Third Sector Trends in England and Wales 2022:

relationships, influencing and collaboration

Community Foundation

About the author

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The contents of the report express the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the commissioning partners.

Third Sector Trends Study

Data in this report are drawn from the Third Sector Trends study which was conceived and originally commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation with research conducted by the universities of Southampton, Teesside and Durham. The Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland was a co-founder of the research and is now responsible for its legacy.

The Community Foundation and St Chad's College are now collaborating with partners including: Power to Change, Barrow Cadbury Trust and Millfield House Foundation to undertake the Third Sector Trends Study survey in 2022-23

All publications from the Third Sector Trends study are available free to download at this address: https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/knowledge-and-leadership/third-sector-trends-research/

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I would like to thank all the participants in the study who took the time to do the survey and to write about their experiences. Many of the people who responded will have been involved in the study for many years now. So my thanks go to them for sticking with it this far and hopefully continuing to take part in 2025.

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Cullagh Warnock, Trust Manager at Millfield House Foundation and Mark Freeman at Cambridge CVS discussed sector influencing and campaigning which was very helpful for the interpretation of new findings.

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This is a long running study and it has benefitted enormously from the support of my colleagues Rob Williamson, Mark Pierce and Adam Lopardo at the Community Foundation in Newcastle. Their enthusiasm, advice and assistance is invaluable and much appreciated.

Executive summary

Third Sector Trends has been surveying the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector every three years since 2010. In 2022, 6,070 responses were received across England and Wales (an average of ~600 responses in each region). The study examines how Third Sector organisations, with a wide range of characteristics and working in different local contexts, fare over time. It is the only long-running survey of its kind in the UK.

This is the only fully representative longitudinal survey which can produce robust and detailed comparative analysis at a regional and national level. It is designed to complement the detailed financial analysis of the sector undertaken in *NCVO's UK Civil Society Almanac* and on grant awards by *360Giving*. In 2022 the study was supported by ***Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Power to Change, Barrow Cadbury Trust*** and ***Millfield House Foundation***.

This is the fourth report from the Third Sector Trends study of England and Wales in 2022. The first report looked at the structure, purpose, energy and impact of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and laid down the foundations for subsequent analysis. The second report explored people resources and was followed by a third report on sector finances. This report looks at sector interactions, influencing and collaboration.

Relationships within the Third Sector

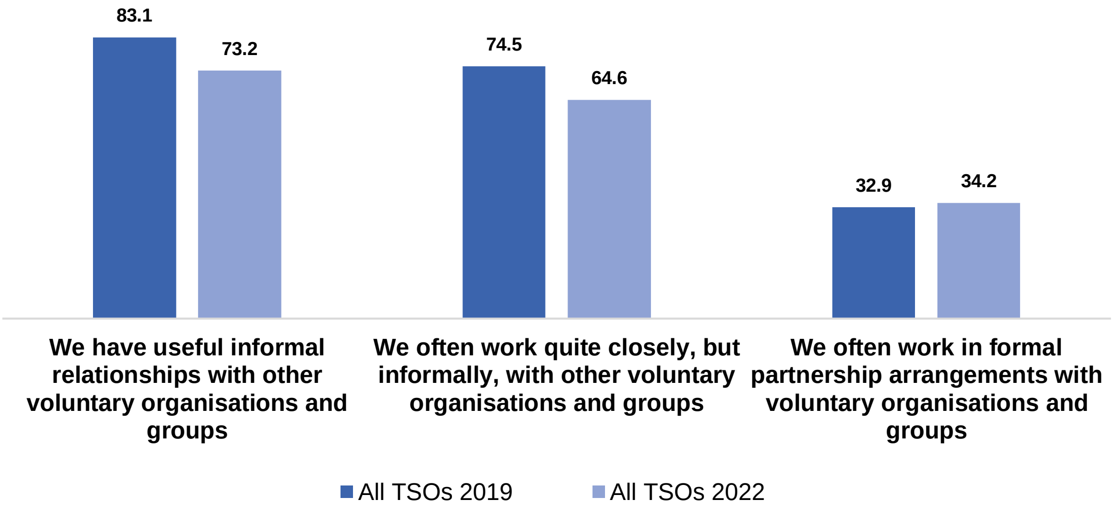
The Third Sector is lauded in policy circles for its willingness and ability to work effectively in partnership. Partnership working can take many forms:

- 73 per cent of Third Sector organisations (TSOs) are currently engaged in 'informal relationships' with other voluntary organisations and groups and another 9 per cent would like to work this way.
- 65 per cent of organisations work closely but only semi-formally with other TSOs. Complementary working is an option 11 per cent of organisations are considering.
- A third of TSOs work in formal partnership arrangements (34%) and another fifth are interested in doing so. Almost half (47%) of the sector is disinterested in formal partnership working.

The Coronavirus pandemic has not undermined sector commitment to partnership working. Informal and complementary approaches to partnership working have declined a little since 2019 because many micro and small TSOs were less active or hibernating (Figure 1). Formal partnership working has increased very slightly.

Figure 1 **Change in Third Sector inter-relationships 2019-2022**

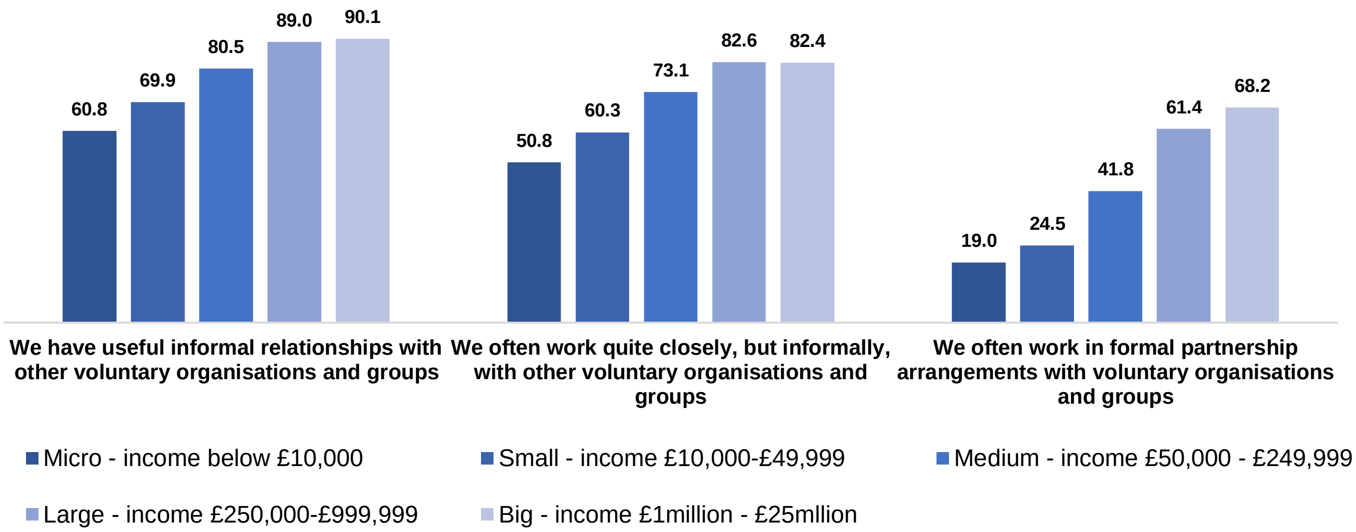
(Percentage of TSOs working in partnership, England and Wales, 2019 n=3,943, 2022 n=5,897)



Eagerness to work in partnership is affected by organisational size (Figure 2). Half of micro organisations (51%) work in complementary ways compared with 82-83 per cent of large and the biggest organisations.

Formal partnership working is common amongst the biggest TSOs (68%), but interest declines by organisational size to only a fifth of micro organisations (19%).

Figure 2 **Relationships within the Third Sector by size of TSOs**
(Percentage of TSOs currently working in partnership, England and Wales, 2022, n=5,897)



Support from local and national businesses

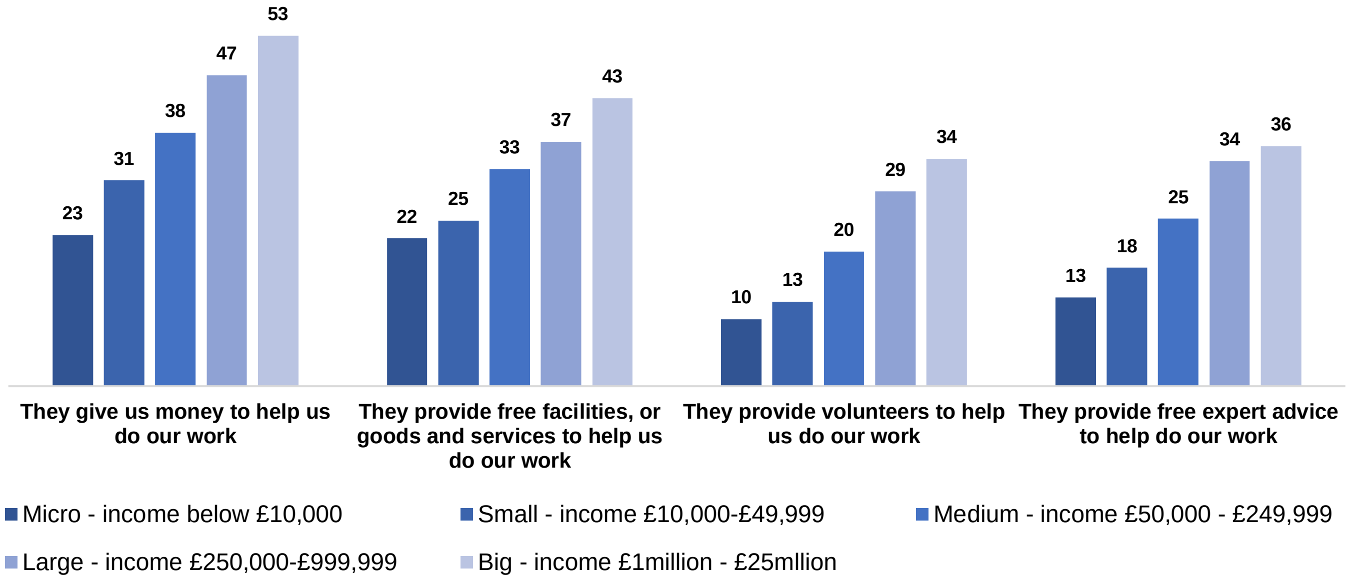
54 per cent of TSOs have relationships with businesses. Amongst these organisations, 69 per cent work exclusively with local businesses and 8 per cent exclusively with national businesses: 23 per cent work with mix of local and national businesses.

Private sector businesses support TSOs in many ways. Figure 3 shows how many TSOs in England and Wales get business support and how much it is valued.

- ***Financial support***: about half of TSOs get some financial support and about a quarter of organisations feel that this is of great importance to them.
- ***In-kind support***: (e.g. use of facilities, used or surplus goods and free services) is received by just under half of organisations – about a third of TSOs feel that this is of great importance to them.
- ***Employee supported volunteers***: (when employees are encouraged to work in TSOs on an occasional or regularised basis). Only a third of TSOs get support from employee volunteers – 15 per cent of organisations feel that it is of great importance to them.
- ***Pro bono expert advice***: (e.g. unpaid professional or technical support) is received by 38 per cent of TSOs - 16 per cent of TSOs think this is of great importance to them.

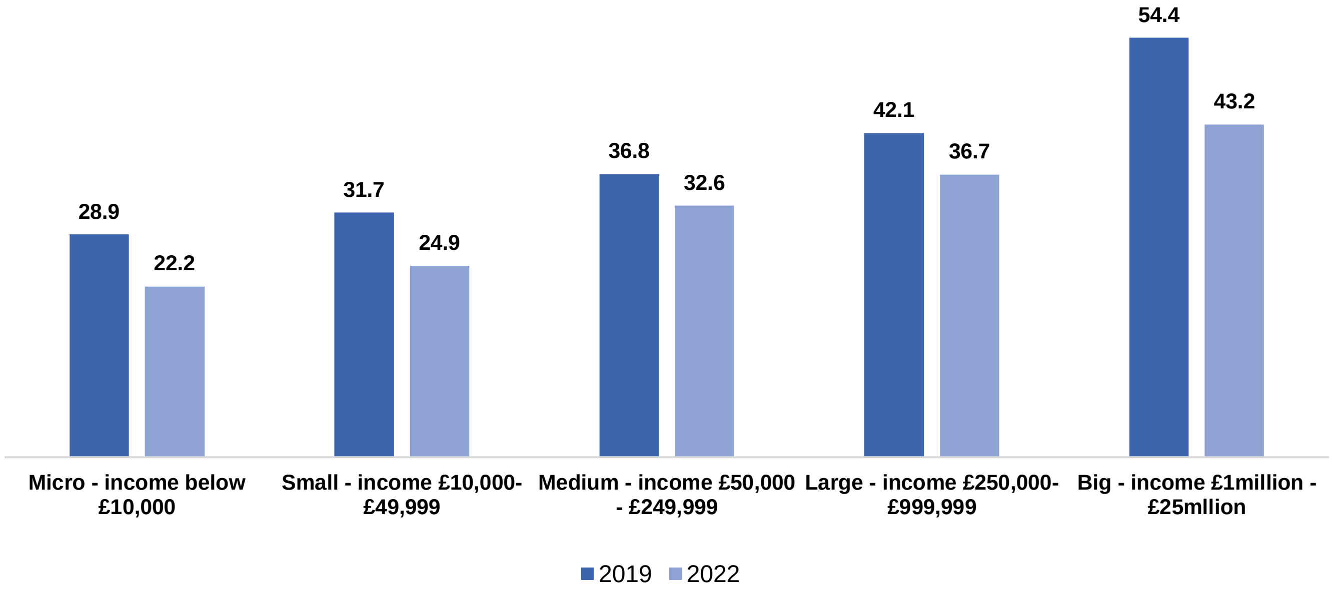
Bigger organisations are most likely to receive all types of support (Figure 4). For example, twice as many of the biggest organisations receive money from business (53%) than micro TSOs (23%).

Figure 3 **Variations in support from business by TSO size**
(England and Wales 2022, percentage of all TSOs which state that support is of 'some imporance' or 'of great importance', average n=5,906)



Over the last two years, the Coronavirus pandemic has seriously affected the activities of businesses and Third Sector organisations. This has resulted in a small decline in provision of and demand for all types of business support. For example, Figure 4 shows that in-kind support has fallen, especially amongst biggest TSOs.

Figure 4 **Changing patterns of in-kind support from business by TSO size**
(Pecentage of all TSOs which state that suport from business is of 'some' or 'great' importance. England and Wales: average responses all charts 2019 n=3,954, 2022 n=5,926)



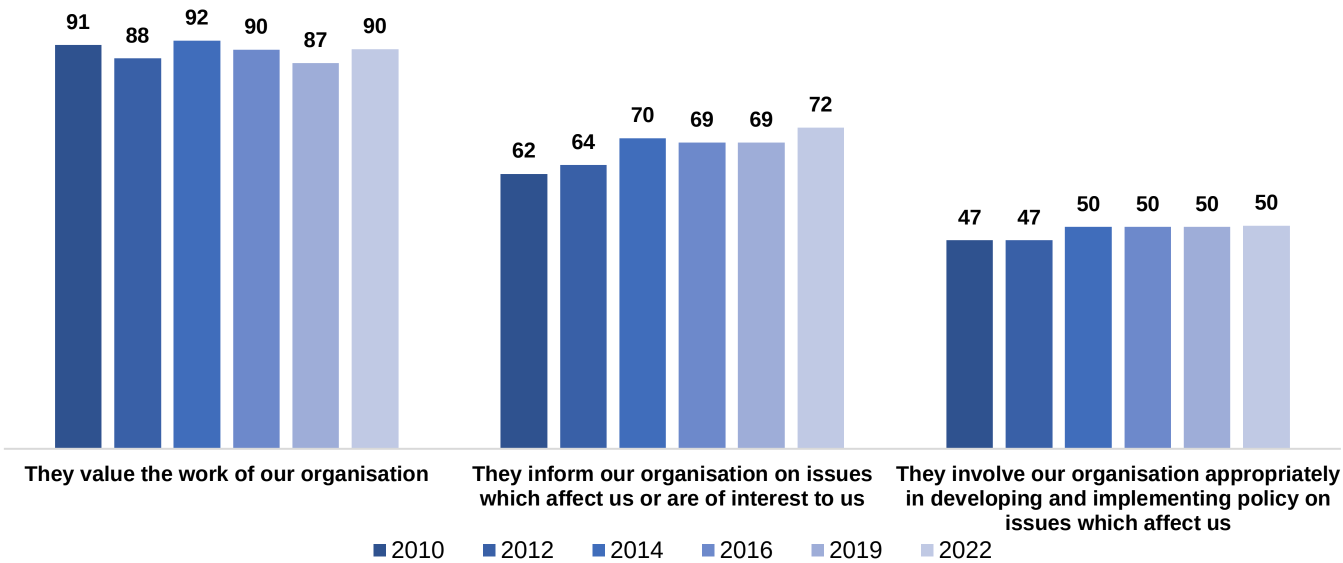
Relationships with the public sector

Years of government austerity policy has decimated many local authority budgets. And yet, the majority of Third Sector organisations have consistently felt that their work is valued and well supported by local public sector organisations (Figure 5).

TSOs are now more likely to feel that local public sector organisations keep them informed about issues affecting them than in 2010 (rising from 62% in 2010 to 72% in 2022).

While only about half of TSOs feel that their organisation is appropriately involved in developing and implementing policies that are relevant to them, this has remained unchanged since 2014.

Figure 5 **Relationships with local public sector organisations 2010-2022**
(Percentage of TSOs which 'agree' or 'strongly agree' - only includes organisations which have a relationship with the public sector)



During the pandemic, a third of TSOs were approached by local public sector bodies for their assistance. About 40 per cent of TSOs have no relationship with the local public sector, but amongst those which do, 36 per cent of micro organisations and 80 per cent of the biggest TSOs were involved with helping out local public authorities during the pandemic.

Expectations about statutory funding

In the current political and economic circumstances, it may be expected that most Third Sector organisations would be pessimistic about statutory funding over the next two years. That is not the case.

- Nearly a third of the biggest TSOs remain optimistic that statutory funding will increase – 25 per cent of big organisations expect it to decline.
- Smaller organisations are much more pessimistic: 67 per cent of micro organisations expect public sector income to fall and only 6 per cent think it will rise.

Current expectations about levels of statutory funding are, however, more optimistic than was the case in 2013, 2016 and 2019.

Influencing local social and public policy

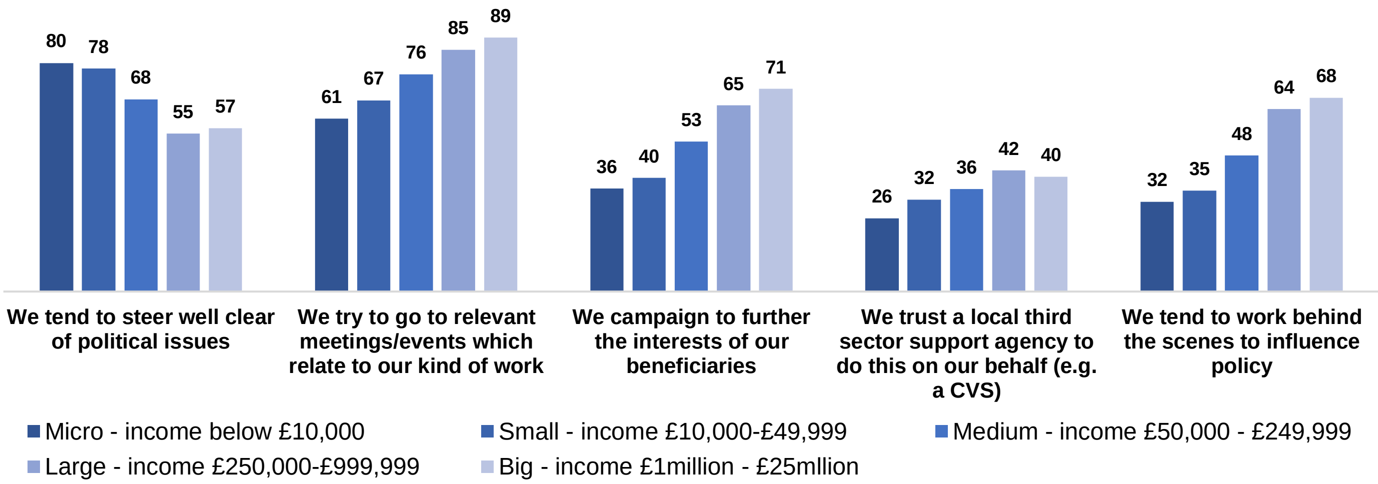
Third Sector Trends has looked at organisational willingness to engage in debates about local social and public policy.

- Almost three-quarters of TSOs steer clear of local political issues (73%). Only 9 per cent of organisations are strongly committed to do so.
- About 71% of TSOs participate in formal consultations about local social and public policy – but enthusiasm is muted: only 21 per cent commit strongly.

- Nearly half of TSOs (47%) agree that they campaign to influence local policy.
- A third of organisations delegate responsibility for engagement with local social and public policy to local Third Sector infrastructure organisations.
- Lobbying behind the scenes to influence policy is an option few TSOs take. Only 9 per cent of TSOs strongly agree that they do this.

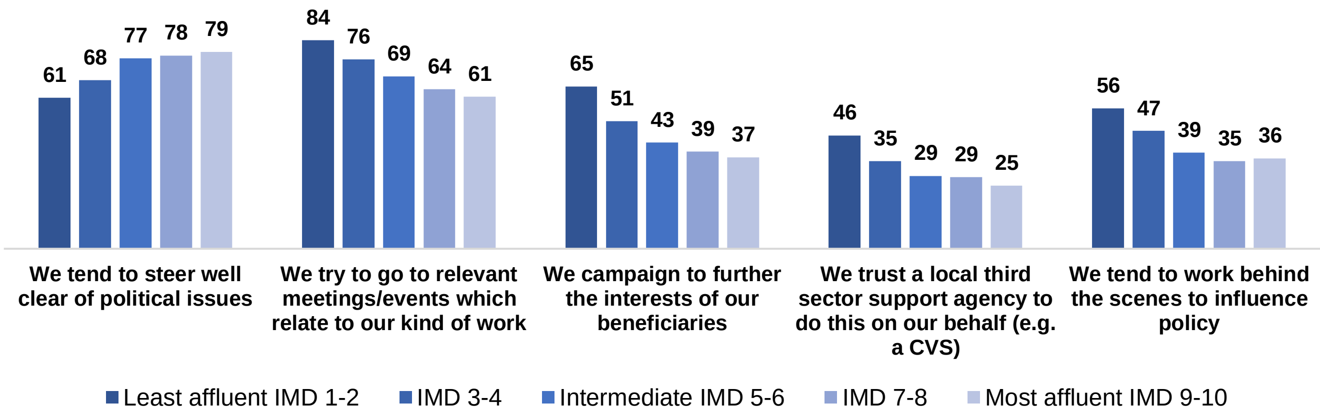
The biggest TSOs are much more likely to engage with social and public policy (Figure 6), but the vital role smaller organisations play must not be discounted because they are much more numerous.

Figure 6 **Influencing local social and public policy by size of TSOs**
(Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', average n=5,764)



TSOs based in the poorest areas, where critical and pernicious personal and social needs tend to be concentrated, are much more likely to engage in all aspects of influencing than organisations in the wealthiest areas (Figure 7).

Figure 7 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy by affluence of areas whre TSOs are based**
(Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', England and Wales, average n=5,693)



Influencing for beneficiary groups

The beneficiary focus of TSOs affects the intensity of engagement in influencing. TSOs that tackle general issues tend to have the lowest level of commitment to influence local social and public policy – while those with a focus on discrete beneficiary groups are much more active (Figure 8).

Figure 8 **Commitment of TSOs to campaigning, attend relevant meetings and events, and working behind the scenes influencing: by beneficiary groups served** (Percentage 'strongly agree' with each statement, England and Wales 2022, n=6,070)

Beneficiaries	**We campaign to further the interests of our beneficiaries** (in rank order)	**We try to go to relevant meetings/events which relate to our kind of work**	**We tend to work behind the scenes to influence policy**
People with concerns about gender and sexuality (n=265)	36.2	40.4	19.2
People of a particular ethnic or racial origin (n=474)	28.3	33.1	18.1
People with homelessness and housing issues (n=619)	27.1	35.1	16.8
Other Third Sector organisations (n=442)	25.3	34.9	21.2
Unemployed/workless people (n=776)	25.3	34.7	14.1
Carers (n=607)	25.0	35.4	13.3
People in disadvantaged urban areas (n=964)	24.2	34.1	14.7
People or households living in poverty (n=1,106)	23.0	32.8	14.4
People with mental health conditions (n=1.434)	22.7	33.0	13.7
People with learning disabilities (n=1,043)	21.5	30.2	13.2
People with physical disabilities (n=1.181)	20.2	27.7	11.7
People with physical health conditions (n=1,202)	19.8	28.7	12.8
People in rural areas (n=909)	15.6	21.1	10.4
Older people (n=1,850)	15.1	22.9	9.5
Children and young people (n=2,412)	14.6	21.8	9.4
People in general (n=3,066)	13.2	19.2	7.9

While the Third Sector is encouraged to play a facilitative role in local decision making, concerns about the legality of campaigning have been inflamed by the Charity Commission's recent publication of draft guidance to charity trustees on the use of social media for campaign purposes.

The guidance reassures trustees that a charity can '*engage on emotive or controversial topics if this is a way of achieving its charitable purpose'*, but asserts that trustees must take action if social media has '*problematic content*'. The incidence of digital campaigning varies by size of organisations.

- Larger organisations (36%) are more involved than the smallest organisations (23%) in digital campaigning – but smaller organisations are much more numerous.

The purposes of digital campaigning can be identified by looking at the beneficiaries served by organisations, for example:

- 68 per cent of organisations which work for people with concerns about gender and sexuality engage in some form of campaigning. All of these organisations (100%) use digital media to campaign.
- At the other end of the spectrum, of those organisations which serve 'people in general' only 45 per cent engage in campaigning – of which 76 per cent use social media to campaign.

Introduction

1.1 The Third Sector Trends study

The Third Sector Trends Study was initiated in 2008 in North East England and Cumbria as a longitudinal study to explore the structure and dynamics of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the context of change.

The field of study has widened over the years to include Yorkshire in 2010, the remainder of North West England in 2016 and across England and Wales in 2019. The longitudinal survey work has been repeated six times so far, which produces unique opportunities for trend analysis.

The study examines how Third Sector organisations (TSOs) with a wide range of characteristics and working in different local contexts fare over time. This is the only long-running study of its kind in the UK and is designed to complement other long-term studies by NCVO and 360Giving.

1.2 Purpose of the report

This is the fourth report from the Third Sector Trends study of England and Wales in 2022. The first report looked at the structure, purpose, energy and impact of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and laid down the foundations for subsequent analysis. The second report explored people resources and was followed by a third report on financial wellbeing.

This report will present findings on the following topics:

- Section 2 – relationships within the Third Sector
- Section 3 – beneficial interactions with the private sector.
- Section 4 – the quality of relationships with the local public sector.
- Section 5 – influencing local social and public policy.

These sections on statistical findings will be followed by a brief summary of key conclusions and implications.

1.3 Research methods and survey sample[1]

Third Sector Trends undertakes large-scale on-line surveys every three years. In 2022, the survey opened on June 6th. When the survey closed on 1st October, 6,070 responses had been received across England and Wales.

The majority of responses were collected by sending direct email invitations to listings of charity leaders drawn from the Charity Commission Register (4,809 returns representing a 4.3% response rate from a sample frame of 110,930 charities). This was supplemented by appeals to join the survey by local infrastructure organisations (such as councils for voluntary service), community foundations and charitable trusts and foundations. This produced an additional 1,263 returns.

The large volume of survey respondents provides a strong basis for in-depth analysis of sector dynamics. As a sample survey, however, there are insufficient data to make reliable assessments of sector structure, purpose and impact. Consequently, the study established a database of Third Sector Organisations in England and Wales

[1] A separate report is available which details the research methodology employed in the Third Sector Trends surveys. This can be accessed here: Technical paper on research methodologies, October 2022.

drawn from the full range of available registers. This data set includes 187,000 organisations.[2]

Using evidence from the Third Sector Trends registers database, it is possible to show how representative survey data are. As shown in Figure 1.1 there is a close match between the sample data and register data in most English regions and in Wales. The exceptions are North East England and Cumbria, where the study began and where there is a much stronger local commitment to invest in the process. In London, by contrast, the response rate was much lower than other regions.

Survey samples are also compared by size of organisation in Figure 1.2. This shows that while there is a slight over-representation of larger and big TSOs, survey sample structure is broadly representative.

Figure 1.1 **Distribution of survey sample and register data**

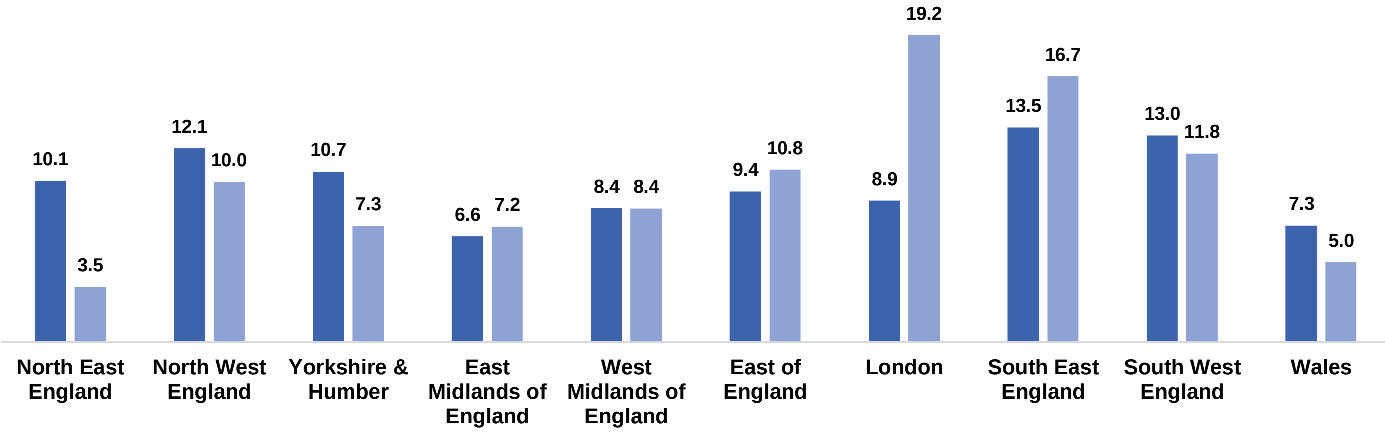
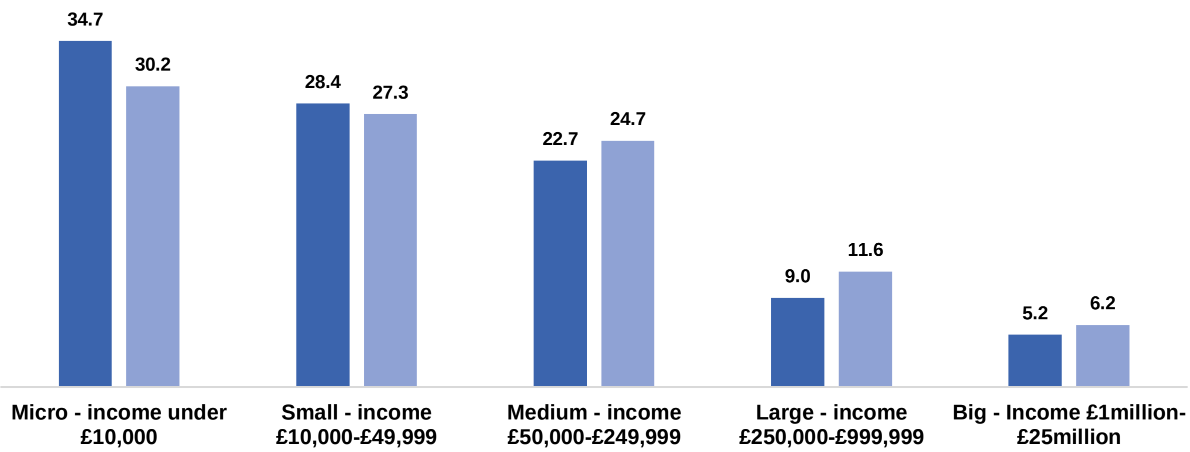


Figure 1.2 **Distribution of samples by size of TSOs**
comparing survey and registers data 2022)



[2] Full details on this database and how it was constructed is available in a technical paper on analytical techniques adopted in the Third Sector Trends study which can be found here: Technical working paper on analytical techniques.

