

# VCS Strategy Refresh and Grants Programme Redesign Survey

Report Date: March 2025

## Report author:

Sarah Mehdi  
*Consultation & Insight Officer*

Joanne Blackwood  
*Strategic Delivery Manager*

## Contact

Hackney Consultation Team  
on 020 8356 3343 or  
[consultation@Hackney.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@Hackney.gov.uk)



## Contents

<b>Introduction, Background, Consultation &amp; Engagement Approach, Response rate</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5-8</b>
<b>Overview of results</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you sharing your views as an individual or organisation?</li> </ul>	<b>9</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your connection to Hackney?</li> </ul>	<b>10</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?</li> </ul>	<b>11</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of organisation are you part of?</li> </ul>	<b>12</b>
<b>Equalities, anti-racism and the way we work</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other ways is inequity showing up in the VCS and Council interactions, based on your experience?</li> </ul>	<b>13</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking about ways of working, are there other things the VCS and Council should consider?</li> </ul>	<b>14</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything in the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?</li> </ul>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative responses</li> </ul>	<b>15-16</b>
<b>Investment and commissioning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we adequately support and resource Hackney's VCS with less financial and staffing resources available?</li> </ul>	<b>16</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity, what kind of funding programmes should we be offering?</li> </ul>	<b>17</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity, what kind of application processes could be used to have a robust and fair process while being equity-focused and not too onerous on applicants?</li> </ul>	<b>18</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we encourage more collaboration between groups when funding is limited?</li> </ul>	<b>19</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we best continue to support the sector in other (non-financial) ways?</li> </ul>	<b>20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything in the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?</li> </ul>	<b>20-21</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative responses</li> </ul>	<b>21</b>
<b>Property</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your property needs changed since the pandemic?</li> </ul>	<b>22</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking about ways of working, are there other things that we (the VCS and the Council) should consider?</li> </ul>	<b>22-23</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?</li> </ul>	<b>23</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative responses</li> </ul>	<b>23</b>
<b>Volunteering and social action</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How important is volunteering and social action to your organisation and the people you are supporting?</li> </ul>	<b>24</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working well with the current support available?</li> </ul>	<b>25</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could be better with the current support?</li> </ul>	<b>26</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we better promote the benefits of volunteering to Hackney's diverse communities?</li> </ul>	<b>27</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we adequately support and resource volunteering with less financial and staffing resources available?</li> </ul>	<b>28</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we build and support connections through networks or other ways?</li> </ul>	<b>29</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?</li> </ul>	<b>30</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative responses</li> </ul>	<b>30</b>
<b>Infrastructure and capacity building</b>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thinking about the support you get or could get from an infrastructure organisation. What is important to your organisation?</li></ul>	<b>31</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?</li></ul>	<b>32</b>
<b>About you</b>	<b>33-37</b>

## **Introduction**

The Council was seeking feedback from the VCS sector and residents on what should be included in the refreshed VCS Strategy, and seeking views on themes in the VCS Strategy in the wider context of budget cuts and the Equalities Plan.

## **Background**

Hackney Council is refreshing their Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2019 - 2022. The current strategy is high-level and long-term. It visualises the sector's future and explores what is needed to continue to thrive. Although much of what has been found through engagement is still relevant today, some things have changed. This refresh provides an opportunity to reflect on what has changed and what is needed to include in the strategy, which will in turn help inform the design of a new grants programme for 2025/26 onwards.

## **Consultation & Engagement Approach**

The consultation was created on Citizen Space and ran from 20th January 2025 until 3rd March 2025.

The consultation was promoted via e-newsletters, social media posts and Love Hackney.

## **Response rate**

24 respondents took part in the survey.

# **Executive summary**

## **Introduction**

- Are you sharing your views as an individual or organisation? (Base 24)
  - The majority of the respondents are sharing their views as an individual (14).
- What is your connection to Hackney? (Base 17)
  - The majority of respondents (8) stated that they lived in Hackney
- Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation? (Base 12)
  - The majority of respondents (6), stated 'Other', followed by 5 respondents who stated that they are an interested member of the public.
- What type of organisation are you part of? (Base 14)
  - The majority of respondents (10) stated that they are part of the Hackney voluntary and community sector organisation.

## **Equalities, anti-racism and the way we work**

- What other ways is inequity showing up in the VCS and Council interactions, based on your experience? (Base 24)
  - The majority of respondents (14) selected "Organisations must adapt to different ways of applying and securing funding, taking time away from responding to community assets", followed by 12 respondents who selected "the system is complex and not always joined up, making systemic inequity more likely to go unnoticed".
- Thinking about ways of working, are there other things the VCS and Council should consider?
  - The majority of respondents, with 15 each, selected "Supporting, developing, and sustaining community action at a local level to meet needs and strengthen local relationships", and "Prioritising interventions that help residents and communities navigate the complex and economic environment and preventing escalating difficulties."
- Is there anything in the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?
  - The majority of respondents (14) stated no, and 4 respondents stated yes.

## **Investment and commissioning**

- How do we adequately support and resource Hackney's VCS with less financial and staffing resources available?
  - The majority of respondents (15), selected 'Encourage collaboration and resource sharing among VCS organisations.'

- With a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity, what kind of funding programmes should we be offering?
  - The majority of respondents (20), selected 'Programmes supporting community-led initiatives and grassroots organisations'.
- With a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity, what kind of application processes could be used to have a robust and fair process while being equity-focused and not too onerous on applicants?
  - The majority of respondents (19), selected 'Streamlined application processes with clear and accessible guidance',
- How can we encourage more collaboration between groups when funding is limited?
  - The majority of respondents (19) selected 'Support the development of shared resources and infrastructure.'
- How can we best continue to support the sector in other (non-financial) ways?
  - The majority of respondents (20), selected 'Offer access to resources and expertise.'
- Is there anything in the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?
  - The majority of respondents (16) stated no, and 3 respondents stated yes.

### **Property**

- Have your property needs changed since the pandemic?
  - The majority of respondents (11) stated yes, followed by 9 respondents who stated no, and 2 respondents who stated that they were unsure.
- Thinking about ways of working, are there other things that we (the VCS and the Council) should consider?
  - There were 8 respondents each that selected 'Yes, definitely (please specify below)' and 'No, I think we've covered everything', followed by 2 respondents who selected 'Maybe, there are a few things'.
- Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?
  - The majority of respondents (15) stated no, and 2 respondents stated yes.

### **Volunteering and social action**

- How important is volunteering and social action to your organisation and the people you are supporting?
  - The majority of respondents (14) selected 'Extremely important, it's the core of our mission.'
- What is working well with the current support available?
  - The majority of respondents (9), selected 'Strong relationships with community partners.'
- What could be better with the current support?

- Ten respondents each selected 'Improved communication about volunteer needs.' and 'Better recognition and appreciation for volunteers.'
- How do we better promote the benefits of volunteering to Hackney's diverse communities?
  - The majority of respondents (17) selected 'Partner with local community organisations.'
- How do we adequately support and resource volunteering with less financial and staffing resources available?
  - The majority of respondents (15) selected 'Focus on building strong volunteer networks.', closely followed by 14 respondents who selected 'Leverage partnerships with other organisations.'
- How do we build and support connections through networks or other ways?
  - The majority of respondents (14), selected 'Organise social events and volunteer gatherings.'
- Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?
  - The majority of respondents (12) stated no, followed by 3 respondents who stated yes.

### **Infrastructure and capacity building**

- Thinking about the support you get or could get from an infrastructure organisation. What is important to your organisation?
  - The majority of respondents (15) selected 'Development support (strategic support; governance, incubating new initiatives.', closely followed by 14 respondents who selected 'Networking and knowledge sharing.'
- Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?
  - The majority of respondents (12) stated no, followed by 3 respondents who stated yes.

### **Qualitative responses**

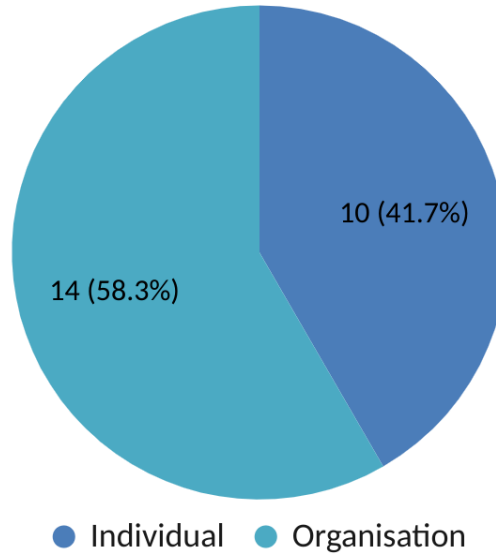
- Not all respondents answered the qualitative questions. Caution should be used when drawing any conclusions from a low response rate.
- Respondents were concerned about the impact of the grant reduction on organisations and communities.
- There was support for developing trusted relationships, partnerships and collaborative working. As well as some support for longer term funding.
- Respondents talked about the need for it to be easier for organisations to have access to space and shared resources.
- Respondents also talked about the importance of volunteering and having a variety of channels to promote and take part.



# Overview of results

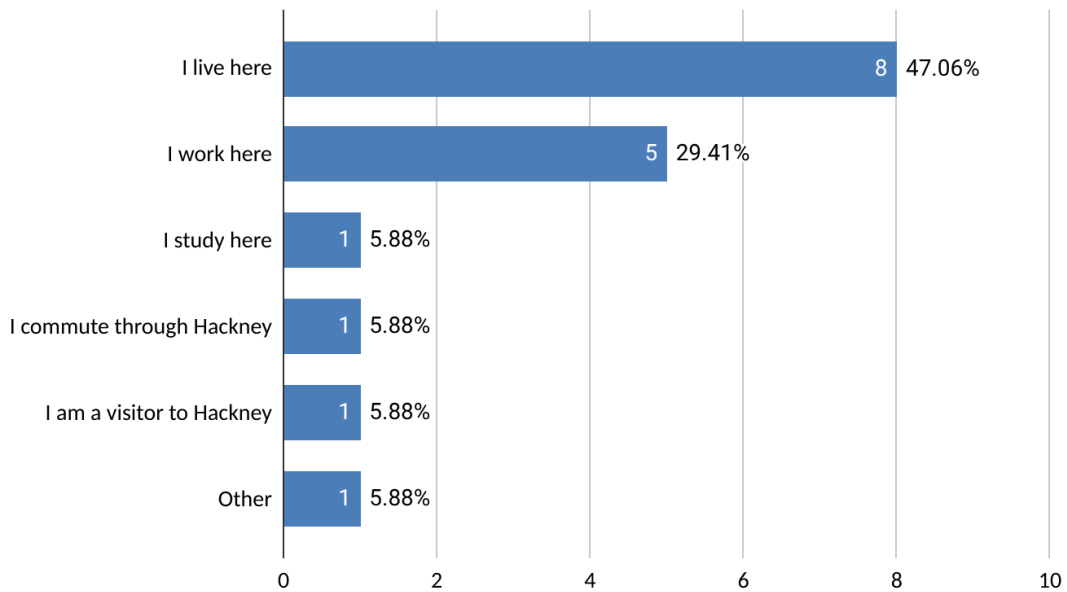
## Introduction

**Are you sharing your views as an individual or organisation? (Base 24)**



The chart above shows that the majority of the respondents are sharing their views as an individual (14), with 10 respondents who said they are sharing their views as an organisation.

