

Results for project “Communication is the path to integration” No. 2018-1-LT01-KA204-046976

CONTEXT

Nowadays, the focus is on the employment of people with disabilities, but successful integration solutions cannot be solved without solving the communication problems. One of the most important and essential human needs is communication. However, communication difficulties cause several levels of problems: the levels of the disabled person, his relatives and those around him. Other people have difficulty understanding even their basic needs due to the language comprehension and communication difficulties of a person with a disability. Both people with a mental disability and those around them suffer from stress because they are unable to express the need for help. Only a person who is able to communicate can integrate into society and participate in various activities with everyone, while improving their socialization, can show their emotions without complexes and not feel alone. Unfortunately, people with disabilities are not always able to easily express their feelings. The aim of this project was to find communication opportunities and solve emerging problems, to apply the best methods of communication that would allow to express the opinions and feelings of people with mental and intellectual disabilities.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve people with disabilities communication skills.
- Reduce persons with disabilities exclusion.
- To develop professional and social skills, promote the socialization of individuals (get new competences).
- To help people with disabilities participate in all spheres of life making them equal opportunities.
- Run non-formal education for people with disabilities.
- To share and develop communications methodologies to help people with disabilities develop self-awareness, social skills and their understanding of the value.
- To create conditions for employees to acquire new competencies in working with the disabled
- Broadening the circle of communication and cooperation between the Europe countries.
- To make equal opportunities for people with disabilities to learn about other countries and their culture make friends with other.
- Ensure the quality of social services.
- Ensure the dignity and equal rights of persons with disabilities.
- Change the attitude towards people with disabilities not only at the regional level but also international level.
- Through this partnership, European countries will gain new knowledge about the best practices of European countries.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

During the project implementation, 2 local meetings were organized in Lithuania and Iceland. The meetings organized in Lithuania and Iceland were attended by 2-3 employees of the organization and 1 person with a mental or complex disability from each country. The third remote meeting was attended by 3-12 employees and 6-15 disabled people with mental or complex disabilities from each country. We note that the project envisaged who from each country had to participate with 1 disabled person and 3-4 employees. A total of 14 employees and 6 disabled people had to attend according to the plan. Due to the fact that the third meeting was organized remotely and there were many people willing to participate in the project activities, a total of 31 employees and 31 people with disabilities participated in the activities. (That is, 17 more employees and 25 more people with disabilities participated in the project activities than planned.) The number of project participants significantly exceeded the number planned for the project.

At each meeting, each country presented methods for improving communication skills in their organizations. Jonava district people with disabilities activity center presented the methodological tool “Communication via picture”. The Haefingarstodin Baejarhrauni center introduced the AAC method. Strázsa Tanya Közhasznú Szocial Szövetkezet presented the drama as a communication method.

RESULTS

In order to properly implement the project, all project partners cooperated with each other to develop project efficiency measurement tools. These measures were designed to measure the results achieved by the project. In order to ensure the success of the ongoing project, a precise and detailed implementation plan was developed together with the project partners.

State analysis

At the beginning of the project, one of the most important tasks for each partner institution was to find out how effective their methods are for the target group of clients and what knowledge each organization would need. Therefore, a “State analysis” was performed to find out the situation of each organization. The main task of the “State analysis” was to find out how many communication difficulties people with disabilities have in the institution and to identify the nature of these difficulties? What kind of difficulties (verbalization, perception, speech apparatus, etc.) This stage also sought to find out how effective the tools used at the center are (for whom they are effective, why they are ineffective for others, what staff do to talk to young people, what technical assistance they should do the same). In this way, customers for whom the available methodologies are insufficient or ineffective were identified and the type of measures they would need was determined. The information obtained was useful and necessary in order to organize mobility in a high-quality and efficient way, taking into account the needs of each institution..

The evaluation found that there are individuals with communication difficulties in each organization. In the Haefingarstodin Baejarhrauni center 24 persons with disabilities have communication difficulties, Jonava distric people with disabilities activity center - 25 persons and Strázsa Tanya Közhasznú Szocial Szövetkezet -8 persons. Both verbal comprehension and language difficulties were identified during the survey. This means that many people with disabilities have a complex disability. Therefore, only one method of communication in an institution is not effective. Some need a method for them to understand verbal information, others for them to be able to express their thoughts orally. Therefore, if the organizations participating in the project learn 2 additional methods, it will be possible to apply them according to the needs and possibilities of the disabled person. All organizations unanimously stated that it would be very useful for them to learn about other methods of communication. All organizations also noted that both staff and people with disabilities were keen to participate in project activities and learn more about the communication methods used by other countries.

Selection form

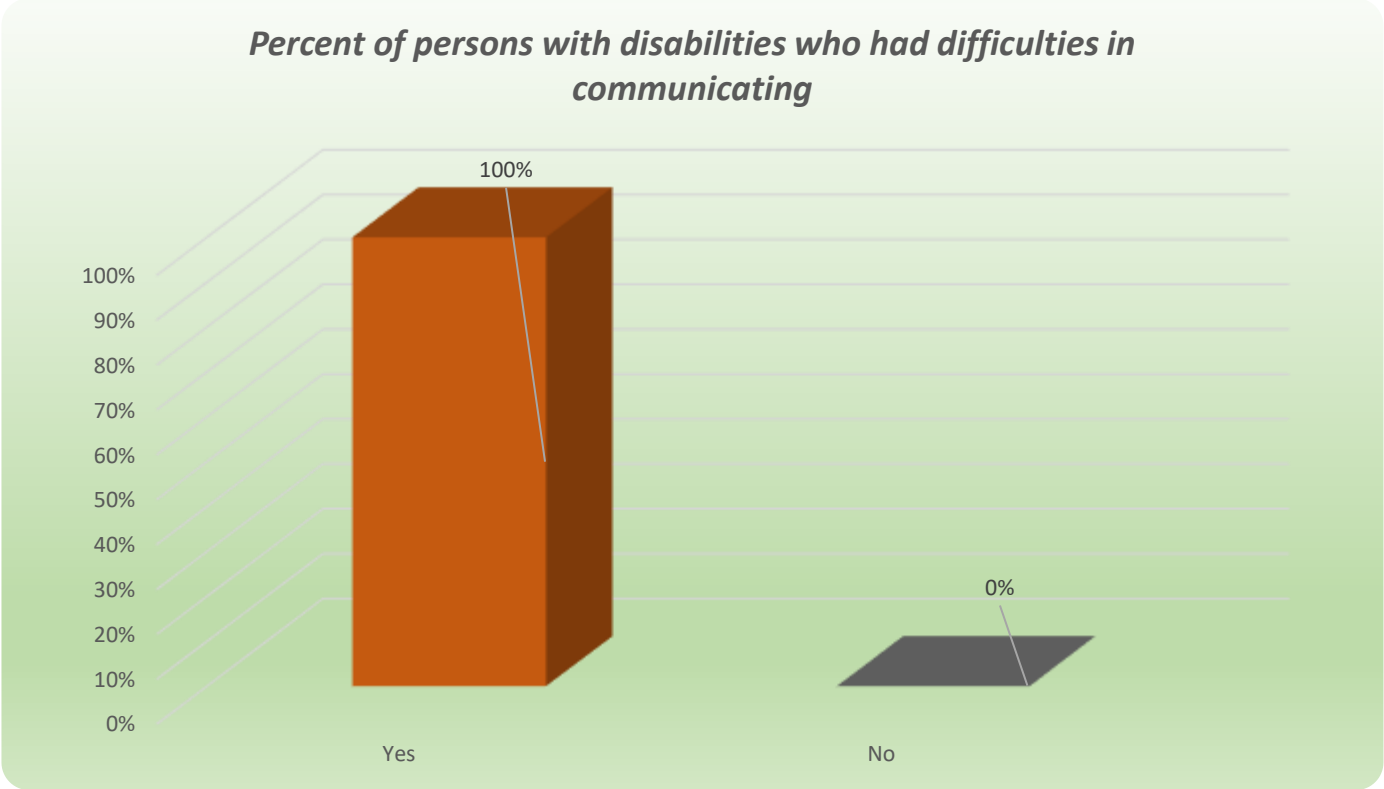
In order to qualitatively assimilate and use new knowledge, the aim was also to find out the level of motivation of employees and disabled people to acquire new skills and methods. In order to enable the most motivated employees and people with disabilities to participate in the further stages of the project. Before going to each mobility, everyone who wanted to take part in the project had to fill in a selection form. The sampling questionnaires were made up of two types (one for employees, the other for the disabled). Based on this survey, selection priorities were identified for what should happen to the mobilities. These questionnaires helped the institutions to select the most motivated project participants who wanted to participate in the project activities. The selection of people with disabilities for mobility also took into account their communication skills in order to make the project activities more effective. Mobility activities were planned based on these questionnaires.

Pre and post tests

Pre- and post-questionnaires were prepared to measure the usefulness of mobility. The pre-test was completed before the mobility and reflected the expectations of the project participant. Based on the expectations received, a post-test questionnaire was developed. The post-test questionnaire assessed the extent to which expectations or levels of mobility utility were achieved during the project. These questionnaires were made up of two types, one for employees and one for the disabled.

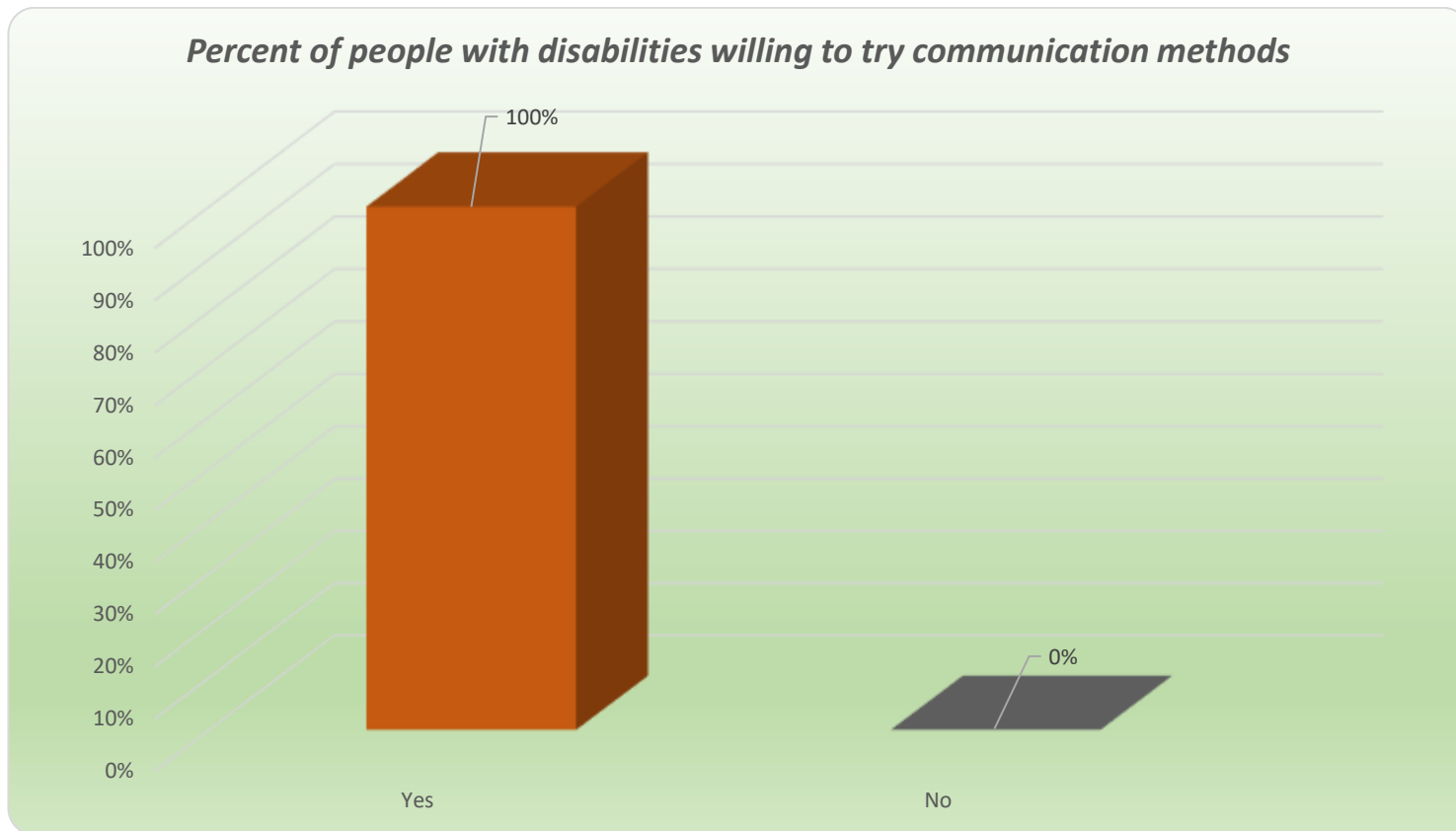
Each disabled person who participated in the project activities had one or another communication difficulty (picture 1).

