

December 2023

Evaluating the delivery of the OfS investment in TASO - Annex A



**Annex A: Results of the impact survey of
higher education providers 2023**

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Glossary

APP	Access and participation plan
FEC	Further education college
HEP	Higher education provider
OfS	Office for Students
TASO	Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes
TEF	Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

1 Introduction

In 2019 Technopolis Ltd. was commissioned by the Office for Students (OfS) to conduct an independent external evaluation of ***“the delivery of the OfS investment in the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO)”***. In spring 2023, the evaluation entered its final phase, focusing on the assessment of the impact of TASO. As part of this, Technopolis and the OfS designed, ran and analysed a survey of higher education providers (HEPs) in England. This impact survey builds on previous baseline and mid-term surveys launched in spring 2020 and spring 2021, respectively, as part of the wider evaluation study. The results of the two surveys were presented in August 2020 as part of the baseline report ('baseline survey') and in August 2021 ('mid-term survey'). As far as possible, the aim of this analysis is to compare the baseline survey results with the impact survey results in order to assess any change within the higher education sector, such as increased use of evidence in access and participation activities and awareness of TASO and its activities. In cases where the baseline vs. impact comparison is not possible, which include survey questions not previously asked during the baseline phase, a comparison with the mid-term phase is presented. There were a small number of survey questions asked during the impact phase without an equivalent in any of the two preceding surveys. In these cases, no comparison was made.

The report starts with a description of the respondents. It then presents the results by first summarising the overall statistics per survey question, then breaking down those results by respondent characteristics: type of provider (e.g. university, further education college (FEC)) and region (e.g. east of England). In some cases, splitting by certain respondent characteristics is not provided where the numbers are too small to compare or present visually.

2 Methodology

Both the baseline and impact surveys were conducted in line with the methodology agreed with the OfS. A number of steps were taken to maximise response rates and ensure the data was robust, such as designing the questionnaire in a user-friendly way such that little preparation was required prior to responding. In addition, reminders were sent to HEPs during the period when the survey was open. The baseline survey was open between 1 April 2020 and 31 May 2020. The impact survey opened almost two years later, on 13 March 2023, and closed on 12 May 2023. Both surveys used the online platform Survey Monkey.

The majority of the survey questions remained the same in both surveys. However, several questions were modified and/or added/removed in order to reflect on some of the issues highlighted in the baseline survey and interviews with providers; and to reflect on the fact that TASO's implementation has advanced since spring 2020 in terms of the selected research themes and produced outputs. Where the questions between the two surveys do not fully align, this is highlighted in the analysis.

In order to minimise the non-response bias,¹ the evaluation team used terminology which is as easy to understand as possible, and, where possible, the necessary explanation was included in the question wording. This was to make sure that those respondents who are less engaged

¹ The evaluation team was aware that providers that are already engaged with TASO and/or with issues of evaluation of access and participation activities may be more likely to respond to the survey than providers that are less engaged.

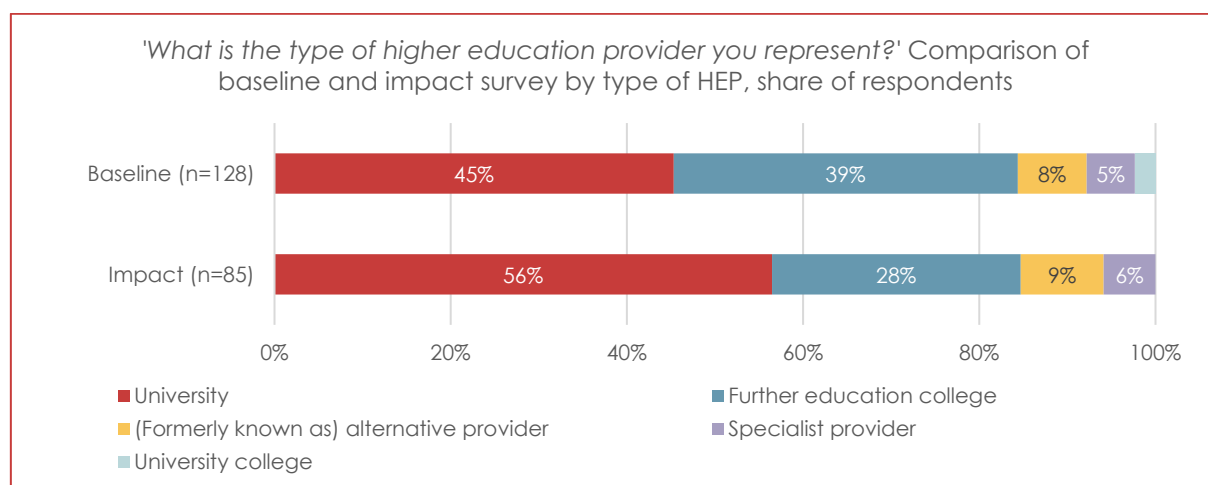
feel confident to respond to the survey and understand all the questions. In addition, questions were formulated in a way that did not require any prior preparation from the respondents (except for situations where they wanted to consult other colleagues and submit a joint response for the whole provider). This is a standard strategy for minimising the non-response bias.

3 Characteristics of the sample

For the baseline survey, a total of 128 HEPs (of 284 invited to respond) responded to the survey (a 45% response rate). For the impact survey, a total of 85 HEPs (of 227 invited to respond²) responded to the survey (a 37% response rate).

Figure 1 compares the composition of the respondents' base by provider type with the baseline sample. Universities were the largest groups of respondents in both surveys (representing 45% of the respondents in the baseline survey and 56% of the respondents in the impact survey), followed by further education colleges (FECs). The share respondents affiliated with a FEC was 39% in the baseline survey and 28% in the impact survey. Because of the very small number of other types of providers, such as specialist providers and alternative providers,³ responding to the surveys, these results are not routinely compared in the analysis below. The sample sizes are too small for meaningful comparative analysis and could be highly misleading due to differences between the two surveys being due to chance.

Figure 1 – Comparison of baseline and impact survey respondents by type of HEP



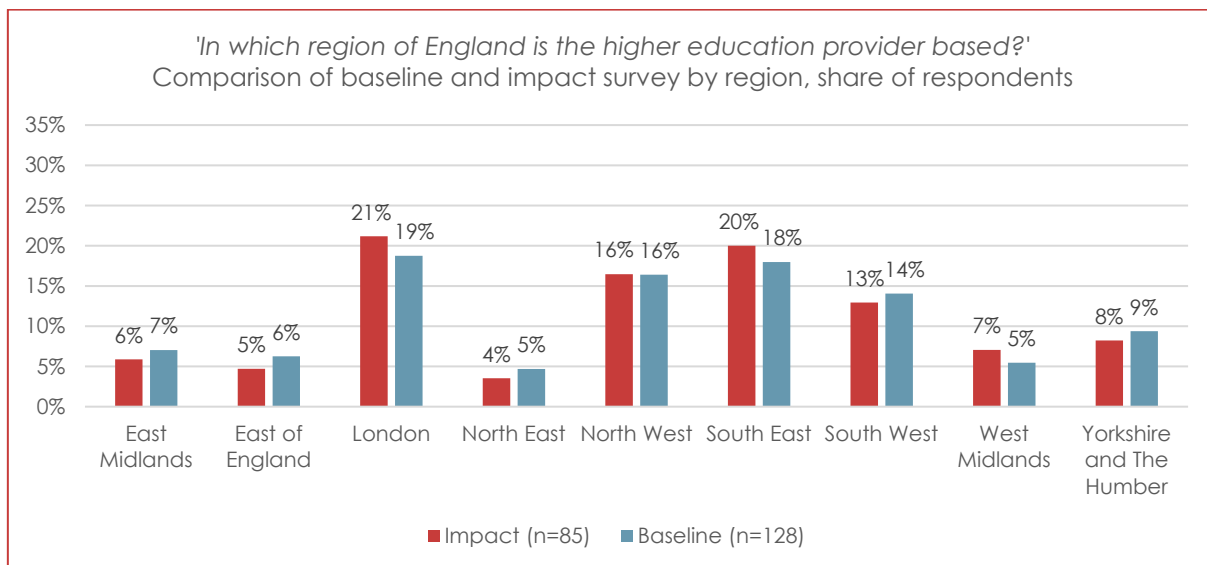
Source: Baseline and impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 2 shows the comparative regional breakdown between the baseline and impact surveys. In both surveys, the numbers of responding HEPs from London, the North-West, South-East and South-West were higher than those from other regions. Nevertheless, for both surveys, the samples still have a good distribution of responses from across England.

² Emails were sent to 227 individual contacts at HEPs, all of which had an APP.

³ Alternative providers were higher education providers that did not receive recurrent funding from the Office for Students.

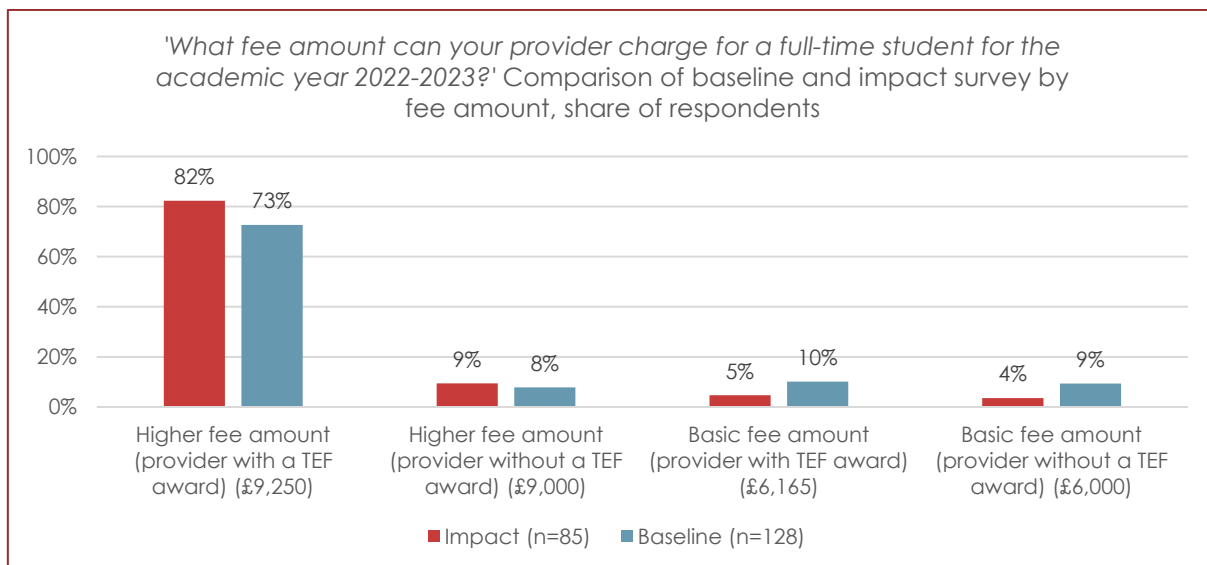
Figure 2 – Comparison of baseline and impact survey respondents by region



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 3 compares the samples across fee amounts charged by respondents. In both surveys the overall majority charged the fee cap imposed by the government. The nature of the small sample in the impact survey means that comparisons would not be meaningful and, therefore, these are not presented further in the analysis.

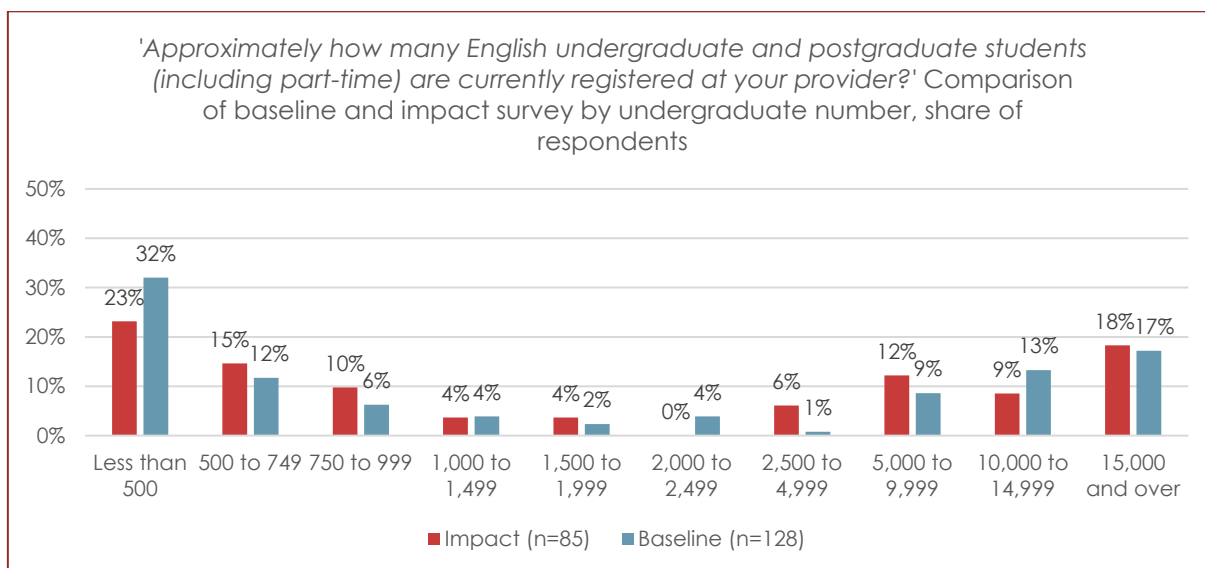
Figure 3 – Comparison of baseline and impact survey respondents by fee amount



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 4 shows a comparison of baseline and impact survey respondents by HEP size (measured by the number of undergraduate students). The spread of respondents across the two surveys is similar with much higher numbers at the lower and higher ends of the scale.

Figure 4 – Comparison of baseline and impact survey respondents by undergraduate numbers



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Similar to the distribution of respondents by fee amount (Figure 3), the sample sizes for some of the HEP size categories are also too small to conduct a meaningful analysis. Therefore, we do not include an analysis of survey questions broken down by HEP size in this report.

4 Findings

4.1 Generation and use of evidence by higher education providers

4.1.1 Use of evaluation evidence to inform access and participation plans

The impact survey asked a question: 'Which type(s) of evaluation evidence in access and participation did you use to inform your latest access and participation plan that your provider submitted?' The types of evidence are defined by the OfS⁴ as listed in Figure 5.

Figure 5 – OfS types of evidence

	Description	Evidence	Claims you can make
Type 1: Narrative	The impact evaluation provides a narrative or a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of activities in the context of a coherent strategy	Evidence of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on access and participation activity effectiveness or from your existing evaluation results	<p>We have a coherent explanation of what we do and why</p> <p>Our claims are research-based</p>

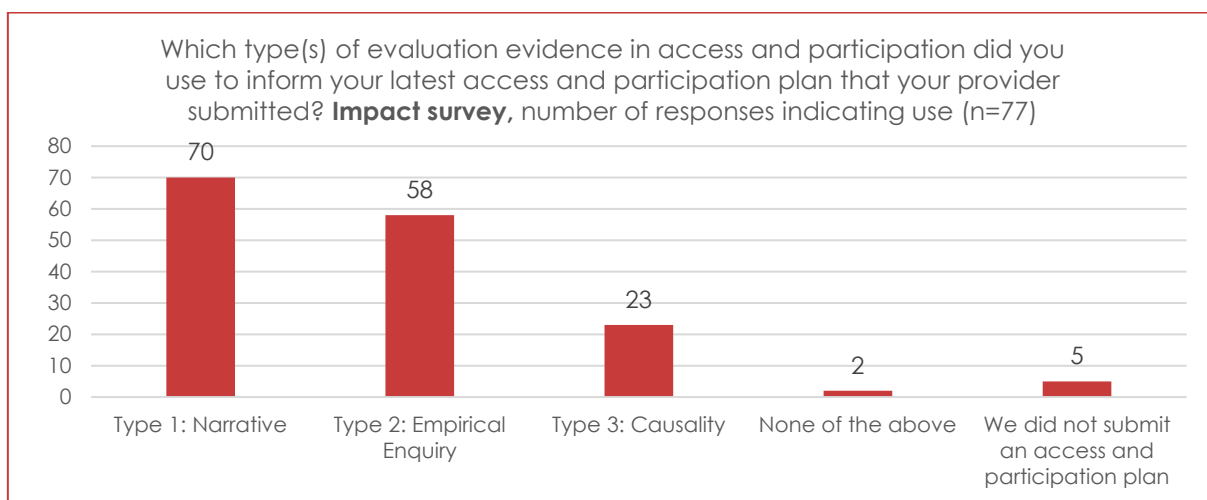
⁴ Available online at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/evaluation/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/>

	Description	Evidence	Claims you can make
Type 2: Empirical Enquiry	The impact evaluation collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes, though does not establish any direct causal effect	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change or a difference compared to what might otherwise have happened	We can demonstrate that our interventions are associated with beneficial results
Type 3: Causality	The impact evaluation methodology provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on participants relative to an appropriate control or comparison group who did not take part in the intervention	We believe our intervention causes improvement and can demonstrate the difference using a control or comparison group

Source: OfS, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/evaluation/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/>

This question asked the respondents to consider these three types of OfS evidence. Figure 6 shows the absolute number of responses across the whole sample. It shows that almost every HEP said it had used narrative evidence in its access and participation plan (APP) (90.91%) and the vast majority used empirical enquiry (75.3%). A much smaller proportion at (29.9%) used causality type evidence.

