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CCS Fundraising
Philanthropy
Pulse

MARCH 2022

22

Higher Education Spotlight

CCS 75
FUNDRAISING YEARS

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A Window into Higher Education Fundraising Practices

As a firm that has had the privilege of partnering with hundreds of universities, colleges, community colleges, HBCUs, technical institutes, professional schools, and other institutions, CCS is committed to helping Higher Education institutions maximize their development efforts. We are pleased to present our latest resource for Higher Education fundraisers and leaders, the *CCS Philanthropy Pulse: Higher Education Spotlight*.

In late 2021, CCS undertook a cross-sector survey of 877 nonprofits. This report summarizes results from the 78 Higher Education respondents on topics including:

- Today's fundraising challenges and tomorrow's opportunities
- Expectations for 2022 fundraising results
- Incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion into development

It is our hope that this report provides a window into Higher Education fundraising practices and helps your institution develop data-informed fundraising strategies for the remainder of 2022 and beyond.

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



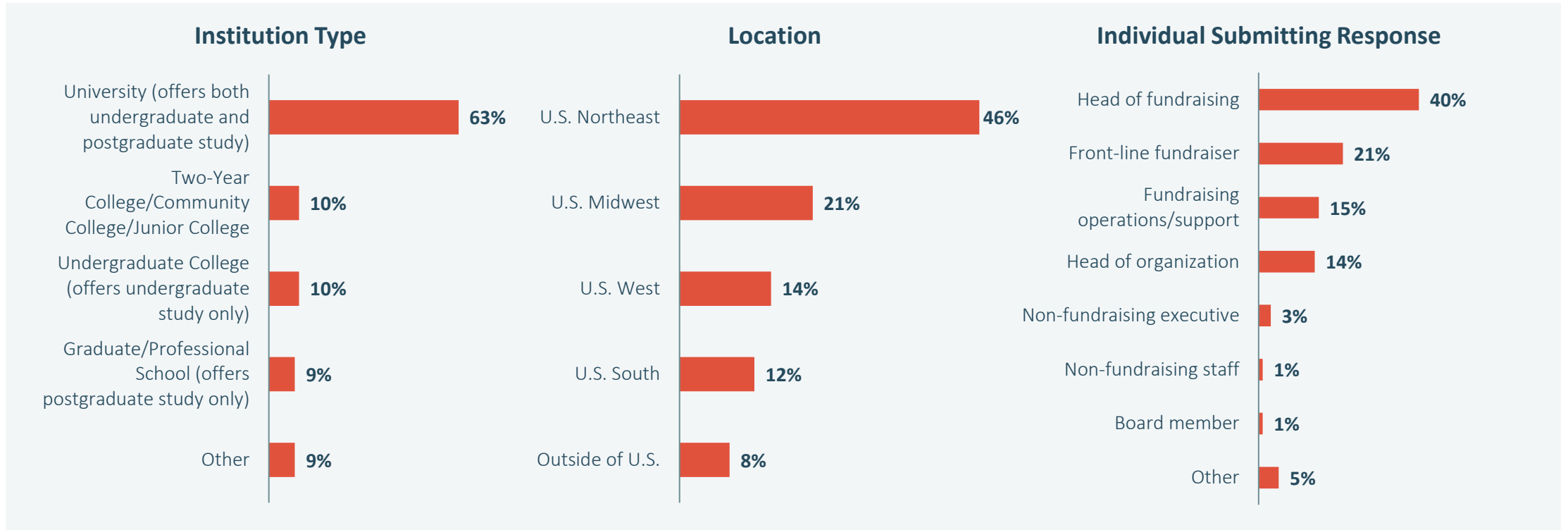
To read the main CCS Philanthropy Pulse survey report and explore more CCS research, visit our [Insights Library](#).