Picture 1



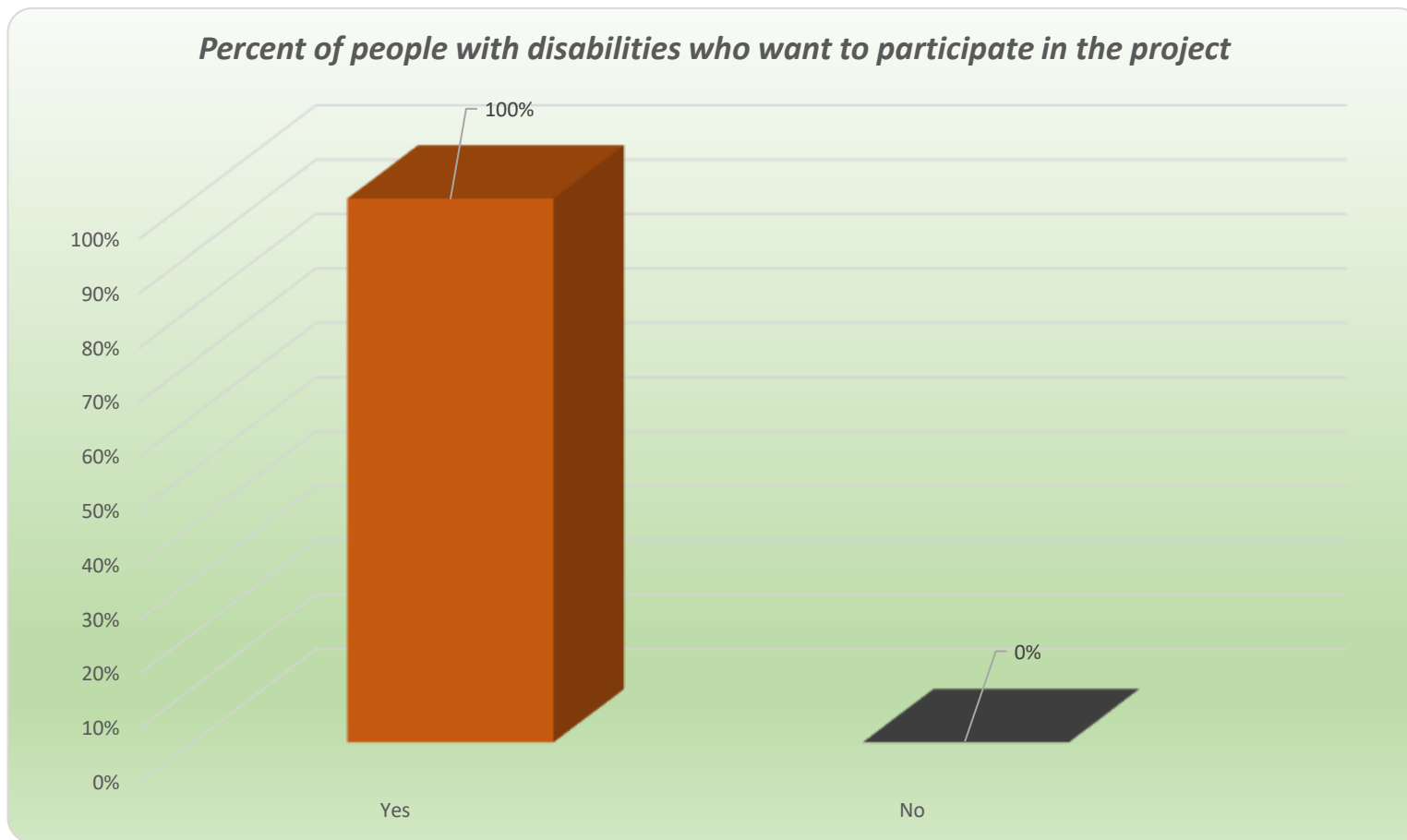
All disabled people involved in the project were interested and wanted to know more about the communication methods used by other organizations (picture 2).

Picture 2



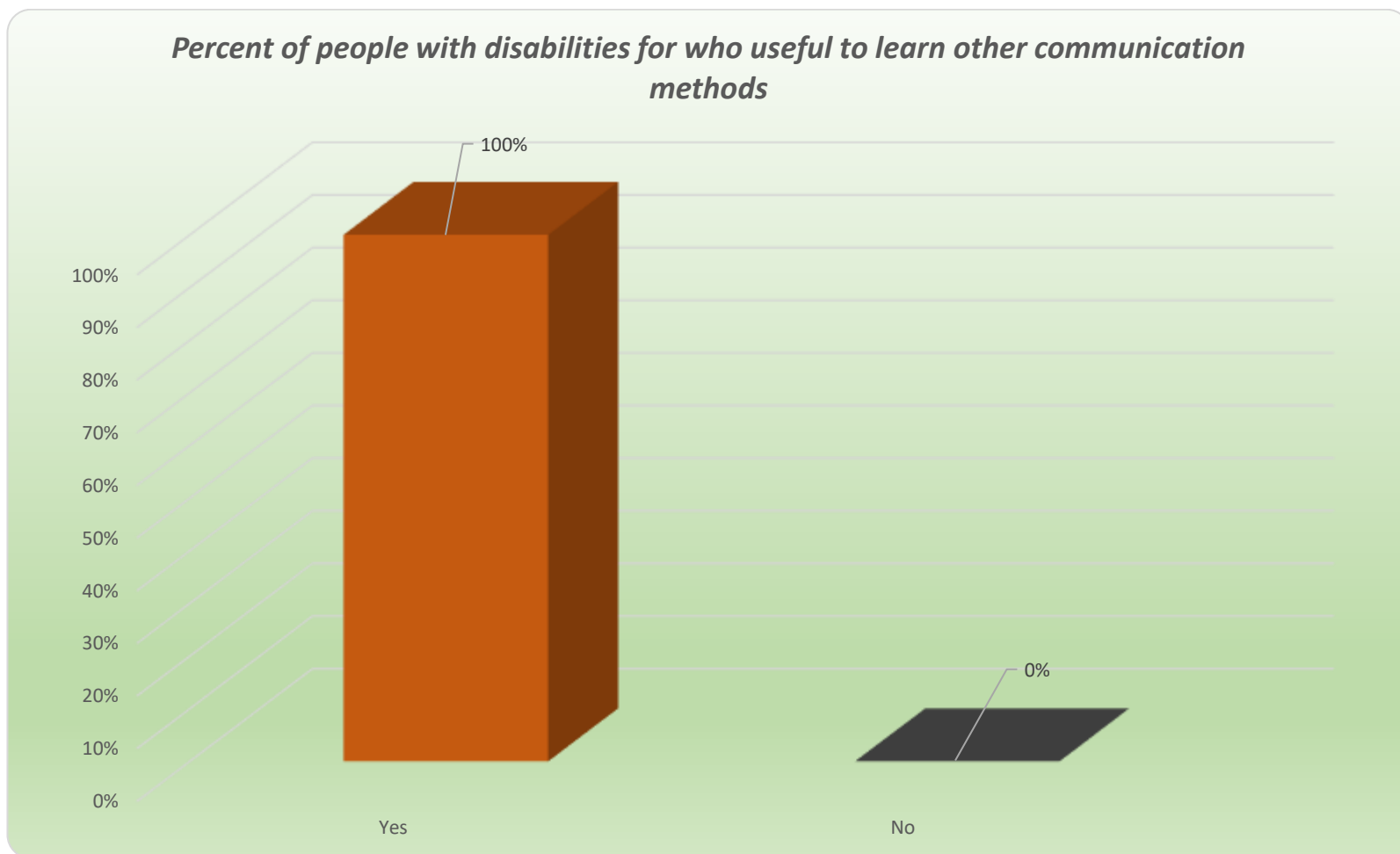
All the disabled really wanted to participate in the project activities, try new things, learn not only about communication methods, acquire new competencies, but also get to know other countries (picture 3).

Picture 3



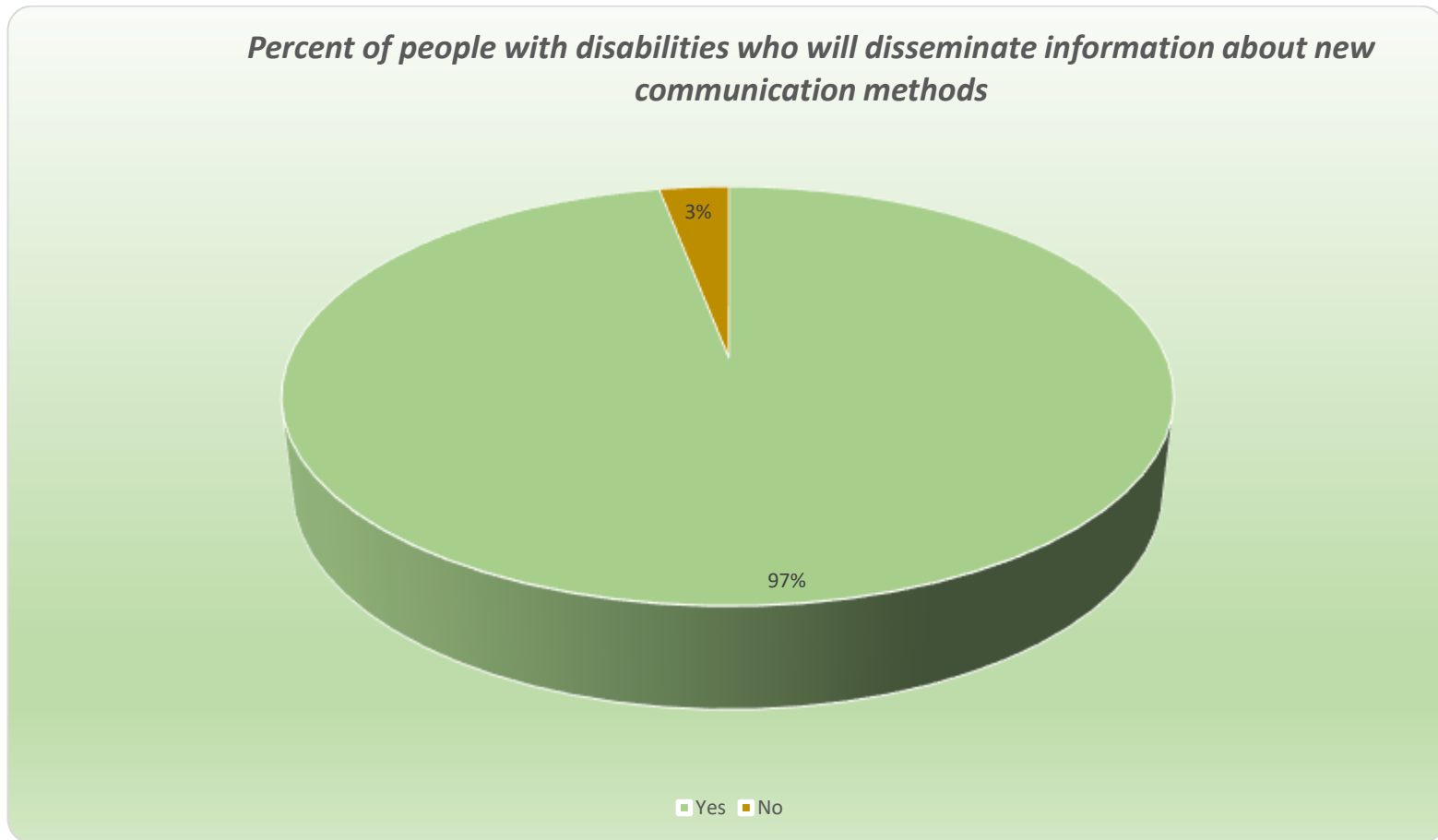
We are glad that only those disabled people participate in the project activities, who really benefited from learning new communication methods (picture 4).

