

Students with Disability Review

# Survey Summary Report: Catholic Education Office Staff

September 2020

## **Background**

*The CESA Students with Disability Review commissioned an independent company, Square Holes, to conduct five surveys to gain the perspective of individuals about the inclusion, learning and wellbeing of students with disability.*

*The surveys invited input from the following groups:*

- *parents/carers/guardians of students with disability*
- *members of the community*
- *principals of Catholic schools*
- *staff of Catholic schools: teachers, positions of responsibility, deputy principals and support staff*
- *staff in the Catholic Education Office.*

*The first pages in the Report present a synopsis of the responses that staff in the Catholic Education Office provided in their survey. It has been prepared by Ms Gerry Gray, a Disability Specialist and Advocate from NSW, whom the Review engaged to assist its independent approach.*

*The synopsis has been organised around the key sections of the survey that were organised to reflect each of the Disability Standards for Education. The survey synopsis begins with the general questions about inclusion. Where appropriate particular comments are selected to illustrate a feature of the responses.*

# SYNOPSIS

## Catholic Education Office Staff Survey Summary Report

It should be noted that CEO staff appeared to be from a diverse group of dedicated people who, possibly due to their roles, had knowledge of the area of education of students with disability from a minimal base through to extremely knowledgeable.

All agreed it was essential and accepted that all students are entitled to be thriving, capable learners and leaders of the world God desires.

### Culture of Inclusion

There was overwhelming agreement that the culture of CESA is very inclusive. However there was also the belief that the school and classroom practice of inclusiveness varies enormously.

There was an inference in responses that not all Catholic schools and services enrol students from diverse backgrounds: students with disability, Indigenous students, students from low SES, students from diverse language backgrounds.

The data indicates that not all staff have completed the eight modules on the NCCD website around the disability standards and if they have, the modules are not revisited or unpacked in professional discussion.

One response suggested that there is a need to look closely at a new paradigm around support and the inclusion of all students and investigate new ways to bring resourcing together so that all students and their families feel safe, supported and included.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Provide all CESA staff with opportunities to engage in professional learning and training around DDA, DSE and disability in general.
- Ensure system wide processes and procedures are in place to support schools in understanding their obligations in relation to the DDA and DSE.
- Utilise the skills of (CEO based) staff in providing professional learning and opportunities for professional conversations with schools more regularly.
- Increase staff training to develop awareness of obligations under the DDA and DSE and adjustments to meet the functional impact of disability and an understanding of imputed disability.
- Be open to listen to school leadership and staff in order to meet their needs and to work in collaboration with staff.
- Consider higher representation of diversity in all forms of CESA employment.
- Consider ways that schools, parents, allied health/NDIS and the CEO staff are able to work together to provide appropriate learning support.

## Enrolment and transition

*The Disability Standards for Education require schools to*

- *Take reasonable steps to ensure that the enrolment process is accessible.*
- *Consider students with disability in the same way as students without disability when deciding to offer a place.*
- *Consult with the prospective students or their associates about the effect of the disability on their ability to seek enrolment; and any reasonable adjustments necessary.*

Generally it was agreed that all families should have the opportunity to access a Catholic school that meets the needs of their child, is inclusive of all students, and its location is satisfactory.

Responses indicated a belief that, in the majority of cases, parents are given the opportunity and time to talk about their child's strengths and interests.

General opinion was that enrolment processes vary from school to school and that schools are observed making decisions as to whether they will enrol a child on the level of support they require, and whether or not they perceive they already have too many students who require adjustments. There is the need for greater consistency across the system.

Communication with families who have a child with a disability and are seeking information in regard to enrolment in a Catholic school may not be currently be responded to in a consistent and welcoming manner. This inconsistency provides a mixed message about the Catholic Education system being inclusive of all students.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Greater awareness of responsibility under the DDA and better supports and training to be put in place.
- Consult with the prospective students (or their associates) about the effect of the disability on their ability to seek enrolment and any reasonable adjustments necessary.
- Have clear processes and procedures in place to support schools in understanding their obligations in relation to the DDA and DSE.
- Provide professional learning and conversations more regularly.
- Provide up to date information about enrolment on the website.

## Learning and participation

*The Disability Standards for Education require schools to*

- *Take reasonable steps to ensure participation.*
- *Consult with the student or their associate about the effect of the disability on their ability to participate.*
- *Make a reasonable adjustment if necessary.*
- *Repeat this process over time as necessary.*
- *Enable students with disability to participate in learning experiences (including assessment and certification).*
- *Consult with the student or their associate.*
- *Take into consideration whether the disability affects the student's ability to participate in the learning experiences.*

Generally, it was felt that some schools/teachers do a great job at engaging students in the curriculum and communities. However, it was also felt that a greater understanding of the DDA and how to differentiate was required.

The expression “gatekeeping” appeared in a number of comments, to describe limited attempts at including students with disability without providing appropriate levels of support, professional learning and funding.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Less of a focus on standardised testing to determine success, student achievement and teacher efficacy and more focus on student centred learning than one-size-fits all pedagogical approaches.
- Cultural competency and disability training for all school leaders, staff, CEO staff
- Distinct pathways for students with disability from primary to secondary and general professional training to develop a greater understanding of what inclusion actually means and how to enact it.
- Increase funding to support students with complex needs, whilst also supporting schools with expert consultancy.
- Engage the whole school community to recognise the dignity of their peers who have disabilities and creating solid space for their talents and passions to be celebrated by the community.
- Stop withdrawing students into sensory rooms and learning centres, without evidence that it helps their education and wellbeing.

## Support services

*The Disability Standards for Education require schools to*

- *Ensure that students with disability are able to use general support services.*
- *Ensure that students have access to specialised support services.*
- *Facilitate the provision of specialised support services.*

There were few comments related to access to allied health – possibly as this issue may occur at school level, and not at Catholic Education Office level. However the following statement is worth consideration:

*“Often it has been a process of trial and error to locate great allied health professionals and expert practitioners. If we strengthen our culture of exceptional quality support services then we will all gain from this. At the moment there is little knowledge or understanding of what the system will provide and what each school is responsible for.”*

## Harassment

*The Disability Standards for Education require schools to*

- *Implement strategies to prevent harassment or victimisation.*
- *Take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and students are informed about their obligation not to harass or victimise students with disability.*
- *Take appropriate action if harassment or victimisation occurs.*
- *Ensure complaint mechanisms are available to students.*

Those who commented on this section spoke of the success of restorative practices in empowering students to express how they feel and what they need.

It was agreed that harassment issues should be dealt with as soon as possible. A restorative practice approach is required to ensure that all are heard and have an opportunity to resolve conflict. Having all staff trained in restorative practice and having a clear plan and process, which families and students are aware of, is believed to be the key.

There was a small number of responses that seemed to confuse harassment with behaviour and then relate behaviour to disability in a general way.



## School structures

In this section, staff were asked to consider the strengths and limitations of mainstream provision, special units and special schools.

### CEO staff observations about advantages and limitations of mainstream provision

The student is able to be catered for well with adjustments to access and participate in the curriculum on the same basis as their peers. Students have identity and belong to a school of choice. Teachers are professionally supported to improve their skills and able to cater for all learners

A limitation might be that students may sometimes feel a deep level of isolation and feelings of rejection.

### CEO staff observations about advantages and limitations of special units, and a combination of special units and mainstream settings (mostly in support of a combined unit and flexible mainstream approach)

A special unit in a school can provide the flexibility of more intense support required in areas where it is needed whilst still being part of a mainstream setting. It allows a flexible approach that offers a greater extent of support in some or at times all areas. It can provide a community within a community for students that promotes greater social opportunities.

A combined approach allows students to receive the support they need to manage social, emotional, peer and academic pressures of schooling along with the opportunity to participate in mainstream education.

### CEO staff observations about advantages and limitations of special schools

The main issue in this section was in relation to the small number of special schools and special settings in the Catholic Schools system, and the impression that this limits the schooling options for parents/legal guardians who have children and young people with complex needs, that require more than a mainstream setting.

It was noted that a special school or unit needs should have the appropriate staff, which is sometimes difficult. It was also noted that if placement has not been considered carefully and there has not been extensive family consultation, placement may not foster participation, access and achievement for students.

Special settings such as FAME, were supported by those who commented as providing a bridge between 'normal schools' and home schooling. Students can transition between school refusal and home schooling to gain the skills and capabilities to navigate their way back into formal education and work.



## Final Comments

The following excerpt from one staff member's response expresses it well:

*“Often we treat these as ‘special’ or ‘different’ when school structures should simply belong to the range of diverse models and support systems we provide to ensure that every young person can find their place in a catholic school and belong to a catholic community. The greater the diversity of educational models we can present to support every student in their journey as a capable learner, the more we will meet our calling to be an option for those at the margins.”*

*Ms Gerry Gray*

*Disability Education and Advocacy Consultant*

*September 2020*

# Students with Disability Review

## Catholic Education Office Staff Report

### CESA

#### **The Square Holes Team:**

Jason Dunstone [Managing Director]

Linley Bertram [Project Director]

Christine Dunstone [General Manager]

Dylan Jacob [Research Analyst]

#### **Data Collected:**

26 June to 6 August

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# Methodology & Approach

Square Holes hosted an online survey on behalf of Catholic Education South Australia for the 2020 Students with Disability Review.

