

Civil Society in 2010: surviving or thriving in the Big Society?

High Peaks CVS, October 2010

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Evidence | Resources | Policy | Opinion | Signposting: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Current context



91,000 micro organisations

 Income: £264m

Income: £26.9 billion

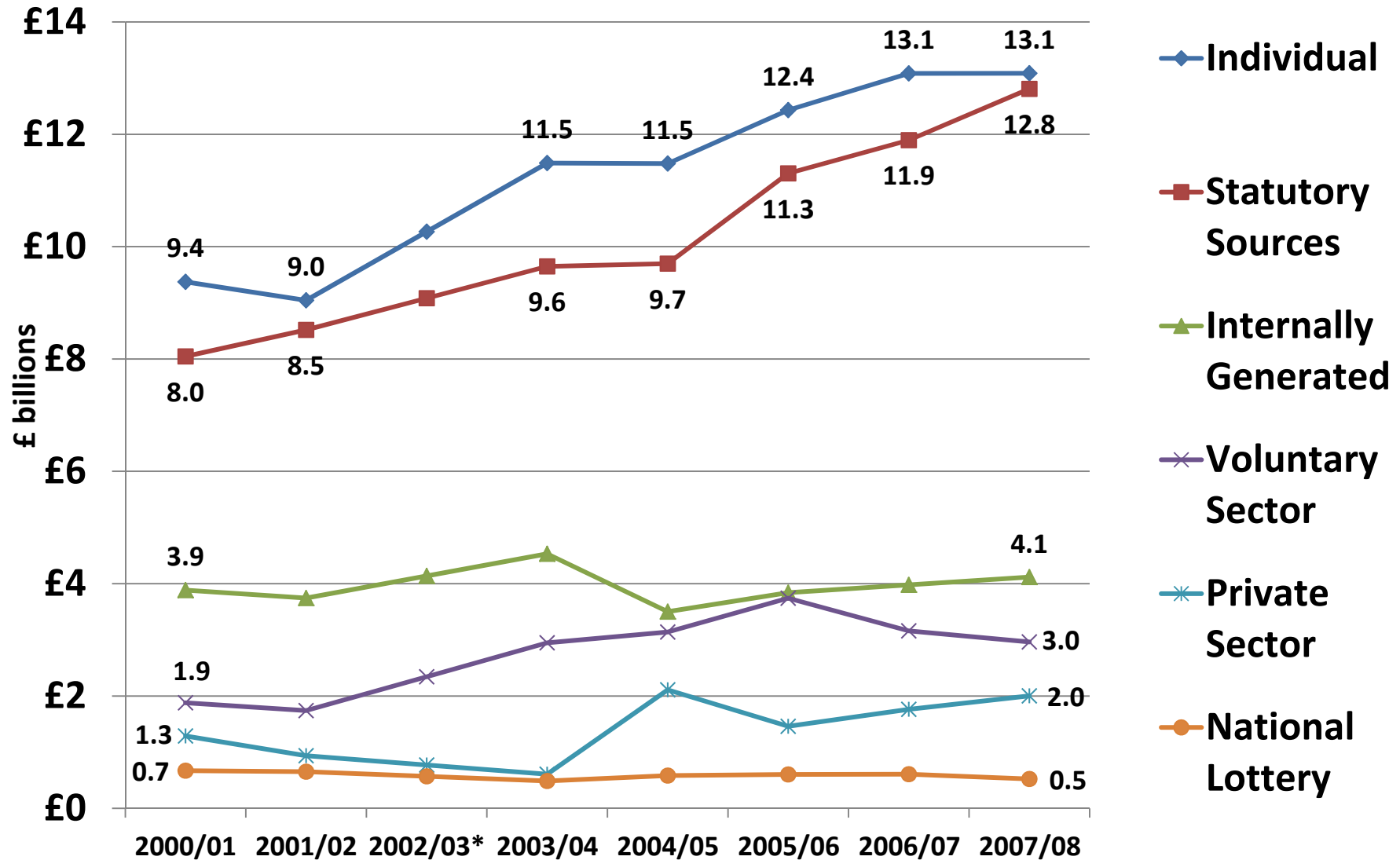
 4,566 major organisations

**75,000 small/
medium
organisations**

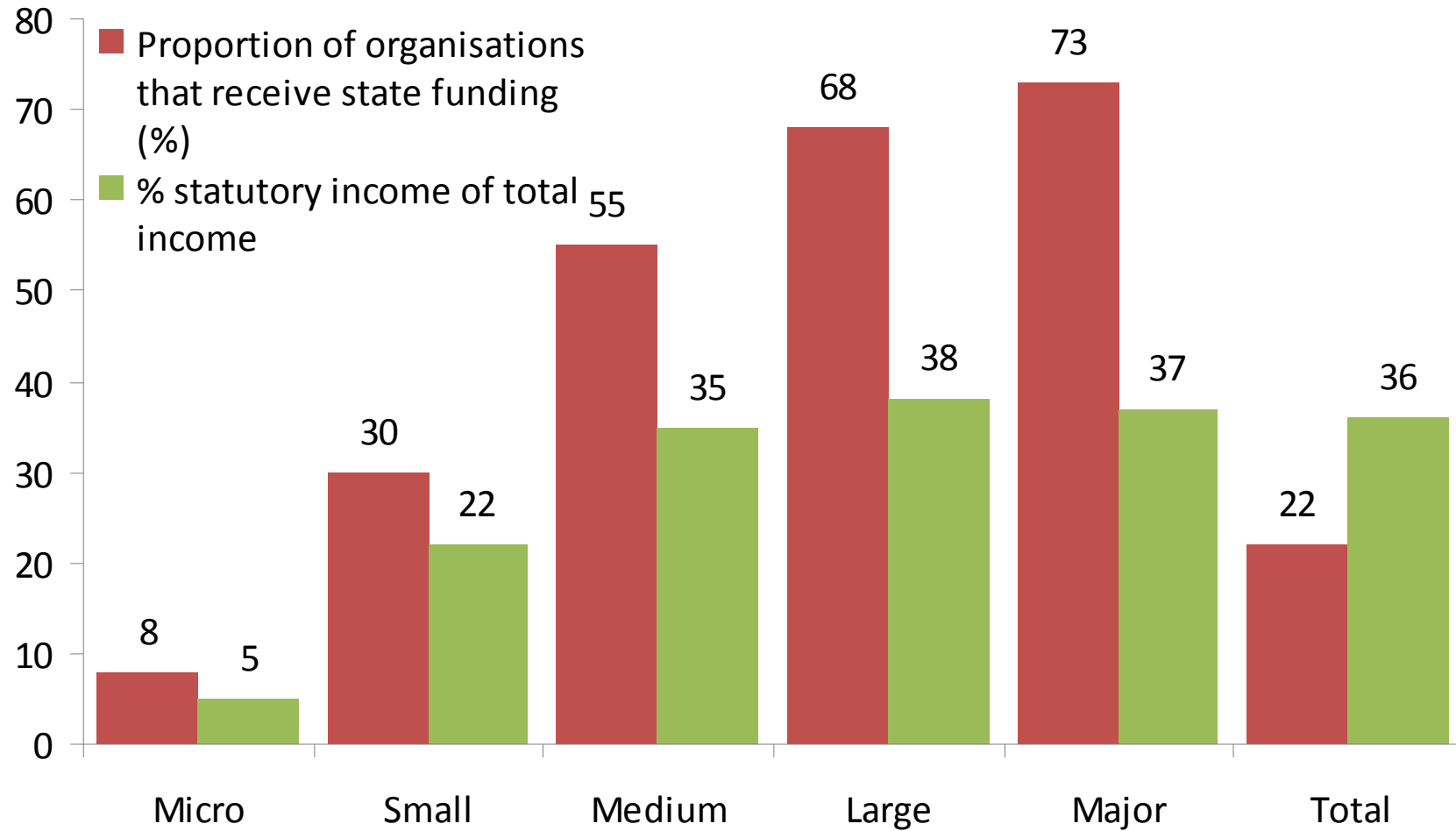
