



THE WATERSPORTS INCLUSION GAMES – WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND BARRIERS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHO PARTICIPATE?



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BACKGROUND

The 2018 HSC guidelines in Northern Ireland reveal the benefits of being active for children with disability includes improved mental health, better pain management and greater ability to cope with difficult situations [1]. Furthermore, involving the whole family exemplifies the importance of physical activity and team coordination for a child with disability. Water and water-based activities have distinct effects on disabled participants which other environments cannot provide. For instance, walking and balancing on uneven surfaces such as the beach or a boat is in par with physical therapeutic goals to provide stability for individuals with disability. The Watersports Inclusion Games [2] is a free event for mainly children and adolescents with a range of disabilities.

"The event showcases the latest on adaptations for optimised watersports delivery and promotes the benefits to health and wellbeing of accessible inclusive watersports participation." [2]

OBJECTIVES

- Through survey technology this study looked at the perspective of parents and guardians of the participants in the WIG.
- We hoped to find the benefits that an event such as the WIG can provide to participants and families. We also explored the barriers to accessibility families and participants regularly face when participating in watersport activities.

RESULTS

What are you hoping for from this event?

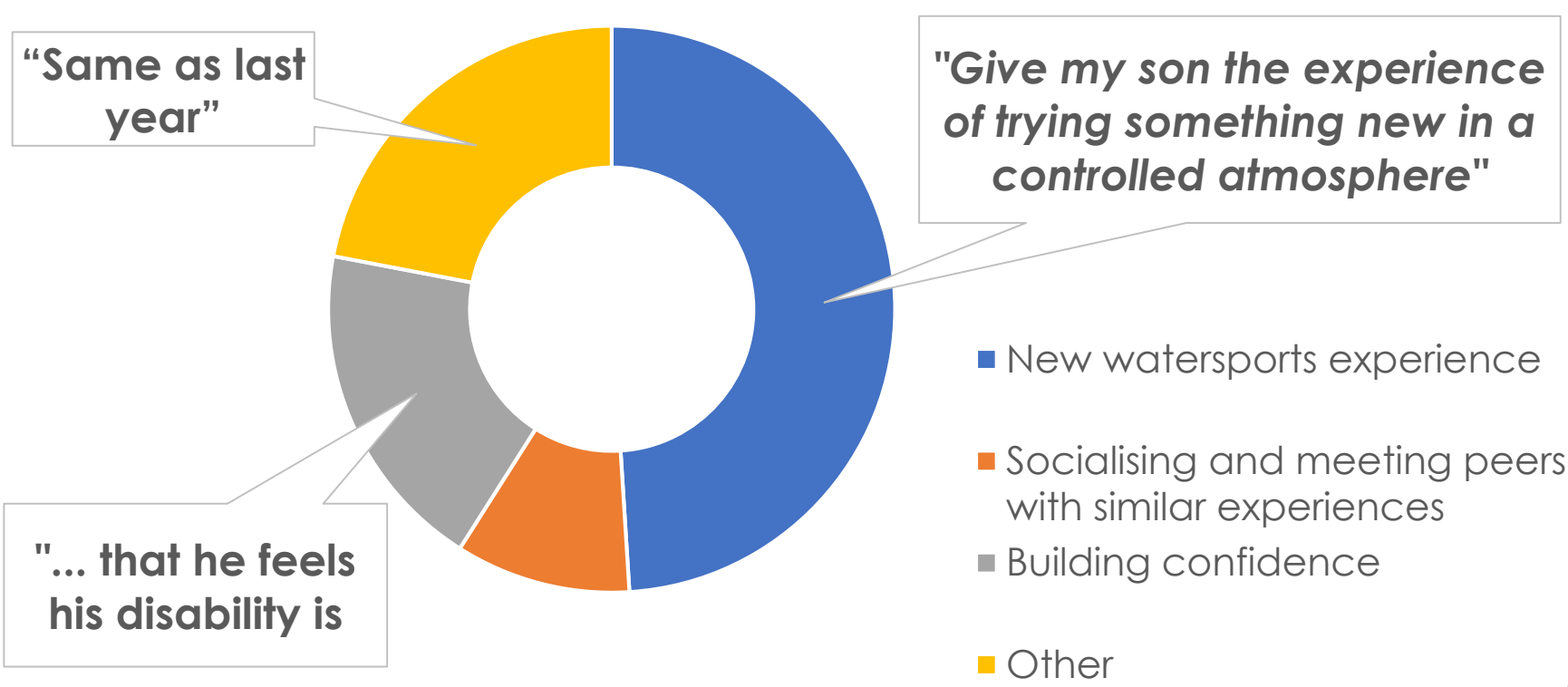
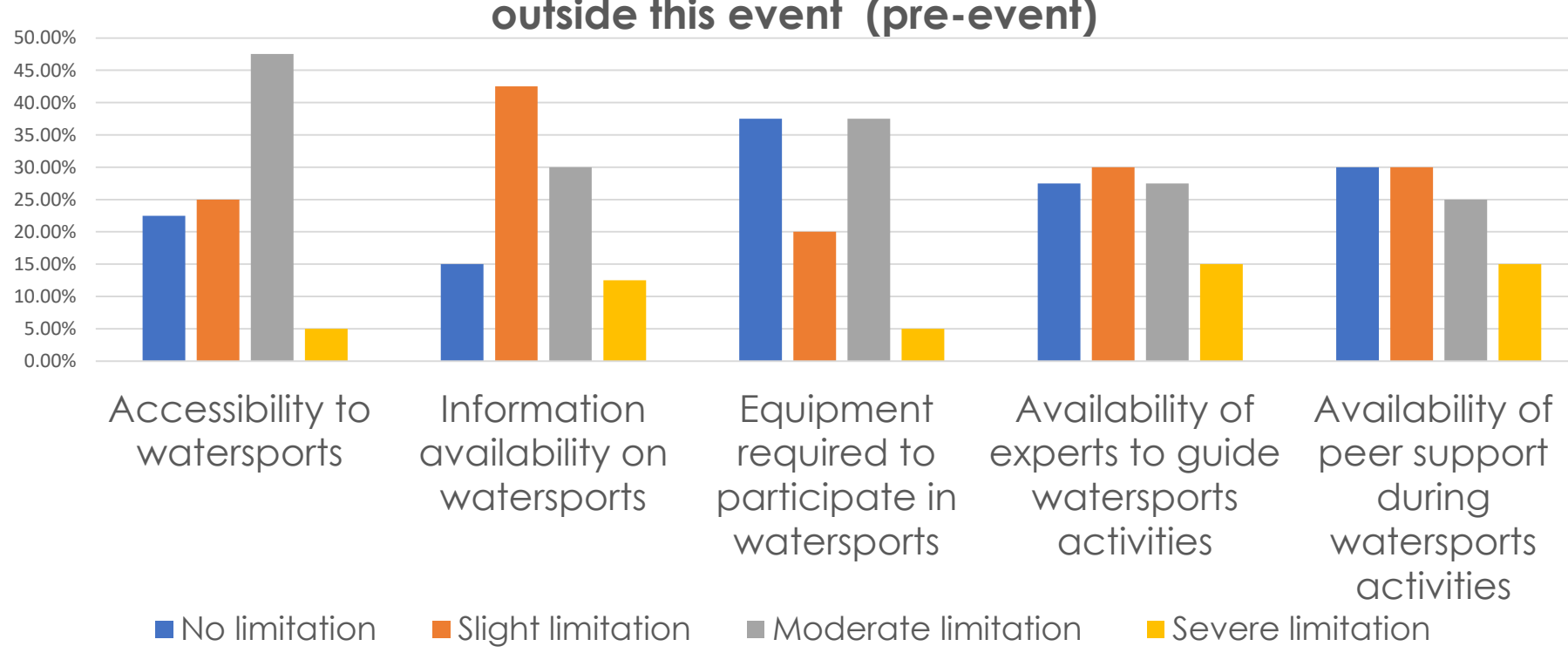


Figure 2: This pie chart shows the four areas of what parents and carers were hoping for from this event. For most families and participants this was their first experience of watersports.