Picture 4



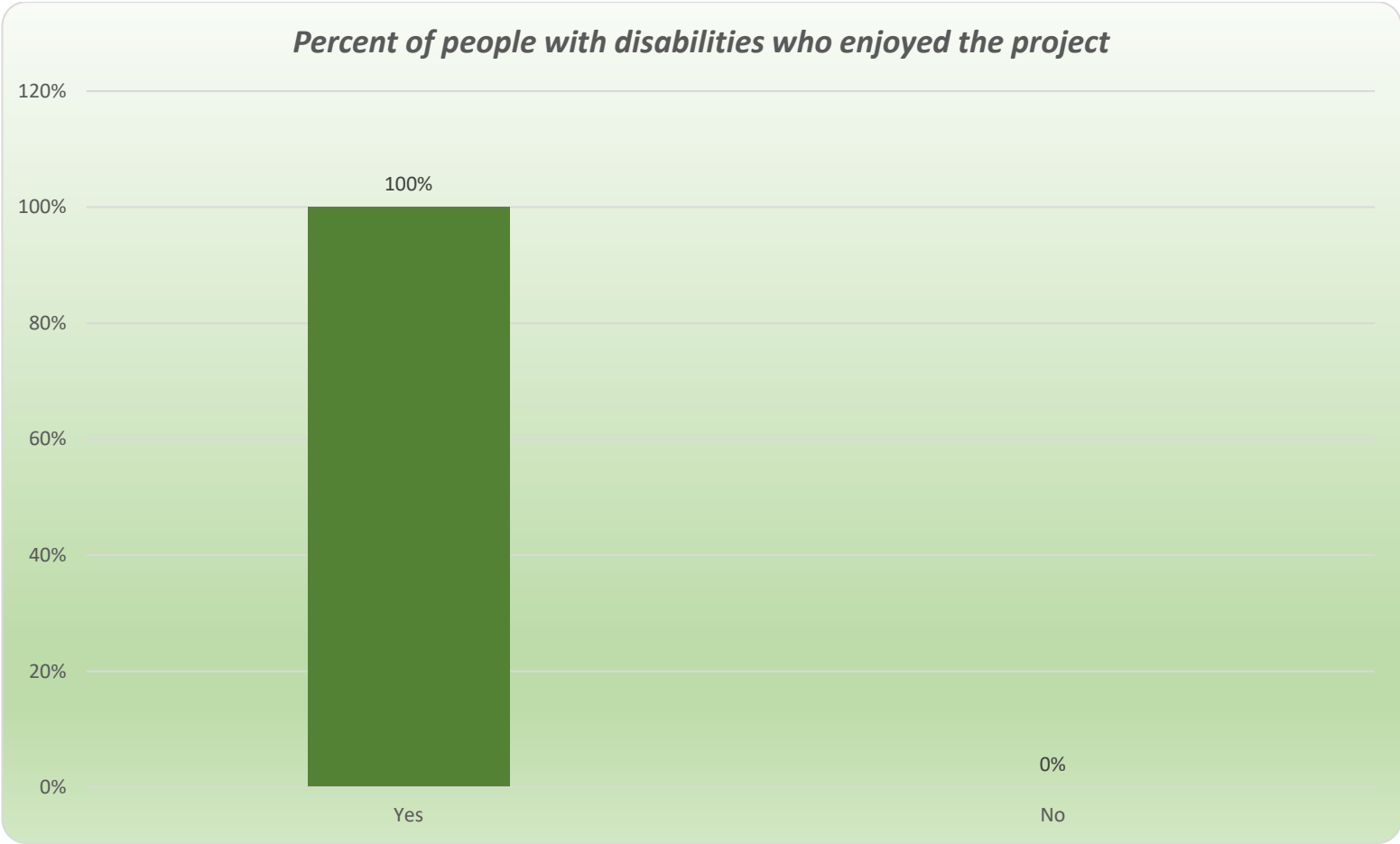
Almost all disabled people involved in the project said they would share the experience gained during the project and new communication methods which learned during the project activities. We need to point out that those who have indicated who will not share experiences are those who have big problems in communicating (picture 5).

Picture 5



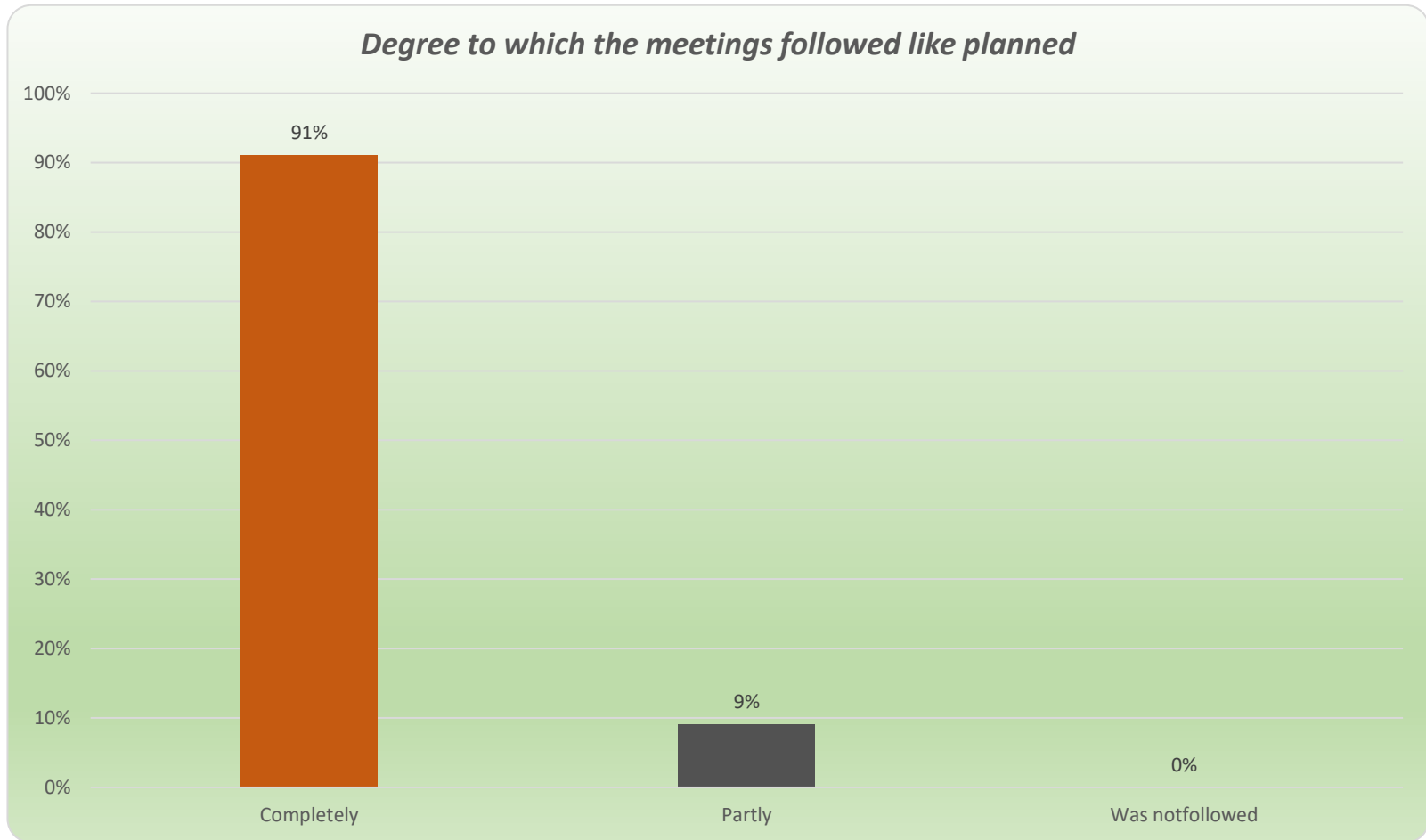
All disabled people who participated in the project activities enjoyed the project activities (picture 6).

Picture 6



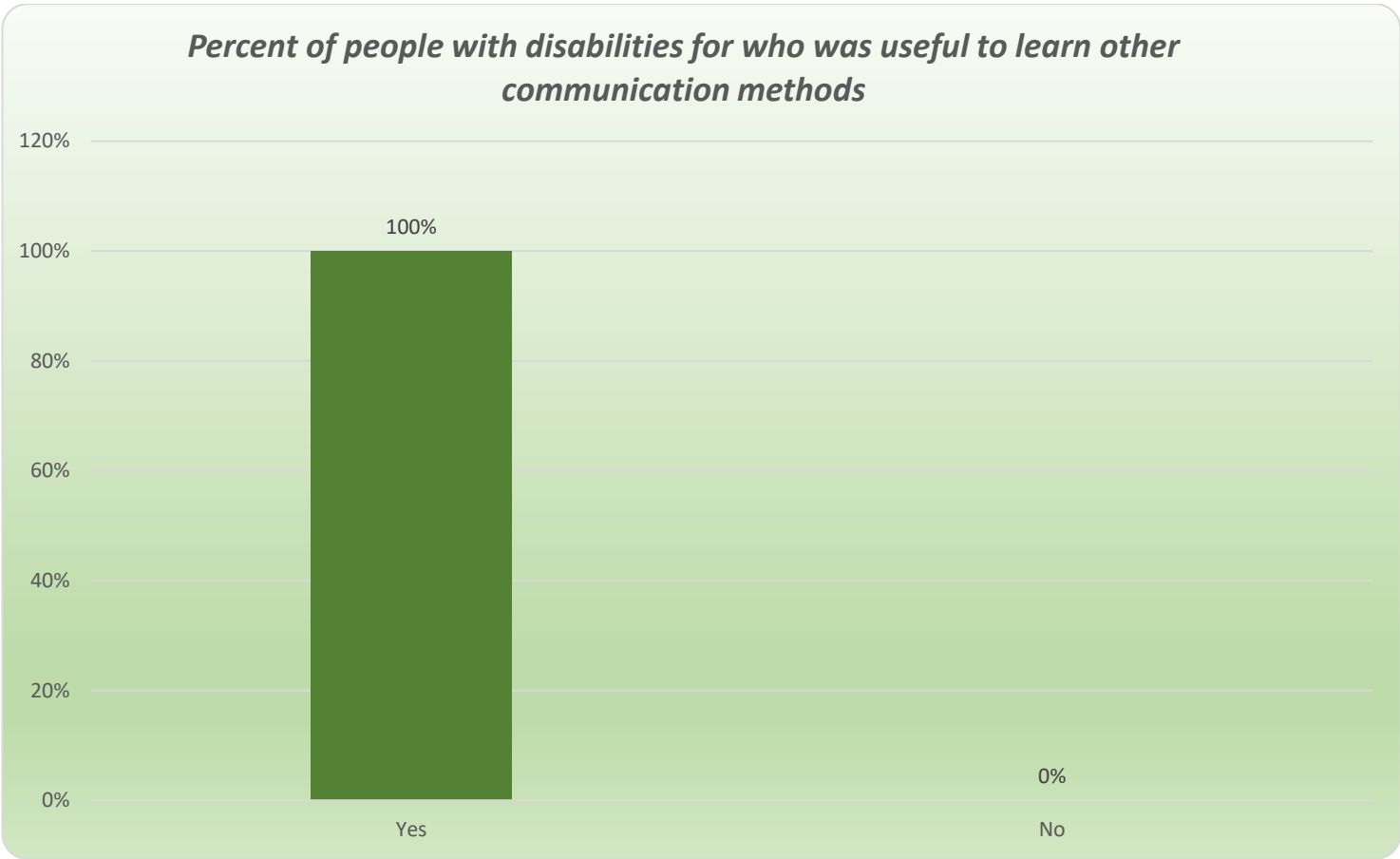
Many of the disabled people involved in the project indicated that the project activities were going according to plan. Only a few individuals indicated that there were deviations for some other reason (picture 7).

