

The Third Global Survey of Repair Cafés: A Summary of Findings

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INTRODUCTION

Rationale

In the summer of 2019 Wouter Spekkink and Malte Rödl of the University of Manchester, in collaboration with Martin Charter of The Centre for Design @ at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and Martine Postma of the Repair Café International Foundation, carried out a survey among members of the international Repair Café community. Previous surveys have been carried out by CfSD at UCA to explore, among other topics, the activities that Repair Cafés across the globe engage in, what motivations people have to join Repair Cafés, and what their expectations for the future are (Charter & Keiller 2014; 2016). Our latest survey revisits some of these topics but places more emphasis on exploring the ways in which Repair Cafés are organized and how they interact and overlap with each other and with organizations outside the community. This also means that our survey focuses more specifically on the characteristics of Repair Café initiatives and not on the characteristics of the people involved in them.

Background

In recent years, we have witnessed various initiatives that encourage the reuse, recycling and reduced use of resources and products. It has become commonplace to frame such initiatives as efforts to transform our linear 'take, make and waste' economies into circular economies in which loops are closed at various stages of product life cycles (see figure 1). Alongside policy- and/or business-driven initiatives, we find citizen-driven initiatives that have developed 'from the grassroots'. Repair Cafés are an important example of this.

Martine Postma organized the first Repair Café in Amsterdam in 2009. The Repair Café concept quickly spread throughout the Netherlands, and the Repair Café Foundation (now the Repair Café International Foundation) was founded in 2010 to facilitate the expansion of the community. The concept quickly gained international following, and by now over 2000 Repair Cafés exist in 36 different countries. In 2019, the Repair Café concept celebrated its 10th birthday, which is a great occasion to take stock of the community it has given rise to, and to get a sense of what *kind* of community this is.

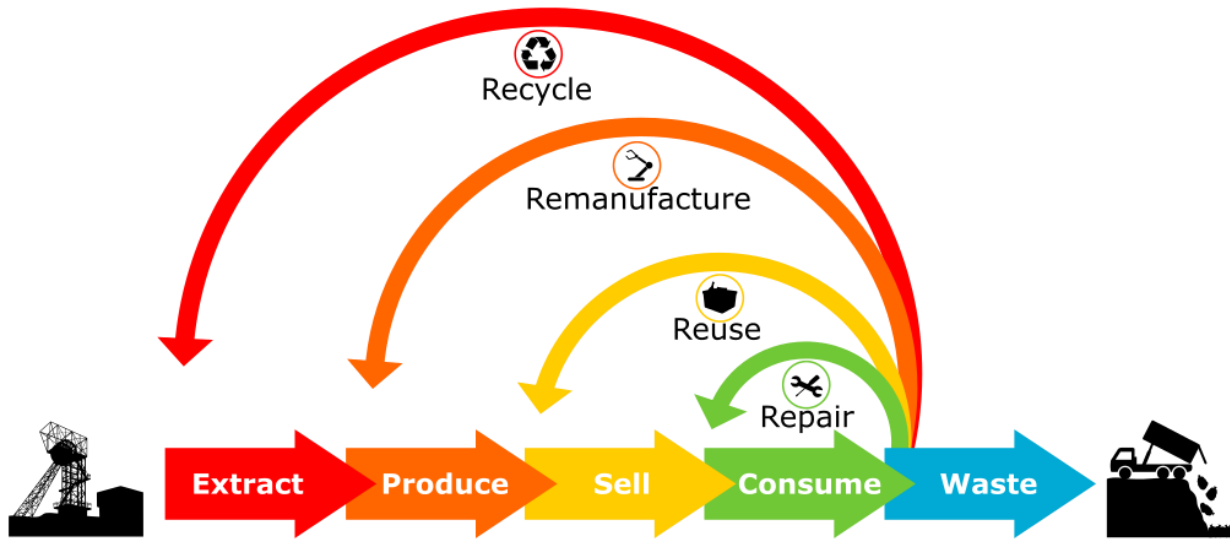


Figure 1. Repairing (the green loop) as part of the transition from a linear to a circular economy.

Methods

The survey was developed by Wouter Spekkink and Malte Rödl. Martin Charter, who coordinated and carried out two previous surveys provided advice and experience on a regular basis as a researcher and a chairman of a Repair Café. Martine Postma provided input on questions to be addressed in the survey and assisted in the distribution of the survey. A small amount of financial support for these activities was provided by the Sustainable Consumption Institute of the University of Manchester. We carried out a pilot survey in the fall of 2018 to gather feedback on the questions and the length of the survey. After some final adjustments and obtaining ethical approval from the University of Manchester, the Repair Café International Foundation distributed the survey via their own communication channels in the summer of 2019. Unfortunately, the Belgian Repair Café community was not included on the distribution list, which means that the Belgian community is not represented in the results. This is an important limitation that should be taken into account when studying the results as there are over 300 Repair Cafés in Belgium (Repair Café International Foundation, 2020).

The survey focused specifically on repair initiatives that are associated with the Repair Café community. The survey thus excludes other repair initiatives that have emerged over the years, such as Restart Parties (<https://therestartproject.org/>) and Repair Boutiques, unless they were included in mailing lists of the Repair Café International Foundation. In the discussion of results, we occasionally refer to “our sample”. This refers to all Repair Cafés from which we have received a response. We received 302 responses in total, of which 7 responses appear to be duplicates (where we

received responses from multiple people from the same Repair Café). In some cases, the answers provided by people from the same Repair Café differed. In this report, we included all responses that we received.

In this report, the responses to all questions of the survey are visualized and briefly discussed. In the figure captions we clarify what type of question is being visualized, which can be one of the following:

- Single choice: Only one answer category could be chosen by the respondent. We visualized the responses to these questions with bar charts.
- Multiple choice: Multiple answer categories could be chosen by the respondent (the answers are not mutually exclusive categories). We visualized the responses to these questions with bar charts.
- Ranking: The respondent could pick answers from a list of options, and rank these in order of importance. It was also possible to exclude options from the ranking. Our visualizations of the responses to these questions have two main parts. In the right part of the figure you will see how often a certain option was ranked in certain position. In the left part of the figure you will see what percentages of our respondents did not rank the option at all. Our visualizations also show the overall ranking that emerges from the aggregated responses to our survey: The option that received the highest overall ranking appears at the top, the option with the second highest overall ranking appears below that, and so on.
- Likert scale: The respondent was asked to respond to statements with answer categories that range from, for example, "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In our visualizations of the responses to these questions, we typically visualized 'negative' answers to the left, 'positive' answers to the right, and (where applicable) 'neutral' answers in the middle. Our visualizations also show the ranking of the statements according to how often they received 'positive'/'negative' responses overall. Thus, the statement that received the most 'positive' responses appears at the top

RESULTS

Locations of Repair Cafés in sample

The first set of questions in our survey addressed basic characteristics of the Repair Cafés, such as their location and venues, age, frequency and number of volunteers. Looking at the locations of the Repair Cafés in our sample, we observe a strong presence in Germany, the Netherlands and France. Given the origin of the Repair Café concept, the strong presence of Repair Cafés in Western Europe is unsurprising. Some European countries are seeing significant growth in recent years. For example, as at February 2020 there are now 125 Repair Cafés in the UK which represents a doubling over the last year.

We should be careful in taking this map as representative of the actual distribution of Repair Cafés across the world, given limitations of our survey. First, the survey was only available in English, which may have been a barrier to participation in countries where English is not widely spoken. As mentioned previously, the Belgian Repair Café community unfortunately did not receive an invitation to participate in the survey.

Please note that throughout the report we use country codes to refer to countries. For those unfamiliar with country codes, please consult <https://countrycode.org/>.

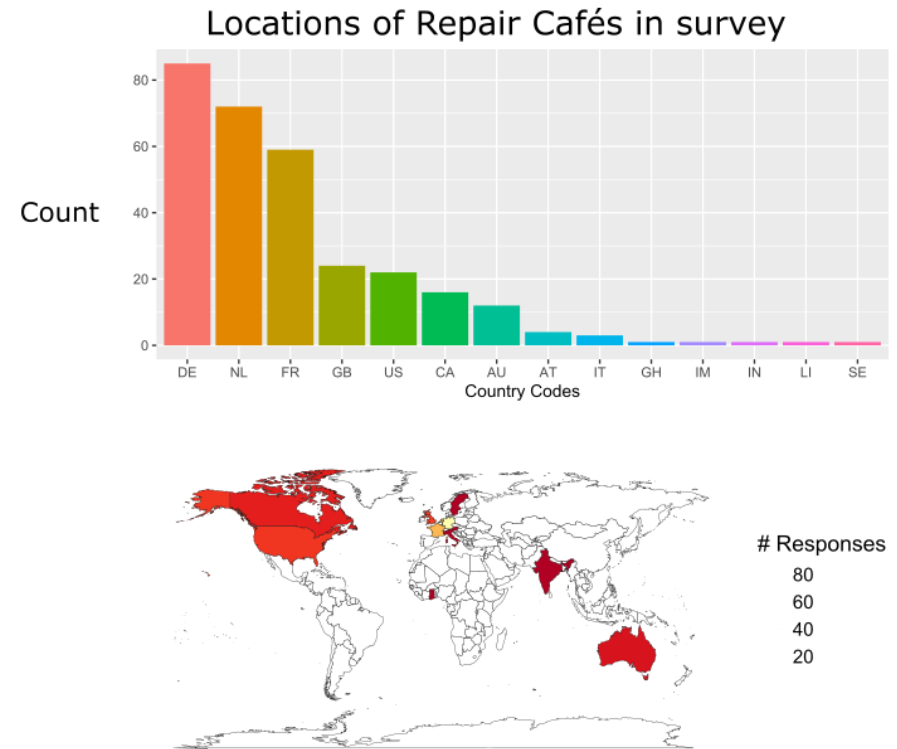


Figure 2. Locations of Repair Cafés included in the survey (single choice).

Age of Repair Cafés in sample

Most of the Repair Cafés in our sample are more than 4 years old. We also explored to what extent the age of the Repair Cafés was important in relation to how other questions were answered. We were wondering, for example, if the age of Repair Cafés related to their size (for example, in terms of volunteers and visitors), their legal status, and their organizational characteristics (for example, how they are led). However, we could not identify any significant and/or meaningful differences between Repair Cafés based on their age.

Question: Approximately how long has your Repair Café been in operation?

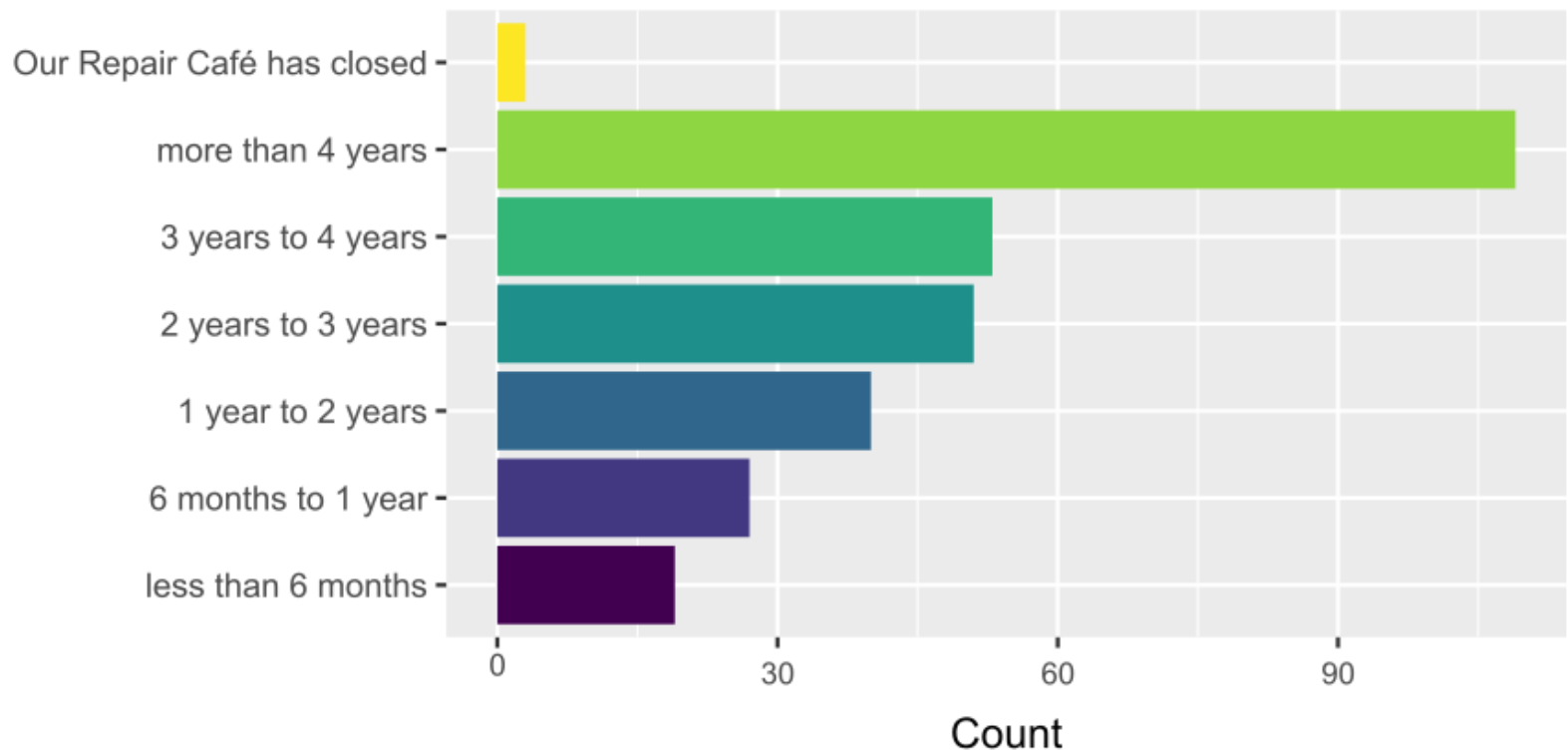


Figure 3. The age of Repair Cafés (single choice).

Venues used

We asked our respondents several questions about the venues that they use for their Repair Café sessions. Most of our respondents indicated that sessions of their Repair Cafés are always organized at the same venue, or usually at the same venue. Our results also show that there are only a handful or Repair Cafés in our sample that organize sessions at multiple venues. It is also clear that community buildings are a popular venue for Repair Cafés. In the (relatively large) 'other' category, respondents typically also listed buildings that resemble community buildings, although often with more specific community purposes. Other relatively popular venues are church buildings, libraries, school buildings and pubs/cafés.