Following the event **100%** of participants stated they had achieved what they had hoped for and more.

Criteria limiting the participants ability to take part in watersports outside this event (pre-event)



Criteria limiting the participants ability to take part in watersports outside this event (post-event)

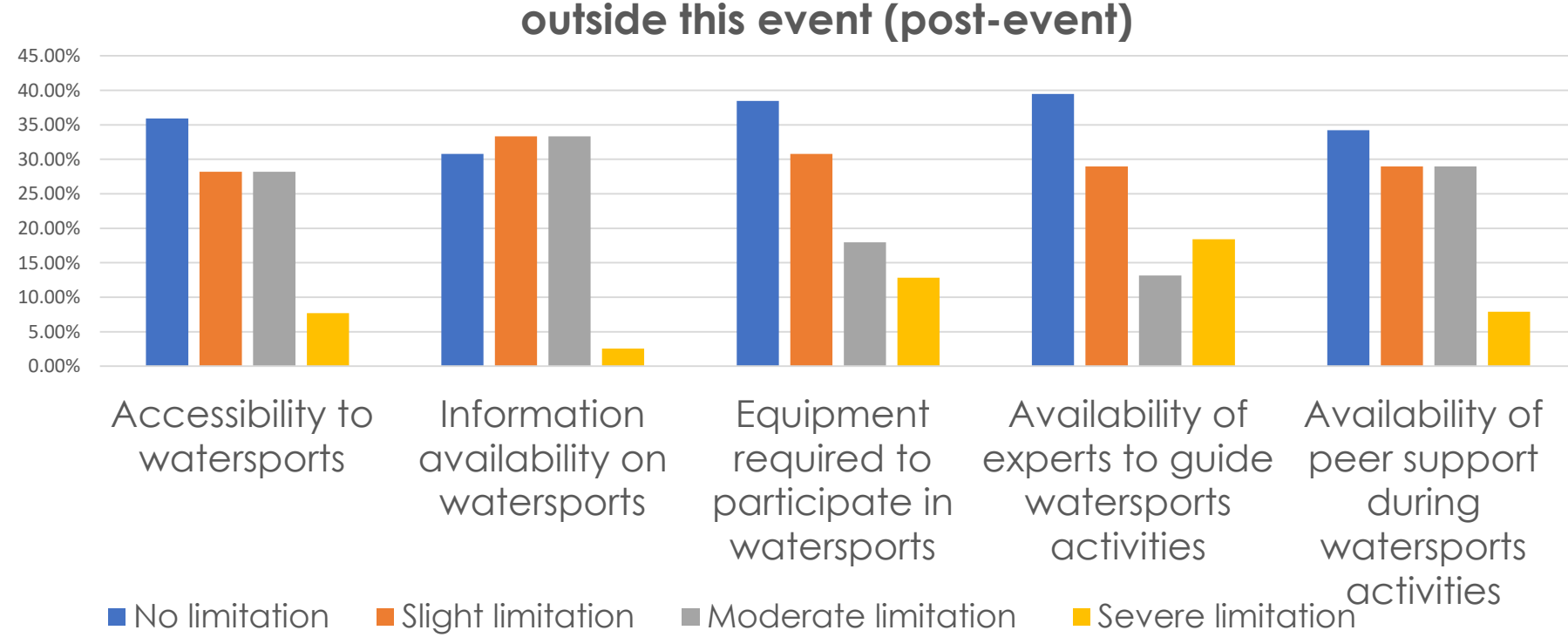
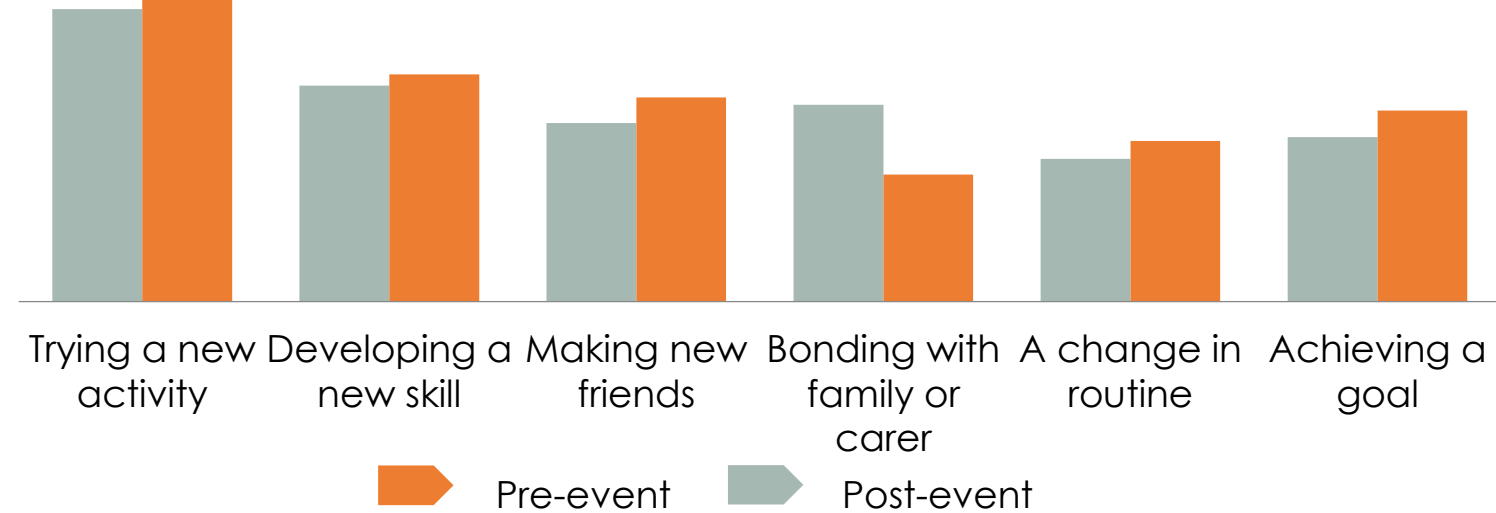


