



# COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY 2023

HOW THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS IS AFFECTING  
GRASSROOTS CHARITIES NATIONWIDE



# FIVE COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEYS CONDUCTED SINCE THE START OF THE COVID OUTBREAK

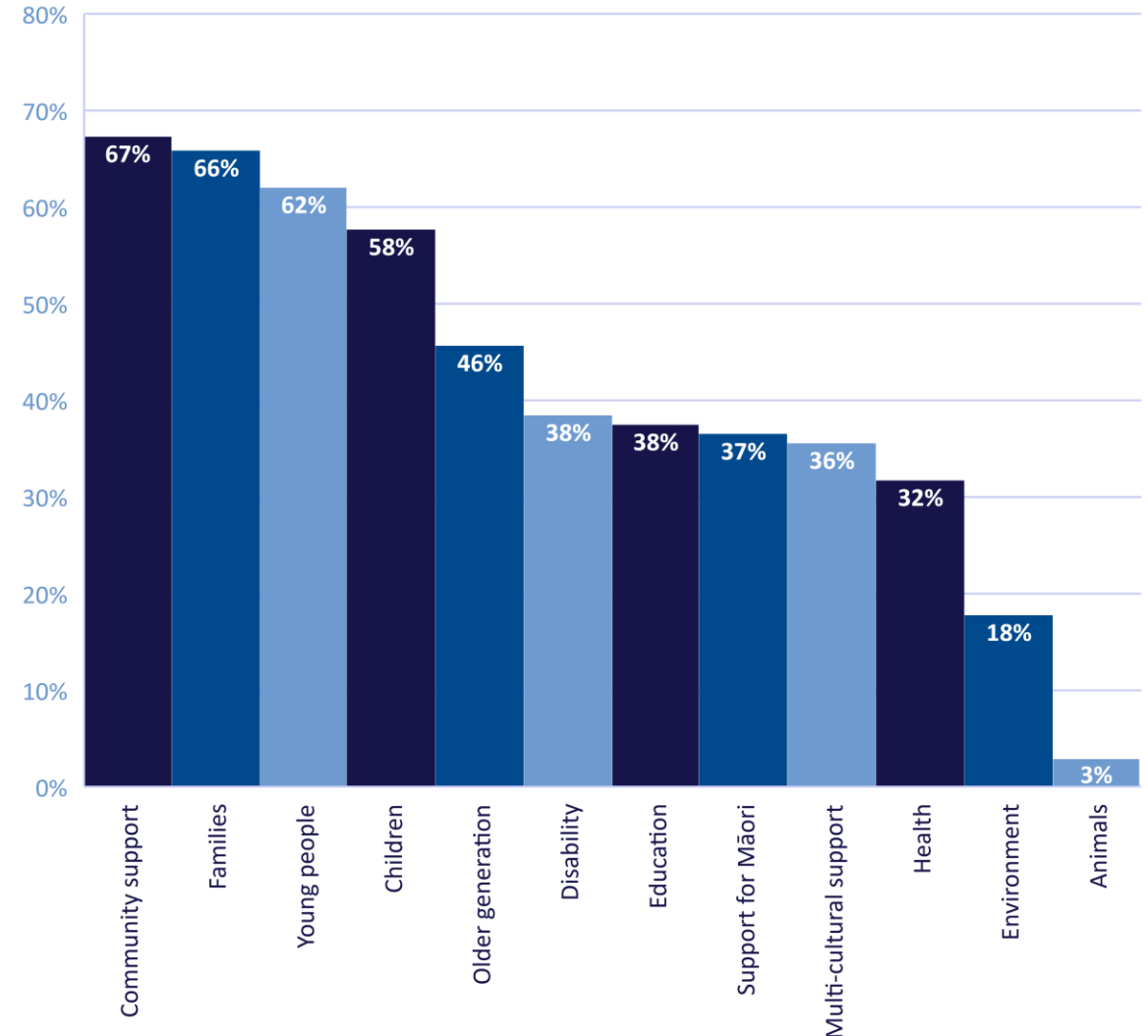
The Catalytic Foundation's Community Needs Surveys identify the most urgent needs of grassroots organisations and the communities they serve.