**Income:
£8.4 billion**

**Income is heavily
skewed to the few...**

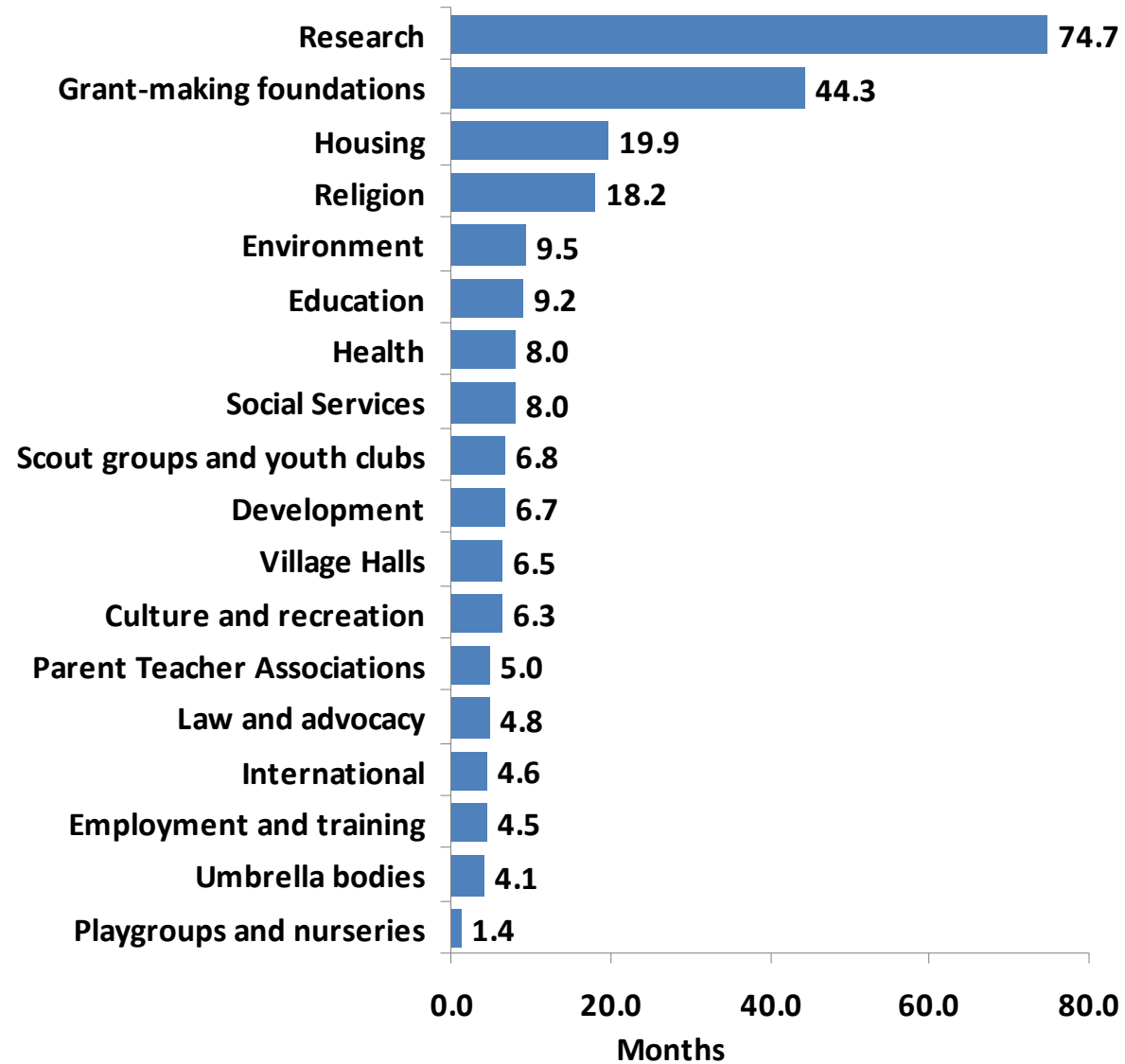
How to grow by £10bn: donors + delivery



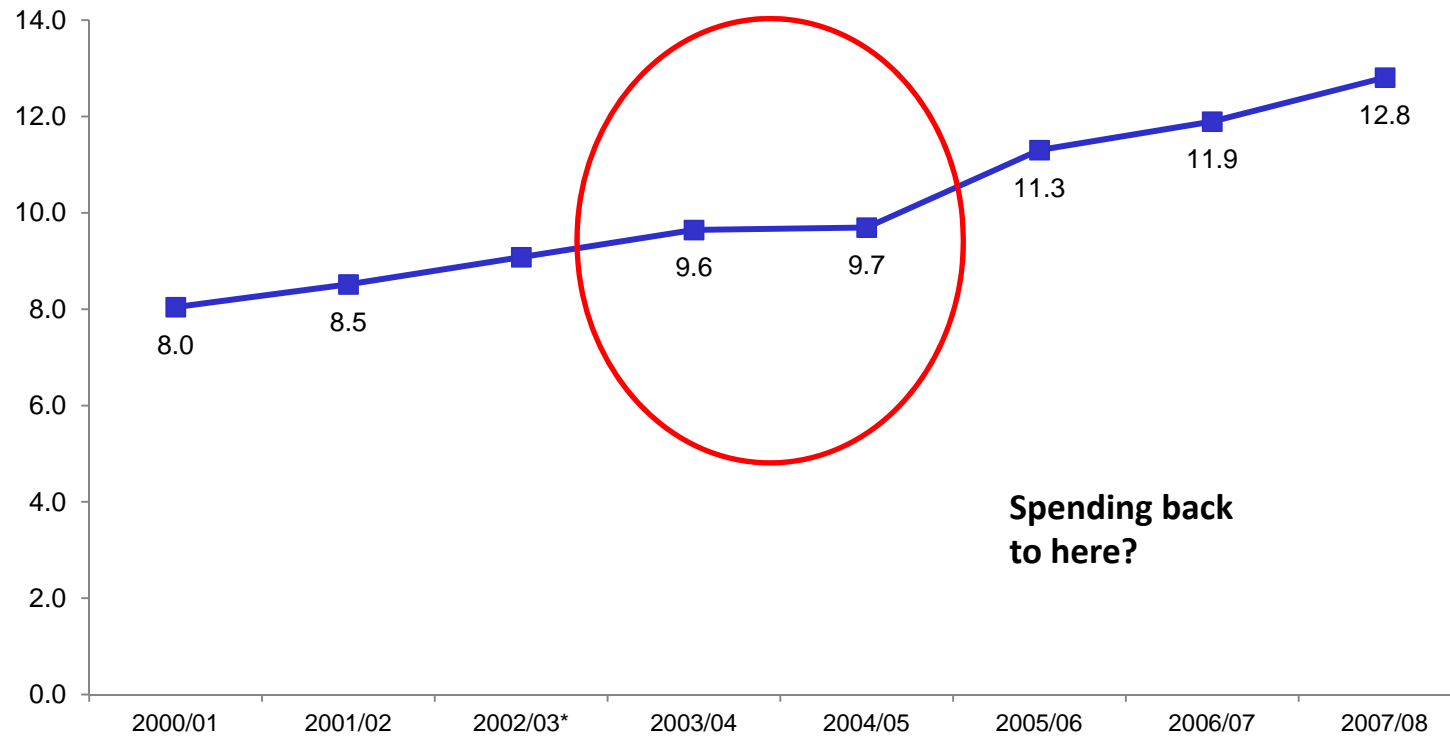
Statutory income = £12.8 billion



