



Cobseo
The Confederation
of Service Charities

Cobseo Members' Survey

October 2020

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Directory of Social Change



Funded by



Introduction

The Covid-19 crisis' impact on the charity sector is undeniable, and data on the extent of this impact from organisations 'on the ground' is crucial to understanding how Covid-19 is affecting Cobseo Members. While sector-level data from recent annual reports and accounts can be effective in understanding the potential impact, there is no substitute for Members giving voice to the reality of their situation.

This is the second Cobseo Members survey undertaken during the Covid-19 crisis, and results presented here provide a comparison between survey results obtained in May 2020 and current data from October 2020 which help to chart the evolving impact on Cobseo Members as they continue to operate and to serve their beneficiaries under challenging circumstances.

When Covid-19's immediate health and economic threat is passed, questions about the impact on Cobseo Members will turn to data for answers. Data exists from before the crisis (2019 annual reports), and there will be data in next year's annual reports and accounts; but establishing what happened on the ground during the crisis will be key to evidencing cause and effect. This is especially true for those organisations which may not survive to write their 2020/21 annual reports.

The results of this survey provide first-hand data, on how the Covid-19 crisis is affecting many of the UK's most well-known and depended-upon armed forces charities and wider organisations. This survey and report is designed to help build an evidence base to inform current action and future planning in the wake of Covid-19.

About the survey

This survey was generously funded by the Forces in Mind Trust and was designed in collaboration between DSC and Cobseo. The subsequent analysis and report were undertaken by DSC. Responses were gathered via the online survey tool 'Survey Monkey' from 6 to 21 October 2020. A total of 121 Cobseo Members completed the survey.

Quotes from respondents are used throughout this report. Quotes appear as written by respondents; however, certain quotes have been minimally altered to maintain the anonymity of respondents. Not all qualitative responses are featured in the report; however, to ensure that all responses were heard, every response given by Members was anonymised and presented to the Cobseo executive team.

About DSC

Directory of Social Change (DSC) has a vision of an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change. We are an independent charity with specialist research expertise and experience from over 40 years of providing support to the charity sector.

Our publications and reports are regarded as the premier sources of information on charities and our work continues to support development in both policy and practice across the charity sector.

Visit DSC online at dsc.org.uk to learn more.

Executive Summary

Characteristics of respondents

- In total, 121 respondents took part in the survey, of whom 77% were Cobseo Members and 21% of whom were Associate Cobseo Members.
- Additionally, 2.5% reported being a member of Veterans Scotland, and 1.7% of reported being a member of both Cobseo and Veterans Scotland. 21% of respondents report operating in Scotland.
- The vast majority of respondents (93%) were from registered charities or charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs).
- 'Small income' charities (annual incomes less than £750,000) accounted for the majority (51%) of survey respondents.

Serving beneficiaries

- Over half of respondents (60%) saw an increase in beneficiary numbers (up 14% since May), while 25% saw a decrease, and only 13% saw no change in beneficiary numbers during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.
- Members reported large increases in beneficiary demand for mental health support (74%, up 20% since May), loneliness support (70%, up 5% since May); poverty and financial support (55%, up 8% since May). Although lower in overall demand, drug and alcohol support saw the largest increase in demand (up 22% since May).
- One-third (35%) of respondents reported coping with demand 'with difficulty', and a combined 9% with very significant difficulty or an inability to meet the demand from beneficiaries. In contrast, a combined 26% reported being able to cope 'easily' or 'very easily' with demand.
- A significant impact on critical services was most strongly reported in the areas of mental health support (45%), welfare support (39%), and support for the elderly (35%).
- Critical services closing or being undeliverable were reported in six areas, most commonly for Service families support (7%), support to the elderly (4%), and Mental Health support (2%).

Cash flow

- A decrease in monthly income was experienced by 72% of respondents, of which 32% saw a decrease of between 1% to 24% in income. Only 9% saw an increase in income and 19% saw no change in income (down 7% since May) to pre-Covid levels.
- The most pronounced decrease in income was in fundraising events income, for which 85% of respondents reported seeing a decrease.

- Over two-thirds (68%) of members noticed a decrease in public donations (up 14% since May), and 64% had seen a decrease in trading income.
- A decrease in monthly expenditure was reported by 61% of respondents, of which 40% saw a 1% to 24% decline in expenditure. Conversely, 24% saw an increase in expenditure, and 15% saw no change in expenditure (down 14% since May).
- The most pronounced decrease in expenditure was for 'service delivery', experienced by 45% of respondents. The need for financial support to cover overheads was a common theme in respondent's qualitative answers.
- Staff costs showed no significant difference between May and October 2020. The Government's *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme* (covering 80% of wages) which launched in March, ended in October. Therefore, the impact of Covid-19 on charity staff may not be fully realised until after quarter-four of 2020. This can be seen in responses, with a combined 25% believing that a reduction in paid staff will become a reality within one year, and 13% of respondents reporting that reduction in paid staff was already a reality.

Risks

- A reduction in service delivery was highlighted by 25% of Members as likely becoming a reality within one year. In total, 13% stated that reduced service delivery was already a reality. A reduction in critical services within one year was reported by 33% of respondents, of which for 8% of respondents, this was already a reality.
- Reduction in paid staff was either 'already a reality' or expected 'within one month' by a combined 17% of respondents.
- A combined 23% of respondents believed that the financial stability of their organisation would be compromised within one year, with an additional 2% of respondents stating that this was 'already a reality'.
- A combined 15% of respondents estimate their cash reserves would be completely depleted within one year. This is almost half the number from May (31%), which may be indicative of a financial deferral rather than a solution, as more respondents now predict their cash reserves being completely depleted in 2-5 years (48% combined) than they did in May (14%).
- For 5% of respondents, merging with another organisation is already a reality (almost four-times more respondents than in May). Differences in responses between May and October also suggest that more Members are considering mergers in the longer term (3-5 years). Additionally, this question was 'applicable' to 21% more respondents than in May, suggesting that mergers are becoming more commonly considered as a result of Covid-19.
- For one organisation, the threat of closing permanently was 'already a reality'. Additionally, 5% of respondents stated that their organisation risked closure within one year, and a combined 18% within two-years.

Support

- Just under one-third of respondents (33%) had either not applied for or had been unsuccessful in applying for a service delivery grant from government. Of those who has obtained a grant, the most common use was for welfare support (17%) and mental and physical health support (17%)
- Close to one-fifth (24%) of respondents reported needing 'significant support' in order to sustain or achieve delivery of critical services in the coming year, with 31% requiring 'minimal to moderate support'.
- Over one-third (34%) of respondents reported needing 'minimal to moderate support' to sustain or achieve improvements to the efficiency of service delivery to beneficiaries, with 35% reporting that they require no support. 13% reported needing 'significant support' in this area.

Conclusions

Increasing beneficiary numbers

Data presented in this survey showed an overall increase in beneficiary numbers between May and October 2020. Overall, 60% of respondents saw an increase in beneficiaries, while 25% saw a decrease in beneficiary numbers.

While 35% of respondents reported being able to cope 'with difficulty' with beneficiary demand, the data shows that certain services are more significantly impacted than others. This is especially so for critical services such as mental health and wellbeing support, which when viewed in relation to findings on increasing beneficiary numbers, shows the strain of increasing demand.

Mental and physical health was the critical service area to report highest levels of 'significant impact' from Covid-19 (45%). However, it was Service families support that saw the highest levels of 'closed or undeliverable' critical services (7%).

Decreasing income and expenditure

Survey data showed an overall decrease in income, with 72% of respondents seeing a decrease. In contrast, only 9% saw an increase in income. Decreased income was commonly (68%) seen in public donations (up 14% since May). Additionally, 85% reported a decrease in fundraising events income.

Overall, 61% of respondents reporting a decrease in expenditure, with 56% reporting that expenditure had decreased by up to half. Respondents cited a decrease due to events being cancelled or some service delivery being reduced, with 13% reporting reduction in service delivery was 'already a reality'.

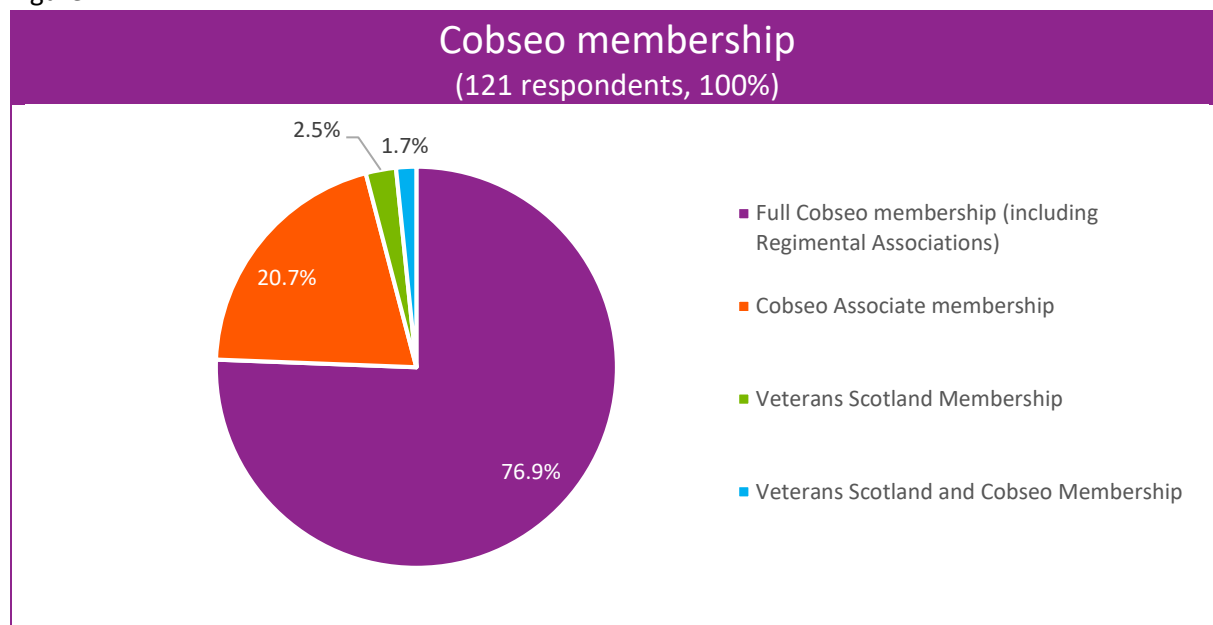
The overall increase in beneficiary demand, combined with decreasing income appears to be placing significant strain on services, most notably for critical services such as mental health and wellbeing support, which has also seen a 20% increase in beneficiary demand since May 2020, with demand for drug and alcohol support also increasing by 22% over the same period.

As income from events and public donations continue to decrease, combined with increasing beneficiary demand and diminishing resources; it will be those individuals and their families who depend upon the work of Cobseo Members that will suffer most in the coming months.

Characteristics of respondents

Figure 1 shows a breakdown of all 121 respondents' Cobseo membership types. Over three-quarters (76.9%) were full members of Cobseo (including Regimental Associations). Only 4.2% identified themselves as Veterans Scotland Members, of which, 1.7% were also Cobseo Members.

Figure 1



Data on Veterans Scotland Membership was not reliably collected. Respondents may not have realised that they could tick more than one option.

Figure 2 shows which UK countries respondent's organisations are operating within. The vast majority (88%) specified UK countries, of which over one-quarter (29.3%) of respondents specified England. A further 10 respondents cited 'other' and include; the Commonwealth, world-wide, UK and selected overseas areas.

Figure 2

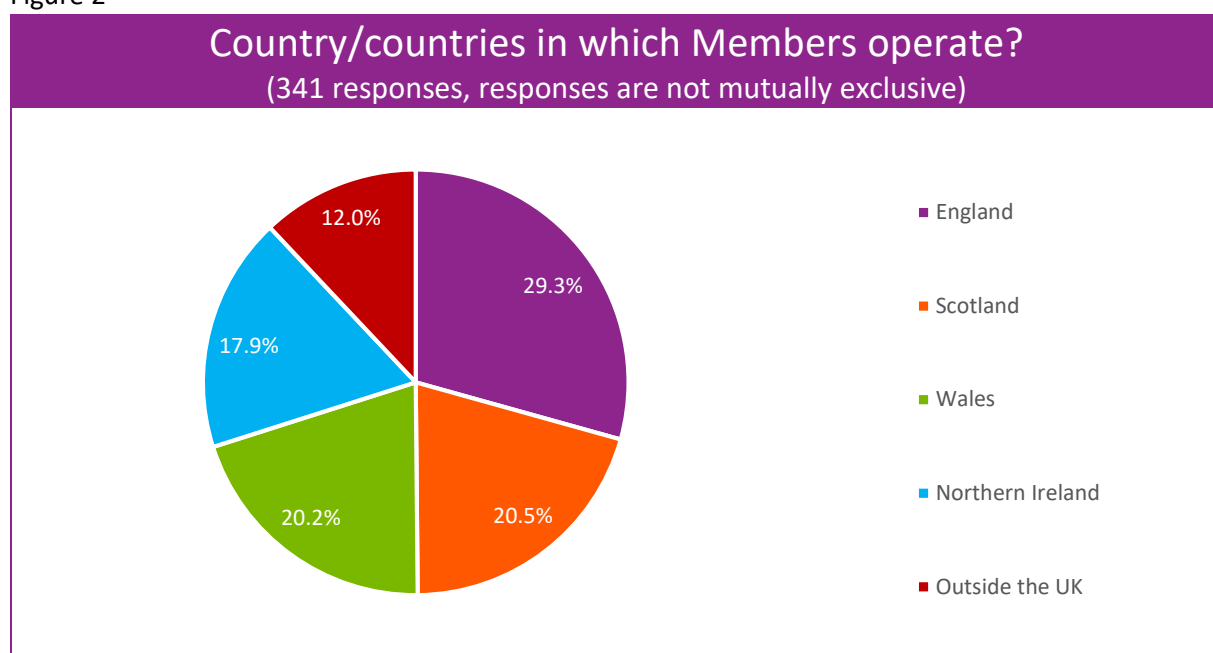


Figure 3 shows the types of organisations represented by respondents. The vast majority 92.6% identified themselves as Registered Charities or CIOs.

A further 5% identified as 'other', and include; associations, an independent body hosted by a charity, NHS Service, professional body, and statutory (part of MOD).

Figure 3

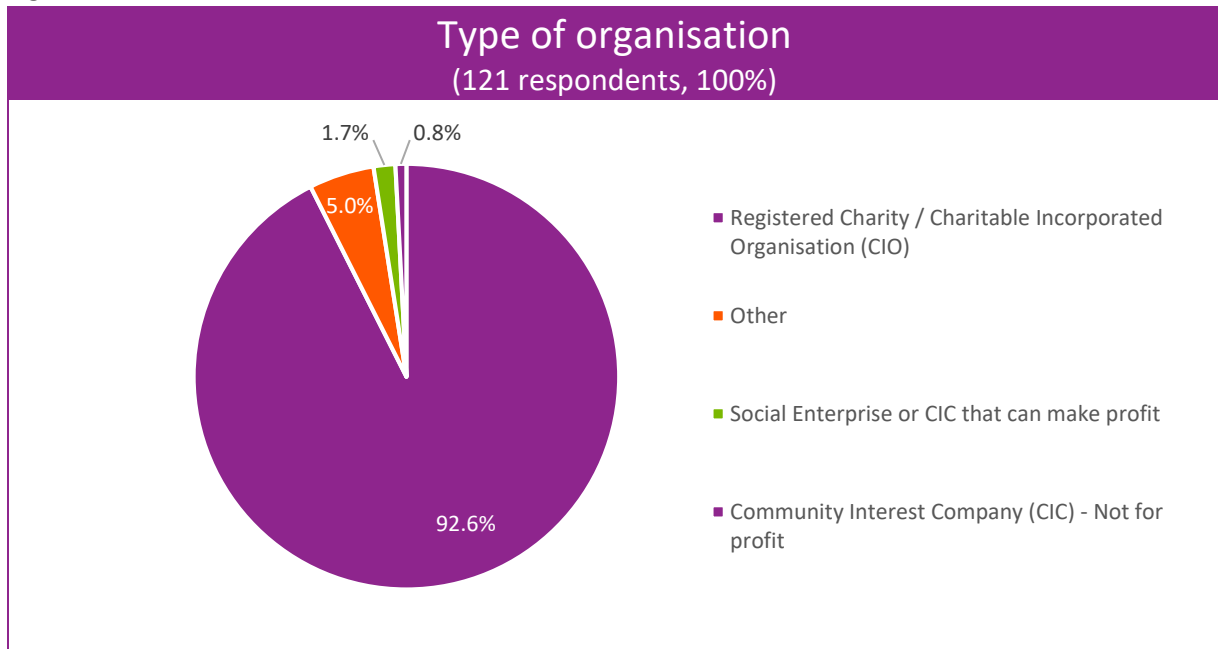
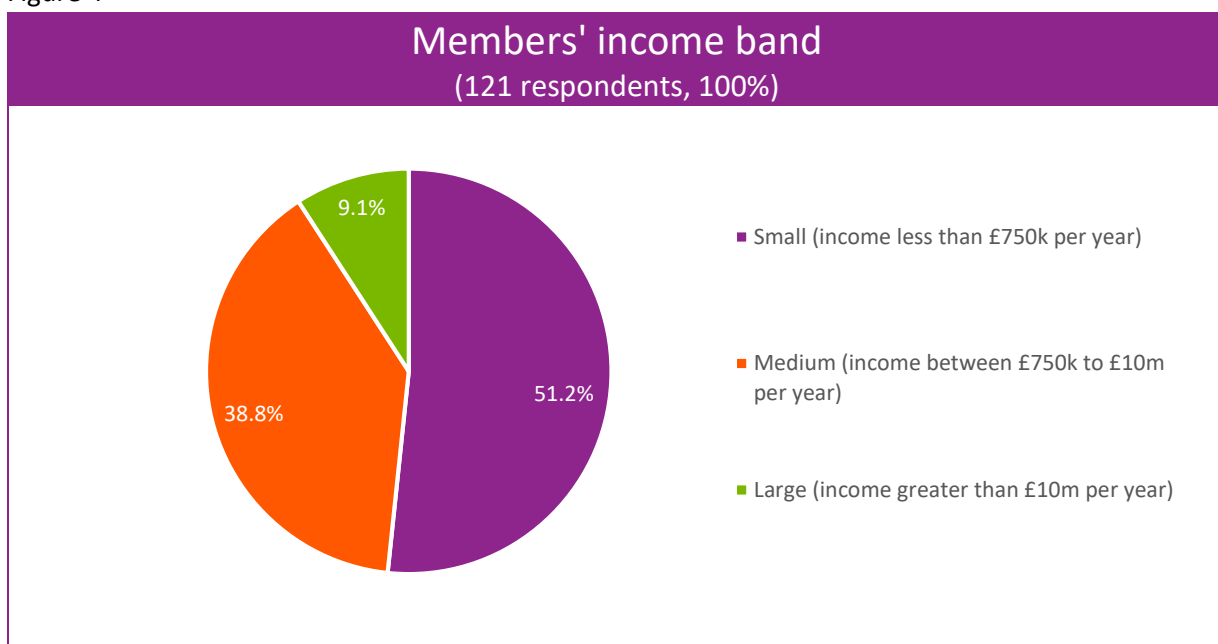


Figure 4 shows the income bands of respondent's organisations. Over half (51.2%) identified as having 'small incomes' of less than £750,000 per year.

