



neighbourly

Global change starts locally.



Neighbourly's Spring 2025 Community Survey Results

1,525 responses

Fieldwork dates: 1 – 25 April 2025

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Executive Summary

We surveyed 1,525 local good causes across the UK and Ireland to understand more about their outlook, needs and challenges.

76% say that **demand has increased** over the past 3 months

50% say there are **people they can't help** due to limitations in capacity or funding

74% are worried about **demand continuing to increase**

61% say it's difficult to **find and access funding from businesses**

79% **don't use AI tools at all** or have done only limited exploration



| Charity category | Response |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Food bank | 14.56% |
| Community centre | 9.97% |
| Other (please specify) | 9.97% |
| Community shop/pantry | 6.75% |
| Community fridge | 5.18% |
| Primary school | 4.92% |
| Disability charity/service | 3.61% |
| Religious organisation | 3.48% |
| Community volunteer group | 3.34% |
| Homelessness charity | 3.21% |
| Children's/Youth charity | 2.89% |
| Community cafe | 2.82% |
| Community garden | 2.49% |
| Social or supported accommodation | 2.30% |
| Various charity types (35) | 23.56% |

Respondents from a wide range of organisation types, across the UK & Ireland

1,525
responses

Insights

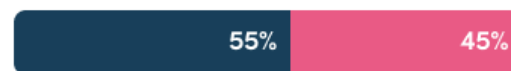


55%

Collect surplus food through Neighbourly

Over half of the respondents surveyed in our community insights provide food aid.

Proportion of charities



● Food ● Non-food

02

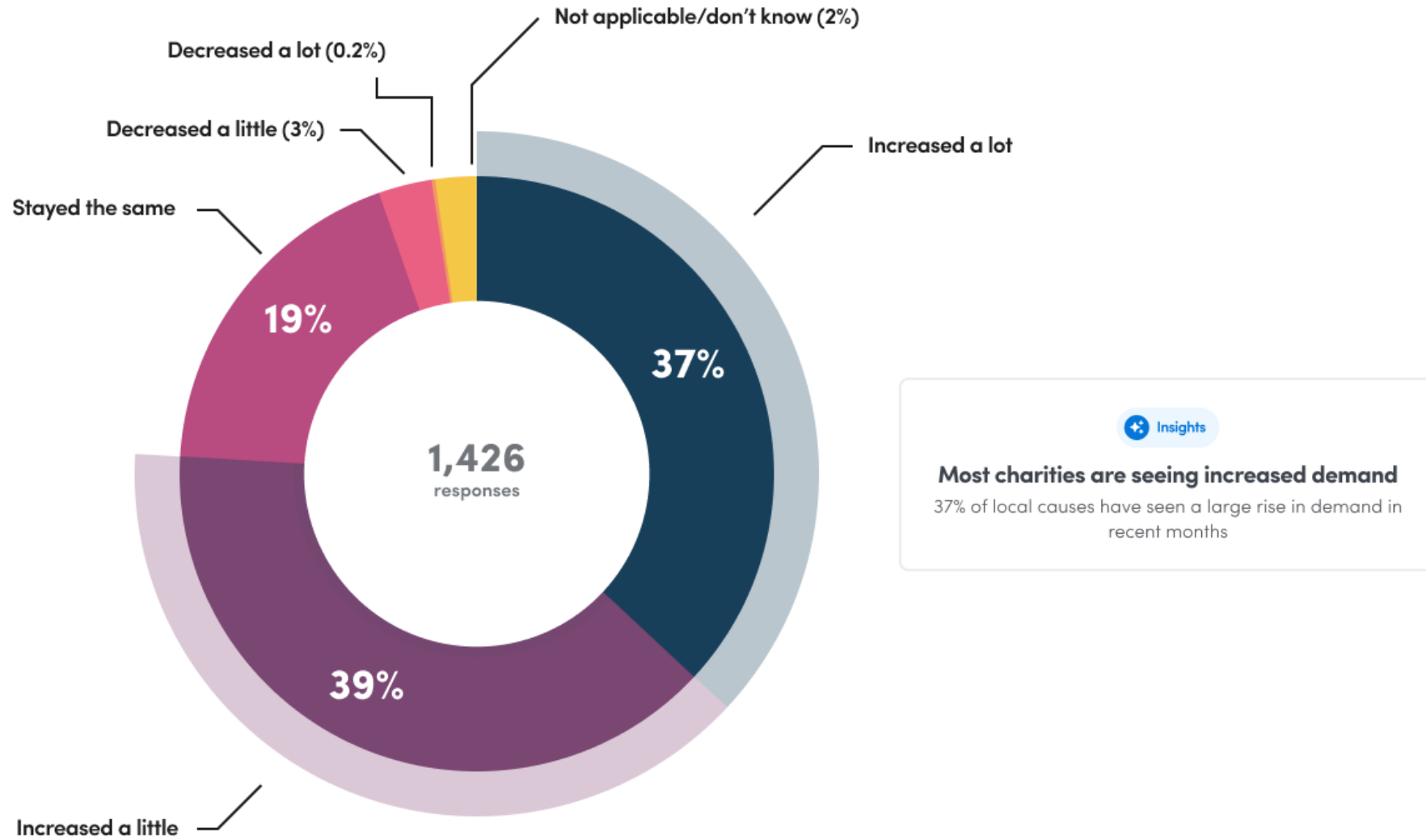
Demand for local support



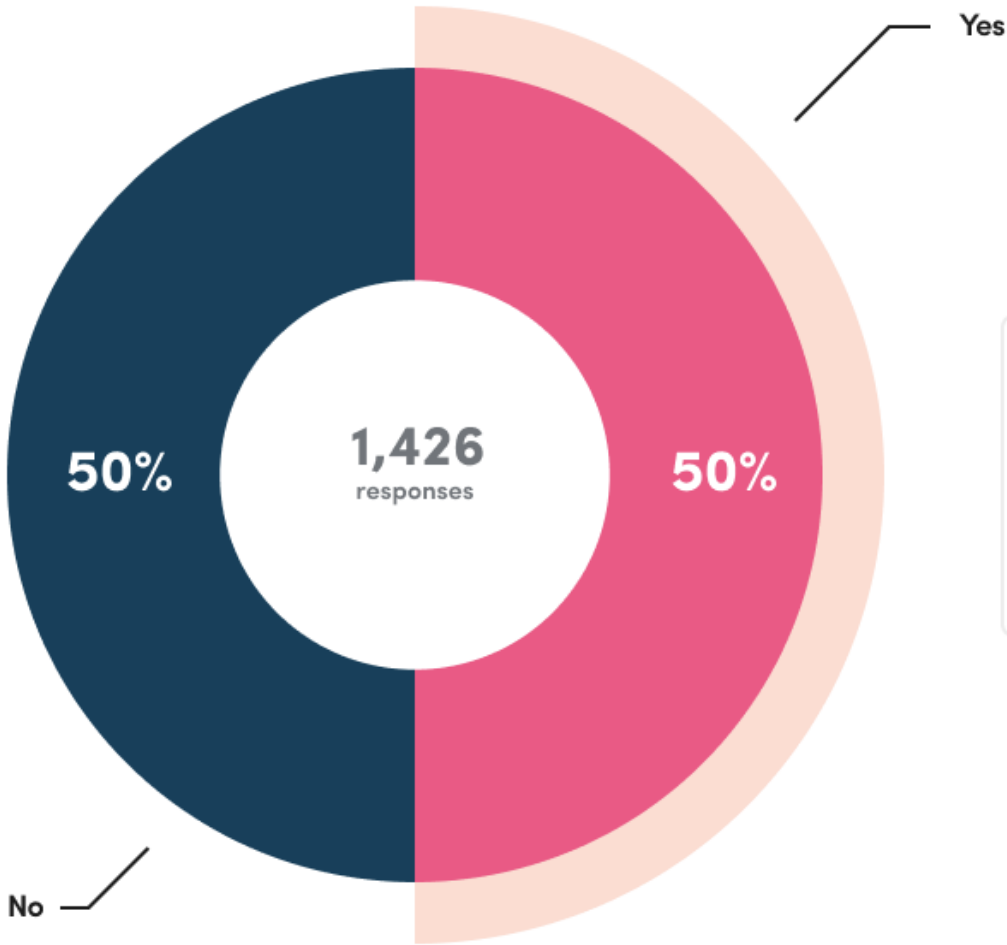
The need in communities remains high – an average of 386 people are supported per week, per organisation



