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CCS Fundraising
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A Window into Fundraising Practices in a Changing World

The most recent *Giving USA report* found that U.S. charitable giving reached an all-time high in 2020, at \$471.44 billion. While estimates for 2021 are not yet available, an [analysis](#) by the Fundraising Effectiveness Project reported that for the 9,000+ organizations in its sample, giving in the first three quarters of 2021 grew in aggregate by 1.4% compared to 2020. Many organizations—whether in the U.S. or across the globe—are considering how they can maintain momentum after these surges of generosity over the past two years. By contrast, many nonprofits did not experience the growth in fundraising seen at the aggregate level and are discerning how their organization can sustain support for its mission in a changing world.

In an ever-evolving philanthropic landscape, CCS is committed to understanding how nonprofits approach development today and how organizations can find fundraising success in the current environment, no matter their starting point.

The following report provides a window into the fundraising practices of 877 organizations based on data collected in October and November 2021. Key findings from the report include:

- **53%** of respondents cited donor acquisition as one of their organization's top three fundraising challenges

- **69%** of respondents receiving major gifts expect to see a fundraising increase from this source in 2022
- **70%** of respondents had at least partially resumed in-person donor meetings and/or events as of November 2021
- **62%** of respondents reported that diversity, equity, and/or inclusion are part of their organization's strategic plans for future fundraising priorities

As we begin 2022, it is CCS's hope that this report provides nonprofit leaders and fundraisers with helpful data to navigate the year ahead.

If you have any questions about this report or about CCS Fundraising, please contact marketing@ccsfundraising.com.



Results from this survey build on CCS's previous research on nonprofit responses to the COVID-19 pandemic through the Philanthropic Climate Survey series in 2020 and 2021. To explore more CCS research reports, visit our [Insights Library](#).

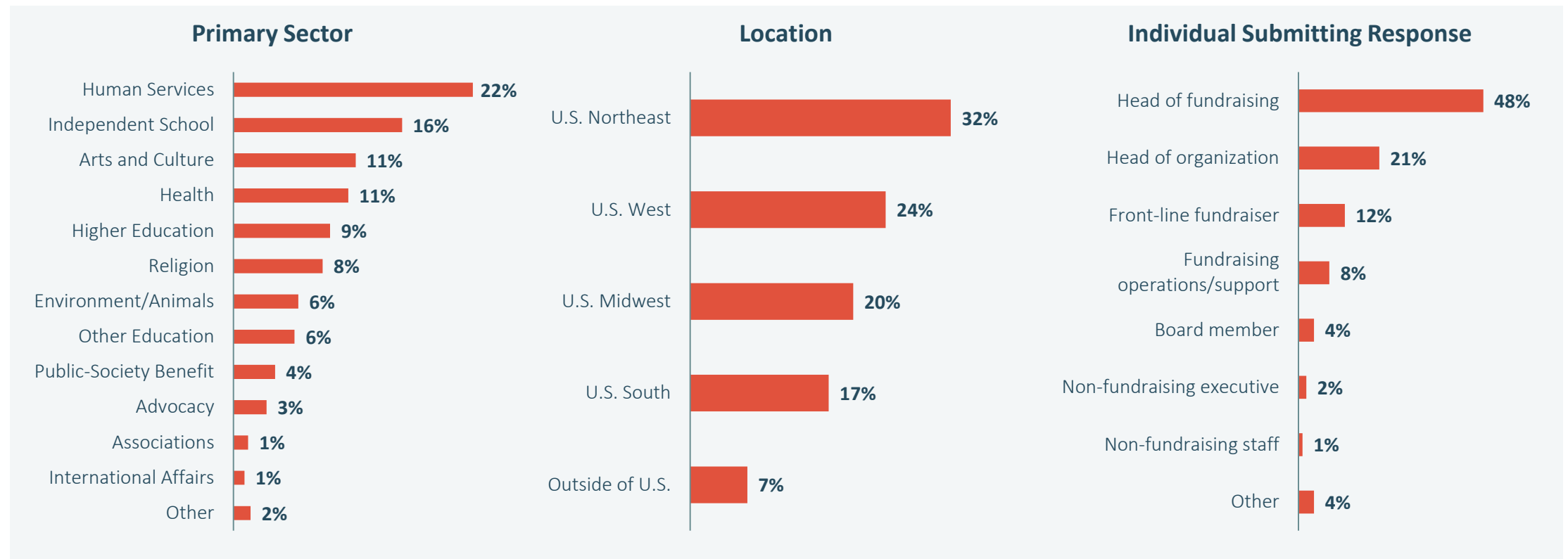
Executive Summary

1. **Fifty-three percent of respondents cited donor acquisition as one of their organization's top fundraising challenges**, followed by donor retention and stewardship (41%) and making data-driven decisions to guide their fundraising activity (28%).
 → *Read more on page eight*
2. When asked about the vehicles and sources from which their organization has received gifts over the past two years, **gifts from family foundations and donor-advised funds were the most commonly-cited answers**, each selected by approximately 80% of organizations. **Cryptocurrency gifts were only cited by 2% of respondents.**
 → *Read more on page nine*
3. Looking ahead to expectations for 2022 fundraising results, **respondents expressed the most confidence in major gifts** (69% expecting an increase) and the **least confidence in government grants** (21% expecting a decline).
 → *Read more on page 10-11*
4. **Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the organizations CCS surveyed intend to undertake some level of campaign activity this year**, whether that is planning, launching, continuing, or restarting a major campaign.
 → *Read more on page 12*
5. As of November 2021, **70% of respondents had at least partially returned to in-person donor meetings and events** since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many respondents intend to permanently adopt some adjustments made during the pandemic: **61% intend to continue virtual events and 55% intend to continue part-time or occasional remote work schedules for staff members.**
 → *Read more on page 13-14*
6. Respondents demonstrated widespread support for incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into donor relations: **91% reported that they discuss the concepts of diversity, equity, and/or inclusion (DEI) with their donors** at least occasionally and **62% reported that DEI is part of their organization's strategic plans for future fundraising activities.**
 → *Read more on page 16-17*
7. **The most popular tactic reported to make development more diverse, equitable, and inclusive was making changes to board recruitment and/or relations practices** (cited by 52% of respondents), followed by DEI training for staff and/or board members (cited by 49%).
 → *Read more on page 18*
8. **Respondents were most likely to rate their organization's fundraising staff as skilled in event planning** (44% rated as completely knowledgeable) and **least likely to report competency in gift planning** (10% rated as completely knowledgeable).
 → *Read more on page 20*
9. **Participating organizations commonly supplement staff capacity with external vendors and consultants. Graphic design was the most frequently-cited outsourced service** (46%) followed by strategic planning (35%) and DEI initiatives or enhancements (35%).
 → *Read more on page 21*
10. **Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported that they are satisfied with their organization's donor database or customer relationship management (CRM) system use, while 23% were dissatisfied.** The way that CRMs are used by an organization's staff factored heavily into these responses: 68% of satisfied organizations reported that comfort in using the data made the difference in their satisfaction. Among dissatisfied respondents, 56% reported that inconsistent, inaccurate, and/or incomplete data were top challenges with their CRM.
 → *Read more on page 22-23*

