



neighbourly

Global change starts locally.



Neighbourly's Autumn 2025 Community Survey Results

1,340 responses

17 Sept – 6 Oct 2025

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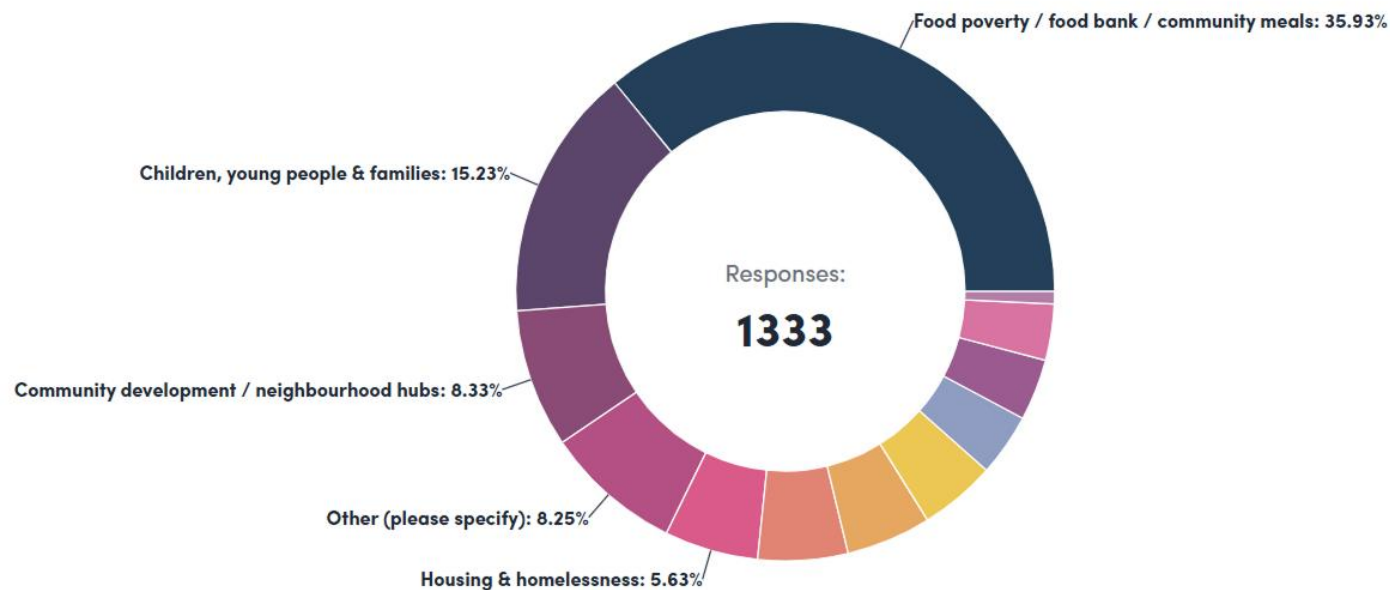
Key insights

1,340 local good causes across the UK and Ireland responded to our Autumn survey, helping us to understand more about their outlook, needs and challenges.

- **Demand Increase:** Nearly four-fifths (79%) of organisations reported that demand for their services has increased over the past 6 months. Specifically, **43% noted demand had 'Increased a lot'**.
- **Cost of Living Crisis Impact:** Organisations overwhelmingly anticipate severe effects this winter. A total of **90%** expect the COL crisis to affect the people they support 'Very significantly' (56%) or 'Quite significantly' (34%).
- **Capacity Shortfall:** Despite high demand, **two-fifths (40%) confirmed they are currently unable to help people requesting support** due to limitations in capacity or funding.
- **Primary Focus Area:** The dominant focus across the network is addressing basic needs, with **food poverty / food bank / community meals** listed as the main focus area for 36% of all responding organisations.
- **Reach:** The survey respondents collectively support a total number of **over 509,000 people directly per week**, with an average of 380 people supported per organisation, per week.

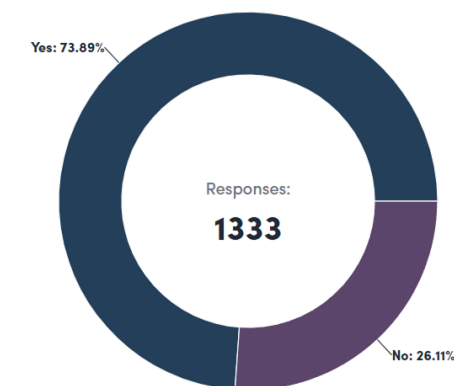


Respondents from a wide range of organisation types, across the UK & Ireland,
with 36% involved in food provision



The majority are registered charities

74% are responding on behalf of registered charities



Education, training & skills: 5.4% Health & disability: 5.1% Mental health & wellbeing: 4.58% Older people: 3.75% Poverty & financial hardship support: 3.68%
Environment & sustainability: 3.38% Refugees & asylum seekers: 0.75%