Figure 6 – Q10 - Types of evidence used to inform APPs (impact survey)

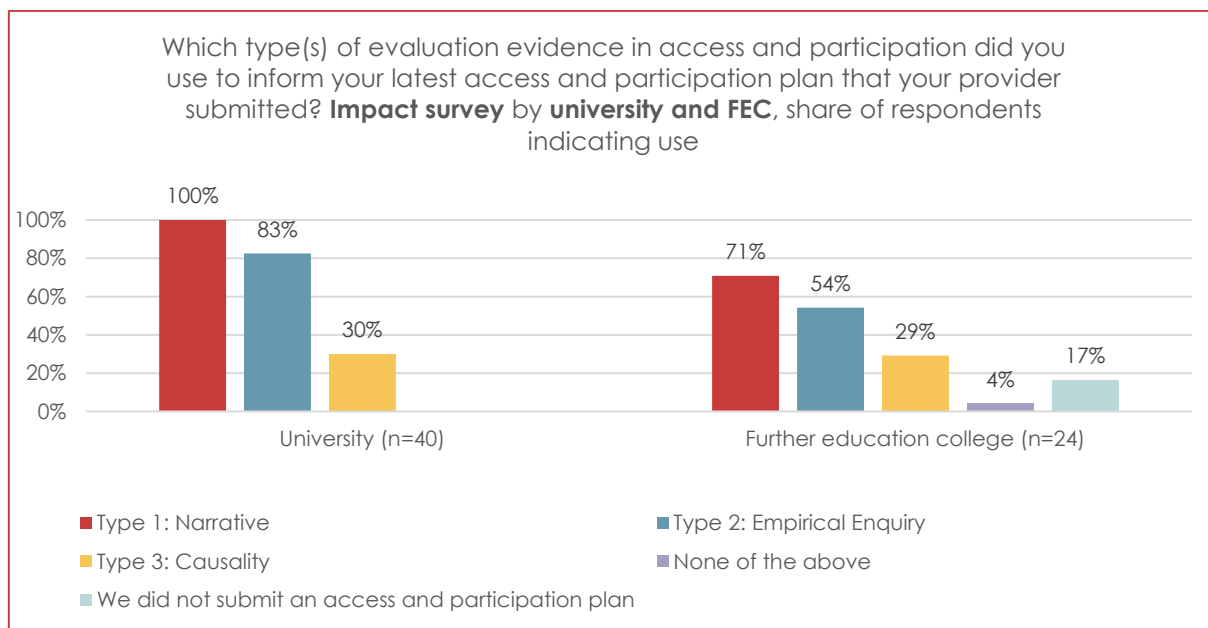


Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 7 looks at this issue by type of provider (university and FEC). The overall levels of the use of the types of evidence recognised by the OfS were higher at universities, compared to FECs. All universities responding to this question indicated they had used narrative evidence. Looking at the other two types of evidence, 83% of the universities responding to the survey used empirical evidence and 30% used causal evidence. The picture is different for FECs. Just over 70% of FECs (of those FECs responding to the survey) used narrative evidence, 54% used empirical and 29% used causal evidence. Although the share of FECs indicating having used

causal evidence is one percentage point smaller than the share of universities, this is still a surprisingly high share, given the overall lower levels of the use of evidence.

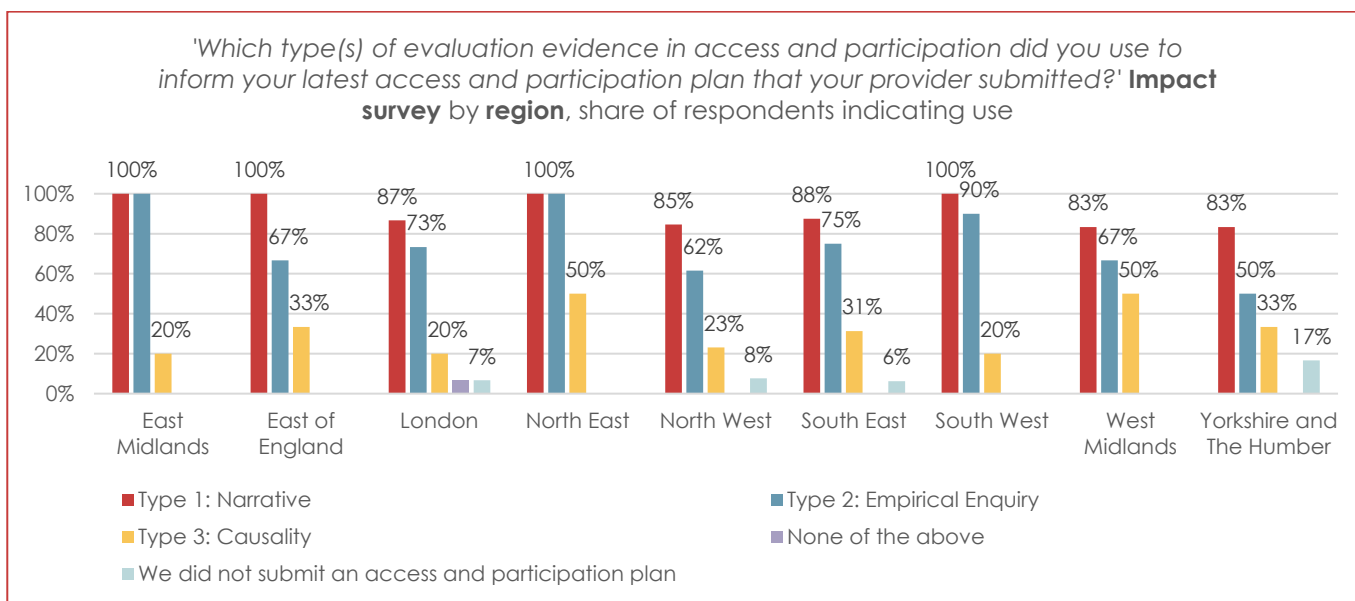
Figure 7 – Q10 on types of evidence used to inform APPs by type of HEP (impact survey)



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis; note: respondents were allowed to select multiple options, therefore the totals do not add up to 100%.

Figure 8 shows the use of different types of evidence in APPs by region. Narrative and empirical evidence were prevalent in all regions. Narrative evidence was used most frequently in all regions, followed by empirical and causal. Interestingly, 50% of responding providers from North East and West Midlands said they had used causal evidence. This was a higher percentage than in any other region. We believe that the role of regional evaluation partnerships (e.g. Aimhigher West Midlands, Aspire to HE, North East Uni Connect Programme etc.) can partially explain these results because they provide evaluation support to their member providers so may have helped with more challenging evaluation techniques and design associated with causal evidence.

Figure 8 – Q10 on types of evidence used to inform APPs by region



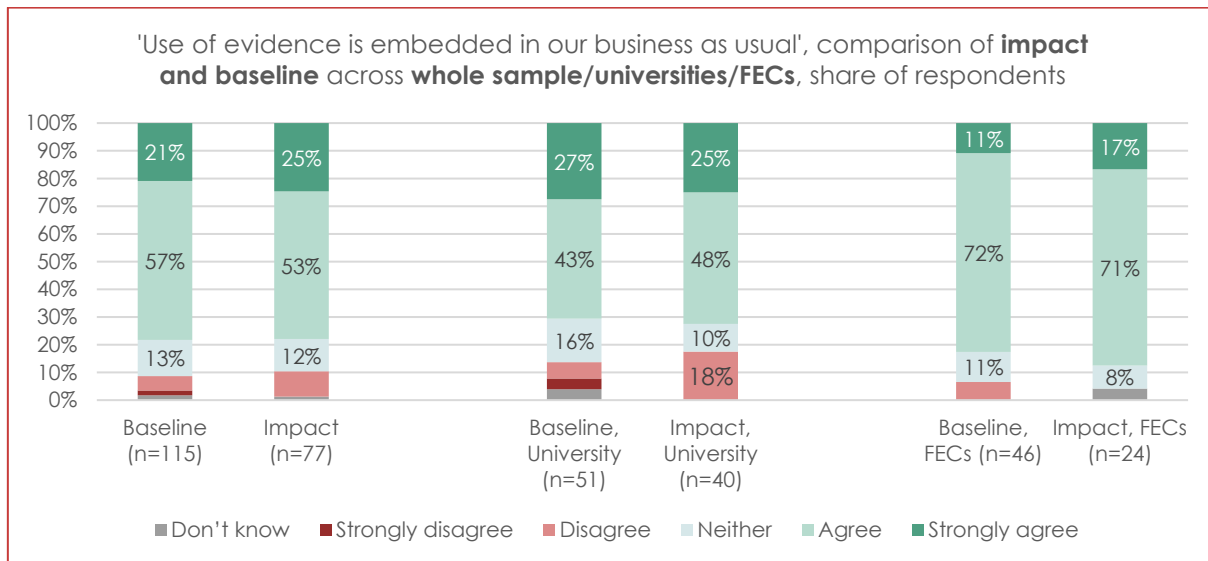
Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

4.1.2 Use of evaluation evidence in access and participation activities

Both the baseline and impact surveys used a Likert scale to test HEPs' responses to a series of statements about their use of evidence. Below, the results are presented for each statement across the general sample and also separately for universities and FECs. Across all but two statements, the proportions of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement has increased between the baseline and impact surveys. A small decrease of one percentage point has been registered in relation to the use of theory-based approaches and sharing evidence across the sector.

Figure 9 presents the results for the statement 'Use of evidence is embedded in our business as usual'. The baseline results showed that a high proportion (78%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. In the impact survey the same share of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that use of evidence was embedded in their business as usual (but the share of those who strongly agreed has increased by four percentage points). The share of universities strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement in the impact survey (73%) was higher than in the baseline (70%); however, so was the share of universities who disagreed (an increase from 6% to 18%). This suggests there is a more polarised view in the university sector. The share of FECs agreeing or strongly agreeing increased as well (from 83% to 88%).

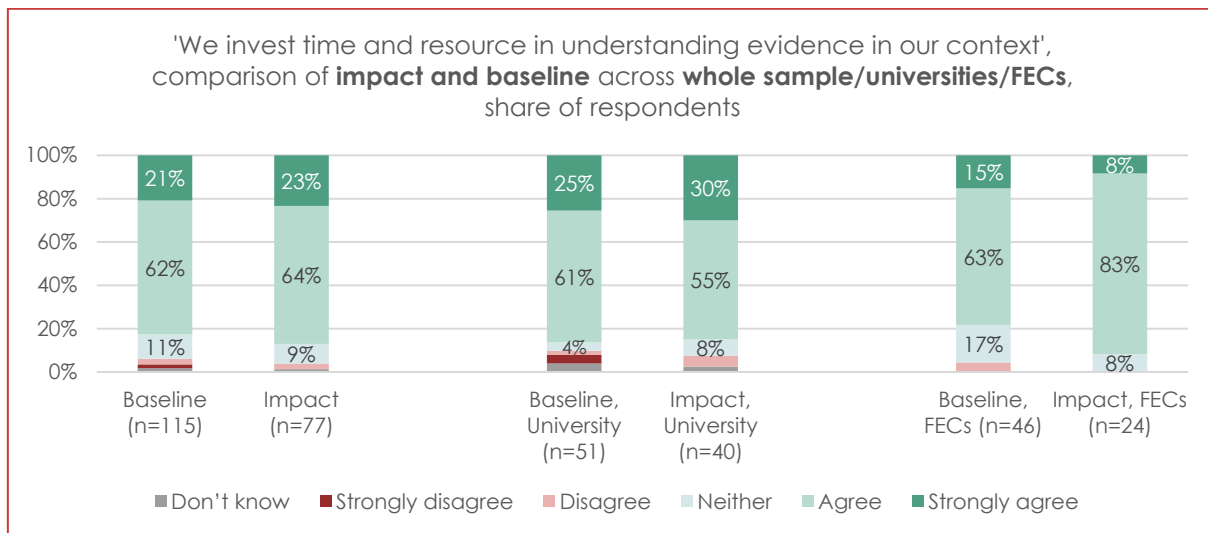
Figure 9 – Q11 on statement related to embeddedness of evidence



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 10 presents the results for the statement 'We invest time and resource in understanding evidence in our context'. The figures for strongly agreeing or agreeing were slightly higher in the impact stage (87%) than the baseline (83%). Within this, universities in particular showed an increase in the share of respondents strongly agreeing (30% in the impact survey compared to 25% for the baseline).

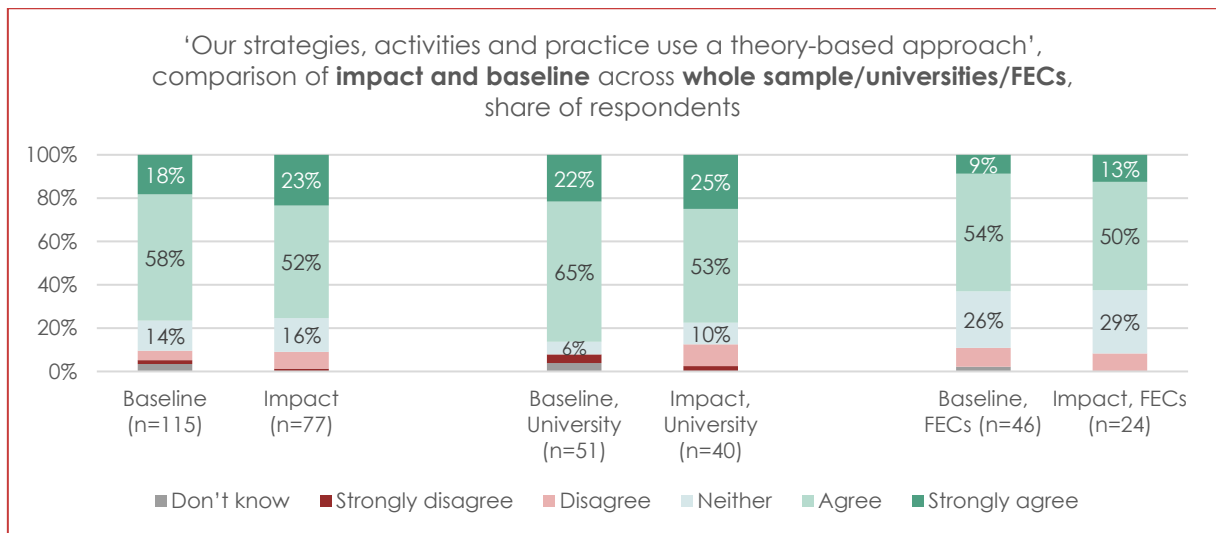
Figure 10 – Q11 on statement related to investment of time and resources in understanding evidence



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 11 presents the results for the statement 'Our strategies, activities and practice use a theory-based approach'. This shows a very similar pattern to Figure 10 above. The figures for strongly agreeing or agreeing were slightly higher for the baseline (76%) than during the impact phase (75%). Universities showed a considerable decrease in the share of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing (87% during the baseline compared to 78% during the impact phase).

