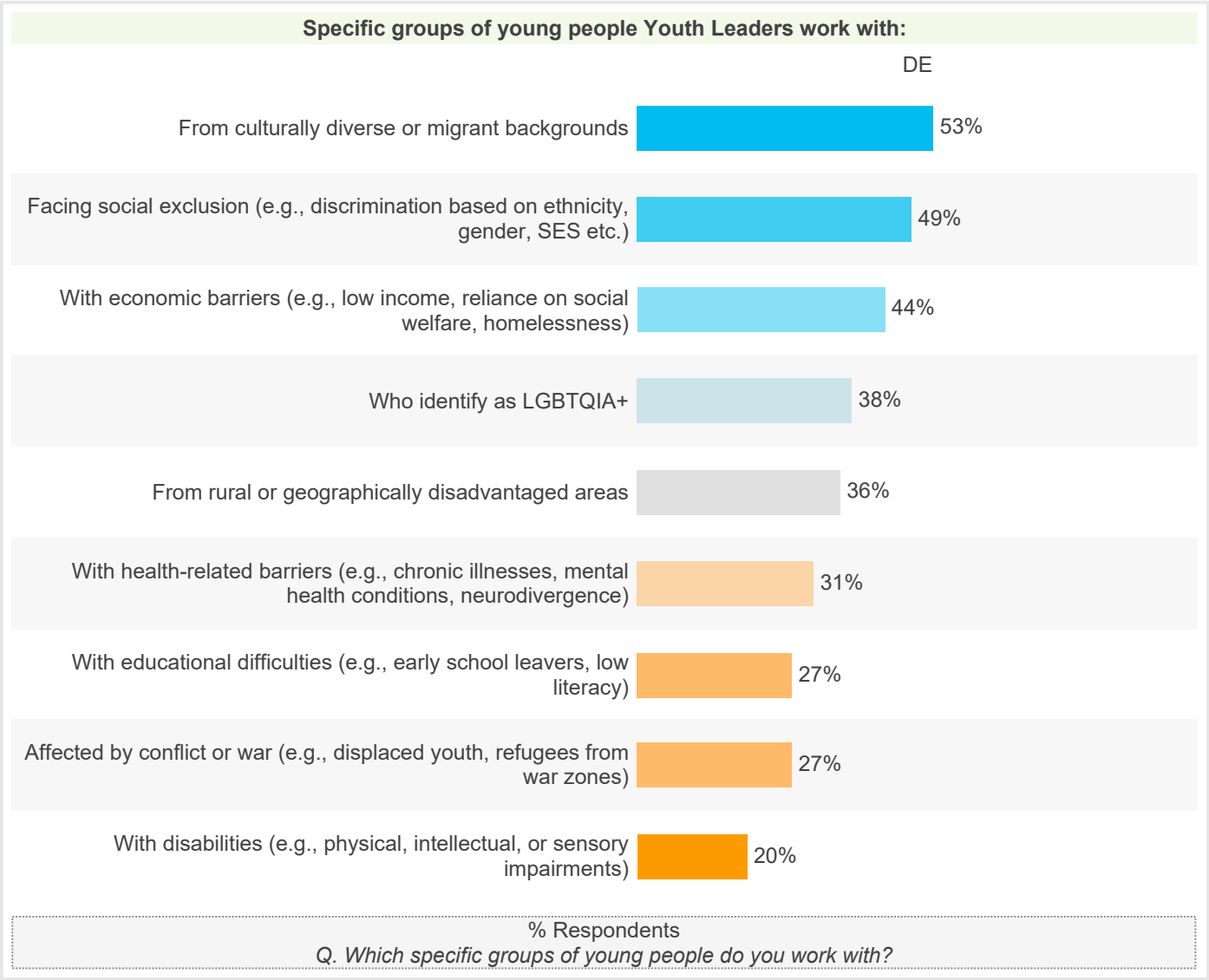
3.1.4 Working with specific youth groups

Youth leaders in Germany report working with a wide range of disadvantaged groups.

The most frequently cited are young people from culturally diverse or migrant backgrounds (53%), those facing social exclusion linked to discrimination (49%), and youth with economic barriers (44%). A significant share also mention working with LGBTQIA+ youth (38%) and young people from rural or geographically disadvantaged areas (36%).

Working with youth facing health-related barriers is reported by 31% of respondents, while 27% cite engagement with young people experiencing educational difficulties or those affected by conflict or war. Working with youth with disabilities is least often mentioned, at 20%.

Overall, the figures indicate that German youth leaders engage across multiple categories, with higher prevalence in areas of migration, discrimination, and economic hardship.



3.2 KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

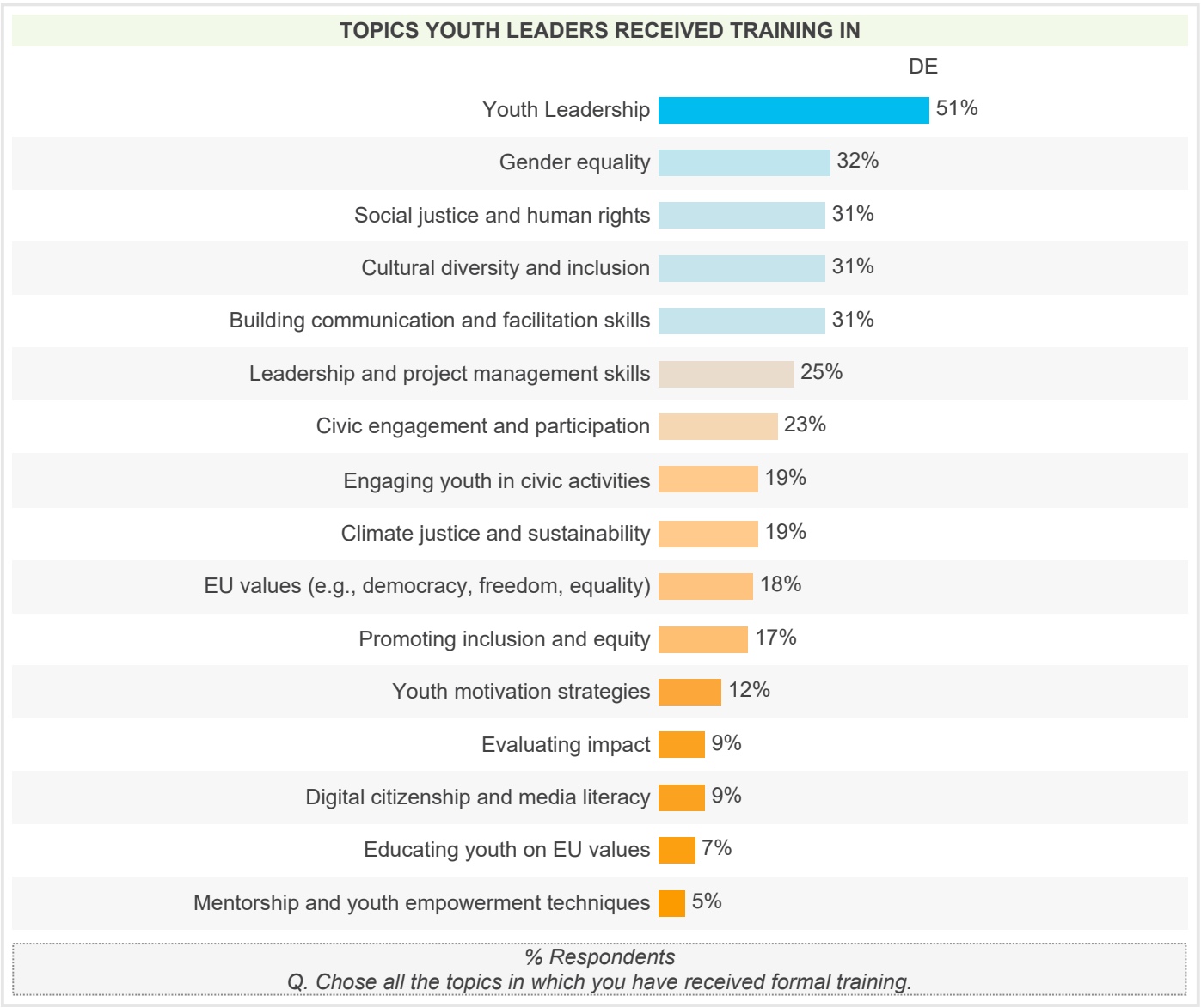
3.2.1 Link between training, practice and priorities in Youth Leadership

Formal training

When we look at training topics that youth leaders are educated in, youth leaders in Germany report higher levels of training across nearly all domains measured. More than half have been trained in youth leadership (51%), followed by gender equality (32%), social justice and human rights (31%), cultural diversity and inclusion (31%), and communication and facilitation (31%).

Other frequently mentioned areas include leadership and project management (25%), economic and civic engagement (23%), and climate justice (19%), reflecting broad coverage of both traditional and emerging topics.

The data indicate a stronger formal training base in Germany, where youth leaders appear to have benefited from a wider range of structured learning opportunities, particularly in leadership, inclusion, and equality.



