

WORLD GIVING REPORT

ITALY — CHARITY INSIGHTS

2025

Fondo
Filantropico
Italiano



CAF
Charities Aid Foundation

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A close-up photograph of a group of children, likely of Southeast Asian descent, smiling and making peace signs. The children are of various ages, with some in the foreground and others slightly behind. They are wearing casual clothing. A solid red horizontal banner is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

01 INTRODUCTION

Welcome.

The Italy Charity Insights Report reveals the current landscape for charitable organisations in Italy. It is the result of our partnership with the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), and part of the World Giving Report 2025 (WGR). All findings related to this country are positioned within the wider global research. In particular, we surveyed 113 charities and organisations throughout the Italian territory.

One of the key findings of this year's research is that the current Italian regulatory framework, when it comes to the non-profit sector, is perceived as inadequate or overly demanding by those working in it: data in stark contrast with the global average. Moreover, among many other challenges for charities, staff recruiting is the biggest, together with employee retention.

On the other hand, our study surprisingly showed that Italian charities have greater revenue diversification than the rest of the world. Despite in fact relying on traditional sources the sector shows better penetration into crucial channels for long-term sustainability, such as government funding and endowments/legacies.

Fondo Filantropico Italiano (FFI), in this difficult context, continues to expand its efforts to support a more organised, concrete and effective philanthropy. Through different personalised tools for every purpose, it aims to strengthen the operational resilience of charitable organisations, helping them adapt to current challenges and take advantage of the right opportunities.



Marcello Gallo
President,
Fondo Filantropico Italiano

“What is needed in Italy is a public-private alliance that can enhance and support the Third Sector, the true pillar of social cohesion. Without it the loss to society would be significant, as the non-profit sector provides services that the government today either cannot or does not want to offer.”

About us.

Fondo Filantropico Italiano

Fondo Filantropico Italiano (FFI) is one of the leading organisations for philanthropy advisory in Italy.

FFI has been established to support visionary individuals in creating value for society, the environment and future generations. FFI is the ideal partner for transforming the donor's commitment into unique and concrete projects: action for the common good.

It was created by a group of highly-successful Italian entrepreneurs, driven by the belief that their extensive experience in the non-profit sector and personal commitment can greatly improve society and generate progress.

FFI supports major private donors, companies and non-profit organisations in grant-making and managing donations in Italy and abroad through donor-advised funds and philanthropy advisory.

CAF

The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) exists to accelerate progress in society towards a fair and sustainable future for all. Over the last 100 years, we have led the way in developing innovative approaches to giving. Annually, we distribute over £1 billion to social purpose organisations around the globe.

As a leading charity operating in the UK, US and Canada, alongside an international network of partners, CAF works at the centre of the giving world. We collaborate with corporate and individual donors to enable them to give more effectively, strategically and impactfully. This includes connecting them to charities globally and providing access to our in-depth sector knowledge, governance expertise and innovative giving solutions.

We help social purpose organisations to strengthen their resilience and do more of their life changing work, through strategic advisory services from our Impact Accelerator, tools to support charities' fundraising activities, and charity financial services from CAF Bank Limited and CAF Financial Solutions Limited. Using our research, policy and campaigns work, we understand and influence the wider environment for charities and donors.

Together, we give more.

The World Giving Report captures the public's attitudes and behaviours around giving in 101 countries across the world and — working with local partners — the state of the charity landscape in 27 of these countries.

- This report is one of 14 country-specific Charity Insights reports and is produced by CAF in partnership with leading social purpose organisations around the world.
- You can access all our global and country-specific insights — from both donors and charities — at: www.worldgivingreport.org

Our methodology.

The results described in this report were collected as part of the Charity Landscape aspect of the World Giving Report between March and June 2025.

All fieldwork was conducted by CAF's co-author of this report. Partners reached out to charities in their countries with an online survey. Sometimes, the partners encouraged responses by conducting telephone or face-to-face interviews and simultaneously (or subsequently) completing an online response that accorded to the answers given in person. Surveys were available in the predominant local language or English.

The sample collected is an indicative snapshot of charity perspectives in this country as, in most cases, there is no data on the sample universe with which to guide any sampling or post-hoc weighting.

A note on 'Charity'

Across the report, we use the words 'charity' and 'charities' to represent any organisation that works to try and improve issues that are affecting individuals, communities, animals or the natural environment, and society as a whole.

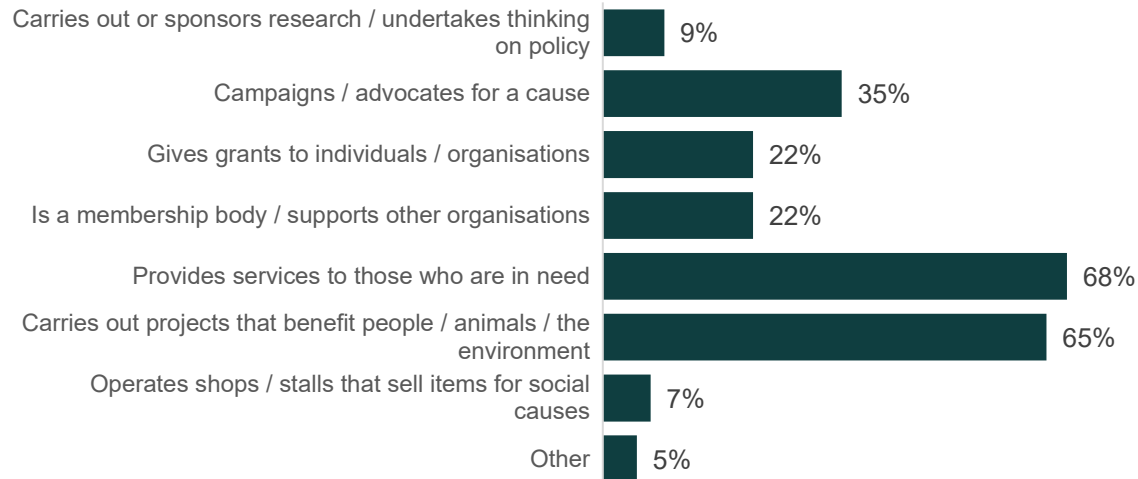
In doing so, we recognise that these terms and their definitions differ around the world, with this type of organisation also described as: non-governmental organisations (NGOs), non-profit organisations (NPOs), community organisations, social purpose organisations, associations and other names.

www.worldgivingreport.org

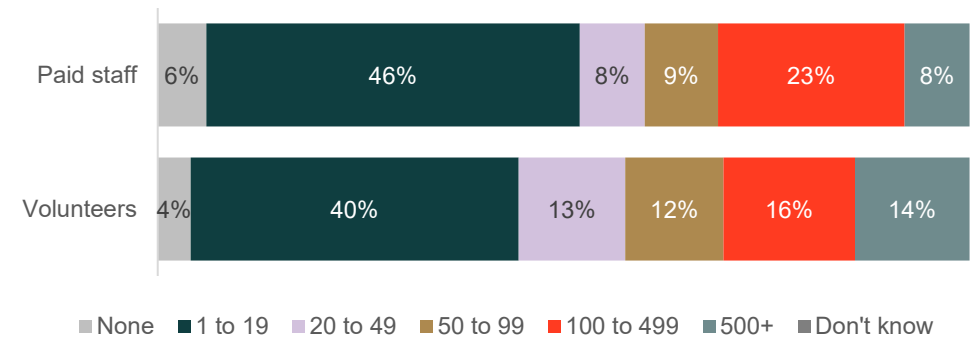


The organisations in the sample: 113 in total.

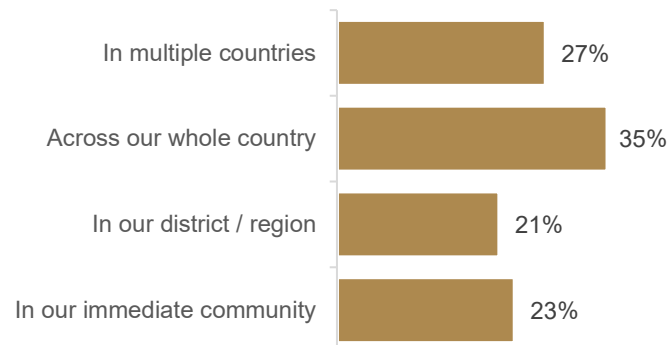
The role of the organisation:



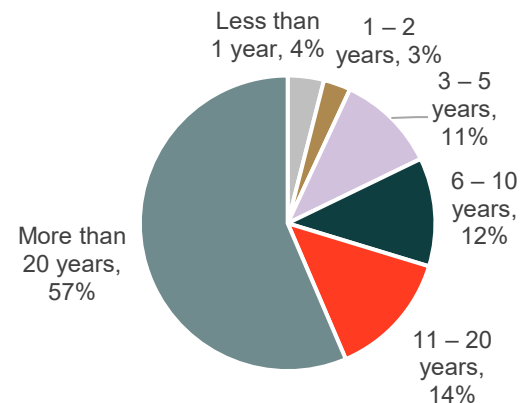
Size of organisation:



The scope of their work:



How long the organisation has operated:



The main cause area supported:

In total, 15 different main cause areas were represented within the sample, with the five most common being:

1. Children or young people (23%)
2. Disabled people (13%)
3. Health (12%)
4. Human rights / equality / diversity (8%)
5. Arts, culture, heritage or science (7%)

02 THE HEALTH OF THE SECTOR



VOLUNTEERS



VOLUNTEERS



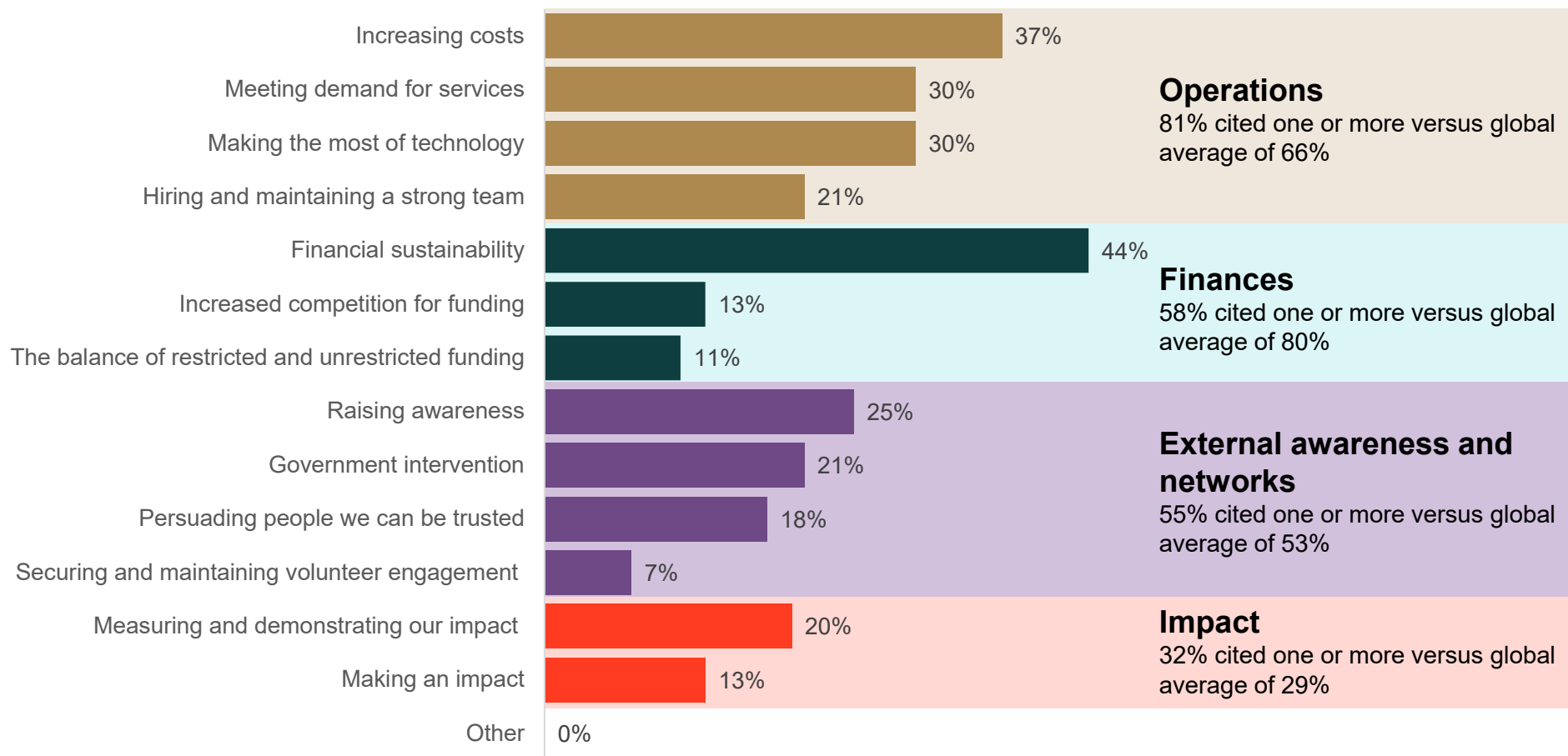
UNTEERS

The biggest challenges for the sector.

