

People, power and priorities

Insights into the
UK refugee and
migration sector

Ruth Grove-White
and Mike Kaye

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About the authors

Ruth Grove-White is an independent consultant, specialising in strategy development, research and evaluation work for NGOs and charitable foundations working on human rights, migration and social justice issues. She is an experienced policy lead and advocate, and past roles include Policy Adviser at the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and Policy Director at the Migrants Rights Network. Prior to this, Ruth was the Programme Manager at minority rights charity European Dialogue and worked for the International Organization for Migration in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mike Kaye has 30 years' international human rights research and advocacy experience, including working as Advocacy and Campaigns Manager for the Still Human Still Here coalition, Communications Manager for Anti-Slavery International, Public Affairs Officer for the Refugee Council and three years documenting human rights violations during the civil wars in Central America. He currently works as a consultant.

About Migration Exchange

Migration Exchange (MEX) is a UK-based charitable programme, established by independent funders in 2010. Our vision is a country where people experience a migration system grounded in dignity, equity and fairness. Our mission is to cultivate insight, connection and action across the UK migration and refugee field, working together with civil society to achieve positive change. We focus particularly on independent funders and charities to achieve this mission, connecting people through convening, events and a funder network. As well as commissioning research and analysis on trends and patterns, we develop and co-design responses to shared challenges and opportunities.

Our Strategic Framework 2023–2028 sets out our two ultimate goals:

1. An equitable, power-aware and intersectional funding landscape, better able to resource systems change in the migration field.
2. A connected and action-focused refugee and migration sector, better able to drive systems change.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, and should not be interpreted as the positions of any of the funding organisations or Migration Exchange as a whole.

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Foreword

At this time when the right to seek asylum in the UK is under threat, and the immigration debate dominates the political agenda and media coverage, this research is cause for hope.

It shows that around the United Kingdom, people are working, volunteering, campaigning and organising at a growing number of NGOs and within movements whose mission is to support people caught up in the hostile and complex refugee and migration system. This demonstrates that the public care about Britain being a place of welcome and fairness.

The research draws on the views and experiences of several hundred people across NGOs and funders in the UK migration and refugee sector.

The migration system must and can be grounded in fairness, equity and dignity.

It shows the 'people, power and priorities' of this diverse ecosystem.

The findings reflect some significant shifts against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, including a 51% increase in funding and 137 new charities being established as well as for staff welfare resulting from increasing demand for services. In addition to the pandemic, government policies that are designed to inflame hatred towards migrants add to the backdrop of this report.

Besides providing comprehensive new data, this report explores how organisations are impacted by the social, political and economic turbulence around them. It finds that organisations are buffeted non-stop by poorly implemented or viscerously cruel government policy. This is taking its toll, with the sector's people struggling with burnout and exhaustion despite their passion and commitment.

The report also finds that the vital work of NGOs in this field depends heavily on independent funders. Data shows government funding overall has reduced, and that the distribution of resources is heavily concentrated in larger NGOs.

The migration system must and can be grounded in fairness, equity and dignity. NGOs and independent funders are a small but important part of a wider ecosystem. As we look ahead to a future of further complexity and rapid change, it is vital to prepare and invest in behaviours, practices and relationships that build power and secure real change.

This report identifies shared priorities for NGOs and funders: to increase equity and distribute power and resources differently; focus on racial justice and lived experience; and build influence and collaboration.

We are grateful to all who contributed to this research, and hope it will deepen understanding of the bigger picture and spark further action for a more positive future.

Anna Camilleri, Li-En Yapp, Marchu Belete, Sarah Cutler
(Migration Exchange team)

July 2023



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Introduction

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1.1 Background

The UK has a long history of civil society activity in support of people who have moved to build their lives in this country. Today, many charities and other voluntary organisations work to provide direct support and representation for people who have migrated or sought protection here, and to advocate for better policies and laws affecting them. They are joined by a wider cohort of organisations, including faith institutions, trades unions, racial justice organisations and others, who link these issues with wider social justice movements.

The UK has a long history of civil society activity in support of people who have moved to build their lives in this country.

This research provides a ‘helicopter view’ of the UK refugee and migration sector, providing data on the size, resources, activities and geographical spread of organisations working at all levels on these issues. It aims to reflect a range of perspectives and capture common themes and challenges.

Informed by data and views from across the sector, we hope it will be a helpful resource for organisations looking to work strategically and collaboratively towards lasting change.

1.2 Reviewing the UK refugee and migration sector

In 2019, Migration Exchange (MEX) commissioned [Taking Stock and Facing the Future](#), the most comprehensive assessment of the UK refugee and migration sector’s resources and infrastructure ever undertaken.

Released in 2020, ‘Taking Stock’ mapped the field and funding landscape and documented the priorities, challenges and opportunities facing organisations working on this issue. It has since been used to inform multiple voluntary sector and funder initiatives, including guiding emergency funding to the sector in April 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2022, MEX commissioned new research, guided by four specific objectives:

- Outline the current political, policy and funding environment.
- Map the focus, size, shape, assets and gaps across the sector.

- Document the key challenges, opportunities and priorities for NGOs, particularly in relation to the sector's potential to achieve wider social change.
- Provide a resource that can be used by funders and NGOs in – and beyond – the sector to explore their shared context and inform priorities and programmes.

1.3 Research methodology

The research for 'People, power and priorities' was conducted between September 2022 and April 2023. It drew upon a wide range of datasets, interviews and workshop discussions, to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible of the UK refugee and migration sector. The key research tools used were:

- Detailed analysis of registered charities in the UK working on refugee and migration issues, and of funding to the sector, using data from the Charity Commission for England and Wales, Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, and Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, as well as data held by 360Giving.¹
- A survey of 175 NGOs with a combined annual income of around £103 million for UK refugee and migration work.
- A survey of 20 key trusts and foundations, with a combined annual spend of around £38 million for UK refugee and migration work.
- Interviews with 32 NGOs and eight funders.
- Six discussion workshops involving NGOs and funders.

Where relevant, this data is compared to the findings reported in 'Taking Stock', to identify key developments since 2020.

A full outline of the research methodology, participating individuals and organisations can be found in Appendices A, B and C.

1.4 Research values

As a research team we have approached this work with our shared commitment to inclusion, equity and respect for organisations working at

all levels across the sector. We have engaged a broad range of perspectives, including from community-based and migrant-led organisations wherever possible.

These values were put into practice through the research by:

- Actively seeking and soliciting NGO survey responses from non-registered organisations and other voluntary and grassroots organisations.
- Ensuring that the research interviewees included a sample of campaigners and leaders with lived experience of the migration and asylum system.
- Inviting and encouraging small organisations to participate in online discussion workshops at which emerging data was presented, to help inform the research narrative and challenge initial findings and assumptions.
- Inviting and resourcing other organisations to hold discussion workshops within their own grassroots networks, to review the emerging research findings and share their views on the stories behind the data.
- Offering a financial contribution to organisations to cover their time in participating in the survey, interviews and workshops.

We hope that these steps have enriched the breadth of perspectives and the quality of the conclusions within this research.

1.5 Glossary

We recognise that a migration experience is only one part of a person's identity. This report only uses the terms below to describe people when their migration status is particularly relevant to the report.

Charity – An organisation which is established for a charitable purpose and which is registered with the appropriate charity commission in the UK.

Hostile Environment – A term used to describe all policies which make life difficult for people who are refugees and migrants in the UK, particularly those from racialised communities and people with insecure immigration status. The term originates from a comment made in 2012 by then Home Secretary Theresa May.

Lived experience – Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people. We use this term to refer to people with personal experience of the UK asylum and/or immigration systems.

Migrant – A person who is living in the UK away from his or her place of usual residence, temporarily or permanently. We use this term to include a wide range of people in the UK, including some workers, students, people with family visas, people here on human rights grounds, survivors of trafficking, foreign national prisoners, and people whose status is undocumented.

NGO – Any organisation with a social or political aim which is independent of the government. We use this term to refer to charities and non-charities (including grassroots organisations, community groups, Community Interest Companies, think tanks, and international organisations) which work on refugee and migration issues in the UK.

Racialisation – a process of ascribing ethnic or racial identities to a relationship, social practice, or group that did not identify itself as such for the purpose of domination and social exclusion.

Refugee – A person who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. We use this term to refer to all people within the UK asylum system, including people granted protection, those who are seeking and those who have been refused asylum in the UK.

UK refugee and migration sector – We recognise that there is not one shared definition of ‘the sector’. However, for clarity in this report we use this term to refer to all organisations – including registered charities, non-charities, inter-governmental organisations, grassroots organisations and others – which work on refugee and migrant issues in the UK.

Windrush generation – The term ‘Windrush generation’ refers to people who had held what became Citizenship of the UK and Colonies (CUKC), and came to the UK between 1948 and 1973 mostly from Caribbean countries. Due to UK Government failures, many had no documentary proof to show that the UK was their rightful home, even though in most cases they had known no other. For some this later led to enforcement action and either removal from the UK or refusal of re-entry.

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The context

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2.1 The UK migration picture

In 2023, the UK is an increasingly diverse country. Data suggests that around 9.5 million people (14% of the total population) in the UK were born overseas.² Six million people (9%) who live here are non-UK citizens. The largest populations from outside the UK were born in India (approx. 896,000 people), Poland (682,000), Pakistan (456,000), the Republic of Ireland (412,000) and Germany (347,000).

The overwhelming majority of people who have come to the UK live in England (92%), with 5% living in Scotland, 2% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland.³ Around half of the UK's foreign-born population (48%) live in London or the South East of England. 37% of London's population was born overseas.

14%

of the total population in the UK were born overseas.

The UK's overseas-born population comprises a diverse range of people who have different rights and entitlements depending on their immigration status. It includes people who came here to seek asylum, those granted refugee or other protection statuses, and those arriving under bespoke visa schemes. It includes people who came here to work, study or join family members, as well as a range of people living in the UK on human rights grounds, survivors of trafficking, foreign national prisoners, and people with undocumented status.

9%

who live here are non-UK citizens.

In recent years, the UK has seen a significant rise in the number of people migrating here. Net migration to the UK in 2022 was a record 606,000, reflecting a growth in immigration from outside the European Union.⁴ People came to the UK in 2022 for a wide range of reasons, including for study or for work, and via bespoke visa routes from Ukraine and Hong Kong.

2.2 The national social and political context

Over the past three years, the national social and political context in the UK has been febrile and chaotic. A combination of unforeseen crises and ongoing political instability have generated an extremely challenging backdrop for work on refugee and migration issues.

2

During this period, national politics in the UK has been highly volatile and turbulent.

During this period (2020–2022), national politics has been highly volatile and turbulent. From March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused devastating and wide-reaching impacts around the world. Successive national lockdowns and other social restrictions in the UK during

2020 and 2021 disrupted daily life to an unprecedented degree, whilst the country struggled to contain the pandemic. Covid-19 generated significant new support needs among vulnerable groups, including some refugee and migrant communities. Although in 2023 the height of the pandemic is now over, it has had lasting social and economic impacts, disproportionately affecting people experiencing structural disadvantage related to race, gender, economic status and disability.

During this period, **national politics in the UK** has been highly volatile and turbulent. The Conservative party has remained in power, but there has been significant political upheaval. In the past three years, the UK has seen three prime ministers, numerous ministerial resignations, sackings and reshuffles in key posts relating to migration and refugee issues.⁵

National austerity policies have continued to deepen poverty and inequality. The UK has seen ongoing cuts to public services (including legal aid) and a worsening housing crisis. Rising interest rates, energy costs and food bills additionally threaten the livelihoods of many people, and the financial security of charities and third sector support organisations.

This backdrop has contributed towards a more **populist public and policy debate**, amid a climate of political polarisation. There has been a rise in clickbait news and social media disinformation, and in **divisive culture wars** on a range of social issues including migration and asylum. Social analysts note the **rising confidence and energy of the far-right**, demonstrated by a growing number of anti-migration protests and actions across the UK.⁶

Race and racial injustice have also continued to inform public debates about migration issues. The global **Black Lives Matter movement⁷ and growing debate about the legacy of British colonialism** have raised the profile of historical racial injustices in the UK, including in relation to immigration policy.

The UK's **devolved administrations** have seen a range of different political dynamics affecting the landscape for these issues. In **Wales**, the Labour government has been broadly supportive on immigration and refugee issues, declaring Wales a Nation of Sanctuary and opposing the UK Government's general approach to immigration issues.⁸

In **Scotland**, the Scottish National Party has also taken a more positive stance, coining the term ‘New Scots’ for refugees and asylum seekers and actively welcoming new arrivals seeking safety.⁹

In **Northern Ireland**, wider divisions have continued to dominate politics. The suspension of the Assembly since 2022 – a consequence of the DUP’s protest against the Northern Ireland Protocol and the post-Brexit trading arrangements – has created a vacuum around decision-making, including on policies affecting people who are migrants and refugees.¹⁰

2.3 UK immigration and asylum policy

Within this chaotic wider context, the UK immigration and asylum policy environment has been extremely challenging. The Government has pursued a series of far-reaching reforms which, in 2023, threaten to undermine the UK’s refugee protection system,¹¹ and further embed punitive approaches towards a range of people migrating to the UK.

Within this chaotic wider context, the UK immigration and asylum policy environment has been extremely challenging.

Much recent policy-making on refugee and migration issues has been disjointed and reactive. Successive Home Secretaries Priti Patel and Suella Braverman have championed divisive positions on migration management, variously breaching the UK’s international human rights obligations and undermining the rule of law.

The wider sense of turbulence across national Government has been mirrored in immigration policy which has often lacked a clear evidence base or consistent rationale.¹²

Reform of the UK asylum system

Central to the Government’s approach have been two major pieces of immigration legislation – the **Nationality and Borders Act 2022** and the **Illegal Migration Bill**.¹³ These laws collectively seek to prohibit people from seeking asylum in the UK if they enter irregularly, regardless of how compelling their claim is. The legislation has been described by the UN High Commissioner on Refugees as ‘*an asylum ban*’¹⁴ and in breach of international law.

The legislation places a duty on the Home Secretary to **remove anyone who has entered the UK illegally either to their home country or to**

The Refugee Council estimates that over

190,000

people could be forced into destitution or detained in the UK over a three-year period as a result of the Illegal Migration Bill.

a safe third country. However, the only agreement currently in place with a third country is with **Rwanda** and this is currently being challenged in the courts.¹⁵

Without third country agreements in place, it is likely that large numbers of people whose asylum claims are deemed 'inadmissible' will remain in the UK in limbo for extended periods. The Refugee Council estimates that over 190,000 people could be forced into destitution or detained in the UK over a three-year period as a result of the Illegal Migration Bill.¹⁶ This could include up to 45,000 children.

The Illegal Migration Bill will also fundamentally undermine the legal framework for **survivors of trafficking** as they too will be penalised for illegal entry even though this is commonly how they are trafficked into the UK. It is estimated that around two thirds of people currently trafficked in the UK will be disqualified by the Bill from advice and support and will not receive a reflection and recovery period, material assistance, a decision on their claim or be protected from removal. Even those who are not disqualified will find it harder to gain support and protection.

The Illegal Migration Bill's passage through Parliament thus far has been exceptional both because the Government was unable to certify that this legislation is compatible with its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and because of the reduced time allocated for the scrutiny of this legislation. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has indicated his willingness to overrule the House of Lords if necessary in order to pass the bill.¹⁷

The Government has sought to justify its punitive and controversial approach as a response to the growing numbers of people crossing the English Channel in **small boats** to seek asylum in the UK. In early 2023, the numbers of asylum seekers coming to the UK reached a twenty-year high, although they comprise only a small proportion of UK immigration overall.¹⁸ Reducing the numbers of small boats crossing the English Channel from France is now **central to the Conservative party's re-election strategy in 2024/25.**

There have been chaotic reforms to asylum management in-country, too. In 2022, the Government announced its decision to move to a **'full-dispersal' policy for people seeking asylum** in the UK, to accommodate new arrivals while they await Home Office decisions. As a result, around 50,000 people seeking asylum are now being housed within hostels

and hotels across the UK, many in areas with no appropriate support services or networks.¹⁹ This costs an estimated £6 million per day.²⁰

To reduce accommodation costs, the Government now plans to move thousands of people into other premises such as **disused ferries, ex-prisons and military bases**.²¹ This plan is highly controversial, generating objections from local communities, authorities and NGOs. There are particular concerns that this will lead to the widespread use of highly securitised, overcrowded and inappropriate accommodation for large numbers of people seeking asylum.

Refugee resettlement and visa schemes

Since 2020, significant numbers of people have arrived in the UK from Hong Kong and Ukraine under bespoke visa programmes.

Media coverage of the UK's bespoke visa schemes has been broadly positive, and public opinion has been largely sympathetic towards recent arrivals from Hong Kong and Ukraine.

In January 2021, the UK launched a new **Welcome Programme for Hong Kong British Nationals Overseas (BNOs)**. This was introduced in response to China's introduction of legislation which significantly curtailed the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong. Since then, over 160,000 people have applied for a UK visa under the Welcome Programme.²²

In February 2022, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia led to the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.²³

The UK Government, alongside other European countries, created **bespoke visa pathways for Ukrainians fleeing the war**. Approximately 130,000 people have arrived in the UK under these visa routes, and are largely hosted within private households across the country.²⁴

Media coverage of the UK's bespoke visa schemes has been broadly positive, and public opinion has been largely sympathetic towards recent arrivals from Hong Kong and Ukraine.²⁵ However, the ad hoc nature of the schemes, which offer different levels of support and security to recent arrivals (and indeed to previous arrivals under similar schemes for people from Syria and Afghanistan), has been confusing and controversial. The welcome offered by these schemes also stands in stark contrast to the hostility of the wider asylum system. This has led to criticisms of **discrimination, hypocrisy and racism** within the Government's approach.

The hostile environment

Integration, citizenship and inclusion have been largely overlooked in policy terms, with little strategic guidance on long-term integration of diverse communities. Instead, the Government has focused on deepening the '**hostile environment**', restricting access to bank accounts, healthcare, education, employment, public services and housing for many people, and embedding immigration enforcement in local communities.

This approach has had particularly devastating impacts on the estimated 1.3 million people with valid leave to remain but no access to mainstream benefits (called 'no recourse to public funds'),²⁶ as well as hundreds of thousands of people thought to be living in the UK irregularly.²⁷ Evidence suggests that **the no recourse to public funds policy itself leads to vulnerability and destitution** among low-income families and children, with a disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities.²⁸

Many members of the **Windrush generation** who were wrongly told they were in the UK illegally – a consequence of the hostile environment policy – have still not received the compensation they are entitled to from the Windrush compensation scheme launched in April 2019.²⁹ The Government has announced that it will not fully implement the recommendations from the Windrush inquiry, which, according to the inquiry's author, creates the risk that this will happen again.³⁰

Provision of legal immigration advice is dwindling across the country due to funding cuts.

The **UK immigration and asylum system continues to generate insecurity and harm for many people.**

The Home Office is now experiencing extensive delays in decision-making on asylum applications, the National Referral Mechanism for survivors of trafficking; immigration applications and appeals. At the end of 2022 there were 166,261 cases in the asylum backlog, contributing to spiralling costs in the system and the sense of limbo for many.³¹ At the same time, immigration fees have been increased substantially. Provision of legal immigration advice is dwindling across the country due to funding cuts, leaving some people unable to make applications or resolve status issues.³²

The **UK's exit from the European Union** has also had significant consequences. Over 5.5 million European Union citizens living in the UK needed to apply for permission to live in the UK through the EU Settlement Scheme.³³ 2.5 million people were granted a temporary 'pre-settled' status which requires them to make a further application for 'settled' status at

a later date. There has been ongoing uncertainty about future pathways for EU nationals with pre-settled status.³⁴

2.4 Public opinion and civil society

Despite the hostility of much Government rhetoric on immigration, **public opinion on immigration** has steadily warmed since 2015, and support for curbing migration has declined.³⁵ The salience of migration as an issue has also declined significantly since 2015, although it started to increase again at the end of 2022, with a YouGov poll in November 2022 finding that 37% of Britons identified immigration and asylum as one of the most important issues facing the country.³⁶

NGO research indicates that local far-right activity has been underpinned by Government hostility towards migrants.

This was largely driven by concerns over small boat crossings. A large majority of those surveyed (87%) believed the Government was handling immigration badly and 52% of this group identified the failure to stop people crossing the channel in order to seek asylum as the reason for their view.³⁷

However, this does not necessarily indicate support for the Government's proposed measures in the Illegal Migration Bill to address this issue. Research by British Future in March 2022 found that 75% of people surveyed in the UK agree that people should be able to take refuge in other countries, including in Britain, to escape from war or persecution. Nearly half (47%) also supported policies to allow asylum claims to be made outside the UK, with only 20% against such measures.³⁸

Media coverage of immigration issues remains largely negative. There has been marked **inaction by social media companies** to clamp down on online abuse and hate.³⁹ The **far-right** has gained new momentum within some local communities, particularly in relation to hotels temporarily accommodating asylum seekers, and it has also been bolstered by high profile media coverage of small boat crossings. NGO research indicates that local far-right activity has been underpinned by Government hostility towards migrants.⁴⁰

There have been a series of **high-profile public criticisms of the UK refugee and migration sector**, apparently aimed at deterring charities from speaking out against government policies. Government ministers and other prominent politicians have repeatedly criticised charities and

lawyers.⁴¹ In March 2023, the chairman of the Charity Commission urged charities to adopt “*a better kind of discourse*” in relation to the Illegal Migration Bill.⁴²

Broader **restrictions on the voluntary sector and civil society** have also added to the challenging backdrop for NGOs working on refugee and migration issues. **The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023** have substantially extended police powers to restrict and criminalise protest activity in the UK.⁴³ This has significantly limited the right to protest, with reports of a ‘chilling’ effect on charities and campaign groups.

There is a continued threat to the UK’s **human rights framework** too. On 27 June 2023, the government announced that it will not be proceeding with its new Bill of Rights, which was introduced in parliament in June 2022 and if passed would have entrenched the primacy of British law over rulings from the European Court on Human Rights, and restricted the use of human rights claims against the government. However, there remains widespread concern about the extent to which the rule of law and human rights are at risk from a range of legislative and policy measures.



3

An overview of the UK refugee and migration charitable sector

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This section offers an overview of the UK refugee and migration charitable sector. It draws upon data from the three UK charity commissions (the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland) to indicate the overall size and income of the sector in September 2022. Where possible, this is compared to data collected in January 2020, to identify key trends in the sector.

3.1 Overview of the sector

The UK refugee and migration NGO sector is a diverse ecosystem of organisations, projects and networks, working at local, regional and national levels.

The profile of organisations in this space is highly dynamic. New NGOs are established and grow whilst others shrink and close, in response to changing needs, internal capacity and wider political and economic contexts. Whilst many are constituted and/or registered as charities or companies, others operate on a more informal basis.

The main types of organisations which we include in our definition of the UK refugee and migration sector are:

- **Registered charities.** Hundreds of UK organisations working on refugee and migration issues are registered as charities with the relevant charity commission in England and Wales, Northern Ireland, or Scotland. This includes many community organisations, thinktanks and campaigning organisations.
- **Other formally constituted not-for-profit organisations.** Some organisations are not registered as charities but have another formal status such as Community Interest Companies (CICs). This includes some community groups and campaigning organisations.
- **Voluntary and community-based organisations, projects, and initiatives.** A range of community-based organisations and initiatives are not formally constituted or registered as charities. This includes some voluntary community groups and networks, online campaign / pressure groups, mutual aid projects, and other community initiatives.⁴⁴

- **International organisations.** This includes agencies of the United Nations, and offices of other internationally registered charities and not-for-profit organisations working on refugee and migration issues in the UK.

