

Community Pulse

Understanding our members' world
Cost-of-Living Edition

September 2022

Executive Summary

The Community Pulse is a longitudinal study of Sported members on the sustainability, needs, and ambitions of community sports groups throughout the UK. It aims to inform the sport for development sector about the issues and opportunities facing community sports groups, as well as increasing awareness of funding and resources available for such organisations. It also seeks to help stakeholders make more-informed decisions in relation to grassroots community sport in the UK.

517
responses

The report is based on 517 responses received from groups in Sported's network between **21 September – 3 October 2022**. Of these, **50% of responses were from groups in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation**.

Sported and its network

Sported is the UK's largest network of community groups supporting half a million young people to overcome barriers to reach their full potential. Our role is to empower the local heroes running these groups by providing much needed professional expertise, resources, and operational support, free of charge, to help their group survive and young people thrive.

Sported's groups work within complex local contexts, often tackling some of society's biggest challenges. Around 45% are located in the bottom three areas of multiple deprivation, and many are volunteer-led and operating on limited budgets – approximately a third have an annual turnover of less than £10,000.



Executive Summary

Key Findings

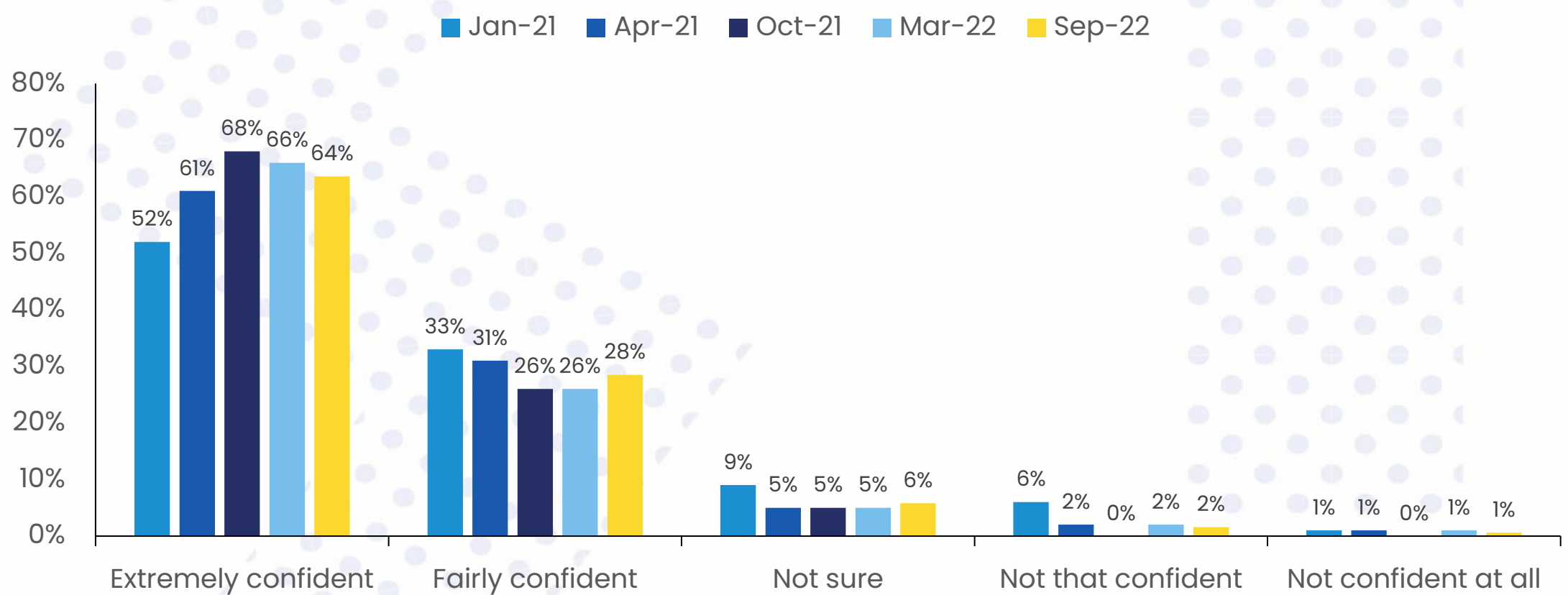
- **Confidence in organisational survival is at a level close to that of six months ago**, with 92% of groups confident (extremely or fairly) that their organisation will survive in the next six months.
- The most-reported priority for the next six months is **securing funding**.
- **Young people not having enough money** is the most common challenge facing their communities according to respondents, and has increased dramatically from our March Pulse.
- Respondents rated their **young people's mental health as lowest** compared with their own and their staff's/volunteers'.
- Around two-thirds of groups reported a score of 7 (out of 10) or above for their capacity to support the mental health of their volunteers/staff.
- Groups identified **issues for young people with disabilities as the most extensive inequality** within their communities.
- **Relationships with local community organisations/sport groups** are the most important for supporting groups.
- **Concern about the impact of cost-of-living pressures is extremely high among members**, with 94% of respondents concerned about the impact on young people, and 93% worried for its effects on their group.
- **Two-thirds of respondents expect up to half their young people to drop out of activities** due to cost-of-living pressures.
- Groups are most concerned about **disengagement/reduced participation among their young people** because of the cost-of-living crisis.
- Almost **three quarters of respondents (72%)** said their group **has made a change in response to the cost-of-living crisis**.
- **Providing free membership to their young people** has remained the most common change for groups to have made in responding to cost-of-living pressures.
- **The majority of respondents (41%) have seen external funding streams reduced** because of cost-of-living pressures.
- **The key funding priority for the next six months** in response to cost-of-living challenges **is delivery costs (such as coaches, sessions fees, and venue hire)**.
- The majority of groups (51%) **need between £1,000 and £9,999** for their cost-of-living funding priorities.

Survival and turnover

Organisational survival

Confidence in organisational survival is at a level close to that of six months ago, with **92% of groups confident (extremely or fairly)** that their organisation will survive in the next six months. There are very few respondents who are not that confident, or not confident at all, in the survival of their group.

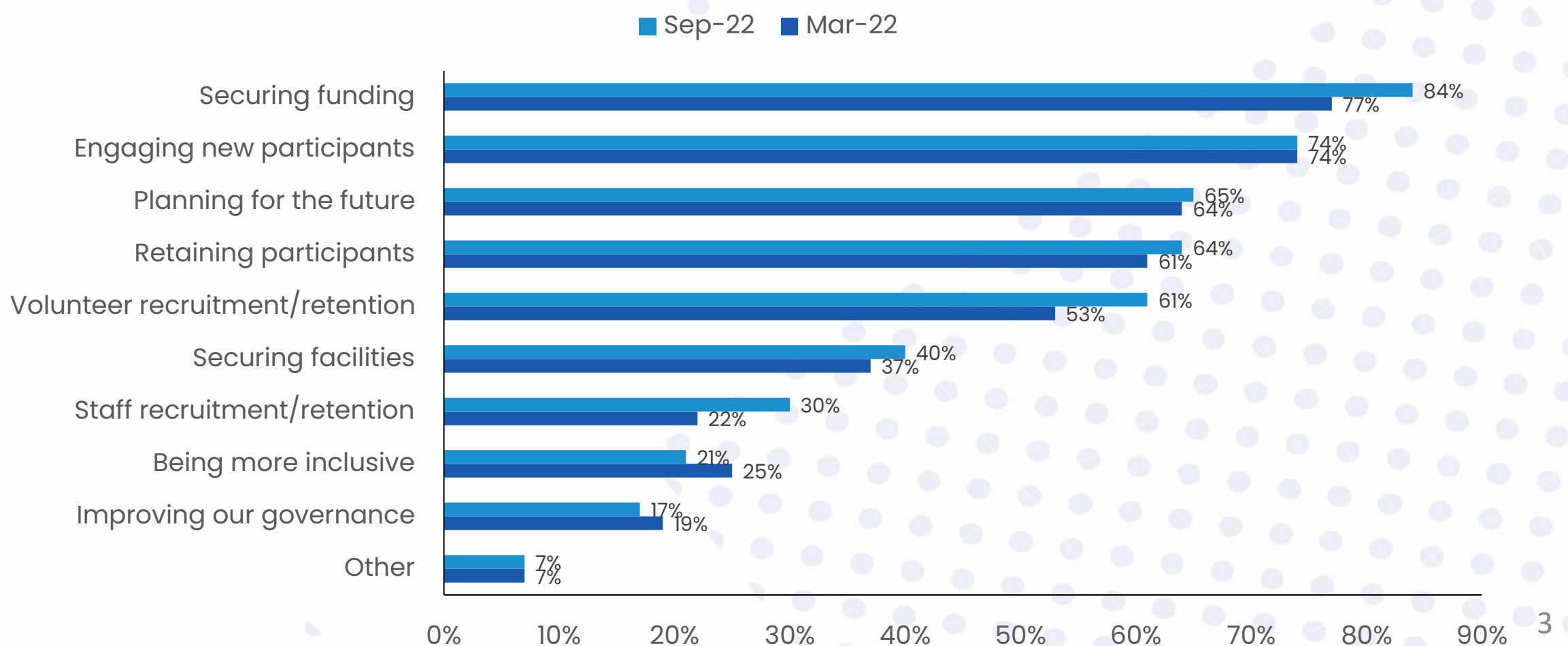
Confidence in organisational survival in the next six months