Organisations with 'medium' (£750,000 to £10 million) annual income represented 38.8% of respondents, and 'Large' (£10 million plus) income organisations accounted for 9.1% of respondents.

Figure 4



Serving beneficiaries

Members were asked whether they were experiencing changes in beneficiary demand during the Covid-19 crisis in terms of 'decreased demand', 'increased demand' or 'no change' (to pre-Covid levels). Responses are limited to those who make provision available in each area of support, therefore the percentages are calculated based on the number of responses to each individual question.

The same questions were also asked in May 2020, and the charts presented below show this data as a comparison. It should be noted that although the May survey featured Cobseo Members, the sample is not identical.

Figures 5 to 8 show responses to several areas of provision in which demand has increased between May and October 2020, but where close-to or over 50% of respondents reported 'no change' to pre-Covid levels of demand. In all cases, demand had increased between May and October 2020, with drug and alcohol support seeing a 21.7% increase between May and October.

Figure 5

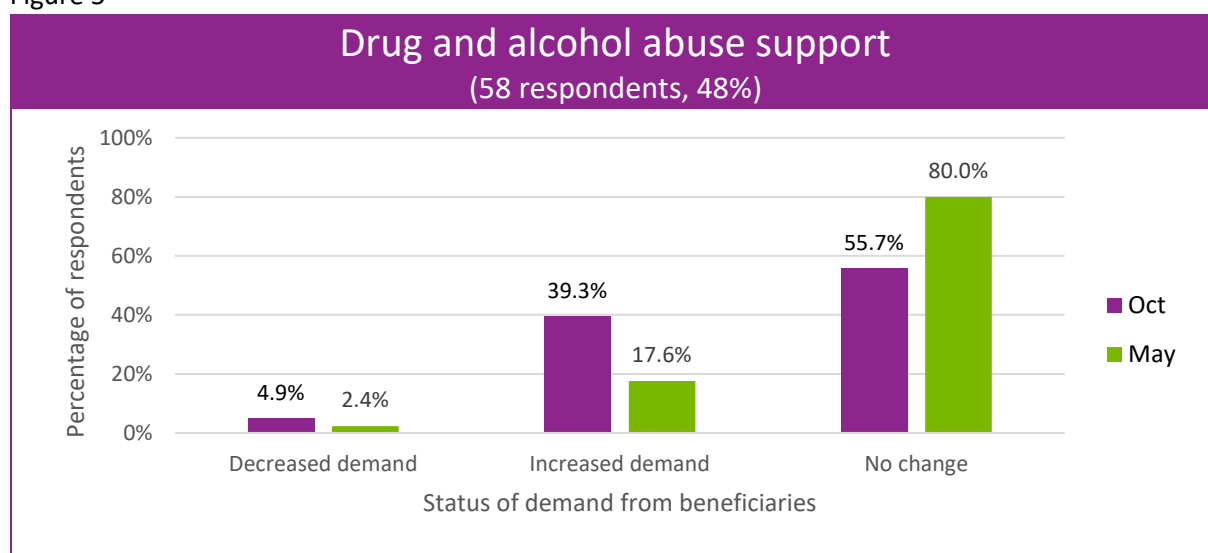


Figure 6

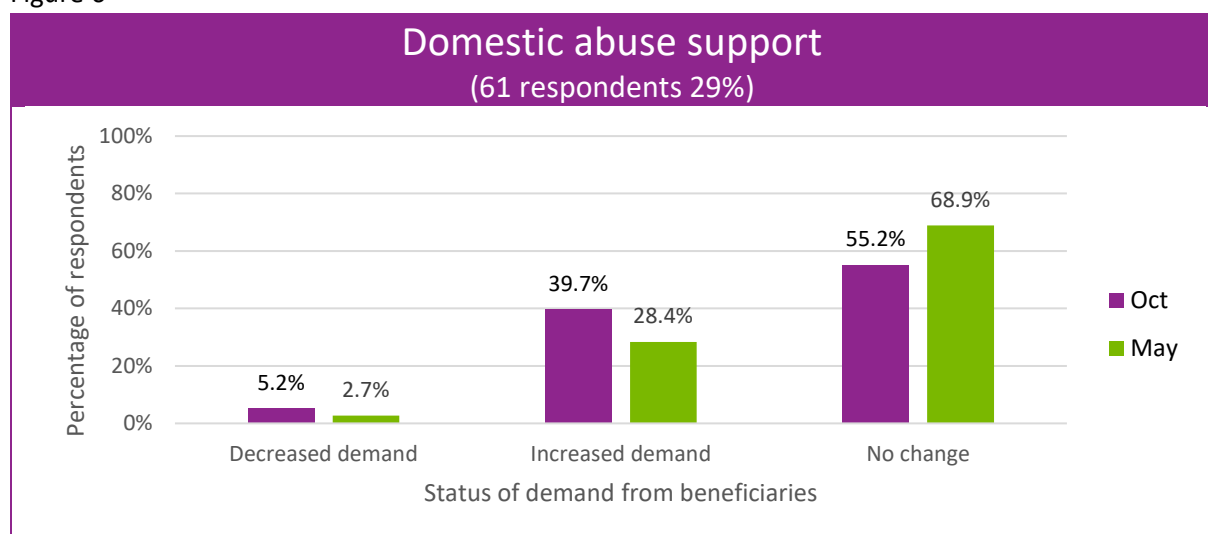


Figure 7

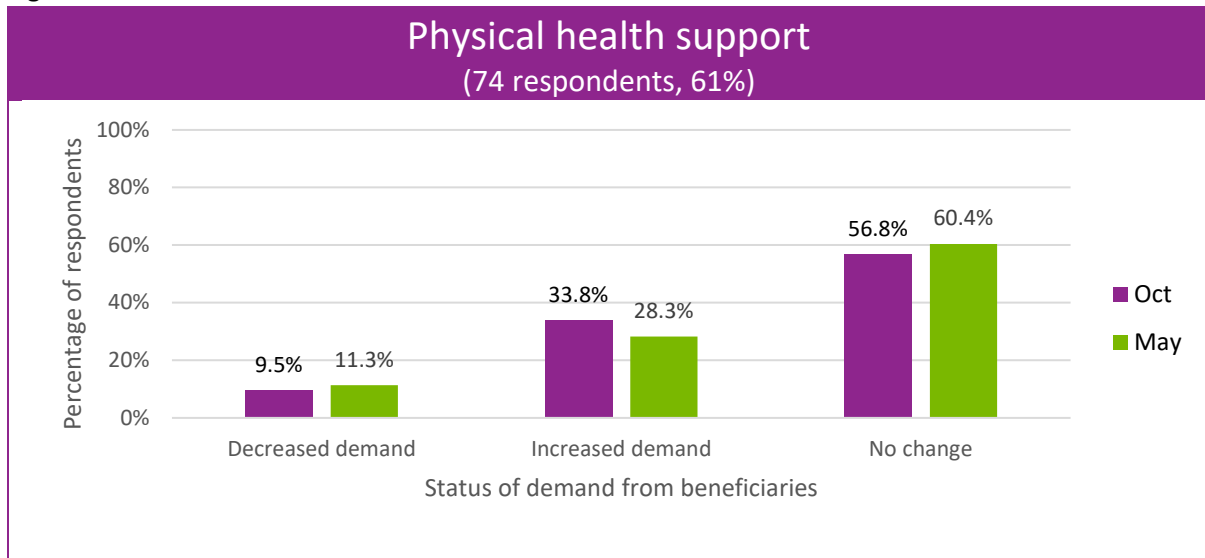
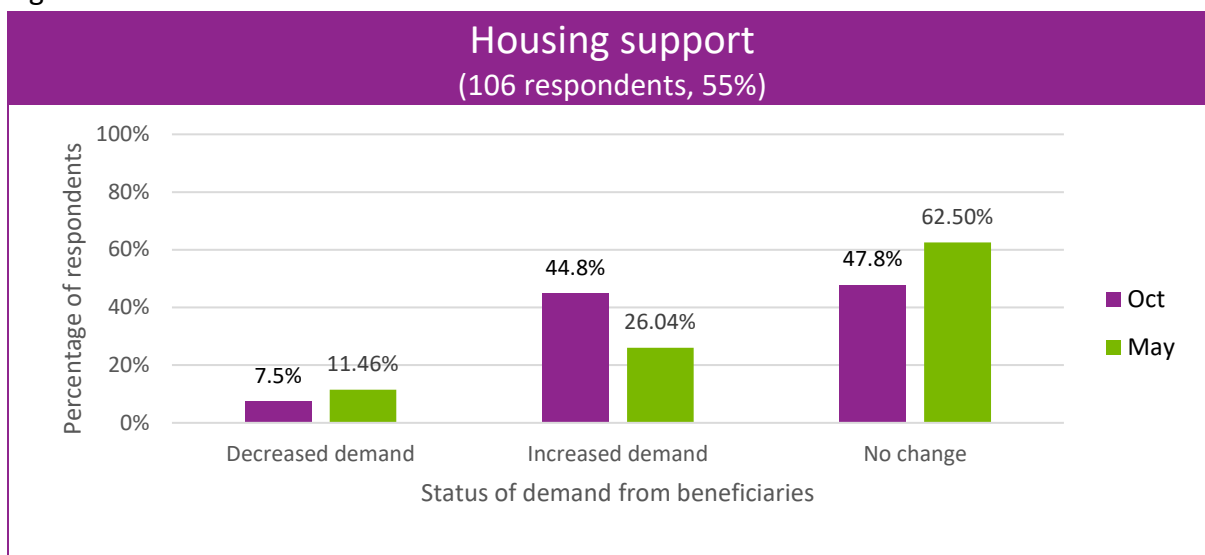


Figure 8



Figures 9 to 11 show responses to areas in which 50% of respondents or more saw an increase in demand. In all cases, demand had increased between May and October 2020, with employment and unemployment support seeing the largest increase (13.6% increase) between May and October.

Figure 9

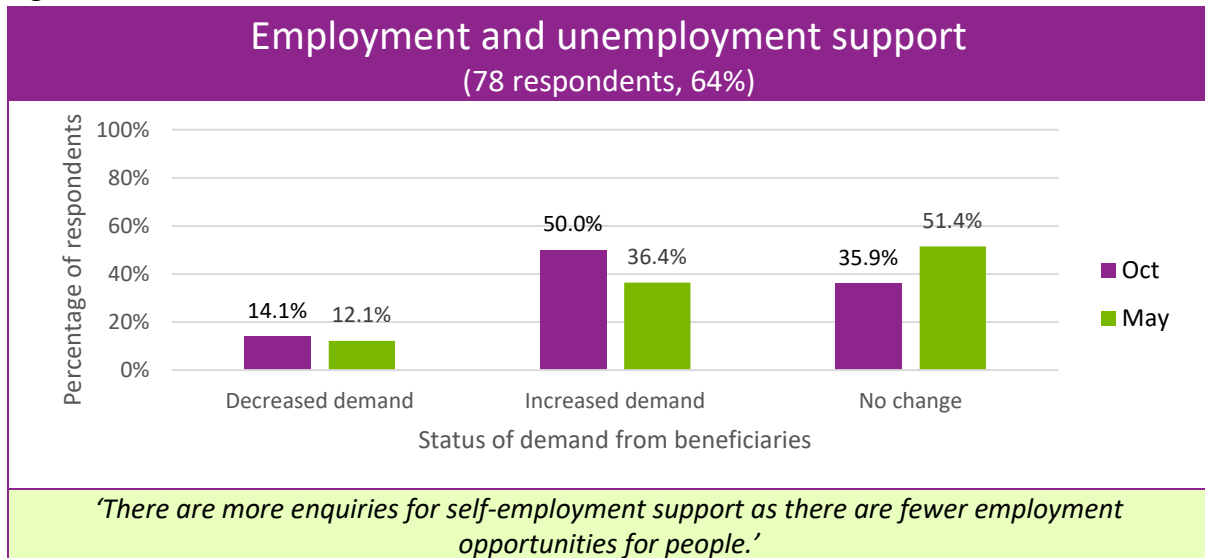


Figure 10

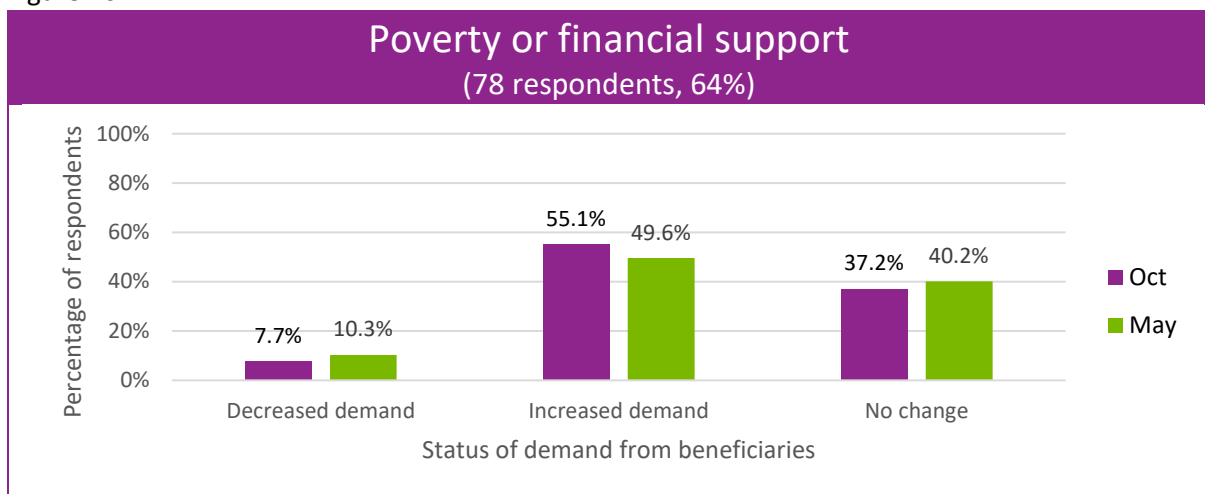
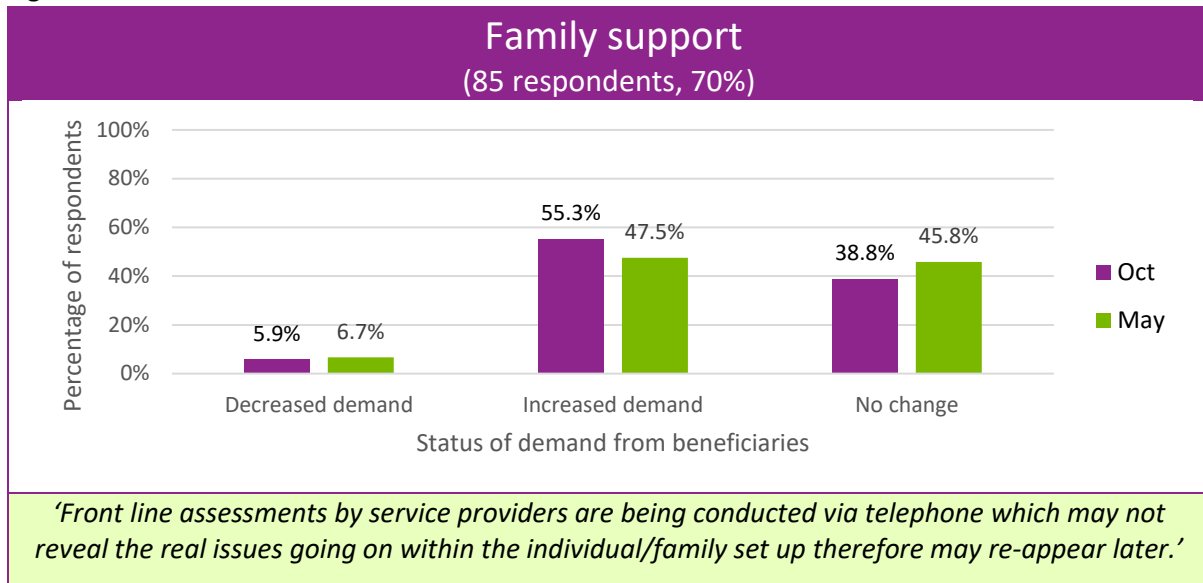


Figure 11



Figures 12 and 13 show that close to 70% of respondents, have seen an increase in demand for both loneliness support and for mental health support (figure 13). In both cases, demand had increased between May and October 2020, with mental health support seeing the largest increase in demand (20.1% increase) since May.