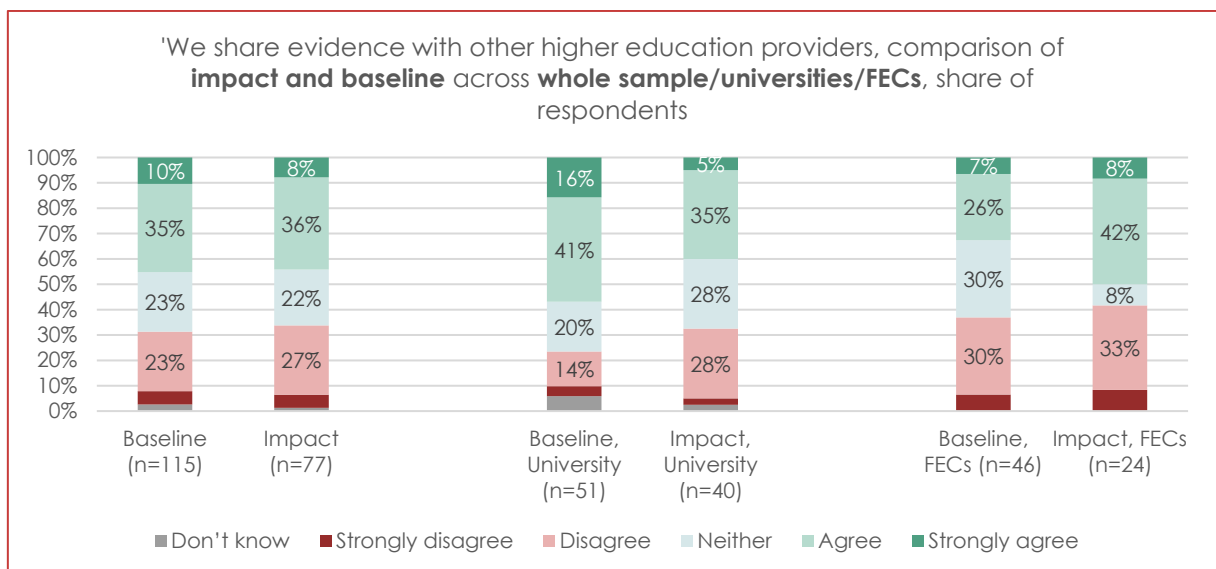
Figure 11 – Q11 on statement related to using theory-based approach



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 12 presents the results for the statement 'We share evidence with other higher education providers'. This is the statement that has consistently received the lowest level of support across the baseline (2020), mid-term (2021) and impact (2023) surveys and among universities and FECs. For universities, the share agreeing or strongly agreeing has actually decreased from 57% to only 40%. This further exacerbates the finding from the previous phases of the evaluation project, pointing to deficits in the degree of sharing of evidence across the university sector. On the other hand, in the further education sector, the proportion has significantly increased from 33% to 50%.

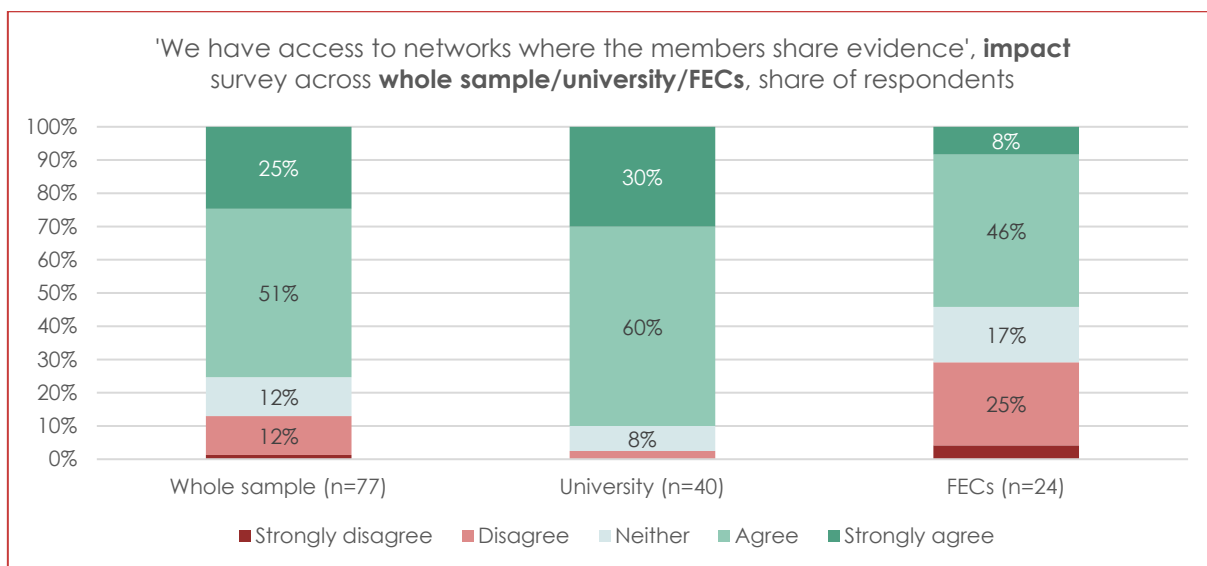
Figure 12 – Q11 on statement related to sharing of evidence with other providers



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 13 shows that around two-thirds of the impact survey respondents had access to networks where the members share evidence (this question was not asked in the previous survey rounds). While this was the case for 90% of universities, only 54% FECs strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

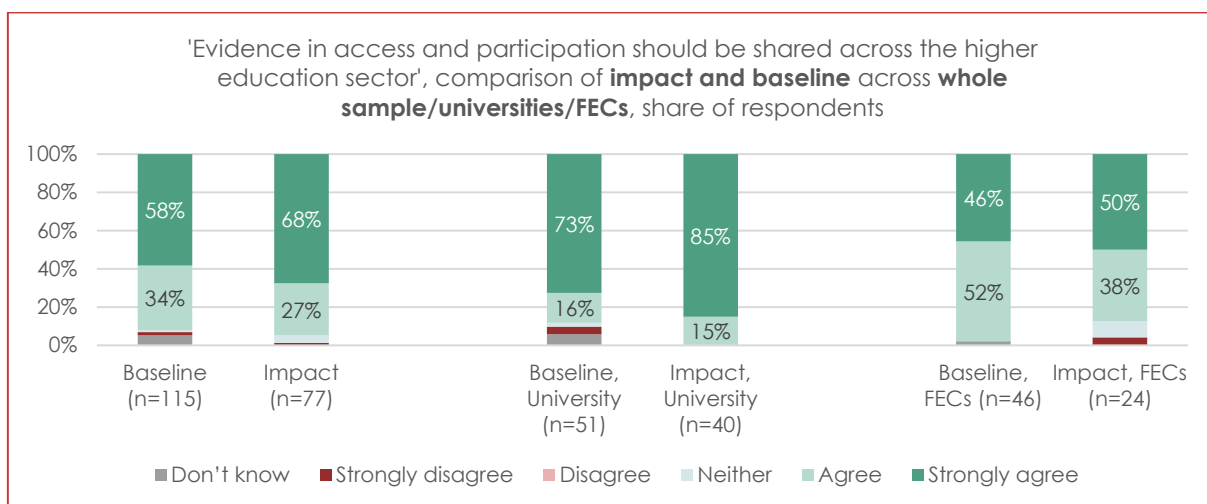
Figure 13 – Q11 on statement related to having access to networks where the members share evidence



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

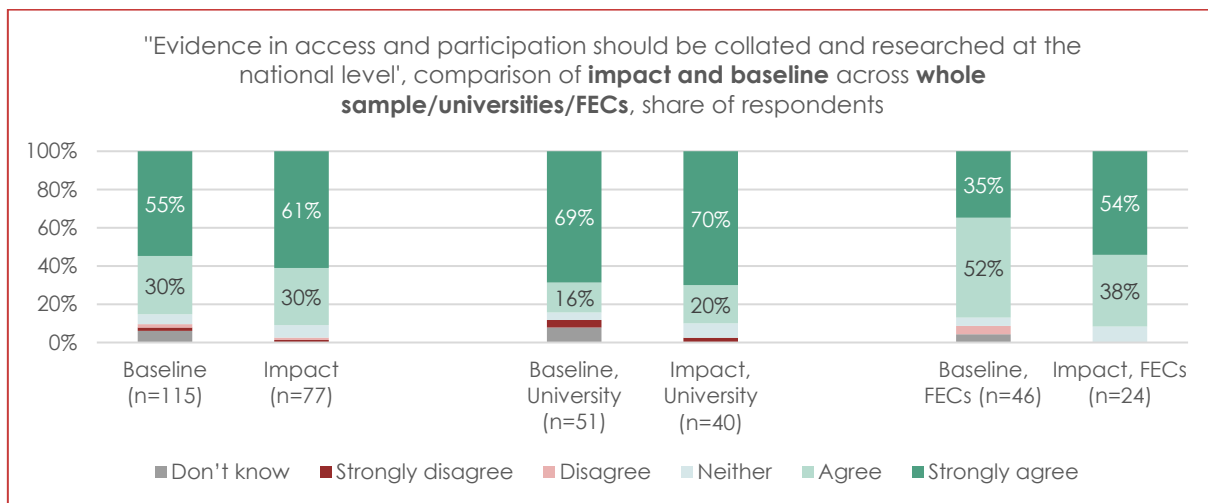
Figure 14 below presents the results for statements on whether evidence and best practice should be collated and shared across the higher education sector. The results are similar for all four statements. The share of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with these statements has remained high and stable. For FECs, the number strongly agreeing has generally increased.

Figure 14 – Q11 on statement related to whether evidence should be shared



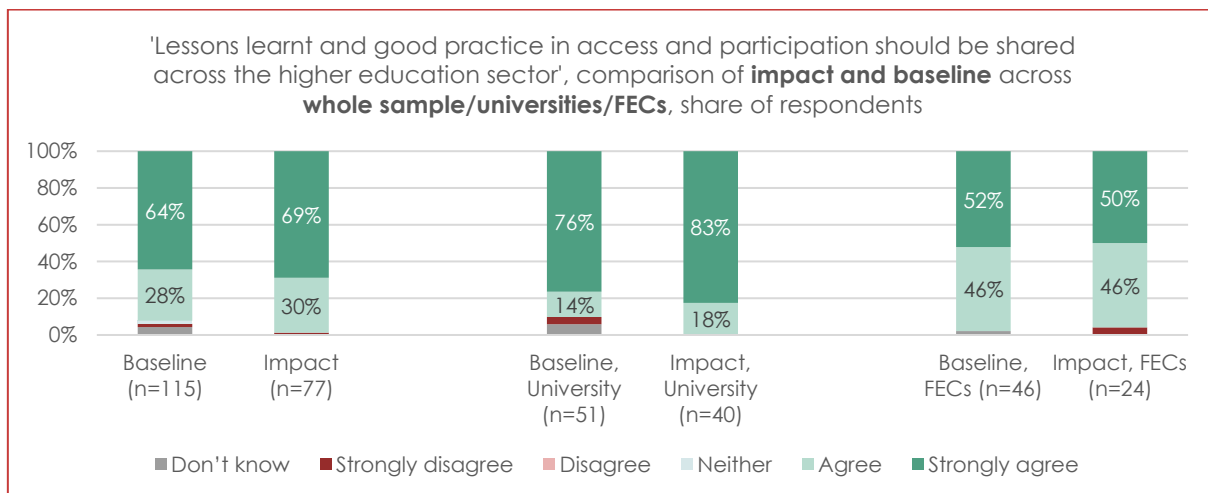
Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 15 – Q11 on statement related to whether evidence should be collated



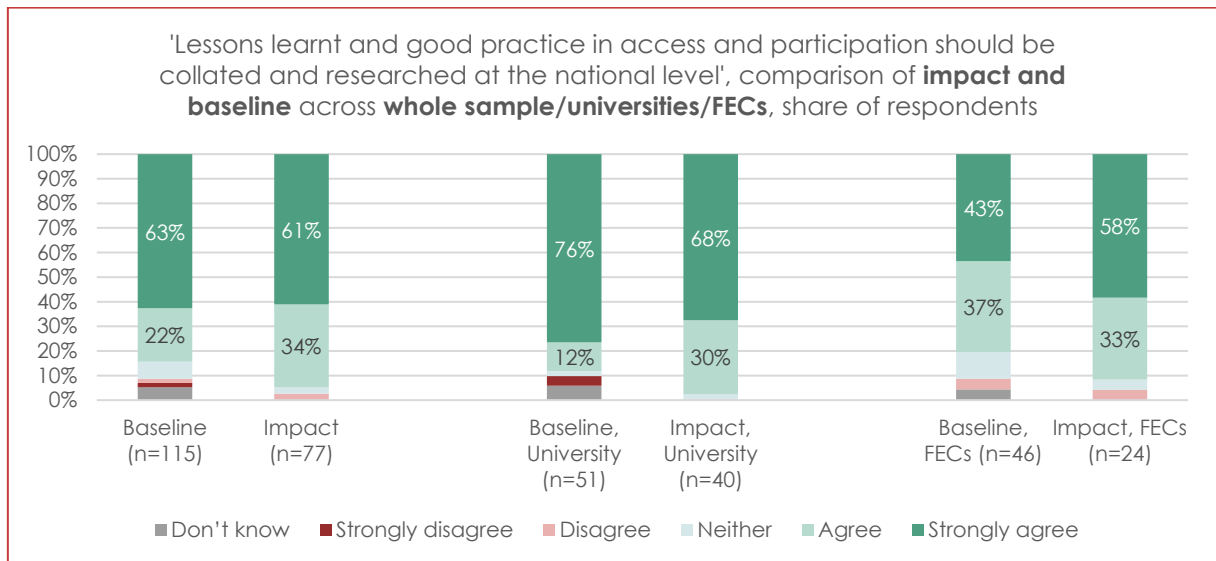
Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 16 – Q11 on statement related to whether lessons and good practice should be shared



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

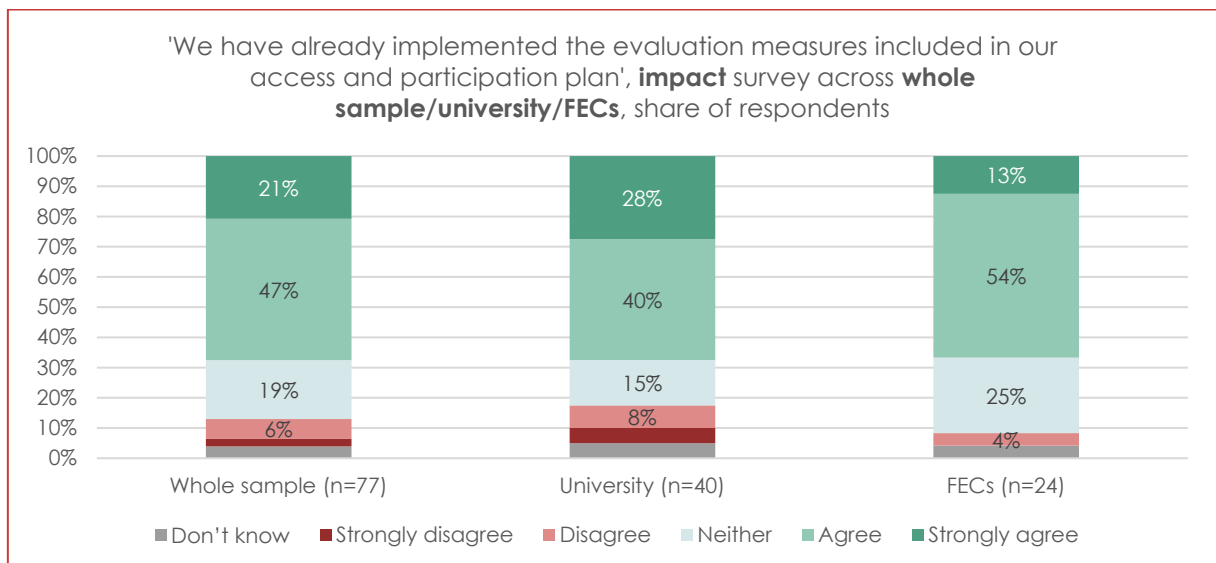
Figure 17 – Q11 on statement related to whether lessons and good practice should be collated



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 18 shows that 68% of the impact survey respondents have already implemented the evaluation measures included in their APPs (this question was not asked in the previous survey rounds). This share is very similar for both universities and FECs.

