



Cobseo
The Confederation
of Service Charities

Cobseo Members' Survey

June 2023

Chester Howarth

Stuart Cole



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directory of social change

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Characteristics of the respondents

In the June 2023 survey of Cobseo Members, there were 60 valid responses. The vast majority (81.7%) of the respondents held a full Cobseo membership – but a significant minority (18.3%) had an associate Cobseo membership. In terms of size, close to half (46.7%) of the respondents identified themselves as small organisations (gross annual income less than £750k per year). Meanwhile, almost two-fifths (38.3%) stated they were medium organisations (gross annual income between £750k to £10m per year) and 15% said they were large (gross annual income greater than £10m per year).

Supporting beneficiaries

The type of support with the most widespread reports of increased demand was hardship and financial support, for which more than three-quarters (77.5%) of the respondents reported increased demand. This was similar to, but still slightly higher than, in November 2022 (74.3%) and was notably higher than last year (May 2022, 51.4%). See figure A.12 in the appendix.

The second and third most prevalent reports of increased demand were for housing (64.5%) and loneliness (58.3%). For changes in demand in other areas, see figure A.3 in the appendix.

DSC also asked survey respondents if they had seen any changes in beneficiary needs or support requirements over the last six months (since December 2022). Several respondents reported no changes, but many respondents did describe the changes they had seen. These individual responses have been reproduced in box A.1 in the appendix.

Ability to cope with demands on service delivery

Survey respondents most commonly (56.7%) said that their ability to cope with service delivery demands was no different from the previous six-month period (May–November 2022). Nevertheless, one-quarter (25%) of the respondents were coping with difficulty, and a small minority (5%) were coping with very significant difficulty.

In contrast, a small proportion (10%) of respondents reported coping easily with demands on service delivery, and just one respondent (1.7%) was coping very easily (see figure A.4 in the appendix).

Survey respondents were given space to explain or provide further details about how they were coping with service delivery. These responses have been reproduced in box A.2 in the appendix.

Cash flow: Income

Approximately two-fifths (40.8%) of the respondents reported a decrease in their organisation's monthly income over the past six months. This was lower than in November 2022 (52.2%) and all other previous waves (except May 2022, 37.5%).

In contrast, almost one-third (30.6%) of the respondents reported increased income over the past six months. This was similar but slightly higher than in November 2022 (26.1%).

Analysis showed that the (median) average decrease in income among respondents was 20% (the same as in November 2022). The (median) average increase in income was 15%, which was slightly higher than in November 2022 (12.5%).

Cash flow: Expenditure

More than two-thirds (70.2%) of the respondents reported that their organisation's monthly expenditure had increased over the past six months. While lower than in November 2022 (81.2%), this figure remains comparatively high relative to pre-2022 survey waves.

Reports of a decrease in monthly expenditure were more common in this survey (17%) than in DSC's previous survey (4.2%). Nevertheless, this figure remains comparatively low in relation to almost all of DSC's previous surveys of Cobseo Members.

The average increase in expenditure was 20% (the same as in November 2022). The (median) average decrease reported was also 20% (the same as in May 2022). For further information and comparison in relation to cash flow, which covers all of DSC's surveys, please see figures A.14 through A.17.

Conclusions

- DSC received 60 valid responses to this survey, mostly from organisations with a full Cobseo membership.
- Over the past six months, more than three-quarters of the respondents reported increased demand for hardship or financial support.
- More than half of the respondents said that their organisation's ability to cope with demands on service delivery had not changed compared to the previous six-month period.
- Around two-fifths of the respondents reported that their organisation saw decreased income over the past six months, with an average decrease of 20%, but a substantial minority saw increased income.
- A clear majority estimated that their organisation saw increased expenditure over the past six months, with an average increase of 20%.

Interactive data on each wave of the Cobseo Members Survey can be found at www.dsc.org.uk/cobseo-impact-database.

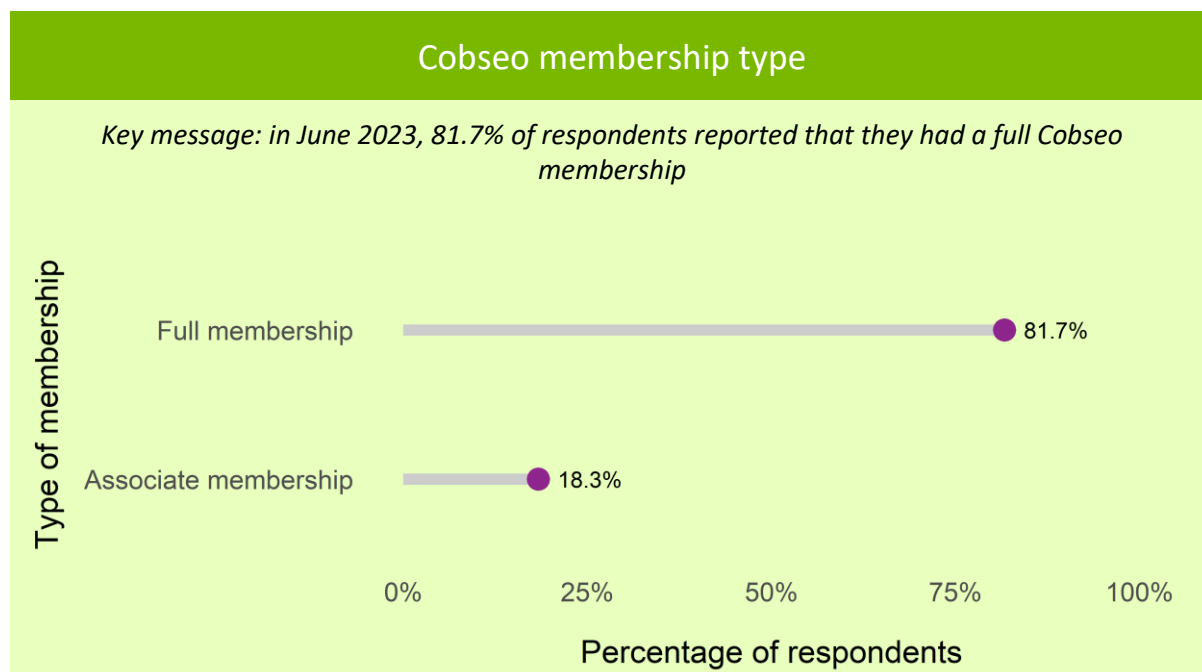
Acknowledgements

DSC wishes to thank all Cobseo Members who took the time to complete the June 2023 survey. DSC also wishes to thank the Cobseo Executive Team for their support and guidance during the planning and review stages of the June 2023 survey and this subsequent report.