Executive Summary

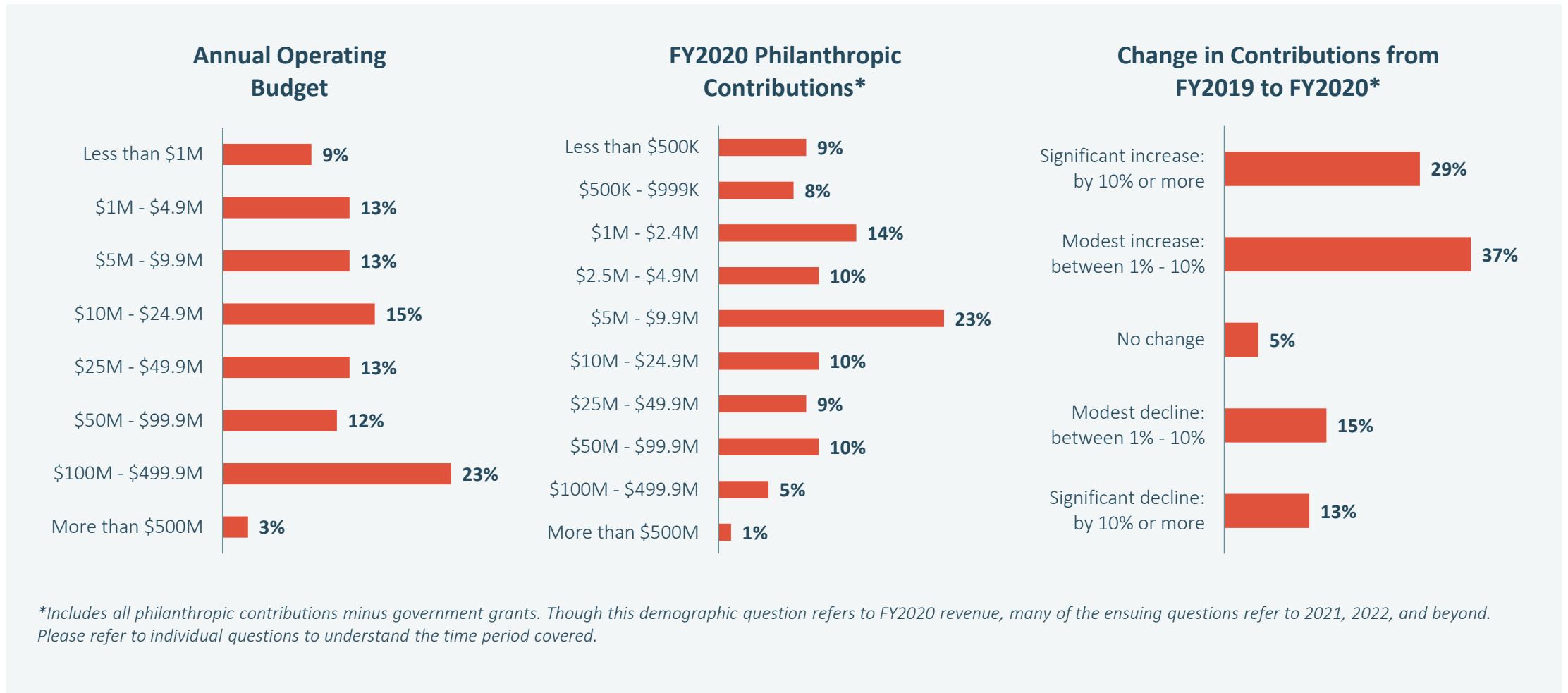
1. **Seventy-one percent of Higher Education respondents centralize their fundraising operations** and 24% use a mix of centralized and decentralized operations.
→ *Read more on page [8](#)*
2. **Major gifts on average comprise 44% of respondents' fundraising.**
→ *Read more on page [9](#)*
3. **Respondents reported using a variety of metrics to assess efficacy and performance,** including the number of proposals/solicitations (73%), visits (65%), and new gifts (64%).
→ *Read more on page [10](#)*
4. **The two most commonly-cited top fundraising challenges were donor acquisition (49%) and hiring and retaining fundraising staff members (41%).**
→ *Read more on page [11](#)*
5. **Nine in ten institutions reported receiving gifts or pledges from donor-advised funds in the past two years.**
→ *Read more on page [12](#)*
6. Looking ahead to expectations for 2022 fundraising results, **respondents expressed the most confidence in mid-level gifts** (68% expecting an increase) **and major gifts** (67% expecting an increase).
→ *Read more on page [13](#)*
7. **Eighty-three percent of surveyed institutions intend to undertake campaign activity this year,** whether that is planning, launching, continuing, or restarting a major campaign.
→ *Read more on page [15](#)*
8. **The vast majority (85%) of respondents had at least partially returned to in-person donor meetings and events** as of November 2021.
→ *Read more on page [16](#)*
9. **About 8 in 10 respondents (81%) plan to retain some level of remote work beyond the pandemic,** though only 32% report planning to keep full-time remote work.
→ *Read more on page [17](#)*
10. **Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported that they incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into their strategic plans** for future fundraising priorities. More than 9 in 10 respondents said they discuss DEI with their donors at least occasionally.
→ *Read more on page [19](#)*
11. The **most popular tactic** reported to make development more diverse, equitable, and inclusive was **beginning to fundraise for new, DEI-related projects or programs (73%).**
→ *Read more on page [20](#)*
12. Respondents were most likely to rate their organization's fundraising staff as skilled in **event planning** (42% rated as completely knowledgeable) **and least likely to report competency in data-driven decision-making** (11% rated as completely knowledgeable).
→ *Read more on page [22](#)*
13. **Participating institutions commonly supplement staff capacity with external vendors and consultants. Prospect research was the most frequently-cited outsourced service (47%),** followed by campaign management (40%) and staff training (38%).
→ *Read more on page [23](#)*
14. **More than half (63%) of respondents reported being satisfied with their institution's donor database** or customer relationship management (CRM) system use. Among satisfied organizations, 67% reported that clear expectations for data entry made the difference for their system satisfaction.
→ *Read more on page [24](#)*

Higher Education Responses Came Primarily from Universities Within the United States

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 78 Higher Education organizations, as described on the following two pages. These 78 Higher Education responses are a subset of the 877 responses from across sectors, analyzed in CCS’s [main survey report](#). Though the makeup of our survey participants does not directly map to the demographics of the Higher Education sector overall, this sample provides a window into an array of institution sizes and locations.



