

foodminds

# Review of Nutrition Connect

Summary Report December 2021



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# Overview

As part of its commitment to transparency and accountability, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) conducts an annual, independent review of Nutrition Connect.

In 2020, FoodMinds conducted the first Nutrition Connect audit. In its first year, the audit focused on the site's adherence to its editorial criteria, user functionality and overall relevancy and impact on public private engagement (PPE) for nutrition. The results are available for public viewing [here](#), and GAIN's response to the review is [here](#).

Now in its second year, the Nutrition Connect audit evolved in scope to focus more specifically on better understanding the overall impact and influence Nutrition Connect has on PPE for nutrition, and how this may be enhanced moving forward.

# Defining influence and impact

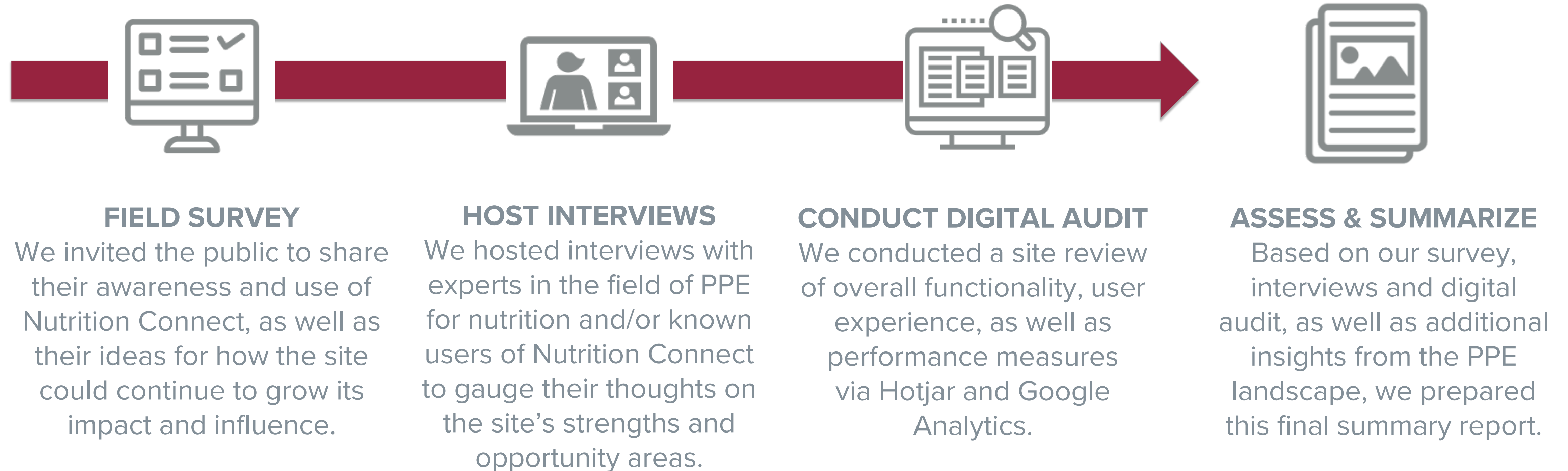
Because this audit sought to shed light on how Nutrition Connect could deliver on its goal to be an influential and impactful leader on PPE for nutrition, it's important to define what we mean.

When we refer to influence and impact, we are evaluating how Nutrition Connect **motivated action, investment and/or learning around PPE for nutrition**. Nutrition Connect seeks to be a destination resource for PPE for nutrition information, and in doing so, it seeks to mobilize online resources into offline action.



# Methodology

FoodMinds applied the following methodology to prepare this report:



# Survey Approach

- 124 survey respondents
  - Of this, 32 completed the survey in its entirety.
  - The number of respondents answering each survey question is included on each slide, as relevant.
- Time frame: October 20 – November 14, 2021
- To secure as many respondents as possible, the survey was distributed in the following ways:
  - Nutrition Connect homepage
  - GAIN and Nutrition Connect’s social media pages
  - United Nations Food Systems Summit Community Page
  - FoodMinds’ social media channels
  - FoodMinds’ FoodScapes food and nutrition affairs e-newsletter
  - Email invitations to GAIN staff

# Interview Approach



- 7 interviews held
- Time frame: October 20 – November 18, 2021
- Each video interview was 45 minutes and used the same interview guide
- Interviews were conducted with diverse stakeholders, in terms of experience with PPE for nutrition, geography, sector and familiarity with Nutrition Connect. In total:
  - Familiarity
    - 3 were familiar with the site and 4 had not used it previously
  - Sector
    - 1 worked in academia
    - 1 worked in private sector
    - 2 worked in public sector
    - 3 worked for a non-governmental or non-profit organization, including two who worked either currently or previously for GAIN
  - Geographic diversity
    - 6 countries represented (see left)



A close-up photograph of hands sorting through a large quantity of coffee beans in a dark tray. The beans are piled high, and the hands are actively moving them. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the texture of the beans and the movement of the hands. The text 'Key findings and recommendations' is overlaid in white, bold font across the center of the image.

# **Key findings and recommendations**



## Key findings

- **Overall interest in Nutrition Connect is high.** There is a strong belief among both interviewees and survey respondents that the site is useful, credible and fills a niche need for the nutrition community.
- However, **awareness could be strengthened** by reaching more people more often. This could be better achieved through:
  - Ongoing nudges to visit the site (e.g., a regular e-newsletter)
  - Stronger communications and clearer engagement opportunities
  - Adding more timely and topical resources of interest, as well as resources that are diverse in geographic scope
- In addition, **clear, quantifiable and measurable goals should be set** to ensure Nutrition Connect's positive trajectory and impact continues

# Top strengths

- Nutrition Connect is considered a useful site and highly credible information hub. Those familiar with it view it very favorably, describing it as “fantastic” and a “one-stop solution,” among other positive terms.
  - All survey respondents (100%) – whether familiar with the site or new to it – believe Nutrition Connect sounded either somewhat or extremely useful.
  - The site’s affiliation with GAIN further boosts its credibility.
- The site resonates with a very engaged and committed group of nutrition professionals. Users primarily rely on Nutrition Connect for ongoing learning/reading.
- It delivers on a niche need, as many users believe there are no other resources that speak specifically to improving PPE for nutrition.
  - When asked where else they go for PPE-related information, survey respondents most often visit United Nations-affiliated sites.
- The diversity of resource formats (peer reviewed research, case studies, podcasts, etc.) works well to meet varied user needs and preferences.



# Opportunities to improve influence & impact

- Seize opportunities to catch people at the start of a PPE, as this could facilitate more offline formation and ongoing use of PPE. Most people use the site for general ongoing reading (vs. to inform a specific project).
  - Demonstrate how knowledge gained on the site can be applied. For example, launch a public campaign like the Food Systems Dashboard contest that invited users to illustrate how/why they've used the Dashboard. Promoting diverse use cases – and sharing them regularly on social channels – could help inspire more ongoing engagement.
- Identify opportunities to further boost awareness of Nutrition Connect.
  - Public campaigns, like the one described above, and frequent posting of Nutrition Connect resources across GAIN social channels could help boost awareness.
  - Link building campaigns with peer websites could also help drive traffic.
- Lean on GAIN's credibility to humanize the content.
  - Consider engaging users more by using titles like "Reports that Move Us," using storytelling and providing some context as to why GAIN is featuring certain content.
  - Share more "firsthand" accounts of the stories or issues GAIN is tracking and why. For example, make a regular feature on staff picks or guest contributors, showcasing select articles and perspectives from leading experts in the field.