Figure 12

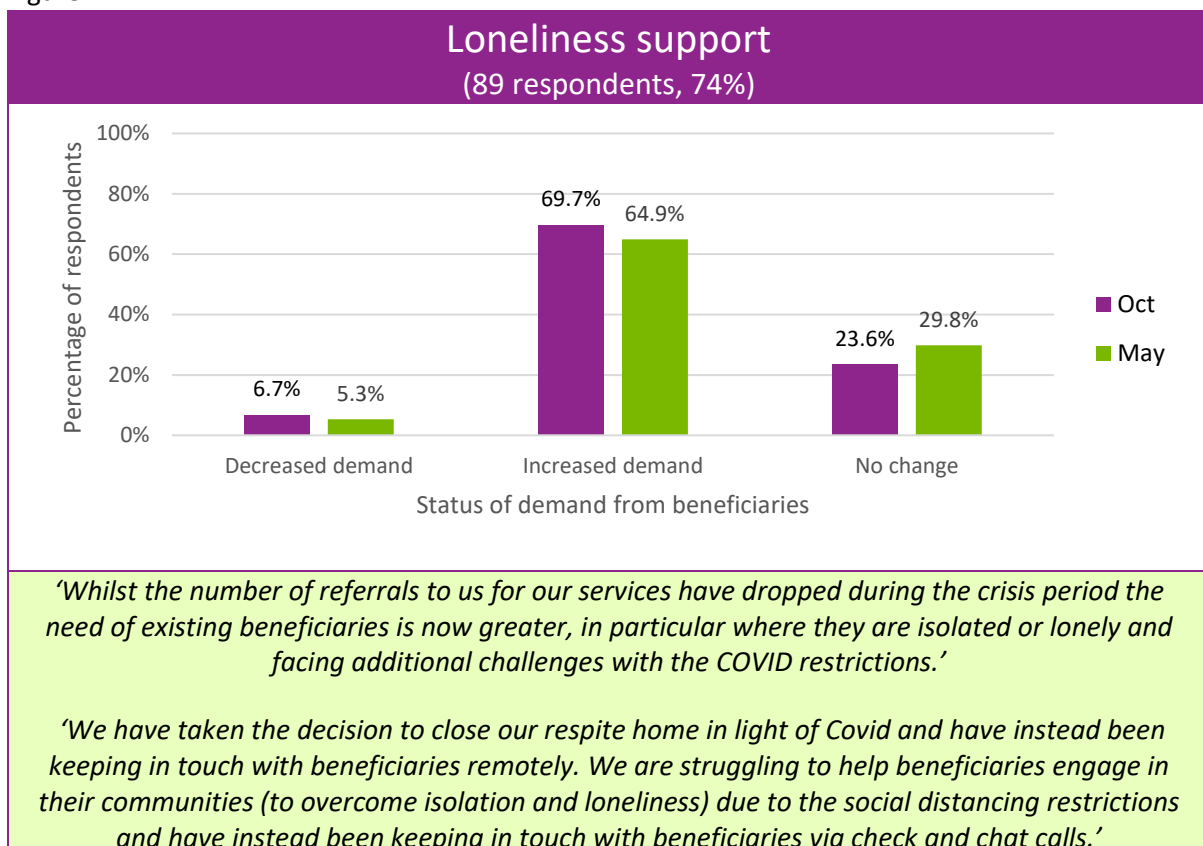
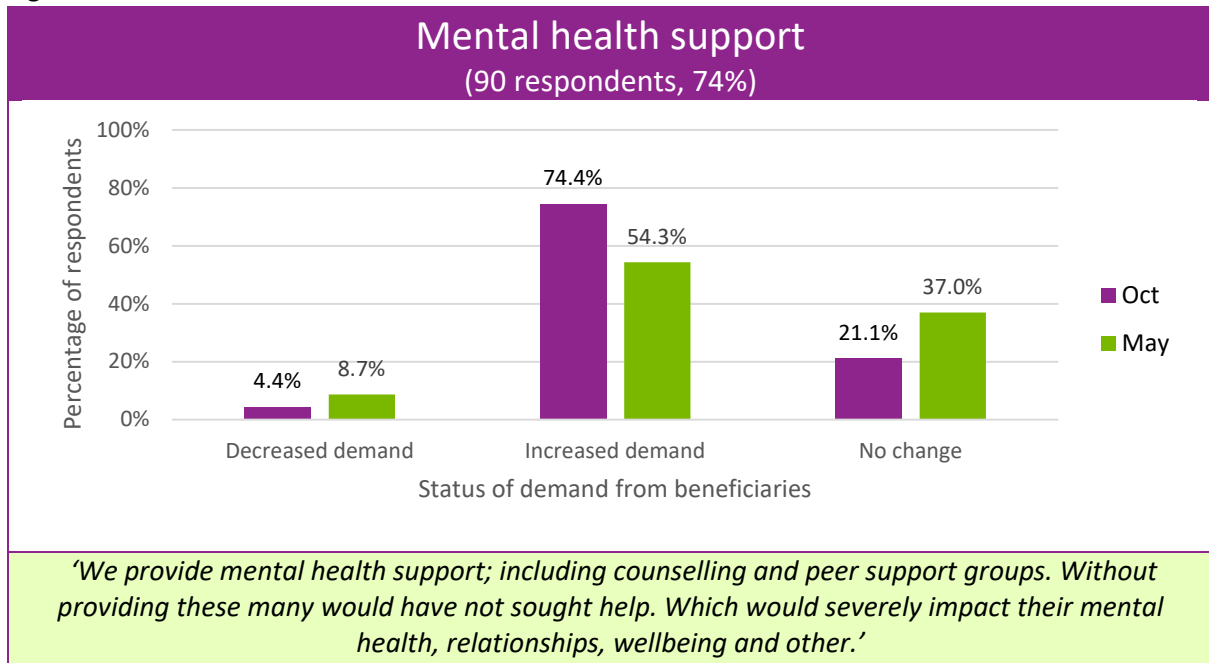


Figure 13



Respondents could also specify 'other' areas of beneficiary demand, which are shown below.

Other areas of beneficiary demand

'Community support - food parcels, prescriptions etc'

'Education'

'Slight increase in backfilling statutory services (particularly NHS provision)'

'Spouse employment support has been a new, and acute demand'

'Support for children'

'Support into hospital, emergency food parcels, support out of probation'

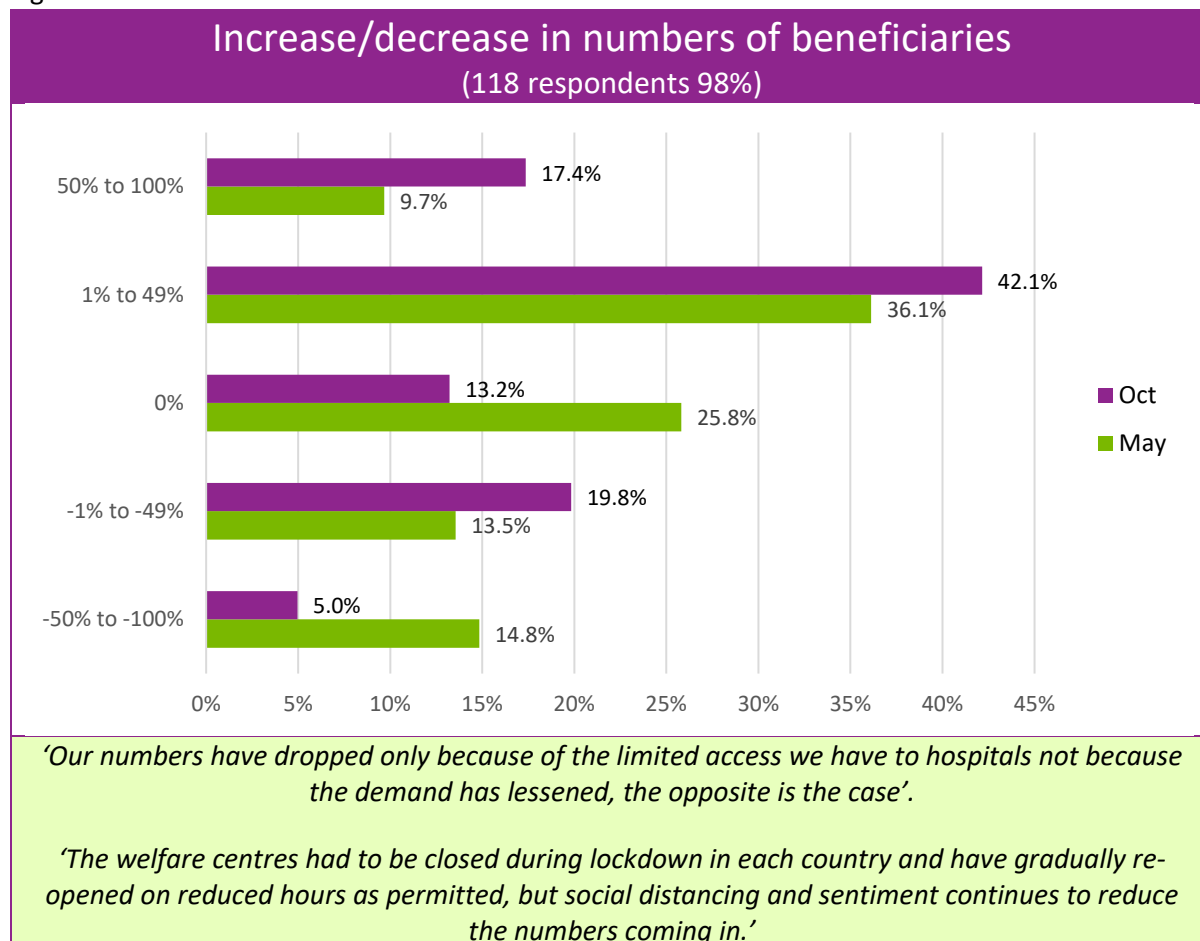
'There has been a marked increase in the demand for financial guidance since the beginning of the pandemic'

'We have seen a significant reduction in esprit d'corps activities and the use of our facilities for and the use of our facilities for respite and welfare Breaks'

Respondents were also asked to estimate the overall increase/decrease in numbers of beneficiaries requesting (or referred for) support. Figure 14 shows that the most common experience was that of seeing a 1% to 49% increase in beneficiaries requesting or being referred for support. Overall, 59.5% of respondents saw an increase in beneficiaries, while 24.8% saw a decrease in beneficiary numbers.

In May 2020, one-quarter (25.8%) of respondents saw no change in beneficiary numbers during the; however, this figure has in October, dropped to only 13.2% who have witnessed a change.

Figure 14



While it is recognised that this observed change may be due to variance between both May and October's survey respondents, figures 9 and 13 do show an increase demand for supporting beneficiaries across every area of support.

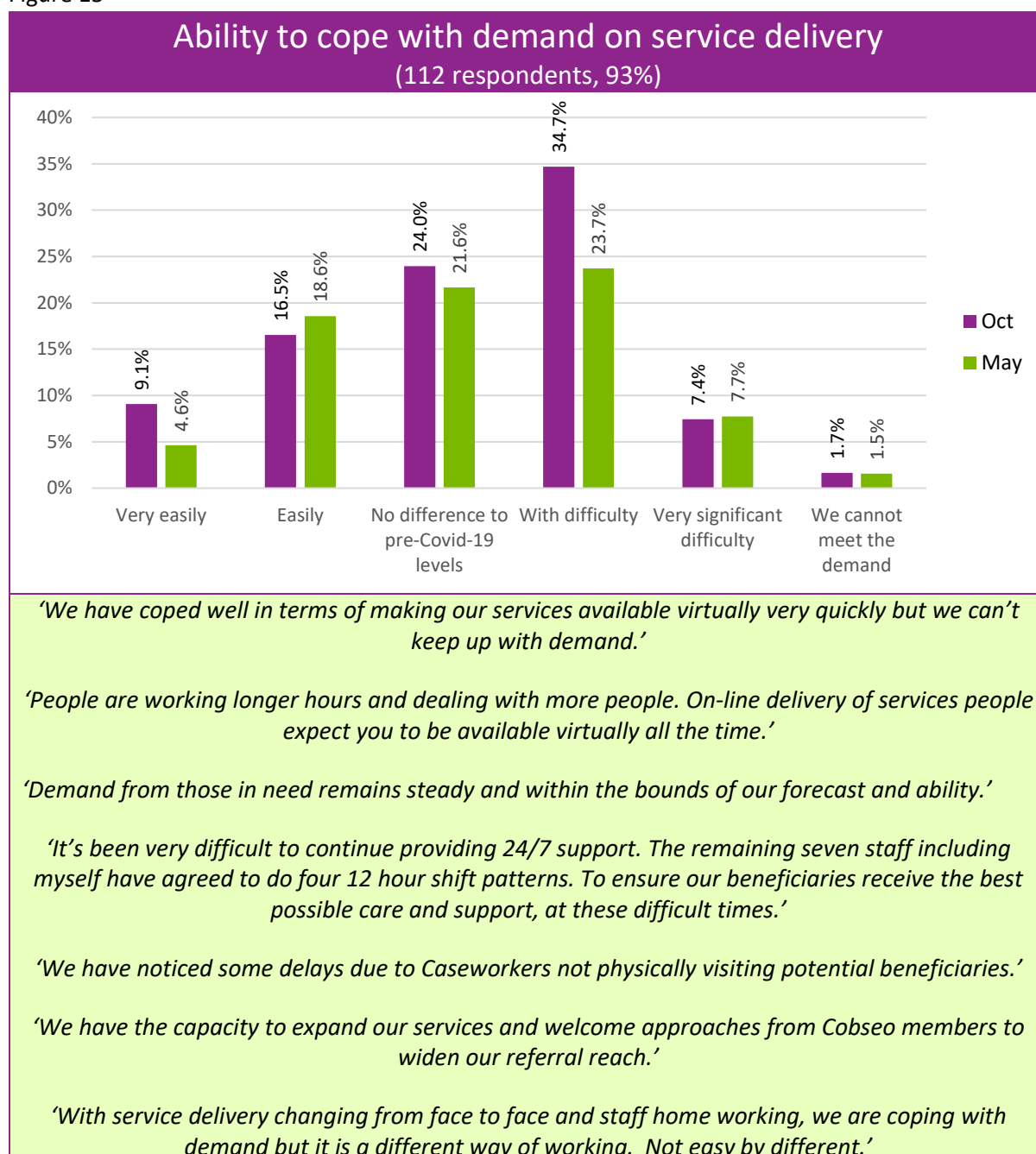
Members were also asked to estimate the number of beneficiaries that they served in the last year (pre-Covid-19). The majority (53%) of all respondents reported serving up to 100 beneficiaries, while 25% reported serving up to 1,000 beneficiaries, and 10% served up to 100,000 beneficiaries.

Therefore, the overall increase in beneficiary demand has the potential to number in the tens of thousands of individuals requiring support compared to before the Covid-19 outbreak, especially for those individuals experiencing loneliness and mental health issues, and the organisations which support them.

Figure 15 shows Members' reported ability to cope with demand on service delivery. Almost half of respondents (49.6% combined) reported being able to cope easily, very easily, or with no difference to pre-Covid levels.

In contrast, one-third of respondents (34.7%) reported coping with difficulty, and a combined 9.1% reported experiencing either very significant difficulty or that they could not meet the demand from beneficiaries. Respondents reporting that they were able to meet demand 'with difficulty' saw the largest change between May and October 2020 (up 11% since May).

Figure 15



Critical services

Figures 16 and 17 show data on the impact of Covid-19 on critical service delivery for nine critical service topics. ‘Critical services’ were defined as ‘services to beneficiaries, without which individuals would face significant or serious challenge to their wellbeing’. This question is unique to the October survey and therefore no comparison data is available from May 2020.

Percentages are calculated from the total number of respondents in each area of provision. Each critical service sums 100% (rounded) across figures 16 and 17. Respondents were able to specify ‘not applicable’ for this question (should they not deliver this support), so data presented below relates only to those who deliver such critical services.

Figure 16 shows respondent data on which critical services were identified as experiencing ‘no impact’ and ‘minimal to moderate impact’. Housing was most commonly (37.0%) reported as experiencing no impact on critical services. Criminal justice system support was the critical service area to report highest levels of minimal to moderate impact’ (53.6% of respondents), closely followed by domestic violence (52.6%).

Figure 16

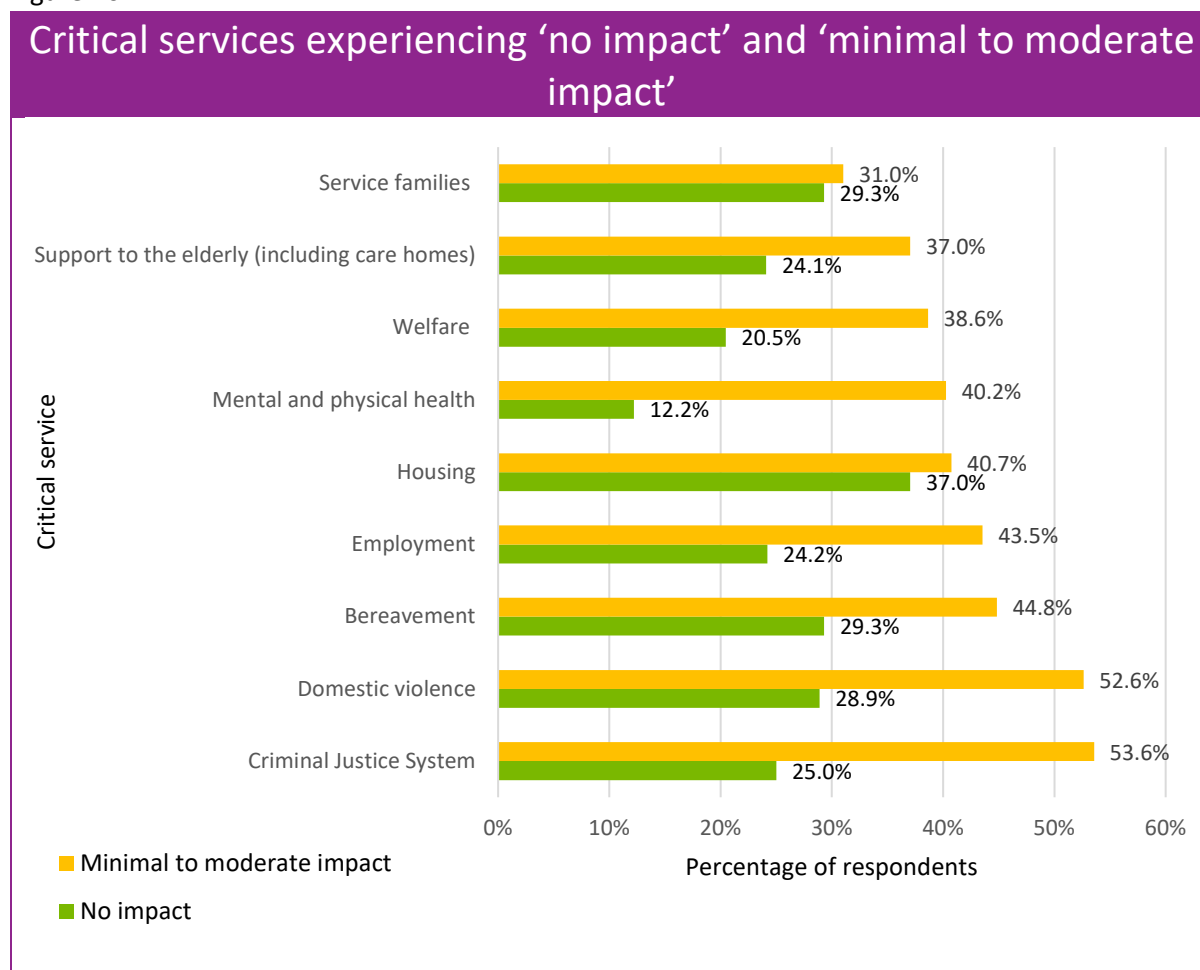
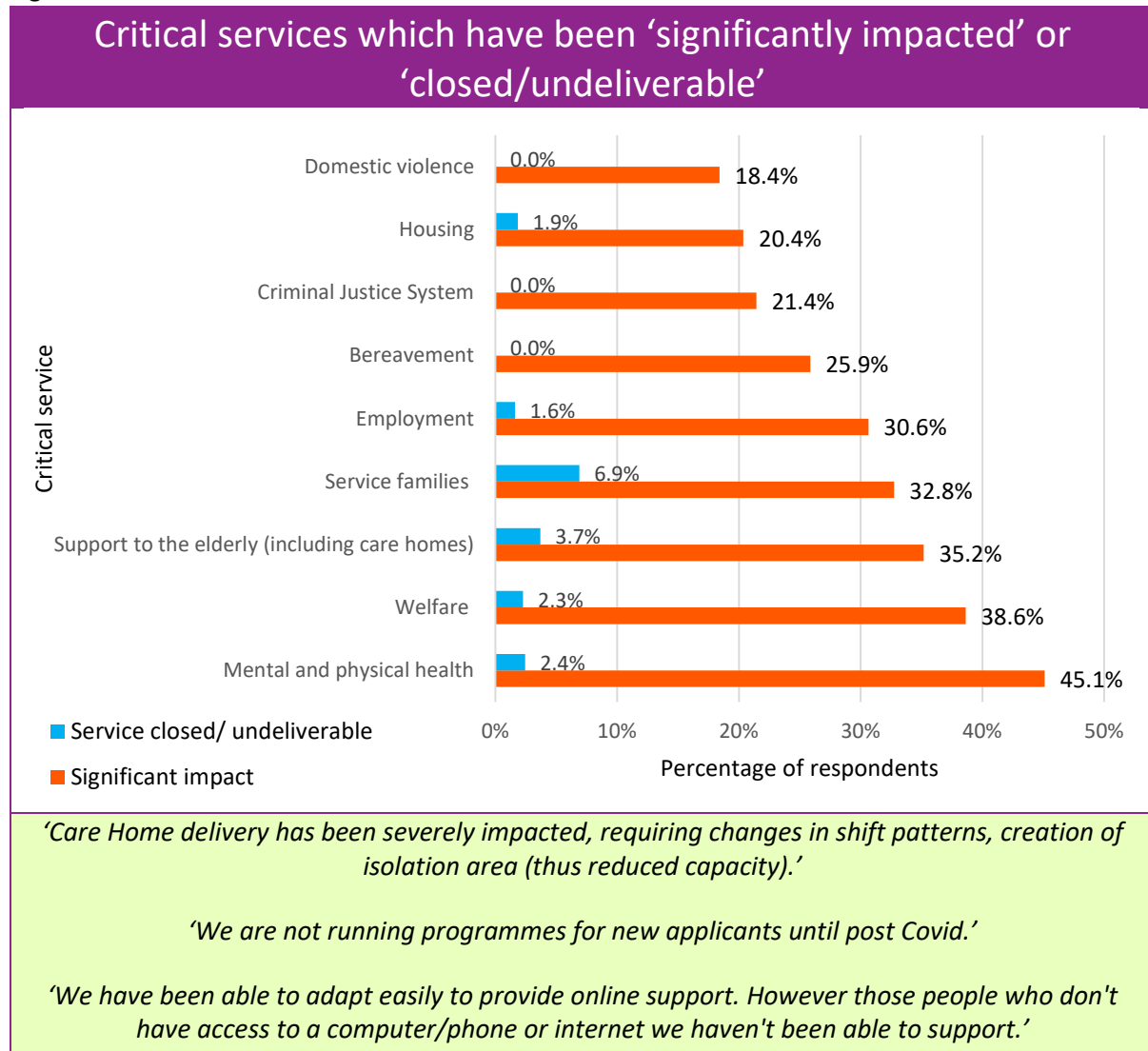


Figure 17 shows respondent data on which critical services were identified as experiencing 'significant impact' and 'service closed/undeliverable'.