Section 2:
Relationships in the Third Sector

2.1 Defining partnership working

The Third Sector is often lauded in policy circles for its willingness and ability to work effectively in partnership. Partnership is a 'warm' word - evoking notions of shared values, interests, power and objectives.[3] Few partnerships, in any aspect of social life, match up to these expectations. The reality is that organisations bring different aspects of power and influence to the table when they establish or join partnerships – which demands that compromises are struck.

Furthermore, at any one time, it is likely that organisations will be involved in a range of partnerships - but the nature of these partnerships will vary. One organisation may find itself in some partnerships where they are clearly dominant over others; while in others, they may play only a small part and be happy to accept a subordinate role. While inequalities are built into most partnership arrangements, TSOs often feel uncomfortable about this – even if they signed up to them knowing that resources and power may not be shared equally.[4]

The word 'partnership' is used in so many contexts that its usefulness can be undermined. To make the term more useful for analysis, distinctions have been drawn between four different types of partnership relationships.[5]

- ***Contractual relationships***: where public sector bodies purchase services from Third Sector providers.[6] Such relationships are often described in partnership terms, but they are unequal as the buyer defines the purpose and scope of the work to be done and builds in clauses for recourse if the supplier fails to deliver. Contractors often encourage or demand that services are

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[3] This introductory section has been adapted from Chapman, T., Mawson, J., Robinson, F. and Wistow, J. (2018) *How to work effectively with the Third Sector: a discussion paper for public sector organisations*, Durham: Institute for Local Government. https://www.stchads.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ILG-How-to-work-effectively-with-the-third-sector-discussion-paper-March-2019-.pdf.

[4] There is a large critical academic literature on partnership working – much of which focuses on public service delivery. See for example: Ansell, C. and Gash, A. (2008) 'Collaborative governance in theory and practice'. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543-571; Balloch, S. and Taylor, M. (2001) *Partnership working: policy and practice*, Bristol: Policy Press: Bovaird, T. (2004) 'Public-private partnerships: from contested concepts to prevalent practice', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 70 (2): 199-215; Craig, G. and Taylor, M. (2002) 'Dangerous liaisons: local government and the voluntary and community sectors', in C. Glendinning, M. Powell and K. Rummery (eds.) *Partnerships, New Labour and the governance of welfare*. Bristol, Policy Press; Deakin, N. (1995) 'The perils of partnership', in Davis Smith, J., Hedley, R. and Rochester, C. (eds.) *Introduction to the voluntary sector*. London: Routledge; Rees, J., Mullins, D. and Bovaird, T. (2012) *Partnership working*, Birmingham, Third Sector Research Centre Research Report no. 88.

[5] These categories are not mutually exclusive. Larger TSOs are likely to engage in all these kinds of relationships at any one time and feel comfortable in doing so. These definitions of levels of partnership or complementary working were first developed in the context of a study of public, private and Third Sector organisations working in national and cross-national contexts. See Lindsey, I. and Chapman, T. (2017) *Enhancing the Contribution of Sport to the Sustainable Development Goals*, London: Commonwealth Books, 24-28.

[6] Most contracts derive from public sector bodies, but the private sector and charitable trusts and foundations also issue large service delivery contracts. This section focuses nevertheless focuses primarily on the public sector. There is a large policy literature emanating mainly from the 1990s and early 2000s which championed the principle of partnership working to deliver public services. See, for example: Audit Commission (1998) *A fruitful partnership: effective partnership working*, London: Audit Commission; Office of the Third Sector (2006) *Partnership in public services: an action plan for Third Sector involvement*. London: Cabinet Office; Home Office (2004) *Change up: capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector,* London: HMSO; Home Office (2005) *Strengthening partnerships: next steps for the compact,* London: HMSO; Office for Civil Society (2010) *Better together: preparing for local spending cuts to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector*, London: Cabinet Office; Office for Civil Society (2010) *Building a stronger civil society: a strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises*, London: Cabinet Office.

delivered in partnership by consortia of TSOs – led by a 'prime contractor'. Such arrangements can work well if they are sufficiently well resourced, participation is voluntaristic and power relationships are well balanced. But these criteria are not always met which can inject problems into consortia or partnership delivery arrangements from the start.

- ***Formal partnership relationships*****:** where agencies from the same or different sectors work together in a formally constituted relationship to deliver specific outcomes usually on a time-limited basis. In such partnerships there may be a permanent lead organisation or rotation of lead partners which manage communications, hold and distribute budgets to other organisations or agencies and/or act as the accountable body to funders. Holding the purse strings can be a powerful tool in shaping the way partnership arrangements manifest themselves. In some formal partnerships, budgets and resources are not shared, but formal protocols are established on working relationships which must be adhered to.
- ***Complementary relationships*****:** where agencies and organisations from the same or different sectors work towards similar objectives but without formally binding or contractual ties. A range of partners may bring money to the table, but rarely, and for good reason, will they agree to 'pool' such resources. The terms of reference of the partnership may be defined in more or less formal ways. Such relationships are less likely to be time limited and can allow for participating organisations to step in or step out during the life of the partnership.
- ***Autonomous working*****:** where organisations or agencies work towards beneficial social or economic outcomes individually or collectively – and can often share common values or objectives. These can further be divided into two categories:
    - ***Good neighbours***: where organisations are empathetic towards and respectful of the contribution of other organisations and agencies and do not purposefully duplicate or undermine the efforts of others. Generosity of spirit is required – but within limits since some reciprocity is expected.
    - ***Poor neighbours*****:** where organisations conflict and/or compete, intentionally or otherwise and undermine the achievement of others' shared objectives or even objectives these difficult neighbours claim to support. Poor neighbours can be empathetic too – which is a dangerous tool in the wrong hands.

2.2 Interactions within the Third Sector

In the analysis that follows, distinctions between different kinds of partnership are borne in mind when interpreting findings. When exploring interactions within the Third Sector, survey data are available from three types of non-contractual partnership working:

- ***Useful informal relationships with other voluntary organisations and groups*** – or 'good neighbourly relationships' as defined above.
- ***Work quite closely but informally with other voluntary organisations and groups*** – or 'complementary relationships' as defined above.
- ***Formal partnership arrangements with other voluntary organisations and groups*** – as defined above - but excludes contractual service delivery.

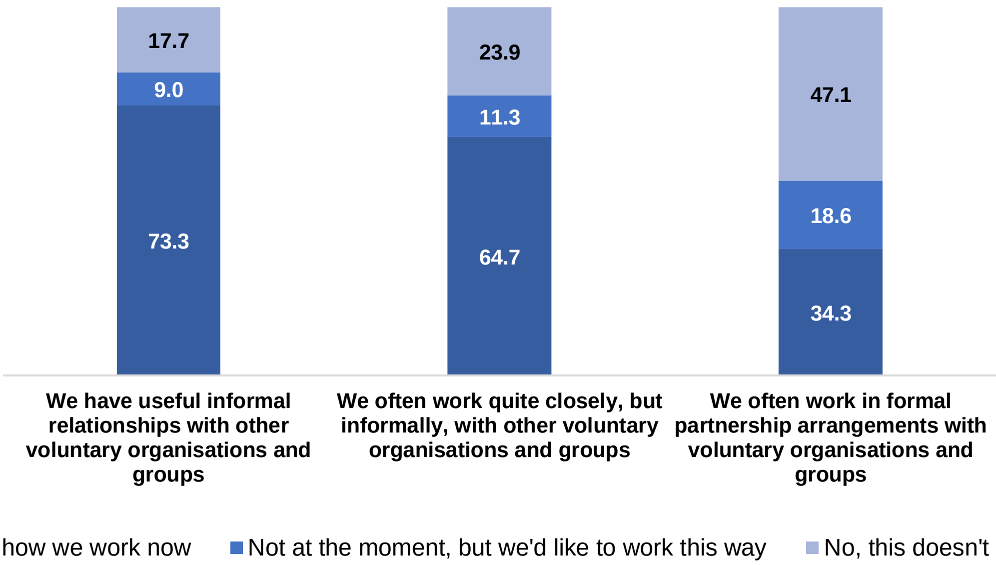
Contractual relationships between TSOs and public sector organisations are not included in these categories because these arrangements have already been explored in the third report from Third Sector Trends 2022 on sector finances.[7]

Figure 2.1 presents headline data on partnership working in the Third Sector in England and Wales. 73 per cent of TSOs are currently engaged in 'informal relationships' with other voluntary organisations and groups. Another 9 per cent of organisations feel that they would like to work with other TSOs in this way, but are not yet doing so. Only 18 per cent of organisations do not have any relationship with other organisations and have no intention to do so.

Nearly two thirds of organisations work 'closely but informally' with other TSOs. Complementary working is an option 11 per cent of organisations would consider but a quarter of TSOs do not want to work this way.

Formal partnership working attracts fewer organisations. Nearly half of TSOs (47%) will not consider this option but 19 per cent say that they that they might like to work this way. About a third of organisations currently work in formal partnership arrangements (34%).

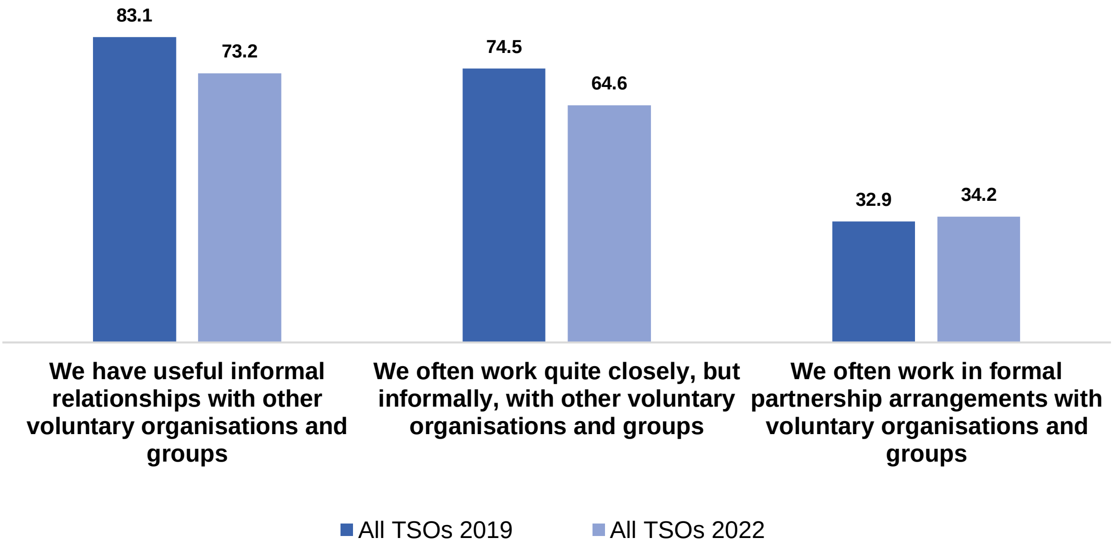
Figure 2.1 **Informal, complementary and formal partnership working amongst TSOs in England and Wales 2022** (average n=5,969)



The above analysis indicates that partnership working is widespread in the Third Sector. But the indications are that informal and complementary approaches to partnership working have declined since 2019 (Figure 2.2). This may be due to the more limited opportunities for interaction during the Coronavirus pandemic. Formal partnership working, by contrast, has not declined (remaining at 33-34%).

[7] See: Third Sector Trends 2022: finances, assets and organisational wellbeing, Newcastle upon Tyne: Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Section 3.2. https://www.stchads.ac.uk/research/research-news/testing-times-ahead-for-third-sector-finances/.

Figure 2.2 **Change in Third Sector inter-relationships 2019-2022**
(Percentage of TSOs working in partnership, England and Wales, 2019 n=3,943, 2022 n=5,897)



2.3 Organisational and area variations

Willingness to work in partnership is affected by organisational size. A majority of micro organisations work informally with other TSOs (61%) compared with 90 per cent of the biggest organisations (Figure 2.3).

About a half of micro organisations (51%) work quite closely with other TSOs in complementary ways compared with 82-83 per cent of large and the biggest organisations. Formal partnership working is common amongst the biggest TSOs (68%), but interest declines by organisational size to only a fifth of micro organisations (19%).

The age of organisations affects interest in partnership working. As shown in Figure 2.4, the oldest TSOs are the least inclined to work informally, in complementary ways or in formal partnership.

Figure 2.3 **Relationships within the Third Sector by size of TSOs**
(Percentage of TSOs currently working in partnership, England and Wales, 2022, n=5,897)

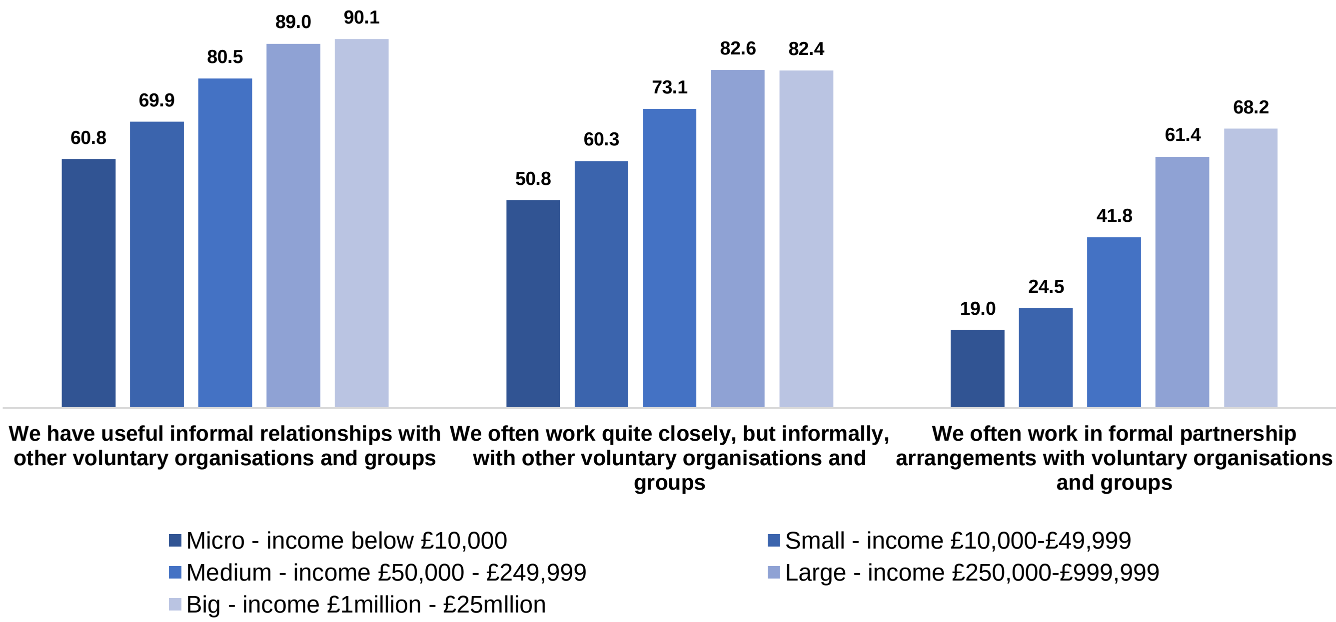
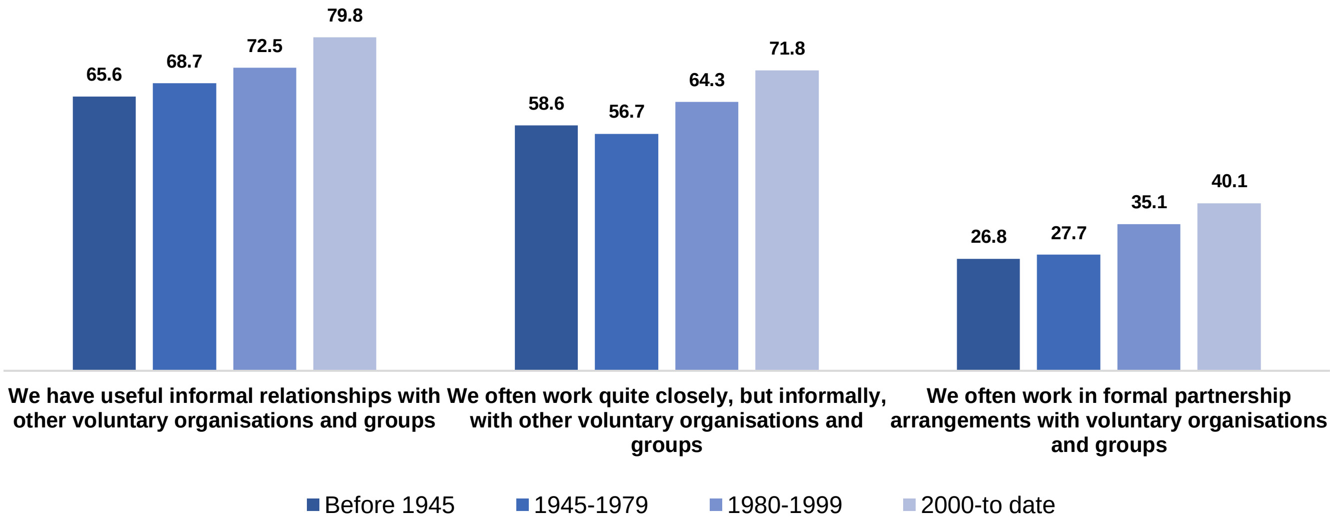
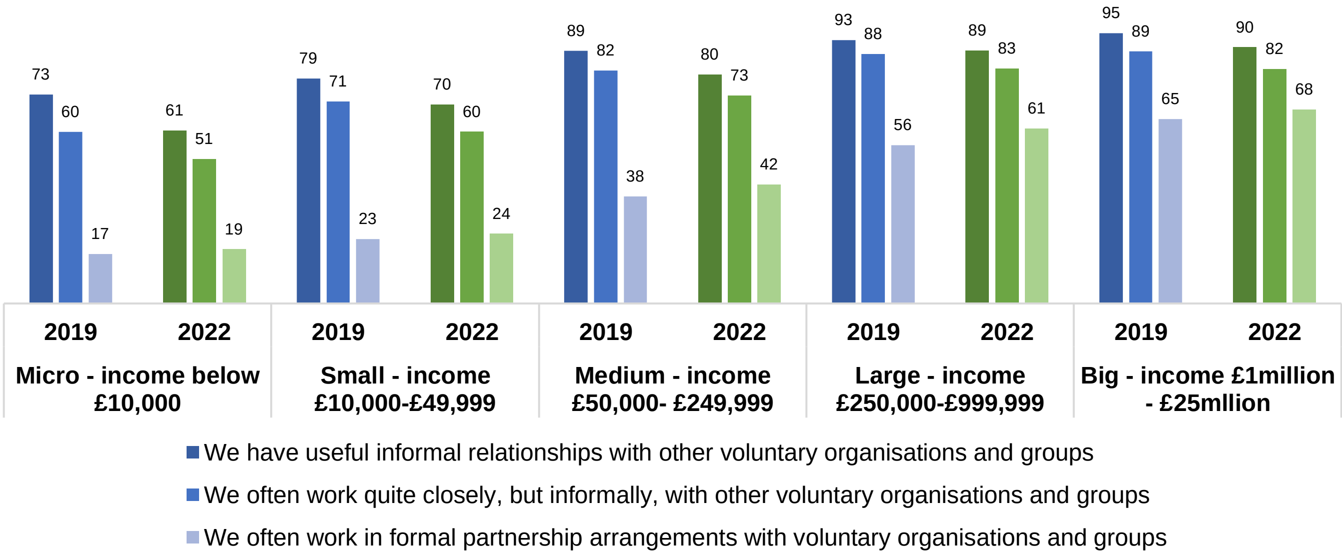


Figure 2.4 **Partnership working by age of organisations**
(Percentage of TSOs currently working in partnership, England and Wales 2022, n=5,969)



When levels of partnership working are compared between 2019 and 2022 (Figure 2.5), it is clear that formal partnership working increased a little since before the pandemic, irrespective of organisational size. But levels of informal or complementary working decreased across the board. The decline was greater amongst micro and small organisations. This may reflect lower levels of activity in smaller organisations and 'hibernation' in some cases until the worst effects of the pandemic abated.[8]

Figure 2.5 **Organisational interactions 2019 - 2022**
(Percentage of TSOs working in partnership, England and Wales, n=4.083, 2022, n=5,897)



The type of urban area where organisations are based affects levels of partnership working. Partnership working is stronger in metropolitan areas than in town and country areas. As shown in Figure 2.6, differences are greatest in formal partnership

[8] There are also indications that micro and smaller organisations were less active in seeking funding during the Coronavirus pandemic than in 2019, see Third Sector Trends 2022: finances, assets and organisational wellbeing, Newcastle upon Tyne: Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Section 5.1 : https://www.stchads.ac.uk/research/research-news/testing-times-ahead-for-third-sector-finances/.

working (43% in metropolitan areas and 28% in town and country areas). This may, though, be due to more limited opportunities for doing so in town and country areas.

This interpretation is strengthened by evidence presented in Figure 2.7 on variations in partnership working by area affluence. In more affluent areas, TSOs are slightly more likely to work together informally than in the least affluent areas (82% and 78% respectively).

Complementary working is much more common amongst TSOs based in less affluent areas (80%) than in the most affluent (56%). Twice as many organisations based in the poorest areas (50%) work in formal partnership arrangements than in the most affluent areas (23%) which is likely to reflect both a shared priority to address critical and pernicious needs and favourable funding arrangements in poorer areas to encourage partnership working.

Regional variations are shown in Figure 2.8. While interpretation will require more detailed analysis at a later date, it is notable that partnership working is the best established in Yorkshire and Humber and least well established in East of England.

Figure 2.6 **Partnership working in urban context**
(Percentage of TSOs involved in partnership working, England and Wales, average n=5,941)

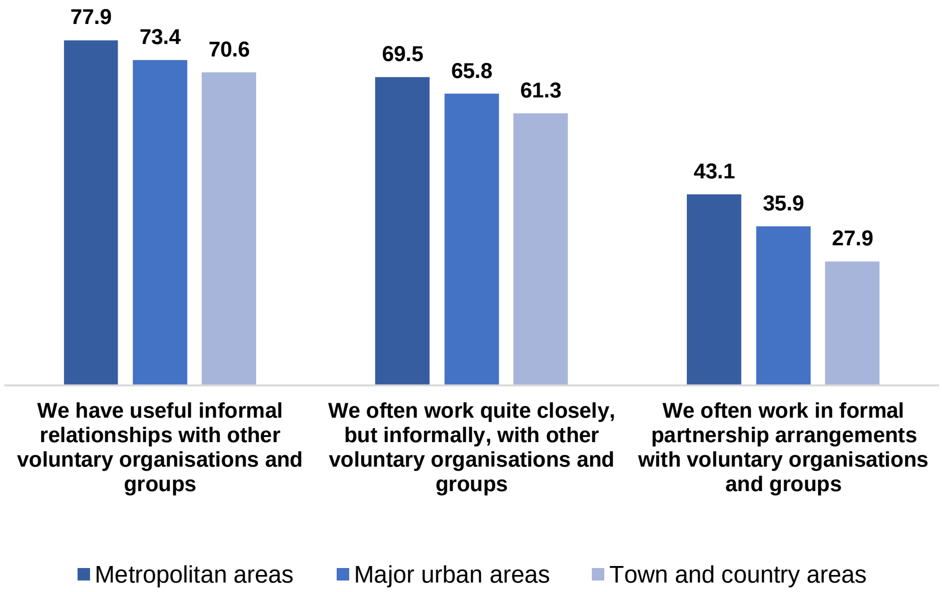


Figure 2.7 **Partnership working by area affluence**
(Percentage of TSOs involved in partnership working, England and Wales, average n=5,848)

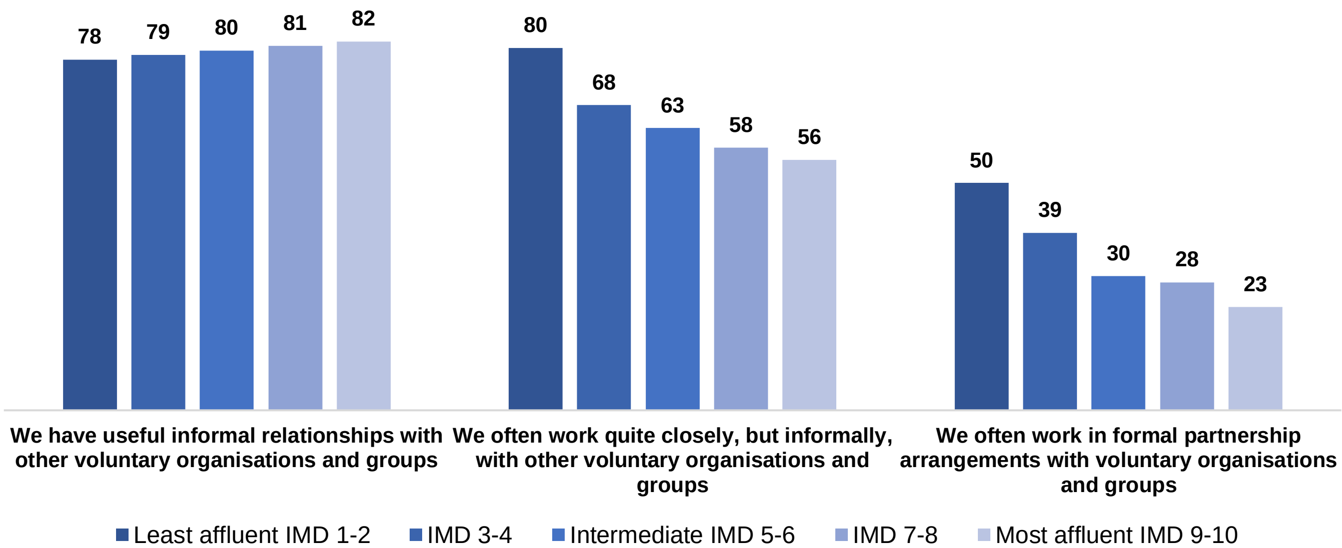
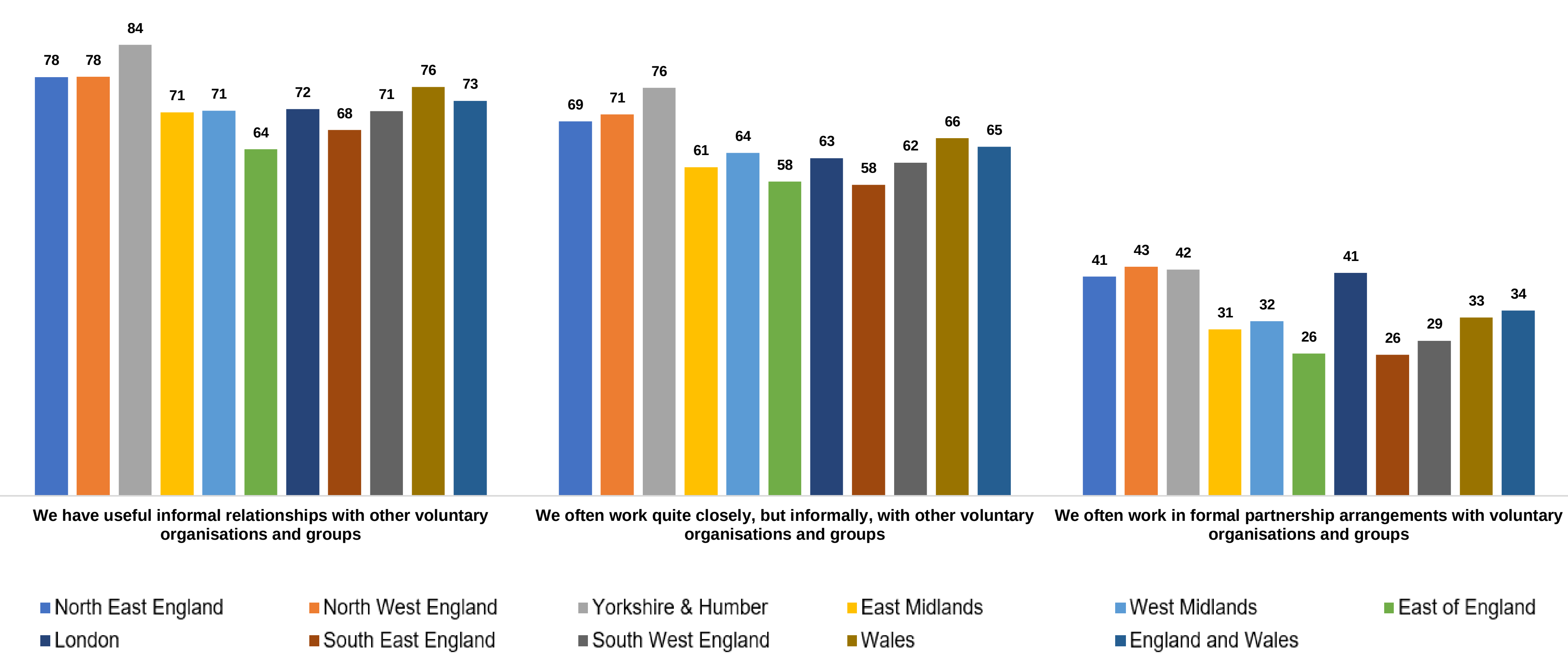


Figure 2.8 **Variations in Third Sector relationships in Wales and English regions** (2022, average n=5,955)



2.4 Expectations about working in partnership

This section looks at general expectations about partnership working within the Third Sector in the next two years. Table 2.1 shows that about 80 per cent of organisations were working in partnership in 2019 compared with 76 per cent in 2022. This small decline is likely to be a residual effect of conditions during the Coronavirus pandemic.

