

Asylum and refugee support: Civil society filling the gaps?

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The Project: Asylum.Welfare.Work

Workpackage 1: Analysis of policy rationale and policymaking processes

Workpackage 2: Costing the policy -cost to government and costs to the third sector

Workpackage 3: Impacts of asylum support policy on asylum seekers

The stratified rights regime

- Illegal to work in most cases for asylum seekers to work
- Working only permitted in detention (£1.00-£1.25 per hour)
- Asylum seekers: receive welfare support £37.75 per week ('Section 95' support) 50% of Job Seekers Allowance rates
- Refused Asylum Seekers: *either* nothing *or* cashless £35.39 per week in vouchers ('Section 4' support)
- Refugees: mainstream benefits system, right to work

The research problem

- The economic entitlements of asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers have been steadily decreasing since early 2000s.
- Asylum seekers receiving Section 95 support, refused asylum seekers receiving Section 4 support, and refugees should still be fully supported by the system.
- NGOs, parliamentary inquiries (cross party & select committee), academics & others have been highly critical of this policy agenda.
- Research evidence tends to be small scale, qualitative
- Aim: To look at the third sector response nationally (the scale of this response) in order to draw some conclusions about the adequacy of the policies in place.

The report, published Oct 2017...

...estimates the financial cost to the refugee third sector of poverty and destitution among these groups. It looks at where refugee third sector organisations are, how many people they are supporting, which groups they are supporting, how they are funded, and support that is hard to cost.

What is known about poverty amongst these groups?

- Most research is small scale, qualitative, interviews or surveys BUT consistent
- Research has found both that people are liable to become destitute at all stages in their asylum journey, including while in the asylum system, and after being granted leave to remain, and that those who are in receipt of asylum support are living in poverty and so are likely to have additional needs which exceed state provision.

2015 JRF study (survey of destitute people)

- Within the asylum group 46% had leave to remain or refugee status and 41% were still in the asylum system.
- Those who were going through the asylum system experienced longer periods of destitution than other groups, and respondents who were supported by the Home Office on Section 95 and Section 4 benefits highlighted the low levels of support rates as the main explanation for their situation.

- Impacts on asylum seekers include mental health problems, high levels of hunger, high levels of maternal and infant mortality, and difficulty navigating the legal process.
- Lacking resources to participate in normal social activities → social isolation, shame, stigma and embarrassment.
- DfH (2006) high prevalence of mental health issues; nearly all (83%) suffered from depression 'often' or 'usually', 63% often or usually experienced loss of sleep

What is known about the scale and scope of the third sector response?

- We know a lot about the scope, very little about the scale
- **Scope:** Legal and welfare advice/advocacy, subsistence support (money, clothes, food banks), housing, social activities, English language lessons.
- Often small, local, heavily dependent on volunteers, many faith based/rely on churches, often located in asylum seeker dispersal areas.
- Changes reported over the past 15 years: client demand (inc.) and available funding (dec.)

The methodological challenge

- Historically: RCOs = most of the sector. V.small, often 'below the radar'
- Many charitable activities undertaken by faith organisations - difficult to get data on
- Support for AS, RAS and R's not restricted to RTSOs
- RTSOs do not *necessarily* disaggregate activities, or record who they help and why