**What is your connection to Hackney? (Base 17)**

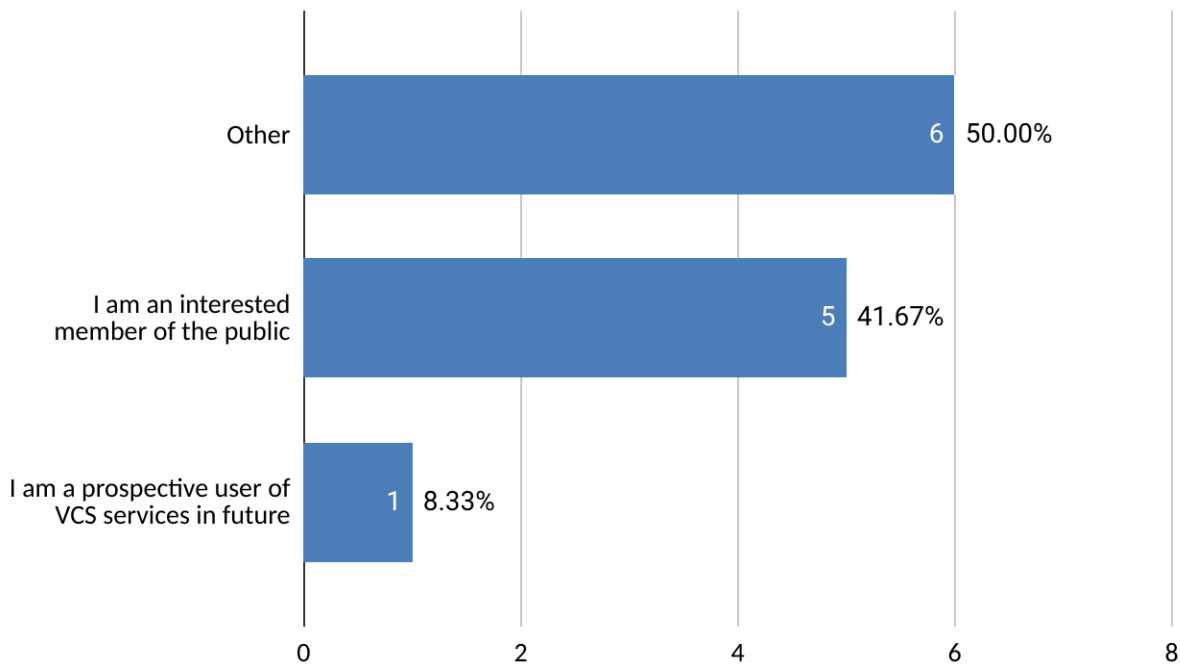


Respondents who selected that they were responding as an individual, were asked what their connection was to Hackney.

The majority of respondents (8) stated that they lived in Hackney, followed by 5 who stated that they worked in Hackney, and 1 response each who stated that they commuted through Hackney, are a visitor to Hackney, and 'other'.

The one respondent who selected 'other', stated that they "used to work in the Vol Sec in Hackney and am retired".

**Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation? (Base 12)**



Respondents who selected that they were responding as an individual were asked which of the following best describes their interest in this consultation.

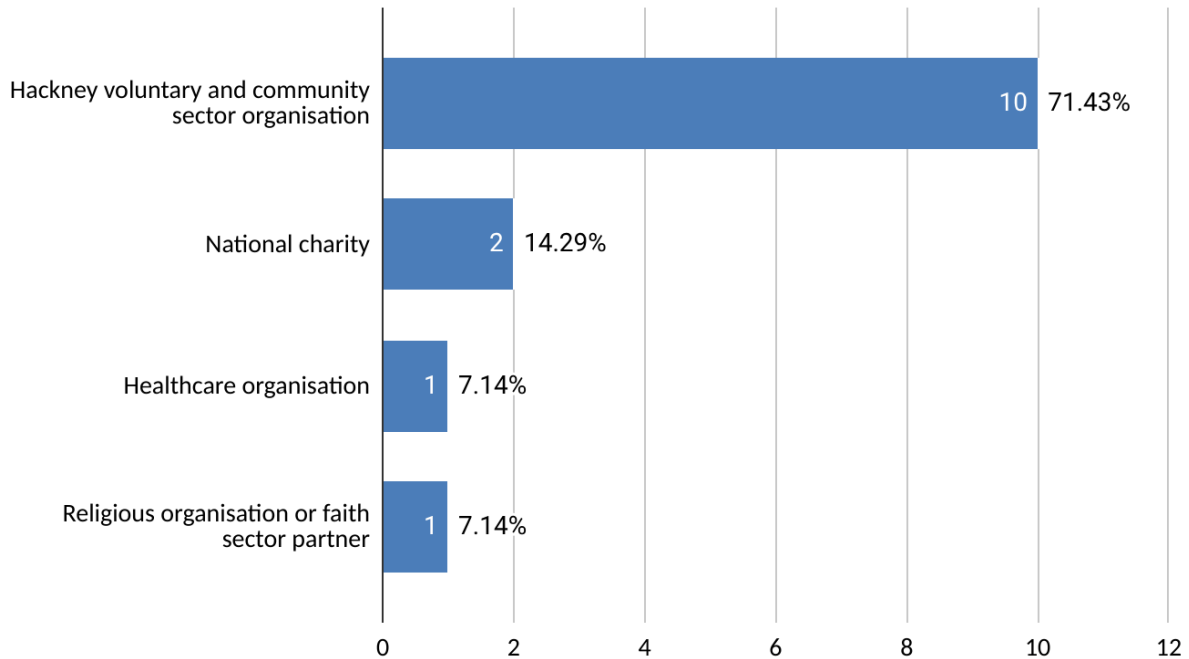
The majority of respondents (6), stated 'Other', followed by 5 respondents who stated that they are an interested member of the public, and 1 respondent who stated that they are a current user of VCS services.

The 6 respondents who stated 'Other', were asked to specify. Their responses are stated below:

- "Trustee of local voluntary organisation"
- "A professional working in a local branch of a national organisation"

- “I co-run a food charity based in Hackney which prepares and distributes hundreds of plant based meals for Londoners facing food insecurity and homelessness”
- “I am concerned about the lack of a group for unofficial carers. I can't believe there isn't one - it wouldn't cost much.”
- “Community artist”

**What type of organisation are you part of? (Base 14)**

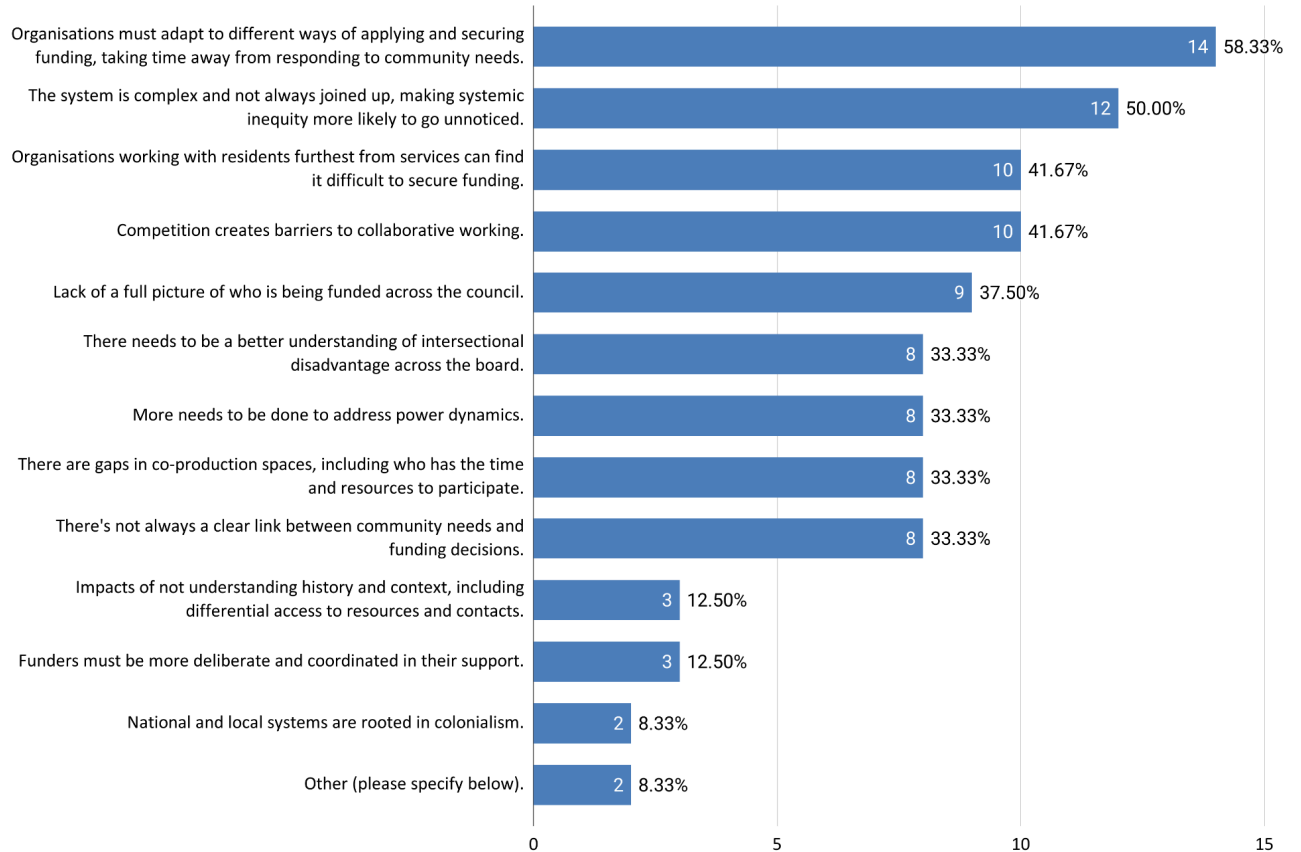


Respondents that stated that they were responding as an organisation were asked what type of organisation they are part of.

