

**Community  
Pulse** 

**May 2023  
Wales**



**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 **48 responses** between **13 – 22 March 2023** from Sported groups in Wales. Of these, 52% of responses were from groups in the lowest 30% areas of multiple deprivation.

**48**  
**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

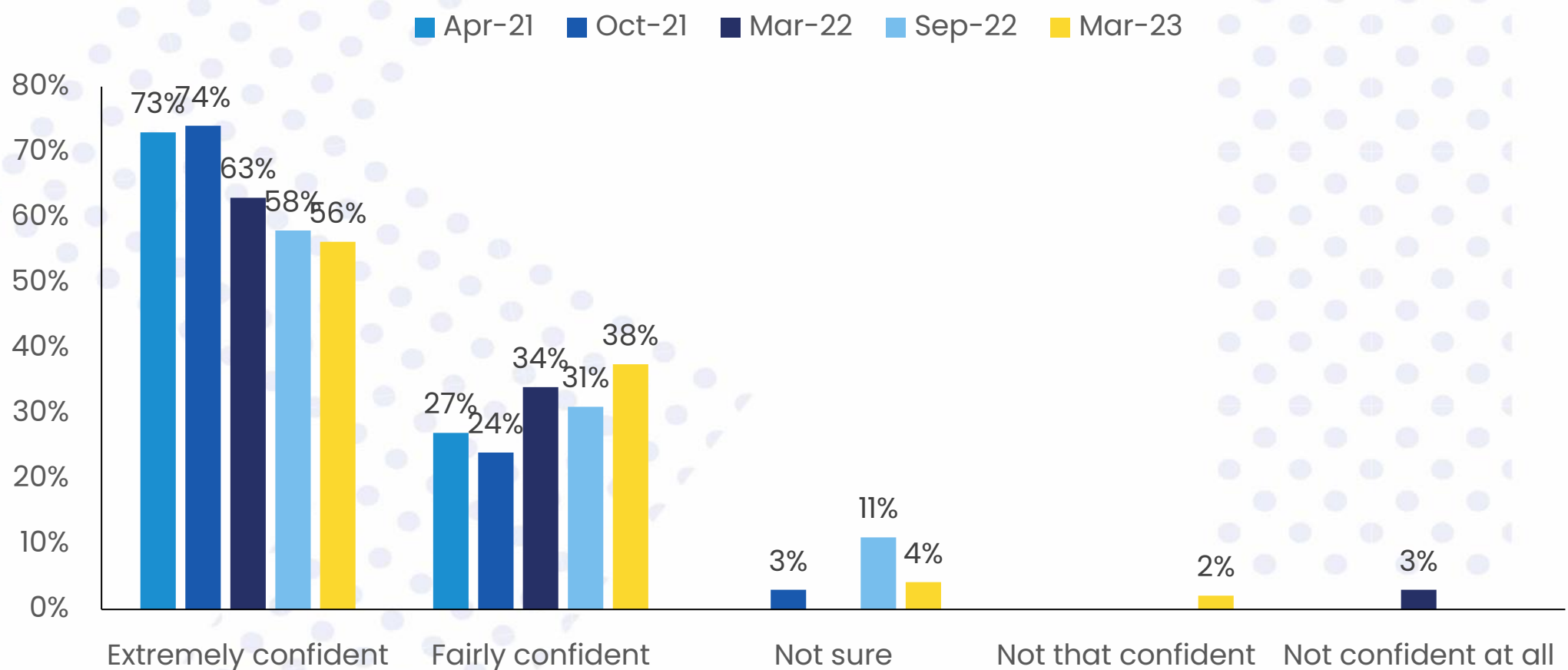
- **Concern about the impact of cost-of-living pressures continues to be very high, with 93% either extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their group and 91% concerned for their young people.**
- The most common concerns around the impact of cost-of-living increases on young people are participants **not being able to afford activities/subs at their groups** (74%) and **disengagement from/reduced participation in sport** (74%).
- **Young people's mental health** continues to be scored lower than their own by group leaders, with around a third of respondents telling us they are **only just about coping in supporting their staff/volunteers' 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 nearly half (49%) telling us this is an issue.
- **Significant rises in utility and energy bills** have 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.
- **Around three-quarters of respondents (76%)** said their group **has made a change in response to cost-of-living increases** – with nearly twice as many groups now **providing free memberships** compared to six months ago.
- **Securing funding** continues to be the most-reported priority for the next six months, as it was in September.
- More than three-quarters of groups say **they play a significant role (vital or big) in building a stronger sense of community** in their local area (82%).
- **Groups' relationships with other organisations are varied** in terms of support for delivery, funding, and sustainability, though significant minorities of groups don't work with local councils, charities outside Sported, and/or voluntary/community sector umbrella organisations.

# Survival and priorities

## Organisational survival

**Confidence in organisational survival is high, and at a level similar to six months ago.** 94% of groups are confident (extremely or fairly) in their survival, compared with 89% six months ago.

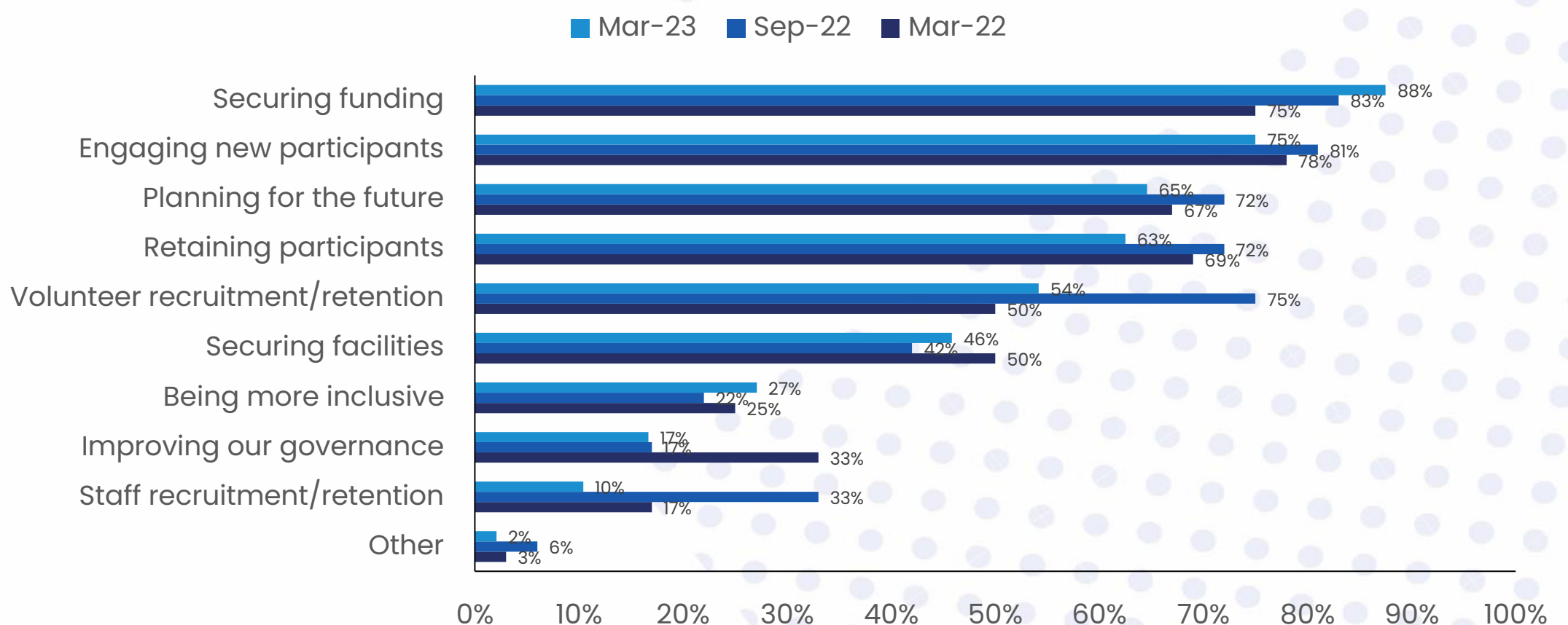
### Confidence in organisational survival in the next six months



## Top priorities over the next six months

**Securing funding remains the most common priority for groups over the next six months,** with 88% of groups identifying this as key issue. This is a similar proportion to our September 2022 Pulse. While over half of respondents identified volunteer recruitment/retention as a priority, this is noticeably reduced since September when three-quarters said it was a focus for the next six months.