Number of survey responses: 56

This project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252

# Detailed Findings

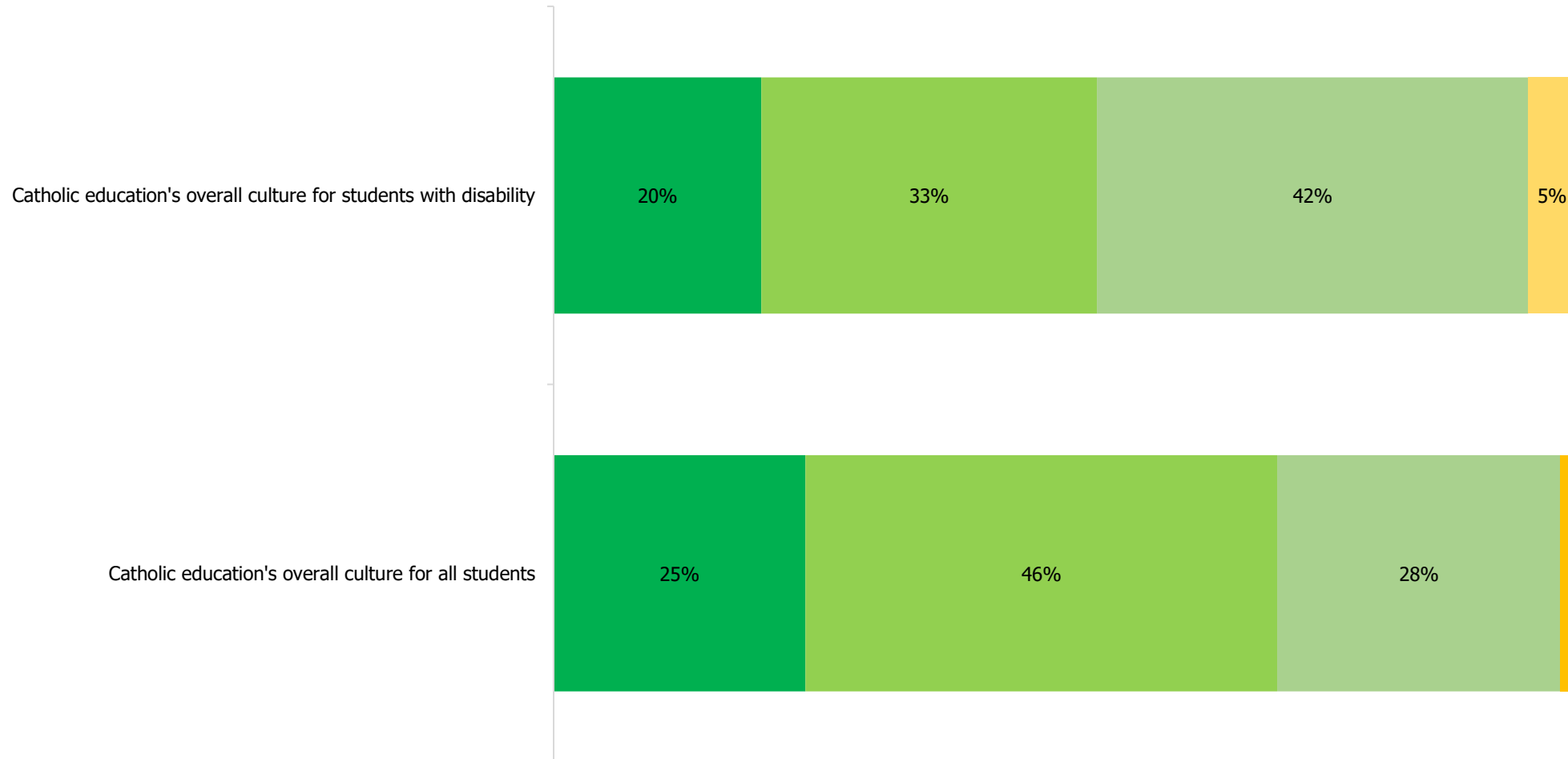
**Catholic Education Office (CEO) Staff**

# Inclusion

**How inclusive do you consider the following to be?**

[N/A responses removed]

■ 6 Extremely inclusive   
 ■ 5 Very inclusive   
 ■ 4 Somewhat inclusive   
 ■ 3 Somewhat not inclusive   
 ■ 2 Not very inclusive   
 ■ 1 Not at all inclusive



# Comments about Inclusion

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statement:

**Please indicate any suggestions you have about how Catholic education could be more inclusive**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

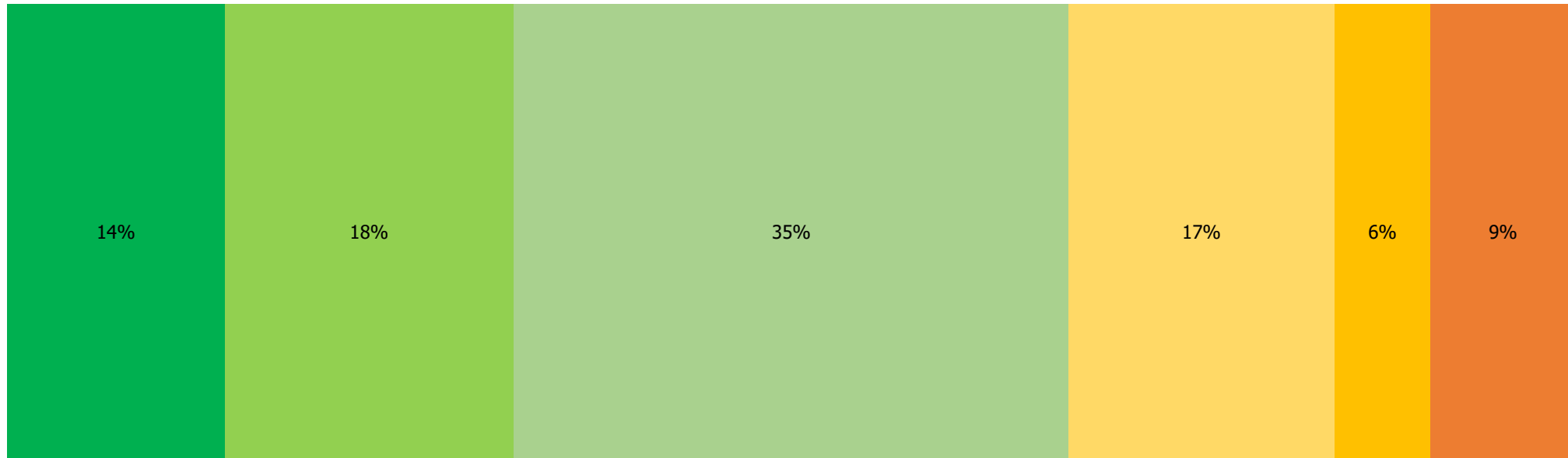
- Encourage enrolments across varied backgrounds including: disability, socio- economic, cultural etc
- Ensure that staff have training to support inclusive education



# Enrolment and Transition

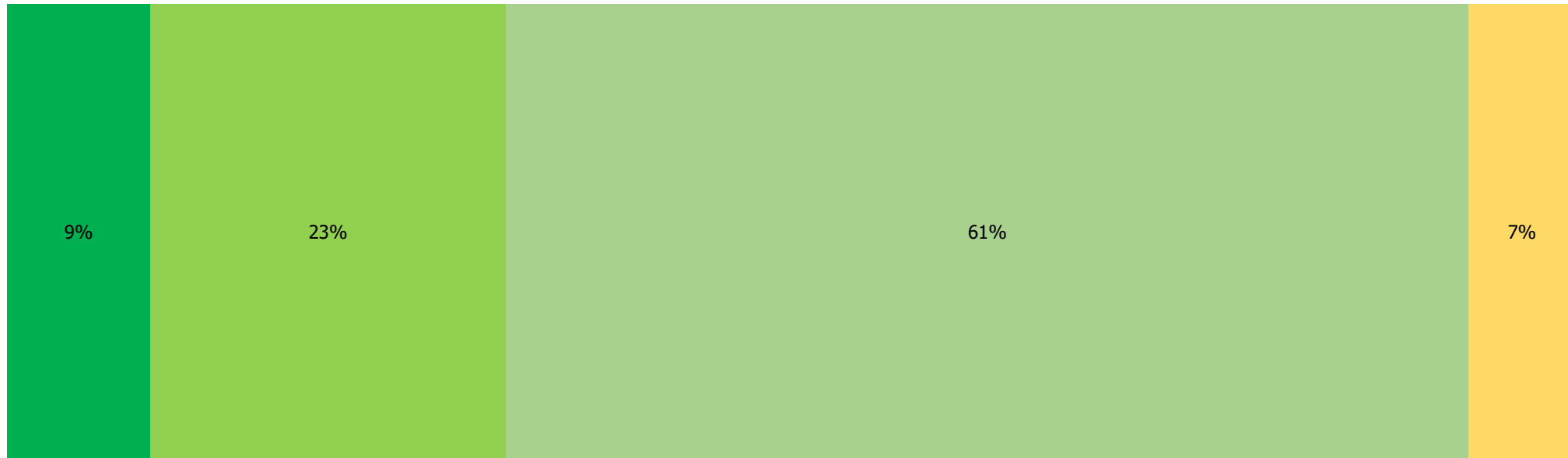
### To what extent are you familiar with the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Standards for Education?

