Saxton Bampfylde

Social Impact Leadership Confidence Index 2026

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Social Impact Leadership Confidence Index 2026

Saxton Bampfylde surveyed CEOs and Chairs of Social Impact organisations to gauge their confidence on key issues facing the sector.

We are very grateful for the participation of 47 current CEOs and Chairs, whose confidence is captured across a series of key topics, including fundraising & partnerships, impact, and leadership performance.

This was a re-run of a survey we conducted in 2025, and we include a comparison of the responses between the two surveys.

The headlines

Chairs and Chief Executives reported a high level of confidence in their organisations, despite the persistent external challenges.

88%

are confident their organisation can deliver its strategy in the medium term

83%

trust their Executive Leadership Team to manage change and uncertainty

80%

feel equipped to deliver their mission despite the current challenges to the sector

63%

are confident they have the resources they need, up from just 50% in 2025

The exception

By far the lowest confidence is in the political environment, with respondents indicating very low confidence in both the policy environment and the prospect of long-term government funding.

"Confident" throughout is the % of those who responded either "confident" or "highly confident" to each field.

Key observations from the 2026 survey

A sector that expects difficult conditions to persist, but believes it has the capability to navigate them.

Where confidence is high

88% Our strategy is deliverable in the medium term

83% The Executive Leadership Team can manage change and uncertainty

80% We are equipped to deliver the mission despite current sector challenges

76% We will achieve our intended impact in the coming year

Where it weakens

49% are confident they will avoid headcount reductions over the next twelve months

41% of Chief Executives are confident their fundraising strategy will secure the organisation's medium-term stability

This contrasts with the very high confidence in medium-term delivery of strategy, and confidence in being equipped to deliver on the organisation's mission.

44% are confident in the internal pipeline for leadership appointments, against 83% confidence in the Executive Leadership Team's management of change and uncertainty

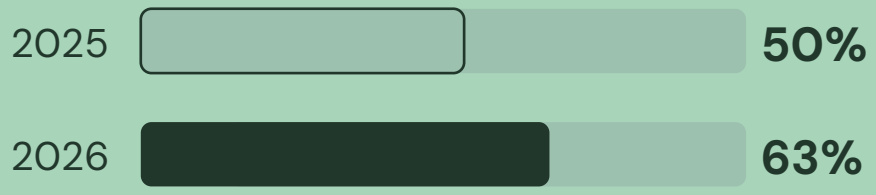
38% are confident that the policy and government funding environment will improve during this parliament. This mirrors the lowest area of confidence last year, despite developments in the intervening year, such as the change of Prime Minister, and establishment of the Civil Society Council

Comparison with 2025

Confidence in resources has risen. Confidence in private-sector partners has fallen.

Confident they have the resources they need to deliver on their mission

+13 percentage points



In a persistently challenging financial environment for charities, it is striking that confidence has improved, although this is up from a low base.

It is notable, however, that only 41% of Chief Executives were confident that the current fundraising strategy will secure the required resources for the medium-term.

Confident they have a compelling proposition for private-sector partners

−12 percentage points



It is notable that confidence in private-sector partnerships has fallen sharply, after a year of testing new fundraising strategies.

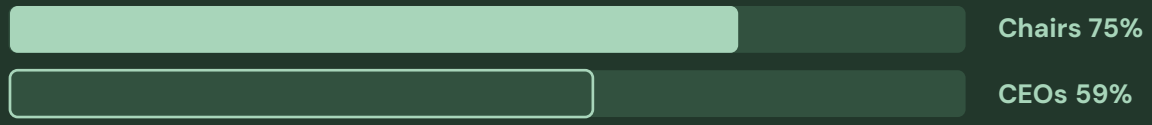
Comparison of perspectives: Chairs and Chief Executives

Chairs are more confident in current organisational strength, while CEOs are more confident in future development and adaptation.