3.2 UK refugee and migration charities: Numbers

The most reliable dataset for the sector relates to registered charities. Analysis of data from the relevant charity commissions in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland shows that, in September 2022,⁴⁵ there were:

- **1,463 registered charities who are recorded as doing at least some work on UK refugee and migration issues.** We refer to this group as the 'wider sector'. It includes registered charities with a **much wider remit**, but who deliver some activity on refugee and migration issues in the UK.⁴⁶
- **708 registered charities which specifically focus on refugee and migration issues.** We refer to this group as the 'core' sector. This is a sub-group of the 'wider sector'. It includes only those registered charities that **specifically focus** on UK refugee and migration issues, and which have a minimum level of resource (at least £2 per annum) to do so.⁴⁷

Fig 3.1 Charities in the core charitable sector, 2022

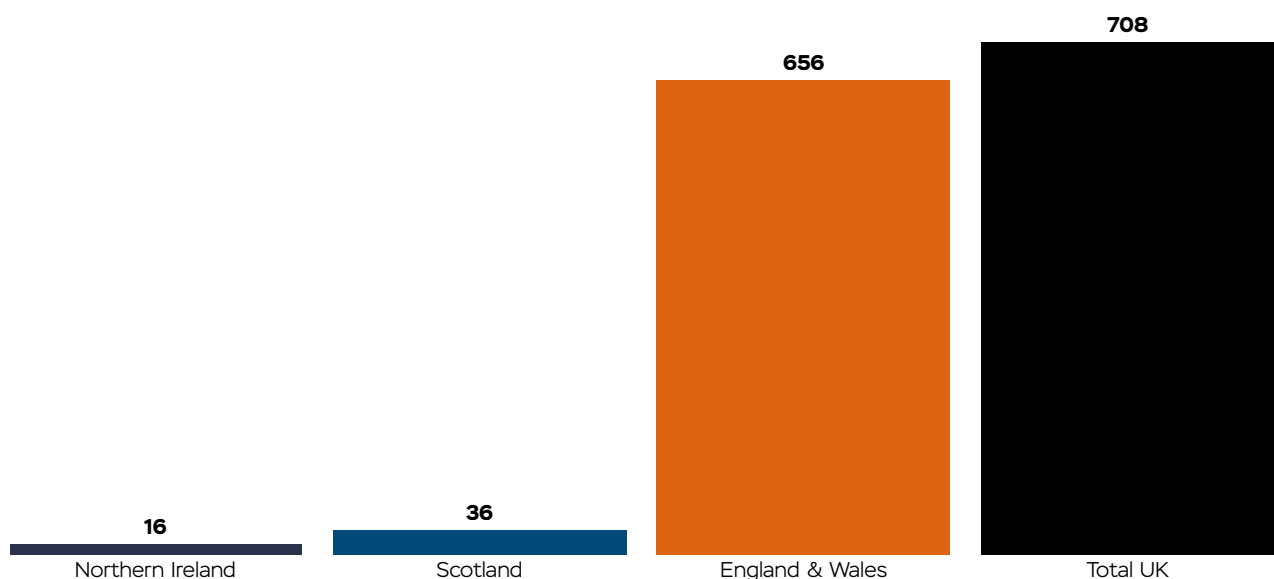
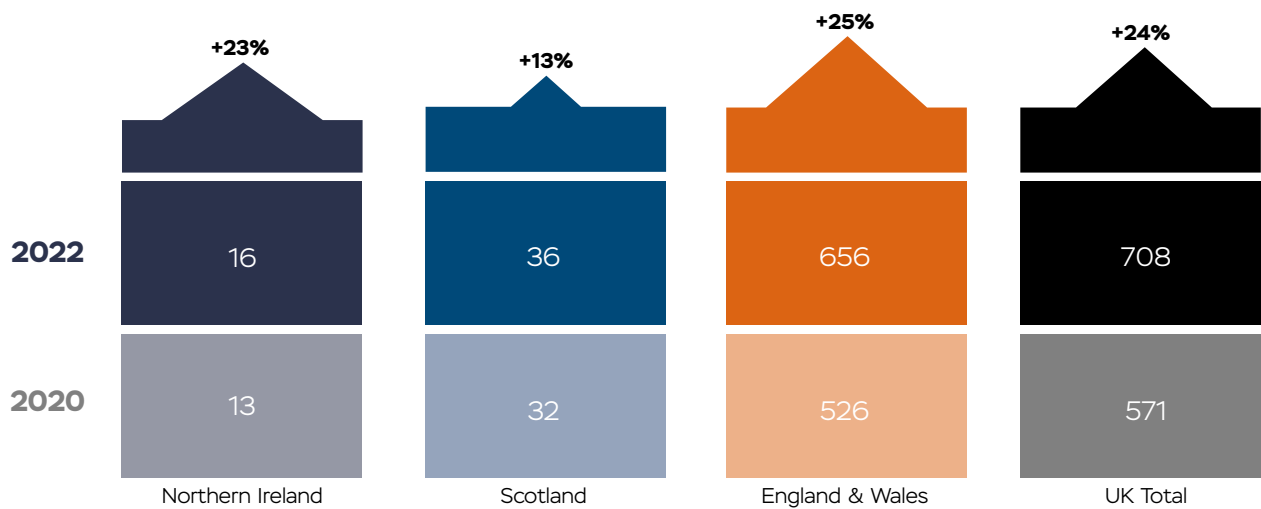


Fig 3.2 Increase in core sector charities by country registered, 2020 vs 2022



Between 2020 and 2022, there was a significant increase in the number of registered charities working on refugee and migration issues in the UK. This trend can be seen in both the 'wider sector' (where the number of charities increased by 359), and the 'core sector' (where the number of charities increased by 137).

All three charity commissions recorded an increase in the number of registered charities working primarily or exclusively on refugee and migration issues between 2020 and 2022.⁴⁸ The biggest increase in the number of new charities was in England and Wales.⁴⁹

The newly registered charities during this period could include a range of organisations, including:

- New charities set up to support recent refugee arrivals to the UK. Although available charity commission data predates the war in Ukraine, some of the growth in the sector could relate to community groups responding to the needs of other resettled communities, including those from Afghanistan and Hong Kong.
- Charities set up to work with people seeking asylum who have been dispersed across the UK.
- Charities set up to support people who are EEA nationals affected by the rule changes created by Brexit.
- New campaigning, advocacy and community-organising charities working on refugee and migration issues.

Reliable data is not available to state categorically whether the number of organisations working in the sector that are registered as Community Interest Companies, or are informal voluntary sector groups, also grew during this period. Based on the information gathered during this research, we believe it is very likely that, as with the charity sector, the number of non-charities working on refugee and migration issues did increase.⁵⁰

3.3 UK refugee and migration charities: Income

The collective incomes of both the wider charity sector, and the core charity sector, significantly increased between 2020 and 2022. Analysis of data from the charity commissions in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland shows that, in September 2022:

- The collective income for registered charities working within the ‘wider’ UK refugee and migration sector was £349 million. This was an increase of £96 million – or 38% – since 2020, when the sector’s income was £252 million.
- The collective income for registered charities working within the ‘core’ UK refugee and migration sector was £176 million. This was an increase of £59 million – or 51% – since 2020, when the sector’s income was £117 million.⁵¹

The rise in the collective income of the refugee and migration sector between 2020 and 2022 can largely be explained by the availability of new funding during this period, including:

- **Emergency grant funding in response to Covid-19.** Charitable trusts and foundations made available an estimated £19 million in additional emergency funding to the refugee and migration sector between March and November 2020⁵². Funding sources included Comic Relief, the National Lottery Communities Fund, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Access to Justice Fund and the jointly-funded Respond and Adapt Fund among others.
- **New statutory funding to the sector.** Since 2020, some charities in the sector have received statutory funding to support people coming to the UK under

Charitable trusts and foundations made available an estimated £19 million in additional emergency funding between March and November 2020.

bespoke resettlement / visa programmes.⁵³ In addition, some charities have received statutory funding to provide advice or support to European Union nationals applying for the EU Settlement Scheme.

- **Other grant funding.** Some additional funding has come into the sector over recent years from new grant funders of UK refugee and migration work.⁵⁴

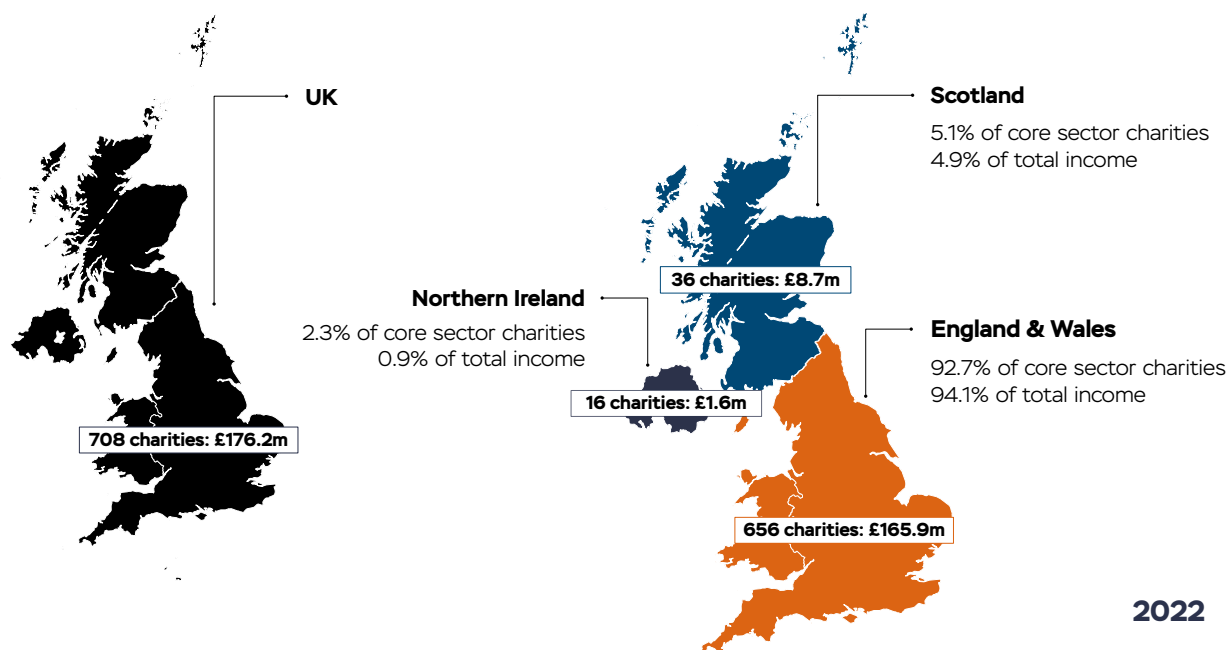
3.4 UK refugee and migration charities: Geography

Around half of charities with annual incomes over **£500,000** are based in London.

Analysis of charity commission data shows that the vast majority of refugee and migration charities (93%) in the core sector in 2022 were registered in England and Wales. Charities registered in England and Wales also accounted for 94% of the core sector's income. There had been no significant change in this since 2020.

Even though there was a proportionately higher increase in the incomes of the core sector charities in both Scotland and Northern Ireland between 2020 and 2022, the charities in these nations were still underfunded in relation to their make-up of the core charitable sector of the UK.

Fig 3.3 Core sector charities and income by country registered, 2022



The core sector charities with the largest incomes also continued to be concentrated in London, with around half of all charities with annual incomes over £500,000 based in the capital.

3.5 UK refugee and migration charities: Income distribution

Data from charity commission websites indicates that, in 2022, financial resource was unevenly distributed.

Overall, the majority of organisations working on refugee and migration issues in the UK were small, with an annual budget of £100,000 or less. A very small number of large organisations had budgets of over £1 million, absorbing the majority of resource in the sector.

Charity commission data analysis shows that, in 2022, just under 3% of registered charities that focus on refugee and migration issues (the 'core' charitable sector) had an annual income of over £1 million. A third of the core charity sector were medium-sized organisations with an annual income of between £100,000 per annum and £1 million.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of organisations working in the core charity sector had an annual income of less than £100,001 per annum. Nearly half (45%) of core sector charities had an income of between £2 and £25,000.

However, despite the small number of organisations at the 'top end' of the income bracket, the 21 UK charities with incomes over £1 million per annum (3% of the core charitable sector) were collectively responsible for allocating around 44% of the sector's resources (around £78 million). The five biggest

charities in this group had a turnover of £61 million between them, more than a third of the total resources available to the sector.

Similarly, 237 medium and large refugee and migration charities in England and Wales – those with over £100,000 in annual income – controlled around 94% of the core charitable sector's resources in those nations (an increase of 2% since 2020). The combined income for this group for 2022 was just over £156 million.

The 21 charities with incomes over £1 million per annum (3% of the core charitable sector) were collectively responsible for allocating around 44% of the sector's resources (around £78 million).

Fig 3.4 Core sector charities in the UK by income bracket, 2020 vs. 2022

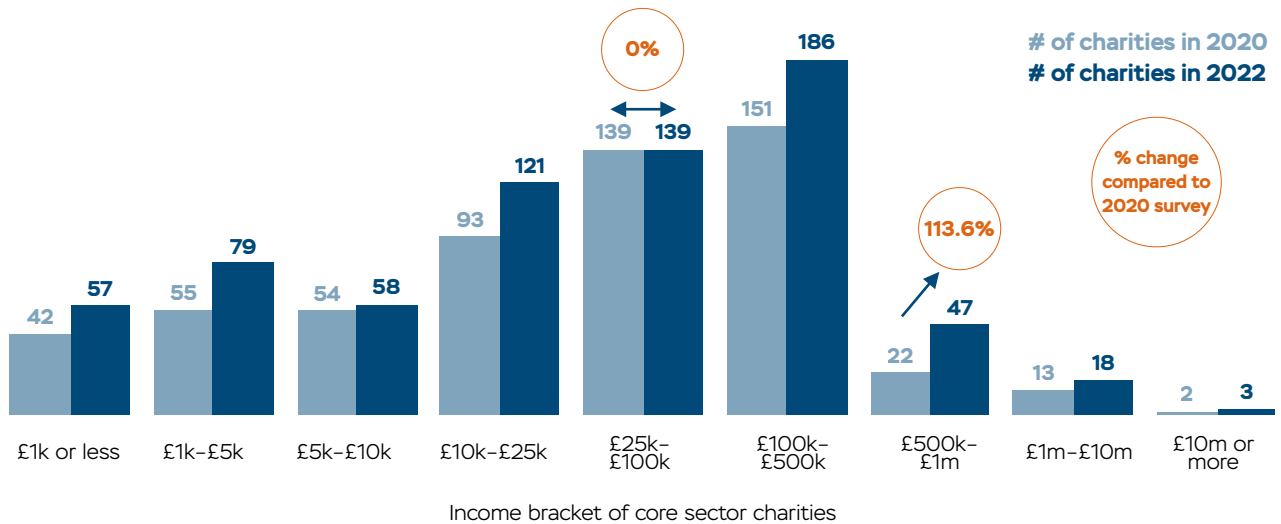
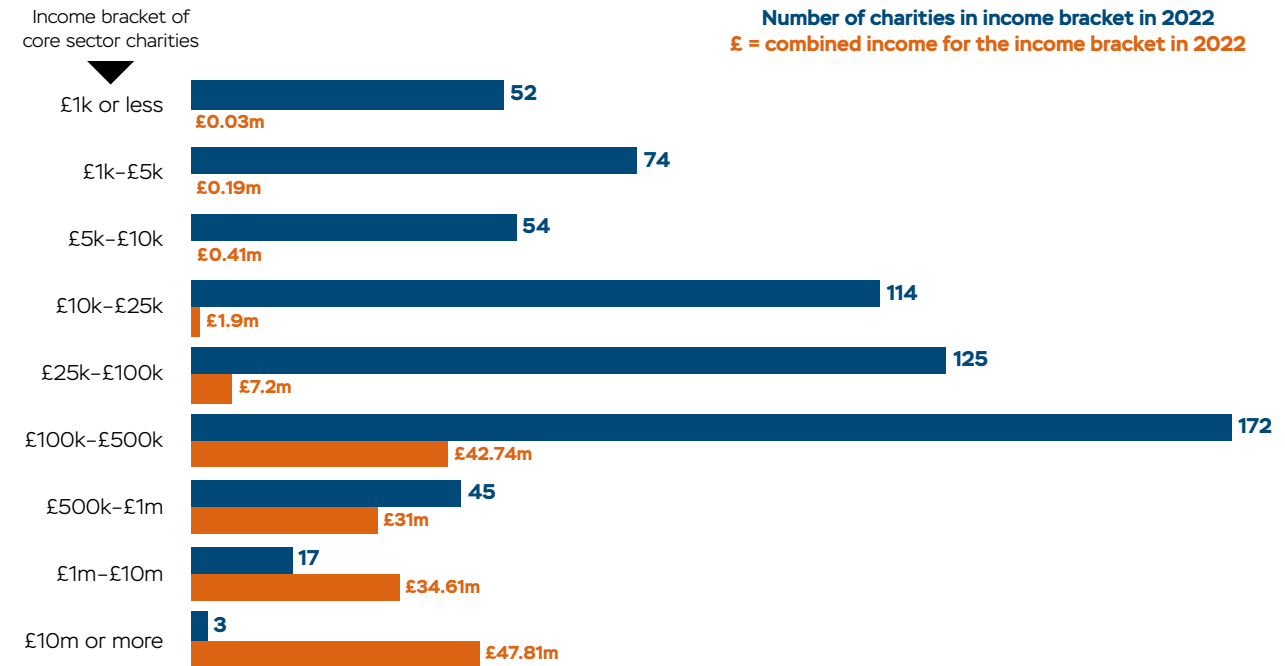


Fig 3.5 Core sector charities in England & Wales, combined income for each income bracket, 2022



The 65 core sector charities in England and Wales with incomes over £500,000 per annum had a combined income of over £113 million, and controlled over two thirds of the sector’s resources in those nations. By contrast, the 419 charities in England and Wales that have incomes of £100,000 or less had a combined income of less than £10 million.

24%
increase in total UK charities since 2020.

Income distribution was broadly the same in Scotland. However, in Northern Ireland, medium and large refugee and migration charities controlled a smaller amount of the core sector’s income (66%).

Organisational size and capacity is likely to have been significant in determining organisations' ability to secure further funding. Analysis of charity commissions data suggests that the more established, medium and large sized charities in the refugee and migration sector were generally most successful in securing additional funding between 2020 and 2022.

Organisational size and capacity is likely to have been significant in determining organisations' ability to secure further funding.

Only around 10% of core sector charities with an income of over £100,000 saw their income fall during this period. Charities with incomes between £500,000 and £1 million more than doubled – the biggest growth in proportion to the rest of the core sector.

In 2022, this group of charities represented nearly 7% of the core sector (up from just under 4% in 2020).

Conversely, there was a fall in the number of refugee and migration charities with incomes between £25,000 and £100,000. While this cohort still made up nearly a fifth of charities in the core charitable sector, it was nearly 5% smaller than in 2020, as many of the charities that were formerly in this group had increased their income and moved up into the £100,000–£500,000 bracket.

The data also indicates that smaller charities in the £10,000 – £25,000 cohort were less successful at securing significant additional funding, as relatively few had moved up into the next income tier by 2022.

4

Profiling the UK refugee and migration NGO sector

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This section provides a detailed profile of a sample of NGOs working in the refugee and migration sector. This is based on the findings of a survey completed by 175 key NGOs between September and November 2022.⁵⁵ The sample included small, medium and large organisations, as well as 'key allies' of the sector, and had a combined annual income of around £103 million.

The findings offer an indicative picture of NGOs working across the sector and includes some organisations not registered as charities. Where possible, this data has been compared with data from 2020.

4.1 Experience

The NGO survey was primarily completed by well-established organisations with more than a decade of experience of working on refugee and migration issues.

Just over two thirds of organisations (68%) that responded to the NGO survey were founded over 10 years ago and 87% were at least six years old. Only four of the NGOs that completed the survey (2%) were founded within the past two years.

As more recently formed NGOs are generally small and there was a proportionately lower response rate to the questionnaire from these organisations, the survey findings are likely to be weighted towards more well-established organisations in the sector. This is confirmed by analysis of the charity commissions' databases which shows that a total of 125 new charities were registered in the UK in the two years prior to September 2022.⁵⁶

There are likely to be many more voluntary and community organisations that have been established in the period since 2020 which have not registered as charities. There are a number of reasons why organisations working in the sector might not wish to be registered as charities, including the administration and costs involved, and legal limitations on some activities such as campaigning.

125

new charities were registered in the UK in the two years prior to September 2022.

4.2 Geographic focus

Over half (56%) of the NGOs who responded to the survey stated that they work primarily at a local or regional level. A further 29% said the focus of their work was UK-wide and the remainder worked at the country level.

Over half of NGOs stated that they work primarily at a local or regional level.

The geographic distribution of resources continues to be heavily weighted towards the South East. Nearly a quarter of the organisations that work at the local/regional level are working in Greater London and 39% of all NGO survey respondents were based in the capital. This is roughly in line with information gathered from the charity commissions' databases which found that nearly a third (32%) of the 708 charities which specifically focus on UK refugee and migration issues are based in London.

Fig 4.1 Geographic focus of NGO work, 2020 vs 2022

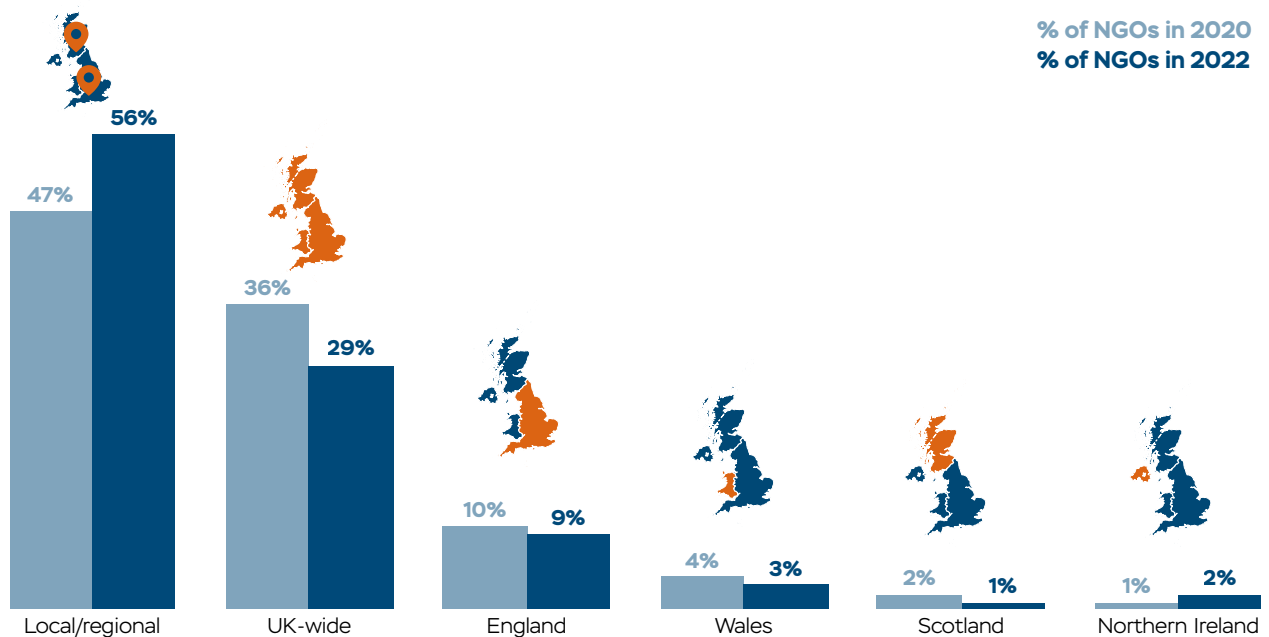
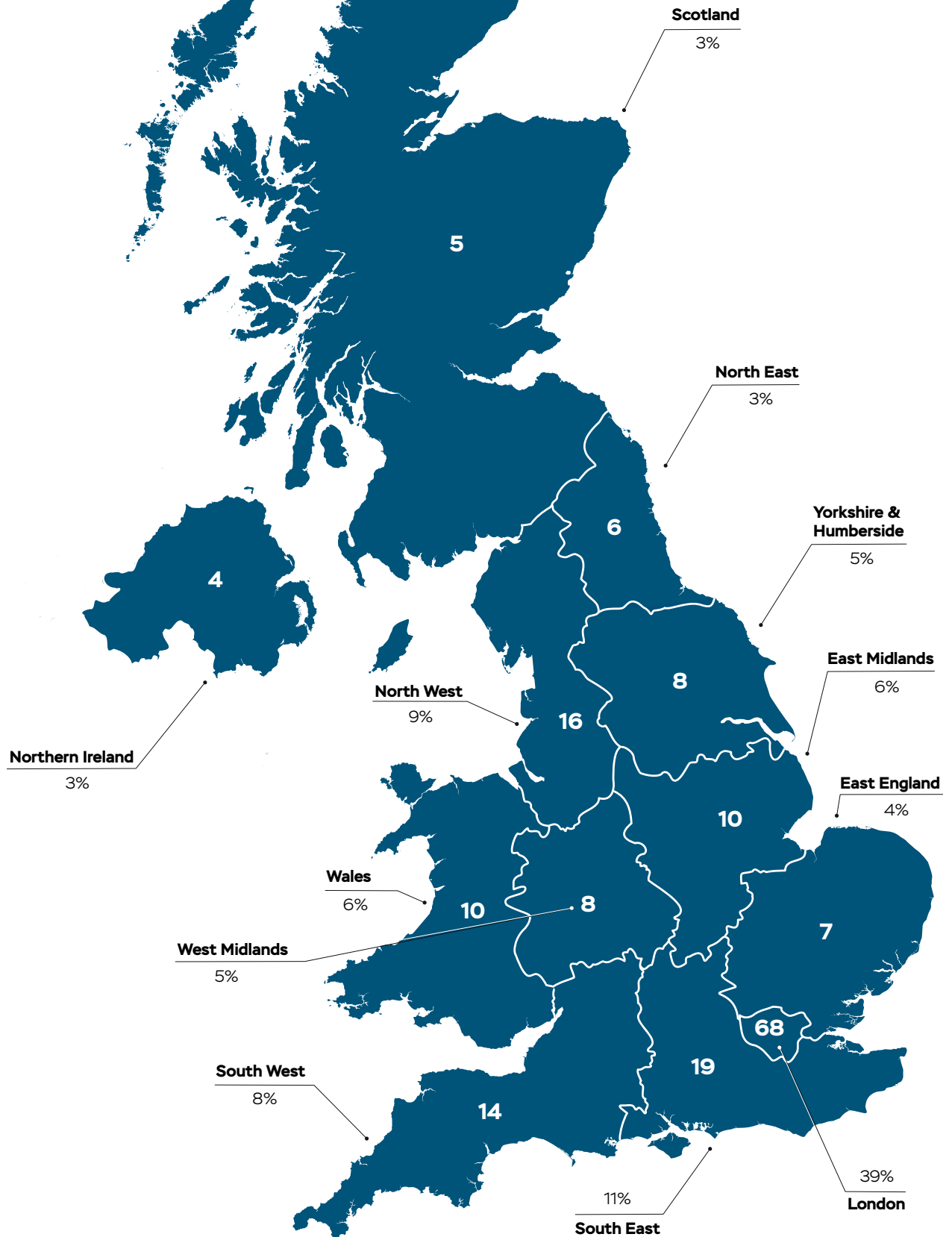


Fig 4.2 Geographic location of NGOs, 2022



4.3 Income

The 175 survey respondents had a combined income of approximately £103 million per annum. This was equivalent to 59% of the total income for the charitable sector working on refugee and migration issues in 2022 (£176 million).

