

A full-page background image of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a camel is being led by a man in a white kurta and turban. To the left, a woman in a yellow and red sari and another person in a yellow and black patterned shirt are walking. The sand dunes are vast and golden under a warm, low sun, creating long shadows and a textured surface with ripples. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

# CEO SURVEY REPORT

## NGO Leaders on Current & Future Change

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2021 NGO Futures

**MAY 2021**



## ABOUT INTERACTION

Founded in 1984, InterAction is the largest U.S.-based alliance of international NGOs and partners. We mobilize our Members to think and act collectively to serve the world's poor and vulnerable, with a shared belief that we can make the world a more peaceful, just, and prosperous place—together.

Learn more at [InterAction.org](https://www.interaction.org).

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## NGO Leaders on Current & Future Change

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome .....	4
Hot Topics .....	6
The Bottom Line.....	7
I. Enduring Trends .....	9
II. Organizational Change .....	11
III. Current Issues .....	24
IV. Support From InterAction.....	31
Endnotes .....	33

## WELCOME

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Ninety-five executives responded to the NGO Futures 2021 annual survey, representing the full spectrum of size and diversity across international development, humanitarian response, and advocacy organizations.

The data this survey produces tracks trends over time and supports peer learning, benchmarking, and the creation of more relevant learning spaces. Additionally, in this report, you will find CEO insights regarding perceptions and responses to the changing operating environment.

Awareness is one small initial step toward growth. We hope that you take the awareness created in this report and let it spark action within your organization. While reading, ask yourself:

- ▶ Is this true for my organization? Why?
- ▶ How does my own thinking compare with what I am reading?
- ▶ How do my organization's efforts at adaptation compare to these sector findings?
- ▶ Compared to where organizations here are on change, is my organization ahead? Behind? Why or why not?
- ▶ How do I feel about my organization's effectiveness?
- ▶ What programming or business strategy conversations does this spark for me?

Thank you to the 95 CEOs who made the time to share their insights during this unprecedented time.

Together we are stronger.

Deborah and George  
*2021 NGO Futures CEO Survey and Report Authors*





Photo by Deborah Espinosa

# HOT TOPICS

TOPIC	PAGE NUMBER
<b>Climate change and environmental degradation</b>	
Enduring trends	9
Program and operational changes	19
<b>COVID-19</b>	
Current issues	24
<b>Cultivating agility</b>	
Program and operational changes	18
Organizational change and perceived organizational effectiveness	20
<b>Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)</b>	
Enduring trends	9
Program and operational changes	18
Organizational change and perceived organizational effectiveness	21
Current issues	24
<b>Funding</b>	
Perceptions on external change, keeping up, and organization vulnerability	11
Significant finance-related changes	15
Current issues	24
<b>Power shift/power sharing/localization</b>	
Enduring trends	9
Program and operational changes	18
Organizational change and perceived organizational effectiveness	21
<b>Protection against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH)</b>	
Program and operational changes	18
Current issues	24

# THE BOTTOM LINE

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In January 2021, InterAction conducted its fourth-annual survey to assess and reflect back perceptions of the changing global development and humanitarian operating ecosystem, how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are responding, and where they want help. Ninety-five InterAction Member organization CEOs shared what the changing world means for their organizations.

Many respondents continue to see the external operating environment significantly changing. When it comes to keeping up with the rate of change, CEOs hold greater confidence in their organization overall than they do their governing boards. They are also more confident that their organization is keeping up than they have been over the past two years.

Simultaneously, a larger proportion of CEOs sense business model vulnerability in 2021 than in the year prior. The sense of vulnerability to business model disruption bifurcated this year—with larger NGOs reporting a greater sense of vulnerability.

## Where might organization size matter?

Larger organizations are more likely to agree that the external environment is changing, feel a bit more vulnerable regarding their business models, identify themselves as further along regarding environmental sustainability, DEI, and agility, and as much further along the change process regarding changes supporting PSEAH.

Prioritized action rose in 2021 for certain enduring trends. Poverty increasingly concentrated in fragile states rose from third in 2020 to top-ranked in 2021 for **individual organizations' action** and economic inequality increasing rose from fifth to second-ranked. Power shift/power sharing/localization leapt up from the lowest-ranking collective priority in 2020 to the fifth priority for **collective addressing** in 2021, and a noteworthy 34% of the 53 respondents cited working differently with local actors when commenting on promising initiatives, investments, and adaptations for ensuring future organizational effectiveness, accountability, resilience, and relevance.

Data from the survey showed that structural, program, and operational changes are going strong. Over half of all respondents develop, execute, or evaluate significant change in all polled program and operational change areas. On average, CEOs identify their organizations as furthest along concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion, followed by cultivating agility, protection against sexual exploitation, assault, and harassment, working differently with local actors, and finally, environmental sustainability practices. In most categories, organizational size is positively correlated with being further along the change spectrum.





Photo by Sumon Yusuf

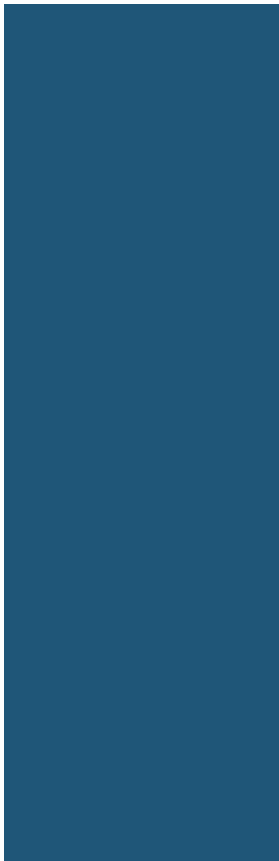


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# I. ENDURING TRENDS

We asked CEOs to identify and rank their top three out of ten enduring trends that require action—by their organization and by the collective InterAction community (Q1.1, Q1.2).<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Prioritized addressing of major enduring trends**

FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION TO ADDRESS	ENDURING TRENDS	FOR THE COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS
4 (tied)	Climate change and environmental degradation	1
3	Race and social justice/DEI	2
10	Trust declining in institutions (i.e., governments, charities, social media, media, corporations)	3
2	Economic inequality increasing	4
4 (tied)	Power shift/power sharing/localization	5
1	Poverty increasingly concentrated in fragile states	6
8	NGOs increasingly impacted by closing civic space and regulations	7
6 (tied)	Disinformation/misinformation proliferating	8
6 (tied)	Migration flows increasing	9
9	Digital security, data privacy, and the growing role of tech	10

Poverty increasingly concentrated in fragile states, economic inequality increasing, and race and social justice were the top three priority enduring trends for leaders' organizations to address. For the collective InterAction community, climate change and environmental degradation, race and social justice, and trust declining in institutions were rated as the top priorities.

While CEOs ranked trust in institutions as the third-highest priority for the collective InterAction community, they ranked it last for their own organizations. CEOs do not see digital security, data privacy, and the growing role of tech as a priority enduring trend for their organizations or for the collective InterAction community to address.

## Trends over time compared to prior years

**Climate change and environmental degradation prioritization hold strong**, maintaining the 2020 ranking as the top priority for collective action. It is also the most frequently chosen top-three action priority for individual organizations.

**Poverty and inequality are higher priorities.** Poverty increasingly concentrated in fragile states rose from third in 2020 to top-ranked in 2021 for organizational action. Economic inequality increasing rose from fifth to second-ranked for individual organizations.

**Power shift/power sharing/localization advanced** from the lowest-ranking collective action priority in 2020 to the fifth priority for collective action in 2021. Organizational prioritization of power shift and sharing held steady from 2020 to 2021 at fourth place. When asked to describe promising initiatives for ensuring future organizational effectiveness, accountability, resilience, and relevance, a noteworthy 34% of the 53 CEOs who wrote in responses mentioned working differently with local actors (Q2.8).