### Groups' priorities over the next six months

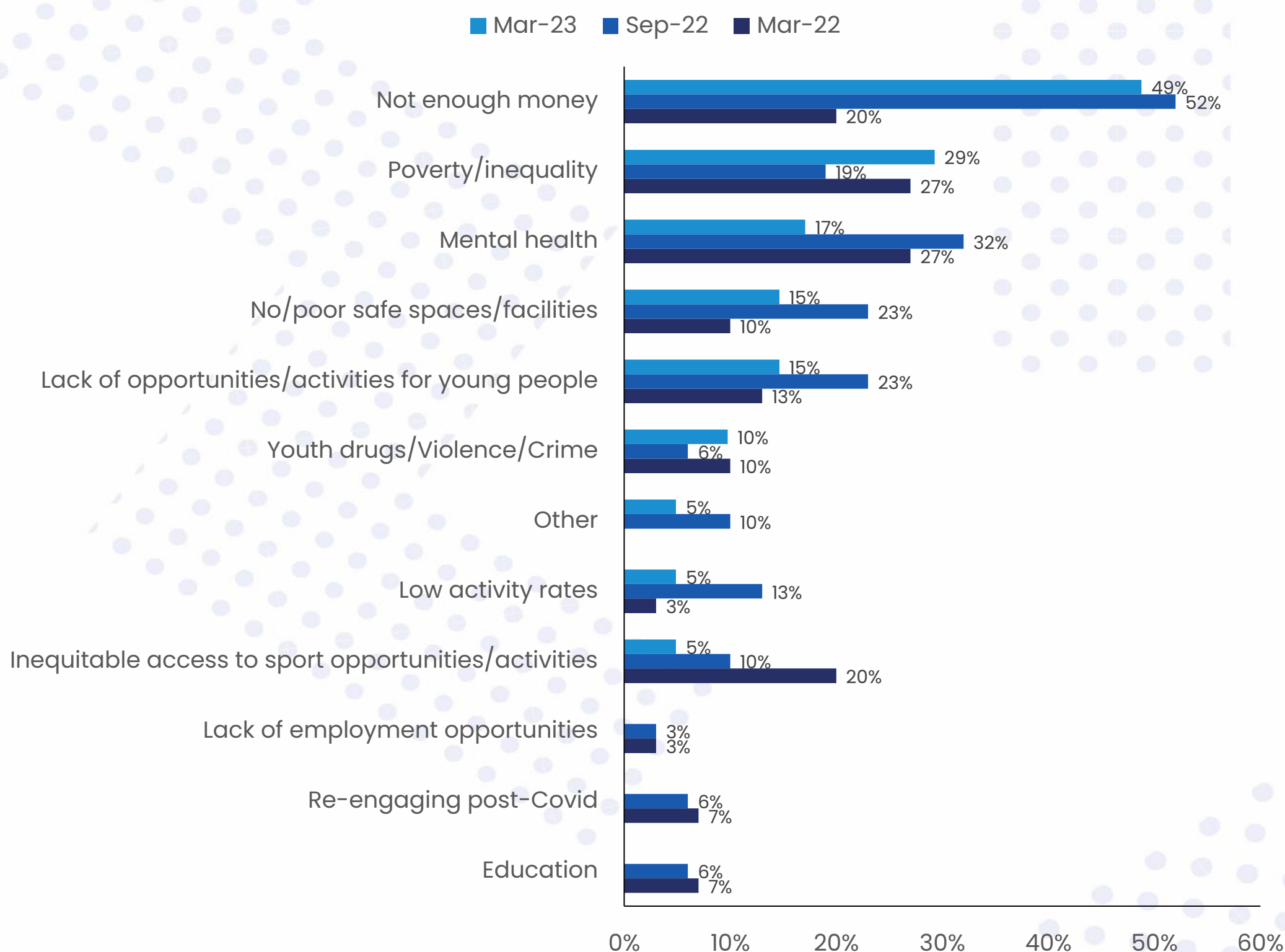


# Challenges for young people

**Concerns around young people not having enough money remain high.** Referring to answers centred on the cost-of-living crisis and immediate economic hardship, nearly half of respondents (49%) said this was a challenge for their young people. This is at a level similar to our September 2022 Pulse, when 52% saw this as an issue.

Concerns around **poverty/inequality** (29%), which covers long-term socio-economic deprivation (including cost-of-living impact), and **mental health** (17%) also continue to be commonly cited challenges.

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



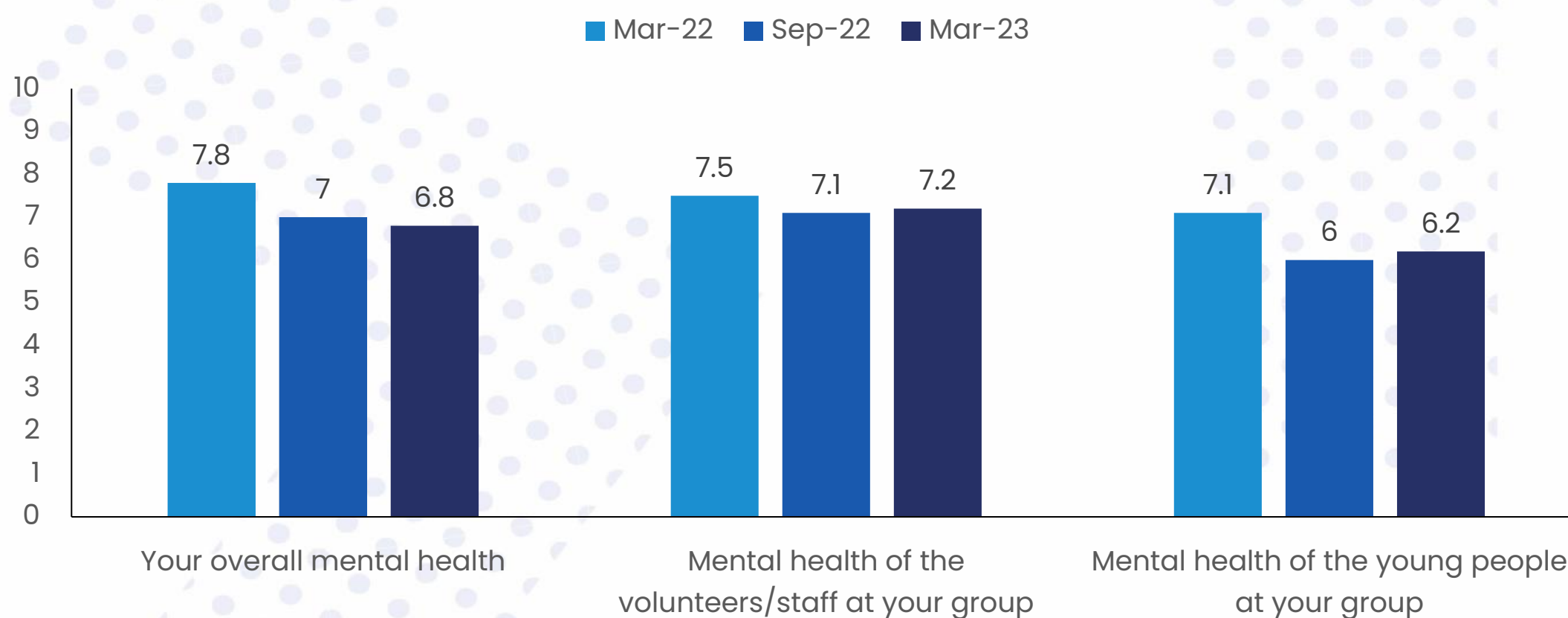
- 'In our rural area financial pressure, being able to access sport, practices and league matches e.g. travelling 3 hour round trips to attend a match. Also the availability of surfaces, which tend to be old and poor quality in rural areas.' – survey respondent
- 'Access to opportunities and continued access to services that offer physical, emotional and well being support.' – survey respondent
- 'Poor physical and mental health, social and economic hardship and weak social relationships with the wider community.' – survey respondent