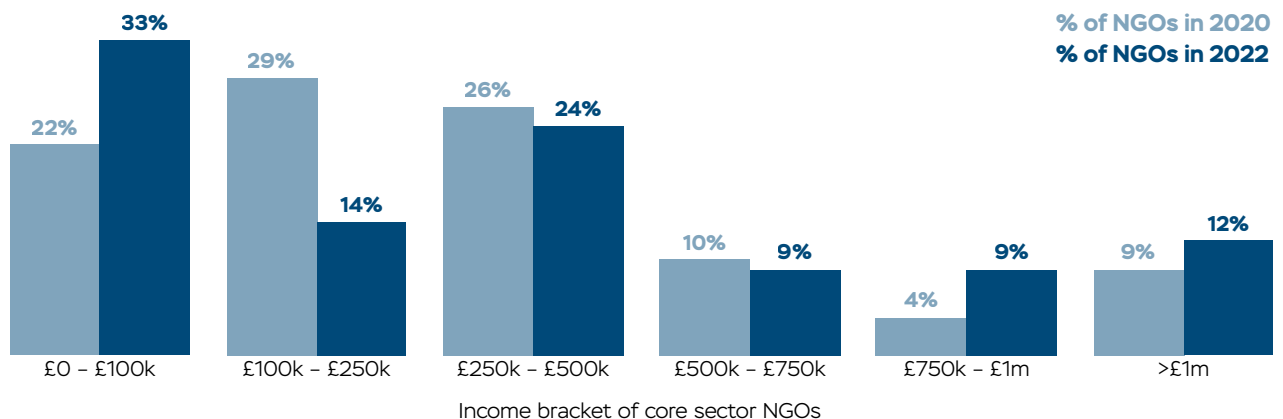
Despite the increase in funding that the sector has seen in the last three years, a third of the NGOs surveyed (33%) still had an annual income below £100,001 and just under half had an income below £250,001 (47%).

While only 12% of respondents (19 organisations) had incomes over one million, their combined annual budget was just over £60 million.

A total of 32 organisations that responded to the survey (19%) do not work exclusively on refugee and migration issues in the UK, but are still important stakeholders in the sector (e.g. the British Red Cross, Doctors of the World, Citizens UK, Maternity Action). The information collected from these organisations for this research (income, staff, etc.) only relates to the work they do on UK refugee and migration issues.

For most of these NGOs, refugee and migration issues are not the primary focus of their activities and 44% dedicate less than a third of their resources to this work. However, as many of these are large organisations, this still equates to millions of pounds each year. If the priorities of these NGOs were to change and they reduced the amount of funding they dedicate to refugee and migration work this would have important implications for the sector, both in terms of service provision and advocacy capacity.

Fig 4.3 NGO income (by income bracket), 2020 vs 2022



4.4 Financial resilience

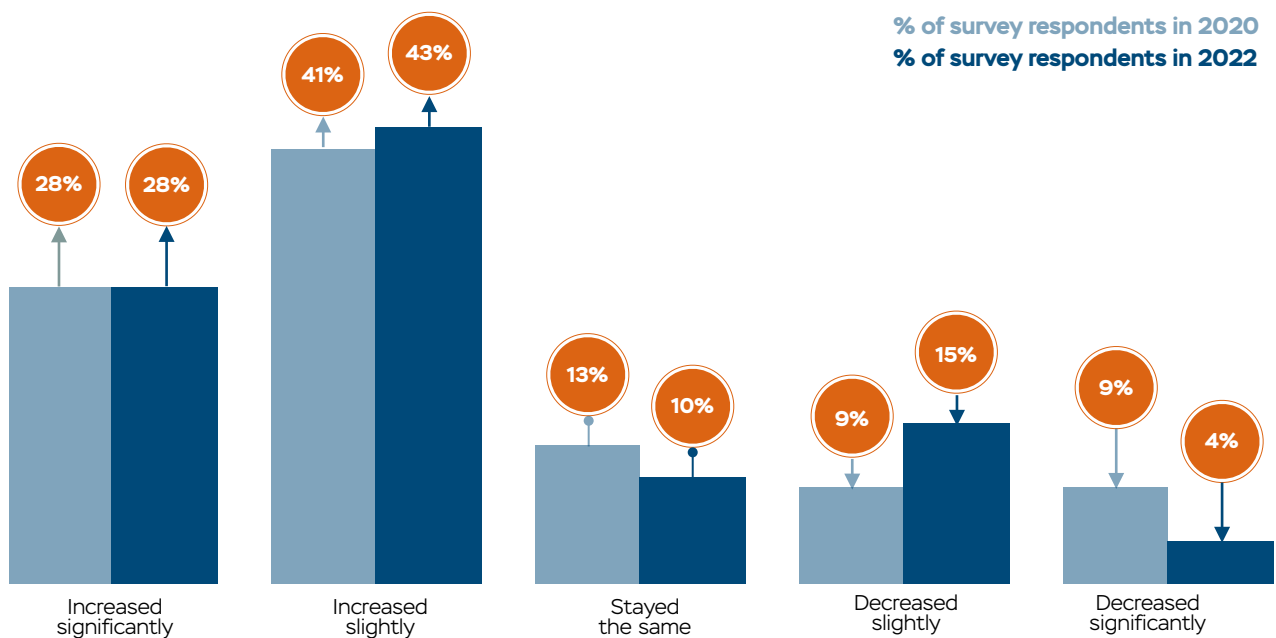
The trend of rising incomes across the sector between 2020 and 2022 shown in the charity commission data is also reflected in the findings of the NGO survey. Nearly three quarters of NGO survey respondents (71%) reported that their funding had increased since 2020.

It should be noted that a similar percentage of NGOs also stated that their incomes had risen in the 2020 survey.⁵⁷ Consequently, many organisations would have experienced an extended period of modest or significant financial growth.⁵⁸

This is likely to be a key part of the explanation of why nearly half (47%) of the respondents stated that their organisation was more resilient (financially secure and better able to deliver its goals) than it was in 2020.

While most NGOs have seen their incomes rise since 2020, just under a fifth of respondents (19%) reported a fall in funding, roughly equivalent to those that said they were less resilient than they were three years ago (21%).

Fig 4.4 Changes to NGO funding levels, according to survey respondents, 2020 vs 2022



4.5 Income sources

Survey findings also showed an overall trend towards less diverse income sources for the sector and a slightly higher dependence on trusts and foundations. In 2022, 62% of NGOs rely on trusts and foundations for at least 60% of their income (58% in 2020). The percentage of organisations which received more than 40% of their income from individual giving, grants from devolved government/local authorities; contracts for service provision with the public sector and European/international funding sources all fell between 2020 and 2022.

59%

of those surveyed only have reserves to sustain their organisation's activities for

4 months or less

The only income source which increased over this period, apart from trusts and foundations, was grants from central government. The percentage of organisations which received more than 40% of their income from central government increased by 3% between 2020 and 2022.⁵⁹

Despite the income growth experienced by most NGO respondents in recent years, more than half (59%) still think financial sustainability should be prioritised to strengthen the health and impact of the sector. This unease about how funding will be maintained in the coming years may be explained by some underlying financial vulnerabilities which are evident in the survey responses:

- 59% of those surveyed only have reserves to sustain their organisation's activities for four months or less (2020:66%).
- 59% received 10% or less of their income from individuals (membership fees, donations, legacies or sales to the public) (2020: 58%).⁶⁰
- 44% depend on grants from trusts and foundations for more than 70% of their income. (2020: 46%).⁶¹
- Unrestricted funding made up just 10% or less of the total income of 20% of organisations (2020: 29%) and 20% or less for 40% of respondents (2020: 44%).
- 15% ran a deficit in the last financial year (2020: 23%).

While these figures are a cause for concern, they also indicate some improvement on where the sector was in 2020. The biggest positive changes were in relation to the percentage of charities that: had 10% or less of their total income as unrestricted funding (down 9%); ran a deficit in the last financial year (down 8%) and had four months or less of reserves (down 7%).

Fig 4.5 a) Income sources for the sector: % of NGO total income from trusts, foundations or charities, 2020 vs 2022

% of income that comes from trusts, foundations or charities

% of NGOs surveyed in 2020
% of NGOs surveyed in 2022

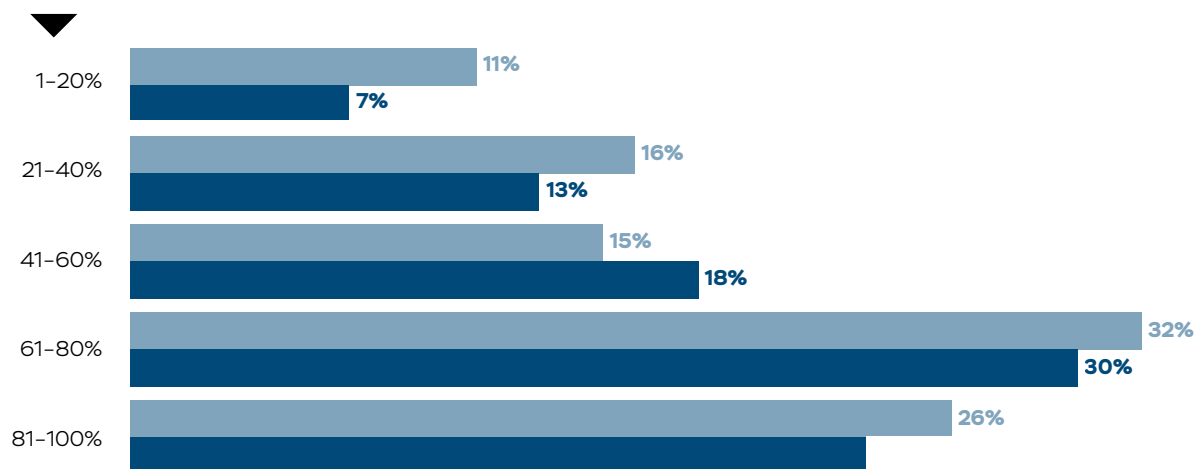
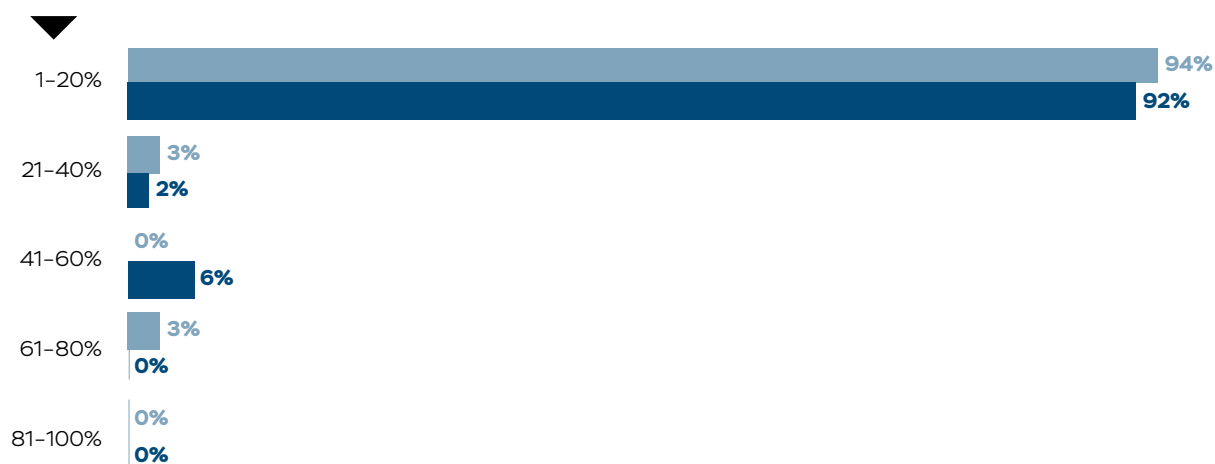


Fig 4.5 b) Income sources for the sector: % of NGO total income from central government grants, 2020 vs 2022

% of income that comes from central government grants

% of NGOs surveyed in 2020
% of NGOs surveyed in 2022



4.6 Staff and volunteers

The majority of refugee and migration NGOs employ relatively small staff teams. Just under half of the NGOs surveyed (48%) had one to five full-time staff members, with a quarter operating with just one to two full time employees.

However, nearly a third of respondents (31%) employed 11 or more members of staff, an increase of 9% since 2020. This may relate to the income growth seen across the sector during this period.

Fig 4.6 Number of full-time staff, 2020 vs 2022

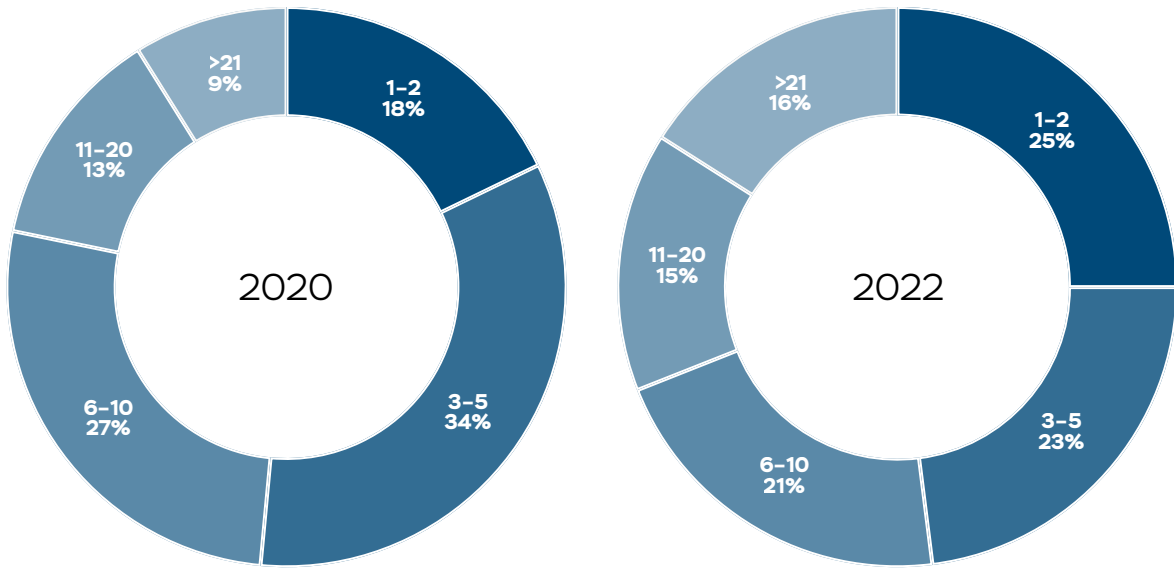
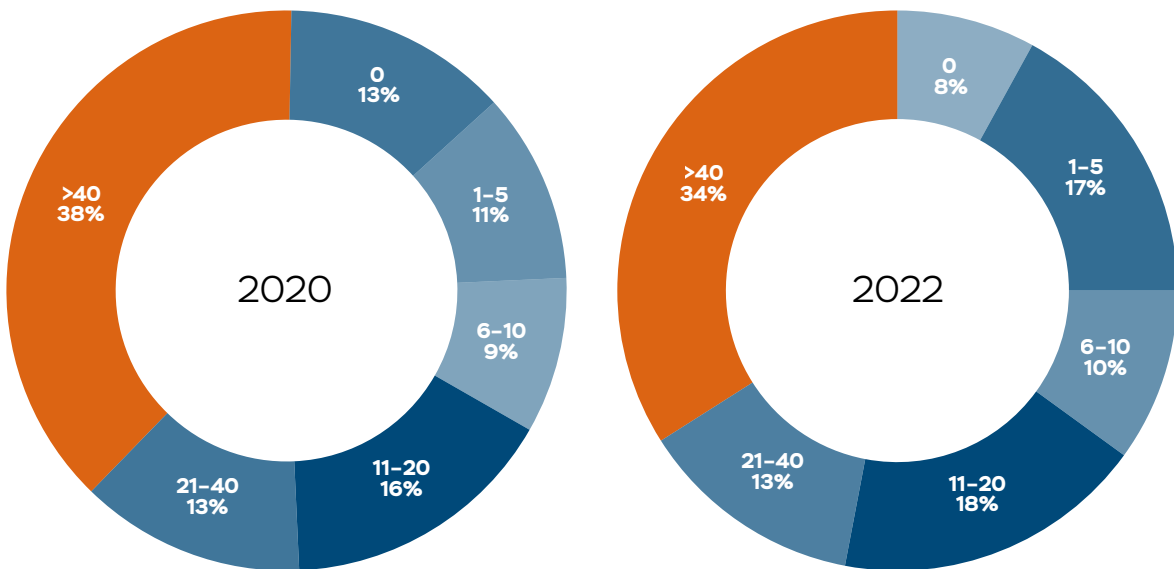


Fig 4.7 Number of volunteers, 2020 vs 2022



Most organisations in the sector rely on the support of considerable numbers of volunteers. Just under two thirds of 2022 NGO respondents (65%) had more than 10 active, regular volunteers and 34% had more than 40. Only 13 organisations (8%) stated that they did not use volunteers at all, down from 13% in 2020.

While the ratio of volunteers to staff has fallen – down from about 3:1 in 2020 to around 2.5:1 in 2022 – this reflects an increase in staff numbers rather than a decrease in the use of volunteers.

Those NGOs that depend on volunteers to deliver key aspect of their work may struggle as the cost of living crisis bites and some organisations are already signalling that they are finding it more difficult to recruit and retain volunteers.

4.7 Thematic focus of work

The NGO survey found that a significantly higher proportion of organisations work for or with people seeking asylum and/or refugees in the UK, than work with people in other parts of the immigration system or non-British citizens.⁶²

- 41% of NGOs which responded work exclusively for / with people in the UK asylum system and / or refugees.
- 16% of NGOs work exclusively for / with people in the wider UK immigration system, and/or other non-UK citizens.
- 43% of NGOs work for / with any migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

NGO survey data shows that there was a modest shift in the focus of organisations sampled for this research between 2020 and 2022. The percentage of organisations reporting that they only work on non-asylum/refugee immigration issues increased by 9%.⁶³ However, this still only equates to 28 NGOs across the UK.

4.8 Activities: Service delivery

87% of NGO survey respondents provided services directly to migrants and/or refugees. 40% of NGOs allocated over 80% of their resources to service delivery. Over two thirds (67%) of NGOs dedicated more than 60% of their income to providing services.

40%

of NGOs
allocated over

60%

of their resources
to service delivery.

Most NGOs typically deliver multiple types of frontline services – those that are currently most commonly delivered include:

- Welfare advice
- Social/welcoming events
- Emergency support

- Integration support
- Immigration/asylum advice and casework
- Local activism and community-organising relating to refugee and migration issues

The percentage of organisations giving welfare advice and emergency support to refugees and/or migrants both increased by

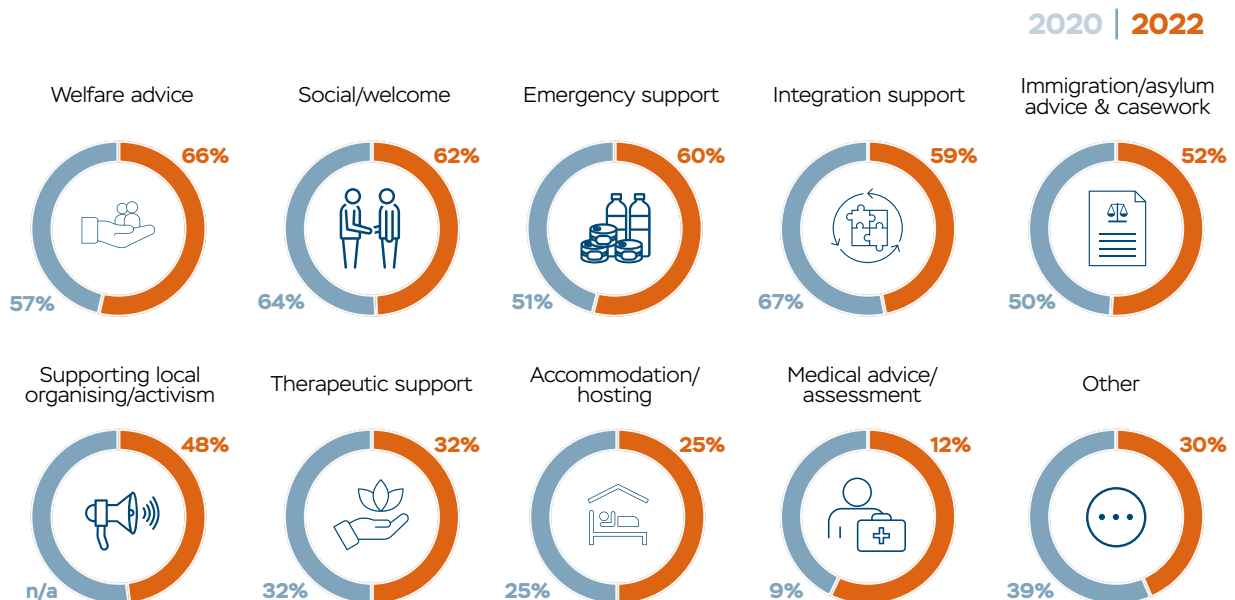
9%

The NGO survey indicates some changes in the services that organisations delivered on the ground between 2020 and 2022. The percentage of organisations giving welfare advice and emergency support to refugees and/or migrants both increased by 9%.

This is likely to reflect the challenging context that organisations have faced during this period, due to needs generated by Covid-19 and to the arrival of substantial new cohorts of refugees and asylum-seekers to the UK during this period.

There was also a noticeable fall in the number of organisations providing integration support (down 8%). This could be as a result of the sector's need to 'fire-fight' by providing emergency support since 2020.

Fig 4.8 Type of service provided by NGOs, 2020 vs 2022



4.9 Activities: Influencing and advocacy

79% of NGO survey respondents engaged in activities which aim to influence policy, practice or public opinion. This includes public campaigns, local or national political engagement, media / communications work, community organising, strategic litigation and work to engage the wider public through the arts, music and cultural activities.

Influencing work on refugee and migration issues remained poorly resourced.

Most of the sector's influencing work was focused at the UK level (47%), although more than a quarter of organisations (27%) engaged in advocacy in their local area. A further 15% focused their influencing work at the regional level and 12% at the country level.

However, influencing work on refugee and migration issues remained poorly resourced. Nearly three quarters of NGOs (73%) dedicated 20% or less of their income to these activities and more than half (57%) allocated 10% or less. Just 17 organisations (10%) allocated more than half of their resources to influencing work.

The relatively low level of influencing capacity across the sector was also reflected in the fact that over half of the respondents (52%) had less than one full-time equivalent staff member to deliver their influencing work. A further 30% had only 1–2 members of staff for this area of work.

Over half of the respondents had less than one full-time equivalent staff member to deliver their influencing work.

Only media and communications work was undertaken by more than half of those organisations which engaged in influencing work (61%). Over a third stated that they: undertook community organising (48%), carried out research and policy analysis (45%), lobbied parliamentarians (43%), encouraged wider engagement through the arts (40%) and advocated with civil servants (39%).

In addition, 29% of organisations reported that more than half of the time they spent on influencing work was dedicated to reactive work. This means that much of the limited resource available for advocacy work was utilised to respond to the government's initiatives or issues raised in the media, rather than pushing forward a positive agenda of change.⁶⁴

Decline in influencing activity

Comparing this data with the 2020 survey data,⁶⁵ the percentage of refugee and migration organisations undertaking influencing work decreased for every type of activity except one (community organising). The sharpest falls were in advocacy with civil servants (down 24%), running campaigns (down 16%) and lobbying of parliamentarians (down 13%).