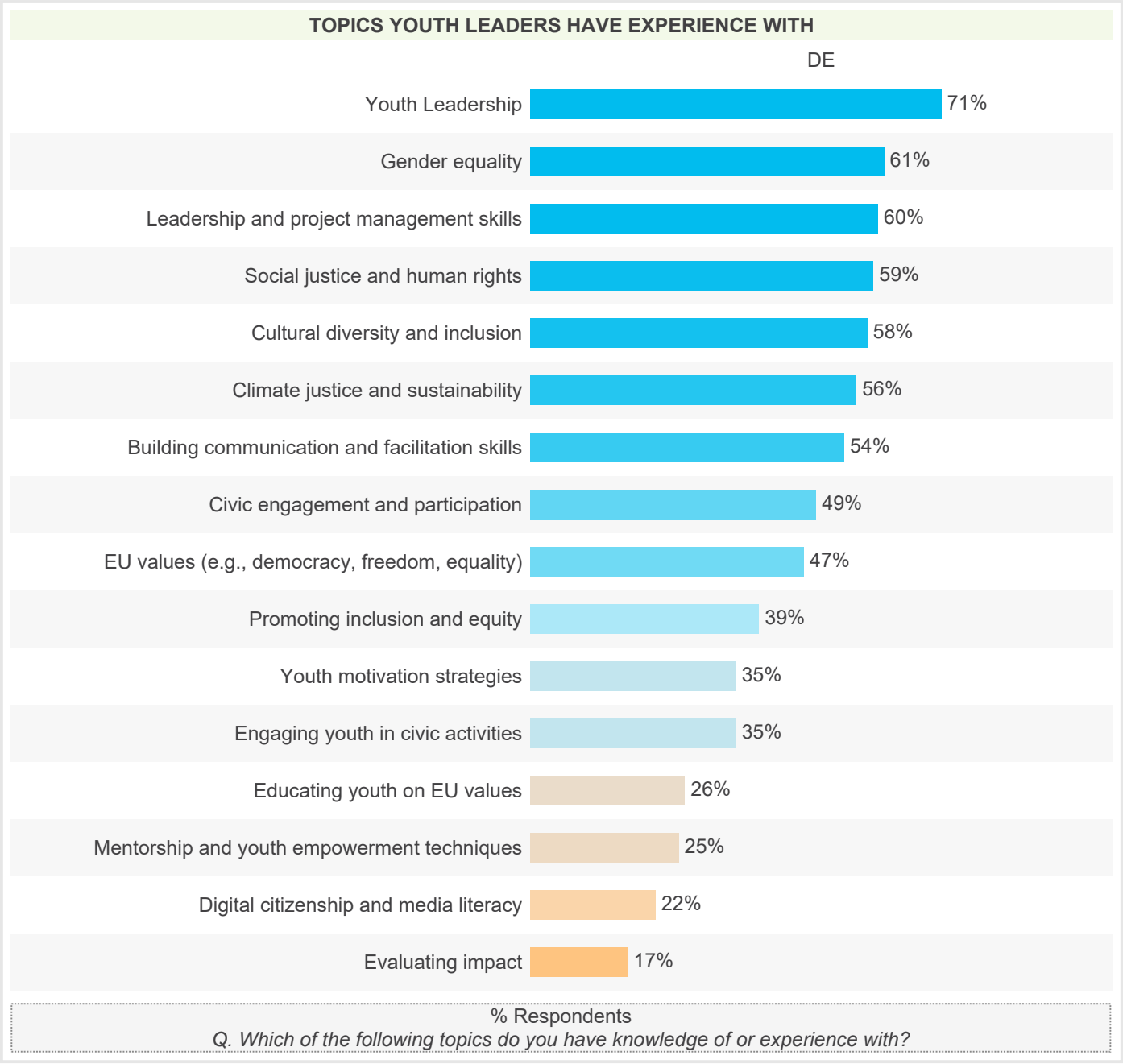
Experience with different topics

When it comes about their practical experience with several topics, data show high reported exeperience across most areas. Training in leadership and project management (60%), civic participation (49%), and communication and facilitation skills (54%) are reported widely. Youth leadership (71%) is the most frequently mentioned topic.

Inclusion and rights-based themes are also highly represented. Cultural diversity and inclusion (58%), social justice and human rights (59%), climate justice and sustainability (56%), and gender equality (61%) stand out. EU values (47%) and educating youth on EU values (26%) are also more frequently reported than in other contexts.

Notably, mentorship and youth empowerment techniques (25%) and evaluating impact (17%) remain among the least developed areas.

Thus, while German youth leaders are strong in leadership and inclusion, further support is needed in mentorship and evaluation.



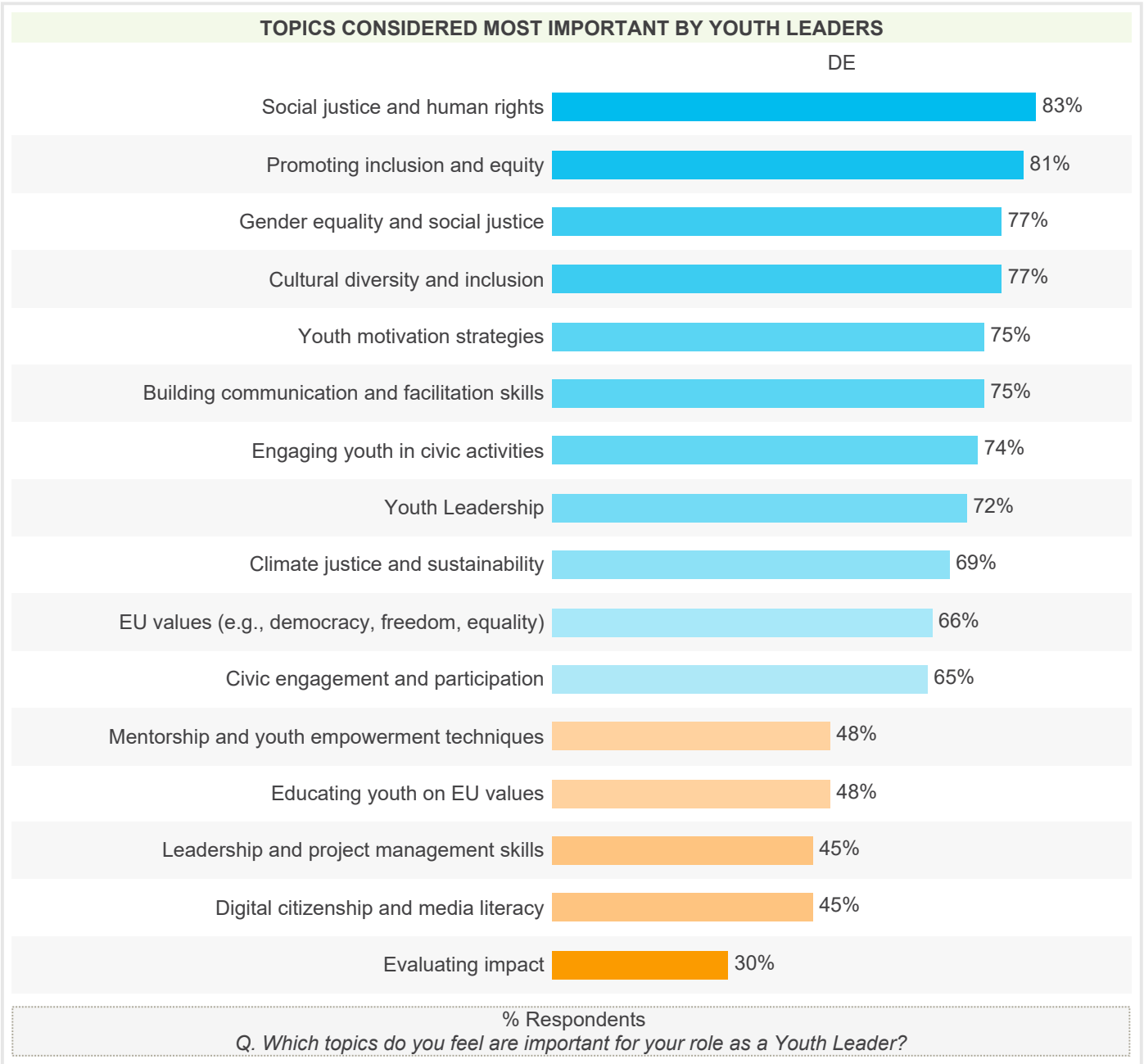
Importance of the topics for their role

Asked about the topics that are important for their role, youth leaders place the highest importance on youth leadership (72%), youth motivation strategies (75%), and communication and facilitation skills (75%). Civic engagement and participation (65%) and engaging youth in civic activities (74%) also rank very highly, indicating a strong focus on both agency and civic involvement.

Inclusion-related areas are also strongly represented. Promoting inclusion and equity (81%), cultural diversity and inclusion (77%), and gender equality and social justice (77%) all stand out. Social justice and human rights (83%) and climate justice (69%) show that German youth leaders connect their work to broader rights and sustainability issues.

The lowest priorities are mentorship (48%), educating youth on EU values (48%), and evaluating impact (30%), which remain comparatively limited.

Taken together, the data suggest that German youth leaders are already highly engaged with leadership, civic action, and inclusion. Training should build on these strong foundations while reinforcing areas like mentorship, EU values, and impact evaluation.