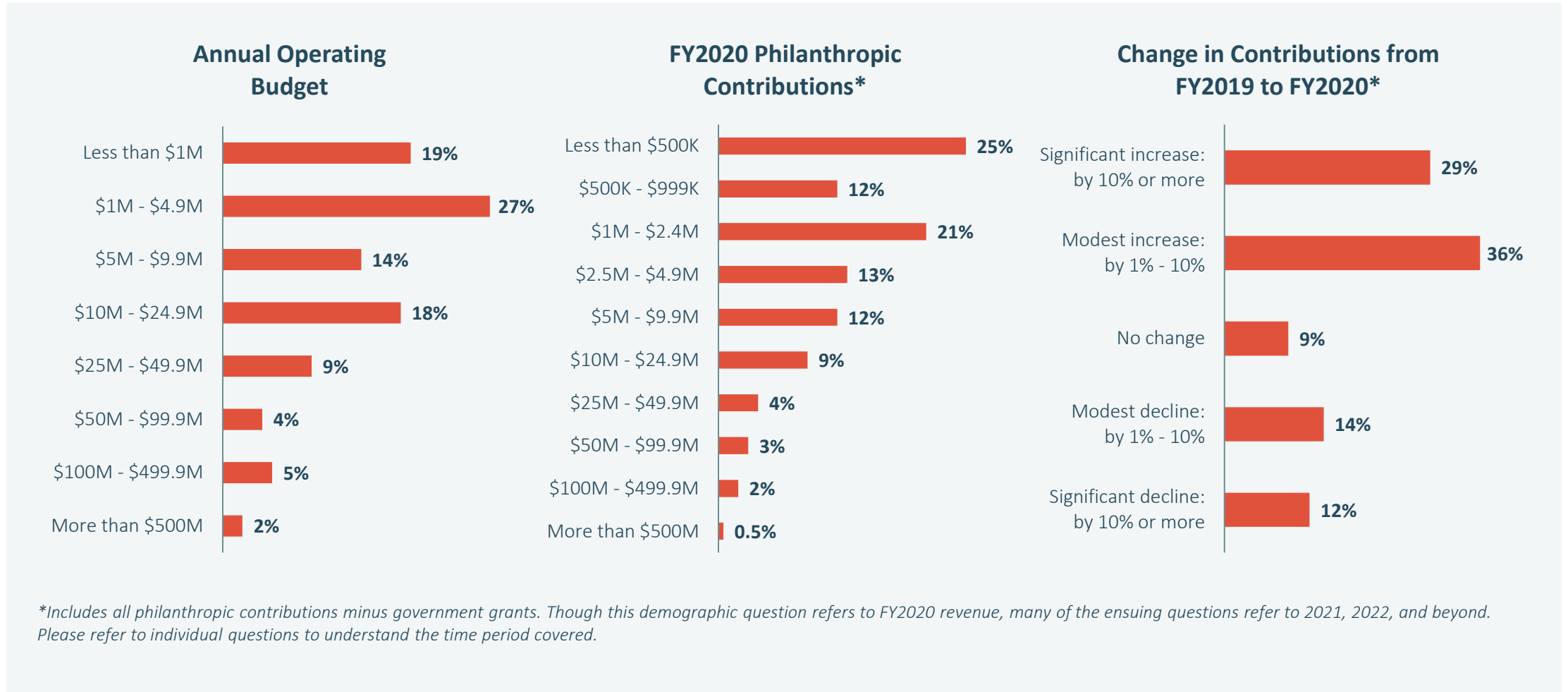
Survey Respondents Spanned a Variety of Sectors and Locations

This report was generated based on data collected via an online questionnaire administered by CCS Fundraising between the dates of October 19 and November 17, 2021. All responses analyzed in this report were submitted voluntarily by 877 organizations, as described on the following two pages.

Though the makeup of our survey participants does not directly map to the demographics of the nonprofit sector overall, this sample provides a window into a wide array of nonprofit sectors, sizes, and geographic locations.



Respondents Also Demonstrated Diverse Financial Situations





Operational Overview



More Than Half of Organizations Cited Donor Acquisition as a Top Challenge Today

When asked to select the top three fundraising challenges their organization is facing today, respondents most frequently cited donor acquisition, donor retention and stewardship, and making data-driven decisions to guide their fundraising activity.