APPENDIX

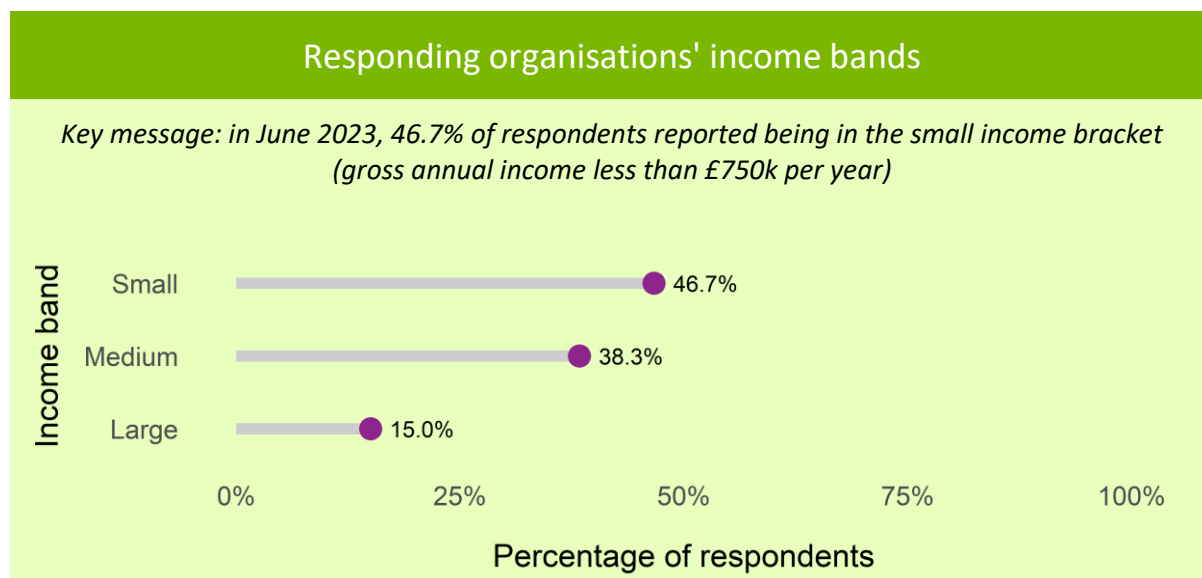
Characteristics of the respondents

Figure A.1



Note: There were 60 respondents to this question in June 2023.

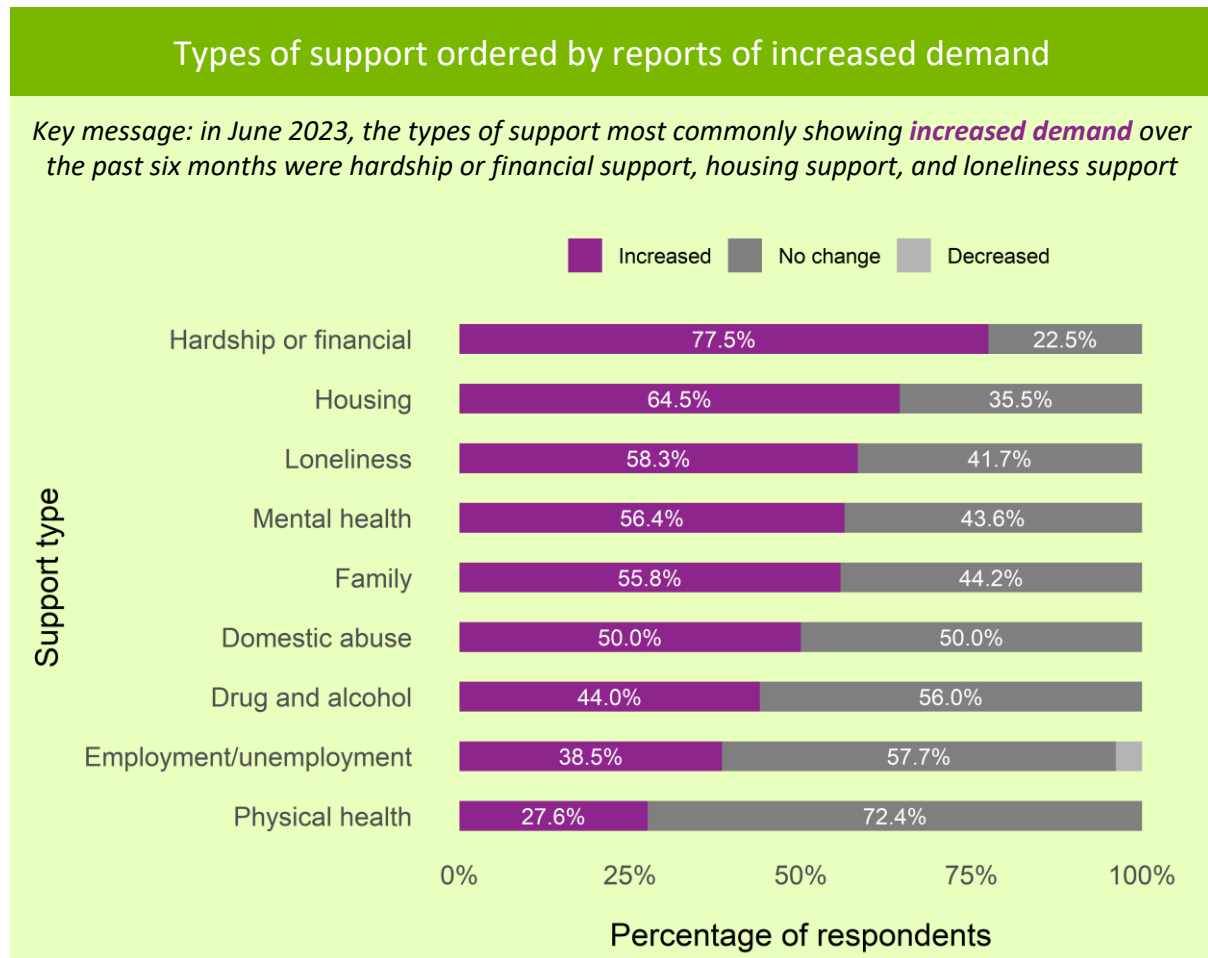
Figure A.2



Note: There were 60 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Supporting beneficiaries

Figure A.3



Note: There were a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 43 respondents to the multiple questions in this chart in June 2023 (please see the following section for more detail). Percentage values below ten are not shown.

Box A.1

Respondents' comments on changing drivers behind beneficiaries' support needs

"Yes, clients do not have resources to fund solicitors' fees."

"Not really, it [cost-of-living crisis] is sometimes mentioned but isn't the main factor."

"No needs directly related to the cost-of-living crisis, but it has to be acknowledged that there are effects at all levels of society."

"Increasing number of requests for support with household expenses, rent, debts."

"Yes. Fuel costs and food."

"Increase in applications for hardship grants to ensure beneficiaries of our supported housing services have a minimum net weekly amount of money to spend once food, rent and utilities have been paid."

"Increasing concern over costs, which causes greater anxiety in the veterans that we serve."

"More support in helping people with their finances and understanding of statutory rights."

"Yes: increased anxiety – generally, those we support are fortunate as we support them long term so we can help them with budgeting, welfare, etc. However, we have more beneficiaries coming to us with hidden homelessness/sofa surfing/separation – [there has been] a huge increase in this."

"Increasing numbers are finding it difficult to cover costs. [There is a] Sense that savings held people over but now a sense that these are near exhausted."

"We have disbursed 80 cost-of-living grants last winter against a couple of previous winter."

"Yes, marked increase that will take time to reduce."

"Yes. For veterans and their families living with a long-term health condition, particularly disability, there is extreme pressure which is increasing their isolation."

"Significant support required in financial planning, healthy eating (based on affordable foods) and isolation due to increased travel costs."

"Everything is more expensive. The veteran residents on benefits don't have as much to go around. However, their housing and food needs (i.e. essentials) can be met satisfactorily while they are living in [our] houses."

"More beneficiaries are voicing their concerns about meeting the costs of daily living and the longer-term impact they face if they have financial worries."

"Increase in families seeking support – [they are] just not able to make ends meet. Sharp rise in grants awarded, including regular charitable payments paid monthly to families."

"Not really – except that commanding officers have, unusually, asked for support, and the charity has supported initiatives that have spent around £25,000 on facilities (catering outlets, family centres) to make life more amenable."

"More families are asking charities for food vouchers and support with household bills rather than brown and white goods."