Free reserves



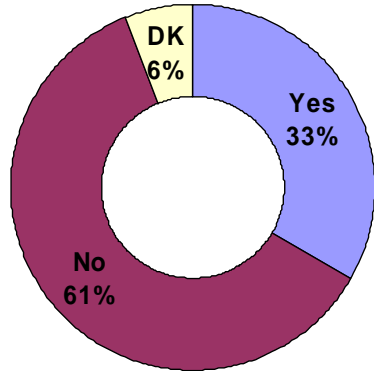
Cuts...



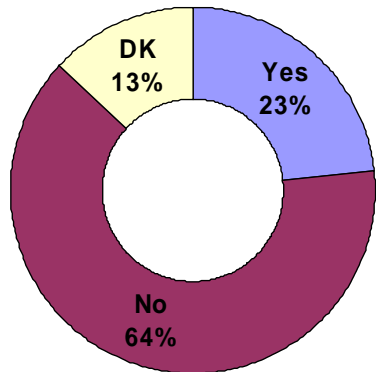
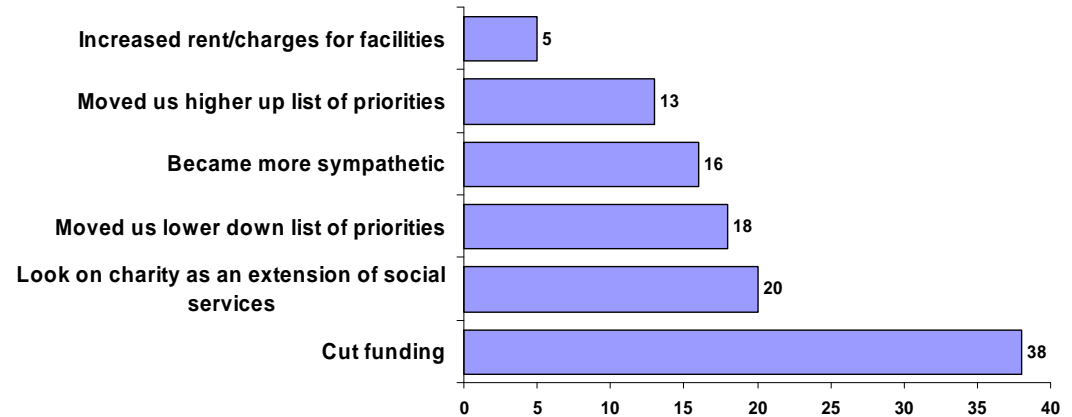
Statutory funding of the VCS, 2001/01- 2007/08 (£billions). Source: NCVO

- Cuts in expenditure take us back to 2003/04: back to pre-*Change Up* levels
- Cuts imply loss in income to the sector of £3.1-£3.2 billions, but assumes a) VCS funded only by unprotected depts, b) political indifference to the sector

