

# State of the sector 2021

How voluntary organisations emerged from a year of criminal justice reform and the Covid-19 pandemic





# Foreword

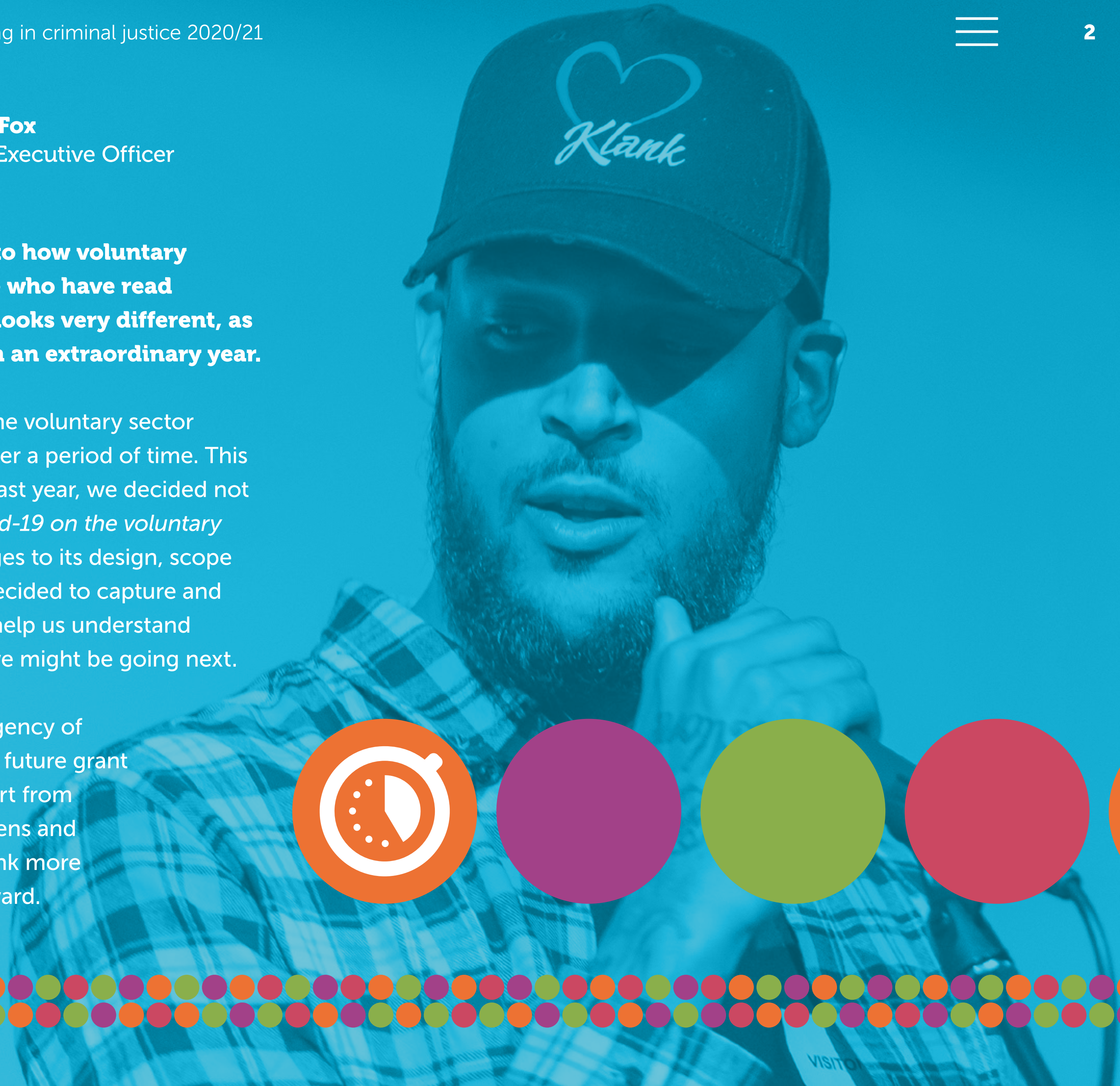


**Anne Fox**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Clinks

**This is the eighth year that Clinks has conducted research into how voluntary organisations in the criminal justice system are faring. Those who have read previous editions of this research will notice that this report looks very different, as we seek to best to capture the experiences of organisations in an extraordinary year.**

Previous reports have attempted to set out the size and shape of the voluntary sector working in the criminal justice system and to identify key trends over a period of time. This time, we had to rethink our approach in the context of Covid-19. Last year, we decided not to run the research at all and instead published *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. This year we have made significant changes to its design, scope and purpose. Given the distinct challenges facing the sector, we decided to capture and provide a comprehensive picture of the 2020/21 financial year, to help us understand where we are emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic and where we might be going next.

Many of the findings of this report – increasing complexity and urgency of need amongst service users, limited access to prisons, and fear for future grant funding streams – mirror the findings of our Covid-19 impact report from December 2020. However, this current report provides a broader lens and a unique perspective to allow us to build on those findings and think more practically about the impact of the year on the sector moving forward.





# Understanding the impact of the pandemic on the voluntary sector in the criminal justice system

The direct challenges for organisations posed by the pandemic are highlighted throughout this report. From the survey results, we can see the varied impacts of the pandemic on running costs and income streams as well as the widespread reduction in volunteer numbers and recruitment challenges. Interview participants described the difficulties of making spaces Covid-safe, revamping policies to be Covid-compliant and having to get through with a skeleton staff after using the Job Retention Scheme to preserve jobs.

I was also struck by the creativity and determination showed by the sector in this context and reminded of this sector’s resilience and commitment to supporting people. Organisations completely changed how they delivered services, with 74% of organisations changing to remote delivery and over half developing new services. In the face of challenges with money, people and access to service users, this is a remarkable feat. The interviews paint a rich picture of determination and innovation. I was particularly struck by examples such as the organisation that set up an allotment to have outdoor space to deliver support, and another organisation redesigning their coaching programmes for online delivery to prison staff.

It’s also clear organisations were stepping in to support people as other support structures disappeared or other services closed their doors. It is in this context that 80% of organisations reported that the level, complexity and urgency of

need of their service users had increased during the year. We heard a lot about isolation and loneliness amongst people in the criminal justice system, and disturbingly, also of a marked rise in women facing domestic violence and abuse.

The sector transforms lives, but it also saves lives, something which this crisis put into stark relief. Throughout this report you’ll find quotes from interviewees illustrating where their organisations have stepped in to support people in crisis, often when no one else will. I have no doubt that some people in the voluntary sector would be reluctant to see themselves as particularly brave or determined. Stepping in at crisis point is not what voluntary organisations want to be doing. But it is what they do and will always do. This is one of the reasons I am so proud to be in and working for this sector.

All this points to a uniquely challenging year for voluntary organisations, but what struck me in this research was how familiar the challenges facing organisations were to those we’ve seen in previous years. Whether it’s an organisation struggling to reach people in their prison cells; or grappling with complex procurement processes; or supporting people in crisis; or struggling to find long-term sustainable resources. All these challenges long pre-date the pandemic.

This research makes clear then that voluntary organisations faced new and incredibly difficult challenges, but these came on top of, not instead of, the wider challenges that have long faced the sector. To truly understand the impacts of this year, we must recognise this was the last thing the sector needed after



years of austerity, public service reform and punitive criminal justice policy. The pandemic has only accelerated and intensified these pressures – and only makes the voluntary sector’s ongoing resilience and creativity more extraordinary.

## Capturing the full diversity of the sector

The research once again also shines a light on the diversity of this sector – both in what the sector does, but also who organisations support. The respondents to this survey support people from every community, facing multiple and often complex forms of disadvantage.

A unique strength of the sector too is its ability to provide flexible, tailored support to different groups of people. Therefore, it is great to see that 32% of respondents said either their main stated purpose was to provide services for women or that they deliver specific services for women.

The findings of this research are also enhanced by 17 respondents out of a total 132, who said the main stated purpose of their organisation is to provide services for racially minoritised people, or who run a specific service for racially minoritised people as part of the organisation’s broader remit. These responses add valuable insight and are reflected in our findings, but don’t provide a large enough sample for us to draw out the specific experiences of this part of our sector.

For many of us, the murder of George Floyd and its reverberations across the world also dominated our minds across the period this research covered. It also forced many of us to reflect on our own complicity or lack of action in tackling racism. Like many other voluntary organisations, Clinks reflected and listened and came up with new plans, processes and commitments to aspire to become an antiracist organisation. In the spirit of this reflection, we can say that it is not good enough that we didn’t capture more experiences from organisations led by and focussed on racially minoritised people. With the establishment of our race and justice network which now has 72 organisations in it, we will seek to address this in future years.

Towards the end of the timeframe this research covers, the government published both the report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The first of these questioned the existence and impact of structural racism in the UK, while the latter will further increase the overrepresentation of racially minoritised people in the criminal justice system. Capturing and understanding the full diversity of the sector will continue to be a vital priority as such damaging policy comes into effect.

## Taking lessons forward

The research shows that voluntary organisations had very different experiences when working with statutory partners in the criminal justice system, some getting glowing praise while others real criticism. Such varied experiences





reflect a wider problem of inconsistency in the approach from statutory services to how they work with their voluntary sector partners. Too often, voluntary organisations working in different prisons will find their access to people in prison and to accurate information from the prison, entirely dependent on a relationship with a single member of prison staff. This is clearly unsustainable.

Again, this is an issue that has perhaps been intensified during the pandemic, but has long plagued the sector. For some years, Clinks has called for the roll-out of voluntary sector coordinators in prison to embed a culture of collaboration with the voluntary sector<sup>1</sup> and we reiterate that call with the publication of this report.

Clinks also had varying experiences of trying to facilitate information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to the sector during the pandemic. In my role as Chair of the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) special interest group (SIG) on Covid-19, it felt certainly in the earlier months that the natural stance of certain parts of central government to information sharing in a crisis was one of controlling the message rather than true collaboration. In this research we see the impacts of this: organisations working on the front line, trying to ease the pressure on the criminal justice system, but prevented from doing so.

While there are many lessons for the sector in this research, there are also lessons for the prison and probation service. They must take the widest possible view of the criminal justice system, in order to open their doors to the capacity

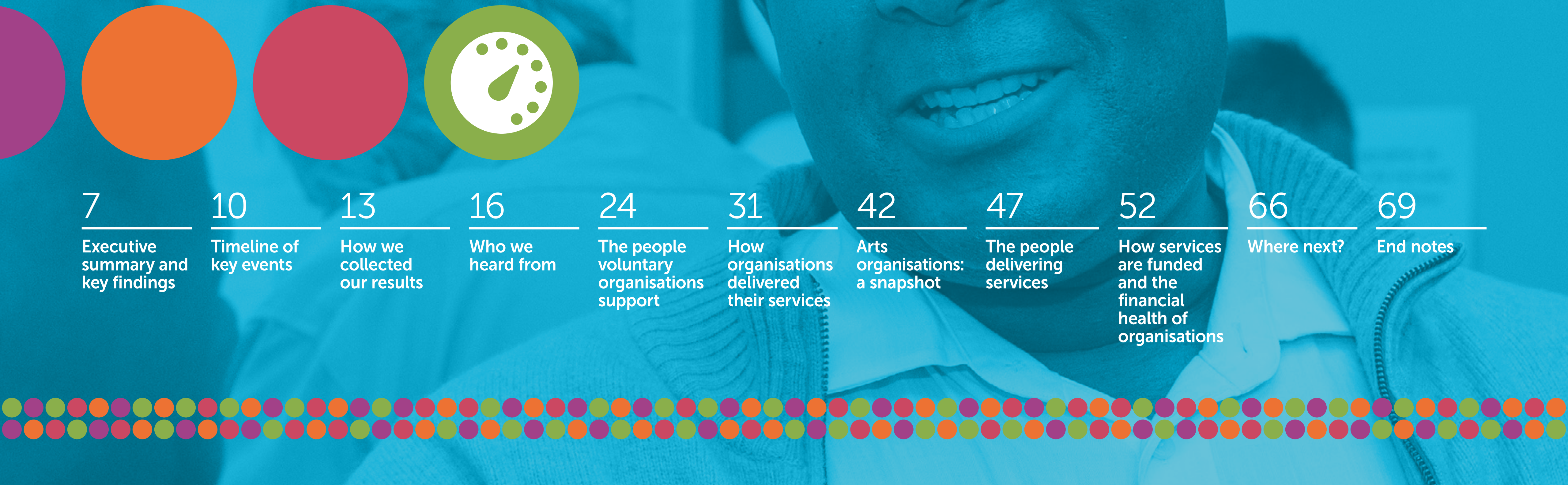
and expertise of the voluntary sector in a crisis, rather than risk shutting non-statutory providers out. Organisations should be trusted to receive the same operational information as the prison and probation staff they usually work in such close collaboration with. The sector must be seen as more than a provider; as a body of people whose work is essential to making the criminal justice system function effectively and fairly to the benefit of the people caught up in it.

The establishment by MoJ and HMPPS of a voluntary sector taskforce in response to this feedback from Clinks and subsequently the HMPPS Third Sector Strategic Partnership Board, I think shows there is hope that such lessons can be taken on board and Clinks will continue to work closely with MoJ and HMPPS to make improvements.

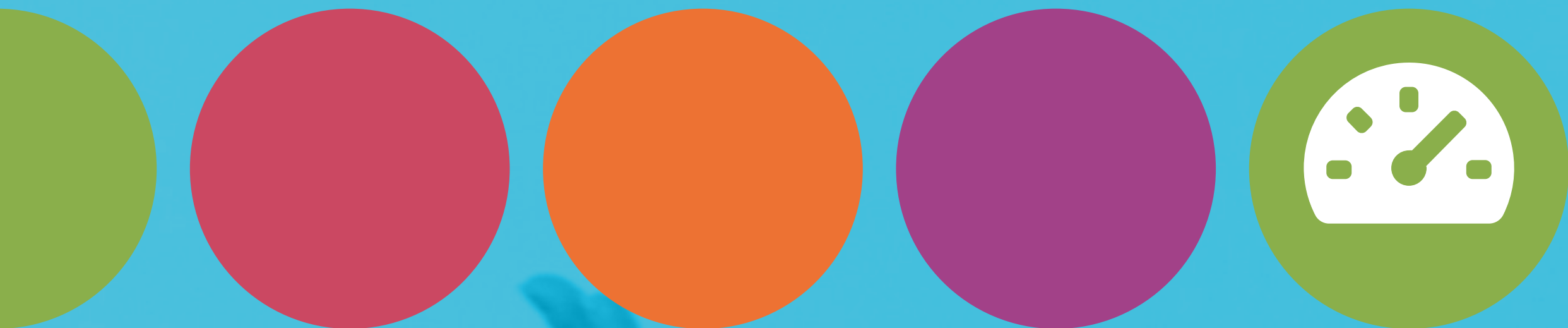
Finally, I was also struck in this report by the fantastic response from charitable trusts and foundations, and indeed the MoJ and HMPPS, to support organisations with emergency funding through the year. However, it is also clear that some organisations have a degree of anxiety about the impact this emergency spending has had on the resources of charitable funders and whether government cuts are likely to happen. There is a concern therefore that opportunities to secure longer-term strategic grant funding in the near future will be harder. This is something Clinks will monitor very closely, and work with charitable funders and government officials to resolve.











# Executive summary and key findings



**This research shows how the voluntary sector working in the criminal justice system has fared during the 2020/21 financial year. The findings are based on 132 responses to an online survey and 11 in-depth interviews, all with voluntary organisations working in the criminal justice system. The research was designed by Clinks with National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) as partners who led on the analysis of survey respondents and conducted the interviews. The final report is authored by Clinks.**

The research finds that voluntary organisations faced an extraordinarily challenging year. Long-term problems of increasing levels of need amongst service users, underfunded contracts, and complex procurement, all continued with the added weight of the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused most organisations to radically overhaul their delivery models. While the availability of emergency funding during the year helped organisations continue their vital work, there is a degree of uncertainty and concern for the future.

The key findings include:

**People accessing voluntary sector services had higher levels of need**

Over 80% of respondents said that the level, complexity and urgency of need of their service users had increased, as the long-term effects of a housing crisis, austerity and welfare reform were compounded by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Voluntary sector services responded with flexibility and innovation to continue supporting people in the criminal justice system**

In response to the pandemic, 74% of organisations changed to remote delivery and over half of organisations developed new services to respond to greater need.

**Inconsistent information from statutory services prevented voluntary organisations from supporting the emergency response to Covid-19**

Organisations didn't know how they could support HMPPS to respond to the crisis in prisons, access to information was highly variable across the estate and there was often a disjoint between central policy directives and local practice.

**The voluntary sector in criminal justice is leading the way in lived-experience involvement**

97% of organisations involved people with lived experience in the design or delivery of their services and the majority recruited people with lived experience as staff and volunteers.

**Volunteer numbers fell as services responded to the pandemic**

47% of organisations reported a decrease in volunteer numbers and the majority reported recruiting fewer volunteers in 2020/21 than the previous year. This appeared to be down to specific circumstances arising from Covid-19 and we hope to see numbers increase next year.





**Voluntary organisations are underpaid for their contracted work**

Only 26% of organisations achieved full cost recovery across all their contracts, an even smaller number than in 2019. Organisations subsidised the shortfall in contracts using their own reserves or other funding sources.

**Emergency grant funding helped organisations to adapt their services and plug gaps in income**

70% of survey respondents applied for emergency grants, predominately from charitable trusts and foundations and statutory bodies. Almost all organisations who applied were successful in securing at least one grant.

**Organisations fear that the availability of emergency funding will reduce in subsequent years**

Interview participants expressed major concern that the pandemic would mean charitable trusts and foundations would not be able to afford long-term strategic grant programmes and that statutory funders would face cuts.







# Timeline of key events







April 2020

**RR3 special interest group on probation meets for the first time**

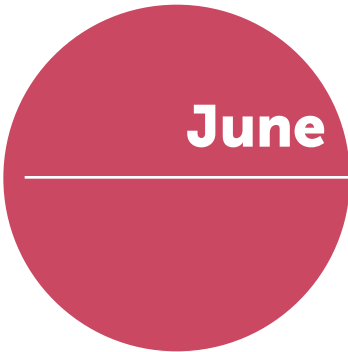
Clinks convenes a group of voluntary sector leaders to provide ongoing advice to HMPPS on the reunification of probation and the commissioning of services.



May 2020

**First gradual easing of lockdown in the community**

People who can't work from home are encouraged back into the workplace, and unlimited exercising and outdoor activity allowed with members of your household.



June 2020

**Further easing of lockdown in the community**

Schools and non-essential shops reopen.

**The MoJ publishes *National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services***

This framework sets out how the MoJ will take decisions about easing Coronavirus-related restrictions in prisons.

**The MoJ publishes *Probation Roadmap to Recovery***

This framework sets out how the MoJ plans to recover probation services as lockdown is gradually relaxed.

**Probation Dynamic Framework opens**

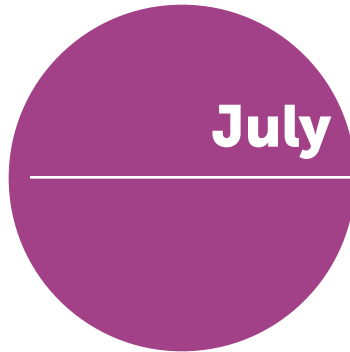
Voluntary organisations are able to apply for qualification onto the main commissioning route under the reunified probation model. HMPPS also decides to reduce the scope of services to be commissioned for day-one due to Covid-19.

**Reunified probation model is further revised**

The government decides to bring accredited programmes and Unpaid Work in-house, cancelling the competitions for Probation Delivery Partners.

**RR3 Covid-19 SIG publishes *What does recovery look like?***

Paper sets out how the government and the voluntary sector can best work together to recover the full delivery of voluntary sector services in the long-term.



July 2020

**RR3 Covid-19 SIG publishes *Impacts of Covid-19 on the financial sustainability of the voluntary sector working in criminal justice***

Report reviewing the impacts of the pandemic on the financial sustainability of the voluntary sector, commissioned by HMPPS and published by Clinks.