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

### Perceptions on External Change, Keeping Up, and Organization Vulnerability

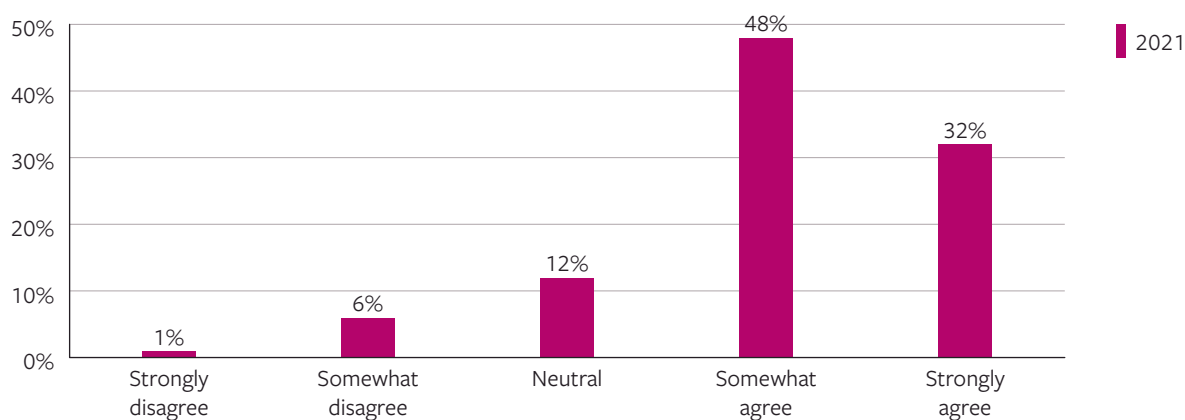
We asked CEOs to reflect on the overall rate of change in their external operating environment.

80% of respondents somewhat or strongly agree that the **external operating environment is significantly changing**. The larger the organization, the more likely the organization is to agree that the external environment is changing (Q2.1\_1).<sup>2</sup>

The overall distribution of responses is generally consistent with data from the three previous years, during which we saw agreement around foreseeing the operating environment significantly changing.

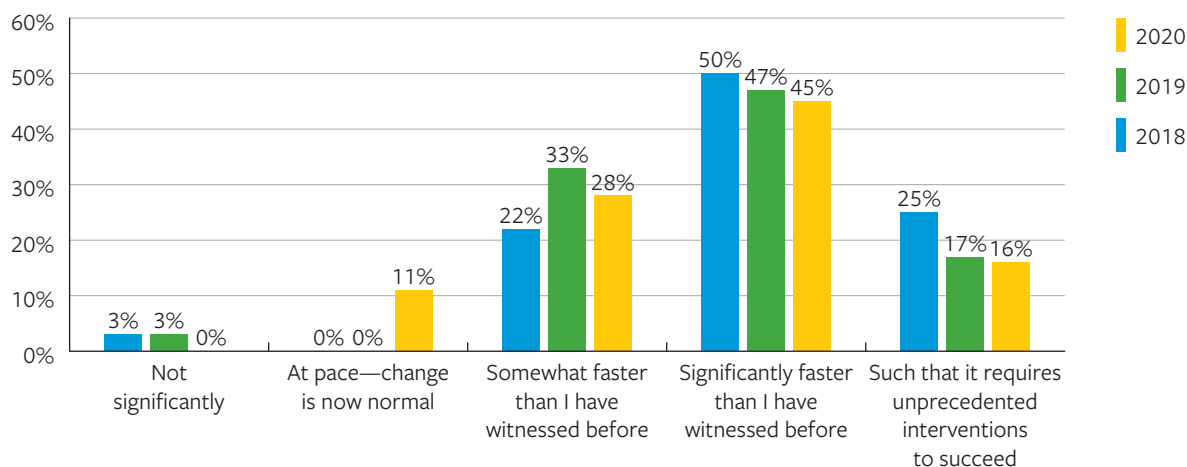
**Figure 1. Perceived rate of external operating environment change**

The external operating environment within which my organization operates is significantly changing.



**Figure 2. Anticipated rate of external operating environment change**

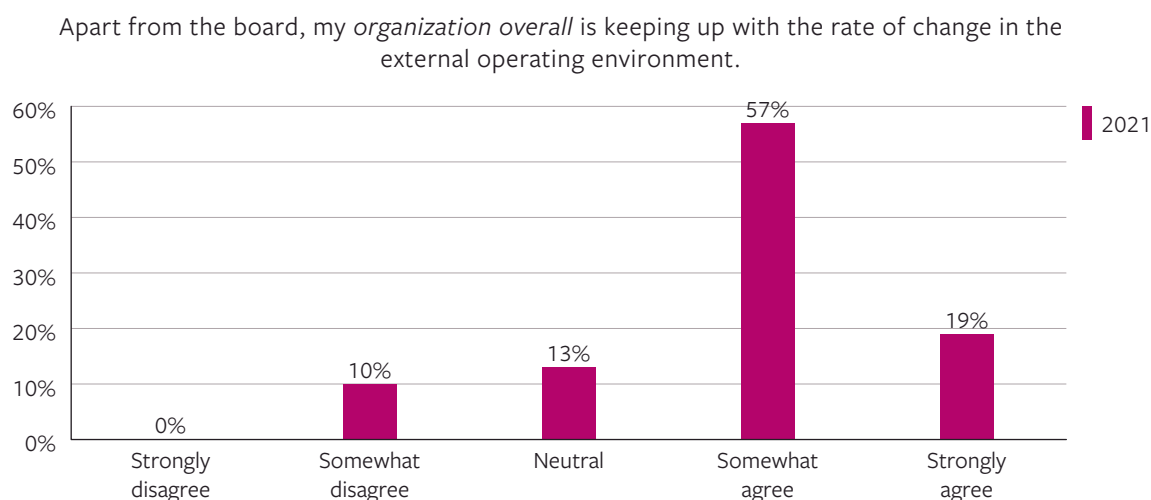
Over the next 10 years, I see the greater ecosystem within which my organization operates changing...



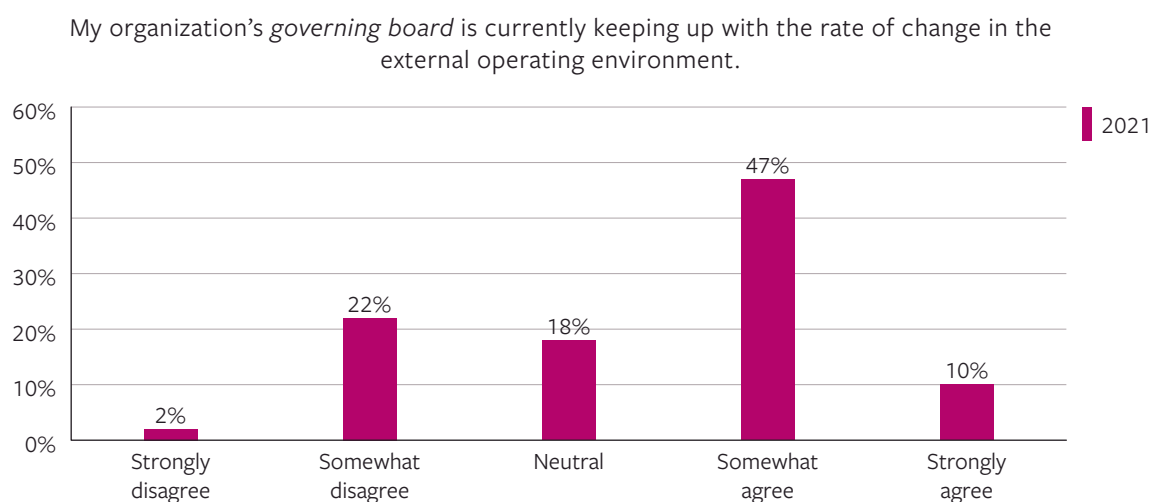


We asked about keeping up with the rate of change in the external operating environment separately for the governing board and for the organization overall.