Picture 7



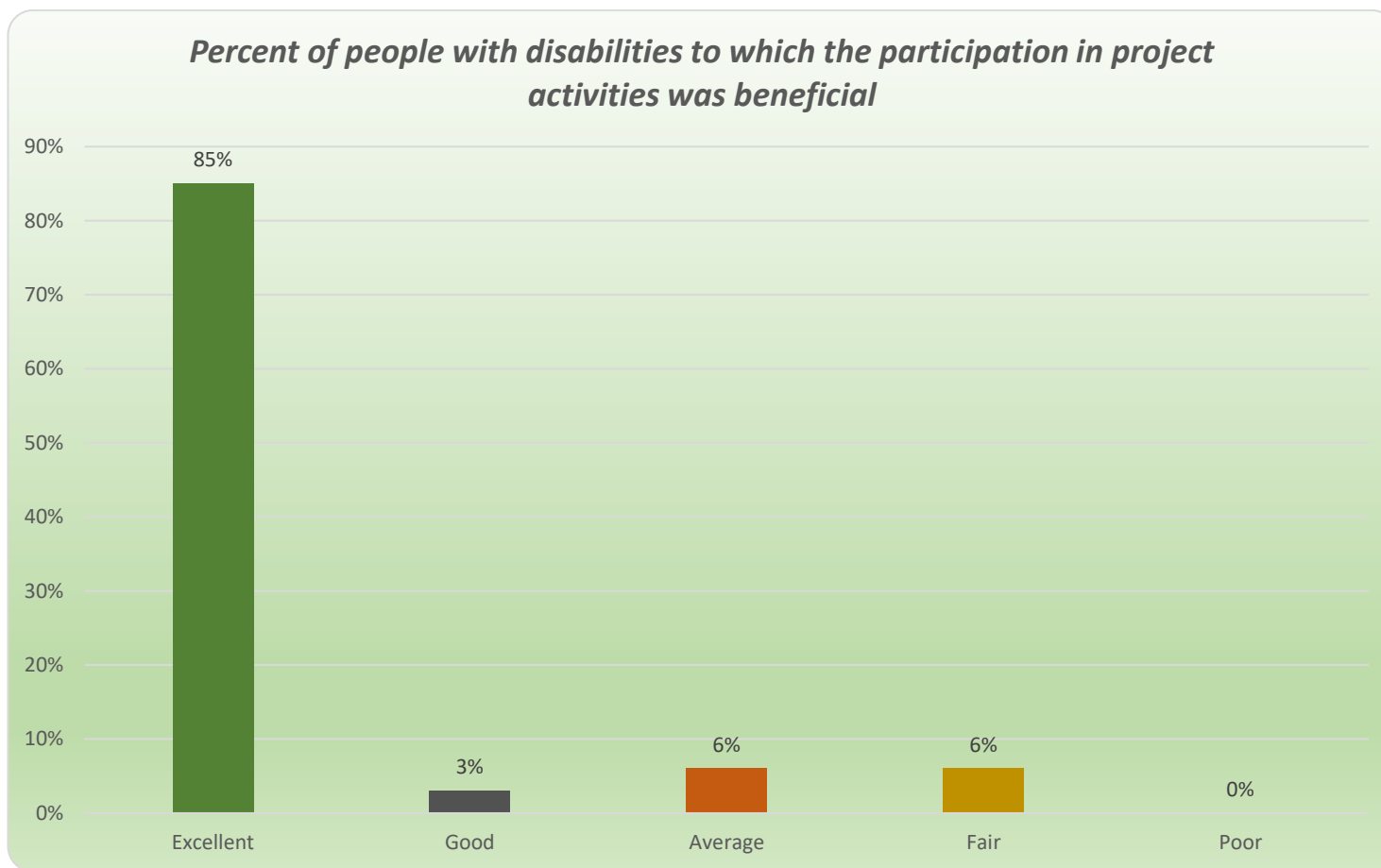
For all disabled people, without exception, the project activities were very useful and effective (picture 8).

Picture 8



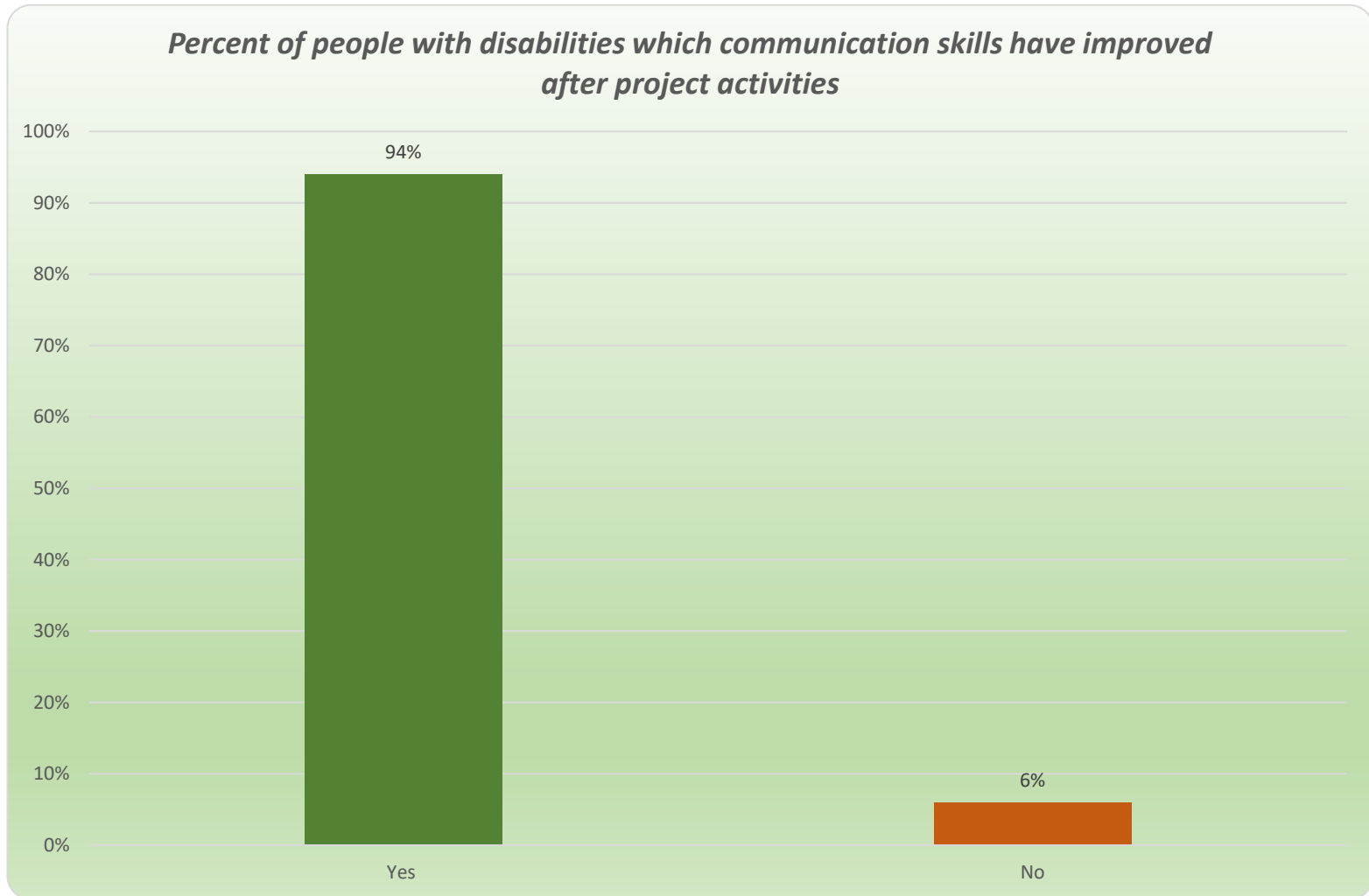
The project activities were excellent for 85% of the disabled people participating in the project, 3% of the persons with disabilities named it as a good activity, on average - 6% of persons and 6% of the participants named it as a fair. (picture 9).

Picture 9



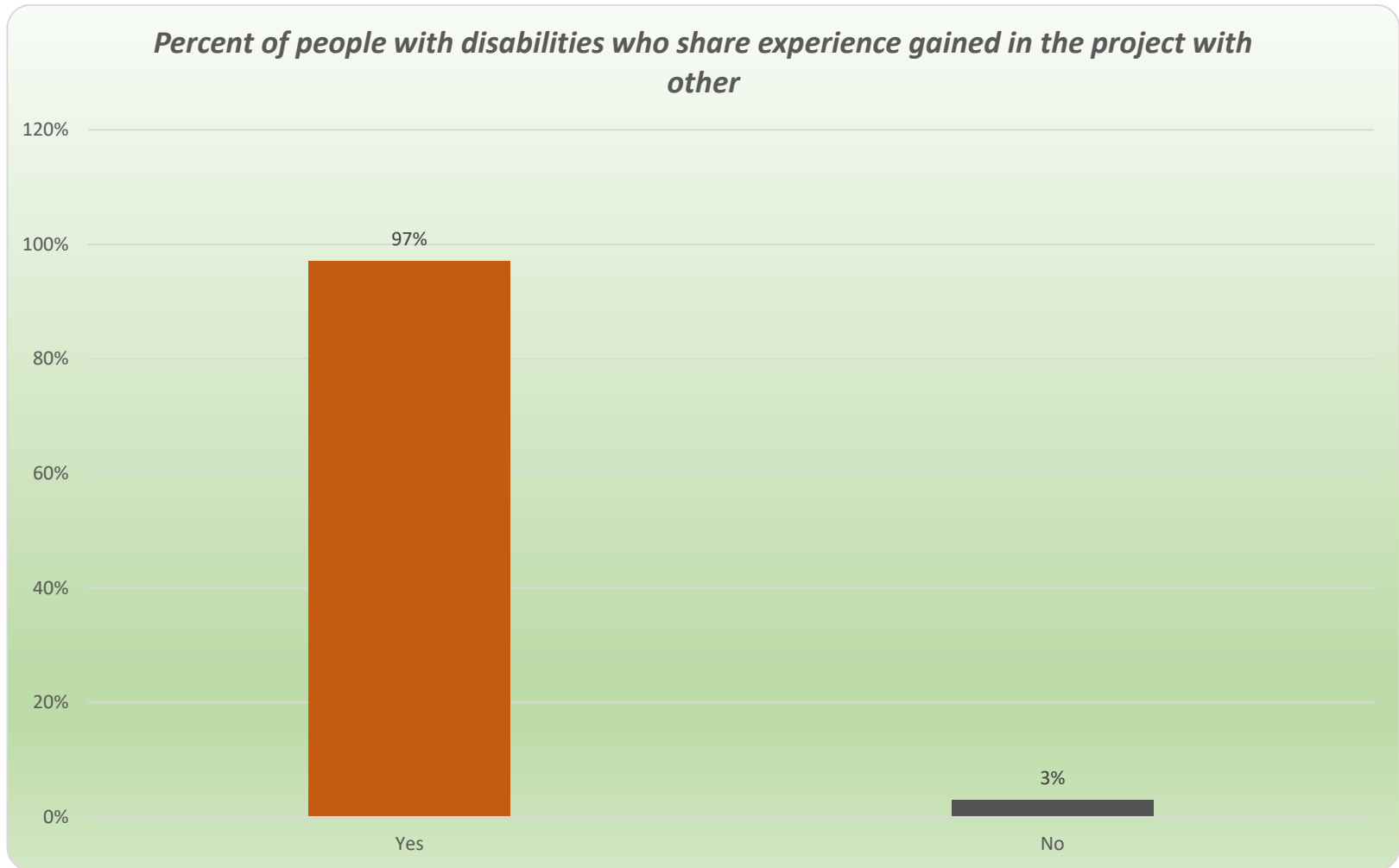
94% of the disabled people who took part in the project activities said that their communication skills had improved after the project activities and 6% said that they had not improved their communication skills. (10 picture).