The majority of respondents (10) stated that they are part of the Hackney voluntary and community sector organisation, followed by 2 respondents who stated that they were part of a national charity, and 1 respondent each who stated that they were part of a healthcare organisation and religious organisation or faith sector partner.

## Equalities, anti-racism and the way we work: quantitative responses

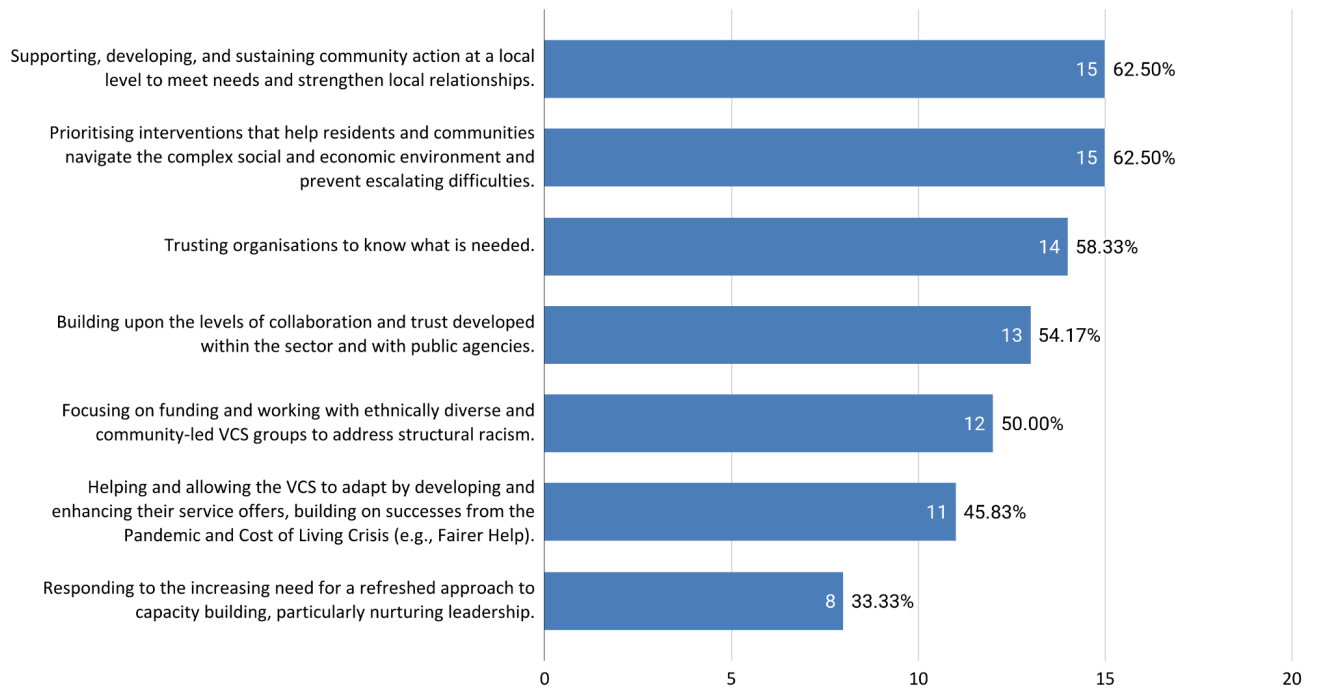
### What other ways is inequity showing up in the VCS and Council interactions, based on your experience? (Base 24)



Respondents were given a list and asked to select, based on their experience, what other ways is inequity showing up in the VCS and Council interactions. The results are shown in the chart above.

The majority of respondents (14) selected “Organisations must adapt to different ways of applying and securing funding, taking time away from responding to community assets”, followed by 12 respondents who selected “the system is complex and not always joined up, making systemic inequity more likely to go unnoticed”.

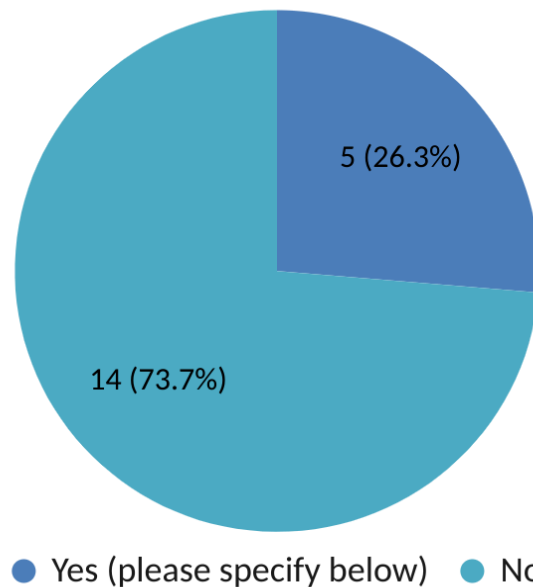
## Thinking about ways of working, are there other things the VCS and Council should consider? (Base 24)



Respondents were given a list and asked to select, if there are other things the VCS and Council should consider when thinking about ways of working. The results are shown in the chart above.

The majority of respondents, with 15 each, selected “Supporting, developing, and sustaining community action at a local level to meet needs and strengthen local relationships”, and “Prioritising interventions that help residents and communities navigate the complex and economic environment and preventing escalating difficulties.”

**Is there anything in the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise? (Base 19)**



Respondents were asked whether there was anything they disagreed with or did not recognise in the slides relating to 'Equalities, anti-racism and the way we work'. The majority of respondents (14) stated no, and 4 respondents stated yes.

## **Equalities, anti-racism and the way we work: qualitative responses**

Responses showed concern that the cuts will have a detrimental impact on residents who rely on the help and assistance they get, especially global majority communities who have nowhere else to turn. However, there was also some concern that ringfenced funding that supports only single issues can cause segregation and make it difficult for projects focusing on community and social cohesion to get funding.

Respondents called for a focus on socio economics and partnerships to address inequality in the borough in order to have a greater impact.

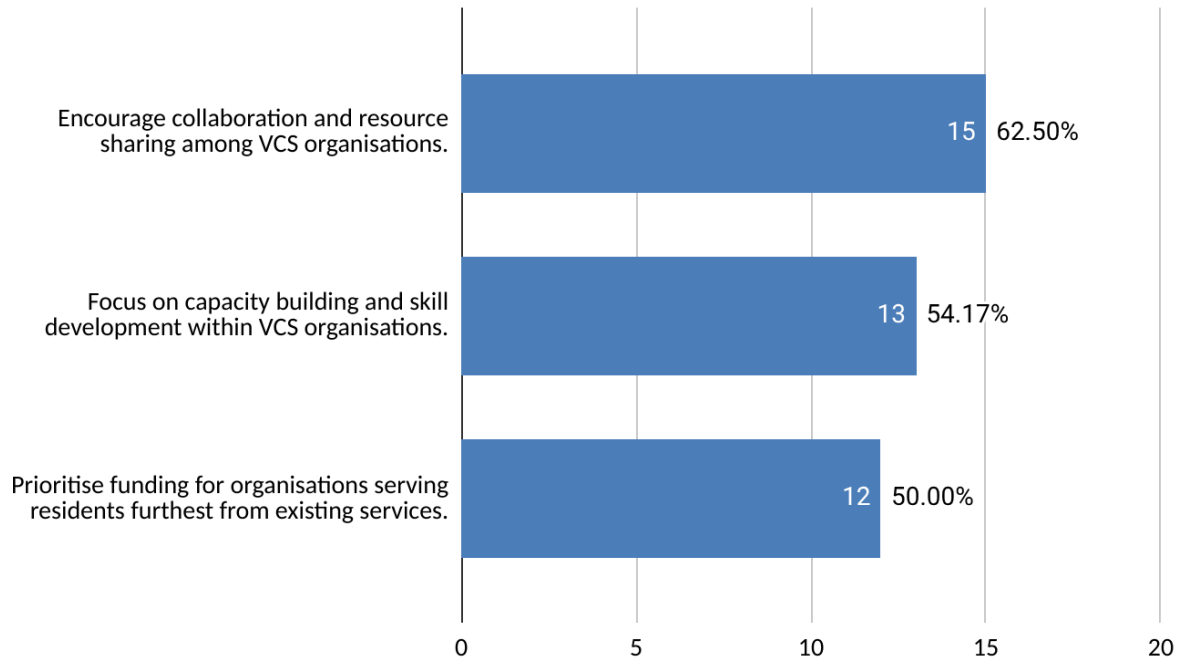
Respondents cautioned that duplication of projects could be due to need and the need for lots of people and lots of services working together on the same issues.

There was some support for consistency in approach and behaviour across the Council and the sector, including frontline workers, and the continued emphasis on developing trusting relationships and that frontline workers are empowered and supported to do what is needed.

Respondents called for a need to move to fairness and trust and were supportive of working collaboratively with the VCS including grass roots organisations.

