SVA Social Ventures Australia

Impact at Scale: sector survey summary

February 2024

Social Ventures Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

About Social Ventures Australia

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with partners to alleviate disadvantage – towards an Australia where all people and communities thrive.

We influence systems to deliver better social outcomes for people by learning about what works in communities, helping organisations be more effective, sharing our perspectives and advocating for change.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Social Ventures Australia. Contributors from SVA included Divya Roy, Joshua Wang, Emily Low and Nicholas Perini.

We thank the many other people inside and outside our organisations who have provided valuable feedback and advice on the work.

Suggestion citation for this report

Social Ventures Australia (2024) *Impact at Scale: sector survey summary*. Social Ventures Australia.

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1. About this document

In 2023, Social Ventures Australia (SVA) kicked off a new program of work to better understand how Australian social purpose leaders and organisations can help drive impact at scale.

This document summarises the key findings from the sector survey completed for the project. It should be read in conjunction with the *Impact at Scale* paper.

The sector survey brings together the perspectives of more than 300 people working across the social sector. It explores:

- Key understandings and views on impact at scale
- The importance of impact at scale to their work across the social sector
- Enablers and barriers faced by people and organisations working towards impact at scale; and
- Different pathways adopted by people and organisations working towards impact at scale.

Methodology

These findings are based on a survey conducted in June 2023 by Social Ventures Australia of over 300 individuals working in the Austrlaian social sector. Respondents included those working as board members, senior leaders, managers, other employees, social entrepreneurs and volunteers. The survey targeted a broad range of sectors, organisation sizes and geographic reach, but was limited to respondents in Australia.

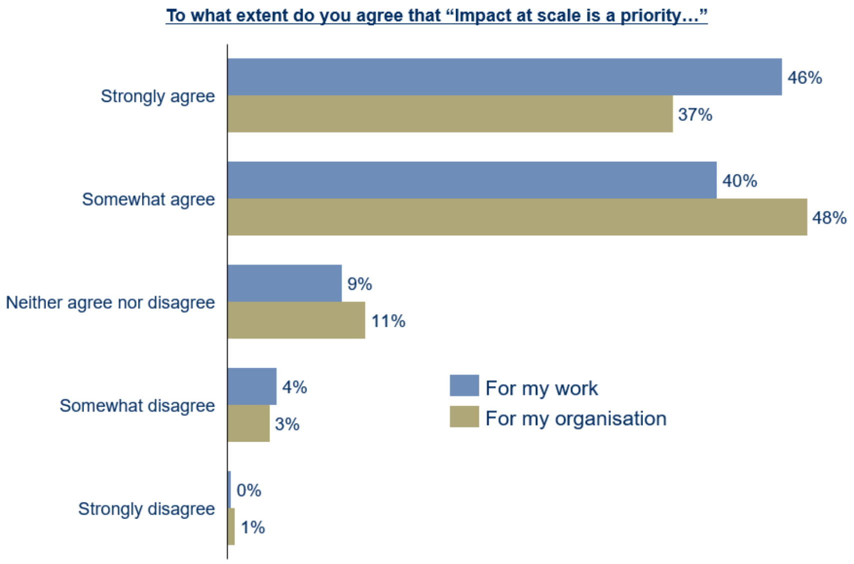
The survey explored various topics about impact at scale. These included the extent to which impact at scale was a priority, the various pathways adopted, and enablers and barriers to this work. For some questions, the survey differentiated between the respondents' perspectives around their own role and work, and that of any organisation they were working for.

2. Overarching perspectives on impact at scale

The survey explored the extent to which impact at scale was a priority for those working in the sector. We differentiated between respondent's perspectives on impact at scale as a priority for their work, and their perspectives on whether impact at scale was a priority for their organisation.

