



*Towards a*  
**National Strategy  
for Volunteering**

*Volunteering in Australia* Research  
Early Findings  
The Organisation Perspective



Curtin University



**Griffith**  
UNIVERSITY  
Queensland, Australia



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA**



**Volunteering**  
AUSTRALIA

# National Strategy for Volunteering Project Overview

Volunteering Australia has been funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services to lead the development of a National Strategy for Volunteering. The outcome of this project will be a National Strategy for Volunteering designed and owned by the volunteering ecosystem that will provide a blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia.



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# *Volunteering in Australia* Research

As part of the development of the National Strategy for Volunteering, Volunteering Australia is leading the *Volunteering in Australia* research project. The project will produce a series of four reports that will serve as a core evidence base on contemporary volunteering in Australia. The four reports will be based on:

1. A representative survey of the general Australian population
2. A survey of and series of focus groups with volunteer involving organisations
3. An analysis of supply and demand for volunteers among organisations across Australia
4. A review of methods of valuing the contributions of volunteering in Australia



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# *Volunteering in Australia* Research



Professor Kirsten Holmes, Associate Professor Leonie Lockstone-Binney,  
Professor Amanda Davies & Associate Professor Patrick Dunlop



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# Key Questions

## Perspectives & Challenges

- How are organisations recruiting and engaging volunteers?
- How do these differ by organisational size, sector, geography, and degree of formality of the organisation?
- What are the challenges and barriers to engaging volunteers?
- What are the costs associated with engaging volunteers?
- Where are volunteers needed?

## Trends & Innovations

- What organisational practices are effective in attracting and retaining volunteers?
- How have volunteer engagement and management practices changed over time?
- What are organisations doing differently?
- How do organisations think volunteer involvement might need to change in the future? What are the drivers of these changes?

# Early Insights

## Perspectives & Challenges

- **How are organisations recruiting and engaging volunteers?**
- How do these differ by organisational size, sector, geography, and degree of formality of the organisation?
- **What are the challenges and barriers to engaging volunteers?**
- **What are the costs associated with engaging volunteers?**
- Where are volunteers needed?

## Trends & Innovations

- **What organisational practices are effective in attracting and retaining volunteers?**
- **How have volunteer engagement and management practices changed over time?**
- What are organisations doing differently?
- **How do organisations think volunteer involvement might need to change in the future? What are the drivers of these changes?**

# Method and Participants



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# Methodology

- Online survey open 13 May to 22 June 2022
- Target population: representatives of Australian volunteer involving organisations
- Newsletters, social media, direct emails, VIKTOR/VIRA Mailing List
- 1208 unique organisations (+93 multiple representatives)
- 97% of respondents named their organisation



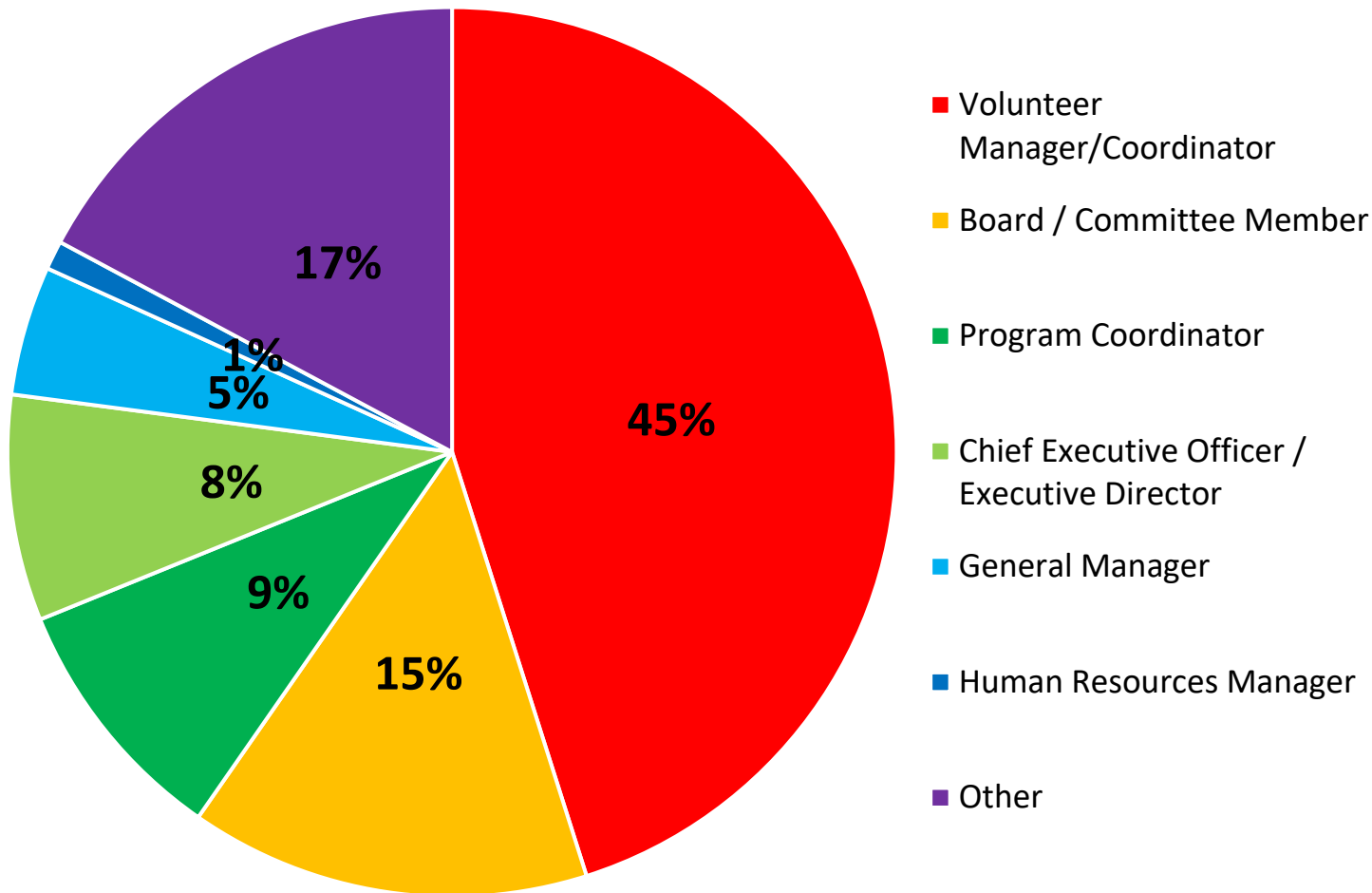
# Considerations

- Sampling
  - Great response across Australia but over-representation of WA
  - Non-random
  - Some duplication (but very little)
- Open link
- Some questions relied on assumed knowledge:

Before we begin, we wanted to mention that we are interested in the views of the person(s) who directly manage volunteers for your organisation or group. If you consider another person in your organisation or group would be better placed to complete the survey, then please forward them the survey link for completion.

# Survey Respondents

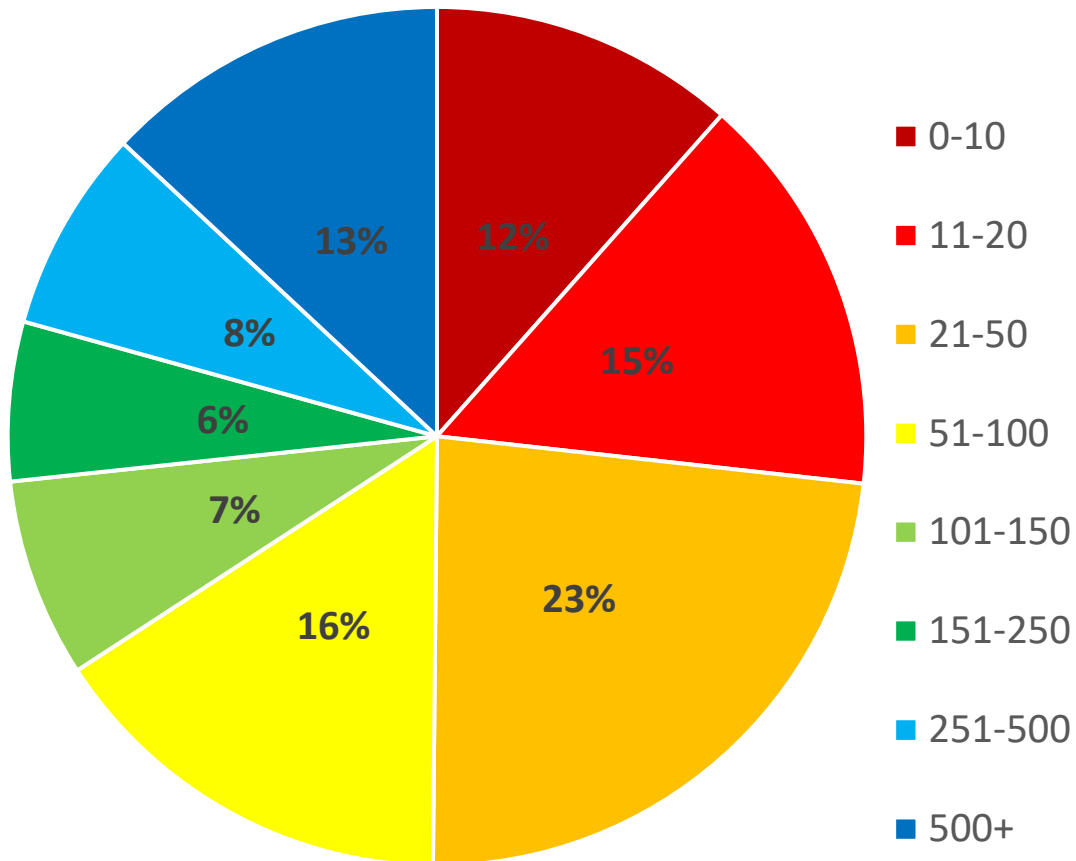
Type of Role Occupied by the Respondent



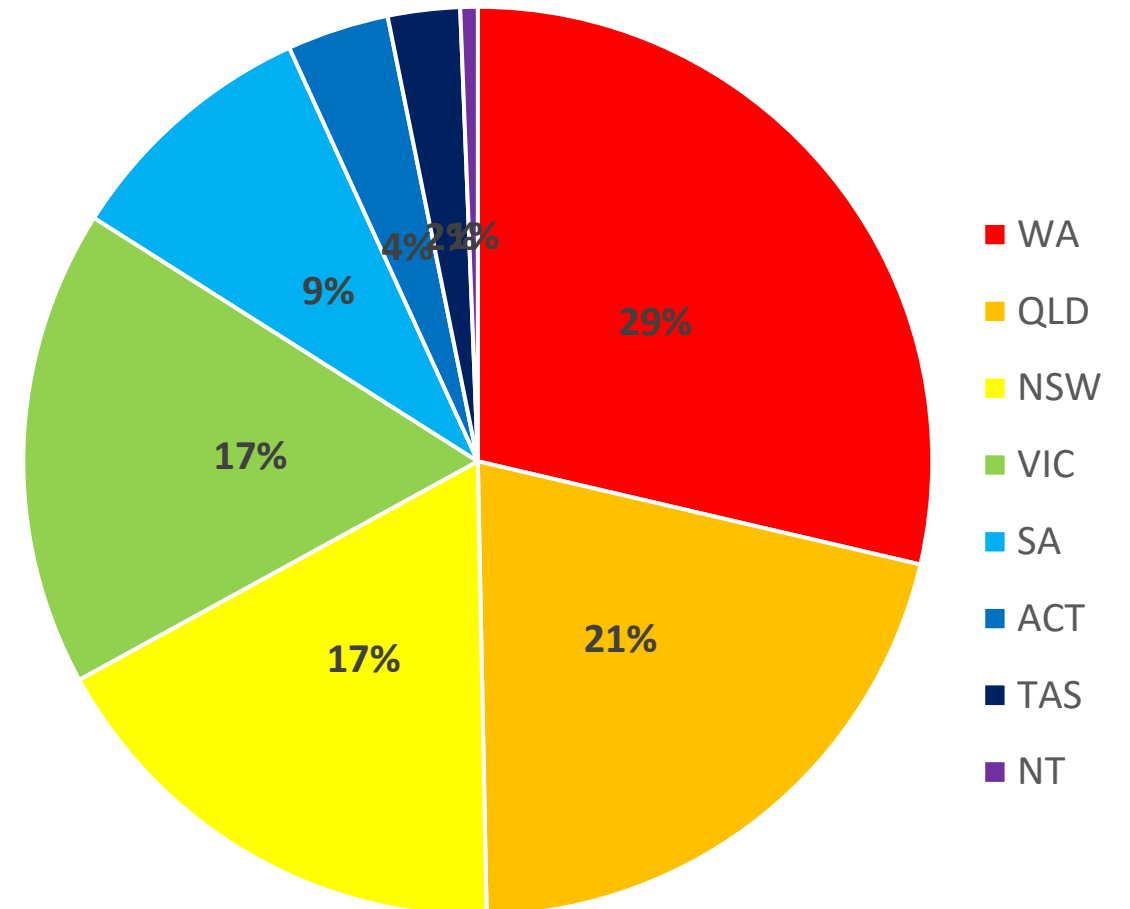
- 60% in paid roles
- 80% 2+ years' tenure (mean = 9 years, sd = 9)
- Respondents reported spending 40% of their FTE time supporting volunteers