# METHODOLOGY

- The latest survey was open to grassroots community organisations between 19 June and 4 October 2023.
- Responses were received from 208 respondents representing 199 organisations.
- 28 of these organisations operate nationwide, and the remaining 171 are local or branch charities from across New Zealand.
- A wide range of types of charities and regions were represented.

Community causes supported by charities





# IMPACT OF THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The cost-of-living crisis has flow on effects, with more families in need seeking help from charities.

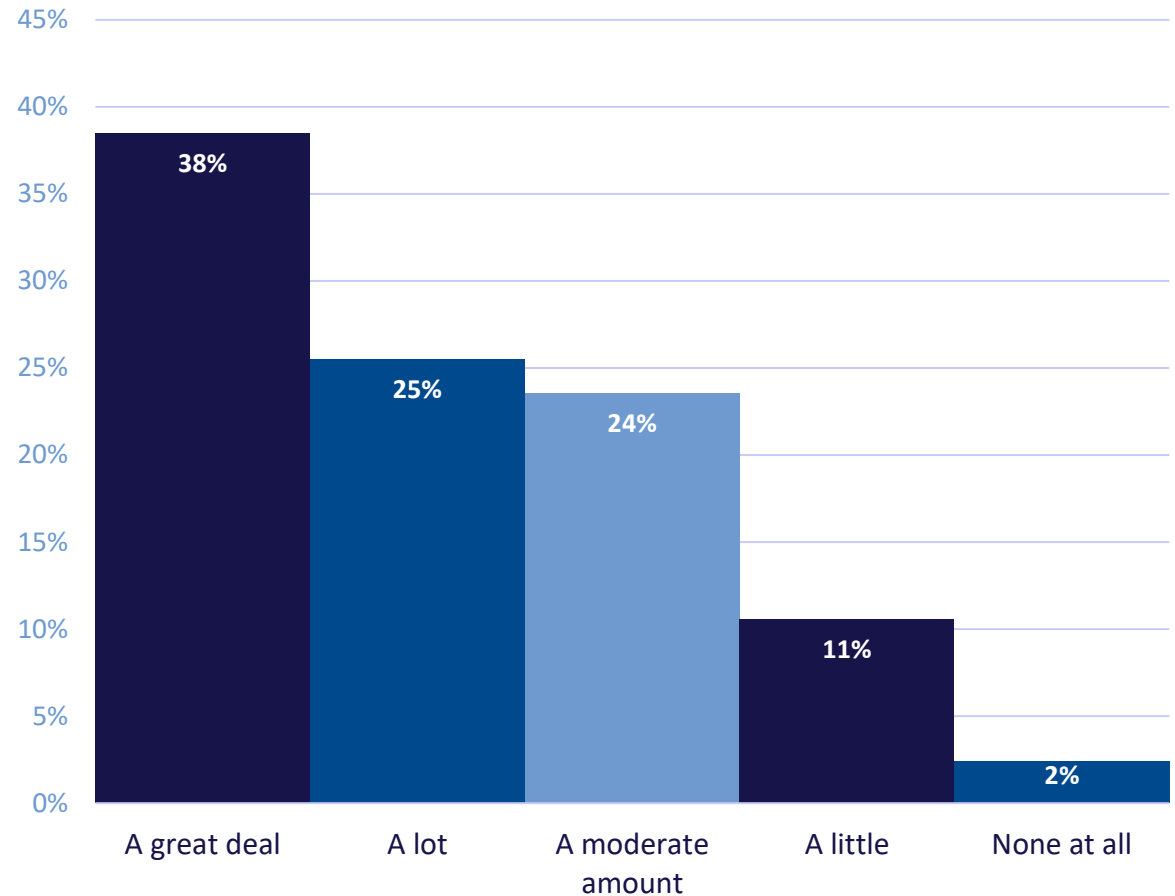
- **96%** said their communities were impacted by cost-of-living increases in the last year.
- **98%** have seen an increase in demand for services over the last year.

