



YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVISM, PARTICIPATION & RESISTANCE

Dr Miro Griffiths, University of Leeds

Miro Griffiths

- Leverhulme Research Fellow in Disability Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds
- Deputy Director to the Centre for Disability Studies, University of Leeds
- Disability Policy Adviser to UK Government and the European Commission
- Former Strategic and Confidential Adviser to UK Government and UK Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Board Member to Disabled People's Organisations access Europe

This session

- Important – contextualise themes and principles to locality
- Research overview
- Data headlines
- Summary and contact



RESEARCH PROJECT OVERVIEW

Understanding activism and social movements

- Three specific aspects are required to achieve this.
 - Firstly, claims are made to assert a position and determine the relation between subjects, objects, and stated claims (contention).
 - Secondly, coordinated strategies and activities occur that demonstrates a shared interest in specified claims (collective action).
 - Finally, those deemed to have influence, authority, and assumed power are identified and interaction occurs (politics).

On a broader scale, social movements constitute: a) repeated attempts of claim making; b) strategies to disseminate claims publicly; c) maintaining collective solidarity; and d) resource mobilisation to sustain claim making and their related activities. (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015)

Disability Activism – what is it achieving?

- Soldatic and Johnson (2021) have charted global perspectives on disability activism and advocacy, highlighting the global reach of disability politics and the emphasis placed on advancing rights-based agendas.
- For some, it is problematic for disability activism to pursue a legalistic, rights-based approach (Oliver and Barnes, 2006) as it orientates social movement activity from an oppositional stance to a collaborative state aide.
- Others (Symeonidou, 2009) claim disability activism engages with extensive cultural and political activities to instigate emancipatory change - including legislative action.
- The complexities associated with establishing safe and accessible spaces for individuals to participate in disabled people's social movements remains underdeveloped - particularly in the context of youth engagement.

Disability activism and youth participation

Opportunities

- Inspire social movement bases, influence leadership, and help sustain movement strategies and demands (Trott, 2021).
- Counter narrative against depictions of apathetic and disengaged youth communities.
- Stone (2021) promote democratic forms of participation within social movements and foster collective action for the claims made by activists.

Implications

- Struggle by young activists to resist dominant conceptualisations of child and youthhood.
- Slater (2015) dominant conceptualisation of youth as a "nearly adult" status,
- Vaghri (2018) young activists encounter situations where they are prevented from asserting claims and coordinating collective action.

2020-2024 Leverhulme Fellowship: Disability Activism in Europe

- Young disabled activists, within the context of this research, is anyone who: self identifies as a disabled person, is within the age range of 18 to 35, and is interested or has experience of disability activism.
- There are four phases of the research project:
- (1) a survey exploring opportunities and challenges to young disabled activist's participation in disabled people's social movements;
- (2) interviews exploring opportunities and challenges to young disabled activist's participation in disabled people's social movements plus their vision for an inclusive and accessible society;
- (3) a "future laboratory" workshop supporting young disabled activists to imagine the role of disabled people's social movements in achieving such societies;
- (4) production of a documentary film exploring youth participation in disabled people's social movements across Europe.

2020-2024 Leverhulme Fellowship: Disability Activism in Europe

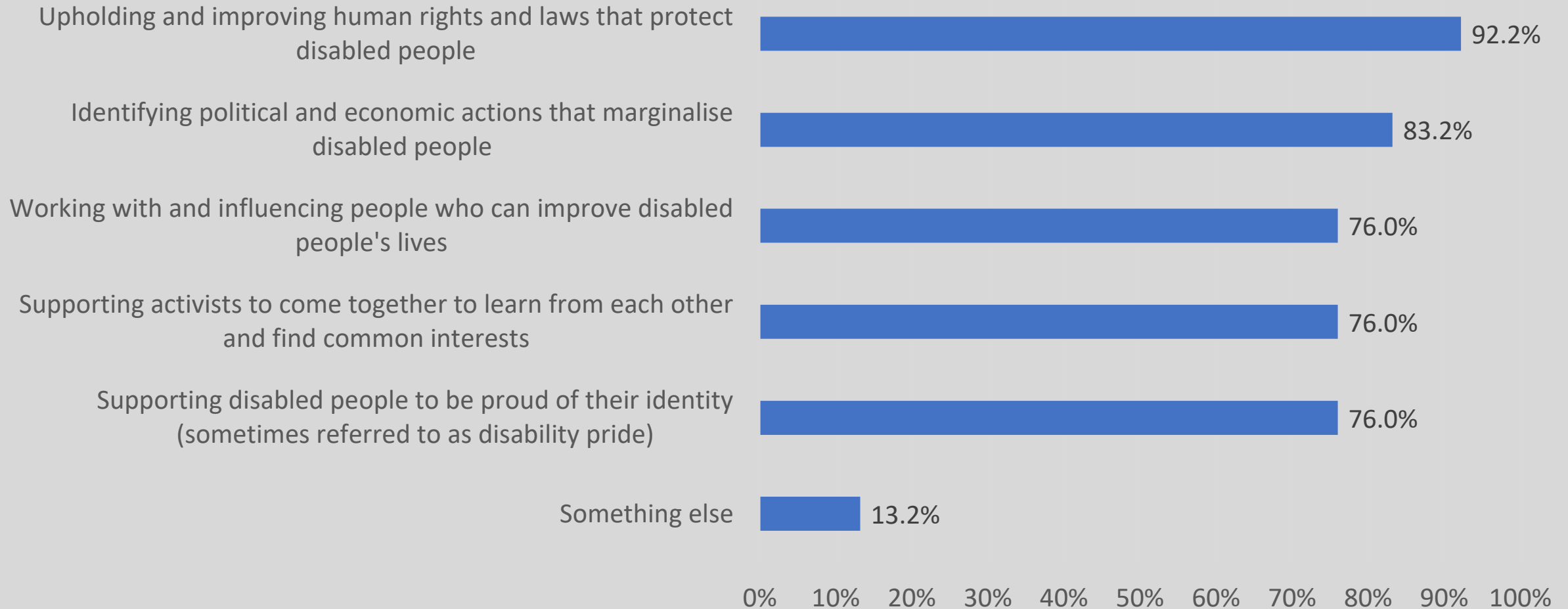
- Research explores five areas:

Areas
Reasons to participate in disability activism
Barriers to participate in disability activism
Opportunities to participate in disability activism
Resistance practices in disability activism
Future of disability activism