# Size and Location

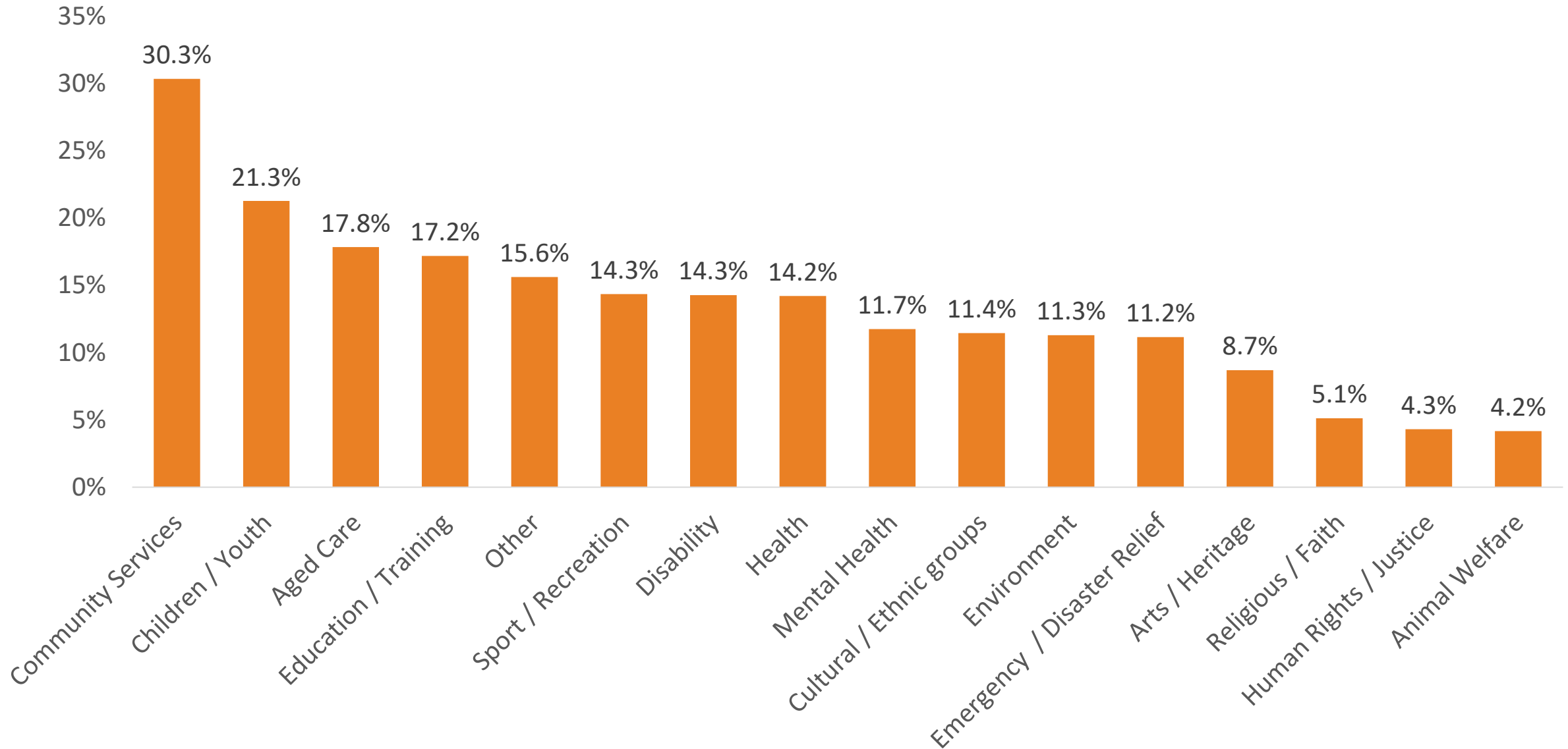
## Number of Volunteers



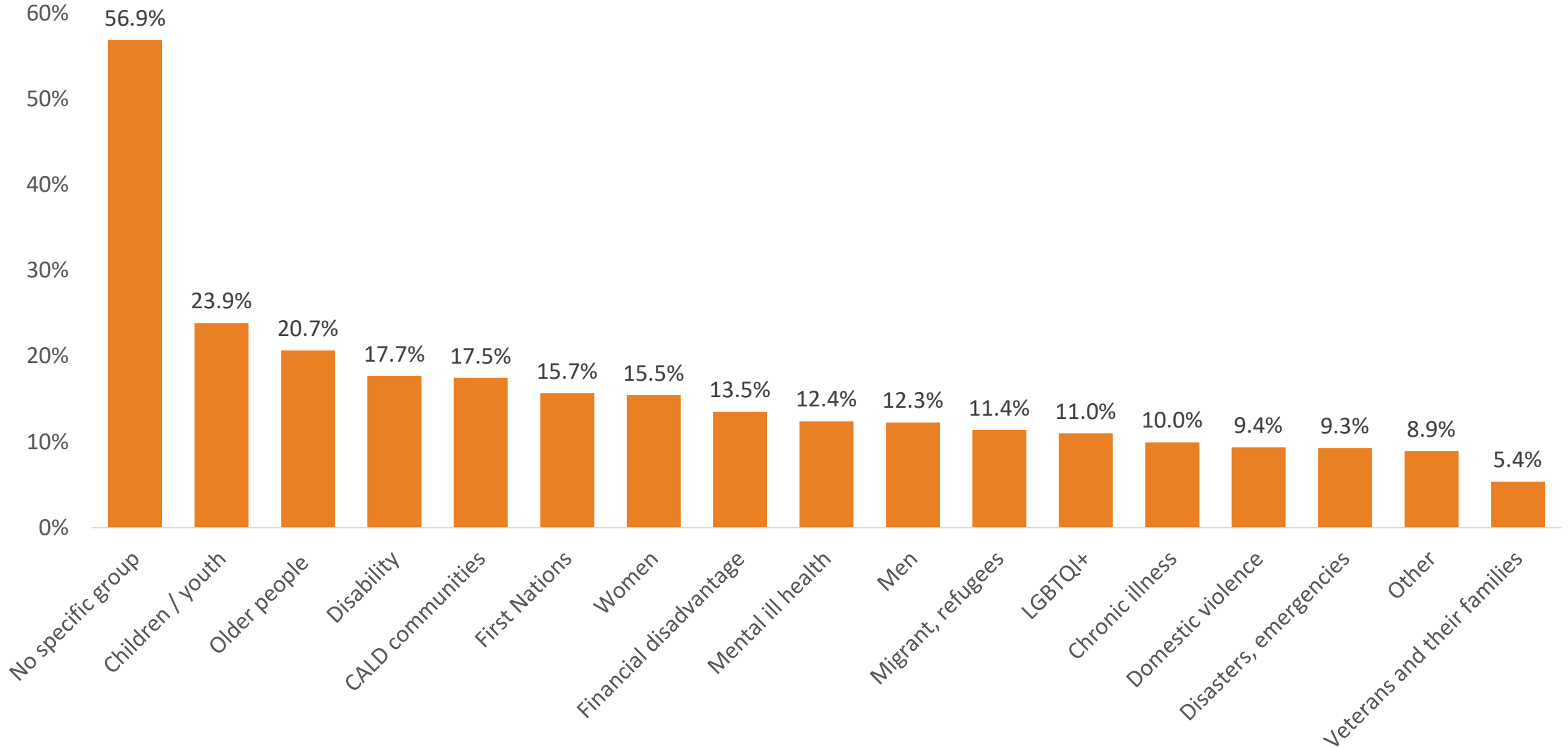
## Exclusive Operating State



# Sector/Core Focus

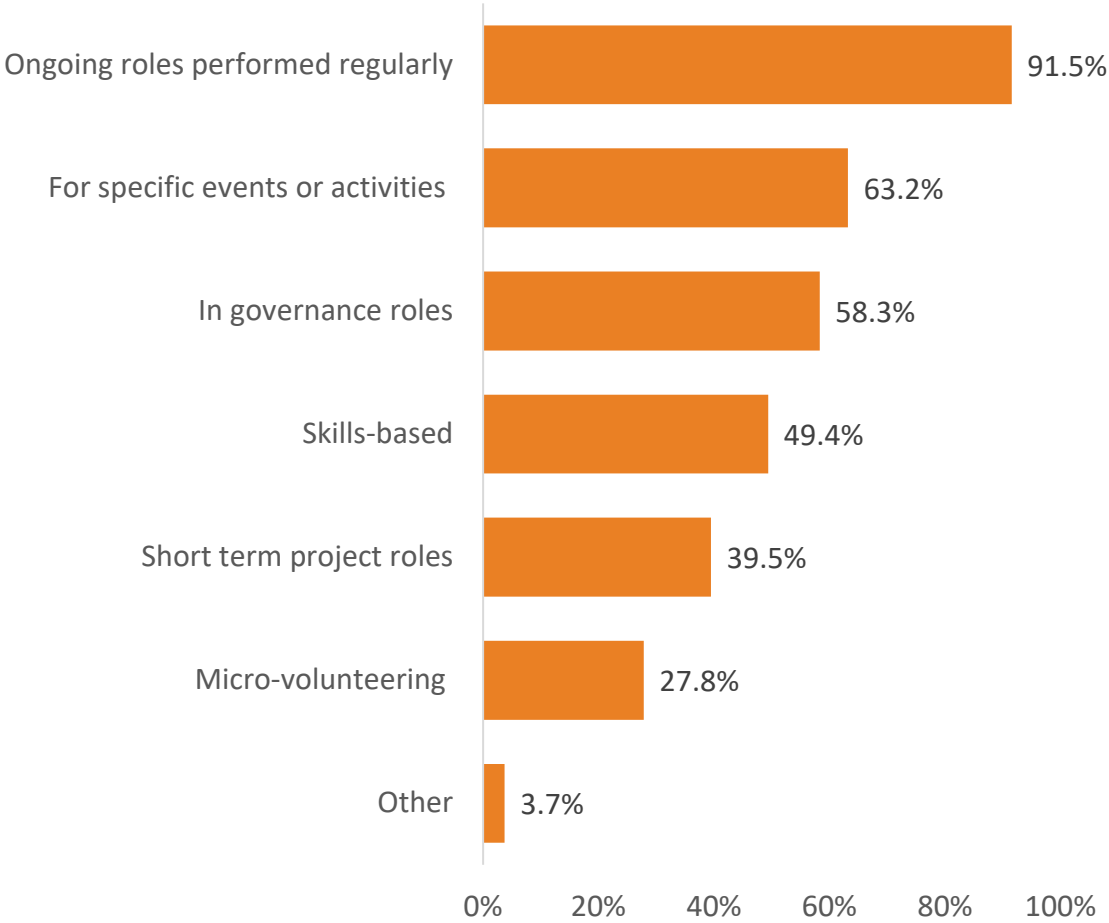


# Target Groups

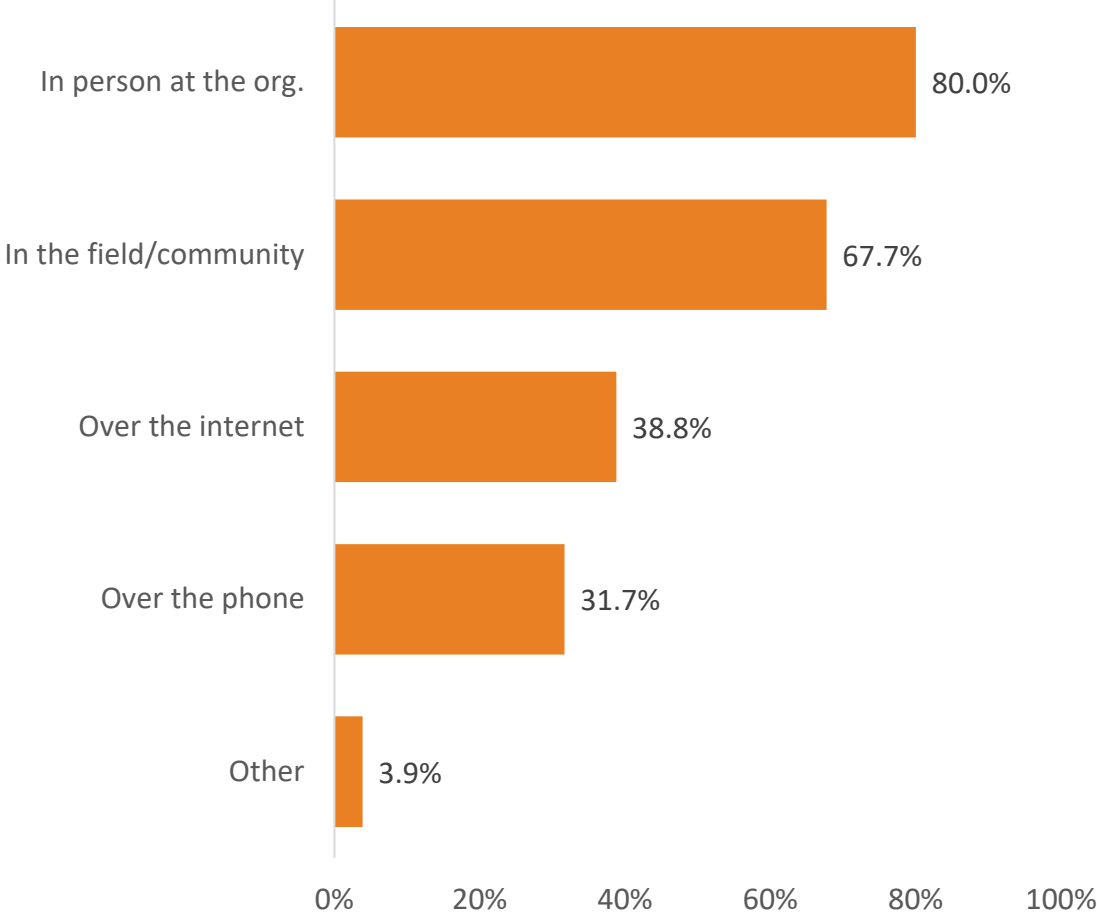


# Nature of Volunteering Activity

## Involvement



## Medium



# The Volunteer Workforce

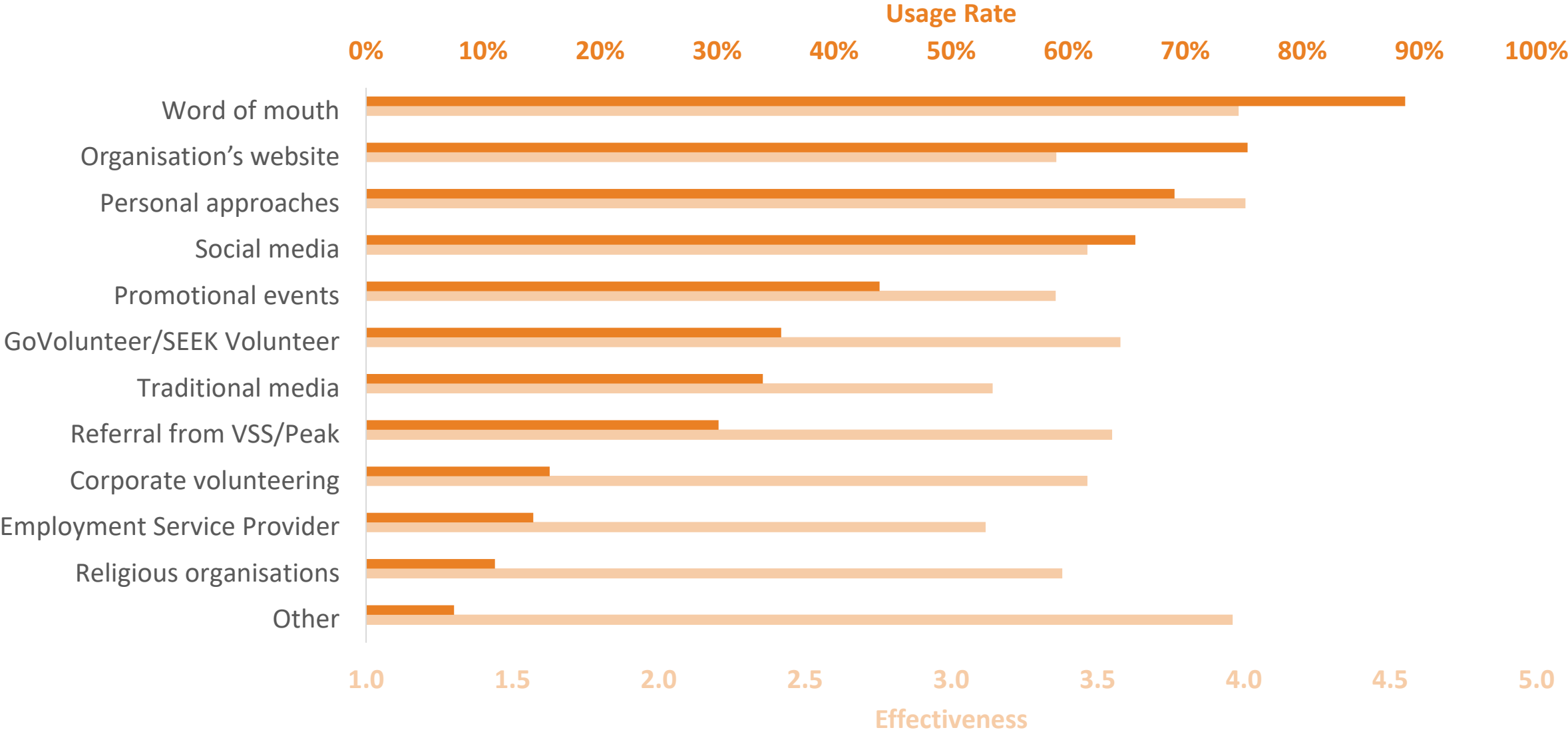


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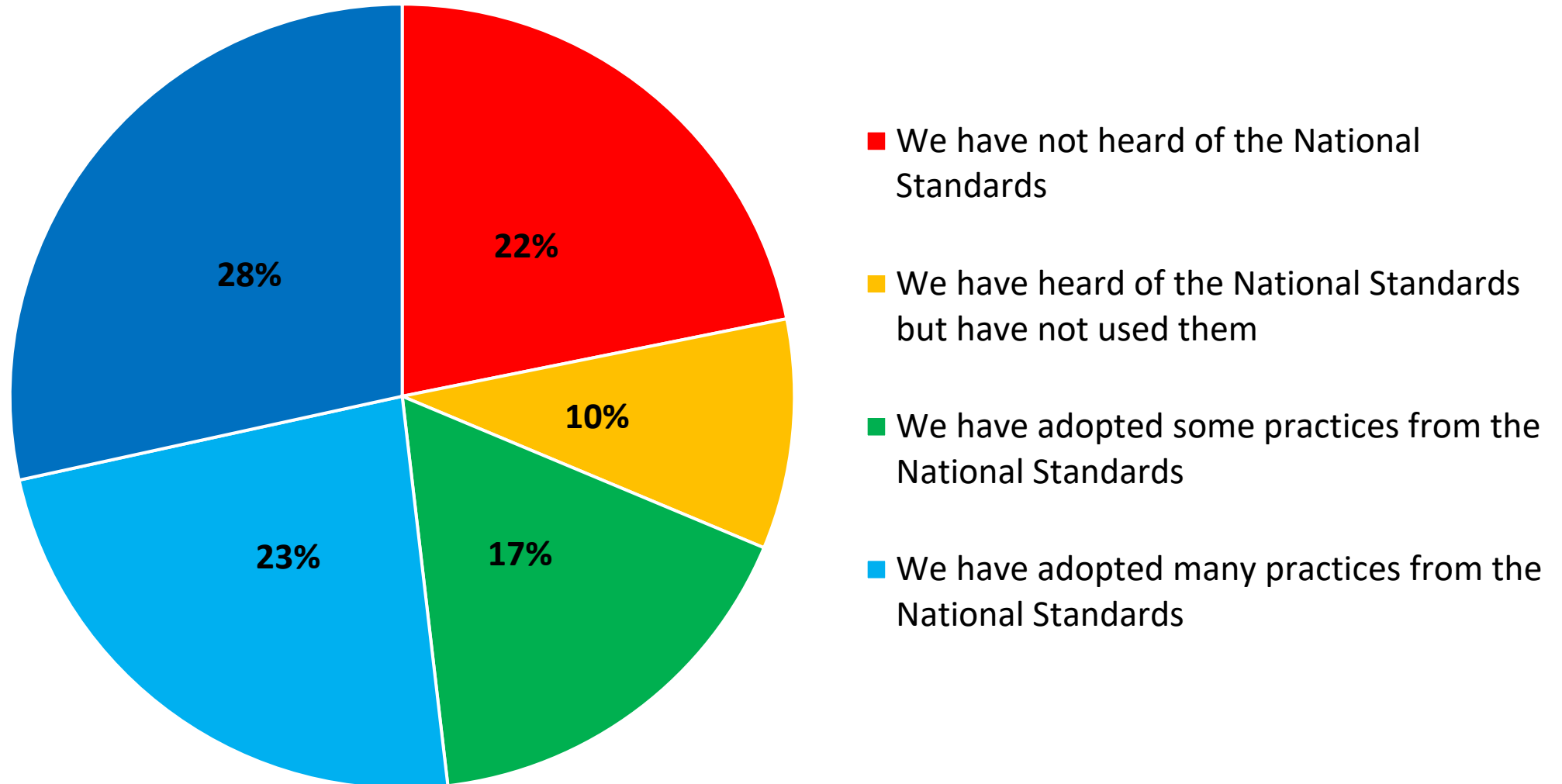
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# Recruitment Methods and Effectiveness



