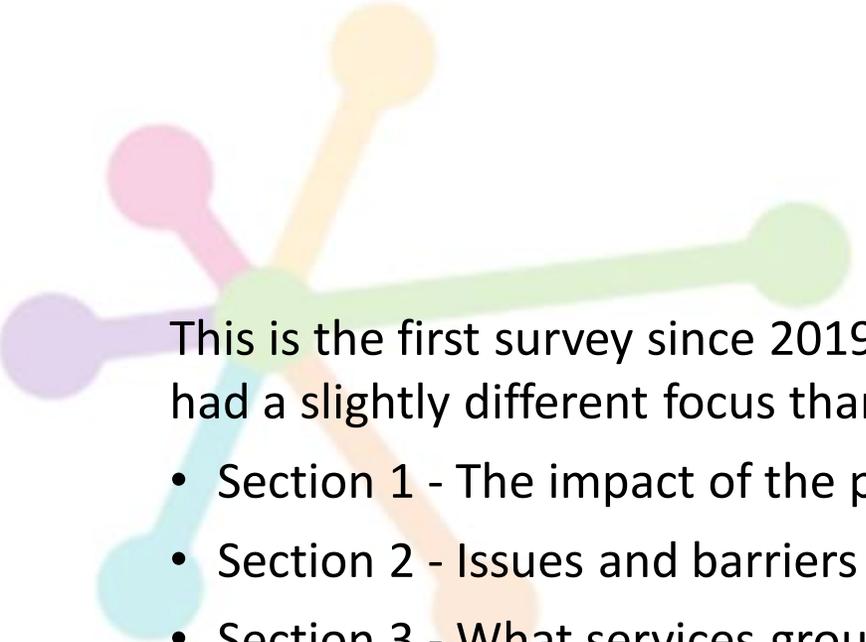




**support**  
**cambridgeshire**  
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# Coming up for air

The state of the voluntary sector in Cambridgeshire  
2022



# Introduction

This is the first survey since 2019 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This has meant that the survey has had a slightly different focus than in previous years. We have looked at:

- Section 1 - The impact of the pandemic on groups.
- Section 2 - Issues and barriers facing groups as they emerge from the pandemic.
- Section 3 - What services groups want.
- Section 4 – About the groups responding.

We have then drawn some conclusions but have refrained from the usual recommendations. We leave up to those reading the report to think about the future role of the sector across the county.

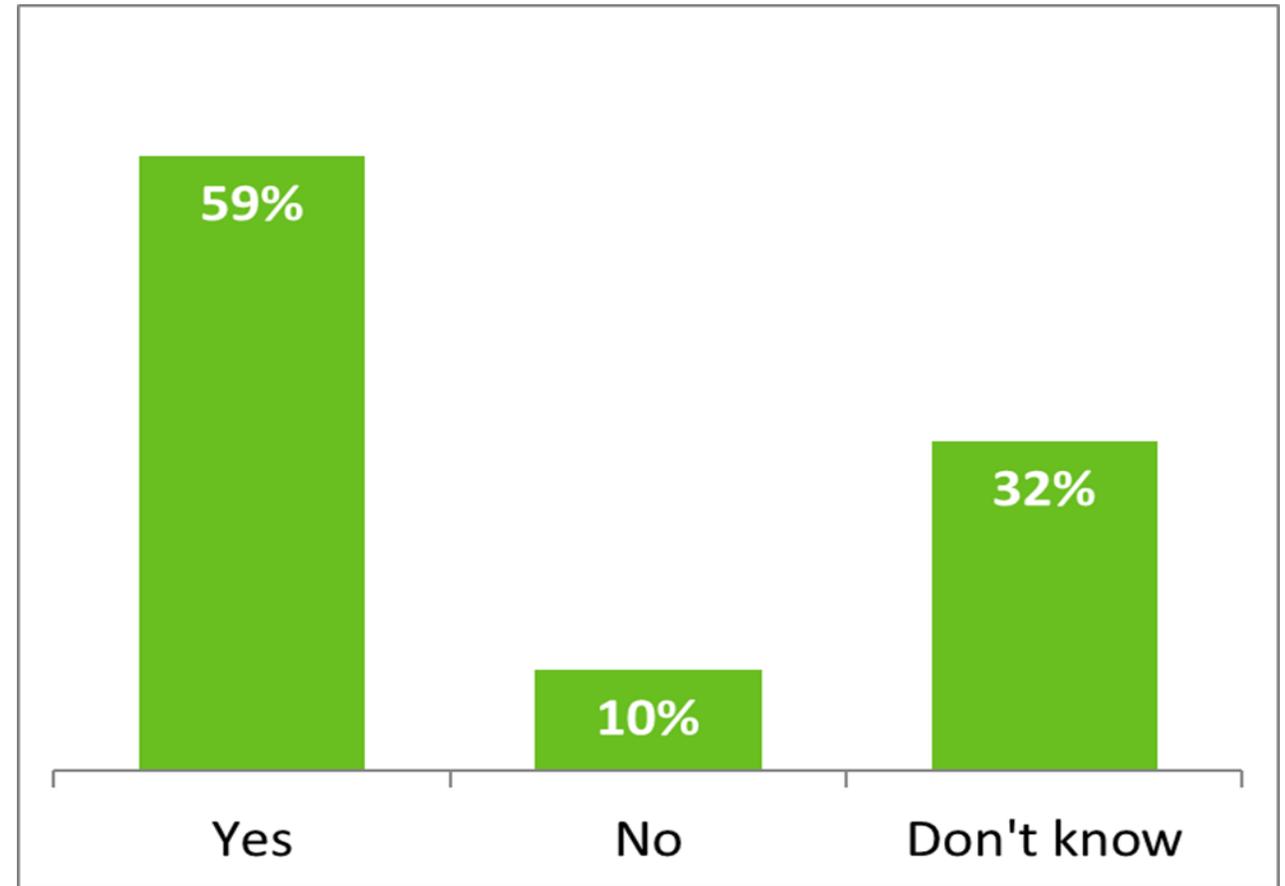
The pandemic has forced a number of changes in how Support Cambridgeshire works, as well as how the sector and our partners work. The obvious change was the move from face to face to online, but at the same time research we carried out in 2020 has shown that relationships and partnership working has become more important. We wanted to test the appetite for how much the sector wanted to return to the old ways of working, and what of the new ways of working they felt they wanted to keep. We will be adjusting our offer following the findings.

## Is 2022 going to be better for your organisation than 2021?

**There is an overwhelming sense from groups that 2022 is going to be a better year than 2021.**

This is relatively uniform across groups of all income. Groups working in Fenland are slightly more unsure, but not significantly.

This bodes well for the sector and more importantly for the people and communities that they work with.



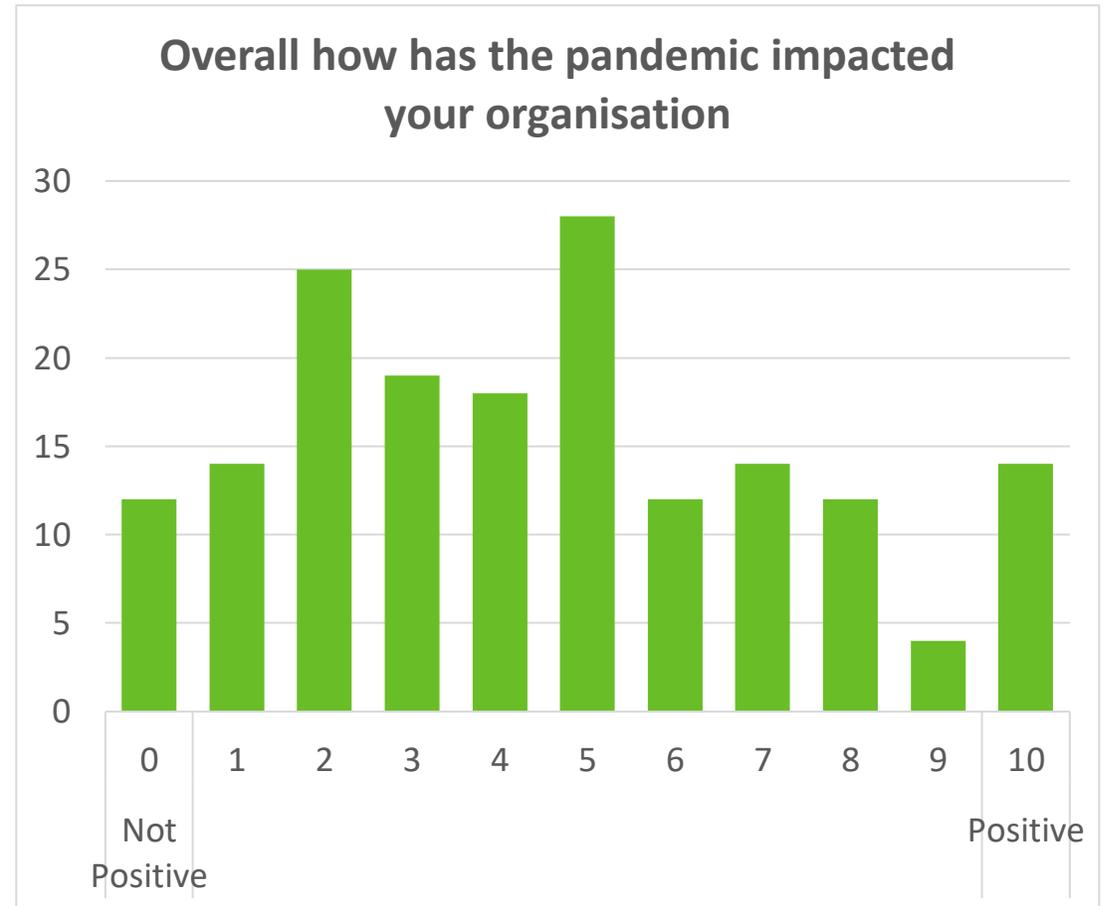
Is 2022 going to be better than 2021?

# Section 1 - The impact of the pandemic on groups

A great deal has been written about the impact of the pandemic on the sector. We carried out research in both 2020 and 2021 that showed that groups were adapting and growing but they had concerns about funding and burnout.

This survey shows that locally groups have weathered the storm relatively well. The impact has been more negative than positive the mean response was 4 out of 10.

What this report will show is that although we still have issues that are of concern and that need to be addressed, overall the sector remains resilient and forward thinking.



The number of groups scoring impact from 0 (not positive) to 10 (positive)

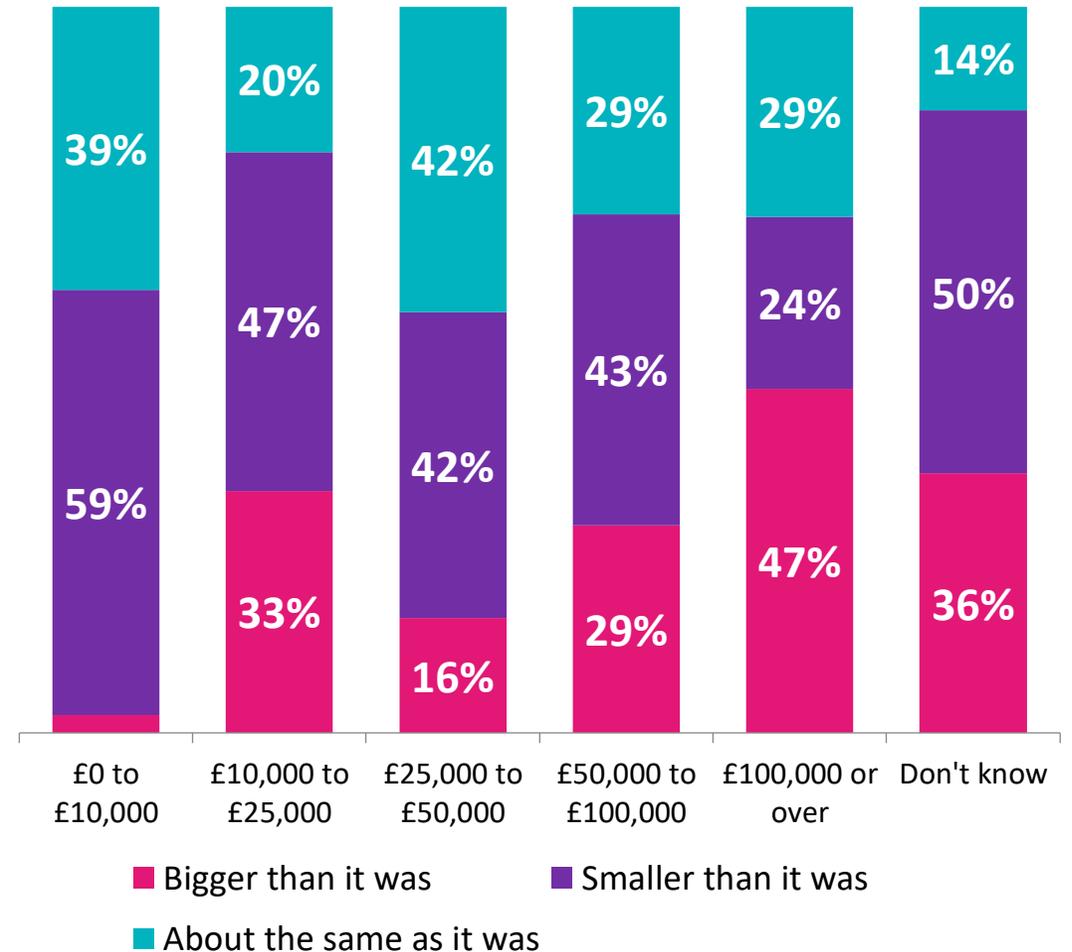
# How income has changed since before the pandemic

Overall 70% of groups are reporting a change in their income since before the pandemic.