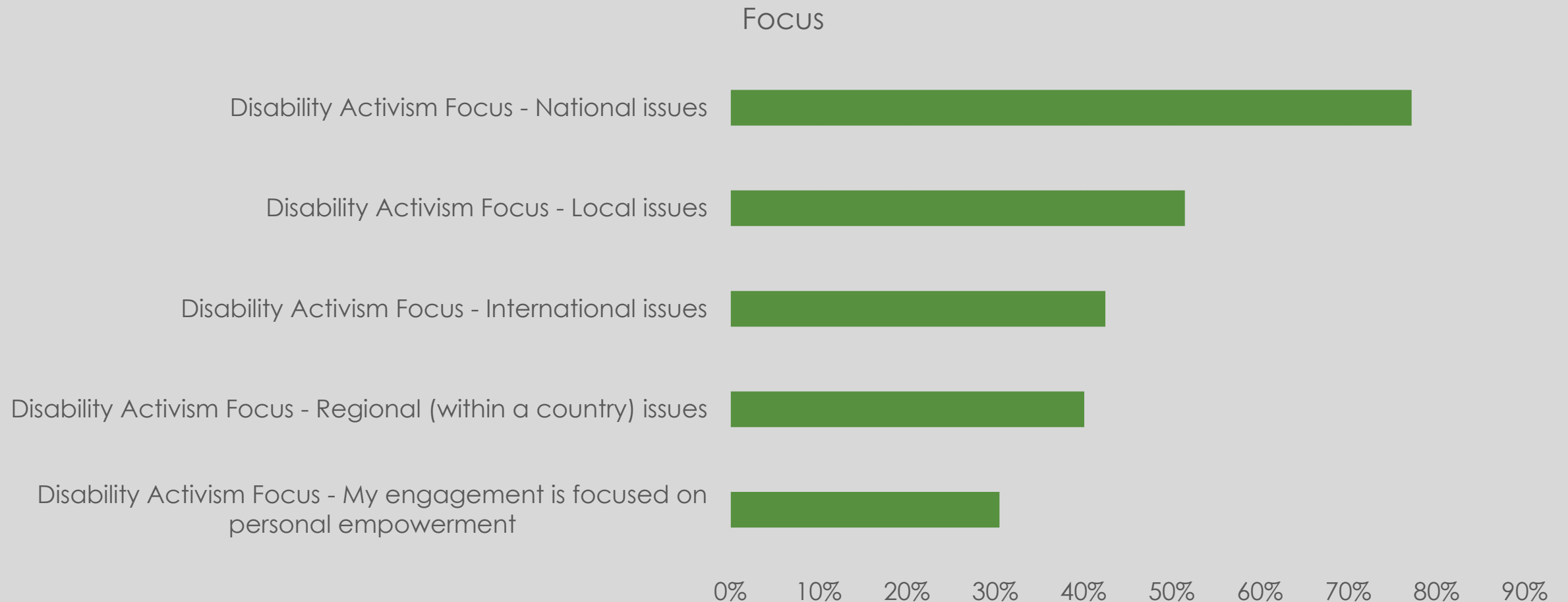


DATA HEADLINES

Reasons for participating in disability activism



Reasons for participating in disability activism

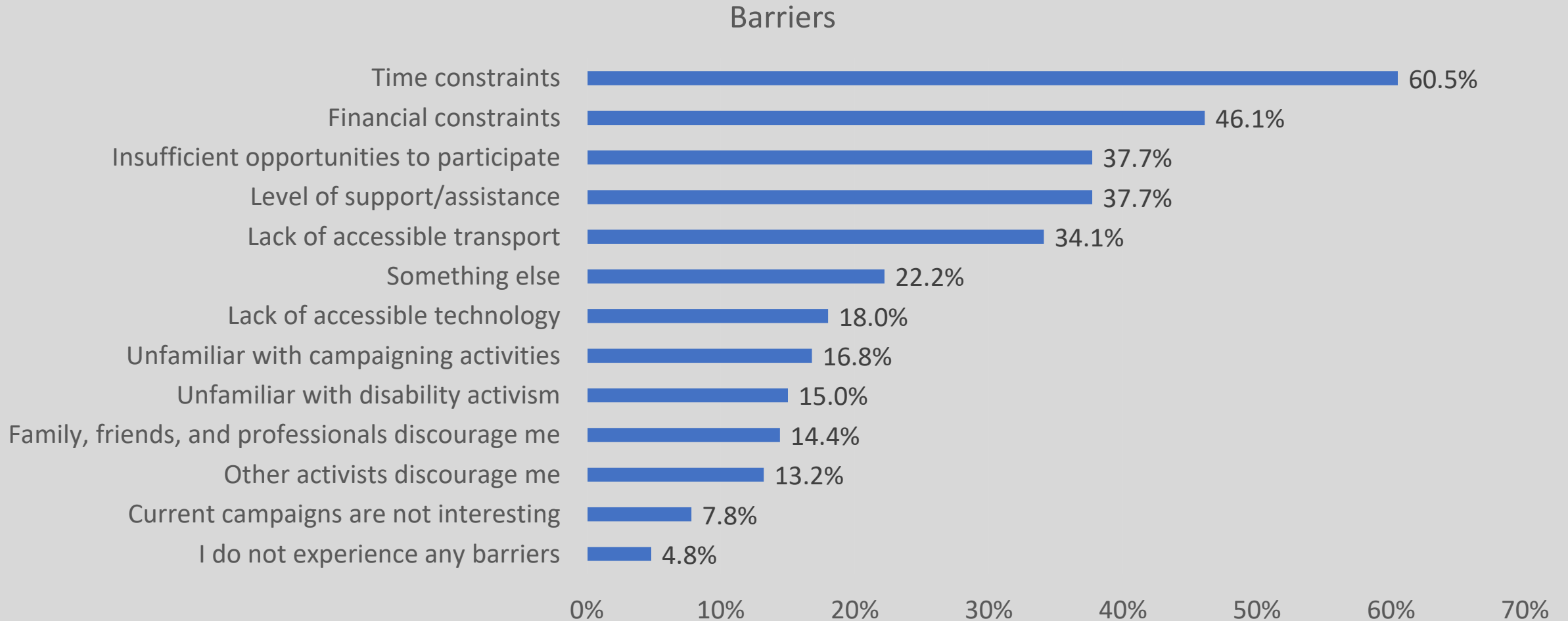


Reasons for participating

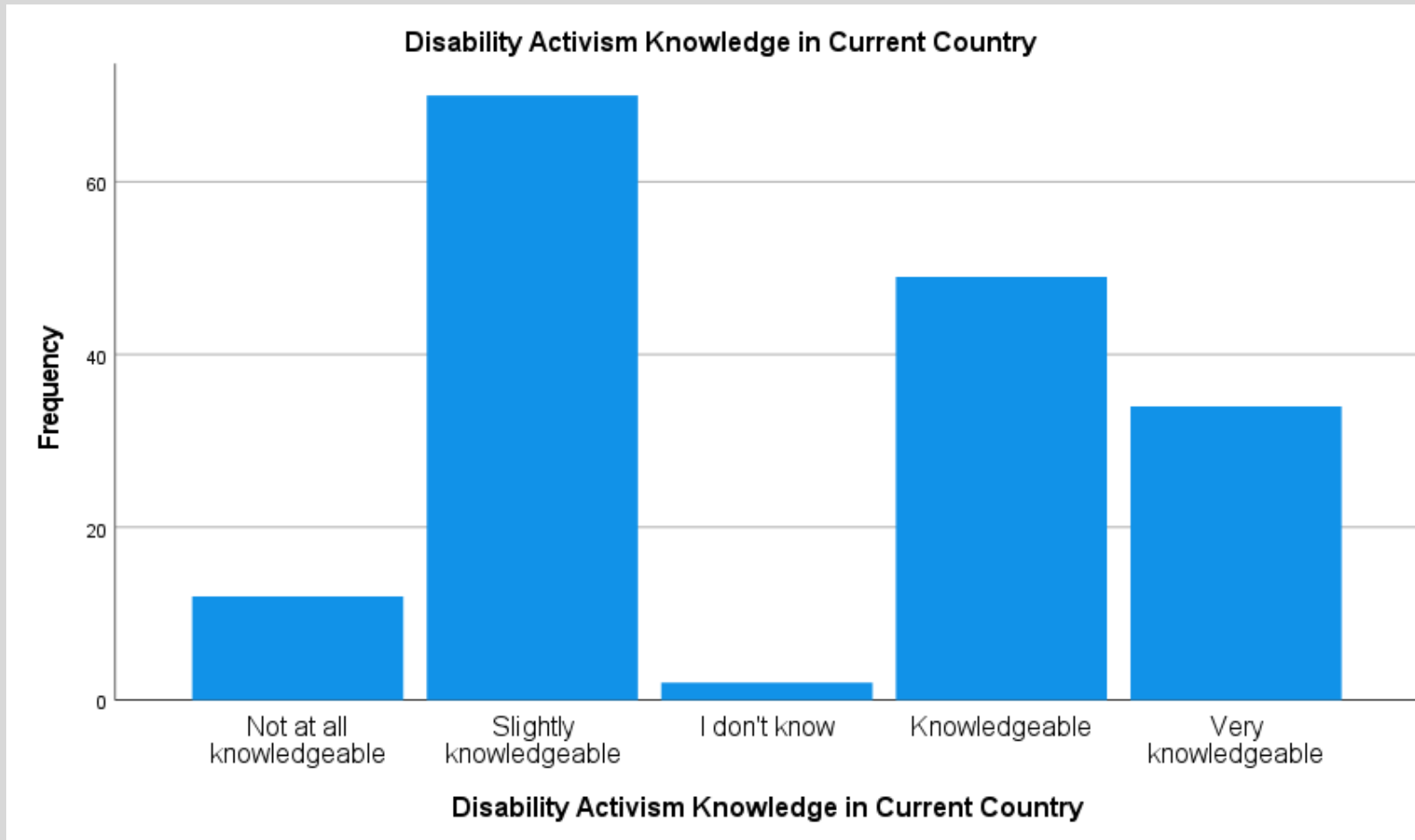
- Radical versus incremental.
- Political and economic overhaul.
