



Nottingham Trent
University

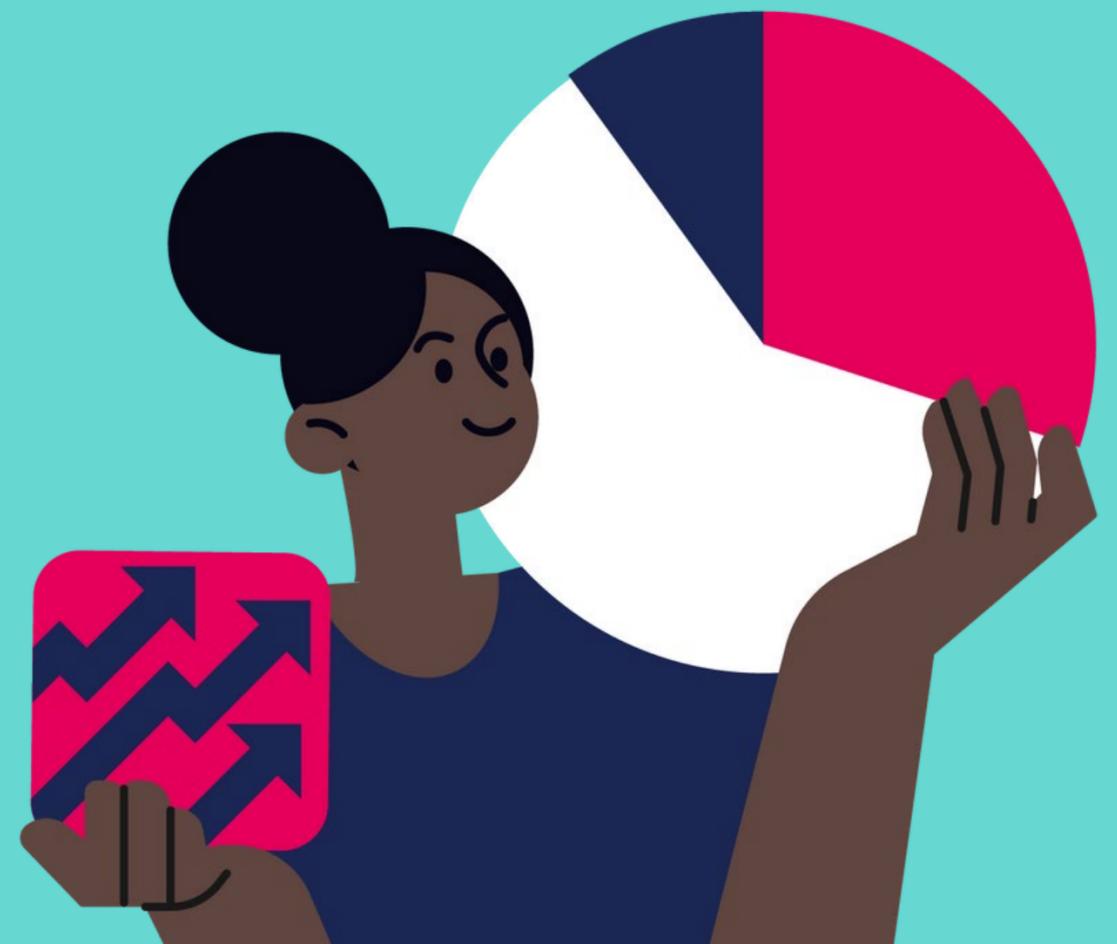


Findings from Wave 8 of the VCSE Barometer



-  Insights for policy makers and practitioners built on real-time data
-  Quarterly 'temperature check'
-  Launched November 2022
-  Partnership with Pro Bono Economics and 14 national organisations
-  Wave 8: 25 September – 15 October 2024 (431 participants)

Thank you for taking part!



Did you know?



You can use our insights dashboard to see how your charity compares

[Click here to try it out!](#)

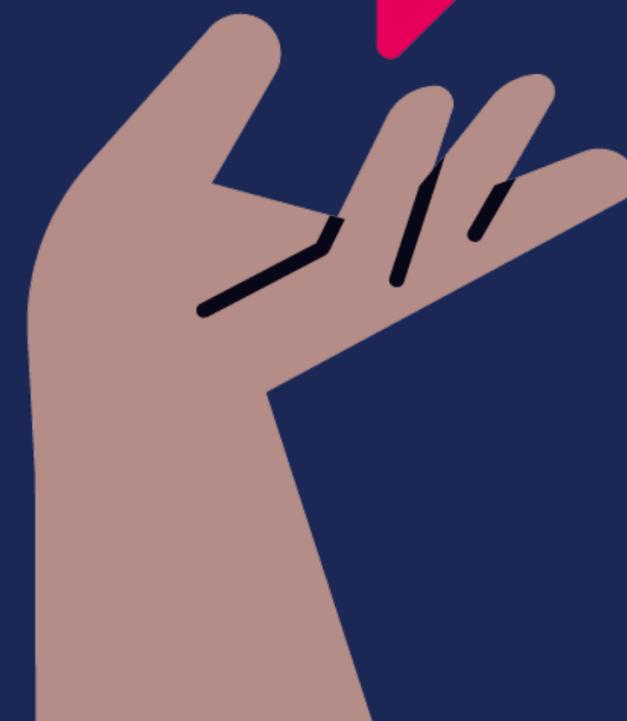




Read the latest article

Taking Skills on Board

[Click here to read the article](#)



Wave 8: Two Years of Financial Challenges and Sustained Demand



For two consecutive years...



3 IN 4

reported **income generation** as a top concern



2 in 3

reported an **increase in service demand** every quarter

Over the next 3 months...



1 IN 3

expect their **financial position to deteriorate**, the highest since February 2023 (Wave 2)