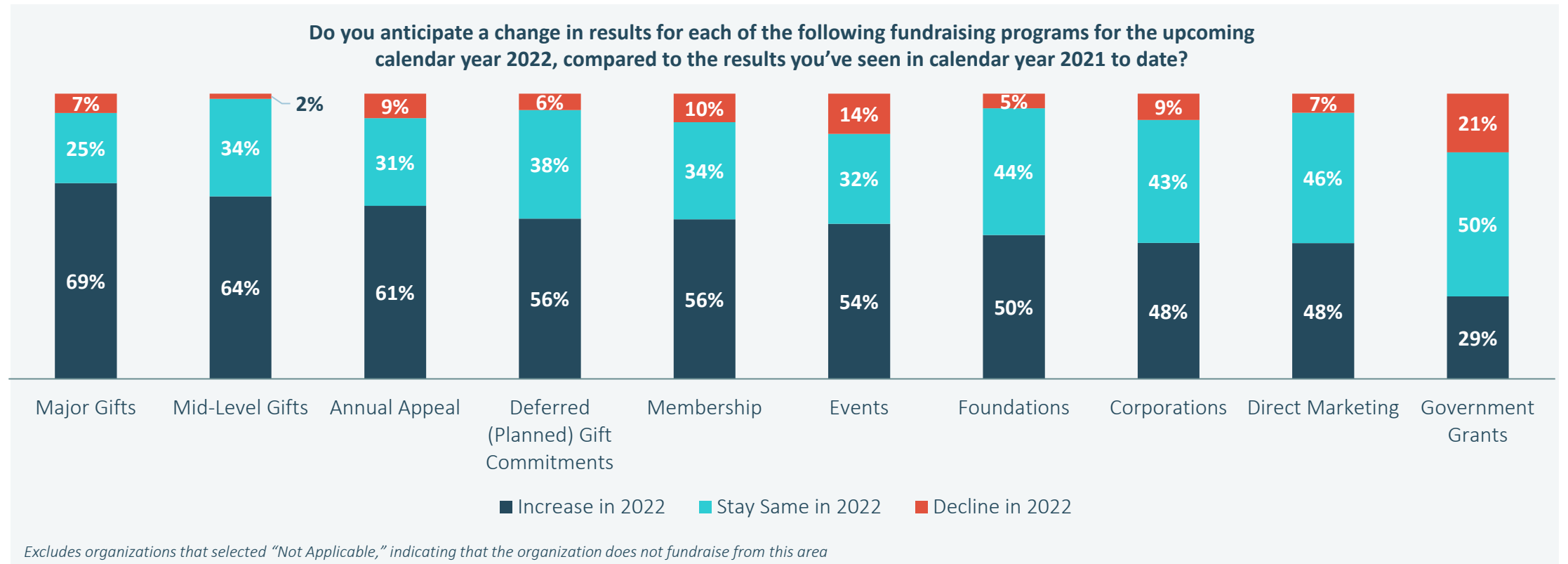
The Vast Majority of Respondents Receive Gifts from Family Foundations and Donor-Advised Funds; Cryptocurrency Gifts Were Only Cited by 2% of Respondents

About 80% of responding organizations received gifts from family foundations and donor-advised funds in the past two years. Appreciated assets and bequests were also cited by more than half of respondents. Sources and vehicles that proved much less common among our respondents included cryptocurrency and bargain sale gifts.



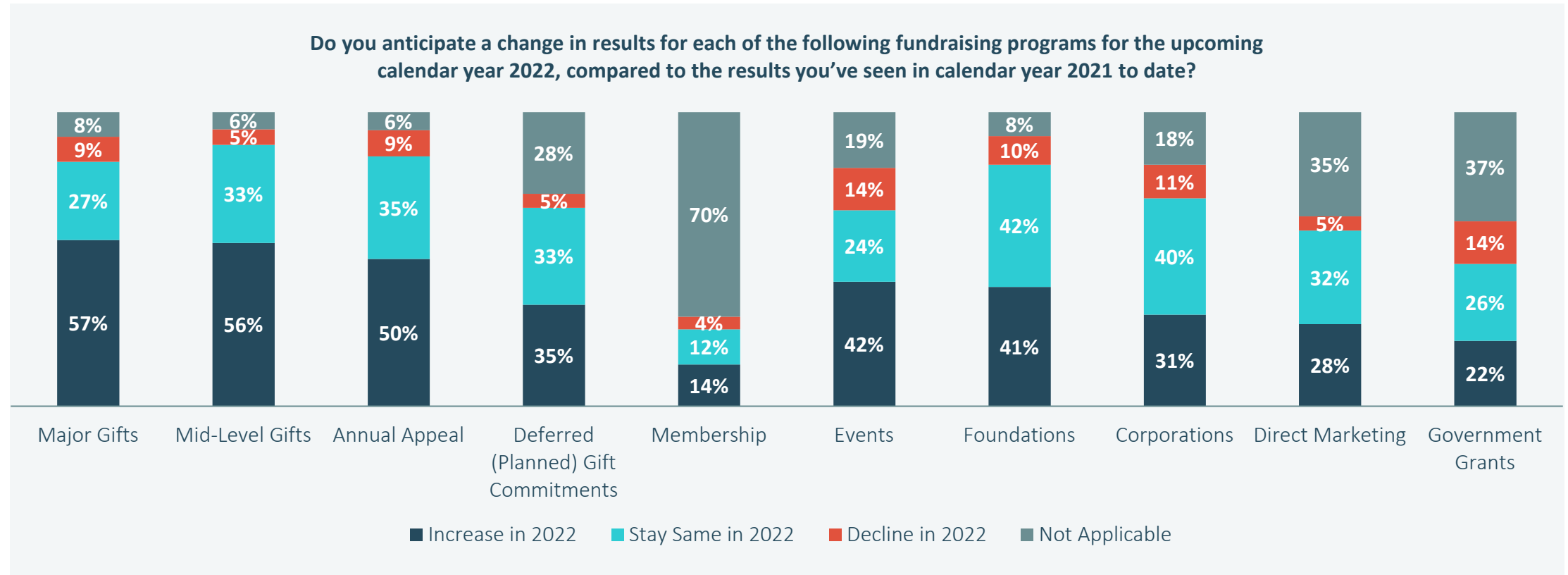
Looking Ahead to 2022 Fundraising Results, Respondents Expressed the Most Confidence in Major Gifts

More than 60% of organizations said they expect a fundraising increase from major gifts, mid-level gifts, and annual appeals this year. Though foundation giving was the fastest-growing source of giving in 2020 across the United States (the country in which most of the respondent pool is located) according to [Giving USA](#), foundation giving was one of the areas where respondents reported lower levels of confidence for 2022.



