

Findings from The California Endowment 2019 Organizing Grantee Survey

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Introduction

Building Healthy Communities North Star Goal #1

Historically excluded adults and youth residents have voice, agency, and power in public and private decision-making to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps.

The year 2020 will mark the 10th year of The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. For 10 ten years, BHC has invested in building capacity in 14 communities to engage in policies and systems change for broader local and statewide impact, developing leadership of young people, challenging dominant narratives, and advancing policy statewide. Since the inception of BHC, one of the priorities of TCE's Learning and Evaluation Department has been to understand how TCE supports local capacity to engage residents in campaigns aimed at changing institutional policies, priorities, and practices that can lead to healthier communities.

Since the BHC North Star Goal #1 has been adopted, USC PERE has been asked to help assess power-building capacities statewide and in key counties; to explore ways to measure power, influence, and impacts that reflect different power-building strategies; and to measure changes in capacities over time.

This memo shares findings from the 2019 survey of TCE organizing grantees, which is the third survey of Healthy Communities grantees that organize in one or more of the BHC sites and the first time that it also includes grantees that organize outside of the BHC sites.

Discussion of Survey Universe

USC PERE's database of the Power-Building Landscape Assessment (PLA) found that organizing and base-building groups comprise 25% of the entire ecosystem*. The universe for this survey includes just a TCE-funded subset of this portion of organizing groups statewide.

This survey is also complemented by the survey effort led by Dr. Veronica Terriquez of UC Santa Cruz, which gathered data from over 200 youth organizing groups over 2018 and 2019. In order to minimize conflict with the 2019 phase of Dr. Terriquez's survey, our survey was amended to minimize overlap and outreach to those youth groups was delayed. Therefore, the data from youth groups in California is underrepresented in this analysis.

* Breakdown of remaining functions from the PLA database was policy advocacy (18%); alliance/network/coalition (14%); research, policy or legal support (13%); leadership development (10%); union/labor (7%); organizational development (5%); funder (4%); cultural and narrative change (3%)

Background

In December 2011, TCE’s Learning and Evaluation Department held the first convening of a cohort of local evaluators and program staff across the 14 places. The cohort prioritized creating a common definition for “organizing and people power”, as well as a process for documenting learning and evaluation over time. The first survey, the Resident-Driven Organizing Inventory (RDOI), was conducted in 2013-14 by the California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University with the aim of collecting baseline data about organizing groups in the 14 sites.

At the five-year mark of BHC, USC’s Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) conducted the second survey of organizing groups in the 14 sites, as well as key informant interviews. The research found that the BHC Initiative increased the capacity for resident organizing in the 14 places. At this five-year mark, BHC increased the power and influence of historically under-represented populations in policymaking, primarily at the local level but increasingly at the county and state levels.

This happened through the development of new leadership, engagement in policy campaigns, and collaborations with other organizations.

The data suggest that TCE is supporting a mix of grantees: 1) strong organizing groups that are new to the BHC site, 2) BHC place-based organizations that are new to organizing, and 3) new organizations. For example, 61 percent of respondents have been organizing in the BHC site for five years or less. But those respondents are diverse in terms of their organizing capacity in the site, organizational budget size, and dependency on TCE funding. This underscores the importance of site-specific and cross-site dialogue to explore issues of sustainability for 2020 – and, more importantly, beyond 2020.

In early 2018, USC PERE conducted the Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape Assessment (PLA) in coordination with a cross-departmental working group of TCE staff. The goal of the PLA was to support a deeper

understanding of the local-to-statewide capacity that can drive policy, systems, and narrative change on the path to health and justice for all in California. An outcome of the PLA was the “power flower”, which defines the organizational ecosystem needed to build the power of historically-excluded residents—and a baseline database of the diverse organizations in this ecosystem.

The 2019 Organizing Survey builds from the 2013-14 RDOI, 2015-16 Organizing Survey, and the 2018 PLA. The goal is to assess the power-building capacities of TCE organizing grantees to inform discussions and decision-making about the evolution of BHC beyond 2020. The primary recipients of the survey are organizations that engage in community organizing and that currently receiving funding from TCE. While the previous two surveys were limited to groups organizing in one of more of the 14 BHC sites, the 2019 survey was expanded to include any group receiving funding from TCE that organizes in the state.

Survey Methodology

The first survey of organizing capacity in the BHC sites was the Resident-Driven Organizing Inventory (RDOI) conducted in 2013-14 by the California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University. It captured data about the characteristics, activities, and priorities of groups funded by BHC to engage local residents in policy and systems change. The RDOI had 65 respondents representing a 64 percent response rate with participation from 12 sites.¹

In 2015-16, USC PERE administered a second survey of resident organizing. The RDOI survey was streamlined and revised in order to capture data related to the resident-organizing 2020 goals. At that time, the 2020 goals were 1) to increase by 30 percent the number of residents actively organizing around health issues in the BHC sites and 2) to grow in strength and sustainability the advocacy and organizing networks focused on BHC issues in California. A total of 94 surveys were completed representing an 84 percent response rate with participation from all 14 BHC sites.²

USC PERE also conducted 25 interviews with individuals involved in, or with deep knowledge of, power building and movement building in California. Interviews explored the impact of TCE on organizing capacity in the state, factors that hinder or help build that capacity, and recommendations about how TCE can ensure that investments and progress made through BHC contribute to a powerful and lasting infrastructure for change past 2021.

In coordination with our Learning and Evaluation Program Manager and in consultation with the PLA working group and co-leads of the Power Goal working group, USC PERE revised the survey tool to gather data that would allow an analysis of shifts in organizing capacity in the 14 places over time as well baseline data on power-building strategies and priorities to deepen an analysis of the power-building landscape. The final 2019 TCE Organizing Survey is organized into four sections: 1) organizational information; 2) organizing capacity; 3) power-building strategies and targets; and 4) collaboration.

To determine the universe of survey recipients, USC PERE was provided with a list from the TCE grants database. Lists were finalized and approved by TCE program managers. Efforts were made to coordinate with other Learning and Evaluation consultants so as to minimize confusion among grantees targeted by more than one evaluation study.

For those organizations that overlapped with the 2019 youth evaluation survey effort led by Dr. Veronica Terriquez of UC Santa Cruz, the 2019 TCE Organizing Survey tool was modified to eliminate duplicate questions with an agreement that data will be shared. Survey outreach was also initiated with these groups only after they completed the youth survey.

¹ For more information, see Stewart, Connie, Dawn Arledge, and Sarah Williams. 2014. *People Power in Building Healthy Communities: Resident-Driven Organizing Inventory Results*. Arcata, CA: California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University.

² It is important to note that only 14 organizations participated in both surveys; therefore, data represent snapshots of the organizing capacity that TCE has supported at two points in time—and do not represent developmental progress among the same set of organizations over the two year period.

Survey Methodology

(continued)

Outreach for the TCE 2019 Organizing Survey was conducted by email and started at the end of February 2019. Follow up was conducted by email and by phone. Initial outreach went out to those organizations that completed the youth survey starting in late March.

Of a total of 141 surveys distributed, 104 organizations responded. This represents a response rate of 74 percent. Of the current responses, 16 organizations participated in the 2013-14 survey; 37 participated in the 2014-15 survey; and 14 participated in both surveys.

Survey Highlights

The 2019 TCE Organizing Survey is designed to provide a snapshot of the capacities, strategies, and priorities of community organizing groups funded by The California Endowment. Highlights preliminary findings are:

TCE's funding continues to be critical to the community organizing piece of the state's power-building ecosystem. Results from the 2015-16 survey of grantees in the 14 sites suggested that BHC brought new organizing capacity to those neighborhoods. Those groups now have six to ten years of experience. And there is now a new cohort of groups with less than five years of organizing experience. The preliminary data suggest that overall the community organizing ecosystem is maturing. Almost half (47 percent) report being in the "mature" stage of organizing capacity, meaning that they have a clear identity and history; a clear focus and process for organizing; a formal decision-making process for selecting organizers or hiring leaders; and what constitutes members. In terms of funding specifically for organizing,

81 percent also receive grants from non-TCE sources, though TCE is still a significant funding source for most groups.

Insufficient organizational capacity and/or resources is the top challenge in engaging residents in policy and systems change. While the field—to which TCE has contributed—has certainly grown, many of the organizing groups are relatively young and small. Nearly half (44 percent) of survey respondents have been organizing for 10 years or less. Nearly two thirds (65 percent) of respondents have 10 or fewer paid staff and 60 percent have an annual organizational budget of less than one million dollars. Not surprisingly, 82 percent of respondents report insufficient organizational capacity and/or resources as the top challenge in engaging residents in policy and systems change. The other top challenges reported are fear in the current political climate (60 percent) and significant political opposition to community-led efforts (46 percent).

Racial justice is the most commonly-cited issue area by organizing grantees (66 percent). This aligns with the populations that groups are organizing which are predominantly communities of color (83 percent) and low-income individuals (81 percent). Organizing groups are engaging residents in all phases of a campaign life-cycle from research and identifying the changes that need to occur to engaging directly with elected officials in their demands for change and helping to monitor the implementation of policy wins. Building power through alliances and coalitions (95 percent) and developing leadership (93 percent) among the historically excluded are the most common power-building strategies employed by organizing groups.

Survey Results

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Part I. Profile of Survey Respondents

In this section, we report on the basic characteristics of survey respondents, including where and who they organize. As previously mentioned, this is the first year in which TCE grantees organizing beyond the 14 BHC sites are included in the survey. Yet 81 percent of respondents organize in one or more of the sites. Respondents report working in every county except for Marin, Napa, and San Luis Obispo. Other than those three counties, there is at least one organizing group working in the remaining counties.

The respondents are largely focused on communities of color (83%) and low-income individuals (81%). Other highly reported constituencies are Latinx (72%), immigrants (66%), women (61%), parents (61%), and youth (60%). It is important to note that youth organizing groups are under-represented in the results as those groups are surveyed by Dr. Veronica Terriquez. The survey's target constituency categories have changed slightly from the 2015-16 survey; they now reflect categories developed through during the power-building landscape assessment project.

Where Survey Respondents Organize (respondents could choose more than one):

85% locally;

50% regionally;

47% statewide; and/or

17% nationally.

