

CULTURAL POLICY BAROMETER 2015

FIRST RESULTS

The full report is in the making. This is a preliminary display of some of the findings of the survey arranged in November-December 2015. For the general aims of the survey and its antecedents see the 2014 Cultural Policy Barometer [Report](#).

The online questionnaire was responded by 170 people, in great majority from Europe. The first question was the following: “What are the most problematic factors for culture in your country?” Participants to the survey were asked to select five from a list of 27 statements, presented on the left column of [Annex 1](#). (In some of the diagrams shorter versions of the statements appear.)

Results of the survey with regard to the instrument

In the 2014 questionnaire there were 28 statements. One was deemed disposable and deleted. Upon the experience of 2014 the wording of a couple of items was improved. The remaining 27 items have stood the test of the 2015 edition well. The list is still quite long, which poses a challenge to participants in the survey, nevertheless even the least often selected ones carry significance for certain environments.

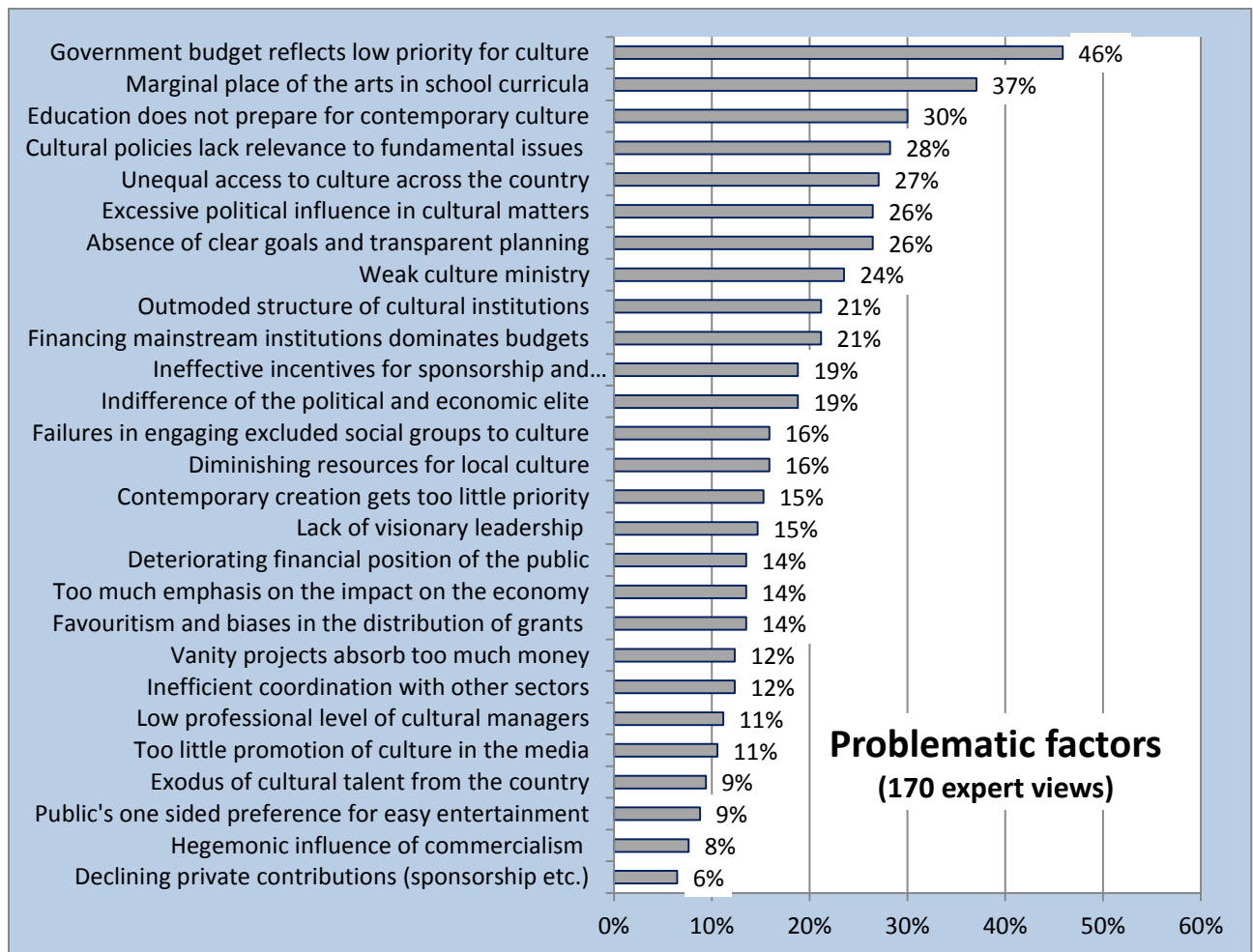
Hegemonic influence of commercialism was selected by 6.6% and *Declining private contributions (sponsorship, philanthropy)* by 7.1% of respondents; nevertheless mathematical statistical exercises demonstrate higher explanatory (discriminating) weight for both than the last two positions by frequency. Also, both items occupied somewhat higher positions a year ago. (Conversely, the last item on last year’s list, *Contemporary creation gets too little priority* attracted greater attention this year.)

No more reduction is therefore proposed from the list of problematic factors.

In fact, the relatively even distribution of the 27 choices, coupled with the limited consistency between the responses, suggests to us a low degree of orientation among the concepts and terms in cultural policies. This deficiency may be true about the public perception of the aspects that define the climate of culture (it can of course signal weaknesses of our survey instrument, too). Anyhow, we maintain that other than being a diagnostic tool, the cultural policy barometer may play a role in consolidating our language on cultural policies.

Problematic factors to culture

Diagram 1 Distribution of choices made by the 170 respondents about the problematic factors



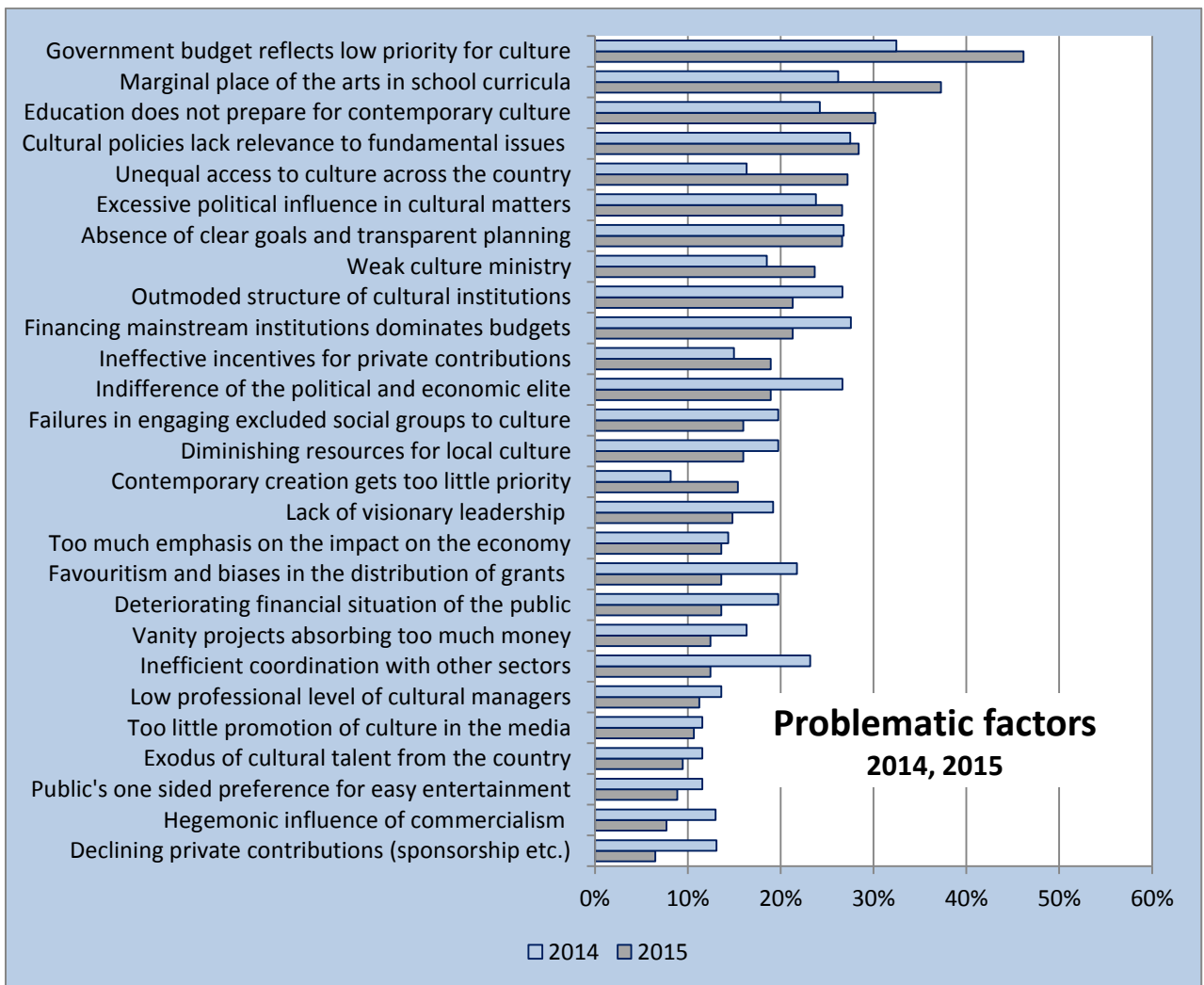
The first diagram contains the cumulated score of 170 responses about the problematic factors affecting the climate of culture across Europe (and a bit beyond) in 2015. The numbers indicate the percentage of responding experts that included the item among the five most important problematic factors to culture in their environment.

Despite a number of differences in the samples, the picture is similar to what we found a year earlier. In 2014, too, governmental priority was the number one concern but was not selected by 51% as now. We do not say the attention *grew*, because the differences in the composition of the respondents do not allow contributing the changes to the time elapsed. Having stated that, see the greatest differences between the two sets of answers, in addition to items at the bottom mentioned earlier:

There were two statements that collected around half of the mentions than last year: *Favouritism and biases in the distribution of public grants* and *Inefficient coordination with other sectors* were now selected by 11% and 10% only.

Conversely, the next three items were chosen about a third more often than in 2014: *Ineffective incentives for private contributions*, *Unequal access to culture across the country* and *Weak culture ministry*.

Diagram 2 Differences in the perception of problematic factors in 2014 and 2015



East and West

Statistical analysis of the data confirms that the primary dividing line can still be drawn between “east” and “west”. 91 answers came from countries with a relatively longer record of capitalism and democracy, labelled as *West*. The remaining 79 participants in the survey live in former communist countries, the political *East*.

Diagram 3 Respondents from “western” countries

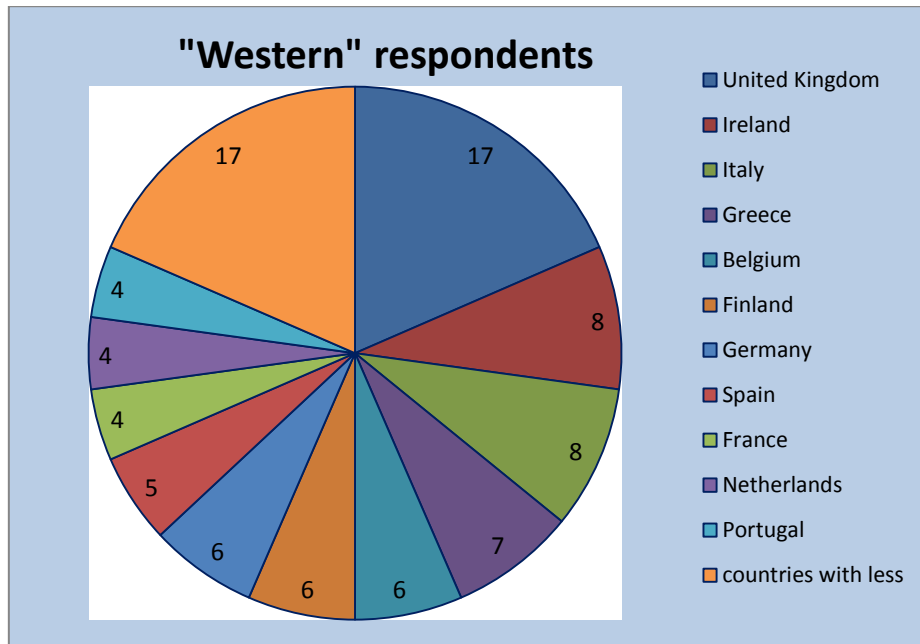


Diagram 4 Respondents from “eastern” countries

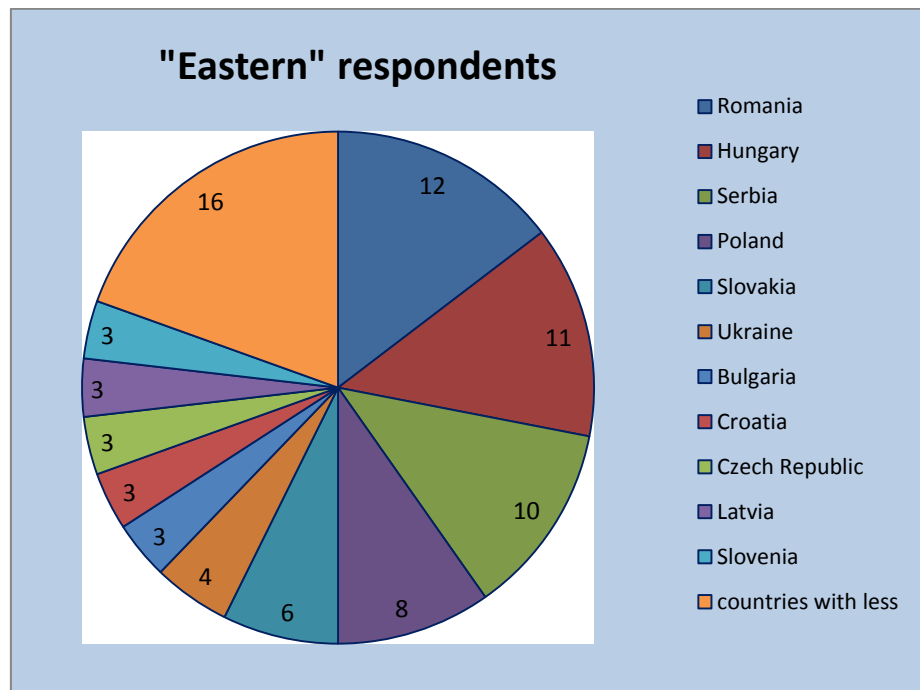
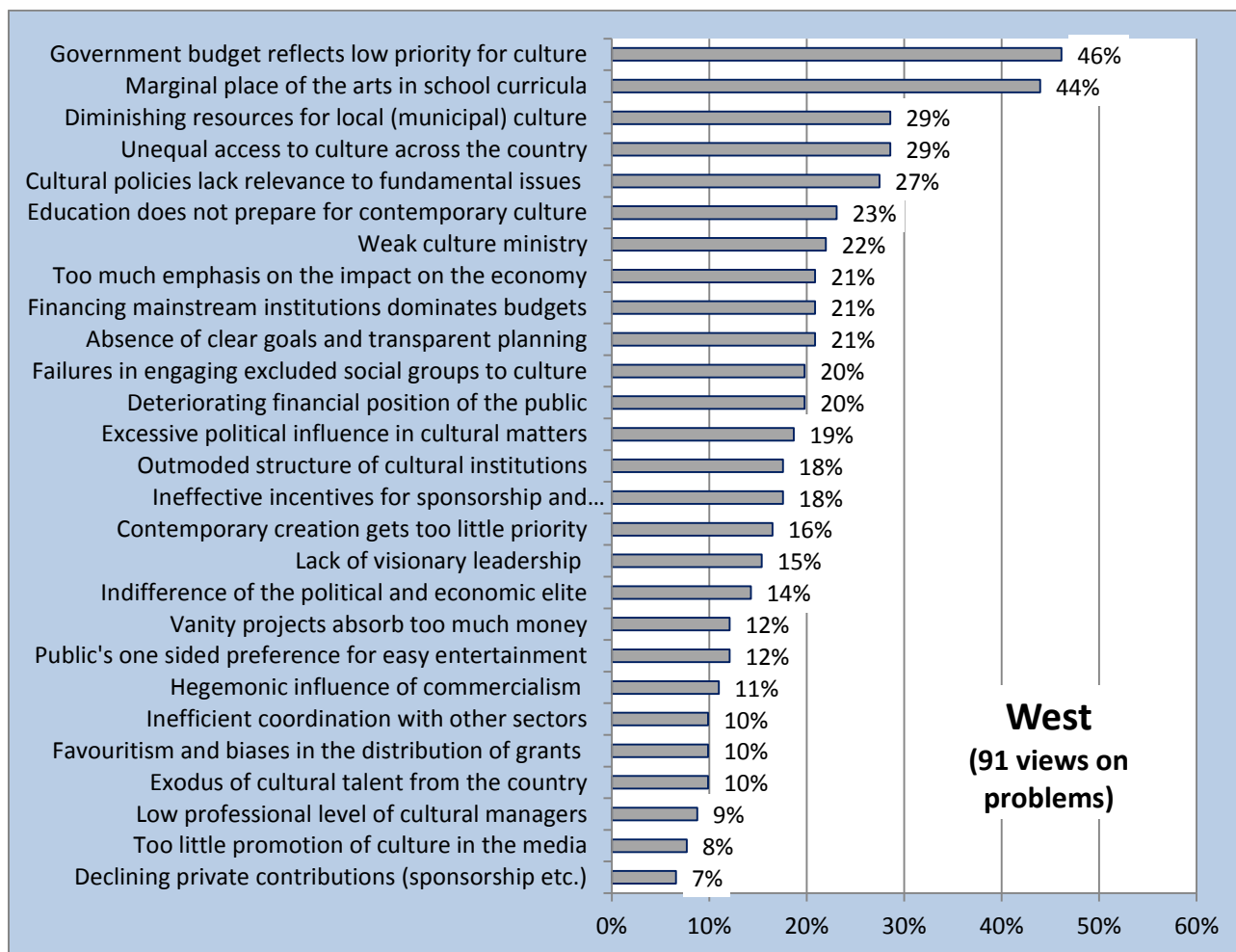


Diagram 5 Problematic factors according to “western” respondents

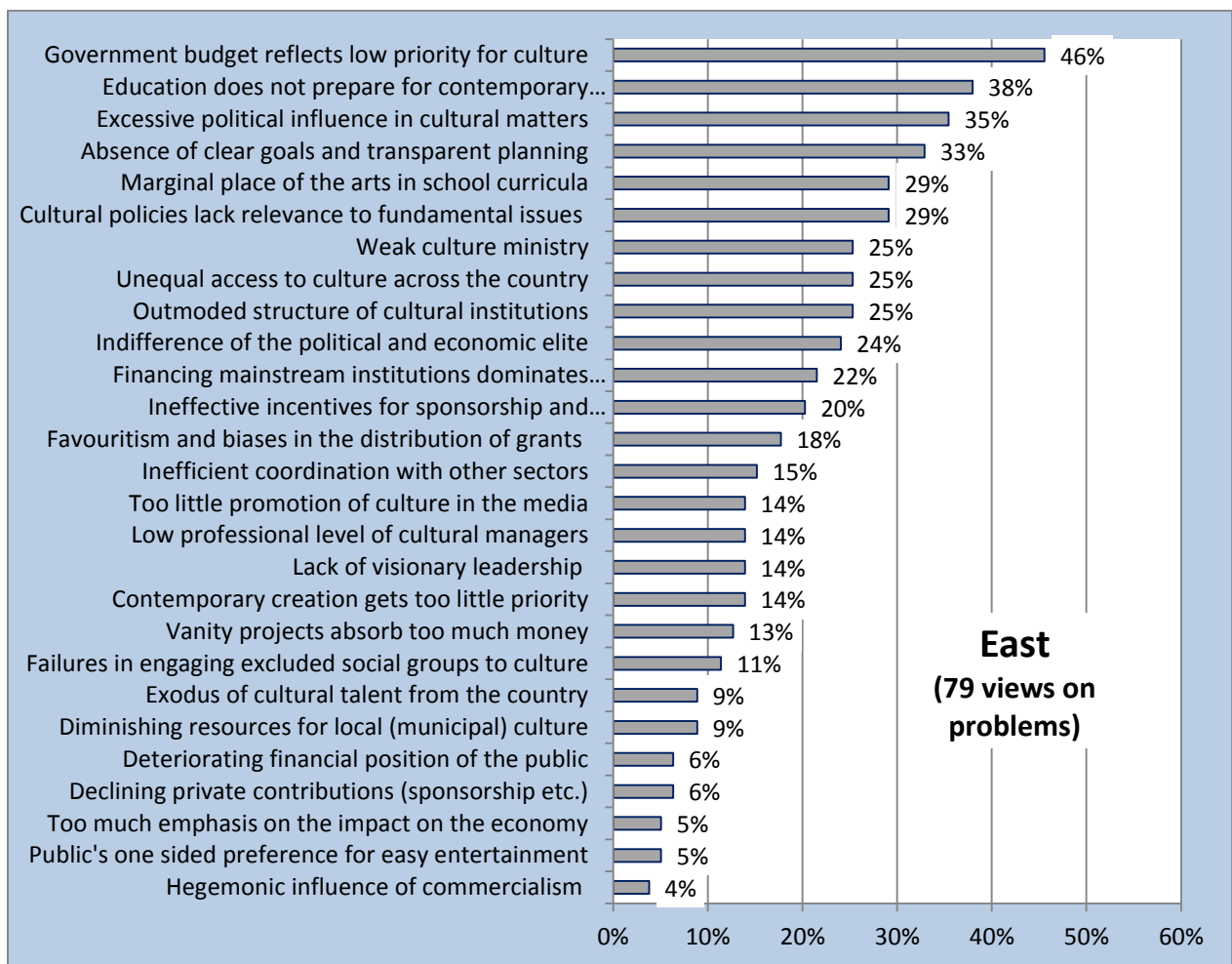


Complaint about the government is on top, here, too. Almost every second respondent bemoans the state of arts education – a western feature, just like at the previous 2014 survey.