02

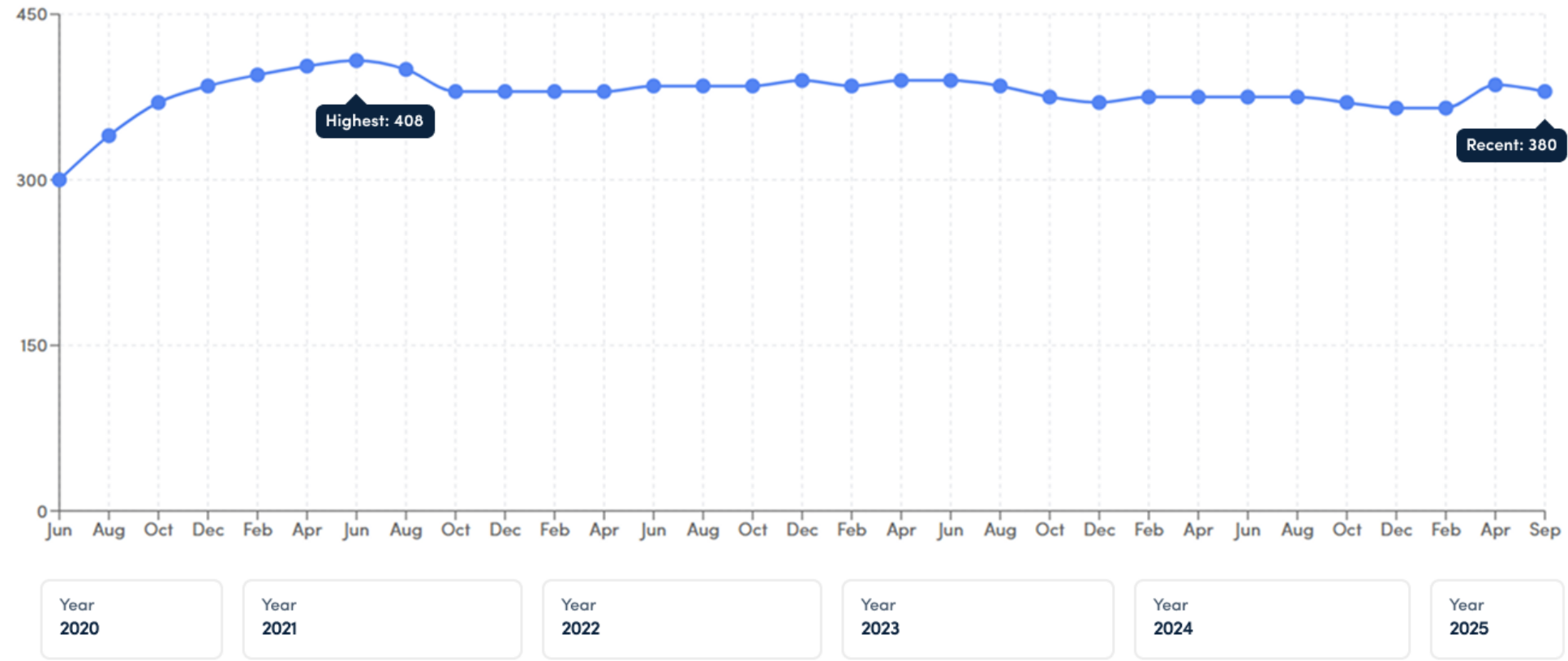
Seasonal demand & service pressures



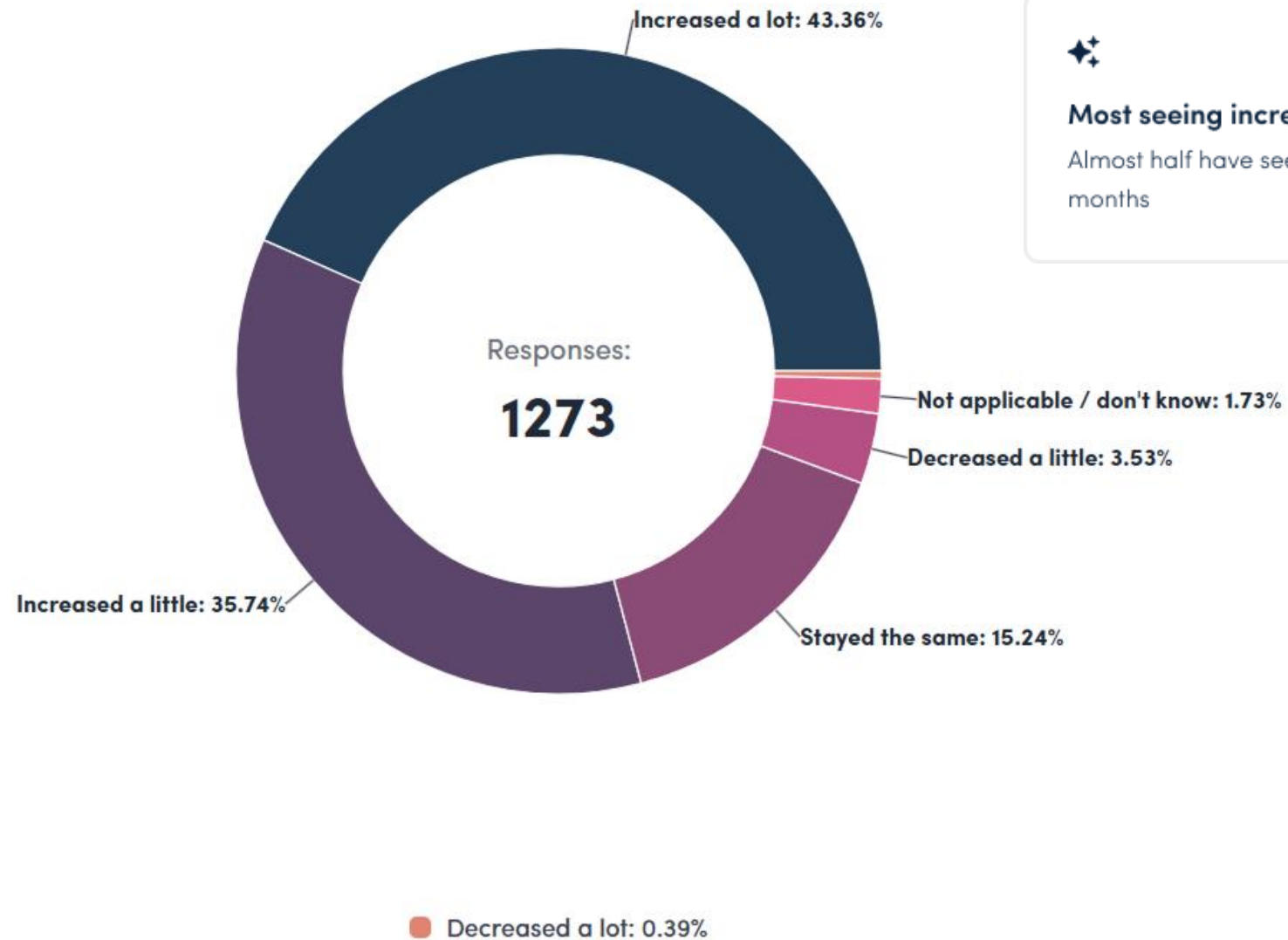
The need in communities remains high – an average of 380 people are supported per week, per organisation

People supported per week

Quarter by quarter comparison



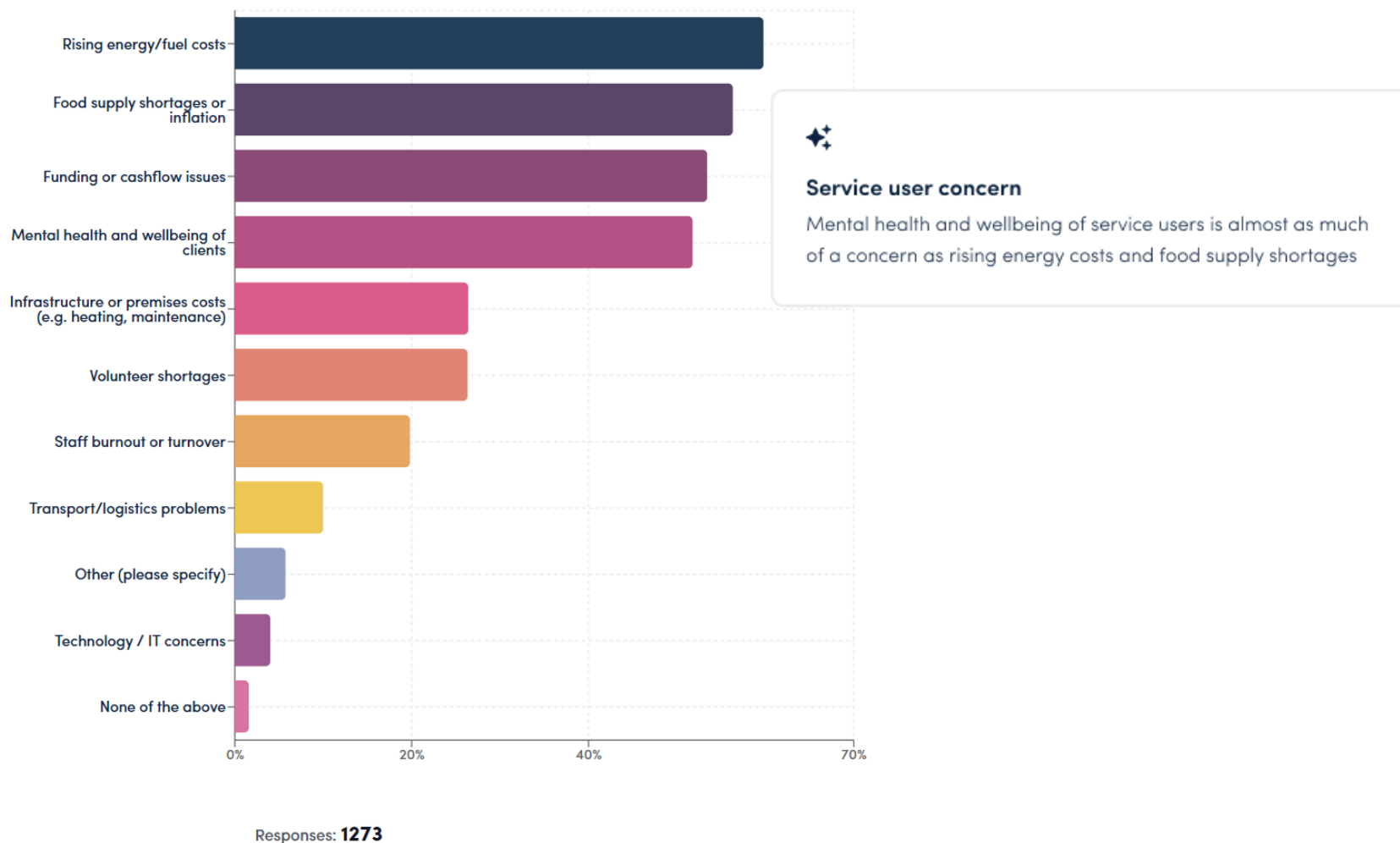
Rising demand - 79% say demand has increased over the past 6 months



