the Possibilists

An in-depth look at the lives, work and needs of young changemakers.

EUROPE REPORT

Why We Need *Possibilists*

From climate change to racial justice, young changemakers in Europe are rallying for a just, sustainable and equitable future. Beyond activism, they are turning their innovative ideas into initiatives that contribute to Europe's burgeoning social economy.

Some of the most globally acclaimed organizations working for a better society have been founded by young people. Boyan Slat, the Dutch entrepreneur, founded *The Ocean Cleanup* at the youthful age of 18. Greta Thunberg is a renowned Swedish activist who started the youth climate protest known as *Fridays for Future* at the age of 15. That protest has grown into a global movement that is challenging world leaders to take immediate action for climate change. Alex Holmes, a teenager in England who after getting bullied himself, founded *Anti-Bullying Ambassadors,* which is now the world's largest anti-bullying initiative.

Often pioneers in their sector, these young and ambitious entrepreneurs are applying fresh ways of thinking to some of the world's most pressing problems.

In times that can sometimes feel impossible, we need people who believe that change is possible. We need Possibilists. So how can we help them reach their full world-changing potential?

This special Europe edition of The Possibilists was made possible by the support of Google.org.

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Who We Are

We are 16 changemaker networks who have come together to improve the lives of young social innovators.

Initiated by ChangemakerXchange, The Possibilists is a unique global alliance committed to delivering real insights into the lives, work and needs of young changemakers and to improving their conditions.

Change maker X Change	ASHOKA	THE DIANA AWARD	UNLEASH
WE ARE FAMILY FOUNDATION	SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES	OBAMA FOUNDATION	Kofi Annan FOUNDATION
SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD	SOCIAL SHIFTERS	ONE YOUNG WORLD	Global Changemakers
PEACE FIRST	YSI young sustainable impact	YUNUS &YOUTH	MASTERPEACE Creating peace. Together.

Academic partner:

WU WIRTSCHAFTS UNIVERSITÄT WIEN VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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The Global Study

We conducted a 40+ question in-depth study on young social innovators.

We surveyed 791 young changemakers, ages 16-35, from 130 countries across the world.

53% were female, 45% male, and 2% were non-binary or preferred not to say. 27% of respondents consider themselves to be part of a marginalized group.
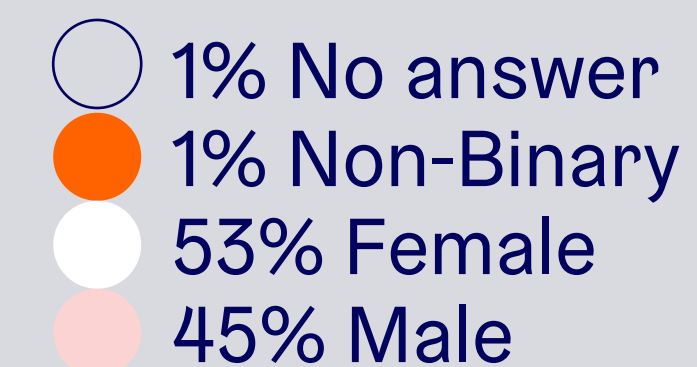
The survey was conducted between February 19th – March 4th, 2021 and distributed among the 16 partner networks, as well as other young changemaker communities around the world.

Now we're taking a deep dive into the European context.

791
Young Changemakers

Gender

○ 1% No answer
● 1% Non-Binary
○ 53% Female
○ 45% Male

Europe in Focus

This report will take a closer look at young European changemakers, by focusing on the data of participants who currently reside in Europe.

The study includes 200 respondents from 32 European countries. The most represented countries in the sample are Germany (18%), the UK (14%), Spain (9%), France (8,5%), Romania (8%) and the Netherlands (6%).

When it comes to their motivation for doing the work, the topics that they work on, or the challenges that they face, young European social innovators are closely aligned with their global peers. However, differences do start to emerge surrounding their personal and initiative's needs, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on their work and motivation. This suggests that the intrinsic, human values focusing on change-making are similar regardless of country or region, including the why and the what, but how the work is done, and the needs attached to it, vary by local or regional context.
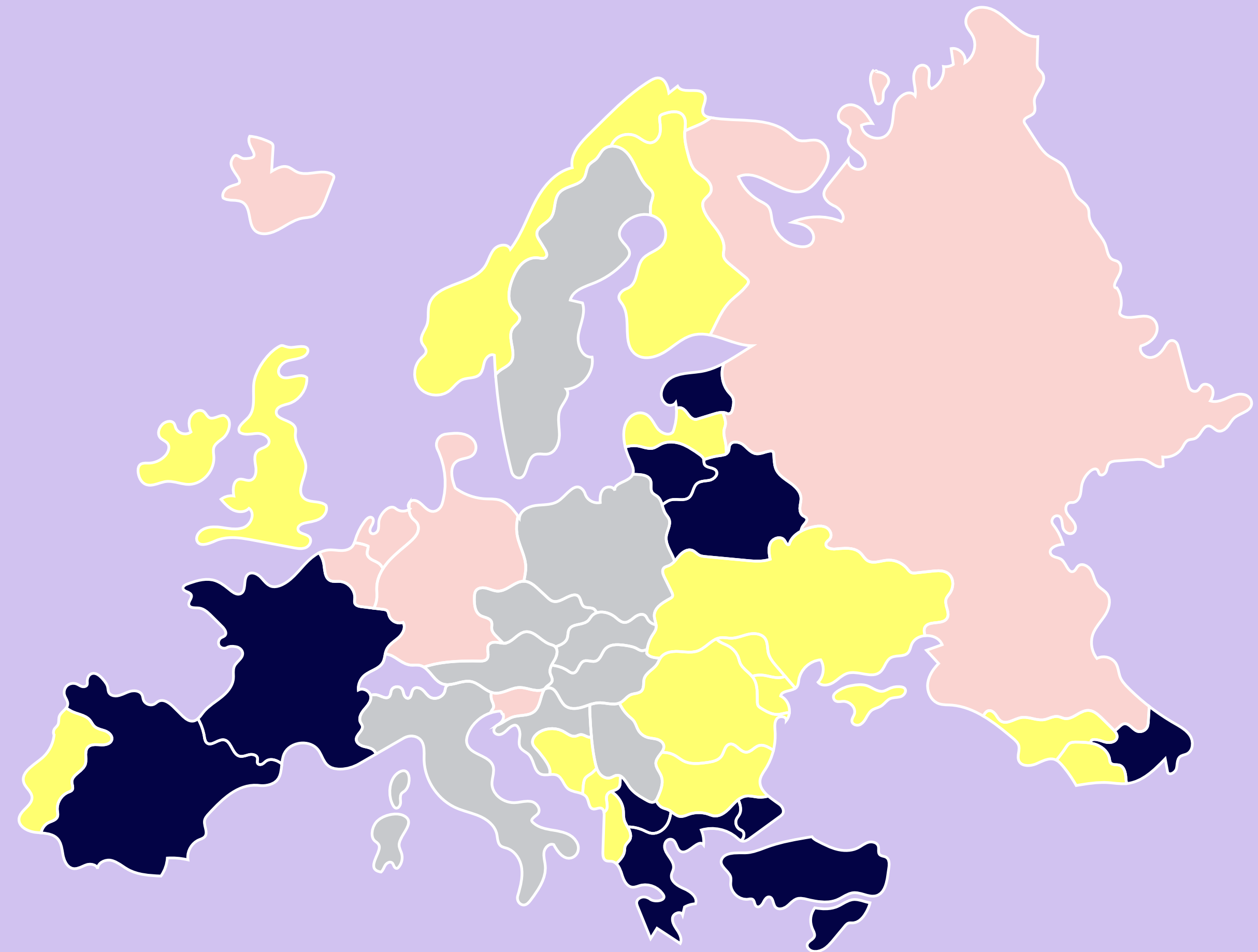
Underrepresented *Individuals* in Focus

In this report, we also pay specific attention to the **challenges and needs** that young social innovators who self-identify as belonging to a marginalized group* face in developing their initiatives. We recognize the need to engage minority groups more in policy-making processes and to address systemic barriers at the same time, so that marginalized groups can also participate in innovation processes. At the moment, the current EU structures don't provide a lot of space for this and EU institutions and processes are designed in a way in which the equal representation of marginalized groups is not strongly fostered.[1]

It is important to note that our data is clearly not a representative sample of **ALL** marginalized groups in Europe, but rather **a self-selected sample** of those who have already overcome considerable systemic barriers in order to start their own ventures.