- 44% say it will be smaller
- 26% say it will be bigger

There are some differences across groups of different size where larger groups have tended to see a more positive change.

We are also seeing a lower number of Fenland groups reporting income growth with only 26% stating this compared to an average of 37% across the other districts.

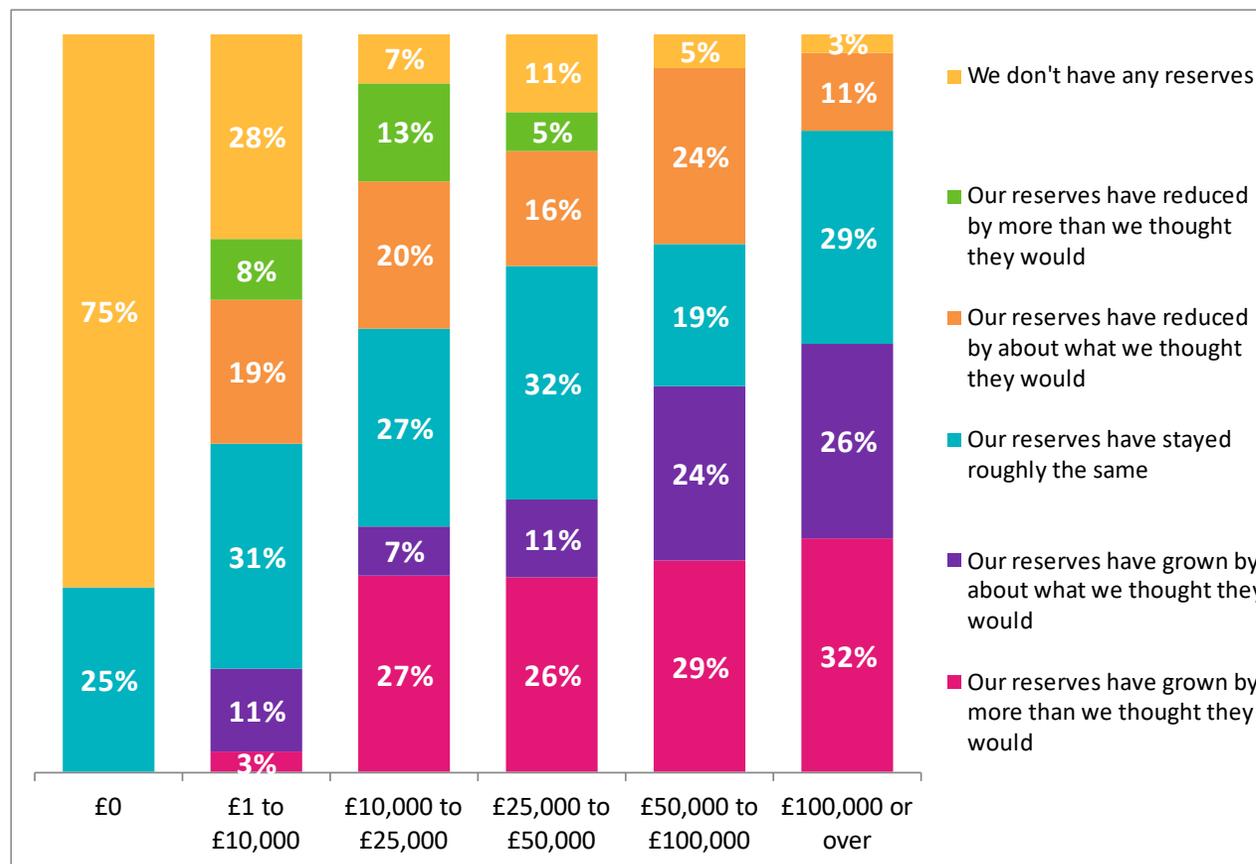


How income has changed for groups of different size

## Use of reserves

Charities keep reserves to tide them over in difficult times and to allow them to act prudently in times of crises.

National research tells us that many, but not all, charities have taken a significant hit on their fundraising, yet our results show that local charities have actually seen an increase in reserves. This may have been down to savings and the furlough scheme but for many it will have also been down to the additional funding made available to help people over the pandemic.



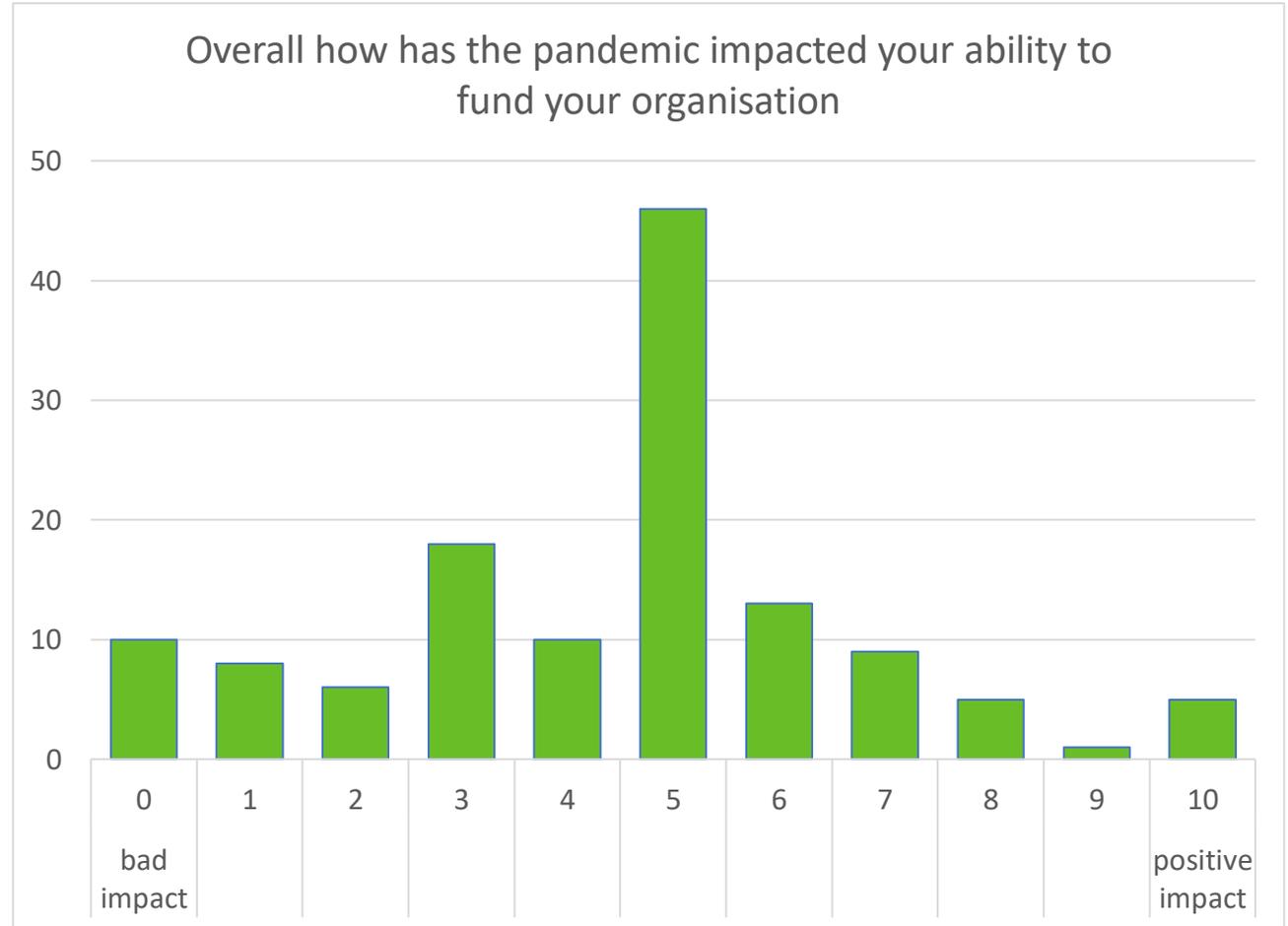
### Changes in reserves based on income levels

There is a clear pattern that the larger the organisation the better they have fared. For many this will be prudent as we know the funding environment is going to get harsher in the near future.

# Fundraising

The pandemic has had little impact on fundraising for most of the respondents. Overall it has been a little worse (The average response was 4.5).

What needs to be recognised is that for some groups the pandemic has been catastrophic on their ability to bring in funds. Yet for others new funding and relaxed grant criteria led to them being able to access more money more easily.



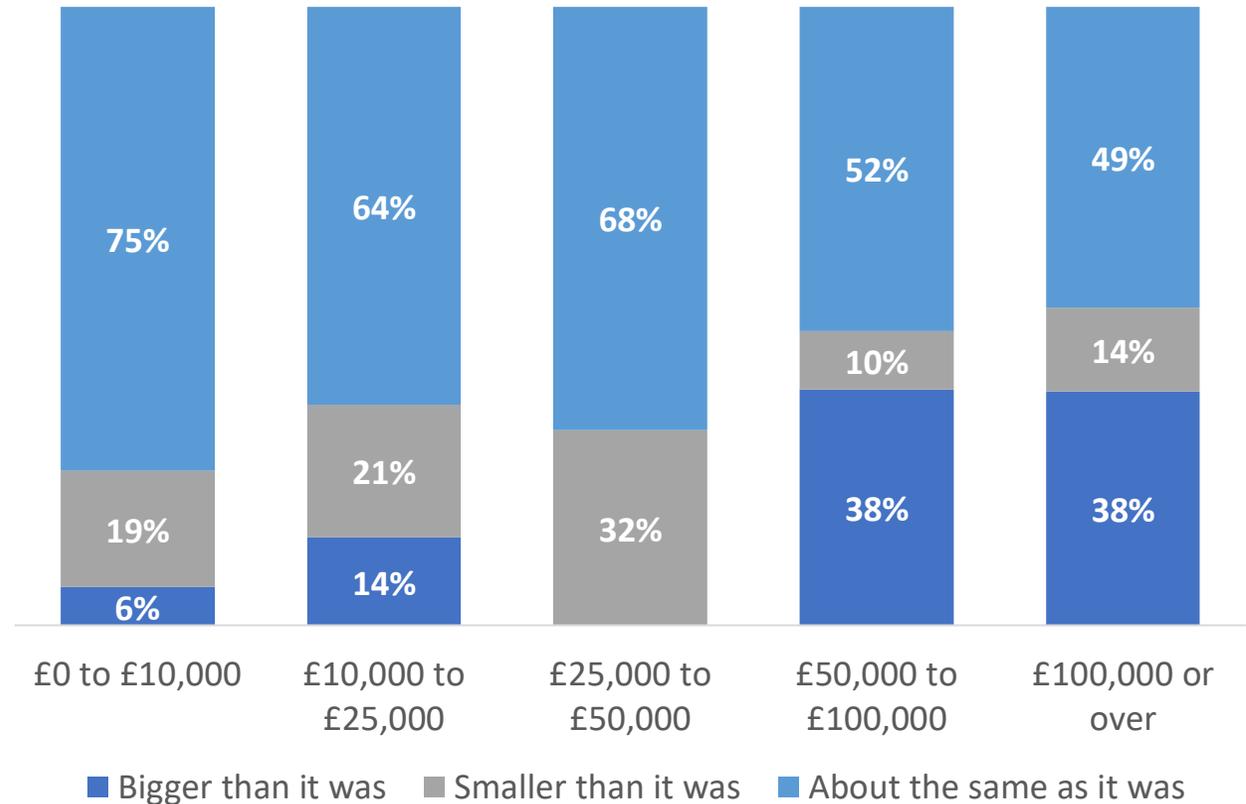
The number of groups scoring impact from 0 (bad) to 10 (positive)

# Impact on staff numbers

When asked if staff numbers had changed since before the pandemic 60% reported no change.