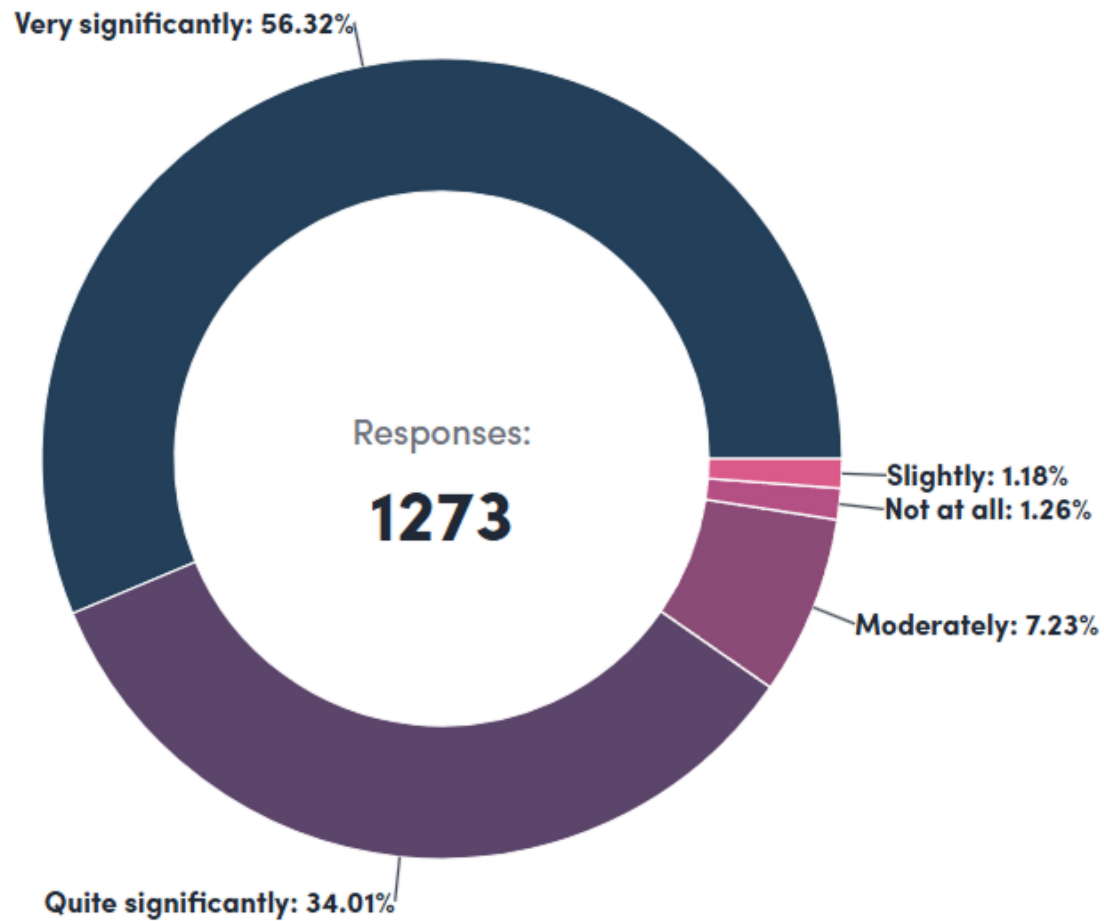
Most seeing increased demand

Almost half have seen demand increase a lot over the past 6 months

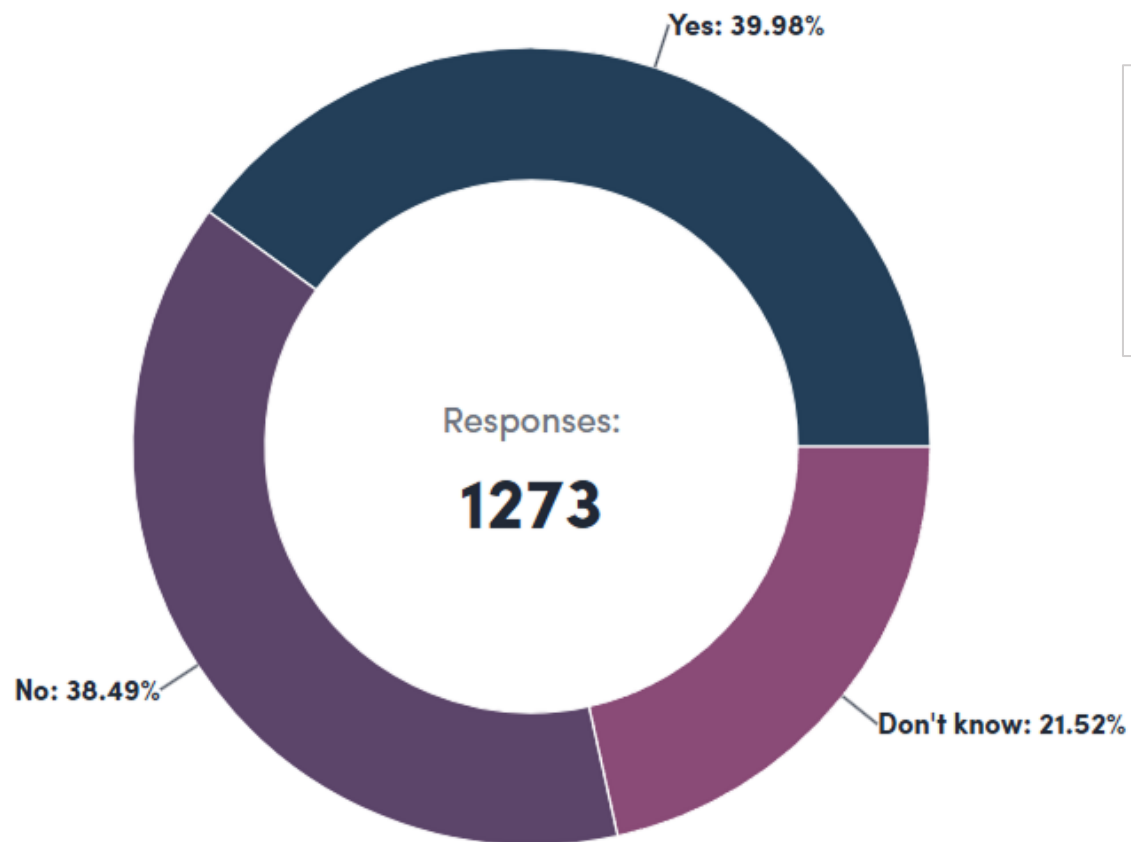
The most widespread concerns for organisations going into the colder months are directly related to inflation and funding, but more than half (52%) cited the mental health and wellbeing of clients as a major concern



90% expect the cost-of-living crisis (food, energy, rent) to 'quite' or 'very' significantly affect the people they support this winter



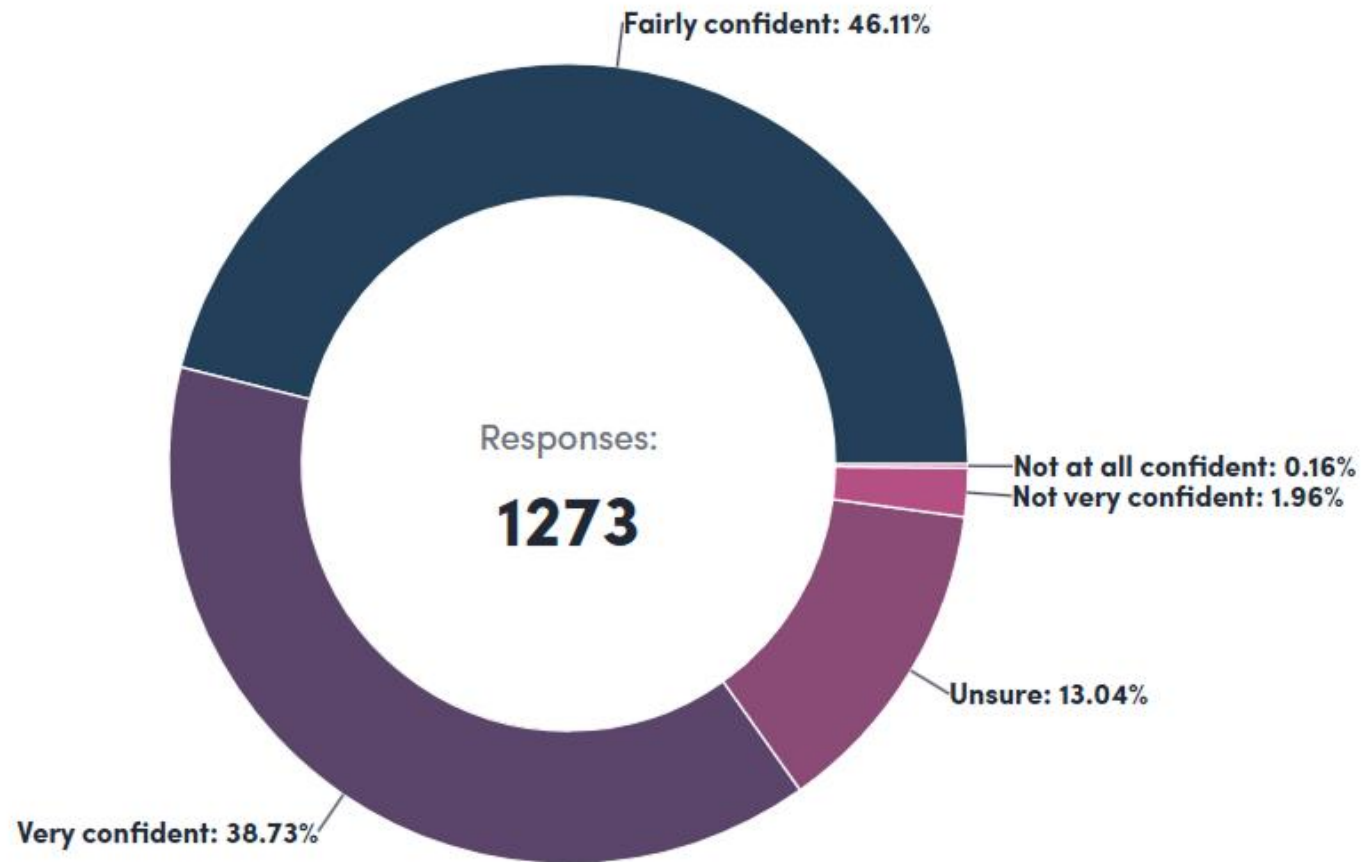
40% say there are people they can't help due to limitations in capacity or funding



Of this 40%, the average number of people per week they are unable to help is approx. 47.

This average includes some high estimates (1,000 – 2,000), which raise the overall average. After removing these, the average is approximately 25.

85% are 'fairly' or 'very' confident in being able to continue to deliver services in the current climate for the next 12 months



“We are mainly concerned with being able to afford to heat our space. Last year we were forced to close the hub due to lack of heating when the temperatures were at their lowest.”