Data indicates that charities face significant pressure on two fronts in particular: long-term funding and day-to-day operational management. Any improvement strategy should prioritise a holistic approach that goes beyond fundraising and actively addresses operational efficiency and technology adoption to increase effectiveness and transparency.

Overcoming the challenge of financial sustainability inevitably requires concrete improvements in operations.

Q. Below is a list of challenges that charities might be facing. Please select the three that are most pressing for your organisation: (All charities answering, n = 105.)



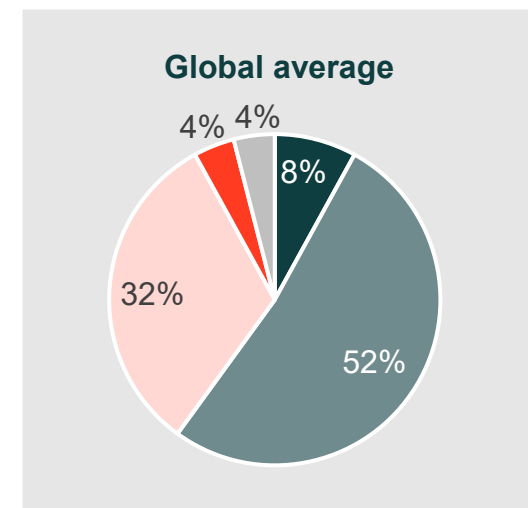
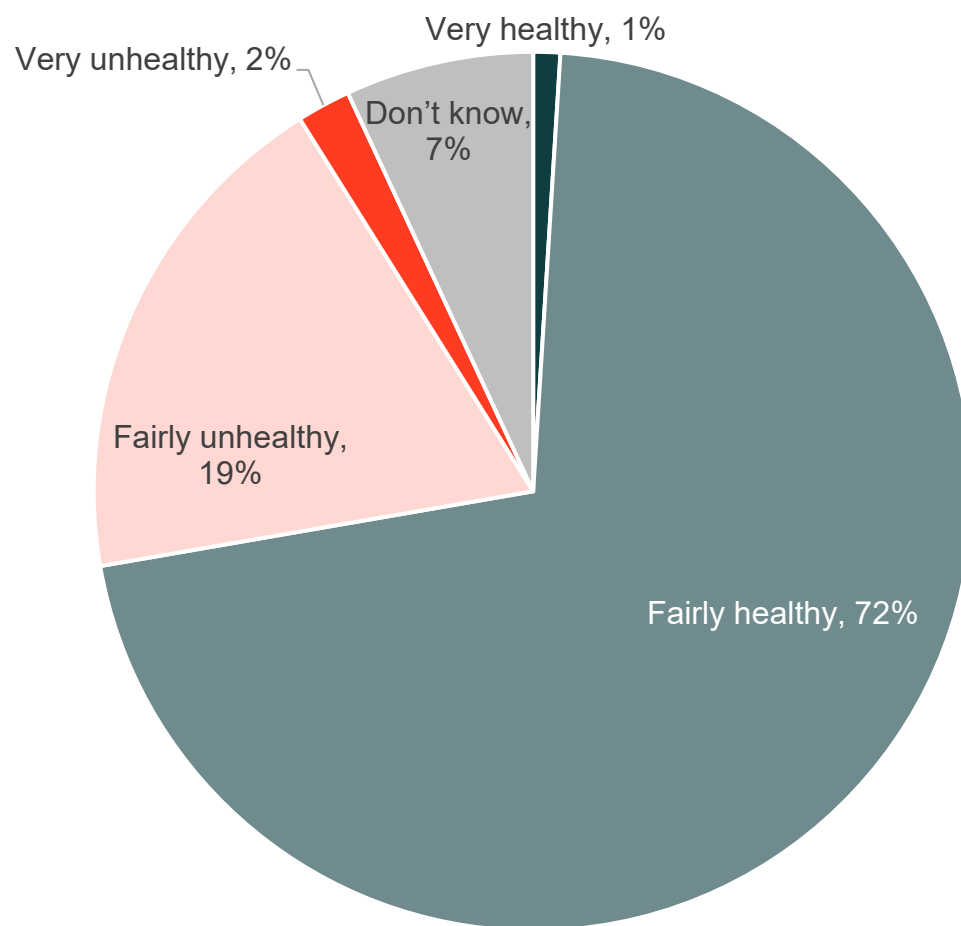
Perceptions on overall sector health.

The overall assessment of the sector's health is clearly positive, with 73% of charities interviewed perceiving it as “Fairly healthy” or “Very healthy”, a percentage significantly higher than the global average.

However, these figures most likely indicate a state of resilience and adequacy rather than true prosperity, thus reflecting a precarious balance.

Despite this confidence, the fact that 21% of charities still consider the sector to be “unhealthy” is not negligible: it indicates the existence of serious structural problems that require targeted interventions to avoid collapse and loss of essential community services.

Q. Overall, would you say the charity sector in your country is... *(All charities answering, n = 106.)*



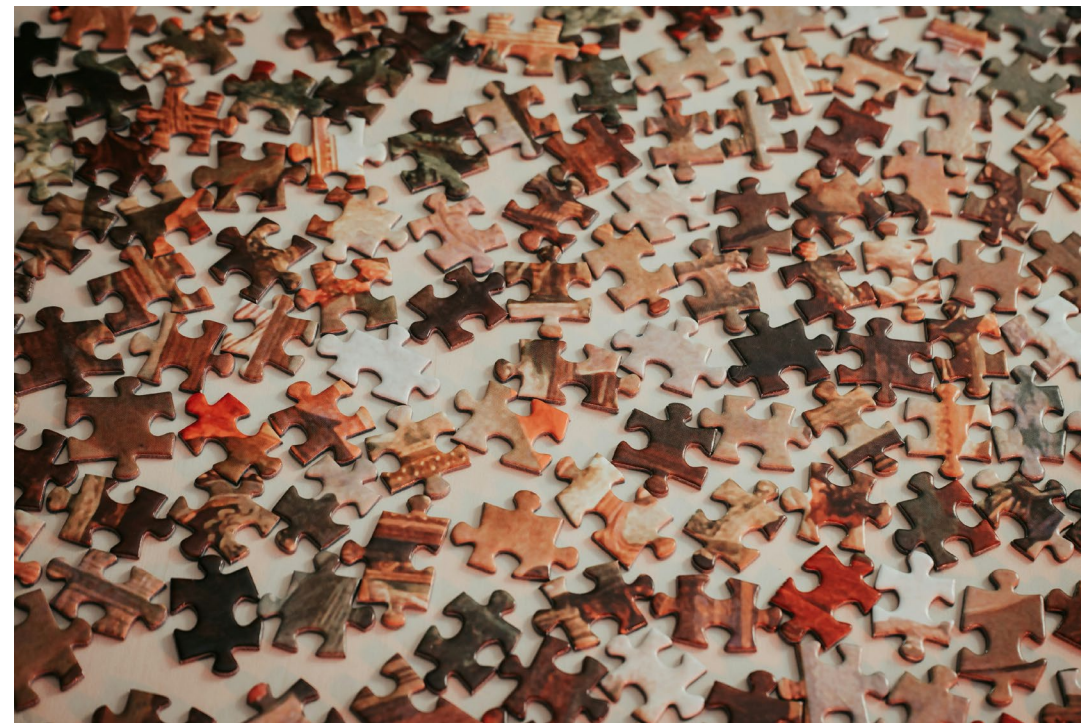
Deep dive: sector health

Analysis of qualitative responses shows that charity leaders see the sector as fundamental to society, capable of filling institutional gaps and responding to social challenges, often demonstrating remarkable resilience and innovation.

However, the general opinion is that it is not yet fully in good health. The main critical issues concern: 1) Excessive fragmentation, which makes it difficult to fully understand and interpret the sector; 2) Insufficient transparency and accountability (especially for larger charities), which fuels a negative image, and 3) The need to improve internal skills and the ability to communicate concrete results.

Many believe the sector still depends too much on external contributions and lacks adequate protection or support from Government, with bureaucracy and regulatory complexity hindering its effectiveness.

Finally, there is a widespread perception that, to progress and gain full trust, organisations need to focus on greater integration, professionalism and adaptability to change — shifting the focus from “problem solving” to creating **lasting impact**.



Due to lack of full cohesion in the sector, it is challenging to see the "bigger picture": there is therefore a need for more integration and alignment. (Picture from Sol Ponce)

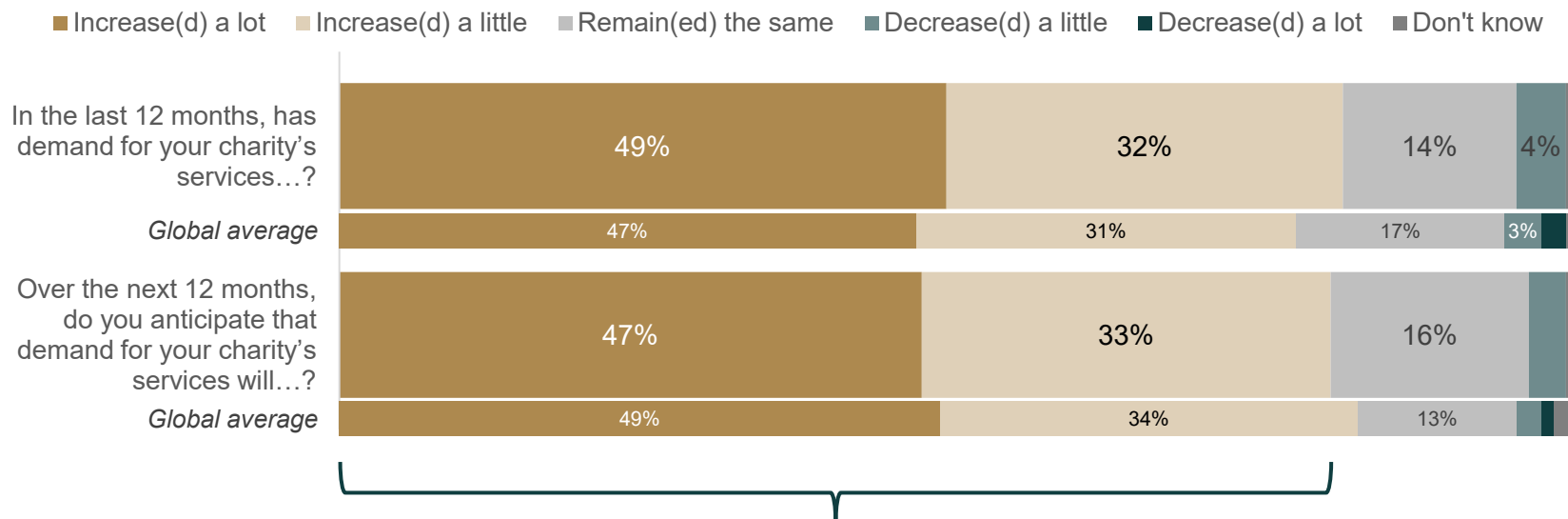
Demand for services.

Data highlights a sector under added pressure, with a substantial 81% of charities reporting an increase in demand for services over the past 12 months, and 80% anticipating a further increase over the next 12 months.

However, this forecast of sustained pressure on services is in conflict with the limited confidence in the ability to face it: only 46% of organisations affirm they could meet this demand.

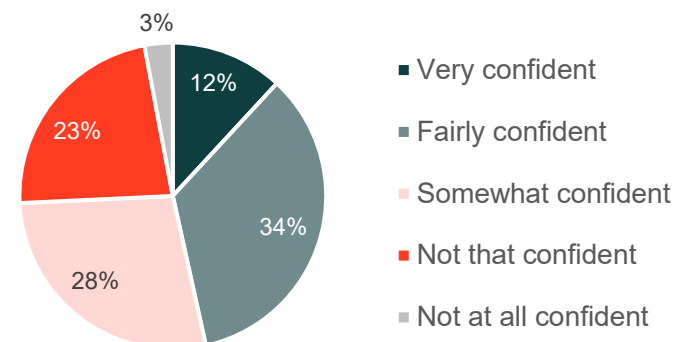
In contrast, an alarming 54% express reservations, indicating that high and persistent demand is creating a significant operational gap that charities are struggling to fill, putting the effectiveness of the services they provide at risk.

Perceptions of demand: (Charities that provide services, give grants and / or do project work, n = 94.)



How confident are you that your charity will be able to meet this increased demand?

(Charities that expect demand to increase, n = 75.)

