Viewfinder 11

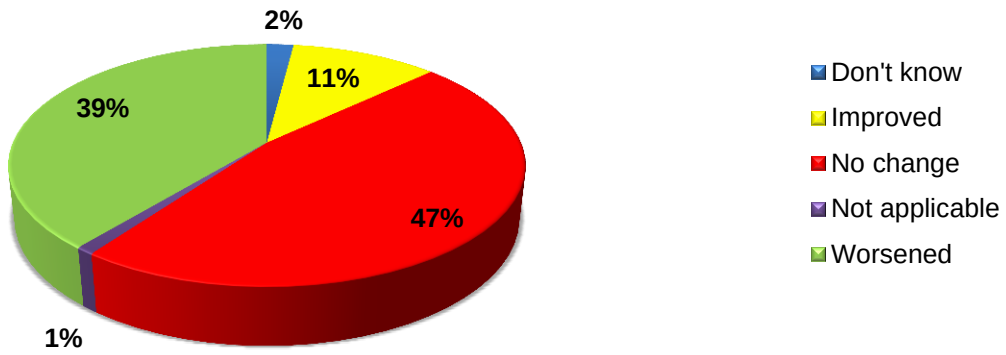
In January 2011 the *Viewfinder 11* questionnaire was made available online to 930 NICVA member organisations. In total 202 organisations responded, generating a response rate of 21%.

Key Findings

- The economic environment continues to impact heavily on member organisations, with 39% reporting that their financial situation has worsened over the past six months.
- 53% of responding organisations have been affected by the public sector funding cuts.
- For almost a fifth of responding organisations there has been some reduction in staff numbers.
- 31% of member organisations have increased their expenditure.
- 16% of organisations have decreased their services over the last six months.
- Members continue to be proactive in taking measures to address the funding cuts.
- For 53% of organisations, grant income makes up over 70% of income.
- Almost half of respondents (49%) stated that they receive some level of funding from Government, 45% funding from charitable trusts and 34% from the general public.
- The trend towards more collaborative working by member organisations is continuing, with 79% of responding organisations having worked in collaboration in the last six months.
- The majority of organisations are satisfied or very satisfied with NICVA's membership package and benefits and NICVA's role and performance over the last 12 months.
- The majority of organisations have no earned income or earned income makes up a small proportion of their income.

Impact of the current financial situation

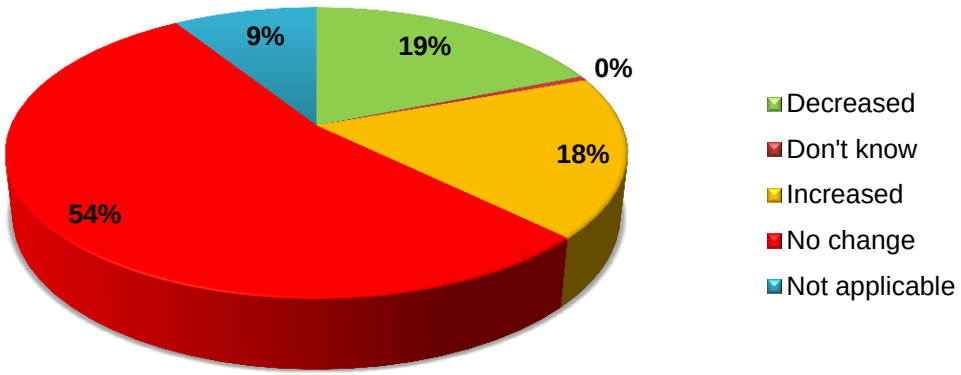
Figure 1: Financial situation over the last six months



Base: 181

As we can see from Figure 1, the current financial situation is continuing to cause uncertainty and challenges for members. Interestingly, the wider economic environment has provided opportunities for some organisations, with 11% of organisations stating that the financial situation of their organisation has improved over the past six months. For almost half of organisations (47%), there has been no change in their financial situation over the six months preceding this survey. However we can see that real financial challenges still exist for many member organisations, with almost two fifths of organisations (39%) reporting that their financial situation has worsened over the past six months.