Figure 5: This shows a comparison of what the participant deemed as important before and after the event. The most notable change is bonding with the family, increasing to a place of greater importance following the event. Trying a new activity remained the most important aspect both before and after the event.

Regarding the event rank the following options from least important to most important for the participant



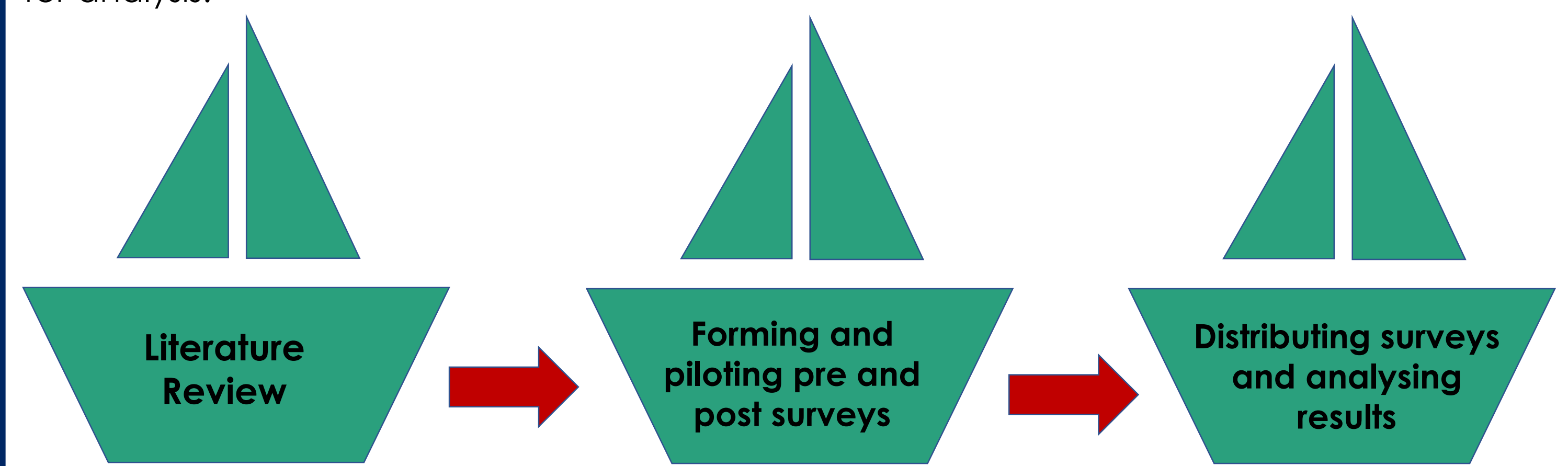
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- 1. Active fun for everyone [Internet]. Publichealth.hscni.net. 2018 [cited 26 July 2019]. Available from: https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Children%20Phys%20Act%20Disabilities%20A5%20Leaflet%2002_18_FINAL.pdf
- 2. Watersports Inclusion Games [Internet]. Sailing.ie. 2019 [cited 5 August 2019]. Available from: <https://www.sailing.ie/Events/Watersports-Inclusion-Games>