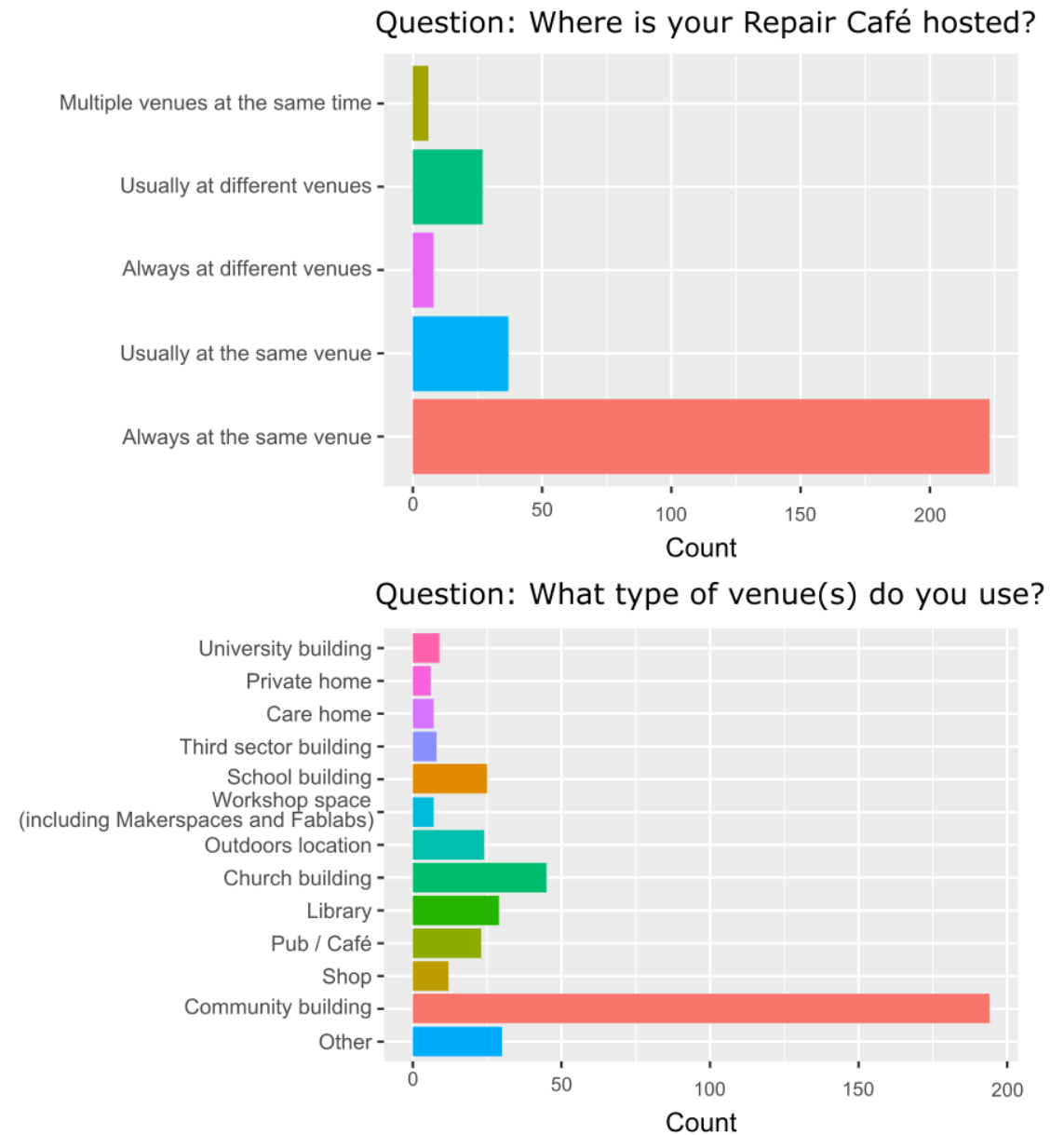


Figure 4. Where Repair Cafés are hosted (single choice).

Frequency of Repair Café sessions

Most Repair Cafés in our sample take place once a month, although there are also a considerable number of Repair Cafés that take place less frequently.

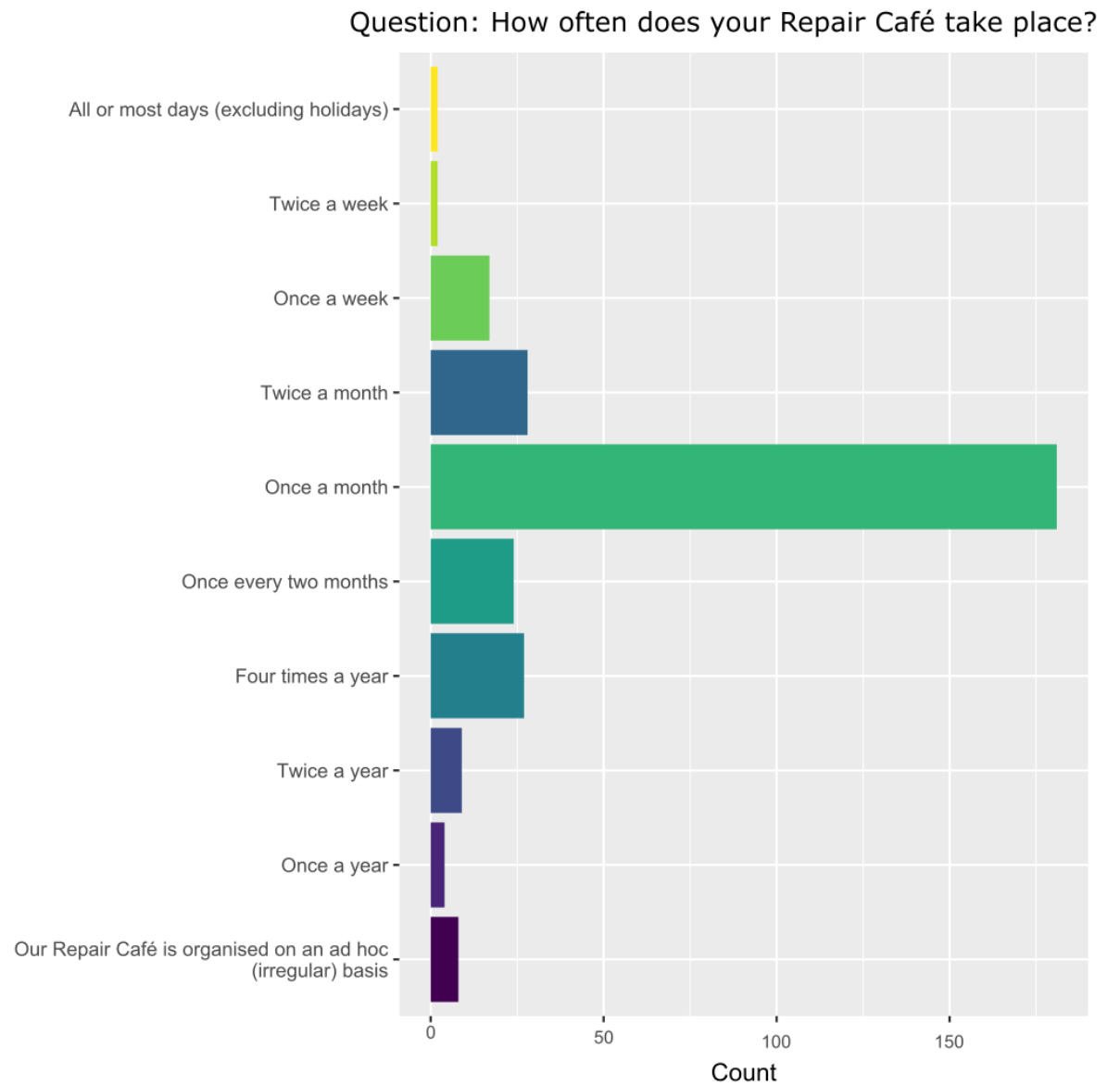


Figure 5. Frequency of Repair Café sessions (single choice).

Number of volunteers

The majority of the Repair Cafés in our sample have sessions that are usually attended by between 7 and 20 volunteers. There is also a significant number of Repair Cafés where the group of volunteers is smaller (4 to 6). Our sample also includes a fair number of relatively large Repair Cafés with 41 or more volunteers.

	FR	CA	NL	DE	AT	US	GB
41 or more	2	2	1	1	1		
31 to 40			1			1	
21 to 30	6	2	5	8		1	4

Table 1. Locations of larger Repair Cafés (in terms of volunteers).

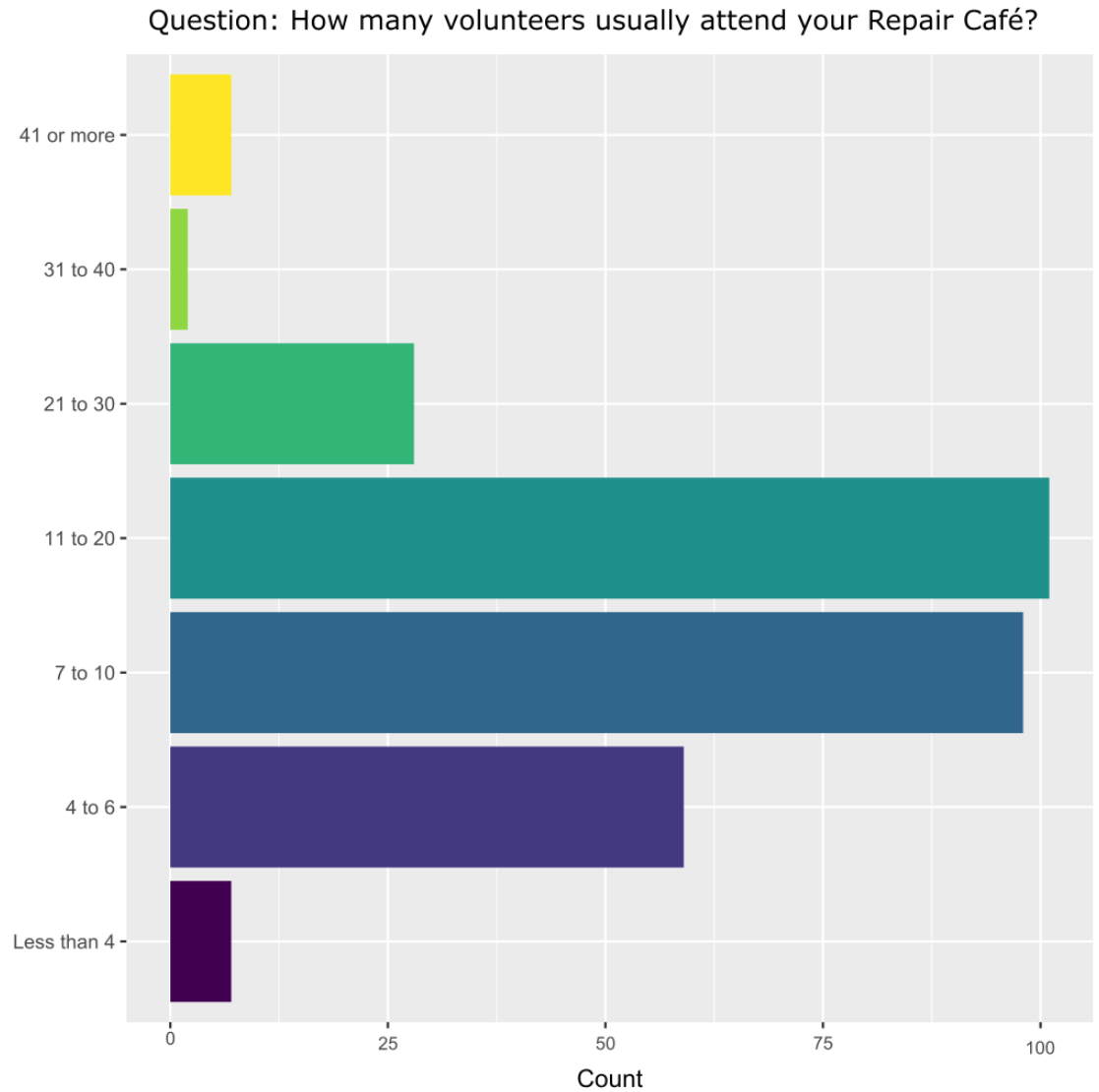


Figure 6. Volunteers at Repair Cafés (single choice).

Number of visitors

We see slightly more diversity in the number of visitors that attend Repair Café sessions. There are over 40 Repair Cafés in our sample that receive only 1 to 10 visitors in a typical session, but an almost equal amount of Repair Cafés receives more than 50 visitors. However, the visitor counts of most Repair Cafés in our sample fall somewhere in the broad range of 11 to 30.

	US	CA	FR	DE	NL	AT	GB	AU	GH	LI
51+	7	7	6	6	5	3	3	1	1	
41-50	2	1	4	5	5		1			
31-40	3	3	9	14	4		3	3		1

Table 2. Locations of larger Repair Cafés (in terms of visitors).

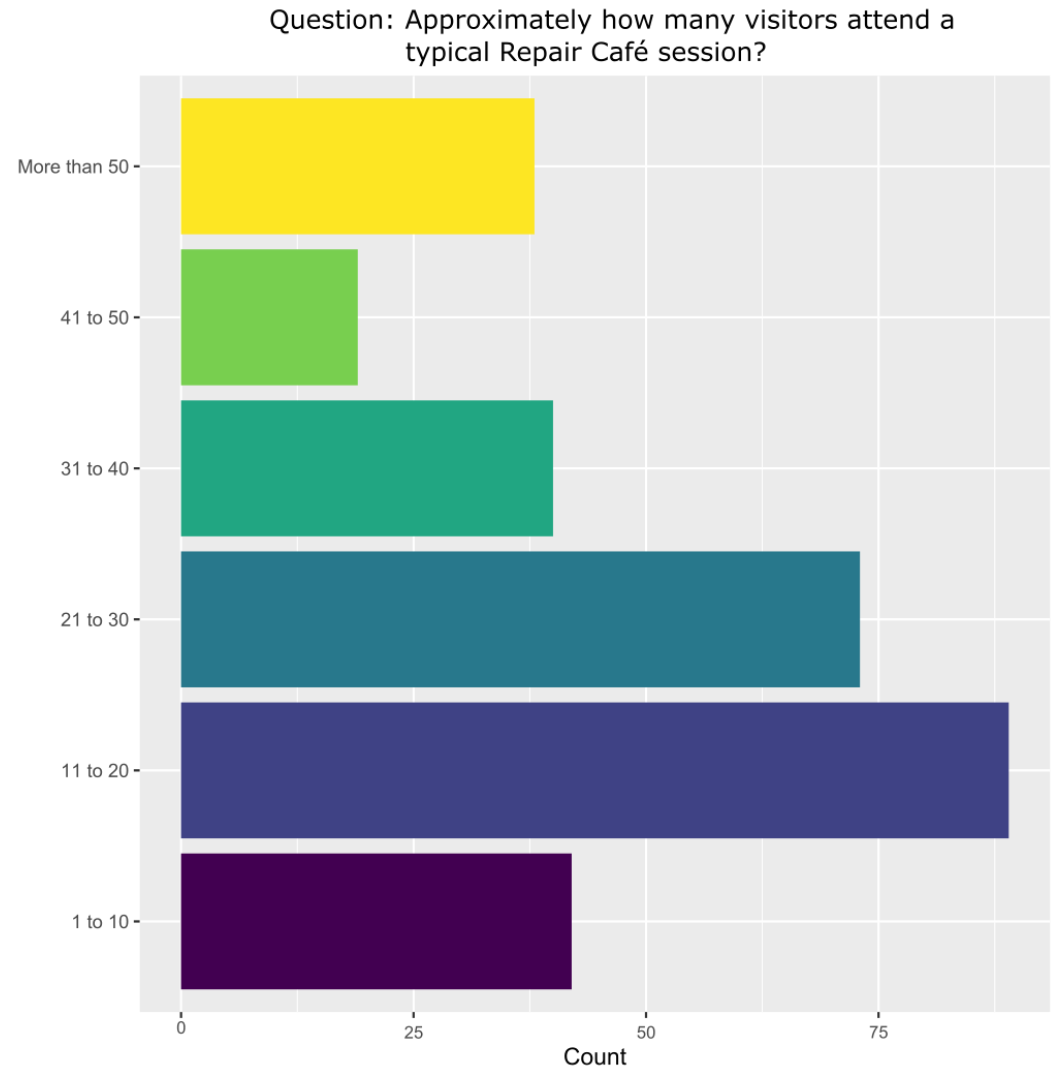


Figure 7. Number of visitors (single choice).