6 Extremely familiar   5 Very familiar   4 Somewhat familiar   3 Somewhat unfamiliar   2 Very unfamiliar   1 Not at all familiar



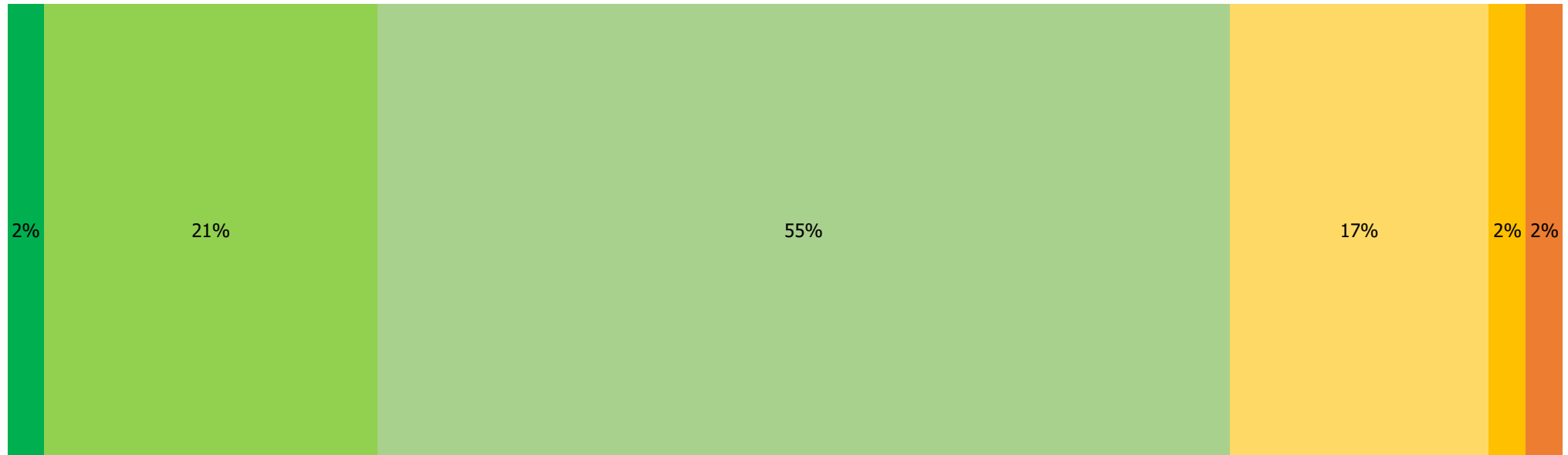
**How well does the enrolment process of Catholic schools recognise the needs of students with disability?**

■ 6 Extremely well   ■ 5 Very well   ■ 4 Somewhat well   ■ 3 Somewhat poor   ■ 2 Very poor   ■ 1 Extremely poor



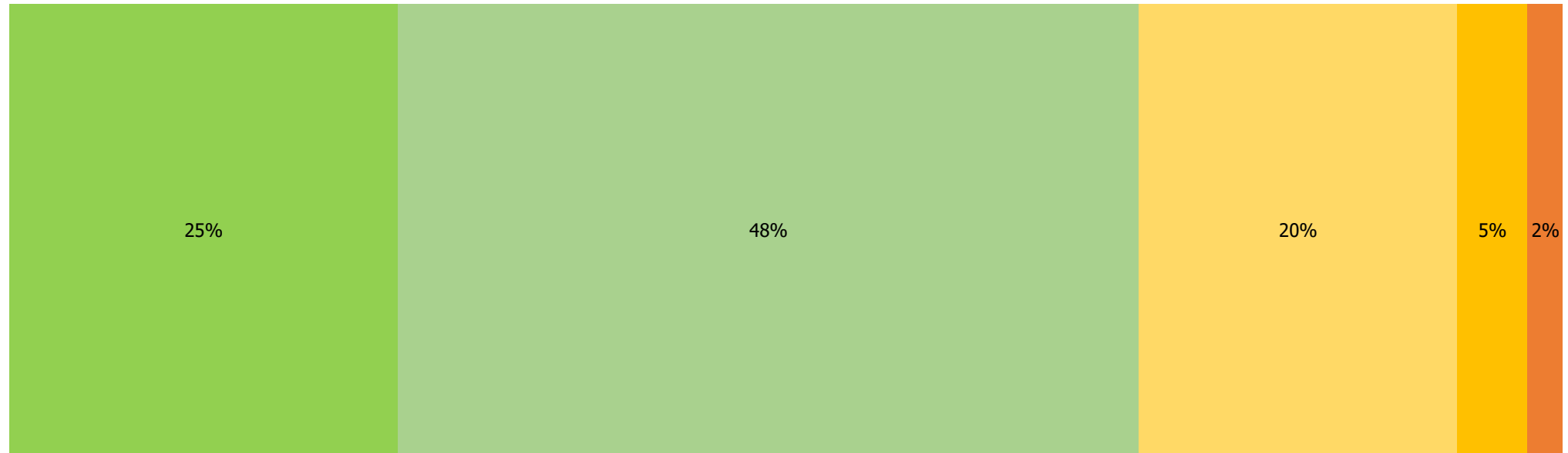
**How clearly does information provided by Catholic schools explain the choice of courses or programs for students with disability?**

■ 6 Extremely clear ■ 5 Very clear ■ 4 Somewhat clear ■ 3 Somewhat unclear ■ 2 Very unclear ■ 1 Not at all clear



**How clearly does information provided by Catholic schools explain about the settings in which students with disability can learn?**

■ 6 Extremely clear ■ 5 Very clear ■ 4 Somewhat clear ■ 3 Somewhat unclear ■ 2 Very unclear ■ 1 Not at all clear



**To what extent do parents/carers/guardians of students with disability find difficulties when enrolling in Catholic schools?**

[N/A responses removed]

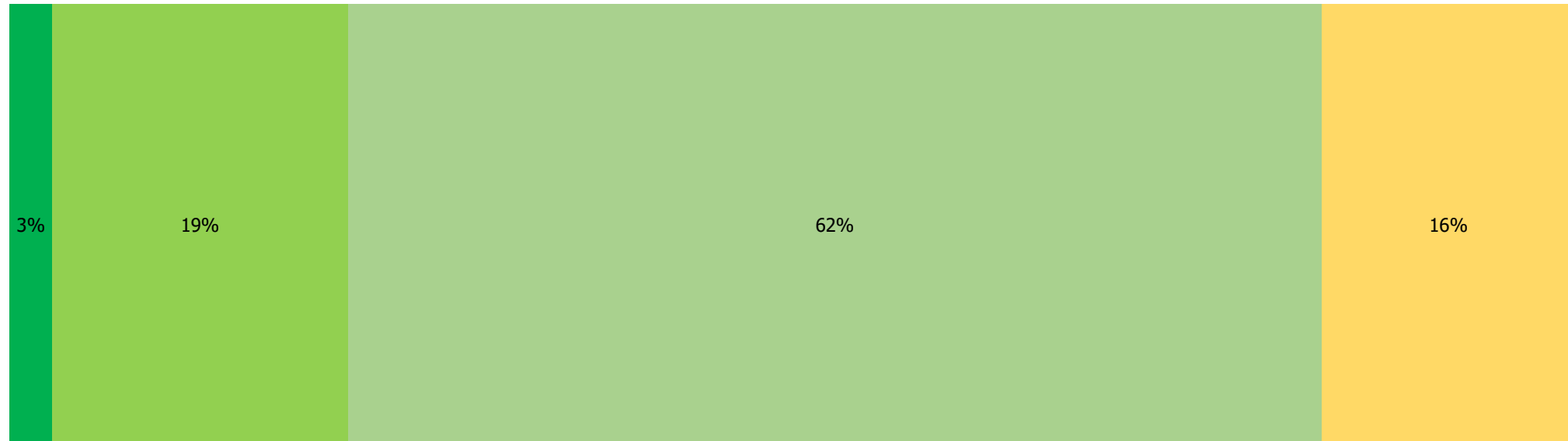
■ 6 No difficulty at all ■ 5 ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1 Extreme difficulty



**When students with disability first enroll in Reception, how effective is the transition process from their early years setting?**

[N/A responses removed]

■ 6 Extremely effective   ■ 5 Very effective   ■ 4 Somewhat effective   ■ 3 Somewhat ineffective   ■ 2 Very ineffective   ■ 1 Not at all effective

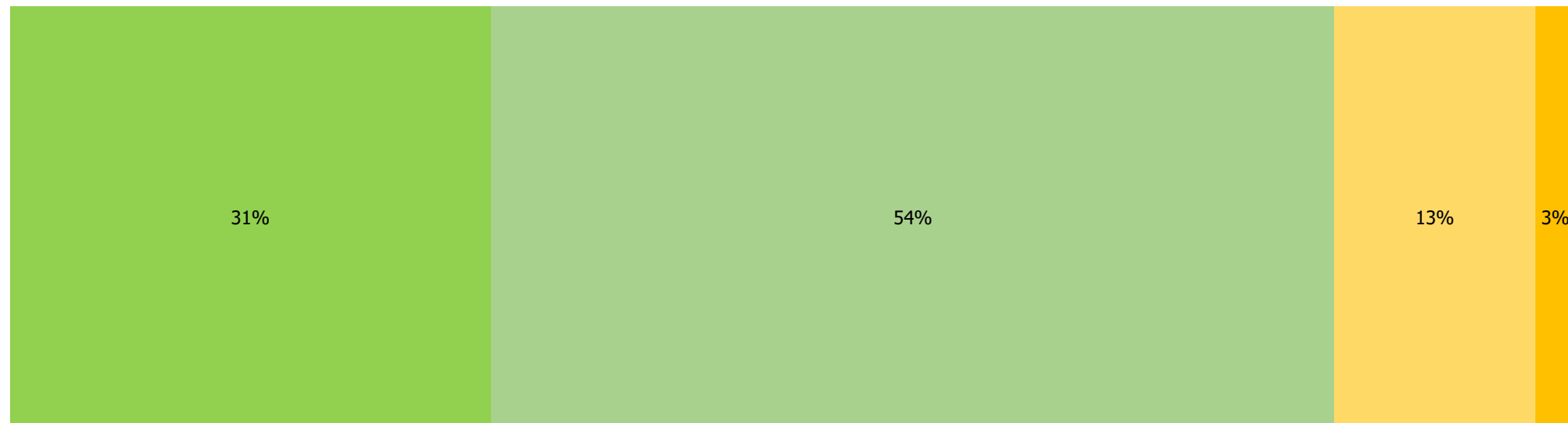




**Following the initial school enrolment of students with disability, how effective is the transition process into their future pathways (e.g. from primary to secondary, or secondary into post school options)?**

