

# CHARITY DIGITAL SKILLS REPORT 2020





# CHARITY Digital Skills Report 2020

#CHARITYDIGIREPORT



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# INTRODUCTION

## **2020 could be a pivotal moment in how charities embrace digital.**

As COVID-19 unfolded, charities have had to embrace remote working, digital fundraising and online service delivery as never before.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic was one of the key changes we wanted to explore as part of this year's Charity Digital Skills Report, whilst also measuring what long term changes are taking place behind the scenes.

This is the fourth year we've run the report, our annual barometer of the state of digital skills across the sector. Digital skills are essential for digital evolution. By tracking how these are changing year on year across the sector we are also able to offer insights into how other critical success factors in digital are changing, including strategy, leadership, and governance. The cornerstone of all of this should be how charities are keeping pace with their users' needs, which are likely to be changing rapidly during this time of wider digital adoption.

As the sector develops its use of digital further, we have added new questions to the report to explore access to funding and support needs in digital, to measure digital product development skills and to understand how charities are factoring user needs into their digital activities.

This year, to extend our data analysis, Skills Platform and Zoe Amar Digital are delighted to have partnered with Catalyst on the report. Catalyst is a collective of digital agencies, funders and charities based in the UK, which works to improve the digital, data and design capabilities of charities and civil society organisations. Their key activities include sharing best practice, connecting charities to the best placed support, and providing funding. The report will be a valuable resource for their work helping civil society respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

We hope that our report helps you understand where your charity and the sector are at, strengthening the case for support and investment for digital. Above all, in this year of huge change, we hope our insights will help charities understand how the sector is transforming, step by step, so that it can continue to grow in digital skills and confidence and help more of the people it serves.

## **Happy reading!**



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Founder  
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# BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH



2020 marks the fourth year we've run The Charity Digital Skills Report. Since the report began in 2017, we've built a picture of how the charity sector is evolving in response to the growing importance of digital to donors, supporters and wider society.

The coronavirus pandemic may, in retrospect, be a watershed moment in how charities engaged with digital. However, these trends are at early stages and, whilst there are some promising indications ([see our COVID-19 results analysis](#)), a broader view is emerging of how the charity sector is changing. The pandemic represents a crucial moment when the sector needs to embrace digital to stay relevant and diversify its offering.

We launched the survey to build the report before lockdown began. Following this, we realised we had an opportunity to understand how charities were using digital to adapt to the coronavirus crisis and so we added in questions to track this.

Between March and May, we heard from 429 charity professionals about how they are using digital and what this means for trends around skills, governance, leadership and strategy across the sector. We wanted to help charities:

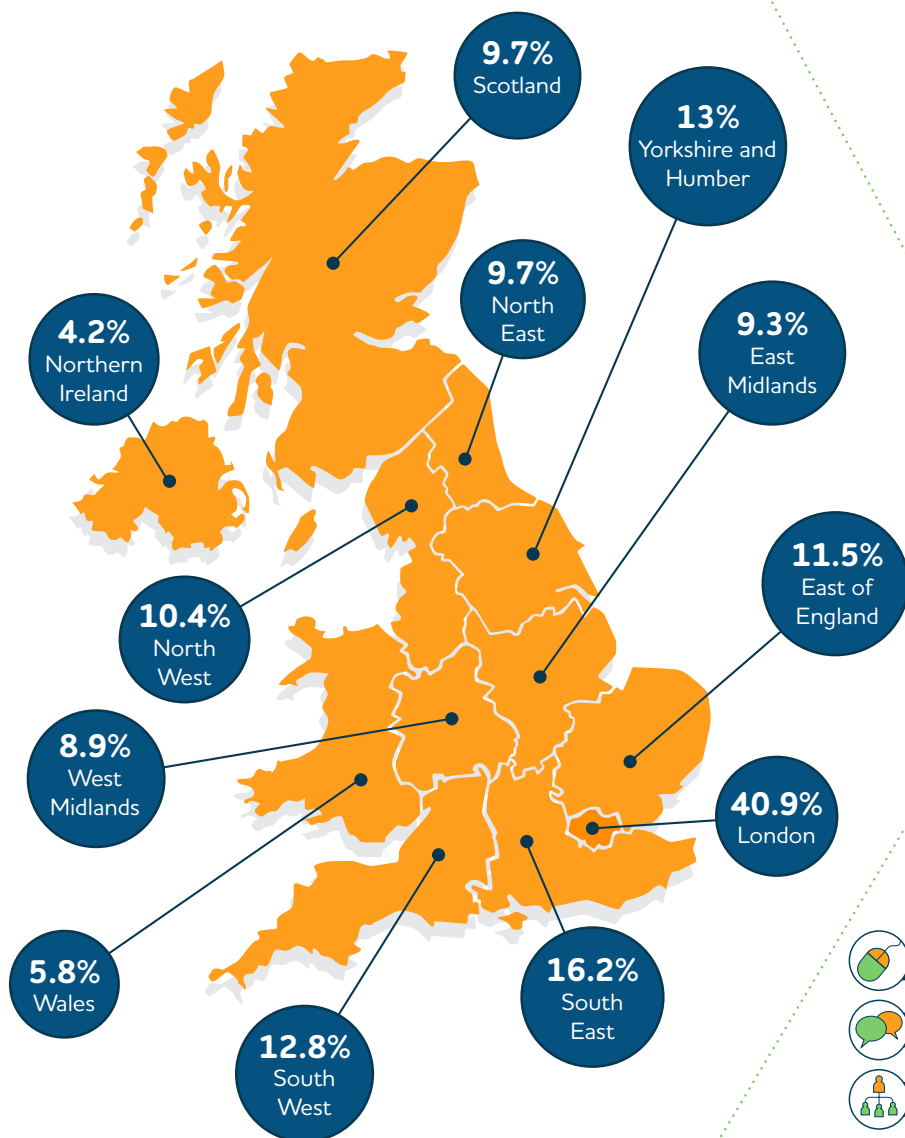
- Understand the overall digital trends across the sector, so they can benchmark their organisations.
- Learn how key issues such as COVID-19, diversity and digital skills on boards could affect their future.
- Track progress made over the last four years and what this means for the sector.
- See where the skills gaps are and analyse what this could mean for charities' sustainability.

We've reported all relevant data from the entire period the survey was open (March 3–May 24, 2020). However, we have undertaken additional analysis of data pre and post-COVID-19 (we define post-COVID-19 as being 20 March 2020 onwards, as that was when government announced the closure of schools and shops). We have also included information on different sizes of charities and stages of digital maturity. We've picked out highlights on these areas where there are points of interest.

If you'd like to download the anonymised data from our report, [you can do so here](#).

*NB: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.*

# SURVEY OVERVIEW

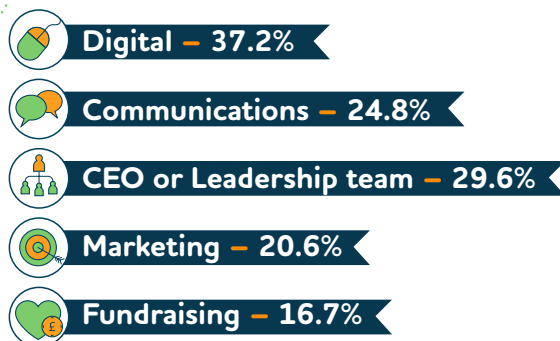


Respondents were asked to select all geographies they had a presence in

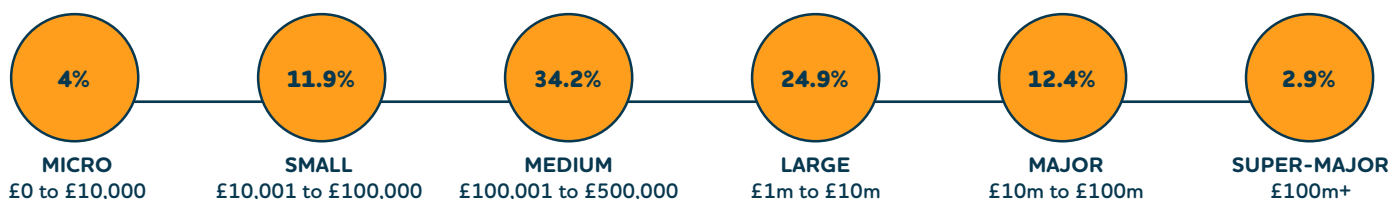


## ROLE

TOP 5 BY REPRESENTATION



## CHARITY INCOME



9.7% didn't know or preferred not to say

# KEY FINDINGS



# KEY FINDINGS

The pandemic is the biggest cause of digital disruption in the sector this year. COVID-19 has been a push for the sector to embrace digital with the aim of staying relevant, helping more people and developing new ways of working, fundraising and offering services. However, whilst there has been acceleration in some areas of charities' digital development, there has been little progress in others.

## EFFECTS OF COVID-19

Our questions were designed to surface the digital needs of charities during the pandemic. They revealed that whilst there are positive indications about how charities are using digital to adapt to the crisis, there are also significant areas where they need support.

This indicates charities' previous digital experience and skills has affected their ability to respond to COVID-19.

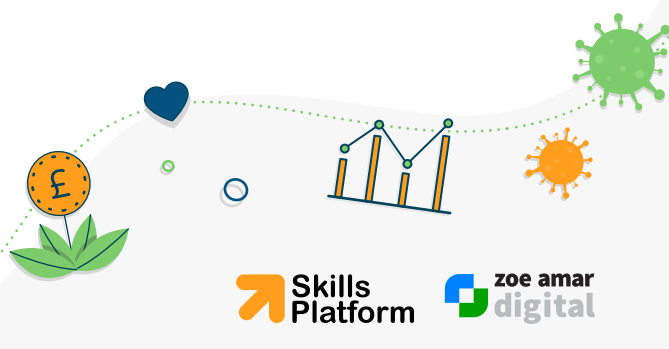
- **Two thirds (66%)** are delivering **all work remotely**, whilst 61% will be offering more online services. It's also encouraging that **almost half (47%)** are collaborating or sharing learnings with each other **around digital**.
- However, **27% have cancelled services** because either their charity or their users don't have the necessary skills or tech.
- **47%** are interested in **how to help users access services online**.
- **46%** want guidance on what works with **digitising face-to-face services**.
- **44%** want to help the **team adjust to change**.
- **43%** want financial support for new technical equipment, software or tools. **Our initial findings in May showed that only 34% wanted financial support for new technical equipment, software or tools, indicating that charities have a growing need.**
- **41%** want to help staff stay **motivated and productive**.

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## POST-COVID-19 FUNDING NEEDS

The funding landscape for charities has changed dramatically during lockdown. Things that charities want from funders includes:

- Scope to include digital in all funding applications (**45% of responses**).
- Additional funding to buy **essential tech and software now needed (38%)**. This grew to over 42% for small and medium sized charities.
- Flexibility of existing funding to **adapt services, activities and outcomes (37%)**.





## DIGITAL FUNDING

- Over the last year, just **under half of respondents (48%)** have not accessed any digital funding. Given our other findings about funding in this report, this suggests a significant unmet need.
- Overall, **11% are not sure if they have accessed any digital funding**. Small and medium sized charities were least likely to have accessed digital funding.
- However, **1 in 5 (20%) of all respondents** obtained funding to improve their online presence, reflecting our other findings in this report. Those who were paper-based were most likely to have accessed this funding.

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## KEY CHALLENGES FOLLOWING COVID-19

- More than **one third of charities (37%) don't have the income to invest in digital**, which is a concern at a time when adoption of digital needs to accelerate across the sector.
- **A third (34%)** see the fact that their audience is not online as **their greatest challenge**. This shows how charities need to take action on the digital divide. Users who are not online during the pandemic won't be able to access crucial services they need. Charities instead need to look at how they can help users access tech (e.g. donating devices and credit) or providing non-digital alternatives.

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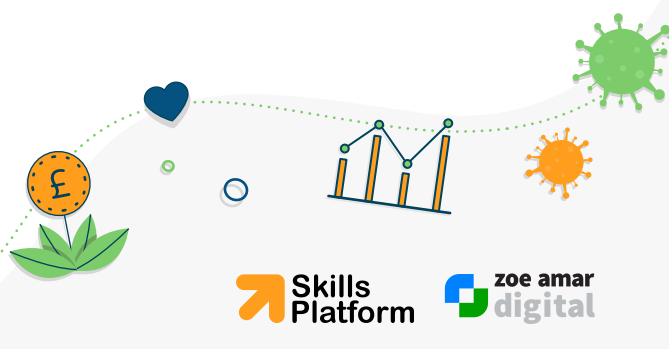
## INTERNAL BARRIERS

- **Lack of funding** is the biggest barrier to getting more from digital for **50% of charities**.
- **Staff skills came out as the second biggest barrier - with 48% of respondents** selecting this. This pattern of results is similar to last year.
- It's no coincidence that a similar number cite **organisational lack of confidence as an issue (47%)**.

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## STRATEGY

- Just **over half (51%)** of charities surveyed **still don't have a strategy for digital** (whether that's a standalone strategy or integrated with the organisational strategy). This is similar to 2019 when 52% did not have one in place.
- However, there are some positive indications that charities are seeing digital as more of a strategic priority: **39% have an organisational strategy that includes digital** (or they have a digital strategy) and it's a priority for them.



## DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS

Over the next 12 months, charities' top four priorities are:

- Half of respondents want to **develop their digital channels**.
- Yet culture is also key – **45% want to improve this**.
- **Digital fundraising is also a priority** and 41% want to improve this.
- This goes hand in hand with the **41% who want to develop a strategy and integrate digital into their organisation**. The latter has stayed the same since 2019.

If charities could increase digital skills, they would like to do the following:

- **Growing reach** is the biggest priority this year (68%).
- **Two thirds (66%)** of charities want to get more from their data (although this has fallen from 81% last year) and **65% want to deliver their strategy effectively** (similar to last year).

---

## LEADERSHIP

- Once again charities have cited strong digital leadership as their key need. **67% want their leadership team to offer a clear vision of what digital could help them achieve**. This has dropped by 6% from last year but is still the most pressing need amongst charities.
- **62%** want their leadership team to **understand the key trends** and how they affect charities, up from 57% last year and almost matching the 63% who wanted this in 2018.
- **57%** want their leaders to be more confident in **moving their charity forward with digital**.

If boards or leadership teams don't develop their digital skills:

- **66%** are concerned that **they will miss out on opportunities to help users**, whilst 58% are worried that they won't reach their audience, up from 50% last year.
- **59%** are worried that **digital fundraising could be affected**, similar to the 60% last year.
- **51%** say that **brand and reputation could be affected**, up from 47% last year.



## BOARDS

- Most charities (**66%**) rate their board's digital skills as low or having room for improvement, down 2% from 2019. Charities must make developing trustees' digital skills a priority if they are to build a stronger future post-pandemic. How can charities transform if their boards do not transform with them?
- There is clearly a large digital skills gap on boards, yet **over a third (38%) don't know what is being done to change this**. This has declined from 45% last year and 48% in 2018, which may indicate that there is more clarity in this area for some charities. However, digital skills amongst trustees is a key issue for the sector and more radical change is required.
- Despite this, **32% of charities do not have any plans to increase digital skills on their board**. There has been little movement on this from the 2018–2019 figures.
- **4% are investing in digital training for trustees**, down from 7% last year.
- **9% of charities are recruiting a digital trustee**, which hasn't changed since 2019. This is surprising, given that only 7% feel their board has strong digital skills already.

## SKILLS

- Overall, **1 in 5 charities have poor skills across a range of areas of digital**, including user needs, data, analytics, cybersecurity, digital service delivery and digital fundraising.
- **29% rate their basic skills** (e.g. synchronising and sharing files) as excellent, with **52% rating themselves as fair**. However, 18% think they are poor in this area, which, at almost 1 in 5, seems worryingly high.

## USER NEEDS

- Once again, charities highlight a skills gap around user needs. **91% rate themselves as fair to poor in understanding how their audience uses digital**. This is a significant concern. Just 8% rate themselves as excellent (with 52% saying that they are fair and 39% poor).
- Echoing this, **87% say they are fair to poor at user research**.
- For those that offer digital services or tools, **62% do not engage regularly with users** to identify improvements.

## DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Charities' confidence with digital channels is mixed. Email marketing seems to be a skills gap, **with 28% rating themselves as poor and 49% as fair**. Last year, 62% rated themselves as good to fair.
- Meanwhile, **79% say that they have fair to poor skills in SEO and ads**, which has risen again from 58% last year. It is also a concern that **82% rate themselves as fair to poor at making the most of their website and analytics**.
- However, **32% say they are excellent at social media**, a strong improvement from 17% in 2019. This is the highest rated skill in the survey.

## DATA

- **88% say they are fair to poor at using, managing and analysing data** (with 46% saying that they are fair and 42% poor). This is a worrying increase from 2018–2019 when 62% rated themselves as fair to low.

## DIGITAL FUNDRAISING

- **Digital fundraising is also an area where charities lack confidence**. 78% say they are fair to poor at this, again a significant rise from 59% last year. This is one of the weakest skills for charities, with 45% saying that they are poor at this.

## DIGITAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- **83% say they are fair to poor at digital service delivery** (of these, 40% say they are poor), soaring from 60% last year and 53% in 2018. The fact that both fundraising and service delivery are gaps at a time when the sector is so dependent on digital is a worry.

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- **80% are fair to poor at developing digital products**, up from 55% who were fair to low last year. This year, half (51%) say that they are poor at this, which is worrying in the context of needing to offer more services online.

