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Services

Building a Culture of Service, Volunteerism, and Civic Action



We exist to inspire & celebrate
volunteering, service and civic
action across Virginia.

**Our impact is
greater together.**



Our Work is Guided by Three Interrelated Strategies



Our Challenge:

Develop a study that could assess how residents were engaging and what they prioritized in their communities, while also gaining insights that could lead to a fuller understanding of the service landscape, strategies for promoting greater awareness on the part of residents, and tactics for boosting volunteer recruitment and program development.

What Our Stakeholders Told Us:

STATE SERVICE PLAN

84%

Said it was very important to gain a greater understanding of community-level needs

60%

Said community organizations lack the volunteer cultivation, training and recruitment resources to boost volunteerism rates effectively

63%

Said limited awareness and understanding on the part of resident for how they can serve was an important barrier to address

55%

Said they felt there was limited inclusivity of “community-level” service in how, we as a sector, think about and measure engagement



Our Process

Aligning on Goals



WHAT THIS STUDY NEEDED TO BE

- More unique to Virginia
- More encompassing of all avenues of community engagement (formal service and volunteering, informal neighborly acts of aid, civic and democratic action, etc.)
- More illustrative of community priorities — where should we be channeling resources and volunteers
- More indicative of messaging and strategies to drive recruitment and retention



WHAT WAS OUT THERE



A widely used tool that looks at a variety of civic participation indicators, primarily leveraging data from the Community Engagement & Volunteering Supplement to the U.S. Census, sponsored by AmeriCorps.



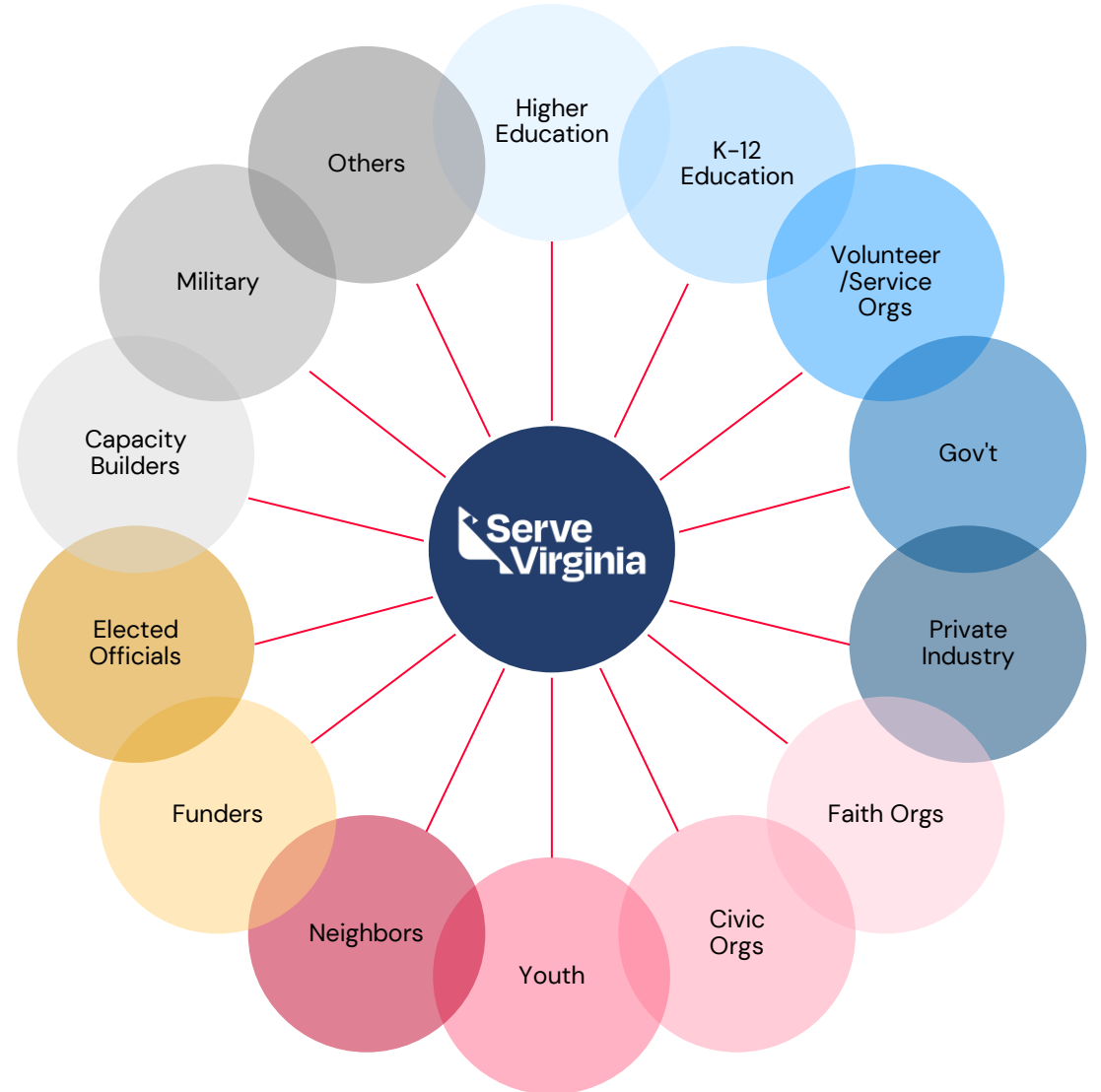
Our Process

Building Our Survey



LEVERAGING INSIGHTS FROM OUR CORE TEAM TO PINPOINT MOST ACTIONABLE AREAS OF INQUIRY

LEVERAGING NATIONAL PARTNERS FOR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP & TO DETERMINE QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT SERVE AS NATIONAL COMPARISONS*



Our Process

Distributing Our Survey

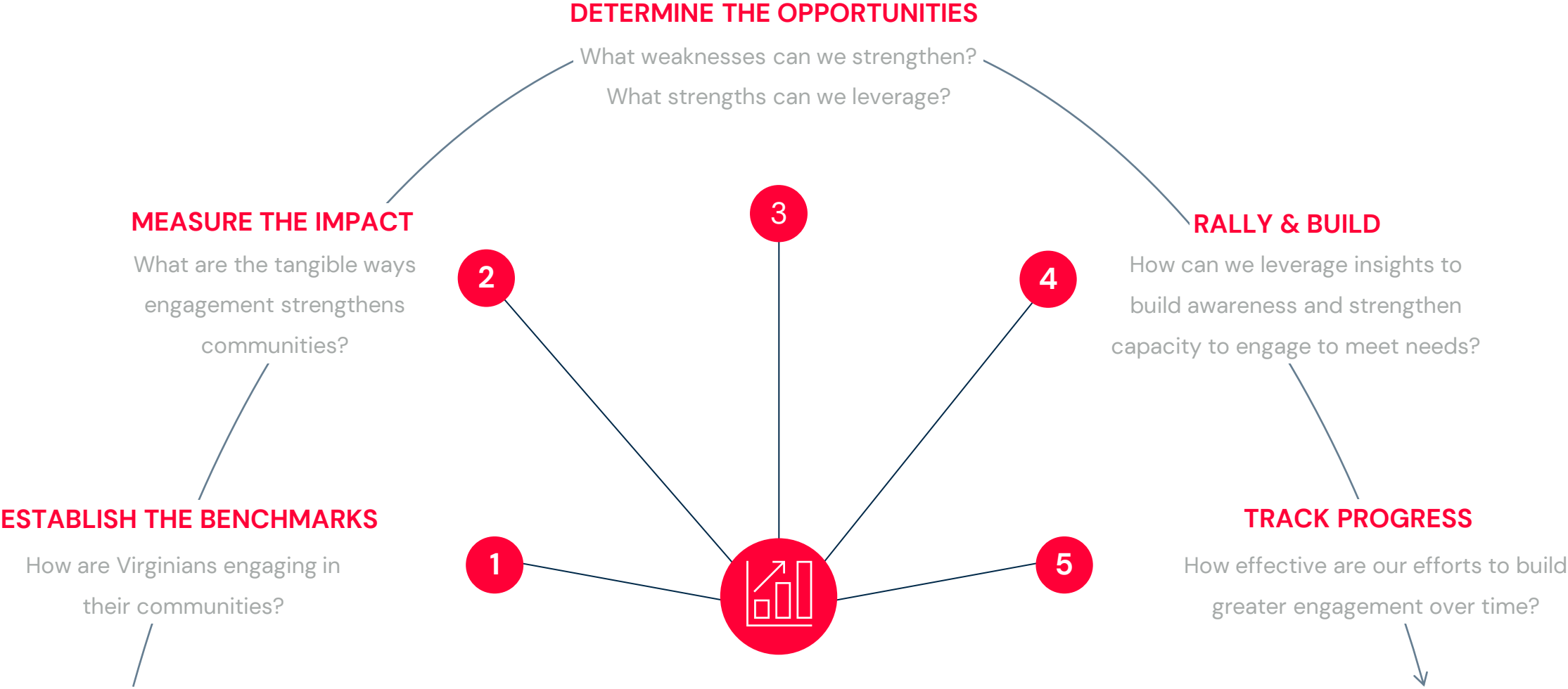
Survey was fielded January 30 through March 8, 2023.



Survey responses have been weighted to more accurately reflect Virginia's geographic and demographic diversity.