# Tactical site enhancements to consider making

- Enhance credibility by featuring more peer-reviewed research studies and making author affiliations (and potential conflicts of interest) clearer.
- Improve readability by featuring the top takeaways of each article.
  - For example, at the top of each resource, add 1-3 bullet points summarizing what the article says and why it matters. Nutrition Connect currently includes brief paragraph summaries, but several interviewees expressed interest in something easier/quicker to read that includes the most important article takeaway(s).
- Continue to expand the geographic diversity of content.
  - One interviewee noted seeing very few resources from India, and a survey respondent indicated that historically, they thought the site may have had more of a “Western gaze” when first introduced.
- Expand list of Priority Areas to focus on additional popular and/or emerging nutrition topics.
  - For example, interviewees and survey respondents expressed interest in seeing resources on food safety, infant/child nutrition, private sector-specific topics (e.g., corporate social responsibility), plant-forward diets, among others.
- Continue to identify search and categorization optimizations.



# Opportunities to mobilize offline action

- Invest in ongoing communications that nudge visitors to the site and expand awareness, focusing on:
  - Regular newsletters (e.g., monthly) that aggregate new resources, upcoming events, etc.
  - Twitter, as this is where most people have heard of the site
  - GAIN communications platforms, as this is the second most common way people have heard of the site
- Make it even easier for readers to see what *works* for PPE for nutrition by celebrating the solutions.
  - Consider spotlighting the most innovative or successful “solves” PPE stakeholders have introduced, so that others can apply these lessons learned to their work. This could be done via social channels or a webinar series.
  - One interviewee noted that many nutrition resources (not specific to Nutrition Connect) focus on “the problem,” but few highlight the solutions. There is an opportunity for Nutrition Connect to feature a “stronger solution orientation.”
  - As part of the newsletter or user contest (as recommended here), consider awarding a prize (grant, recognition, etc.) for the most forward-looking applications of PPE for nutrition. Highlight winners on Nutrition Connect and GAIN channels.
- Feature PPE funding opportunities on the site, as lack of funding is considered the top barrier for PPEs.
- Continually remind people to share their PPE experiences with Nutrition Connect.
  - The digital audit found that very few people submit PPE resources to post on the site, indicating that there’s an opportunity to improve the site’s two-way relationship with readers.
  - Make this a constant reminder on social channels and in newsletters. Encourage GAIN staff and/or third-parties to share these reminders with their followers.



A close-up photograph of hands sorting through a large quantity of coffee beans in a dark tray. The beans are piled high, and the hands are actively moving them. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the texture of the beans and the movement of the hands. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**Detailed findings:  
What works well**



# Those familiar with the site describe it favorably

Those aware of Nutrition Connect described it in **positive terms** (great, one-stop solution, fantastic, etc.).

Unprompted, they hit on the site's **niche offering**: providing nutrition and food systems-oriented research and resources to inform partnership efforts.

“Nutrition Connect aims to empower public and private sector actors to collaborate so together we can identify innovative solutions, form novel partnerships and share good practices that drive investment and action to improve nutrition.”

- Survey respondent [sector, location not shared]

“I see Nutrition Connect as a fantastic report and resource hub for information and academic materials and research, and I think that can be very useful when it comes to inspiring.”

- Interviewee, NGO, United Kingdom

“It is a great resource for obtaining cross cutting research documents and articles on food systems.”

- Survey respondent [sector, location not shared]

“Platform to focus public and private organizations on nutrition.”

- Survey respondent [sector, location not shared]

“A storehouse of all things food systems.”

- Survey respondent, Academia, India

“It is a platform to share knowledge and experience and to learn from each other to take forward the cause of nutrition.”

- Survey respondent [sector, location not shared]

“One-stop solution for information. [I] search on Nutrition Connect, then on Google for relevant and updated information.”