10 picture



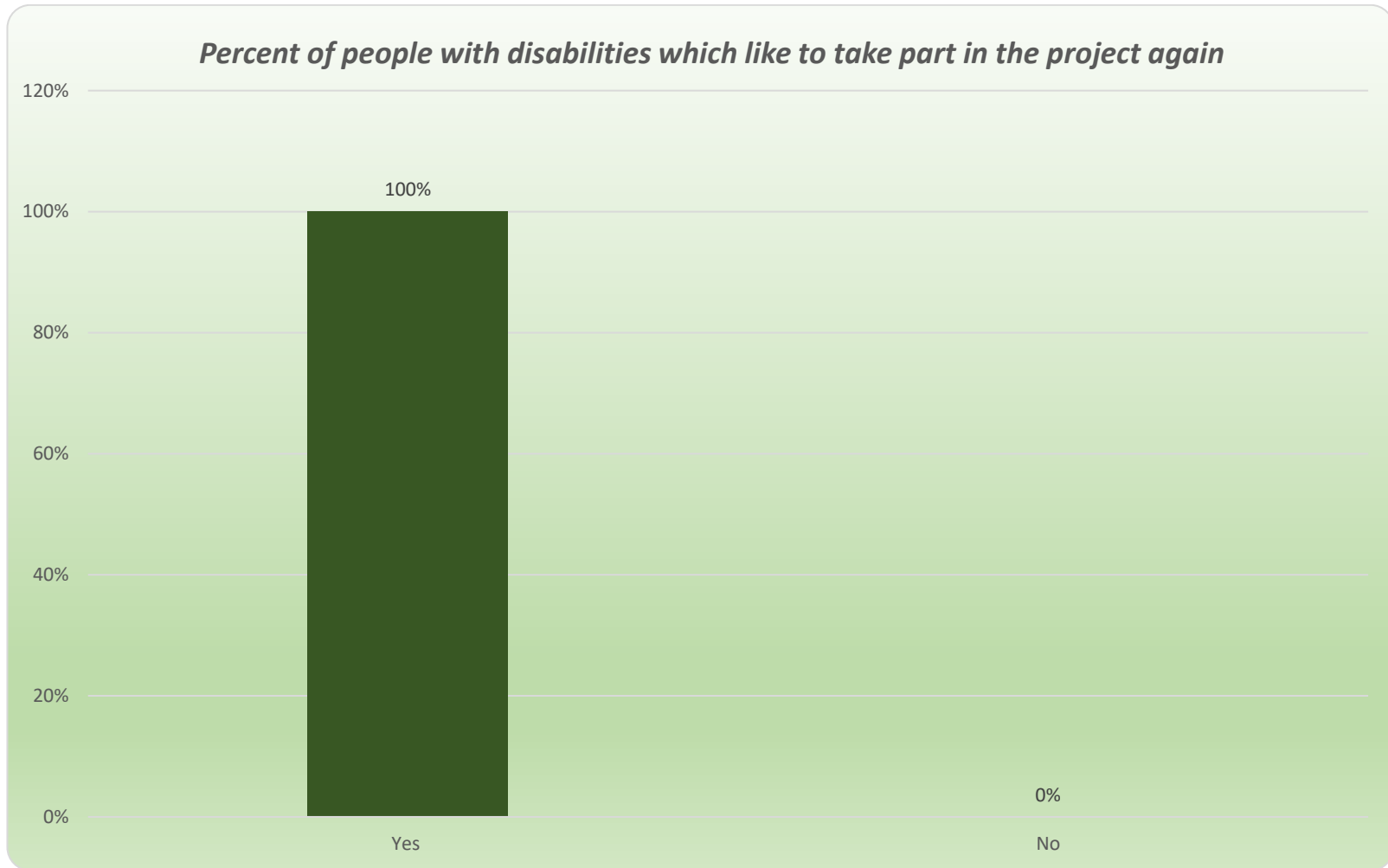
97% of the disabled people who participated in the project activities stated that they would share their experience with other people after the project activities and only 3% said that they would not share (11 picture).

11 picture



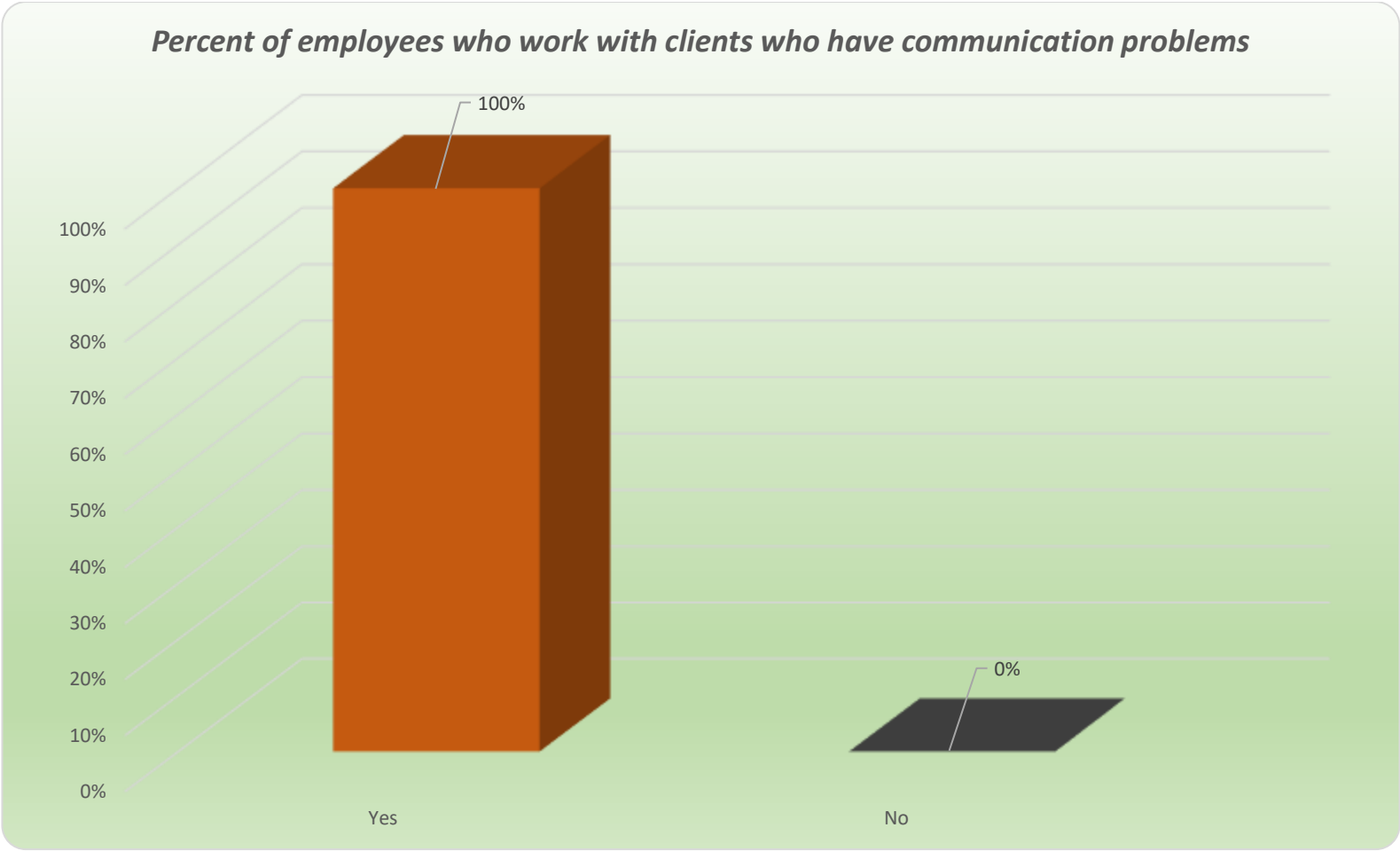
All 100% of people with disabilities who took part in the project said they would like to take part in the project again (12 picture).

12 picture



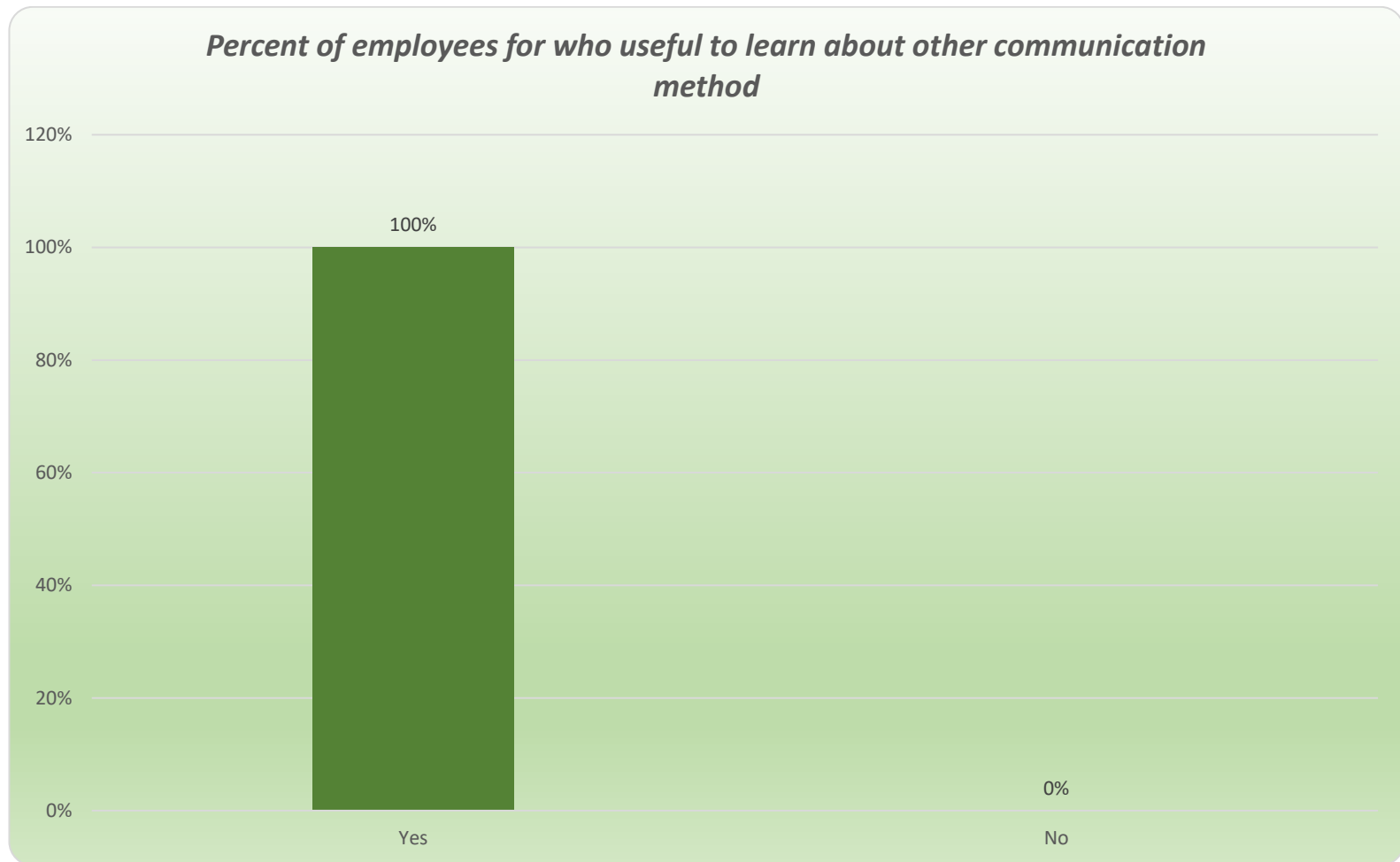
All 100% of the staff involved in the project activities work with people who have communication problems (13 picture).