**RR3 Covid-19 SIG provides feedback on *Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs)***

Voluntary sector leaders provide feedback to improve the quality of EDMs that provide guidance for running regimes under Covid-19.



August 2020

**Restrictions further eased in the community**

Indoor theatres and gyms open, the government launches its 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme.

**Call-off competitions through the probation Dynamic Framework begin**





September

2020

Restrictions in the community reintroduced

The 'rule of six' established, people are advised to work from home and a new 10pm hospitality curfew introduced

MoJ publishes *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*

The government publishes its sentencing white paper without meaningful consultation. The sector is concerned about many of its commitments.

October

2020

Further restrictions introduced in the community

A new three-tier system of Covid-19 restrictions is introduced.

55 organisations awarded MoJ/ HMPPS Covid-19 response grants

November

2020

Second national lockdown comes into force

RR3 feedback to HMPPS on its management of Covid-19 is published

Paper highlights how the voluntary sector has struggled with the quality of information it has received from the government during the pandemic.

December

2020

New restrictions introduced

National lockdown is ended, with a return to a tiered system. A new tier 4 is introduced.

First Covid-19 vaccination is delivered

Clinks publishes *Impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*

January

2021

Third national lockdown

Vaccination roll-out in prisons begins

February

2021

Government publishes roadmap for lifting lockdown

March

2021

Children return to school

Prisons start to move from stage 4 to stage 3 of the national prisons framework







# How we collected our results





# What this report will tell you

This report provides a snapshot of the health of the voluntary sector working in the criminal justice system across the 2020/21 financial year, including a look at the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on organisations and the people they support.

For the fourth consecutive time, we have partnered with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) to collect and analyse the data for this State of the sector research. Clinks authored the report, based on our analysis of the data, and our existing knowledge of the sector, gathered through ongoing dialogue with our members.

in partnership with



This year’s report is based on two data sources:

- A survey
- 11 semi-structured interviews.

## Survey

A survey was conducted between October and November 2021. We received 132 complete responses. The survey included both open and closed questions, allowing organisations to explain the responses they gave. This enabled us to gather more detailed insights into the trends behind the data.

As with all research, there are some limitations to the data. The sample for the survey was self-selecting and so not all findings are representative of the voluntary sector working in the criminal justice system as a whole. For example, when compared to the population, our sample was skewed towards larger organisations. Where possible we have proactively sought to address this, such as selecting interviewees to ensure representation from small and specialist organisations. The findings of this report should therefore be valuable to organisations of any size.

We have also included additional analysis and comparison of data to highlight where experiences between different types of organisations have differed, such as between smaller and larger organisations. We have defined smaller organisations as having an annual income of under £500,000 and larger organisations as having an income of £500,000 or over. This definition allowed us to make meaningful comparisons based on large samples in each category. However, as the response rate for some groups is quite low, we have not been able to represent their experiences for every part of the survey.

Please note that the percentages in some of the graphs and tables below add up to over 100%. This is due to rounding and/or where respondents could select more than one option.

## Interviews

NCVO conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with senior representatives of voluntary organisations working in the criminal justice system. The interviews explored





the impact of the pandemic on the organisations and its beneficiaries. They also discussed experiences of working alongside statutory agencies, and expectations of financial sustainability. Interviewees were selected to ensure representation of:

- Organisations led by and focussed on racially minoritised people
- Specialist women’s organisations
- Organisations supporting families of people in the criminal justice system
- Medium-sized organisations
- Large organisations
- Organisations delivering services in Wales
- Arts organisations.

Anonymised quotes from these interviews are provided throughout the report to provide more detailed observations and insights. Where quotations are used, they may be lightly edited for ease of reading.

### Thank you

This report would not have been possible without the voluntary sector organisations who took their time to fill out the online survey, and those who took part in interviews, so thanks goes to them first and foremost. Big thanks also to colleagues at NCVO for all their fantastic work on the survey questions and data analysis.

### How this research differs from previous State of the sector reports

We did not publish a State of the sector report last year due to the impact of the pandemic and so the most recent comparisons we make in the data are with *State of the sector 2019*. Where possible, we compare the findings of this research with those from *State of the sector 2019*, though direct comparisons are limited in their use as we have made major changes in the research design for this latest edition to enable us to capture the experiences of organisations during Covid-19.

Finally, we have in previous years worked with NCVO to conduct a financial analysis of the sector as a whole. This financial analysis is drawn from financial accounts submitted to the Charity Commission, and analysed as part of NCVO’s UK Civil Society Almanac, but as the most recent available financial data would have been from 2018/19, we decided not to include this analysis this year, questioning the relevance this data would have for the distinct circumstances of 2020/21.

During the early part of the pandemic, Clinks ran a series of surveys of the sector to understand the impacts of Covid-19. These findings were published in *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice* in December 2020. In many ways, this latest edition of State of the sector can be read as a follow-up to this earlier report, expanding on its themes and benefiting from a broader time frame and opportunity to reflect.







# Who we heard from





# Who voluntary organisations supported

We received 132 full responses to our survey, and respondents were almost evenly split between those who work mainly in the criminal justice system (49%), and those with some service users or services within the criminal justice system (51%). The majority of responding organisations provided support to fewer than 500 people over the year, although a large minority (28%) supported over a thousand people.

Most organisations took their referrals from prisons (74%), the Probation Service<sup>2</sup> (67%), or other voluntary sector organisations (58%). Other less common routes of referral included local authorities (50%), police (36%), local health services (27%), or schools (18%).

Organisations delivered services to a diverse range of people, including young adults (60%), older people (54%) and people with learning difficulties and disabilities (55%).

73% of respondents said they supported women and 45% said they supported racially minoritised people. We also asked organisations whether they were set up to provide specific support to groups of beneficiaries:

- 14% provide services exclusively for women
- 18% have specialist services for women as part of a broader remit

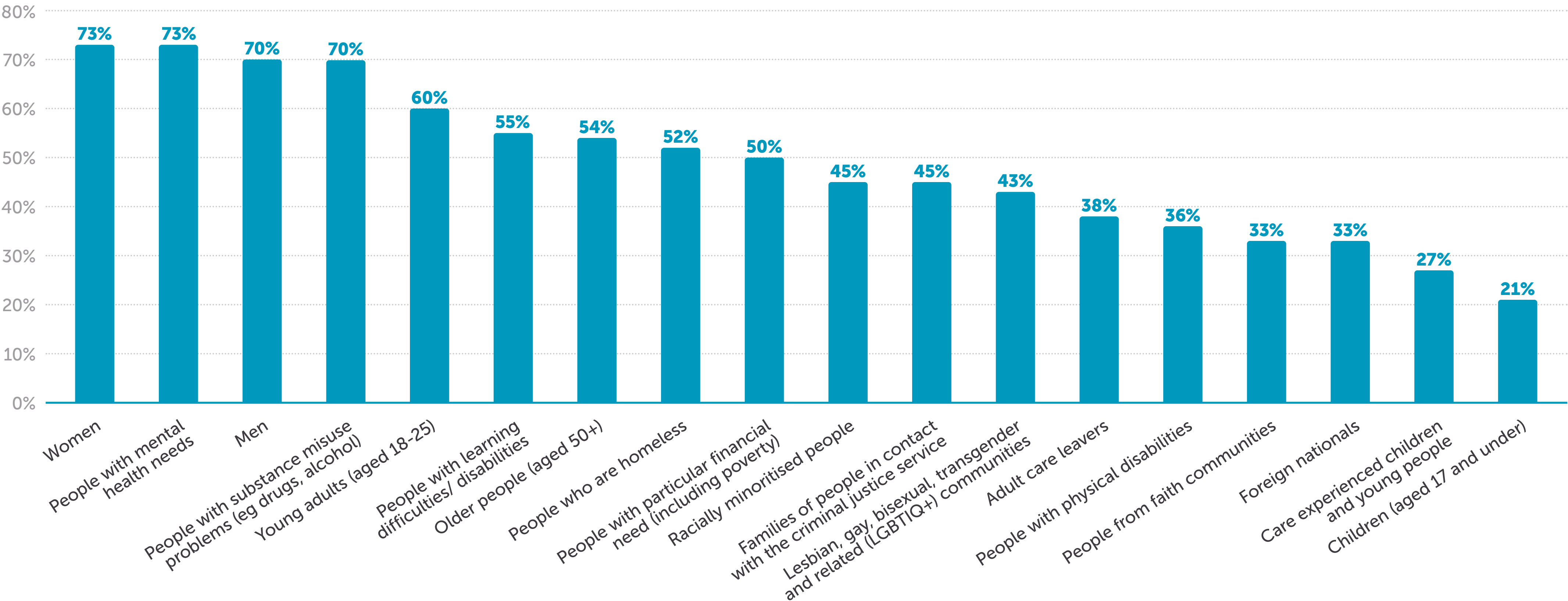
- 4% provide services exclusively for racially minoritised people
- 9% have specialist services for racially minoritised people as part of a broader remit.

Reflecting the multiple disadvantage and exclusion that people in the criminal justice system often experience, we also found that a large number of organisations supported people with mental health needs (73%), substance misuse problems (70%), people who are experiencing homelessness (52%) and people with a particular financial need, including poverty (50%).



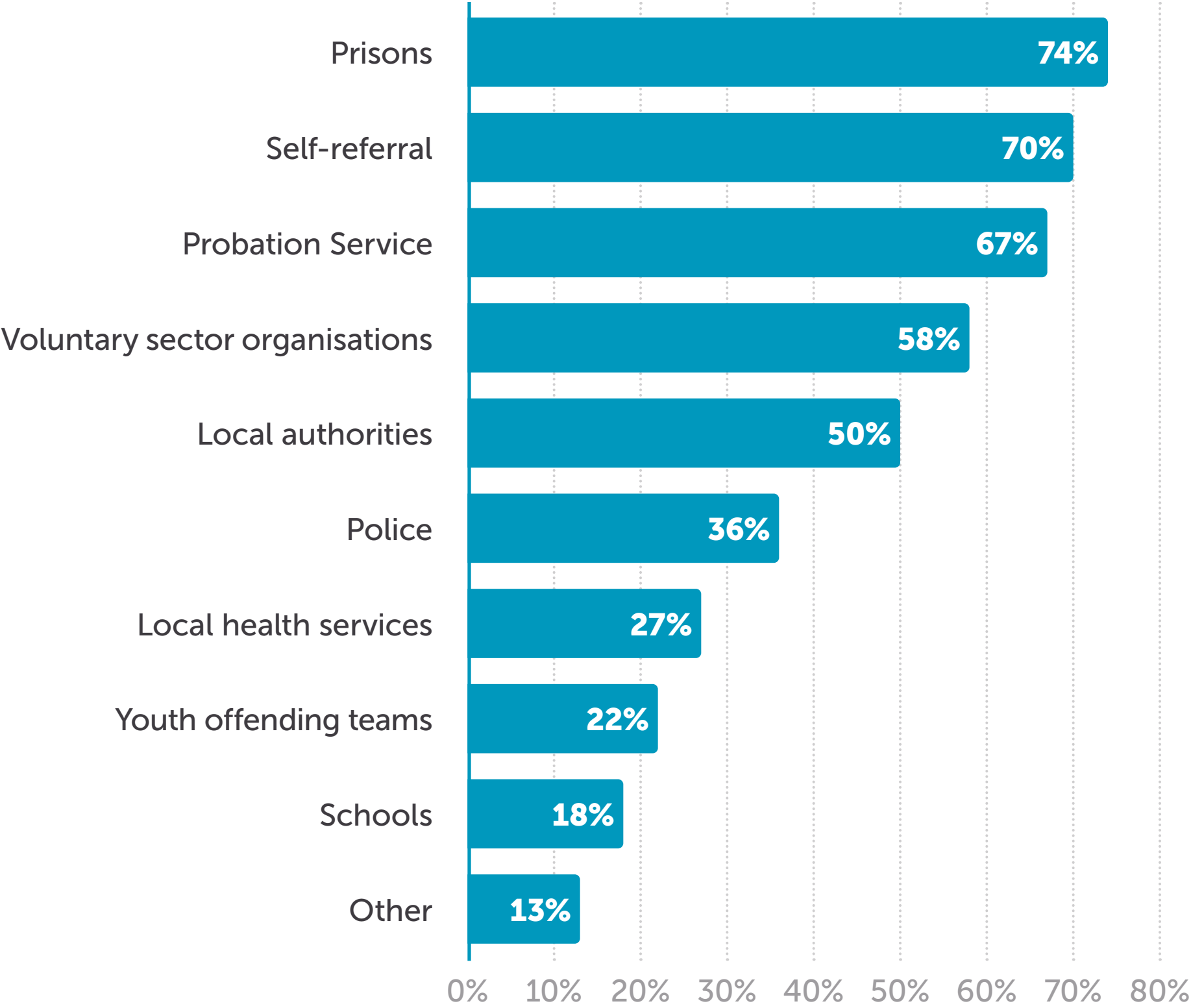


Who voluntary organisations support

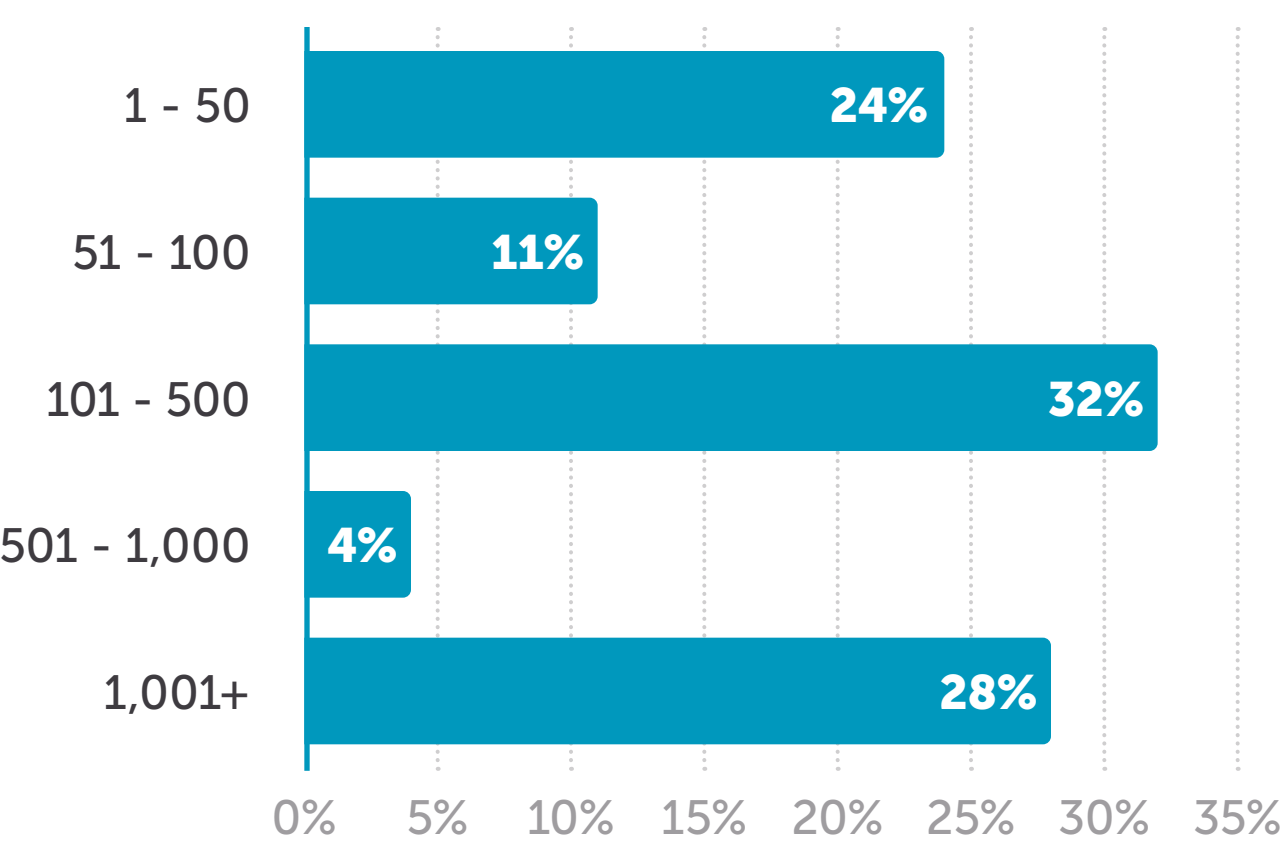




From where organisations' service users are referred



Organisations' service users





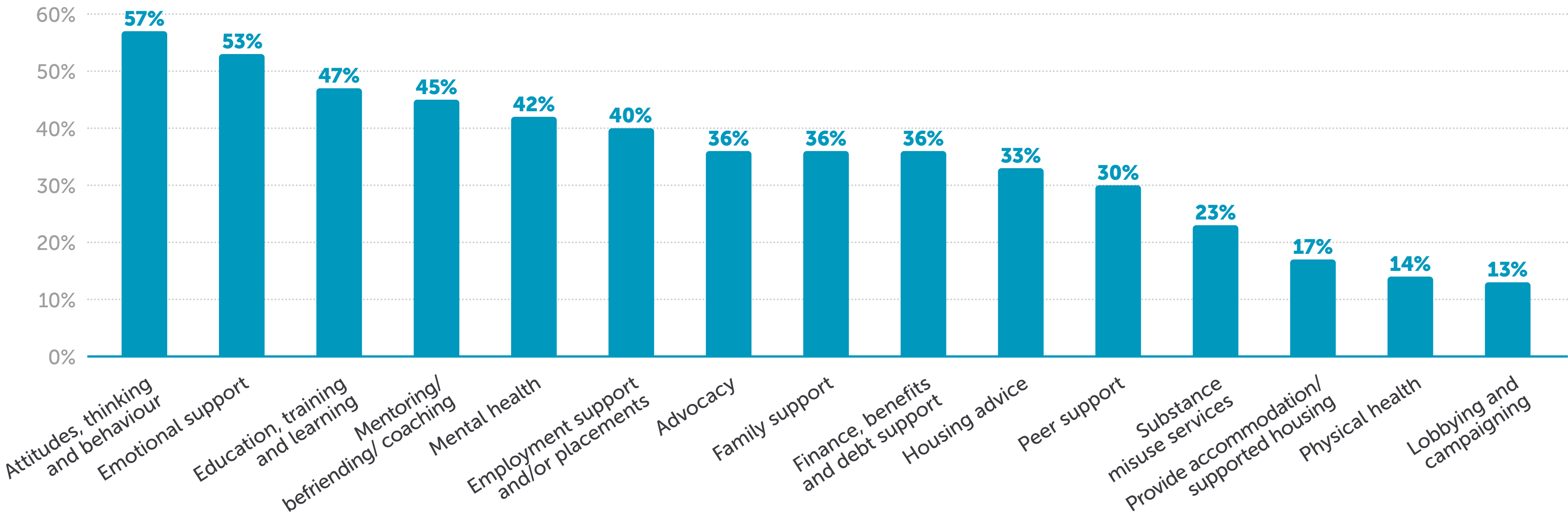
# What services voluntary organisations provide

Respondents provided a vast range of services to meet the basic and diverse needs of service users and to address all the factors that we know support people through desistance.<sup>3</sup>

A large number of organisations provided services such as emotional support (53%), mentoring, befriending and coaching (45%) and mental health support (42%), all

of which would have offered a real lifeline for people dealing with uncertainty, anxiety and isolation during the pandemic. Some of the other most common areas of work included support with attitudes, thinking, and behaviour (57%); education, training, and learning (47%); and employment support and/or placements (40%).