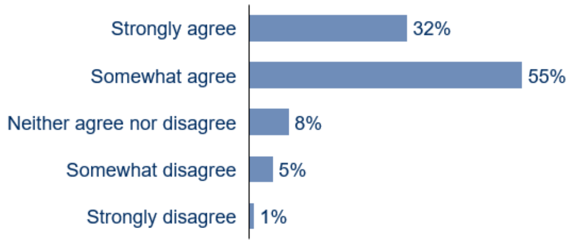
Key findings

Impact at scale was broadly seen as a priority for respondent's work (86%) and a priority for their organisations (85%). This highlights the importance of this topic for those working across the social sector.

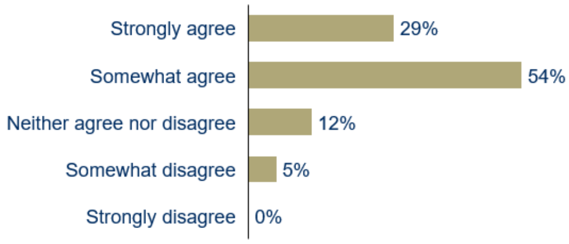


Respondents were asked a series of questions about their understanding of impact at scale for their work, and what impact at scale looks like for their sector. A significant majority of respondents agreed that they understood what impact at scale looks like for their work (86%), and agreed that their organisation understands what impact at scale looks like (82%).

To what extent do you agree that "I understand what impact at scale looks like for my work"

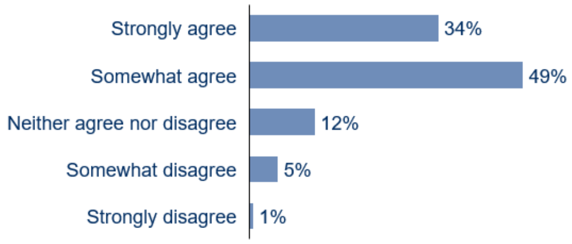


To what extent do you agree that "My organisation understands what impact at scale looks like"

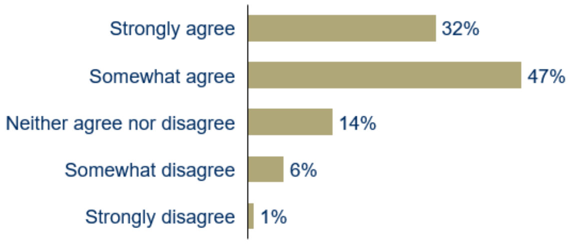


A significant majority of respondents' also agreed that they understood what impact at scale looks like for the sector (83%), and that their organisation understood what impact at scale looks like for the sector (79%).

To what extent do you agree that "I understand what impact at scale looks like for my sector"



To what extent do you agree that "My organisation understands what impact at scale looks like for my sector"

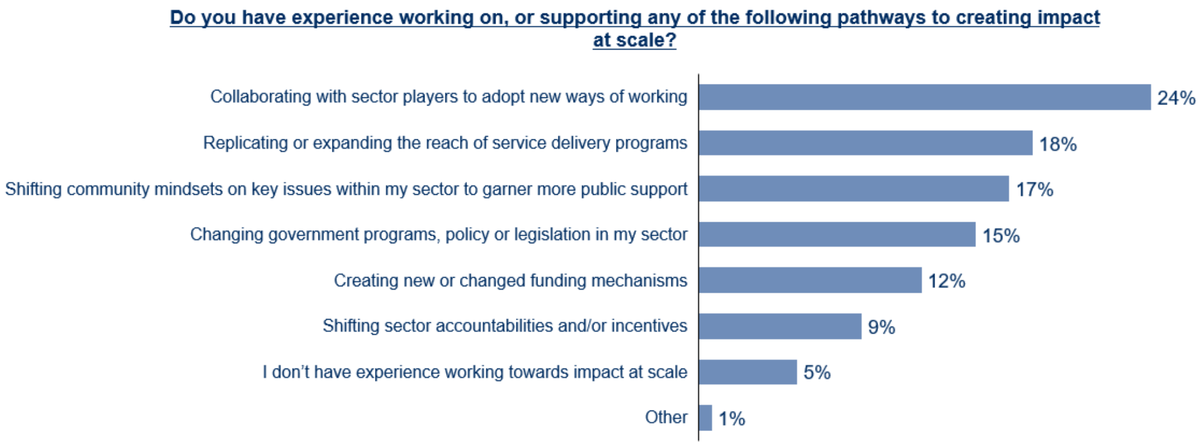


3. Pathways adopted towards impact at scale

Respondents were asked about their experience working on or supporting a range of different pathways towards impact at scale, with the ability to select up to three different options.