Top priorities over the next six months

The most reported priority for the next six months is securing funding, with **84% of groups identifying this as an urgent need**. This is an increase from 77% of respondents in March, when it was also the most common priority.

Groups' priorities over the next six months

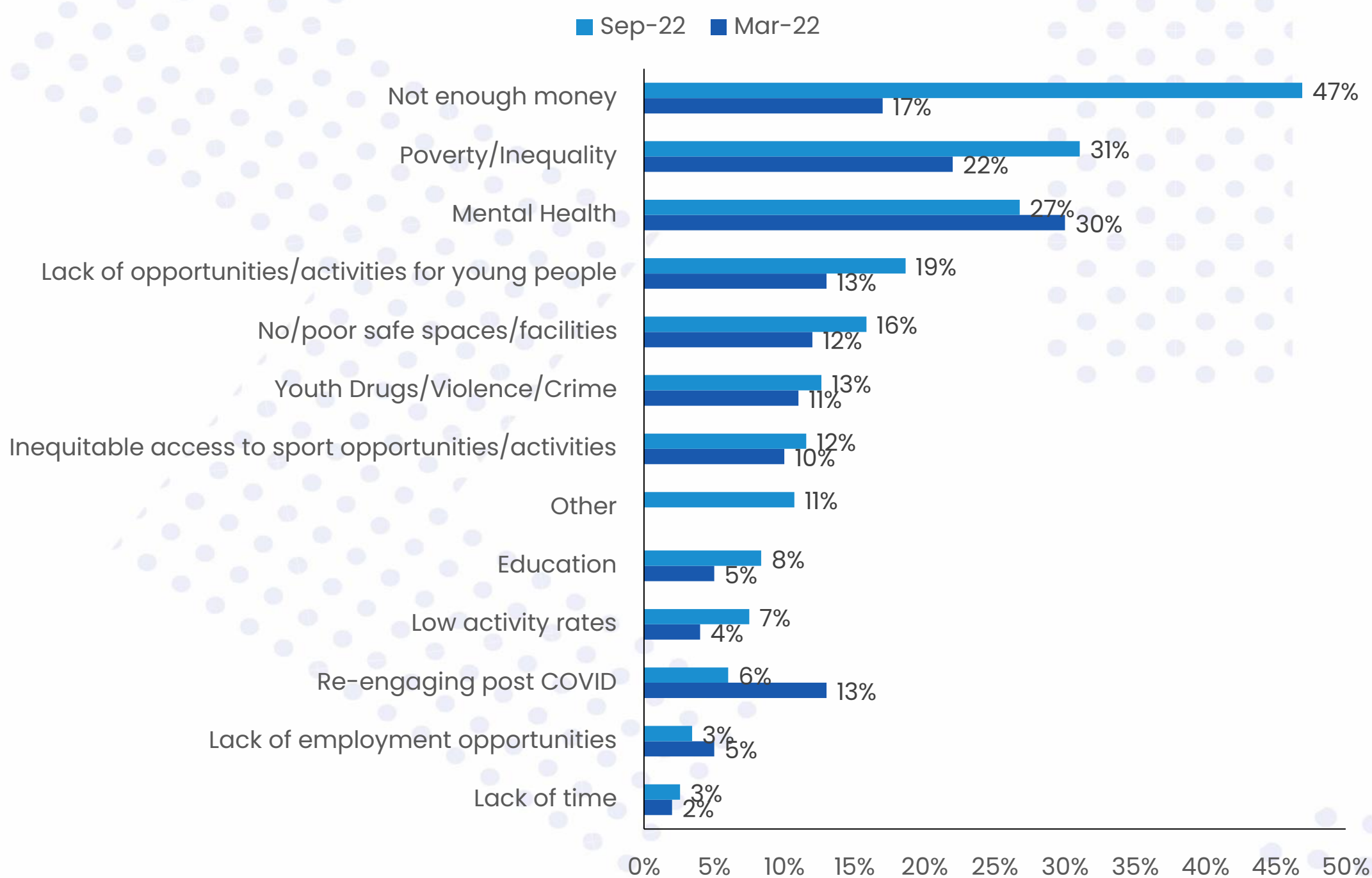


Challenges for young people

Concerns around young people not having enough money have increased dramatically since March. Referring to answers centred on the cost-of-living crisis and immediate economic hardship, nearly half of respondents (47%) registered this issue as a challenge for their young people – a substantial increase from our March Pulse, when 17% saw this as a notable issue.

Concerns around **poverty/inequality** (31%), which cover long-term socio-economic deprivation (including cost-of-living impact), and **mental health** (27%) remain in the top three most commonly cited challenges. More respondents cited the former as a challenge compared to March.

Key challenges young people are facing in members' communities at this time



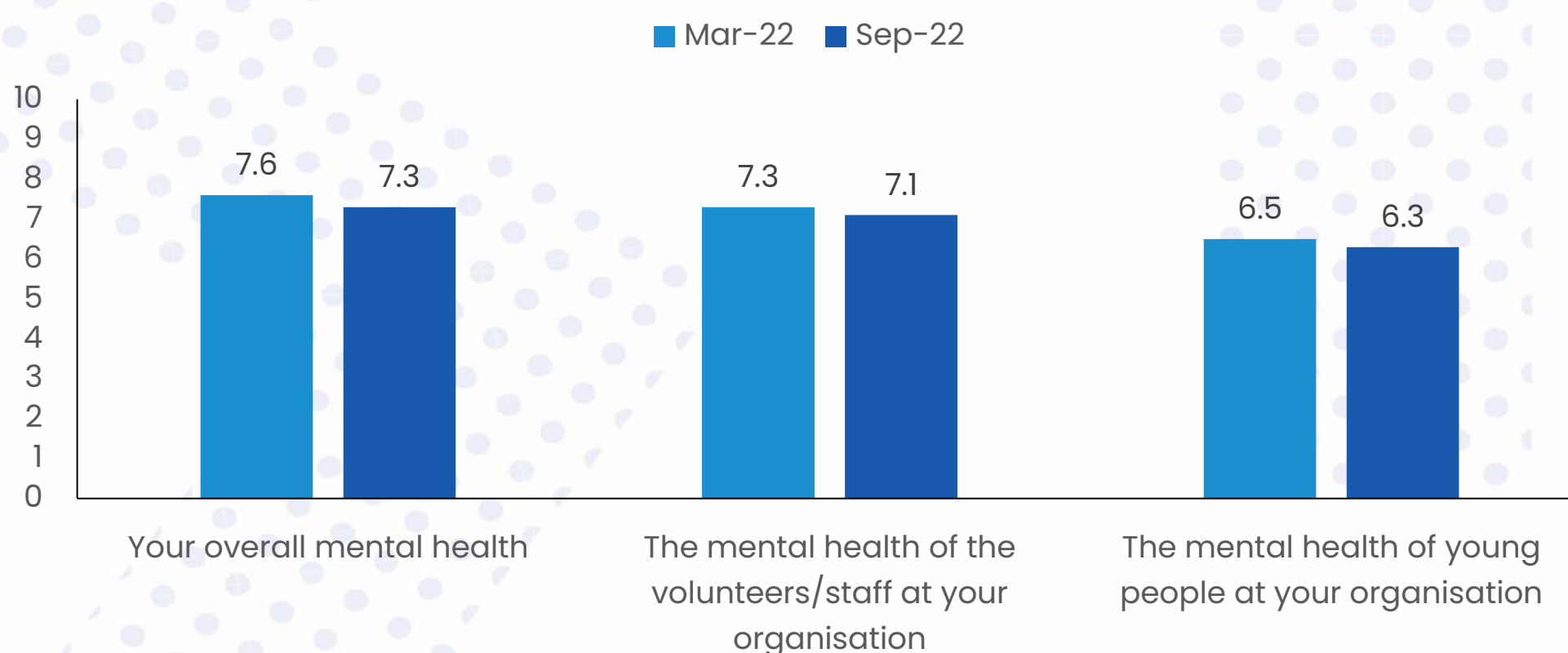
- 'More young people now are **finding it difficult to secure jobs** and training, **they feel helpless** as they can see their families struggling and cannot help. Young people are **disengaged from their own community** and **feel there is nothing sports-related available** within the area and feel they have **no outlet in order to improve their own mental health and wellbeing.**' – survey respondent
- '**Lack of affordable/free facilities** and **youth provisions. Lack of quiet and safe spaces** to do homework, be warm and escape from troubled homes.' – survey respondent
- 'The impact of the cost-of-living crisis means that **more young people's mental well-being is negatively affected.** Young people also **turning to negative influences** as a source of income.' – survey respondent
- '**Social anxieties since lock down**, the rise in accessibility in **illegal drugs, alcohol and disposable vapes.** The **higher expectancy** to achieve greater results earlier in school. **Access to out of school activities** due to low-income households and the dramatic rise in the cost-of-living combined with the **uncertainty of the economy and their future.** Pressure of **the responsibility for climate change.**' – survey respondent