Given that the data indicates that social entrepreneurship comes with considerable personal risk in terms of financial

security and health, we could also suggest it is currently not a feasible career choice for youth who are at risk.

In that sense, we might observe that the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in its current state favors those who have a financial support system and who already have access to support networks.

*The discrimination criteria upon which over a quarter of our respondents recognize themselves as members of marginalized groups are gender (being a woman), sexual orientation (LGBTQ+), being young, having a refugee or migrant background, belonging to a specific race or ethnicity, and/or their religious affiliation. Young social innovators also feel marginalized based on their limited financial resources, on coming from a non-academic background and being the first generation to access education in their family. Health is also an element that makes them feel vulnerable, either due to physical disability or due to mental health issues. Coming from the youth care system, for instance, orphanages, was also mentioned as a source of marginalization.

Ingi Mehus

LOCATION
Netherlands

INITIATIVE
Pocket Stories

Ingi's personal journey led her to work with international migration across four continents with local NGOs, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and IOM - UN Migration. Dissatisfied with the current personal and global narratives about migration, she decided to found Pocket Stories to connect people with unheard voices through storytelling to embrace and accept diversity and broaden our understanding of migration. Pocket Stories works to establish a more inclusive narrative about migration through workshops, events and book/video productions. Listening to and recording hundreds of personal stories from around the world has helped Ingi better understand how we are all interconnected because of human migration.

"Being an Asian woman, I've encountered a lot of stereotypes around submission and cuteness. These perceptions of me, shape my awareness of myself and my identity, and translate into a sense of insecurity or a feeling of *imposter syndrome*. I would like to see more diverse role models and more open discussion around this. I think it's important to show that leaders, founders and entrepreneurs come from all ages, races, backgrounds and genders."

Key Findings

Young changemakers in Europe are *resilient*, *innovative* and *intrinsically motivated* to change the world and improve the lives of others. But they are struggling.

These are *challenging times* for young social innovators in Europe.

Social entrepreneurship is a difficult undertaking in the best of times and the COVID-19 pandemic has added an additional element of uncertainty.

In addition to the pandemic, systemic inequalities are noted as the main external influencer that negatively affects working on their ventures.

The very young, women and those belonging to a marginalized group(s) report the highest levels of burnout risk and self-doubt.[2]

54%
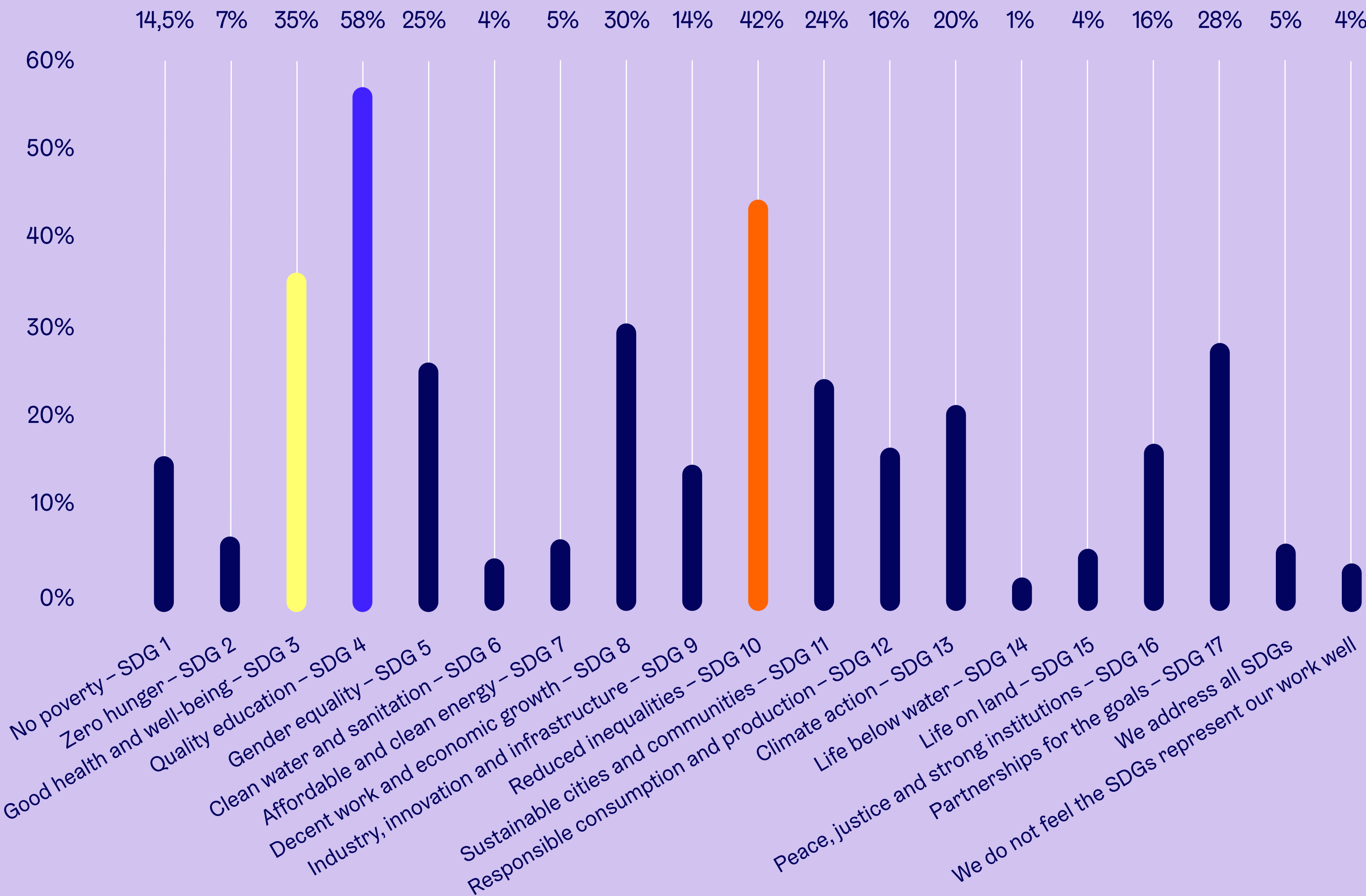of young changemakers in Europe have experienced some form of burnout

Only
19%
can live off of their ventures

What they work on and *why*:

Distribution across SDGs

14,5% 7% 35% 58% 25% 4% 5% 30% 14% 42% 24% 16% 20% 1% 4% 16% 28% 5% 4%

Categories: No poverty – SDG 1, Zero hunger – SDG 2, Good health and well-being – SDG 3, Quality education – SDG 4, Gender equality – SDG 5, Clean water and sanitation – SDG 6, Affordable and clean energy – SDG 7, Decent work and economic growth – SDG 8, Industry, innovation and infrastructure – SDG 9, Reduced inequalities – SDG 10, Sustainable cities and communities – SDG 11, Responsible consumption and production – SDG 12, Climate action – SDG 13, Life below water – SDG 14, Life on land – SDG 15, Peace, justice and strong institutions – SDG 16, Partnerships for the goals – SDG 17, We address all SDGs, We do not feel the SDGs represent our work well

When asked to think about their work within the SDG framework, the three main focus areas are:

