

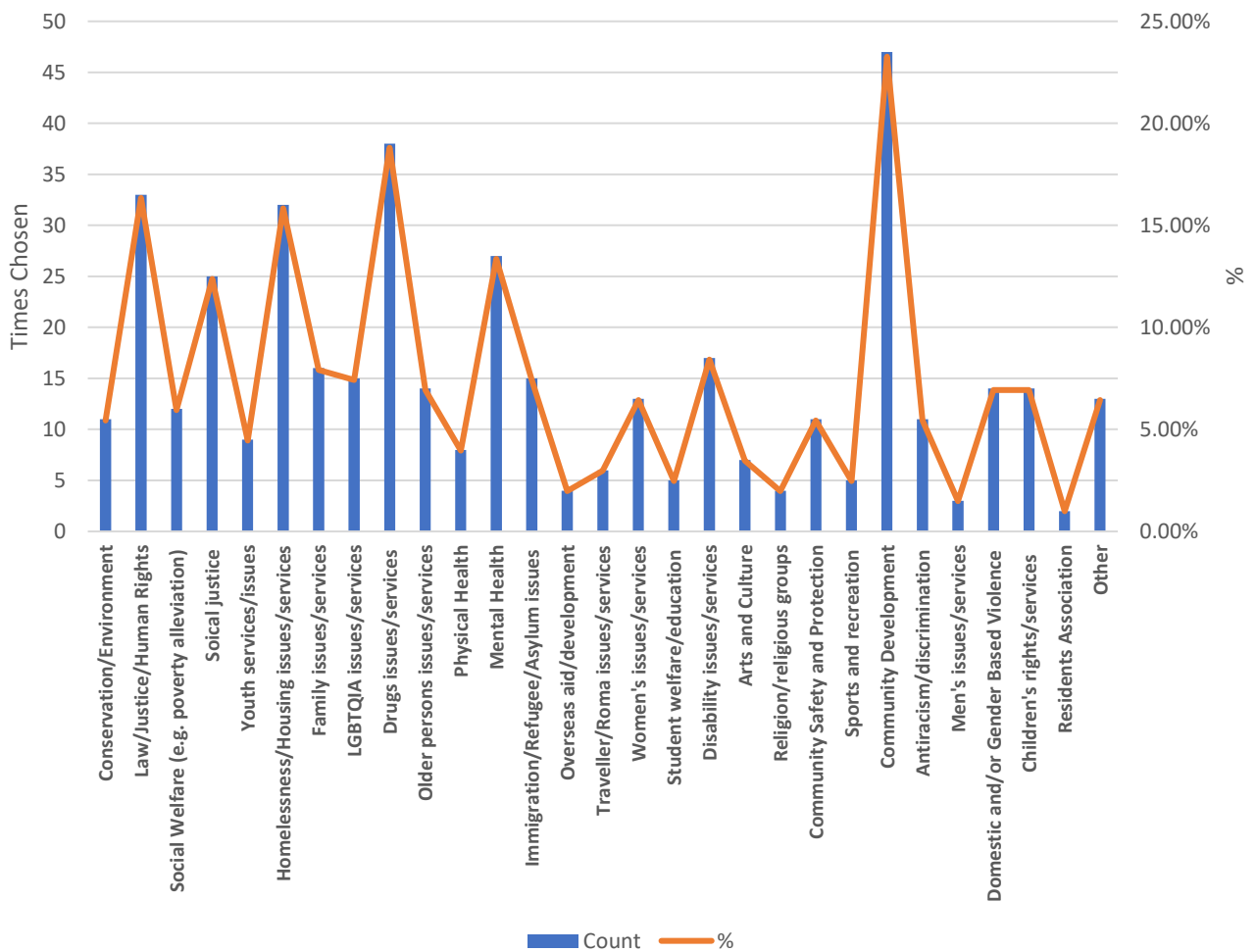
# Restrictions on Community and Non-Profit Advocacy in Ireland

**Full Set of Data August 28<sup>th</sup> 2023**

## A Note on the Graphs:

<b>(n=xxx)</b>
This refers to the number of respondents who answered the question, i.e., if (n=50) then 50 people responded.
<b>Average Score</b>
The average score is calculated by dividing the total score for the entire graph, by the number of people who responded. This gives us the average response and is represented on the graphs by the vertical red line.
<b>Mode</b>
The mode is different from the average as it is the most frequently chosen response. This is indicated on the graphs by the red circle.
<b>Trend Line</b>
The trend line is the blue dashed line that runs across the graphs, and it represents the "spread" of answers. If the line is very steep, it means that most respondents chose answers at the end of the scale where the line is higher.
<b>Times Chosen</b>
Indicates the total number of times a response was selected by respondents.
<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Indicates the proportion of respondents who selected an answer (e.g., if 5 of a total of 10 respondents selected an answer, the proportion is 50%) and is most frequently represented by a solid line on the graph.

**Fig 1.1: Organisational Focus (n=202)**



**Fig. 1.2: What kinds of activities does your organisation engage in? (n = 175)**

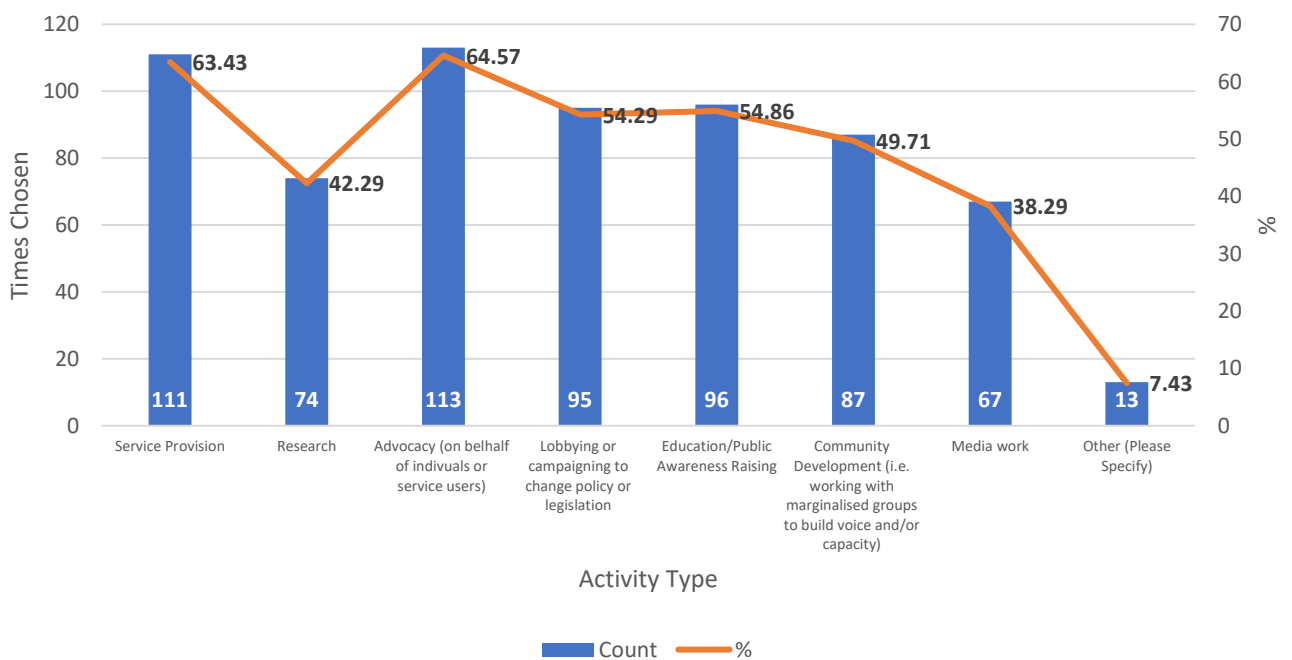


Fig. 1.3: Service Provision (n = 128)  
Average Score: +61.17 Mode: +100 (50)

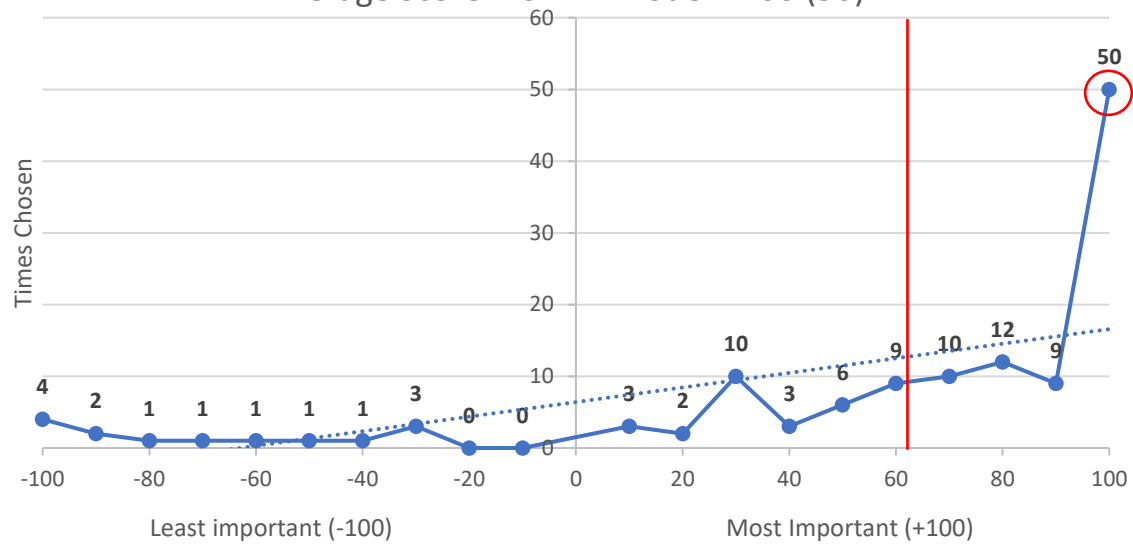
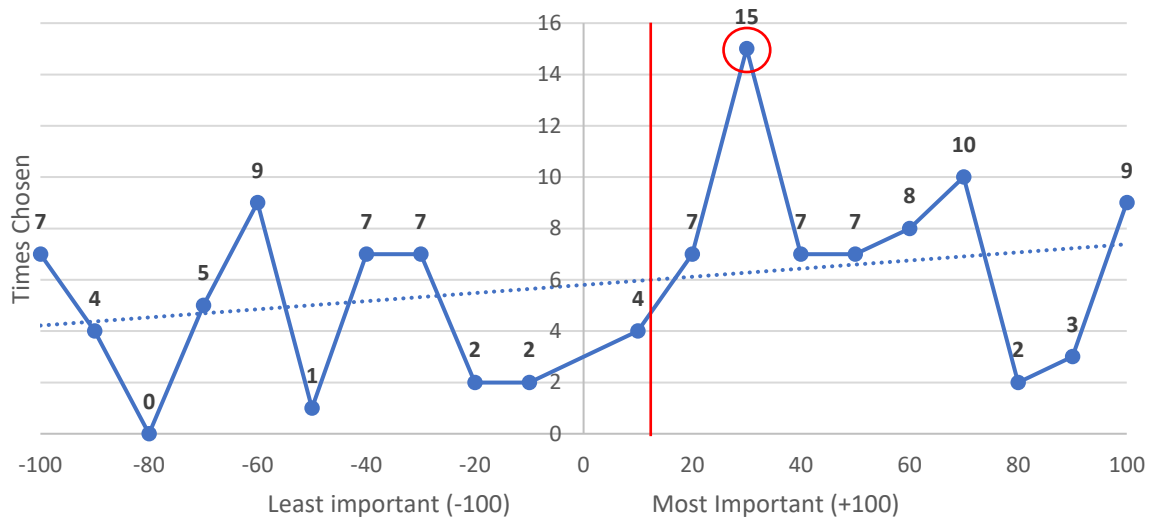
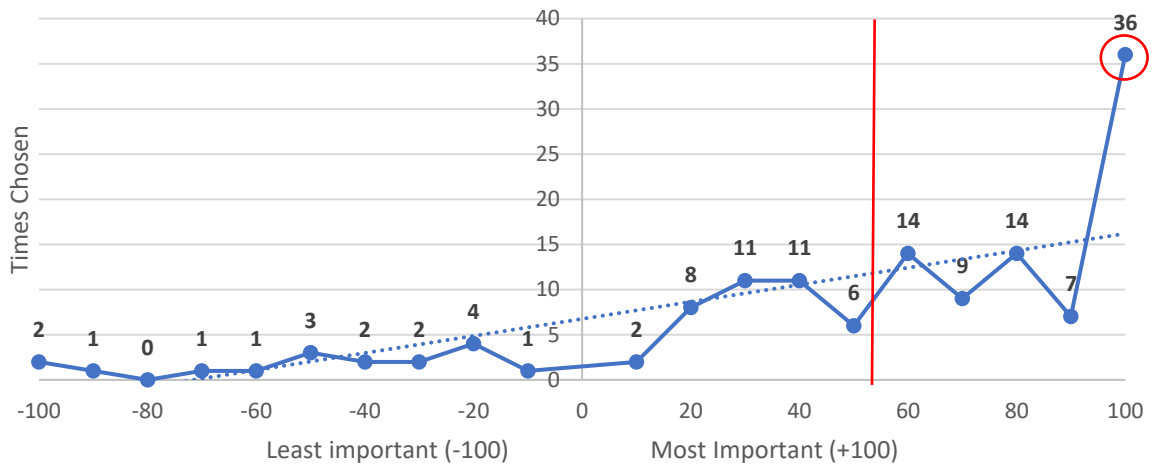


Fig. 1.4: Research (n=116)  
Average Score: +10.25 Mode: +30 (15)



**Fig. 1.5: Advocacy (n=135)**  
Average Score: +53.58 Mode: +100 (36)



**Fig. 1.6: Lobbying/Campaigning (n = 121)**  
Average Score: +33.3 Mode: +30 (15) & +100 (15)

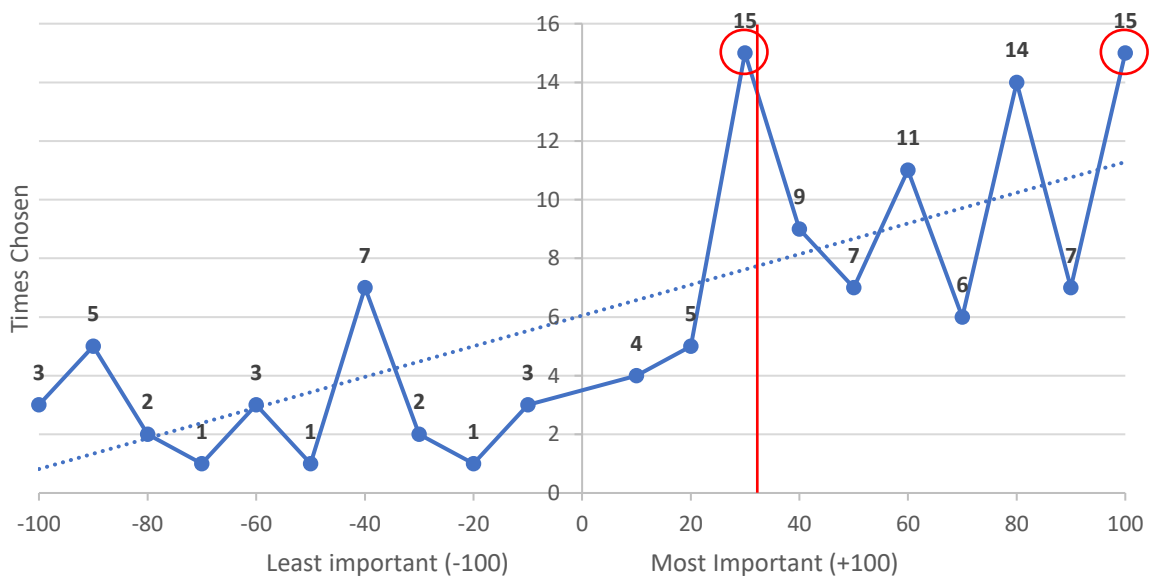


Fig 1.7: Education/Public Awareness Raising (n = 126)  
Average Score: +44.3 Mode: +40 (17)

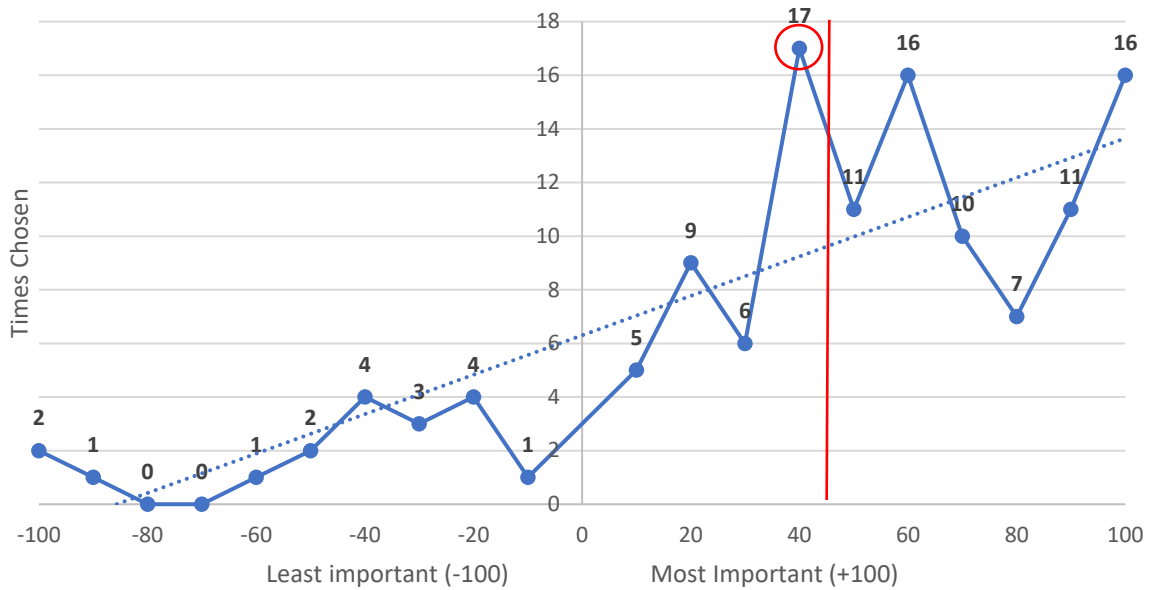


Fig. 1.8: Community Development (n = 114)  
Average Score: +40.79 Mode: +100 (26)