The next three items, mentioned by 27-29% each, witness about the engagement of most western colleagues towards the equality of chances and supply. Contradicting clichés, they complain the least about shrinking sponsorship. Maybe it does not shrink?

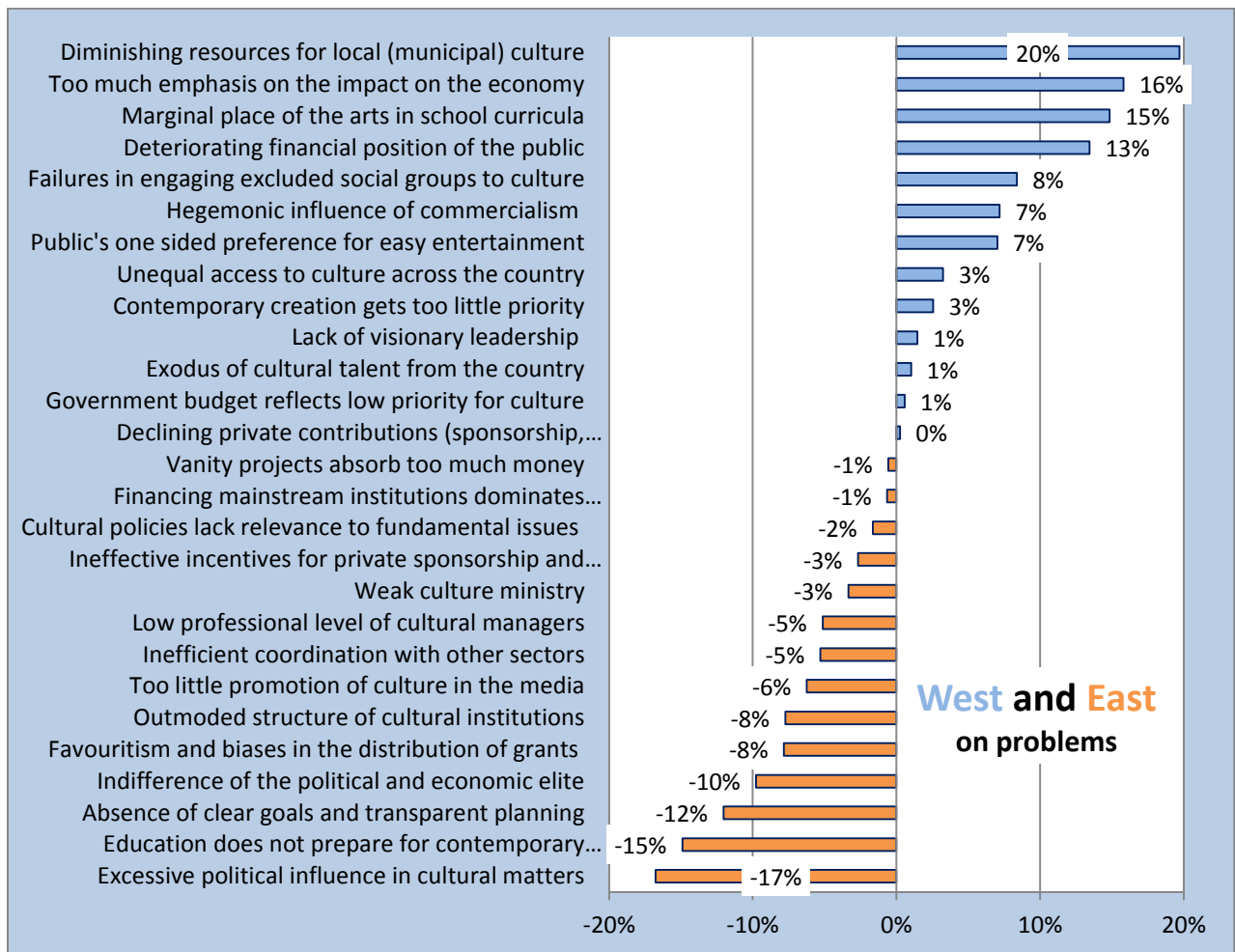
Turning to the east, [Diagram 6](#) reveals that the same statement is on top there, too. With the same (46%) proportion as in the west but without rivals do eastern government budgets carry the greatest blame for the woes of the cultural climate. Unusual is the high position of *Education does not prepare for contemporary culture* on the eastern list of grievances with 38%. Last year it was tenth with 26%.

Diagram 6 Problematic factors according to “eastern” respondents



Another important difference is that every third eastern expert complains about political influences against only 19% in the west. Characteristic divisions like this are best displayed by contrasting views from the east and west – go to [Diagram 7](#).

Diagram 7 Fusing eastern and western views about problematic factors



Contrasting was done by deleting eastern answers from western ones: the latter were more numerous, 91 against only 79 from the postcommunist “east”. Taking the first item, in the west 29% complain about the financing of local culture, which is 20% more than the 9% mentions in the east. At the other end of the scale we find a problematic area where the west is in minus: 16% fewer western experts suffer from political interference into culture than their eastern colleagues (19% vs 35%).

All fourteen items to the left of the axis (in orange) bother western respondents less than eastern ones.

Observed with a broader focus we can establish that westerners select items relating to the public (its purchasing power, exposure to commercialism and entertainment) in higher numbers than easterners, who are more concerned about internal aspects of the sector like professionalism in management and governance, as well as the institutions, intersectoral cooperation etc.

Positive aspects with regard to cultural life

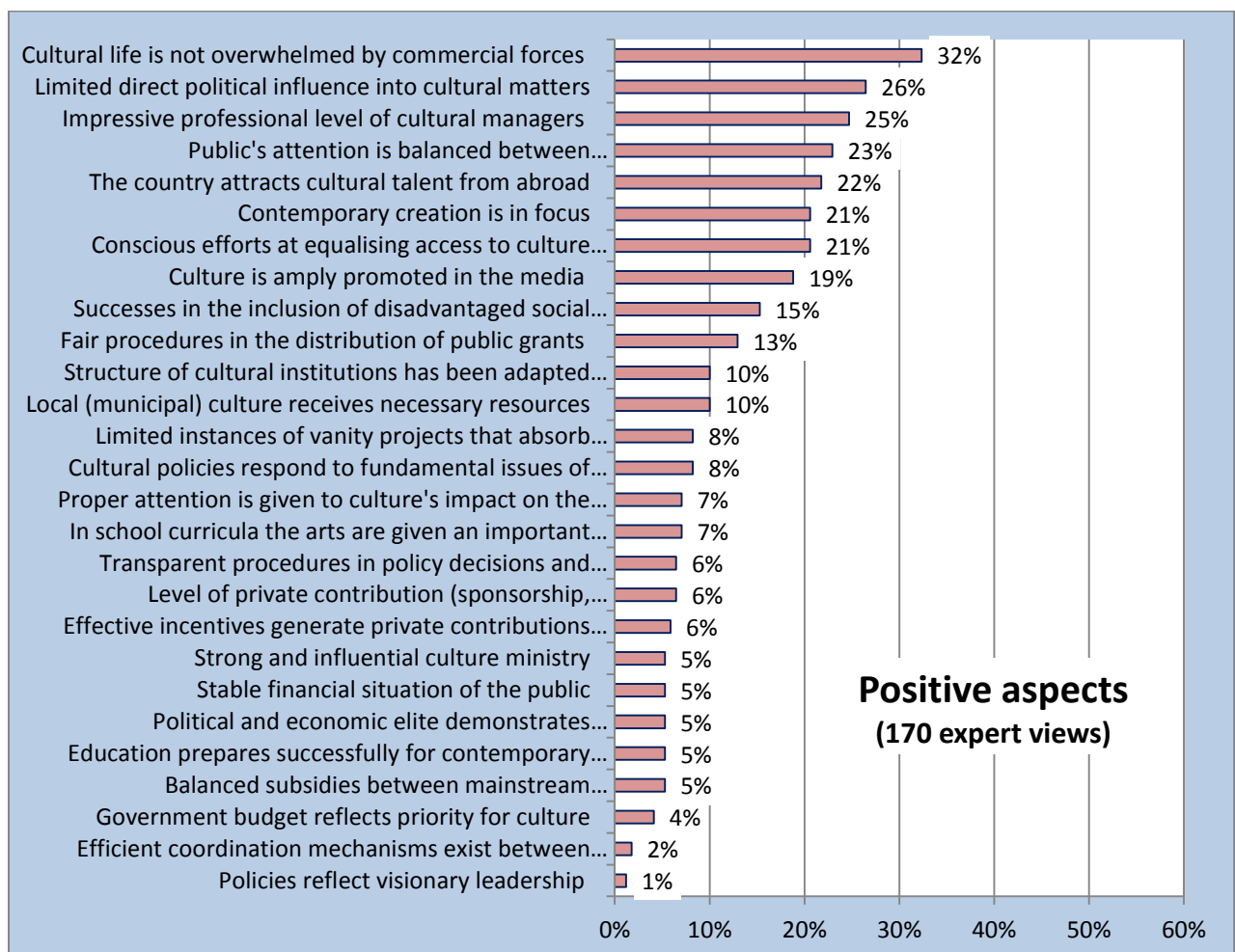
The first editions of the survey focused on the problematic aspects. In no time this met with the criticism of a one sided approach and a claim for examining factors that have a positive effect on the climate of culture.

At first, variations of a sliding scale were applied where the answerer was asked to choose a position on a scale; the latest variant of that instrument is seen on [Annex 2](#). Coping with filling out the questionnaire appeared too demanding, including also the proper interpretation, which is why we returned to the simpler task of selecting five out of a list of 27. We have not yet given up, nevertheless, plans of testing the sliding scale as well.

The task nevertheless became double with the addition of a complementary list of 27 positive statements. [Annex 1](#) contains the two sets matched the corresponding items to one another.

The preliminary trials proved that it is a greater challenge to select factors that one is happy about than to share one's dissatisfaction about conditions. The survey therefore allowed the respondents to choose less than five positive statements. On the average the 170 respondents chose 3.2 positive items (instead of 5).

Diagram 8 Positive factors affecting culture according to 170 views



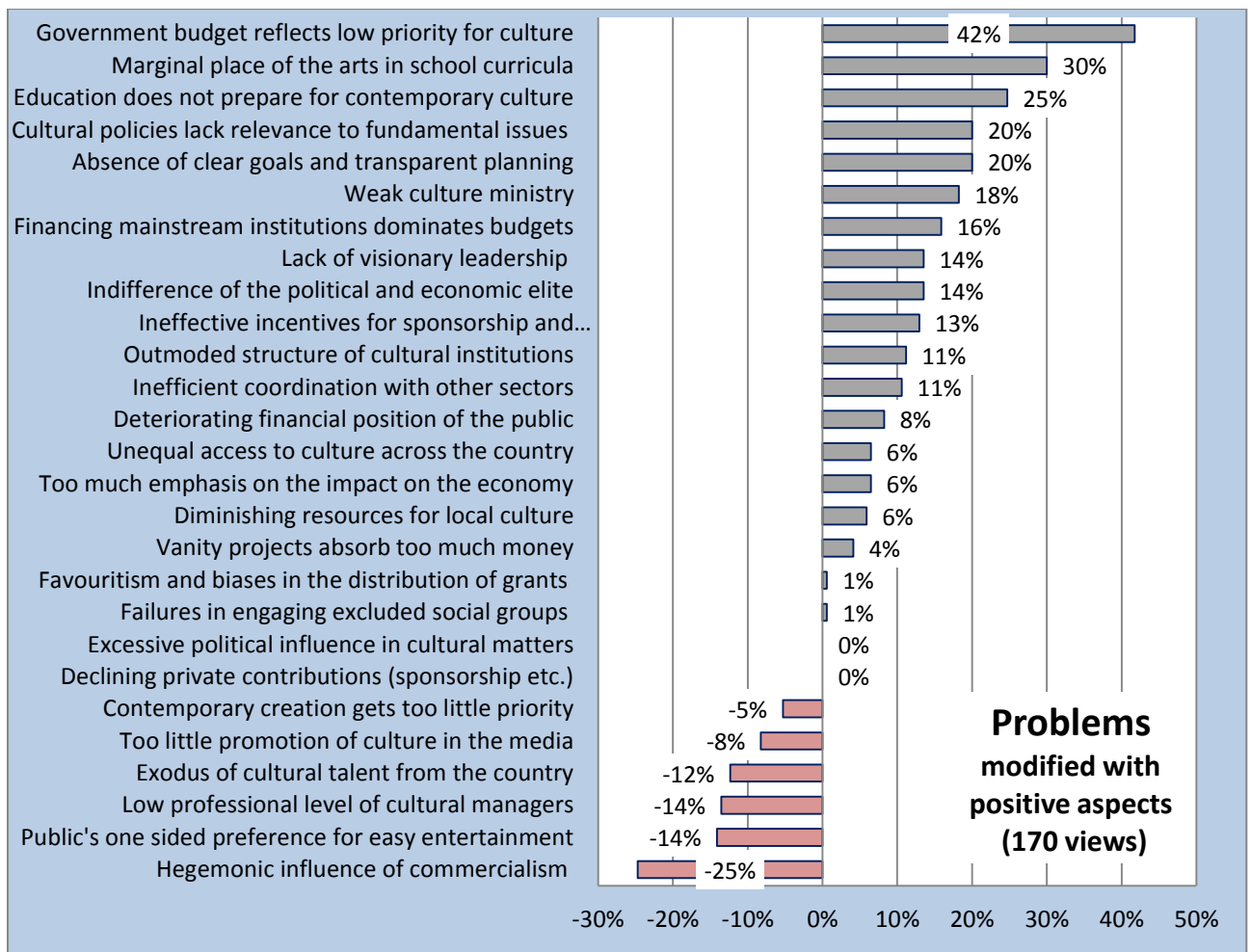
The outstanding popularity of the statement about the indemnity from commercialism is a surprise. Dominant in most eastern countries but holding strong also in the west, this might be a lukewarm default choice when respondents are at a loss for the right praise. At least business has not fully overcome... Also, politics has not run over everything, according to the second most popular item. Two statements about absences are on top of the victory list.

This is a moment to muse about the significance of the choices. Whether they report about facts (really existing positive or negative factors) or they express value preferences rather. Also, wording can play an important role. For example, in the earliest version *Lack of cultural policy vision* was a popular choice among respondents, while the current formula of *visionary leadership* resonates to the least of all.

The combination of positive and negative statements

Besides forming and analysing rankings of the answers from two separate points of view, positive and negative choices were also matched. On the example of the top item in [Diagram 9](#): 46% of all 170 answerers selected the low priority of culture in government budget as a major problematic factor. On the other hand, 4% chose the opposite, claiming that culture does enjoy government priority, hence a combined value of 42%. The very few positive options did not jeopardise the dominant negative position of the issue.

[Diagram 9](#) Problematic factors modified with positive choices



The most interesting part is the bottom of the scale where problematic factors were suppressed by their positive counterparts. The case about commercialism was mentioned before. The -25% is the

outcome of 7% complaining about hegemonic influence of business, and 32% selecting the indemnity from commercialism as a positive aspect.

Worthy of attention are the next four items at the bottom of the ranking, where the overall consensus was in favour of positive assessment rather than complaints:

- *Culture is amply promoted in the media (vs too little promotion)*
- *Public's attention is balanced between entertainment and deeper cultural challenges (vs one sided preference for easy entertainment)*
- *Impressive professional level of cultural managers (vs low level of the same)*
- *Contemporary creation is in focus (vs too little priority for contemporary creation)*

East and west on the positive aspects

Returning to the east-west divide, accounts about the favourable aspects – strengths of the cultural ecosystems – have also produced certain characteristic differences. First of all the lines in the western Diagram 10 tend to be longer: contributors from established capitalist democracies find eight positive aspects that are selected by more than 20%. Experts and operators in postcommunist countries found only one! The averages were 3.7 choices in the west and 2.6 in the east against the possible 5 in both cases. Is it so hard to find or say nice things in the new democracies?