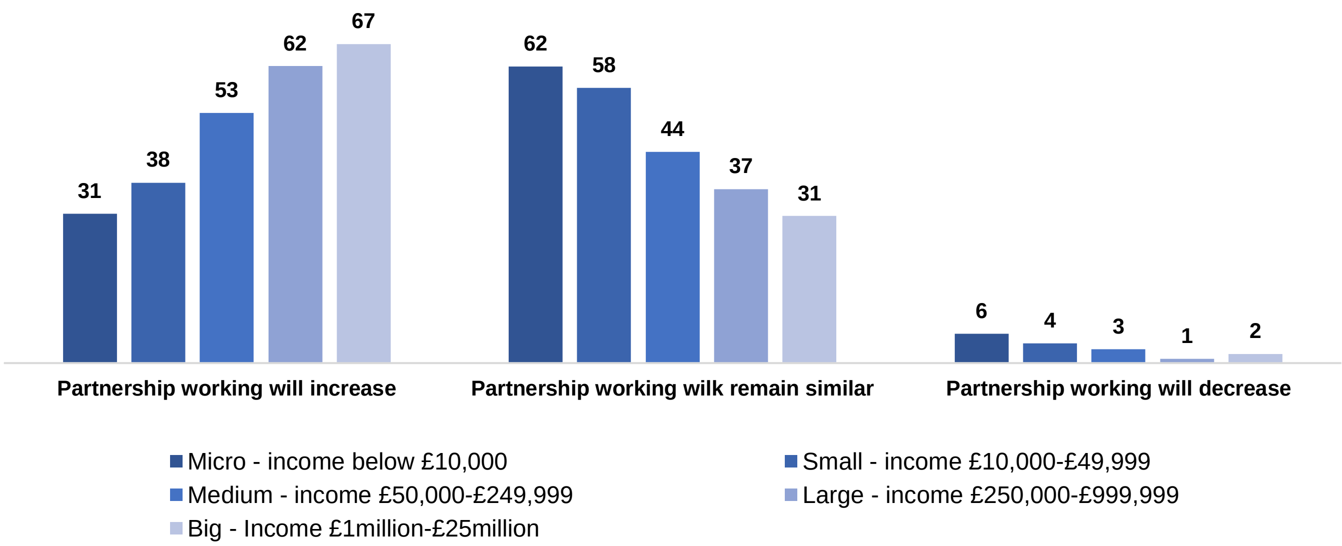
Amongst those TSOs which were involved in partnership working in 2019 and 2022, expectations have remained similar – although organisations were slightly less up-beat in 2022 about increasing levels of partnership activities.

Table 2.1 **Changing expectations about partnership working** (England and Wales 2019 and 2022)

	All TSOs		*TSOs which work in partnership*	
	2019	**2022**	**2019**	**2022**
Increase significantly	6.0	6.0	7.5	7.9
Increase	33.6	29.2	42.1	38.4
Remain similar	37.3	38.0	46.7	50.0
Decrease	2.2	1.9	2.8	2.4
Decrease significantly	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.2
Not applicable (i.e. not working in partnership)	20.1	24.1		
N=	4,001	5,940	3,197	4,510

Figure 2.9 compares expectations by size of TSOs in 2022. The results are revealing because it is shown that micro and small organisations have much lower expectations about partnership working increasing than bigger organisations. From an interpretative point of view, it cannot be known if these expectations are fairly 'normal' or not. Consequently, Figure 2.9 compares expectations in 2019 with 2022.

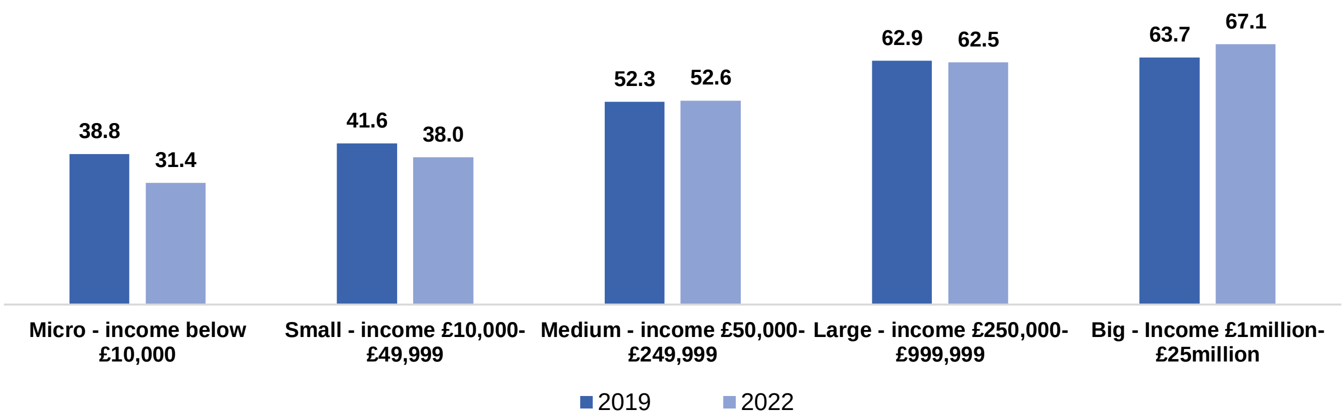
Figure 2.9 **Expectations about partnership working in the next two years**
(England and Wales, n= 5,830)



When comparing expectations between 2019 with 2022, it might be expected that attitudes would vary due to different pre and post Covid-19 working environments. Up until 2019, partnership dynamics had been fairly consistent for a number of years. But between 2020 and 2022 the Coronavirus pandemic turned many aspects of sector practices upside down.

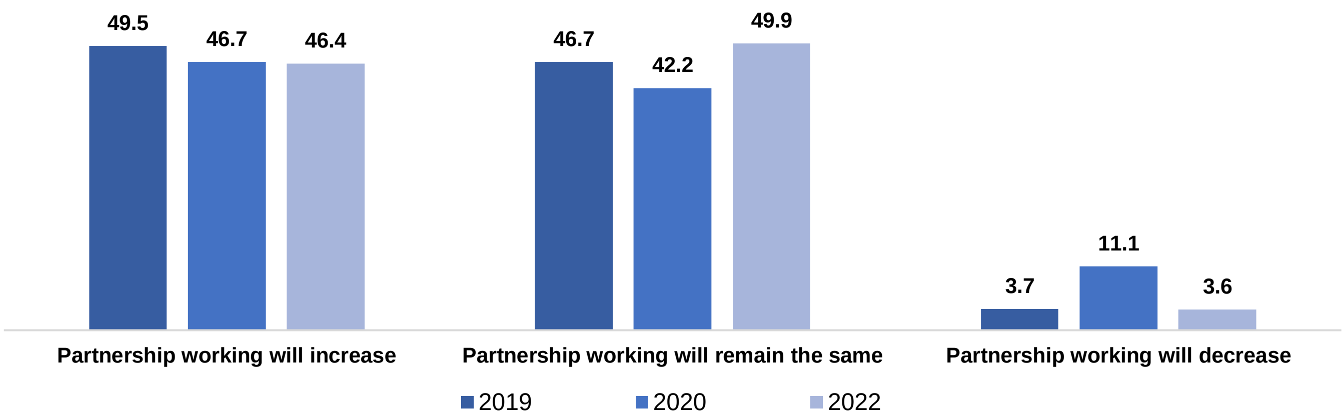
But data presented in Figure 2.10 indicate that expectations remained remarkably similar in 2019 and 2022 for medium and large TSOs. Fewer micro and small organisations felt that partnership working would increase in 2022 than in 2019.

Figure 2.10 **TSOs expecting that partnership working will increase in the next two years**
(England and Wales 2019 and 2022)



The above analysis shows that sector opinion on partnership working has remained remarkably consistent, even after the challenging situation many organisations faced during the pandemic. As shown in Figure 2.11, in the depths of the Coronavirus pandemic (although this was a smaller-scale interim survey[9]), sector opinion on future partnership working did not collapse.

Figure 2.11 **Changing expectations about partnership working before, during and after the Coronavirus pandemic**
(England and Wales, 2019 n=4,083, 2020 n=360, 2022 n=5,985)



[9] See: *Third Sector Trends Covid-19 impact survey* (2020) Newcastle upon Tyne, Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, https://www.stchads.ac.uk/research/research-news/charity-leaders-confidence-about-the-future-is-plummeting/.

Section 3

Relationships with the private sector

3.1 Defining relationships with the private sector[10]

Previous research on the relationship between business and civil society has tended to be concerned with the 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) activities of big business. This spotlight on CSR is explicable because it often involves generously funded programmes which capture media, research and political attention.

CSR by big business certainly packs a punch financially. As the Directory of Social Change's *Guide to UK Company Giving 2021* shows, the ten largest corporate contributors dispensed £295 million – 61% of the £483 million given by 235 businesses.[11]

The financial contribution of big companies should be recognised. But, as shown in Table 3.1 the issue must be kept in proportion – big companies represent just 0.1% of the business population. Consequently, debates about the contribution of the private sector to civil society must be widened to include smaller locally-based businesses that contribute to social wellbeing in financial or other ways.

Table 3.1 **Business population, employment and turnover, England and Wales 2020**[12]

	Number of businesses	**% of businesses**	**Number of employees**	**% of employees**	**Turnover (£ millions)**	**% of turnover**
Micro businesses with no employees	4,181,675	76.6	4,534,000	17.8	289,594	7.2
Micro businesses (1-9 employees)	1,049,940	19.2	3,790,000	14.9	571,865	14.1
Small businesses (10-49 employees)	190,895	3.5	3,729,000	14.7	599,466	14.8
Medium businesses (50-259 employees)	32,590	0.6	3,187,000	12.5	640,321	15.8
Large businesses (250 plus employees	7,165	0.1	10,170,000	40.0	1,946,672	48.1
Totals	5,462,265	100	25,410,000	100.0	4,047,918	100.0

In 2019, the Federation of Small Business (FSB) published its *Small Business, Big Heart* report to draw attention to the contribution of smaller firms to civil society. Based on 1,876 membership survey responses. The report shows that 80% of small businesses made a contribution to their local community in the previous three years and about three quarters of these firms supported local charities.

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[10] This sub-section is adapted from a report for the Law Family Commission on Civil Society using Third Sector Trends 2019 data: Chapman, T. (2021) *Going the extra mile: how businesses work with the social sector,* London: Pro Bono Economics: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353379534_Going_the_extra_mile_how_businesses_support_the_third_sector_in_England_and_Wales.

[11] Pembridge, I, et al. (2021) *The guide to UK company giving* (13th edition), London: Directory of Social Change.

[12] Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (2020) *Business population estimates for the UK and the regions 2020*, London: OGL, Extracted from Tables 20 and 21, 7th April 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923565/2020_Business_Population_Estimates_for_the_UK_and_regions_Statistical_Release.pdf.

According to the FSB, support provided by small businesses is not necessarily financial, but includes employee volunteering, pro bono work or in-kind support. For example, 27% business owners stated that they hold a position in the community in conjunction with running their business and 11% say they are community volunteers themselves.

The FSB report is concerned with direct support offered by small businesses. But this may under-estimate their overall contribution. Business owners often support the community in other ways, by making philanthropic donations to, for example, community foundations or via intermediary organisations such as local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs or Freemasons.[13]

3.2 Support from local and national businesses

In 2022, Third Sector Trends introduced a supplementary question on relationships with business to find out more about the balance between the contribution of national and local businesses. The data show that 54 per cent of TSOs have relationships with businesses. Amongst these organisations, 69 per cent only have a relationship with local businesses while 8 per cent only have a relationship with national businesses:

Nearly a quarter (23%) of TSOs have relationships with both local and national businesses. This should not be a surprise. A local charity may well, for example, get in-kind support from an independent florists and from a neighbourhood supermarket which is part of a national chain.

The size of Third Sector organisations has a bearing upon relationships with national and local businesses (Figure 3.1). A large majority micro and smaller TSOs (77%-78%) work only with local businesses compared with half of the biggest organisations. Even amongst the biggest TSOs, only 12 per cent work exclusively with national businesses – although half of the biggest TSOs working with the private sector have a relationship with big business.

[13] Chambers of Commerce tend to work autonomously on issues surrounding social and community impact. See for example: an example of a campaign to encourage local businesses to 'make a pledge' to commit to their social responsibilities in North and West Yorkshire: https://www.wnychamber.co.uk/news/chamber-launches-businesses-pledge-to-encourage-social-impact/; and the commitment of Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce to join Social Value UK to improve their approach to social impact and support other Chambers to do so. For more detail on the purpose, operation and contribution of Rotary Clubs to charitable issues, see: https://www.rotary.org/en/why-rotary-best-steward-your-money. A recent Freemasons report states that over 415 grants were given to charities in the previous financial year valued at £42 million: https://impact.mcf.org.uk/2020/.

Figure 3.1 **Relationships with local and national private sector businesses**
(England and Wales 2022, 3,212 of 5,959 respondents had a business relationship)

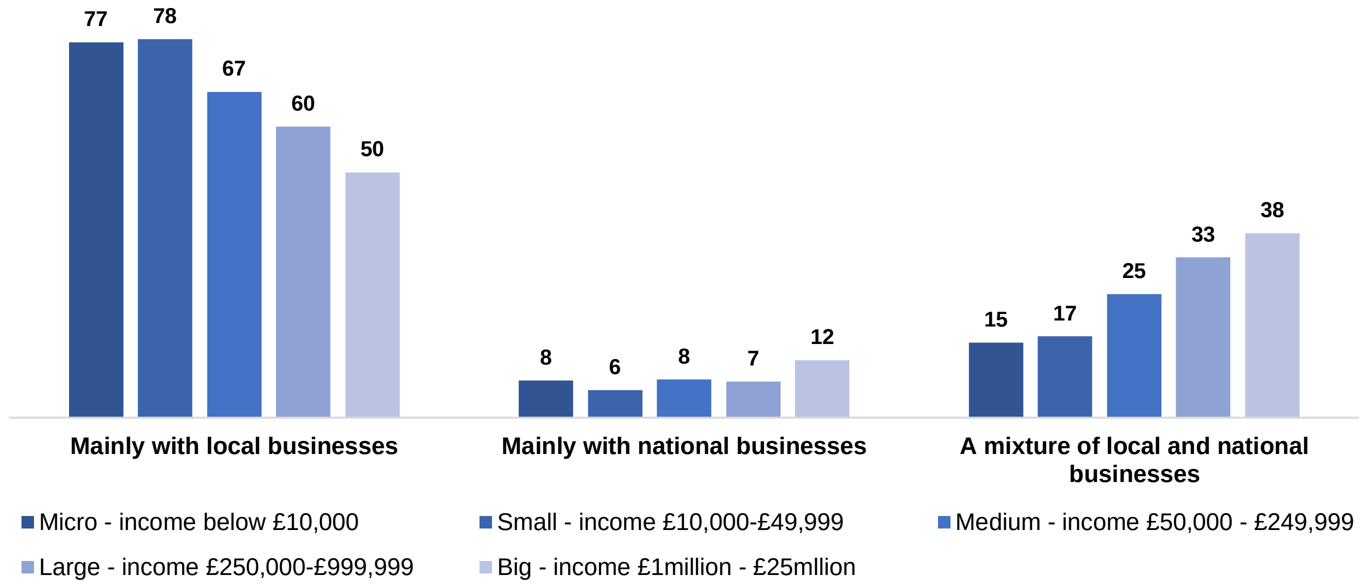


Figure 3.2 shows area variations in the types of businesses TSOs work with. TSOs based in the most affluent areas are more likely to work exclusively with local businesses. In the poorest areas, TSOs are most likely to work with a mix of local and national businesses.

The urban characteristics of areas where TSOs are based has an effect upon the kinds of businesses they work with (Figure 3.3). In town and country areas, organisations are more likely to work just with local businesses (76%). In metropolitan areas 28 per cent of TSOs work with a mix of local and national businesses.

Figure 3.2 **Types of businesses supporting TSOs based in rich and poor areas** (England and Wales 2022, 3,174 of 5,883 respondents work with business)

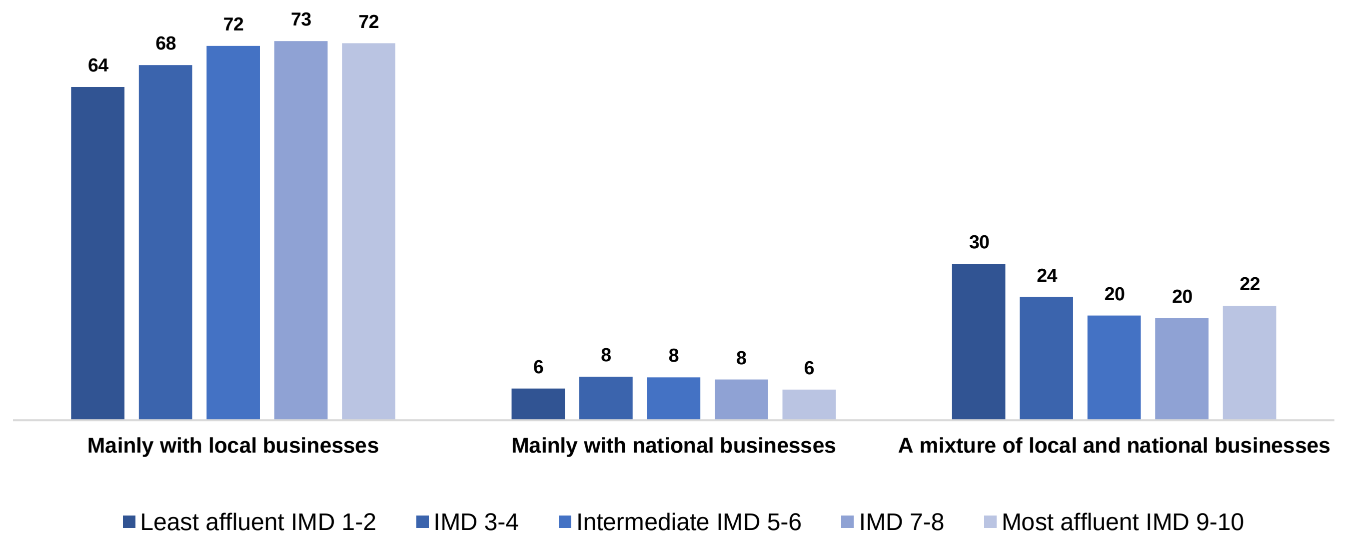
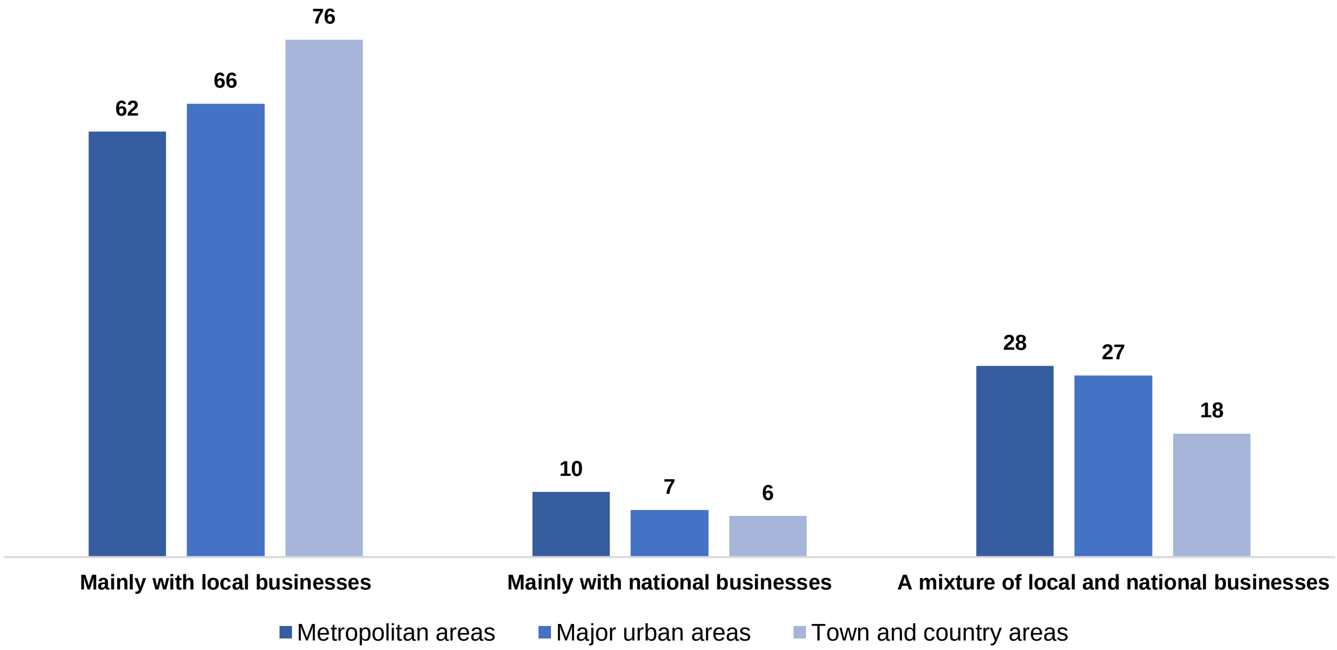


Figure 3.3 **Relationships with business types by urban characteristics of areas where TSOs are based**
(England and Wales 2022, 3,226 of 5,978 respondents work with business)



3.3 Types of business support

Private sector businesses support the Third Sector in many ways.[14] Figure 3.4 shows how many TSOs in England and Wales get business support and how much it is valued.

- ***Financial support***: money given to TSOs in various ways such as sponsorship of events, one-off financial contributions to support projects and initiatives, more regularised payments to sustain activities, and so on. About half of TSOs get some financial support and about a quarter of organisations feel that this is of great importance to them.
- ***In-kind support***: use of facilities (such as meeting rooms, minibuses, plant or studios), gifts of new, used or surplus goods (such as DIY products, food and drink, stationary, computing equipment) and free services (such as printing leaflets, catering services). In-kind support from business is received by just under half of organisations – about a third of which feel that this is of great importance to them.
- ***Employee supported volunteers***: where companies allocate paid time for their employees to undertake tasks for TSOs on an occasional or regularised basis – but not necessarily using their work-related skills. Volunteering activities may include, for example, decorating a community centre, fundraising, environmental work, marshalling at events and so on. Only a third of TSOs get support from employee volunteers – 15 per cent of which feel that it is of great importance to them.

[14] A literature review on these kinds of support from business is provided in *Going the Extra Mile*, see Chapter 1, *ibid.* *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353379534_Going_the_extra_mile_how_businesses_support_the_third_sector_in_England_and_Wales* . A more textured understanding of the kinds of support given and how it is valued was gained from qualitative interviews in the TSO50 study and other directly related projects, see: https://www.stchads.ac.uk/uncategorised/going-the-distance-how-third-sector-organisations-work-through-turbulent-times/ and https://www.stchads.ac.uk/research/research-news/trading-interactions-amongst-community-businesses-bradford-hartlepool-middlesbrough/.

- ***Pro bono expert advice***: where business owners, partners or qualified employees provide unpaid professional or technical support to TSOs with, for example, book-keeping and accountancy, architectural and design services, mentoring, business and management consultancy, public relations and media support, amongst other things. Well over a third of organisations receive pro bono support from business (38%) - 16 per cent of which think this is of great importance.

Figure 3.4 **How types of business support are valued by TSOs**
(England and Wales 2022, average n=5,948)

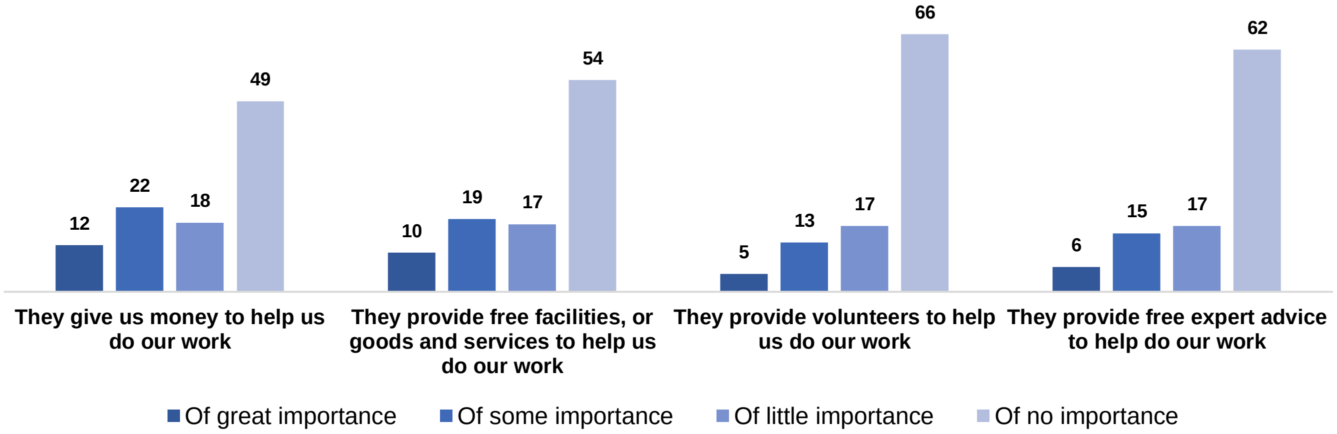


Figure 3.5 (over page) shows that since the pandemic, there has been an overall decline in all types of business support. But this decline is not as severe as may have been expected given the difficult conditions businesses and TSOs have been working under over the last two years. In-kind support has decreased the most (i.e. the provision of free facilities, or goods and services).

The percentages of TSOs which highly value contributions from local businesses and national businesses are shown in Figure 3.6. It is clear that organisations receiving assistance from national business tend to value this support more highly than those which get support from local businesses (which is likely to be due to the scale of support provided in CSR programmes). But the percentage of TSOs which get support from national businesses is much lower (31%) than those organisations receiving from local businesses (93%).

Figure 3.6 **Percentage of organisations which highly value support from local and national businesses**
(England and Wales 2022, n=3,205 excludes TSOs which do not get support from business)

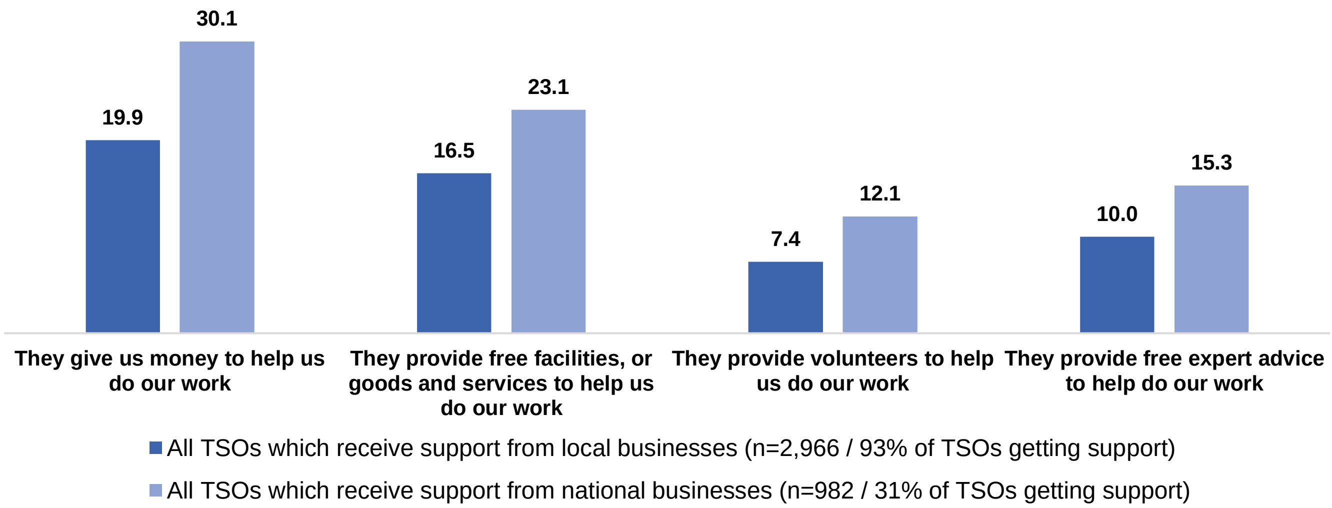
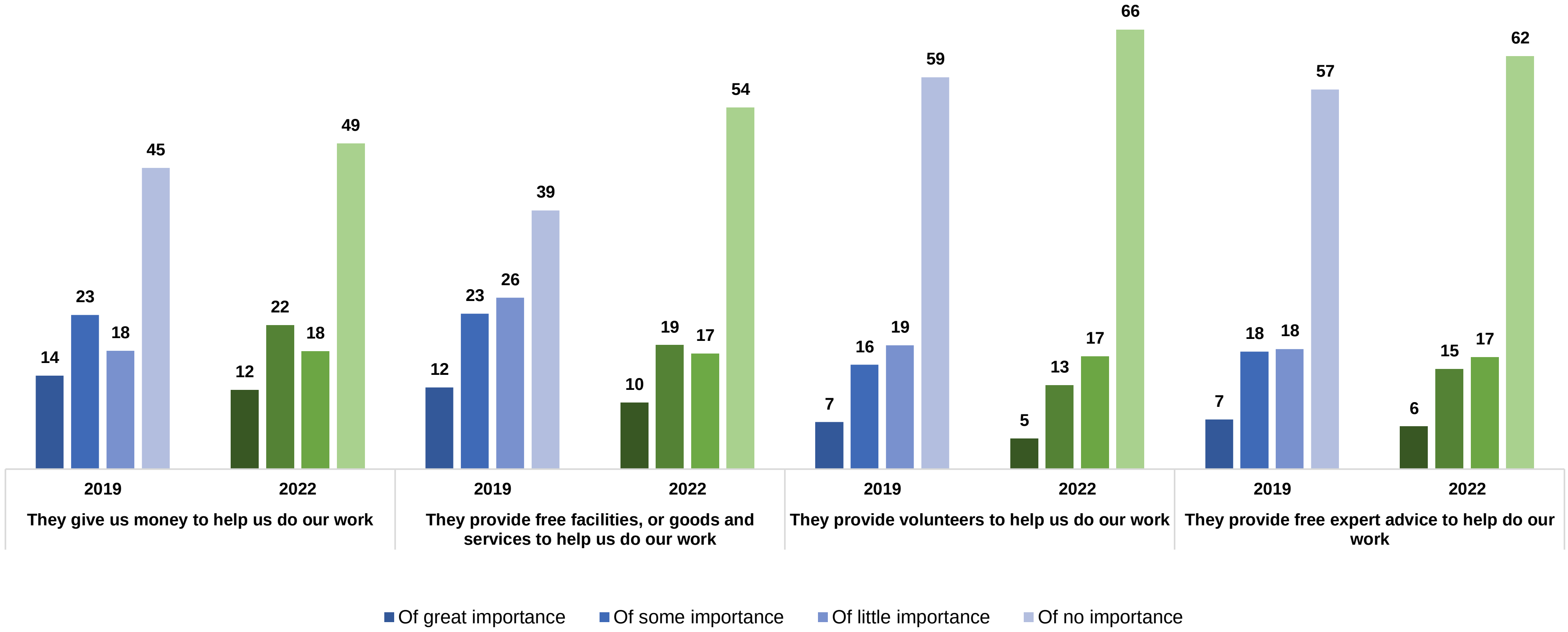


Figure 3.5 **Comparative percentages of TSOs valuing support from business: 2019 and 2022**
(England and Wales, 2019 =n=4.083, 2022 n=5,948)



3.4 Organisational and area variations

The range, extent and value of business support varies by size of TSOs (Figure 3.7). The biggest organisations are twice as likely to value financial support (53%) as micro organisations (23%). In-kind support is also provided to a larger proportion of big organisations (43%) than micro TSOs (22%).