"Our numbers have increased due to both pressures on families – i.e. adding to stress and clients can no longer afford private mental health therapy. We are free."

"We support the poorest and most marginalised overseas. The cost of living is having, in many cases, a greater impact on those in developing nations than the UK."

"Since COVID-19 and the [associated] financial benefits provided by the government, we saw a drop in welfare cases. This has now started to pick up again."

"More beneficiaries citing extreme short-term hardships, requiring food vouchers, etc."

"Very much, support with needs that wouldn't have been required before the cost-of-living crisis. Costs have risen so much that families cannot afford to pay for food and clothes, etc."

"We have had an increase in the number of beneficiaries joining us at lunchtime to reduce their living costs or because they do not have enough money left at the end of the month to purchase food."

"The volume of new applications for cost-of-living support has reduced as households' utility bills are typically lower now than they were in colder periods. Across our wider services, we are experiencing an increasing demand for other essentials of everyday life, particularly food and clothing."

"Serving married soldiers and lance corporals have been supported with a winter fuel grant."

"Veterans are saying that they are now feeling the squeeze. Service personnel at lower ranks are definitely struggling."

"Food vouchers, utility [bills] support, rental mortgage support."

"Yes, beneficiaries are not able to meet the costs of travelling to us for activities and service deliveries."

"I do not think the specific costs of the cost-of-living crisis filter through the bids for grants that we get from potential grantees, except in general terms, e.g. running costs of the charities and charitable organisation we support, reports of veterans needing more help from food banks and the like."

"Roughly the same number of beneficiaries are requesting increasingly large amounts of financial support in areas such as priority debt, rent and home-moving costs."

"Financial issues, rent, food, fuel poverty supported by our funding."

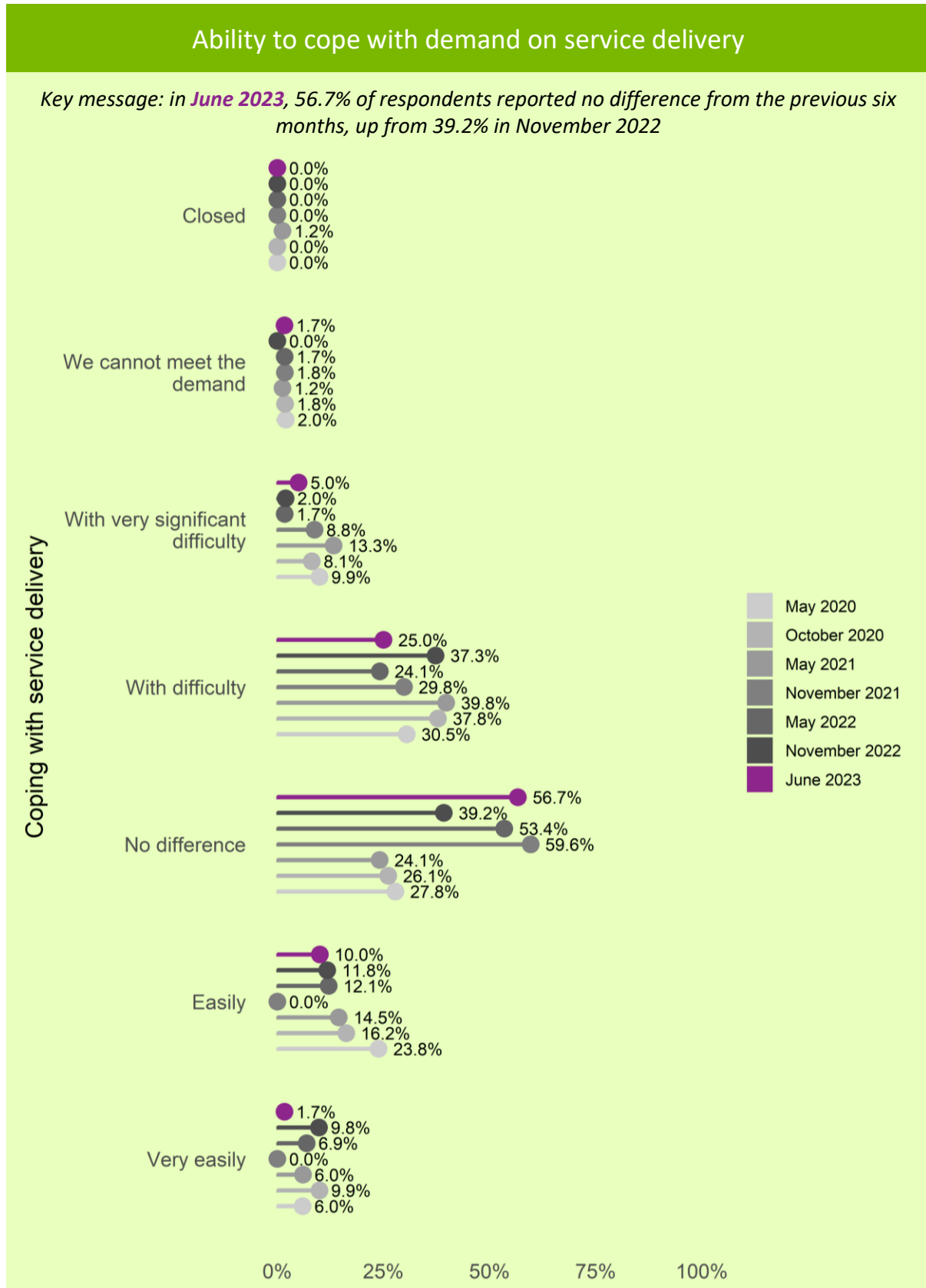
"Alcohol misuse – and concern regarding jobs."

"Interest rates rising on loans and debts. Less disposable income."

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

Ability to cope with demands on service delivery

Figure A.4



Note: There were 60 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Box A.2

Respondents' comments on how they are coping with service delivery

"The charity has grown organically, and staff are flexible to allow for increased hours to accommodate increasing workload, and whilst we recruit additional members of staff. Strong management has allowed for a significantly increased workload."

"Casework is increasingly complex, and statutory service provision has worsened in terms of communications, waiting times and service delivery."

"The key operational challenges we face remain inflation and domestic and support staff recruitment and retention. Strategically, we currently find it difficult to invest and make provision to improve sustainability and implement measures to reduce our carbon footprint."

"Increasing demand from 'chaotic' beneficiaries whose needs are complex and have not been 'case managed' meaning that they have gone down some pathways and they have not been completed and then have bounced around all over the place with increasingly fewer options available to them."

"Volume of requests has increased."

"We've coped with demand, which has increased and shows no sign of reducing."

"Increased demand, decreased funding."

"The decrease in available funding and the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant effect on our ability to deliver services."

"Longer waiting times to process applications for support from families, despite larger team."

"We are unpaid volunteers, so use other charity, professional, full-time staff to support us for any complex cases."

"Many applications, only one clerk, not enough time in the week to process the number we are receiving."

"Retaining staff continues to be a problem as we cannot compete with comparative roles in other sectors."

"We are almost at pre-pandemic levels."

