

Level the Field

DISABILITY INCLUSION IN SPORT (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)

A research partnership project between the University of British Columbia School of Kinesiology and viaSport British Columbia

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background

To increase the quality of experience and opportunities in sport and physical activity for people living with a disability, the partnership received 3-year federal funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant program to study disability inclusion in the B.C. sport sector.

Research Aims

The purpose of this project was to explore what is needed to increase and improve the sport and physical activity participation experiences of people with disabilities.

Our research questions were: 1) How do people with disabilities engage or not engage in sport and physical activity? 2) What would facilitate inclusive sport and physical activity participation according to people with disabilities' wants, needs and imaginings?

Methods

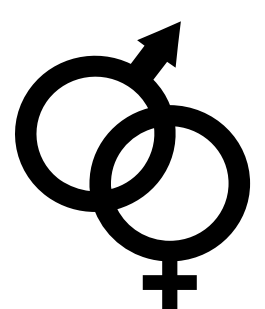
After sampling Disability Community Organizations (DCO) across the province, we worked with two DCOs to co-design an online survey and conduct semi-structured interviews. All interview and survey data were analysed systematically using qualitative description as described by Sandelowski (2000; 2010) to include the diversity of perspectives drawn upon in the data, and the diverse audiences (e.g. community partners, sport organizations) for who the research is intended.

"The biggest barriers are: knowledge of what is available, lack of staff training on how to be inclusive, and transportation to get to activities."

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



81 respondents, aged 19-71 years
(average age: 39 years)