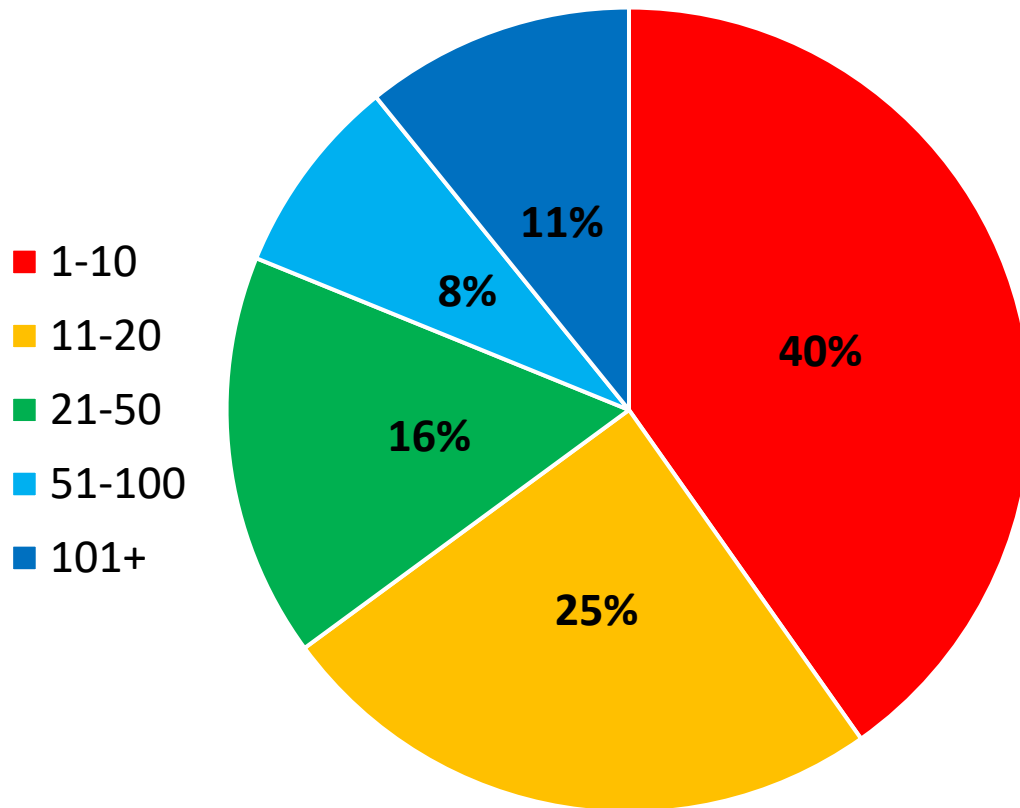


# Awareness and Adoption of National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

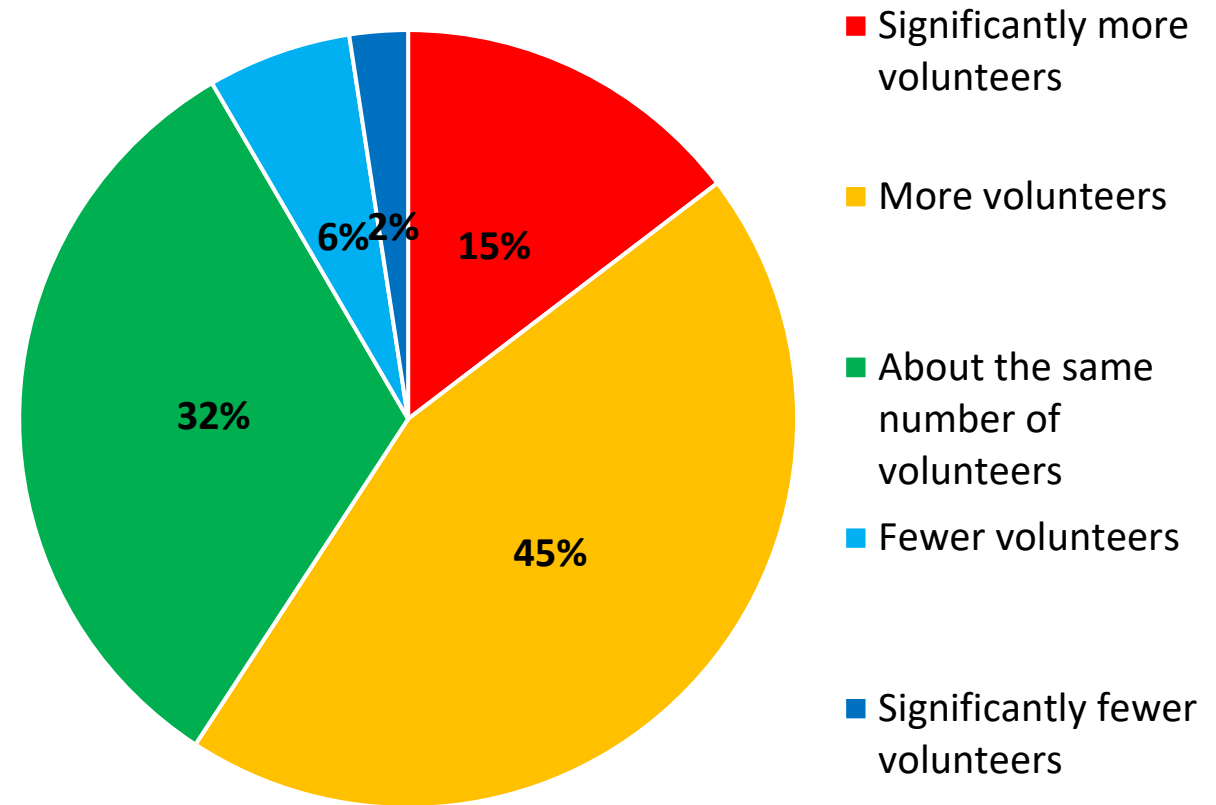


# Demand for Volunteers

## Immediate Term

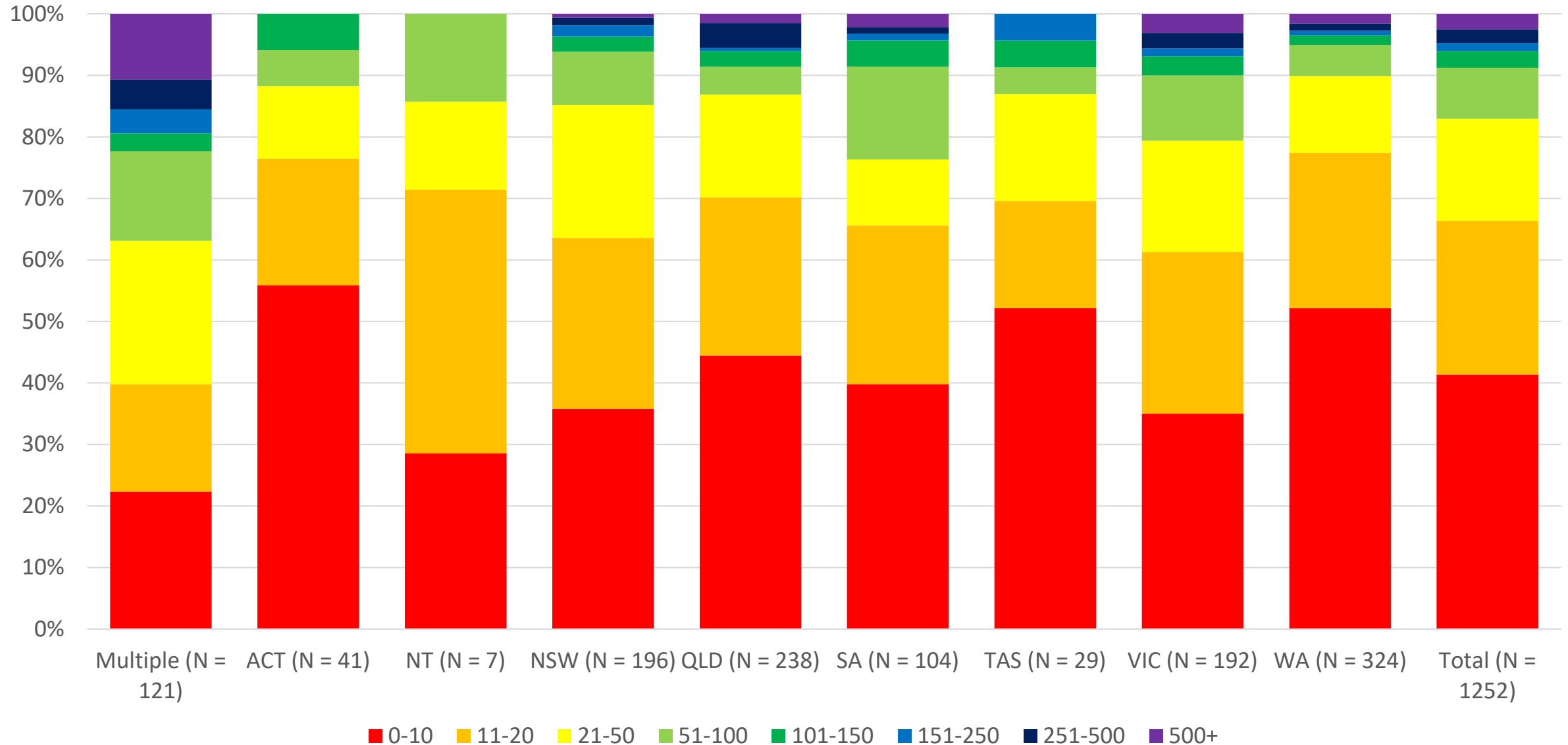


## Next Five Years

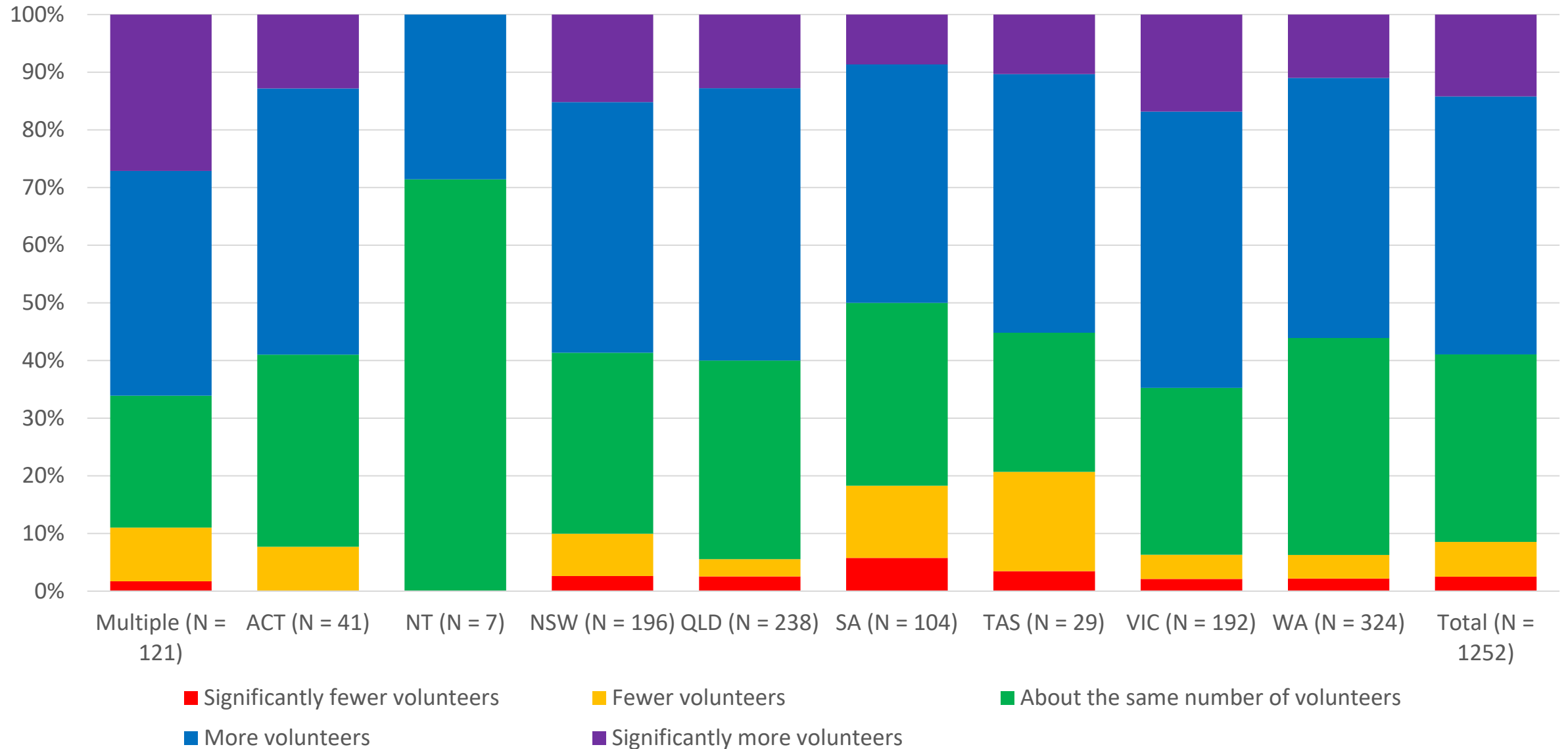


**85% said their organisation needs more volunteers!**

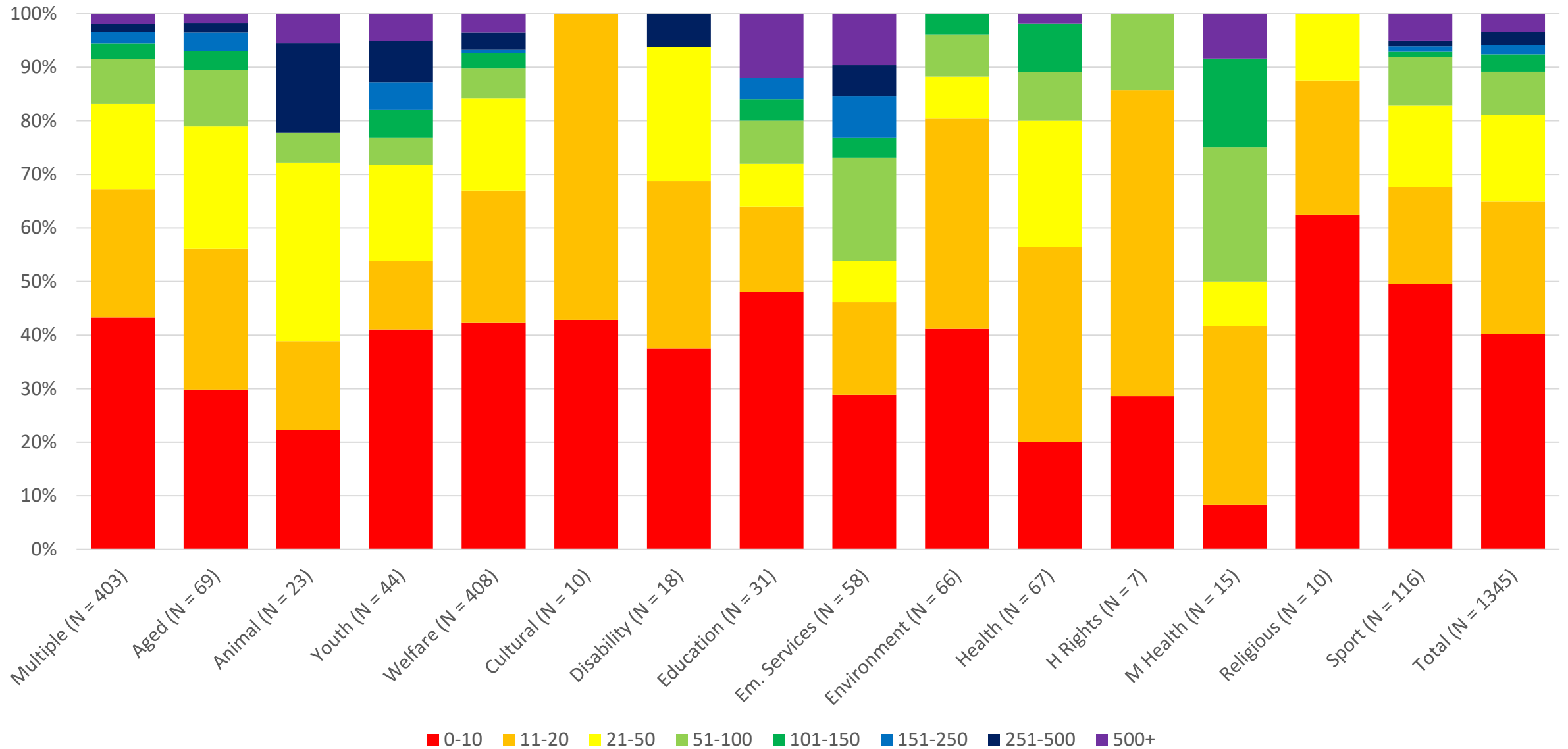
# Immediate Demand by State/Territory



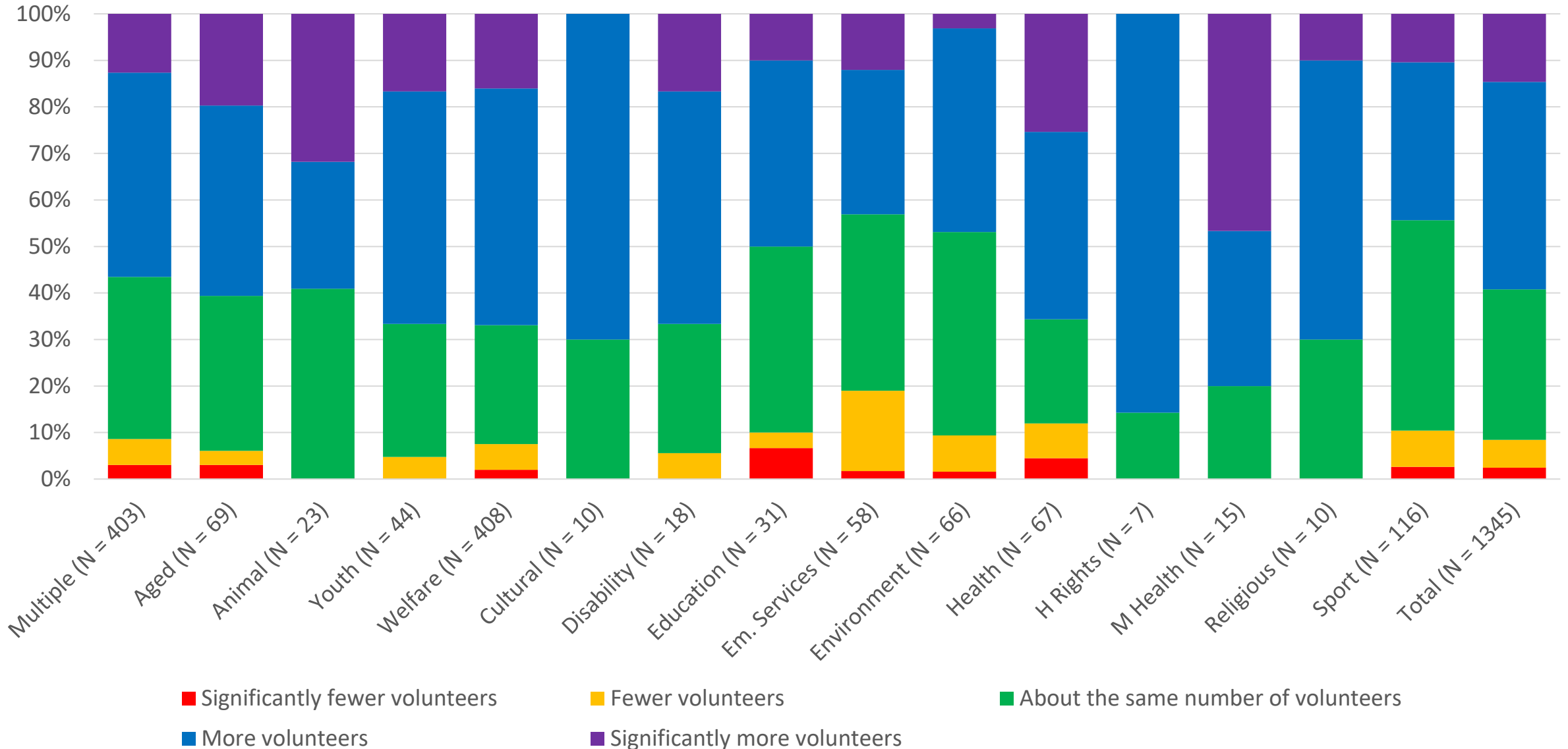