## Organisations' primary areas of work



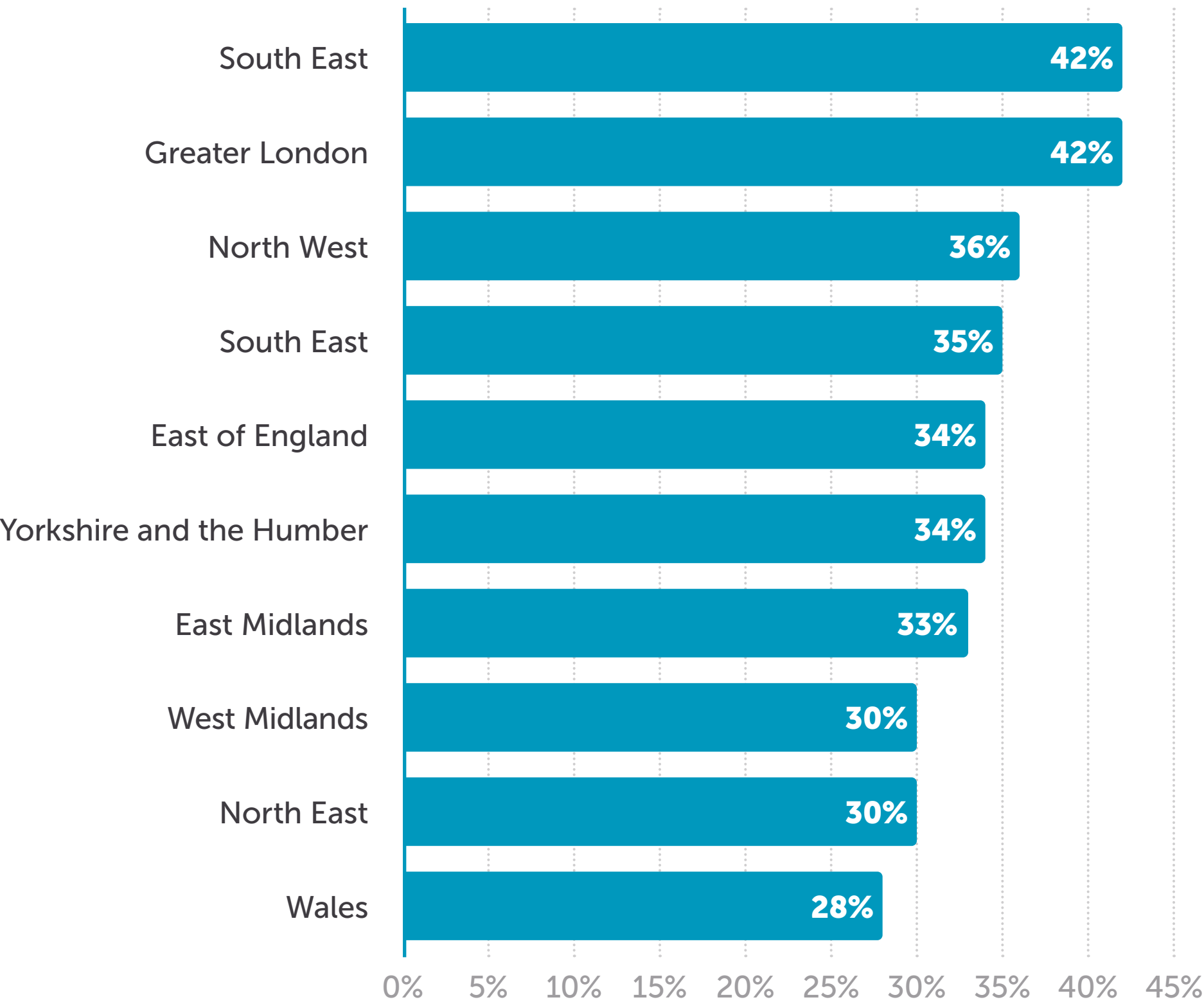


# Where organisations work

Respondents operated at different geographical levels (37% were national organisations, 31% operated regionally and 32% operated at the local level) and they operated across the full breadth of England and Wales. Of those organisations operating in England, the distribution across the country roughly matches the population distribution.

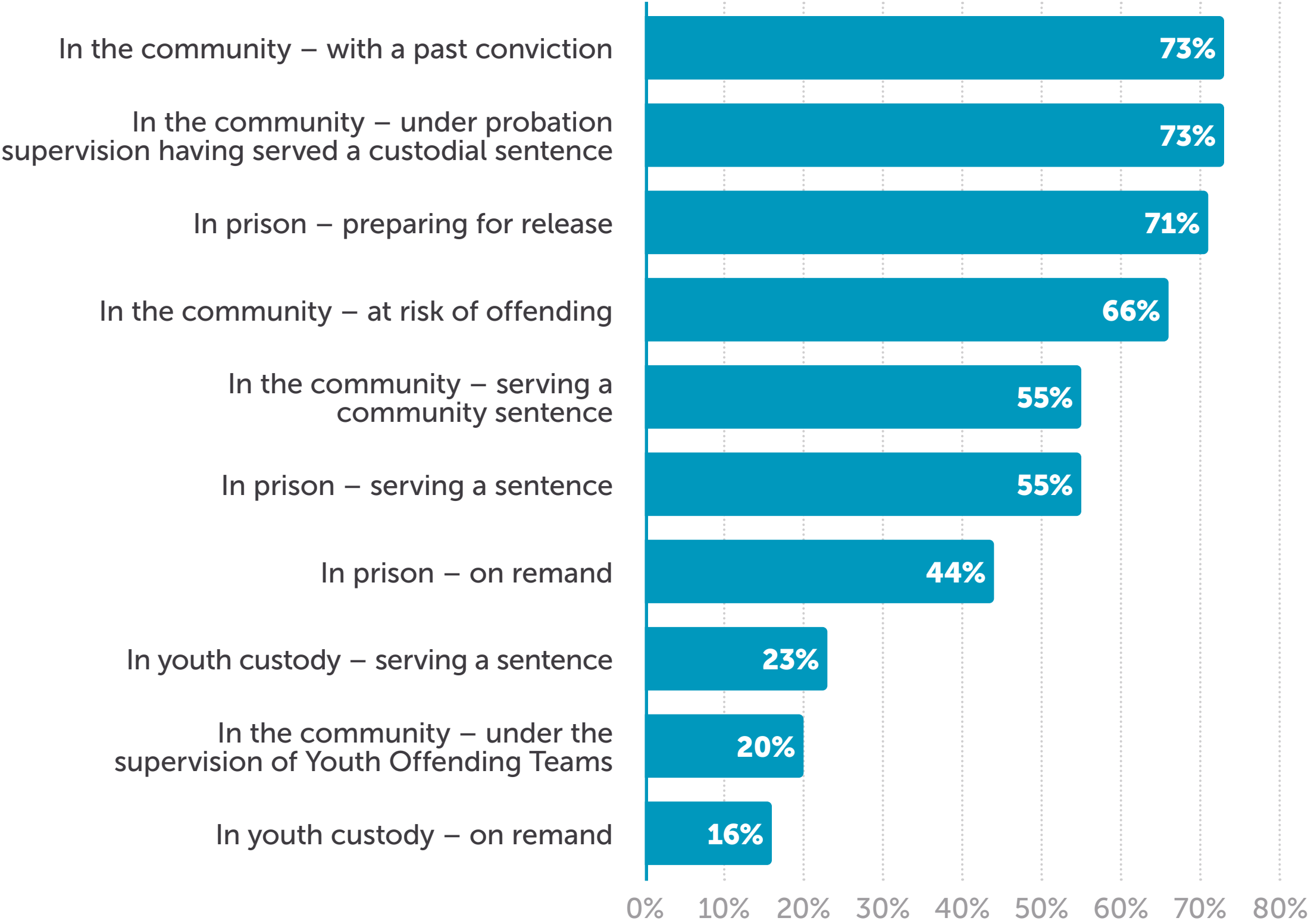
Respondents worked with people both in prison and in the community. A large proportion worked with people in the community (73%) and a similar number (71%) worked with people in prison preparing for release. The smallest groups worked in youth justice, with 23% reporting that they work in youth custody, and 20% with young people in the community.

# Where organisations deliver services





Where organisations work



Size of organisations

Organisations of all sizes – from very small to very large – were represented in the survey responses, though almost half of all respondents had an income of somewhere between £100,000 and £1m.

Total annual income in 2020/21

Annual income	% of respondents
Less than £10,000	2%
£10,001 - £50,000	10%
£50,001 - £100,000	6%
£100,001 - £500,000	28%
£500,001 - £1,000,000	19%
£1,000,000 - £10,000,000	23%
£10,000,000+	11%

n = 130

Compared to the make-up of Clinks members, there appears to be an underrepresentation of very small organisations in the sample – 18% of respondents had an income of under £100,000, whereas 35% of Clinks members do. This underrepresentation of very small organisations also creates a general skew towards very large organisations,

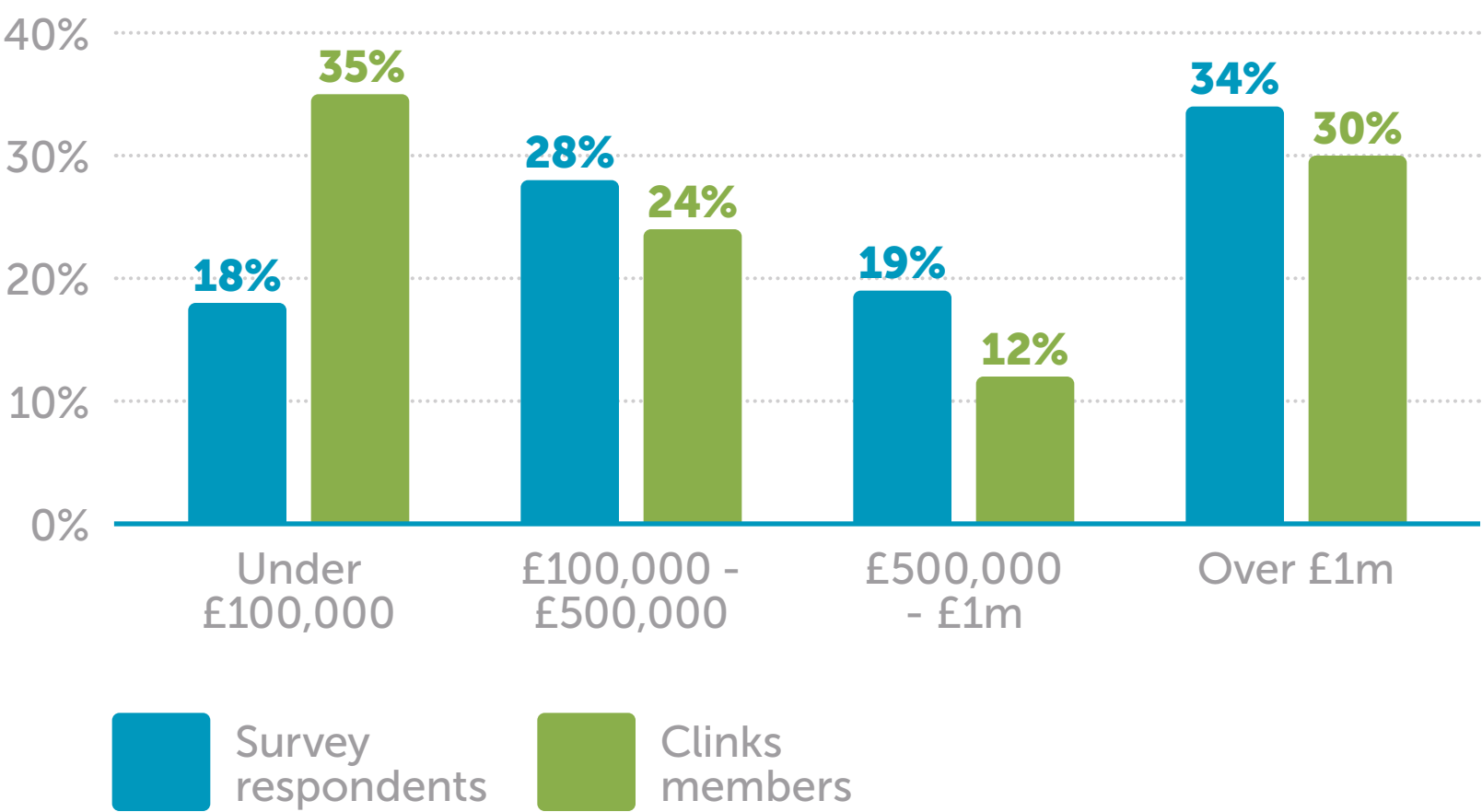




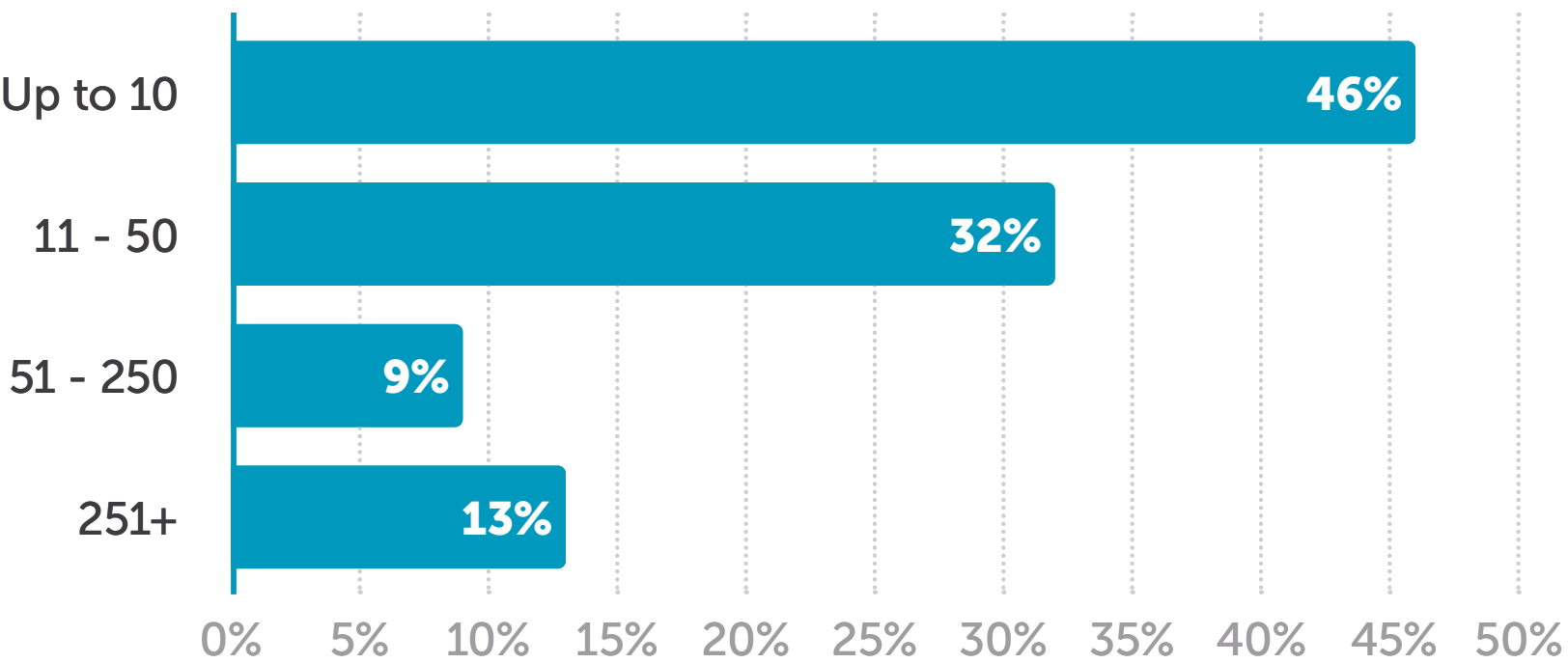
though the proportion of organisations falling into each income bracket is very similar to that seen in *State of the sector 2019*.

It’s important to note that many smaller organisations contributed to this survey and the relative underrepresentation of very small organisations does not negate the relevance and importance of these findings for small organisations working in the criminal justice system.

Annual income 2020/21 – survey respondents vs Clinks members



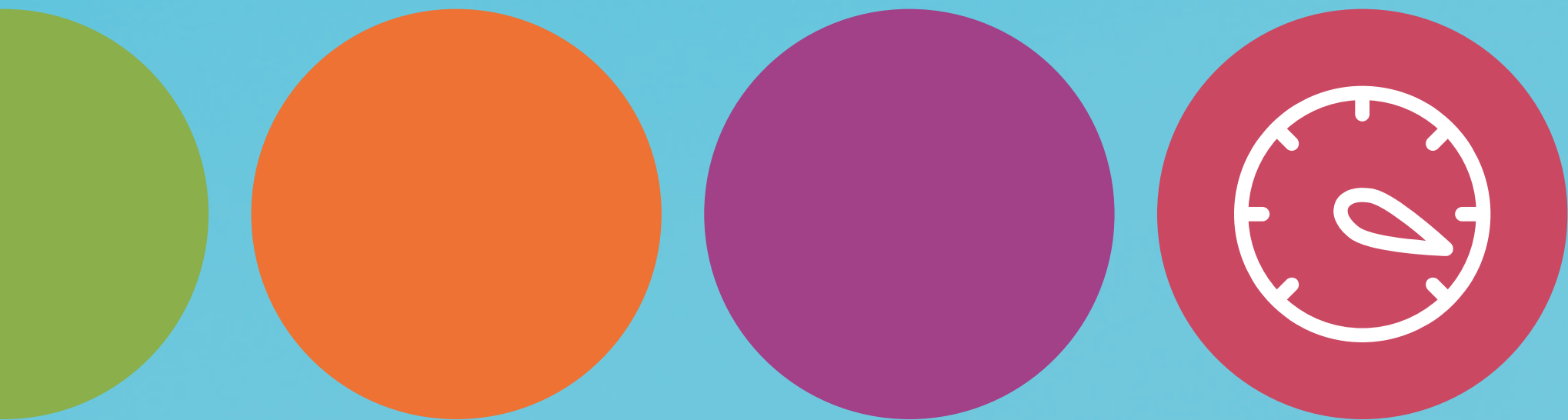
Organisations’ full-time equivalent staff



Looking at voluntary organisations’ staff, a little under half of organisations (46%) have up to 10 paid full-time equivalent staff, and about a third (32%) have between 11 and 50 full-time equivalent staff. Organisations with over 250 members of staff made up 13% of respondents.







# The people voluntary organisations support





# People accessing voluntary sector services had a greater, more complex, and more urgent level of needs

Over 90% of respondents said that the overall level of need of their service users had increased during 2020/21. 90% also reported that the complexity of need had increased and 83% said that the urgency of need increased.