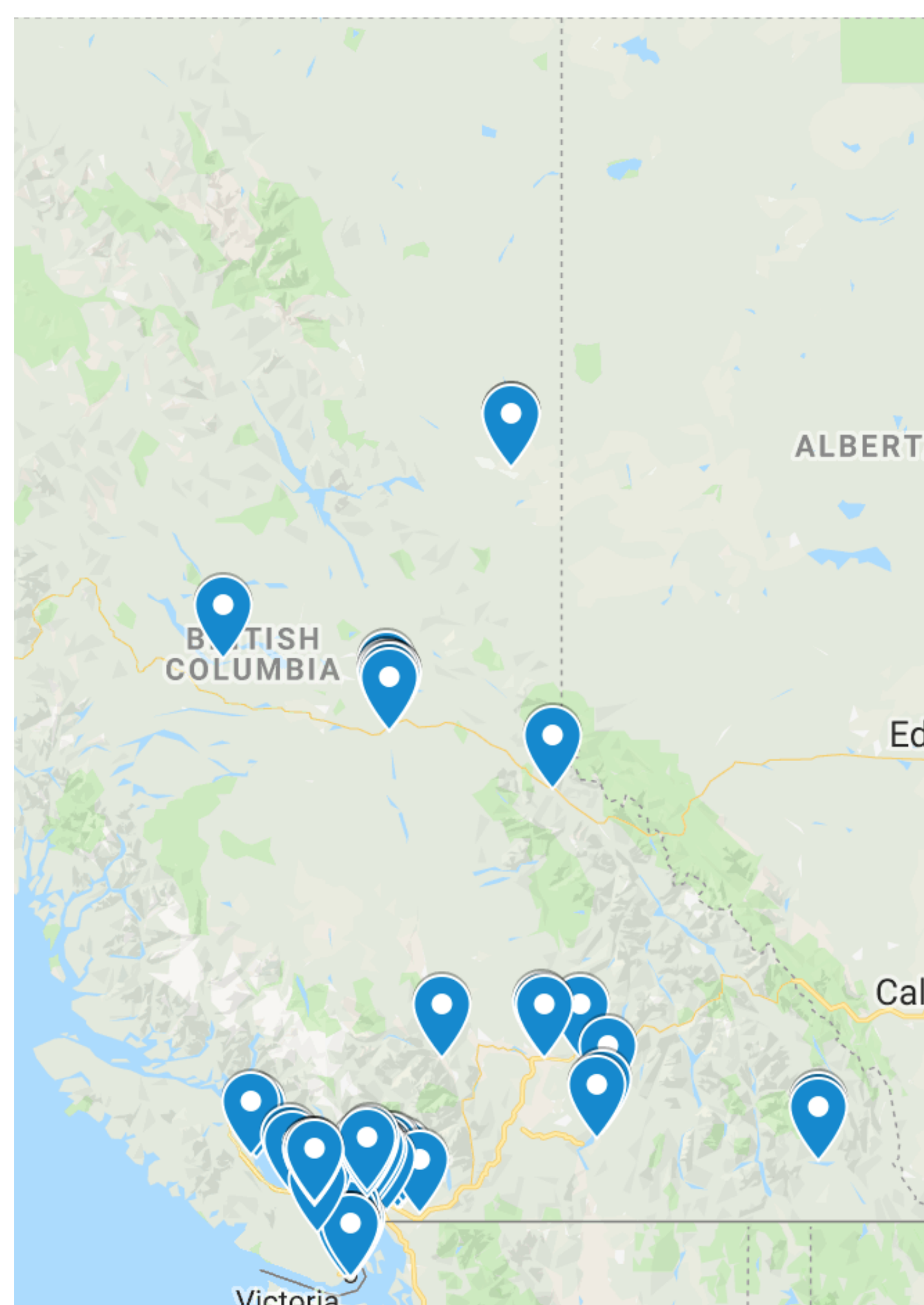
57 women, 22 men, one non-binary



'Disability' was self-defined.
53 surveys were completed independently and 23 by a nominee



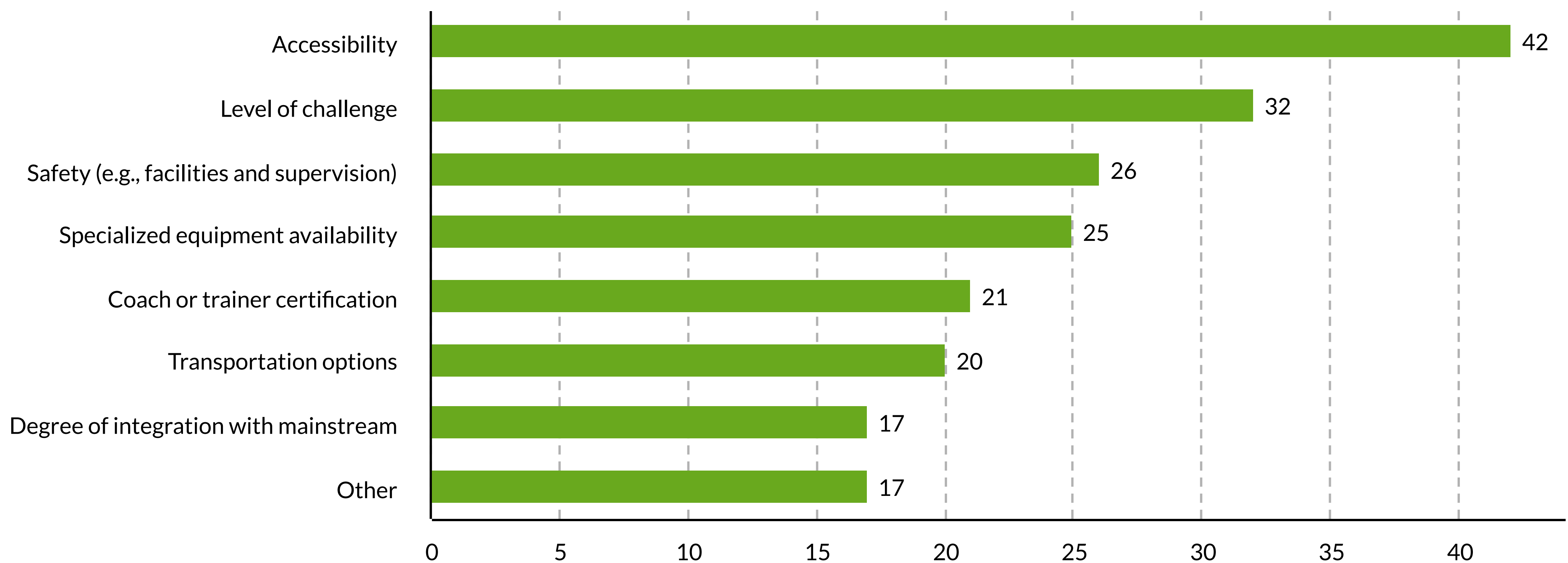
56 had participated in physical activity, 20 had not