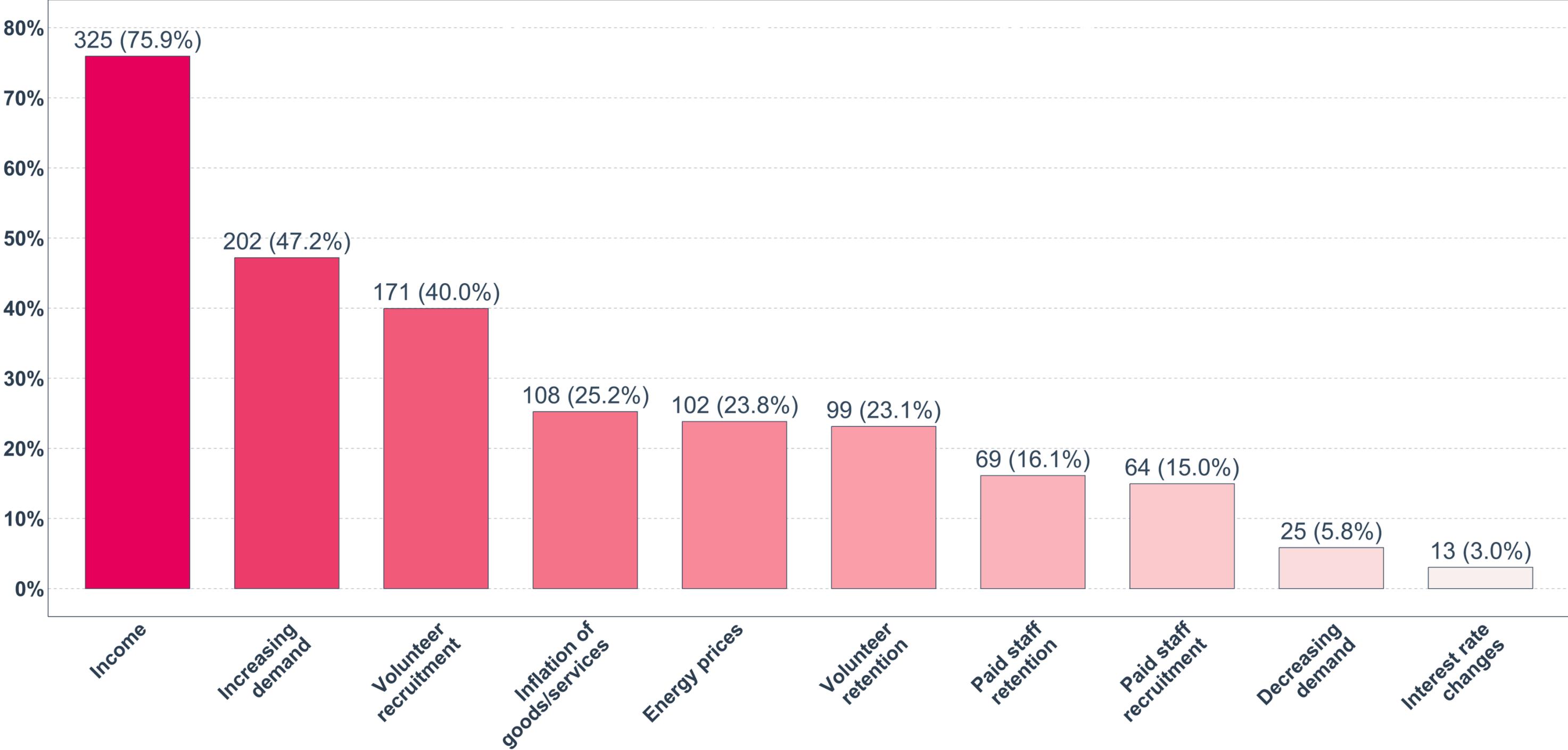
1 IN 3

expect to **fall short of meeting demand**

Income, increasing demand, and volunteer recruitment remain the top 3 concerns, with increasing concerns about volunteer and staff retention



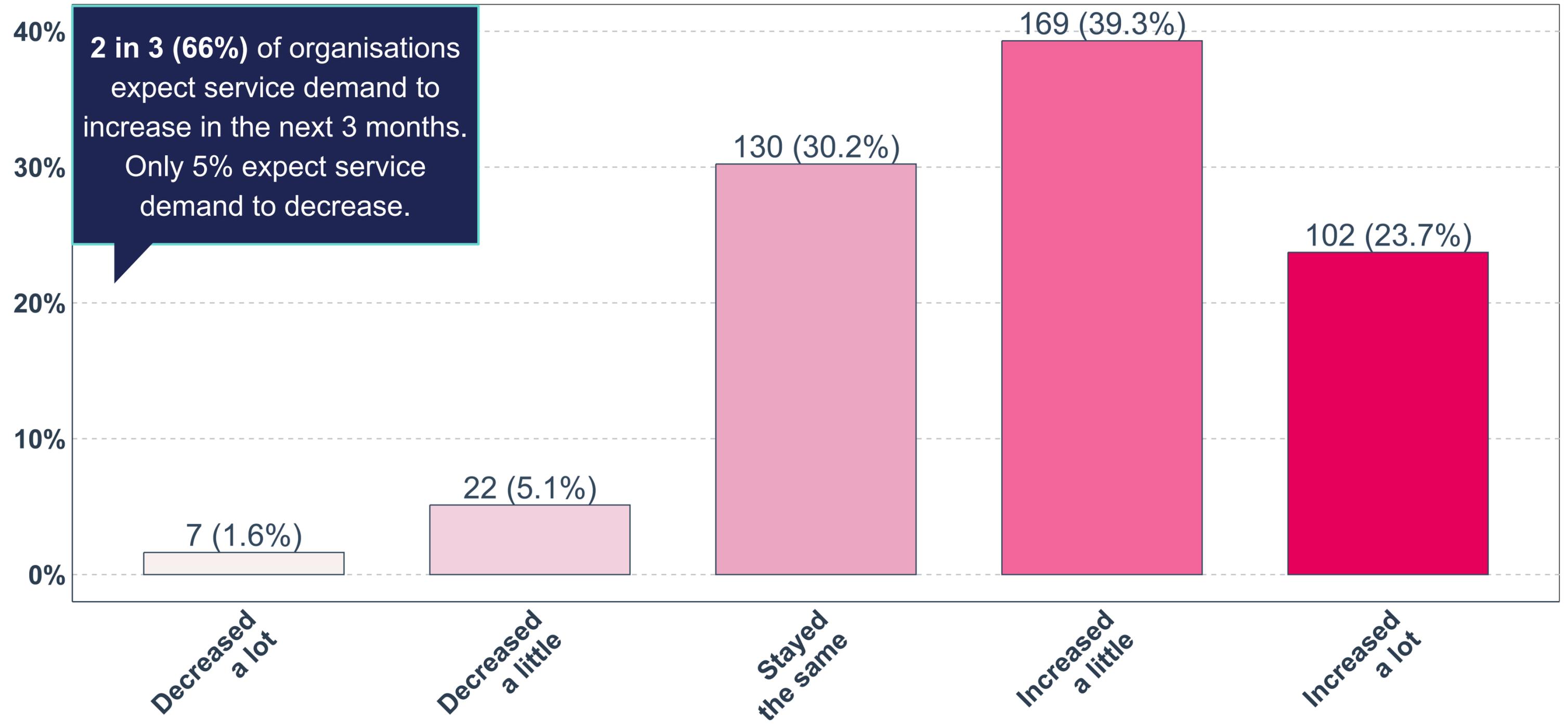
Key Concerns Affecting Organisations, Wave 8



Almost 2 in 3 organisations report an increase in service demand in the past 3 months