Rising demand is creating pressure - 76% say demand has increased over the past 3 months



50% say there are people they can't help due to limitations in capacity or funding



 Insights

Half of the good causes are having to turn people away

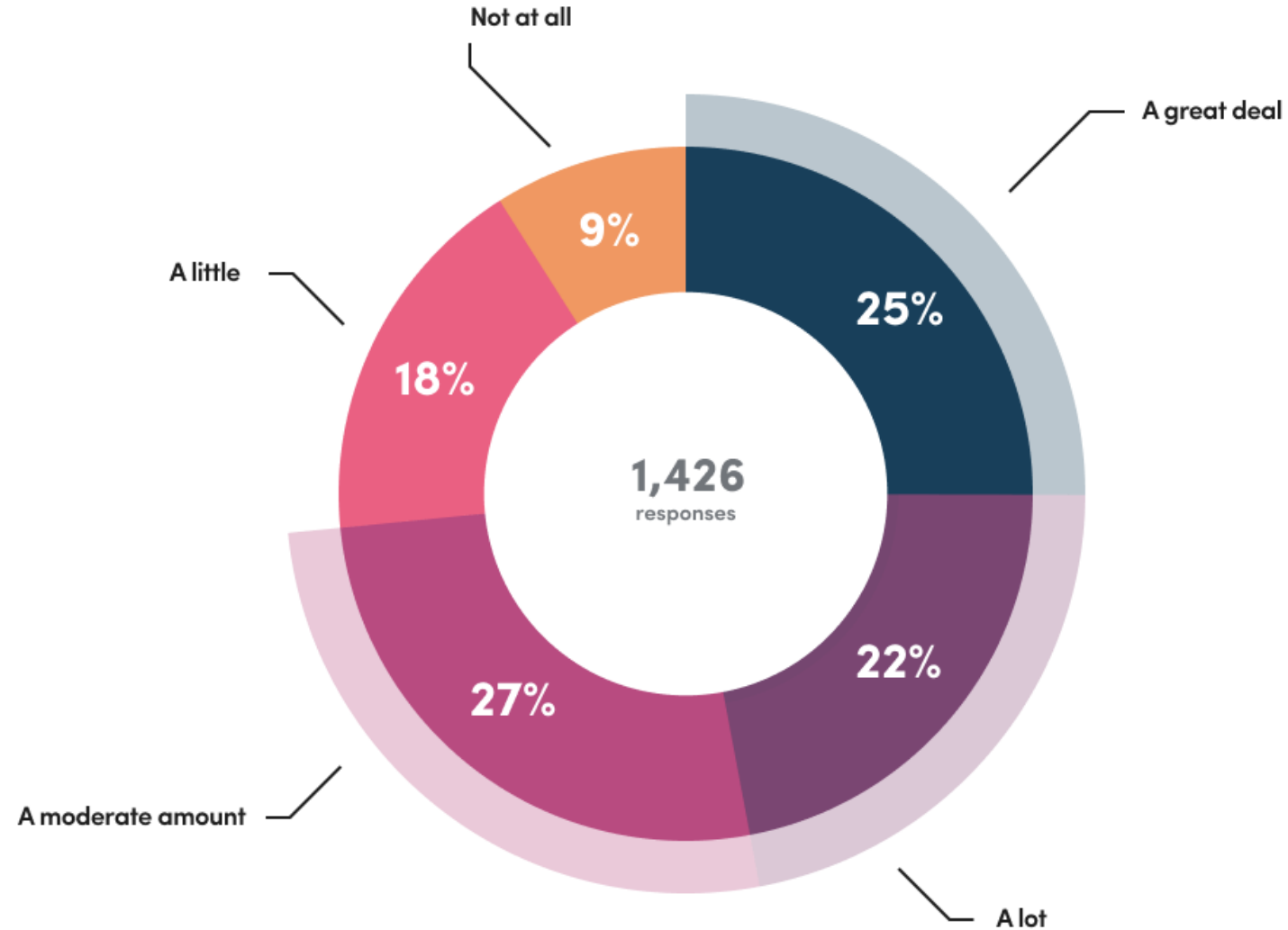
Of this 50%, 68 people per week on average request support but can't be helped