Respondents represented every region of viaSport's Regional Alliance Partnership across B.C.

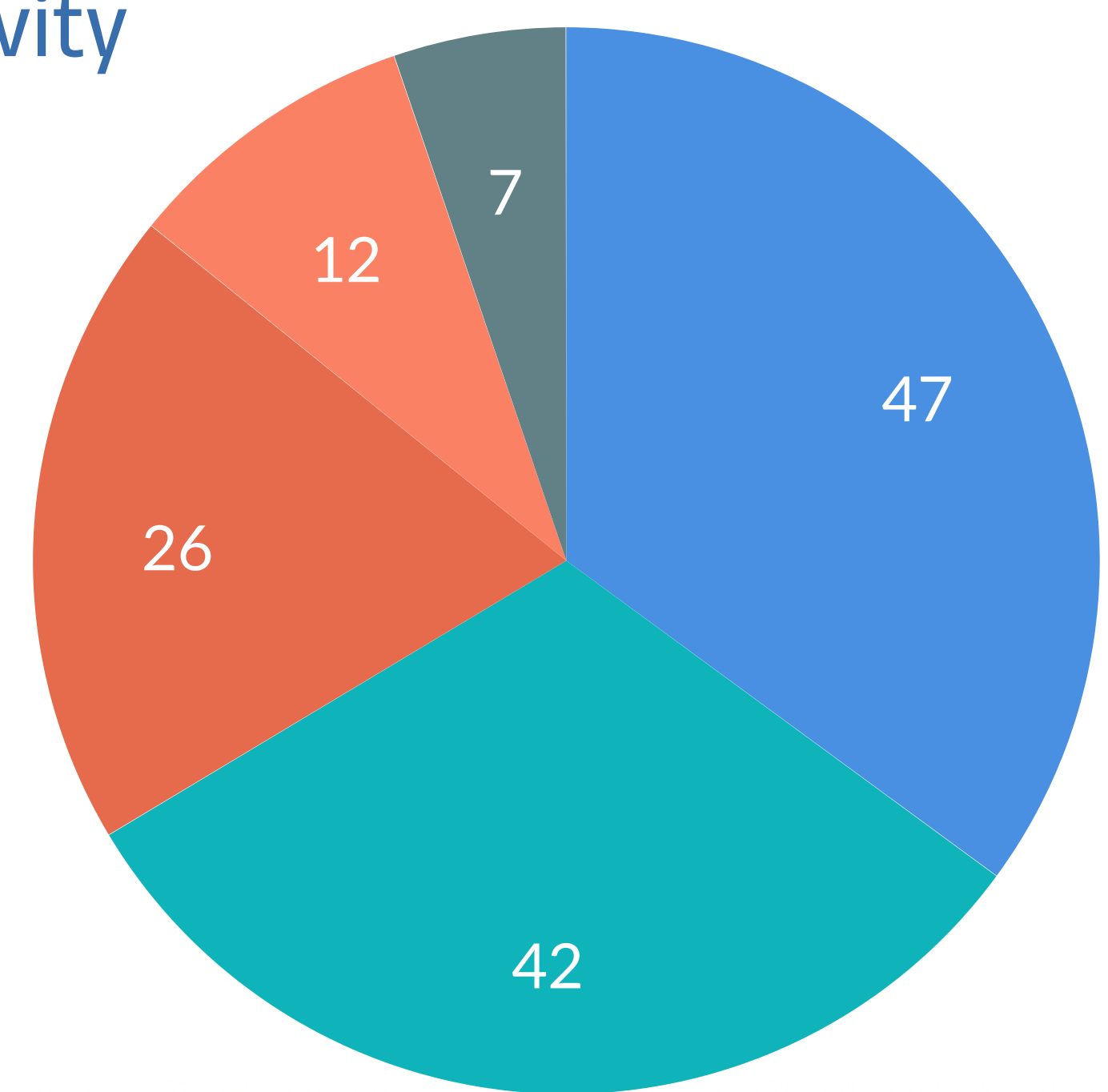
SURVEY RESPONSES

Information needed when deciding whether to participate in a physical activity program