### Of those who develop digital products:

- **89%** do not make their solutions available for others to use.
- **68%** do not follow agile development practices.
- **62%** do not trial simple versions as early as possible.
- **62%** do not engage regularly with users to identify improvements.

## EMERGING TECH

- **60% have low skills in AI**, which is better than 2019 when 76% said they had low to very low skills in AI. However, 31% either don't know what it is or say it's not applicable.
- **Horizon scanning is a skills gap in the sector**. Only 9% say they are excellent at this.
- **35% said that they know of ethical issues related to emerging tech** but aren't sure if they're relevant. This is worrying as automation is likely to increase as a result of the pandemic.
- **21% say these issues aren't relevant to them**, which is a big increase on 9% last year. It is surprising given that emerging tech now touches many of our lives and those of our beneficiaries and that **nine million people are struggling to get online**.

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## DIVERSITY

- **25%** say that they need to **improve diversity amongst staff with digital responsibilities**. We were worried to see that this has declined from 41% last year, given sector data on diversity.
- **18%** say there is **limited awareness of this issue**, whilst 15% don't know what their charity is doing about this.

# DETAILED FINDINGS



# WHERE WE ARE



## Q 1 What stage is your charity at with digital?

Just over half (51%) of charities still don't have a digital strategy. This is similar to 2019 when 52% did not have one in place. There are some positive indications that charities are seeing digital as more of a strategic priority: 39% have an organisational strategy that includes digital (or they have a digital strategy) and it's a priority for them.

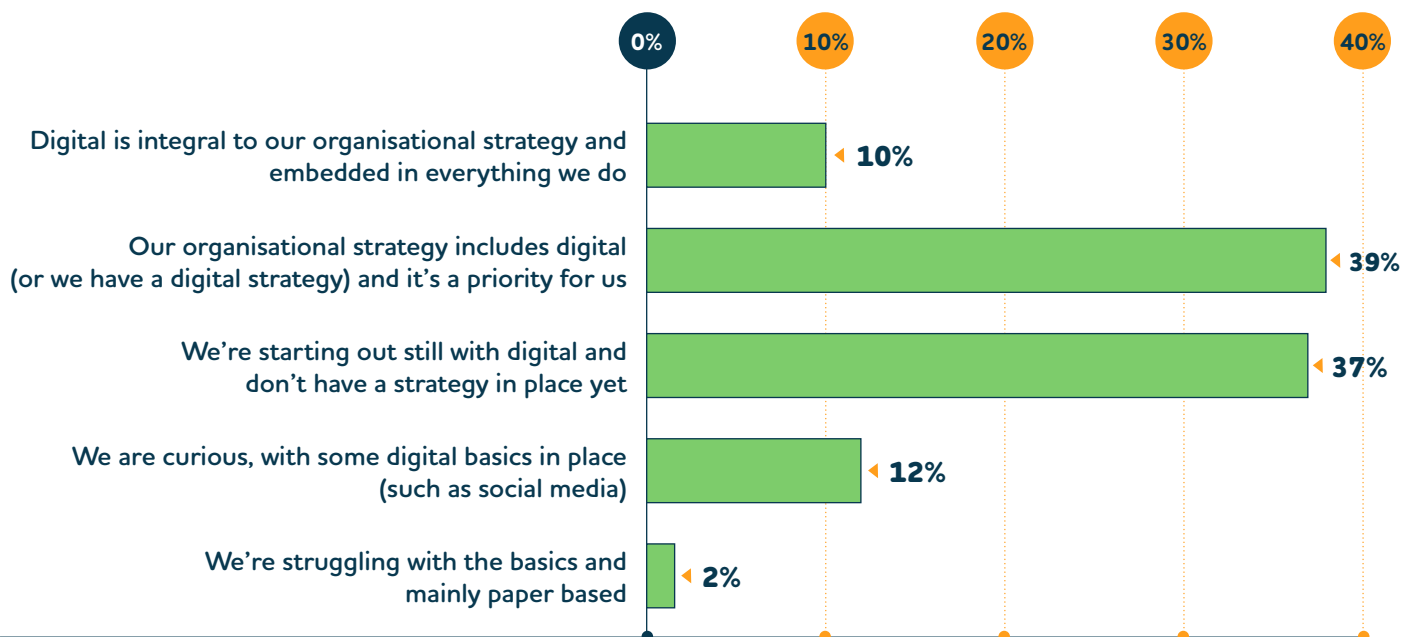
### ANALYSIS

● **37% of charities are starting out** and don't have a strategy in place yet. These, plus those who are curious and have some digital basics in place (12%) and those who are struggling with the basics (2%), amount to **51% of charities who do not have a strategy in place**. This compares to 52% in 2019, 45% in 2018 and 50% in 2017.

● However, there are indications that digital is an emerging priority for charities. Whilst **10%** of charities told us that **digital is integral to their organisational strategy and embedded across their work**, which hasn't grown since 2019, 39% told us that their organisational strategy includes digital (or they have a digital strategy) and **it is a priority for them**. This is a positive sign.

● **Large** (£1m to £10m), **major** (£10m to £100m) and **super-major charities** (£100m+) were **most likely to be at the stage of digital being embedded across their work**.

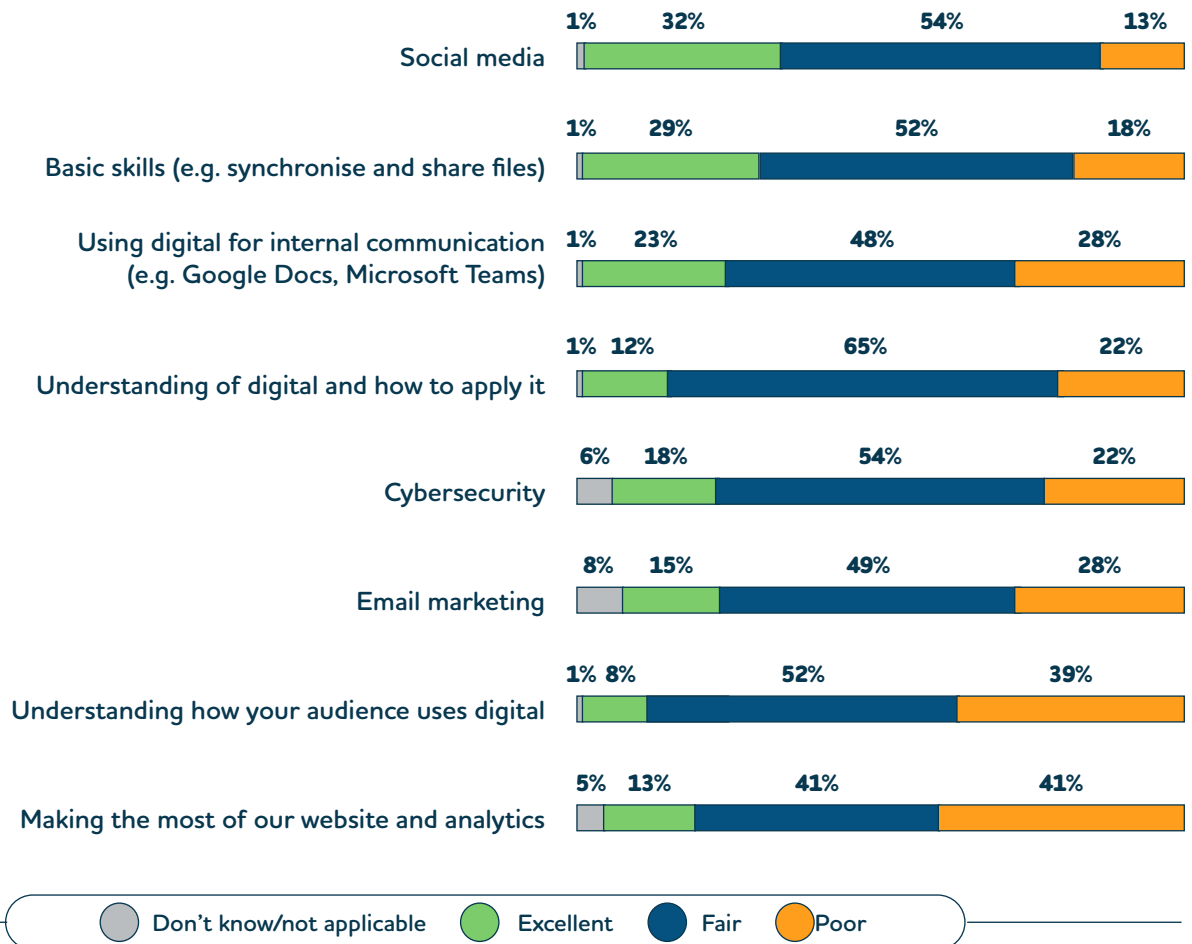
● **2% of charities are still struggling with the basics** and are mainly paper-based – a figure that hasn't changed much from 3% last year.





## Q 2 How would you rate your charity's skills in the following areas?

Whilst charities are feeling confident about areas such as social media and using digital for internal comms, it's worrying that charities rated a significant number of their skills as fair to poor, showing that the sector needs additional support.



### ANALYSIS

- **87% rate their understanding of what digital is** and how to apply it as fair (65%) or poor (22%), with only 12% rating themselves as excellent. This has **increased considerably from last year**, when 53% rated themselves as fair or low.
- **29% rate their basic skills** (e.g. synchronising and sharing files) as excellent, with 52% rating themselves as fair. However, 18% think they are poor in this area, which, at **almost 1 in 5, is worryingly high**.
- On a similar note, it is a concern that charities rate themselves towards the fair to low end of the spectrum for using digital for internal communication (e.g. Google Docs, Microsoft Teams), with **48% seeing themselves as fair and 28% as poor**. However, 23% rate themselves as excellent.

## Q 2 How would you rate your charity's skills in the following areas?

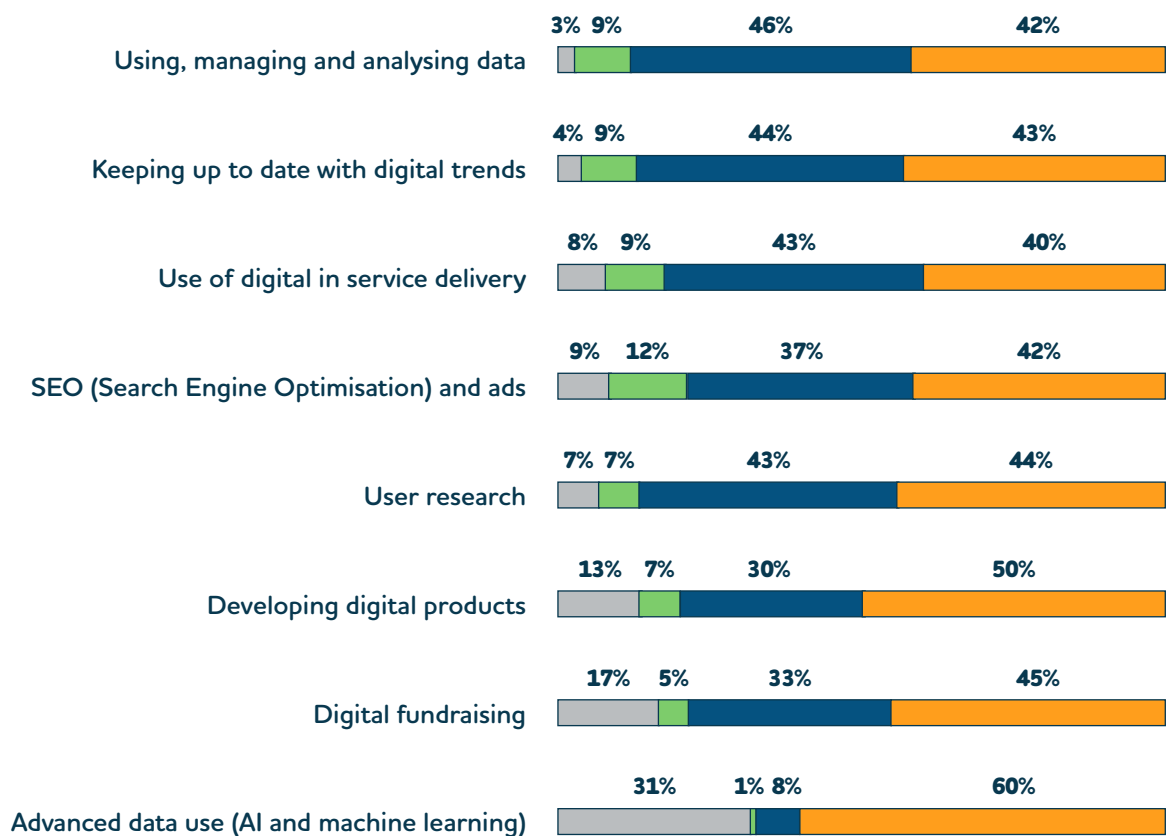
Once again, charities highlight a skills gap around user needs. **91% rate themselves as fair to poor in understanding how their audience uses digital** (with 52% saying that they are fair and 39% poor). This is a significant concern. Just 8% rate themselves as excellent. Echoing this, 87% say they are fair to poor at user research.

Charities' confidence with digital channels is mixed. **Email marketing seems to be a skills gap**, with 28% rating themselves as poor and 49% as fair. Last year, 62% rated themselves as good to fair. Meanwhile, 79% say that they have fair to poor skills in SEO and ads, which has risen from 58% last year. It is also a concern that 82% rate themselves as fair to poor with making the most of their website and analytics. However, 32% say they are excellent at social media, a strong improvement from 17% in 2019. **Social media is the highest rated skill in the survey.**

The point on **analytics is mirrored by how charities think they perform in using, managing and analysing data**. 88% say they are fair to poor at this (with 46% saying that they are fair and 42% poor). This is a worrying increase from 2018–2019 when 62% rated themselves as fair to low.

**Digital fundraising is also an area where charities lack confidence**. 78% say they are fair to poor at this, again a significant rise from 59% last year. This is one of the weakest areas for charities, with 45% saying that they are poor at this. This skill is much needed in the context of COVID-19 where face to face events have been cancelled.

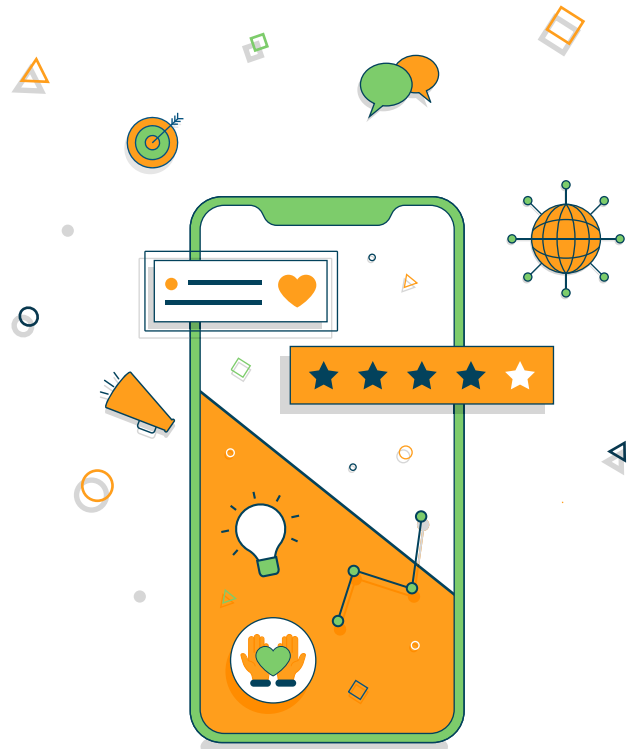
**76% say they are fair to poor in cybersecurity**, which is an issue with so many charities operating remotely (although only 22% say that they are poor in this area). In 2019, 54% said they were fair to low at this.



Don't know/not applicable
  Excellent
  Fair
  Poor

## Q 2 How would you rate your charity's skills in the following areas?

- **83% say they are fair to poor at digital service delivery** (with 43% saying fair and 40% poor), soaring from 60% last year and 53% in 2018. The fact that both fundraising and service delivery are gaps at a time **when the sector is so dependent on digital is a worry**.
- **80% are fair to poor at developing digital products**, up from 55% who were fair to low last year. Half (51%) say that they are poor at this, which is worrying in the context of needing to offer more services online.
- **60% have low skills in AI, which is better than 2019** when 76% said they had low to very low skills in AI. However, 31% either don't know what it is or say it's not applicable.
- Finally, **horizon scanning is a skills gap in the sector**. 9% say they are excellent at this, whilst 44% say that they are 'fair', which is up from the 35% last year who said they were up to speed and had a plan in place to tackle key trends.
- **Comparing the before and after COVID-19 results in skills**, charities rated their skills highest in the same three areas: social media, basic skills and using digital for internal communication.
- Comparing the two datasets, **the overall ratings for skills in using digital for service delivery had increased by 15%** and using **digital for internal communications had increased by 10%**. This is based on a comparison of the percentage who rated themselves as 'fair' before and after March 20.
- **The top 5 skills were the same for whichever stage of digital charities selected**. However, those at earlier stages of digital (curious) scored lower on average across all skills in comparison to those starting out, who again scored lower than those at later stages of digital (advancing).



## Q 3 What do you see as the biggest challenges to your charity increasing its use of digital?

The two major issues here are income and the digital divide. More than one third of charities (37%) don't have the income to invest in digital whilst a third (34%) see the fact that their audience is not online as their greatest challenge.

### ANALYSIS

As COVID-19 unfolded this question was updated to offer relevant options. Please note our analysis below reflects responses post-lockdown.