Mental and physical health was the critical service area to report highest levels of 'significant impact' from Covid-19 (45.1% of respondents). However, Service families support saw the highest levels of 'closed or undeliverable' critical services (6.9% of respondents).

Figure 17



Members were asked how critical services delivered by their organisation were being impacted during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

Ways in which critical services have been impacted during the Covid-19 crisis

'All our team transitioned to home working in March with no impact on service delivery.'

'Closing the hubs which were superb at providing an answer to loneliness, integration into and with their communities. Also face to face support which is vital to create long lasting support that makes a difference.'

'Communication is difficult due to working from home - requires more time and slightly more effort to maintain levels of support but has not really impacted on critical service delivery.'

'Lack of face to face case working has complicated the delivery of an increased number of welfare cases.'

'Huge impact, with mass cancellations of activities, and opportunities cancelled / deferred.'

'Inability to meet beneficiaries face to face particularly if some have limited IT skills and/or access to a computer.'

'Much of our pastoral support is delivered face to face in community centres and refreshment/relaxation facilities. Covid restrictions mean that some are closed, the remainder are operating with social distancing, and much of our activity is having to move on-line.'

'Our work very much depends on the delivery of casework, without which we cannot normally deliver our services.'

'Our issue is funding the necessary capacity to meet the increasing needs. We have the ability and the right services, as evidenced by external evaluation, but we need to provide to more people.'

Cashflow: Income

The following section explores respondents' current cash flow situation. Figures 18 to 24 focus on income, and figures 25 to 32 explore expenditure.

Respondents were asked whether they were experiencing changes in income during the Covid-19 crisis, in terms of 'decreased', 'increased' or 'no change' (to pre-Covid levels). Responses are limited to those who generate each area of income; therefore, percentages are calculated on the number of responses to each question. The same questions were also asked in May 2020, and the charts presented below show this data as a comparison. It should be noted that although the May survey featured Cobseo Members, the sample is not identical.

Figures 18 and 19 showed the highest levels of reporting 'no change' in income for both legacy income and fees for services income during the Covid-19 crisis.

Figure 18

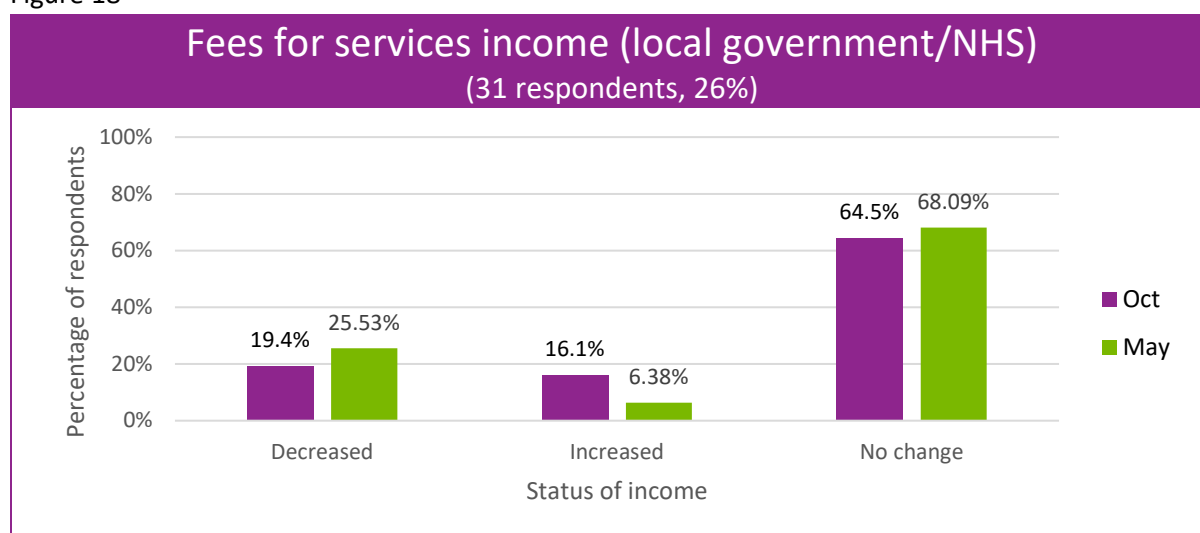


Figure 19

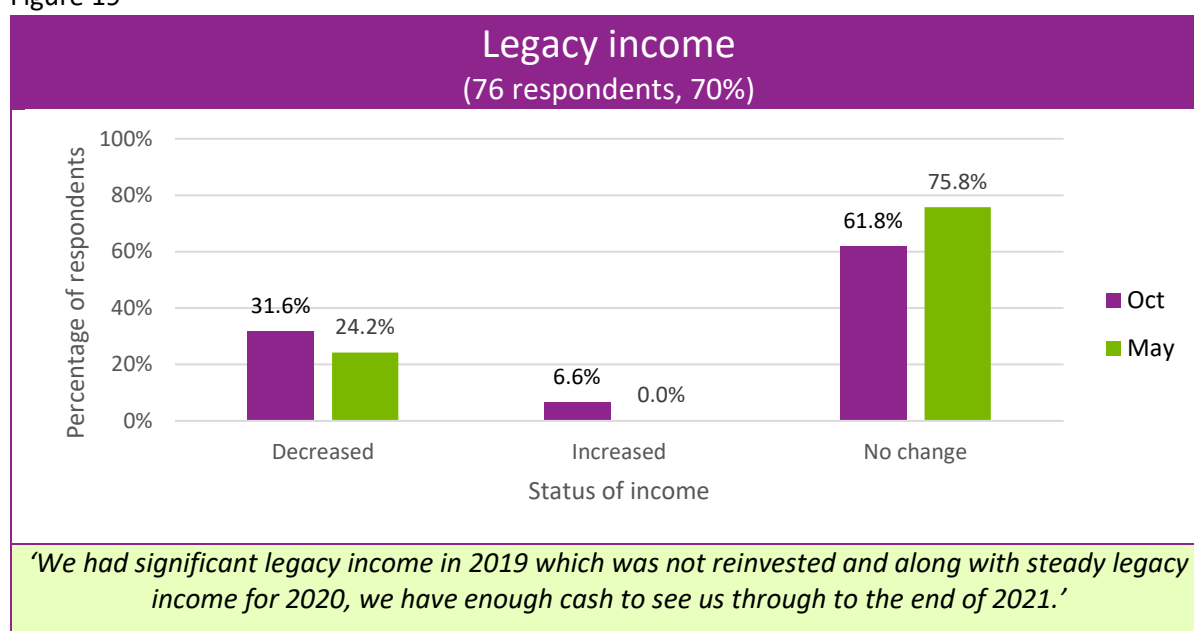


Figure 20 shows that close to one-quarter (23.5%) of respondents had seen an increase in grants/ funder income. This is in contrast to figures gathered in May, which show that Members' experience of funded income has not further decreased but may have started to increase.

Figure 20

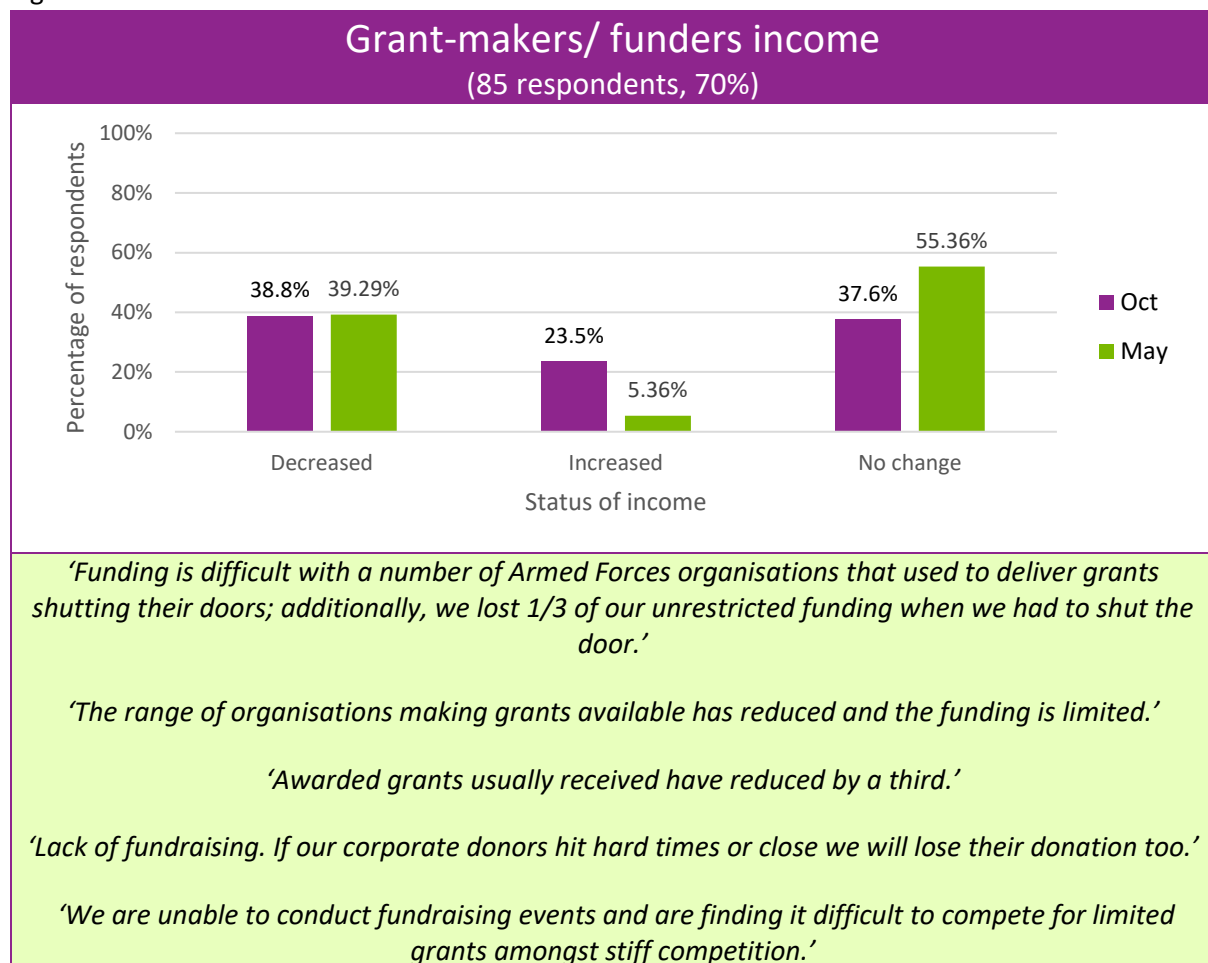


Figure 19

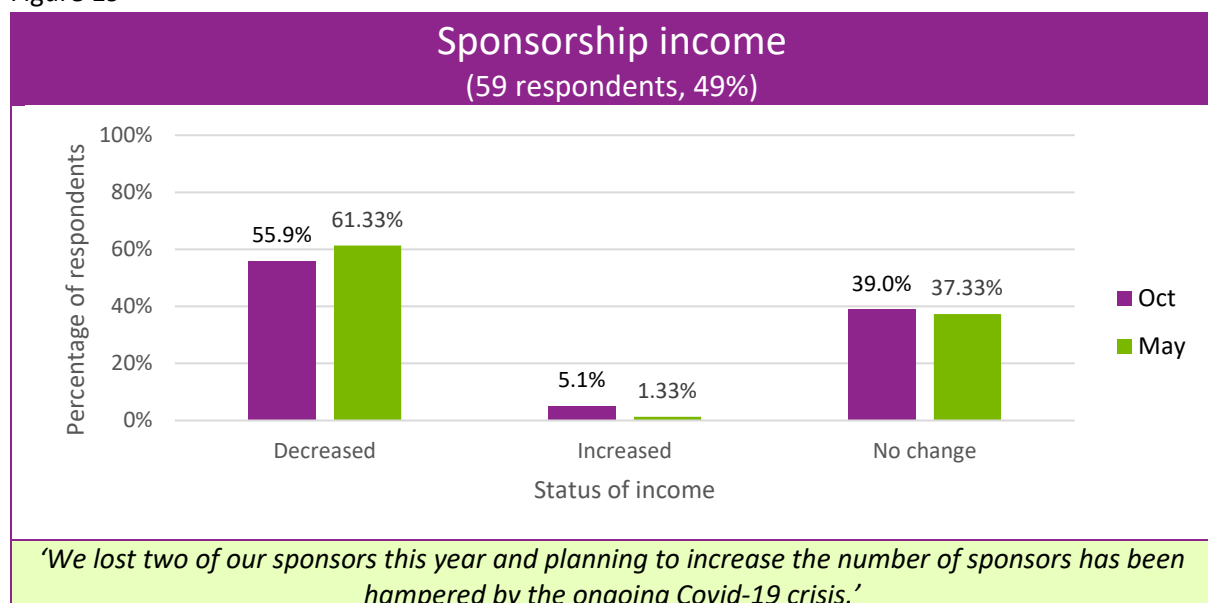


Figure 20 and 21 show similar findings to each other, with over three-fifths of respondents experiencing a decrease in both trading income (63.6%) and in investment income (62.5%). Data on investment income was not collected in the May survey and so no comparison data is presented in figure 21.

Figure 20

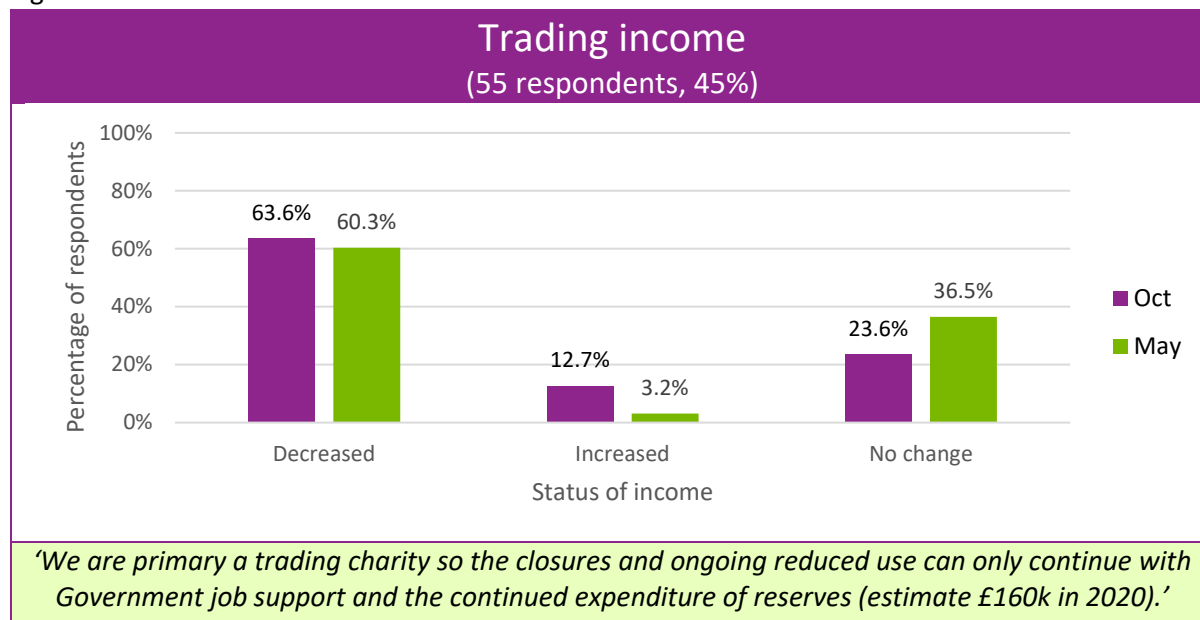
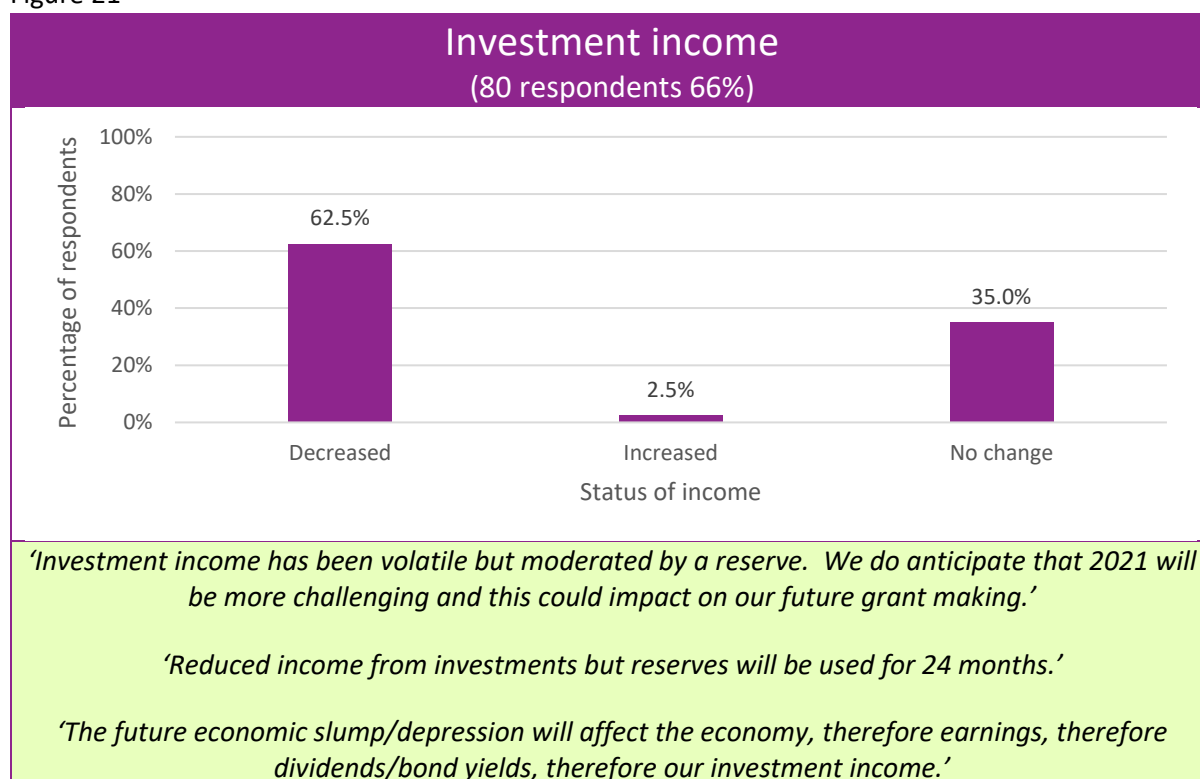


Figure 21



Figures 22 and 23 shows the most pronounced levels of Members' experiencing decreased income, with over two-thirds (67.8%) experiencing a decline in public donations, and over four-fifths reporting a decrease in fundraising events income.