Employee volunteer support is valued by more than three times as many big TSOs (34%) than the smallest organisations (10%). The provision of pro bono advice and support, similarly, is valued by few micro organisations (13%) but many bigger TSOs (36%).

Older organisations are much less likely to receive support from business. About half as many older organisations get each kind of support (Figure 3.8). It is not known whether this is because they are not offered support or that they choose not to seek it.

Figure 3.7 **Variations in support from business by TSO size**
(England and Wales 2022, percentage of all TSOs which state that support is of 'some imporance' or 'of great importance', average n=5,906)

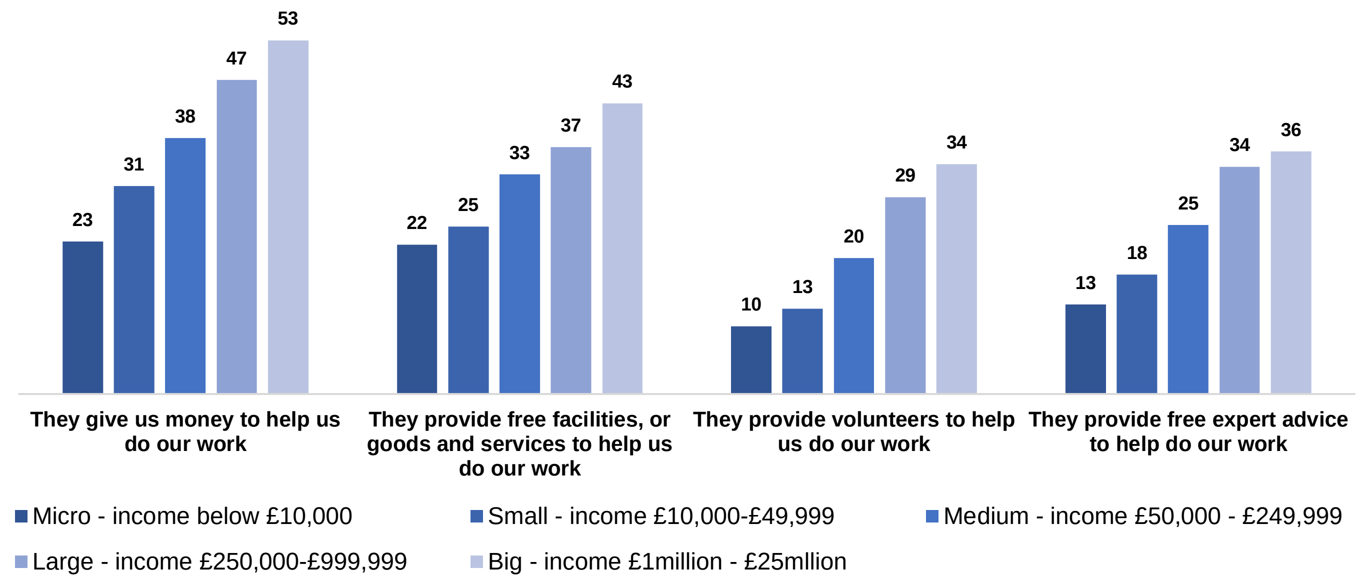
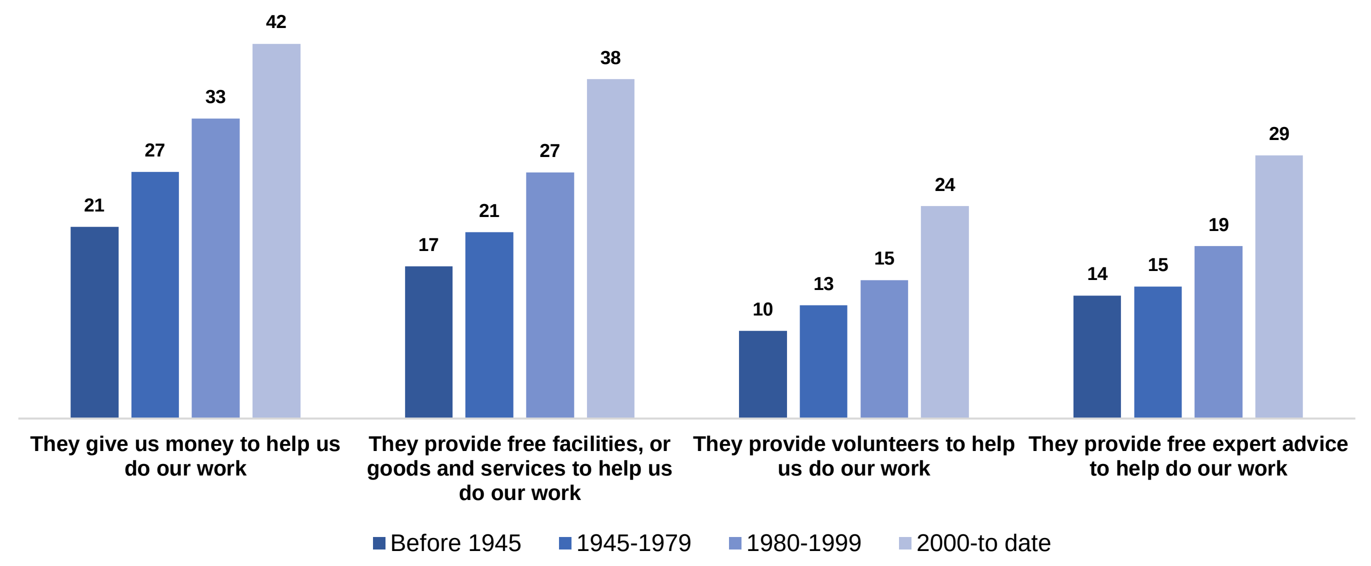


Figure 3.8 **Variations in support from business by the age of TSOs**
(England and Wales 2022, percentage of all TSOs which state that support is of 'some imporance' or 'of great importance', average n=5,904)



The value of business support varies by the type of areas within which TSOs are based. As shown in Figure 3.9, organisations based in the poorest areas are more likely to value all types of support from business than in the most affluent areas. Indeed, many more TSOs value financial, employee volunteer and pro bono support if they are located in the poorest areas compared with the most affluent. Variations in the receipt of in-kind support are less pronounced but still clear.

Business support of all kinds tends to be valued most highly in metropolitan districts (Figure 3.10). It is not known whether business density is the source of such variations. Data for English regions and Wales are provided in Figure 3.11(a) and 3.11(b). Variations are both complex and pronounced, which means that interpretation will depend upon further analysis to take into account local circumstances at a later date.

Figure 3.9 **Variations in support from business by area affluence**
(England and Wales 2022, percentage of TSOs which state that support is of 'some importance' or 'of great importance', average n=5,828)

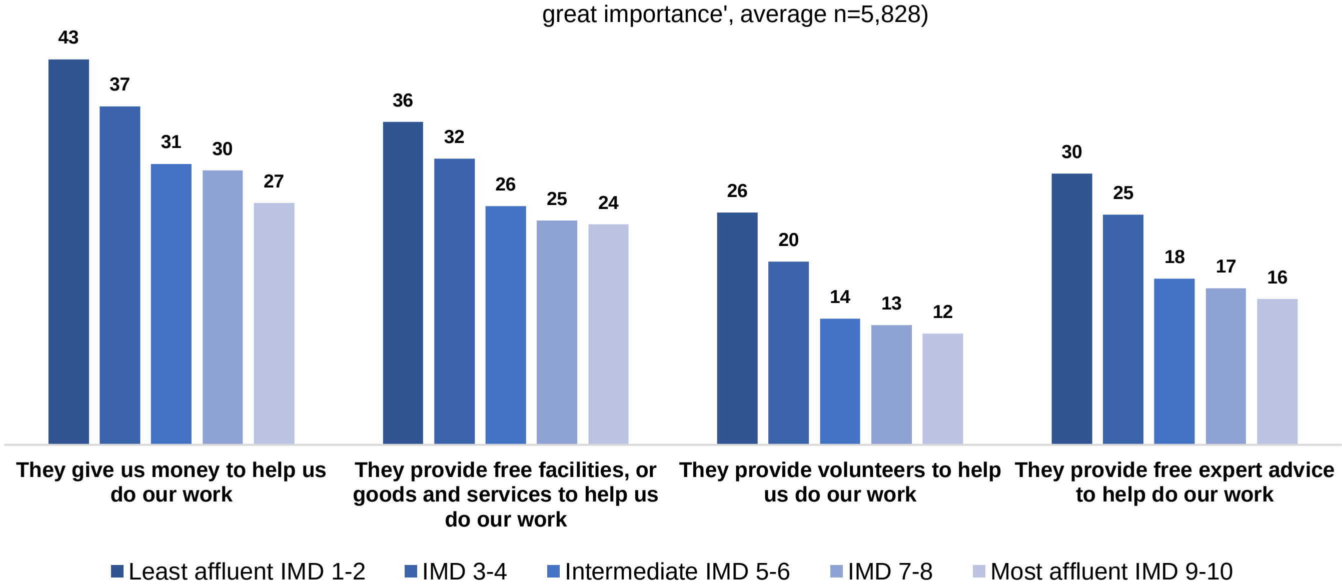


Figure 3.10 **Variations in support from business by urban characteristics**
(England and Wales 2022, percentage of TSOs which state that support is of 'some importance' or 'of great importance', average n=5,920)

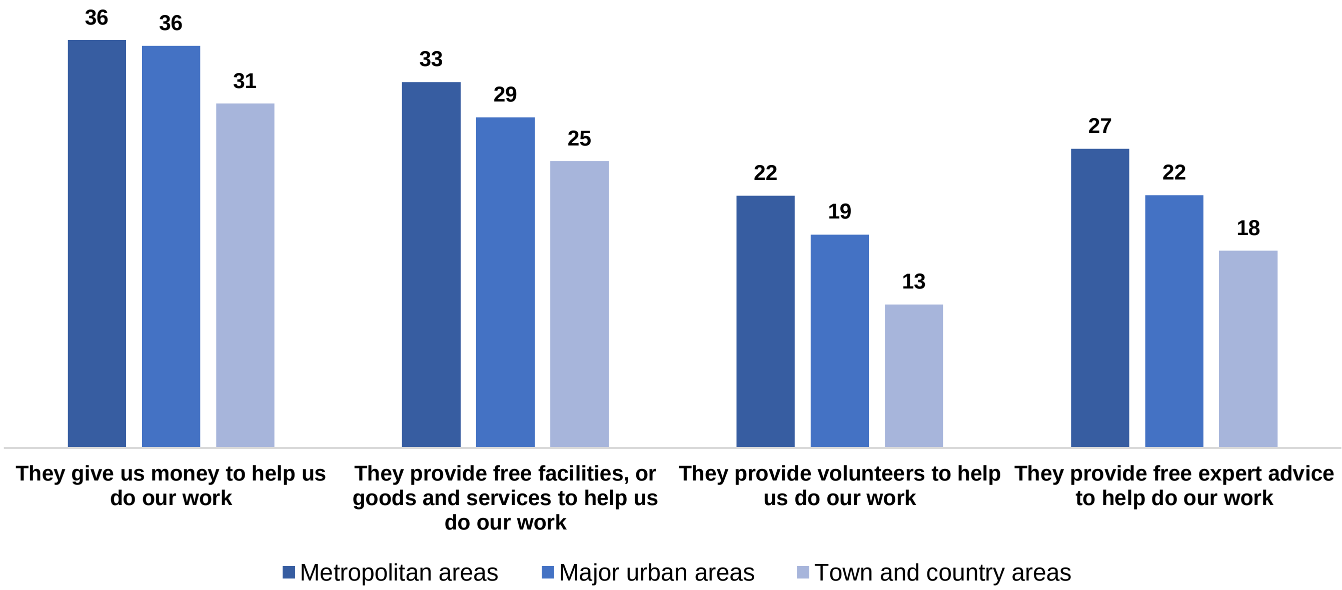


Figure 3.11(a) **Variations in business support for TSOs in English regions and Wales**

(England and Wales 2022, percentage of TSOs which state that support is of 'some importance' or 'of great importance', average n n=5,943)

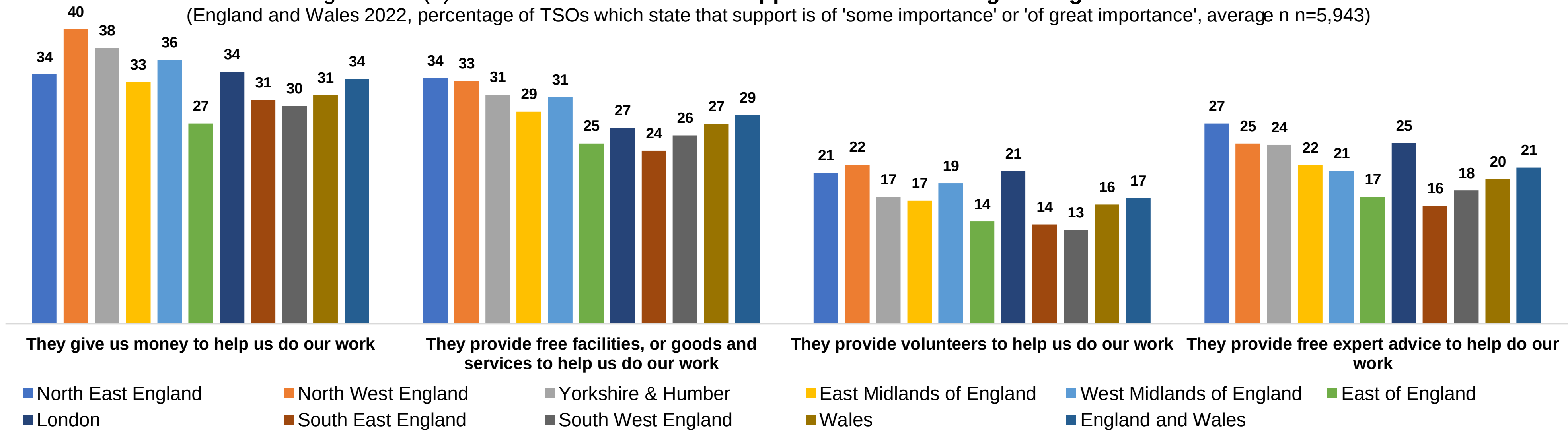
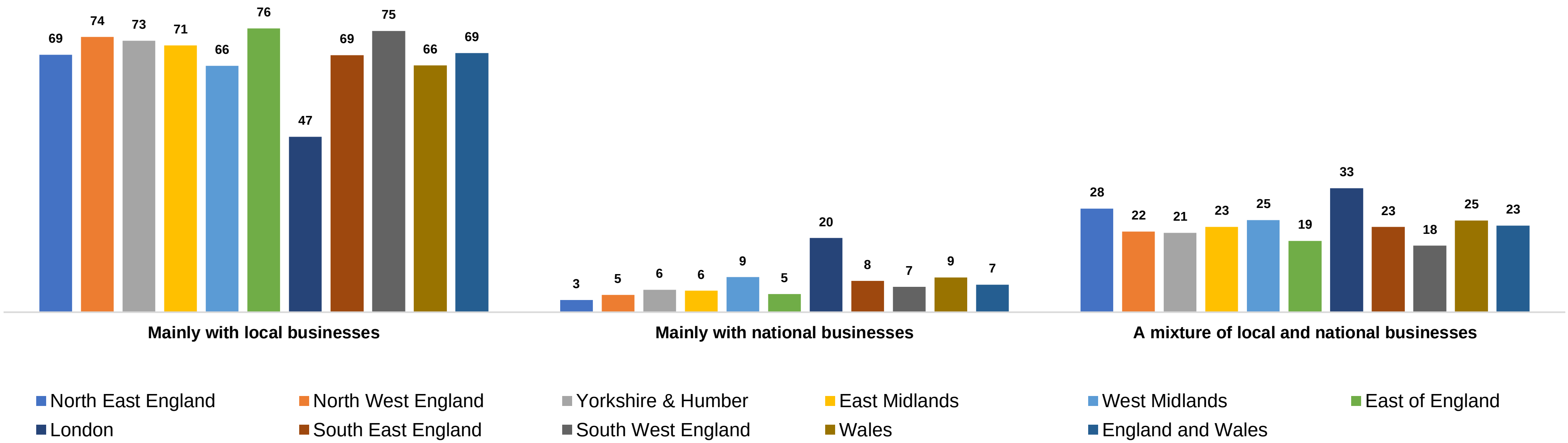


Figure 3.11(b) **Variations in support from local and national businesess for TSOs in English regions and Wales**

(England and Wales 2022, percentage of all TSOs which state that support is of 'some importance' or 'of great importance', average n=3,237)



3.5 Changing patterns of support from business

Over the last two years, the Coronavirus pandemic has seriously affected the activities of business and Third Sector organisations. This has resulted in a decline in provision and/or demand for all types of business support since 2019 for organisations of all sizes – though not as much as may have been expected. The biggest organisations are the most likely to have seen business support reduce (see Figures 3.12(a) to 3.12(d).

Figure 3.12(a) **Changing patterns of business support by TSO size: financial support** (Pecentage of all TSOs which state that suport from business is of 'some' or 'great' importance. England and Wales: average responses all charts 2019 n=3,954, 2022 n=5,92

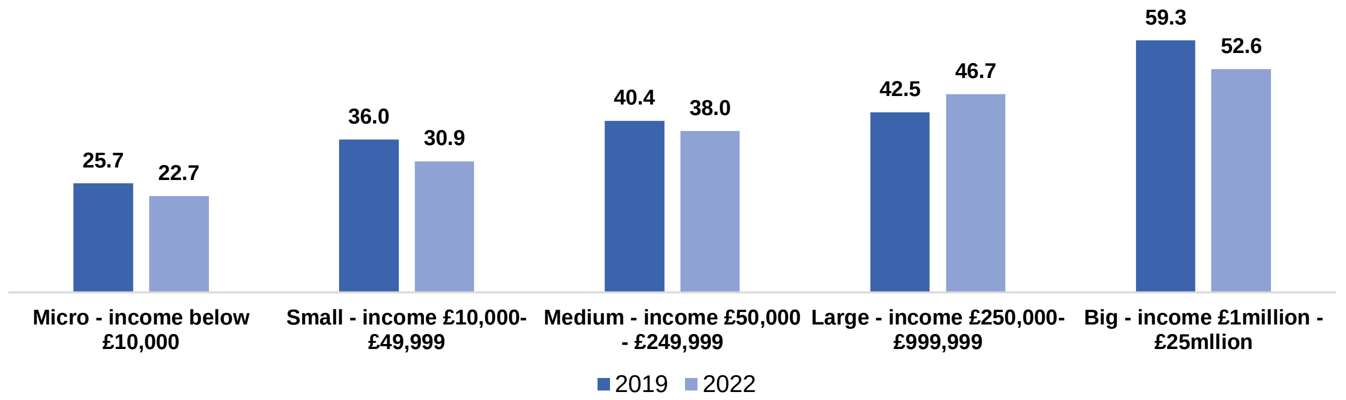


Figure 3.12(b) **Changing patterns of business support by TSO size: in-kind support**

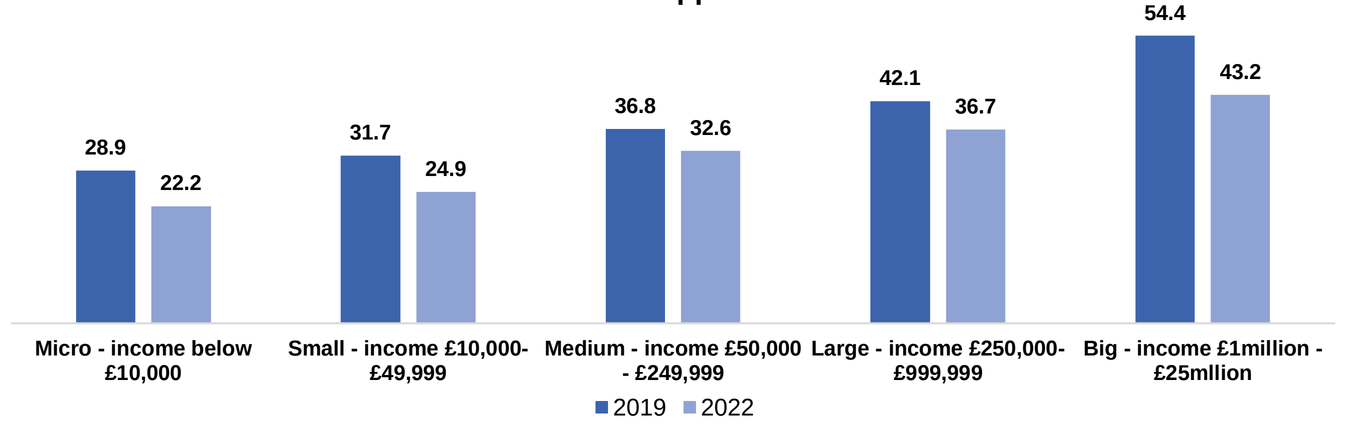


Figure 3.12(c) **Changing patterns of business support by TSO size: employee volunteer support**

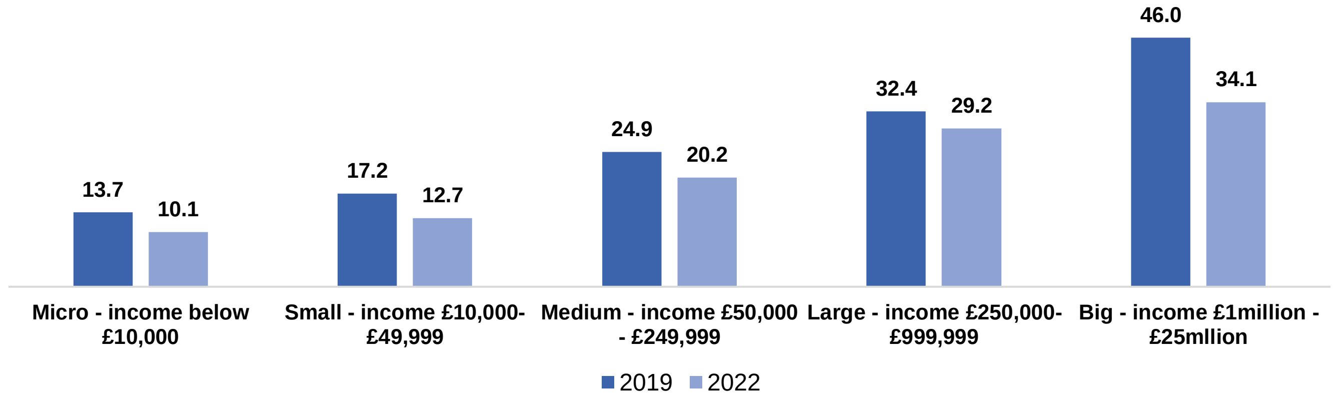
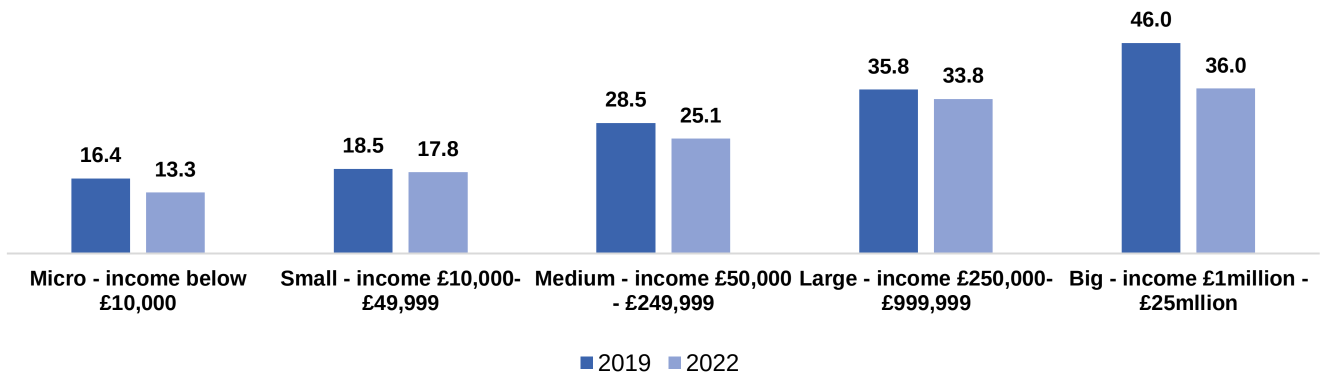


Figure 3.12(d) **Changing patterns of business support by TSO size: pro bono support**



Expectations about the level of support from private sector businesses in the next two years are shown from Third Sector Trends surveys in 2016, 2019 and 2022 (Figure 3.13). The data reveal that expectations about support from business has declined substantailly over the years - falling from 46 per cent in 2016 to 25 per cent in 2022.

In 2022, larger organisations have higher expectations about increasing support from business (Figure 3.14). Three times as many big TSOs expect that support will increase (31%) than micro organisations (9%). Smaller organisations have lower expectations of or need for business support (60% micro and 49% small TSOs) than large and the biggest organisations (29%-30%).

Regional expectations are shown in Figure 3.15 but further analysis is required to interpret these data, It is nevertheless worth noting that confidence in London is a great deal higher than elsewhere. Confidence is also quite high in Northern England but at its lowest in Wales.

Figure 3.13 **Expectations about getting support from business in the next two years** (North of England only 2016, England and Wales 2019 and 2022)

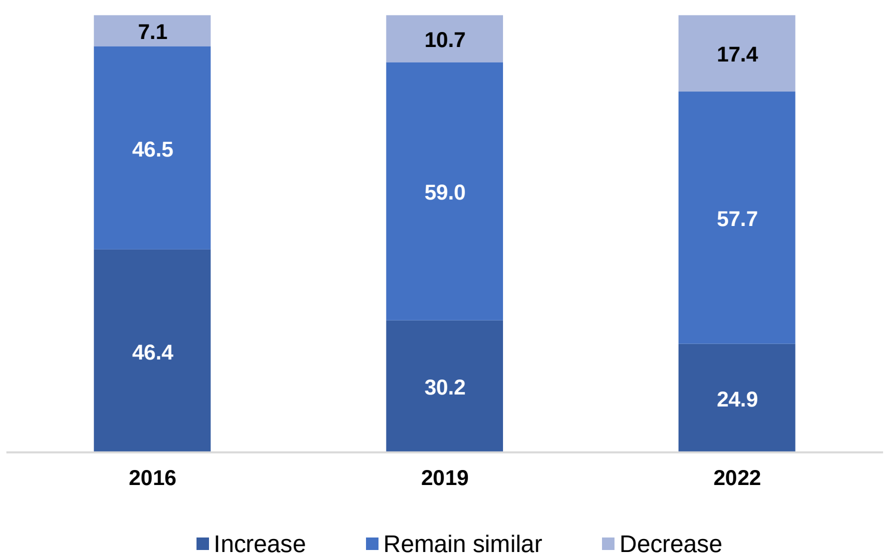


Figure 3.14 **Expectations about working with private sector businesses in the next two years by organisation size**
(England and Wales 2022, n=5,436)

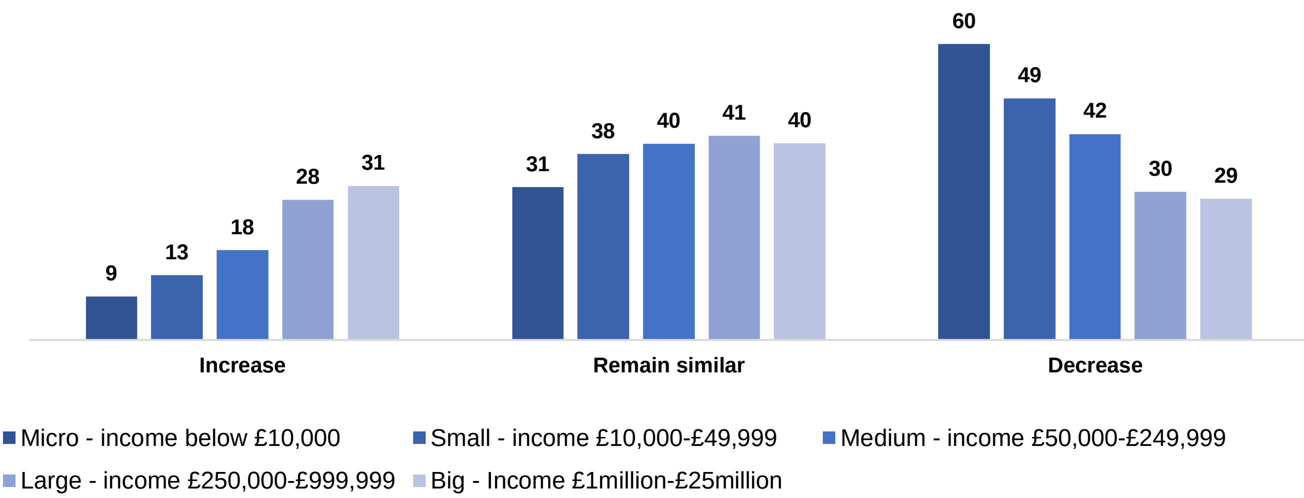
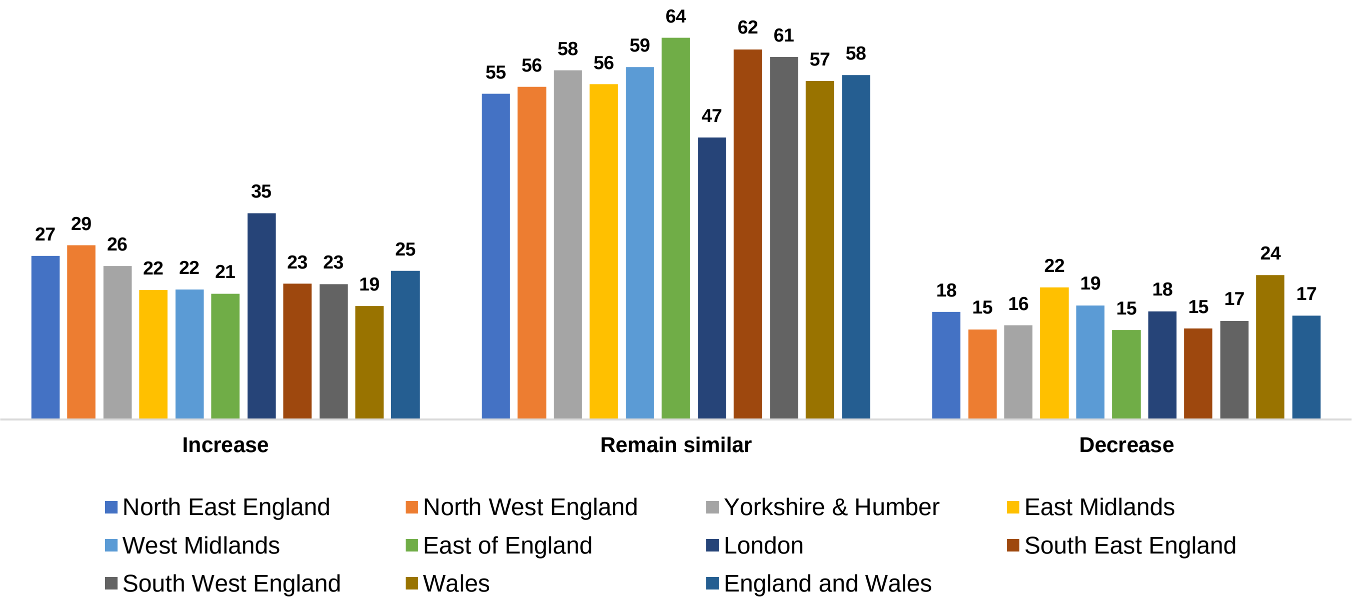


Figure 3.15 **Expectations about working with private sector businesses in the next two years in English regions and Wales**
(England and Wales 2022, n=3,508, excludes TSOs not currently receiving business support)



While the above analysis is informative in many ways, it is clear that the absence of knowledge about Third Sector 'demand' for business support limits understanding. An attempt will be made to rectify this gap in our knowledge in the next round of the study in 2025.

