

**Community
Pulse** 

**May 2023
Scotland**



SPORTED  **x ring**

**Making neighbourhoods stronger and
safer through community sport**

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.
- increase awareness of funding and resources available for such organisations.
- help stakeholders make more-informed decisions in relation to grassroots community sport in the UK.
- fill an insight gap on behalf of those who aren't 'traditional' sports clubs or who don't work as commercial or leisure providers.

This report is based on **79 responses** between **13 – 22 March 2023** from Sported groups in Scotland. Of these, 35% of responses were from groups in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation.

79
responses

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 50% 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

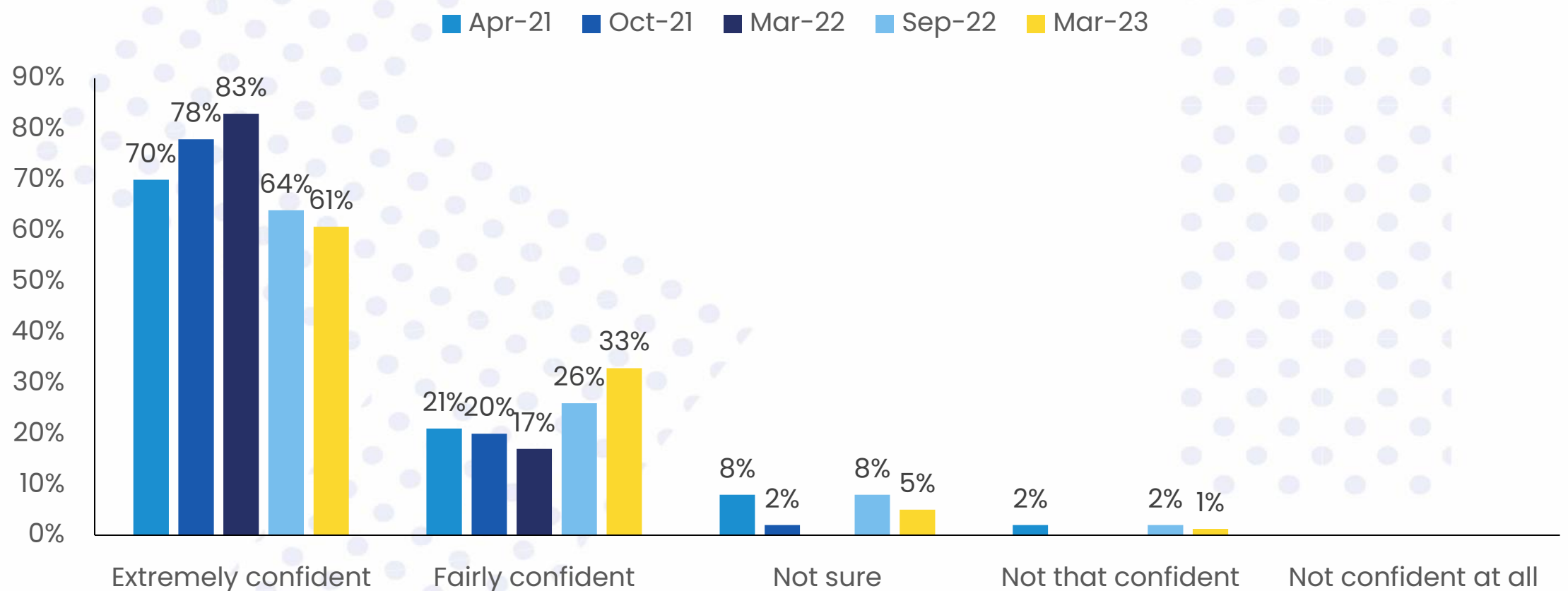
- **Concern about the impact of cost-of-living pressures continues to be very high, with 94% of respondents either extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their group and 92% concerned for their young people.**
- The most common concerns around the impact of cost-of-living increases on young people are for **their mental health (77%)** and that they will **disengage from/reduce participation in sport (75%)**.
- **Young people's mental health continues to be scored by leaders as below their own and their staff/volunteers', with around a third of respondents telling us they are only just about coping in supporting their staff, volunteers, and young peoples' mental health.**
- **Young people not having enough money** is the most common challenge facing communities according to respondents, as it was in our last Pulse in September 2022, with around half (51%) telling us this is an issue.
- **A significant rises in energy bills** has been the most common experience of cost-of-living increases in the past six months, while **increases in Public Liability insurance** is the most expected for the next six months.
- Nearly **three-quarters of respondents (74%)** said their group **has made a change in response to cost-of-living increases** – the most common has been to **provide free memberships**.
- **Securing funding** is the most-reported priority for the next six months, taking over from engaging new participants in our last Pulse.
- Nearly three-quarters of groups say **they play a significant role (vital or big) in building a stronger sense of community** in their local area (74%).
- **Groups' relationships with other organisations are varied** in terms of support for delivery, funding, and sustainability, with groups being supported in delivery from a number of different organisations in their area and across the sector.

Survival and priorities

Organisational survival

Confidence in organisational survival is at a level similar to September 2022, with 94% of groups now confident (extremely or fairly) in their survival, compared with 90% six months ago. However, there has been a noticeable fall in the proportion who are extremely confident since March 2022.

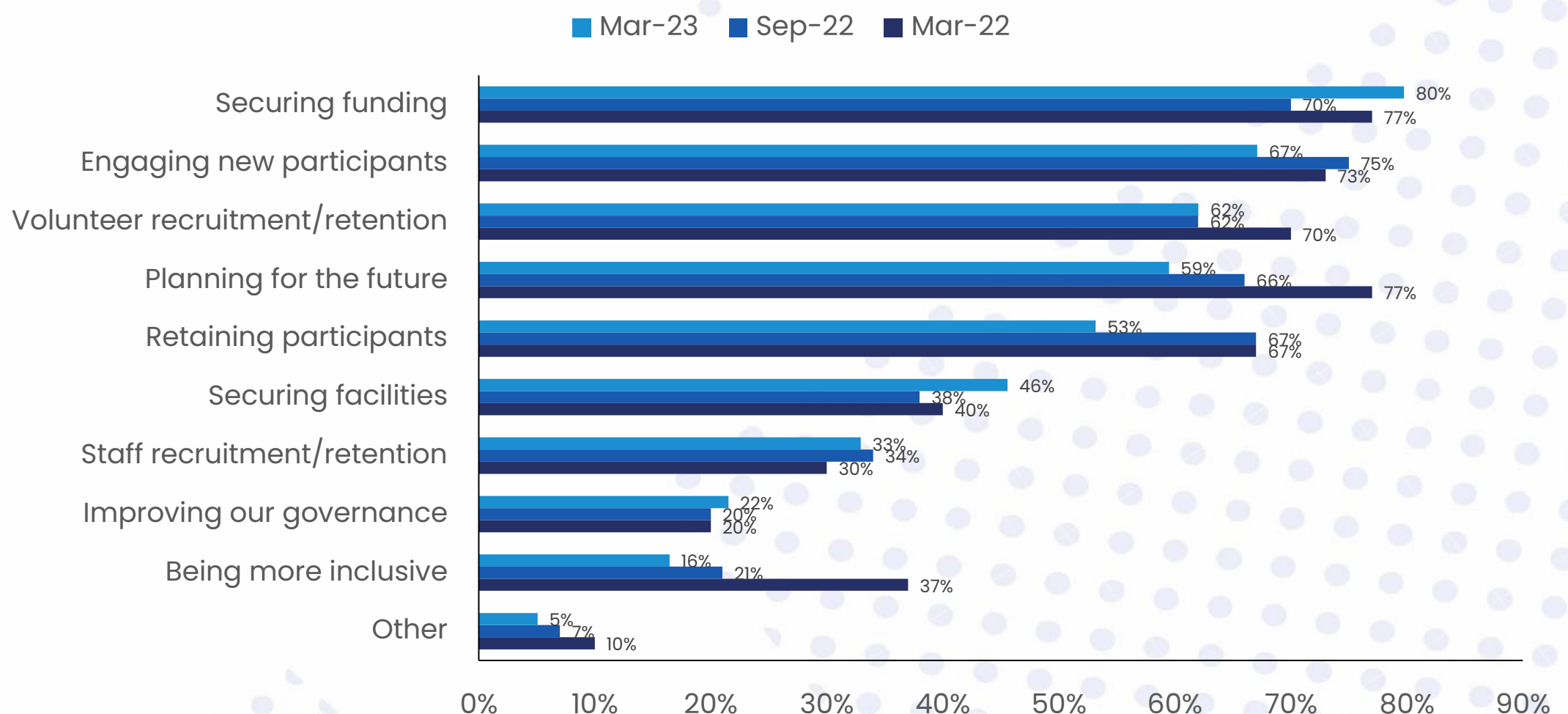
Confidence in organisational survival in the next six months



Top priorities over the next six months

Securing funding remains the most common priority for groups over the next six months, with 80% of groups identifying this as key task. This has increased by 10% from September 2022.