# Mental health

## Leaders, staff/volunteers, and young people

Respondents reported **lower scores for their young people's mental health** (6.2 out of 10) in comparison to their own (6.8) and their volunteers/staff (7.2).

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

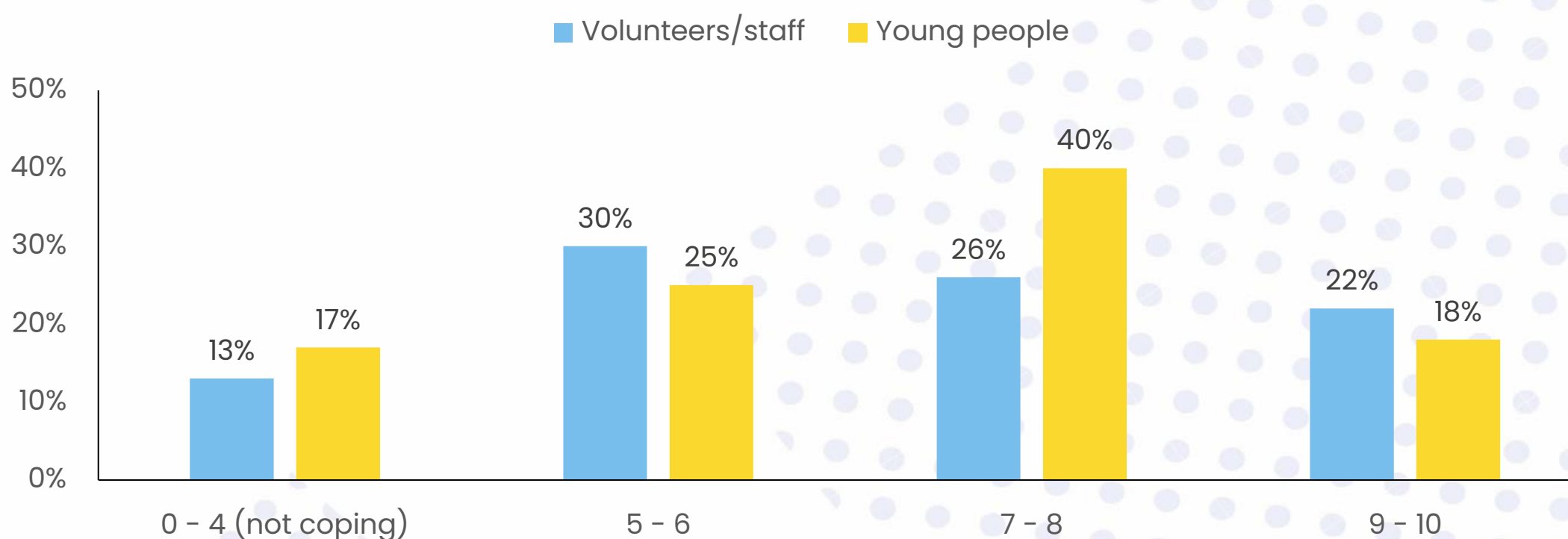


## Capacity to support mental health

**Nearly half of groups (48%) reported a score of 7 (out of 10) or above for their capacity to support the mental health of their volunteers/staff. Just over half (58%) scored 7 or above for capacity to support their young people's mental health.**

However, around a third (30%) are only just about coping (5-6, out of 10) in supporting their volunteers/staff with their mental wellbeing. A quarter (25%) said the same regarding supporting their young people's mental health.