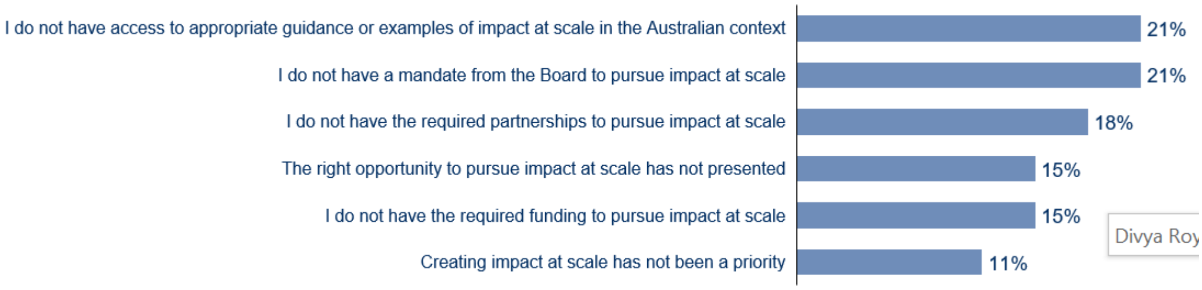
Key findings

The most common pathway identified by respondents was 'collaborating with sector players to adopt new ways of working' (24%). This was followed by 'replicating or expanding the reach of service delivery programs', which could include strategic partnerships, organic growth, mergers or acquisitions (18%).



Only a small number of respondents had no experience on working towards impact at scale (5%). Of these respondents, many stated that they did not have access to appropriate guidance or examples of impact at scale in the Australian context (21%). This highlights the need for continued work and thinking around the topic of impact at scale in Australia.

For respondents who do not have experience working towards impact at scale, do any of the following apply?

