



HELPING MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS GROW

ASSOCIATION ECONOMIC OUTLOOK REPORT

FALL 2020 / 2ND EDITION

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ASSOCIATION ECONOMIC OUTLOOK REPORT

METHODOLOGY



The Association Economic Outlook Survey was conducted online.



It was launched on July 20, 2020, and remained open until August 10, 2020.



541 association employees responded to this survey and form the basis of this report.



Margin of error is 4.2%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

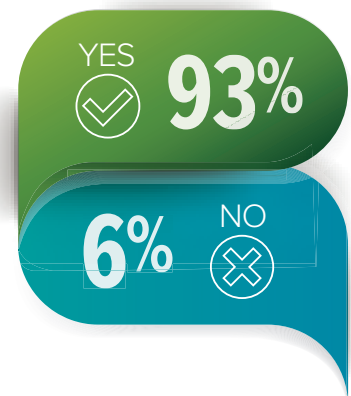
In 2019, Marketing General Incorporated (MGI) conducted its first Association Economic Outlook poll. We learned that, while a large portion of associations saw a potential recession on the horizon, many associations were not actively preparing for it, and very few indicated taking any proactive measures to mitigate the potential downturn. There was very much a “wait and see” vibe.

2020 has already proven to be much different than anyone could have ever imagined. We are now in a recession, officially beginning in February, as well as a global pandemic.

With that in mind, MGI conducted our second economic outlook poll to take the pulse of the association world. While some questions remained the same from 2019, new items were added to address the “new normal.”

While the challenges have been great, associations indicate that they are rapidly adapting to these challenges.

This quick pivot has been enabled by the removal of some obstacles and making some tough choices. For example, in 2019, participants pointed to institutional resistance (31%) and a slow board (30%) lacking agreement (25%) as significant obstacles to quickly responding to a potential recession. By 2020, each obstacle had decreased by about ten points. For associations during this time, necessity has indeed become the mother of invention. They have effectively streamlined their decision processes based on the significant challenges confronting them.

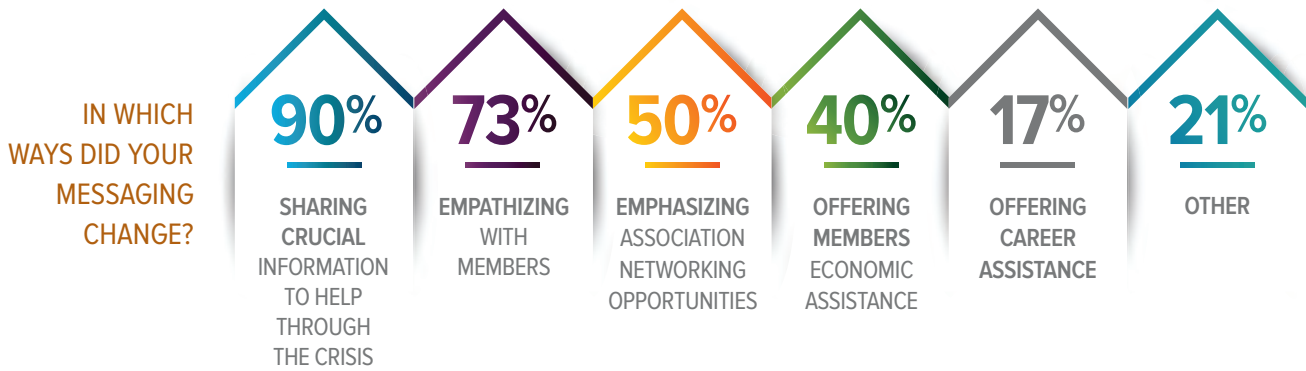


IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, HAS YOUR MESSAGING TO YOUR MEMBERS CHANGED?



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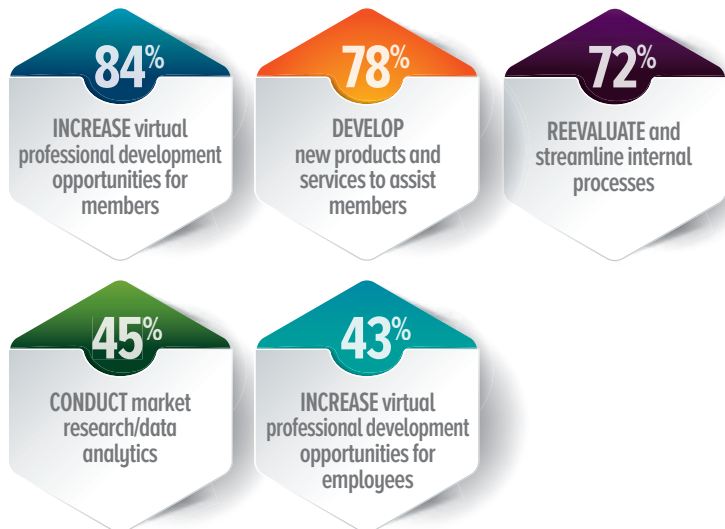


One of the most noticeable changes to come out of the research is that associations have made quick changes to their messaging to respond directly to the new environment. In response to the current pandemic, 93% say their messaging has recently changed. They are now focused on sharing crucial information to help members and companies through the crisis (90%).