Definitions

- Organizing **locally**: within a BHC site, neighborhood, city, or within one county
- Organizing **regionally**: in multiple counties, such as the Bay Area or Antelope Valley
- Organizing **statewide**: working to affect policy or systems change for all of California
- Organizing **nationally**: organizing in states outside of California

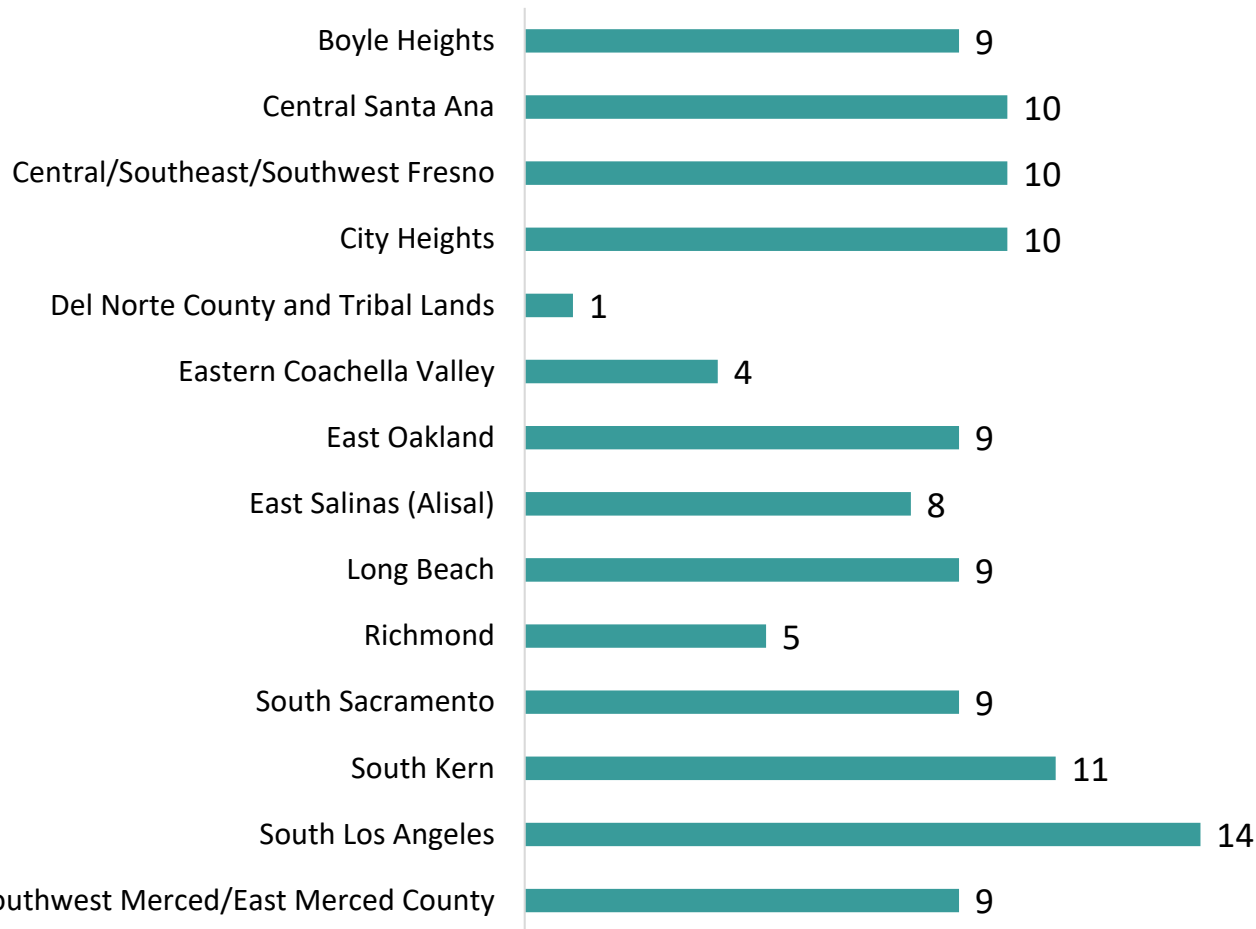
Top 20 Counties Where Respondents are Organizing (number of responses in parentheses):

1. Los Angeles (35)
2. Fresno (21)
3. Alameda (20)
4. Kern (17)
5. Sacramento (17)
6. San Diego (16)
7. Orange (15)
8. Merced (14)
9. Tulare (13)
10. Contra Costa (12)
11. Monterey (12)
12. Riverside (12)
13. San Bernardino (11)
14. San Joaquin (11)
15. San Francisco (10)
16. Kings (9)
17. Stanislaus (9)
18. Madera (6)
19. Santa Cruz (6)
20. Santa Clara (6)

Profile of Survey Respondents

14 BHC Places

Number of Organizations in each Building Healthy Community Site
n = 103



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Percent (number) that organize in one or more BHC places:

81% (84)

Of groups organizing in a BHC site:

11% organize youth* (under 25 years)

34% organize adults

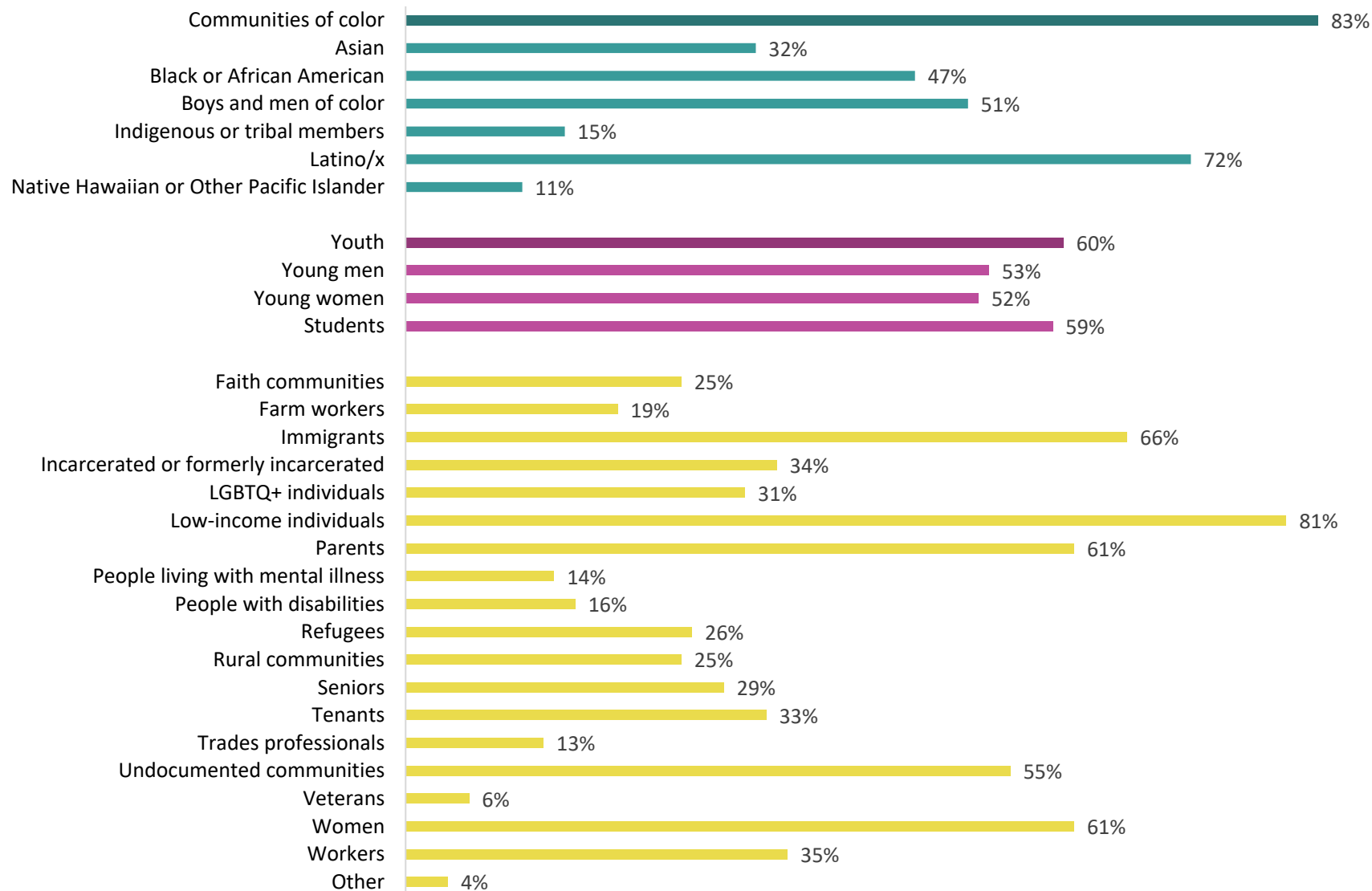
55% organize both youth and adults

*USC PERE is working in close coordination with Dr. Veronica Terriquez, who is evaluating TCE's youth work. Thus, our analysis here underrepresents youth organizing groups in California.

Profile of Survey Respondents

Target Organizing Populations, 2019

n = 103



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Part II. Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

In this section, we report on the organizing capacity of organizations, as well as sustainability and funding issues. The capacity-related indicators that the 2019 survey explores are:

- Number of years organizing
- Stage of development of the organizing work
- Staff and (volunteer) core leader capacity
- Organizational annual budget
- The portion of organizing funding that the group receives from TCE
- Whether groups receive funding from other sources to organize for health issues
- Other sources of funding for organizing

The data suggest that the community organizing ecosystem is maturing. The organizing groups that started organizing at the inception of BHC now have six to ten years of experience. Those groups that have been organizing between 5-10 years make up the largest proportion of responses at 27 percent. Compared to 2015-2016 and 2014, a smaller percentage consider their organizing capacity at the “forming” end of the

development spectrum (4 percent) compared to 10 percent and 8 percent in the last two surveys, respectively. Also notable is that a higher percentage of organizations report being in the “mature” stage of organizing capacity with 47 percent compared to 30 percent and 43 percent. At this stage, it means that they identify as having a clear identity and history; a clear focus and process for organizing; a formal decision-making process for selecting organizers, or hiring leaders; and what constitutes members. We find that it is organizations that are working statewide (and that may also be organizing regionally and/or locally) are most likely to consider themselves to be well-developed (mature).