**Figure 3. Organization keeping up with external change**



**Figure 4. Board keeping up with external change**



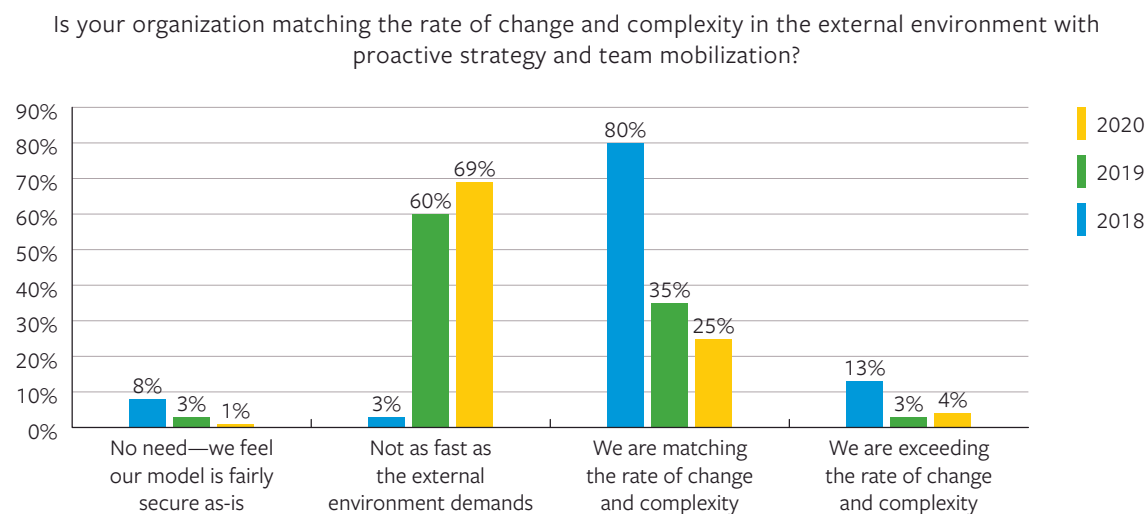
CEO confidence is stronger regarding their organization's overall keeping up with the rate of change compared to their governing board's.<sup>3</sup> 76% of CEOs somewhat or strongly agree that their organization is overall keeping up with the rate of change in the external operating environment; 57% of CEOs somewhat or strongly agree that their organization's governing board is keeping up (Q2.1\_3, Q2.1\_4).

Throughout survey responses, efforts referenced to strengthen boards included: board geographic representation, recruiting board competency, diversity of lived experience, recruiting a more representative and diverse board, collaborating with the board on a DEI roadmap, and adding new experienced board members to help achieve goals.

Compared to 2019 and 2020, 2021 data (see Figures 3 and 5) suggest increased confidence in organizations keeping up with the rate of external change.

In 2020, 69% of CEOs reported that their organization was not matching the external environment rate of change with proactive strategy and team mobilization. In 2021, only 10% indicate that their organization is not keeping up.

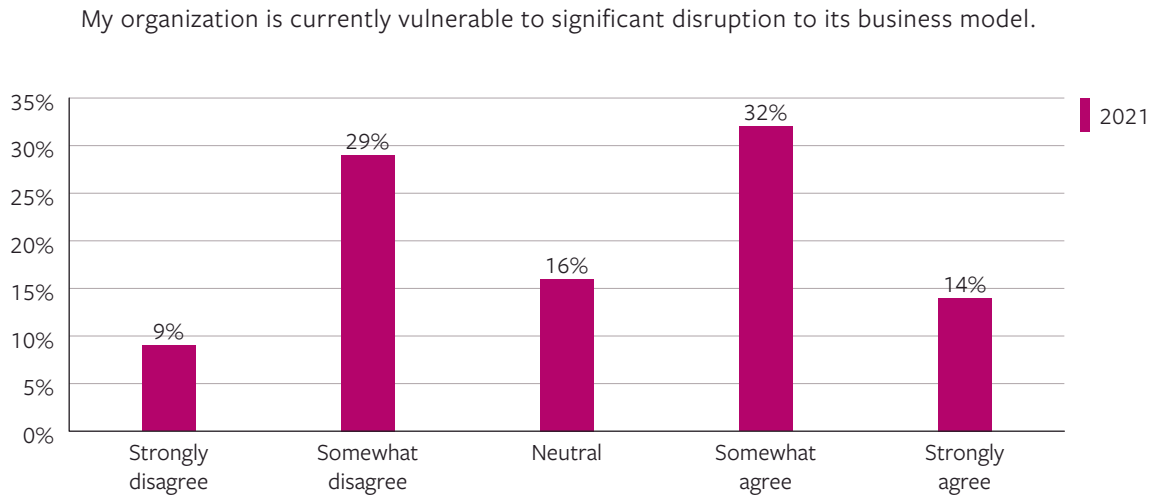
**Figure 5. Organization matching external rate of change 2018-2020**



## **■ We asked about vulnerability to significant business model disruption.**

Although CEOs felt mostly positive about keeping up with change in their operating environment (Figure 3), they had more concern when it came to their business model.

**Figure 6. Business model vulnerability**



In 2021, responses bifurcate toward agreeing or disagreeing regarding business model vulnerability. Smaller NGOs are slightly below neutral, indicating less vulnerability, while larger NGOs are slightly above neutral, indicating more perceived vulnerability (Q2.1\_2).<sup>4</sup>

Though there is increased confidence in the organization keeping up with the rate of external change (Q.2.1\_3), a larger proportion of CEOs sense business model vulnerability in 2021 than the year prior. In 2021, 46% of CEOs somewhat or strongly agreed that their organization is currently vulnerable to significant disruption to its business model. In 2020, 33% indicated that their business model was increasingly at risk or at risk.

**Figure 7. Business model stability 2019, 2020**





## **Significant finance-related changes:**

CEOs sprinkled comments on finances throughout open-ended responses (Q2.5, Q2.8, Q3.7, Q4.2\_3).

## **Changes and promising areas respondents mentioned include:**

- ▶ Making significant changes to the revenue model and to development/fundraising efforts, investing in fundraising, experimenting with new financial mechanisms, more emphasis on fee for service/social enterprise models, different revenue streams and funding models, impact investments, and local control of resources seeking to honor localization.
- ▶ Developing a new grant making system, expanding grantmaking flexibility, greater effort toward funding organizations not projects, developing a social loan investment program, and having crafted a specialized fund for partners' COVID-19 response activities.