Section 4

Relationships with the public sector

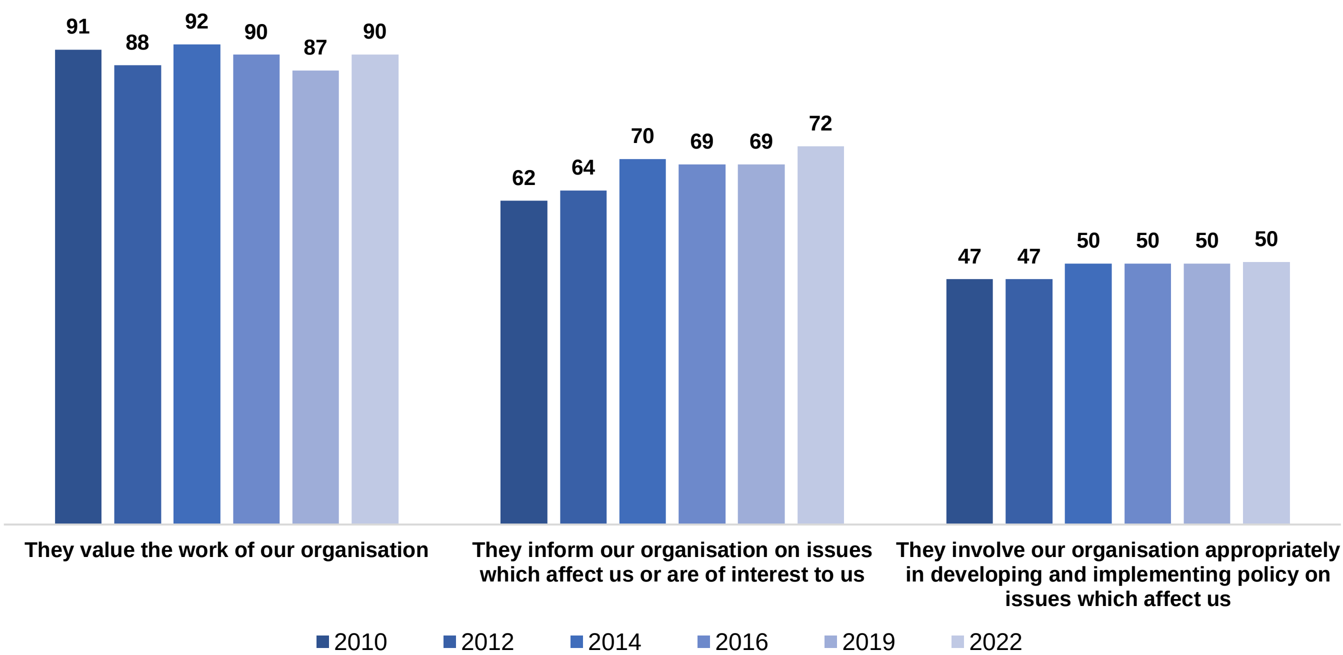
4.1 Continuity in the quality of relationships

Years of government austerity policies have decimated many local authority budgets. Pressure on NHS budgets in the face of an ageing population, diminished public health, rising costs and unmet patient demand has also been relentless.

In these circumstances, it might be expected that relationships with the Third Sector would have suffered.[15] But this is not the case. Since 2010, the vast majority of Third Sector organisations (TSOs) have felt that their work is valued by local public sector organisations (Figure 4.1).

TSOs are now more likely to feel that local public sector organisations keep them informed about issues affecting them than in 2010 (rising from 62% in 2010 to 72% in 2022). And while only about half of TSOs feel that their organisation is appropriately involved in developing and implementing policies that are relevant to them, this has remained unchanged since 2010.

Figure 4.1 **Relationships with local public sector organisations 2010-2022**
(Percentage of TSOs which 'agree' or 'strongly agree' - only includes organisations which have a relationship with the public sector)



[15] Given the generalised orientation of Third Sector Trends surveys, it is often left to the good sense of respondents to interpret broadly-based questions. 'Public sector organisations' is intended to embrace, primarily, local authorities and health authorities – but also include other organisations which have close relationships with the Third Sector such as police, fire, probation, educational, employment and social services that operate at the local level. Crucially, respondents are given the opportunity to state that they have no such relationships so as to isolate those TSOs which can have a viewpoint on public sector relationships.

4.2 Organisational and area variations

Figure 4.2 shows how opinion varies by size of organisations. In 2022 the biggest TSOs tended to have the most positive attitudes about engagement with the local public sector on all dimensions. But these attitudes vary by topic. For example, the biggest TSOs were much more likely to report that local public sector organisations came to them for help during the Coronavirus pandemic (80% of the biggest compared with just 36% of the smallest TSOs).

Bigger organisations were also much more likely to feel that they were well-informed, were involved in policy processes and that public sector agencies acted on their opinions. Irrespective of the size of TSOs, they nearly all felt that their work was valued by public sector agencies (rising from 87% of micro to 95% of the biggest organisations).

The age of organisations has little or no effect on opinions about working with the local public sector. The only exception is that more recently established TSOs were more likely to report that the local public sector came to them for help during the pandemic (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.2 **Relationships with the public sector by size of TSOs**
(Percentage of TSOs 'agree' or 'strongly agree' which have a relationship with the public sector, average n=5,923)

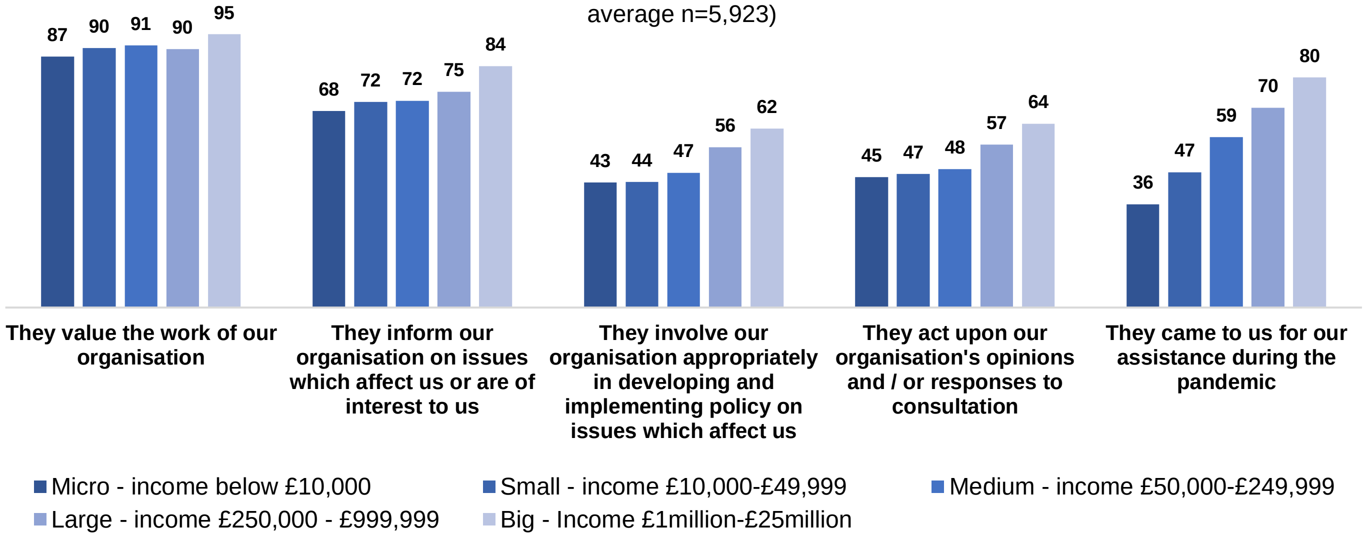
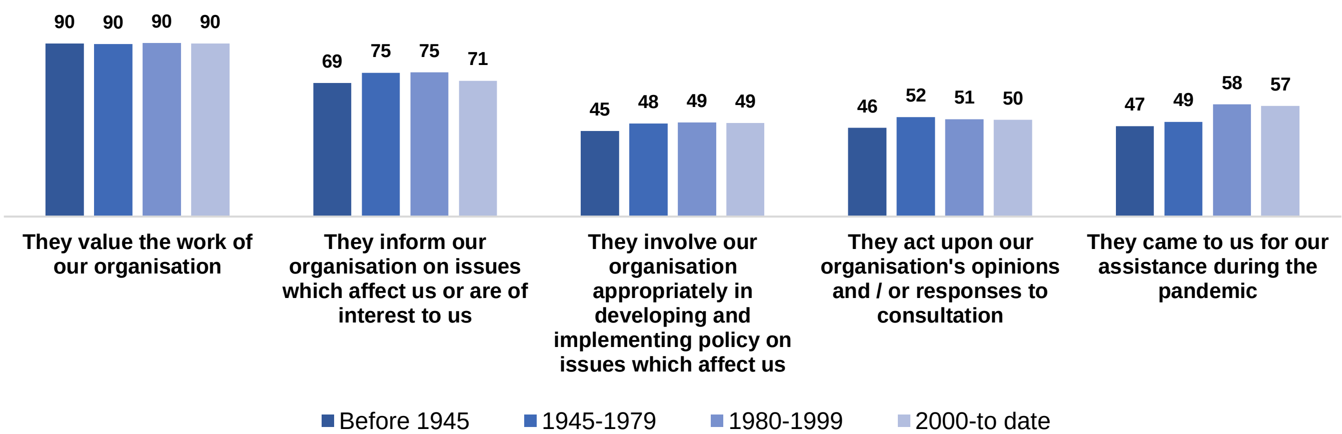


Figure 4.3 **Relationships with the public sector by age of TSOs**
(Percentage of TSOs 'agree' or 'strongly agree' which have a relationship with the public sector, average n=5,969)



Area variations are also limited, suggesting that local public sector organisations are adept at working well with the whole of the local Third Sector. There are some indications, though, that organisations in less affluent areas are more closely involved with local public sector agencies than in the most affluent areas. Public sector agencies were more likely to approach TSOs in the poorest areas during the Coronavirus pandemic (this is partly because there are more larger TSOs in such areas: see Figures 4.4 and 4.5).

Figure 4.4 **Relationships with the public sector by urban characteristics of areas where TSOs are based**

(Percentage of TSOs 'agree' or 'strongly agree' which have a relationship with the public sector, average n=5,943)

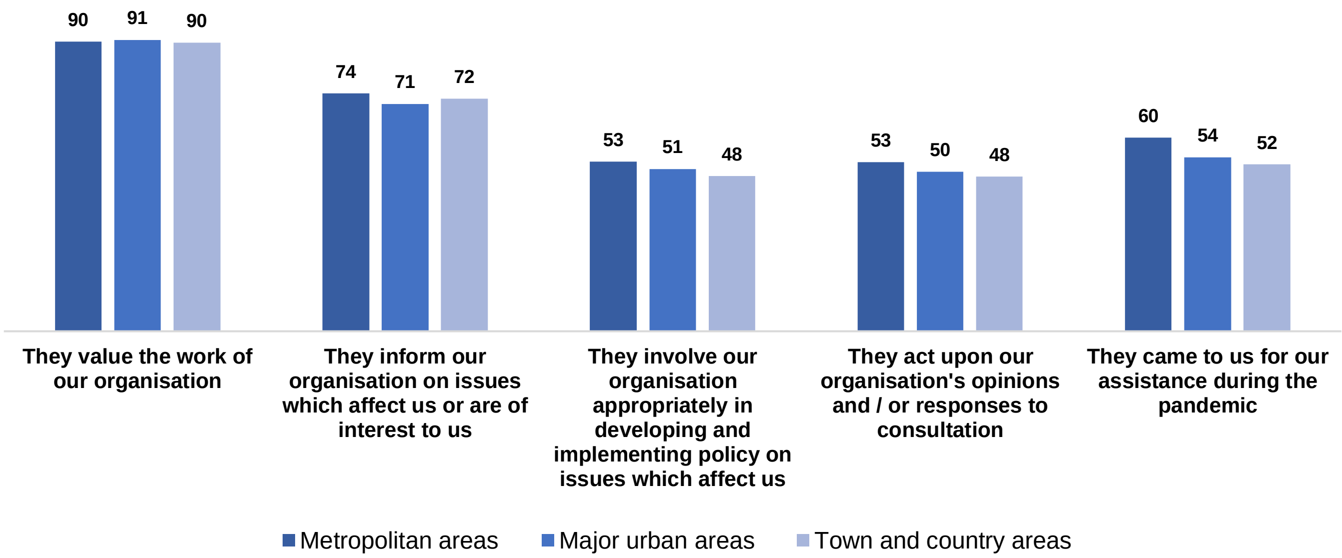
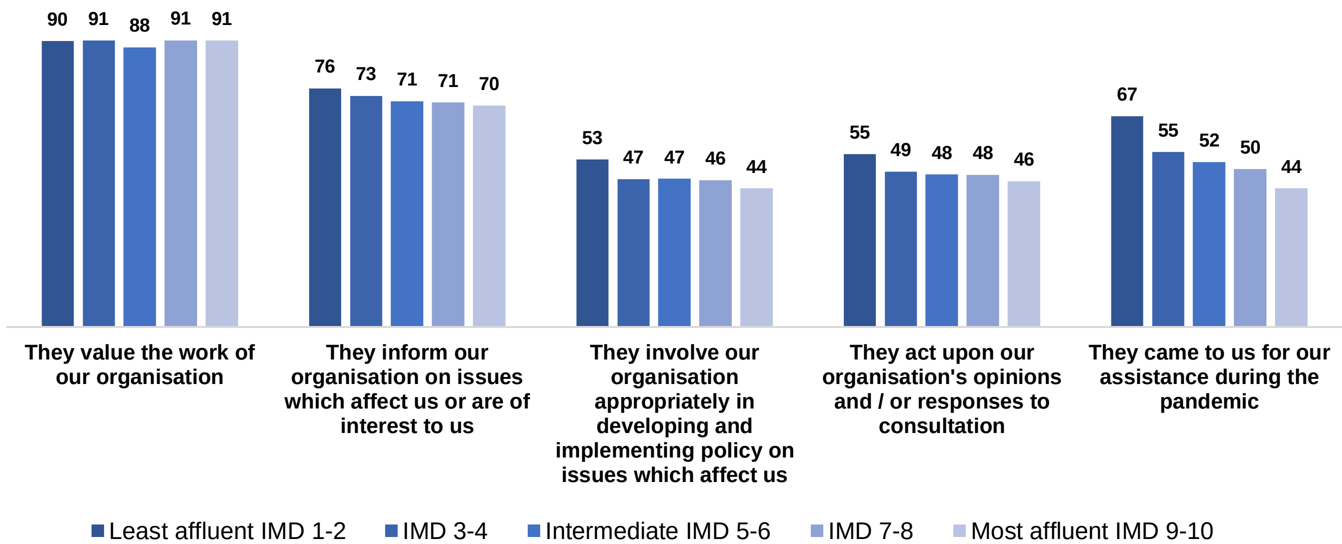


Figure 4.5 **Relationships with the public sector by affluence of area within which TSOs are based**

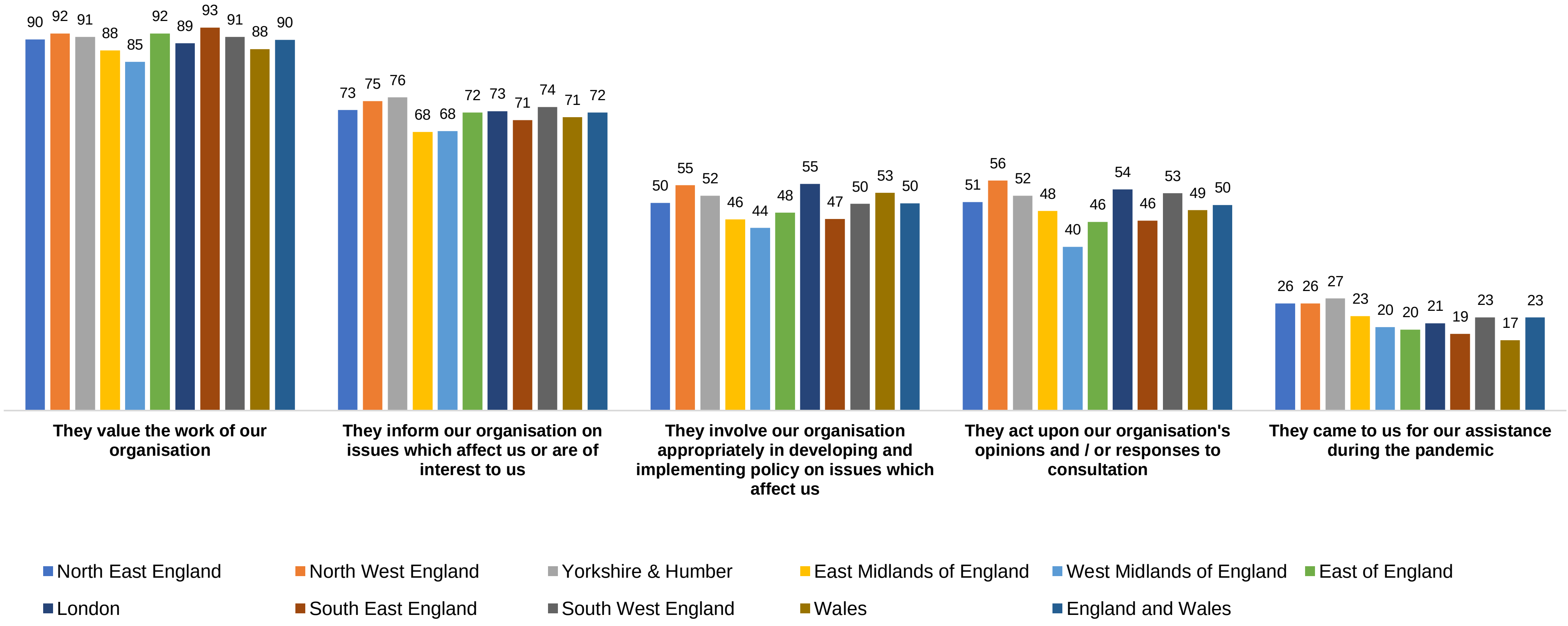
(Percentage of TSOs 'agree' or 'strongly agree' which have a relationship with the public sector, average n=5,849)



Regional variations are shown in Figure 4.6. More detailed sub-regional analysis would be required to interpret these data with confidence. This can be done at a later date if required.

Figure 4.6 **Relationships with the public sector by English regions and Wales**

(Percentage of TSOs 'agree' or 'strongly agree' which have a relationship with the public sector, average n=5,963)

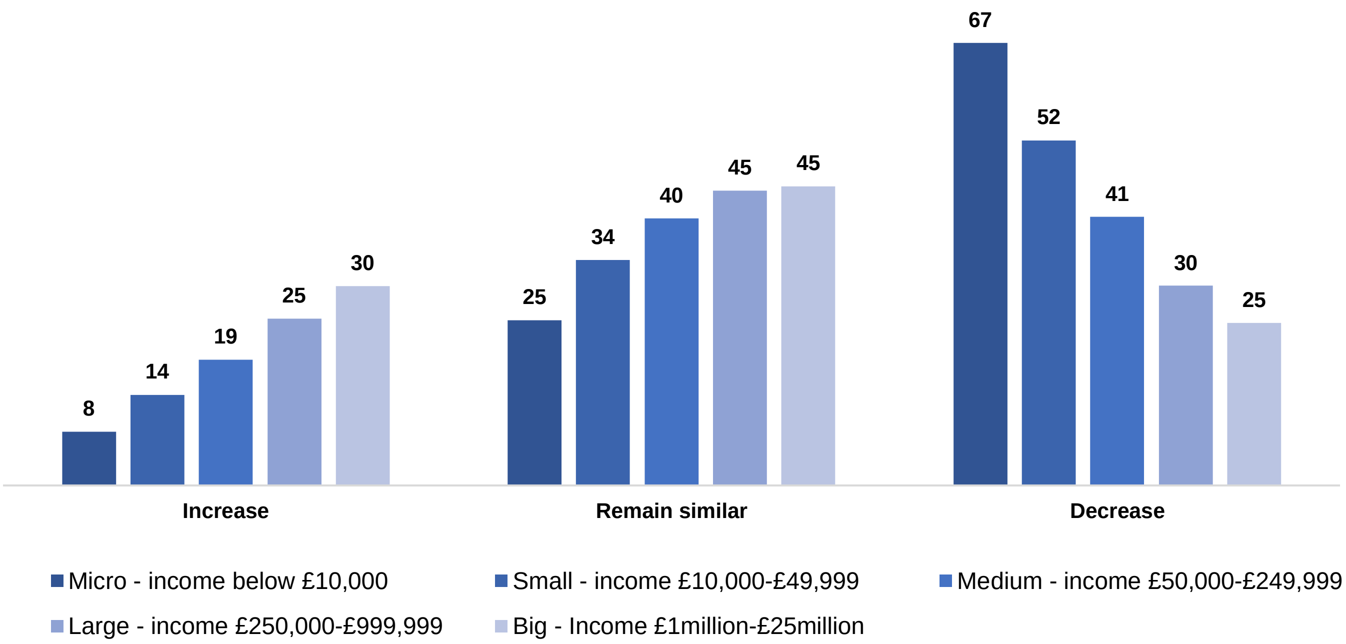


4.3 Expectations about statutory financing

In the current social and economic circumstances, it would be expected that Third Sector organisations may be down-beat in their expectations about future funding from statutory sources. Figure 4.7 compares attitudes by organisation size. These data refer to all types of statutory funding ranging from small local community grants to major public service delivery contracts.

It is surprising to note that nearly a third of the biggest TSOs remain optimistic that statutory funding will increase over the next two years. But this finding should be offset by the fact that 25 per cent of big organisations also expect income from statutory sources to decline. Smaller organisations are much more pessimistic in this respect. 67 per cent of micro organisations expect statutory income to fall and only 8 per cent think it will rise.

Figure 4.7 **Expectations about financial support from statutory sources over the next two years** (England and Wales 2022, n=5,200)



Current expectations about future levels of statutory funding are more optimistic than was the case in 2013, 2016 and 2019 (Figure 4.8). This suggests that the Third Sector feels that there has been something of a ‘thaw’ in government austerity policies. It remains to be seen whether this is true.

Optimism seems to be the highest in North of England regions and in London which, arguably, collectively face the biggest social challenges surrounding social and economic deprivation (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.8 **Expectations about financial support from statutory sources over the next two years: 2013 to 2022**
(North of England, 2013/14 and 2016, England and Wales 2019 and 2022)

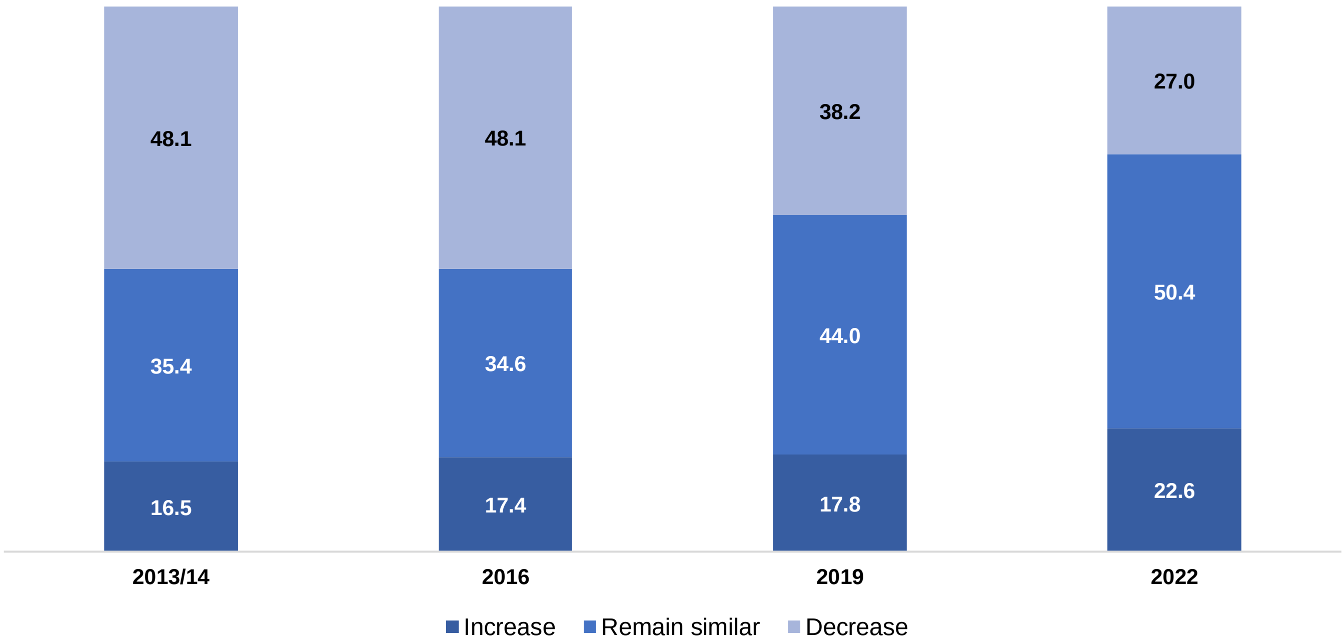
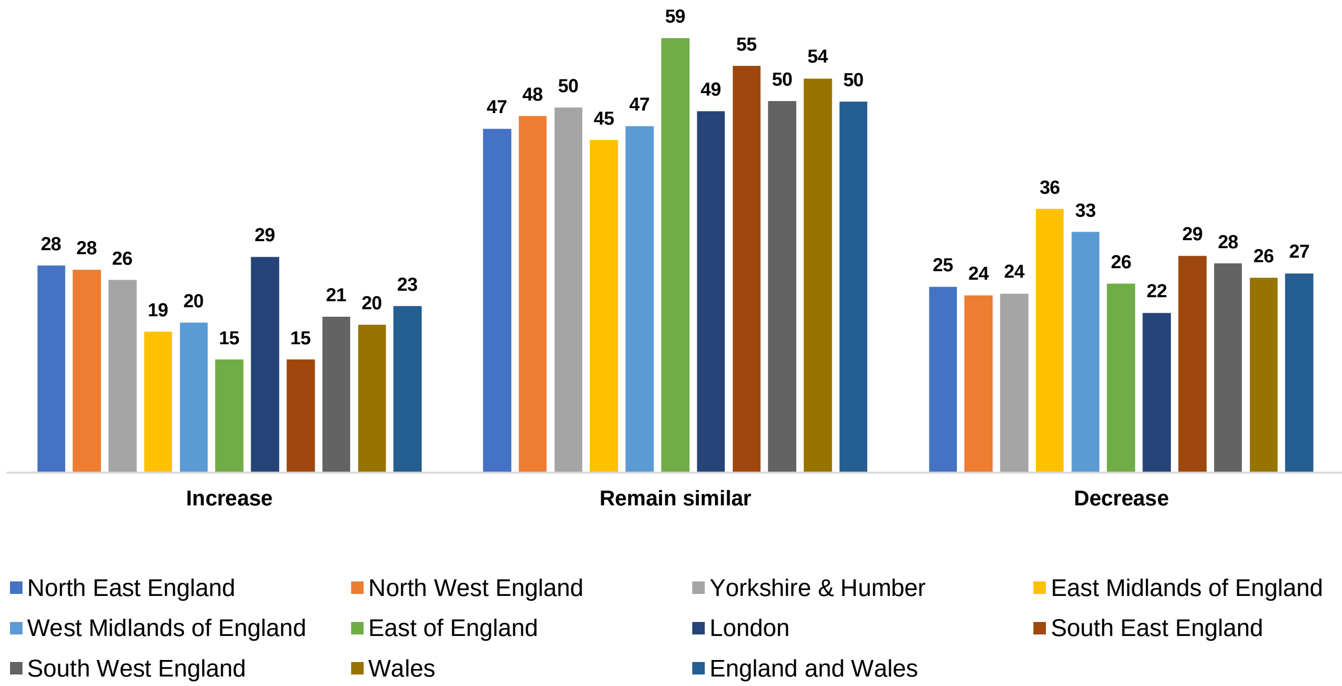


Figure 4.9 **Expectations about financial support from statutory sources over the next two years by English regions and Wales**
(England and Wales 2022, n=5,200)



Section 5

Influencing local social & public policy

5.1 Political and legal context

In government White Papers and major opposition parties' policy statements on social wellbeing, it has long-since been recognised that the local Third Sector makes a valuable contribution to local social wellbeing.[16]

Similarly, at government departmental level (especially in The Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government), it is often stipulated in policy statements that voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises play a vital part in the social welfare mix.

Policy statements often put strong emphasis on the crucial role that the local Third Sector plays in strengthening communities. While government shows its 'appreciation' of the sector's contribution, such statements are often appended with claims that more could be done to 'unleash' sector potential. Often such statements are appended with ambitions to deepen inter-sector relationships, promote collaborative working and establish formal partnerships to align with government policy and tackle issues 'systematically'.

For example, current policy debates on 'levelling up' or 'community wealth building' focus on empowering people in localities to play a bigger part in local decision making. Narratives about community empowerment run through current government policies[17] and in policy proposals under development within the Labour Party.[18]

Voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises (variously described as 'civil society organisations', 'social sector organisations' and so on) are mentioned in all of these policy statements: emphasising the role the Third Sector can play in the delivery of local services, helping to shape local priorities using local insights, and reaching into communities to facilitate local people's participation (or speak for them) in local priority setting and political decision making. [19]

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[16] See, for example: HM Treasury (2002) *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A cross cutting review*. London: HM Treasury; Cabinet Office, (2007) *The future role of the Third Sector in social and economic regeneration*; London: HMSO; HM Government (2010) *The coalition: our programme for government*. London: Cabinet Office.

[17] The government's 2018 Civil Society Strategy and Levelling-Up White Papers place considerable emphasis on the importance of taking into account 'local voice' in decision making and some budgetary and political power has been devolved to combined authorities. Department for Levelling UP, Housing and Communities (2022) *Levelling up in the United Kingdom*, London: CSO. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom; Cabinet Office (2018) *Civil society strategy: building a future that works for everyone:* London, Cabinet Office, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732765/Civil_Society_Strategy_-_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf.

[18] See [Labour Party] Commission on the UK's Future (2022) *A new Britain: renewing our democracy and rebuilding our economy,* London, Labour Party. https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Commission-on-the-UKs-Future.pdf. The Labour Party's civil society strategy was published in 2019: Labour Party (undated) *From paternalism to participation: putting civil society at the heart of national renewal*, London: Labour Party: https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Labour-Civil-Society-Strategy-June-2019.pdf.

