

A BESA INSIGHTS REPORT

State of the Estate.

Feb 2024

Introduction

This special report, commissioned by BESA, examines the provision and condition of school building and infrastructure of over 900 UK schools. Research has shown that the condition of a building has a substantive impact on the wellbeing, attainment, and behaviour of pupils and staff. Despite this a recent report by the National Audit Office found that over 700,000 pupils are learning in a building which requires a rebuilding or major refurbishment.

This report looks at various aspects of the condition and planned investment for school infrastructure, and then conducts an in-depth dive into how this is impacting school life and outcomes across several subject areas.

Through this research, we have found that pupils are continuing to learn in facilities which are outdated and, in the worst of cases, having a direct consequence on the outcomes of pupils – including areas which are identified as a priority for the government including physical education and STEM.

At its current rate, the entire schools estate would take over 400 years to rebuild. This is simply not good enough when a school building is typically built to last around 70 years. This report brings together key voices from across the sector to highlight the pressing need for a new funding settlement for schools to modernise their estates and facilities.

We hope you find this report informative, and we encourage you to explore BESA's wider research programme, including our Compass, Barometer, and library of thematic reports just like this, to help you expand your knowledge of the education sector.

Caroline Wright – Director General of The British Educational Suppliers Association



Focus Group.

The BESA 2023 State of the Estate report was launched alongside a focus group discussion with 4 of the survey participants. The following themes were discussed at length, and we would encourage anyone interested in better understanding the reality of estate management in challenging economic times, to watch the full-length video available on the BESA website.

1. SEND provision is a huge stress on the estate with the need for specialist facilities and spaces having a large impact on budgets for general maintenance
2. Schools are staggering breaktimes and lunchtimes to reduce the strain on the staff and space, but this is having a negative effect on the pupil community
3. Internet access is no longer a problem – access to devices often is
4. Budgets for school maintenance are low – with up to 60% (in one instance) spent simply on having the facilities assessed each year
5. Bidding for funds is expensive, time consuming and often unsuccessful
6. There is a suspicion that builders inflate costs for schools because of slow payments and distrust in local authorities.
7. Staff are meeting in cupboards and cars due to lack of space
8. Accessibility for disabled students and parents is a problem for some
9. Some schools are doing amazingly innovative things. In one instance, TESLA batteries used alongside solar panels provides 'free' electricity for up to 6 months each year
10. Most schools are renting out the facilities, with some raising tens of thousands of pounds of additional income. That money, however, isn't always finding its way back into the maintenance budget – i.e. more stress on the buildings with additional funding for maintenance

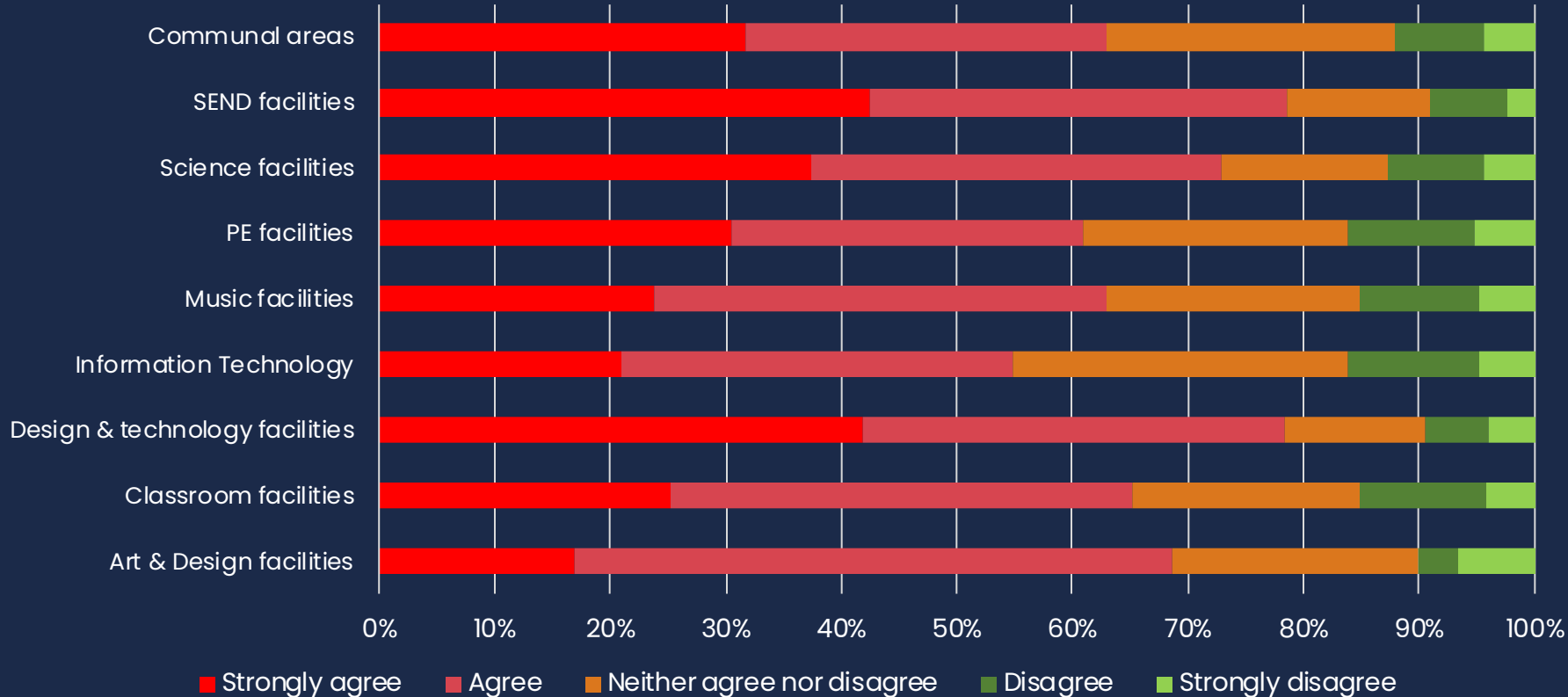
State of the estate.

Investment



Investment.

“The current level of investment in facilities at our school is insufficient and may lead to significant challenges or overspending in the future.”



70%
of SEND teachers are worried about current levels of investment

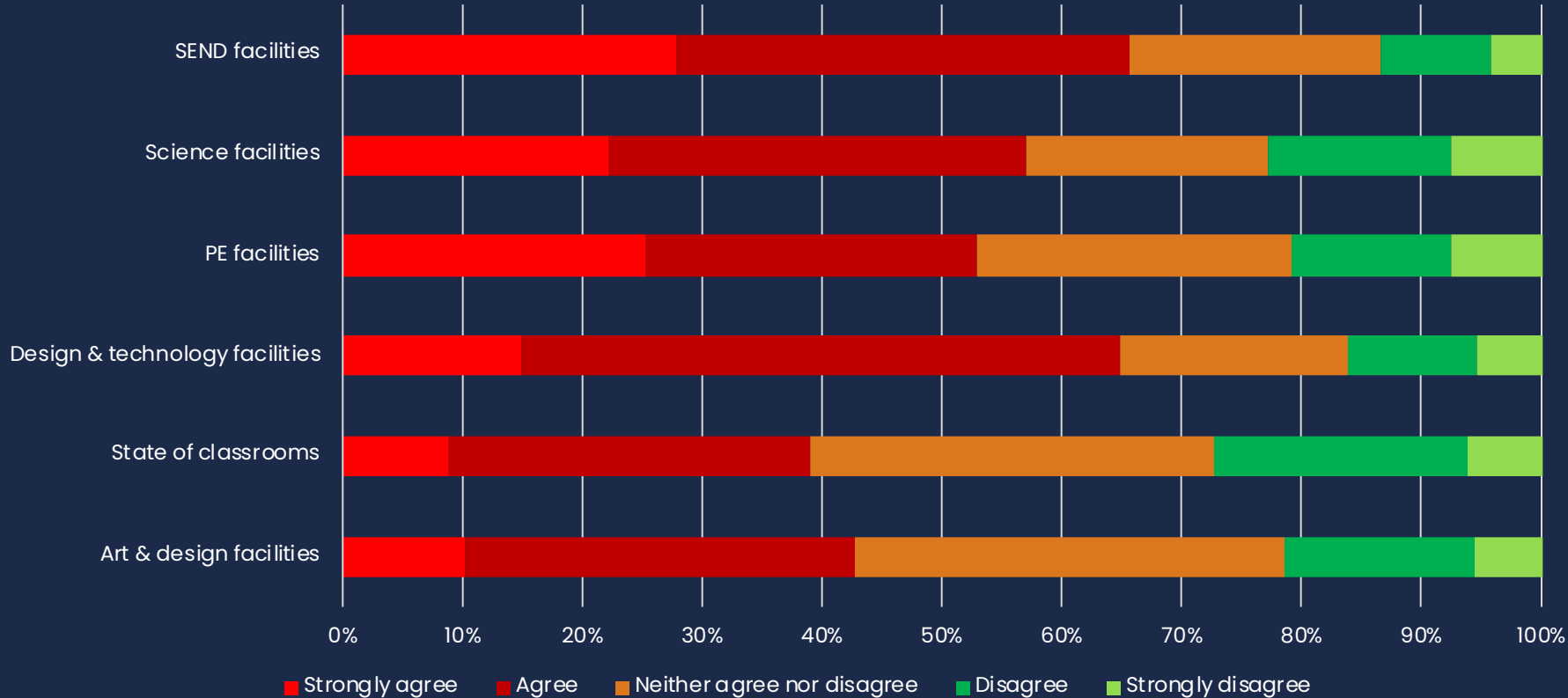


The majority of educators believe the current level of investment in their school will lead to significant future challenges.

Only a small number of respondents strongly disagreed with this hypothesis.

Investment.

“The current state of facilities in our schools is negatively affecting outcomes for students”



Secondary schools reported greater concerns than primary

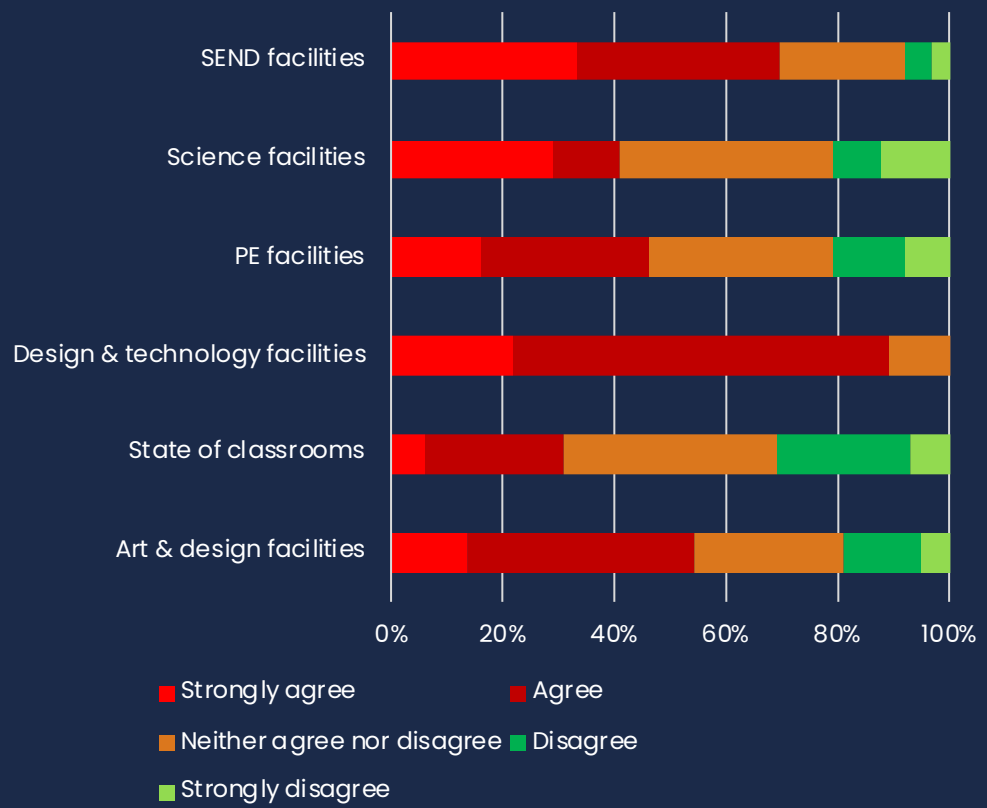


SEND and Science facilities have been reported as the most likely to be a cause of concern and leading to negative outcomes for students.