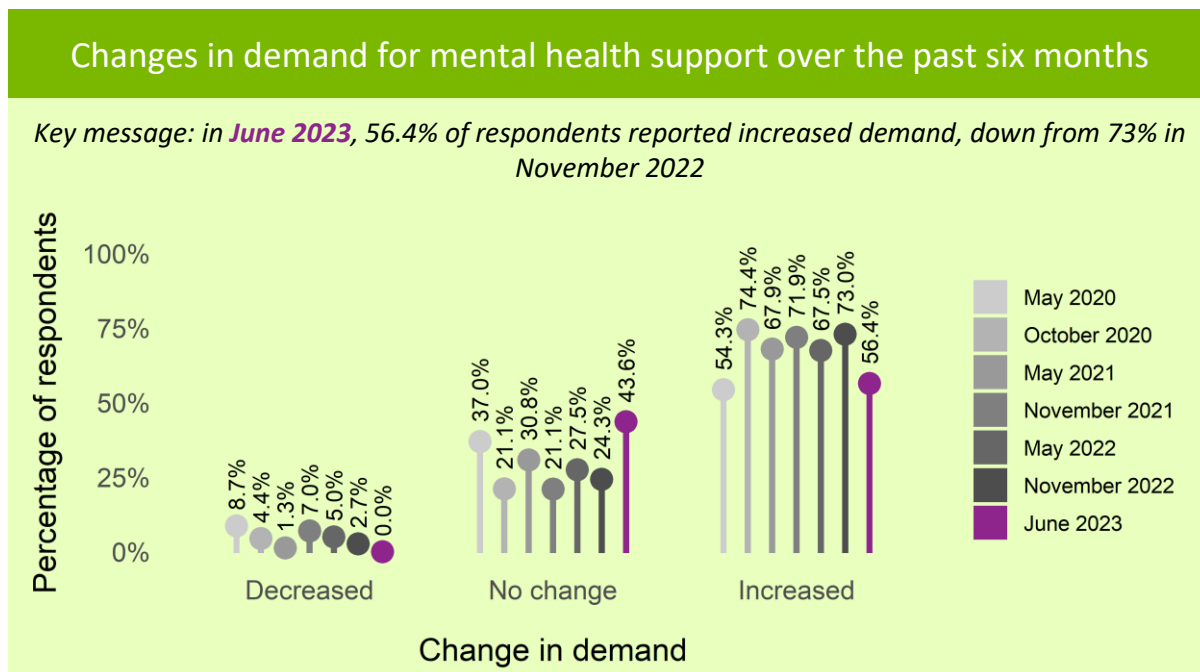
"Demand for [our] holistic case management and specialist services has increased in the last six months; some of this is due to reaching new audiences through the use of [a new] platform. We expect that demand will continue to increase as we near autumn winter 2023."

"A large percentage of the charity's time is now spent looking for funding rather than concentrating on service delivery."

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

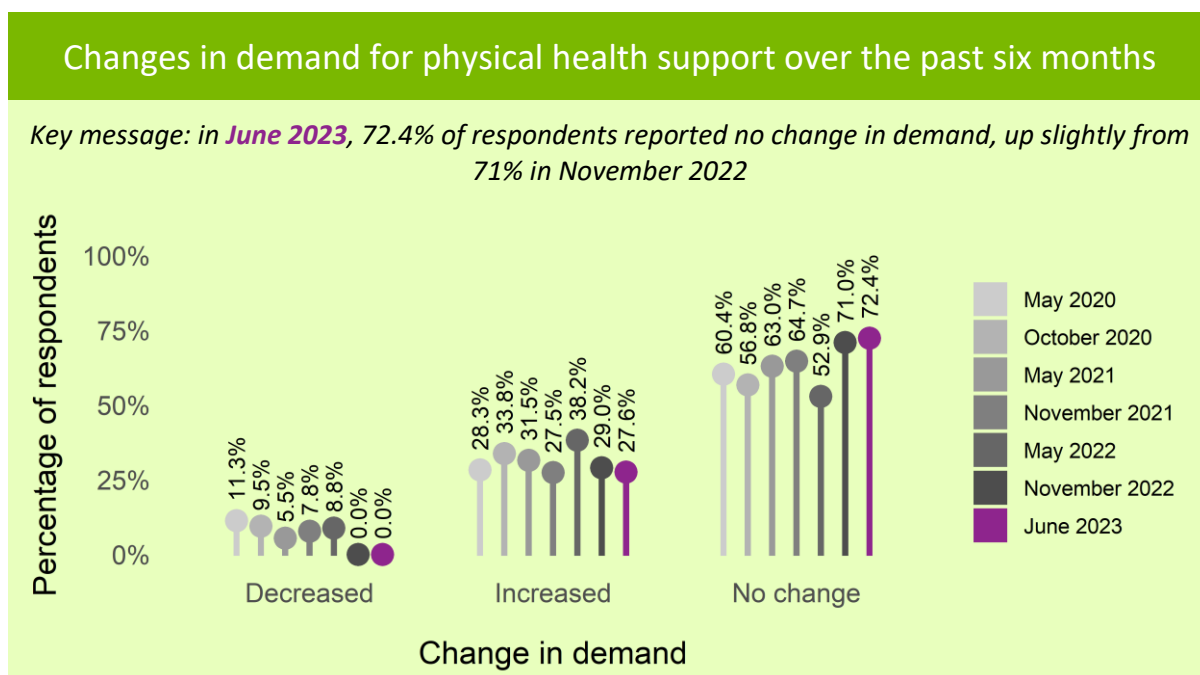
Mental and physical health support

Figure A.5



Note: There were 39 respondents to this question in June 2023.

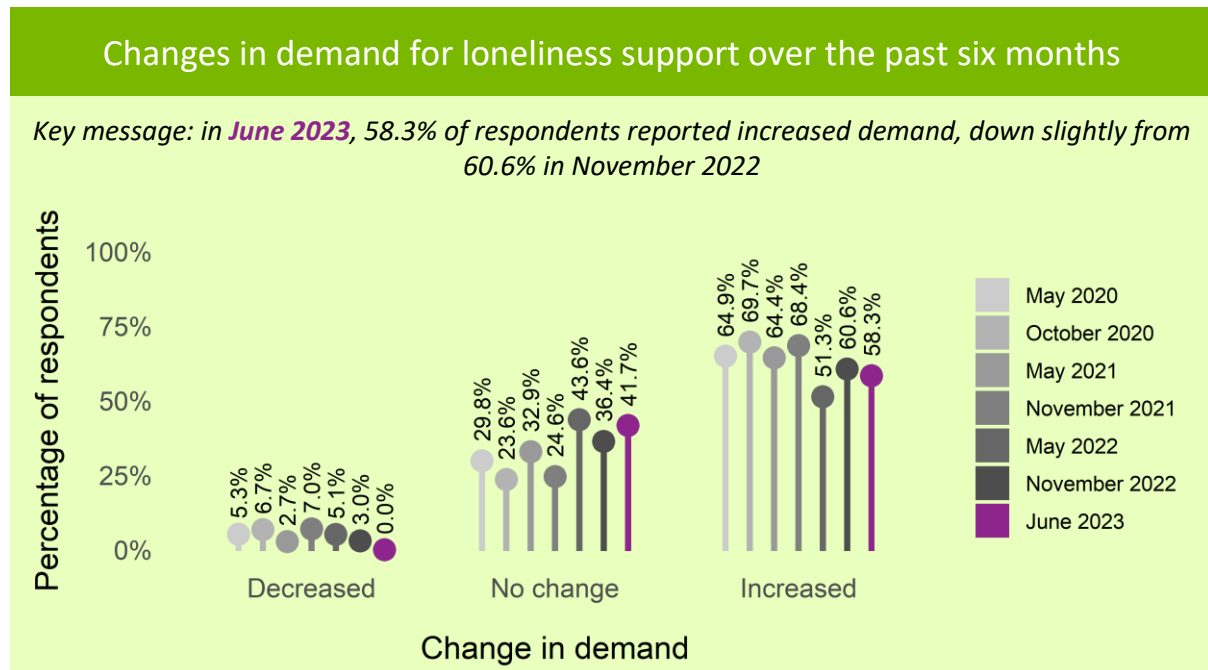
Figure A.6



Note: There were 29 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Loneliness support