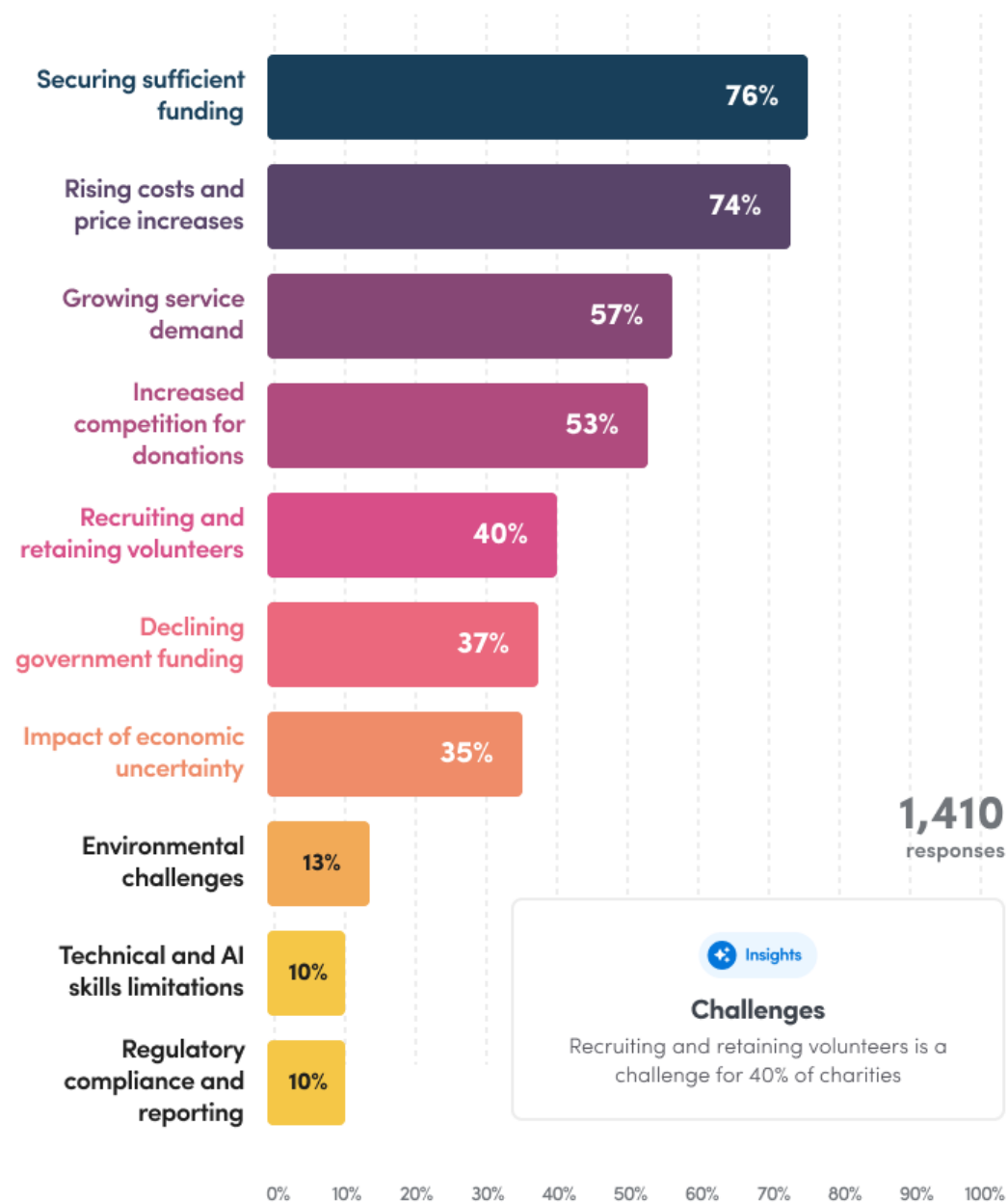
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Future outlook & concerns



74% are moderately to very worried about demand continuing to increase





Top current challenges;

- Securing sufficient funding
- Rising costs and price increases
- Growing service demand
- Increased competition for donations

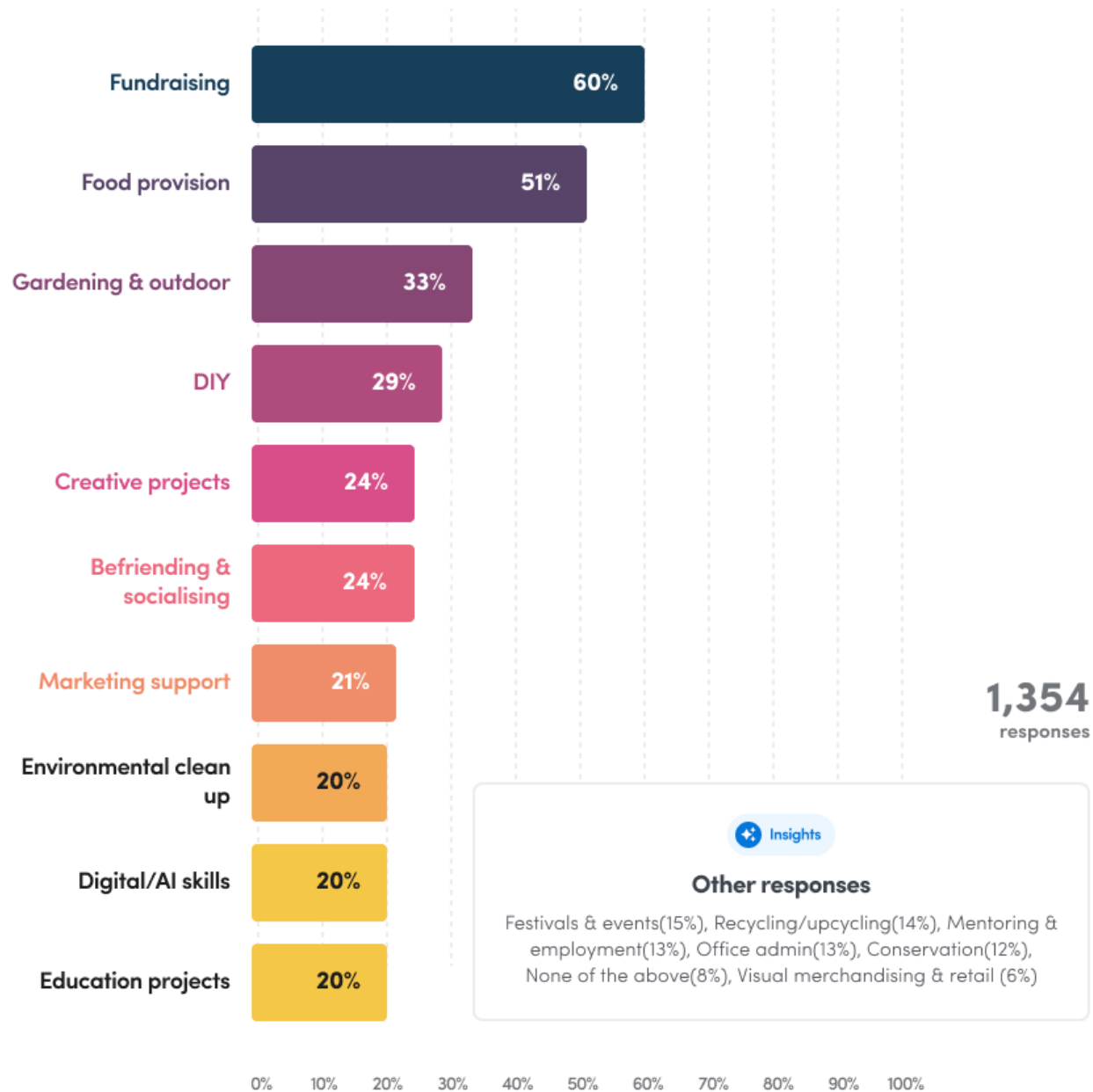
“With all the changes due to occur within the benefits system it is more important than ever that we see a Government committed to the principle of guaranteeing our essentials - a place to live, that can affordably be heated, and food on the table.”