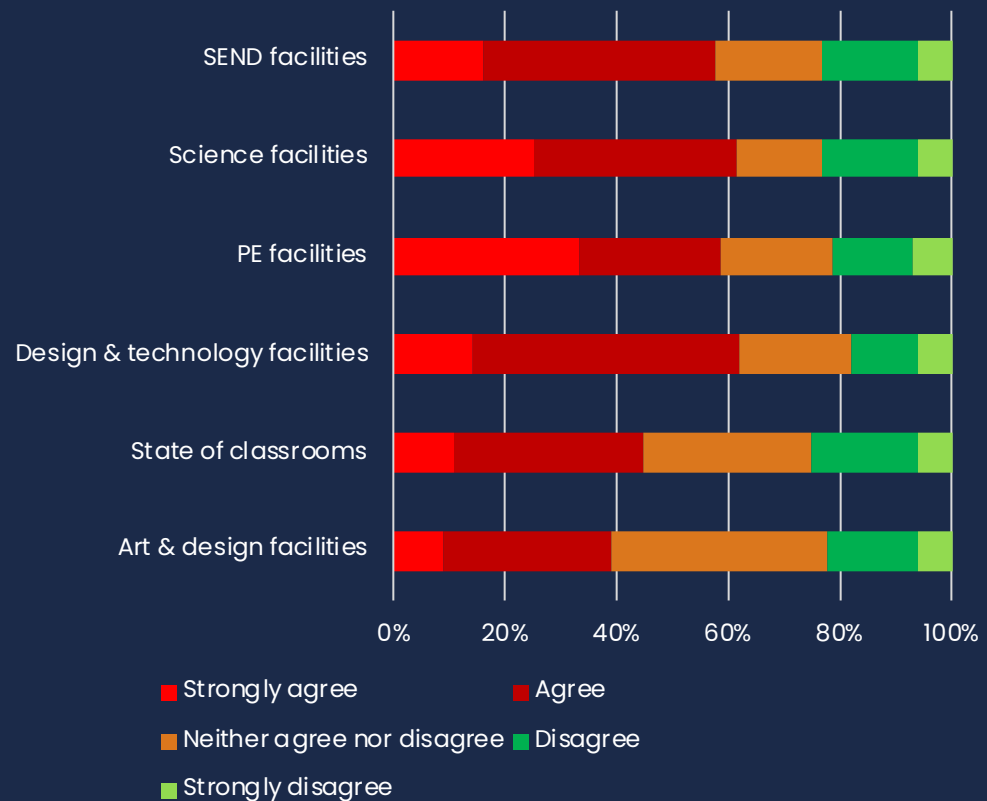
Investment – by Sector.

“The current state of facilities in our schools is negatively affecting outcomes for students”

Primary



Secondary



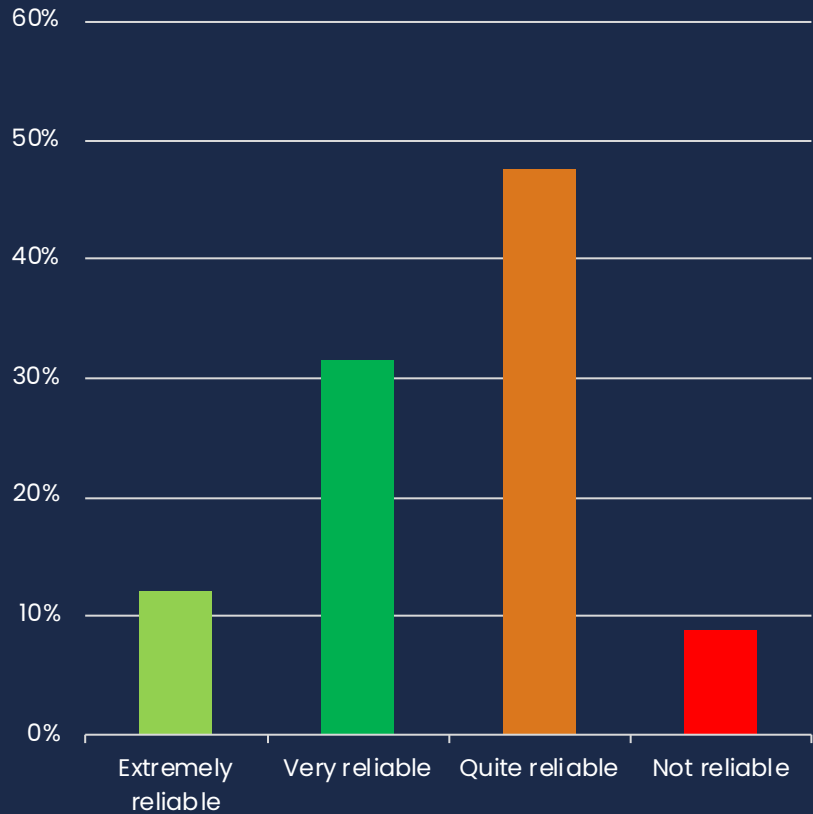
State of the estate.

IT Infrastructure

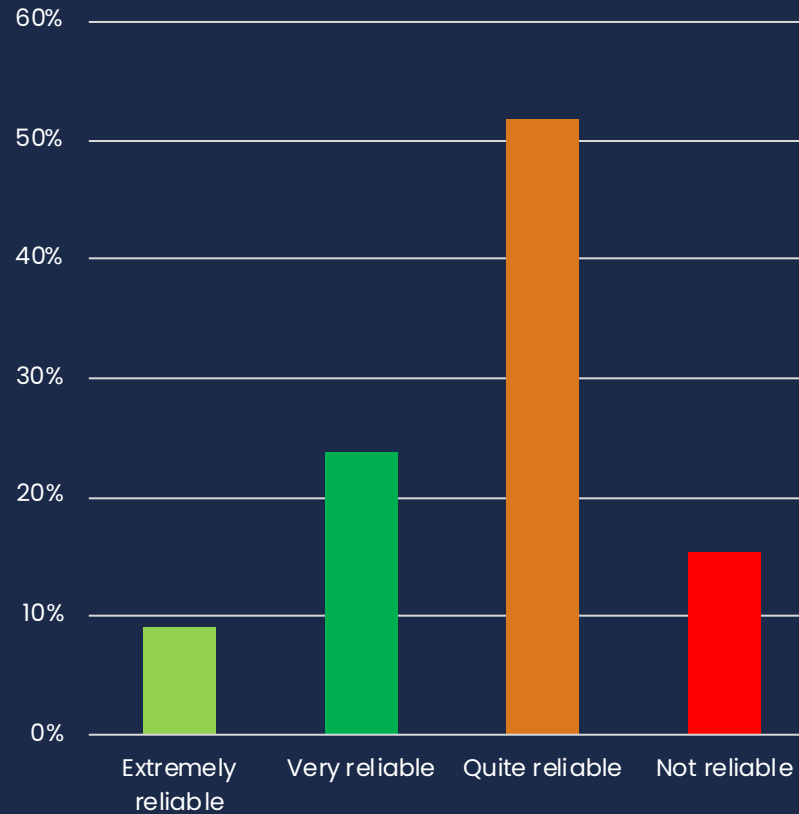


IT Infrastructure.

? How reliable is your internet connection?



? How reliable is your wi-fi?

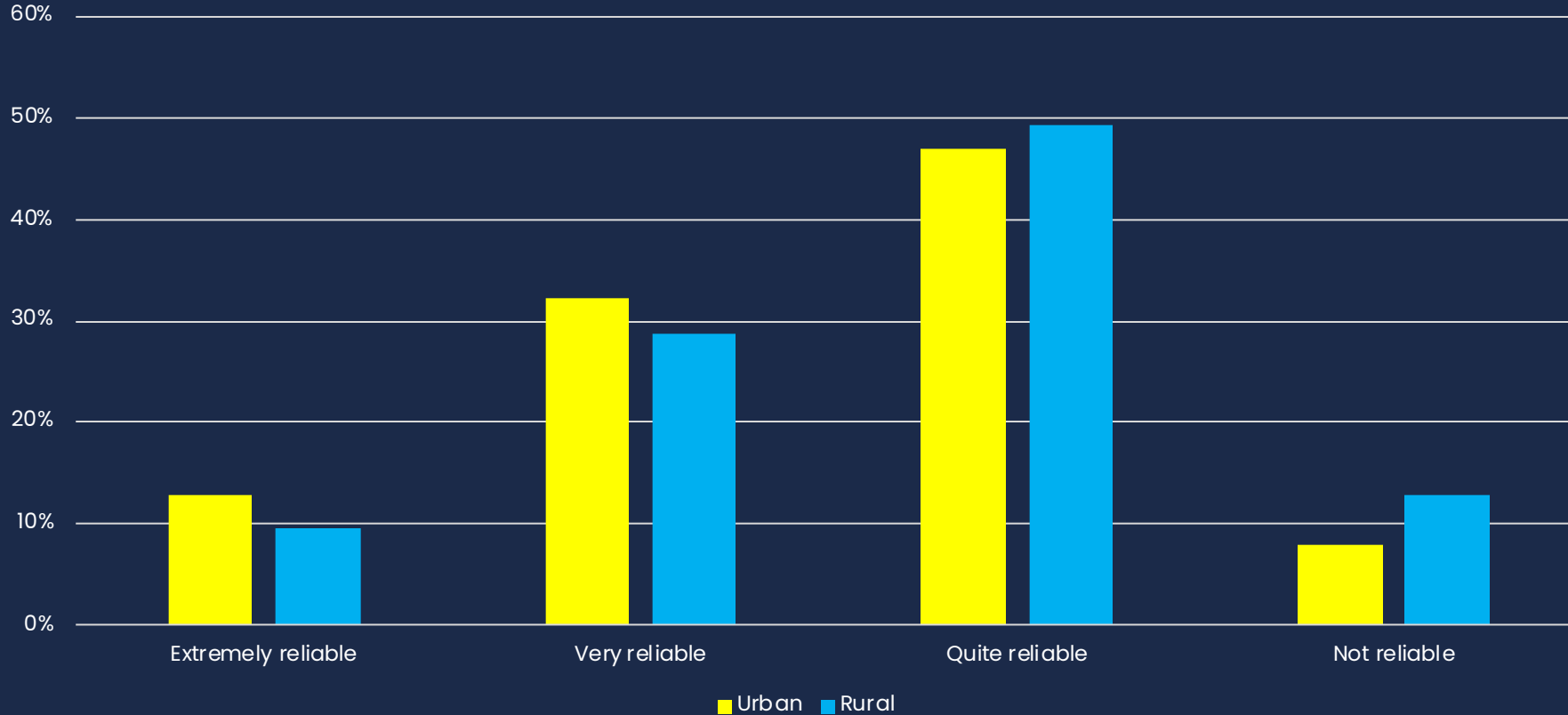


91%
described their internet connection as reliable or better

i Schools are generally happy with their internet speed and reliability with less than 10% overall describing it as Not Reliable.

IT Infrastructure.

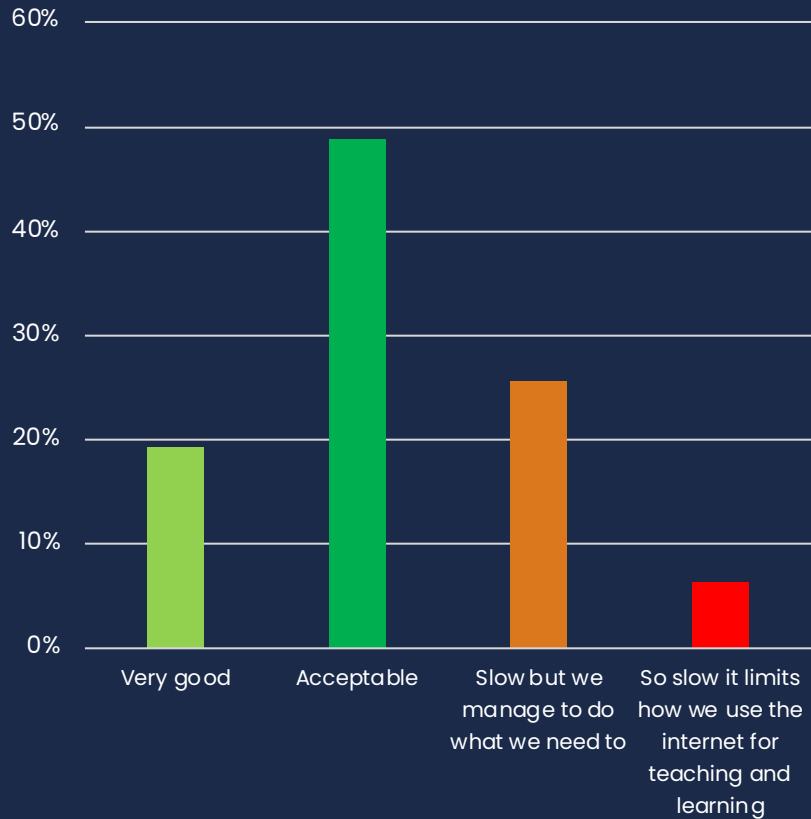
? How reliable is your internet connection?