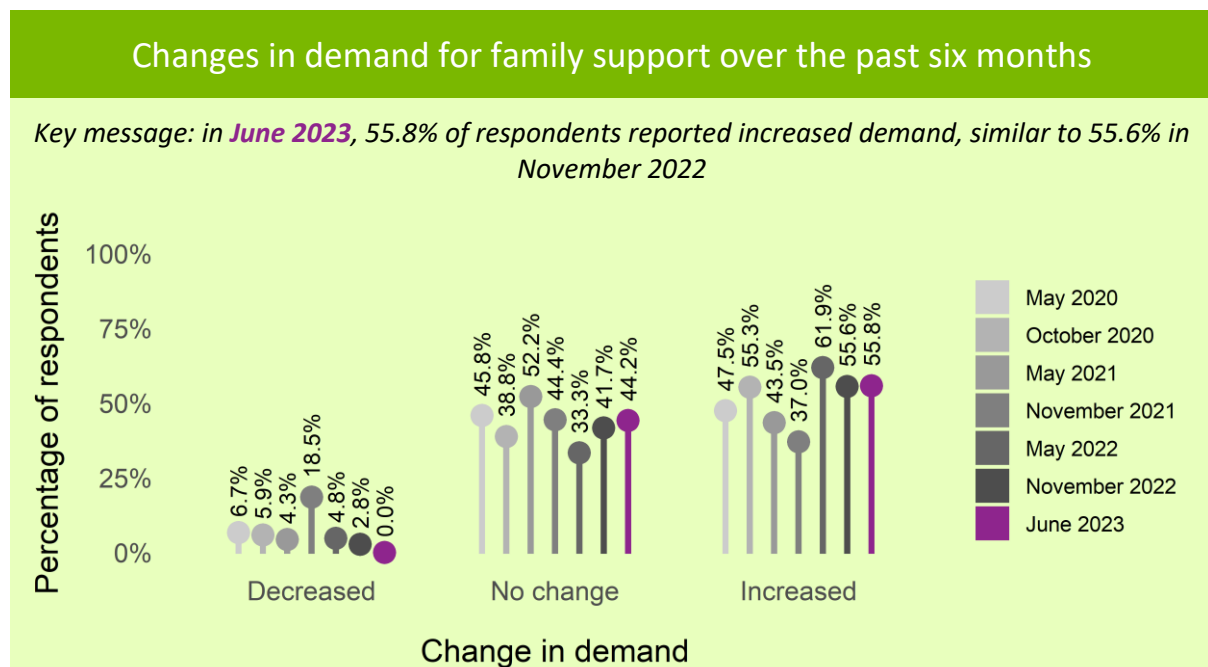
Figure A.7



Note: There were 36 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Family support

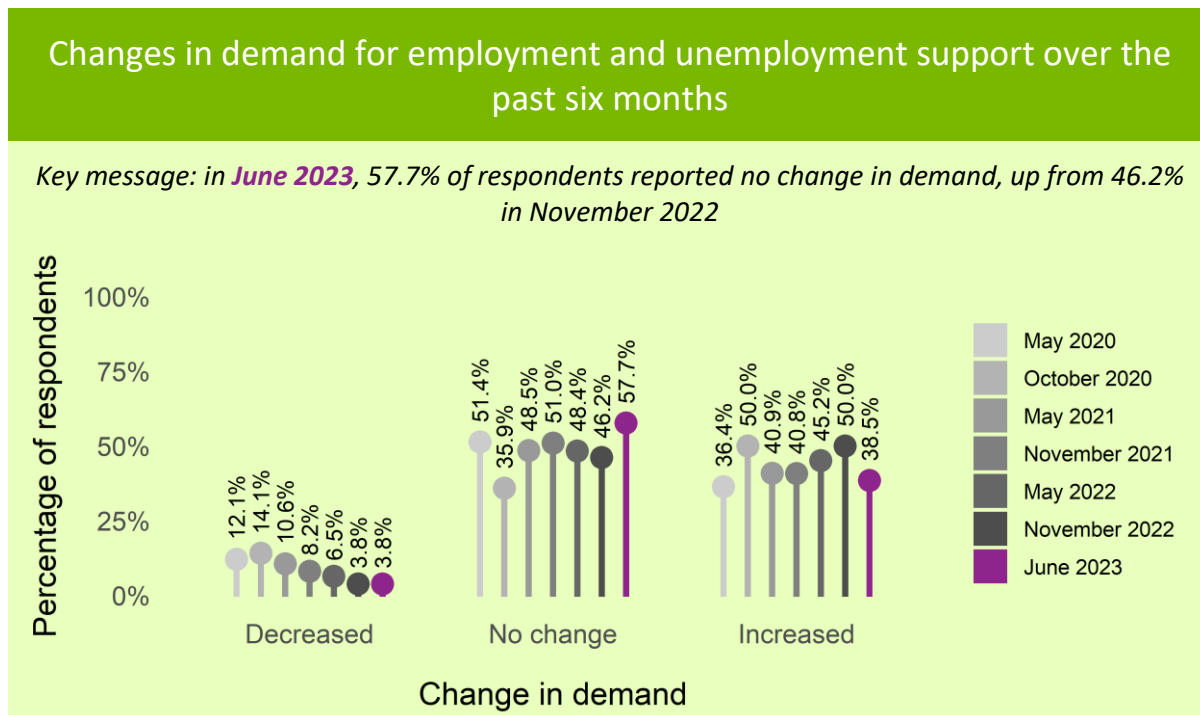
Figure A.8



Note: There were 43 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Employment and unemployment support

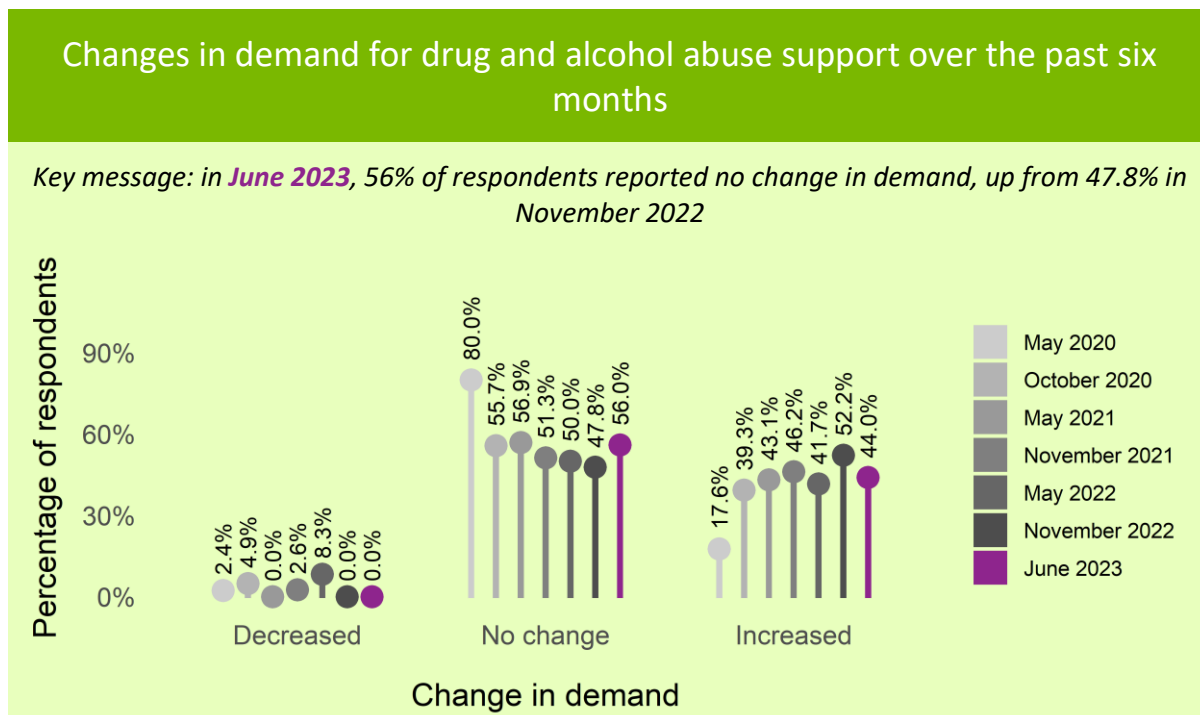
Figure A.9



Note: There were 26 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Drug and alcohol abuse support