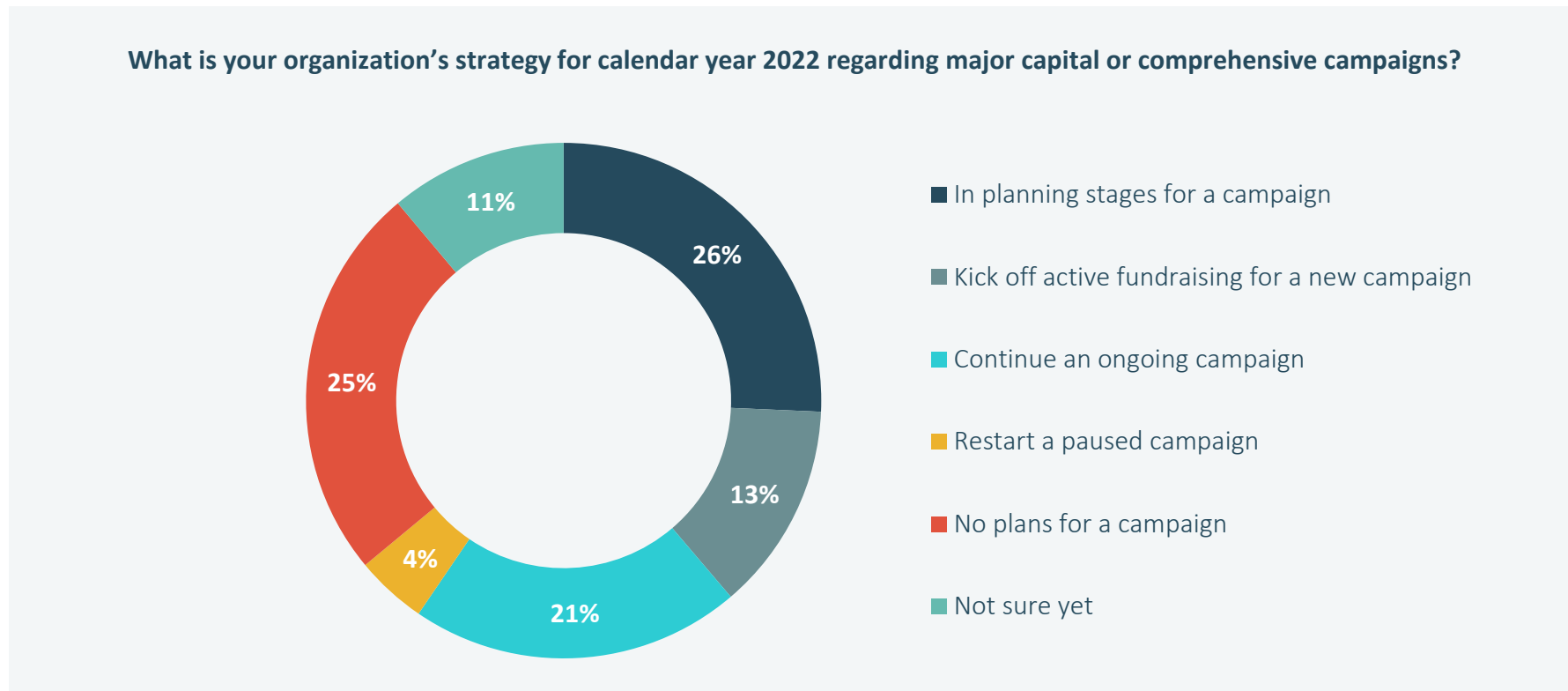
Raw Data Shows the Percentage of Respondents That Fundraise in Each Category

For a fuller picture of the respondent pool, the following chart includes organizations that selected “Not Applicable” in each fundraising program, indicating that their organization does not fundraise in that area.



Nearly Two-Thirds of Respondents Intend to Undertake Some Level of Campaign Activity This Year

A combined 64% of organizations in CCS's survey intend to undertake some sort of campaign activity in 2022, whether that activity is planning, launching, continuing, or restarting a campaign. One-quarter of the respondents have no plans for a campaign in 2022, and 11% are not yet sure of their organization's plans at the time of the survey.



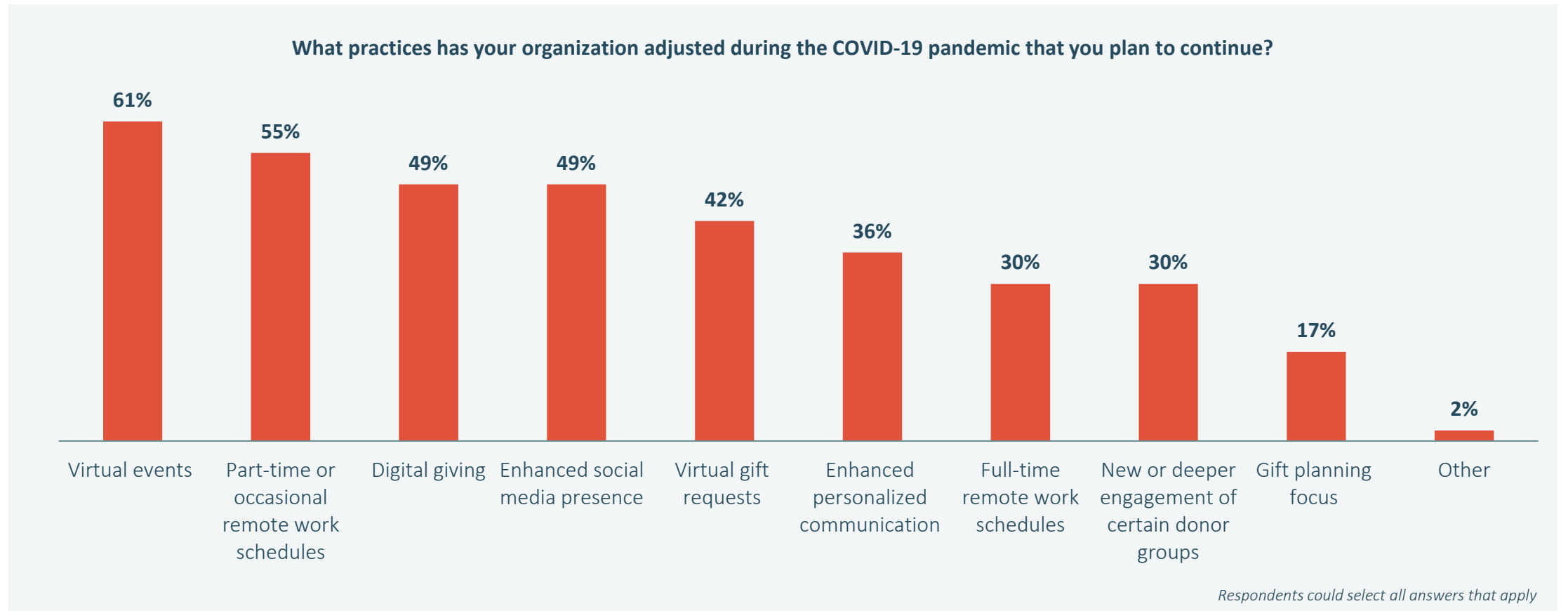
70% of Organizations at Least Partially Returned to In-Person Donor Engagement since the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic

As of November 2021, 70% of responding organizations had at least partially resumed in-person donor meetings and/or events. Given the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant, it is likely that many organizations in this 70% have increased virtual operations as of this report's publication in January 2022. Even still, this data demonstrates that since the earlier days of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations have largely sought some level of return to in-person donor engagement.



Many Respondents Intend to Permanently Adopt Some Pandemic-Era Adjustments

Many adjustments to operations made during the COVID-19 pandemic could become permanent fixtures of our respondents' development operations. For example, more than half of responding organizations shared that they plan to continue virtual events as well as part-time or occasional remote work schedules for staff members.



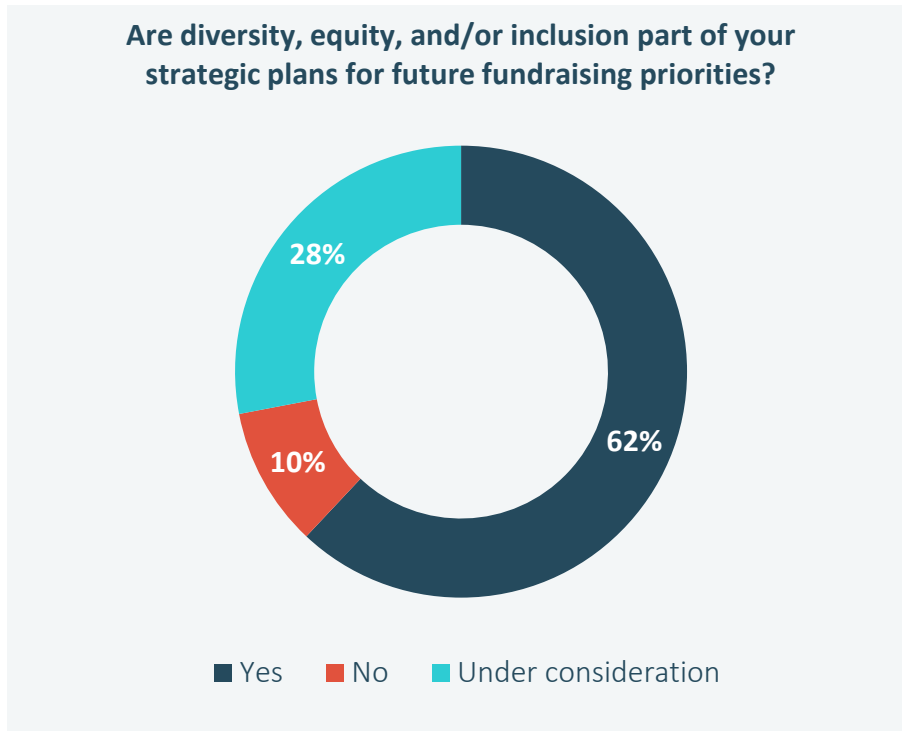


Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Donor Relations

Nearly All Respondents Discuss DEI with Donors to Some Extent and Nearly Two-Thirds Include DEI in Strategic Plans

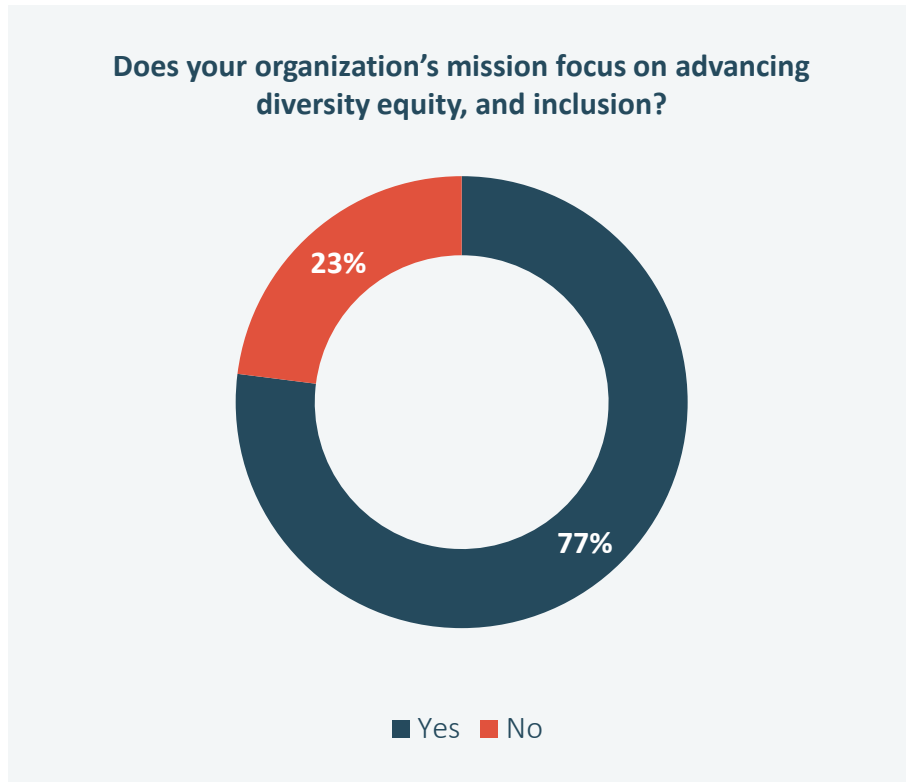
Responding organizations demonstrated support for incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into donor relations practices, with 62% reporting that diversity, equity, and/or inclusion were part of their strategic plans for future fundraising priorities. Moreover, 91% of respondents said they are discussing DEI with their donors at least occasionally.