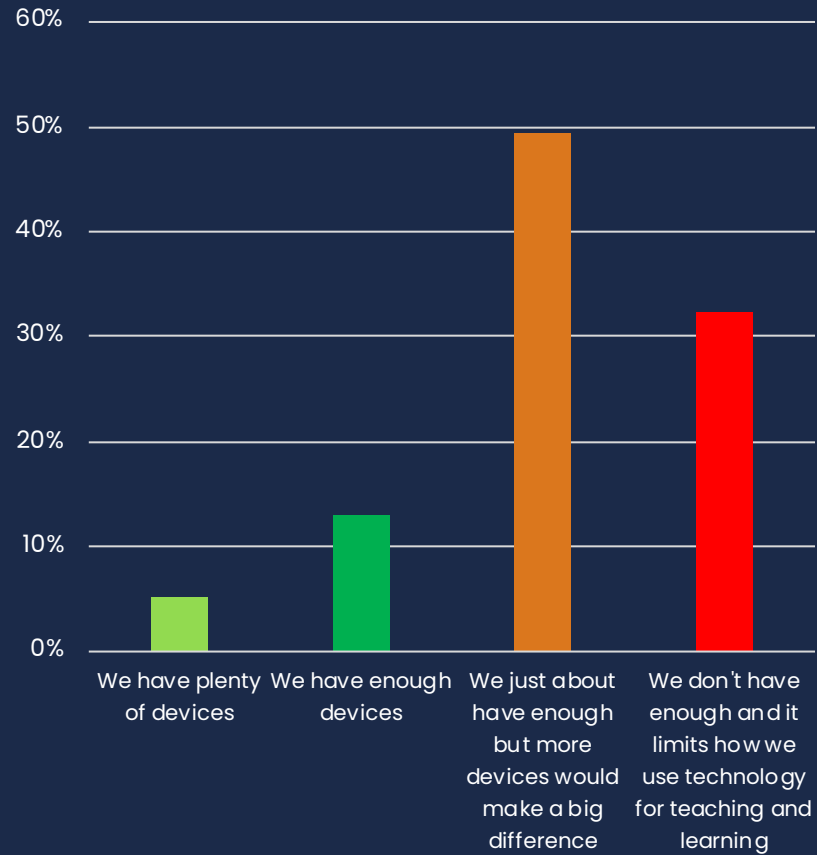
i Rural schools are almost a third as likely to describe their internet as unreliable ALTHOUGH, the differences between the two are not as stark as they once were.

IT Infrastructure.

? Speed of internet devices.



? Internet connected devices used by students. Select all that apply.

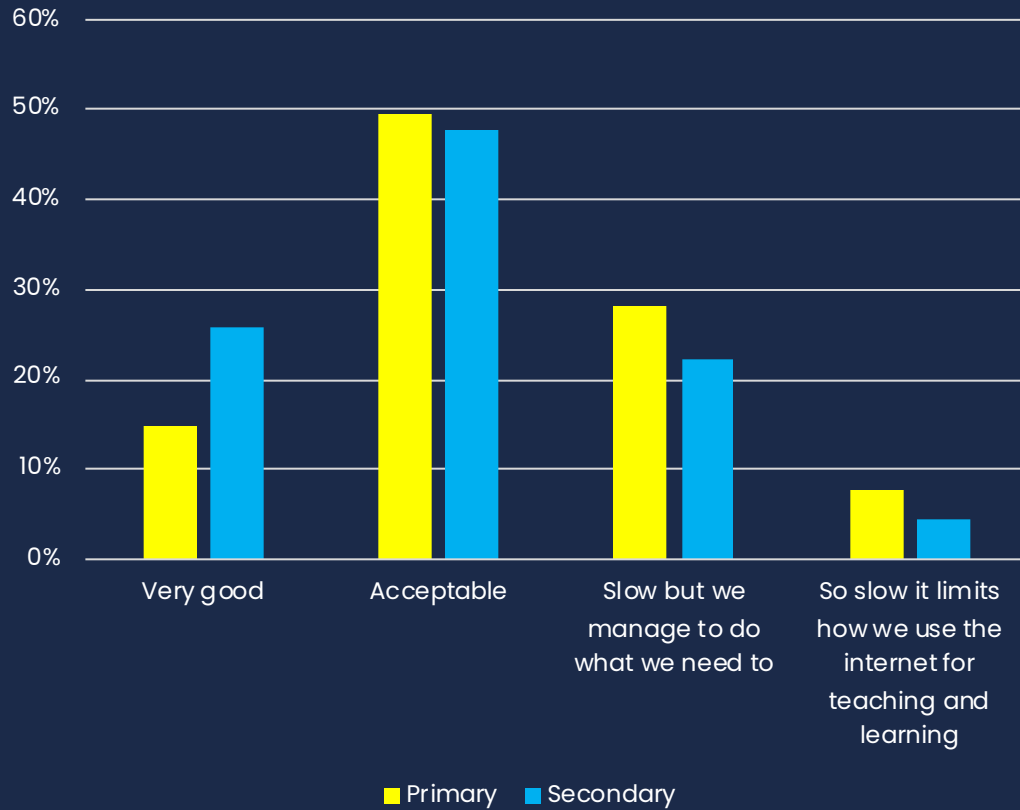


29%
report lack of devices as a serious issue

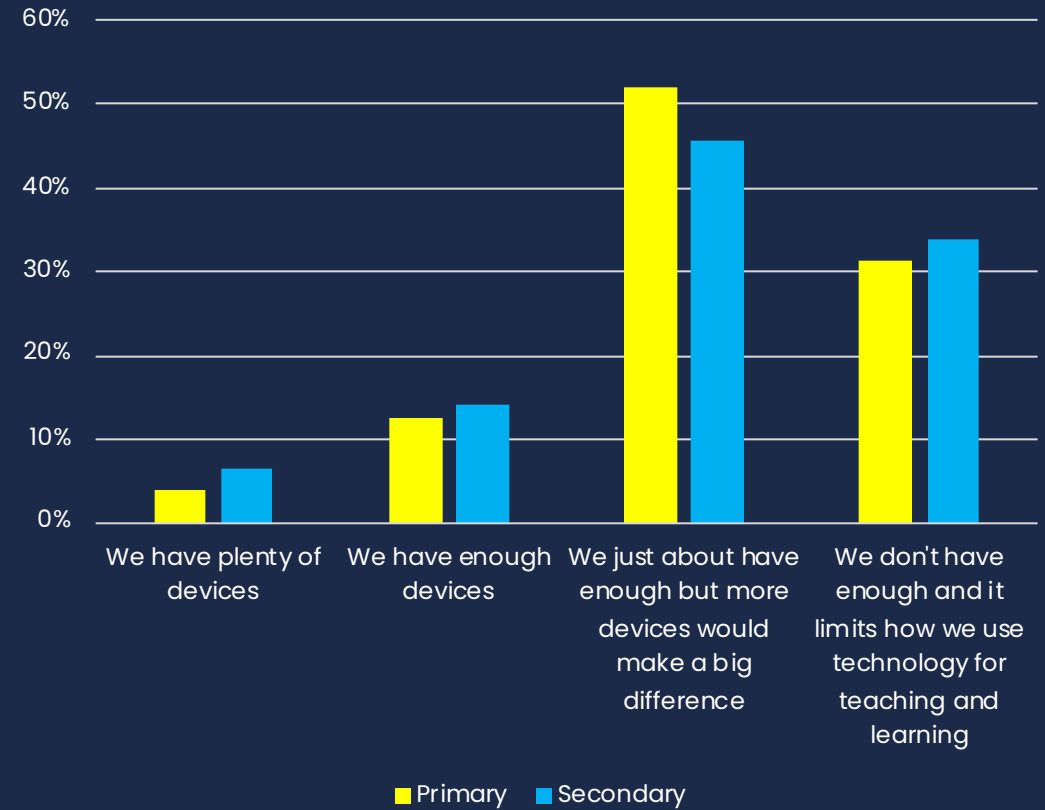
i The speed of internet devices is not a problem for most schools. However, lack of devices means almost a third of schools are limited in their use of technology for teaching and learning.

IT Infrastructure – by sector.

? Speed of internet devices.

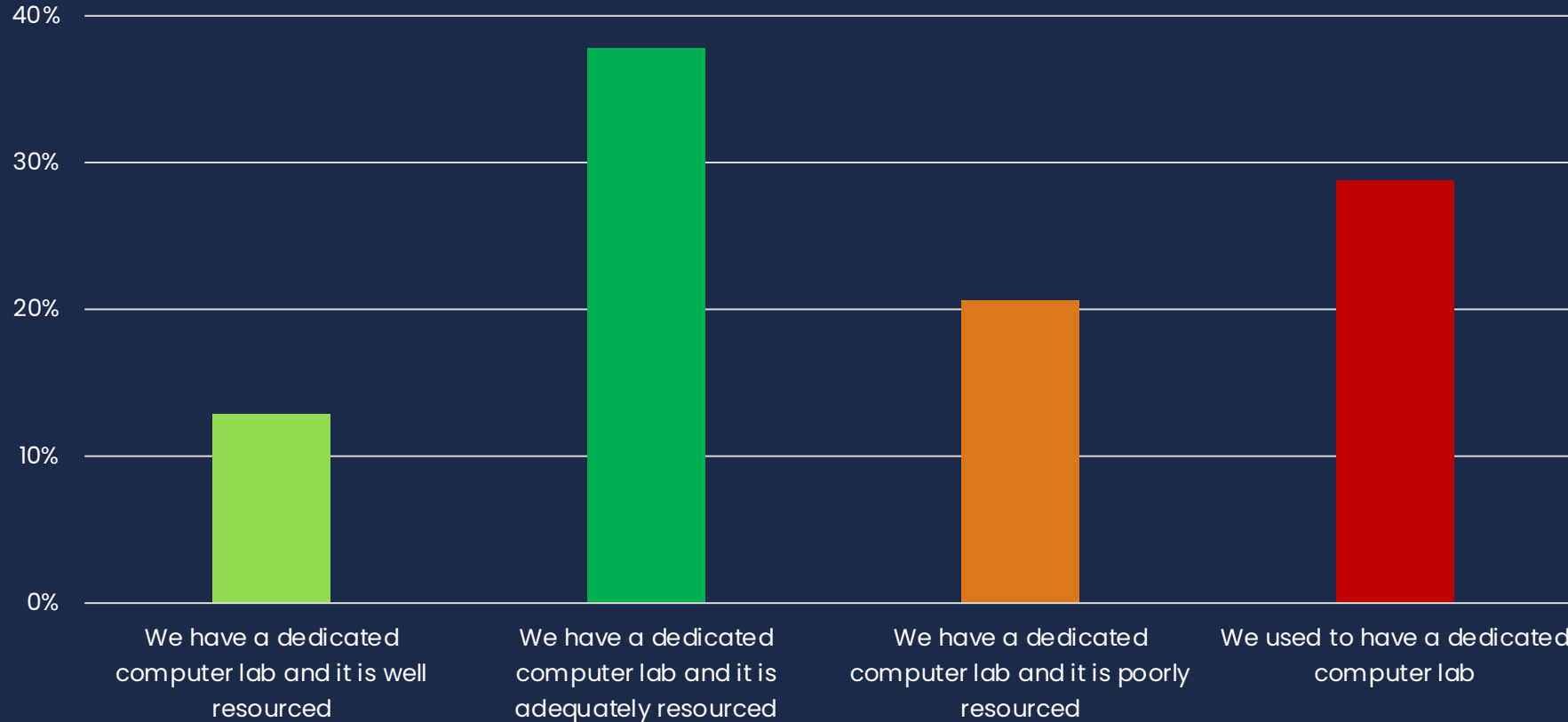


? Internet connected devices used by students. Select all that apply.



IT infrastructure.

Thinking of a dedicated computer lab, please select the statement that best describes this facility in your school.



29%
Schools without a dedicated computer lab

i Almost one-third of schools do not have a dedicated computer lab. Of those that do the majority are reporting it as adequately or well resourced.

Comment.

"The findings of the BESA "State of the Estate" report paints a mixed picture regarding IT infrastructure in schools and the reliability and access to digital devices and connectivity. The findings pose some challenging questions for schools regarding the effectiveness of connectivity, the availability of devices and the need for specialist computer labs. These questions come at a time when increasing numbers of schools are relying upon cloud-based resources, delivered within flexible learning spaces using student connected devices.

Whilst some 45% of respondents felt that their internet connection was extremely or very reliable, over half of respondents (54%) felt that their connectivity was only quite reliable or unreliable. When this is aligned with the reliability of WiFi, with some 50% of respondents reporting that their WiFi is at best quite reliable and a further 15% stating that their WiFi was not reliable, this poses significant issues for schools who are increasingly dependent upon robust connectivity to access an ever-growing menu of cloud-based resources and services.

Where connected devices are concerned the picture is even starker, with almost 30% of schools reporting that they do not have enough connected devices. This therefore limits how they can use technology for teaching and learning, with presumably priority given to those subjects traditionally seen as most benefiting from digital technologies. Clearly, such a picture in schools will limit the opportunities for creative and innovative use of digital devices across a broader range of subjects and curriculum activities.

An interesting consideration for schools is the need for dedicated computing labs. Some 60% of respondents indicate they have a dedicated computer lab, yet only 12% feel that the lab is well resourced. With increasing budget pressures on schools, schools may find the resourcing of computer labs, often allocated to specific subjects, difficult to sustain and may need to explore alternative approaches."