## **Investment and commissioning: quantitative responses**

**How do we adequately support and resource Hackney's VCS with less financial and staffing resources available? (Base 24)**

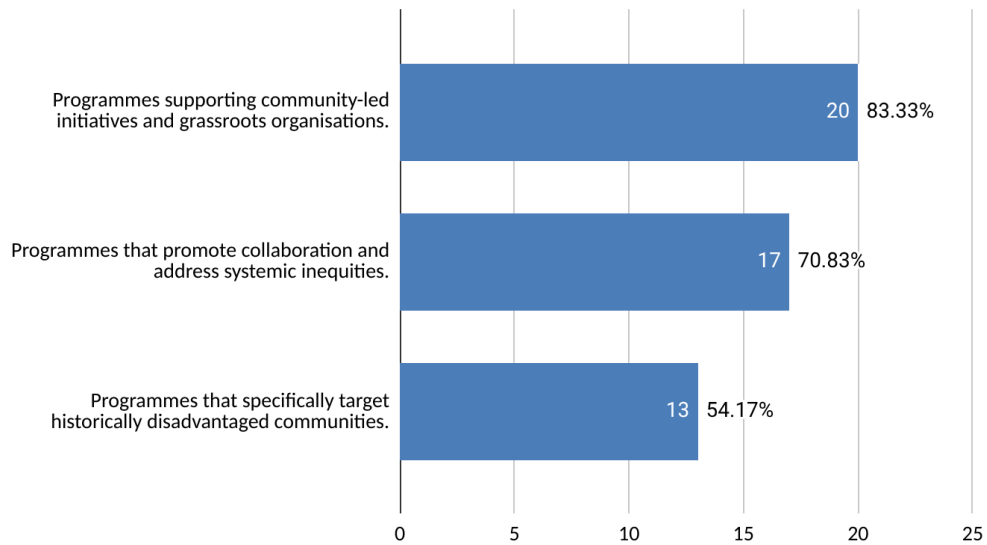


Respondents were asked to select from a list to state how do we adequately support and resource Hackney's VCS with less financial and staffing resources available.

The majority of respondents (15), selected 'Encourage collaboration and resource sharing among VCS organisations.', followed by 13 respondents who selected 'Focus on capacity building and skill development within VCS organisations' and 12 respondents who selected 'Prioritise funding for organisations serving residents furthest from existing services.'



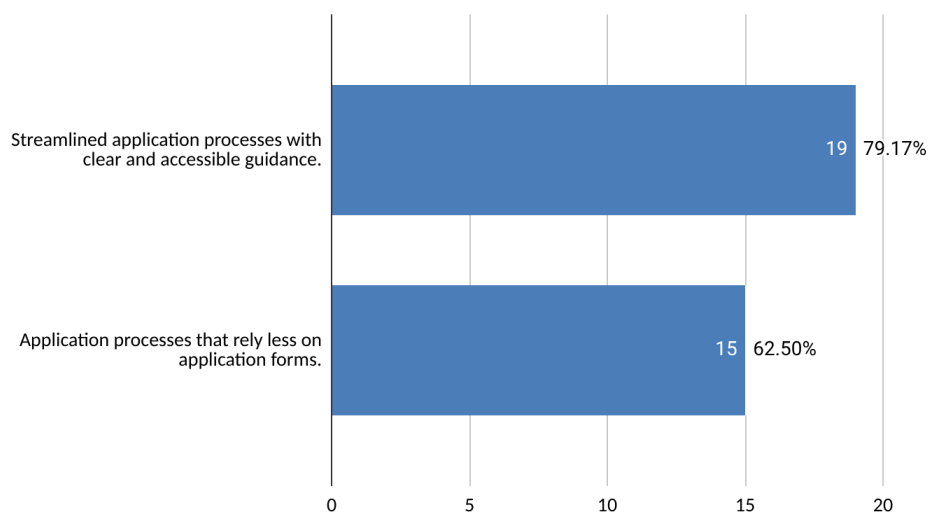
**With a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity, what kind of funding programmes should we be offering? (Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to select from a list, which kind of funding programmes should we be offering with a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity.

The majority of respondents (20), selected 'Programmes supporting community-led initiatives and grassroots organisations', followed by 17 respondents who selected 'Programmes that promote collaboration and address systemic inequities.' and 13 respondents who selected 'Programmes that specifically target historically disadvantaged communities.'

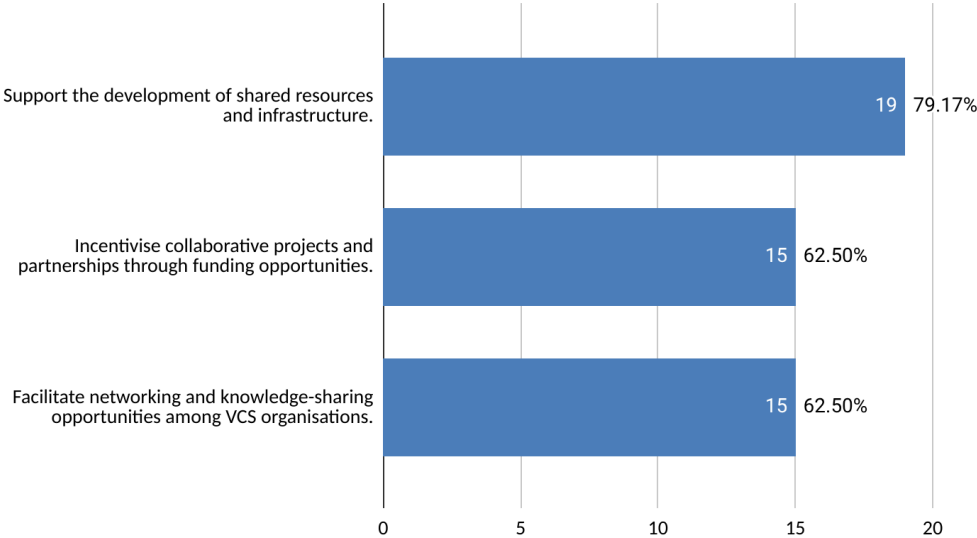
**With a limited grants budget and an increased focus on equity, what kind of application processes could be used to have a robust and fair process while being equity-focused and not too onerous on applicants? (Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to select from two options, on which kind of application processes could be used to have a robust and fair process while being equity-focused and not too onerous on applications.

The majority of respondents (19), selected 'Streamlined application processes with clear and accessible guidance', followed by 15 respondents who selected 'Application processes that rely less on application forms.'

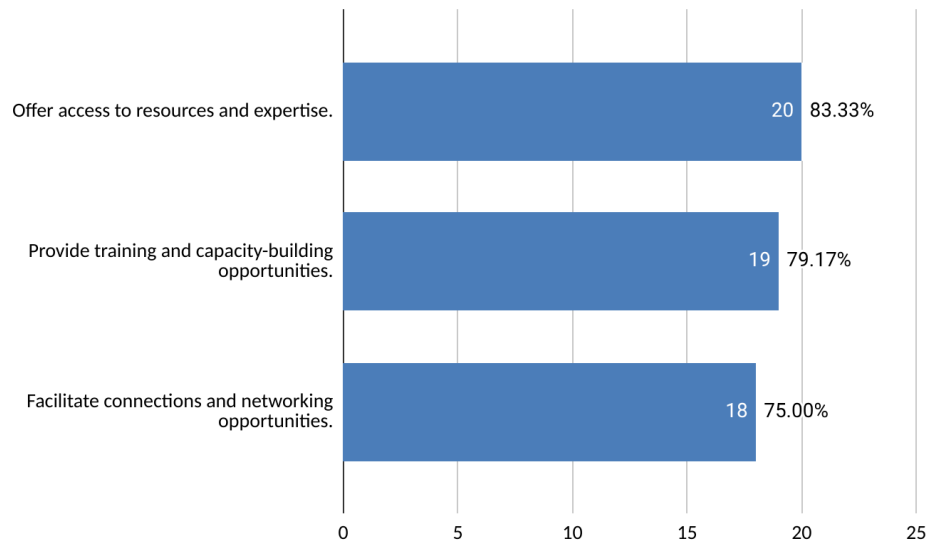
**How can we encourage more collaboration between groups when funding is limited? (Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to select from a list, on how we can encourage more collaboration between groups when funding is limited.

The majority of respondents (19) selected 'Support the development of shared resources and infrastructure.', followed by 15 respondents each who selected 'Incentivise collaborative projects and partnerships through funding opportunities.' and 'Facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities among VCS organisations.'

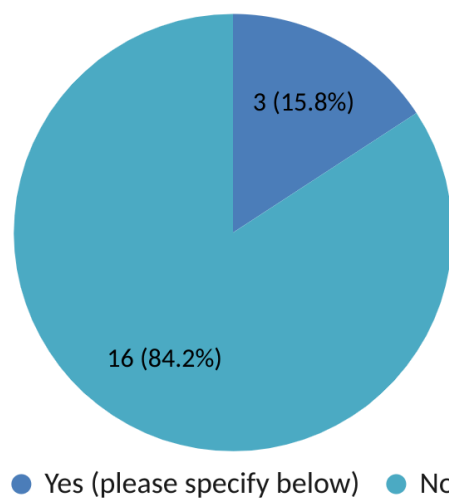
**How can we best continue to support the sector in other (non-financial) ways?  
(Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to select from a list, how we can best continue to support the sector in other (non-financial) ways.

The majority of respondents (20), selected ‘Offer access to resources and expertise.’, closely followed by 19 respondents who selected ‘Provide training and capacity-building opportunities.’ and 18 respondents who selected ‘Facilitate connections and networking opportunities.’.

**Is there anything in the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise? (Base 19)**



Respondents were asked whether there was anything they disagreed with or did not recognise in the slides relating to ‘Investment and commissioning’. The majority of respondents (16) stated no, and 3 respondents stated yes.

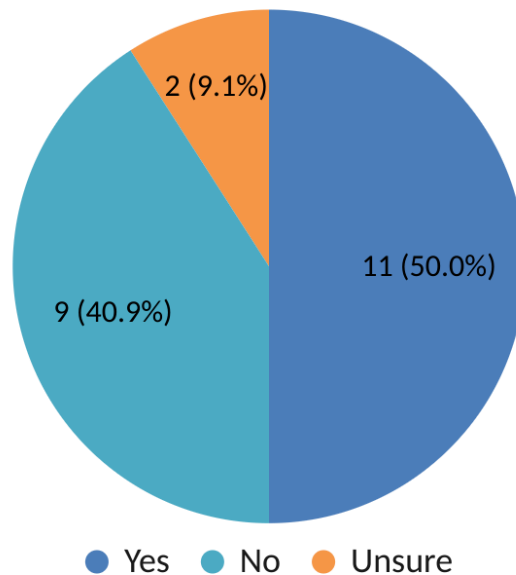
## **Investment and commissioning: qualitative responses**

There was support for shared resources, such as Payroll, HR and IT support.