- Progress existing rights and legislative actions (including policy).
- Produce pride and politicised identity.
- Build alliances.

[Reflection – what are the reasons for participating in activism where you are?]

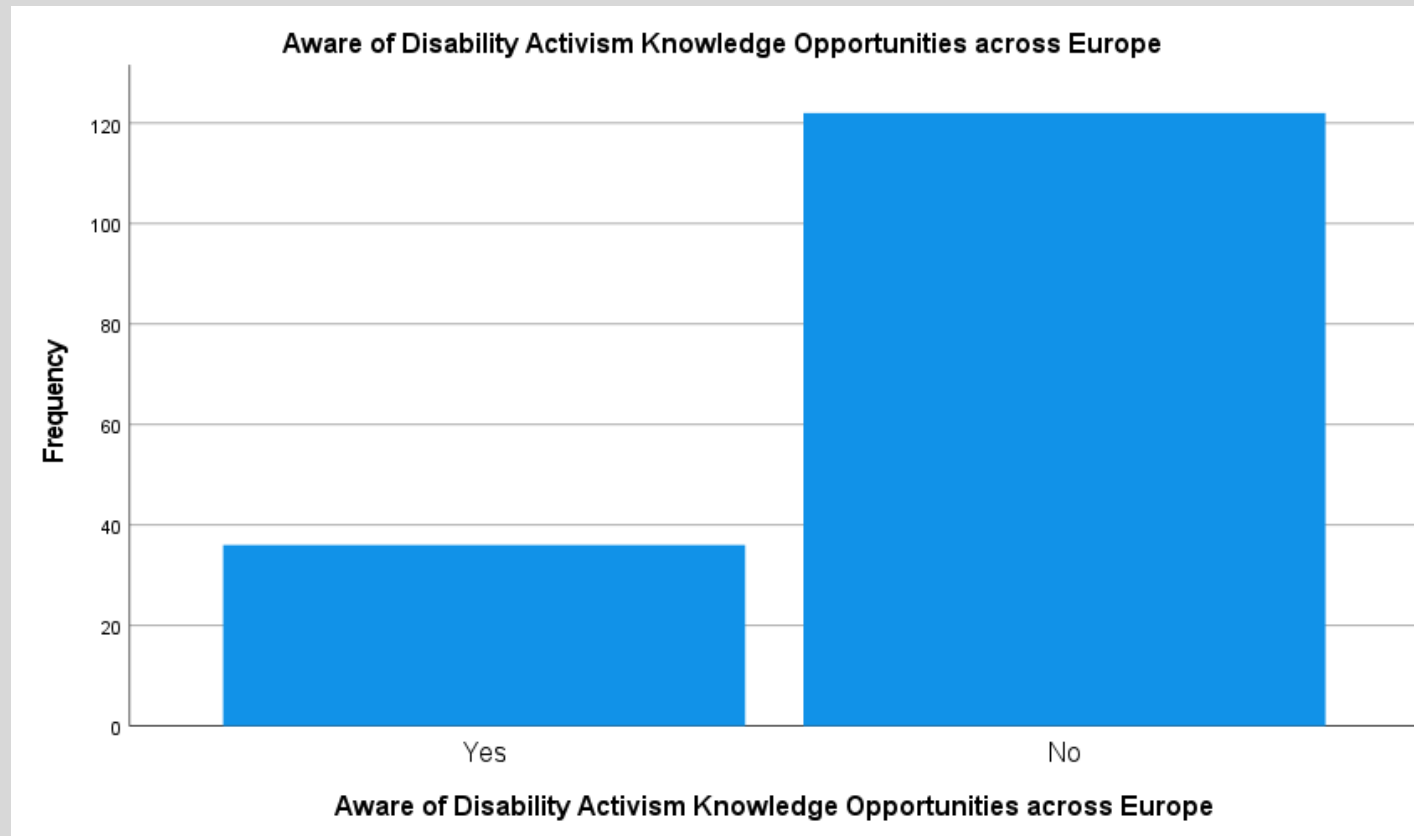
Barriers to participate in disability activism