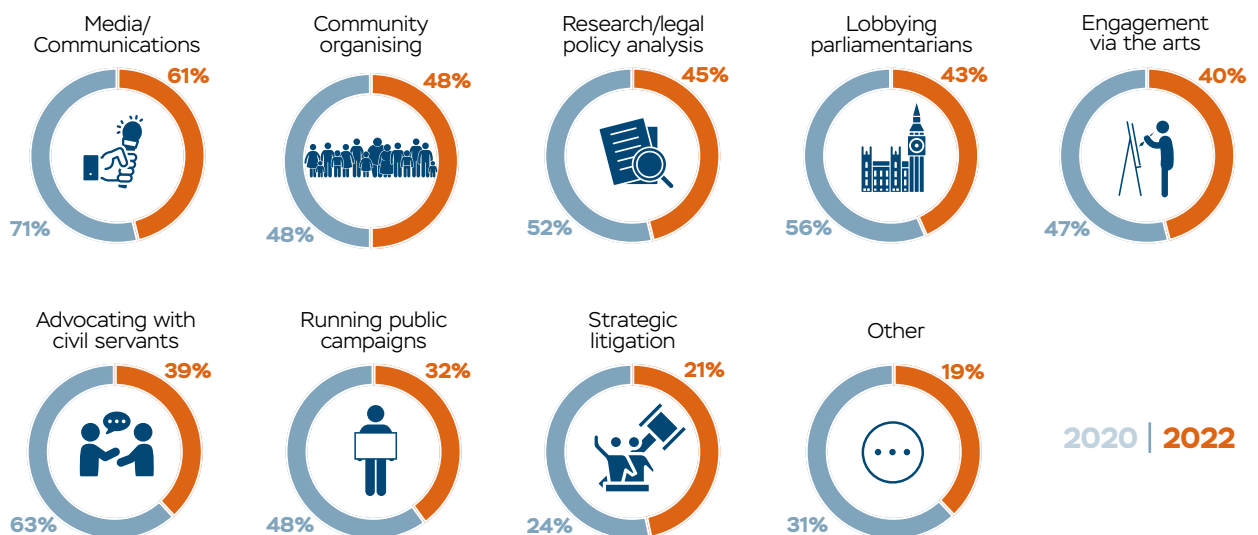
Survey results indicate increased cooperation between organisations to try and influence policy and practice.

These findings were echoed in responses to other questions in the research survey regarding the impact of the sector's campaigning work, and changes since 2020:

- Only 4% of NGOs and funders agreed that the sector had better relations with the Home Office and could influence important policy decisions (42% disagreed and 15% said it was the same).
- While an average of 22% of respondents thought the sector did more to engage sections of society which hold sceptical or hostile attitudes towards people who are refugees or migrants, 39% disagreed or said it was the same.

Despite the above, there were indications of increased cooperation between organisations to try and influence policy and practice. 54% of NGOs and funders agreed that the sector now pooled more of its collective resources to try and achieve significant policy changes than it did in 2020. 22% either disagreed or said it was the same. On this issue funders were more positive than NGOs about progress (65% versus 43% agreeing).

Fig 4.9 running influencing activities, by activity type, 2020 vs 2022



The decline in the number of NGOs delivering influencing work over the past three years is likely to be due to the challenging political context during this period. It may also reflect the larger proportion of smaller NGOs which responded to the 2022 survey. Smaller organisations generally have less influencing capacity and it would not be a surprise that fewer have been able to prioritise this work in recent years.

The overall finding may mask a more nuanced picture across the sector, with some organisations continuing or even expanding their advocacy work. Of the small number of NGOs that do devote a significant proportion of their time to influencing work, several stated that they were allocating the same amount of resource or more they had three years ago. These trends are explored further in Section 6.5.

4.10 Activities: Providing support to other organisations

More than half of NGO respondents (58%) spent 10% or less of their time on providing resources or wider support to other organisations in the sector. This represents a modest improvement since 2020 when the percentage was 62%.

Only 11 respondents (7%) spent more than half of their time on providing support to other NGOs. This includes some organisations that focus on providing infrastructure and/or expert issue-based support to the sector.

66%

of respondents reported that they collaborate more with other organisations than they did in 2020.

However, 66% of respondents reported that they collaborate more with other organisations than they did in 2020. Only 5% stated that they collaborated less and the remainder said that their level of cooperation with other organisations had stayed the same.

5

Funding for UK refugee and migration work

- 5.1** Overview of funding to the sector 45
- 5.2** Survey of trusts and foundations 48

This section offers an overview of funding to the UK refugee and migration sector, including analysis of funding sources and trends between 2020 and 2022.

5.1 Overview of funding to the sector

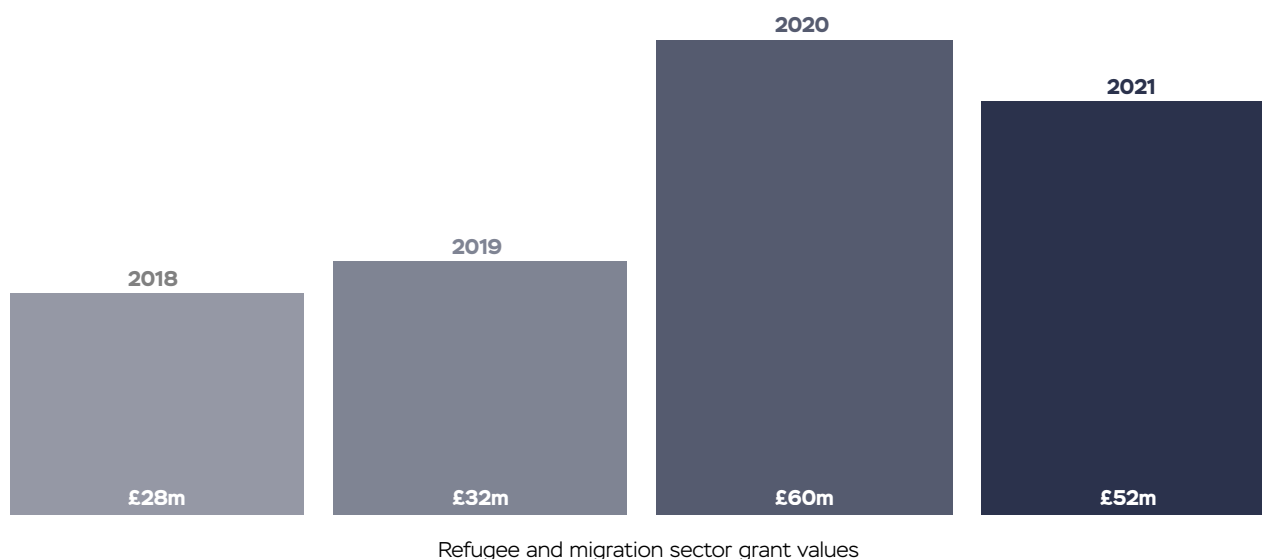
The refugee and migration sector receives funding from a range of sources, including independent trusts and foundations, statutory funders, income-generating activities, corporate and individual donors. Analysis of the 360Giving website for the period 2018–2021 offers some opportunity to identify trends across some of the sector’s key funding sources.⁶⁶

Trusts and Foundations

Grants to all sectors by trusts and foundations increased by 23% between 2018 and 2021. However, the refugee and migration sector saw a comparatively greater increase, with its funding up by 85% or £24 million (from £28m in 2018 to £52m in 2021).⁶⁷ This aligns with a MEX estimate that £19m in new funding was made available in emergency Covid-19 funding to the sector between March and November 2020.⁶⁸

The value of all grants made by trust and foundations increased from £1.6m in 2019 to £2.4m in 2020 in response to the pandemic, but then fell back to £1.6m again in 2021. In the refugee and migration sector, grants also went down in 2021, but the sector still received £20m more in grants in 2021 than it did in 2019.

Fig 5.1 Grant-value awarded to refugee and migration sector, 2018–2021



National Lottery grants

Most National Lottery grants to the refugee and migration sector come through the Community Fund, although a small number are also provided via the Heritage Fund and Sports England. While only 1.7% of National Lottery grants in 2021 were allocated to refugee and migration projects, it is still one of the largest individual funders of the sector's work. In 2021, it allocated £16.5 million to refugee and migration projects, the equivalent of just under 10% of the entire income for the core charitable sector.⁶⁹

Consequently, any change in National Lottery grant practice is likely to have a ripple effect throughout the sector and could seriously impact organisations that are already dealing with other funding challenges (e.g. a reduction in individual giving due to the cost of living crisis or a key trust/foundation changing their eligibility criteria).

The value of National Lottery grants to the refugee and migration sector has changed little between 2018 and 2021, with the exception of 2020. In 2020, National Lottery grants fell by £6.4 million, the equivalent of a 42% reduction.⁷⁰ While the total value of grants given by the National Lottery also fell in 2020 (by £178 million), this only represented a 20% reduction.

In 2021, National Lottery grants returned to previous levels, with total grants up £270 million on the previous year (38%).

Apart from this volatility in funding during the Covid pandemic, the other point worth noting about National Lottery funding is that the number of grant recipients has increased significantly between 2018 and 2021. There were 1,934 more recipients for all National Lottery grants in this period (up 14%) and the trend is more pronounced for the refugee and migration sector where there were 122 additional organisations receiving grants in 2021 than in 2018 (up 44%).

Given that the value of National Lottery refugee and migration grants in 2021 is roughly the same as it was in 2018, this means that the average grant size must have been significantly reduced for most organisations.

Statutory funding

The value of all central government grants has remained just over £30 billion between 2018 and 2021, except for 2020 when the value of grants made almost doubled to just under £60 billion. During this four-year

period the number of recipients of grants has more than doubled (up from 16,502 to 38,572), indicating that the average size of grants has got smaller.

Funding from central government to refugee and migration projects does not follow this pattern. The value of grants has fallen by 76% between 2018 and 2021 – a reduction of nearly £619 million – and the remaining funding is spread over a larger number of recipients (up 27% in 2021 when compared with 2018).

It should be stressed that this data includes Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) grants to refugee and migration projects overseas and that in 2018 and 2019 the majority of funding was allocated to these types of projects. However, as the budget has fallen a greater proportion is being directed to projects in the UK. For example, in 2021 over 250 grants of £384,704 were made to councils, local authorities and NGOs for post-arrival support for resettlement programmes. This is likely to explain the small increase in central government funding identified in the NGO survey responses.

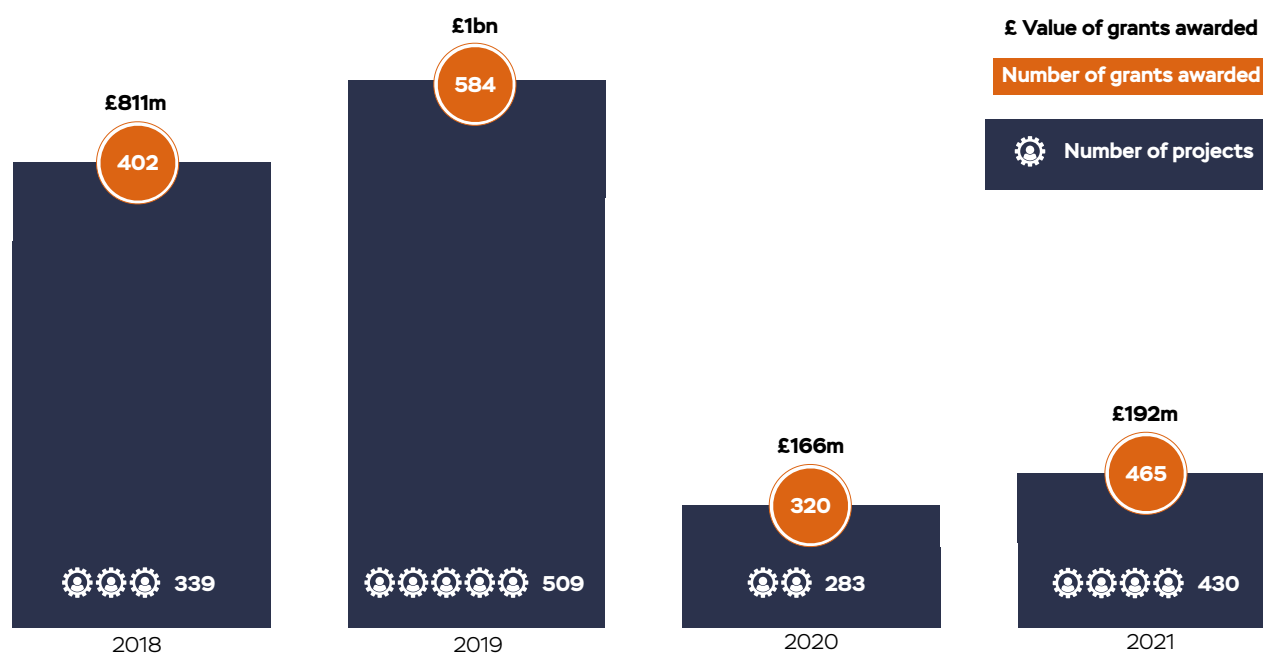
The value of central government grants to the sector has fallen by

76%

between 2018 and 2021.

While central government has provided tens of millions of pounds to UK resettlement programmes in 2021, this is likely to be a time-limited allocation of resources to assist people from Syria, Hong Kong and Afghanistan (and, from 2022, from Ukraine). If and when this funding is reduced in the coming years, it is likely to impact on a significant part of the sector, including both large and small organisations.

Fig 5.2 Central government grants to refugee and migration projects, 2018–2021



Individual giving

The number of people giving to charity has declined steadily since 2017 with the percentage who donated or sponsored having fallen from 67% in 2017 to 57% in 2021. This trend is consistent across all age groups and regions and continued into the first quarter of 2022.⁷¹

However, there was a spike in donations in March 2022 during which 32% of people said they specifically donated to charities helping people affected by the crisis in Ukraine. The average donation increased to £85, the largest monthly donation average the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) has ever recorded in its UK, and more than £62 million was raised in just one week for the DEC Ukrainian humanitarian appeal in March.⁷²

The number of people giving to charity has declined steadily, falling from 67% in 2017 to 57% in 2021.

CAF also noted that there has been a significant fall in total individual giving in 2021 when compared to the preceding year – down from £11.3 billion in 2020 to £10.7 billion in 2021. It is likely that this trend will continue as individual incomes are squeezed by the cost-of-living crisis. Around one in eight (13%) reported that they were considering cutting back on donations to charity in the next six months, whilst one in 12 people (8%) said they had already chosen not to make a one-off donation (March–May 2022). This, combined with inflationary pressures, will leave many charities with less disposable income.⁷³

The effects of this on the refugee and migration sector are likely to be more muted as it is generally less dependent on donations from individual giving than other sectors. The data collected from our survey of 175 refugee and migration NGOs showed that 59% of respondents received 10% or less of their income from individuals in 2022. CAF data also indicates that only a small proportion of total giving goes towards refugee and migration issues in the UK.⁷⁴

However, organisations in the sector which do rely on donations from supporters for a significant percentage of their income may face funding shortfalls and this is likely to have a particularly severe impact on small organisations which raise funds from within their own communities.

5.2 Survey of trusts and foundations

The majority of the sector relies upon funding from independent trusts and foundations to support its work. To profile grant-making to the sector in more

70%

of funders surveyed had been supporting refugee and migration projects for more than a decade.

detail, a detailed survey was completed by 20 key independent trusts and foundations which provide funding support to the sector. The funder sample had a combined annual spend on UK refugee and migration issues of around £38 million.⁷⁵ Where possible, this data has been compared with data from 2020.

Full details of the survey methodology can be found in Appendix A.

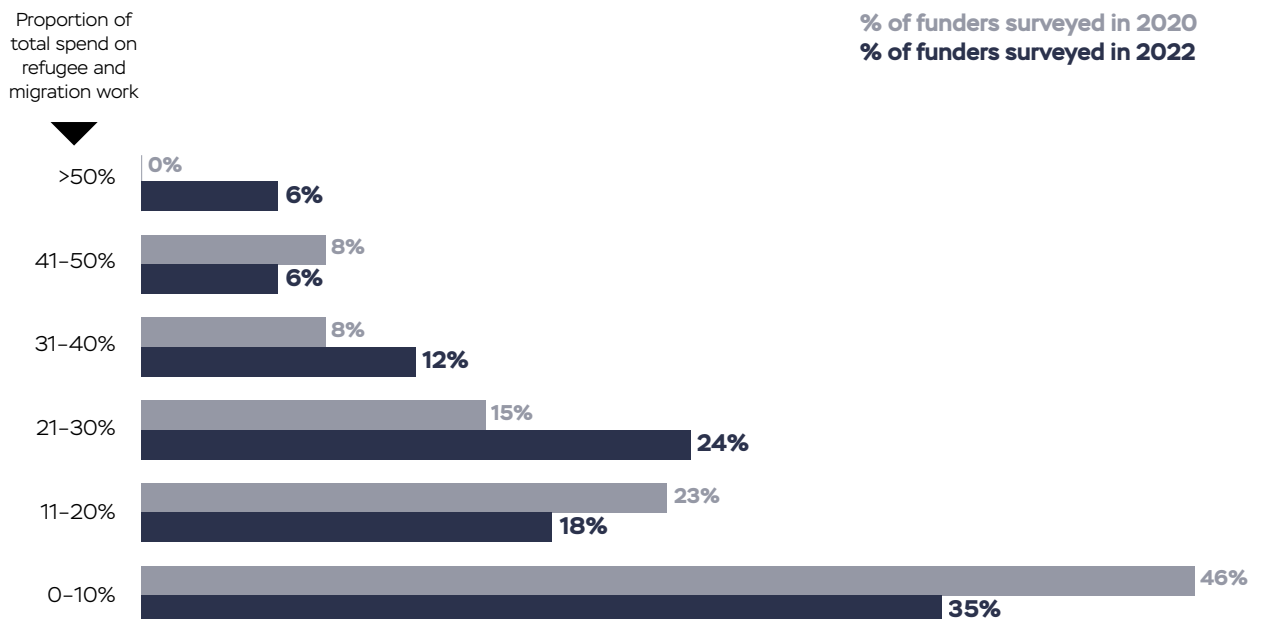
Experience

The majority of the trusts and foundations that completed the survey were both experienced and committed to this area of work, as reflected in the fact that 70% (14 organisations) had been supporting refugee and migration projects for more than a decade. Three funders had started supporting the sector's work in the last four years.

Focus of work

The types of activities that funders most commonly supported in relation to refugee and migration work were service delivery, immigration advice, capacity building and influencing work to achieve systemic change (including research, campaigns, lobbying, strategic litigation and communications work).

Fig 5.3 Proportion of total spend by funders on UK refugee and migration work, 2020 vs 2022



Three quarters of funders supported projects across the UK. Only three respondents (15%) focused their support on work at a local/regional or country level.

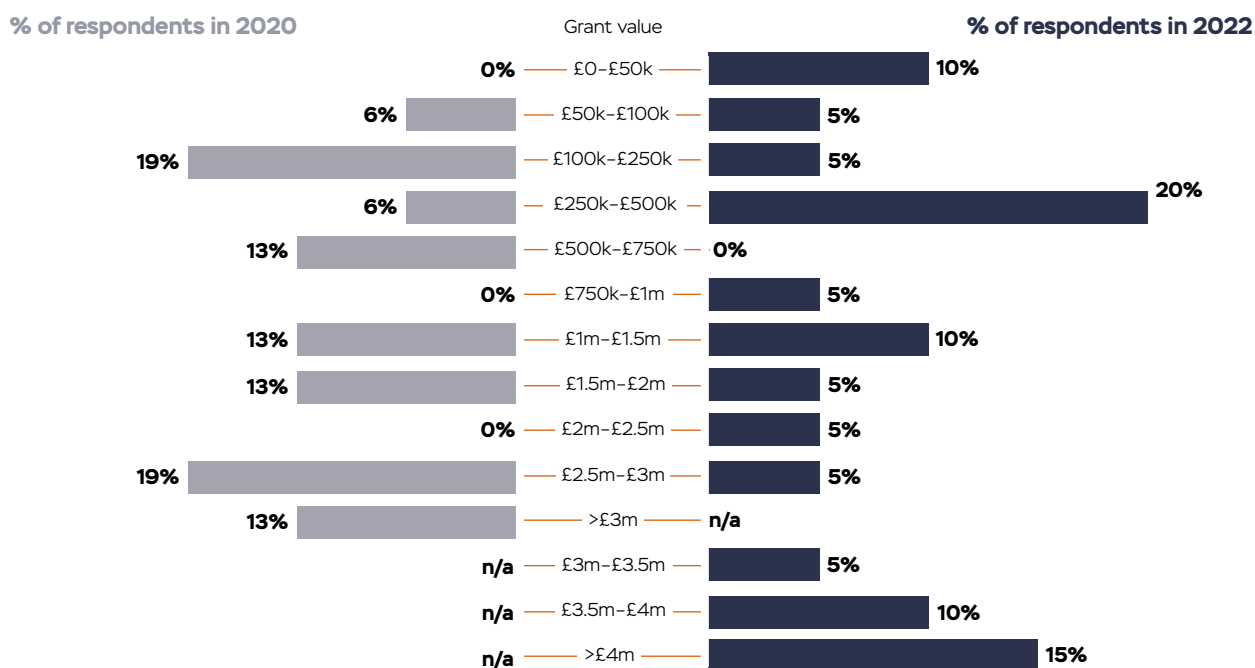
Most of the sector's key funders had a broad portfolio of interests and the primary focus of their work is not refugee and migration issues. Of the 20 survey respondents, only two funders (10%) exclusively supported UK refugee and migration projects. Of those trusts and foundations that fund other issues, more than three quarters (77%) allocated less than a third of their expenditure to UK refugee and migration work. More than a third (35%) of this group of funders dedicated less than 10% of their expenditure to work on this issue. Only one funder assigned more than 50% of their total spend to this area of work.

Having said this, the proportion of funders' total spend which is allocated to UK refugee and migration work increased significantly between 2020 and 2022 (see Fig. 5.3).

Value of grants made

The 20 survey respondents **provided around £38 million worth of grants** to the UK refugee and migration sector in the last financial year. This represents a significant increase on the £23 million that was invested in the sector by the 16 funders that completed the survey in 2020.⁷⁶

Fig 5.4 Grants made for UK refugee and migration work by total value, 2020 vs 2022



The amount that each funder gave to the sector varies considerably: 40% provided grants with a total value of £500,000 or less (20% of which were under £250,001); 20% of between £500,001 and £2 million; and 40% gave grants with a total value of over £2 million.

The number of large funders of the sector that made grants with a total value of over £3 million increased from 13% in 2020 to 30% in 2022.

Number and size of grants

While 40% of respondents gave 15 grants or less a year, at the other end of the spectrum 35%, provided more than 30 grants a year. When compared

Fig 5.5 Number of grants for UK refugee and migration work, 2020 vs 2022

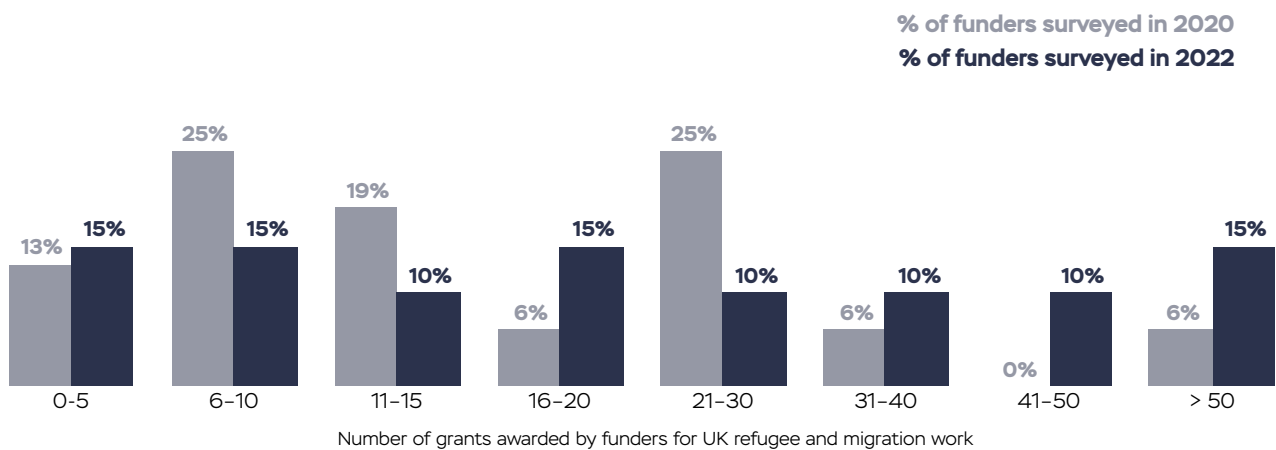
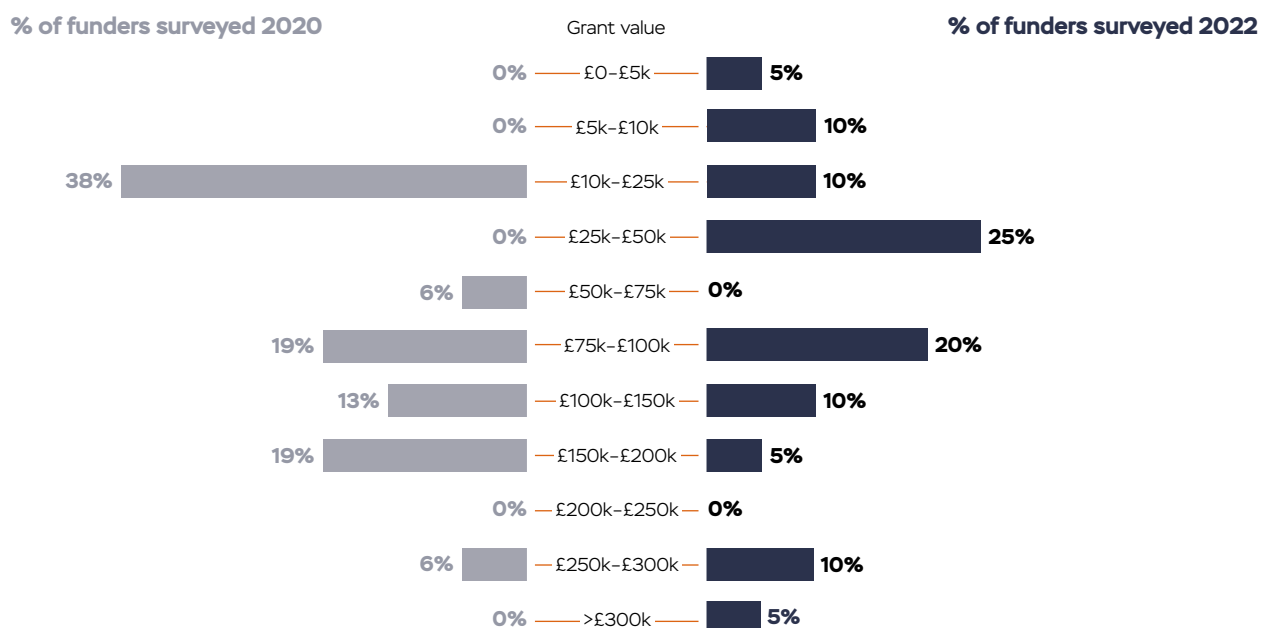


Fig 5.6 Average grant size made by funders (%) to support refugee and migration work, 2020 vs 2022



with 2020, these figures show an increase in the number of grants made to the sector. The percentage of organisations which offered 15 grants or less fell (down 17% since 2020) and the number offering more than 30 grants increased (up 23% since 2020).