[19] For example, the Labour Party's civil society strategy paper states that "*Instead of being passive recipients of whatever's on offer, Labour wants people to have the power to actively shape the services they use and decisions that affect them. People who are most disadvantaged often have limited capacity to participate, so we will involve charities and campaign groups to act as their advocates and make sure they always have a voice when decisions that affect them are taken. We believe that making public*

Sector participation in the policy process, but within limits

From across the political spectrum there is a desire harness the power of the Third Sector by working in close partnership. In so doing, policy makers are keen to give reassurances that sector independence will be respected. The first line of the Government's Civil Society Strategy states, for example, that:

> ***"The Civil Society Strategy sets out how the government will work to support and to strengthen civil society, without compromising its independence."*** **While Labours strategy states that** ***"We want to deepen democracy and transfer real power to the people of this country so they can take control of the decisions that affect them. Doing that requires a strong independent civil society as its cornerstone."***

Nevertheless, over the last decade, government unease about the power of the sector's voice in expressing opposition to policy initiatives has been especially evident.[20] And so, while the Third Sector is encouraged to play a facilitative role in local decision making, guidance is given to define what the limits of charities' legitimate involvement in the political process must be. 'Political activity' has been defined as:

> ***"…activities or campaigning to change or influence policies or decisions taken by: national, devolved, local or overseas government [and] public bodies including international organisations such as the UN and World Bank, and national or local organisations such as regulators or NHS Trusts."***[21]

Such activity is permitted.

> ***"Charities can take part in political activity that supports their purpose and is in their best interests. There may be situations where carrying out political activity is the best way for trustees to support their charity's purpose. However, political activity must not become the reason for the charity's existence. [and] Charities must remain independent and must not give their support to a political party."***

This guidance has yet fully to be tested in the courts in the context of local political decision making. Consequently, the limits of Third Sector involvement in local political processes is something of a grey area.[22] Nevertheless, many trustees may have been unnerved by government attempts to limit charities' independence via the

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services directly accountable to the people who use them leads to better public services, fully takes service users' real needs and aspirations into account and provides better value for money." (2019) *From paternalism to participation*, *ibid.* p.10. The Conservative Party's *Civil Society Strategy,* similarly, states *"In thriving communities people have a sense of pride in the places where they live, feel able to get involved and take action to improve local life, and have control over the decisions which affect their neighbourhoods. There is a rich diversity of civic institutions, formal and informal associations, shared spaces, and activities. Thriving communities make life better for everyone and naturally prevent or reduce social problems. This is something long recognised by the traditional social sector, including individual philanthropists, trusts, and foundations, as well as major public institutions like Big Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, who invest in the capabilities and infrastructure of communities."* p.19.

[20] For a wide ranging in-depth discussion of the development and early implementation of such policies, see ACEVO (2017) *Speaking frankly, acting boldly: the legacy and achievements of charity campaigning*, London: ACEVO. https://www.acevo.org.uk/reports/speaking-frankly-acting-boldly/.

[21] Charity Commission (2022) *Political activity and campaigning by charities*, London: Charity Commission: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/political-activity-and-campaigning-by-charities#what-we-mean-by-political-activity. Examples are provided on the kinds of activities which may be regarded as 'political'.

[22] Helen Stephenson, chief executive of the Charity Commission, attempted to clarify the situation by stating that "If charities appear to the public to be engaged in political debate not because they are representing their beneficiaries or bringing expertise, but because they are taking a position on one side of a political divide, this undermines public confidence in charity as something special, which can inspire trust where other institutions do not. The deeper the divisions in the country, the more important it is that charities are demonstrably driven not by their leaders' own world views but by the needs of the beneficiaries they serve. Charities have the potential to build bridges and heal social divides, if that is damaged then everyone will lose out." Helen Stephenson (2019) *Charities and political campaigning: a reflection on charities' responsibilities'* (Charity Commission blog, 13th September) https://charitycommission.blog.gov.uk/2019/09/13/charities-and-political-campaigning-a-reflection-on-charities-responsibilities/. The guidance has not been fully tested in the courts, but cases have been taken up by the Commission to examine whether rules on political engagement have been breached. See for example, Stephenson's blog on a Charity Commission investigation into the activities of the National Trust. https://charitycommission.blog.gov.uk/2021/03/11/engaging-with-controversial-or-divisive-issues-reflections-for-charities/.

Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014, (more generally referred to as the Lobbying Act).[23] And these worries have been aggravated by ill-advised statements that charities should, 'stick to their knitting' rather than get involved in politics.[24]

If that were the case, as ACEVO have argued, society would be bereft from many of the achievements of a sector which has campaigned successfully for, amongst other things, the illegality of smoking in public places, the wearing of seat belts, the plastic bag tax, criminalisation of rape in marriage and the establishment of the Disability Discrimination Act. As ACEVO astutely observe:

> ***"Charities do not arise out of a vacuum. They are a response to an identified need in society, be it a social injustice, health problem or an environmental issue. Not all of these needs can ever totally be resolved but all charities work towards a vision in which their charitable aims are met. In the vast majority of cases, this necessitates legal or policy changes that can continue in perpetuity. Where there is a prospect of a charity realising a permanent solution to the charitable need which has created the organisation then all tools should be available to charities to help them achieve this end. It is not realistic or humane to expect charities to act as a 'sticking plaster' and only react to harm once it has occurred."***

Concerns about the legality of campaigning have been inflamed by the Charity Commission's recent publication of draft guidance to charity trustees on the use of social media for campaign purposes[25] (see Section 5.5 for further detail).

Debates about campaigning and lobbying have generated a good deal of heat over the last few years. But they have taken place against a backdrop of limited evidence on the extent and depth of political or campaigning activity, nor even the 'interest in' or 'commitment of' Third Sector organisations to get closely involved in local decision making.

Consequently, Third Sector Trends has attempted to bridge aspects of that knowledge gap by examining how many organisations participate in debates about local social and public policy, the extent of engagement in campaigning and influencing decision making by lobbying through informal channels.

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[23] The Lobbying Act (2014) intended to stifle the involvement of businesses or charities in political campaigning in the twelve months preceding general elections. For a useful commentary on the debate and the impact of the Lobbying Act on charities, see Simon Francis (2018) 'The Lobbying Act is stifling charity campaigners. It doesn't have to', *The Guardian* (17th January) https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2018/jan/17/the-lobbying-act-stifling-charity-campaigns-it-shouldnt. Clarifications on reform of the Lobbying Act in 2019 eased concerns of many charities on potential restrictions on or consequences of engagement in campaigning. For a brief overview of new Electoral Commission guidance for non-party campaigners see: Douglas Dowell (2019) *New Electoral Commission guidance for charities: the Lobbying Act shouldn't stop you from campaigning',* London: Electoral Commission: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/new-electoral-commission-guidance-charities-lobbying-act-shouldnt-stop-you-campaigning. The Labour Party have proposed to repeal the Act in the following terms: *"The law should provide clear rules for how civil society can operate. Under the Conservatives, the Lobbying Act has created a culture of fear in the sector with many organisations now self-censoring and afraid to speak out about the social injustices they see. This harms democracy and prevents the Government learning from mistakes. Labour believes the law should energise civil society, not stifle it. We know that civil society wants clear, fair rules that help it to play a bigger role in supporting communities, so that is what Labour will deliver."* Labour Party (undated) *From paternalism to participation: putting civil society at the heart of national renewal*, London: Labour Party: https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Labour-Civil-Society-Strategy-June-2019.pdf.

[24] The comment that 'We really want to keep charities and voluntary groups out of the realm of politics' is attributed to Brooks Newmark in 2014, then Minister for Civils Society in response to a statement by Charity Commission trustee Gwythian Prins that charities should "stick to their knitting". Source: ACEVO (2017) *Speaking frankly, acting boldly, ibid.* p. 2).

[25] See: Rob Preston (2023) 'Concerns shared as regulator publishes social media guidance for trustees', *Civil Society Media* (17th January): https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/concerns-shared-as-regulator-publishes-social-media-guidance-for-trustees.html.

5.2 Defining approaches to influencing

To find out more about how organisations try to influence local social and public policy,[26] Third Sector Trends introduced new survey questions to assess levels of participation. Respondents were invited to say whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with each of the following statements (highlighted in blue) about influencing local social and public policy.[27]

- ***We tend to steer well clear of political issues*** – this statement was devised simply to assess whether TSOs were prepared to engage with local 'political' issues.
- ***We try to go to relevant meetings/events which relate to our kind of work*** – to find out if TSOs will participate in formal activities (orchestrated by, for example, local authorities, health authorities or local infrastructure organisations) which address local social and public policy priorities.
- ***We campaign to further the interests of our beneficiaries*** – to see if TSOs aligned with the principle of 'campaigning' to serve the interests of their area or beneficiaries.[28]
- ***We trust a local Third Sector support agency to do this on our behalf (e.g. a CVS)*** – to determine whether TSOs were willing to delegate some aspects of responsibility to a trusted local infrastructure organisation to represent theirs and the sector's interests.
- ***We tend to work behind the scenes to influence policy*** – to find out if organisations communicate with individuals in positions of power or influence informally to advance their organisation's and/or beneficiaries' interests.[29]

In addition, a supplementary question was asked about the use of digital media to aid campaigning which is discussed and analysed in Section 5.5.

It is recognised that the above statements are 'generalised'. This lack of specificity is necessary in a large-scale study to ensure that all participants can answer the question, whether or not they have a comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding legal rights, responsibilities and constraints.

Nevertheless, these question break new ground by providing insights into sector-wide attitudes towards influencing local social and public policy and deepens understanding by comparing and contrasting attitudes by the characteristics of organisations, where they operate and whom they serve.

Figure 5.1 presents headline findings for England and Wales.

- ***A majority of TSOs steer clear of political issues*** 73 per cent of organisations take the view that they do not engage in local political activity;

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[26] The impetus to pursue this aspect of analysis arose from discussion with Millfield House Foundation who commissioned this aspect of the work. The construction of the question was undertaken collaboratively with the foundation's Trust Manager, Cullagh Warnock.

[27] No option was given to 'sit on the fence' by including a response category such as 'neither agree nor disagree' to ensure that respondents made a clear decision, either way. Similarly, no option was given to state that the question was 'not relevant/applicable to us' on the basis that all organisations should be in a position to take a view on each statement. Completing the question was not 'compulsory'. Indeed, none of the questions on the survey are compulsory – if a question is left unanswered the Online Survey platform is configured to allow people to continue unfettered. Percentage non-response to each statement were as follows: 'steer well clear of political issues' 2.9%, 'go to relevant meetings' 3.8%, 'Campaign to further the interests of our beneficiaries' 4.4%, 'trust local CVS to do this on our behalf' 5.4% and 'we tend to work behind the scenes' 4.9%. All five questions therefore achieved our benchmark standard for in-survey response rate of 95%. No complaints were received about the question (unlike, for example, questions on diversity). For a more detailed discussion of the approach taken to survey design, see: https://www.stchads.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Third-Sector-Trends-Research-Methods-2022.pdf.

[28] In the absence of a specific and widely accepted definition of what constitutes 'campaigning' participants were able to interpret the question their own way.

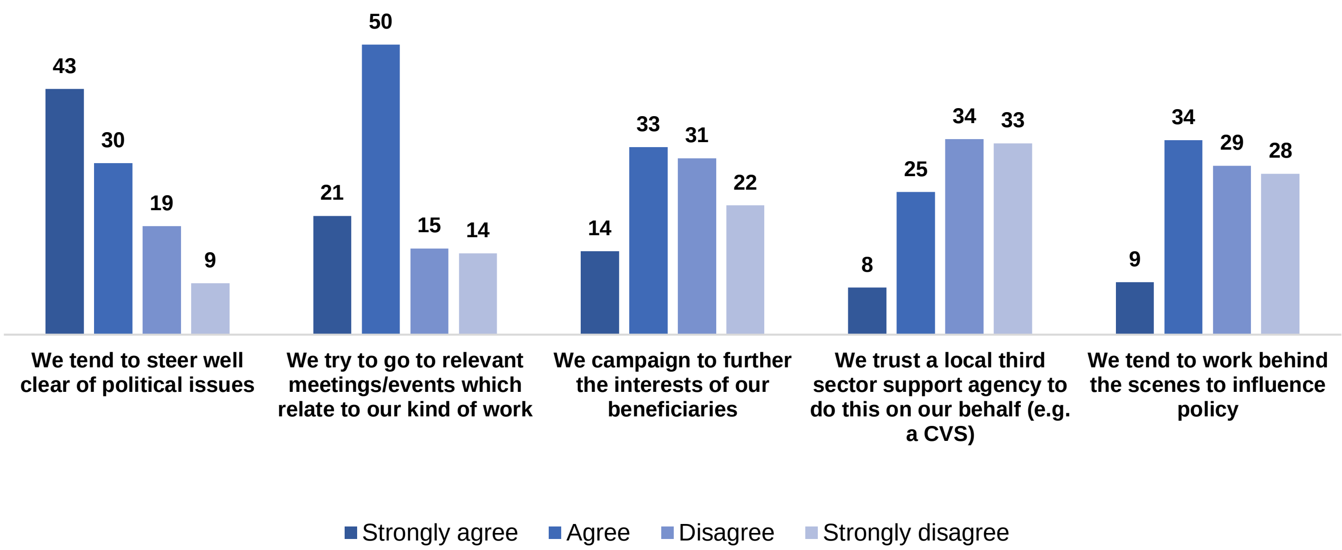
[29] The term 'lobbying' was purposefully not used so as not to signal negative or politically loaded connotations.

43 per cent express this view strongly. Only 9 per cent of organisations are strongly committed to engaging with local political issues.

- About 71% of organisations state that they try to ***participate in formal meetings and events*** that address issues associated with local social and public policy – but enthusiasm is muted. Only 21 per cent of organisations strongly agree that they do this; 14 per cent of the sample emphasise that they have no interest in attending such events.
- About half of TSOs (47%) agree that they ***campaign to influence local policy***. But the strength of that agreement is quite low – only 14 per cent are heavily committed to campaigning compared with 22 per cent of organisations which are strongly against campaigning.
- A third of organisations are happy to ***delegate responsibility*** for engagement with local social and public policy to local Third Sector infrastructure organisations (such as a CVS). Few TSOs appear to be willing to abstain entirely from influencing local policy (8%).
- ***Working behind the scenes to influence policy*** is not an option many TSOs choose to take. Only 9 per cent of TSOs strongly agree that they do this – but another third agree that this is an option they sometimes take. A clear majority (57%) do not try to influence policy from 'behind the scenes' (and 28% are more adamant in this position).[30]

These headline findings provide a useful overview of sector orientation to influencing local social and public policy. But more needs to be known about the kinds of organisations which are committed to influencing, whom they serve and where they are located.

Figure 5.1 **Approaches taken by TSOs to influence local social and public policy** (England and Wales 2022, average n=5,808)



[30] Interpretation of these data is difficult at this stage of the research because it is not known if some or many respondents feel uncomfortable about stating that they 'work behind the scenes' as this may be regarded as/or implicitly felt to be a 'socially discrediting' admission. Equally, many or most of these organisations may not attempt to influence behind the scenes because there are no opportunities for this to happen or because they simply do not feel that there is any need for them to do so. This issue cannot be resolved without further in-depth qualitative research which is now being planned.

5.2 Organisational and area variations

Organisational variations

In the absence of reliable data, it would be tempting simply to assume that engagement in local social and public policy processes is the preserve of larger local organisations because they have more capacity, expertise and organisational purpose for doing so.

Similarly it may be expected that if small organisations do get involved, it is more likely to be about specific issues that are of direct and immediate concern to them. This section tests such assumptions empirically for the first time on a national scale with access to a representative sample of organisations.

Figure 5.1 demonstrated that 72 per cent of TSOs steer clear of local political issues. But Figure 5.2 shows that there are substantial variations in levels of local political engagement depending upon organisational size. As anticipated, micro organisations are much more likely to avoid political issues (80%) than the biggest TSOs (57%).

The biggest organisations are most likely to attend relevant meetings or events which centre on policy issues (89%). This would be expected, as bigger organisations have more capacity to do so – and given the broader range of their work spatially or thematically they are more likely to perceive benefit from investing their time. Nevertheless, 61 per cent of micro organisations are prepared to do so.

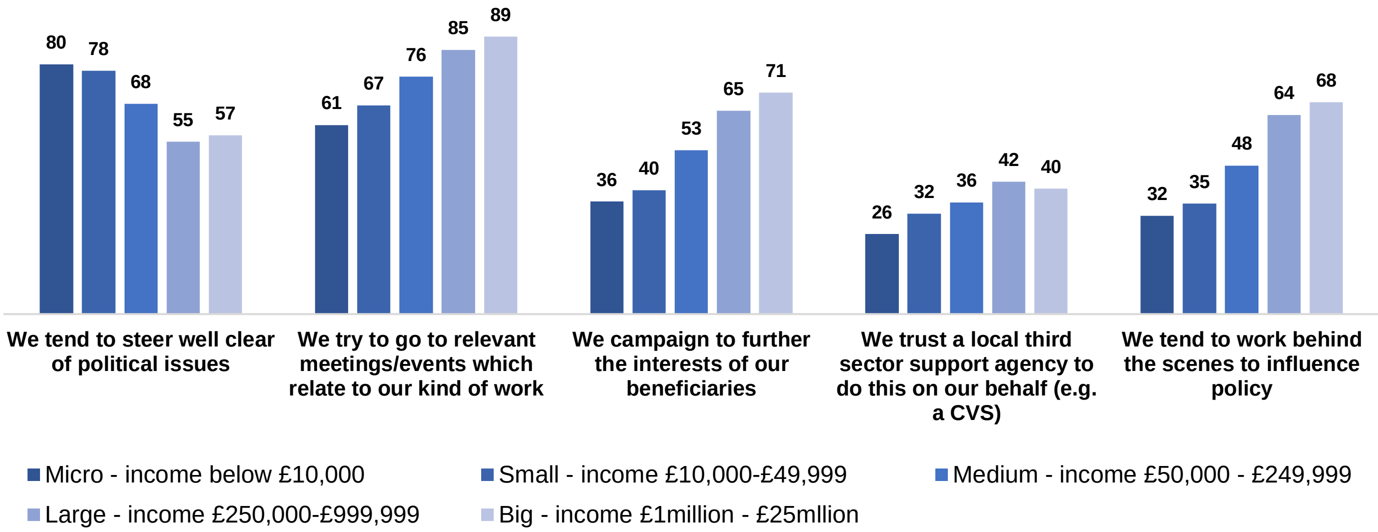
Campaigning to further the interests of beneficiaries is more common amongst the biggest organisations (71%). Fewer micro organisations engage in such activity – but many of them do (36%).

Few TSOs delegate trust to local infrastructure organisations to act on their behalf.[31] Perhaps surprisingly, larger TSOs are more likely to agree that they delegate some of these responsibilities (42%) than small (32%) or micro organisations (26%).

Working behind the scenes to influence local social or public policy is much more common amongst large or big organisations (64% and 68% respectively). That stated, about a third of micro and small TSOs do engage in behind the scenes influencing.

[31] This question refers specifically to local public and policy engagement and does not, therefore, mean that they lack trust in local infrastructure organisations to work on their behalf in other respects.

Figure 5.2 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy by size of TSOs**
(Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', average n=5,764)



The indications are, in summary, that there is good deal more engagement with local social and public policy than might have been expected. Proportionally, fewer small or micro organisations get involved with local social and public policy agendas than their larger counterparts. But this does not indicate that the voices of smaller organisations are under-represented in local policy debates. This because there are *many more smaller organisations* than larger ones.

In North East England, for example, there are about 6,920 registered organisations. Only 19 per cent of micro organisations engage in local politics compared with 50 per cent of the biggest organisations (see Figure 5.1). If these percentages are scaled up to sector level, this amounts to 443 (of 2,360) micro organisations engaging with local politics compared with 173 (of 346) of the biggest TSOs.

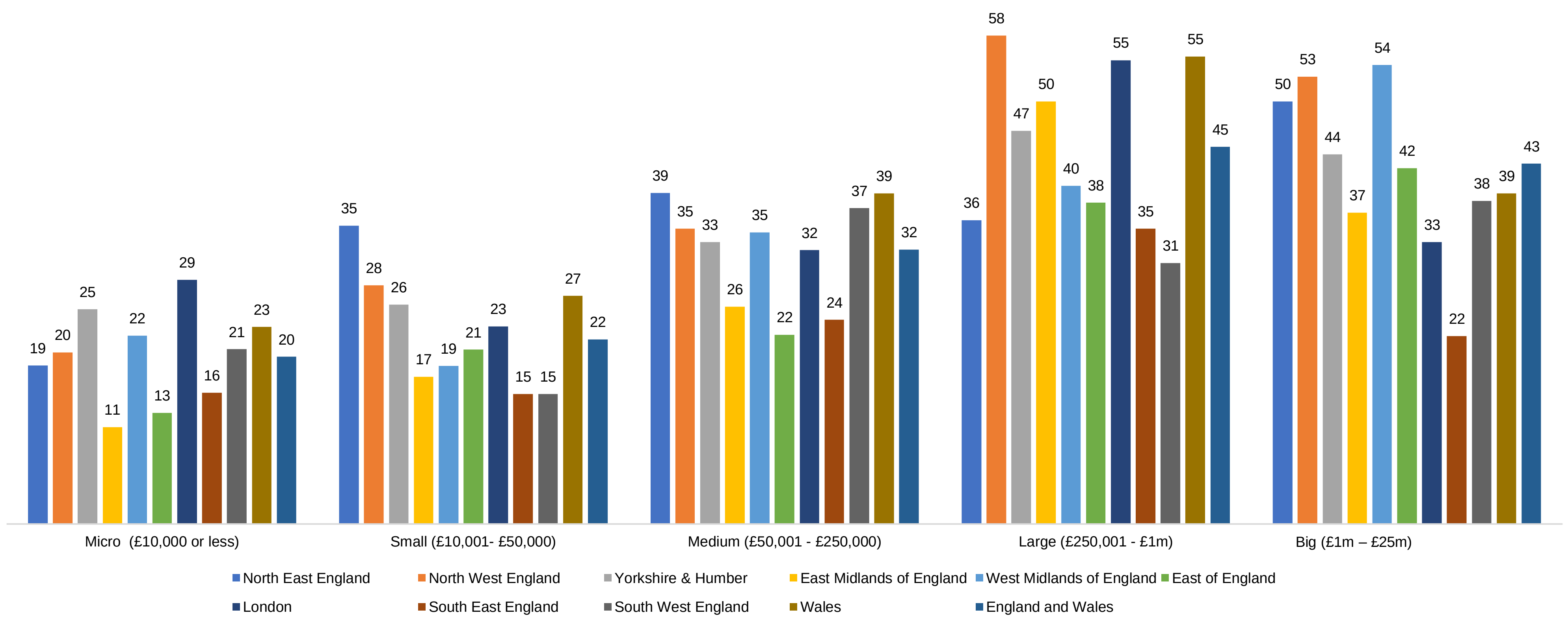
Third Sector Trends data cannot determine how 'intensively', 'effectively' or 'frequently' TSOs engage with local politics – but it does show that smaller organisations play a major part in the process (equivalent data for all other English regions and Wales are provided in an Appendix). As shown in Figure 5.3, there are wide variations in the extent to which organisations are prepared to engage in local politics across Wales and English regions.

Table 5.1 **Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics** (North East England, 2022)

	Micro (£10,000 or less)	**Small** (£10,001-£50,000)	**Medium** (£50,001 - £250,000)	**Large** (£250,001 - £1m)	**Big** (£1m – £25m)
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics*	18.8	35.3	39.2	36.0	50.0
Number of registered organisations in region**	2,360	1,917	1,599	706	346
Estimated number of TSOs engaging in local politics	443	677	626	254	173

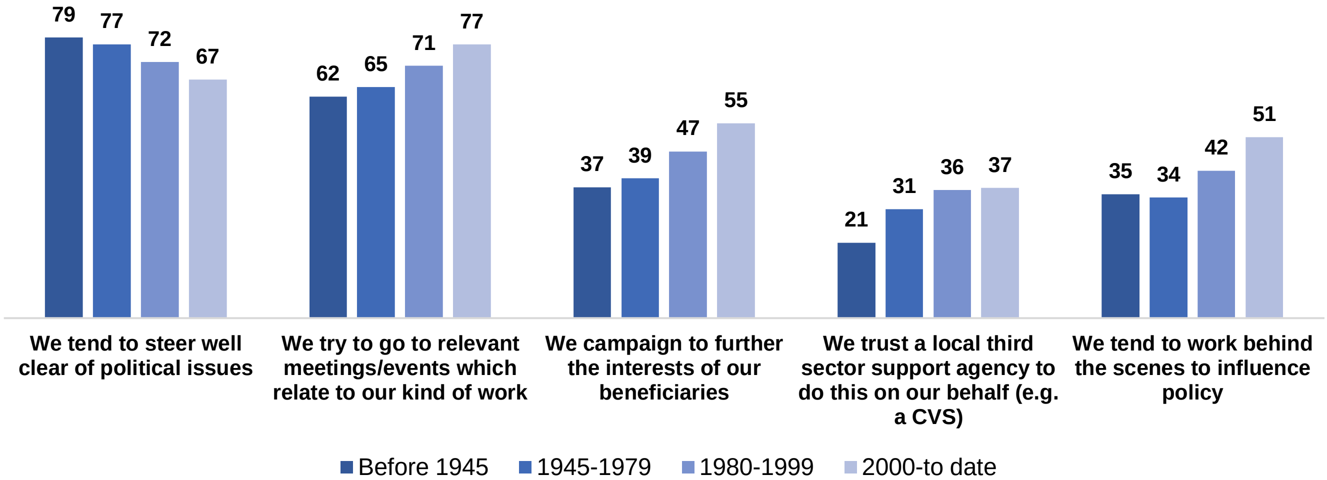
*Percentages refer to 2022 survey data TSOs in North East England only.
**Numbers of organisations are drawn from Third Sector Trends register data 2022.

Figure 5.3 **Percentage of organisations which will engage with local politics in English regions and Wales** (2022, n=5,842)



The age of organisations also affects levels of engagement with local social and public policy. Older organisations are less involved than more recently established TSOs in attending relevant meetings, campaigning and lobbying (see Figure 5.4). Counter-intuitively they are also the least likely to trust local infrastructure organisations to act on their behalf. But this is more likely to be indicative of broader political disengagement than 'lack of trust' of local infrastructure organisations.

Figure 5.4 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy by age of TSOs**
(Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', England and Wales 2022, average n=5,808)



To consolidate analysis, a new statistical variable has been created to identify those TSOs which were either highly politically engaged (i.e. *go to relevant meetings*, *campaign* and *work behind the scenes* to achieve objectives) or were politically disengaged (*did not go to meetings, campaign or work behind the scenes* to achieve objectives). Relatively few organisations fell into these neat categories: about two thirds of the sample are therefore defined as having moderate or occasional levels of involvement.[32]

Figure 5.5 shows that only 6 per cent of micro organisations are heavily committed to political engagement compared with 28 per cent of the biggest TSOs. About a quarter of micro organisations are largely 'disengaged' from local politics compared with just 5 per cent of the biggest TSOs. And as shown in Figure 5.6, nearly a quarter of the oldest organisations appear to be politically disengaged compared with just 12 per cent of the most recently established.[33]

[32] Data for politically engaged TSOs are generated from a variable which combines organisations which agree or strongly agree that they do not steer clear of political issues and that they do go to relevant meetings, do campaign to further the interests of beneficiaries and do work behind the scenes to influence policy. Trusting CVSs to tackle such issues on their behalf is not included in the variable. For disengaged TSOs, the opposite values are included.

[33] Current reporting of political disengagement does mean that such organisations could never become politically active. All TSOs, in this sense have latent potential to engage with political processes if, for example, the purpose for their existence is threatened. And in some cases, latent community power can be released when threats to local wellbeing is recognised – as is often the case with so-called 'nimbyism'. For an example, see Ros Coward (2021) 'Nimbys are not selfish, we're just trying to stop the destruction of nature', *The Guardian* (4th July) https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jul/04/nimbys-nature-destruction-wildlife-developers. Or in the case of housing developments see Matthews, P., Bramley, G. and Hastings, A. (2015) .Homo economicus in a big society: understanding middle-class nimbyism towards new housing developments', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 32(1). 54-72; see also, in the case of energy infrastructure, Carley, S. Konisky, D., Atiq, Z. and Land, D. (2020) 'Energy infrastructure, NIMBYism, and public opinion: a systematic literature review of three decades of empirical survey literature', *Environmental Research*, 15(9).

Figure 5.5 **Engagement with local social and public policy by size of TSOs**
(England and Wales 2022, 6,015)

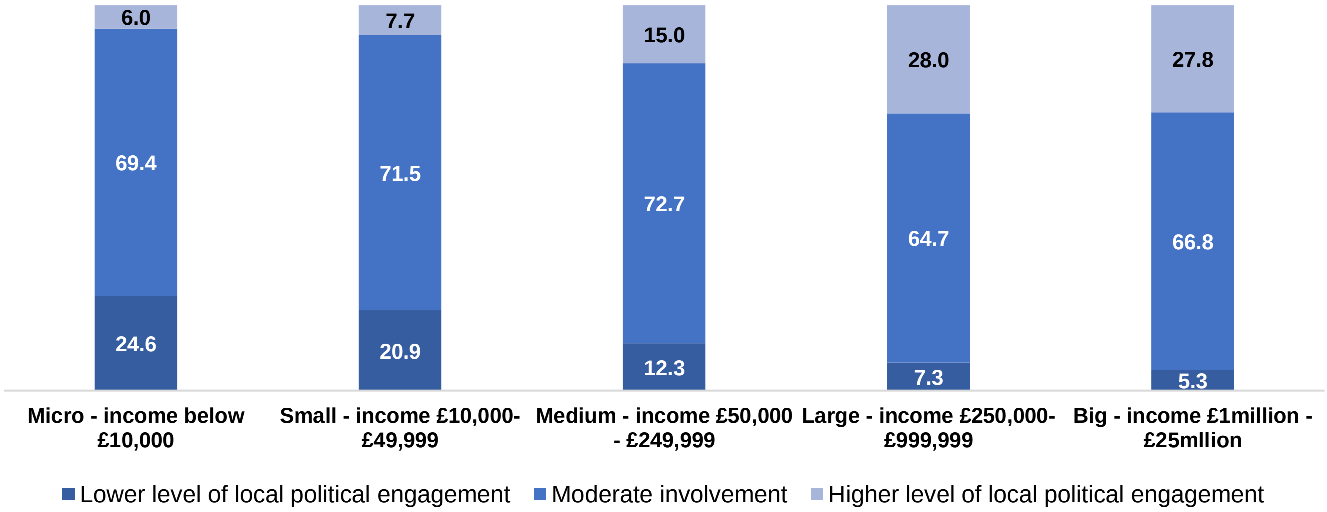
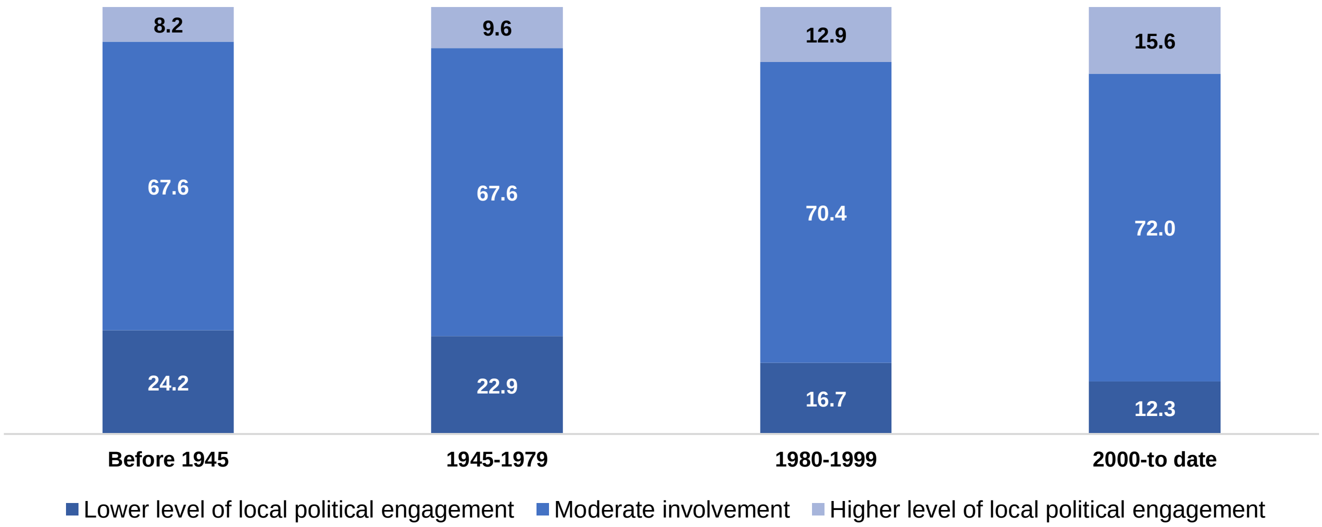


Figure 5.6 **Engagement with local social and public policy by age of TSOs**
(England and Wales 2022, 6,066)



Area variations

The characteristics of the area where TSOs are based reflect local attitudes about influencing local social and public policy. Against all dimensions of engagement, TSOs in town and country areas are less likely to be involved than their metropolitan counterparts (Figure 5.7).