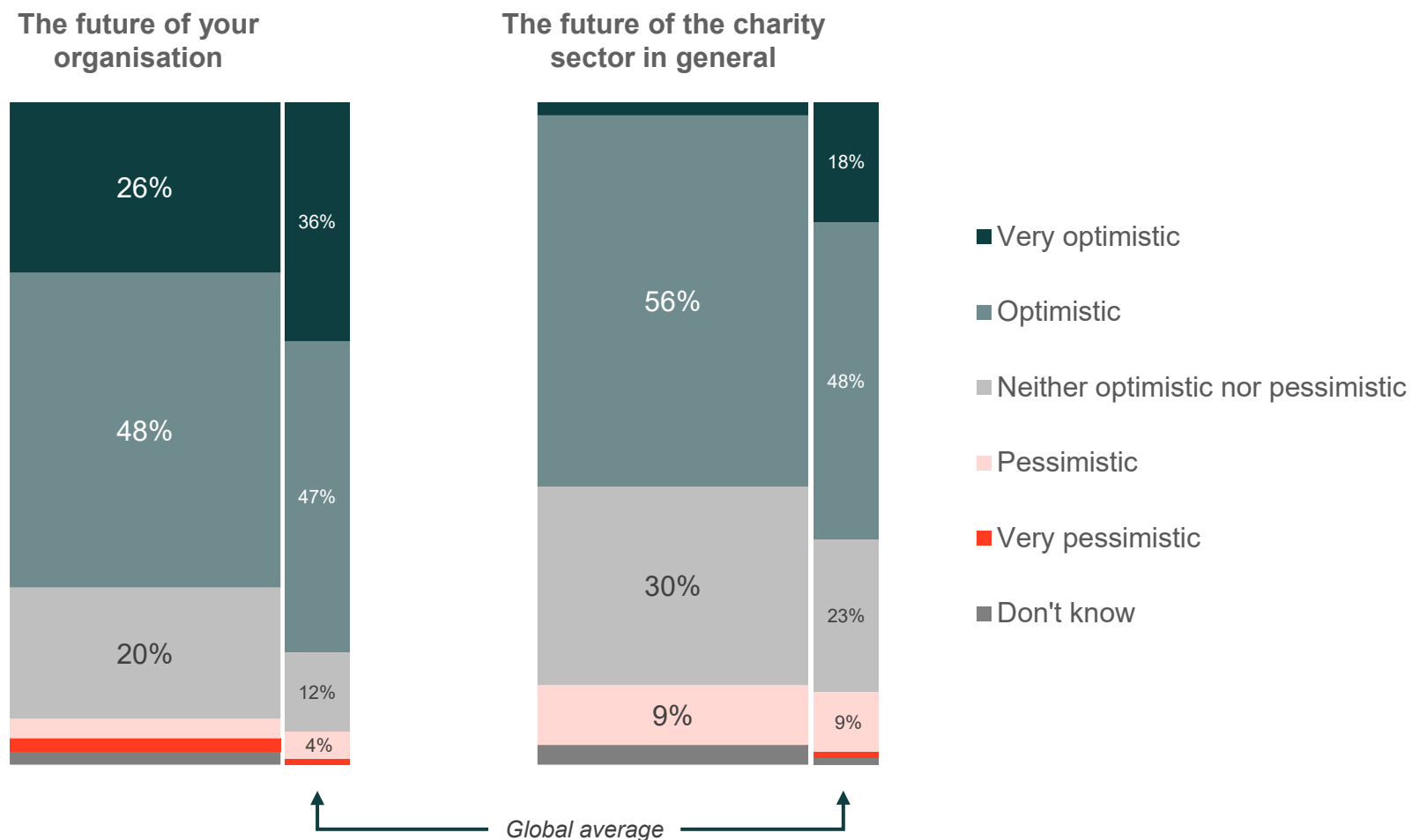


Optimism for the future.

The analysis reveals a clear difference between confidence in one's own organisation and confidence in the sector as a whole (so-called “optimism bias”). When it comes to the future of their charity, as many as three quarters of charity leaders (74%) say they are optimistic, indicating strong confidence in their own resilience and management capabilities.

In contrast, optimism drops significantly to 58% when considering the future of the charitable sector, highlighting a perception of systemic vulnerability likely caused by the current economic and political environment. The percentage of ‘Neither optimistic nor pessimistic’ is significantly higher for the sector (30% versus 20% for their own organisation), suggesting uncertainty and caution about future choices.

Q. How optimistic or pessimistic are you about...? (All charities answering, n = 105.)



CAF's six characteristics of a resilient charity.

Through our extensive research and advisory work with charities, we have identified six characteristics that show an organisation has the potential to be resilient.



Purpose



Understanding what the organisational purpose is, and just as importantly, what it is not.

Evidencing impact



The ability to identify and communicate the needs being met, and the impact that is having.

Well networked



Being well connected and able to get support from working in partnership with others.

Financially & operationally fit



Being financially and operationally fit with sufficient income from a diverse range of sources.

People & culture



Having the right staff and prioritising their development and wellbeing with effective leadership.

External awareness



Awareness of the political, economic, local and national context. Horizon scanning for threats and opportunities.

The questionnaire included a number of questions that, when taken together, give each organisation a score for each of the six characteristics. Please see page 16 for the scores for this country.

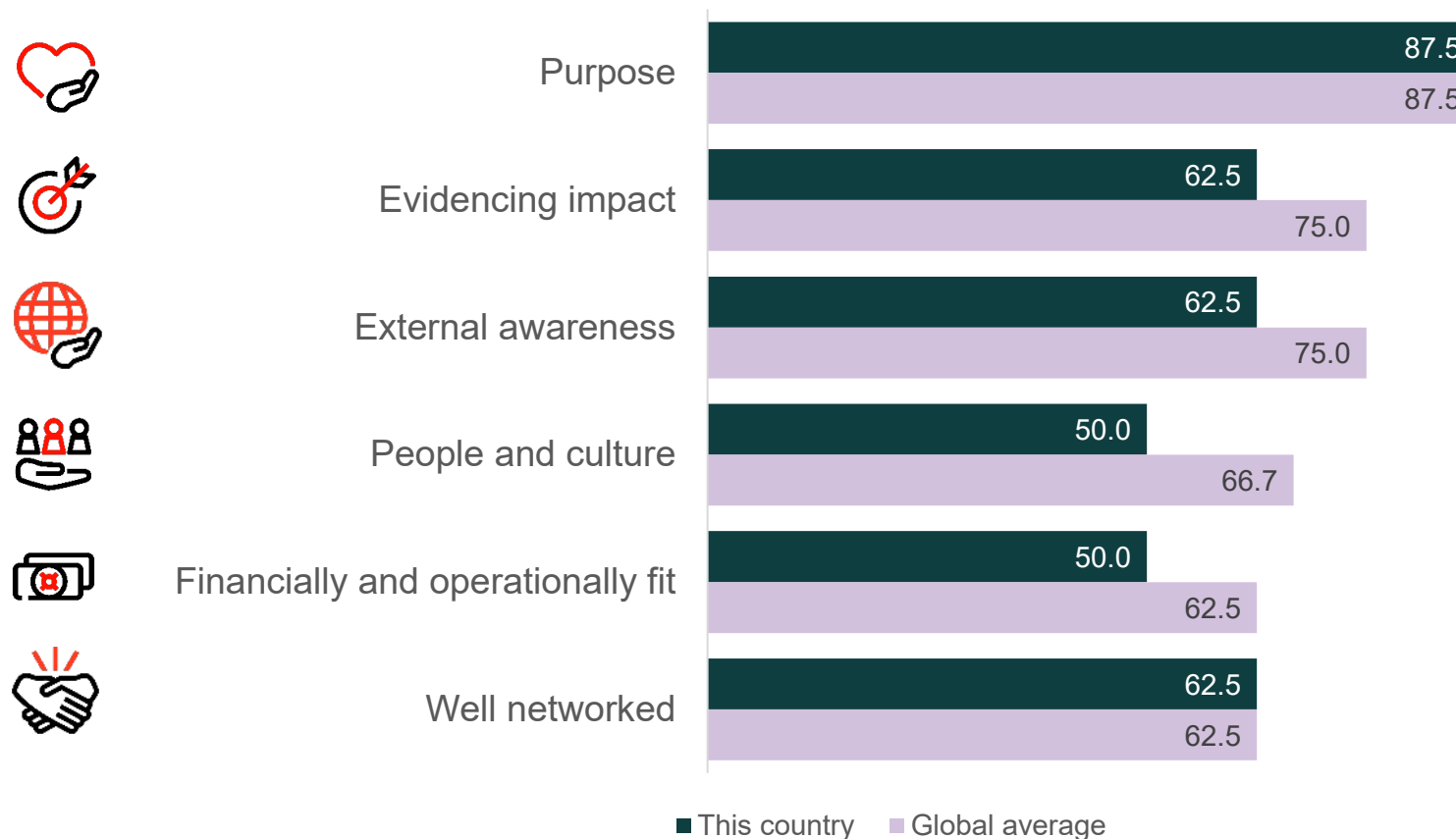
Levels of resilience.

Italian charities show a high degree of resilience in terms of “Purpose”, confirming a strong identity and motivation.

However, in almost all the other aspects, Italian data is below the global average, including in the crucial areas of “Evidencing impact”, “External awareness” and “People and culture”. The most worrying figure concerns “Financial and operationally fit”, which is well below the global average, highlighting a structural vulnerability in resource management and efficiency.

To sum up, the sector has a strong core (Purpose), but is weak in execution and resources (Finance, People, Impact), ranking behind its international counterparts in almost all operational and management parameters.

Resilience scores showing the median score for each aspect: (All charities answering, n = 107.)



03 FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL FITNESS



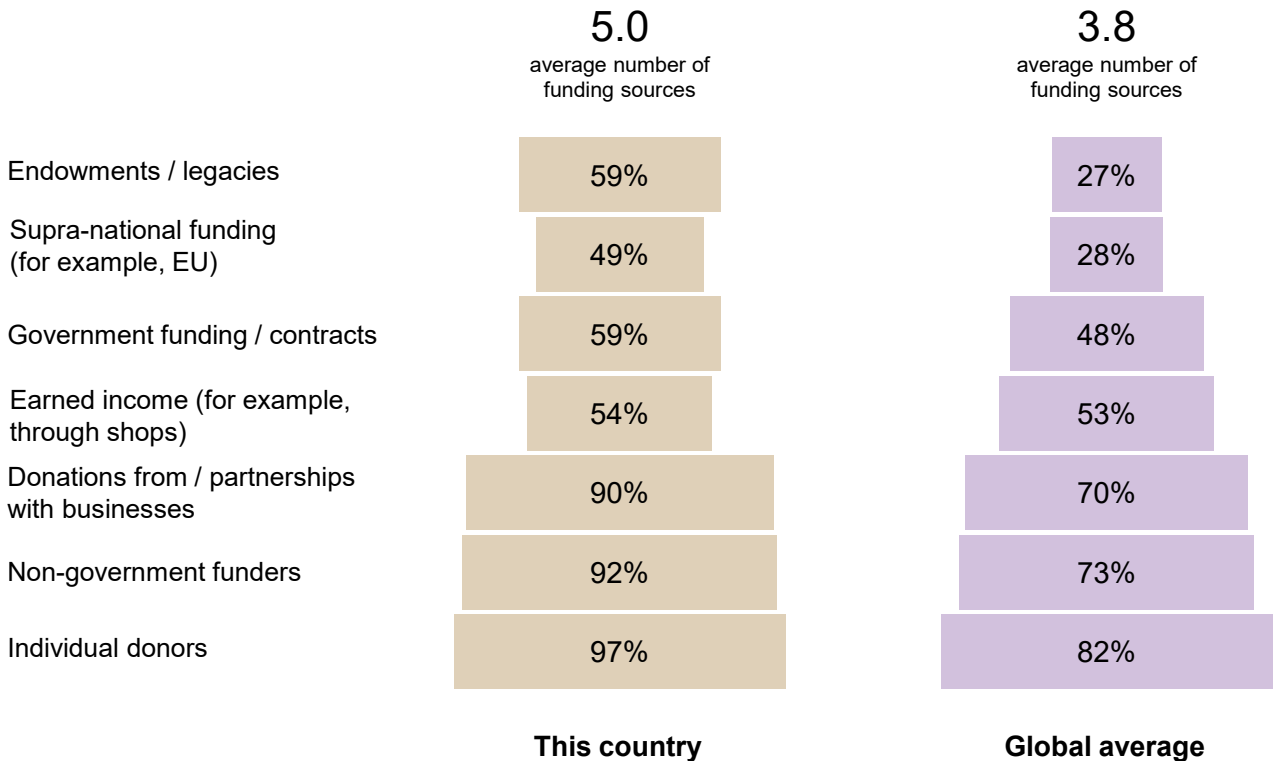
Diversity of income streams.

The analysis reveals that Italian charities have greater revenue diversification than the rest of the globe, as demonstrated by the average number of sources.

Despite heavy reliance on traditional sources, such as individual donors and non-governmental funders, the sector shows better penetration into crucial sources for long-term sustainability: Government funding/contracts and endowments/legacies. The latter suggests a much more solid financial base for the future.

However, while the high percentage of supranational funds is noteworthy, the high degree of reliance on traditional philanthropy highlights a clear need for organisations to work increasingly on their “funding mix” strategy.