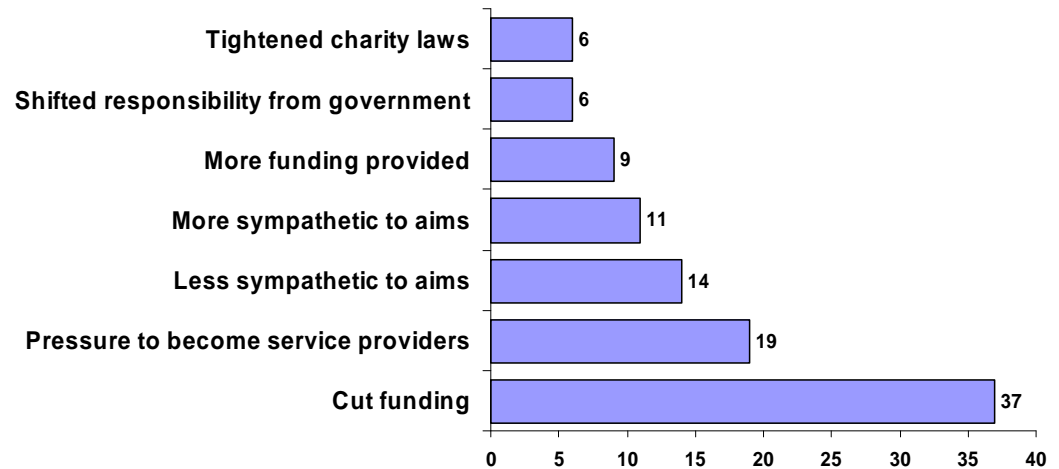
How did government respond in 1991-93?