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

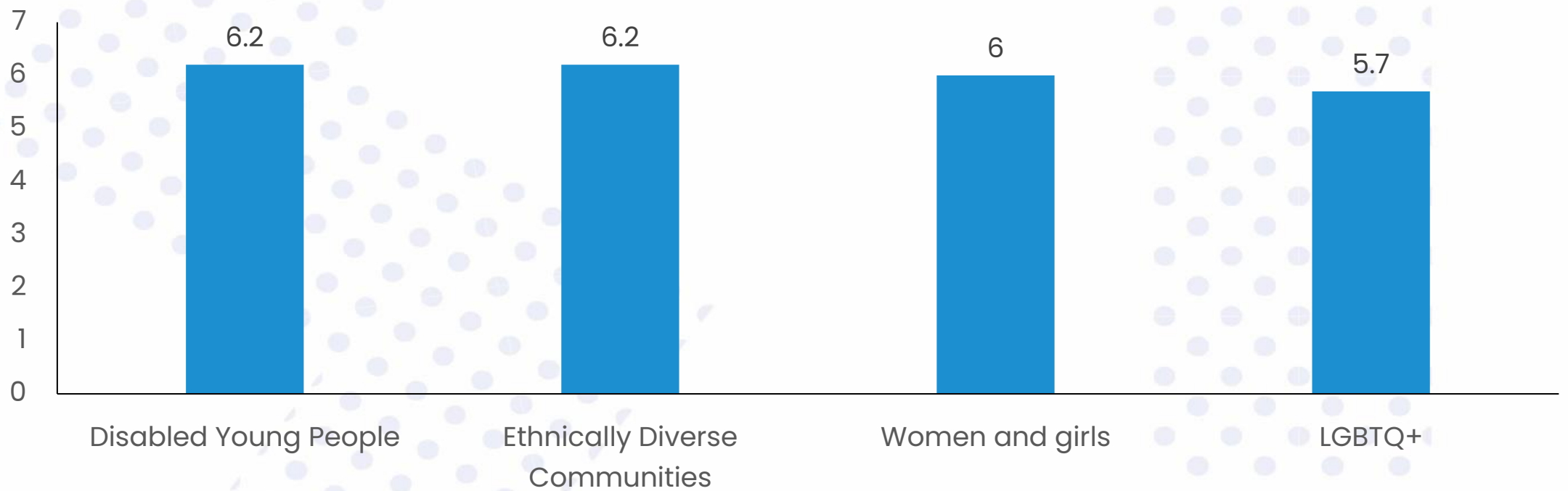


# Tackling inequalities

## The significance of inequalities experienced in communities

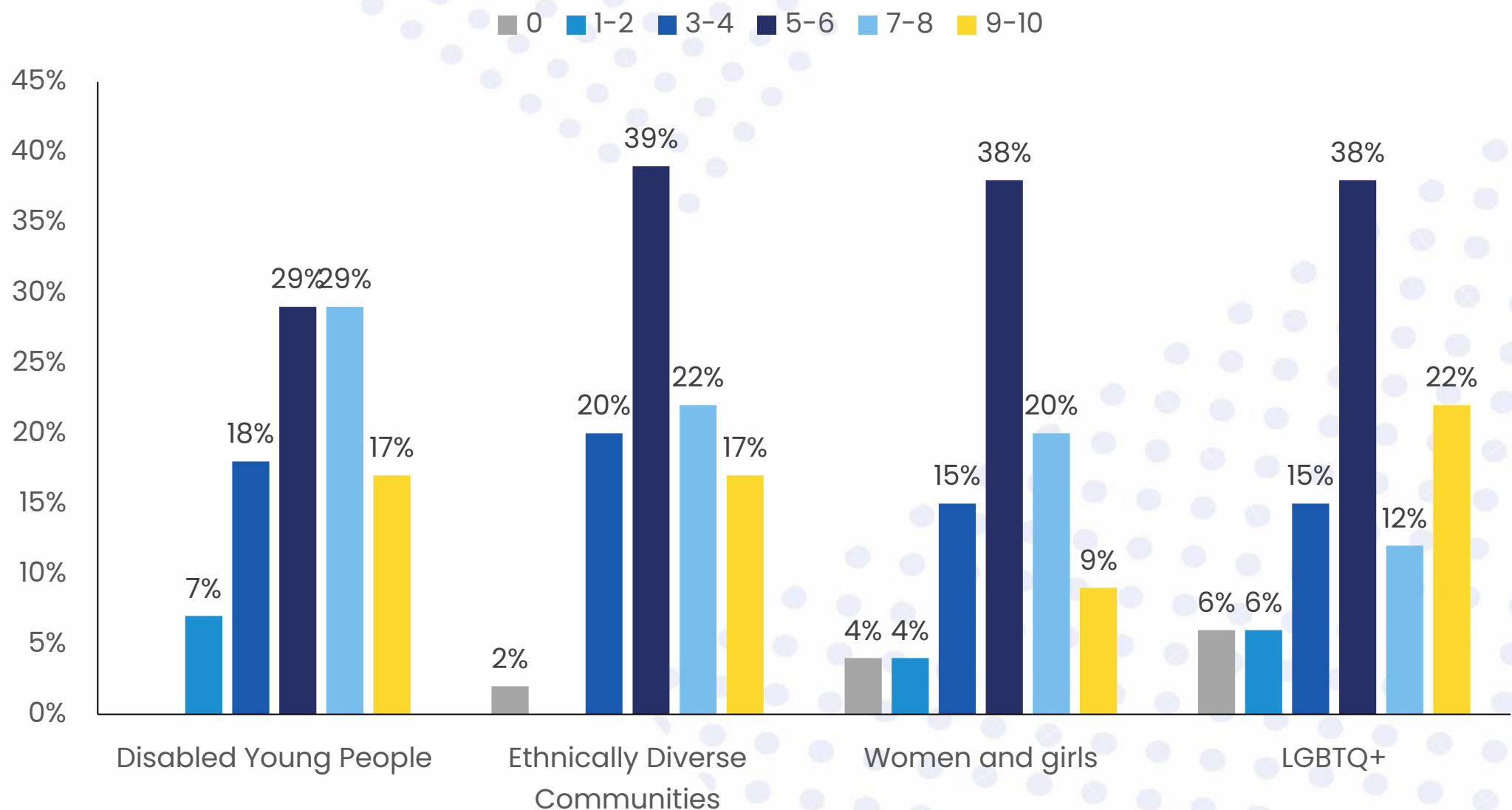
Group leaders identified **inequalities experienced by Disabled Young People** and **Ethnically Diverse Communities** within their communities as most significant, with an average score of 6.2 (out of 10).

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



Leaders told us the most acute inequality (9-10) is experienced by LGBTQ+ communities, with nearly a quarter (22%) scoring it in this range.

### Significance of inequalities within groups' communities – score distribution

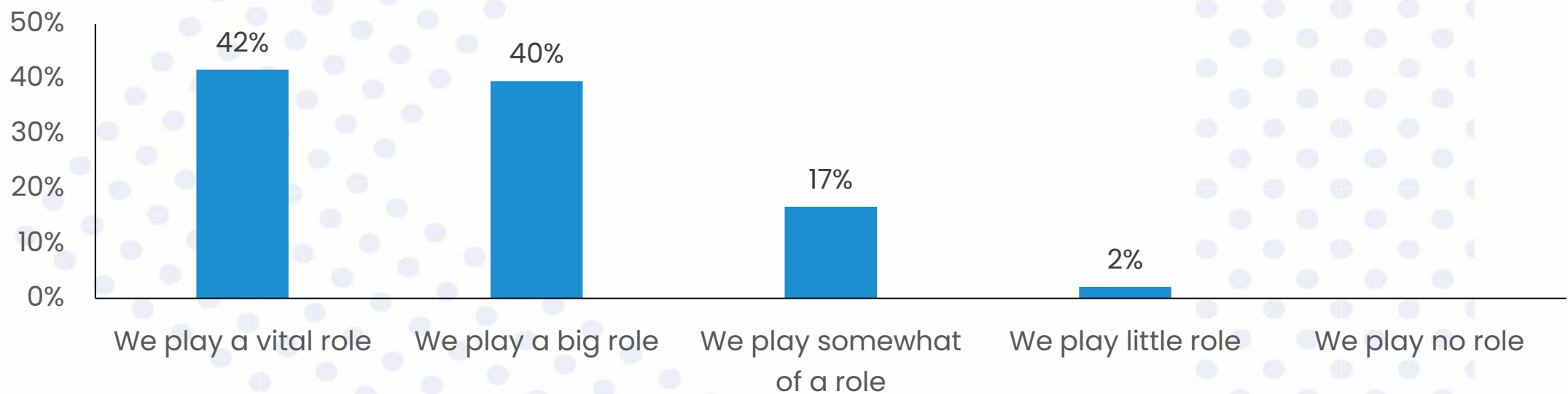


# Connecting communities

## Building communities

More than three-quarters of groups say **they play a significant role (vital or big) in building a stronger sense of community** in their local area (82%).