23% of groups reported a growth in staff numbers and 17% a staff shrinkage.

When looking at the difference in different size groups it can be seen that overall bigger groups were more likely to have seen a staff increase with small ones more likely to have seen staff numbers remain the same or get smaller.

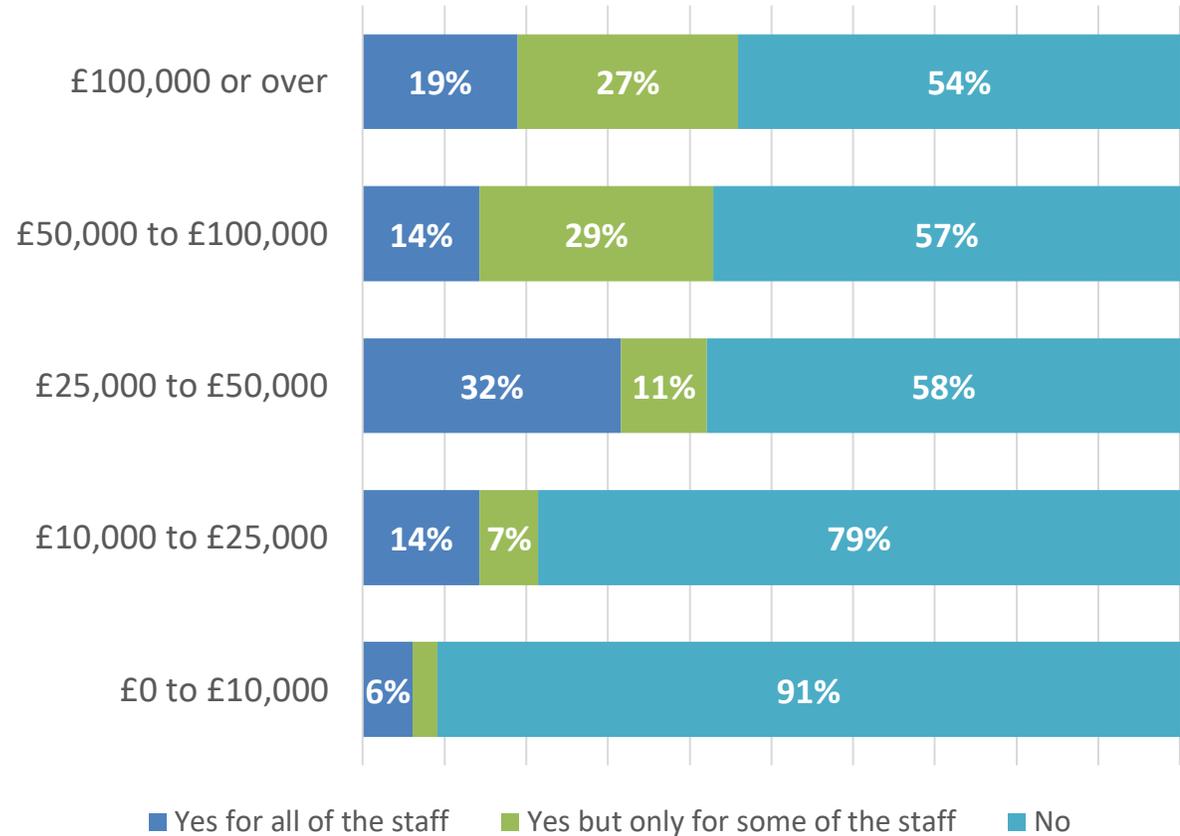


# The Furlough scheme

The government furlough scheme was designed to ensure that groups that had to stop working were able to continue to pay staff wages.

68% of respondents made no use of the scheme and only 15% furloughed all their staff at some time during the pandemic.

Larger groups with larger staff counts were more likely to have used the scheme with very few of the very small groups making use of the scheme.

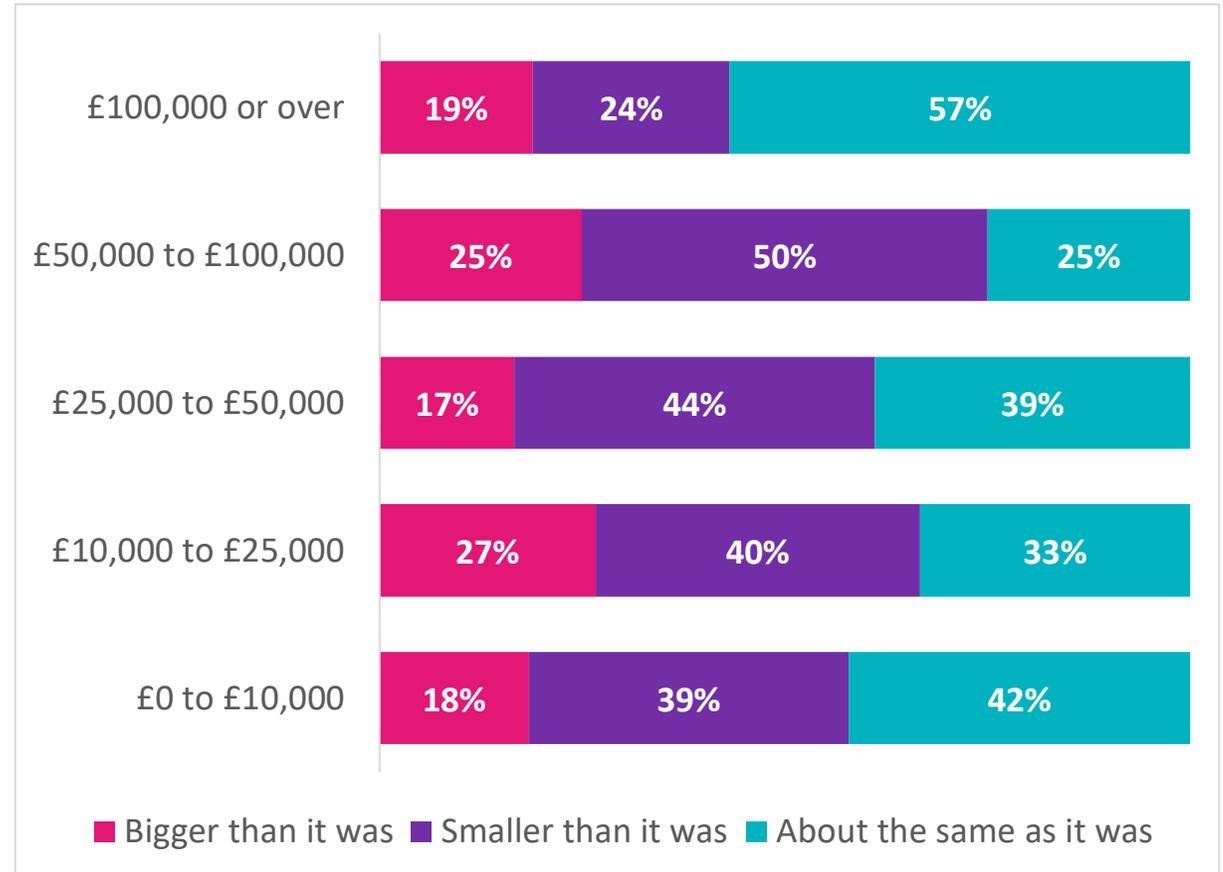


# Volunteer numbers

Overall 41 % of groups reported their volunteer numbers had not changed since before the pandemic. 23% were bigger and 36% were smaller.

Of those saying that increased demand for services was really or quite important 79% have seen their volunteer count go down or stay the same. This is a worry as lack of volunteers will impact on their ability to deliver any enhanced services.

Worryingly, of those groups who identified recruiting volunteers as a big issue 63% have seen a drop in volunteers.



How has your volunteer count changed since the start of the pandemic?



## Section 2 - Issues and barriers facing groups as they emerge from the pandemic.

We wanted to take the temperature of the sector and to find out what issues were causing them concern and also those issues that they thought might be important to their work. We also wanted to find out a little more information about fundraising issues specifically and also about volunteer recruitment.

The issues and barriers listed were agreed by the Support Cambridgeshire teams, these were based on things that had been observed locally or things that had been highlighted in national research. We tried to keep the questions to a reasonable length and we identified funding and volunteer recruitment as the issues we thought would be most of an issue and the areas where we wanted to ask more questions. Our guess about the most important issues proved to be correct but we could have explored any of the issues in more depth as all are areas that will impact groups.

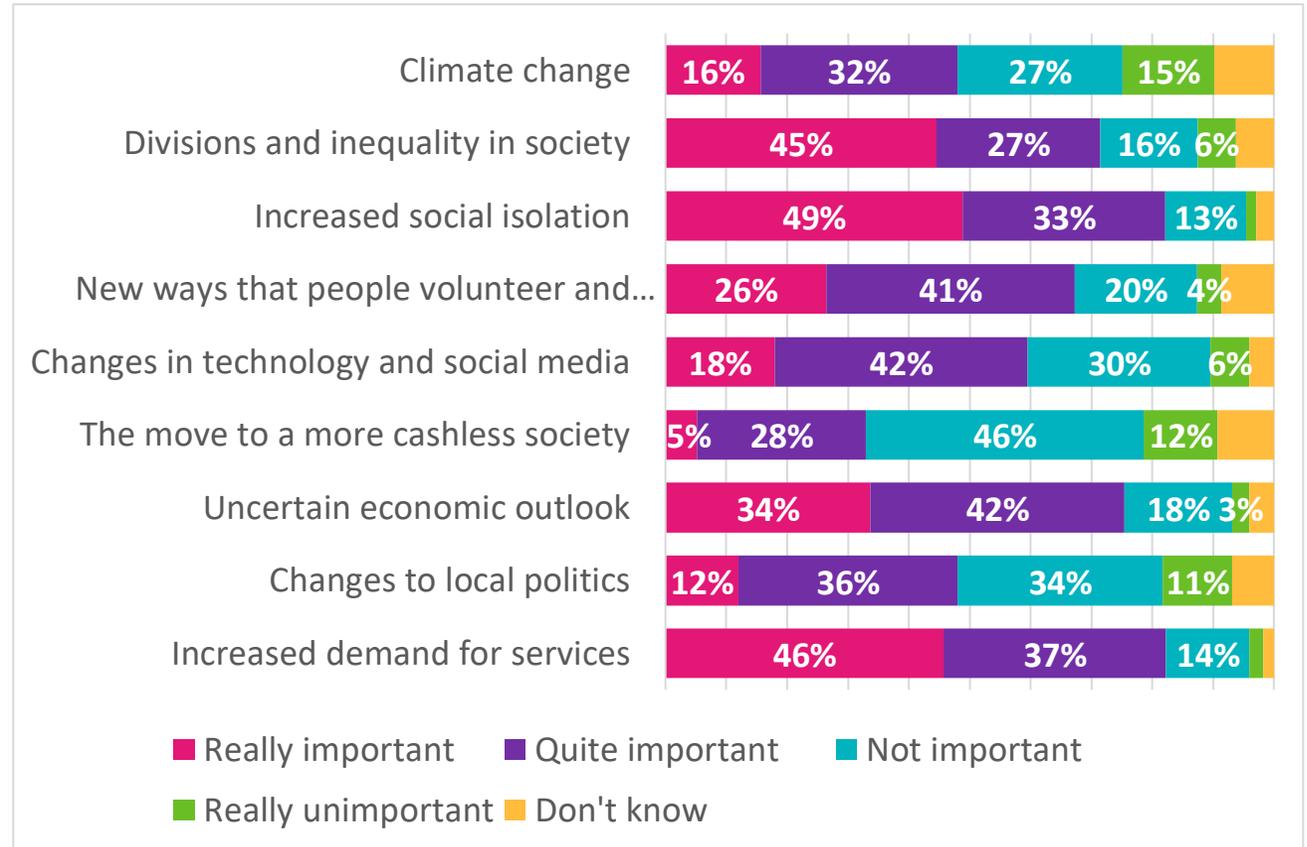
The pandemic increased the pace of change for groups in a lot of areas. How we all deliver services, communicate, and build relationships has changed and we have to continue to adapt without losing what was good about how we used to work. Rightly there will be no going back, only forwards.