METHODS

A literature review initially carried out and was used to construct a primary set of survey questions based on these key themes: **satisfaction with activities, scoring of attitude scales, perceived barriers and facilitators to watersports, future intention of participation and general feedback.** The pre-event and post-event surveys were created from the key question set and added to SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool with industry standard encryption technology.

The pre-event survey link was then sent out by the Inclusion Games Officer to the adult carers of the participants in the WIG. This was sent out in three rounds, starting three weeks prior to the event and twice more in the following two weeks. After the event the post-event survey was sent out, also in three consecutive weeks. The results were then exported for analysis.



RESULTS

Parents standing on the following statements prior to the event

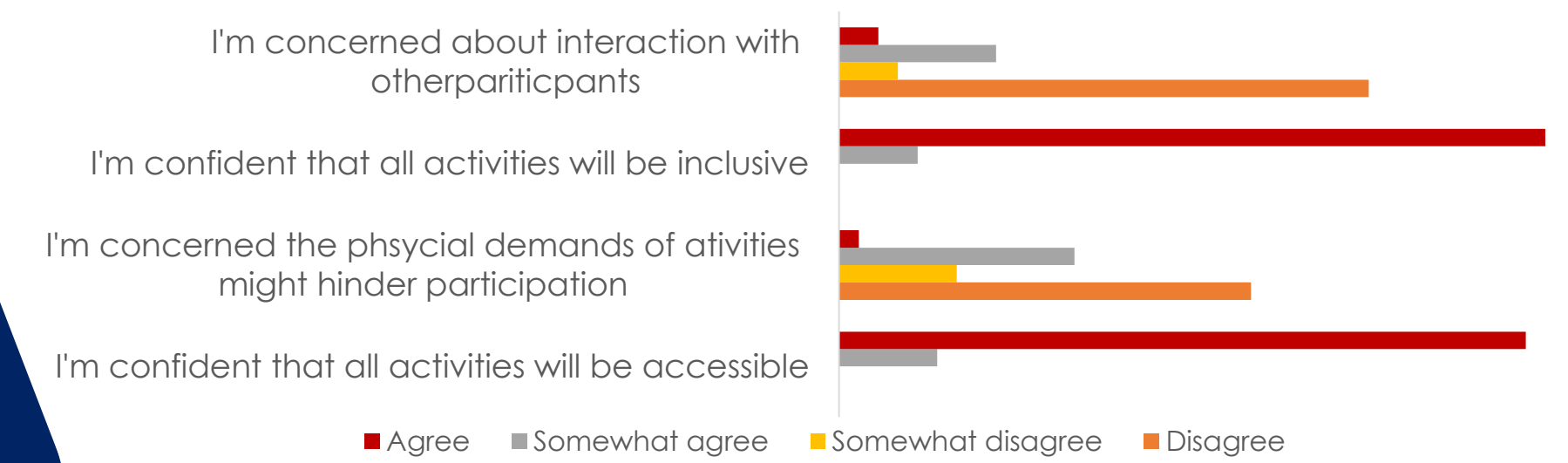


Figure 6: This shows the concerns parents had and did not have prior to the event. Most concerns were associated with each participants ability, rather than event organisation such as inclusivity and accessibility.