Building a stronger sense of community in groups' local area



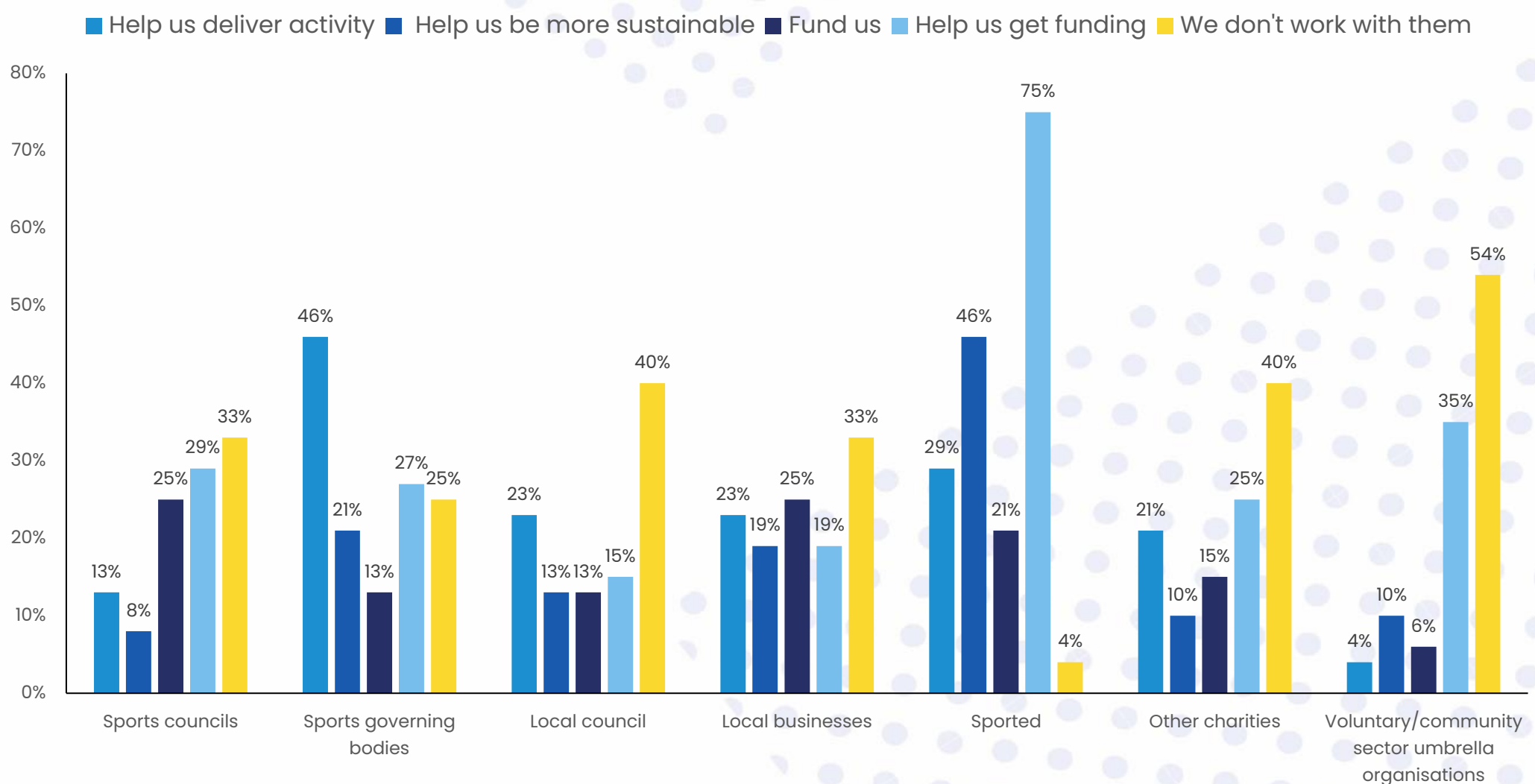
## Groups' relationships to other organisations

A third of groups told us that **they don't work with sports councils** (33%), while sports governing bodies are most likely to support groups **in helping deliver activities** (46%).

Nearly half of respondents **don't work with their local council** (40%) and a third **don't work with local businesses** (33%).

Three-quarters of groups told us that Sported helps them get funding (75%), though 40% **don't work with charities outside Sported**. Just over half **don't work with voluntary/community sector umbrella organisations** (54%).

Relationships with other organisations





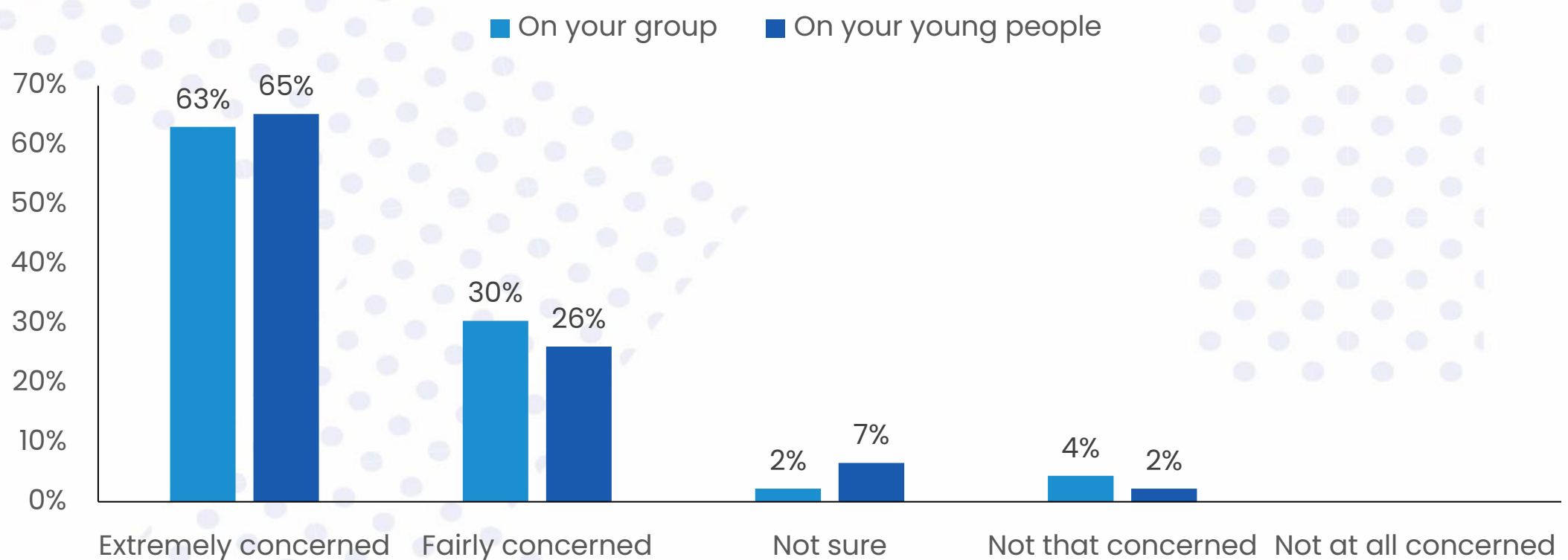
# Cost-of-living increases

## 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. 93% are either extremely or fairly concerned about the impact on their group, with 91% concerned for their young people.

This level of concern is similar to our September 2022 Pulse, where 95% of respondents were concerned about the impact on their group and 92% for their young people.