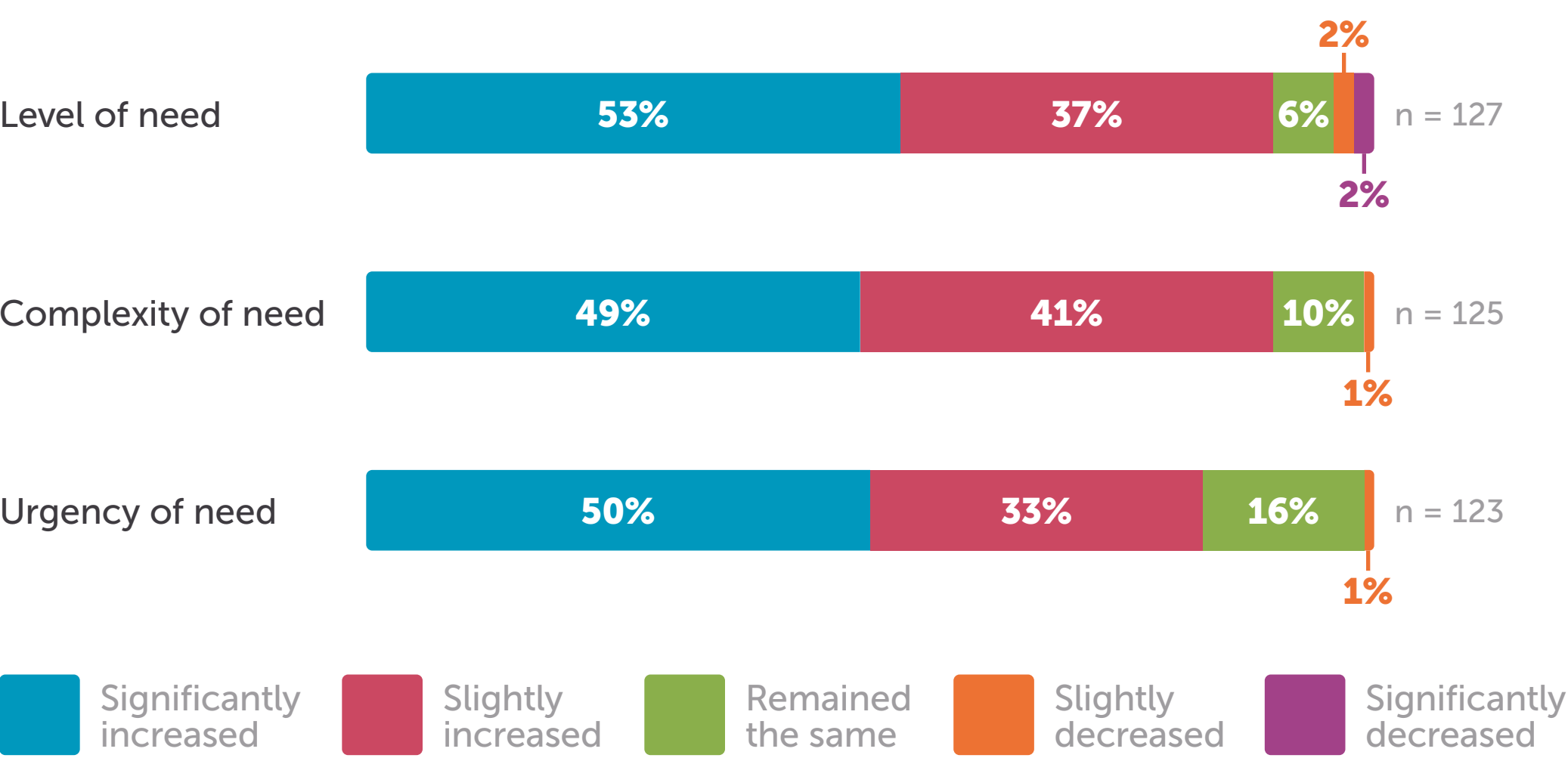
This mirrors the findings from surveys Clinks conducted through the early stages of the pandemic, in which organisations were consistently reporting that the needs of people in the criminal justice system had increased during, and as a result of, the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Our impact report also found that the basic needs of people in the criminal justice system were going unmet during the pandemic and more were being pushed into poverty as a result.

This is a significant increase to our 2019 report, where 72% of respondents said the needs of their service users had become more complex and 71% said they had become more urgent.<sup>5</sup> In previous reports, organisations have attributed increases in the complexity and urgency of need largely to the impacts of austerity and welfare reform that pushed people into poverty and created barriers to accessing vital support services. It appears that while these issues still exist, they have been compounded over 2020/21 by additional issues related to the pandemic.

“We were working with so much need. I mean we’ve seen the need of people we work with really increase, intensify, so working with people in real and more urgent crisis than it used to be.”

Interview participant

Change in the level, complexity and urgency of need amongst service users during 2020/21



Excludes 'unsure'  
Source: NCVO, Clinks – created with Datawrapper





*"[The pandemic] just created a pressure pot in what, for a lot of people, was already... a challenging and unpredictable environment. Covid-19 just magnified that by at least 10 – trying to manage an everyday task that was already difficult and now becomes significantly more difficult because they often wouldn't have the support structures in place to support them."*

Interview participant

Almost three in four organisations reported working more flexibly with people in the criminal justice system to respond to changing need and over half said they were making better use of technology (57%). Most organisations also said they were developing new services (52%) – a small increase from 2019 (47%). In line with our previous report, slightly less than half (46%) responded by upskilling staff through new training.

Over a third of organisations (34%) reported that staff were taking on larger caseloads in response to the changing needs of service users. This is a similar figure to previous reports, and there is a concern that this cumulative increase in caseloads puts ever increasing pressure on staff, impacting on recruitment and retention, as well as potentially harming the quality of services people are able to access.

## Prison leavers and people in the community found their usual networks of support disrupted

Organisations said there were additional pressures on people in contact with the criminal justice system as they lost the support structures that previously existed and felt increasingly isolated. In the absence of usual support structures, people presented with worsening mental health, and they became more reliant on voluntary sector staff to meet those needs. This again reflects the findings from Clinks' Covid-19 impact report, which found people in contact with the criminal justice system struggling from isolation and anxiety during the pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

*"Women we work with are extremely isolated to begin with, because very often they'll have limited networks in this country. Then those places that they do have, have shut down, so they often don't really know anybody locally and have been incredibly isolated. Many of them are destitute and so financial hardship is a massive issue as well for a lot of them."*

*"In the past, yes, I could say most of our clients do have mental health issues but this was on another level because every client that you saw was suffering some way, somehow, because of the pandemic and they were either suffering because of loneliness, isolation and just being not able to get the services when they wanted."*





## People found it more difficult to access statutory services in the community

Interview participants also said that people they supported found it harder to access and engage with statutory services in the community during the pandemic, creating additional reliance on voluntary sector services to step in, both to meet their additional needs and help to navigate services.

*“(One of our biggest challenges has been) getting through to the right people when you’ve got agencies that have closed, that’s been the barrier and people having their waiting lists going through the roof so everyone’s been inundated... getting through to the right people can take a week instead of a couple of days and I find that quite frustrating that we can’t get the answers or you ring an agency and then you find that they’ve closed.”*

Some felt their organisations played a vital role in protecting women, at a time when statutory safeguarding teams were stretched. This speaks to a recurring theme across interviews that voluntary organisations stepped in time and time again to support people in crisis, often when no one else would.

*“The level of domestic abuse we all know went up but we saw it in our services, in the first lockdown, reports in our women’s services of women reporting sexual violence went up 179%, it was extreme. There were a lot of people we were very, very worried about. I feel like we were playing quite a vital role and really highlighting stuff that was going on.”*

Interview participant

## Rates of domestic abuse and violence in the community increased

It was highly concerning that three separate interview participants expressed concerns about seeing more women suffering from domestic abuse and sexual violence,<sup>7</sup> something we also heard from specialist women’s organisations in our previous research on Covid-19.<sup>8</sup> Organisations said demand for their services from women facing domestic abuse increased. One participant said calls in relation to domestic violence tripled, while another said incidents of women reporting sexual violence went up 179%.







# Meeting the needs of women in contact with the criminal justice system

**A medium sized voluntary organisation that predominately supports women on release from prison and in the community, described seeing increased demand for its services at a time when it was changing its model of service delivery.**

This organisation was forced to close its women’s centre to walk-ins early in the pandemic and instigated a number of changes to its delivery model:

- Face-to-face services with probation officers and voluntary sector staff were delivered in smaller numbers and by appointment only
- All courses moved online, and virtual coffee mornings and online wellbeing and meditation sessions were set up
- Delivered calls to 9,000 women on its database to communicate how its support model had changed – but that it was still there for women who needed it.

This went hand-in-hand with increased need amongst the women the organisation supported. Women were said to be isolated, and suffering from poor mental health, an especially acute problem for those coming out of prison. Disturbingly, it also recorded a large increase in calls related to domestic abuse and violence.

*“We were receiving calls and the mental health and wellbeing calls went through the roof and domestic violence, that tripled.”*

Early in the pandemic, many women said they wanted to access services face-to-face, to come in and see staff and do courses in person, which was impossible for the organisation to deliver in line with government guidance. Over time, it also saw the opposite problem emerge, with some women reluctant and scared to leave their homes and to attend services in person. The organisation speculated about whether the isolation women





had faced during the year had led to a lack of confidence. Getting women back into the centre represented a major challenge.

*“Though they wanted that support, it’s the isolation and that actual talking face to face that they were quite nervous of doing where they’d been talking to us over the phone.”*

In a time of crisis, there were also challenges with working alongside statutory partners. Though the organisation’s relationships with probation services remained strong, it struggled to access women in prison to help prepare them for release and found working with other statutory agencies and local authorities slow and frustrating. It also saw an increase in referrals from agencies that had closed, or had moved to a very limited remote delivery model.

*“Quite a lot of the other agencies took advantage of that as well, they referred their clients to us because their staff were furloughed so they weren’t working at all so we were the emergency contacts as well.”*



Photo: Glen Clova Project, Angus / © Community Justice Scotland [www.flickr.com/photos/193682195@N04/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/193682195@N04/albums)





## People in prison faced severe challenges

One interview participant said that, early in the pandemic, many of their service users struggled with uncertainty and anxiety, feelings that were present in the community, but manifested in a more severe way in prison, because of the risks of rapid transmission. Again, it appears voluntary organisations were crucial in responding to these challenges.

*“You can imagine if you’re shut in a prison cell 23 hours a day, a lot of the clients that we were working with, they just needed that reassurance. Not the reassurance as in, ‘Oh everything’s going to be okay’, but the reassurance as, ‘We’re going to be here, we’re not going anywhere’.”*

Interview participant

*“Prisoners were spending 23 hours a day in their cells... So, having huge concerns and issues on wellbeing and mental health, being able to communicate, and obviously levels of frustration and just trying to find out what was going on... There was a very restrictive regime that created a lot of challenges for prisoners to understand what was being communicated.”*

Interview participant

## Organisations are involving more people with lived experience in the design and delivery of services

It was positive to see that almost all organisations (97%) had involved people with lived experience of the criminal justice system in the design or delivery of their services in some way.

For organisations to continue to prioritise service user involvement during a year of such change and responding to critical need is remarkable. This should inspire others across the sector and statutory services to embed the involvement of services users as the norm.

The most common way of involving people with lived experience was for organisations to consult people who have accessed their services about their design and delivery (65%). A majority of organisations also reported recruiting people with lived experience as staff (52%) and volunteers (52%), and a sizeable minority recruited people with lived experience as trustees (27%). It was very positive to see that almost half (47%) of organisations had also consulted people with lived experience to inform their policy, influencing, and campaigning work.







# How organisations delivered their services





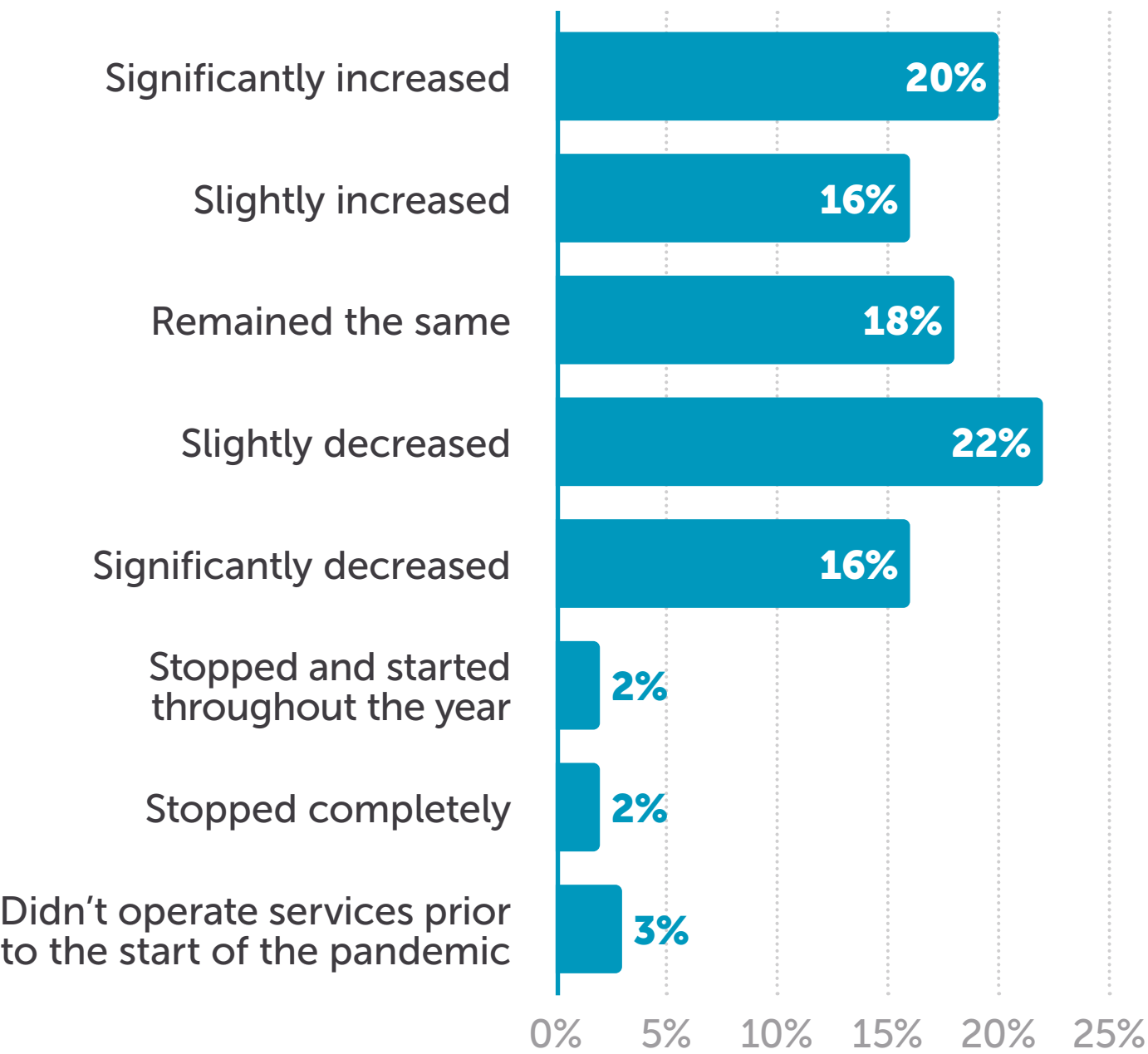
# Organisations quickly adapted their delivery models in response to Covid-19

78% of organisations said that the pandemic impacted their level of service provision in some way, though as many said provision decreased (38%) as those who said it increased (37%). This can probably be attributed to the way in which the pandemic simultaneously increased demand on services and made access to service users more difficult. For example, organisations operating phone lines or outdoor community-based work may have increased their service delivery, whilst organisations delivering group work in prison would find themselves needing to entirely redesign their service.

When asked how organisations adapted service delivery during the year, 80% of organisations reported that they made better use of technology, and 74% said they made previously in-person services remote. Interviewees described making use of a range of different digital platforms for both group activities and one-to-one meetings.

Two interview participants said that people accessing their services felt more able to engage well and disclose information when working one-to-one with voluntary sector staff online, rather in a group setting.

Change in the level of service provision



*“Our retention rates (of people accessing the service) have shot up massively as a result of the change to online working... my instinct tells me it’s to do with the amount of personal attention that a one-to-one session gets that they wouldn’t get in a group.”*

Interview participant





Voluntary sector staff showed real creativity in keeping people engaged online, with examples of organisations teaching music and art remotely, and even making a film together remotely. Some organisations said learning from the pandemic, they will look to offer a blended service into the future.

## Digital inequality and data poverty impacted people’s access to services

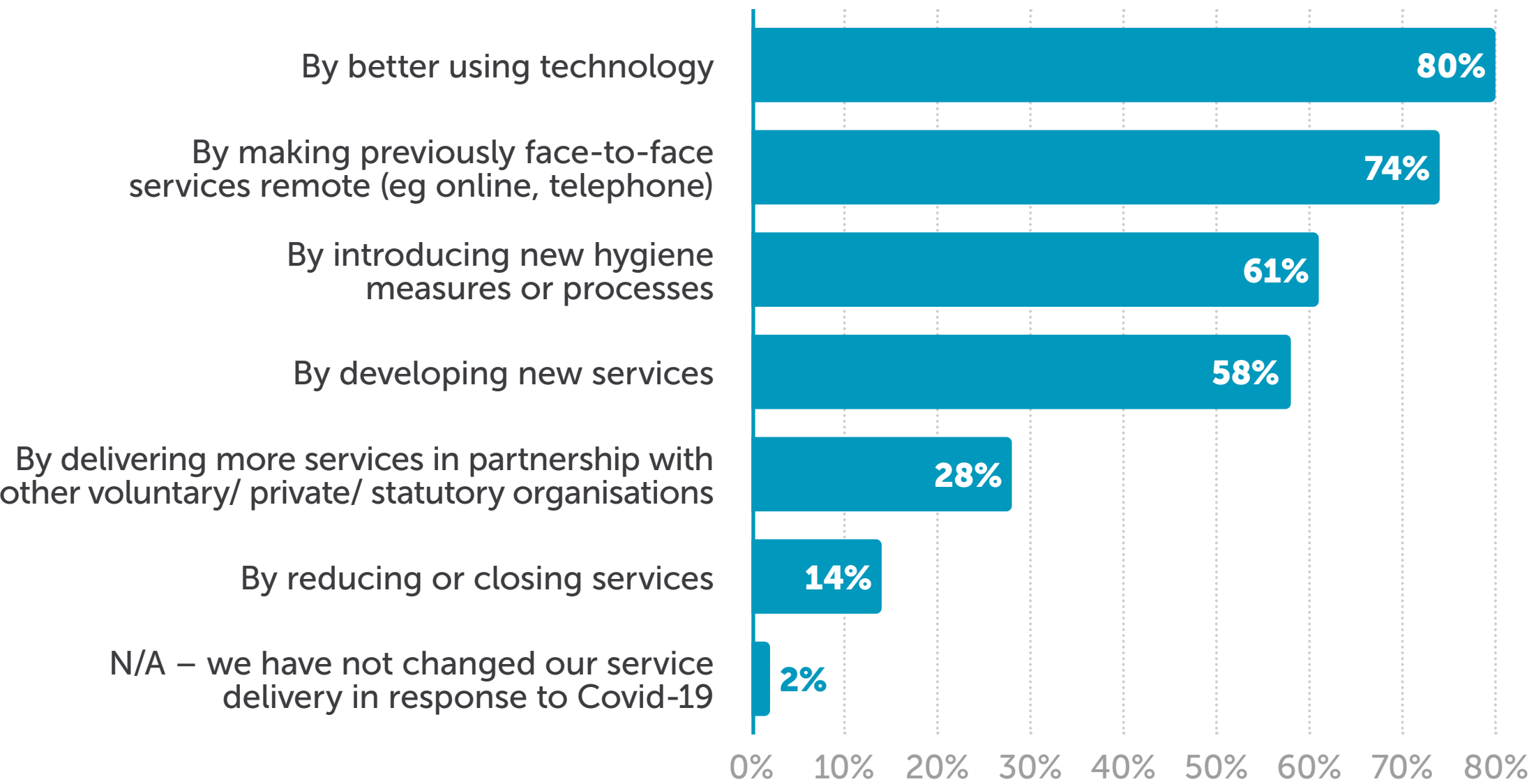
Remote delivery of services also put into stark relief the level of digital inequality and data poverty facing people in the criminal justice system. Multiple interview participants raised this and showed how digital inequality presents in different ways.

*“There is a real digital inequality and Covid-19 has just exaggerated that difference. Some people have done very well out of Covid-19, and some people have done very, very badly... the level of struggle that some people have had has been serious. They have had a shocking experience.”*

Interview participant

Access to devices such as smartphones has long been an issue for people in contact with the criminal justice system, but with many statutory services operating remotely during the year, this became an even more fundamental and urgent issue. Some organisations therefore struggled to access the people they support effectively remotely, with some organisations distributing devices to people, often using emergency Covid-19 grants to do so.

## Adapting service delivery



*“Using the Covid-19 funding, we’ve been able to buy smartphones or tablets for women through this time, so I think all our clients now do have access to an internet enabled device, because the vast majority of them didn’t prior to this.”*

Interview participant





Organisations highlighted high levels of digital illiteracy amongst some people in the criminal justice system. Organisations had to provide significant support to upskill people to be able to use video calling and messaging technology.