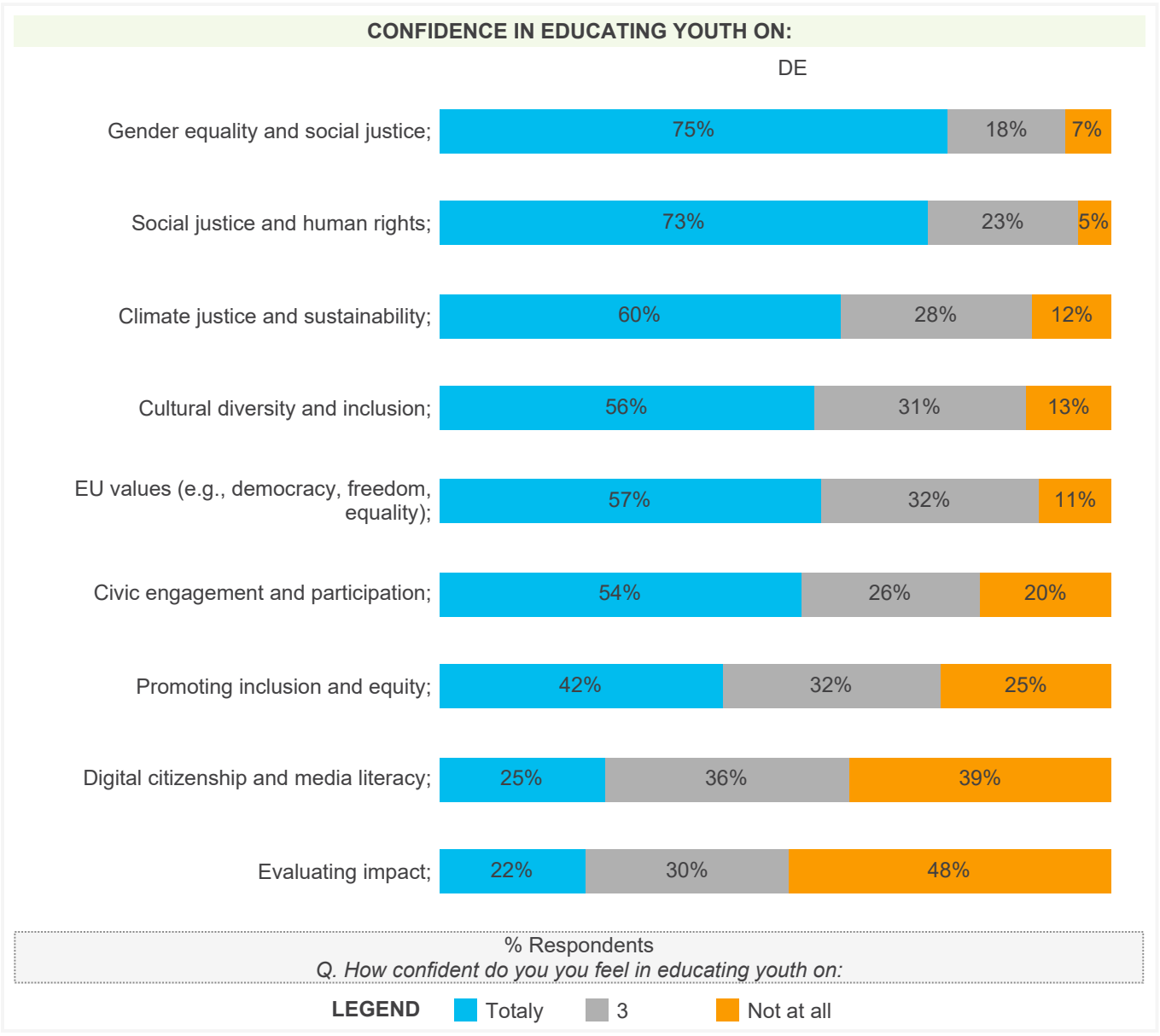


3.2.2 Confidence in educating youth on different thematics

When questioned about confidence in educating youth on diffrent topics, youth leaders report the highest confidence in rights-based areas. Social justice and human rights (73%), gender equality (75%), and civic participation (54%) are strongly represented. Cultural diversity and inclusion (56%) and EU values (57%) also rank highly, reflecting a broad and consistent engagement with civic and rights-related themes.

Confidence is less developed in emerging and technical topics. Digital citizenship (25%) is notably low, making it the weakest domain outside evaluation. Climate justice (60%) is moderately strong but less prioritized than other rights-based issues. Evaluating impact (22%) is the lowest-rated area, showing that systematic assessment of youth work remains uncommon.

Overall, the figures indicate that German youth leaders have a solid grounding in equality, inclusion, and human rights, while data suggest clear gaps in digital literacy and evaluation. These topics remain the least integrated into everyday practice.



3.3 CHALLENGES IN WORKING WITH YOUTH

3.3.1 Challenges youth face in Youth Leaders opinion

Youth leaders in Germany mirror a generation confronted with overlapping crises. The climate crisis, right-wing extremism, and the erosion of democratic values appear as dominant concerns, fueling a sense of urgency but also maybe fear. At the same time, economic and social inequalities, ranging from youth poverty to housing shortages, is perceived by the youth leaders that limit young people's opportunities to thrive.

Mental health emerges as another critical issue, with the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the constant pressure of social media, situation that is considered by the youth leaders that is leaving many youth feeling anxious, isolated, and overwhelmed. Leaders point out that they observe that young people experience a lack of recognition, feeling their voices are ignored in politics and society, which deepens their sense of powerlessness.

"Young people feel they have no lobby, that their perspectives and voices are not heard, in part because their small share of the population means they do not represent a major voting bloc for political parties. As a result, they feel unseen and unheard, powerless, and convinced they cannot contribute to societal change. Combined with multiple crises, from climate change and right-wing populism to economic insecurity, this leads to a deep sense of hopelessness about the future." YL, Germany, 2025

CHALLENGES YOUTH FACE

DE

<table>
<tr><td>Civic Disengagement and Lack of Representation
“youth not taken seriously”, “low participation”, “lack of political inclusion”, “no role in decision-making”</td><td rowspan="3">Mental Health and Social Media Pressure
“psychological strain”, “Corona pandemic aftermath”, “mental health”, “pressure from social media”, “constant comparison”, “low communication skills”</td><td rowspan="3">Right-Wing Extremism and Democracy at Risk
“right-wing shift”, “right-wing populism”, “extremism”, “democracy crisis”, “rising racism and sexism”, “lack of representation for youth voices”</td><td rowspan="3">Social Inequality and Economic Pressure
“poverty”, “youth poverty”, “economic hardship”, “lack of housing”, “financial worries”, “unemployment”, “inequality”</td></tr>
<tr><td>Climate Crisis and Environmental Anxiety
“climate crisis”, “environmental destruction”, “sustainability”, “loss of natural foundations of life”</td></tr>
<tr><td>Educational and Structural System Gaps
“broken education system”, “lack of support from schools”, “aging infrastructure”, “skills mismatch”, “lack of recognition for youth needs”</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Uncertainty and Future Anxiety
“future fears”, “feeling powerless”, “lack of hope”, “orientation in uncertain world”, “multiple crises”</td></tr>
</table>

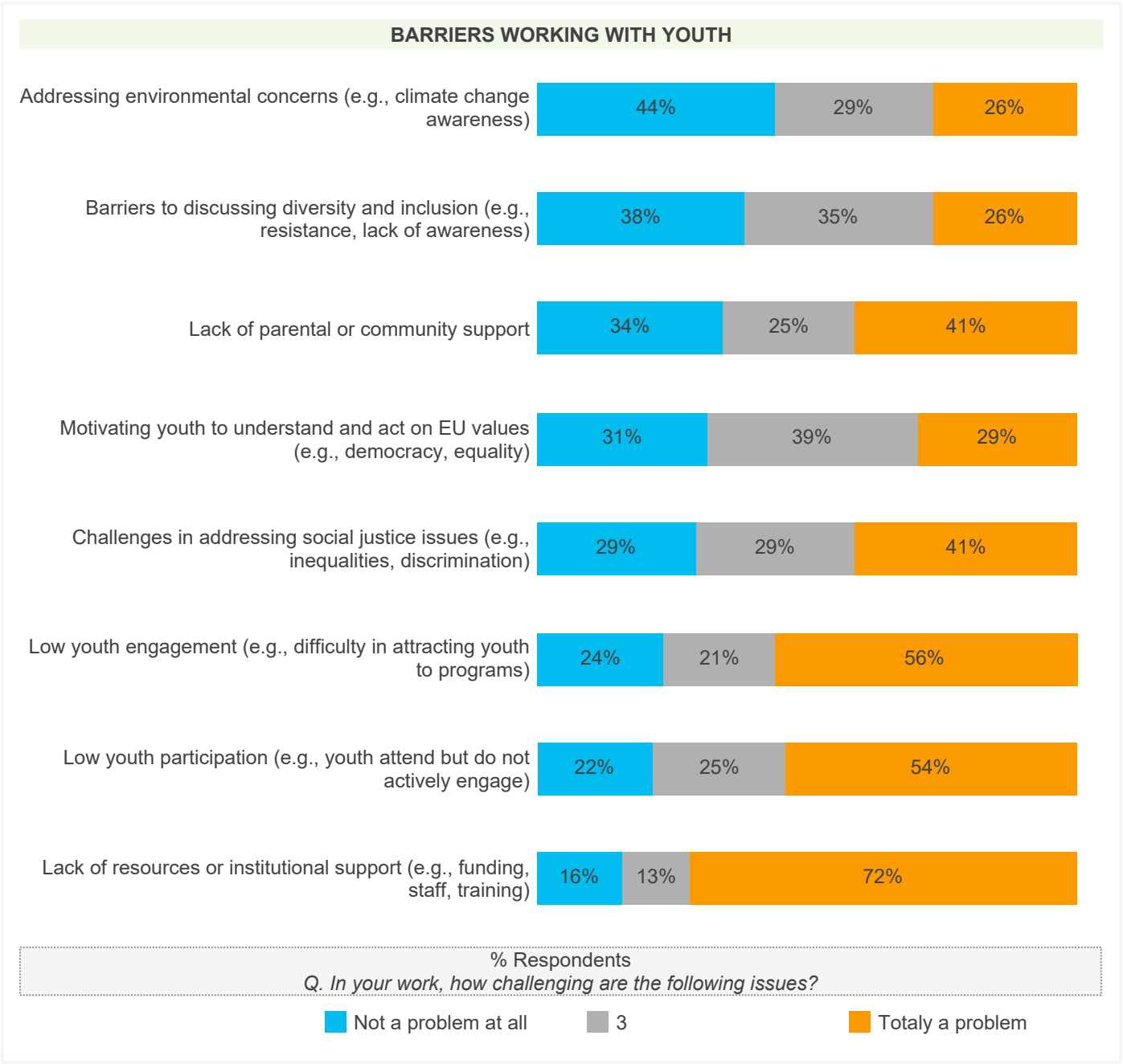
Q. Thinking about the youth generation in your country, what is the biggest challenge they are currently facing?