13 picture



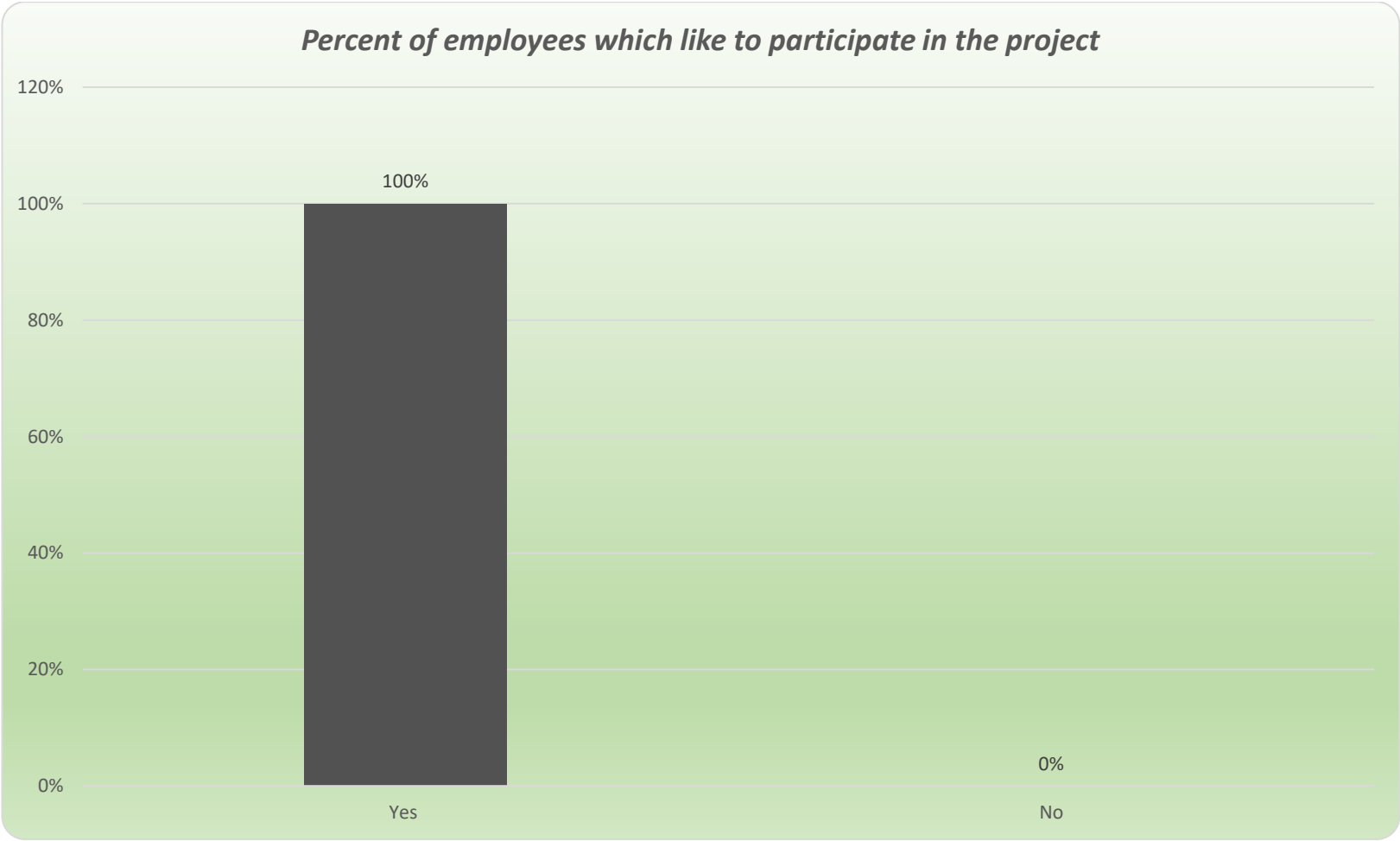
All 100% of the staff involved in the project found it very useful to learn more about new communication methods working with people with disabilities (14 picture).

14 picture



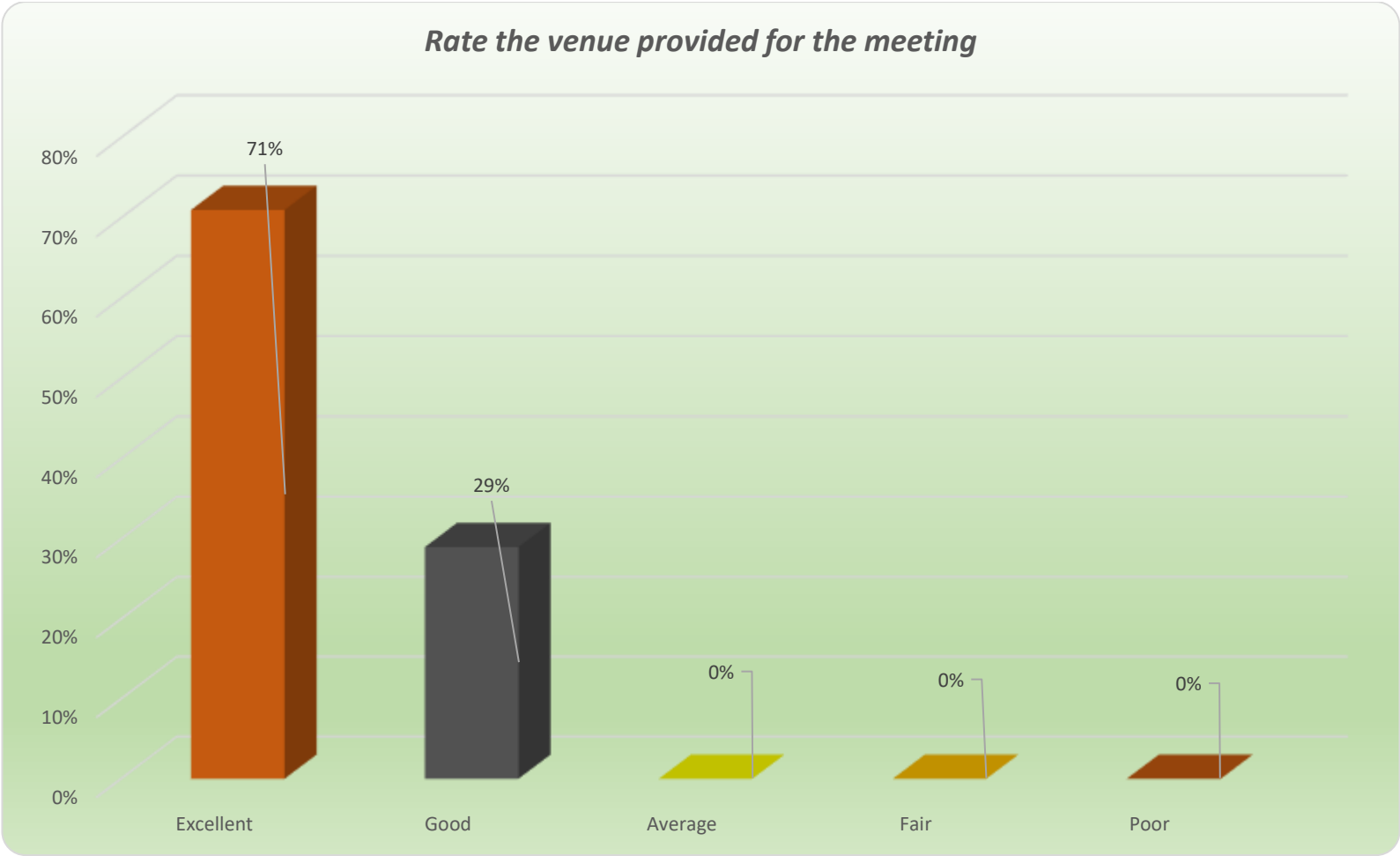
All 100% of the participants who participated in the project really enjoyed participating in the project activities (15 picture).

15 picture



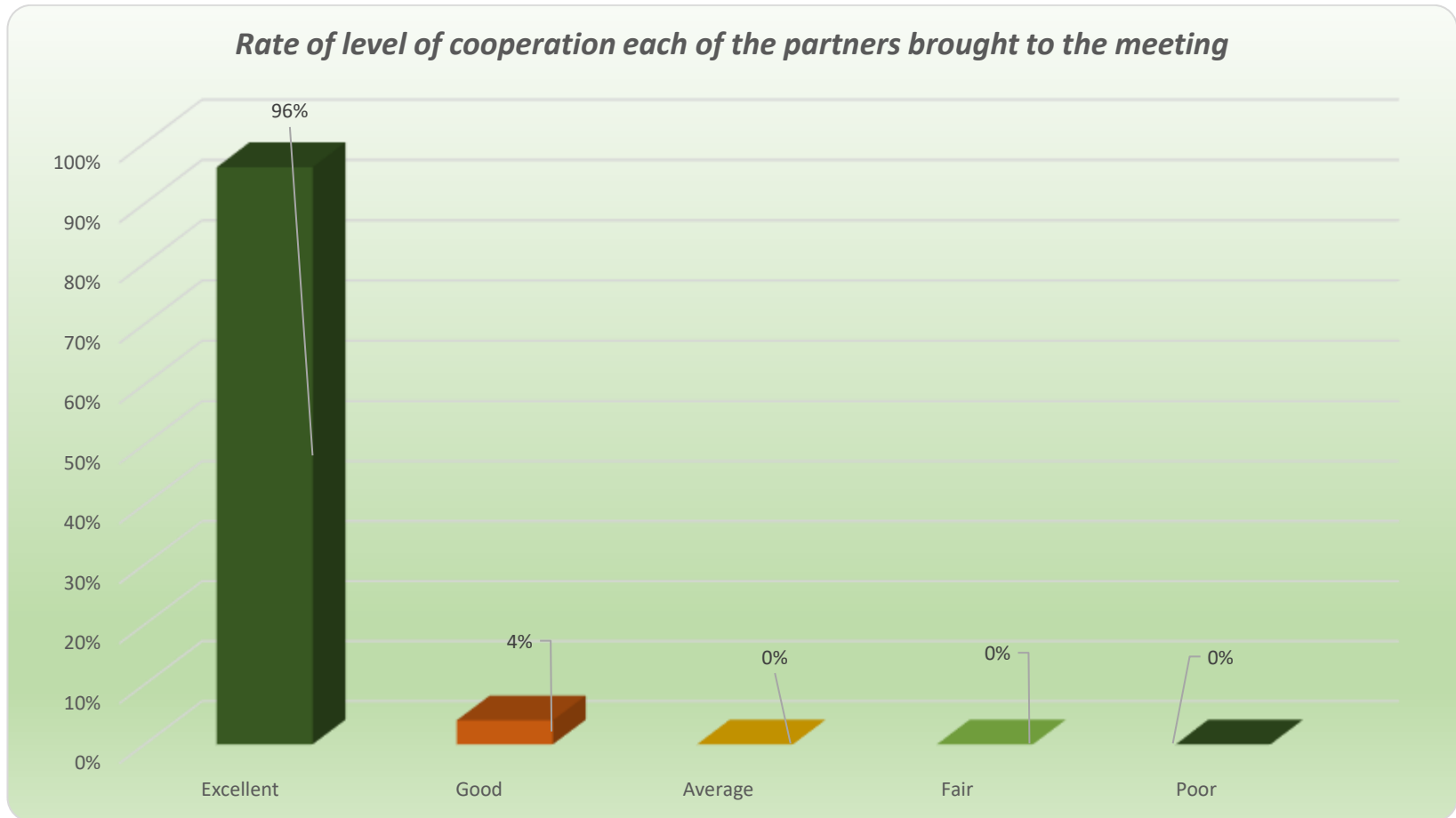
71% of employees rated the venue provided for the meeting as excellent and 29% as good (16 picture).