Gavin Hawkins – Director of NAACE

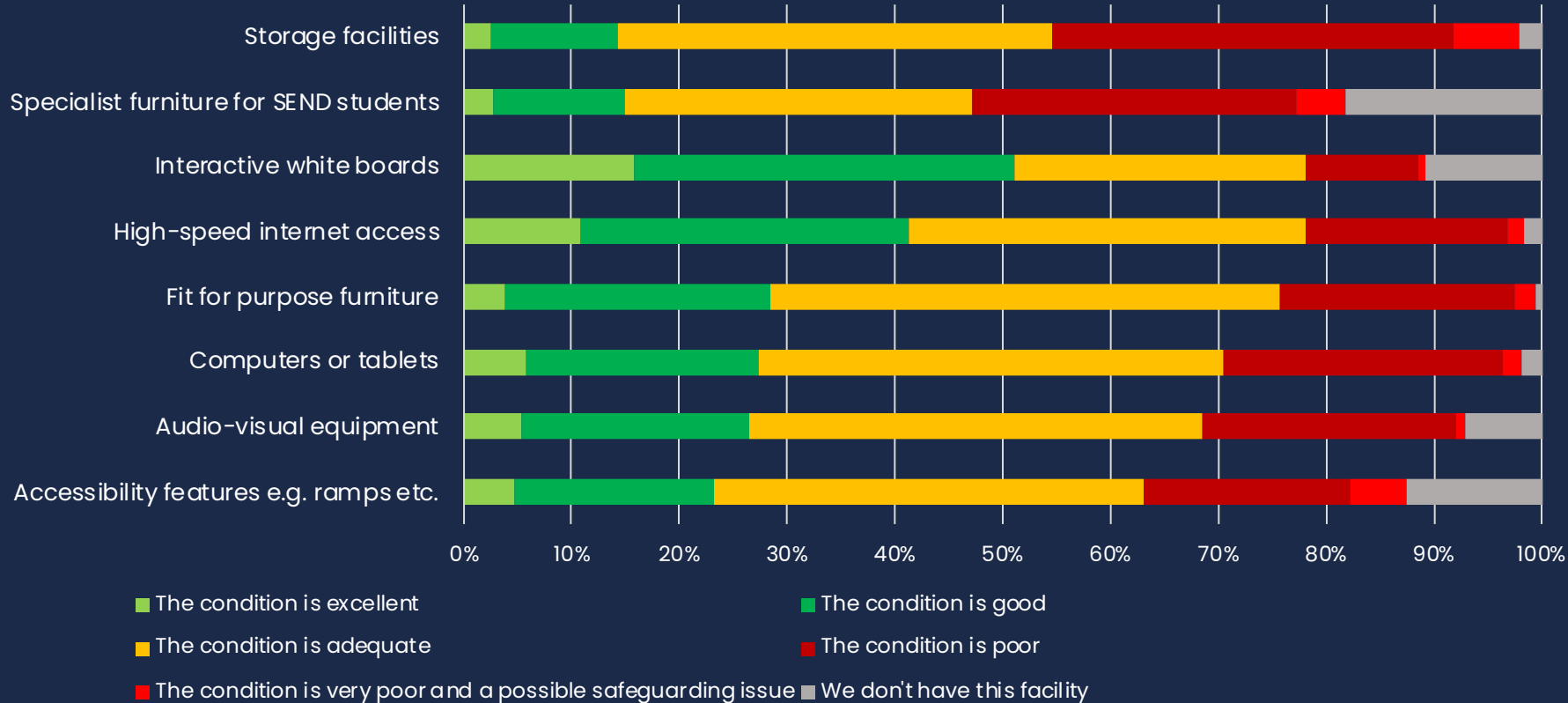
State of the estate.

Classrooms, teaching
and learning spaces



Classrooms, teaching & learning spaces.

Thinking about the condition of the classrooms used by students in your school/setting – please select the most appropriate statement.

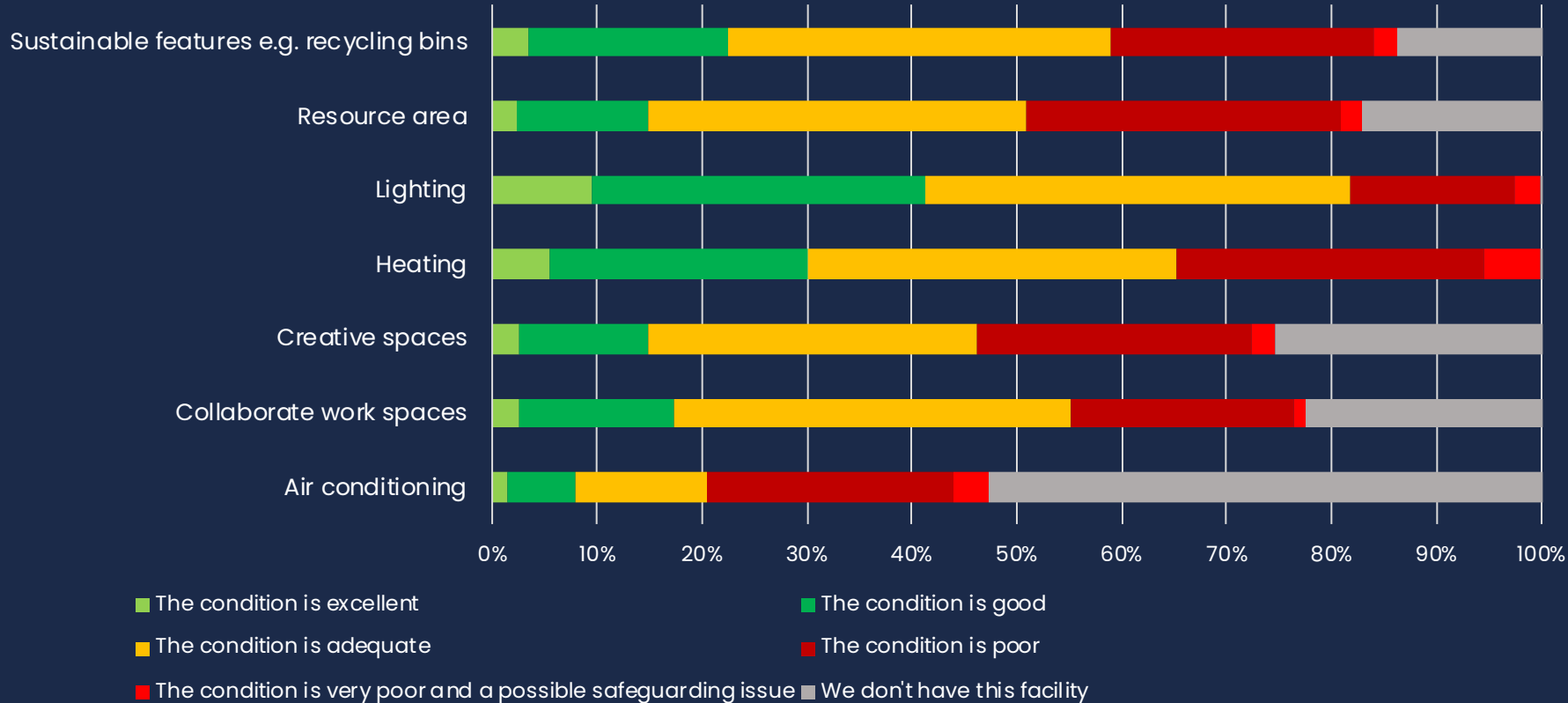


26%
reporting concerns with accessibility features

i Classroom ICT infrastructure is in a reasonable state (High Speed Internet Access, Interactive Whiteboards), all other areas, however, are rated as adequate or poor by more than 70% of respondents

Classrooms, teaching & learning spaces.

Still thinking about the condition of the classrooms used by students in your school/setting – please select the most appropriate statement.



20%
Schools with adequate or good air conditioning

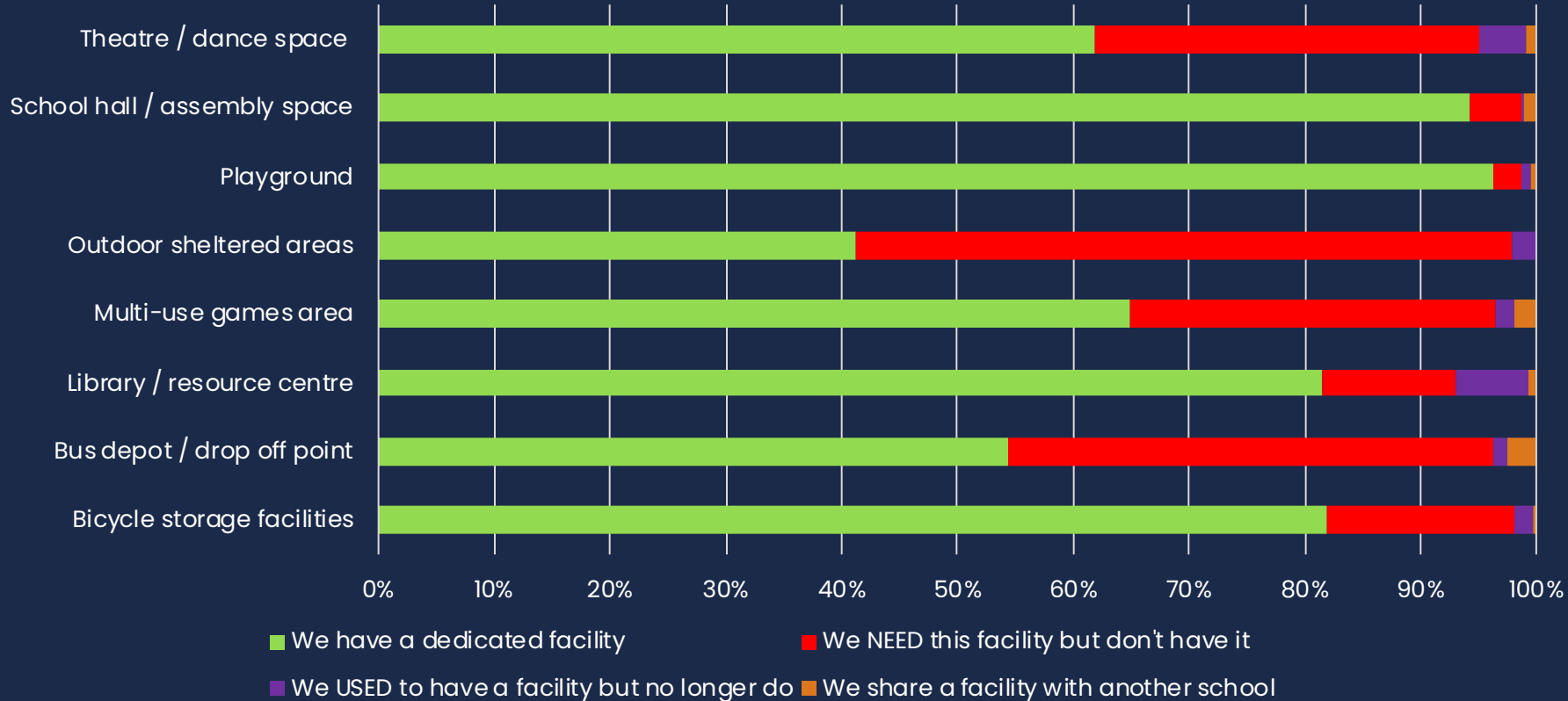
i The answers provided by respondents from different school phases were very similar. The provision of heating and air-conditioning is an issue for many schools in the UK.

State of the estate.
Communal Spaces,
Safeguarding &
Transport



Communal Spaces.

Thinking about communal spaces and facilities used by students in your school/setting – please select the most appropriate statement for each provision.