Respondents Also Demonstrated Diverse Financial Situations



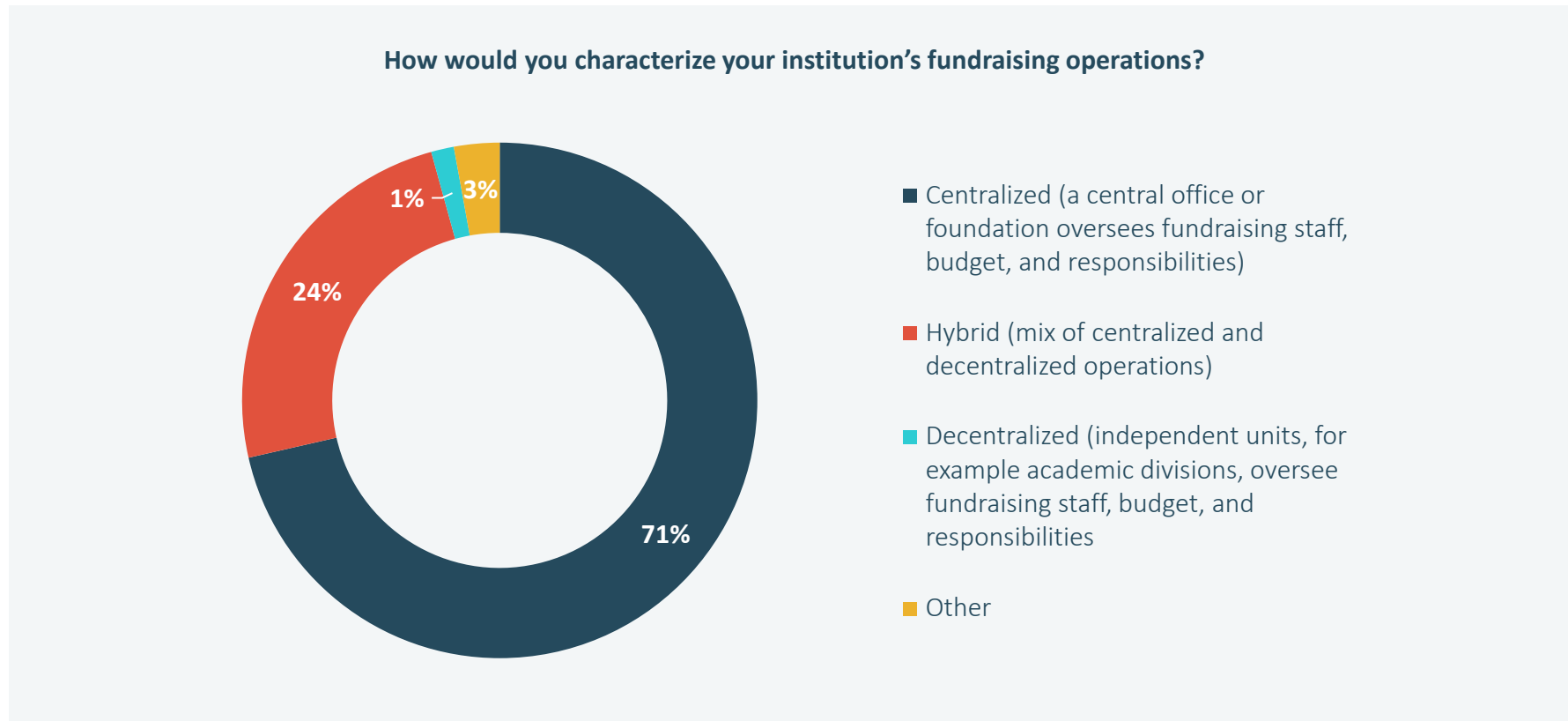


Operational Overview



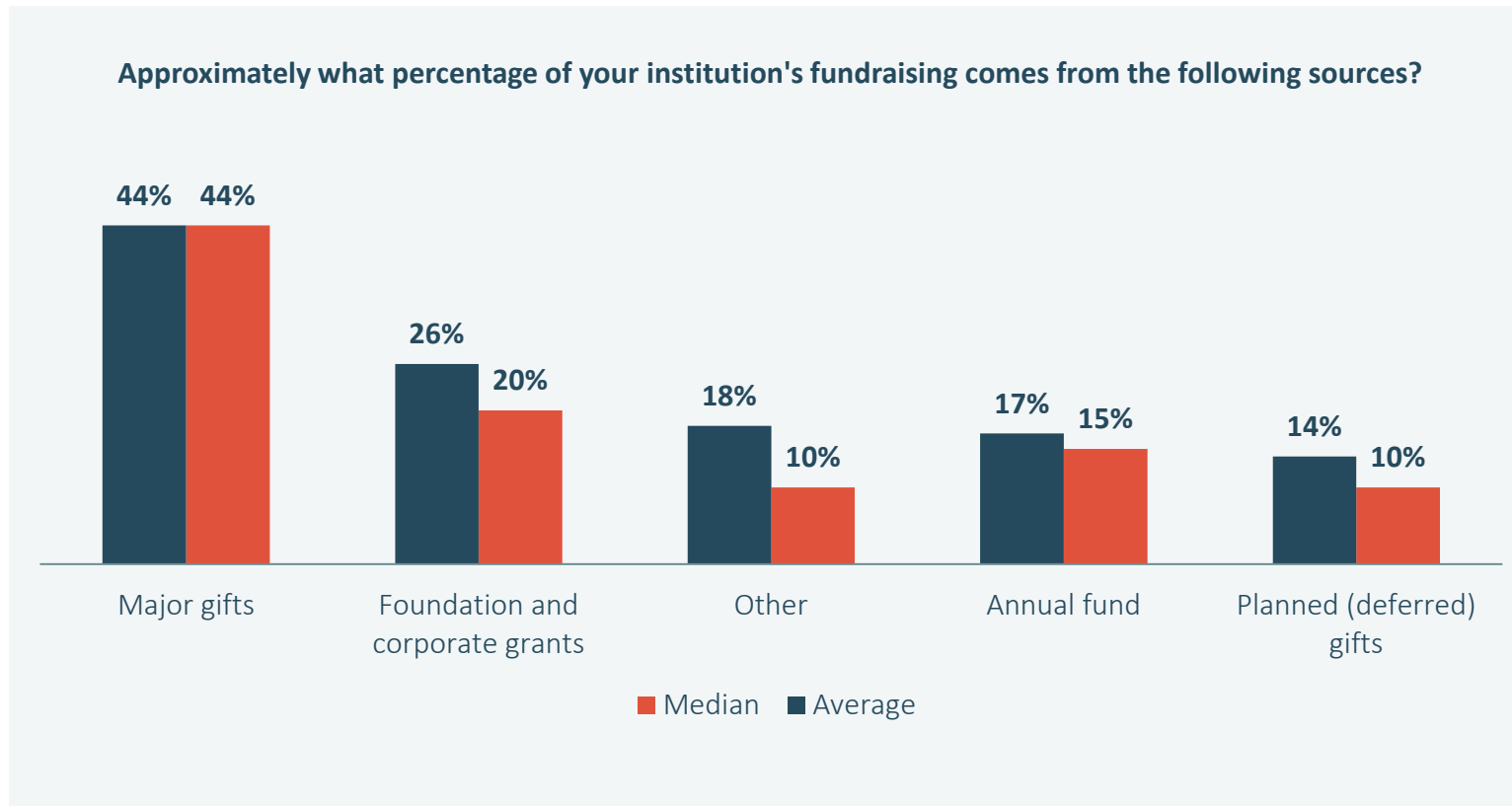
Most Responding Institutions Centralize Fundraising Operations

When asked about the operating model for their institution's fundraising functions, 71% of respondents reported employing centralized operations, 24% reported a mix of centralized and decentralized operations, and 1% reported decentralized operations.



Major Gifts Comprise the Largest Slice of Fundraising

On average, survey respondents reported that 44% of their institution’s fundraising comes from major gifts. The respondent pool had varying definitions of what constitutes a major gift, as described in the table below. The second-largest portion of fundraising came from foundation and corporate grants (average of 26%), followed by other sources (average of 18%), the annual fund (average of 17%), and finally planned/deferred gifts (average of 14%).