Groups' priorities over the next six months

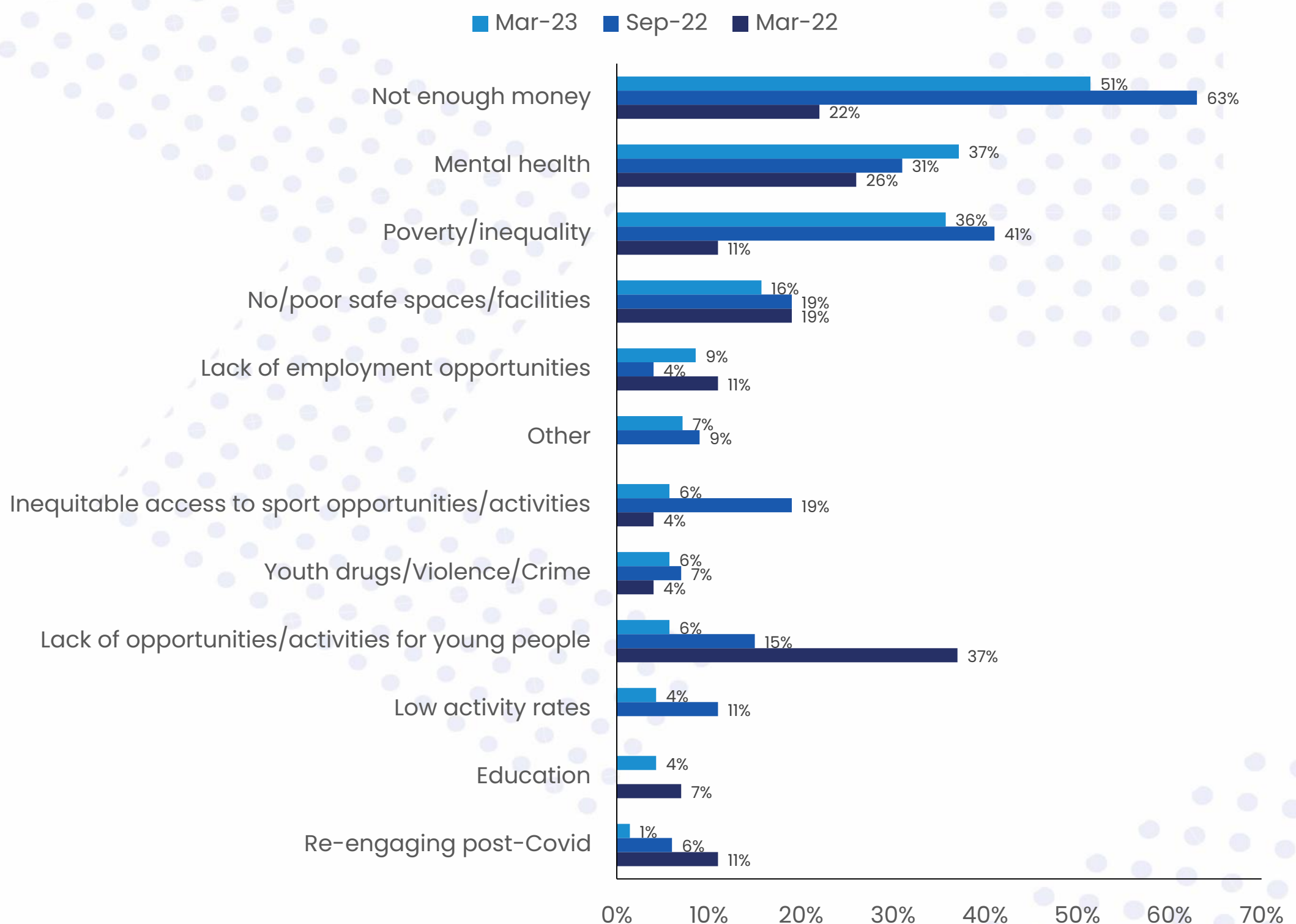


Challenges for young people

Concerns around young people not having enough money remain high. Referring to answers centred on the cost-of-living crisis and immediate economic hardship, over half of respondents (51%) said this was a challenge for their young people. This has fallen a little from our September 2022 Pulse, when 63% saw this as an issue.

Concerns around **mental health** (37%) and **poverty/inequality** (36%), which covers long-term socio-economic deprivation (including cost-of-living impact), continue to be the next most commonly cited challenges.

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



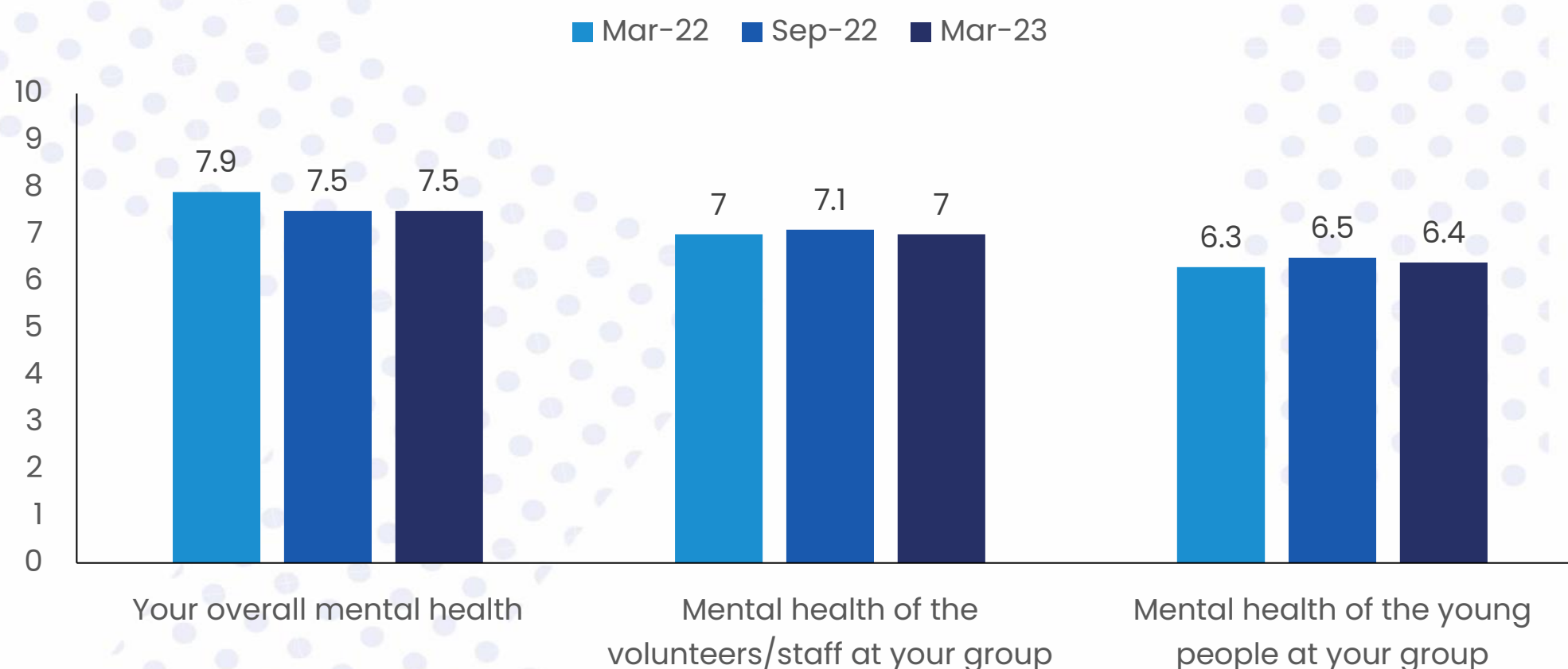
- 'Financial hardship, motivation and a severe sense of isolation. Constant promotion of socially isolating online activity and bullying. Specifically in our area dreadful public transport. The free transport cards are effectively pointless if you live in the majority of rural areas and Scotland is a very rural country.' – survey respondent
- 'Young people are still being affected by the disruption caused by the pandemic. Issues include poor mental health and wellbeing, isolation, reluctance to leave home and take part in wider group activities. Other issues exacerbated by poverty include food and hygiene poverty.' – survey respondent
- 'Cost-of-living crisis for families which is having an effect on the young people in terms of coming to us more for essentials like being fed rather than the actual activity itself.' – survey respondent