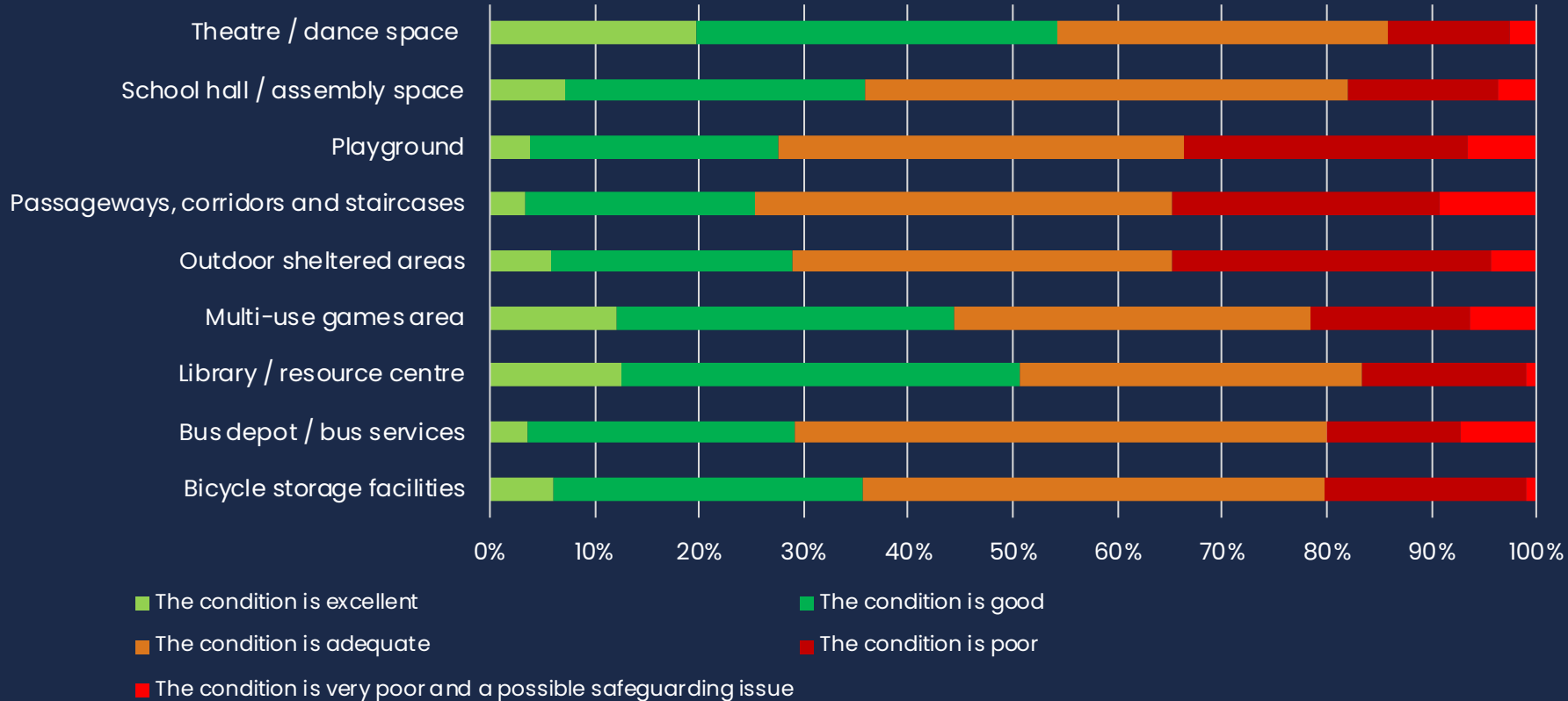


57%
Schools reporting, they need outdoor sheltered areas.

i Outdoor sheltered areas, theatre and dance spaces, multi-use games areas and dedicated drop off points for students are missing but required by many schools.

Communal Spaces.

Thinking about the condition of the communal spaces and facilities used by students in your school/setting – please select the most appropriate statement.

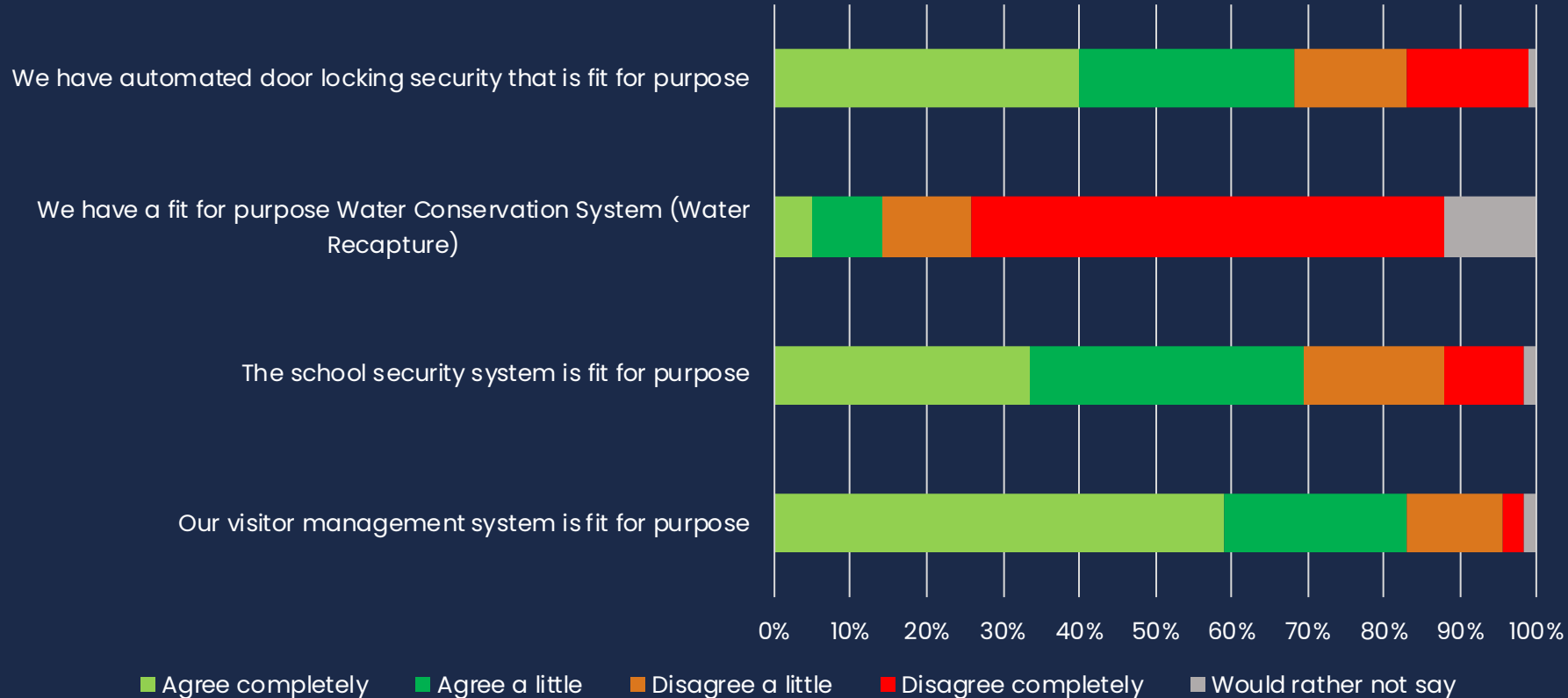


36%
Schools reporting issues with communal areas

i Most schools, but by no means the majority, are reporting adequate provision in most areas – apart from outdoor play areas and internal corridors, passageways and stairs.

The Building infrastructure.

Thinking about the condition of the building infrastructure in your school/setting – how much do you agree with the following statements?

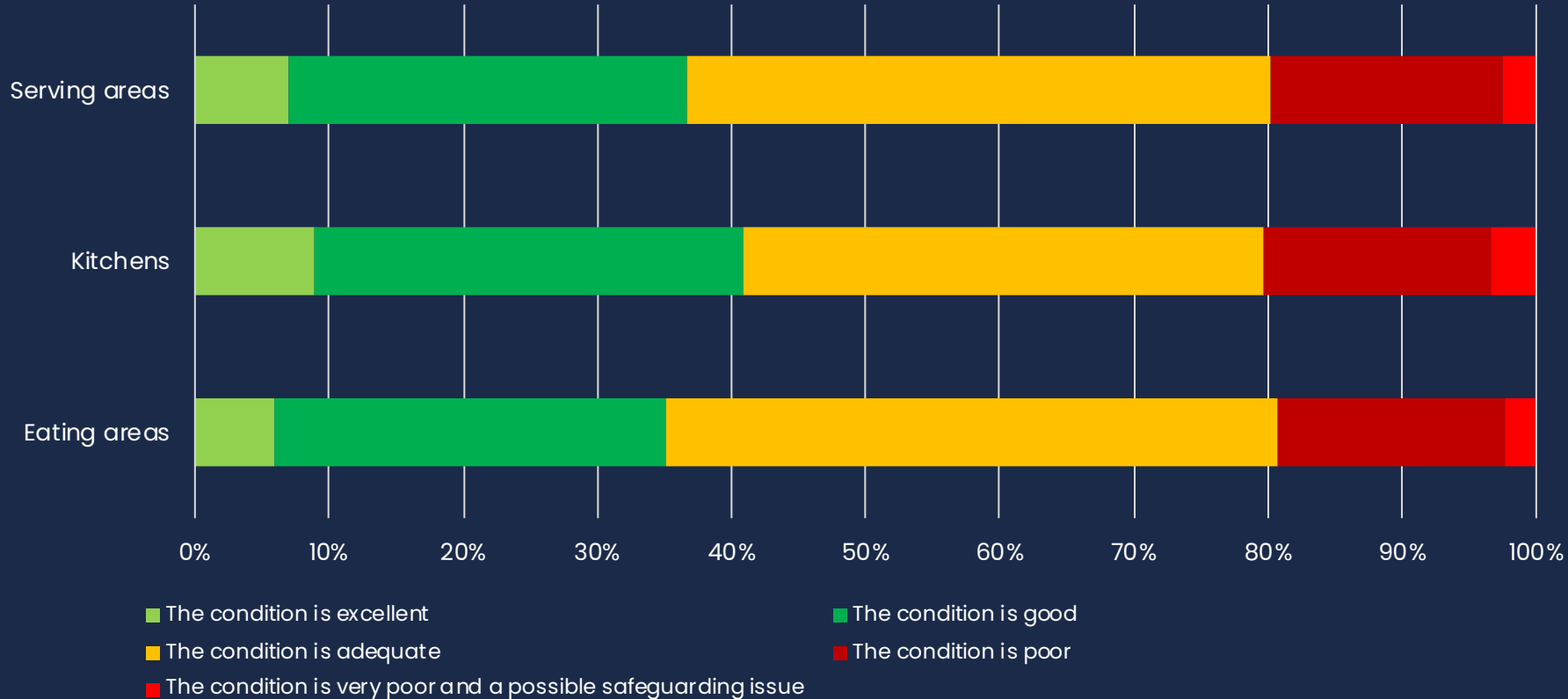


14%
Schools reporting a water recapture system

i Security in schools appears to be largely in an adequate or better condition. The statements provided did not differ by sector

The Building infrastructure.

Thinking about the condition of the catering facilities in your school/setting – please select the most appropriate statement.

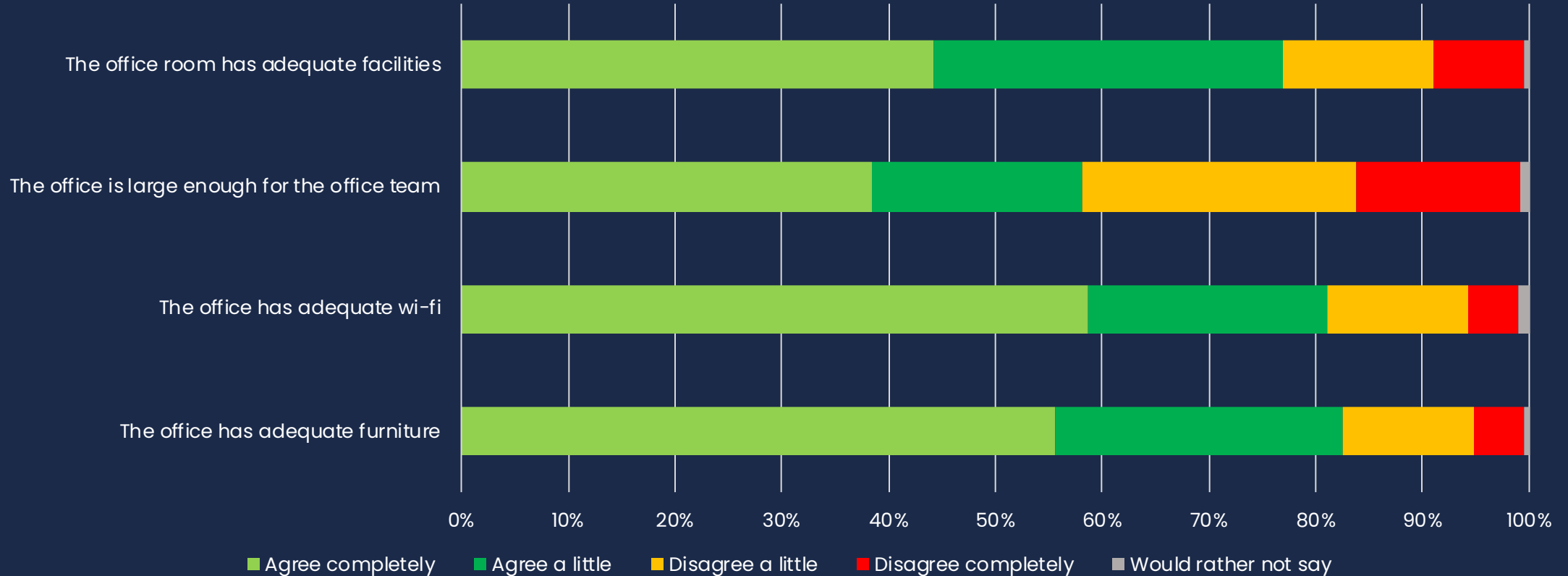


20%
Schools reporting kitchen conditions as poor or worse

i Approximately one-fifth of schools responding are reporting their catering facilities as poor. There were very few differences between primary school and secondary school respondents.