#### The top challenges for charities were:

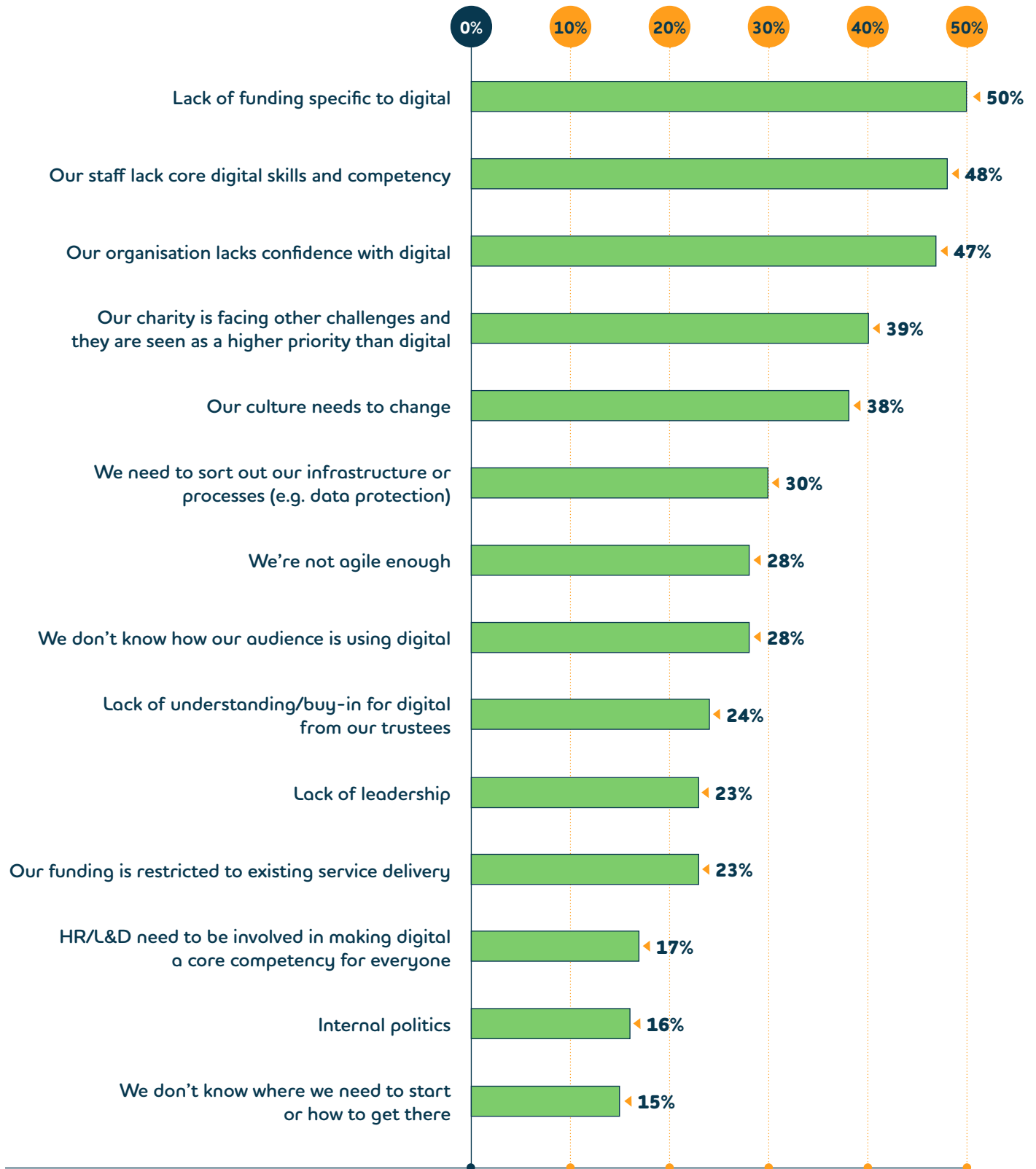
- **They don't have the income to invest in digital (37%).** This echoes findings from 2018–2019 when money was cited as the biggest barrier.
- **Their audience is not online (34%).** This shows how charities need to take action on the digital divide. Users who are not online during the pandemic won't be able to access crucial information. **Charities will either need to look at how they can help users access tech** (e.g. donating devices and credit) or providing non-digital alternatives.
- They need to undertake **new research with their users to understand what they need (34%).** On the one hand, it is positive that over a third of charities see user research as a priority. The remaining two thirds are either on top of their users' needs or do not see this as important. This is reinforced by the **30% of charities who told us that their audience's use of digital is changing rapidly.**
- They need to **adapt to working remotely (34%).** This indicates how charities are **still adjusting to digital ways of working post lockdown**, and is interesting alongside the finding that 31% are not sure they will need to be providing remote services.

There were few significant differences according to the stage of digital charities were at.



## Q 4 What are the biggest internal barriers to your charity getting the most from digital?

Charities see funding, staff lacking core skills and competency and an organisational lack of confidence with digital as their three top barriers.

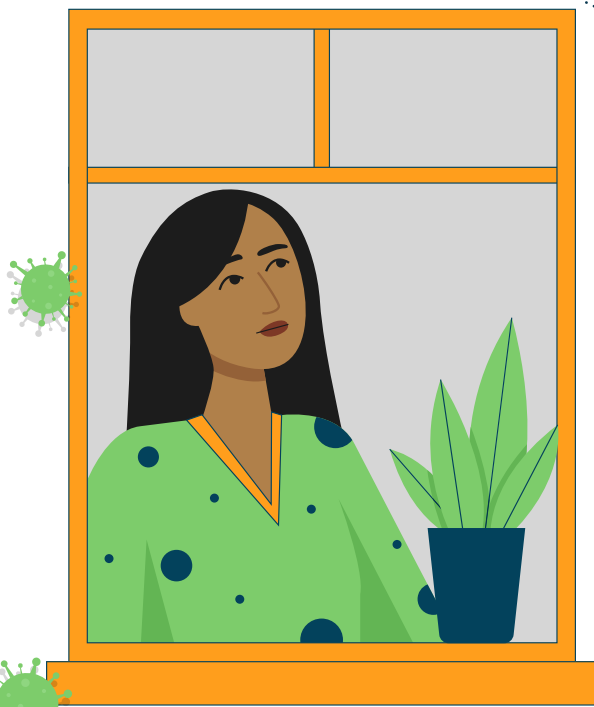


## Q 4 What are the biggest internal barriers to your charity getting the most from digital?

### ANALYSIS

- **Lack of funding** is the biggest barrier for **50%** of charities.
- **Staff skills came out as the second biggest barrier** - with **48%** of respondents selecting this.
- It's no coincidence that a similar number cite **organisational lack of confidence as an issue (47%)**.
- **39%** say that their organisation is **facing challenges that are seen as higher priority than digital** (similar to the 41% last year).
- However, **culture is less of an issue than last year**, falling from 45% to 38% this year, suggesting that charities see it as less of a challenge.
- **30% want help with infrastructure and processes**, falling from 36% last year.
- **28% worry that they're not agile enough**. This may be linked to the similar number who don't know how their audience is using digital.
- **1 in 4 (24%) cite a lack of buy-in from trustees**, with a similar number (23%) facing a lack of leadership. The latter has fallen from 27% last year.
- **23% are concerned that funding is restricted** to service delivery.
- Similar to last year, **17% want HR to be involved**.
- **Internal politics** as an issue fell this year from 23% to 16%.
- **15% don't know where to start** or how to get there.
- Results stayed largely similar **pre- and post-COVID-19**.
- Before COVID-19, 30% felt that 'Lack of understanding/buy-in for digital from our trustees' was one of their biggest internal barriers. For those **responding post-COVID-19, this has decreased to 15% of respondents**.
- Answers were remarkably **consistent across all stages of digital**.

# THE COVID-19 EFFECT



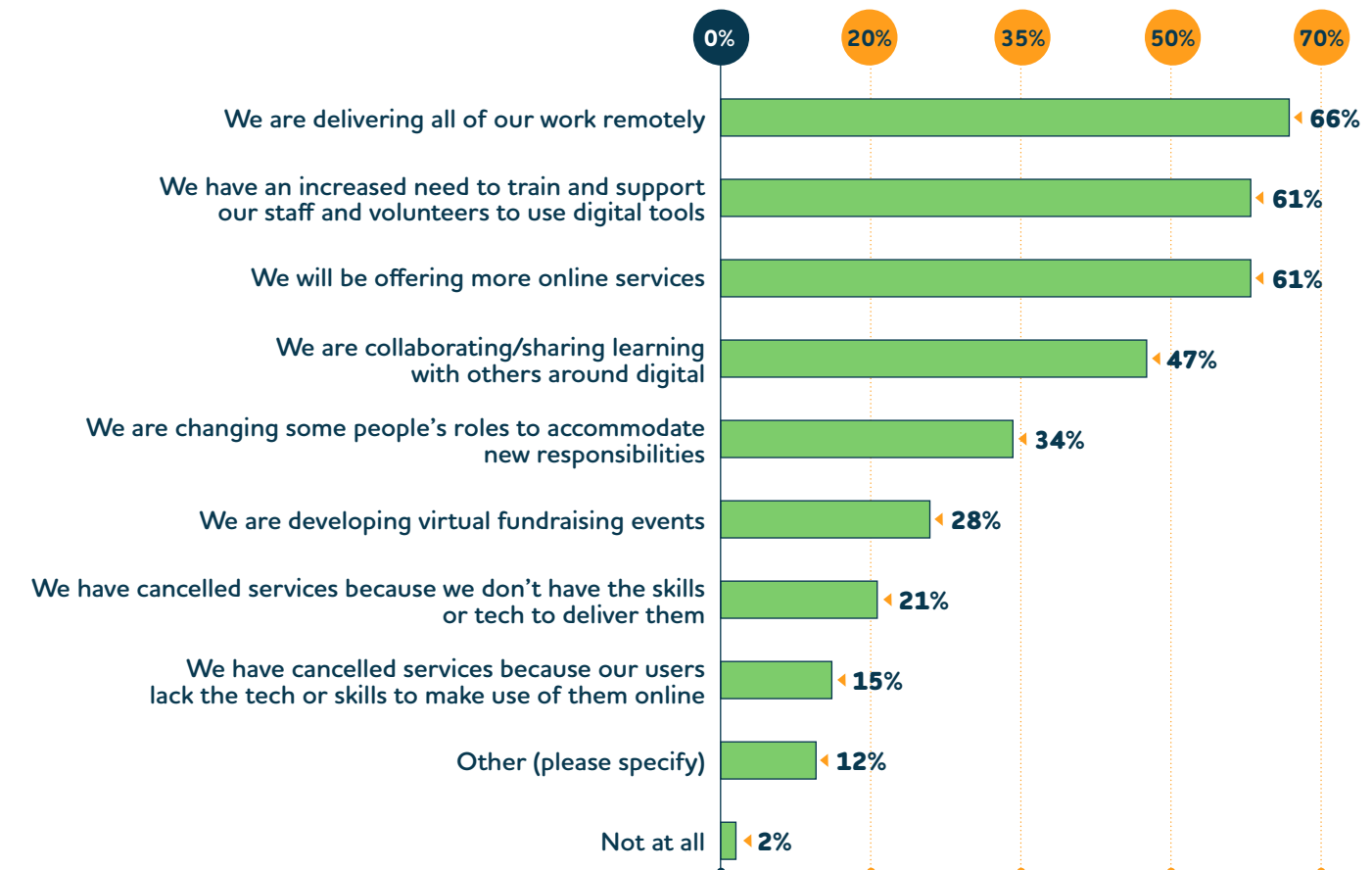
## Q 5 How is the coronavirus pandemic changing your charity's operations in terms of digital?

There are positive indications about how charities are using digital to adapt to the crisis. Two thirds (66%) are delivering all work remotely, whilst 61% will be offering more online services. It's also encouraging that almost half (47%) are collaborating or sharing learnings with others around digital. However, 27% have cancelled services because either their charity or their users don't have the necessary skills or tech.

### ANALYSIS

We asked charities how the pandemic is changing their charity's operations in terms of digital and they told us that:

- 66% are delivering **all work remotely**.
- 61% have an **increased need to train and support** their staff and volunteers to use digital tools.
- 61% will be offering **more online services**.
- 47% are **collaborating/sharing learning** with others around digital.
- 34% are **changing some people's roles** to accommodate new responsibilities.
- 28% are developing **virtual fundraising events**.
- 21% have **cancelled services** because they don't have the skills or tech to deliver them.
- 15% have **cancelled services** because their users **lack the tech or skills** to make use of them online.





## Q 5 How is the coronavirus pandemic changing your charity's operations in terms of digital?

There are some positive signs here about how the sector is using digital to innovate. The fact that two thirds of charities are delivering all work remotely and that almost half (47%) are collaborating and sharing digital learnings with others are promising signs.

**We dug into the analysis further, filtering the results to look at the trends amongst charities at different stages of digital. It was interesting to see that:**

- **67%** of those starting out with digital and **66%** of those advancing with digital were delivering all work remotely. This shows that **remote working isn't just for charities at more advanced stages of digital**.
- The appetite for digital tools training was best represented **by those starting out and advancing with digital stages** (73% and 58% respectively).
- **60% of those starting out will be offering more online services** along with 67% of those advancing, again indicating that there could be appetite at both ends of the digital spectrum for change.

### Charities also told us that:

*"Issues with board and senior staff's lack of digital skills and knowledge is significantly impacting on our ability to deliver any work and meaning junior staff are having to do their own jobs, try and skill up senior colleagues, and 'debate' digital and still not get anywhere."*

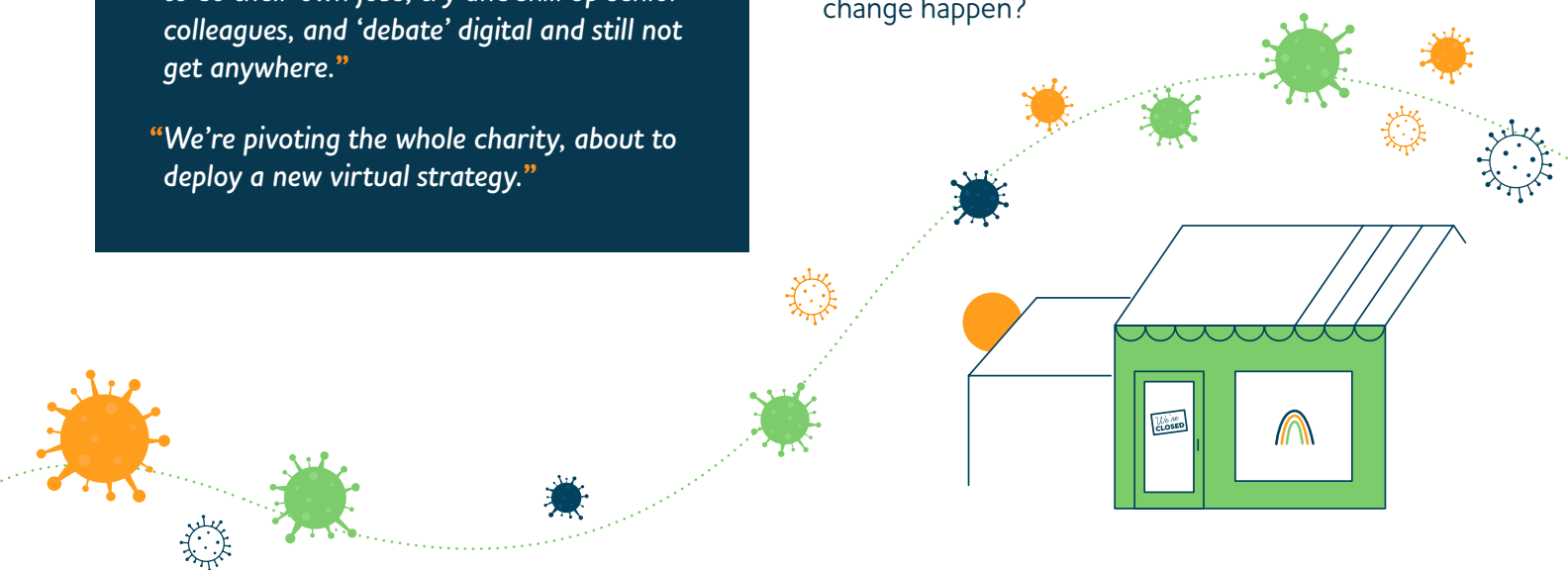
*"We're pivoting the whole charity, about to deploy a new virtual strategy."*

As discussed above, **21% have cancelled services because they don't have the skills or tech to deliver them** (compared to 37% at 1 May) However, when you look at the stage of digital 48% of those who are curious have cancelled services because they don't have the skills or tech to deliver them, compared to 18% of those starting out, 19% of those advancing and 13% of those advanced.

**15% have cancelled services because their users lack the skills or tech to make use of them online.** However, at the paper based or curious stage, 38% have cancelled services because users lack the tech or skills to make use of them online, compared to 16% starting out with digital and only 8% of those advancing and 7% of those advanced.

This indicates **charities' previous digital experience and skills** has affected their ability to respond to COVID-19.

These results are really interesting indications of how charities are using digital to adapt to the crisis. What could this mean for the 'new normal?' And what do charities need to make digital change happen?



## Q 6 In the context of coronavirus, what kind of support do you need with digital, if any?

Question 2 shows that charities are using digital to adapt to the crisis, yet their support needs are significant.