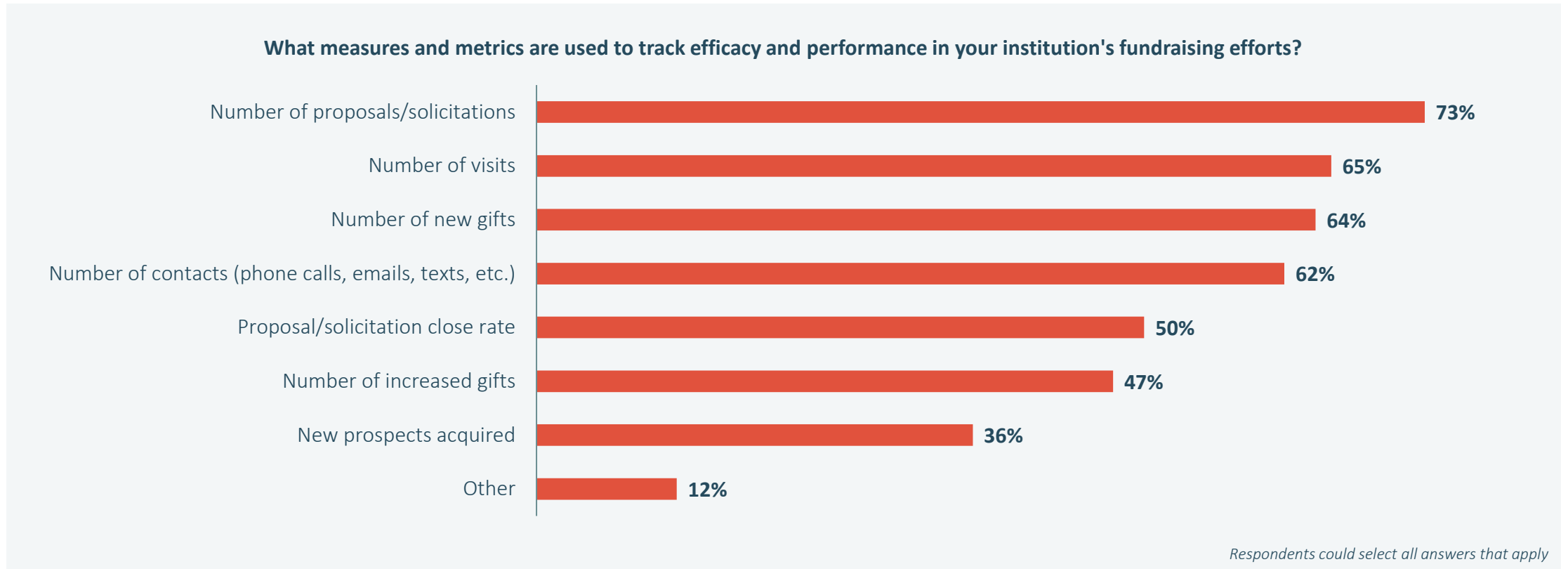


What size gift does your institution consider a "major" gift?

Minimum Threshold	Percentage of Respondents
Less than \$5,000	5%
\$5,000 to \$10,000	32%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	43%
\$100,000 to \$250,000	21%

Respondents Reported a Variety of Fundraising Metrics Currently Tracked at Their Institutions

At least half of all Higher Education respondents shared that their institution uses the number of proposals and solicitations (73%), number of visits (65%), number of new gifts (64%), and number of contacts (62%) to track efficacy and performance of its fundraising efforts.



After Donor Acquisition, Hiring and Retaining Staff Members Is the Most Frequently Cited Fundraising Challenge

When asked to select the top three fundraising challenges their organization is facing today, Higher Education respondents most frequently cited donor acquisition. Hiring and retaining fundraising staff members—cited by 41% of respondents—outranked donor retention and stewardship, which was cited by 32% of respondents.



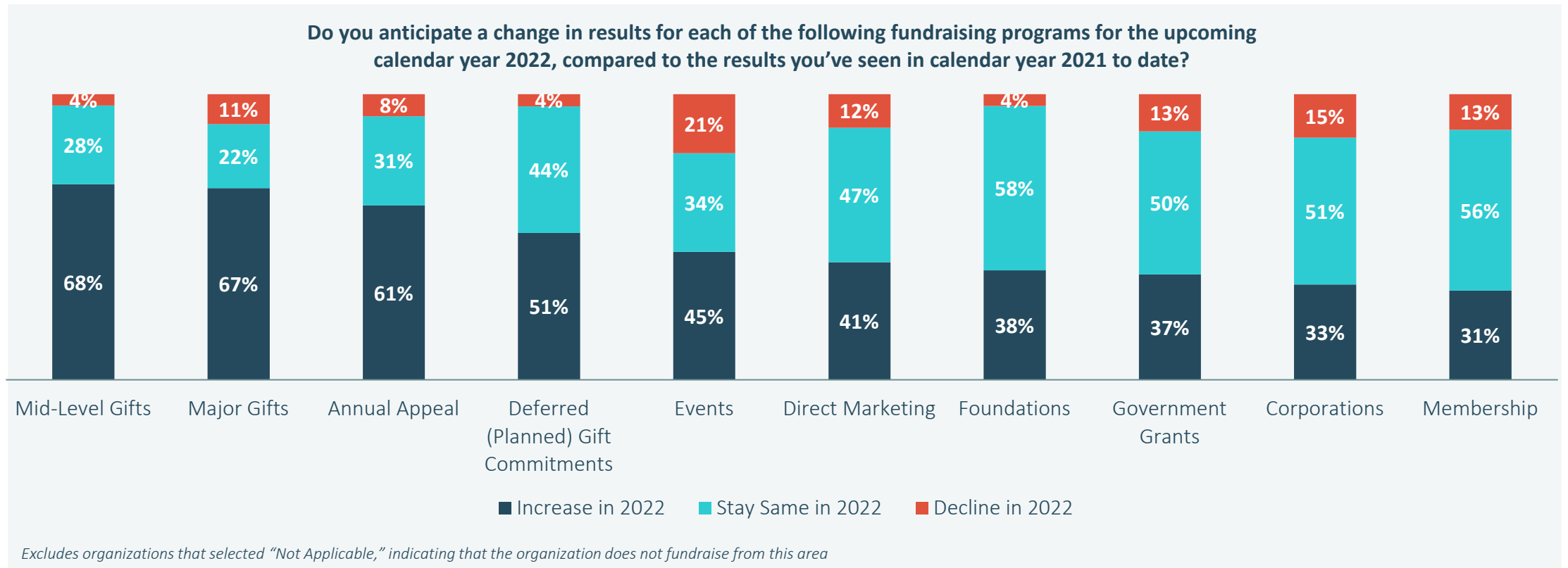
9 in 10 Institutions Receive Gifts from Donor-Advised Funds

Out of all Higher Education respondents, 90% reported that their organization had received gifts and/or pledges from donor-advised funds over the past two calendar years. Overall, the respondent pool demonstrated receiving a large variety of gift sources and vehicles.