Associations are also exploring new opportunities that they were not looking at in 2019.

For example, 78% of respondents indicate that their association is looking to develop new products and services to assist members; this is up from 68% in 2019. Likewise, there has been a dramatic increase in associations encouraging their staff to participate in virtual professional development opportunities (43% in 2020 vs. 18% in 2019).

WHAT NEW OPPORTUNITIES MIGHT YOUR ASSOCIATION EXPLORE DURING THIS RECESSION/PANDEMIC?

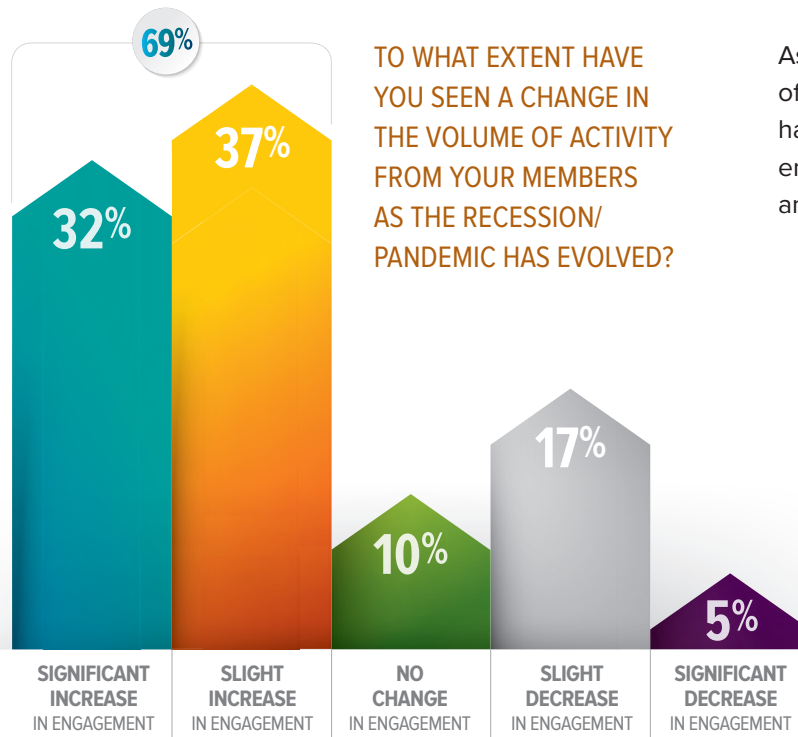
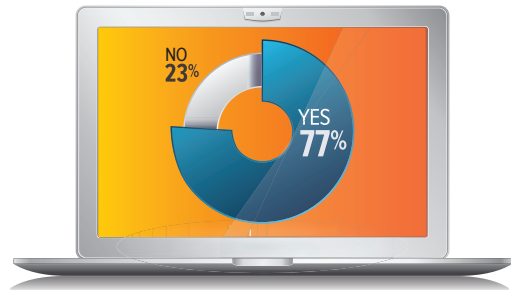


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In-person annual conferences – a major source of revenue for many associations – have been particularly affected by the pandemic, and again associations have pivoted quickly to make the most of a potentially bad situation.

78% of participants indicate their association had to postpone its annual in-person event, yet 77% of those were able to develop a virtual event in its place. That is no small feat and should be taken as a positive sign of how associations have adapted quickly when necessary.

DID OR WILL YOUR ASSOCIATION OFFER A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE IN PLACE OF THE IN-PERSON EVENT?



As a result of these changes, 69% of association executives say they have seen an increase in member engagement since the recession and pandemic began.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING HAS YOUR ASSOCIATION EXPERIENCED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC?



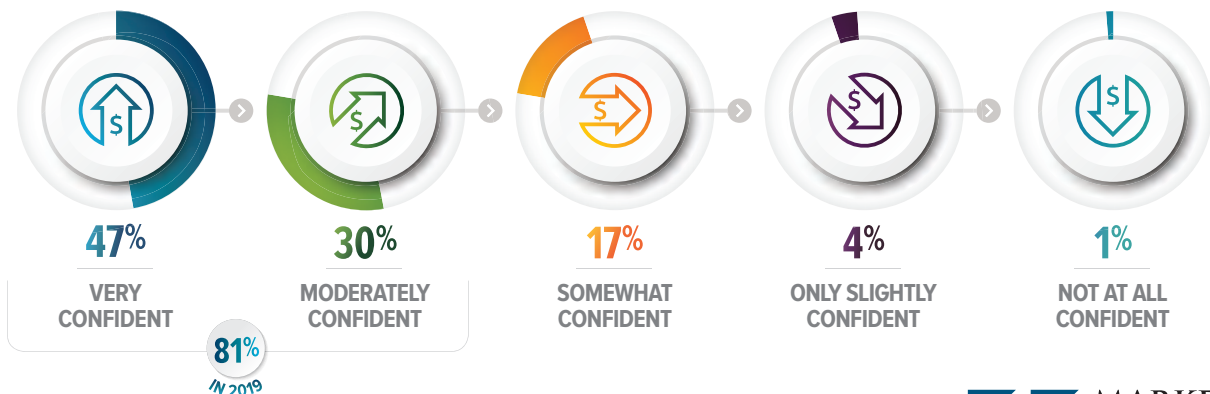
The research does highlight that significant challenges remain for associations.