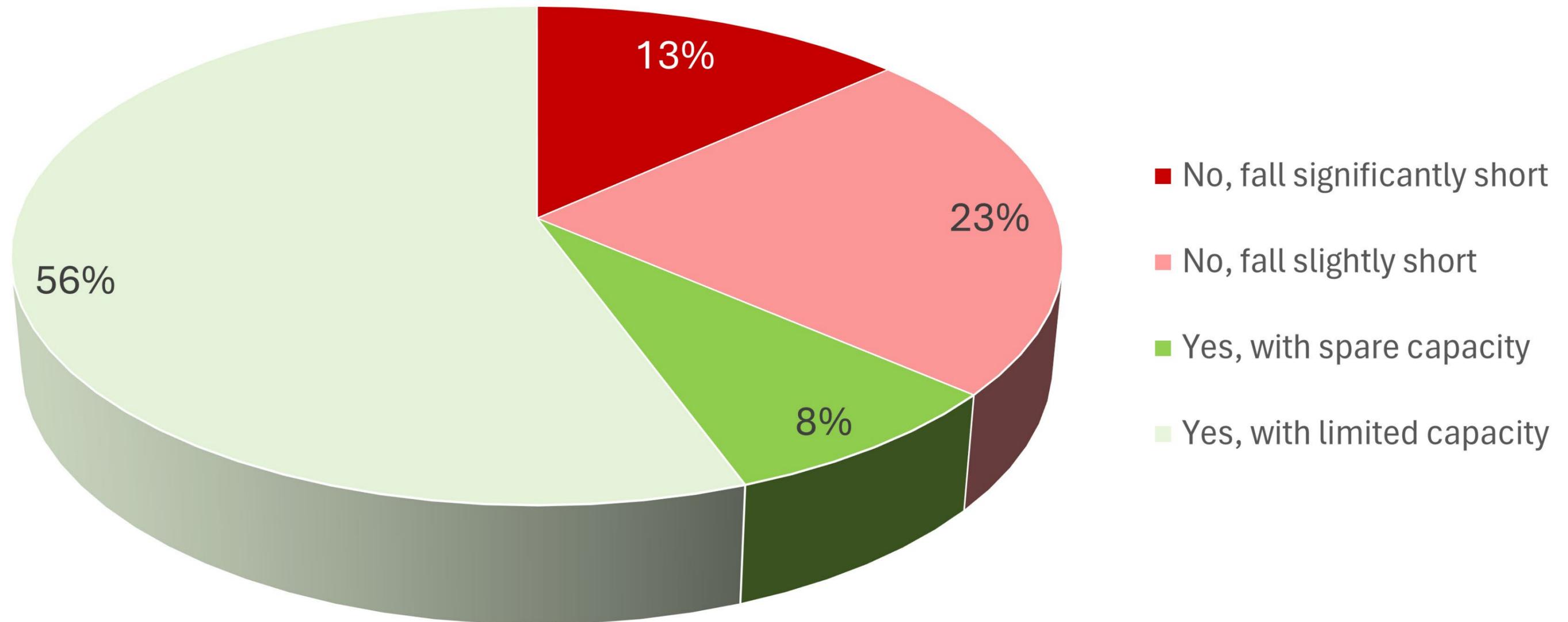
Service Demand Past 3 Months, Wave 8



More than 1 in 3 expect to fall short in meeting demand, while over half expect to do so with limited or no spare capacity



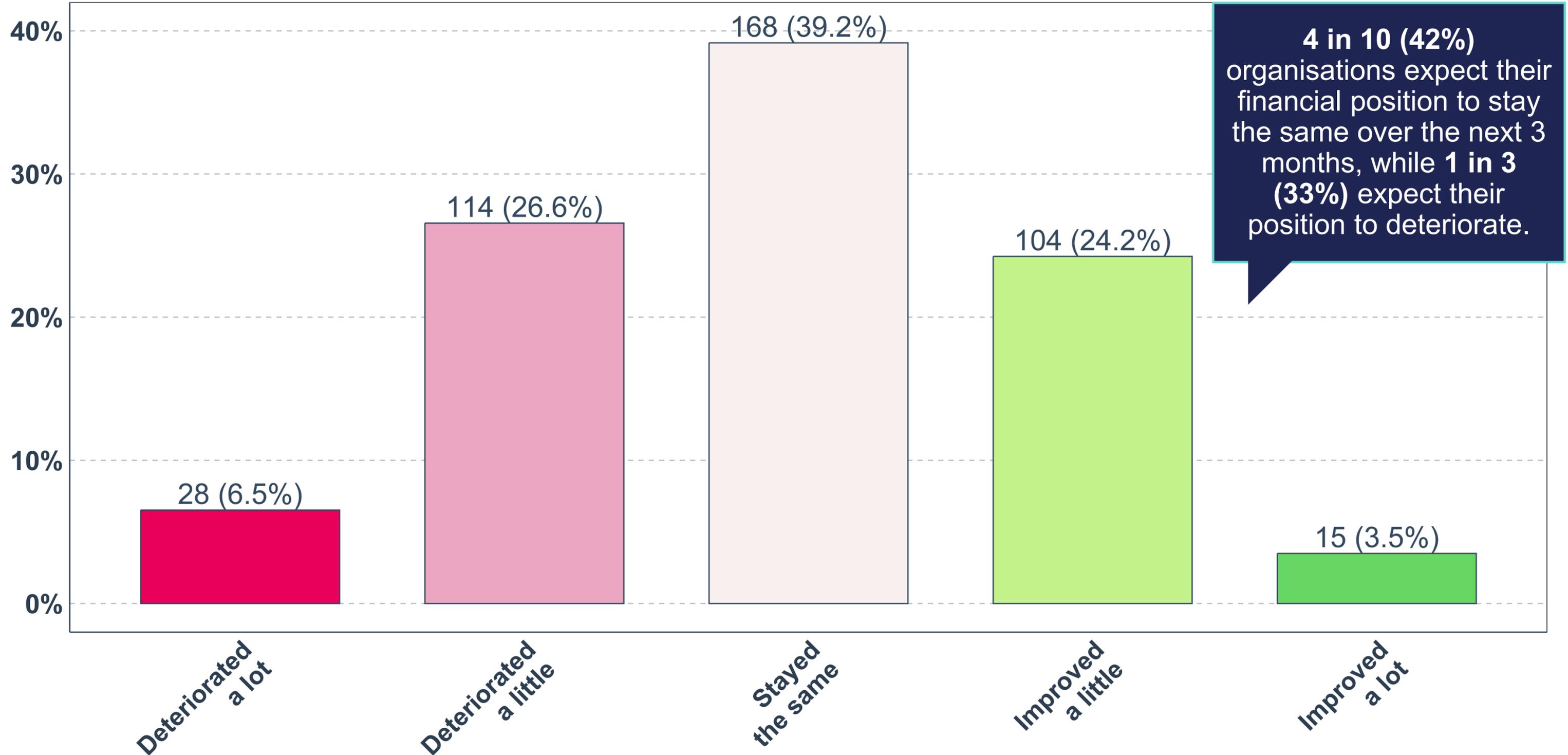
Expectations about Meeting Demand over the Next 3 Months, Wave 8



Organisations report a mixed picture in their financial positions over the last 3 months



