

Partnering with Helsinki 2026

**Summary of the results of the survey
for associations, foundations and
clubs in Helsinki**

Cooperation between the City of Helsinki
and Bondata Research Oy

Helsinki



The aim and implementation of the survey

The aim of the survey

The survey examined the operating conditions, current changes and outlook for 2026 of **associations, foundations and clubs operating in Helsinki**. A particular focus was placed on the impacts of grant cuts and other changes in the operating environment on organisations' activities and everyday work.

Implementation

A total of 286 organisations from six organisation types responded to the survey conducted in April–May. The respondents included both organisations that received grants from the City of Helsinki and organisations that do not cooperate with the City.

Respondents by type of organisation

Wellbeing promotion, health and social services organisations	77
Cultural sector organisations	66
Other organisations	49
Sports and leisure organisations, incl. sports clubs	42
Youth and pre-teen organisations	34
Child and family organisations	18
Total	286

Helsinki has a broad and diverse organisation sector

Helsinki's field of organisations consists of various organisations whose activities range from everyday support to hobbies, culture and advocacy.

The organisations' activities cover, among other things:

- low-threshold support, guidance and peer support
- sport and physical activity, culture, youth activities and events
- community, meeting places and volunteering
- expert work, advocacy and communications

The organisations complement the City's service network and reach people through low-threshold activities.



Volunteering supports the activities of organisations

Organisations' operations are often based on a combination of paid work and volunteering. Most of the organisations have employees, but volunteering is still an essential part of the activities. Some of the organisations operate entirely on a voluntary basis.

86%

of organisations involve volunteering.

34%

of organisations operate entirely on a voluntary basis.

Volunteering makes the field of organisations flexible and close to everyday life. At the same time, it increases vulnerability if volunteers become overburdened or operating conditions deteriorate.

Organisations have a wide reach

The activities of organisations reach almost the entire population, but are particularly focused on groups that public services do not always reach or for whom peer support and community are a key part of wellbeing.

Organisations can reach, among others:

- children, young people, families with children and the elderly
- people with disabilities, people with chronic illnesses and their family members and loved ones
- people recovering from mental health or substance use problems
- immigrants and language and cultural minorities
- people experiencing loneliness and other vulnerable groups

For many target groups, the activities of organisations are a low-threshold place to get support, participate and meet others.



Changes in the operating environment are already widely reflected in organisations

A majority of respondents estimate that changes in the operating environment affect their organisation's operations **at least to some extent**. The changes are related to, for example, grants and other funding, cost pressures and the organisations' opportunities to organise activities.

64%

estimate that changes in the operating environment affect their organisation's activities.



Grants are an important part of the funding of organisations

Grants are key for organisations, but rarely their only source of funding.

Often, the operations are based on a combination of support from the City, central government and other funders, as well as premises and other forms of funding.

80%

of organisations receive grants.

Grants and other forms of support are received from several sources, most commonly from the City and central government.

73%

of the recipients of grants from the City of Helsinki estimate that the grant **covers less than 30 per cent of the activities.**

Changes to discretionary government grants affect some organisations

Changes to discretionary government grants do not affect the entire field of organisations in the same way, but the impacts are concentrated on some organisations.

27%

of organisations say that their operating environment has already changed due to changes to discretionary government grants.

The change particularly applies to:

- organisations receiving discretionary government grants or EU grants
- child and family organisations
- organisations for the promotion of well-being and social and health sector organisations.

Changes are already reflected in the everyday life of organisations

In the open responses, organisations describe changes in funding and the operating environment as already being reflected both in participants' everyday lives and in the **conditions for organising activities**. The impacts are related, among other things, to rising costs, reductions in activities and pressure on staff and volunteers.

Participation

- an increase in participation and membership fees
- a decrease in the number of participants
- barriers to participation for people on low incomes

Activities

- reduction of projects
- reduction of activities
- targeting of activities on core tasks

Staff and volunteers

- pressure on staff and volunteers
- staff being moved to part-time work
- lay-offs or redundancies

Anticipated changes increase the pressure on services and organisations' activities

Organisations anticipate that the changes will be reflected both in growing pressure on the City's services and in their own opportunities to organise activities.