Figure 18 – Q11 on statement related to whether providers have already implemented the evaluation measures included in their APPs

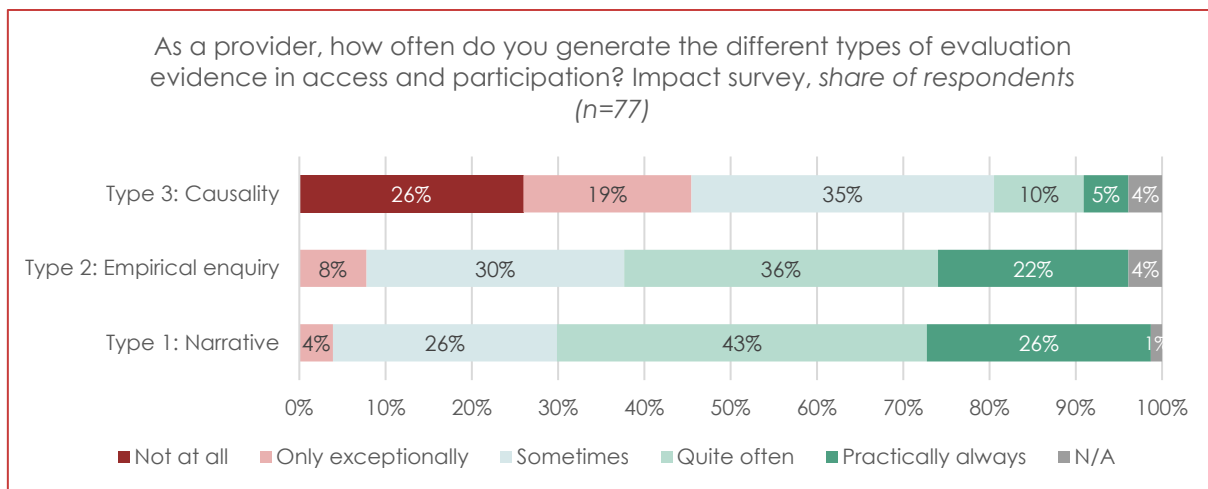


Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

4.1.3 Generation of evaluation evidence in access and participation

Question 12 of the impact survey focused on gathering data about types of evaluation evidence generated by HEPs. The findings are presented in Figure 19. Narrative evidence is generated 'practically always' or 'quite often' by more than two-thirds of respondents (69%). The figure is significantly less for empirical enquiry (58%). And for causality type evidence it falls to 15% of respondents.

Figure 19 – Q12 on HEPs' generation of types of evaluation evidence in access and participation

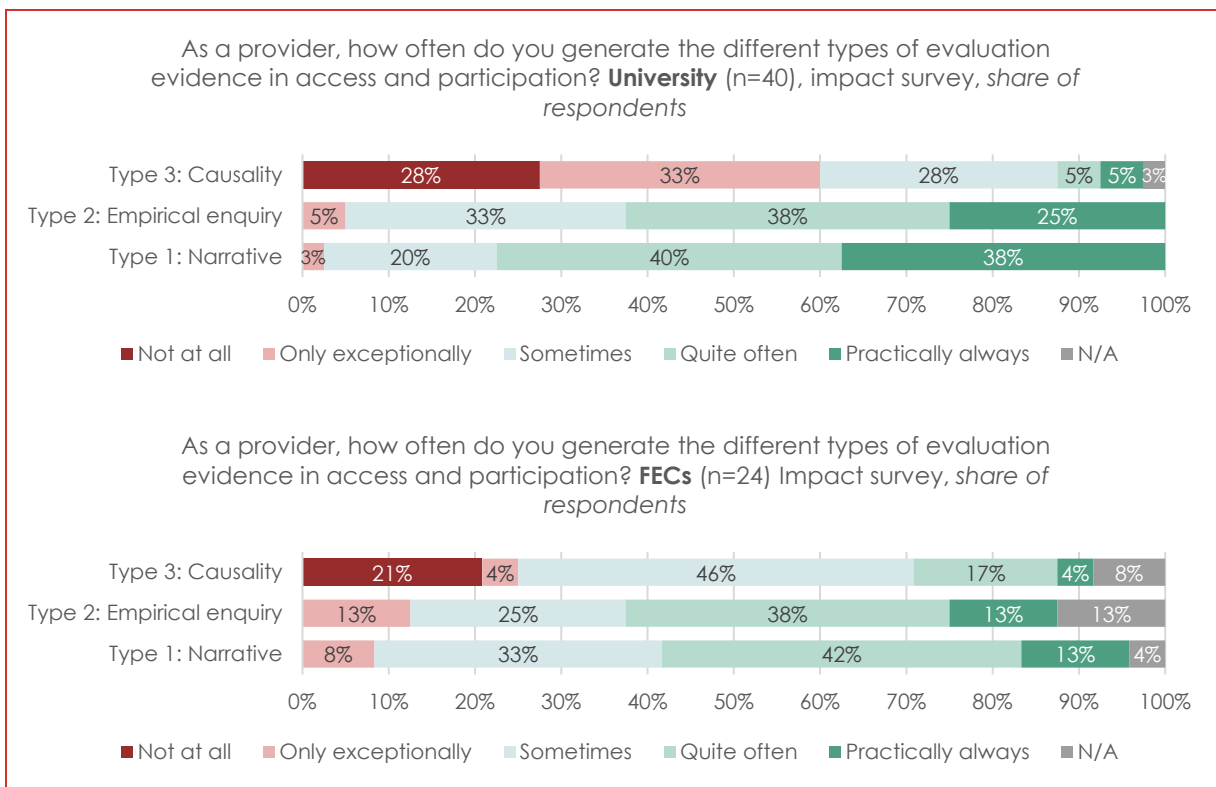


Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 20 presents the results on evidence generation broken down by type of provider. Universities show a higher generation of narrative and empirical enquiry type evidence than FECs. However, interestingly, FECs reported slightly higher degrees of generation of causality type evidence than universities.

Differences across regions were tested for but no significant differences were identified.

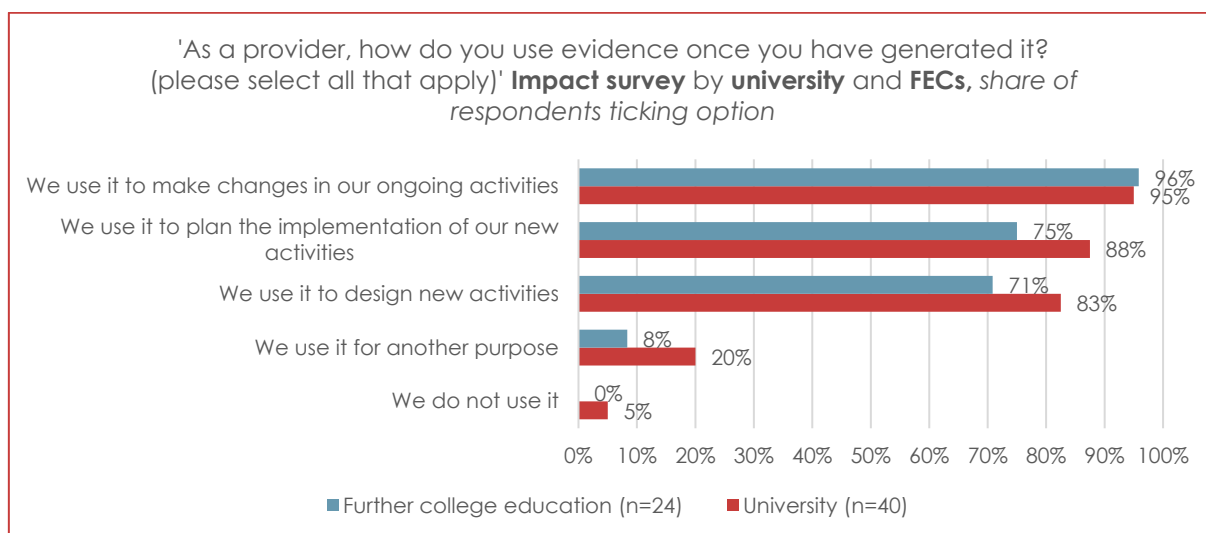
Figure 20 – Q12 on HEPs' generation of types of evaluation evidence in access and participation by type of HEP



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

In Question 13, respondents were asked what happens with evidence in access and participation once providers have generated it. Almost all universities and FECs who responded to this question said they use it to make changes in their ongoing activities (Figure 21). Large numbers of them also use it to plan the implementation of their new activities (three-quarters of FECs and 88% of universities).

Figure 21 – Q13 on what happens with evidence once it has been generated, by type of HEP



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

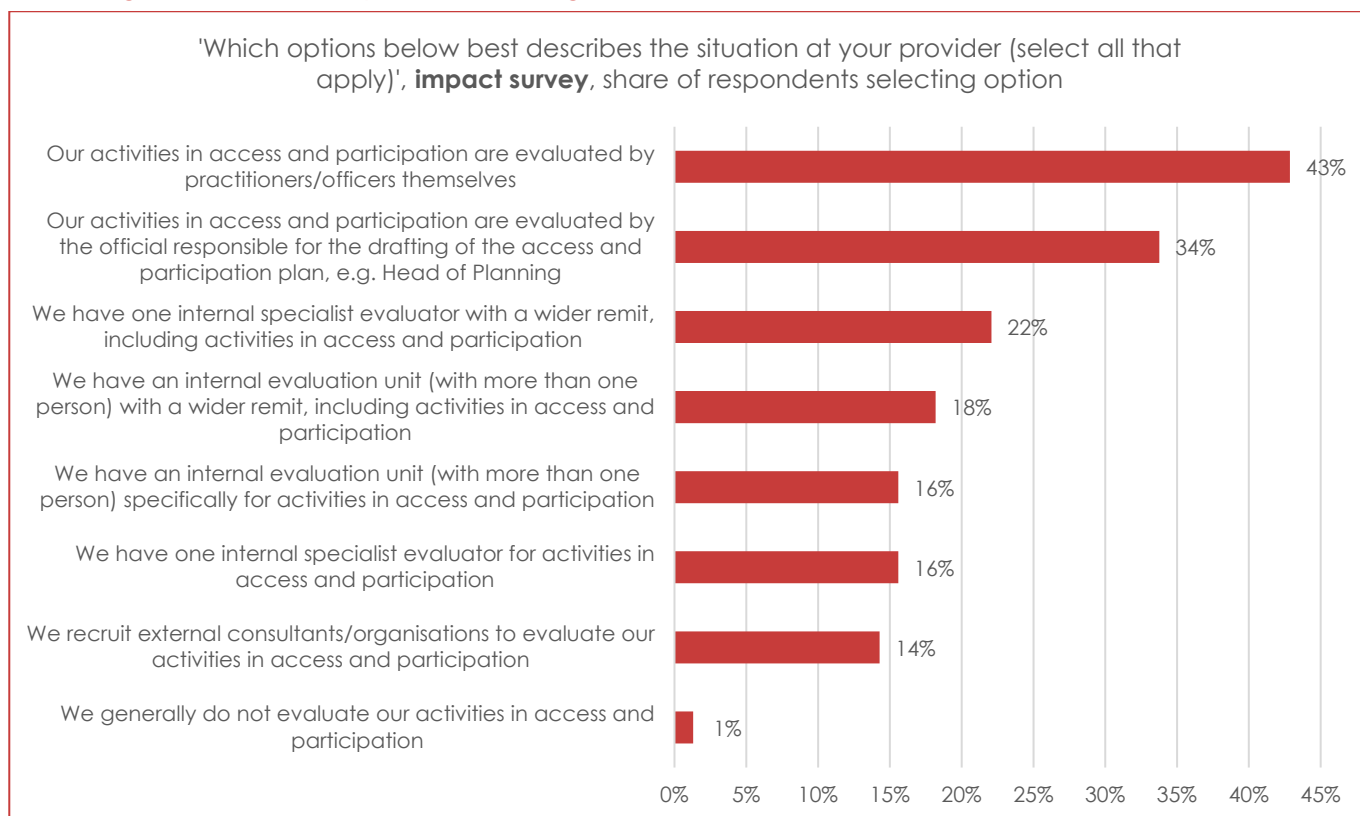
4.1.4 Evaluation structures in place

In Question 14, respondents were asked to select which evaluation structure(s) apply to them. Respondents were able to select multiple options (Figure 22). Evaluation conducted by practitioners/officers themselves appears to be the most frequently applied evaluation practice across the sector. In total, 43% of the survey respondents said that this was their evaluation model. Just over a third of respondents said that evaluations were conducted by those in charge of drafting their APPs. More than a fifth of responding providers have one internal specialist evaluator with a wider remit, including activities in access and participation.

There were very significant differences identified between universities and FECs across their replies to the statements. The most common situation at FECs is that interventions are evaluated by the official responsible for the drafting of the APP (42%). For universities, it is more likely to be done by practitioners/officers themselves (50%). Universities are more likely to have internal evaluation units. However, it is notable that around one-quarter of FECs reported having one internal specialist evaluator with a wider remit, including interventions in access and participation (Figure 23).

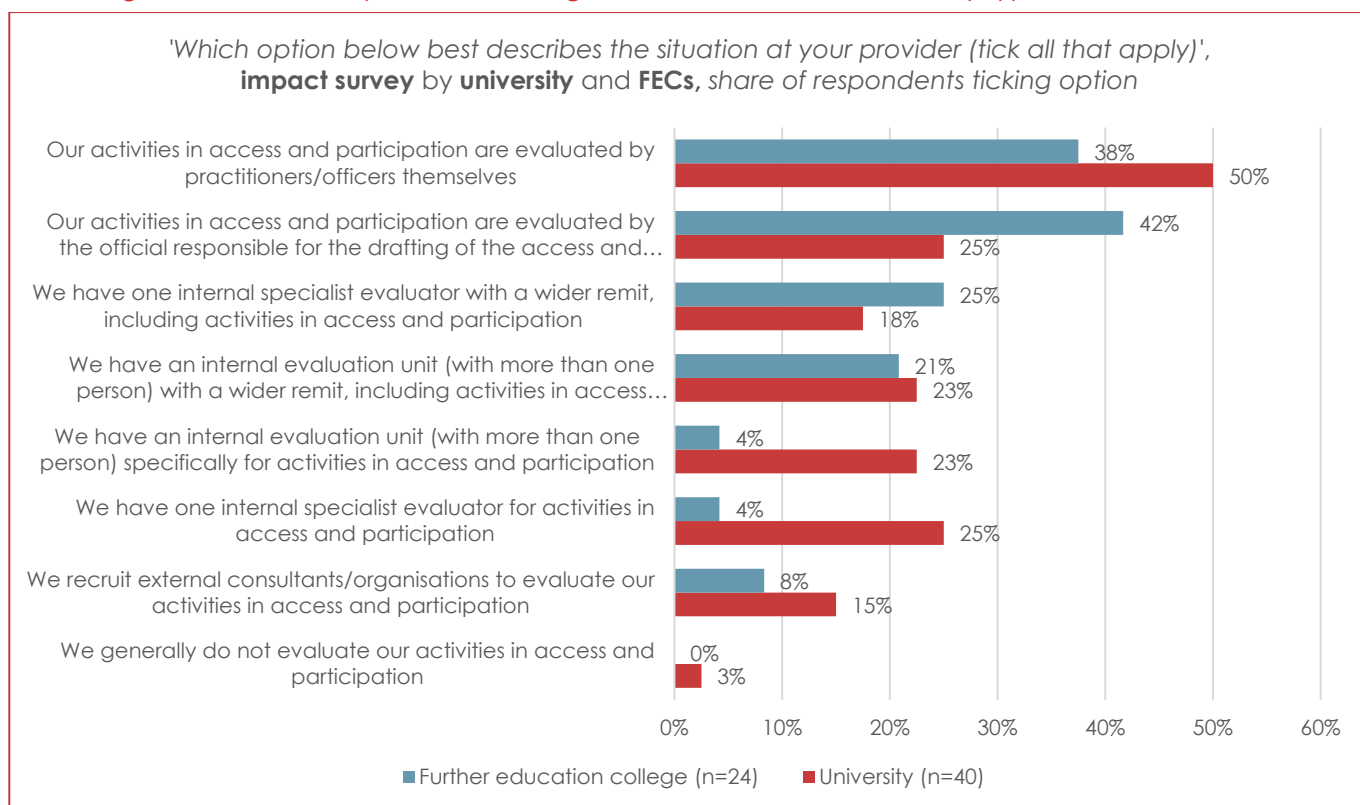
We also checked for regional variance in terms of HEP evaluation situations, but no meaningful patterns were identifiable.