SDG 4
Quality education
58%

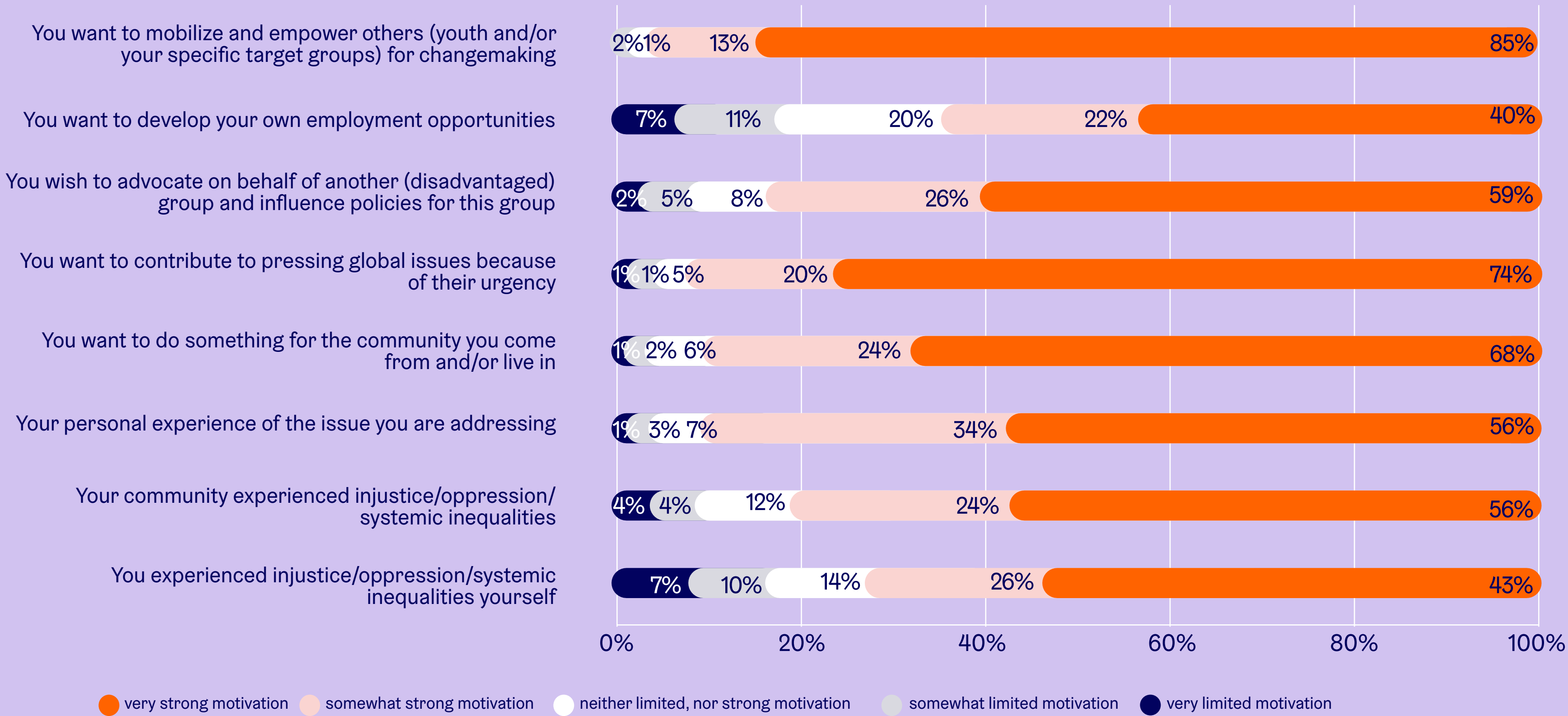**SDG 10**
Reduced inequalities
42%

SDG 3
Good health and well-being
35%

KEY LEARNING

Our study found that most young social innovators in Europe focus on education, seeing it as a major lever for reducing inequalities and instigating change.

What they work on and *why*:

Main motivation for developing the initiative

The three main motivators for their work are to:

85%
mobilize and empower others for changemaking

74%
contribute to pressing global issues

69%
do something for their community

You want to mobilize and empower others (youth and/or your specific target groups) for changemaking — 2% 1% 13% 85%

You want to develop your own employment opportunities — 7% 11% 20% 22% 40%

You wish to advocate on behalf of another (disadvantaged) group and influence policies for this group — 2% 5% 8% 26% 59%

You want to contribute to pressing global issues because of their urgency — 1% 1% 5% 20% 74%

You want to do something for the community you come from and/or live in — 1% 2% 6% 24% 68%

Your personal experience of the issue you are addressing — 1% 3% 7% 34% 56%

Your community experienced injustice/oppression/systemic inequalities — 4% 4% 12% 24% 56%

You experienced injustice/oppression/systemic inequalities yourself — 7% 10% 14% 26% 43%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

● very strong motivation   ● somewhat strong motivation   ○ neither limited, nor strong motivation   ● somewhat limited motivation   ● very limited motivation

KEY LEARNING

Young social innovators are not primarily driven by their own employment needs and wishes, but rather by an intrinsic desire to improve the lives of others on a global and local scale.

The three *main challenges* that young social innovators in Europe face:

61%
experience a lack of personal financial security
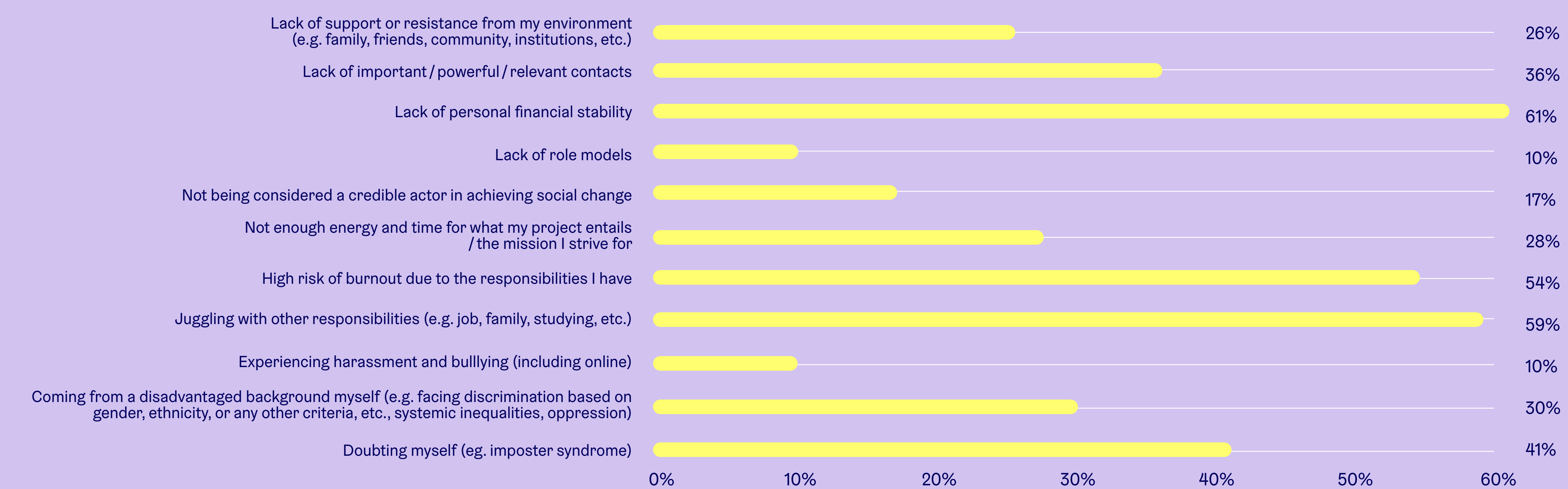
54%
see themselves at high risk of burnout

59%
say they are juggling various responsibilities and being stretched too thin

KEY LEARNING

European changemakers face significant financial difficulties, though they are less extreme than their global peers. This is perhaps due to a better economic situation and funding available for social entrepreneurs in Europe. In addition to financial insecurity, social innovators in Europe express needs around wellbeing support, access to networks and greater visibility.

What makes it *most difficult* for you personally to successfully work on your initiative?

Category	Percentage
Lack of support or resistance from my environment (e.g. family, friends, community, institutions, etc.)	26%
Lack of important / powerful / relevant contacts	36%
Lack of personal financial stability	61%
Lack of role models	10%
Not being considered a credible actor in achieving social change	17%
Not enough energy and time for what my project entails / the mission I strive for	28%
High risk of burnout due to the responsibilities I have	54%
Juggling with other responsibilities (e.g. job, family, studying, etc.)	59%
Experiencing harassment and bulllying (including online)	10%
Coming from a disadvantaged background myself (e.g. facing discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or any other criteria, etc., systemic inequalities, oppression)	30%
Doubting myself (eg. imposter syndrome)	41%

Financial *insecurity*

Only **19%** of young changemakers in Europe can cover all of their necessary expenses by working on their initiative. While this proportion is low, it is twice as high as what changemakers around the world report, as the global average is only **9%**.

58% of young European changemakers cannot compensate themselves at all or can only pay themselves a small token amount, compared to **66%** at the global level. This figure is higher for respondents under 20 (78%) and in the first half of their twenties (77%) and for those who lead an initiative in the start-up stage (77%). This goes to show that the youngest social innovators with initiatives in the early stages are the most vulnerable to financial difficulty.