Local Government



Central Government

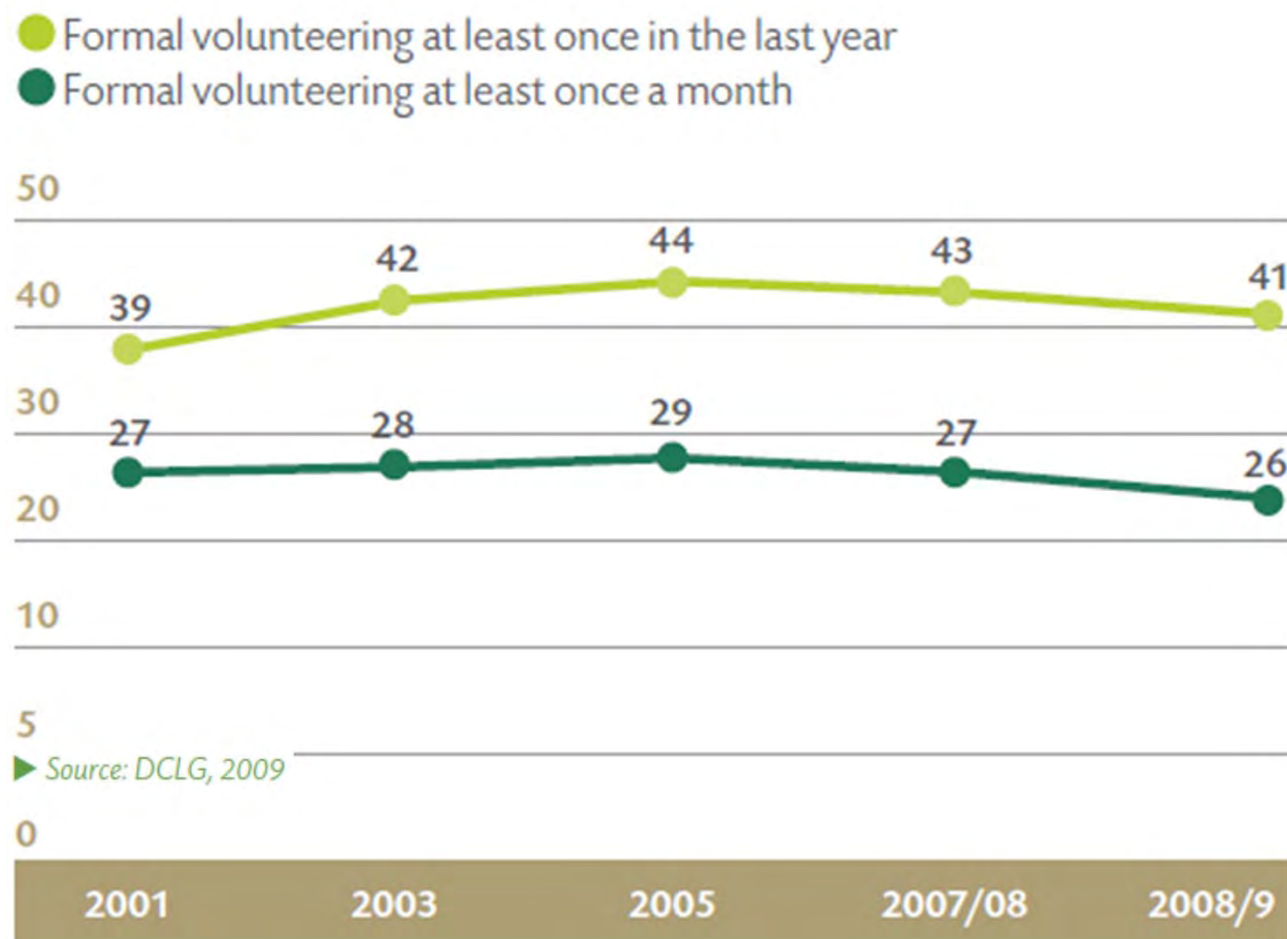


Commentary

A majority report no change in attitude of government to the sector – but where there was a response the most widely cited response was a funding cut.

Volunteering has remained relatively static

Levels of formal volunteering in England, 2001 – 2008/09 (%)





Public policy and the VCS: The Big Society

What is The Big Society?

In short, it's a vision (not yet an ideology?) with **5 themes**:

1. Give communities more powers
2. Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
3. Transfer power from central to local government
4. Support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises
5. Publish government data

Many of these themes have little or no underlying detail.