Mental health

Leaders, staff/volunteers, and young people

Respondents reported lower scores for their young peoples' mental health (6.3, out of 10) in comparison to their own (7.3) and that of their group's volunteers/staff (7.1). Across the board, average scores for mental health are lower than as reported in our March Pulse.

Average rating (scale: 0 – 10, where 0 is not at all good, 5 is coping, and 10 is excellent)

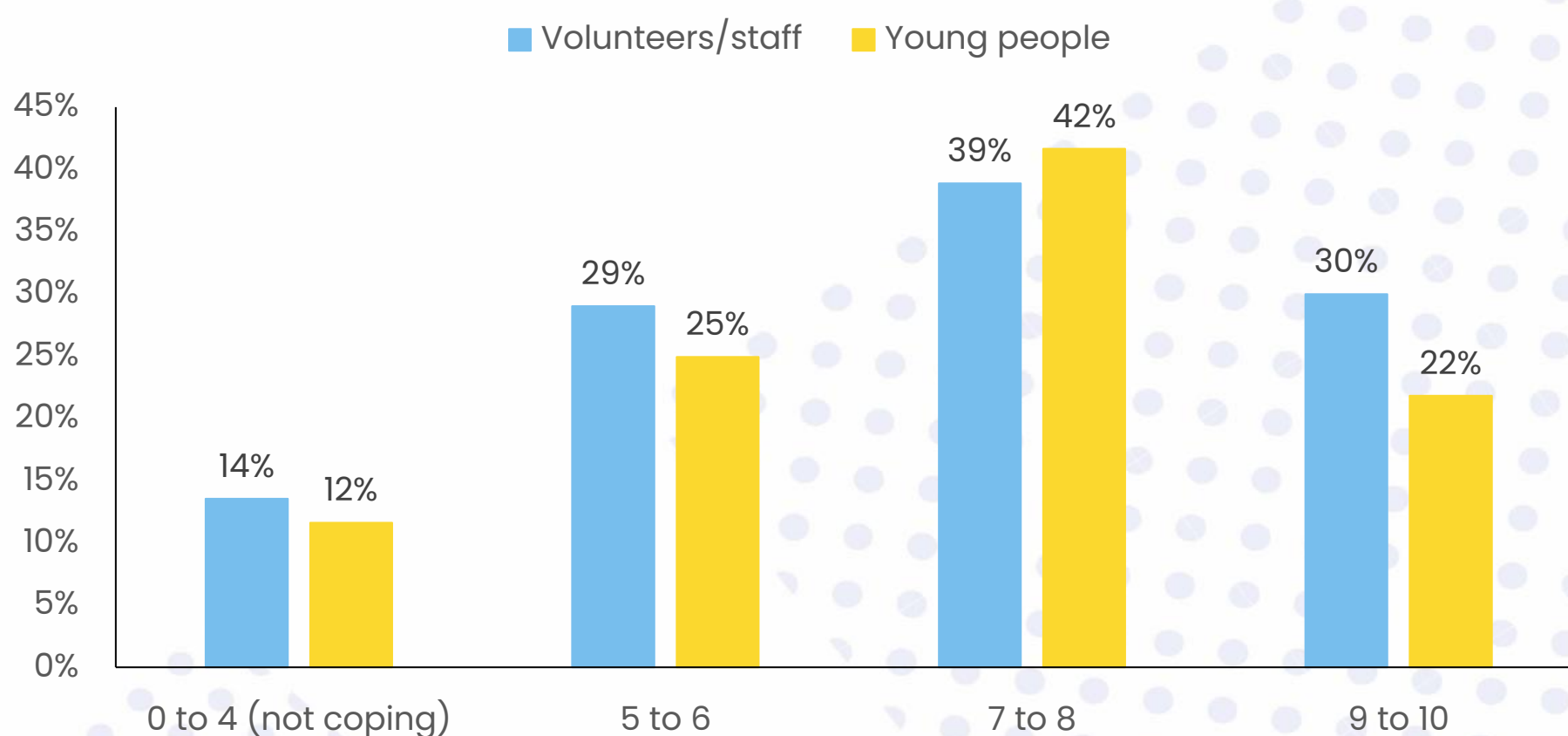


Capacity to support mental health

More than half of groups (69%) reported a score of 7 (out of 10) or above for their capacity to support the mental health of their volunteers/staff. A similar proportion (64%) scored 7 or above for capacity to support their young people's mental health.

However, several respondents said they are not coping with supporting mental health at their group – 14% scored below 5 in supporting their staff/volunteers, with 12% answering below 5 in their capacity to support their young people.

Rating distribution (scale: 0 – 10, where 0 is not at all good, 5 is coping, and 10 is excellent)