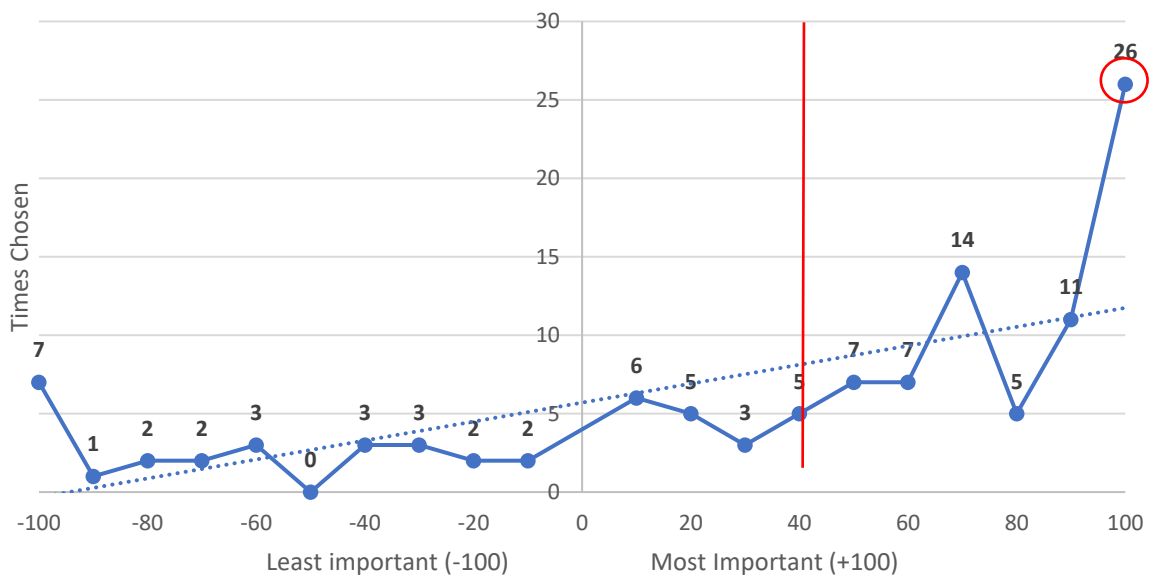


Fig. 1.10: Would you say that most of the above work takes place at a local or national level? (n = 152)

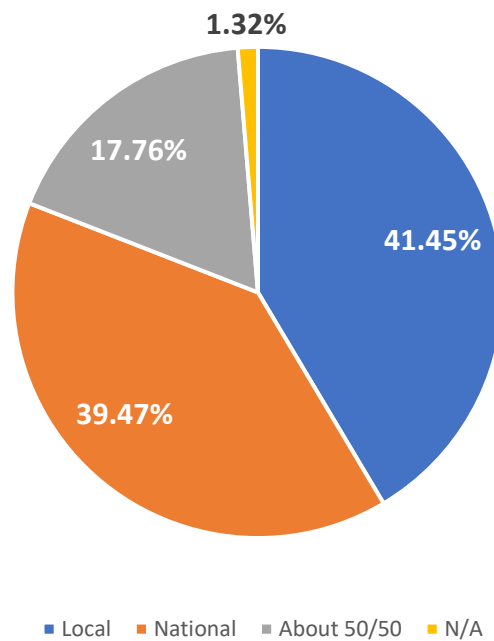


Fig. 1.11: Where does your organisation primarily operate/what area does it serve? (n = 168)

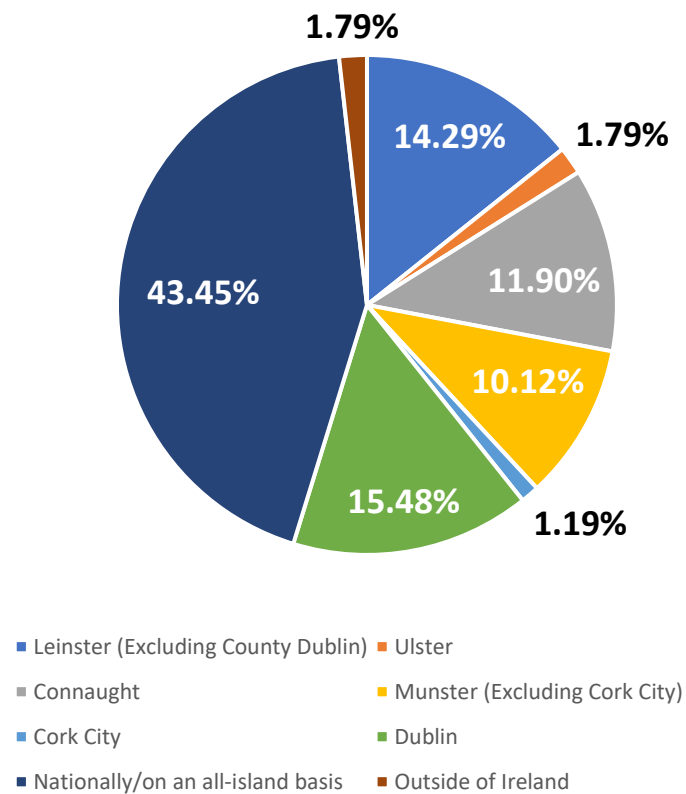


Fig 1.11 (A) Respondents Mentioning Community Health Organisation Area (CHO) (n=18)

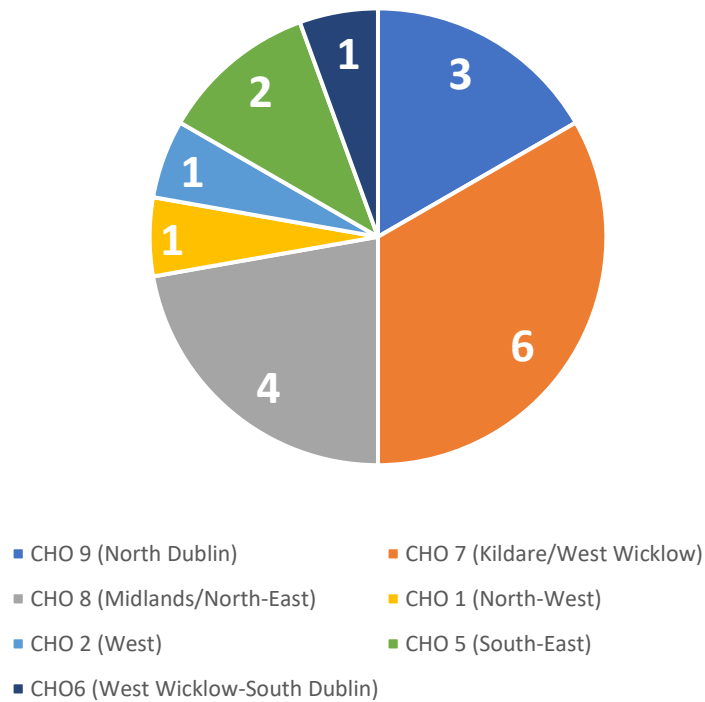


Fig 1.12: What position do you hold in your organisation? (n = 78)

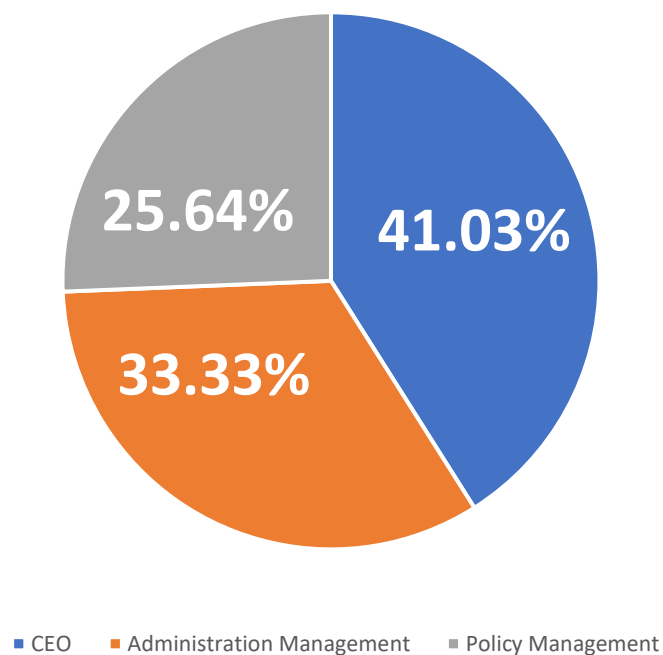


Fig 1.13: How long have you been in this role? (n = 82)

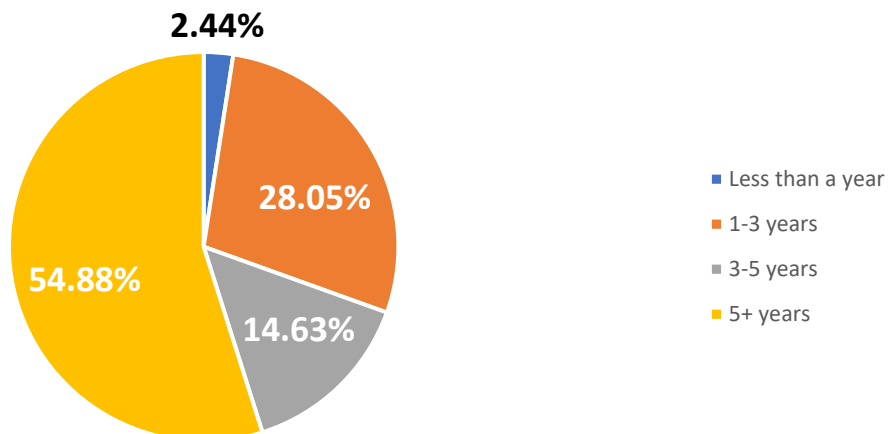


Fig 1.14: How large is your organisation? (Number of Employees) (n = 79)

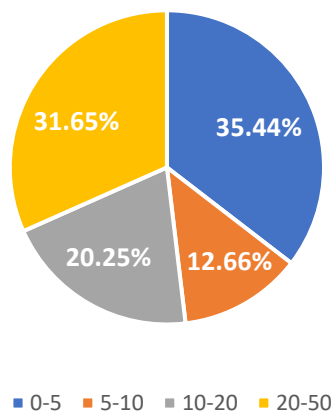


Fig 1.15: What is your age group? (n = 84)

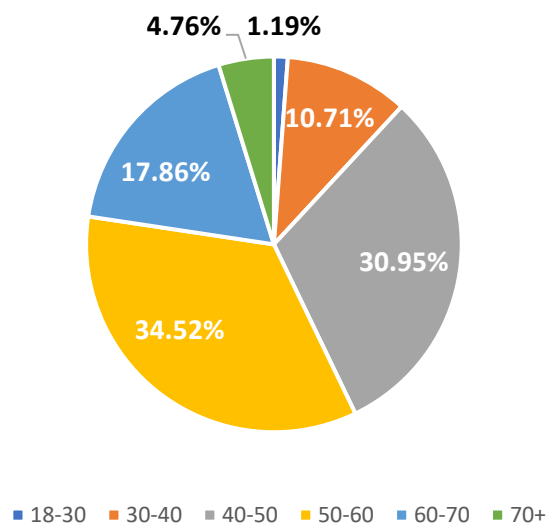




Fig. 2.1: Does your organisation currently receive any government funding for core operations or individual projects? (n = 118)

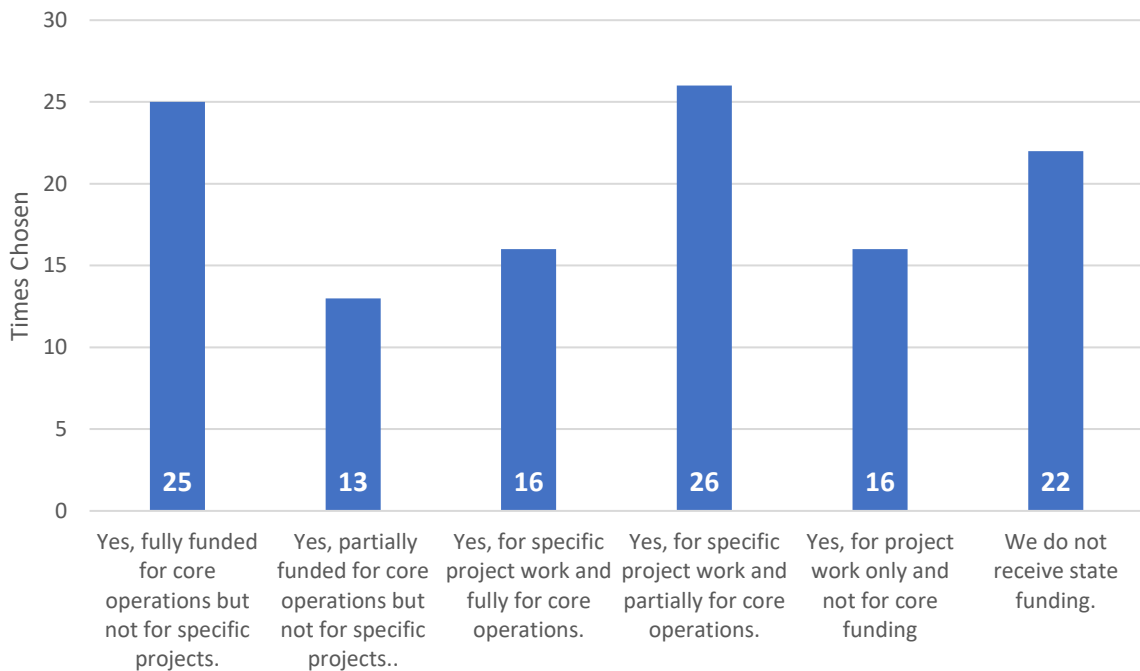
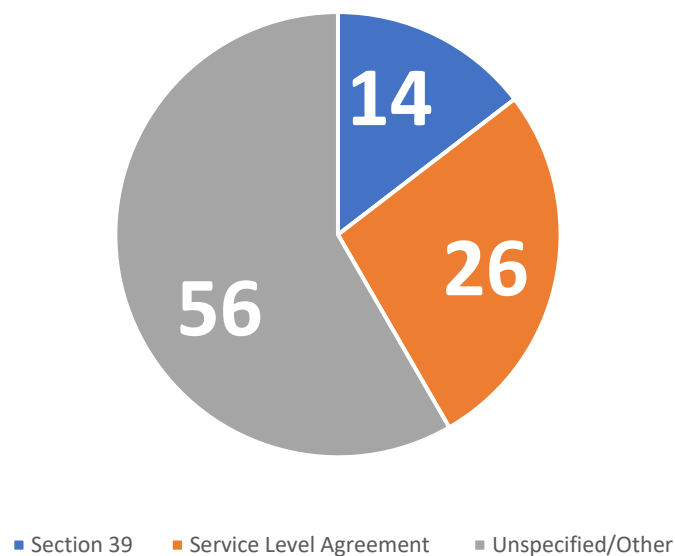
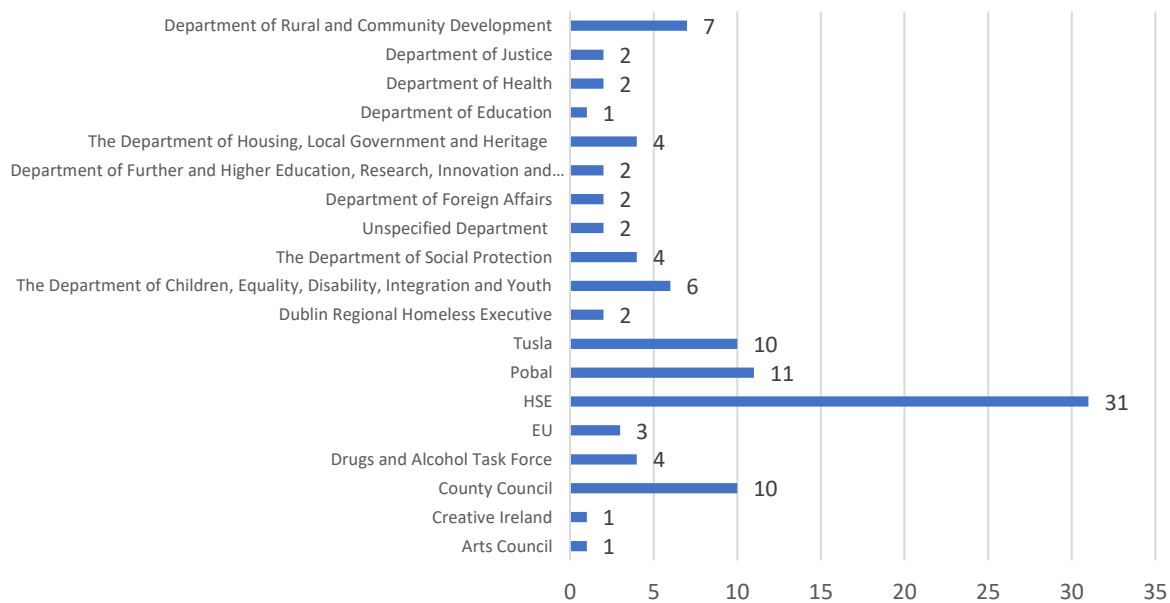