# Long-Term Demand by State/Territory



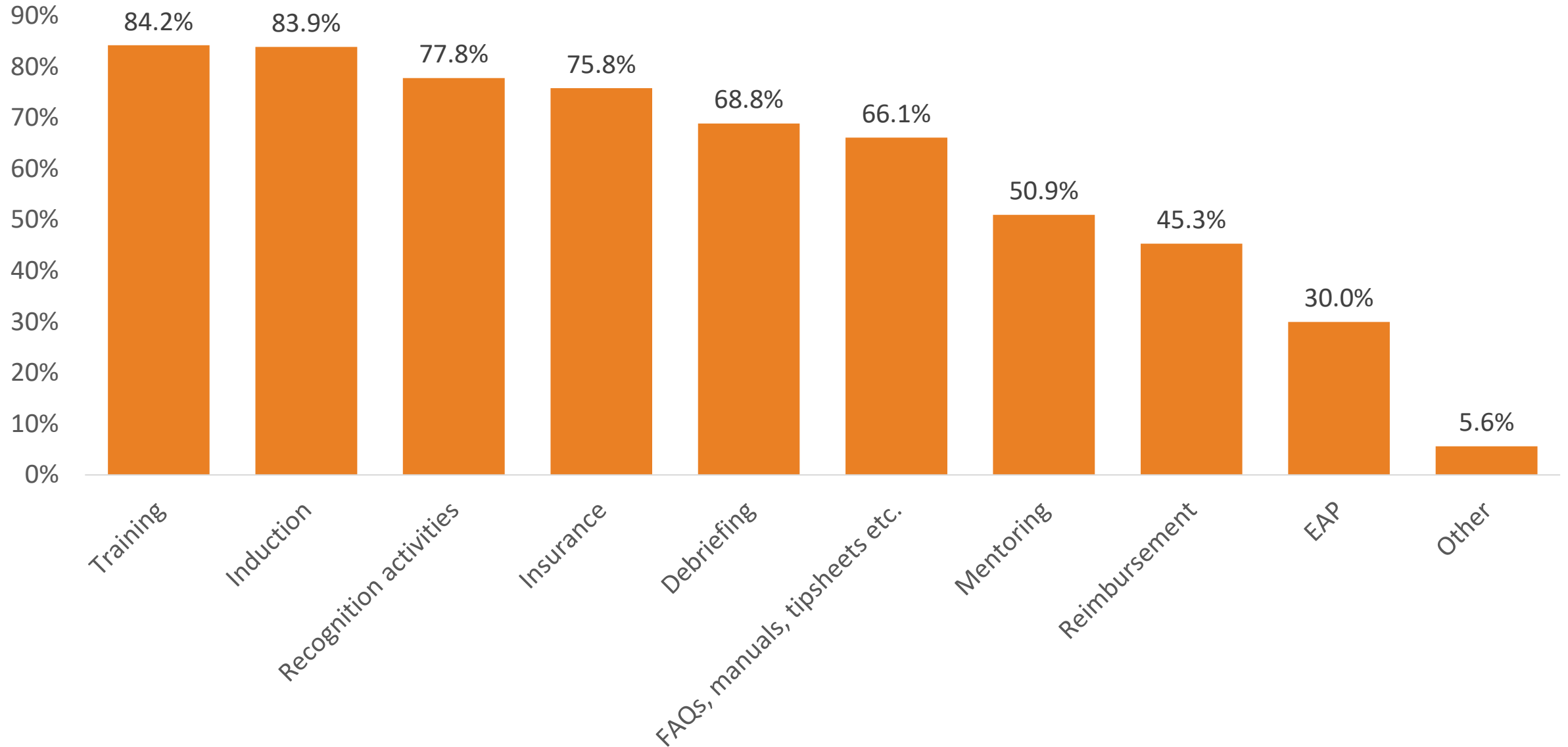
# Immediate Demand by Sector



# Long-Term Demand by Sector



# Forms of Support for Volunteers



# Circumstances, Challenges, Changes, and Change Drivers



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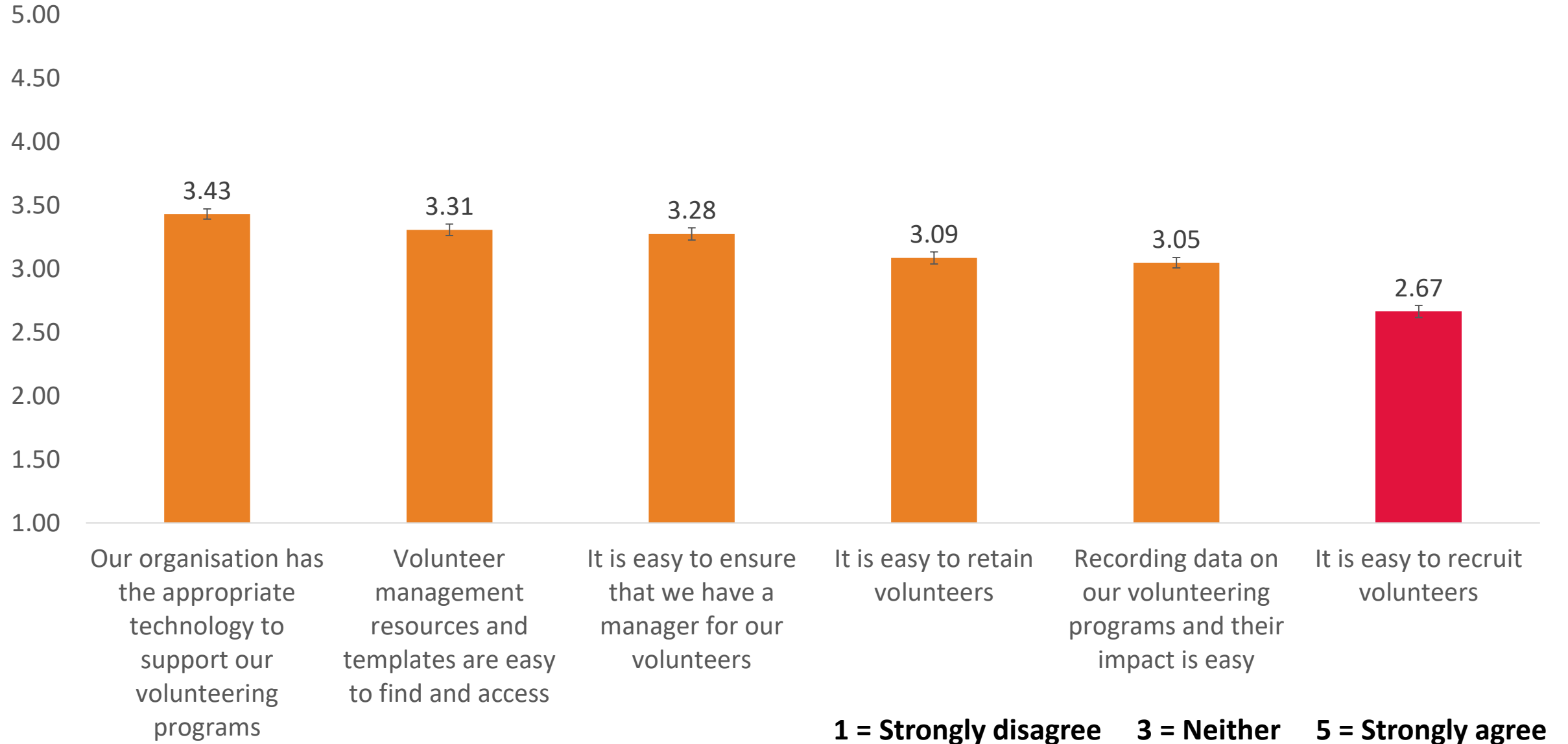
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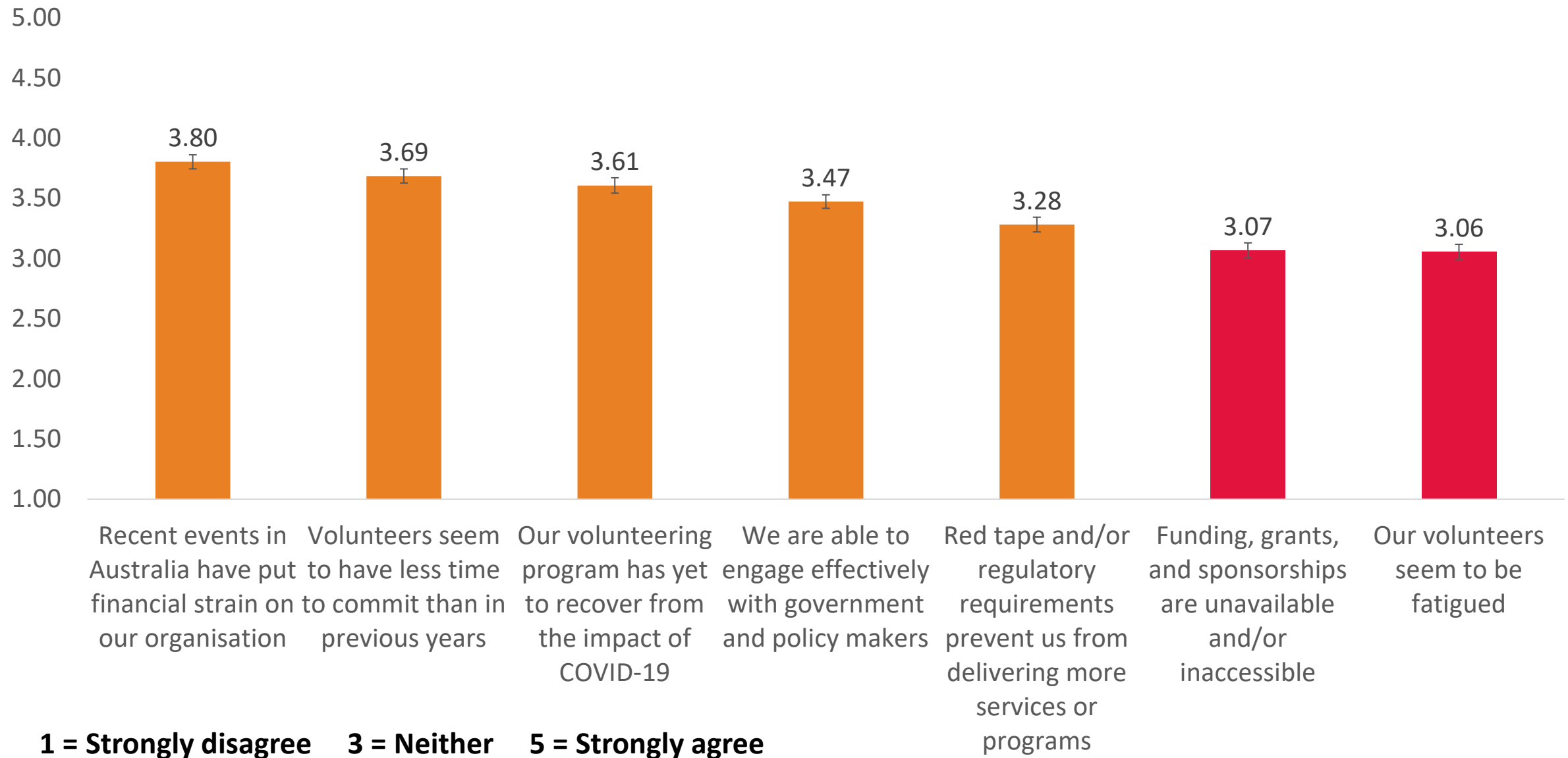
# Going Well