Our Process **Formalizing Our Goals**



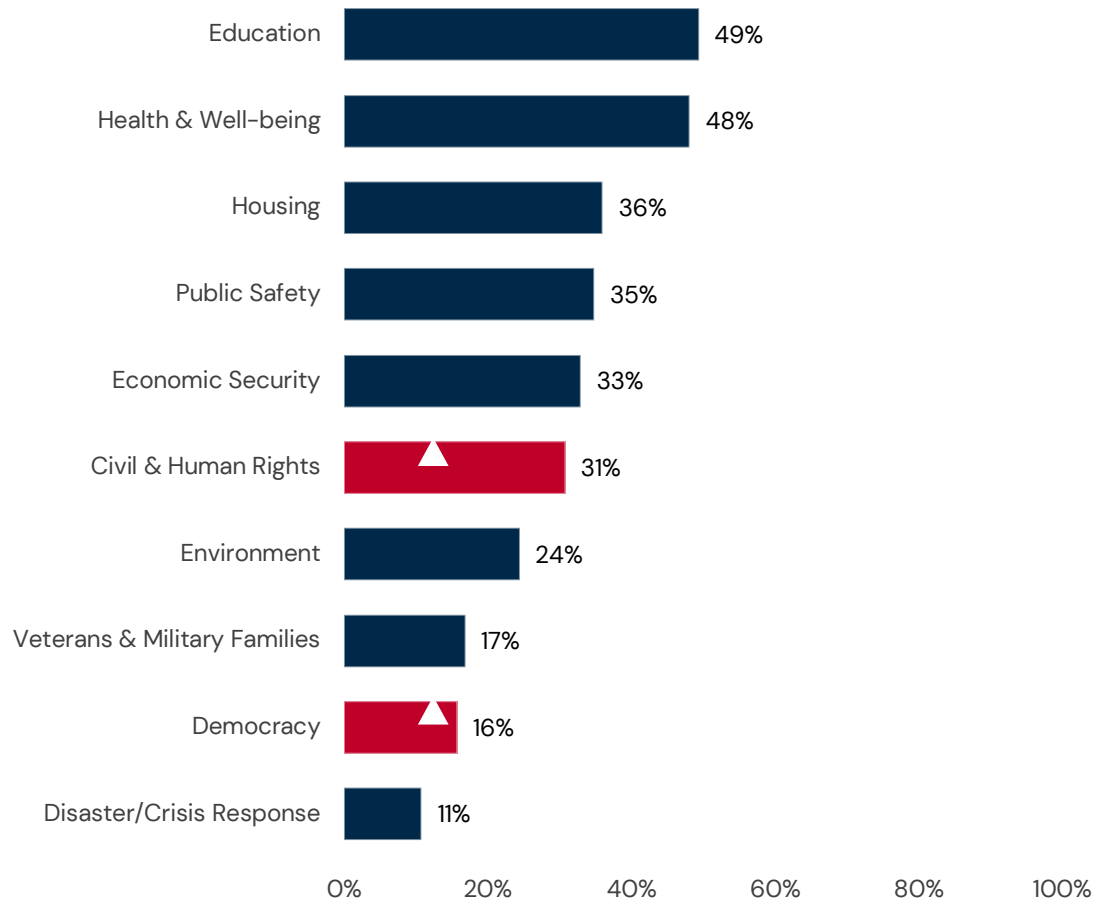
What We Learned



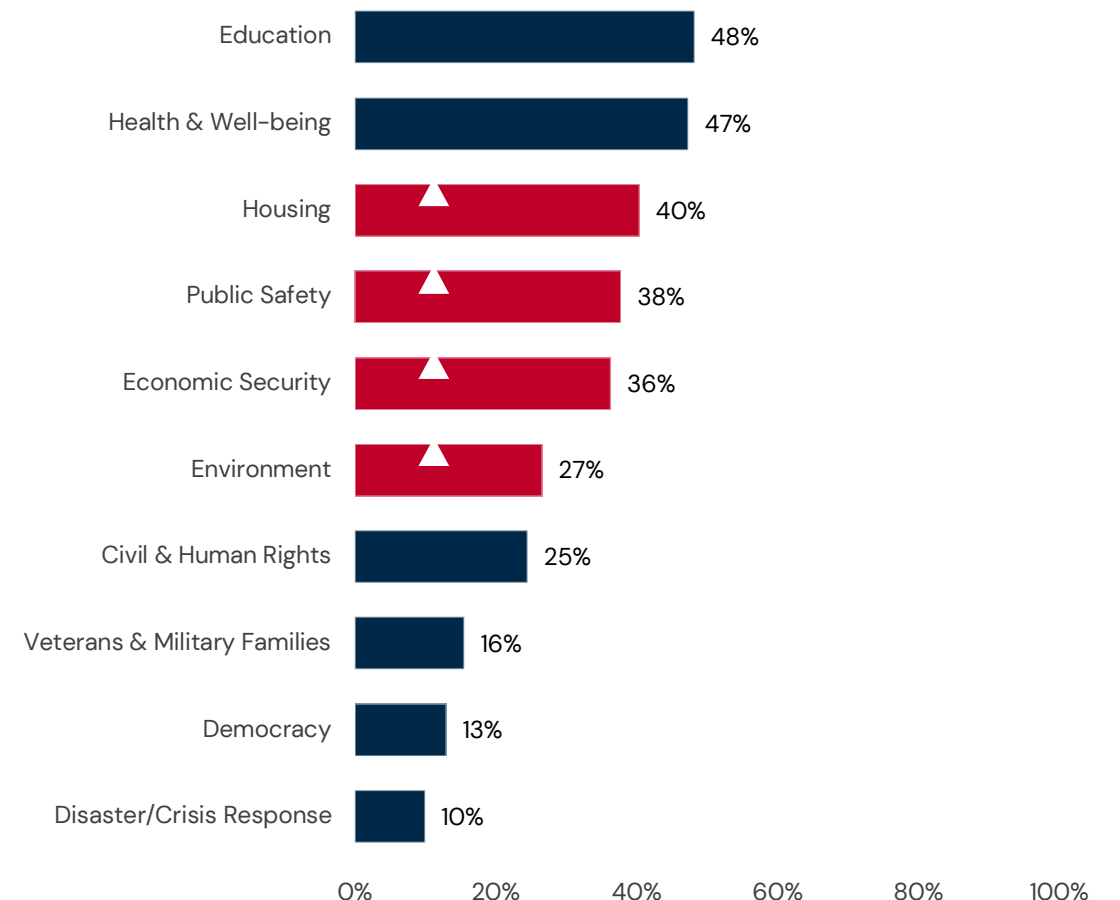
State vs. Local Priorities

When comparing state and local priorities, respondents place higher emphasis on housing, public safety, economic security and the environment on the local level, while placing higher emphasis on civil and human rights and democracy on the state level.

STATEWIDE PRIORITIES



LOCAL PRIORITIES



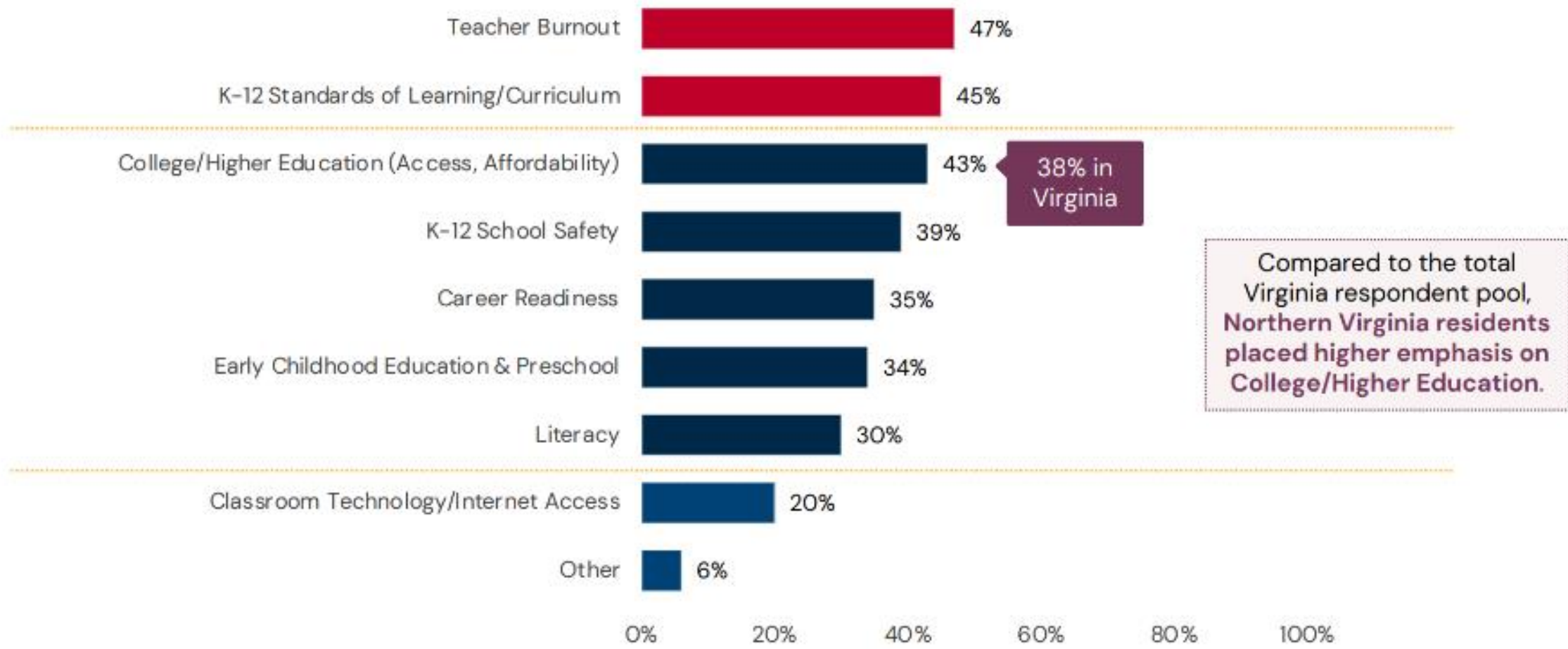
Q12. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for Virginia? n = 6,379
 Q13. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for where you live? n = 6,374



EDUCATION: What needs to be addressed

REGIONAL INSIGHT

Roughly half of those who chose Education as a top priority felt addressing **Teacher Burnout** and **K-12 Standards of Learning** as the most important areas to address.