Financial compensation

No Answer / Don't know	2%
I can cover all of my necessary income through my work on my initiative.	19%
I can cover most of my necessary income through my work on my initiative.	11%
I can cover half of my necessary income through my work on my initiative.	11%
I can compensate myself financially with a symbolic amount.	27%
I am not able to compensate myself financially at all.	31%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%
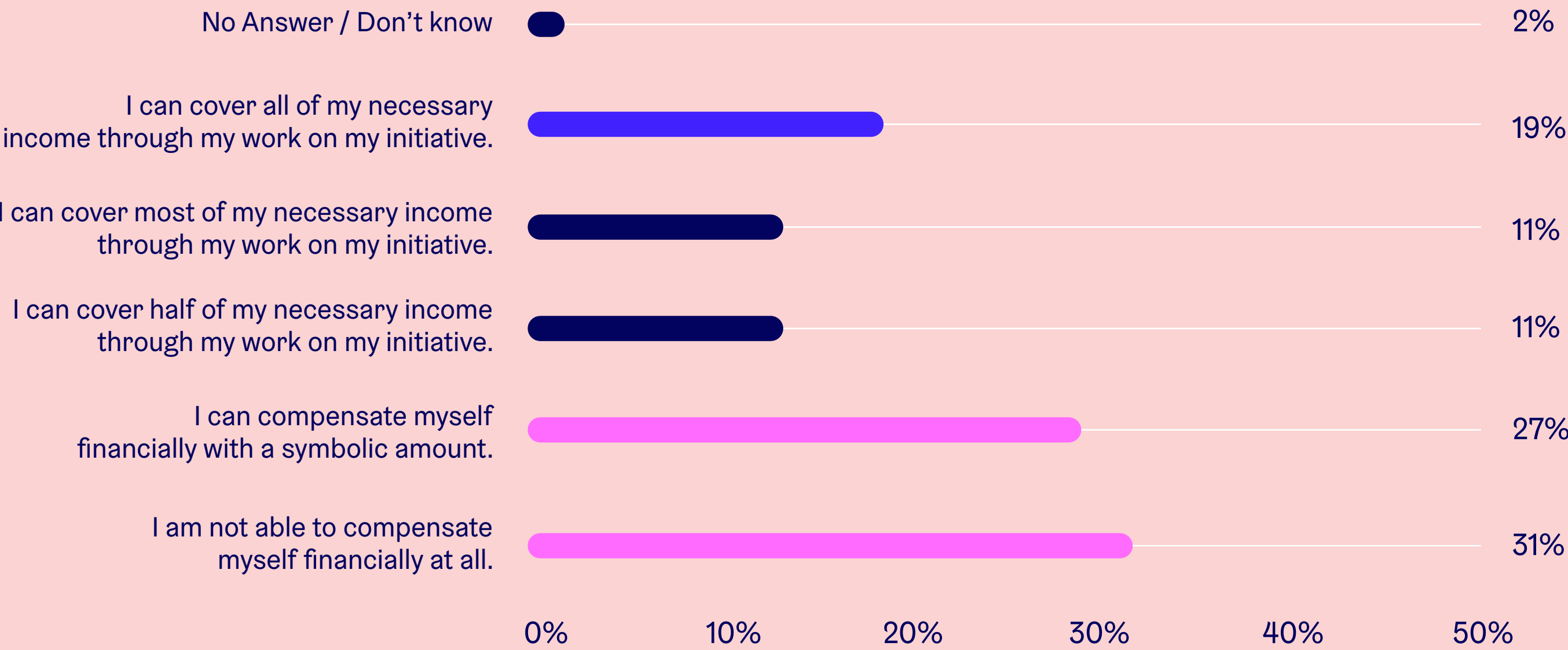
Young social innovators in Europe face great financial insecurity. The vast majority cannot live off of their initiatives and have to supplement their income through various side-gigs, despite the fact that they are very dedicated to their ventures.

The gender pay gap is present, even in the social impact sector. Women are 15% less likely to be able to compensate themselves financially than their male counterparts. European men aged 31-35 enjoy the highest levels of financial security when compared to their global peers.

As often the case in matters of employment, those starting out find themselves in the most precarious position.

In interviews, social innovators constantly mention personal financial insecurity as being one of their greatest stressors and negative factors in their overall well-being.

Rónán Ó Dálaigh

Ireland

INITIATIVE
Thriftify

Rónán ó'Dálaigh is the Founder and CEO of online charity shopping website Thriftify.ie, which has 98% of Ireland's charities signed up to sell on it. Rónán launched Thriftify in 2018 and they recently launched in the UK. Their platform has helped dozens of charity retailers to value millions of donations and is the go-to destination for thrifters and eco-driven consumers.

"Funding has been our *biggest struggle*. We barely got by on small grants and awards for 2-3 years before we were able to raise capital. There isn't enough funding for early-stage ideas. If we had gotten more funding early on, there is no doubt that our impact would be much larger than it is today."

Mélanie Marcel

France

SoScience

Mélanie Marcel is the founder of SoScience and is a recognized expert at the European level in responsible innovation policies and programs. SoScience specializes in responsible research, namely how to use science and technology to answer social and environmental issues. They work with research institutes and major industries to improve their research practices and allow civil society to have a more active role in science valorization.

Mélanie advises public research organizations and major industrialists on new innovation practices serving the common good. Her commitment to the dissemination and implementation of responsible research and innovation has earned her numerous international recognitions: she is an Echoing Green Fellow (2017), Ashoka Fellow (2018) and won the Grinnell College Innovator for Social Justice Prize (2018). She published her first book on the subject in 2017.

"The impact of *stress* has been immense. I have suffered a loss in my productivity and creativity. I live with the constant mental burden and fearfulness around my lack of financial security, as well as the lack of my company's financial security. Very often, I don't pay myself a salary for months at a time in order to preserve jobs."

Multiple Simultaneous
Responsibilities

I have other professional commitments:

● Yes   ○ No
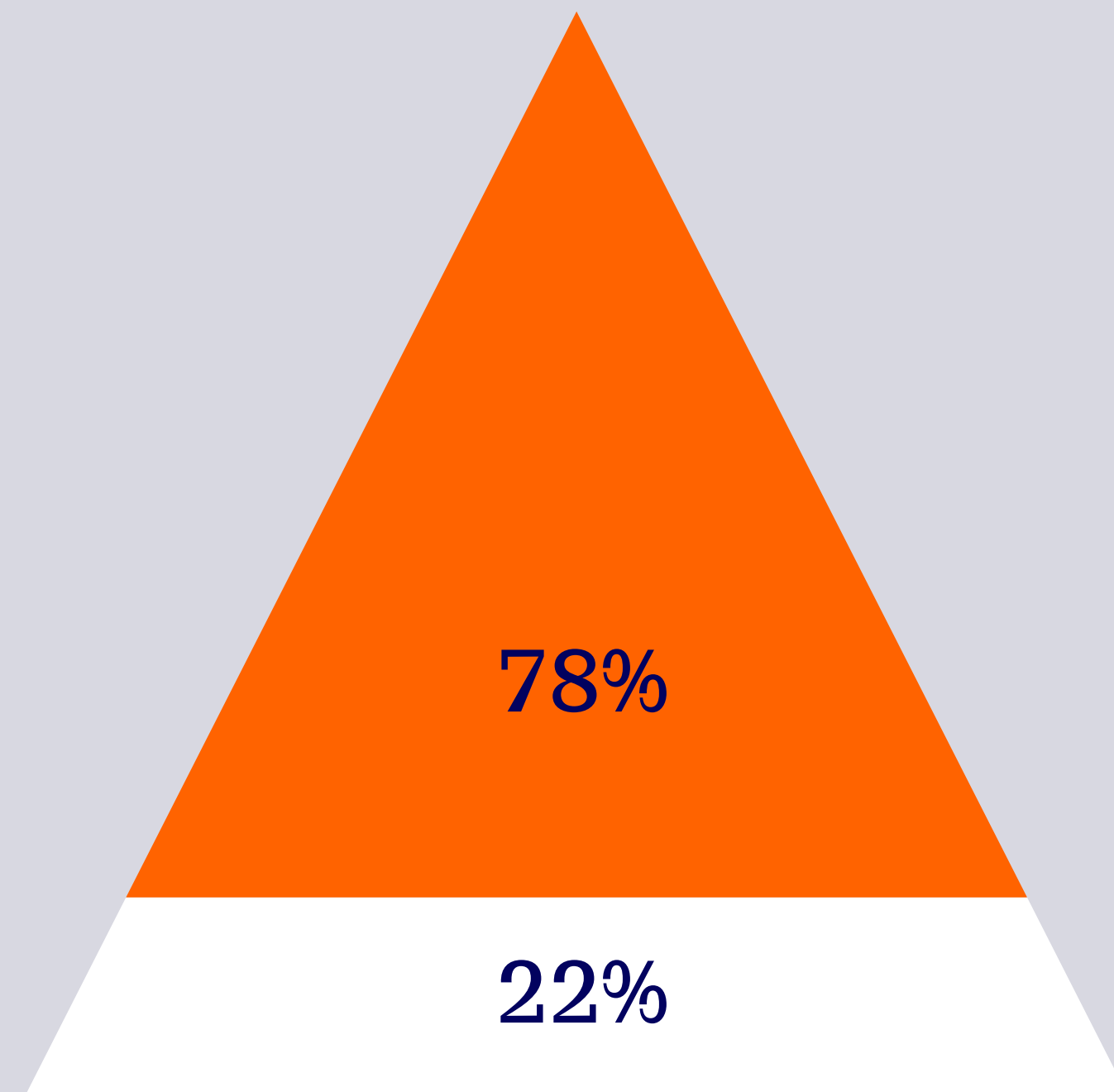
78% of young changemakers have other ongoing professional commitments in addition to their initiatives.

