

Scottish Business UK - SME Preferences 2021 Survey Report

30th November 2021



In September 2021, Scottish Business UK (SBUK) surveyed senior SME business leaders (MD, CEO, Company Chair, Senior Partner, FD) who want to keep Scotland in the United Kingdom. It sought to understand:

1. **Why** business leaders think being in the United Kingdom **benefits** Scotland's c.361,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
2. **What** they think the Scottish and UK governments could do **better** to support business growth and productivity.

Unprompted written responses were provided by the **62 business leaders** from a **wide range of sectors and locations** in Scotland[i].

[i] See appendix at the end of the report for summary of sectors & locations



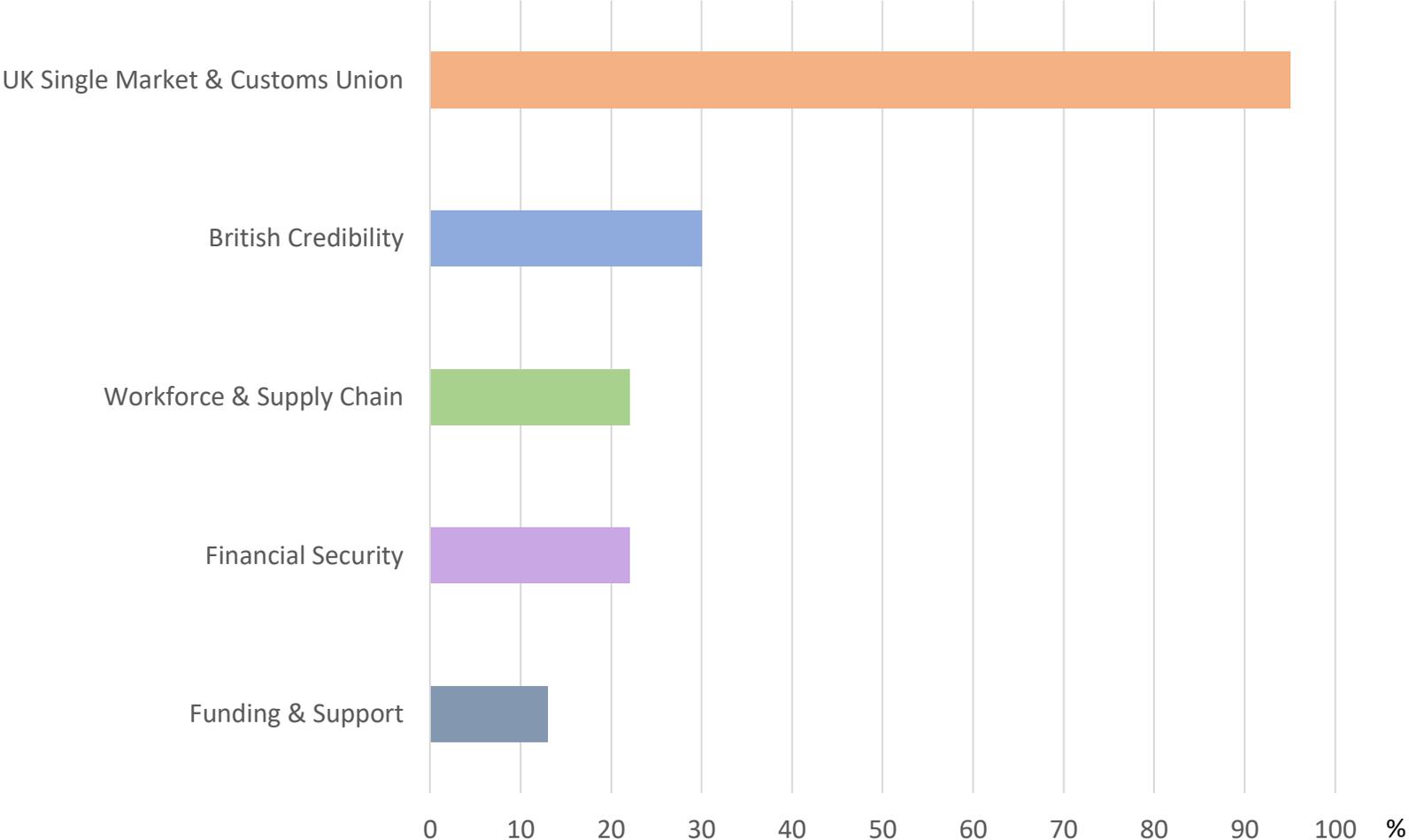
What are the benefits to your business and your sector of being part of the UK?