3.3.2 Barriers in working with youth

When working with youths, for German youth leaders, lack of institutional resources is the most significant barrier, with 72% describing it as a major problem and only 16% saying it is not a problem at all. Low youth engagement is also widely reported, with 56% identifying it as a major issue and 21% as moderate.

Low participation in activities is another concern, with 54% saying young people attend but do not actively take part. Parental and community support appears less mentioned, as 41% view it as a major problem while 34% do not see it as a barrier.

Other issues such as social justice (41% major), EU values (29% major, 39% moderate), and inclusion (26% major, 35% moderate) show variation, while climate concerns are less prominent (26% major). Overall, the data suggest that institutional resources and active participation remain the strongest obstacles in Germany.



3.3.3 Methods in motivating youth

When asked how they engage and motivate youth, German youth leaders most often emphasized participatory approaches. Many responses highlighted the importance of giving young people a voice in decision-making, co-creating activities, and fostering experiences of self-efficacy through responsibility and ownership.

Interactive and experiential learning methods were also widely used, including games, group work, creative activities such as poetry slams, arts-based projects, and practical workshops. These tools are seen as effective in creating dynamic environments that capture attention and sustain involvement.

Digital outreach and communication, especially via social media and school visits, complement these strategies. Mentorship, safe spaces, and recognition of effort also emerged as central, with youth leaders stressing that engagement improves when young people feel taken seriously and included.

Embedding participatory methods and creative experiential learning in training could strengthen youth leaders' ability to design engaging environments that emphasize agency and shared responsibility.

METHODS AND TOOLS USED TO MOTIVATE YOUTH

DE

<table>
<tr><td>Global Citizenship and Values Education
Global learning, civic education, addressing privilege; democratic participation exercises</td><td rowspan="2">Non-formal Education and Workshops
Non-formal education; project-based learning; thematic workshops, seminars, role play</td><td rowspan="2">Participation and Co-creation
Youth involvement in decision-making; shared responsibility; self-empowerment; open youth work principles; participatory workshops</td></tr>
<tr><td>Interactive and Experiential Learning
Games, group work, warm-ups, creative formats (poetry slam, comics, film, arts); learning by doing</td></tr>
<tr><td>No Methods / I Don't Know
"I don't know"; "I don't use any"</td><td colspan="2">Personalized Contact and Dialogue
Personal outreach (social media, schools, messenger contact, face-to-face conversations); spaces for free youth-led design</td></tr>
</table>

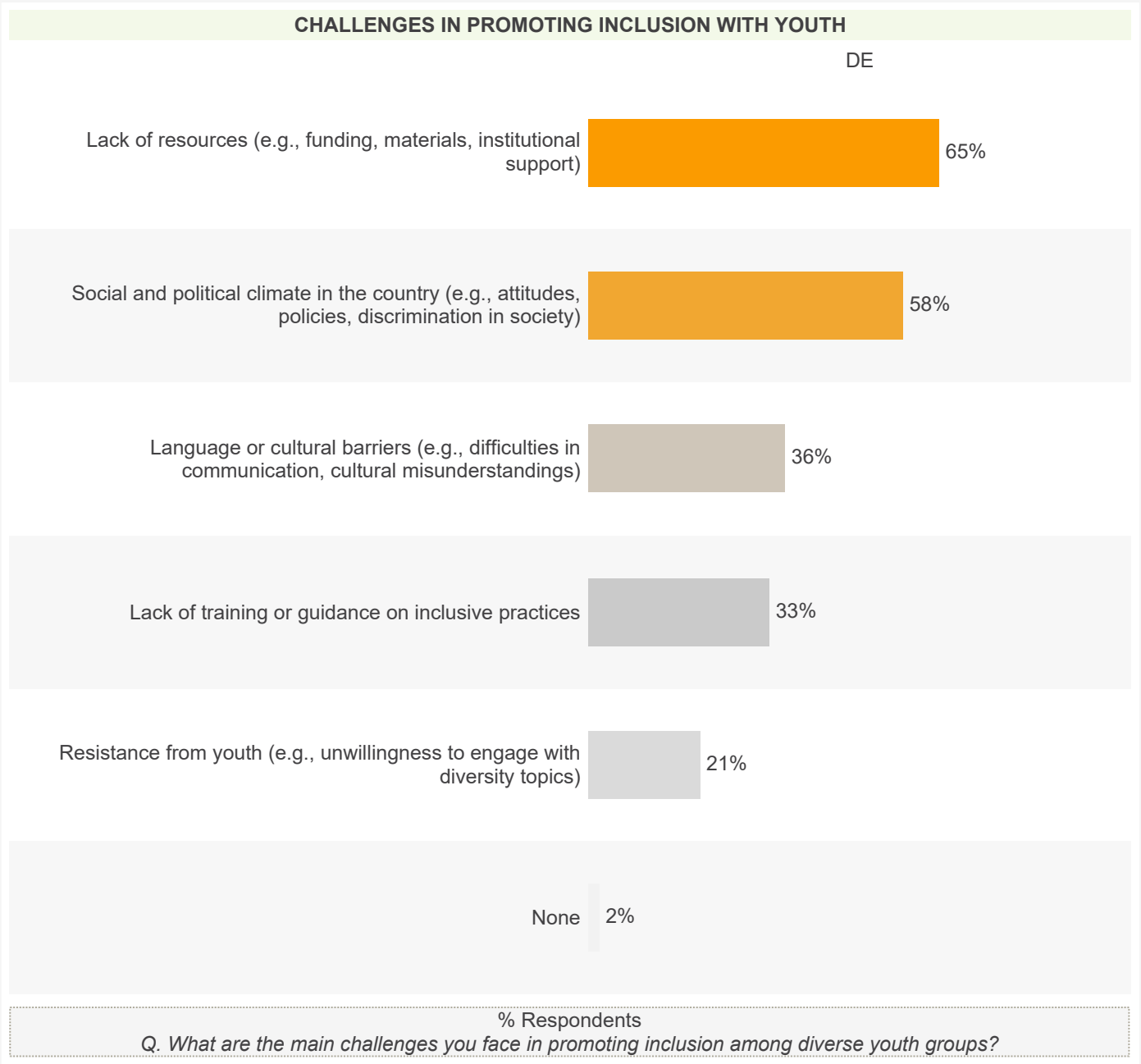
Q. What tools or methods do you use to engage and motivate youths?

3.3.4 Challenges in promoting inclusion among youth

The most frequently cited obstacles by the respondents in promoting inclusion among youth are lack of resources (65%) and the wider social and political climate (58%), highlighting how institutional and societal conditions affect inclusion efforts.

Other challenges appear less prominent. Lack of training on inclusive practices is cited by 33%, and resistance from youth by 21%. Language or cultural barriers are mentioned by 36%, the highest across countries, though still less than half of respondents. Only 2% report no challenges, the lowest share overall.

These figures suggest that German youth leaders most often see structural and societal conditions as barriers, while direct resistance from youth or lack of training are less consistently reported.



3.3.5 Methods in promoting inclusion among youth

When asked how they support the inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities, German youth leaders participating in this study most often emphasized removing financial and logistical barriers. Many pointed to free or low-cost offers, reimbursement of expenses, or solidarity-based contributions that make participation possible regardless of economic background.

Non-formal education and adapted communication also play a strong role, according with the open-ended respones. Leaders frequently mentioned the use of simple language, barrier-free materials, sign language interpretation, and creating quiet spaces to ensure accessibility.

Personalized mentoring, close guidance, and consistent accompaniment were also described as ways to support young people who face structural or health-related barriers.

Safe and inclusive spaces emerged as another recurring theme. Leaders emphasized providing protected environments where young people could share experiences without fear of judgment, and ensuring that participation did not require payment. Partnerships with schools, social workers, and inclusion services were often cited as ways to reach those who might otherwise remain excluded.