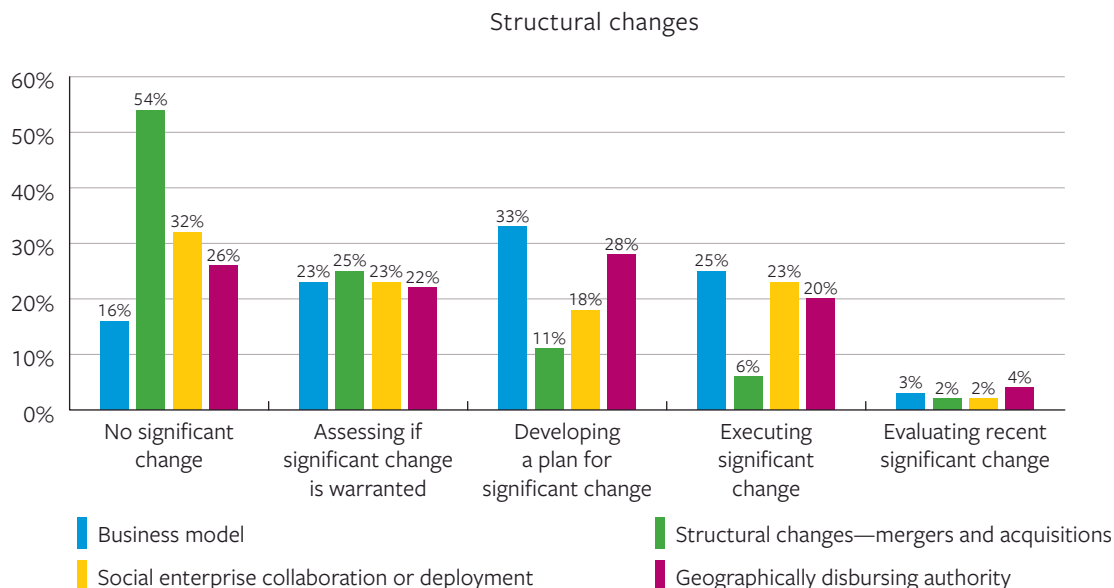
## **Challenges were also shared:**

- ▶ Challenges holding fundraising events; major upheaval in U.S. Government and other donor country governments; increased competition for traditional charitable funding; increased competition for resources between domestic and international; status quo and risk averse thinking among donors; the shifting resource landscape; changes in the funding landscape; uncertainty about the funding landscape; and shifting donor priorities toward COVID-19 relief, DEI, and climate over previous development priorities.

## Structural Changes

We asked about current stages of change regarding business models, mergers and acquisitions, geographically disbursing authority, and social enterprise efforts.

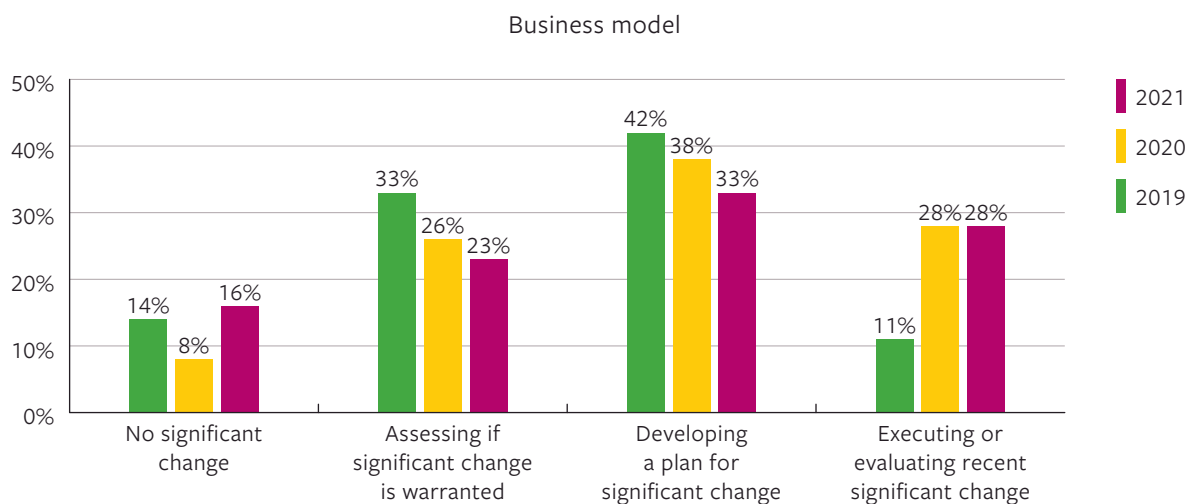
**Figure 8. Structural changes in action**



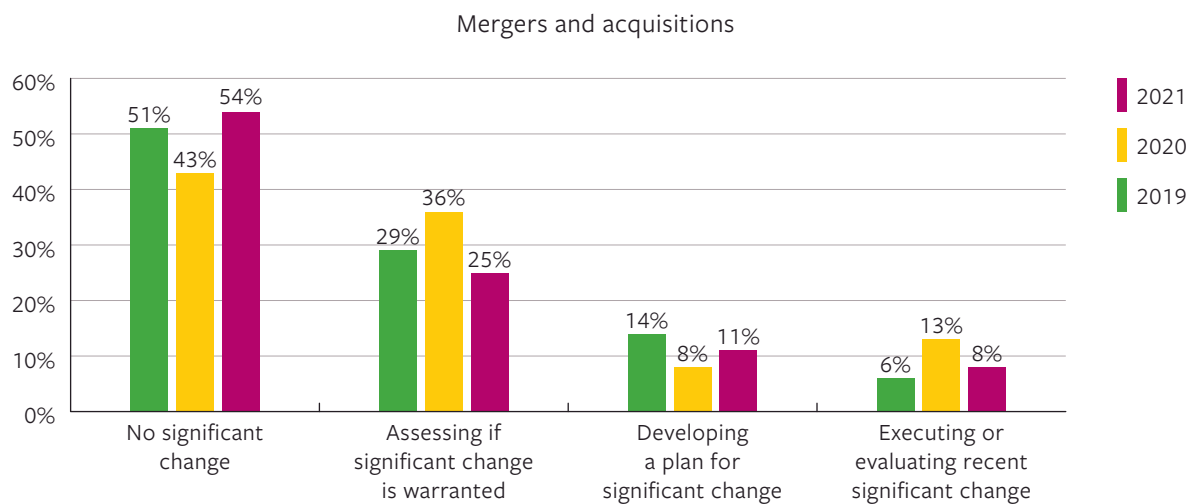
Overall, business model changes are slightly further ahead on the change spectrum, followed by geographically disbursing authority<sup>5</sup> and social enterprise collaboration or deployment (Q2.2).<sup>6</sup> Most (54%) respondents have no plans for mergers and acquisitions—leaving a substantial proportion of organizations exploring the potential.

Across the three structural change areas with previous years benchmarked—business model change, mergers and acquisitions, and social enterprise collaboration or deployment—there is a slight movement on the change spectrum toward “no significant change,” although the overall patterns are broadly consistent.

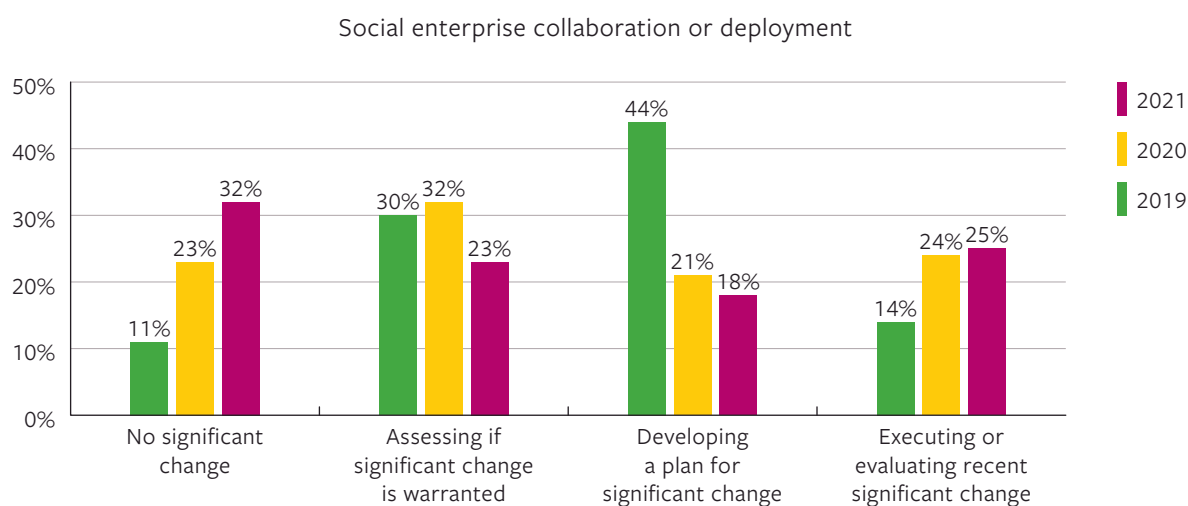
**Figure 9. Business model change in action**



**Figure 10. Mergers and acquisitions in action**



**Figure 11. Social enterprise change in action**



We continue to see minor variations reflecting NGOs' movements along the change spectrum in these different areas (Q2.2).