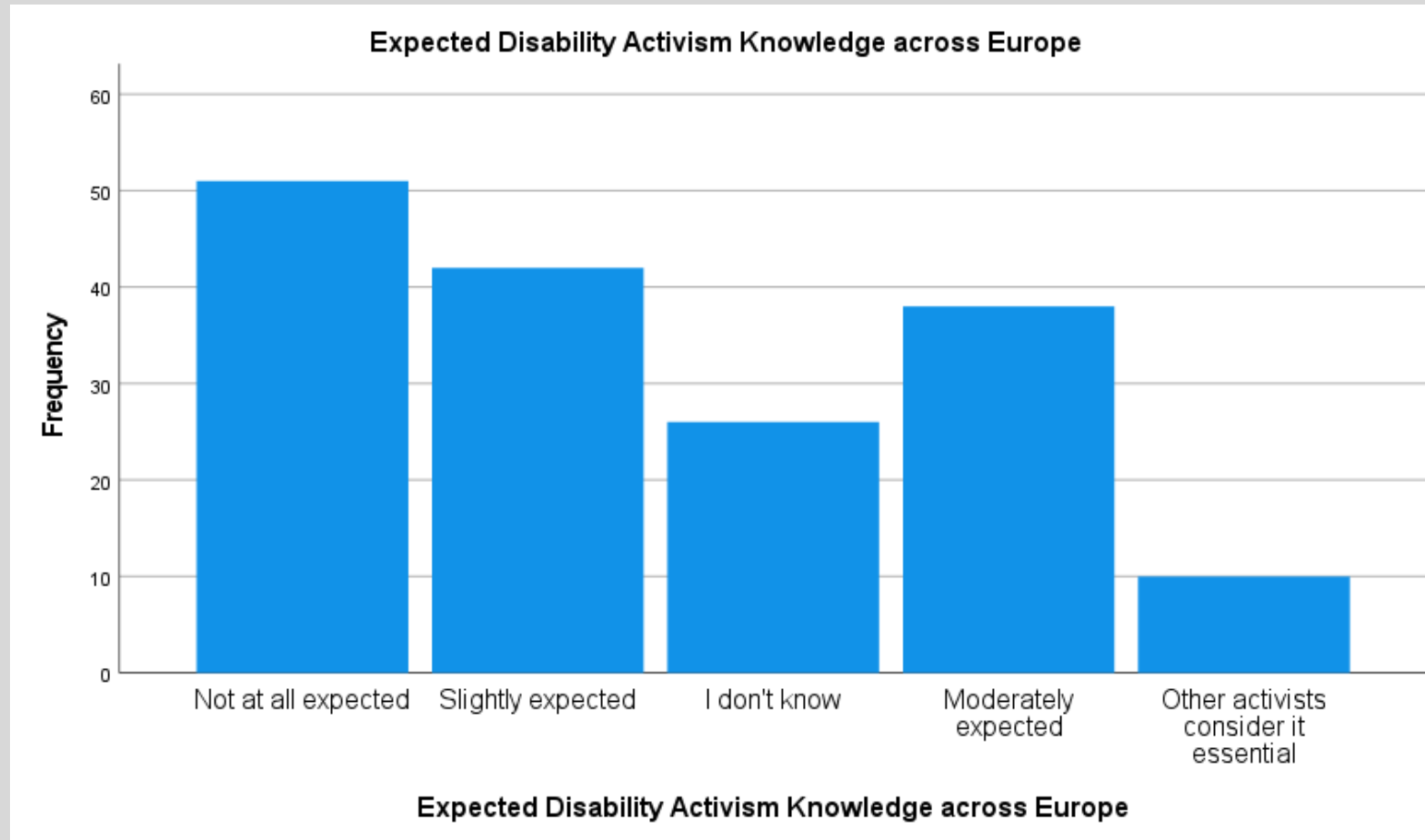
Barriers to participate in disability activism



Barriers to participate in disability activism



Barriers to participate in disability activism



Barriers to participate in disability activism

[Reflection –

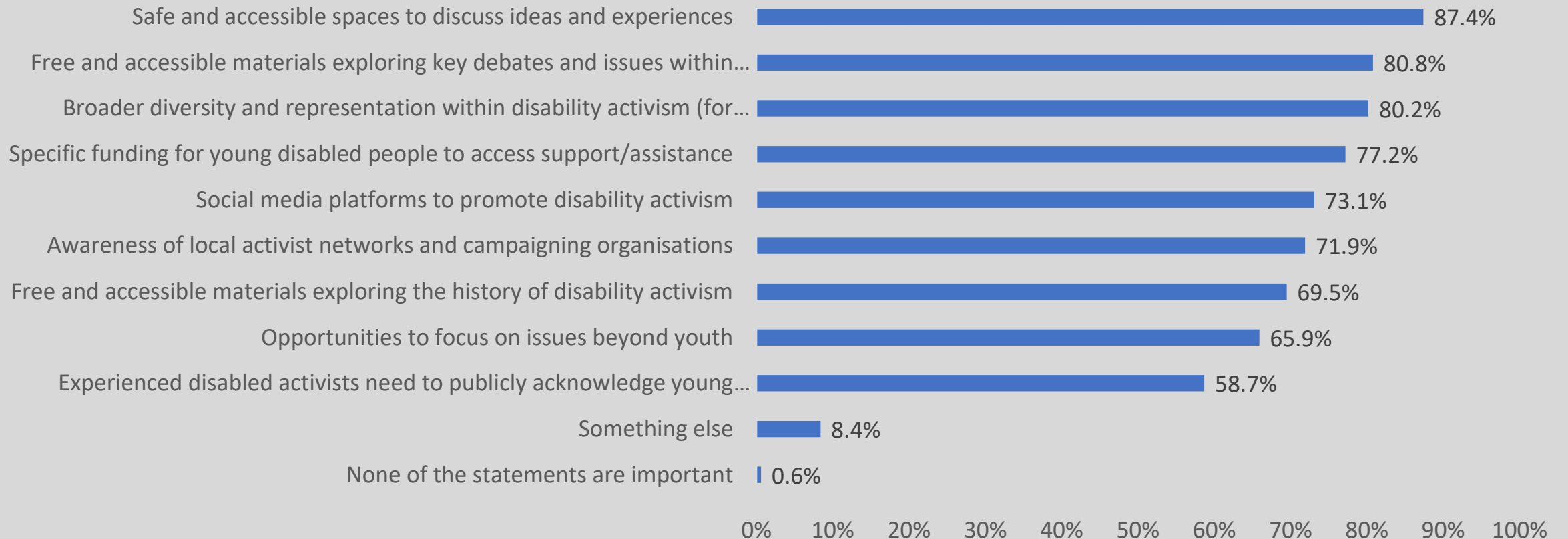
what barriers do you experience when participating in activism?]