Diagram 10 The frequencies of positive aspects in the western answers

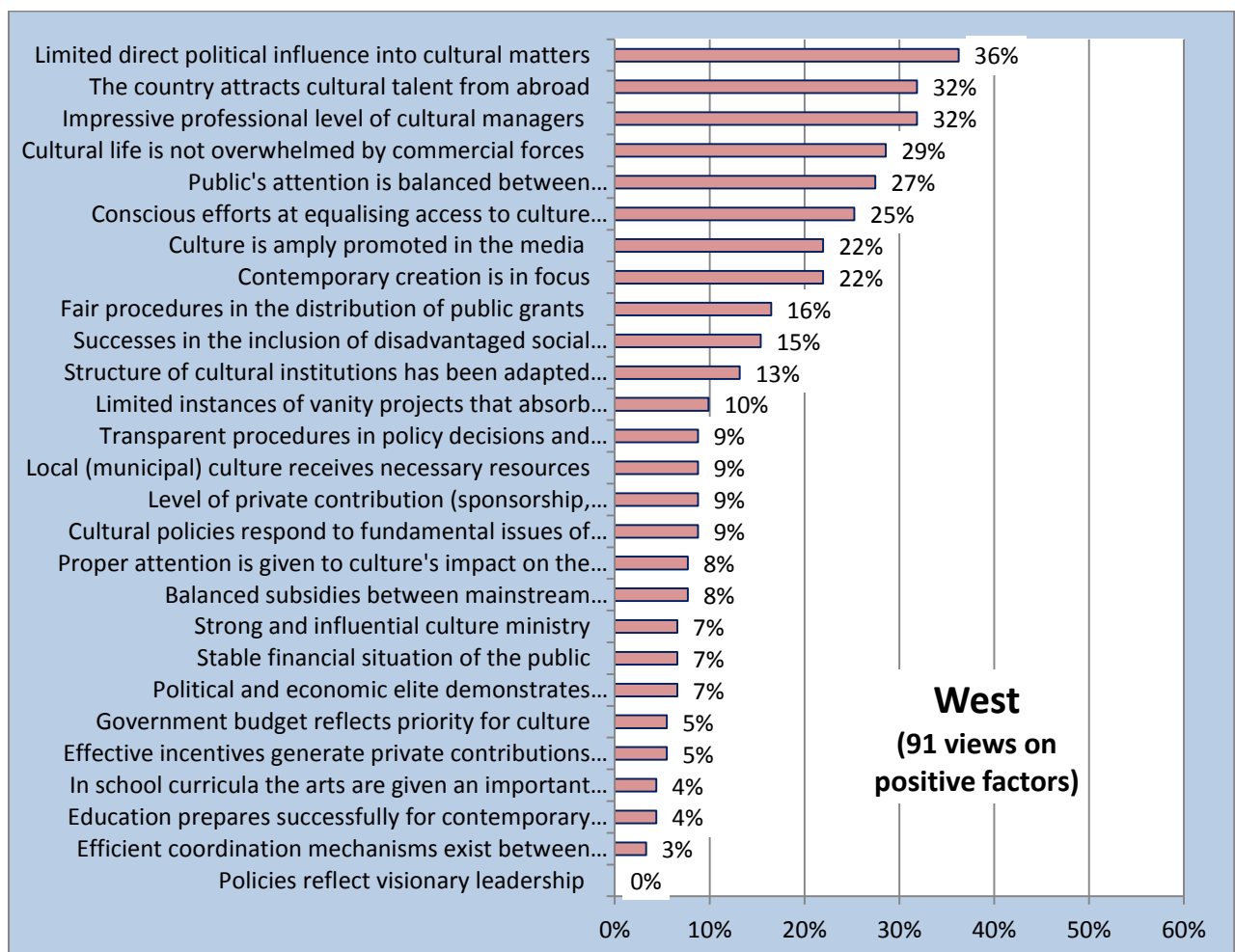
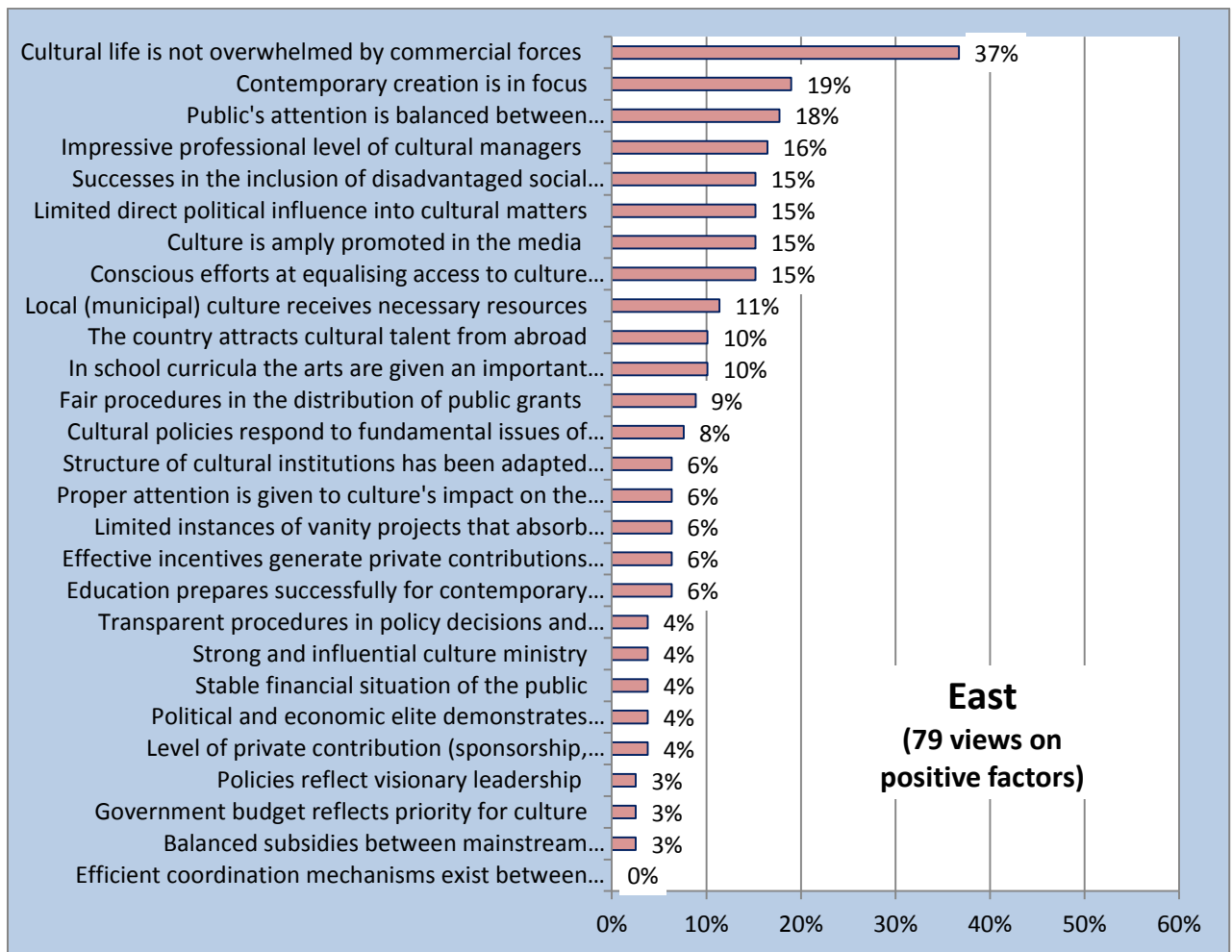


Diagram 11 The frequencies of positive aspects in the eastern answers



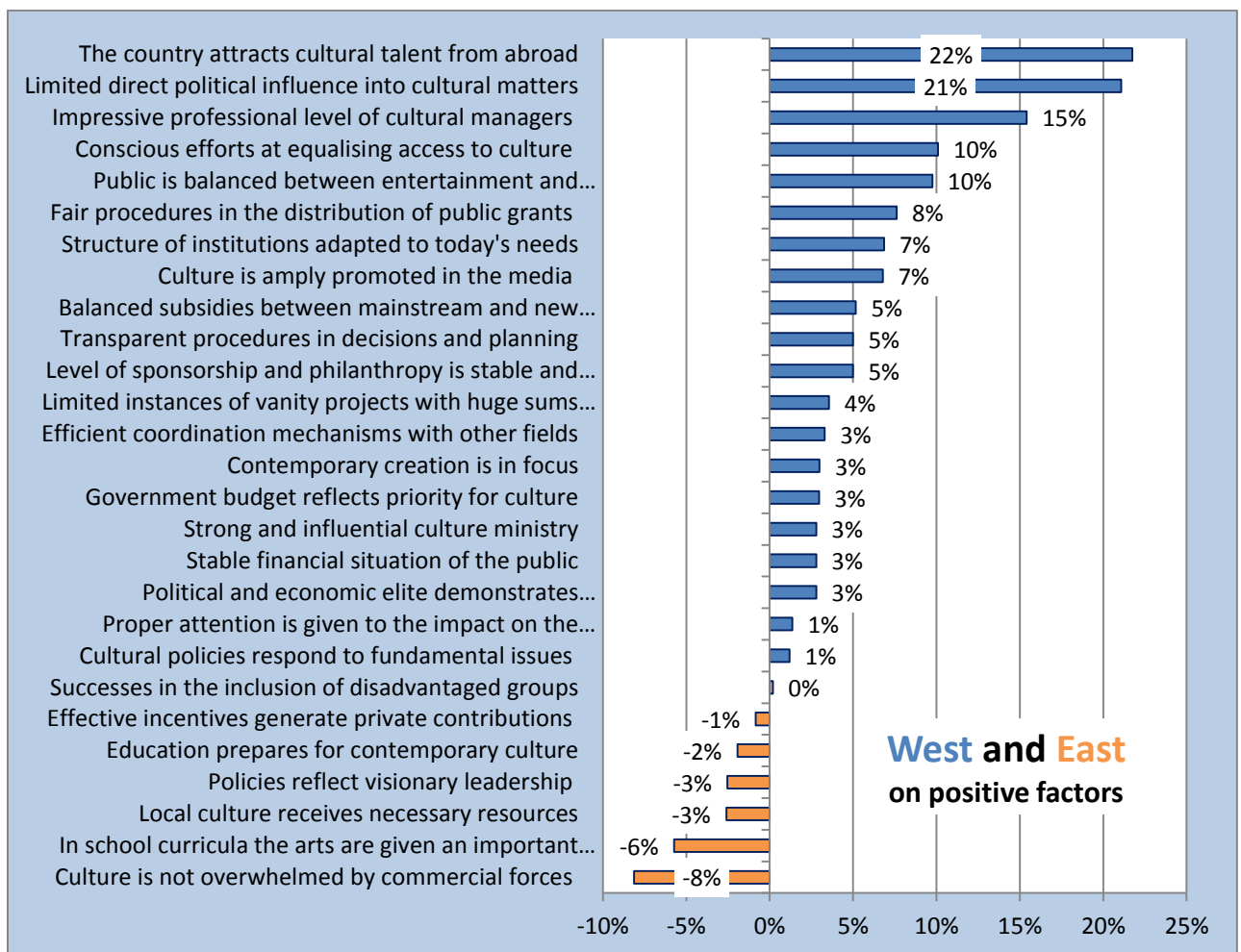
As seen, eastern contributors carry the brunt of responsibility for the high popularity of the statement *Cultural life is not overwhelmed by commercial forces*.

Further nuances are revealed by direct contrasting. [Diagram 12](#) follows the logic of [Diagram 7](#): the typically lower eastern percentages are distracted from the western figures.

Let us take at the two items on top. *The country attracts cultural talent from abroad* was marked by 32% in the west and 10% in the east resulting 22%; while *Limited direct political influence into cultural matters* collected 36% in the west and 15% in the east, hence the 21%. Both items are the positive formulation of challenges that one would associate with the eastern half of Europe: brain drain and over-politicised cultural life. Without trying to interpret the four figures, the combined highs indicate that both issues are on the top of people's mind everywhere, including the west.

The contributions to the survey suggest that art education has more stable positions in east and central Europe, corroborated by mentions of *Education prepares for contemporary culture* – two statements that very few western respondents identified as strength in their climate.

Diagram 12 Fusing eastern and western views about positive aspects



The most dedicated to statistical manoeuvres are invited to [Diagram 13](#). In it we went one step further than the last graph. First the exercise of [Diagram 9](#) was administered to the 79 eastern respondents. That is: at each problematic factor the percentage by which the 79 people marked it was reduced with the percentage that the same group of 79 marked the positive counterpart of the item. Then the same was done to the 91 western responses. Thus we arrived at two lists of problems modified with their positive complement. The smaller (the set belonging to the 79) was then deducted from the larger (the figures of the 91 western responses). The resulting graph reflects the basic division in attitude. With the average of 3.7 positive choices, westerners modified (weakened) their list of grievances while the eastern complaints were left heavy after only 2.6 strengths marked on the average. This is the reason why this graph based on problematic factors is dominated by the colour that stands for the eastern responses.

Diagram 13 The distances between eastern and western views about problematic aspects as modified by positive counterparts

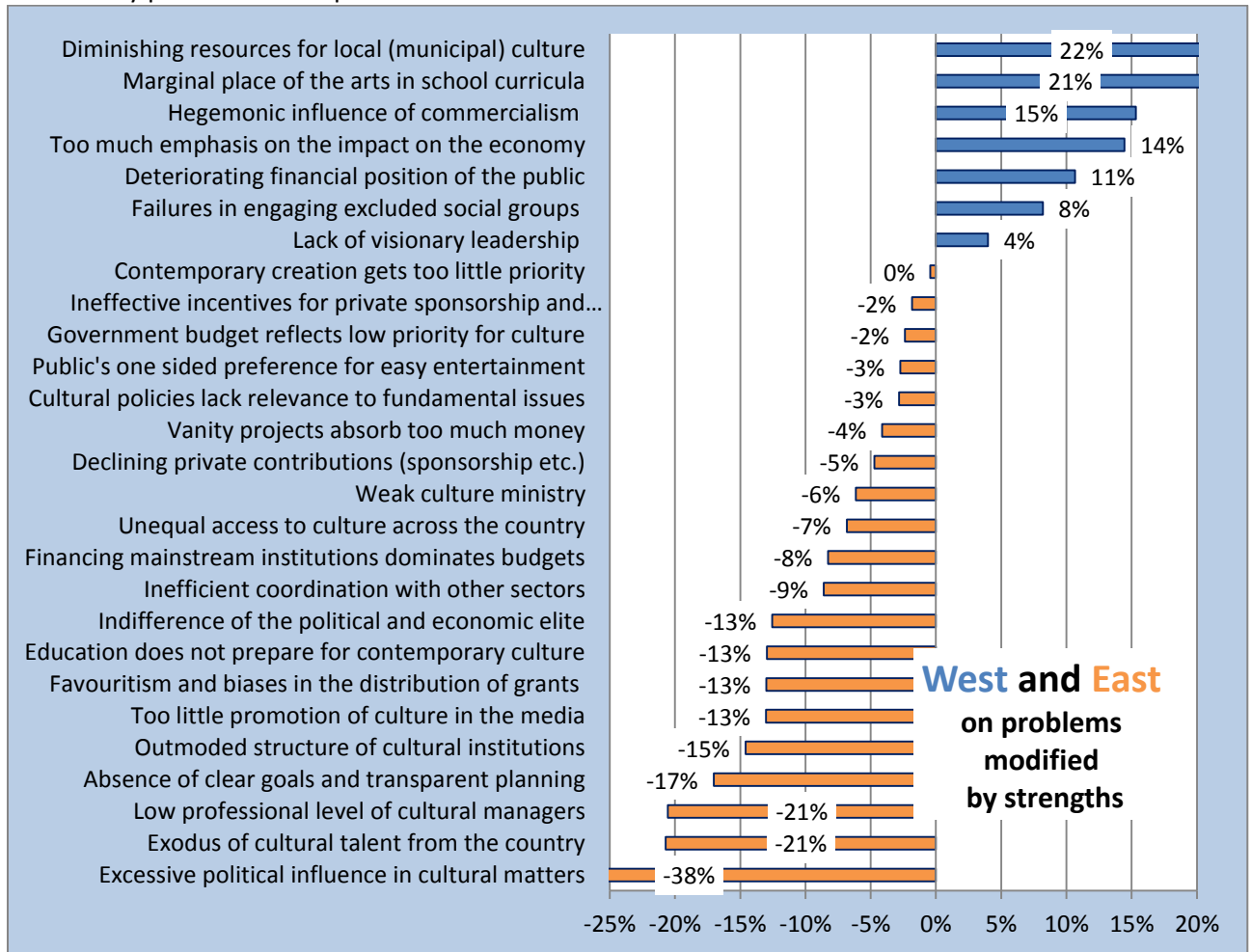


Diagram 13 measures distances between the two groups of respondents. On the example of *Public's one sided preference for easy entertainment*. In the East 79 group 5% selected this problematic factor. But on the other hand 18% marked the positive complement, *Public's attention is balanced between entertainment and deeper cultural challenges*. The modified eastern percentage of this problem is -13%, in fact considerably larger satisfaction than discontent.

The respective percentages of the West 91 group are 12% and 27%, indicating consensual western satisfaction at -15%. Combining east and west puts this “problem” at the second position from the bottom at **Diagram 9**, which is in fact the second most positive of all aspects generally perceived.

Diagram 13, on the other hand focuses on the differences between west and east, which is negligible at 3% in the case of this aspect.

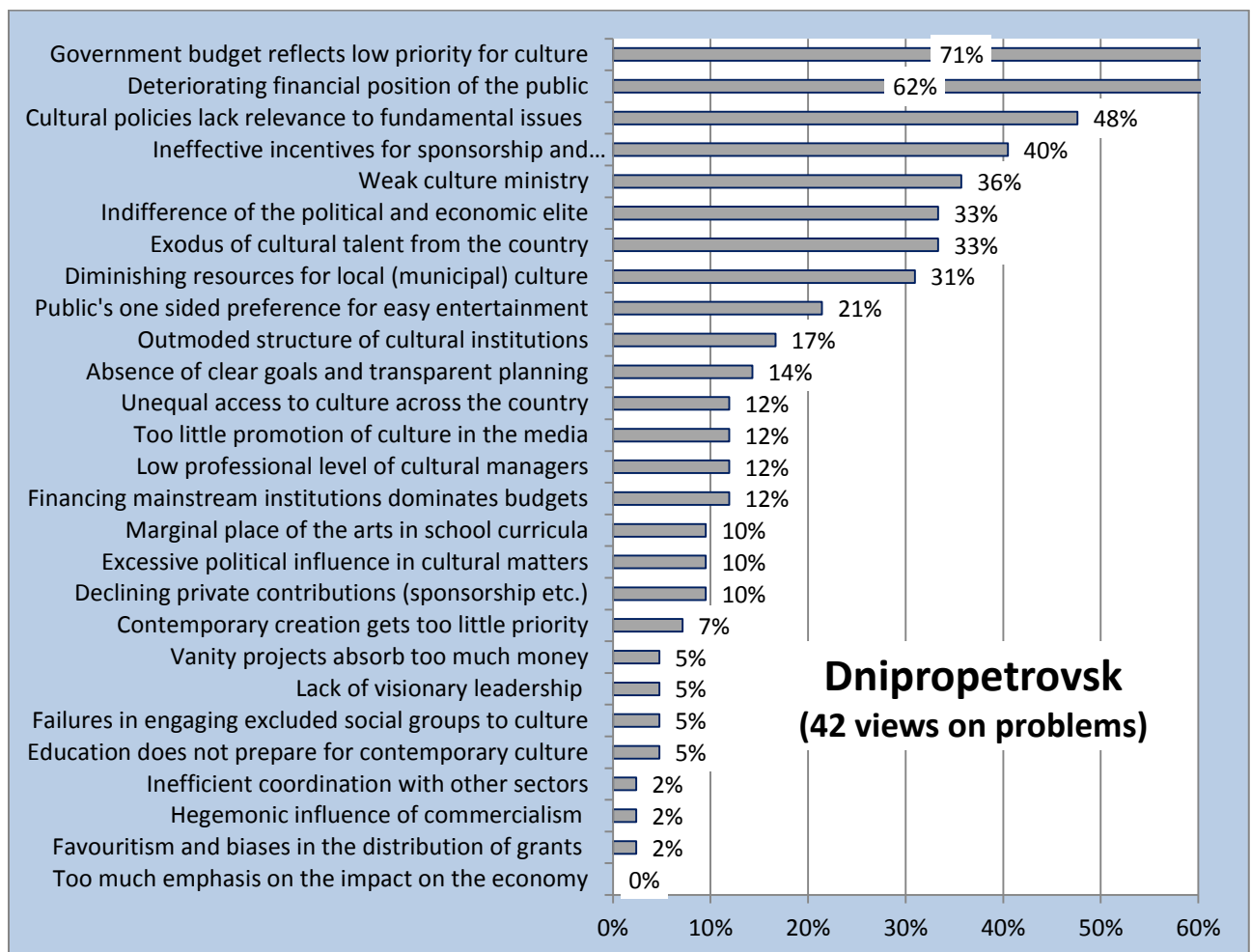
The greatest distance is about political interference in cultural matters, a complaint brandished high by the 79 contributors from the east. Taking the measure of absolute distance, the complaint about the financing of local culture divides east and west the most. The three more issues where the distances in perception are also important are:

- *Marginal place of the arts in school curricula*
- *Low professional level of cultural managers*
- *Exodus of cultural talent from the country*