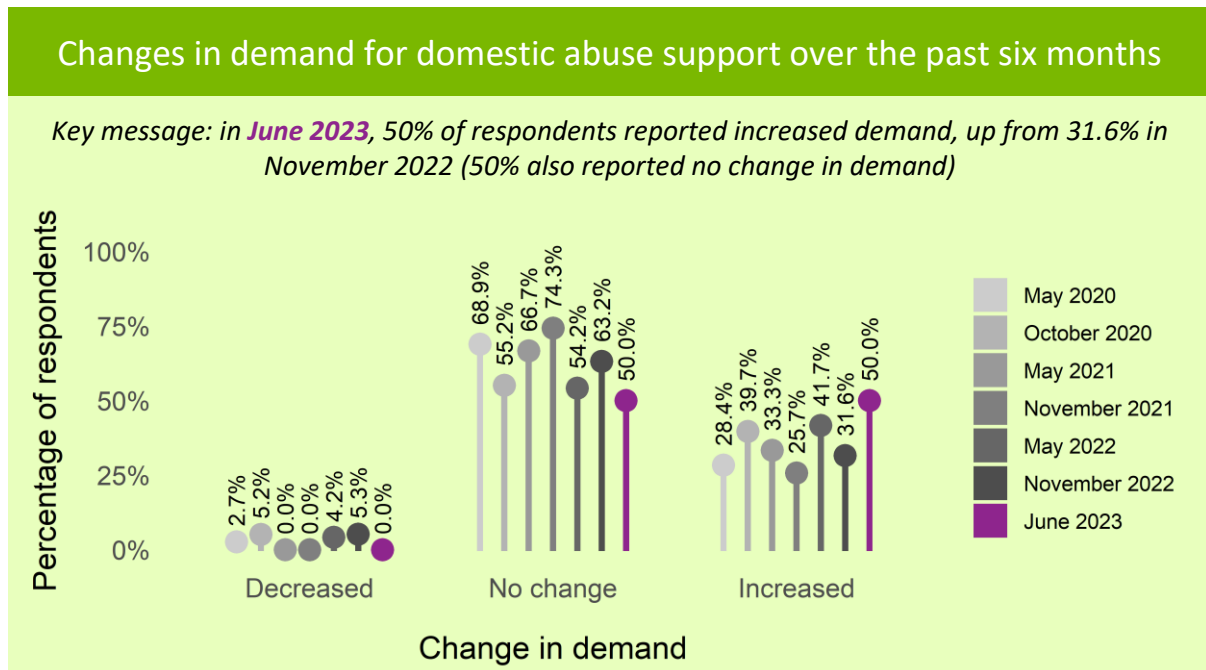
Figure A.10



Note: There were 25 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Domestic abuse support

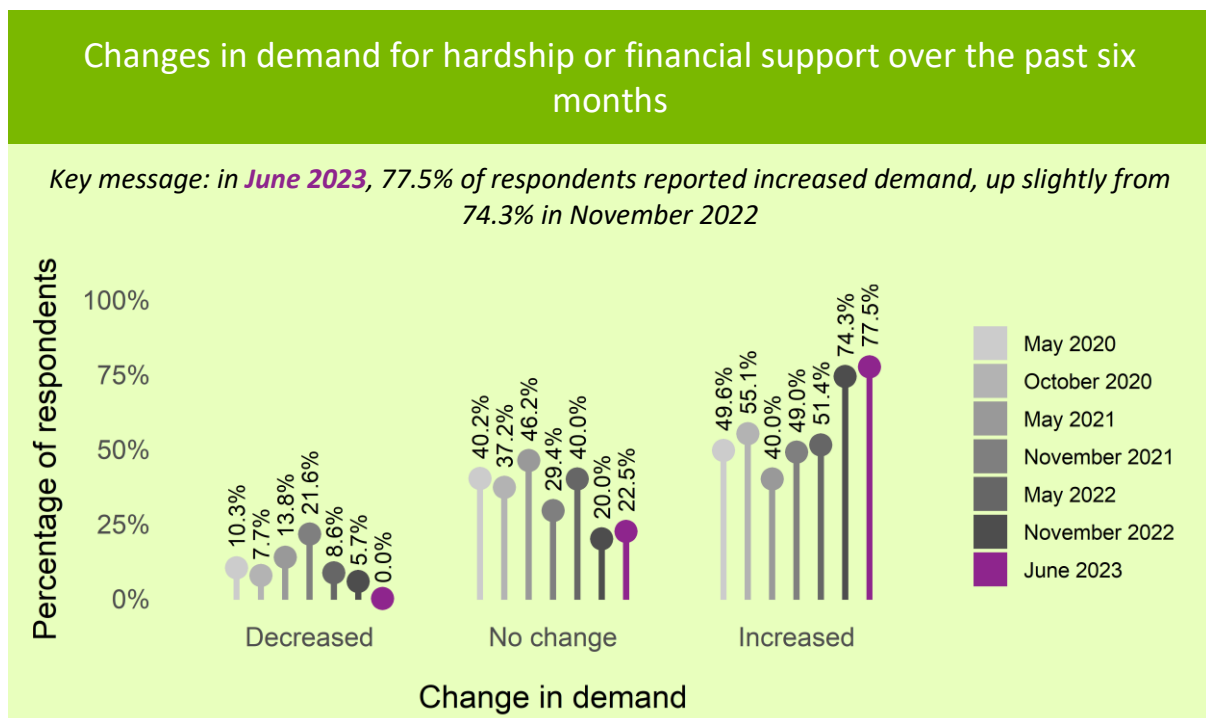
Figure A.11



Note: There were 24 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Hardship or financial support