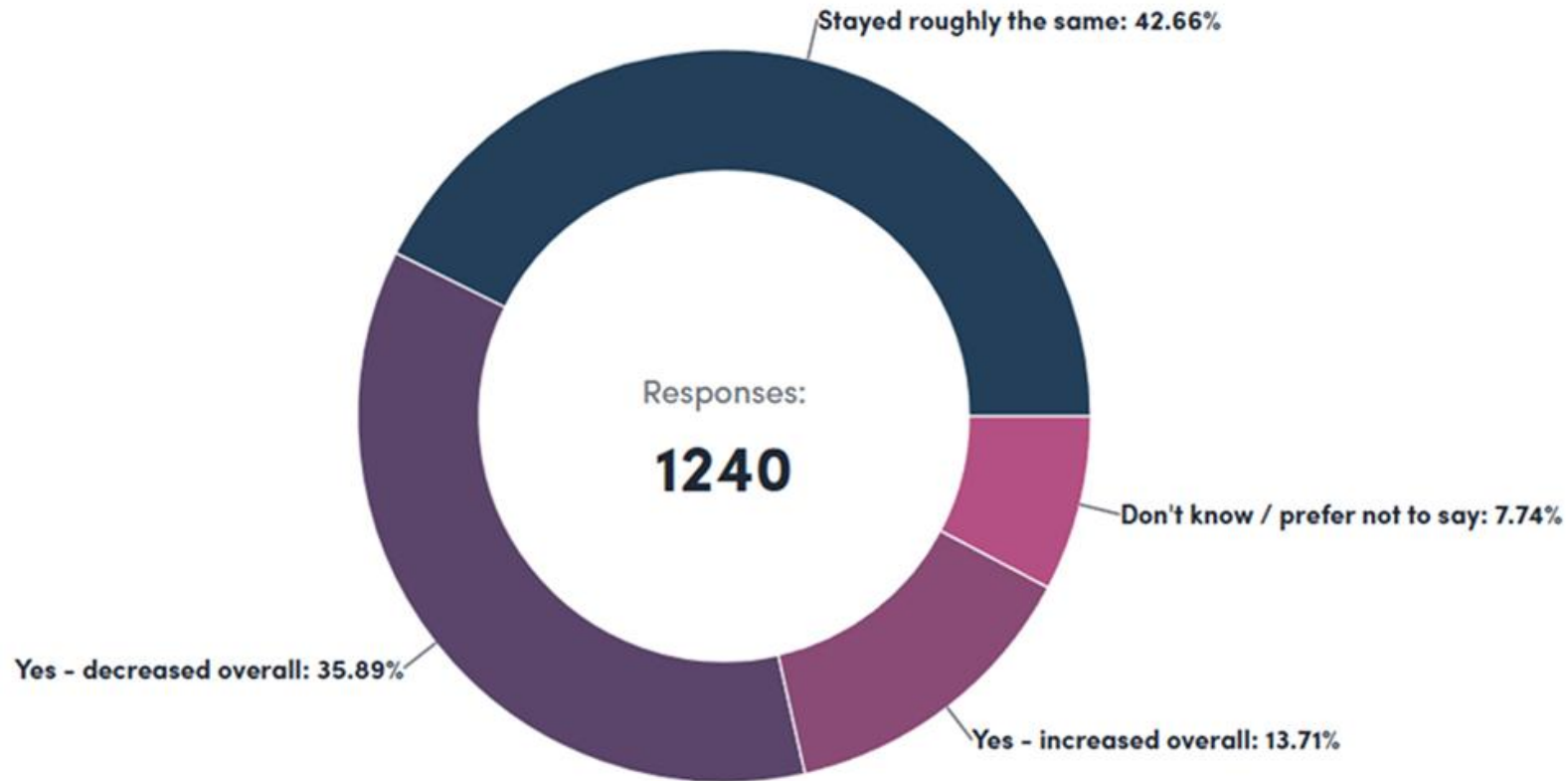
Arts 2 Heal, Blackburn

03

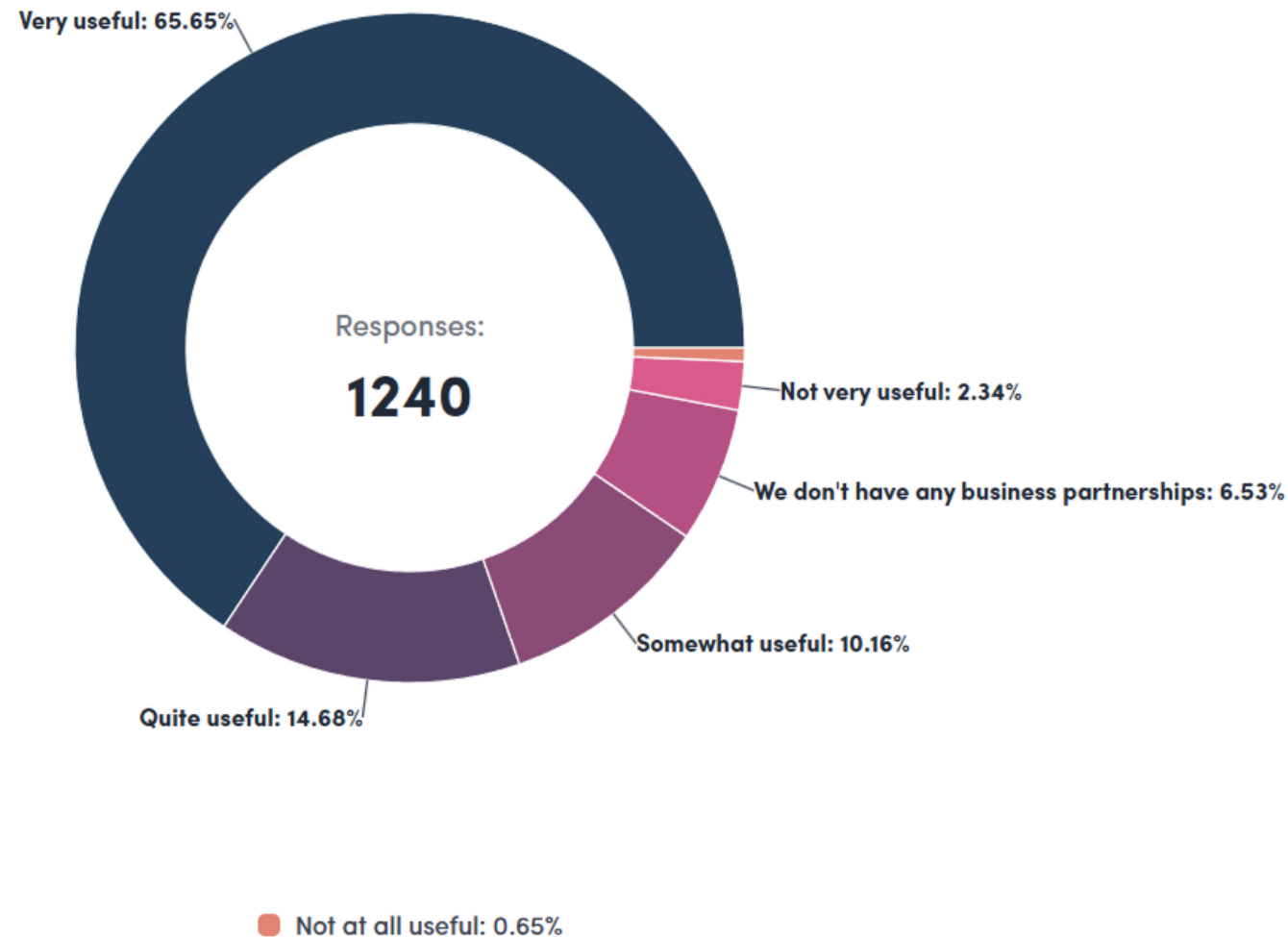
Support & partnerships



Regarding fundraising and income streams over the past year, 36% reported that their income had decreased overall



Business partnerships (such as volunteering, surplus giving, donations and sponsorship) are seen as overwhelmingly useful. 81% rated partnerships as 'Very useful' (66%) or 'Quite useful' (15%) in helping them deliver their services.



Product donations – most needed items

Strong demand for a broader range of donations beyond the typical fresh food and bakery items.

Non-food essentials (most requested):

- **Personal and feminine hygiene:** This was the most frequently mentioned category after food. There is a high demand for toiletries, including soap, shampoo, shower gel, deodorant, and especially menstrual products.
- **Cleaning and household products:** Many organisations requested cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, toilet paper and general household items to support both their own operations and the families they serve.
- **Baby products:** Nappies, baby formula and baby food were a recurring request, highlighting the need to support young families.
- **Clothing:** Requests for clothing, especially warm items like coats, socks, hats, and bedding, were common, reflecting a focus on helping people through the colder winter months.

Specific food and drink categories:

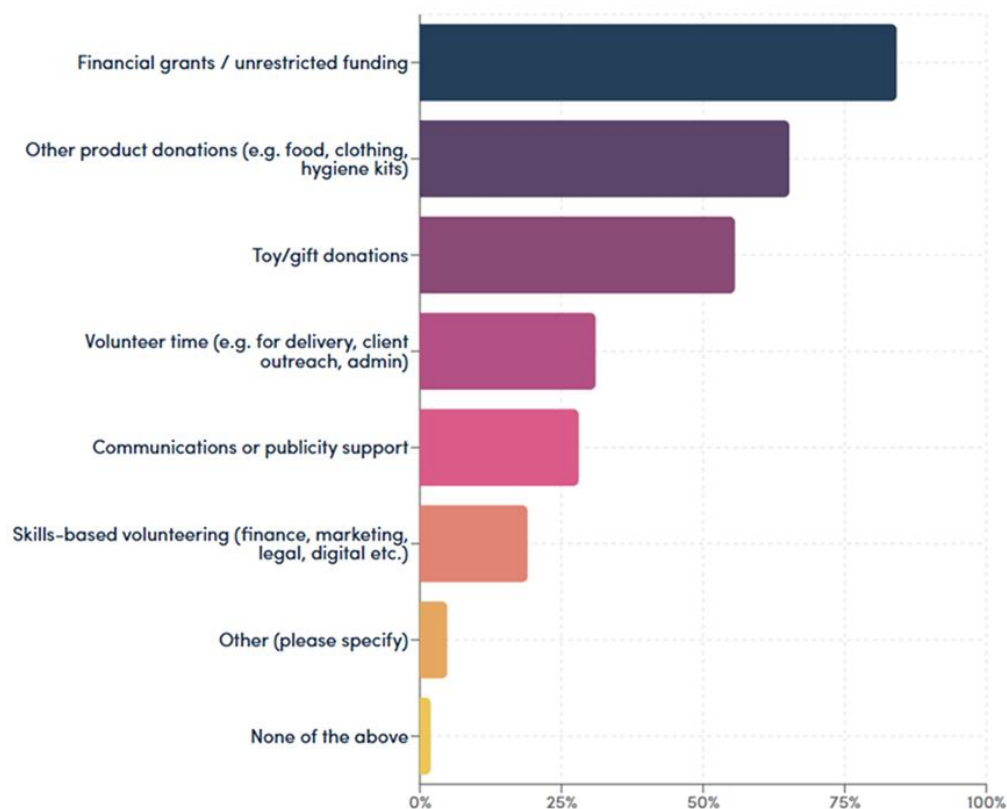
- **Long-life and ambient foods:** While all food is appreciated, there is a consistent demand for cupboard staples such as tinned goods, pasta, rice, tea, coffee, sugar, and long-life milk. These items are more reliable and easier to store than perishable goods.
- **Fresh produce:** More fresh fruits, vegetables and meat, and less of the bread and bakery items which can sometimes be disproportionate.
- **Specialty foods:** There were several requests for halal products and ethnic foods to cater to diverse community needs.

Non-standard donations & infrastructure:

- **Building and DIY materials:** A number of organisations requested building materials, paint, tools, and gardening supplies, for maintaining or improving physical spaces.
- **IT and technology:** There is a need for laptops, computers, printers and other IT equipment to help with digital inclusion efforts and organisational management.
- **Funding and logistics:** Some responders touched on logistical and financial challenges, mentioning the need for funding to purchase items, support for transportation (vans), and more consistent, reliable donation schedules from supermarkets.