When answering questions in this section, respondents were asked to consider an expansive definition of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” to address a broad set of identities including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, ability, and other visible and invisible traits.



A DEI-Focused Mission Positively Correlated to Talking About DEI with Donors and Including DEI in Strategic Plans

An organization’s mission correlates to how it answered the DEI-related survey questions. A respondent was more likely to indicate talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion with its donors if the organization’s mission focused on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion: 95% of organizations with DEI-focused missions talk about DEI with their donors either always, frequently, or occasionally in comparison to 77% of organizations without DEI-focused missions. The same pattern appeared in the data on incorporating DEI into strategic plans for future fundraising priorities: 68% of organizations with DEI-focused missions incorporated DEI compared to 41% of organizations with non-DEI-focused missions.



Are diversity, equity, and/or inclusion part of your strategic plans for future fundraising priorities?

	Yes	No	Under consideration
DEI-Focused Missions	68%	6%	25%
Non-DEI Missions	41%	23%	36%



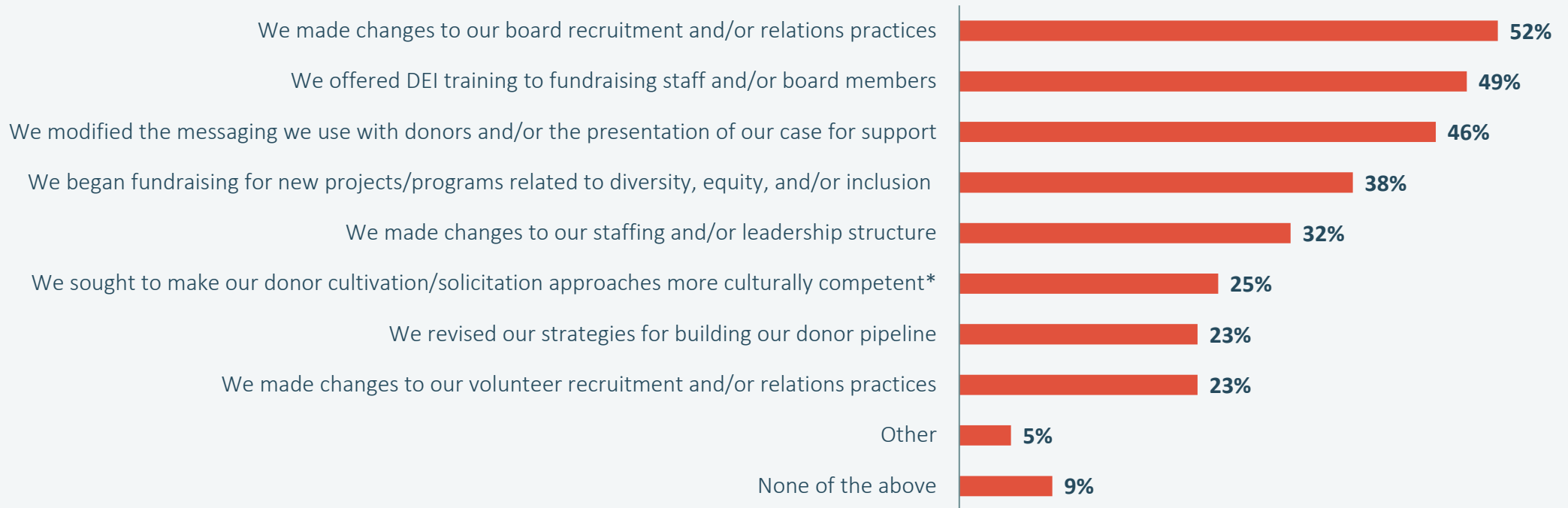
Does your organization discuss the concepts of diversity, equity, and/or inclusion in your conversations with donors?

	Yes, always	Yes, frequently	Yes, occasionally	No
DEI-Focused Missions	27%	39%	29%	4%
Non-DEI Missions	5%	25%	47%	23%

Board-Related Changes Were the Most Frequently Cited Tactic to Meet DEI Goals

On page 16, the respondent pool indicated widespread support for incorporating DEI into their donor relations strategies, with 62% incorporating these concepts into their strategic fundraising plans. When asked what specific tactics their organization has employed over the past two years to make their fundraising activities more diverse, equitable, and/or inclusive, only one tactic was reported by more than 50% of responding organizations—changes to board recruitment and/or relations practices.

In the past two years, what tactics has your organization employed to make your fundraising practices/operations more diverse, equitable, and inclusive?