Products brought in for Repair

Most Repair Cafés in our sample see up to 40 products being brought in for repair in a typical session. However, there are more than 15 Repair Cafés that have indicated that they see more than double that amount in a typical session.

	US	CA	FR	AT	DE	GB	GH	NL	AU
80+	6	2	2	1	1	1			
71-80	2	2			2	1	1	1	
61-70	2	2	2		1	1		2	1
51-60	2	2		1	4	1		5	1
41-50		2	6	1	2	1		4	1

Table 3. Locations of larger Repair Cafés (in terms of products brought in for repair).

Question: Approximately how many products in need of repair are brought to a typical Repair Café session?

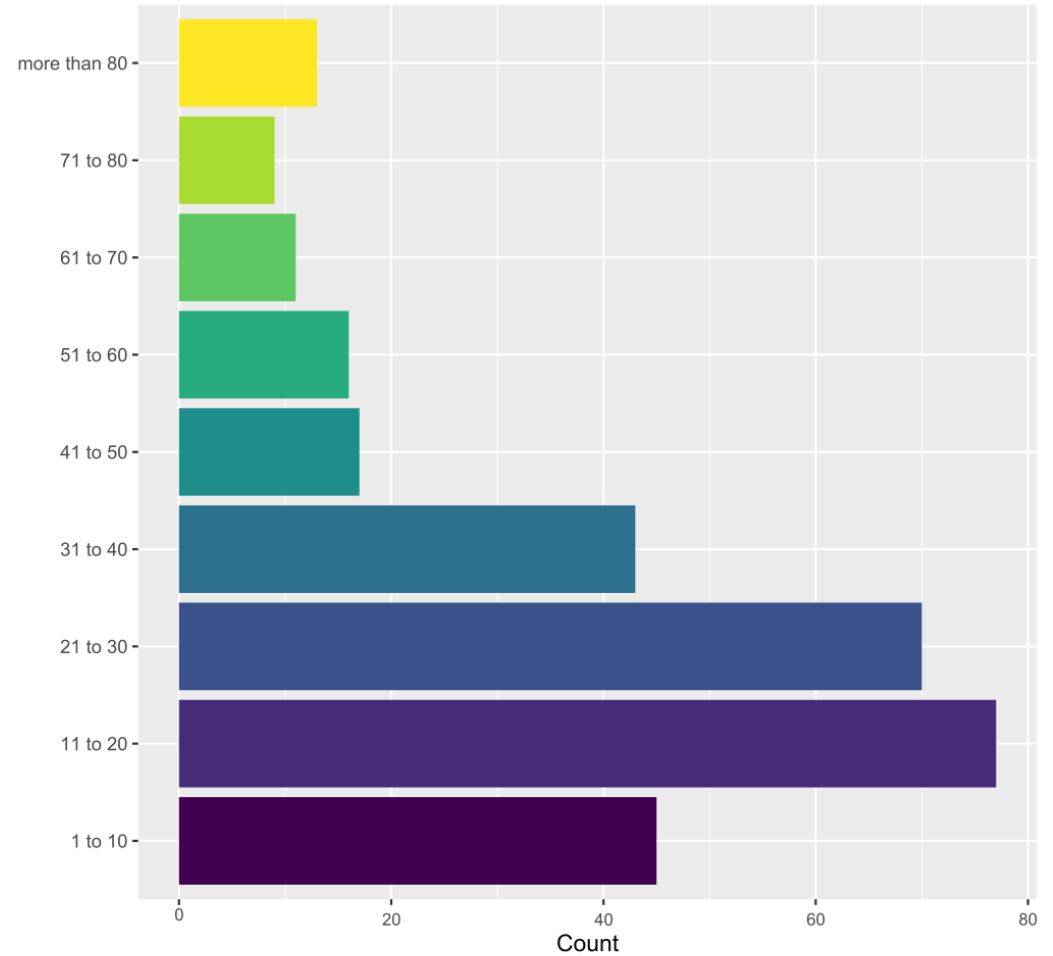


Figure 8. Products brought in for repair (single choice).

Question: Approximately how many products that are brought to a typical Repair Café session are successfully repaired?

Products successfully repaired

We also asked our respondents to estimate how many products are successfully repaired in a typical Repair Café session. Anticipating that it would be difficult to provide exact numbers, we provided approximations as possible answers.

Most of the Repair Cafés in our sample indicate that, of the products that are brought in for repair, about 3 in 5 are successfully repaired. This is also in line with what was found in previous surveys (Charter & Keiller 2014; 2016). However, there is also quite a large number of Repair Cafés where it is indicated that an even larger number of repairs have been successfully completed.

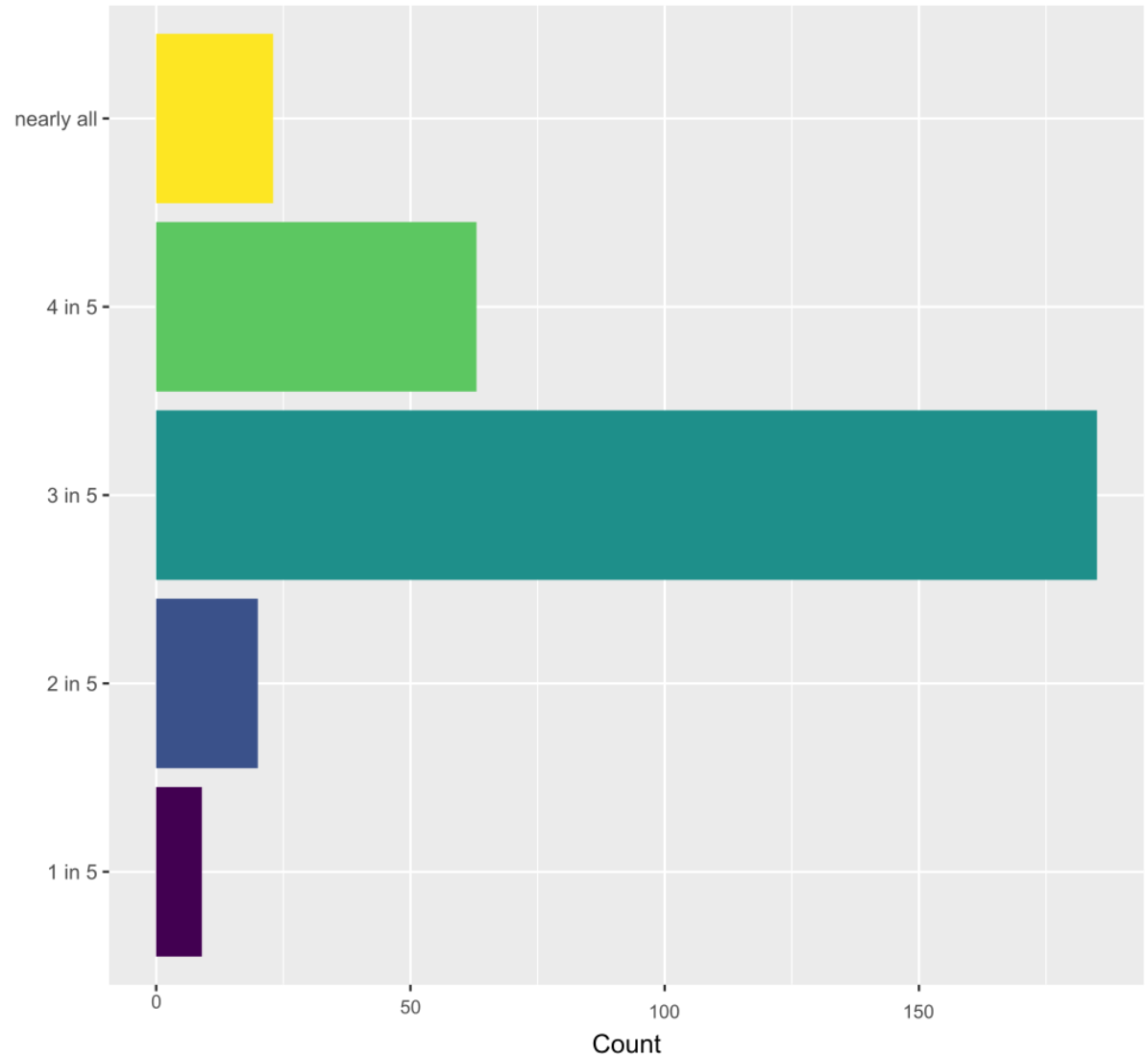


Figure 9. Products repaired (single choice).

Goals of Repair Cafés

We showed our respondents a list of possible goals that Repair Cafés might have and asked them to rank goals relevant to their Repair Café. We chose this approach over, for example, asking respondents to simply indicate the importance of different types of goals, because the ranking forces the respondents to prioritize certain types of goals over others. An inherent limitation of our approach is that it is impossible for a respondent to give two goals equal importance, even if they feel that is the case.

Question: Please rank the following possible goals for your Repair Café from most important (top) to least important (bottom). Select only those relevant for your project.

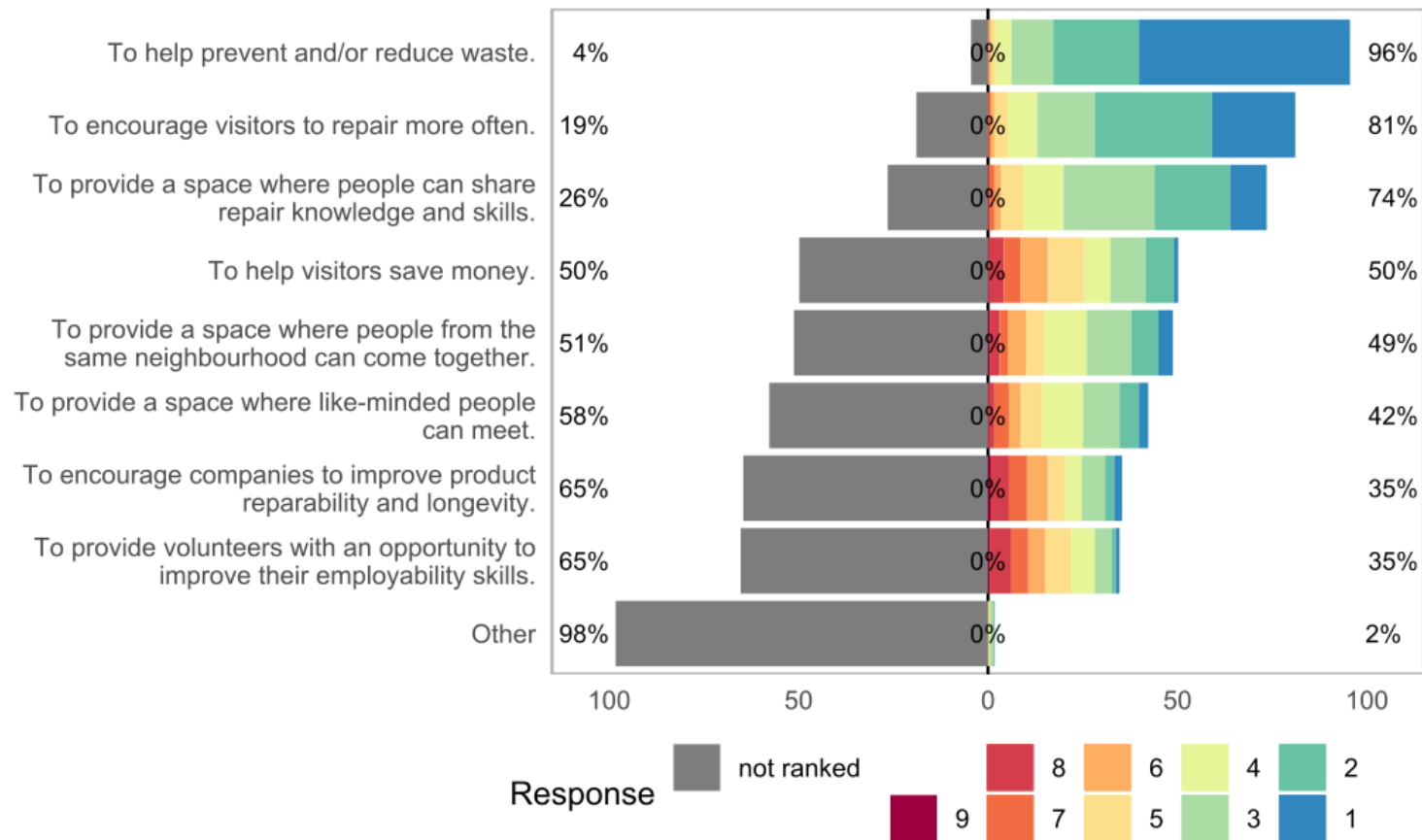


Figure 10. Ranking of goals for Repair Cafés. Percentages for answer categories are left out because they reduce the graph's readability (ranking).

The prevention/reduction of waste was ranked relatively highly by the majority of the respondents. There is also only a handful of respondents that have not ranked this goal at all. This goal is closely followed by the goal 'to encourage visitors to repair more often', which is indeed closely related goal, but focused more on changing the attitude of people towards repairing. The goal that comes in third is 'to provide a space where people share repair knowledge and skills'. In our view, these goals speak more to the environmental motivations underlying the organization of and participation in Repair Cafés, and efforts to motivate people and equip them better (with knowledge and skills) to lead less wasteful lives.

Below this top three, we then find more socially oriented goals, such as helping people save money, providing a space where people from the same neighborhood can come together, or where like-minded people can meet, etc. However, also note that half or more of the respondents did not rank these socially oriented goals at all.

Near the bottom we find a more activist goal of 'encouraging companies to improve product reparability and longevity' and the goal to help volunteers develop improved employability skills.

Thus, overall, we see that environmental goals are ranked highest by most Repair Cafés, followed by social goals. We should add here that there are important exceptions. We also see a handful of Repair Cafés that rank one of the more socially oriented goals first. Moreover, an important limitation to take into account is that we asked one person to give an answer representative for their Repair Café, while different people in the same Repair Café may prioritize goals differently (for example, based on their personal motivations to be involved, or based on their role in the Repair Café).

Some respondents also included additional goals in the 'other' category, including things related to more general environmental awareness raising, the facilitation of the transfer of repair skills between generations, allowing people to simply have a good time together, helping people in need, and providing a space where different people can meet (a more neutral variant of two options our survey included).

How Repair Cafés are founded

Our survey included a number of questions on various organizational aspects of Repair Cafés, including how they were founded, how they are led, and the prioritization of goals for Repair Cafés.

Our results show that most Repair Cafés in our sample are founded by either a motivated individual, or an informal group of motivated individuals (this is also consistent with the results of the previous survey; Charter & Keiller 2016). In the 'other' category our respondents typically listed other types of groups of people, community groups, or local community bodies.