39% say that they believe their membership counts will decline for the year. And because of the economic difficulties that they are facing, 20% of associations report reductions in salary/hours for employees, 18% report layoffs, and 10% report furloughs. Additionally, only 17% of respondents indicate that their association is offering career assistance. Given the sheer volume of individuals filing unemployment claims, offering career assistance would seem to be an easy opportunity for many associations to connect with their members. Even if associations already offer these services, it is worth reiterating this fact to members, many of whom may not realize this assistance is available.

Our research highlights that associations have been able to pivot and make enormous changes because of and under these challenging circumstances.

Because of this, most groups have a positive outlook for the future. 81% of respondents believe that their association will weather the recession and pandemic and continue to be able to serve their members. The ability to continue to adapt in 2021 will be critical to ensuring this happens.

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT YOUR ASSOCIATION WILL SUCCESSFULLY WEATHER THIS RECESSION/PANDEMIC?



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MESSAGING CHANGE



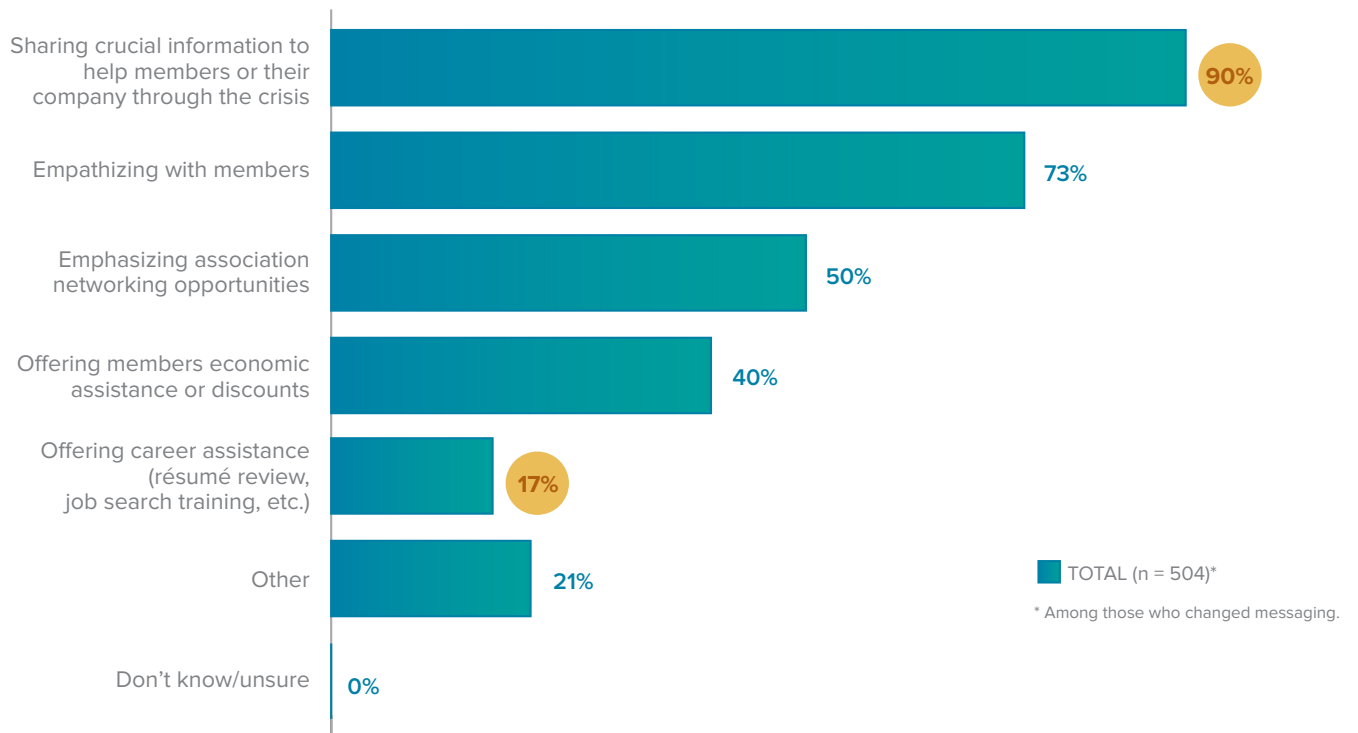
In the past few months, has your messaging to your members changed?