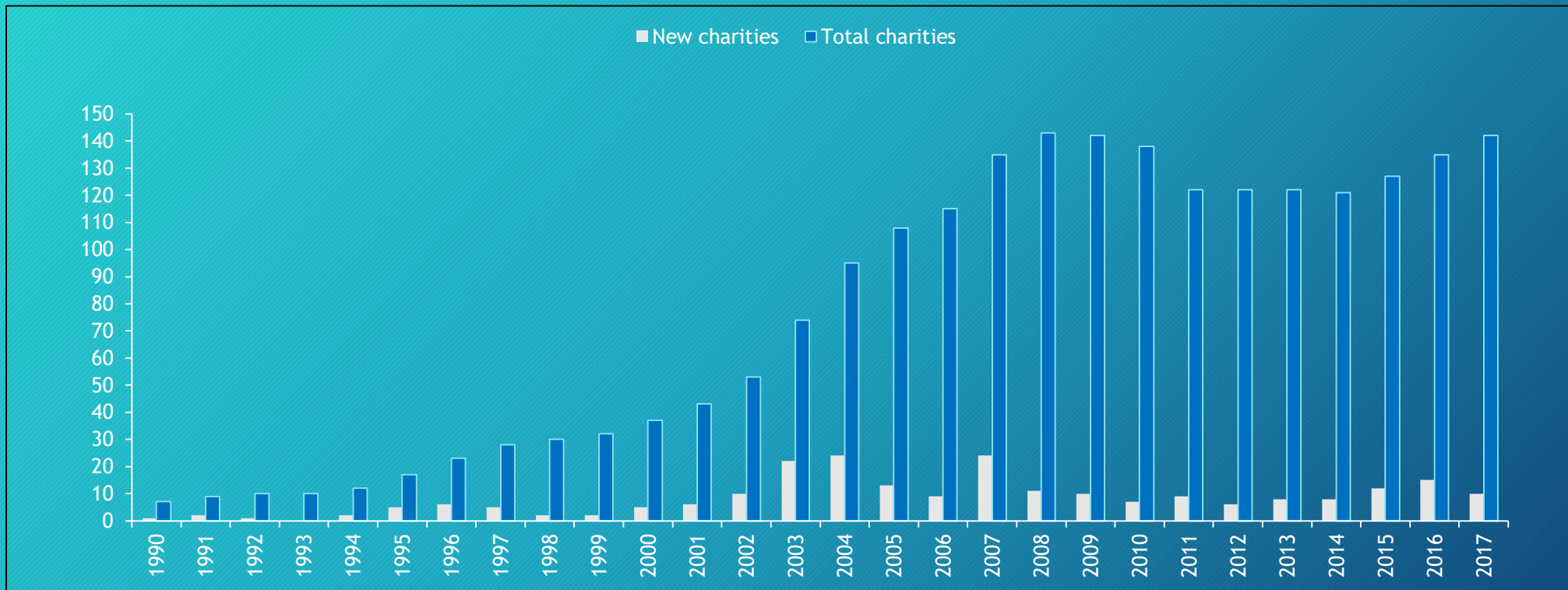
Research design

1. Charity Commission data
2. British Red Cross
3. Survey of NACCOM member organisations
4. 2 case studies of locally based organisations