78%

22%

Work, studies, volunteering and activism. These are all common simultaneous pursuits for today's youth. Young social innovators want to be engaged in their communities while continuously learning and growing as individuals. Many work and study at the same time, and hold various volunteer positions. That said, their overachiever tendencies are also rooted in their financial strife and the need to supplement their income in order to cover their living costs. The tensions between this urge to learn and contribute and the need to provide for themselves take a significant toll on their overall wellbeing, as they find themselves stretched thin and struggling to find a healthy balance. Additionally, societal expectations around youth are starting to normalize this juggling act that increases pressure on them to perform.

Prone to
*Burnout**

Level of burnout during the entire time of working on the initiative

Response	Value
No Answer / Don't know	1%
I have felt completely burned out and often wondered if I could go on. I have been at the point where I may have needed some changes or may have needed to seek some sort of help.	18%
The symptoms of burnout that I've experienced wouldn't go away. I thought about frustration at work a lot.	7%
I have definitely burned out and have had one or more symptoms of burnout, such as physical and emotional exhaustion.	36%
Occasionally I am under stress, and I don't always have as much energy as I once did, but I haven't felt burned out.	34%
I enjoy my work. I have never had symptoms of burnout.	6%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

*Our working definition of burnout: A state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion, usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration, whereby a person is unable to cope with their life situation and perform optimally.

61% of respondents report having felt completely burned out, even being in need of help, or having had one or more symptoms of burnout.

78% of young social innovators in the study reported needing support in increasing their wellbeing.

Burnout levels are higher among women (65%), compared to those of men (52%).

Young social innovators who identify as belonging to a marginalized group perceive a greater risk of burnout than their peers (62% vs. 52%) and are more likely to have suffered from it (65% vs. 58%).

KEY LEARNING

Women and those who identify as marginalized report higher levels of burnout. This may be due to the fact that they feel they need to push themselves harder in order to disprove negative stereotypes about themselves. Additionally, youth aged 16-20 report the highest risk of burnout.
This highlights the need to question how societal expectations are impacting youth, women and underrepresented individuals and the pressure they feel in order to prove themselves.

Binta Jammeh
CAMPAIGN ACCELERATOR, FRANCE

"When you are part of *a marginalized group*, and I speak from my experience as a woman of colour, there is this unspoken rule that you need to work twice as hard, twice as fast, and twice as smart to receive even just a modicum of recognition and success that your peers do. This absolutely impacted how I viewed work and what 'success' meant to me. I had absolutely ZERO boundaries when it came to work.
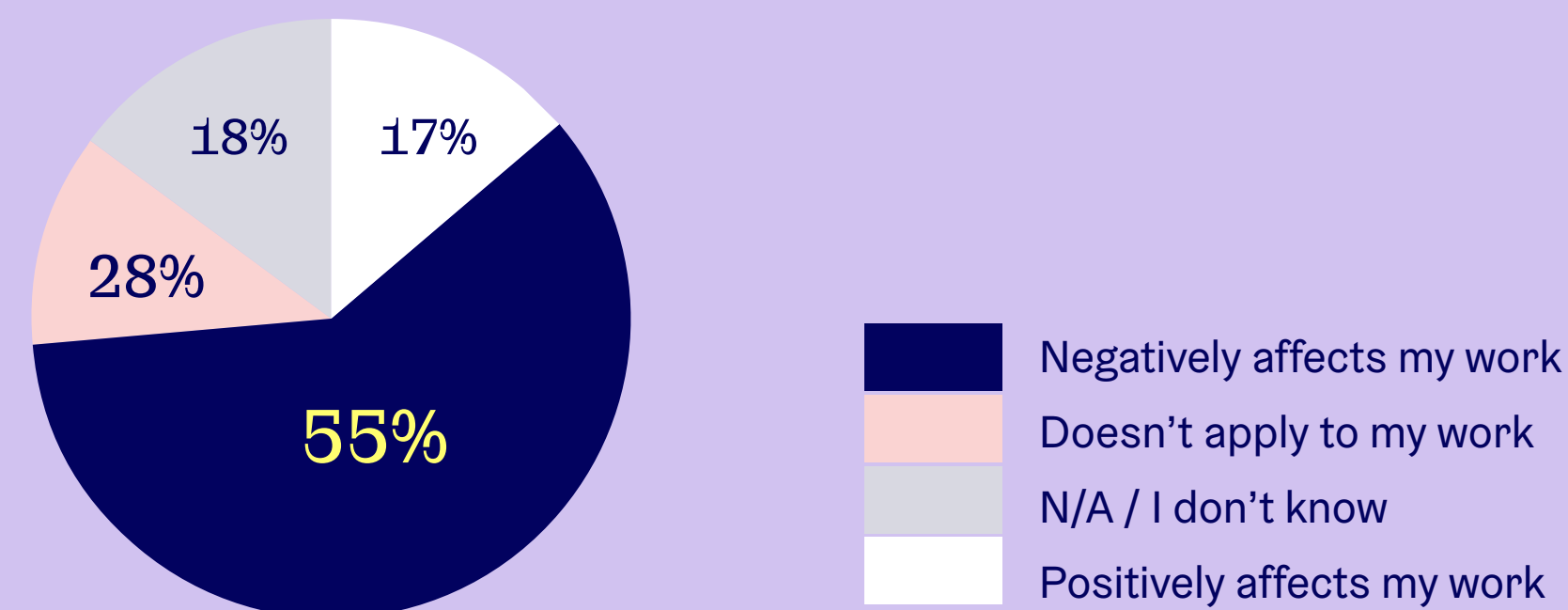
I think this is a narrative that a lot of social entrepreneurs buy into, this notion that we must sacrifice ourselves for our causes and our work. I learned the hard way that it doesn't work like that, and that without boundaries, you lose yourself and you lose sight of what is important."

External
Conditions

When it comes to general external conditions, systemic inequalities are highlighted as the main concern for young social innovators. Additionally, COVID-19 was also clearly an external factor that affected their work and wellbeing in the past year.

Systemic Inequalities

Legend:
- Negatively affects my work
- Doesn't apply to my work
- N/A / I don't know
- Positively affects my work

Pie chart values: 55%, 28%, 18%, 17%

55% of young changemakers in Europe report that systemic inequalities, such as those relating to race, ethnicity, gender, injustice, etc., negatively affect their work. This emerges as the highest concern for European social innovators compared to other external factors.

COVID-19

Despite the pandemic, 77% of respondents continued their activities with 70% pivoting activities in some way. 38% of respondents developed new activities in response to the pandemic. Only 1% shut down and 16% paused their initiatives.

This data highlights the resilience and determination of young social innovators in Europe. When times were hard, they rose to the challenge. That said, it took a significant toll on the mental and financial states of changemakers.

LOCATION
Germany

INITIATIVE
MUSEUM OF VALUES

Jan Stassen is the co-founder of the Museum of Values and CEO of the cocreation.loft in Berlin. After working in the field of advertising for many years, Jan became interested in social businesses and impact-driven initiatives. Out of his personal desire and frustration in advertising, he started reflecting on his own values and focusing on what is actually important to him. This internal journey led him to create the Museum of Values. Its goal is to create immersive experiences for people to explore, connect and reflect on personal and collective values. Together with his co-founders, Jan is inspiring a much-needed discourse about values in museums, schools, and businesses.