*“The challenge is that there are some women who we might be able to send a smartphone to, but actually without them being able to come in and literally just show them how to switch it on and how to get onto WhatsApp then they’re just really not able to use them. So that’s been difficult and I think poses challenges longer term.”*

Interview participant

In addition, data poverty was raised as a specific issue. Many people in the criminal justice system cannot afford broadband or data. One organisation gave the example of a young man they support accessing services in a McDonald’s car park, as he could use their Wi-Fi for free.

*“Data poverty was really, really extreme. It wasn’t technology poverty, it was data poverty and that was driving a lot of the frustrations and restriction and it was creating a jam point where people were not able to access services or do stuff when it was set up or access the support of the agencies because they literally couldn’t get online, they literally, ran out of data.”*

Interview participant

*“We’re also giving women data top-ups, particularly if they’re coming to activities previously, we would have given them travel expenses for coming into the centre.”*

Interview participant

## Organisations believe there is a benefit to in-person delivery, though some people were unexpectedly reluctant to return to these services

Whilst many organisations made this move to digital service delivery, others continued to operate in-person services with protective measures in place, such as social distancing and one-to-one appointments as opposed to drop-in sessions. There was broad recognition in interviews as to the benefits of in-person services including helping service users who might lack digital skills, or who prefer doing things in-person.

*“We ended up having quite a long waiting list especially for people who were suffering from domestic abuse... some people didn’t want to do the courses online, they preferred to do courses in person which we couldn’t do at that time... We did have a long list of people who didn’t want to do them online, who wanted to come in and see the staff.”*

Interview participant





*“We had to then take on additional space so that we could accommodate the clients but also keep the staff safe and then revamp all those policies in terms of making sure that we were Covid-19 compliant. So, it was a massive, steep learning curve very quickly and you had to adjust with very little resources.”*

Interview participant

One interviewee discussed how they appeared to have greater flexibility as a voluntary organisation, compared to statutory agencies, and this allowed them continue to carry out in-person activity where it was needed.

*“Our teams felt they were pretty vital because I think probation officers had to all just do everything by phone whereas we could still go out and really, really carefully but knock at someone’s door and just sort of stand back but say, ‘We just want to see that you’re okay.’”*

Interview participant

One interviewee also noted that voluntary organisations appeared to be continuing with some face-to-face provision whereas other parts of the criminal justice system had stopped working in this way.

*“If I’m really honest, probably what our teams in the early days felt was in criminal justice there was a lot of door shutting and it was the voluntary and community sector who kept face-to-face services. We were still doing welfare checks on doorsteps, we were still on the streets supporting people experiencing homelessness, women selling sex on the street and I think what we experienced was that the statutory services just shut their doors quite a lot.”*

Interview participant

There has been an unexpected reluctance from service users to return to using face-to-face services. Outside of prison, even when lockdowns were eased, some organisations reported that service users could be reluctant to come to their offices for face-to-face meetings. This perhaps indicates that the experience of lockdown for some people in the criminal justice system had unexpected longer term impacts on confidence and motivation with engaging with services.

*“People are just too scared to leave their houses, and even now they’re still a bit apprehensive about coming out. I guess what’s surprised us is that with people being at home for so long, how they haven’t wanted to engage with us to access our support... we thought there would be more coming forward to help with their own mental health, by just getting out of the house, by just having that interaction again.”*

Interview participant





It could also indicate that some people simply prefer engaging with services remotely and see the benefit of accessing services in more flexible ways that are easier to manage with other commitments and prevent unnecessary travel. This might indicate the beginnings of a longer-term shift in how services are delivered, with more emphasis on forms of delivery being more flexible to suit the preferences and needs of service users, rather than a single service offer.

## Voluntary sector organisations struggled to access people in prison

The protective measures that were introduced in prisons meant that a lot of voluntary organisations were suddenly not able to access people living in prison. Whilst restrictions in prisons changed over the year, they did so at a difference pace and degree to the community. Organisations reported having little access to prisons, if any, for the entire year.

*“The other big challenge for us was how we meet the needs of our service users. We were not able to access the men and women in prisons – and this challenge is still ongoing.”*

Interview participant

*“While the rest of society unlocked quite a lot, prisons never fully unlocked, they never fully got back to the regime. In terms of rehabilitative interventions and services, that’s still stayed really minimal.”*

Interview participant

The poor state of technological infrastructure in prison compounded these issues, making it very hard for organisations to access people remotely. One respondent expressed frustration that the issue had not been resolved over many years, meaning prisons were unable to respond effectively to the pandemic:

*“It’s very easy to say this is hindsight but we’ve been saying it for years: the lack of digital infrastructure in prisons is going to come back and bite us. And this is the bite. It blows my mind that in 2021 we can’t have safe ways for people to access their educational provision, or contact their family. The minimum we should allow is visits via Zoom. There is a real digital inequality and Covid-19 has just exaggerated that difference.”*

Interview participant







# Adapting services in the face of Covid-19

**A medium sized voluntary organisation that provides coaching to up to 200 young people in prisons and the community each year, cited not being able to access people in prison as their number one challenge.**

This organisation found it consistently difficult to access people in prison across the whole year. The research participant from this organisation thought that high rates of sickness amongst prison staff was likely to be a contributing factor.

*“Prisons never fully unlocked, they never fully got back to the regime... rehabilitative interventions and services still stayed really minimal.”*

Due to this minimal access to people in prison, the organisation was forced to completely overhaul its service offer:

- It delivered new services directly to prison staff, recognising that during lockdown the only face-to-face interaction most people in prison would have was with frontline prison officers

- Set up new community work, working with young people prior to prison and after prison and delivering one-to-one sessions rather than in groups
- Set up a new online coaching offer for the first time
- Put a greater emphasis on immediate emotional and mental wellbeing in its services, rather than focussing mainly on future goals, ambitions, employment, etc.

This was in part made possible due to the organisation’s funders, one of which reallocated funding from restricted to unrestricted, and gave it the freedom to adapt its services in whatever way it deemed best. Another funder provided an emergency grant, which enabled the organisation to create new resources for its new model of delivery.

*“We’d go out and fundraise and say, ‘We hope to reach 100 young people next year’ but we’ve no idea which prisons we’ll be in, that has been a massive challenge for this sector.”*





The forced diversification of its service delivery has had unintended benefits, opening up new opportunities for funding and growth as a different offer broadened the pool of potential funders. However, the organisation said that the lack of clear information from central MoJ and HMPPS, as well as individual prisons, hindered organisations in applying for funding, as it was very hard for them to know where they would be able to operate and in what numbers.

## Communication from statutory services to the voluntary sector was often poor

Voluntary organisations that tried to work alongside statutory services had very different experiences, highlighting an underlying inconsistency in the way in which prisons and probation services communicated to the sector. Experiences appeared to be driven by local factors, such as the way in which local statutory services set their priorities in response to the pandemic and whether organisations had existing relationships with local statutory partners and the quality of those relationships.

*“The relationship [with probation services] has been going on for over 21 years now so it’s a partnership that we’ve built over the years which was a strong, solid working relationship so there were no issues there.”*

Interview participant

The strength of existing relationships appeared to be particularly important when working with prisons. For example, one interviewee said it was only through relationships with specific staff in specific prisons that they were able to deliver services. Another interviewee said they had a different experience at each prison they delivered services in, despite them being operated by the same private company.





*“Access to prisons has been an ongoing nightmare. We have been doing a lot remotely. We have four key prisons that we have good relationships with. We’ve only been able to reach people because of contacts with particular staff.”*

Interview participant

*“We just had such a different experience from each site, and I think that was a real frustration. [The prisons] are both privately run, although they are run by the same company, so that was interesting that they were still so different. It wasn’t consistent, and it meant just a lot of back and forth and a lot of just keeping asking for updates from each one and trying to find out what was happening, when we might be able to go back and what we could do to support in the meantime. It definitely meant that we weren’t able to reach all the women that we normally would have been, which was really tough.”*

Interview participant

A reliance on individual relationships to access people in prison or receive up-to-date operational information is precarious, as some organisations found their contacts suddenly disappeared as Covid-19 hit and became entirely shut out from prisons. These issues of communication from individual prisons are not new. It is precisely these issues that have driven Clinks work to promote the roll-out of voluntary sector coordinators in prisons over a number of years. It should be in the interests of prisons to have well-

developed relationships with the voluntary sector services in their areas, through flexible points of contact, rather than a reliance on one individual.

*“All our points of contact within secure institutions literally disappeared. It felt like we were sending emails and leaving messages in a void. So, when the services restarted and started to reopen, it felt like we were back on the start again.”*

Interview participant

Respondents also said how policy and operational information from central HMPPS was not always forthcoming, and when it was, it did not align with experiences of organisations on the ground.

*“One of the biggest challenges for the whole sector has been the lack of information from prisons and HMPPS and MoJ, so the biggest challenge actually has been navigating constantly changing scenarios and that’s exhausting.”*

Interview participant

*“There was a big disjoint between the policy level stuff I was hearing at HMPPS and actually what was happening on the day-to-day basis and that was hugely frustrating.”*

Interview participant





One organisation said the only way they were able to get a sense of what was happening on the ground was because they happened to have access to officials through their role on an infrastructure body internal group.

*“The only way that I had a sense of what was really going on, on the ground, was because I was sitting on [strategic group facilitated by an infrastructure body] at that point in time.”*

Interview participant

This unclear and inconsistent information from HMPPS was a point of frustration for organisations that were ready and able to support statutory services in their response to the pandemic. These frustrations certainly reflect the experiences of the RR3 Covid-19 SIG, which found HMPPS to be risk-averse in their approach to information sharing during the pandemic, and repeatedly pushed for operational information to be shared on an equal basis with voluntary sector partners.<sup>9</sup>

## Voluntary organisations recognised the enormous pressures statutory services faced and had positive examples of collaborative working

Interview participants acknowledged the extraordinary challenges that everyone in the criminal justice system faced over the year to adapt to the continually evolving environment. Organisations noted there was a desire from prison staff to work with the sector, but staff were stretched as absences mounted.

*“I think we were all, and still are, we’re in an environment that no one has ever been in before and there were no plans or policies of how to manage this, so I think it’s always easy to criticise and not always as easy to look at some of the positives and I think overall, it’s been managed well. Yes, there have been some localised challenges, but personally, from the prisons we worked in, we were able to address those and overcome what those challenges were.”*

Interview participant

*“What I saw was very, very busy frontline statutory workers who had less capacity to engage with the voluntary sector, even though they desperately wanted to, you could see that they wanted to offer their young people more services and more support but were very, very stretched.”*

Interview participant

Some interviewees also shared positive experiences of working with statutory services. For example, one interviewee reflected on the way in which probation staff took a more flexible and person-centred approach, while another praised the work of youth justice services to work collaboratively with voluntary organisations in responding to the pandemic.





*“Women I spoke to in criminal justice said, ‘This is great, it’s the first time my probation officer has asked me if I’m okay and if I need a food parcel’ rather than more punitive discussions and felt that it shifted relationships and also that they weren’t having to jump through so many hoops.”*

Interview participant

*“I was very impressed with the youth justice services we were working with. I thought they were up for taking risk, up for experimenting, understood what their responsibilities were and articulated their concerns to us very, very clearly so we could design stuff in response to those concerns.”*

Interview participant





# Arts organisations: a snapshot





# What arts organisations do and where they do it

Just over a third (34%) of organisations who responded to our survey delivered arts-based provision or services of some kind. In this section, the percentages used are of this ‘arts organisations’ group. The majority of these arts organisations (77%) offered arts as part of a larger portfolio of work. Only a small minority (23%) primarily delivered arts services. We also draw from two in-depth interviews with specialist criminal justice arts providers.

Arts organisations broadly reflect the size of the wider sector, though are slightly more likely to be smaller organisations. Only a quarter of organisations that said they delivered arts provision had an annual income of over £1m, whereas across survey respondents as a whole, this increased to one in three.

The majority of arts organisations receive their income mainly through grants from trusts, foundations or other charitable organisations (53%). They are more likely to receive their main source of funding this way than other respondents (44%), but this reflects what we would expect given arts organisations tend to be slightly smaller. Arts organisations are also less likely to receive their main source of income from government grants and contracts (33%) than the wider sector (42%), though this again is in line with what we know about how smaller organisations are funded.

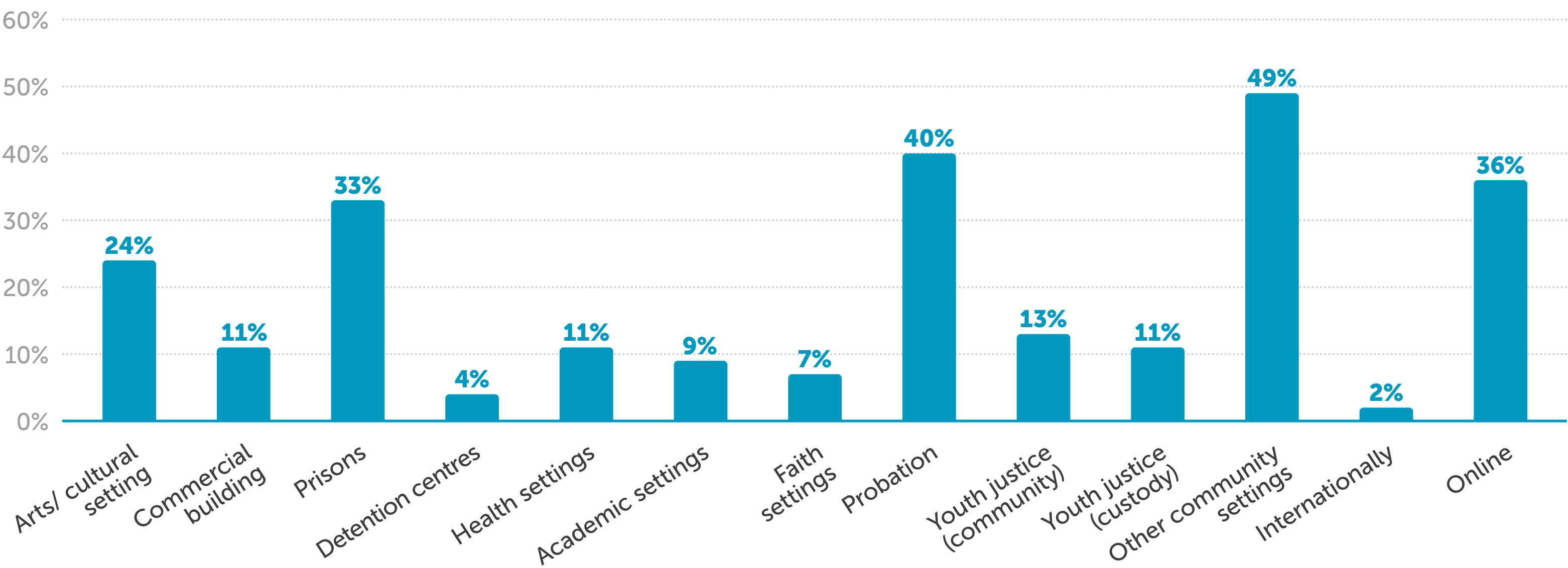
The research makes clear that there is an exciting array of creative interventions delivered across the criminal justice system. The most common types of activity offered by arts organisations were visual arts such as painting, drawing and sculpture (64%), followed by music (49%) and crafts (47%). Organisations also offered performance arts, with 29% of arts organisations offering spoken word, 24% offering drama or theatre, and 16% offering dance.

These creative activities are delivered right across the criminal justice system and beyond it. Arts organisations delivered their services in prisons (33%), probation settings (40%) and the youth custodial estate (11%). Organisations also delivered interventions in arts settings such as galleries, theatres, libraries and museums (24%) and in ‘other community settings/group’ (49%), which in most cases will probably mean community centres or other such spaces. This is an impressive breadth of work and shows the possibilities of how creative activities can help erode the barriers that detach people in the criminal justice system from the wider communities they live in, and to help raise awareness and challenge stereotypes in the process.





Where arts organisations deliver activity



How arts organisations adapted their delivery models

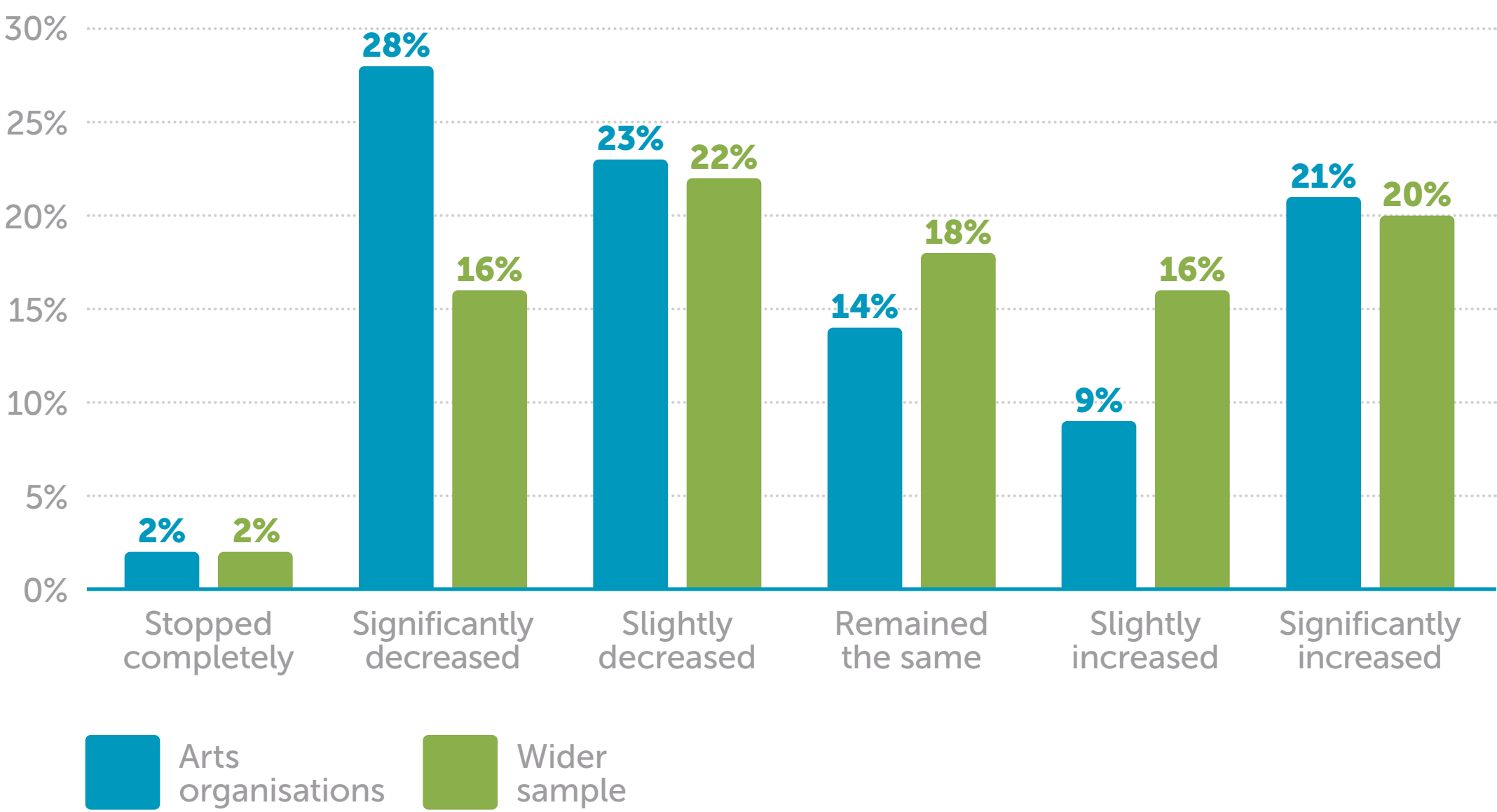
The pandemic created significant challenges for arts organisations to deliver their activities and it appears some of these challenges may have impacted arts organisations more than the wider sector. A majority of arts organisations (53%) reported that they reduced their level of service provision due to Covid-19 and they were more likely to report a reduction in service than the wider

sector (40%). Arts organisations were also twice as likely to report that they closed or reduced some services during Covid-19 (29%) than the wider sector (14%). The fact that arts organisations were more likely to reduce their service provision might be because arts activity is often delivered in groups, and so harder to deliver in a Covid-safe way or simply to adapt to remote delivery.