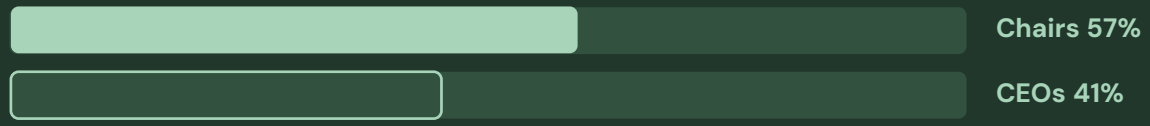
Overall, Chairs were generally more optimistic than Chief Executives about organisational resilience and current operating performance, while Chief Executives were somewhat more optimistic about future opportunities, leadership development, and fundraising potential.

Where Chairs are more confident than Chief Executives

Financial resilience: confidence in the strategy to weather current financial challenges.



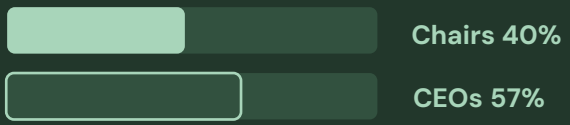
Fundraising strategy: confidence that the current fundraising strategy will secure medium-term financial stability.



Organisational capability: Chairs tended to express higher confidence across several measures of operational resilience and current organisational performance.

Where Chief Executives are more confident than Chairs

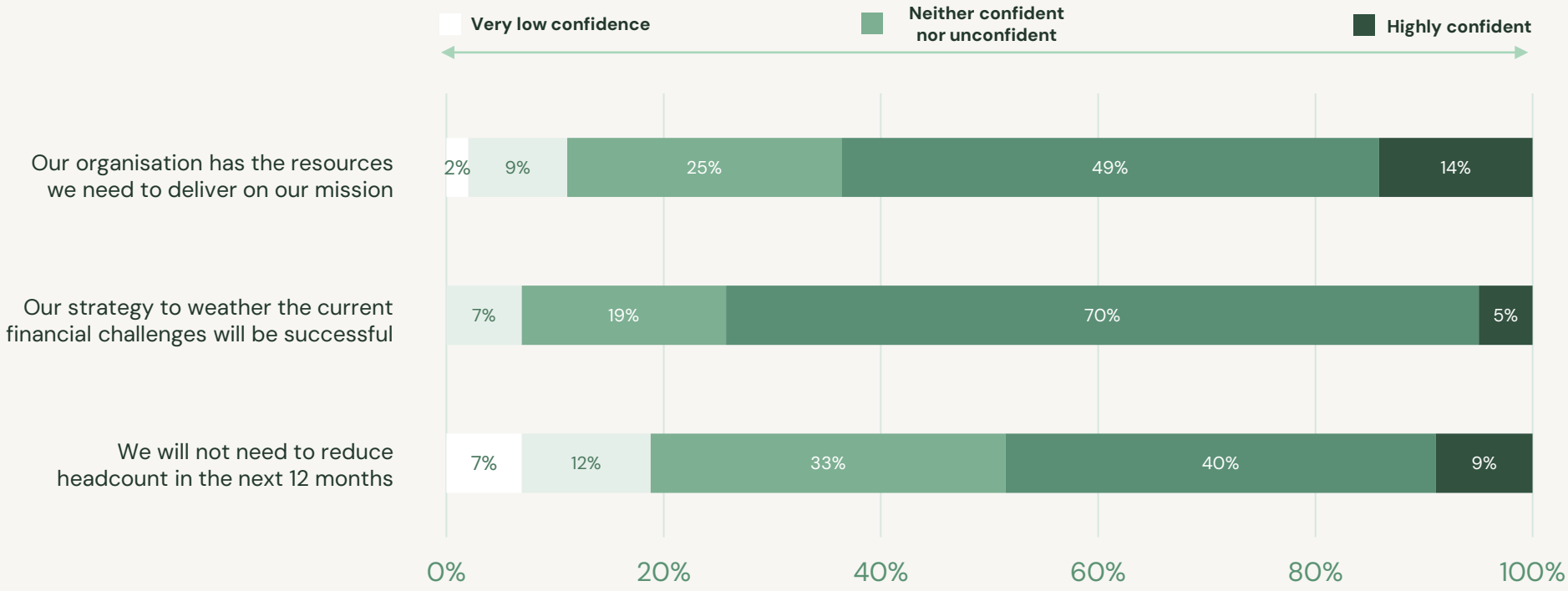
Leadership succession



Leadership succession was the clearest area of diversion here, with 57% of Chief Executives were confident or highly confidence that there is a strong internal pipeline for future leadership appointments, while the equivalent figures for Chairs was just 40%.