One respondent commented that building capacity requires long term support and funding. 12 month funding leaves a very short period to make any impact and to retain capacity. Knowledge is frequently lost with high staff turnover both within the voluntary sector and the Council.

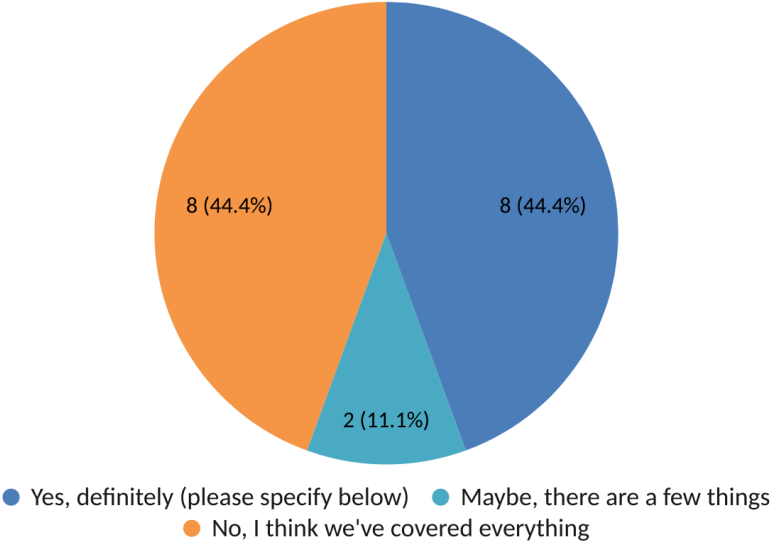
## **Property: quantitative responses**

### **Have your property needs changed since the pandemic? (Base 22)**



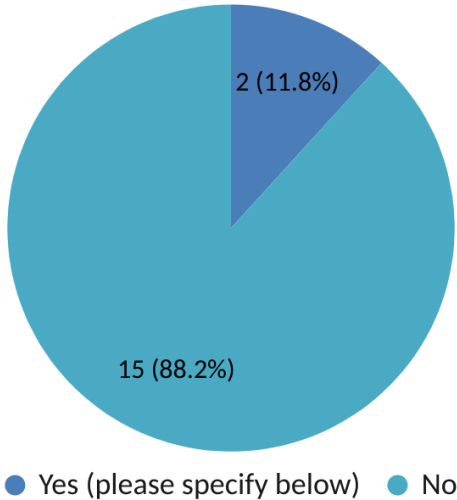
Respondents were asked if their property needs have changed since the pandemic. The majority of respondents (11) stated yes, followed by 9 respondents who stated no, and 2 respondents who stated that they were unsure.

**Thinking about ways of working, are there other things that we (the VCS and the Council) should consider? (Base 18)**



Respondents were asked whether there were things that the VCS and Council should consider when thinking about the ways of working. There were 8 respondents each that selected 'Yes, definitely (please specify below)' and 'No, I think we've covered everything', followed by 2 respondents who selected 'Maybe, there are a few things'.

**Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise? (Base 17)**



Respondents were asked whether there was anything they disagreed with or did not recognise in the slides relating to 'Property'. The majority of respondents (15) stated no, and 2 respondents stated yes.

## **Property: qualitative responses**

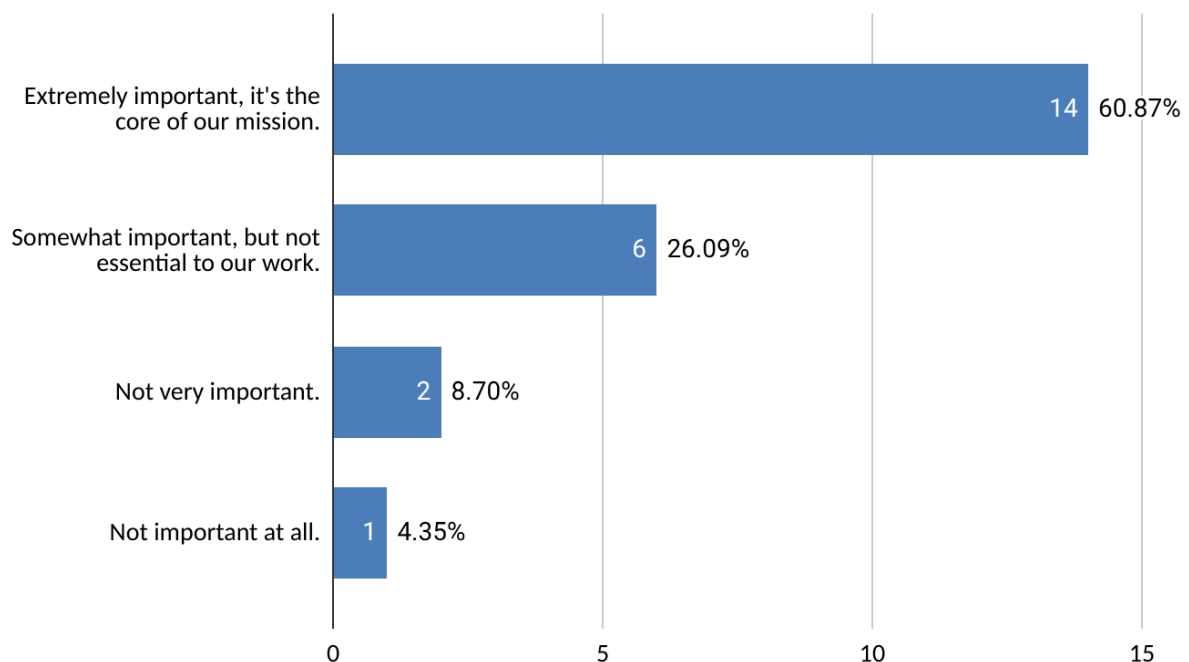
Some of the responses related to Council buildings. Including making it easier for organisations, including grassroots organisations to use Council hubs and community centers to provide workshops and to reduce the amount of time filling out forms to access space.

One respondent referenced closed school buildings and whether they could be shared between trusted VCS organisations

Another respondent referenced ensuring community spaces were made available by developers as part of building new homes.

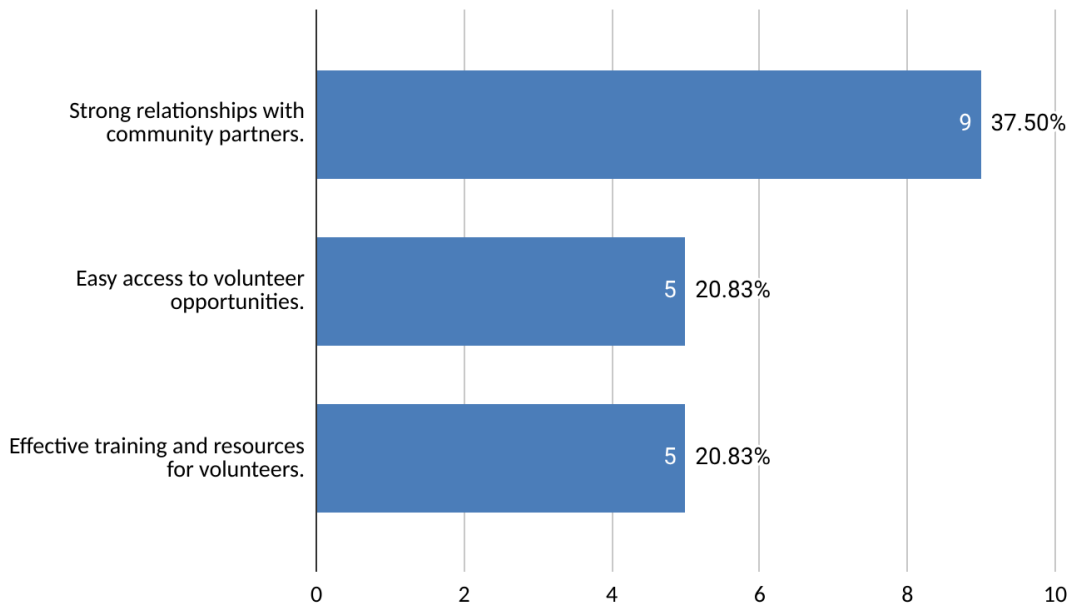
## **Volunteering and social action: quantitative responses**

**How important is volunteering and social action to your organisation and the people you are supporting? (Base 23)**



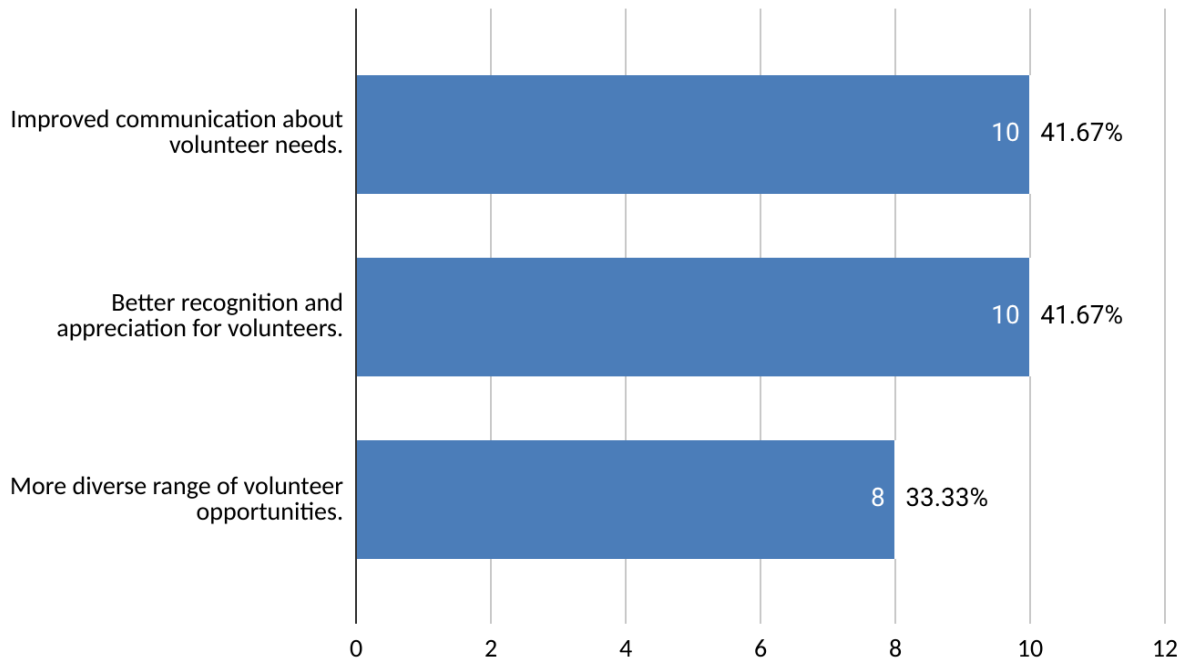
Respondents were asked to select how important volunteering and social action is to their organisation and the people they are supporting. The majority of respondents (14) selected 'Extremely important, it's the core of our mission.', followed by 6 respondents who selected 'Somewhat important, but not essential to our work.', 2 respondents who selected 'Not very important.' and 1 respondent who selected 'Not important at all.'.