16 picture



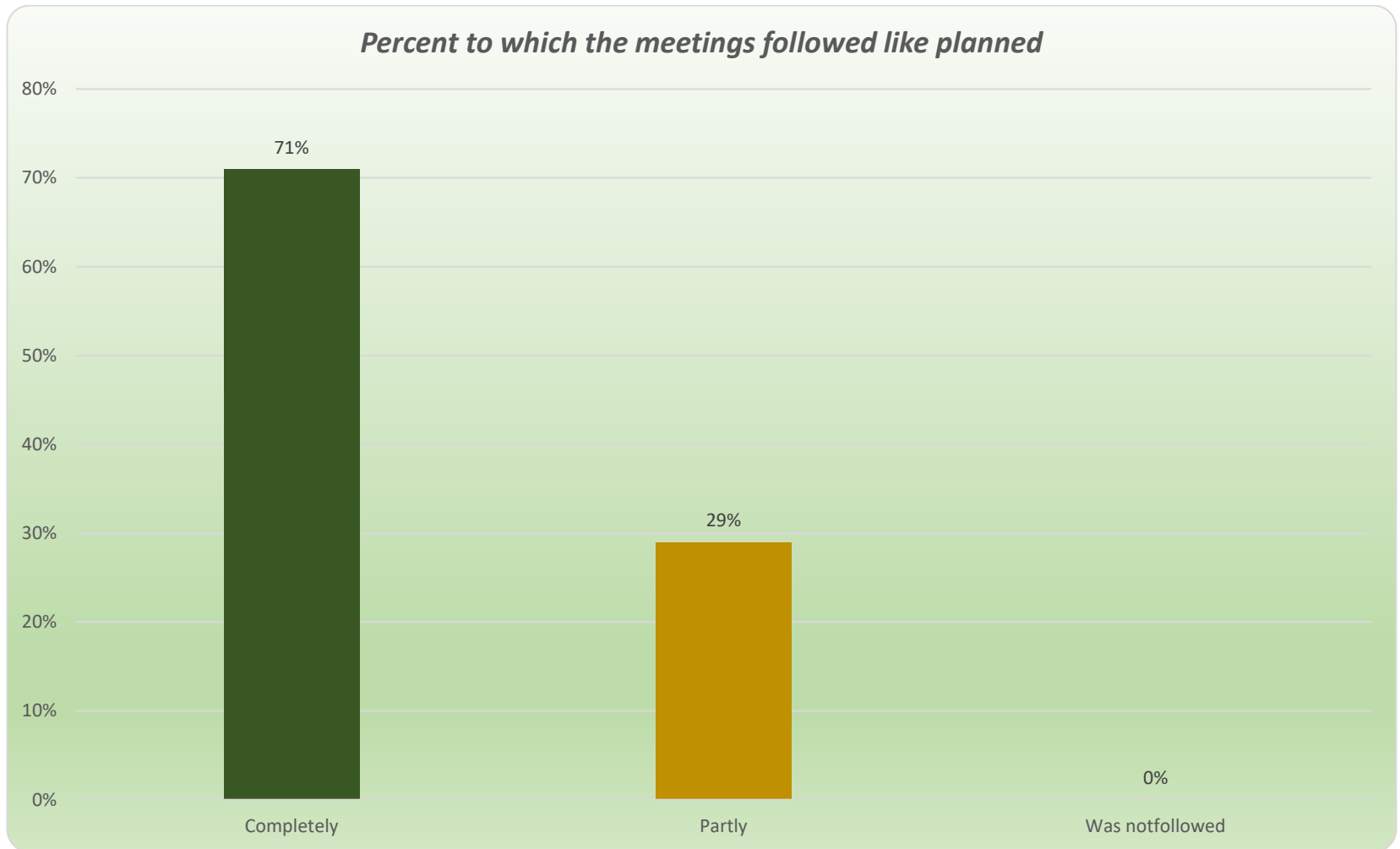
The cooperation of the partners during the meetings was noted by 96% of the staff as excellent and 4% by the staff - as good (17 picture).

17 picture



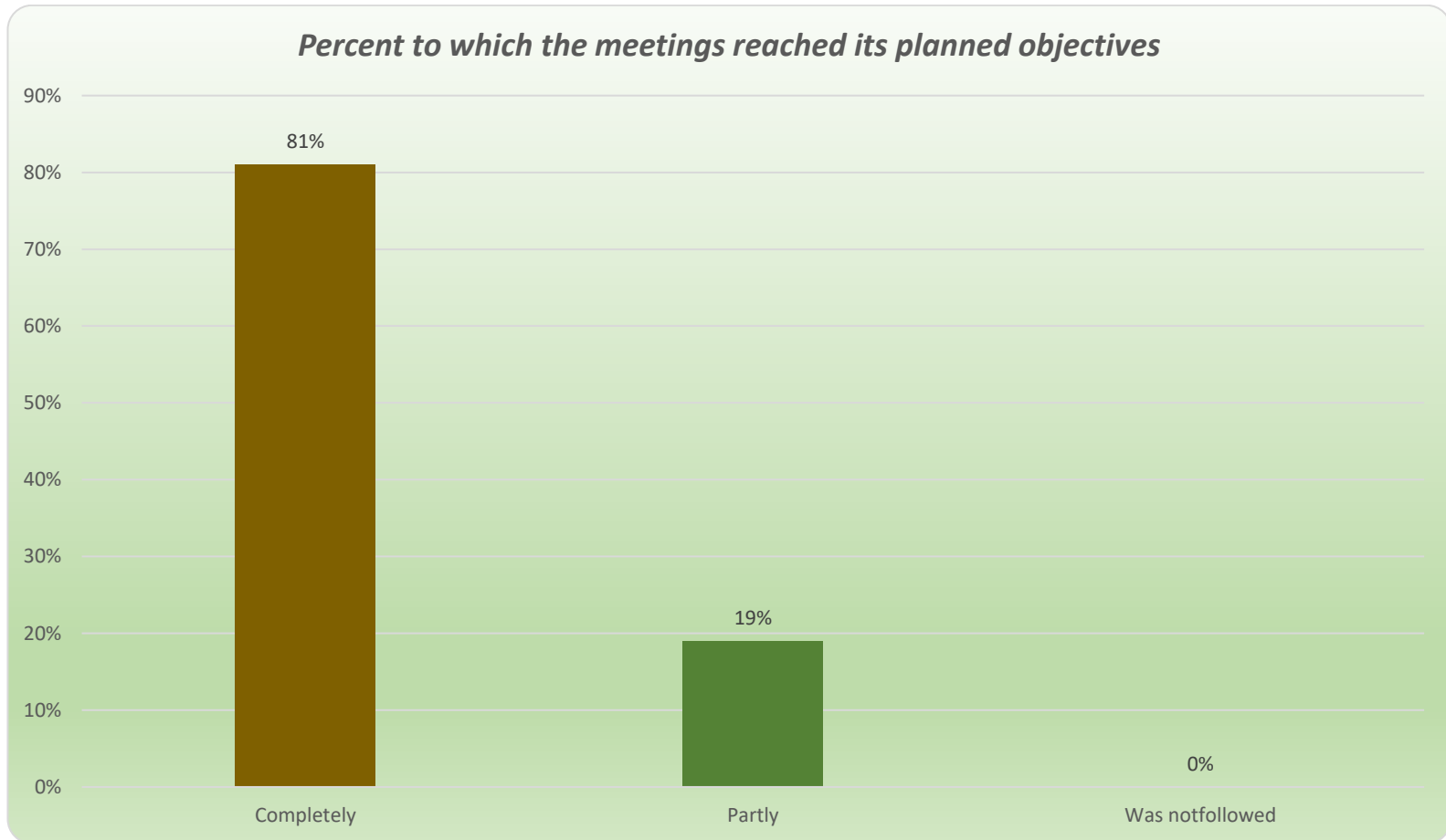
71% of participants indicated that the meetings followed like as planned, and 29% of participants said that they were partly like planned. We would like to point out that this assessment was due to the fact that the third meeting was organized remotely and not directly as originally planned (18 picture).

18 picture



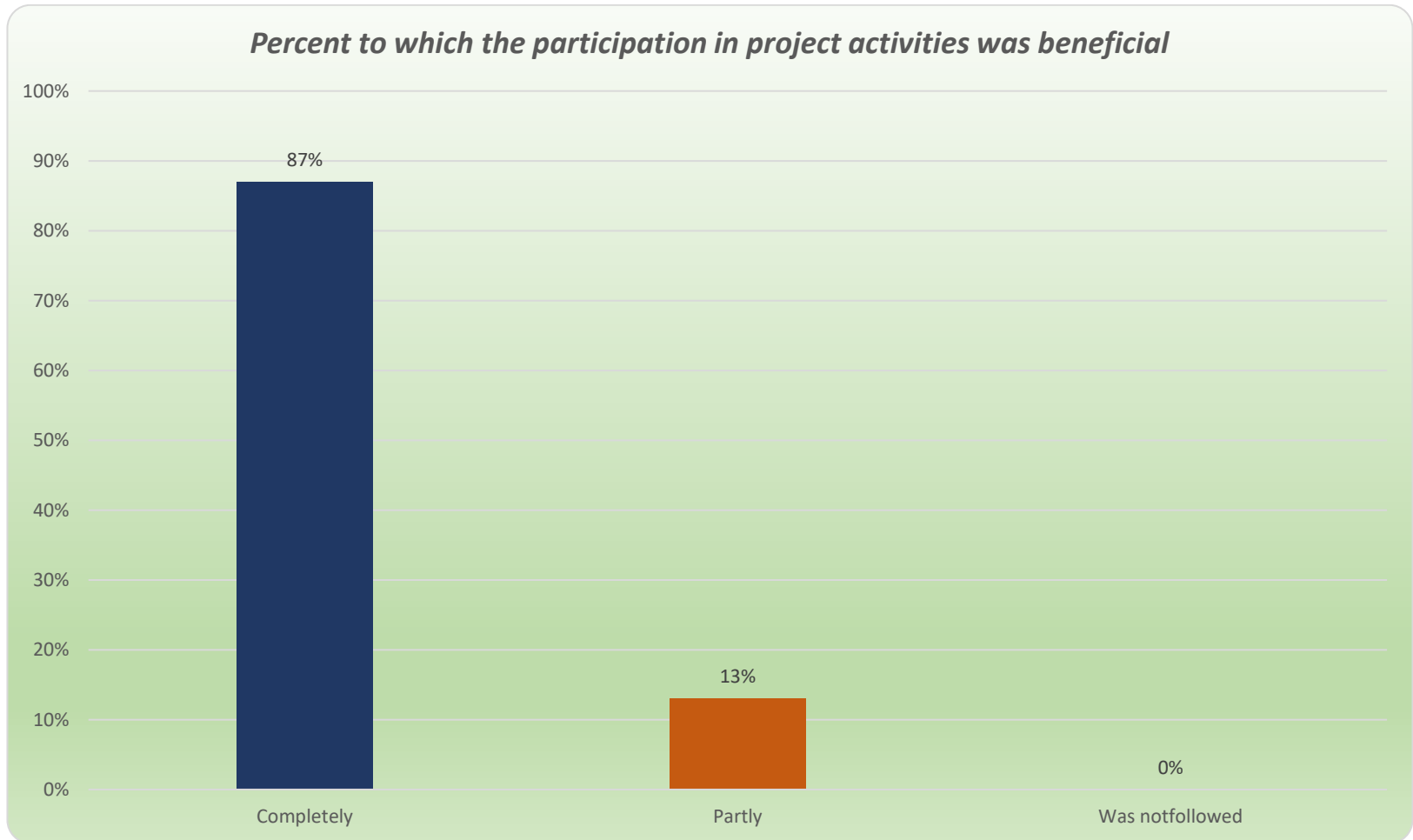
81% of participants indicated that the project objectives were fully achieved as planned, and 19% of participants indicated that they were partly achieved (19 picture).