## General issues

We asked about the issues that respondents felt were important to the work of their organisation.

Increased demand for services and Increased social isolation were the two biggest issues.

The fact that climate change is seen as relatively unimportant may be down to groups not seeing this as a focus of their work. The move to a cashless society might not be important as groups have adapted and invested in the new technology that has become widely available.



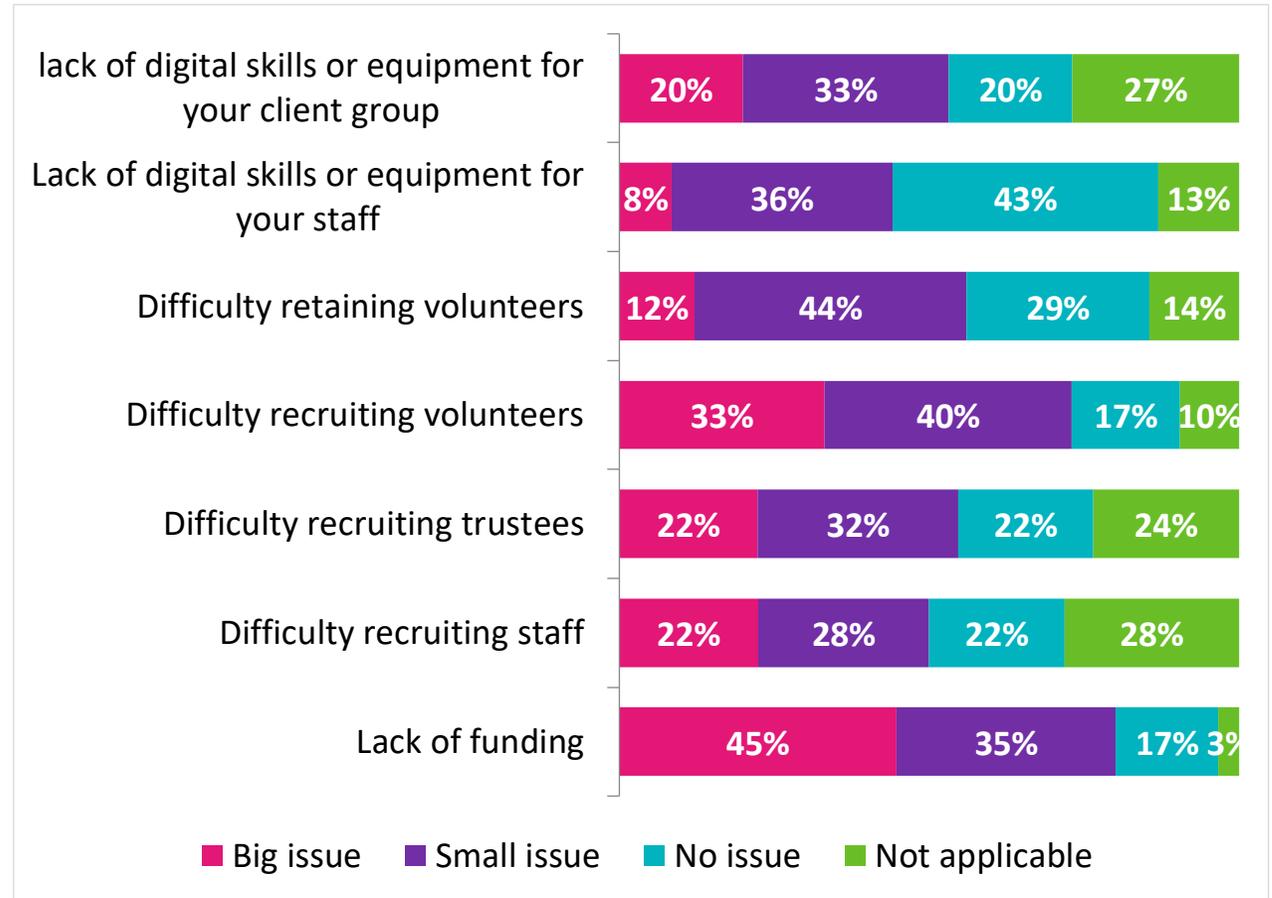
How important respondents think different things are to the work of their group?

# Barriers

The principle barriers facing groups are the lack of funding and their difficulty in recruiting volunteers.

Over half of groups were reporting all the barriers as being of some issue. The exception is that only 42% felt a lack of digital skills and equipment for staff was an issue, this is less but still an issue that needs addressing.

In the comments the main barrier raised was the reluctance of people to come back to events that were in person both as volunteers and as clients.



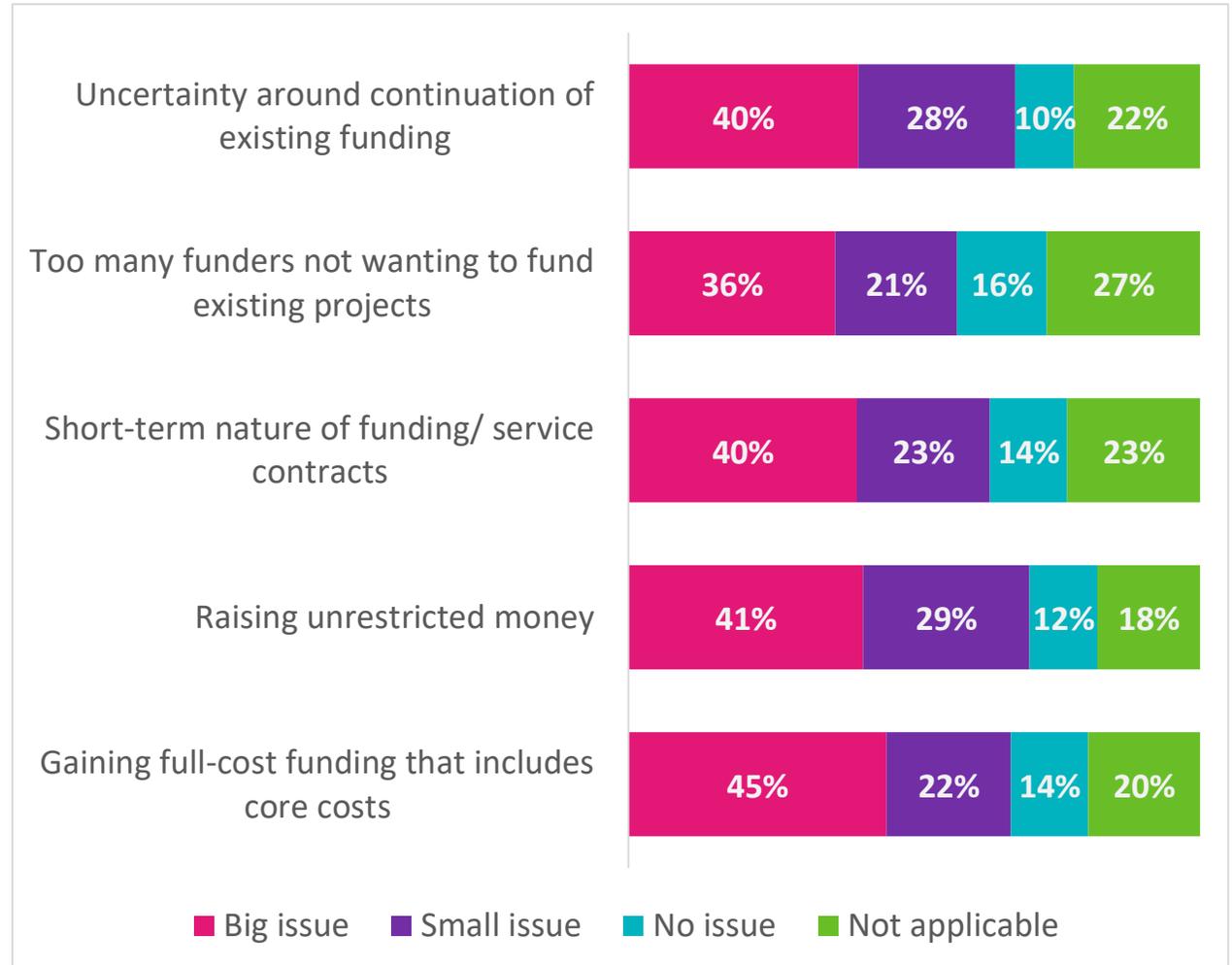
Did respondents think these things were barriers to their groups work?

# Fundraising issues

We wanted to explore funding issues in a little more detail.

Raising unrestricted money and 'gaining full-cost funding that includes core costs' were two of the top issues. Whilst we are seeing some more enlightened funders offering this, too many continue to be focused on new project work rather than sustaining core work.

There are also issues with continuation of existing funding and the short term nature of funding. Again we need to find ways for groups to access longer term funds.



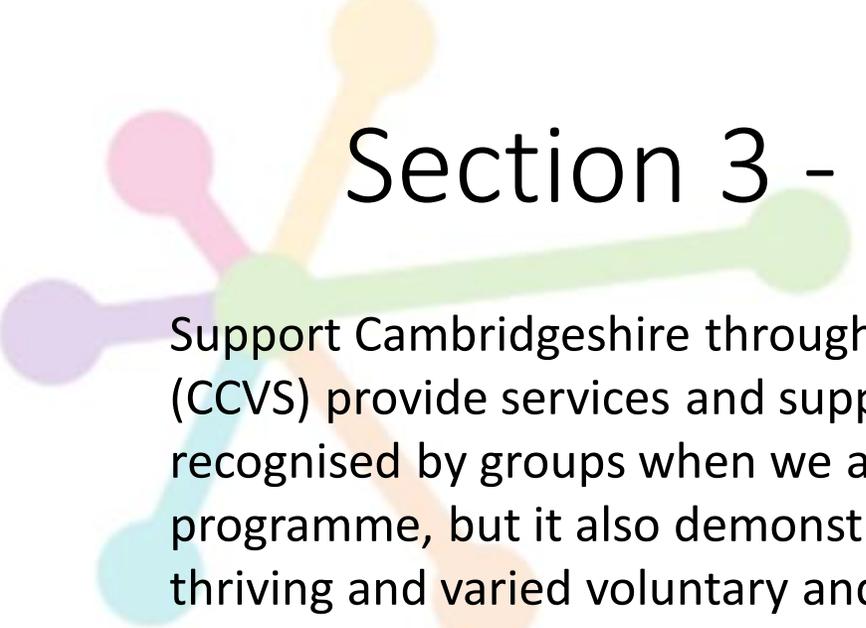
# Volunteer recruitment issues

Recruiting volunteers has been highlighted as an issue for groups locally and in national research and discussions. The pandemic saw a flood of volunteers providing local support and services. This has not translated into new volunteers in the traditional roles. We have also seen some of the core volunteers from the pre pandemic not returning to roles for a variety of reasons.

It is harder for smaller groups to recruit volunteers. There are many possible reasons for this and it is essential that we find ways to help boost volunteer recruitment if groups are to survive.



If you use volunteers has your ability to recruit them changed?