## Program and Operational Changes

We asked CEOs to rate specific operational changes according to where their organization is on the change spectrum (Q2.3).

**Table 2. Stages of operational change**

	Diversity, equity, inclusion practices	Cultivating agility	Protection against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment	Working differently with local actors	Environmental sustainability practices
1. No significant change	10%	19%	28%	20%	26%
2. Assessing significant change warranted	11%	16%	17%	25%	23%
3. Developing a plan for significant change	33%	23%	16%	20%	32%
4. Executing significant change	39%	38%	22%	31%	14%
5. Evaluating recent significant change	8%	4%	17%	2%	5%

**Over half of all respondents are developing, executing, or evaluating significant change in the five areas polled.** On average, CEOs identify their organizations as furthest along with respect to DEI (3.24, or slightly beyond developing a plan), followed by cultivating agility (2.91), PSEAH (2.83), working differently with local actors (2.70), and finally, environmental sustainability practices (2.51).

In most categories, organizational size is positively correlated with being further along the change spectrum. Large organizations identify as further along regarding environmental sustainability, DEI, and agility, and as much further along regarding changes supporting PSEAH.<sup>7</sup> For example, on a scale of 1-5, smaller NGOs averaged 2.2 on the environmental sustainability practices change spectrum, a bit beyond assessing if significant change is warranted. Larger NGOs averaged 2.8, closer to planning change. Size is not correlated with the stage of change for working with local actors.<sup>8</sup>

### Working Differently with Local Actors

When asked about promising initiatives, investments, and adaptations for ensuring future organizational effectiveness, accountability, resilience, and relevance, **34% of the 53 respondents mentioned working differently with local actors.** See *below*, Q2.8.

## Environmental Sustainability Practices

CEOs commented on environmental sustainability practices throughout open-ended responses.

- ▶ **Broad comments:** “Greening,” “Move to act in a more environmentally sustainable way.”
- ▶ **Integrated nature of climate change:**
  - ▷ “Embedding environmental and financial sustainability into all that we do,” “bringing the consideration of climate change mitigation into every aspect of the work - from field programs to the offices.” “Adaptation: Through Initiatives and Investment to build resilience against the effects of global warming and climate change. Build strong communities that prevent the need to flee and become climate refugees.”
  - ▷ “Further knock-on effects from COVID = Harder to get access to populations in great need, and all this is exacerbated by the effects of climate change in this region of West and Central Africa.” “Impact of climate change on humanitarian issues, economic growth, etc.”

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment

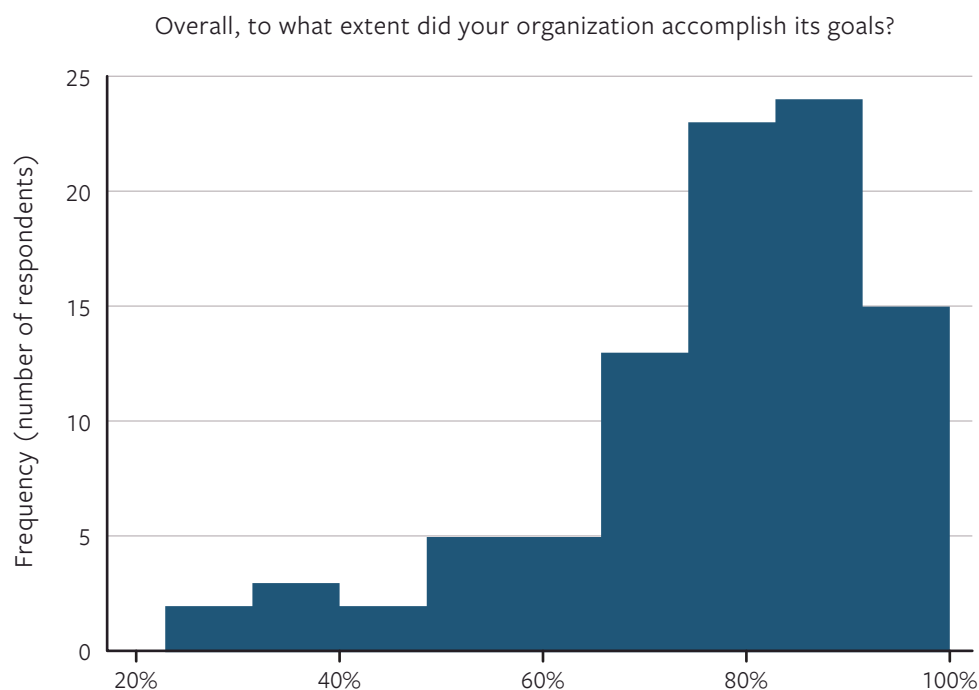
About 80% of CEOs indicate that their organization is actively making operational changes regarding DEI practices, whether in the plan development, execution, or evaluation phase of significant change. For PSEAH, the figure is about 55%. (See below, Q2.8, Promising Initiatives, and III. Current Issues for further exploration of DEI and PSEAH.)

## Organizational Change and Perceived Organizational Effectiveness

We asked respondents to rate their organization's effectiveness on a percentage scale (Q2.7\_1).<sup>9</sup>

Overall, respondents indicated an average of about 77% effectiveness for their organizations. The median value is about 80%.

**Figure 12. Organizational effectiveness**



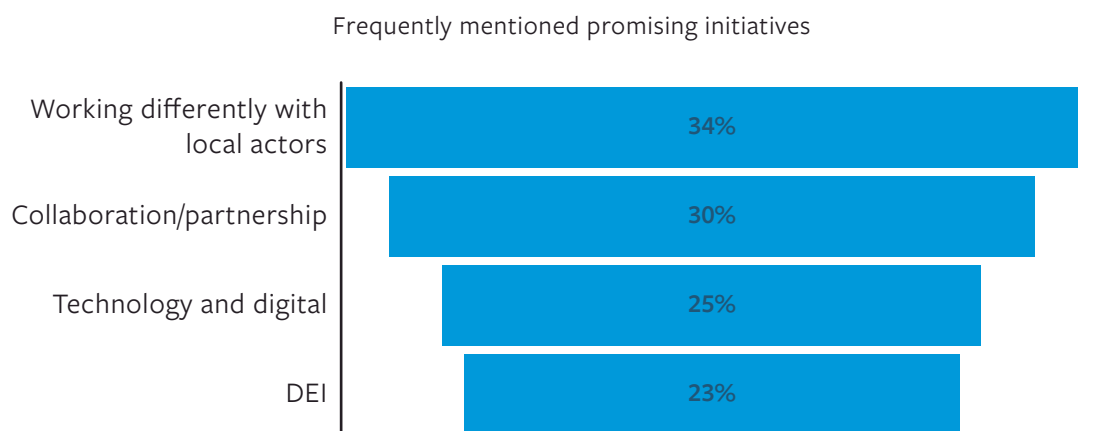
Being one step further along the change spectrum for **cultivating agility** is associated with a 4.6 percentage point increase in perceived **organizational effectiveness** (Q2.3\_5, Q2.7\_1).<sup>10</sup>



## Promising Initiatives

We asked CEOs what kinds of initiatives, investments, and adaptations they see NGO leaders undertaking that seem promising for ensuring future organizational effectiveness, accountability, resilience, and relevance.