"On March 3rd 2020, Merkel announced the German lockdown. Directly after her press conference, our phones wouldn't stop ringing. Suddenly our initiatives were stopped, and we had nothing to do. All of our project funding was gone. From busy days and enthusiasm, everything came to a halt and frustration grew. That was *challenging* and *nerve-wracking*. We started living like students again, with less than 1000 EUR a month. Suddenly we were alone. The foundations, the funders, everyone retreated into their own bubbles. We were all in survival mode but in that time, I felt very unsupported. From a professional standpoint, scaling impact in these kinds of conditions and with so many uncertainties is challenging."

The Role of *Community*

Young changemakers in Europe feel a high sense of belonging to their local community (71%). Most of them feel to a high extent that they can be their authentic self in their communities (63%), and – although slightly less – they also feel valued, seen, accepted, and recognized for their contributions to their local community (59%). That said, social innovators who identify as members of marginalized groups actually have a lower tendency to be part of local support networks (63% vs. 52%).

Compared to their peers, young changemakers who identify as part of marginalized groups in Europe feel higher trust (86% vs. 80%) and a slightly higher sense of satisfaction (75% vs. 71%) in international communities. They feel that their voice is represented more (72% vs. 53%) and feel more seen, valued, and recognized for their work (84% vs. 71%).
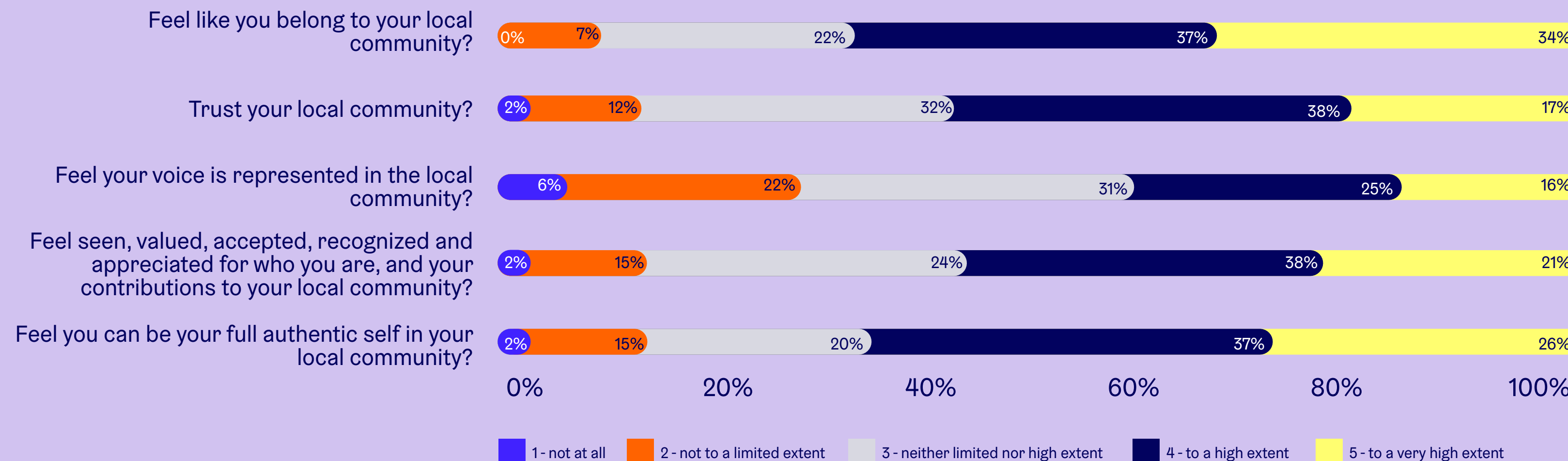
All young social innovators in Europe recognize the importance of community and support networks. In interviews conducted with those who self-identify as marginalized, the role of community and the safe space that it provides is noted as being very important. It "allows me to belong," "feel supported," to "exchange knowledge," or simply enjoy the little moments in life.

That said, social entrepreneurs who identify as belonging to a marginalized group feel less connected to local support networks. Instead, they feel more represented and more anchored in international networks. This highlights the need to further develop and strengthen local support networks while also maintaining the high levels of trust in international communities.

Finding a place where they feel seen and heard, where they feel they belong, is critical to contrast the (numerous) spaces in society where they feel unseen and cast aside.

Chart

Question	1 - not at all	2 - not to a limited extent	3 - neither limited nor high extent	4 - to a high extent	5 - to a very high extent
Feel like you belong to your local community?	0%	7%	22%	37%	34%
Trust your local community?	2%	12%	32%	38%	17%
Feel your voice is represented in the local community?	6%	22%	31%	25%	16%
Feel seen, valued, accepted, recognized and appreciated for who you are, and your contributions to your local community?	2%	15%	24%	38%	21%
Feel you can be your full authentic self in your local community?	2%	15%	20%	37%	26%

Legend:
- 1 - not at all
- 2 - not to a limited extent
- 3 - neither limited nor high extent
- 4 - to a high extent
- 5 - to a very high extent

What's Needed:
For Social Innovators

A strong personal network and access to thought-leaders. The most relevant personal needs for young social innovators relate to skills, knowledge, networking, and visibility. Respondents consider the following to be the top three important factors: connections with relevant people (93%), mentoring from more senior changemakers and from advisors (89%), gaining recognition, visibility, and credibility for their work (89%).

Personal financial resources. 87% of respondents said that financial resources for them personally would be one of the most important factors for success.

Skills development and peer-to-peer learning. European young changemakers value as important success factors the development of specific skills for the initiative (84%) and peer-to-peer learning at the international (81%) and local level (79%).

KEY LEARNING

Much like on the global level, we notice a strong focus on needs around learning, growth, and visibility, as well as access to networks and community. Personal financial security also remains a crucial need for young changemakers in Europe.

Do young social innovators who self-identify as part of a marginalized group have specific personal needs?

Yes! In addition to the aforementioned needs, those who self-identify as belonging to a marginalized group or groups indicated stronger needs for the following:

Greater need for basic resources. Respondents who belong to a marginalized group are in higher need of personal financial resources (91% vs. 84% for those who do not belong to a marginalized group) and of basic security (81% vs. 63%), such as shelter, food, etc. With a nearly 20% difference, our findings show that basic security is a specific concern to those who feel marginalized.

Support to avoid burnout. Social innovators who identify as members of a marginalized group or groups consistently report higher levels of burnout and also express a greater need for support when it comes to mental health. 75% (vs. 67%) of respondents report a high need for tools and support for wellbeing.

Access to general education and professional skill development, working and digital infrastructures. Those belonging to marginalized groups also expressed a greater need for general education and professional skills development (79% vs. 66%), access to better working facilities and infrastructures (73% vs. 48%), and to digital infrastructures (71% vs. 58%).

KEY LEARNING

This goes to show that if we want to support social innovators from diverse backgrounds, we need to reconsider our assumptions about the most basic of resources and not take for granted things like food and financial security, housing, education, and digital access. We need to invest more in these areas and provide specific support for living costs and basic resources.

Natalia Bialobrzewska

LOCATION
Germany

INITIATIVE
kontakt kollektiv

Natalia is a communications strategist, community educator, and social entrepreneur who works to create safe spaces for people of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to connect meaningfully. In response to the growing need for purposeful human connections during the Covid-19 pandemic, Natalia co-founded kontakt kollektiv. Through inclusive projects and events, the initiative fosters mental wellbeing, civic engagement, and integration of people of various backgrounds and abilities in society, decreasing discrimination and inequalities. She is a strategy advisor to ChangemakerXchange and a trained intercultural facilitator. Natalia has led community and leadership development initiatives for young people and underrepresented groups in Malaysia, The Americas & Europe with UNHCR, AIESEC, & ITTS.

"I see a lot of women creating initiatives that generate positive impact, however, I haven't found a support network that specifically addresses the challenges women face. These challenges range from self-confidence and self-reliance to financial literacy and burnout. Having small, trust-based local networks for women to discuss their challenges, learn from one another, and expand the access to opportunities could help decrease the barriers that women face."