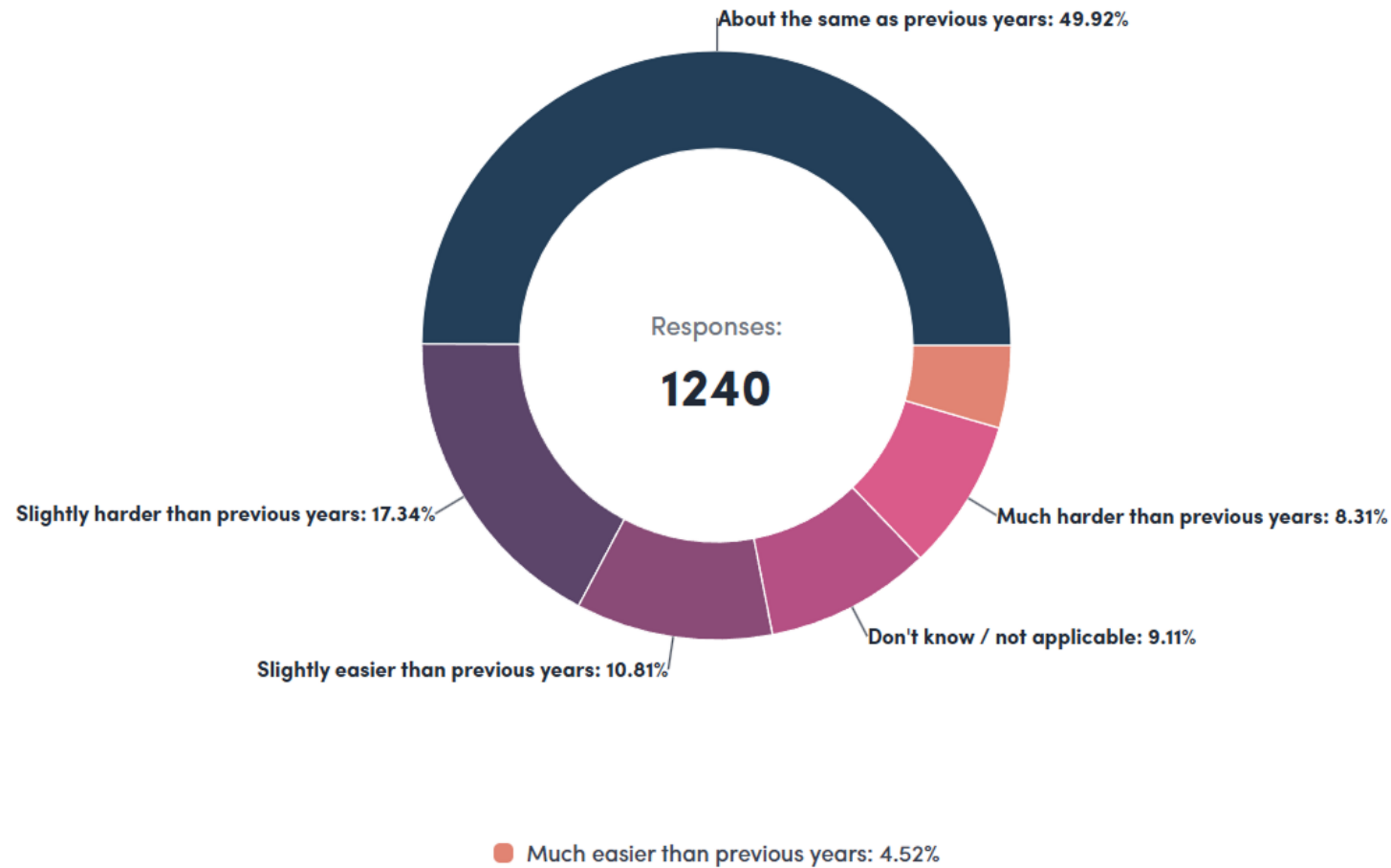
Christmas support priorities;

- Funding tops the list: More than 8 in 10 charities (83%) say financial grants or unrestricted funding are one of the most helpful forms of Christmas support
- Practical help: Nearly two-thirds (66%) highlight donations of essential products such as food, clothing and hygiene kits
- Festive gifts: Over half (57%) say toys and gift donations are important