Mental health

Leaders, staff/volunteers, and young people

Respondents reported **similar scores for their mental health** (7.5 out of 10), **their volunteers'/staff's mental health** (7) and **their young people's mental health** (6.4) compared to six months ago. Scores for the mental health of their volunteers/staff and their young people have been consistent since March 2022.

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

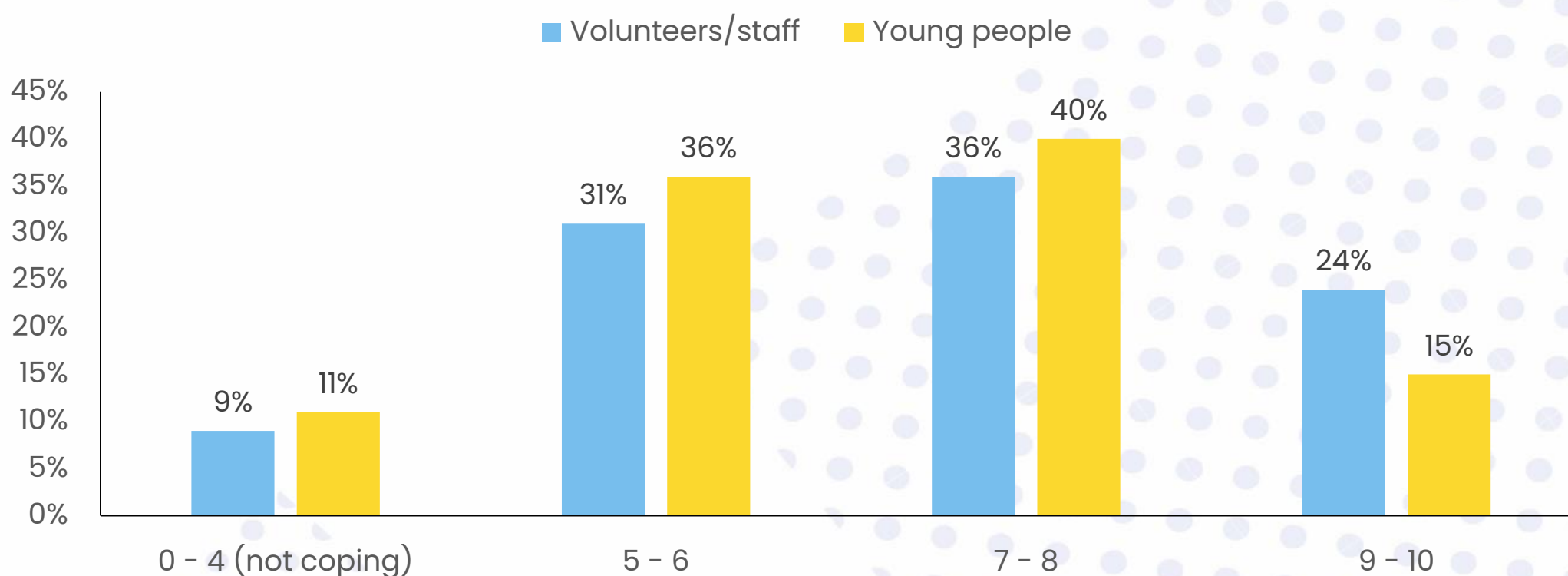


Capacity to support mental health

More than half of groups (60%) 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 (55%) scored 7 or above for capacity to support their young people's mental health.

However, around a third are only just about coping (5–6, out of 10) and several respondents said **they are not coping with supporting mental health** at their group: 9% scored below 5 in supporting their staff/volunteers, with 11% 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)