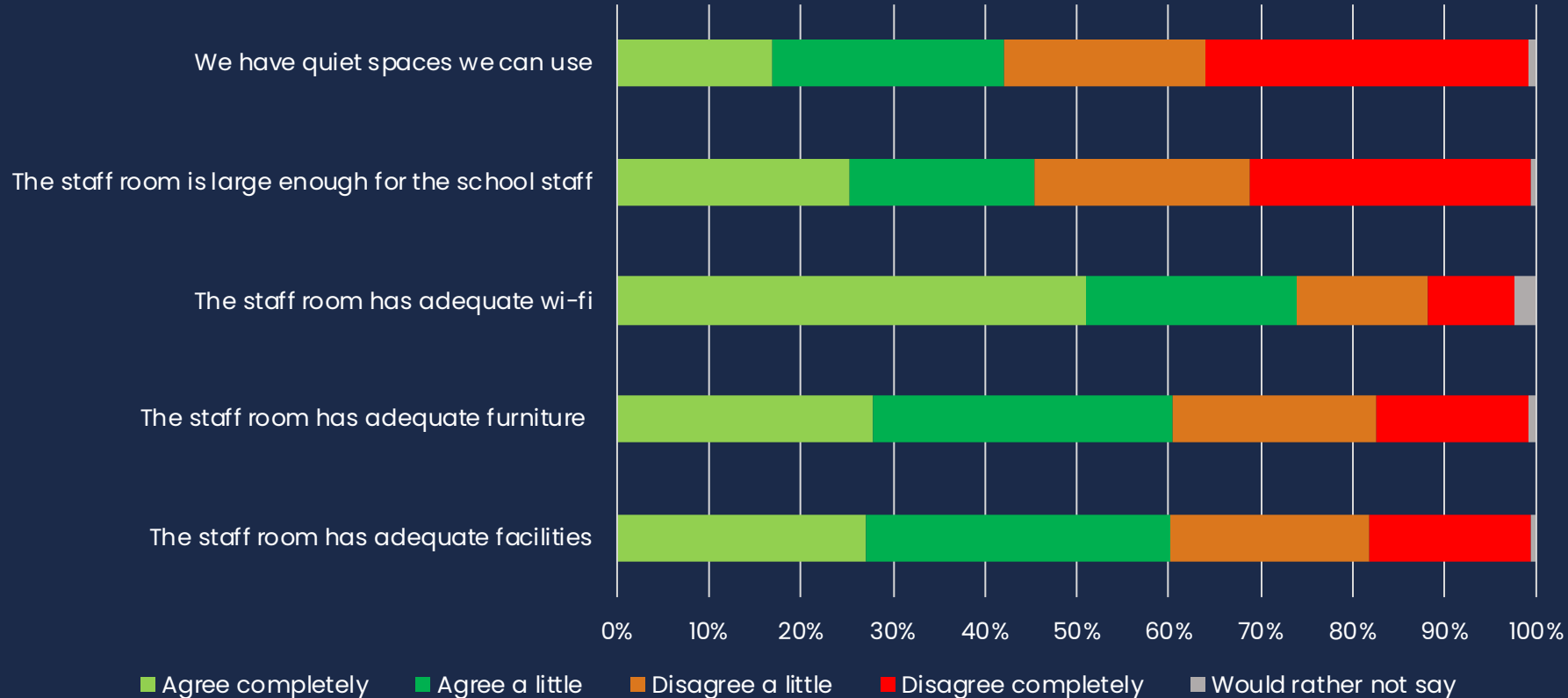
The school office.

Thinking about the condition of the school office in your school/setting – how much do you agree with the following statements?



The School Staff Room.

Thinking about the condition of the staff room facilities in your school/setting – how much do you agree with the following statements?



35%
Respondents without a quiet space for staff

i With renewed and continued pressure on staff retention and recruitment it is concerning to see that many staff rooms don't have quiet spaces for educators. Most staff rooms appear to have adequate furniture, but space and use of space appears to be an issue for many.

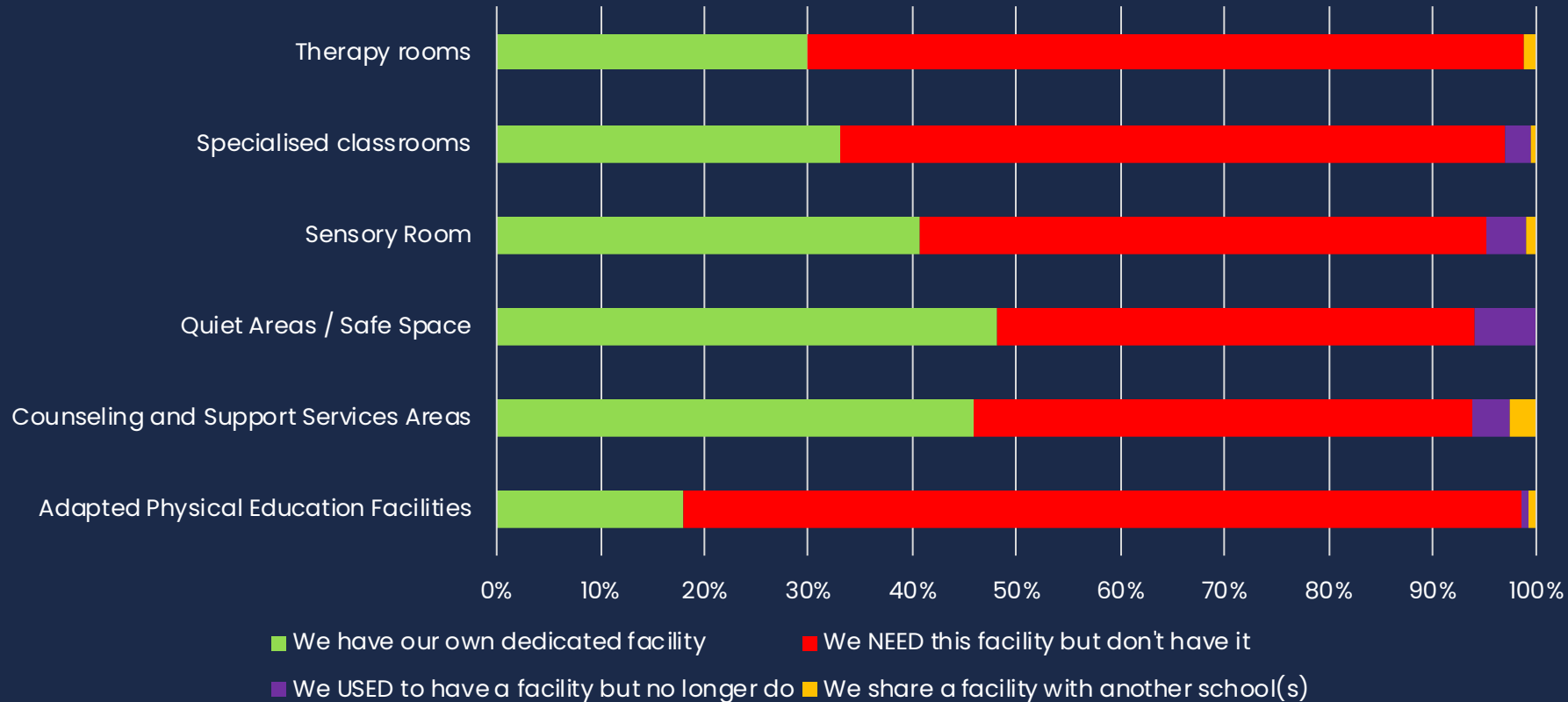
State of the estate.

SEND



SEND.

Thinking about SEND facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.



80%
Schools that want adapted PE facilities for SEND

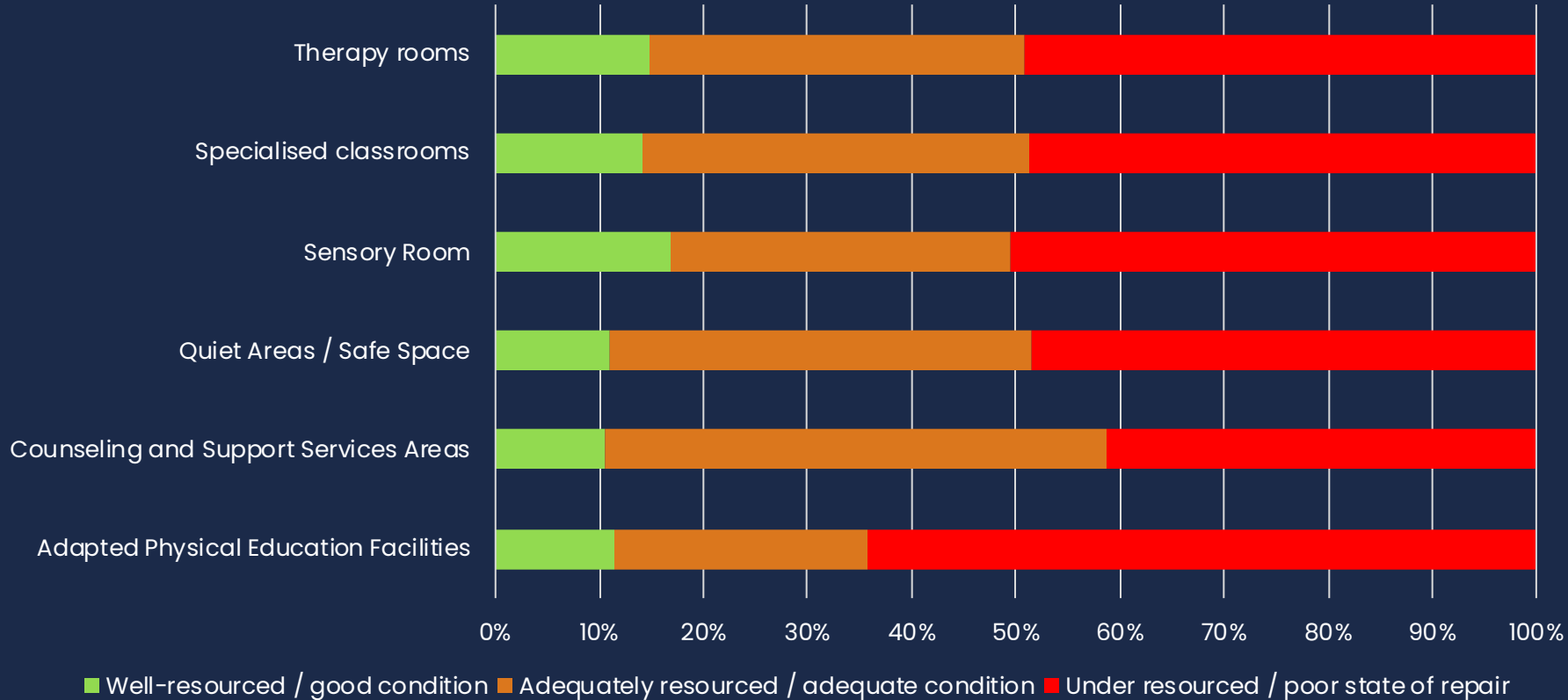


It is well-known that the SEND provision in mainstreams schools is under extreme pressure. The lack of facilities clearly being a contributing factor.

Most schools want, but do not have, specialised classrooms or therapy rooms.

SEND.

Thinking about the condition of the SEND facilities – please select the most applicable statement..



64%
Schools who have adapted PE facilities consider them under resourced.



Even those schools in the fortunate position of having dedicated facilities and reporting a poor state of repair.

A more in-depth look at SEND provision is available in the Autumn 2023 BESA COMPASS report.