- An overwhelming majority (95%) of comments provided by respondents cited access to the **UK single market and customs union** as a clear benefit business would miss if Scotland left the United Kingdom.
- In addition, nearly a third of responses (30%) raised the benefits for business derived from the **credibility of being a UK company**. Almost a quarter (22%) raised the benefit they receive from access to the **UK workforce and supply chain** and the same proportion raised the benefit of **added financial security**. (13%) spoke up for the **funding and investment support** they can access by being in the UK.

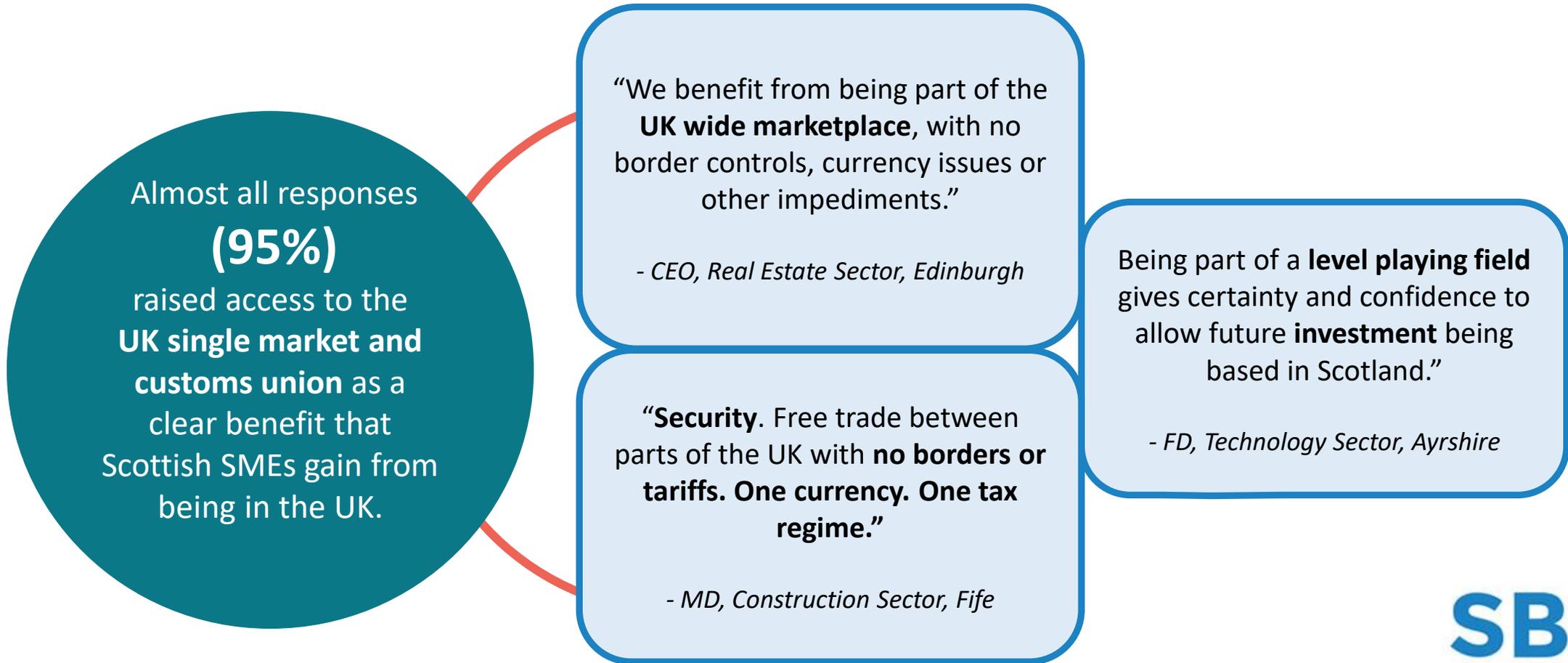
What do the Scottish and UK governments need to do better to support business growth and productivity?