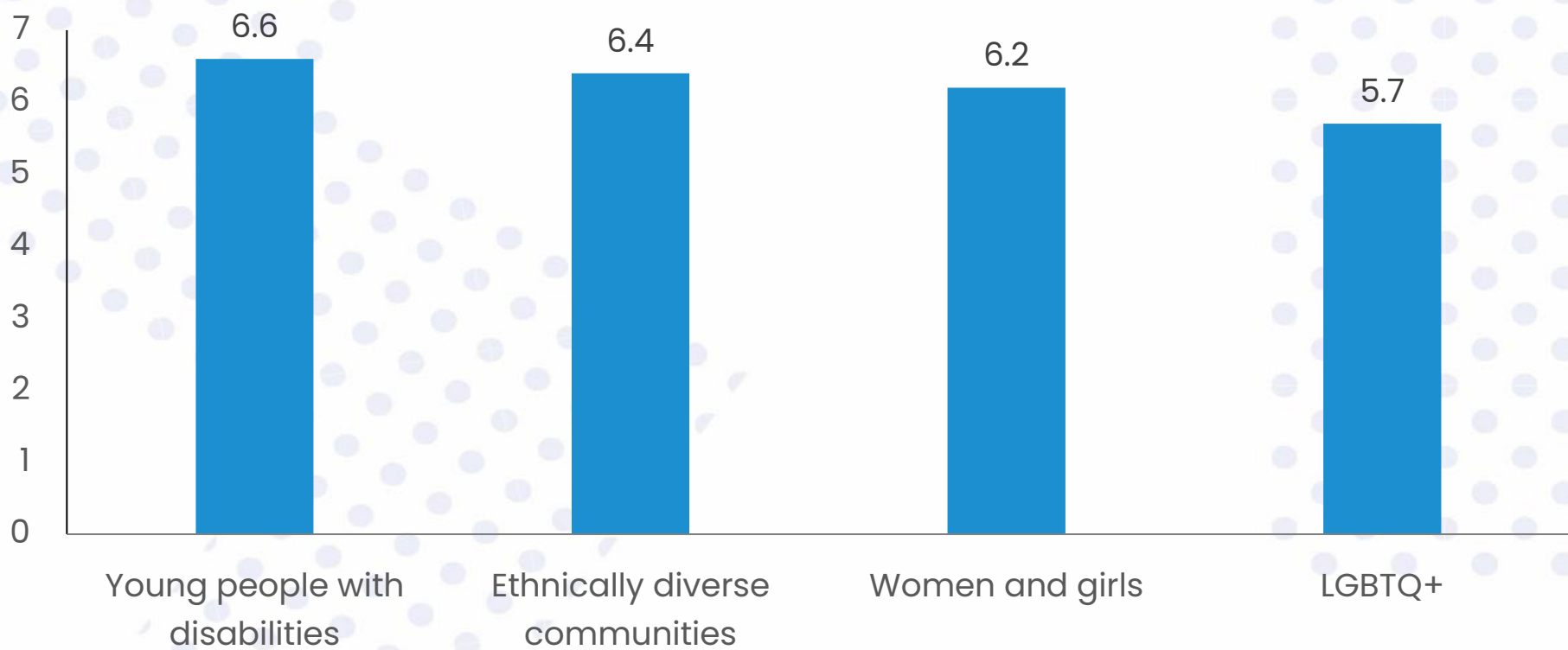


Tackling inequalities

The extent of inequalities within communities

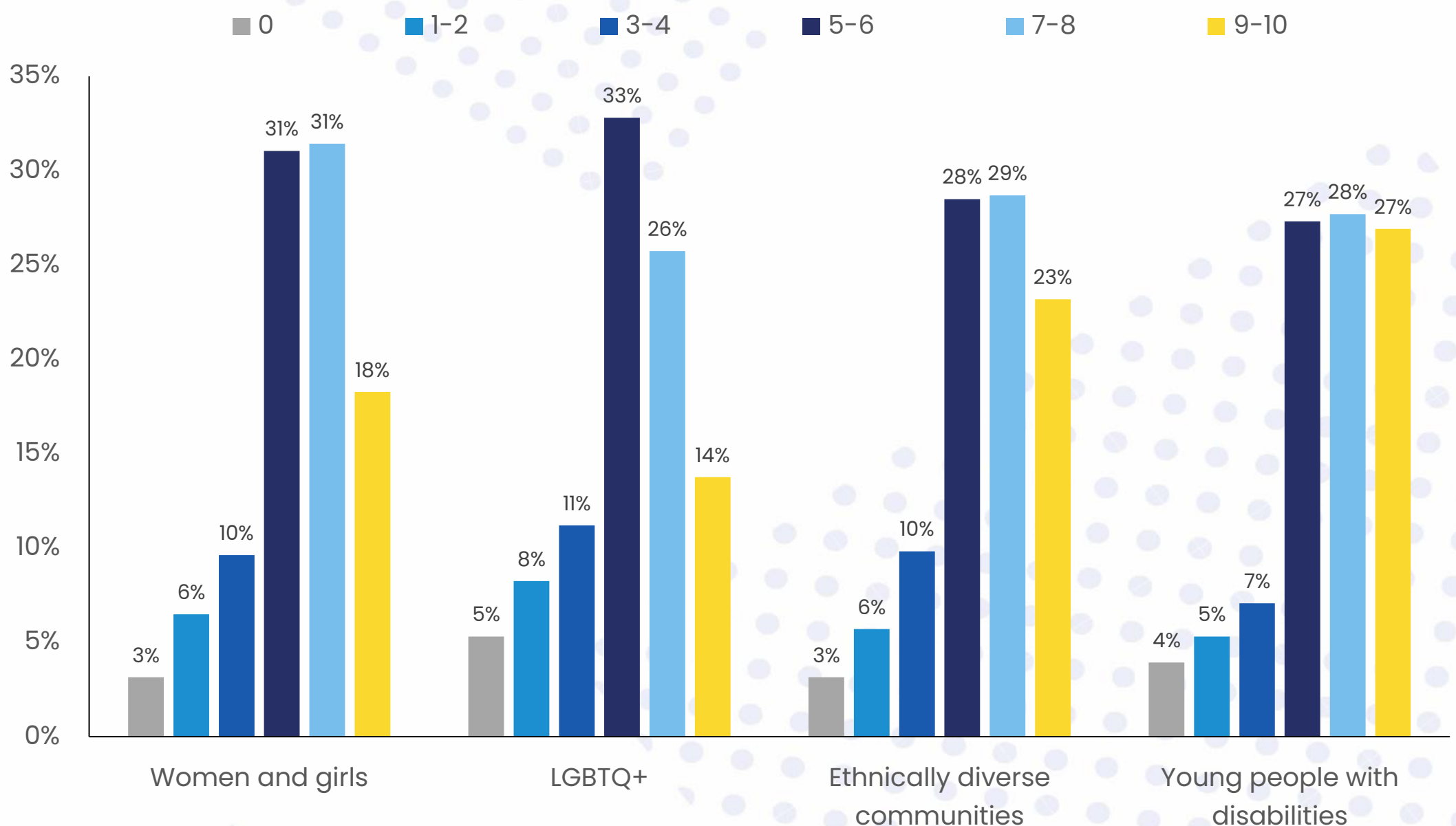
When thinking about the extent of the inequalities within their communities, groups identified issues for **young people with disabilities as the most extensive**, with an average score of 6.6 (out of 10). There was a fairly consistent response across other areas of inequality and their extent within communities.

Extent of inequalities within groups' communities – average score (out of 10)



Examining the spread of scores for these inequalities, **more respondents scored inequalities around young people with disabilities at the highest end of the scale (9-10)** than other inequalities – a quarter (27%) scored it as either 9 or 10.