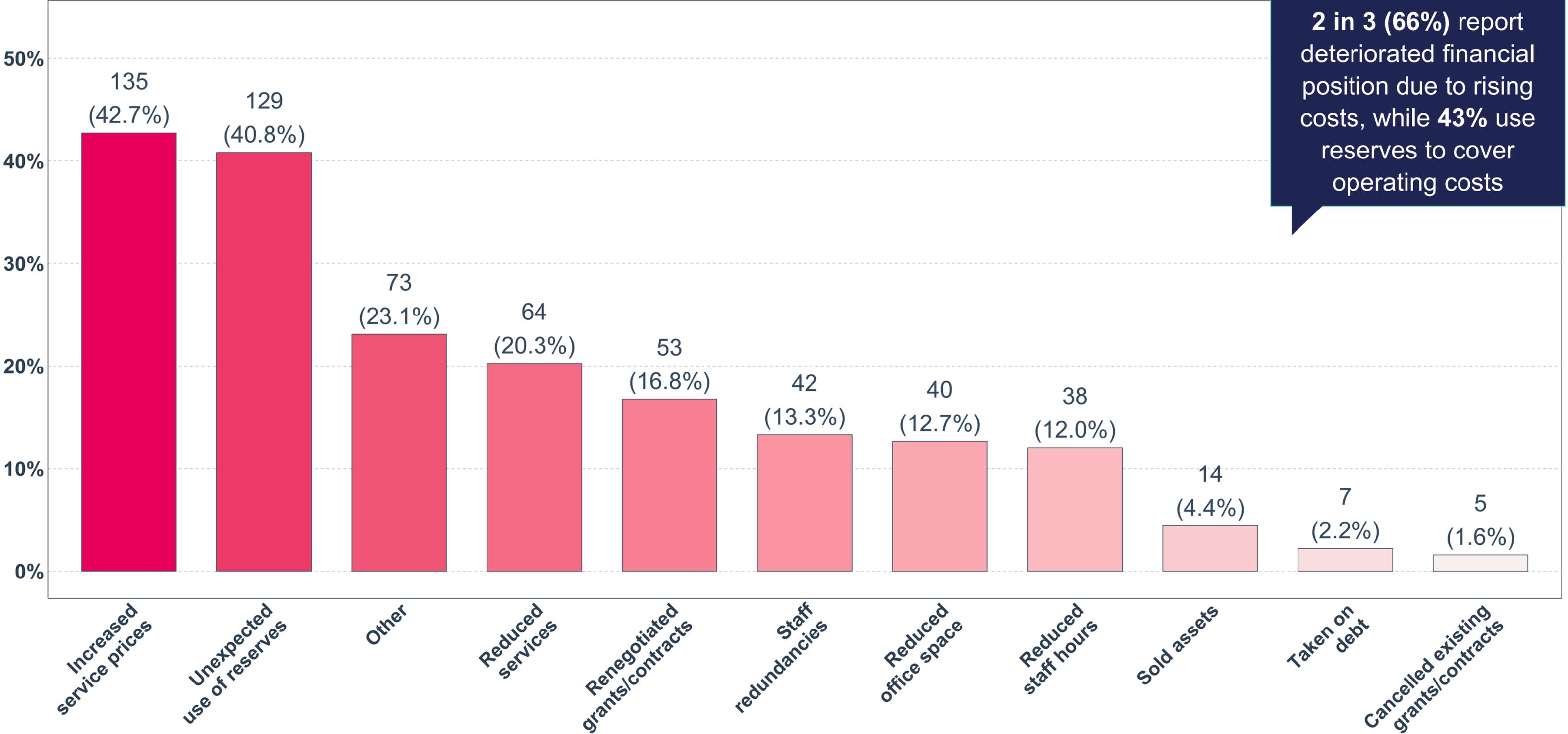
Financial Position Past 3 Months, Wave 8



More than 4 in 10 organisations have increased service prices and unexpectedly used reserves due to rising costs



Actions Taken due to Rising Costs, Wave 8

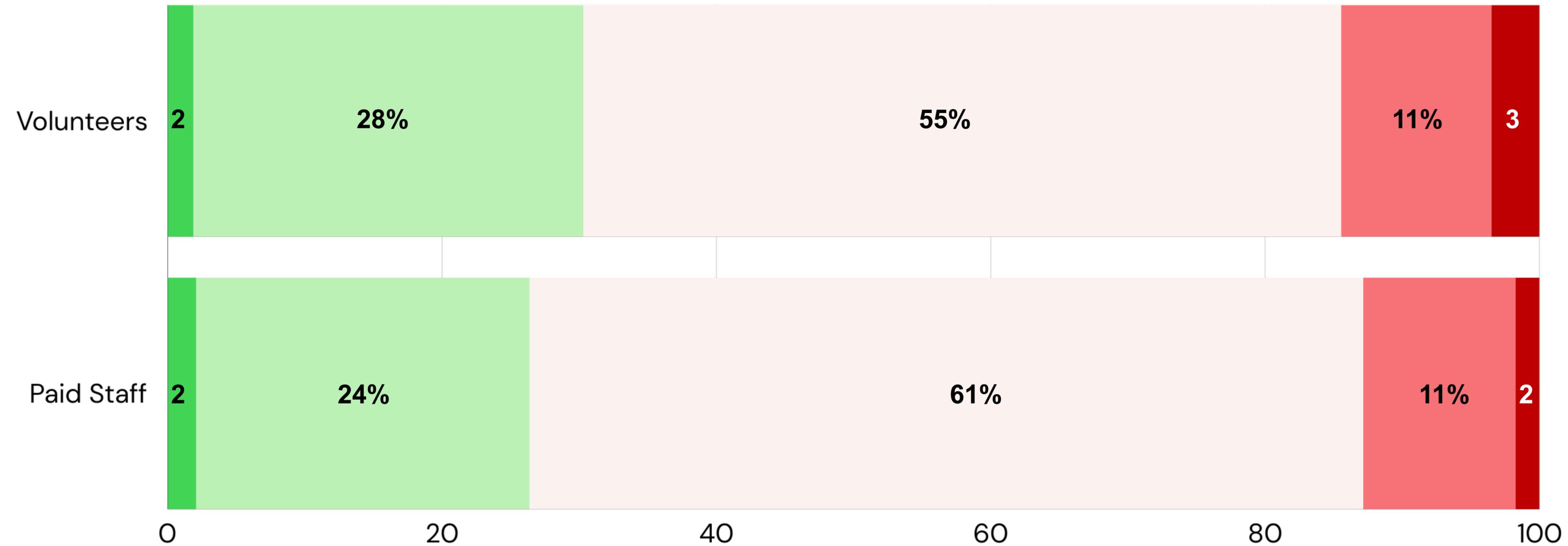


Most organisations report no change or a slight increase in personnel numbers in the last 3 months



Change in Personnel Numbers Last 3 Months, Wave 8

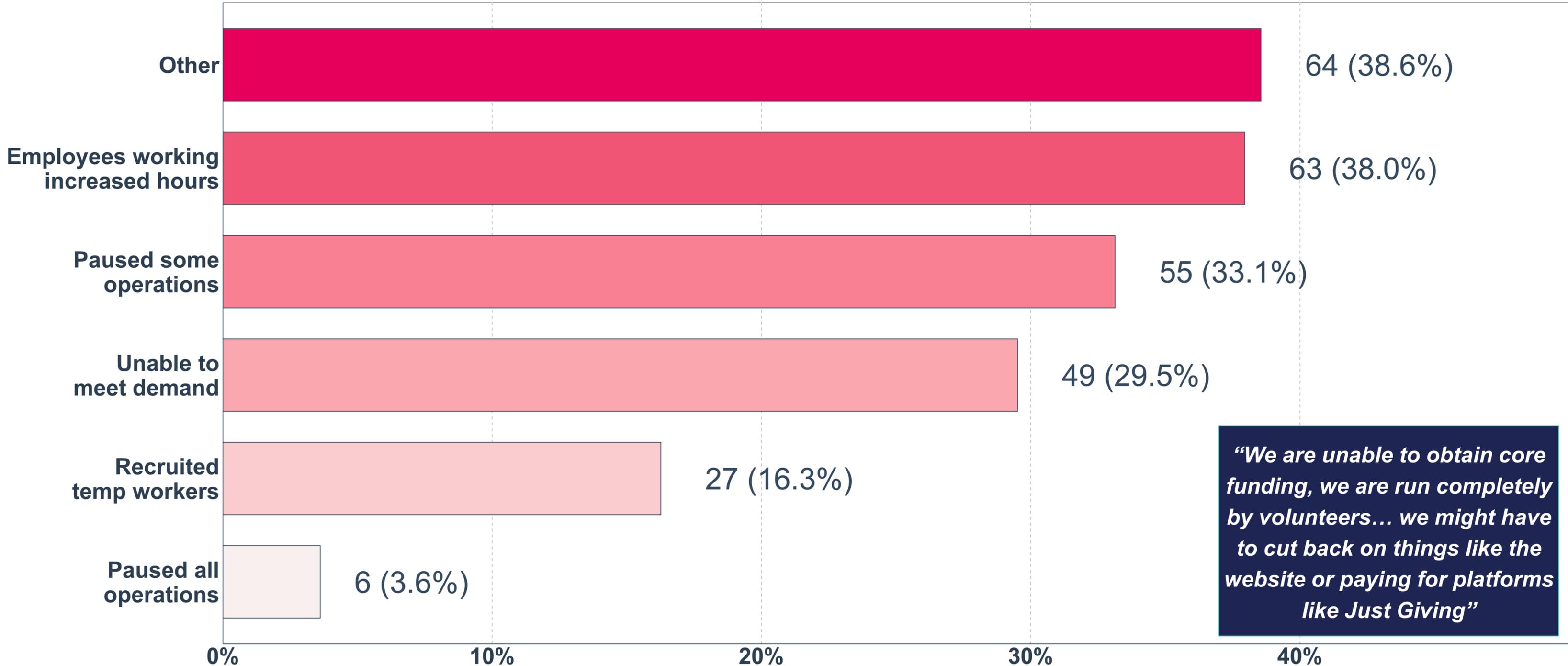
Increased a lot Increased a little Stayed the same Decreased a little Decreased a lot