Alex Holmes

UK/Ireland

INITIATIVE
Anti-Bullying Ambassadors

In 2004, Alex founded the peer support program 'Anti-Bullying Ambassadors,' a network of trained young people dedicated to preventing peer on peer violence and bullying, particularly in schools, communities, and online. This program is now in over 4,000 schools across the UK, Ireland, Greece, Miami (United States), empowering young people to keep themselves and their peers safe and happy. There are over 35,000 young people who have been trained as Ambassadors with backing from the Department for Education, Comic Relief, Facebook/Instagram, Nationwide Building Society, and online safety and mental health initiatives with the likes of Vodafone, ASOS, ask.fm, and Supercell Games. Alex has been made a Queen's Young Leader by Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace, a role which sees him representing the commonwealth. He has also been named on the Independent on Sunday's Happy List as one of the '100 people who make Britain a happier place to live and is a member of The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Advisory Board, helping spearhead their Sustainable Development Goals 'Goalkeeper program.

"A *big barrier* I see is that some organizations and funders don't appreciate youth/age and don't recognize informal education. I am a big believer in young people and their power - their energy and eagerness should be valued and not just measured in terms of formal education. Rethinking the application processes and formats is key to ensuring a more diverse social innovation sector."

What's Needed:
For Initiatives

Financial stability of the initiative and general well-being of the team. 93% of respondents report ensuring the financial health of the initiative as one of the most pressing needs. Young changemakers also value the general wellbeing of the team as important (92%).

Increasing the impact of the initiative. Most respondents consider important needs ensuring the quality of services (92%), increasing the impact and scaling (92%), and increasing their capacity to describe the impact (90%) of their initiative.

Credibility and access to resources and connections. 89% of respondents said that gaining recognition, visibility, and legitimacy and access to funding - perhaps as a result of legitimacy - was very important for their initiative. 88% stated that collaboration with other projects was an important need for success, and 87% said access to specific knowledge and skill development were very important for the overall success of their venture.

Compared to results for the global level, needs for increasing the quality and impact of the initiative, as well as access to funding and improving the level of collaboration with other projects, are mentioned slightly less. This could be the result of an infrastructure that is already somewhat more developed for social entrepreneurship and already offers support in these areas.

Do young social innovators who self-identify as part of a marginalized group have specific needs for their initiatives?

Changemakers belonging to marginalized groups have similar initiative needs, however, they also indicate some additional specific needs which were less important to the overall sample.

Team set up. 86% consider finding the right team fit (vs. 78%) important, and 85% report ensuring the diversity of the team as an important need (vs. 74%). This signals a greater awareness and sensitivity to issues of team diversity, belonging, and inclusion.

Organizational set up of the initiative. Young changemakers from marginalized groups report as slightly more important the need for better working facilities and infrastructure (52%), compared to their peers (45%).

Impact of the initiative. In addition to needs in this area that they share with nonmarginalized social innovators, those who identify as part of marginalized groups are concerned with the access to new target groups. 78% of respondents in this category consider that to be an important need for the development of the initiative (vs. 73%).

KEY LEARNING

When it comes to team structure and setup, marginalized individuals are emphasizing a stronger need for diverse and inclusive workplaces. However, it should not be their sole responsibility to advocate for this. The fact that these topics are higher on the list of needs for marginalized groups than those who are not marginalized, indicates a need for ally-ship and greater awareness for those who do not belong to marginalized groups to create spaces of belonging and prevent tokenism within their organizations.

"I'd like to *rethink* the way funding and grant-giving currently work, particularly in relation to the time frame and reporting. Rather than having it be purely transactional (money given and project deadline set), approaching it more as a collaboration and supporting one another to reach a shared goal. I'd love more opportunities to get into close contact with donors from my field, people who understand my work and can guide me, both short-term and long-term."
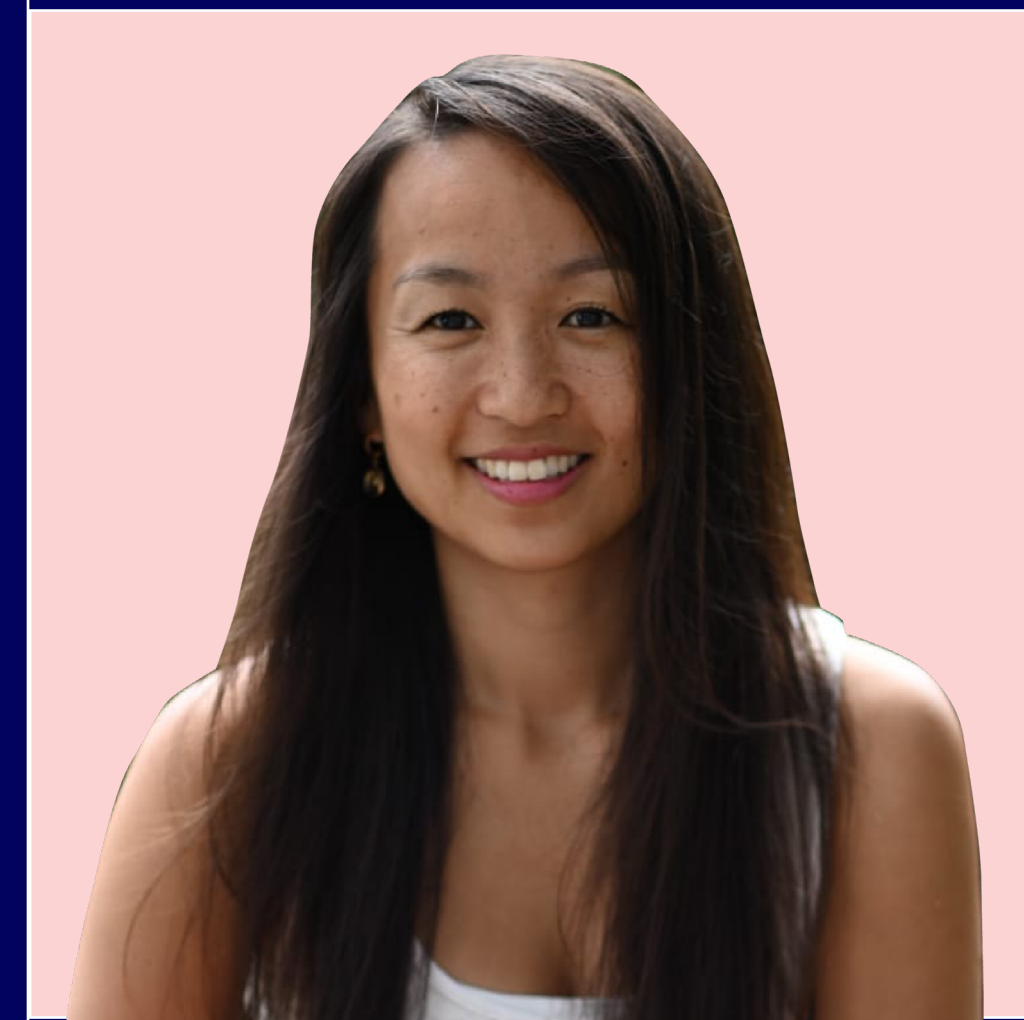
Ingi Mehus
POCKET STORIES, NETHERLANDS

Binta Jammeh
CAMPAIGN ACCELERATOR, FRANCE

"I have worked with female social entrepreneurs in the UK where I learned that of all VC funding in the country in 2019, only 0.0006% went to women of colour. In France, I have seen *how difficult* it is to fund and support social movements and ventures that are founded by marginalized people with lived experience of their causes, only to turn around and see that funding has been given to ventures that work in the same field, but don't have a single person on their team with lived experience or knowledge of the issue."

Viviane Ogou Corbi

LOCATION
Spain

INITIATIVE
Puerta de África

La Puerta de África is a non-profit think-and-do tank that promotes research on African affairs, the achievement of Agenda 2063, and youth empowerment. Their goal is to transform the narrative of Africa in the media and promote more space in the Spanish academy for the study of Africa from a multidisciplinary perspective. Viviane is currently serving as Youth Delegate to Spain for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. In addition, she collaborates with the European Parliament in youth-related events.

"*Training, technical support*, and *finance*. These three things are fundamental for us to generate employment for ourselves and others, and to give a step up to the communities that historically were marginalized and oppressed."

Recommendations

The data shows that young changemakers around the world face similar challenges, suggesting a universality in their struggles. Therefore these recommendations can be applied to youth in Europe and beyond while taking into account the regional specificities that influence the work of young social innovators.

For Funders

1.
Ensure the personal financial stability of young social innovators.

Ensuring the personal financial security of young social innovators is critical. Although they enjoy slightly higher financial stability compared to their global peers, young changemakers in Europe still face high levels of demand and low levels of financial security. Young social innovators who identify as members of marginalized groups, additionally, are in need of basic resources, including food and financial security, housing, education, and digital access. We should offer concrete funding opportunities and perhaps even living stipends for some.