*E.g., tailoring engagement approaches for a major donor based on the complex and intersecting components of the donor's identity

Respondents could select all answers that apply



Staffing, Resourcing, and CRM Technology



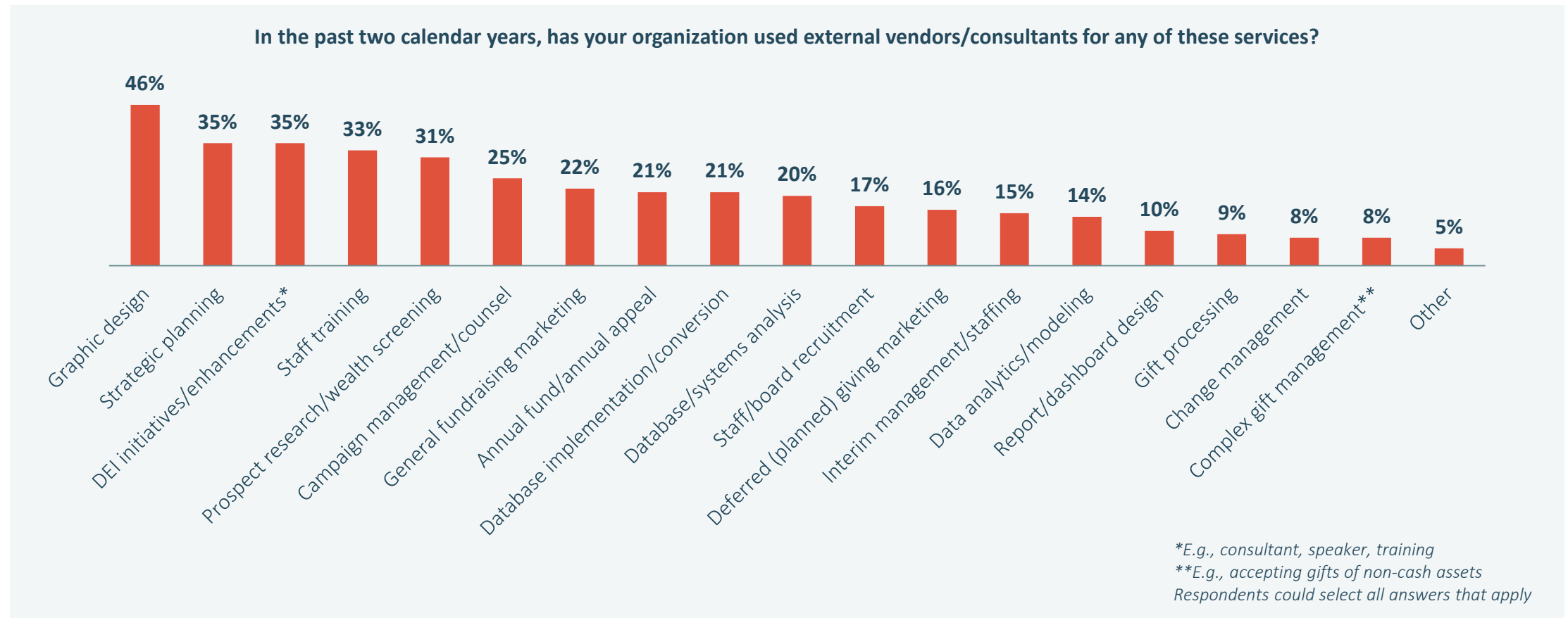
Gift Planning Was Rated as the Area in Which Fundraising Staff Have the Lowest Levels of Expertise

When asked to rate the knowledge of their fundraising staff in a variety of areas, organizations were most likely to report competency in event planning and board relations. The responses to this question are perhaps unexpected in conjunction with the responses seen on page ten regarding where nonprofits expect to see a fundraising increase in 2022. While on page ten organizations reported strong expectations for fundraising from major gifts and planned giving, only 23% of respondents said their staff was completely knowledgeable in major gift strategy and only 10% said their staff was completely knowledgeable in gift planning.



Respondents Are Supplementing Staff Capacity with External Vendors and Consultants

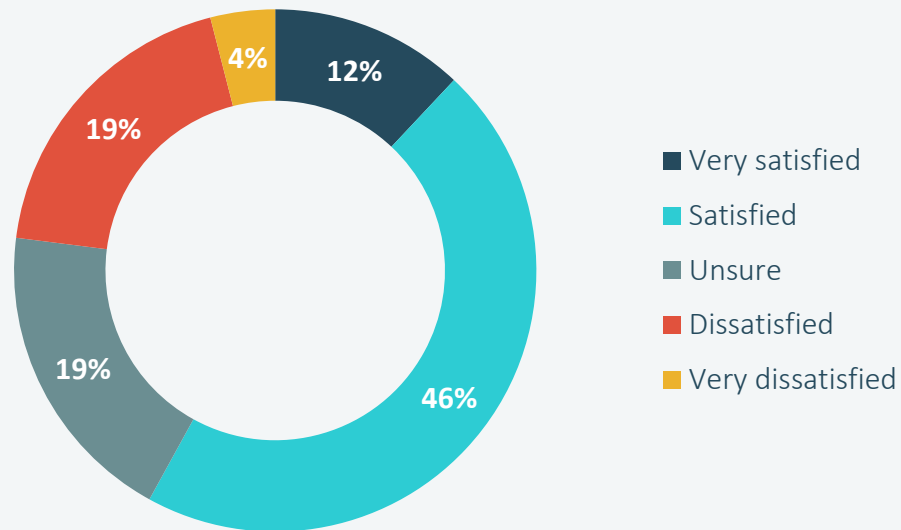
Among the respondent pool, nearly half of organizations used external graphic design assistance in the past two years. Approximately one-third of responding organizations employed external vendors or consultants to assist with strategic planning, DEI initiatives or enhancements, and/or staff training.



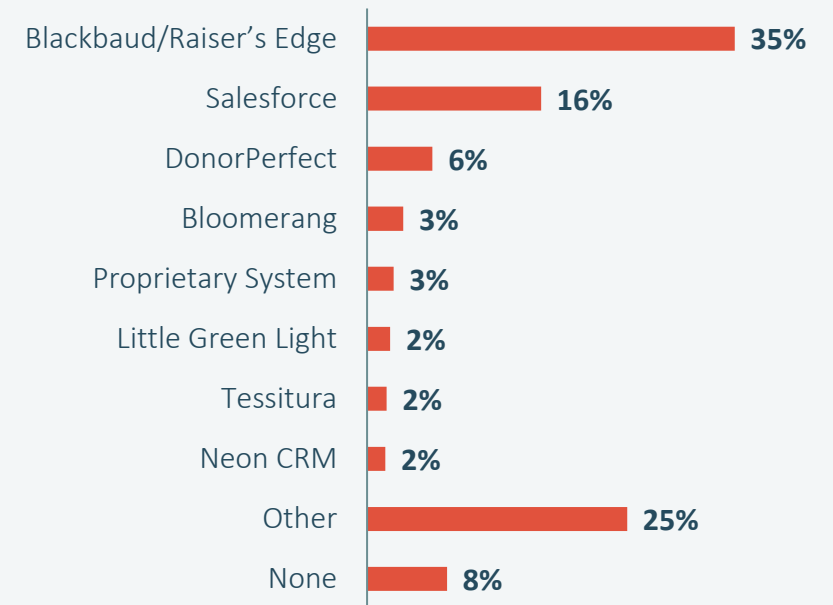
Nearly a Quarter of Respondents Are Dissatisfied with Their Organization’s CRM Use