While the number of grants increased, their average size generally got smaller. Half of the funders gave average grants of £50,000 or less in the last financial year (as opposed to 38% in 2020) and 70% gave average grants of £100,000 or less (63% in 2020). Six respondents (30%) gave average grants of above £100,000 (down from 38% in 2020).

Length and nature of grants

Nearly half of the funders (40%) provided average grants of two years or less, of which 25% were 18 months or less. Just over a third (35%) provided grants of between two and three years and a quarter of respondents gave grants which had an average length of over three years.

80%

of funders said they had been doing more than before to reach smaller, grassroots groups with funding opportunities.

A quarter of respondents did not provide any unrestricted grants to NGOs working on refugee and migration issues in the last financial year. However, of those that did, on average around 70% of their total grants were given as unrestricted funding (13 organisations provided data).

This represents a significant shift towards more unrestricted grants. In the 2020 survey, 38% of respondents did not provide any unrestricted grants and, where funders did, the proportion of the total grants that were unrestricted averaged around 50%

80% of funders said they had been doing more than before to reach smaller, grassroots groups with funding opportunities, particularly through increased outreach, sub-granting, dedicated funding streams and pooled funding to reach groups outside their eligibility criteria

6

Digging deeper: six key priorities

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The evidence gathered through this research has interesting implications for both NGOs and funders. This section builds on the data reported in Sections 4 and 5 of the report to explore some of the wider dynamics affecting work on refugee and migration issues. It focuses on six topics for deeper analysis and reflection, identified on the basis of NGO and funder surveys.⁷⁷ We were also guided by the findings from research interviews and workshops, which are the source of the quotes used throughout this section.

6.1 Adapting to external challenges and crises

Since 2020, the UK refugee and migration sector has had to contend with a highly challenging and hostile external environment, which has generated new, and urgent, needs among many people from refugee and migrant communities. The impacts on the sector of this period – variously described as *'bleak and relentless'*⁷⁸, *'an absolute nightmare'*,⁷⁹ and *'unlike anything I have experienced before'*⁸⁰ – cannot be overstated.

During the past three years, the pace and scale of change to which the sector has had to react has been unprecedented. Key developments have included the Covid-19 pandemic; large-scale refugee resettlement schemes for people from Ukraine and Hong Kong, and the rapid dispersal of thousands of people seeking asylum across the UK.

There has been a sense that NGOs are *"constantly operating on an emergency footing where you are firefighting one problem after the next"*.⁸¹ Government policy-making has been chaotic and poorly-planned, increasing the toll of these developments.

// As a small sector it's been totally exhausting. You're trying to respond to one crisis and something else happens."⁸²

The external context has been particularly challenging for organisations that provide direct support to people (85% of NGO survey respondents), but we also heard about the impacts on influencing, infrastructure and research organisations. Interviews and workshops offered deeper insights into the drivers of these changes and how the sector has responded.

The Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic generated profound impacts on the UK's wider charitable sector, increasing support needs and forcing service changes among many charities.⁸³

The refugee and migration sector faced a particular set of pressures. Some people within the immigration system, and some racialised communities, were disproportionately exposed to Covid-19 infection and / or excluded from mainstream support packages put in place during this period.⁸⁴ There was particular concern about the welfare of people within the asylum system, those being held in immigration detention, and individuals and families with no recourse to public funds or undocumented status, among others.⁸⁵

Face-to-face activities such as drop-ins, advice sessions and public events – the backbone of most support and community-based work – were largely suspended.

NGOs on the frontline needed to adapt their structures and services to meet new, urgent needs across communities. Face-to-face activities such as drop-ins, advice sessions and public events – the backbone of most support and community-based work – were largely suspended. The particular vulnerabilities of those subject to immigration controls during the pandemic, coupled with new safeguarding concerns for some, presented urgent problems which needed to be responded to in innovative ways.

During this research, we heard that NGOs of all sizes developed and implemented new ways of providing remote and/or outreach support to individuals and communities, including legal advice, welfare and mental health support. Tech solutions were central to enabling remote contact with clients and across staff teams. For some, this enabled services to be provided in a way that may not have been considered otherwise.

“ There was previously an accepted orthodoxy that remote [services] for our clients were non-viable, [but] Covid helped achieve a service breakthrough.”⁸⁶

The pandemic had substantial impacts on organisations themselves. Covid-19 caused high levels of sick leave and churn, and exacerbated mental health issues.⁸⁷ It led to the permanent adoption of hybrid and remote working models and other long-term management changes, the effects of which are still playing out.⁸⁸

Many organisations benefited from emergency funding and this was described as a lifeline during a very challenging period.

Despite this, both funders and NGOs reflected positively on the way organisations adapted to the challenges presented by Covid-19, echoing wider accounts of the sector’s resilience.⁸⁹ There is a sense among NGOs that, after a difficult adjustment period, “*we landed on our feet*”.⁹⁰ There was also pride in the sector’s advocacy work which highlighted the needs of some people within the UK asylum and immigration system during the pandemic.⁹¹

// The sector’s response to the Covid pandemic was a real success – the agility and the way we quickly adapted to the new environment we faced.”⁹²

Some NGOs reported an increase in cooperation and solidarity during this period, including with social justice organisations, local authorities, and others. Inclusive efforts around the Everyone In programme (which aimed to help people off the streets, regardless of immigration status), for example, departed from traditional fault-lines and offered new opportunities.⁹³

// Although the pandemic was difficult... it has had some tangible benefits for the sector in terms of convening, cooperating and advocating together.”⁹⁴

A number of NGOs shared their positive reflections on the flexible response to Covid-19 among the trusts and foundations closest to the sector. Many organisations benefited from emergency funding and this was described as a lifeline during a very challenging period.⁹⁵ Both NGOs and funders felt that there is some important learning to be brought out from this experience, particularly with regards to funding and collaboration.

National refugee and migration policies

The research heard about the negative impacts on the sector of a series of chaotically implemented Government refugee and migration policies, since 2020. The sector has needed to adapt to a largely hostile and “*knee-jerk*”⁹⁶ policy environment.

A lack of dialogue with Government has made it difficult for NGOs to anticipate or prepare for major developments. We heard that statutory authorities (including local authorities and Strategic Migration Partnerships) and local MPs were also often not forewarned about key policies, resulting in anxiety and confusion.

// When the Rwanda policy was announced there was no heads up for NGOs or even Home Office officials... It meant our phones were ringing off the hook and this created a lot of uncertainty and additional work".⁹⁷

As outlined in Section 2, the introduction of new, bespoke refugee resettlement schemes for Ukrainian nationals and Hong Kong BNOs led to thousands of new arrivals in local communities across the UK. Many Ukrainians and Hong Kong nationals needed expert support and legal advice, at very short notice. But the piecemeal and sometimes confusing nature of these schemes led to the sector (alongside other local agencies) needing to work out how to respond in real time.⁹⁸

// The Ukrainians came in in a different way than we were used to... The council didn't really know how many people were here – the process was being devised while they were arriving... These sorts of schemes create new pressures that are really hard to deal with."⁹⁹

We heard that some established refugee and migration NGOs managed to adapt their services to assist new arrivals, often with limited additional resourcing. For some this came on top of existing support work with people from Syria and Afghanistan. The different rules and funding formulae across the various resettlement schemes added new layers of complexity for NGOs in responding to local needs. In some areas, other community groups – including charities, faith networks and others, mobilised to support new arrivals. We heard about coordinated civil society activity in some areas, and more fragmented responses in others.

The sudden dispersal of thousands of people in hotels across the UK in recent years presented significant new challenges.

In addition, the sudden dispersal of thousands of people in hotels across the UK in recent years presented significant new challenges. There has been a lack of Government engagement with local authorities or the voluntary sector around this policy. Many hotels are located in geographically isolated areas where there are no dedicated refugee support organisations and where the local authority has no experience of working with asylum seekers. Local refugee organisations have needed to step in to provide assistance and coordination.

// We've had to respond to the families in hotels a lot. They are so isolated and don't have appropriate support."¹⁰⁰

We heard that delivering support services in hotels has been intensely challenging. Many hotel residents have depression and anxiety as a result of the long period of limbo while their asylum application is decided.¹⁰¹ NGOs need to adapt to a lack of appropriate facilities such as access to private spaces for Zoom calls or consultations, and access to computers for residents. Gaining access to hotels can be challenging too.

// We can't even arrange a visit to people and turn up because we can't get hold of them, and have to get through security. It's marginally easier to get into HMP Doncaster!"¹⁰²

To meet these new needs, NGOs have needed to develop and adapt outreach support services. This has involved mobilising staff and volunteers to conduct emergency support, ESOL lessons and welfare assistance in hotels, facilitating access to technology, devising remote legal advice and health support services, and establishing new partnerships with the voluntary sector in local areas.

These 'crisis' developments have landed on top of a worsening backdrop for the sector's work, within which many NGOs feel increasingly stretched and under-supported.

These 'crisis' developments have landed on top of a worsening backdrop for the sector's work, within which many NGOs feel increasingly stretched and under-supported. We particularly heard about the cumulative impacts of wider hostile environment policies, the impacts of reductions in the provision of ESOL tuition and legal advice, and fears about the impacts of far-right activity.¹⁰³ Many NGOs have also needed to respond to the widespread demand for advice and assistance among EEA nationals affected by Brexit.¹⁰⁴

A number of organisations highlighted the "*absolutely critical crisis*"¹⁰⁵ in relation to specialist legal immigration advice, as demand for advice continues to outstrip supply. Although this has been a growing challenge over recent decades, pressures have increased sharply in the last few years due to a further fall in the number of legal practices offering immigration advice, the rapid rise in people seeking asylum representation across the UK since 2021, and the 'full dispersal' policy.¹⁰⁶ Other Government policies, such as the 'streamlined asylum processing' policy, have actively increased the demand for under-resourced legal services.¹⁰⁷

Looking ahead

There are concerns among both NGOs and funders that the sector will continue to face intense and complex pressures to which it will need to adapt.

Refugee and migration work is inherently unpredictable, and many NGOs in the sector have expertise in emergency response work and the nature of forced migration. However, the sector has a limited collective capacity to plan for – and respond to – external challenges and crises. This is exacerbated by the pace and intensity of the context, the scant resource for preparation and coordination, and the dysfunctional nature of much central government policy and practice.

The sector has a limited collective capacity to plan for – and respond to – external challenges and crises.

Many organisations have relatively low confidence in their ability to adapt and reprioritise in the face of further unexpected challenges. Just 33% of NGOs we surveyed thought that the sector is now in better shape to respond to ‘shock events’ than it was in 2020.¹⁰⁸ This may be related

to the fact that most are already overstretched, as well as the exhaustion that we observed among some NGOs after what has been a highly demanding period.

Some of the frontline NGOs we spoke with anticipate that there will be an increasing need for emergency and support services. Support needs within local communities could be increasingly complex, given the rising cost of living and ongoing impacts of cuts to public services.

“ The growing demands for our services will be a big reality for us... I’m worried about that.”¹⁰⁹

Full implementation of the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Migration Bill would significantly increase the destitution, detention and removal of people from the UK. This could radically change the nature of their support needs, and the role of the sector in response.

Respondents also raised concerns about the future of democratic politics and the rule of law; the increasingly polarising role of social media; the impacts of technology and artificial intelligence; and climate change – and how these trends could impact on this issue. However, current pressures make it difficult to widen the lens and consider these trends.

// Many conversations in the sector still prioritise migration over everything else, and maybe that is making us less resilient because we continue to live in that micro world, without having any sense of what may be happening at the meta level.”¹¹⁰

Some NGOs pointed to the lack of structured guidance and support when external crises or challenging policies affect their frontline work.

// There is much less collaboration on service delivery and strategic responses [than on campaigning] and that is a real gap. Take the issue of asylum hotels – there is no joined-up sector response about how to meet the needs of people in hotels. There is lots that is local but no pan-sector response.”¹¹¹

NGOs and funders shared a range of views on how the sector could best be supported, to strengthen its resilience in the face of future challenges and crises.

Suggestions for future action included:

Crisis response support for service delivery organisations.

There are some dedicated infrastructure organisations and a small number of national organisations are playing an increasingly central role in supporting service coordination.¹¹² However, the sector would benefit from further capacity and resources to support service planning and coordination among NGOs (including smaller organisations). This could help the sector to collectively prepare for, and respond to, new challenges and crises which affect service delivery on the ground.

Systematic rapid response funding to the sector. Funders should consider how support could best be swiftly provided in future, to help NGOs to respond to hostile policies and crisis events. Emergency funding support should be developed with an eye to legacy, and would ideally contribute towards building infrastructure and capacity for the longer-term.

A pan-sector strategy on immigration legal advice. We heard about the need for a pan-sector strategy around provision of immigration legal advice. The funder-led Justice Together Initiative is focused on a more coordinated response to the crisis in immigration legal advice.¹¹³ Some NGOs would like to see more discussion about the strategy

and long-term vision for the legal advice sector, given the scale of the challenge.

“ I don’t think there is adequate recognition that we need to find alternatives. This is not a crisis, it is the new norm. The infrastructure for a proper legal aid system is gone and it’s not coming back... We need a robust analysis of the scale of the problem and we will have to think differently and innovatively about the solutions.”¹¹⁴

Longer-term strategic horizon-scanning. The current direction of policy and law is creating existential concerns for some organisations. Parts of the sector may need to reenvision their work within what threatens to be a radically different asylum system over the coming period. Similarly, many anti-trafficking organisations will be unable to provide effective support to people who come to them for assistance once the Illegal Migration Bill is passed.¹¹⁵

“ My concern is that the asylum policy changes will have a drastic effect on who we are and what we can deliver. If people are stopped from coming here altogether then we would really have to reconsider our services and who we work for.”¹¹⁶

We heard that the sector now, more than ever, continues to need resource, support and headspace to plan, adapt and innovate. The future is unpredictable, and many NGOs and funders value coming together to think strategically about the role of their work within a rapidly changing context.

“ At most, the sector is prepared for the next one or two years but not further ahead.”¹¹⁷

6.2 Funding and financial sustainability

Throughout the research we heard pressing concerns about organisations’ financial sustainability and future funding. Financial sustainability was identified by 59% of NGOs surveyed for this research as a key priority issue.

This issue was seen as less pressing by funders than by NGOs. Just 21% of funders listed funding and financial sustainability as one of their five key

priorities for the sector, and the issue in fact ranked in 11th place in terms of priority issues for funders.

Funding during and after the Covid-19 pandemic

As outlined in Sections 3 and 4, the Covid-19 pandemic saw an unanticipated increase in flexible, emergency funding to the sector in 2020. This largely took the form of unrestricted grants. We believe that this new funding primarily explains the growth in income to the refugee and migration sector between 2020 and 2022. However, the impacts of this growth have been uneven. We heard concerns about financial sustainability.

Some respondents felt that emergency Covid funding had particularly benefited more established and larger organisations, which were better placed to access these grants.

// A lot of new funding went in around Covid... but I've seen organisations growing and not being so sustainable."¹¹⁸

Some respondents felt that emergency Covid funding had particularly benefited more established and larger organisations, which were better placed to access these grants.¹¹⁹ A number of NGOs that received this support praised the quick and collaborative way that it was rolled out by funders.

// Funders did extremely well in the pandemic and showed that they could be flexible... They were responsive and trusted us to do good work. I'd like to see that continue."¹²⁰

Many organisations reported, however, that since the height of the pandemic they had experienced growing financial insecurity. For those that received emergency Covid-19 funding, we heard that the temporary stability this offered has largely ended, and that competition for funds is now fiercer than ever. Some NGOs grew their services during the pandemic and as a result now have a larger budget to fundraise for.

// In terms of Covid emergency funds... when the funding came to an end, it was like what happens next?! Because there wasn't any other funding for us to apply to."¹²¹

A number of NGOs told us about the problems created for them by the simultaneous closure of a number of key funders for strategic reviews. This involved at least four funders closing to new (and repeat) applications at the same time whilst they revised their priorities. We heard that this reduced the level of funding available to the sector in the post-pandemic period.¹²²

Some NGOs reported that this temporarily interrupted their core funding streams.¹²³ Others reported lasting effects, as revised priorities excluded them from applying for future grants. This issue indicates that coordination among key funders to the sector could be further improved.

Improvements to grant-making in the sector

Over the past three years there have been some shifts in grant-making to the sector. This is reflected in the findings of the funder research survey (see Section 5), which points to a small rise in the number of grants being made by core funders (although a reduction in average individual grant size), longer grant terms and a rise in unrestricted grant-making.

// Grant-making is getting noticeably better – funders are clearly listening and changing.”¹²⁴

We also heard positive examples of more flexible and proactive trust and foundation grant-making in the past two years, possibly informed by models adopted during Covid-19. This has included grant-making in response to the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis among NGOs and multi-year funding.

// Two of our funders have given us a cost-of-living payment as a boost to the organisation which has been amazing.”¹²⁵

Despite this, a number of NGOs told us that they continue to face challenges in securing core, unrestricted grants. Nearly three quarters of NGOs surveyed for this research (70%) said that it had been particularly difficult to secure unrestricted funding in the last two years.

A number of NGOs told us that they continue to face challenges in securing core, unrestricted grants.

// Funders are still reluctant to give core grants for our core work, so we have to keep coming up with new projects to fund it.”¹²⁶

We also noticed some discrepancy between funders’ and NGOs’ perceptions of funding to smaller, grassroots organisations. 80% of funders who responded to the survey said that they were doing more than before to reach smaller, grassroots groups with funding opportunities. This includes the creation of a new pooled fund to support grassroots community-organising in three areas across the UK.¹²⁷

A small number of key funders told us about the steps they are taking to make their ongoing grant programmes more open to grassroots and migrant-led organisations. These steps variously include removing minimum income requirements for applicants, requiring a proportion of board and/or staff members to have lived experience of the migration/

Discussions with NGOs suggested that the wider grant landscape remains extremely challenging for grassroots organisations, and particularly those delivering services on the frontline.

asylum system, and scrapping written grant applications and/or reports in favour of telephone conversations with grantees.¹²⁸

Despite these efforts, discussions with NGOs suggested that the wider grant landscape remains extremely challenging for grassroots organisations, and particularly those delivering services on the frontline. Many small groups in the sector did not receive emergency Covid-19 funding. We heard that this was likely to be because many smaller organisations lacked prior connections with funders or had low fundraising capacity. Some have struggled to access adequate funding for vital community support work both during and since Covid, and are now facing rising costs.

“ Our experience in Scotland is that there are bigger organisations who receive the big pots of funding, but small organisations like ourselves who do the frontline work get less funding. There is a huge difference there.”¹²⁹

The reduction in infrastructure organisations that support voluntary and community organisations is also likely to have contributed to this issue. At least 17 national and local Black and Minority infrastructure organisations have closed since 2011.¹³⁰ The consequence of this was that in 2020, when funders were looking to ensure their emergency pandemic grant programmes were reaching communities who needed it most, the infrastructure organisations that were still running lacked the capacity to scale up and respond to the demands made of them.

Funder collaborations

We heard that a core group of trusts and foundations play a crucial strategic role in the sector, with significant influence over its size, shape and activities. There is a broad consensus that these funders are responsive, engaged and committed to the sector, and that this is valued. The ‘helicopter view’ that this relatively small group of funders bring is viewed by some NGOs as adding real value to the sector.

“ I personally think that strategic thinking by the funders has driven the sector... they can put capacity into the strategic overview of where the links are in a way that is hard for even some of the big organisations to do.”¹³¹

However, some NGOs are concerned that some funder collaborations may have unintended consequences. We heard examples of NGOs struggling to renew grants for core services, as a result of funder resources becoming committed to pooled funds. There are concerns that collaborations can lead to unhelpful groupthink.

“ I’m not sure whether collaboration is always the best way forward if that collaboration ... creates a cabal that comes to a conclusion which is completely wrong and everybody goes in that wrong direction.”¹³²

At a time when resources are stretched, there is also anxiety among some NGOs about what parts of their work will fit within evolving funder priorities. Some organisations perceive a broad shift within funders away from service provision and towards longer-term movement-building, advocacy and influencing work. 33% of NGO survey respondents said that they were struggling to secure funding for their service provision.

There is anxiety among some NGOs about what parts of their work will fit within evolving funder priorities.

“ I’m seeing a lot more funding in policy and advocacy than I am in service delivery. Service providers doing frontline care do not seem to be at the top of funders’ agenda.”¹³³

Some NGOs think that the funder landscape has been too opaque and fragmented, and that funders are not transparent enough about the objectives behind their grant funding. This reduces accountability as to whether the funding has been well-spent and achieved progress.

“ Whatever the amount of money going into the sector, we need to understand the intention behind those investments and the results we are getting [as a sector]. That’s more important than the amounts of money.”¹³⁴

We heard from several interviewees (both NGOs and funders) that there has not yet been enough collective consideration among key funders about how and why funding priorities are set. One funder described:

// There is no clarity between funders about how change happens, and we have not really come together to explore if there is a consensus or if we know what organisations we want to fund".¹³⁵

There is a perception, particularly among some NGOs, that important decisions that impact on the sector are still being taken by a relatively small number of people. We heard that this has fed into wider frustrations about power dynamics and exercise of privilege across the sector.¹³⁶

// Funders need to be really clear on what they want to try and achieve... They have enormous power to shape and drive the sector and with that power comes huge responsibility."¹³⁷

Income diversification

As outlined in Section 5, NGOs secure funding from a range of different sources, including statutory sources, individual giving and corporate sponsorship or partnerships. However, NGO survey responses suggest that the overall trend is towards less diverse income sources for the sector and a greater dependence on trusts and foundations than in 2020.

// We need to reach out to different sectors, to corporates and so on. There is too much reliance on grant funders".¹³⁸

While a small proportion are receiving more funding from central government, this appears to be linked to emergency resettlement programmes and is therefore restricted.

Some NGOs told us that statutory funding is often unpredictable, short-term and tied to specific cohorts of people depending on immigration status, or delivery of specific services. Funding from the Legal Aid Agency is currently subject to extensive delays related to the Home Office backlog. Funding from national, devolved and local government often has short commissioning timeframes, is contingent on specific client outcomes, and has tightly ringfenced budgets. It can be difficult to use this funding for overheads such as administrative support or senior management positions.

We also heard that crowd-based/public fundraising has been very volatile. Some NGOs saw a surge in donations as a result of public awareness of the Afghan and Ukrainian refugee crises. However, more recently, some organisations have noted a decline in public donations, mainly due to the increased cost of living. One national NGO reported that:

“ It has been a bad fundraising year, with a big shortfall on new donors based on past projections”.¹³⁹

Looking ahead

The financial environment for NGOs will continue to be challenging over the coming period. The rising cost of living is likely to increase financial pressures, at a time when demand for services is rising. Statutory funding and public donations remain unpredictable and appear to be declining.

We heard from a small number of trusts and foundations that they will be reducing their funding for refugee and migration work over the coming period, due to factors beyond their control. Other funders plan to increase their grant-making to the sector over the coming period.

There are hopes that additional trusts and foundations will start to support this work. Both NGOs and funders talked about the importance of engaging new corporate and charitable funders from other sectors such as climate change, racial justice, gender equality and other social justice movements.

Both NGOs and funders shared their views on how grant-making and financial resilience could be strengthened to help the sector to weather the challenging economic period ahead.