Opportunities to participate in disability activism

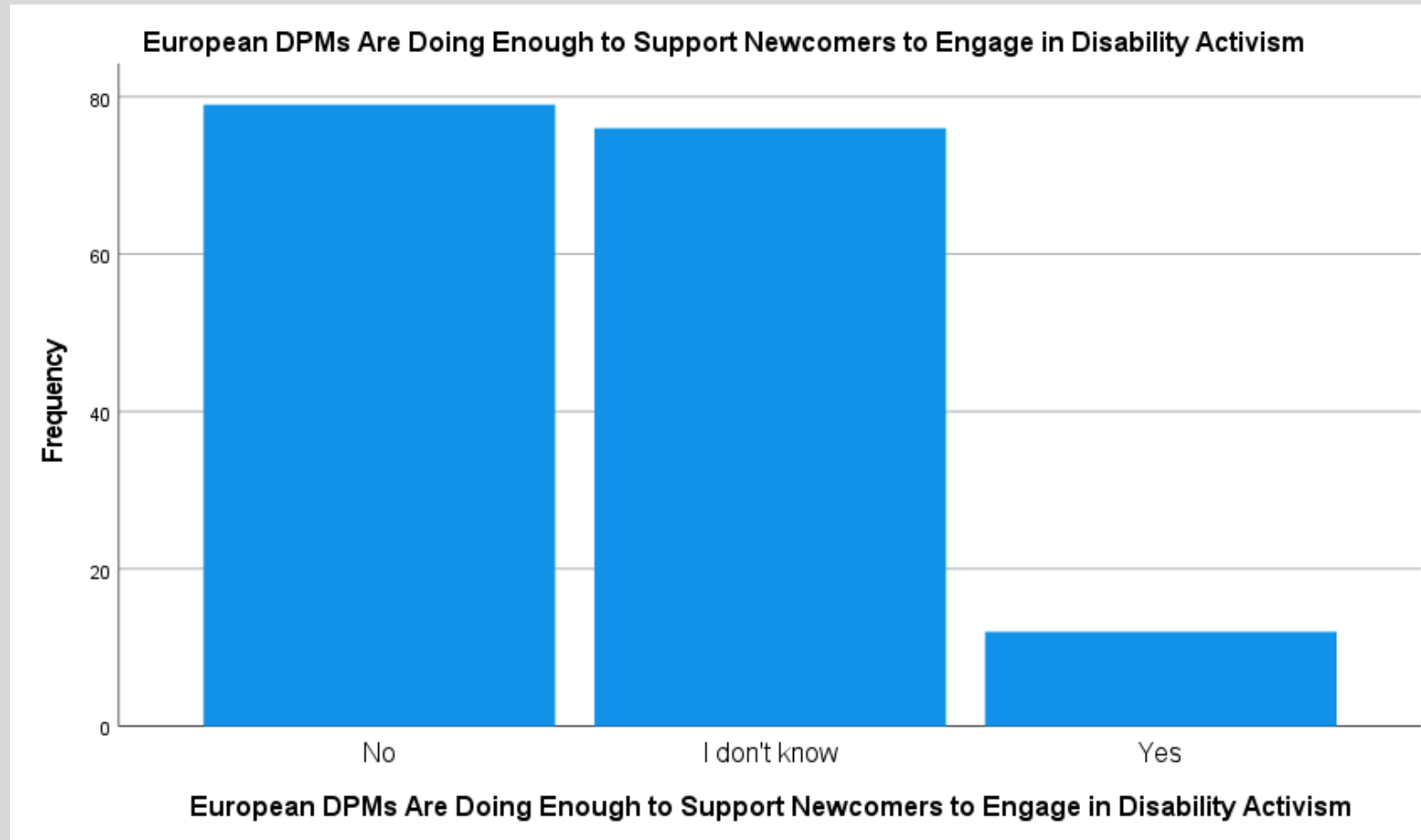


Opportunities to participate in disability activism

Ways to Improve Participation



Opportunities to participate in disability activism



Opportunities to participate in disability activism

[Question –

"It is the young disabled person's responsibility to achieve an active and valued role within disabled people's social movements. Other activists cannot be responsible for this."

"It is the responsibility of all disabled activists to ensure young disabled people have an active and valued role within disabled people's social movements. All activists are responsible for this."

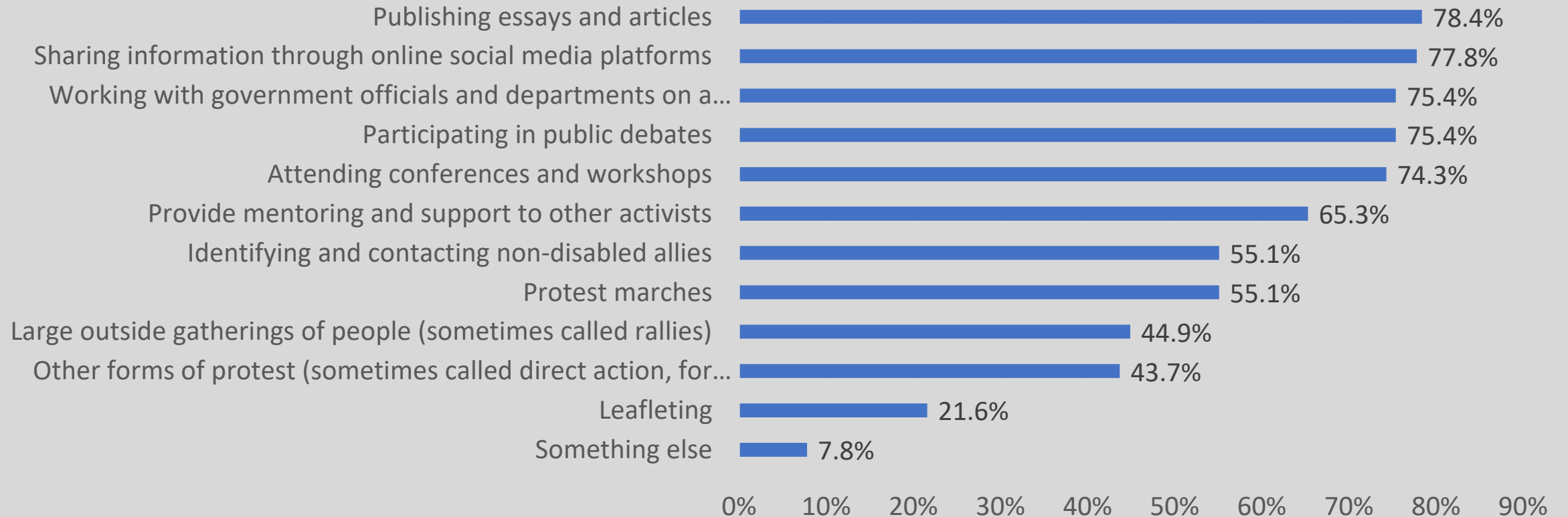
Which statement do you agree with?]