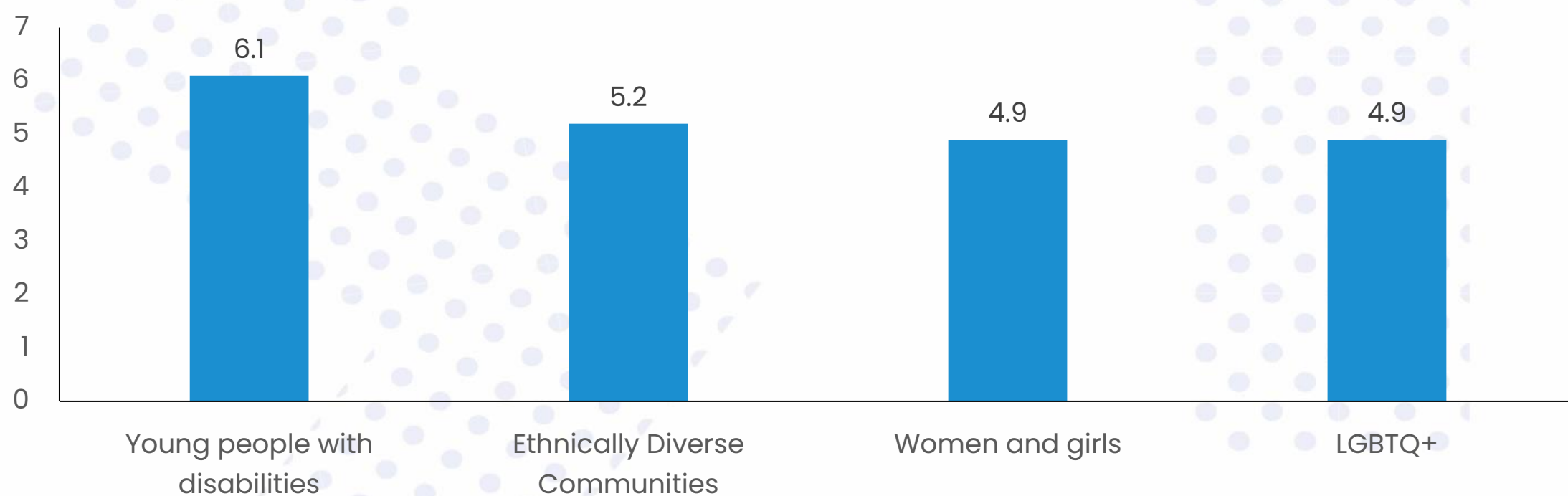


Tackling inequalities

The significance of inequalities experienced in communities

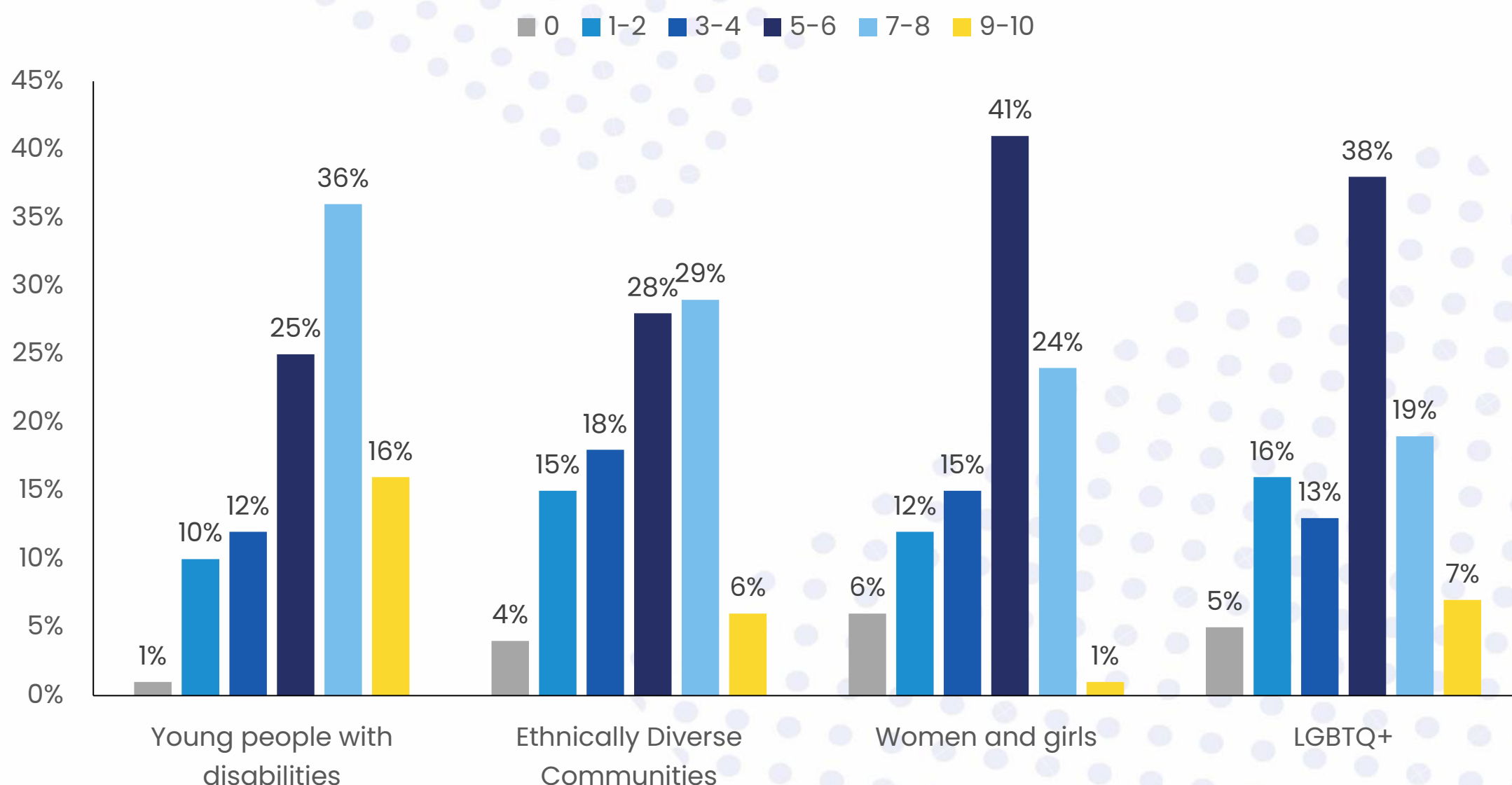
Group leaders identified **inequalities experienced by young people with disabilities** within their communities as most significant, with an average score of 6.1 (out of 10).

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



For the spread of scores on significance, **more respondents told us the most significant inequality relates to young people with disabilities** than other inequalities – 16% scored it as either 9 or 10.

Significance of inequalities within groups' communities – score distribution

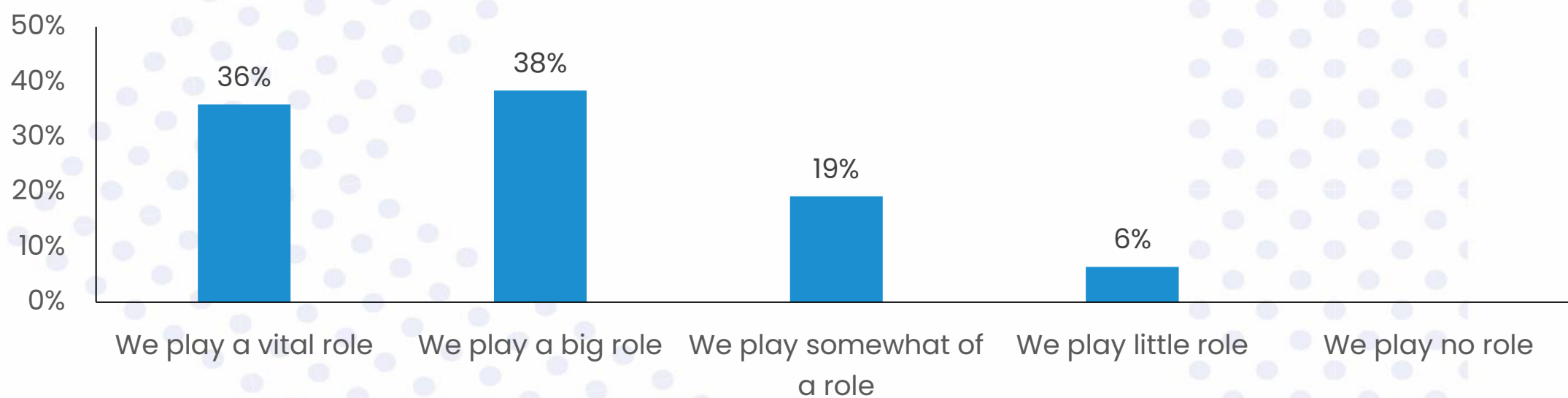


Connecting communities

Building communities

Around three-quarters of groups say **they play a significant role (vital or big) in building a stronger sense of community** in their local area (74%).

Building a stronger sense of community in groups' local area



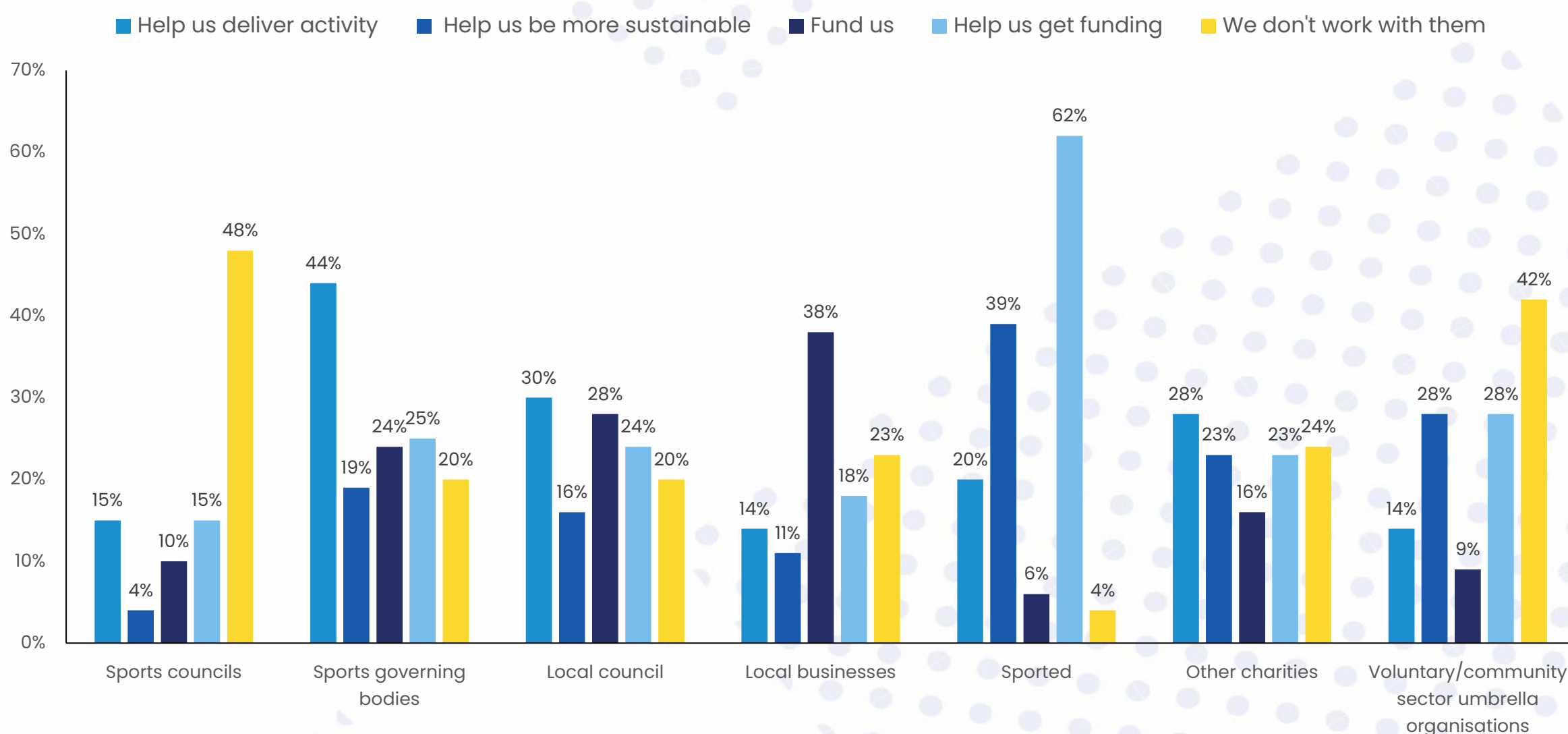
Groups' relationships to other organisations