- The most commonly heard view (expressed in 55% of comments) was that the Scottish government should **stop focusing on campaigning to break up the UK**. Similarly, more than half of responses (52%) expressed a desire to see more or better **collaboration between Scottish ministers and the UK government**.
- Other common themes raised by respondents included a desire to see the government get better at **listening to business** (raised in 32% of responses); better **alignment of regulation and tax systems** between Scotland and the rest of the UK (29%); more done to **invest in Scottish businesses** (21%) and; action to **improve education, skills and training** (18%).

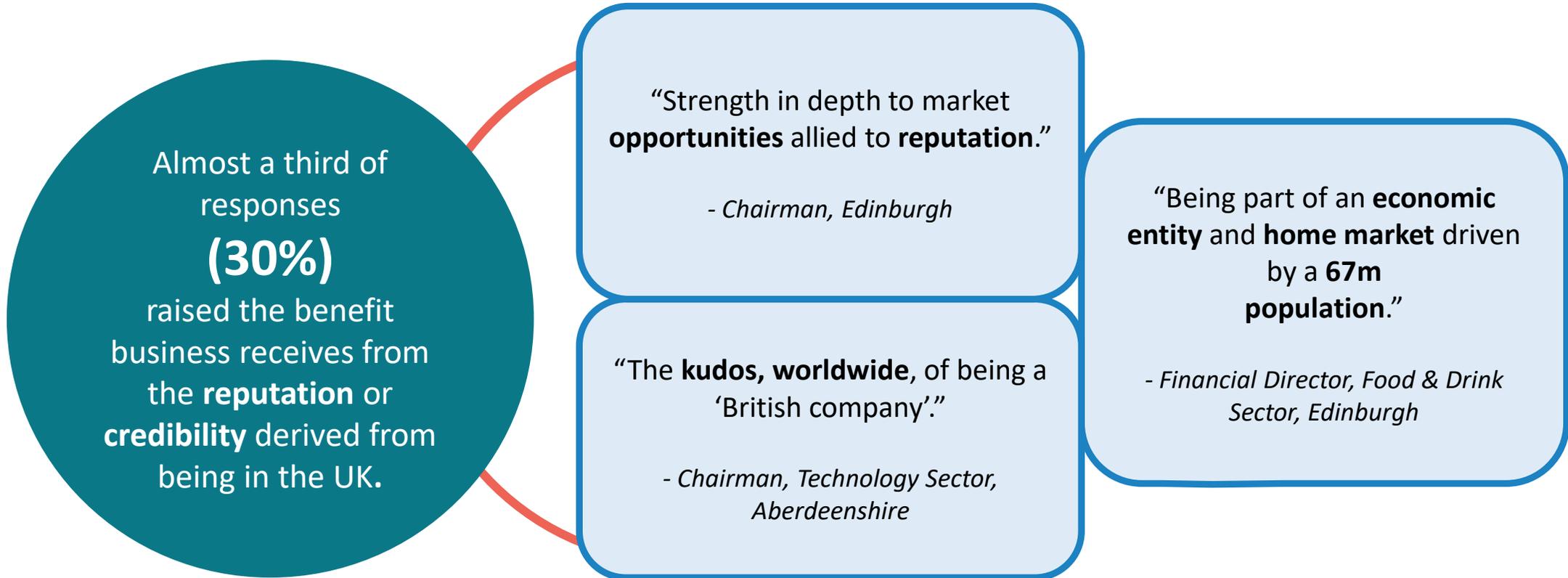
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Almost a quarter of responses **(22%)** mentioned the benefit of business access to the UK **workforce & supply chain.**

“Supplier network and access to employee talent across the UK.”
- Financial Director, Food & Drink Sector, Edinburgh

“Seamless and coherent market through the whole of the UK, with access to all sectors with a UK wide workforce.”
- Chairman, Technology Sector, Aberdeen

“Our customers, suppliers and contractors are nearly all derived from the UK.”
- Partner, Accommodation Sector, Dumfries & Galloway



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Almost a quarter of responses (**22%**) raised the additional **financial security** that can be received as a result of Scotland's place in the UK.