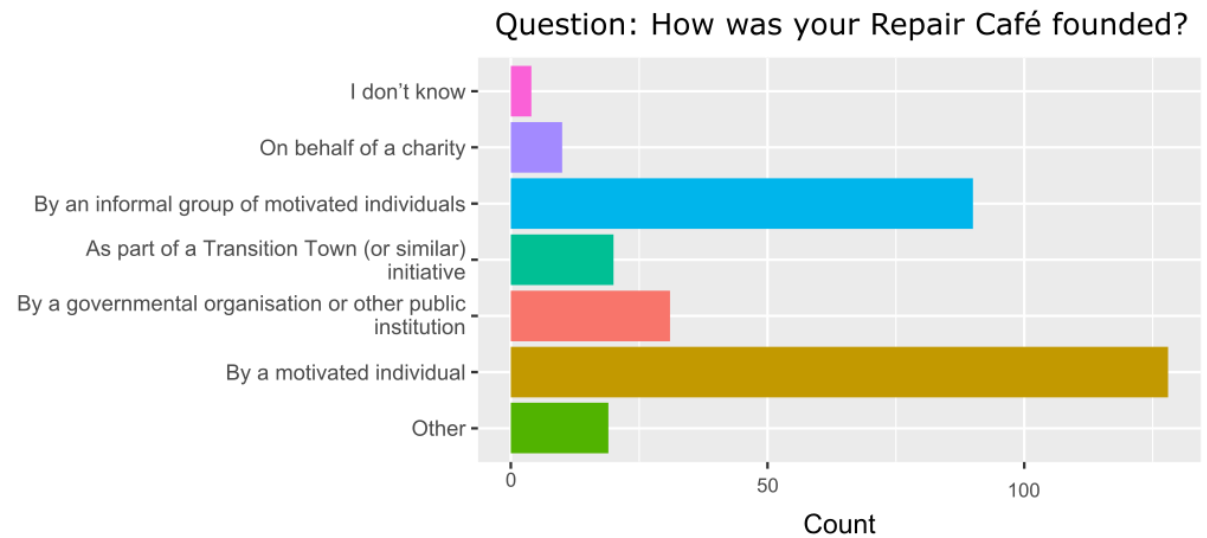


Figure 11. How Repair Cafés are founded (single choice).

Question: What is the leadership structure of your Repair Café?

How Repair Cafés are led

The dominance of an informal approach to organizing Repair Cafés also emerges when we examine how Repair Cafés are led. Many Repair Cafés are led informally by an individual, or by multiple people. Only a relatively small amount of Repair Cafés in our sample has a board of directors or trustees.

Many of the Repair Cafés in our sample also have a steering/coordinating committee. Far fewer Repair Cafés have additional supporting committees for specific tasks.

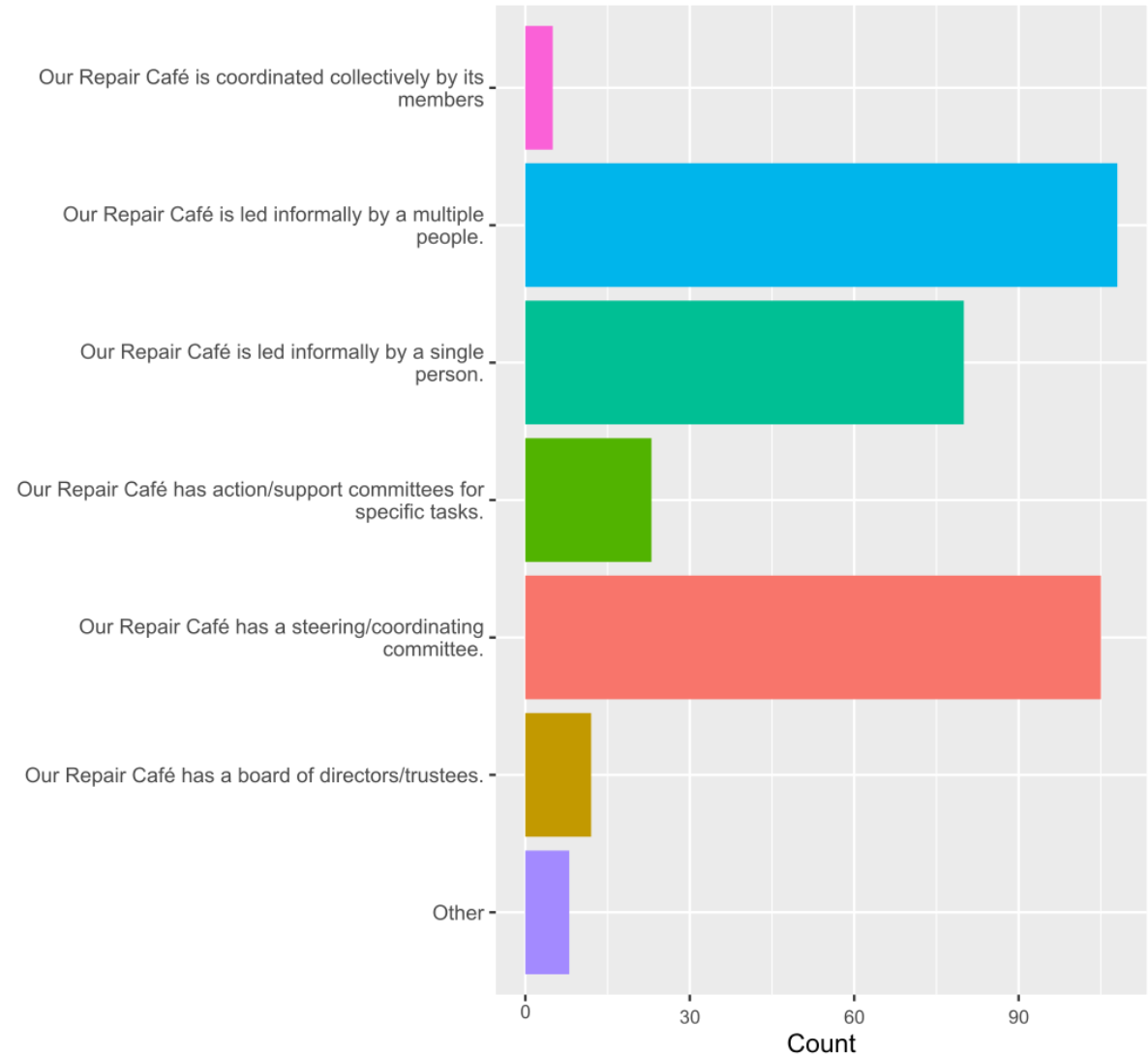


Figure 12. Leadership structure of Repair Cafés (multiple choice).

Legal status of Repair Cafés

We were also interested in knowing more about the legal status of Repair Café. It proved challenging to phrase a question on this in a way that does justice to the diversity of legal systems across countries and the variation in labels used for different legal structures this entails. We therefore ended up with a relatively simple set of answers: no legal status, a legal status, or existence as a project within a wider initiative. We included the latter answer because we were aware that some Repair Cafés are set up as projects within Transition Towns.

Our results show that Repair Cafés are most often part of a bigger initiative, such as a Transition Town, Church, or (other) charities. Around 90 of our respondents indicated that their Repair Café does not have a legal status. This also supplements our findings on the prominence of informal leadership of Repair Cafés (see above). Around 80 have indicated that their Repair Café *does* have a legal status of some kind.

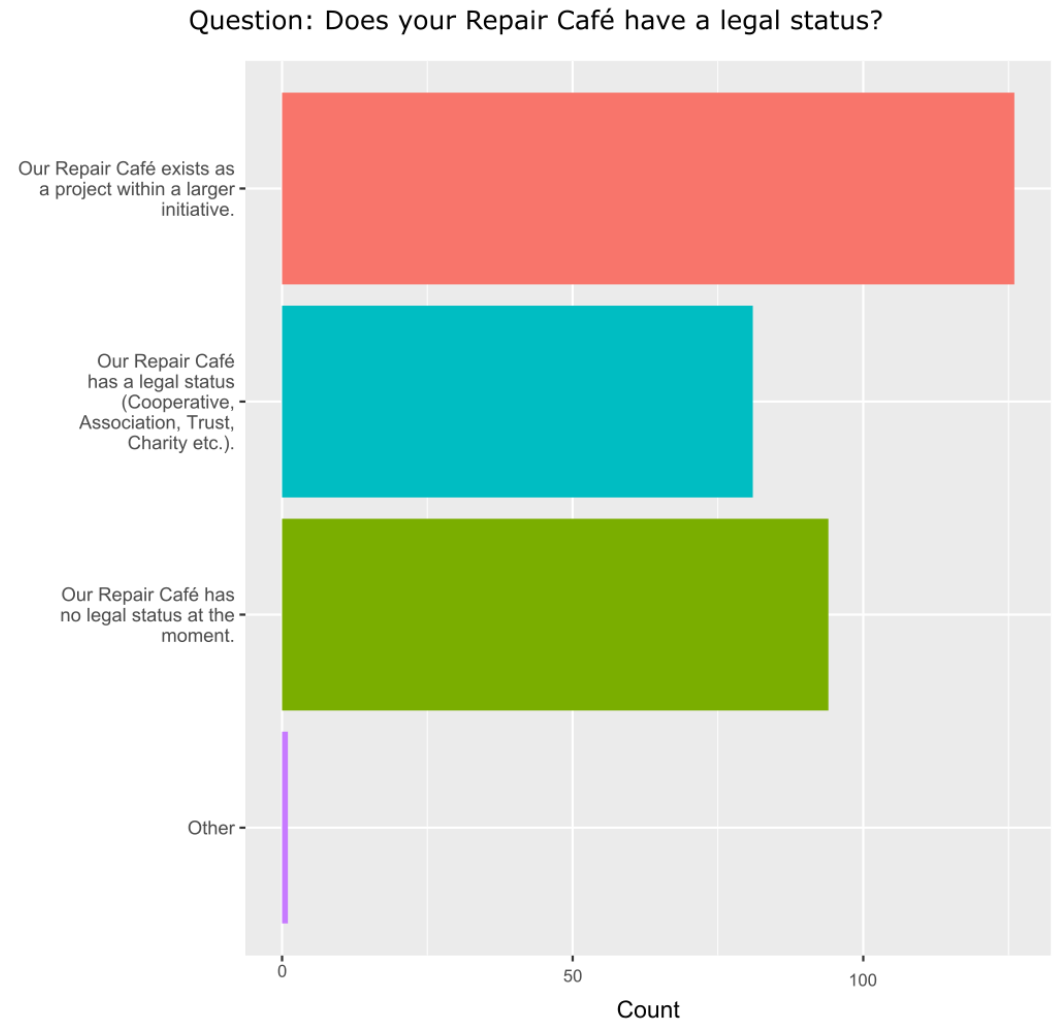


Figure 13. Legal status of Repair Cafés (single choice).

Community outreach

We found that the Repair Cafés in our sample use quite a broad palette of means to reach out to their local community, with popular examples being word of mouth, social media, and websites. Only a few of the options are rarely used by most of the Repair Cafés in our sample, such as local radio / TV and e-marketing.

Quite a few of our respondents also mentioned additional means of outreach in the 'other' category, where we find things like 'multifunctional business cards', 'church announcements', 'canvassing', and 'newsletters of other organizations'. Note that the percentages for the 'other' category only cover the amount of people that used the 'other' option. For example, 40% of the respondents that picked the 'other' option indicated that they use some additional means of communication very frequently (not 40% of the total number of respondents).

Question: By what means does your Repair Café reach out to the local community?

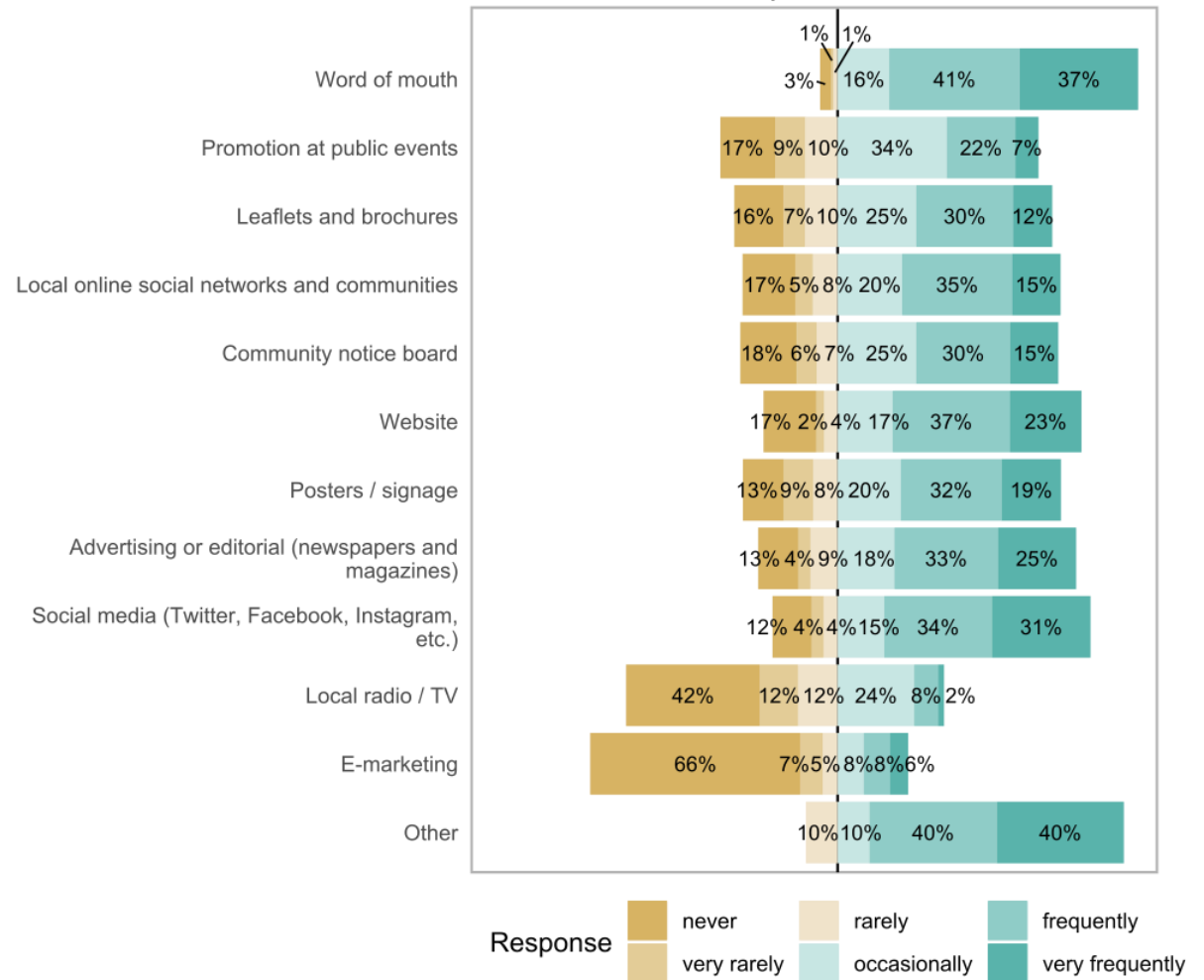


Figure 14. Outreach of Repair Cafés to local communities (Likert scale).

Statements about Repair Cafés

We asked our respondents to respond to statements on topics that did not fit neatly in our other questions. These statements show a few interesting things. First, the vast majority of the Repair Cafés in our sample make use of the logo associated with the Repair Café International Foundation, which may indicate that a number of Repair Cafes see the use of the logo as part of alignment to a broader group, movement or ethos.

The statements also show that safety and insurance are topics that receive quite a lot of attention in the Repair Café community. Close to 200 Repair Cafés report that they have insurance. Most Repair Cafés also have house rules that explain points on safety for visitors and many of them test electrical products for safety after repair. The share of Repair Cafés that have insurance and that test electrical products is higher than in the previous survey (Charter & Keiller 2016).