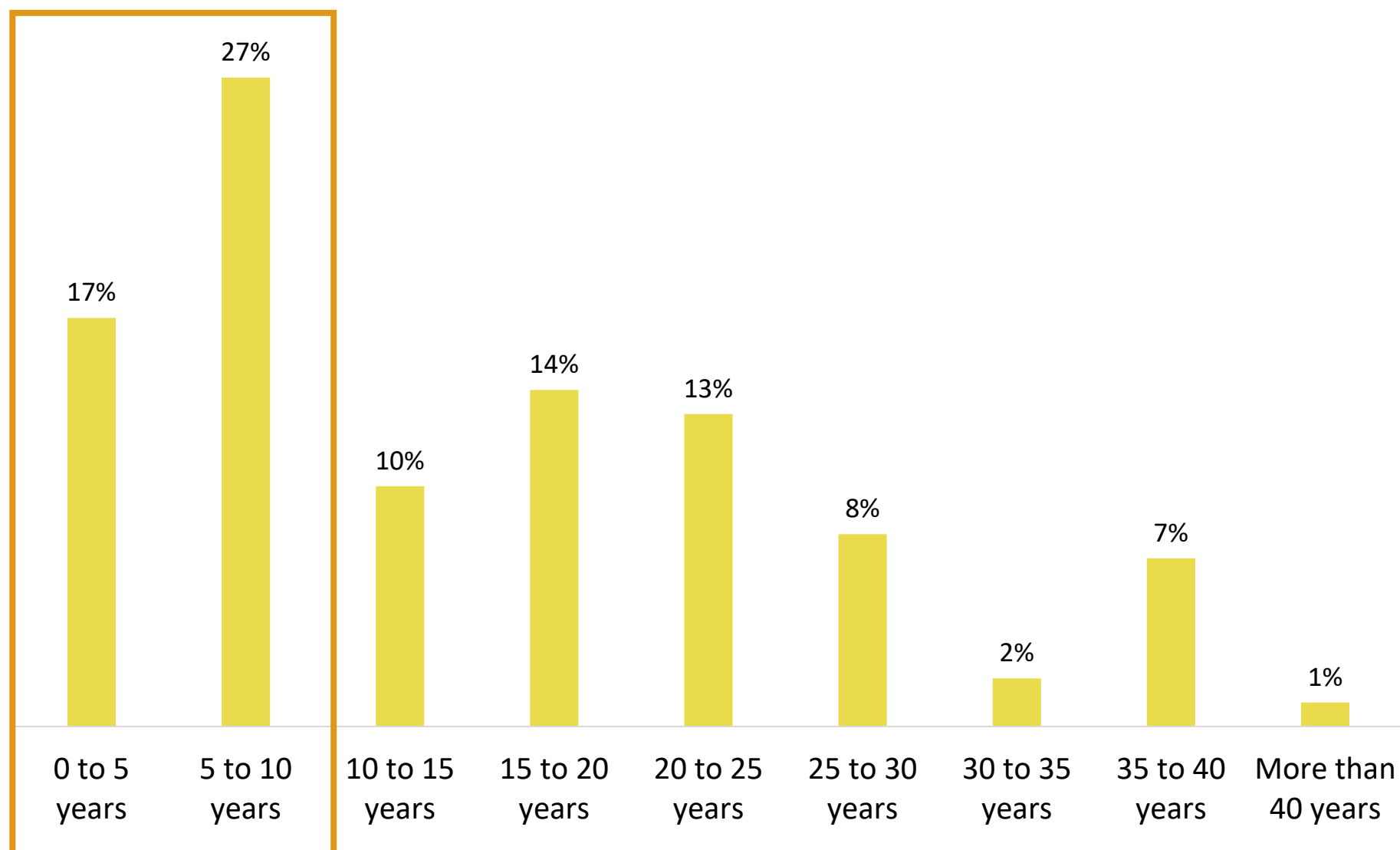
Yet, the groups have limited resources. A significant portion (60 percent) have an organizational budget of one million dollars or less and 10 or fewer paid full-time equivalent staff (65 percent). About one-third (37 percent) have fewer than 5 staff. In terms of staff dedicated to organizing, 72 percent of respondents report fewer than 5 organizers.

A significant percent (83 percent) receive funding for organizing from sources other than TCE. In fact, a total of 139 foundations and organizations are supporting grantees in their organizing and base-building work with the most commonly-mentioned being a few statewide foundations (James Irvine Foundation and The California Wellness Foundation), several local foundations (Liberty Hill, San Francisco Foundation, California Community Foundation, and Sierra Health Foundation), and one national foundation (Marguerite Casey Foundation). Yet, over one-fourth (30 percent) of respondents rely on TCE for over half of their total funding for organizing.

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Organizing Capacity: Years of Organizing Experience, 2019

n = 99

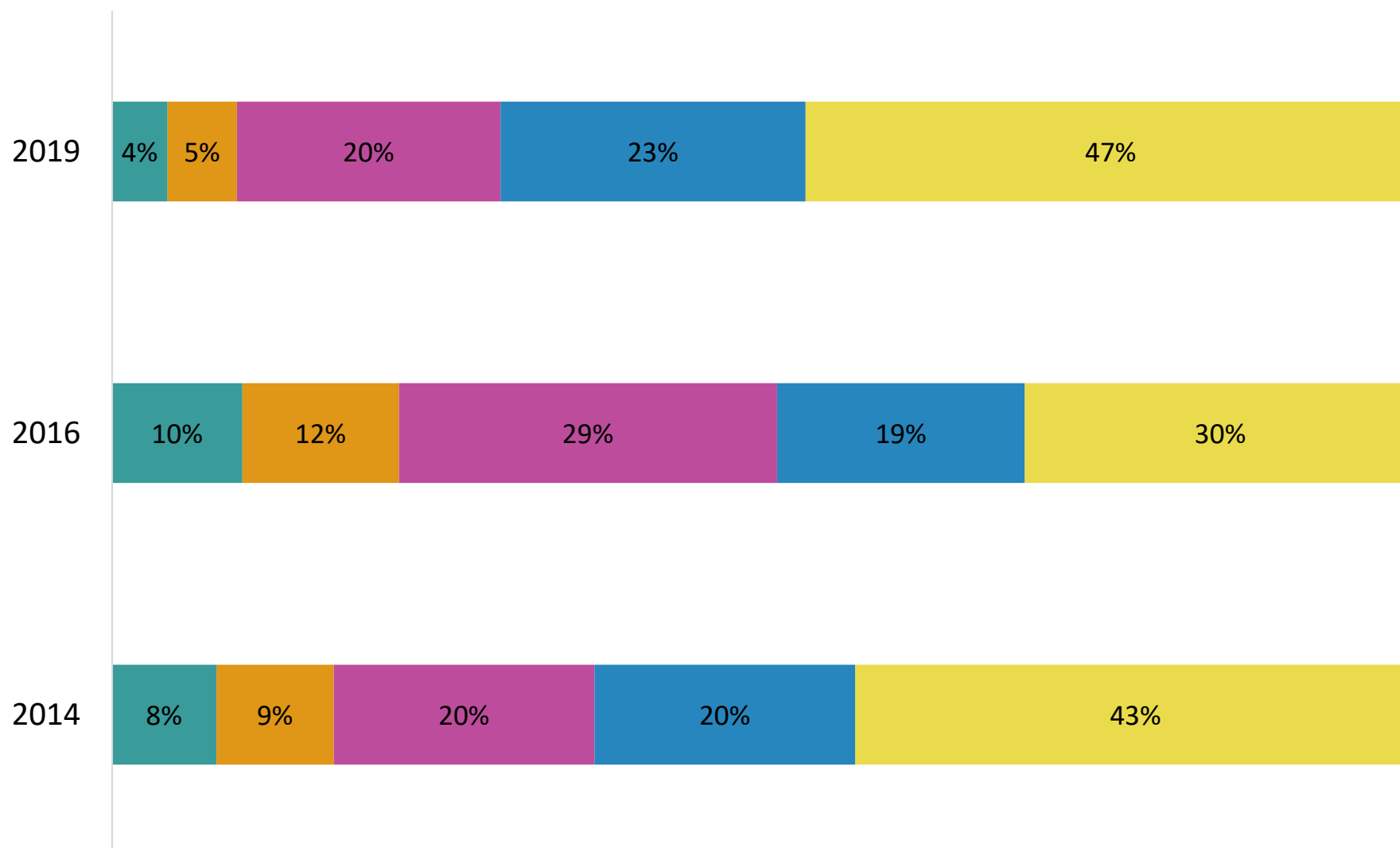


Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Stage of Development in Organizing Capacity: 2014, 2016, 2019

■ Forming ■ Transitioning from Forming to Developing ■ Developing ■ Transitioning from Developing to Mature ■ Mature

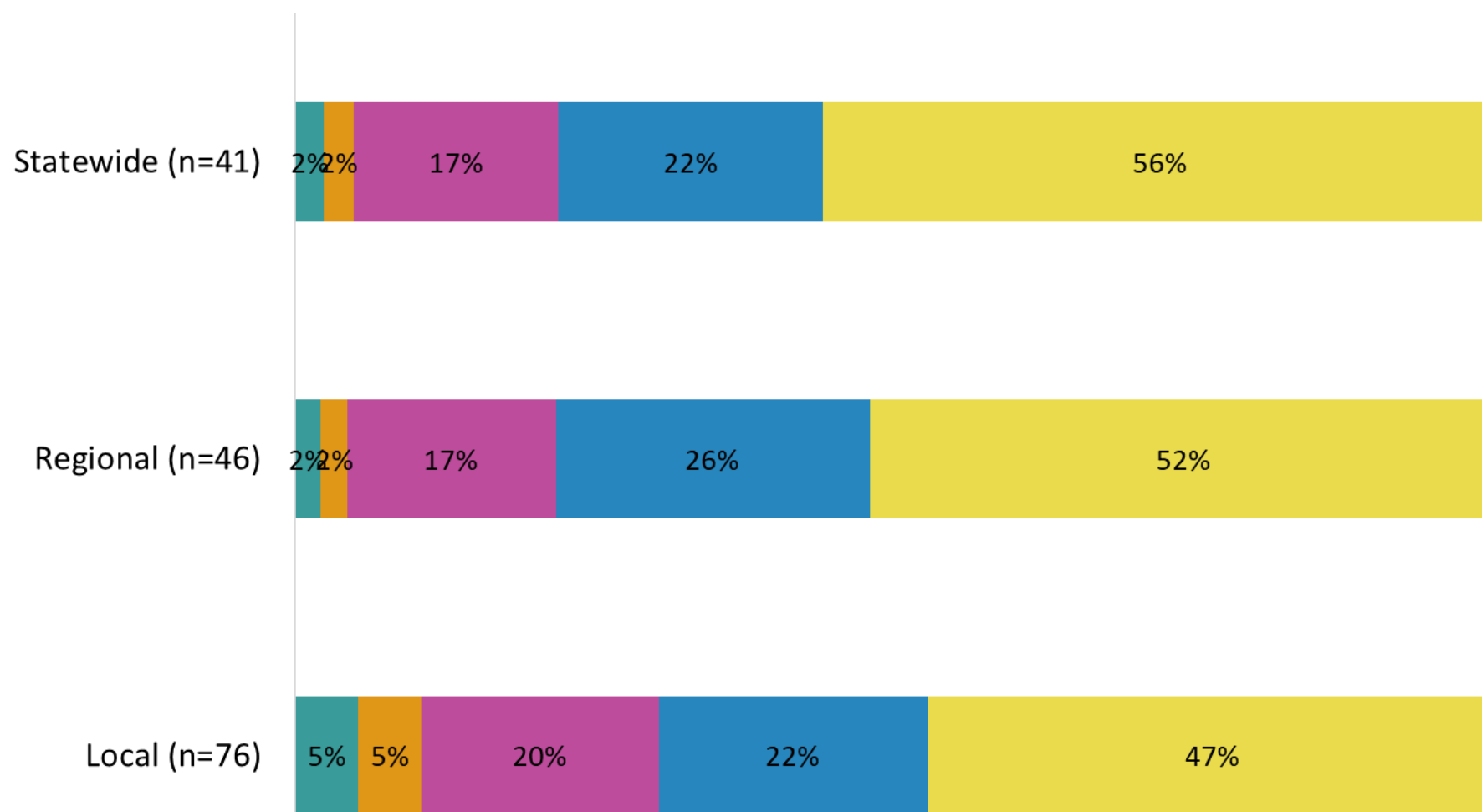


Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey, 2015-16 Organizing Survey, 2013-14 Resident-Driven Organizing Inventory