## Section 3 - What services groups want.

Support Cambridgeshire through both Hunts Forum and Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) provide services and support to groups across the county. The importance of this is recognised by groups when we ask what they want from us. This helps us to determine our work programme, but it also demonstrates that there is a need to fund infrastructure groups to ensure a thriving and varied voluntary and community sector.

The work we do falls into three broad categories

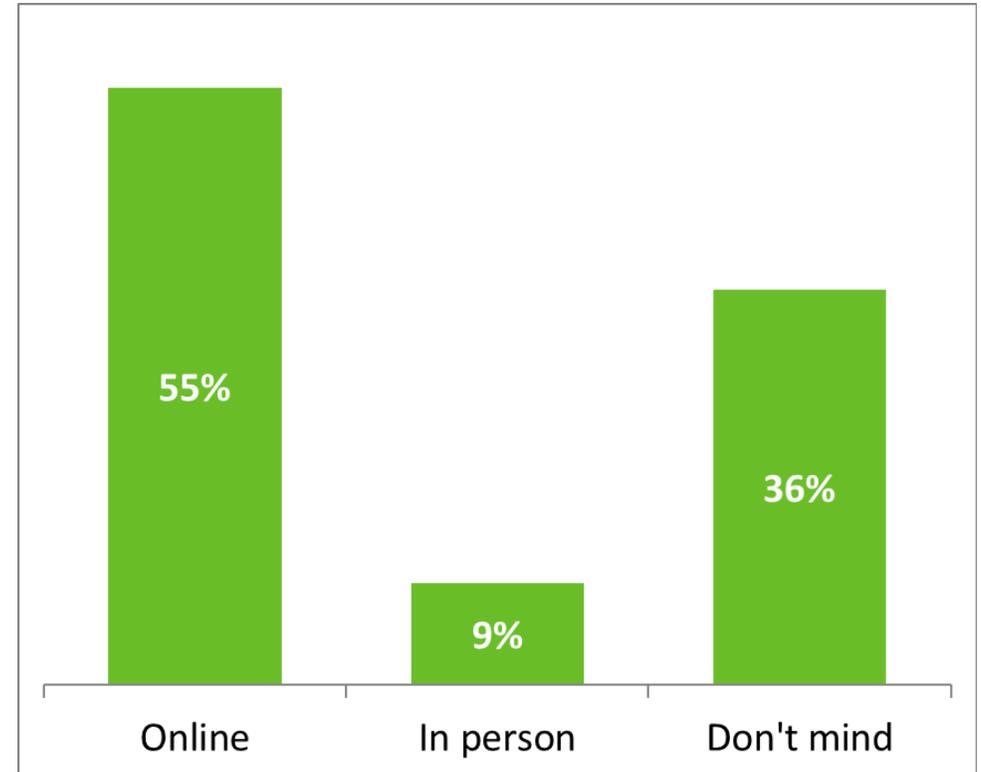
1. The provision of support advice and training to give those involved with groups the knowledge and confidence to deliver their services.
2. Networking and relationship building that enables groups to come together with others from the sector and also with businesses and statutory providers that leads to mutual support, knowledge sharing and partnerships.
3. The representation and championing of the sector. We know the fantastic work groups do and the incredible difference they make to people's lives, we aim to make sure that others are aware of this and recognise the importance of supporting groups.

## Networking is important

The importance of relationships and building connections has been highlighted over the last two years. (Read our research blog)

We plan to increase the amount of networking opportunities we offer based on what has run or been requested over the last few years. We asked groups which of these they would support and how they would prefer future networks to be provided.

There was clear support for our plans, and despite people often saying how much they miss face to face there was a clear desire to see networks continue in an online format.



How would you prefer networking events to be delivered?

# What training do you want?

We asked what training people wanted and if they would prefer it to be in person workshops, online workshops, or 'always available' self learning modules.

For all subjects apart from First Aid, **in person was the least popular option.**

Across all subjects and responses the preferences were

- 42% online
- 33% always available
- 25% in person

The numbers requesting the most popular courses are shown.



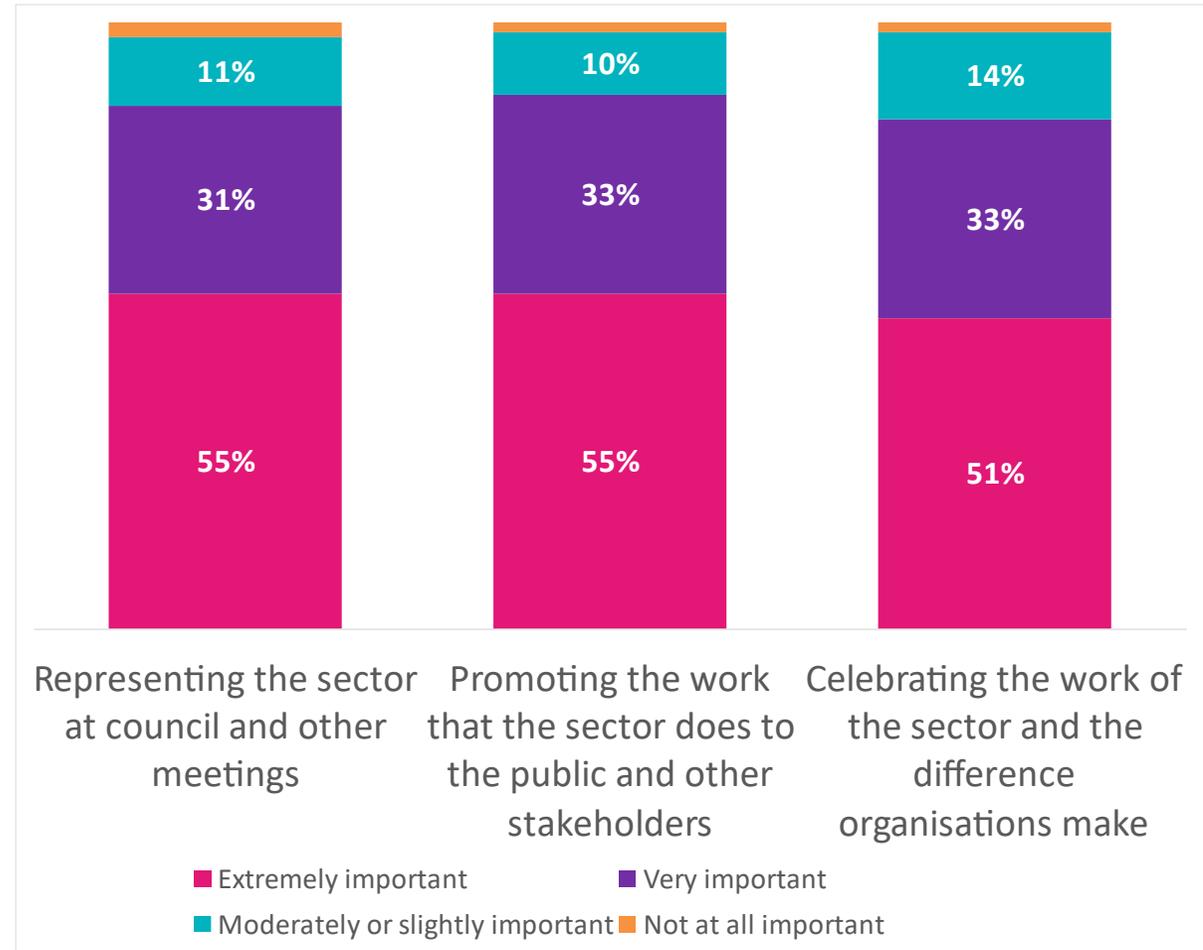
# Representation

A big part of the role of Support Cambridgeshire is to be the champion of the sector and to act as the collective voice when talking to statutory stakeholders and partners.

There was a clear vote of support for the work that was carried out in this area across all organisation sizes and all districts.

*“It is so important that council officers know just how much the voluntary sector contributes to individuals and communities.”*

(comment from respondent)



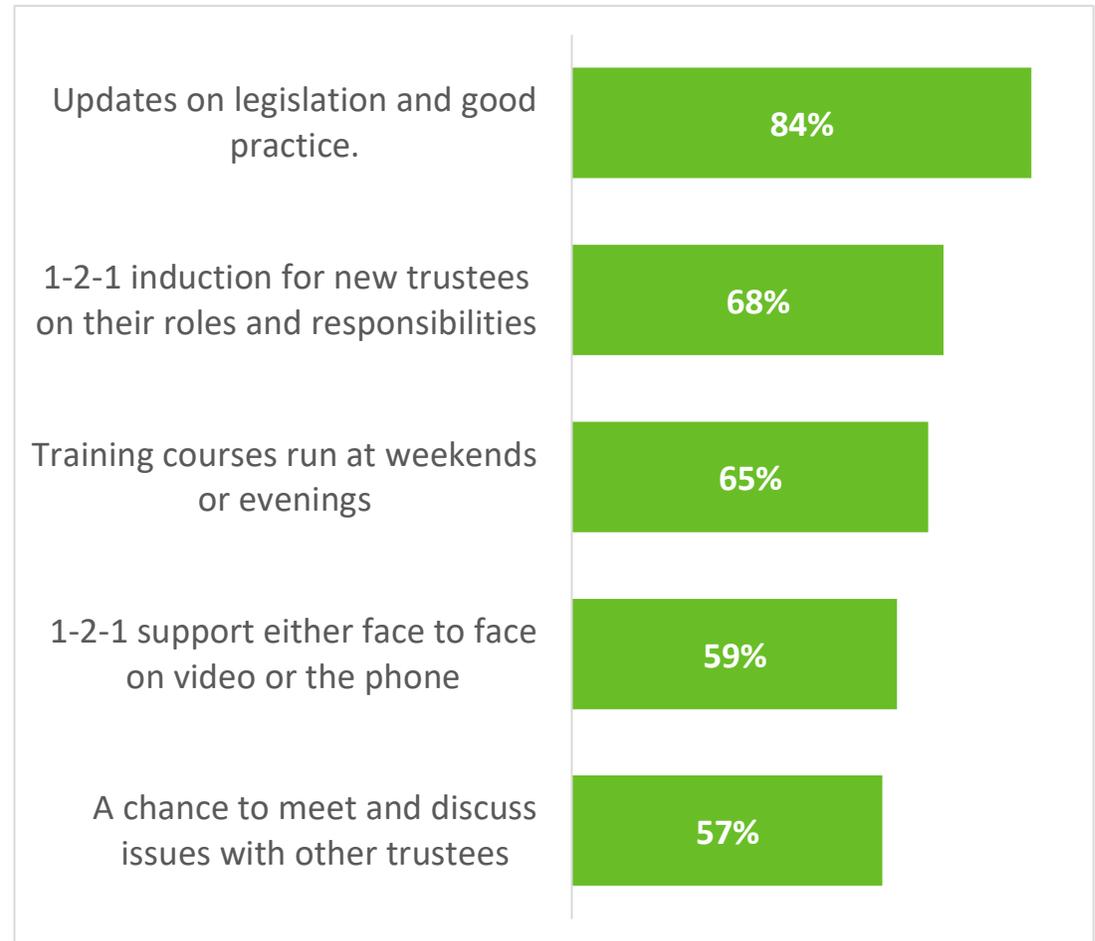
How important it is that Support Cambridgeshire does these tasks

## Trustee support

Trustees take on a lot of responsibility and it is important that they have the knowledge and skills to ensure that they are acting legally and in the best interests of the charity.

Smaller groups are more inclined to want support for their trustees. Of those groups with an income up to £10K 92% want legislation updates and 86% would like 1-2-1 induction for new trustees.

Those groups between £10K and £50K are most likely to be looking for courses that are delivered in the evening or at weekends.