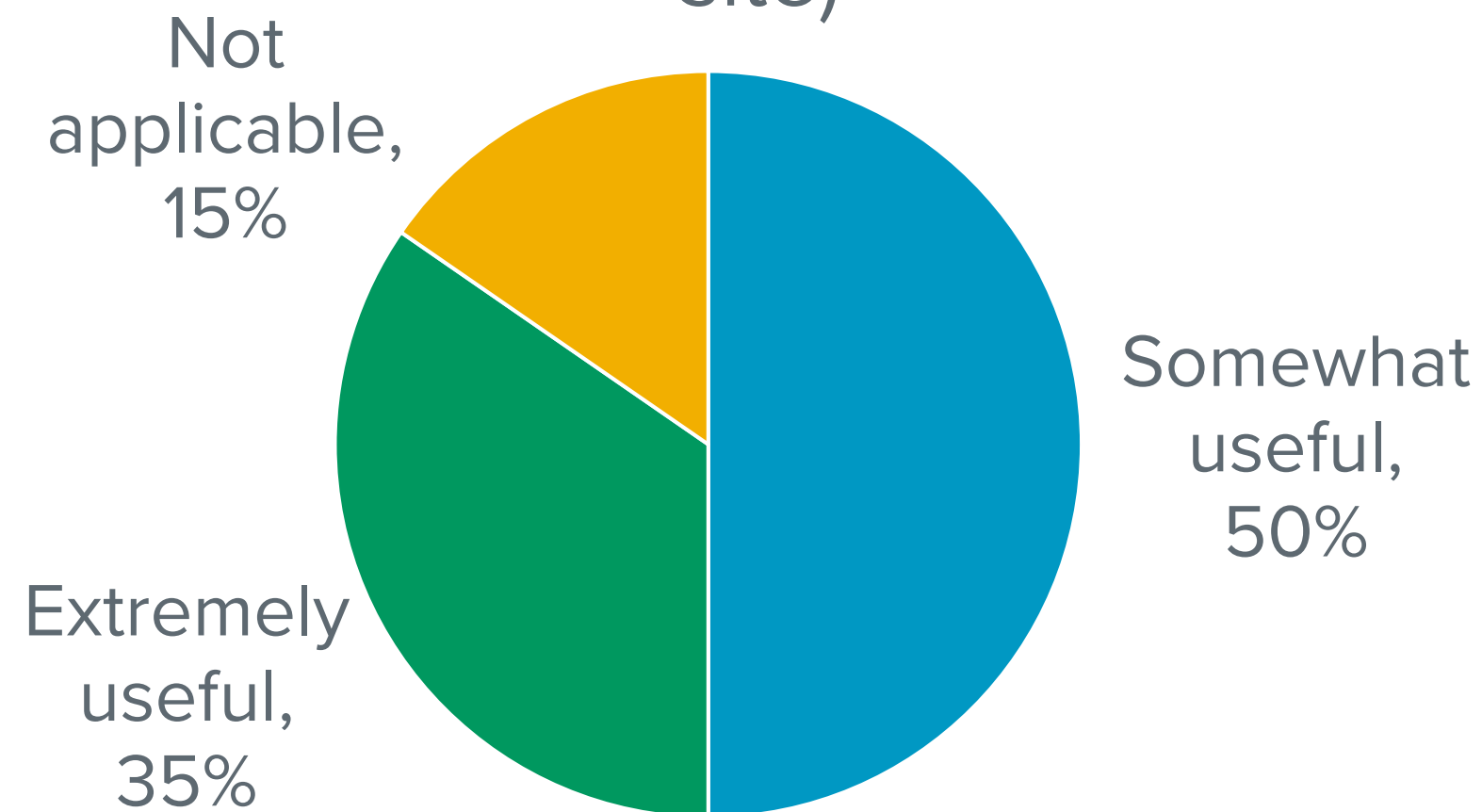
- Survey respondent, Academia, India

# All surveyed think Nutrition Connect sounds useful

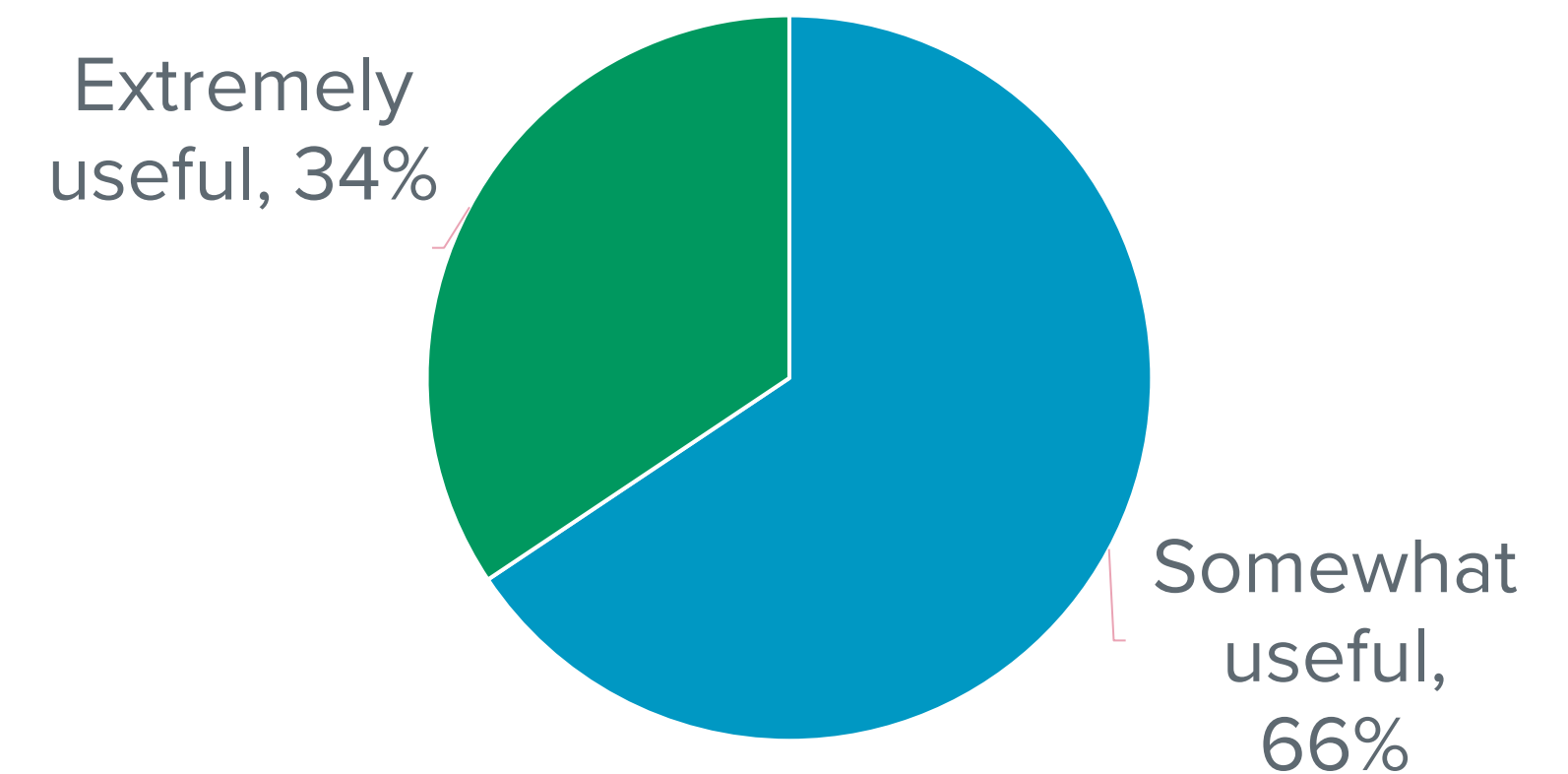
The **majority (85%)** of survey respondents aware of the site said it's either somewhat or extremely useful.

**All respondents (100%)** – whether familiar with the site or new to it – believe it sounded either somewhat or extremely useful.

Usefulness of Nutrition Connect  
(Among those who had heard of site)



Usefulness of Nutrition Connect  
(Among all respondents)

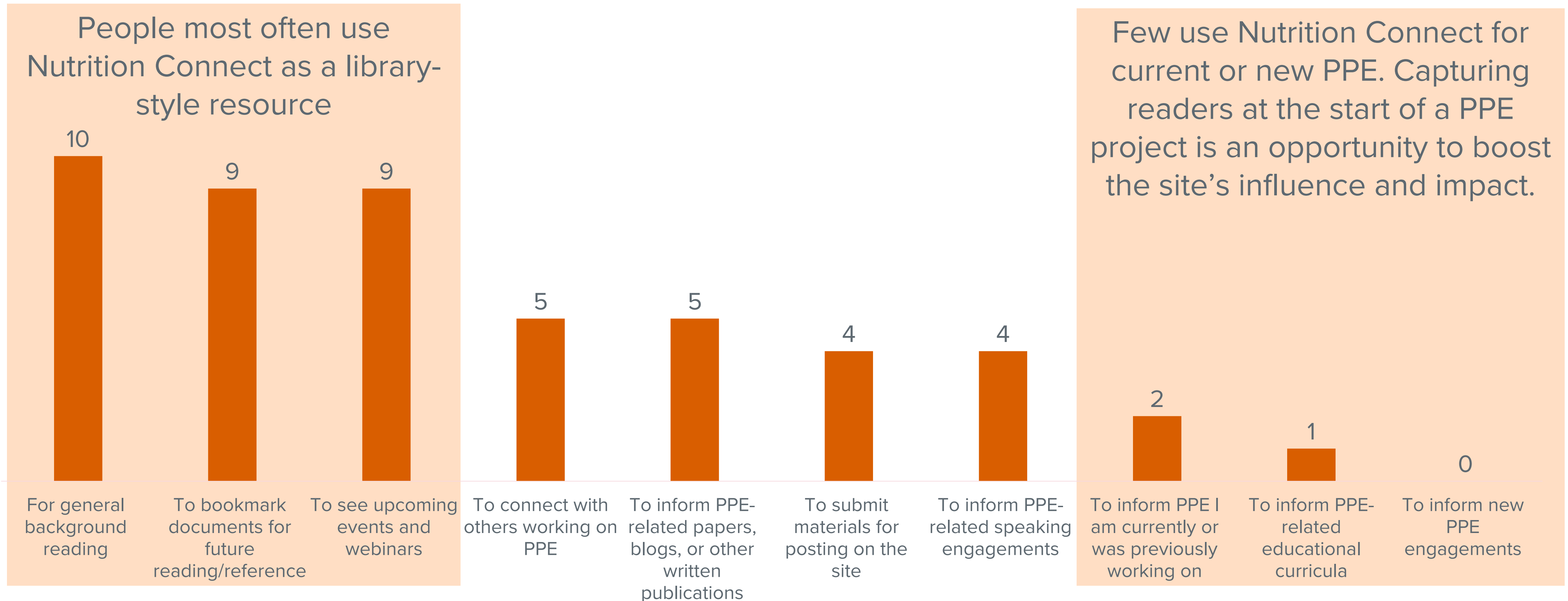


[Among those who had heard of Nutrition Connect] How useful was Nutrition Connect to you? (n=26)

[All respondents] Based on the description of Nutrition Connect, how useful does the site sound to you? (n=32)



# Nutrition Connect is considered a learning hub



How, if at all, have you used Nutrition Connect in the past? Please select the top three reasons. (n=26)

# Interviewees illustrated how they use the site for general learning/reading

Interviewees use Nutrition Connect to gather information on nutrition or PPEs, particularly when they have downtime.

Some interviewees use it to learn about PPE actions taken by specific sectors, such as business.

“I used Nutrition Connect to search for resources in general. I would use the Nutrition Connect search mode then go through categories to find what I needed.”

- Interviewee, NGO, Thailand

“I use Nutrition Connect as a jumping off point.”  
- Interviewee, NGO, United Kingdom

“I haven’t used it yet, but I would tell my students to go through it because there are some interesting case studies, some interesting researchers, some projects which give you a lot of ideas and you have them from all over the world.”