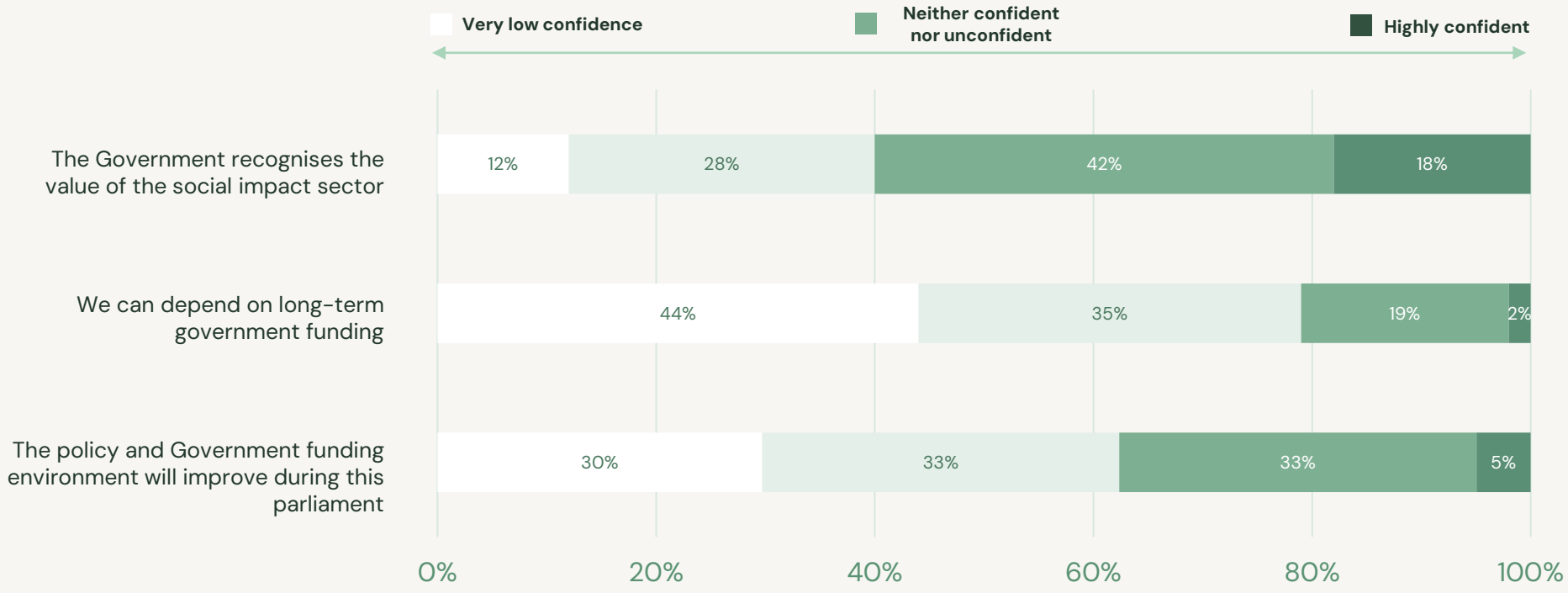
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1. Financial Stability