Compared to the total Virginia respondent pool, **Northern Virginia residents placed higher emphasis on College/Higher Education.**

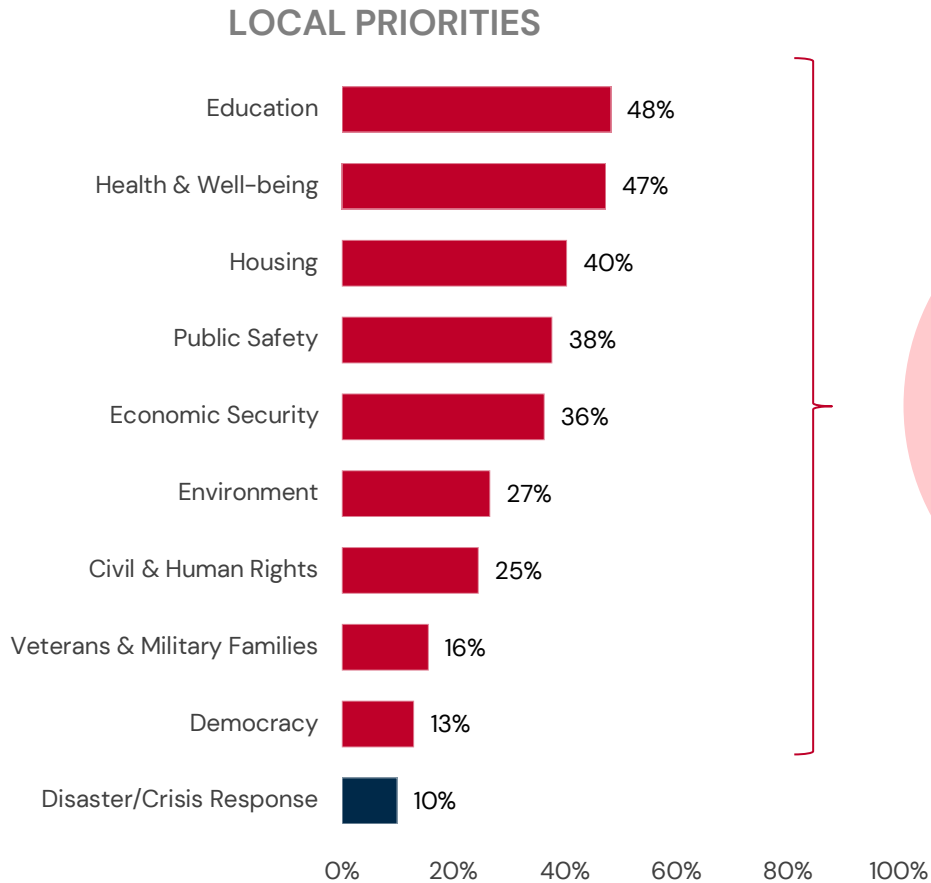


Q14.4. You chose Education as a top priority for where you live. Thinking of that priority, which of the following "areas to address" are most important? *Please select three options.*

n = 986

What are the most effective actions?

For all but one priority area, respondents choose community education and outreach, as well as political and legislative activity, as the most effective actions to meet community needs.



KEY QUESTION:

Do Virginians' reported actions and engagement align with what they feel are the most effective actions to take?



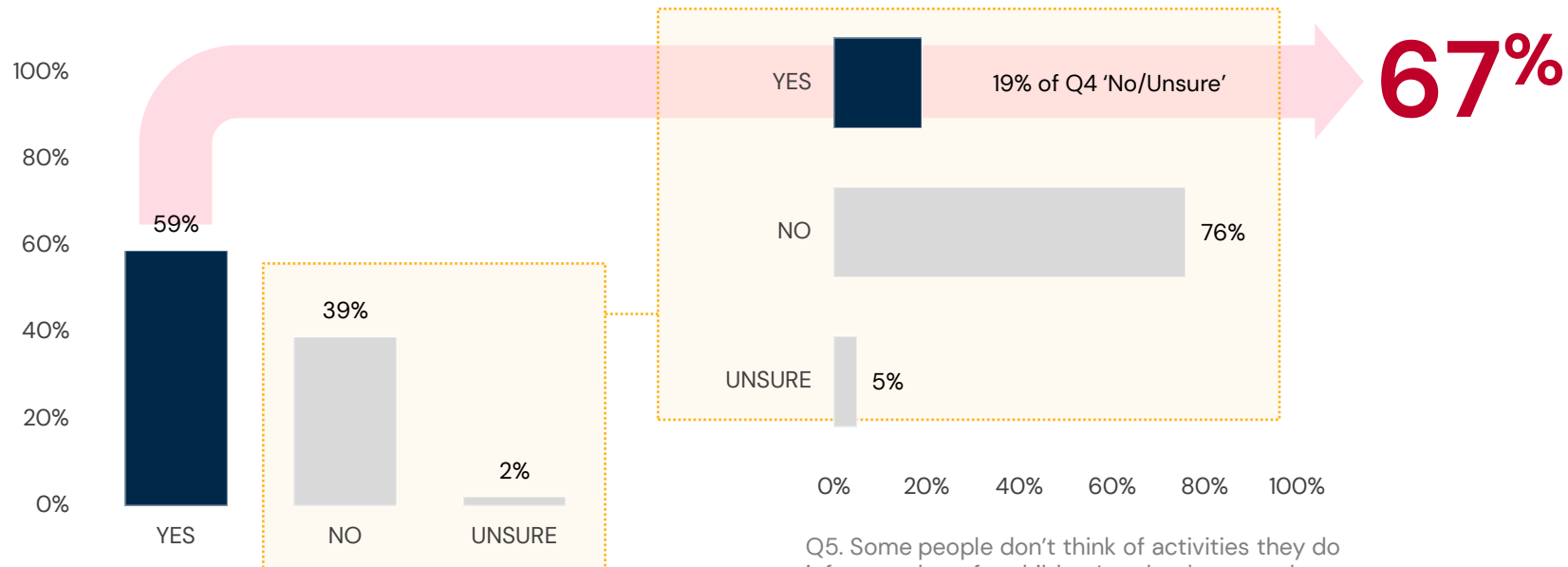
Q13. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for where you live

n = 6,374

How Virginians Give of their Time, Talent & Voices



Percentage of Virginians Who Have Volunteered in the Past 12 Months:



Q4. In the past 12 months, did you spend any time volunteering for any organization or association?

n = 6,382

Q5. Some people don't think of activities they do infrequently or for children's schools or youth organizations as volunteer activities. In the past 12 months, have you done any of these types of activities?

n = 2,479

Unaided, nearly 3 out of 5 Virginians say they've volunteered with an organization in the past 12 months.

However, when prompted to consider activities that may fly under the radar of traditionally held notions of "volunteering," an additional 19% self-identify as a volunteer.

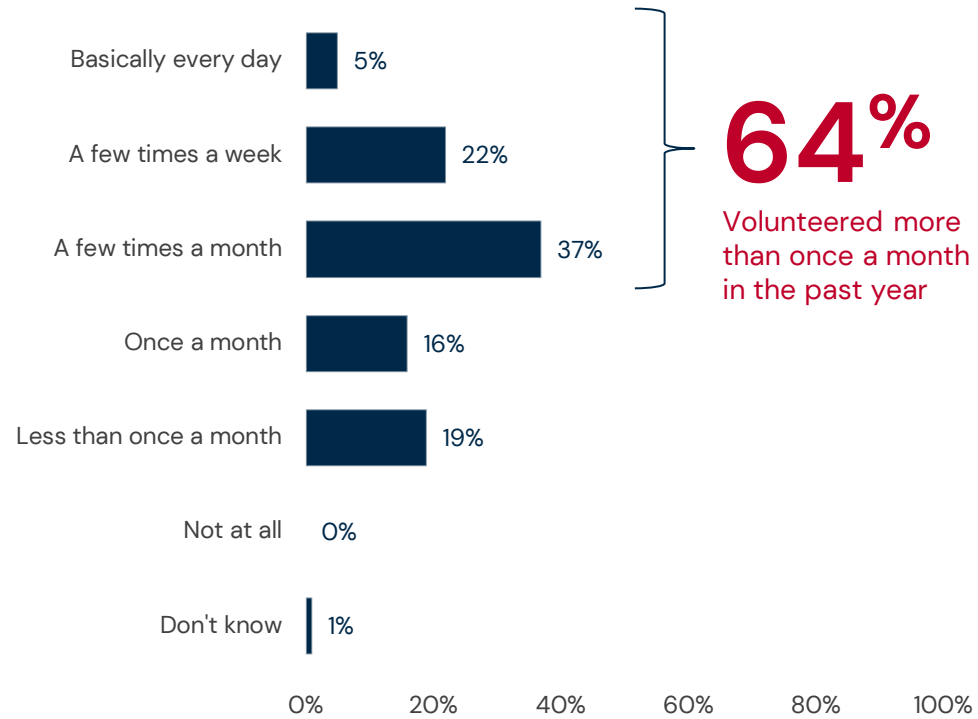


DEMOGRAPHIC FINDING

Black (25%) and Hispanic/Latino (23%) respondents were more likely than White respondents (16%) to change their answer to "yes" when prompted to broaden their definition of volunteerism.