### Concern about the impact of cost-of-living increases

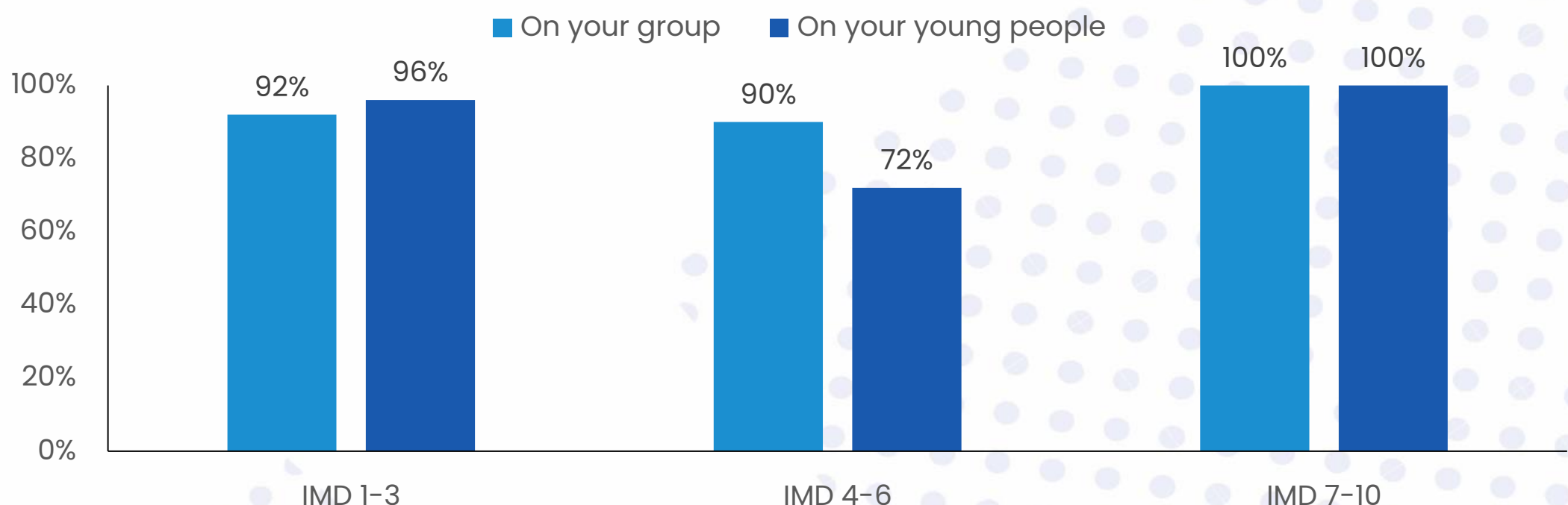


## Impact on groups and their young people by IMD

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

It is highest amongst those groups working in the highest 40% areas of multiple deprivation.

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

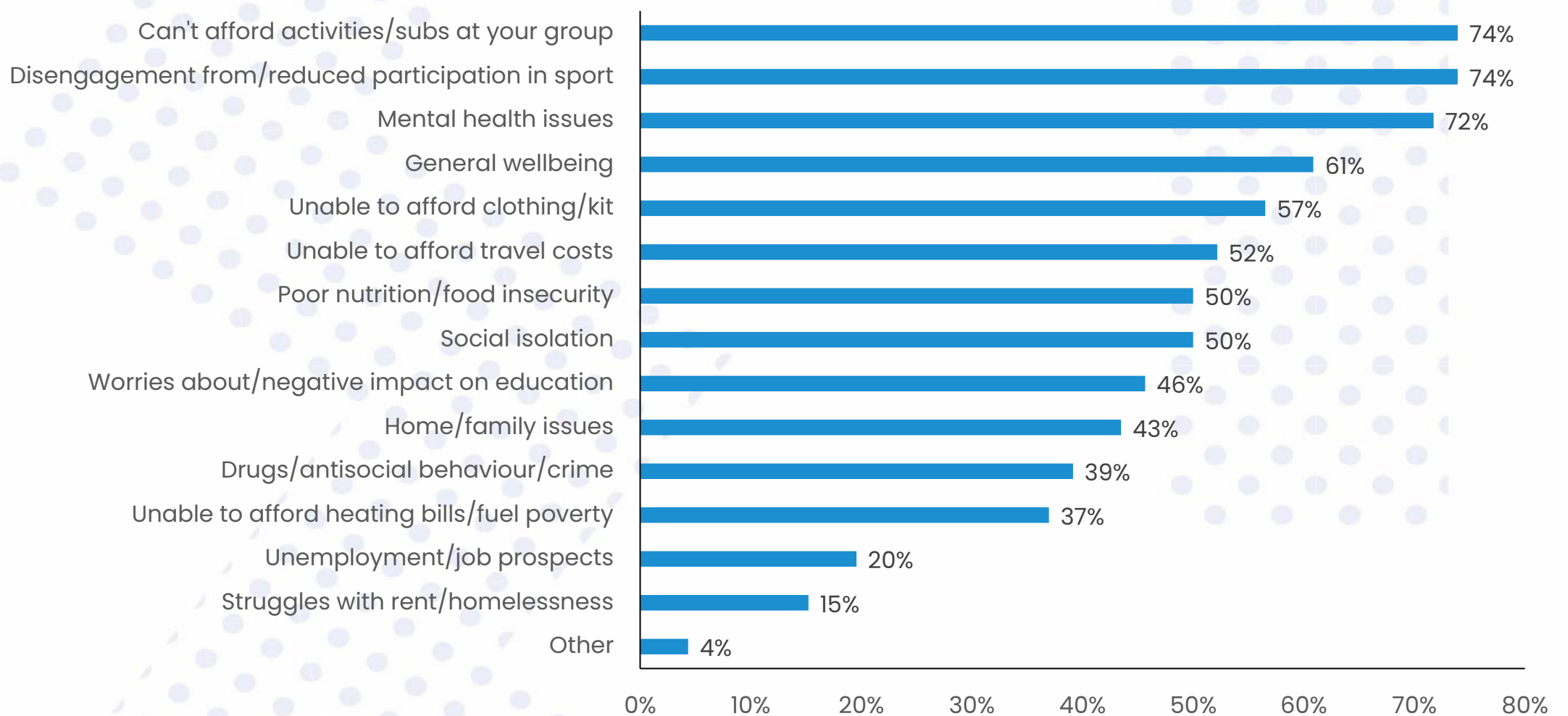


# Cost-of-living increases

## Impact on young people

Asked to outline concerns about cost-of-living increases on their young people, group leaders identified being **unable to afford activities/subs at their groups** (74%) and **disengagement from/reduced participation in sport** (74%) as the most common impacts. A similar proportion told us that they worried for their **young people's mental health** (72%).

### Impact on young people

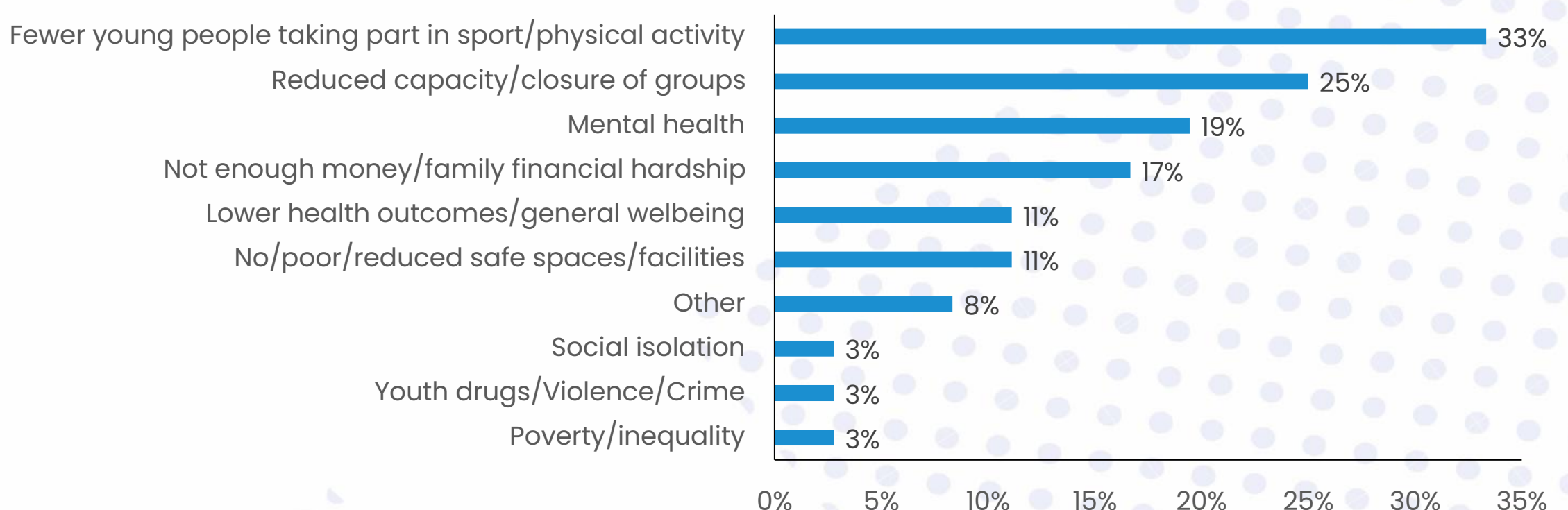


## Impact on communities

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 (33%).