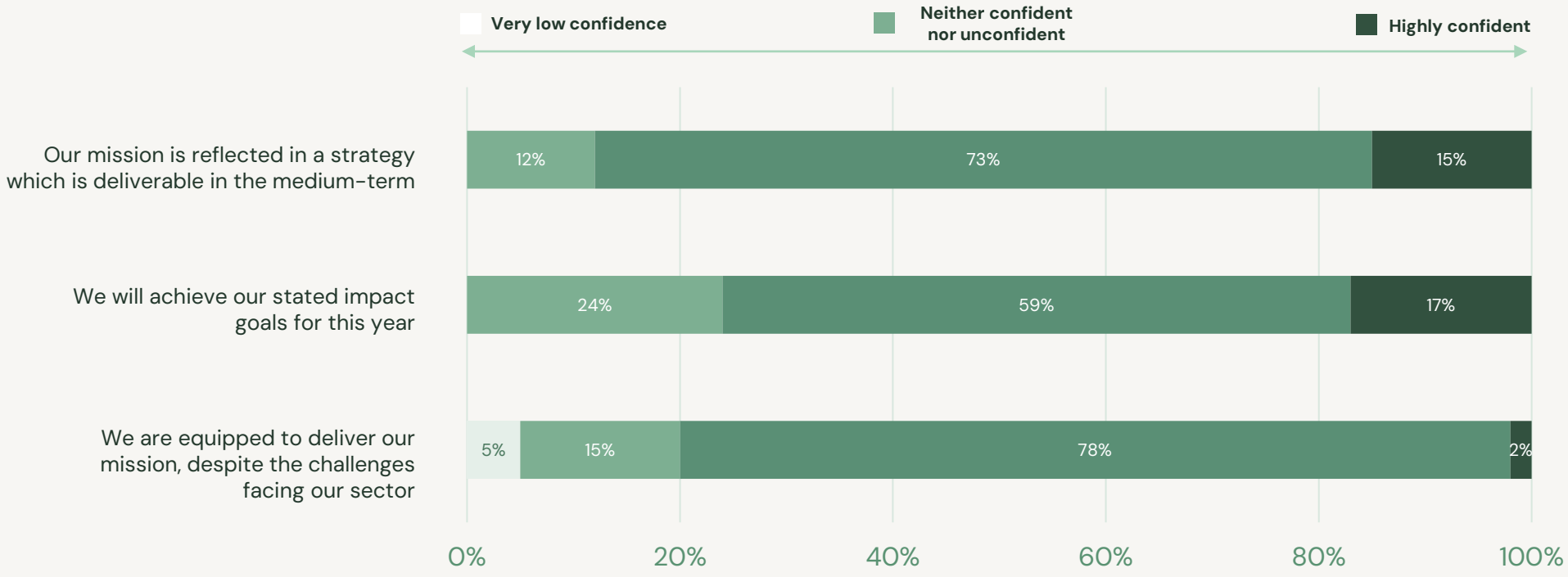
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2. Political Environment