“We have noted over the past 8-12 months that families need greater support with food items. As such, we now have two family pantries and run a weekly dinner programme to help families out.

– Christchurch medical support charity

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Increase in demand for services



# INCREASE IN DEMAND AT ITS HIGHEST IN YEARS

**Demand for services has increased year on year.**

- The percentage of respondents seeing an increase in demand for services jumped 9 percentage points in 2022, and 16 percentage points in 2023.
- This year, only 5 out of 208 respondents did not see an increase in demand.

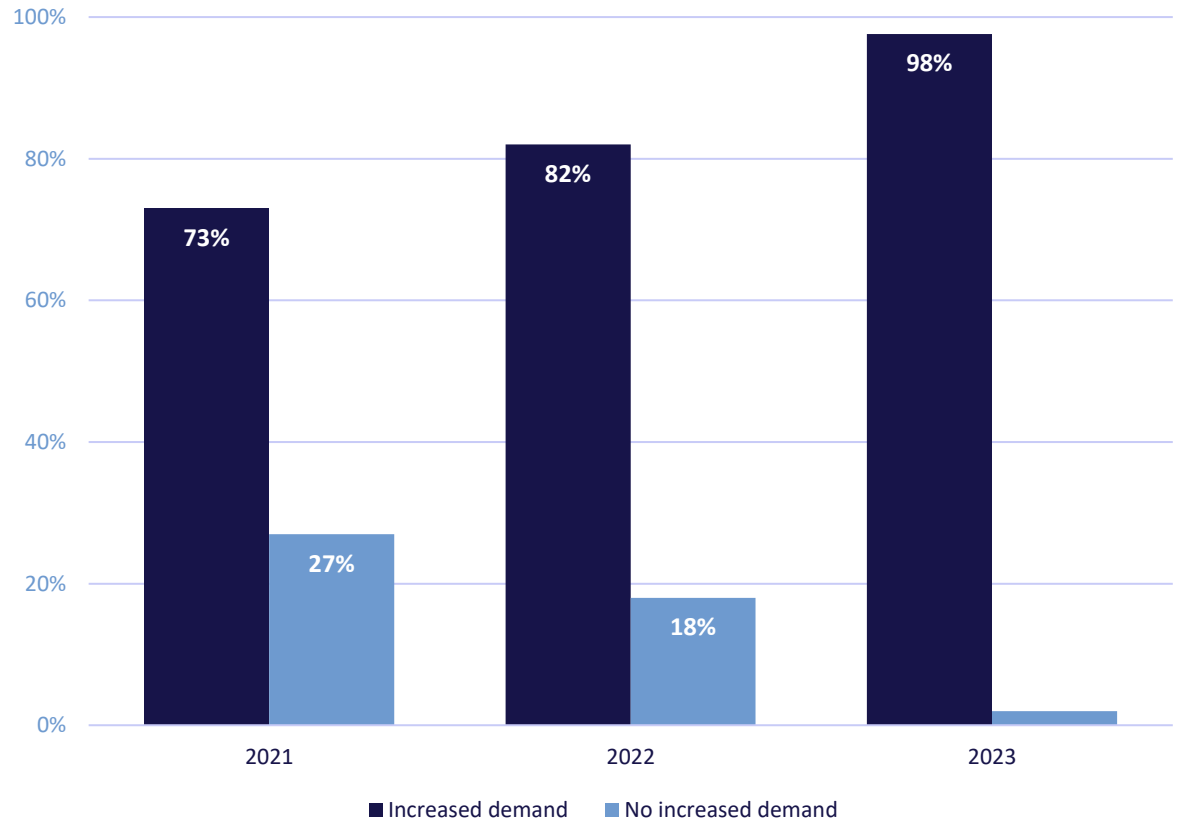


*“Demand growth this year has exceeded all expectations. Our volunteers remain under pressure, with rising costs making our mahi more difficult.”*