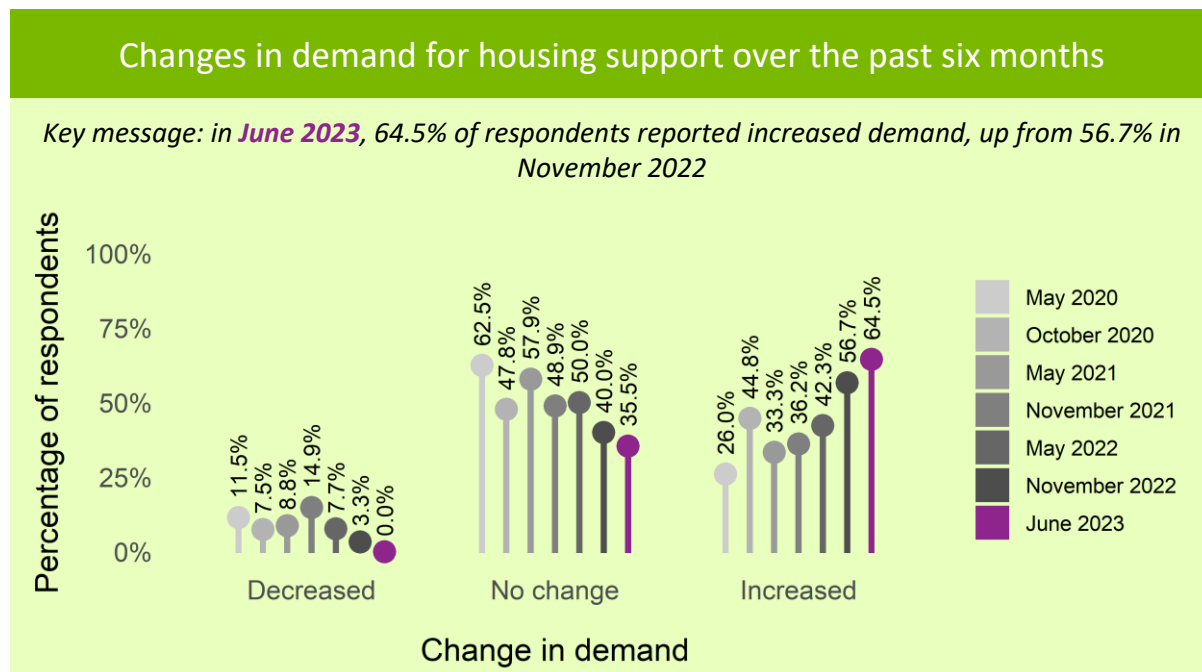
Figure A.12



Note: There were 40 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Housing support

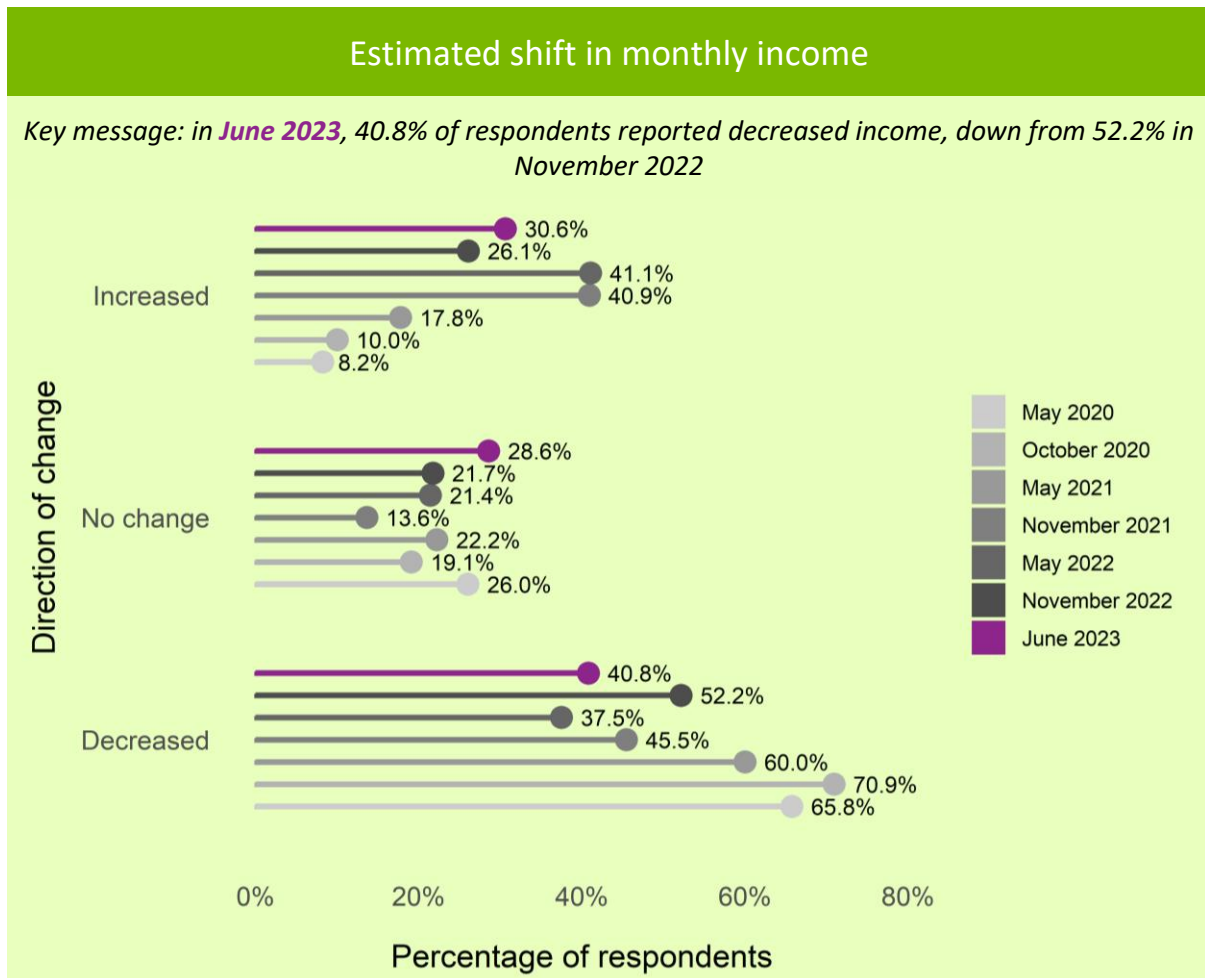
Figure A.13



Note: There were 31 respondents to this question in June 2023.