This is unsurprising, as 'events' are not being held due to social distancing rules, and in both cases, there is a decrease in this trend between May and October 2020, which is especially noticeable for public donations income.

Figure 22

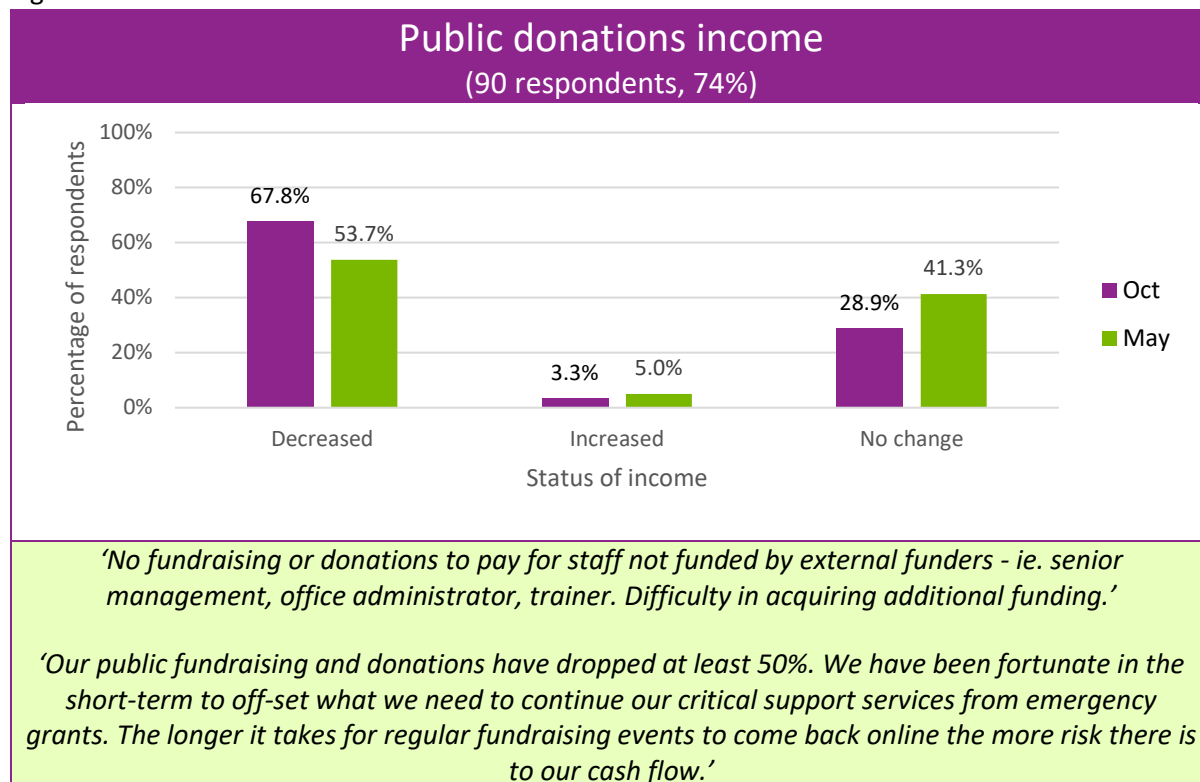
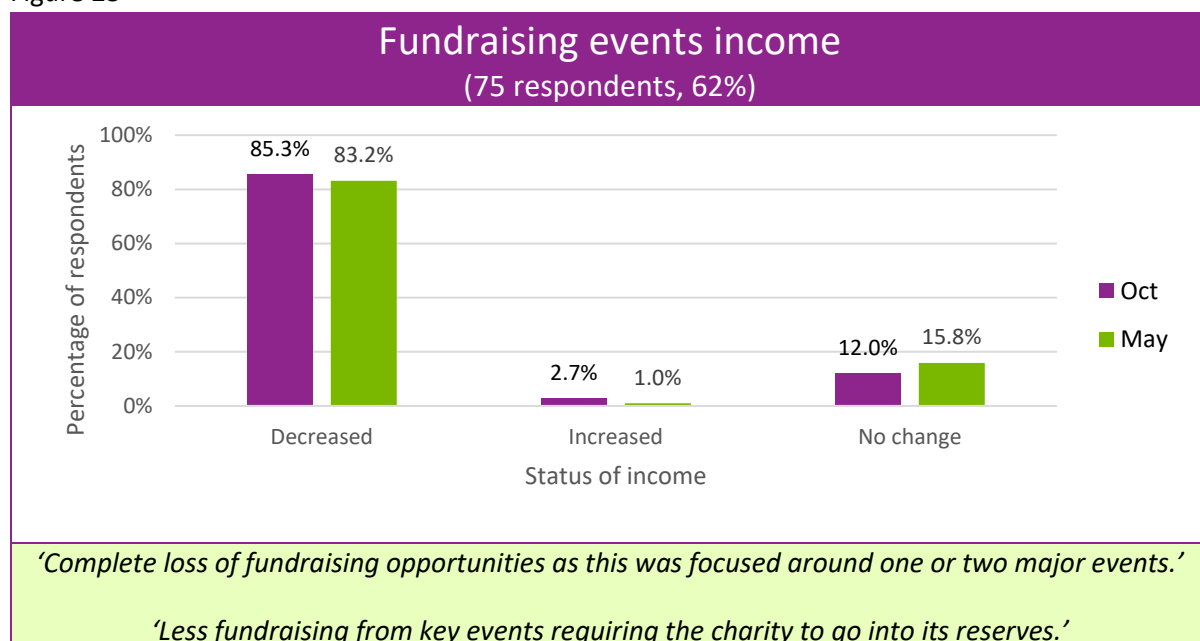


Figure 23



'More demand for services, less fundraising opportunities.'

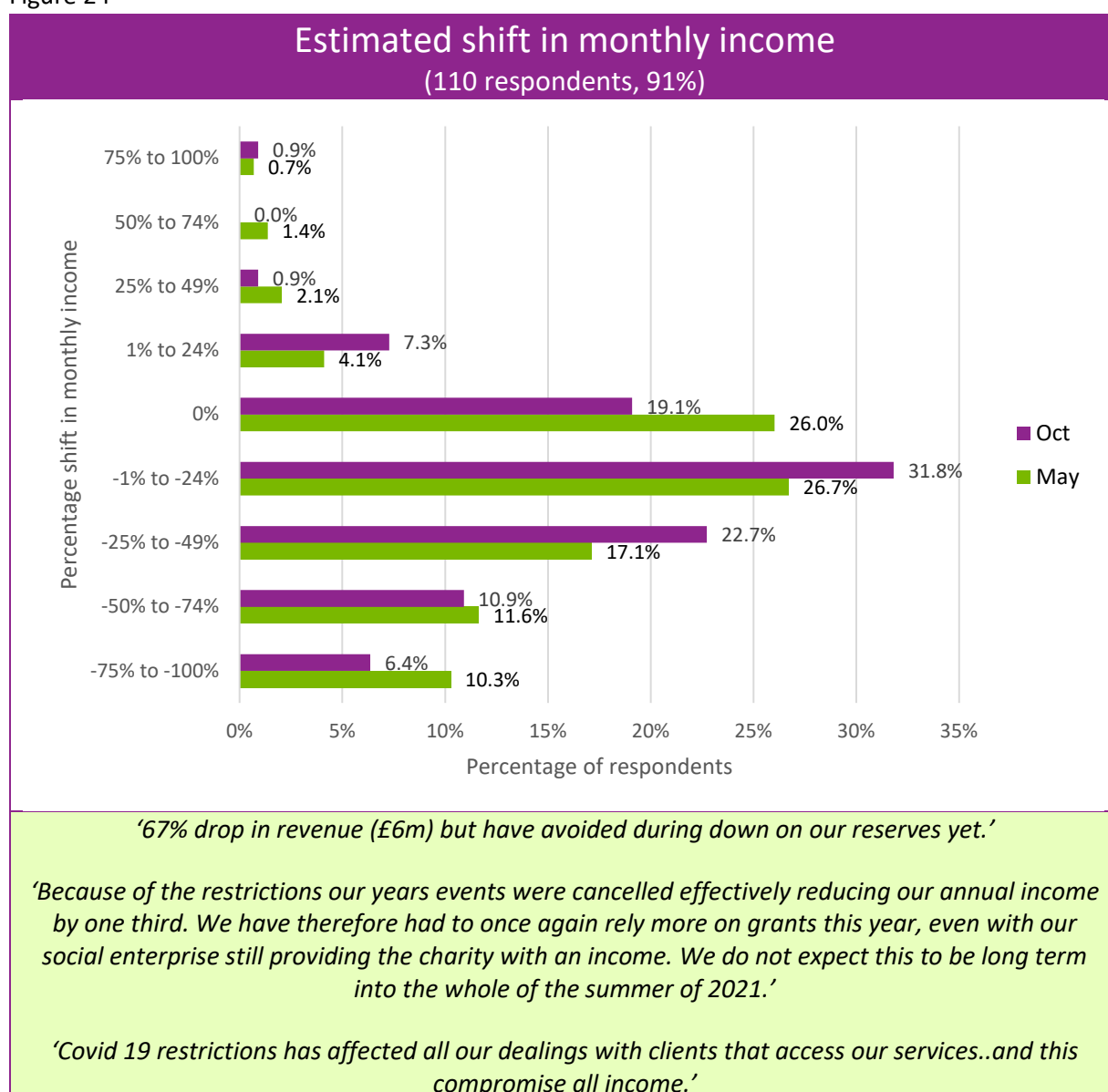
'Not been able to arrange corporate events has reduced the cash flow significantly.'

'Only two annual fund raising activities normally. Both cancelled this year. some costs from cancellation.'

Respondents were asked to estimate the overall increase/decrease in income during the Covid-19 crisis. The same questions were also asked in May 2020, and the charts presented below show this data as a comparison. It should be noted that although the May survey featured Cobseo Members, the sample is not identical.

Figure 24 shows that Collectively, 71.8% of respondents saw a decrease in income in October (up 6.1% since May). Close to one-third (31.8%) saw a 1% to 24% decline in income, (up 5.1% since May).

Figure 24



Cashflow: Expenditure

Figures 25 to 33 focus on Members' expenditure situation. Respondents were asked whether they were experiencing 'decreased' or 'increased' expenditure, or 'no change' (to pre-Covid levels). Responses are limited to those who commit expenditure in given areas, therefore, percentages are calculated based on the number of responses to each individual question.

The same questions were also asked in May 2020, and the charts presented below show this data as a comparison. It should be noted that although the May survey featured Cobseo Members, the sample is not identical.

Figure 25 shows expenditure relating to fundraising costs. More respondents reported a change in both increasing and decreasing fundraising costs compared to in May 2020. This was also the case for volunteer management costs, and governance costs (figure 26), where in both cases, slightly more respondents reported a decrease in costs than reported an increase.

Figure 25

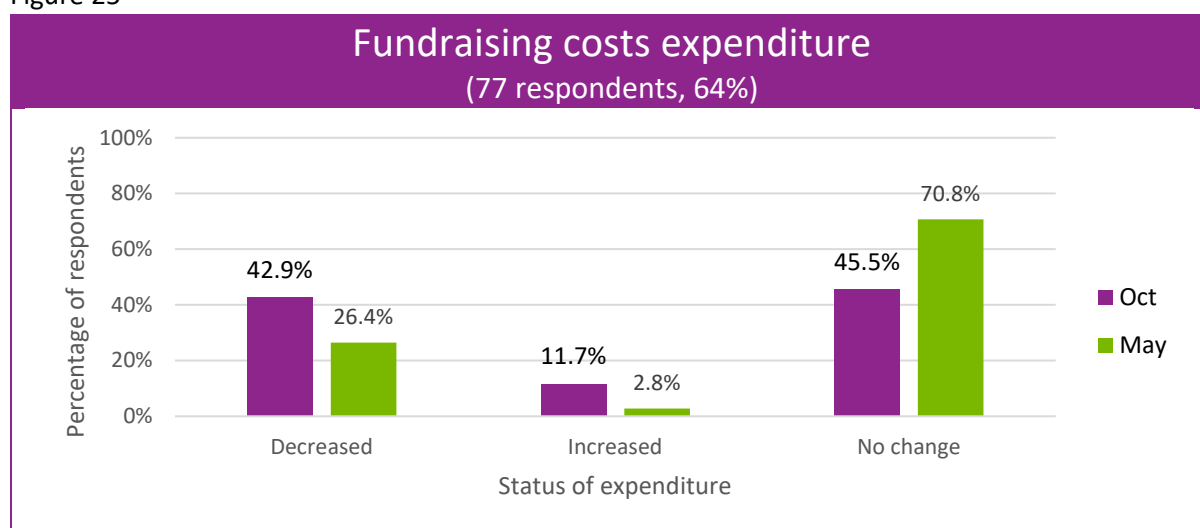


Figure 26

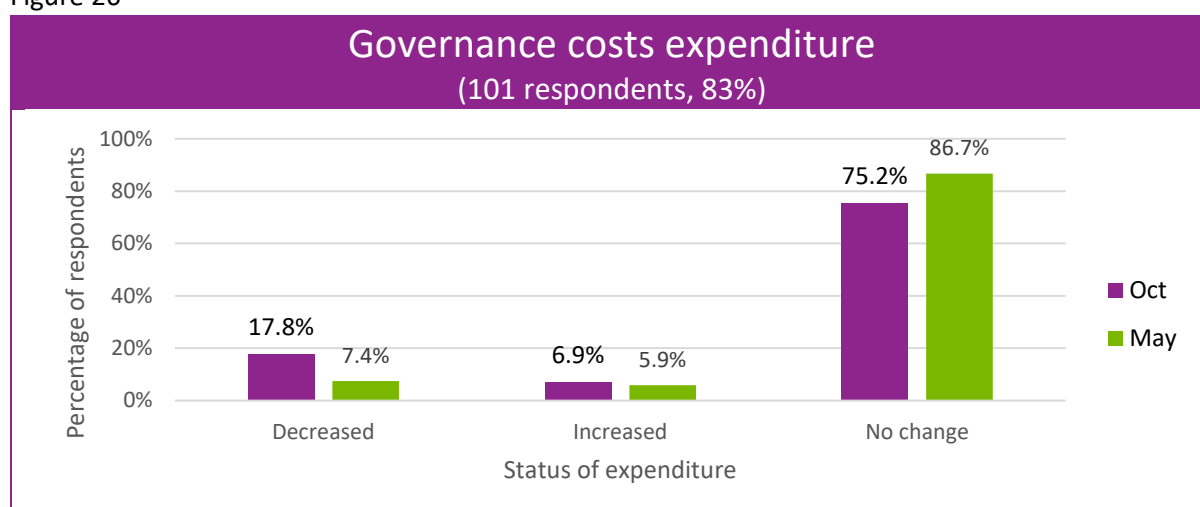
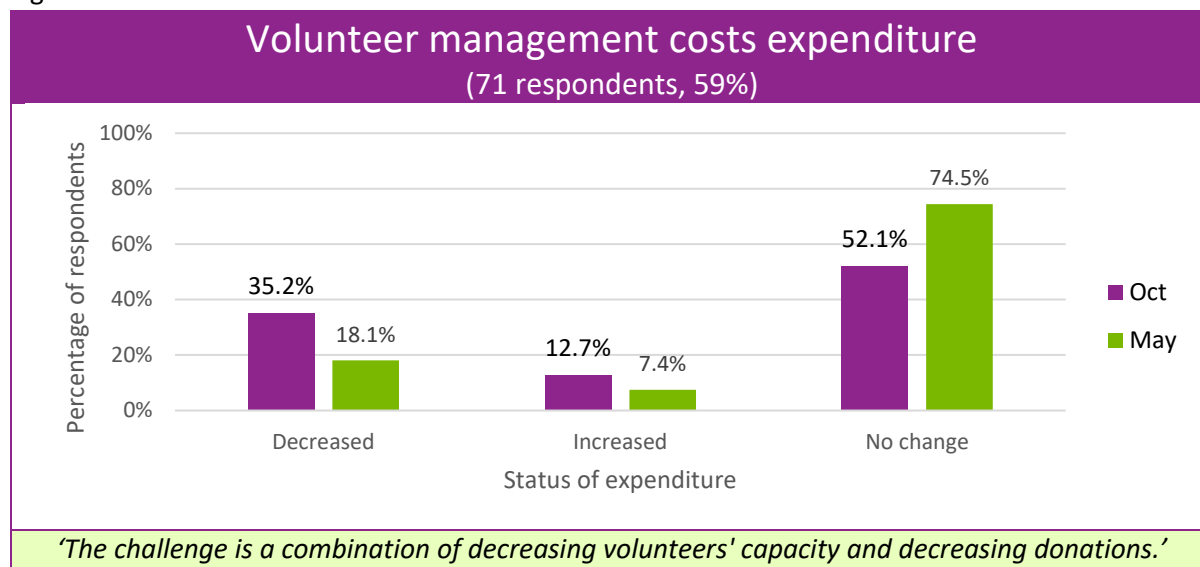


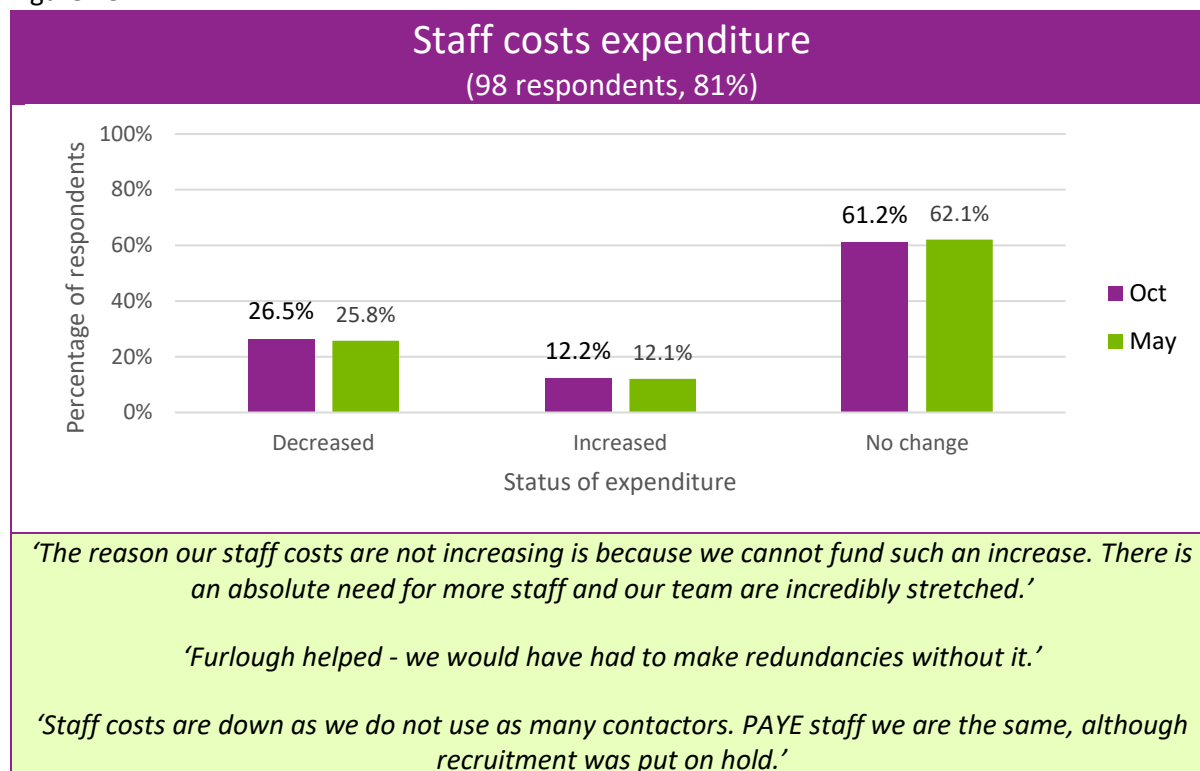
Figure 27 shows volunteer costs, for which more respondents reported a decrease in volunteer management costs in October than did in May. A slight increase in costs was also noted by respondents.