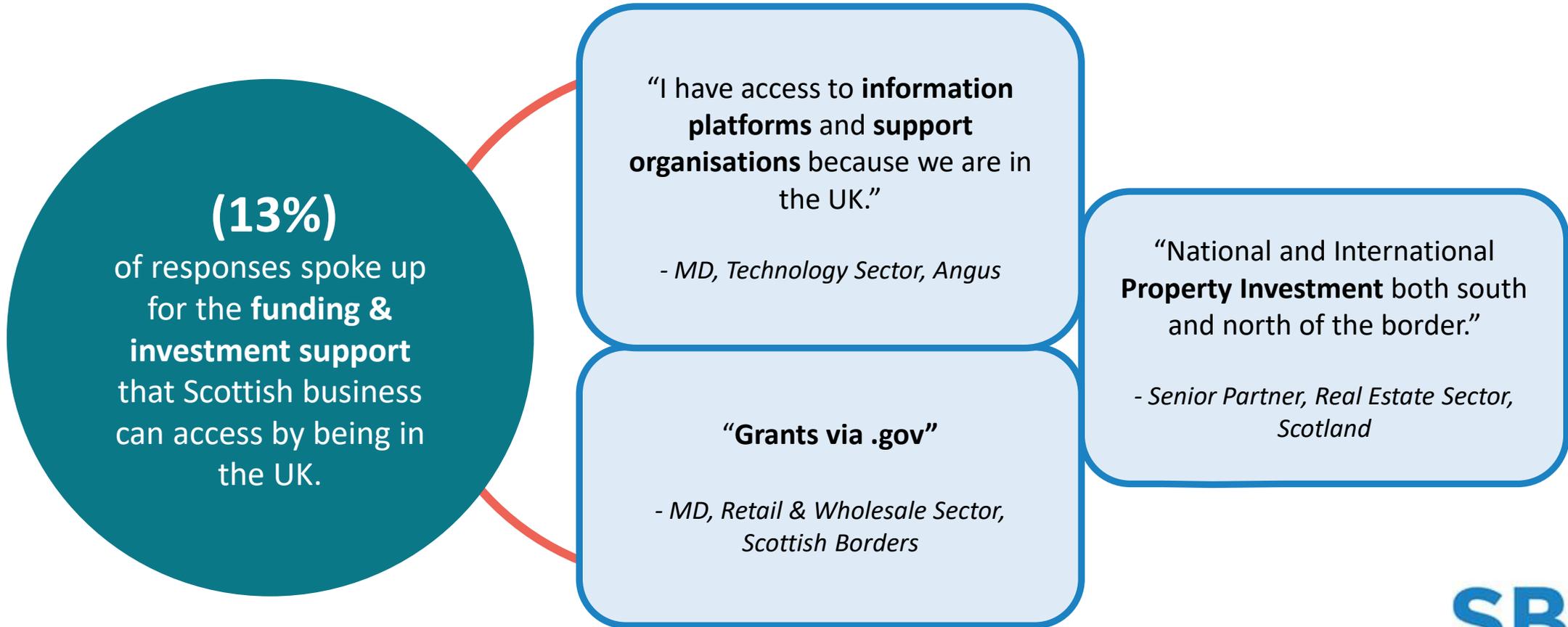
“Confidence in pension, financial support in crisis, i.e., Covid”
- Chairman, Arts & Entertainment Sector, Highland

“An attractive place to invest due to the financial security brought on by being part of the Union.”
- MD, Real Estate Sector, Perth & Kinross