The Dnipropetrovsk case

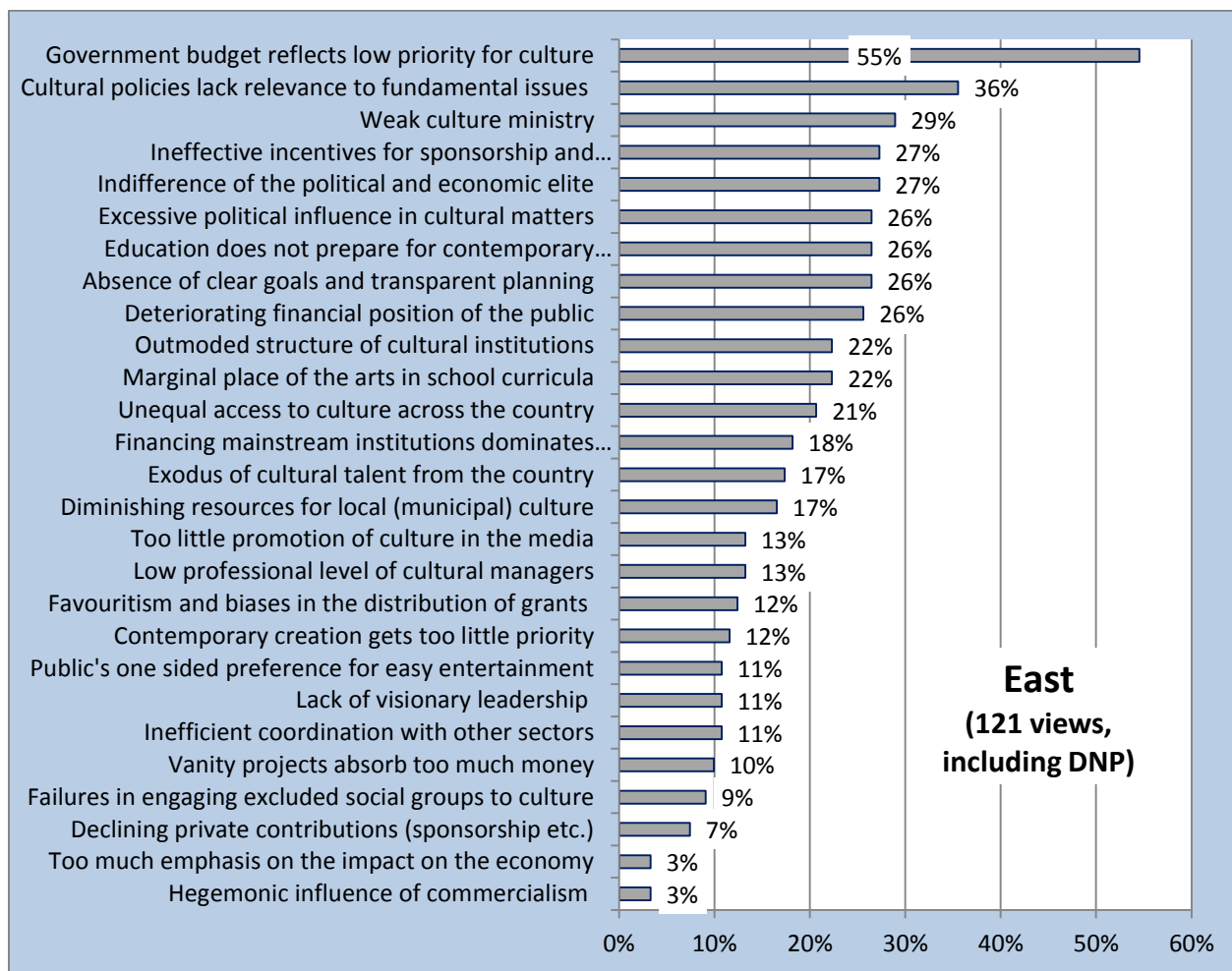
In the early piloting period of the questionnaire ad hoc small groups (like a class in a course) were asked to fill in but the instrument was applied in combat for the first time in December 2015 in the Ukrainian city of Dnipropetrovsk. The participants of [a conference](#) on regional cultural policies filled in the questionnaire. The answers were processed and presented the following day, including comparisons with findings elsewhere. The exercise is warmly recommended to be repeated on other occasions.

Diagram 14 Answers received in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, about problematic factors



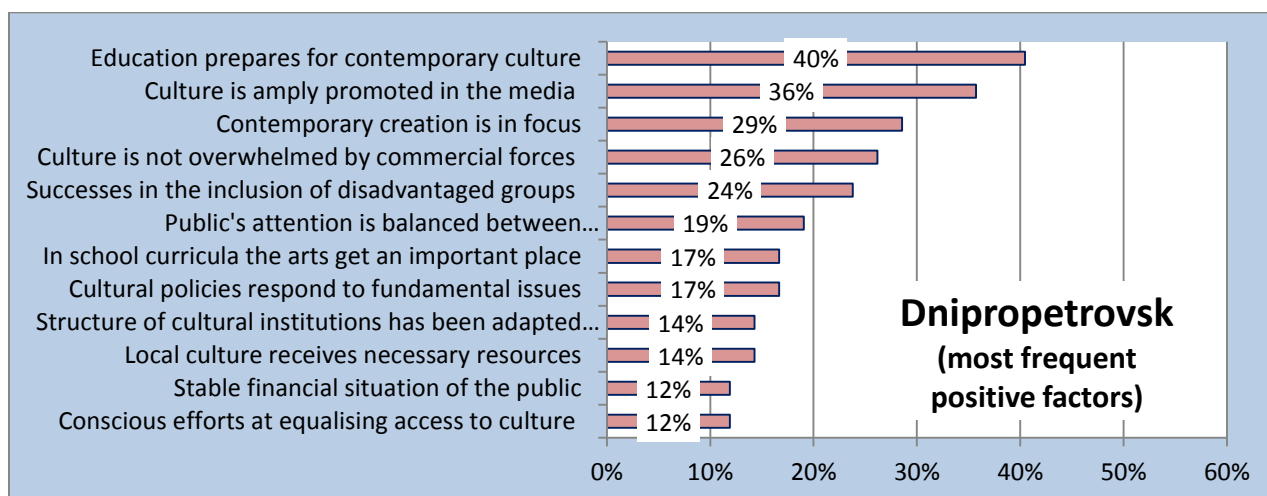
The highly dominant position of the complaint about the government budget (and 36% wishing for a strong ministry) is symptomatic of a place with strong legacies of centralised power also in matters of culture. In a country with so many hardships it is no surprise that nearly two thirds refer to the precarious conditions of the population. Hopes are pinned to sponsorship and altruism, as over 40% expect more effective incentives in those directions.

Diagram 15 Responses from eastern countries, including those received in Dnipropetrovsk



This is a reinforced edition of [Diagram 6](#), the cumulated opinion of everyone from postcommunist countries. Adding the 42 views collected in Dnipropetrovsk (DNP) lends a bit more optimism to the eastern responses (no matter how ironic this appears). People in DNP chose 3.3 by average, more than others in the east yet still much less than in the west – see top of their list in [Diagram 15](#).

Diagram 16 Ten most often selected positive factors in Dnipropetrovsk.



Regional specificities

The example of Dnipropetrovsk showed the relevance of a fairly cohesive collective judgment on the conditions of the climate of culture, produced by the 42 participants in the survey. The other geographic groupings in the survey lack that level of concentration. In case of the problematic factors the relative shortage in numbers is partly counterbalanced by references to the 2014 barometer, where answers on the same statements were broken down by similar geographic principles. We are lacking this basis for reference at the newly applied positive aspects, and we did not ask about the professional background of the contributors in 2014.

The largest group is labelled the Centre. The majority of the 52 contributors in the group are from the old member states of the EU. The sporadic answers from Switzerland, Canada and Australia were also added to the centre in a cultural sense. This group demonstrates the essence of the west, among other by pointing at one of the largest number of positive aspects, the average being 4.0 choices by respondent. (Correspondents from Nordic-Baltic countries were a notch more accommodating.)

The antipode from this latter point of view is the group of countries on the south-east of Europe: the 33 answers included 70 mentions of positive features, an average of 2.1. Romanians are to blame, with an extra low average of 1.8 positive aspects, the 12 expert views from that country painted a gloomy picture about the south-eastern cultural climate.

To adapt to the format of the graphs shortened versions of the statements are applied.

Diagram 17 Perceptions of the cultural climate in the centre (UK, Ireland, Benelux, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Canada, Australia)

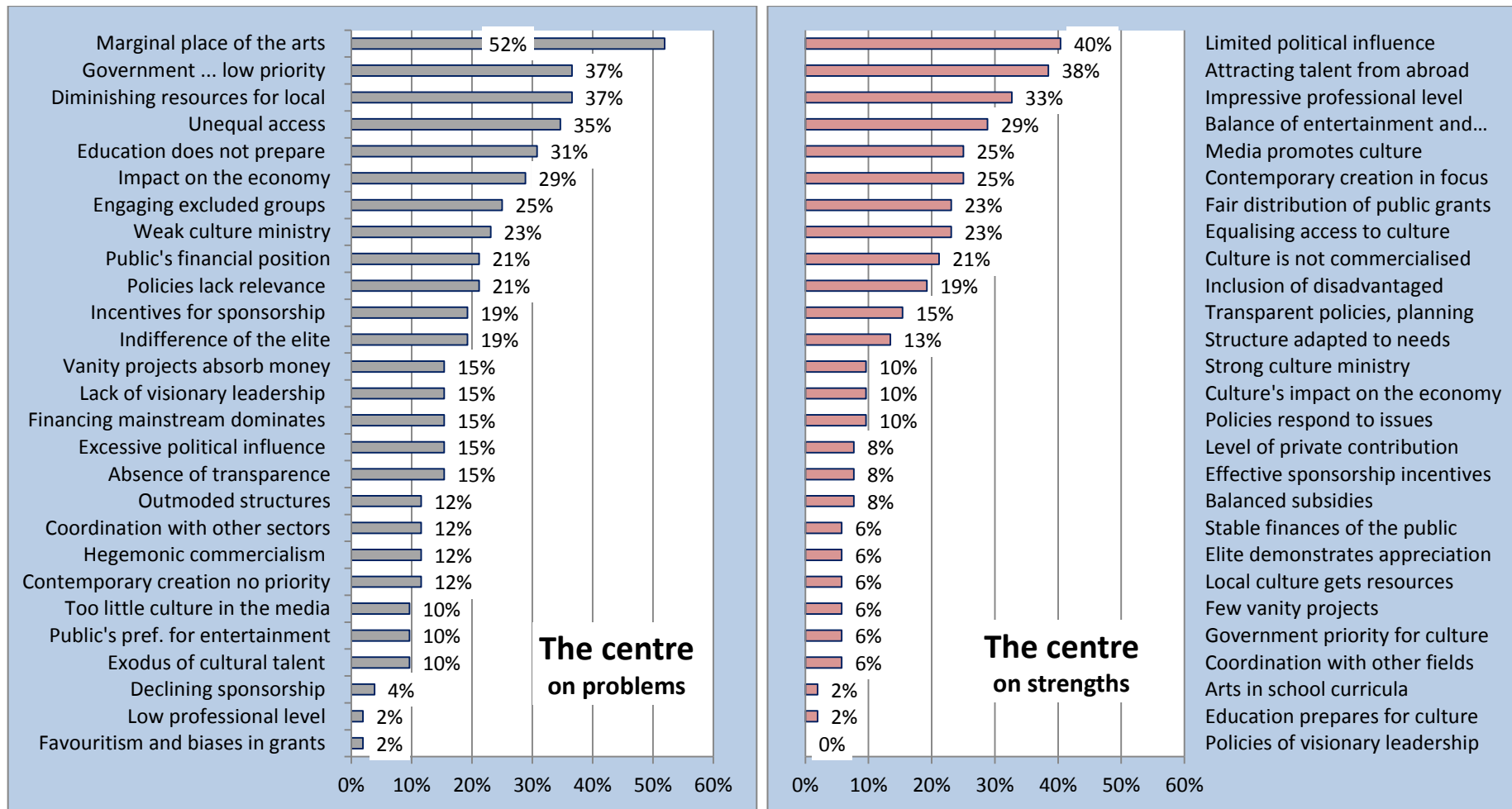


Diagram 18 Perceptions of the cultural climate in the south-east (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, ex-Yugoslav countries, Turkey)

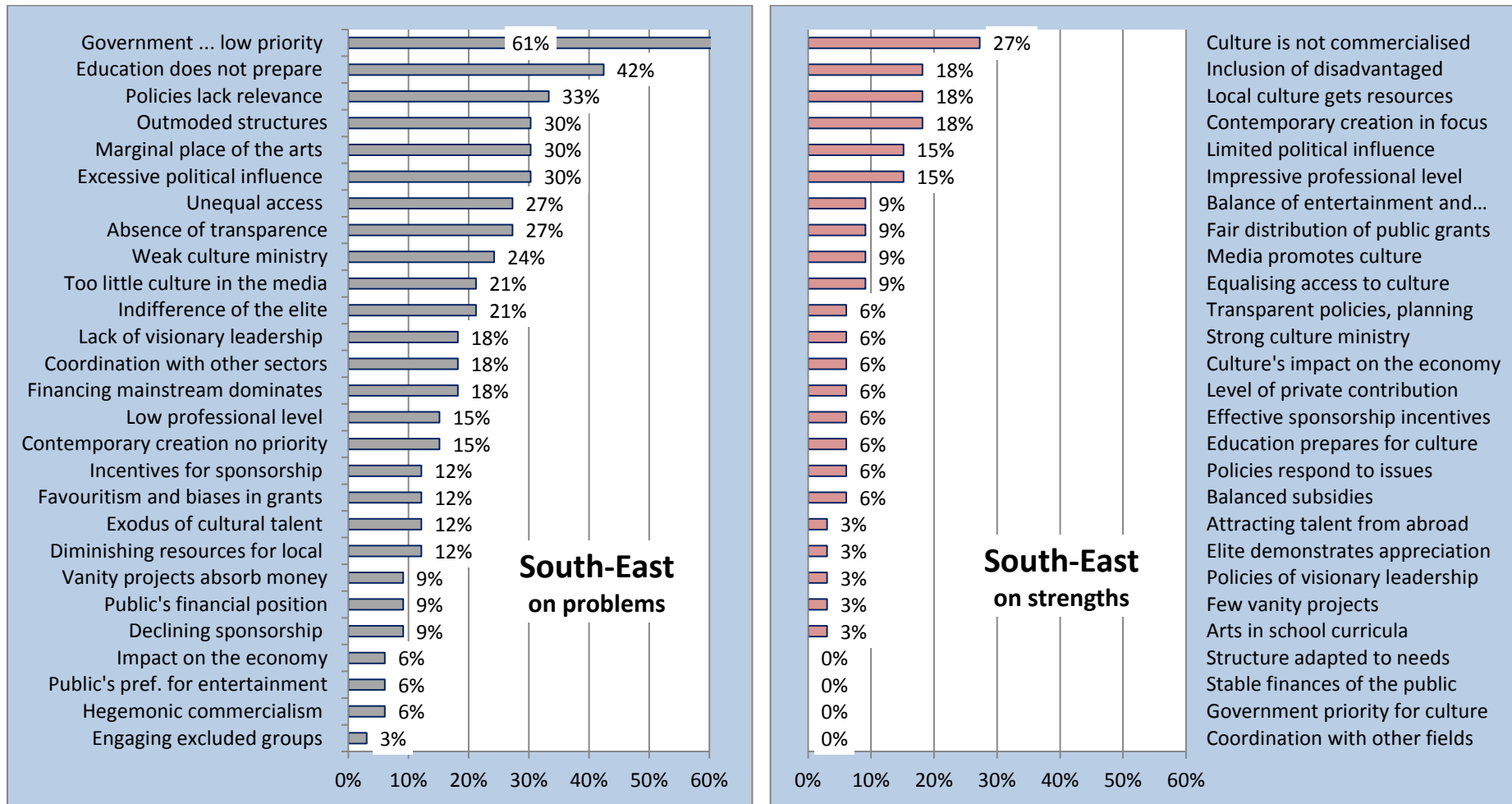


Diagram 19 Perceptions of the cultural climate in the Visegrad countries (Czech Rep., Hungary, Poland, Slovakia)

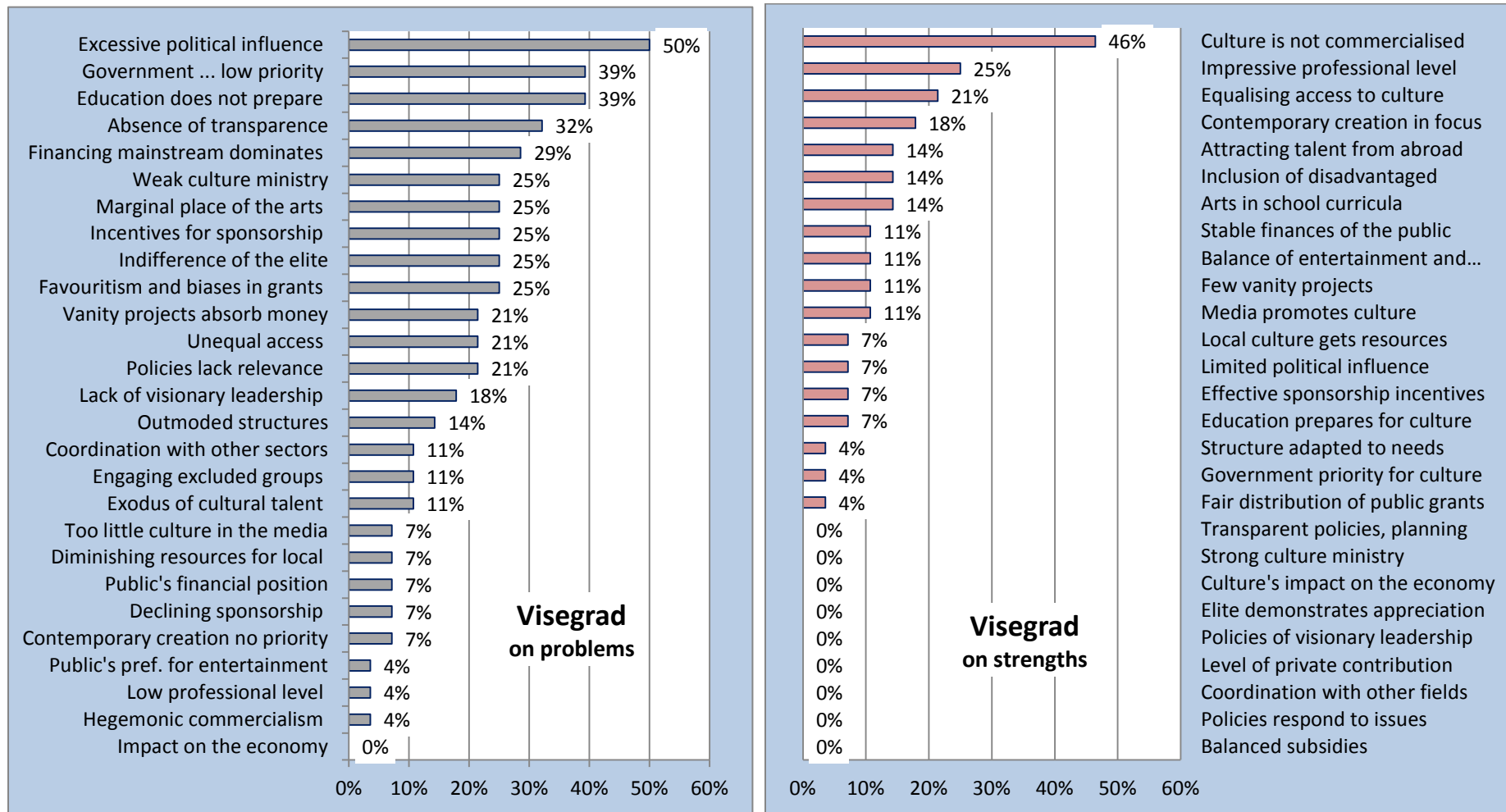


Diagram 20 Perceptions of the cultural climate in the Mediterranean countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain)