Fig 2.1(A) If applicable can you specify the type of contract(s) your organisation is currently party to? (n=80)



**Fig 2.1(B) If applicable can you specify the type of contract(s) your organisation is currently party to? (n=105)**  
**Named Organisations**



**Fig 2.2: If applicable, do any of the contracts your organisation is party to restrict your ability to make public comment on government policy? (n = 100)**

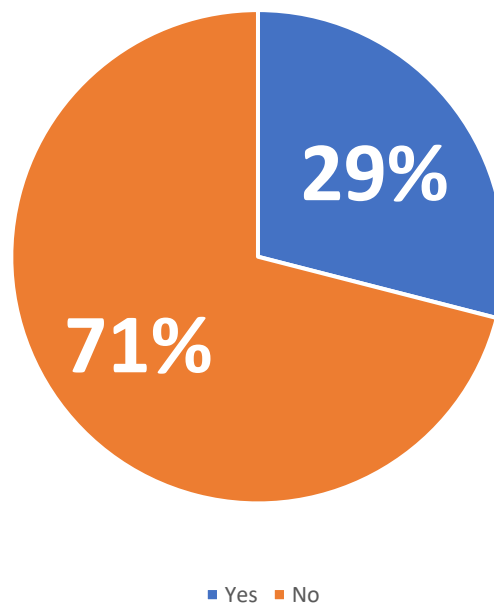
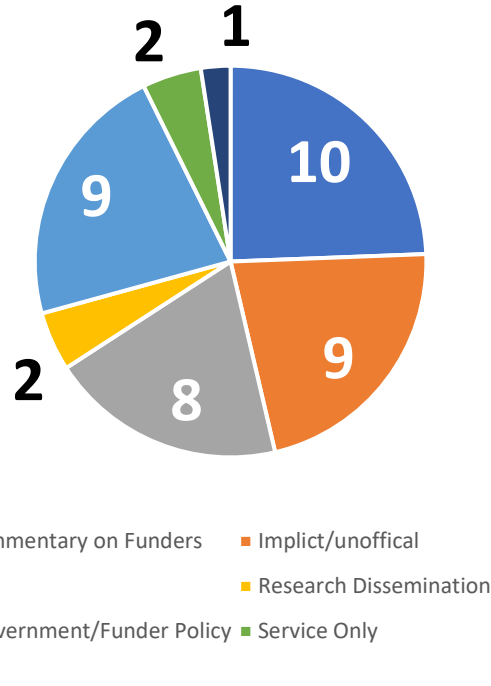


Fig 2.2 (A) If the contracts your organisation is party to restrict your ability to make public comment on government policy, what are these restrictions? (n=30)



**Fig 2.2.(B) Do any of the contracts your organisation is party to restrict your ability to make public comment on government policy? What are these restrictions? (Selected)**

Cannot take a position or add our support to voices that run counter to government policy.
[Government Departmental Official] has clearly stated to both the Board and CEO that an organisation in receipt of funding from the [Government Department] is not free to disagree with government policy
Implicit restrictions on lobbying/advocacy in how money may not be used. Plus, knowledge of how groups who crossed the 'line' were sanctioned.
Implicit understanding that service is our main objective.
Informal. We and others in our sector [...], have been selectively bullied and "punished" for criticising [State Agency].
It has been made clear to us verbally if we kept our current position on a piece of legislation our funding would be at risk. We have also been requested to confirm that none of a particular type of activity includes advocacy
No lobbying allowed. Be very conscious of offending funders
Not explicitly, but we are always aware of our relationship with funders.
we must go through [State Agency] communications

Fig. 2.3: In the last 10 years, has your organisation's government funding been cut significantly, or grown significantly? (n = 98)

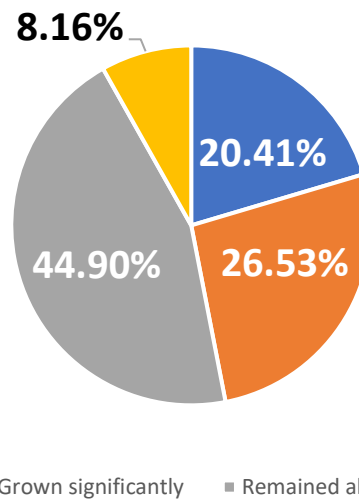
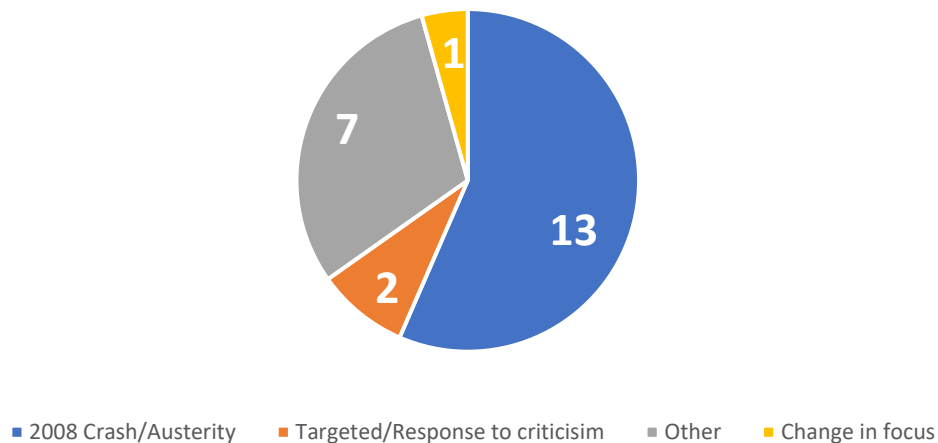


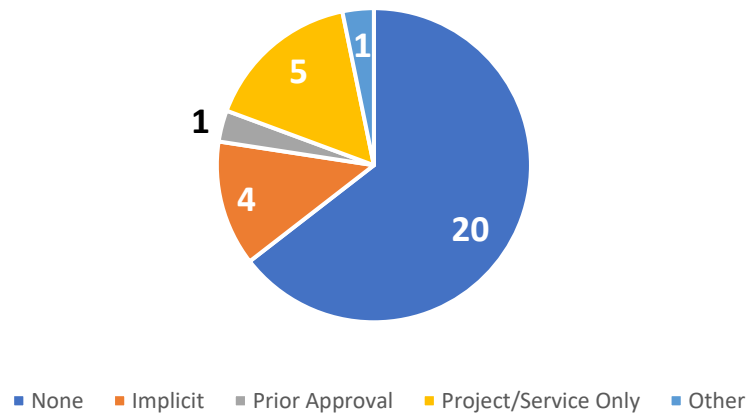
Fig 2.3 (A) If significant funding was lost, what reasons were given for this if any? (n=23)



**Fig 2.3 (B) If significant funding was lost, what reasons were given for this if any?  
Do you think the reasons given were genuine? (Selected)**

Funding from the [State Agency] was withdrawn following a review by the [State Agency] that we were not part of nor consulted. We were told that our work on community engagement in relation to [issue] was not [...] related despite it being included as an action in [relevant strategy]. We had been extremely vocal about a range of issues and critical of government policy and have always felt that it was a targeted withdrawal. We lost one staff member and a project that had been embedded in the community.

Fig 2.3 (C): If significant funding was awarded, did it come with conditions attached to your advocacy? What were these restrictions? (n=32)



**Fig 2.3 (D) If significant funding was awarded, did it come with conditions attached to your advocacy? If yes, what were these restrictions? (Selected)**

Any direct and indirect funding has the nonpolitical unwritten rule [...] we have to get creative about how we deliver what we wish to do, and we have withdrawn from funding or not applied due to conditionality.

Some of the restrictions are not written but implied. For example, for one funding stream it was made clear that we were not to be critical of [State Agency] policy

Fig 2.4: Have you ever curtailed advocacy, campaigning or communications for fear of risk to your organisation's funding? (n = 105)

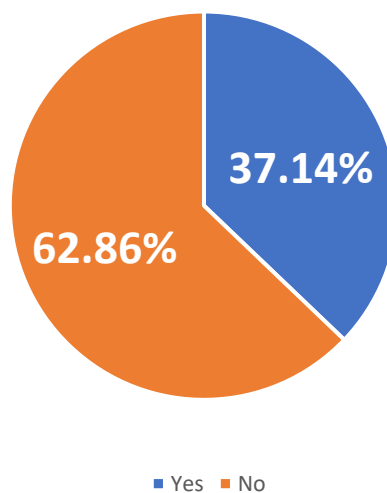


Fig 2.5: Have you ever felt that your organisation's funding was put at risk because of commentary, campaigning or advocacy that you engaged in?  
(n = 103)

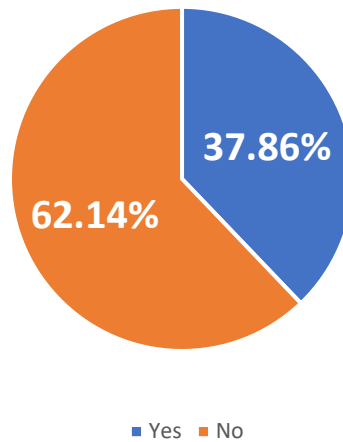
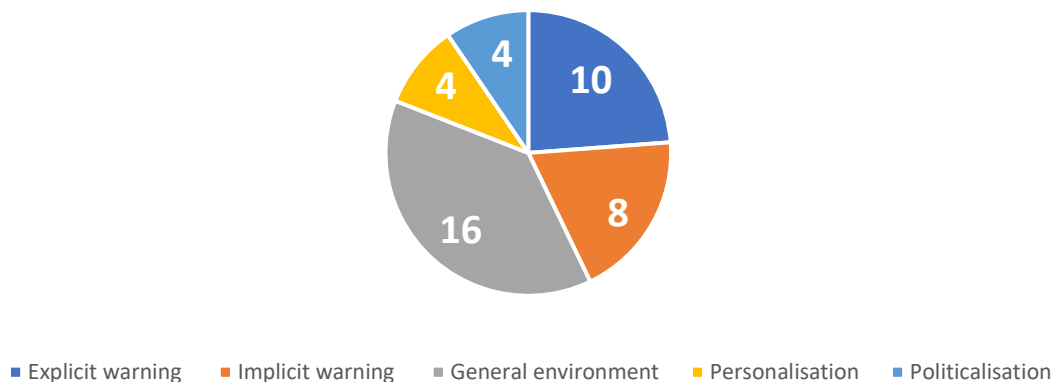


Fig 2.5 (A): Have you ever felt that your organisation's funding was put at risk because of commentary, campaigning or advocacy that you engaged in? How did this risk present itself? (n=34)



**Fig 2.5. (B) Have you ever felt that your organisation's funding was put at risk because of commentary, campaigning or advocacy that you engaged in? How did this risk present itself? (Selected)**

[Government Department] official has clearly stated to both the Board and CEO that an organisation in receipt of funding from the [Government Department] is not free to disagree with government policy and implicit in that member organisations of our networks, without having been directly threatened, are reluctant to be seen to take positions that would be at odds with [Government Department].

Comments were directed to us that some of what we spoke about was unacceptable. Things seem to be taken personally rather than systemically. People spoke about how offended they were that we would say such things. They thought we were working in partnership with them.

Explicit instructions from the organisation not to engage on certain matters and/or interference to delay actions where they become less effective, implicit threats from funders, and explicit calls to remove funding from political representatives, and powerful lobbies.
Explicit threats where an 'either/or' scenario was presented
Implicit comments and questions - hostile environment and tone.
Implicit threats from elected representatives.
information being carried back to state agencies about statements or actions you make and also processes of blacklisting and exclusion of community workers
It was subtly done, but had real consequences e.g., including defunding of a project (it was made clear privately why); not winning a particular contract (it was made clear privately why); etc. At one point it was stated by a public servant in a meeting that the organisation was to choose between advocacy or service delivery. That the organisation couldn't do both.
Social media comments which called into question our funding from government sources while also advocating for change in gov policy. Such comments tend to come from [unfriendly commercial] sources.
Subtle messaging to indicate special scrutiny on all terms and conditions
The funder, in the past sought to restrict the organisation's advocacy on [issue]. Different people have different perspectives on what we can say and what we `might get away with`
The threats are rarely explicit though sometimes they are. We once did not engage in a partnership with a [network] due to their methods but that was directly after we lost our funding, and we were feeling extremely vulnerable. We have a unique structure in this area, and we had applied for funding to replace what was lost, the structures include the bodies the withdrew our funding. They established a separate 'working group' to review our application saying that it had to be reviewed by all the state agencies to ensure we were not 'duplicating' their work. This is a common theme among agencies here.
Threats to cut funding
Told explicitly that [work] in the area of [topic related to work of organisation] was not to be engaged in
Usually in the context of a backlash; Parliamentary threats; TD's call for ending all funding for NGOs; [...].
We find this particularly at local level with local authorities. Any comment on [issue], waiting lists for services, people being turned away because of capacity causes friction with funders. It is often most difficult for the managers of our front-line services, who have the most contact with funders on a day-to-day basis, even though these staff do not do any media work, lobbying or highlighting rising numbers. Our SLA is always referred to & the restrictions within it are often exaggerated. All our campaigning and media work is based on published figures and our own data and is fact, but this seems irrelevant. If there's a tender for a new service coming up, we'll avoid media work as it will impact our chances of success. There are often comments about our media work at inter-agency meetings and it continues to be a bone of contention for us. The issue varies from county to county and seems to be personality driven and often historical.
We operate in an extremely hostile environment. Employees of high-profile organisations that are funded by the government have implied that we are organised criminals
When we received funding under the [funding stream], we were a very outspoken organisation, and we consistently challenge government policy even through local politicians however one of those politicians was a junior minister in [Government Department] at the time and we firmly believe he viewed the project as a threat, and [...] was instrumental in removing the funding

Fig. 2.6: Is your organisation a registered charity?  
(n = 113)

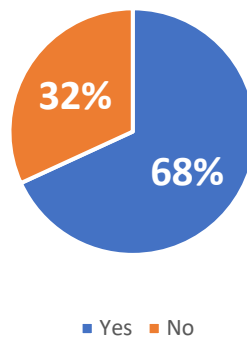
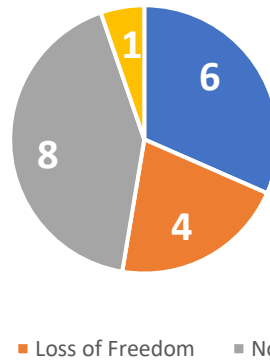


Fig 2.6 (A): If no, is there a specific reason why you've chosen to not register (as a charity) if eligible? (n=19)



**Fig 2.6 (B) If no, is there a specific reason why you've chosen to not register (as a charity) if eligible? (Selected)**

Too difficult to do. far too many restrictions and red tape;

We are small and the reporting burden would eat up all our resources.

We cannot afford to meet the statutory requirements to qualify as a registered charity. We are a company limited by guarantee.

We have tried but application is too hard.

Wouldn't be able to advocate to change the law in the same way



Fig. 2.7: On balance, would you say that your charitable status is crucial for your organisation's financial wellbeing?  
(n = 101)

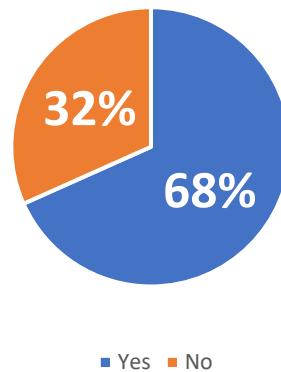


Fig. 2.8: Are you concerned that the way in which you engage in policy debate/advocacy/campaigning may affect your charitable status? (n = 98)

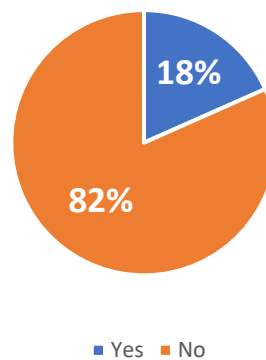
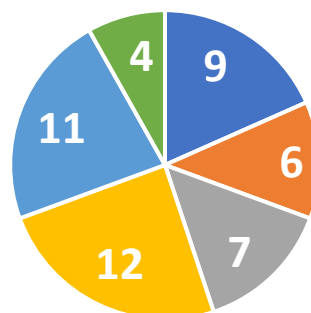


Fig 2.8(A) Are you concerned that the way in which you engage in policy debate/advocacy/campaigning may affect your charitable status? Can you describe the activities which you believe may make you vulnerable? (n=37)

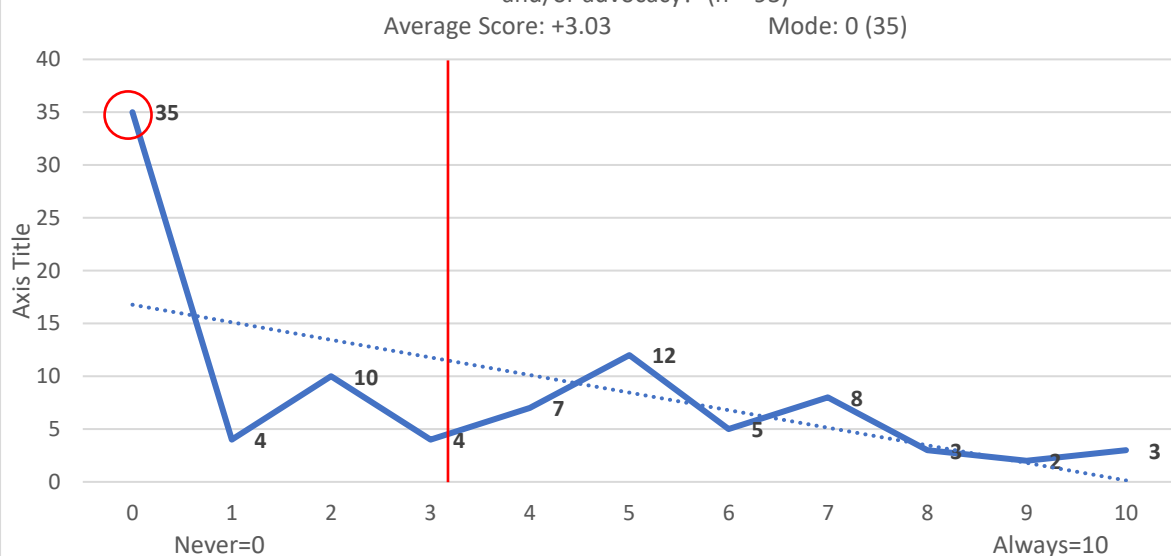


- Particular policy issue seen as contentious    ■ None seen
- Campaigning on policy or legislation        ■ Being overly critical
- "Going against" funder                            ■ Other