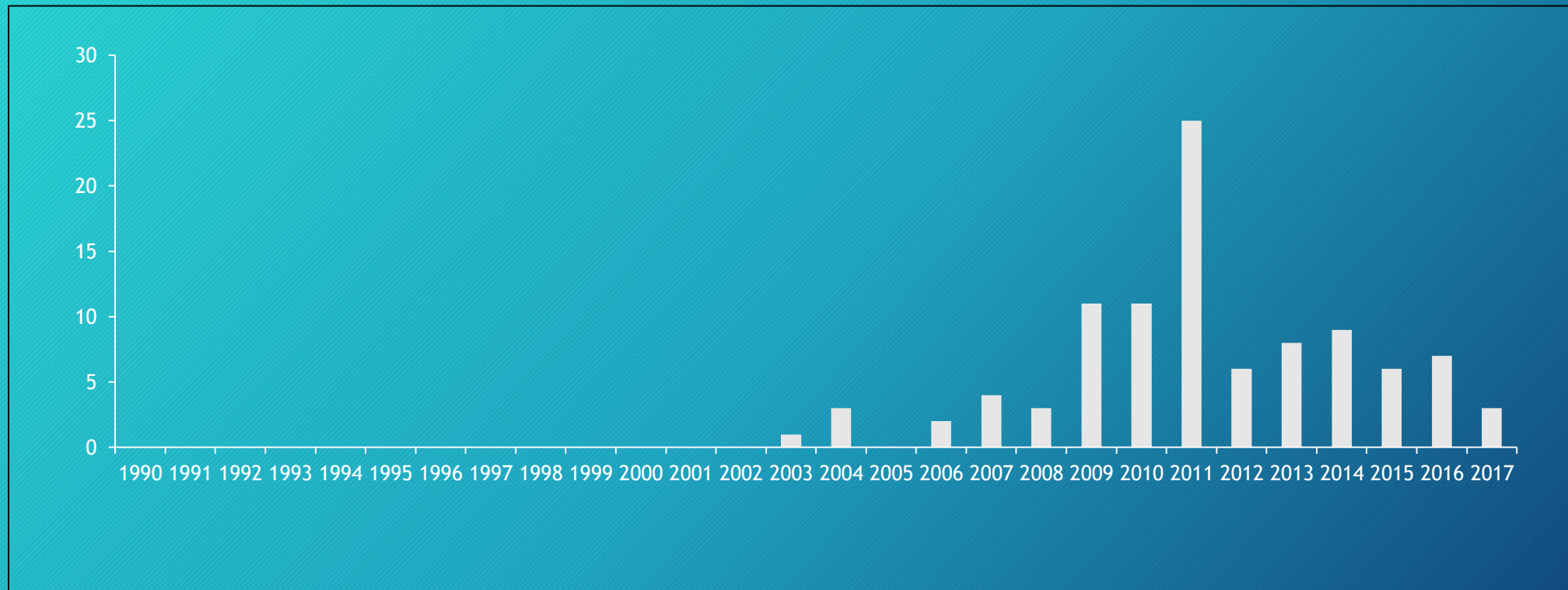
How many RTSOs are there?

- 142 RTSOs that work with AS/RAS/Rs & focus on alleviating poverty and destitution in England and Wales
- 7 new organisations with an income of over £10,000 are created each year

How many RTSOs are there?