### What is working well with the current support available? (Base 24)



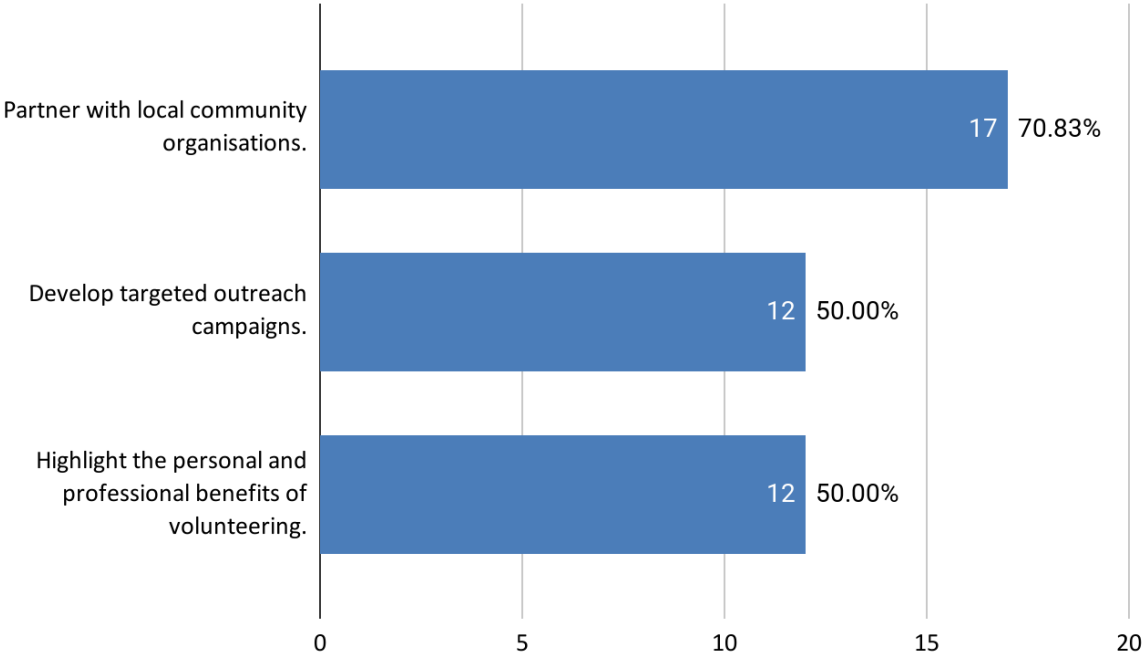
Respondents were asked to select from a list, what is working well with the current support available. The majority of respondents (9), selected 'Strong relationships with community partners.', followed by 5 respondents each who selected 'Easy access to volunteer opportunities.' and 'Effective training and resources for volunteers.'

### What could be better with the current support? (Base 24)



Respondents were asked to select from a list, what could be better with the current support. Ten respondents each selected 'Improved communication about volunteer needs.' and 'Better recognition and appreciation for volunteers.', followed by 8 respondents who selected 'More diverse range of volunteer opportunities.'

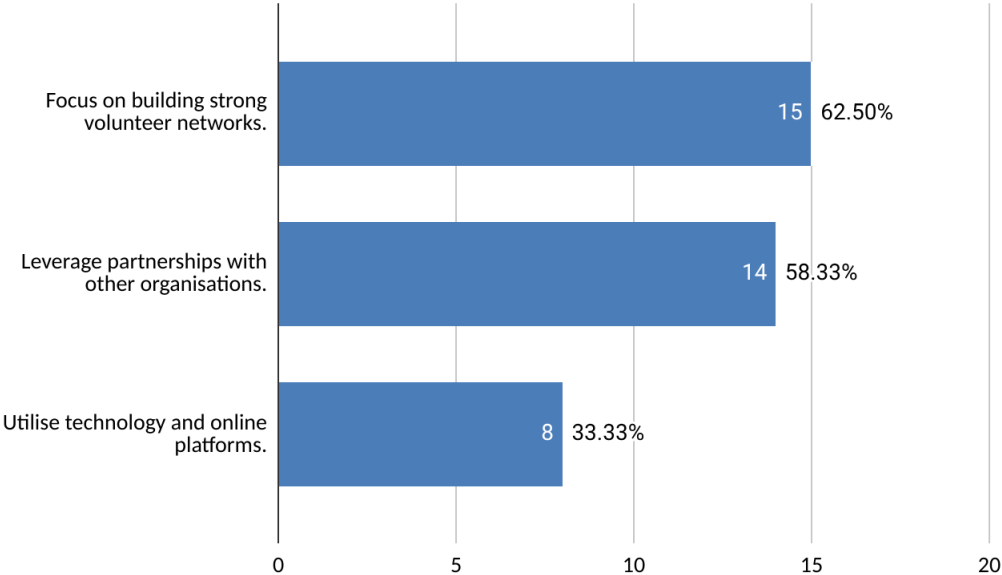
**How do we better promote the benefits of volunteering to Hackney's diverse communities? (Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to select from a list, how do we better promote the benefits of volunteering to Hackney's diverse communities. The majority of respondents (17) selected 'Partner with local community organisations.', followed by 12 respondents each that selected 'Develop targeted outreach campaigns.' and 'Highlight the personal and professional benefits of volunteering.'

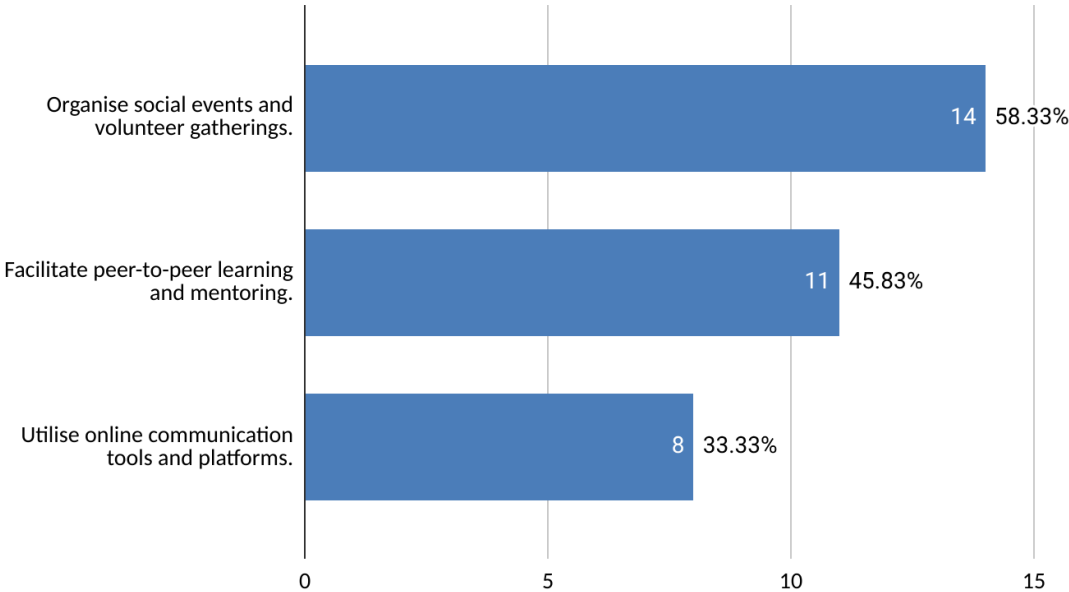


**How do we adequately support and resource volunteering with less financial and staffing resources available? (Base 24)**



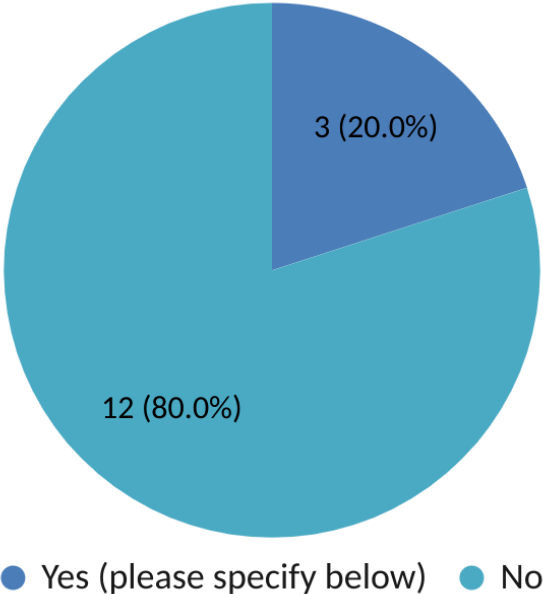
Respondents were asked to select from a list, how do we adequately support and resource volunteering with less financial and staffing resources available. The majority of respondents (15) selected 'Focus on building strong volunteer networks.', closely followed by 14 respondents who selected 'Leverage partnerships with other organisations.' and 8 respondents who selected 'Utilise technology and online platforms.'

**How do we build and support connections through networks or other ways? (Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to select from a list, how do we build and support connections through networks or other ways. The majority of respondents (14), selected 'Organise social events and volunteer gatherings.', followed by 11 respondents who selected 'Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and mentoring.' and 8 respondents who selected 'Utilise online communication tools and platforms.'

**Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?  
(Base 15)**



Respondents were asked whether there was anything they disagreed with or did not recognise in the slides relating to 'Volunteering and social action'. The majority of respondents (12) stated no, followed by 3 respondents who stated yes.