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of respondents indicated that they are dissatisfied with their organization’s donor database use—inclusive of both the software itself and the processes around using the system—while 58% reported being satisfied and 19% said they are unsure. The most popular CRM systems among the respondent pool were those made by Blackbaud, with 35% of organizations indicating that they currently use this software.

How would you rate your organization’s satisfaction with its donor database use, considering not only the software itself, but also the processes your organization uses to enter, maintain, and use the information in the system?



What donor database/CRM (customer relationship management) software does your organization currently use?



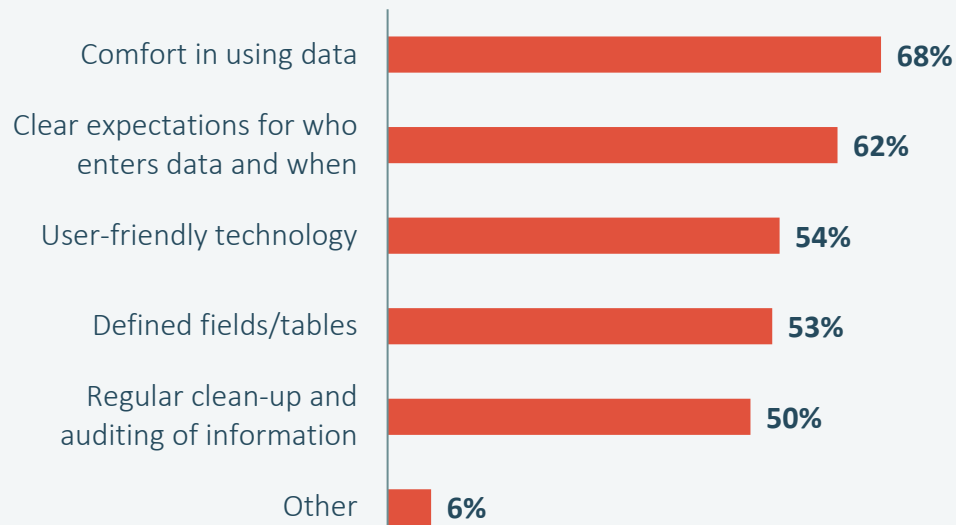
Respondents could select all answers that apply

Human Elements Contribute to Both Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with an Organization’s CRM

Among organizations that reported being satisfied with their database use, more than 60% got to this satisfied state as a result of comfort in using the data and clear expectations for data entry. For organizations that indicated dissatisfaction, more than 50% reported that dated software and inconsistent, inaccurate, and/or incomplete data were main challenges in using their donor database. These datapoints speak to the centrality of human-backed processes to CRM success, [echoing patterns seen in CCS’s work](#) with nonprofits on their systems-related challenges.

Among the **58%** of respondents that are **satisfied** with their database use...

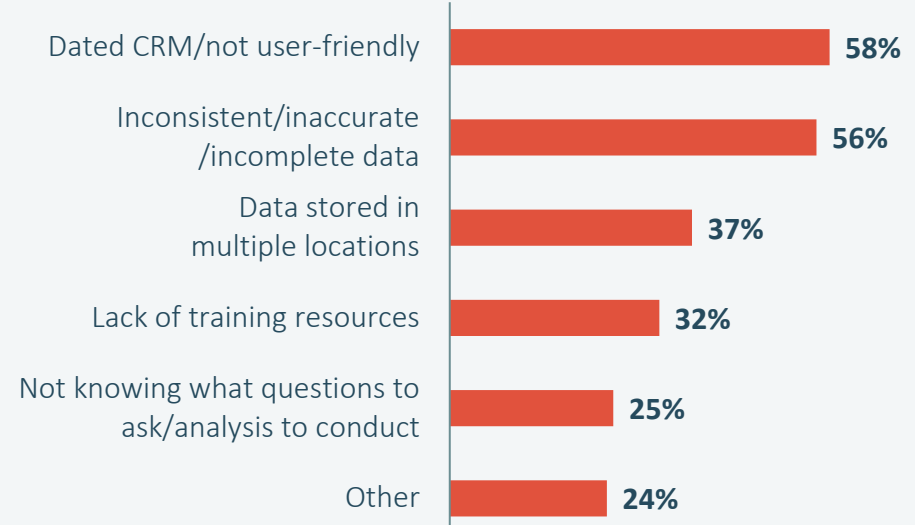
What has made the difference for your organization in terms of satisfaction with its donor database use?



Respondents could select all answers that apply

Among the **23%** of respondents that are **dissatisfied** with their database use...

What are your main challenges related to the donor database?



Respondents could select all answers that apply

About CCS Fundraising

For 75 years, CCS Fundraising has empowered many of the world's greatest organizations to advance some of the most important causes in history. As leading consulting experts in development and campaign strategy, we plan and implement fundraising initiatives to help nonprofit organizations make a bigger impact—locally, nationally, and globally.

Our services include:

- Campaign Planning & Management
- Data Analytics
- Systems Projects
- Interim Development Management
- Development Audits & Assessments
- Gift Planning Assessments
- Strategic Planning
- Specialized Development Projects

To learn more about CCS Fundraising and our work, visit ccsfundraising.com.

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FEATURED INSIGHT:

Snapshot of Today's Philanthropic Landscape
Tenth Edition | July 2021

Featuring essential philanthropic research from all major sources in the industry, this exclusive report examines key themes in American philanthropy and data on giving by U.S. individuals, foundations, and corporations.

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