Whitchurch Foodbank, Shropshire

04

Business support





Types of corporate volunteering viewed as most useful;

- Fundraising
- Food provision
- Gardening & outdoor
- DIY

Corporate volunteering needs – analysis of free-text responses

Professional Skills & Expertise;

- Financial/Accounting Support: Many organisations requested accounting, book-keeping, financial advice, and budgeting assistance
- Legal Services: Pro bono legal advice and support was frequently mentioned
- IT & Digital: Website development, social media management, IT support, and digital training were common requests
- HR Support: Several organisations needed help with recruitment, volunteer management, and HR policies
- Marketing & Promotion: Support with communications, advertising, and awareness-raising

Operational Support;

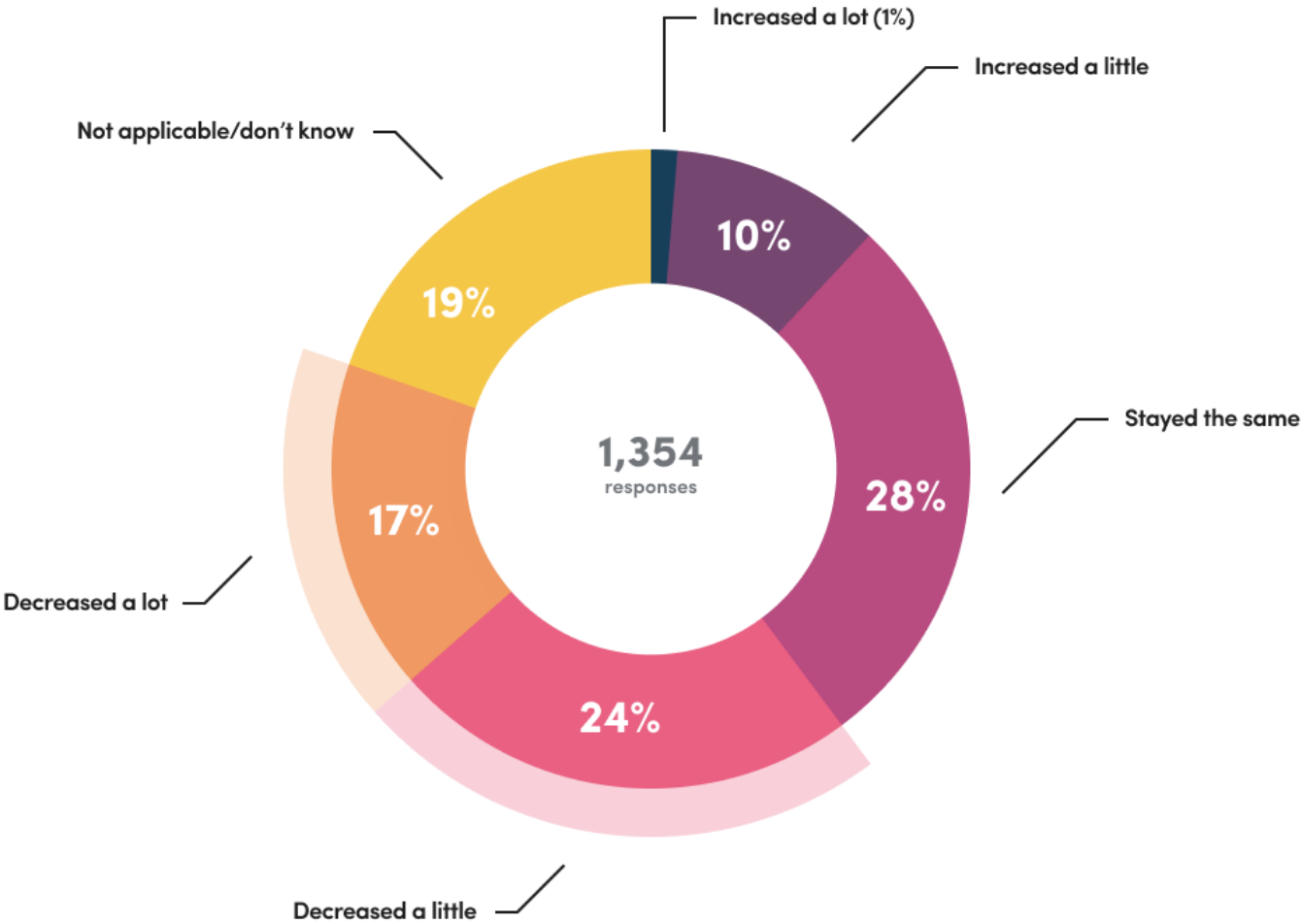
- Warehouse Assistance: Help with sorting, packing, and managing donated goods (especially food)
- Transportation: Drivers, delivery services, and vehicle loans were frequently mentioned
- Food-Related Activities: Collecting, sorting, packing, and delivering food parcels was a significant need
- Building Maintenance: Requests for repairs, decorating, cleaning, and grounds maintenance

Strategic Support;

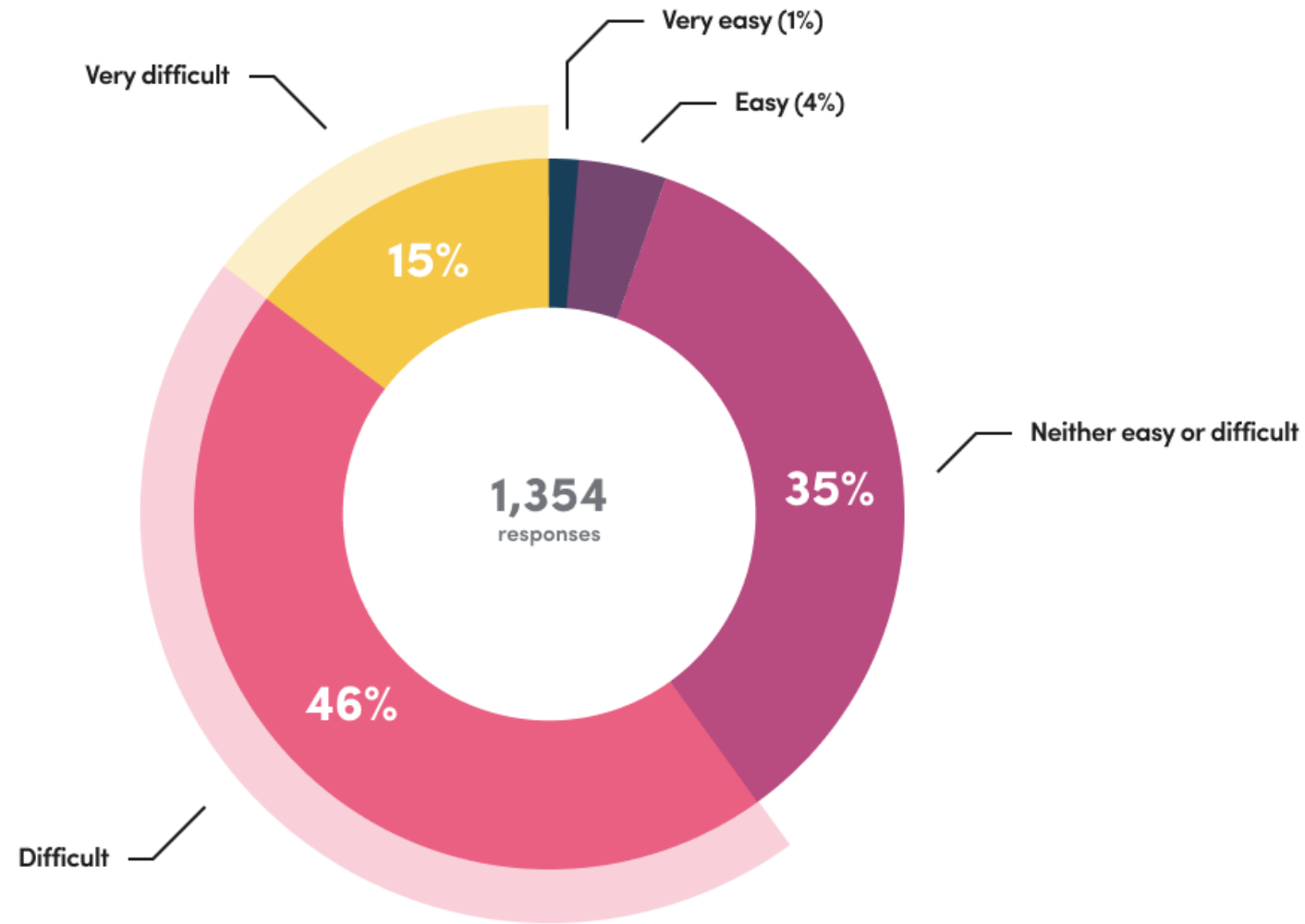
- Fundraising: Help with grant applications, fundraising strategies, and event organisation
- Strategic Planning: Business planning advice and organisational development support
- Governance: Board members, trustees, and management committee volunteers