[Reflection –

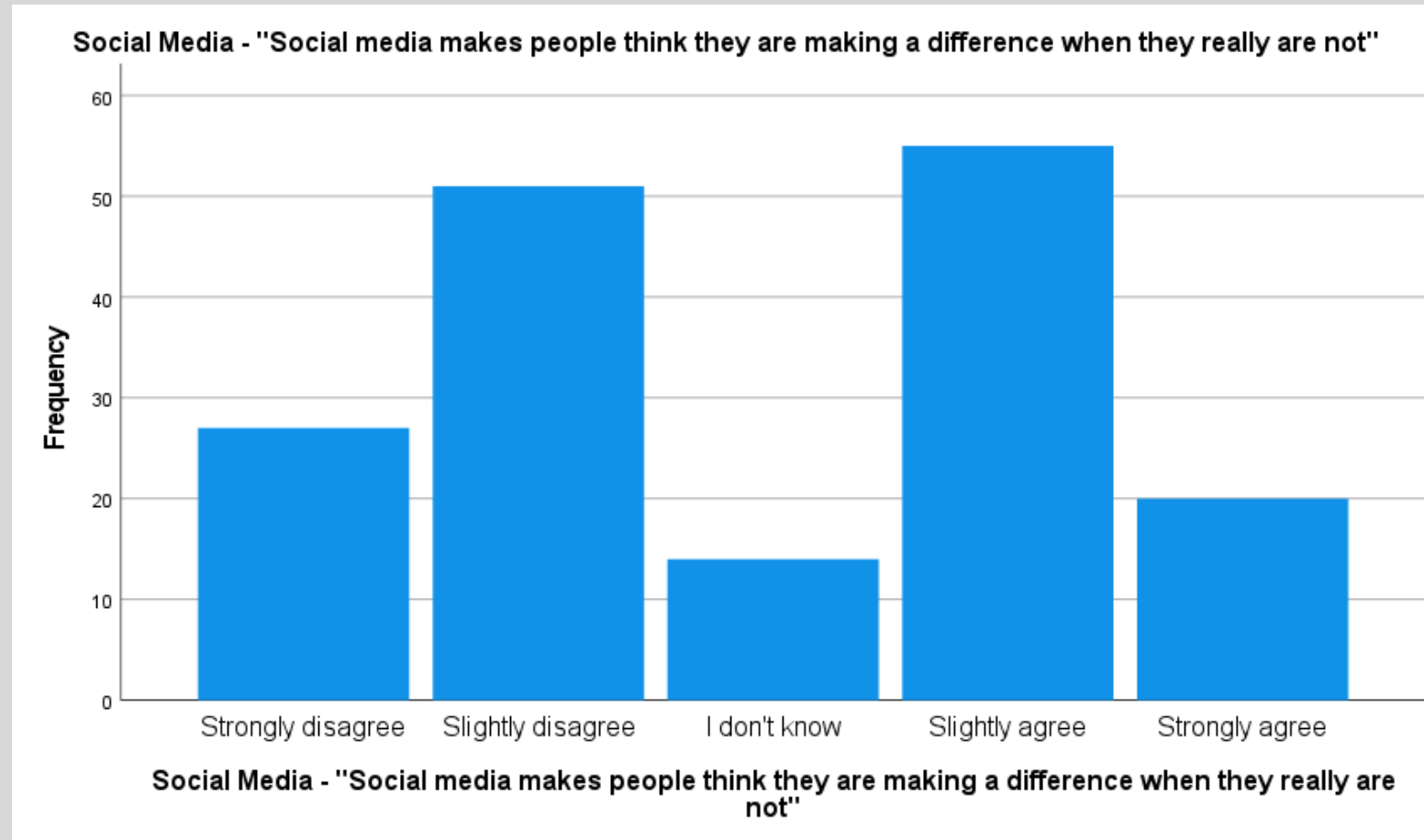
what would make participating in activism more accessible where you are?]