### ANALYSIS

- 47% are interested in **how to help their users access services online**.
- 46% want guidance on what works with **digitising face-to-face services**.
- 44% want to **help the team adjust to change**.
- 43% want **financial support for new technical equipment, software or tools**.  
Our initial findings in May 2020 (before the survey closed) showed that only 34% wanted financial support for new technical equipment, software or tools, indicating that charities have a growing need.
- 41% want to **help staff stay motivated and productive**.

There was an interesting cluster of responses from a third of respondents:

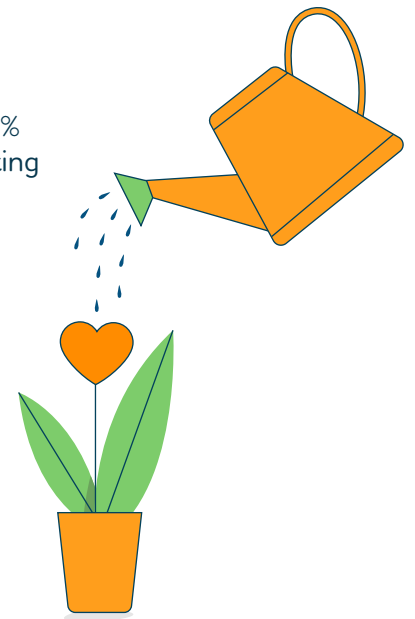
- 35% want technical advice (e.g. what tools to use).
- 33% want guidance on working online (e.g. running effective meetings).
- 32% want help on managing a virtual team.
- 32% want help on coping with isolation.

**Remote working is still an area where charities need help.** 46% of those charities starting out with digital want to help staff stay motivated and productive, whilst 57% of those who are curious about digital i.e. interested to know more and who have some basics such as social media in place and 38% of those starting out want guidance about working online (e.g. running effective meetings).

**Technology is still an issue, whether that's broadband speed or access to tech. This speaks to how the digital divide also affects charity employees, as well as users:**

- 27% want faster broadband.
- 26% want better access to tech.

Just **11% said that they were well set up** and that guidance exists for them. What happens to the other 89% and what is the impact on their beneficiaries?

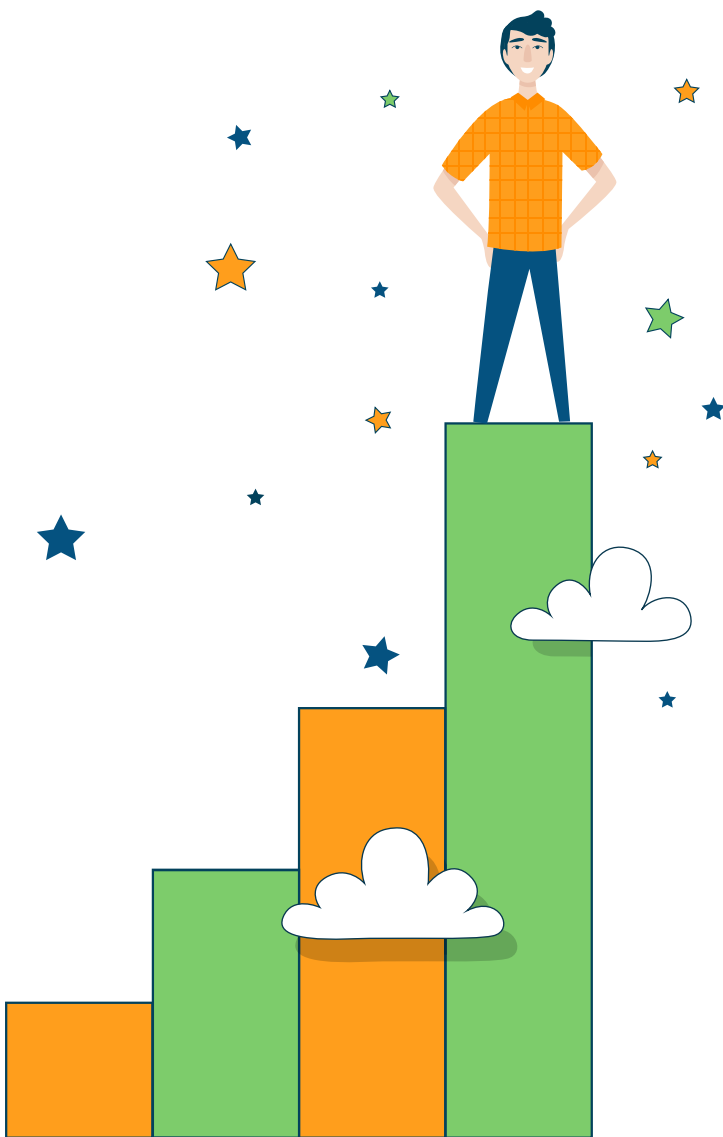


### Charities also told us that they needed support with:

*"Helping the executive team adjust to tech changes required."*

*"Collaborating and communication online (new ways of working remotely)."*

# DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

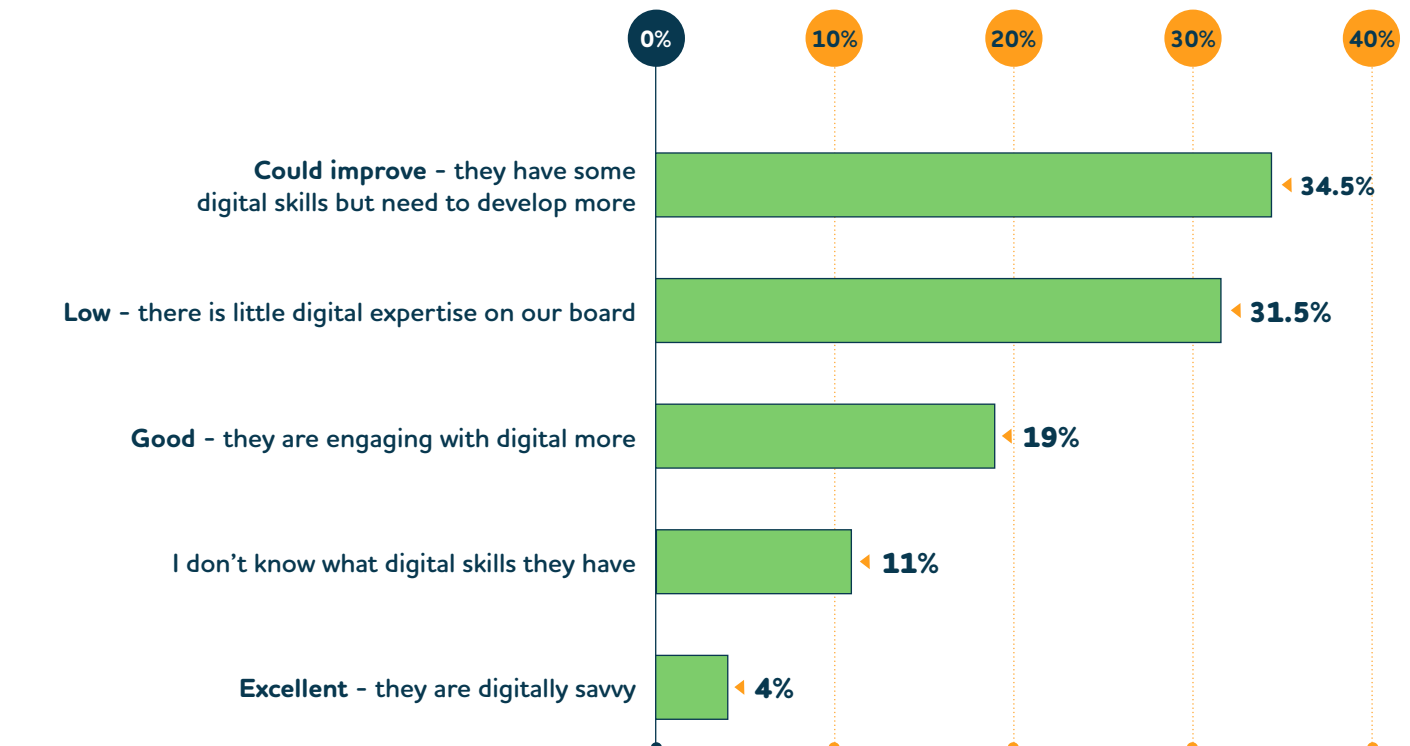


## Q 7 How would you rate your board's digital skills?

Most charities (66%) rate their board's digital skills as low or having room for improvement, down 2% from 2019. Charities must make developing trustees' digital skills a priority if they are to build a stronger future post-pandemic. How can charities transform if their boards do not transform with them?

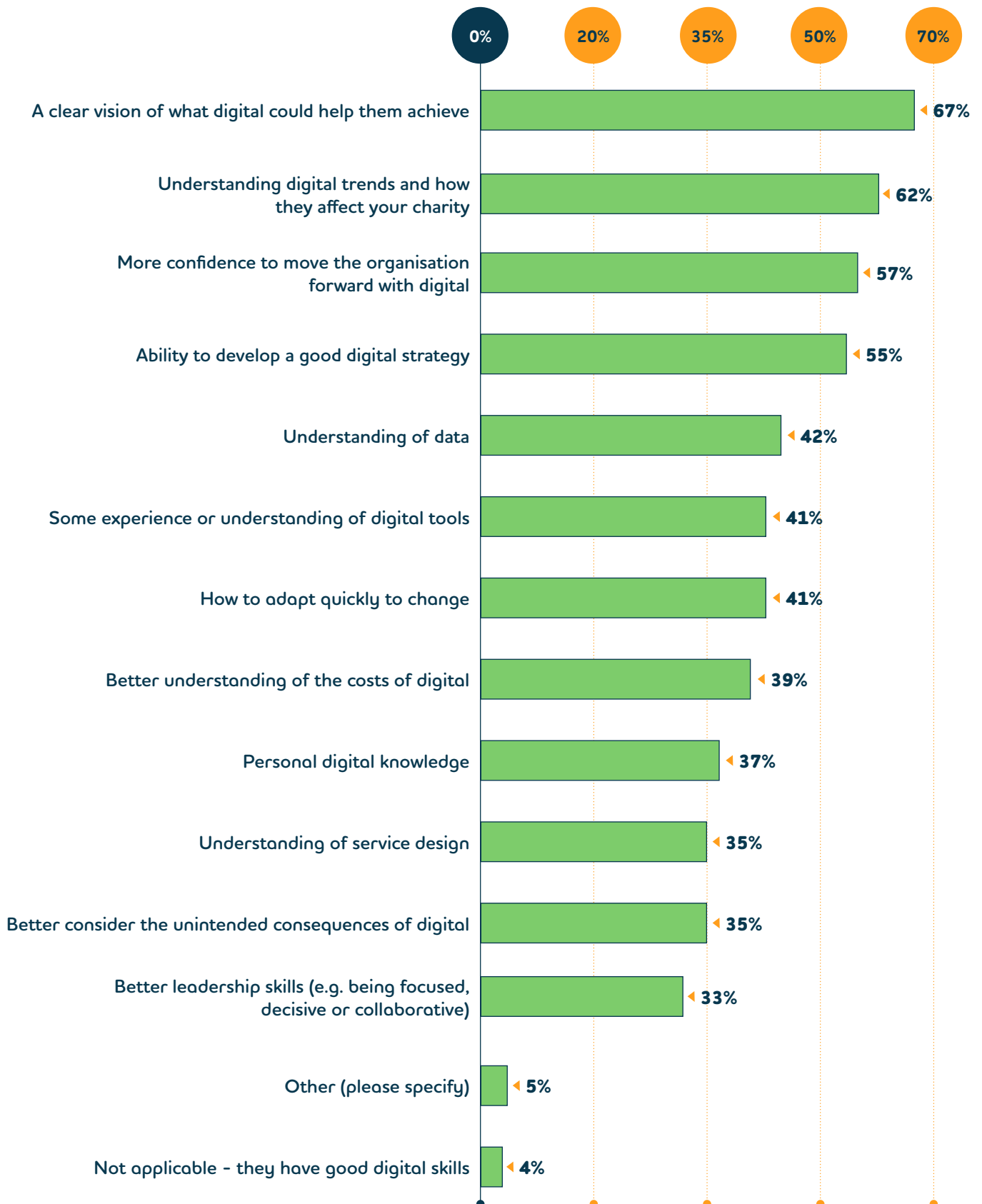
### ANALYSIS

- **31.5%** say that their board has **low digital skills**, a 5% improvement on 2019.
- **34.5%** feel that their board **could improve their digital skills further**, compared to 32% last year.
- **19%** say that their board is **good and engaging more with digital**, up from 16% in 2019.
- A tiny **4% of charities see their board as digitally savvy**, a 1% increase since last year.



## Q 8 What digital skills and knowledge would you like to see your leadership team improve on?

Charities need more digital leadership. From establishing a clear vision to understanding trends and having confidence, leaders must raise their game.



## Q 8 What digital skills and knowledge would you like to see your leadership team improve on?

### ANALYSIS

- Once again charities have cited **strong digital leadership as their key need**. 67% want their leadership team to offer a clear vision of what digital could help them achieve. This has dropped by 6% from last year but is still the most pressing need amongst charities.
- **62% want their leadership team to understand the key trends and how they affect charities**, up from 57% last year, and almost matching the 63% who wanted this in 2018.
- **57% want their leaders to be more confident in moving their charity forward with digital**.
- **55% want their leaders to develop a good digital strategy**, down from 64% in 2019.
- **42% would like their leaders to have a better understanding of data**.
- Meanwhile, **41% want their senior team to have some experience or understanding of digital tools**, down from 45% last year, with 37% seeking better personal digital knowledge from leaders.
- **41% want their leadership teams to be more agile and adapt to change**, which hasn't changed since last year.
- **39%** would like their leaders to have a better understanding of **the costs of digital**.
- **35%** want to see an understanding of service design and the same number want leaders to consider **the unintended consequences of digital**.
- **33%** are looking for better leadership skills such as being **more decisive, focused and collaborative**, down from 39% in 2019. This could signify an improvement.
- Answers were relatively similar whichever stage of digital charities were at.



### Charities also commented:

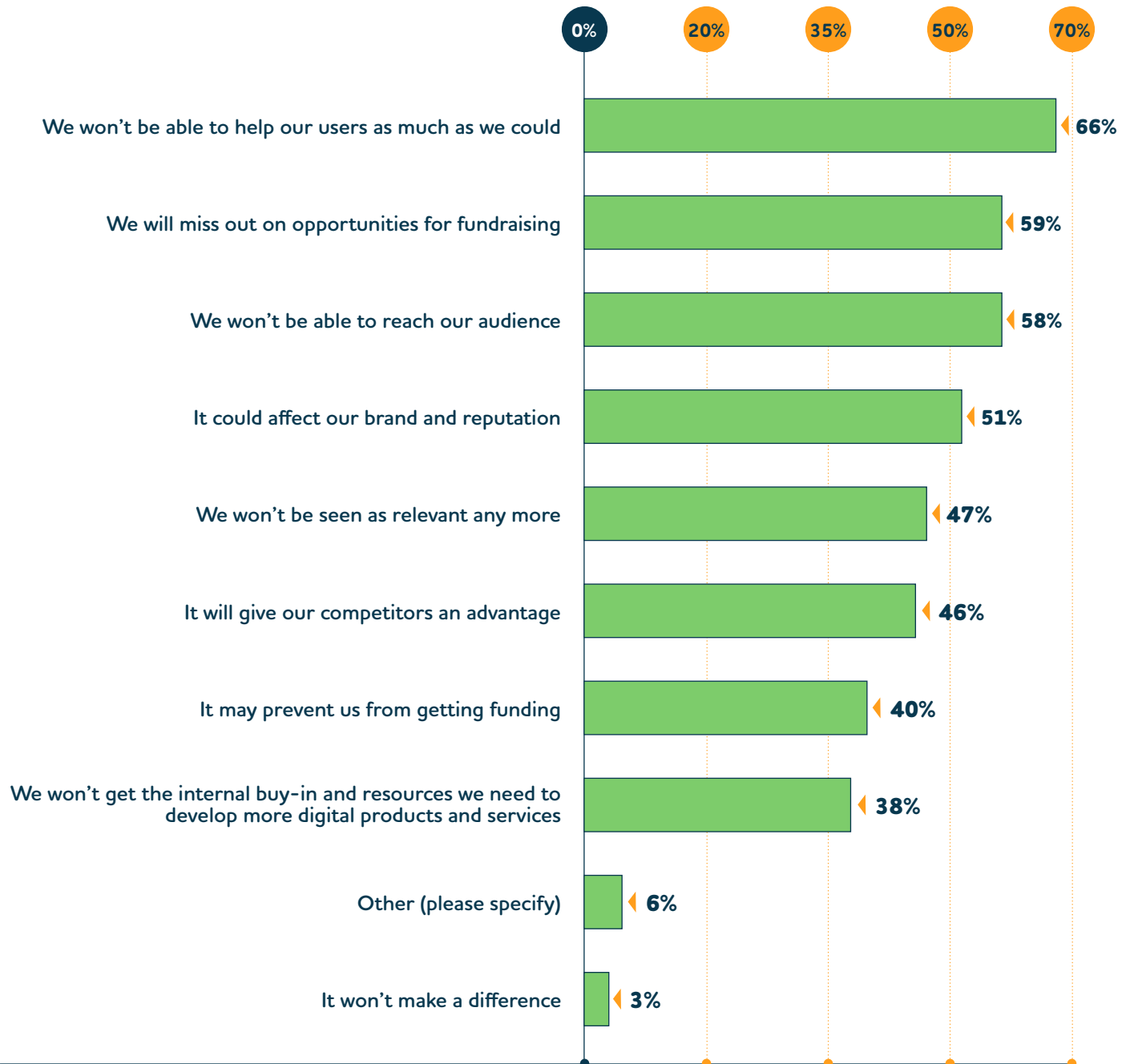
*“Basic understanding of essential digital services. Too often they delegate rather than taking the time to learn and understand.”*

*“Adoption of tools like machine learning to better utilise our data. Would be great to better personalise service delivery too.”*

*“Allowing digital to be a strategic function not a service delivery team for other teams.”*

## Q 9 What do you think will happen if your board or leadership team doesn't increase its skills and confidence with digital?