Figure 2: Staff numbers

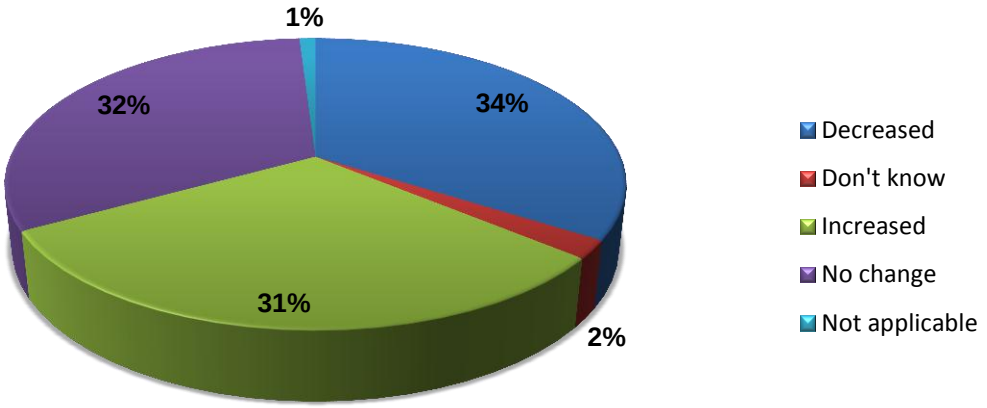


Base: 177

For the majority of respondents (54%), there has been no change over the past six months in the numbers of paid staff within their organisation. This is in line with the findings of Viewfinder 10[1], where 55% of respondents expected staffing levels to remain unaffected over the next 12 months. Yet for almost a fifth of responding organisations there has been some reduction in staff numbers, perhaps indicating that the public expenditure cuts are starting to impact these organisations (again, this is in line with the findings of Viewfinder 10, where 17% of respondents expected to experience a decrease in staff numbers).

We can also see from Figure 2 that the current environment may have led to new opportunities for some organisations, with 18% of organisations stating that their staff numbers have increased. This could also reflect increasing pressure on the services they offer, with increased need requiring organisations to take on more staff to meet these needs.

Figure 3: Expenditure

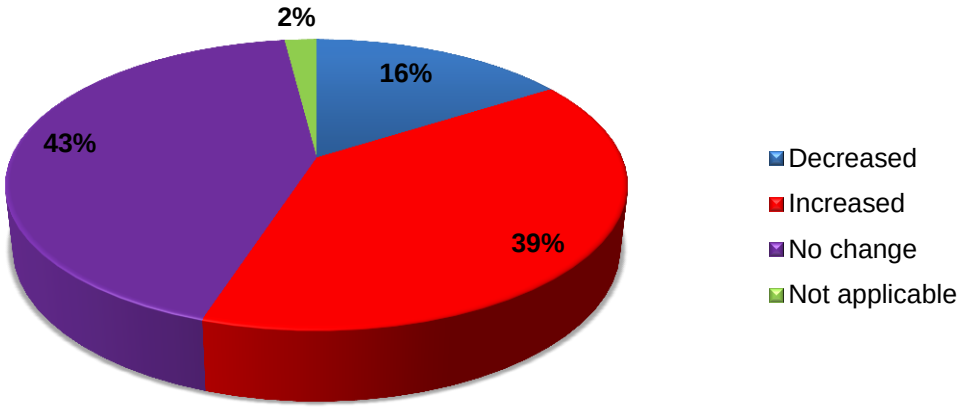


Base: 176

Member organisations were very evenly split on how the current economic and funding environment has affected their overall expenditure in the last six months. With the 34% of organisations that reported a reduction in their expenditure over the last six months, we may be seeing the clearest impacts of the public cuts. 31% of organisations have in fact increased their expenditure, perhaps reflecting the increased needs in wider society as the economic situation worsens.