They responded by writing in their own comments (Q2.8).



Fifty-three people responded to this question. Of those people, 34% mentioned working differently with local actors, 30% mentioned collaboration/partnerships, 25% mentioned technology and digital, and 23% mentioned DEI.

### Working differently with local actors

#### ► Broad comments:

- ▷ “Focus on localization and decolonizing aid”
- ▷ “Pushing toward greater localization”
- ▷ “Rethinking how we deliver programming, support localization more effectively”
- ▷ “Kicking off a holistic process of how we actually live and ‘do’ localization and what needs to change”

#### ► Building resilience, partnering, and collaborating locally:

- ▷ “Investment has to be made to offer opportunities and build resilience in local situations”
- ▷ “Local investment and shifts in responsibility, initiatives to combat Covid-19 locally and continued recognition of the importance of being locally responsive”
- ▷ “Localization, building resilience, incorporation of new ideas and risk taking”
- ▷ “Investing in and working with local leaders”
- ▷ “Increased collaboration with local actors: government, NGO and private sector, and collaboration across sectors”
- ▷ “Partnerships with local actors”
- ▷ “Training staff on ‘Shared Value’ approaches; Transferring key strategic functions to the field”
- ▷ “Changes in staffing patterns away from expats and toward host country nationals”
- ▷ “Localization of aid workers, decentralization”
- ▷ “More local control of data and resources”

- ▷ “Foundational priorities are changing in terms of focusing on locally oriented organizations versus international development ones”
- ▷ “We are carrying out a staff led initiative to adapt our organizational goals and practices to be in line with becoming an anti-racist institution and decolonizing our programs.”

## Collaboration/Partnership

- ▶ **Internally:** “Cross program work teams.”
- ▶ **Sectorally:**
  - ▷ “Uniting efforts on PSEAH, D/I, Advocacy, and scaling strategies”
  - ▷ “Developing new partnerships,” “Collaboration,” “Different kinds of collaborations,” “Increased coalitions/partnerships”
  - ▷ “Cross-program work teams”
  - ▷ “Collaboration for peace and development”
  - ▷ “Increased collaboration with local actors; collaboration across all sectors”
  - ▷ “Affiliation with larger organization with broader scope to allow multisectoral approaches”
  - ▷ “Focus on collaboration within the NGO sector”
  - ▷ “Aggressively developing partnership to leverage investment”
  - ▷ “Being more selective and invested in deep partnerships for impact”
  - ▷ “Developing new funding models and partnerships”
  - ▷ “Mergers and partnerships of all kinds”
  - ▷ “Banding together at national level or significant subnational level to create coordinated action to ‘blanket’ the entire area with strong development practice.”

## Tech and Digital

- ▶ “Technology platforms that drive metrics/data, innovation, and learning”
- ▶ “Digital technology investments”
- ▶ “Use of technology – Collaboration; Move to digital and online on all fronts (operations, fund development)”
- ▶ “Tech platforms for management, especially resource management”
- ▶ “Use of remote sensing in evaluating program effectiveness”
- ▶ “Digitalization”
- ▶ “Starting to think about a digital transformation, touching all of our business models and operations”
- ▶ “Automated digital processes and data science”
- ▶ “Investing in technology to automate various functions”
- ▶ “More local control of data and resources; more reliance on tech”
- ▶ “Most NGOs have been forced to pivot significantly to remote working and use of technology and this is going to continue to be an area of investment that is needed for the future.”

## DEI

- ▶ **Making significant changes:** “I see this confluence of COVID + racial justice + repudiation of ‘America First’ as a time of huge opportunity for this sector to make significant changes to stay relevant. I believe those who don’t adapt will become less relevant over time. NGOs need to get out of the echo chamber.”
- ▶ **Adapting goals and practices:** “We are carrying out a staff-led initiative to adapt our organizational goals and practices to be in line with becoming an anti-racist institution and decolonizing our programs.” “Being pro-equity,” “Investing in equity.”
- ▶ **Diversifying people:** “Move to diversify team members at all levels,” “Recruiting board competency as well as diversity of lived experience.” “The need for both organizational agility and inclusiveness.”

### III. CURRENT ISSUES

In 2020, many NGOs increased their commitments to **diversity, equity, and inclusion** and protection from sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment while contending with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### COVID-19 Knock-On Effects

Figure 13. COVID-19 funding impacts

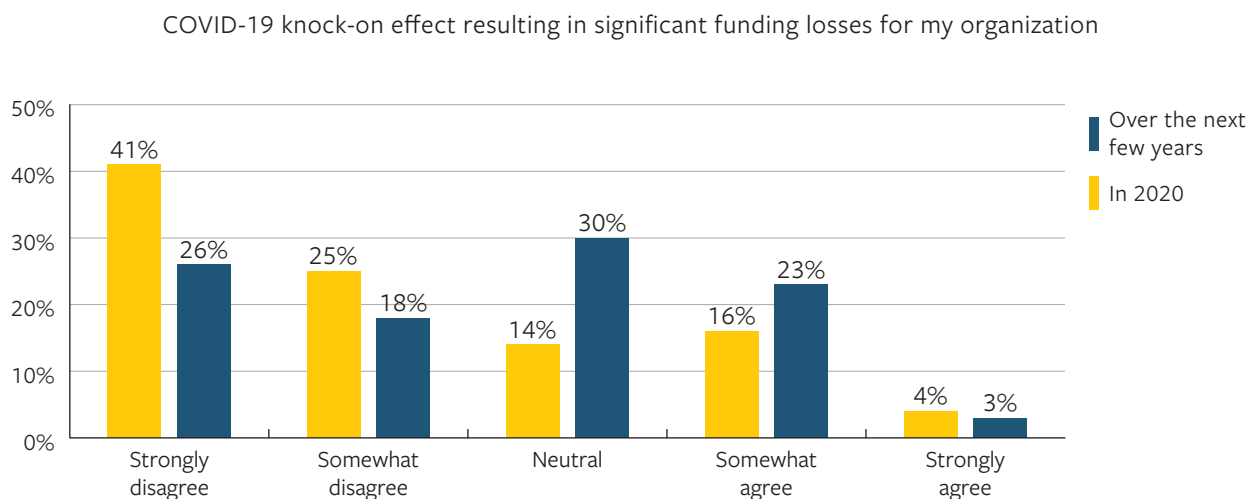
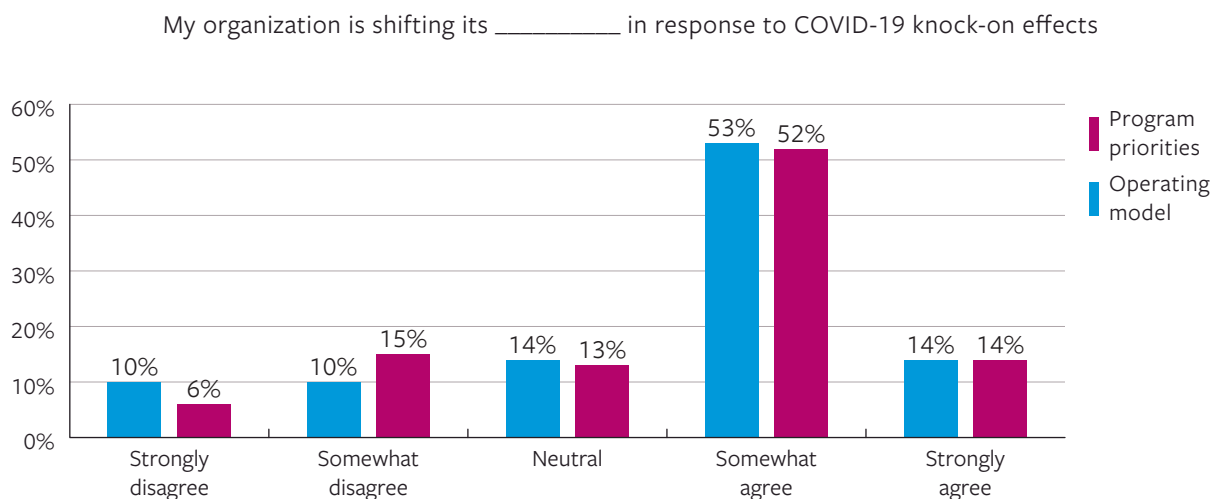