Boards and leadership teams need to do more so that their charities can help more users, fundraise online and boost brand and reputation.



## Q 9 What do you think will happen if your board or leadership team doesn't increase its skills and confidence with digital?

### ANALYSIS

- **66%** are concerned that **they will miss out on opportunities to help users**, whilst 58% are worried that they won't reach their audience, up from 50% last year.
- **59%** are worried that **digital fundraising could be affected**, similar to 60% last year.
- **51%** say that **brand and reputation could be affected**, up from 47% last year.
- **47%** fear they won't be seen as relevant, similar to 2018–2019.
- However, only **46%** are concerned they will **give competitors an advantage**, down from 51% last year.
- **40%** say they could miss out on funding and 38% feel that they won't be able to get the support they need to **develop more digital products and services**, down from 48% in 2019.
- Just 3% think that **digital skills amongst their board and leadership team won't make a difference**, compared to 7% last year.

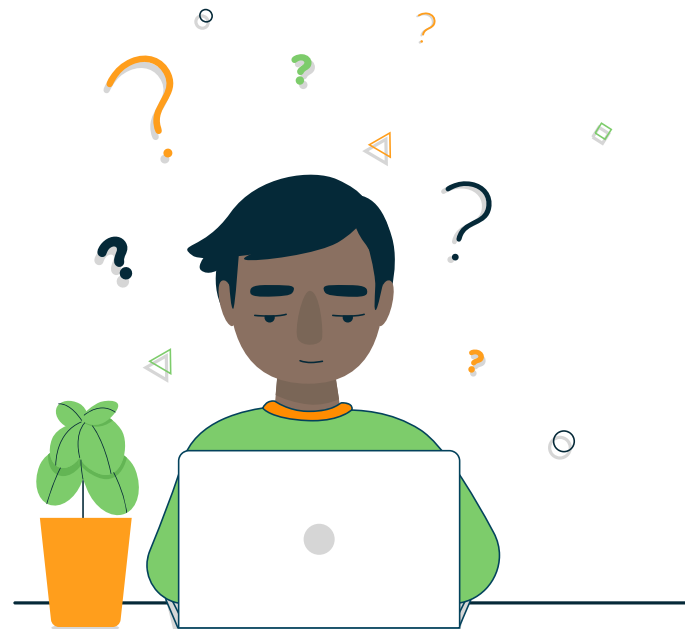
### Charities told us:

*"It would be helpful to have someone on the board who could take a more active leadership role in terms of identifying digital opportunities and tools."*

*"We will waste money and effort when we could work much more efficiently and effectively. We will not make evidence-based decisions but be led by people's opinion."*

*"It's a lost opportunity to better serve our audience."*

*"We won't be as efficient as we could be in running the organisation."*



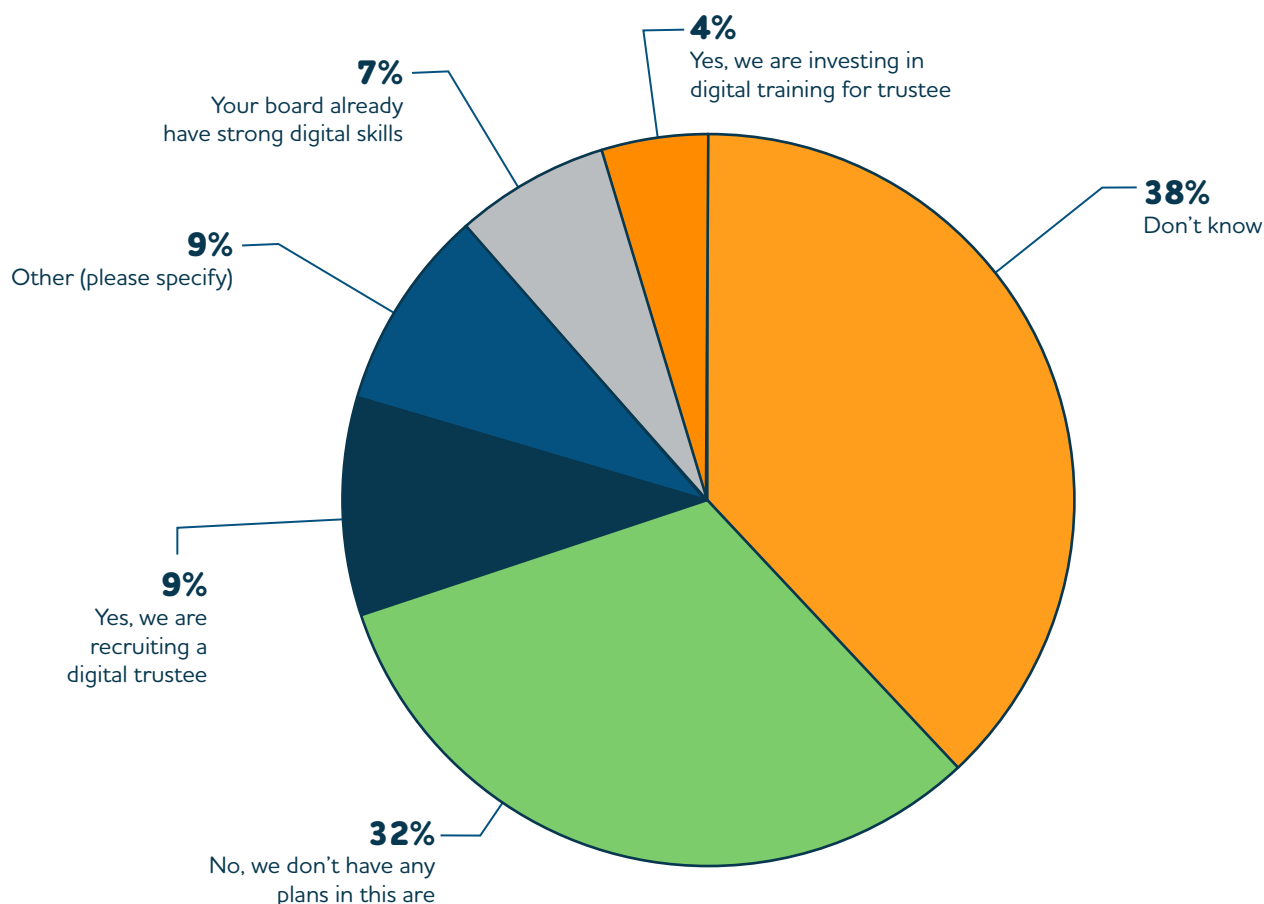


## Q 10 Is your charity planning to increase digital skills on its board?

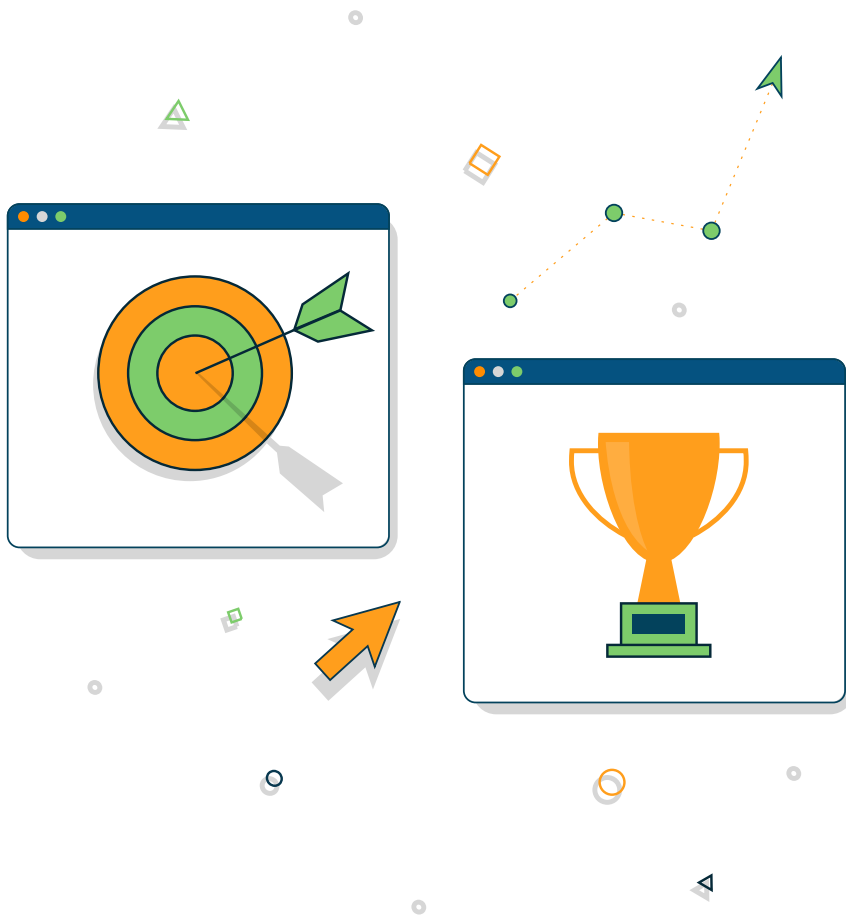
Despite the digital skills gap on boards, 7 out of 10 respondents either don't know what is being done about this or say that their charity doesn't have any plans to change this.

### ANALYSIS

- There is clearly a **large digital skills gap on boards, yet over a third (38%)** don't know what is being done to change this. This has declined from 45% last year and 48% in 2018, which may indicate that there is more clarity in this area for some charities. However, digital skills amongst trustees is a key issue for the sector and more radical change is required.
- **4%** are investing in **digital training for trustees**, down from 7% last year.
- **9%** of charities are **recruiting a digital trustee**, which hasn't changed since 2019.
- These figures stayed **relatively similar before and after lockdown**.
- The groups that were most likely to recruit a digital trustee were those who **were either starting out or advancing with digital**. This stayed relatively similar pre- and post-COVID-19.
- Despite this, **32% of charities do not have any plans in this area**. There has been little movement on this from 2018–2019 figures. Those at earlier stages of digital are less likely to have plans in this area. 41% of those at the curious stage, 36% of those starting out, 27% of those advancing and 29% of those advanced said they didn't have any plans in this area.

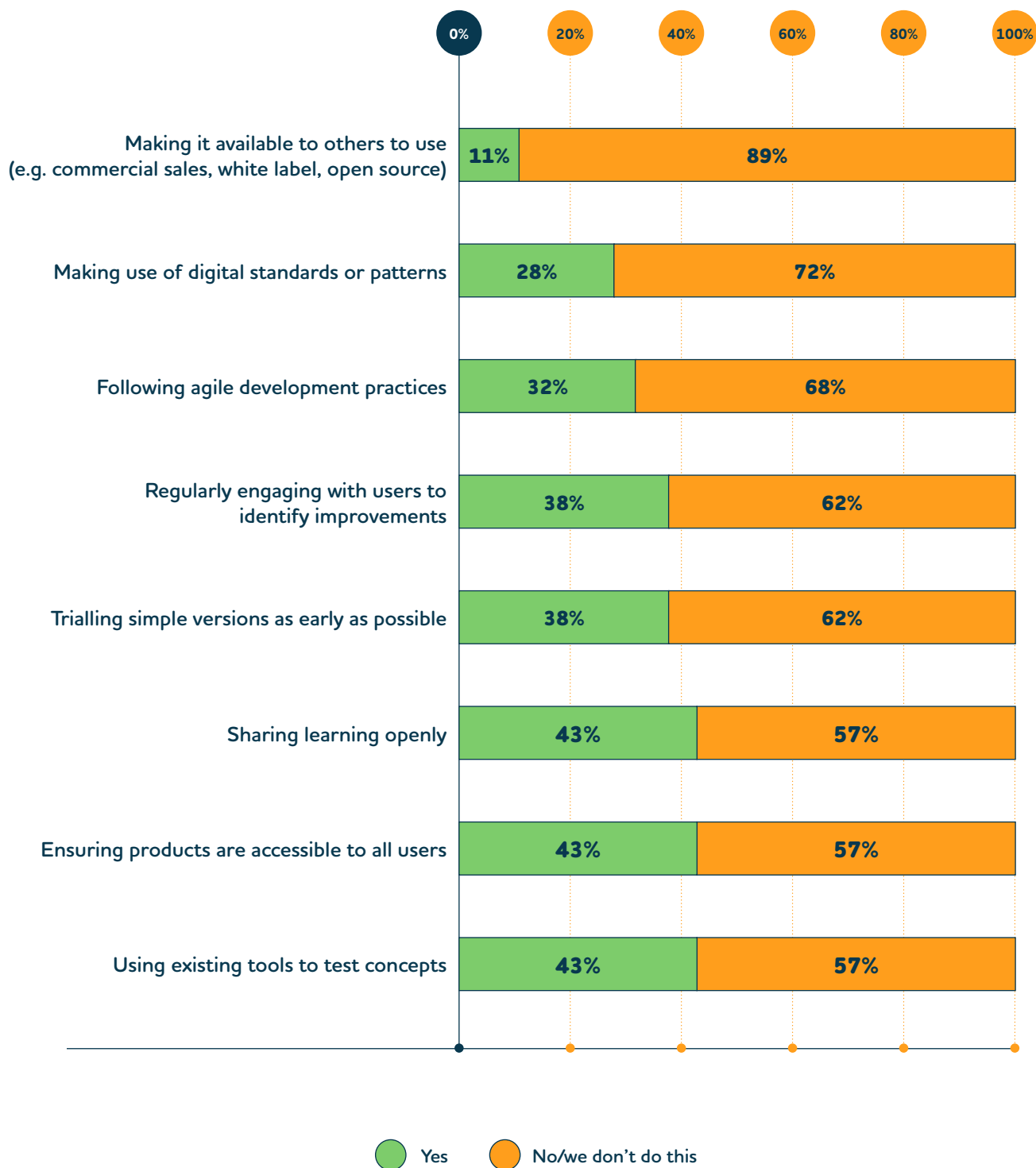


# FOLLOWING BEST PRACTICE



## Q 11 If you develop digital products, would you say you are effective at ...

Some charities are still struggling with digital product development, which is a concern given the renewed focus on digital service delivery.



## Q 11 If you develop digital products, would you say you are effective at ...

### ANALYSIS

#### Of those who develop digital products:

- **89%** do not make their solutions available for others to use.
- **72%** do not make use of digital standards or patterns.
- **68%** do not follow agile development practices.
- **62%** do not trial simple versions as early as possible.
- **62%** do not engage regularly with users to identify improvements.
- **57%** feel they do not ensure products are accessible to all users.
- **57%** do not trial existing tools to test concepts.
- **40%** of those 'advancing' **follow agile practices**, compared to 18% of those at the starting out stage and curious stage.
- **68%** of those 'advancing' **do not trial simple versions as early as possible**, compared to 84% of those at the starting out stage and 81% of those at the curious stage.
- **47%** of those 'advancing' **do not ensure products are made accessible to all users**, compared to 70% of those at the starting out stage and 73% of those at the curious stage.
- **48%** of those 'advancing' **regularly engage with users to identify improvements**, compared to 21% of those at the starting out stage and 35% of those at the curious stage.