[1] Viewfinder 10, NICVA, October 2011 http://www.nicva.org/publications/viewfinder-10

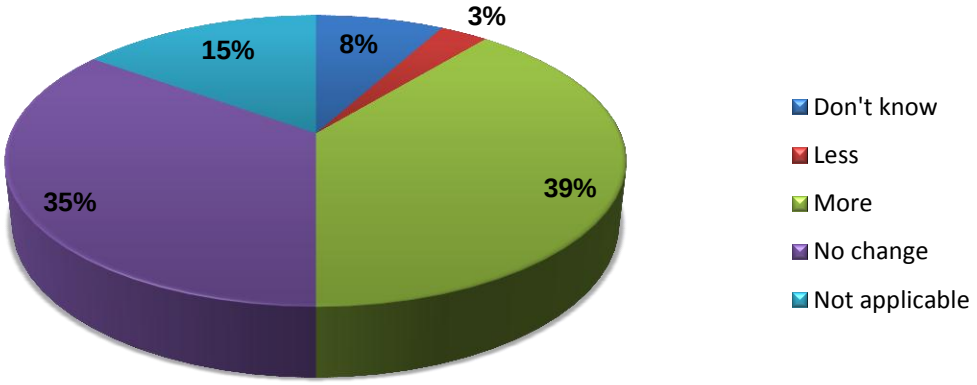
Figure 4: Services offered over last six months



Base: 179

Figure 4 reflects the fact that there may be more social need and more pressure put upon member organisations as the economic environment changes, as a significant minority of organisations have increased the services they offer over the last six months. 16% of organisations have decreased their services over the last six months, perhaps reflecting reduced funding to provide these services. 43% of organisations have seen no change in the amount of services they offer.

Figure 5: Competition with other organisations



Base: 176

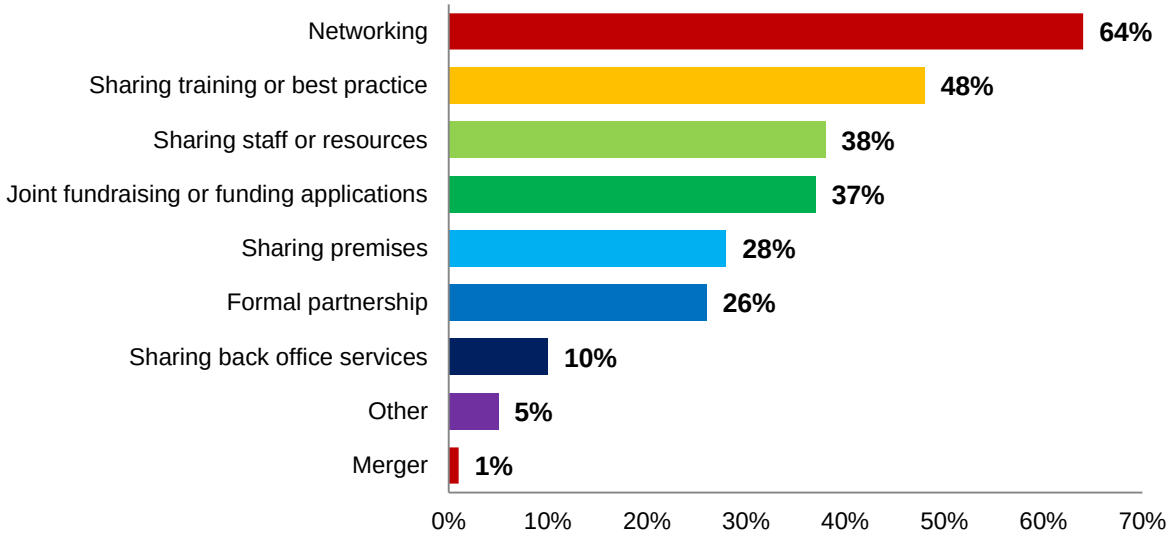
As we can see from Figure 5 a significant amount of responding organisations (39%) are of the view that they have faced more competition from other organisations over the last six months. This may reflect the fact that 76% of organisations believe that the economic conditions for the voluntary and community sector have become more negative over the last six months, whilst only 2% of responding organisations felt that the economic conditions had become more positive over the same time period. This worsening of the economic environment is confirmed by the fact that 80% of organisations stated that they had experienced an increased demand for their services over the last six months.

Collaboration

79% of responding organisations[2] have worked in collaboration with one or more organisations over the last six months. This signifies the continued importance of collaboration within the sector, and reflects trends identified in previous viewfinder surveys. For example, in Viewfinder 8[3] (April 2008) NICVA reported that 91% of respondents believed it was essential that the voluntary and community sector work more collaboratively, and over three quarters of Viewfinder 9 respondents (76.2%) thought that the sector should work more collaboratively.