Suggestions for future action included:

More flexible, accessible, long-term grants. Echoing the findings of previous research into the sector,¹⁴⁰ NGOs would like to see funders continue to strengthen their grant-making by providing more accessible funding streams for grassroots organisations (e.g. through easier application and reporting processes); increasing core and unrestricted grant-making to organisations; and lengthening the life of grants to at least five years.

These recommendations are largely supported by the funders we spoke to, and our survey data suggests that modest progress has been made since 2020. However, much more can be done across the funder landscape.

Increasing innovative and participatory grant-making. Some NGOs suggested that funders could increase their use of more innovative grant-making models. This could include more responsive grants to help NGOs adapt to new challenges. It could involve greater consultation with charities (including grassroots organisations and communities) in the development of funding streams.¹⁴¹

// We have used emergency funding and it's been very useful...

I think it's a really good model, rather than waiting for a deadline, to say 'Here is the issue. Here is our way of addressing this issue. How can we resource this?'"¹⁴²

We heard about the success of some participatory grant-making initiatives¹⁴³ In this model, NGOs play a central role in designing and/or managing grant programmes. This approach can help to ensure that funding reaches smaller, migrant-led organisations.

// I'm surprised that there has been very little participatory grant-making [to the sector] particularly with all the talk of lived experience. Funders still decide where the money goes rather than building the capacity of people with lived experience to make the decisions themselves."¹⁴⁴

Developing collective, forward-looking strategies.

Some NGOs called for funders to work more closely with the sector to develop broader, strategic objectives for grant-making, and to align this with a shared vision for the sector into the future. This could involve helpful discussions about the contexts in which the sector will be working, theories of change, and the future work of the sector. It could also help to unlock new funding from other sectors.

// When we think about funding and the future, we should be setting ourselves a difficult set of questions about where society will be in five years' time and the role that we will be playing."¹⁴⁵

36%

of funders and NGOs currently view tackling racial injustice as one of their top five priorities.

6.3 Racial justice, power and lived experience

This research has heard a range of views in relation to issues of racial justice, power and lived experience.

Much of the focus has been on how far organisations have been able to strengthen the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of the asylum and migration systems (also referred to as 'experts by experience'), across the sector's work. However, there are wider concerns about how far these efforts are translating into a deeper shift in power towards impacted – and particularly racialised – communities.

Racial justice and power

There is growing focus on racial justice in the sector, and systemic racism within the immigration system. 36% of funders and NGOs currently view tackling racial injustice as one of their top five priorities.

More than a third (35%) of NGOs thought that funders are now doing more to help them address structural racism in their organisations and the wider immigration system than they were at the start of 2020. This was considerably less than the number of funders (55% of survey respondents) who thought they were doing more to address structural racism than in 2020.

Behind these figures, there is a complex set of debates underway. We heard about a wide range of approaches towards racial justice and power dynamics among NGOs. Some organisations are strongly informed by anti-racist principles and practices, and by a commitment to shifting power away from traditional hierarchies. These NGOs regularly centre the racialised nature of immigration law and policy in their work.¹⁴⁶

Other parts of the sector, including both local and national NGOs, are more muted – and perhaps conflicted – on how to address racial injustice in relation to refugee and migration issues. We heard that much of the sector does not actively engage with these arguments, or with racial justice movements such as Black Lives Matter. We heard that some campaigning NGOs do not regularly highlight racism in policy critiques and outputs.

// I have not seen many organisations using the framework of racial justice to talk about migration and refugees. There is an

acknowledgement of race but there are different understandings of how they come to this issue.”¹⁴⁷

We heard, however, that the focus on lived experience can be too narrow, and side-step deeper issues around racism, classism and oppressive power dynamics.

We also heard mixed views on how far the sector has been able to scrutinise its own diversity and inclusiveness. Some NGOs felt that *'liberal guilt'*¹⁴⁸ can inhibit open discussion about racism within the sector.

// There is a question about how comfortable people are in the sector talking about race.”¹⁴⁹

The main route into these debates, currently, is through a focus on how people with lived experience of the UK immigration system can be more meaningfully involved in the sector's work (explored further in the next section). We heard, however, that the focus on lived experience can be too narrow, and side-step deeper issues around racism, classism and oppressive power dynamics.

// The [sector's] structural understanding of power and racism is not as prevalent now as it might have been in the past. Now, it all feels much more individualised, and less organised. It's not coming from black people claiming the power in a positive way, it's more from other [white] people who are almost putting it on them”.¹⁵⁰

Several NGOs reflected that the sector would benefit from applying a wider intersectional lens towards inclusion and diversity. A range of other barriers – relating to economic status, gender, religion, sexuality and disability – are present across the sector, and embedded within the refugee and migration policy landscape. These issues also need to be considered and addressed.

// The intersectionality of all this – lived experience is so varied, so complex, class is connected, race is connected, we need to be aware of all these layers.”¹⁵¹

Some NGOs reflected on the need for more radical changes within organisations to address these challenges. This could include new ways of working such as more open, collective decision-making processes and non-hierarchical management models, to challenge structural exclusion.

// Creating a genuinely inclusive organisation is a much broader challenge than just getting people with brown skin in leadership roles... There is lazy thinking here”.¹⁵²

These complex, deep-seated issues are not only being considered by NGOs; we also heard about similar debates within trusts and foundations. Some funds have their origins in colonial wealth-building, and this has led to difficult reflections. Some funders are actively reviewing their internal policies and practices, assisted by anti-racist organisations. A small number of funders have made changes to decision-making on funding, to shift power closer to refugee and migrant communities.

// We now have three people with migrant or refugee backgrounds [in our grants team]. The dynamic of decision-making has also changed... the balance has shifted towards outsiders.”¹⁵³

For other funders, change has been slower and more challenging. We heard that there can be different approaches between grant managers and trustees, with one funder describing that *“staff are generally more progressive than the board”*.¹⁵⁴ Some funders *“feel deeply uncomfortable”*¹⁵⁵ that their own internal structures do not reflect the diversity or pluralism that they would like to see within NGOs.

// We are grappling with this internally – our decision-making is very hierarchical and trustee-led.”¹⁵⁶

Lived experience

As previously mentioned, the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of the migration system across the sector is a key focus among NGOs and funders.

A high percentage (80%) of NGO survey respondents said that people with lived experience already have direct involvement in the design or delivery of their organisation’s services, although this has fallen slightly since 2020, down from 83% to 80%.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the percentage that said people with lived experience led or significantly contributed to their influencing work also fell marginally, down from 81% to 79%.¹⁵⁸

65% of NGOs and 74% of funders indicated that meaningful involvement of people with lived experience should be a top priority.

An average of 60% of NGOs and funders agreed that the sector works more ‘with’ and less ‘on behalf’ of migrants and refugees than it did in 2020 (21% either disagreed or said it was the same). NGOs were slightly more positive than funders about the progress that has been made (with 66% versus 60% agreeing).

Both NGOs and funders view it as very important to increase the involvement of people with lived experience in the sector itself. 65% of NGOs and 74% of funders indicated that this should be one of the sectors' top five priorities to strengthen its health and impact. **There was more consensus on this than on any other priority issue within the research survey.**

Some funders now require a certain proportion of trustees and/or staff members to have lived experience to qualify for funding, although some NGOs view this as an overly blunt and restrictive tool.

Progress across the sector

NGOs and funders broadly agree that it is important for people with lived experience to be more involved in setting the direction of the sector. There is a sense that some progress is being made but that there is much work still to be done.

// I'm impressed by the sector's focus on centring the voices of those with lived experience and sharing power with them. It's a long journey and there is still a way to go, but I've seen improvement."¹⁵⁹

Many NGOs have a long-standing commitment towards supporting and enabling engagement of people with lived experience within their organisation. This includes involving people with lived experience in trustee boards, senior management, staff and/or volunteer teams. Many NGOs run lived experience Advisory Boards, some of which have strategic influence and/or a formal role in governance. Some NGOs have internal strategies on strengthening lived experience representation. We heard about a growing number of high-profile organisations and initiatives in the sector which are founded and led by people with lived experience.¹⁶⁰

Meaningful involvement of people with lived experience in the sector is increasingly becoming integrated into some funder requirements. Some funders now require a certain proportion of trustees and/or staff members to have lived experience in order to qualify for funding, although some NGOs view this as an overly blunt and restrictive tool for achieving progress.

// The expectation from funders is that we should be able to tick the box that 50% of our senior leaders have got lived experience, but how are we supposed to deal with that? I think there's a lot more complexity in this than funders are appreciating"¹⁶¹

Concerns and barriers

Despite the prominence of this issue, we heard concerns across a range of funders and NGOs there has also been *“more talk than action”*¹⁶² and that *“there is a good deal of performative action.”*¹⁶³

// The sector is still mostly led by people who have made a career in it and have learned experience, rather than people who have lived experience.¹⁶⁴

There are a number of reasons why this may be the case. We heard from NGOs about how local migration histories and contexts, as well as organisational cultures, have affected their approach to this issue.

For some organisations, involving people with lived experience more deeply requires a culture shift. This is particularly the case for some NGOs that are more familiar with ‘service user engagement’ approaches, rather than what one NGO described as the *‘new orthodoxy’*¹⁶⁵ of power-building among refugee and migrant communities. Other organisations would like to do more to engage people with lived experience, but say that they struggle to prioritise this within a very challenging frontline climate.

We heard a range of views about the terminology and desired ‘end goal’ for work involving people with lived experience. Some NGOs and funders reported internal confusion in defining ‘lived’ and ‘learned’ experience. Others emphasised the diversity of migration experiences, with some people experiencing injustice and racial discrimination in the UK, whilst others have high levels of power and privilege. Some people with experience of the UK immigration system do not wish to be defined by this aspect of their life history.¹⁶⁶

// For us part of the task is defining what we mean by lived experience. We’ve got people whose parents were refugees so they are second generation – does that count? What about if you have a senior team of three people with different immigration statuses but they are all white?”¹⁶⁷

Central to this is a debate about what is meant by ‘meaningful involvement’ of people with lived experience. There is broad agreement that ‘involvement’ does not equate to ‘influence’ or ‘power’. We heard that work which does not bring people with lived experience into decision-making processes equates to ‘tick-box’ inclusion, and can be tokenistic and extractive.

// Organisations have more representation and opportunities [for people with lived experience]... but it hasn't transformed how power is held in the organisations. It's a change in aesthetics rather than in power relations."¹⁶⁸

There is broad agreement that 'involvement' does not equate to 'influence' or 'power'.

There is a consensus that meaningfully involving people with lived experience requires significant internal commitment, time and resources – often far greater than NGOs and funders realise. There are multiple examples of good practice across the sector about how to support and strengthen the involvement of people with lived experience. This is often long-term, intensive work.

// In our experience, it takes a long time and lot of resource to invest in something like real lived experience participation, co-production, co-delivery, and do it well."¹⁶⁹

We heard that some people with lived experience may benefit from language assistance or specialist training to work within the sector. Other people may need support around mental health and trauma issues.¹⁷⁰ Some NGOs have introduced specific roles for people with lived experience; there were mixed views on the impact of this approach which to some can feel reductive.

// This can't just be a tick box exercise, such as setting up a specific staff post – it's a much longer process. We need to combine lived experience and learned experience"¹⁷¹

There is also a debate about the financial resource needed to support and enable people with lived experience to be more involved in the sector. Some NGOs and funders offer financial compensation to people with lived experience to help them to attend meetings or initiatives. We heard that financial security can be a significant barrier for many people with lived experience.

// Unless people's basic needs are met, they cannot advocate, they cannot be involved. They cannot do more than just survive."¹⁷²

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, debates about racism, power, and lived experience could helpfully be drawn together, towards a clearer shared understanding of the issues and joint strategies. This work could be informed by a recognition of the diversity of organisations across the sector, and by a shared willingness to work towards long-term change through open dialogue, mutual support and adequate resourcing.

Suggestions for future action included:

A strategic, resourced approach towards lived experience. Several NGOs called for a more intentional, joint strategy on building meaningful involvement and leadership among people with lived experience. This should centre on the need to build skills, confidence, and power in a sustainable way. It should also recognise the time, resources and commitment needed to do this work properly.

“ Our sector seems to have taken the approach, driven by funders, that something needs to be done and we have to just do it – rather than taking a more strategic approach based on what the evidence suggests is effective and then being more purposeful.”¹⁷³

Some NGOs suggested that an open, participatory evaluation of the sector’s progress on lived experience thus far could help to inform a more confident, coherent approach. A collaborative inquiry into lived experience in the sector has been commissioned by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2021, which may help to move this forward.¹⁷⁴

More widely, we heard a plea from some NGOs for funders not to abandon organisations that are further back on this journey, but to take a longer-term approach which involves them in a wider conversation about progress.¹⁷⁵

“ I don’t think the criteria set by some funders is always helpful, such as stating that over 50% of staff must have lived experience. It is better to create pathways for progress and measure progress towards those goals.”¹⁷⁶

NGOs and funders could build links with wider anti-discrimination and human rights movements, to help strengthen the collective commitment to a more inclusive sector overall.

Tackling discrimination and building power. The sector should continue to connect with the wider anti-racist movement, to deepen a collective approach towards racial equality and power-building efforts. Some anti-racist organisations offer helpful guidance for NGOs and funders on how to dismantle privilege and institutional discrimination within their organisations.¹⁷⁷ It is clear that there is an appetite among NGOs and funders for more collective debate and action in this area and around the involvement of people with lived experience in the sector.

“ One thing that’s important is... the intersection between race and equality – that’s a very rich seam to be mined more.”¹⁷⁸

Racialised communities are building power in parts of the sector through their community organising and political activism. This work builds leadership and representation among people affected by immigration policies into the longer-term.¹⁷⁹ Learning from this could be helpfully supported and shared across the sector.

A number of NGOs told us that debates about racial justice and lived experience need to be informed by a wider intersectional lens which recognises the structural barriers created by other factors such as economic status, gender, religion, sexuality and disability. NGOs and funders could build links with wider anti-discrimination and human rights movements, to help strengthen the collective commitment to a more inclusive sector overall.¹⁸⁰

6.4 Staff welfare and leadership

One of the key assets of the refugee and migration sector is its committed staff, who often have a long-standing dedication to the work and high levels of subject-specific expertise.¹⁸¹ We heard that staff in the sector have, for many years, faced issues including overly broad job roles,¹⁸² lack of job security due to short-term or insecure contracts¹⁸³, low pay rates,¹⁸⁴ and lack of benefits such as pension schemes.¹⁸⁵

This research highlighted a growing concern about staff welfare, due to the pressures of the external context.¹⁸⁶ 43% of NGOs and funders now view

staff welfare as a priority, and this was the issue that has grown most in salience since 2020, when just 26% marked it as a priority issue.

The growing concern about staff welfare has also been highlighted recently by the Refugee Action Good Practice initiative which in June 2022 found that 76% of refugee and asylum organisations were just “surviving” in relation to staff wellbeing.¹⁸⁷ Particular concerns among staff were overwork, financial worries, stress and anxiety.

Respondents also mentioned that significant numbers of staff in the sector became ill with Covid-19, and for a minority this had lasting effects in the form of long Covid.

We heard about high levels of staff turnover during and after Covid.¹⁸⁸ This period, widely described as “*the Great Resignation*”,¹⁸⁹ saw organisations across the sector struggle to retain staff. There are concerns about the recent loss of some experienced staff and leaders, and ongoing difficulties in recruiting to key NGO positions.

// I’m a bit concerned by the volume of people who have huge expertise but are saying they want to take a break. I’ve seen that not just in the asylum system but across the piece.”¹⁹⁰

Many organisations have permanently adopted hybrid or remote working arrangements for some or all staff members. Some reported that this has had positive outcomes for staff and NGOs, contributing towards happier employees, and more innovative organisational cultures.¹⁹¹

However, we also heard that new working arrangements can be more difficult for leaders to manage, and may result in more isolated staff. Some NGOs were concerned that hybrid working is reducing the ability of management to set boundaries and spot health needs among staff.¹⁹² There are also fears that it could contribute towards a more fragmented and less resilient organisations in the long-term.

// I’m worried about an internal disintegration in the strength of our relationships that have kept us bound together to fight what’s on the outside.”¹⁹³

Pressures arising from the policy environment

We heard that the fast-changing policy environment has significantly increased the pressures on NGO staff over the past three years. The hostility

of the immigration system and highly charged media coverage of asylum issues has contributed to an increasing feeling of powerlessness among many staff, and a permanent sense of crisis.

// There is a real risk of burnout for staff who cannot keep up with the level of demand they are having to manage.”¹⁹⁴

Many frontline organisations are now supporting rising numbers of clients with immediate – and often unresolvable – needs. This has resulted in high levels of staff stress and exhaustion. Some staff, including in relatively well-resourced national organisations, struggle to manage their workloads and to set work/life boundaries.

// I really encourage my staff not to work long hours, to take proper breaks and manage workloads, but in the current crisis it’s really hard to manage that.”¹⁹⁵

Some NGOs reported increasing concern about staff safety as far-right activism and attacks have increased.

Exposure to high levels of client need can be particularly challenging for NGO staff members with lived experience of the UK refugee and migration system.¹⁹⁶ We heard that some people with lived experience feel survivors’ guilt or experience re-traumatisation. They may particularly struggle to set boundaries and to ‘switch off’ from their work.¹⁹⁷ We heard about cultural barriers and stigma which can prohibit some staff members with lived experience from acknowledging their mental health needs and accessing appropriate support.

// Some people from minority communities don’t trust wellbeing initiatives because of the language that is used. Sometimes the language and cultural terms are simply not relevant to the communities”.¹⁹⁸

Some NGOs reported increasing concern about staff safety as far-right activism and attacks have increased around issues like the small boats crossings and asylum seekers living in hotels. Events such as the assault on staff and residents at a hotel in Knowsley in February 2023,¹⁹⁹ and the thwarted knife attack on immigration solicitors Duncan Lewis in 2020²⁰⁰ have fed fears across the sector.

The external environment has also been damaging for staff delivering political influencing and campaigning work. Some organisations have been the subject of intimidating campaigns by the national media and hostile MPs,

and this has taken its toll on staff members.²⁰¹ One funder noted the toxic role of online trolling and abuse as a key factor in burnout across the sector.

// If we don't address these issues, all the good work that migration funders are supporting will go to waste. The toll of people being targeted and trolled in culture wars is huge – why would you do a job where you open your inbox to 1000 people saying they want to kill you?... Without an understanding that this is part of the picture, more people will leave the sector.”²⁰²

Support measures across the sector

Overall, there has been a more open discussion of mental health in NGO workplaces since Covid-19.

In response to these concerns, we heard that many NGOs across the sector are increasing their efforts to address mental health concerns in staff teams. For some this includes more pastoral care, and firmer boundaries to protect staff.

Some NGOs have provided structured mental health support for their staff teams for many years, but for others this is new. We heard that, overall, there has been a more open discussion of mental health in NGO workplaces since Covid-19. This was described as having been a positive development for the sector.²⁰³

A growing number of organisations are now taking concrete steps to strengthen specialist mental health support for staff members. This includes clinical supervisions with external psychologists for frontline staff, through partnerships with local, regional and national support organisations.²⁰⁴

We heard that there is an increasing demand among frontline NGO staff for vicarious trauma and resilience training, and for support in dealing with online abuse. Some NGOs are creating new spaces for peer support and reflection on wellbeing, to help create a more responsive internal culture. Providing mental health support to staff requires dedicated resources, which can be an issue for some NGOs.

// Our biggest challenge is the lack of developmental and management resources that you need to be able to support people well.”²⁰⁵

Funders are playing an increasing role in helping the sector to address staff welfare issues. We heard about a small number of dedicated funding streams to help NGOs seeking to promote staff wellbeing. We also heard about the

access to external mental health support provided by funders operating ‘funder plus’ models, and the signs that this is being used by NGOs.

However, many of the underlying challenges for staff in the sector relate to their insecure contracts, low pay and overly broad job roles. These long-standing, structural issues cannot be solved through discrete wellbeing initiatives, but require dedicated, long-term shifts in employment conditions.

“ I feel exasperated by things like mindfulness or isolated offers to manage stress and wellbeing, when there is so much investment in structural issues needed.”²⁰⁶

Leadership and staff welfare

There has been a growing focus on the role of leadership in recent years.²⁰⁷ Good leadership was described by some NGOs as crucial in order to support and protect staff. Strong governance and leadership is viewed by 53% of funders as a key priority issue for the sector.

Managers can play a critical role in supporting staff to minimise stress, draw boundaries and deal with difficult situations.

Both the NGO and funder surveys suggest that there has been some positive progress in the sector’s governance, particularly in relation to trustee boards. Nearly a third (30%) of NGOs and funders agreed that the sector has increased the diversity of boards’ skills and facilitated greater contact between trustees and staff since 2020.

We heard from several NGOs about the importance of good management in the sector. Managers can play a critical role in supporting staff to minimise stress, draw boundaries and deal with difficult situations. They can help staff to set realistic expectations of their work, and to deal with rising demand in the context of a highly-pressurised external environment.

“ One of the really critical tools to manage people’s wellbeing and stress is really strong management; managers who understand the different demands that are being placed on their staff”.²⁰⁸

Some NGOs and funders highlighted the burnout in the refugee and migration sector at leadership level in recent years. There are concerns that the pressures on the sector have contributed towards the loss of some prominent leaders.²⁰⁹ We heard that some NGOs currently struggle to recruit to senior management positions due to the challenging nature

of these roles. This is a challenge for the sector at a time when strong leadership is more important than ever.

// No new people want to take over the leadership of small organisations... As these organisations do not have fundraising teams it falls to CEOs and there is a lack of capacity.”²¹⁰



Looking ahead

It will be more crucial than ever for NGOs and funders to take a proactive approach in supporting staff and leaders in the coming period.

Suggestions for future action included:

Capture and develop learning and resources about staff welfare.

Refugee Action has already begun to map staff experiences and mental health concerns, and to explore how this could be supported in future.²¹¹ They recommend the creation of safe staff discussion spaces and toolkits which capture and share good practice about mental health support in the sector – and with a particular eye to the needs of people with lived experience. These recommendations were echoed by NGOs engaged in this research.

// The migration sector should be working on creating a more friendly, supportive staff team, and particularly for those with lived experience who need that additional support.”²¹²

Many NGOs described their work to provide access to specialist clinical supervision support, including from local, regional and national offers. The sources of this support and the learning about what is most effective could be captured and consolidated, for example through a database (or just a list) of specialist support offers. One NGO called for more ambitious investment in the sector’s ability to support staff across the sector.

// There needs to be an IMIX equivalent for wellbeing in the sector, which can provide clinical supervision to help people process the trauma they are experiencing or hearing about.”²¹³

Grant-making that supports staff welfare. Some funders are working to provide wellbeing support to NGO staff members through their ‘funder plus’ offers and the learning from this could also be shared more widely.

However, a number of NGOs said that funders need to do more to ensure that their ongoing grant-making supports (rather than undermines) staff mental health. This should include ensuring that their grants support decent pay rates and secure employment contracts.

Guidance and support to the sector’s leaders. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in creating a safe, sustainable environment for staff members. We heard that some of the sector’s leaders could benefit from targeted support and professional development, such as peer support networks, coaching, training and/or mentoring initiatives. Some managers may particularly need guidance on staff welfare issues given the ongoing pressures on the sector.

The sector could build on recent initiatives to support leadership,²¹⁴ to continue to invest in skills and confidence among senior management figures.

// The sector has never had the capacity to invest in its people, but great organisations are made up of great people...As a sector we need to invest in our leaders and management.”²¹⁵

6.5 Advocacy and influencing

The sector’s ability to influence legislation, policy and public opinion is a key concern for both NGOs and funders.

45%

of NGOs and funders agreed that the sector now needs to increase its impact on policy and public opinion, as one of its top five priorities.

As outlined in Section 4, the majority (79%) of migrant and refugee NGOs surveyed for this research say that they do at least some influencing and advocacy work. However, NGOs in the sector generally allocate relatively little resource to influencing and advocacy work and this has reduced, overall, since 2020.

45% of NGOs and funders agreed that the sector now needs to increase its impact on policy and public opinion, as one of its top five priorities. Influencing activity is likely

to increasingly focus on the next General Election, likely to be held during 2024. We explored these themes further through interviews and workshop discussions.

Advocacy activity

We wanted to unpack the NGO survey finding that the sector's advocacy work has reduced, and explore which organisations have reduced this work and why.

Based on interviews and workshop discussions, it is likely that the reduction in influencing work has largely been among smaller organisations providing direct services. A number of grassroots organisations confirmed to us that as a result of wider pressures on their organisations, they have had very little capacity for advocacy work such as lobbying MPs or engaging with the media.

// We're just trying as a team to focus on making a difference at a local level, trying to share positive stories, encouraging people to be part of the local community."²¹⁶

Elsewhere in the sector, medium-sized and large organisations (and particularly those with some dedicated resources for advocacy and influencing work), reported that they have continued to be active in advocacy work over the recent period. Some organisations have increased their advocacy in response to policy challenges.

// We are doing more influencing work than before, but it's a real strain on the organisation because we are not resourced to do work that achieves significant change".²¹⁷

We heard that, even if there is less advocacy work among smaller organisations, there is now a "*stronger core group*" of NGOs which are working together to coordinate advocacy messages.²¹⁸ This is particularly the case in the refugee sector. A number of NGOs highlighted the Asylum Reform Initiative and the Together with Refugees coalition as important focal points for joint advocacy work.