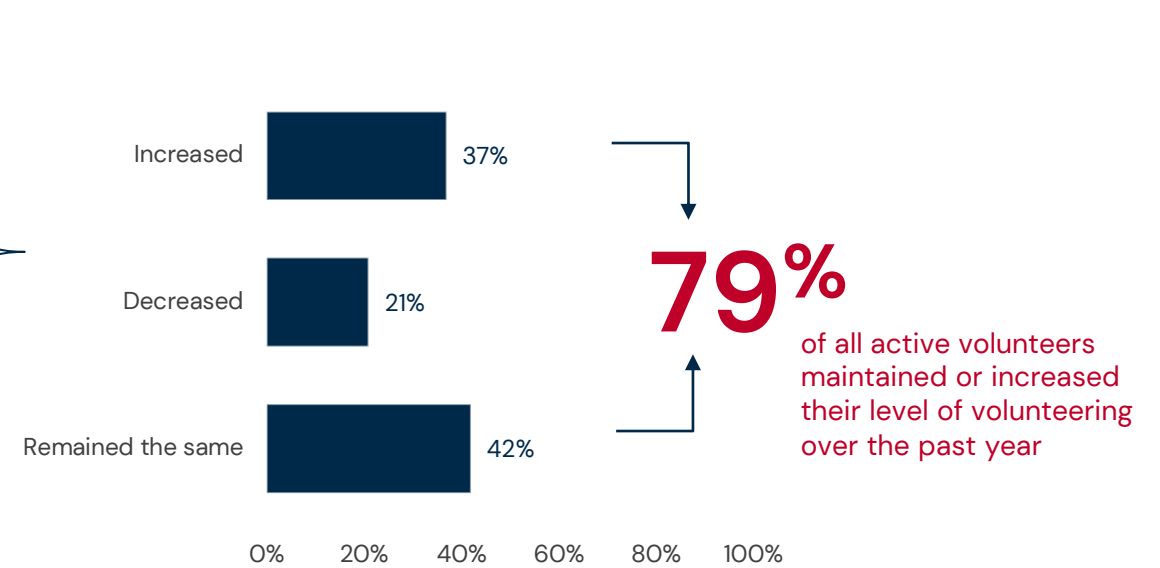
How often they volunteer

Nearly two-thirds of active volunteers say they serve multiple times per month, and the vast majority have maintained or increased their level, or frequency, of volunteering in the past year.



Q7. How often did you volunteer?

n = 4,354



Q8. Has your level of volunteering or service increased or decreased in the past 12 months?

n = 4,353

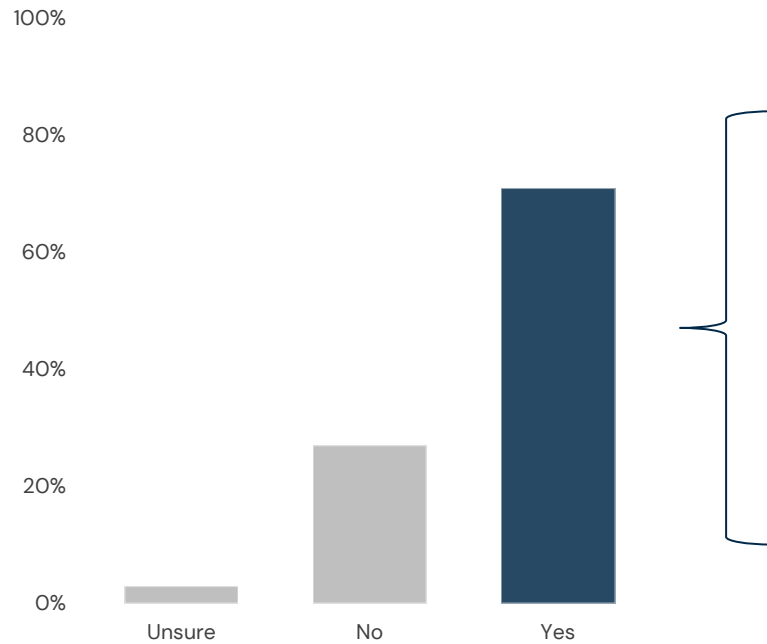


Neighbors Helping Neighbors...

Roughly 7 in 10 Virginians embrace “informal” forms of helping their neighbors...

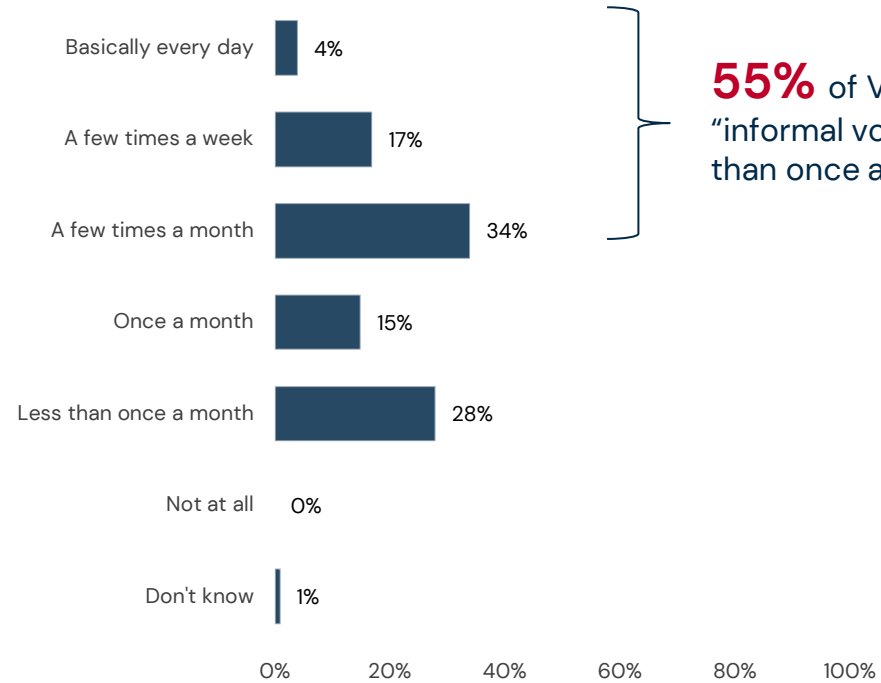


...and more than half of those who engage in “informal” service say they do so more than once a month.



n = 6,381

Q2. In the past 12 months, did you and your neighbors do favors for each other such as house-sitting, watching each other’s children, lending tools, and other things to help each other?



55% of Virginians engage in “informal volunteerism” more than once a month.

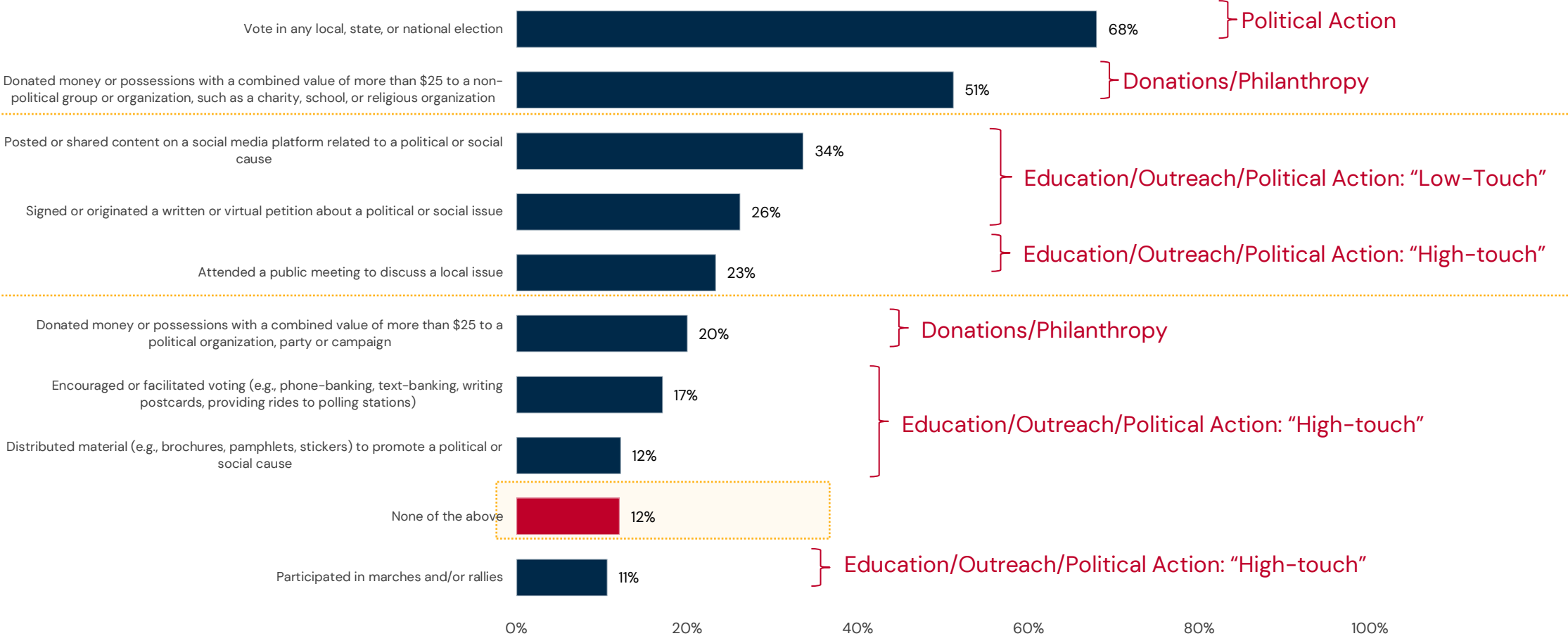
n = 4,602

Q3. In the past 12 months, how often did you and your neighbors do favors for each other such as house-sitting, watching each other’s children, lending tools, and other things to help each other?