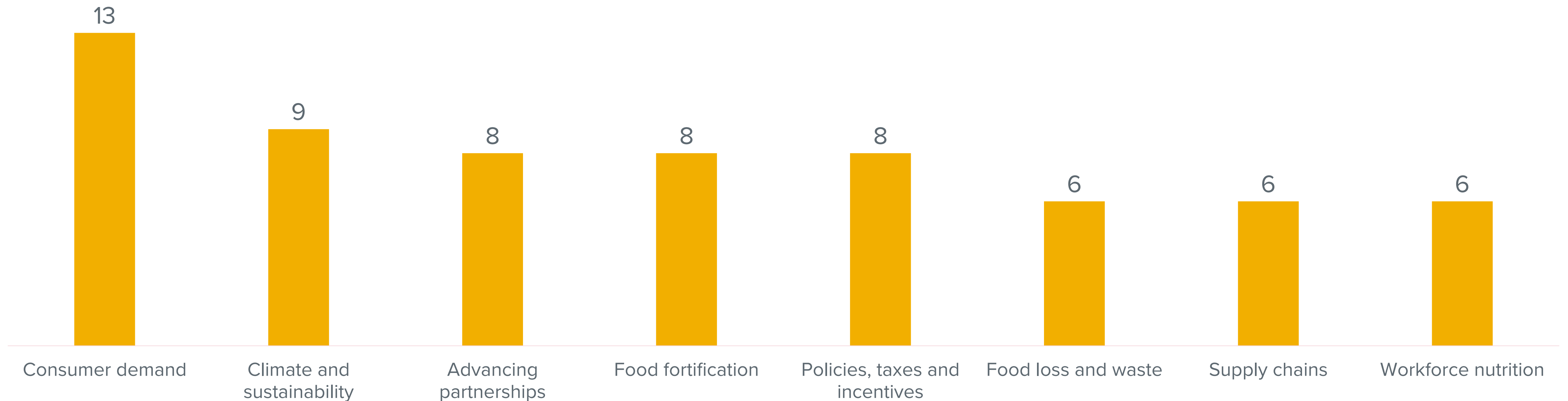
- Interviewee, Academia, India

“I use Nutrition Connect to find examples of and understand private sector actions on nutrition.”

- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands



# Most survey respondents are interested in consumer demand resources, followed by climate and sustainability



# Other global NGOs are looked to for PPE information

Survey respondents generally turn to other United Nations (UN)-related NGOs for information on food/nutrition-focused PPEs.

One interviewee praised GAIN for acting as a bridge between the UN and private sector.

“I give GAIN a lot of credit - they are acting as a bridge to UN groups, to the WHO, and to private sector, to build a world where there can be better dialogue and more solutions for the problems we face.”

- Interviewee, Private sector, United States



TANZANIA FOOD AND  
NUTRITION CENTRE



A close-up photograph of hands sorting through a large quantity of coffee beans in a dark tray. The beans are a rich brown color and are being spread out. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more of the sorting process. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

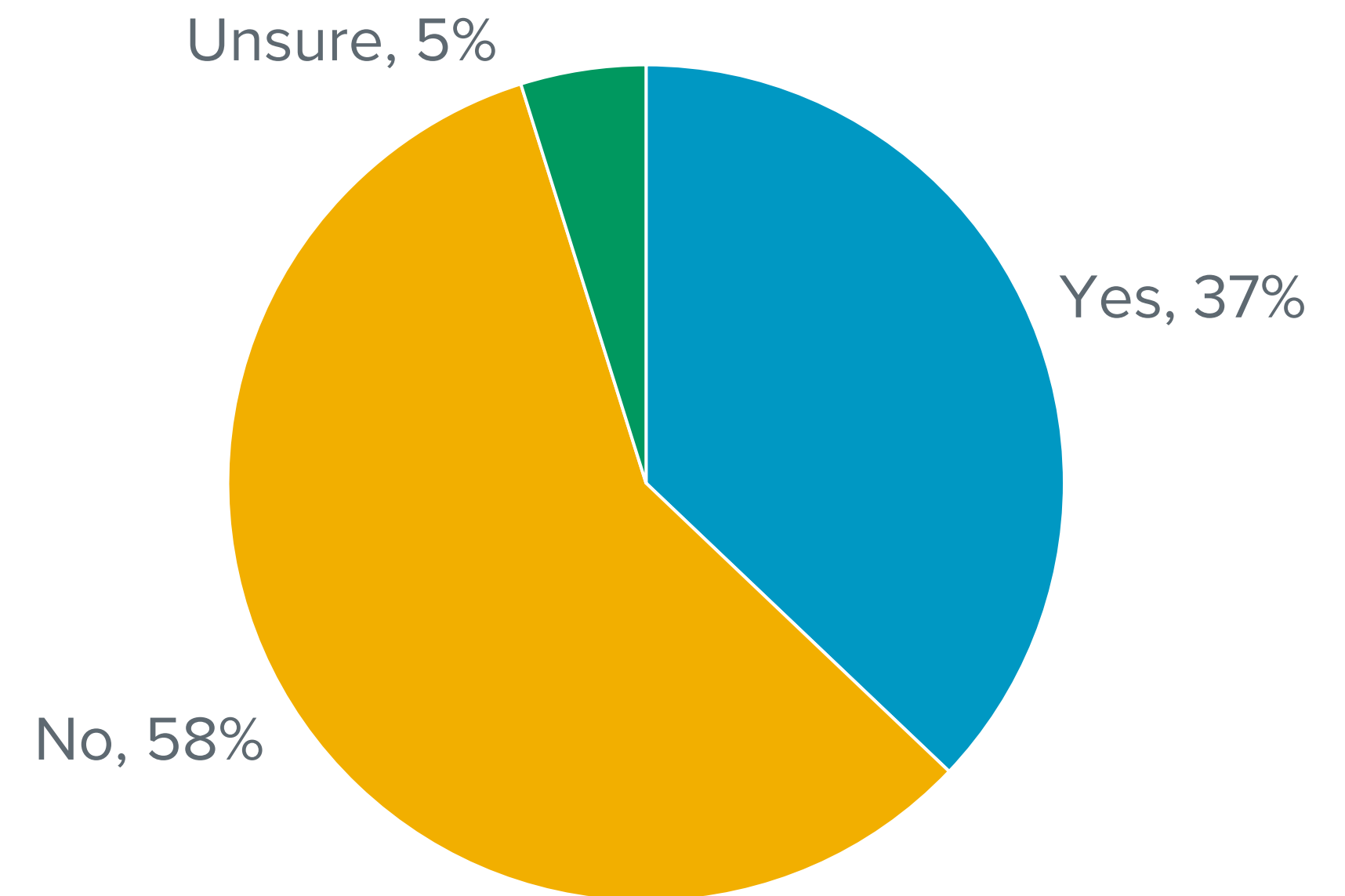
**Detailed findings:  
Opportunities to improve  
influence and impact**



# Most are unaware of Nutrition Connect

- Just **over half (58%)** of survey respondents had not heard of Nutrition Connect prior to the survey.
- Among the **one-third (37%)** of respondents who had heard of Nutrition Connect, social media (primarily Twitter) and GAIN communications were the most common ways they learned of the site.
  - Two individuals learned of the site via the SUN Business Network.
  - NGO staff were more likely to have heard of the site than those from government agencies or academia.

Aware of Nutrition Connect



# Respondents see ways the site could be enhanced

## Improve organization

“It was useful to an extent, just not fully. Information was difficult to find and I felt that information was presented from a Western gaze at the time (a number of years back).”

- Survey respondent [sector, location not shared]

## Ensure timeliness

“The site could be more complete and up-to-date. It would be easier to use more regularly if reports, events and the calendar were updated on a consistent schedule.”

- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands

## Clarify GAIN / Nutrition Connect relationship

“Well organized, especially by topic area, especially compared to the GAIN site. Unfortunately, there isn't a super clear link to the two beyond the disclaimer language.”