A quarter said they believed **groups would have reduced capacity/have to close** (25%).

### Impact on communities in the longer-term



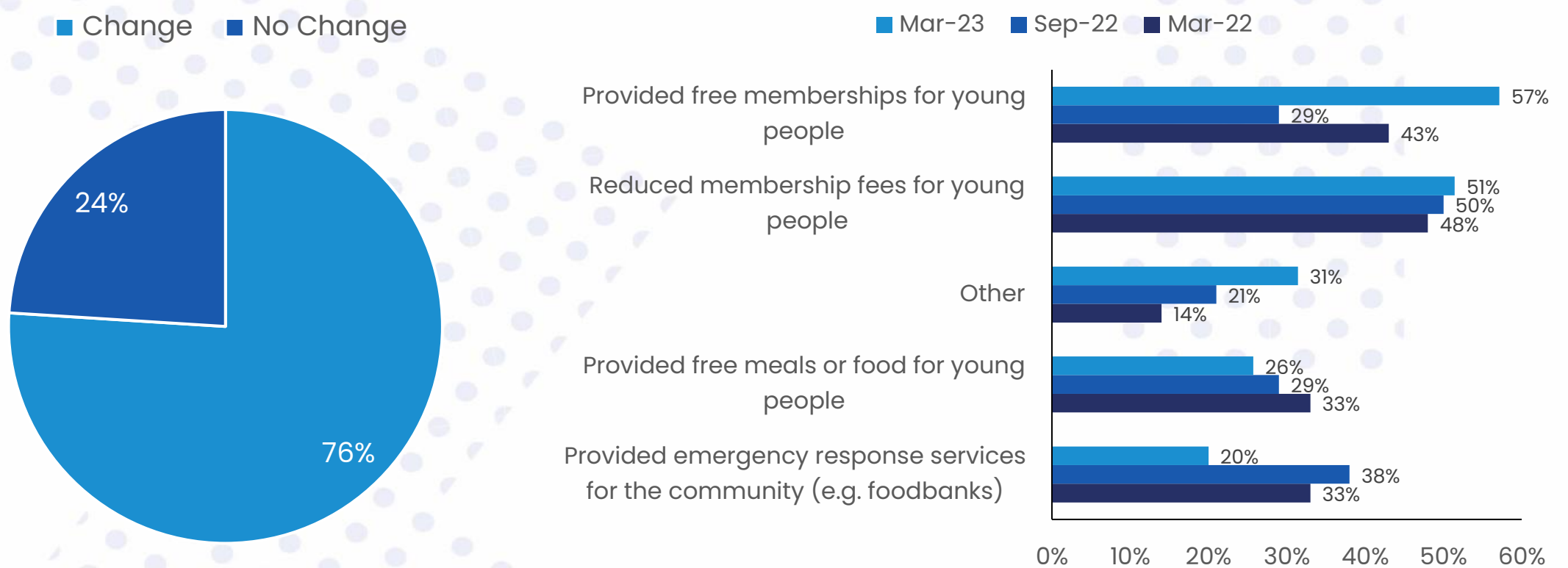
# Cost-of-living increases

## Groups' responses to the increases

Three-quarters of groups (76%) have responded to cost-of-living increases by making a change to their operation. This is a small increase from our September Pulse, when 67% of respondents indicated they'd made a change.

The most frequently made change has been to **provide free memberships for their young people (57%)**. This is twice as many groups compared with September (29%). Around a half have **reduced fees for their young people (51%)**, a similar proportion to six months ago.

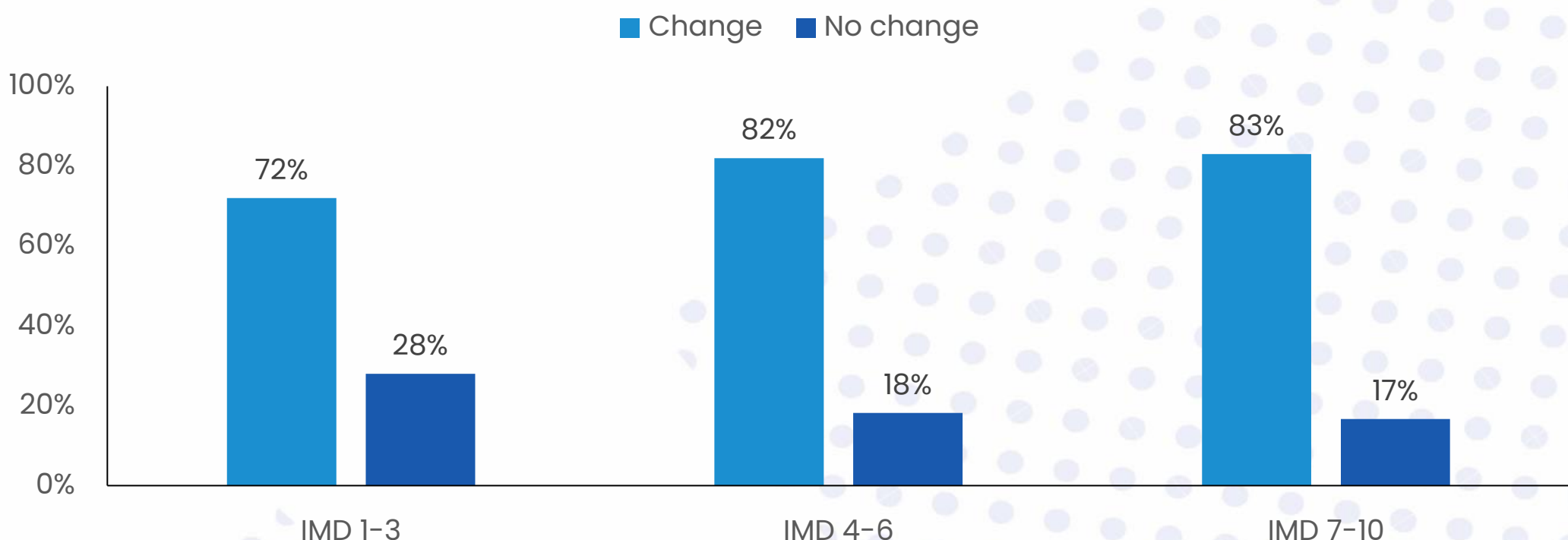
### Changes made in response to cost-of-living increases