Trustees who thought support would be very or quite useful

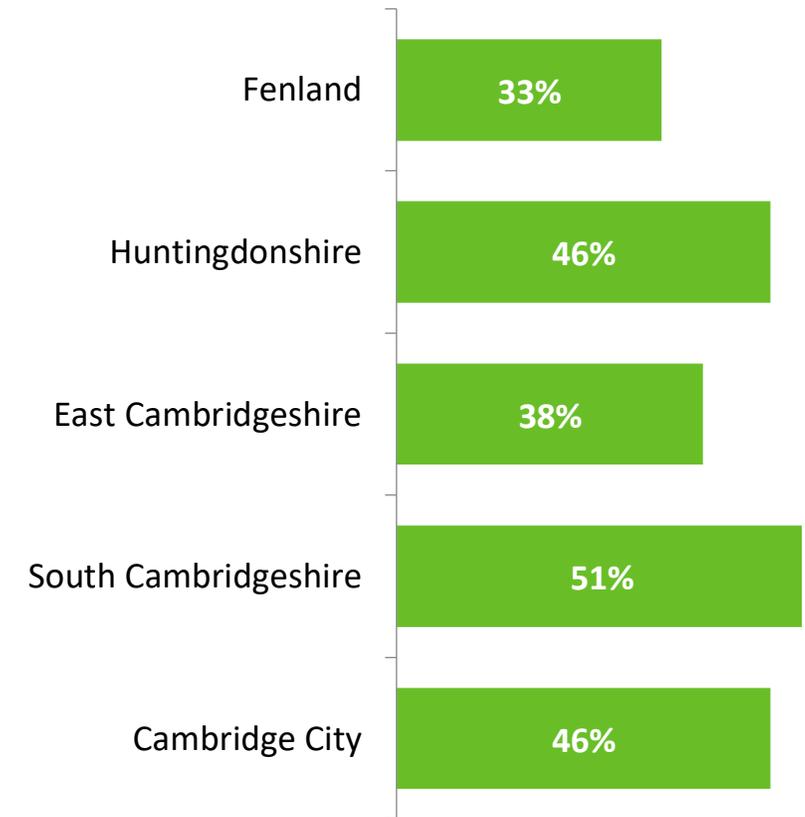
# Section 4 – About the groups responding

The survey is aimed at Cambridgeshire voluntary groups and all others are removed from the data set.

Of those responding 61% were members of C CVS and 35% were members of Hunts forum whilst 22% were not members of either.

The bulk of those replying were registered charities (60%) or Charitable Incorporated Organisations (13%). 15% were unregistered community groups, and there were small numbers of clubs, sports clubs and town or parish councils. A number of groups also self identified as religious organisation or linked to churches or schools.

We ask where groups work. 45% worked in just one district and 14% worked in all five districts. We continue to see less groups working in Fenland and East Cambs completing the survey.

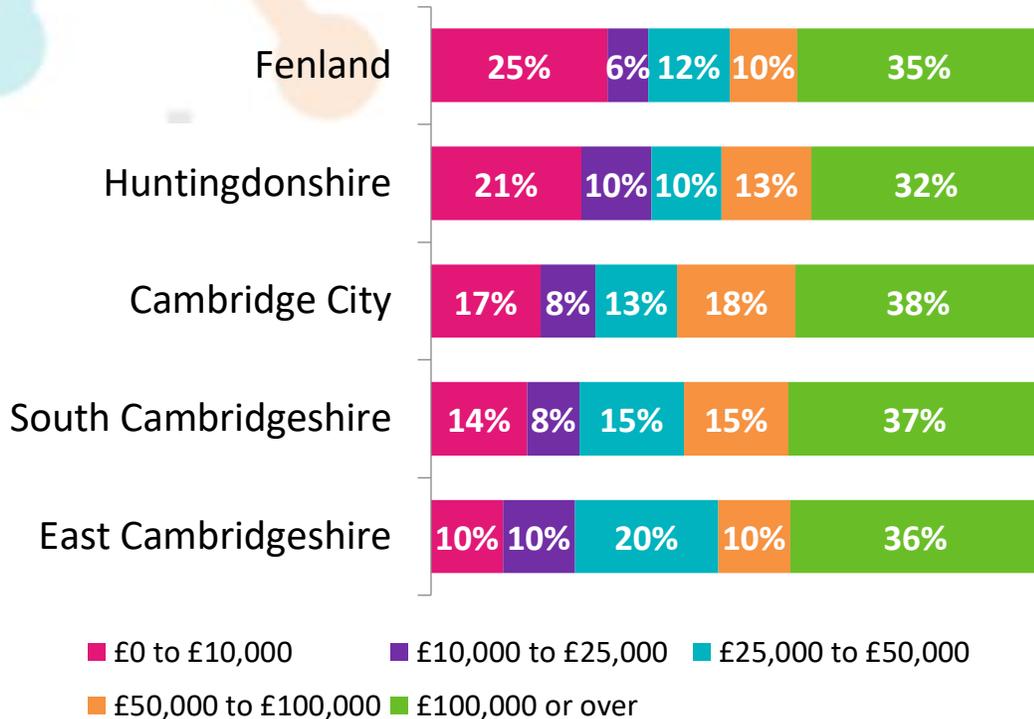


What districts groups work in  
(Multiple answers possible)

# Size of groups responding

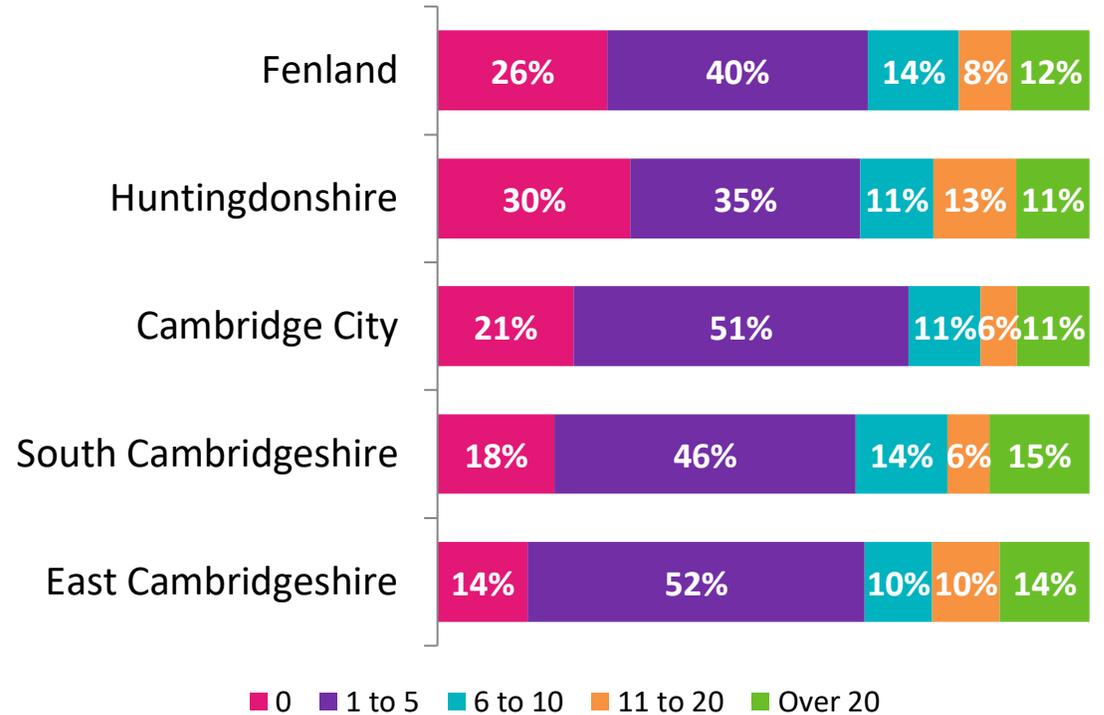
## Income

57% of the groups that gave an income were £50,000 or less.



## Staff levels

74% of the groups that gave an answer had five or less staff.



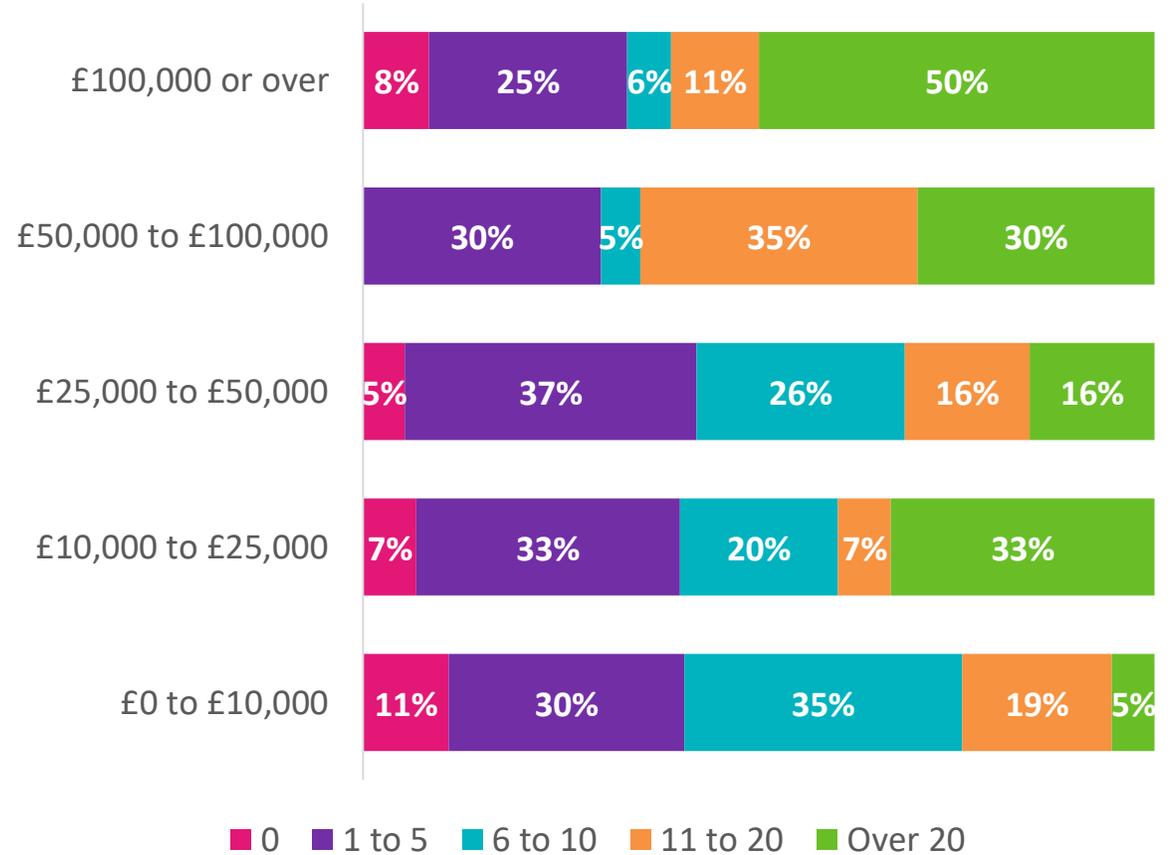
# Volunteer numbers

The majority of groups responding used volunteers in some way with only 8% of those responding stating they did not use any volunteers. 31% had 20 or more volunteers.

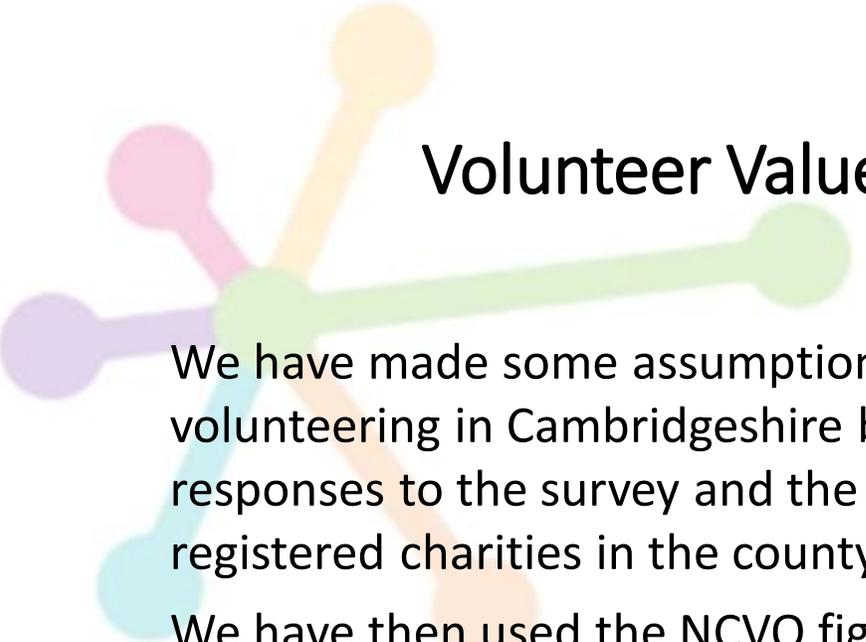
Volunteers continue to be an important part of how groups deliver their services. There is a recognition that groups need to change to ensure that volunteers remain interested and engaged.