Figure 22 – Q14 on options describing evaluation situation at HEP



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 23 – Q14 on options describing evaluation situation at HEP, by type of HEP

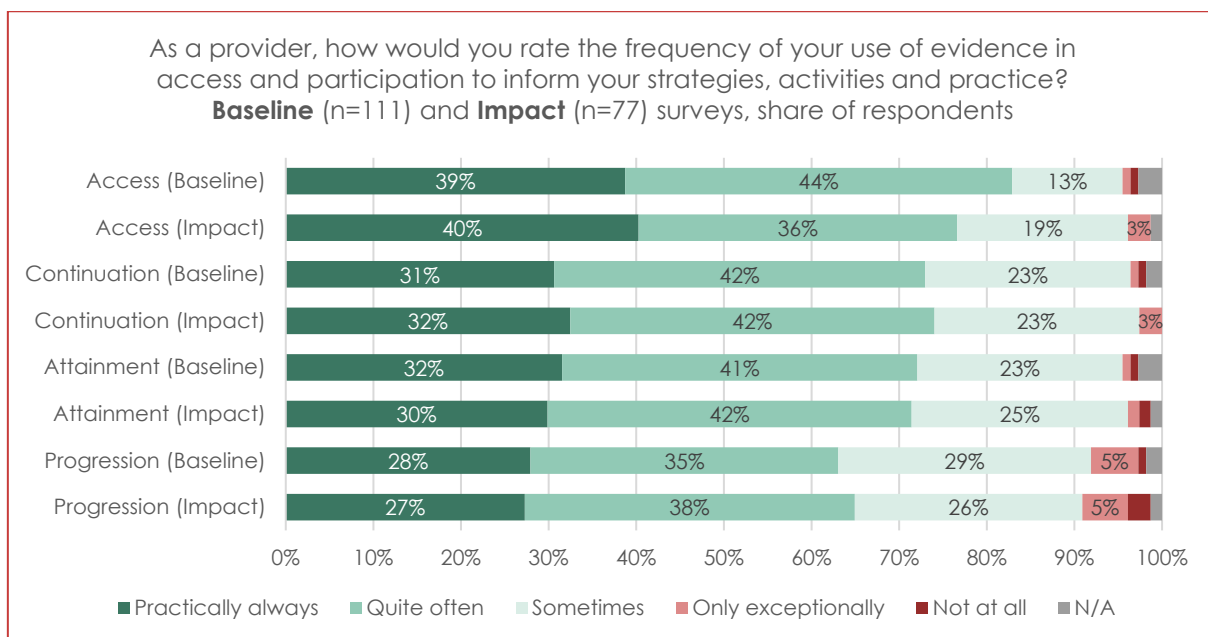


Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

4.1.5 Frequency of use

HEPs continue using evidence in access and participation across all stages of the student journey. There has been an increase in the use of evidence across three out of four stages of the student journey between the baseline and impact surveys. Progression was the only stage where the share of respondents who used evidence practically always, quite often or sometimes, decreased from 92% to 91%. However, the share of respondents who used evidence in this stage practically always or quite often increased from 63% to 65%. Activities around access continue to enjoy the highest frequency of use of evidence, compared to the other three stages (continuation, attainment and progression). The results are summarised in Figure 24.

Figure 24 – Q6 on frequency of use of evidence in access and participation



Source: Baseline and impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 25 provides a synopsis of the survey results for Question 6, broken down by stage of student journey and by type of provider for both the baseline and impact surveys.

Looking at the two largest types of providers (in terms of the number of responses), i.e. universities and further education colleges, the survey results do not suggest that, for universities, there has been an increase in the use of evidence between the baseline and impact surveys, for any of the four stages of the student lifecycle (access, continuation, attainment, progression). The picture is slightly different for further education colleges where there has been a qualitative increase across all four stages of the student lifecycle.

At this point, it is not possible to explain these results based on the survey analysis only; however, the follow-up qualitative research will aim to provide further clarification. One possible scenario is that providers' understanding of what "evidence" means in the context of access and participation has changed since the baseline, due to awareness-raising activities of TASO and the OfS

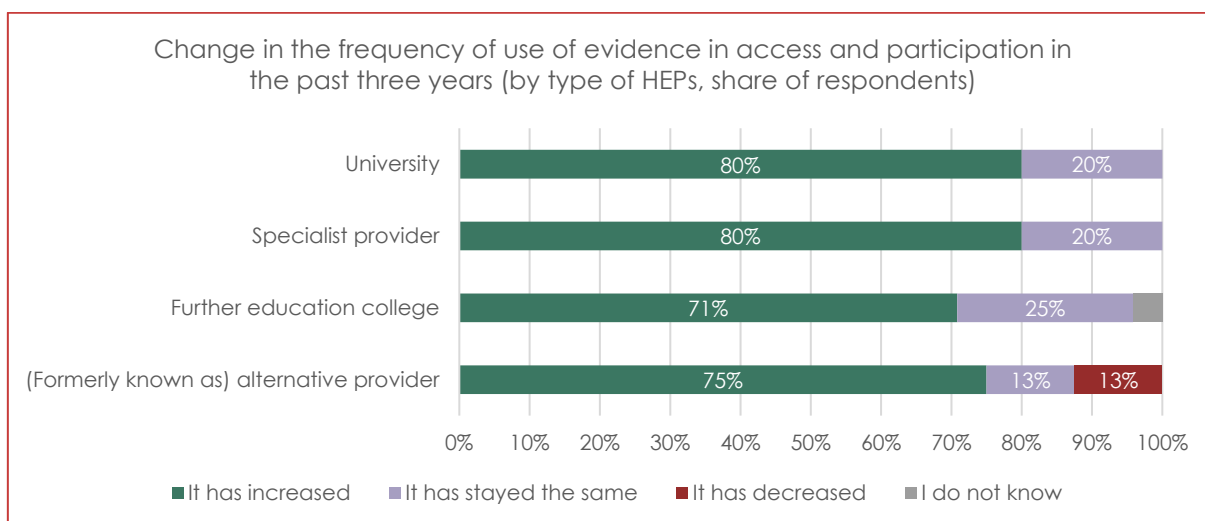
Figure 25 – Q6 on frequency of use of evidence in access and participation by type of HEP



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 26 shows the results of self-reporting by providers on change in the frequency of use of evidence in access and participation in the past three years. There is a very clear increase across all four types of providers and these are very positive results. This is a little bit contradictory to the results of Question 6 and the explanation may be very similar, i.e. a shift in providers' understanding of "evidence" in access and participation over the past three years.

Figure 26 – Q7 on change in the frequency of use of evidence in access and participation in the past three years (by type of HEPs, share of respondents)



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

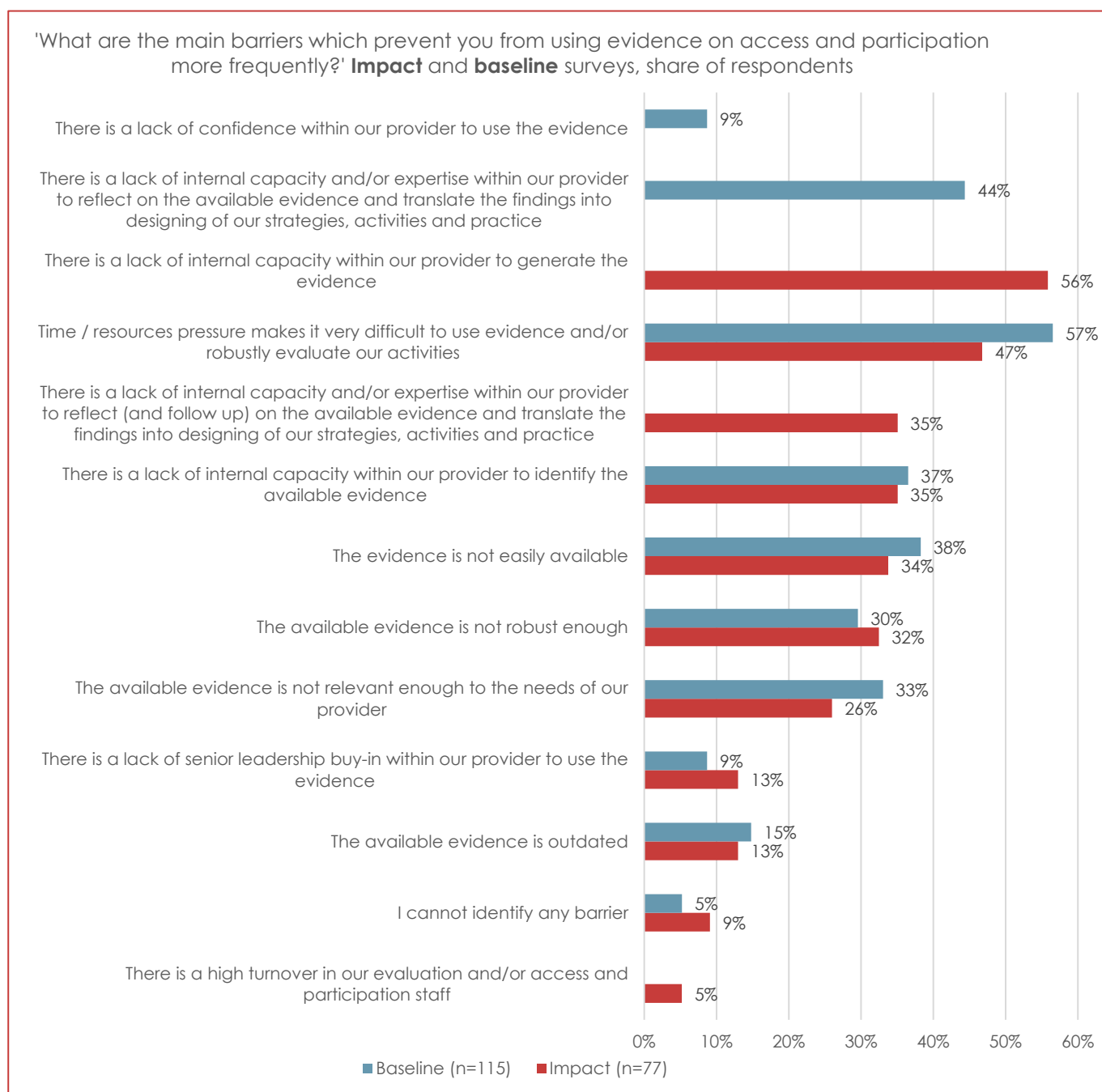
4.1.6 Common barriers to using evidence

Figure 27 compares the results in relation to common barriers to using evidence from the baseline and impact surveys. The following were the changes between the baseline and impact questionnaire, and the comparability is, therefore, limited:

- 'There is a lack of confidence within our provider to use the evidence' was offered in the baseline survey only
- 'There is a lack of internal capacity within our provider to generate the evidence' was offered in the impact survey only
- 'There is a high turnover in our evaluation and/or access and participation staff' was offered in the impact survey only
- 'There is a lack of internal capacity within our provider to reflect on the available evidence' was modified for the impact survey.

The comparison of the identified barriers by providers between the baseline and impact surveys shows that, overall, providers faced fewer barriers in 2023, compared to 2020, and these barriers appeared to have been less serious. The importance of availability, relevance and the recentness of evidence as barriers has decreased. In addition, pressures on time and resources seem to have been less important barriers in 2023, compared to 2020. Conversely, the robustness of evidence and the lack of senior leadership buy-in appear to have risen in importance over the last three years.

Figure 27 – Q8 on common barriers to using evidence



Source: Baseline and impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Fourteen providers commented further on the barriers to using evidence in access and participation. They mentioned the following additional issues:

- Small numbers of students making evidence less robust (five providers mentioned this)
- Problems with linkage of various data sources which are hosted on different platforms (one provider mentioned this)
- The metrics used by the OfS not mirroring/translating as the same metrics that providers use to measure outcomes for students for access and participation (one provider mentioned this)

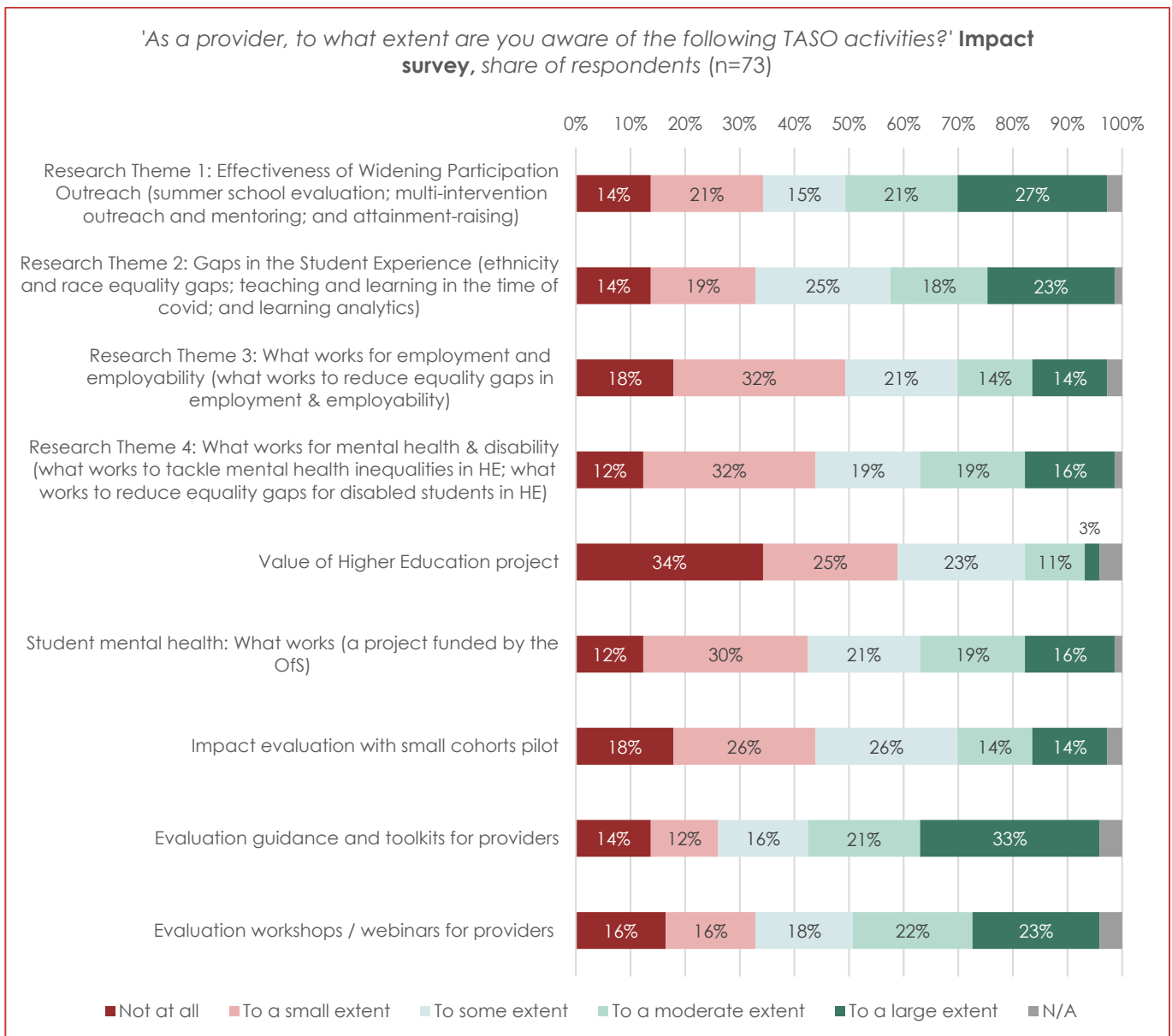
- Frequent and inconsistent OfS priority/requirement adjustments (one provider mentioned this).