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Stage of Development in Organizing Capacity 2019: Statewide, Regional, and/or Local Focus

■ Forming ■ Transition from Forming to Developing ■ Developing ■ Transitioning from Developing to Mature ■ Mature

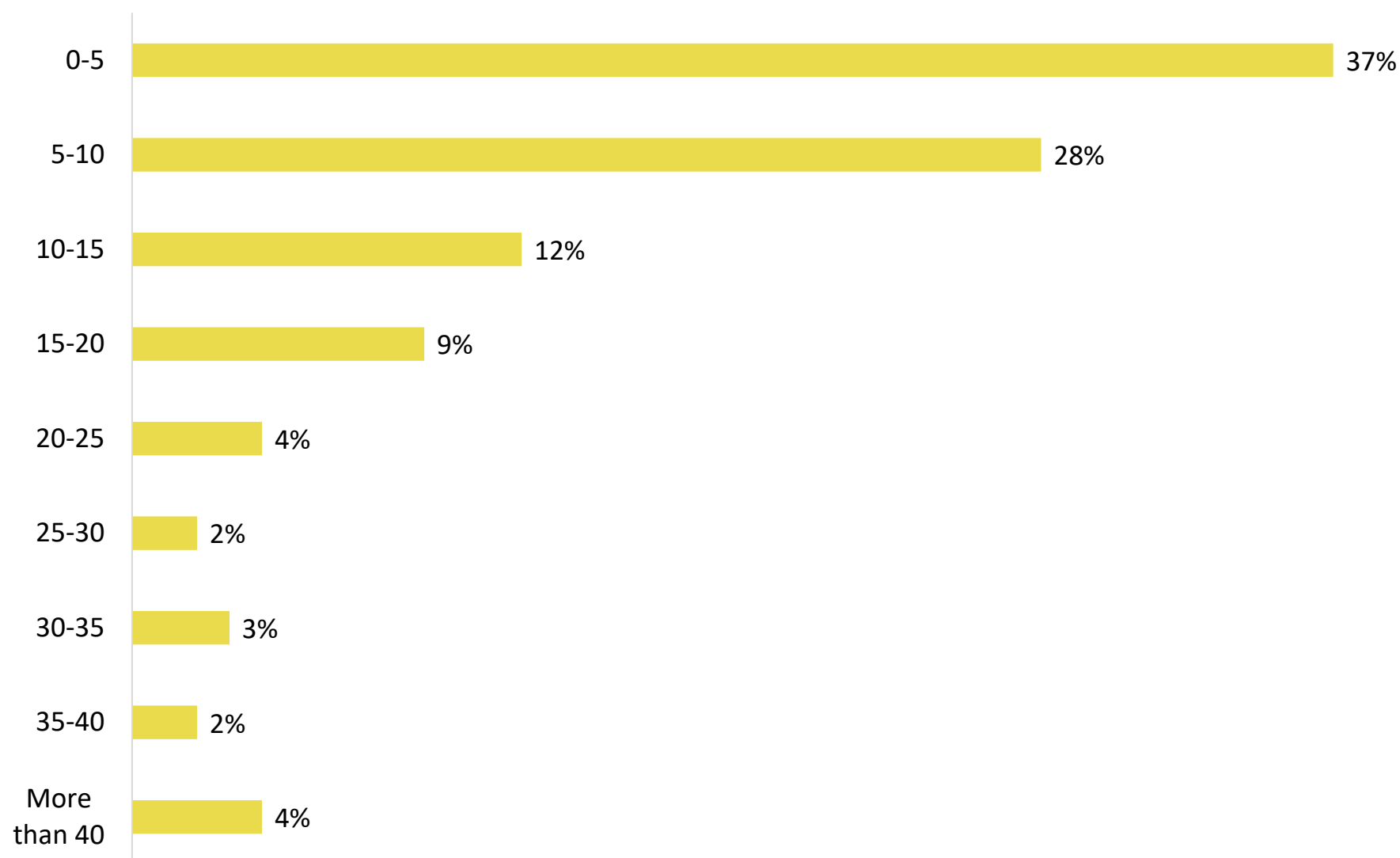


Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one geographic scale.

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Number of Paid Staff, 2019

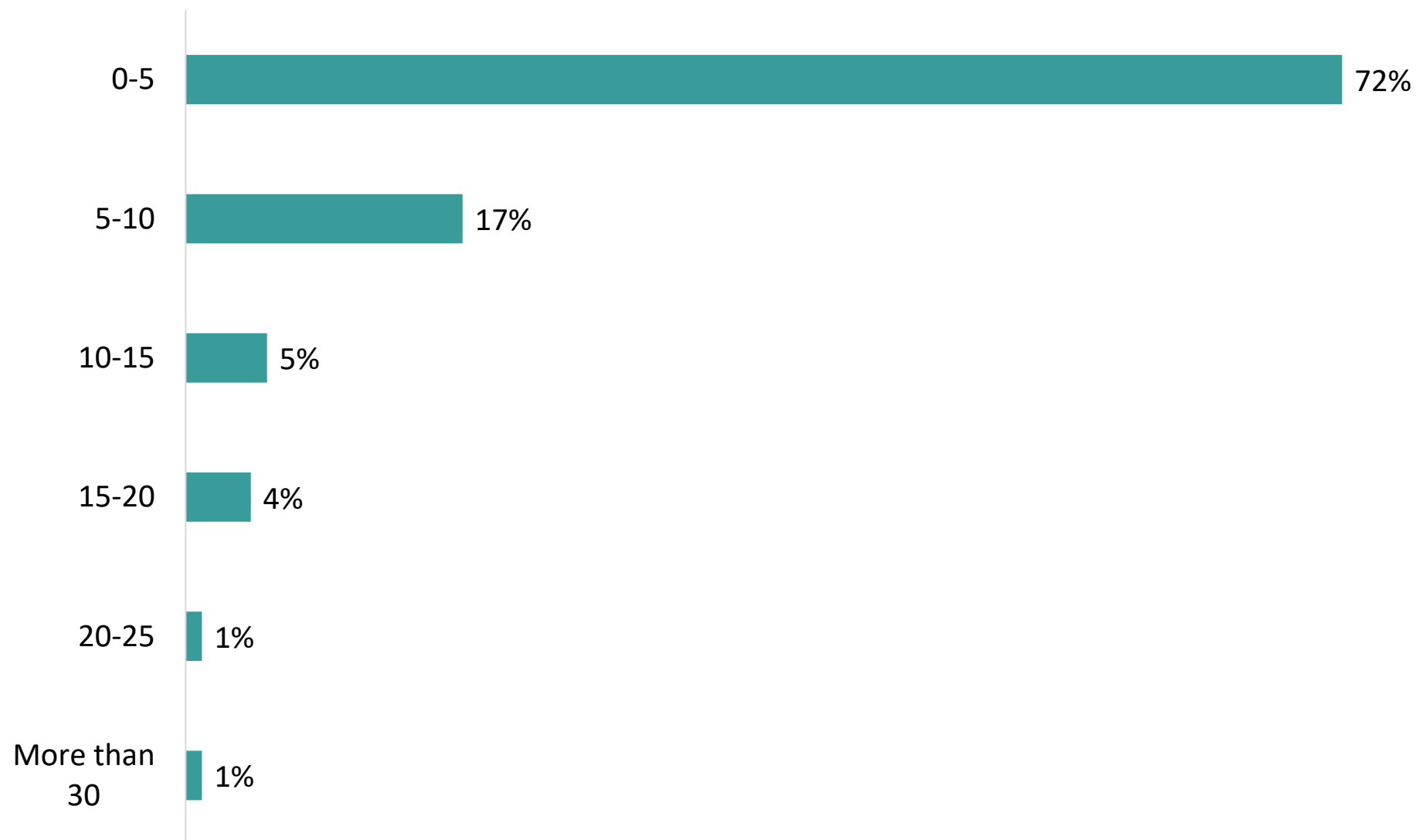
n= 101



Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Number of Paid Organizing Staff, 2019

n = 99

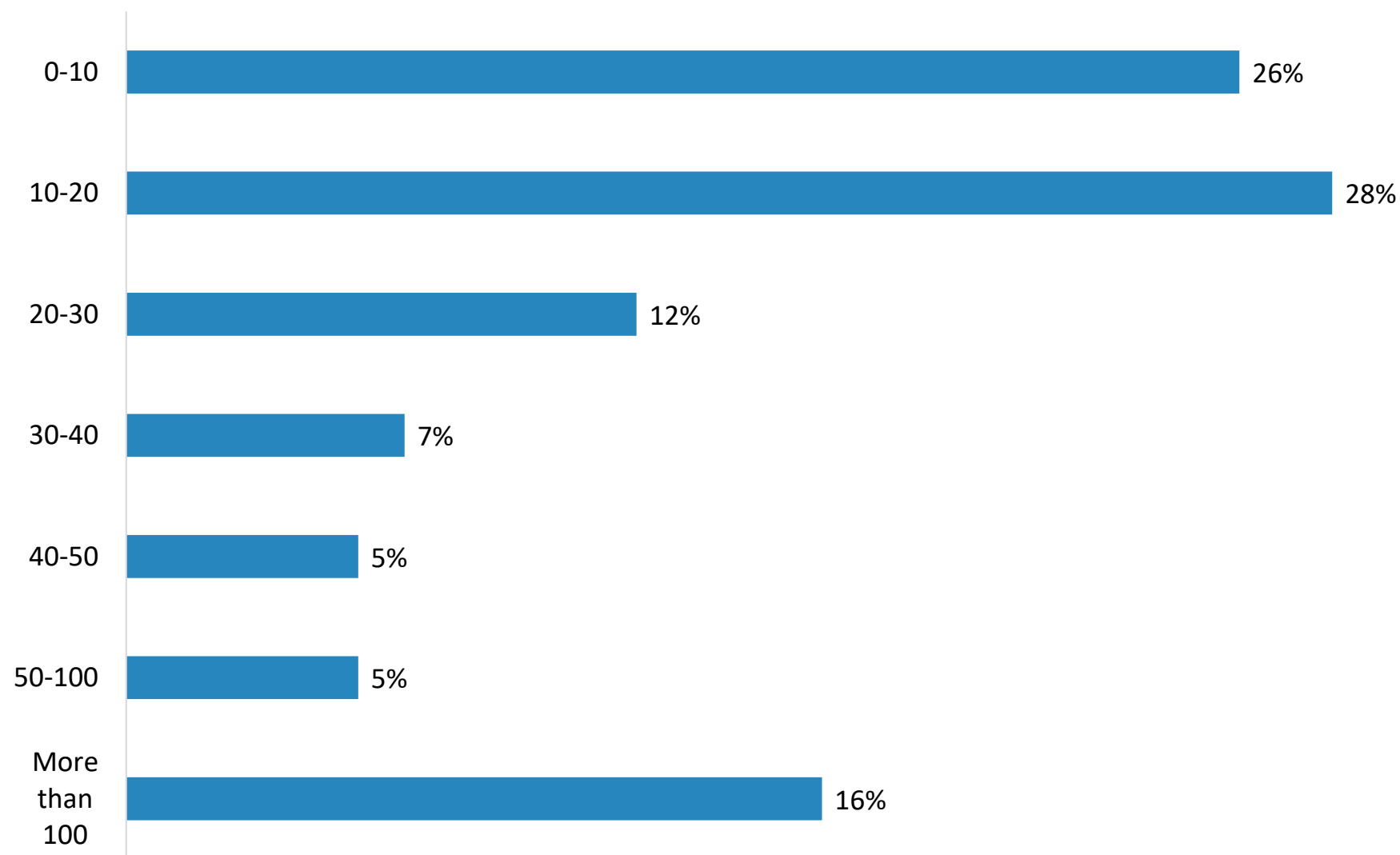


Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Number of Core Leaders (Volunteer), 2019