The proportion of charities that receive each type of funding: *(All charities answering, n = 111.)*



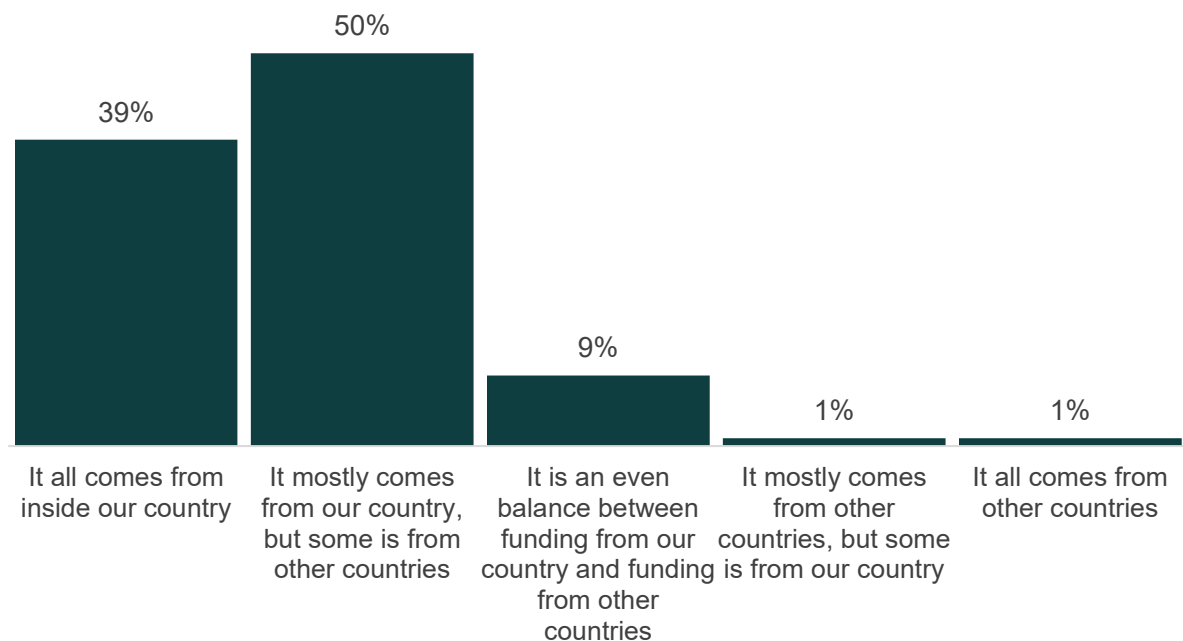
Where funding comes from geographically.

The study reveals that the charitable sector in Italy is almost entirely dependent on domestic sources, with 89% of organisations receiving funding entirely or predominantly from within the country.

While this strong localisation strengthens ties with the national community and local trust, it also exposes the sector to significant vulnerability to economic shocks or internal regulatory changes.

This limited internationalisation of fundraising suggests untapped potential in accessing supranational fundings or foreign donors, indicating that the funding mix strategy is, for now, geographically limited.

Q. Geographically, where does your funding come from? *(All charities answering, n = 111.)*

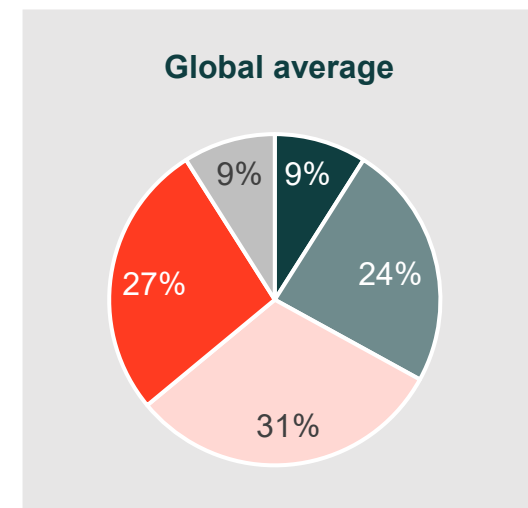
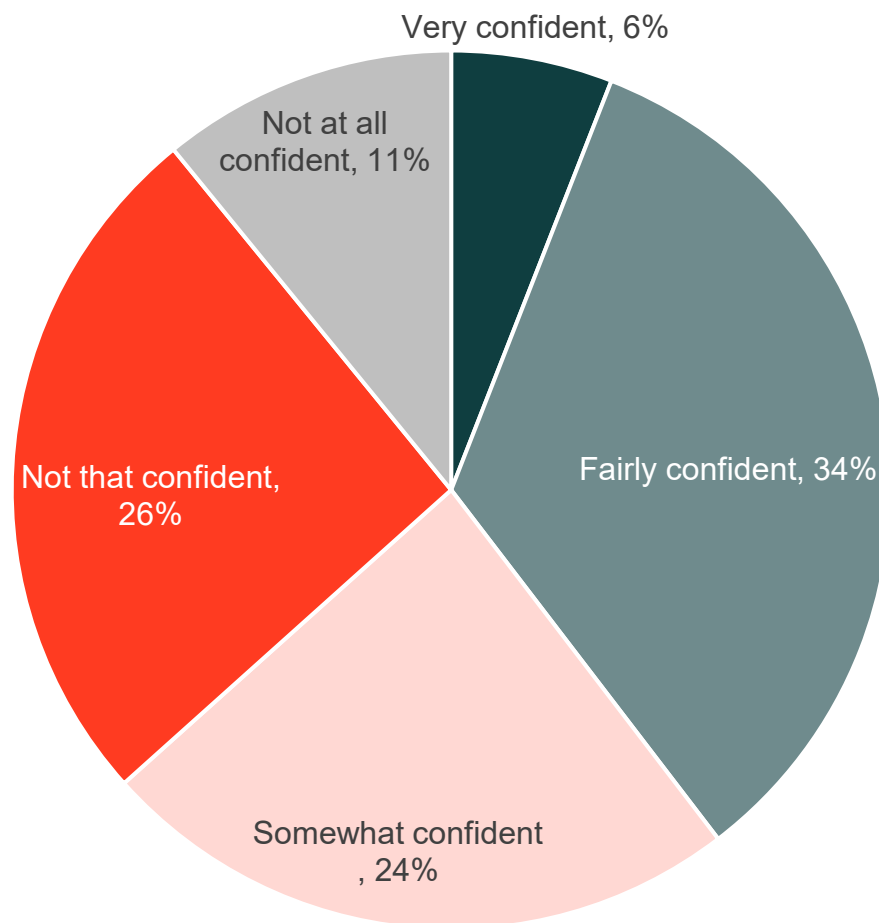


Confidence in the diversity of income streams.

The survey reveals significant financial anxiety in the sector, with only 40% of charities expressing confidence in their ability to easily manage a sudden reduction in a single source of income.

In contrast, 37% express a clear lack of confidence, indicating a perception of structural vulnerability and poor financial resilience. This low overall confidence aligns with previous data showing poor performance in the “Financially and operationally fit” category.

Q. How confident are you that your income streams are diverse enough to cope easily with sudden decreases from any one of them? *(All charities answering, n = 113.)*



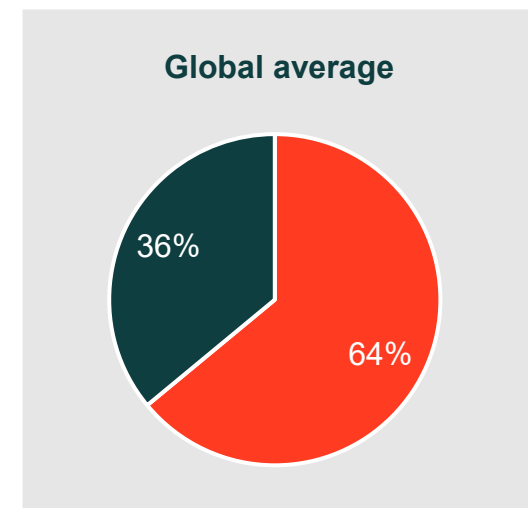
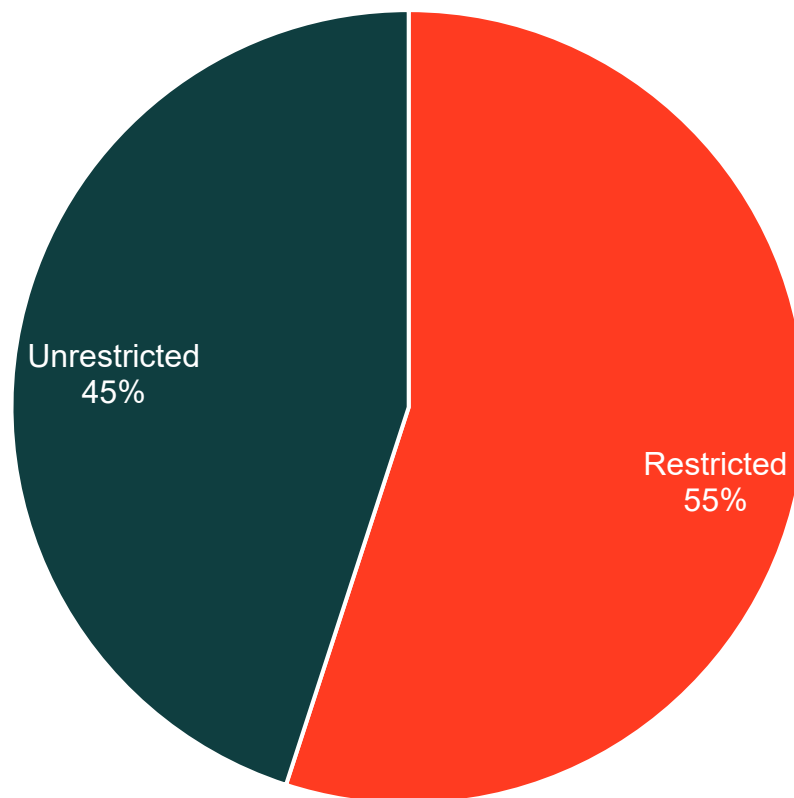
Restricted versus unrestricted funding.

Although the percentage of unrestricted funds is significantly higher than the global average, the fact that most funding is still subject to limitations represents a significant operational and strategic challenge.

Restricted funds limit management flexibility and the ability to invest in critical areas such as infrastructure, technology and rising operating costs, contributing to the perception of poor financial resilience.

Despite its relative strength in terms of unrestricted funds compared to the global benchmark, the sector still faces the structural problem of funding rigidity, which hinders adaptability and long-term sustainability.

Q. How much of your funding is given as ‘restricted’ funds (for example, only able to be spent on a specific project / purpose)? *(Charities that were able to provide an answer, n = 106.)*



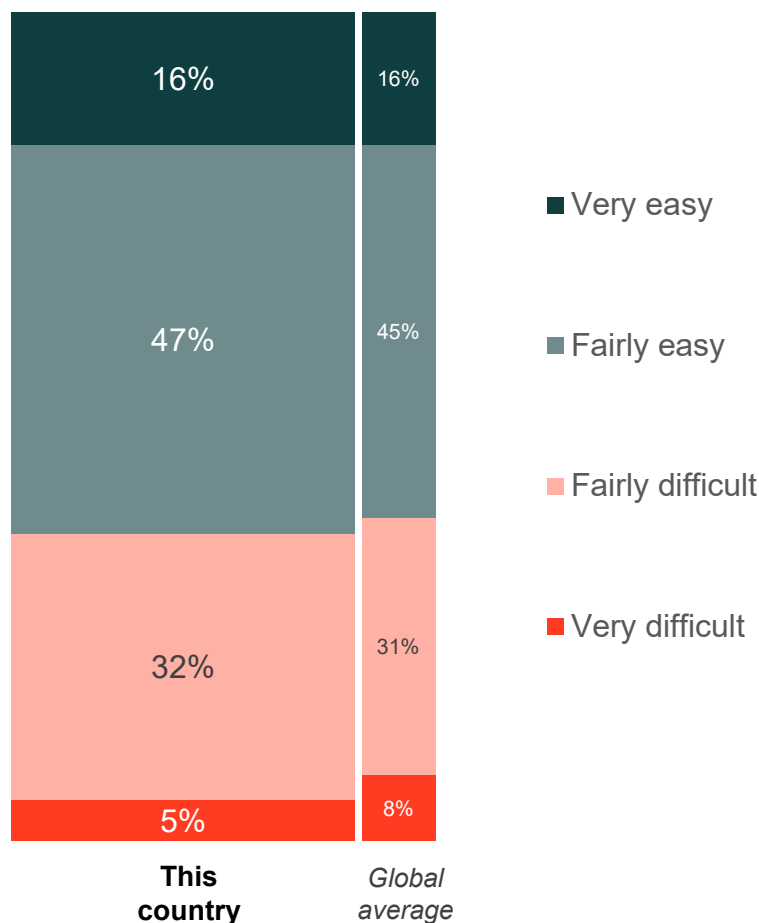
Satisfaction with their funding mix.

The analysis highlights that, despite a higher percentage of unrestricted funds compared to other countries around the globe, the sector faces significant operational challenges.

More than a third (37%) of charities report that the current composition of their income makes it difficult or very difficult to achieve their objectives. Combined with low confidence in their funding diversification, this is likely to mean much less strategic flexibility for these organisations.

There is a risk that the challenges created by a lack of flexible funding could force organisations to divert energy away from their core mission and towards the administrative management of funding sources.

Q. Does this mix of funding make it easy or difficult for you to achieve your goals? (All charities answering, n = 104.)



“The results indicate that, to achieve significant improvement, the charity sector needs action on several fronts: institutional, managerial and communicative. The top priority is the simplification of bureaucracy and regulatory stability, which includes easier access to funding and the introduction of multi-year and unrestricted funds, essential for long-term planning.