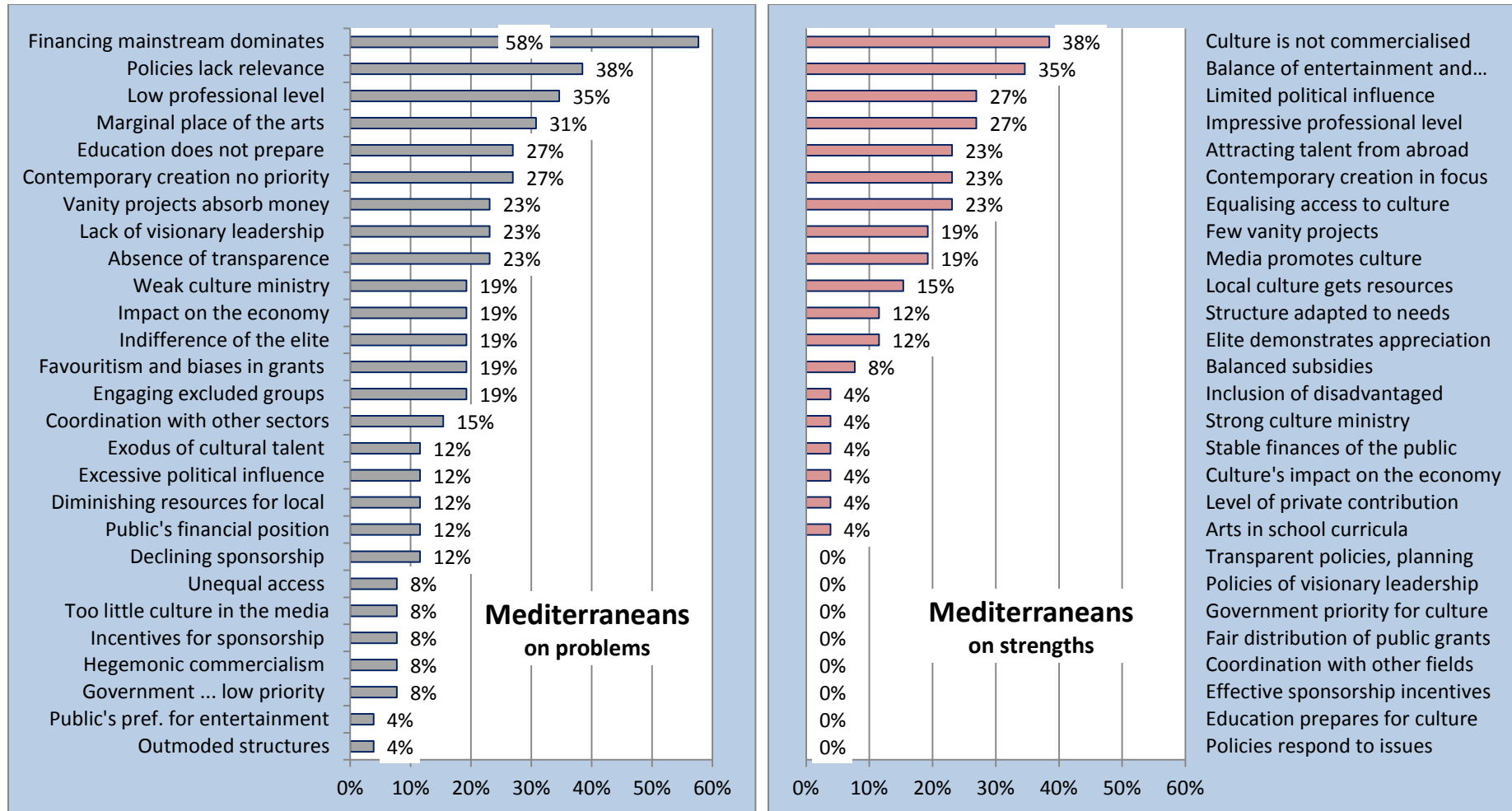
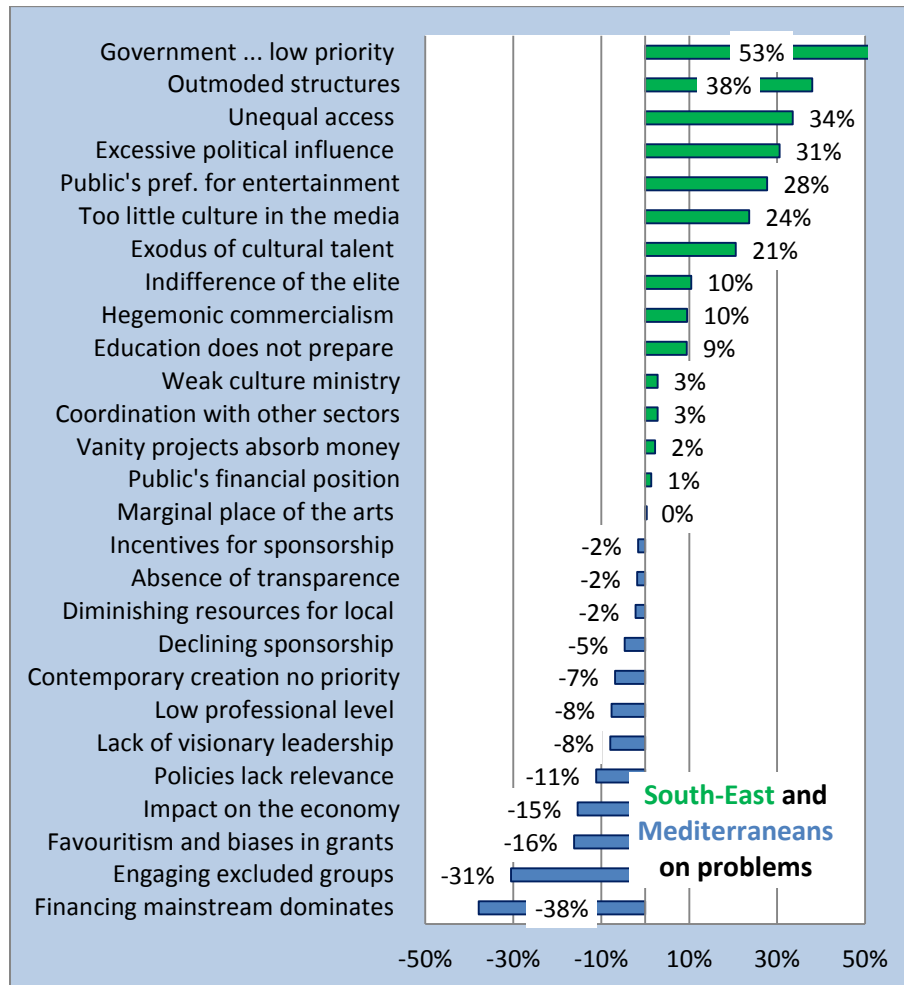
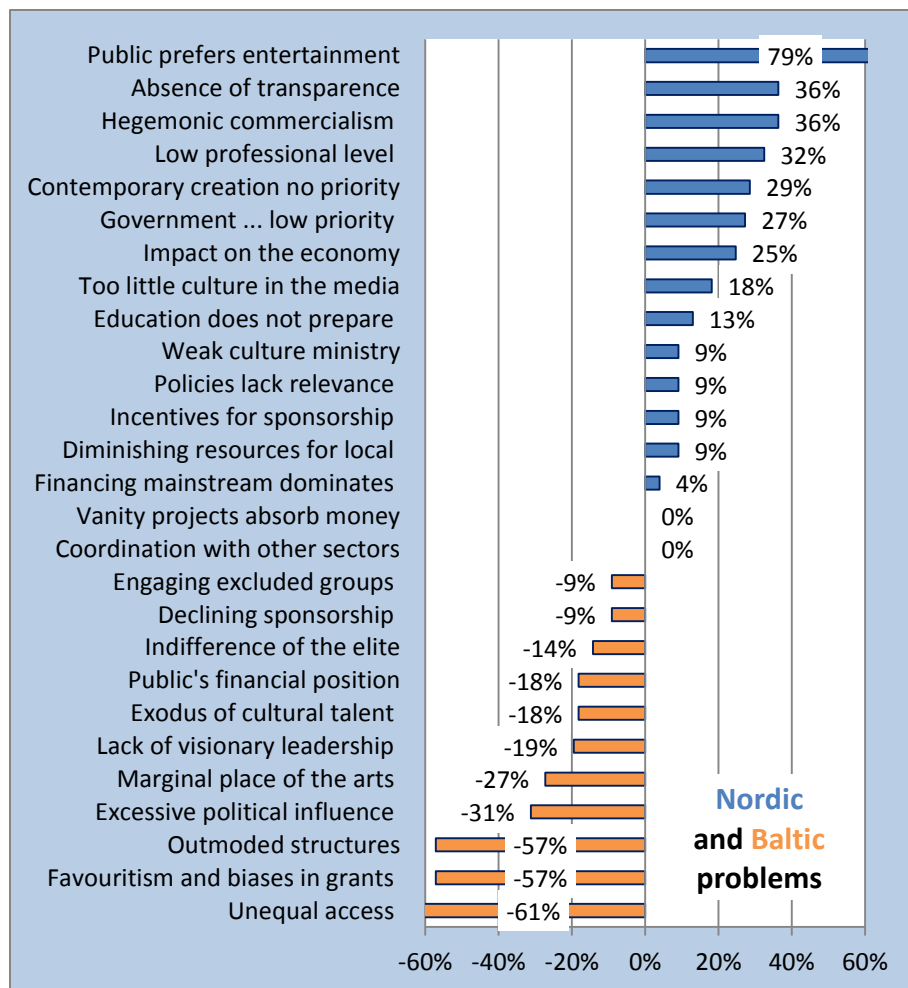


Diagram 21 The distances between south-eastern and Mediterranean views about problematic aspects as modified by positive counterparts



(Explaining [Diagram 21](#))

Diagram 22 The distances between Nordic and Baltic views about problematic aspects as modified by positive counterparts



(Explaining [Diagram 22](#))

Diagram 23 Perceptions about the cultural climate in ex-soviet countries (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, including the participants of the Dnipropetrovsk offline survey)

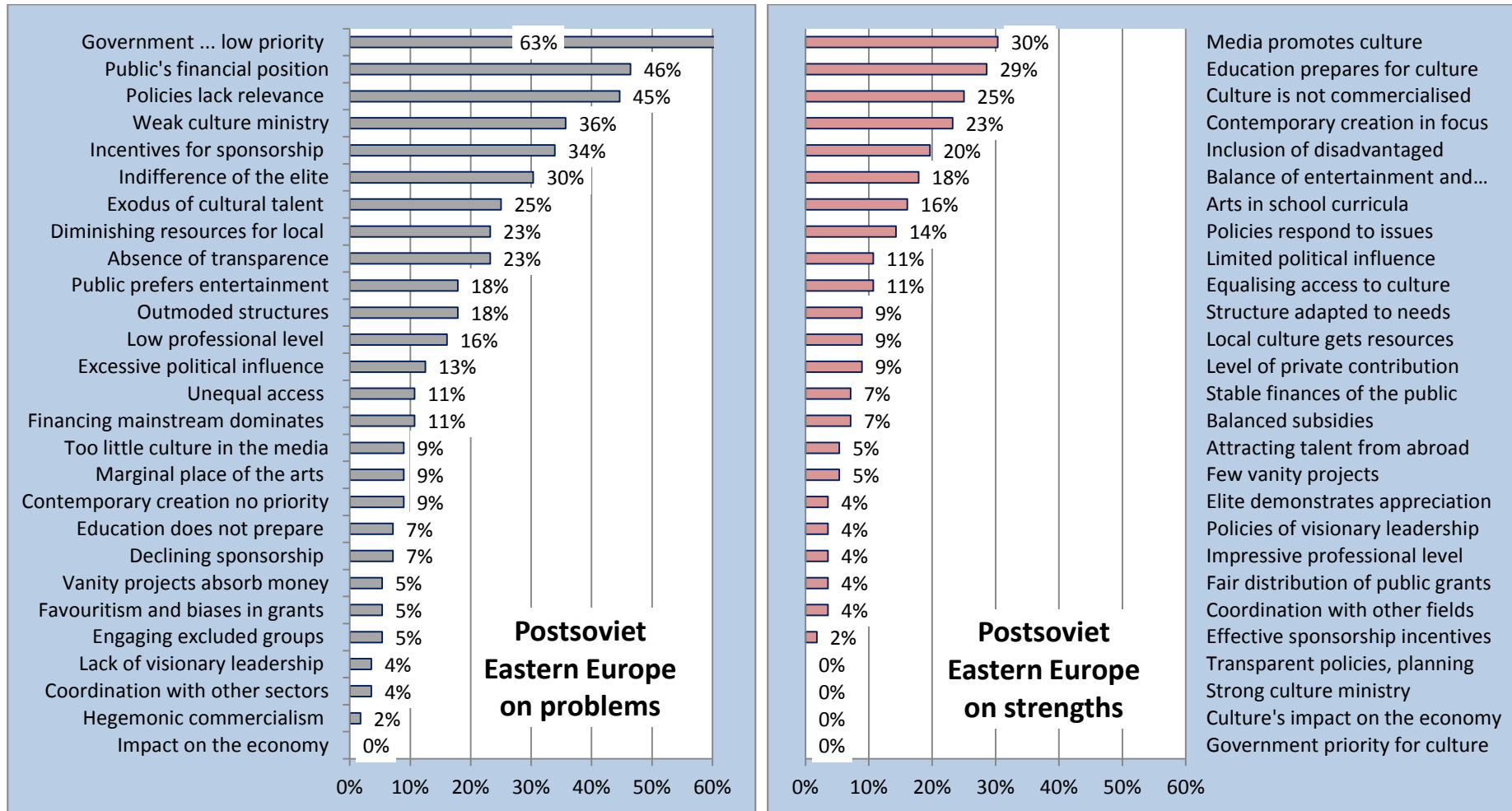


Diagram 24 Perceptions on the cultural climate in the former Yugoslav republics (Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia)

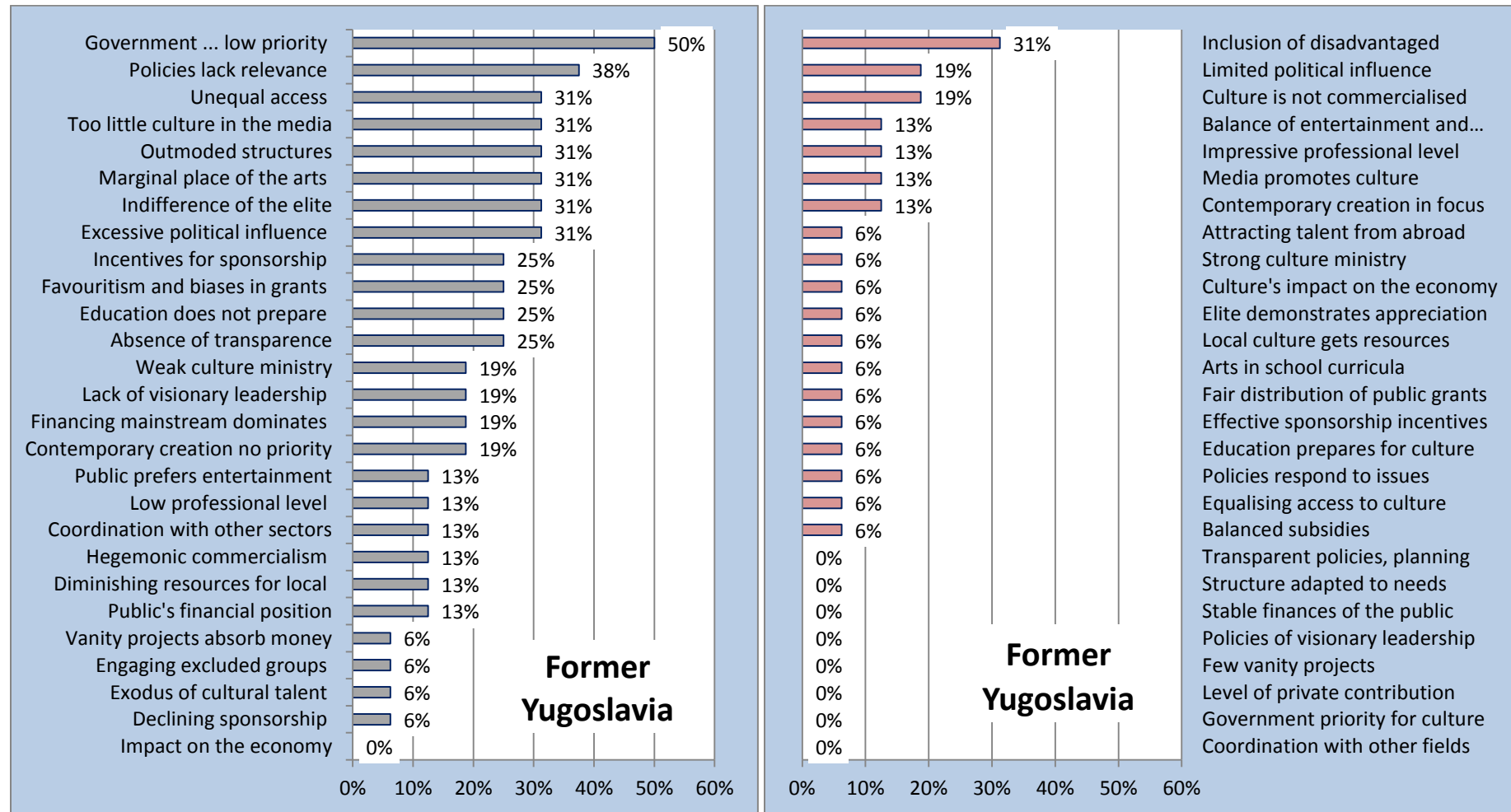
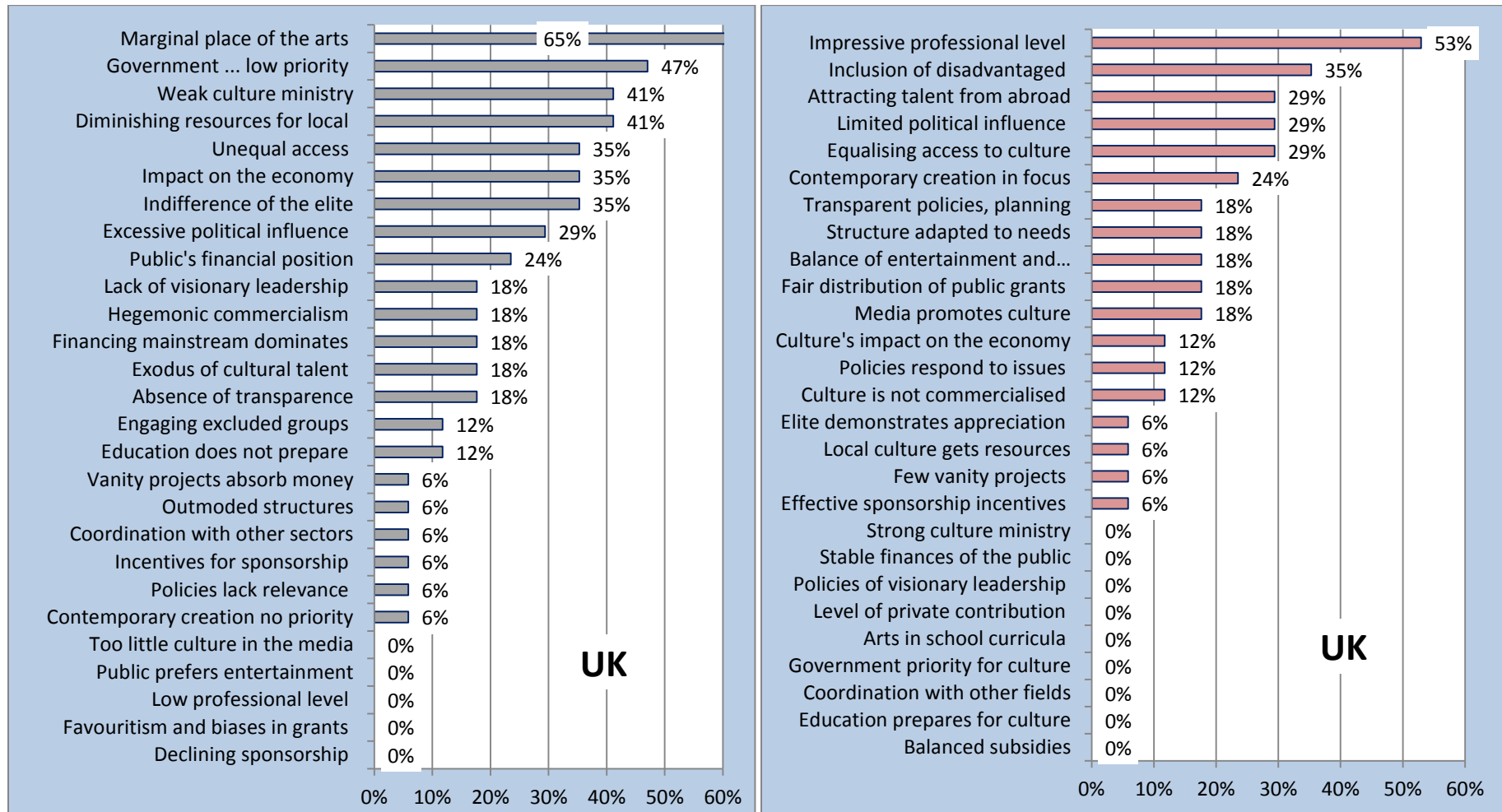