- 1. Give communities more powers**



2. Encourage people to take an active role in their communities



3. Transfer power from central to local government

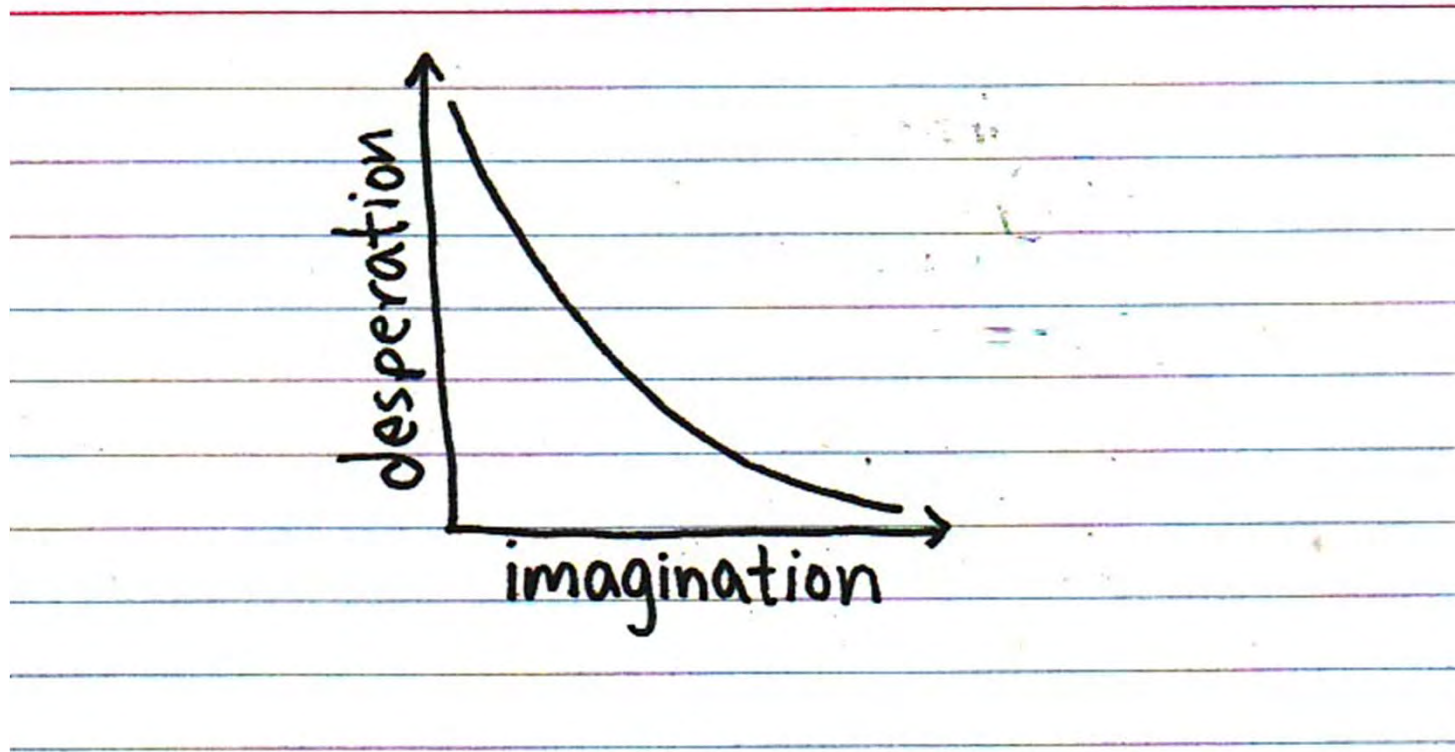




4. **Support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises**

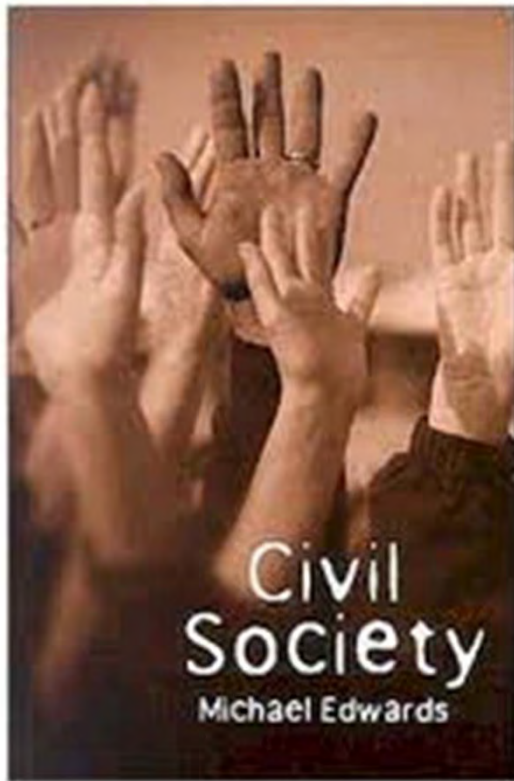
5. Publish government data





Looking ahead: a bigger society?

The Big Society and Civil Society



- The Big Society is not the same as civil society...
- ...or a big voluntary sector.
- The goal must not be simply a bigger society – but a better, fairer society

Threats

1. Inefficient resource allocation
2. Can we cut public spending and maintain capacity to grow the Big Society?
3. The funding ecosystem: loss of diversity
4. The gap between 'here' (funding) and 'there' (finance)
5. Does more localism just mean more resources for town halls? Or communities of place?
6. Disappointment: scale is an issue that will not go away
7. Loss of distinctiveness and independence: why give?

Opportunities



1. Grassroots resources: the voluntary impulse is strong
2. Capacity: voluntary organisations are more resilient than a decade ago
3. Resource allocation: new forms of social finance
4. Giving: citizen philanthropy
5. Asset transfer/sharing
6. Working Wikily: new technology and open data will power social change/resources
7. The ferment of ideas produced by the Big Society

Where next: emerging questions for policy



1. Does Big Government really 'crowd out' Big Society?
2. How do we address the issue of scaling-up voluntary action? Big charities?
3. Can the Big Society engage all parts of the community, not just those who shout loudest?
4. Are we prepared to stay with this for the long-term?
5. What do VCOs – *civil society* - want the Big Society to be?