## 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 the highest 60% areas of multiple deprivation.

### Changes made by IMD



# Cost-of-living increases

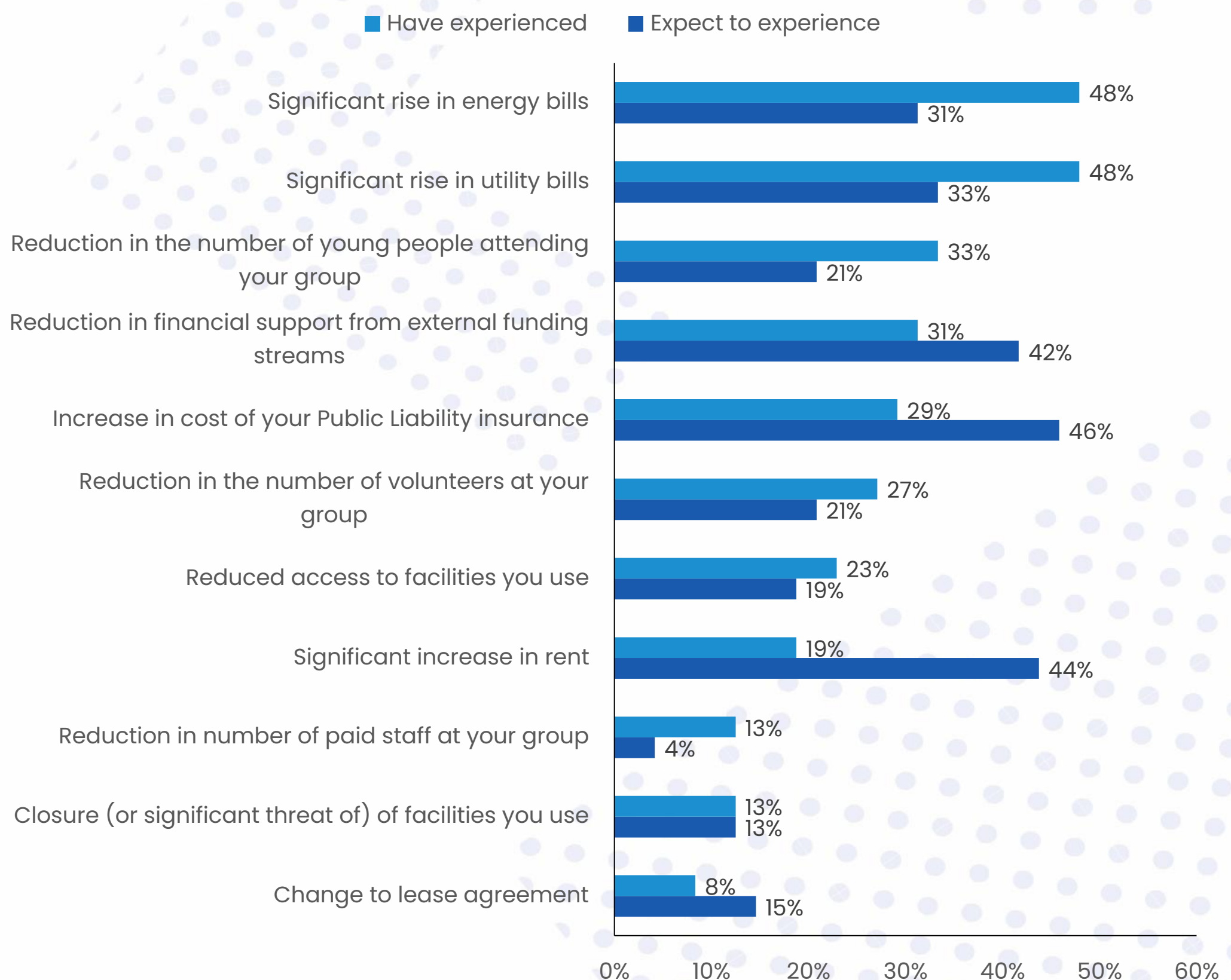
## Issues experienced and expected

The most common experiences for groups over the last six months have been **a significant rise in energy bills (48%)**, a **significant rise in utility bills (48%)**, and a **reduction in young people attending their group (33%)**.

Nearly half of groups expect to experience **increases in the cost of Public Liability insurance (46%)** over the next six months. Similar numbers of groups expect a **significant increase in rent (44%)** and a **reduction in financial support from external funding streams (42%)**.

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)



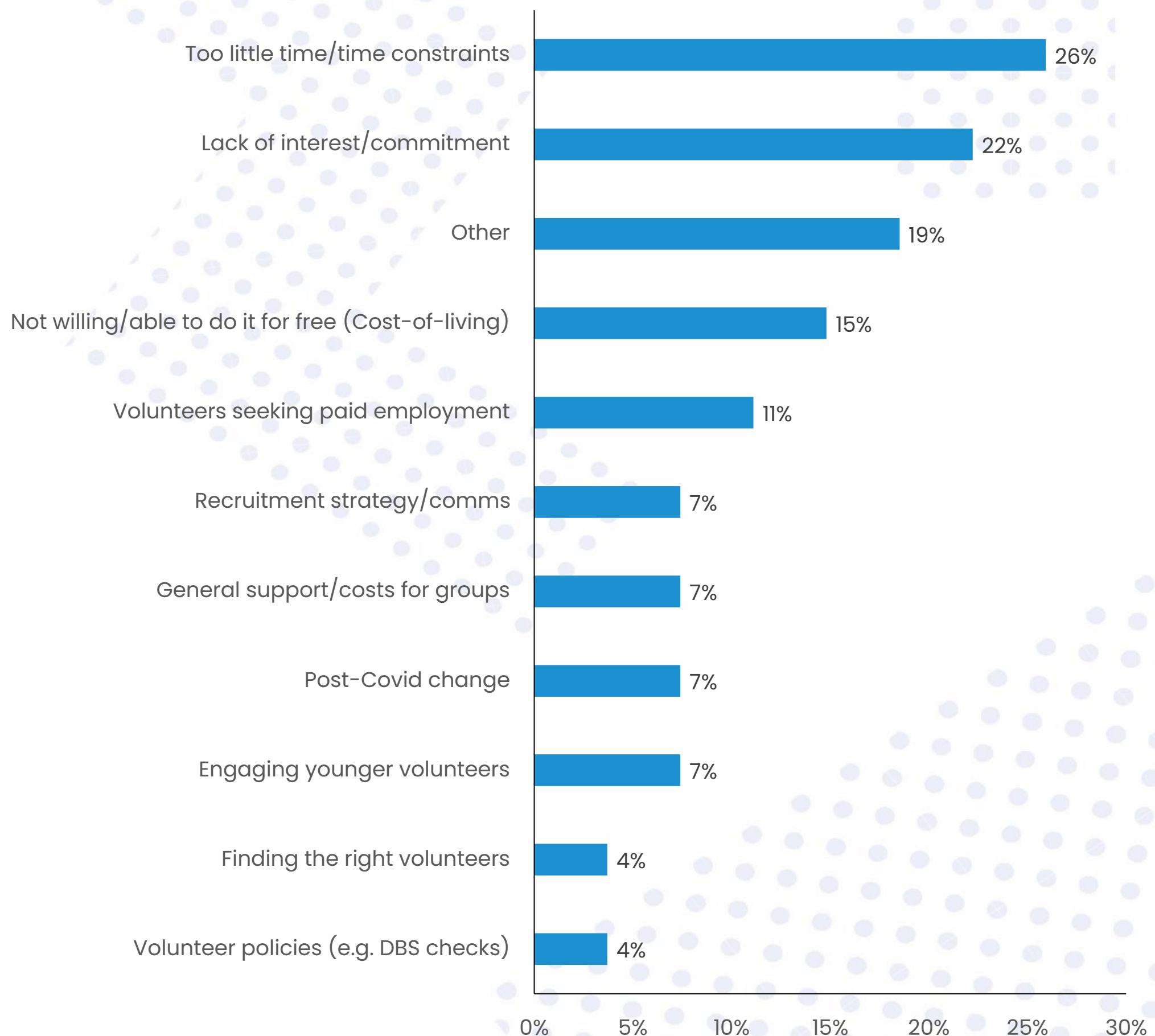
# Cost-of-living increases

## Recruiting/retaining volunteers

The most commonly cited challenges around volunteer recruitment/retention are volunteers **not having enough time** (26%) and **a lack of interest/commitment** (22%).

Volunteers are also **not willing/able to do it for free** (15%), often due to cost-of-living pressures, which presents a challenge for groups. This may be connected to several groups reporting volunteers are **looking for paid employment** (11%) rather than volunteering opportunities.

### 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](http://www.sported.org.uk)