Civic Action

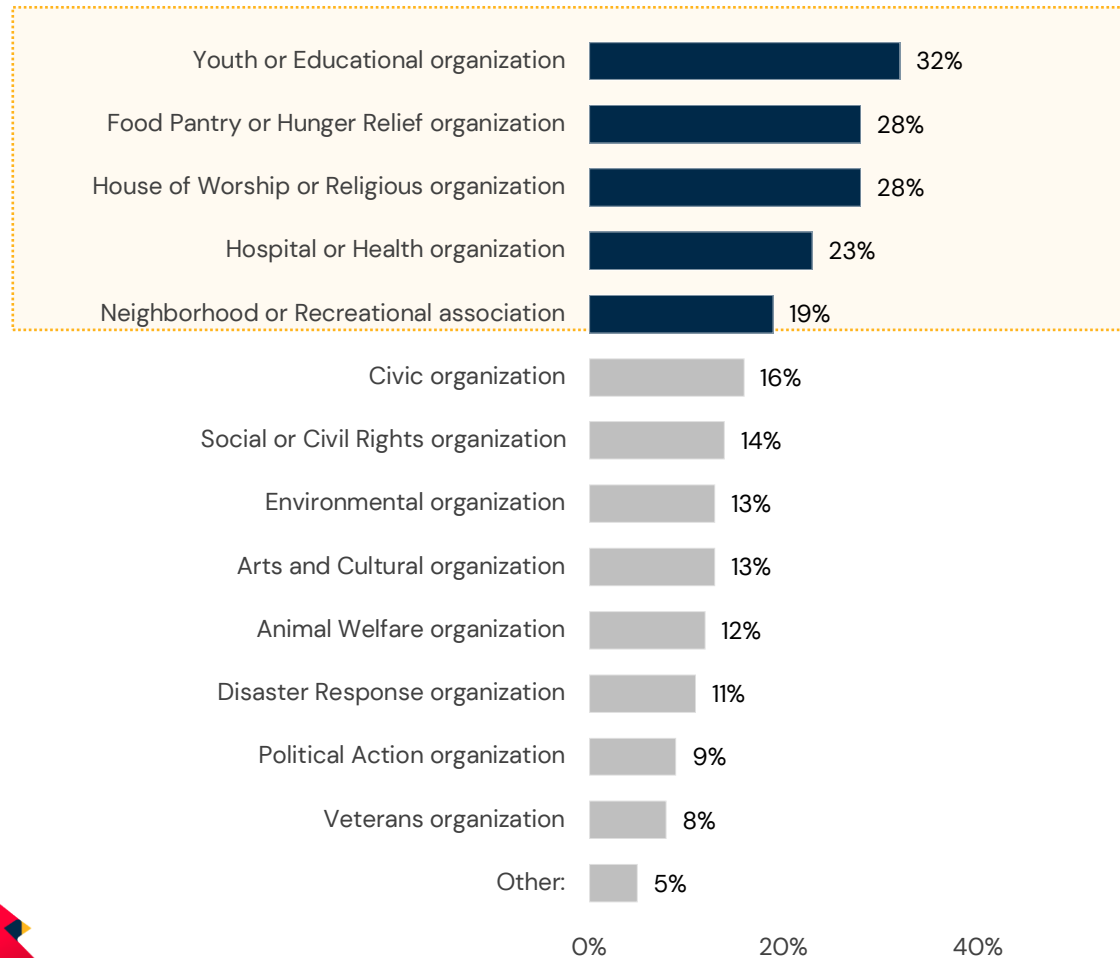
The most direct actions respondents are most likely to take involve voting and making non-political donations. Beyond that, respondents are most apt to use virtual or public forums to spread awareness.



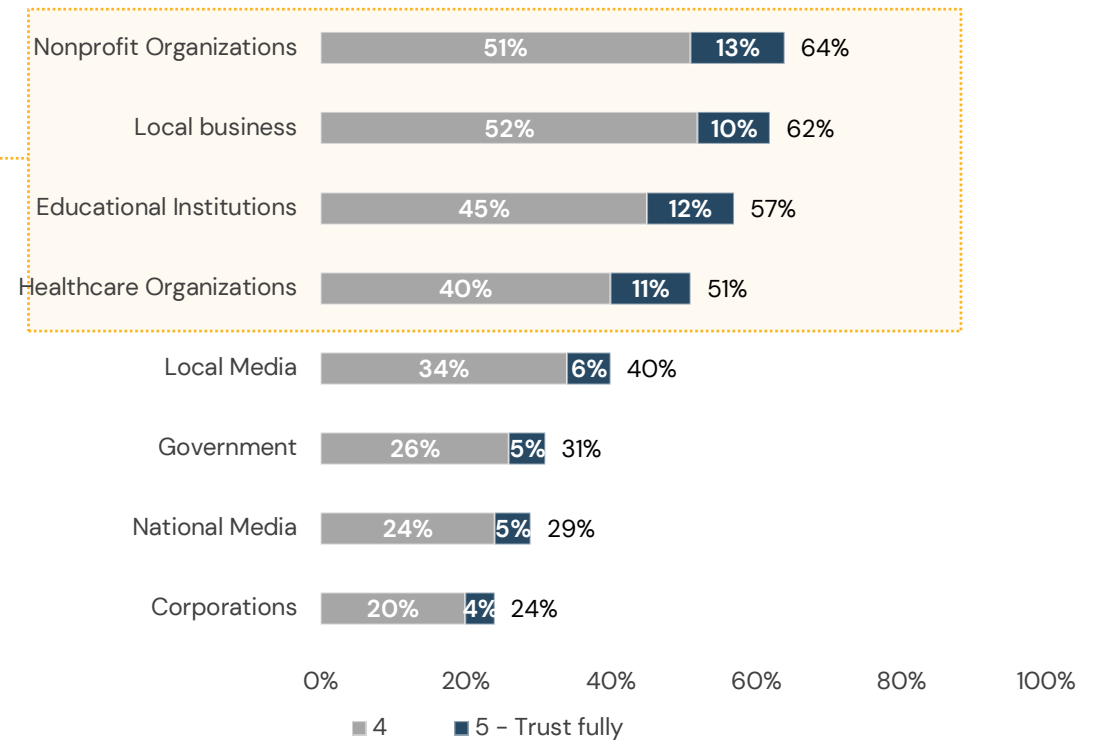
Q30. In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following? *Select all that apply.* n = 6,259

How Trust Manifests Locally

The high prevalence of “neighborly acts” Virginians report signifies a high degree of trust people have in each other. Beyond that, a closer examination of where Virginians most often volunteer also suggests a desire to support organizations that tend to have a unique local presence, reflect local character or even function as community spaces.



Where they volunteer most often is also aligned with those organizations they trust to do the right thing.



Q6. Which types of organizations have you volunteered for in the past 12 months? Select all that apply
 Q29. How much do you trust the following institutions to do what is right?

n = 4,353
 Avg n = 6,257

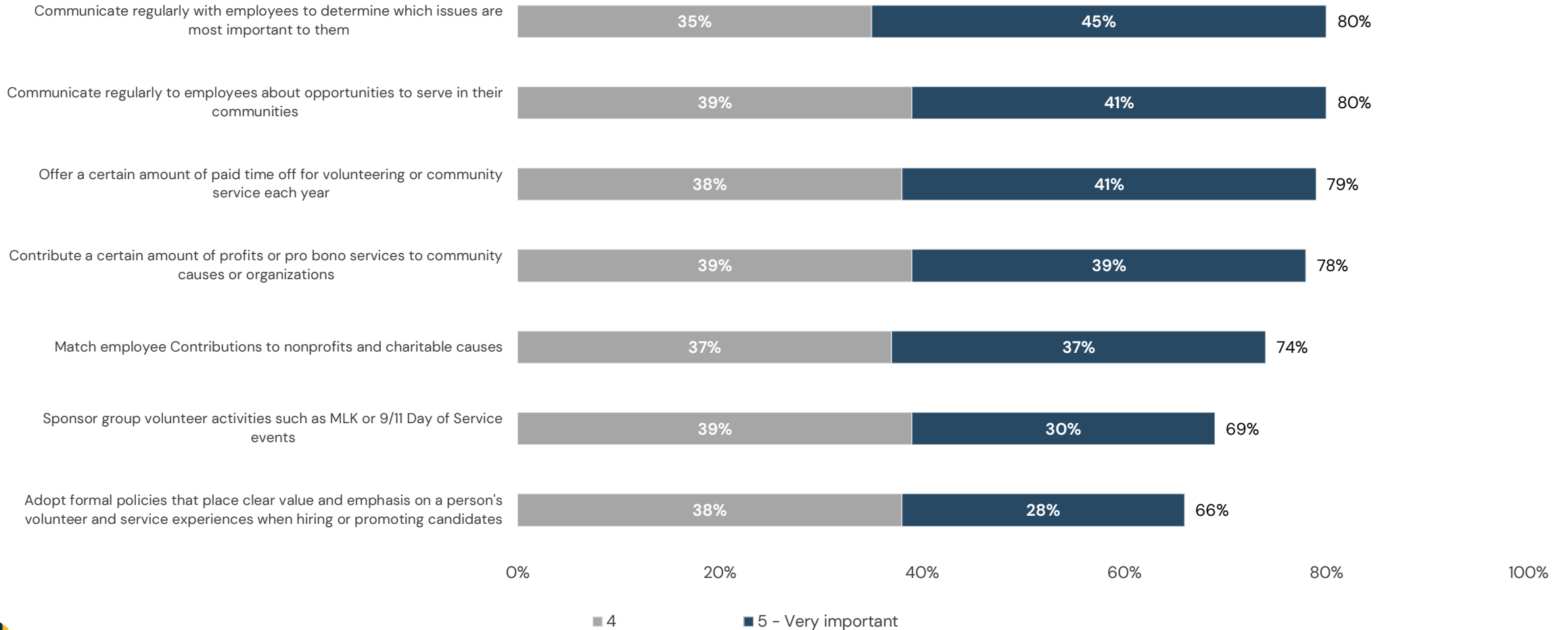
Leveraging Employers

Beyond Outreach and Recruitment from Nonprofits
and Organizations, Opportunities Exist for Employers
to Get More Involved