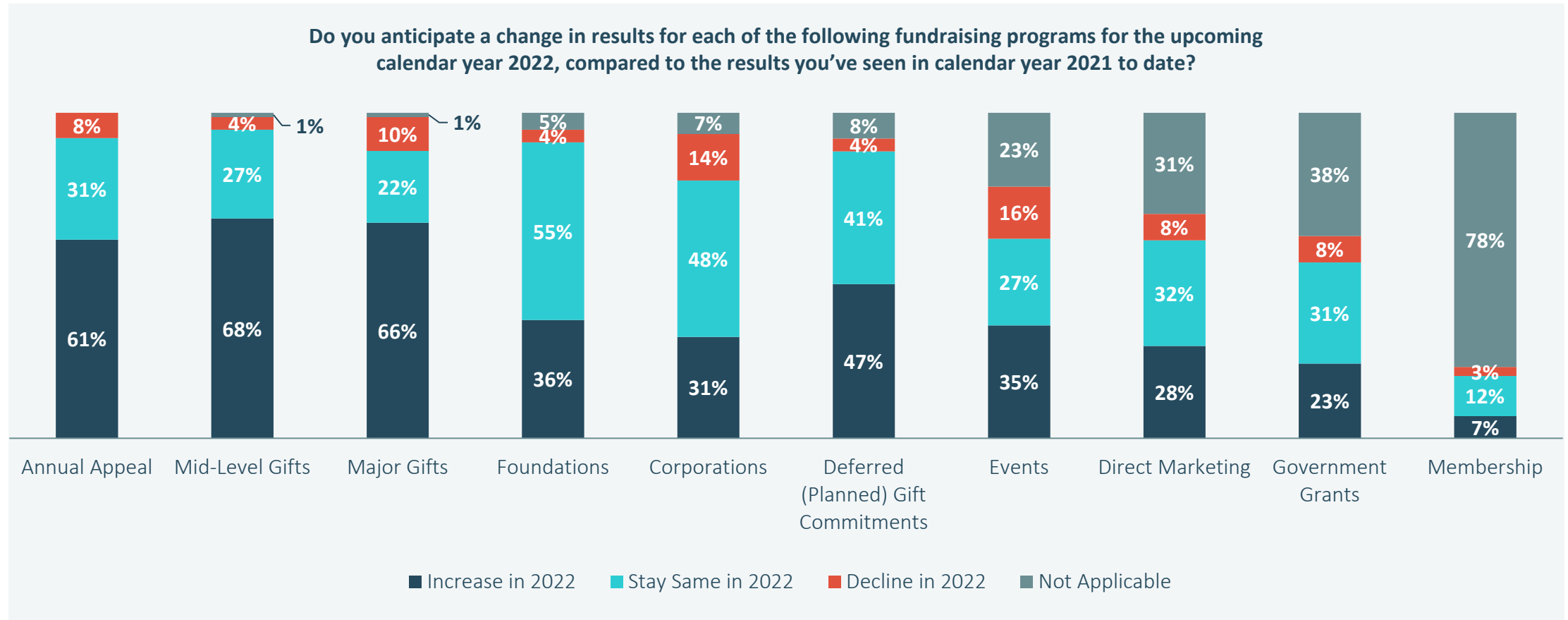
Institutions Most Commonly Expect Increases from Mid-Level and Major Individual Gifts

For most fundraising categories, between 85% and 96% of respondents expected to see either increased or consistent fundraising results in 2022, compared to 2021. Events garnered the overall lowest levels of confidence for 2022, with 21% of institutions reporting that they expect a decline in event fundraising results this year.



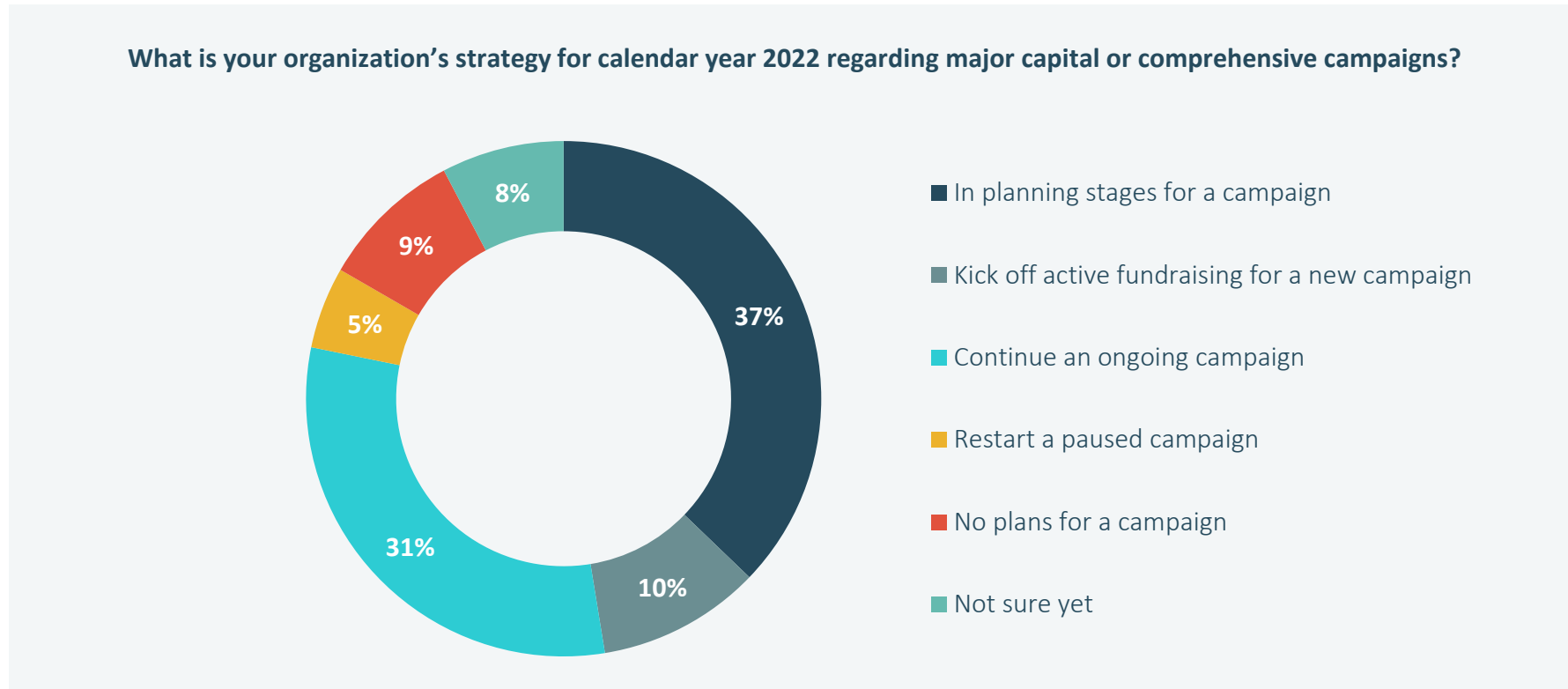
Nearly 1 in 4 Respondents Does Not Fundraise from Events

A different view of the data in which “not applicable” responses are included suggests that 23% of Higher Education respondents do not fundraise from events, 31% do not fundraise from direct marketing programs, and 38% do not fundraise from government grants.



83% of Respondents Intend to Undertake Some Level of Campaign Activity This Year

A combined 83% of Higher Education institutions 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. Nine percent of institutions in the sample have no plans for a campaign, and 8% were not yet sure of their organization's plans.