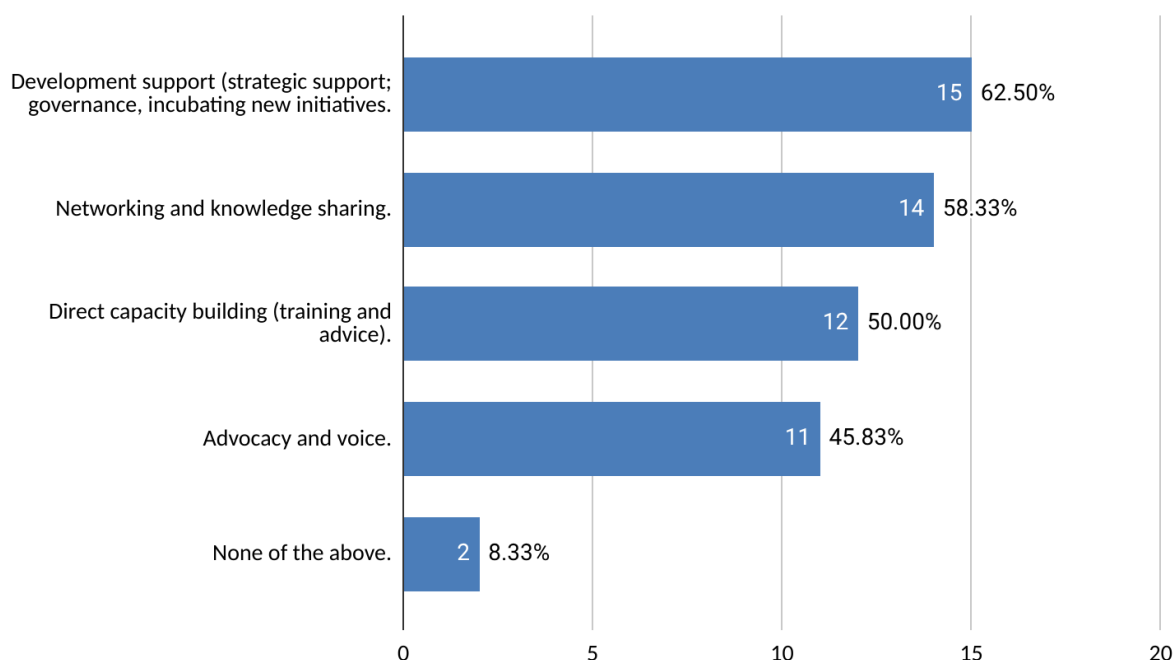
## **Volunteering and social action: qualitative responses**

Some respondents talked about the use of digital channels, both for sharing volunteer stories and to receive training and hear of learning and development opportunities. Other respondents talked about the need for other channels as IT is not suitable for all and there should be a mixture.

The majority of respondents talked about the value of volunteering and the value it gives to each volunteer as well as the organisations.

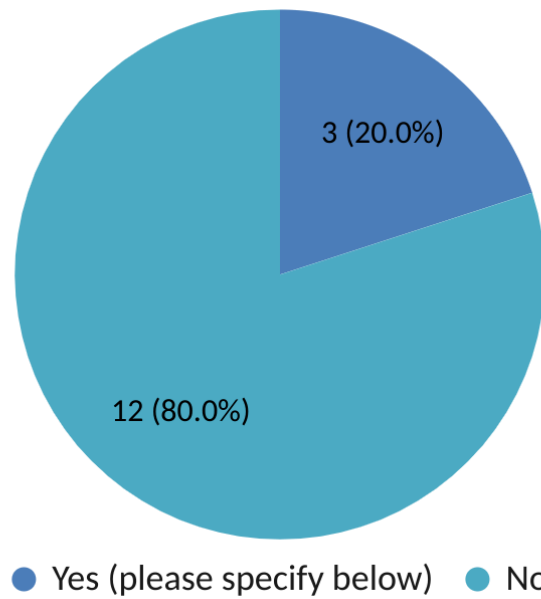
## **Infrastructure and capacity building: quantitative responses**

**Thinking about the support you get or could get from an infrastructure organisation. What is important to your organisation? (Base 24)**



Respondents were asked to think about what support they could get from an infrastructure organisation, and select from a list what would be important to their organisation. The majority of respondents (15) selected 'Development support (strategic support; governance, incubating new initiatives.', closely followed by 14 respondents who selected 'Networking and knowledge sharing.', 12 respondents who selected 'Direct capacity building (training and advice).', 11 respondents who selected 'Advocacy and voice.' and 2 respondents who selected 'None of the above.'

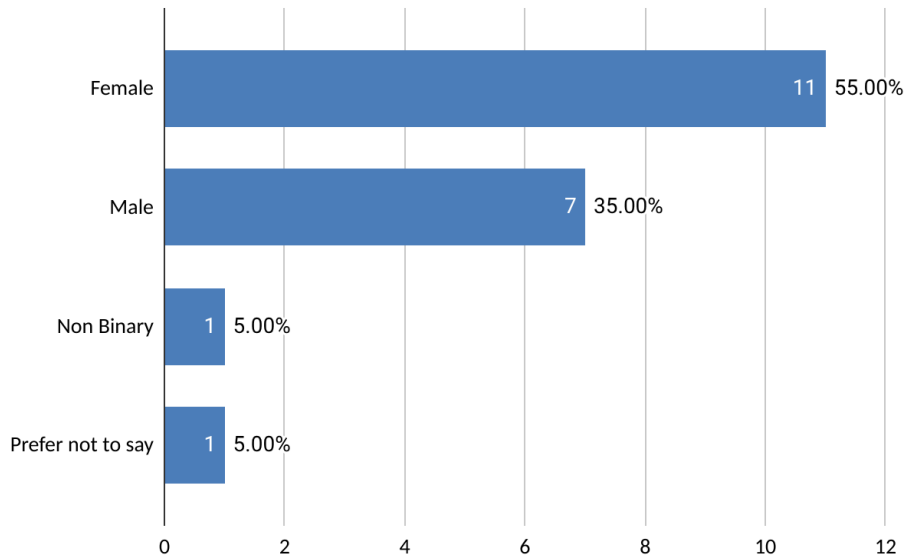
**Is there anything from the slides that you disagree with or do not recognise?  
(Base 15)**



Respondents were asked whether there was anything they disagreed with or did not recognise in the slides relating to 'Infrastructure and capacity building'. The majority of respondents (12) stated no, followed by 3 respondents who stated yes.

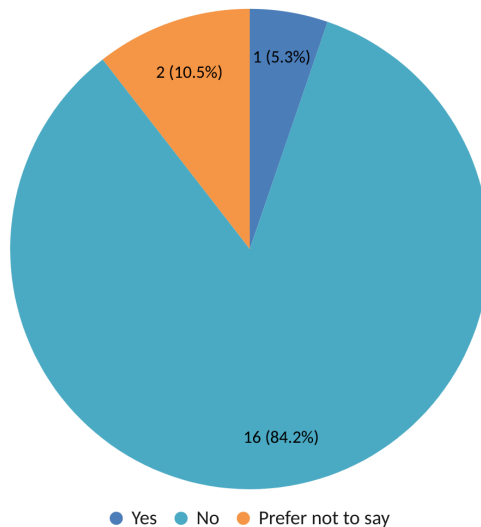
# About you

**Gender: Are you... (Base 20)**



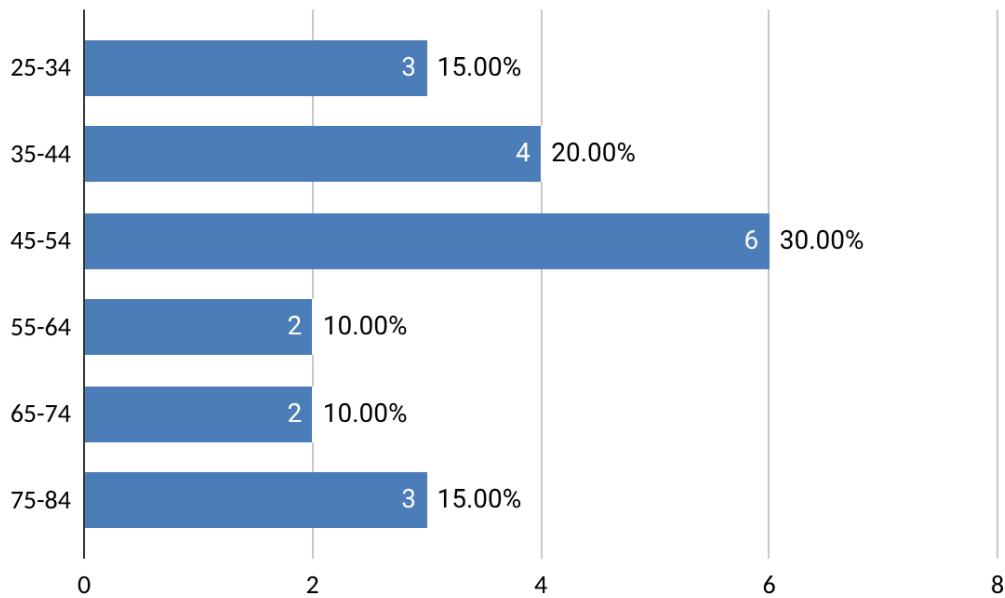
The above chart shows that 55% of respondents stated they were female (11), with 35% of respondents who stated they were male (7) and 1 respondent each that stated that they were non binary and preferred not to say.

**Are you transgender or have a transgender history? (Base 19)**



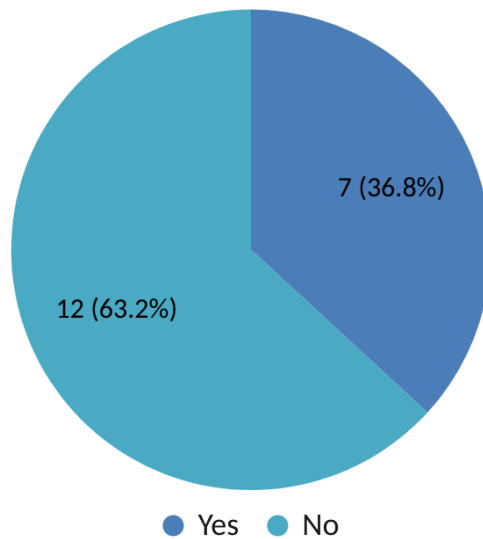
84% (16) of respondents stated they were not transgender or have a transgender history, followed by 11% (2) respondents that stated they were transgender or have a transgender history, and 5% (1) that stated that they preferred not to say.