We can see that these views on collaborative working are being translated into practice, with 85% of Viewfinder 9[4] (November 2010) respondents collaborating with other organisations on projects and 84% of respondents reporting that they work in collaboration with other organisations in Viewfinder 10 (October 2011).

Figure 6: Types of collaborative working



Base: 202 multiple response

As is clear from Figure 6, for more than half of respondents (64%) the main type of collaborative work put in place over the past six months has been networking, effectively building on the already existing formal and informal networks that have been evident in the voluntary and community sector for many years. 37% are carrying out joint fundraising or joint funding applications, which suggests a more formal collaborative approach than networking. This is in line with the findings of Viewfinder 10, were for almost half of respondents (45%), the main type of collaborative work planned for the next year was networking.

Almost half of responding members (48%) shared training and best practice with other organisations over the same period. This is commensurate with the findings of Viewfinder 10, in which almost a third (31%) of respondents intended to share training and best practice with partner organisations. 38% of respondents have

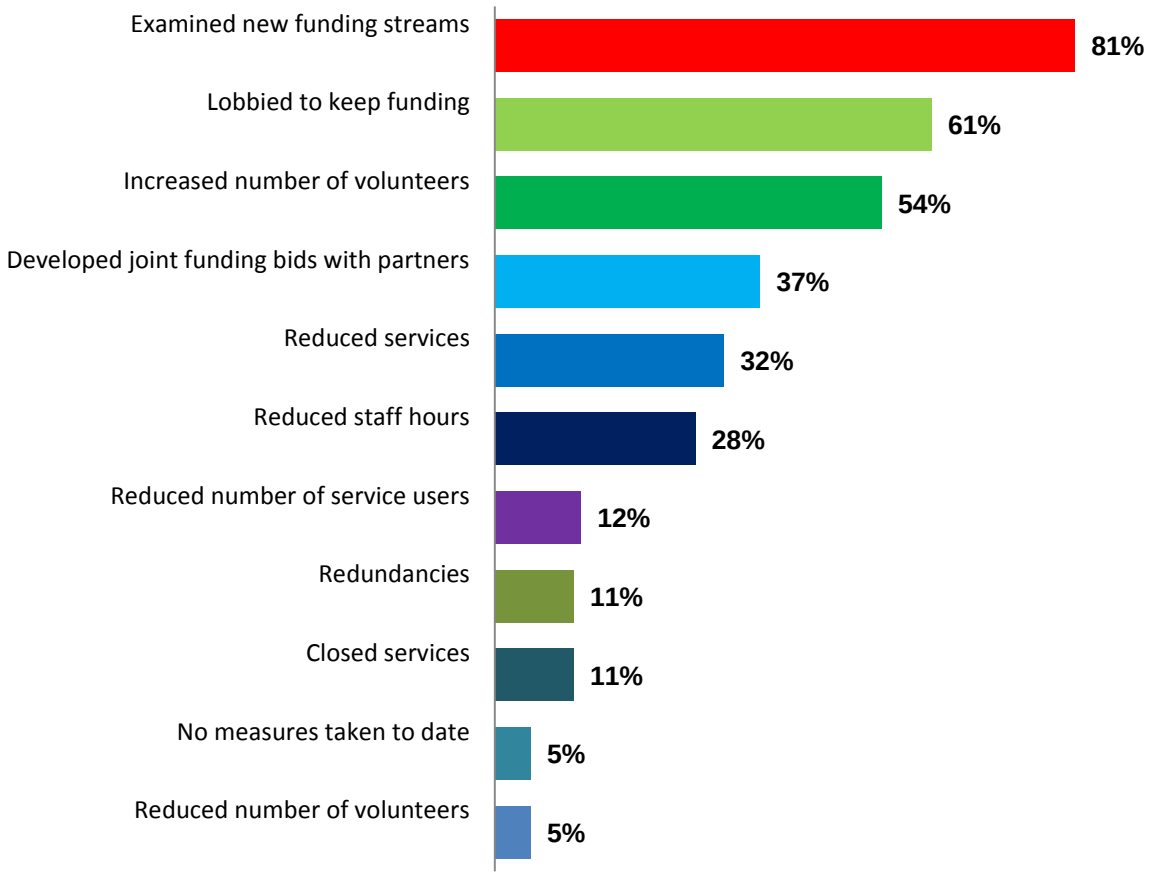
[2] Base=178
[3] http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/Viewfinder8_Final.pdf
[4] November 2010, http://www.nicva.org/publications/viewfinder-9

shared staff or resources over the past six months, whilst 28% have shared premises. Sharing premises, a collaborative practice that also featured heavily in responses to Viewfinder 10, are the fifth most common forms of collaborative working over the past six months (28%).