Figure 27



Staff costs (figure 28) showed no significant difference in between May and October 2020, which is likely due to the Government's *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme* (covering 80% of wages) which launched in March and ended in October 2020.

Figure 28



Service delivery costs (figure 29), and overheads costs (figure 30) shows that more respondents reported decreasing service delivery costs compared to May 2020. This was also the case for and overheads costs.

Figure 29

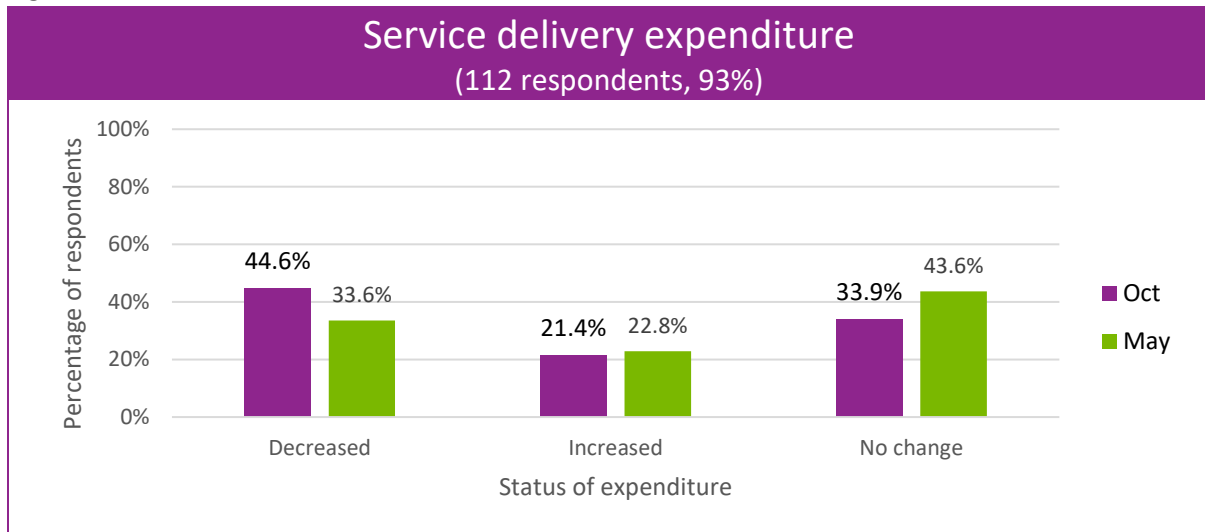
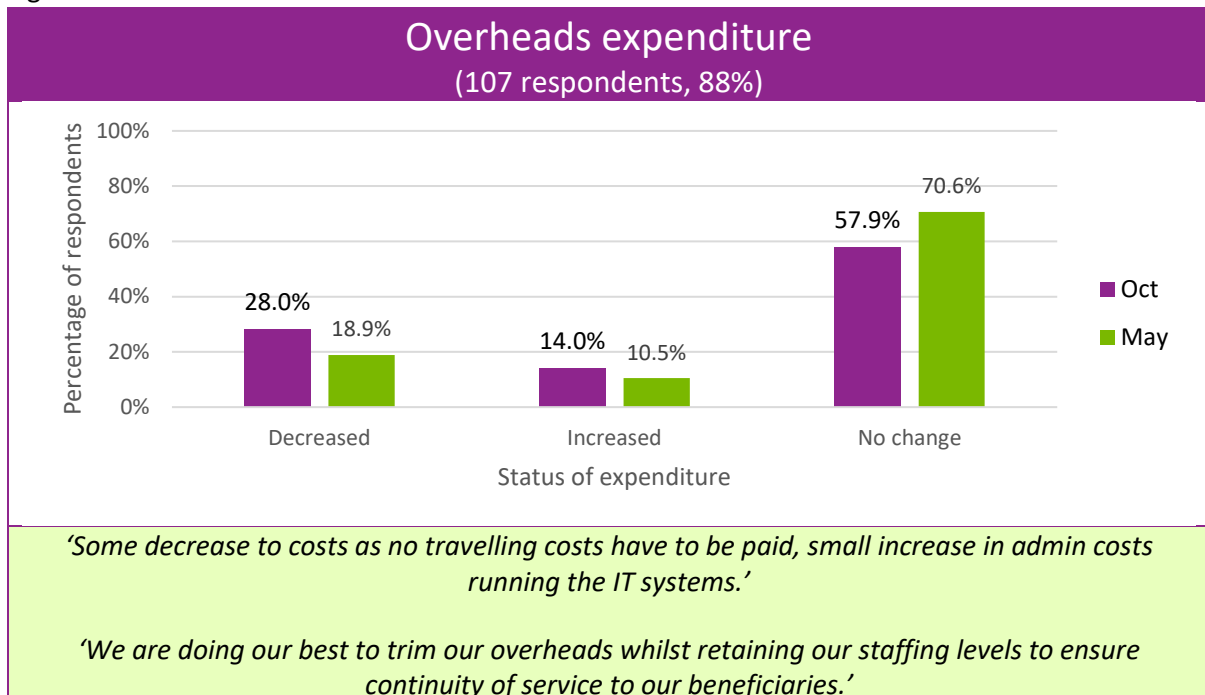


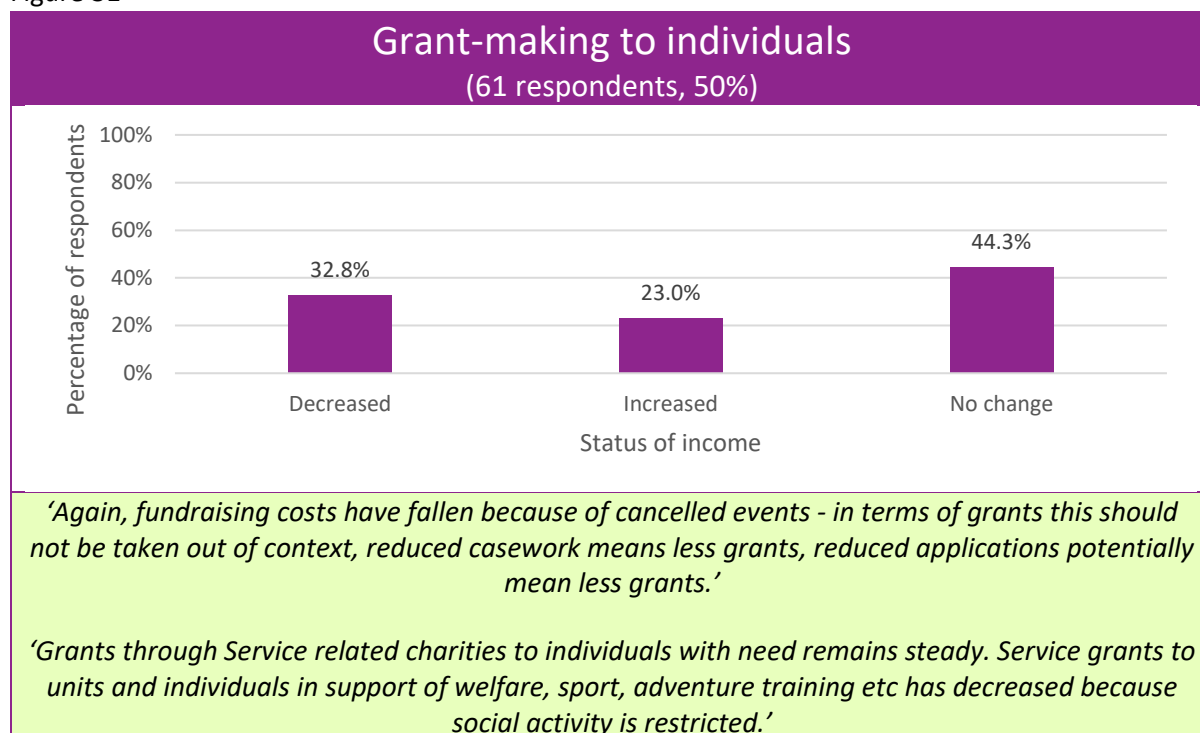
Figure 30



In this survey, respondents were also asked about Covid-19's impact on costs of grant-making to both individuals (figure 31) and to organisations (figure 32). Data was not collected on these topics in May 2020, and so no comparison data is presented in the following two graphs.

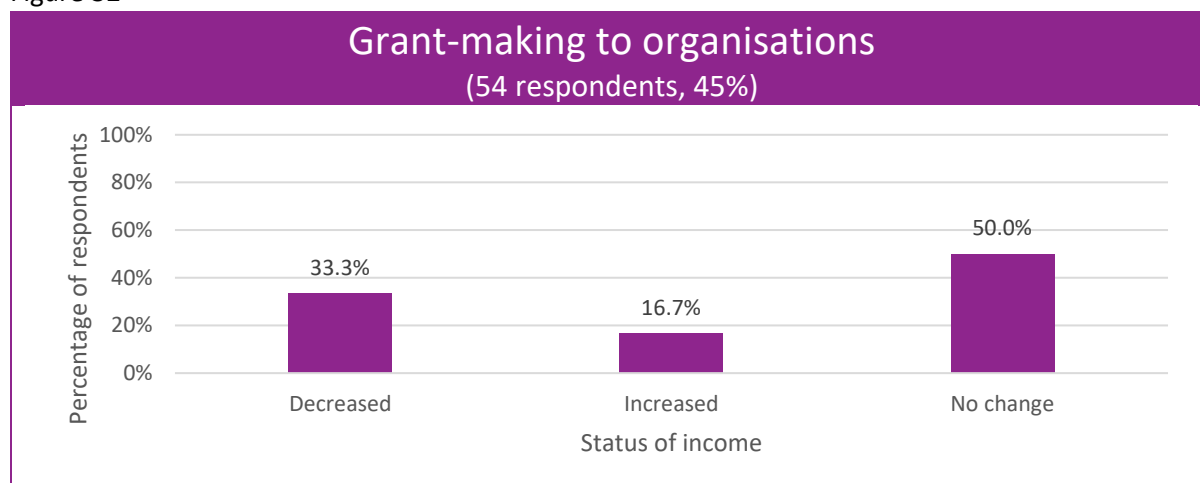
Figure 31 shows that most commonly respondents saw no change in costs for grant-making to individuals; however, more respondents reported a decrease in such costs than reported an increase.

Figure 31



Similar to figure 31, grant-making to organisation (figure 32) also showed more respondents reporting no change to costs associated with making grants to organisations. As seen above, more respondents reported a decrease in these costs than reported an increase. Comparatively, income from funders (figure 20) showed that 39% of respondents reported a decrease and 38% reported no change in funded income. Only 24% reported an increase in funded income.

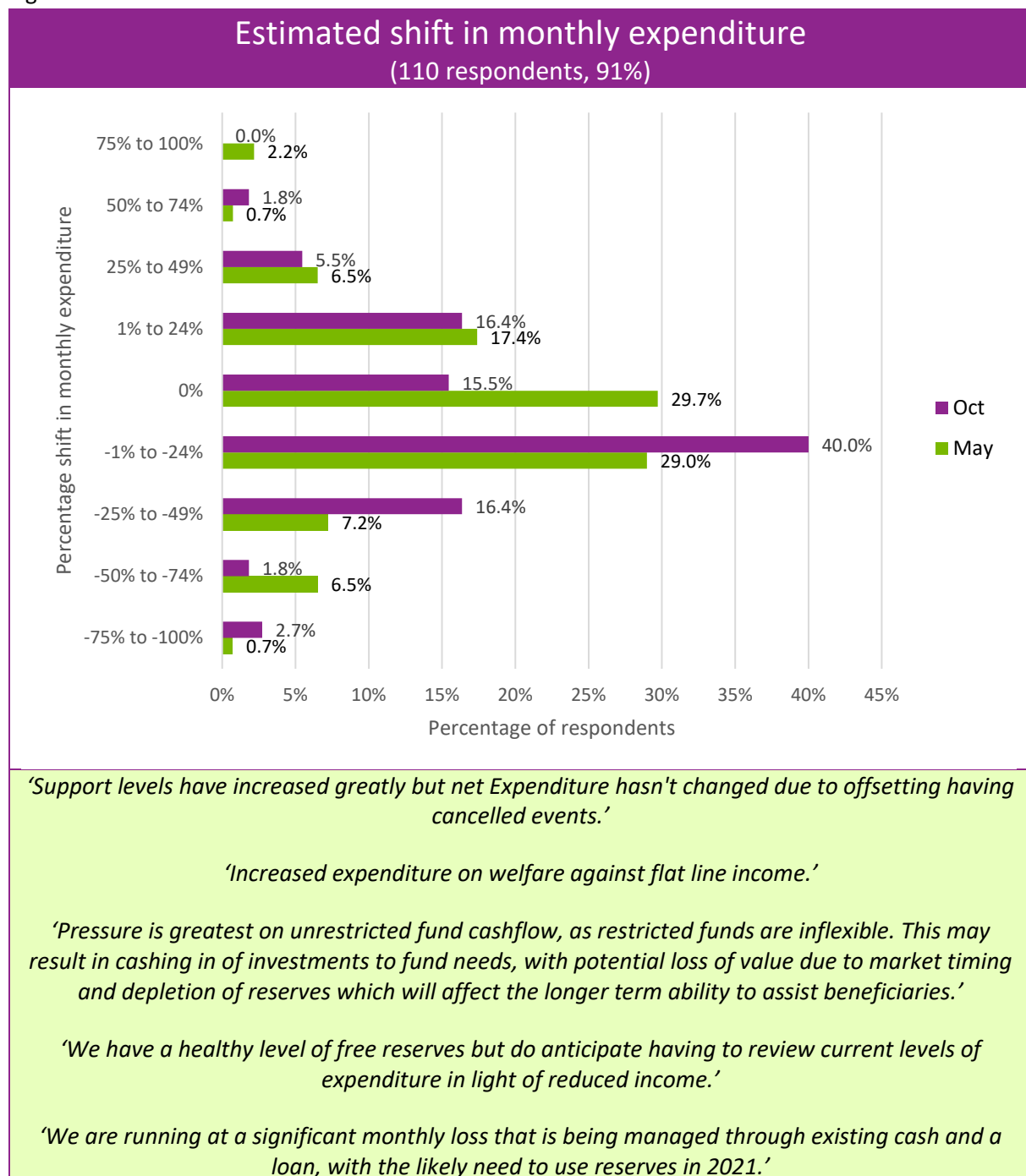
Figure 32



Respondents were asked to estimate the overall increase/decrease in expenditure during the Covid-19 crisis. The same questions were also asked in May 2020, and the charts presented below show this data as a comparison. It should be noted that although the May survey featured Cobseo Members, the sample is not identical.

Figure 33 shows that 60.9% of respondents saw a decline in expenditure, of which 40.0% saw a 1% to 24% decrease. Additionally, 23.7% reported an increase in monthly expenditure (down 3.1% since May).

Figure 33



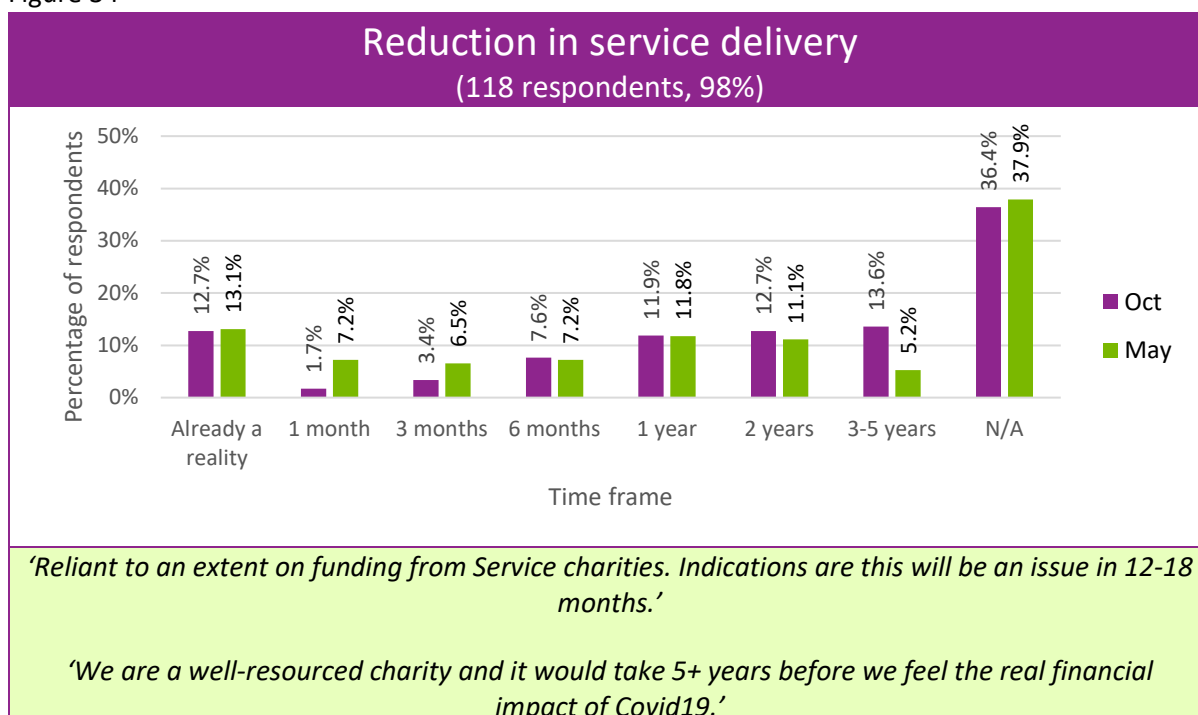
Risks

The following section explores risks facing Cobseo Members. Figures 34 to 41 present a series of risks and the time frame in which respondents believe those risks will become a reality.