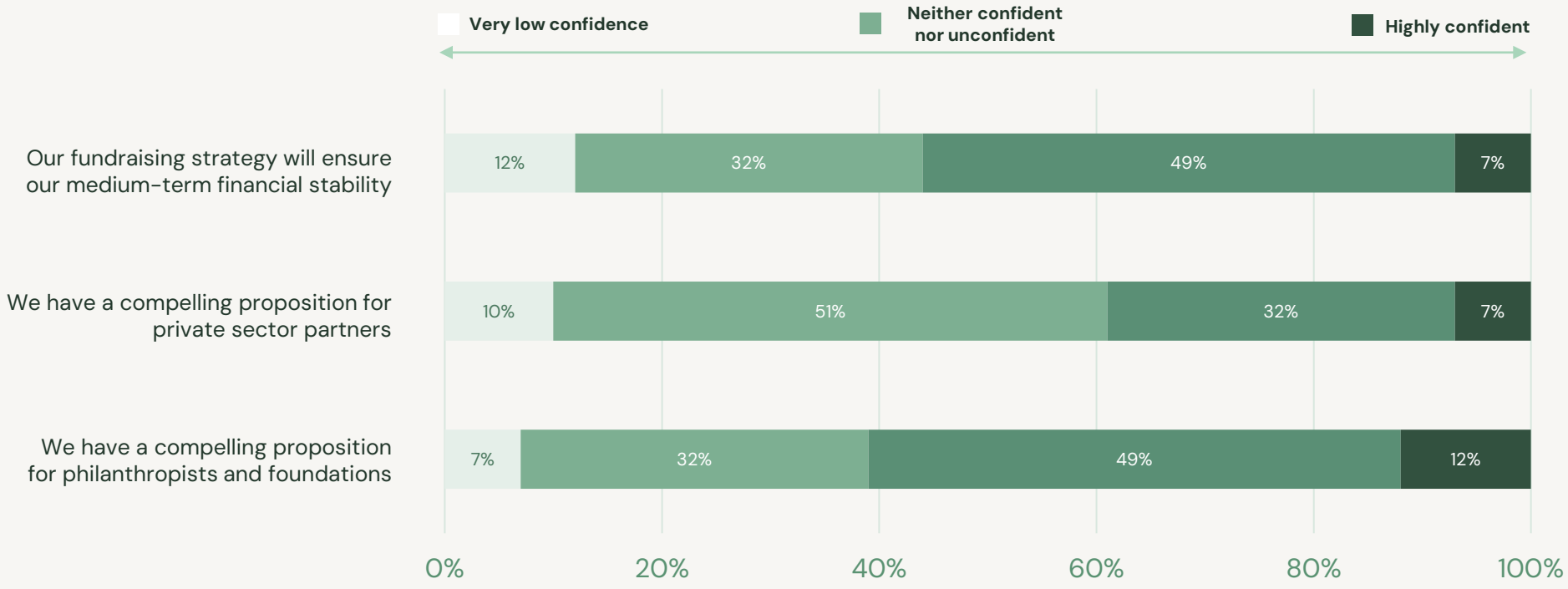
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3. Impact



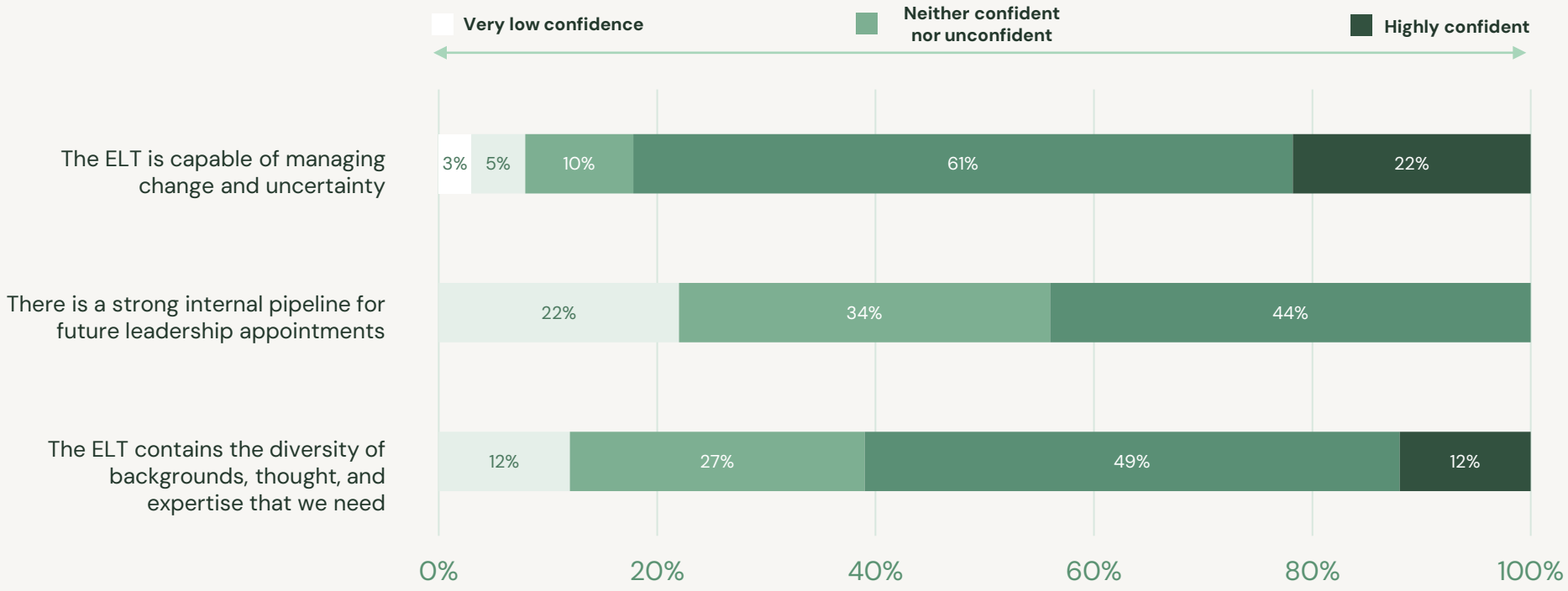
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4. Fundraising & Partnerships



