



justfair

IVAR we listen, and
learn together

Using everyday rights as a tool for change

What we heard from civil society organisations

October 2023

Introduction

Just Fair is the only UK-wide civil society organisation focusing on everyday human rights – economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) – across the UK. ESCR are our rights of everyday life.

We are specialists in ESCR policy, research, and practice, have an established track record, extensive networks, and strong partnerships.

Our goal is for ESCR to be incorporated into domestic law, and for the UK Government and public authorities to be effectively held to account in relation to their human rights obligations.

If we are successful, these rights will be better respected, protected, and fulfilled, and everyone will be guaranteed the basic requirements of a decent life in which they can thrive, with dignity.

We wanted to gather feedback from civil society activists and organisations, on the extent to which we are meeting our goals to:

- Help civil society activists and organisations (CSOs) be more confident and have more capacity to use ESCR as a tool for change.
- Create a broader movement of communities working on and for positive change in ESCR.
- Help rights holders be more confident and have more capacity to know their rights and assert their own power.
- More effectively hold the UK Government and public authorities to account on their existing ESCR obligations.

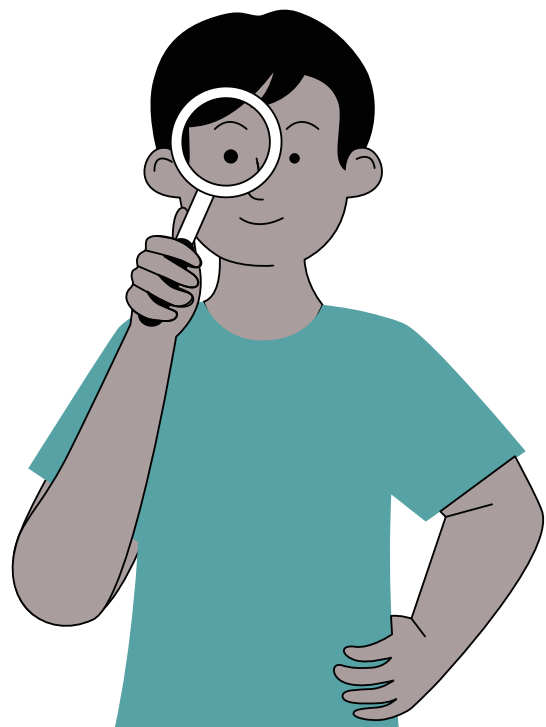
This report summarises the views and experiences shared by 55 CSOs we have engaged with.

During August 2023, insights were gathered through an online survey (which received 52 responses).

We also carried out five in-depth interviews with colleagues from three CSOs that have worked closely with Just Fair during 2022/23. These CSOs were René Cassin, Tai Pawb and the Women's Resource and Development Agency. The vignettes in this report summarise their experiences.

We would like to thank all the CSOs who shared their views and experiences with us, and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) who are helping us to develop our approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning.

We would also like to thank our funders, past and present, for supporting this work. Together, we are working to make life in the UK better for all of us.



How CSOs are getting involved

A diverse range of CSOs engage with Just Fair’s work, varying in size (income), subject matter, and location (including all four nations/jurisdiction of the UK).

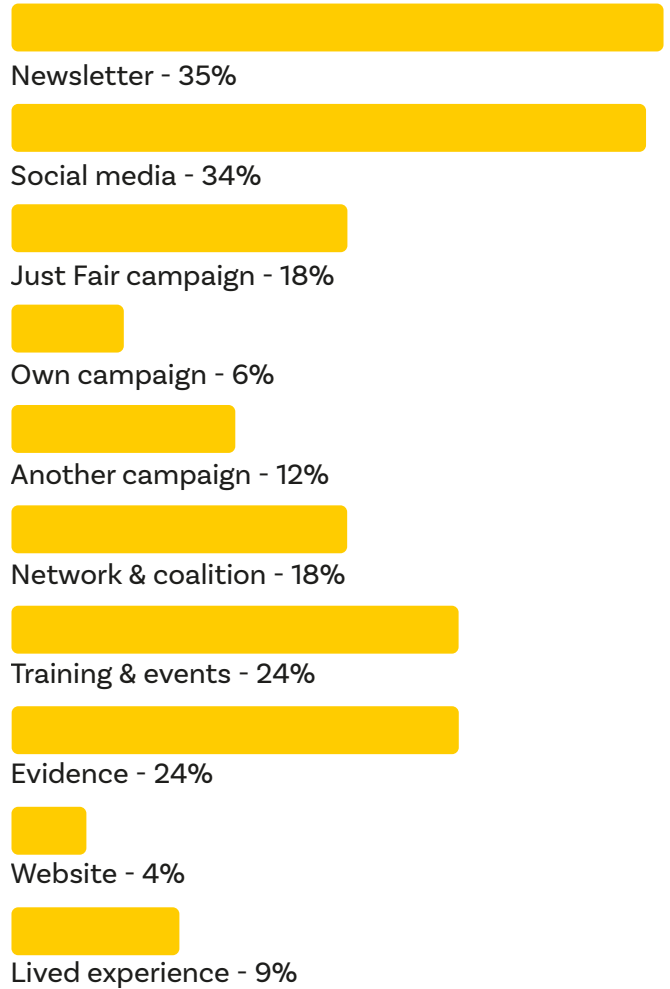
When asked, ‘What best describes the work your organisation does’, the majority of CSOs (87%) were involved in campaigning and advocacy whilst also carrying out other activities such as community development, service delivery, etc. (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: ‘What best describes the work that your organisation does?’