*- Nationwide charity supporting parents*



**Respondents that have experienced an increase in demand for services**



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*“We've seen a huge spike in requests for food assistance, including from schools that want to run food parcel programmes. Our Hub facility costs, and volunteer manager are funded for this financial year, but our ability to source and distribute greater volumes of free fresh food needs support.”*

*– Auckland food rescue charity ”*



Photo thanks to Whanganui Birthright

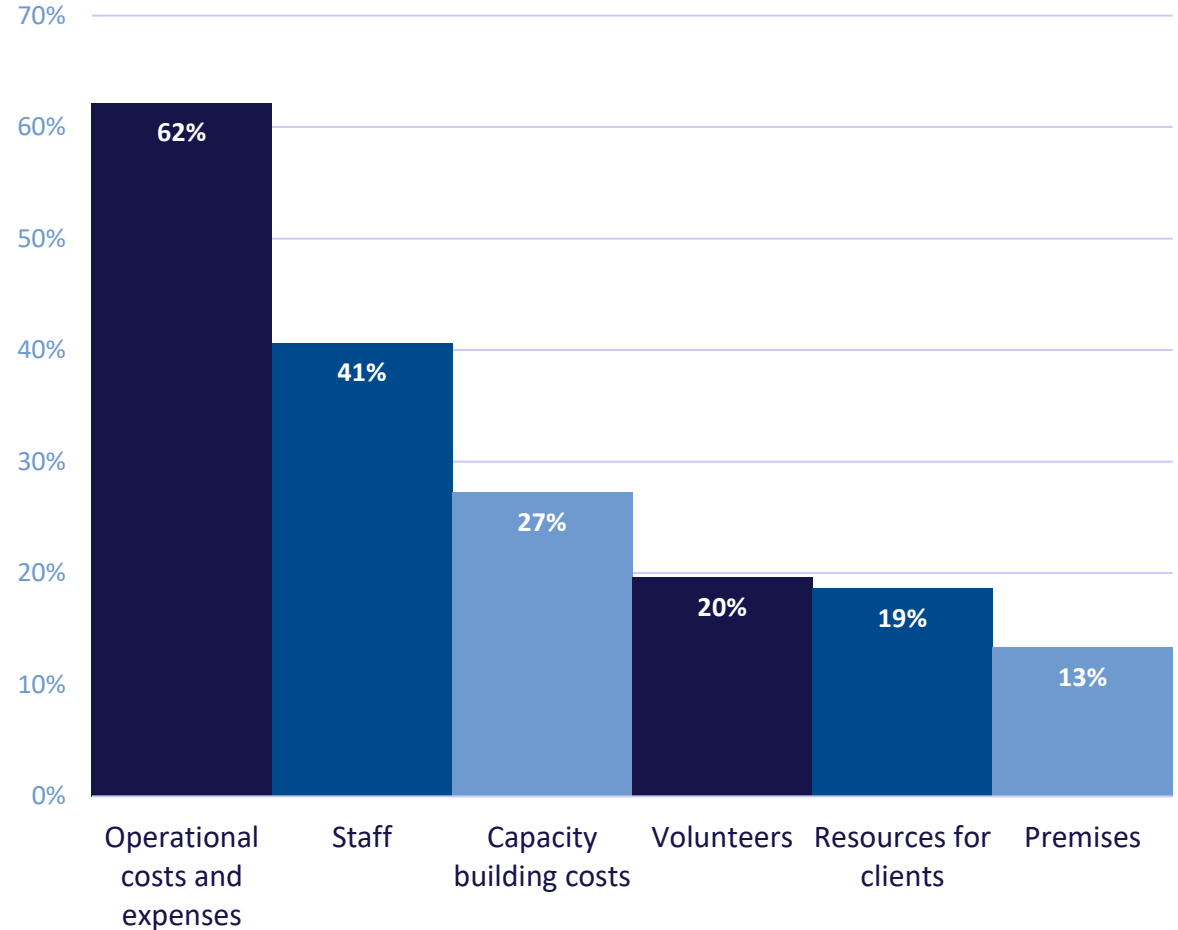
# BIG GAPS IN FUNDING FOR ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

With rising costs, organisations are struggling to maintain services and meet increased demand.