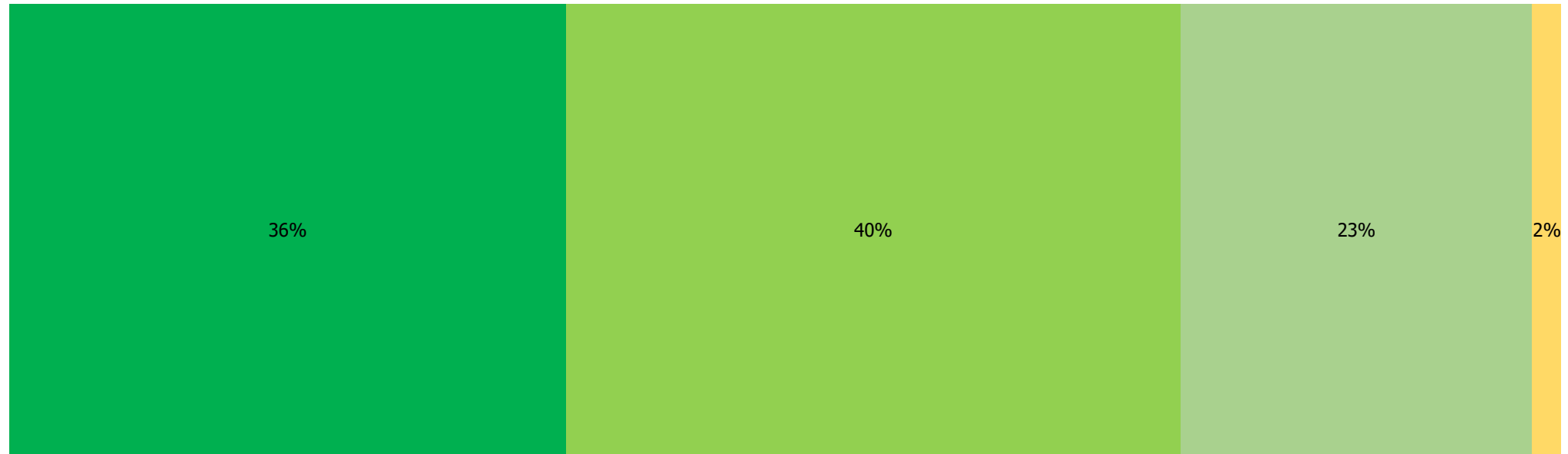
[N/A responses removed]

■ 6 Extremely effective ■ 5 Very effective ■ 4 Somewhat effective ■ 3 Somewhat ineffective ■ 2 Very ineffective ■ 1 Not at all effective



**To what extent should the CESA Enrolment Policy provide direction and guidance about the enrolment of Students with Additional Needs, including students with disability?**

■ 6 Extremely high extent   ■ 5 High extent   ■ 4 Some extent   ■ 3 Low extent   ■ 2 Very low extent   ■ 1 No extent at all



# Comments about Enrolment and Transition

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate what you think are the strengths of the enrolment and transition processes in Catholic schools for students with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Enrolment processes vary from school to school, however, it is important that communication between parents and school commences well before enrolment.

## **Please indicate what you think the enrolment and transition processes in Catholic schools for students with disability should do less of or stop doing**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Overpromising
- Not seeking enough information/ or outdated information

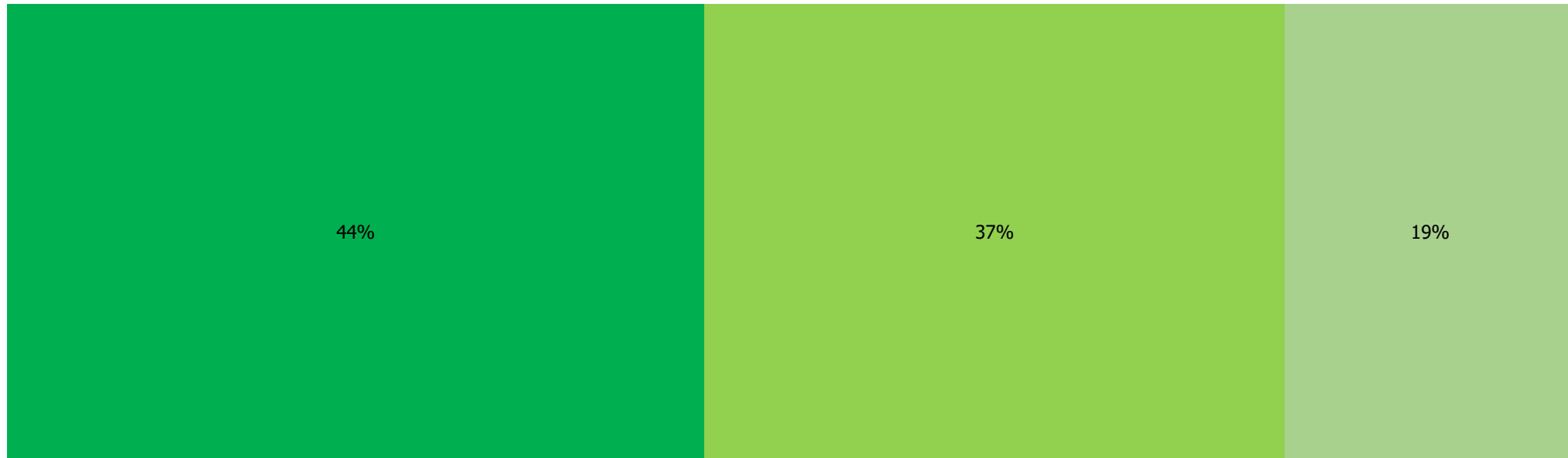
## **Please indicate how the enrolment and transition processes in Catholic schools for students with disability can best improve**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Ensure that families are supported throughout the enrolment and transition process
- Consistent processes

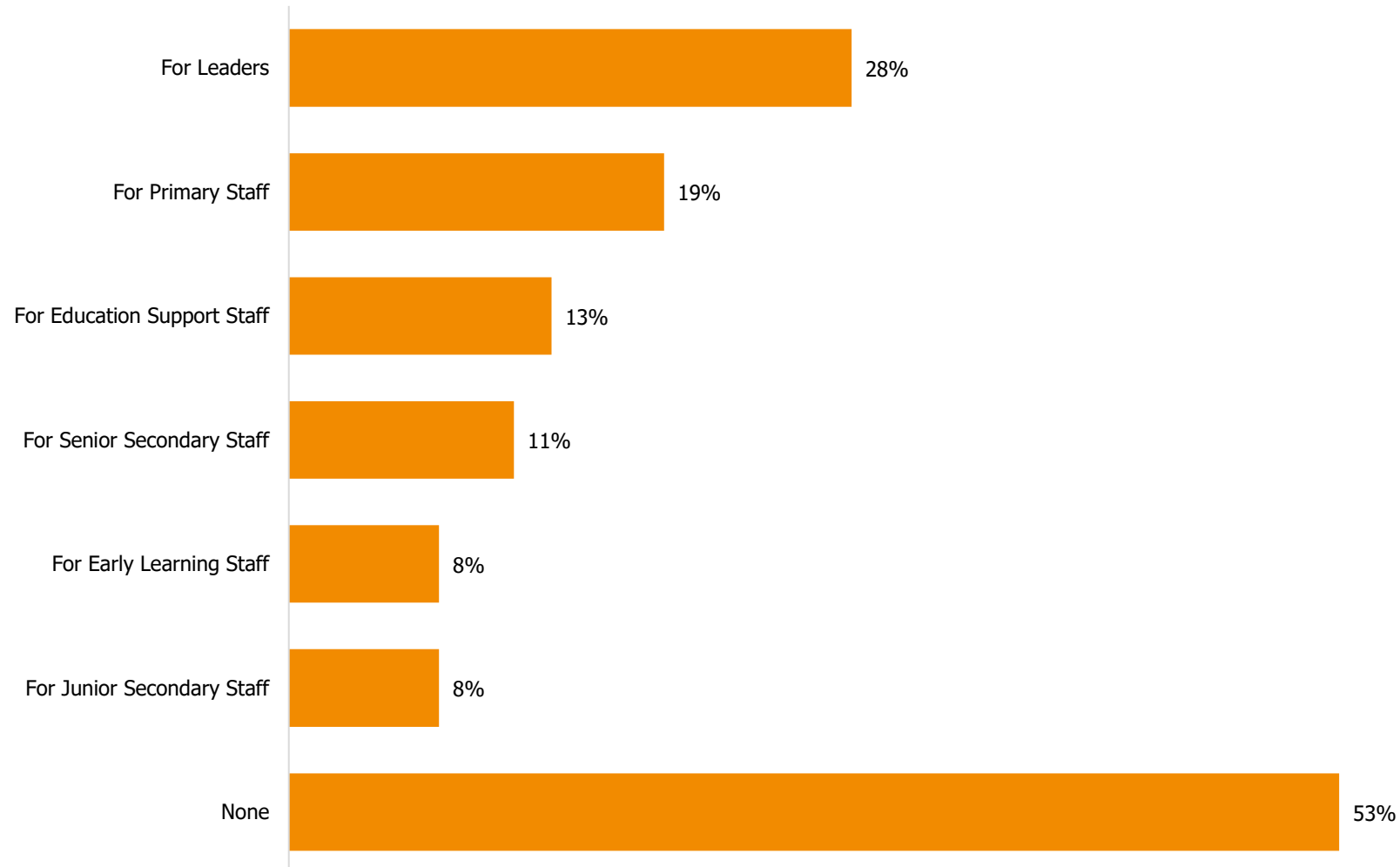
**To what extent should the CESA Disability Policy provide direction and guidance about the enrolment of students with disability?**