Funding cuts

53% of responding organisations[5] have been affected by the public sector funding cuts. Therefore it is clear that the cuts in public expenditure are continuing to impact on member organisations, as this represents only a small drop from the 58% of responding organisations that reported having been affected by the cuts in Viewfinder 10. 57 organisations stated that they had been affected by having their funding cut. A quarter of these organisations (25%), had lost 50% or more of their funding due to these cuts. As we found in Viewfinder 10, the majority of these cuts (61%) represented 20% or less of the organisations funding.

Figure 7: Measures taken to manage funding cuts



Base= 57. Multiple Responses

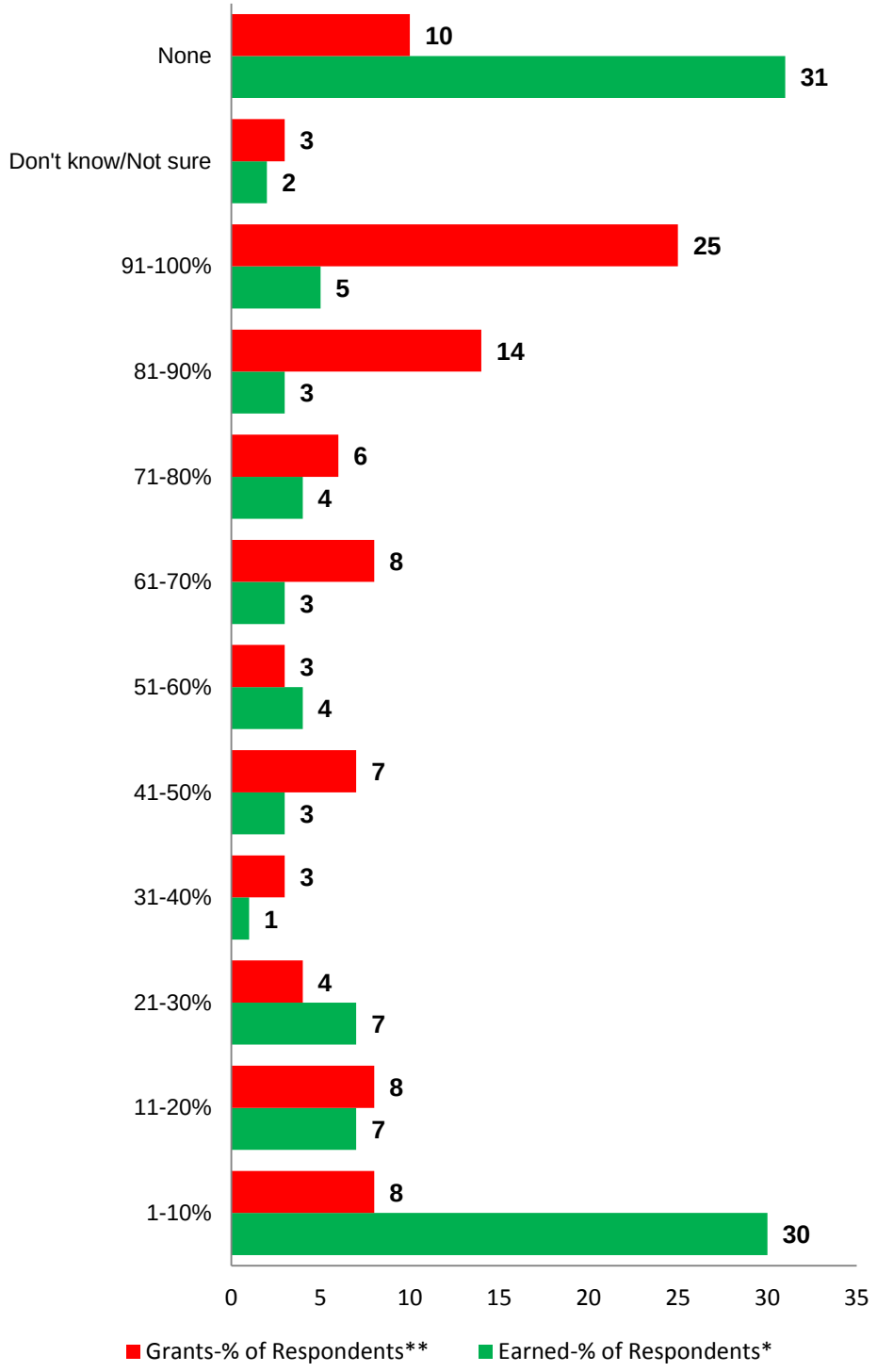
As we can see from Figure 7, in order to manage the cuts in public expenditure, a large majority of organisations (81%) that have experienced direct cuts to their income have examined other funding streams. 61% have lobbied to keep their funding, and well over a third (37%) have developed joint funding bids with partner