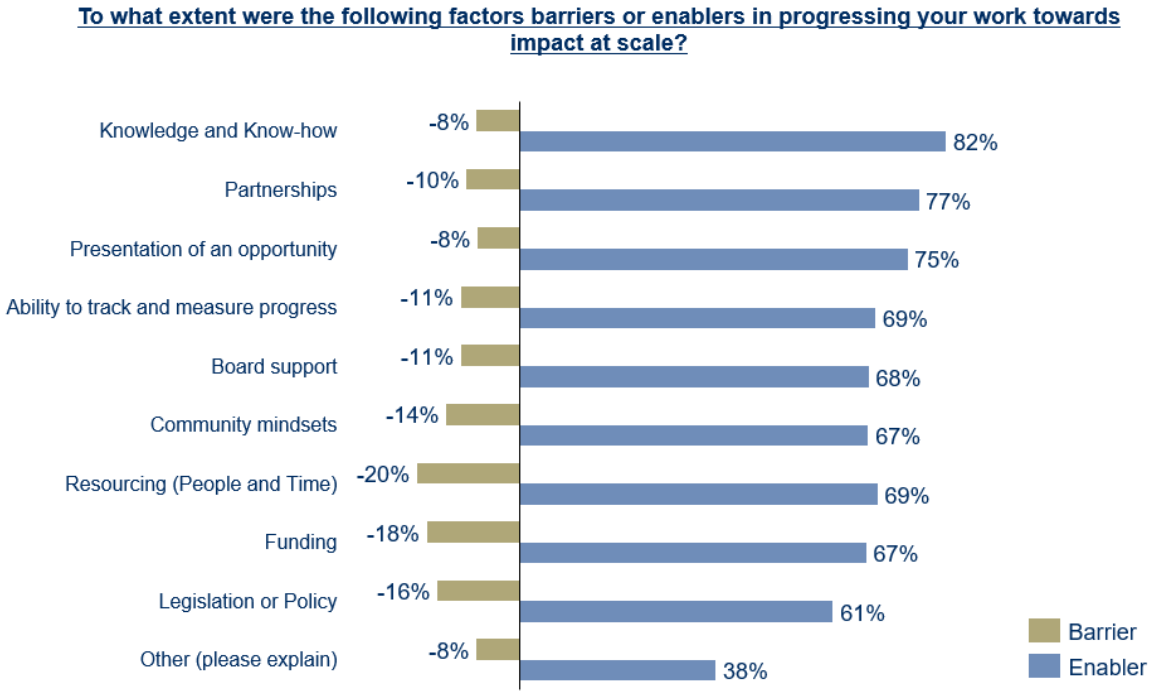


4. Enablers and barriers towards impact at scale

The survey sought to understand to what extent various factors were barriers or enablers in working towards impact at scale.

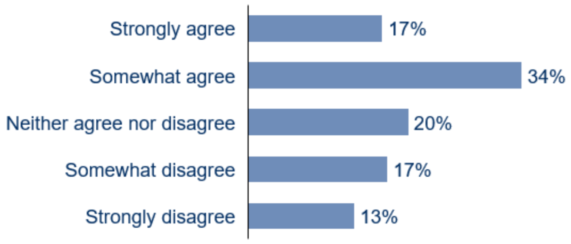
Key findings

Overall, the most common barriers towards impact at scale were resourcing – having sufficient people and time – (20%) and funding (18%). Conversely, the most common enablers towards impact at scale were knowledge and know-how (82%), partnerships (77%) and the presentation of an opportunity (75%).

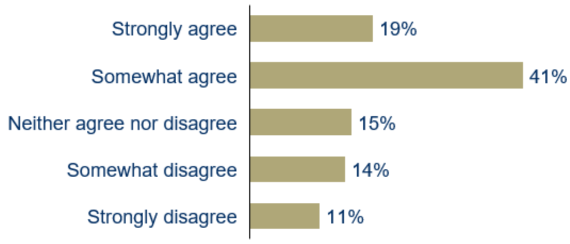


When asked about the required funding to work towards impact at scale, respondents were less likely to agree that they had the required funding for their own (50%) as compared to their organisation having the required funding (60%).

To what extent do you agree that "I have the required funding to work towards impact at scale"

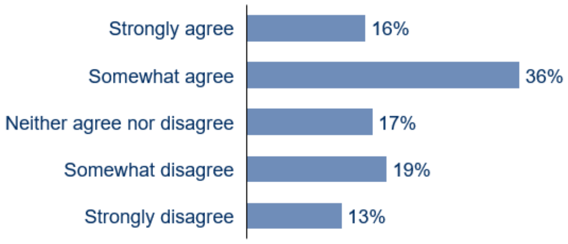


To what extent do you agree that "My organisation has the required funding to work towards impact at scale"

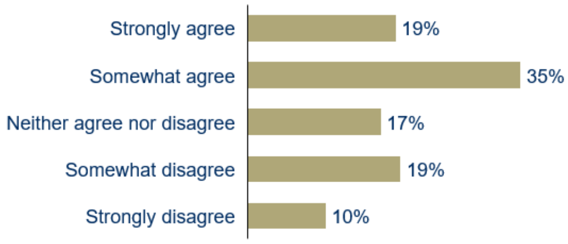


Around half of respondents agreed that they had the required resourcing (people and time) and that their organisation had the required resourcing, to work towards impact at scale.