Charities that have ceased operating 1990-2017



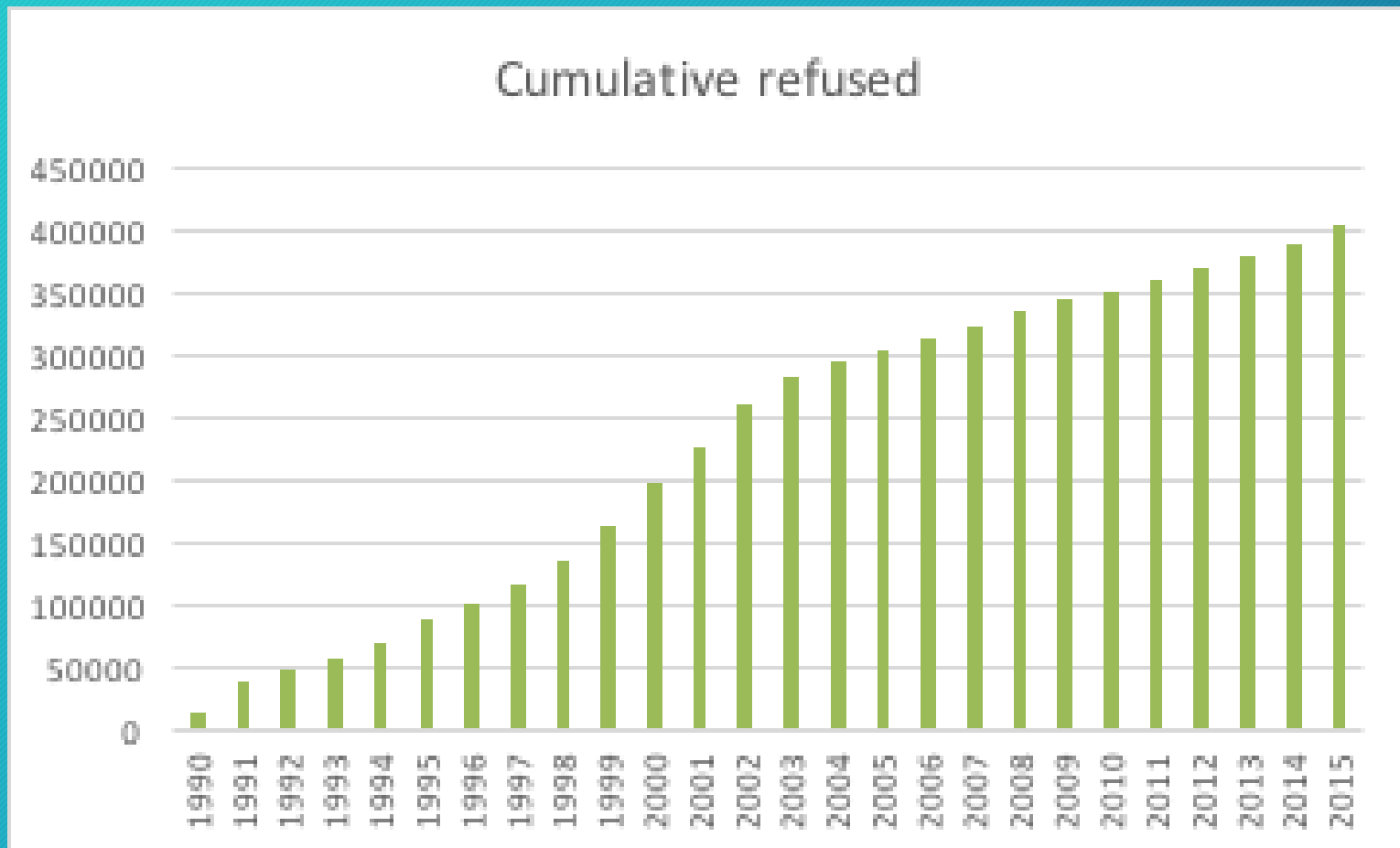
Where are the RTSOs?

- Dispersal areas
- No correlation between number of RTSOs and population size, or broader trends in third sector
- North East (lowest concentration of charities of any region in the UK) has 3 urban centres in top 10 for number of orgs

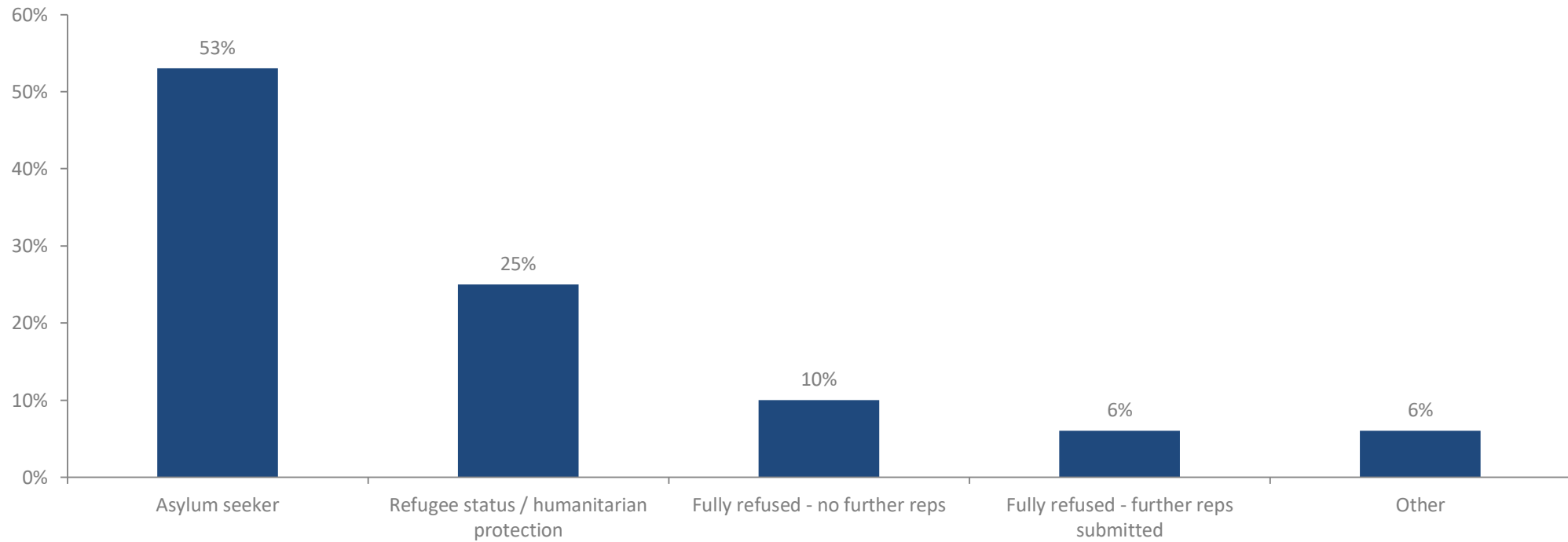
How many people are relying on charitable support?