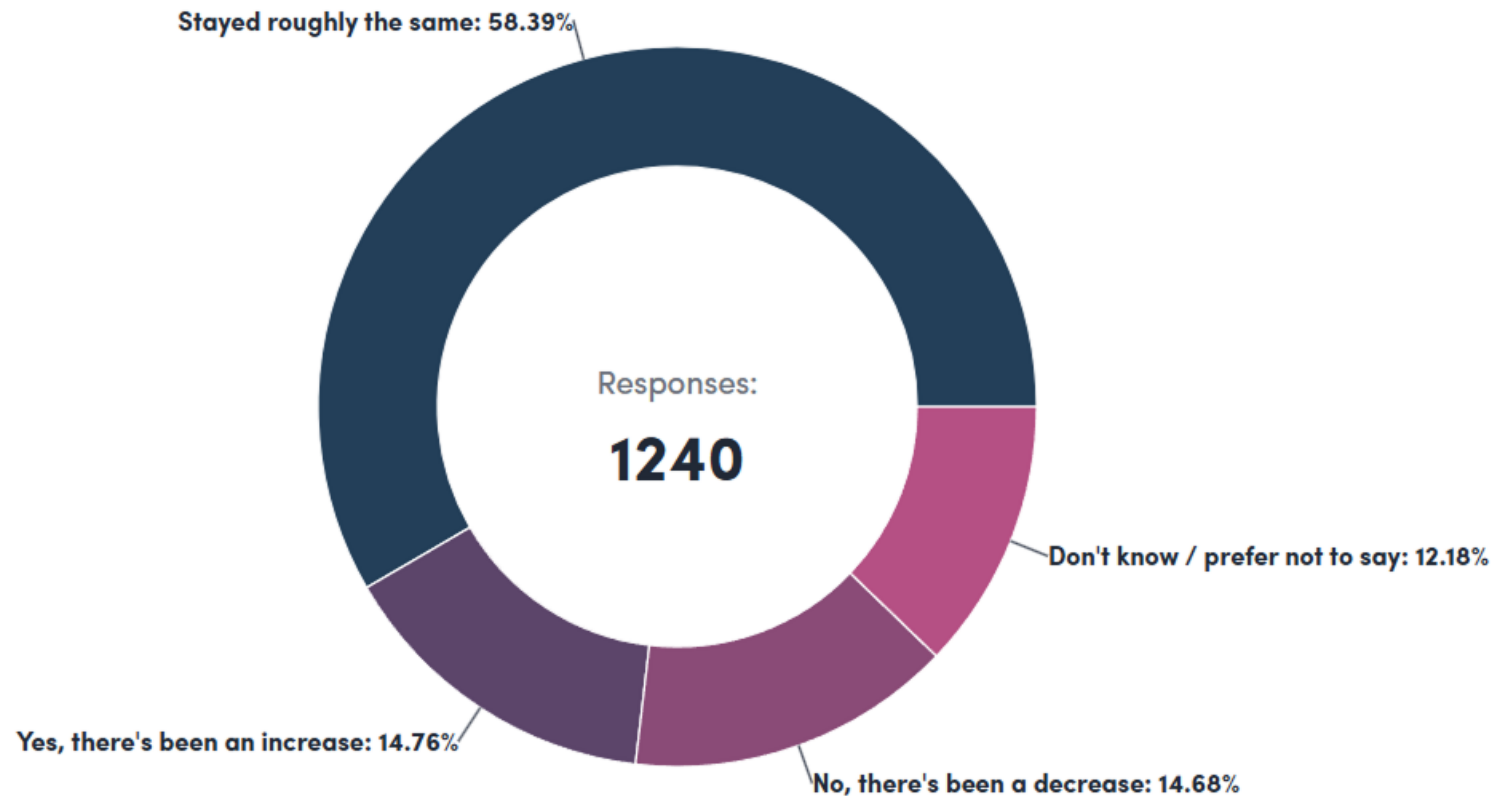


Responses: **1240**

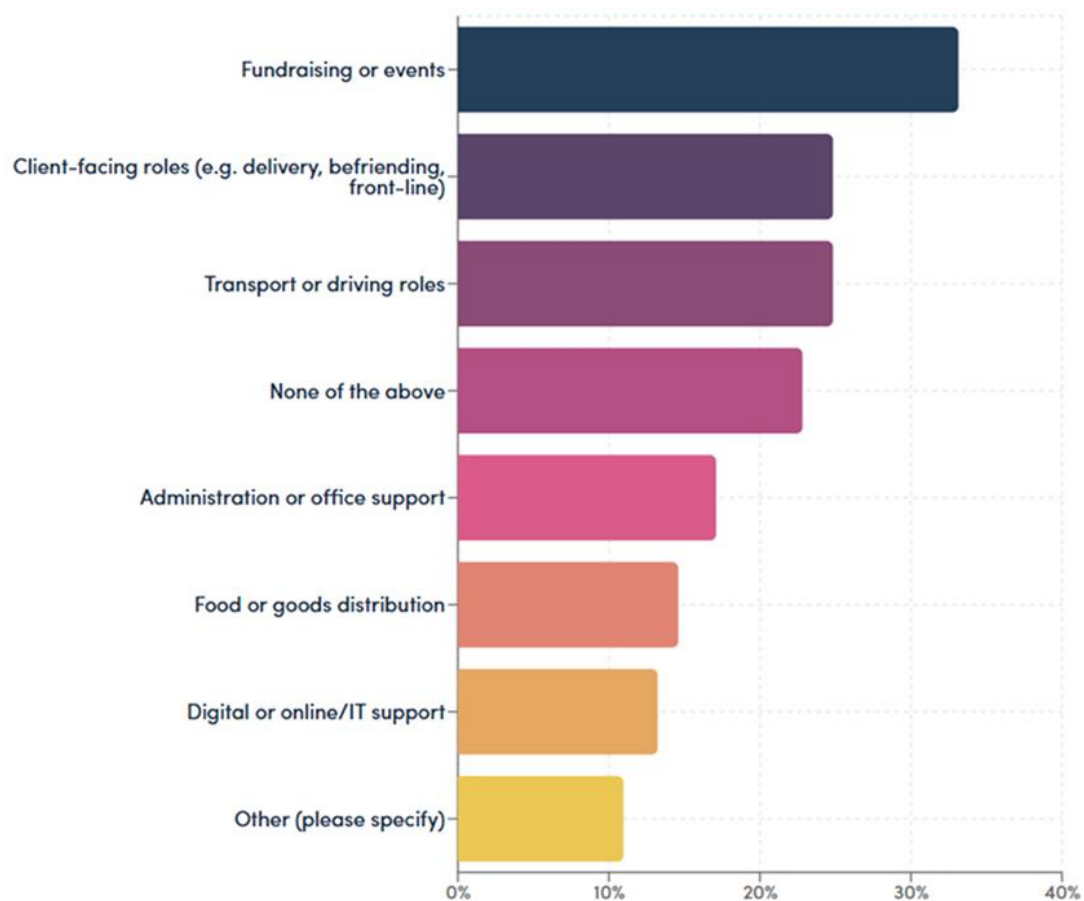
50% say volunteering recruitment and retention has remained about the same as previous years



58% say repeat volunteers have stayed roughly the same over the last 6 months, compared to previous periods



The most challenging volunteer roles to fill are fundraising & events (33%), client-facing roles (befriending, front-line: 25%) and transport & driving roles (25%). Corporate volunteering programmes can target these high-need areas.



Responses: **1240**

“We are grateful for the support we receive from Neighbourly with the AI training, funding support and the amazing food supplies.

On behalf of the people of Croydon and the surrounding areas, we say a big thank you for supporting people’s mental wellbeing by providing quality food parcels and essential toiletries.”

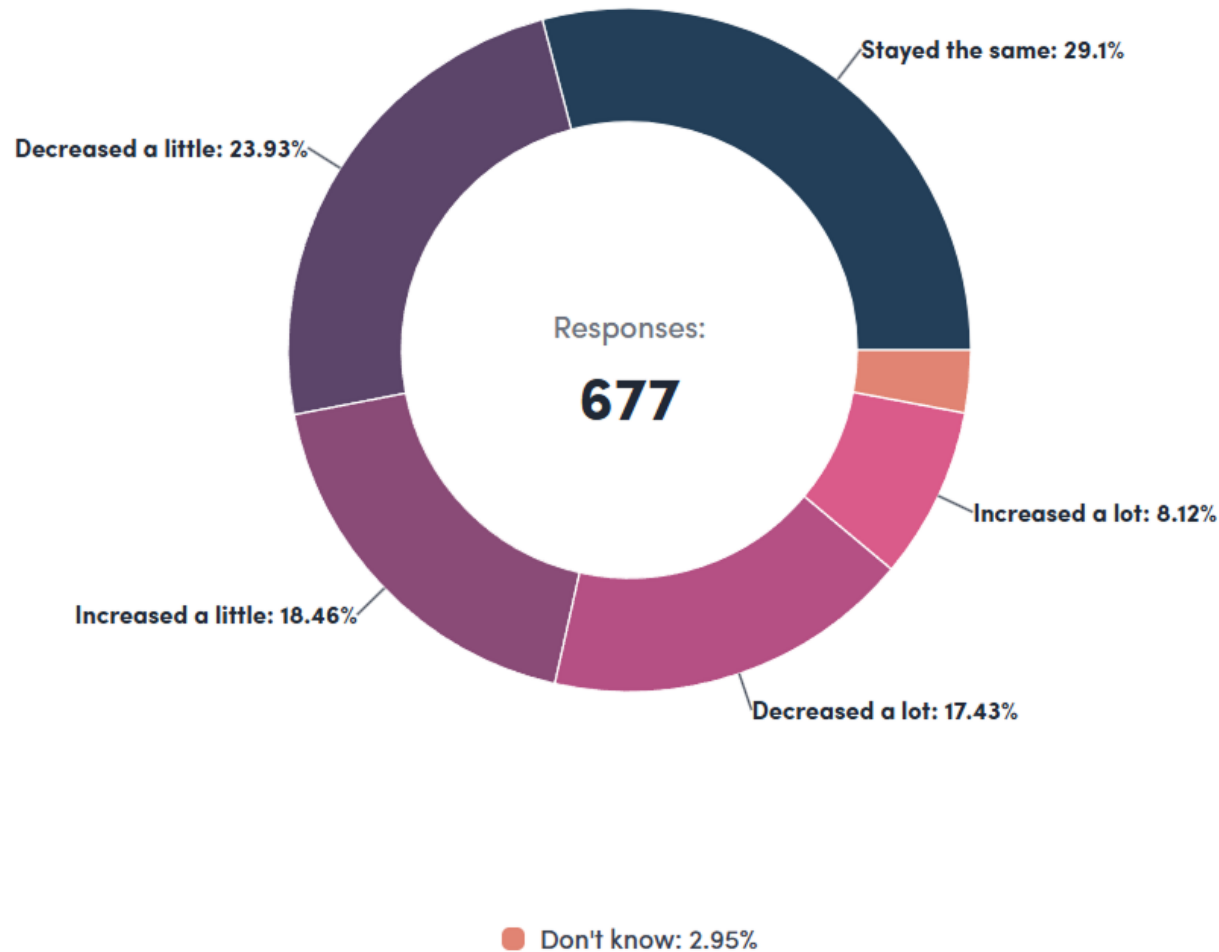
Alive foodbank, Croydon

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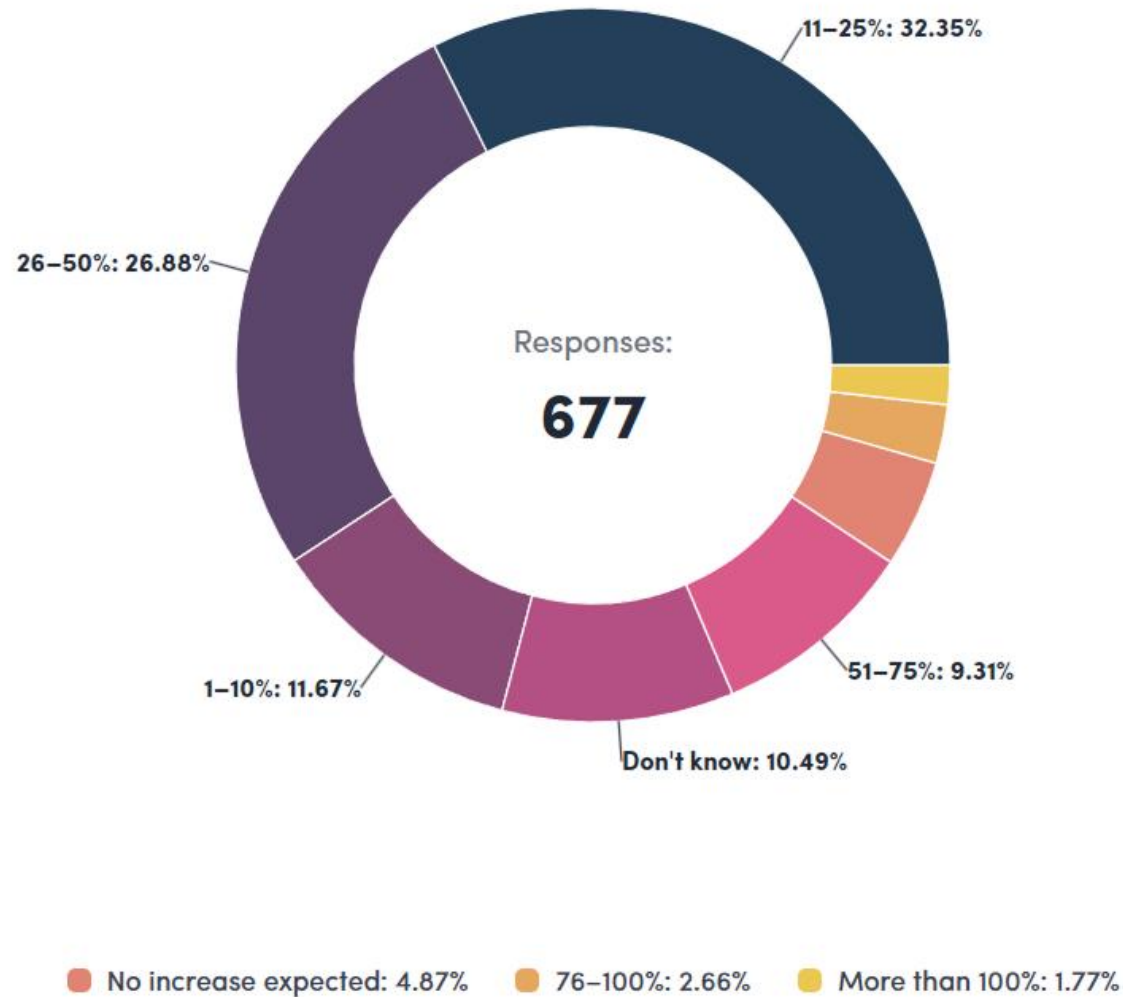
Food surplus supply & demand



42% of food collectors think surplus donations to their organisation have decreased over the past 6 months. 29% say they have stayed the same



The demand for foodbanks and food provision is expected to increase by an average of nearly 30% over the colder months



“Winter is ahead, and I am worried for our clients as I know there's always a bigger need during those winter months. We want people to keep warm and, if on the streets, have some nice warm food.