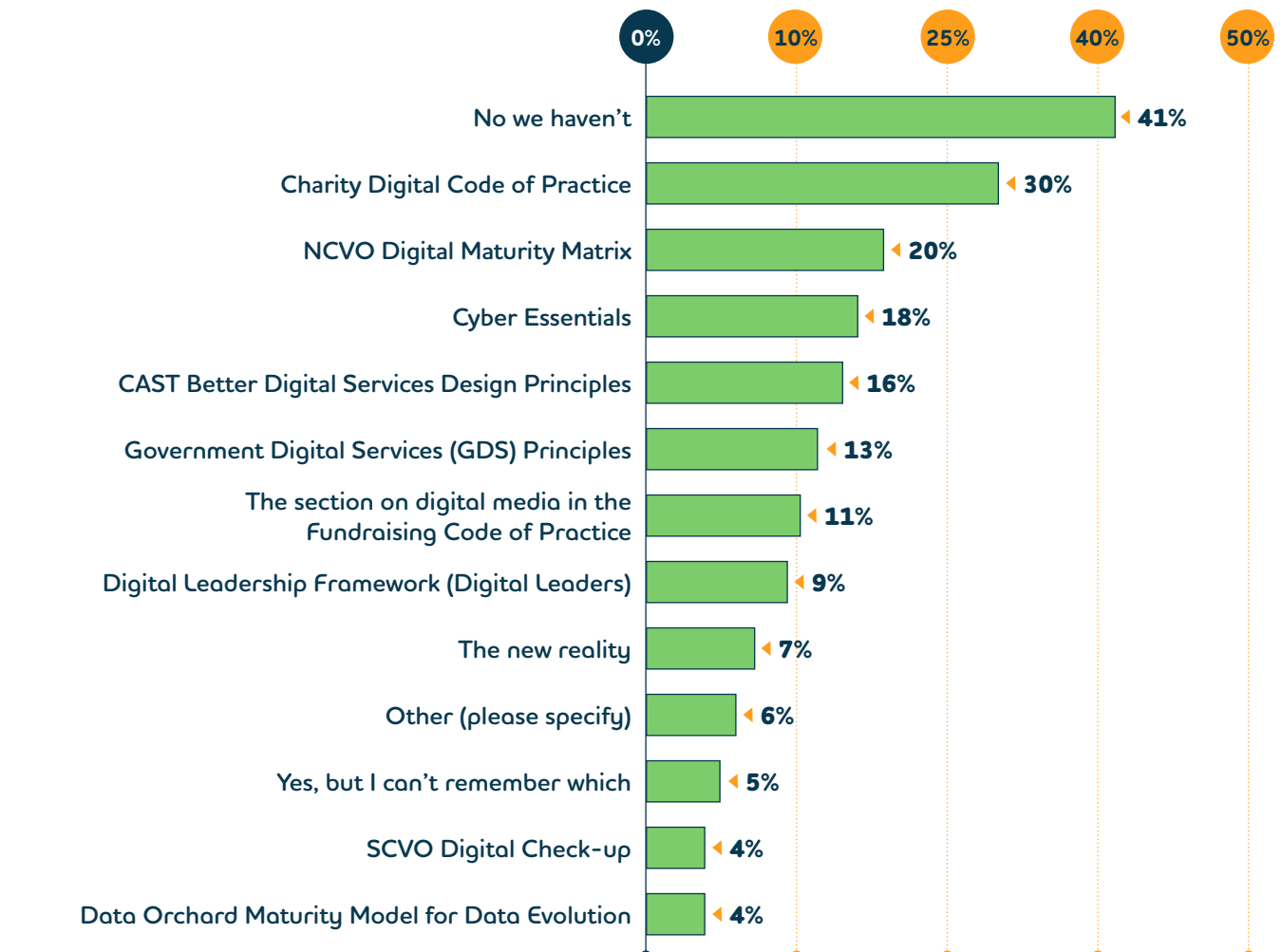


## Q 12 Have you made use of any of the following digital maturity diagnostic tools or best practice frameworks in your organisation or team?

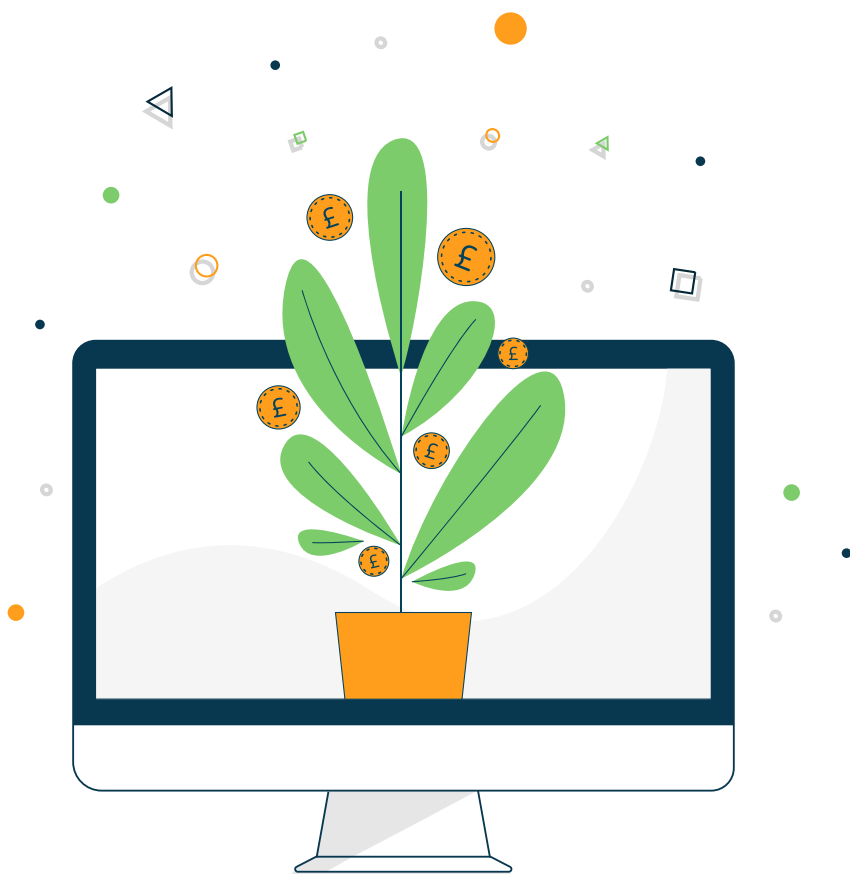
Charities are using a range of frameworks and tools.

### ANALYSIS

- **41%** of charities are not using any frameworks or tools.
- **30%** are using The Charity Digital Code of Practice.
- **20%** are using NCVO's Digital Maturity Matrix.
- **18% are using Cyber Essentials**, whilst 16% are using CAST's Better Digital Services Design Principles and 13% are engaging with the GDS Principles.
- Only a **third (33.9%)** of those advancing hadn't used a digital maturity diagnostic tool or best practice framework (therefore, two thirds have).
- In comparison, **half of those** at the earlier stages of digital (curious and starting out) **had not used a diagnostic framework**.
- For those **using a framework or tool, 40% used 3 or more**, and 36% of respondents used only one of these frameworks.



# DIGITAL SUPPORT NEEDS & FUNDING

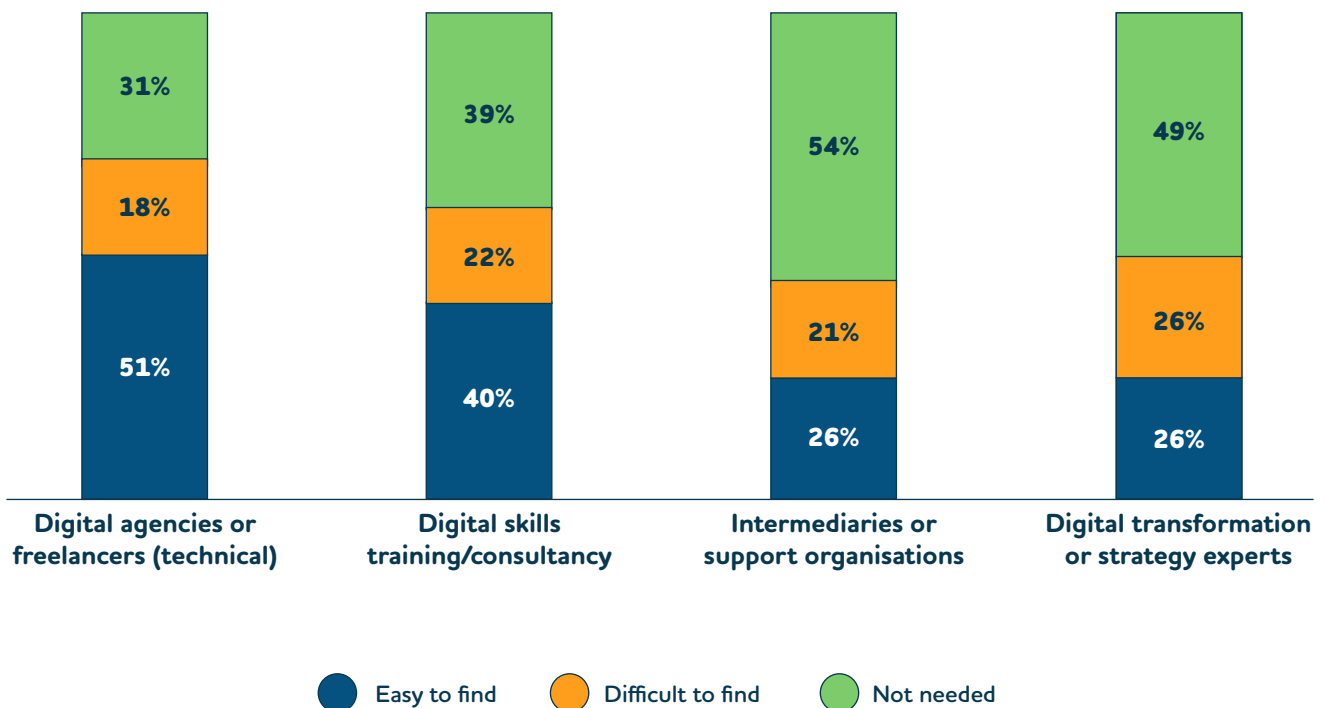


## Q 13 In the last year, have you needed to access support, advice or guidance from the following? And how easy was it?

For the first time, this year we asked charities about accessing support. Agencies and consultancies were relatively easy to find but digital transformation and strategy experts are harder to access.

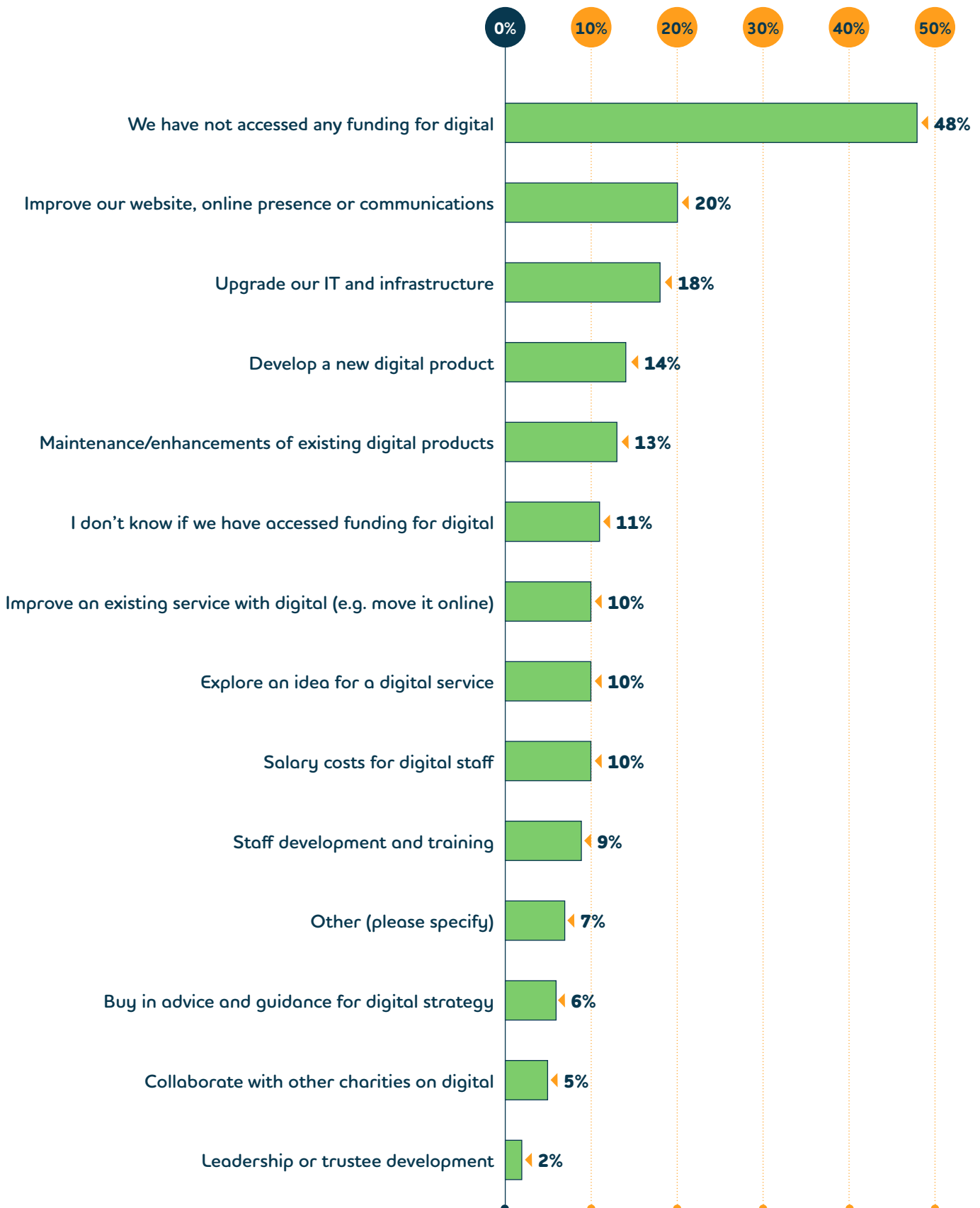
### ANALYSIS

- More than half of charities (**51%**) found agencies **easy to find**, but 18% found this difficult. Just under a third (31%) say that agencies were not needed.
- Close to half (49%) say that **they don't require digital transformation and strategy experts**. For those who did, an equal number (26%) say they are both easy and difficult to find.
- **40%** feel that **digital skills training and consultancy is easy to find**, yet just over 1 in 5 (22%) say they are difficult to find and more than a third (39%) say they are not needed.
- More than half (**54%**) have not needed **intermediaries or support organisations**, whilst 21% say they are difficult to find and 26% say they are easy to find.
- Support needs seemed to be greatest amongst those **starting out and advancing with digital**.
- Overall, this presents a **mixed picture of ability to access support across the sector**.



## Q 14 Have you accessed funding for digital in the last year for any of the following?

Almost half of charities have not accessed any funding for digital.





## Q 14 Have you accessed funding for digital in the last year for any of the following?

### ANALYSIS

- Just under half (**48%**) **have not accessed any digital funding.** Given our other findings about funding in this report, this suggests a significant unmet need. Overall, 11% are not sure if they have accessed any digital funding. Small and medium sized charities were least likely to have accessed digital funding.
- However, 1 in 5 (**20%**) **has obtained funding to improve their online presence,** reflecting our other findings under Q12. Those who were paper-based were most likely to have accessed this funding. It's also positive that 18% have accessed funding to improve their IT and infrastructure.
- **14% have developed a new digital product** and 13% have had support for maintenance and development of existing products.
- Just **10% have had funding to improve an existing service with digital or explore a digital service idea.** Again, this could be an area of unmet need across the sector, given that it is so dependent on digital service delivery during the pandemic.
- **9% have had help with digital staff salary costs and staff training.** However, only 2% have accessed support for trustee and leadership digital training. This, alongside our other findings on digital skills training for boards and the demands on leaders we've illustrated, suggests that funders and charities are underinvesting in this increasingly critical area.
- Just **6% have had funding for digital strategy work.** Again, this appears to be an area of demand given our findings under Q1.



## Q 15 What are the most important changes funders could make to help you with digital?

Charities want more scope for including digital in funding bids. They are also looking for the funding for tech and to adapt existing funding.

### ANALYSIS

As funding had emerged as the biggest barrier to charities embracing digital in previous reports, we wanted to find out where funders could make the biggest difference.

**Post-COVID-19, the most important changes funders could make to help with digital were:**

- Scope to include digital in all funding applications **(45% of responses)**.

- Additional funding to buy **essential tech and software charities now need (38%)**. This grew to over 42% for small and medium sized charities.

- Flexibility of existing funding to **adapt services, activities and outcomes (37%)**.

- In comparison, **large** (£1m to 10m turnover), **major** (£10m to £100m) and **super-major charities** (£100m+) felt these were more important:

- **Flexibility of existing funding** to adapt services, activities and outcomes.
- **Additional funding** to explore how to adapt services in an online setting.

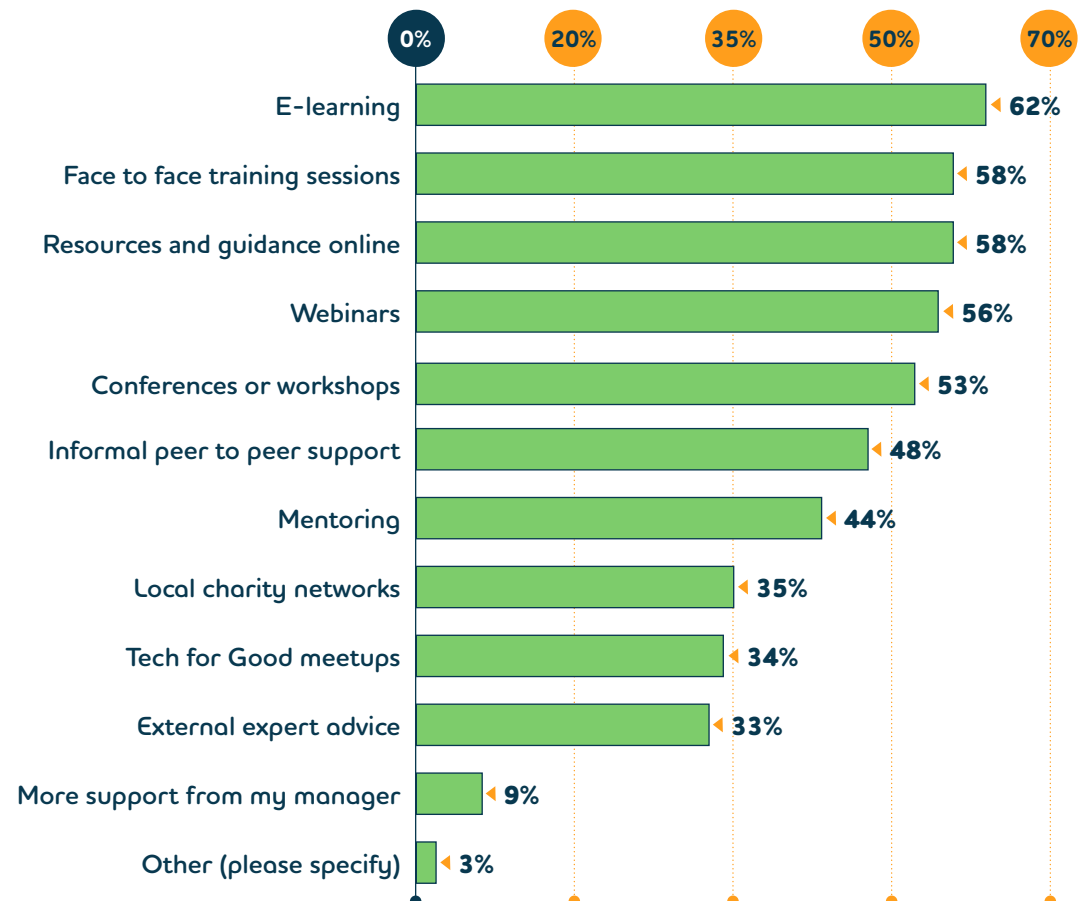


## Q 16 How would you prefer to learn about digital?

E-learning has overtaken face-to-face training for the first time.