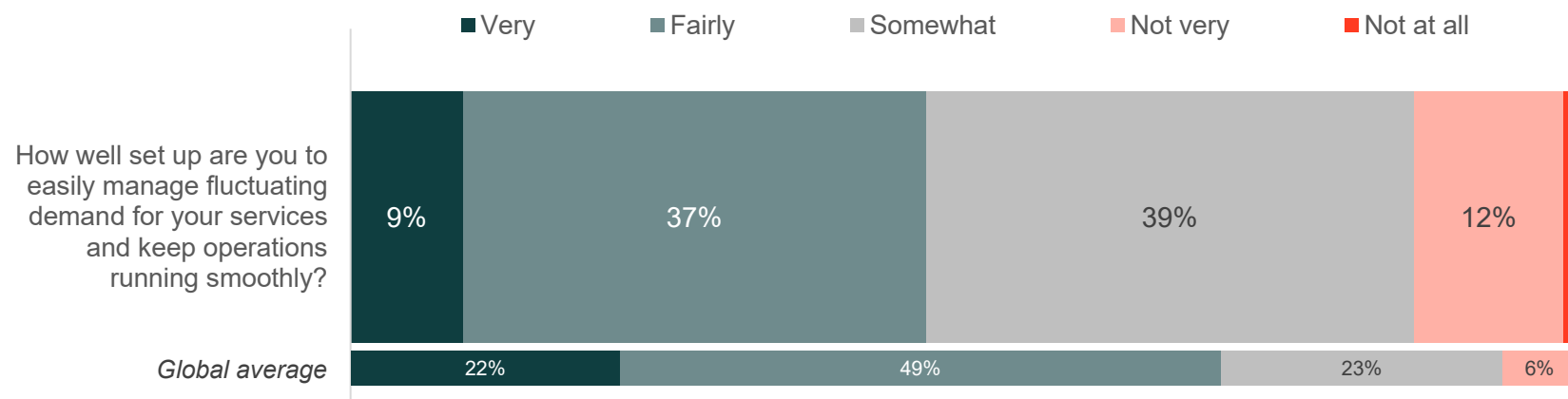
“Greater visibility and structural support from the Government is required, not as a substitute, but as a facilitator of the non-profit sector. The overall objective in approaching the funding mix is to create greater trust and collaboration between the actors (public, private, third sector), showcasing charities as professional and strategic entities for the well-being of the country, and not just as an emergency remedy.”

Operational fitness to meet demand.

The results indicate a greater degree of operational inadequacy compared to the global benchmark. Only 46% of charities consider themselves well equipped to manage demand for services while keeping operations running smoothly, significantly lower than the global average of 71%. On the other hand, a significant 53% express uncertainty or clear difficulty.

The charitable sector feels structurally less agile and prepared to manage operational pressure and fluctuating demand than its international counterparts, indicating a serious lack of investment in systems, personnel or operational flexibility.

How they would rate their charity: (All charities answering, n = 107.)



04 PEOPLE AND CULTURE

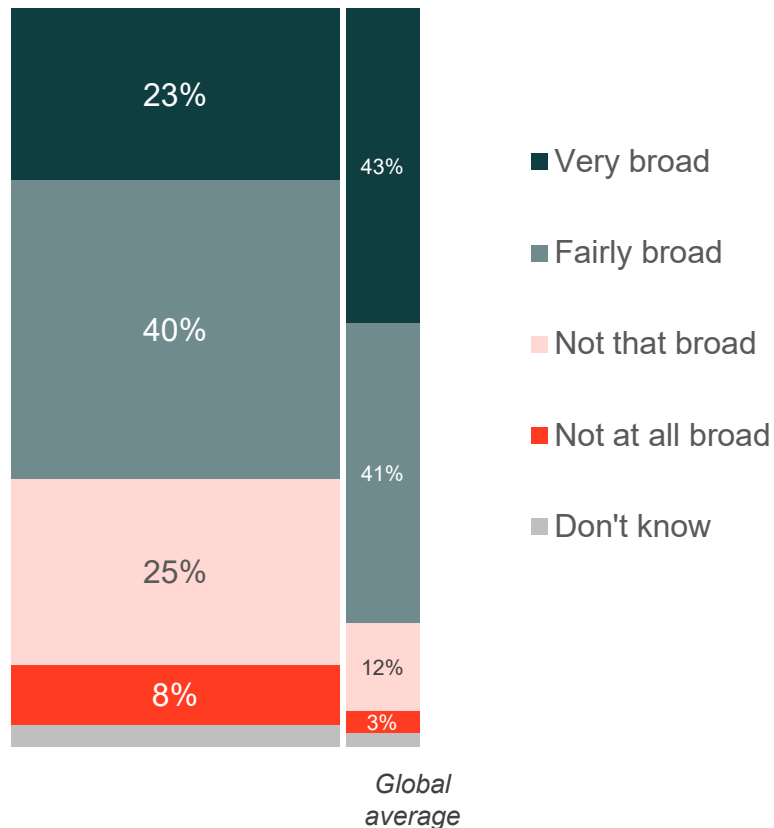


The senior team.

Around six in ten (63%) charity leaders perceive the skills of their senior team as 'Very' or 'Fairly broad', significantly lower than the global average of 84%. A third (33%) judge them to be 'Not that broad' or 'Not at all broad.'

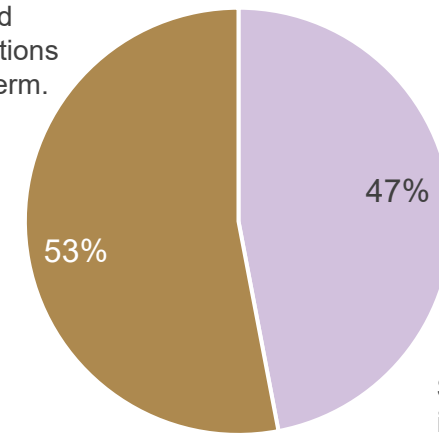
At the same time, the senior team devotes a disproportionate amount of their time (53%) to solving immediate ('day-to-day') problems, and only 47% to long-term strategic planning. This operational imbalance is more pronounced than at the global level (where strategic allocation is 60%), confirming that leaders are overly absorbed in day-to-day execution rather than strategic vision, a direct consequence of the skills shortage and operational pressures highlighted in the previous findings.

How broad are the skills and experience of the most senior leadership team in your organisation? In some cases, this might be your board, an external board of trustees or a C-suite team (e.g. CEO, CFO, etc.) (All charities answering, n = 107.)

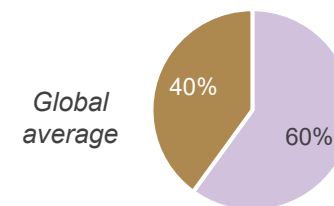


Roughly speaking, what proportion of time does your senior team spend on each of the following? (All charities answering, n = 107.)

Thinking and planning more strategically and making connections for the longer-term.



Solving day-to-day, immediate problems that ensure we can keep operating.



Recruitment and retention.

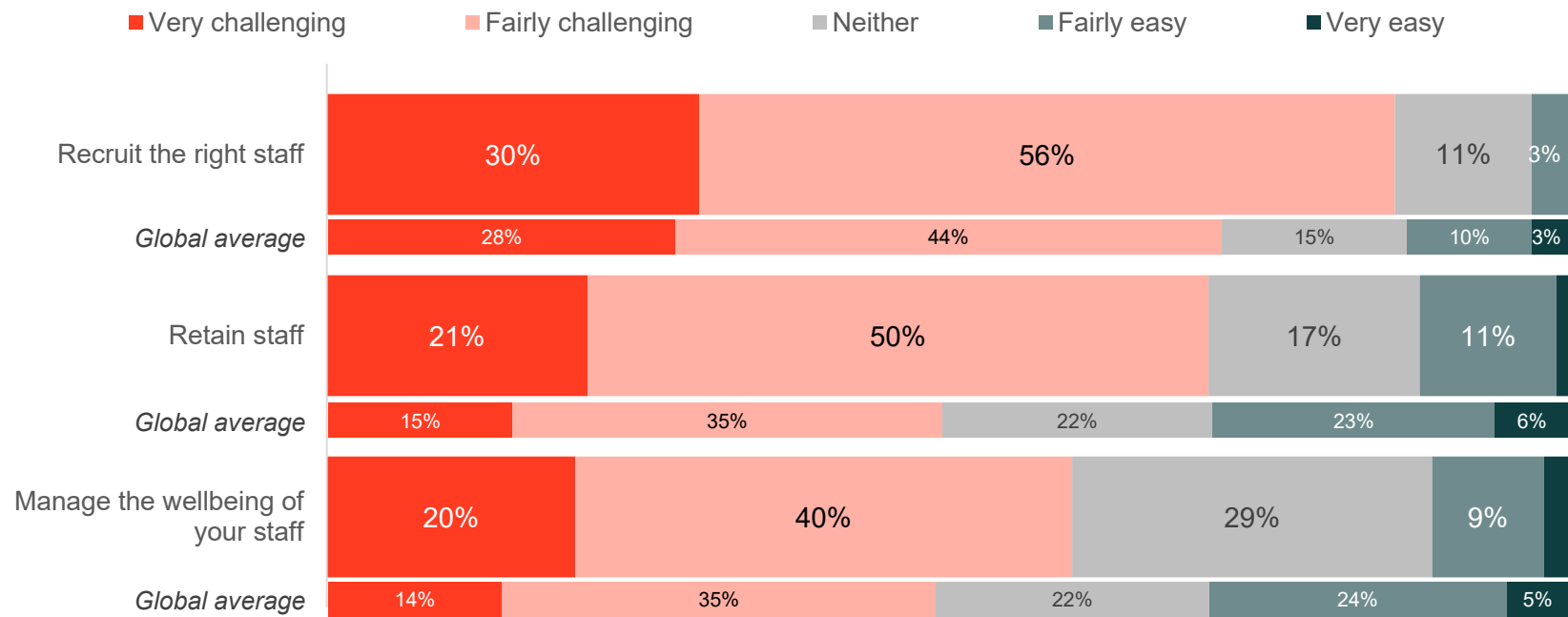
Data reveals that talent management is a critical obstacle, with perceived difficulties significantly higher than around the globe in all aspects. Recruiting the right staff is the biggest challenge: a substantial 86% finds it challenging, compared to the global average of 72%.

Staff retention is an issue for 71%, indicating more frequent turnover and higher levels of dissatisfaction than the international benchmark.

Finally, managing staff wellbeing is challenging for 60% of charities.

The high degree of challenge across the board suggests that the sector is facing a human capital crisis characterised by high stress, insufficient skills and operational pressure that falls heavily on human resources.

How challenging is it to do the following? (All charities answering, n = 107.)



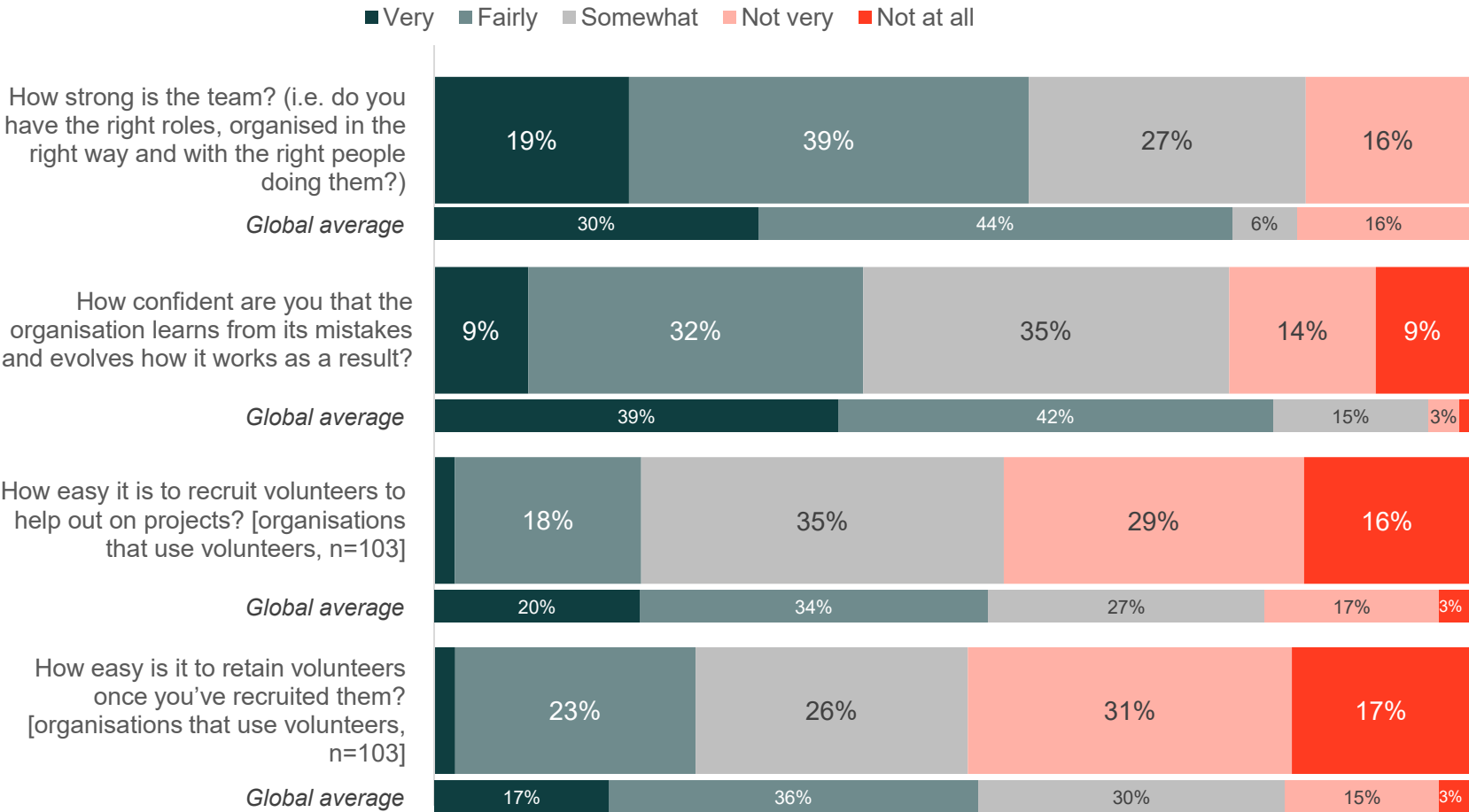
Strength and depth of the team.