- Survey respondent, NGO, United States

“It was useful, but it's a bit hard to differentiate from a development organization website.”

- Survey respondent, NGO, India

## Enhance transparency

“I couldn't see who the authors were. When you open an article, you need to know who the authors are and what is their affiliation. Is there any conflict of interest that this author has declared?”

- Interviewee, public sector, South Africa

“It would be helpful to expand on Nutrition Connect's methodology, in terms of how it decides what information gets posted.”

- Interviewee, Private sector, United States

## Focus on solutions

“Focus on solutions. This could be a big differentiation opportunity because most focus on the problem. Frame the information in a way that Nutrition Connect could be recognized for driving a stronger solution orientation - show what's working.”

- Interviewee, Private sector, United States



# People wanted more “nudges” to visit the site

Survey respondents and interviewees believed that a regular e-newsletter would help remind them to visit the site on a timelier and more regular basis.

“If there was a weekly bulletin or a monthly bulletin with all the news or everything that's coming up. It makes me think a bit of a newsletter...I thought that if the platform was to be used like this and was more regularly updated, something like that might be very useful.”

- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands

“Main problem: it is a "go to" tool, no "pull" with a newsletter for news & events (or at least I could not find the newsletter).”

- Survey respondent, Government, Switzerland

[In describing another site that shares monthly newsletters] “I see every month what is new and what interests me. I don't have to go searching for it so that helps. The mailer helps.”

- Interviewee, Academia, India

“I don't know how well it's marketed or shared with others. If I had known about it I might have used it to do an assessment or prepare for a project.”

- Interviewee, Private sector, United States

# Consider refining Priority Areas

In addition to the current Priority Areas on Nutrition Connect, survey respondents are interested in seeing information on other hot button topics. Several of these topics (sustainable food systems, plant-forward foods, etc.), however, are addressed, so this could also be a matter of refining organization/searchability.

- “Examples of concrete ROI for all parties. Not generic positive talk, but numbers”
- Food safety
- Nutrition across the lifespan, particularly infant/child nutrition needs and marketing to children policies and actions
- Plant-forward diets
- Ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF)
- Sustainable food systems
- More diverse resources from private sector, including:
  - Resources that are inclusive of private sector SMEs and individuals (not just large corporations)
  - Corporate social responsibility activities and investor reports focusing on actions to improve nutrition and public health

“Search terms didn't always find what I was looking for or reflect the current landscape. For example, "plant-forward" only returned one result. Important reports on a given topic also weren't easy to find.”

- Interviewee, Private sector, United States

“Nutrition Connect is a good resource...but it skews more heavily towards nutrition versus PPE. There aren't any other resources I frequent beyond other case studies for PPE work.”

- Survey respondent, NGO, United States

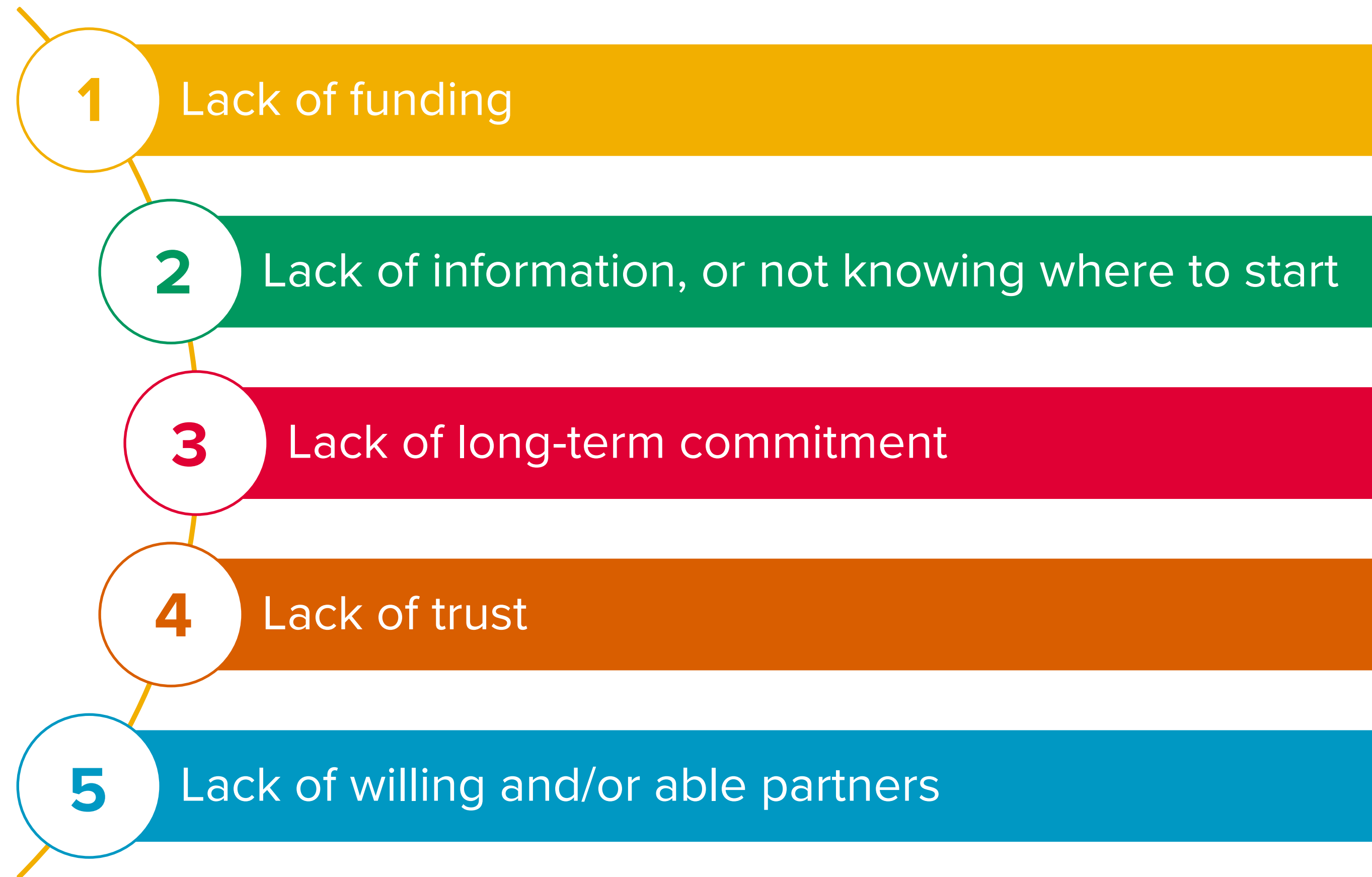
“There's almost no content on infant access to nutrition, but I also do recognize it's very specific...There is no website that has the news or the reports or that collects everything on infant and young child nutrition together (infant and young child is 0 to 36 months).”

- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands

# Lack of funding is considered the top barrier to PPE for nutrition

No survey respondents believed that lack of data or lack of other examples/case studies to learn from was the top barrier.

Therefore, it will be important for Nutrition Connect to enhance resources specific to the top barriers, including lack of funding and helping users kick-off a PPE project.





# Creating a unifying language or starting point can help create and deliver effective PPE

In addition to funding barriers, interviewees focused on a “lack of common language or starting point” as a main barrier to PPE for nutrition. They saw a role for Nutrition Connect to play in defining the rules of engagement, best practices and ways to build trust.

“Messaging and communication needs to consider national and local context, including language barriers. This can help achieve a consistent understanding of why the information is important and how to use it.”

- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands

“One of the biggest barriers to effective PPE is not speaking a common language or establishing a common starting point. Understanding each other’s longer-term goals and ambitions – at the start of a partnership – is critical.”