- **91%** have organisational needs they are unable to resource.
- **62%** have operational costs they are unable to resource.
- **41%** have staffing costs they are unable to resource.

“We have limited capacity to expand even as our client referrals and caseloads are increasing.”  
– Otago charity serving older people

## Organisational needs that cannot be resourced





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*“We are desperately in need of more storage facilities. We currently use up an entire triple garage of a volunteer currently overseas, as well as two 20-foot storage containers, two storage units... plus several volunteers’ spare bedrooms! We also need more [food] to supplement our weekly food boxes out to families in financial crisis.*

*– Queenstown food charity supporting people in crisis*

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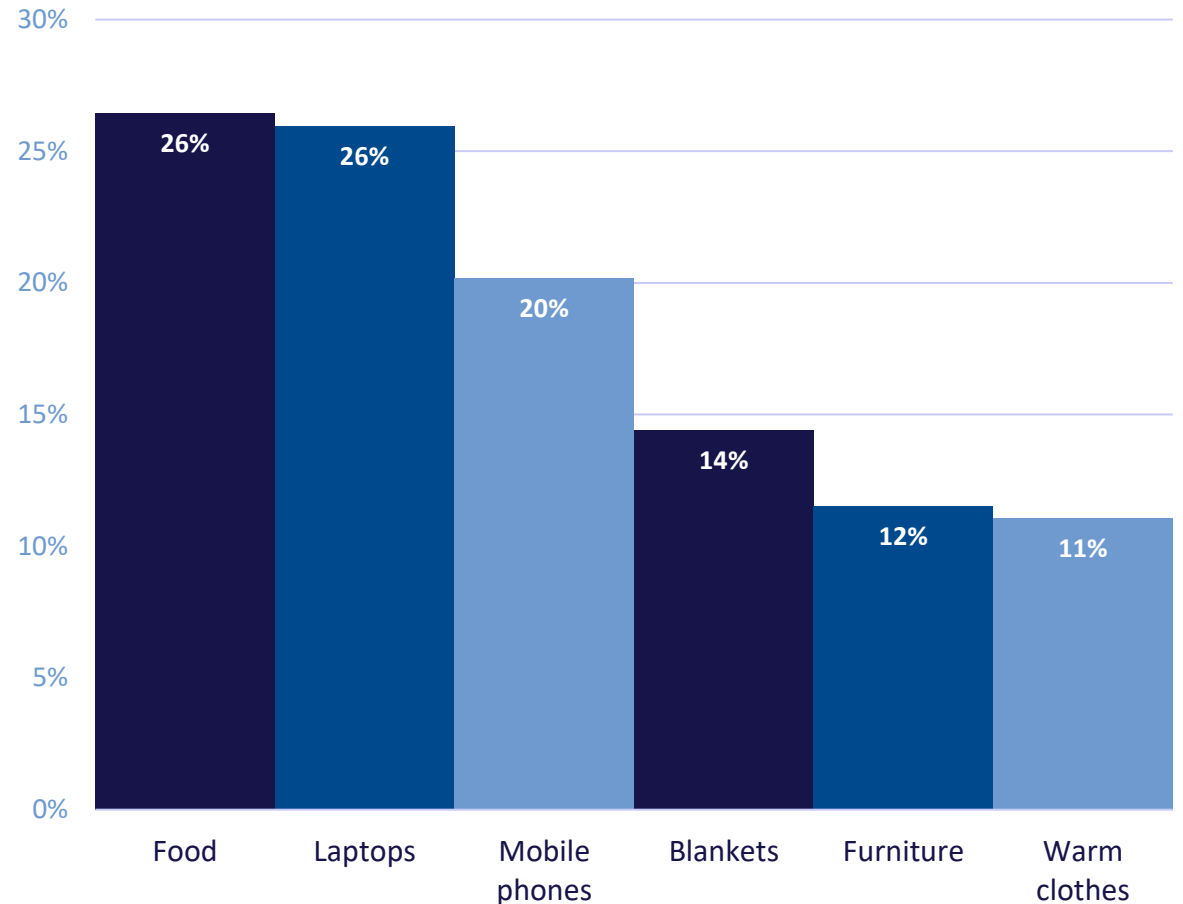