Figure 14. COVID-19 inspired changes





About two-thirds of CEOs are shifting their operating models and program priorities in response to COVID-19 (Q3.1\_3, Q3.1\_4). Although most respondents did not experience or expect significant funding losses due to COVID-19, they foresaw more negative effects ahead over the next few years compared to what they experienced in 2020 (Q3.1\_1, Q3.1\_2).<sup>11</sup>

Three common topics came up open-ended remarks related to COVID-19.

**Stress of finances and needs:** Of the 40 CEOs responding to an open-ended question about other current issues impacting their organization this year, 43% commented on finances (Q3.7).

As shared by one CEO, “post-pandemic future—how will the upcoming austerity impact poverty reduction work?” Another expressed concern about the “dramatic increase in extreme poverty due to COVID.” Another highlighted the rising challenge from related increased malnutrition and the challenge of balancing COVID-19 response and growing needs with critical ongoing programs.

**Impact of remote work:** In open-ended responses, CEOs mentioned significantly greater openness to remote work and virtual operations, debates regarding keeping the headquarters office space, travel limitations impacting models, and increased remote delivery of services.

**Impact on wellbeing:** Some CEOs also wrote about staff wellbeing concerns:

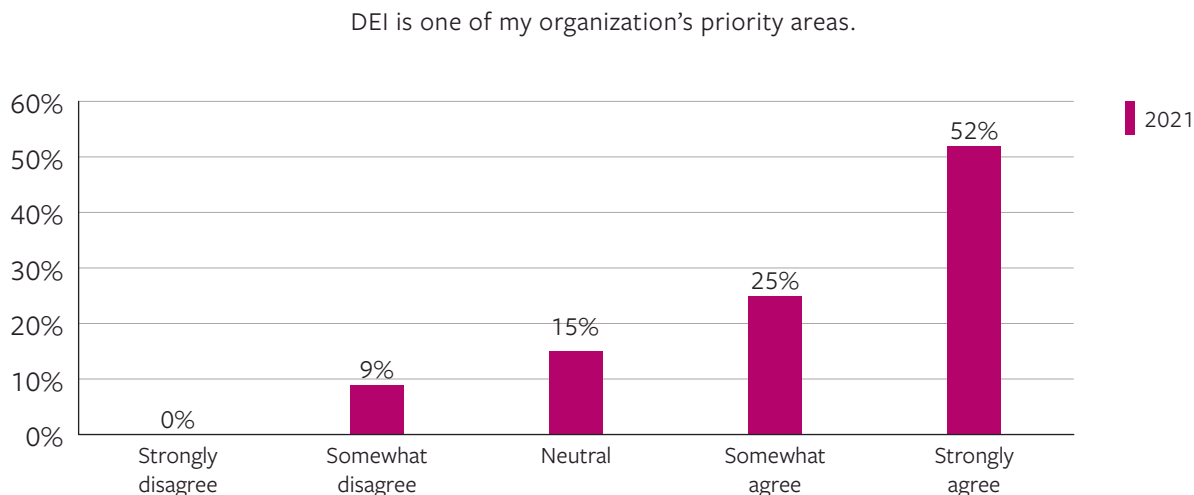
- ▶ “staff mental health/motivation in relationship to remote work/COVID stress”
- ▶ “employee fatigue”
- ▶ “staff wellbeing and burnout”
- ▶ “staff morale due to ongoing lockdowns”

We explored more deeply CEO perspectives and efforts related to DEI and PSEAH—two areas with active InterAction programs introduced in 2020 and 2019, respectively, to help Member organizations evolve.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

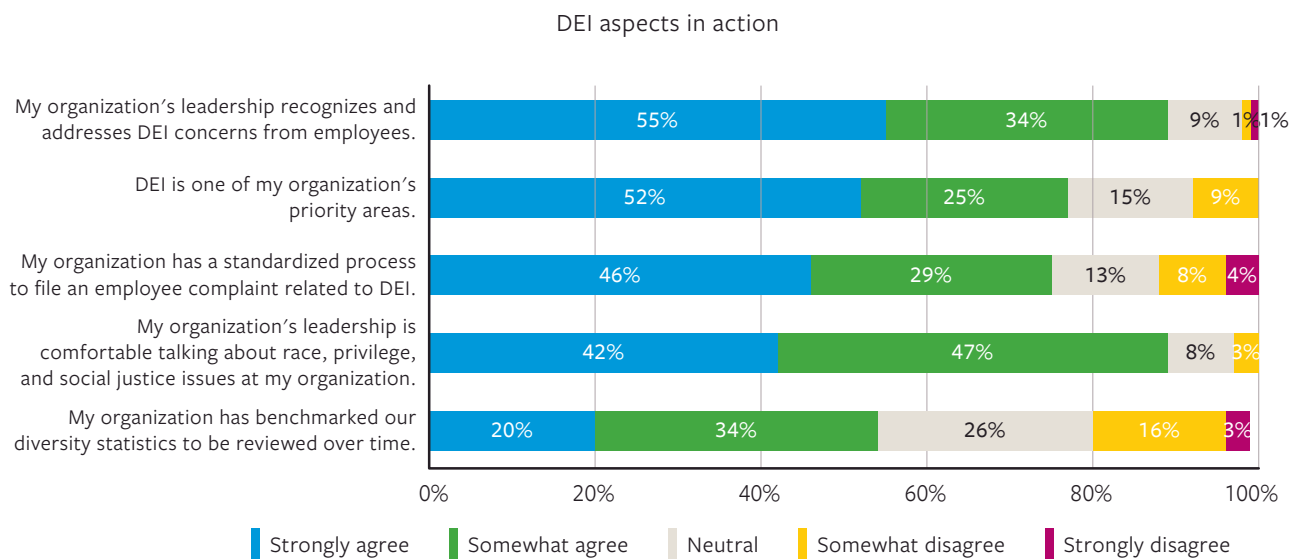
Race and social justice/diversity, equity, inclusion is a priority area for most CEOs. Over half of CEOs strongly agree that DEI is one of their organization's priority areas and an additional quarter somewhat agree (Q3.2\_1).

**Figure 15. Prioritizing DEI action**



We polled five specific aspects of DEI in action.

**Figure 16. DEI aspects in action**



CEOs most strongly agree that their organization's leadership recognizes and addresses DEI concerns from employees (55%), followed by DEI is one of my organization's priority areas (52%) (Q3.2).

Data suggest two potential areas for future growth: benchmarking and standardized procedures.

- ▶ 19% of respondents disagreed somewhat or strongly that their organization engages in benchmarking to improve DEI.
- ▶ 12% of respondents disagreed somewhat or strongly that their organization has a standardized process for addressing DEI related complaints.