Diagram 25 Perceptions of the climate of culture in the United Kingdom



(Editing to be continued)

Diagram 26 Equality: *Diminishing resources for local (municipal) culture, Failures in engaging excluded social groups to culture, Unequal access to culture across the country*

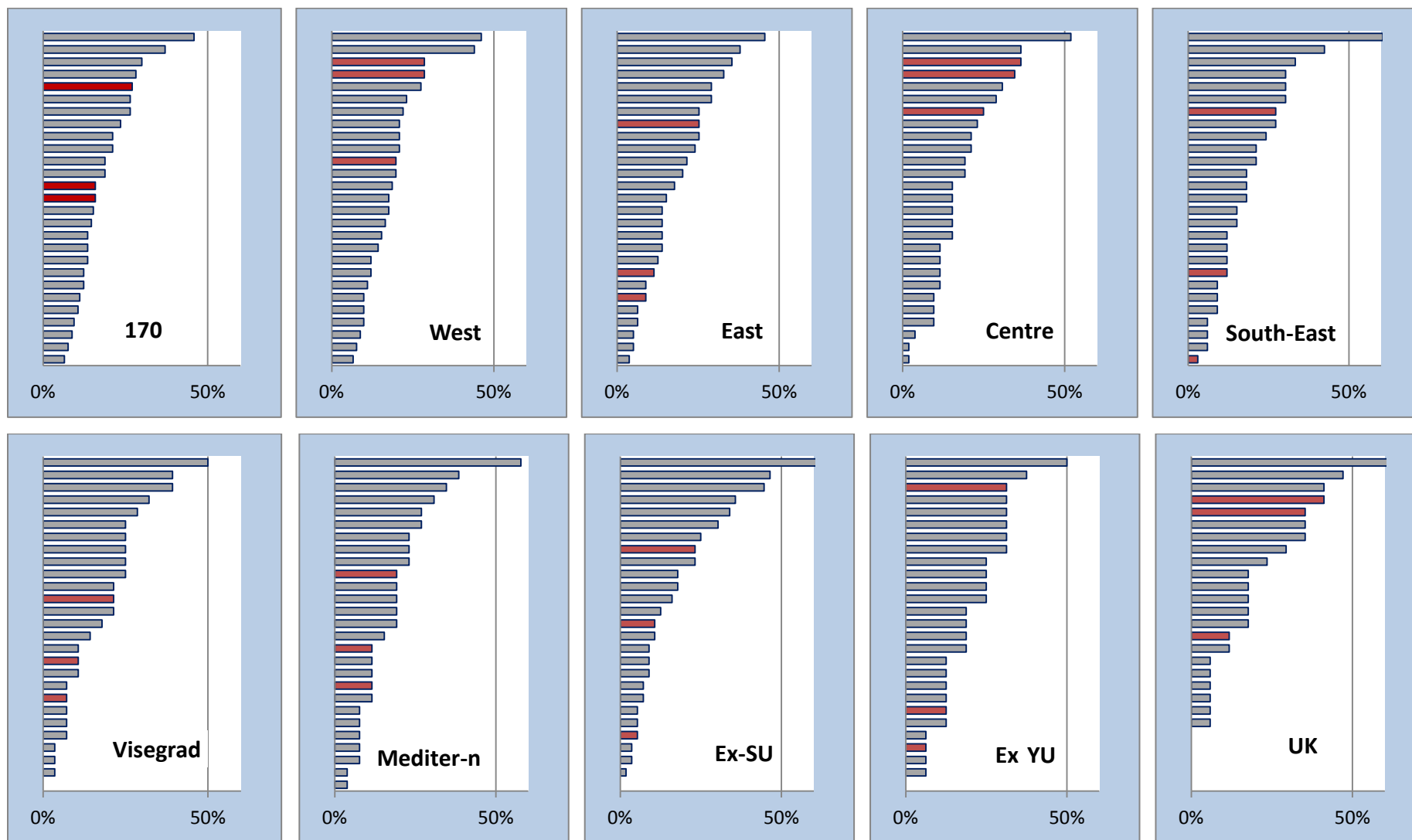


Diagram 27 Transparency: *Absence of clear goals and transparent planning, Excessive political influence in cultural matters, Favouritism and biases in the distribution of public grants, Vanity projects absorb too much money*

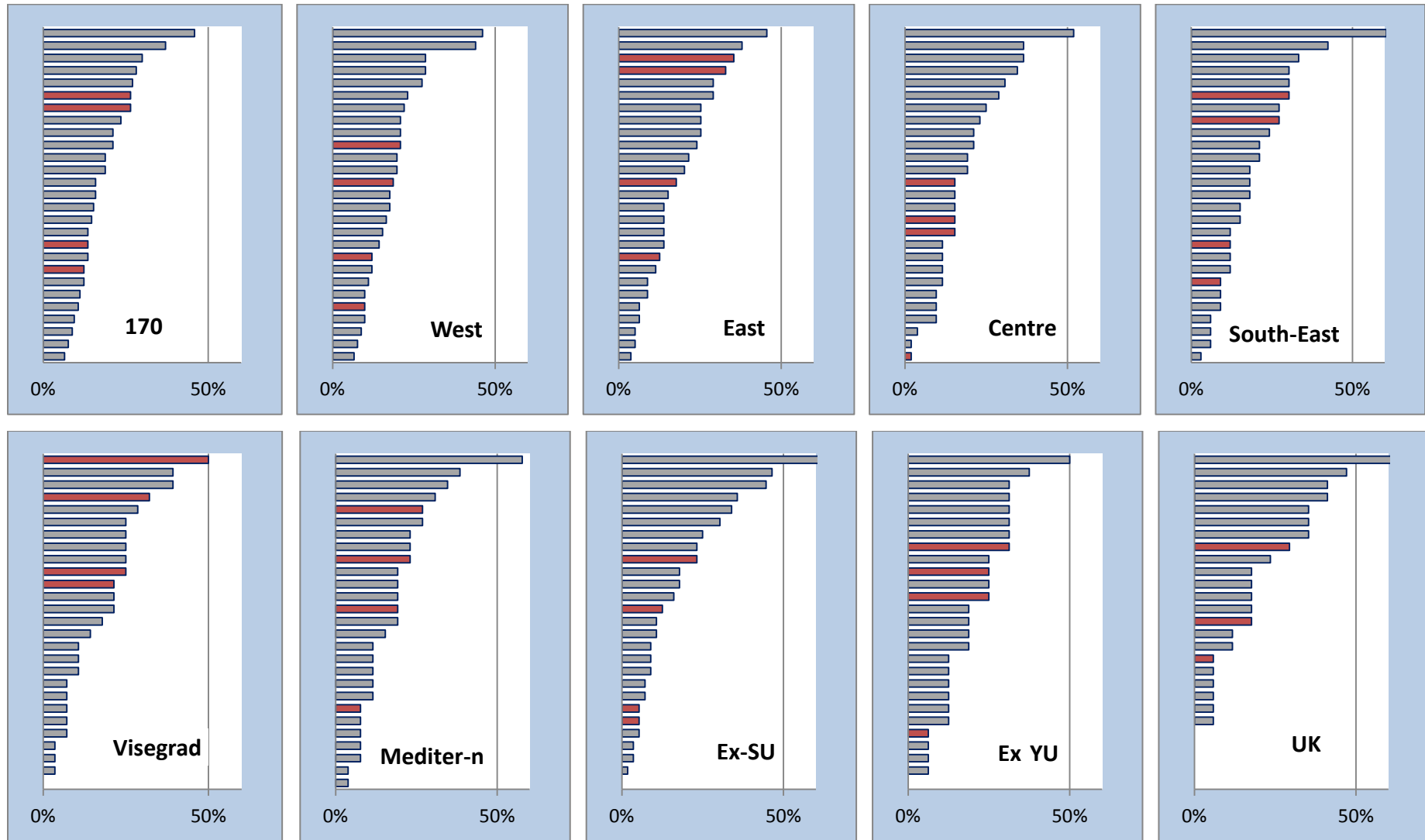


Diagram 28 Public: *Deteriorating financial position of the public, Hegemonic influence of commercialism, Public's one sided preference for easy entertainment*

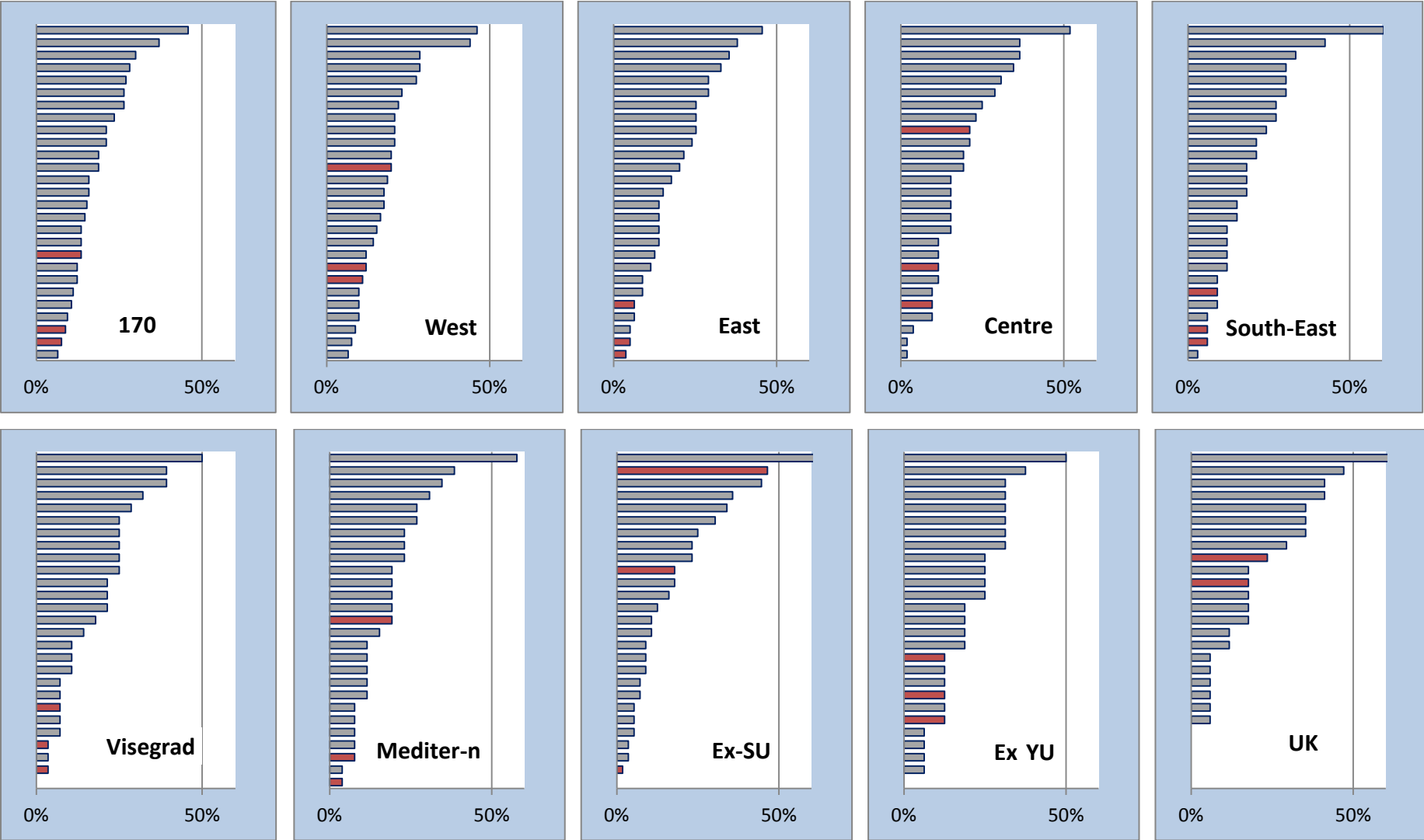


Diagram 28 Sponsorship: *Declining private contributions (sponsorship, philanthropy), Ineffective incentives for private sponsorship and philanthropy*

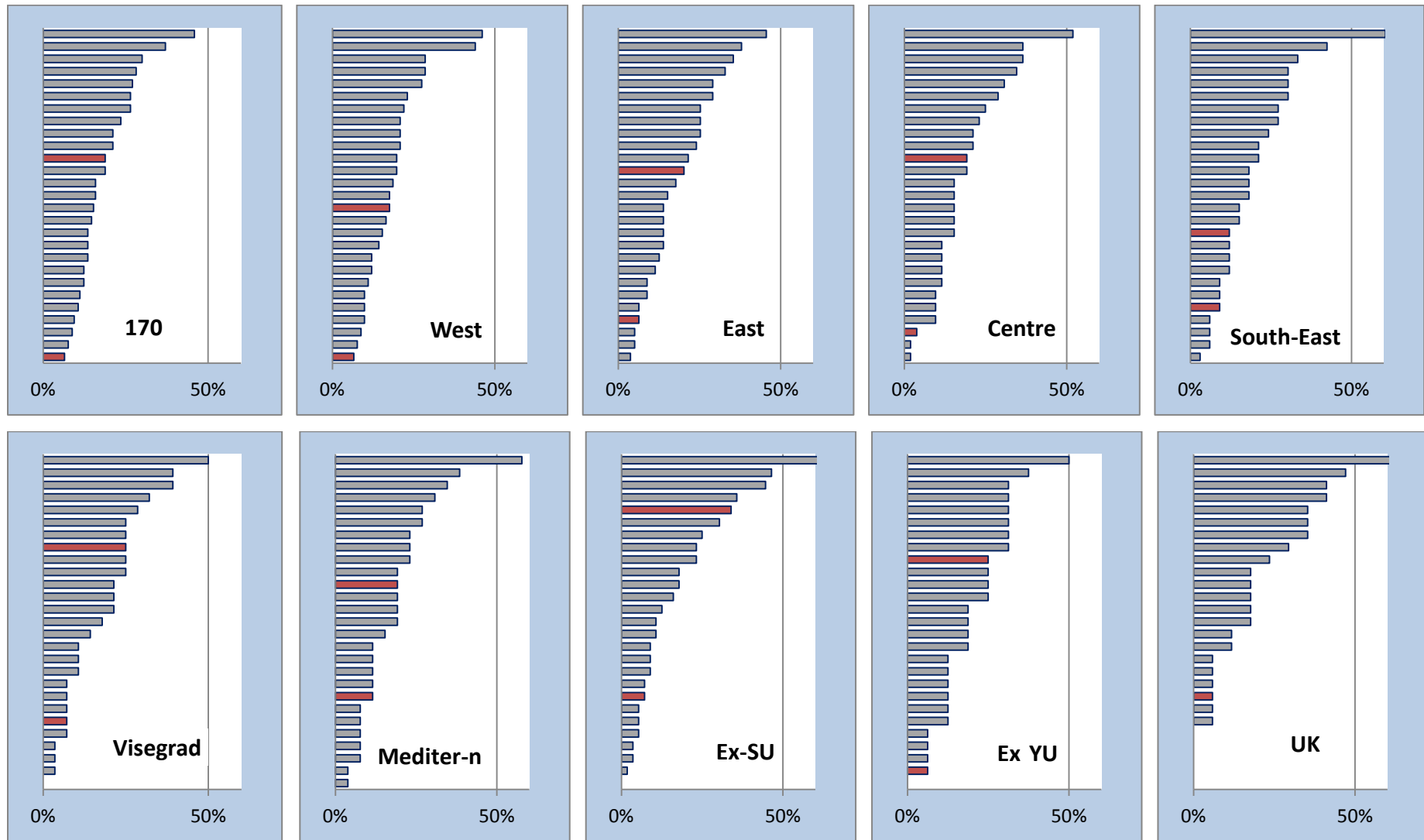


Diagram 29 Artists' perceptions about the climate of culture

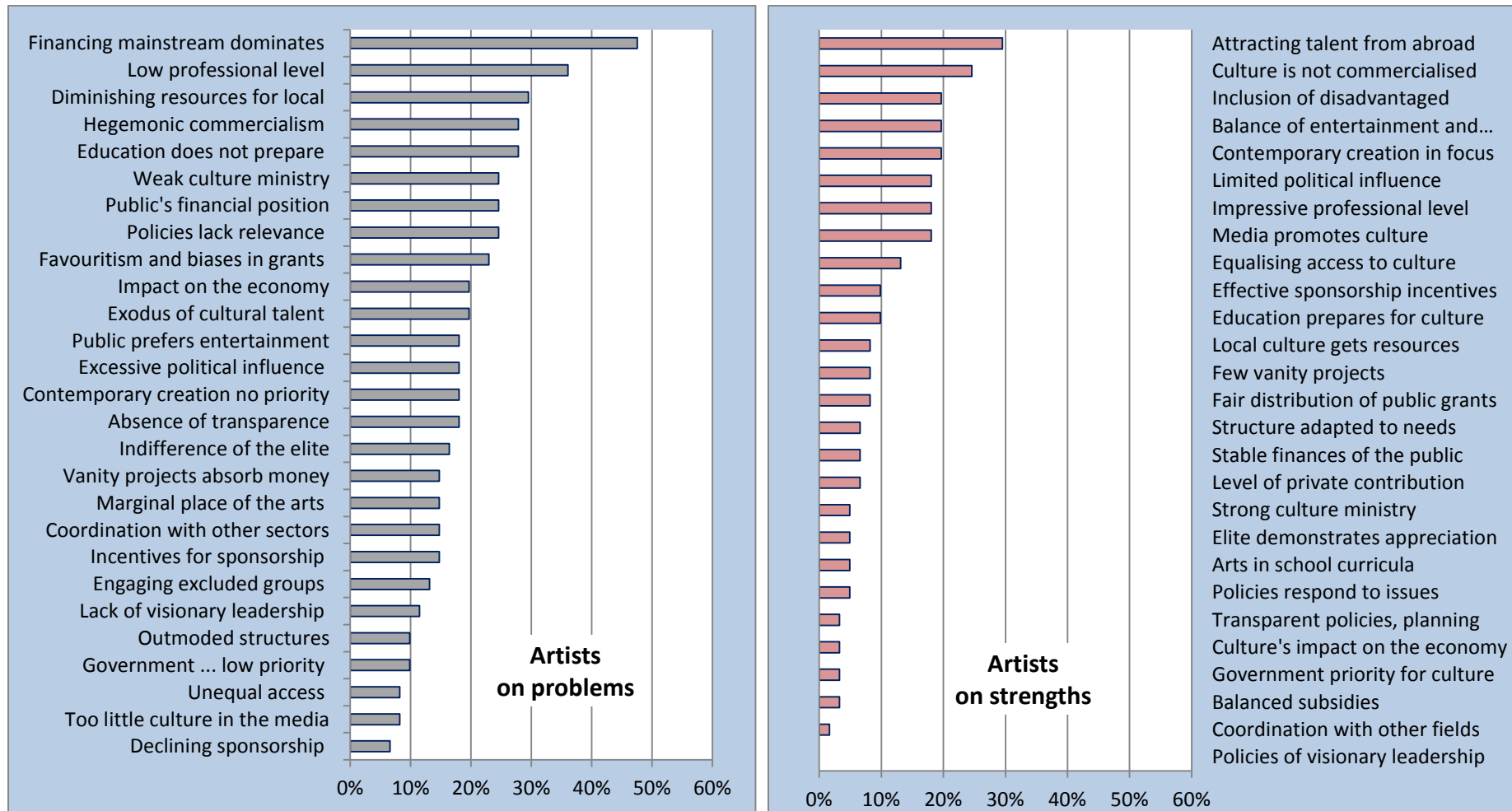


Diagram 30 Perceptions of western performing artists about the climate of culture