- British Red Cross supported 9138 asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees and 4130 dependents nationally in 2015
- No. of AS \approx 25% of those in receipt of asylum support that year
- BRC supported 76 people in Oxfordshire during 2015 but AW handed out 2321 food parcels to 1029 clients
- NACCOM members provided 209,250 nights of accommodation in 2016, inc of 29% since 2015

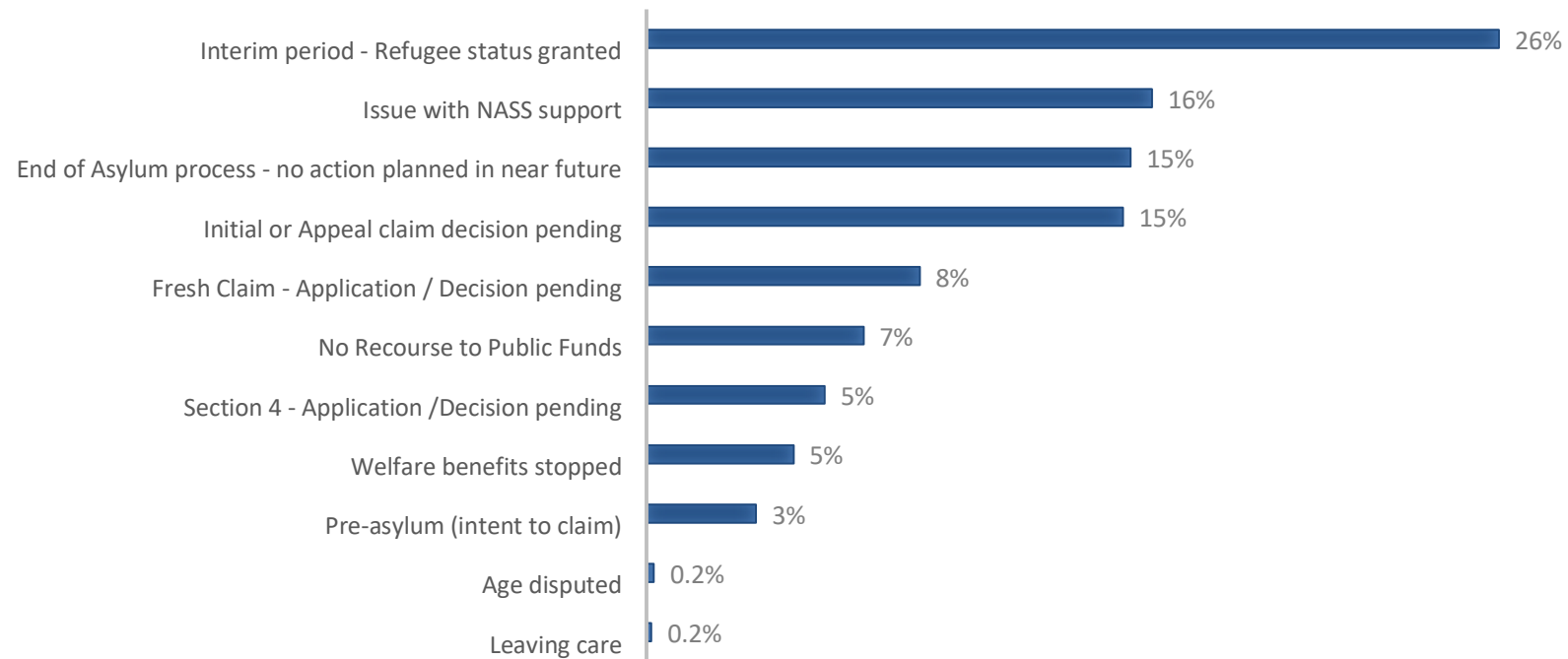
Who is relying on charitable support?