[5] Base=179

organisations. As in Viewfinder 10, there is a noteworthy trend towards organisations increasing its number of volunteers. In terms of identifying the impact on the services delivered by organisations, the survey highlighted an increase in the reduction of services 32% (up from 19% in Viewfinder 10), reduced staff hours (28%), redundancies (11%) and services closed (11%).

Income

Figure 8: Sources of income



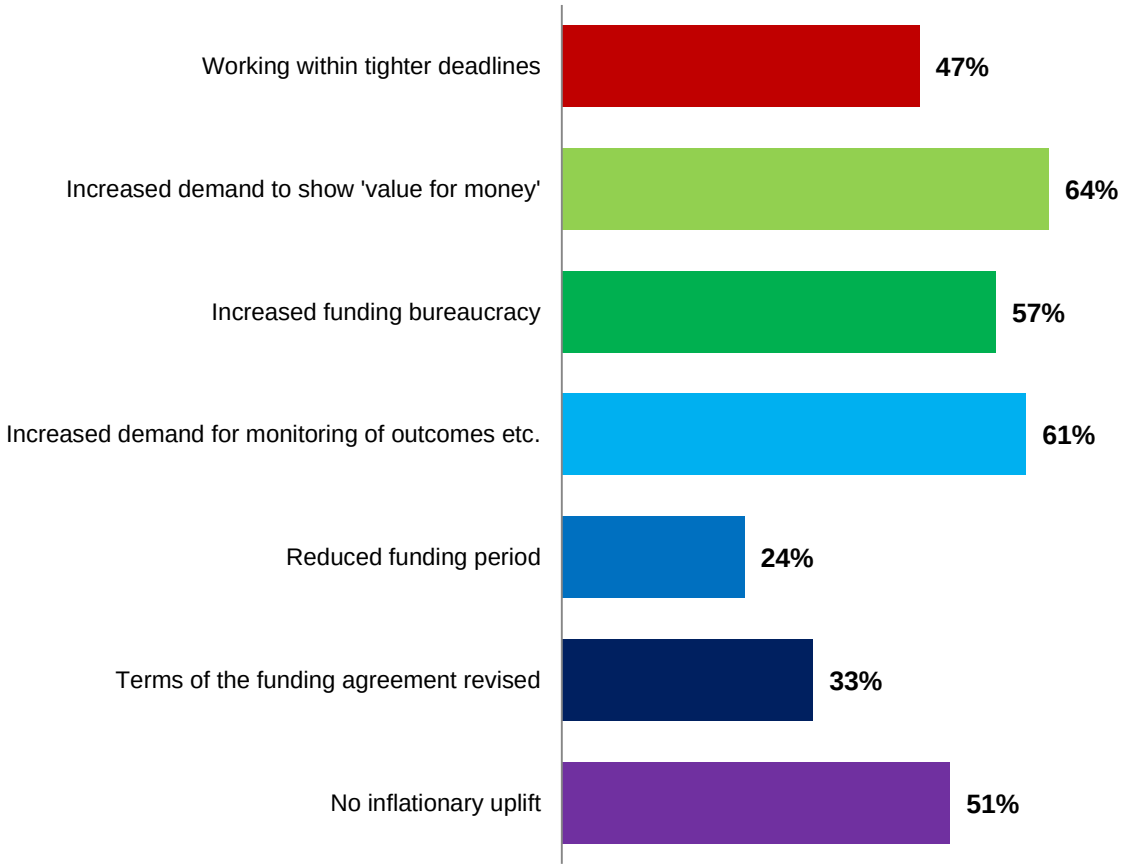
*Base: 174 ** Base: 177

Figure 8 highlights that almost a third of organisations (31%) have no earned income at all. For almost another third, earned income makes up 10% or less of overall income. For 12% of respondents, earned income accounts for more than 70% of total income.