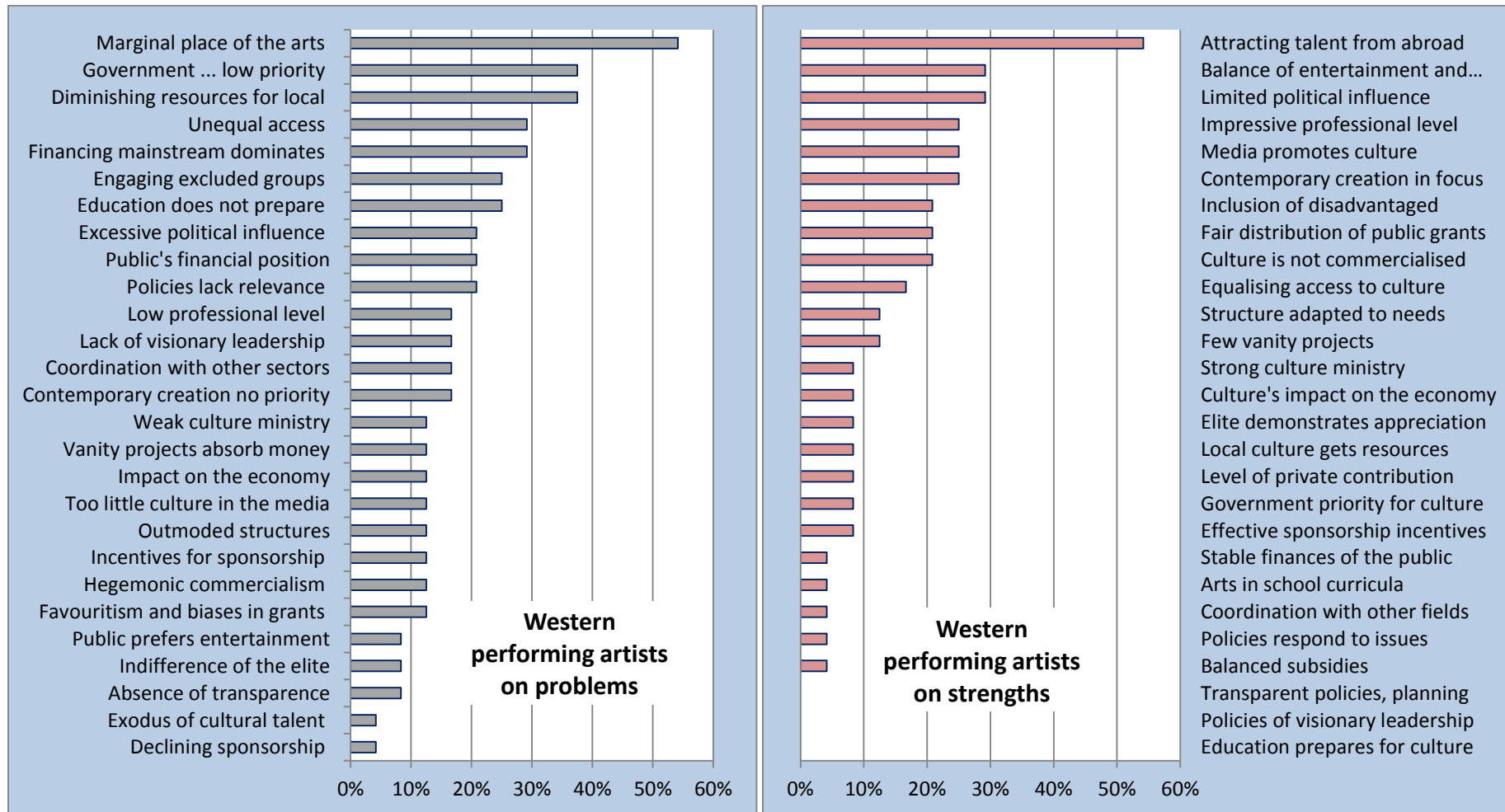


Diagram 31 Perceptions of eastern performing artists about the climate of culture