*“The pandemic has made us think differently about volunteering and so are bringing in new roles and revising our volunteer policy.”*

(comment from respondent)



The number of volunteers groups had by income



## Volunteer Value

We have made some assumptions about volunteering in Cambridgeshire based on the responses to the survey and the number of registered charities in the county.

We have then used the NCVO figure for the average amount of time a volunteer gives and the Real Living Wage of £9.90 an hour.

From this we think Cambridgeshire benefits from volunteering with this value every year.

Once all the informal volunteering is taken on board, as well as the real value of people's time this amount is a conservative estimate for what volunteering is worth in the county.

The value of volunteering each year in Cambridgeshire is

£117

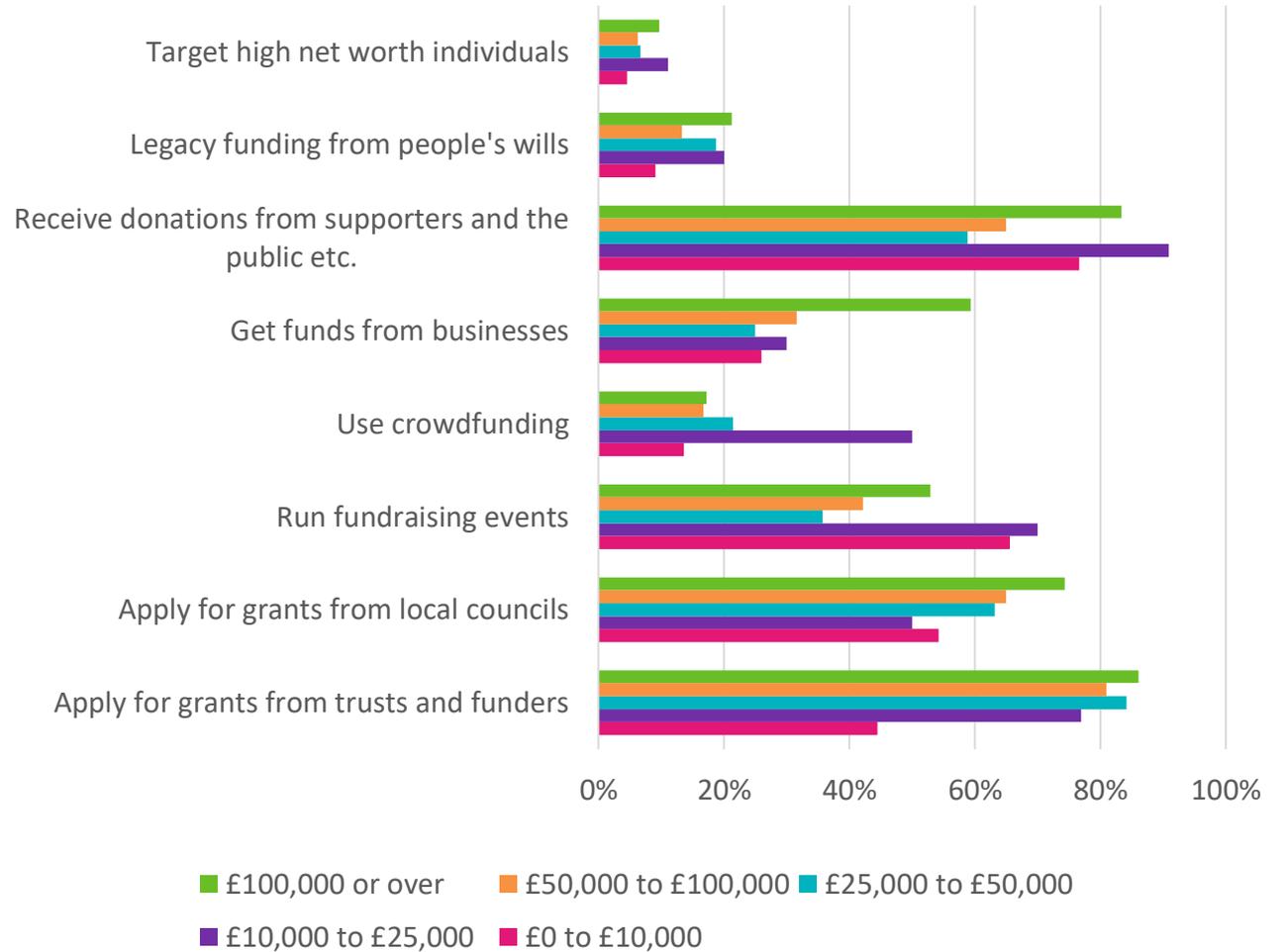
Million

# How groups raise funds

The most popular funding techniques for groups of all size are applying for grants either from councils or from trusts and funders, or by receiving donations from supporters and the public. Running fundraising events is also popular, especially for smaller groups.

Larger groups also receive funds from business but this is less common for smaller groups.

Crowdfunding, legacy funding and targeting high net worth individuals are not commonly used by local groups.



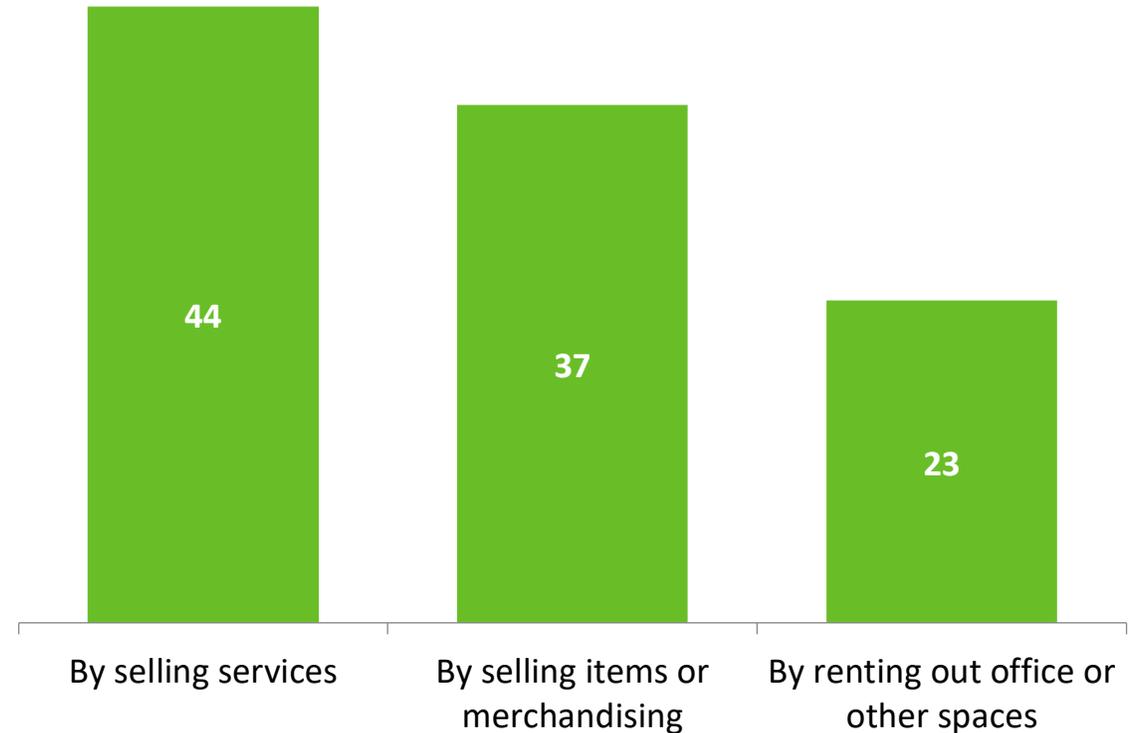
Percentage of groups that use different funding techniques by size

## Earned income

Many charities have always relied on trading to generate some or all of their income. This is done in many different ways but these can be broadly grouped into these three categories.

Larger groups are more likely to have an earned income stream with 81% of those saying they earned some of their income having an income over £50K.

Smaller groups are equally likely to generate income by selling services or items. 35% of the smaller groups (with an income below £50K) will generate money this way.



Numbers of groups that indicated they earned some of their income

## Training undertaken in the last year

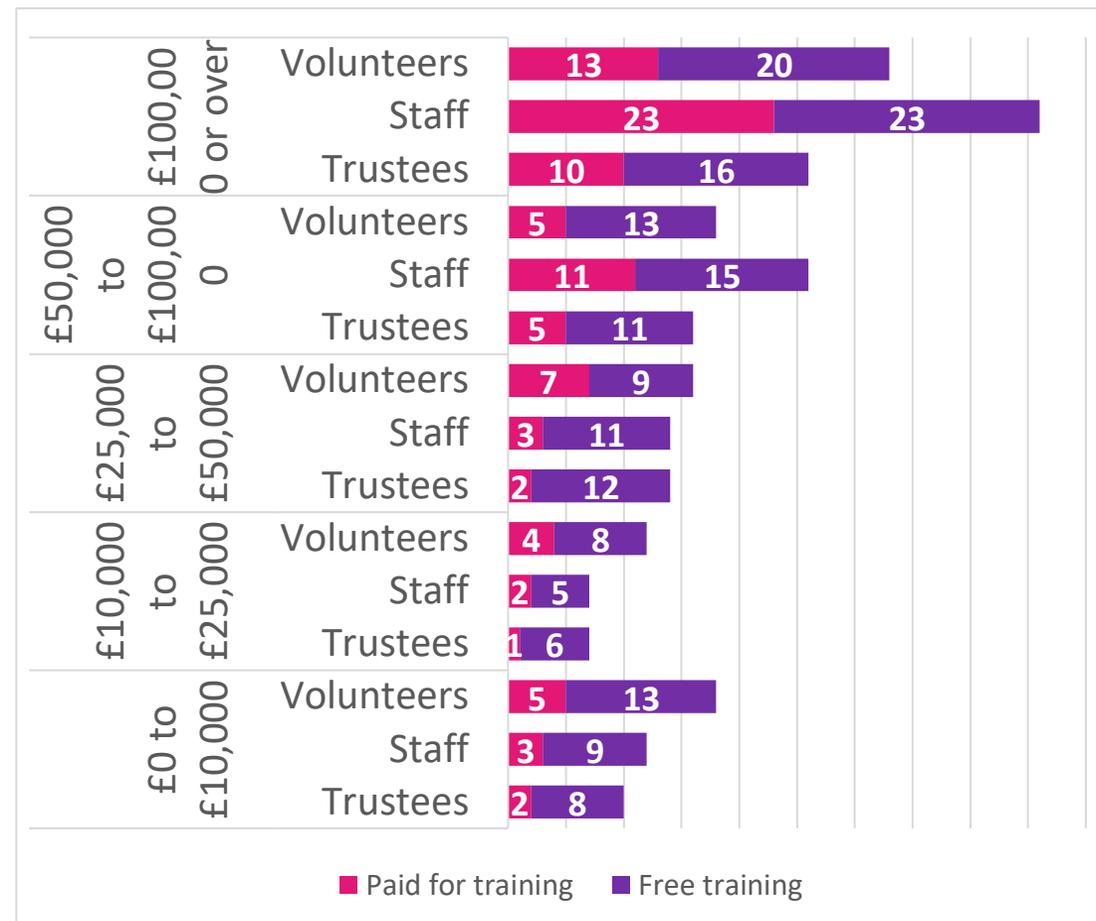
We asked if staff, trustees or volunteers had undertaken paid or free training in the past year.

Groups working in Fenland and East Cambs are less likely to have done training.

Of the groups where training had happened:

- 78% had trained some or all of their volunteers
- 73% had trained some or all of their staff
- 62% had trained some or all of their trustees

Staff are more likely to have had training in larger groups whereas volunteers are more likely to have had training in smaller groups.