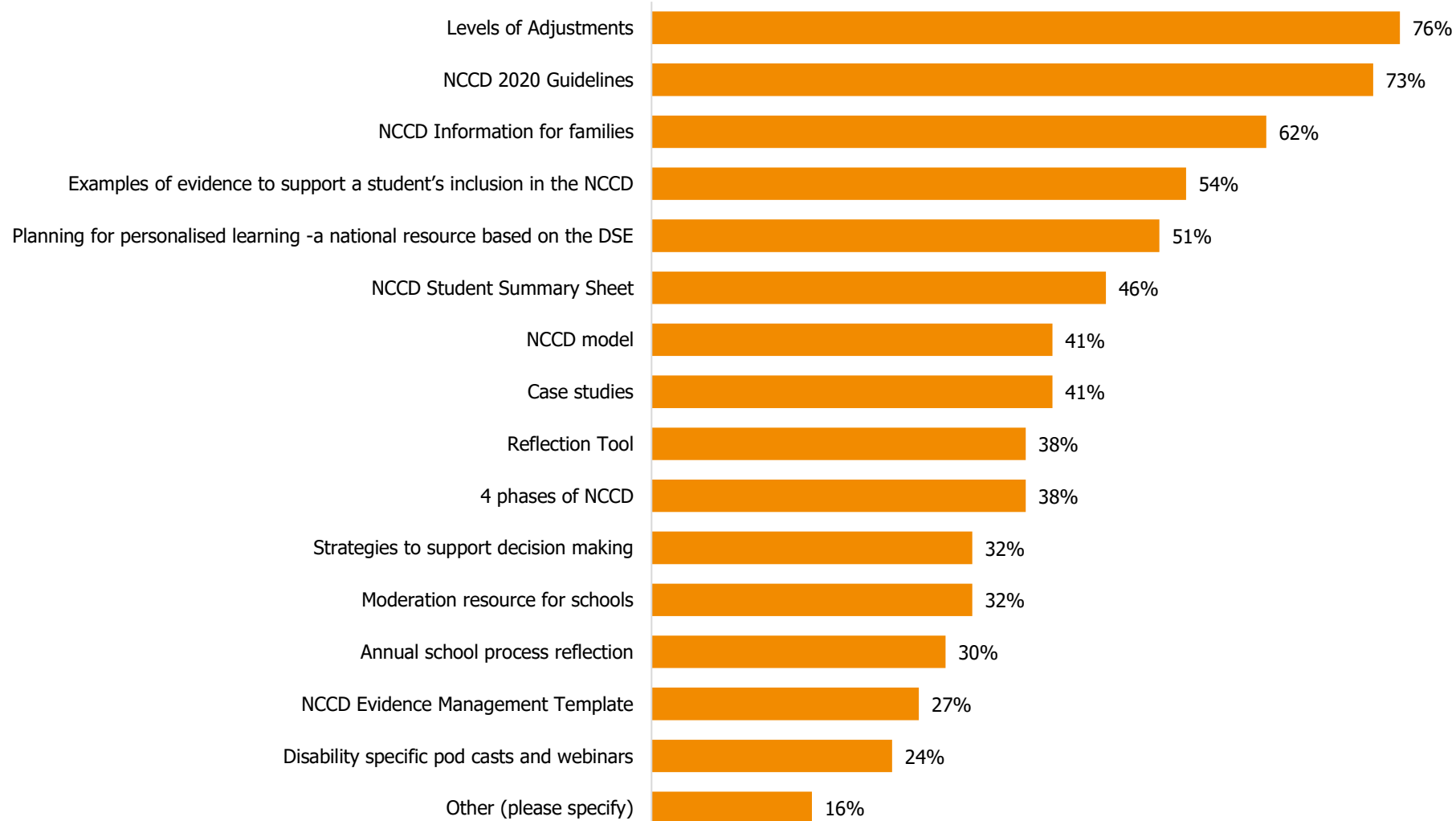
■ 6 Extremely high extent   ■ 5 High extent   ■ 4 Some extent   ■ 3 Low extent   ■ 2 Very low extent   ■ 1 No extent at all