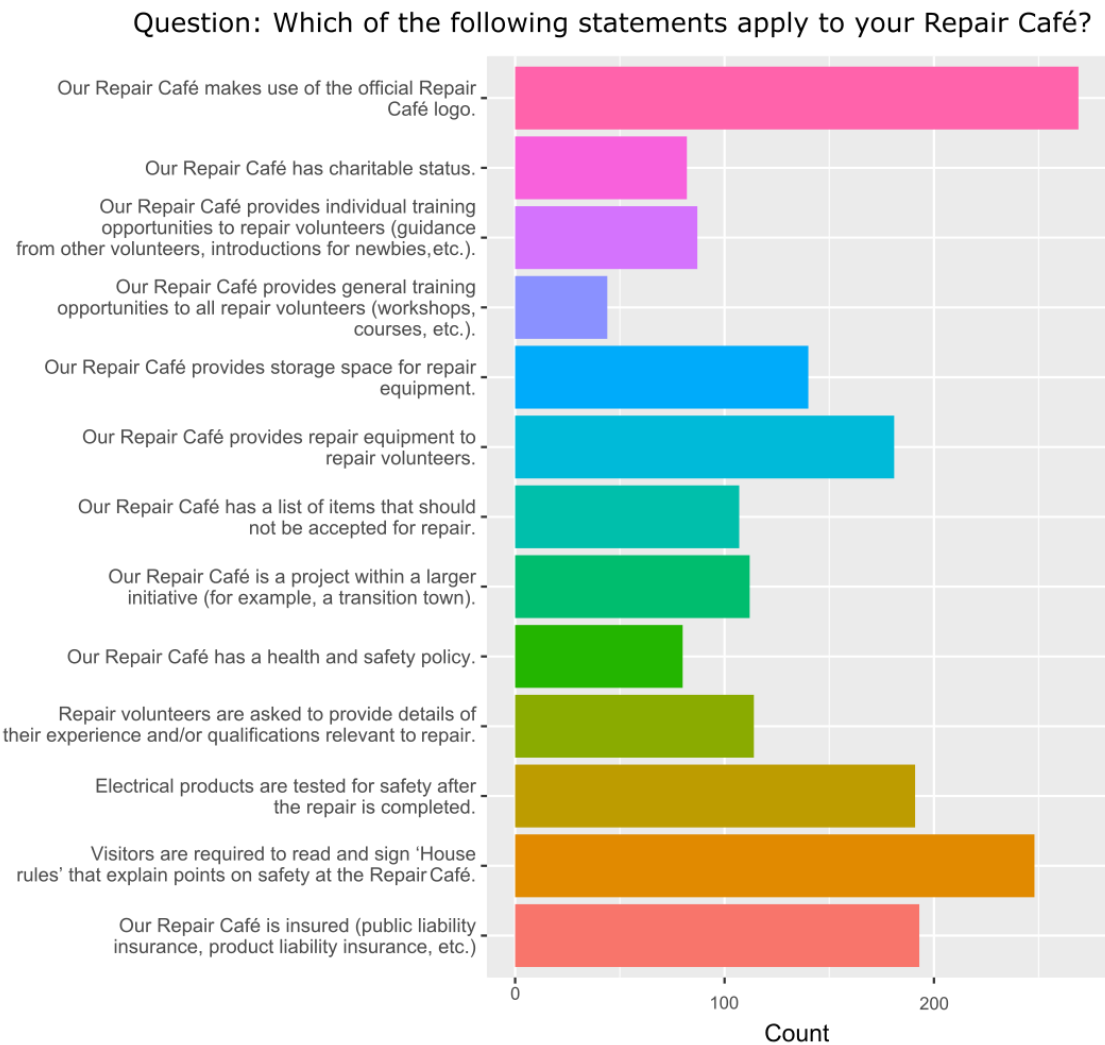


Figure 15. Statements about Repair Cafés (multiple choice).

Spreading repair skills

One of the reasons that Martine Postma started the Repair Café concept was as a response to the decline in repair skills and knowledge. In the transition to a circular economy, the preservation of such skills and knowledge is crucial. We were therefore interested in finding out what activities are most important in helping to spread repair skills. This is mostly done by engaging visitors in repairs, by asking them to observe the repair process as it is performed on their product, by asking them to actively participate in repairs, by offering explanations of how repairs are done or providing advice if products cannot be repaired. Another, slightly less commonly used approach is to provide visitors with tools and advice when they want to do their own repairs. There are also quite a few Repair Cafés in our sample that organize workshops, including workshops / stalls at public events.

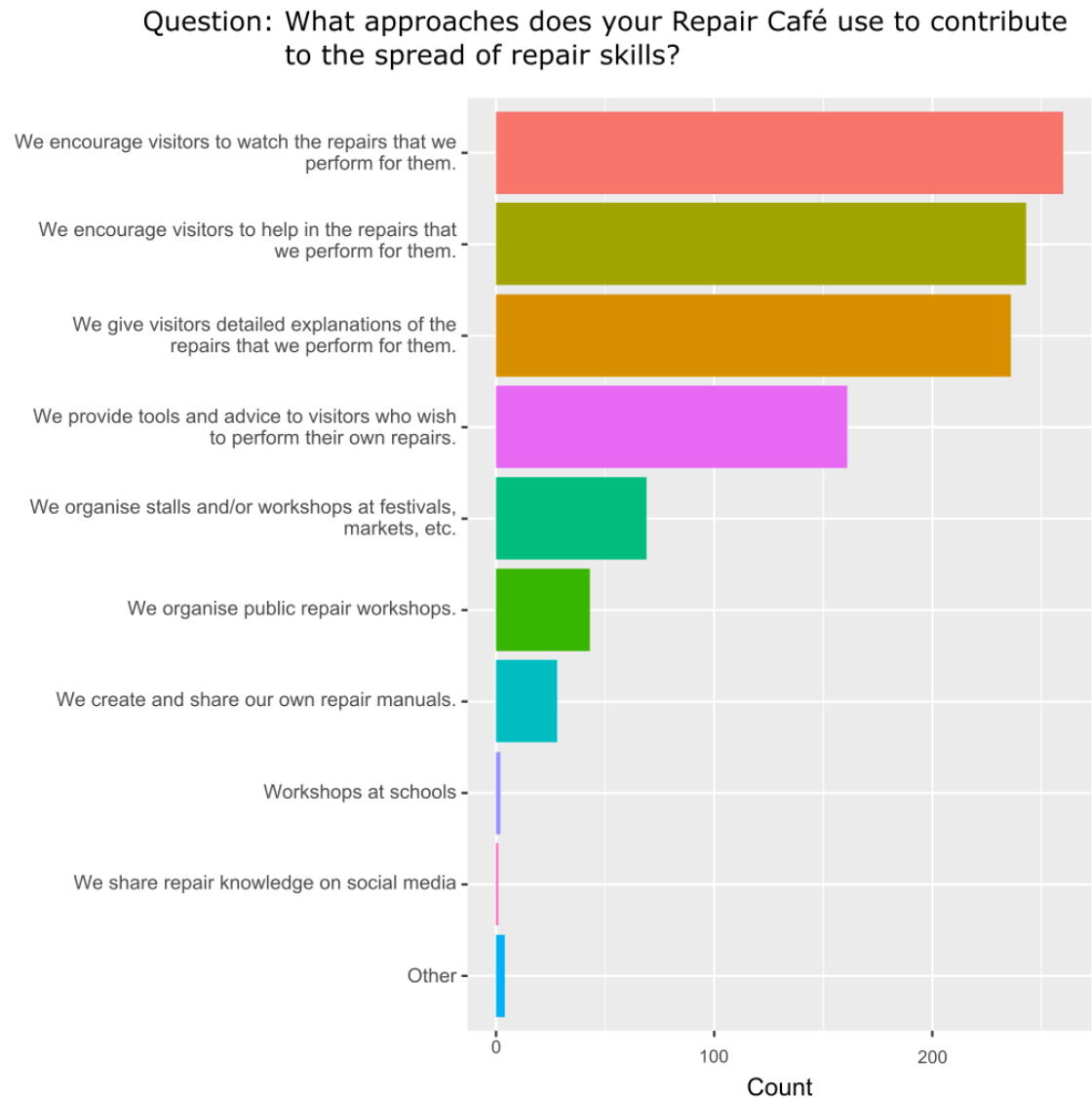


Figure 16. Spreading repair skills (multiple choice).

Involving younger generations

An activity that is closely related to spreading repair skills is the involvement of 'younger generations'. Our survey shows that the most popular methods to attract a younger audience to Repair Cafés are to actively recruit them from the community, or by encouraging visitors to bring their children to Repair Café sessions. There are also quite a few Repair Cafés that organize repair sessions at schools, or that organize special repair-related events for younger audiences. We were also surprised to see that there are already close to 25 Repair Cafés that offer internships for young people. In this case, we decided it would be worthwhile including an overview of some of the answers in the other category, as a possible source of inspiration for others (see next page). It is also interesting to note that 100 of our respondents did not pick any of these options, suggesting that attracting younger generations is not of immediate concern to them.

Question: What actions does your Repair Café take to involve people from younger generations?

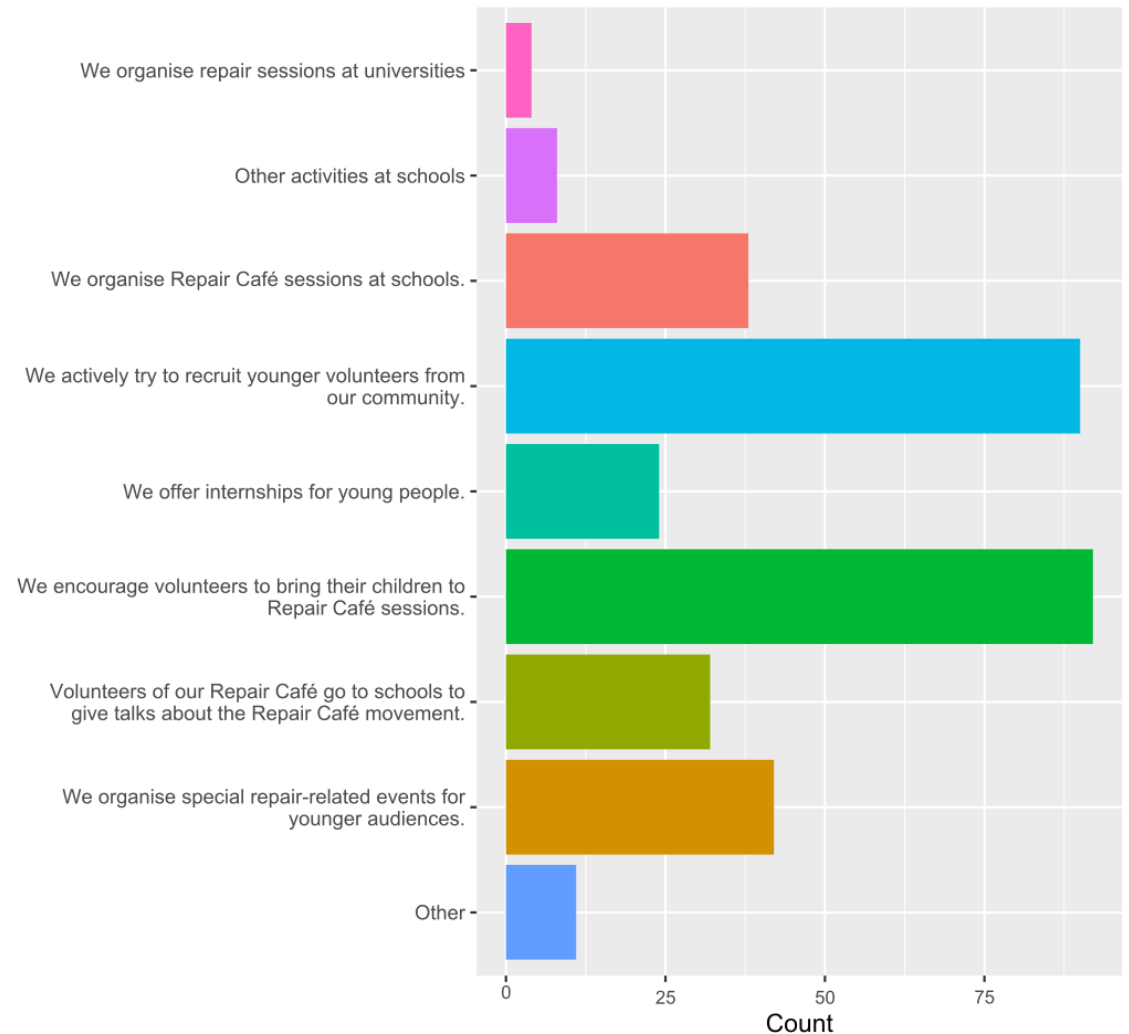


Figure 17. Attracting younger generations (multiple choice).

Specific activities that Repair Cafés use to involve younger generations:

- Bicycle light repair events
- Teaching school children to repair their bicycle tires
- Organizing road-side events, inviting lots of children to do their own repair of their bicycles
- Offering refugees a place to learn the local language while repairing
- Donating the Repair Café International Foundation book to some local libraries
- Organizing repair sessions or stalls at universities
- Having a “creation/tinker station” where anyone can make upcycled/recycled art, take things apart, and etc.
- Organizing a Maker Fair in school
- Organizing a “Tinkerbelle Station”, where kids are encouraged to get hands-on with tools, take things apart and create new things
- Organizing toy Repair Workshops and Dolls’ Hospitals
- Approaching Scouts and local technical colleges
- Organizing youth-Repair Cafés in a leisure center for kids
- Information/invitations via Twitter and Facebook
- Creating opportunities for young people to sit alongside a volunteer and hopefully become a volunteer
- Offering childminding services during the Repair Café sessions
- Organizing Repair Cafés at venues where young people are likely to be present
- Working together with a community youth project
- Having young volunteers at the check-in table
- Including young people from church-groups, such as confirmation class
- Making donations for the youth group of the church
- Recruiting student volunteers
- Inviting schools to Repair Café sessions
- Hosting an adult-supervised kids-take-apart-table

External support

We asked our respondents to indicate what kinds of external support are important for the continuity of their Repair Café. Perhaps unsurprisingly, donations from visitors during Repair Café sessions are dominant here, followed by venues that are made available by public organizations. It is also interesting to see that most of the sources of external support are deemed slightly important or not important by our respondents, perhaps suggesting that, in general, most Repair Cafés depend relatively little on external support for their continuity. Some of the answers in the other category here include start-up grants, making use of insurance coverage of hosting organizations, discounts at hardware suppliers, various types of back-office support, and donations of equipment.

Question: How important are the following types of external support for the continuity of your Repair Café?