Nearly half of groups told us that **they don't work with sports councils** (48%), while sports governing bodies are most likely to support groups **in helping deliver activities** (44%).

Nearly a third of respondents are supported in **delivery activities** by councils (30%). Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported **Sported helps them get funding** (62%).

Just over a quarter are **supported by other charities in delivering activities** (28%), though most groups **don't work with voluntary/community sector umbrella organisations** (42%).

Relationships with other organisations



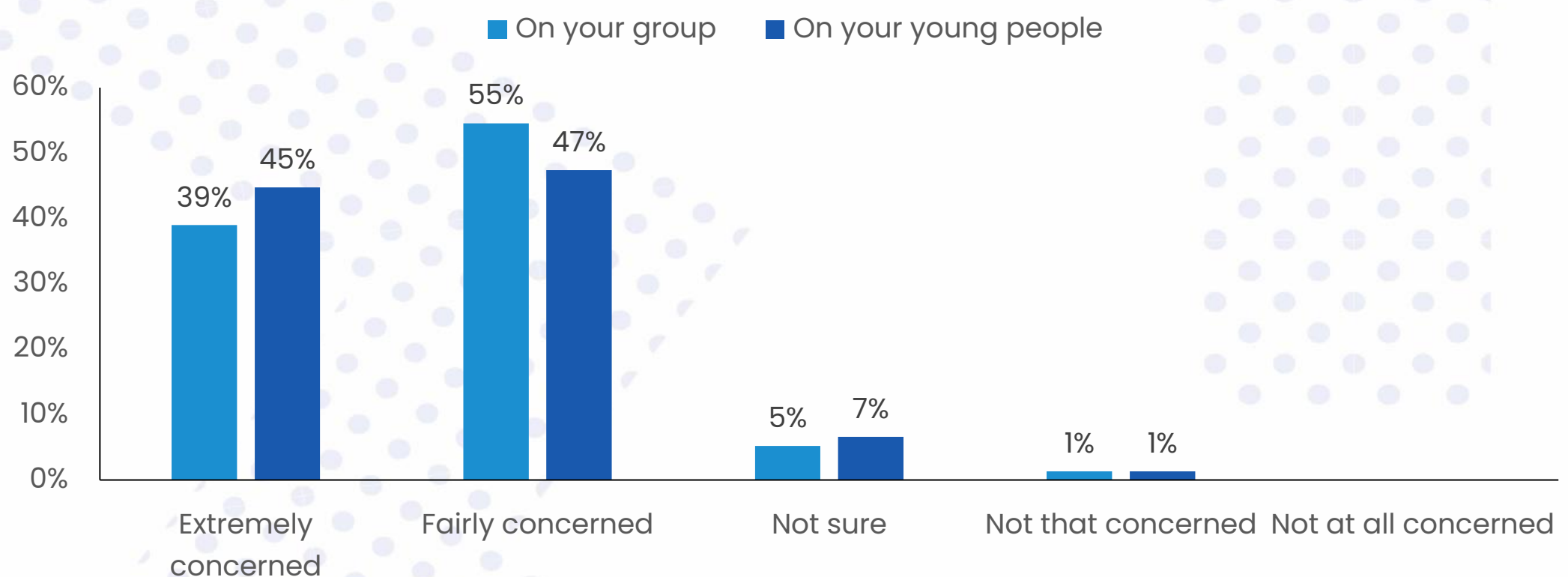
Cost-of-living increases

Impact on groups and their young people

More than 90% of respondents are concerned about the impact of cost-of-living increases on their group and on their young people. 94% are either extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their group, with 92% concerned for their young people.

This level of **concern is similar to our September 2022 Pulse**, where 98% of respondents were concerned about the impact on their group and 99% for their young people.

Concern about the impact of cost-of-living increases

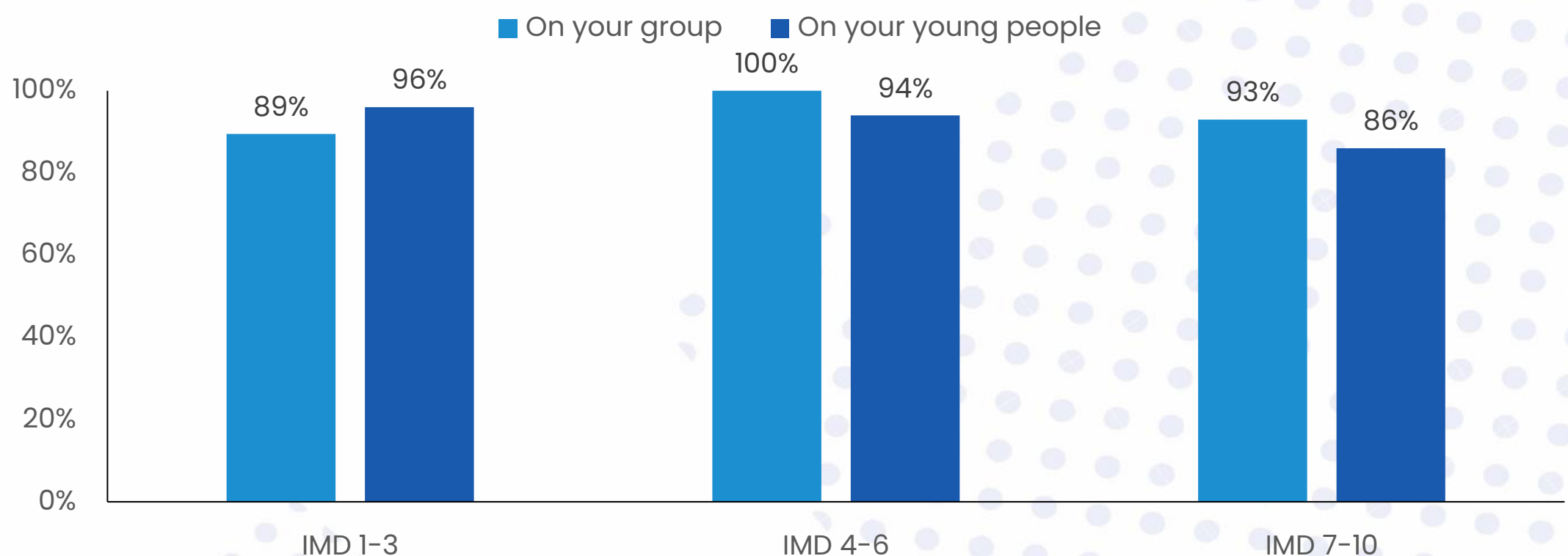


Impact on groups and their young people by IMD

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

The highest concern for the impact on young people is felt by those groups working in the **lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation.**