**Fig 2.8 (B) Are you concerned that the way in which you engage in policy debate/advocacy/campaigning may affect your charitable status? Can you describe the activities which you believe may make you vulnerable? (Selected)**

As an older well-established org, we are not aware of any risks we run in relation to criticising govt, calling for policy changes whilst also receiving funding for services, some core costs and policy work through [funding stream]
Criticism of harmful systems may jeopardize our chances of receiving state funding
Criticism of Ministers, Party Politics,
Engagement on legislation and judicial review related activity and advocacy, and positions contrary to funders position.
If we speak out about the current issues affecting our communities, if we criticize government policy and link it directly to actual cause of social exclusion, substandard housing, community under threat due to lack of resources for other services particularly for young people who are at risk of being sucked into the drugs economy
Impact on relationships with elected reps, fear this may impact access to funding streams
More and more work and responsibility is pushed onto the organisation as the funding bodies are the statutory body with the remit re the social issue which contracts out the work with lots of conditions and none of the decision-making role. In addition, other agencies in the sector are also funded by the same statutory body and this all providers are in competition for the same funding despite there being the need there for all the services - competition and undercutting rather than collaboration. So, it leaves the funders with lots of power over the funded organisation and how it runs its services.
Public comment on [State Agency] chaos. Criticism of their disorganised, personalised, abusive handling of financing.
We feel that we could not publicly criticise the [State Agency] due to potential risk of current or future funding
While there is not a direct threat, there is a feeling that we limit our voice somewhat due to a concern that we might upset statutory funders. We also receive non-statutory funding (grants) from public bodies. As we are constantly being assessed for funding, we have to consider our relationship with funders. This is perhaps an issue of mindset but can nonetheless affect decision making - the perception (real or only perceived) that decisions around advocacy may influence funders decision-making (indirectly or directly) can limit what decisions are taken internally.

**Fig. 2.9: Does consideration/anxiety regarding you organisation's charitable status impact on decisions as to whether or not you engage in policy debate, campaigning and/or advocacy? (n = 93)**



**Fig 2.9 (A) Does consideration/anxiety regarding your organisation's charitable status impact on decisions as to whether or not you engage in policy debate, campaigning and/or advocacy? Why/ why not? (Selected)**

A lot of damage has been done to charities by charities and we need to always ensure that we are in no way controversial in our views. Also, due to the small size of our charity, we would not have the expertise in the team which some of the larger charities in this space would have.

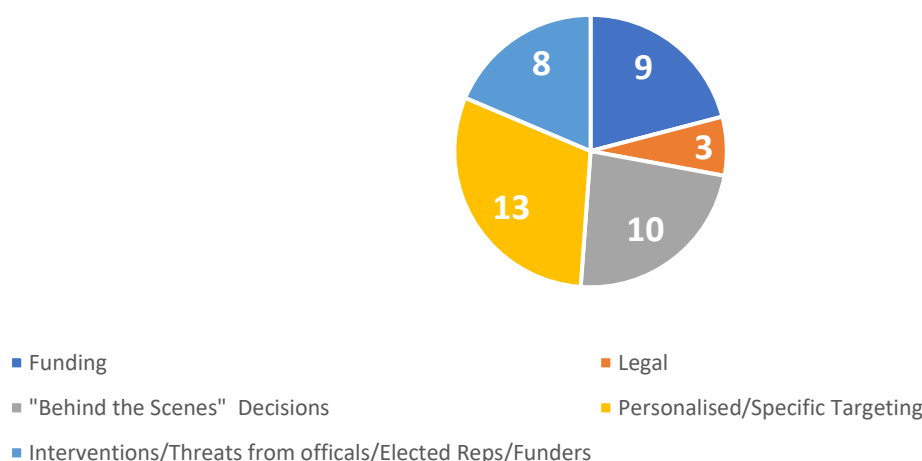
Feel always need to be mindful of crossing funders

We always have to temper our messaging; the board are concerned about upsetting Government. They don't like us to be publicly critical.

We would not want to upset our funders so we would be careful about what we would say

You have to be aware of all the forces at play and play the game wisely. Burning bridges is never a good idea.

Fig 2.10: If there are any other specific instances of where you believe your organisation has faced pressure (overt or covert) in terms of your ability to advocate or speak out, please feel free to share here (n=27)



**Fig 2.10 (A) If there are any other specific instances of where you believe your organisation has faced pressure (overt or covert) in terms of your ability to advocate or speak out, please feel free to share here: (Selected)**

Calls in the Oireachtas and media to de-fund the type of work that we do. Quiet conversations inside rooms from those with influence over funding decisions with senior management.

CEO was forced to step down from a BoM as it was deemed to be a 'clash of interests' by a funder (and a threat to funding for the organisation the CEO worked for), even though it had never before been a clash of interests

Certain [State Agency] staff are malicious. Others are weak and incompetent

Having to be careful not to offend people and their perceived offence

It has often been alluded to, to not 'rock the boat' or it's not the role of our organisation to bring certain issues to light.

It's now part of the culture. So, people are risk adverse.

Keeping good relations with funders/departments etc is always a consideration

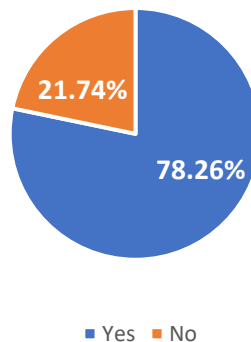
On many occasions. one particular occasion the state agency in question brought in a reviewer to effectively close the organisation by using their material as second-hand justification for taking actions based on the reviewers' recommendations. all nonsense of course just a pretext for closing a prominent opponent of the new regime.

Previously this and other organisations I worked in have had their funding discontinued - and although it would be hard to prove that we did not get it because of the subject matter we were working with - you kind of know what will and will not fly when you see who gets funded instead.

We are informed by members of our network about negative comments about our work that have been made to them by officials and "warnings" about engaging with us. [Government Department] has put blocks in the way of an event (at least one for definite) we had planned and has enlisted other stakeholders to take the lead in the blocking process. [Departmental] officials have informed us that people "at the highest level" in the Dept are not happy with us.

We have been in the room when a senior civil servant said it was not our role to criticise government policy.

**Fig 3.1: Have you been involved in a stakeholder engagement process? e.g. Making a submission, attending a stakeholder meeting, filling out a questionnaire etc. (n = 115)**



**Fig 3.2: What form did this stakeholder engagement take? (Select as many as apply) (n = 89)**

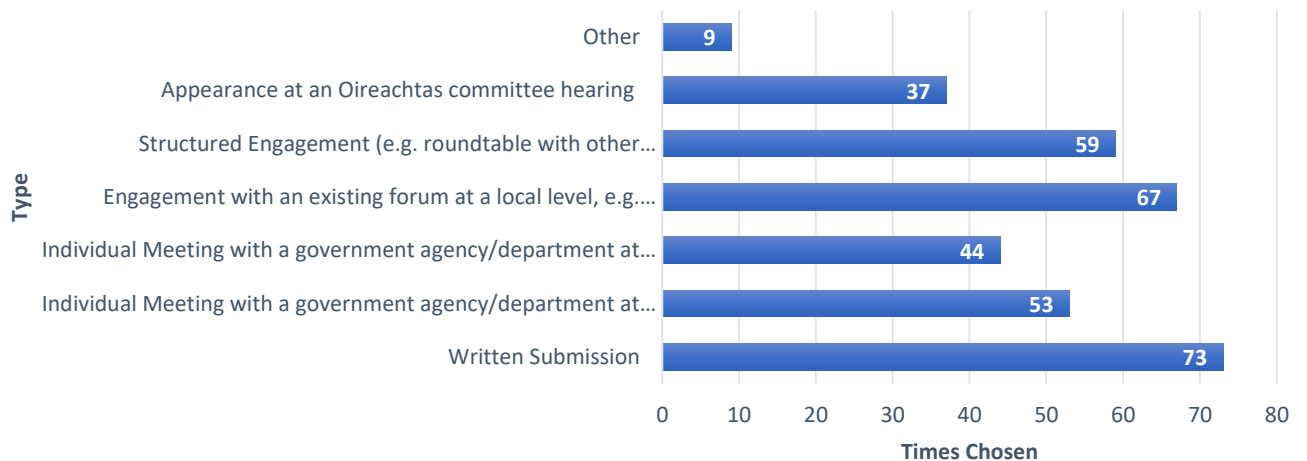


Fig 3.3: In general, at what stage are you invited to take part in the consultation process? (n = 84)

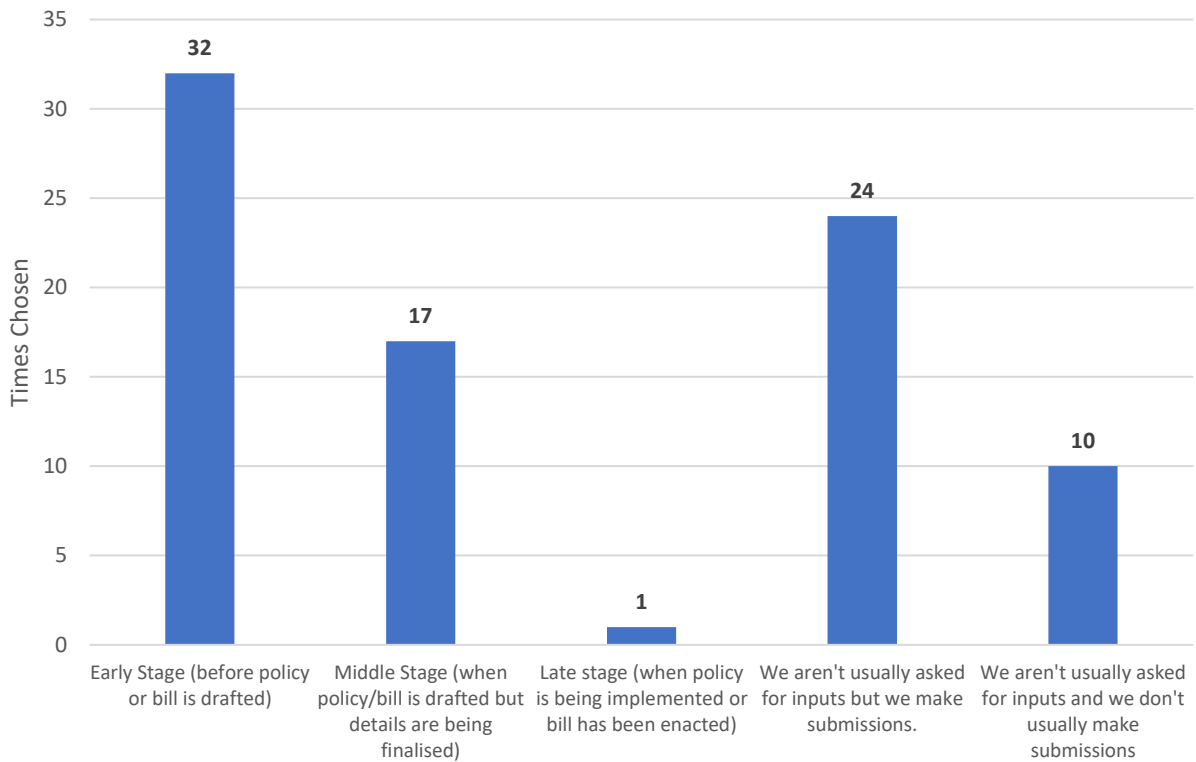


Fig 3.3(A) What resources did your organisation need in order to be able to effectively participate in the stakeholder engagement? e.g. undertaking research, consultation with members, the use of a consultant, travel funds, etc. (n=70)

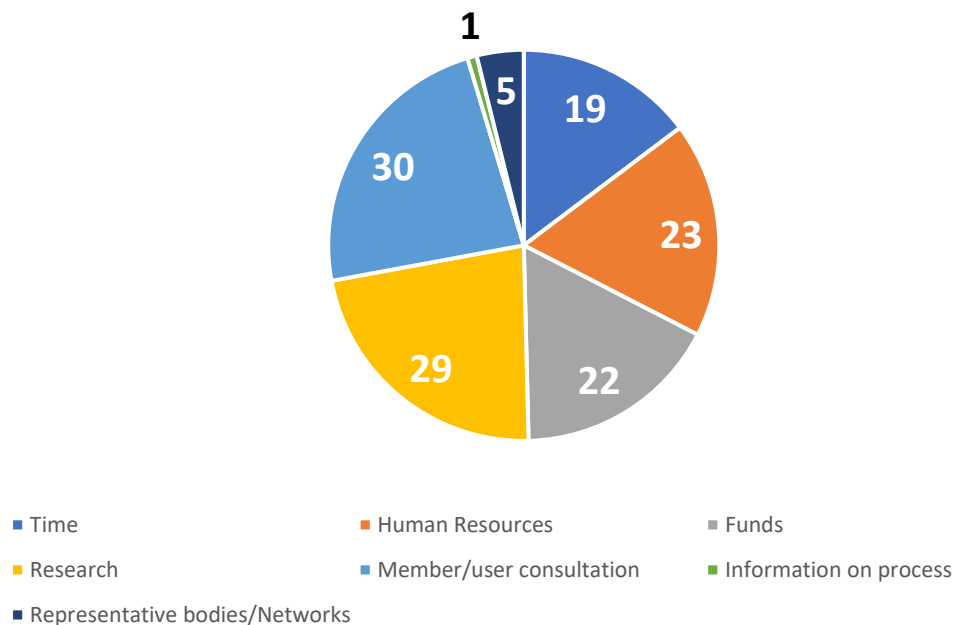


Fig 3.4: Were any resources provided by the organisation running the stakeholder engagement in order to assist you to cover costs? (n = 82)

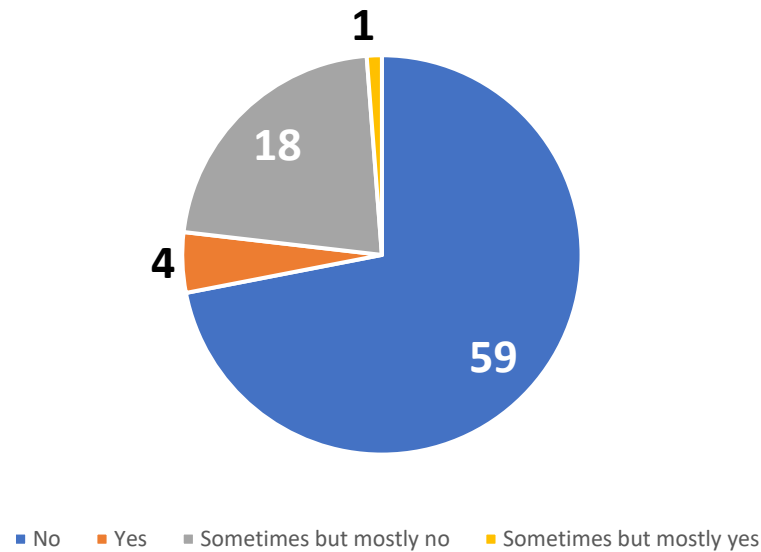


Fig 3.5: Thinking back on the stakeholder engagements you've taken part in, please rank how, most frequently, your organisation came to be involved in them. (n = 83)

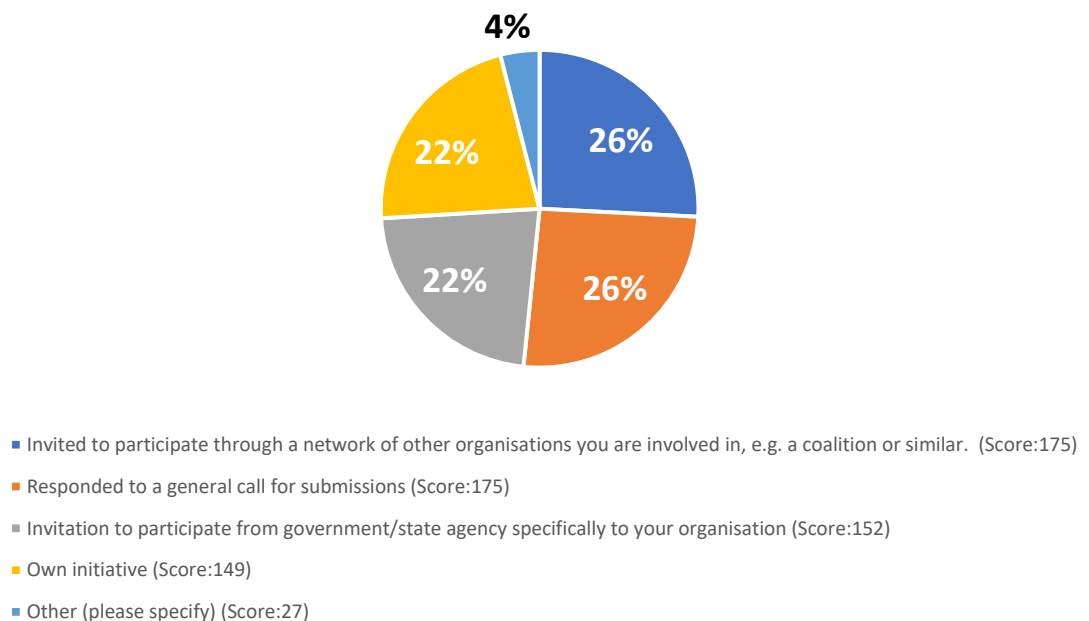


Fig 3.5(A): Other ways in which you came to be involved in a consultation process. (n=28)