TYPES OF MESSAGING CHANGE



In which ways did your messaging change? Check all that apply.

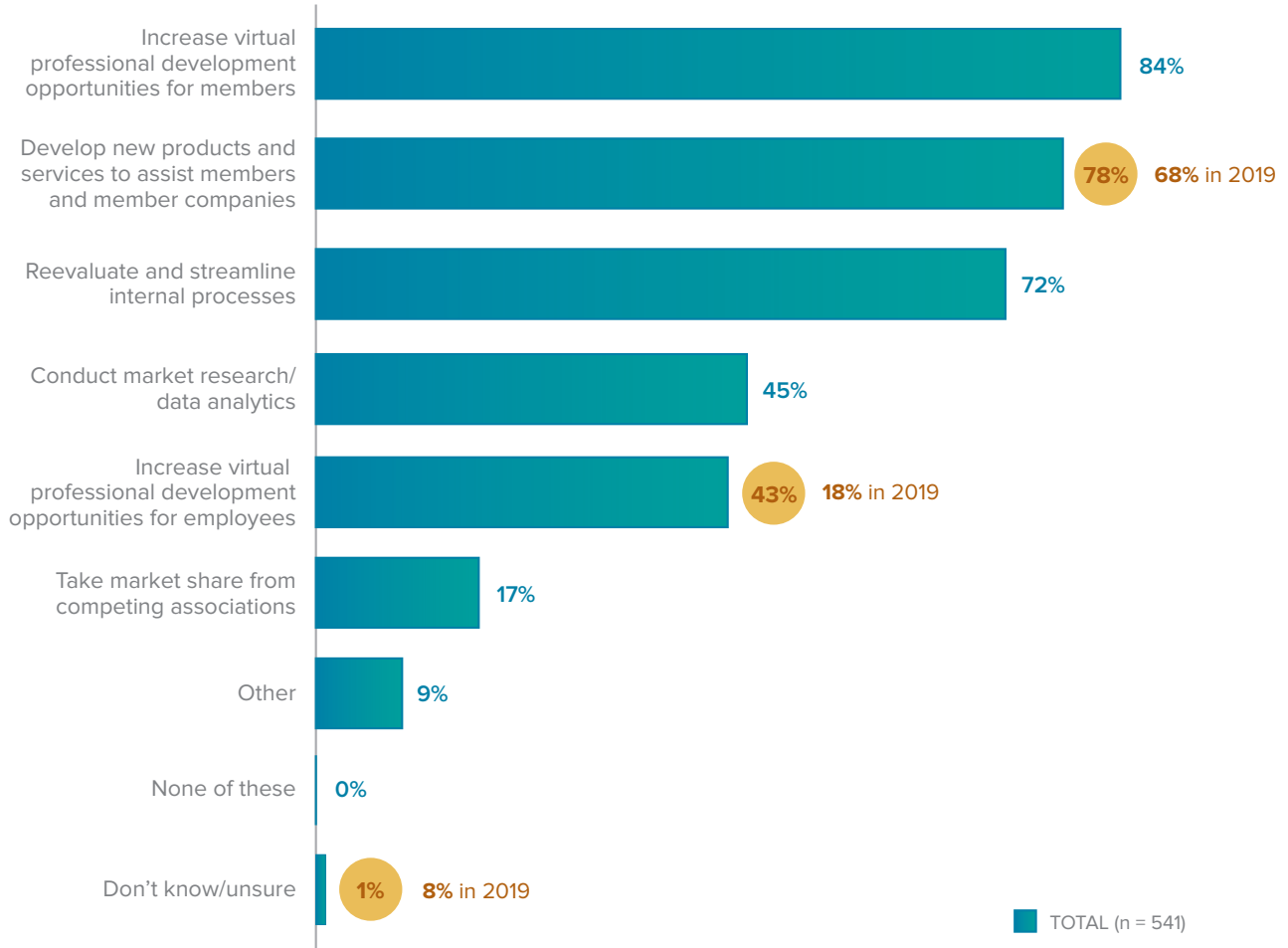


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NEW OPPORTUNITIES



What new opportunities might your association explore during this recession/pandemic? Check all that apply.