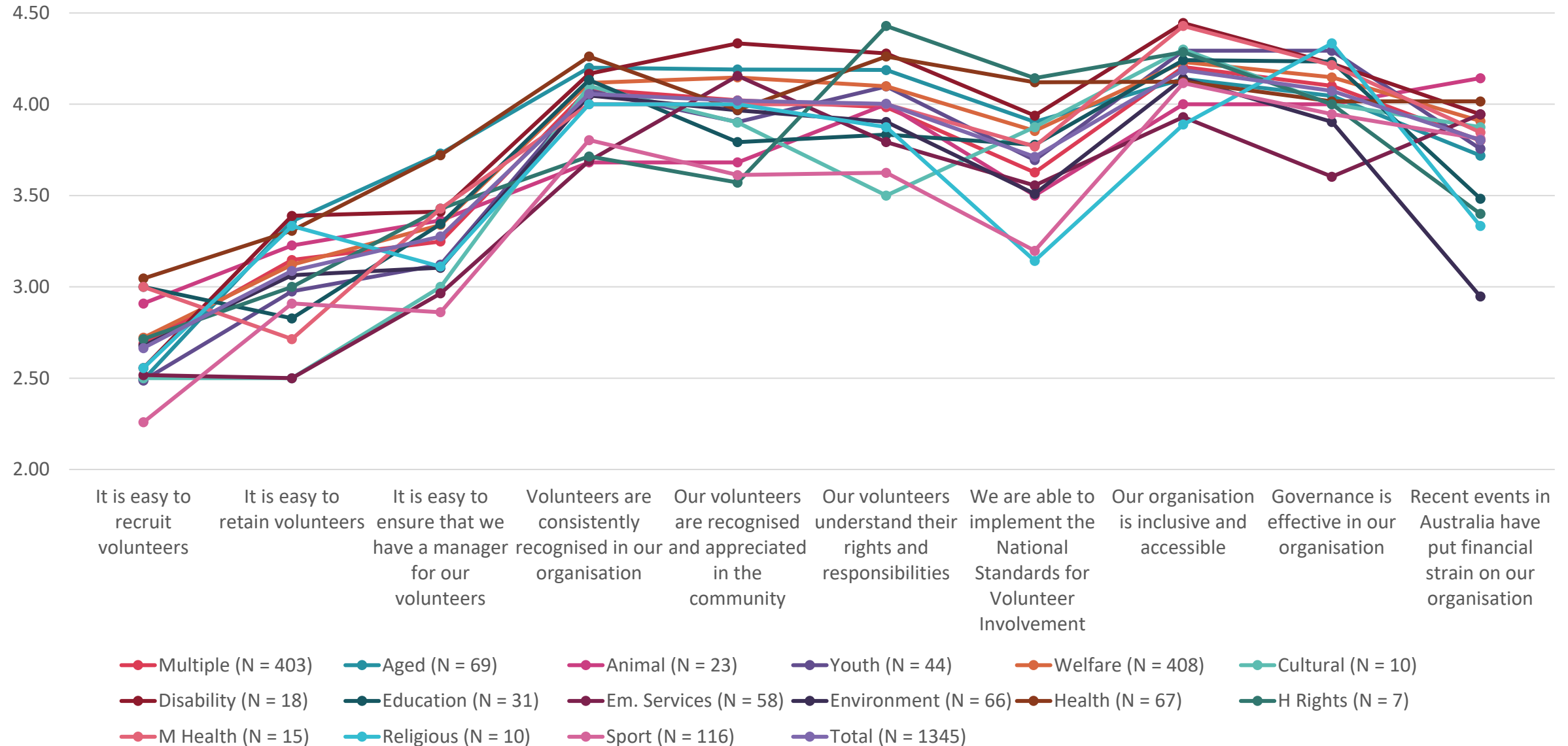
# Could Be Better



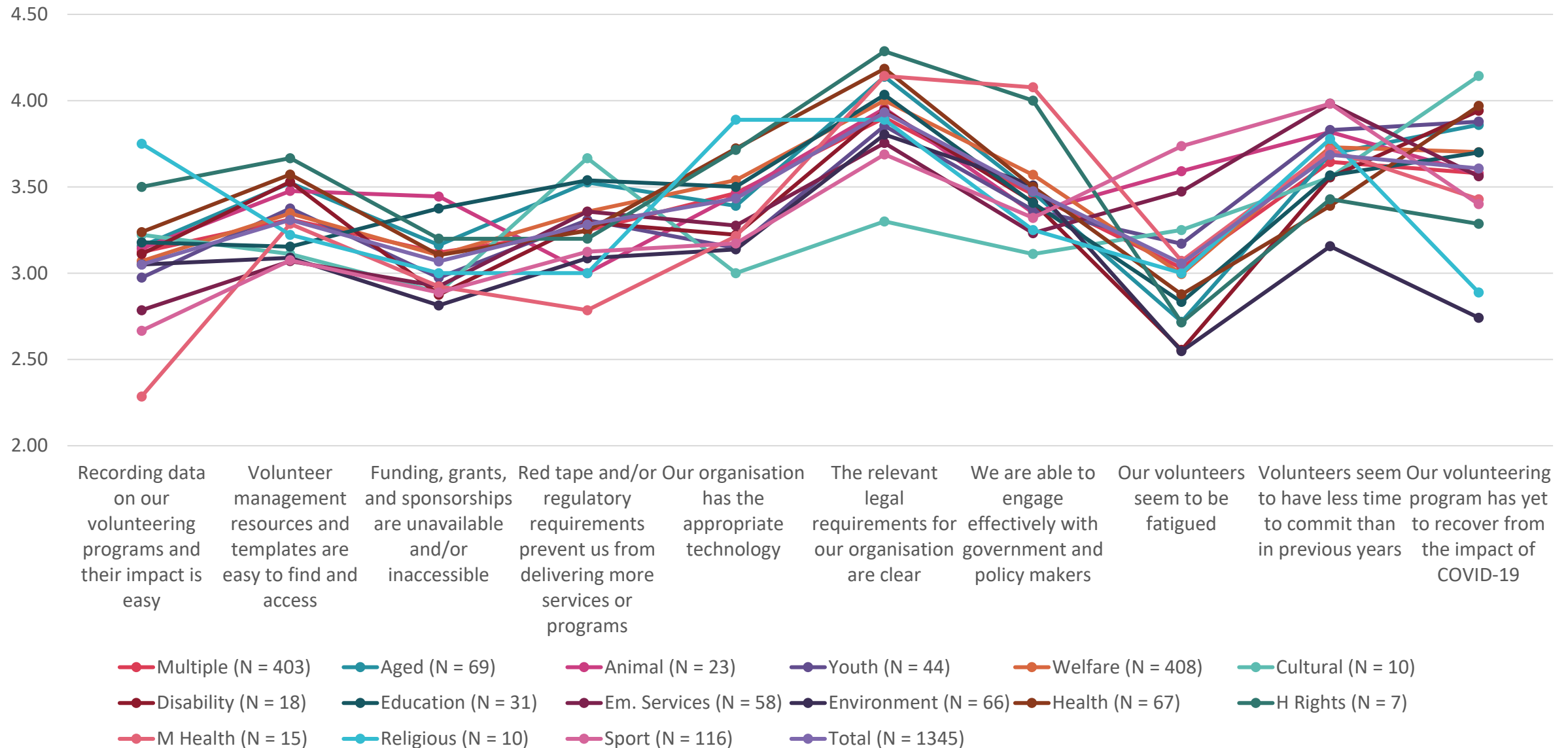
# Challenges



# Perception of Challenges Vary by Sector

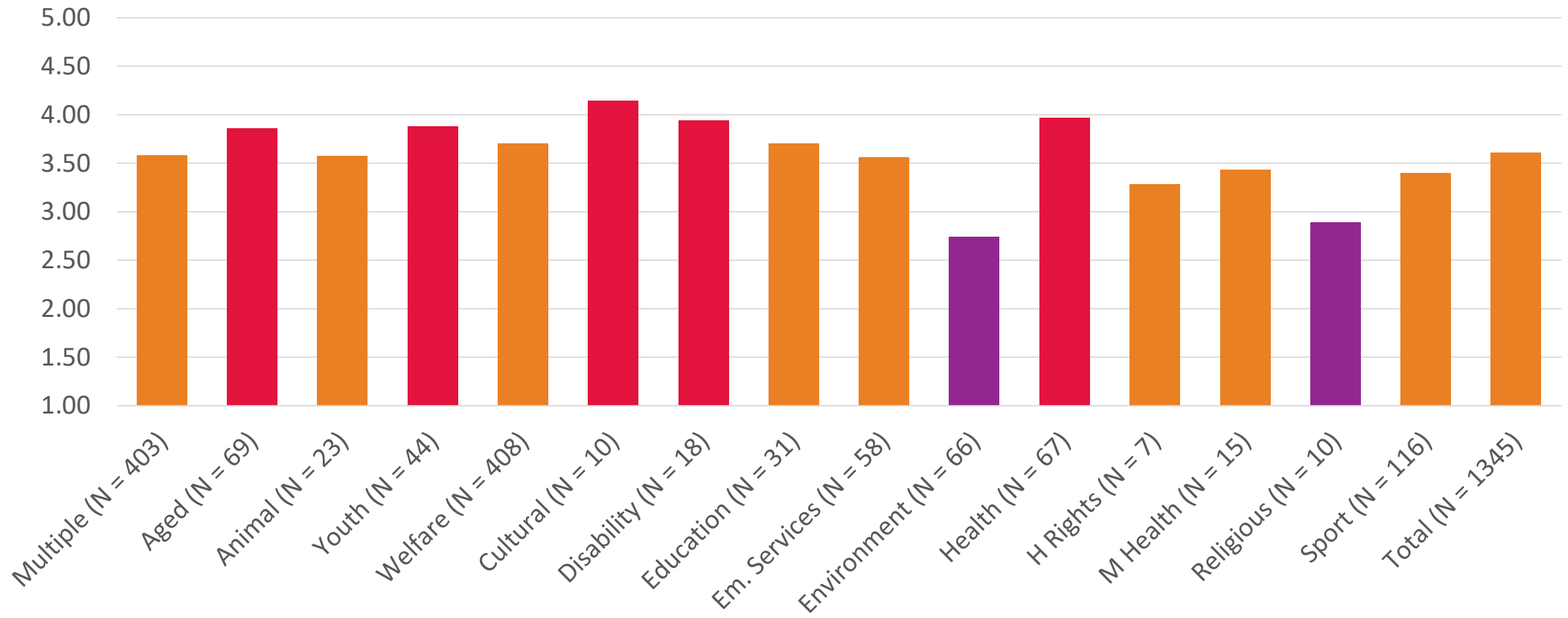


# Perception of Challenges Vary by Sector



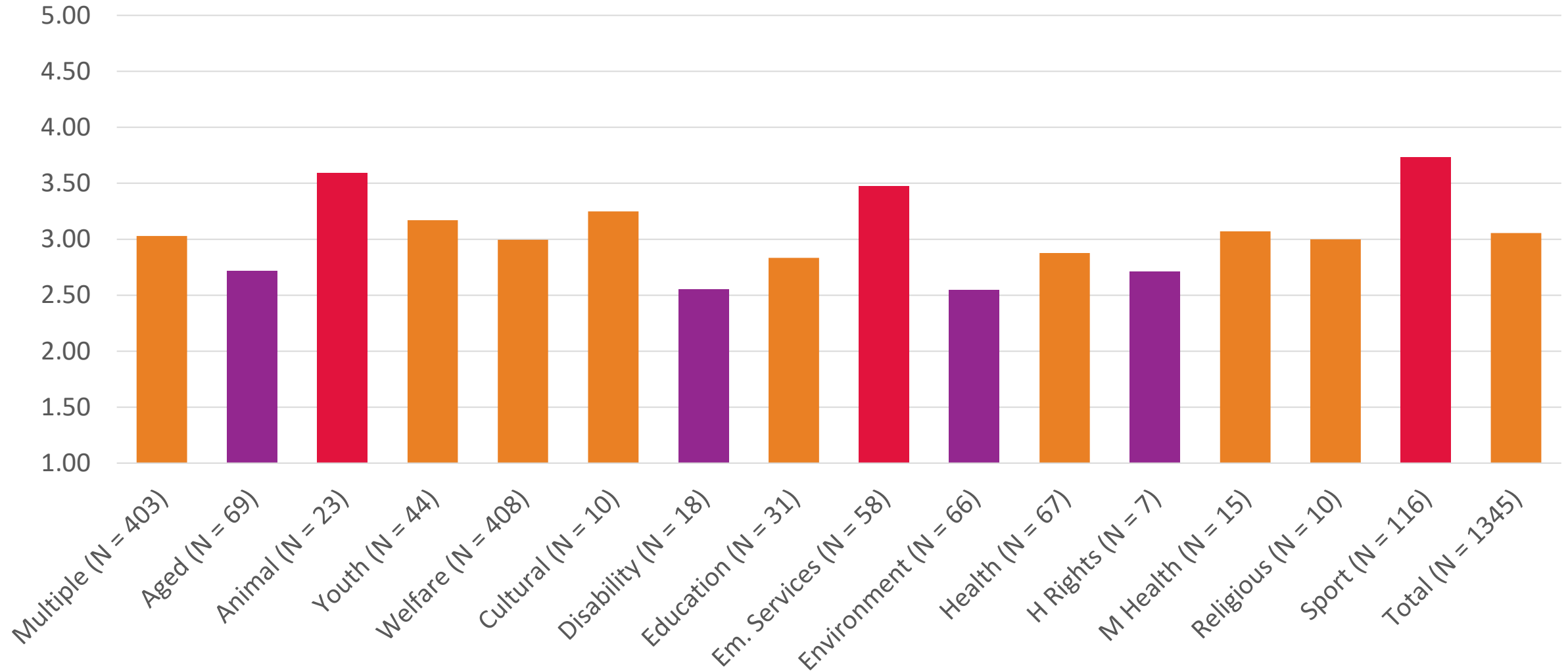
# Large Sector Differences

Our volunteering program has yet to recover from the impact of COVID-19



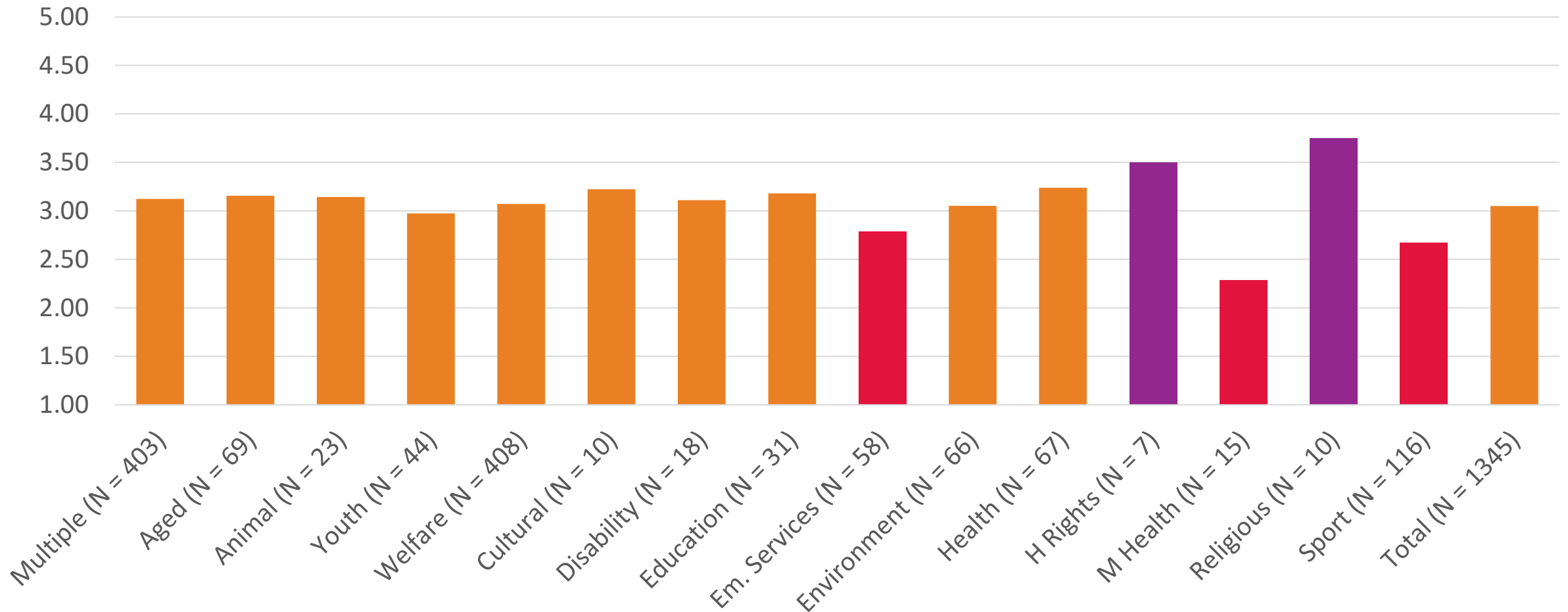
# Large Sector Differences

Our volunteers seem to be fatigued



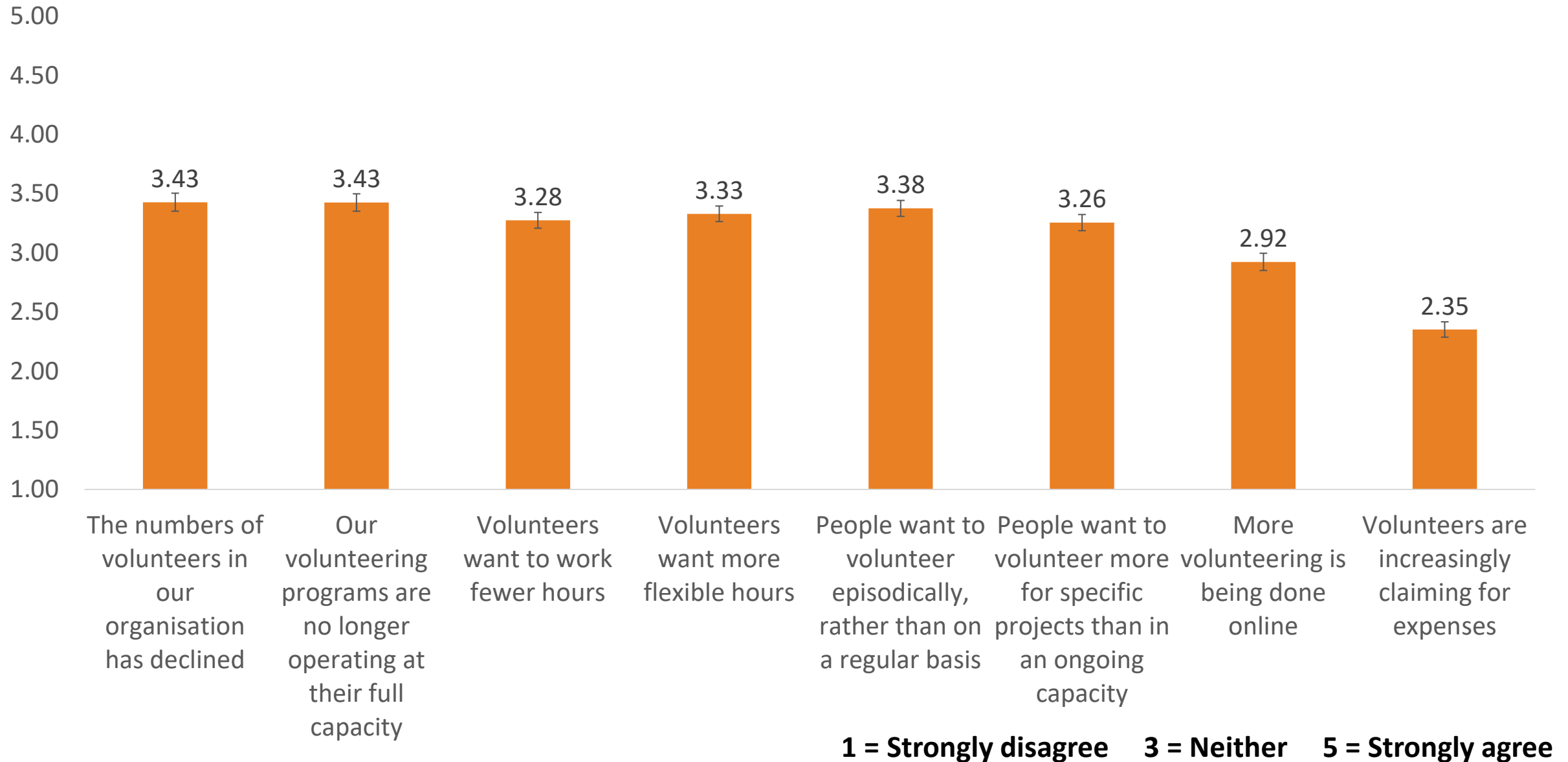
# Large Sector Differences

Recording data on our volunteering programs and their impact is easy

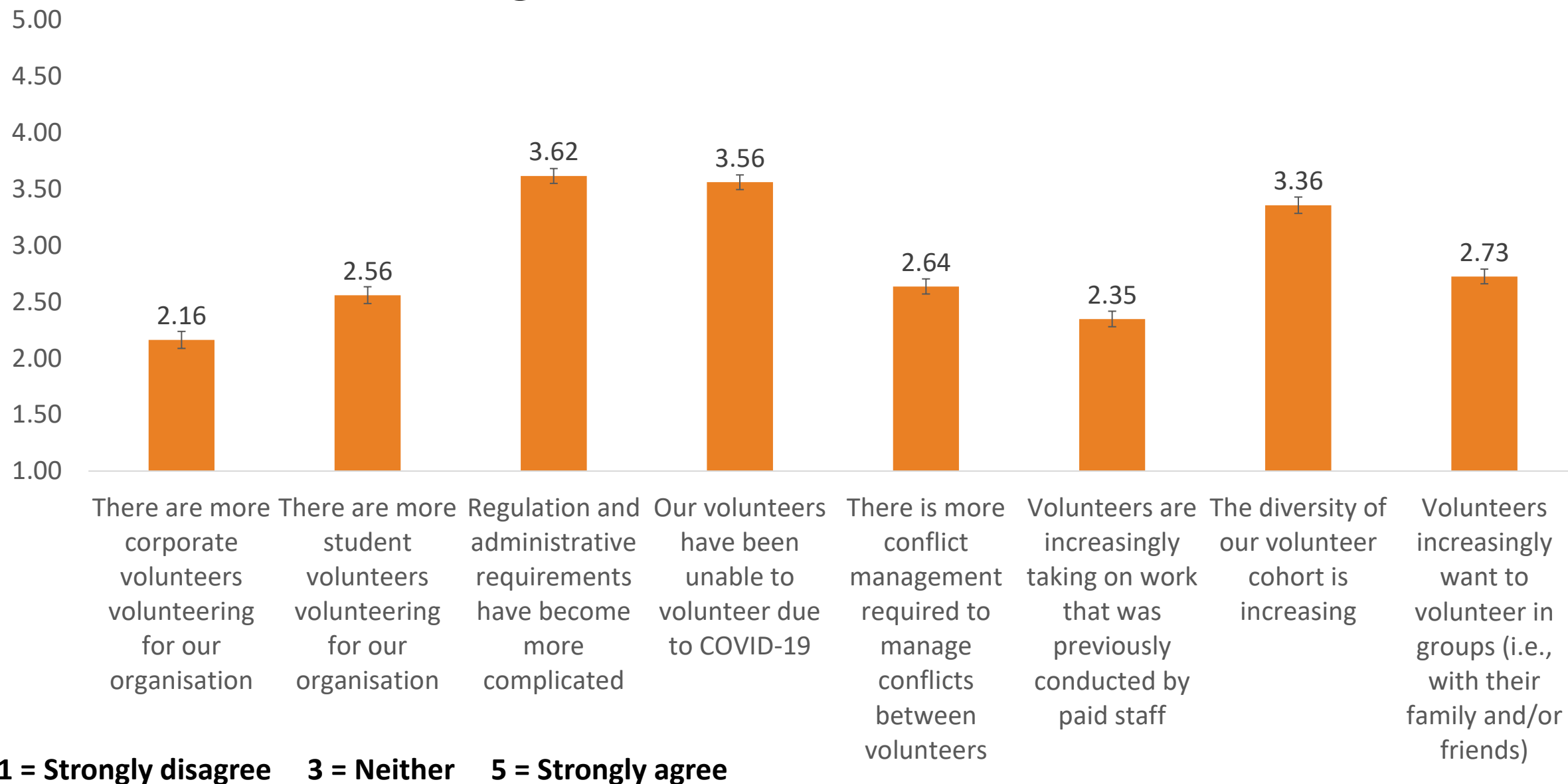




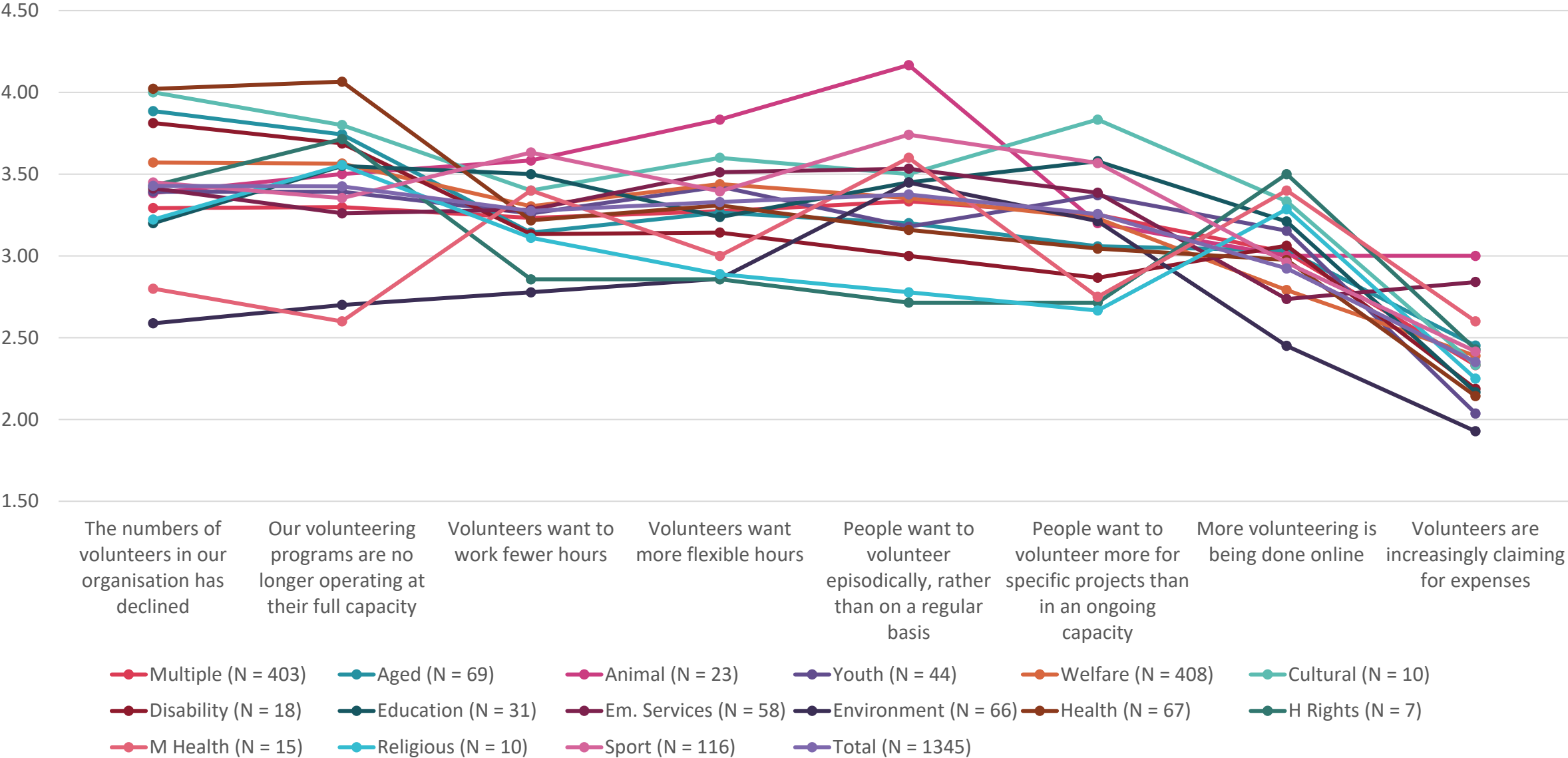
# Changes Since COVID-19



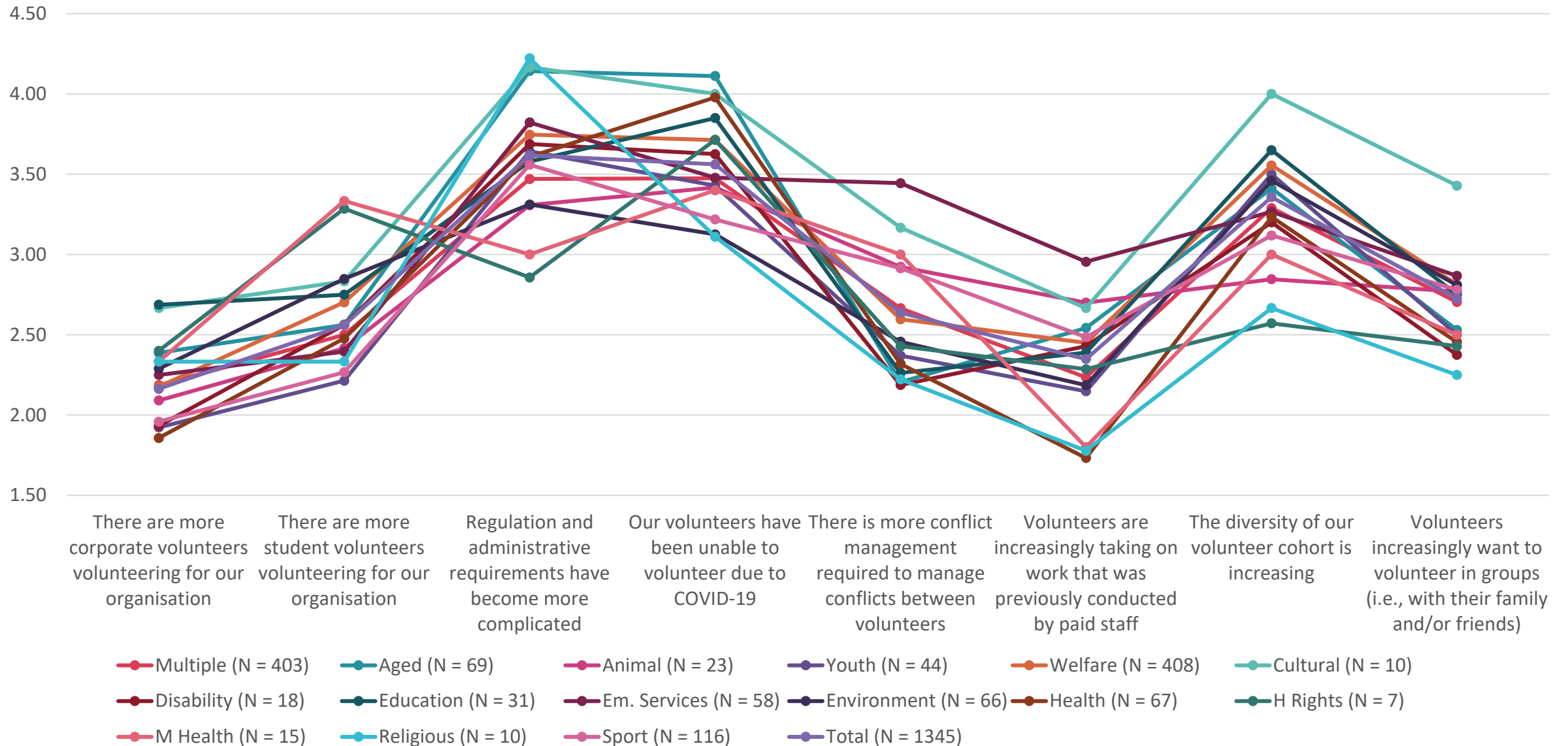
# Changes Since COVID-19



# Perceptions of Change Vary by Sector

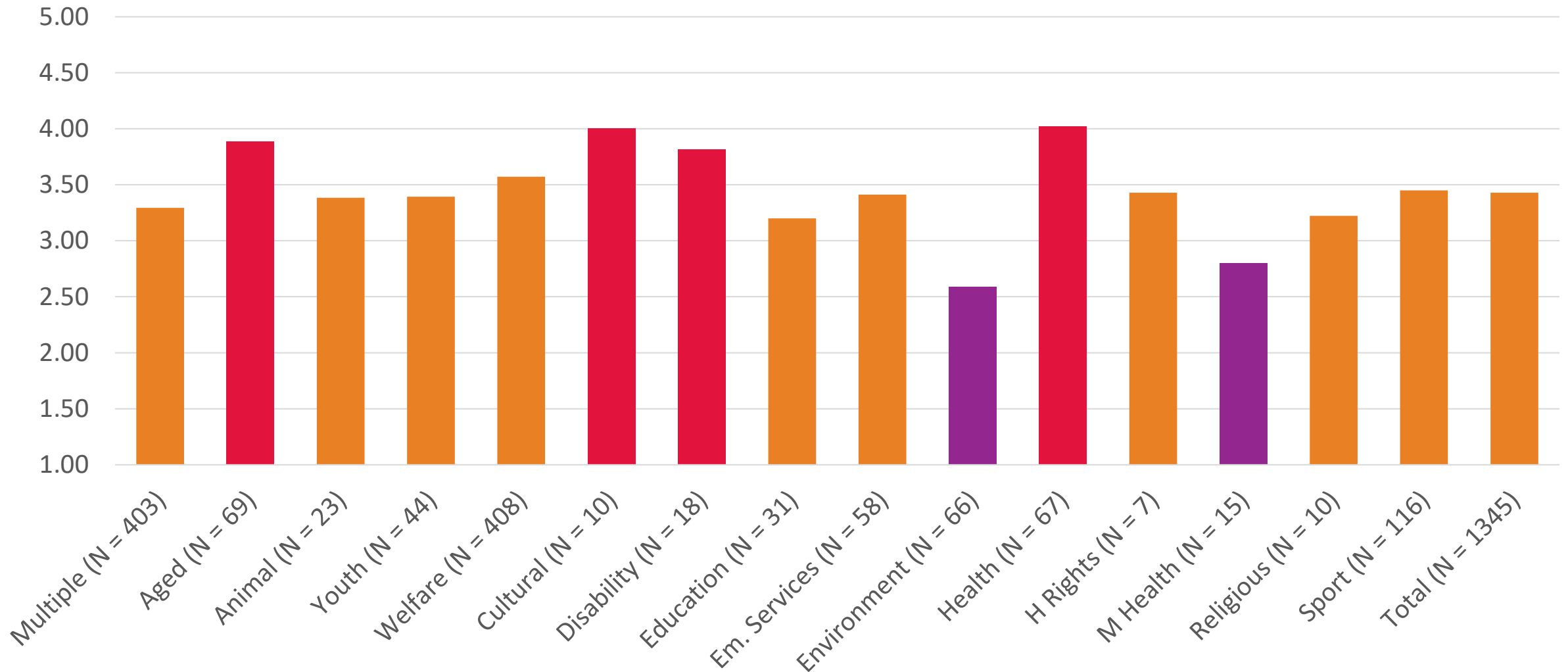


# Perceptions of Change Vary by Sector



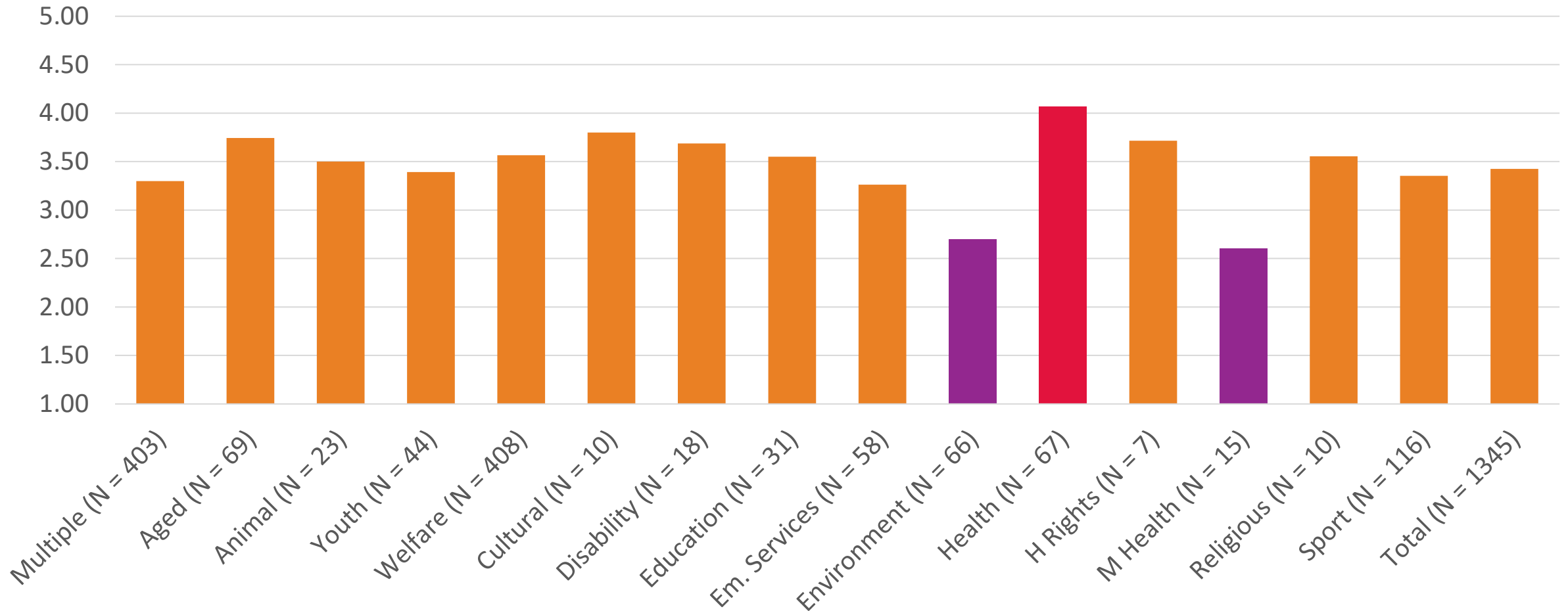