Hopefully with Neighbourly we can continue to do this with all our surplus and volunteer support.”

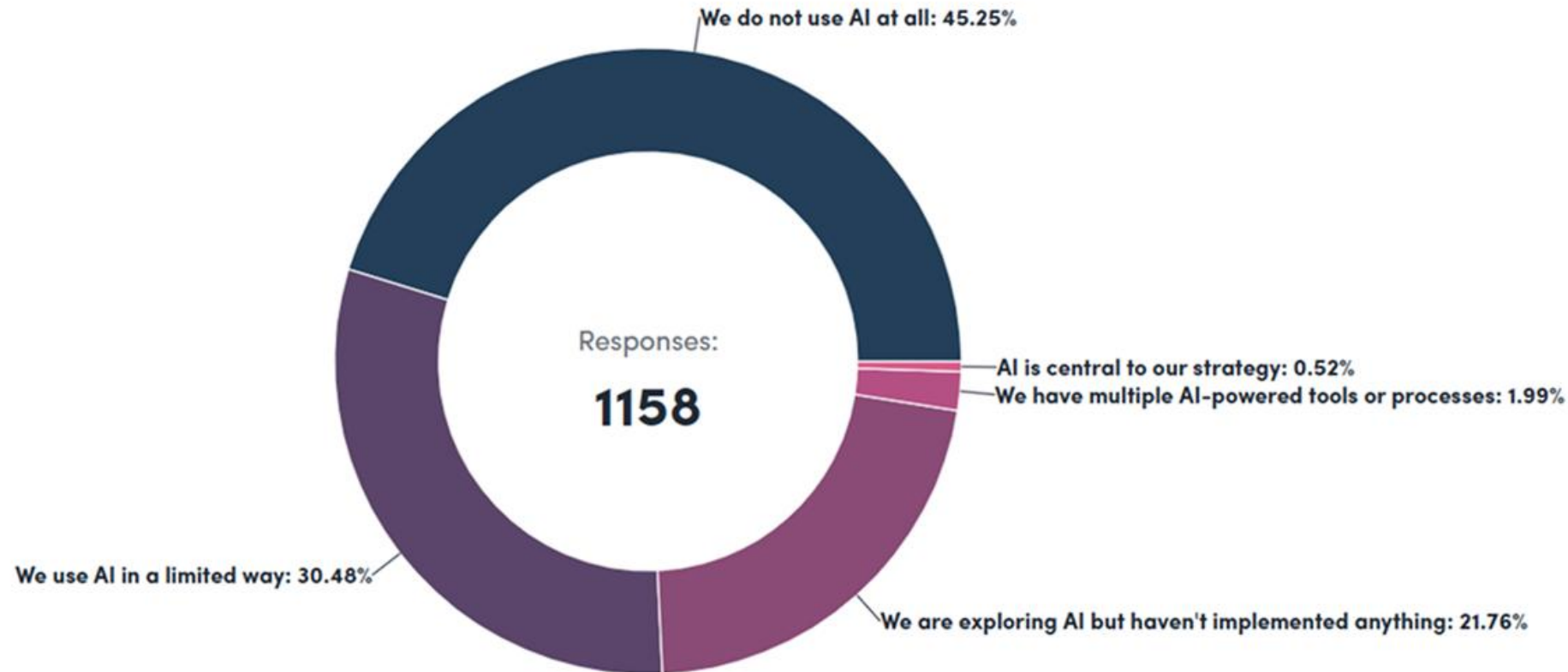
The People's Army, London

05

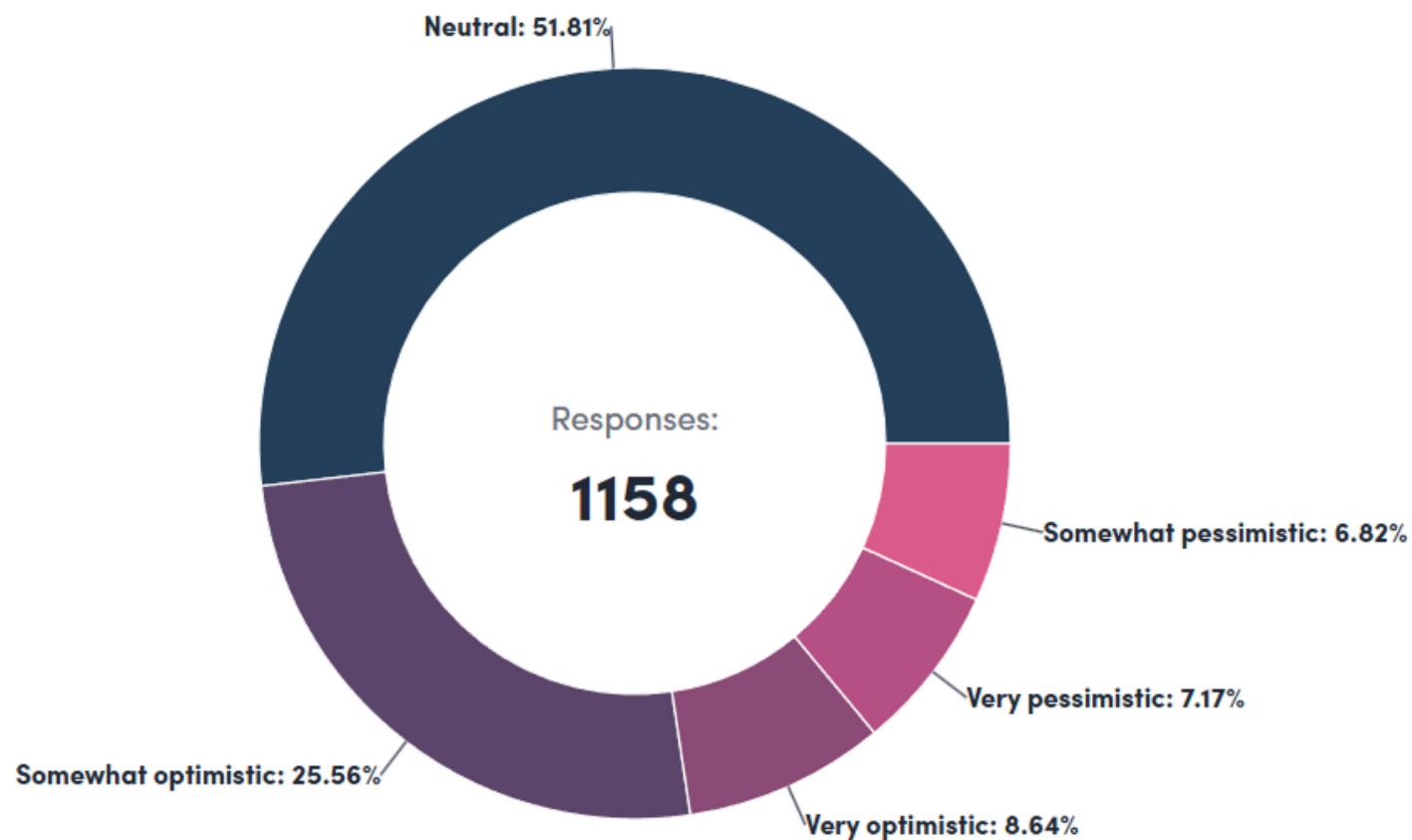
Technology, AI & digital



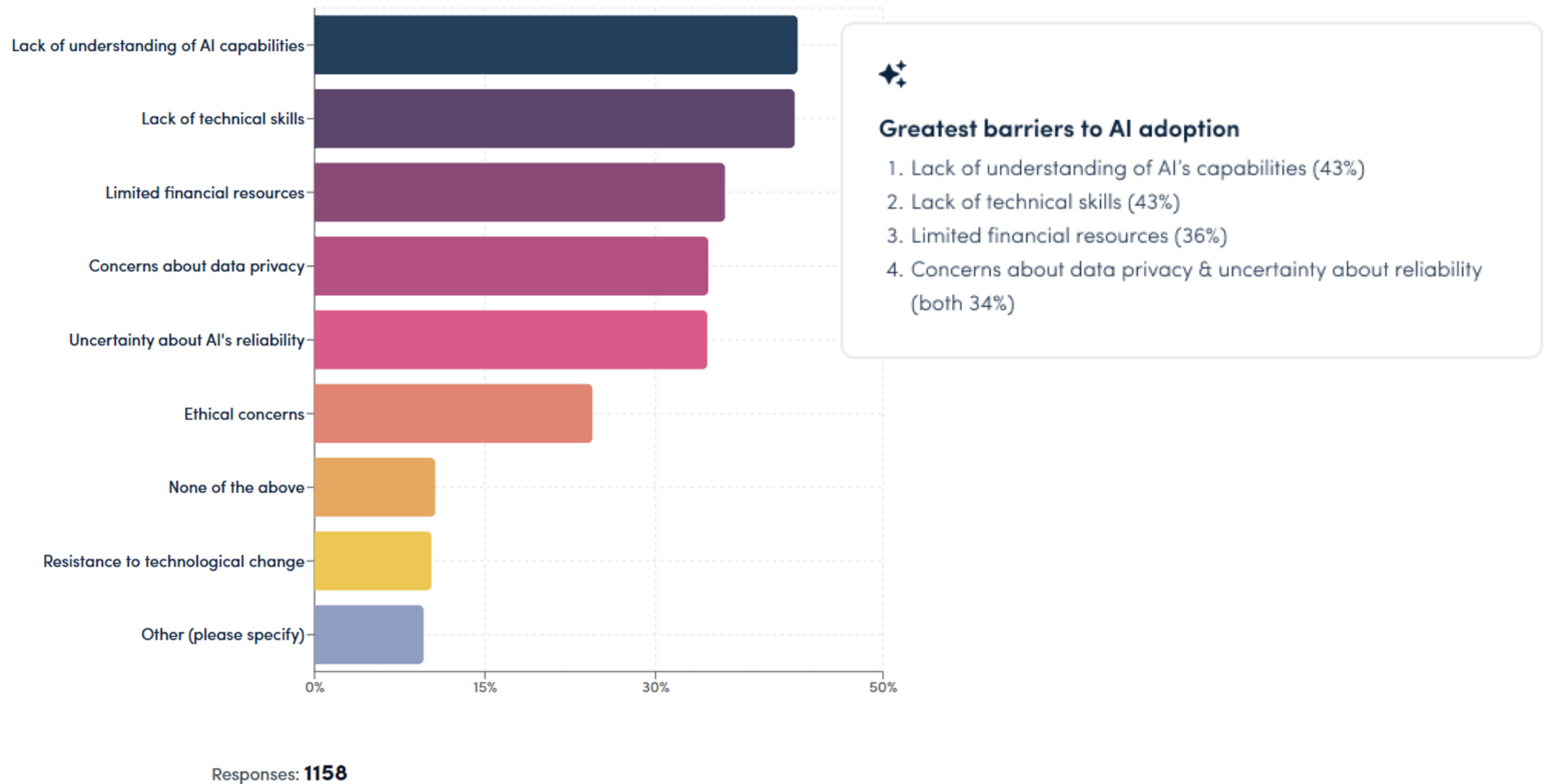
30% say they are now using AI in a limited way (up from 19% six months ago)
45% say they aren't using AI at all (a drop from 58% six months ago)