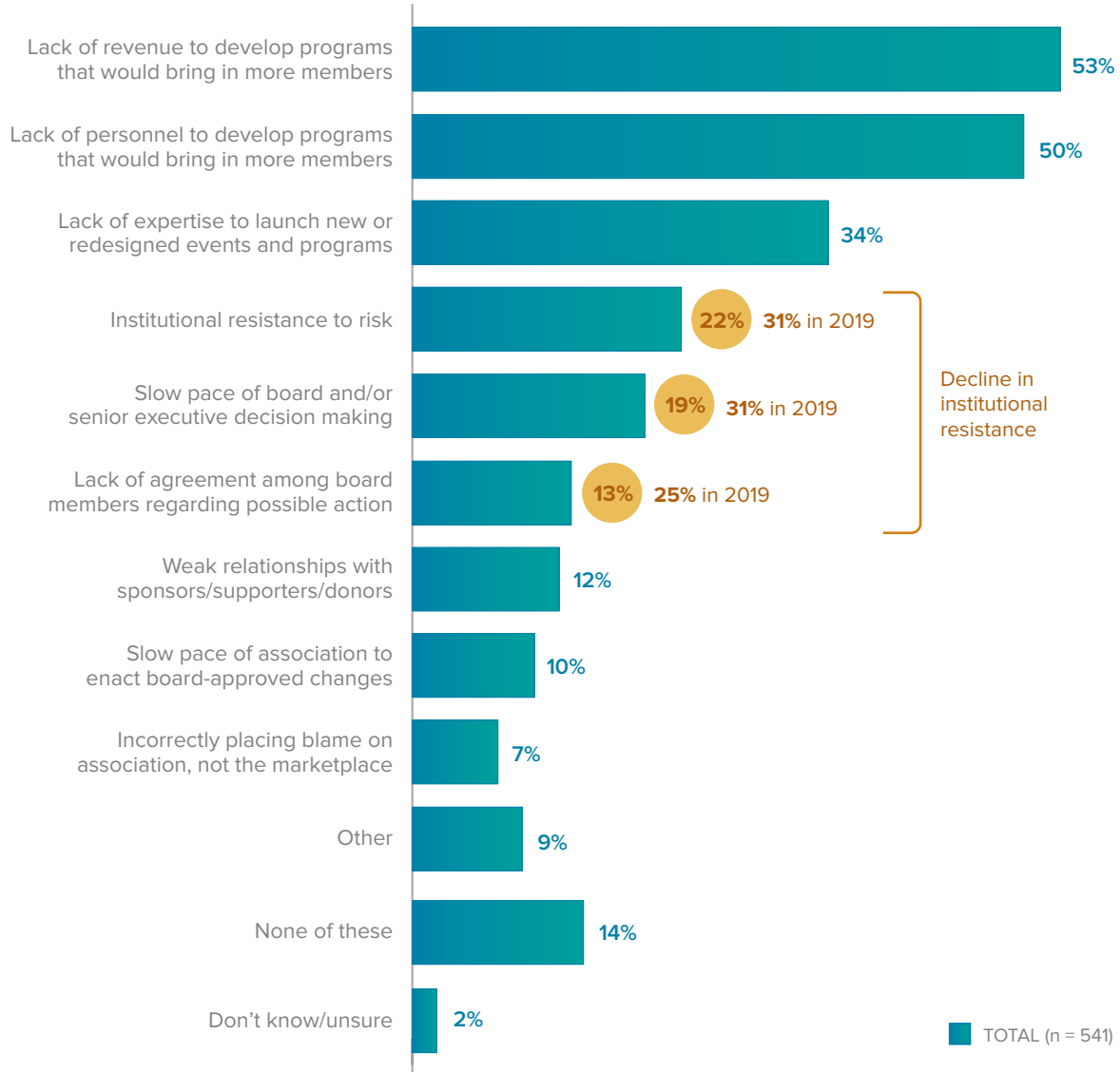


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OBSTACLES



What obstacles will affect how quickly your association can react to the economic recession/pandemic?