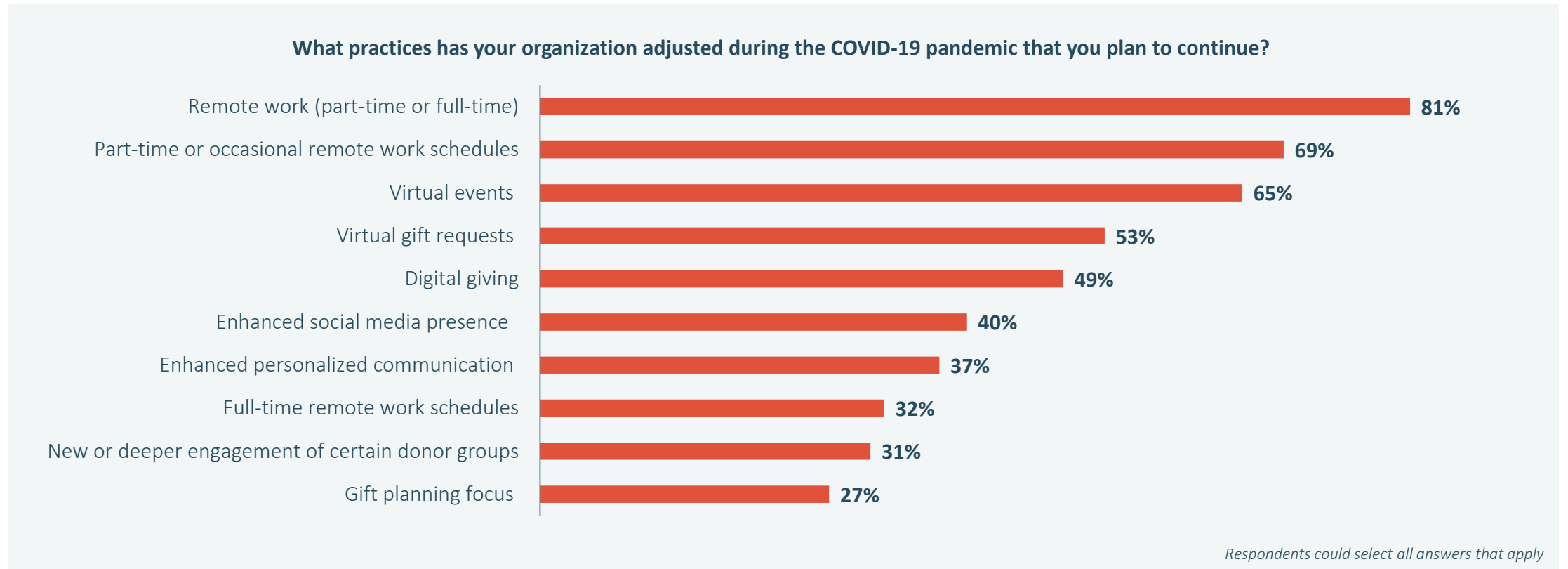
85% of Institutions at Least Partially Returned to In-Person Donor Engagement since the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic

As of November 2021, a combined 85% of responding organizations had at least partially resumed in-person donor meetings and/or events. Nearly one-fourth (23%) had completely resumed activities as of November and more than half (62%) had partially resumed activities. Among Higher Education respondents that knew their institution's plans at the time of the survey, none reported a plan to return later than the first half of 2022.



Remote Work May Remain Popular Beyond the Pandemic

In total, 81% of Higher Education respondents indicated that their institution plans to continue either part-time or full-time remote work beyond the pandemic. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they would continue part-time or occasional remote work schedules, while only 32% said they plan to keep full-time remote work schedules. Moreover, more than half of respondents indicated they would keep virtual events (65%) and virtual gift requests (53%).



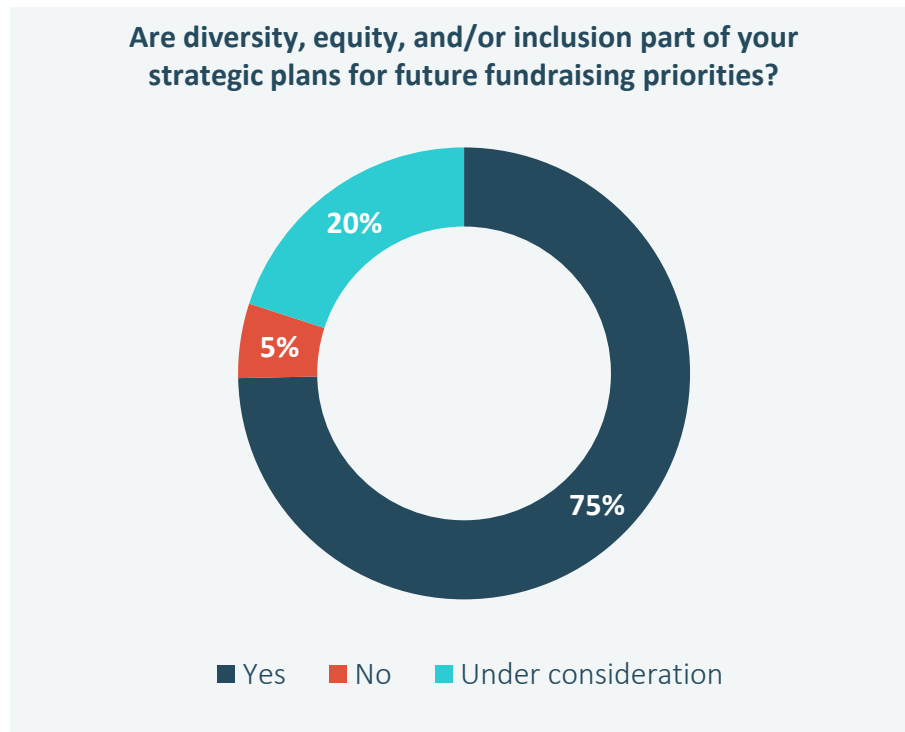


Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Donor Relations

Three-Quarters of Respondents Include DEI in Strategic Plans and Nearly All Discuss DEI with Donors at Least Occasionally

Higher Education respondents demonstrated broad support for incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into donor relations practices, with 75% reporting that DEI is part of their strategic plans for future fundraising priorities. Furthermore, more than 9 in 10 respondents said they discuss 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.



Nearly 3 in 4 Respondents Began Fundraising for New DEI-Related Projects or Programs

When asked what tactics their organization has employed over the past two years to make their fundraising activities more diverse, equitable, and/or inclusive, 73% of Higher Education respondents reported that their organization began fundraising for new DEI-related projects or programs. Moreover, a majority of respondents reported that they offered DEI training to fundraising staff and/or board members (62%) and modified board recruitment and/or relations practices (59%).