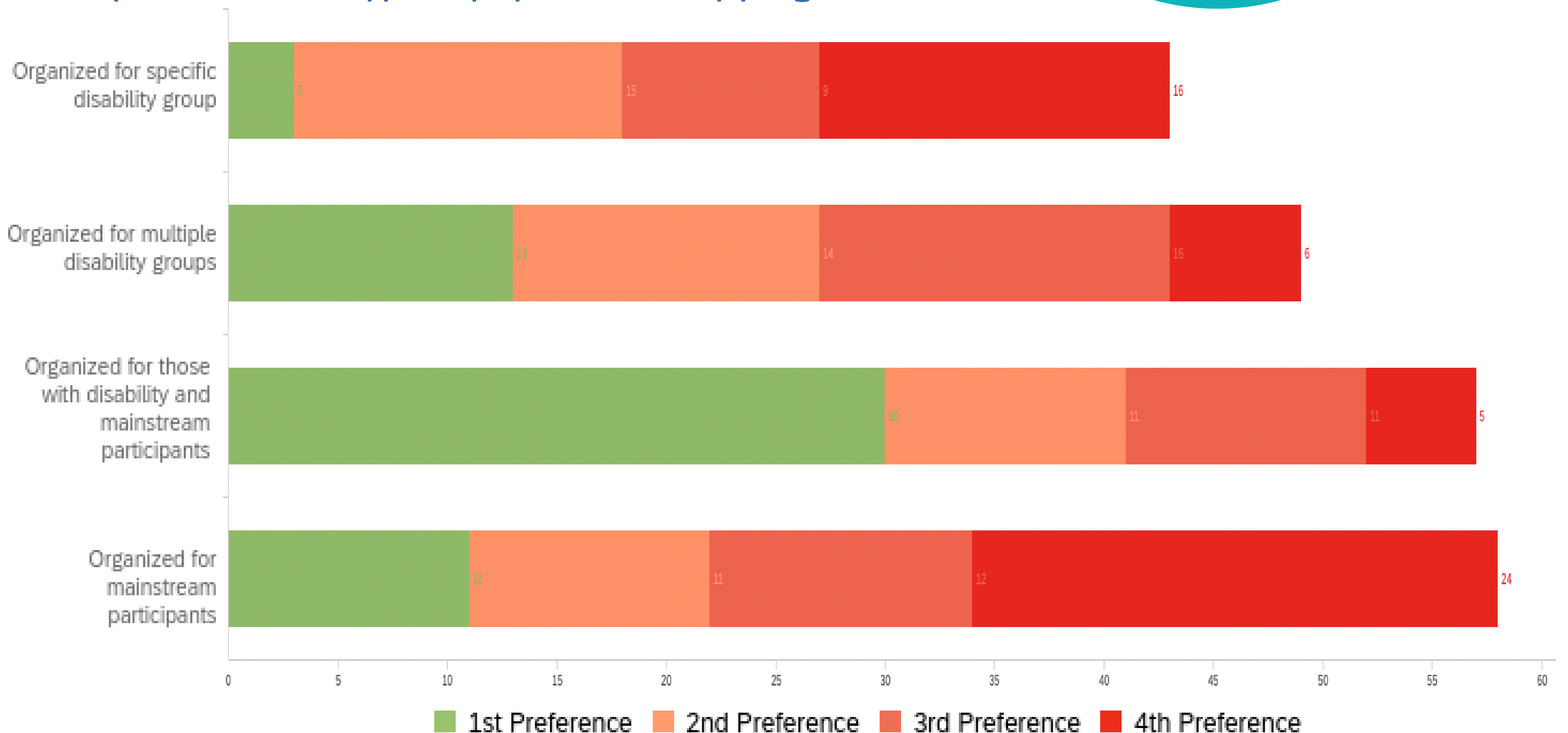


Online platforms used to find information about physical activity programs

- Sport organization websites (35.07%)
- Facebook (31.34%)
- Email (19.4%)
- Other (e.g., disability groups, community centres) (8.96%)
- Twitter (5.22%)



Order of preference for type of physical activity programs



Responses to 'What does inclusion mean to you in relation to physical activity?'

"Inclusion means being able to participate in the activity without an obnoxious number of extra steps or requiring one's own personal facilitator to attend (parent or support person)."

"For me inclusion is ensuring that the needs of everyone are considered when planning, executing, and reviewing a physical activity."

INTERVIEW RESPONSE SUMMARY

Finding 1



EXPERIENCES WITH SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Community members and support staff described several motivators for participating in sport and physical activity such as meeting new people, being active for health reasons, and hanging out with friends. Although participants also said coaches and instructors created quality physical activity experiences, it was frustrating when they ignored clients and only communicated with support workers.

"If [other athletes] make me feel bad, if they make me upset I will just talk to one of the coaches and they are always there to help you. If you have a problem with something just let your coaches know and they will just help you. That is what the coaches are there for, they are there to help the athletes." (Community Member)

"We need to train our staff to deal with all types of people, right? I am not asking the support staff at the rec to manage my client. Do you know what I mean? I will do that. But know how to talk to them. You see this person every week, don't tell me you don't know how they are, stop treating them like you have just met them... just communicate." (Support Worker)

Finding 2



(RE)IMAGINING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: A primary concern for many participants was the desire for more and a wider variety of physical activity programming, in particular during day time hours while others are at work or school. One notable theme was the need to make mainstream physical activity spaces more inclusive to people with disabilities (through adaptation and increasing access) so that community members can, for example, build social skills independently without the help of their family or support worker.