Extent of inequalities within groups' communities – score distribution



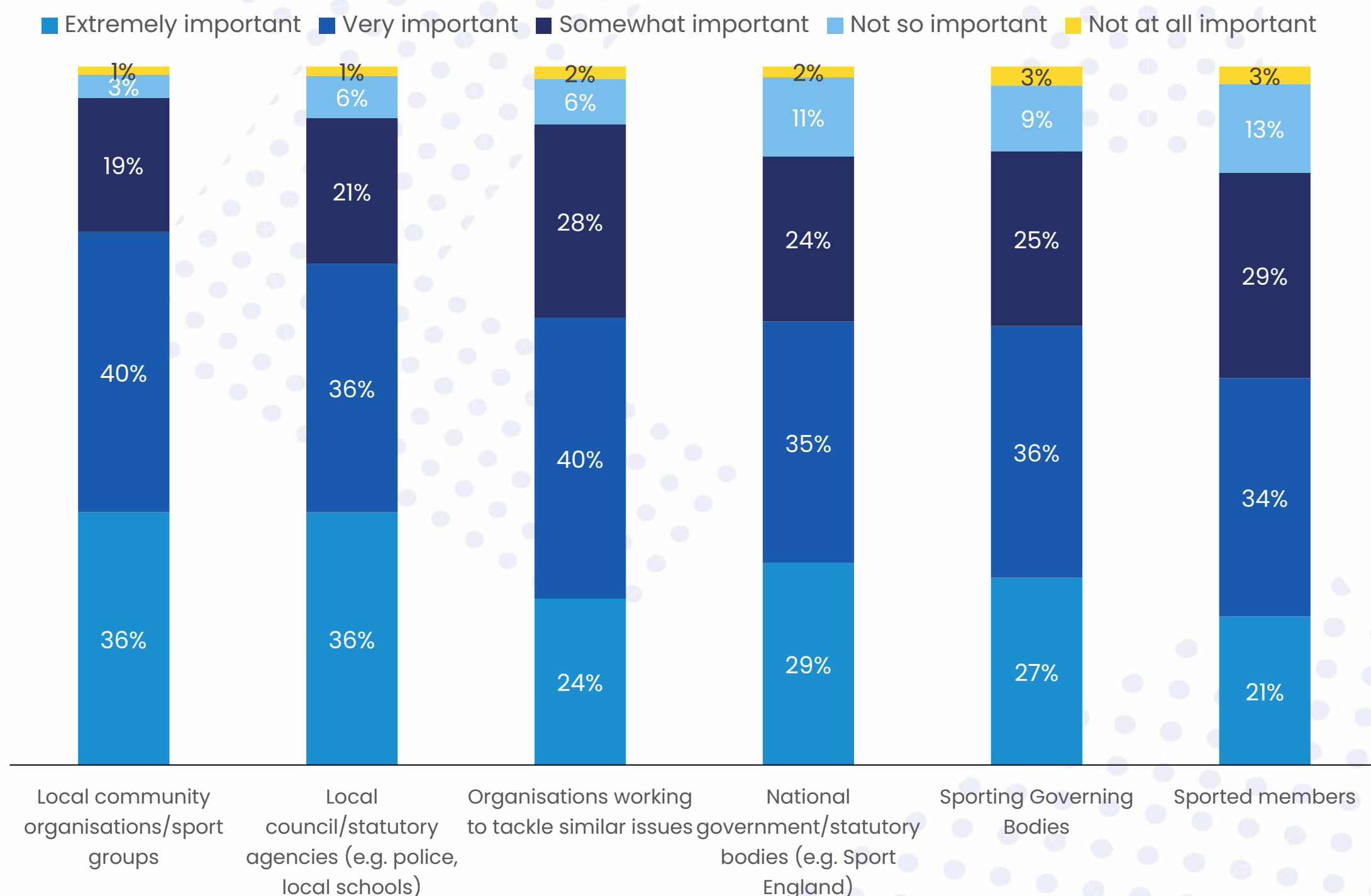
Connected communities

Groups' relationships to other organisations

Members reported that **relationships with local community organisations/sport groups are the most important for supporting their group** – three quarters (76%) indicated such support was extremely or very important.

Local councils/statutory agencies were the next most important organisations for supporting members, with 72% regarding them as important (extremely or very).

Importance of relationships with other organisations in supporting members



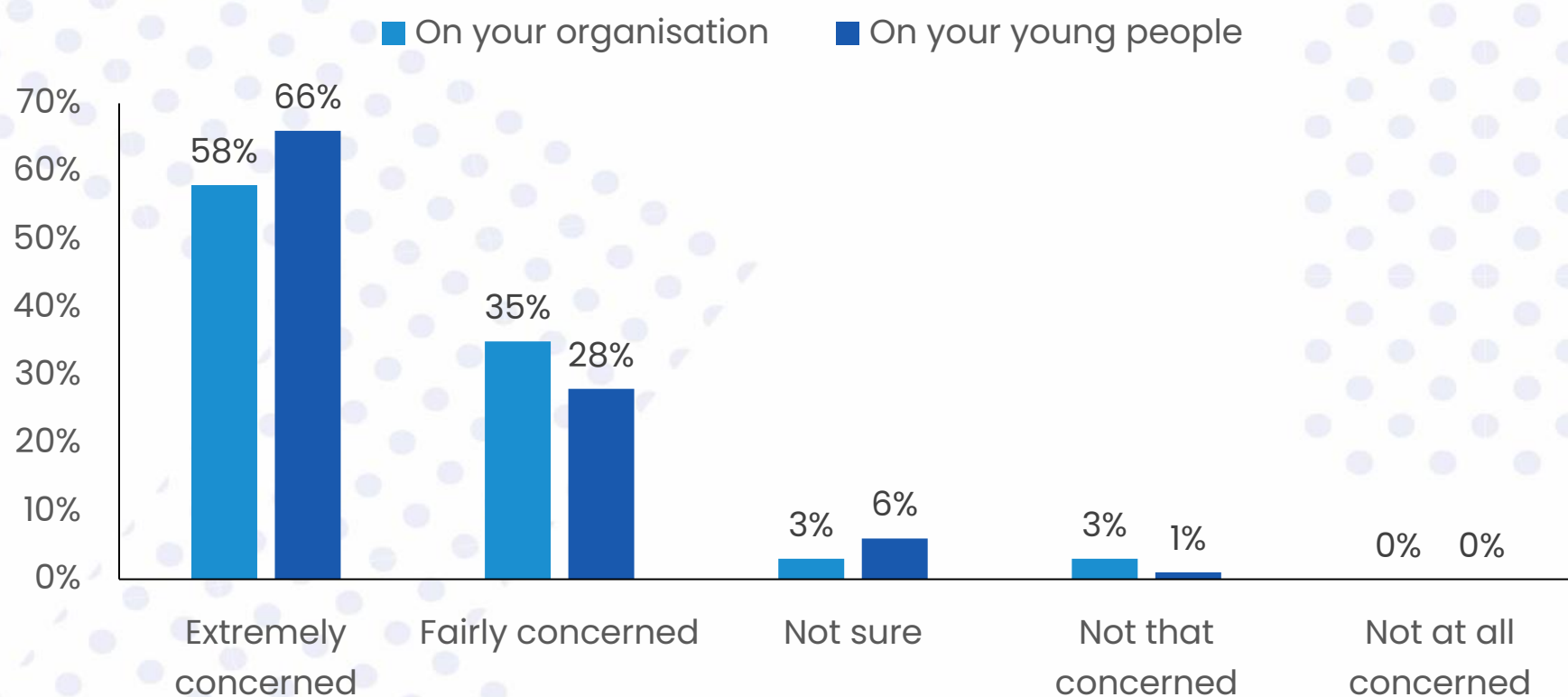
The cost-of-living crisis

Impact on groups and their young people

More than 90% of respondents are concerned about the impact of cost-of-living increases on their organisation and on their young people. 93% are either extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their group, with 94% concerned for their young people.

This level of concern has increased from our March Pulse, where 88% of respondents were concerned about the impact on their organisation and also on their young people.

Concern about the impact of cost-of-living increases

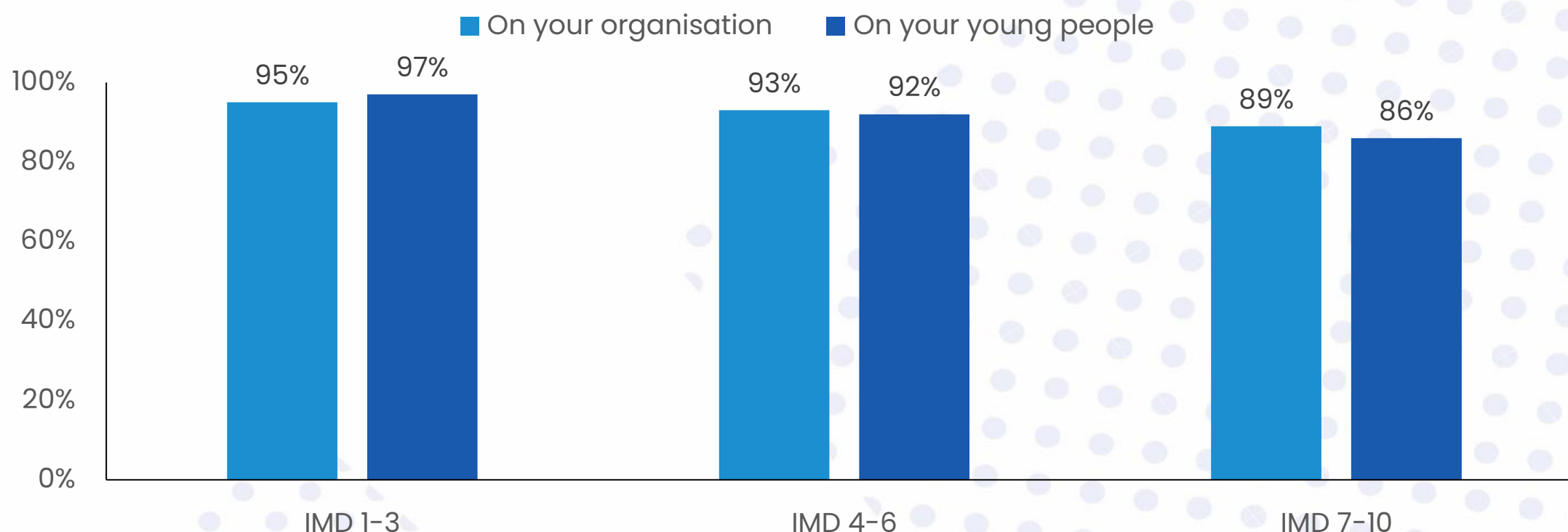


Impact on groups and their young people by IMD

High levels of concern about the impact of cost-of-living increases on organisations are found across all indices of multiple deprivation (IMD).