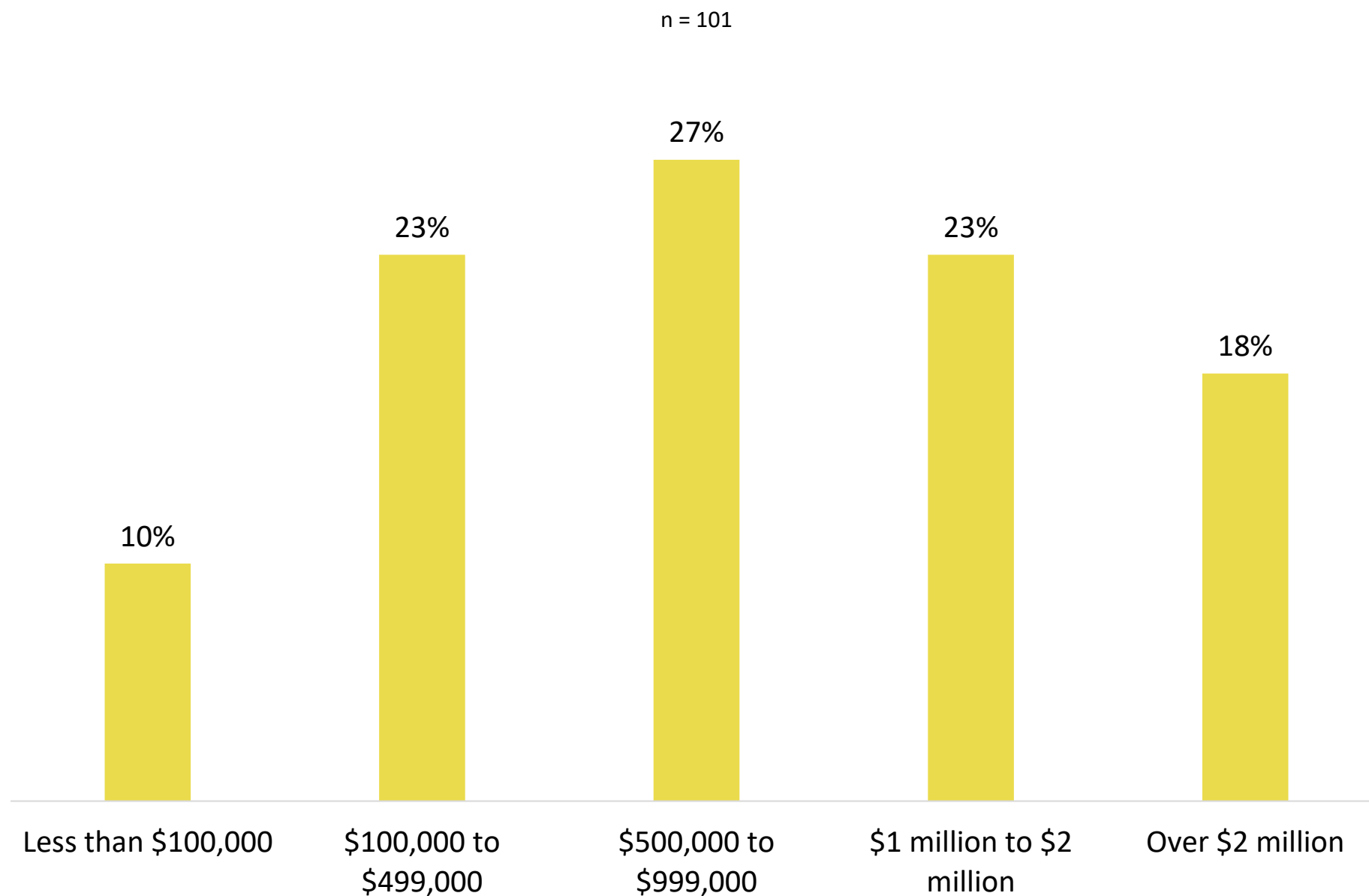
n = 92



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

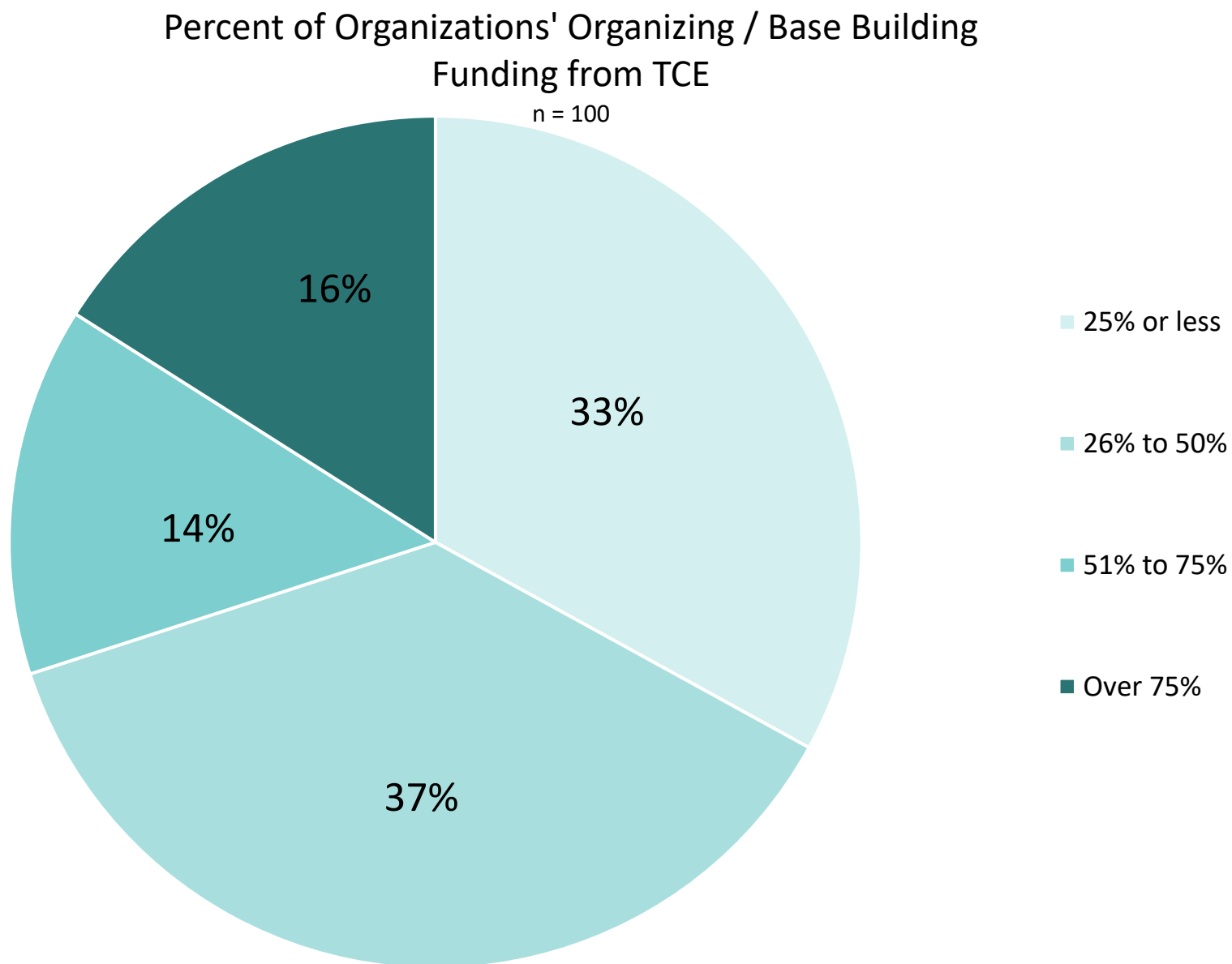
Annual Organizational Budget, 2019



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Funding Sources: TCE, 2019

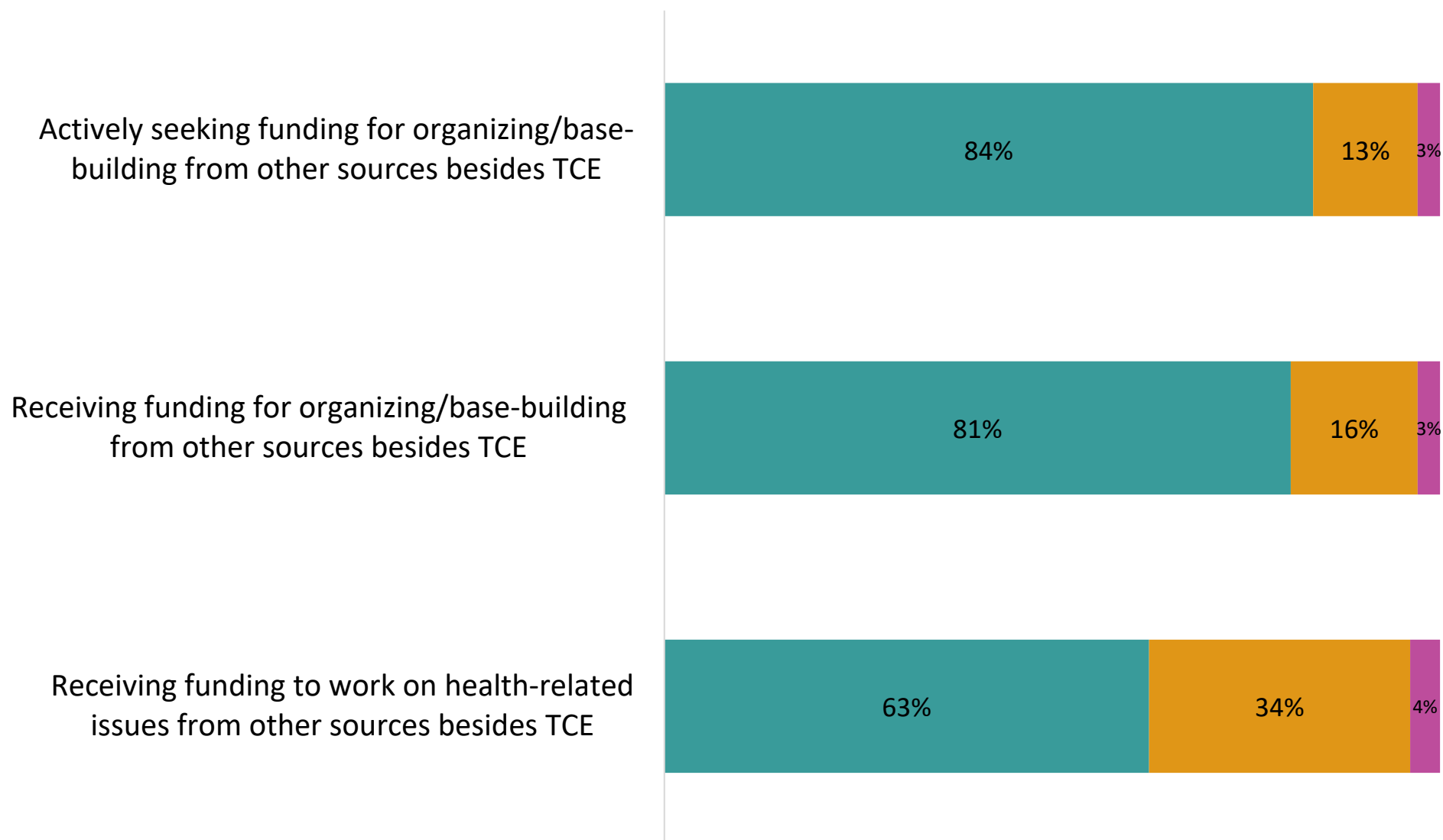


Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Funding Sources: Non-TCE, 2019

n = 104

■ Yes ■ No ■ No Response



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Other Foundations

Those who receive funding for organizing and base-building beyond TCE named a total of 139 foundations and organizations as funding sources. The top foundations are:

1. **James Irvine Foundation**
2. **Liberty Hill Foundation**
3. **San Francisco Foundation**
4. **Marguerite Casey Foundation**
5. **Weingart Foundation**
6. **The California Wellness Foundation**
7. **California Community Foundation**
8. **Sierra Health Foundation**

The following are the foundations and organizations that fund groups for organizing that were named more than once (number of mentions in parenthesis):

- James Irvine Foundation (18)
- Liberty Hill Foundation (10)
- San Francisco Foundation (10)
- Marguerite Casey Foundation (8)
- Weingart Foundation (8)
- The California Wellness Foundation (7)
- California Community Foundation (6)
- Sierra Health Foundation (5)
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development (4)
- Hazen Foundation (4)
- JIB Fund Black Equity Initiative (4)
- Satterberg Foundation (4)
- Akonadi Foundation (3)
- Latino Community Foundation (3)
- Marisla Foundation (3)
- Rose Foundation (3)
- The 11th Hour Project (2)
- AAPI CE Fund (2)
- Common Counsel Foundation (2)
- East Bay Community Foundation (2)
- Energy Foundation (2)
- Ford Foundation (2)
- Haas, Jr. Fund (2)
- Heising Simons Foundation (2)
- Hill Snowdon Foundation (2)
- Levi Strauss Foundation (2)
- Needmor Fund(2)
- Open Society Foundation (2)
- PICO CA (2)
- Power California (2)
- UU Veatch at Shelter Rock (2)
- Y&H Soda Foundation (2)

Part III. Power-Building Strategies and Issue Areas

Key to organizing and building a base of people who have been historically excluded from decision-making processes is the one-on-one, face-to-face recruitment, engagement, and development of grassroots leaders. Organizing groups are engaging residents in all phases of a campaign life-cycle from research and identifying the change that need to occur to engaging directly with elected officials in their demands for change and helping to monitor the implementation of policy wins. The roles that leaders play in our 2019 sample show consistency across time with a slight increase in monitoring advocacy efforts.