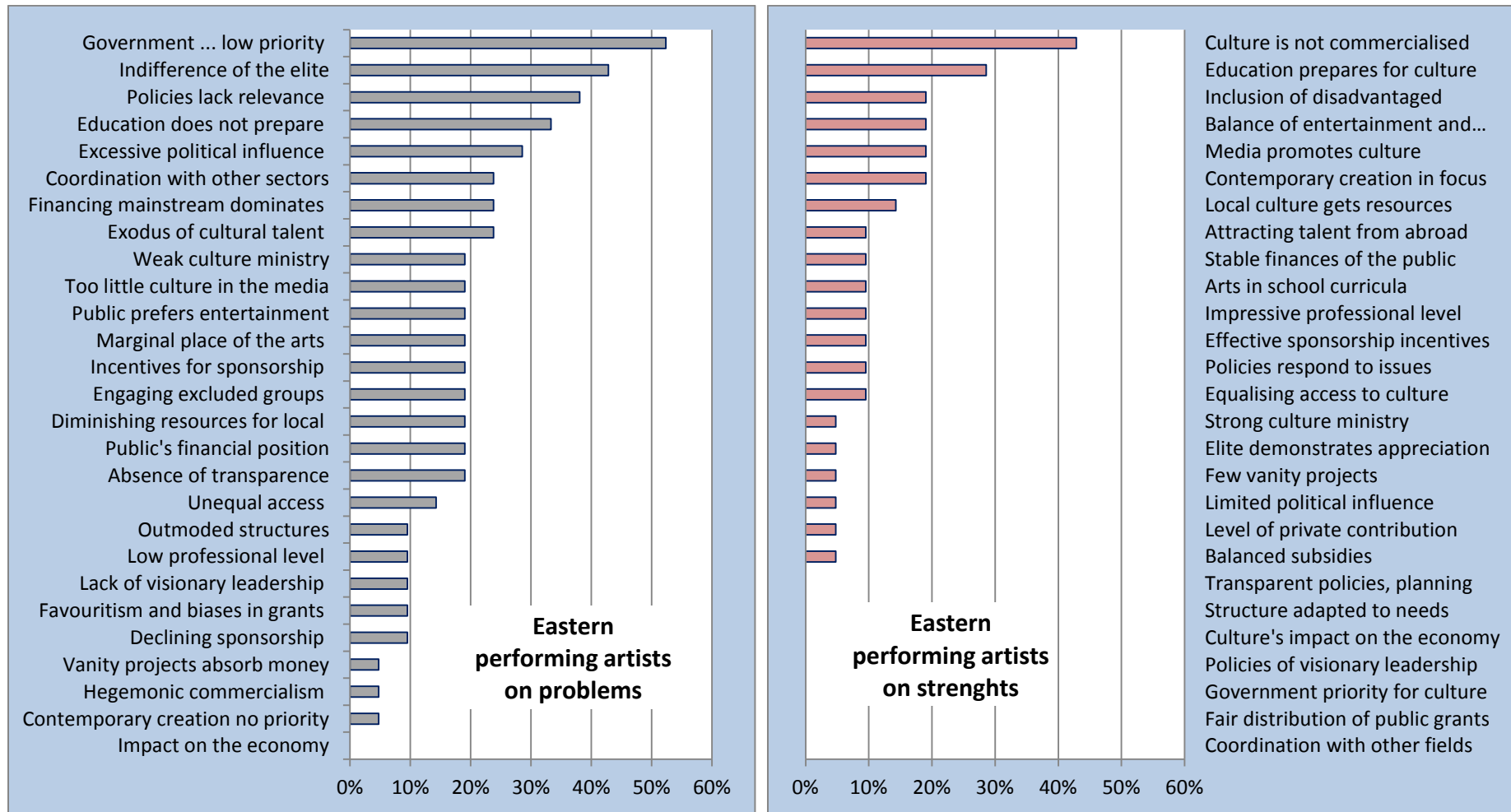


Diagram 32 Perceptions of visual artists about the climate of culture

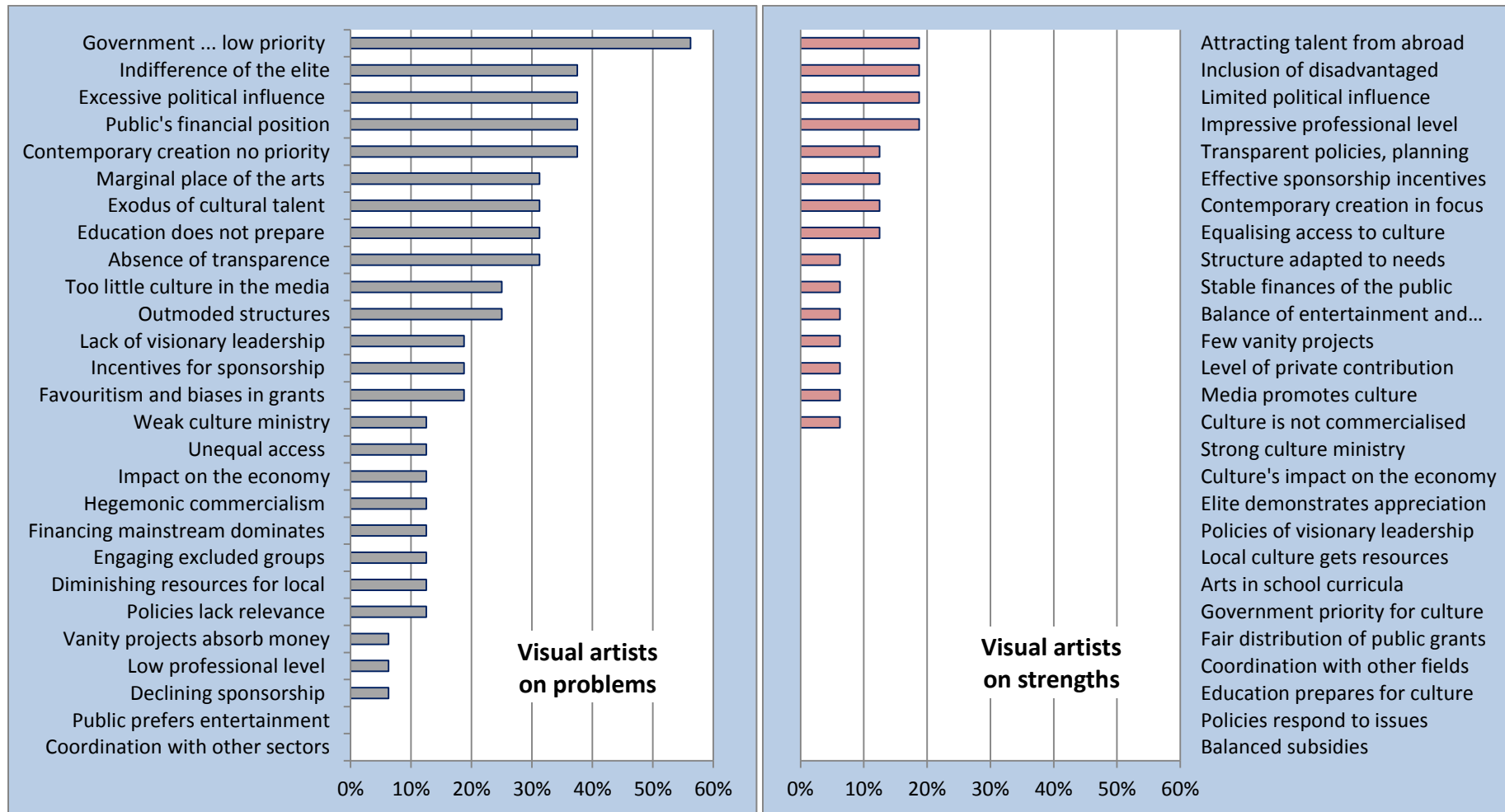


Diagram 33 Perceptions of researchers about the climate of culture

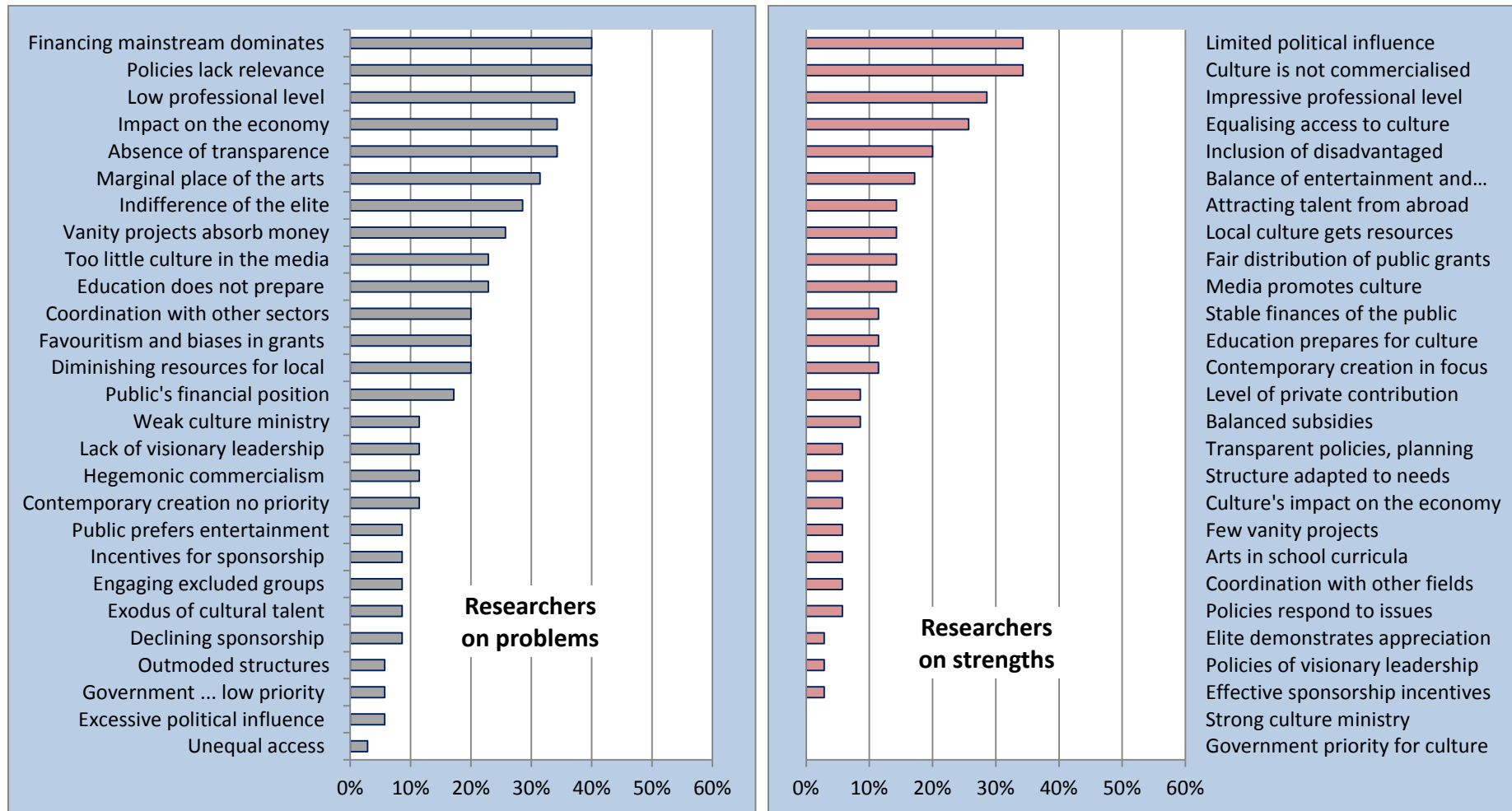


Diagram 34 Perceptions of western researchers about the climate of culture

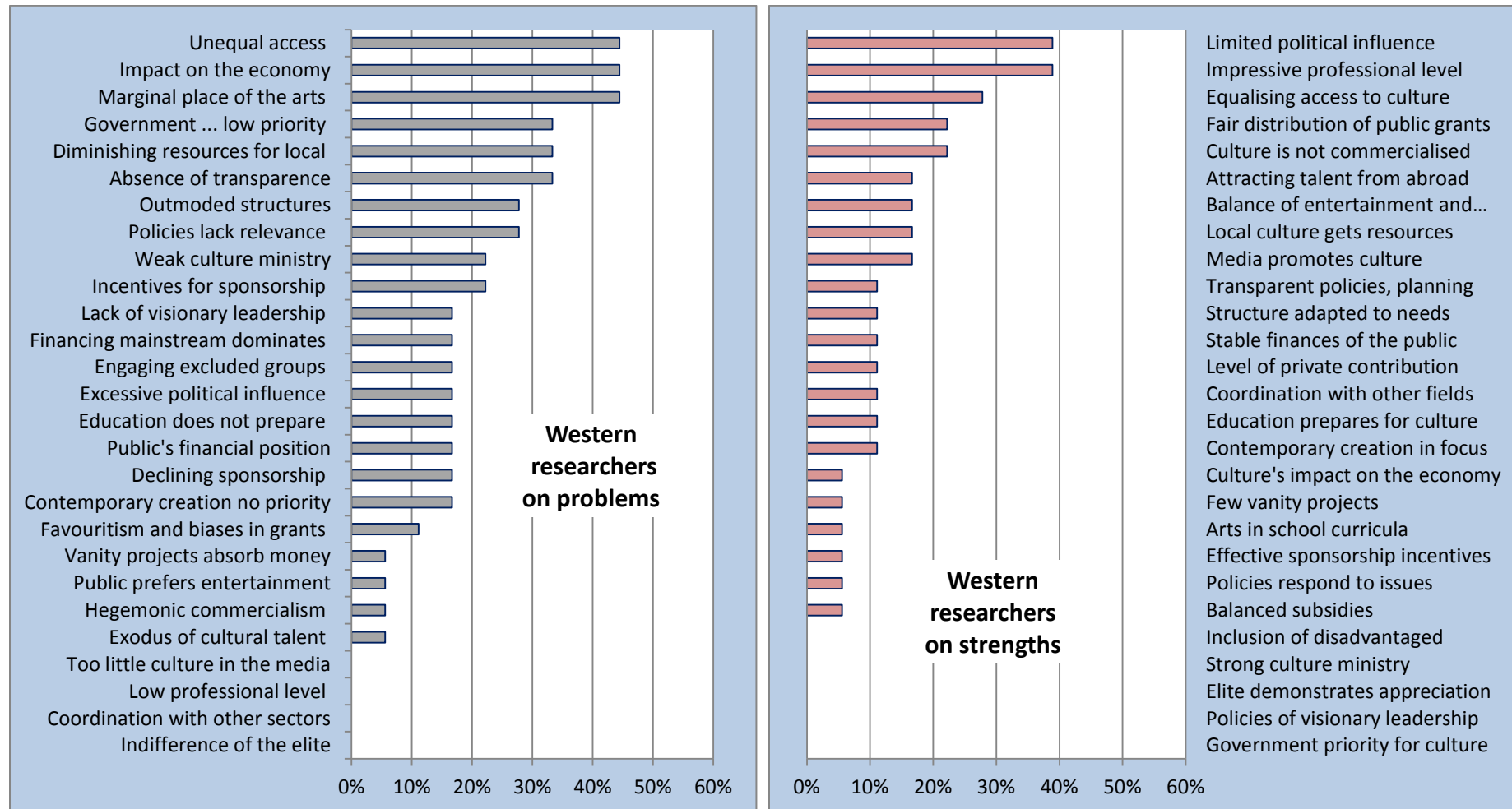


Diagram 35 Perceptions of eastern researchers about the climate of culture

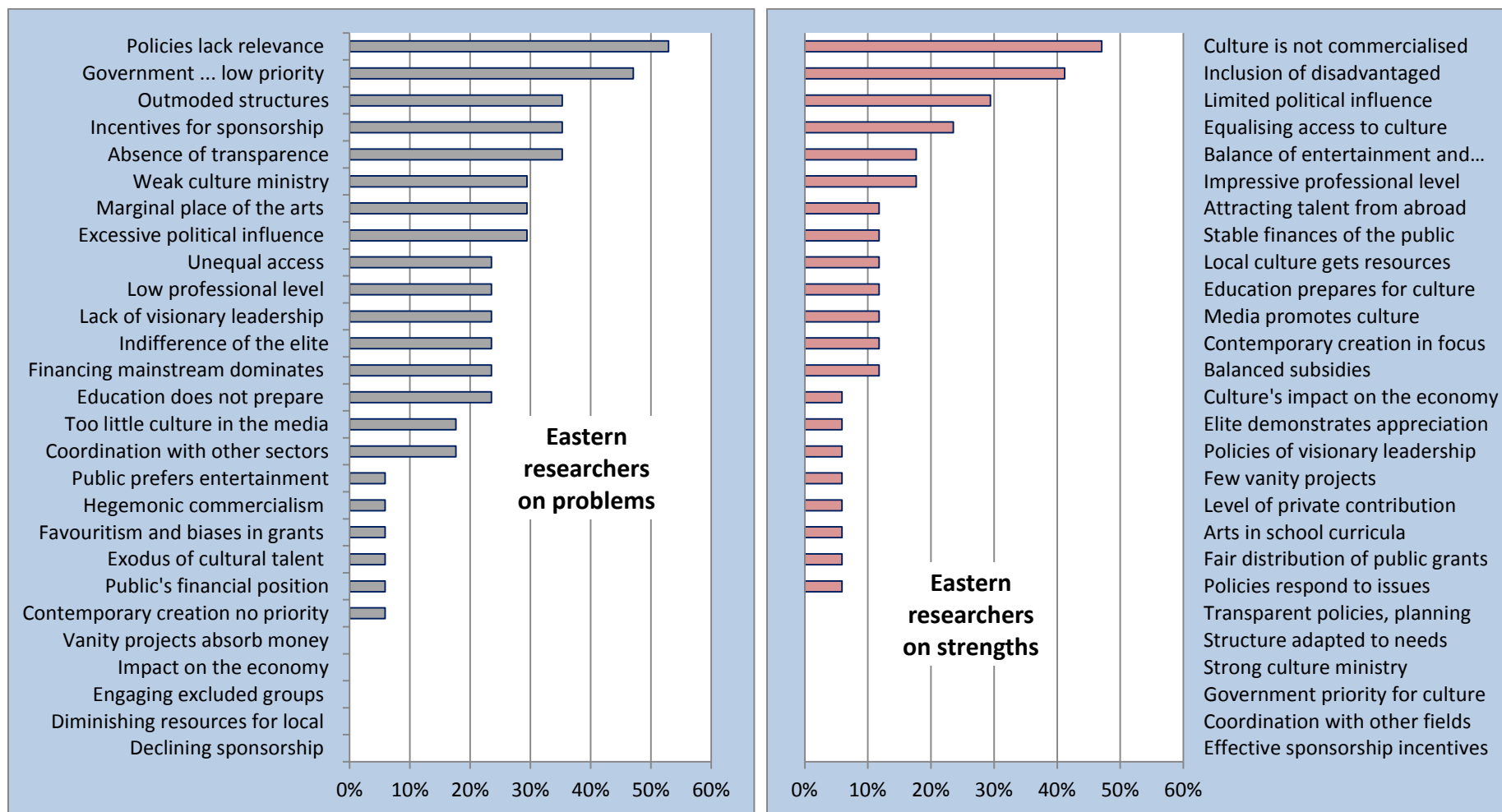


Diagram 36 Perceptions of administrators about the climate of culture

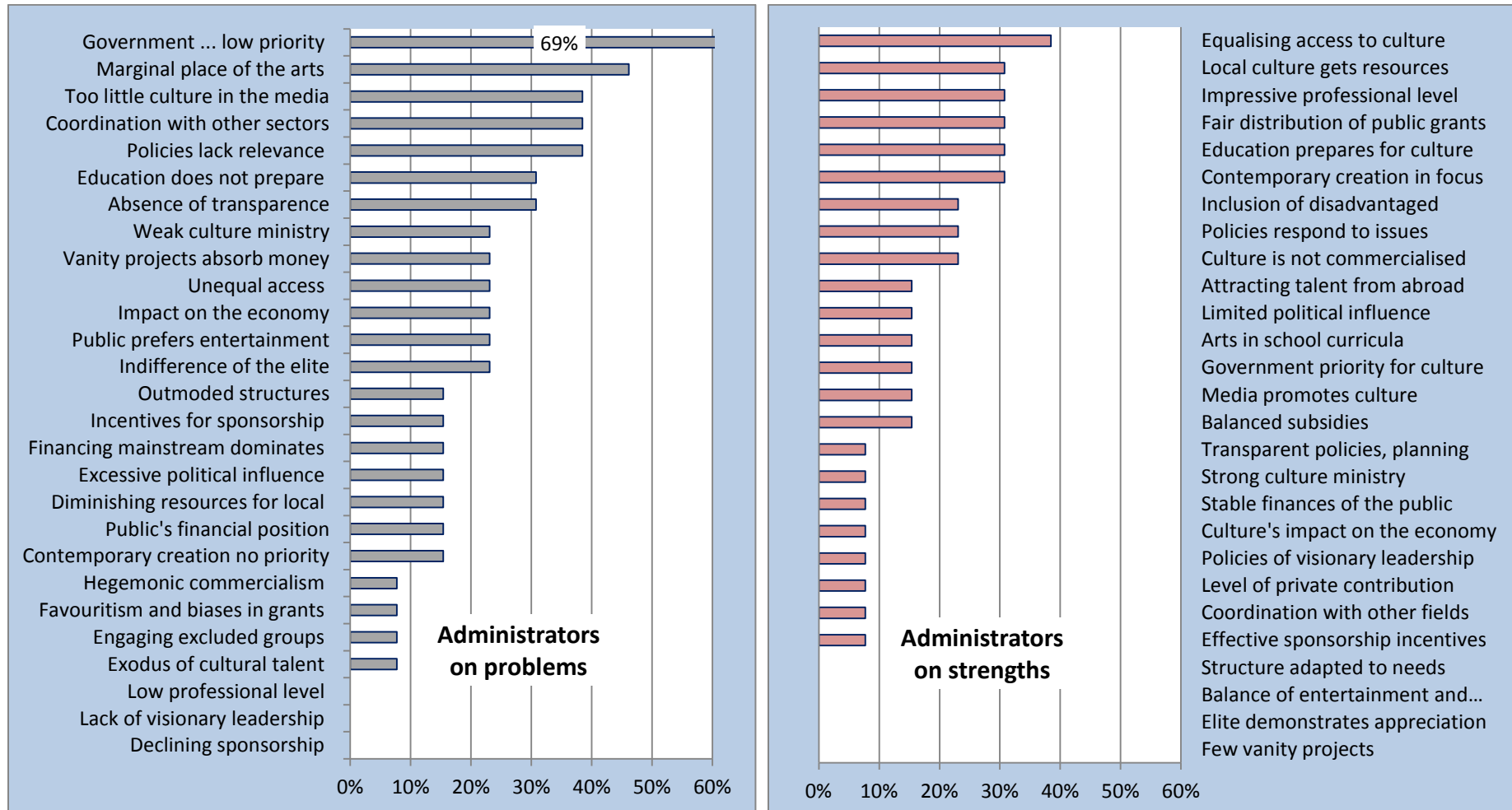


Diagram 37 Equality: *Diminishing resources for local (municipal) culture, Failures in engaging excluded social groups to culture, Unequal access to culture across the country*

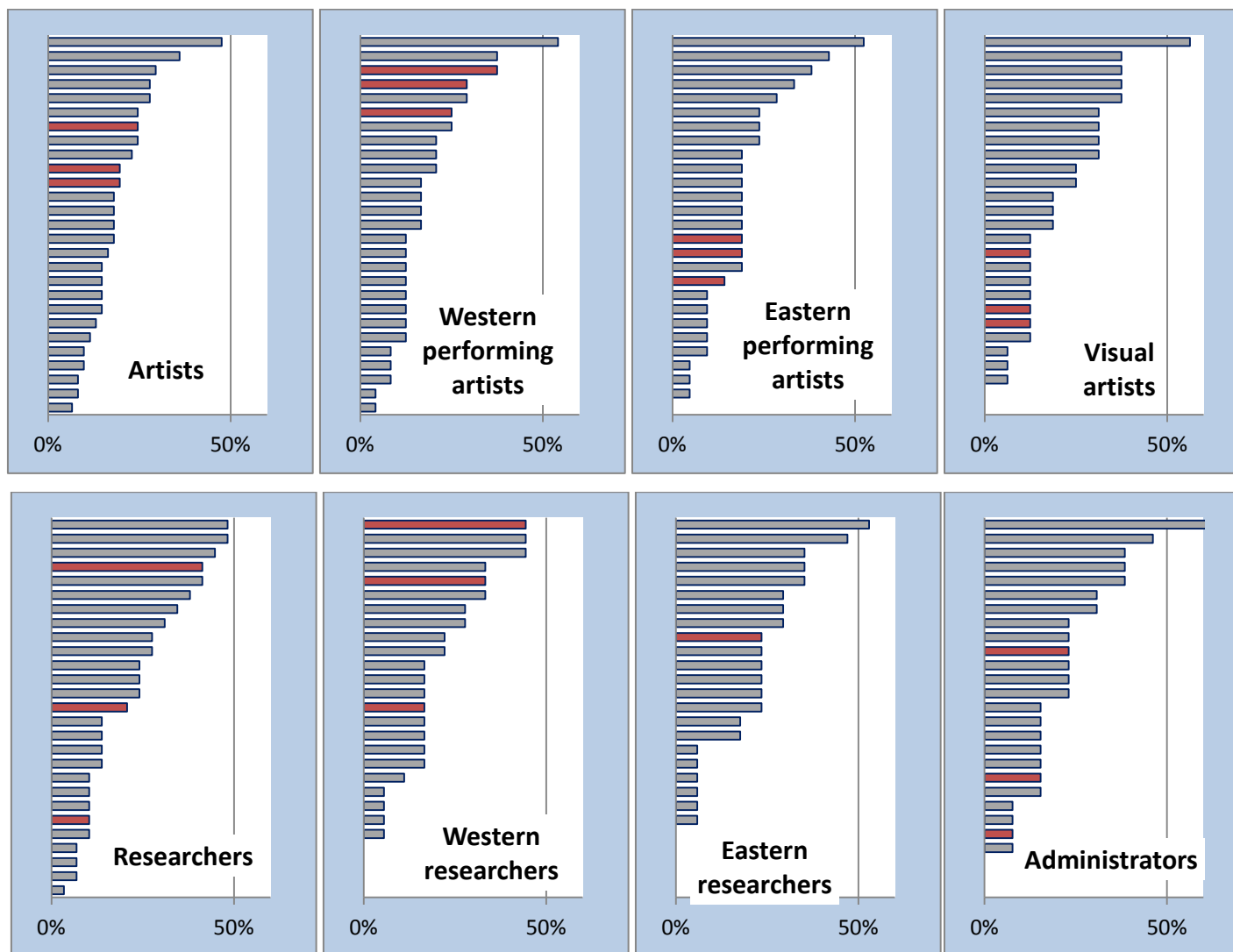
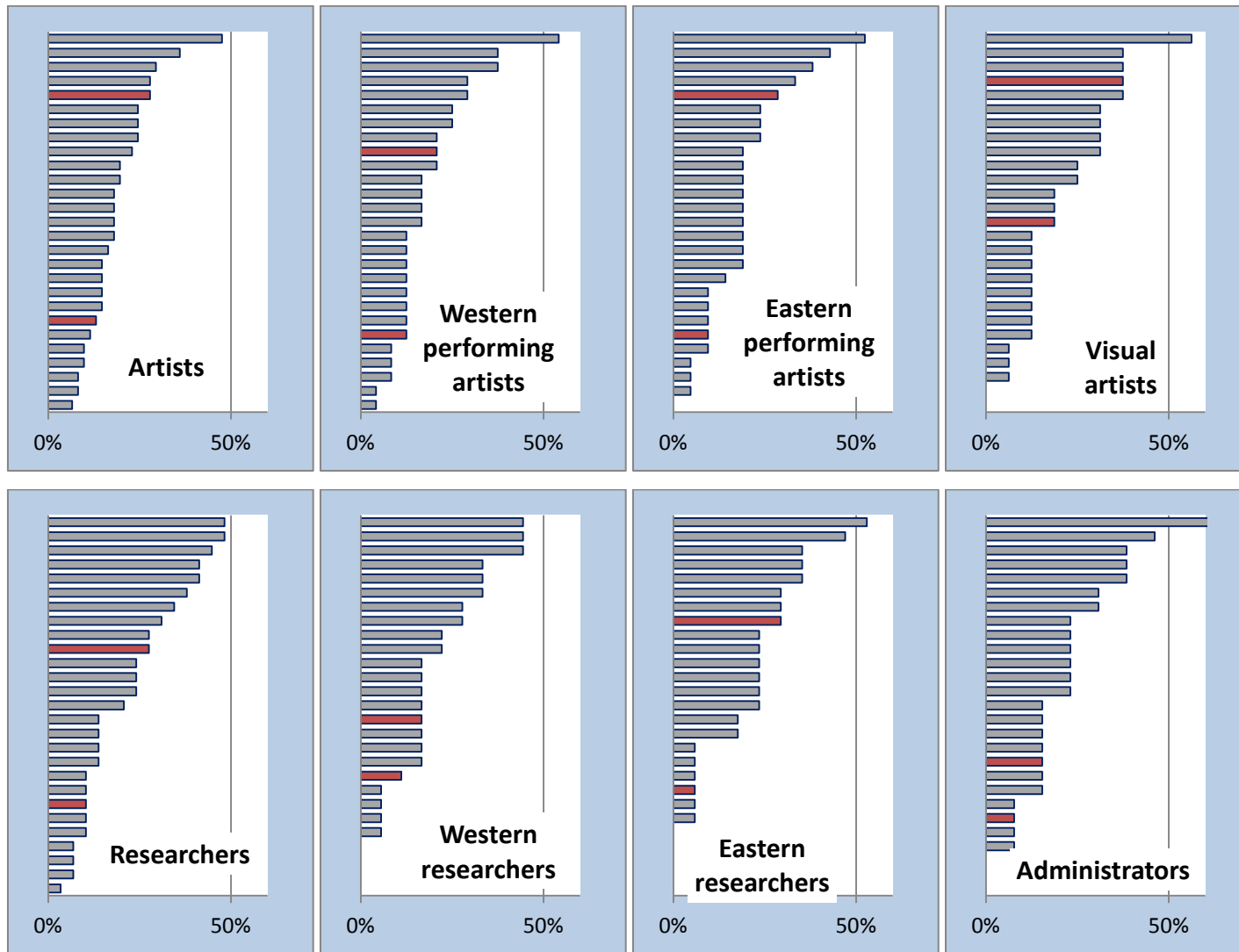


Diagram 38 Transparency: *Excessive political influence in cultural matters, Favouritism and biases in the distribution of public grants*



(Editing continues)

Annex 1: The list of problematic factors with their positive counterparts

What are the most problematic factors for culture in your country?

Absence of clear goals and transparent planning
Contemporary creation gets too little priority
Cultural policies lack relevance to fundamental issues of society
Declining private contributions (sponsorship, philanthropy)
Diminishing resources for local (municipal) culture
Education does not prepare for contemporary culture
Excessive political influence in cultural matters
Exodus of cultural talent from the country
Failures in engaging excluded social groups to culture
Favouritism and biases in the distribution of public grants
Financing mainstream institutions dominates government budgets
Government budget reflects low priority for culture
Hegemonic influence of commercialism
Indifference of the political and economic elite
Ineffective incentives for private sponsorship and philanthropy
Inefficient coordination with other sectors
Lack of visionary leadership
Low professional level of cultural managers
Marginal place of the arts in school curricula
Outmoded structure of cultural institutions
Public's one sided preference for easy entertainment
Too little promotion of culture in the media
Too much emphasis on culture's impact on the economy
Unequal access to culture across the country
Vanity projects absorb too much money
Weak culture ministry
Deteriorating financial position of the public

What are the most positive factors that affect culture in your country?

Transparent procedures in policy decisions and planning
Contemporary creation is in focus
Cultural policies respond to fundamental issues of society
Level of private contribution (sponsorship, philanthropy) is stable and important
Local (municipal) culture receives necessary resources
Education prepares successfully for contemporary culture
Limited direct political influence into cultural matters
The country attracts cultural talent from abroad
Successes in the inclusion of disadvantaged social groups into culture
Fair procedures in the distribution of public grants
Balanced subsidies between mainstream institutions and new or small-scale initiatives
Government budget reflects priority for culture
Cultural life is not overwhelmed by commercial forces
Political and economic elite demonstrates appreciation for culture
Effective incentives generate private contributions (sponsorship, philanthropy)
Efficient coordination mechanisms exist between culture and other policy fields
Policies reflect visionary leadership
Impressive professional level of cultural managers
In school curricula the arts are given an important place
Structure of cultural institutions has been adapted to today's needs
Public's attention is balanced between entertainment and deeper cultural challenges
Culture is amply promoted in the media
Proper attention is given to culture's impact on the economy
Conscious efforts at equalising access to culture across the country
Limited instances of vanity projects that absorb huge sums of money
Strong and influential culture ministry
Stable financial situation of the public

Annex 2: Draft sliding scale of the culture climate barometer

What factors influence or characterise the climate of culture in your country? Please, mark your country's position on each of the 27 scales below. With 5 you fully agree with one of the extremes, with 0 you are completely undecided, and all other options express shades of opinion in between.

Here, the scale is displayed at the first item only for illustration. Also, the content of the statements is slightly different from the two sets of 27 items applied in the survey.

1. Public's attention											
Easy entertainment enjoys one sided preference						Balanced between easy entertainment and cultural challenges					
5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Financial situation of the public											
Weak						Stable					
3. Commercial market culture											
Dominates cultural life						Does not dominate cultural life					
4. The attitude of the political and economic elite towards culture											
Indifferent						Demonstrates appreciation					
5. Exodus of cultural talent from the country											
Critical						Non-existent					
6. Promotion of culture in the media											
Too little						Receives ample space					
7. Positions of the arts in school curricula											
Marginal						Adequate					
8. Preparation for the understanding and appreciation of contemporary culture by the educational system											
Poor						Satisfactory					
9. Government budget											
Reflects low priority for culture						Reflects due priority for culture					
10. Culture ministry											
Weak and ineffective						Strong and effective					
11. Procedures on policy decisions and planning											
Lack of transparency						Transparent procedures					
12. Relevance of cultural policies to fundamental issues in society											
Policies lack relevance						Policies respond to basic issues					

13. Coordination of cultural policies with other sectors

Inefficient Policies are developed in conjunction

14. Culture's impact on the economy

Overtly emphasised Balanced treatment of the spin-off effects

15. Cultural budget of the government

Dominated by the financing of mainstream institutions Balanced between mainstream institutions and new or small scale initiatives

16. Structure of cultural institutions

Outmoded, crying for reform Fit for today's and tomorrow's world

17. Professional levels of cultural leadership and management

Low Impressive

18. Distribution of public grants

Favouritism and biases prevail Rule of law and fairness prevail

19. Vanity projects

Absorb too much money Only isolated cases of wastage

20. Political interference into cultural matters

Excessive Limited

21. Contemporary creation

Receives too little priority It is in focus

22. Level of private contribution (sponsorship, philanthropy)

Declining Stable

23. Incentives for private contribution (sponsorship, philanthropy)

Non-existent or inefficient Effective

24. Access to cultural services across the country

Unequal Conscious efforts at equalising

25. Local culture and participation

Its resources are declining Receives necessary support

26. Boosting citizens' cultural activity

No priority Top priority

27. Engaging and empowering marginalised groups in culture

Failures and neglect Successes exist