It is highest amongst those groups working in the lowest 30% and middle 30% of areas of multiple deprivation. For groups working in the highest four deciles of deprivation, concern levels are slightly reduced, though they remain very high.

Groups who are extremely/fairly concerned about the impact of cost-of-living increases by IMD (0-10)

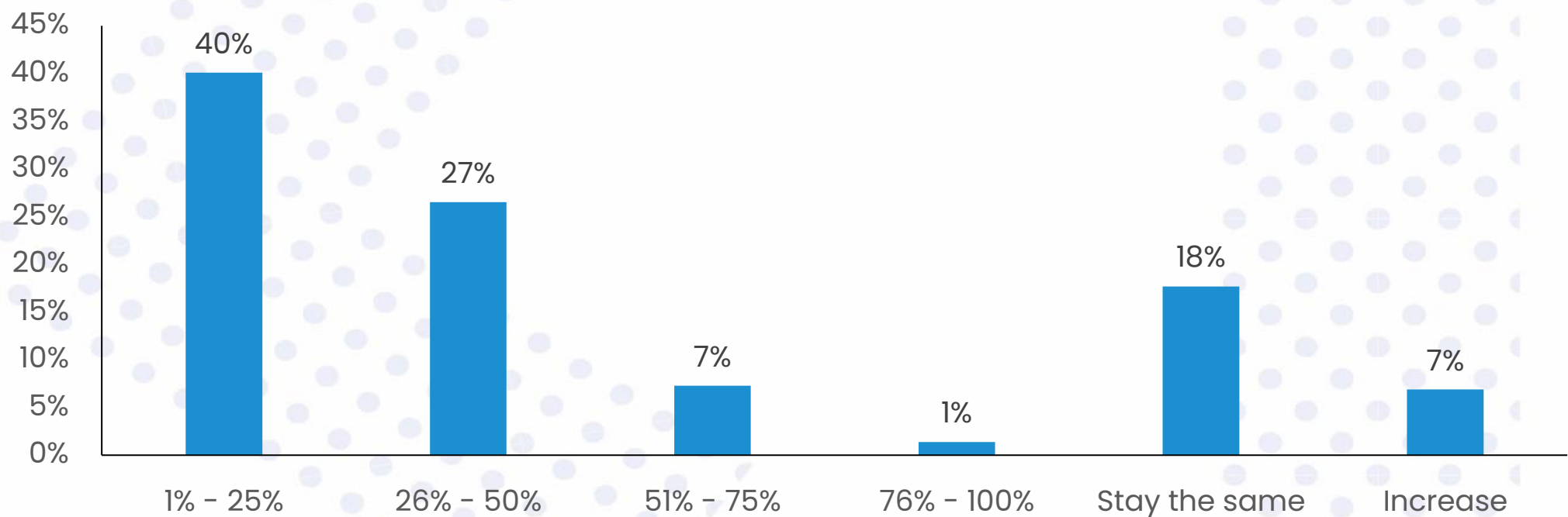


Cost-of-living increases

Impact on participation

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) indicated that up to half their young people would not be able to attend activities over the next six months because of cost-of-living pressures.

Reduction in participation rates in the next six months

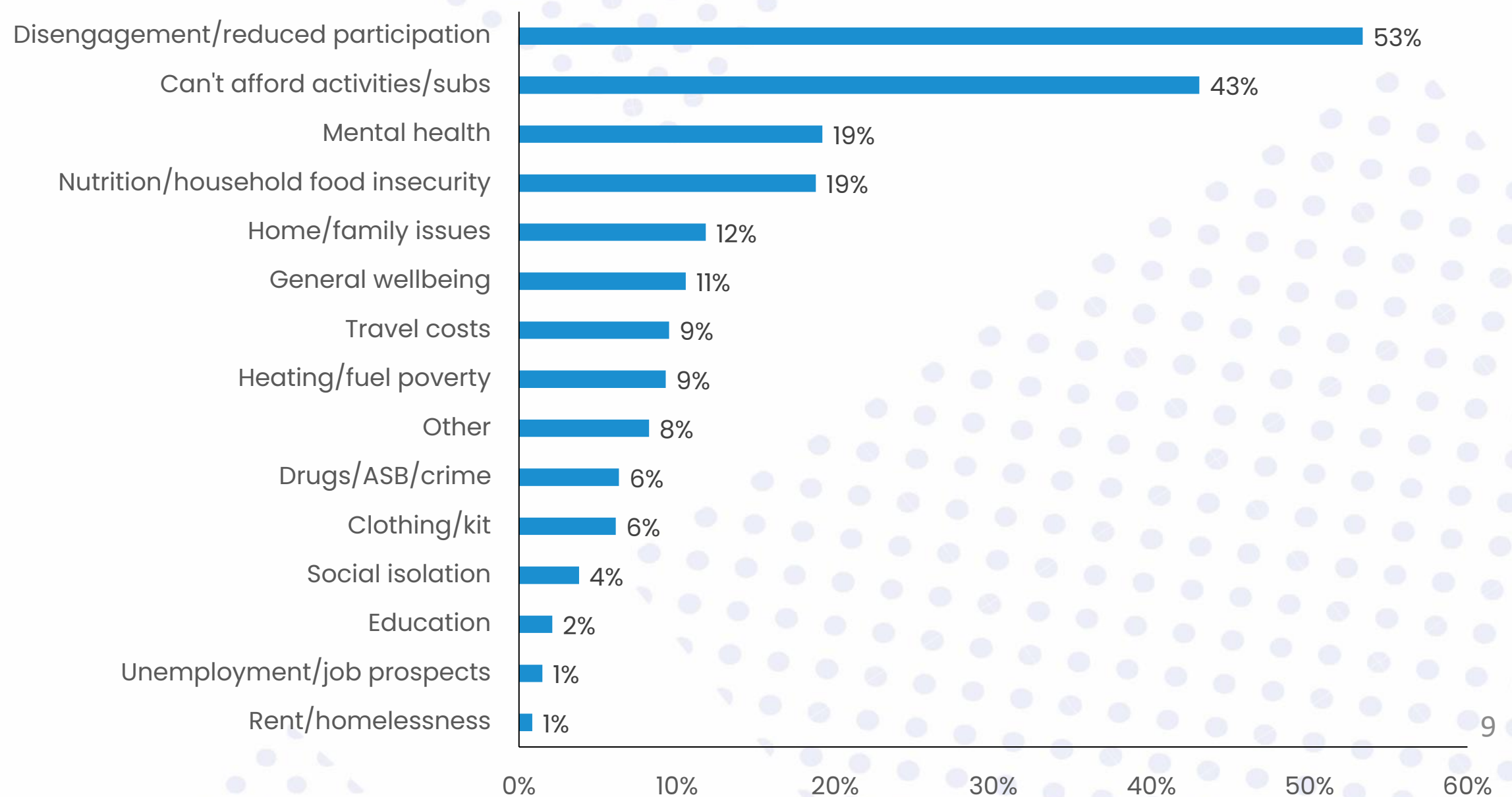


Impact on young people

Asked to outline concerns about the cost-of-living crisis on their young people, respondents identified **disengagement/reduced participation in activities** as their most common concern (53%). Nearly half (43%) explicitly told us they feared young people would be **unable to afford activities/subscriptions**.