The number one issue that organizing groups report working on is racial justice followed by education. The fewest groups reported organizing for LGBTQ+ rights (16 percent) and reproductive rights (10 percent). Organizing groups employ multiple strategies in their efforts to build power. Almost all groups are engaged in alliance or coalition-building (95 percent), leadership development (93 percent), campaigns (88 percent), and movement building (82 percent).

Definitions of Power-Building Strategies:

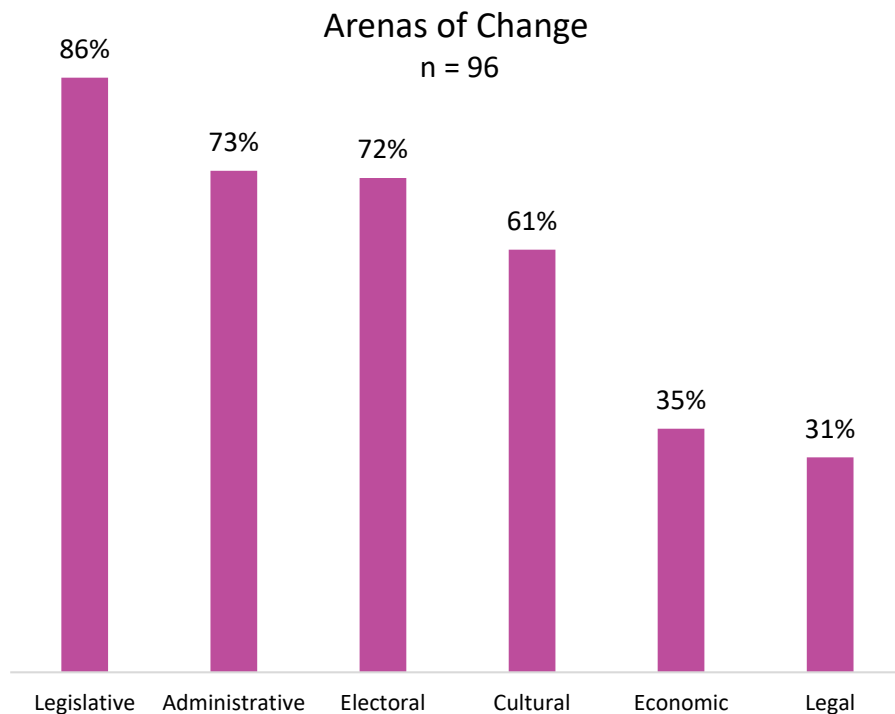
- **Base-Building:** Building an organized base to mobilize toward a common purpose
- **Alliance or Coalition Building:** Building collaboration among groups with shared values and interests
- **Arts and Culture:** Incorporating various creative skills of organizers to foster connection and solidarity through lived experience
- **Campaigns:** Employing an organized series of actions that address specific policy change
- **Communications:** Messaging that connects communities to an issue and inspires them to join the movement
- **Healing:** Addressing personal hardships and how they connect to social inequities to improve well-being threatened by trauma
- **Inside-Outside Strategies:** Developing strategies and vehicles through which elected offices on the “inside” work with leaders of “outside” organizations
- **Integrated Voter Engagement:** Integrating short-term election work into long-term base-building work
- **Leadership Development:** Equipping grassroots leaders with skills to play a larger role in their movement
- **Litigation:** Leveraging legal resources to reach outcomes that further the movement’s goals
- **Lobbying:** Mobilizing constituents to target public officials to influence policy
- **Movement Building:** Scaling from one issue to long-term, systems-changing initiatives
- **Narrative Change:** Harnessing arts and expression to replace dominant assumptions of a community with dignified narratives
- **Research or Policy Analysis:** Gathering and analyzing data to create credibility and direct a movement’s efforts
- **Social Services:** Providing services that reach clients and can then highlight and incorporate their needs in internal practices
- **Voter Engagement:** Educating, registering, and motivating communities to vote

Power-Building Strategies and Targets

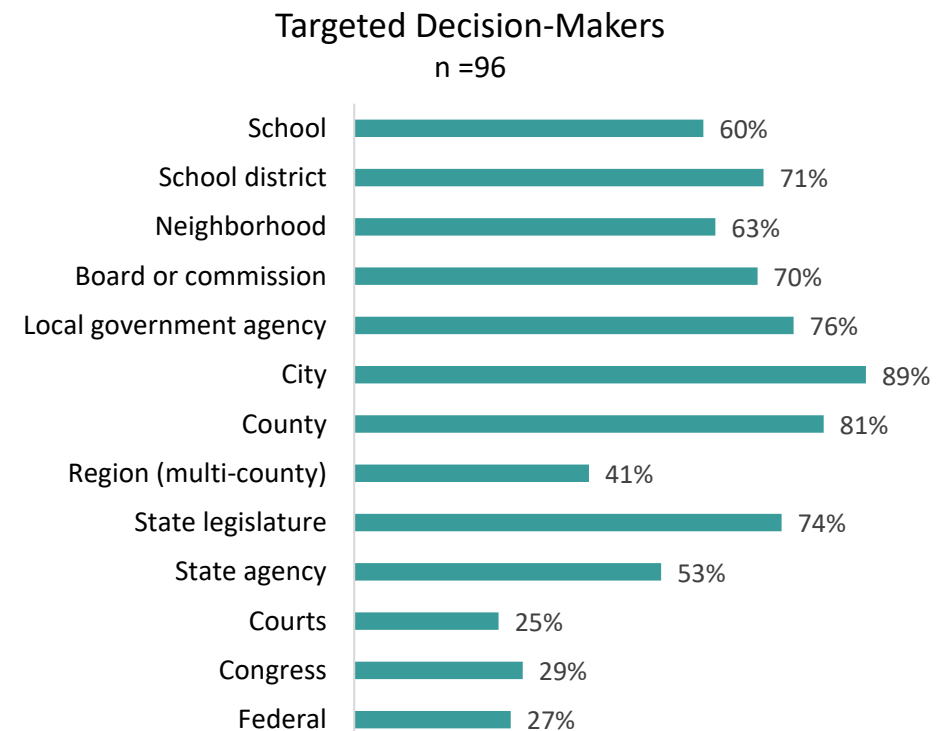
Public and Private Decision-Making

Arenas of change are the types of decision-making processes that groups are trying to influence. The results reflect BHC's priorities on policy, systems, and narrative change: 86 percent work in the legislative arena, 73 percent are targeting public agency administrators, 72 percent are involved in elections, and 61 percent work in the cultural arena.