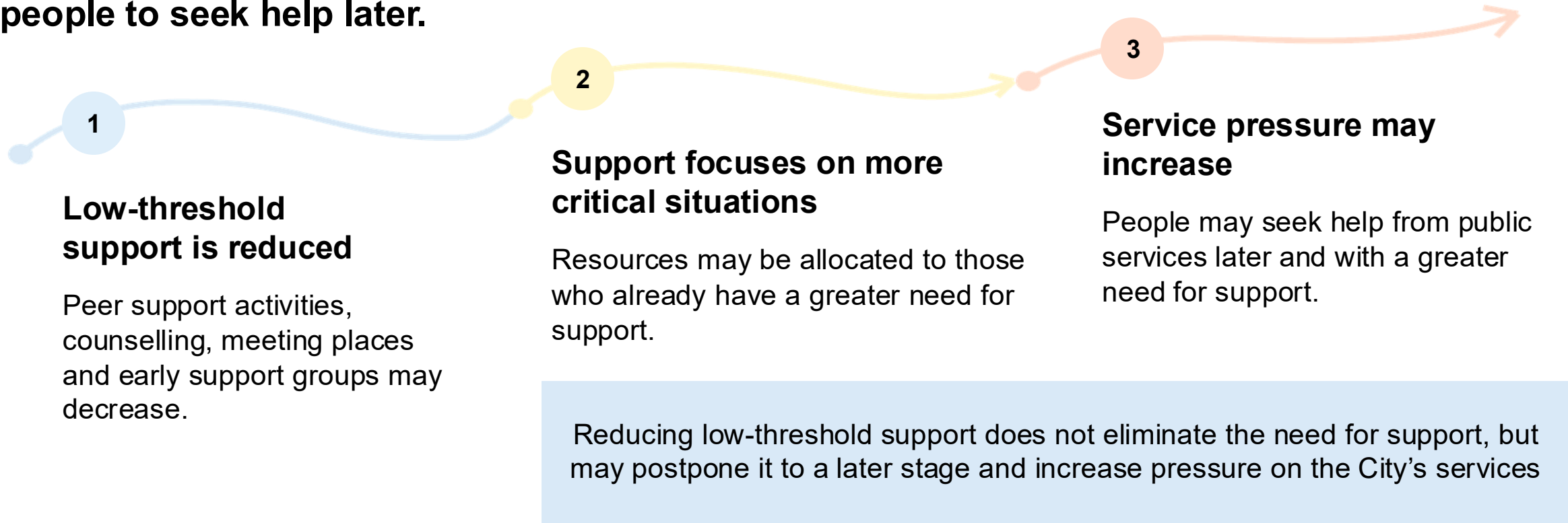
The results reflect two parallel developments: the increased burden on public services and organisations' need to cut costs, reduce activities and focus their work. This may weaken the availability of support, especially for those for whom the activities of organisations are important low-threshold support.

Most commonly anticipated impacts	
Pressure on public services increases	51%
Cutbacks to administration and premises	44%
Reductions to development work and projects	40%
Some are excluded from support or activities	33%

The table shows the four most commonly anticipated impacts for 2026. The proportions describe respondents who at least somewhat agree with the statements.

Reducing early support may increase service pressure later

Organisations for the promotion of well-being and social and health sector organisations describe that reducing low-threshold activities may cause people to seek help later.



Organisations are looking for solutions, but there is not enough flexibility for everyone

In the open answers, organisations describe many ways of responding to the changing operating environment. At the same time, some say that additional reductions would already cut into core operations.

Methods currently in use include:

Strengthening cooperation:

Strengthening networks, partnerships and common operating models.

Targeting of activities

Focusing on core target groups, prioritising activities and reducing costs.

New operating methods

New sources of funding, hybrid and online activities and the growing role of volunteering.

The methods are already in use, but not all organisations have the same capacity to adapt. Some feel that they can no longer afford additional reductions without jeopardising their core operations.

The City's role as a partner is emphasised

In a changing operating environment, the City's role as a partner is becoming increasingly important.

Organisations need cooperation where it is easy to find the right party, the discussion starts early enough and upcoming changes can be anticipated in good time.

10 per cent do not cooperate with the City even though they would like to.

Key wishes of organisations

- **Predictable funding and lighter practices**
More multi-year grant models, timely communication and less bureaucracy, especially for small applicants.
- **Early and two-way dialogue**
The organisations are involved in the discussion at the early stages of preparation.
- **Clear points of contact with the City**
A contact person or a one-stop service model to make it easier to find the right party.
- **Practical support, visibility and networks**
Communication assistance, training, shared platforms, service networks and free or inexpensive premises.

Summary of the results

Organisations reach widely into everyday life

Organisations reach many population groups and offer low-threshold support, activities and opportunities for participation. The activities are also heavily based on volunteer work.

The change in the operating environment is already reflected in the organisations' everyday life

The open answers describe the increase in fees, the reduction in activities, the decrease in the number of participants and the burden on the personnel and volunteers. The impacts can also be reflected in who gets to participate in the activities.

Reducing early support may increase the City's service pressure

The need for support may not decrease, but may emerge later and place additional pressure on the City's services.

The City's role as a partner is emphasised in the changing situation

The organisations hope that the City will provide predictable cooperation, clear connections, early dialogue and support for premises, visibility, networks and integration into service pathways.



Helsinki