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

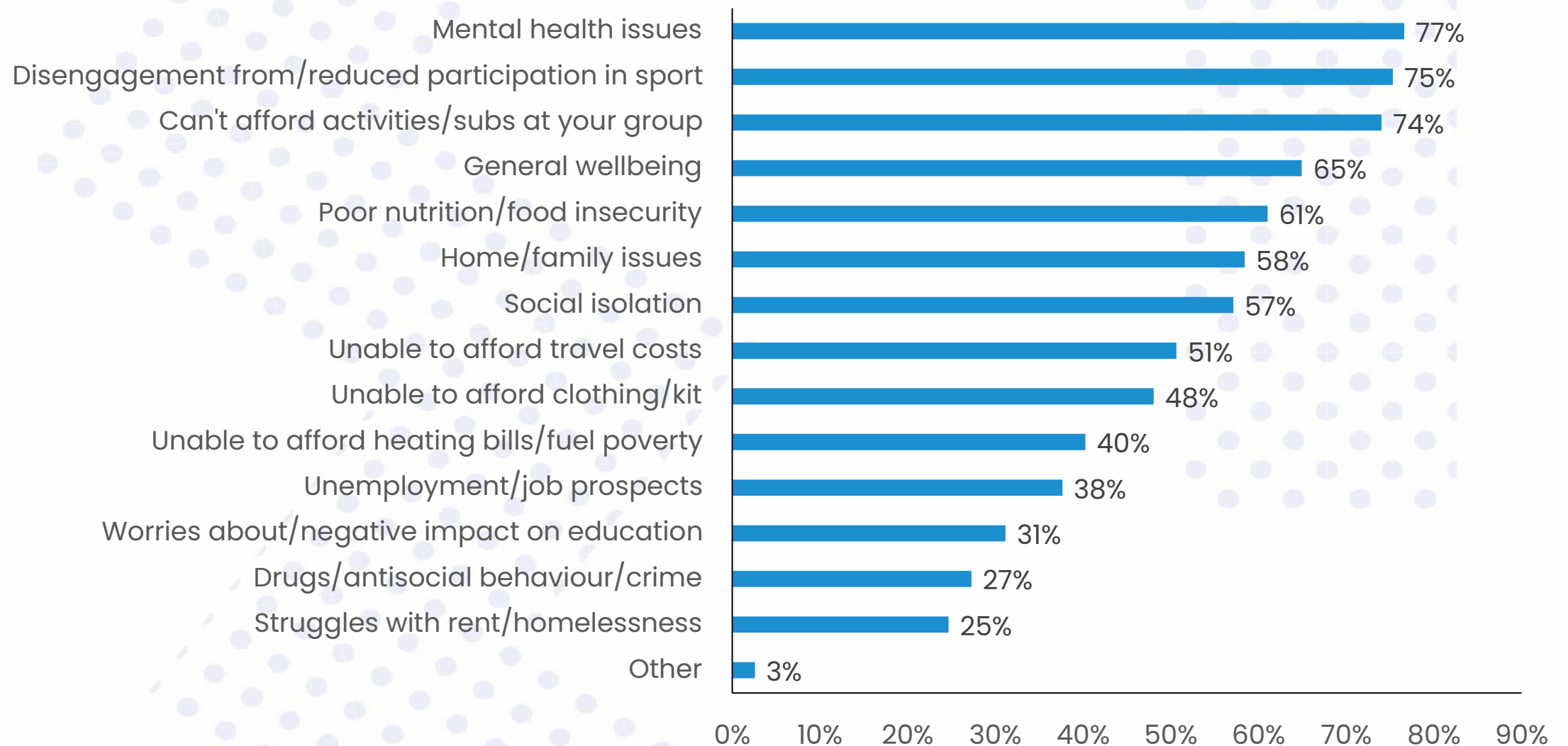


Cost-of-living increases

Impact on young people

Asked to outline concerns about cost-of-living increases on their young people, group leaders identified **mental health issues** as their most common concern (77%). Similar numbers reported concerns around **disengagement from/reduced participation in sport** (75%) and **young people not being able to afford activities/subs at their group** (74%).

Impact on young people

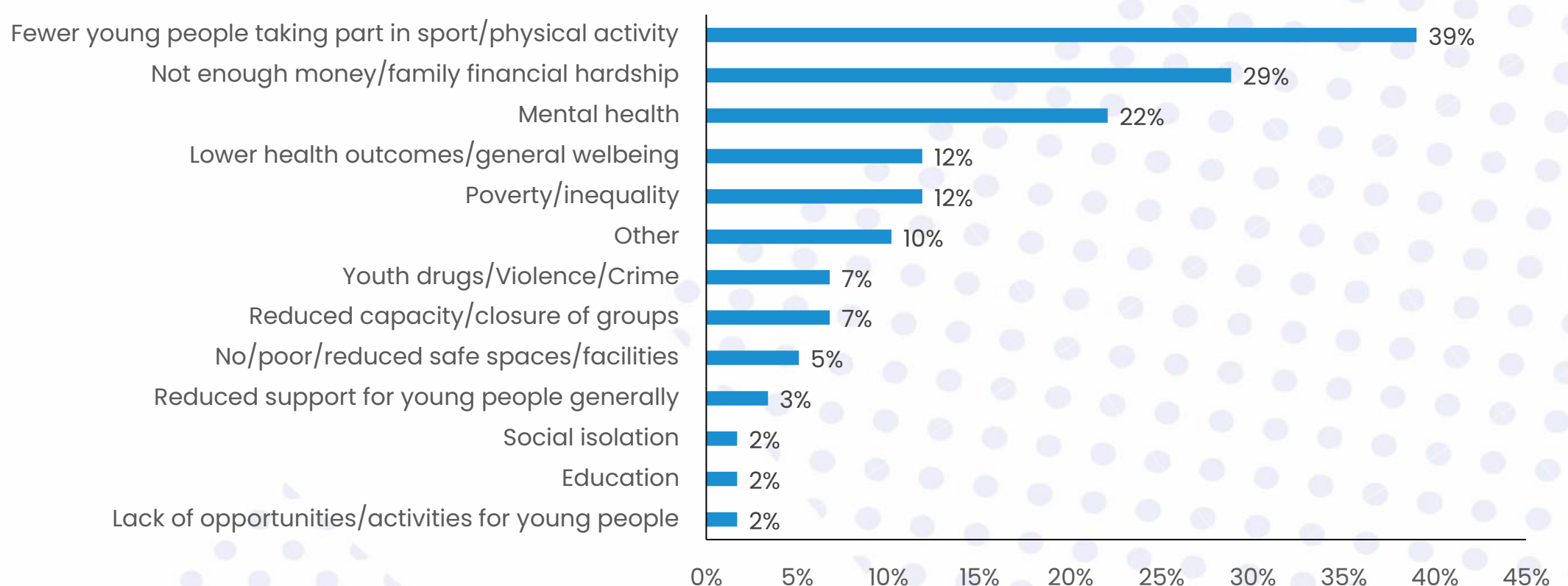


Impact on communities

Thinking about the longer-term impact of cost-of-living increases on the communities they work in, respondents identified **fewer young people taking part in sport/physical activity** as the most likely consequence (39%).

More than quarter told us young people and their families would **not have enough money/face financial hardship** (22% each).