The Role of Employers

Respondents feel it is important for employers to help encourage and facilitate community engagement and place the highest emphasis on communicating about issues and opportunities to serve, offering incentives to serve, contributing profits or pro bono services and matching employee contributions. However... →

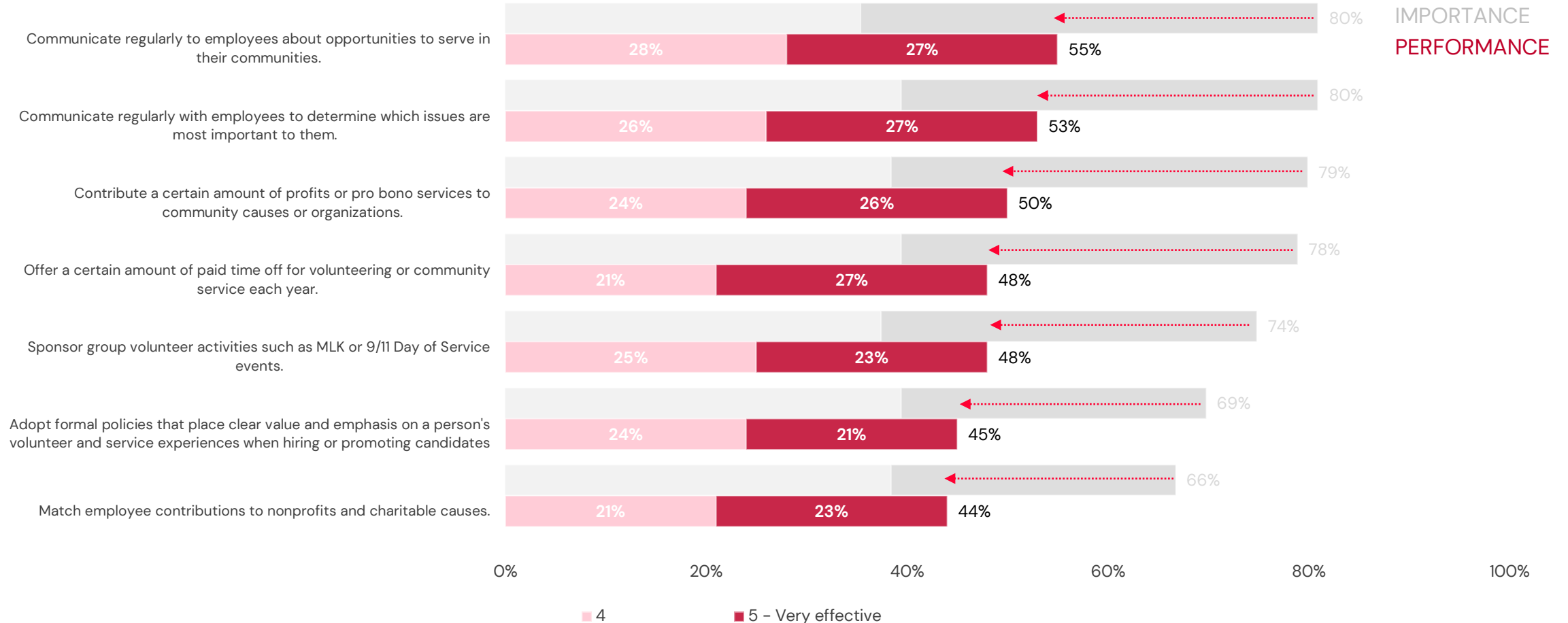


Q26. Below is a list of expectations someone might have for a company or employer when it comes to community engagement. How important do you feel it is for companies or employers to:

Avg n = 6,302

The Performance of Employers

While roughly half of respondents feel their employers do an effective job communicating with them and contributing profits or services to community causes, performance ratings for all attributes fall well short of expectations when examined in relation to the high levels of importance respondents place on those attributes.



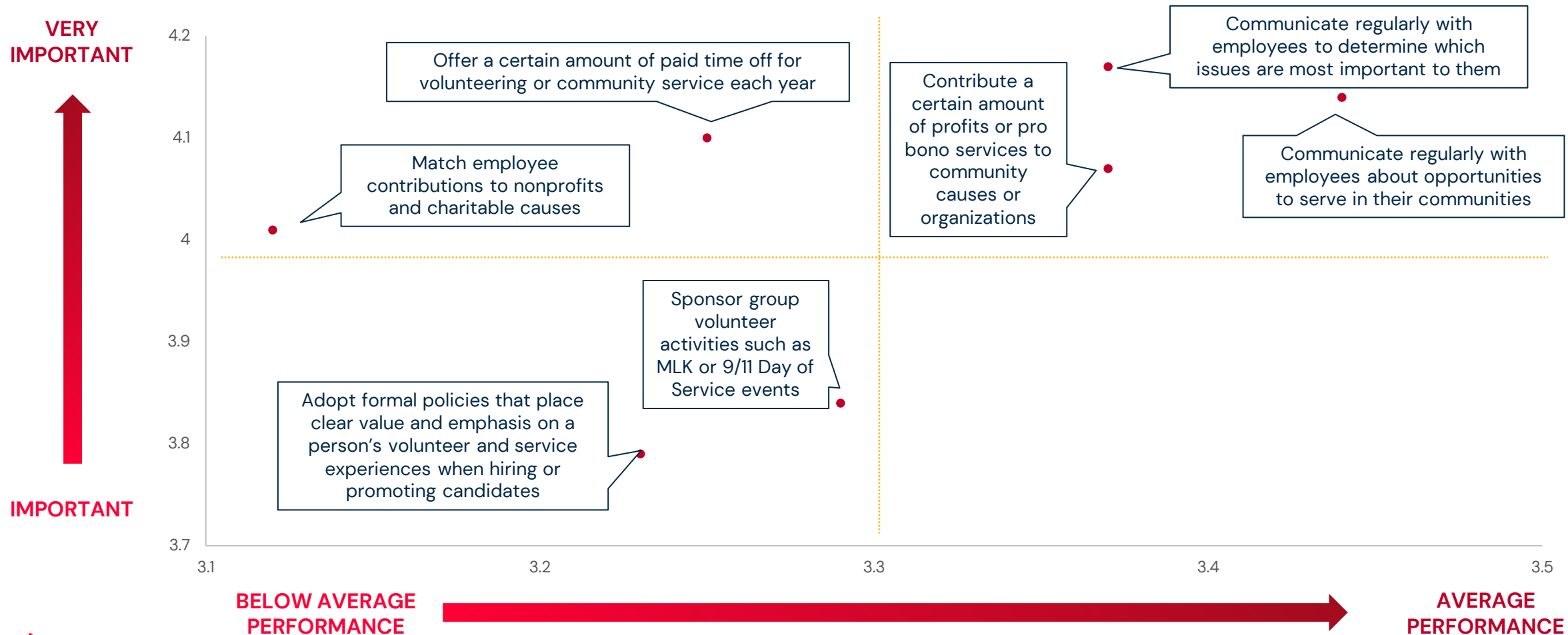
Q27. Thinking of your current or most recent employer, how effective are they at meeting these potential expectations related to community engagement?

Avg n = 5,781

Gap Analysis

Strategic Opportunities

Gap scores on their own don't always tell the whole story. When we start to plot the relationships between performance and importance, clearer strategic pathways emerge.