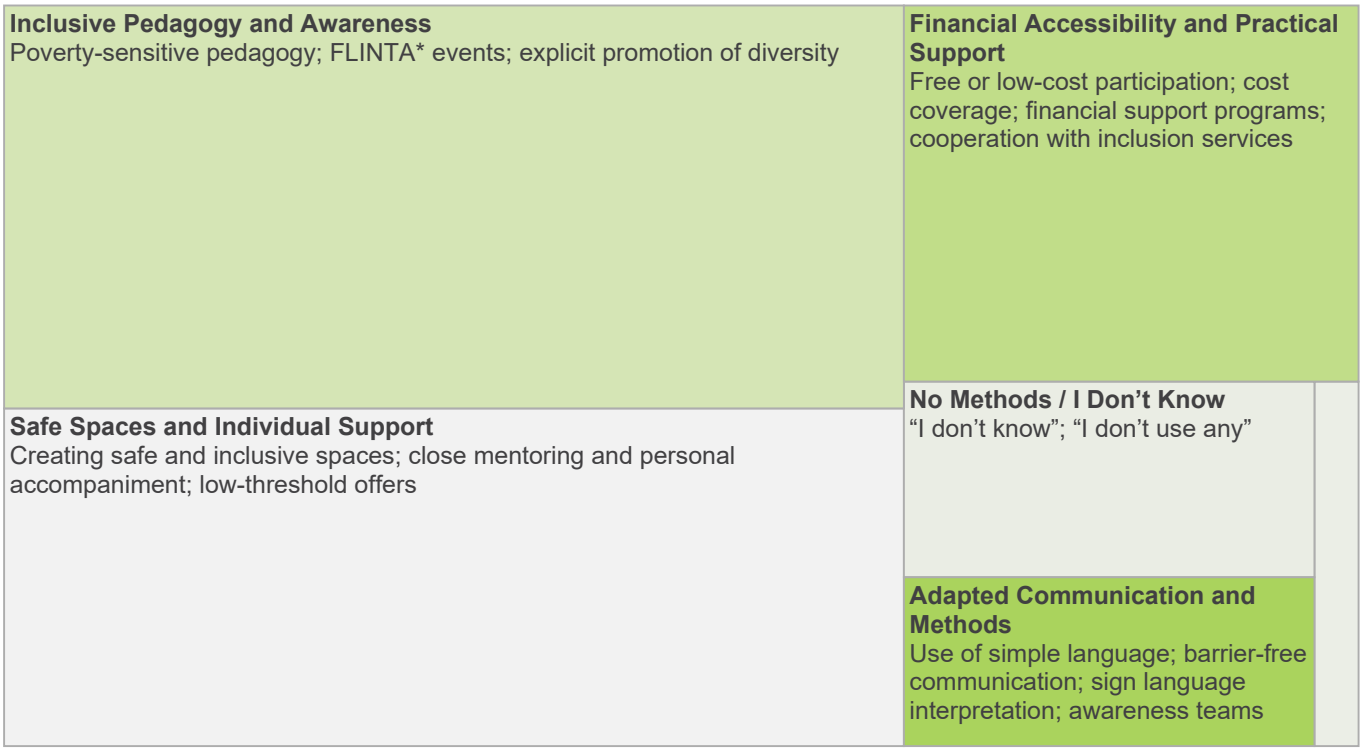
While digital tools and awareness activities were less central, some mentioned using social media or online platforms to share information about scholarships, stipends, or support opportunities.

A notable share of responses fell under “I don’t know” or “I don’t use any methods,” suggesting that not all leaders feel equipped with strategies to support disadvantaged youth. This points to a clear need for training in inclusive design and barrier-free youth work.

“We make sure there are no participation fees, or we find alternative funding so young people don’t have to worry about costs. We also ensure accessible spaces and take time to explain everything step by step. It’s important that they feel supported and understood, not excluded because of barriers they cannot control.”
YL, Germany, 2025

INCLUSION SUPPORT METHODS AND TOOLS

DE



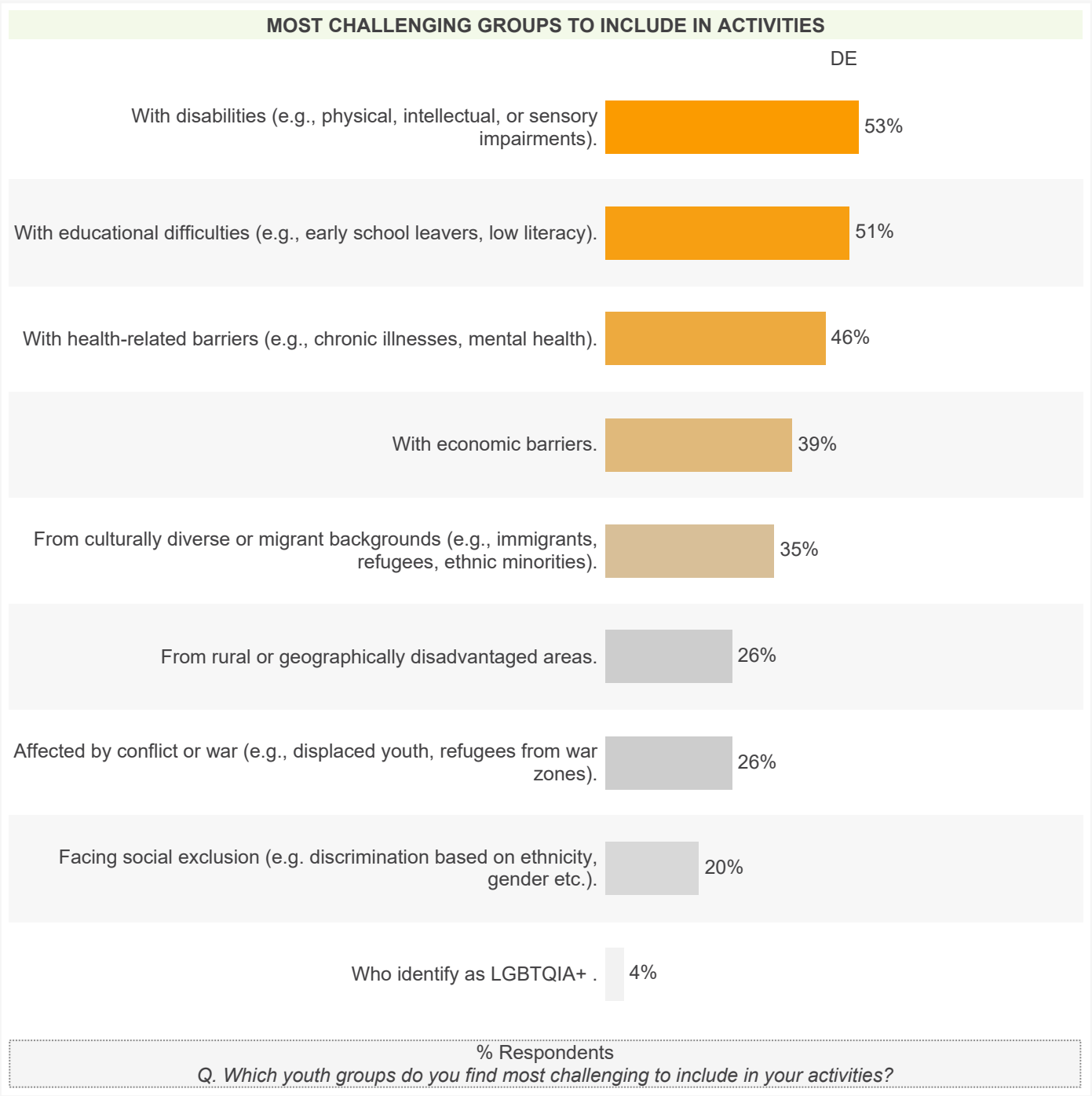
Q. What tools or methods do you currently use to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (e.g., youth facing economic, social, educational, or health-related barriers)?

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 including 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 faceing economic hardship (39%), culturally diverse or migrant backgrounds (35%), rural or geographically disadvantaged areas (26%), and youth affected by conflict or displacement (26%). Youth that face social exclusion is cited by 20%, and LGBTQIA+ young people by 4%.

Taken together, the figures indicate a broad distribution of perceived challenges, with the highest shares concentrated on youth facing disability, education difficultis, and health barriers.