41% say financial donations to their organisation from businesses have decreased over the past 6 months

39% say they have increased a little or stayed the same

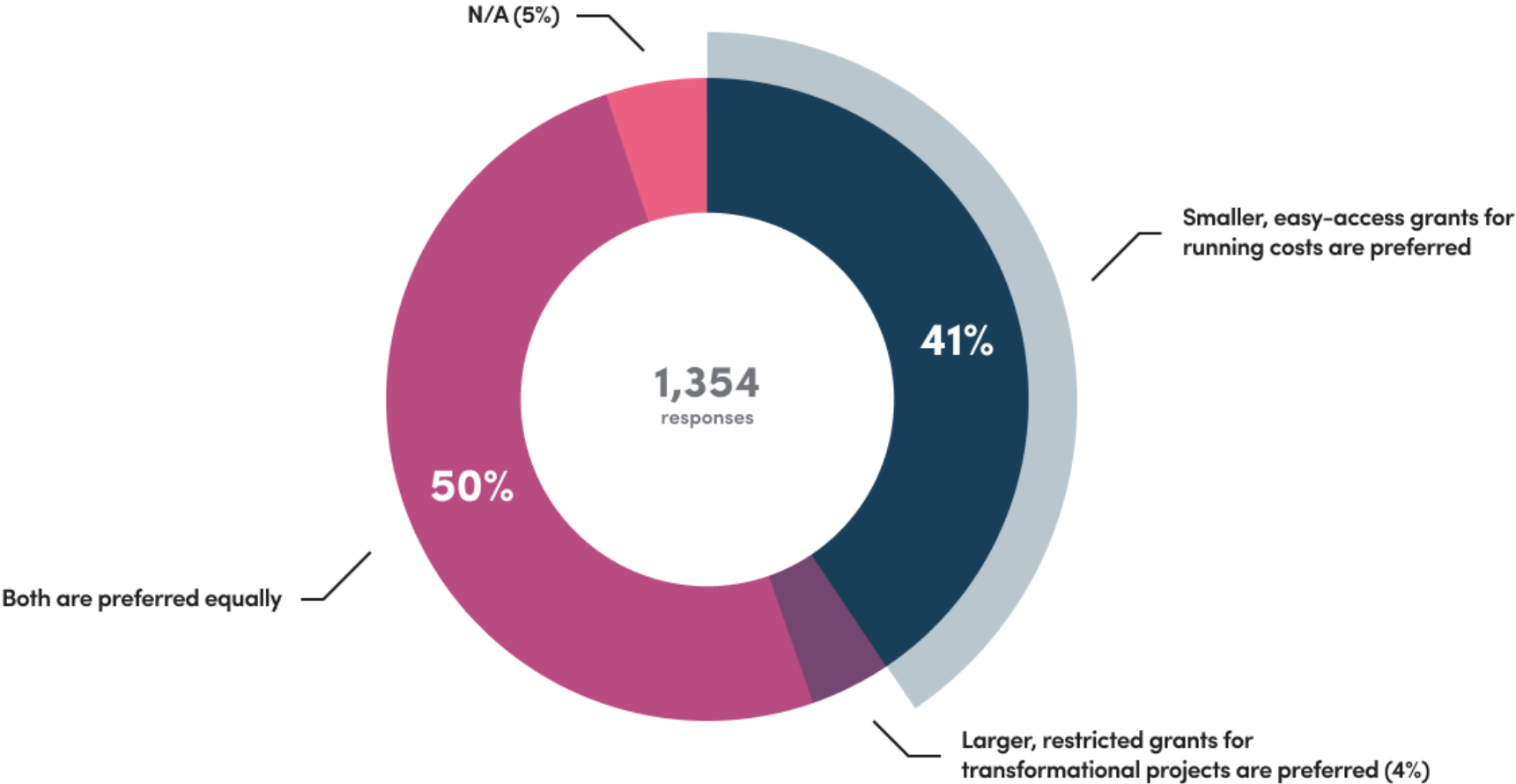


61% think that generally it is difficult to find out about and access funding from businesses



41% prefer smaller
easy-access grants from
businesses

50% think both smaller easy-access grants
and larger restricted grants for are equally
preferable



Funding preferences – analysis of free-text responses

Unrestricted Funding

- Overwhelming preference for unrestricted funding: This emerged as the single most mentioned need, allowing organisations to direct resources where most urgently needed
- Many respondents emphasised flexibility to address core costs, adapt to changing needs, and avoid creating new projects simply to qualify for funding
- Phrases like "unrestricted funding is key to sustainability" appeared frequently

Core Cost Coverage

- Strong desire for funding that covers operational expenses including staff salaries and wages, rent and facility costs, utility bills (noted with concerns about energy cost increases), administrative expenses
- Many noted that while project funding is relatively available, core cost funding is extremely difficult to secure

Multi-Year Funding

- Preference for longer-term funding commitments: Organisations want funding that spans multiple years, e.g. 3-5 years
- This provides stability, allows for better planning, and reduces the constant burden of fundraising
- Several mentioned the need for "sustainability" through regular, reliable funding streams

Application Processes

- Simple application processes preferred: Many small organisations lack capacity for complex applications – resource drain
- Some funders have disproportionate reporting requirements relative to grant size