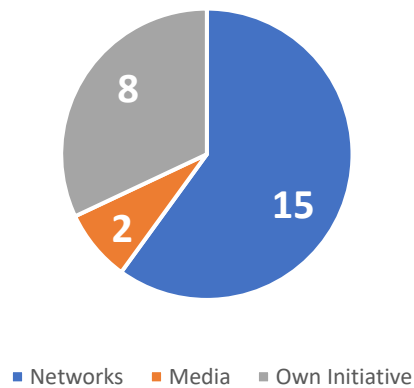


Fig 3.6: Overall, do you find it difficult to keep track of new policies/legislation of relevance to your organisation which is being developed? (n = 86)  
Average Score: 5.9 Mode: 5 (15)

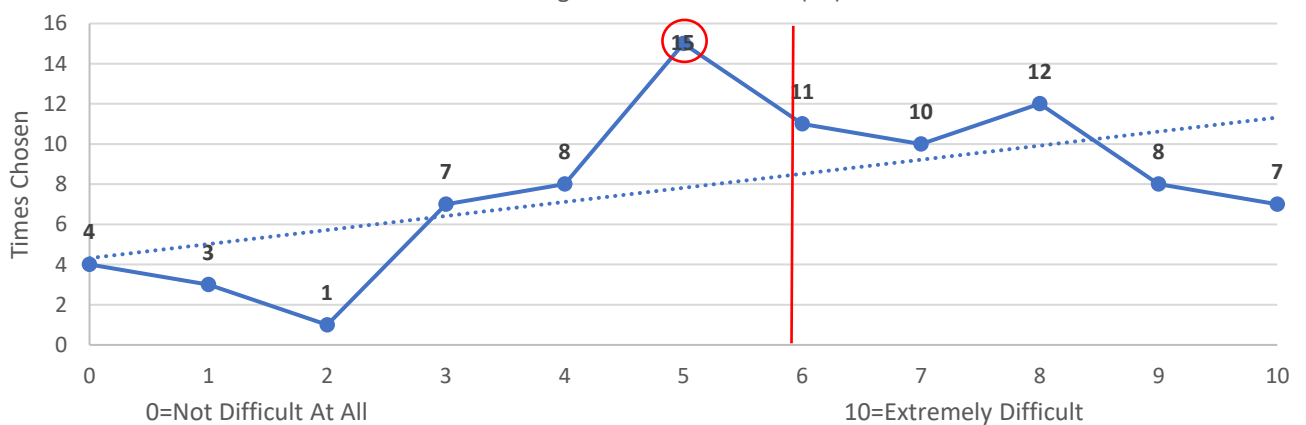


Fig 3.7: Have you ever missed contributing inputs to policy/legislation of relevance to your organisation because you found out about it too late? (n = 88)

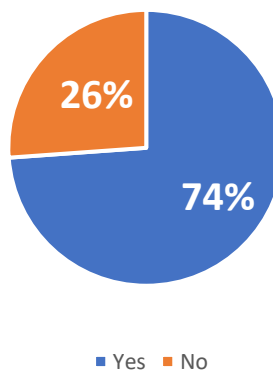


Fig 3.8 How would you describe your experiences of taking part in state/agency stakeholder engagements over the past 5 years- Resources  
(n = 80) Average Score: 6.24 Mode: 8 (16)

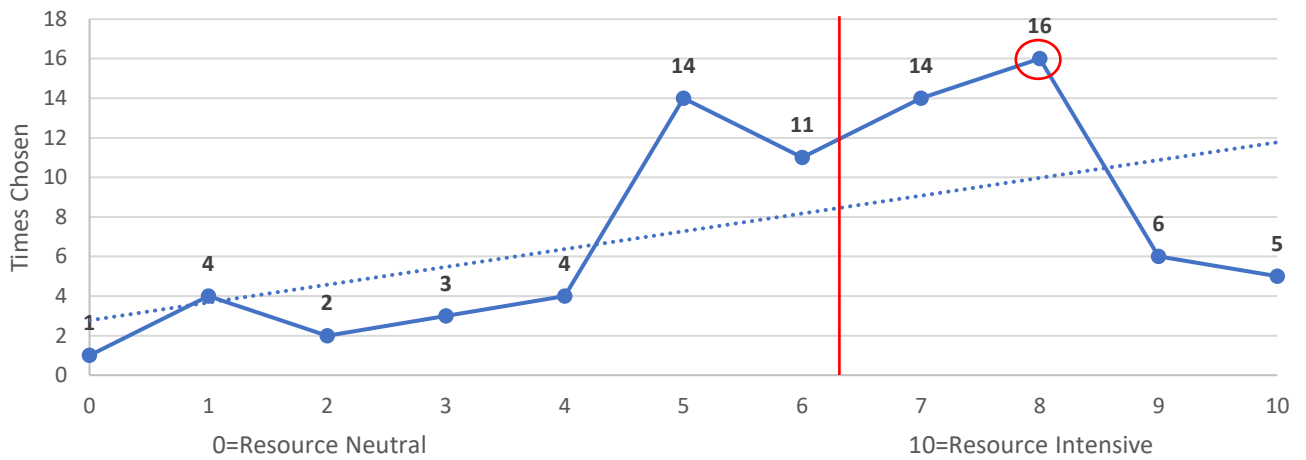


Fig 3.9 How would you describe your experiences of taking part in state/agency stakeholder engagements over the past 5 years- Impact on Policy  
(n = 82) Average Score: 3.93 Mode: 5 (13)

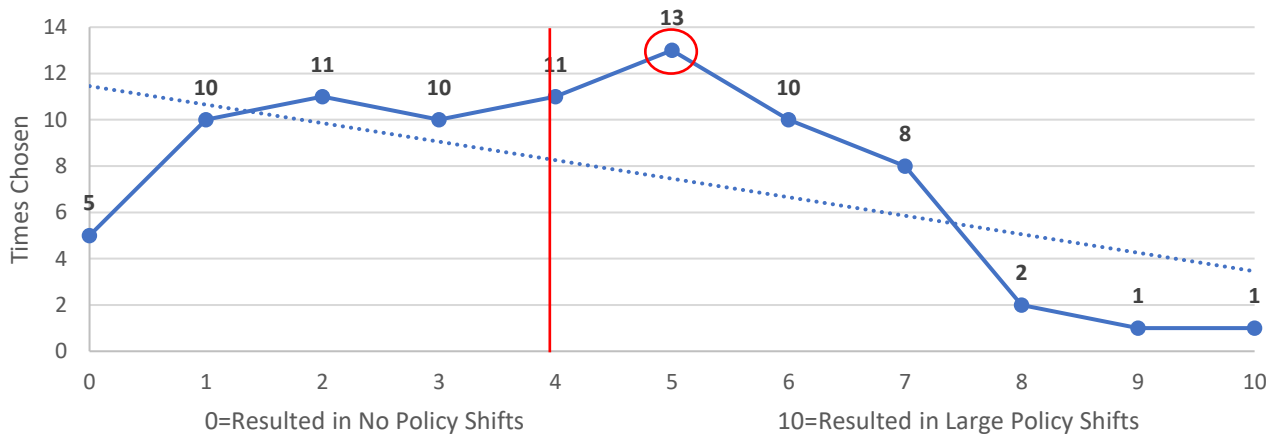


Fig 3.10 How would you describe your experiences of taking part in state/agency stakeholder engagements over the past 5 years- Relationship With Funder  
(n = 79) Average Score: 3.9 Mode: 5(23)

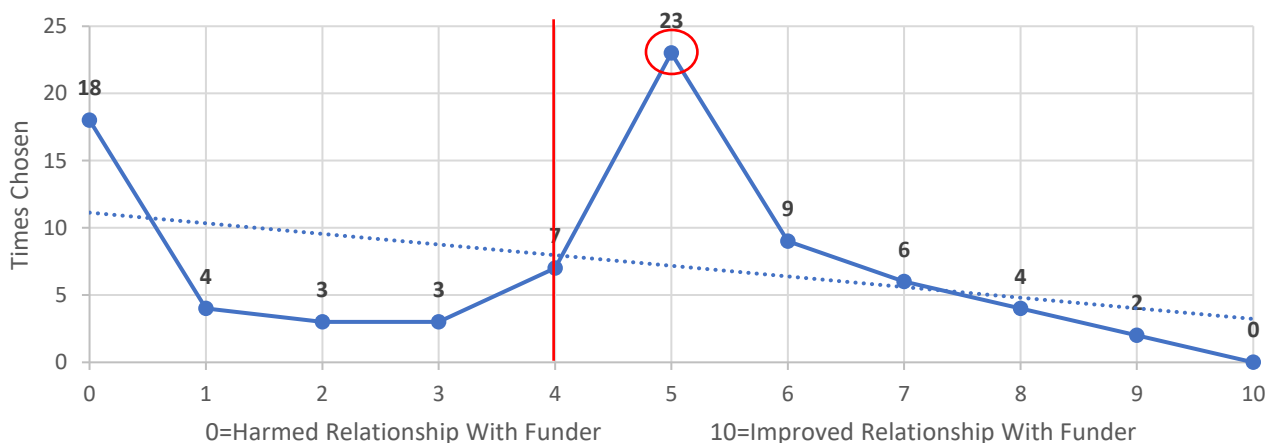




Fig 3.11 How would you describe your experiences of taking part in state/agency stakeholder engagements over the past 5 years- Effort vs. Benefits  
(n = 82) Average Score: 4.1 Mode: 2 (22)

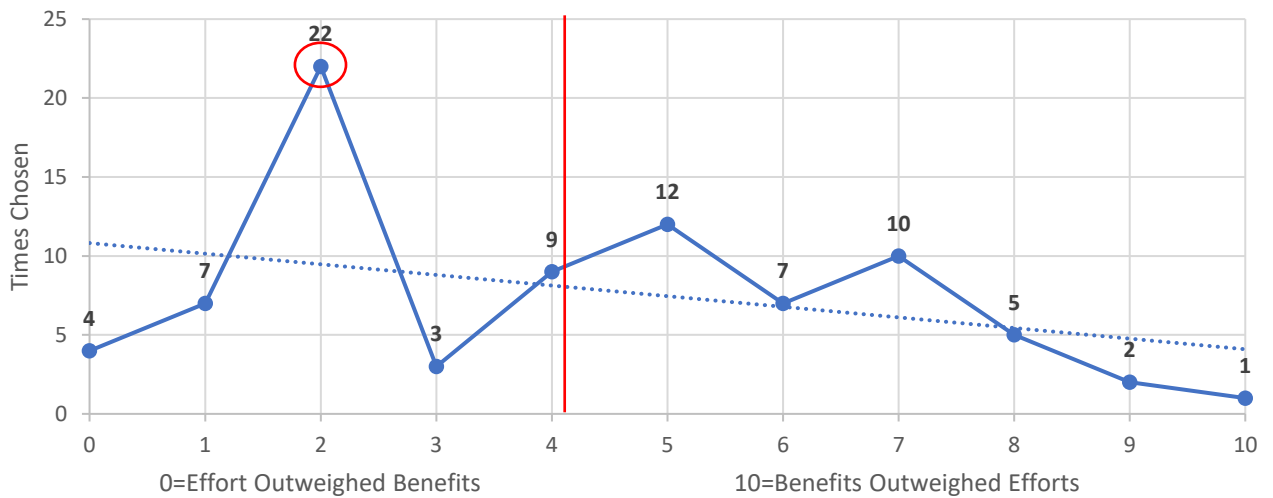


Fig 3.12 How would you describe your experiences of taking part in state/agency stakeholder engagements over the past 5 years- Future Participation  
(n = 83) Average Score: 4.93 Mode: 5 (18)

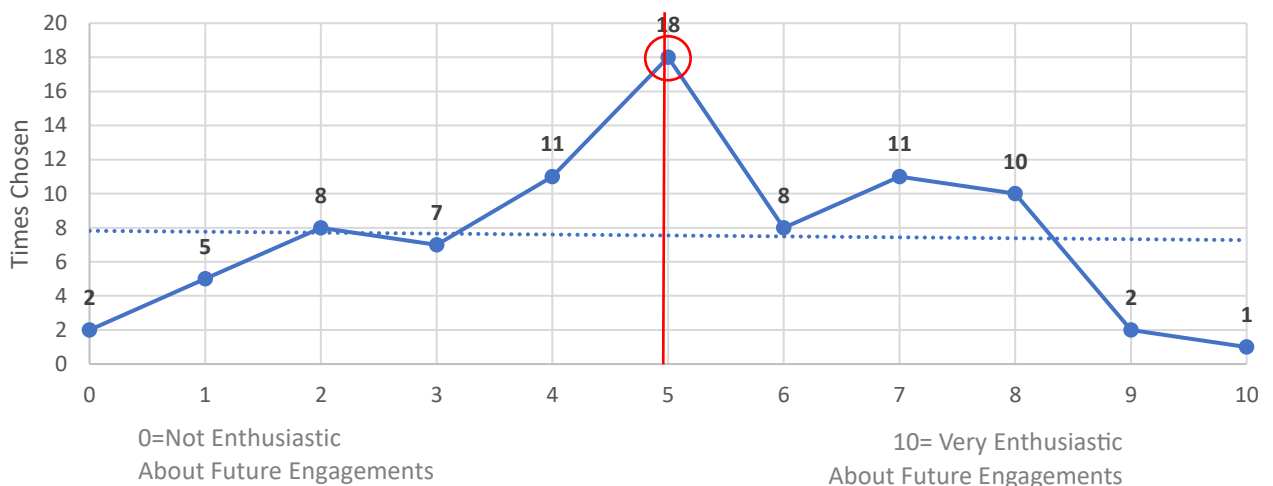


Fig 3.13 In general, are the issues you raise during stakeholder engagements taken on board?  
(n = 82)

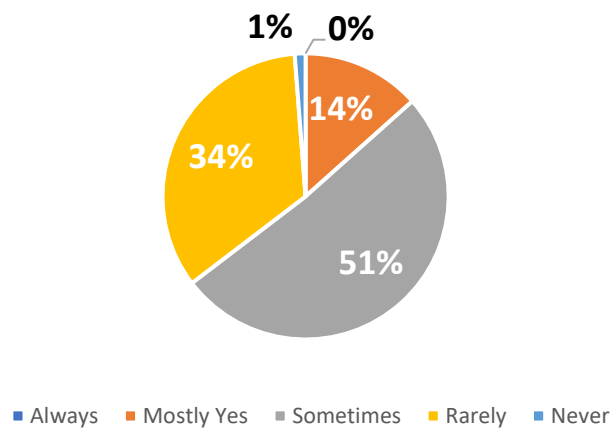


Fig 3.13 (A) If you answered yes, can you describe how issues are addressed? (n=31)

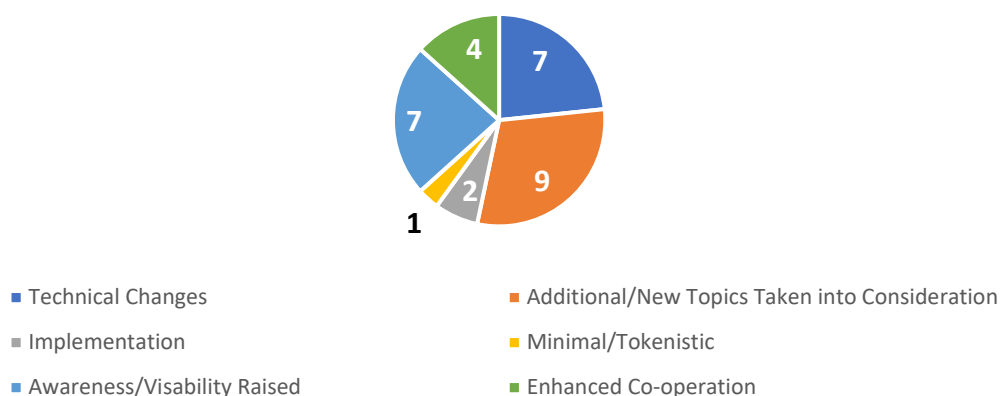


Fig 3.13 (B) If you have any other thoughts to share on issues you have experienced with stakeholder engagements, please feel free to input below: (Selected)

Again, it varies across government, but effective partnership working on the whole has declined in recent years with some very recent attempts to improve it

Closer to partnership and taking on board civil society expertise & principles would be ideal. Stakeholder engagement ranges depending on the issue and the decision-maker in question. Sometimes we are genuinely consulted, other times we are informing (if issue is not a priority for the decision-maker or if they don't agree with our position)

Most consultations with our sector are cosmetic consultation which is very opposite to the effect of the funders engagement with big business interests.

Participation of people experiencing the issue that require solutions is a stable principle that is often given lip service. Resources are not provided to adequately engage people while at the same time provide services. Timeframes for submissions are often very short and do not allow for adequate consultation. Sometimes only a week or two are given.