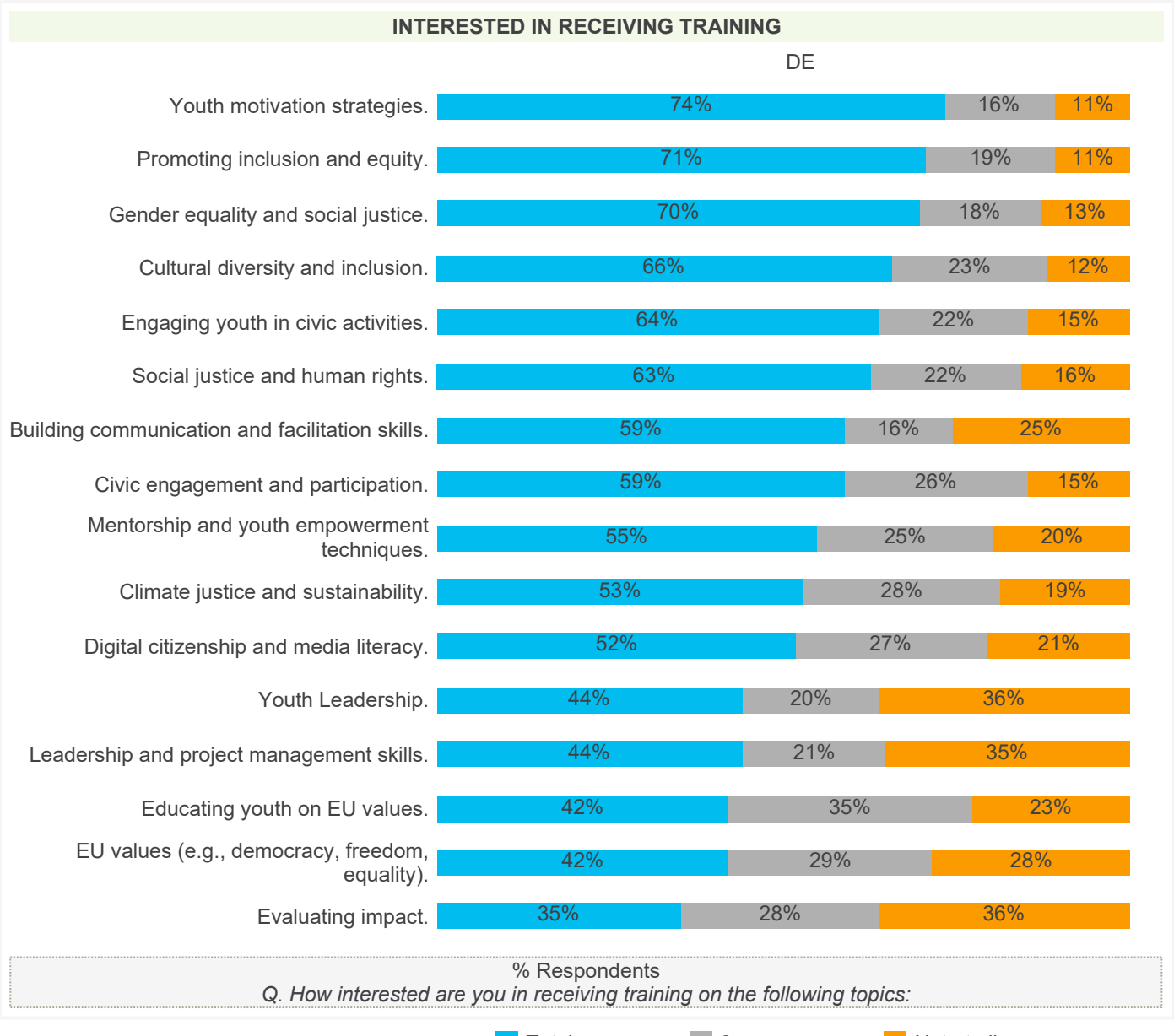
3.4 TRAINING NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

3.4.1 Topics of interest

Youth leaders in Germany are most interested in receiving training on youth motivation (74%), communication skills (59%), and mentorship (55%). Civic engagement and leadership topics, such as project management (44%) or youth leadership (44%), draw slightly lower interest.

Interest in more complex or value-based areas like inclusion (71%), social justice (63%), and climate justice (53%) is moderate, while EU values and impact evaluation generate less enthusiasm, only 42% and 35% express strong interest, respectively.

Overall, German youth leaders appear to prioritize soft skills and personal development areas over formal civic or institutional themes, suggesting a need to frame training in practical, applied terms to enhance engagement.

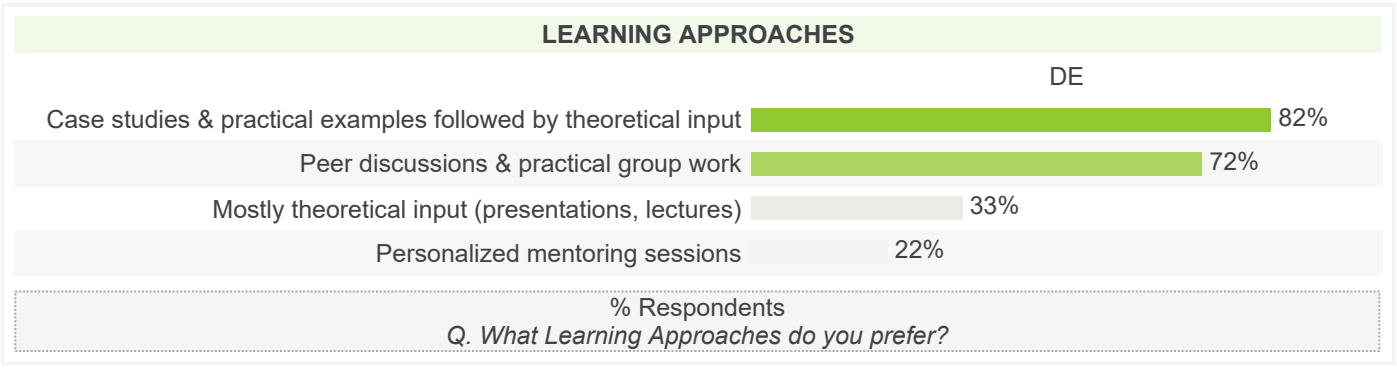


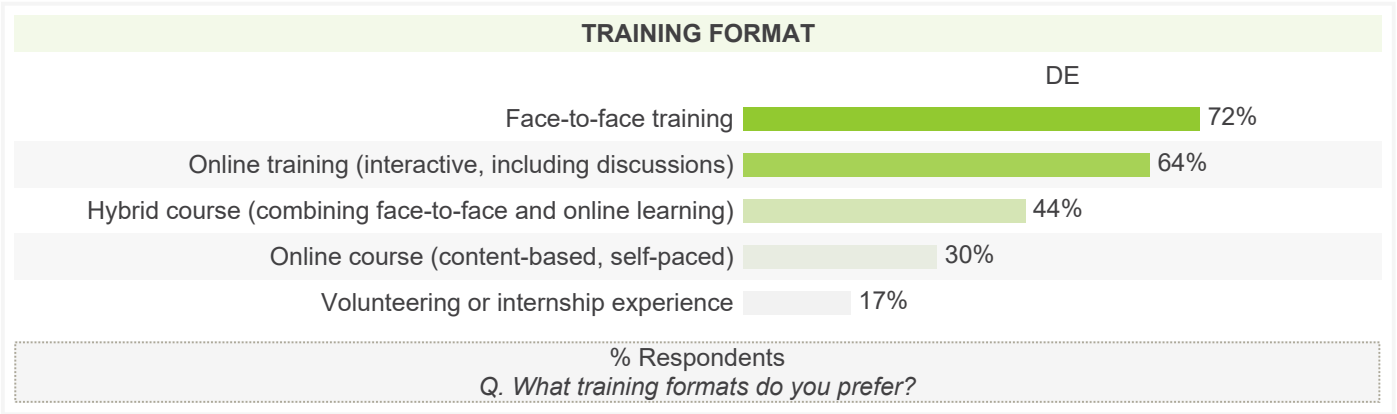
3.4.2 Preferred training formats and learning approaches

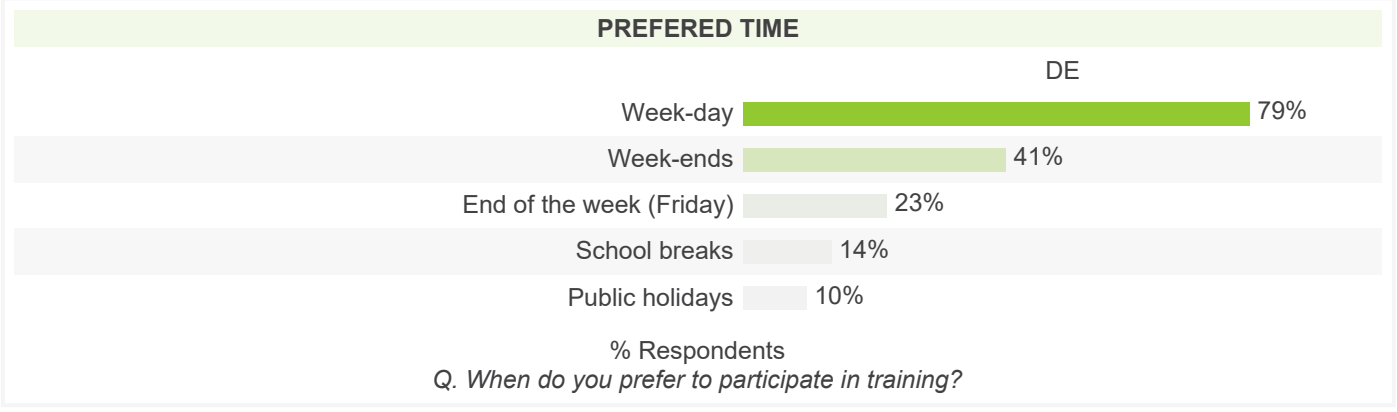
When it comes to training preferences, youth leaders in Germany participating in this study show a clear preference for structured, in-person formats with interactive components. Working with case studies and practical examples followed by theoretical input is the top choice for 82% of respondents. Peer discussions are also highly rated (72%), while traditional lectures are less preferred (33%).

Face-to-face training is strongly favoured (72%), clearly ahead of online training (64%) and hybrid options (44%). Other formats such as volunteering (17%) or self-paced courses (30%) are less popular, indicating a strong orientation toward real-time, direct interaction.

Preferred timing is different from other countries: weekdays are the top choice (79%), followed by weekends (41%). Fewer respondents select school breaks (14%) or public holidays (10%). These insights point to a preference for structured, in-person learning environments scheduled during the regular work week.







3.4.3 Preferred training content or activities

Asked about what content or activities should be included in a training course, youth leaders in Germany most often emphasized a balance of theory and practice, with a strong demand for methods they could directly apply in their work. They highlighted “new concrete methods,” “best-practice examples,” and “tools for everyday youth work” as central to making training relevant.

Interactive and participatory formats were consistently requested. Leaders want courses built around group discussions, workshops, simulations, and peer exchanges, rather than long theoretical inputs. Opportunities for networking and experience sharing with other practitioners were seen as just as important as learning from expert trainers.