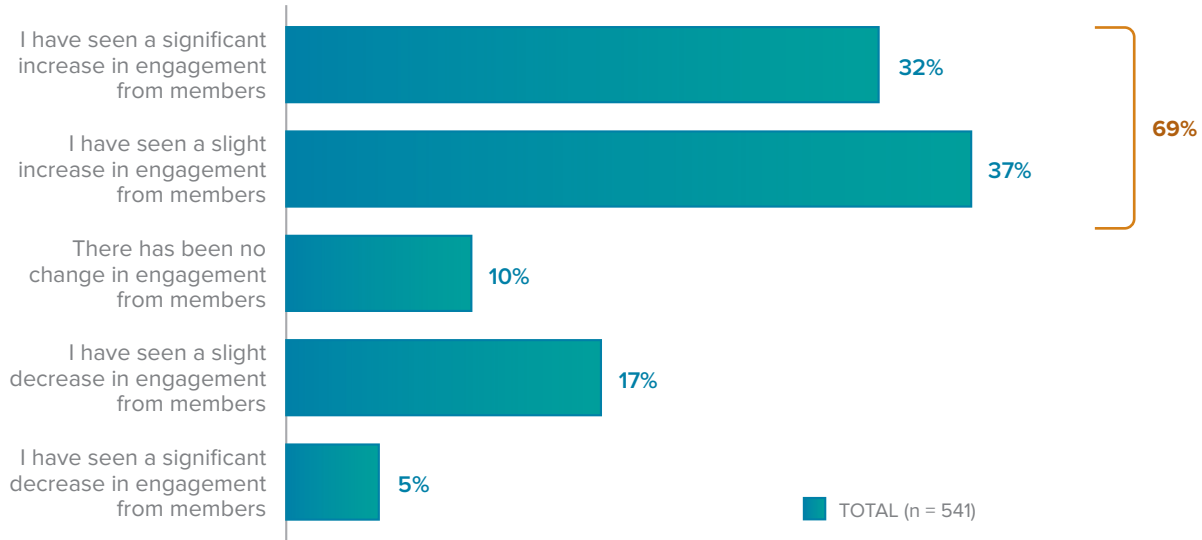


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CHANGE IN MEMBER ENGAGEMENT



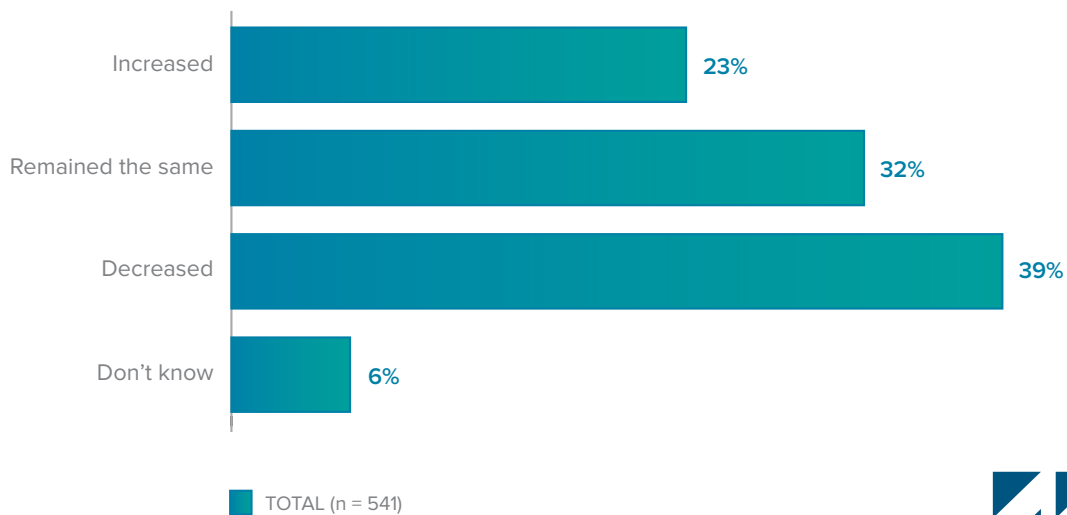
To what extent have you seen a change in the volume of activity from your members as the recession/pandemic has evolved?



FUTURE OF MEMBERSHIP



Thinking forward to next year at this time, do you anticipate that your membership will have...

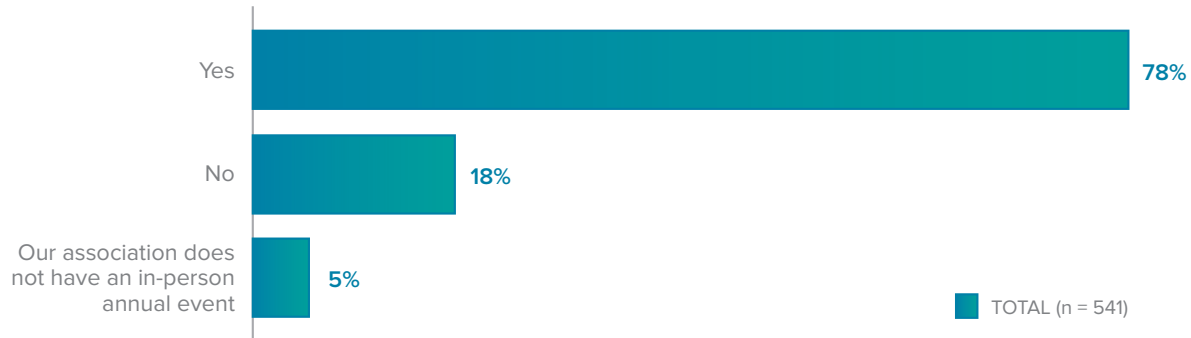


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IN-PERSON ANNUAL EVENT POSTPONED



Was your association's in-person annual event canceled or postponed in 2020?



VIRTUAL CONFERENCES



Did or will your association offer a virtual conference in place of the in-person event?