Resistance practices in disability activism

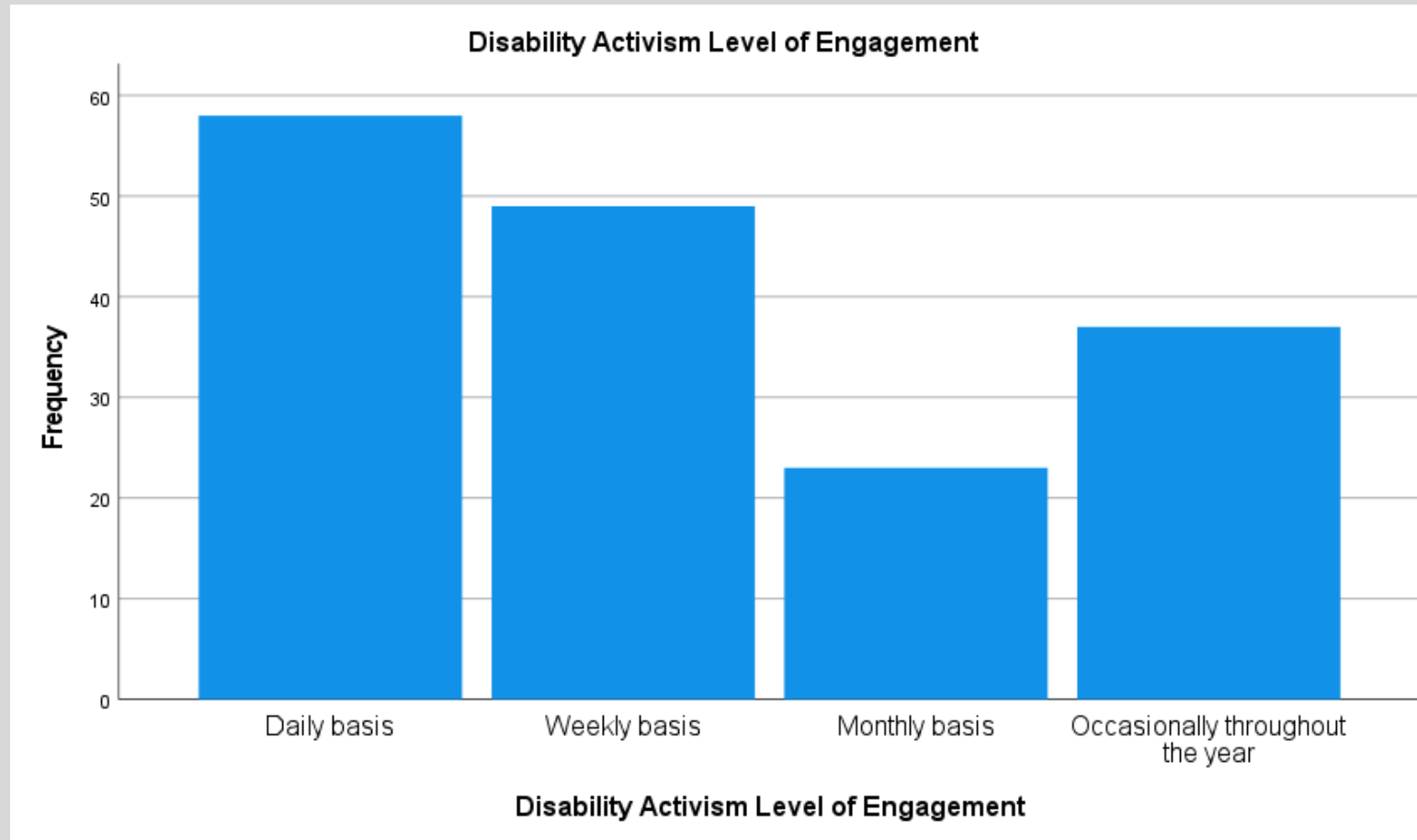
Interested Activities



Resistance practices in disability activism



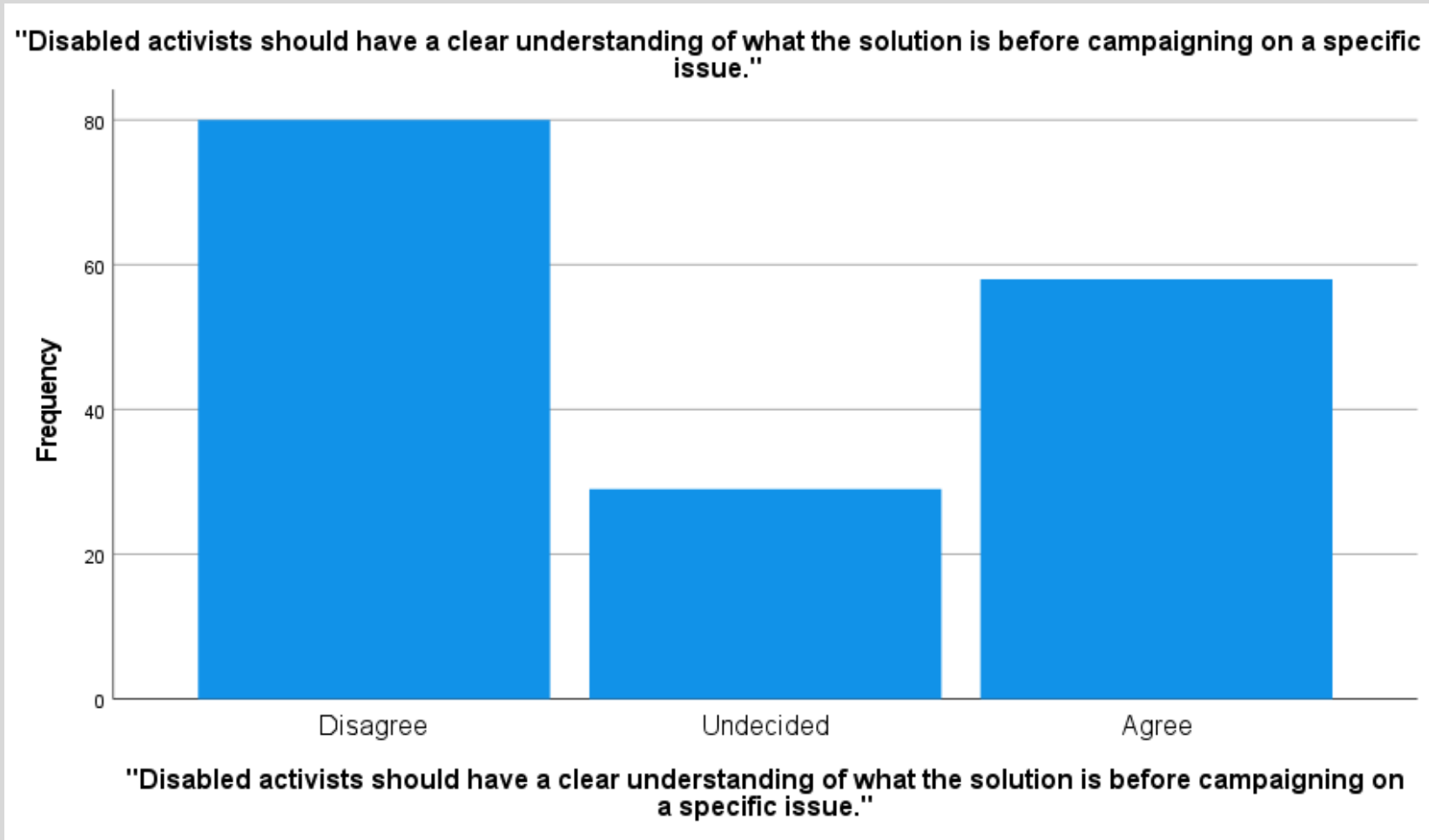
Resistance practices in disability activism



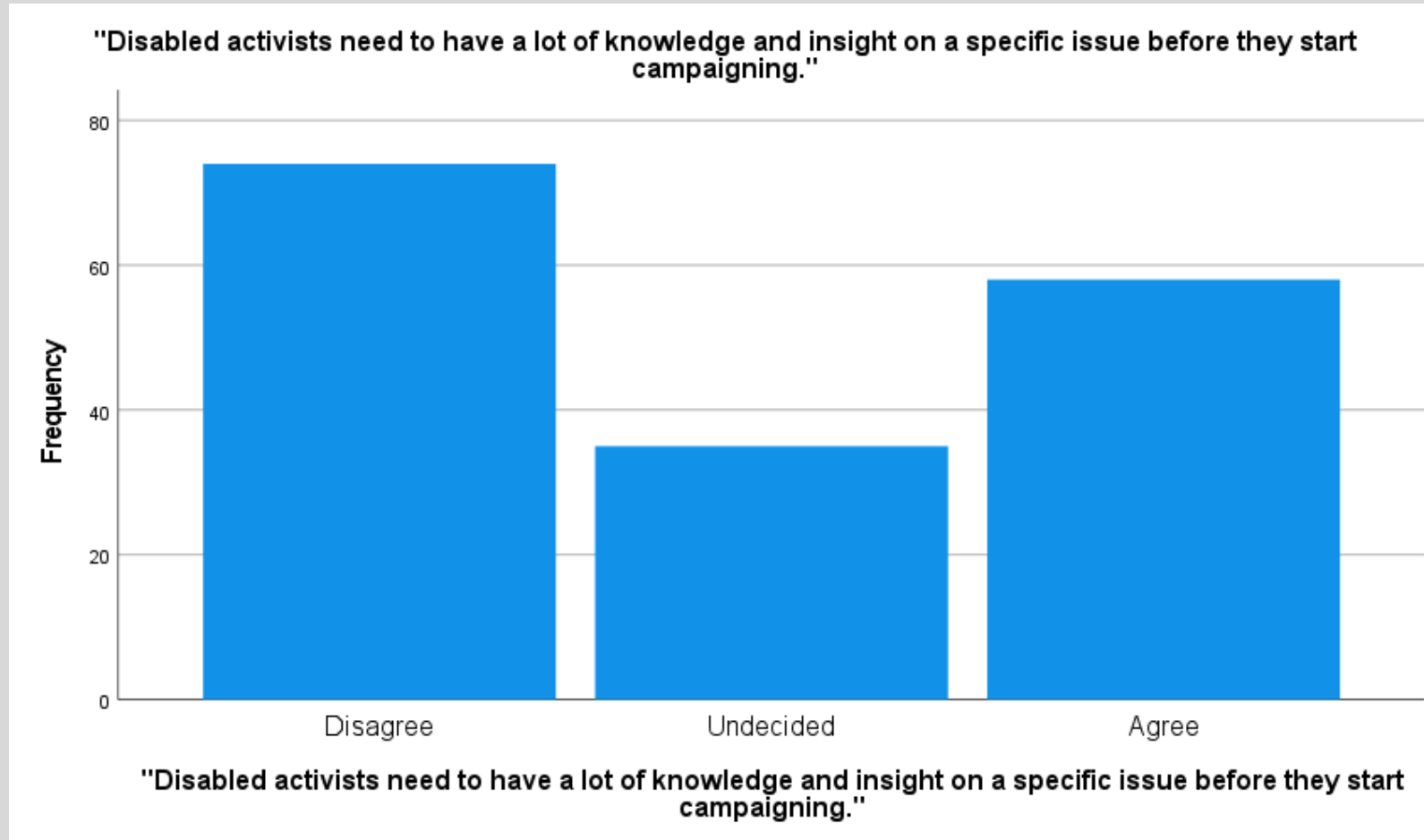
Resistance practices in disability activism

[Reflection – what activism activities do you consider to be most effective?]