# TYPES OF RESOURCES NEEDED BY CHARITIES

Charities have varied needs depending on the communities they serve, but common threads come through.

- Food, laptops, mobile phones, blankets, furniture and warm clothing were commonly stated needs.
- Some charities working with tamariki and rangatahi specified a need for toys, musical instruments and outdoor equipment.
- Building improvements such as accessibility and heating were required by some.
- Other needs included storage, vouchers for clients, and basic software such as Microsoft 365.

Resources needed by charities



“*Obsolete computers, laptops and phones are now the norm. The inefficiency this creates is crippling, especially given we are working with highly tech savvy young people. Even the computers we have available for young people to access are now useless with 50% failing and now sitting in a cupboard and not worth repairing.*”  
– Christchurch charity supporting youth

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Organisations were asked to identify three main areas of need they were seeing in their communities.





# 3

top areas of  
need

1

## Food and financial security

Rising costs mean many have trouble accessing food and other essential basics such as adequate power and transport.

2

## Warm and affordable housing

Access to housing was the second most commonly stated need, with stability, safety and accessibility being key concerns.

3

## Mental health support

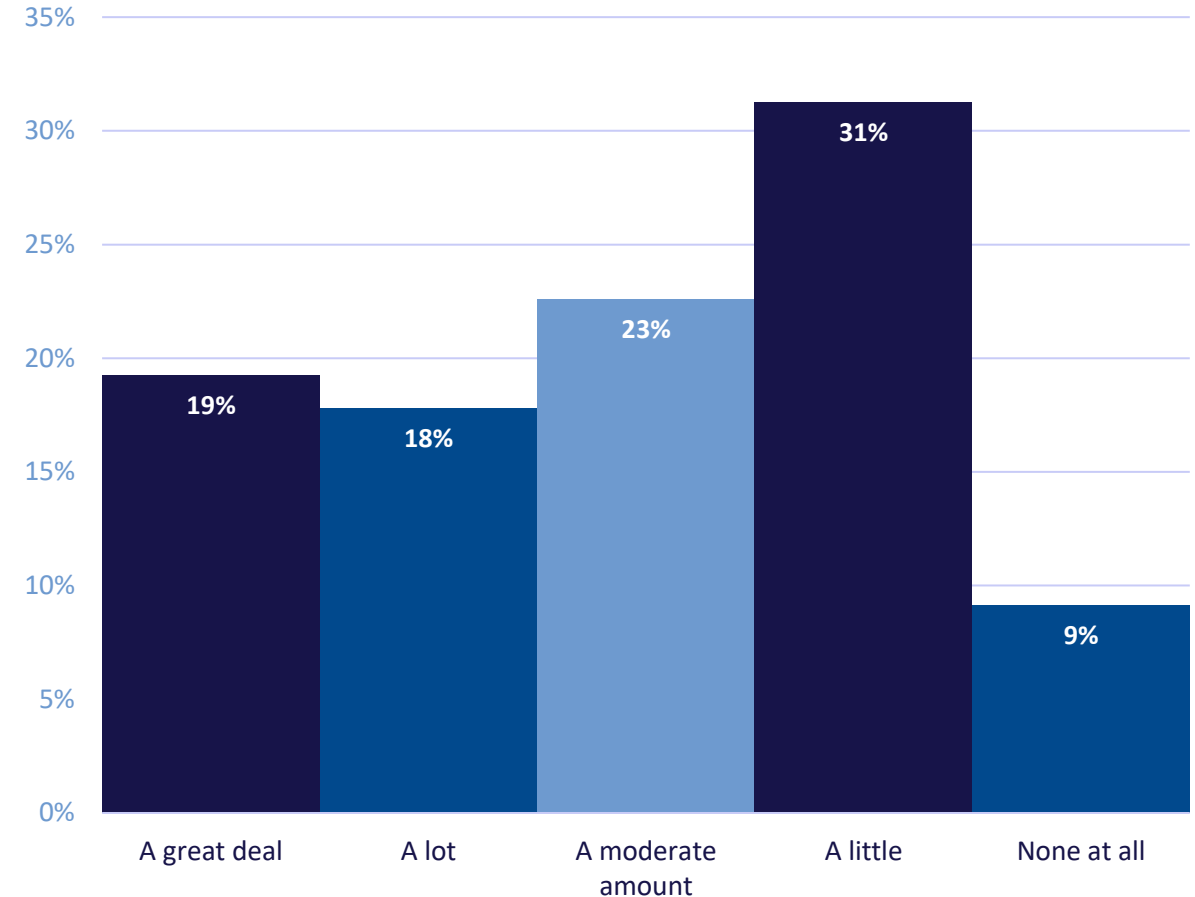
The need for more funding for well-being, counselling, mentoring and support programmes was frequently stated, especially for young people.