Difficulties recruiting new volunteers means that existing volunteers are shouldering the burden



Consequences of recruitment difficulties, Wave 8



“We are unable to obtain core funding, we are run completely by volunteers... we might have to cut back on things like the website or paying for platforms like Just Giving”

Taking skills on board

*Findings from the eighth
VCSE Sector Barometer*

Dr Beth Kitson

November 2024





Pro Bono Economics uses economics to empower the social sector and to increase wellbeing across the UK.

We combine project work for individual charities and social enterprises with policy research that can drive systemic change. We have helped over 500 charities and worked with over 400 volunteers since our inception in 2009.

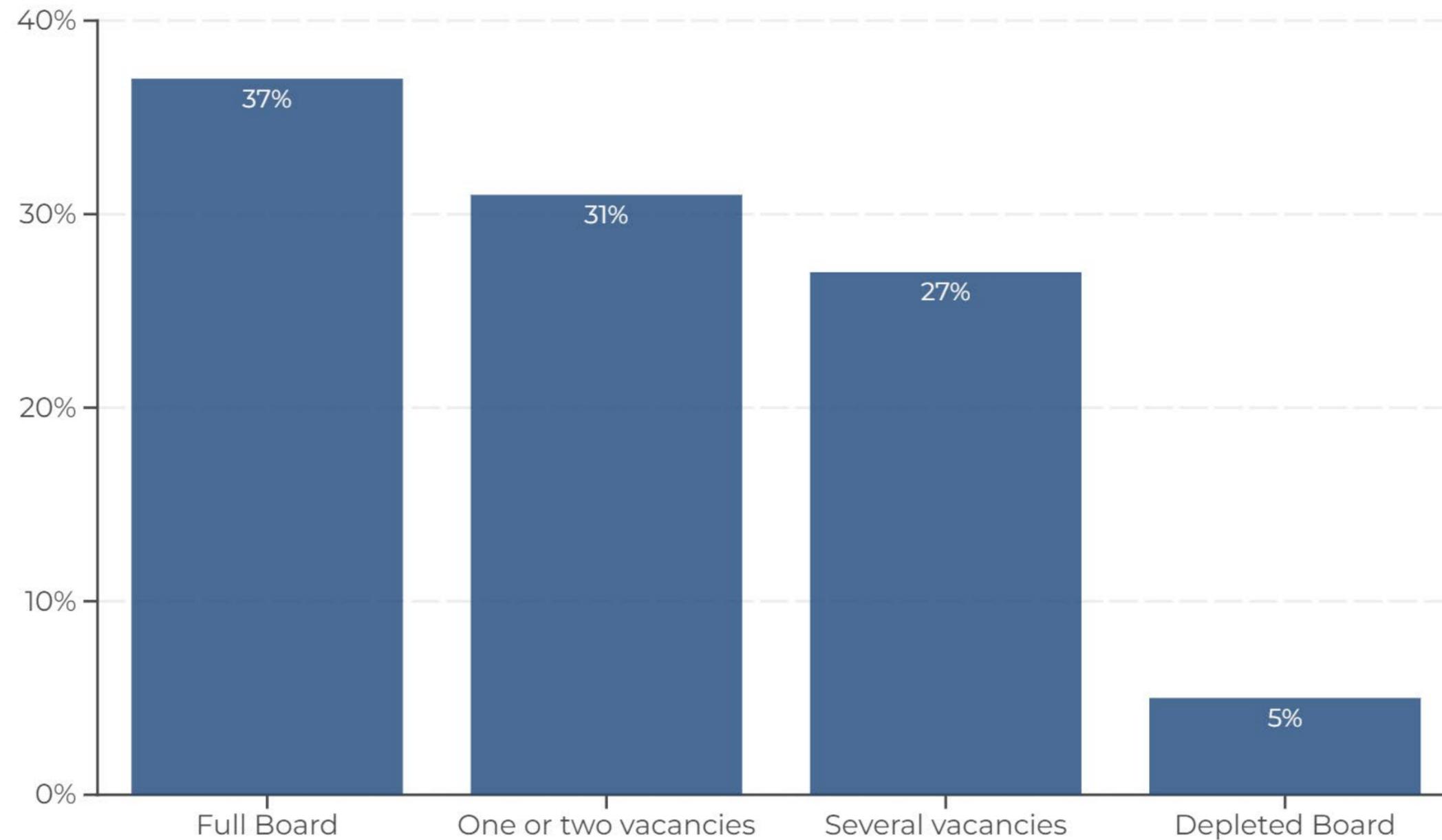
VCSE Sector Barometer Wave 8

Topical questions

- How are charity boards and trustees doing in the current climate?
- What role do boards and trustees play in supporting organisations?
- What skills do boards and trustees bring?