Numbers of groups where training was undertaken in 21-22

# Risk planning

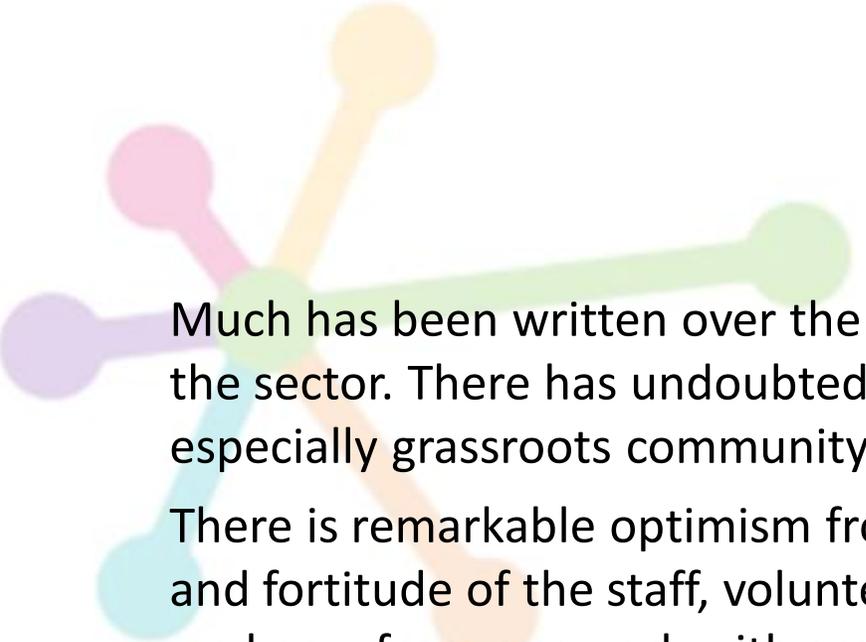
We asked groups if they had a risk plan, of those that responded 53% had a plan. 37% had trustees regularly reviewed the plan and 37% referred to the plan when looking at new projects or planning their work.

It can be seen that as groups got bigger they were more likely to have a risk plan but worryingly 15% of the biggest groups did not have a plan.



- We have a risk plan
- The trustees regularly review the risk plan and refer to it in meetings
- We refer to our risk plan when we are looking at new ideas and planning our work
- We don't have a risk plan

Groups use of risk plans by income

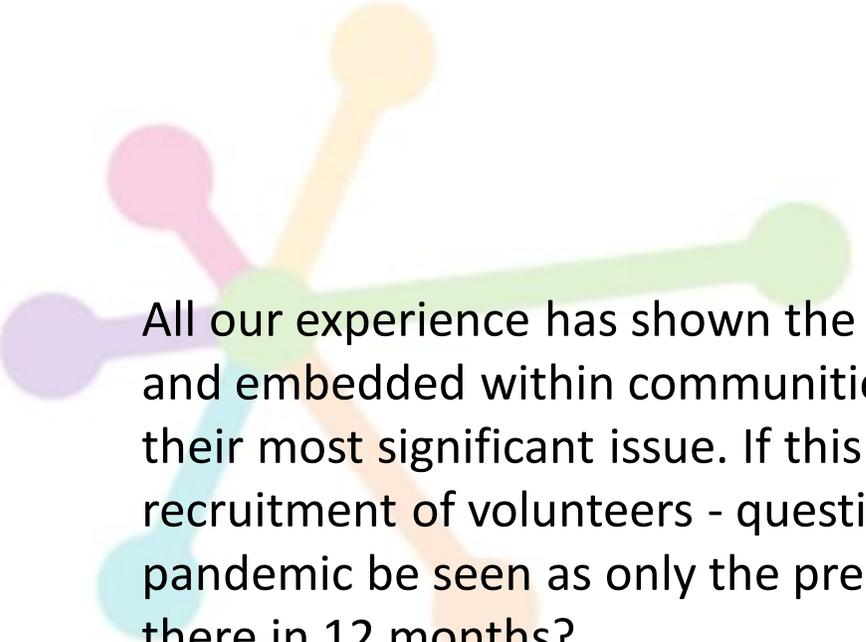


# Conclusions

Much has been written over the last 2 years about the impact that the pandemic has or will have on the sector. There has undoubtedly been a massive shift in how things are done and how the sector, especially grassroots community groups are viewed and trusted New Local trust figures(?)

There is remarkable optimism from groups for the future and this is testament to the enthusiasm and fortitude of the staff, volunteers and trustees involved. What the report doesn't show (and that we know from our work with groups) is the staff turnover due to burnout, the groups that have closed and continue to close, and the fact that we have moved seamlessly from a pandemic to a cost of living crisis that will continue to impact on groups. The cost of living crisis had not manifested itself in any major way when we asked groups about their thoughts on 2022, and hindsight may have tempered the optimism.

The sector continues to deliver vital services and our role in promoting this remains key. Only by people and groups recognising what they have will we see them supporting groups with their time, their donations, and their grant funding.



# Conclusions

All our experience has shown the importance of the groups we work with, those groups that are local and embedded within communities. But groups have highlighted the increase in demand for services as their most significant issue. If this is coupled with their two biggest barriers - the lack of funding and the recruitment of volunteers - questions need to be asked about how the demand can be met. Will the pandemic be seen as only the prequel to the perfect storm, and will groups, let alone the optimism, be there in 12 months?

Groups have adapted their delivery methods, how they raise funds, the services they offer, and almost every aspect of their work, even those groups that are back delivering face to face services are doing it in different ways to keep people safe and to give people the confidence to return. For Support Cambridgeshire online is now the preferred delivery method and whilst face to face has its place it should be used only when it will bring real added value.

The pandemic has not treated all groups equally. Larger groups are significantly more likely to have seen their reserves grow. At the other end the smallest groups are most likely to have seen their incomes drop. There are undoubtedly many reasons for this but we have to ensure that moving forward all groups are able to grow their income to enable them to deliver their services and meet demand.

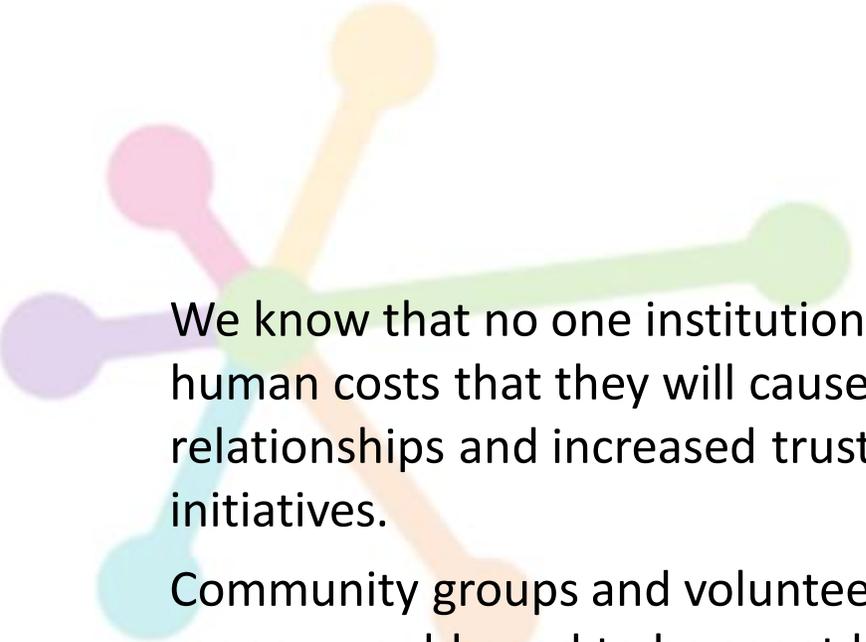


# Conclusions

The report highlights that we have to find ways to help both groups and funders to do funding differently. There is a movement towards this from the more enlightened national funders where unrestricted grants are offered and where application and reporting processes have been streamlined and simplified. Groups have to look at where they get the funds they need from. We know that many funders, including national and local government, released additional funding to ensure that the impact of the pandemic was mitigated and that groups could survive, adapt and deliver the support that communities and individuals needed. This will mean there is less money for the future and this has to be recognised and planned for.

Networking and relationships will continue to be key for all those looking to reduce the impact of some of the biggest issues identified in the research.

- Divisions and inequality in society
- Social isolation
- Uncertain economic outlook

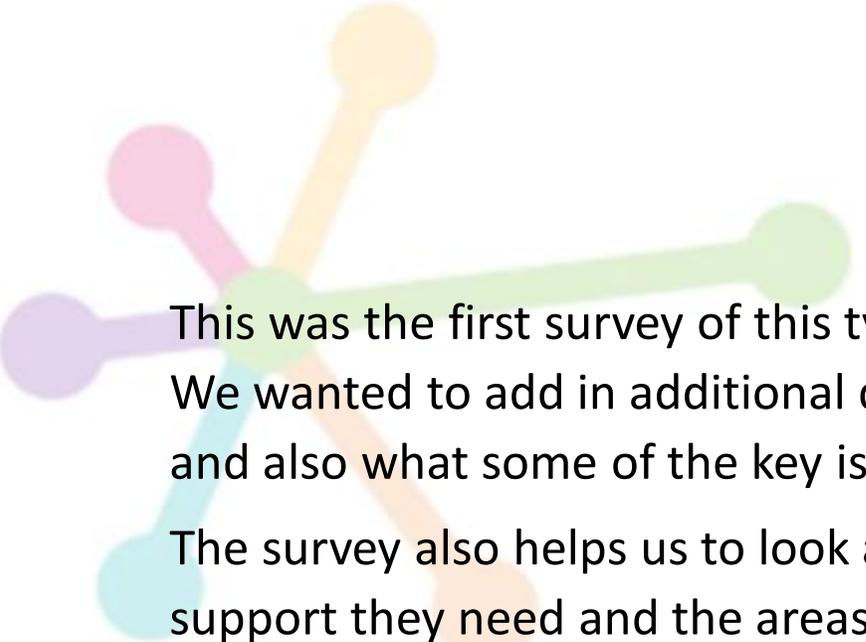


# Conclusions

We know that no one institution or organisation will be able to solve the issues and deal with the human costs that they will cause. We will have to see more partnership working, better relationships and increased trust from all parties so that local activity can complement national initiatives.

Community groups and volunteering are essential to resilient communities. Without them far more money would need to be spent by statutory services to replicate the services or deal with the consequences of the lost services.

It has been an extraordinary two years since our last survey and the sector and communities have shown what they are able to do and how important they are. The effort that all those involved with these groups have put in has been astonishing. The fact that they have come up for air with such optimism and with such a desire to do more, to work smarter and have an even bigger impact is a testament to everyone. At Support Cambridgeshire we have been privileged to watch first hand the difference these groups have made to people's lives and we have been amazed and astonished by what we have seen. We want to ensure that the groups, the staff, the volunteers and the trustees are still with us in the future so that we can continue to watch in awe what these groups achieve.



# Methodology

This was the first survey of this type we have carried out since 2019 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. We wanted to add in additional questions around how groups were fairing following the pandemic and also what some of the key issues and barriers they were facing.

The survey also helps us to look at the services that we provide by asking groups what areas of support they need and the areas they want additional support. Finally we ask questions about how groups who have used our services have found them. This helps us to continually improve.

Through established networks Support Cambridgeshire contacted member groups and advertised the survey on websites and newsletters. We also carried out targeted emailing and contacted groups by phone to encourage them to complete. We continue to use social media to target groups. All surveys were completed using Survey Monkey.

We carried out tracking of where responses came from. 83% completed the survey from links in newsletters or e-bulletins. The remainder completed the survey from links in social media posts with LinkedIn showing 7% of the responses and Facebook 4%.

# Your county, your voice, our support

Support Cambridgeshire helps community groups and organisations to strengthen and grow, providing a range of advice, training and support.

We are a partnership between Hunts Forum and Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service. We recognise the need for greater cross-working and the ability to provide a high-level offer to charities, village halls and parish councils.

We would like to thank all those who have taken the time to complete this survey as well as the funders that make this and all our work possible.

Written by Mark Freeman

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