For the first time in our Community Pulse, **nutrition/household food insecurity** was highlighted by respondents as a concern.

Impact on young people



Cost-of-living increases

Groups' responses to the increases

Nearly three quarters (72%) have responded to the cost-of-living increase by making a change to their operation. This is an increase from our March Pulse, when 64% of respondents indicated they'd made a change.

The most frequently made changes have been to **provide free membership for their young people (50%)** and to **reduce fees for their young people (48%)**. More groups are providing free membership, reducing their fees, or offering free meals/food for their young people than in March.

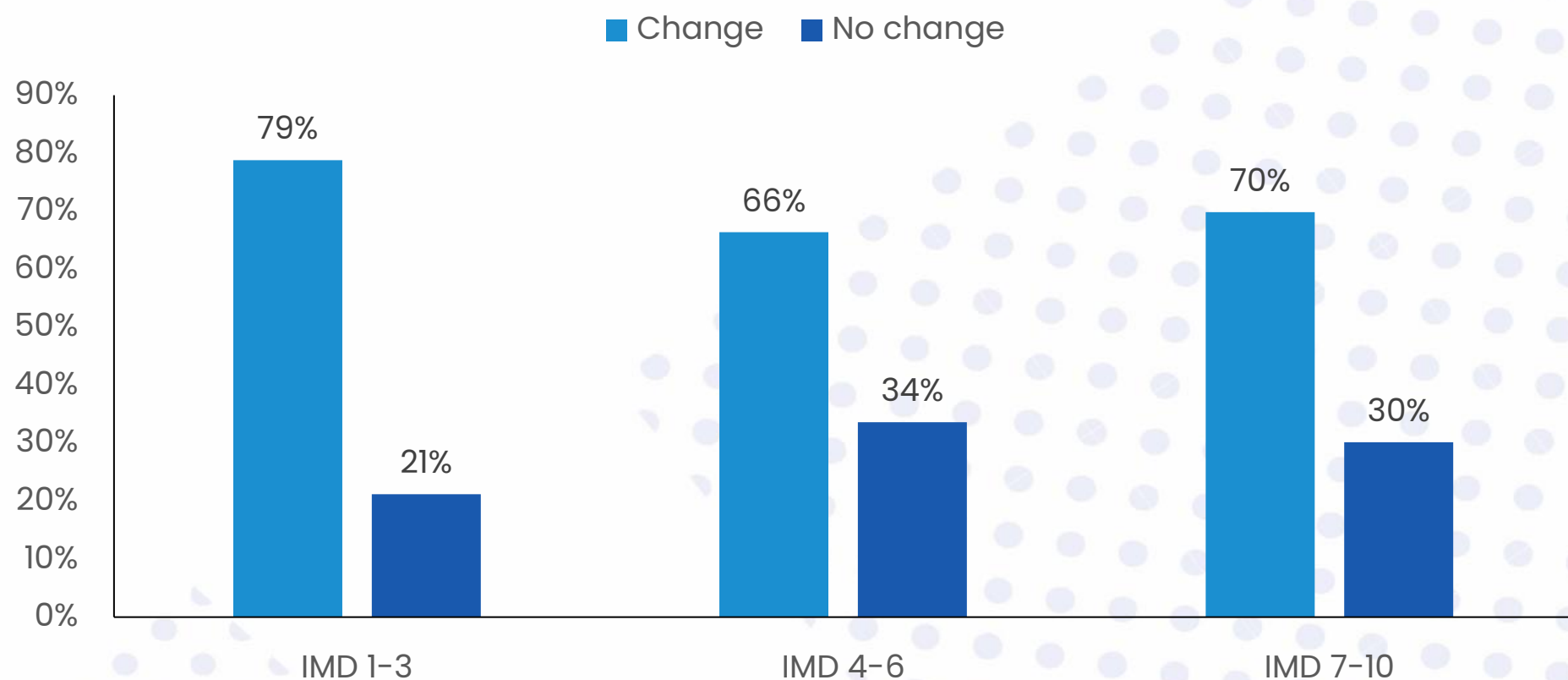
Changes made in response to cost-of-living increases



Groups' responses to the increases by IMD

Groups were more likely to have made changes in response to cost-of-living increases if based the lowest three deciles of multiple deprivation, with 79% of respondents based in these areas reporting having made a change.

Changes made by IMD

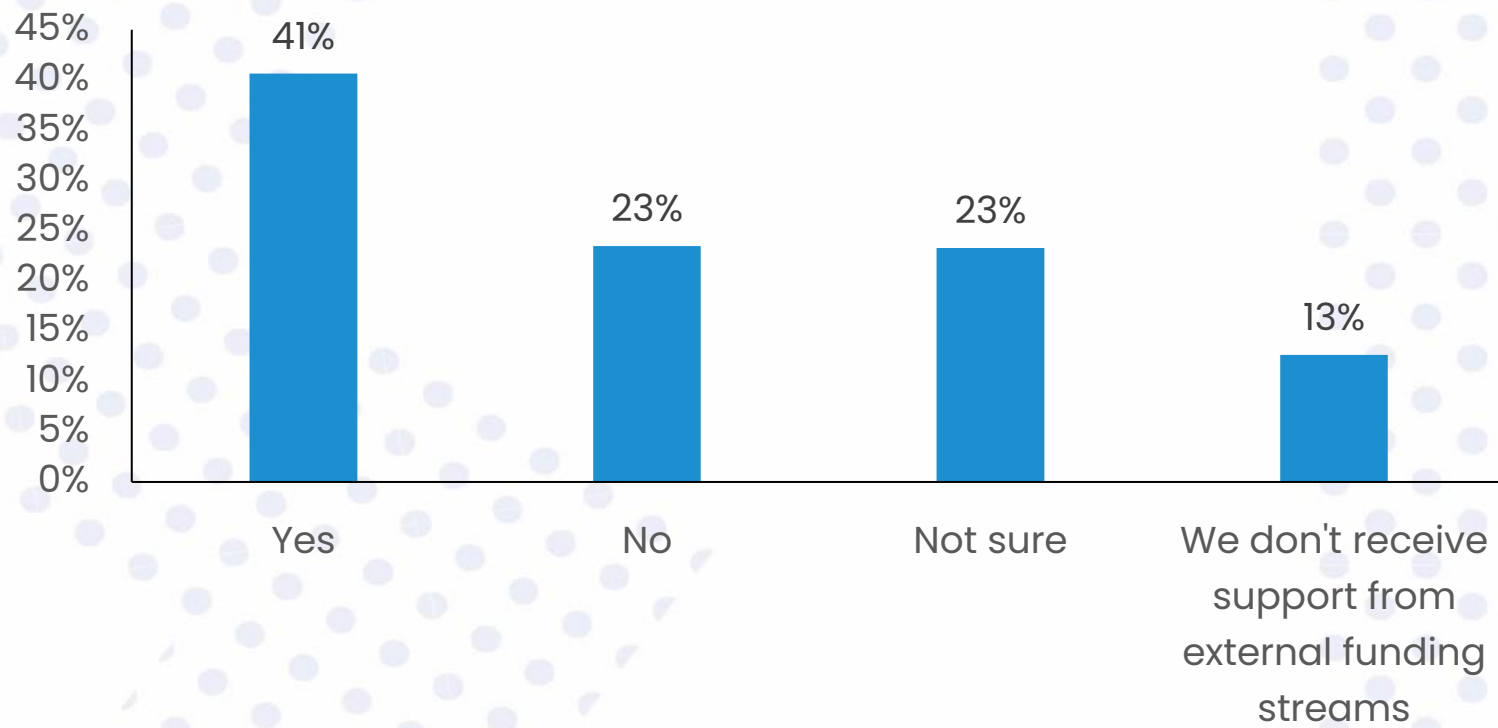


Cost-of-living increases

Reduction in external funding streams

41% of respondents told us that they have seen a reduction in financial support from external funding streams (such as local businesses, trusts and foundations, etc.) because of cost-of-living pressures.