4.2 Role and activities of TASO

4.2.1 Awareness of TASO's work

Figure 28 below presents the results showing the level of awareness in the sector with TASO activities. Overall, the results show an average level of awareness, with responses indicating no awareness ranging between 12% and 34%. The main variation in the results relates to the proportion of respondents indicating they are aware 'to a large extent'. TASO research themes introduced earlier (e.g. Theme 1 and Theme 2), together with more general activities (such as evaluation guidance and toolkits, workshop and events), show higher levels of awareness than other activities.

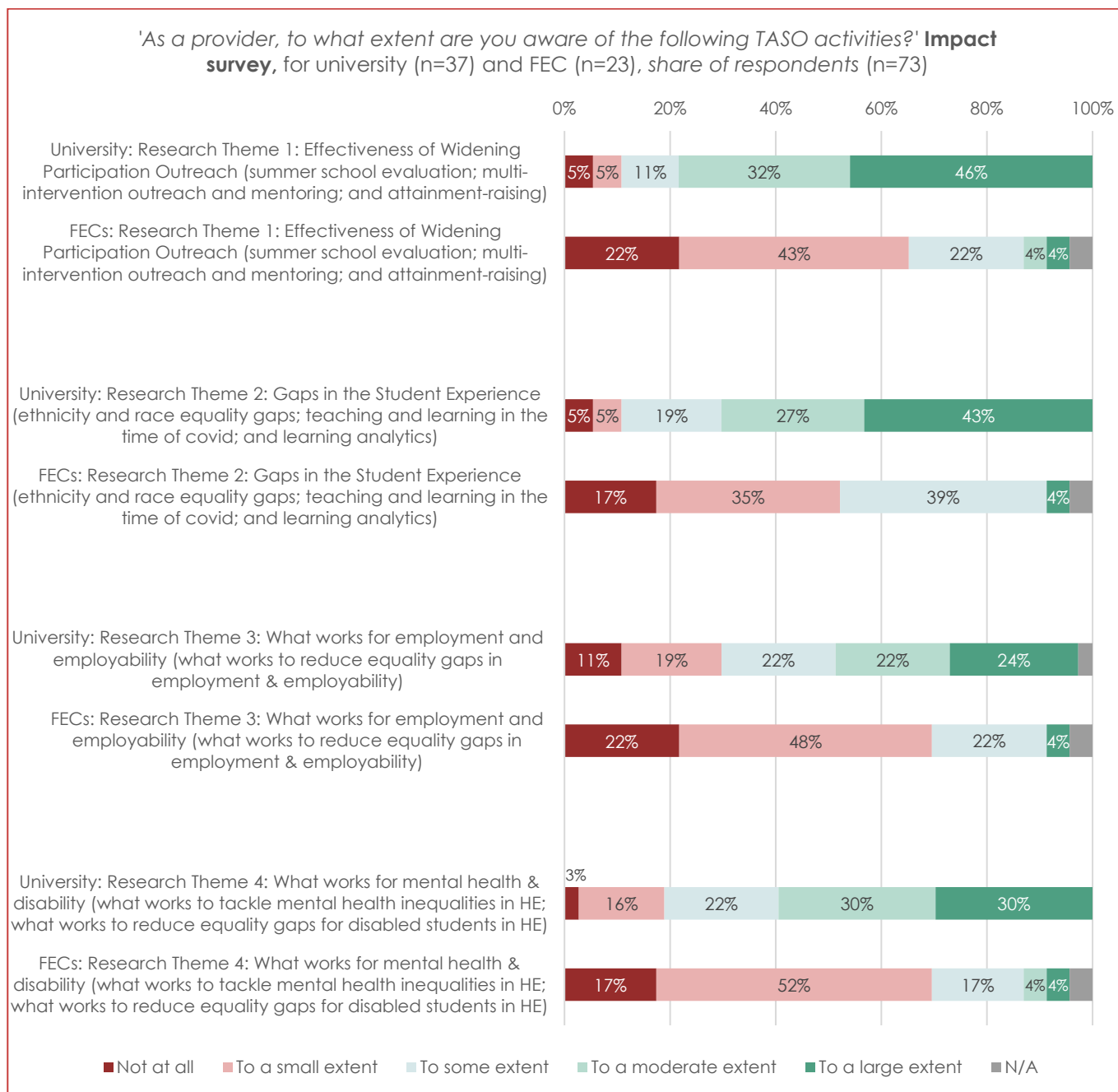
Figure 28 – Q15 on level of awareness of TASO's activities



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

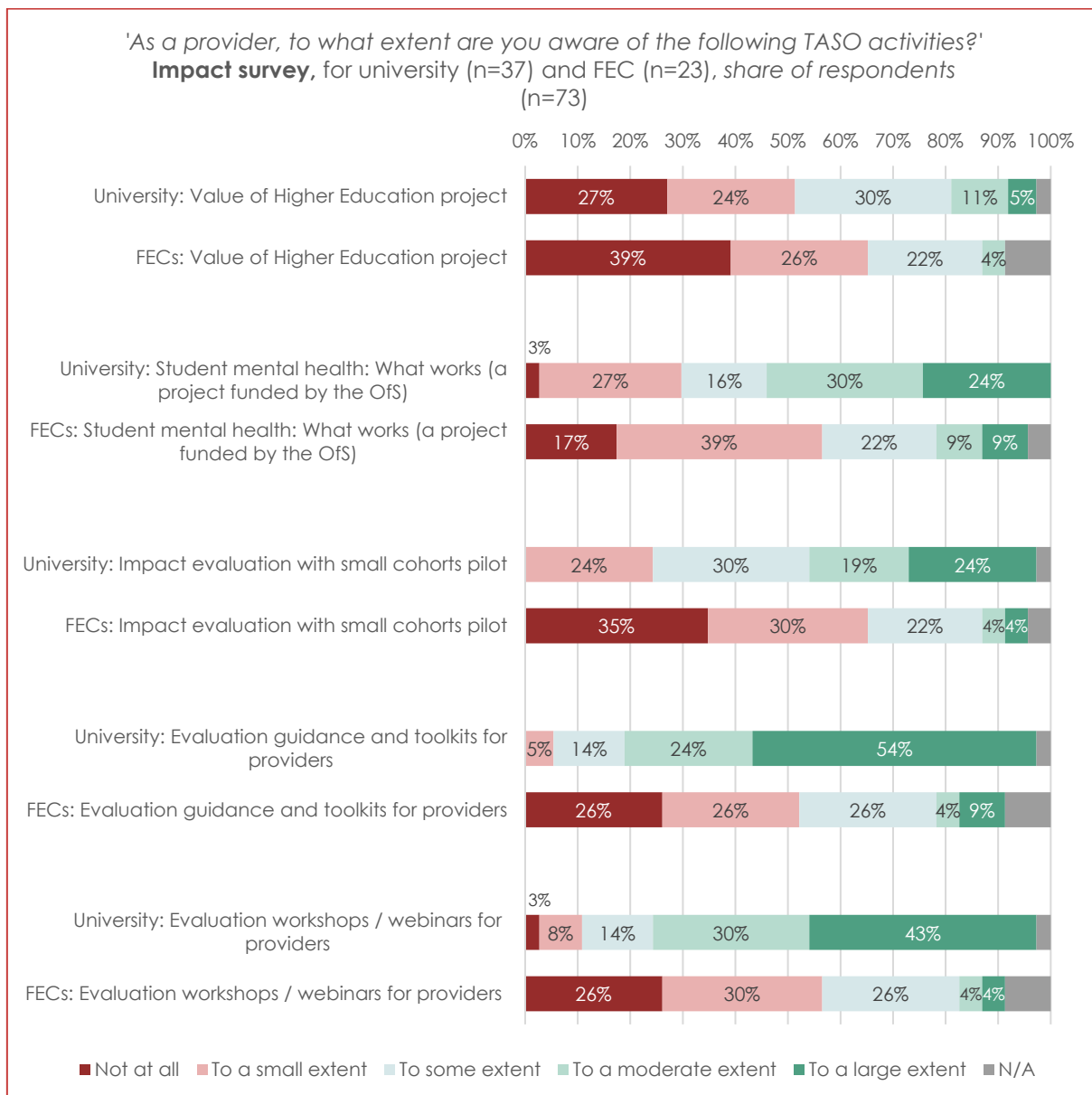
Figure 29 and Figure 30 compare the levels of awareness of activities reported by university and FEC respondents. The graph shows striking levels of difference in awareness across all the activities, with universities consistently more aware than FECs. The difference is strongest in relation to Theme 1 and evaluation guidance and toolkits for providers. 78% of universities state they are aware either 'to a large extent' or 'to a moderate extent' of Theme 1, compared to only 8% for FECs. This points to persistence of an issue identified in the baseline survey around the overall lower awareness within the further education sector about TASO's work.

Figure 29 – Q15 on level of awareness of TASO's activities by type of HEP



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

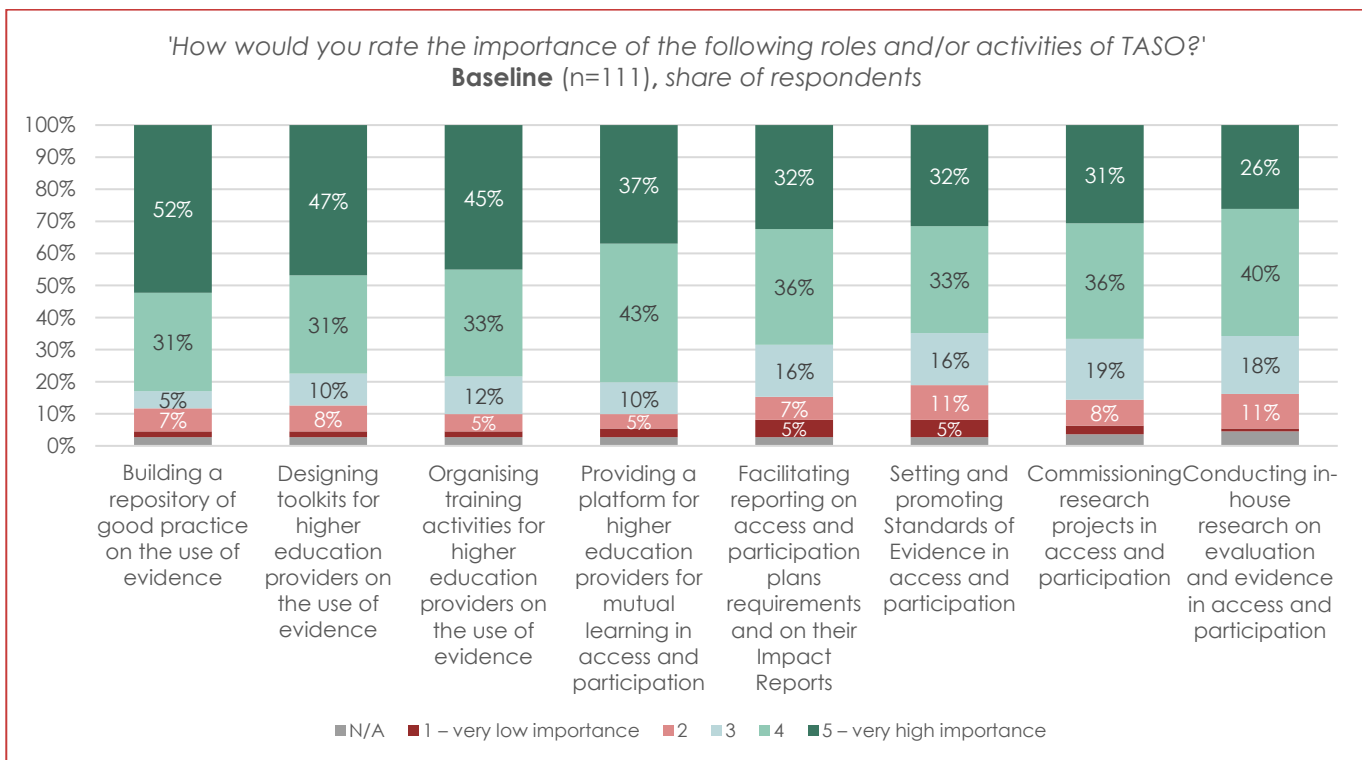
Figure 30 – Q15 on level of awareness of TASO's activities by type of HEP



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

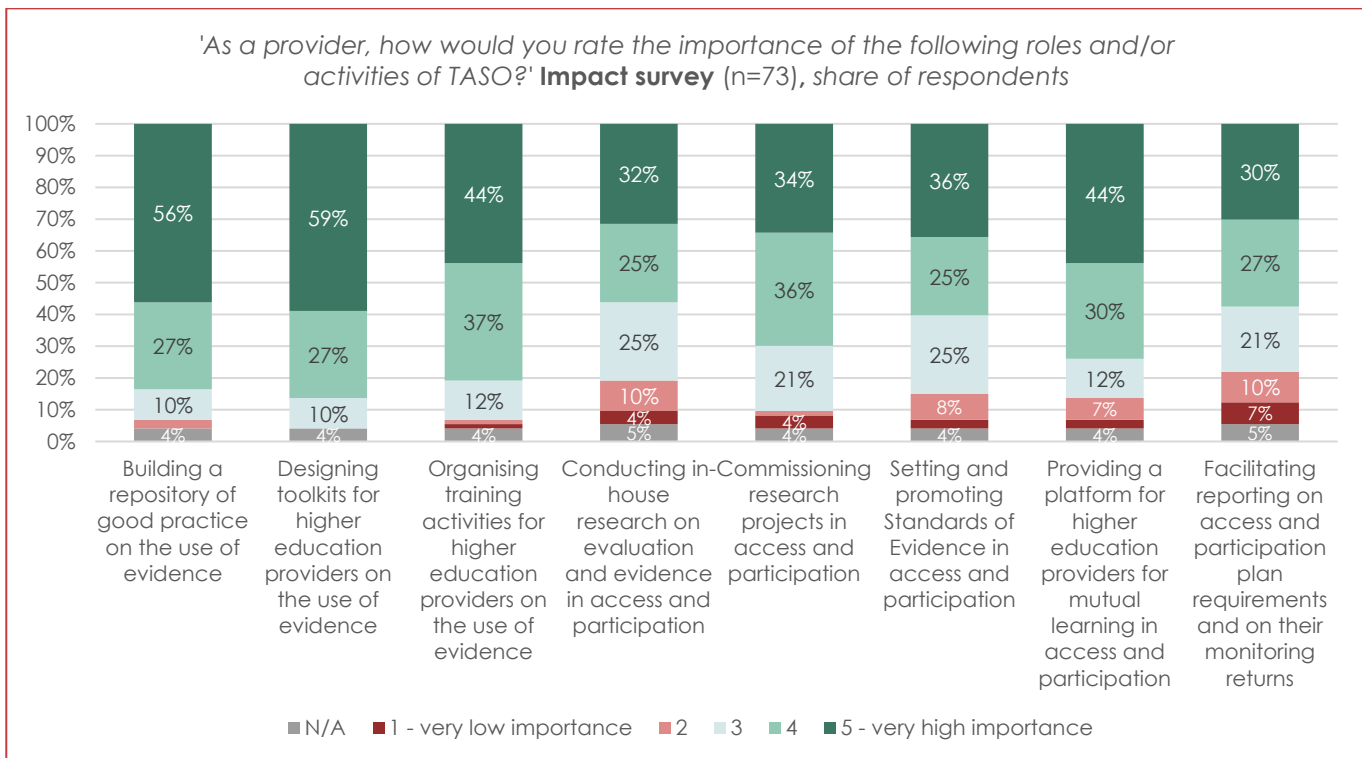
In both surveys, providers were asked to rate the importance of the various roles and activities of TASO. Figure 31 shows the baseline results and Figure 32 shows the results for the impact survey. The results across the two surveys show an almost identical pattern with no notable differences.