For 53% of organisations, grants make up over 60% of all income, and for a quarter of respondent organisations grants make up between 90% and 100% of overall income.

Funding

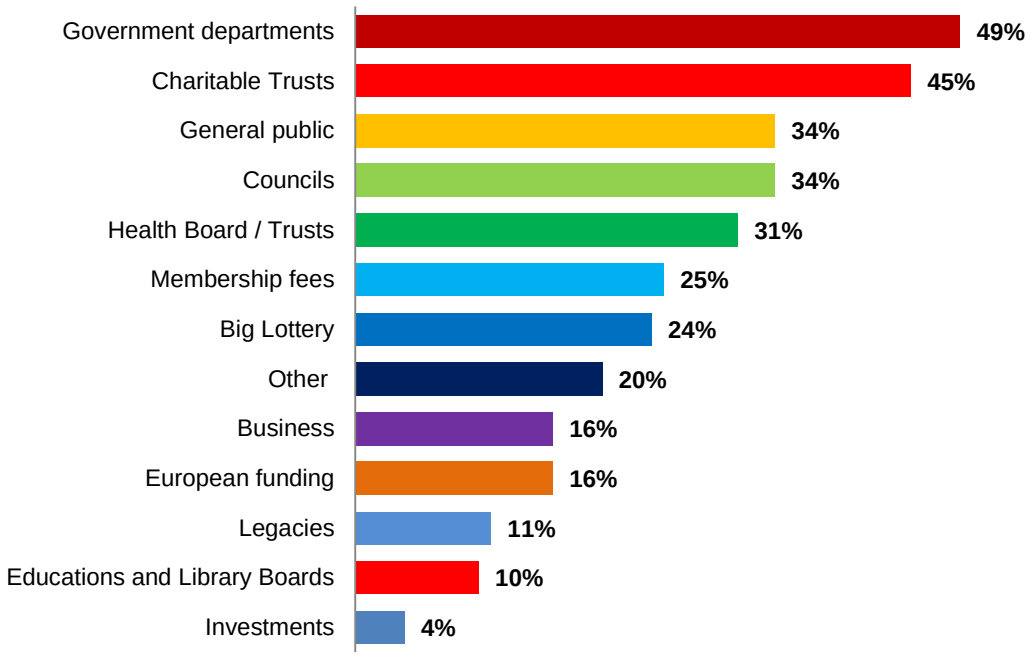
Figure 9: Funding developments over past six months



Base: 202 multiple response

As is clear from Figure 9 there has been a number of notable developments in the funding environment over the past six months. 64% of responding member organisations state that they are under increasing demand from funders to show value for money. This increasing demand to show value for money is mirrored by an increase in funding bureaucracy, with 57% of organisations affected by increased bureaucracy and 61% affected by increased demand for monitoring of outputs and outcomes. We can also see from Figure 9 that there is a continuing issue with organisations not being granted an inflationary uplift in their funding. This is commensurate with the findings of NICVA's CutsWatchNI research programme.