Many charity boards are incomplete

Proportion of charities reporting vacancies



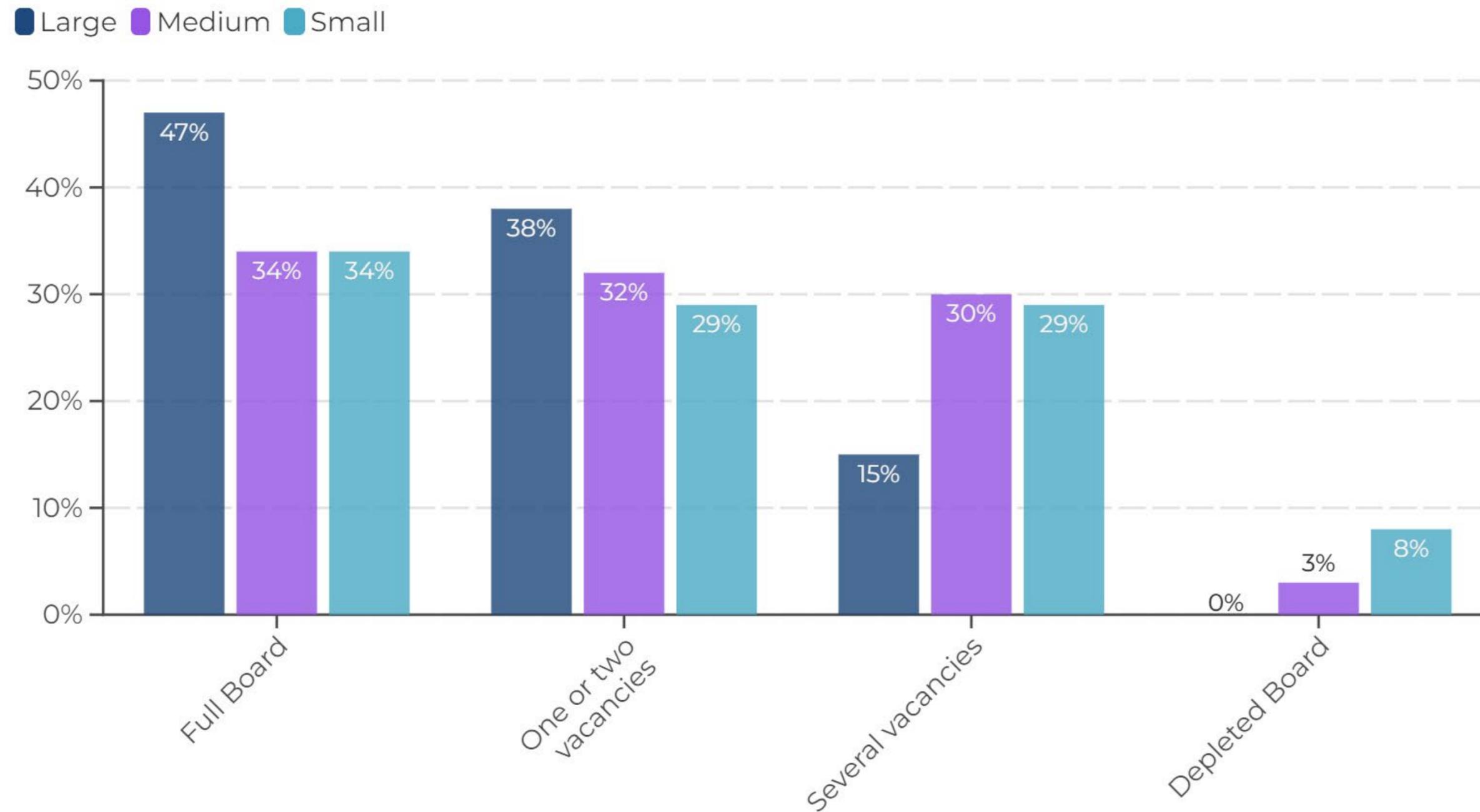
Fewer than four in 10 (37%) charities report having full boards

Almost two-thirds (63%) have at least one board vacancy

Notes: N = 423
Source: Pro Bono Economics and Nottingham Trent University, VCSE Data and National Insights Observatory, VCSE Sector Barometer (Survey conducted 25 September – 17 October 2024)

Smaller charities find it particularly difficult to access the trustees they need

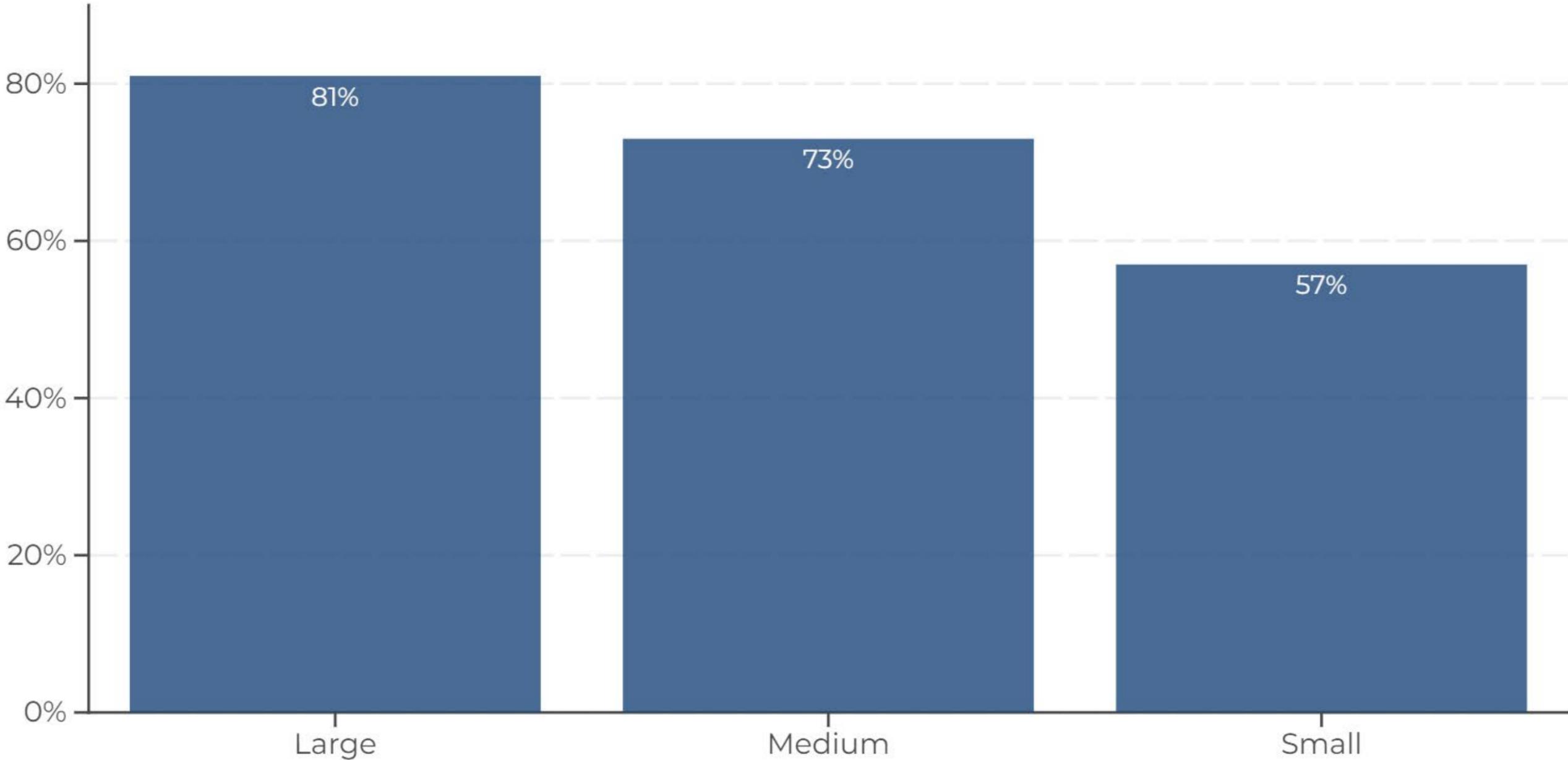
Proportion of charities reporting vacancies, by charity size



Notes: Large £1mn income (N=68); Medium £100k - £1mn income (N=141); Small < £100k income (N = 206)
Source: Pro Bono Economics and Nottingham Trent University, VCSE Data and National Insights Observatory, VCSE Sector Barometer
(Survey conducted 25 September - 17 October 2024)

Meaning small charities that are less confident their boards can address current and future challenges

Proportion of charities that agree their boards have the right blend of skills, knowledge and experience