Impact on external funding streams

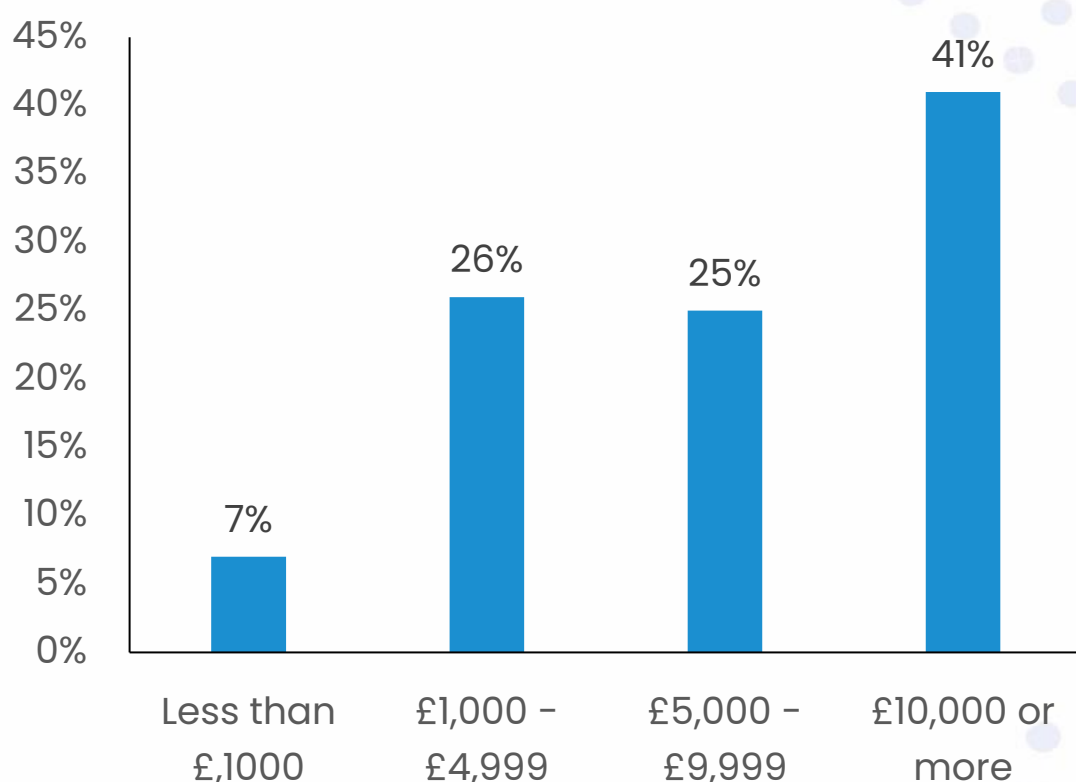


Priority funding for cost-of-living pressures

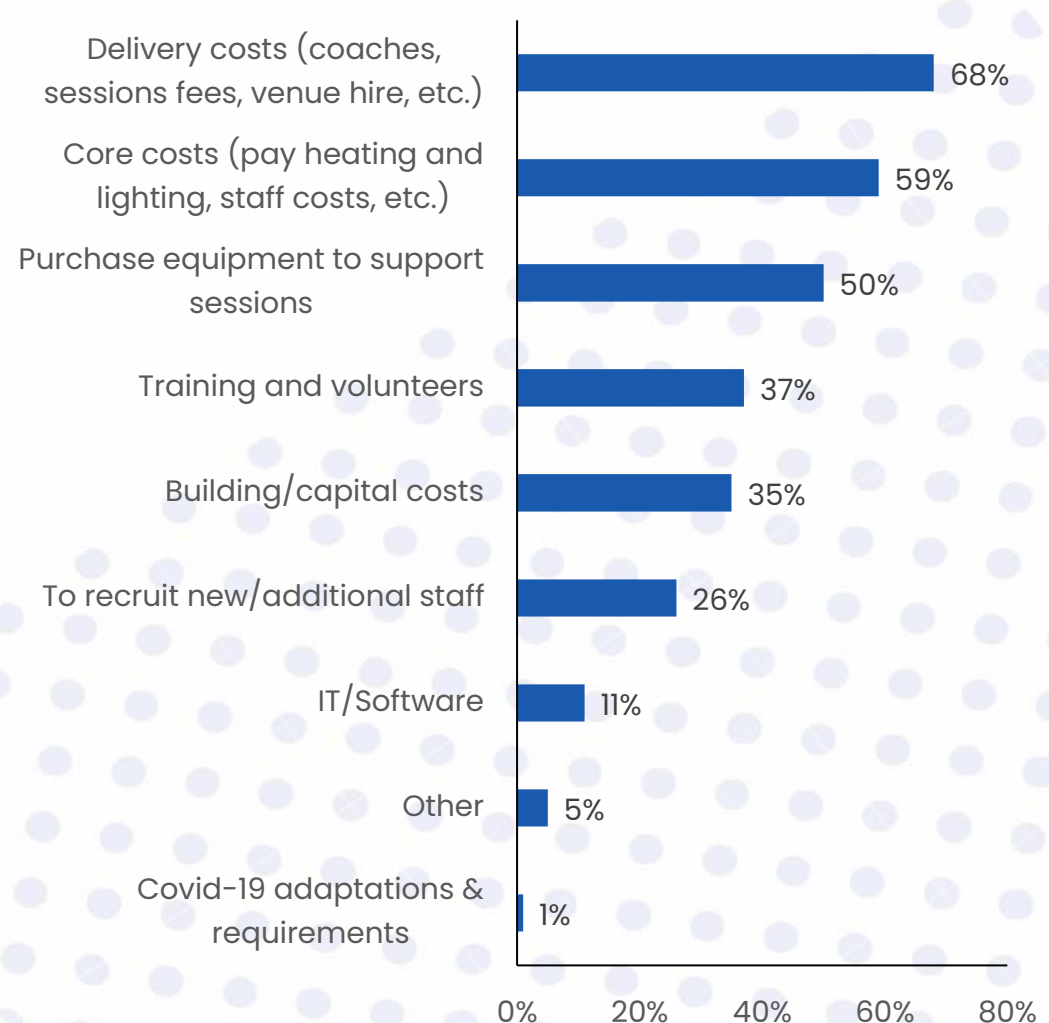
Looking to the next six months, **just over half of groups (51%) need £1,000–£9,999 to cover priority funding areas in response to cost-of-living pressures.** 41% need £10,000 or more.

The most common priority funding area is to support delivery costs (68%). Core costs (59%) and equipment purchases (50%) are also key areas where groups need funding.

Funding needed to support priority areas



Priority funding areas



Our response

What we're doing in response to Pulse

- Planning a series of webinars focused around areas of need identified through the Pulse.
- New “Cost of Living” page set up on the Sported Hub containing information about cost savings, events, funding and other useful information.
- Working with partners and stakeholders at local and national level to co-ordinate support to groups around cost-of-living.
- Linking in with funders to deliver information sessions on relevant grants and supporting groups to apply for them.
- Additional funding sources in the funding bulletin focused on delivery costs, core costs, and purchasing equipment to support sessions.
- Additional member communications to ensure members feel supported and have up to date information on events and other support services.
- Follow up support calls from the Sported field team relating to answers in the Pulse where groups need support.
- Ensuring our team of skilled volunteers are ready to provide support through placements.

Keep the Doors Open

Community sports organisations are critical to the lives of disadvantaged young people. Our reach on the ground tells us the cost-of-living-crisis is already limiting access to activity and support to young people with the greatest need.

Groups are forecasting drops in participation – and also an urgent need for more funding to mitigate the pinch felt by their participants and their families and to cover the increased running costs. In listening to these organisations, they are asking us to both assist and to use our voice on the issue.

So Sported has launched a campaign to raise awareness of the issue. It has already featured in the media through outlets including BBC, Sky and The Times and we are using the data from our survey to complement examples from those we work with. We are also pressing government and other influencers to take action. And we will extend this campaign into 2023 to ensure that these groups survive the winter but also are put on a more sustainable footing in the long term.



You can find out more about our campaign here: [Keep The Doors Open | Sported](#)



www.sported.org.uk