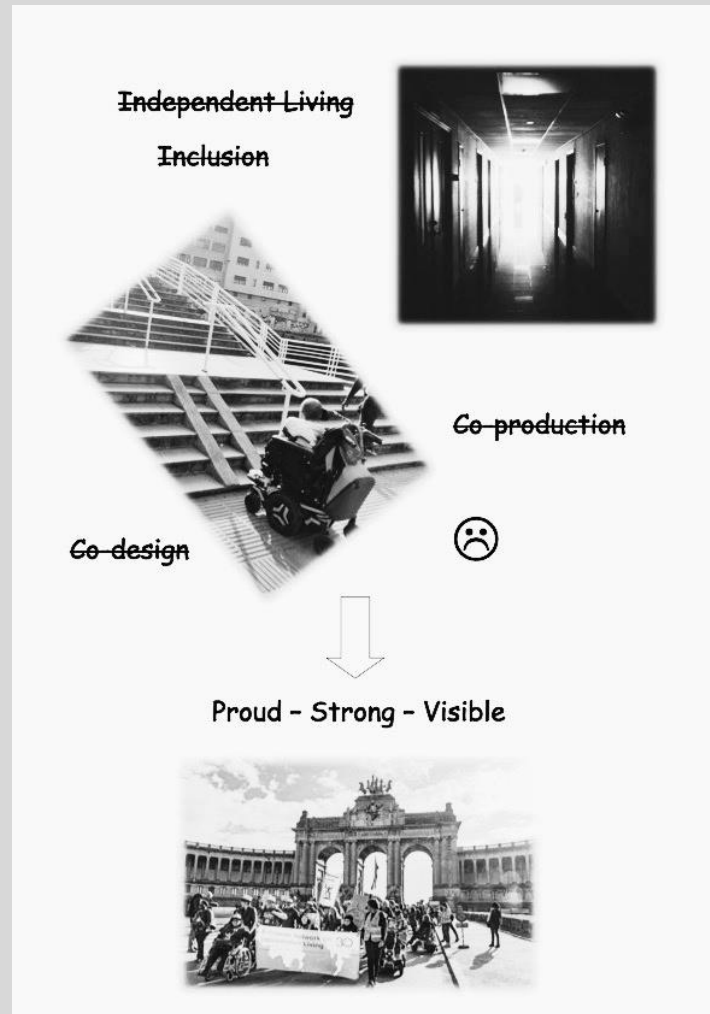
Future of disability activism



Future of disability activism



Future of disability activism



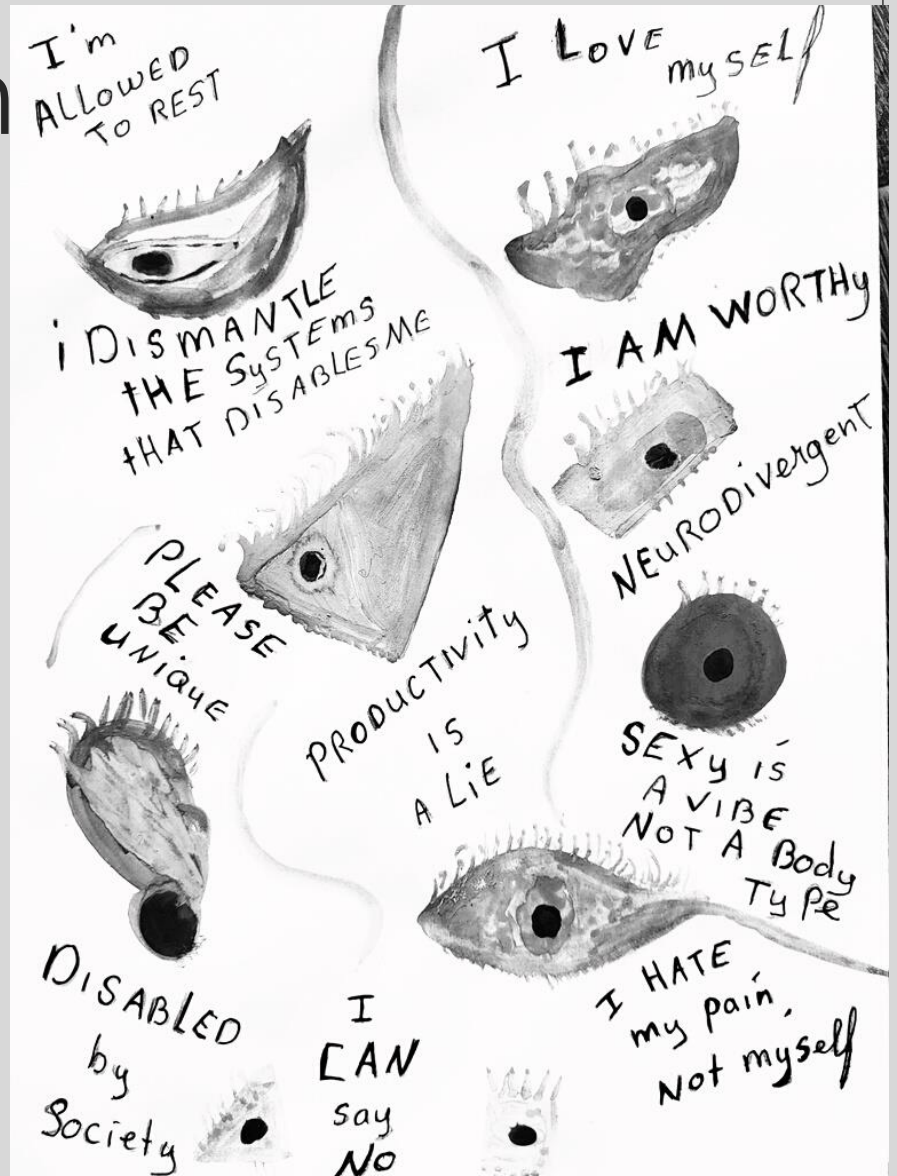
IF YOU ALWAYS
DO WHAT YOU'VE
ALWAYS DONE YOU
WILL ALWAYS GET
WHAT YOU HAVE
ALWAYS GOT.
BE THE
CHANGE

Future of disability activism

I expect our society to treat every individual with respect and consideration no matter what they look like, what their brain is like, what their job is like, what their ethnicity is like, what their gender is like, what their religious affiliation is like, I think it's depressing to have to apologize for who we are, as if we were the ones who had to constantly make an effort to become horribly standardized humans.

I am a person with rights and I have no reason to feel guilty for finding this world globally inadequate and inaccessible. I will fight until the day you no longer think of us as people to eliminate, pitied with a tear in your eye, or as superheroes to be glorified.

Nicolas Joncour



Future of disability activism

[Question - "It is possible to build an inclusive and accessible society by improving existing laws and creating better policies to support disabled people. The existing political and economic arrangements provide a good starting point for realising inclusion and accessibility."

Vyri suggests "Every aspect of society needs to change in order to build an inclusive and accessible society. The political and economic arrangements do not provide a good starting point, and they need to be radically changed in order to realise inclusion and accessibility."

Which statement do you agree with?

[Reflection – what does accessible and inclusive society mean?]



SUMMARY AND CONTACT

Summary

- Three areas (membership; organisation; future considerations) require attention to improve youth participation within social movement bases.
- Young disabled people gaining opportunities to introduce alternative ways of producing an inclusive and accessible social world.
- This means positioning young disabled people as valued and credible contributors to claim making processes within social movement bases, who can influence the strategies and activities that develop shared interests amongst activists.
- Reconfiguring young disabled people's position within disability activism will reinforce Goodley's et al. (2019) call for new enquiries that explore disabled people's experiences through the intersection of their identities.

Contact

- Email: m.griffiths1@leeds.ac.uk
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/miro-griffiths/>
- Twitter: @mirogriffiths
- Profile link: <https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/sociology/staff/1040/miro-griffiths>