Figure 31 – Q14 on rating of importance of TASO's roles and activities in the baseline survey



Source: Baseline survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 32 – Q16 on rating of importance given to TASO's roles and activities in the impact survey

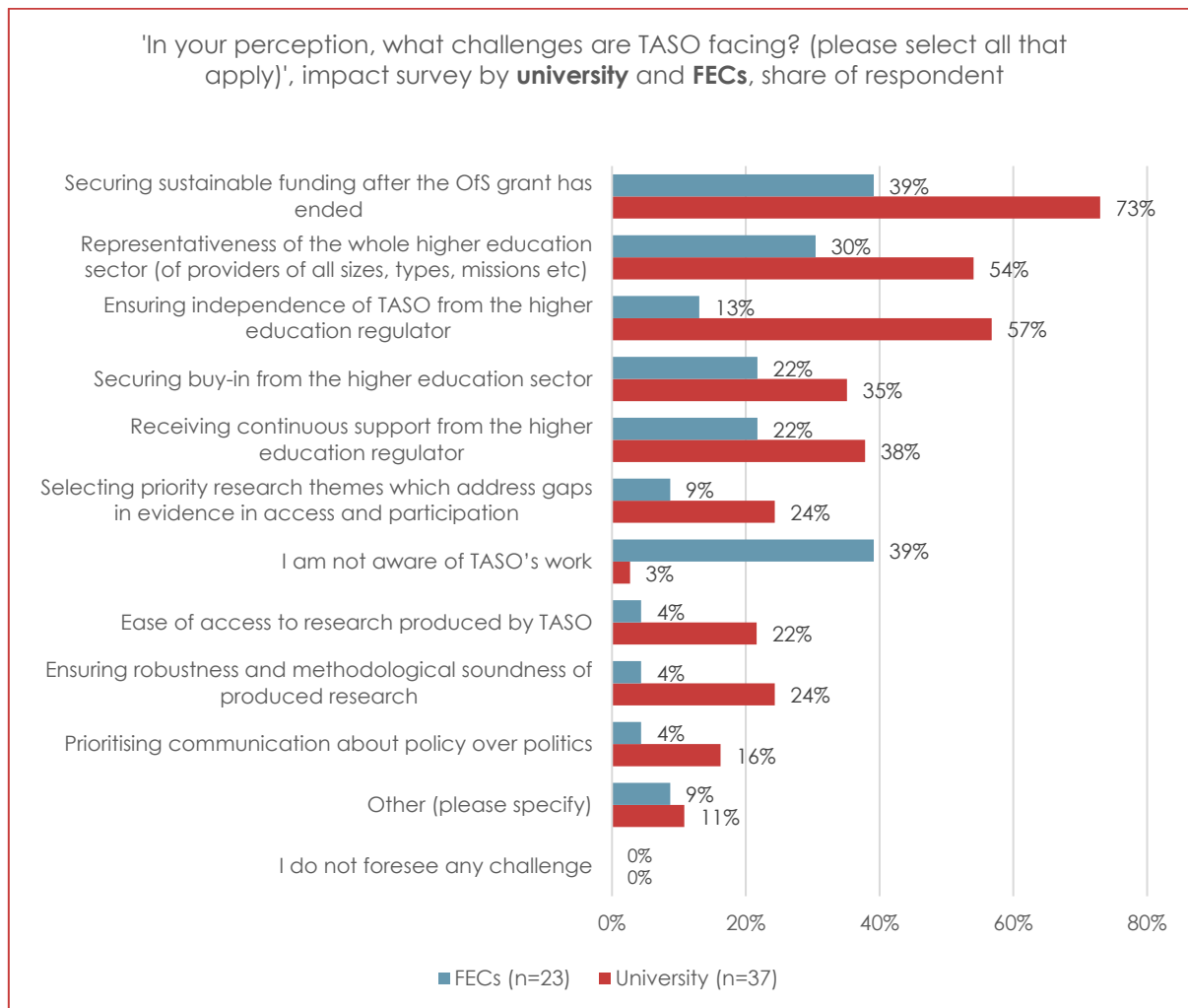


Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

4.2.2 Challenges foreseen for TASO

Figure 33 shows the perceptions of providers concerning TASO's main challenges in the Impact survey. Securing sustainable funding after the OfS grant has ended was seen as the biggest challenge for TASO, followed by making sure that TASO remains representative of the whole higher education sector.

Figure 33 – Q18 on challenges foreseen for TASO



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Twelve respondents provided additional comments on challenges for TASO. Most of the comments related to funding of TASO. Some providers mentioned concerns about the overall funding available in the sector for access and participation work, particularly because providers will have an option to review their investment on these activities in their next APP next year.

"Currently, the cost to attend conferences [related to access and participation] across the sector, including TASO conferences, is extremely high. There is a risk that [access and participation] teams will not have the budget to attend good practice sharing conferences." A survey respondent.

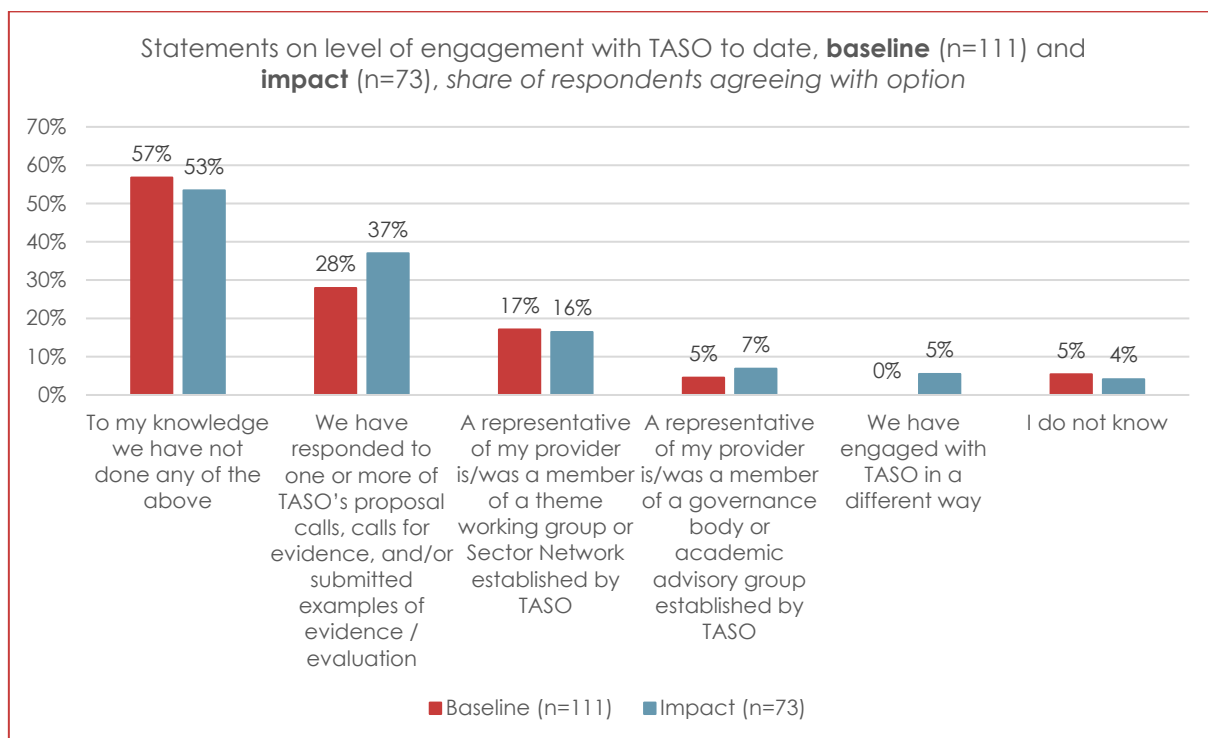
4.3 Engagement with and impact of TASO

4.3.1 Level of engagement to date

Figure 34 shows levels of engagement with TASO to date from HEPs across the baseline and impact surveys. The results indicate there has been an overall improvement in engagement between 2020 and 2023. More than a third (37%) of providers mentioned that they had responded to one or more of TASO's proposal calls, calls for evidence, and/or submitted examples of evidence or evaluation. This is higher than in 2020 (28%).

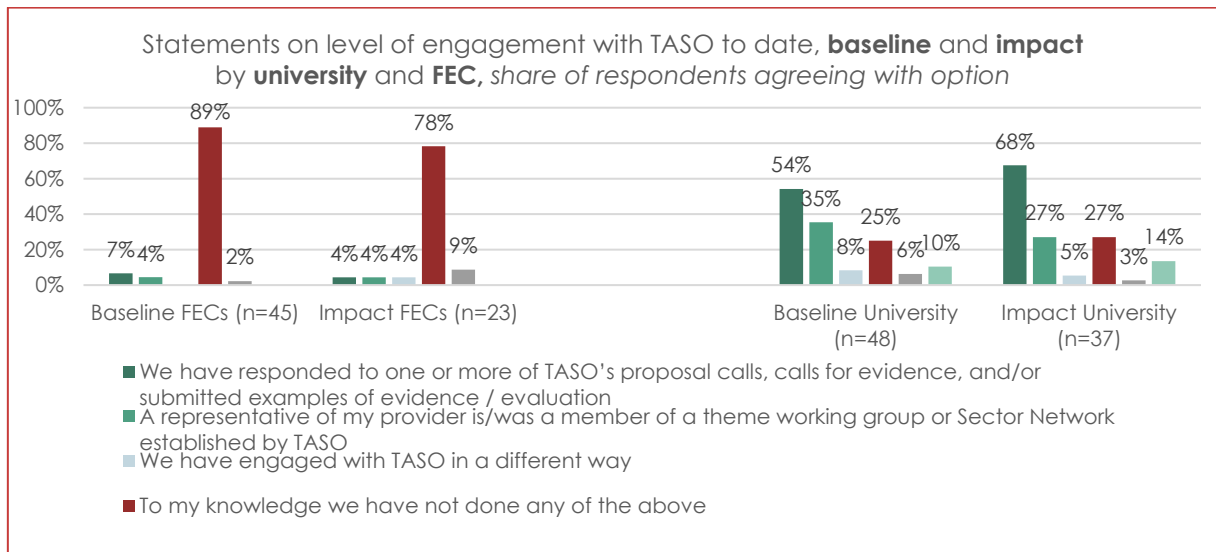
Figure 35 shows that a high proportion of FECs has not engaged. However, Figure 35 also shows that the change is partly attributable to the fact that for the FEC respondents the proportion indicating they have not engaged has decreased from 89% to 78%. This is still a very high proportion who have not engaged but is at least a positive sign that more engagement is definitely now taking place.

Figure 34 – Q17 on level of engagement with TASO to date



Source: Baseline and Impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 35 – Q17 on level of engagement with TASO to date by type of HEP



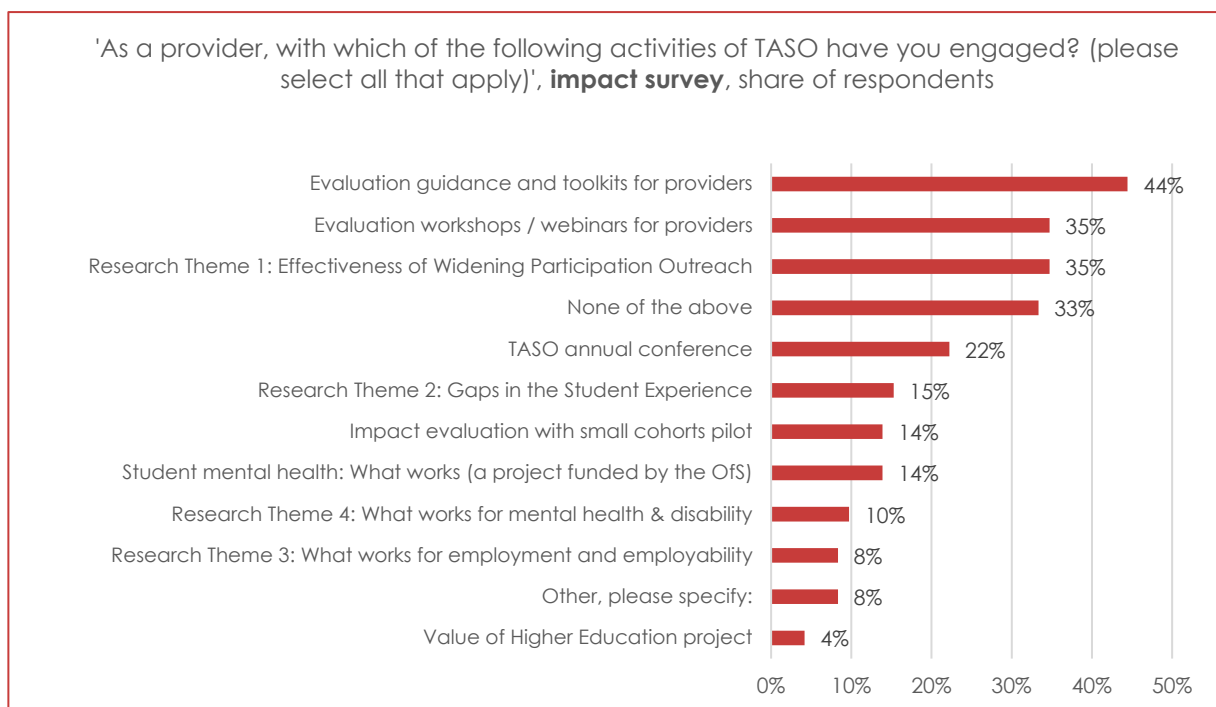
Source: Baseline and Impact surveys of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

4.3.2 Engagement with TASO activities

Figure 36 shows that 44% of respondents have engaged with evaluation guidance and toolkits produced by TASO. Evaluation workshops/webinars and Research Theme 1 were both selected by 35% of respondents (respondents were able to select more than one option). Research Theme 3 and Research Theme 4, as well as the Value of Higher Education project were selected only by 8%, 10% and 4% of respondents, respectively.

These results corroborate the results of Question 15 (awareness of TASO) presented in Figure 28.

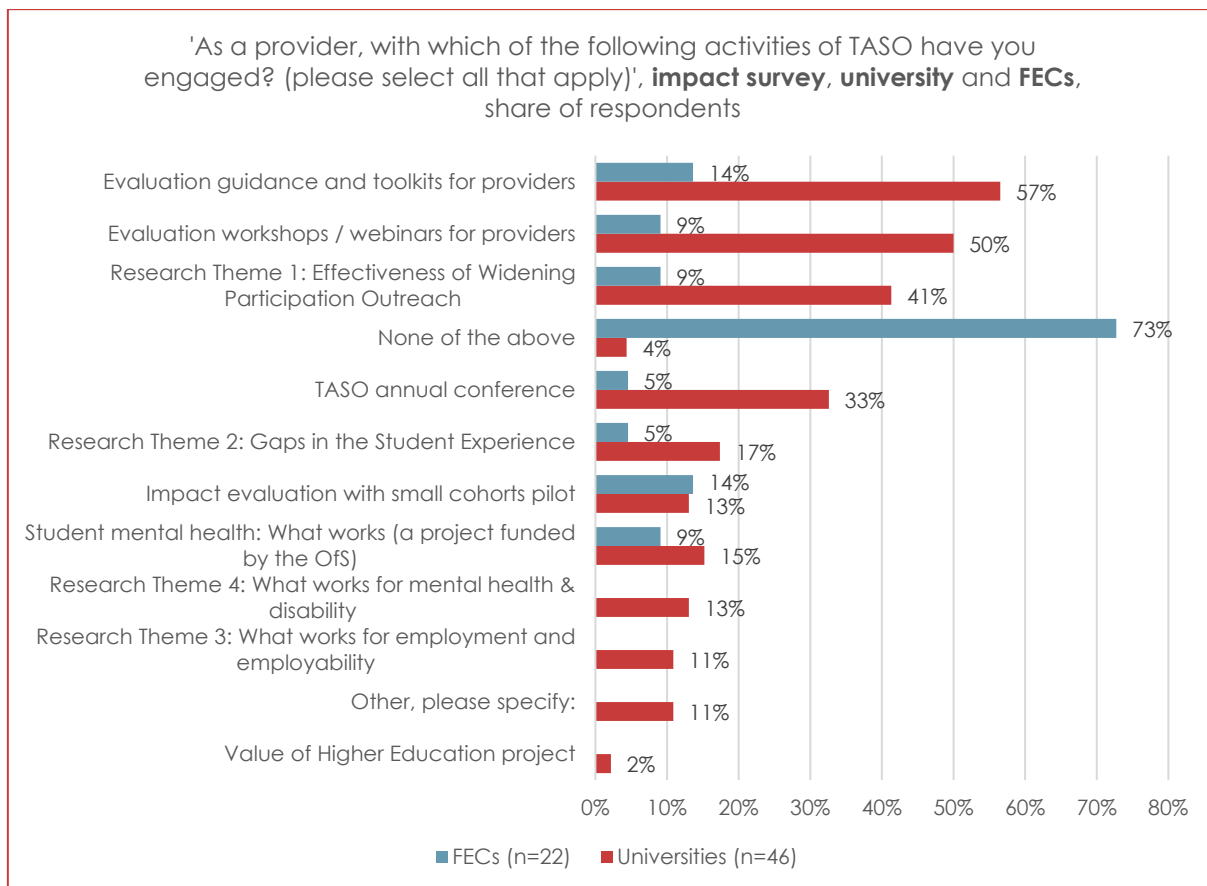
Figure 36 – Q20 on TASO activities with which providers have engaged



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Furthermore, Figure 37 very clearly shows that the engagement with individual TASO activities is driven by the university sector. Almost three-quarters of the responding FECs said they had not engaged with any of the listed activities.