Power structures will not be overhauled by expressions of local concerns or priorities; consultations at best are guides that may help inform final decisions or at worst just window dressing. Most obvious example is [issue]. In my experience there is a community dynamic that operates locally that is far more influential than any national principles or objectives or even law. If a local wealthy community has access to power, it will decide who (or what) will benefit in their area and if they don't want something to happen it won't

Stakeholder engagement is very haphazard with government departments/agencies. Issues that affect the community we work with are often issues that are larger than a particular govt department [...] so no matter how much 'engagement' there is no 'one' dept can solve it. this can be frustrating

The role of private consultation competing for and setting the business conditionality for public funding has devalued the idea of citizen participation, democracy and the value of 'public good' making it more difficult to make arguments for funding of socio civil development activities within communities.

There is a lack of clarity as to when consultations will be done and when they will not. We had a recent experience of discovering an important legislative change was under contemplation without any apparent consultation process, which was only announced following intervention. Some consultations can feel tokenistic.

We have found it very frustrating to have our views and expertise sought through government consultation yet the decision making indicates that frequently these views are ignored, often in favour of vested interests. It is not clear how such consultations are used to actually make decisions.

While experience in recent years has been very negative, we have up to about 2016 been involved in processes of genuine engagement where our expertise was respected, views were taken on board and clearly reflected in outcomes

**Fig 3.13 (C) If you work across multiple policy areas or have different experiences in engaging with a multitude of agencies, departments etc. please add more detail here. (Selected)**

Although there are often really rich conversations at tables, it never appears to get into a predetermined or proscribed template of what is to be captured.

Authoritarian disciplinary approach in general since the beginning of austerity from state agencies toward the community organisations

[Government Department & State Agency]- actively seeking to silence community voices and to reconstitute [Networks] where traditionally there has been stronger service user and community engagement. [Government Department]: The new [Funding stream] overseen by this department is the complete opposite with strong engagement between the department and stakeholders. [Local Authority]: tokenistic and box ticking

Different departments/agencies have different cultures and approaches to engagement, but it also depends on the issue. Unsurprisingly, major shifts in thinking or proposals that 'threaten' established interests are less likely to be taken on board.

Gov departments open to engagement, but we're limited by low staffing/limited finance for additional hours. [State Agency] not open to engagement, [State Agency] somewhat open

It depends on what minister is in and where he/she is from, usually that is where the money for CD goes, i.e., recent resource centre funding

Most of it vies between tokenism and non-participation.

Some departments are far more interested in stakeholder engagement and genuinely treat you as partners e.g., [Government Department] have shown greater engagement and willing to meet outside of formal structures. [Three named Government Departments] may have mechanisms for engagement but are often rigid and not very inclusive.

Strategies get produced in a consultative way and then implementation committees are very tokenistic and there's no accountability for actions that are not progressed.

The voice of the community is being silenced either by Department need being more important [Government Department] or by an active silencing because our voices are an inconvenience to department objectives [Government Department]; only [Government Department], in our more recent experience seem actively interested in supporting community voice.

There is a difference between engagement with political actors and with government departments, generally politicians are more willing to engage with stakeholders than civil servants

There is not uniformity. Some individual officials or ministers are much more open than others. Organisational culture varies a lot.

Variation across government. Often the detail of policy decision will be taken on board but rarely at a macro/budget level

We work across multiple areas and departments including [Four named Government Departments]. It is our experience that there is a profound resistance to looking at [issue] in depth. This is not unique to Ireland and our international counterparts report similar findings. It is indicative of the power of vested interests to influence government thinking.

While main work is with [Government Department], which we have had more positive engagement with, we have also engaged with [Government Department], which has been mixed and [Government Department], which has not felt effective.

Fig 3.14 The "ladder of participation" is a visual designed by Sherry Arnstein to understand the level of citizen involvement in decision-making.

Based on your experiences:  
Where do you see the level of participation for your organisation now (Average: 5.04) Mode: Consultation (29)  
At what level would you like to see your organisation in an ideal world? (Average: 2.56) Mode: Partnership (49)

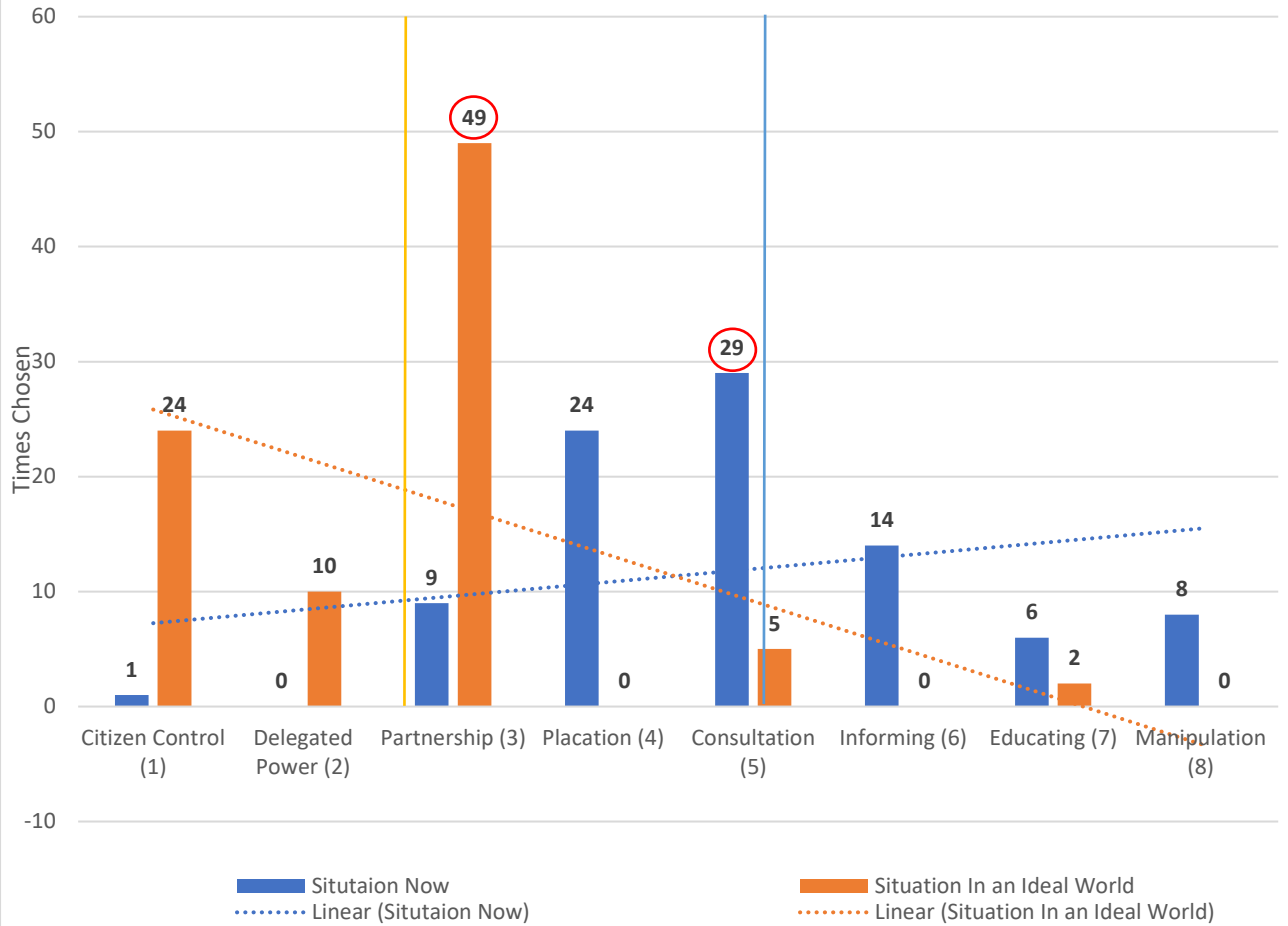


Fig 4.1: In your organisation's policy areas, what do you think the state's attitude to stakeholder engagement is? (n = 89)

Average Score: 4.12 Mean: 4 (21)

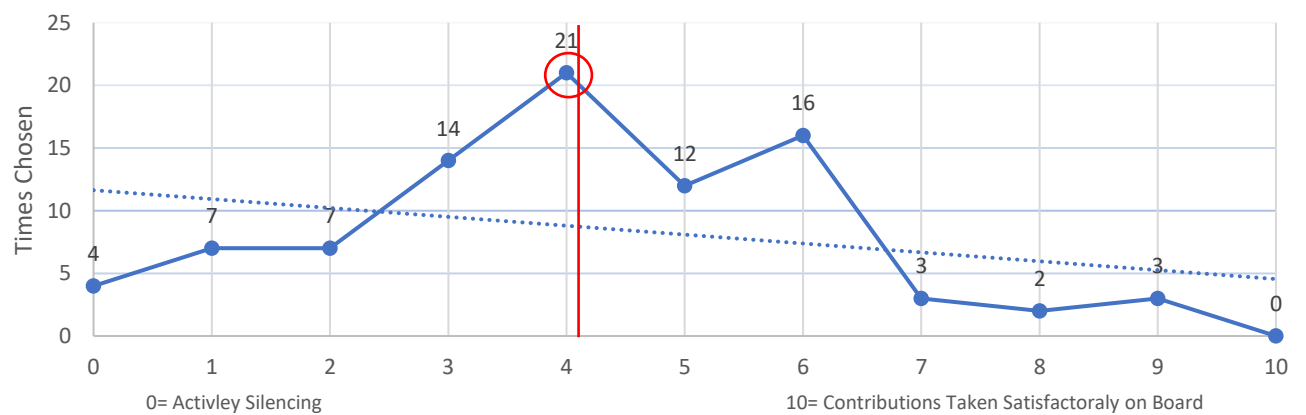


Fig 4.2: In general, current Irish political culture encourages the inclusion of the voice of organisations such as mine in policy formation. (n = 90)  
Average Score: 3.92 Mode: Somewhat Agree (35)

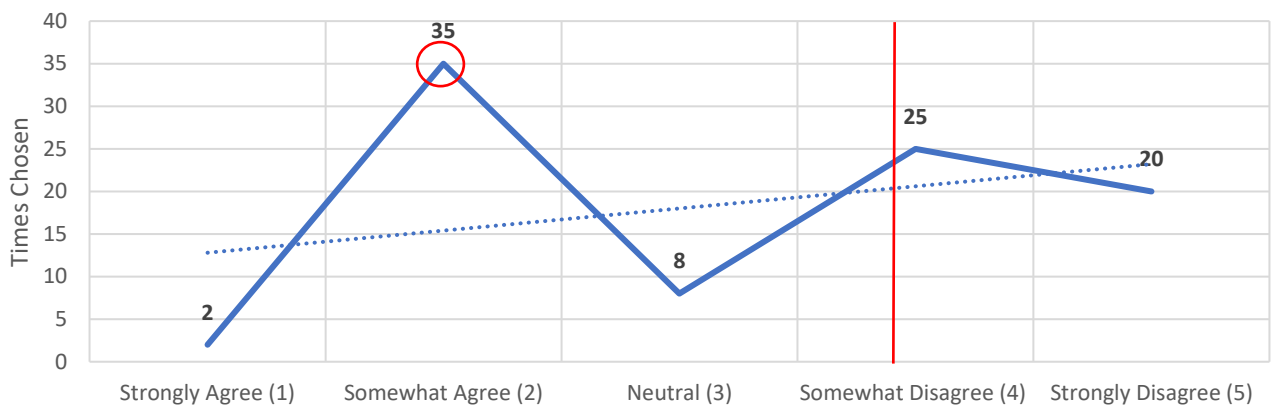


Fig 4.3: Economic power and strong vested interests are major drivers of government policy (n = 90)  
Average Score: 1.38 Mode: Strongly Agree (66)

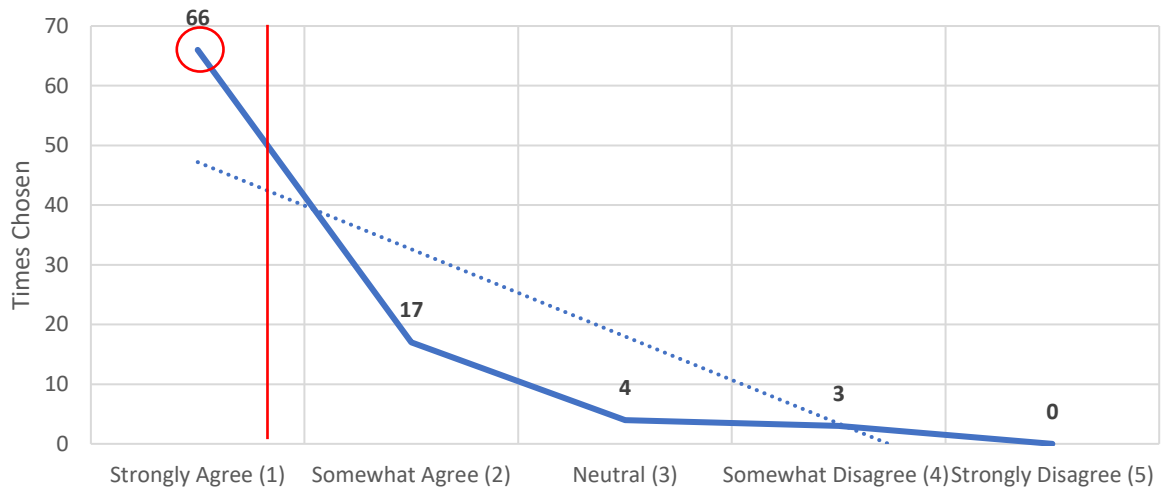


Fig 4.4: In my experience NGOs/CSOs/CVOs face pressure to tailor public statements to be in line with government policy (n = 88)  
Average Score: 3.5 Mode: Most of the Time (28)

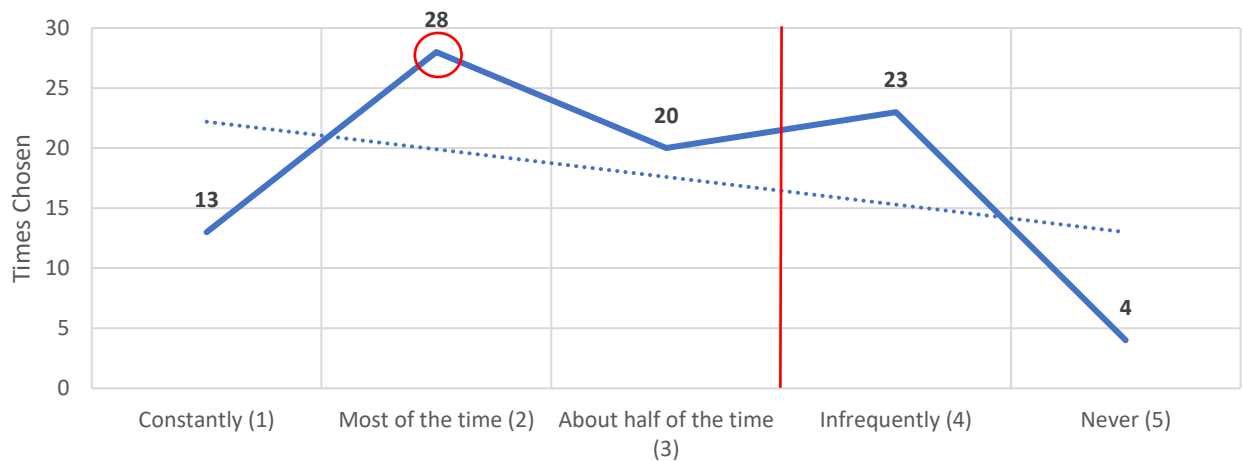


Fig 4.5: The Irish media fosters an accurate view of the NGO/CSO/CVO Sector and the work we do. (n = 90)

Average Score: 3.5 Mode: Somewhat Agree (43)

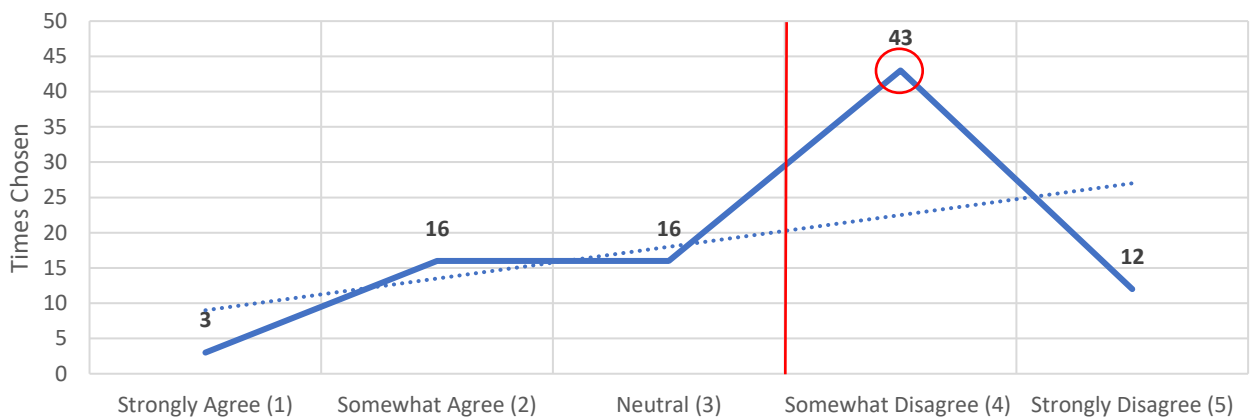


Fig 4.6: Organisations that dissent from current government policy are valued in the policy formation process. (n = 88)

Average Score: 3.73 Mode: Somewhat Disagree (29)