TOTAL (n = 420)

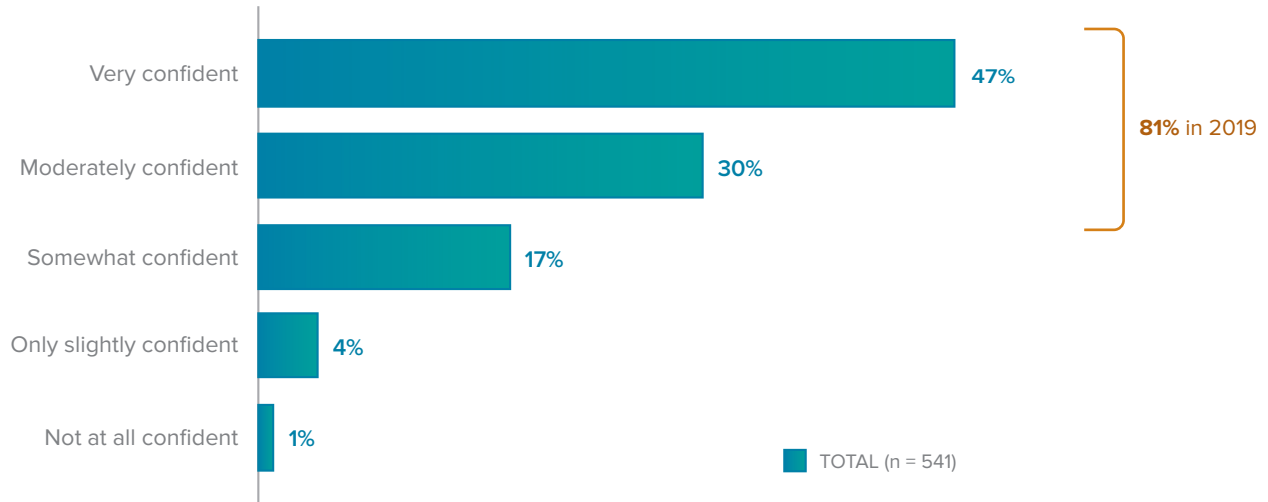
* Among those whose in-person event was postponed

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WEATHERING THE RECESSION/PANDEMIC



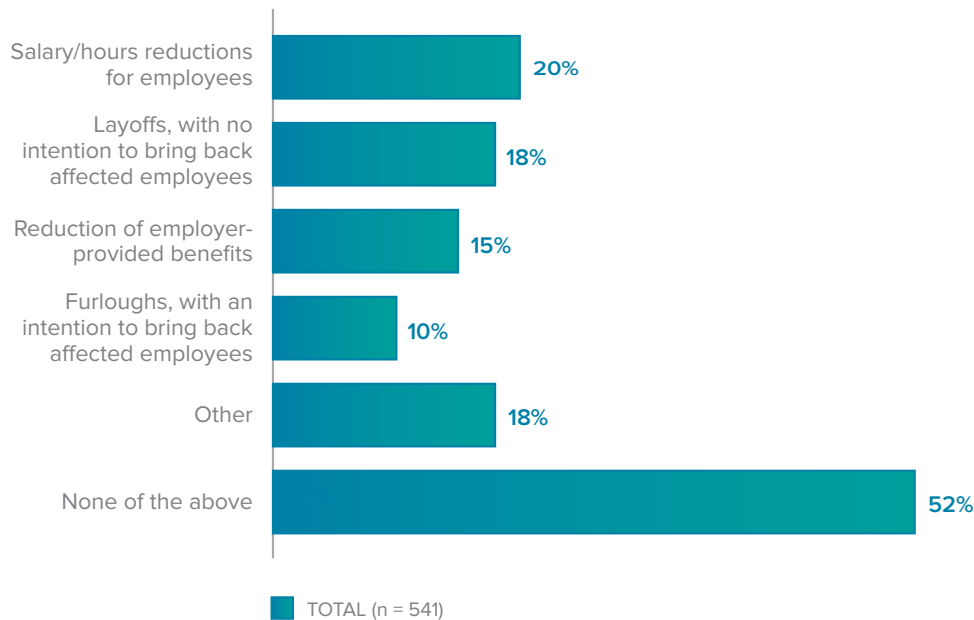
How confident are you that your association will successfully weather this recession/pandemic?



WORKFORCE CHANGES DURING PANDEMIC



Which, if any, of the following has your association experienced since the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020)? Check all that apply.