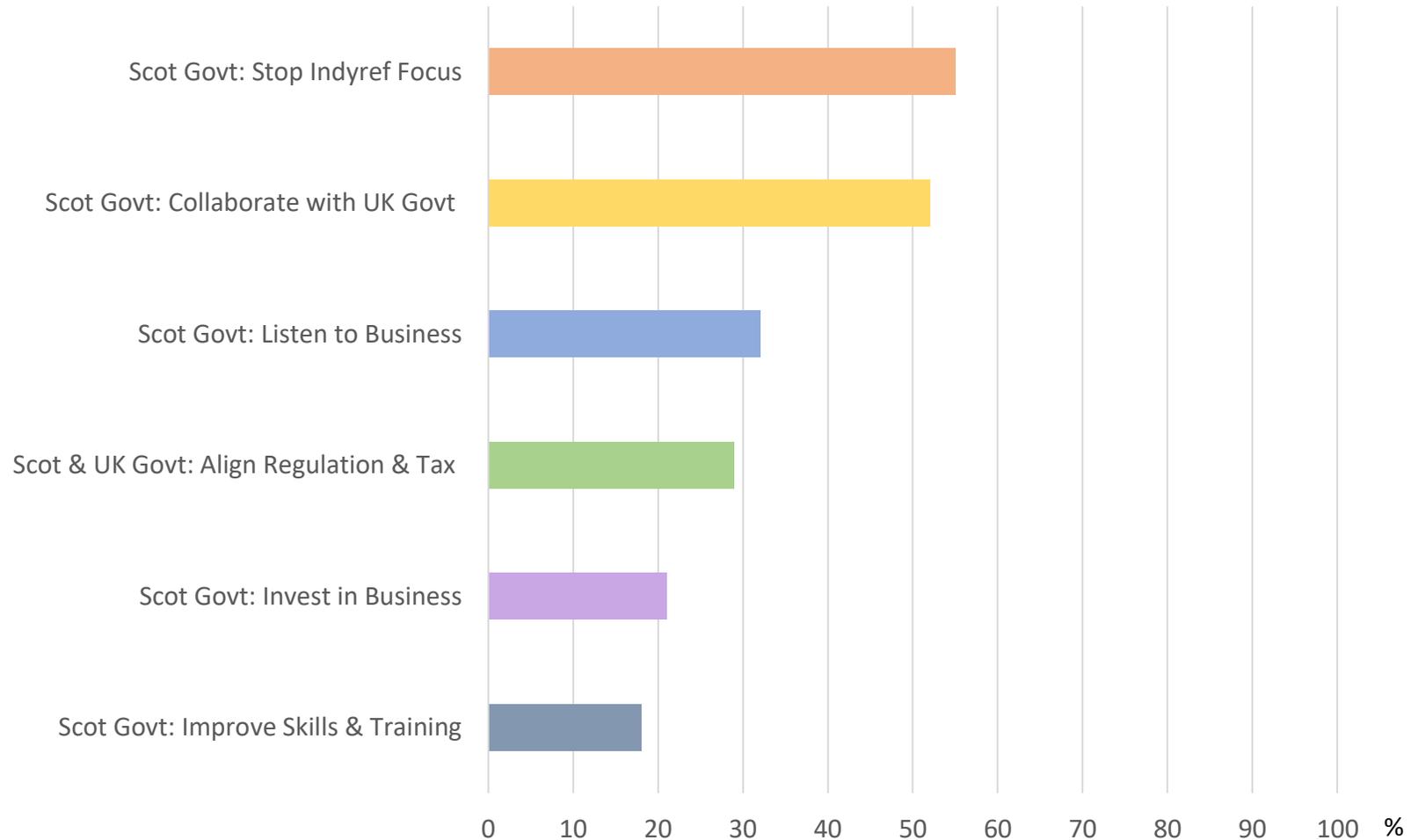
“Part of G7 nation with its consequent opportunities and supports.”
- MD, Construction Sector, Stirling



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What do the Scottish and UK governments need to do better to support business growth and productivity?



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(55%)
of responses opted to raise a view that the **Scottish government** should **stop focusing on independence**.
but **(52%)**
suggested more **collaboration between the governments**

Note: None (0%) called for a referendum or said the breakup of the UK would suit business.