# Larger Sector Differences

The numbers of volunteers in our organisation has declined



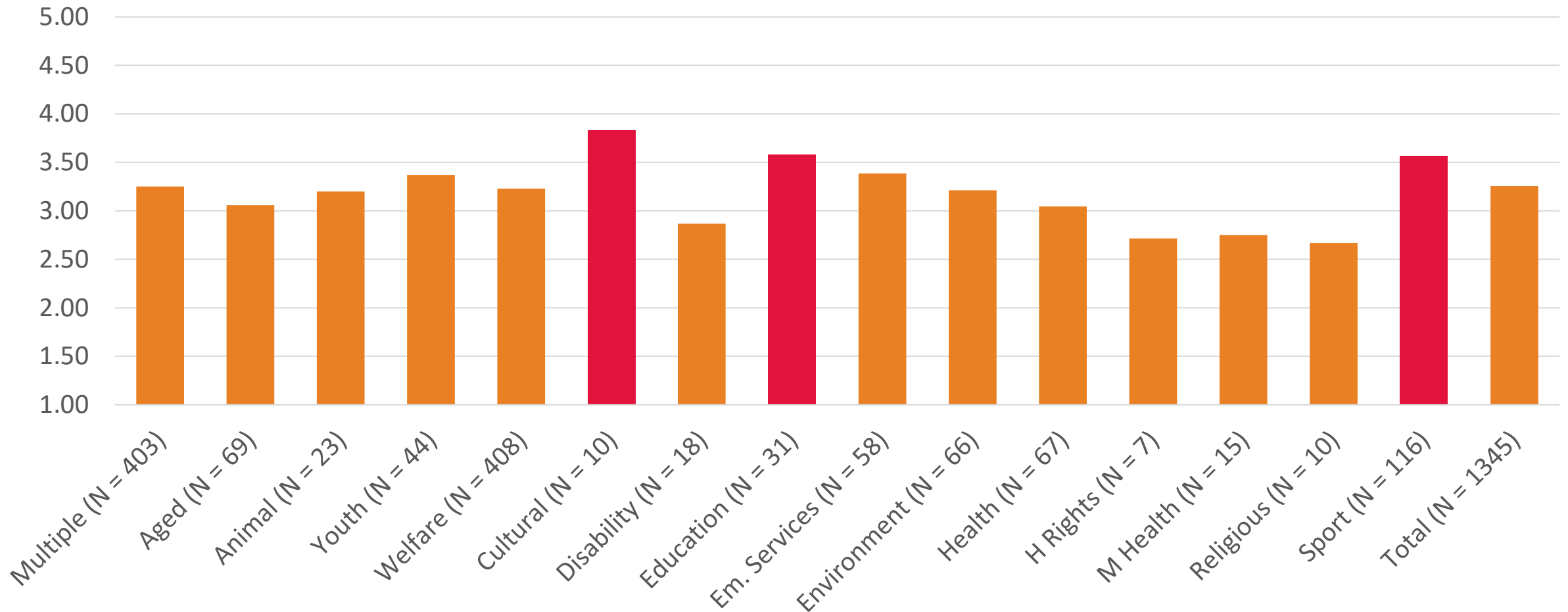
# Larger Sector Differences

Our volunteering programs are no longer operating at their full capacity



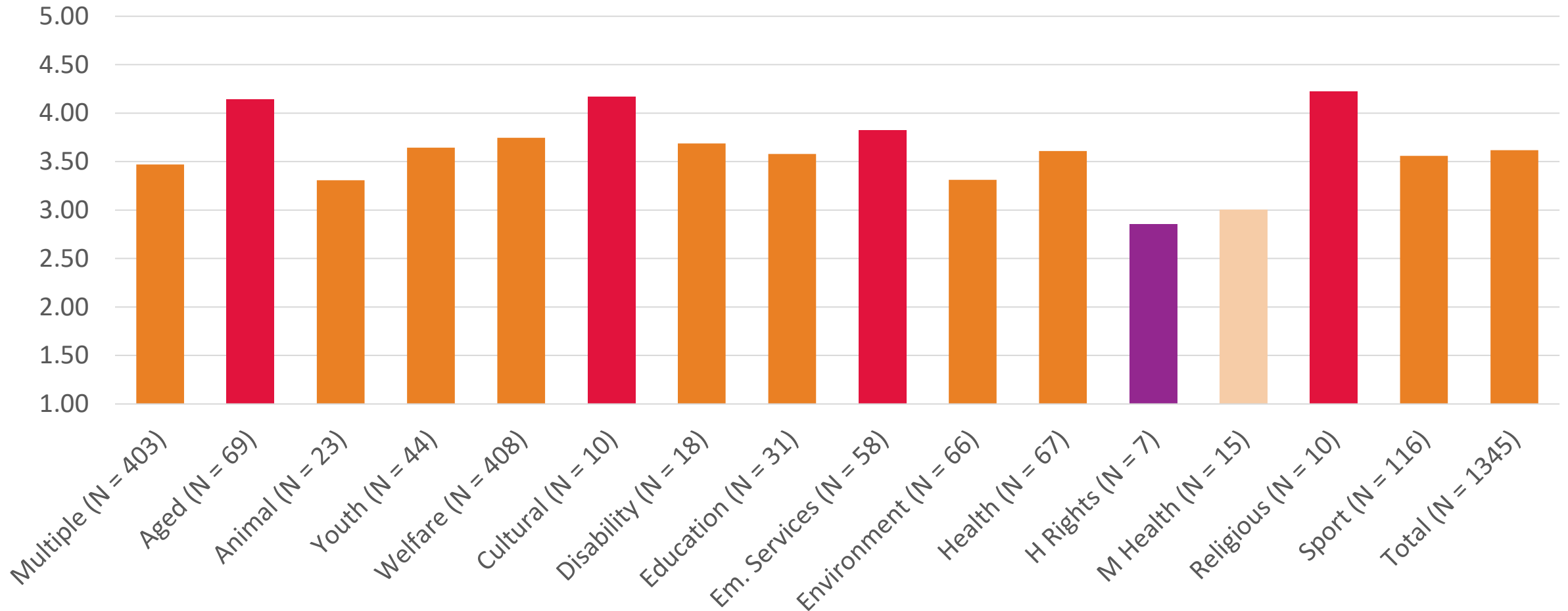
# Larger Sector Differences

People want to volunteer more for specific projects than in an ongoing capacity



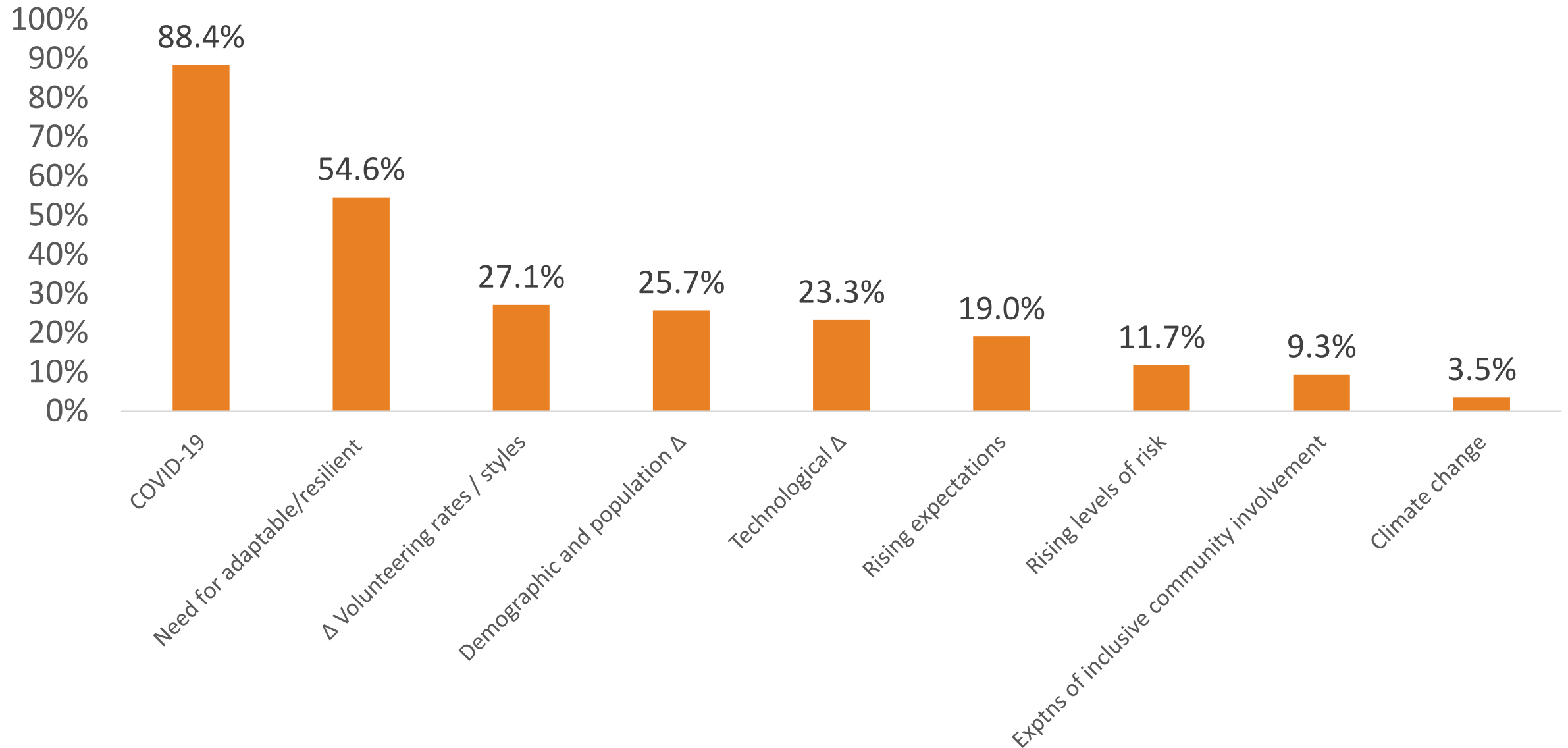
# Larger Sector Differences

Regulation and administrative requirements have become more complicated





# What Seems to be Driving the Changes?



# Coming Soon!

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Costs and benefits of volunteering
- Corporate volunteering
- Barriers to recruitment and retention
- Focus group discussions
- High-level qualitative analysis  
*(we received 197,998 words of text...)*

# Sarah Wilson

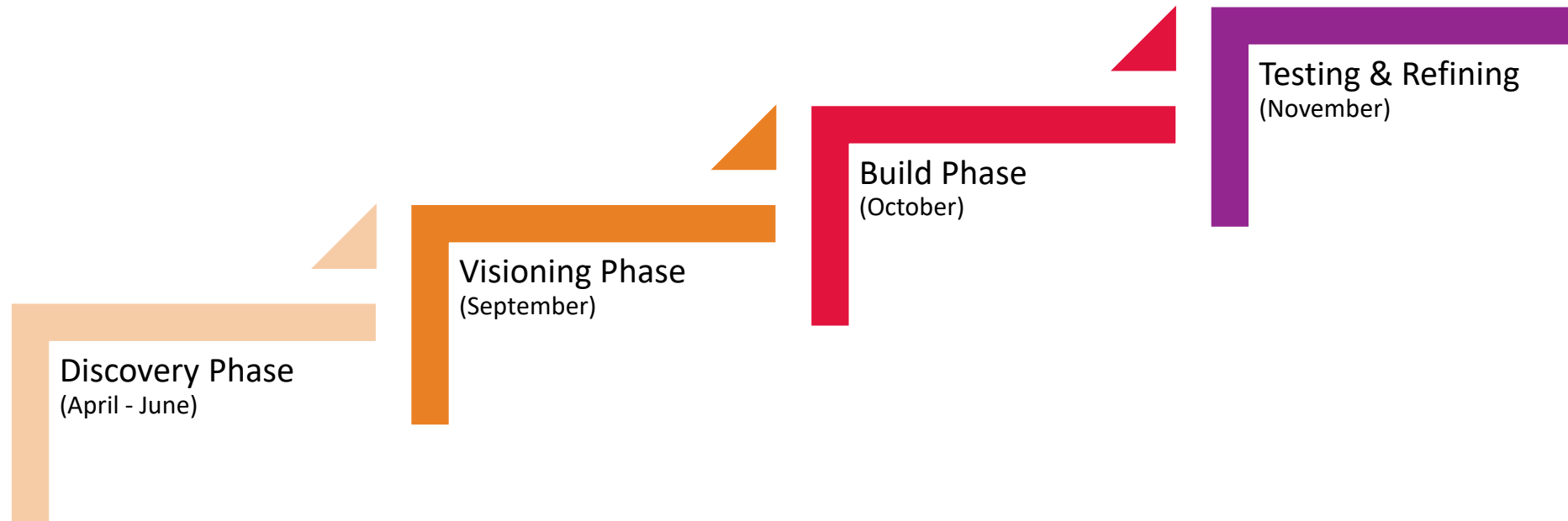
National Strategy Director, Volunteering Australia