This is likely to reflect the focus of social and public policy and TSOs on critical or pernicious personal, social and community problems which tend to be closely associated with concentrations of local deprivation. The evidence presented in Figure 5.8 demonstrates that this is so. Many more TSOs based in the poorest areas engage in all types of influencing than organisations in wealthier areas.

The interactions between urban form and area affluence are illustrated graphically in Figure 5.9. These data suggest that it is levels of local deprivation that makes the biggest difference rather than urban form. Although there is some association between urban form and political engagement – with slighty higher levels in metropolitan areas and major urban areas than is the case in town and country areas.

Figure 5.7 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy by characteristics of areas where TSOs are based**

(Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', England and Wales, average n=5,782)

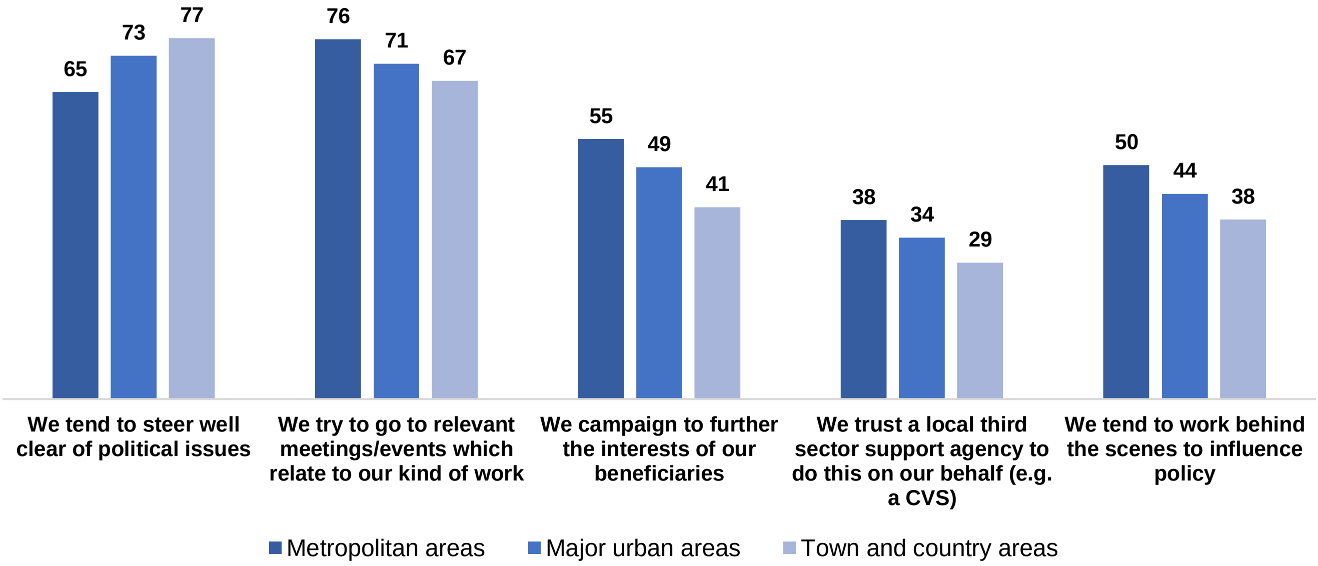


Figure 5.8 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy by affluence of areas where TSOs are based** (Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', England and Wales, average n=5,693)

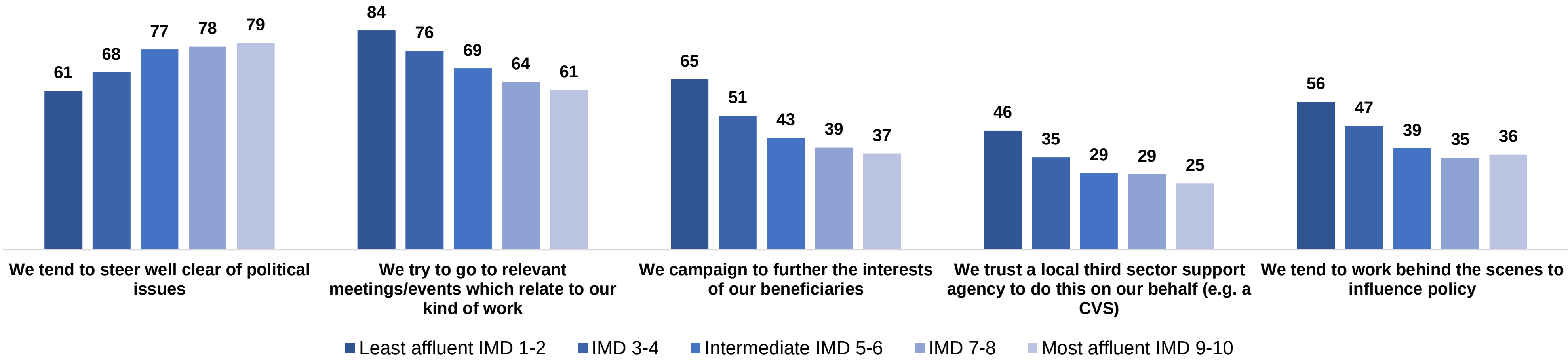
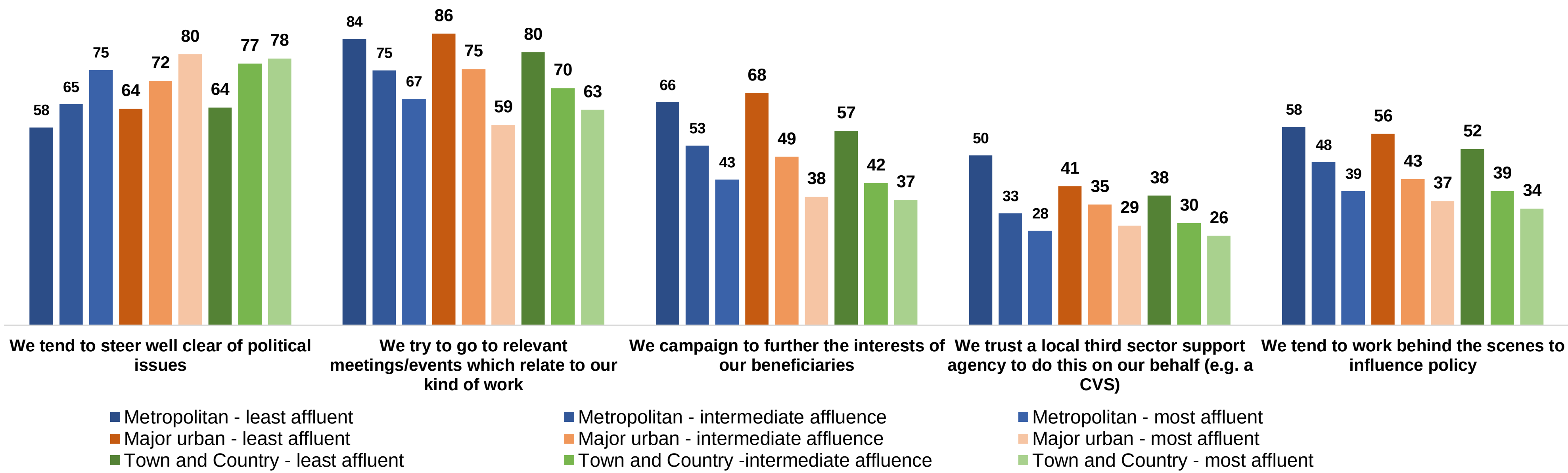


Figure 5.9 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy amongst TSOs by area affluence and urban form** (Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', England and Wales, average n=5,782)



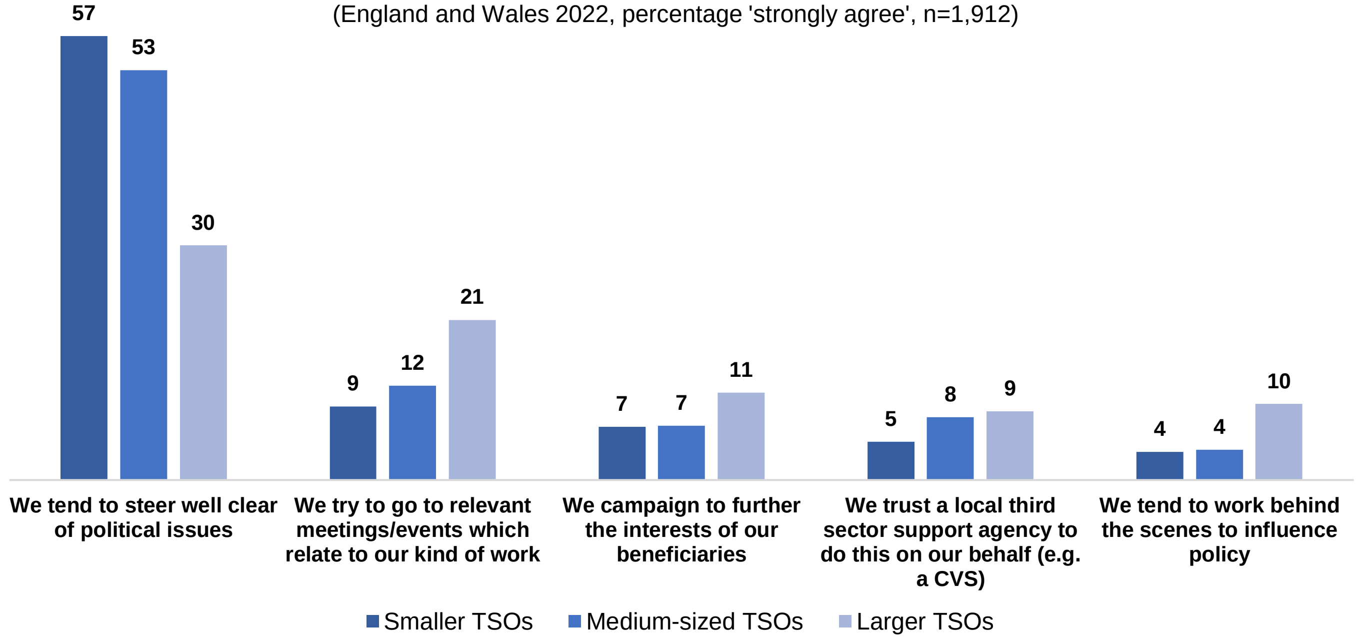
Organisational commitment to the locality

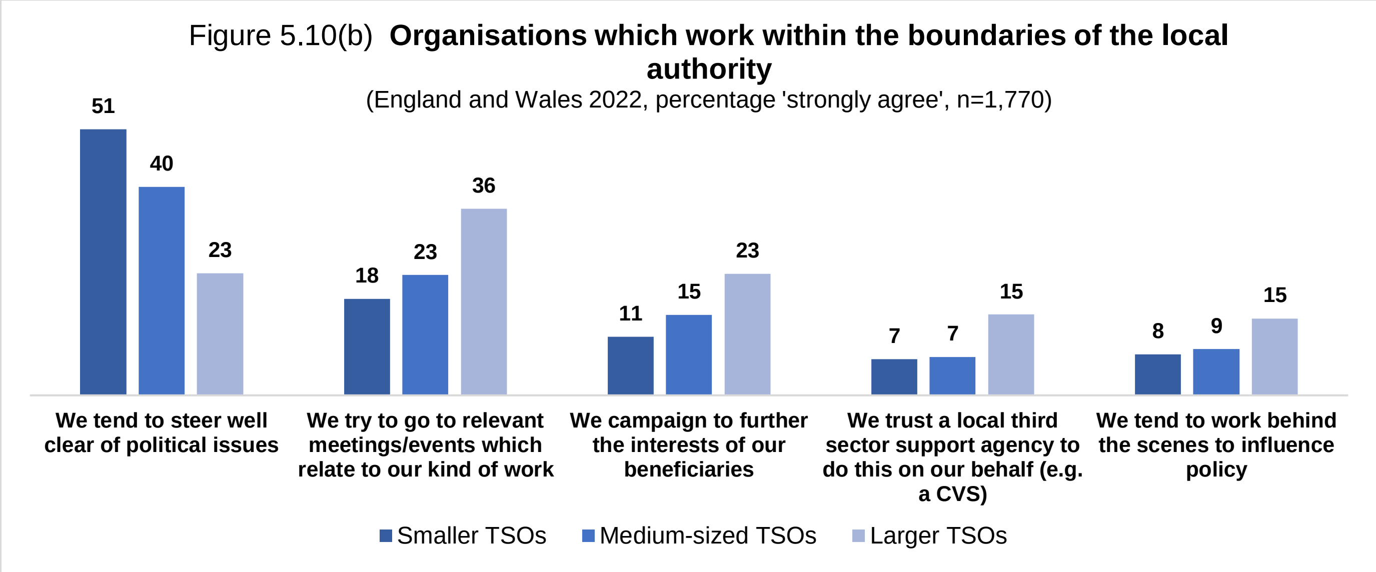
A further consideration is the spatial range of activity of TSOs (see Figures 5.10(a) to 5.10(c)). To emphasise strength of commitment in localities, percentages refer only to those respondents which 'strongly agree' with each statement. To account for levels of interest and capacity of organisations to get involved in local social and public policy issues, each chart separates smaller (income below £50,000), medium-sized (income £50,000-£250,000) and larger TSOs (income above £250,000).

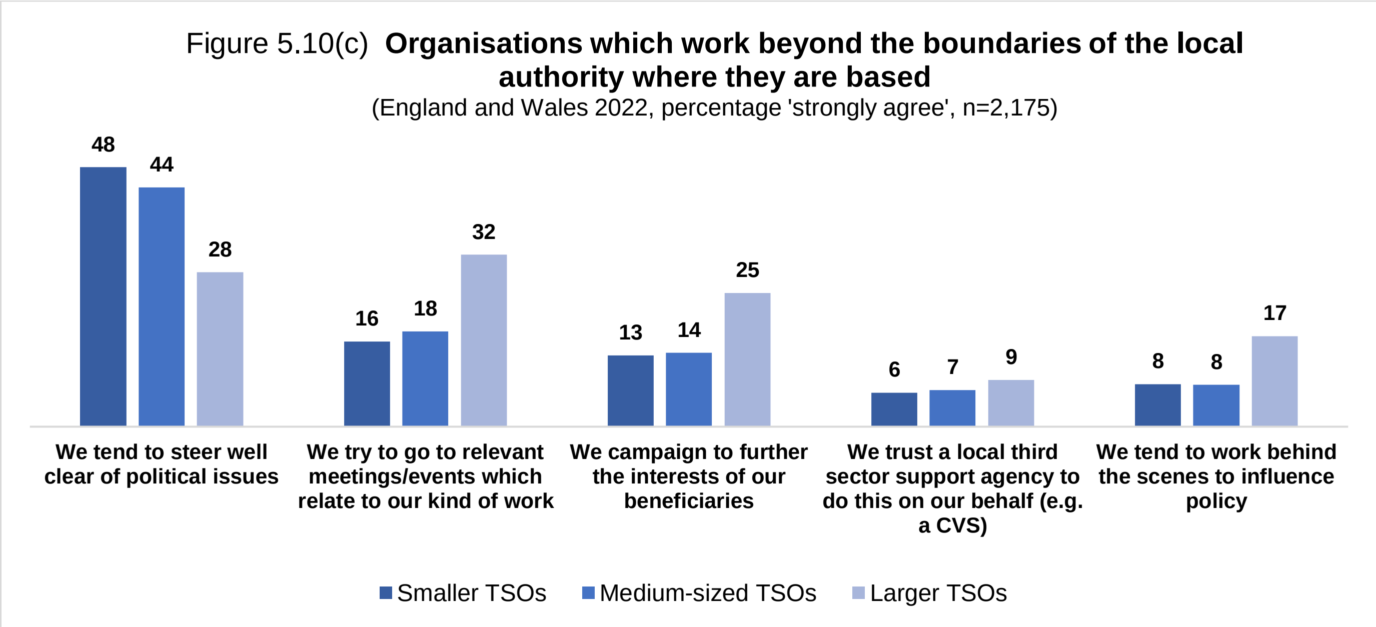
- ***Organisations which focus only on their local neighbourhood or village*** are the least engaged in influencing local social and public policy – although larger organisations tend to be more engaged than smaller TSOs.
- ***Organisations work within the boundaries of their local authority*** (but not exclusively within one neighbourhood or village) are more likely to engage in local social and public policy. Larger organisations are the most active.
- ***Organisations that work beyond the boundaries of the local authority*** (but usually also work locally), are less likely to attend meetings and campaign than similar sized TSOs which contain their work within a local authority. Larger organisations working beyond local authority boundaries are slightly more likely to work behind the scenes to influence local policy (17%) than those which just work in the area (15%).
- ***Abstention from political issues*** is at its strongest amongst small organisations working at the neighbourhood or village level. Medium-sized and larger organisations working within a local authority are the least likely to abstain from local political issues.

Figure 5.10(a) **Organisations which only work at neighbourhood / village level**

(England and Wales 2022, percentage 'strongly agree', n=1,912)







Regional variations

Finally, regional variations are presented in Figure 5.7 (see also Figure 5.3, above). A surface appraisal of these data indicates that engagement with local social and public policy is stronger in the Northern regions of England, London and the West Midlands of England. In Wales, organisations are much more likely to trust their local infrastructure organisations to act on their behalf (47%).[34] Trust in local infrastructure is also high in the regions of Northern England but is at its lowest in South East England.

Given the complexity of the social, political and economic landscapes in each region, these headline data conceal more than they reveal. Consequently, further exploration at regional level can be done at a later date if requested.

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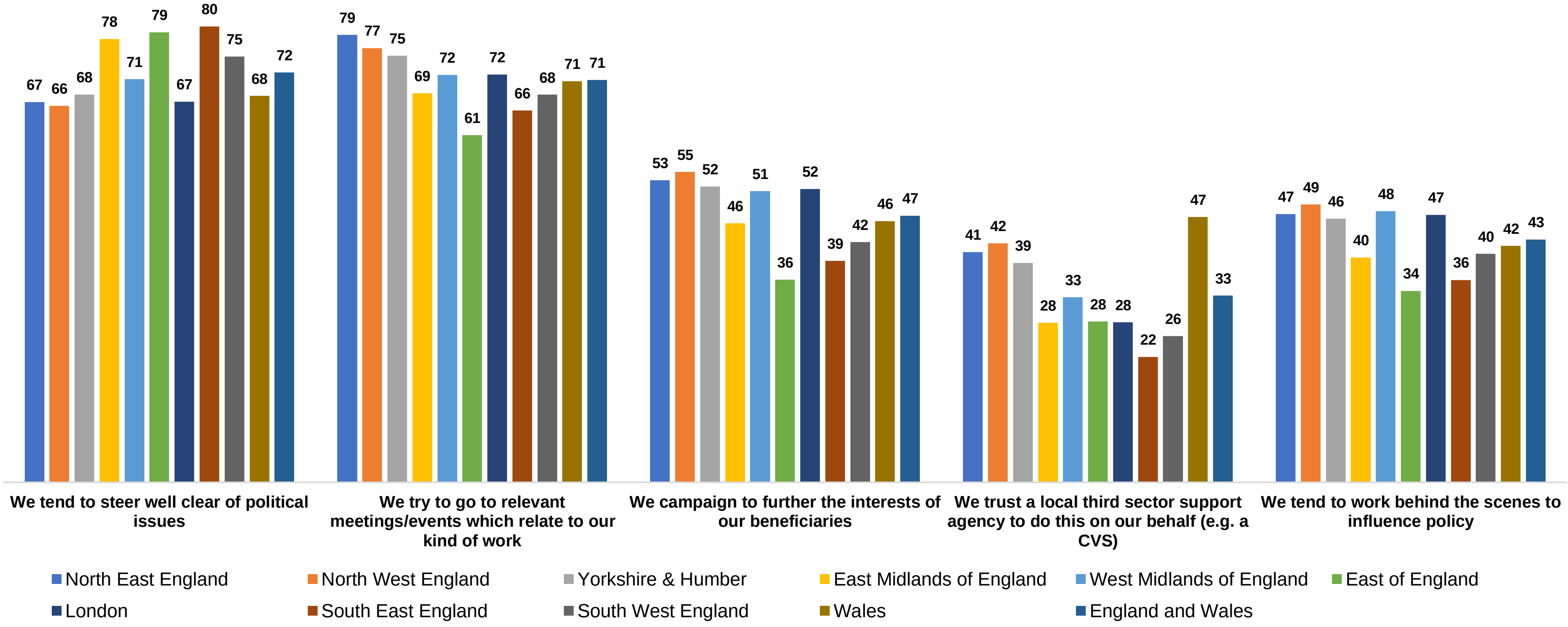
[34] Wales Government investment in local infrastructure is much stronger than is the case in English regions. Furthermore, national level infrastructure in Wales is better resourced than is the case in the few English regions which have sustained area-wide umbrella bodies (such as, for example, VONNE in North East England and VSNW in North West England). For a recent report on infrastructure support in England, see: Macmillan, R., Leather, D. and Stuart, J. (2022) *Connecting locally: local voluntary and community sector infrastructure in England*, Sheffield: NAVCA, *https://navca.org.uk/research-project*. In Wales, information on infrastructure support is provided by WCVA, see: https://wcva.cymru/.

Figure 5.7 **Approaches taken to influence local social and public policy by TSOs based in English regions and Wales**
(Percentage 'agree' or 'strongly agree', England and Wales, average n=5,803))



5.3 Influencing for beneficiary groups

The above analysis has shown which kinds of organisations are most likely to try to influence policy, where they are spatially situated and the geographical range of activity. Identifying who their beneficiaries are is a complex task because TSOs often serve many beneficiary groups (see the first Third Sector Trends report for more analysis and discussion[35]). Table 5.2(a) shows the percentage of organisations which 'strongly agree' that they either campaign, attend relevant policy meetings or work behind the scenes to influence policy.

Beneficiary groups served are listed in rank-order (with the highest levels of commitment to campaigning at the top of the table and lowest levels at the base).[36] These data indicate that 'general charities' tend to have the lowest level of commitment to influencing local social and public policy (e.g. 'people in general', 'older people', 'children and young people') while TSOs with a specialist beneficiary focus have the most (e.g. 'people with concerns about gender and sexuality', 'people of a particular ethnic or racial origin').

Table 5.2(a) **Commitment of TSOs to campaigning, to attend relevant meetings and to work behind the scenes to influence local social and public policy: by beneficiary groups served** (Percentage 'strongly agree' with each statement, England and Wales 2022, n=6,070)

Beneficiaries	**We campaign to further the interests of our beneficiaries** (in rank order)	**We try to go to relevant meetings/events which relate to our kind of work**	**We tend to work behind the scenes to influence policy**
People with concerns about gender and sexuality (n=265)	36.2	40.4	19.2
People of a particular ethnic or racial origin (n=474)	28.3	33.1	18.1
People with homelessness and housing issues (n=619)	27.1	35.1	16.8
Other Third Sector organisations (n=442)	25.3	34.9	21.2
Unemployed/workless people (n=776)	25.3	34.7	14.1
Carers (n=607)	25.0	35.4	13.3
People in disadvantaged urban areas (n=964)	24.2	34.1	14.7
People or households living in poverty (n=1,106)	23.0	32.8	14.4
People with mental health conditions (n=1.434)	22.7	33.0	13.7
People with learning disabilities (n=1,043)	21.5	30.2	13.2
People with physical disabilities (n=1.181)	20.2	27.7	11.7
People with physical health conditions (n=1,202)	19.8	28.7	12.8
People in rural areas (n=909)	15.6	21.1	10.4
Older people (n=1,850)	15.1	22.9	9.5
Children and young people (n=2,412)	14.6	21.8	9.4
People in general (n=3,066)	13.2	19.2	7.9

[35] See: *Third Sector Trends in England and Wales 2022: structure, purpose, energy and impact,* (2022) Newcastle upon Tyne: Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Section 3 'Sector purpose' available here: https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Third-Sector-Trends-in-England-and-Wales-2022-structure-purpose-energy-and-impact-November-2022.pdf.

[36] It should be noted that these are 'general' categories that can include a wide range of beneficiary groups under a broad heading. For more detail, see Section 3.4 of the report on Third Sector Trends' research methods: https://www.stchads.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Third-Sector-Trends-Research-Methods-2022.pdf.

The propensity of TSOs to avoid political issues or to delegate trust to a local infrastructure organisation to handle them on their behalf is shown in Table 5.1(b). The organisations which are most likely to avoid political issues are at the top of the table ('people in rural areas') and those most likely to engage with such issues are at the base (i.e. 'people with concerns about gender and sexuality').

Table 5.2(b) **Propensity of TSOs to 'steer clear of political issues' or to delegate to a 'trusted local Third Sector support agency'** (Percentage 'strongly agree' with each statement, England and Wales 2022, n=6,070)

Beneficiaries	**"We tend to steer well clear of political issues"** (in rank order)	**"We trust a local third sector support agency to do this on our behalf"** (e.g. a CVS)
People in rural areas	44.7	21.1
People in general	44.3	19.2
Older people	42.8	22.9
Children and young people	41.9	21.8
People with physical disabilities	40.1	27.7
People with physical health conditions	38.3	28.7
People with learning disabilities	36.7	30.2
People with mental health conditions	32.9	33.0
Carers	31.6	35.4
People or households living in poverty	31.1	32.8
People with homelessness and housing issues	30.5	35.1
People in disadvantaged urban areas	29.1	34.1
Other Third Sector organisations	28.7	34.9
People of a particular ethnic or racial origin	28.0	33.1
Unemployed/workless people	27.9	34.7
People with concerns about gender and sexuality	26.0	40.4

5.5 Influencing with digital technology

In Section 5.1, it was shown that over the last decade government has become more concerned about charity involvement in 'political' activity. A recently published set of draft guidelines put out by the Charity Commission for consultation on the use of digital media[37] has caused considerable consternation within the sector.[38]

The guidance for charity trustees stipulates that:

If you use social media:

- ***adopt a social media policy so that you have internal controls in place that are appropriate, proportionate and are clear to everyone at the charity using social media,***
- ***ensure you use social media only to help you achieve your charity's purpose (what your charity was set up to do) and in a way that is in your charity's best interests,***
- ***comply with relevant laws and regulations,***
- ***any campaigning or political activity that you do on social media complies with the rules on political activity and campaigning,***
- ***ensure your processes help you keep people safe online. Read the "Operating online" section of our guidance on safeguarding.***

The guidance reassures trustees that charities can '*engage on emotive or controversial topics if this is a way of achieving its charitable purpose'*, but asserts that trustees must take action if social media has '*problematic content*'. At present, 'problematic content' is ill-defined and could, presumably, be utilised to accuse individual charities of all manner of infringements into the political arena when commenting or campaigning on issues.

It is troubling that the policy guidance has been drafted in the absence of clear evidence on the extent or impact of the use of social media in charity campaigning – which raises questions as to whether the guidelines are an appropriate response to the incidence of 'problematic content'.

This section fills some gaps in current knowledge by assessing the extent to which TSOs use digital media to communicate (via websites and social media) – and levels of activity in campaigning using such digital tools.

The usage of digital technology

There is a growing body of research on the adoption of digital technologies for communication and other practical purposes by TSOs which indicates that usage has increased in recent years – especially during the Coronavirus pandemic.[39]

Third Sector Trends has collected evidence in England and Wales from 2019 on the usage of digital technology for financial, communication and campaigning purposes. Evidence on the use of digital tools for fundraising and financial management has

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[37] Charity Commission (2023) *Draft guidance: charities use of social media* (published 17th January): https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-guidance-charities-use-of-social-media.

[38] See, for example, Zoe Amar (2023) Our response to the Charity Commission's social media guidance (19th January): https://zoeamar.com/2023/01/19/our-response-to-the-charity-commissions-social-media-guidance/.

[39] See, for example, Lloyds Bank (2019) *UK Charity digital index 2019*, London: Lloyds Bank, https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/resource-centre/pdf/charity_digital_index_2019.pdf; Amar, Z. and Ramsay, N. (2022) *Charity digital skills report 2022*, London, Charity Digital Skills: https://charitydigitalskills.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Charity-Digital-Skills-Report-2022.pdf : and CAF (2020) *Charity landscape 2020*, London: Charities Aid Foundation: https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/031120-clr-a_charity-landscape-2020_a4-4pp_web_011220.pdf; other studies which looked at the use of digital during the Coronavirus pandemic have produced some valuable insights on changing practices. But without baseline data prior to the pandemic and small samples of TSOs, it is not possible accurately to judge the magnitude of change: see for example, NCVO (2021) *Covid-19 Voluntary Sector Impact Barometer*: https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/new-survey-digital-technology-during-the-pandemic/#/.