“Stop wasting time on Indy talk and **do the job they are supposed to be doing**. This would help business confidence about the medium to long term.”
- MD, Arts & Entertainment Sector, Ayrshire

“The Scottish government needs to **be less adversarial** and **work with**, rather than against, the **UK government**.”
- MD, Professional & Scientific Sector, Edinburgh

“All this **emphasis on independence creates uncertainty**, especially for **investors** and financial institutions which is **corrosive to economic growth**. Scottish Govt needs to **work as a team** with **UK Govt**, not fight them the whole time.”
- MD, Real Estate Sector, Perth & Kinross



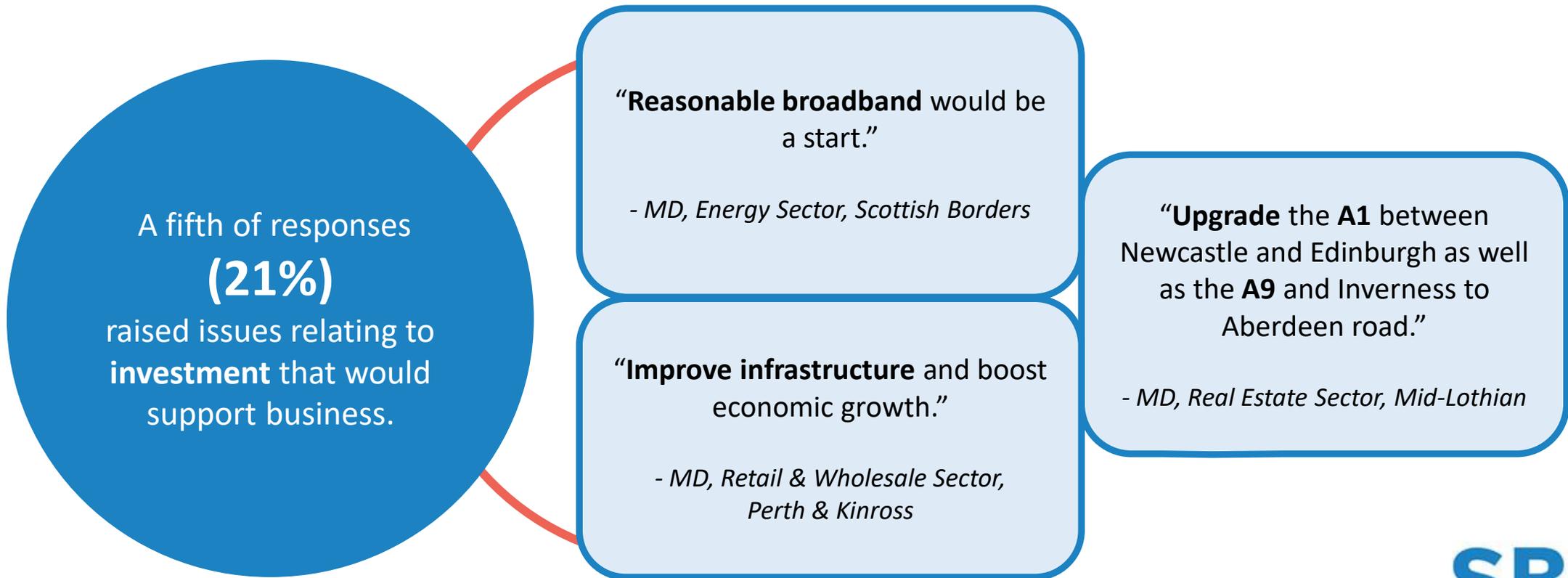
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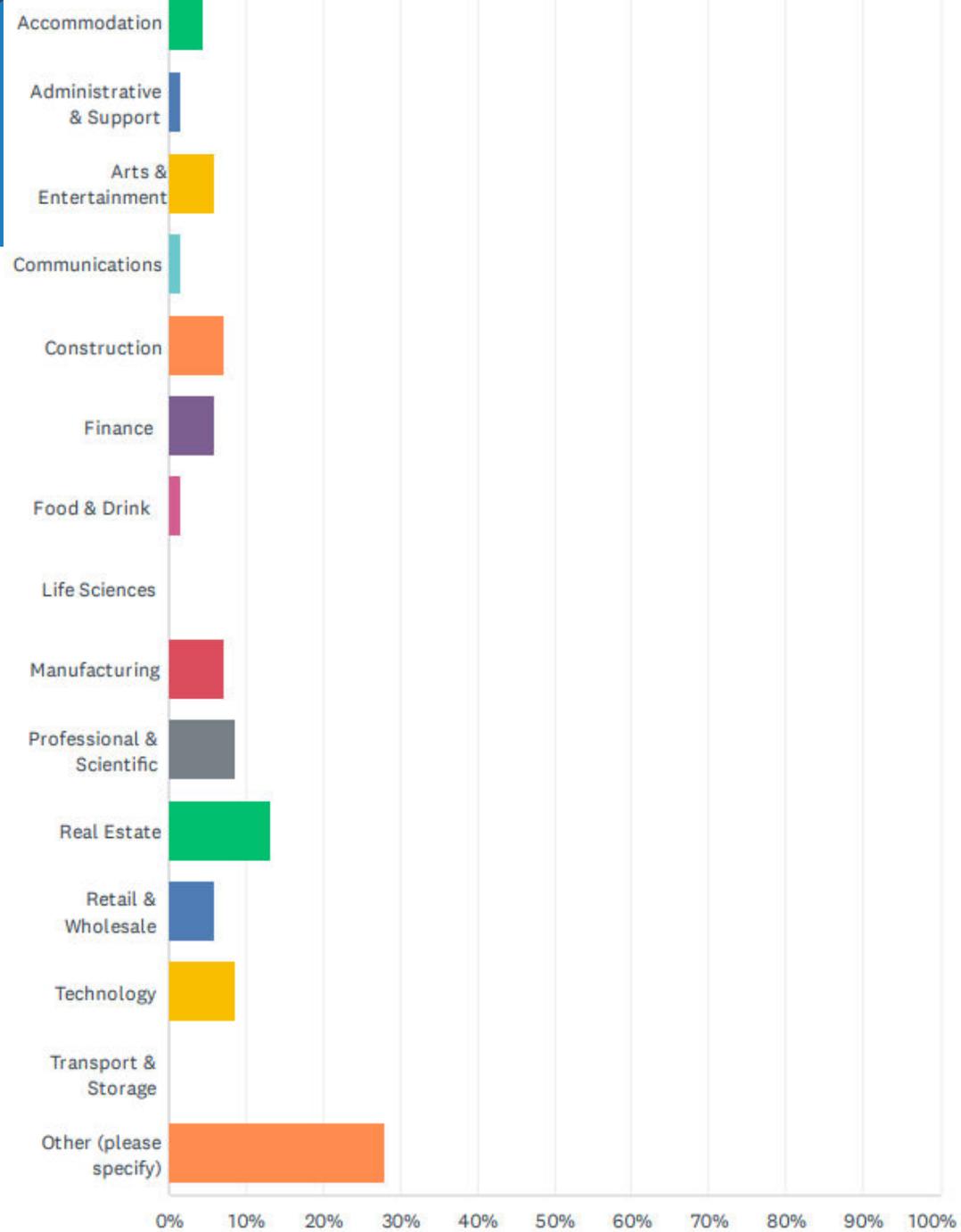
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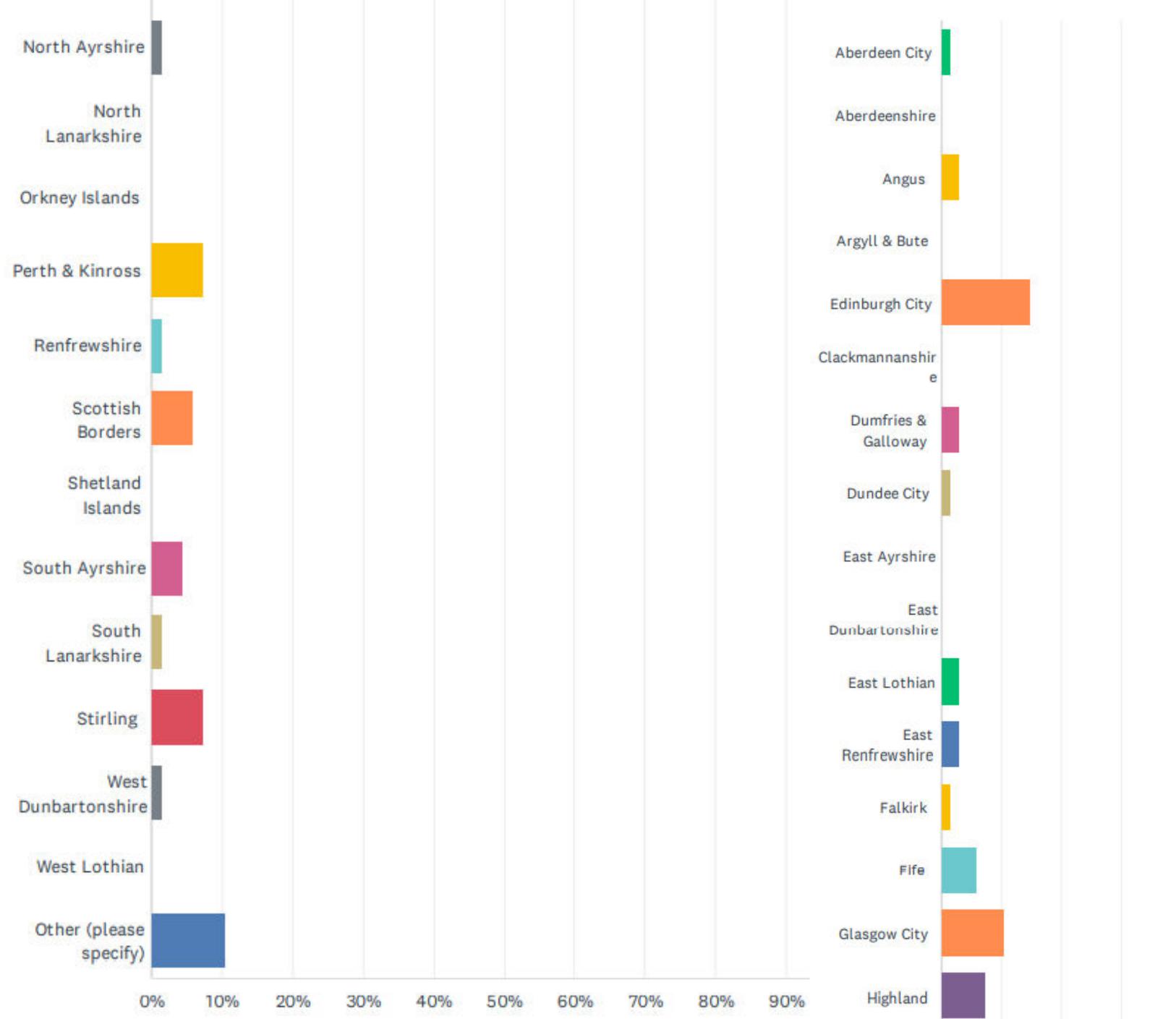
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Sectors Surveyed



Locations Surveyed



About SBUK

Scottish Business UK (SBUK) is an independent, non-party voice for business leaders who want to see Scotland thrive economically as part of the United Kingdom. It seeks to make a positive case for that future and believes strongly that the campaign to break up the UK offers unacceptable disruption for business and public services, especially as Scotland tries to rebound from the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

SBUK's founder and chairman is entrepreneur Robert D. Kilgour, and its Chief Executive is Struan Stevenson. SBUK's Advisory Council currently has a membership overseeing business interests that together employ over 10,000 people in Scotland and 35,000 people across the UK and Ireland. Profiles of each member can be read at <https://scottish-business.uk/about-us/>.

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