Additional Insights

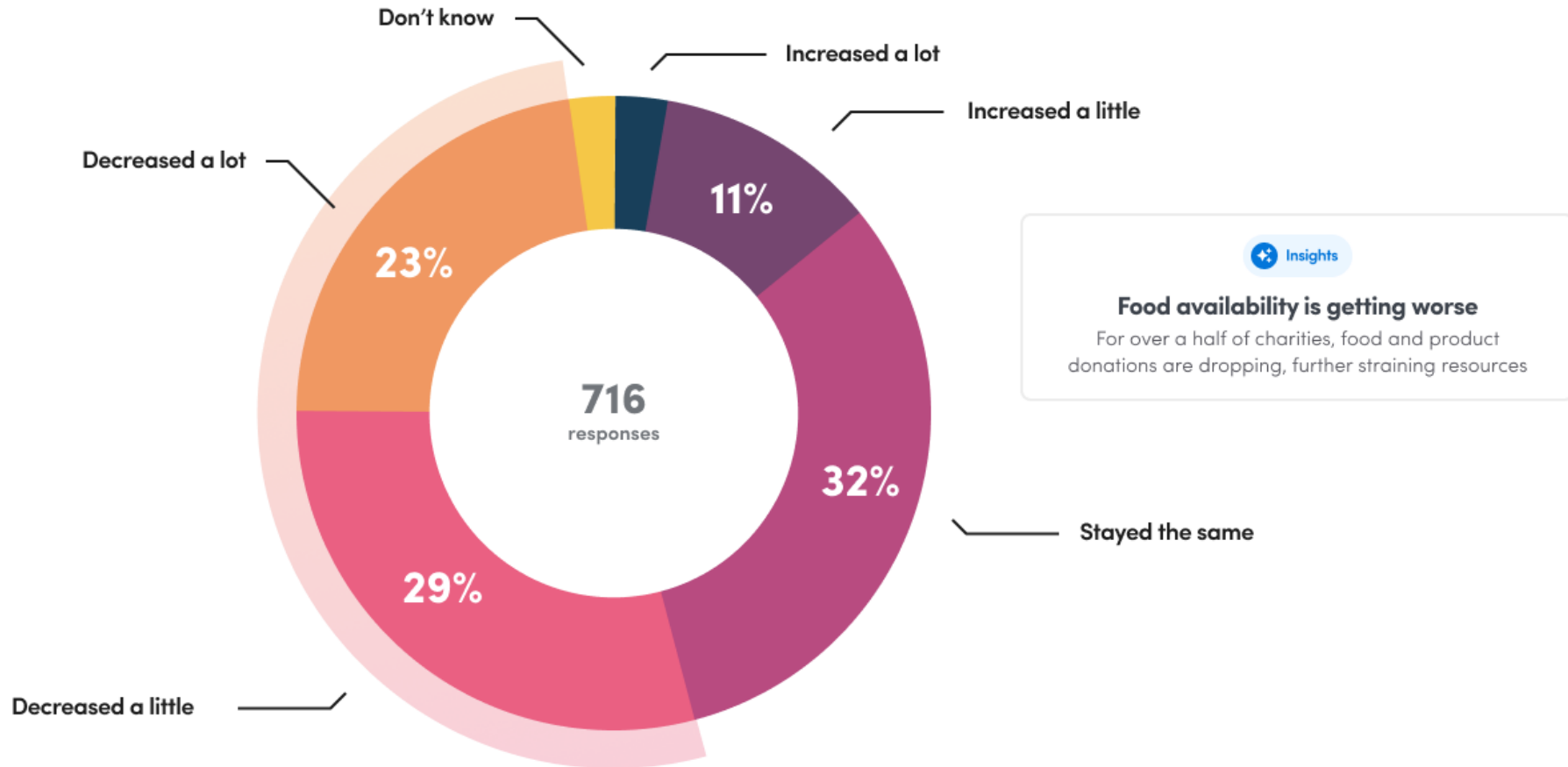
- Larger organisations often absorb most funding opportunities while smaller groups struggle despite doing "hands-on work"
- Funders often prefer "transformational" or new projects while organisations often need support for existing successful programmes
- Support is needed to build internal capacity and skills rather than just direct service funding

“The funding climate is becoming harder for charities. Some grants organisations are closing their doors or pausing grants programmes. As a result, more charities are going for smaller and smaller amounts of funding. The impact of the National Insurance increase for employers is further contributing to the funding issues faced by charities.

Some changes in the way funders restrict grants would make a huge difference to charities. For example, more unrestricted/core grants would ensure the essential running of the charity. An increase in continuation funding would allow successful services and projects to continue. Currently few organisations will give continuation funding – they want to fund brand new initiatives. This often means that successful projects are having to be closed, and new ones unnecessarily created.”

Meadow Well Connected, Tyne & Wear

52% of food collectors think surplus donations to their organisation have decreased over the past 3 months. 46% say they have increased or stayed the same