The analysis reveals significant management and governance weaknesses compared to the global benchmark. Only 58% of charities perceive their team as strong and well-structured, significantly lower than the world average, indicating a gap in organisational design and skills.

The ability to learn and evolve from mistakes is even lower: only 41% are confident (in stark contrast with the world average of 81%), suggesting an organisational culture that is resistant to change.

The challenges extend to volunteer management: in addition to volunteer recruitment being perceived as difficult by 45% of organisations, retention is the biggest challenge, with nearly half of these organisations (48%) finding it difficult or very difficult. To sum up, these figures confirm an operational fragility that goes beyond funding, affecting team effectiveness, governance and the management of unpaid human resources.

How they would rate their charity: (All charities answering, n = 108.)



05 EXTERNAL AWARENESS AND NETWORKS



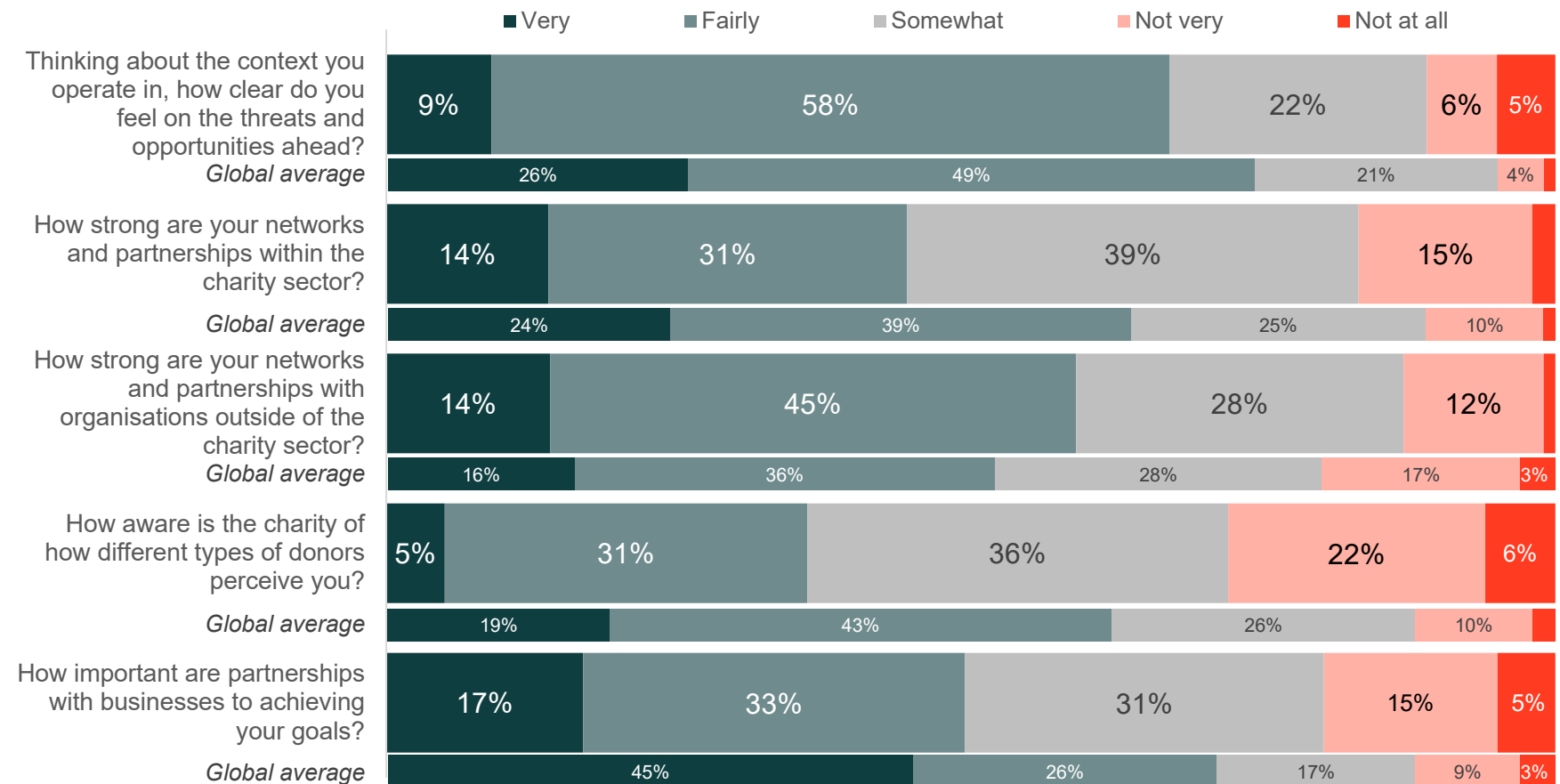
External awareness and partnerships.

Data shows that Italian charities generally have a clear understanding of threats and opportunities, although this percentage is lower than the global average.

However, the weak point lies in awareness of the perception of different types of donors towards the organisation: only 36% say they are “Very” or “Fairly” aware, significantly lower than the global figure of 62%.

This indicates a potential gap in understanding their brand perception and stakeholder engagement, which is a cause for concern for fundraising and future sustainability.

How they would rate their charity: (All charities answering, n = 107-108.)

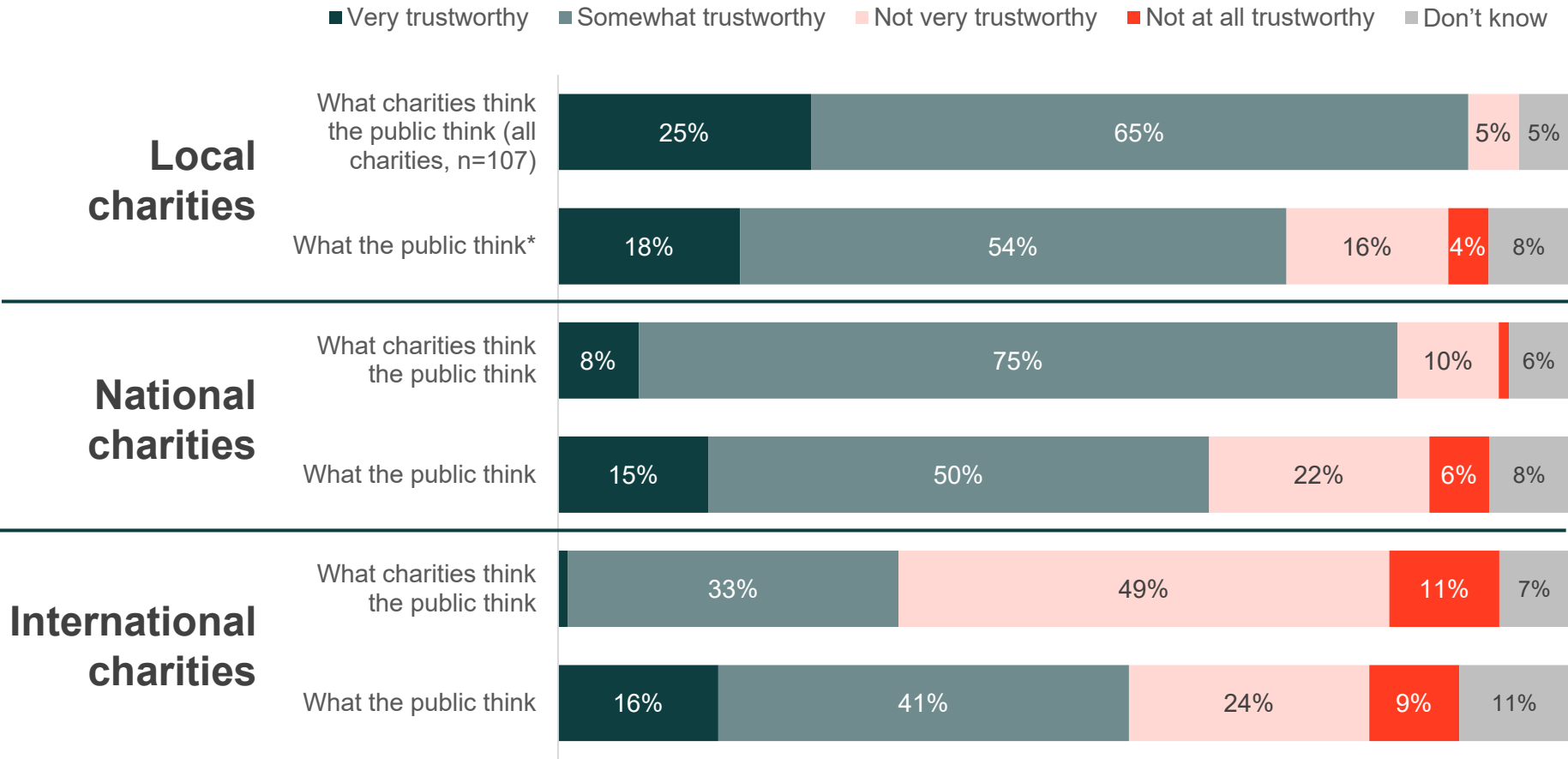


Trust in charities.

The analysis reveals a significant trust deficit and perception gap, highlighting a potential weakness in public relations and transparency. Although charities consistently tend to overestimate the public's perception of their trustworthiness, the most concerning gap occurs among international organisations.

This discrepancy suggests that many organisations may be operating with an inflated perception of public goodwill, which could lead to over-optimism in their communications efforts, particularly about financial transparency and impact reporting, which are critical to building genuine and lasting public trust. Local charities show the smallest gap, indicating that proximity and direct involvement in the community may be the most powerful drivers of positive public perception.

Trustworthiness of charities — what charities think the public thinks, and what the public actually thinks:



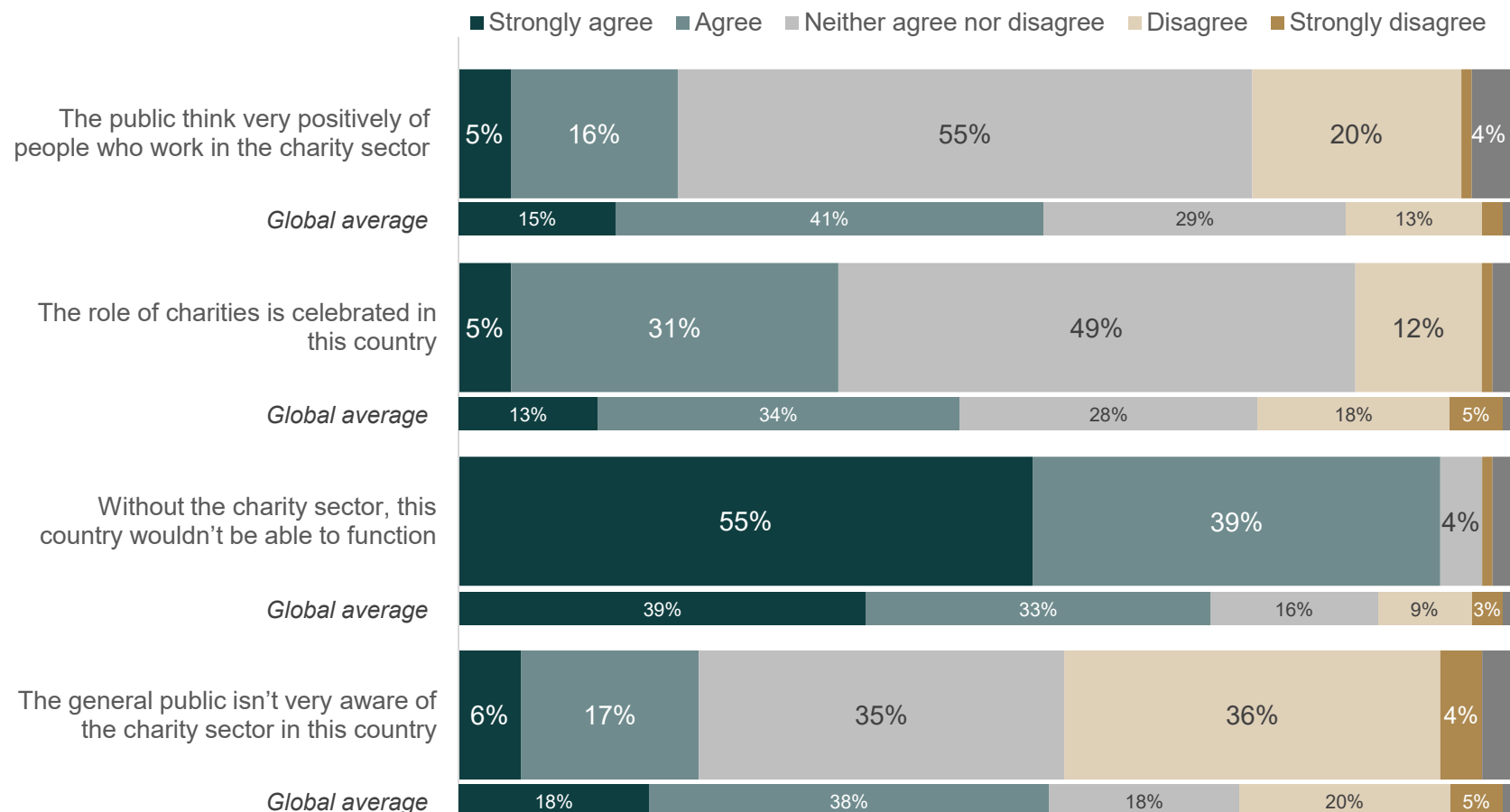
Charities' perceived role and reputation.