Content requests ranged from democracy education, participation, and sustainability to digital literacy, social media, and fake news. Several also stressed the importance of mental health, inclusion, and motivational strategies for young people. Practical themes such as project management, funding opportunities, and evaluation were also cited, showing a desire for tools that link youth work to organizational sustainability.

Overall, German youth leaders want concise, practice-oriented training with space for exchange and expert input, ensuring that they leave with strategies, methods, and resources they can implement immediately.

“The training must strike a good balance between theory and practice. We need expert input, but also practical examples and workshops where we can test things ourselves. Above all, it should give us concrete tools we can take home and use in our daily work with youth.”
YL, Germany, 2025

PREFERRED CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES

DE

Balance of Theory and Practice “short theoretical input plus practical exercises”, “mix of theory and application”, “expert knowledge plus workshops”	**Digital Competence** “dealing with digitalization”, “social media and fake news”, “media literacy training”	**Motivation and Communication** “communication skills”, “motivating techniques”, “life-world connections with young people”	**No Specific Preference** “I don’t know”, “no specific needs”, “cannot answer”
Certification and Recognition “certificate of completion”, “recognized training course”	**Exchange and Peer Learning** “discussion and exchange with other participants”, “networking opportunities”, “learning from colleagues’ practice”	**Practical and Applicable Methods** “new concrete methods that can be adapted”, “practical examples”, “tools to use in youth work”, “materials to take away”	
Civic Education and Democracy “democracy education”, “global citizenship”, “participation”, “sustainability goals”	**Mental Health and Inclusion** “psychological health”, “inclusion”, “equality for all”, “how to motivate young people”	**Project and Organizational Skills** “project management”, “funding opportunities”, “evaluation of projects”, “moderation techniques”	

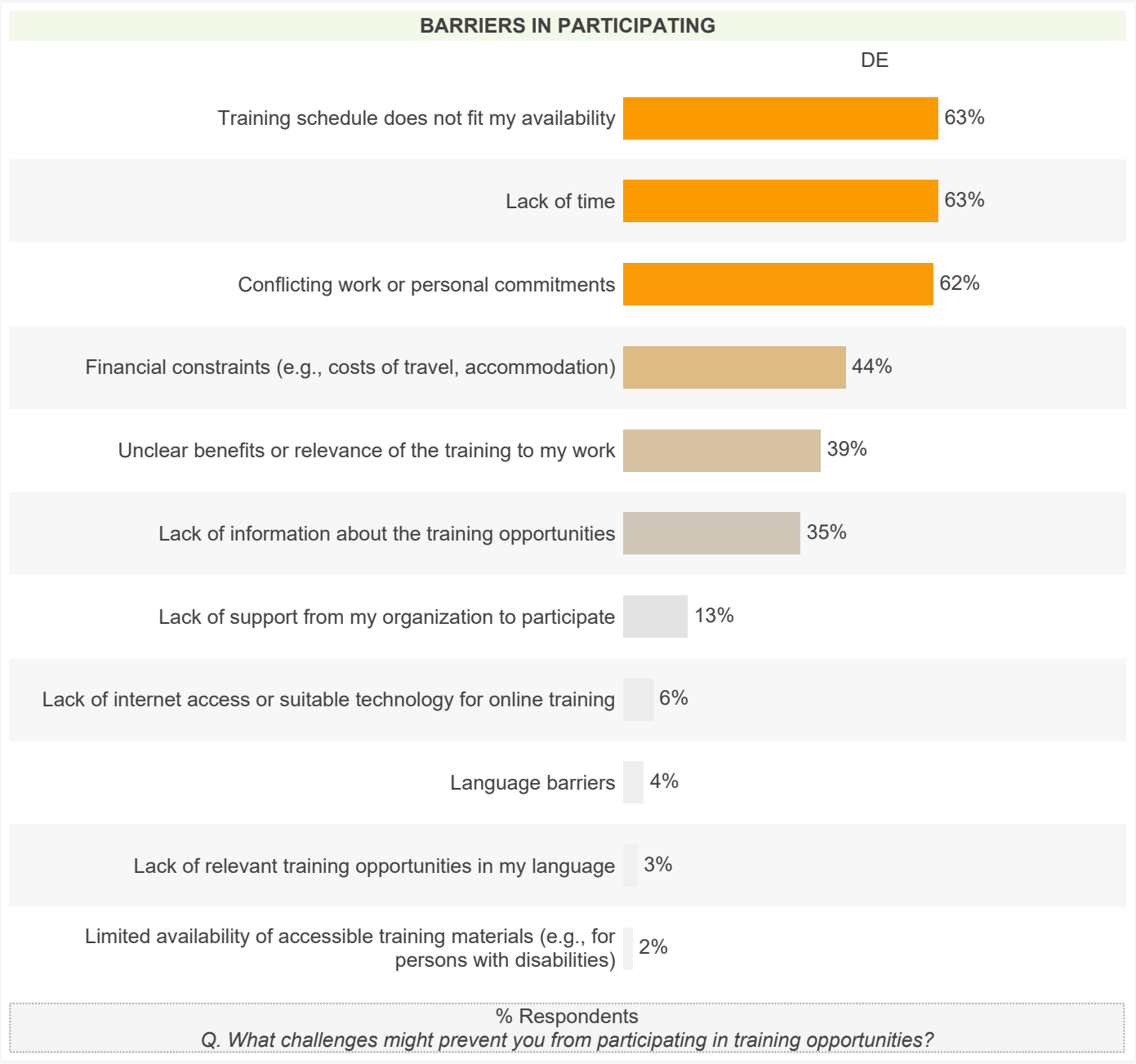
Q. What content or activities should be included in the training course for you to participate?
Open Q

3.4.3 Barriers and incentives to accesing professional development

Youth leaders in Germany report multiple time-related and structural barriers to training participation. The top issue is the training schedule not matching their availability (63%), followed by lack of time (63%) and conflicting commitments (62%), forming a tight cluster of obstacles around availability and competing demands.

Financial constraints are also significant (44%), pointing to a need for low-cost or subsidized options. Meanwhile, 39% cite unclear relevance or benefits as a limiting factor, and 35% mention lack of information about available training.

A smaller portion of respondents mention lacking institutional support (13%) or facing accessibility issues such as technology or materials (6% or lower). These results suggest that German youth leaders need training offers that are well-communicated, low-cost, and highly flexible to fit complex work lives.

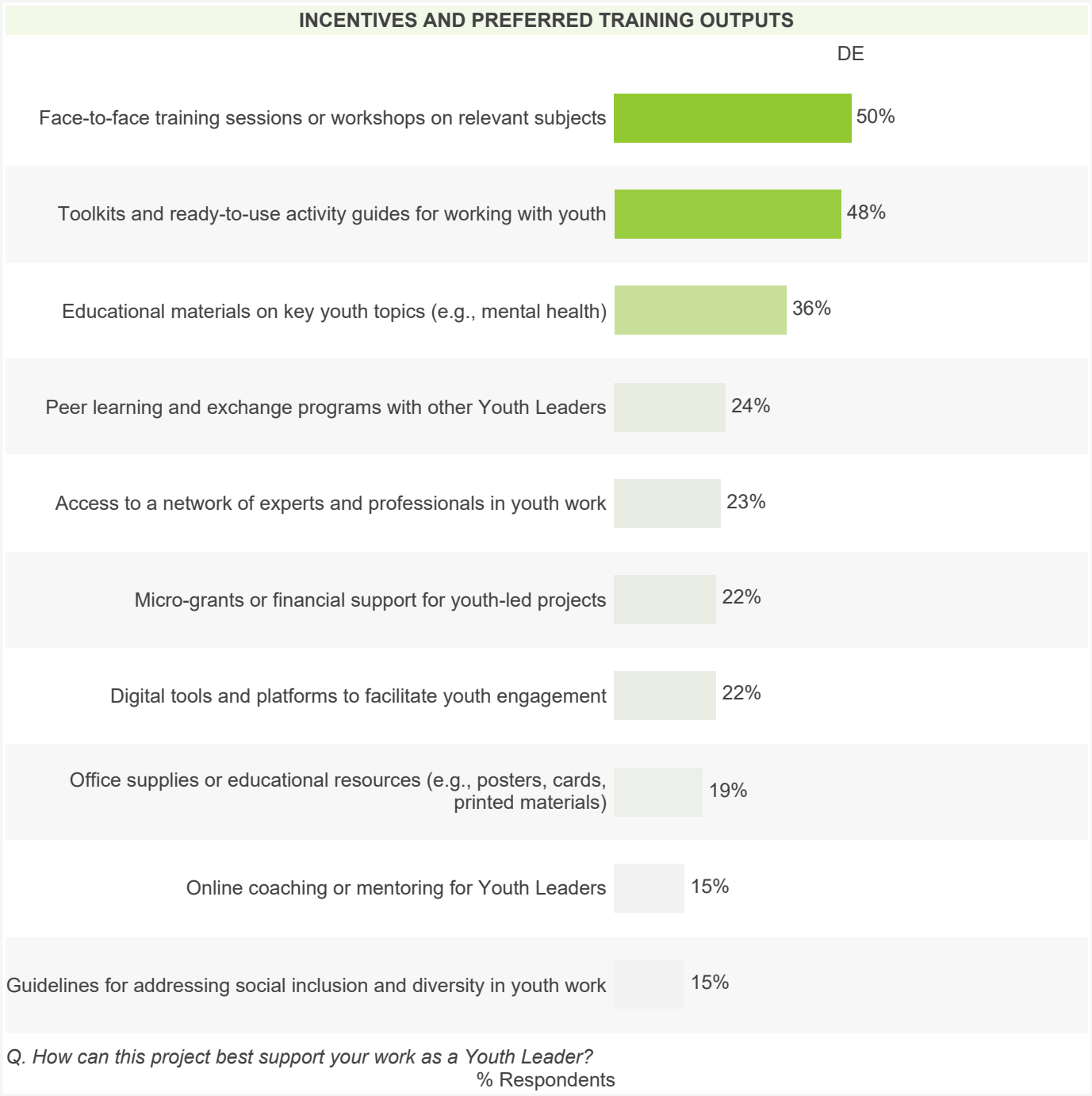


When asked what types of outputs or incentives would be most valuable, the respondents expressed a clear preference for hands-on resources and in-person learning opportunities. The most selected output was face-to-face workshops and sessions (50%), followed by toolkits and activity guides (48%), suggesting that tangible materials and structured spaces for engagement are particularly valued.