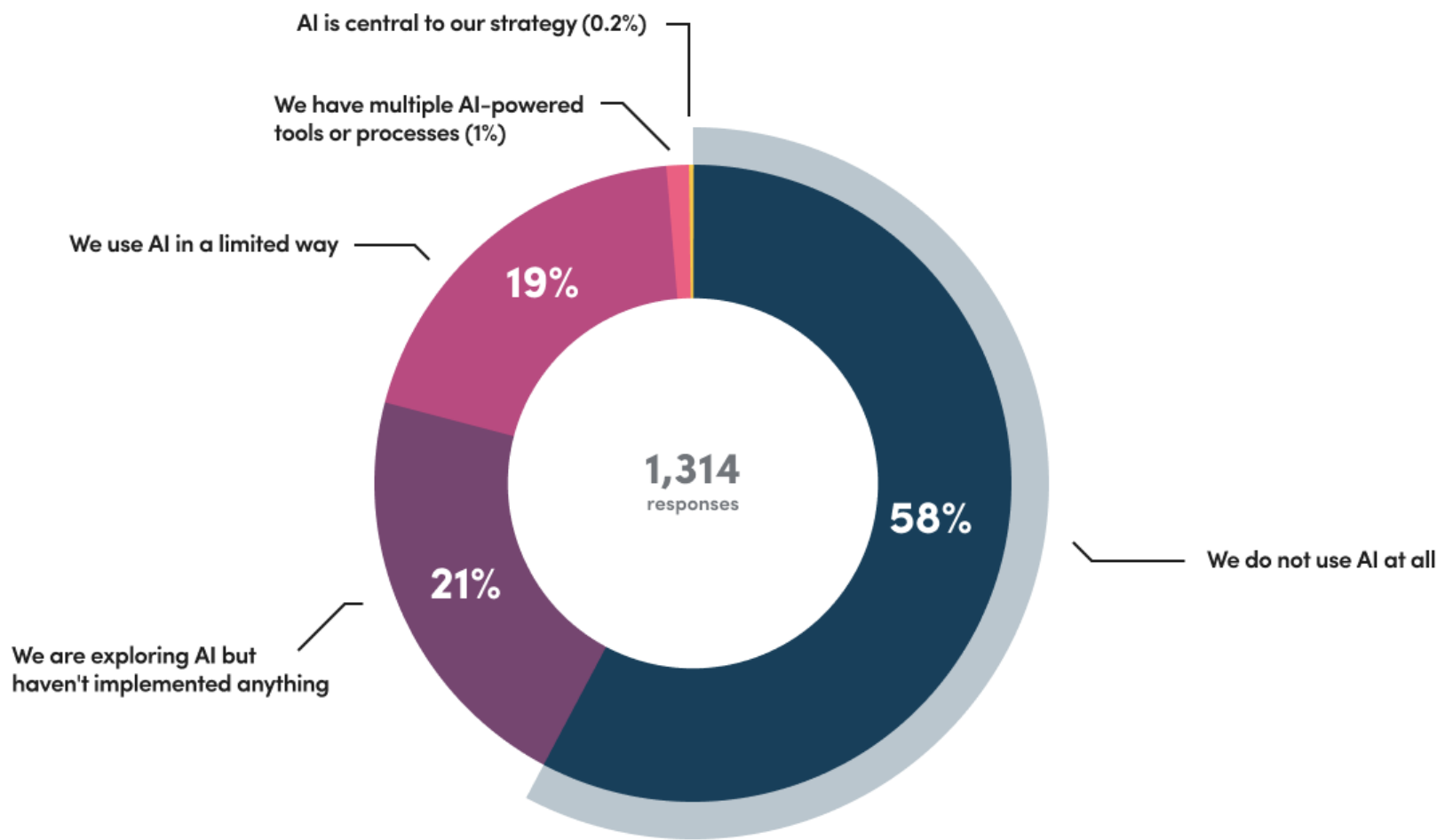


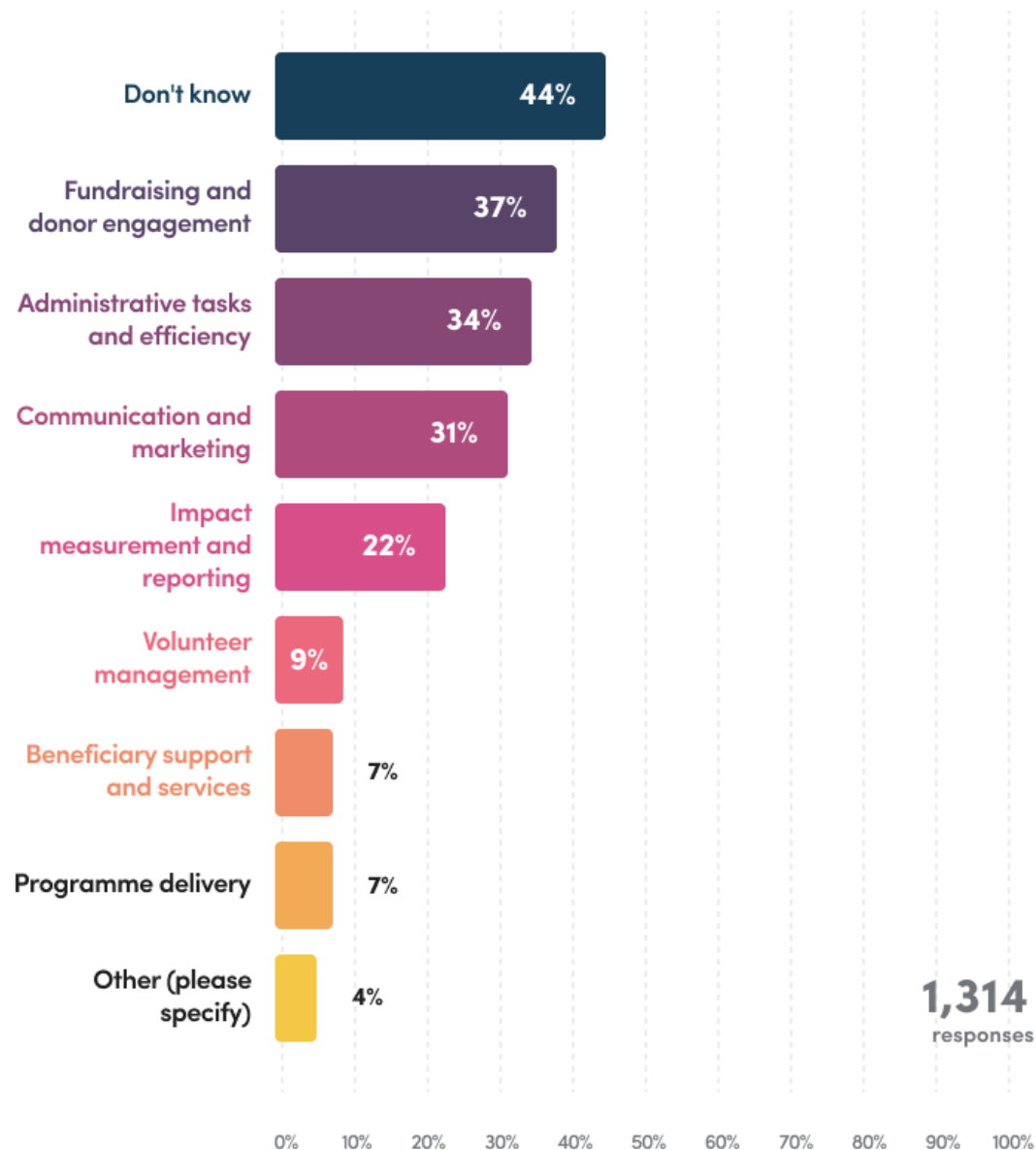
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AI and digital skills



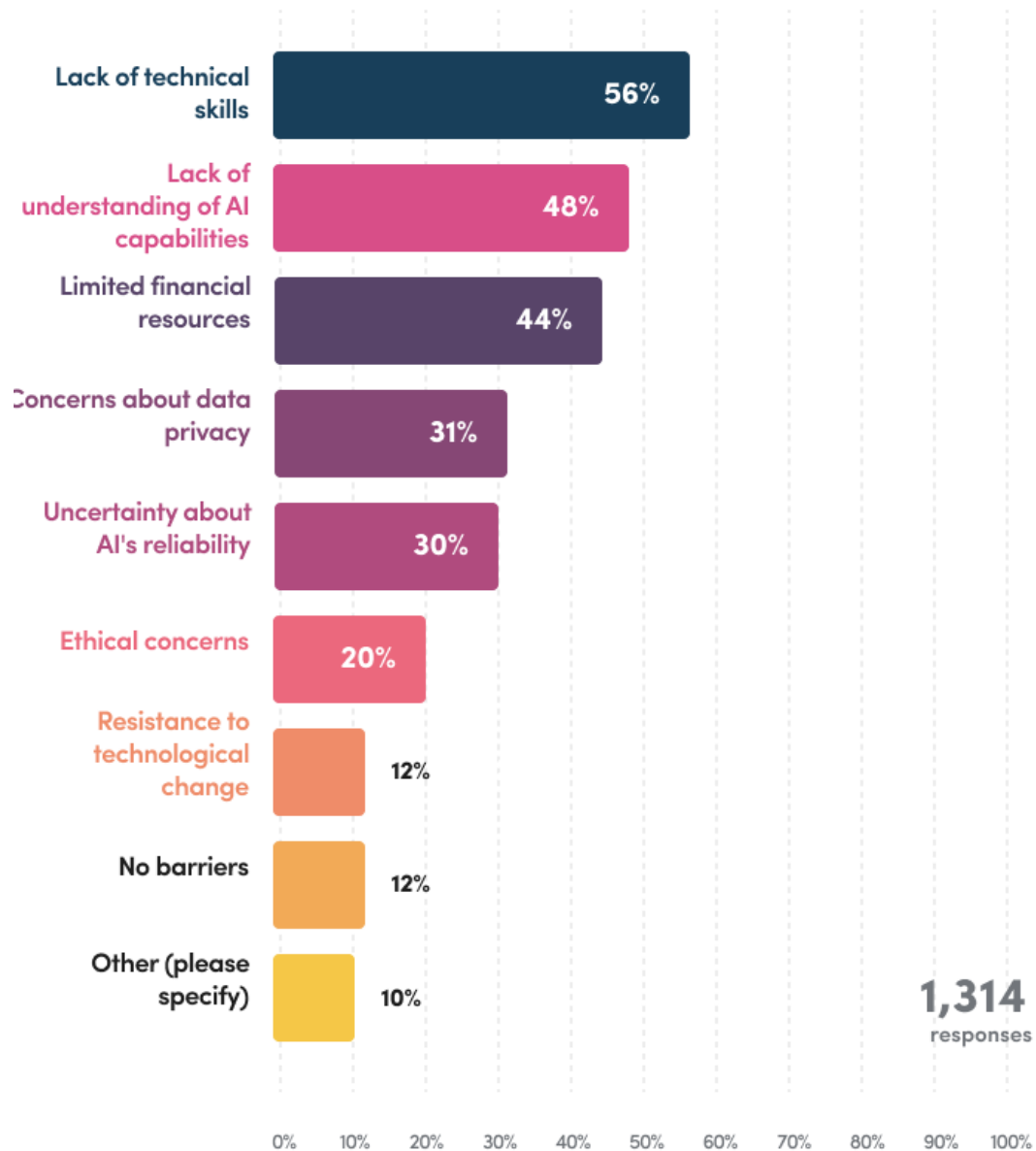
58% aren't using AI at all. A further 21% are exploring but have not implemented the use of any AI tools. In total, 79% aren't using.