Figure 37 – Q20 on TASO activities with which providers have engaged, by type of HEPs



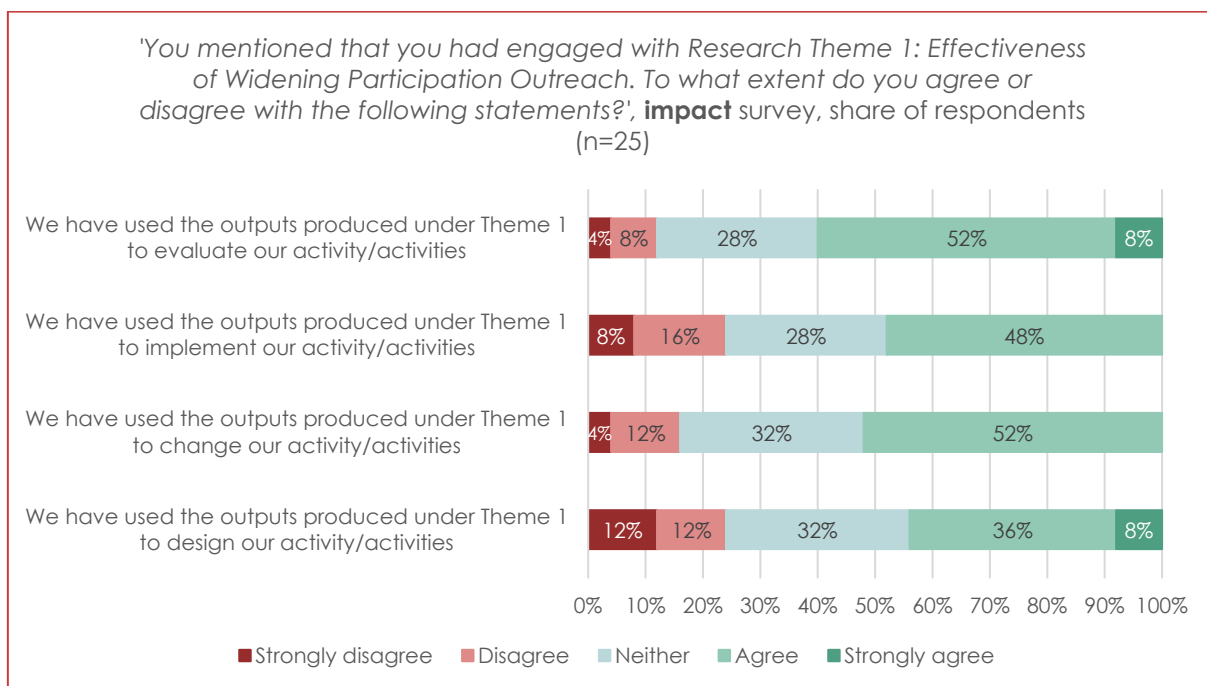
Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

4.3.3 Use of outputs produced by TASO

Figure 38 and Figure 39 provide further insights into the use of TASO's Research Themes 1 and 2 (this evidence comes from the respondents who answered in the previous question that they had engaged with Theme 1, or Theme 2, respectively).

With respect to Research Theme 1 (Figure 38), 60% of respondents said they had used the outputs to evaluate their activities and just over a half of them (52%) said they had changed their activities using the outputs.

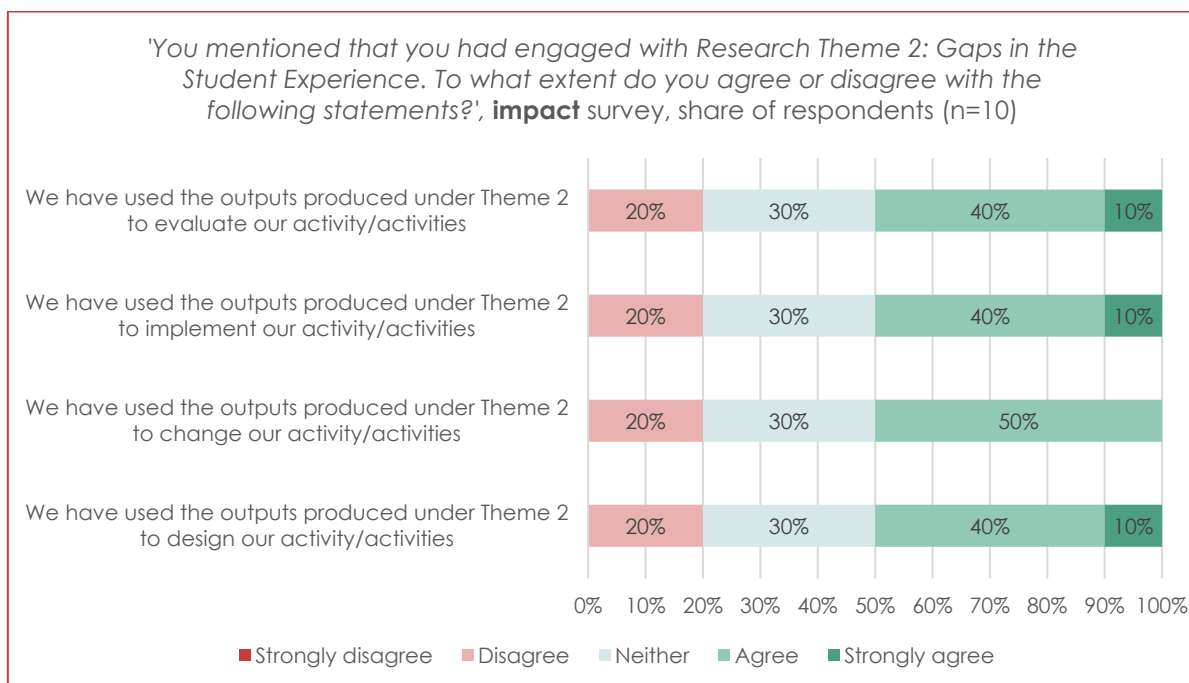
Figure 38 – Use of outputs of TASO's Research Theme 1



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

With respect to Research Theme 2 (the following data comes from ten respondents only), five respondents said that the outputs had been used for their internal evaluation, implementation of activities, change of their activities, and design of activities (Figure 39).

Figure 39 - Use of outputs of TASO's Research Theme 2



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

In the survey, we also asked respondents to elaborate on their engagement with Research Themes 3 and 4. However, the numbers of responders were too small to be presented in a chart.

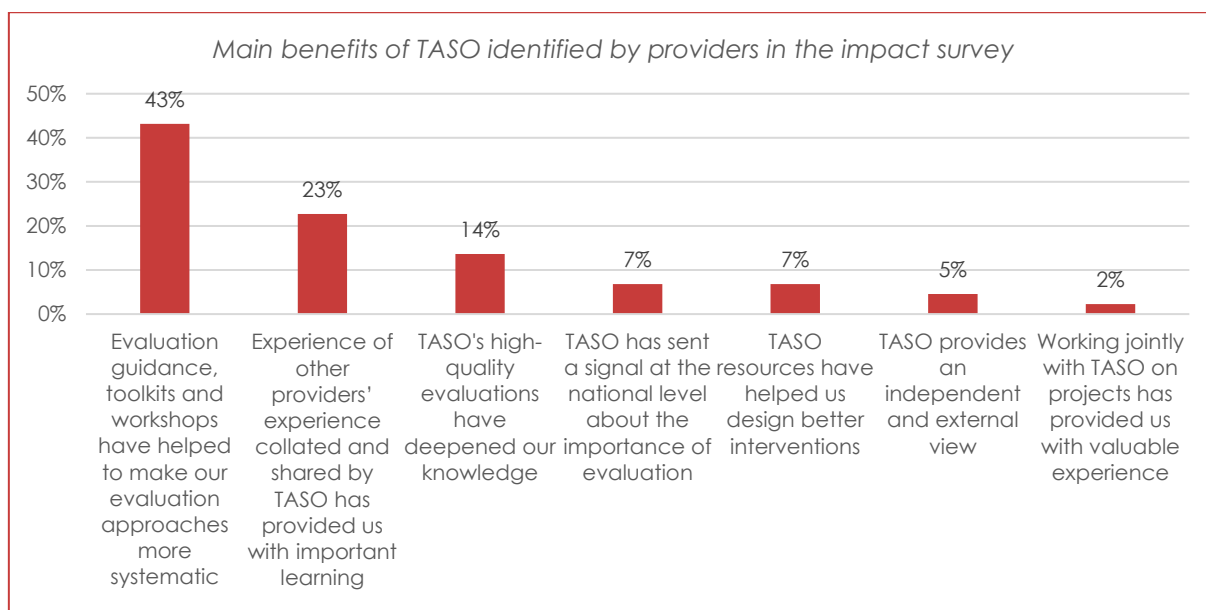
- In relation to Research Theme 3, most frequently the outputs were used to design or change access and participation activities.
- In relation to Research Theme 4, design, implementation and evaluation of activities were the most common uses of the outputs.

Just over 30 providers added comments on how specifically they had used the evaluation guidance and toolkits produced by TASO. Most commonly, providers used the TASO evaluation guidance and toolkits to develop their own evaluation framework and Theory(ies) of Change and to design and plan their evaluations. They have also often used them to design their new access and participation interventions for their next APPs. In a limited number of cases, providers used these outputs to deliver internal training.

4.3.4 Impact of TASO on providers

In Question 33, providers were asked to mention the most important benefit(s) of TASO. This was a free-text question, so respondents were able to identify any benefit. We coded the responses and we present those mentioned most frequently in Figure 40. The most frequently mentioned benefit stemmed from the use of TASO's evaluation guidance, toolkits and workshops, which have been helping providers make their internal evaluation approaches more systematic.

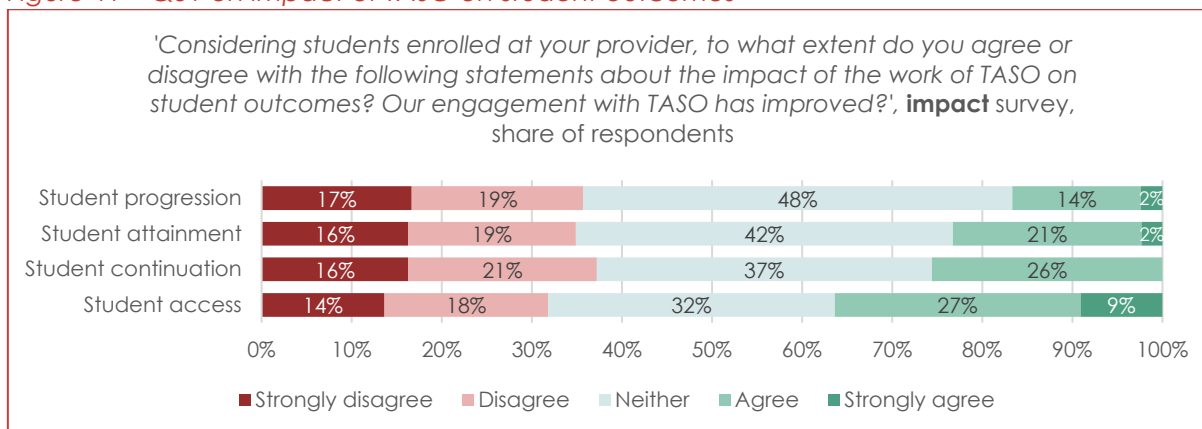
Figure 40 – Q33 - Main benefits of TASO identified by providers in the impact survey



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Figure 41 presents the results of Question 31 in which respondents were asked about the impact TASO has had on student outcomes. In total, 36% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that TASO had improved student outcomes in the area of student access. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because any such impact is likely to be in very early stages.

Figure 41 – Q31 on impact of TASO on student outcomes



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

In Question 32, respondents were given an opportunity to elaborate further on the impact on student outcomes. Many of the comments reiterated that it is too early to assess any impact on student outcomes. Nevertheless, around half of the written comments were generally positive about the impact in the future. Providers were positive about applying the lessons learnt in their next APPs.

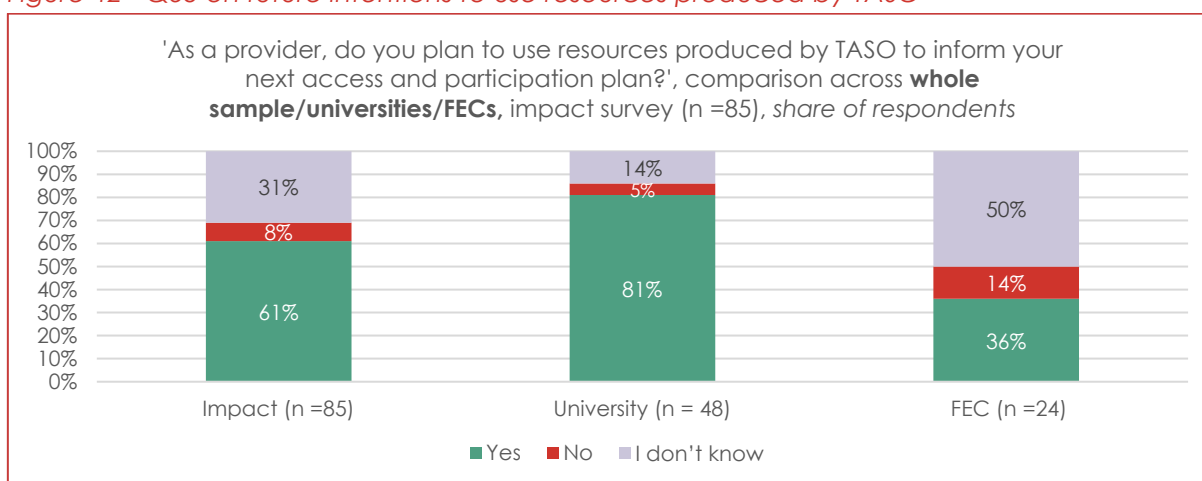
"We have applied what we have learned through TASO (theories of change, small n pilot) to our access work, which we believe can only improve what we offer through this work. Through learning how other institutions are evaluating their student success (continuation and attainment) work, we have begun thinking differently about how we capture our impact in this area, which is likely to result in impact that has not yet materialised through how this is formalised in our new APP." A survey respondent

One provider added that TASO had guided their efforts in supporting less advantaged students.

4.3.5 Future intentions for engaging with TASO

Figure 42 shows that 61% of respondents plan to use resources produced by TASO to inform their next APP, whilst only 8% do not. There are significant differences between the two main provider types. A vast majority of universities (81%) plan to use TASO resources; only 36% of FECs plan to do so.

Figure 42 - Q35 on future intentions to use resources produced by TASO



Source: Impact survey of HEPs; analysis by Technopolis

Respondents had also an option to add further comments on what prevents them from engaging with TASSO more in the future. A lot of the comments reiterated what had earlier been identified as barriers to using more evidence (Figure 27), i.e. lack of time and internal capacity. Other specific issues mentioned included TASSO's outputs being too "technical" and too "quantitative", which means, – particularly for small or specialist providers – that the utility of TASSO's outputs is limited. One provider mentioned that their internal planning cycles were not aligned with TASSO's timelines of publishing the outputs. They mentioned TASSO's survey design and validation trial as examples which came too late for them.