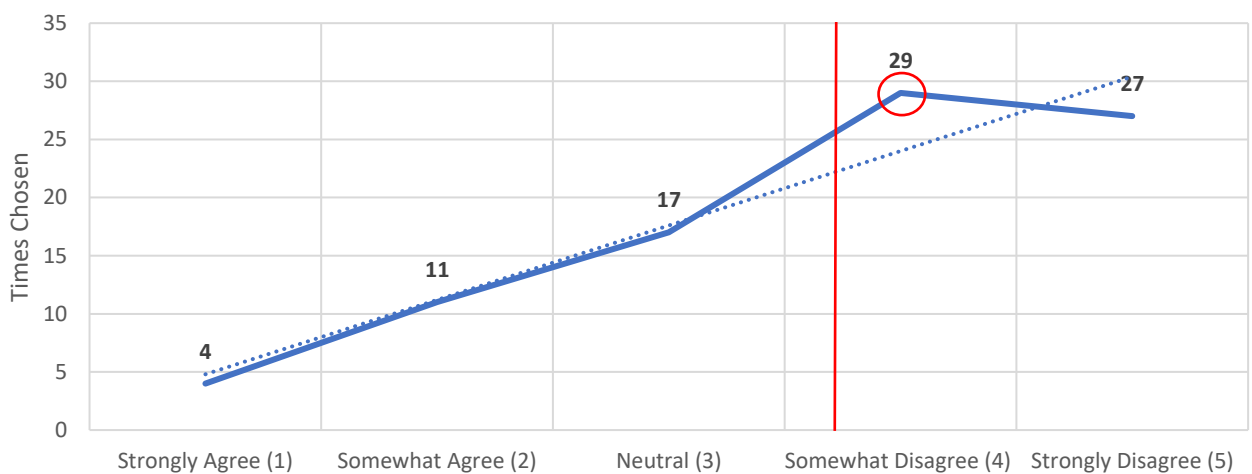


Fig 4.7: The government values NGOs/CSOs/CVOs and respects our work as part of policy development process. (n = 87)

Average Score: 3.34 Mode: Somewhat Disagree (30)

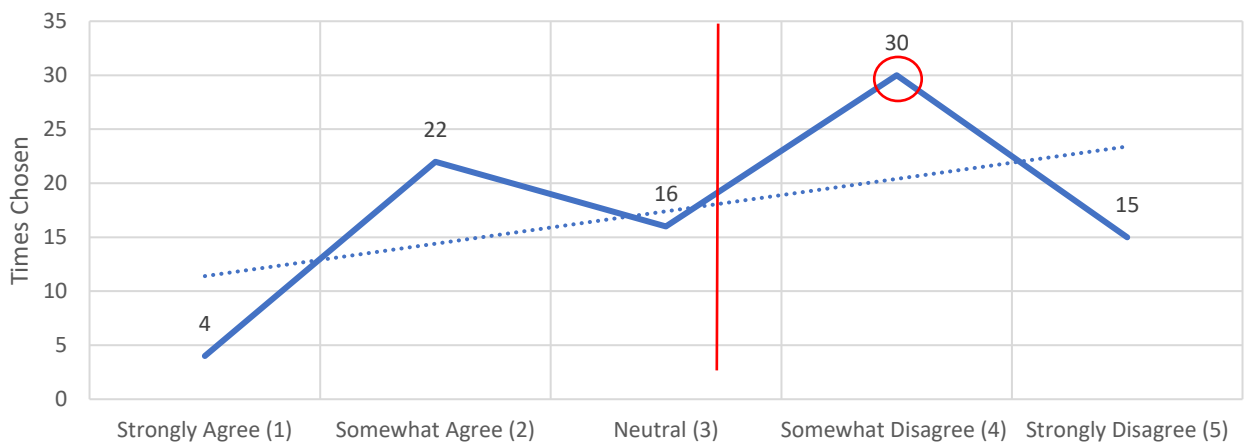


Fig 4.8 Organisations which dissent from government policy risk having their funding cut (n = 88)

Average Score: 2.4 Mode: Somewhat Agree (29)

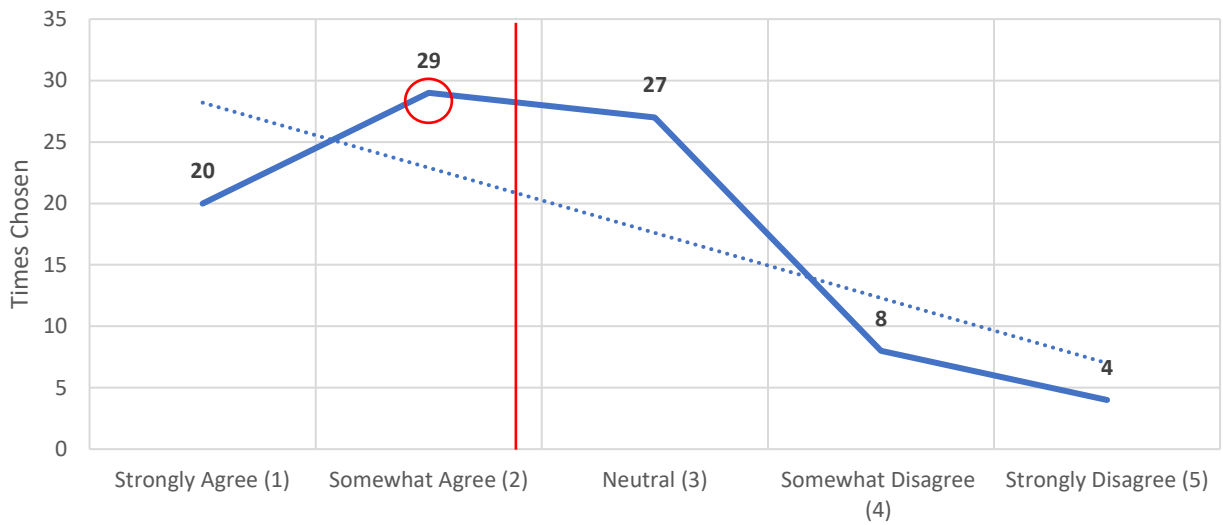


Fig 4.9: The government values the expertise and knowlegde we bring to the table as experts in our sector (n = 86)

Average Score: 3.14 Mode: Somewhat Agree (39)

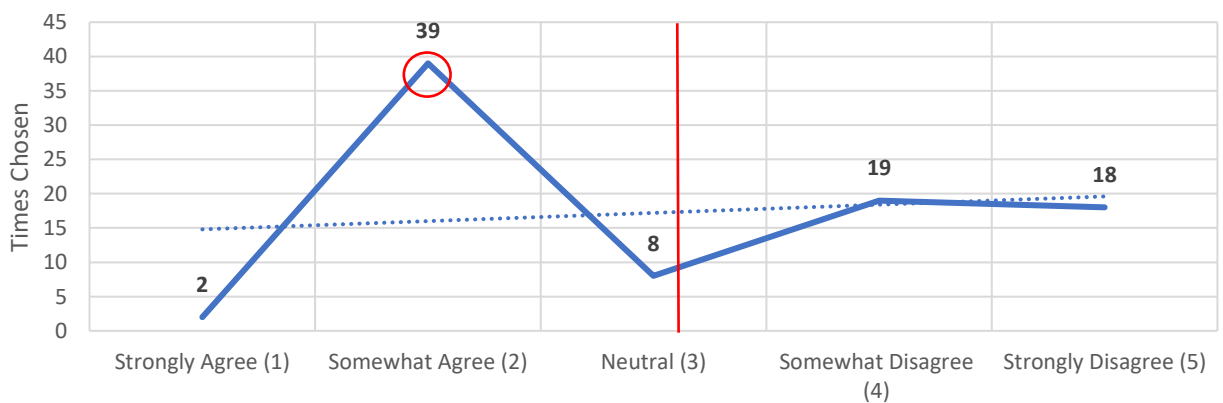


Fig 4.10: Organisations which dissent from government policy risk having their charitable status withdrawn (n = 87)

Average Score: 3.37 Mode: Neutral (32)

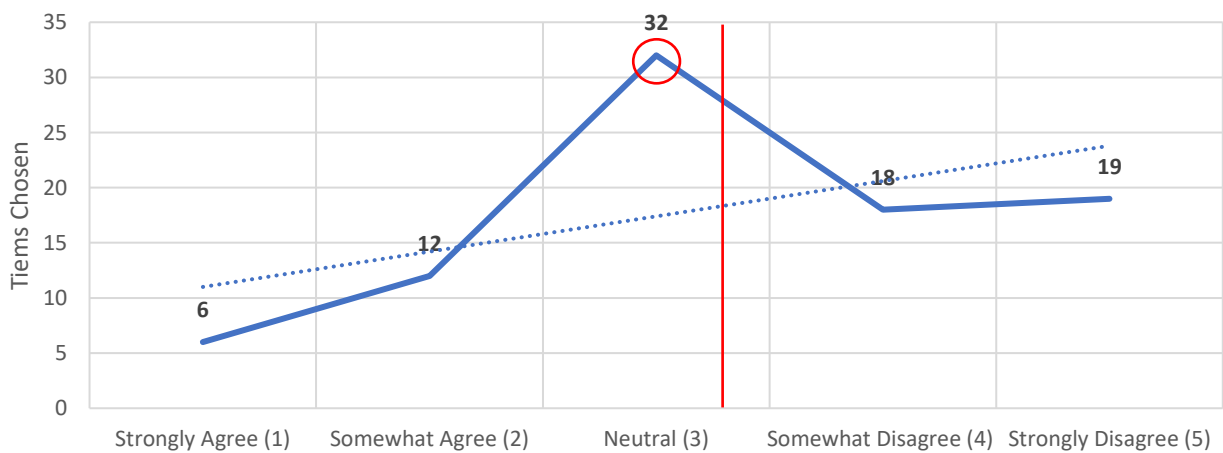




Fig 4.11: The Charities Regulator is of great benefit to the sector (n = 87)  
 Average Score: 2.7 Mode: Somewhat Agree (36)

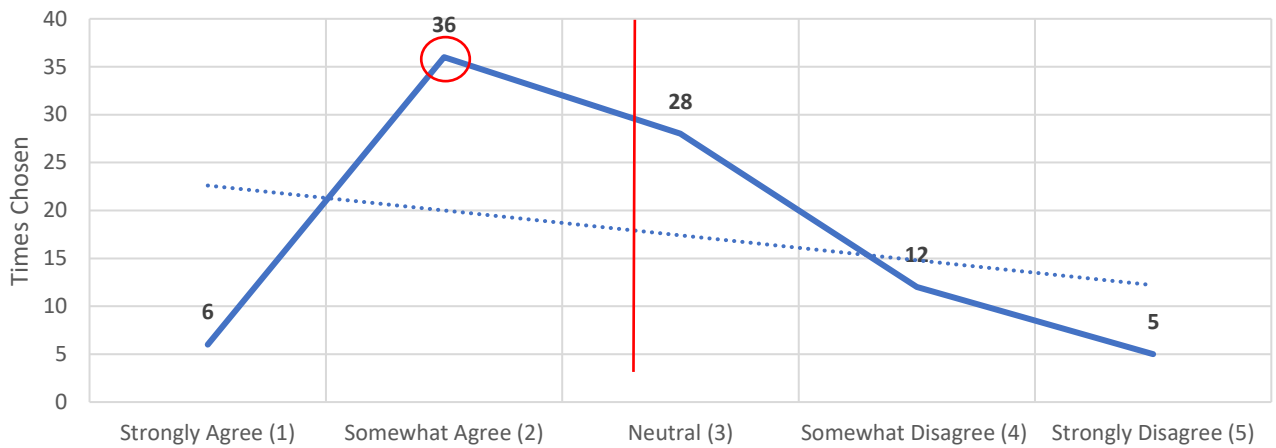


Fig 4.12: The government would prefer if we engaged in no advocacy and only in service delivery. (n = 87)  
 Average Score: 1.85 Mode: Strongly Agree (43)

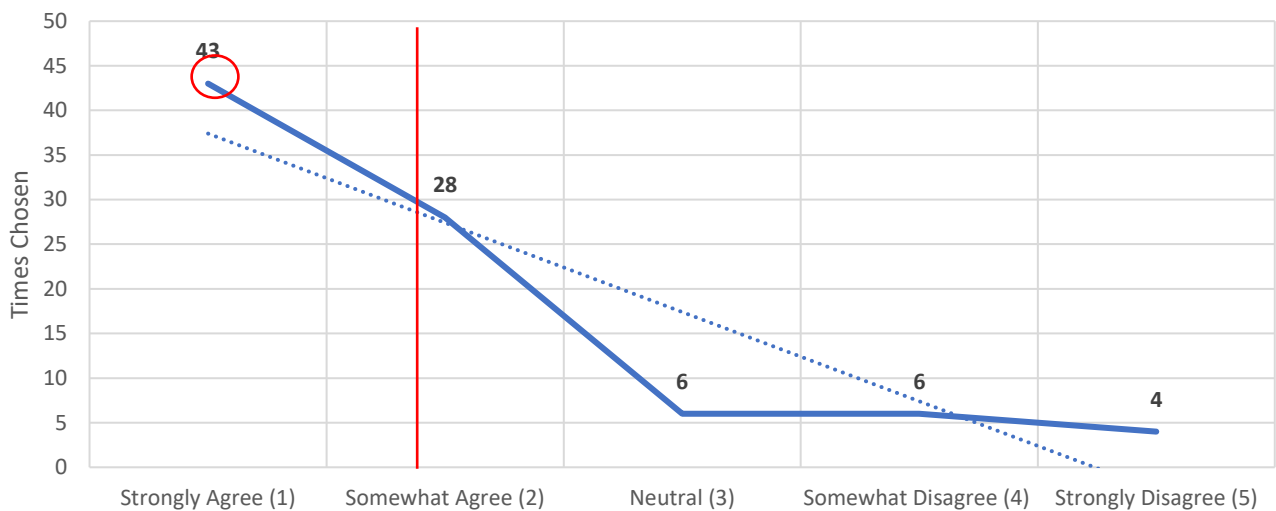
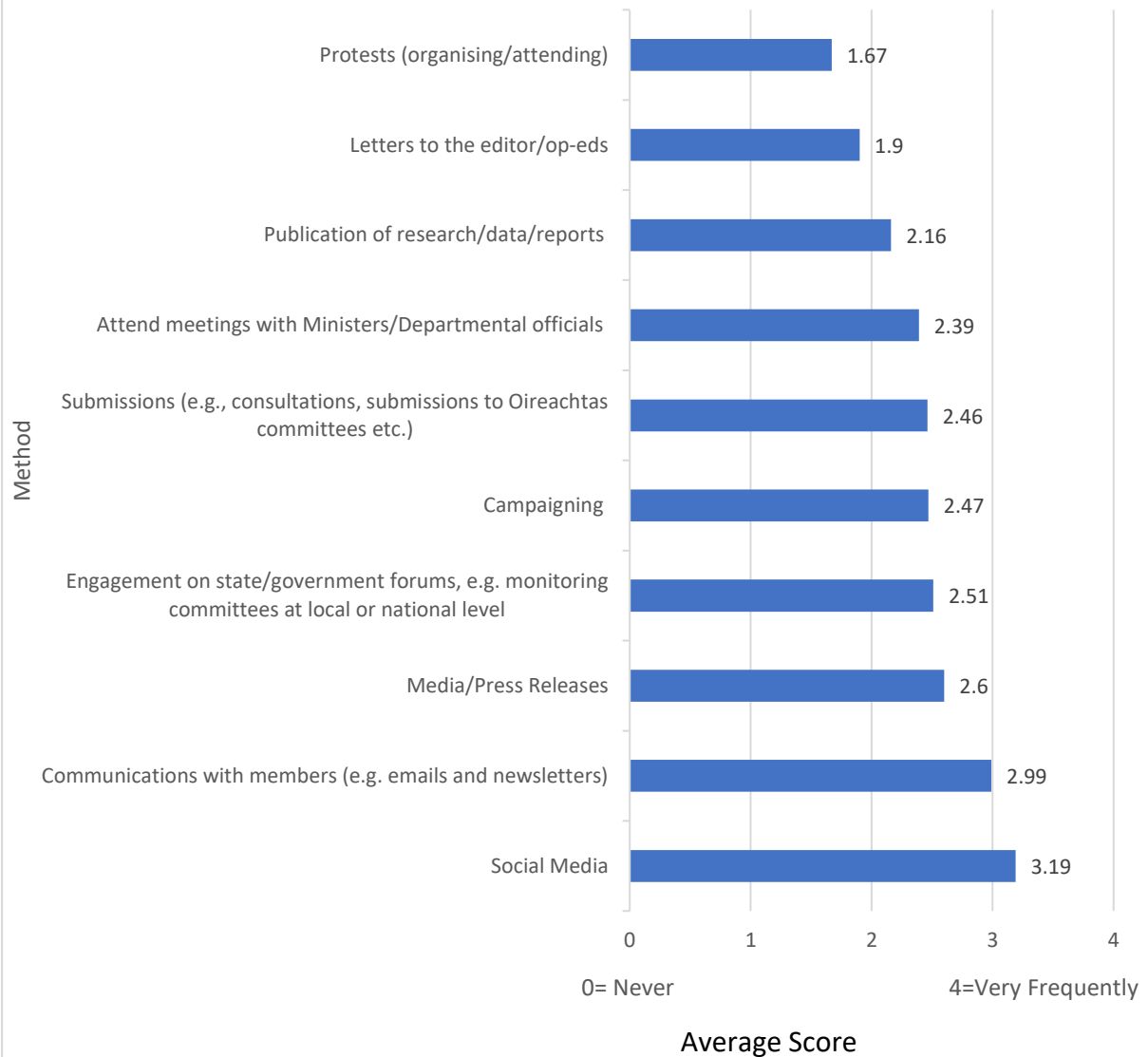


Fig 4.13: What methods does your organisation use to get your key messages across to policymakers/decisionmakers? (n=89)