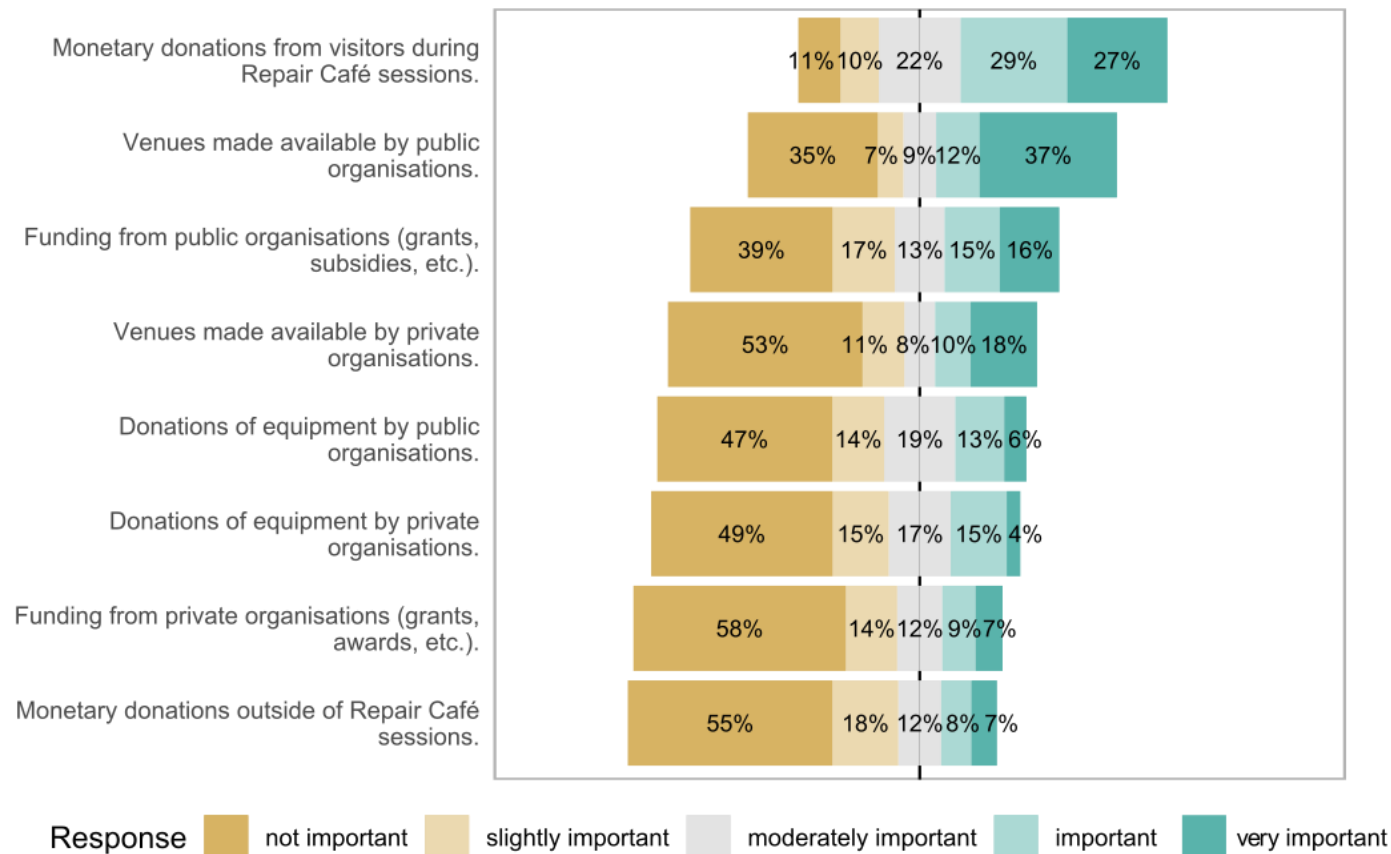


Figure 18. Different kinds of support (Likert scale).

Difficulties experienced by Repair Cafés

If we look at the difficulties experienced by Repair Cafés in our sample, we see that most of them don't experience a lot of difficulties in most of the issues that we listed. The issues that stand out as being most difficult are attracting younger visitors and volunteers (also see figure 17). We also wish to highlight that only few respondents indicate that they experience difficulties in obtaining insurance (which is consistent with the previous survey; Charter & Keiller 2016).

Question: We have compiled a list of issues that some Repair Cafés experience difficulties with. How difficult are these issues for your Repair Café?

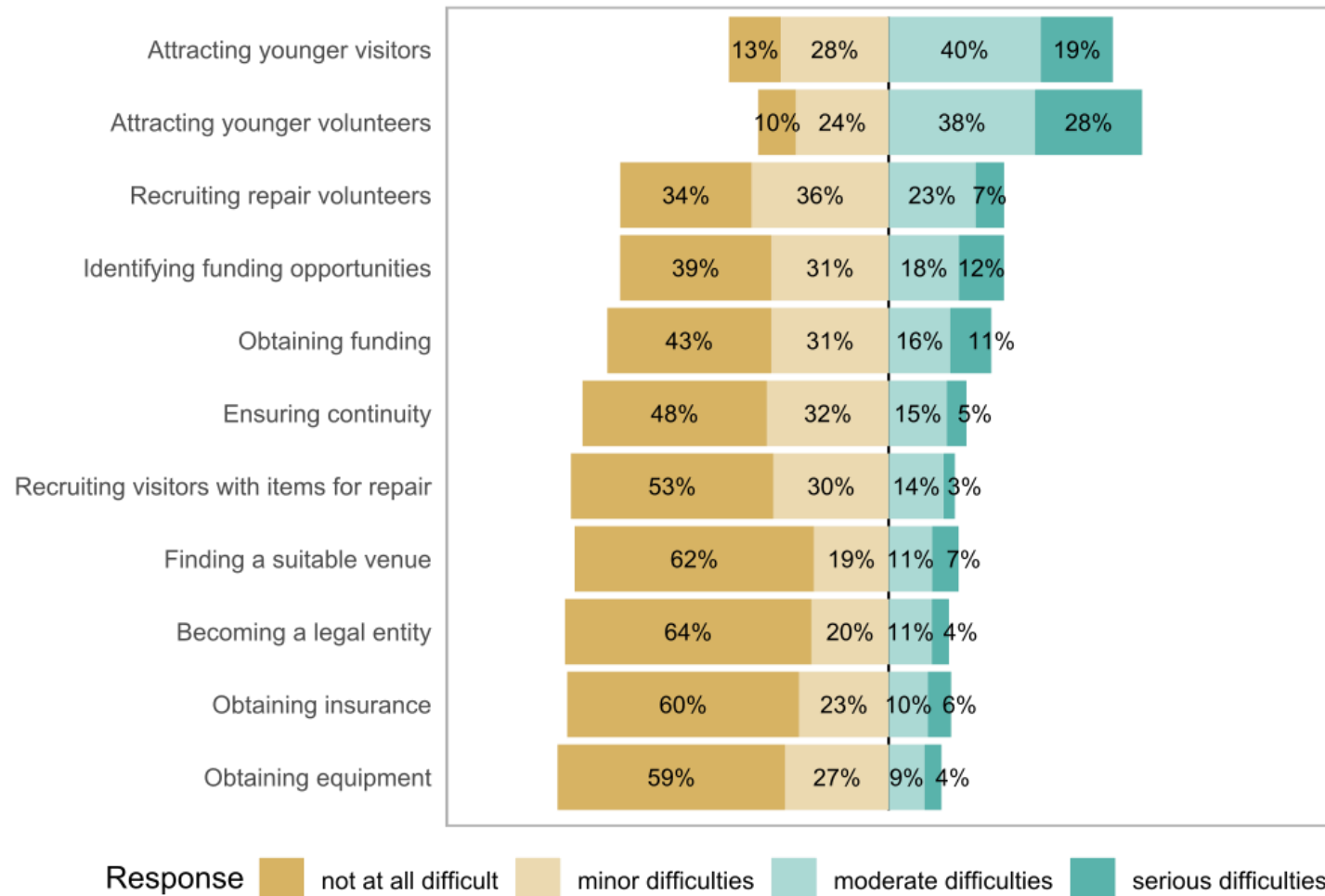


Figure 19. Difficulties experienced by Repair Cafés (Likert scale).

At the same time, several respondents indicated that they see a role for the Repair Café International Foundation in solving issues around insurance (see figure 25). In the Netherlands, it is possible for Repair Cafés to make use of a collective liability insurance that the Repair Café International Foundation obtained for all members of the Dutch Repair Café network.

In the 'other' category we find issues such as finding affordable venues, finding storage space, finding people to help out in the organization of Repair Cafés, getting publicity, volunteer burn-out and finding volunteers with special skills (for example, electronics).

Question: How does your Repair Café collect data about the products that are brought in for repair?

Data collection

Several attempts have been made in the Repair Café community to systematically collect data on products that are brought in for repair, and to share these among Repair Cafés or with other organizations. To explore activities in this area further, we asked our respondents how they collect data, and with whom the data are shared.

We found that in most of the Repair Cafés in our sample, collected data with pen and paper. In most of these cases, the data are later typed into a computer and only a handful of Repair Cafés record data into a computer directly. Around 40 Repair Cafés in our sample don't collect any data at all.

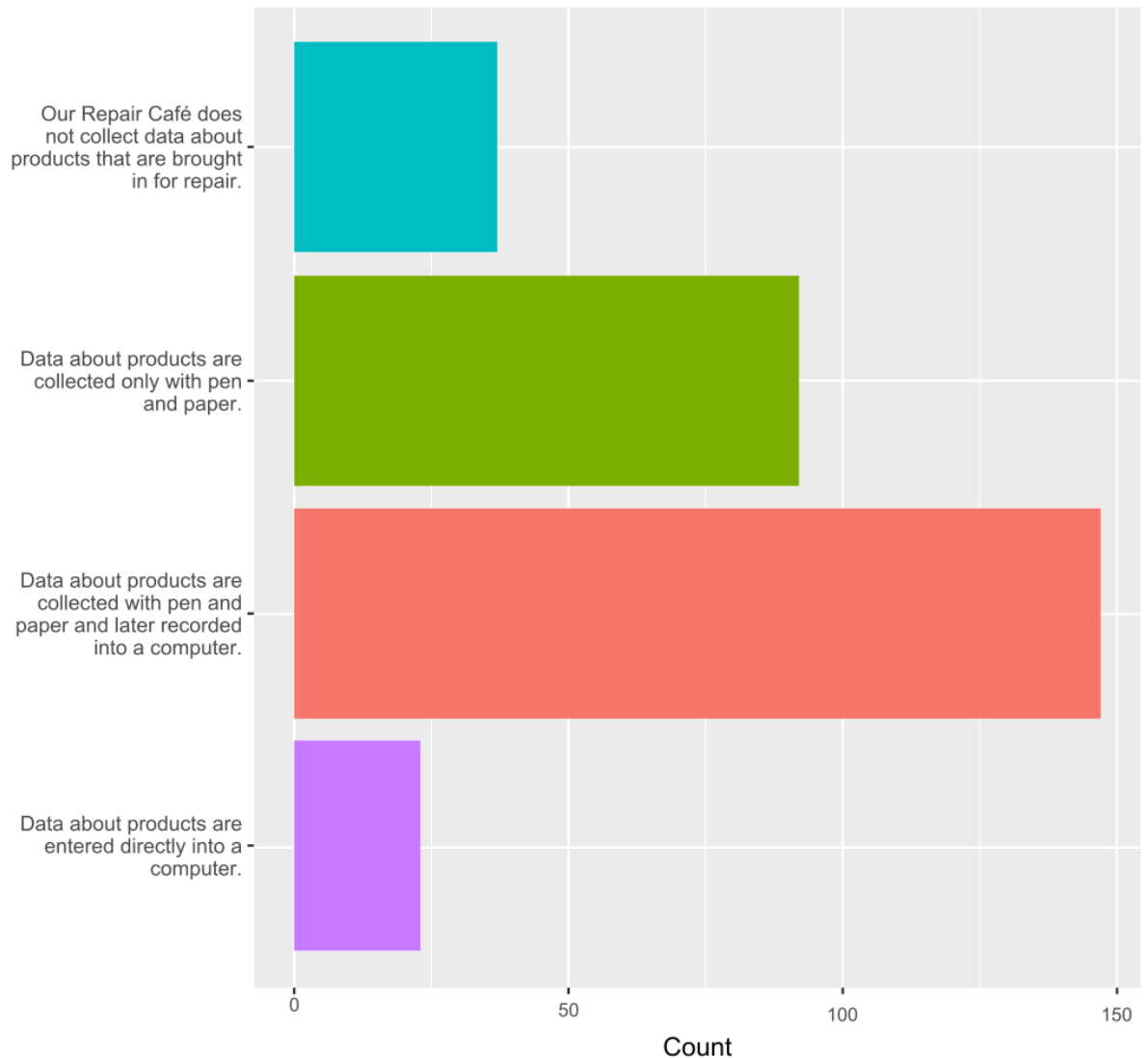


Figure 20. Approaches to collecting data about products (single choice).

Data sharing

The vast majority of the Repair Cafés in our sample indicated that they do not share data. Around 60 Repair Cafés share data with other Repair Cafés or with the Repair Café International Foundation. A few of the Repair Cafés in our sample participate in the relatively new initiative RepairMonitor (currently available in four languages).

Given the discrepancy that exists between the number of Repair Cafés that collect data and the number of Repair Cafés that share data, we believe that there is an untapped potential here. The data collected by Repair Cafés could be an asset in interactions with consumers, producers, policymakers and others. It offers a great opportunity to assess the impact of production and consumption practices at the grassroots level. However, the collection and sharing of data is a complicated exercise and will require funding, organization and standardization for it to work.

Question: Does your Repair Café share data collected about products that are brought in for repair with other Repair Cafés and/or with the Repair Café International Foundation?

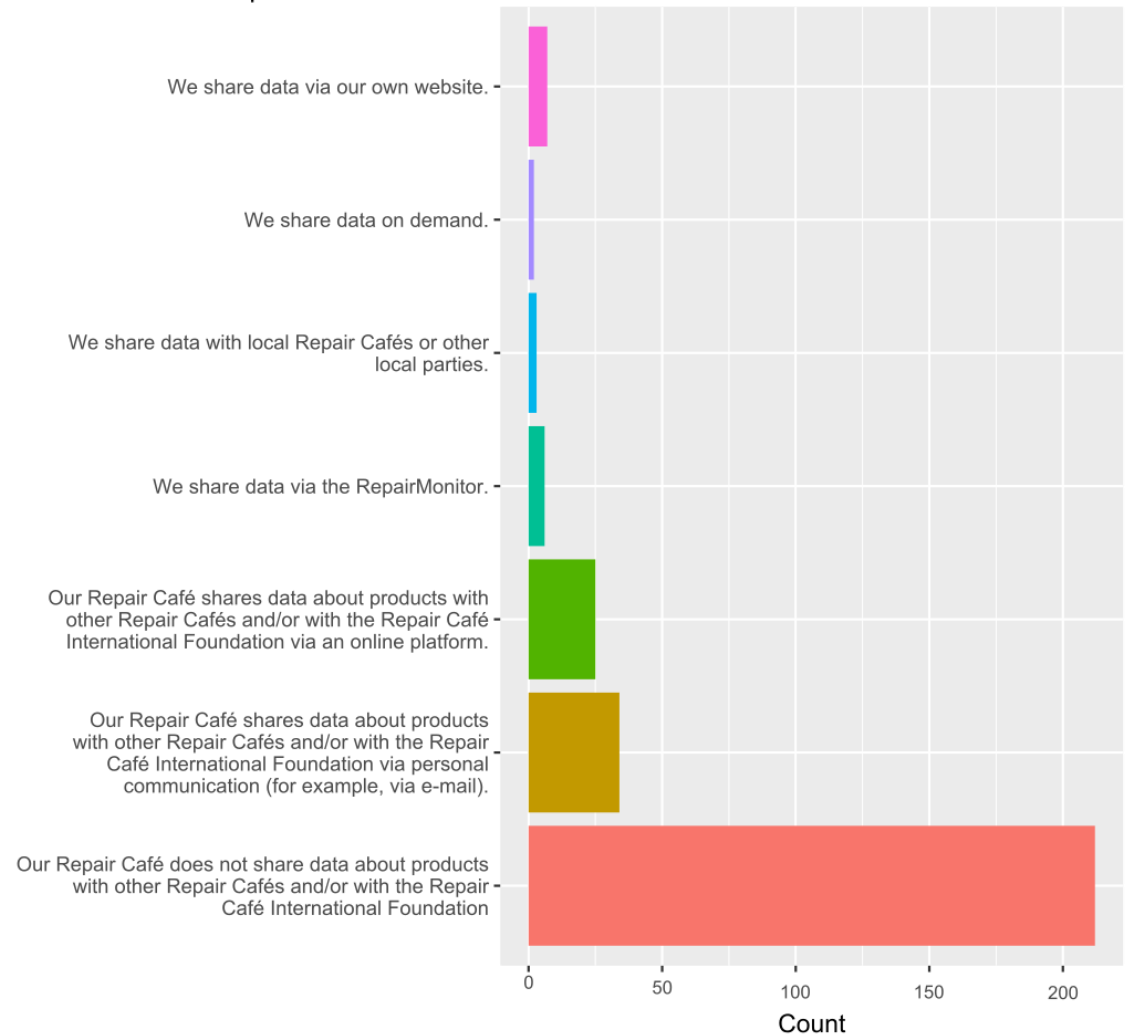


Figure 21. Sharing data about products (single choice).