# VOLUNTEERS ARE SOUGHT BY CHARITIES

- 91% said that more volunteers would help their organisation.
- 19% said that it would help “a great deal”.
- Some stated that they needed specific skillsets, dispositions or lived experiences.
- Some stated that they did not have capacity to screen, train or manage volunteers.
- Others stated that there were confidentiality issues or police vetting requirements to navigate.

Degree to which volunteering assistance would help the organisation



# TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING NEEDS

- Marketing and communications and manual labour were cited as the most common needs.
- This was followed by charity support services, IT support, and mentoring and teaching, especially for charities working with kids and youth.
- Other skills sought included administration, language skills, professional skills and practical skills such as driving, cleaning and organising.



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*“Once every six months we like to deep clean our facility. It is always difficult to find volunteers who are physically able to complete this work. A work off volunteer crew would be amazing during these times.”*

*– Manawatū-Horowhenua community charity*

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# IN SUMMARY

- Food and financial security, warm and affordable housing and mental health support are the top three needs in our communities today.
- With the current cost-of-living crisis, charities are under strain.
- 91% of charities have organisational needs they are unable to resource.
- 91% of charities would welcome volunteer assistance.
- Volunteers are highly valued, but managing volunteers requires staff time and resources.



Photo thanks to Fair Food



# HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Think about which professional or practical skills you can offer a local charity.
- Consider making a lasting impact by becoming a volunteer mentor or support person.
- Choose a group volunteering session as a team-building event.
- Support charities in your local area through [Pay It Forward](#) giving to the Catalytic Community Fund.

**Catalytic Foundation can provide the community connection you need to make a difference. Get in touch to chat about your next step.**



# INTRODUCING CATALYTIC CAMPAIGNS

**Practical and simple ways to meet urgent needs in your community today.**

- **Backpacks 4 Education** – Supporting children living in hardship with backpacks, school supplies and devices.
- **Sustainable Living** – Addressing needs for housing, community gardens and food security through team volunteering.
- **Youth Mental Health** – Fundraising for charities providing counselling and suicide prevention services.
- **[Christmas Shoebox Project](#)** – Supporting families living in hardship with Christmas gifts and essential items.





# THANK YOU!

PLEASE CONTACT US  
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP  
YOUR COMMUNITY



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