Impact on communities in the longer-term



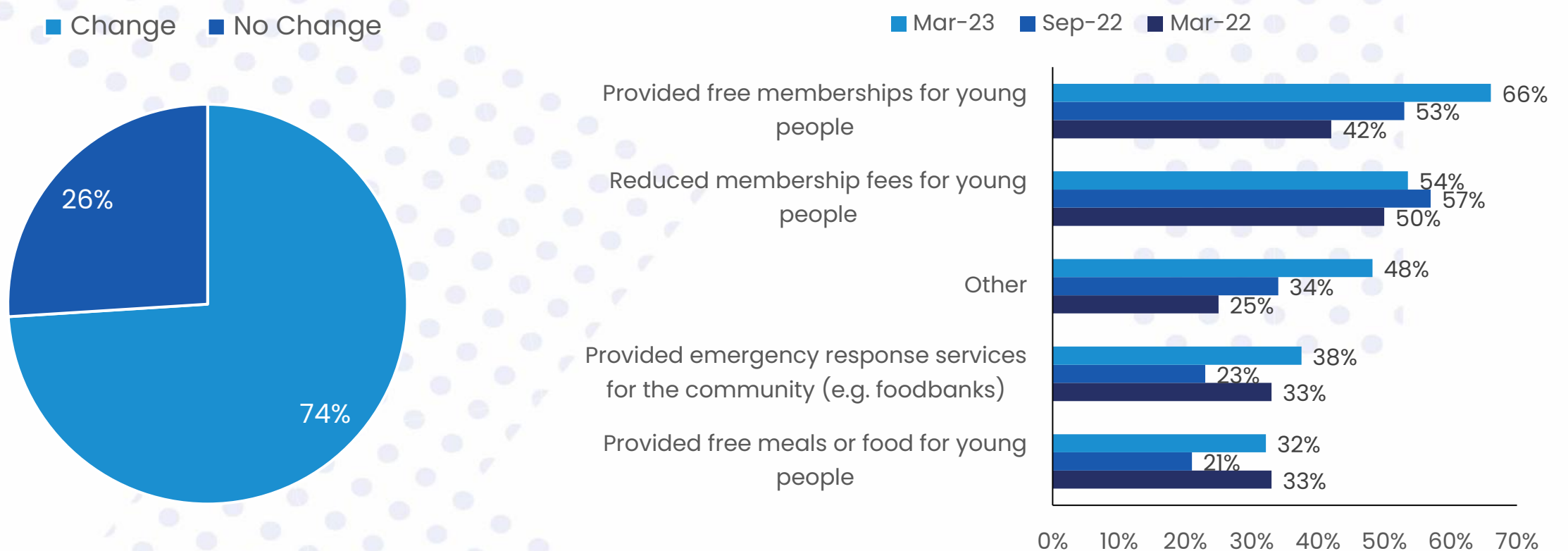
Cost-of-living increases

Groups' responses to the increases

Three-quarters (74%) have responded to cost-of-living increases by making a change to their operation. This is almost identical to our September Pulse, when 77% of respondents indicated they'd made a change.

More groups are now providing free memberships for young people than six months ago, with two-thirds doing this (66%) compared with just over half (53%) in September. Around half have reduced fees for their young people (54%), a similar proportion to six months ago.

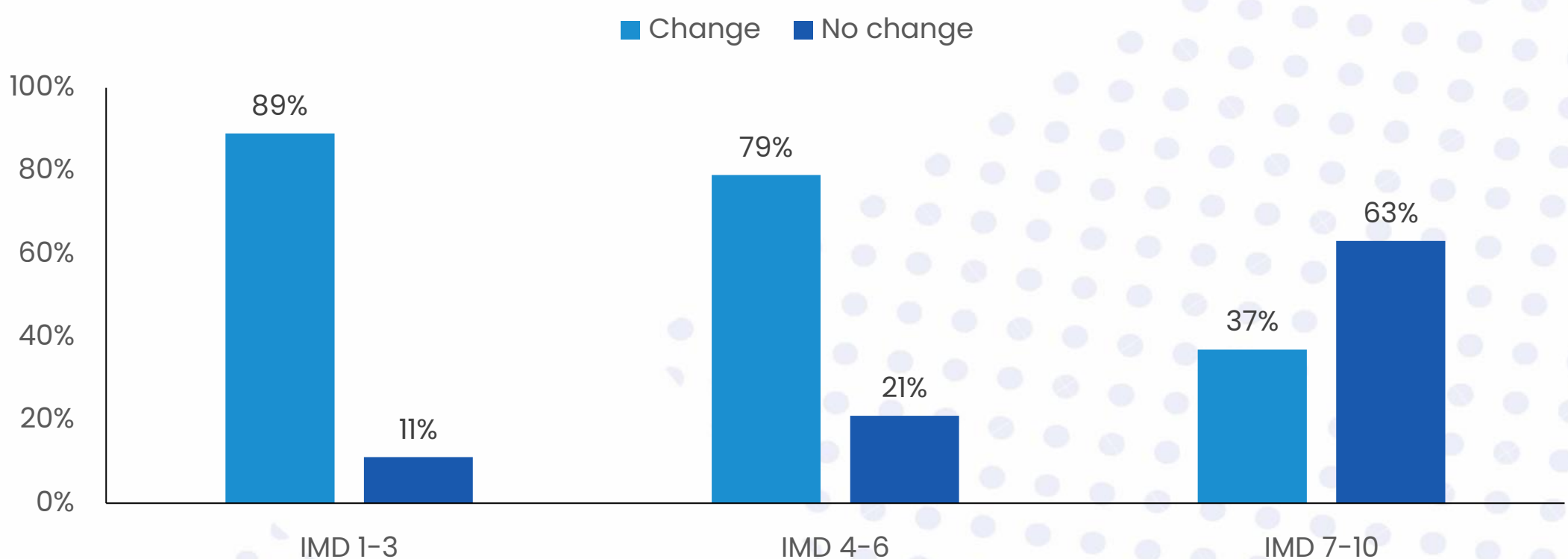
Changes made in response to cost-of-living increases



Groups' responses to the increases by IMD

Groups were more likely to have made a change in response to cost-of-living increases when based in areas of greater relative deprivation.