The survey highlights a significant discrepancy between the perceived importance of the sector and its actual public visibility. Encouragingly, charities believe that “without the charity sector, this country would not be able to function”.

However, this belief in their necessity does not translate into equally strong recognition or awareness among the public. Only 21% of respondents believe that “the public thinks very positively of people who work in the charity sector”, while 24% disagrees.

This suggests that, despite the sector considering itself vital, its narrative, impact and staff are failing to effectively reach or engage the public. This indicates a clear need for more effective communication and awareness-raising strategies.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the charity sector? (All charities answering, n = 106.)

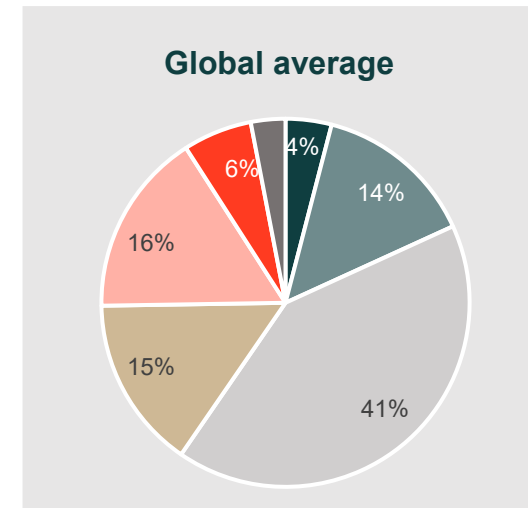
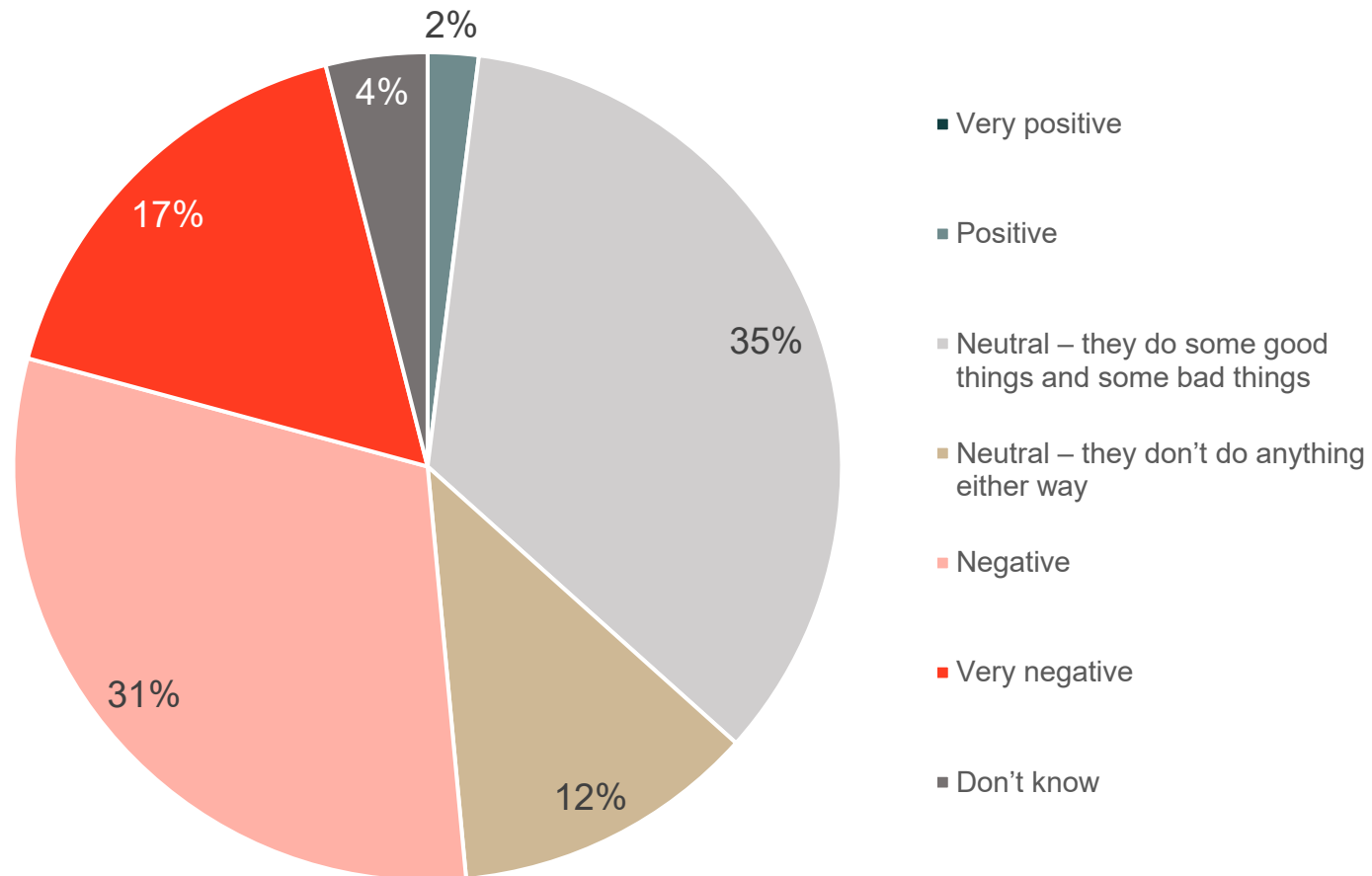


Overall influence of Government on charities.

Data reveals a clear and predominantly negative view among charities regarding the Government's influence on their sector. As many as 48% of the surveyed organisations think the Government's impact is negative or very negative, and only 2% consider it to be positive.

This strong negative imbalance highlights deep dissatisfaction in the relationship between the non-profit sector and the executive branch. The prevalence of negative perceptions suggests systemic problems related to policies, funding or regulations, which are perceived as an obstacle rather than a support to the work of charities.

Overall, do you think the Government is a positive or negative influence on the charity sector? (All charities answering, n = 104.)

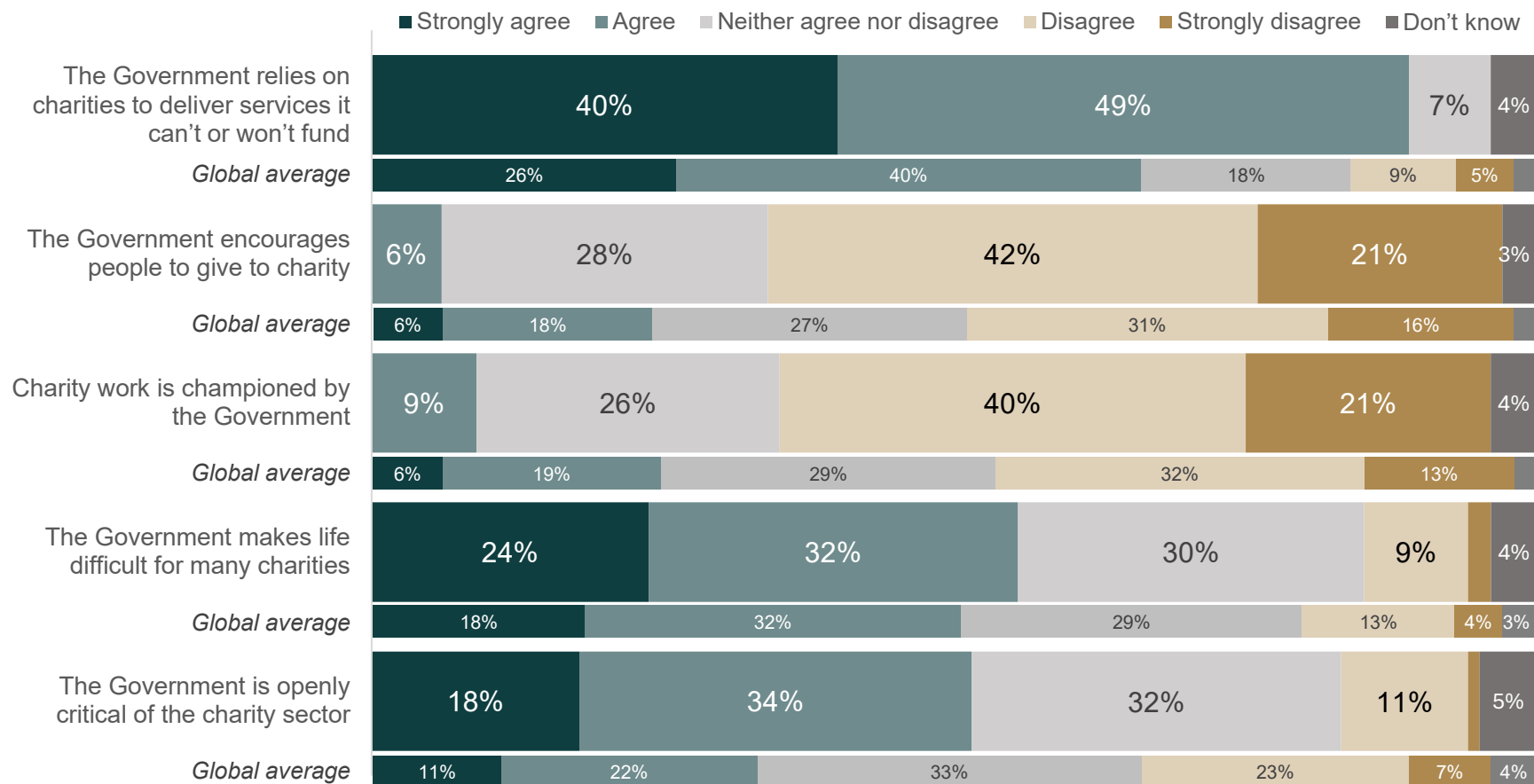


Specific opinions on the role of Government.

The study highlights a particularly critical perception of the Government among charities. The most widespread opinion is that “the Government relies on charities to deliver services that it cannot or will not fund”, with 89% of organisations agreeing. This figure positions the charitable sector as a provider of essential services and a substitute for the Government, much more so than the global average.

Over half of charities believe that “the Government makes life difficult for many charities”, and 52% agree that “the Government is openly critical of the charity sector”. This combination of excessive operational dependence and perceived lack of support reveals a dysfunctional and tense relationship, in which the Government is seen as a reluctant partner rather than a supporter.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Government’s involvement in the charity sector? (All charities answering, n = 104.)



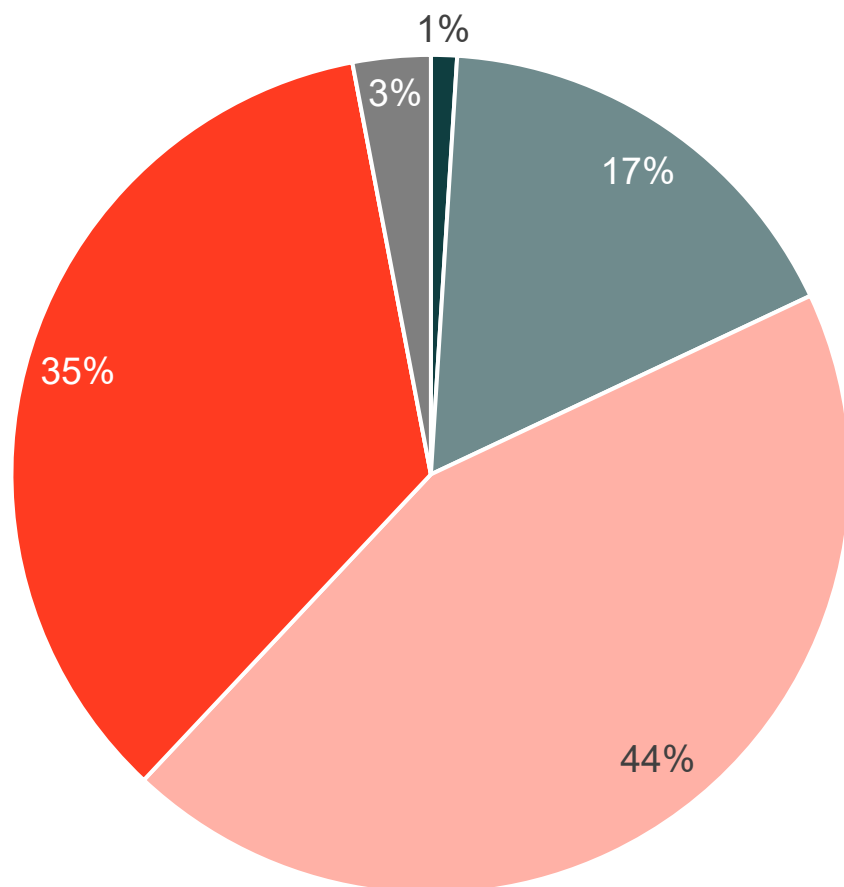
Effectiveness of regulation.