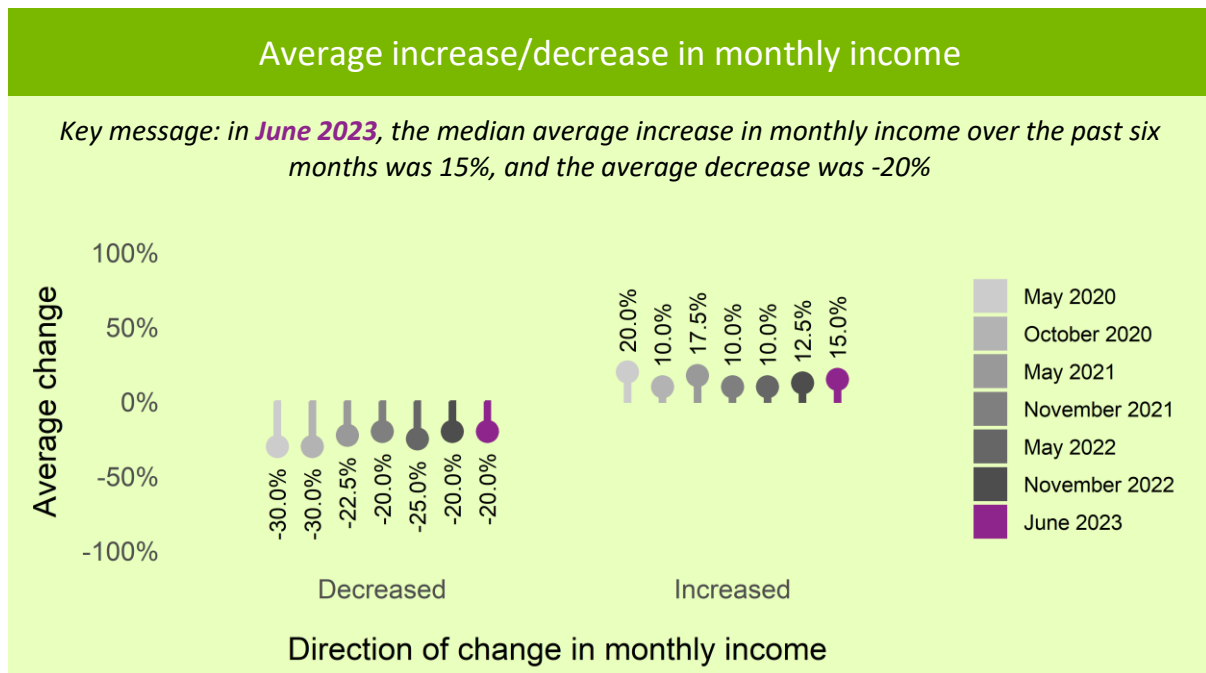
Cash flow

Figure A.14



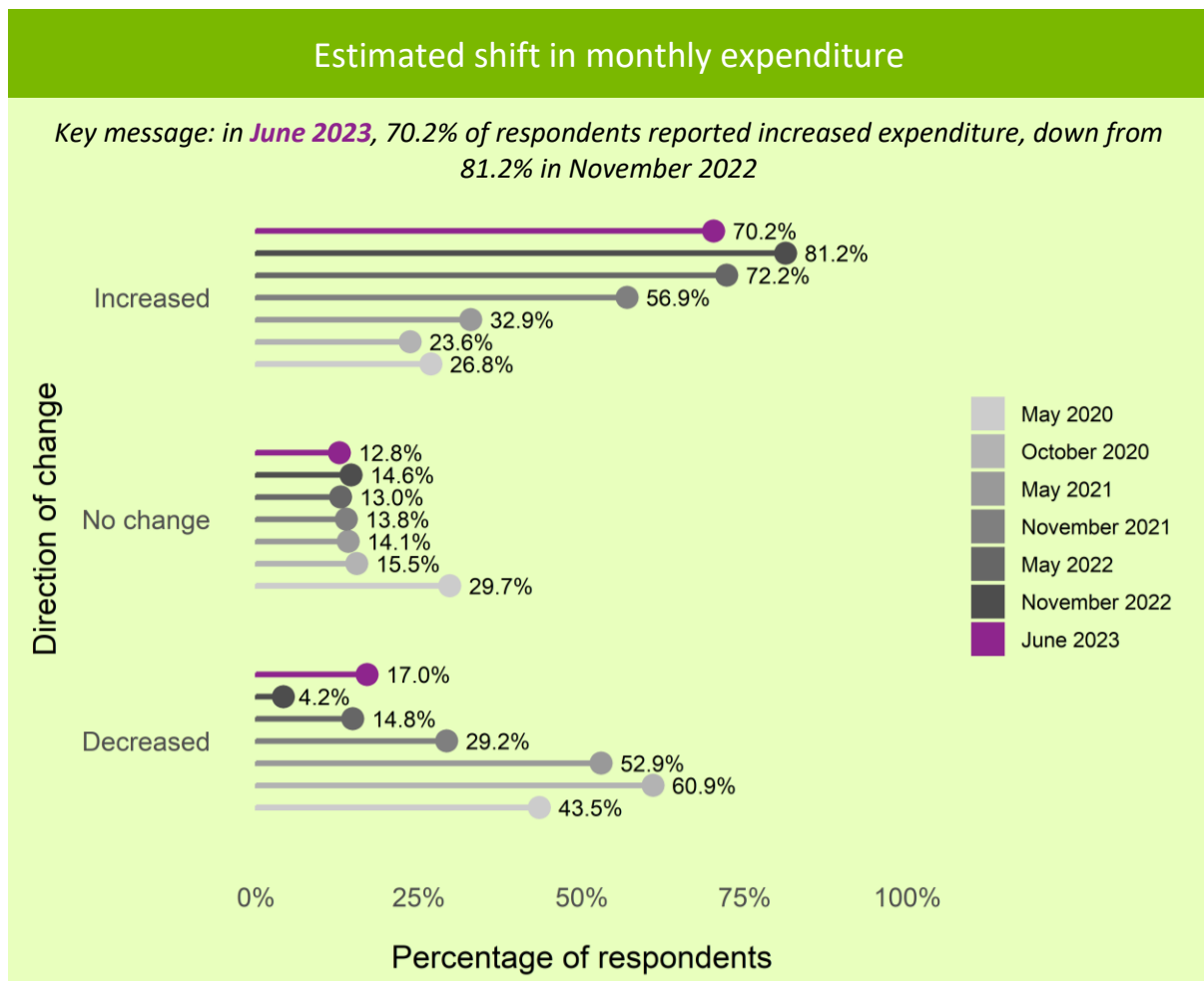
Note: There were 49 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Figure A.15



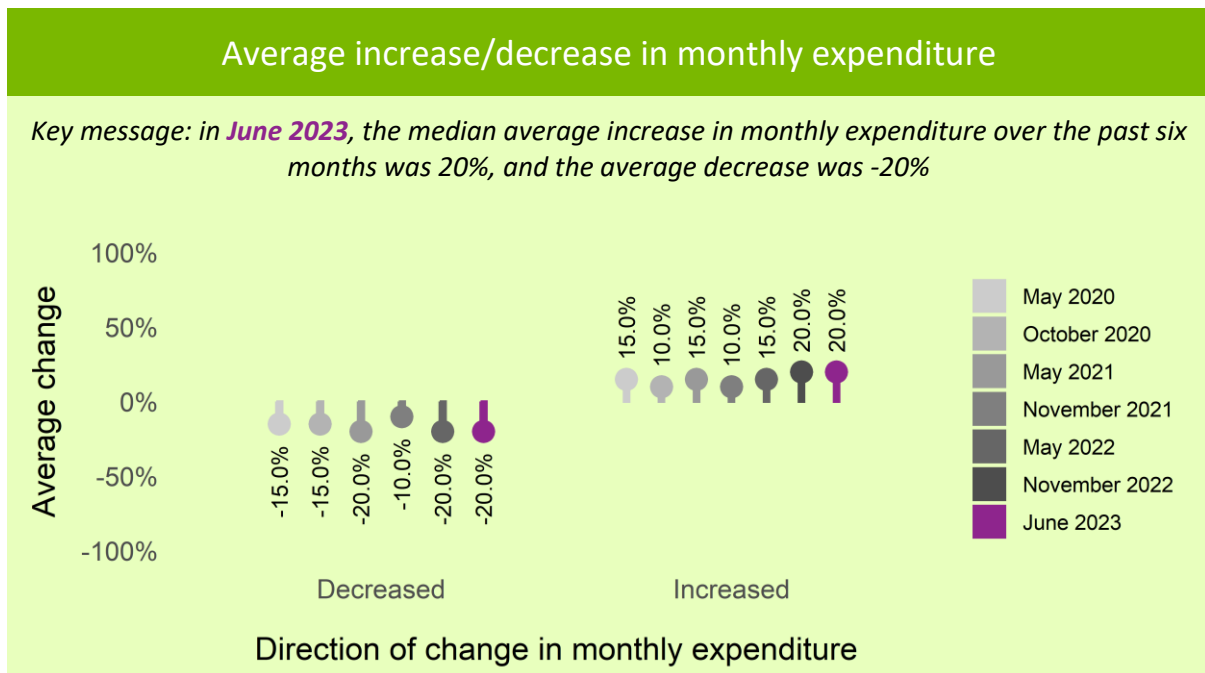
Note: There were 49 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Figure A.16



Note: There were 47 respondents to this question in June 2023.

Figure A.17



Note: There were 47 respondents to this question in June 2023.