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# Link with National Strategy for Volunteering



*Volunteering in Australia* Research

Council and Working Groups

Volunteering Ecosystem

# Reflections

- 57% of respondents indicated their organisations aimed to serve the general community, rather than focusing on a specific group of beneficiaries. This speaks to the diversity of services, programs, and activities undertaken by many volunteer involving organisations.
- Our research on the Volunteer Perspective and the 2022 Census further demonstrated the persistent decline in participation in formal volunteering. Our survey of organisations found they overwhelmingly involved volunteers in ongoing roles performed regularly. This may suggest a misalignment between how people want to volunteer and how organisations typically engage volunteers, which has a myriad of possible implications for the future of volunteering.
- Word of mouth referrals and personal approaches are still the most widely used and effective volunteer recruitment methods. This likely speaks to the highly personal and relational nature of volunteering, but in an increasingly digital world this could further exacerbate the challenges facing formal volunteering.
- 60% of respondents indicated they'll need more or significantly more volunteers in the future, underscoring the criticality of the volunteer workforce.
- Only 30% of respondents engaged employee volunteers. This is an area with huge potential for growth.



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# Q&A



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# Thank You

To access the Early Findings Report on the Organisation Perspective [click here](#)

The full report will be released later in 2022

For more information on how to be involved in the National Strategy for Volunteering project go to [volunteeringstrategy.org.au](https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au)



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