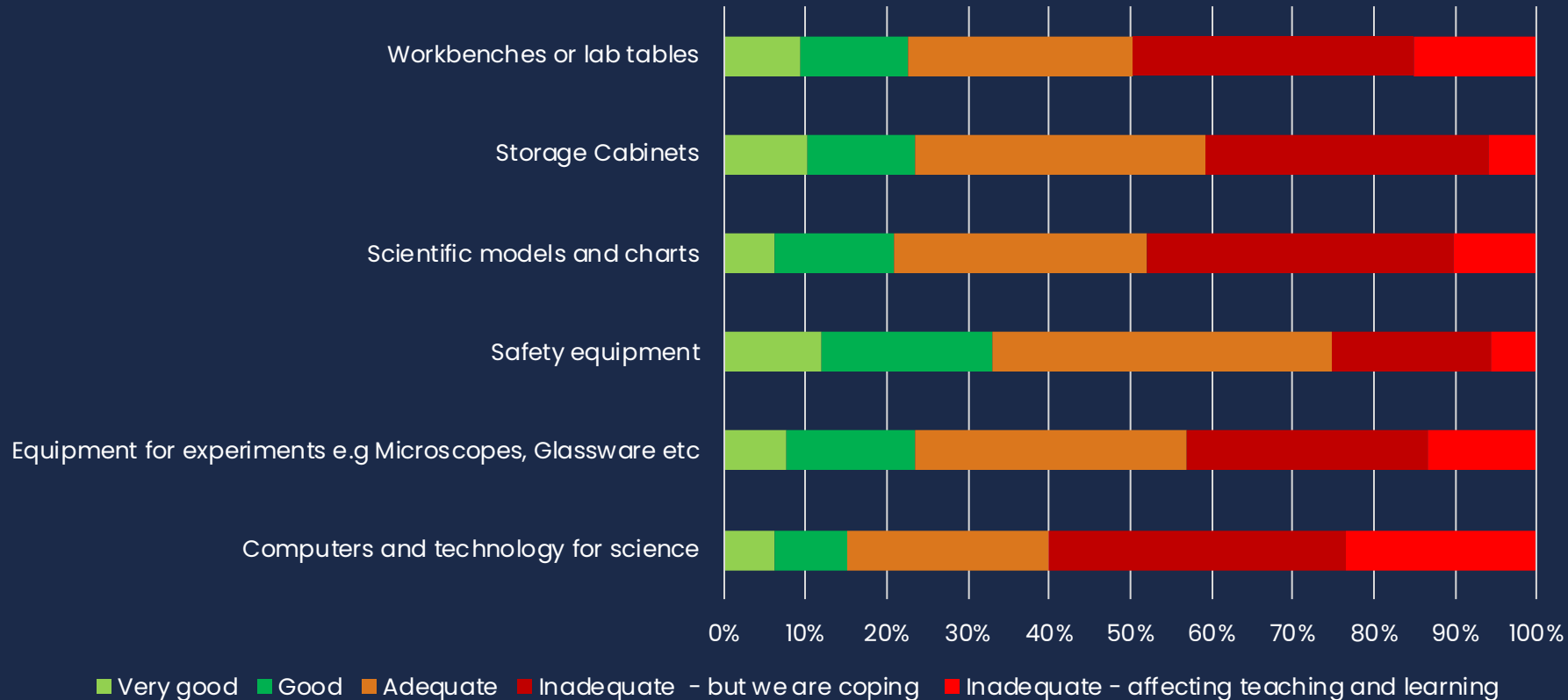
State of the estate.

SCIENCE



SCIENCE.

Thinking about science facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.



23%
Science teachers reporting ICT facilities are affecting teaching & learning

i The science departments in Secondary schools are reporting some of the worst conditions and lack of investment of any provision / department. Almost 45% do not have adequate scientific models and charts.

Comment.



“In an era driven by technological advancements and scientific innovation, it is paramount that we prioritise investment in science education infrastructure and facilities. Doing so not only ensures that every young person leaves school with a good understanding of the world around them, but also contributes to the future workforce’s ability to tackle complex challenges, topics and emerging issues such as climate change, potential pandemics and biodiversity loss.

Yet the results of this most recent survey by BESA provide a concerning picture of the state of science education facilities and infrastructure in some of our schools. Of the disciplines surveyed, respondents were most negative about the state of science investment and its impact on students: more than half of the responses state that workbenches, lab tables, storage cabinets, access to scientific models, charts, equipment and computers are inadequate.

A lack of investment in science facilities will directly and negatively impact the effectiveness of science teaching and learning. It raises direct questions about students’ ability to access hands-on learning experiences and high-quality practical science education. Gatsby’s Good Practical Science Benchmarks states that all schools “should have enough laboratories to make it possible for every teacher to do frequent practical science safely and that each laboratory should have sufficient equipment for students to work in small groups”. This research suggests that these benchmarks are not being met in schools across the country and as such paints a bleak picture for the future of science education in the UK.

It is vital that as a nation we invest more heavily in the state of our science facilities – and provide future generations with the tools they need to engage and excel in science.”

Association of Science Education

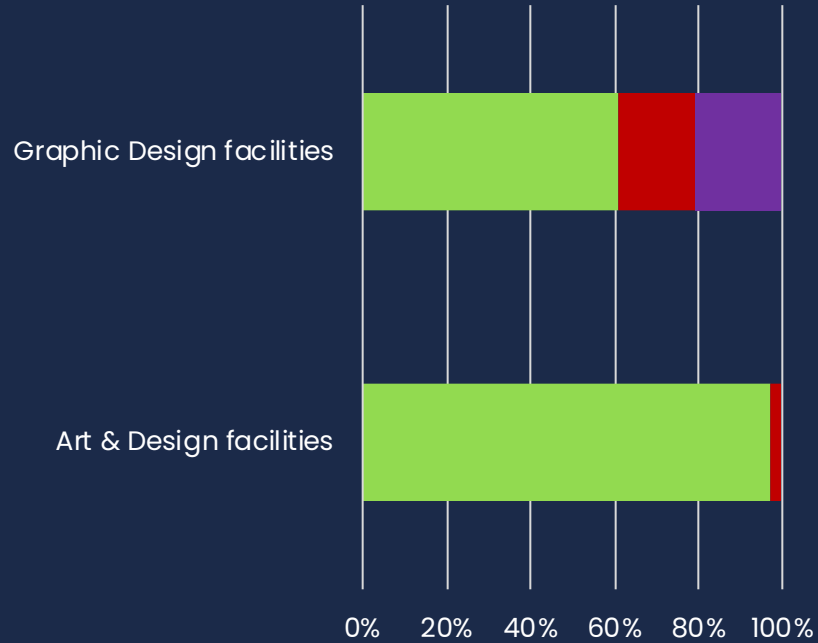
State of the estate.

ART & DESIGN

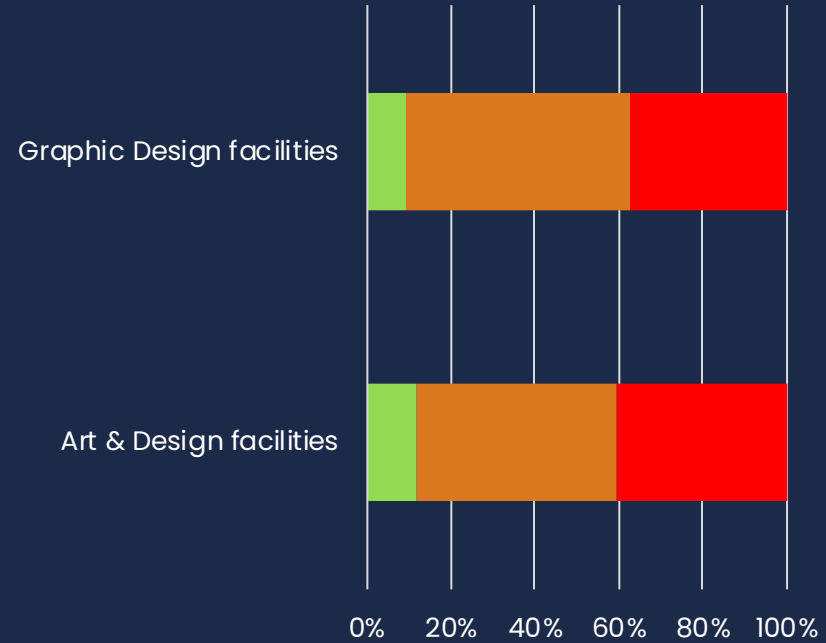


ART & DESIGN.

Thinking about art & design facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.



- We have our own dedicated facility
- We NEED this facility but don't have it
- We USED to have a facility but no longer do



- Well resourced / good state of repair
- Adequately resourced / adequate state of repair
- Under resourced / poor state of repair

40%
Schools reporting issues with their Art & Graphic Design facilities

i While most secondary schools have a dedicated art and design facility less than 15% consider it to be well resource and or in a good state of repair.

Comment.

The logo for NSEAD, consisting of the lowercase letters 'nsead' in a white serif font on a dark blue square background.

“This report shines a light on the need for action to ensure that pupils in the UK receive an education that allows them to develop skills, knowledge and understanding through hands on learning. Teachers are telling us that art and design facilities are under-resourced, poorly maintained, and in some cases non-existent. They are clear that this is having a negative impact on learning, and that the situation will only get worse unless there is adequate investment, now.

So much learning in art and design is through practical experience, working with materials and specialist equipment to develop skills and understanding of a range of processes and disciplines. Pupils need access to well-equipped studios and classrooms. Pupils need the resources to support learning through making, but also access to digital devices, which are an essential part of learning in the subject.

Art and design teachers are known for being creative and resourceful, but there are limits to what can be done safely and to a high standard if the resources are not there. Across the UK darkrooms, kilns, printing presses are being de-commissioned because there is no budget to maintain them. Pupils are not working in film, animation and graphics because of insufficient devices and IT support and infrastructure in their schools. This is already leading many centres to offer an unacceptably narrow curriculum. Without action and investment now, we will feel the loss of learning in our creative industries for decades to come.”

CEO NSEAD

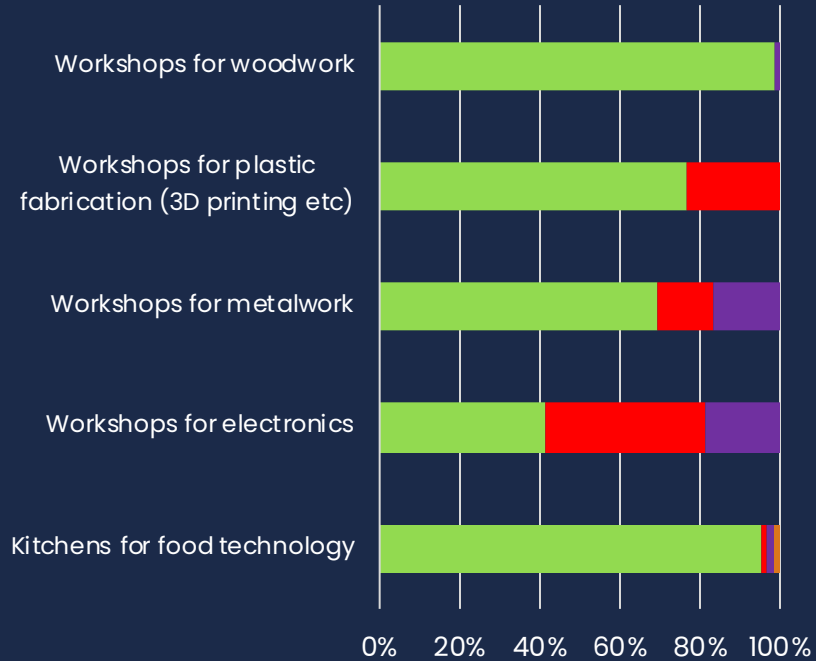
State of the estate.

DESIGN & TECH

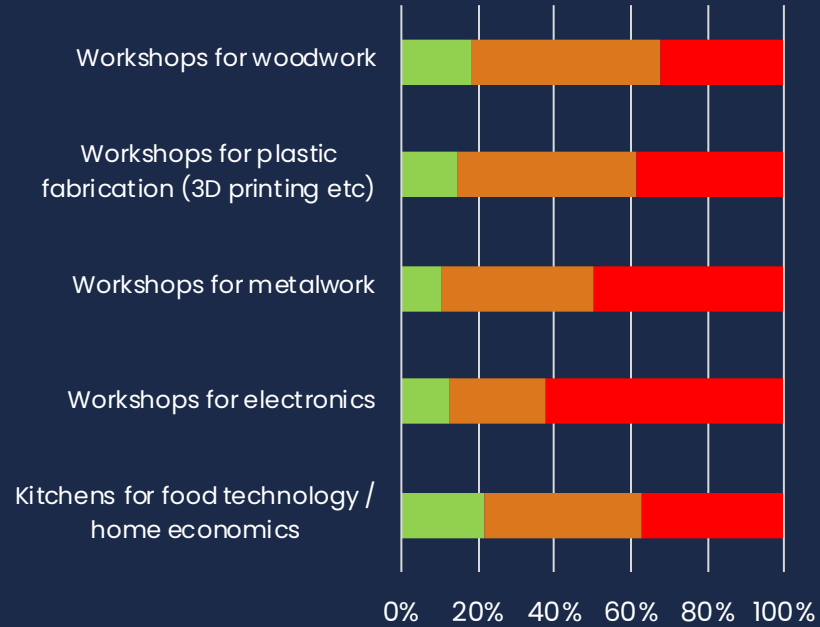


DESIGN & TECH.

Thinking about design & technology facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.



- We have our own dedicated facility
- We NEED this facility but don't have it
- We USED to have a facility but no longer do
- We share a facility with another school(s)



- Well resourced / good state of repair
- Adequately resourced / adequate state of repair
- Under resourced / poor state of repair

42%
Secondary schools with a dedicated electronics workshop

i With design and technology no longer, a mandatory subject is perhaps unsurprising the the condition of facilities is considered a problem by many schools.