Interactions within the Repair Café community

One of our interests in doing this survey is to explore the kinds of relationships that exist between the different members of the Repair Café community. Our results show that it is relatively common for Repair Cafés to provide some form of support to other, nearby Repair Cafés. Nearly 150 Repair Cafés in our sample provide such support and over a 100 have indicated that they receive support. Quite a few Repair Cafés also organize joint Repair Café sessions.

Question: How does your Repair Café interact with the broader Repair Café movement?

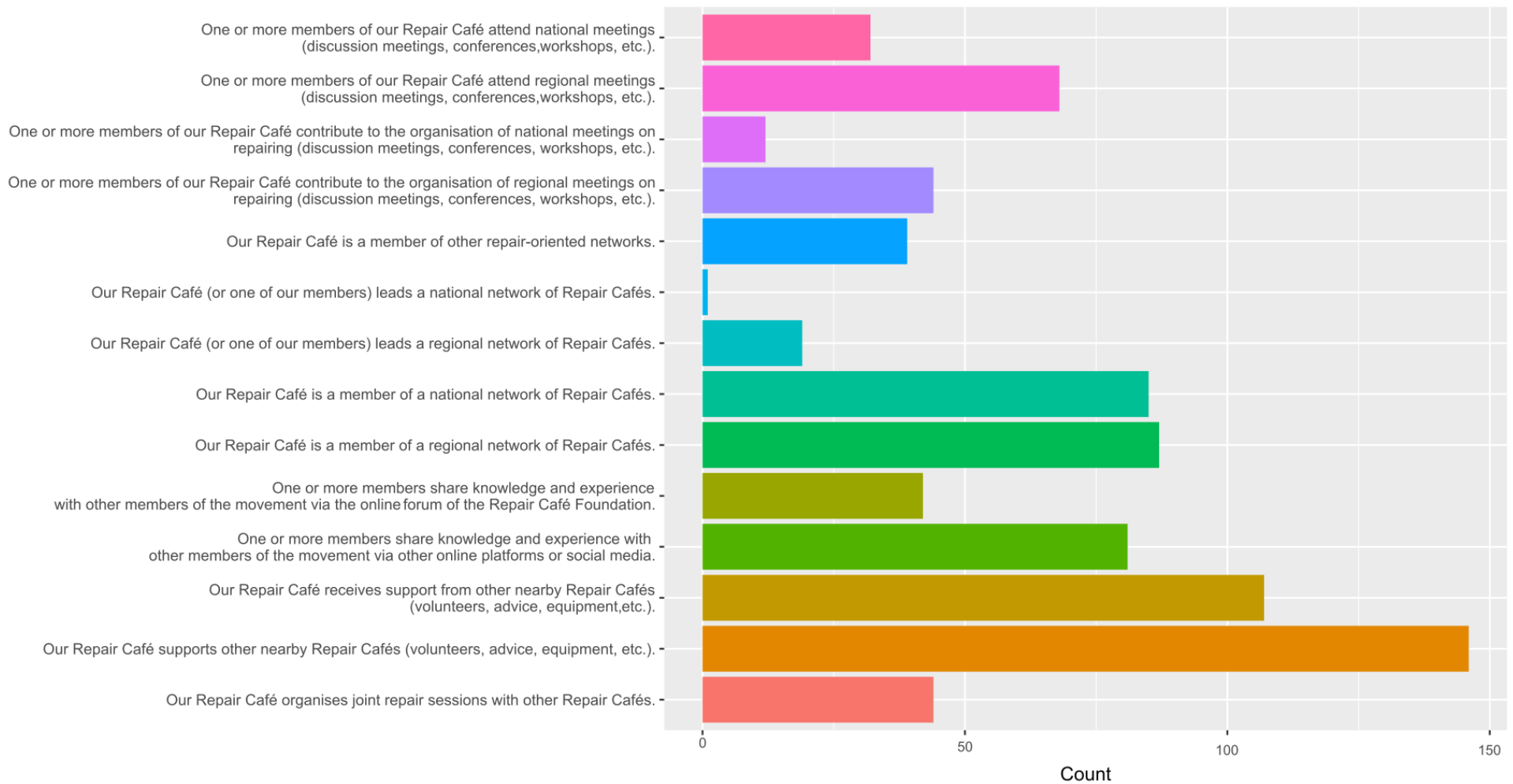


Figure 22. Relationships among Repair Cafés (multiple choice).

Many members of the Repair Café community share knowledge and experience with each other online, sometimes via the online forum of the Repair Café International Foundation, but most often via other online platforms or social media.

It is also fairly common for Repair Cafés to be members of a national and/or regional network. Around 20 Repair Cafés in our sample even lead a regional network. Nearly 70 respondents have indicated that one or more of their members attend regional meetings and there are quite a few that also contribute to the organization of such meetings. In both cases, regional meetings are more prominent than national meetings. We were interested in exploring in which countries we might find networks at different levels. If we look at the countries in our sample with at least 5 Repair Cafés, we see the following results.

Country (total respondents)	Member of national network	Member of regional network	Contributes to organization of national meetings	Contributes to organization of regional meetings
<i>Germany (84)</i>	29%	38%	6%	21%
<i>The Netherlands (72)</i>	49%	17%	6%	11%
<i>France (59)</i>	31%	29%	2%	14%
<i>Great Britain (24)</i>	0%	38%	0%	13%
<i>United States (22)</i>	0%	27%	5%	18%
<i>Canada (16)</i>	0%	13%	0%	0%
<i>Australia (11)</i>	35%	64%	0%	9%

Table 4. Indicators of levels of national and regional organization per country (only countries with at least 5 Repair Cafés).

The table shows, among other things that it is most common to be member of a national network in the Netherlands, and that regional networks are more prominent in Germany, France, Great Britain, the United States and Australia (the geographical size of these countries may also play a role in this). It is also interesting to see that in Great Britain and the United States there are no Repair Cafés (from our sample) that are member of a national network (we know that in Great Britain no national network exists), but that regional networks are quite prominent in these countries.

We should also note that 47 of our respondents did not pick any of the options provided.

Overlap with other organizations

We wanted to explore how Repair Cafés overlap with other organizations. That overlap appears to be quite strong. We see that more than a 150 Repair Cafés in our sample have one or more members whom are also volunteers in other local environmental groups. A slightly smaller number of respondents have indicated that one or more of their members are active in local non-environmental community groups. The results also show that many repair café volunteers are active in more than one Repair Café. We also found it striking that nearly 75 of our respondents indicated that they have members that are politically active. In the 'other' category respondents have indicated, for example, that their members are mostly retired, or they mention specific examples of other organizations in which their members are active. 31 of our respondents did not pick any of the options provided.

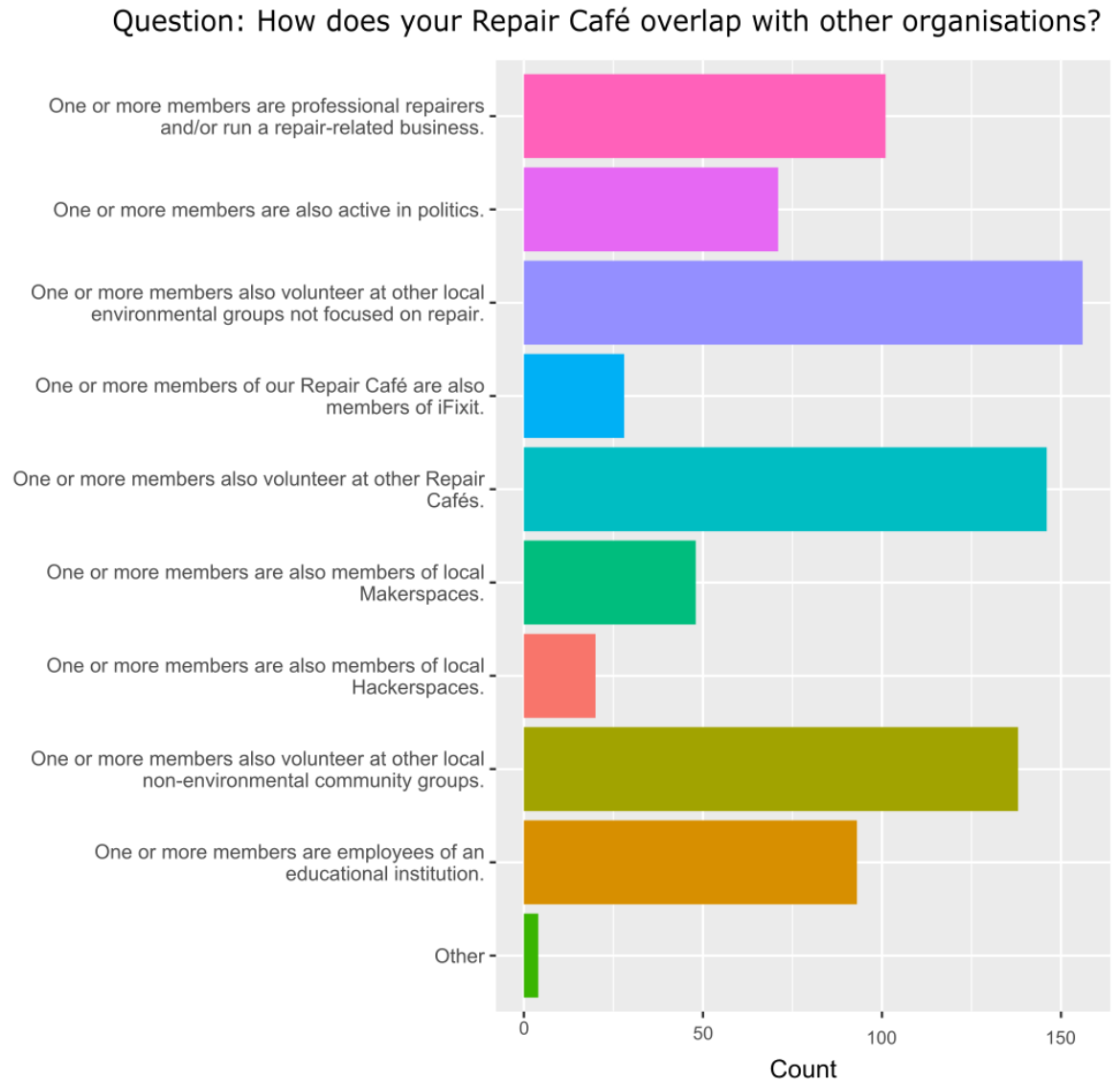


Figure 23. Overlap with other organisations (multiple choice).

Relationship with the Repair Café International Foundation

Our next two questions explore the relationship between Repair Cafés and the Repair Café International Foundation. Most of our respondents indicate that their Repair Café is fully independent of the Foundation for most of their activities. At the same time, the responses to other statements in this question show that the Foundation often was an important inspiration in setting-up local Repair Cafés and also helped out many local Repair Cafés that were in their start-up stages. Slightly more than half of our respondents have indicated that their Repair Café would not have existed without the Foundation.

Question: Please respond to the following statements about the relationship between your Repair Café and the Repair Café International Foundation.

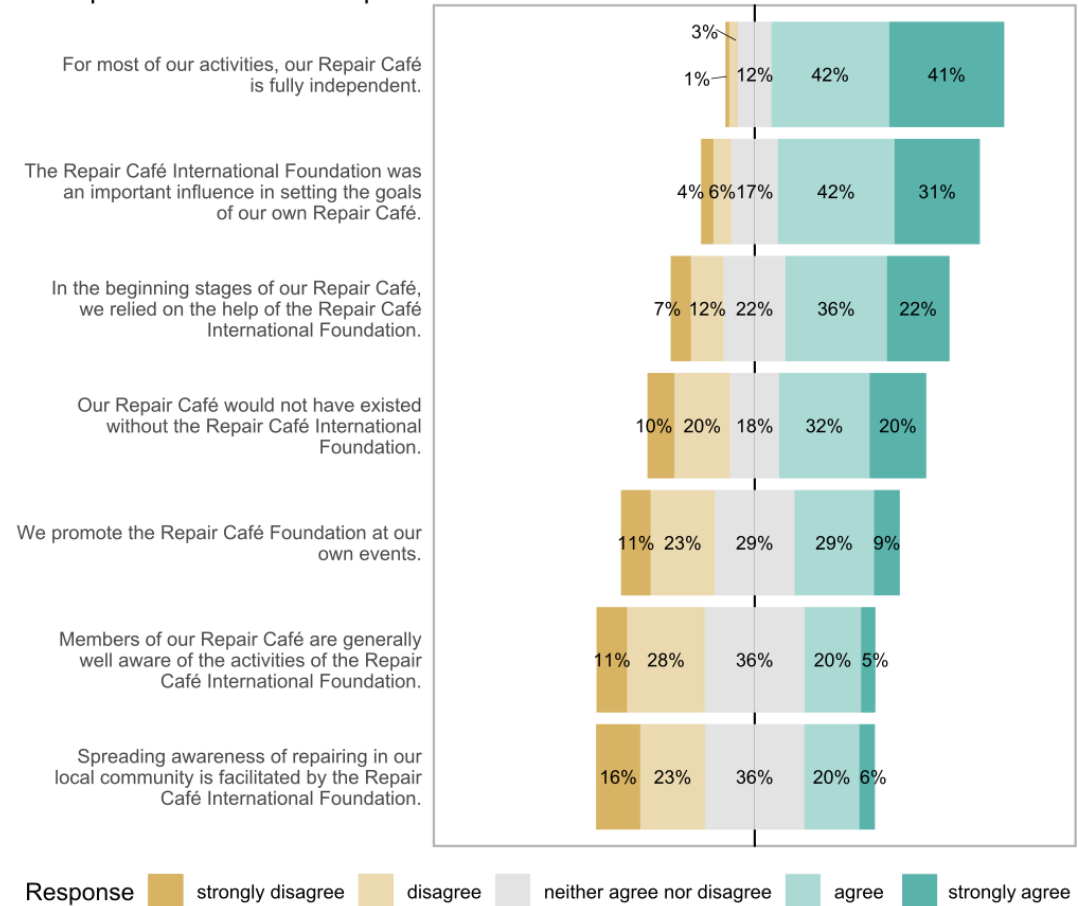


Figure 24. Relationship with Repair Café International Foundation (Likert scale).

Possible future roles for the Repair Café International Foundation

We asked our respondents to think about what role the Repair Café International Foundation might play in the future that would be most useful to help Repair Cafés around the world. The respondents indicated that the most popular future role would be to lobby for policies that encourage better product design. A closely related goal that also ranks highly is to enter in conversation with companies about this topic. It is interesting to compare this with the answers to the question on goals of individual Repair Cafés (see figure 10). There, we saw that a similar goal ranked relatively low. This may indicate that our respondents see a possible division of roles between local Repair Cafés, who do the actual ‘groundwork’, and the Repair Café International Foundation, who might be focused more on strategic that benefit the repair community as a whole.