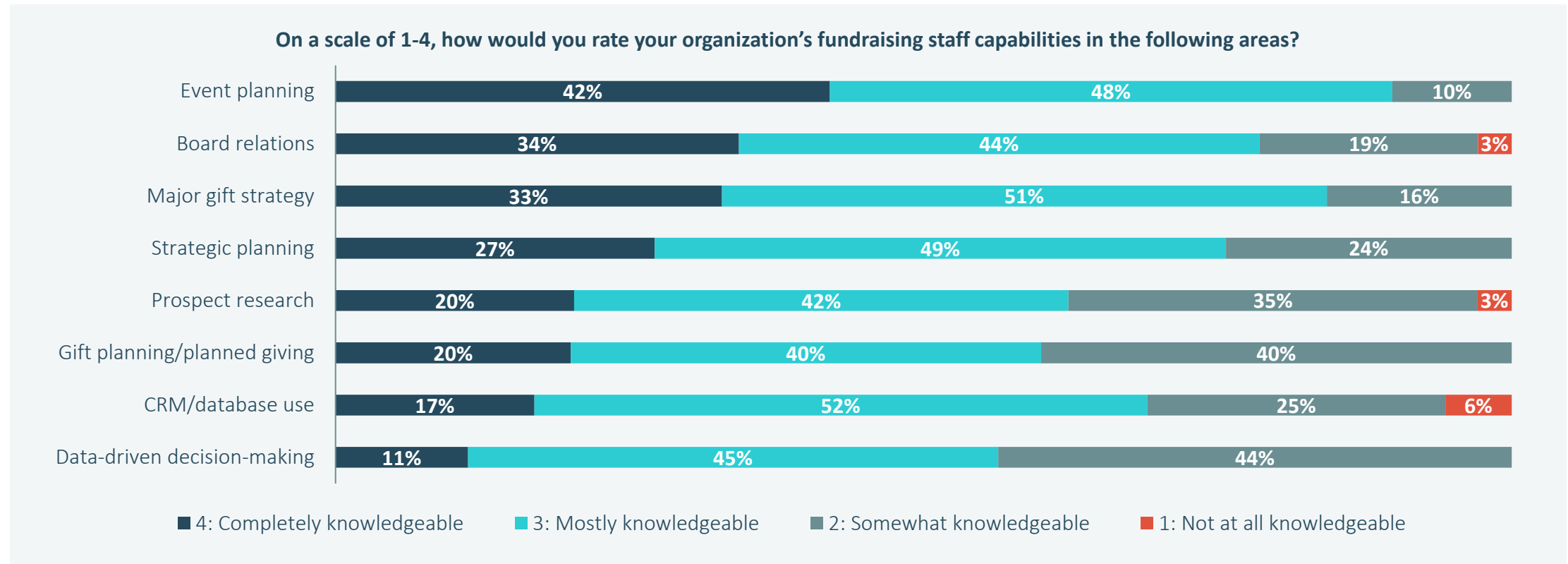




Staffing, Resourcing, and CRM Technology

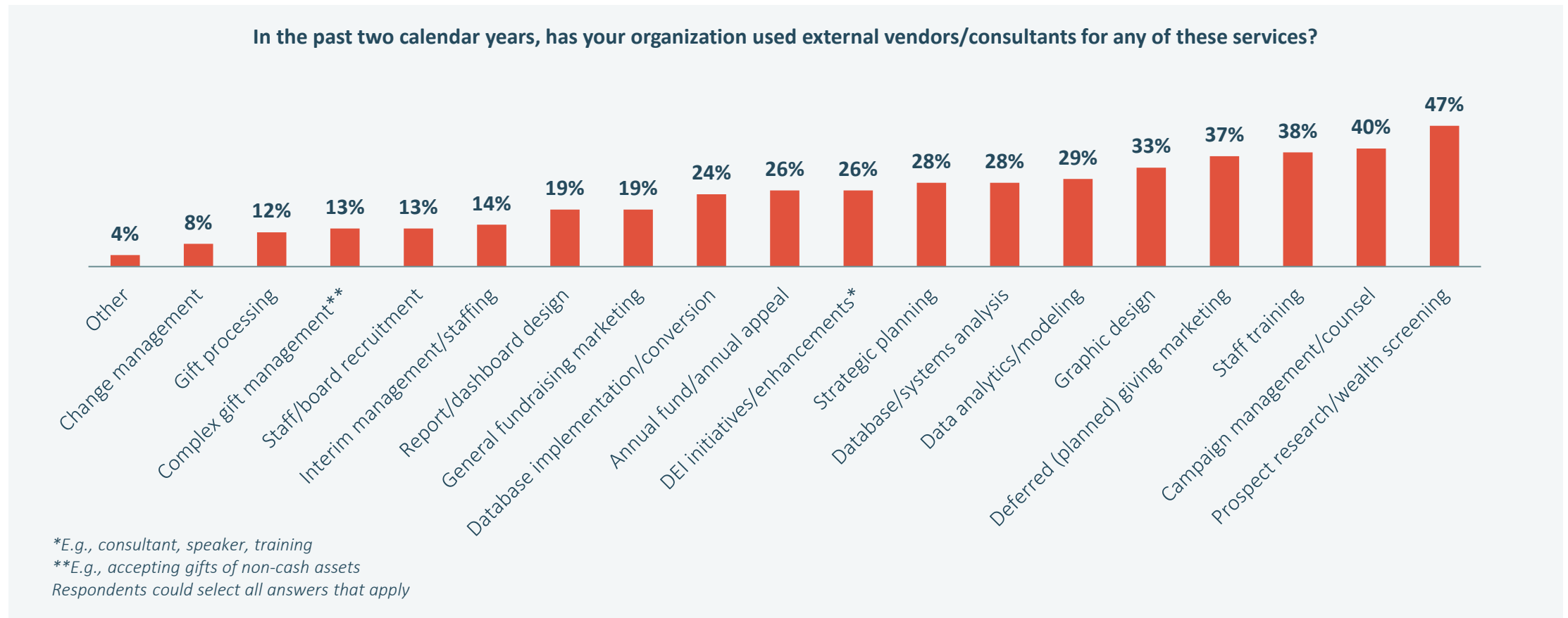
Data-Driven Decision-Making Was Rated as the Area in Which Fundraising Staff Have the Lowest Levels of Expertise

When asked to rate the knowledge of their fundraising staff in a variety of areas, Higher Education respondents were most likely to report expertise in event planning and board relations. Data-driven decision-making was the area where organizations were most likely to report lower levels of staff knowledge, with only 11% of institutions saying that their fundraising staff is completely knowledgeable in data-driven decision-making.



Respondents Commonly Seek External Assistance on Prospect Research, Campaign Management, and Staff Training

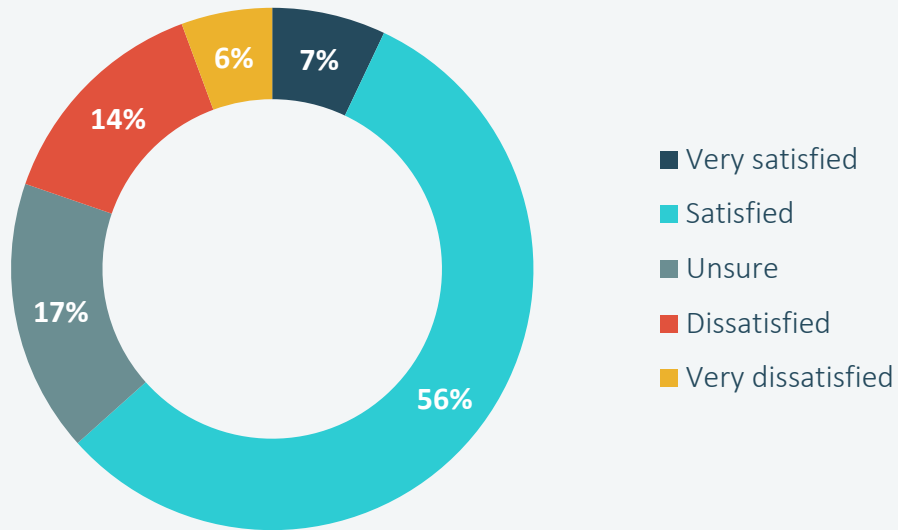
Nearly half (47%) of all Higher Education respondents reported using external prospect research assistance in the past two years. At least one-third reported using external vendors or consultants for campaign management/counsel (40%), staff training (38%), deferred (planned) giving marketing (37%), and graphic design (33%).