4.14 Which of the following audiences would you consider to be key targets for your policy messages? (n = 89)

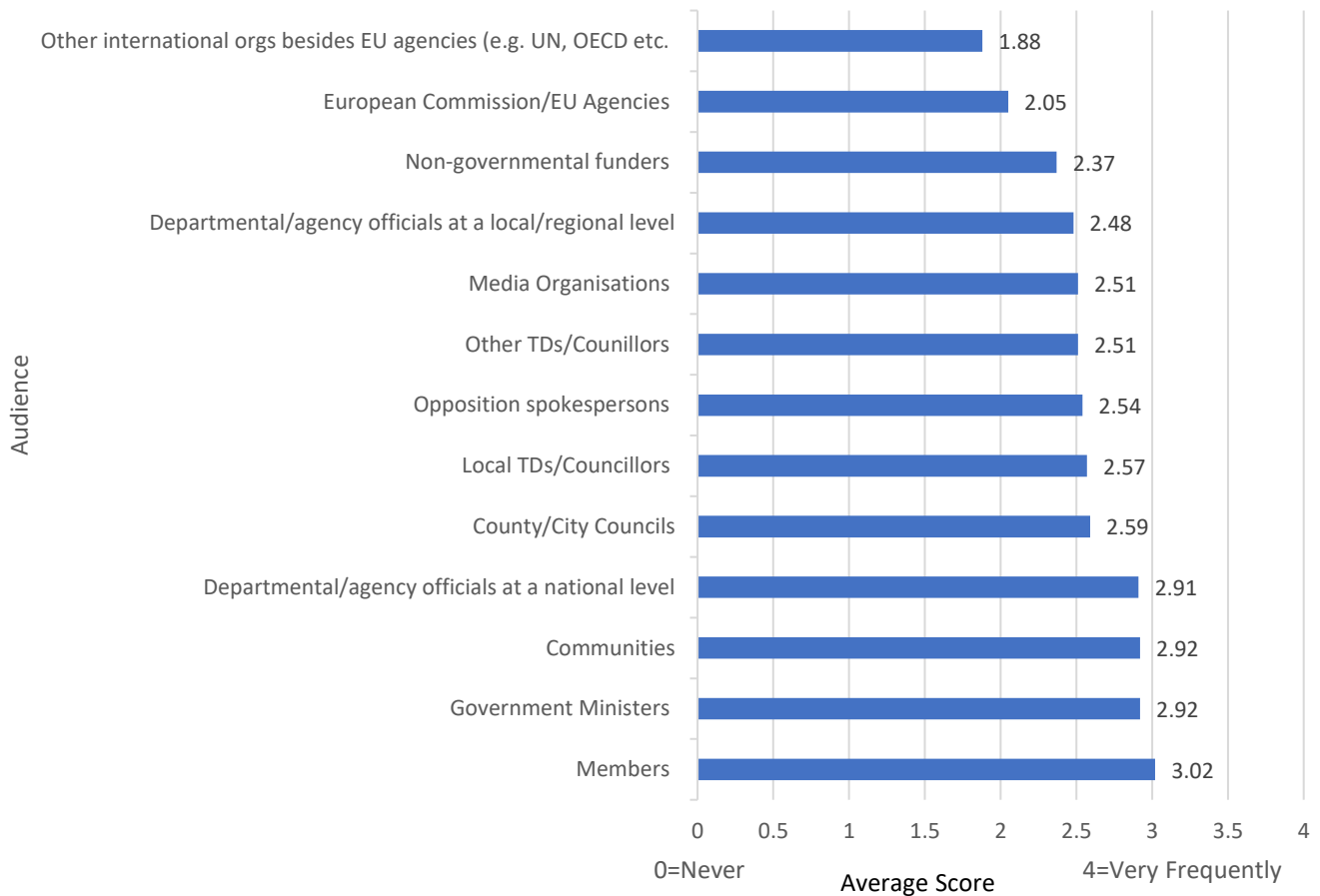


Fig: 4.15 Thinking about the last 12 months, how successful do you feel your organisation has been in having your key messages heard by policymakers/decsionmakers? (n = 88)  
Average Score: 4.48 Mode: 6 (16)

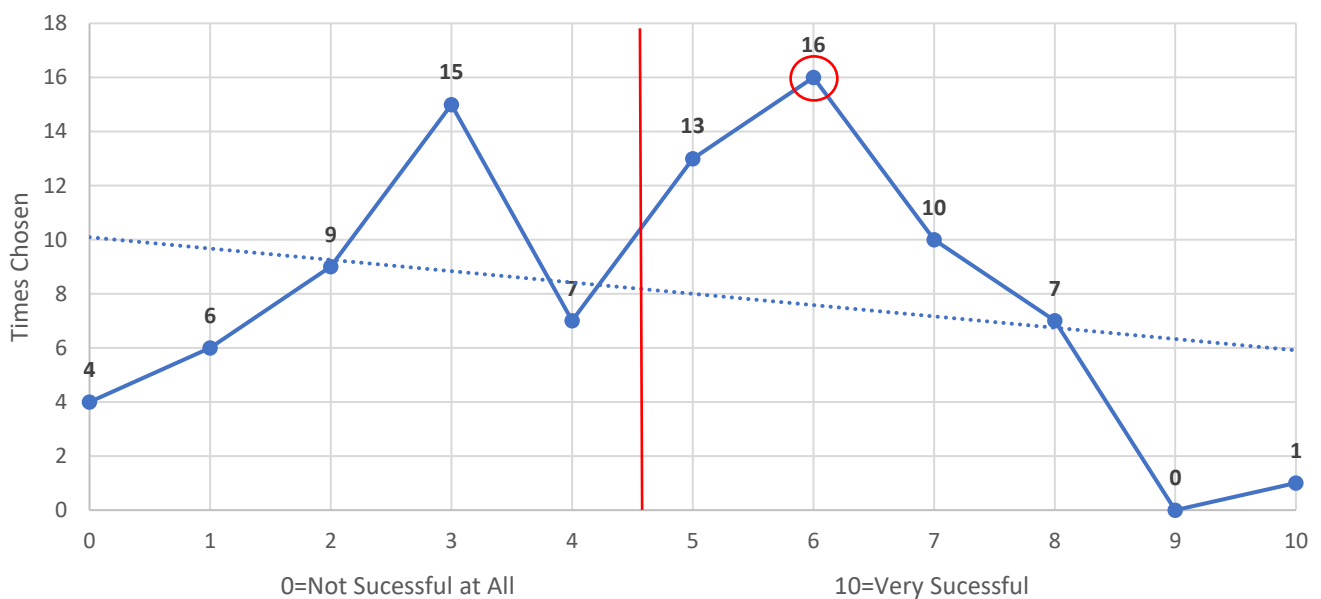
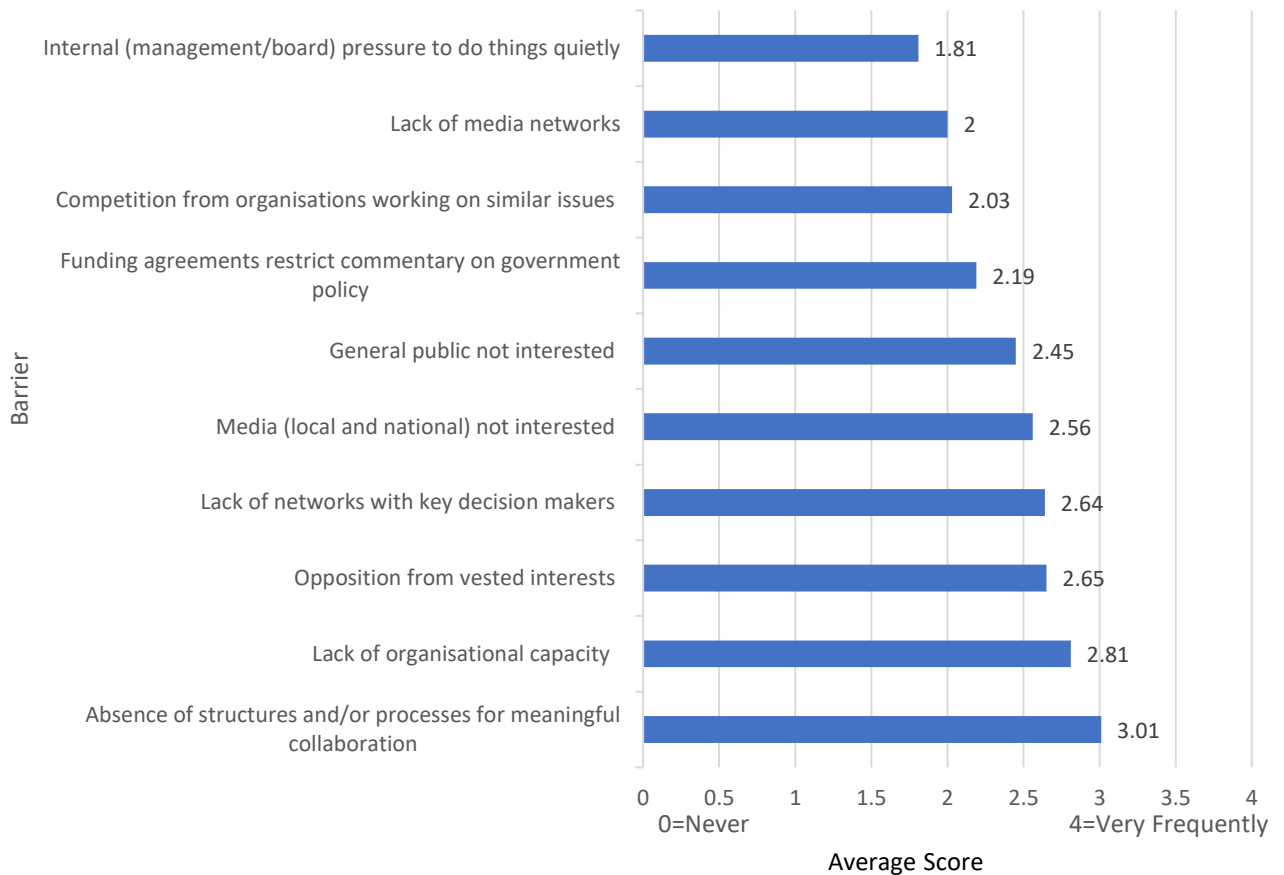


Fig 4.16 What do you think are the main barriers to having your organisation's message heard and acted upon by funders ? (n = 83)



**Thinking about the last 12 months, how successful do you feel your organisation has been in having your key messages heard by policymakers/decisionmakers? How can you tell? (Selected)**

Conversations with and follow up actions by Department Officials - most important for us and we happen to be working with [Government Department] Complete lack of movement to the opposite of what we want with another example - worrying example [Government Department].

One Minister engaging with us twice in 2 years. 4 TDs asking us for information, albeit two are local. 1 Local Senator visiting our office. Pretty terrible statistics.

Our positions/submissions reflected in policies [...], access to senior political figures and seeing our influence 'hold the line' on issues or expand/evolve thinking and narrative, regular engagements with policy makers and political figures, informing the development of issues.

Small comments in statements, Dail record - but the question is 'heard' - not acted on. In fact, interventions can lead to backlashes.

Some of our proposals have been taken on board in certain instances and others have been ignored.

They hear us, they just don't always act on what we're saying.

We are reasonably effective in getting our messages out but nor successful in getting them responded to or acted on

We convinced the Local Authority to establish a High-Level Working Group to deal with issues in specific location, [...].

We have had regular meetings with decision-makers and politicians across parties on key issues. They would be aware of our key policy asks - still a challenge to move to action on these asks.

We have not been loud enough for our voice to be heard and often have no vehicle through which we can make it heard.
We rarely even get responses to our submissions/letters beyond an automated thanks, and occasionally some generic public statement of Dáil speech the Minister has made which fails to address specific concerns/items/questions in our correspondence.
We see our messages reflected particularly in political statements, maybe not government policy however
We've been heard - but not listened to - the effect of our calls not reflected adequately.

**Fig 4.17 Do you have any further comments on attitudes to stakeholder engagement? (Selected)**

Charities regulator has itself become very bureaucratic & moved from a supportive reg. To be more like [State Agency] For example, stating without any prior issues, that they would only deal with trustees rather than executive staff. Luckily trustees pushed back.
[State Agency] procurement nationally and locally has no interest in engaging directly with the voluntary sector that provide vital services. Token engagement with representative bodies that act as a filter are not effective and often self-serving.
I have lost faith in Government. Ireland has the same population as that of Greater Manchester in the UK, yet with full Ministerial offices rather than civic offices. The system is so slow, cumbersome and mostly in denial of the great work and experience of NGOs. I have had ONE Minister engage, when the [issue] I represent has 240,000 people accredited to it, and crosses 8 different Government Departments. Everyone is far too busy doing I don't know what, to afford the time. As an unpaid CEO of my organisation, I find that incredible and deeply disturbing.
I think government are interested in working with NGOs particularly if they deliver services. There is an understanding of that type of work, and it is valued - often because such services are being carried out on behalf of the State. However, when it comes to fundamental policy work it is absolutely clear that government will listen very attentively to business and vested interests. Even when such interests actually cost the State significant amounts. [...] It is clear who the government is listening to at the moment.
I think there are always pockets of government who welcome NGO input, but those opportunities are often contracted out to private consultants with little or no knowledge of the issue, so public -policy makers at all levels and NGOs are having fewer and fewer opportunities to build relationships, engage and are receiving their information from the consultant.
I think you also need to include the state...governments come and go but there is a mind-set that operates at state level which informs incoming ministers on how things should be. Most government ministers have very limited experience of the historical perspective of their ministry, but their officials are the ones who will advise them of the best way forward or how the department operates and their relevant programmes. If the officials are oblivious or indifferent to the concerns of people at the coalface, then how on earth would a government know how or what to do? Policies are designed by officials, not ministers. They just claim credit for them.
In general, we have experienced strong engagement both politically and with civil servants on multiple issues of policy and legislation. This has evolved much over the past 20 years and is in a much better position now than in the early 2000's for example. While we may not always agree or see our positions reflected, there is a sense that the expertise of the organization is respected, valued and that our positions are well informed and not vexatious. We have never come under pressure to limit our public engagement or positions or risk our funding being impacted.
Our relationship with the government department very much depends on the topic we are working on. If it's seen as of benefit to the government or that particular department our engagement is welcomed, if not, it really is not.

The charities regulator and unrealistic governance impositions have made the work of the charity I run more difficult. They have been very difficult to work with making the running of the company more onerous, and more needlessly bureaucratic.

The Charities Regulator is a valuable asset for the sector; however, legislation should be updated to ensure that legitimate activities related to lobbying, advocacy and campaigning which are part of our mandate are covered. There is also a need for greater clarity in how the legislation can be interpreted by the CRA. Currently, it appears to be interpreted in a very narrow manner, i.e., political activity can be permissible when it 'directly supports' the organisation's charitable objective. A combination of a limited set of charitable objectives in the legislation and a very narrow interpretation of what 'directly' means, potentially limits what NGOs can do, in a manner which is not reflective of the role of civil society in bringing about social change. Social change happens through a complex and non-linear set of actions and interactions, whereas the guidelines on political activities for the charity sector tends to suggest that only actions that have a direct causal relationship with achieving the charitable purpose are acceptable and permissible. The experience of development organisations may differ from national organisations. We have freedom in our advocacy as it is all funded from non-Government funds and don't face restrictions on this in the Irish context. However, we do face concerted campaigns when we advocate on particular issues. Whilst we are included in Government consultations and are invited to stakeholder engagements etc., we don't always have strong influence over the issues we are advocating on. We have good access and respect, but our influence varies according to the issue at hand.

The Charities Regulator is very blunt instrument, some community groups are being forced to take on charitable status because they receive grant funding for very small projects. This is a huge commitment for them, and we have lost quite a number of groups because of this

The community sector provides services to more disadvantaged communities cheaply and are patronised by the government. We are not valued so Section 38 & 39 grant agreements are never increased to accommodate rising costs and salaries. Many community workers have moved to the state sector because of this. With regard to advocacy there is little room for a voice in this regard. We belong to a [network] which has a strong voice, and an attempt was made to silence us which because we were strong, we were able to resist this attempt to silence us. The state use 'consultants' and 'reviews' to waste our time and tie us into knots. This is very stressful

There has been a major shift in the last 10 years towards a focus on service delivery and away from collective engagement which is at the heart of community development organisations. Our work is measured in a quantitative way and does not allow for the time needed to create real change. Some organisations have adapted to the service delivery model and have retained their funding and continue to do good work. For those who did not shift and continued to remain true to core values have had a very difficult decade.

There is an issue with how Government and media present the interests we represent. The establishment media typically engage to either stimulate debate or create the appearance of balance. Consultation, engagement is box-ticking to comply with legal requirements and rarely if ever drives real change, until economic interests appear to align, and then those outcomes take the priority.

Ultimately, while I think policymakers do see value in the contribution of the sector and acknowledge our expertise, this is secondary to immediate pressures, both political (appeasing disagreeable audiences) and financial (lack of resources). This pressure then justifies courses of action which see inadequate supports given to the voluntary sector.

Variation across government. Regulator is vital but not functioning effectively in many areas. There is not widespread understanding of the contribution and central importance of civil society to economic and social life in Ireland. Often not helped by media narratives and focus.

We are paid lip service and often it is like we are there to take pressure off governments, they can say they provide a service in disadvantaged community, but really it is not properly resourced, we have taken pay cuts over the past 14 years in order to continue to provide local services

We recognise that our answers here reflect a particularly negative experience in recent years with [Government Department and State Agency] and we accept that experience with other Depts and agencies may be more positive. However, a key learning from our experience is that when there are difficulties with a specific dept/agency and in particular with key officials within those depts/agencies there is absolutely no mechanism for addressing it and in effect they can act with impunity