Changes to service provision during Covid-19



In interviews, we heard how arts organisations working in prisons were unable to deliver their services at all and reported losing all their prison-based work at the outset of the pandemic and struggled to gain any access to people in prison across the whole year. Both interview respondents said the inability to access people in prison represented the biggest challenge for them during the pandemic.

“Overnight, in March 2020, we lost every piece of work that we thought we had booked in for the new financial year. We delivered our last piece of work in prison in late March – then we had a board meeting where we discussed what was happening. Even as we were in the meeting, we were getting emails losing all our other pieces of work.”

“Literally everything closed down in all our prison-based work, places where we worked in week in week out year in year out for 25 years, that work stopped the end of February last year and has yet to restart.”

Where organisations were able to deliver services, they did so by adapting their models of delivery. Overall, organisations delivered to smaller groups of people than they did before the pandemic. There was a decrease in the numbers of organisations working in both small and large groups and an increase in the number of organisations delivering one-to-one services.<sup>10</sup>

New models of remote delivery created both positive and negative effects. While one participant said data poverty created barriers for people to access arts activity and meant access was unequal, another participant said an unintended consequence of the shift from group activities to one-to-one delivery was to increase retention rates.





# Commissioning models: a continued cause of frustration

While this report captures some of the challenges experienced by other survey respondents in relation to commissioning models including the probation Dynamic Framework, both interview participants from arts organisations were particularly critical about the prison education Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). Respondents were frustrated and disillusioned with the model.

- “It’s not fit for purpose and from a sector perspective, I can’t emphasise that enough; it’s the bane of the arts in criminal justice sector’s lives, the DPS system. It offers no hope and if anything, it is encouraging a race to the bottom in quality.”*
- “I don’t know if you know about the Dynamic Purchasing System – it is an absolutely awful way of commissioning education programmes in prisons.”*

With people confined to their cells, some prisons requested arts organisations funded through the DPS to provide ‘distraction packs’ to people in prison to give them something to pass the time. Both arts organisations interviewed considered these packs a very poor substitute for their hugely impactful services. One participant specifically related to the demand for such packs to the inflexibility of the DPS system, where prisons had committed funding and wanted to see an output regardless of whether it would have any benefit

to service users. The second arts interview participant was concerned the demand for packs was indicative of some prison leaders’ attitudes to voluntary sector services and the value of arts in the criminal justice system.

- “In prison, a lot of arts based stuff that was sent in got described as ‘distraction packs’ which I hate the name of! We resisted the idea that the work that we did could be put into a box as a distraction pack because it gave our sector a little bit of a window into how some of our work is thought about, ‘That’ll do, it’ll distract them,’ it’s that sort of thing.”*
- “There is a lot of inflexibility in the commissioning process and this is reflected in inflexibility on what to do when the normal processes can’t work.”*







# The people delivering services





# Most organisations retained their staff, many with the help of the Job Retention Scheme

Encouragingly, organisations were able to maintain existing staffing levels (41%) or even increase them (44%) in the 2020/21 financial year, with only a small minority saying that they had decreased (16%). 52% of respondents said they had furloughed staff during the pandemic, suggesting the furlough scheme helped many organisations retain staff during a turbulent year.

The vast majority of interview participants said that they had furloughed at least one staff member (under the Job Retention Scheme) during the year, though there was great variability in how this was done. For example, one respondent said they had put a single cleaner on furlough in response to their offices closing, while another respondent said the entire organisation was furloughed aside from one member of staff.

On the whole, most organisations said they kept services going and looked to shift staff to other duties where possible rather than furlough them. Organisations were more likely to have used furlough early on in the pandemic, and only when absolutely necessary, before taking advantage of opportunities around flexible furlough, to remobilise services as soon as possible.

*“As soon as flexi furlough kicked in, we started bringing people back and tried to figure out a way to rebuild a connection (with service users).”*

Interview participant

One clear benefit of the furlough scheme was to enable an organisation to retain highly specialist staff in roles that are difficult to recruit and train to.

*“The real big challenge for us was the expertise that we have in the team. It’s incredibly specialist work... The average length of service in that team is 10 years. It takes ages to train people, it’s not just a case of having a drama degree. We have six months minimum training on probationary before we let people anywhere near actual work. We knew that if we lost them it would take us ages to reboot. We were able to use furlough and furloughed the entire team apart from myself.”*

Interview participant

# Front-line staff responded brilliantly to the crisis but had an extremely challenging year which might impact on retention

Throughout this research, participants said how brilliantly staff had responded and rose to the challenge, going above and beyond to support marginalised people in a time of real crisis. There was even an example in one interview, of how furloughed staff volunteered with a local community initiative to help deliver 30,000 meals to frontline NHS staff in the first few months of lockdown.





*“They carried on working face to face but within a very different context. For me, it was quite amazing really because very quickly I felt that our staff teams just got on with doing what was needed in front of them and actually, a lot of power really shifted to frontline services.”*

Interview participant

However, interview participants stressed how challenging it had been for front-line voluntary sector staff across the year. As we’ve seen above, many organisations completely redesigned their services in response to the pandemic, whilst simultaneously seeing caseloads increase as both the level and complexity of need increased. On top of this, staff were dealing with the impact of Covid-19 in their own personal lives.

*“We also need to remember that they are individuals that are also coping with Covid-19 in their own world, in terms of their personal world and with their own families, so as well as managing that, we’re asking them to provide and support those that are also struggling coping with Covid-19.”*

Interview participant

*“I feel as if I’m playing magician all the time, trying to put things in the right places for the right people to meet the right needs in the constant changing environment really.”*

Interview participant

One interview participant said their organisation had put new staff welfare measures in place, such as a WhatsApp group for staff to keep in touch and access to confidential mental health and wellbeing support through an independent provider. In our previous report on Covid-19, we similarly found that organisations responded well to staff wellbeing during the pandemic, ensuring additional support measures were in place.<sup>11</sup>

Some organisations also expressed concerns about staff exiting the voluntary sector permanently, especially specialist staff who are difficult to replace. They saw this potential loss of specialist staff as a far greater threat to the sustainability of their organisation than their financial situation.

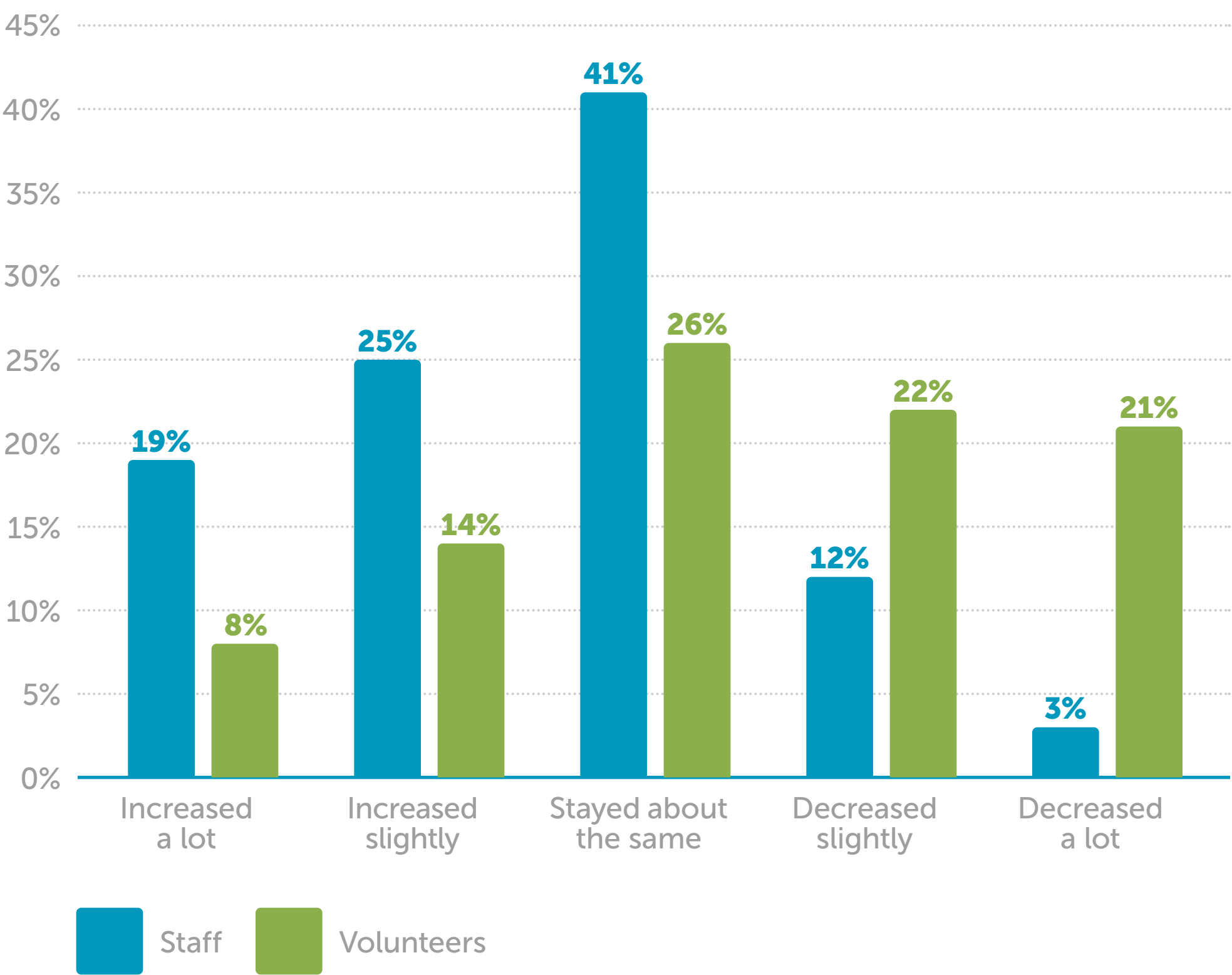
*“We have so many staff leaving the sector altogether... how do we increase pay for people at the frontline? ... We have to go back to commissioners. Because you’ve got the cost of living going up, utilities, national insurance contributions are going up, the impact of interest rates on the charity sector... It feels a bit embarrassing going, ‘Yeah, loads of people are leaving’; it makes you sound like you’re a really crap employer but you’re not, it’s just that people have re-evaluated.”*

Interview participant





How staff and volunteer numbers changed



Volunteer numbers fell as services responded to the pandemic

90% of all respondents engaged volunteers in their organisation. Volunteers conducted a wide range of tasks, the most common including befriending or mentoring, helping to run activities or events and peer support. It is disappointing therefore to see many organisations report an overall decrease in volunteer numbers (47%), with only a quarter of organisations saying their volunteer numbers had increased at all over the year. The majority (57%) of organisations said that they had recruited fewer volunteers in 2020/21 than the previous year and only 14% said that they had recruited more volunteers. This reaffirms our finding from December 2020 that volunteer numbers had decreased due to the pandemic,<sup>12</sup> but sits in stark contrast to what we saw pre-pandemic, where 75% of organisations said they were recruiting more volunteers.<sup>13</sup>

*“We weren’t able to continue working with our volunteers unfortunately, so previously we had a volunteer mentoring scheme, and that worked with women in prison and also in the community centre ... we just weren’t able to sustain the mentoring programme.”*

Interview participant

The pandemic is of course likely to have impacted this, with impacts on both the demand for and availability of volunteers. The closure of in-person services, the delivery of services remotely and the need to enforce social distancing





may have meant that less people were needed to support the delivery of in-person services. It is also possible that there were logistical challenges in recruiting new volunteers and setting up and training volunteers remotely.

The availability of volunteers may also have been further reduced as older people, who have in previous research been shown to be more likely to volunteer in the criminal justice system,<sup>14</sup> were disproportionately at risk of Covid-19 and therefore more likely to be shielding or drastically reducing contact for significant periods of the year.

*“The volunteers were not able to come in to the centre. It was only the staff, so we just stayed within our pool of staff that managed the workload.”*  
Interview participant

Interview participants said that some volunteers were effectively stood down as organisations paused, withdrew or adapted services in response to the pandemic. This appeared to have significant impacts on the delivery of some services and in one case, impacted a vital source of income, when the volunteer fundraising team ceased being active.

*“We have a volunteer fundraising team that haven’t been able to operate for the last 18 months now ... they’ve not been able to go out in to the community or to do any car boot sales or anything like that.”*  
Interview participant

The reduction in volunteer numbers and recruitment across the year is a serious cause of concern. As previous research by Clinks has shown, people in contact with the criminal justice system find volunteers to be independent, trustworthy and motivated by a genuine desire to help others and that voluntary and statutory paid staff think volunteers made services more credible.<sup>15</sup> Given the value of volunteers in the criminal justice system, we hope these figures represent a temporary blip due to external factors and that numbers can rebound next year.







# How services are funded and the financial health of organisations





# Smaller organisations were much more likely to be funded through grants

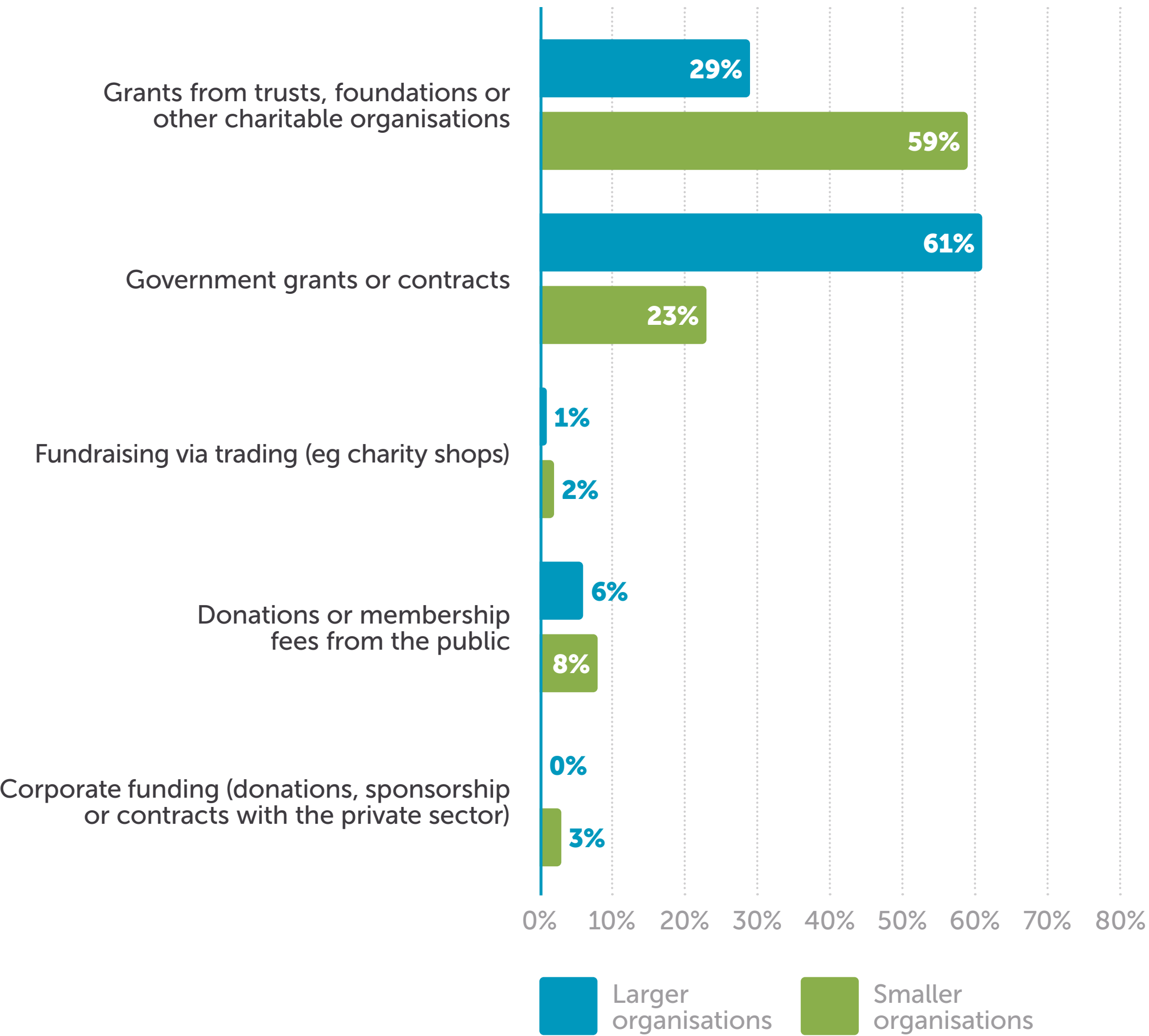
Survey respondents were fairly evenly split between those whose main source of income came from trusts, foundations or other charitable bodies (44%) and those whose main source of income came from government grants or contracts (42%). Relatively few reported their main source of income as coming from other sources such as public donations, corporate fundraising, or other types of trading.<sup>16</sup>

When broken down by organisation size however, larger organisations were much more likely to state their main source of income came from government grants or contracts (61%), whereas smaller organisations were much more likely to report trusts, foundations and other charitable funders as their main source of income (59%). This is reflective of what we know from previous years.

65% of organisations said they received grants from charitable trusts and foundations – the most common source of grant funding. This was followed by lottery funding (41%), and Police and Crime Commissioners (26%). Contracts, however, were more likely to come from the Ministry of Justice or HMPPS (31%), or Community Rehabilitation Companies<sup>17</sup> (17%).

There seems to be a large amount of variability in how their sources of contract and grant funding changed over the financial year, although substantially more organisations reported that their funding from grants and contracts had increased (49%) compared to decreased (23%).

Largest source of income





At first look, this may seem surprising given the challenges organisations faced in the year, but as expanded on below, this may be because of the greater availability of emergency grant funding during the pandemic. In fact almost all (94%) organisations had applied for at least one grant during the 2020/21 financial year and almost all (94%) had also been successful in securing at least one grant.

### The financial impact of the pandemic depended on highly specific circumstances

The financial impact of the pandemic on organisations was very varied. 31% reported that their costs decreased but 45% reported that their costs rose. The impact on costs seemed to be highly dependent on specific circumstances.

Increases in costs appeared to be largely linked to adaptation of services to remote delivery, as organisations invested in new software, databases, cloud systems, and digital hardware. Others described the additional costs of introducing protective measures that had to be put in place to help keep staff and service users safe. For example, one participant said they had to buy cleaning materials, products to sanitise spaces after each session, and large stocks of stationary so each person could be provided with their own. However, some highlighted that savings could be made in mileage and staff time when adapting to remote service delivery.

*“We were paying rent on something we weren’t using, we were paying utilities on a space that we weren’t using and we’ve had to completely revamp our IT which we weren’t expecting to do.”*

Interview participant

Organisations also reported the impact of both investing in new forms of service delivery, while continuing to make payments on property and utilities they weren’t using. Conversely, other participants spoke about the savings that the pandemic had brought about for their organisations. One participant even said their landlord shut the building and reduced everyone’s rent, and another spoke about the costs saved from taking vehicles off the road, and the reduced payments in office service costs.