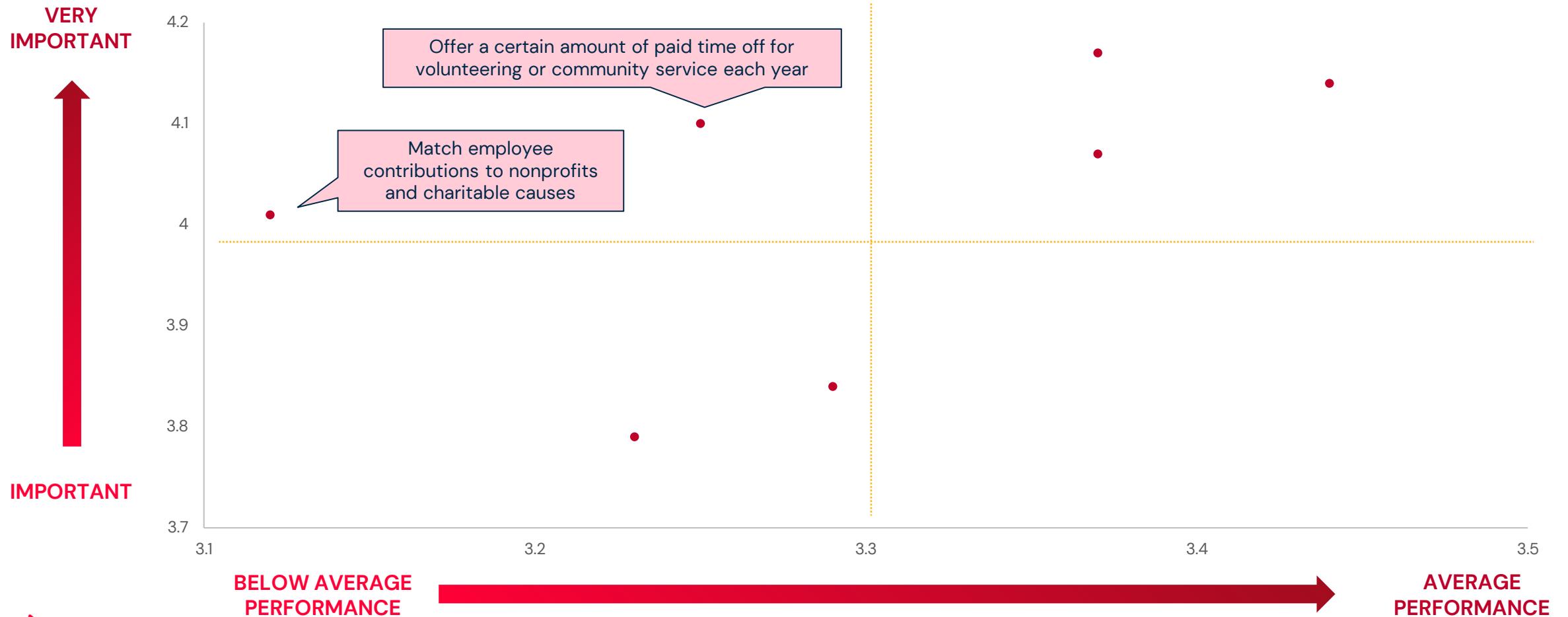
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Gap Analysis

Best Growth Opportunities

Respondents highly value incentives to serve and to donate to causes they care about, but these are the two areas where employers are performing below average.



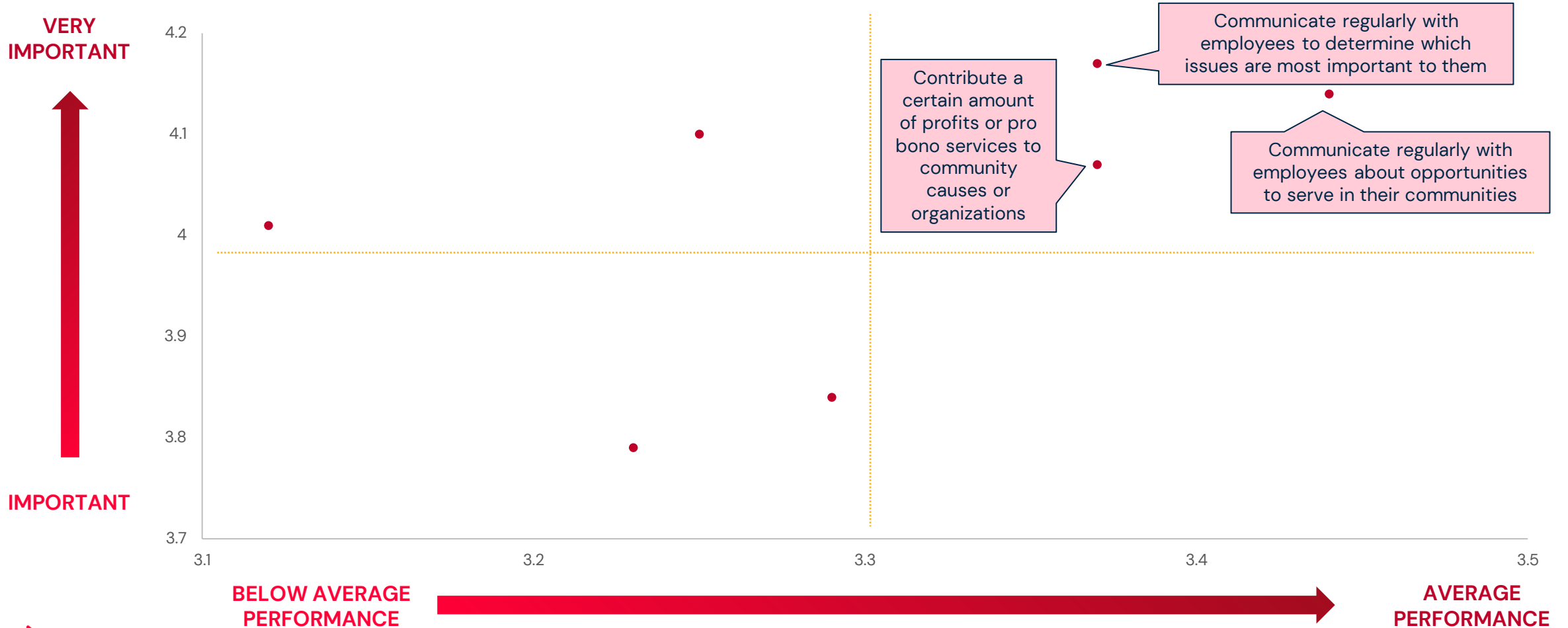
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Gap Analysis

Reinforce & Continue to Strengthen

Respondents most want strong and consistent communication from their employers, and those are also two of the highest performing attributes. Continuing to leverage communications to both learn and promote opportunities will be essential, as will contributing to causes and organizations through philanthropy or pro bono services.



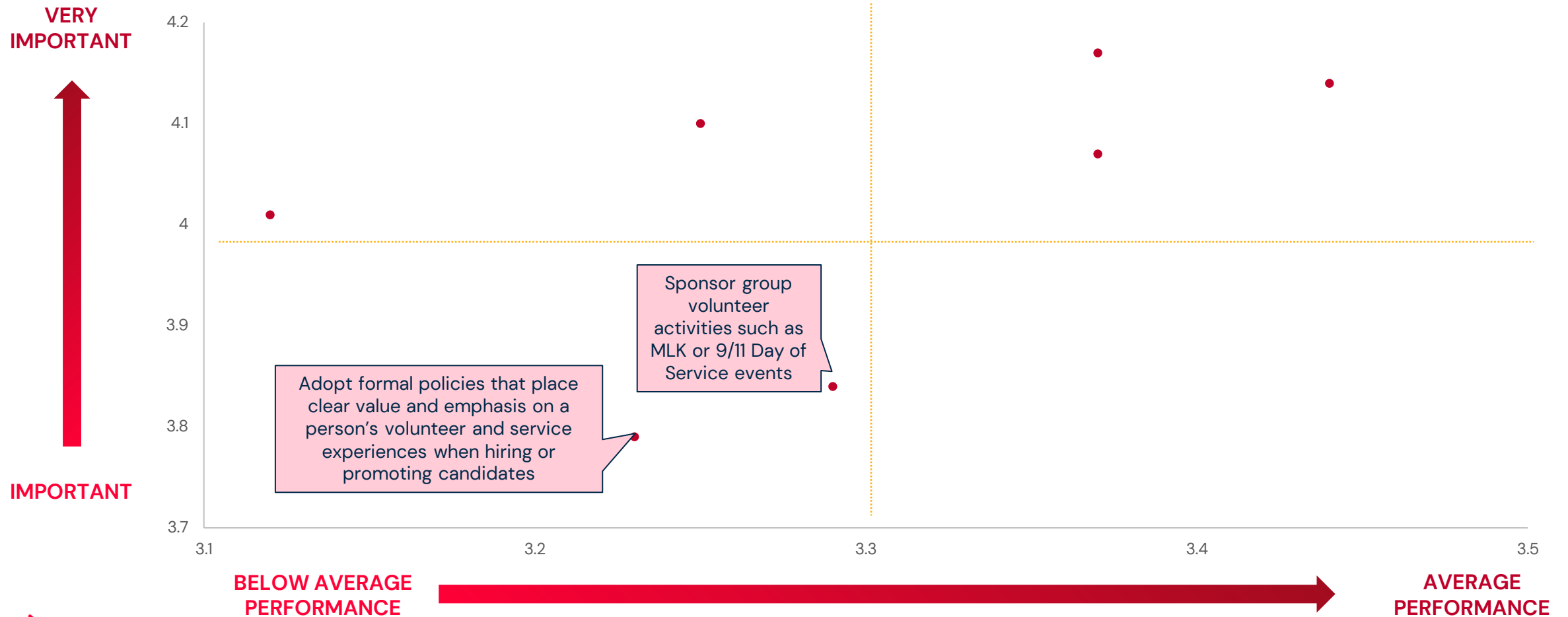
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Gap Analysis

Explore Further

Employers aren't significantly underperforming here relative to the lower level of importance respondents place on these attributes. Without further exploration, however, it's difficult to say whether these ratings are due to lack of awareness of what such policies or activities would entail.



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Q27. Thinking of your current or most recent employer, how effective are they at meeting these potential expectations related to community engagement?

Planning for Impact

Leveraging VCEI Data at Any Level

At its core, the strength of the VCEI rests in its dual ability to increase engagement — both with residents of the Commonwealth and among organizations throughout the public and private sectors who have a shared interest in leveraging this unprecedented level of data and insights.

As individual organizations, we can “plug in” to this spectrum at any point. And as a collective, we can decide at what level we want to devote our time, energy, and resources.