In the policy and systems change work, communities supported by respondents are targeting the following top three levels of decision-makers: city (89 percent), county (81 percent), and local government agency (76 percent). About two-thirds of respondents are engaging communities at the state legislative, school district, and board levels.



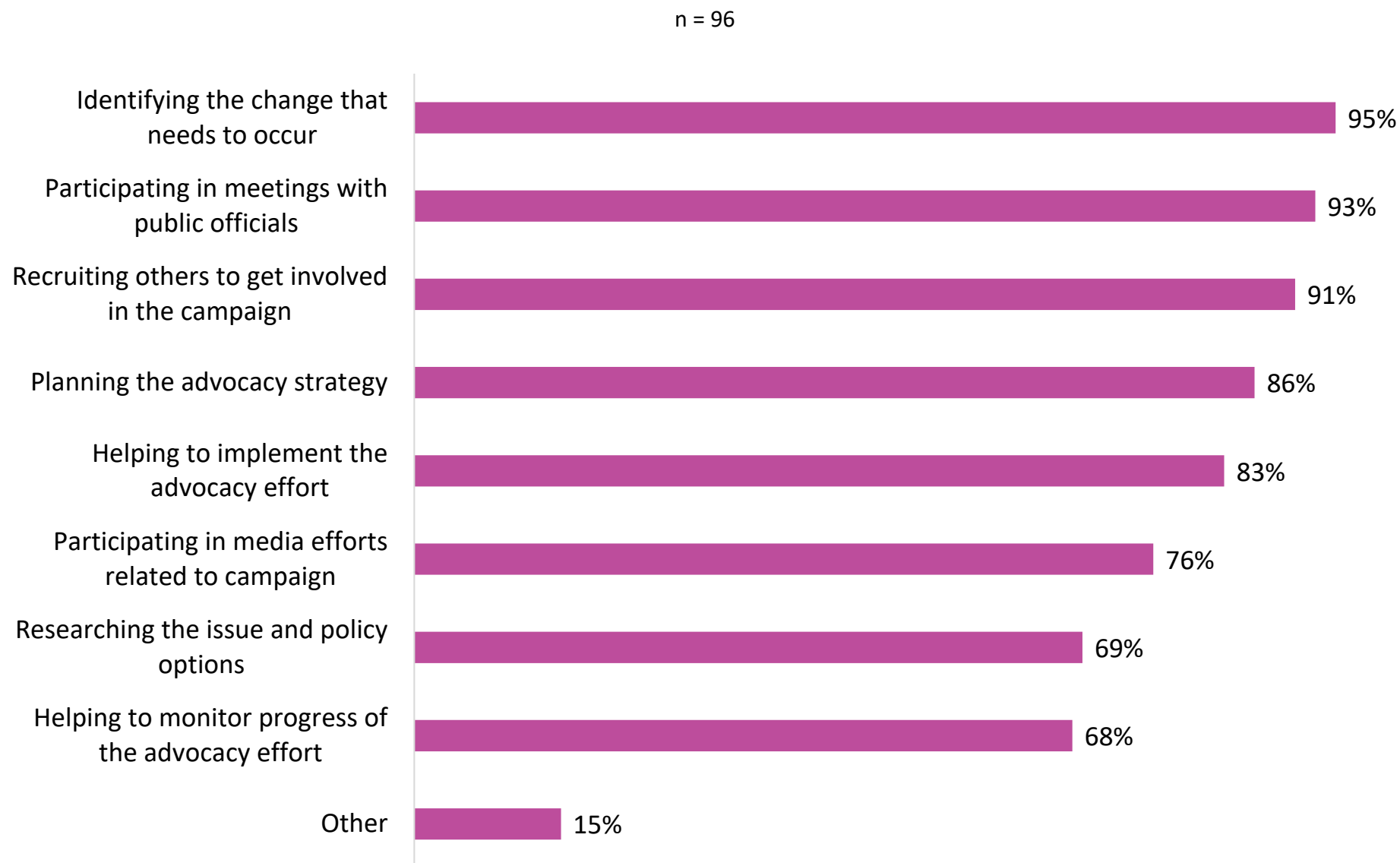
Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Power-Building Strategies and Targets

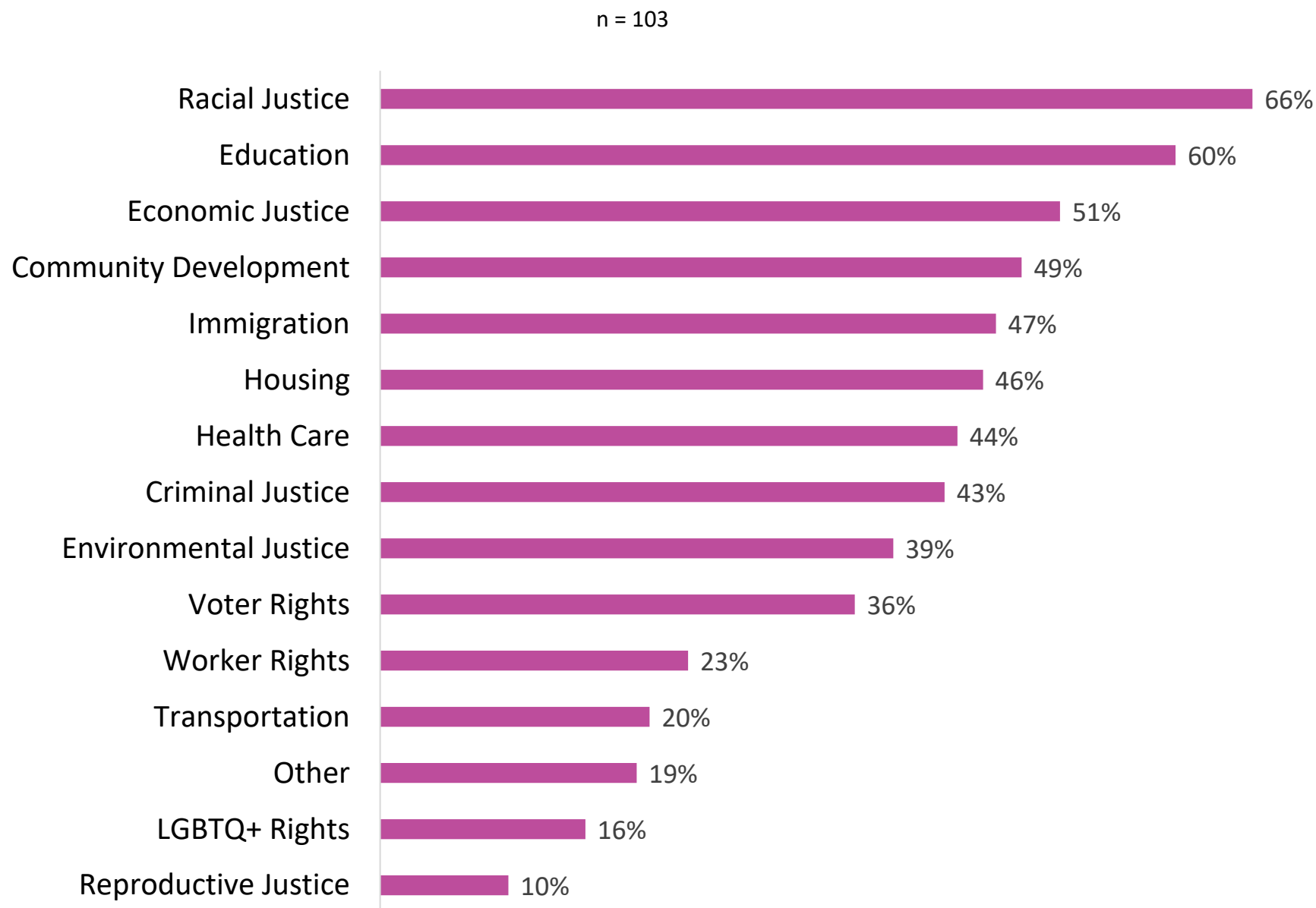
Roles of Residents in Policy & Systems Change Campaigns, 2019



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Power-Building Strategies and Targets

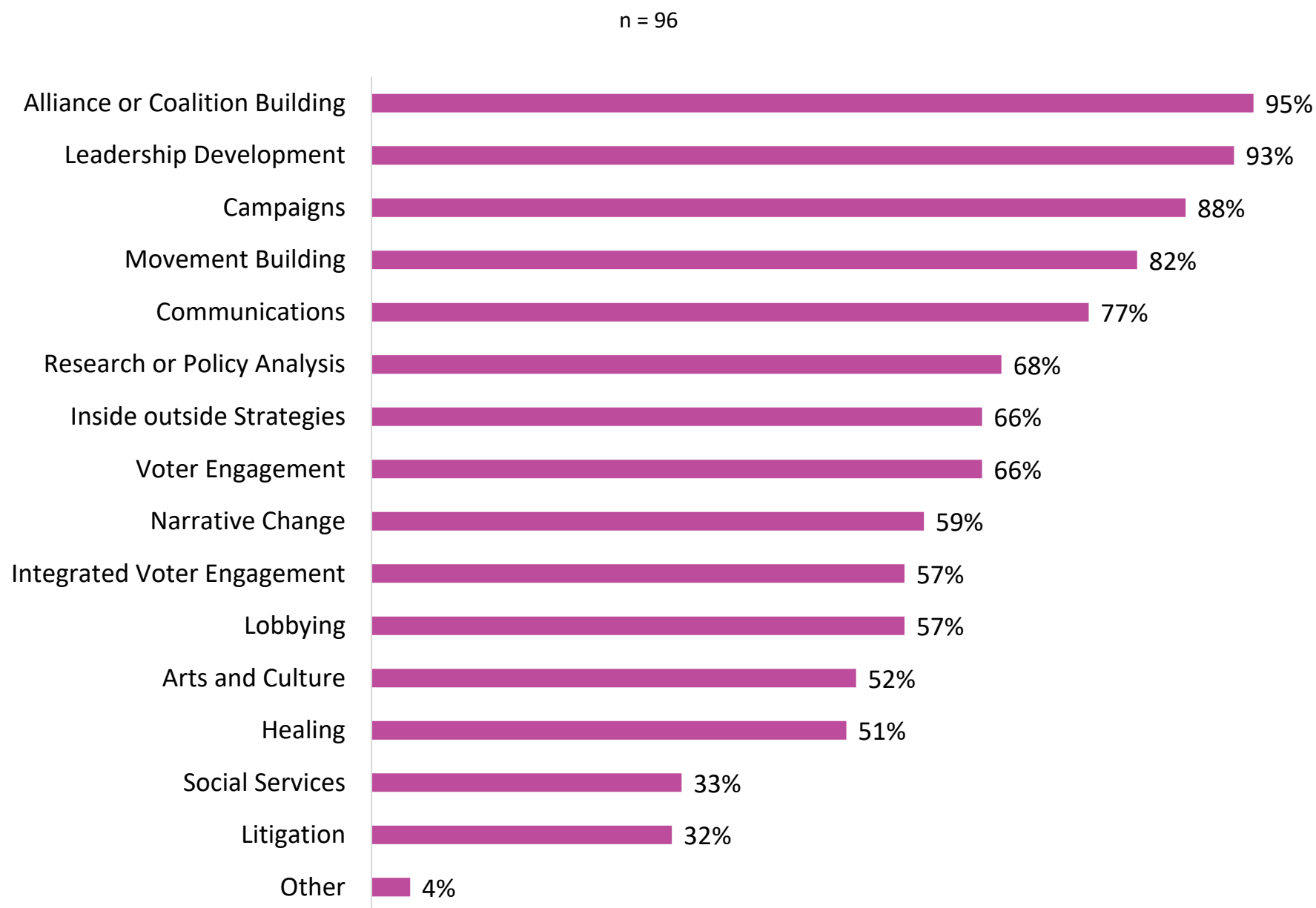
Issues, 2019



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Power-Building Strategies and Targets