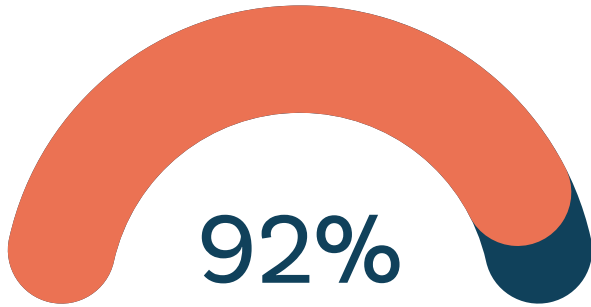
CSOs are engaging with the full spectrum of activities provided by Just Fair, with most involved in two to three activities, often keeping informed via the Just Fair newsletter or social media feeds as well as engaging in more depth, e.g. attending a training event or contributing evidence for a Just Fair campaign (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Just Fair activities that CSOs have engaged with during 2022/23



Throughout this report, we refer to CSOs’ ‘interactions’ with Just Fair. This is used as short hand to describe the range of different activities survey respondents said they had engaged with.

Helping civil society to use ESCR



92% of organisations felt their interactions with Just Fair ‘had helped give them a greater understanding of ESCR’.

This applied both to organisations with ‘moderate’ or ‘no knowledge’ of ESCR prior to these interactions (57%), and those with ‘strong knowledge’ (43%).

“ I and the organisation I work for already have a strong commitment to ESCR, but working with Just Fair has given us access to otherwise difficult to access expertise and valuable opportunities to further this commitment in our work.

We consistently heard that Just Fair acts like an anchor for ESCR in the UK, and that it is useful for CSOs to know there is somewhere they can go for support on these issues. We are on hand to make complex things accessible and provide access to difficult to obtain expertise.

In addition, most organisations (92%) felt that as a result of their interactions with Just Fair, they had ‘a greater belief that ESCR, and rights-based approaches should be part of the lasting solution’.



Future events

CSOs expressed an interest in participating in all future Just Fair activities. The most popular offers were, ‘Involvement in joint, or coordinated advocacy initiatives or campaigns’ (73%), and ‘Specialist training on ESCR’ (65%).



ORGANISATION A René Cassin

Organisation A is a Jewish human rights organisation. They talked about the extent to which their confidence in how and when to use ESCR had increased and the impact this had on their work:

“We definitely were using ESCR, just perhaps with less general ease, or flair than we can now that we feel supported by Just Fair. For example, moving to ‘the right to food’ was a good example of us possessing that language framework and a robust understanding of cultural, economic and social rights ... The Just Fair resources and general language framework keeps kind of going into your head and into your bloodstream and you learn the language and ... way of communicating. Also, because when [Just Fair] approaches and asks us to contribute things, that also builds our confidence and [helps in] establishing our niche.”

Creating a broader movement

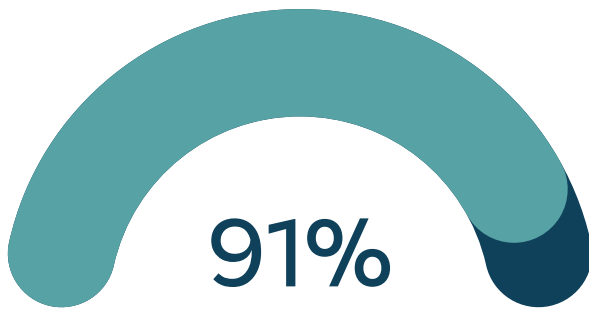
A large part of our value stems from us making connections, building networks, and also bridging the gaps that exist. This includes from a UK level to the devolved administrations, where these bridges in particular were viewed as useful.

CSOs made clear that these connections and networks were vital not just for the success of their own work, but also to increase knowledge and use of ESCR.

We heard from CSOs that Just Fair encourages a journey, not just the destination.

“ The way that we word some of our work around human rights is being tweaked ... It helps embolden [us] ...knowing that there are lots of other conversations going on around human rights and there’s a forward trajectory.