19 picture



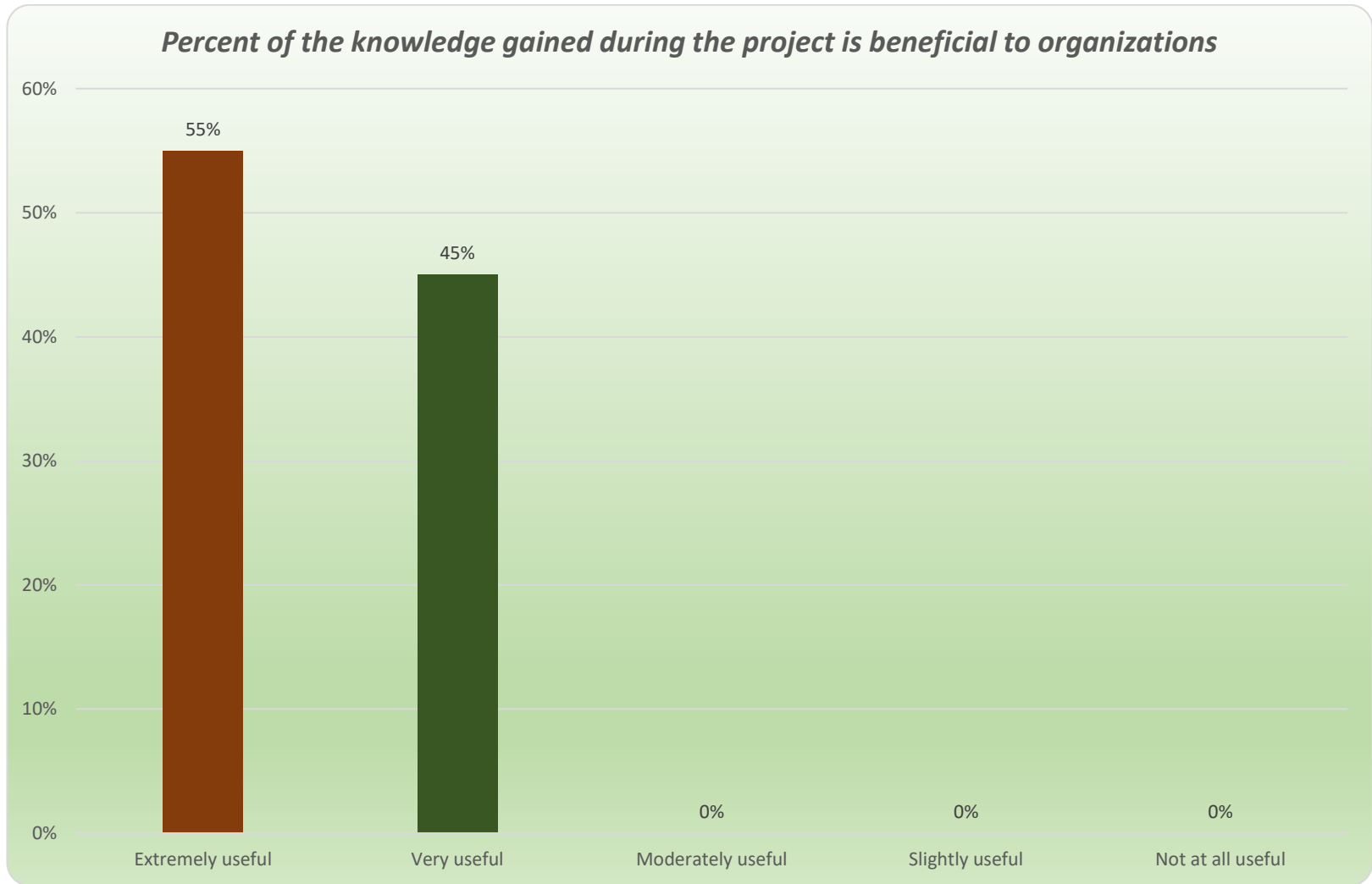
87% of participants indicated that the project activities was beneficial, and 13% of participants indicated that was- partly (20 picture).

20 picture



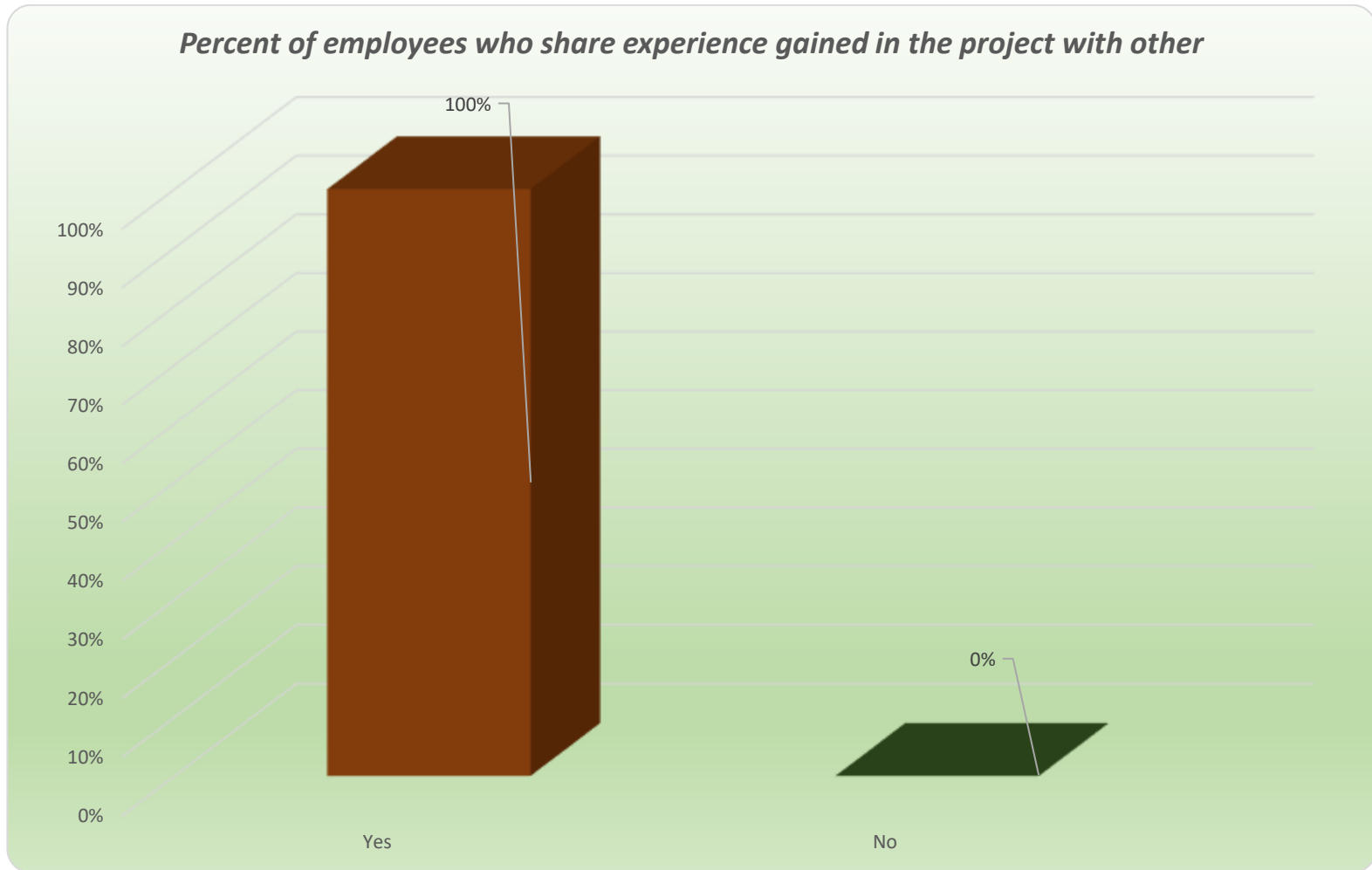
55% of employees who participated in the project activities stated that the knowledge gained during the project is extremely useful for organizations and 45% of employees stated that it was very useful (21 picture).

21 picture



All 100% of employees involved in the project activities stated that they would definitely share the experience gained during the project (22 picture).

22 picture



Analysis and reporting

Analyzing the obtained results, we would like to note that the project activities involved employees who work with the disabled and the disabled who have communication problems. Therefore, the project activities were very beneficial for the employees, for the disabled and the organizations too. Everyone was happy to learn many new communication methods during the project such as: Communication through pictures, visualization, colors telling, therapy session “How to speak to those who don’t speak, AAC, Bliss symbols, Snouzelen, intensive interaction, sustainable community, gentle teaching, drama method, verbal puzzles, communicator-5. All employees and many people with disabilities shared their knowledge with others- employees, colleagues in the staff meetings, in conferences, with new employers, clients during discussion. The majority of participants indicated that the activities were going as planned, with the exception of the third meeting, which had to be organized remotely due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, all participants mentioned that the project activities achieved the set goals, improved the communication skills of the disabled participants in the project activities. The staff stated that during the project they acquired such competencies as: fundamental communication, make better knowledge, improve English, self confidence, new communication methods, communication skills, new technology, alternative communication methods, how people with disabilities express themselves with new communication methods, express needs, to make better quality of life. Many project participants enjoyed close cooperation between the parties. All the people involved in the project want to take part in another project.

Focus group

Thanks to the focus group discussion, the aim was to summarize the results of the whole project. During the focus group, the implemented project activities were discussed, how much the project activities were useful, how and in what way the aim is to use the acquired knowledge in one's work, daily activities. During the focus group, the results achieved by the project were summarized.

Introduction. A focus group is a small-group discussion: participants feel free to talk openly and give honest opinions. It is used to learn more about opinions on a designated topic, and then to guide future action. Often, the focus group discussion method is defined as a purposefully structured discussion to gather participant’s insights into the research question in a neutral environment.

Focus group discussion took place in 3 groups: 1 group – Jonava people with disabilities activity center (Lithuania), 2 group – Haefingarstodin Baejarhrauni (Iceland) and 3 group – Strázsa Tanya Közhasznú Szocial Szövetkezet (Hungary). In the discussion participated disabled people and staff of the organizations. The common similarity between these groups is communication difficulties and alternative means of communication are used. The discussion took place during the last meeting, in the 2021 on June 18.

1. Questions:

Opening
<i>What are some of your thoughts about what's going on now? Would you say you are satisfied with the current situation, with the way things are going on? (If so) What are you satisfied about? Why is that? (Or, What's going well...?) Are there things you are dissatisfied with, that you would like to see changed? (Or, What's not going well...?).</i>
Discussion
<i>It is important for you to communicate? Why? How about alternative communication methods. What do you think about that? What alternative communication method you try to use? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this method? Can you give an example? (Or, Do you agree with this...?) Does anyone else have some thoughts on that?</i>
Summary:
<i>Are there other recommendations that you have, or suggestions you would like to make? Are there other things you would like to say before we wind up?</i>

2. Analysis and reporting:

- During the focus group discussion participants noted that during the project they acquire and raised following competencies as: activities of planning, communication and cooperation with other, self-expression and self-realization, positive and communicate, be responsible to manage conflicts, organizing, new activities, installation, customization work competencies, self-sufficiency.
- Each participant of the project has improved their communication in native and foreign (English language) languages skills, communication and cooperation with other countries competencies, use of new methods of communication skill improvement, use of new technologies, the ability to exchange information and to customize the newly available information, initiate the implementation of the ideas included in other, monitor and evaluate. As well as increased motivation to work and to innovate in their work of excellence.
- Improving staff competencies with disabilities, it was created more job opportunities for the development of its own needs, opportunities and full participation not only in the process, but also in the community to learn the lessons from other countries. Stay at workers and people with disabilities were able to know each other better in an informal setting.