Who is relying on charitable support?



Reason for seeking charitable support



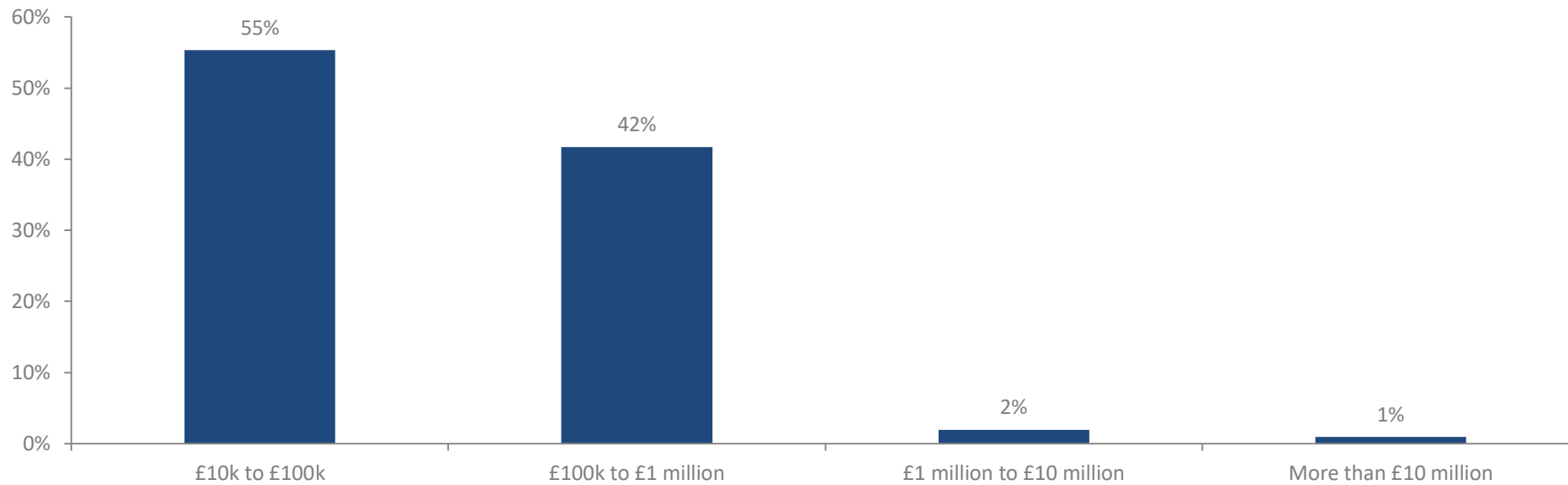
Accommodation

- Sought mainly by refused asylum seekers and new refugees
- NACCOM: Approx 1/2 refused asylum seekers, 1/3 refugees