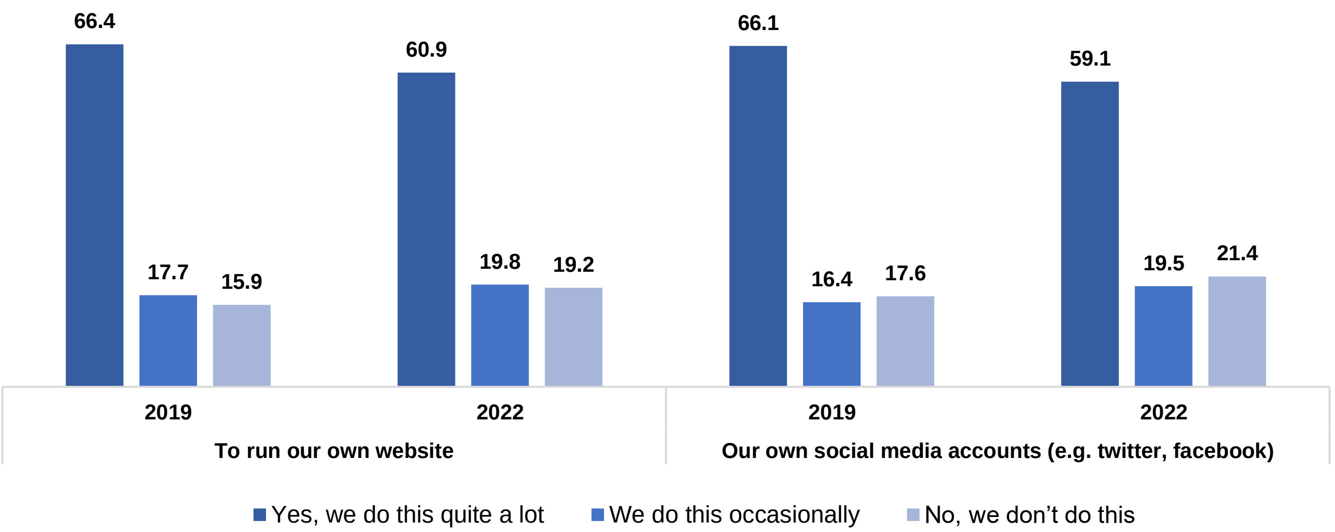
already been explored in a previous Third Sector Trends report on sector finances.[40] In this report, the focus is on the use of digital media for communication and campaigning purposes.

Comparative data are available from 2019 on the ownership and use of a dedicated website and use of social media. A third element was introduced in 2022 on the use of digital applications for campaigning purposes. As a large-scale representative sample survey of England and Wales, the pitfalls of using 'self-selected' samples of respondents with a strong interest in digital technology has been avoided.[41]

Figure 5.8 shows how digital usage has changed since 2019. Contrary, perhaps, to expectations,[42] the evidence indicates that digital usage for communications purposes has decreased slightly since 2019. In 2019, 81 per cent of organisations owned and used a dedicated website compared with 84 per cent in 2019. Similarly, usage of social media has also declined slightly (from 82% in 2019 to 79% in 2022). Amongst those TSOs which use digital technology, the intensity of usage has also decreased slightly.

When comparing by size of organisations, it is clear that use of websites and social media has declined irrespective of organisational size (Figure 5.9 and Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.8 **Use of digital technology for communication purposes**
(England and Wales, 2019 n=4,014, 2022 n=6,003)



[40] See: *Third Sector Trends in England and Wales 2022: finances, assets and organisational wellbeing*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Section 5.4 'Using digital technology to secure and manage money': https://www.stchads.ac.uk/research/research-news/testing-times-ahead-for-third-sector-finances/.

[41] Self-selected samples usually refer to studies where an open call is made to individuals who are interested in the topic (either because they favour or oppose it – but rarely because they are disinterested or ambivalent about the issue). This skews findings and undermines their accuracy. For a critical discussion, see Keilding, N. and Louis, T. (2016) 'Perils and potential of self-selected entry to epidemiological studies and surveys', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 179(2) 319-376; Oksanen, A., Räsänen, P. and Blank, G. (2020) 'Social media, web, and panel surveys: using non-probability samples in social and policy research', *Policy and Internet*, 13(1), 134-155.

[42] See, for example, Joe Lepper (2022) *Charities to use more digital in 2022*, London: Charity Digital (23rd February) https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/topics/charities-to-use-more-digital-in-2022-9732. There has been more convincing research on the changing uses of digital during the pandemic, see NCVO (2021) 'New survey shows 81% of charities changed how they used digital technology during the pandemic', https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/new-survey-digital-technology-during-the-pandemic/#/.

Figure 5.9 **Regular use of an organisational website 2019-2022**
(England and Wales, 2019 n=3,955, 2022 n=5,959)

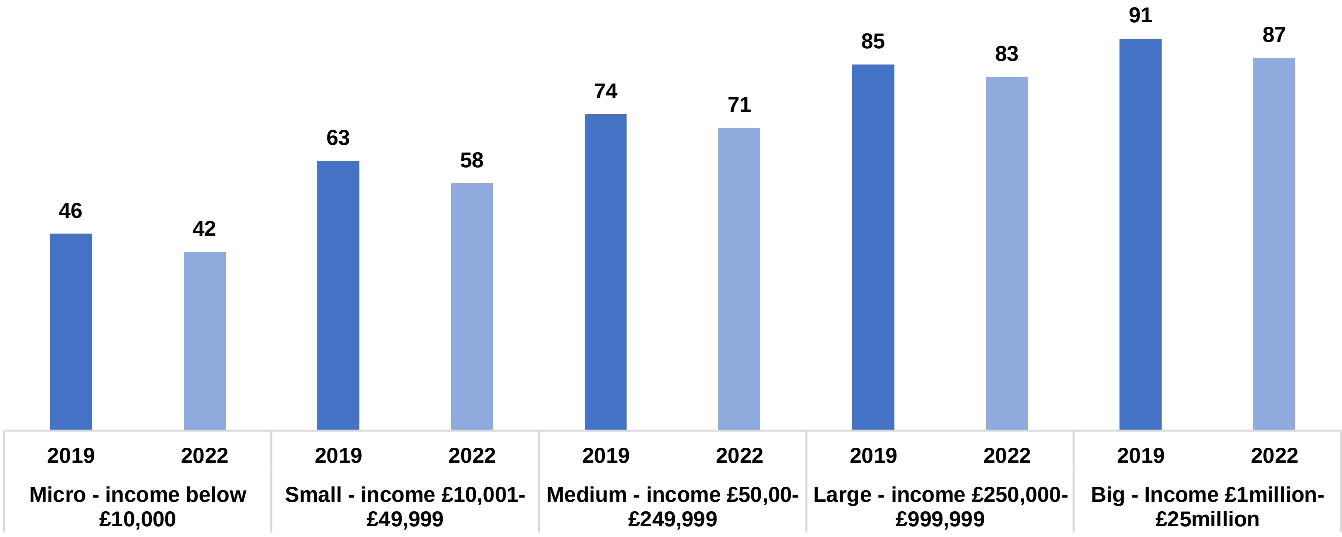
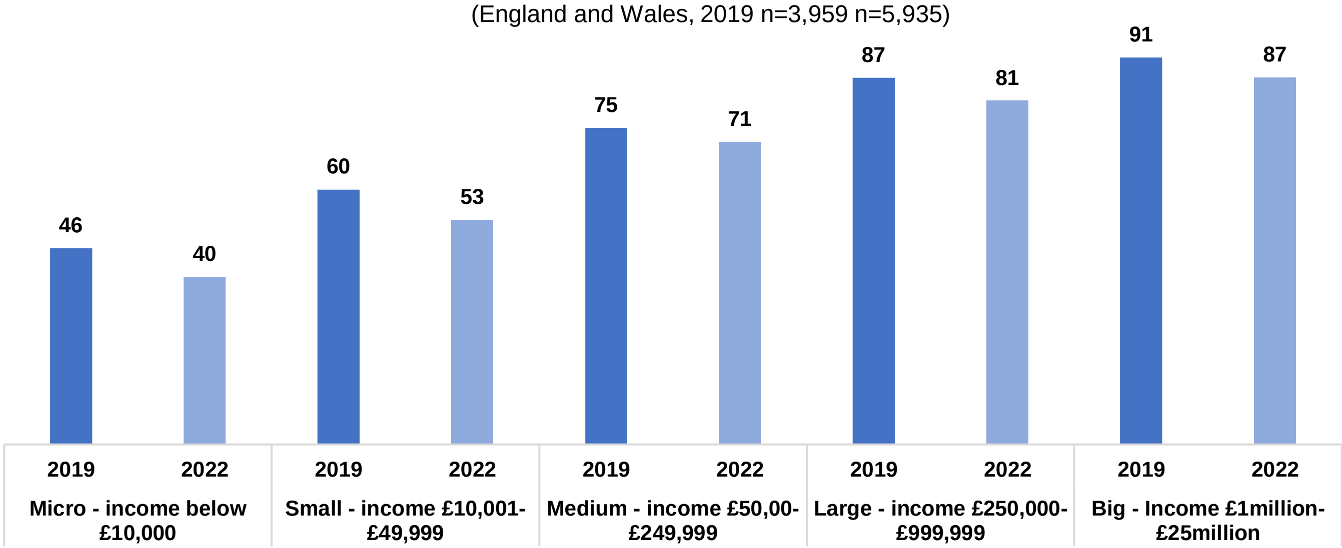


Figure 5.10 **Regular use of social media (e.g. twitter, facebook) 2019-2022**
(England and Wales, 2019 n=3,959 n=5,935)

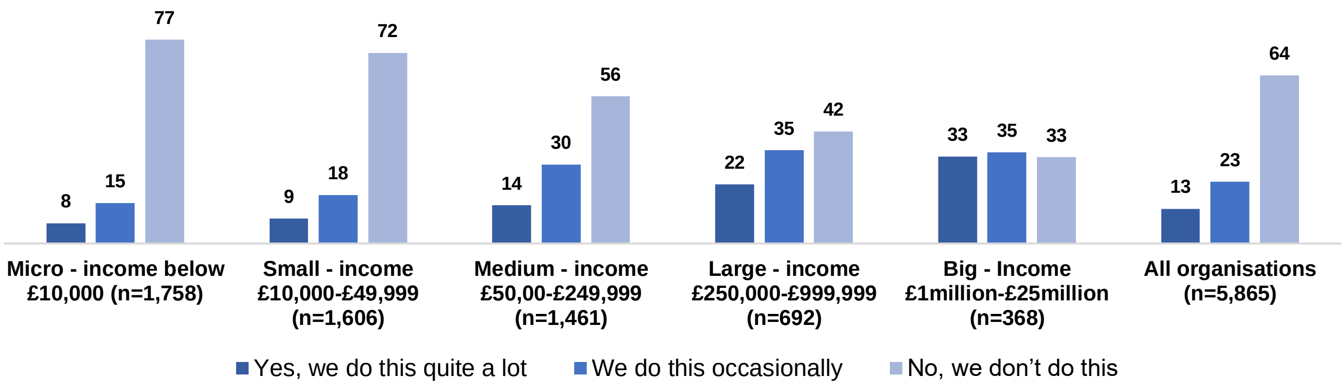


Data on the use of digital technology for campaigning to further organisational purposes were collected for the first time in 2022. Figure 5.11 shows how engagement with campaigning digitally varies by size of organisations.[43] The majority of TSOs do not campaign digitally (64%).

Amongst those which do, larger organisations tend to be more involved than smaller organisations. A third of the biggest organisations campaign digitally 'quite a lot' compared with just 8 per cent of micro TSOs. Nevertheless, nearly a quarter of micro organisations (23%) are involved in digital campaigning.

[43] Questions about the legitimacy of campaigning from a Charity Commission point of view, as discussed in this section, can be dispensed with because respondents were specifically asked to respond to the statement 'Online campaigning about issues important to us' - indicating that the purpose of campaigning is explicitly aligned with their charitable objects.

Figure 5.11 **Percentage of TSOs which engage in digital campaigning**
(England and Wales 2022)



These headline statistics are interesting, but are difficult to interpret using available data because too little information is currently available on the approaches taken to campaigning digitally. To achieve this will require more intensive qualitative research on the use of digital applications.[44] It is possible to get some indication of the intensity of digital campaigning by looking at the beneficiaries served by organisations.

Figure 5.2 is divided into two parts. On the right-hand side of the table, the grey columns show the percentage of all TSOs serving specific beneficiary groups and then shows the percentage of those TSOs using digital campaigning.

For example, 68 per cent of organisations which work for people with concerns about gender and sexuality (n=268) engage in some form of campaigning. All of these organisations (100%) use digital media to campaign. At the other end of the spectrum, of those organisations which serve 'people in general' (n=3,140) only 45 per cent engage in campaigning – of which 76 per cent use social media to campaign.

On the left- hand side of the table (uncoloured columns) the percentage of organisations which campaign more intensively ('we do this quite a lot') and less intensively ('we do this occasionally') are shown. These data indicate that organisations which have a strong focus on discrete beneficiary groups are more heavily involved with digital campaigning than TSOs with a more generalist beneficiary orientation. Furthermore, they use social media more intensively to serve this purpose.

For example, almost half of TSOs campaigning for 'issues surrounding gender and sexuality' do so regularly, compared with just a third of those organisations which campaign for 'people in general'.

[44] Given the relatively low levels of engagement in digital campaigning, too few respondents would be interested in such questions which may lead to them leaving the survey prematurely. Third Sector Trends surveys generally only ask questions when at least 95 per cent of in-survey respondents are likely to answer. For a more detailed discussion of the approach taken to survey design, see: https://www.stchads.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Third-Sector-Trends-Research-Methods-2022.pdf. The survey will continue to track usage of digital applications using existing questions in 2025.

Table 5.2 **Use of digital media for campaigning purposes** (England and Wales 2022, n=6,070)

Beneficiaries served	Percentage of TSOs using digital media to engage in campaigning: Yes, we do this quite a lot	We do this occasion-ally	No, we don't do this	N=	Percent of all TSOs that campaign using any method (in rank order)	Percent of all TSOs that campaign which use digital media to campaign
People with concerns about gender and sexuality	31.3	36.2	32.5	268	***67.5***	***100.0***
Other Third Sector Organisations	21.8	37.0	41.3	441	***66.5***	***88.4***
People of a particular ethnic or racial origin	22.9	33.5	43.6	475	***69.0***	***81.7***
Carers	23.1	33.2	43.7	611	***56.3***	***100.0***
People with homelessness and housing issues	20.9	33.9	45.2	626	***64.9***	***84.4***
Unemployed/workless people	21.6	34.4	44.0	778	***67.0***	***83.6***
People in rural areas	15.3	24.5	60.2	928	***49.7***	***80.1***
People in disadvantaged urban areas	20.5	33.8	45.7	971	***66.5***	***81.7***
People with learning disabilities	18.3	30.4	51.3	1,060	***59.1***	***82.4***
People or households living in poverty	19.9	31.7	48.4	1,121	***63.2***	***81.6***
People with physical disabilities	17.7	27.8	54.5	1,200	***56.6***	***80.4***
People with physical health conditions	18.6	29.1	52.3	1,218	***57.7***	***82.7***
People with mental health conditions	20.1	31.5	48.5	1,455	***61.6***	***83.8***
Older people	13.0	25.7	61.3	1,882	***50.5***	***76.6***
Children and young people	13.8	25.9	60.3	2,472	***48.8***	***81.4***
People in general	12.3	22.4	65.3	3,140	***45.4***	***76.4***

Area variations in digital campaigning are shown in Figures 5.12 to 5.14. The data indicate that TSOs are more likely to be engaged in digital campaign when based in metropolitan areas (45%) than in town and country areas (29%). These differences may partly be due to the concentration of areas of deprivation in metropolitan districts. In the poorest areas, 53 per cent of TSOs are involved in digital campaigning compared with just 27 per cent in the most affluent areas.[45]

Regional variations are difficult to interpret without further analysis. But is clear that digital campaigning is much more common in London and North West England than in other English regions or Wales. The lowest levels of digital campaigning are concentrated in East of England, South East England and South West England where smaller organisations predominate and areas are generally more affluent.

[45] TSOs working in the most deprived areas, it has been argued, also make a valuable contribution to digital exclusion. See, for example: Joe Roberson (2021) *Five ways charities have reduced digital exclusion through their services*, London: Catalyst https://www.thecatalyst.org.uk/resource-articles/charities-digital-exclusion. In a forthcoming Third Sector Trends report for *Power to Change*, these data will be explored further, including analysis on sharing of digital technology and skills across the Third Sector (and community businesses in particular) together with analysis on use of digital for service delivery.

Figure 5.12 **Digital campaiging by area urban characteristics**
(England and Wales 2022, n= 5,900)

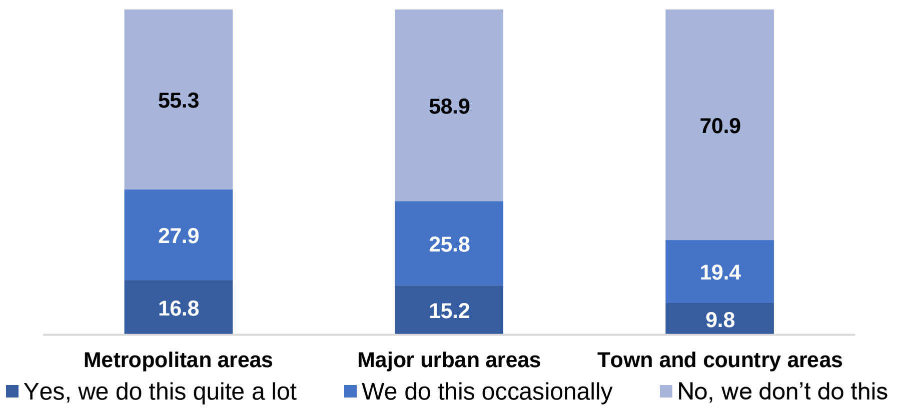


Figure 5.13 **Digital campaigning by area affluence**
(England and Wales 2022, n=5,808)

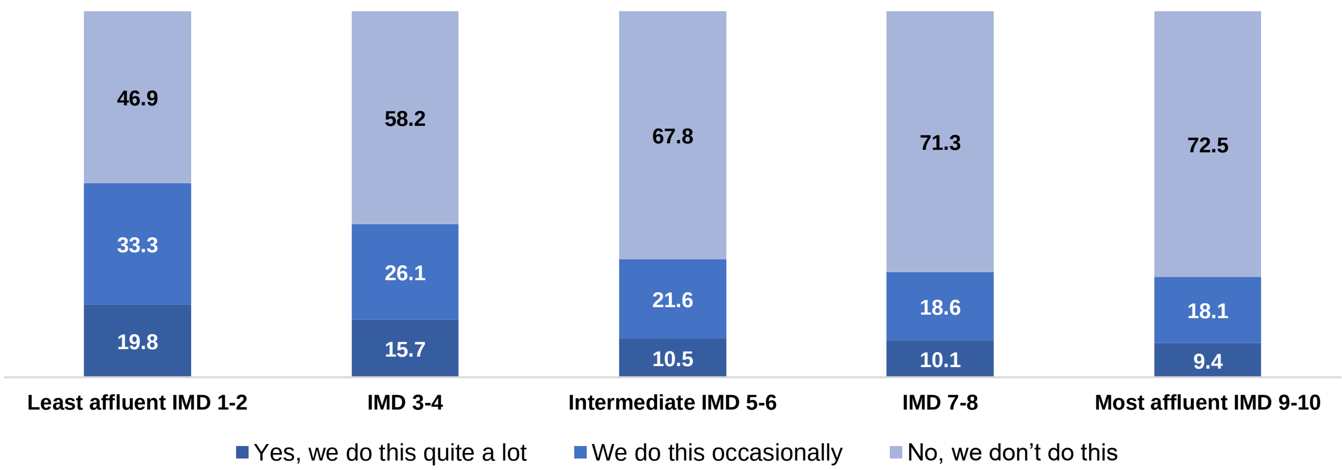
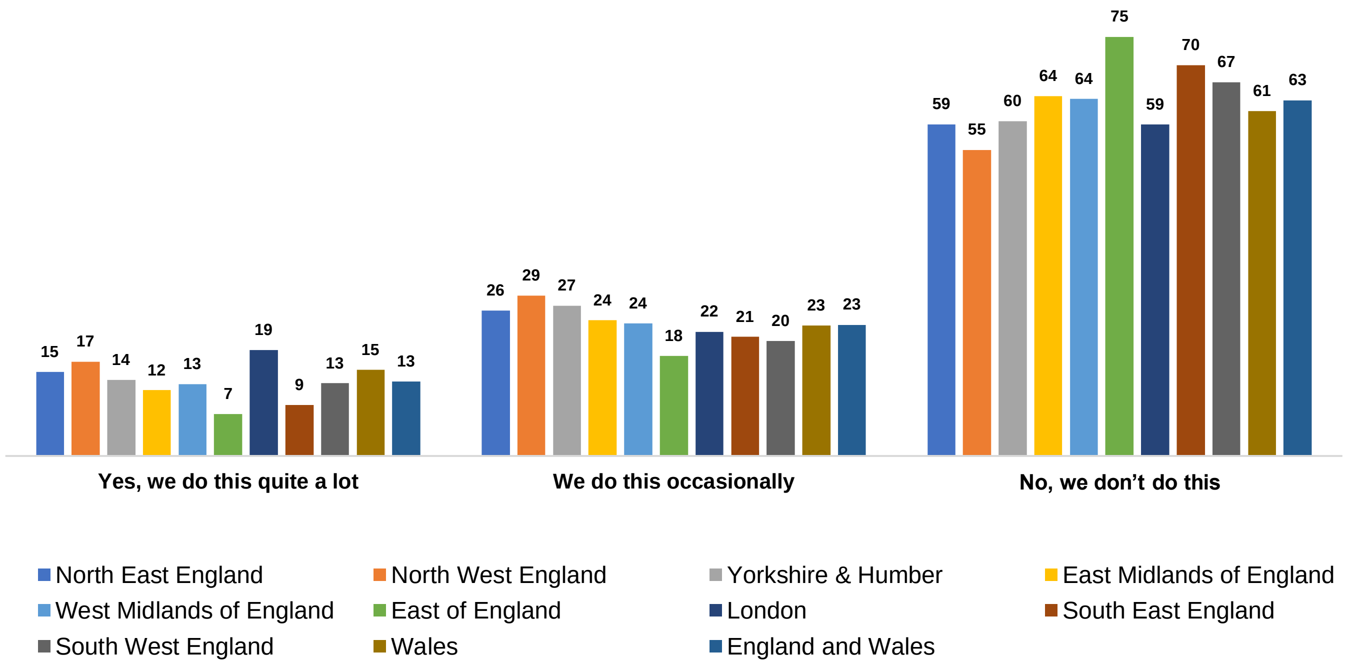


Figure 5.14 **Percentage of organisations which engage in digital campaigning by English regions and Wales 2022** (England and Wales, n=5,913)



Section 6

Summary and implications

This report on sector inter-relationships and their role in influencing local social and public policy concludes this phase of national level statistical analysis of survey data from the Third Sector Trends study in England and Wales in 2022.

Understanding relationships is vital when examining the contribution the Third Sector makes to economy, environment and society – not least because the sector is so big. As the first report revealed, there are about 200,000 registered organisations in England and Wales with a workforce of 1.1 million employed people and 4.3 million regular volunteers.

The energy the sector has at its disposal can be valued financially by the hours its workforce puts in to effect social benefit at £54 billion. At a national level, the energy the sector produces £83 billion of 'tangible' added value (including direct economic, fiscal and use value).

Additionally, at least £54 billion of intangible value is produced - ranging from 'social value' for individuals (by tackling, for example, social isolation), 'community value' (such as increasing pride in place) and 'existence value' (when caring for fragile ecosystems that people do not 'use', but want to be protected).

Assessing the whole sector's value in England and Wales involves more than simply 'adding up' the contributions of individual organisations. That is, firstly, because the value of the sector's social productivity is greater than the sum of parts; and secondly, because value is not 'owned' by individual organisations – but rather, is shared.

Third Sector organisations can rarely, if ever, achieve everything on their own. This report shows that most organisations, large or small, work together well – but rarely to the point that they lose their independence. Informal neighbourly relationships are the most common: 73 per cent of TSOs do this. But there is a lot of semi-formal complementary activity too – where organisations work together towards shared goals (51% of micro TSOs get involved in such work, rising to 82% of the biggest organisations).

Policy makers are right that this is a sector which can work well together, but there are dangers of pushing the analogy too far by imagining that it is a resource that can be corralled and directed to do the government's bidding.

So it is not surprising that policy makers applaud the Third Sector for working well in partnership and in so doing, get closer to their communities than local public sector organisations can usually manage. And certainly, government at national and local level recognised during the Coronavirus pandemic that the sector knew when to take the initiative, could tackle problems in innovative ways and was fleet of foot when the crisis occurred.

Policy makers are right that this is a sector which can work well together, but there are dangers of pushing the analogy too far by imagining that it is a resource that can be corralled and directed to do the government's bidding.

The local Third Sector is a web of complex interactions, not a mappable system that fits together like a jigsaw and works harmoniously like a machine. There may be a great deal of internal cooperation, just as there is with the public and private sectors too. But there are tensions. Competition over resources is endemic and fundamental differences in organisational values, ambitions, priorities and approaches to practice proliferate.

Buttering up the Third Sector with flattery in policy statements does not mean that organisations will rush in to provide assistance unless objectives are aligned with their own interests, that they are incentivised or supported to do.

Buttering up the sector with flattery in policy statements does not mean, therefore, that organisations will rush in to provide assistance unless objectives are aligned with their own interests, that they are incentivised or supported to do so and that the cost of involvement can be covered – one way or another.[46]

This report shows that fewer organisations are enamoured by the idea of formal partnerships that constrain aspects of their autonomy (19% of micro organisations get involved rising to 68% of the biggest TSOs). Furthermore, the evidence presented in the third report on sector finances demonstrated that the appetite to tender for contracts to deliver public services has been on the wane for middling-sized organisations for some time. And while involvement in contracts is holding up amongst the biggest organisations, circumstance is making it more difficult for them to sustain this due to severe problems associated with staff retention and recruitment.

The last decade has been tough, financially, for local public sector organisations. Government austerity programmes have hit council budgets hard and NHS trusts and partnerships have struggled to manage with steeply rising costs and growing demand. And yet, this report shows that the Third Sector has consistently felt highly valued by local public sector agencies (remaining at about 90% of TSOs since the study began in 2010).

Relationships with public sector bodies are not one-way. About two thirds of TSOs feel that the local public sector informs them on matters of that concern them. And while fewer organisations think that the public sector involves them appropriately in developing and implementing policies that affect them – a lot do (50%).

In 2022, Third Sector Trends collected more finely-tuned data on how charities and social enterprises engage with the public sector in practical terms to pursue their charitable objectives or to work together to achieve shared local interests.

There is a great deal of engagement with local social and public policy where TSOs attend formal meetings or contribute to consultations (including 61% of micro organisations rising to 84% of the biggest TSOs). A good deal of active 'behind-the-scenes' interaction to influence policy goes on too (rising from 36% of micro TSOs to 56% of the biggest).

National government is more likely to be pleased than perturbed that the Third Sector gets involved in local social and public policy debates. But over the last decade, while respecting the right of charities to campaign, Ministers and the Charity Commission have become hot under the collar about 'illegitimate' political activities. This resulted in the Lobbying Act in 2014 and just in the last few weeks, the publication of draft guidance for charitable trustees on the avoidance of mis-use of social media for political purposes. The eight-week consultation period promises to produce lively debate.

It is surprising that government has become quite so tetchy about this issue because evidence on the incidence of campaigning, until now, has been extremely limited. In 2022 Third Sector sought to find out how widespread political engagement is by asking participants, firstly, if they 'tend to steer clear' of politics. Percentages of TSOs

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[46] As the second report (on people) and the third report (on finances) show, determining the cost of delivery is not entirely straightforward issue for TSOs because they use a mix of paid and volunteer labour to get things done. Explaining how financial costs are met is even more complicated. Organisations use income from various sources to fund their work. This can include grants, contracts, earned income, subscriptions, donations, gifts and legacies, income from investments, loans and in-kind support (such as the free use of space and facility, or expert pro bono support). The likelihood, especially amongst larger organisations is that they will be supported by more than one grant funder (it is not unusual to have a number of grants running concurrently from several foundations together with grants from local authorities or NHS trusts or partnerships – some of which will have been given as unrestricted funding while others will be conditional. Money can be shared or vired from sources to meet the same or similar objectives. This is why, when grant makers expect to demonstrate accountability of their spend, evidencing the source of impact can be so hard to disentangle because all of the aims of the organisation are likely to be closely related but also multifaceted. For a more detailed discussion of such processes, see Chapman, T. (2020) *The strength of weak ties: how charitable trusts and foundations collectively contribute to civil society in North East England,* Newcastle upon Tyne: Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland: https://www.stchads.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CFTWN-Strength-of-Weak-Ties-Full-Report-February-2020.pdf.

agreeing that they steer clear of local politics rises from 67% of the biggest organisations to 80% of the smallest.

A second question asked if organisations ‘campaign to further the interests of our beneficiaries’ - which is judged to be a legitimate activity according to the Charity Commission. Around a third of micro TSOs (36%) campaign - rising to 71 per cent of the biggest organisations).

Becoming agitated about illegitimate political activities of charities, like as not, reveals as much about the government’s political insecurities as it does about the sector itself: not least because the enormous range of political opinion and activity within the Third Sector is so complex that it defies meaningful categorisation.

Appendix
Additional data tables

Table A.1 **Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics** (English regions and Wales, 2022)

	Micro (£10,000 or less)	**Small** (£10,001- £50,000)	**Medium** (£50,001 - £250,000)	**Large** (£250,001 - £1m)	**Big** (£1m – £25m)
North East England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	18.8	35.3	39.2	36.0	50.0
Number of registered organisations in region	2,360	1,917	1,599	706	346
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	443	677	626	254	173
North West England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	20.3	28.2	34.9	57.8	52.9
Number of registered organisations in region	7,053	5,607	4,742	1,788	924
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	1,433	1,584	1,657	1,033	489
Yorkshire and Humber					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	25.4	25.9	33.3	46.5	43.8
Number of registered organisations in region	5,215	4,152	3,380	1,224	597
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	1,325	1,077	1,127	5,69	261
East Midlands of England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	11.5	17.4	25.7	50.0	36.8
Number of registered organisations in region	6,072	4,115	2,840	971	493
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	697	717	730	485	182
West Midlands of England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	22.3	18.7	34.5	40.0	54.3
Number of registered organisations in region	6,248	4,808	3,601	1,357	737
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	1,393	899	1,243	543	400

Table A.1 continued/…	**Micro** (£10,000 or less)	**Small** (£10,001-£50,000)	**Medium** (£50,001 - £250,000)	**Large** (£250,001 - £1m)	**Big** (£1m – £25m)
East of England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	13.2	20.6	22.4	38.0	42.1
Number of registered organisations in region	8,558	6,224	4,625	1,448	778
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	1,126	1,284	1,036	5,50	328
London					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	28.9	23.4	32.4	54.9	33.3
Number of registered organisations in region	9,737	9,275	9,968	5,657	3,849
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	2,815	2,169	3,229	3,105	1,283
South East England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	15.5	15.4	24.2	34.9	22.2
Number of registered organisations in region	10,740	10,573	7,805	2,602	1,601
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	1,670	1,627	1,885	908	356
South West of England					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	20.7	15.4	37.4	30.9	38.2
Number of registered organisations in region	9,142	7,081	4,997	1,610	876
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	1,890	1,089	1,867	497	335
Wales					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	23.3	27.0	39.1	55.3	39.1
Number of registered organisations in region	4,137	2,972	1,848	713	372
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	964	802	723	394	145
England and Wales					
Percent of organisations which will engage in local politics	19.8	21.8	32.5	44.6	42.6
Number of registered organisations in region	69,400	56,800	45,400	17,800	10,400
Estimated number of organisations engaging in local politics	13,730	12,406	14,733	7,943	4,433

*Percentages refer to 2022 survey data TSOs in each region / nation
**Numbers of organisations are drawn from Third Sector Trends register data 2022.

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