### ANALYSIS

- For the first time this year, **e-learning has overtaken face-to-face training**, rising 2% this year to 62%. E-learning was most popular with charities who were either paper-based or digitally advanced, whilst webinars were needed most by those starting out or who are advanced.
- **Face-to-face training has fallen to 58%**, a dramatic fall from 68% last year. This number has declined from 75% when the report began in 2017. Conferences and workshops account for 53% of training.
- **Just over half like online guidance and support (58%)** and 56% prefer webinars.
- **Informal peer-to-peer support has fallen from 56%** over the last two years to 48%, although 44% want a mentor and 33% value external expert advice. Those who are paper-based or advanced are most likely to seek out peer-to-peer support.
- A third would like to **learn through local charity networks (35%)** and Tech for Good meetups (34%).
- Only **9% want more support from their manager**. This has fallen from 18% last year and may indicate that this support need is being met more effectively for some charity professionals.



## Q 17 What could your charity do if it increased its digital skills?

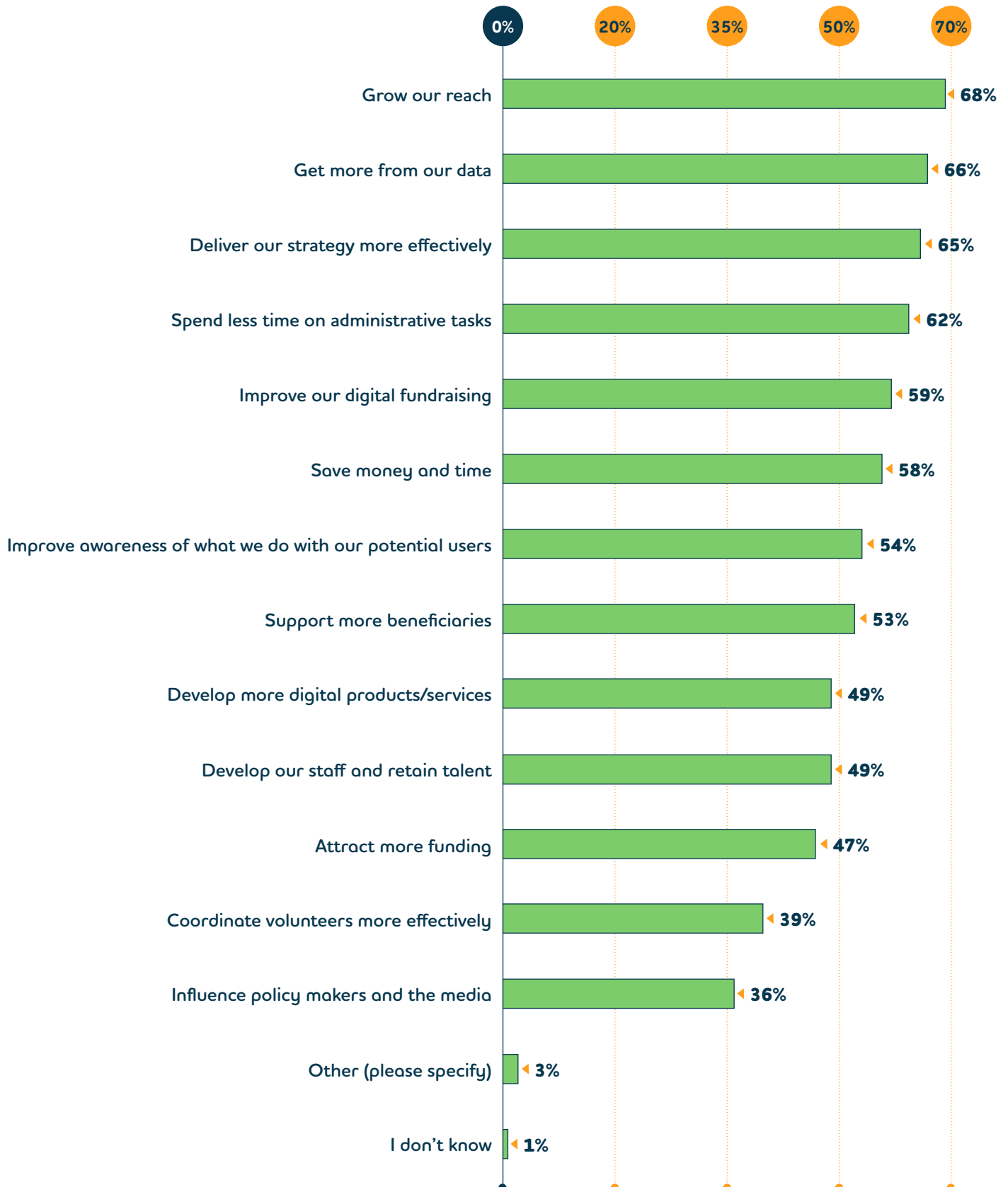
Charities' top needs are growing reach, getting more from their data and delivering their strategy more effectively.

### ANALYSIS

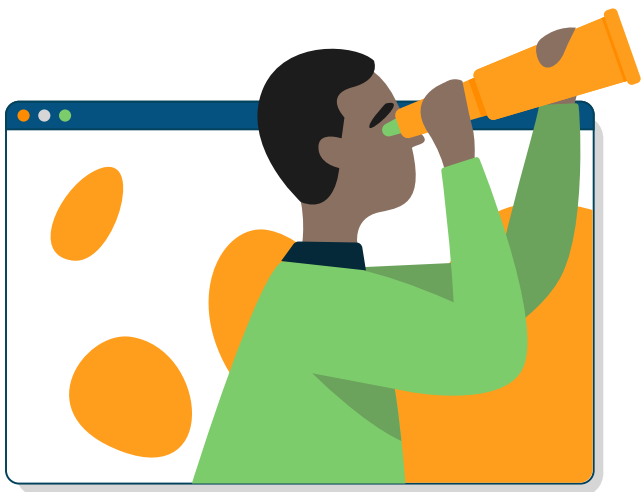
- **Growing reach is the biggest priority this year (68%).** This was a top priority across charities at all stages of digital.
- **Two thirds (66%) of charities want to get more from their data** (although this has fallen from 81% last year) and 65% want to deliver their strategy effectively (similar to last year). Getting more from data was particularly important to those at the starting out, advancing and advanced stage of digital.
- Charities want to benefit from the efficiencies and productivity associated with digital. **62% want to spend less time on admin**, with over half (58%) keen to save money and time. The latter fell from 72% in 2019, which is surprising.
- **59% want to grow digital fundraising** (this has declined by 9% since 2019, indicating that charities see it as less important), whilst **47% are keen to attract funding**.
- **Charities want to use digital to reach more people**, aiming to improve awareness with users (54%) and to support more beneficiaries (53%).
- Close to half want to **develop more digital products and services (49%).**
- **49% want to develop staff**, falling from 57% last year, suggesting it has become less of a priority. 39% want to manage volunteers more effectively.
- Just **over 1 in 3 (36%) think digital could help them influence policy makers and the media**, which suggests that charities need more support in this area.
- All of the above were **most popular with those starting out and advancing with digital**.
- Looking at responses pre- and post-COVID-19, a **higher proportion would support more beneficiaries** (change of 13% from 48% to 60%).



## Q 17 What could your charity do if it increased its digital skills?



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



## Q 18 What do you see as your charity's key digital priorities for the next 12 months?

Charities' top priorities are improving their website, online presence and social media, developing their culture and improving digital fundraising.

### ANALYSIS

- **Half of respondents want to develop their digital channels.** Yet culture is also key – 45% want to improve this.
- Online fundraising is also a priority, as **41% want to improve this.** This goes hand in hand with the 41% who want to develop a strategy and integrate digital into their organisation. The latter has stayed the same since 2019.
- **40% want to improve their colleagues' skills,** similar to last year (41%), whilst 28% want to grow their board and leadership team's skills, rising from 23% last year.
- **40% want to improve digital service delivery,** declining from 48% last year.
- **37% want to use data more effectively.** Surprisingly, this has fallen sharply from 59% last year. Just 1 in 5 (19%) want to improve data security, privacy or GDPR compliance.
- **36% are looking to improve infrastructure and systems.**
- **18% wish to look at emerging trends and opportunities.** It is surprising this isn't given higher priority.
- **Just over 1 in 10 are looking at hiring,** i.e. recruiting digital staff (13%) and recruiting a digital trustee (12%).

**The change pre- and post-COVID-19 is not huge,** but there is a 12% increase in the priority 'develop a new digital service' and an 8% increase in 'use digital to improve service delivery', as well as a 12% drop in 'improve our online fundraising'.

### However, the top 3 priorities pre-COVID-19 were:

- Improve our website, online presence or social media.
- Create a digital strategy/integrate digital into our organisational strategy.
- Improve online fundraising.

### Post-COVID-19, the top 3 priorities were:

- Improve our website, online presence or social media (**49%**).
- Develop our digital culture (**46%**).
- Use data more effectively (**36%**).

### For those charities who were curious, the top 3 priorities are:

- 1 Improve our website, online presence or social media (**53%**).
- 2 Develop my own or my colleagues' skills (**47%**).
- 3 Create a digital strategy / integrate digital into our organisational strategy (**38%**).

For those starting out the top 3 priorities are the same.

## Q 18 What do you see as your charity's key digital priorities for the next 12 months?

For those who were advancing with digital the priorities are:

- 1 Develop our digital culture (48%).
- 2 Improve our website, online presence or social media (47%).
- 3 Use digital to improve our service delivery (46%).

Even for those at the later stages of digital, the basics still need to be revisited and prioritised for improvement, with improving our website, online presence and social media being a top priority for the next 12 months.

Digital service delivery was more of a priority for those at later stages of digital.

### Charities also commented:

*“Try to figure out how/whether we can use digital to deliver some services whilst social distancing restrictions remain in place – this is not the same as ‘use digital to improve service delivery’ because, from our service users’ perspective, the face to face service is best for them. It’s more about adapting to present circumstances to offer the best we can in challenging times.”*

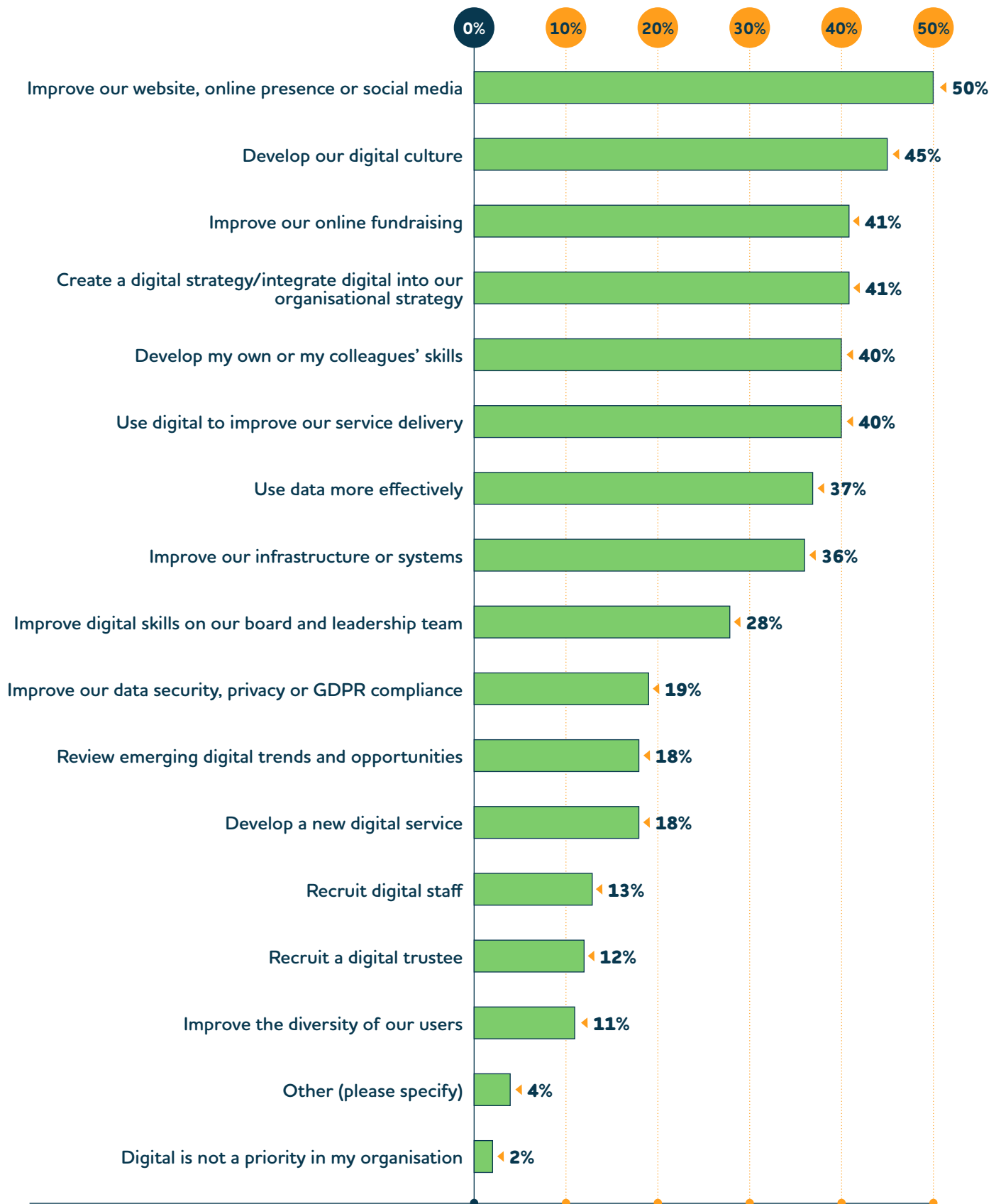
*“Retain existing staff including digital (loss of income due to C-19 puts these posts at huge risk).”*

*“Build design capacity.”*





**Q 18** What do you see as your charity's key digital priorities for the next 12 months?



## Q 19 Is your charity taking active steps to improve diversity amongst staff (particularly in specific digital teams or roles)?

We wanted to find out how charities are tackling diversity and digital. Fewer people see this as a priority since 2019. Alongside the fact that 1 in 5 say their charities already have a diverse team, this is a concern, given sector data on diversity.

### ANALYSIS

- **20% say they already have a diverse team.** This is surprising given that less than 9% of the charity workforce are **from BAME backgrounds**, a lower proportion than both the public and private sectors (both at 11%) and a lower proportion than the UK as a whole (14%). 68% of BAME respondents had experienced, witnessed or heard stories of racism in the charity sector **according to ACEVO's report**.
- **25% say that they need to improve this.** This has declined from 41% last year.
- **18% say there is limited awareness of this issue**, whilst 15% don't know what their charity is doing about this.
- **18% see it as a priority**, down from 25% last year.
- This stayed relatively similar pre- and post-COVID-19.
- Only 9% of those starting out and **12% of those at the curious stage saw this as a priority**, compared to 25% of those advancing and 33% of those advanced.

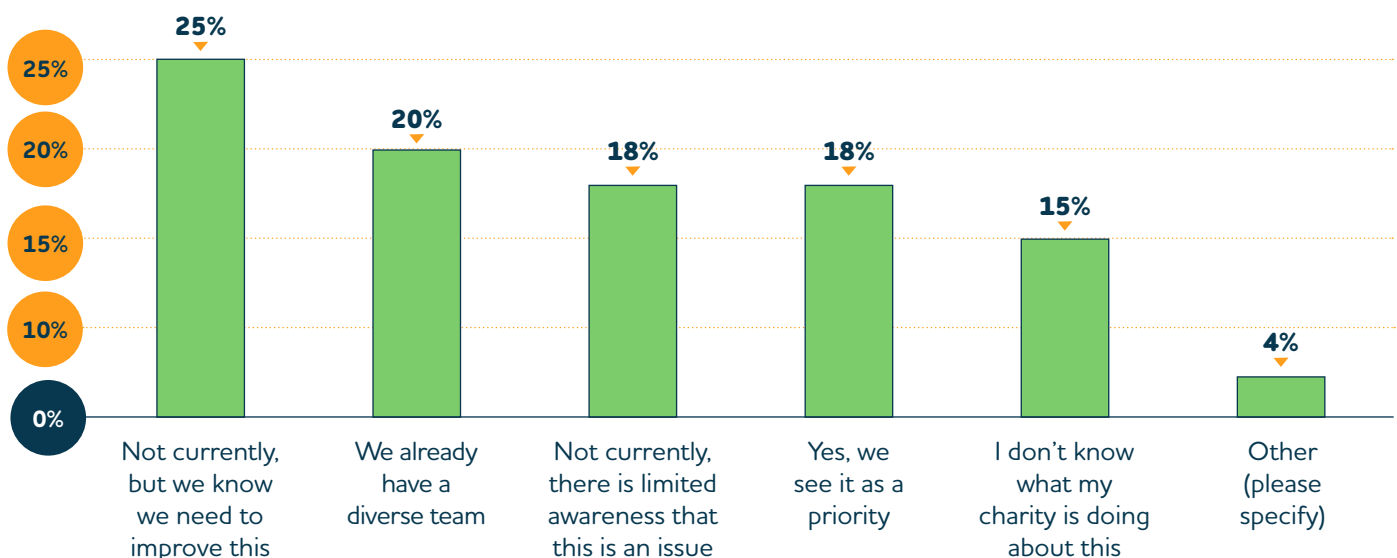
- Furthermore, **35% at the curious stage and 20% at the starting out stage felt there was limited awareness** that this was an issue, compared to 13% of those advancing and those advanced.