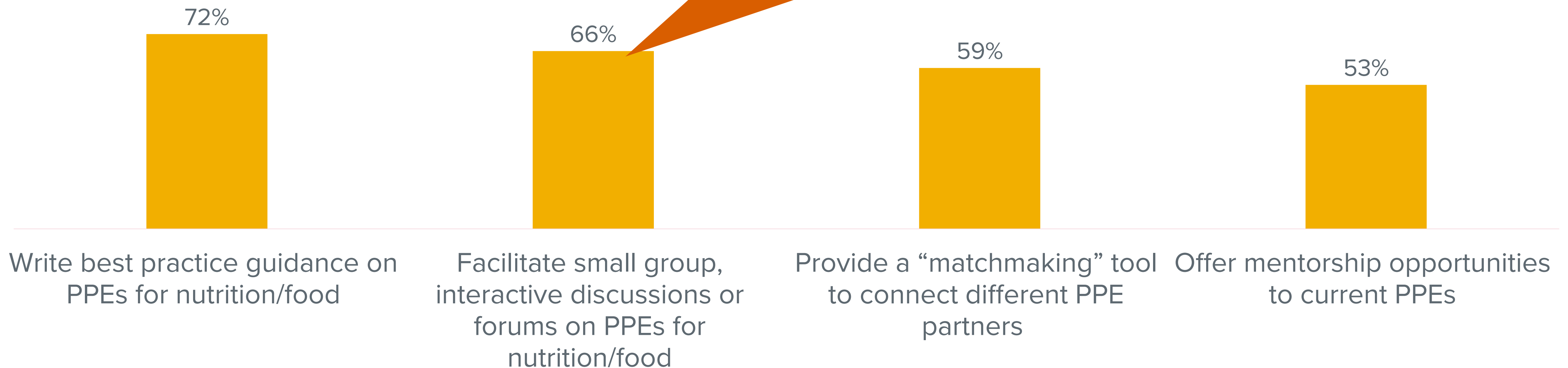
- Interviewee, Private sector, United States

“If we are going to make a difference and get a lot of players on board with this agenda, we have to be able to speak the same language.”

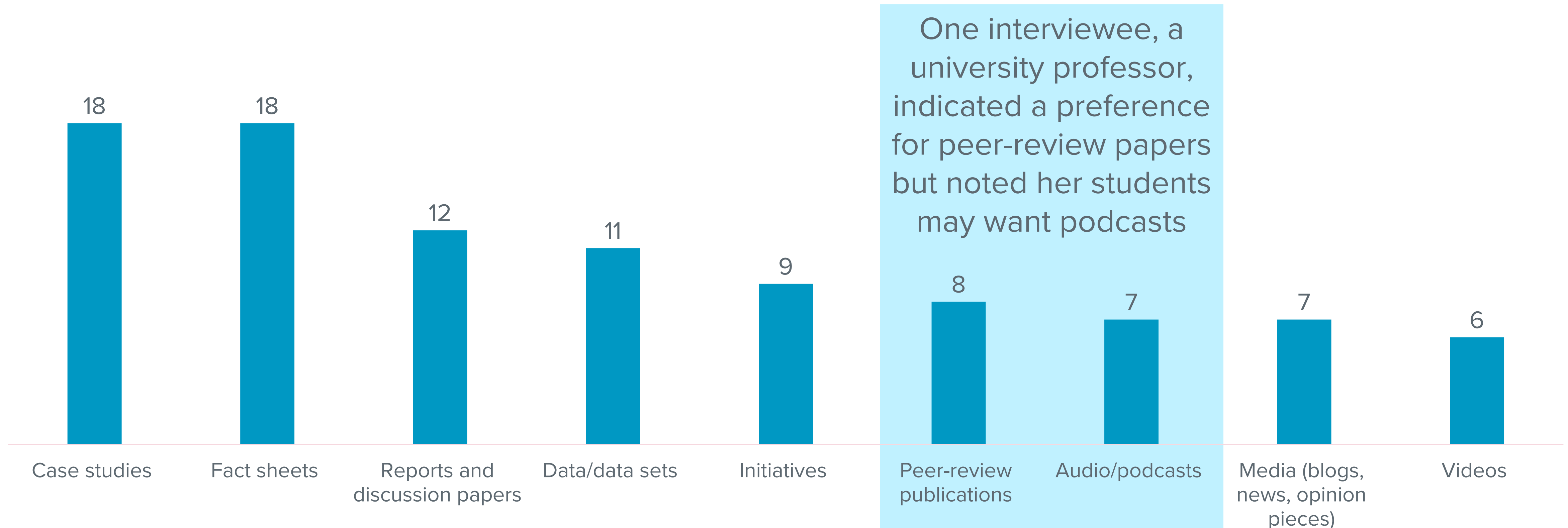
- Interviewee, Private sector, United States

# There is interest in more resources or guidance from Nutrition Connect on creating PPE for nutrition

“Consider organizing “deep dives” on particular themes of interest (e.g., webinar), with links to contact people actively working in that space.”  
- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands



# Maintain diversity of resource formats to meet diverse user preferences and needs





# Interviewees underscored the need to include diverse resource types

Those working in academia and public sector liked the variety of resource formats Nutrition Connect offered, but said ultimately they must defer to **peer review research** in their work.

Several interviewees also liked the ability to listen to **podcasts** on-the-go.

A private sector representative wanted to see **raw data and user insights**, and also recommended considering ways to incorporate more visual communications.

“Eventually, the ones that we would need to rely on in terms of the work we do will be the research that’s peer-reviewed. But, there are people who will be more interested in advocacy and others might want to listen to the podcast. I think what you have is quite good.”

- Interviewee, Public sector, South Africa

“I would definitely prefer a peer reviewed article because that's evidence based and doesn't go away. Even if it's video and audio or YouTube or whatever, the authenticity of that is a little doubtful because anybody can post it. The Internet is so large that anyone can say anything.”

- Interviewee, Academia, India

“Infographics are compelling storytelling opportunities that can help generate more interest on a topic.”

- Interviewee, Private sector, United States

# Resource wish list

- People wish that the following tools existed to support their PPE for nutrition work:
  - Overviews of PPE legislation (e.g., marketing to children policies)
  - Details on transparency and how to ensure consumer trust
  - Comprehensive toolkit that includes success stories and briefs on evidence
  - A resource that lists all intergovernmental organizations willing to work with the private sector on specific topics, organized by topic
  - For all resources, clear names/contact information of people to get in touch with for follow up communications/actions on a given topic
  - A database of donor opportunities, including:
    - Matching opportunities
    - Guide to federal and private grant funding that supports PPE projects.



## Explore opportunities to leverage GAIN platforms

Highly engaged users realize that GAIN oversees many digital nutrition platforms.

They use Nutrition Connect for general reading, but some look to mobilize action via the new Innovative Food System Solutions Portal (IFSS).

“Consider integrating existing tools, including Nutrition Connect, into a toolbox for PPE. Having a space where key, complementary tools and resources are presented in a practical way would be helpful. This could include tools like the IFSS portal, nutrition business monitor, FAO e-learning series and more.”

- Interviewee, NGO, Netherlands

“To convert [reading] into action...one of my favorites is the new Innovative Food System Solutions Portal. It’s a fantastic thing that lives on Nutrition Connect. The portal is a sort of melting pot for everybody, researchers, academics, donors, private sector, large and small NGO's, policymakers, governments.”