To what extent do you agree that "I have the required resourcing to work towards impact at scale"

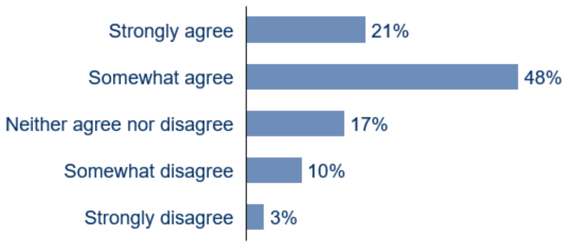


To what extent do you agree that "My organisation has the required resourcing to work towards impact at scale"

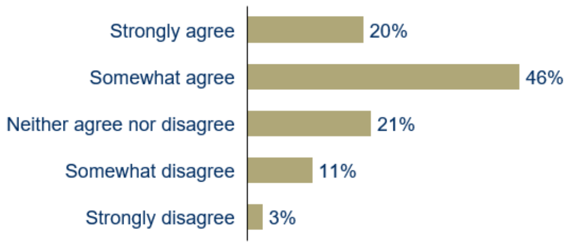


Lastly, respondents were asked about their ability, and their organisation's ability, to manage the associated risks in working towards impact at scale. A majority of respondents agreed that they were able to manage the associated risks (70%), with a similar proportion of respondents agreeing that their organisation was able to manage the associated risks (66%).

To what extent do you agree that "I feel confident in managing the associated risks in working towards impact at scale"



To what extent do you agree that "My organisation is able to manage the associated risks in working towards impact at scale"



Appendix: demographics of survey respondents

Table 1. Best description of current work

Current work	% of responses	# of responses
Non-profit organisation delivering services	34%	108
Government agency	31%	101
Social entrepreneur	8%	26
Non-profit intermediary organisation	7%	23
Non-profit member-based organisation	6%	18
Non-profit peak body	5%	16
For-profit organisation	3%	9
Other	2%	8
Philanthropic or grant-making organisation	2%	6
Multiple roles across organisations	2%	6
University or other educational institution	0%	1
Total	**100%**	**322**

Table 2. Best description of current role

Current role	% of responses	# of responses
Manager within an organisation	57%	184
Senior leader of an organisation	26%	83
Board member	7%	21
Social purpose entrepreneur	5%	16
Working across multiple roles	3%	10
Other (please explain)	2%	8
Total	**100%**	**322**

Table 3. Best description of primary sector(s) that organisation or work is focussed on (option to select multiple)

Primary sector(s)	% of responses	# of responses
Child, youth, & family services	10%	92
Economic, social, and community development	9%	79
Health	8%	71
Education	7%	63
Disability	5%	48
Mental health	5%	48
Culturally & linguistically diverse communities	5%	46
Domestic & family violence	5%	43
Employment & training	4%	37
Housing & homelessness	4%	37
Legal services & justice	3%	32
Early years	3%	30
Environment & animal protection	3%	30
Financial wellbeing	3%	30

Sports & recreation	3%	30
Culture & arts	3%	29
Alcohol & other drugs	3%	28
Other (please explain)	3%	28
First Nations communities	3%	27
Emergency relief	3%	25
Older Australians	3%	24
Human rights	2%	18
Religion & culture	2%	16
Grant making	2%	14
Total	**100%**	**925**

Table 4. Best description of geographic reach of organisation or work

Geographic reach	% of responses	# of responses
Local or community-based	36%	116
National or multi-state based	28%	89
State-based	27%	87
International	9%	30
Total	**100%**	**322**

Table 5. Best description of annual revenue of organisation

Geographic reach	% of responses	# of responses
Less than $1 million	25%	75
Between $1 million and $25 million	32%	97
Between $25 million and $50 million	16%	49
Between $50 million and $100 million	10%	30
Over $100 million	14%	42
Other	3%	8
Total	**100%**	**301**

Table 6. Best description of the current FTE of organisation

Geographic reach	% of responses	# of responses
Less than 5 FTE	15%	44
Between 6 and 20 FTE	18%	54
Between 21 and 50 FTE	17%	50
Between 51 and 100 FTE	14%	41
Between 101 and 200 FTE	11%	33
Over 200 FTE	25%	75
Other	1%	4
Total	**100%**	**301**

Table 7. Best description of current age of organisation

Geographic reach	% of responses	# of responses
Less than 5 years old	14%	44
Between 6 and 15 years old	27%	87
Between 16 and 20 years old	13%	43
More than 20 years old	45%	142
Other	1%	3
Total	**100%**	**319**

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