Parents standing on the following statements after the event

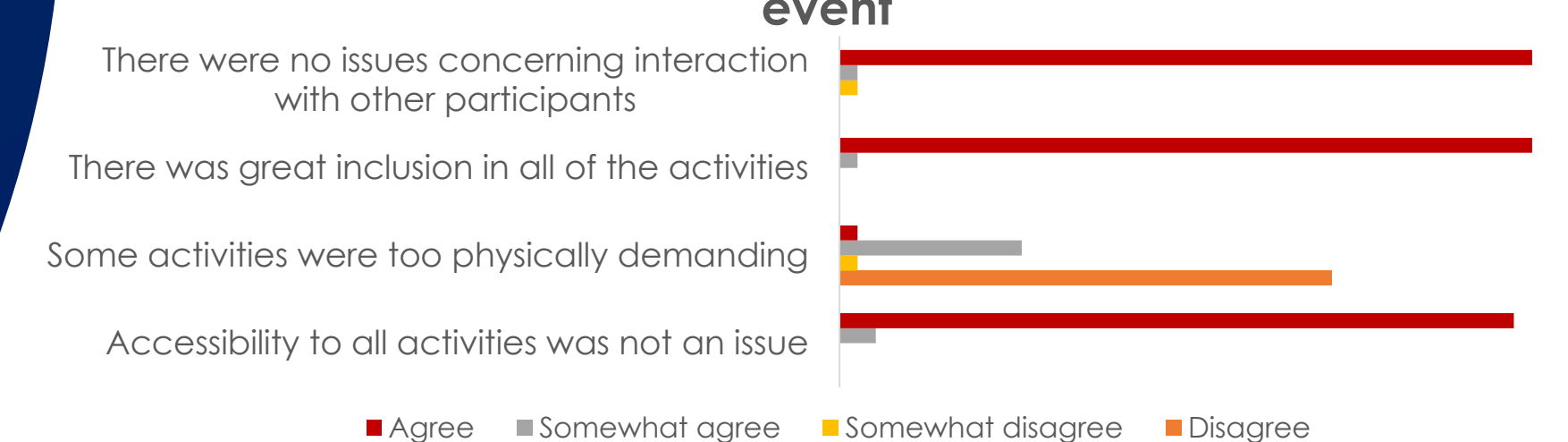


Figure 7: This diagram displays the change in opinions of parents and guardians following the event. There is a notable change in concerns about the physical demands of activities, with an increase in "disagreement" that activities were too physically demanding.

Post-event question: List some things you enjoyed about the event

- "The fact that the event was open to siblings so her little brother could for once 'enjoy' his sister's disability"**
- "Sailing the yacht. I loved the rowing machine. I'm going to use that at the Club now!"**
- "Happy feeling everyone mixed together. No class distinction. Trying sports my child would never get to try only for the event"**
- "...disability limits the physical activities in which the family can participate. On this occasion it was allowing the family to try new things."**
- "To be able to get onto any boat without having to worry about how to."**

CONCLUSION

The WIG are a good showcase for the capabilities children may have in the water, in a controlled environment. **Exposure to a sport where disability was not a barrier increased self-esteem and motivation for future participation, for caregivers and children.** This type of event enables families to partake in activities without the constant focus of disability as a limitation, making space for carefree enjoyment and family bonding. As said by a parent, "we discovered water sports can be accessible to all if planned correctly and risk assessed".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to all the participants and families, without whom event would not have taken place. Also a big thank you to all the volunteers, sponsors and skippers for offering their time and boats.