The same questions were also asked in May 2020, and the charts presented below show this data as a comparison. It should be noted that although the May survey featured Cobseo Members, the sample is not identical.

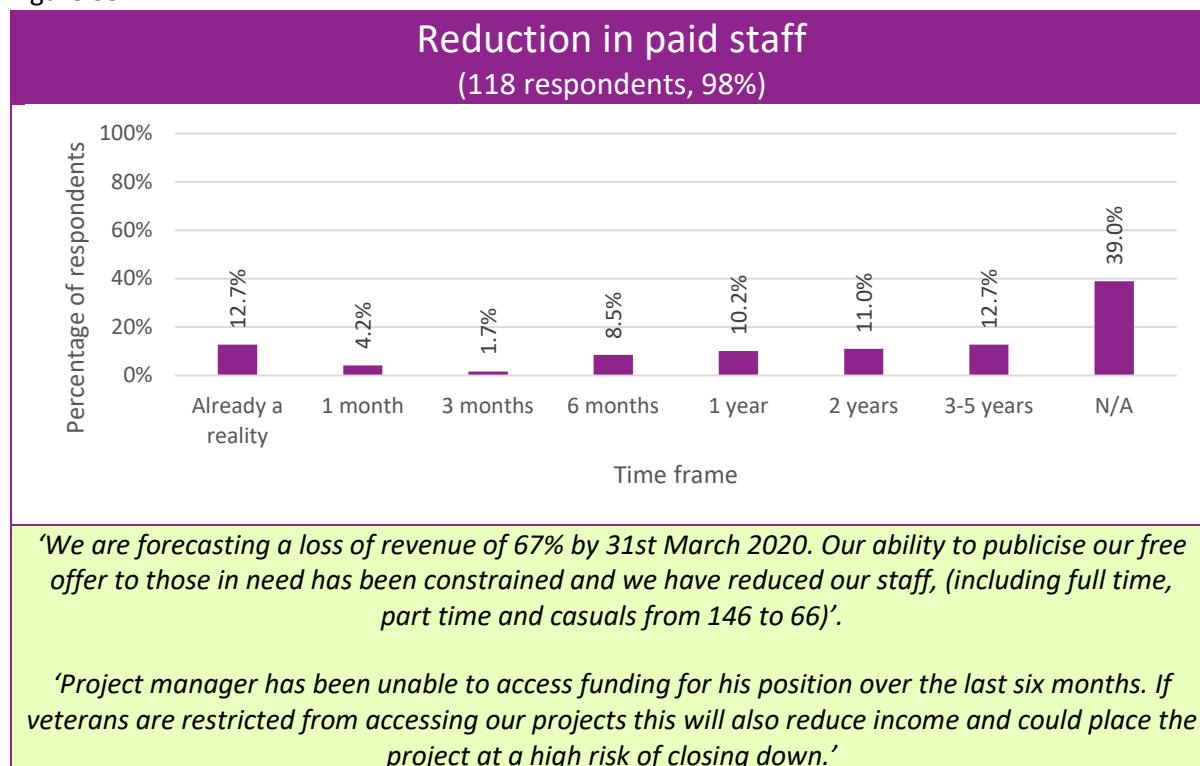
The most pressing risk to Members was reduction in service delivery, with 12.7% stating this is already a reality, and a combined 24.6% believing this will become a reality within one year.

Figure 34



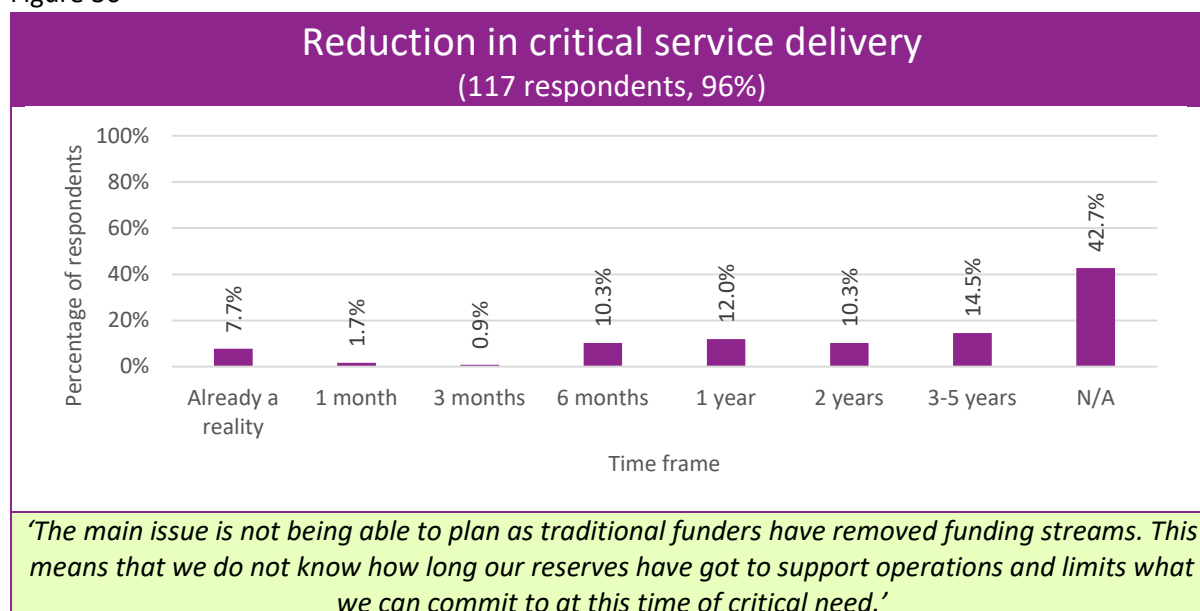
Reduction in paid staff (figure 35) also showed a high rate of responses for whom this was ‘already a reality’ (12.7%). A combined 24.6% reported that a reduction in paid staff will become a reality within one year. This question is unique to the October survey, so comparative data from May is not available.

Figure 35



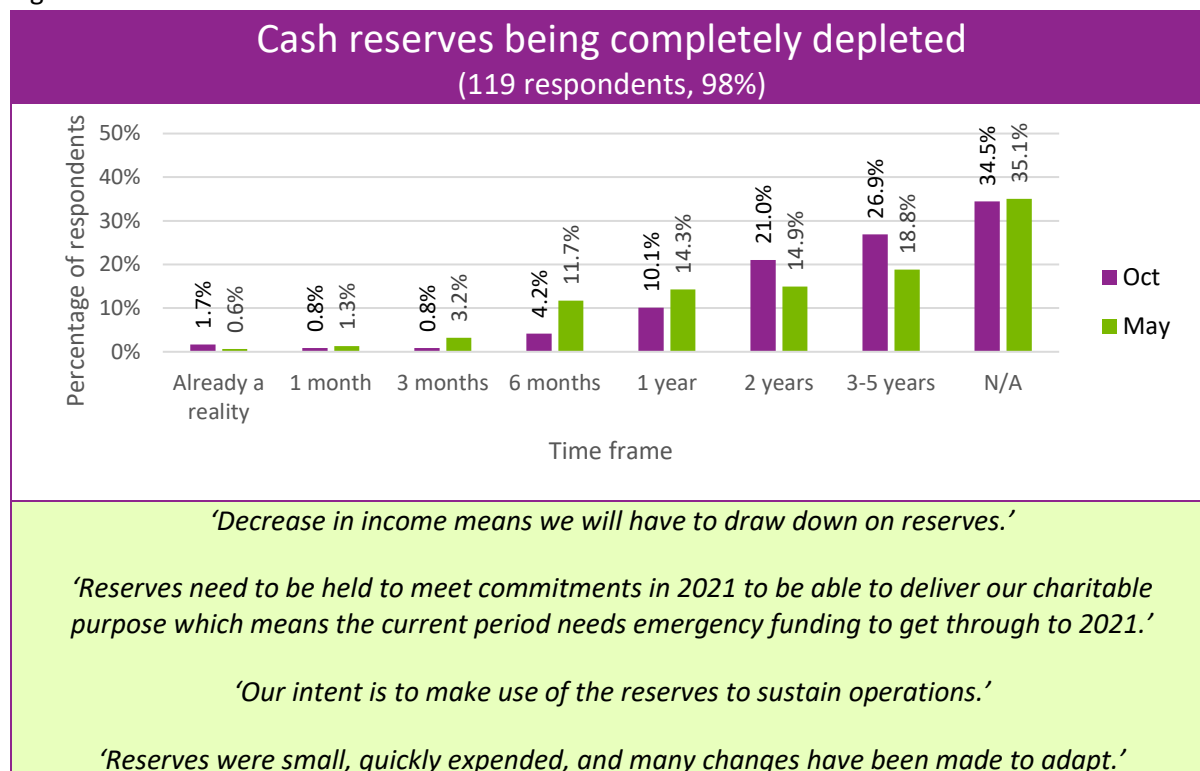
Reduction in critical service delivery (figure 36) was ‘already a reality’ for 7.7% of respondents. A combined 24.6% reported that a reduction in paid staff will become a reality within one year. A combined 36.8% of respondents placed this risk within a one to five-year timeframe of occurring. This question is unique to the October survey, so comparative data from May is not available.

Figure 36



Figures 37 show that a combined 15.1% of respondents estimated that their cash reserves will be completely depleted within one year, repressing half the number of respondents from May (30.5% combined). This may be indicative of a financial deferral rather than a solution, as more respondents now predict their cash reserves being completely depleted in 2-5 years (47.9% combined) than they did in May (14.2% increase from May).

Figure 37



A similar finding to the above graph can be seen in figure 38, in which 27.7% of respondents believe their organisations' financial stability would be compromised within 3-5 years. This is 8.9% more than specified 3-5 years in May's survey.

Figure 38

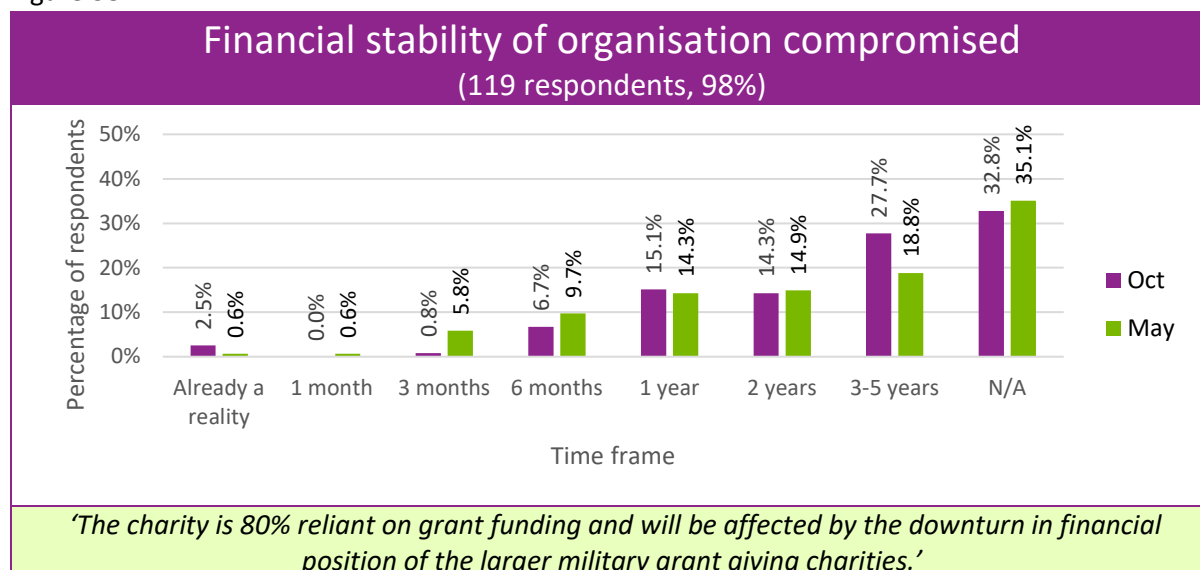


Figure 39 shows that 5.1% of respondents have already started to sell assets to raise funds. As seen above, more respondents believe this risk will become a reality in the longer term (3-5 years, 10.3%).

Figure 39

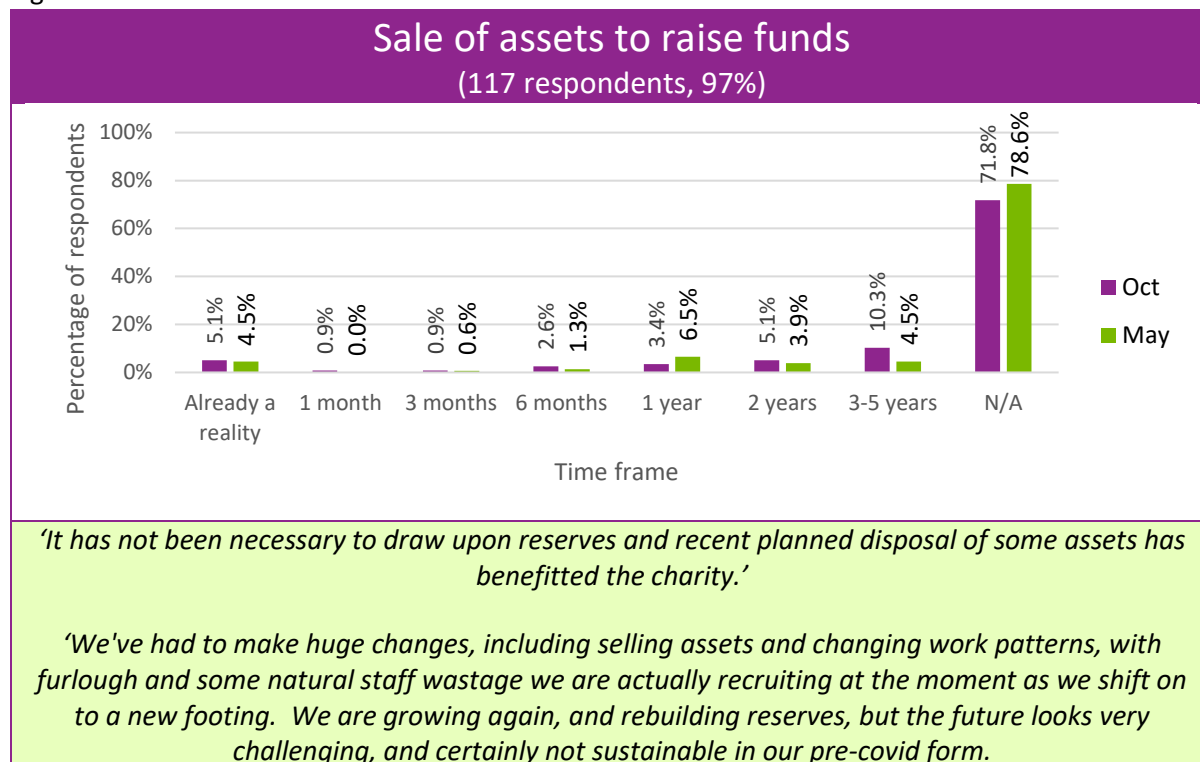
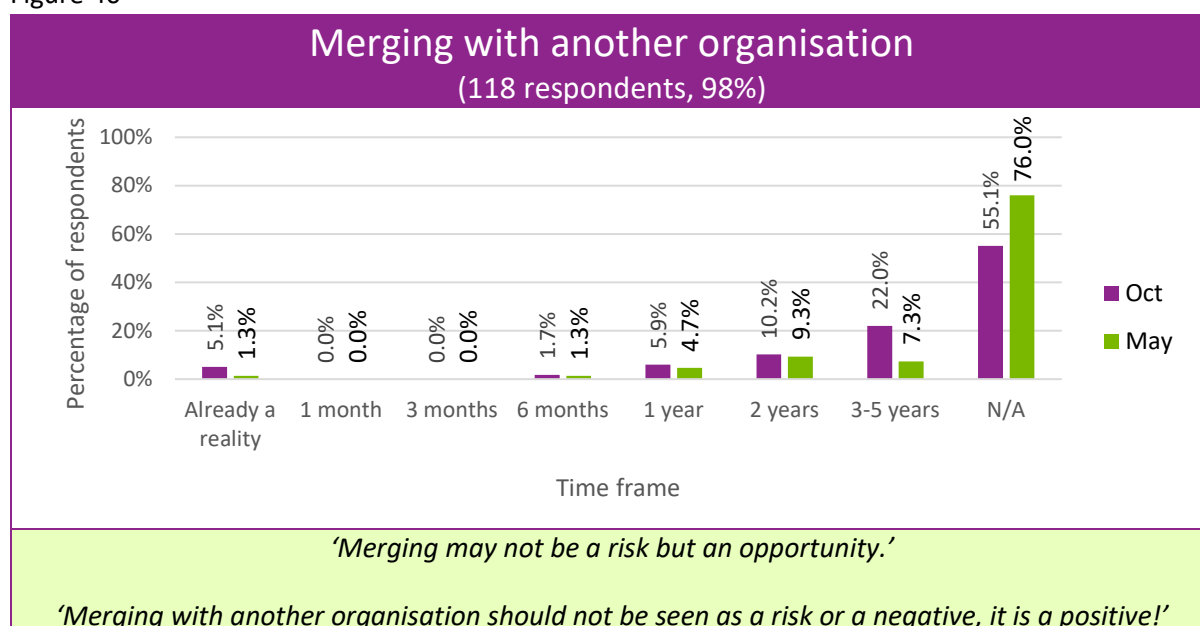


Figure 40 shows that for 5.1% of respondents, merging with another organisation is already a reality (almost four-times more respondents than in May). Differences in responses between May and October also suggest that more Members are considering mergers in the longer term (3-5 years). Additionally, this question was 'applicable' to 21% more respondents this time than in May, overall suggesting that mergers may be becoming more commonly considered as a result of Covid-19.

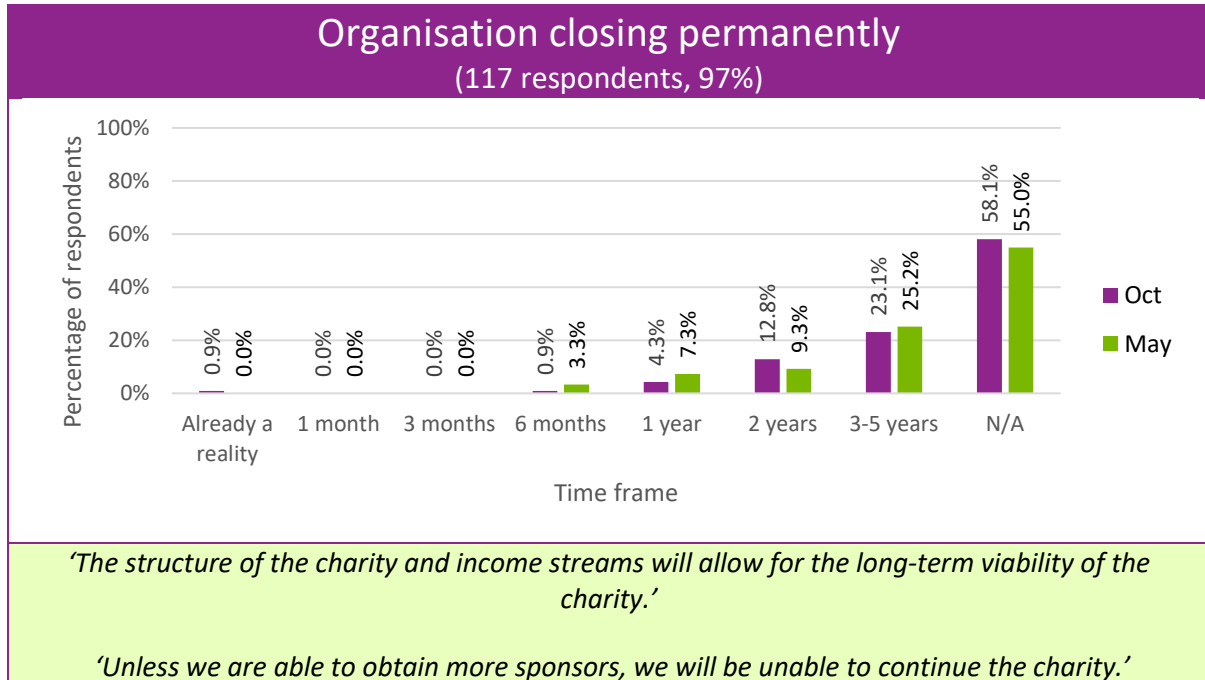
Figure 40



'We are looking for partnering other organisations/charities not merging. We already work in collaboration with literally 100s of organisations.'