- Interviewee, NGO, United Kingdom



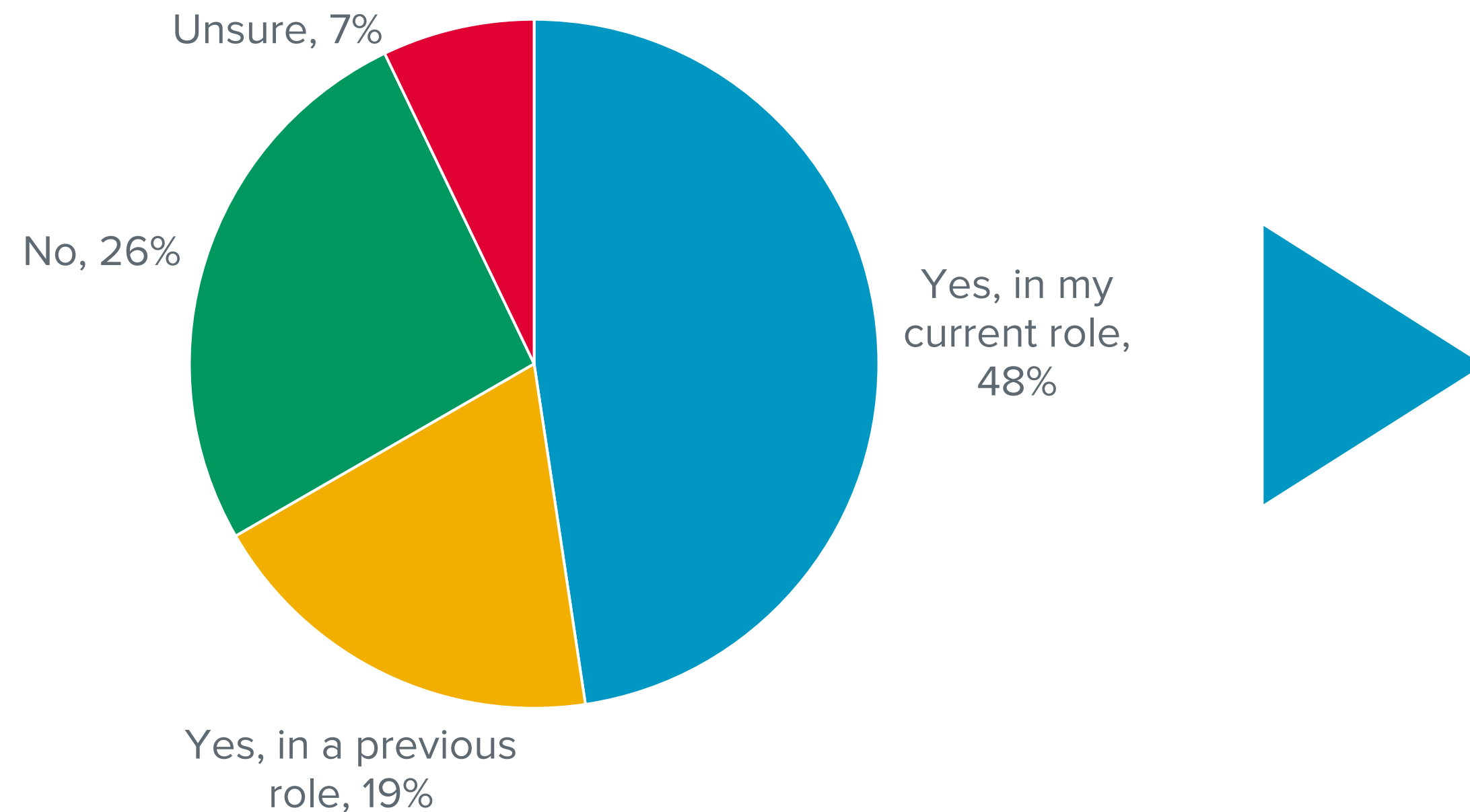
A close-up photograph showing hands sorting through a large quantity of coffee beans in a dark tray. The beans are piled high, and a small blue plastic cup is visible in the foreground. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the texture of the beans and the movement of the hands. The text 'Survey respondent background' is overlaid in white, bold font across the center of the image.

**Survey respondent background**



# Most surveyed have experience with nutrition PPE

Respondents who worked in PPE in a professional capacity

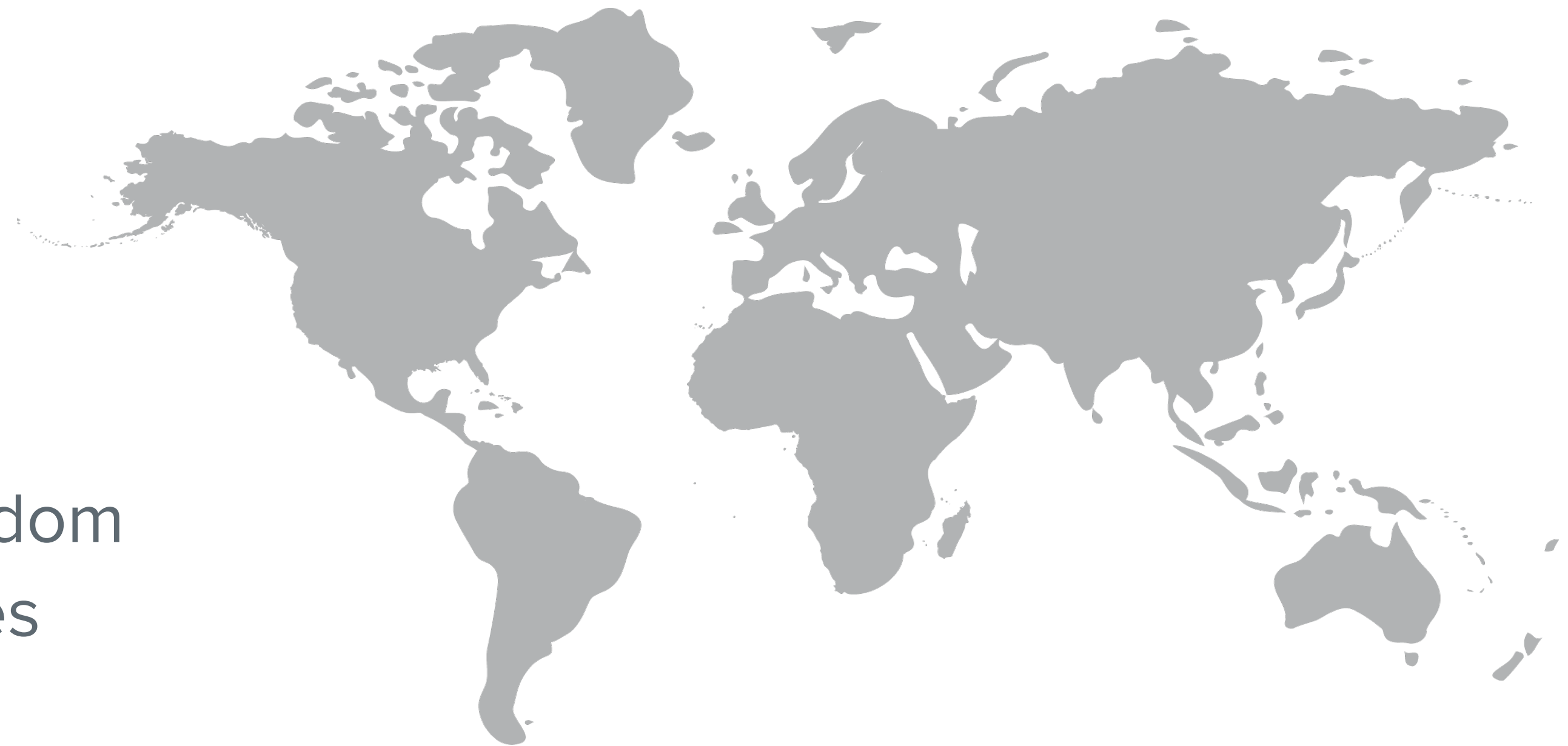


Of the 67% who currently or previously worked in a PPE for nutrition, **93% supported one focused on nutrition**

# All continents were represented in the survey, with the exception of Latin America and Antarctica

Survey respondents came from:\*

- Bangladesh
- Canada
- Europe
- India
- Kenya
- Netherlands
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Senegal
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States