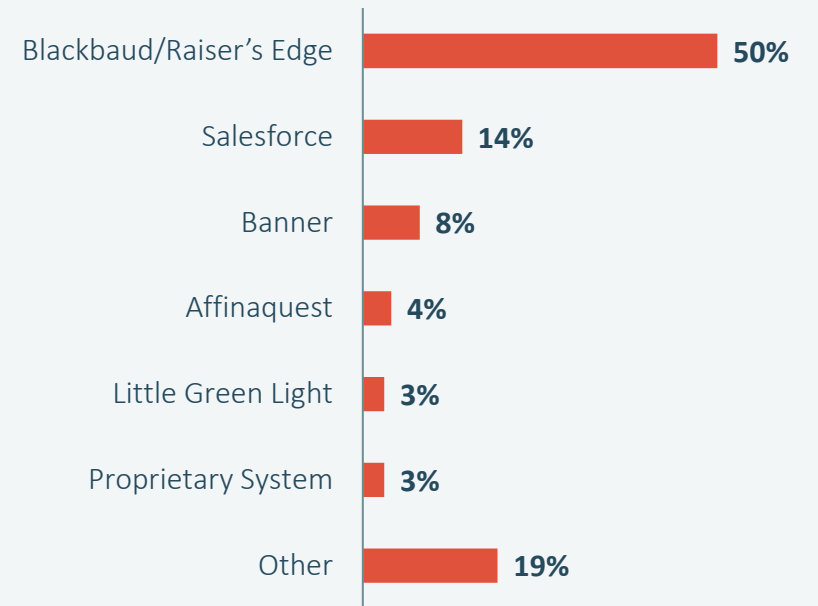
Most Institutions Reported Being Satisfied with Their CRM

A combined 63% of Higher Education respondents reported that they were either satisfied (56%) or very satisfied (7%) with their organization’s database use—inclusive of both the software itself and the processes around using the system. About 20% of organizations reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and 17% said they were unsure. The most popular CRM systems among the respondent pool were those made by Blackbaud, with 50% of institutions 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?



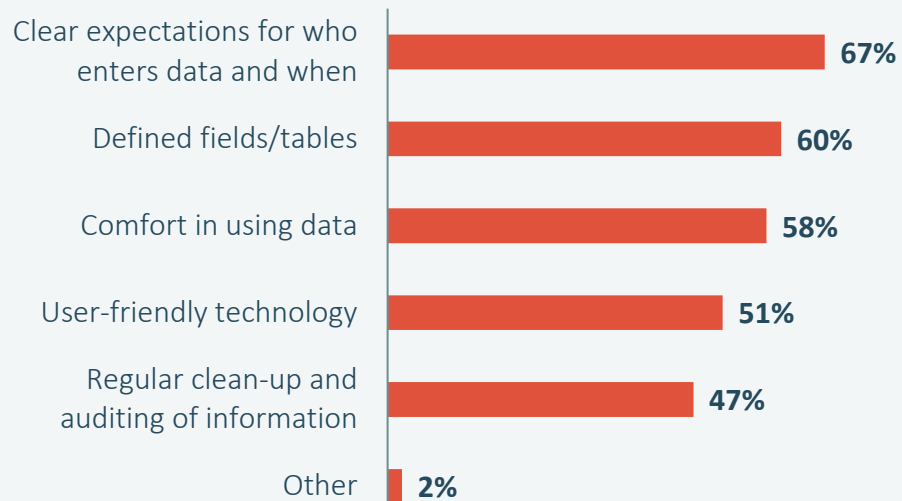
Respondents could select all answers that apply

Two-Thirds of Satisfied Institutions Report That Clear Expectations for Data Entry Make a Difference for Database Use

Among Higher Education institutions that reported being satisfied with their database use, 67% said that clear expectations for data entry made a difference in their satisfaction. Among the organizations that indicated being dissatisfied, the most frequently cited database challenges were a dated, non-user-friendly CRM system (86%) and inconsistent, inaccurate, or incomplete data (57%).

Among the **63%** of respondents that are **satisfied** with their database use...

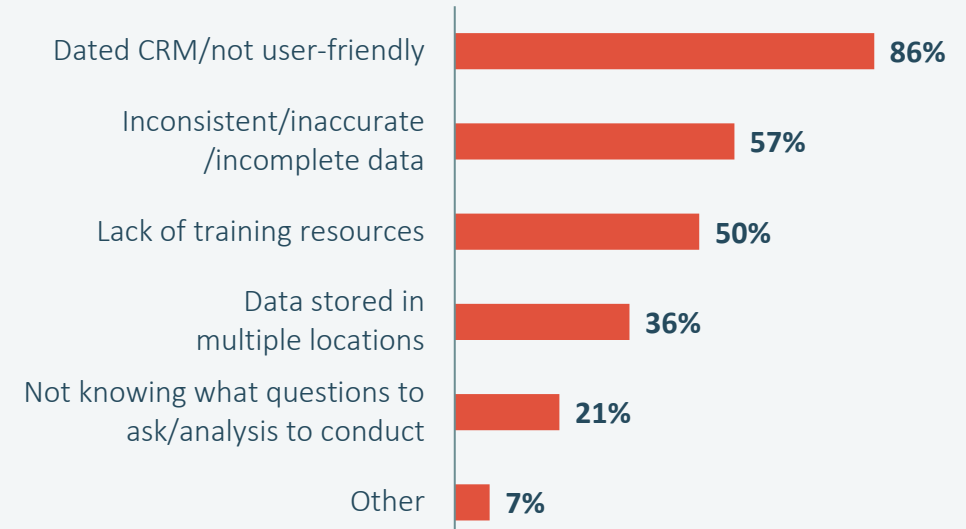
What has made the difference for your organization in terms of satisfaction with its donor database use?



Respondents could select all answers that apply

Among the **20%** 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

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