// Together with Refugees is a success. There's a lot that could be improved but it is brilliant as a banner that people can come together under."²¹⁹

Much of the sector has been focused on more immediate challenges and has had limited capacity for GE24 planning, to date.

Organisations highlighted the Lift the Ban campaign and its success in bringing a range of organisations together²²⁰. We also heard about the important role played by a range of campaign coalitions and networks working across and beyond the sector.²²¹

Some national organisations report that they are now working together in more informal partnerships and coalitions to increase their advocacy impact. Several infrastructure organisations are also providing crucial support to the sector's campaigning work.²²²

Some concerns were raised about the extent to which smaller, community-based organisations have been able to play a central role within advocacy campaigns. The sector's national campaigns were described by one infrastructure NGO as "*top-down*" and "*inequitable*".²²³ Within this context, some grassroots networks have been important in helping to bring community organisations into the tent.²²⁴

A small number of NGOs and campaign groups have begun to develop pre-election campaigning strategies, in relation to the 2024 General Election (GE24). However, much of the sector has been focused on more immediate challenges and has had limited capacity for GE24 planning, to date.

Parliamentary lobbying and public affairs

We heard that, over the past three years, parliamentary lobbying on refugee and migration issues has been extremely challenging. NGOs have had to respond to a fast-moving, hostile policy agenda. NGOs particularly referred to lobbying work aiming to influence government responses to Covid-19, the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, the Illegal Migration Bill, and in response to headline-grabbing policies such as the proposed removal of people seeking asylum to Rwanda.

// Most of the work over the last three years has been reactive, with no space for proactive work, strategic thinking on policy or strategies for the next election, because everyone is firefighting."²²⁵

NGOs variously highlighted the disengagement or active hostility of many MPs on refugee and migration issues, the populist nature of political debate, and a lack of interest across the government in evidence-based policy discussions.²²⁶ We heard that NGO advocacy work has been disrupted

by a high rate of churn among civil servants and senior parliamentarians since 2019.

// Changes in the government have been an absolute nightmare for us. We have spent six months building up relationships with cabinet ministers who are then suddenly irrelevant. We have to keep rewriting our strategy.”²²⁷

We heard some concerns that the sector’s limited influencing capacity has been overly tied up in trying to influence high-profile, hostile legislation.

// I definitely think there’s a debate to be had about how much time we as a sector put into bills given the government majority. There is no use spending loads of campaigning hours on things that won’t get traction.”²²⁸

We heard different views on the value of trying to bring about change through parliamentary lobbying and behind-the-scenes engagement with civil servants in the Home Office and other departments. Some organisations felt that *“there is little hope of change”*²²⁹ through traditional mechanisms of engagement at Westminster and Whitehall.

// The old influencing models are defunct. There is a greater need for outside the tent campaign work, with more public facing campaigns and less focus on policy.”²³⁰

However, other NGOs reported concrete policy achievements as a result of engaging with civil servants during the recent period. This work can be long-term and time-consuming, but can deliver results despite a hostile political landscape.

// The sector needs a better understanding of the Home Office, as people don’t understand that it is a series of different departments ... We’ve benefited from the continuity of the civil servants, but you need to build trust with them.”²³¹

Power-building and community-organising

As parliamentary advocacy has become more difficult, some parts of the sector are concentrating on longer-term power-building strategies. This aligns with wider currents across the sector seeking to support leadership and representation among migrant and diaspora communities.

There is a sense among some NGOs and funders that community-led work now needs to grow considerably if it is to translate into “organised influence”.

A number of NGOs, including organisations led by people with lived experience, focus their work on movement-building at a local level through community-organising, political education and direct action. Much of this work involves bringing together people directly affected by immigration policies, and working to identify priorities, messages and spokespeople, build campaigning confidence and skills, and take forward strategic political lobbying, public protests and direct action.

We heard from several NGOs that advocacy work informed and led by people with lived experience has been particularly impactful, with a number of successful campaigns in recent years. These campaigns have centred on the priorities of people most affected by policies, strengthening their relevance and impact. We heard that some lived experience campaigns have benefited from wider strategic support, and that equitable alliances between NGOs with shared goals can play an important role too.

We heard that this work must now be part of a wider effort to build power within - and in partnership with - refugee and migrant communities. There is a sense among some NGOs and funders that community-led work needs to grow considerably if it is to translate into “organised influence”²³² and achieve longterm change to refugee and migration policies in the UK.

Public opinion and media

Opinion polling indicates that public opinion on immigration has been warmer than in previous periods, with a broadly supportive stance on some groups of refugees and migrants.²³³ Some funders and NGOs highlighted the importance of cultural activities including events such as Refugee Week and the role of pop culture to sustain shifts in public attitudes.²³⁴

NGOs told us about the support they had received from local communities in response to national news coverage of refugee issues, including through local volunteers, financial donations and other offers of assistance. Building on this, NGOs broadly agreed that the sector needs to reach out beyond the ‘usual suspects’, engage more effectively and systematically with the media, challenge disinformation and “*call out the racist, divisive nature of the current approach.*”²³⁵

However, despite more positive public attitudes at large, some NGOs reported community tensions towards refugees, particularly focusing

on local 'asylum hotels'. We heard concerns about the rising confidence and influence of the far-right over the past three years, including in local communities with little experience of such activity. A number of NGOs reported hostile activities such as local leafleting and demonstrations, and online abuse. There are fears that this may worsen in the coming period.²³⁶

// There is a concern around safeguarding and preparing ourselves for physical attacks because it is only a matter of time before online aggression becomes physical aggression. This is the environment in which we operate – it's hostile and dangerous and we're not equipped to deal with it."²³⁷

Advocacy 'wins'

We heard about some successful advocacy initiatives across the sector. This includes the successful campaign to reduce the ten-year settlement route down to five years for children;²³⁸ the introduction of free school meals for children with no recourse to public funds;²³⁹ and the campaign to ensure that Privilege Style airlines would not take part in the removal of asylum seekers to Rwanda.²⁴⁰

The sector managed to win several amendments in the House of Lords during the passage of the Nationality and Borders Bill in 2021–22.²⁴¹ The Lift the Ban campaign, which demands asylum seekers have the right to work in the UK, has gained significant cross-party support over the past few years, including from 70 Conservative MPs.²⁴²

In Wales and Scotland, the sector has capitalised on a different and perhaps more sympathetic national discourse to secure positive policy change.

Challenges in the courts have also played an important role. Informed by the sector, in 2023 the Independent Monitoring Authority successfully brought a judicial review of the Home Office regarding the rights of two million EU/EEA citizens with 'pre-settled status' in the UK.²⁴³ A legal challenge supported by RAMFEL and the Unity Project (among others), also in 2023, found

the No Recourse to Public Funds condition to be in breach of disability discrimination laws.²⁴⁴ Another legal challenge, mounted by Women for Refugee Women in 2022, ensured that all legal advice surgeries in immigration detention must take place face-to-face.²⁴⁵

In Wales and Scotland, the sector has capitalised on a different and perhaps more sympathetic national discourse to secure positive policy change. These include the provision of free public transport for asylum seekers;²⁴⁶ voting rights for refugees;²⁴⁷ and a super sponsor scheme for Ukrainian

resettlement.²⁴⁸ We heard from NGOs that there is currently more capacity to lobby the devolved governments than in Westminster, and that they can help to 'test' more compassionate policy approaches.

// We have a direct line of contact with the Welsh Government, it's a smaller sector so it's also easier to work together and engage in systems change."²⁴⁹

In Northern Ireland, advocacy work has been largely stalled due to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In the absence of a functioning government or budget for much of the past three years, NGOs report that they have focused on lobbying All Party Parliamentary Groups and statutory services in order to push for improved practice.²⁵⁰

Parts of the sector have also made progress through advocacy work targeting local and regional authorities. This has included work which variously targets local and county councils, Strategic Migration Partnerships, city mayors and regional metro mayors.

// On a local level we've been working with the city council to try and get the local authority to identify children's immigration status, to build it into their care plans from the beginning. That is very local but has national implications"²⁵¹

Looking ahead

We heard that, over the coming 18 months, national advocacy work will be dominated by lobbying and campaigning in relation to the Illegal Migration Bill, the implementation of new enforcement and hostile environment policies, and the General Election campaign.

Parts of the sector also plan to continue their discrete lobbying work around the implementation of existing laws and policies. This includes monitoring the impacts of the Nationality and Borders Act, dialogue with the Home Office around implementation of the Windrush Compensation Scheme (especially in lead up to the 75th anniversary of the Windrush landing in the UK), intensifying campaigning for detention reform, building cross-party engagement around the issue of No Recourse to Public Funds, and operational work to ensure that children can access the new five-year route to settlement.

// You need people campaigning on big structural issues with a big vision, but you also need people chipping away at what we already have. That can help us to slowly build power and momentum too.”²⁵²

The General Election (GE24)

The GE24 is broadly viewed as an important opportunity, and key parts of the sector are likely to focus their advocacy work on pre-election planning. Some NGOs and funders are currently preparing for the

potential election of a Labour-led Government, possibly in coalition with another party such as the Liberal Democrats.

Some NGOs are optimistic that a change of government could offer an important shift in the tone and content of policy-making.

There are a range of views about the potential impact of a Labour-led government on refugee and migration policy. The Labour leader Keir Starmer has indicated that a Labour government would not repeal the Illegal Migration Bill – although it may look to make

‘quick changes’ such as overturning the duty on the Home Secretary to deport small boat arrivals.²⁵³ Some NGOs are optimistic that a change of government could offer an important shift in the tone and content of policy-making.

// We might only be swapping a hostile government for a neutral one but that would still be a completely different context.”²⁵⁴

However, we heard some concerns that the sector has not yet had the time or capacity to engage in power-mapping and political strategising for GE24 or engagement with an incoming government. NGOs will need to build strategic relationships with influential politicians, local and regional leaders and key stakeholders such as businesses. Time for doing this is running out.

// As a sector we are quite focused on supporting service delivery NGOs to do advocacy, but I feel there are lots of other voices we could be using to have more of an influence”.²⁵⁵

We also heard frustration from some NGOs that the sector has previously struggled to agree on joint campaigns, particularly on broader immigration issues (as opposed to asylum and refugee issues). There are long-standing disagreements across the sector about how

to reconcile different visions and theories of change. There are also different views on the value of incremental policy change as opposed to more fundamental reform. A number of NGOs want to see the sector do more to set disagreements aside and find common ground in the run-up to GE24.²⁵⁶

// Everyone doesn't have to be in the same lane but there needs to be an attempt to achieve greater alignment so that collectively you are pulling together rather than pulling apart.²⁵⁷

We heard that, in the past, some of the more successful sector-wide advocacy efforts have been either very broad, bringing the sector together around shared principles that a broad spectrum of organisations can get behind, or very focused. Either way, joint advocacy work over the coming period will need to be equitable and strategic.

Suggestions for future action included:

Additional resource and strategic planning for GE24. Given the limited advocacy capacity across the sector, NGOs will need to be strategic about where to put their resources over the coming period. We heard a desire across the sector to put more resource into planning for GE24 and a new government.

We particularly heard that some NGOs would welcome additional resources and expert inputs to help guide their lobbying work ahead of GE24. NGOs emphasised the need for additional support on political strategy and campaigning to compliment the policy expertise that the sector has in abundance. This could also help NGOs to map the opportunities that a change of government might bring, and how to best capitalise on those following the election.

// The sector is full of experts on content and policy but has far fewer experts on the methodology to achieve change."²⁵⁸

Support to equitable, collaborative campaigns. A number of NGOs called for more capacity in the sector to support equitable, collaborative campaigns. This reflects an appetite among many organisations for joint advocacy and campaign work. Most of the NGOs we spoke with were broadly supportive of joint campaigns such as the Together with

Refugees Initiative. However, there is a desire for grassroots and migrant-led organisations to be more involved in setting the agenda for – and representing – these campaigns.²⁵⁹

There is a desire for grassroots and migrant-led organisations to be more involved in setting the agenda for – and representing – these campaigns.

Longer-term investment in the sector's influencing capacity. Beyond GE24, NGOs and funders both see the need for continued, long-term investment in the sector's advocacy capacity.

We heard concern that fundamental principles such as the right to seek asylum, once lost in the UK, could be hard to regain. There is a wider sense that much more work will be needed to shift the dial towards a more compassionate, rights-based approach towards migration and asylum in the future, regardless of which party is in power. This could include work which focuses on "*long-term, strategic issues*" such as voter rights, which builds sustained power in grassroots organisations, and which engages more consistently with diaspora communities.²⁶⁰

Support will be needed across a range of approaches – parliamentary lobbying, public affairs, media and communications, movement-building and campaigning. There is an appetite among NGOs to build positive visions for the future, strategies for shifting power and new alliances across and beyond the sector.

6.6 Alliances and collaboration

Building and sustaining strategic alliances to support advocacy, community-organising and service-delivery is crucial for organisations working across the UK refugee and migration sector.

We heard that collaboration between NGOs in the sector has grown over the past three years. 66% of NGOs we surveyed collaborate more with other organisations than they did three years ago. Around 40% of NGOs view alliances and collaborations – both with others in the sector and outside the sector – as a key priority over the coming period.

We explored a range of perspectives on collaborations, networks and partnerships across the sector, and the lessons learned from this work for the future.

Collaboration across the sector

Throughout this research, we heard about the positive – and crucial – role played by many collaborations. This includes partnerships to deliver services, alliances to support community-organising and mobilising, and joint campaigns and advocacy work.

Many NGOs reported that they had benefited from working much more closely with others during Covid-19.

Many NGOs reported that they had benefited from working much more closely with others during Covid-19. Some highlighted the positive effects of new local partnerships, cross-sectoral alliances, and collaborations

with statutory actors to support migrants and refugees. For some organisations, this way of working has diminished as other priorities and pressures have come into play.

// In Covid there was a sense of people doing things together and having each other's backs, but now it feels like that has gone."²⁶¹

Other organisations reported a new sense of energy behind collaborations and alliance-building. We heard about a proliferation of support networks and learning initiatives across the sector. In the post-pandemic landscape, a range of networking efforts, driven by both NGOs and funders, have successfully engaged organisations across the UK.

// It felt like we were disconnected before. But now we are exploring the potential for developing a more joined-up four nations partnership – working around devolved mitigations of the hostile environment."²⁶²

We heard some desire to see the sector develop deeper coalitions, particularly around campaigning work. One funder noted that there is currently little by way of formal, permanent alliances in the sector (such as Bond or Aid Alliance in the international development and aid sectors) which could provide a framework for sharing resources in pursuit of agreed long-term strategies.²⁶³

The scope for new alliances

In research workshops we invited reflections on how far NGOs and funders have been able to build alliances with new organisations in the sector and whether this has resulted in a stronger sector overall.

Many of the NGOs that we spoke with had not had any significant contact with new organisations. We heard from a few NGOs that they have had limited capacity to reach out to new organisations. Some were concerned about increased competition for funding. One NGO questioned whether the growth in the sector reflects *"flourishing or fracturing."*²⁶⁴

The establishment of new migrant diaspora organisations could present an opportunity for the sector in future. We heard, for example, that there are now between 70 and 100 groups working across the UK with Hong Kong British Nationals Overseas (only a handful of which are registered charities).²⁶⁵ If the sector can engage with these groups, they could inject a huge boost in capacity, energy and influence on refugee and migration issues.

Building alliances outside the refugee and migration sector was indicated by 40% of NGOs as a top five priority for the sector over the coming period.

// I think the sector's impact could be improved through more dialogue and exchanges between the different migrant groups. There's a lot of room for synergy and for joint work to change perceptions".²⁶⁶

Building alliances outside the refugee and migration sector was indicated by 40% of NGOs as a top five priority for the sector over the coming period. Many migrant and refugee NGOs do collaborate with important stakeholders outside the sector, including statutory authorities and services, trades unions, faith networks, schools and universities. However, more can be done.

// There are three million Muslims in the UK and half of them are under 21. They have broadly positive views on refugees. How are we engaging with them?... [Building a wider coalition] is the only route to long-term change"²⁶⁷

During this research we particularly heard about NGOs' desire to build stronger alliances with other, aligned sectors, including with organisations working on race equality, homelessness, women's rights, LGBTQI+ issues and climate change. Many NGOs view such external alliances as a crucial part of bringing about lasting change and meeting future challenges.

// There is nowhere near enough bridging between sectors. That is about capacity and we are not as used to doing it as we should be."²⁶⁸

Looking ahead

There is clearly an appetite among most NGOs to build on collaborative work within and beyond the sector. There is also a sense that joint working will be more needed than ever over the coming period, as the sector comes under increased pressure.

Suggestions for future action included:

Supporting effective, equitable collaborations across the sector. We heard how important it is for collaborations to be fair and equitable. A number of NGOs reflected on examples of joint-working between grassroots or migrant-led organisations, and bigger ‘professional’ organisations, and noted that in some cases these collaborations can end up being extractive for smaller organisations.

There is considerable anecdotal learning across the sector about what effective collaborations look like. There is a recognition that joint-working must be respectful, equitable and mutually beneficial. We also heard that networks and learning initiatives that bring organisations together need to add value rather than absorb NGO capacity. The principles from this could usefully be captured and shared to strengthen good practice among funders and NGOs.

“ We can facilitate more joint working by being open and acknowledging the challenges we face. Not one of us on our own can make a difference, we need a variety of organisations and approaches and that can only come from more collaboration.”²⁶⁹

The convening role of funders. Funders inevitably play an important role in supporting the sector’s collaborative work and alliances. Collaborative work needs to be properly funded through grant-making which should take a long-term perspective.

We heard about the value of equitable collaboration and dialogue between NGOs and funders. This can lead to a more informed, joined-up and ultimately more effective sector. There are different views on the convening role played by some trusts and foundations. One funder told us that *“funders should not be actively convening groups. They should be creating the spaces for people and allowing the ideas to bubble up”*.²⁷⁰

Where funders do bring NGOs together, they need to be aware of the power dynamics at play. Funder-led spaces can be intimidating or disempowering for some NGOs.

Conversely, however, one NGO suggested that funders could be “*more firm*” in convening and resourcing groups of NGOs around key issues, particularly in the run up to GE24.²⁷¹ Another suggested that funders could draw on models used in the international development field, making dedicated funding available for campaigns involving small groups of NGOs – “*to force us into collaboration.*”²⁷²

Where funders do bring NGOs together, they need to be aware of the power dynamics at play. Funder-led spaces can be intimidating or disempowering for some NGOs. To mitigate this, funders need to facilitate or curate these spaces carefully, and reduce any negative impacts.²⁷³

Building new alliances. We heard that NGOs and funders could usefully have more joint discussion about the shape and scope of the sector’s collaborations.

“ I think the sector could have more impact if it looks at how to connect more deliberately and intentionally and considers issues thematically. It needs to be reflective about who is at the table and who isn’t, as well as whose voices are listened to and whose are not. It needs to be more self-aware.”²⁷⁴

The sector could collectively consider the types of alliances that will be most effective in achieving the sector’s goals. What types of internal and external strategic alliances will be needed, to meet the challenges over the coming five to ten years? Where does the responsibility for making and maintaining those alliances lie, and what resources will be needed to make them happen?

NGOs and funders could build strategies and partnerships which help to situate refugee and migration issues within a much wider context, and which build solidarity across and beyond the sector. This could contribute towards the strengthening of a broader, future-facing movement in support of refugees and migrants in the UK.

Appendix A

Details of research methodology

The key tools used in this research were:

Charity Commission datasets

In September 2022, we analysed data on registered charities held by the three UK charity commissions – the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

This data was used to identify and profile registered charities working on UK refugee and migration issues today. We were able to compare this data with similar analysis conducted in 2020, to identify emerging trends and developments.

The analysis of UK registered charities working on refugee and/or migration issues was carried out in September 2022, using data from the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland websites. The information available on these websites is taken from the reports submitted by charities for the previous year and therefore the data referenced will normally refer to 2021.

Charities working on UK refugee and migration issues were identified via a search of the charity commissions' databases which checked to see if key words appeared in either the charity's name, charitable objects or key activities. The key words used were:

asylum-seeker, refugee, migrant, immigrant, immigration and torture.

All charities that were identified through this search were then reviewed to ensure that they did in fact undertake some work on refugee and/or migration issues in the UK. This search identified a total of 1,463 organisations which deliver this work as part of their charitable purpose.

This group was then filtered to exclude charities that: do not work primarily or exclusively on refugee / migration issues in the UK; had not filed accounts with the relevant Charity Commission within the past two years; or had an income of less than £2 per annum. This resulted in a list of 708 charities which work primarily or exclusively on refugee and/or migration issues in the UK and have some level of resource to do so.

This review of the charity commissions' databases will undercount the number of charities that work on refugee / migration issues. This is because it will not capture NGOs that do not describe this work as part of their charitable purpose or activities (e.g. British Red Cross). Similarly, charities that do not use the key words to describe their activities will also not be identified in the search (e.g. if a charity describes its work as "supporting Sudanese people who have been exiled and are living in the North East").

Furthermore, the review of the charity commissions' databases cannot provide

a complete picture of all the organisations working on refugee and migration issues in the UK because it excludes the cross section of civil society organisations which are not registered charities.

This group will include hundreds of small community and voluntary organisations (e.g. only around a quarter of the 126 City of Sanctuary groups are registered charities) as well as larger NGOs, trade unions, faith organisations, and other groups and networks that have not registered as charities (e.g. The 3Million, New Europeans, RAMP, Free Movement, NRPf Network, etc.).²⁷⁵ The research attempted to capture the views and experiences of these organisations through an online survey, interviews and workshops (see below).

NGO survey

From September to November 2022, an online survey was distributed to a sample of 668 small, medium and large civil society organisations working on refugee / migration issues in the UK. The sample comprised of:

- 332 small and community based organisations. This includes charities and non-charities with an annual income of between £0 and £100,000 that work primarily or exclusively on refugee / migration issues.
- 276 medium and large charities. These organisations are all charities that work primarily or exclusively on refugee / migration issues and have annual incomes over £100,000.

- 60 key allies. This includes NGOs which do not work primarily on refugee / migration issues, but are key stakeholders in the sector, as well as non-charities.

The sample was weighted towards small and community organisations to try and ensure that the responses included a representative number of organisations from this cohort (the response rate from small organisations to the 2020 survey was very low). In addition, a contribution of £20 was offered to smaller organisations (those with incomes under £25,000) for taking the time to complete the survey in the hope that it might facilitate their participation.²⁷⁶

The sample also sought to reflect the sector in relation to the different geographic locations across the UK in which NGOs work and get an appropriate balance between those organisations that work on migration issues and those that focus on refugee issues.

The survey was completed by 175 NGOs, between 11 October and 24 November 2022. Respondents had a combined income of approximately £103 million per annum – equivalent to 59% of the total income for the charitable sector working on refugee and migration issues (£176 million). A list of NGO survey respondents can be found in Appendix B.

Funder survey

From September to November 2022 we distributed a funder survey to 39 independent trusts and foundations that are key funders of the UK refugee and migration sector.

Survey responses were received from 20 grant funders, who collectively provided around £38 million worth of grants to the UK refugee and migration sector in the last financial year. A list of funder survey respondents can be found in Appendix B.

In April 2023, we additionally conducted analysis of data regarding funding to the sector using the 360Giving website, to reflect a wider range of funding sources.

Research interviews

Between January and April 2023, we conducted 40 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This included 32 interviews with chief executives and senior management figures working across the sector, and eight interviews with funders.

The interviewees were selected with the aim of providing a cross-section of perspectives across organisational income, issue / client focus and geographical location. We sought to ensure that a significant proportion of interviewees were from migrant-led organisations or were leaders with lived experience of the issues.

All interviews were carried out online or by telephone. The interviews provided crucial context and allowed for in-depth analysis of emerging themes. Anonymised quotes from interviews have been used within the report. A list of research interviewees can be found in Appendix C.

Workshop discussions

During the research, three online workshop discussions were convened, in order to invite analysis from across the sector on key research themes:

In September 2022, prior to the start of the research, MEX convened an online discussion workshop with NGOs and funders, to shape the research methodology, focus and outputs. In February and March 2023, MEX convened two online workshops at which early research findings were presented to NGOs and funders for discussion.

Between February and April 2023, MEX also invited three organisations – Migrants Organise, Migration Policy Scotland and Right to Remain – to hold their own discussion workshops with their wider networks or staff teams, which focused on the initial research findings.

These six workshops involved people from more than fifty funders and NGOs working across the sector. The feedback provided context, allowed for peer review of emergent findings, and offered new insights into the research process itself. They particularly allowed us to hear more from grassroots organisations and activists.

A list of workshop participants can be found in Appendix C.