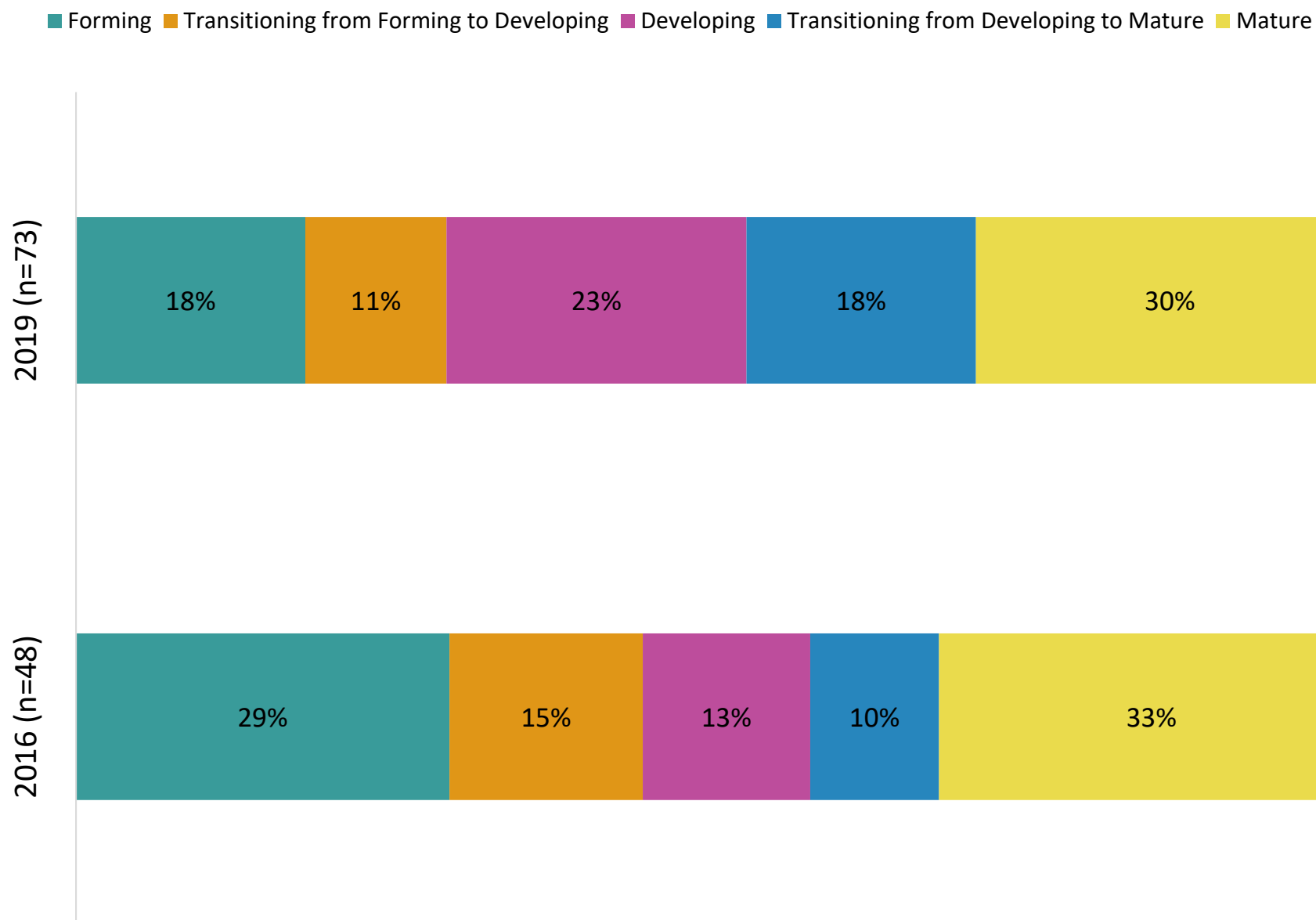
Strategies, 2019



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Power-Building Strategies and Targets

Stage of Development in Voter Engagement: 2016 and 2019

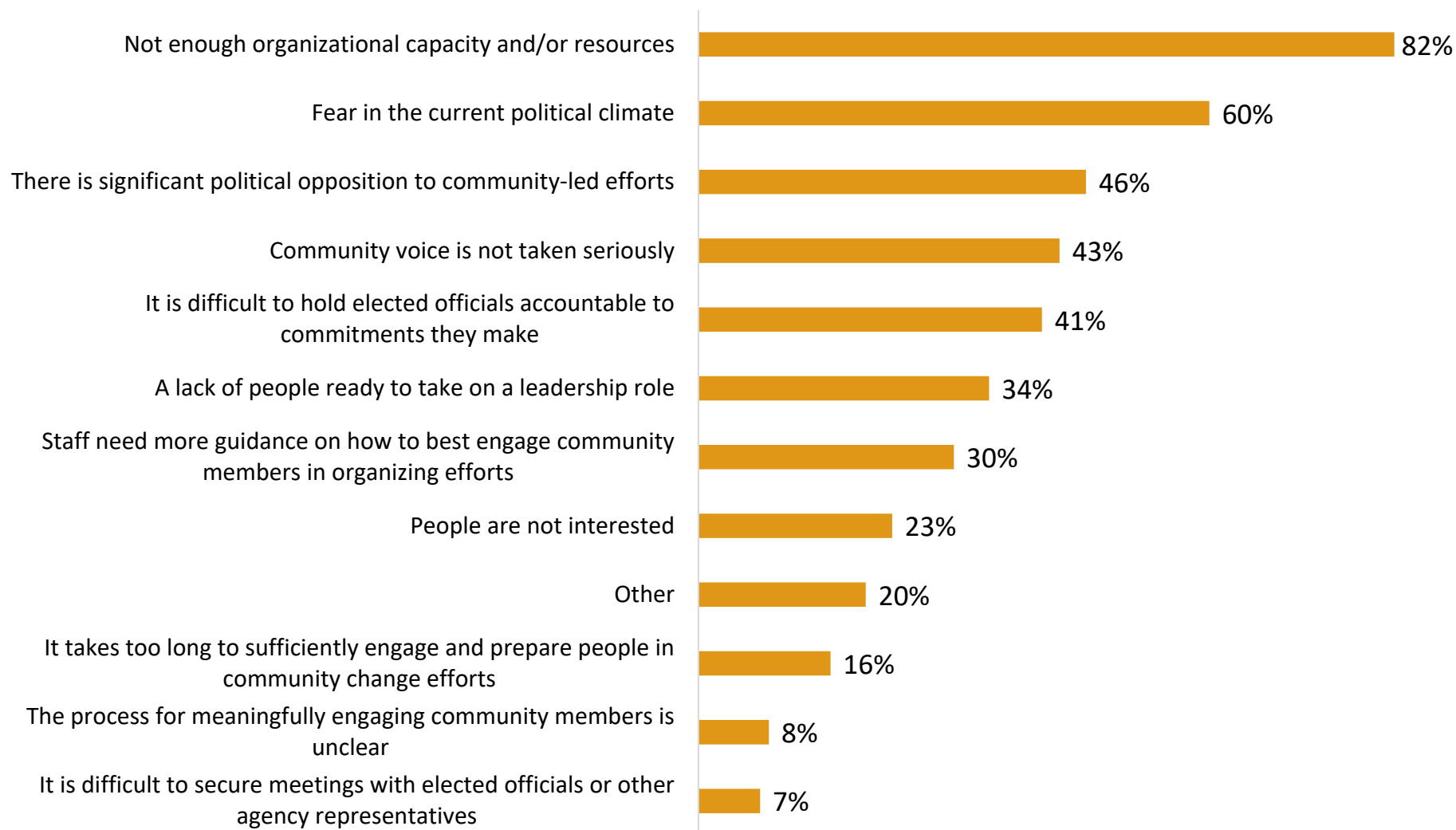


Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; 2019 percentages exclude those groups that marked "not applicable"

Organizing Capacity and Sustainability

Challenges Engaging People in Advocacy or Systems Change, 2019

n = 96



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Part IV. Collaborations in Building Power

Working in coalition with other organizations is the top power-building strategy of organizing and base-building organizations. Of the 104 respondents, 85 reported being a member of a formal alliance or coalition—and most are involved with multiple alliances. All together respondents listed over 300 names.

The top types of organizations that organizing groups collaborate with in their efforts to build power are:

- Policy advocacy (88%)
- Organizing / base-building (85%)
- Foundations (80%)
- Research (76%)
- Leadership development (75%)



Collaborations in Building Power

Types of Organizations, 2019



Source: TCE 2019 Community Organizing Survey; respondents could choose more than one option

Conclusion

Organizing is essential to building the voice, power, and influence of historically excluded populations over decisions that affect the health and well-being of their communities. Since the inception of Building Healthy Communities (BHC), The California Endowment (TCE) has funded organizing groups through the state. In a 2015-16 study of the impact of TCE funding in the 14 BHC places, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) found that:

- Populations impacted by health inequities who usually do not participate in decision-making are organizing.
- Residents are involved in campaigns in ways that develop their voice, leadership, and advocacy skills to influence decision-making processes.
- Organizing groups have more power and influence due to increased collaborations, primarily at the local level but increasingly at the county and state levels.
- The culture and dynamics of decision-making in BHC places are starting to shift.

The highlights of the 2019 survey of TCE organizing grantees:

- TCE funding continues to be critical to the community organizing component of the state's power-building ecosystem.
- Insufficient organizational capacity and/or resources is the top challenge that grantees face in engaging residents in policy and systems change.
- Racial justice is a top priority for grantees.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Ito (itojeni@usc.edu) or Madeline Wander (mwander@usc.edu).