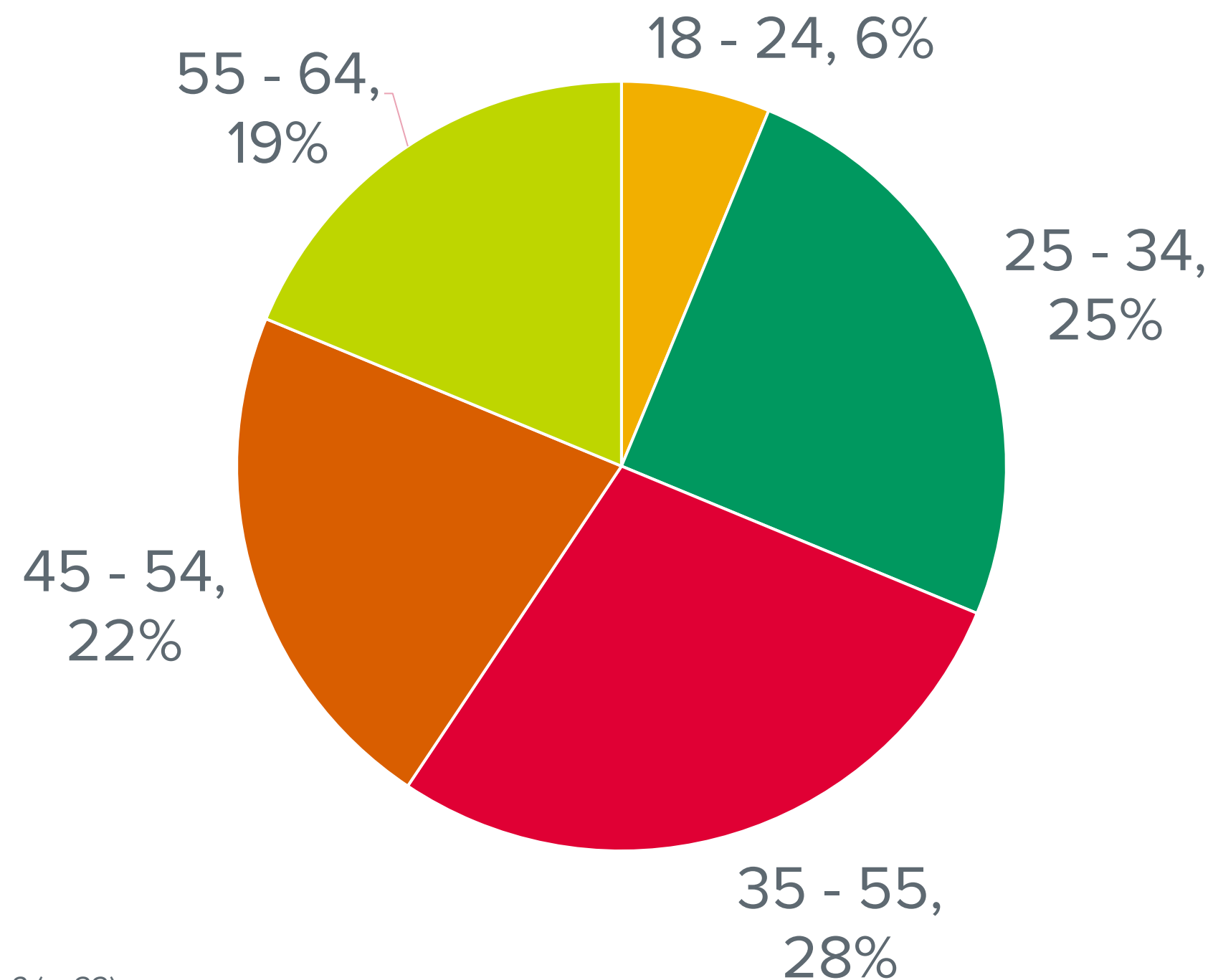
\*Not exhaustive, as respondents did not have to disclose their home country.



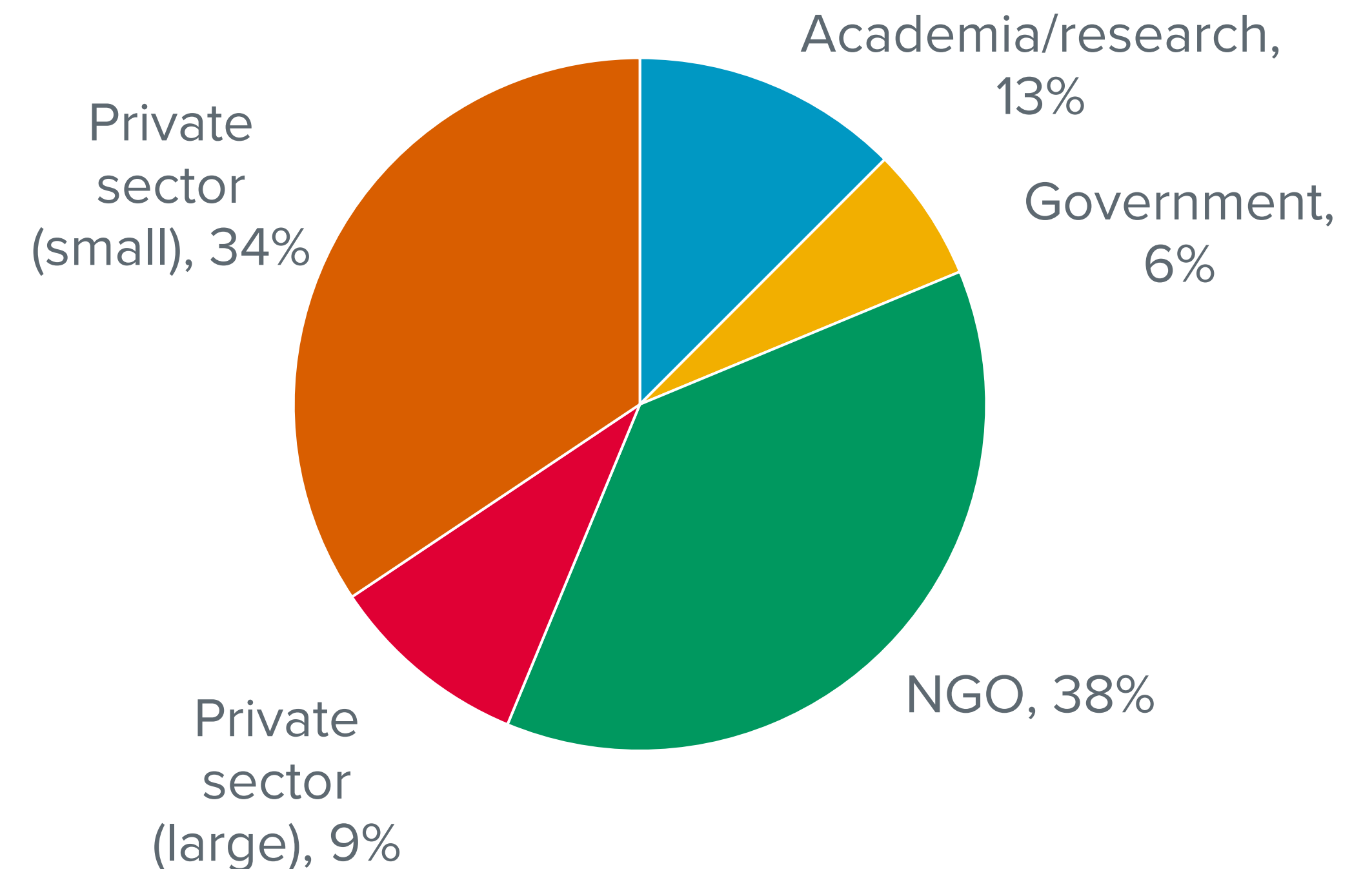
# Diverse ages and sectors provided input

Survey respondents were well-rounded in terms of age and sector. However, no one under 18 or above 65 completed the survey. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents were current or former GAIN employees.

**Survey Respondent Age**



**Survey Respondent Sector**



What is your age? (n=32)

What sector do you work in? (n=32)

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# Thank you!

## Contact

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