Appendix B

Organisations that completed the NGO and funder surveys

NGOs

Access – Supporting Migrants in East Anglia	Budleigh Syrian Community Sponsorship	Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)
Abigail Housing	CARAS	Forth Valley Welcome
Action Foundation	Cardiff City of Sanctuary	Freedom from Torture
African Rainbow Family	Caring and Sharing Rochdale	Friends of The Drop-In for Asylum Seekers And Refugees
Aid Box Community	Carriers of Hope Coventry	GARAS
ASSIST Sheffield	Centre for Social Inclusion	Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID)	Citizens UK	Glass Door Homelessness Charity
Asylos	City of Sanctuary UK	Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
Asylum Aid	Community InfoSource	GYROS
Asylum Justice	Community Integration and Advocacy Centre	Hackney Migrant Centre
Asylum Link Merseyside	Coram Children’s Legal Centre	Haringey Migrant Support Centre
Asylum Matters	Croydon Refugee Day Centre	Hastings City of Sanctuary
Asylum Support Appeals Project	Derby Refugee Forum (Derby Refugee Advice Centre)	Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees
Asylum Welcome	Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity	Hear Me Out
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile	Detention Action	Helen Bamber Foundation
BARAC UK	Detention Forum	Here for Good
Barnet Somali Community Group	Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support	Hereford City of Sanctuary
BEACON Bradford	Doctors of the World UK	Herts Welcomes Refugees
Belfast City of Sanctuary	East European Resource Centre	Hillingdon Law Centre
Big Leaf Foundation	Eastbourne Networx	HOPE Not Hate
Birmingham Community Hosting Project	Embrace NI	Hope Projects
Borderlands	English +	Horn of Africa People’s Aid NI
Bradford African Community BAC	Entraide (Mutual Aid)	HOST Nottingham
Breaking Barriers	Ethiopian Community in Britain	Hummingbird Project
Brighton Exiled/Refugee Trauma Service	Ethnic Youth Support Team	IMIX
Bristol Hospitality Network	European Network on Statelessness	Indo-American Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO)
Bristol Refugee Rights	Europia	International Care Network
British Future	Fairbeats Music	Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants
British Red Cross	Family Refugee Support Project	Jesuit Refugee Service UK
British Refugee Council	Fatima House	Jewish Council for Racial Equality
Brushstrokes Community Project		

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants	Northumberland County of Sanctuary	Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group
Kanlungan Filipino Consortium	Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum	Springboard Youth Academy
Kent Refugee Action Network	Oasis Cardiff	Student Action for Refugees (STAR)
Latin American Women's Rights Service	Oasis One World Choir	Suffolk Refugee Support
Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network	On Road Media	Swindon City of Sanctuary
Leicester City of Sanctuary	Open Door North East	The 3Million
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	Polish Expats Association	The BACA Charity
Living Vital	Praxis	The Birth Partner Project
Luton City of Sanctuary	Project 17	The Boaz Trust
Manchester City of Sanctuary	Rainbow Migration	The Comfrey Project
Maryhill Integration Network	RAMP	The Congolese Association of Merseyside
Maternity Action	RAPAR	The Gap – Wales
Medact	Refugee Action York (RAY)	The Harbour Project
Medical Justice	REAP (Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership)	The Nottingham Arimathea Trust
Merseyside Refugee Support Network	Refugee Action	The Refugee and Migrant Centre
Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation	Refugee Education UK	Together with Migrant Children
Migrant Democracy Project	Refugee Support Devon	Trauma Foundation South West
Migrants Rights Network	Right to Remain	Upbeat Communities
Migrant Voice	Room to Heal	Warm Hut UK
Migrants Organise	Runnymede Trust	Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership
Migrateful	Samphire	Welsh Refugee Council
Migration Observatory	Scottish Refugee Council	Women Asylum Seekers Together
Migration Policy Scotland	Settled	Women for Refugee Women
NACCOM	Share Knowsley	Wycombe Refugee Partnership
New Europeans UK	Slough Immigration Aid Unit	Xenia
Nilaari	Sola Arts	York City of Sanctuary
Northern Ireland Law Centre	Solace	Young Roots
	South London Refugee Association	(Three organisations wished to remain anonymous)

Trusts and Foundations

A B Charitable Trust	Justice Together Initiative	(Two organisations wished to remain anonymous)
Alan and Babette Sainsbury Charitable Trust	Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	
Barrow Cadbury Trust	MTVH Migration Foundation	
Bromley Trust	Network for Social Change	
City Bridge Trust	Oak Foundation	
Comic Relief	Paul Hamlyn Foundation	
Community Foundation Wales	Social Change Initiative	
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	Trust for London	
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	Unbound Philanthropy	

Appendix C

Interviewees and workshop participants

Research interviewees

NGOS

Alexandra Lopoukhine –
Joint Council for the Welfare
of Immigrants

Andrea Cleaver – Welsh
Refugee Council

Andreea Dumitrache and Kezia
Tobin – the3Million

Asumani Shusho – Bradford
African Community

Bridget Young – NACCOM

Caroline O'Connor – Migrant Help

Chrisann Jarrett – We Belong

Duncan McAuley – Action
Foundation

Denise McDowell – Greater
Manchester Immigration
Aid Unit

Eiri Ohtani – Right to Remain

Enver Solomon – Refugee Council

Fahim Zazai – Afghan Community
and Welfare Centre

Helen Hibberd – Birmingham
Community Hosting Network

Jenni Regan – IMIX

Jon Beech – Leeds Asylum Seeker
Support Network

Julian Chan – Hongkongers
in Britain

Kendall Bousquet – Migrant
Centre Northern Ireland

Kimberly McIntosh – Action for
Race Equality

Kolbassia Haoussou – One Strong
Voice / Freedom from Torture

James Asfa – Citizens UK

Laura Taylor – RAMP

Leila Zadeh – Rainbow Migration

Magda Fabianczyk – Polish
Migrants Organise for Change

Mohamed Omar – Refugee
Action

Paul Hook – Asylum Matters

Rebecca Dadge – Forth Valley
Welcome

Rosario Guimba-Stewart –
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant
Network

Sabir Zazai – Scottish
Refugee Council

Sian Williams – City of Sanctuary

Sonya Sceats – Freedom
from Torture

Sunder Katwala – British Future

Zrinka Bralo – Migrants Organise

FUNDERS

Ali Torabi – Joseph Rowntree
Charitable Trust

Ayesha Saran – Barrow
Cadbury Trust

Caroline Gentile – Lloyds Bank
Foundation for England
and Wales

Dan Berelowitz –
Jubilee Foundation

Emma Clarke and Sara Harrity –
A B Charitable Trust

Laura Lines – Esmée Fairbairn
Foundation

Letícia Ishibashi – Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Will Somerville – Unbound
Philanthropy

Workshop participants

Representatives from the following NGOs, funders and groups attended online workshops in September 2022, February 2023 and March 2023:

Action Foundation	Glass Door Homeless Charity	Right to Remain
After18	Good Faith Partnership	The Sam and Bella Sebba Charitable Foundation
Amna Refugee Healing Network	GYROS	Southeast and East Asian Centre
Anti-Slavery International	Helen Bamber Foundation	Student Action for Refugees (STAR)
Asylum Aid	Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	The Blue Thread
Asylum Support Appeals Project	Jesuit Refugee Service UK	The Boaz Trust
Barrow Cadbury Trust	Justice Together Initiative	The Bromley Trust
BEACON (Bradford Ecumenical Asylum Concern)	Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network	The Comfrey Project
Breaking Barriers	Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	The Legal Education Foundation
British Future	Maryhill Integration Network	the3million
Bromley Trust	Medact	Treebeard Trust
Carriers of Hope	Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation (MEWSo)	Trust for London
City of Sanctuary	Migrant Democracy Project	University of Kent
Community Infosource	Migrant Voice	Upbeat Communities
Concept Training	Migration Policy Scotland	Voices in Exile
Disrupt Foundation	MTVH Migration Foundation	Welsh Refugee Council
Doctors of the World UK	NRPF Action Group (Praxis)	Women for Refugee Women
East European Resource Centre	Open Door North East	WomenCentre
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	Praxis	
European Network on Statelessness	Project 17	
Experts by Experience Employment Initiative	RAMP	
FLEX	Refugee Action	
Freedom from Torture	Refugee Council	

Appendix D

Key additional data tables from NGO and funder surveys

1. Views on the wider UK refugee and migration sector

The NGO and funder surveys asked respondents whether the sector was better positioned today than it was at the start of 2020 in relation to a range of issues which

relate to the collective strength of the refugee and migration sector and its ability to achieve social change. Respondents could choose one answer.

Question	Funder NGO Average			
	Yes	No	The same	Don't know
The sector is better prepared for 'shock' events and able to respond effectively to them.	55%	10%	15%	20%
	33%	31%	20%	17%
	44%	21%	18%	19%
The sector pools more of its collective resources to try and achieve significant policy changes	65%	0%	5%	30%
	43%	14%	24%	20%
	54%	7%	15%	25%
The sector's efforts to influence public opinion on migrant and refugee have more impact	30%	10%	20%	40%
	29%	21%	30%	21%
	30%	16%	25%	31%
GOs in the sector have increased the diversity of their board's skills base & facilitated greater contact between trustees and staff	30%	5%	10%	55%
	29%	10%	18%	44%
	30%	8%	14%	50%
The sector does more to engage sections of society which hold sceptical or hostile attitudes towards people who are migrants and refugees	20%	15%	15%	50%
	23%	18%	28%	32%
	22%	17%	22%	41%

Question	Funder			
	Yes	No	The same	Don't know
The sector works more 'with' and less 'on behalf' of migrants and refugees	60%	10%	10%	20%
	66%	4%	17%	13%
	63%	7%	14%	17%
The sector has better relationships with decision makers in the Home Office and can influence important policy decisions	0%	35%	15%	50%
	8%	48%	15%	29%
	4%	42%	15%	40%
Funders do more to enable NGOs to focus less on short-term goals and more on innovation and long-term strategies	35%	5%	15%	45%
	32%	19%	26%	23%
	34%	12%	21%	34%
Funders do more to support organisations to address structural racism in their organisations and the wider immigration system	55%	10%	0%	35%
	35%	15%	17%	34%
	45%	13%	9%	35%

2. Areas that should be prioritised to strengthen the health and impact of the sector. Respondents were asked to choose up to five.

Priority areas to strengthen the health and impact of the sector	NGOs	Funders (18)	Overall Total Nov. 2022	Overall Total Jan 2020
Involvement of people with lived experience	65%	74%	70%	74%
Financial sustainability	59%	21%	40%	56%
Influence on wider public opinion	42%	47%	45%	55%
Influence on local/regional national policies	45%	47%	46%	51%
Alliances outside the refugee and migration sector	40%	37%	39%	51%

Priority areas to strengthen the health and impact of the sector	NGOs	Funders (18)	Overall Total Nov. 2022	Overall Total Jan 2020
Collaboration with others in the sector	39%	26%	33%	50%
Staff wellbeing	38%	47%	43%	26%
Agility and responsiveness to external developments	33%	26%	30%	24%
Anti-racism/racial justice	30%	42%	36%	N/A
Strategic planning	29%	26%	28%	40%
Strong governance and leadership	23%	53%	38%	26%
Influence on practice and or service delivery	22%	5%	14%	26%
Risk taking and ability to innovate	18%	5%	12%	24%

Endnotes

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- 4 'Net migration' refers to the difference between long-term immigration and long-term emigration levels. Office of National Statistics, Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2022, 25 May 2022. www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/longterminternationalmigrationprovisional/yearendingdecember2022
- 5 There have been multiple UK Home Secretaries and Ministers of State for Immigration since 2020. The ministerial post of Secretary of State for Refugees was created in September 2021 and had two post-holders before it was removed in September 2022.
- 6 In 2022 alone, far-right activists visited accommodation housing migrants and asylum seekers at least 253 times, a 102% increase on 2021. As reported in Hope Not Hate, State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Racism and Resentment, <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>
- 7 <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>
- 8 See Welsh Government, Refugee and asylum seeker plan (nation of sanctuary), 1 January 2019. <https://www.gov.wales/refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan-nation-sanctuary>
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- 11 See the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, UNHCR Legal Observations on the Illegal Migration Bill, 2 May 2023 (Updated). www.unhcr.org/uk/sites/uk/files/legacy-pdf/641d7b664.pdf
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- 14 United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Statement on UK Asylum Bill, 7 March 2022. Available online at: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/statement-uk-asylum-bill>
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- 45 Data from the websites is drawn from charities' submitted annual accounts relating to the most recent complete financial year. In most cases this will be the 2020–21 financial year.
- 46 This includes generalist community and faith groups that tackle disadvantage and social exclusion, and law centres and citizen advice bureaux which give advice on a range of issues including refugee and migration issues. It also includes organisations with specific social justice remits, for example, to support children, provide employment training, reduce discrimination and/or tackle homelessness.
- 47 To identify the 'core sector', the wider group was filtered to select only those charities which: primarily or exclusively work on refugee and migration issues in the UK; have a budget of at least £2 per annum; and have submitted accounts in the last two years. We refer to this group as the 'core' UK refugee/migration charitable sector.
- 48 A total of 115 charities were registered in England and Wales in the 22 months prior to September 2022, with a further 6 registered in Northern Ireland and 4 in Scotland in the same period. It should be noted that the core charitable sector does not include 180 registered charities who work primarily or exclusively on refugee and migration issues in the UK, but have not reported any income for the last financial year. The majority of these organisations are newly registered charities.
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- 61 The survey of 92 environmental organisations found that grants from foundations provided just 13% of their total income. Florence Miller et.al., op.cit.
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- 63 Ruth Grove-White and Mike Kaye, Taking Stock and Facing the Future, op.cit.
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- 65 Ruth Grove-White and Mike Kaye, Taking Stock and Facing the Future, op.cit.
- 66 Unless otherwise stated, data in this section is from the 360Giving GrantNav database (accessed on 22 April 2023). 360Giving uses a data standard which consists of a set of information fields that must be included when a grant making organisation shares grant data. GrantNav contains information from 249 different funders, but can only include grant information which is published using the 360Giving data standard. For more information see <https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org>
- 67 The search was conducted on the 360Giving GrantNav database on 22 April 2023 using "migrant", "refugee", "asylum seeker" and "immigration" as the key word search terms. <https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org>
- 68 See Barbra Mazur and Fancy Sinantha, A Perspective, op.cit.
- 69 All data from the 360Giving GrantNav database, 22 April 2023, op.cit.
- 70 The education in grants is likely to be due to reduced income related to impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the number of people playing the National Lottery.
- 71 See Charities Aid Foundation, UK Giving Report 2022, https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-research/uk_giving_2022.pdf CAF UK reports are based on the largest study of household donor behaviour in the UK.
- 72 Despite this, data from January to April 2022, still shows that only 57% of people donated or sponsored someone in the previous 12 months, with an estimated 4.9 million fewer people donating or sponsoring compared to the same months in 2019. See Charities Aid Foundation, op.cit.
- 73 See Charities Aid Foundation, op.cit.
- 74 Religious organisations, overseas aid/disaster relief, children/young people, animal welfare, homeless people/housing, medical research, hospitals/hospices and conservation/the environment/heritage together received some 77% of the total amount donated in 2021. Physical and mental health care, disabled people, education, elderly people, the arts and sport and recreation together received a further 15% of the total. "Other issues", which would include refugee and migration concerns in the UK alongside a variety of other causes, accounted for just 9% of the total. See Charities Aid Foundation, op.cit.

- 75 Respondents to the funder survey included the Justice Together Initiative - a pooled fund to which some of the other funder survey respondents have contributed. It has not been possible to disaggregate this data from the wider survey findings.
- 76 88% of the trusts and foundations that completed the 2020 survey also responded in 2022.
- 77 NGO and funder survey recipients were asked to respond to a series of key statements about aspects of the sector. They were also invited to identify the five key priority areas that could strengthen the health and impact of the UK refugee and migration sector. Full details of responses to these questions can be found in Appendix D.
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- 79 NGO interview 8.
- 80 NGO interview 7.
- 81 NGO interview 26.
- 82 NGO participant, Funder workshop 1.
- 83 Charity Commission, COVID-19 Survey 2021, 28 October 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-commission-covid-19-survey-2021>
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- 86 NGO interview 11.
- 87 See Section 6.4 'Staff welfare and Leadership'.
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- 89 See Refugee Action, Stories of Resilience, in partnership with Migration Exchange, <https://www.ragp.org.uk/programmes/resilience>
- 90 NGO interview 21.
- 91 For example, see Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Migrants and the COVID inquiry - our joint letter to the inquiry chair, 2022. www.jcwi.org.uk/migrants-in-the-covid-inquiry-joint-letter
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- 94 NGO interview 3.
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- 99 NGO interview 10.
- 100 NGO interview 2.
- 101 See Refugee Council, Lives on Hold, July 2022, <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Lives-on-hold-research-report.-July-2022.pdf>
- 102 NGO interview 17.
- 103 See Section 6.4 Staff welfare and leadership, and Section 6.5 Influencing and advocacy for more on far right activity and its impacts on the sector.
- 104 See Maria Llorente & Kate Smart, Settled not Secure: The needs of EU citizens in the UK, Settled, April 2022, <https://settled.org.uk/settled-not-secure/>
- 105 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 106 See Jo Wilding, No Access to Justice: How legal aid deserts fail refugees, migrants and our communities, Refugee Action, May 2022; and Jo Wilding, Maureen Mguni, Travis Van Isacker, A Huge Gulf: Demand and Supply for Immigration Legal Advice in London, Justice Together Initiative, June 2021: <https://justice-together.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/A-Huge-Gulf-FINAL-report.pdf>

- 107 See Sheona York, Are the new asylum questionnaires fit for purpose? Free Movement, 2 March 2023, <https://freemovement.org.uk/questionnaires/>
- 108 An average of 44% of NGOs and funders thought that the sector is now better positioned to respond to 'shock' events than in 2020 (39% either disagreed or said it was the same). Funders were more positive than NGOs about progress in this regard (55% versus 33% agreeing).
- 109 NGO interview 2.
- 110 NGO interview 27.
- 111 NGO interview 7.
- 112 See, for example, Asylum Matters, NACCOM (No Accommodation Network), and Refugee Council.
- 113 <https://justice-together.org.uk/>
- 114 NGO interview 27.
- 115 It will be hard to advise a trafficked person who has entered the UK illegally to go to the authorities for help or to enter the National Referral Mechanism, as they will be putting themselves at risk of detention and deportation.
- 116 NGO interview 20
- 117 Funder interview 4
- 118 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 119 NGO interview 15.
- 120 NGO interview 21.
- 121 NGO participant - Funder workshop 2.
- 122 Funder interview 3.
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- 130 David Kane and Tania Cohen, Sector Infrastructure Funding Analysis, 360Giving, February 2023.
- 131 NGO interview 6.
- 132 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 133 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
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- 137 NGO interview 7.
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- 139 NGO interview 11.
- 140 Ruth Grove-White and Mike Kaye, 'Taking Stock and Facing the Future', 2020.
- 141 NGO interview 5.
- 142 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
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- 144 Funder interview 5.
- 145 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 146 See, for example, the work of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Migrants Organise and Migrants Rights Network.
- 147 Funder interview 4.
- 148 NGO interview 6.
- 149 NGO interview 3.
- 150 NGO interview 13.
- 151 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 152 NGO interview 7.
- 153 Funder interview 4.
- 154 Funder interview 3.
- 155 Funder interview 1.
- 156 Funder interview 7.
- 157 The meaning of 'direct involvement' was not defined in the survey, and so was subject to interpretation by NGOs and funders.
- 158 This marginal fall could be because there is a better understanding of what substantive involvement of people with lived experience is across the sector and therefore a higher bar has been set for answering this question positively. It may also be because the current survey includes a greater percentage of small and voluntary NGOs, which generally have less capacity to implement the measures needed.

- 159 NGO interview 22.
- 160 For example, We Belong, One Strong Voice, Survivors Speak Out (hosted by Freedom from Torture), the Experts by Experience Employment Initiative.
- 161 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 162 NGO interview 12.
- 163 Funder interview 8.
- 164 NGO interview 24.
- 165 NGO interview 11.
- 166 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 167 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 168 Funder interview 4.
- 169 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 170 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 171 NGO interview 28.
- 172 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 173 NGO interview 7.
- 174 Find more details on the Lived Experience enquiry on the Paul Hamlyn Foundation website: www.phf.org.uk/programmes/collaborative-inquiry-into-lived-experience-in-the-migration-sector.
- 175 NGO interview 24.
- 176 NGO interview 31.
- 177 For example, Charity so White, BRAP, and others.
- 178 Funder interview 1.
- 179 NGO interview 25.
- 180 This is explored further in Section 6.6 – Alliances and Collaboration.
- 181 See Ruth Grove-White and Mike Kaye, Taking Stock and Facing the Future, op cit.
- 182 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 183 NGO interview 21.
- 184 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 185 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 186 Although we recognise the central role played by volunteers within the sector, this section focuses on staff and leaders.
- 187 Refugee Action released two relevant reports in March 2023: Wellbeing challenges of staff and volunteers across the migration sector (<https://www.ragp.org.uk/blog/wellbeing-challenges-of-staff-and-volunteers-across-the-migration-sector>) and How might we improve the wellbeing of people working in the migration, refugee and asylum sector? www.ragp.org.uk/reports.
- 188 NGO interview 1.
- 189 NGO interview 20.
- 190 NGO participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 191 NGO interview 20.
- 192 NGO interview 11.
- 193 NGO interview 13.
- 194 Funder participant, MEX workshop 2.
- 195 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 196 NGO interview 8.
- 197 See Refugee Action, How might we improve the wellbeing of people working in the migration, refugee and asylum sector?, op.cit.
- 198 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 199 NGO interview 13.
- 200 Man charged with right-wing terror plot to kill immigration solicitor, BBC News, 23 October 2020. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-54661222>
- 201 See Defunding Politically Motivated Campaigns, by Conservative Way Forward, which highlighted the work of Refugee Action, Refugee Council and Migrant Help among others. Further examples are detailed by Adam Bucawski in How the government went to war on refugee charities, Open Democracy, 14 March 2023, www.opendemocracy.net/en/suella-braverman-refugee-asylum-charities-government-illegal-migration-bill/
- 202 Funder interview 2.
- 203 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 204 For example, the Helen Bamber Foundation, Trauma Treatment International and the Black Wellbeing Collective.
- 205 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 206 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.

- 207 See Julia Slay and Kate Weiler, A snapshot of leadership development in the UK migration and refugee sector Needs, experiences and recommendations, Migration Exchange, December 2022. <https://global-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/MEX-Leadership-Development-2022-Full-Report.pdf>.
- 208 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 209 Funder interview 2.
- 210 NGO interview 21.
- 211 See Refugee Action, How might we improve the wellbeing of people working in the migration, refugee and asylum sector?, Op.cit.
- 212 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 213 NGO interview 8.
- 214 For example, the Leading Beyond Borders programme run by Clore and Centre for Knowledge Equity, and the New Scots Leadership Programme run by the Scottish Refugee Council.
- 215 NGO interview 7.
- 216 NGO participant, MEX workshop 3.
- 217 NGO interview 24.
- 218 NGO interview 6.
- 219 NGO interview 22.
- 220 NGO interview 26.
- 221 For example, These Walls Must Fall, Freedom from Torture, More in Common, Hope not Hate, and the Asylum Matters 'Communities not Camps' campaign.
- 222 For example, the Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy project (RAMP) provides support on parliamentary affairs, IMIX provides support on media and communications, and NEON provides media training to spokespeople from the sector and beyond.
- 223 NGO interview 15.
- 224 For example, Asylum Matters, City of Sanctuary, Detention Forum, NACCOM, New Scots Network (coordinated by Scottish Refugee Council).
- 225 NGO interview 21.
- 226 NGO participants, MEX workshop 3.
- 227 NGO interview 8.
- 228 NGO interview 25.
- 229 NGO interview 28.
- 230 NGO interview 11.
- 231 NGO interview 30.
- 232 Funder interview 8.
- 233 British Future, Where is public opinion on refugee protection. op.cit.
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- 250 NGO interview 19.
- 251 NGO interview 13
- 252 NGO interview 25.
- 253 I News, Labour would quickly scrap small boats measures to deport all Channel asylum seekers, 11 May 2023 <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/labour-scrap-small-boats-measures-deport-all-channel-asylum-seekers-2333185>

- 254 NGO interview 6.
- 255 NGO interview 25.
- 256 NGO interview 6.
- 257 NGO interview 7.
- 258 NGO interview 7.
- 259 See Section 6.6 – Alliances and Collaboration.
- 260 Funder interview 8.
- 261 Funder interview 1.
- 262 NGO interview 19.
- 263 Funder interview 8.
- 264 NGO workshop 2.
- 265 NGO interview 14.
- 266 NGO interview 14.
- 267 Funder interview 8
- 268 NGO interview 3.
- 269 NGO interview 27.
- 270 Funder interview 5.
- 271 NGO interview 8.
- 272 NGO interview 16.
- 273 NGO interview 25.
- 274 NGO interview 26.
- 275 It is difficult to estimate how many voluntary and community organisations exist that are not charities as there is no easy way to identify them.
- 276 While the response rate from small organisations was still low (53 returned the survey), this cohort did make up a reasonable proportion (30%) of the completed surveys.

This research was commissioned by [Migration Exchange](#) in September 2022 and written by Ruth Grove-White and Mike Kaye.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, and should not be interpreted as the positions of any of the funding organisations or Migration Exchange as a whole.

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Email:

mex@global-dialogue.org



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