Question: In the future, what possible roles for the Repair Café International Foundation would be most helpful for Repair Cafés around the world? (Please rank the selected items, placing the most important item at the top)

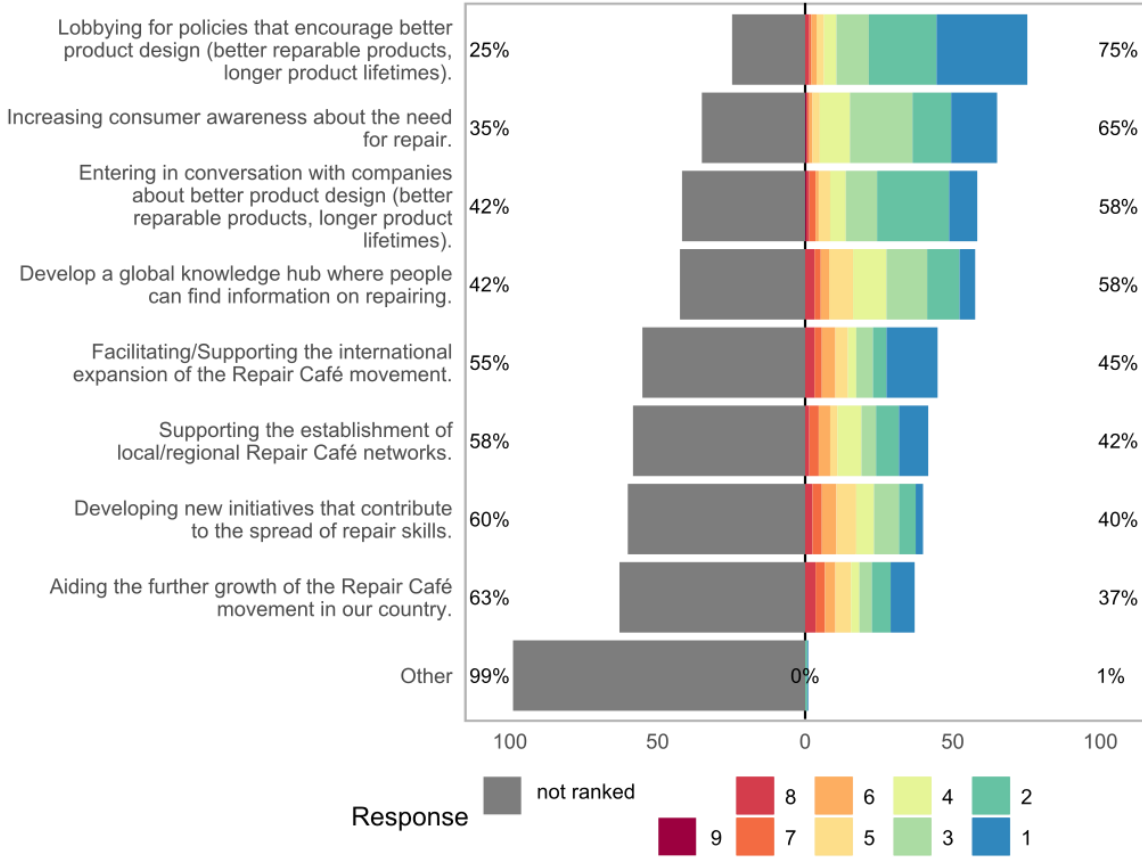


Figure 25. Ideas about possible future roles of Repair Café International Foundation (ranking).

Increasing citizen awareness about the need for repair also ranks highly, coming in at second place. Interestingly, roles related to the establishment of new networks, or adding to the further growth of the Repair Café community are ranked lowest overall.

As with our other ranking questions, we should draw attention to the fact that this concerns an overall ranking. We can also see that some respondents give very low priority to the roles that end up near the top in the overall ranking, and vice versa. For example, in the overall ranking 'aiding the further growth of the Repair Café movement in our country' ranks lowest, but 8% of our respondents ranked it first. Also, even the roles in the overall top three were not ranked at all by many respondents. For example, 25% of our respondents did not include the overall top 1 answer (lobbying for policies that encourage better product design) in their ranking at all). In other words, there does not seem to be a very strong overall agreement in how our respondents ranks different potential roles for the Repair Café International Foundation.

In the 'other' category, several of our respondents suggested that the Repair Café International Foundation could provide support in solving insurance problems. Earlier questions showed that most Repair Cafés in our sample have insurance (see figure 15), and that most Repair Cafés experience little difficulty in obtaining insurance (see figure 19). Yet, it was striking to us that multiple respondents brought up insurance as an issue that the Repair Café Foundation might support in.

The future of individual Repair Cafés

We closed our survey with a question about the future of the Repair Café, asking respondents about the anticipated importance of a variety of developments. Here, we again see that attracting younger audiences is an important theme for many Repair Cafés in our sample. We also see that stronger involvement in campaigns for improved reparability/longevity of products is found relatively important. This somewhat contradicts responses to an earlier question about the goals of the Repair Café.

Question: Thinking about the future, how important do you think the following developments will be for your Repair Café?

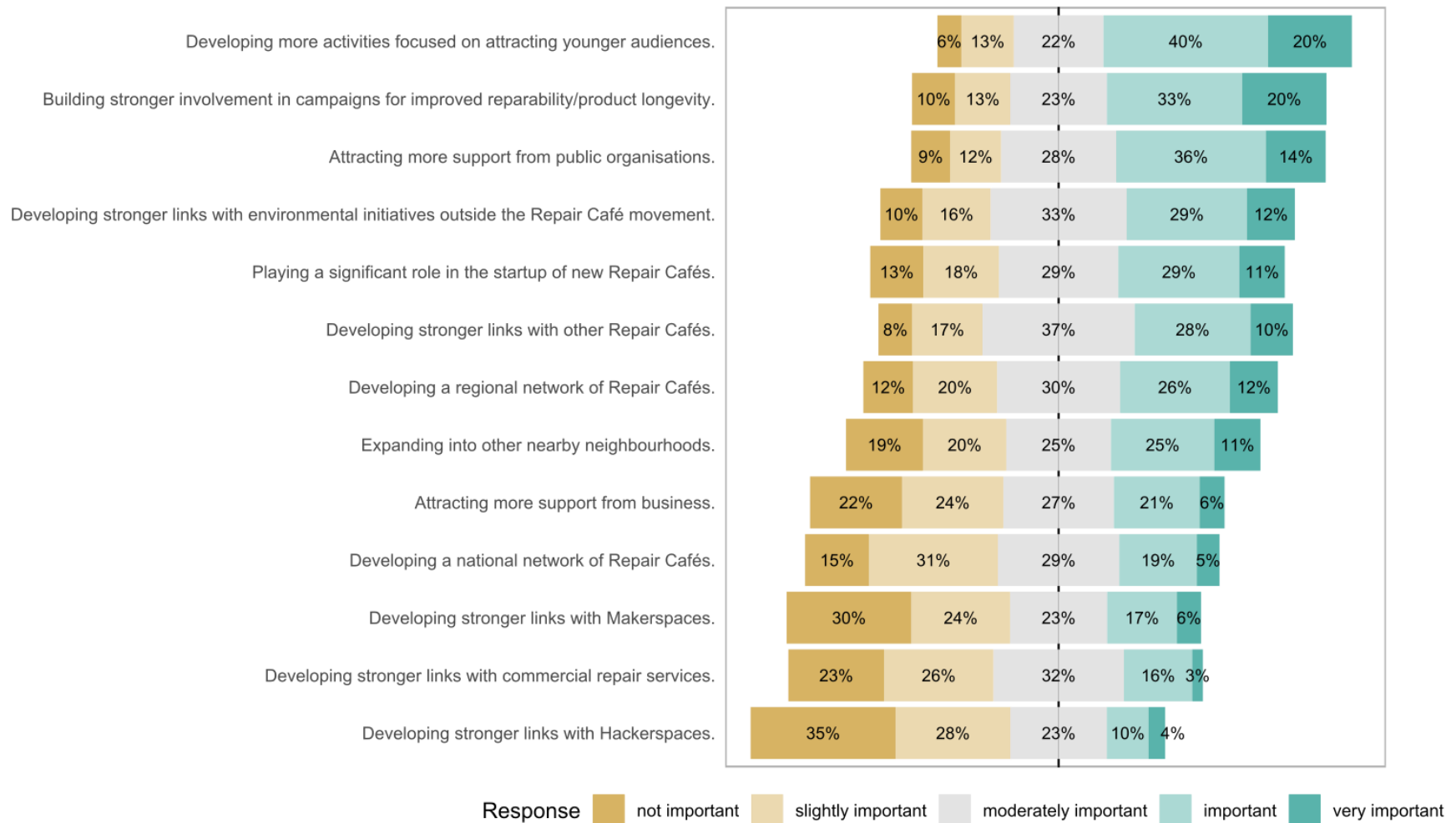


Figure 26. Future of individual Repair Cafés (Likert scale).

If we look at the statements about developing links with other organizations, it is striking to see that the development of links with environmental initiatives outside the Repair Café movement ranks relatively highly, even higher than developing stronger links with other Repair Cafés. Developing links with Makerspaces and Hackerspaces is given low priority, as is the idea to develop national networks of Repair Cafés (the development of regional networks is given more importance overall). We also see a contrast in the importance that is given to attracting more support from public organizations versus attracting more support from private organizations.

If we compare the results to a similar question that was asked in the previous survey (Charter & Keiller 2016), we observe that attention seems to have shifted away from strengthening links with other Repair Cafés / building networks, which was the most prominent item on the list in the previous survey. Greater involvement in campaigns for improved reparability and product longevity was also prominent in the previous survey. Issues such as attracting younger audiences were not part of the previous survey.

CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

Having briefly discussed the results of the survey, we have a few closing observations based on these results.

If we look at our questions on the basic characteristics of Repair Cafés, our overall impression is that most Repair Cafés follow a similar model (notwithstanding the various exceptions that our figures also show). This model is one of a community repair workshop or Repair Café that was founded and run in a somewhat informal manner and that is typically organized once a month, often using some type of community building as the main venue. The number of volunteers that attend Repair Café sessions most likely falls somewhere between 7 to 20 individuals, whom mostly are over 55 years old (age based on Charter & Keiller 2016). The most important goal of the Repair Café is typically to help prevent and/or reduce waste. The typical Repair Café is citizen driven and self-sufficient in most of its activities, but it is not unusual that repair volunteers also volunteer in other Repair Cafés, or in other local community initiatives.

Throughout our survey we included items that are possible indicators of maturity, such as leadership structure that is used, the legal status of the Repair Café, the presence of insurance and health and safety policies. If we study these indicators and compare Repair Cafés of different ages, then we do not find anything that clearly indicates that Repair Cafés become 'more advanced' over time. Some of the Repair Cafés that might be considered as more 'advanced' according to these indicators were started relatively recently. In other words, the differences that we observe in these indicators do not seem to indicate differences in levels of maturity, but rather differences in the organizational models that are applied in Repair Cafés; some initiators/organizers take a much more formal approach to running their Repair Café than others.

Even though there is little that we can meaningfully say about the maturity of individual Repair Cafés, there is possibly more to say about the maturity of the Repair Café community as a whole. This also helps us to begin to address one of the questions that was at the heart of this study: What kind of 'community' is the Repair Café community? There are a few things that we could focus on when trying to answer this question, such as the growth of the community as a whole, the consequences of this growth in relation to how the community 'organizes itself' at the supra-local level (including the evolution of the role of the Repair Café International Foundation) and the extent that this enables the community to make an impact at a strategic level (for example, influencing (inter)national policies and consumption and production practices). The number of Repair Cafés has grown significantly in 10 years, and it continues to do so. Assuming that our sample is more or less representative of the Repair Café community, we can see that this growth currently mostly occurs in the Western World (and primarily Western Europe). One possible explanation is that Repair Cafés also mostly addresses problems that find their origins more in 'the Western World', such as the emergence of the 'Throwaway Culture', the decline of repair knowledge and skills and the lack of social cohesion in parts of societies.

This growth inevitably also has consequences for the role that the Repair Café International Foundation plays in the community. When the Foundation was founded in 2010 there was a greater scope for supporting fledgling Repair Cafés and contributing directly through the spread of Repair Cafés within and (later) across the Netherlands. However, the community has now achieved a size that makes that role very difficult to fulfil for a Foundation that, in the end, is run by a small team. When we asked members of the Repair Café community what the *future* role of the Foundation might be we see that, despite some obvious disagreements, there is a relatively strong emphasis on strategic activities, such as lobbying for policies that improve product reparability and longevity, raising consumer awareness and engaging in a dialogue with companies to convince them to improve their practices. We believe that it indeed would make sense for these to be among the tasks that the Repair Café International Foundation takes up (to the extent that it has not taken them up already). We also see a great potential in making better use of the vast amount of data being collected on products by Repair Cafés. This collection already happens on a large scale, but only a fraction of the data seems to be shared. As mentioned previously, we see this as a missed opportunity, given that the data could be a great asset in the more strategic activities that the Repair Café community might engage in. However, in practice this is easier said than done. For example, it would require the development of a uniform approach to collecting, storing and sharing data and it is not immediately obvious whom is willing and able to take the lead in organizing such an effort. The RepairMonitor that the Repair Café International Foundation started, and which contains data on almost 30,000 repairs in the Netherlands, could be a starting point for this. However, additional funding is required to further improve, diffuse and maintain the system, as well as for setting up an infrastructure for sharing the data. The Repair Café International Foundation has stated that it is willing to take the lead here, but currently lacks the funding to do so.

It would also be a great use of what we consider to be one of the key strengths of the Repair Café community: the fact that individual Repair Cafés can not only make a positive impact locally, but also internationally, by mobilizing as a larger movement. An important caveat here is that the vast majority of Repair Cafés are run by volunteers that will not have the time to get actively involved in a larger movement, although the feeling of being part of such a movement may be important itself.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that some kind of support on cross-cutting issues that affect all Repair Cafés (e.g., insurance, data collection and sharing) by supra-local organizations or networks is not possible. We previously highlighted that several of our respondents emphasized the possibility of the Repair Café International Foundation playing a role in addressing insurance and liability issues. These are issues that affect the community as a whole, but the salience of this issues (we should also remember that our survey indicates that most Repair Cafés do not experience great difficulties in obtaining insurance), as well as possible solutions will differ across countries due to the particularities of their legal systems and the awareness of insurance companies over what Repair Cafes' do. In theory, these issues might be picked up by supra-local organizations but

given the particularities of different legal systems, it may make more sense for these matters to be addressed through national or regional networks than through the Repair Café International Foundation. Similarly, regional and national networks can play a key role in supporting fledgling Repair Cafés and contributing to the further growth of the Repair Café community. A possible role for the Repair Café International Foundation in this could be to identify and communicate best practice in setting up and running Repair Café networks and to support national and/or regional networks based on this knowledge. Indeed, this is all theoretical. In practice, setting up and running new supra-local organizations is a highly complicated matter that will not be easily taken up by people that are already spending a significant amount of their time volunteering in an individual Repair Café.

So, what kind of community do we think that the Repair Café community is? We believe that one thing that makes the Repair Café community special is that on the one hand it seems to be a relatively loose collection of locally-oriented community initiatives, but that, on the other hand, there is a sense of being part of something bigger; something that resembles a larger movement. However, this needs more research. This potential movement is oriented to a modern form of pragmatic environmentalism that is focused on encouraging people to waste less, by showing them that something that is broken can usually still be repaired, that repairing is a crucial skill and activity for a (transition towards) a more sustainable society. Within the potential movement we also have identified various regional and national networks, although the level and extent of supra-local organization differs significantly across countries (for example, we don't see many national organizations). We see these networks as potential key players nurturing and harnessing the 'sense of being a larger movement' and engaging in 'strategic' activities. In turn, the Repair Café International Foundation may have a potential intermediary role that can help in building bridges between different networks.

The Repair Café community is also a community that still includes relatively few people from younger generations, but it is clear that many Repair Cafés are taking action to change this, and we hope that the ideas shared in this survey may also serve as a source of inspiration.

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