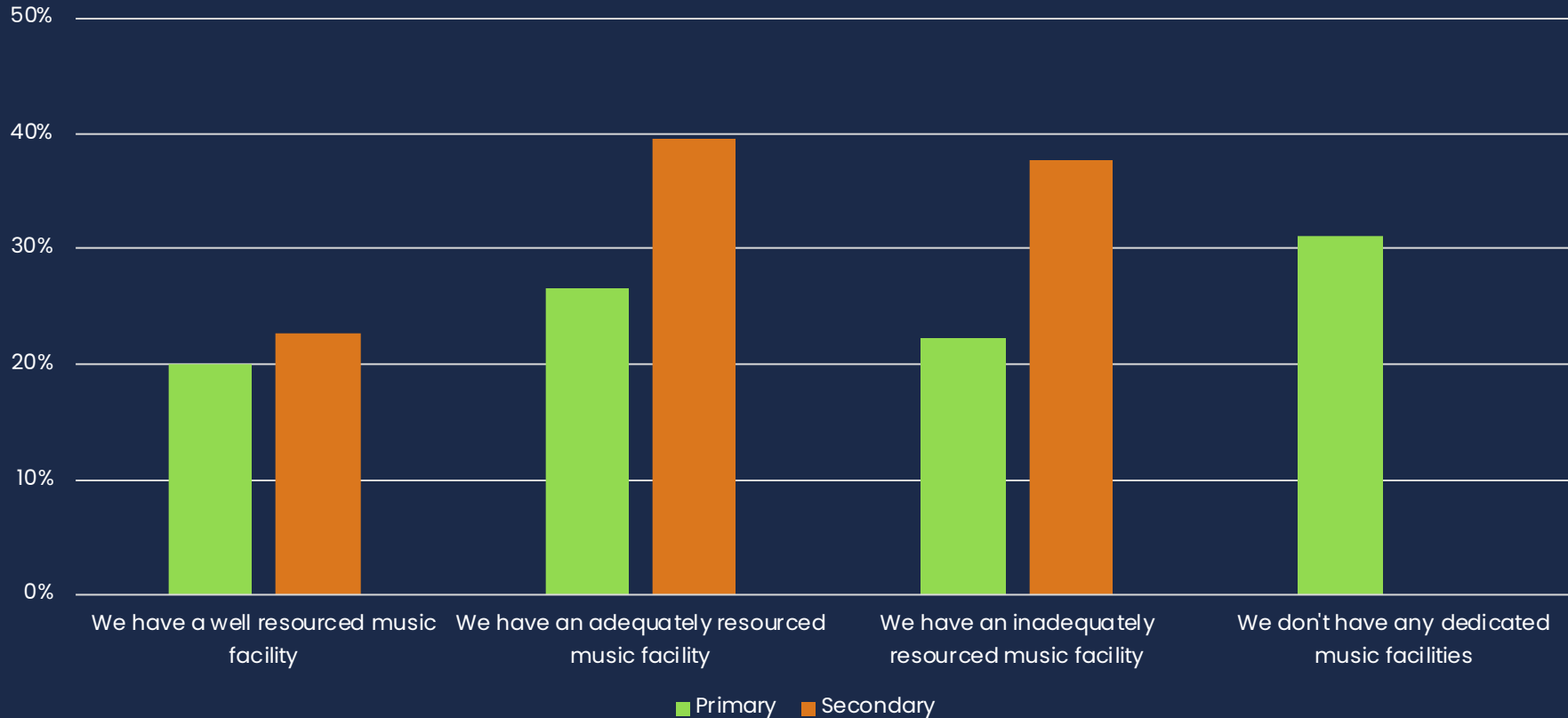
State of the estate.

MUSIC



MUSIC.

Thinking about music facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.



38%
Secondary schools with inadequate music facilities

i Primary schools are largely happier with their music facilities than secondary schools. This is likely driven by the less complex requirements of primary schools. With almost half of secondary schools reporting issues, there is clearly a challenge for UK music teachers.

Comment.



“High quality facilities are an essential part of any child's music education, they create space for children and young people to create, experience, and be transformed. The National Plan for Music Education sets out a vision for the power of music to change lives, where ***“Music must not be the preserve of the privileged few”***.”

It is deeply concerning to hear about schools with no or inadequate facilities, and we seek urgent investment to bring the opportunity this provides to all.”

Music Mark

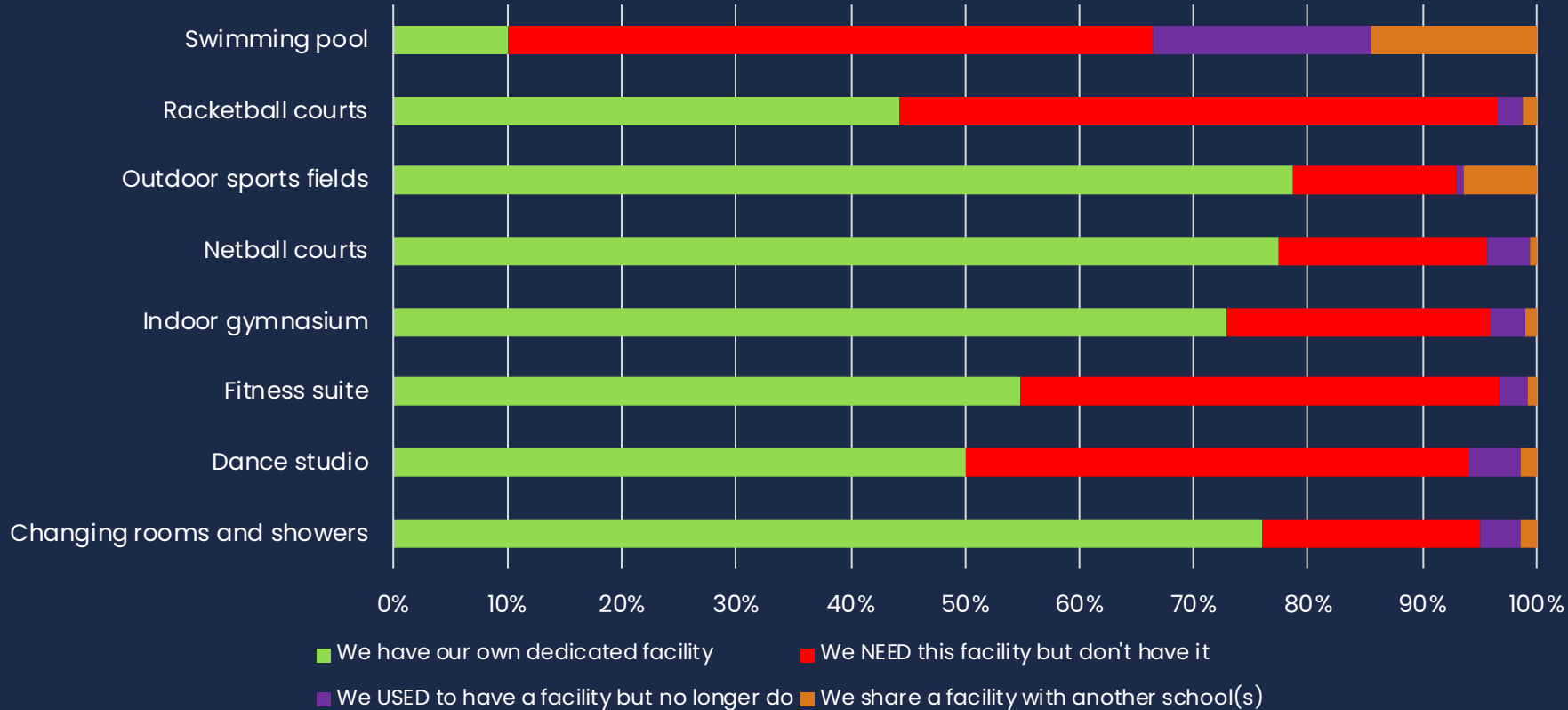
State of the estate.

PE



PE Facilities.

Thinking about PE facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.

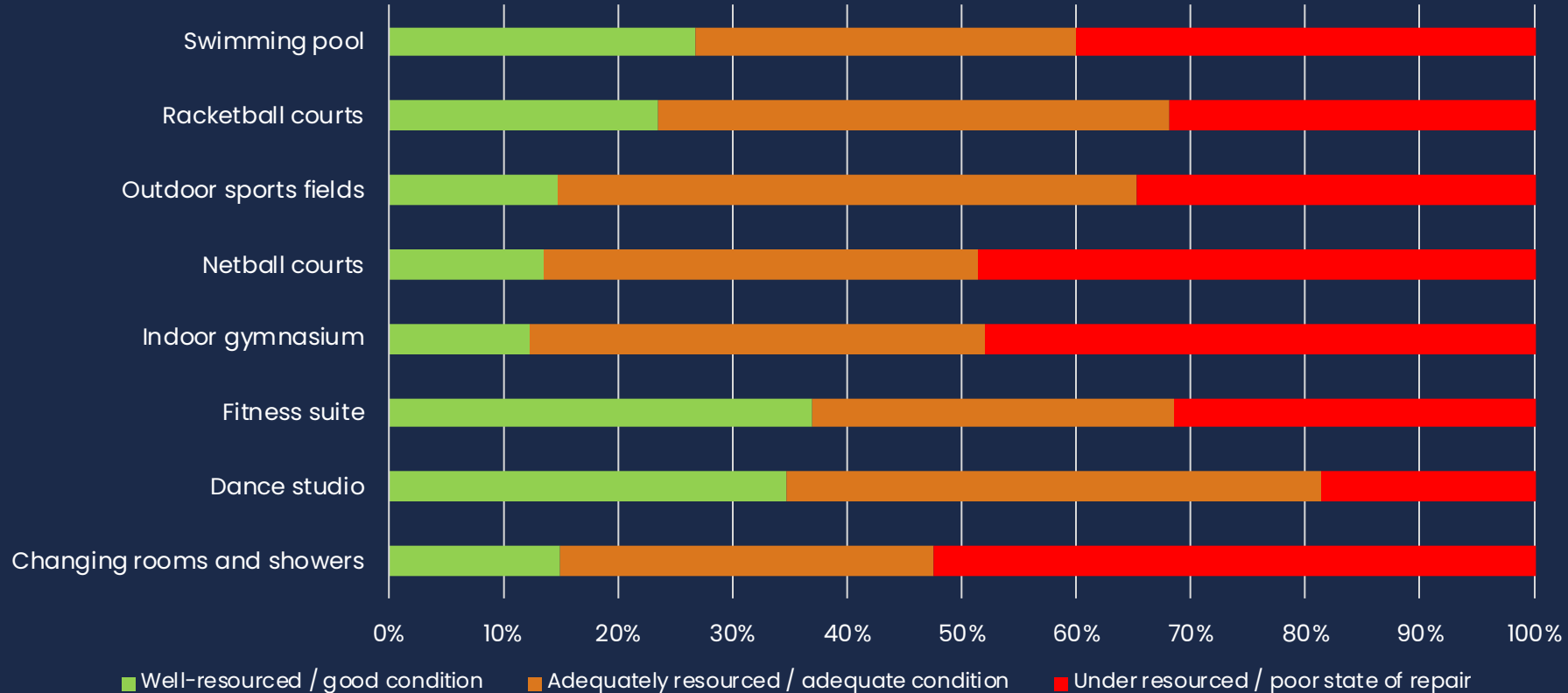


56%
Schools reporting they need (but don't have) a swimming pool.

i Many schools are reporting a lack of core PE facilities. Over 50% of schools would like, but don't have, a swimming pool – a similar number need but don't have a racket ball courts.

PE the condition of facilities.

Thinking about PE facilities in your school/setting – please select the most applicable statement.



53%
Schools reporting issues with their changing room facilities



The condition of PE facilities is a problem for many schools. Almost 50% reporting issues with their netball courts and indoor gymnasiums. Outdoor sports fields are on average, better, but very few class them as being in a good condition.

Comment.



“The Youth Sport Trust passionately believes improving children and young people’s wellbeing is a national priority. Nearly every day seems to bring a new story or statistic about children’s declining mental and physical health and wellbeing, serving to highlight just how much young people are struggling at the moment. The UK’s Chief Medical Officers recommend children and young people should be active for a minimum of 60 active minutes a day. However, currently only 47% of children meet this target.

Healthy, happy children learn better and being physically active not only facilitates positive physical and mental health, but also provides access to skills such as teamwork, communication and leadership, helps foster a sense of wellbeing, and drives educational attainment.

Every child has the right to be physically active and we believe schools are uniquely placed to provide opportunities to all children, including through PE and school sport. However, as this report shows, nearly 60% of schools agree or strongly agree that the current level of investment in PE facilities at their school is insufficient and may lead to significant challenges in the future.

Delivering on a long-term plan to increase children’s activity level requires investment in school facilities, so all children are empowered to develop their physical literacy and have an active start in life. Not only can this help in providing high-quality, enjoyable PE and school sport experiences, but by also providing greater access to facilities outside the school day, we can deliver more opportunities for children and young people to be physically active to support them to achieve 60 active minutes each day.”

Ali Oliver MBE – CEO of the Youth Sport Trust



If there are any aspects of the state of the estate you feel has not been adequately covered in this report, please email besa@besa.org.uk and we will attempt to accommodate your request in the next publication.