When we craft better invitations to serve, we:

- Increase the number of residents who feel empowered and supported in taking direct action to uplift their communities

When we increase the number of residents taking direct action to uplift their communities, we:

- Increase the strength of programs and initiatives
- Increase the strength of policies that reflect community priorities and allocate resources

When we increase the strength of programs and policies, we:

- Increase the strength of individual organizations
- Increase our capacity for partnership

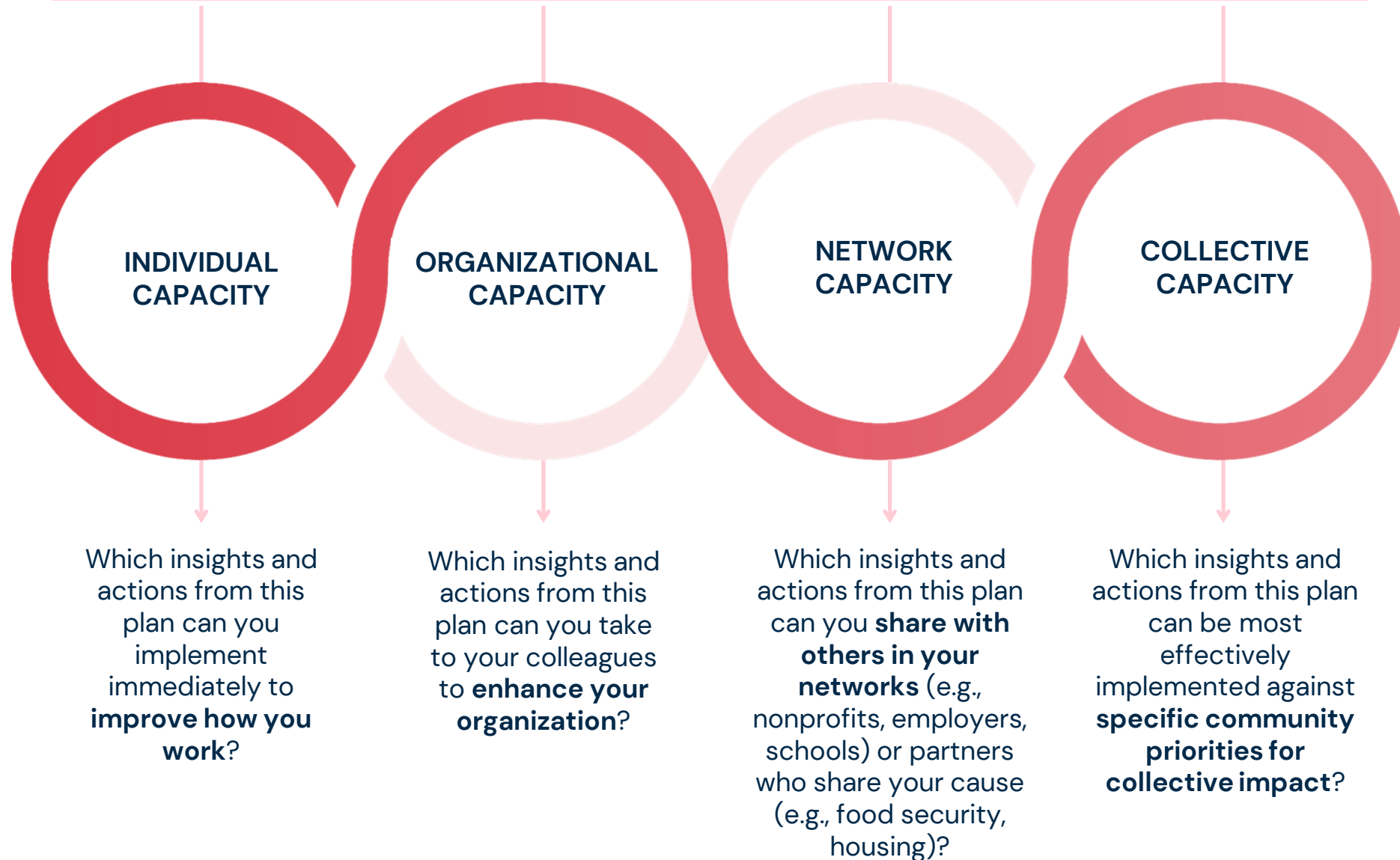
When we increase the strength of organizations and our capacity for partnership, we:

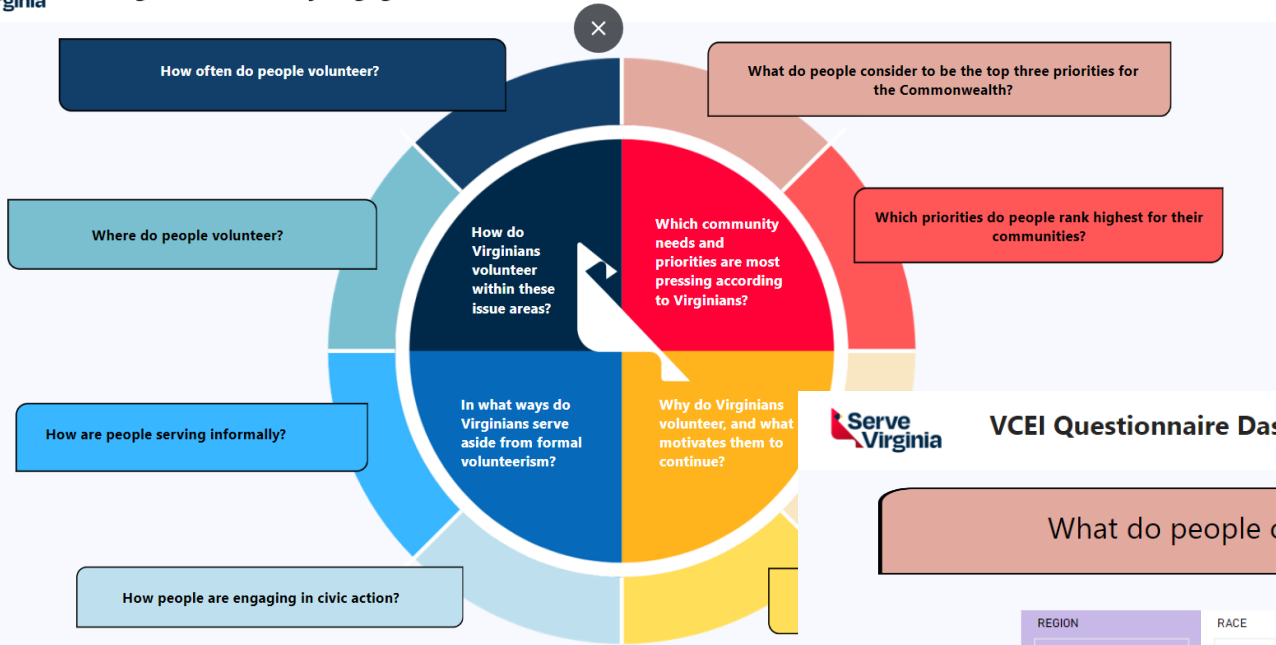
- Increase our collective capacity to meet community needs through existing programs and policies
- Increase our collective capacity to develop innovative programs and policies

When we increase our collective capacity to meet community needs and generate more innovative programs and policies, we:

- Increase our ability to measure our collective impact through the next VCEI in 2025 and identify strategic opportunities for future engagement

Applying the Plan



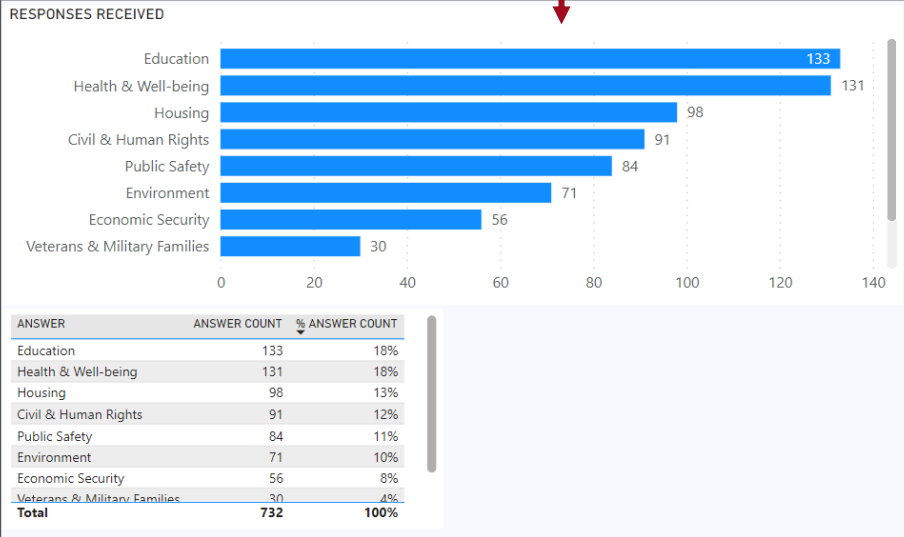


Education is the top priority for Gen Z, while health and wellbeing ranks higher for Boomer respondents.

What do people consider to be the top three priorities for the Commonwealth?

*For more specific insights, select one region, and/or one demographic filter to focus the findings.

REGION:
 RACE:
 GENDER:
 INCOME:
 EDUCATION:
 GENERATION:



Respondents were asked:

Of the following options, what should be the top 3 priorities for Virginia?

Across the state, people rated education, health and wellbeing, and housing as the top three priorities for Virginia.

For more information about what community priorities ranked highest in the Commonwealth, see the full Virginia Community Engagement Index report here, starting on page 8.



NEXT STEPS

Partnering with Serve Virginia

[Servevirginia.org](https://servevirginia.org)



Implement the VCEI

Help sponsor the VCEI for your company, community or network of partners



Improve volunteer engagement

Join our network and attend the virtual Volunteerism Summit (May 15 & 16) for best practices on engaging employees in volunteerism



Nominate, or be nominated, for a Governor's Award on Service and Volunteerism

Nominations will open later this spring, sign up for our newsletter at servevirginia.org to stay informed.