Interview participants also shared a number of examples of how income generation was impacted during the pandemic, from closing charity shops, to cancelling fundraising events and standing down volunteer fundraising teams. Our December 2020 research showed that half of organisations had lost earned income as a result of the pandemic.<sup>18</sup>

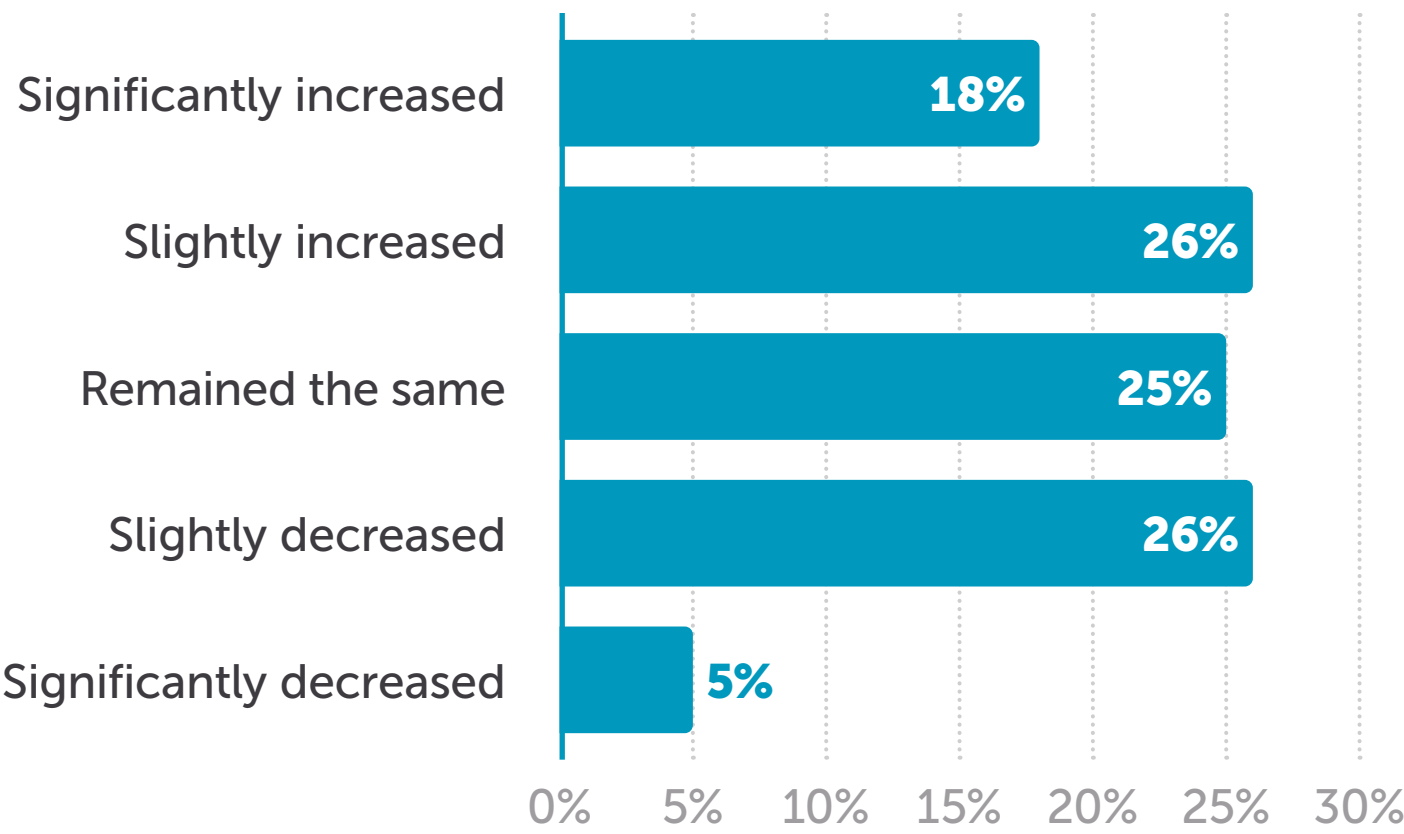
*“Our income from the charity shop went from £1,000 to nothing so our monthly income for that is zero because it wasn’t open. And our luncheon club that we have every Friday that was closed and the coffee morning was closed that we usually have in house.”*

Interview participant





Impact of changes on running costs



*“Our ability to generate income totally disappeared. We had a total inability to access service users and an inability to generate income.”*

Interview participant

The varied responses from organisations on the impact of the pandemic on their finances appeared to be dependent on quite specific factors, such as the cost of the adaptation of services, whether organisations had to pay for resources they weren’t using (like office space, utilities, etc.) and the resilience of their existing sources of income and the availability to secure alternative sources of income. The way in which factors impacted organisations in such different

ways shows how this crisis was so difficult to plan for and that organisations will need to adopt a variety of different strategies as they emerge from the crisis.

Emergency grants helped organisations to cover additional running costs and bridge gaps in income

Many organisations were able to cover the increased running costs or reduction in income through emergency grants. 70% of survey respondents applied for emergency grants, almost all (97%) of which were successful in at least one emergency grant application. Organisations were most likely to apply for emergency grant funding from trust and foundations (70%), regional or local government (51%) and national governments<sup>19</sup> (50%).

Interview participants said that emergency grants enabled them to support service users during the pandemic with things like internet-enabled devices, data top-ups and emergency financial support to cover bills. Other respondents said emergency grant funding helped them to cover some of their core costs, and one respondent even said there were able to acquire new premises and establish a new inclusion post in their organisation.





*“Securing additional Covid-19 funding filled in some of the small gaps that we had in our budget for the year, but also meant that we were able to do more in terms of meeting women’s basic needs. So slightly oddly, I think we probably finished in a better financial position than we might have done without.”*

Interview participant

*“We lost a lot of earned income, but our emergency income from grants went up substantially. Perhaps the bottom line didn’t change hugely.”*

Interview participant

Across a number of interviews, there was significant praise for the way in which funders responded to the crisis and were able to turn around emergency grant programmes extremely quickly.

*“What’s been really obvious during this pandemic is a lot of the funders have been absolutely brilliant... turning out grants, commissioning around very, very quickly ... they’ve shown that they can respond very, very quickly and organisations, particularly like Clinks, have done a fantastic job of getting grants and funding to the frontline.”*

Interview participant

While it appears organisations on the whole had good access to emergency funding, this was not a universal experience and it’s worth remembering that previous research conducted by Clinks showed that organisations were using their already limited reserves to bridge gaps in income or respond to increased expenditure.<sup>20</sup>

Some interview participants expressed concern too that financial support during the initial phase of the pandemic was easier for organisations who already had strong relationships with funders. Due to the fast pace of these programmes, it is perhaps unsurprising that existing relationships helped organisations to secure funding, but this did carry the risk that some organisations could have become shut out from opportunities.

*“All of the grant funding world closed their doors to new applications and focused on their current grantees which I totally understand and we benefited from that, but what we couldn’t do is put in big applications to new funders because they all responded basically in the same way.”*

Interview participant

*“Even though there was some funding that was being offered through Clinks and by the probation services, we didn’t get that because we hadn’t built those relationships with local probation services and we were still in the process of building those relationships. So, whenever we tried to apply for funding, we weren’t getting that.”*

Interview participant





In addition to emergency grant applications, organisations adopted a range of approaches to access support, including renegotiating rent payments; accessing emergency loans; receiving non-financial support from other charities or businesses; renegotiating payments for goods or services; or requesting filing extensions for annual returns or accounts.

Other emergency measures taken to access support during the pandemic

Emergency measure	Percent
Accessing government guidance on Covid-19 and the charity sector	30%
Renegotiating payments for rent	11%
Emergency loans	4%
Non-financial support from other charities	4%
Non-financial support from businesses	4%
Other	3%
Renegotiating payments for other goods or services	3%
Requesting a filing extension for your annual return or accounts	2%

Organisations fear that funding administered in 2020/21 will reduce the available funding in subsequent years

Emergency funding, predominately through grants, became a lifeline for some organisations and came in the absence of a meaningful settlement for charities from central government.<sup>21</sup> Much of the funding offered was understandably short-term, aimed at supporting organisations to adapt services or to bridge gaps in income during an emergency. This was true for both statutory funding and grants from trusts and foundations.

*“When we were looking through the funding lists that came through from the council and the funding bulletins, it always seemed to be restricted, short term funding which is always a problem and it would be project specific to support the local community during Covid-19. Everything was sort of ring-fenced around Covid-19.”*

Interview participant

However, some organisations expressed concern that the availability of this resource during the crisis would have a knock-on effect of reducing the level of funding available from key funders in subsequent years, a fear that was also seen in our December 2020 research.<sup>22</sup> Some people interviewed said they had already seen funding opportunities dry up towards the end of the year. There was a particular concern about whether the emergency





response from charitable trusts and foundations would come at the expense of their hugely valued longer-term strategic grant programmes.

*“It was a really good (initial) response from the funding sector. However, it was all about food banks and emergency services which were absolutely essential but because all grant funders took an emergency approach, you couldn’t go to them and say, ‘Okay, but we actually want two to three years’ funding to strategically build a new programme.”*

Interview participant

*“We did get quite a few emergency bits during Covid-19, yes. However, now it’s really, really tight and getting lots of rejections.”*

Interview participant

*“It felt a little that money was sloshed, being thrown around, get it out the doors really quickly... I think that (the funding) has stopped and for me, it’s now that we’re really seeing... the devastating impact of the pandemic, as an organisation and also for people we work with and our staff teams.”*

Interview participant

Organisations also expected the lack of availability of future strategic grant funding to be compounded by future cuts to public services, as the government addresses the significant deficit incurred during Covid-19 more broadly. This was a real cause of concern as the impacts of Covid-19 on

people in the criminal justice system will be long felt and some organisations questioned where the funding to address those needs would come from.

*“They (commissioners) are aware that we need long term funding because of the cohort we’re dealing with and yet, I assume their hands are tied because you know they can’t allow us any longer funding because they need to prove to the public sector that it is worth investing in this. It’s kind of a circle really, they know that we need long term funding and yet we can’t get it because we need to validate ourselves and things might change a year down the line.”*

Interview participant

*“We’re hearing from commissioners that cuts are coming, and I think that’s a massive concern. I just think either there has to be an acknowledgment really that there’s going to be a lot of people in crisis who aren’t receiving services, going that direction, particularly around things like domestic abuse and homelessness. Or something else has to happen.”*

Interview participant

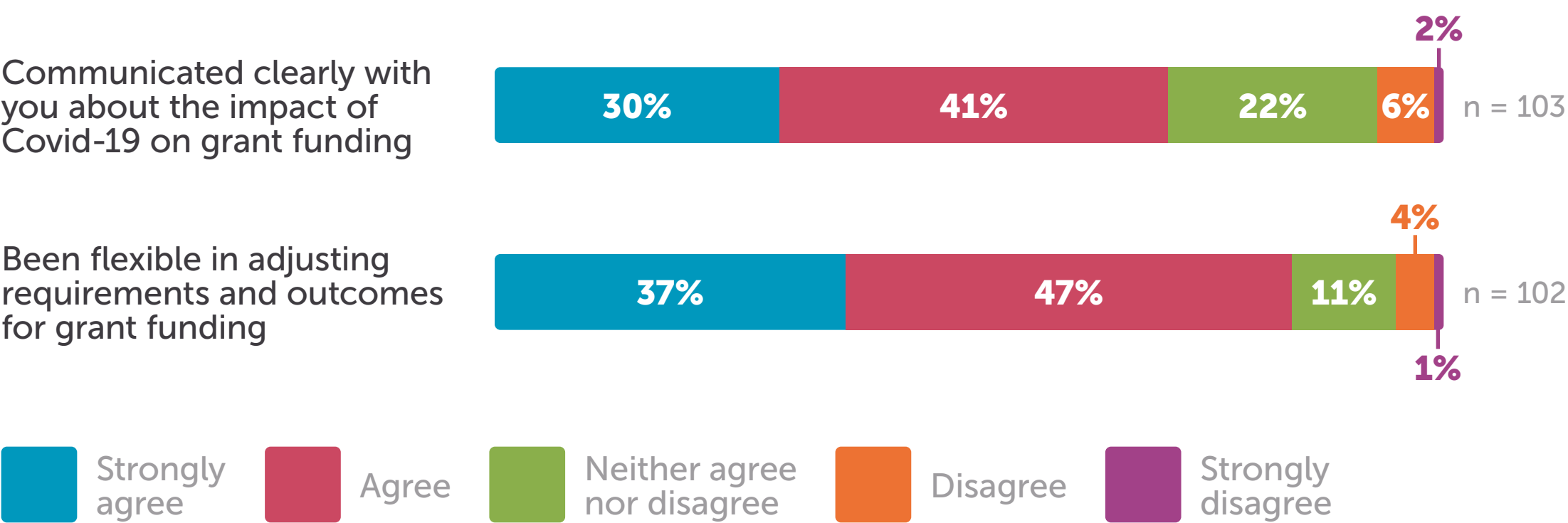
## Grant managers and contract managers responded well during the pandemic

Respondents were positive about the response of grant managers during the pandemic, with 71% agreeing that they had communicated clearly on the impact of Covid-19 on grant funding, and 84% said that they had been flexible in adjusting requirements or outcomes.





How grant and contract managers responded



Source: NCVO, Clinks – created with Datawrapper

Some interviewees were extremely positive about their experience of working with grant managers. Trusts and foundations in particular will be pleased to see extremely positive feedback on the way in which they supported their grant holders during the pandemic.

“Our grant funders stuck by us and despite not being able to deliver at the right levels, our grant funders were all very supportive.”

Interview participant

“Trusts and foundations were universally brilliant – some exceptionally so. Some went above and beyond. In the very dark period of myself working alone, I had funders just checking in on me every week. We had two big national funders dedicating staff time to checking in on us ... they weren’t going to let us go without a fight. Financially and emotionally, it was reassuring. Lots of funders allowed us to re-purpose/postpone project funding. The response from funders was fantastic.”

Interview participant

Grant managers enjoyed slightly higher approval ratings than contract managers, though there was still significant praise for the latter. 64% of respondents agreed that commissioners were flexible in adjusting requirements and outcomes, and 74% agreed that commissioners communicated clearly about the impact of Covid-19 on contracts. This appears to present a slightly more positive picture than our emerging findings during the pandemic,<sup>23</sup> perhaps suggesting that contract managers responded to feedback over the course of the year to improve their communication and support.

In the interviews, some organisations reflected on how a more flexible and trusting relationship was developed with contract managers during the pandemic. One organisation particularly praised the Ministry of Justice.

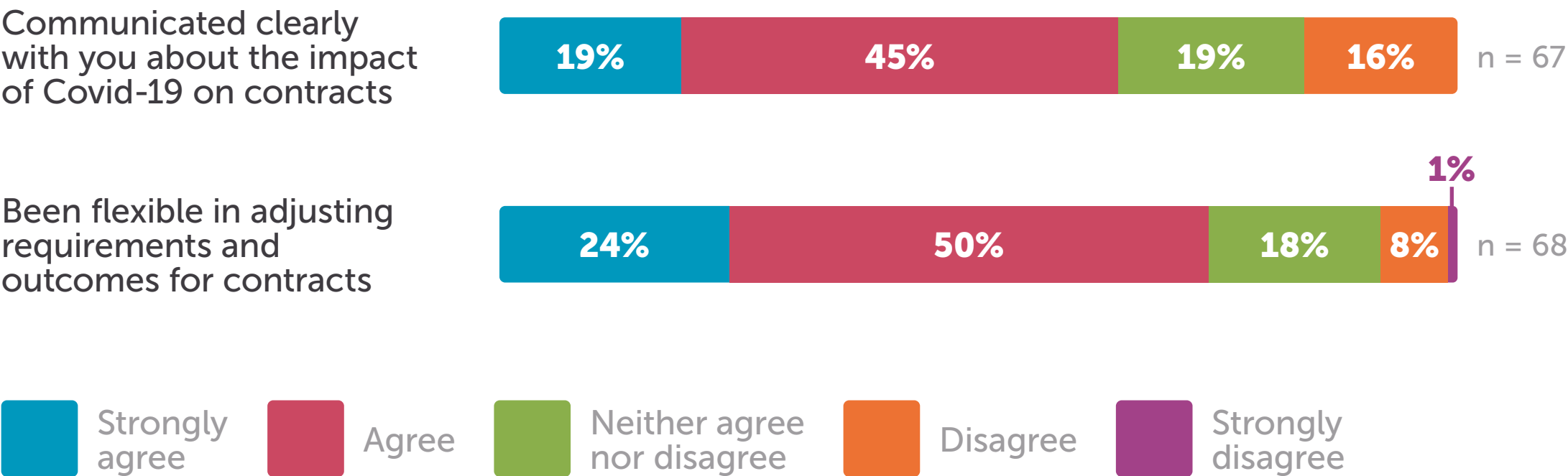




*"I want to go on record to say that the pandemic support we received from the Ministry of Justice – in terms of supplier relief, flexibility on contract targets and prompt payments – was excellent. Far better than many other contracts we have with authorities in other work areas. They made a huge difference in enabling us to retain skilled staff and adapt our services rapidly for re-opening."*

Interview participant

**"Overall, to what extent do you agree that your contract managers have..."**



Source: NCVO, Clinks – created with Datawrapper

## Voluntary organisations are underpaid for their contracted work

Despite reporting broadly positive experiences with contract managers during the pandemic, organisations continue to report wider challenges in the resourcing of contracts.

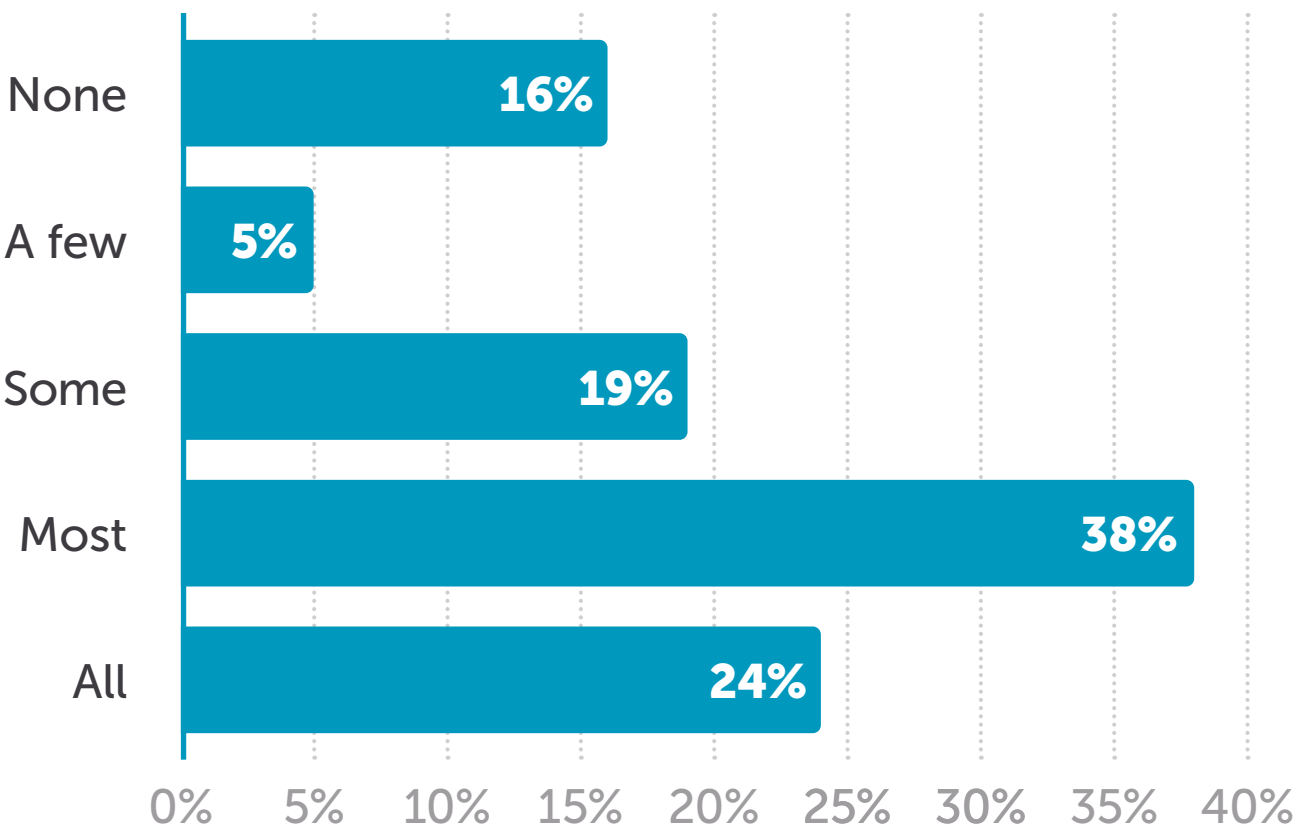
The majority of organisations sampled said they delivered services under contract or sub-contract but less than one in four of these respondents reported that they achieved full cost recovery across all of their contracts. We have highlighted the issue of the underfunding of contracts in previous reports, but this year's figures suggest the issue is only getting worse. In 2019, 71% of organisations reported that they did not consistently achieve full cost recovery on their contracts and that has increased to an extremely concerning 76% for 2020/21.