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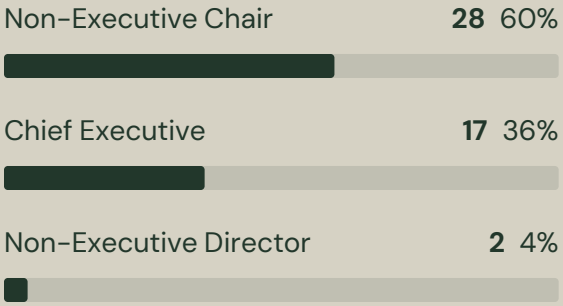
5. Executive Leadership Team



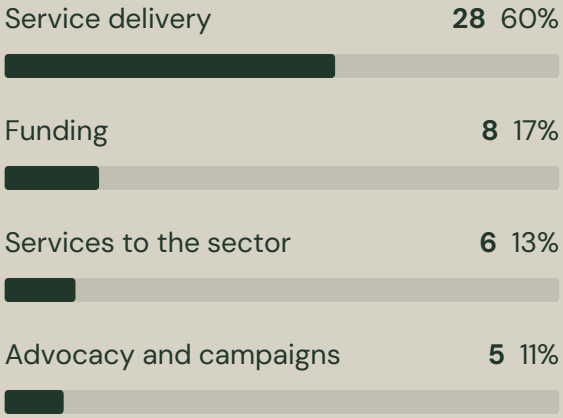
Our contributors

47 leaders from across the social impact sector, most from service-delivery organisations.

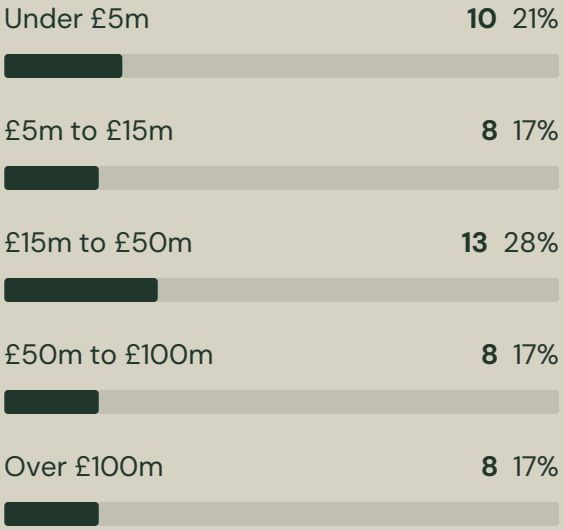
Role



Primary activity



Annual income



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About us

Saxton Bampfylde is a leading leadership advisory firm, specialising in appointments at the intersection of social impact, business, education and the public sector.

Team contacts



Aidan Kennedy
Partner & Head of Social Impact Practice
aidan.kennedy@saxbam.com



Nick Ricketts
Partner & Consultant
nick.ricketts@saxbam.com



Vidhu Sood-Nicholls
Partner & Consultant
Vidhu.sood-nicholls@saxbam.com

Saxton Bampfylde

London
79-81 Borough Road
London
SE1 1DN
+44 (0)20 7227 0800

Edinburgh
80 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3BU
+44 (0)131 603 5700

Global
panorama-leadership.com

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