Figure 10: Funding sources



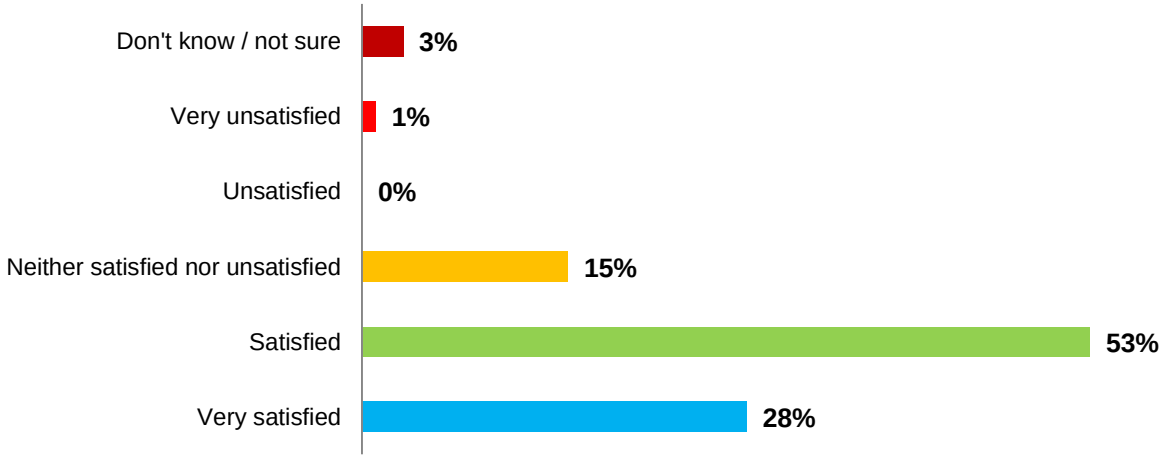
Base 202: multiple response

In line with previous research on funding to the voluntary and community sector as a whole, the most common source of funding for responding member organisations is government departments. Almost half of respondents (49%) stated that they receive some level of funding from this source. We can also see that charitable trusts remain a key source of funding for voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland, with 45% of organisations currently obtaining funding from this source. We can also see that the continued generous support of the voluntary and community sector by the general public, evidenced by previous NICVA research[6], means that income from the general public is a funding stream for a significant number (34%) of responding members.

[6] Individual Giving, NICVA, 2010 http://www.nicva.org/news/nicvas-individual-giving-survey-2010-reveals-sustained-and-committed-charitable-giving

NICVA membership benefits

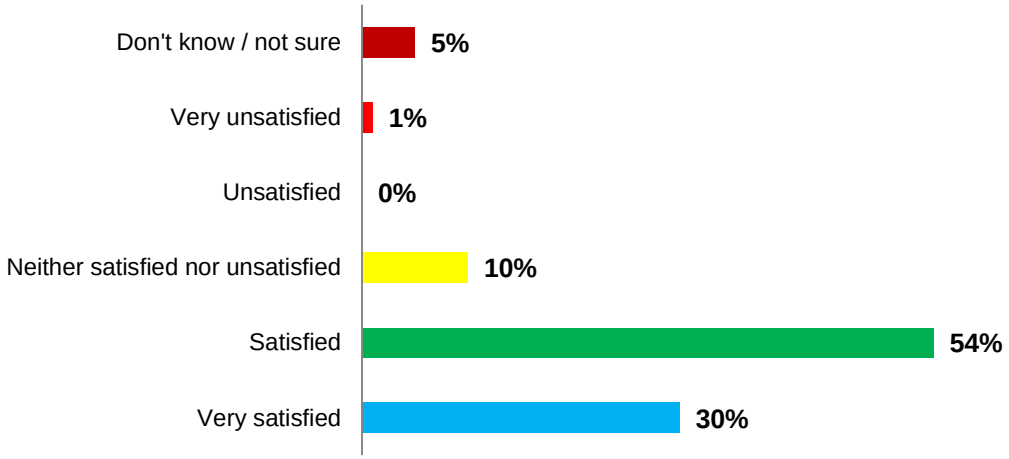
Figure 11: Views on NICVA'S membership package



Base: 174

As is clear from Figure 11, the majority of organisations (81%) that responded to the Viewfinder 11 survey are satisfied or very satisfied with the NICVA membership package and benefits. Less than a fifth of organisations (15%) stated that they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. A small number of organisations (1%) stated that they were very unsatisfied with the current NICVA membership package and benefits.

Figure 12: Views on NICVA's role



Base: 173

As is clear from Figure 12, the majority of organisations (84%) that responded to the Viewfinder 11 survey are satisfied or very satisfied with NICVA's role/performance over the last 12 months. 10% of organisations stated that they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. A small number of organisations (1%) stated that they were very unsatisfied with NICVA's role/performance over the last 12 months.

Information

If you would like further information on any of the themes discussed in Viewfinder 11, or if you would like further information about the survey or how to include questions in future *Viewfinders*, please contact Stephen Bloomer at:

stephen.bloomer@nicva.org or 028 9087 7777

NICVA would like to thank everyone who took part in this survey. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.