Notes: Large £1mn income (N=68); Medium £100k - £1mn income (N=141); Small < £100k income (N = 206)
Source: Pro Bono Economics and Nottingham Trent University, VCSE Data and National Insights Observatory, VCSE Sector Barometer (Survey conducted 25 September – 17 October 2024)

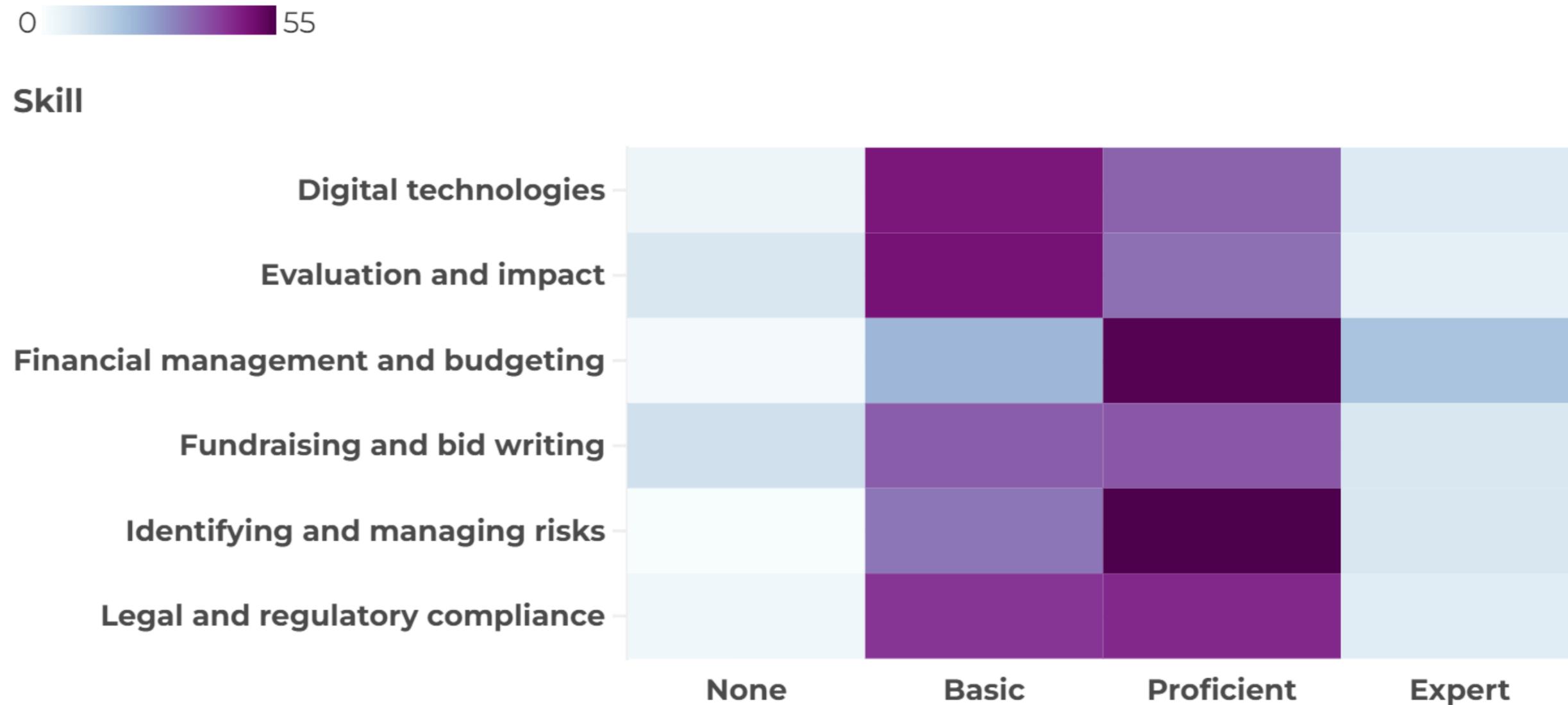
“If one trustee leaves, the answers (on how we’re doing are suddenly very different”

“Around half of our trustees were lost in 2023... This included many experienced and skilled members.

It has proven very difficult and slow to replace them”

Charities are most confident that their board can carry out “traditional” functions

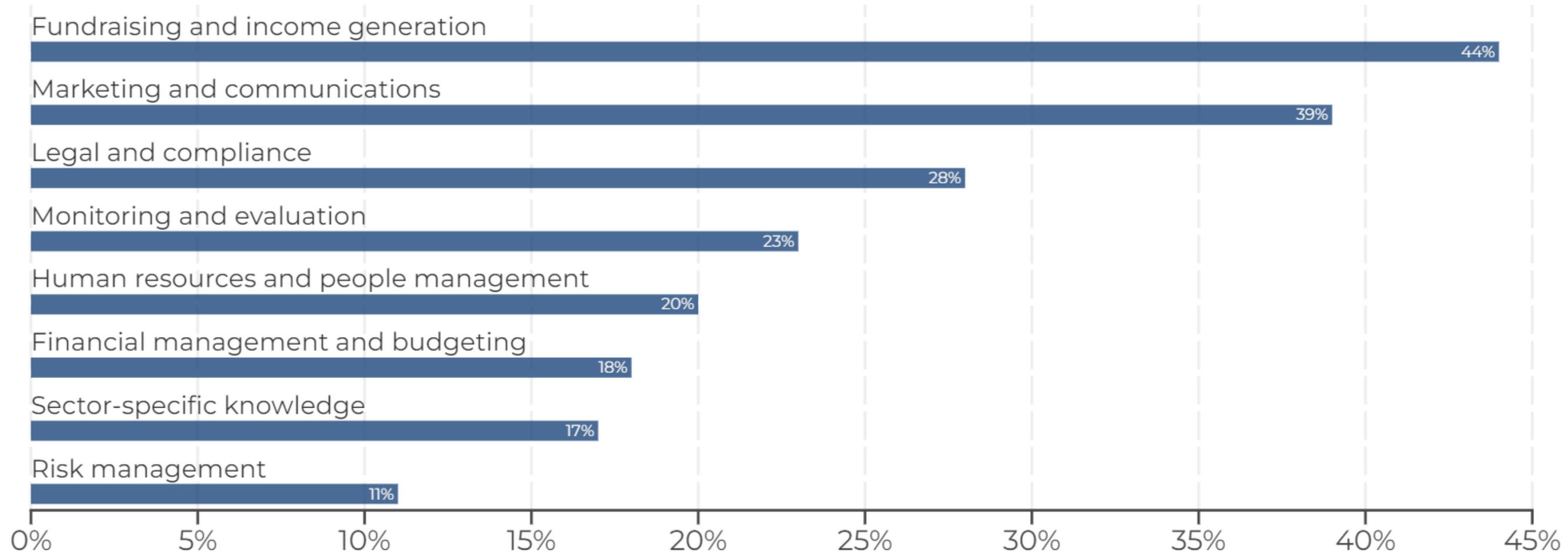
Small charities’ assessment of their board skillsets, by charity size



Notes: Large £1mn income (N=68); Medium £100k - £1mn income (N=141); Small < £100k income (N = 206)
 Source: Pro Bono Economics and Nottingham Trent University, VCSE Data and National Insights Observatory, VCSE Sector Barometer
 (Survey conducted 25 September – 17 October 2024)

Where skills gaps are most likely to hold charities back, it is in preparing to be fit for the future

The most common skills gaps on boards, according to charities



Notes: N = 415 (blanks excluded)