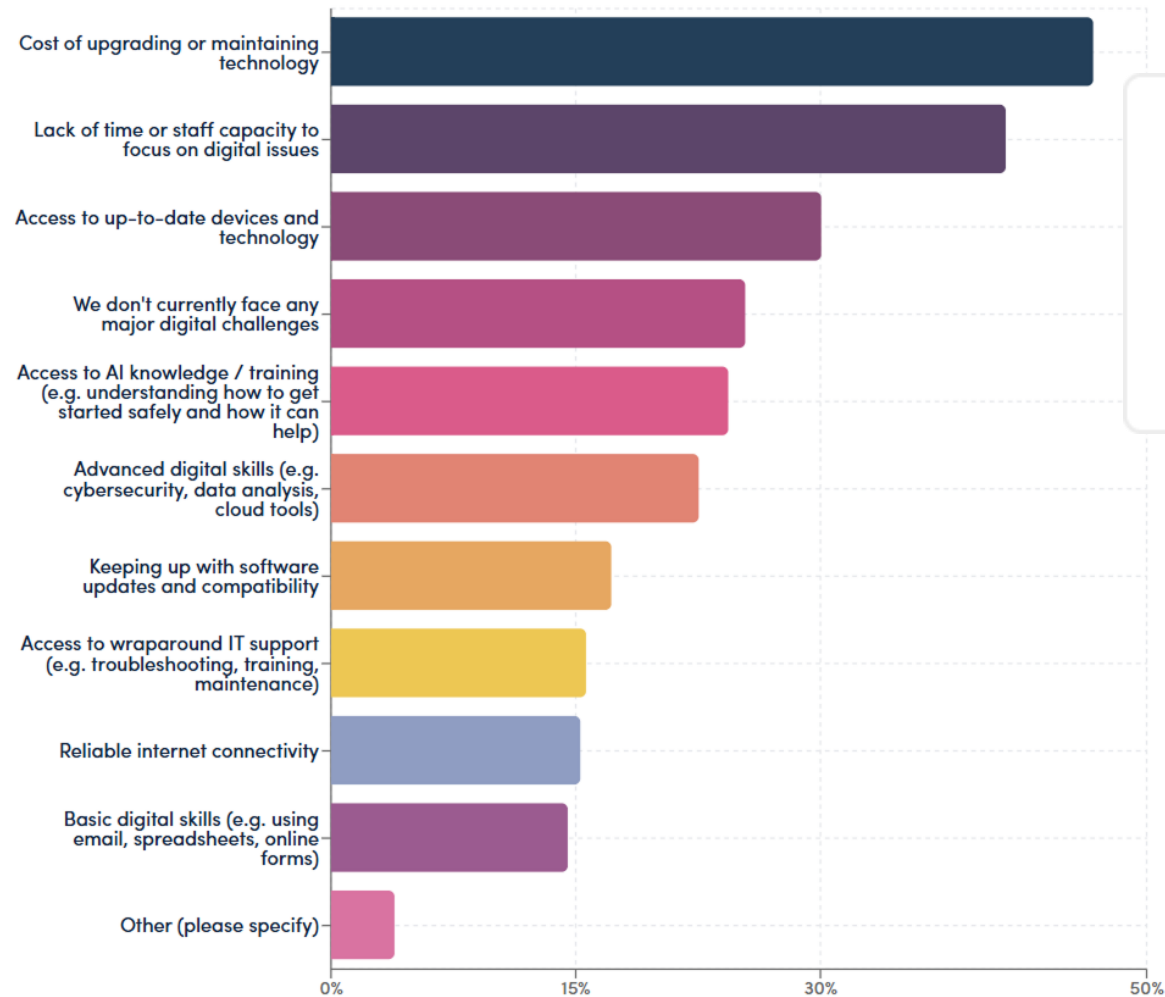
35% are 'somewhat' or 'very' optimistic about AI's potential to support their organisation's work. However, the majority (52%) still feel neutral about it.



There are still significant barriers to AI adoption



The biggest digital skills or access challenges relate to financial, time and equipment gaps



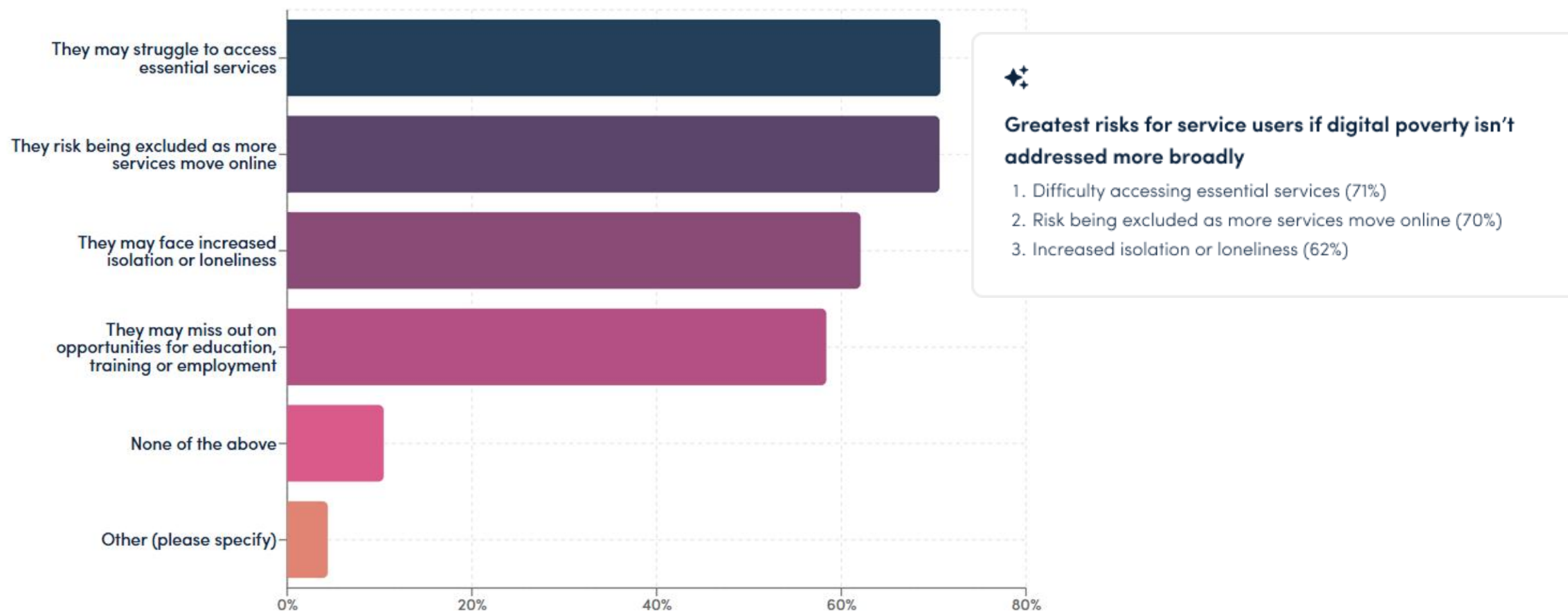
Responses: **1158**



Greatest digital skills or access challenges;

1. Cost of upgrading or maintaining technology (47%)
2. Lack of time or staff capacity to focus on digital issues (42%)
3. Access to up -to -date devices and technology (30%)

Risk of exclusion for communities if digital and technology challenges are not addressed



Responses: **1158**

“Smaller charitable organisations, including us, that work on the ground with/for many different disadvantaged groups, are missed out of digital resources and equipment, and therefore unable to effectively deal with the increased demand and need by people in poverty and those in hardship.”

Food Share Project, 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.



“As a small community charity, we’re doing everything we can to support local people through tough times. Rising costs and growing demand mean we’re constantly balancing limited resources against very real needs.

What keeps us going is community — people coming together, looking out for one another, and valuing the centre as a place of welcome and support. Our biggest concern is sustainability: making sure we can continue to be here for the hundreds of families and individuals who rely on us every month.”

The Tin Hat Centre, nr Nottingham



neighbourly

0117 422 0866

hello@neighbourly.com

Engine Shed, Station Approach
Temple Meads, Bristol, BS1 6QH



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