Interest was more moderate for educational materials (36%) and access to expert networks (23%), while digital tools (22%) and online mentoring (15%) ranked relatively low, indicating a preference for in-person over virtual support.

Micro-grants (22%) and peer learning exchanges (24%) also received modest attention, reflecting a more selective interest in funding and collaboration opportunities. Inclusion guidelines and printed resources were among the least mentioned.

These results point to a preference for structured, physical learning formats and practical tools, with lower demand for digital or remote resources compared to other countries.

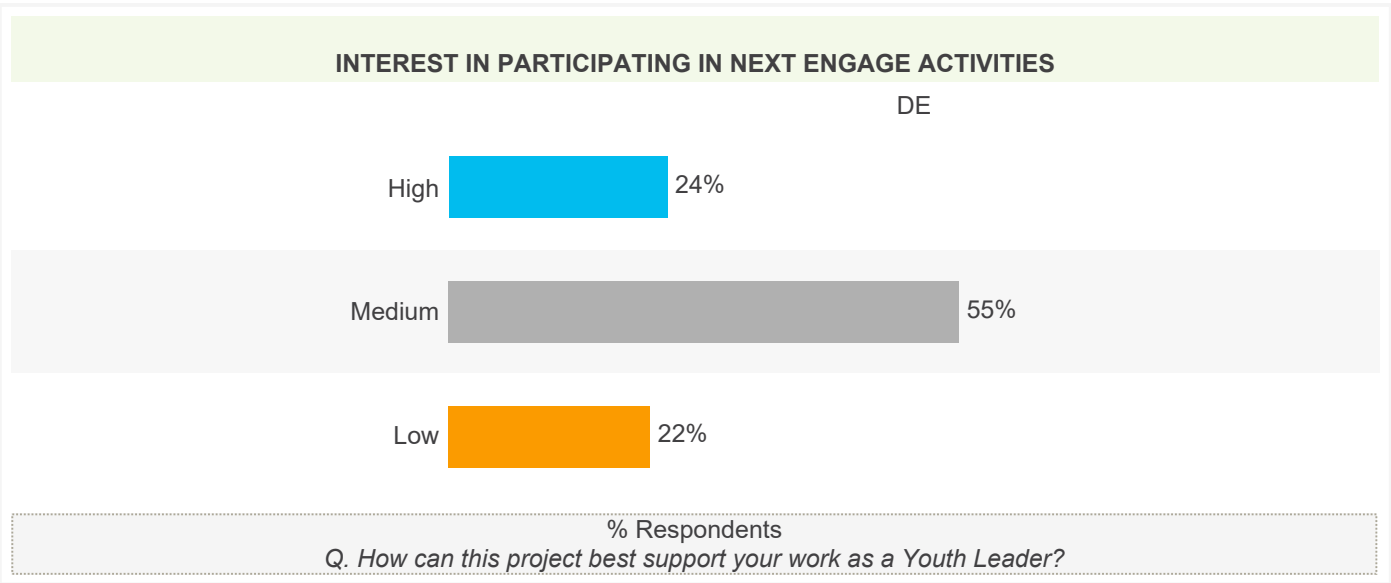


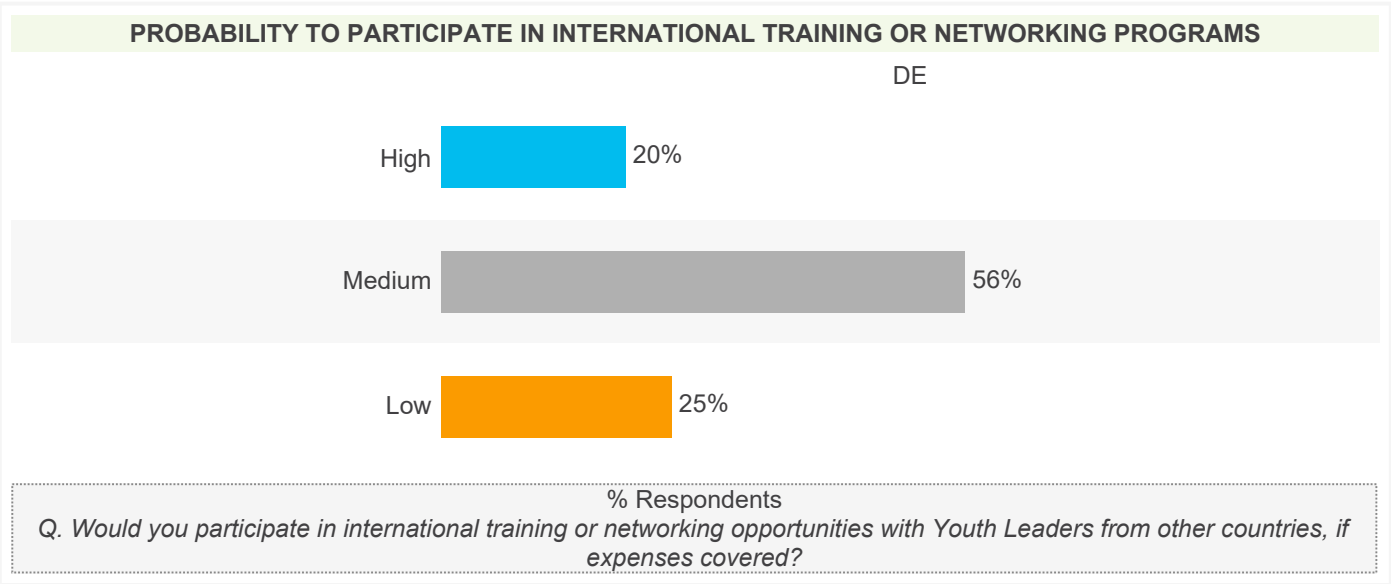
3.4.4 Interest in participating in international experiences and needs

Youth leaders from Germany participating in this research show lower levels of interest in international participation when compared to other countries involved in the project. Only 24% of youth leaders report high interest in future ENGAGE activities, and just 20% say they are likely to participate in international training or networking programs.

Open responses suggest that for many, logistical concerns, workload, or limited institutional incentives reduce their likelihood of taking part. However, among those interested, the benefits cited are similar to other countries: learning new tools, meeting peers, and gaining insights into best practices.

Although international participation appears less of a priority for most respondents in Germany, there is a committed group of youth leaders who see value in cross-border collaboration and could benefit from targeted outreach or tailored formats.





3.5 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The profile of youth leaders in Germany reflects a diverse but well-qualified group. Most respondents are concentrated in urban areas and have higher education backgrounds, with many active in NGOs, community organizations, or youth centres. While there is a balance of genders, a large proportion of youth leaders report between three and ten years of experience, showing that the field is anchored by practitioners with professional stability as well as emerging ones.

Training, practice, and priorities are interconnected, though gaps remain. German youth leaders place high importance on civic engagement, leadership, and participation. Yet, while confidence in teaching democracy and inclusion is strong, training is uneven. Many feel underprepared in areas such as climate justice, gender equality, and digital media literacy, despite these being central challenges for youth. This suggests strong personal motivation but insufficient structured training opportunities.

Youth leaders identify multiple challenges in their work. They highlight that young people in Germany face climate anxiety, political extremism, and threats to democracy, alongside economic inequality and housing shortages. Barriers in youth work include lack of resources, low participation, and insufficient institutional support. Inclusive practices remains complex, with challenges in working with young people with disabilities, educational difficulties, or health-related barriers. Resistance from youth to diversity topics is less emphasized compared to Romania, but the social and political climate is seen as a significant factor.

To motivate and include young people, German youth leaders rely on participatory and experiential methods. Participation and co-creation were among the most emphasized strategies, giving youth ownership of activities. Interactive workshops, games, arts-based projects, and group work are common, alongside mentoring and creating safe spaces. Financial accessibility is central, with many leaders stressing free or low-cost activities and partnerships to remove economic barriers.

Training preferences reveal strong demand for a balanced mix of theory and practice. Respondents highlighted the importance of short, structured theoretical inputs complemented by practical workshops, simulations, and peer exchange. Specific content needs include democracy education, mental health, inclusion, project management, and media literacy. Recognition through certification was noted as an incentive.

German youth leaders also show less openness to international exchange, compared to their counterparts. However, those interested see value in learning new methods, building partnerships, and addressing global issues like climate and democracy. International experiences are understood as opportunities to transfer knowledge and enhance practice.

In conclusion, German youth leaders demonstrate strong professional motivation and a clear orientation toward participatory methods, while revealing training needs in gender, digital literacy, and inclusion. Their call for applied, practice-oriented training and international exchange reflects a pragmatic approach to youth work.