### Age: what is your age group? (Base 20)



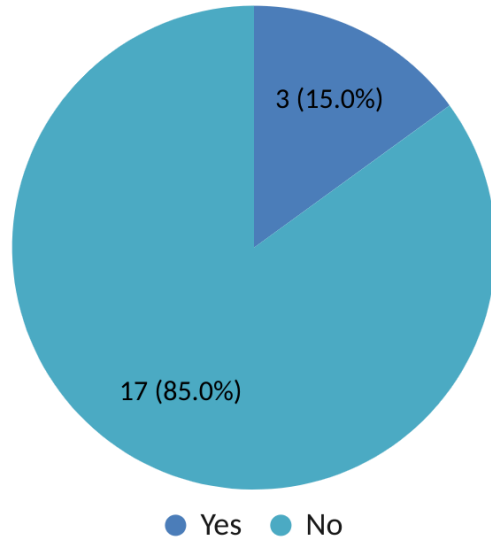
The highest percentage of respondents stated that they were in the 45-54 age group (6). This was followed by 35-44 (4), 25-34 (3), 75-84 (3), 55-65 (2) and 65-74 (2).

### Disability (Base 19)



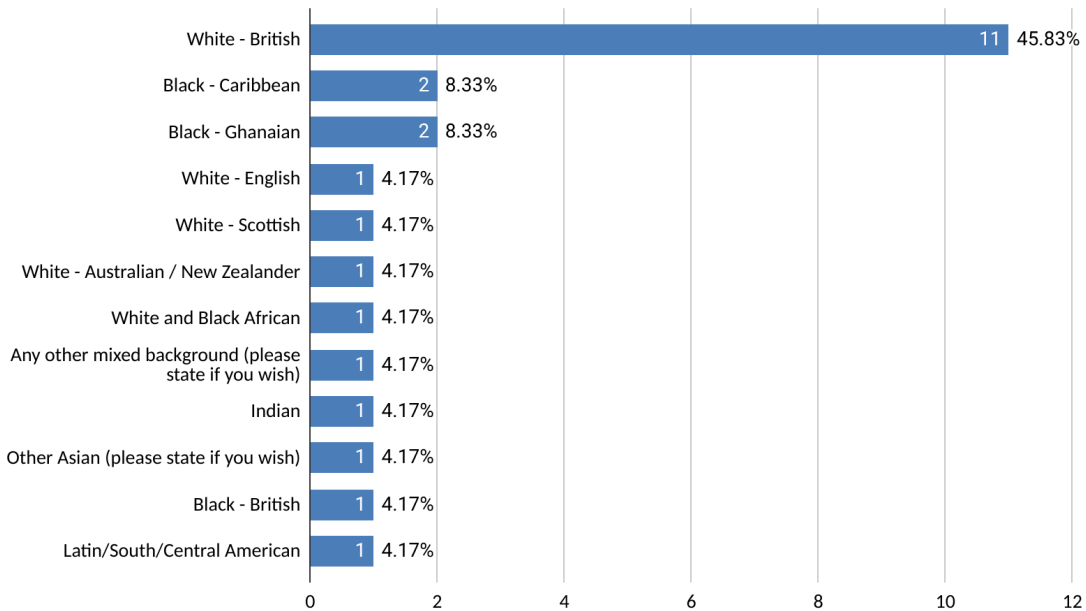
The majority of respondents (12) stated that they do not have a disability. Two respondents stated that they do.

### Caring Responsibilities (Base 20)



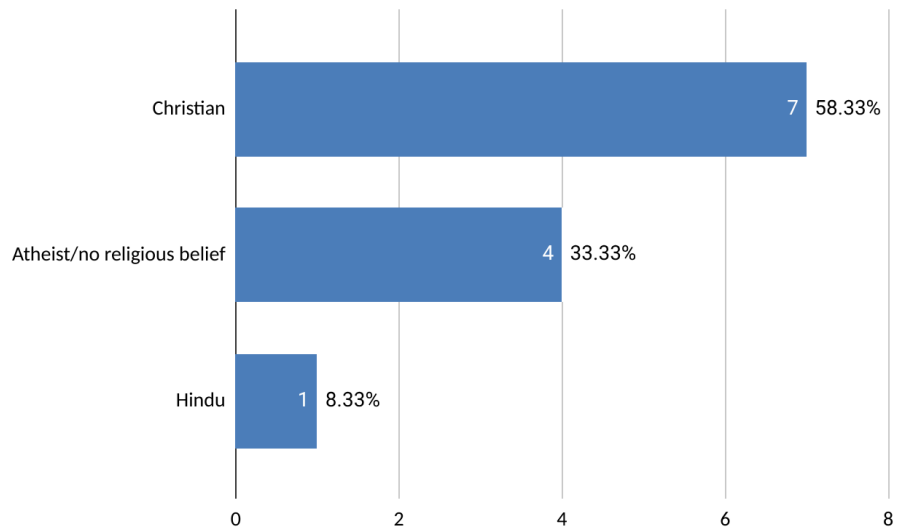
The majority of respondents stated that they do not have caring responsibilities (17). Three respondents stated that they do.

### Ethnicity: Are you... (Base 24)



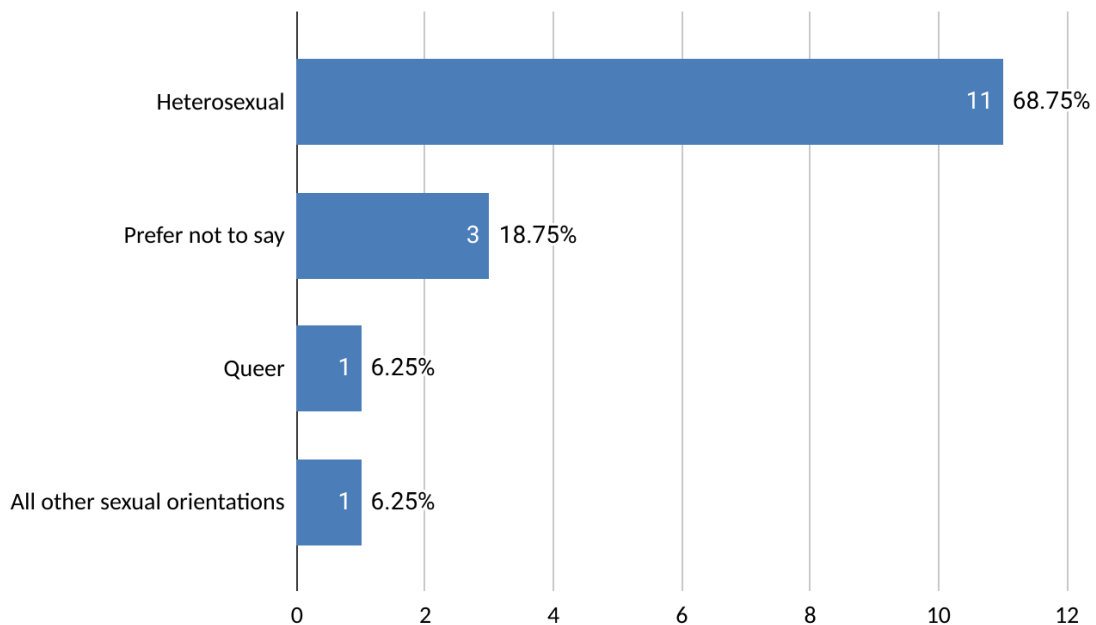
The majority of respondents stated that they were “White - British” (11). This is followed by “Black - Caribbean” (2), “Black - Ghanaian” (2), and one respondent each for the other ethnic groups stated in the chart above.

### Religion or belief: Are you or do you have... (Base 12)



The majority of respondents, 58%, stated that they were Christian (7). This is followed by Atheist/no religious belief (4) and Hindu (1). When asked if they are or have any other religion or beliefs, one respondent stated “Jain”.

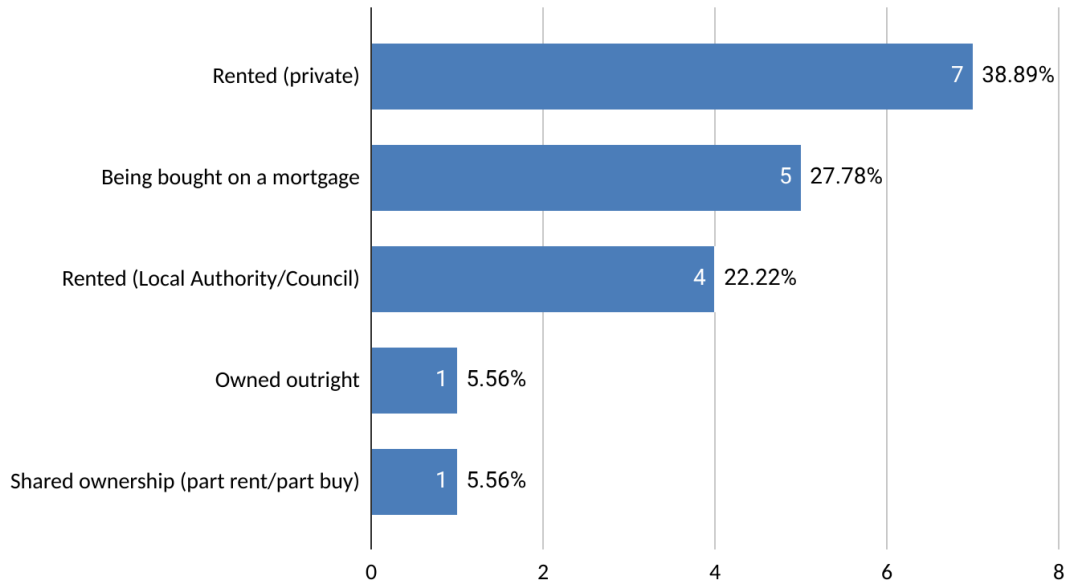
### Sexual orientation: Are you... (Base 16)



The majority of respondents stated that they were heterosexual (11). This was followed by prefer not to say (3), Queer (1) and all other sexual orientations (1).



### Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home? (Base 18)



The majority of respondents stated that they rented privately (7). This was followed by those that stated their home was being bought on a mortgage (5), rented from the Local Authority / Council (4), owned outright (1) and shared ownership (1).