The cost of this third sector response

- Total income of our sample of RTSOs in 2015/16 was £33.4 million. Decrease of 25% since 2010
- Expenditure: £31.8 million (95% of total income)
- Smaller orgs more reliant on individual donations (which is precarious), larger orgs historically more reliant on gov funding (also precarious)

Percentage of organisations registered with the Charity Commission in each income band

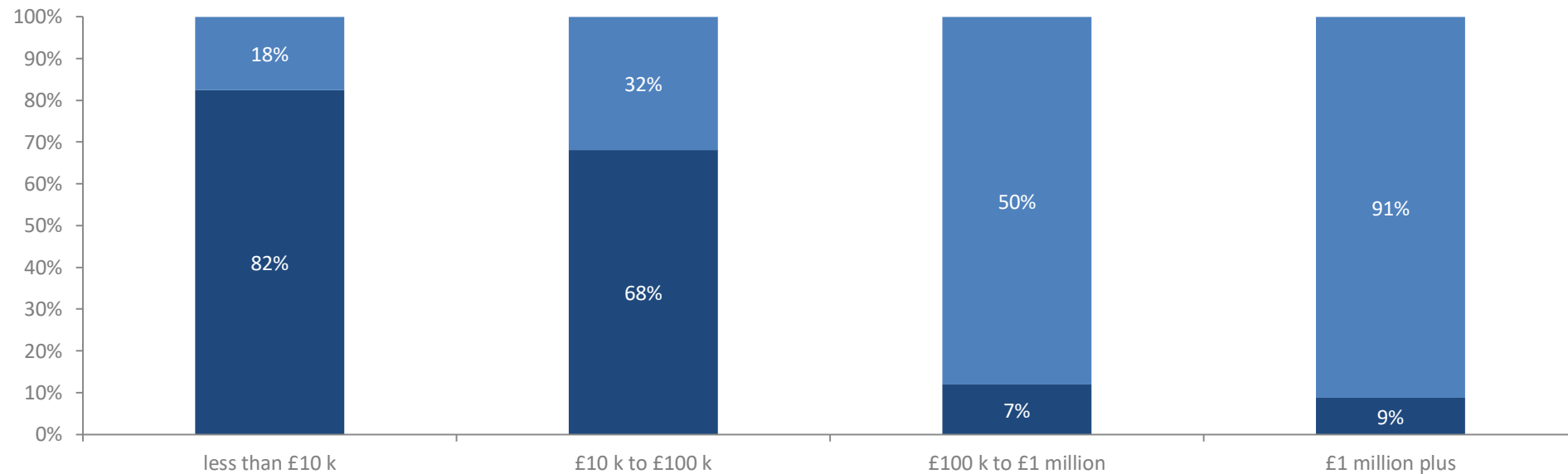


Support that is hard to cost

- BRC provided 1535 food parcels, 1370 vouchers for Red Cross clothing shops & 1022 hygiene packs (2015)
- Asylum Welcome handed out 2,321 bags of food, totalling £30,869 worth of food provided (2015/16)
- ASSIST volunteers spend on average a total of 463 hours a week volunteering. If volunteers were paid the national minimum wage, combined wage bill for ASSIST's volunteers would be £700 a day / £3,472 a week / £180,544 a year.

Support that is hard to cost

Hours worked by volunteers and staff in different size NACCOM member organisations



Conclusions

- RTS is growing, despite constrained resources, with support from civil society
- £31.8 million per year being spent on supporting AS/RAS/Rs → an underestimation of spend + not indicative of demand
- RAS a growing group, inevitable burden on TS
- RTS appears to be supporting significant numbers of AS who are entitled to gov support with subsistence provision
- Refugees a significant group seeking charitable support to avoid destitution

But...

- Significant gaps in the data
- Charity Commission still the most reliable source
- Still difficult to say definitively whether support sought by asylum seekers entitled to state support is mainly related to administrative problems and delays or low levels of support

Thank you!

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