The analysis highlights an extremely negative assessment by charities regarding the effectiveness of their regulation in Italy. An overwhelming 79% of respondents believes that charities are “not very effectively” or “not at all effectively” regulated. Only a minority believes that regulation is successful.

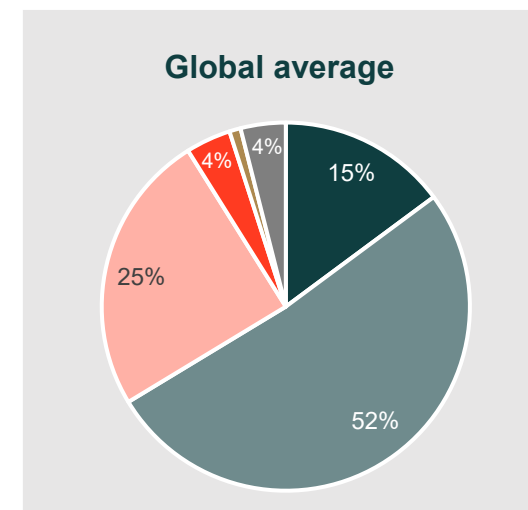
These results suggest that the current regulatory framework is perceived as inadequate or overly demanding by those working in the sector. Furthermore, this pessimism stands in stark contrast with the global average, where the majority believes that regulation is at least “fairly effective”.

The strong negative sentiment at national level may be contributing to the lower than average public confidence discussed on page 30, since ineffective regulation can undermine the transparency and governance of the entire sector.

Overall, how effectively do you think charities are regulated in your country?
(All charities answering, n = 105.)



- Very effectively
- Fairly effectively
- Not very effectively
- Not at all effectively
- Charities are not regulated here
- Don't know



06 PURPOSE AND IMPACT



Clarity of purpose.

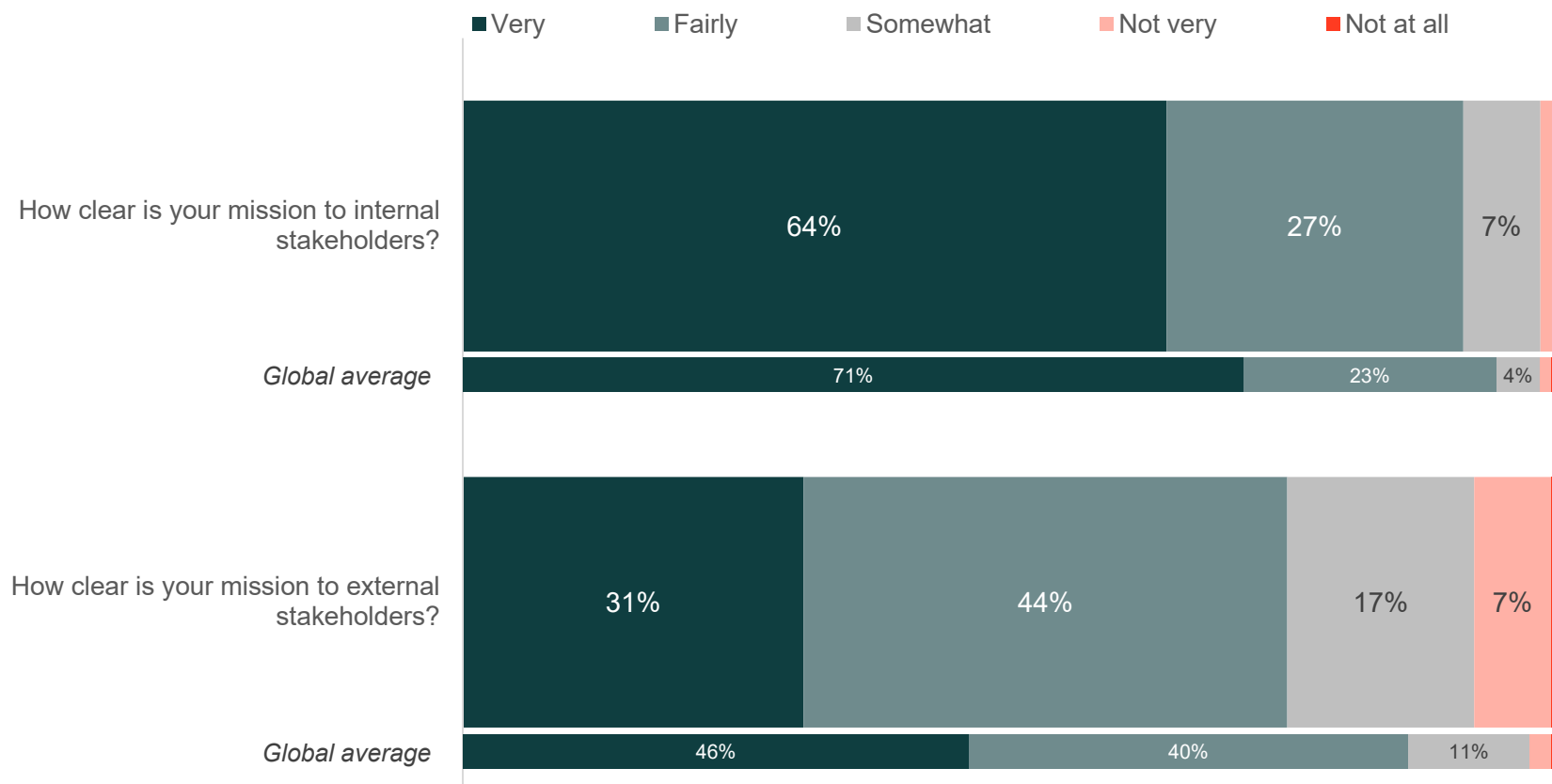
Organisations can often encounter difficulties and in translating their objectives and purpose into an effective and easily understandable public message.

The research highlights a clear and problematic gap between the internal and external clarity of charities' missions, suggesting some shortcomings in communications with the public.

While the majority believes that their mission is clear to internal stakeholders, only a third of organisations believe that it is very clear to external stakeholders.

Furthermore, the data suggests that the Italian charitable sector has more acute external communication issues than its international counterparts, which could potentially cause problems in fundraising and public trust.

How they would rate their charity: (All charities answering, n = 108.)



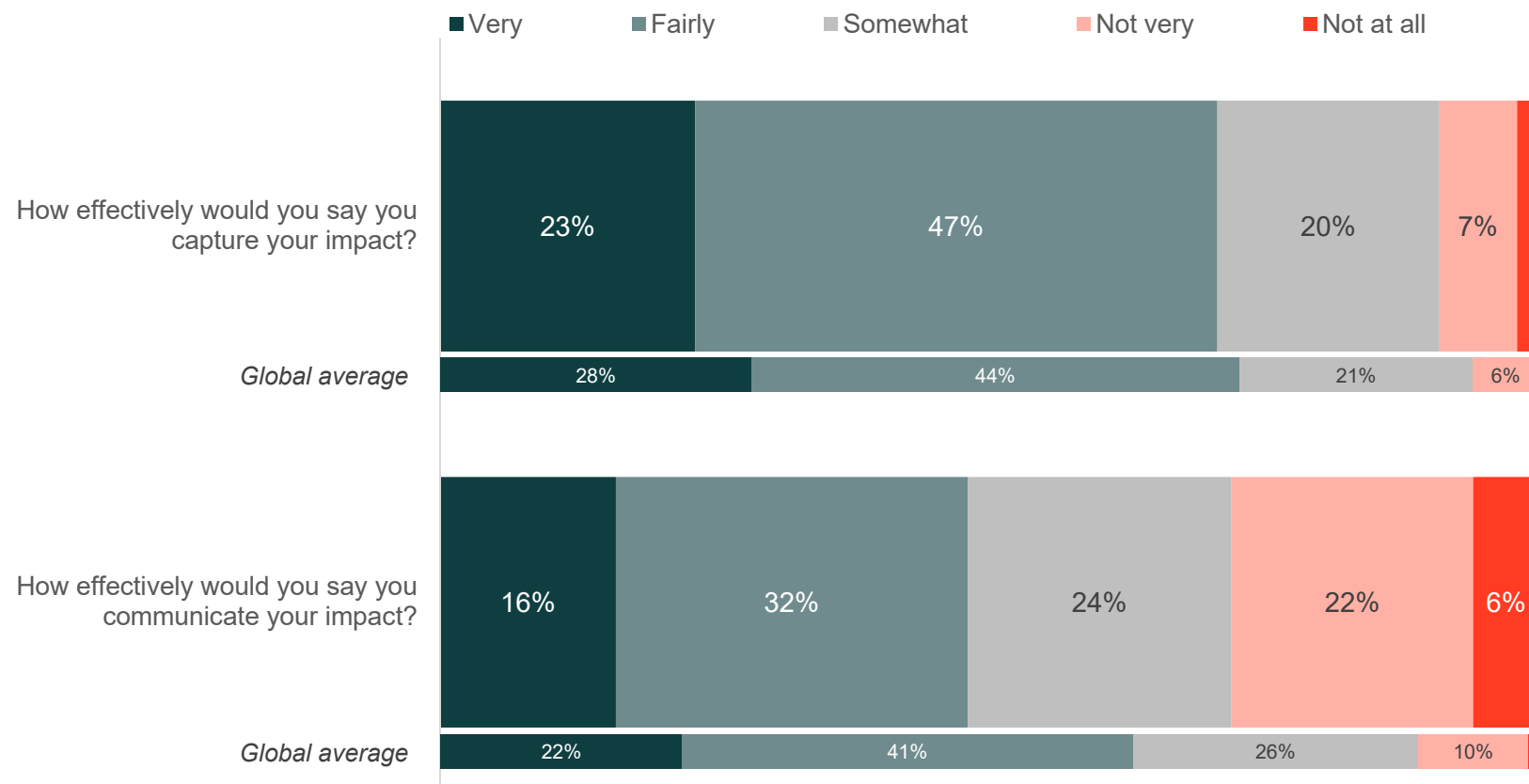
Translating purpose into impact.

Data highlights a significant inability to translate impact measurement into effective communication, a critical issue for fundraising and public trust.

While 70% of Charities believe they are effective at measuring their impact, only 48% think they communicate this impact well to the public. This suggests that many organisations collect valuable data internally but lack the skills or strategies to transform that data into compelling and accessible narratives for external stakeholders.

Furthermore, the perception of being effective at communicating impact is below the global average, highlighting that the sector is not only underselling the impact that it measures, but is also less effective at doing so than its international counterparts.

How they would rate their charity: (All charities answering, n = 108.)



07 CONCLUSION



Civil society in Italy.

The invisible strength of society: Why the third sector matters more than ever.

In these difficult times, it is important to continue to emphasise that if the non-profit sector were to disappear or be drastically reduced, the loss to society would not only translate into an operating deficit or the need for the to take over the management Government of certain services. Its disappearance would affect the most valuable and least measurable element: the “cohesive effect” and the dense network of human relationships that arise spontaneously and independently of specific activities. Third Sector organisations operate in “the spaces in between” of society, in those grey areas where public intervention is difficult, creating bonds, trust and reciprocity. These elements form the basis of a resilient and inclusive community.

The underestimating logic of the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, which today increasingly takes the form of institutions leaving things to the social private sector, risks being short-sighted and dangerous. What is needed is a public-private alliance that can both enhance and concretely

support the third sector, and that provides services that the Government today either cannot or does not want to offer. Its value is not only “economic”, but above all “political” and social: it lies in its ability to promote active citizenship, develop innovative solutions and mobilise civic engagement. Entrusting the third sector only with mere operational or emergency tasks means weakening its function as a social laboratory and proactive interpreter of cultural changes.

Today more than ever, the non-profit sector must reclaim its role as an autonomous and strategic actor in the construction of the common good. The real impact of this ‘industry’ lies in its ability to build bridges between people, institutions and the needs of the territory. Giving up this relational dimension in the name of efficiency or economic convenience means irreversibly impoverishing the democratic fabric.

Ultimately, the third sector today is a guarantee of cohesion and a more attentive and participatory society, and we need it more than ever.



The third sector not only connects people: it bridges gaps in society and contributes to creating a relational fabric in it. (Picture from Hannah Busing)

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