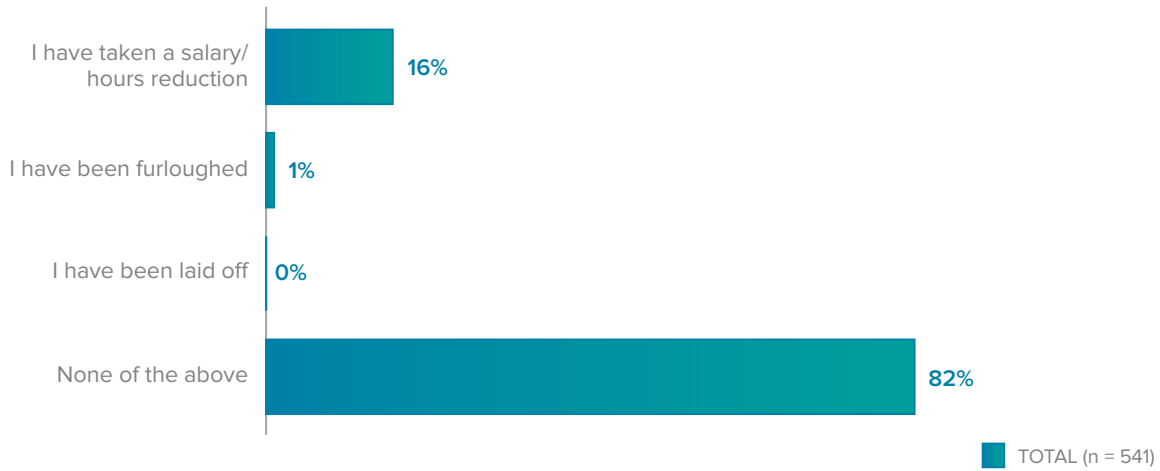


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CURRENT PERSONAL SITUATION



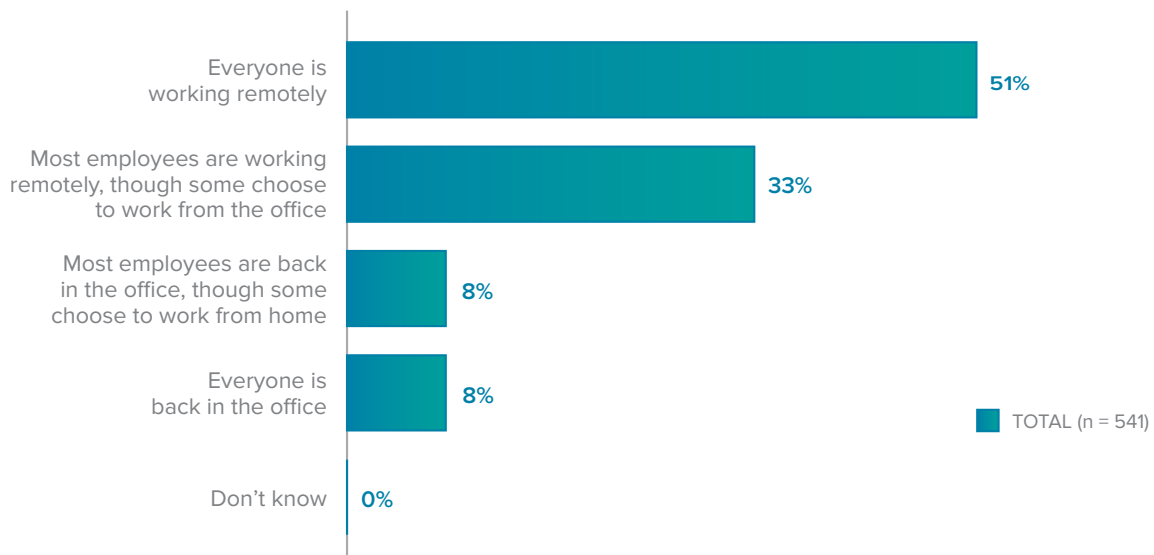
Which currently best describes your situation?



CURRENT OFFICE SITUATION



What is your association's current office situation?

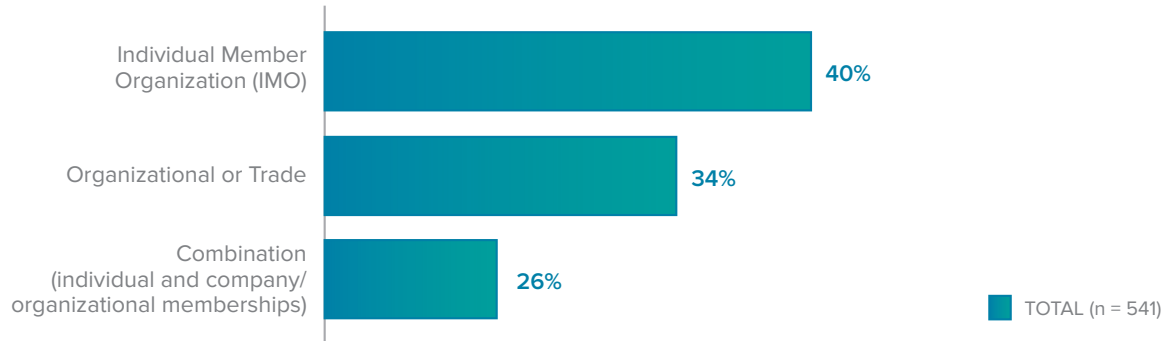


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TYPE OF ORGANIZATION



What type of membership offering best describes your organization?



ABOUT MARKETING GENERAL INCORPORATED

Marketing General Incorporated (MGI) is the nation's largest marketing agency working exclusively with membership associations. During the past 40 years, MGI has helped hundreds of associations and relationship-based organizations grow their membership, improve retention, enhance member engagement, increase dues and non-dues revenue, and gain new insights through market research and analysis.

The MGI team is comprised of experienced creative, data, digital services, research, production, and account management professionals ready to help your organization grow.



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