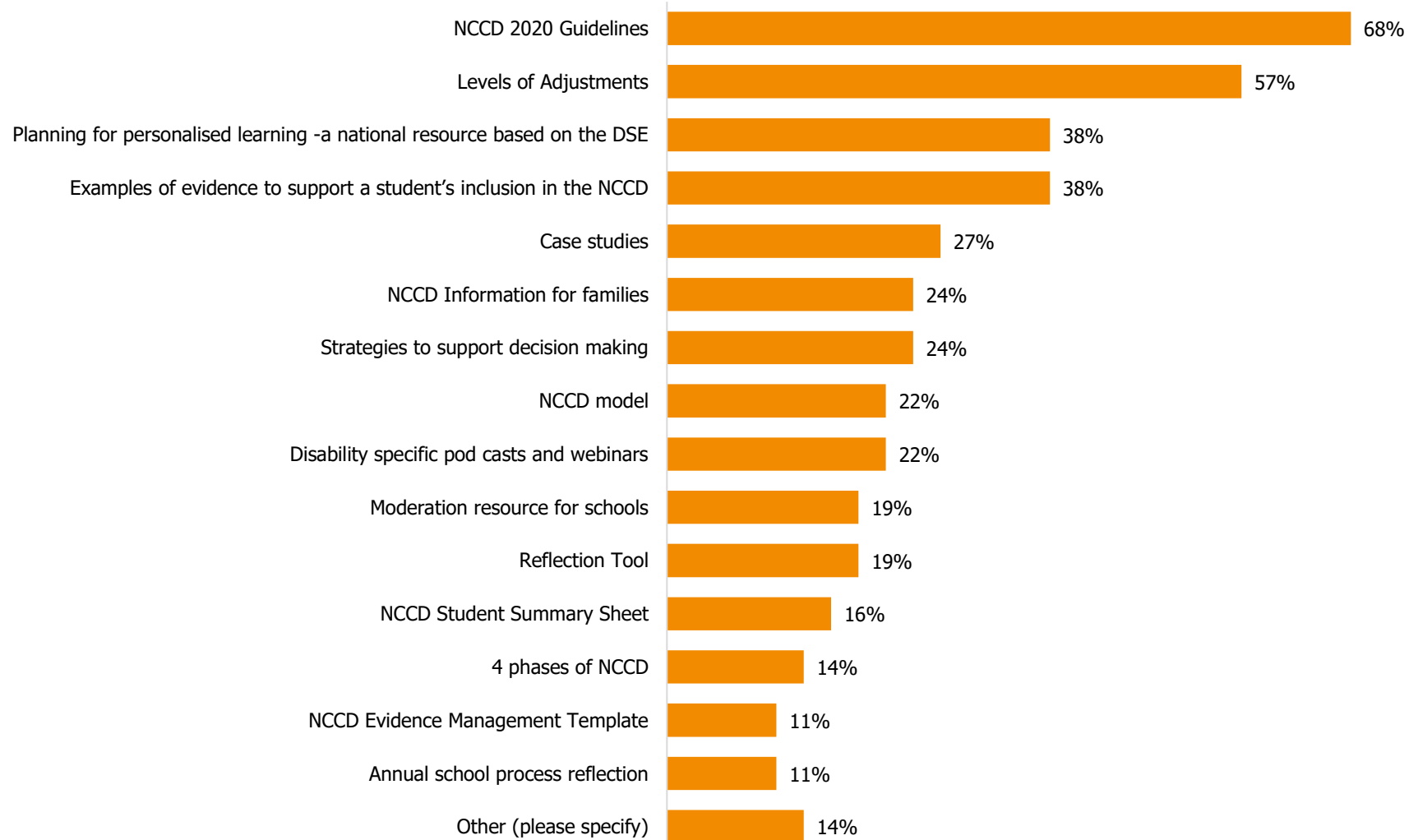
# Student participation and learning

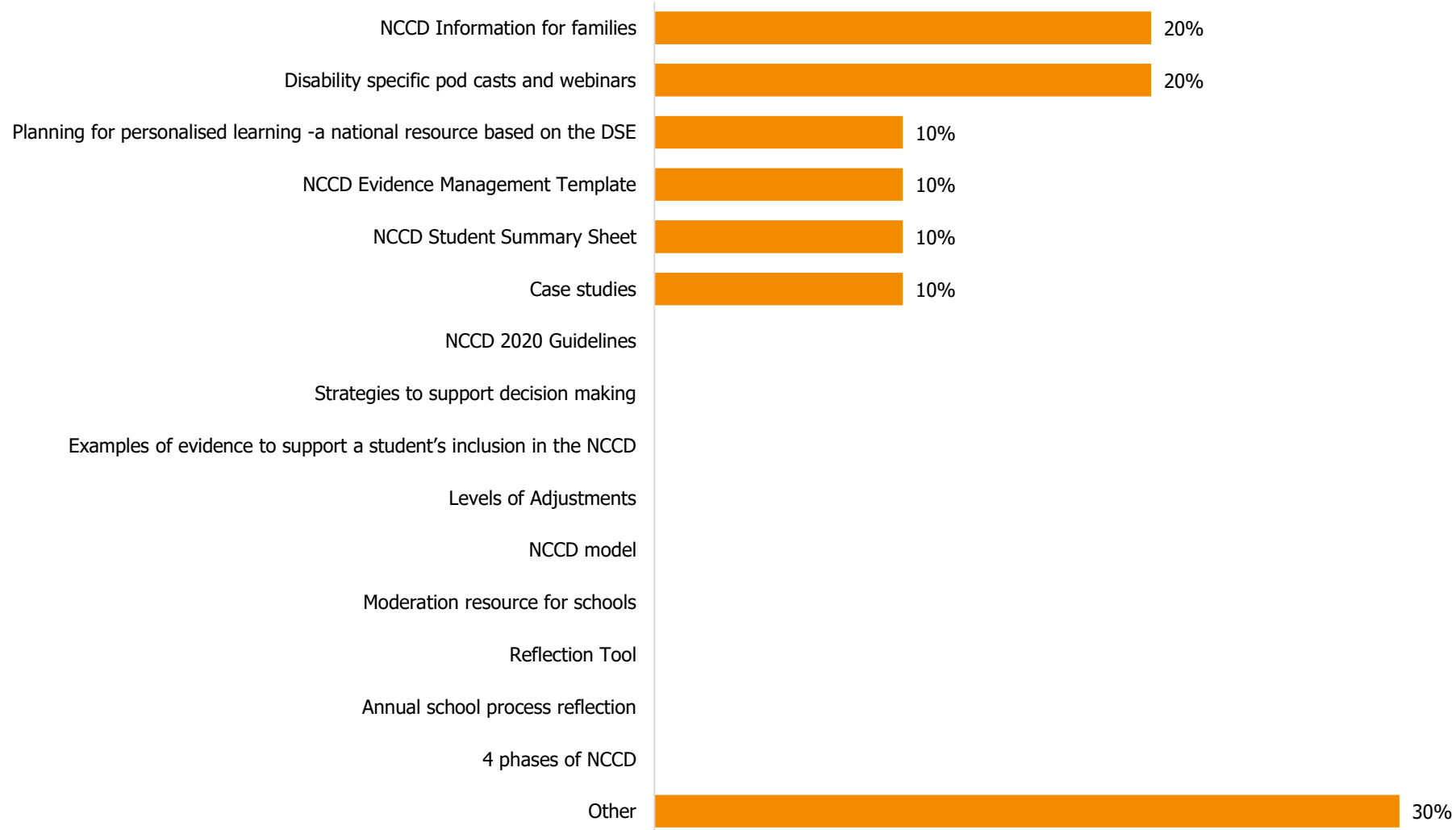
**If you have you completed the Disability Standards for Education E-Learning Modules, please indicate which**



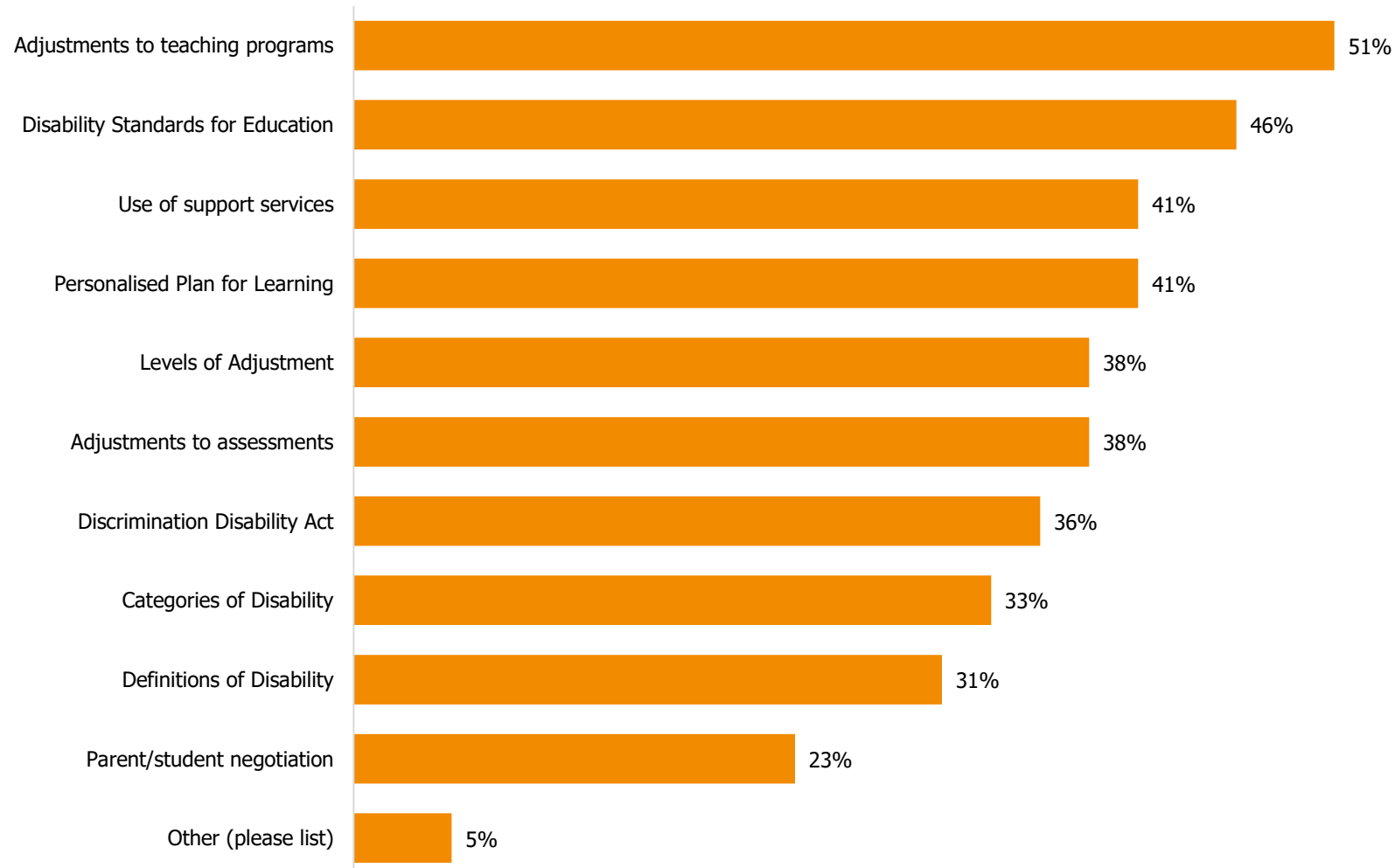
**Please indicate which resources on the NCCD website you have used**



**Please indicate which resources you found most useful**

**Please indicate which resources you found least useful**

**Please indicate the areas where your professional learning about inclusion, learning and wellbeing for students with disability is most needed**



**To what extent should the CESA Disability Policy provide Catholic schools with guidance about inclusion, learning and wellbeing for students with disability?**

■ 6 Extremely high extent ■ 5 High extent ■ 4 Some extent ■ 3 Low extent ■ 2 Very low extent ■ 1 No extent at all



**To what extent do you consider CESA should provide additional guidelines and assistance to schools in enabling the inclusion, learning and wellbeing of students with disability?**

■ 6 Extremely high extent ■ 5 High extent ■ 4 Some extent ■ 3 Low extent ■ 2 Very low extent ■ 1 No extent at all



# Comments about Participation and Learning

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate the strengths of how Catholic schools assist inclusion, learning and wellbeing for students with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Catholic schools are considered to deeply care about the welfare of all students.

## **Please indicate what you think Catholic schools should do less of or stop doing to assist inclusion, learning and wellbeing for students with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Responses were varied ranging from lack of resources and not providing adequate support for students.