The underfunding of contracts represents a serious challenge for the sector. It forces organisations to subsidise contracted work from alternative funding sources, when the availability of such funding is so scarce. Most respondents said they most commonly subsidise the shortfall in contracts using their own reserves (54%) or other funding sources (52%) and 26% reduced overhead costs to make up for the loss. Covering the gap in underfunded contracts could potentially undermine the wider financial sustainability of organisations. It also potentially jeopardises future investment from trusts and foundations, who will be wary of inadvertently subsidising statutory services.



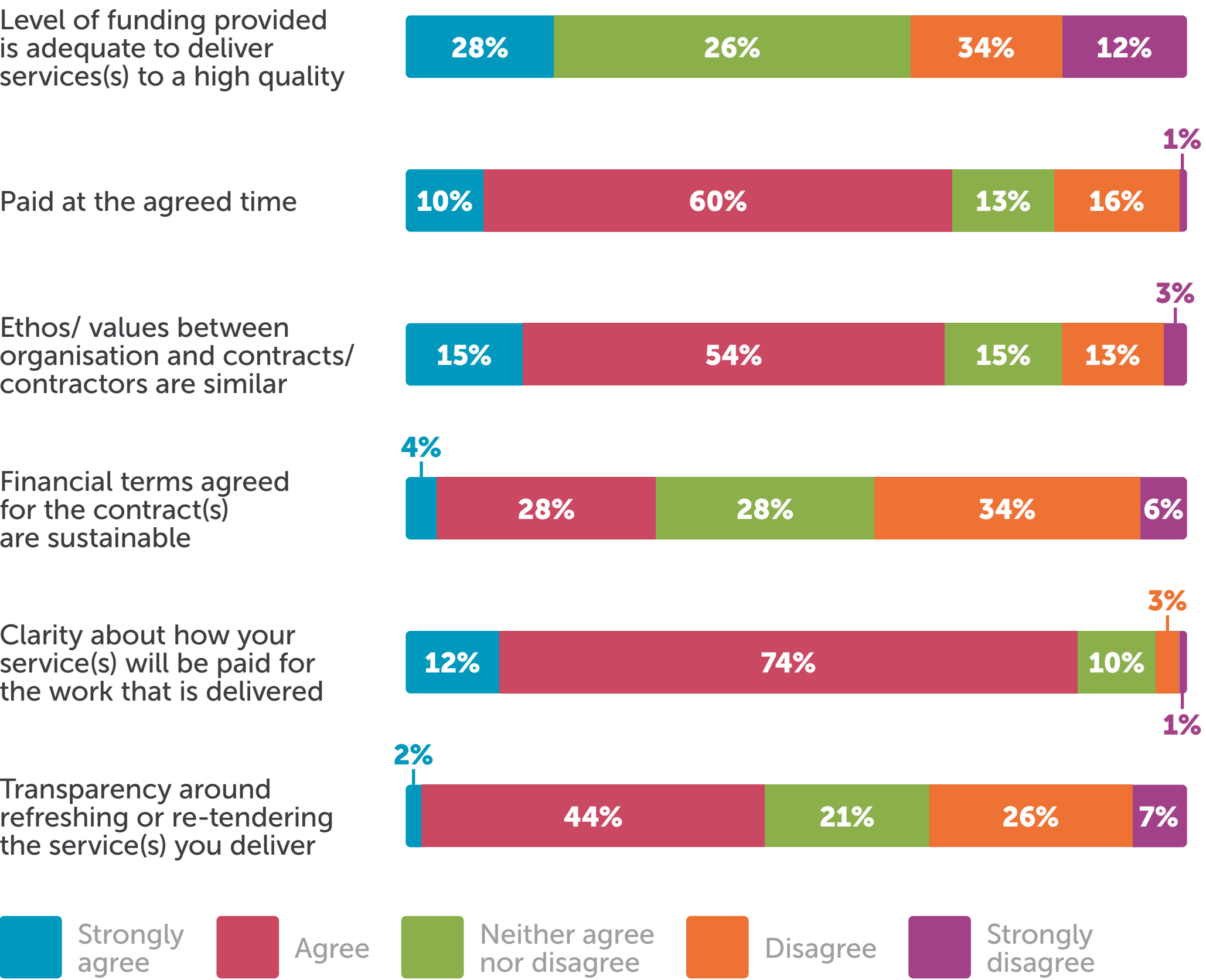


Proportion of contracts that received full cost recovery



Part of the reason why voluntary organisations cover gaps in contract values is because they have a social mission to ensure they are delivering impactful services for the people they support. They would always rather try to cover those additional costs, rather than deliver a poor service. However, this is a constant challenge, and it’s likely that underfunded contracts can lead to worse experiences for people accessing services. 17% of organisations said they had responded to not receiving full cost recovery on their contracts by reducing or closing other services, while when we asked for organisations’ experiences of delivering contracts, only 28% said the level of funding they received from contracts is adequate to deliver services to a high quality. This is frustratingly short-sighted as poorer services will arguably lead to increased costs elsewhere in the system.

Experiences of delivering contracts



n = 68 Source: NCVO, Clinks – created with Datawrapper





# Commissioning processes continue to be overly-complex and alienating to many

In interviews, some smaller organisations continued to express frustration about commissioning models and processes, particularly those used by MoJ and HMPPS to procure services in prison and in the community.

One interviewee who leads a small organisation, said they tried to engage with the probation Dynamic Framework with the view to bid for services, but were left feeling as though they “don’t stand a chance”. They thought the processes were not set up to be accessible for smaller organisations.

*“It looks like all these big organisations are getting the contracts and us small organisations are getting forgotten because we really did think that by getting on the Dynamic Framework we (would be able to bid for) the contracts but that’s not the case, there is still hoops and jumps and things to go through.”*

Interview participant

This aligns with much of the feedback Clinks has gathered on the probation Dynamic Framework since its launch, and reinforces the need for the framework to be simplified and streamlined to open up opportunities to smaller organisations.<sup>24</sup> The respondent suggested

Clinks could do more to support smaller organisations to build better links and relationships with statutory services and commissioners.

# Most organisations were relatively confident about their financial position at the end of the year – though some conveyed anxiety about future sustainability

Survey respondents were relatively split on their views about how the pandemic might have impacted their long-term financial sustainability, though the picture does seem to be more positive than many would have expected.

It is encouraging for example that 62% of respondents said the pandemic had either a neutral or even positive impact on their long-term financial sustainability. In the interviews, several organisations reported an improved financial situation with some mentioning growth in the amount of reserves they had, and others noted plans for expanding services rather than making cuts.

*“We have six months of reserves. Normally we’ve operated around about three months... We’re now looking to try and push that again. I want to be able to get that to around about eight/nine months of reserves, if possible.”*

Interview participant







# Concern for the future funding of vital services

**A large national charity expressed concern for the availability of future funding of vital services to address the long-term impacts of Covid-19.**

As a larger organisation, it tends to be funded by statutory funders and it saw lots of resource being made available through the government as the crisis hit. The organisation itself benefited from a large grant from a government department to expand its work. However, it had concerns even at an early stage that this availability of funding was focussed on the short-term and would inevitably lead to a reduction in the availability of future funding. The organisation expressed real concern that cuts to public expenditure were coming and heard from commissioners that this is the case.

*“I was quite worried, that a lot of the money was being poured into crisis now and was already really aware of, ‘Yeah, but what about later?’”*

The organisation was extremely concerned that this would mean there simply wasn’t the funding to address the severe and long-

term impacts of Covid-19 on people in the criminal justice system, which it had started to see towards the end of the year.

*“I just think either there has to be an acknowledgment really that there’s going to be a lot of people in crisis who aren’t receiving services, going that direction, particularly around things like domestic abuse and homelessness. Or something else has to happen.”*

This comes on top of existing pressures the organisation is facing, particularly in relation to staffing. Staff are exhausted and there are vacancies across the organisation, while the underfunding of contracts means charities have very little wriggle room to increase pay in order to improve retention. This combination of challenges means the organisation is now looking to shrink rather than grow. It is looking at making redundancies in its central office functions, including within its policy team which would limit its ability to speak out and raise its voice.

*“We’re making really difficult decisions, we’re definitely making redundancies in our central services as much as we possibly can.”*





We should approach these positive findings with caution however. Not all organisations expressed such optimism, with more than one interview participant saying that their organisation had to put expansion and growth plans on hold during the year, and another expressing regret that they had to start making redundancies in their policy and influencing work.

*“I think what we can do as a charity is going to be really pared back for a while and I think it will make a dent on our impact in terms of our capacity to really raise our voice.”*

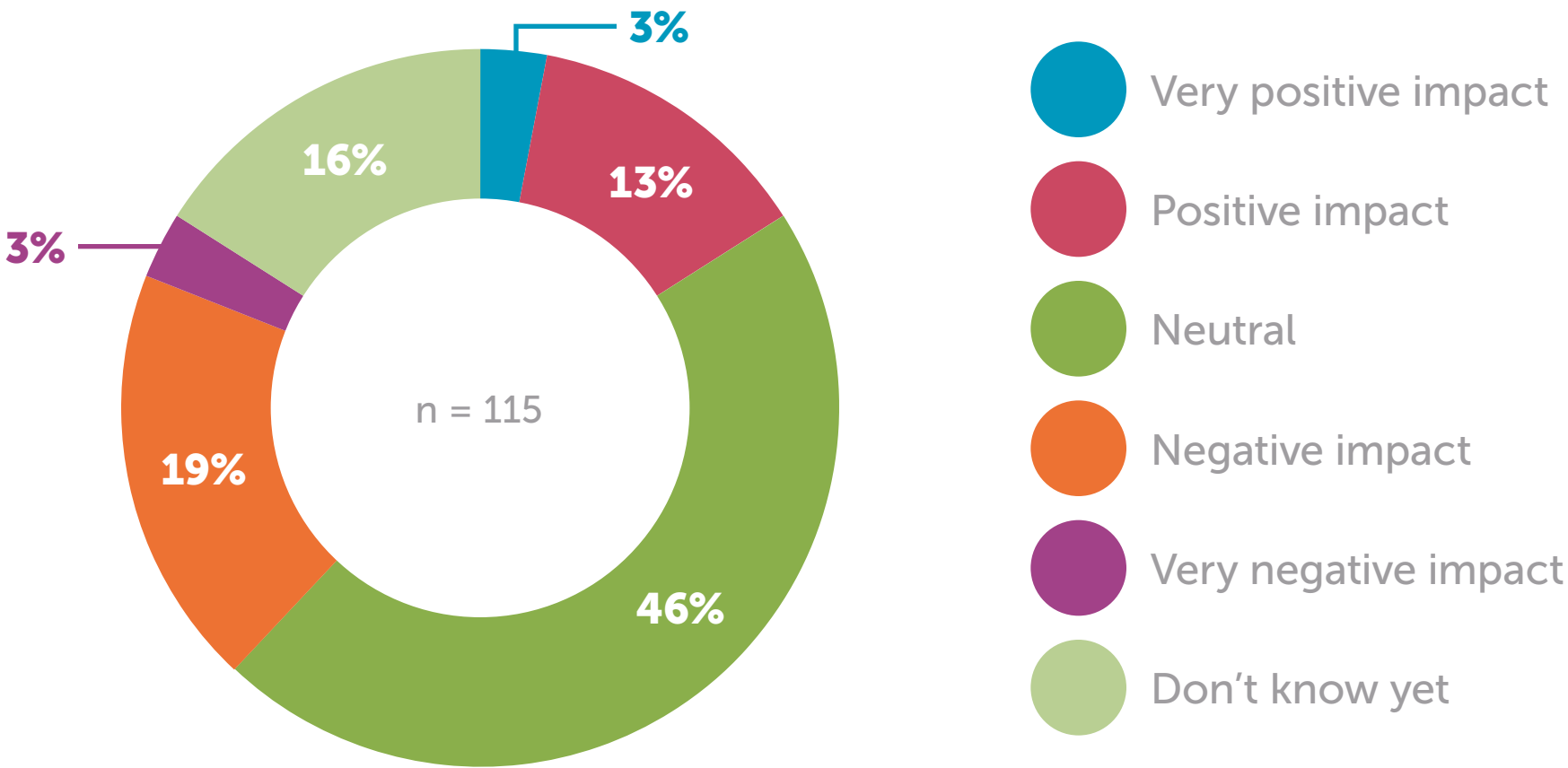
Interview participant

*“We had plans to grow faster and bigger that were shelved... So, we basically maintained rather than grew. I think we’ve actually appointed two new roles this year, but the speed of growth is nowhere near what we’d hoped we would be doing.”*

Interview participant

Some organisations also talked about future plans to diversify their income sources. This shows admirable creativity to think about alternative ways to ensure future sustainability. However, these decisions may be made through necessity, to reduce reliance on grant and contract funding that can be difficult to obtain. There is also possibly a degree of uncertainty as it’s unlikely that organisations can know whether they will be able to diversify in such a way that yields a good return. This uncertainty is

How do you think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected your organisation’s long term financial sustainability?



reflected by the fact 16% of organisations do not yet know what the impact of Covid-19 will be on their long term financial sustainability.

*“We’re looking at different income streams and not relying on the grants and tenders side, or looking at longer term tenders through the government. We are looking at income generation such as expanding our charity shop, our luncheon clubs, looking at different fundraising... It’s diversifying the funding portfolio.”*

Interview participant





There are numerous other findings from the survey that should raise concerns:

- 21% of organisations said that the pandemic had an overall negative impact on financial sustainability
- 13% of respondents said they had to make redundancies of paid staff as a result of the pandemic
- 14% of organisations said that they were reducing or closing services in response to the pandemic
- 54% of organisations continued to plug underfunded contracts with their reserves.

Overall, it appears that government support and the response from trusts and foundations has helped to ensure the sustainability of charities, at least in the short-term, with some optimistic about their future. However, concerns over recruitment and retention of staff, and the availability of funding from trusts and foundations and the cuts to statutory services over the coming years means we must express caution in our optimism.







# Where next?





**We want the findings of this report to be widely read by the voluntary sector and decision makers. The greater collective understanding we all have on how the voluntary sector in the criminal justice system is faring, the better able we are to work cooperatively to design solutions to the challenges we have identified. This report is also hugely important in informing Clinks’ work for the following year. We want to put this research to good use, to ensure thinking is followed by doing.**

The findings of this research will inform all our work for the coming year, but the following three areas will receive particular attention in light of the report’s findings:

**1. We will continue to understand the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on people in contact with the criminal justice system**

A key underlying theme across this research is that voluntary organisations in the criminal justice system are deeply concerned that the full impact of Covid-19 on people in the criminal justice system is yet to be felt. Everything indicates that the increased need stemming from the pandemic is not going anywhere soon, including the longer-term impact of isolation and trauma experienced (and still being experienced) by many in prison; the burn-out of voluntary sector staff; the return of increasing prison populations as

court backlogs are slowly cleared; and the possible shift in the long-term to restricted regimes in prisons, as signalled in the Prisons Strategy White Paper.

Clinks will continue to ensure that the government is aware of these challenges on people in the criminal justice system and to push for measures to address them that harness the expertise and capacity of the voluntary sector.

**2. We will work with the government and philanthropic funders to address concerns about future funding**

This research provides further evidence that charitable funders and the MoJ and HMPPS stepped up during the pandemic to provide much needed emergency funding that supported organisations to adapt services, bridge gaps in income and cover additional costs. The funding kept many organisations operational and directly led to people receiving essential support in crisis. This should be applauded.

It is clear though that the focus from charitable funders to provide shorter-term or emergency funding to support organisations, and the funding made available by the government, has created a concern from organisations over the future availability of longer-term funding that can help their organisation adapt, grow and remain sustainable in the longer-term. Organisations are





concerned that charitable funders will need to reduce their offer in years to come, and that the government will implement a new round of austerity.

Clinks will work with HMPPS and charitable funders to continue to think strategically about the importance and cost-effectiveness of funding the sector through long-term flexible grants, and why this will never be more important than in the aftermath of the pandemic.

### 3. We will monitor how voluntary organisations continue to adapt their service delivery as they manage longer term impacts of Covid-19

Our regular State of the sector reports provide valuable insights which directly inform both our policy work and how we support organisations on the ground. In this research, we heard concerns about recruitment and retention of staff; saw a worrying reduction in volunteer numbers; and heard from organisations who were seeing changes in how people in the criminal justice system wanted to access services following the pandemic. It is therefore important for us to better understand the prevalence of these issues and the way in which they might materialise in different ways.

Through ongoing relationships with key stakeholders across England and Wales, and our regular forums with voluntary organisations, our area development team, membership network and thematic networks, we gather intelligence and insight that is crucial to maintaining and developing our understanding of how voluntary organisations are faring, and the impacts national and local policy are having on the ground. This will be crucial in continuing to monitor the issues identified in this report and to work to support organisations as they address potential longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on service delivery and their service users.





# End notes

1

Clinks (2018). *The good prison*. Online:  
<https://www.clinks.org/publication/good-prison>

2

During the 2020/21 financial year, probation services were delivered by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS). To ensure clarity for survey respondents, we grouped all probation services under Probation Service.

3

HMIP (2020). *Desistance – general practice principles*. Online:  
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-probation/models-and-principles/desistance/>

4

Clinks (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/impact-covid-19-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice>

5

Clinks (2019). *The state of the sector 2019*. Online:  
<https://www.clinks.org/publication/state-sector-2019>

6

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7

Agenda (2021). *Voices From Lockdown: A Way Forward*. Online:  
<https://weareagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Voices-From-Lockdown-A-Way-Forward-report.pdf>

8

Clinks (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/impact-covid-19-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice>

9

Clinks (2020). *RR3 feedback to HMPPS on its management of Covid-19*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/rr3-feedback-hmppps-its-management-covid-19>

10

Running against the grain, there was a slight increase in organisations that reported delivering services in very large groups, though this may be due to a few cases of where online delivery of services made it easier to deliver in this way.

11

Clinks (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/impact-covid-19-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice>

12

Ibid.

13

Clinks (2019). *The state of the sector 2019*. Online:  
<https://www.clinks.org/publication/state-sector-2019>

14

Clinks (2018). *Valuing volunteers in prison*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/Valuing%20volunteers%20in%20prison.pdf>

15

Ibid.





16 As stated above, the respondents to the survey worked for organisations of various sizes, though the sample is probably skewed slightly to larger organisations.

17 Community Rehabilitation Companies were in operation during the time the research covers, but have now been dissolved with the establishment of the Probation Service.

18 Clinks (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/impact-covid-19-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice>

19 Including both UK government and Welsh government

20 Clinks (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/impact-covid-19-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice>

21 Never More Needed (2021). *About the Campaign*. Online: <https://nmn.org.uk>

22 Clinks (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice*. Online: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/impact-covid-19-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice>

23 Ibid.

24 Clinks has recently published findings from dedicated research into the voluntary sector’s experience of bidding for probation services under the dynamic framework. You can access the full findings here: <https://www.clinks.org/publication/tracking-voluntary-sectors-experience-probation-reform-programme>







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## Our vision

Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives.

## Our mission

To support, represent and advocate for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

## Join Clinks: be heard, informed, and supported

**Are you a voluntary organisation supporting people in the criminal justice system?**

Join our network of over 600 members. Clinks membership offers you:

- A voice to influence change
- Practical assistance to be effective and resilient
- Support from a community of like-minded professionals.

**www.clinks.org/membership**

## Photos

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