Changes made by IMD



Cost-of-living increases

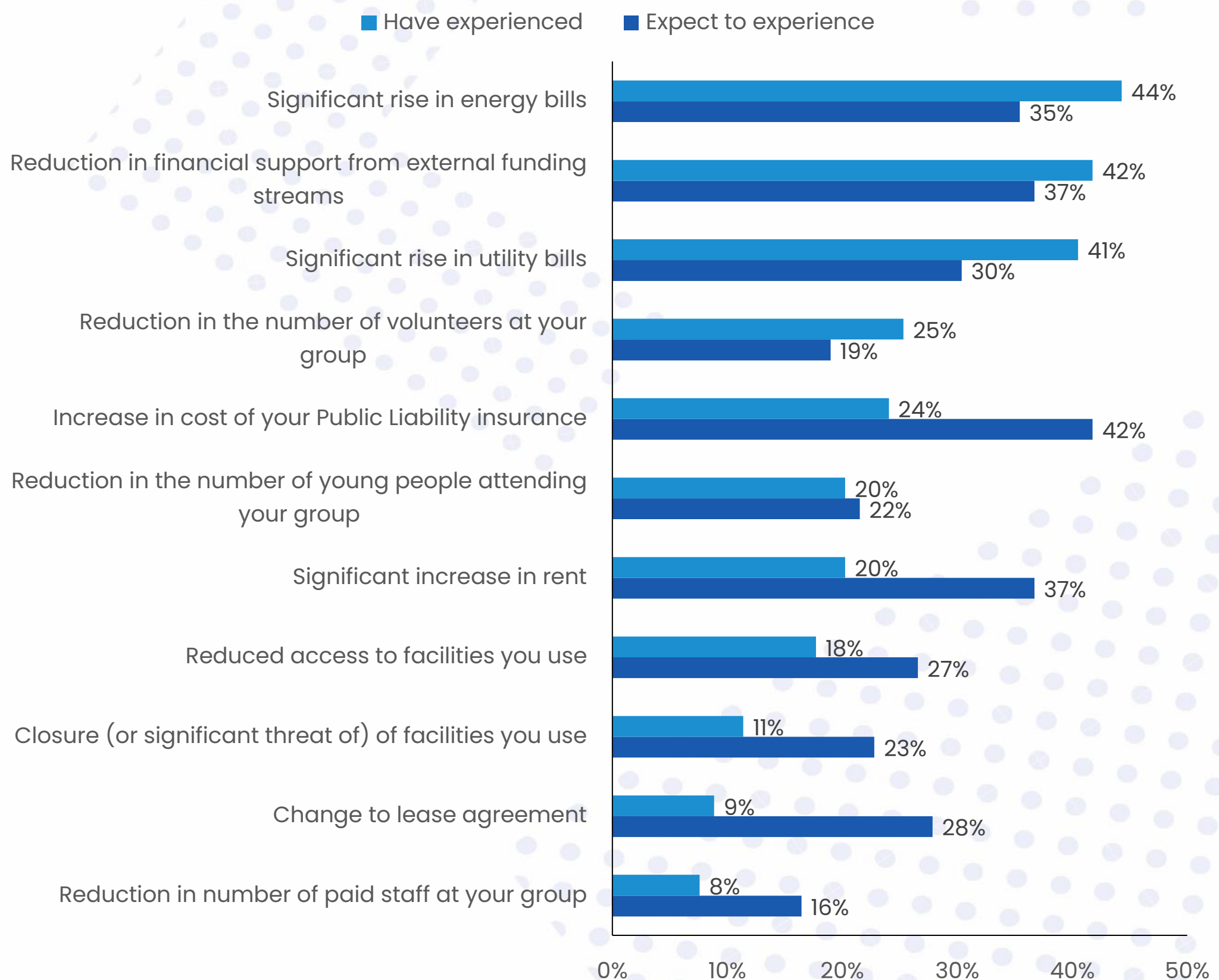
Issues experienced and expected

The most common experiences for groups over the last six months have been **a significant rise in energy bills (44%)**, a **reduction in financial support from external funding streams (42%)**, and a **significant rise in utility bills (41%)**.

Nearly half of groups expect to experience **increases in the cost of Public Liability insurance (42%)** over the next six months. Just over a third expect a **significant increase in rent (37%)**, with the same proportion predicting a **reduction in financial support from external funding streams (37%)**.

The expected increase in Public Liability Insurance is significant because groups need this insurance to protect them from personal injury or property damage claims, and it can protect Trustees/committee members from paying any of these claims directly

Issues experienced (in the last six months/expected in the next six months)



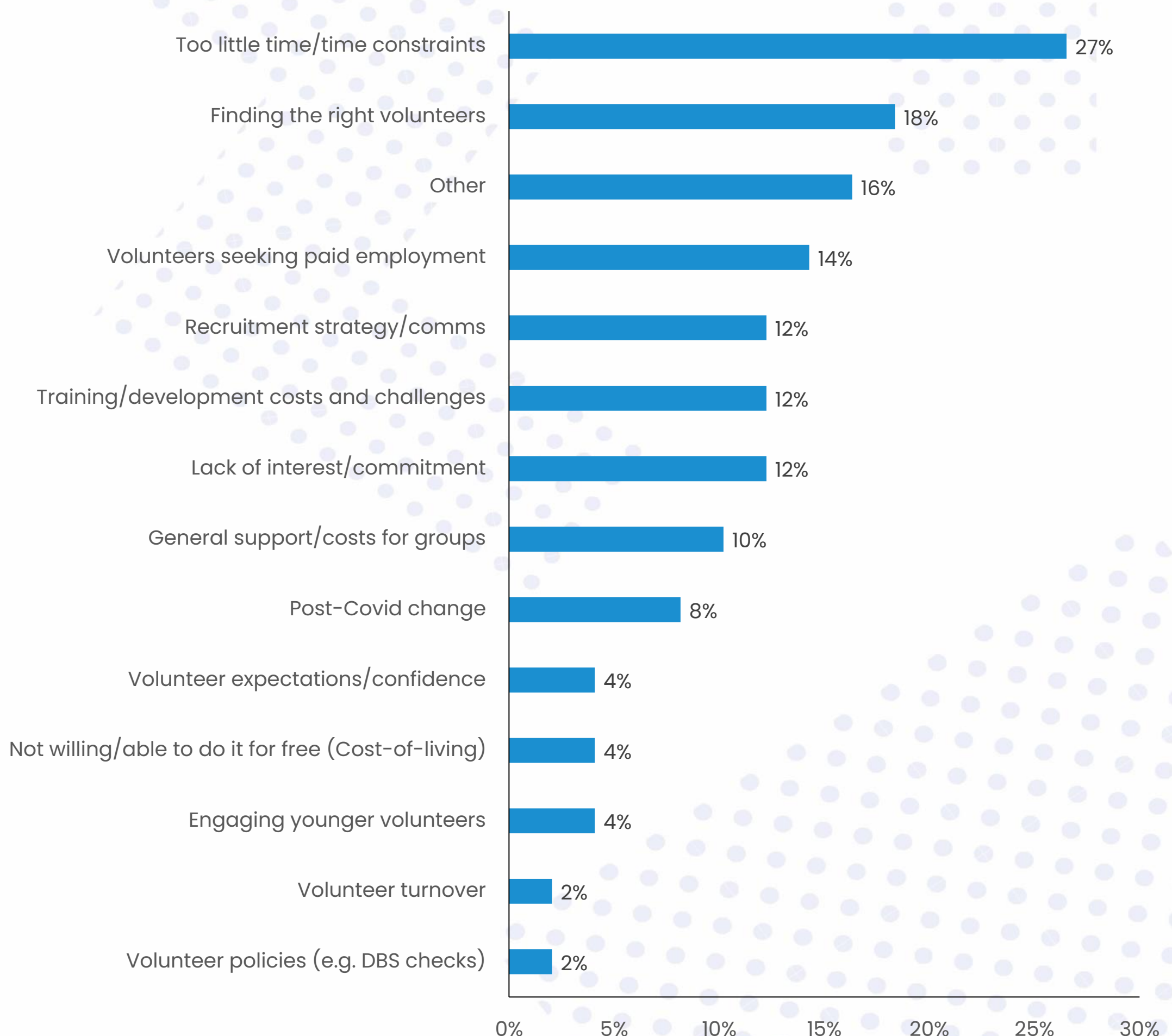
Cost-of-living increases

Recruiting/retaining volunteers

The most commonly cited challenges around volunteer recruitment/retention are volunteers **not having enough time** (27%) and groups struggling to **find the right volunteers** (18%). Respondents also identified challenges with **volunteers seeking paid employment** (14%) as an issue.

Effective **recruitment strategy/communications** (12%), **training/development costs and challenges** (12%), and **a lack of interest/commitment** from volunteers (12%) were also picked out by several respondents as particular issues.

Challenges in recruiting/retaining volunteers



Our response

What we're doing in response to Pulse

- Continuing to focus on securing grant income and other direct support for groups most impacted by cost of living increases.
- Exploring further partnerships and funding opportunities relating to mental health of young people.
- Follow up support calls from the Sported field team relating to answers in the Pulse where groups need direct support.
- Additional follow up calls to understand more from members seeking to engage new participants, and those expecting increases in Public Liability Insurance costs.
- Compiled resources, training and toolkits, as well as links to specialist support within our Hub, to help group leaders tackle mental health challenges amongst their staff, volunteers and young people.
- Planning a series of webinars focused around areas of need identified through the Pulse.

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 limiting access to activity and support to young people with the greatest need.

Groups are experiencing significant increases in bills, reduced support from external funders, and a drop in participation levels – they urgently need 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.

Deploying our research to reach a media and policy audience, Sported has continued to run our Keep The Doors Open campaign to push for change based on the issues raised in the survey. As well as numerous discussions with government and others in the political sphere, the data leveraged coverage in the media through outlets including BBC, ITV, The Guardian and The Sun during the past few months. Our campaign stressed the need for support and action so that these groups survived 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