## **Please indicate how Catholic schools can best improve inclusion, learning and wellbeing for students with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

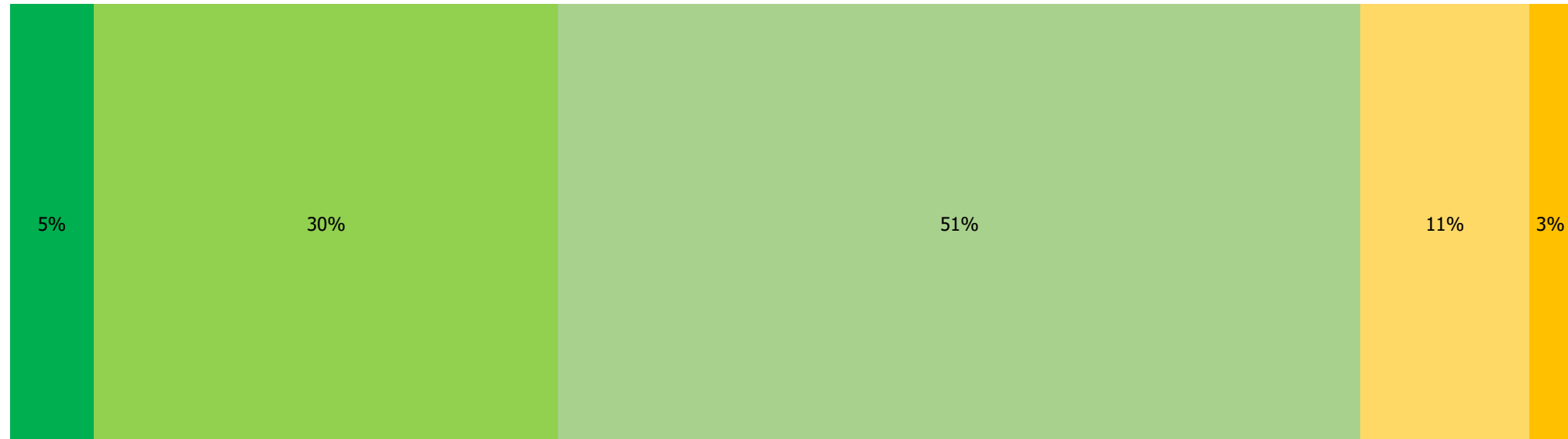
- Continue to provide staff and school community education to support students with disability

# Support services

### How effective are the internal support services Catholic schools use to assist the learning and wellbeing of students with disability?

[N/A responses removed]

■ 6 Extremely effective   ■ 5 Very effective   ■ 4 Somewhat effective   ■ 3 Somewhat ineffective   ■ 2 Very ineffective   ■ 1 Not at all effective

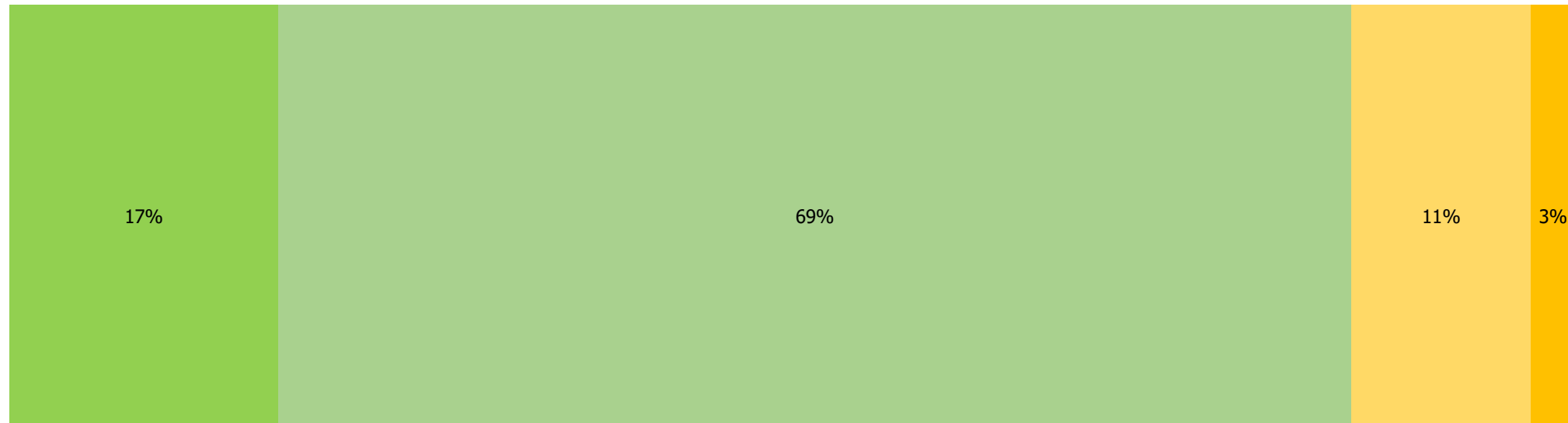




**To what extent do Catholic schools have an understanding of and liaison with allied health and specialist services (or reports provided by them) to assist the learning and wellbeing of students with disability**

[N/A responses removed]

■ 6 Extremely high extent ■ 5 High extent ■ 4 Some extent ■ 3 Low extent ■ 2 Very low extent ■ 1 No extent at all



# Comments about Support Services

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate the strengths of the internal and/or external support services for students with disability in Catholic schools**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Access to allied health professionals [varied across schools]

## **Please indicate what you think Catholic schools should do less of or stop doing in its internal and/or external support services for students with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Teachers should not approach the education of students with disability as a personal mission to 'fix' the child, rather have a clear picture of their current abilities and the capacity to extend them.
- Having external supports work in isolation from the teacher. Not sharing information. Not working as a team.
- Staff may not be aware of the range of external support services available

## **Please indicate how Catholic schools can best improve its internal and/or external support services for students with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Build stronger relationships with support services to increase consistency and communication

# Eliminating harassment

**To what extent do you consider the strategies and programs of Catholic schools are effective in preventing harassment of students with disability?**

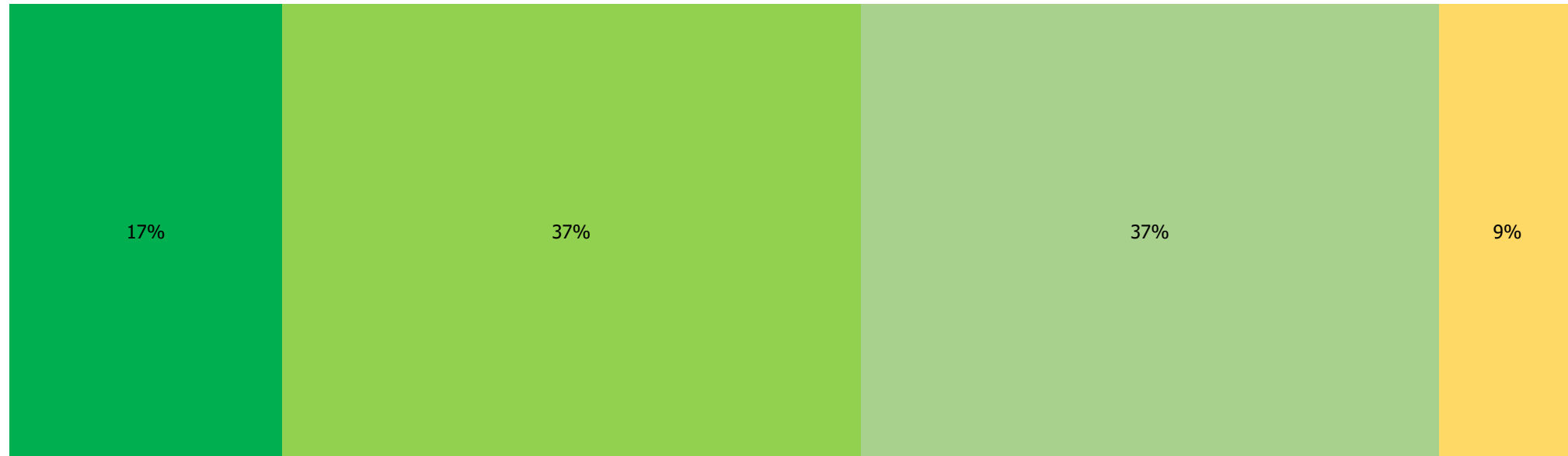
[N/A responses removed]

■ 6 Extremely effective   ■ 5 Very effective   ■ 4 Somewhat effective   ■ 3 Somewhat ineffective   ■ 2 Very ineffective   ■ 1 Not at all effective



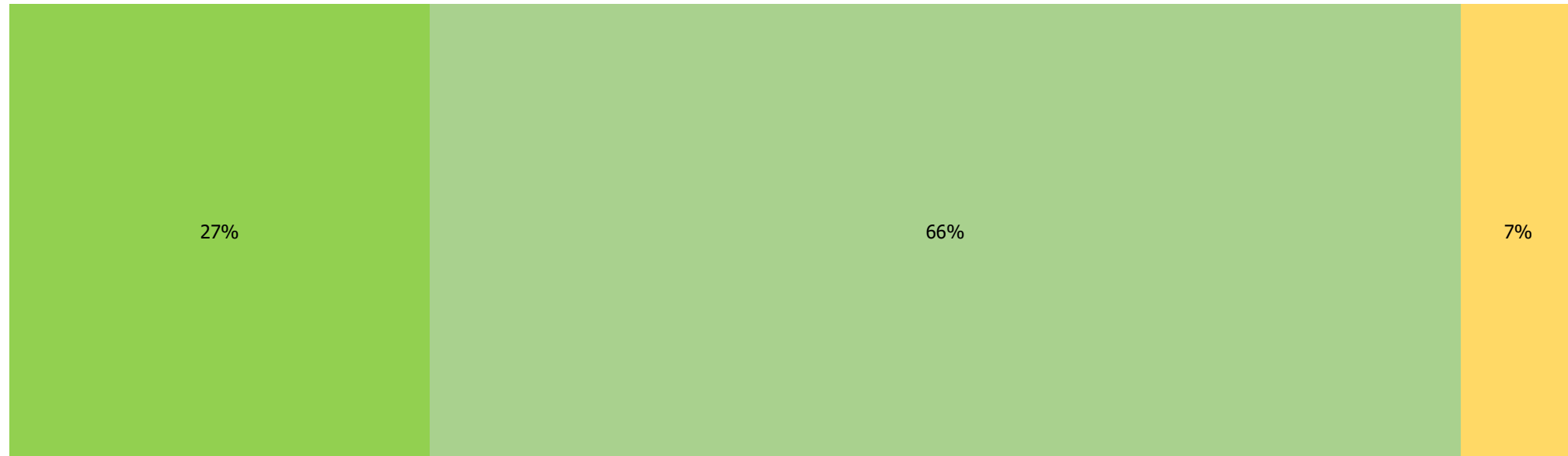
**To what extent do you consider Catholic schools make it clear that all students have the obligation to ensure students with disability are free of harassment?**