"So, when [client] does go to the [local mainstream] gym, I have a lot of feedback from the staff I supervise, everybody is talking to him and know him and say 'Hi [client name], how's it going?' That is not like a Special Olympics segregated type place where people would get that engagement." (Senior Manager)

Community members contributed ideas about their ideal physical activity program that could encourage programmers to think creatively when it comes to being inclusive of diverse abilities.

"I have seen places for people to work out in wheelchairs, where the seat comes out of the post and you can just pull the wheelchair over the top of it. And they can do arm curls or whatever. So ... make custom machines for people ... to help them out." (Community Member)

Finding 3



PROGRAM AWARENESS: Participants recommended that sport organizations should work with disability community organizations to develop and promote inclusive programs. For example, open communication between the program and potential clients, such as through the use of online live chat, could help people with disabilities learn more about how they could participate in the program.

"I would like the programs to come out and say: 'Oh, would you like to join?' Yeah, because it is hard to ... you know, you look at the magazines that they have at the rec center or something like that and you read that there is sports, there is this program, that program, this program and that program and I don't know which one that I would fit into. This class, the swimming class might be for people that don't have disabilities." (Community Member)

Others suggested incorporating an inclusive attitude into general physical activity promotions, rather than focusing on promoting segregated programs designed specifically for people with disabilities. For example, programmers shouldn't promote a wheelchair basketball program, but instead promote how their basketball programs are inclusive to people in wheelchairs.

"I think they need to go away from promoting segregated programs, as much as they can. And I think when they do that... I think it will change a lot of perspectives. So, it doesn't matter what is going on, whether it is just a general exercise class or whatever, part of their general promotion should be how this program is inclusive and how it can accommodate various abilities." (Support Worker)

Partners: Partners on this project include The University of British Columbia and viaSport BC.



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