**NB:** we will be expanding the definition of diversity in future surveys.

### Charities told us that:

*"We have made some progress within our individual teams but I'm not aware of any active steps being led organisation-wide from senior level."*

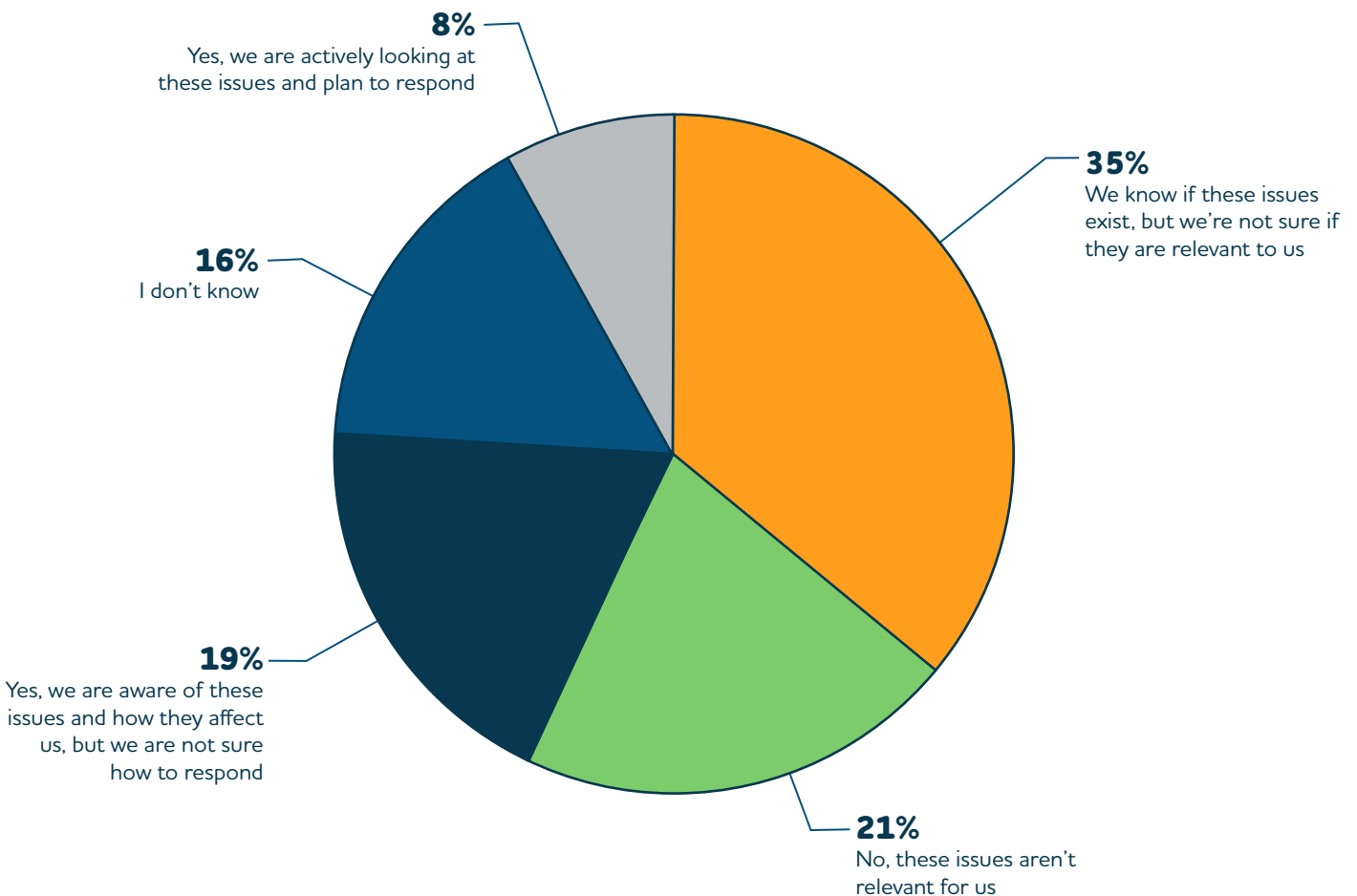
*"I was left to devise an application and role description to support this. Senior staff and board's poor understanding of need, tech and tools resulted in them watering down/editing the role so it doesn't make sense (let alone would get an application from someone with the skills needed)."*



## Q 20 Is your charity looking at ethical challenges with emerging tech, e.g. how algorithms make decisions, digital inclusion, or retraining staff whose jobs may be automated?

### ANALYSIS

- **35% said that they know of the issues but aren't sure if they're relevant.** This is worrying as automation is likely to increase as a result of the pandemic.
- **21% say these issues aren't relevant to them,** which is a big increase on the 9% last year. It is surprising given that emerging tech now touches many of our lives and those of our beneficiaries and that ***nine million people are struggling to get online.***
- However, charities need support in this area. Almost 1 in 5 (**19%**) are aware of the issues but are not sure how to respond.
- Only **8%** are actively looking into these issues and planning what to do next. This is still a marked contrast with 2019 when more than 1 in 4 (27%) were already looking at this challenge.
- Charities in the **£10 to £100million income bracket** were most likely to be working on this.

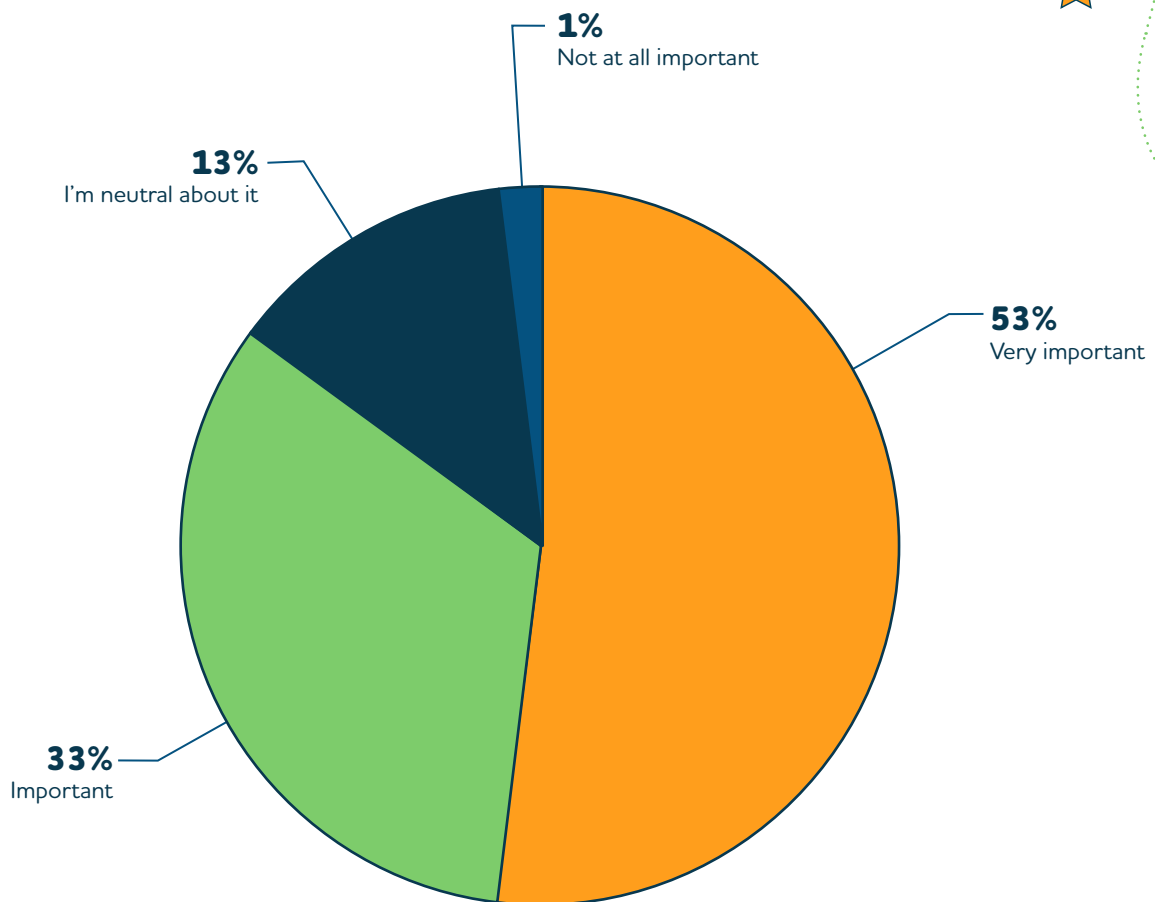


## Q 21 How important is it to you to work for a charity that is actively developing its digital capabilities and skills?

86% feel that it is very important or important to work for a charity committed to digital, demonstrating similar demand to 2019.

### ANALYSIS

- **86% said this was very important and important to them,** compared to the 86% who said it was important last year.
- Just **13% were neutral about this,** the same level as 2019.
- A mere **1% said it wasn't important.**



# KEY SURVEY COMMENTS



## Q 22 Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about how digital skills could help your charity?

“We recognise that it will help us to reach more people, both locally and internationally, as people, organisations and institutions would be able to access our work.”

“Having a staff member dedicated to digital would make a massive difference, but we cannot afford to fund an additional role.”

“As a charity working with people with sight loss we know digital skills can be a game changer for our service users enabling them to lead independent and fulfilling lives, but there are challenges around users' and staff's abilities to access assistive technology, fully understanding what solutions are out there, understanding people's requirements and how digital can help them, plus funding to help us dedicate sufficient resources.”

“There seems to be an underlying assumption that everything moving to digital is 'good' or an 'improvement'. The experiences of our service users during the pandemic has shown more clearly than ever the negative impact of going digital on all those people who are unable to access support, services, information or human connections in this way. The people who need the most support are those who are non-digital and increasingly marginalised/disadvantaged because of that. I'd be very interested in any research/development or funding to support people who are digitally disadvantaged. We have to be selective about the digital tools we use and where we invest our limited resources/staff time to best effect – key priorities would be to develop our web presence and social media capacity – this is less about a lack of skill/willingness and much more about lack of time on top of all the other duties of a small staff team. Some funding to pay for additional staff capacity would be the most helpful – if we could employ people with digital skills and/or marketing skills we could improve our own skills internally and also offer additional services for local community sector groups to help them develop.”

“Moving to remote working has required staff to begin to use digital platforms to deliver therapy, assessment and advocacy skills. We believe that there may be gaps in our knowledge around developing these further and also developing apps and/or client specific tools to use between sessions, e.g. to build self-esteem, remind about the messages of a therapy session, psycho-education.”

“Digital skills are important for our staff and volunteers, but also for the communities we work with. We cannot deliver services digitally if that will exclude many of the people we work with. This has become very clear during the lockdown and the phone has been one of our most essential tools to keep in contact (along with deliveries of food, other essentials and resources). Relying on one device for home schooling and a wide range of digital services is very difficult for many families at this time. Digital skills could make a huge difference as long as we are also building digital capacity in local communities.”

“Capacity and prioritisation are two of our biggest challenges. The appetite to develop our digital offer is there but to deliver this we need greater capacity; and if we were to devolve some digital responsibilities, we'd need to look at both upskilling and capacity.”

“Our core users are young people aged 13–15 who are very tech savvy and although face-to-face counselling is still the 'best' and most preferred choice, there are many who will be able to adapt to online and phone counselling – and many that will prefer it. It will help us to help more young people.”

## Q 22 Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about how digital skills could help your charity?

“More belief in IT/Digital, stop seeing it only as a cost, this would allow us to make big savings and huge efficiency/productivity gains, which would better allow us to deliver to our users.”

“We currently aren't reaching new people and our existing user base is depleting rapidly. I'm concerned that if we don't embrace digital for marketing we will close.”

“I work for a smaller charity within a large group charity, so we are dependent on their digital strategy and resources. As a small charity we can make changes quickly, but the bigger charity restricts us.”

“I think these skills are no longer just for digital teams, but essential for all modern charity workers. It's crucial that we're all able to understand our users, work quickly and adapt, and learn and share. The charities that fall behind will be those where hierarchy wins, where the highest-paid person's opinions beat user needs, and where decisions have to be signed off in triplicate. Everyone, from fundraisers to policy and campaigners, need to do what's best for their users – just to have the most impact they can as a charity.”

“It's not a specific answer to that question, but as I've recently changed roles, I've noticed that across the board the wages for digital roles in the charity sector seem to be going down. An officer used to be able to expect around £35–40K – now I see roles for as little as £29K for very experienced roles. If wages do not reflect experience, the sector will really struggle to recruit and retain digital staff when you could go to the private sector and easily earn £45K plus .... I think there should be some independent guidance produced over what charities should expect to pay digital staff in order to retain them.”

“There's a huge variance of skill in our team. We have staff who do not recognise that they do not have strong digital skills because they have used computers for so long. They do not understand digital culture, i.e. searching for solutions to your problems, understanding that digital services are not infallible, etc. Something that looks at the skill level of individuals and upskills those who need it would be very helpful.”

“Where our leadership team lack digital skills, it would be great for them to have more trust in the specialists they have employed. Often our data led decisions are thrown out if a Director's opinion differs to the recommendation. This is hugely frustrating. In our organisation, we also need to better collaborate. IT is often tasked with creating digital tools, but the Digital Marketing Team, who have the data and user journey understanding, are not involved in the build.”

“Crucial need for small charities is funding for digital expertise and tools/software to execute long term the culture change required as well.”

# CALL TO ACTION



BY ZOE AMAR  
Founder of Zoe Amar Digital

## 1 Charities need support with strategy

Just **over half of charities (51%) don't have a digital strategy** - either a standalone one or a section of their organisational strategy. Charities need support with this.

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## 2 Charities need additional, COVID-19 specific digital support

**27% have cancelled services** because either their charity and/or their users **don't have the necessary skills or tech**. Funders need to offer support for tech, software and skills development, as charities adapt to the crisis. Beneficiaries will also need help to get online.

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## 3 We need a concerted effort by funders to support charities with digital

**50% cited lack of funding as the biggest barrier they face to digital progress**, similar to 2019. Just under half (48%) of our respondents told us that their charities have not accessed any digital funding over the last year. There is some funding for charities and digital - but this shows how demand far outstrips what's on offer, meaning that organisations and, ultimately, beneficiaries, cannot move forward.

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## 4 Leaders need to focus on their digital vision

Respondents cited strong digital leadership as a key need, similar to last year. **67% want their leadership team to offer a clear vision of what digital could help them achieve**. As a sector we need to offer leaders the training and support they need to develop this.

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## 5 Digital should be a critical priority for trustees

**Most charities (66%) rate their board's digital skills as low or having room for improvement**, down 2% from 2019. We need more digital trustees and all trustees need to take responsibility for skilling themselves up in digital, so that they can make informed decisions as their charities adopt digital further during the crisis. **Reach Volunteering** can help charities recruit digital trustees.

Chairs can make a difference here by encouraging trustees to ask the right questions about digital. See the **[COVID-19 digital checklist for trustees](#)**.



## 6 Charities need to commit to understanding their users better

Just **8% of charities rate themselves as excellent at understanding users** - whether that's beneficiaries, donors or supporters. We need wider adoption of service design techniques across the sector and to get better at managing and analysing the data and insights we already have about the people we serve. User research and user testing needs to prioritise diversity and accessibility. This should also help charities develop better digital services, which is an additional a skills gap.

## 7 Charities need help with digital fundraising

**With face to face events decimated, charities need to grow digital fundraising to plug income gaps.** Yet this is one of the weakest skills for charities, with 45% saying that they are poor at it. We need a shared understanding of what good digital fundraising skills look like, and what success means in this area.



### ABOUT ZOE AMAR

Zoe Amar is widely regarded as one of the charity sector's leading digital experts. She founded digital agency and social enterprise *Zoe Amar Digital* in 2013. Their clients have included NSPCC, Anglia Ruskin University and The School for Social Entrepreneurs.

Zoe is Chair of The Charity Digital Code of Practice. She writes for Third Sector about charities and digital issues and co-founded the *Social CEOs awards*. She also co-authored The Charity Commission's digital guidance for trustees, 'Making Digital Work.'

Zoe has ten years' experience as a charity trustee. She currently sits on the board of Tech Trust. She also sits on the Board Audit and Risk Sub-Committee at the Samaritans as their digital expert. Previously, Zoe worked for 5 years as part of the leadership team at a national charity which advised non-profits about technology. She recently won an Inspiring Communicator award from CharityComms.

[www.zoamar.com](http://www.zoamar.com)



### ABOUT THE SKILLS PLATFORM

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