■ 6 Extremely high extent ■ 5 High extent ■ 4 Some extent ■ 3 Low extent ■ 2 Very low extent ■ 1 No extent at all



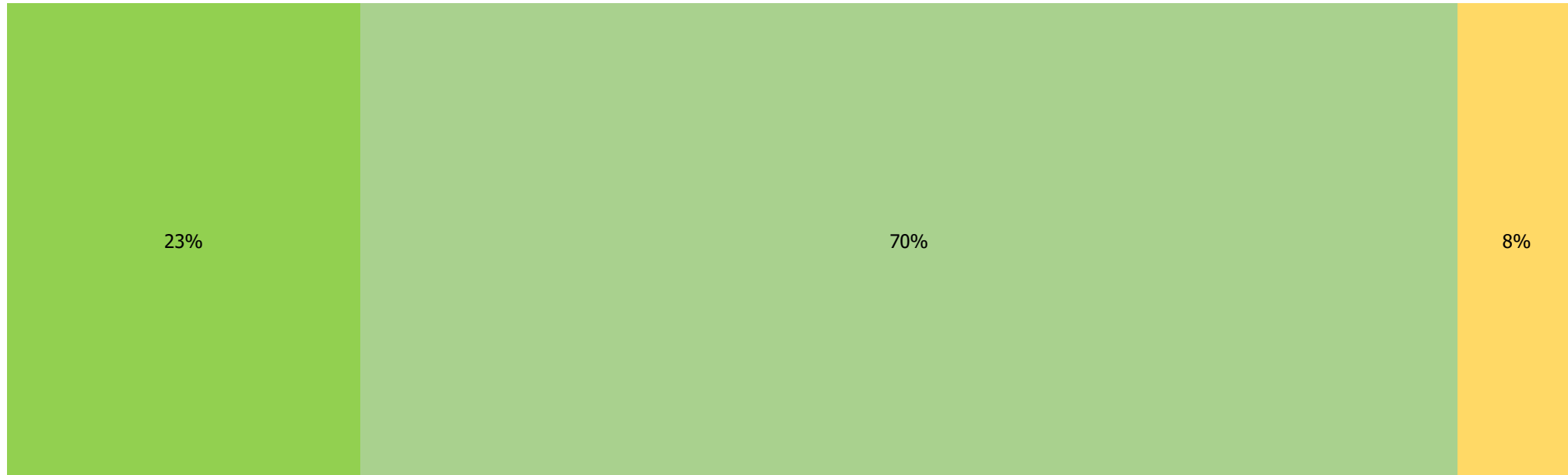
**To what extent are the complaint mechanisms of Catholic schools effective for a student who is harassed?**

■ 6 Extremely high extent ■ 5 High extent ■ 4 Some extent ■ 3 Low extent ■ 2 Very low extent ■ 1 No extent at all



**To what extent are the actions of Catholic schools effective in resolving instances of harassment?**

■ 6 Extremely high extent ■ 5 High extent ■ 4 Some extent ■ 3 Low extent ■ 2 Very low extent ■ 1 No extent at all



# Comments about Harassment

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

**Please indicate the strengths of the culture and strategies of Catholic schools for dealing with the harassment of students, including those with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Whole school approaches

**Please indicate what you think Catholic schools should do less of or stop doing in their culture and strategies for dealing with the harassment of students, including those with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Not providing education around what is harassment
- Not dealing with harassment that occurs online and in and beyond school
- Teaching to one level of students. Giving students lower grades due to adjustments. Looking for alternative places for students with disability rather than being creative about how they can provide what the students needs.

**Please indicate how Catholic schools can best improve their culture and strategies for dealing with the harassment of students, including those with disability**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Ensuring all children feel safe and supported

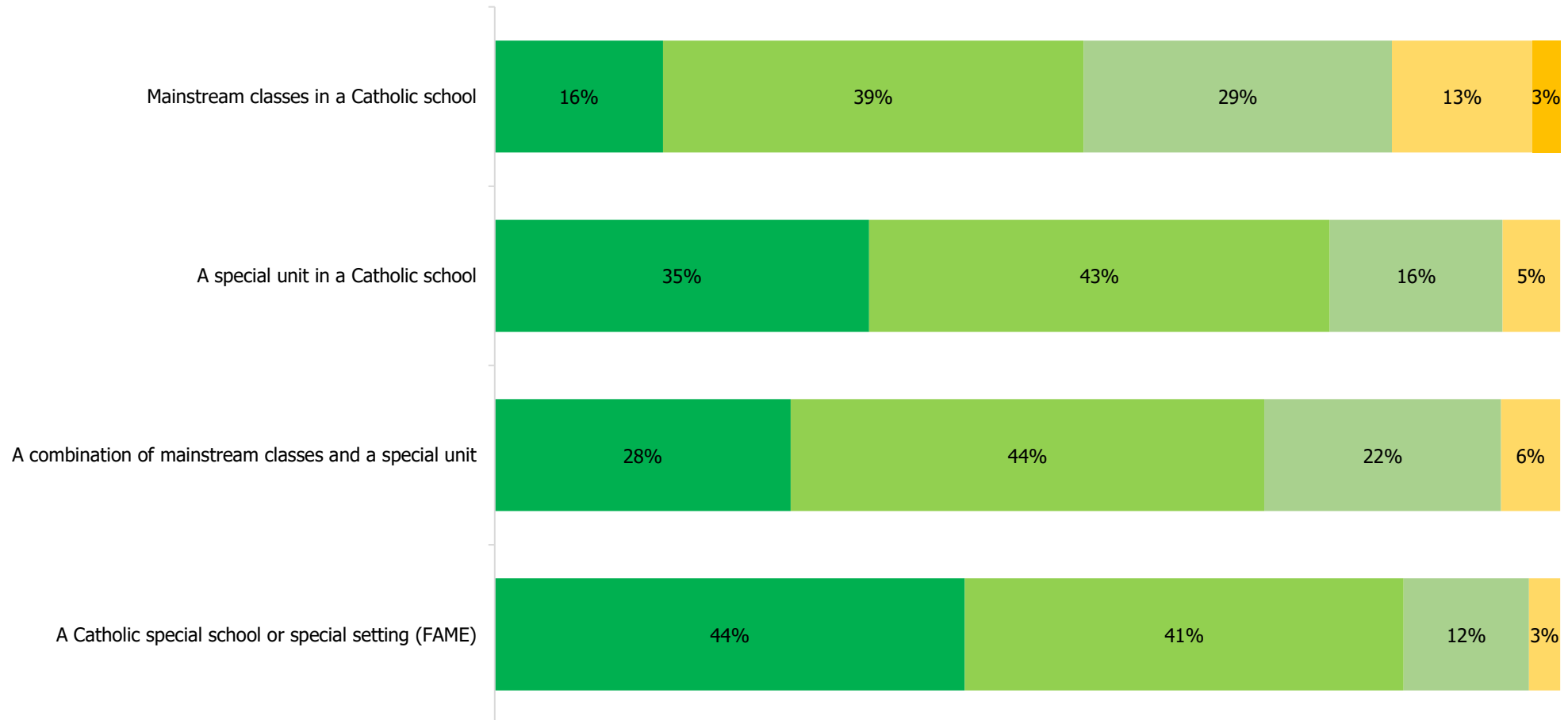


# School structures

**To what extent do you consider these structures (below) as effective in providing inclusion, learning and wellbeing of students with disability**

[Don't know responses removed]

6 Extremely effective   5 Very effective   4 Somewhat effective   3 Somewhat ineffective   2 Very ineffective   1 Not at all effective



# Comments about mainstream provision

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate the strengths of mainstream classes in a Catholic school**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Brings all students together
- Greater opportunities to participate in the full curriculum

## **Please indicate the limitations of mainstream classes in a Catholic school**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Depends on level of support required
- Limited teacher skills/ time

# Comments about special units

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate the strengths of a special unit in a Catholic school**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Specialised support
- Smaller class sizes

## **Please indicate the limitations of a special unit in a Catholic school**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Isolation of students

# Comments about a combination of mainstream classes and a special unit

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate the strengths of a combination of mainstream classes and a special unit**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Choice
- Inclusion

## **Please indicate the limitations of a combination of mainstream classes and a special unit**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- Depends on the level of support available

# Comments about special schools and special settings

Staff were invited to provide comments in response to the following statements:

## **Please indicate the strengths of a Catholic special school or special setting (FAME)**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphases in the comments:

- Provides an option for those with complex needs
- Specialist teachers and support staff

## **Please indicate the limitations of a Catholic special school or special setting (FAME)**

A range of comments were provided. The Square Holes analysis identified the following main emphasis in the comments:

- There are only a small of special schools and special settings in the Catholic schools system, which limits the schooling options for parents/legal guardians who have children and young people with complex needs that require more than a mainstream setting.

**Square Holes**

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