Figure 41 shows that for one organisation, this is already a reality, and a combined 5.2% of respondents believe that their organisation will close within one year.

Figure 41



Support

This section explores government support currently being accessed by Members and additional support needs required.

Figure 42 shows which service delivery areas respondents have used government Covid-19 grants. Most commonly, respondents had not applied for or been successful at obtaining grants (32.4%). This question is unique to this survey, and therefore no comparative data is available from May.

Of those who specified grant topics, welfare (17.7%) and mental health and wellbeing (16.5%) were most common. This also tallies with earlier findings which showed that mental health and wellbeing was an area which had seen both increased beneficiary demand (figure 13) and was in the top-three areas for critical services being either ‘significantly impacted’ or ‘closed/undeliverable’ (figure 17).

Figure 42

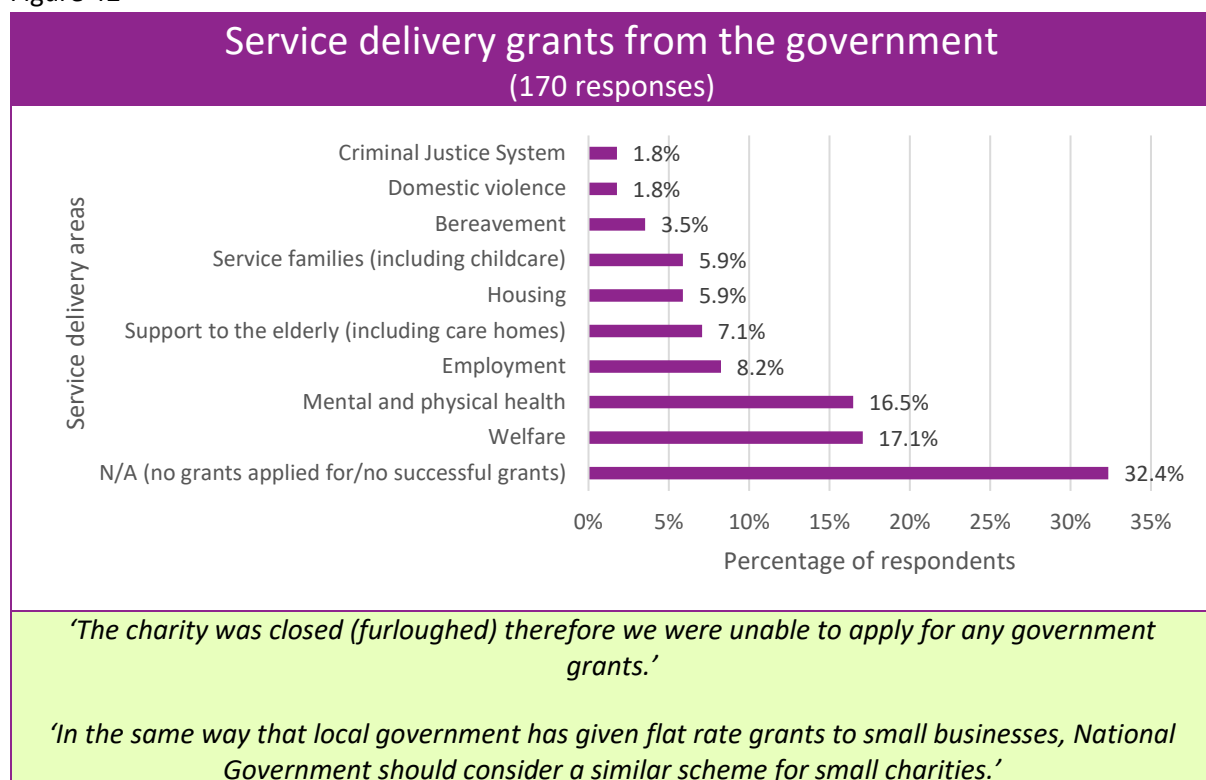


Figure 43 shows respondent's level of support needed to sustain or achieve delivery of critical services in the coming year. Close to one-fifth (23.9%) reported needing significant support in this area.

Figure 43

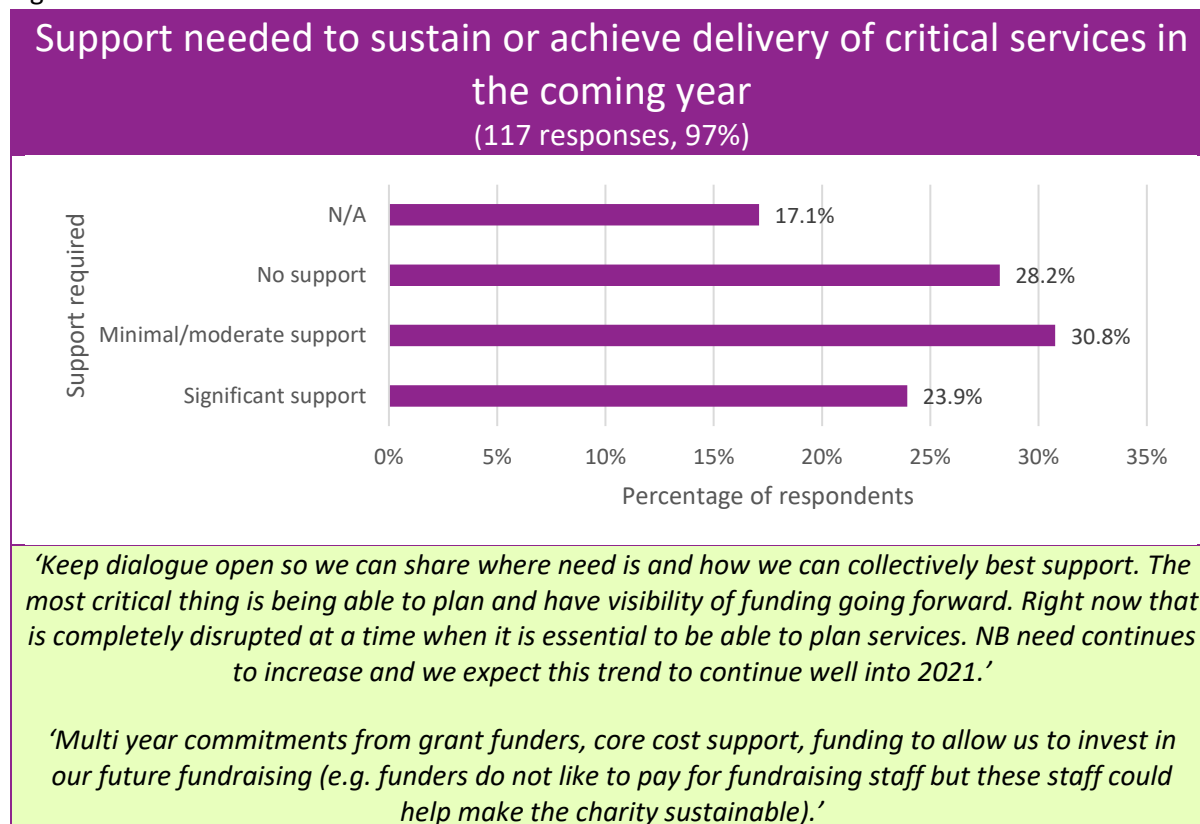
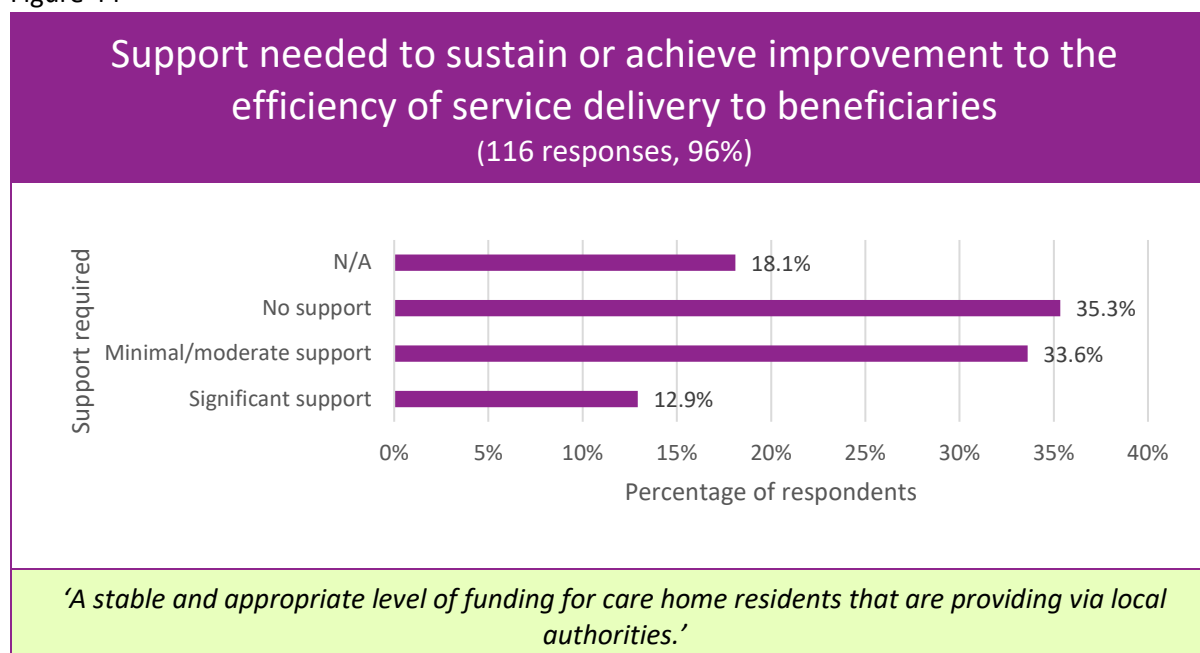


Figure 44 shows respondent's level of support needed to sustain or achieve improvement to the efficiency of service delivery to beneficiaries. One-third (33.6%) reported needing minimal to moderate support in this area.

Figure 44



'Apart from being able to access grant holders for core costs such as salaries during the rest of this pandemic not much else really.'

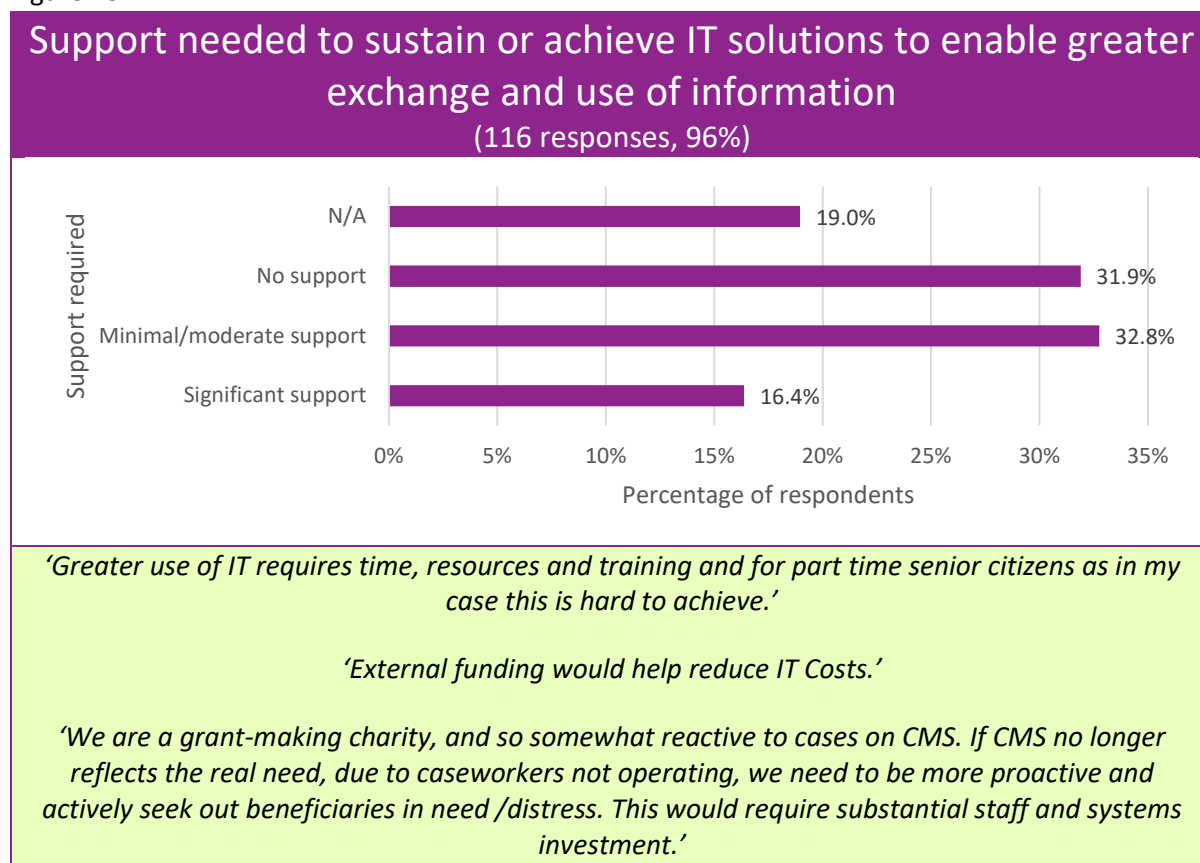
'Assistance with general operating costs.'

'Greater collaboration with similar organisations, and even to explore mergers; there is a growing need for our part of the sector to look actively at options to consolidate our various offers to beneficiaries.'

'Financial grant to sustain the charity. Pooling resources with other charities, collaborative working, joint fundraising initiatives. Consultant to work with us on strategies for sustainability / commercial opportunities. Sector-wide review of priorities.'

Figure 45 shows respondent's level of support needed to sustain or achieve IT solutions to enable greater exchange and use of information. Close to one-third (32.8%) reported needing minimal to moderate support in this area.

Figure 45



Conclusions

The following section summarise findings and provides concluding remarks on the survey's findings.

Increasing beneficiary numbers

Data presented in this survey showed an overall increase in beneficiary numbers. Overall, 60% of respondents saw an increase in beneficiaries up (14% since May), while 25% saw a decrease in beneficiary numbers.

One-third (35%) of respondents reported being able to cope 'with difficulty' with beneficiary demand, but the data shows that certain services are more significantly impacted than others. This is especially so for critical services such as mental health and wellbeing support, which when viewed in relation to findings on increasing beneficiary numbers, shows the strain of increasing demand.

"We have seen an over 30% increase in demand for our mental health support services. We are experiencing increased case complexity with beneficiaries experiencing multiple challenges, often requiring a greater number of recovery interventions/sessions and a longer period of support to achieve objectives. If these trends continue, the accumulative impact is likely to be that we are unable to respond as quickly as we would like with potential waiting lists for some high demand services."

Support for mental health has not only seen the largest overall demand (74%), but it is also among the highest reported incidence of Members experiencing a 'significant impact' (45%) on critical service delivery. Additionally, mental health support has seen a 20% increase in beneficiary demand since May 2020, with demand for drug and alcohol support also increasing by 22% over the same period.

"Fundraising has almost completely ceased, grant giving charities are giving out less and donations are markedly down. Corporates and individuals are tightening the belts for the long haul and yet the demand for support to the beneficiary increases as a consequence of the increased isolation and loneliness."

Demand for loneliness support also remained high (70%, up 5% since May), with many respondents citing challenges in engaging with beneficiaries due to both social distancing restrictions, and also older beneficiaries' lack of internet or devices with which to communicate other than the telephone. In total, 35% of respondents reported experiencing a 'significant impact' of Covid-19 on their ability to provide support to the elderly (including care homes).

"Our delivery model for mental health, wellbeing and welfare is based around face to face contact. A significant number of our service users cannot engage digitally."

Decreasing income and expenditure

Survey data showed an overall reduction in income between May and October 2020. Overall, 72% of respondents saw a decrease in income, while only 9% saw an increase. A decrease in public donations was experienced by 68% of respondents (up 14% since May). Additionally, 85% of respondents reported a decrease in fundraising events income (up 2% since May).

“The majority of our income (Over 50%) comes from fundraising events and community fundraising, but as a result of Covid-19 almost all of these were cancelled or postponed until 2021 resulting in a reliance on grant funding to make up the shortfall.”

Overall, expenditure showed a reduction, with 61% of respondents reporting that their expenditure had decreased. Respondents cited a decrease in spending, where possible, due to events being cancelled or some service delivery being reduced, with a total of 13% of respondents reporting that a reduction in service delivery was ‘already a reality’.

Expenditure on staff costs showed no significant difference in between May and October 2020. However, the Government’s *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme* (covering 80% of wages) which launched in March, ended in October. Therefore, the impact of Covid-19 on charity staff may not be fully realised until after October 2020. This is supported by survey results showing that 25% of respondents believed that a reduction in paid staff will be a reality within one year.

“Running costs have reduced and we are lean anyway. We have been successful in winning some new bids, but we are certainly not complacent and know that things will get tougher in next years.”

A number of respondents expressed concern that their reserves were becoming depleted, yet more respondents communicated that their reserves position was stable for now. Data showed that for many, the financial impact of Covid-19 is expected to be felt within the coming years, rather than months.

“Our unrestricted reserve is now slightly above our minimum. However, the next and following years present an unknown as if grants go down we do not believe that fundraising opportunities or the opportunity to court business support will be in abundance.”

A combined 15% of respondents estimate that their cash reserves will be completely depleted within one year, repressing half the number of respondents from May (31% combined). However, this may be indicative of a financial deferral rather than a solution, as more respondents now predict their cash reserves being completely depleted in 2-5 years (48% combined) than they did in May (up 14% from May). For those who rely on fundraising events and public donations, and find themselves with diminishing reserves, the immediate future presents a very real existential crisis for their organisation and in turn will leave beneficiaries without their support services.

“Funding and income is the main factor in weather the organisation survives or goes into liquidation.”

Acknowledgements

DSC wishes to extend thanks to all who took part in this survey. The data provided by Members was insightful, honest and thought provoking.

Special thanks go to the Forces in Mind Trust for funding this research, and in so doing, providing an opportunity for Cobseo Members to have their voices heard during a most challenging of times.