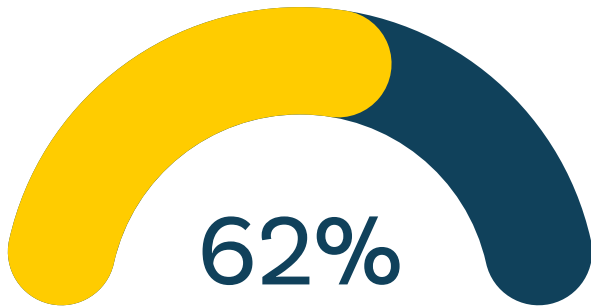
“ [Just Fair] has made me feel more connected to those wider discussions around the UK with colleagues in different countries, what’s happening in Ireland, what’s happening in Scotland, what’s happening in England...



The majority CSOs (91%) felt that they had ‘made new or strengthened existing connections’ through their interactions with Just Fair.



Helping rights holders know their rights



62% of CSOs felt that their interactions with Just Fair had led to them being able to better help rights holders know and assert their rights.

“What Just Fair excels in is delivering really complex information in a very simple way. I rely on their briefings heavily and I always share with our own members to help them better understand too.

“We have been able to put on joint training sessions with Just Fair for our members and this has been extremely valuable.

For those where it hadn't yet had an impact on their work with rights holders, in some cases this was because they were early on in their own journey of incorporating ESCR into their work.

ORGANISATION B

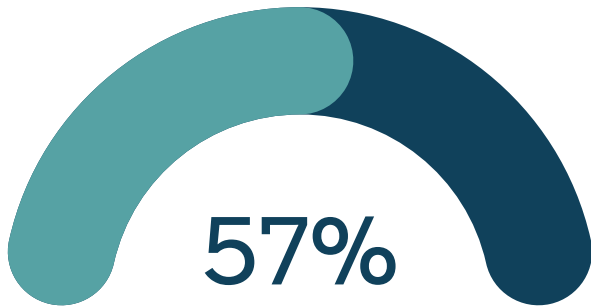
Women's Resource and Development Agency

Organisation B provides support and resources to women in Northern Ireland:

“Sitting in focus groups with women in women's centre and seeing [them] have the language to say, 'I have a right to adequate healthcare, I have a right to democratic representation,' those kind of things ... I think that there are a lot of people who don't work or study in the area of human rights who sort of accept the status quo and think this is just the way it is, so it actually is really powerful when someone can turn around and say, 'No, we have a right to better.'”



Holding the UK Government and public authorities to account



57% of CSOs felt that ‘There is evidence of Just Fair increasing the profile and understanding of ESCR with decision makers across the UK.’

“ We have been able to really direct our campaign work to be more impactful in highlighting and addressing the barriers Disabled people face by taking a rights-based approach.

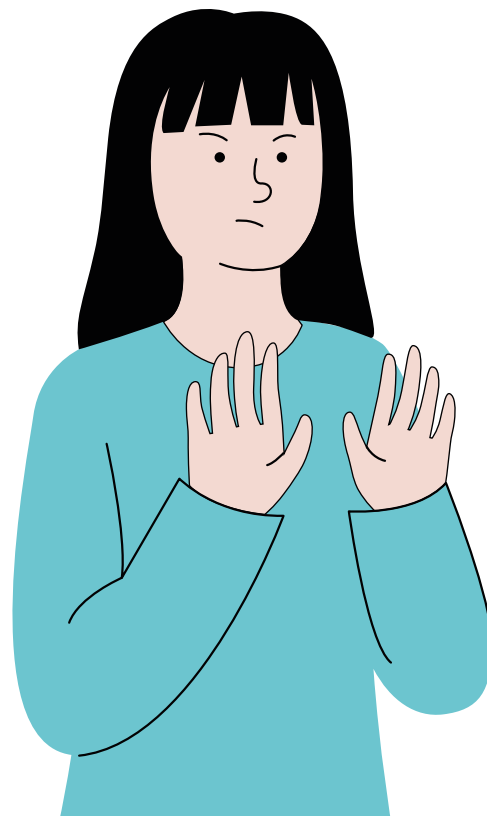
Some respondents - 33% - indicated that they were ‘not sure’ when questioned specifically on the impact of Just Fair’s work on decision makers.

The answers given to this question are likely to relate to visibility and a lack of knowledge as to whether an effect is being had, rather than feeling it isn’t happening.

ORGANISATION C Tai Pawb

Organisation C advances equality and social justice in housing in Wales:

“I can specifically refer to the support we had from Just Fair in terms of the local governments’ Housing Committee inquiry into the right to adequate housing in Wales ... [we] were invited to give evidence and the conclusions will be debated in a plenary session of the Senedd. That is a direct result of engagement and lived experience, but also the knowledge Just Fair has in what works internationally and what should be happening on the ground [in Wales] ... that was a tremendous supportive mechanism to us in the campaign and generally in policy making in Wales.”



Our funders

We would like to thank all our funders and supporters including



justfair

c/o Doughty Street Chambers,
54 Doughty Street,
London, WC1N 2LS
www.justfair.org.uk

Send an email

Info@justfair.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter

[@JustFairUK](https://twitter.com/JustFairUK)

Like us on Facebook

[JustFairUK](https://www.facebook.com/JustFairUK)

Registered as Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the UK
Charity number: 1141484
Company number: 07394478