Source: Pro Bono Economics and Nottingham Trent University, VCSE Data and National Insights Observatory, VCSE Sector Barometer (Survey conducted 25 September – 17 October 2024)

“I would like the board to be more proactive and supportive (for example) with fund raising, - not just turn up to board meetings and complain that things aren't to their liking”

“The Board can sometimes default to spending time on operational matters rather than focusing on strategy, especially in relation to funding/commissioning challenges”

Three actions charities are taking to broaden board membership and skills

Skills audit

- Regularly asking where expertise is needed
- 42% only carry out ad hoc audits

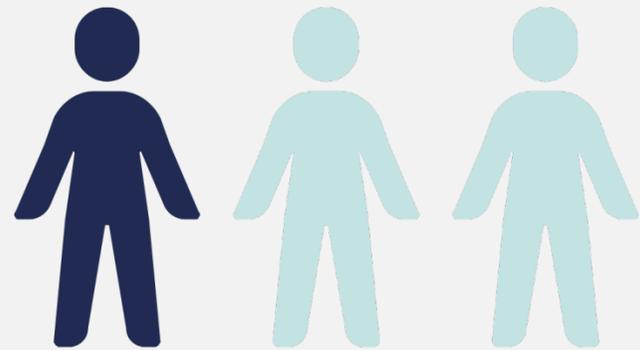
Development

- Offer training to develop and motivate current and future board members

Partnership

- With infrastructure bodies, partners across civil society and other sectors
- Raising awareness, providing resource and encourage new trustees

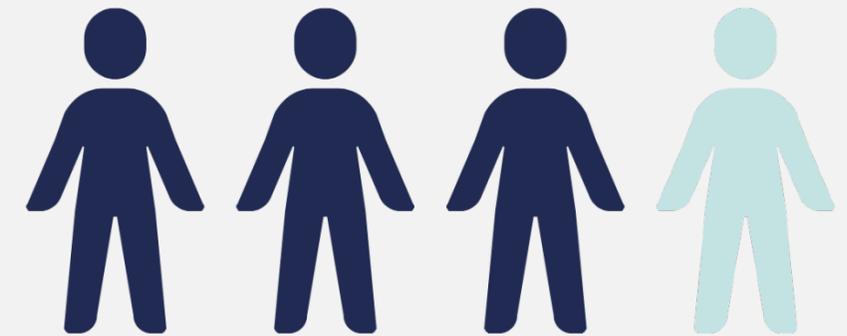
Other Findings: Boards and Trustees



1 in 3 report increased board member involvement in fundraising and community outreach over the last 2 years



Say their board **lack skills** in fundraising and bid writing and evaluation and impact



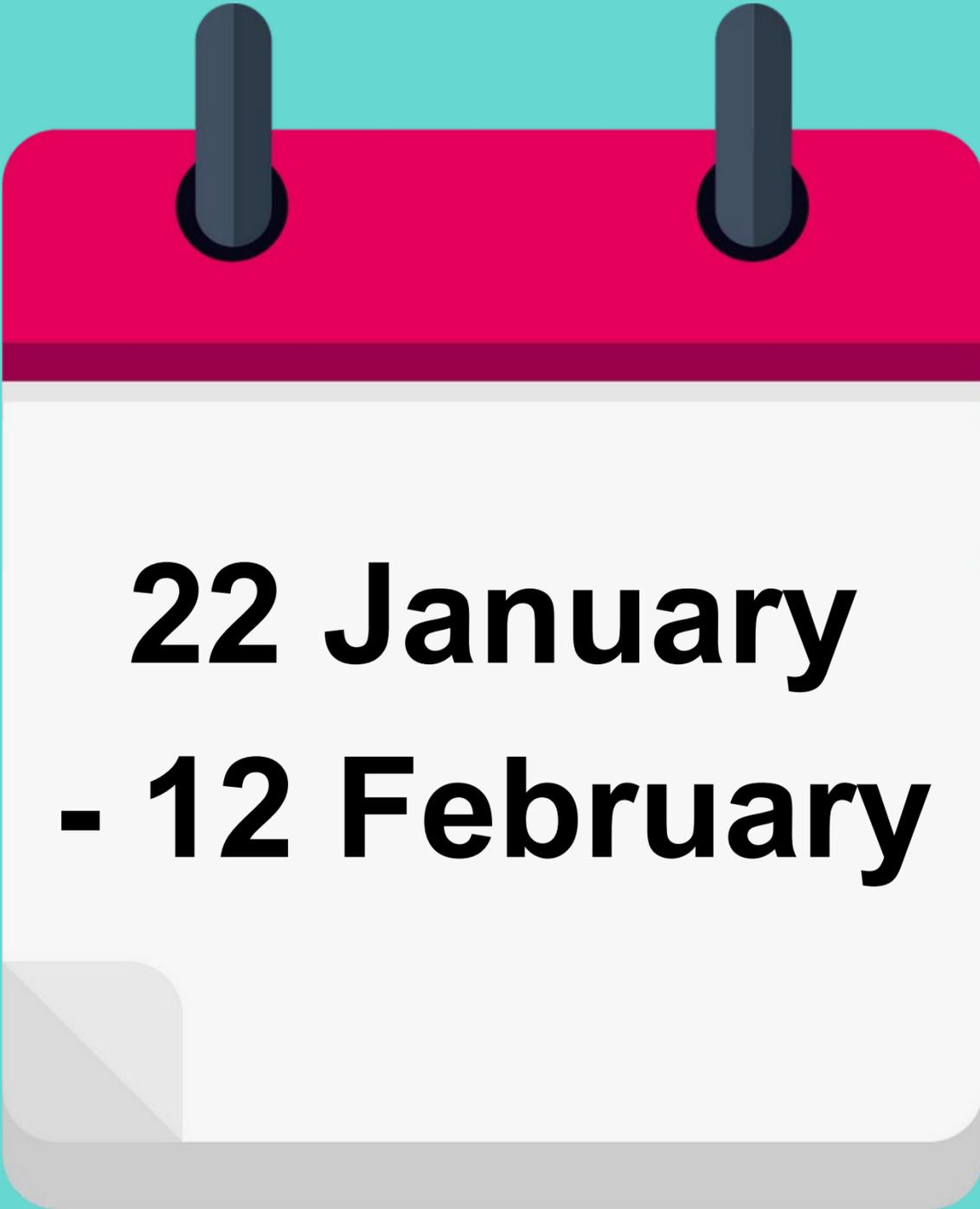
3 in 4 report that Boards are moderately or extremely **effective** in strategic leadership, supporting management, cooperation, and **risk management**



2025 Developments

- 🗨️ Our aim is to make the Barometer more useful and beneficial, empowering users to make the most of their data
- 🗨️ Individualised reports – compare your responses to others
- 🗨️ Improved dashboard – working toward a holistic view of the sector
- 🗨️ User testing – if you are interested, please get in touch at VCSEObservatory@ntu.ac.uk

Wave 9

A graphic of a calendar page with a red header and two dark grey binder rings at the top. The page is white with a grey shadow at the bottom.

**22 January
- 12 February**

Thank you!



Stay in touch

-  [Email: VCSEObservatory@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:VCSEObservatory@ntu.ac.uk)
-  [X \(formerly Twitter\): @VCSEObservatory](https://twitter.com/VCSEObservatory)
-  [Website](#)
-  [LinkedIn](#)