2.
Support the ventures of young social innovators to be financially stable.

Young social innovators emphasized their need for more financial stability within their organization. In addition to providing funding for early and mid-stage startups, we should rethink funding processes in order to lower the barriers of access, particularly for mid-stage organizations who find themselves struggling to attract institutional funders, and develop more useful frameworks for assessing the financial health of initiatives. In particular, we should fund projects and initiatives run by those who have direct and/or lived experience of the issues they seek to work on.

3.
Prevent burnout of young social innovators.

Young social innovators, particularly those who are dependent on program funding, note high levels of stress and pressure associated with accessing funding and managing reporting for funders. We must consider how funding programs and reporting criteria might be placing additional or unnecessary pressure and/or demands on young social innovators. Acknowledging that oftentimes young social innovators have multiple simultaneous or similar demands and that they are juggling program management and reporting - and all while securing additional funding for the future - might be a first step towards remedying the stress and pressure that social innovators feel from funders.

Recommendations

For Policymakers

1.
Connect young social innovators with relevant decision-makers.

The future-oriented ideas and perspectives of young social innovators should be at the core of devising long-term strategies and influencing leadership at multiple levels. The wish of youth to have a voice, play a role, and achieve social change should be fostered and amplified. As an ecosystem, we need to facilitate access to decision-makers and grant young social innovators access to places of power and influence. We need to keep working to amplify the voices and credibility of young social innovators as key stakeholders and contributors. Additionally, we need to give young social innovators from all backgrounds access to places of power and influence. Specific focus should be awarded to shaping decision and policy processes to become more inclusive and accessible for people from marginalized groups.

2.
Leverage the strong motivation of young social innovators to make a difference.

Even in the face of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, we see young social innovators around the world stepping up with constructive solutions for new challenges. Their resilience, innovation, and adaptability are vital resources for their communities and for building healthy societies in the future. The strong intrinsic motivation of the Possibilists makes them incredible peers and inspirational role models for other young people, also for those who identify themselves as part of marginalized groups. We must appreciate and acknowledge this widely so that they become multipliers and continue empowering other youth to become change agents in their own communities.

3.
Build upon the strong local – international connection of young social innovators.

The participants in The Possibilists study act as bridges between global macro issues and the way these manifest locally in communities of different sizes and types around the world. They can effectively communicate local challenges internationally while at the same time translating global matters into concrete local action. Such a bridging role is possibly intensified for young changemakers who self-identify as part of marginalized groups, who show a lower connection with local communities but elevated trust in their membership in international networks. Additionally, representation and role models matter when it comes to reaching other marginalized youth. In order to make progress on reaching ambitious goals such as the SDGs, we need to better leverage the embeddedness of young social innovators in both their global and local worlds. In addition to creating international formats for networking and connection, we must also create spaces where local-specific challenges can be discussed. As a global community, we need to honor the importance of the local in driving deep and sustainable social change.

Recommendations

For Support Networks

1.
Focus on the person, not just the initiative.

Young social innovators want to be seen, heard, and valued as individuals. As an international support network, we must acknowledge that young social innovators can only create impact for their communities if they are thriving as individuals. Therefore the components of support programs for youth social entrepreneurship need to be adjusted to not only incorporate ways of strengthening initiatives but to also acknowledge and provide personal-level support. The focus of our work should be fostering a life-long changemaking mindset that is not bound to the success of a specific organization or venture.

2.
Compensate social entrepreneurs for their time.

We must work to change our perceptions and actions regarding financial access for youth working on social change initiatives. Young changemakers deserve financial compensation for their time. Organizations who engage young social innovators as speakers or promote their work, even be it micro-engagements, should ensure they are fairly compensated for their time.

3.
Improve the wellbeing of young social innovators.

As support networks, we must also acknowledge the wellbeing issues raised in recommendation 3 for funders and use them to inform all elements of our program design. Our support programs should offer young social change leaders concrete, context-specific wellbeing support in the forms of resilience training, therapy/counseling, wellbeing retreats, or similar (depending on the culture, place, and time). As well as providing tools and resources, we recommend support networks provide safe spaces for groups to openly discuss burnout, stress, and the other personal challenges social change leadership brings.

4.
Support the initiatives of young social innovators to develop, scale and grow.

Young social innovators emphasized their need for more support in developing quality products and services, as well as help with scaling their ventures. To meet these needs, we should offer regular training and interdisciplinary learning opportunities that allow young social innovators to deepen the understanding of their work and learn from other state-of-the-art solutions addressing similar challenges. We can help them scale by connecting them to like-minded peers and initiatives that complement their work while also strengthening their global and local networks through mindful strategic partnerships.

5.
Reduce barriers in our own programming and support diverse young social innovators.

Systemic inequalities are one of the main barriers for social innovators and their work. We need to put an explicit focus on reducing these barriers in order to achieve real diversity, inclusion, and belonging. It starts by looking at our own programming and considering what requirements or formulations might exclude certain people from feeling addressed or welcome. Once we have looked within and worked to deconstruct our own organizational biases, we can begin to look outward. In order to overcome exclusion, we must actively seek out those who are often underrepresented. This means doing outreach in marginalized communities and remote areas and address the specific needs of those who are part of these groups. Even if this requires greater organizational efforts in terms of funding and time, ensuring equitable and diverse representation among young changemakers is essential for developing effective solutions for all. Support programs should pay attention to addressing specific needs in terms of organizational setup and the impact of their initiatives.

Our *recommendation* for supporting social innovators from marginalized groups

In order to encourage *historically under-represented* groups to participate in innovation processes and reduce systemic barriers, we must amplify the voices and ventures of marginalized social innovators. We must listen to their experiences and stories and gain new perspectives and then develop support programs and opportunities together with them, in order to speak to their lived experiences, unique realities and challenges. We must also help lead education and learning initiatives for changemakers from all backgrounds to better understand the impact of systemic barriers and systemic injustices to better serve as allies for marginalized groups and to better serve as allies for each other. And finally, we need to provide basic resources for them and their organizations, including funding, living stipends, digital access, education and training.

This is just the beginning.

Real and long-term sustainable change will require all stakeholders to participate.

We're ready to find real solutions. We're ready to get uncomfortable. We're ready to do the work.

Can we count on you to *join us*?

https://thepossibilists.org/

Self Reflection

While it is our intention to honor and celebrate the important work that young changemakers are doing, we certainly do not want to celebrate or glorify their suffering. Nor do we want to contribute to the narrative that youth are under obligation to save the world. This study is meant to highlight that the rate of individual sacrifice that we as a society are expecting from young changemakers is highly abnormal and must be addressed. While young innovators prove time and time again that they are capable of truly incredible things, they should not have to withstand incredibly negative working conditions. Therefore let us not sit back silently and offer them our congratulations, but rather step in and step up to support them.

Acknowledgements

Methodology

The survey questions were developed through repeated exchange among the partner networks involved in The Possibilists and were based on their previous experiences working with young leaders and social innovators.

The survey was transferred into an online format using the Paperform platform. The respondents could choose between an English, Spanish, and French version of the survey to fill out anonymously. The survey took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete, and respondents were also offered some 'thank you tokens' for their efforts.

The data gathered was cleaned and prepared for analysis by ensuring the consistency of responses, preparing the variables for analysis, and partially translating the Spanish and French data for the closed questions (the qualitative answers in Spanish and French were analyzed in original). The analysis was focused on a descriptive overview of the data and identifying first correlations between different variables, especially between the demographic variables and the aspects that stood out in the first analysis (the issue of financing, wellbeing, etc.). The results of the first analysis can be found in the global report(7) published in June 2021. Throughout July - August 2021, a specific analysis of the European data was conducted, with a focus on young social innovators in Europe who consider themselves to be marginalized. The results of this analysis in this report were developed through an iterative process in The Possibilists team.

In August 2021, we also conducted supplementary qualitative interviews with individuals who had self-identified as belonging to a marginalized group and expressed willingness to share their stories. Participants responded to 8 in-depth questions aimed at understanding their experience and providing space for them to share their stories and recommendations. They were compensated for their time. This qualitative part of the study was conducted via phone and e-mail correspondence, and it complemented and contextualized the results of the survey.

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2. This assessment is a result of both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis of the data for this report.