Top areas where AI is seen as having the potential to support the organisation's work;

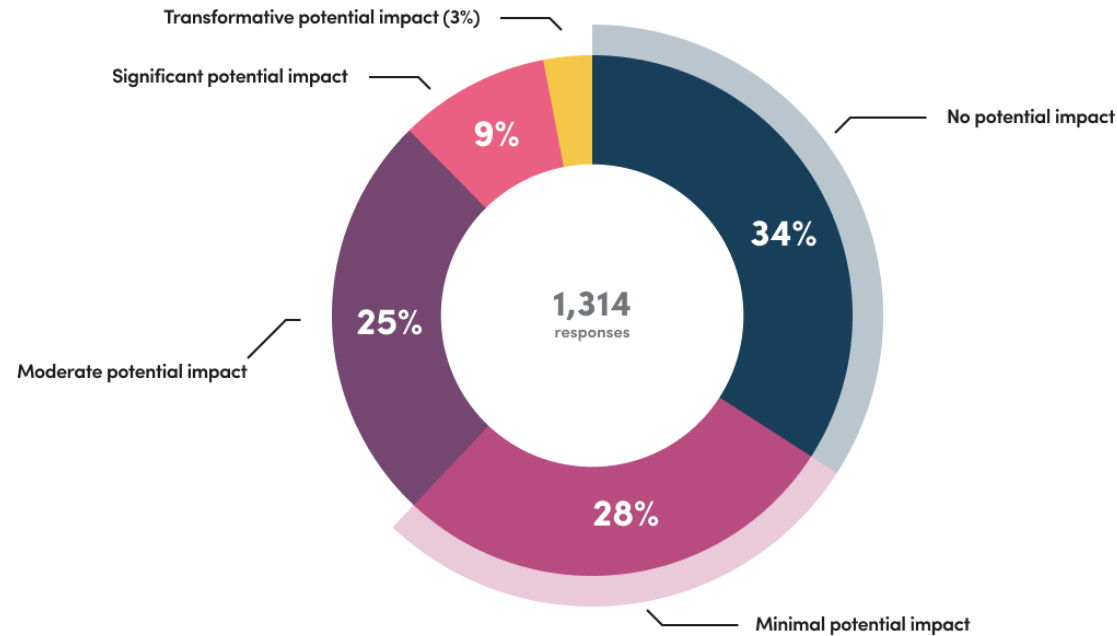
- Fundraising and donor engagement
- Administrative tasks and efficiency
- Communication and marketing



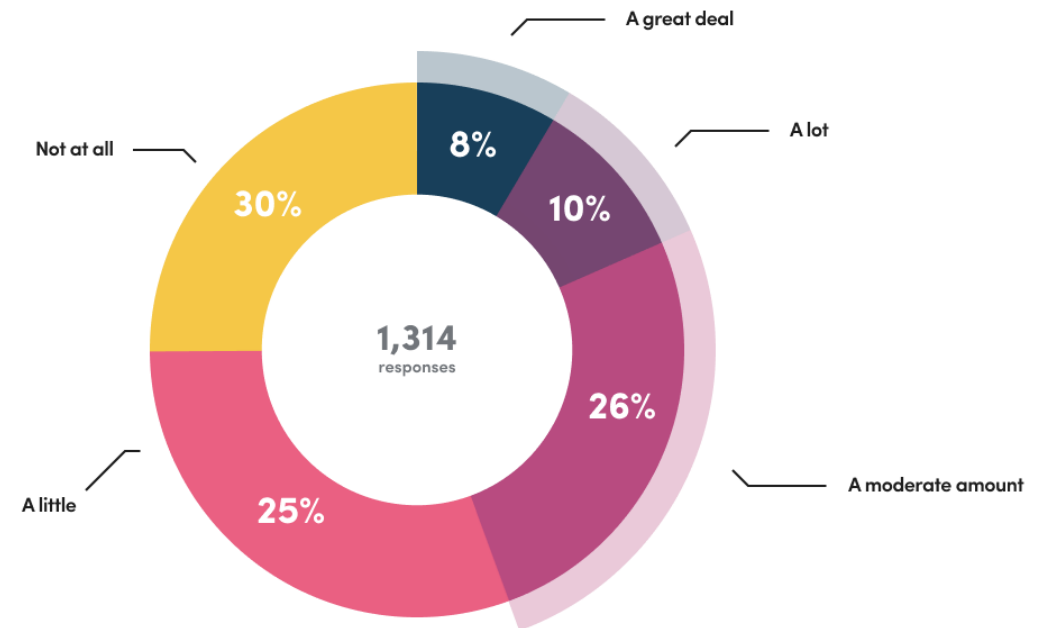
Barriers to AI adoption;

- Lack of technical skills
- Lack of understanding of AI's capabilities
- Limited financial resources
- Concerns about data privacy

62% rate the potential impact of AI on the organisation's ability to achieve its mission as none or minimal.



Yet 70% think a lack of AI knowledge could impact their organisation's ability secure funding to some degree.



“We’ve been exploring moderate use of AI to help us bridge the gap between the costs of running an organisation with a small core team. As funding processes become increasingly competitive, with smaller pots and more hoops to jump through, tools like AI offer us the chance to work smarter, but we know we need to make better use of them to ease pressure on our small team.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact families across our community, we’ve seen a noticeable drop in food donations, at a time when demand for our support is rising sharply”

Spectrum Derbyshire - No Hungry Child, Derby



Thank you

This report offers valuable insights into the health and wellbeing of the small charity sector – our thanks to everyone who has contributed.



“We’re so grateful for the generous support received through Neighbourly. Your contributions have significantly enhanced our ability to provide essential services to the community and have enabled us to offer nutritious food directly to benefiting families in need.

It helps us not only supply vital resources but also foster community cohesion and empower individuals through education and integration initiatives. We look forward to continuing these collaborations to make a lasting positive impact. Thank you!”

Educational Learning Support Hub (ELSH), Barnsley



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