## DEI at InterAction

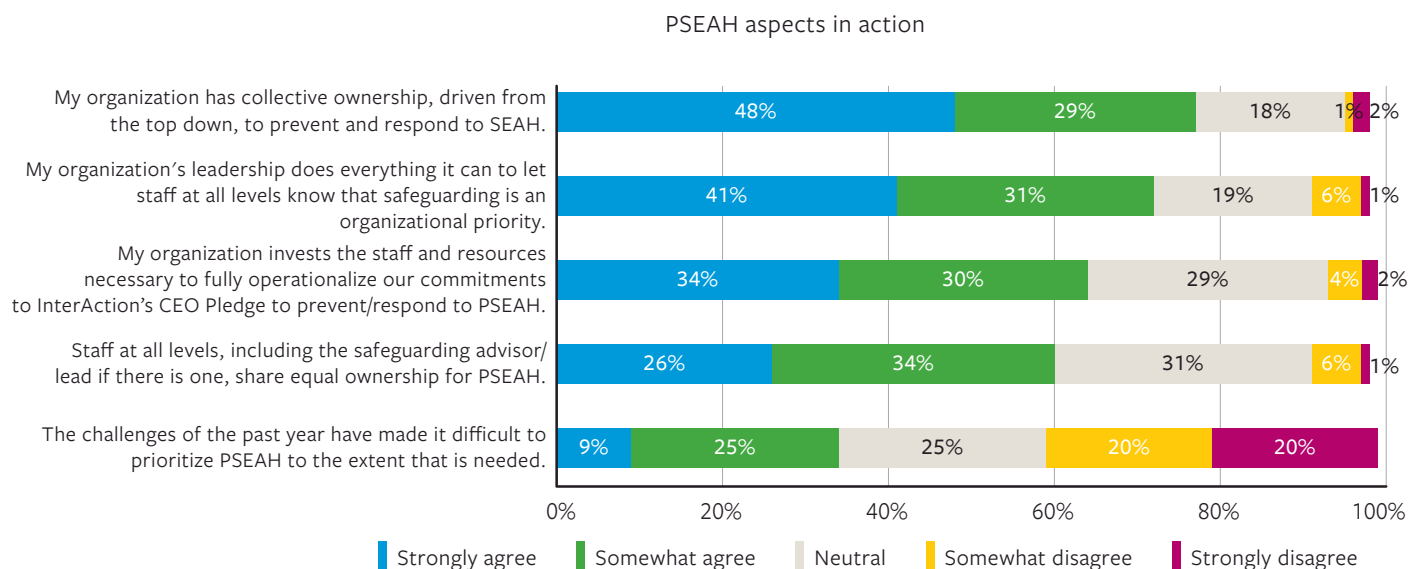
InterAction is developing a coalition-led and valued DEI approach for the international NGO sector, grounded in InterAction's deep learning for building movements across our coalition and rallying NGOs to adopt new objectives into their organizational structure. Led and shaped by the Coalition DEI Task Force, the 2021 focus is on:

- ▶ Establishing a set of DEI standards, best practices, and recommendations with accountability for NGOs to accelerate operational, programmatic, and cultural change.
- ▶ Proposing a collective, public commitment to the coalition expressing dedication to a DEI approach in the NGO sector (e.g., an action-oriented pledge or compact).
- ▶ Guiding the coalition to incorporate and prioritize a DEI approach over a multi-year period.

The Task Force works together to identify both the barriers and opportunities to address inequities and injustices that undermine our work in the NGO sector. There are numerous InterAction Members and Partners committed to and leading in this work while some are just beginning to focus on DEI internally or externally. No matter where an organization is on this journey, there is always room to grow and learn.

## Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment

**Figure 17. PSEAH aspects in action**



Top areas of PSEAH in action include collective ownership, driven from the top-down, followed by leadership effort to let staff at all levels know PSEAH is an organizational priority—for example, bringing it up at meetings, sending e-mails to staff about the importance of PSEAH, and meeting regularly with a safeguarding lead (Q3.3). About 34% of CEOs indicated that the challenges of the past year have made it difficult to prioritize PSEAH to the extent that is needed. There is room for growth overall, with less than half of respondents strongly agreeing with their status in any of the actionable aspects of PSEAH that were polled.

Data suggest two potentially helpful areas for growth regarding PSEAH.

- ▶ About 40% of CEOs did not agree that staff at all levels share equal ownership for PSEAH.
- ▶ About 36% of CEOs disagreed that their organization invests the staff and resources necessary.

Over half of the 26 CEOs who wrote in about PSEAH requested implementation resources, such as policy guidelines, best practice examples, tools, and peer learning spaces (Q4.3.2).

### PSEAH at InterAction

InterAction works with Member organizations to drive forward a holistic and integrated approach to the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment for staff and the communities they serve in both humanitarian and development settings. InterAction's PSEAH team worked with safeguarding staff at Member organizations to compile a one-page document to share insights into how CEOs and senior leadership can best advance safeguarding at their organizations. The document covers the basics of safeguarding, effective ways to engage with staff, and how to support safeguarding teams. It can be accessed [here](#).

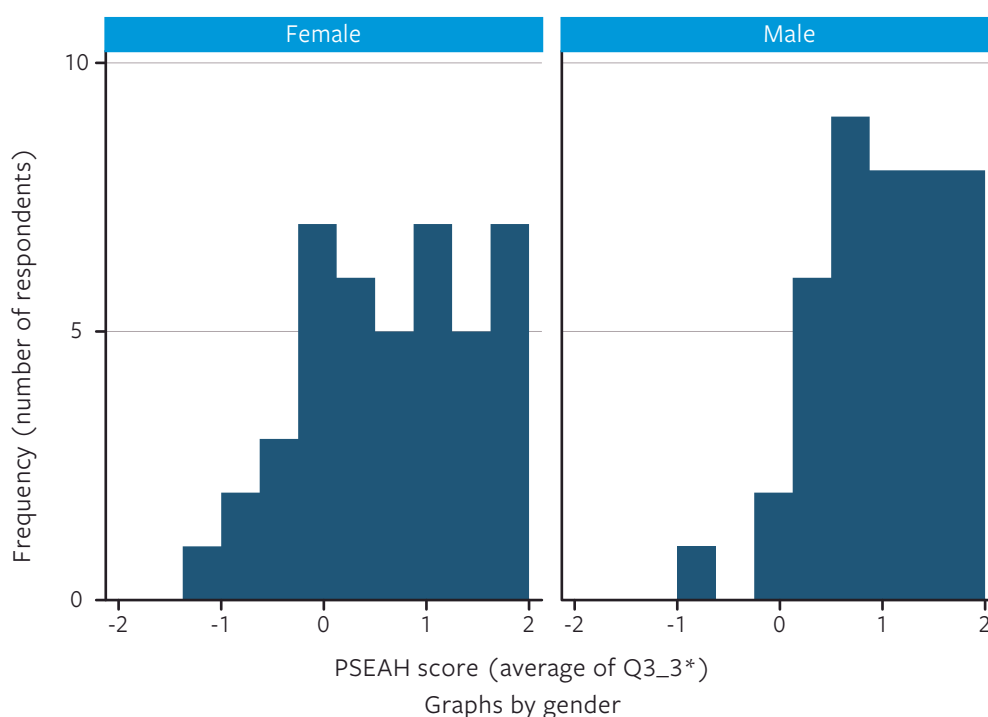
## Overall DEI and PSEAH Environment

To better understand how CEOs feel about DEI and PSEAH for their organizations overall, we created overall DEI and PSEAH scores based on the respective survey questions. The overall scores are scaled to a range of -2 (very poor) to +2 (very good), with 0 indicating neutral.

DEI and PSEAH scores are positively correlated.<sup>12</sup> NGOs high on one score tend to be high on the other, and vice versa.

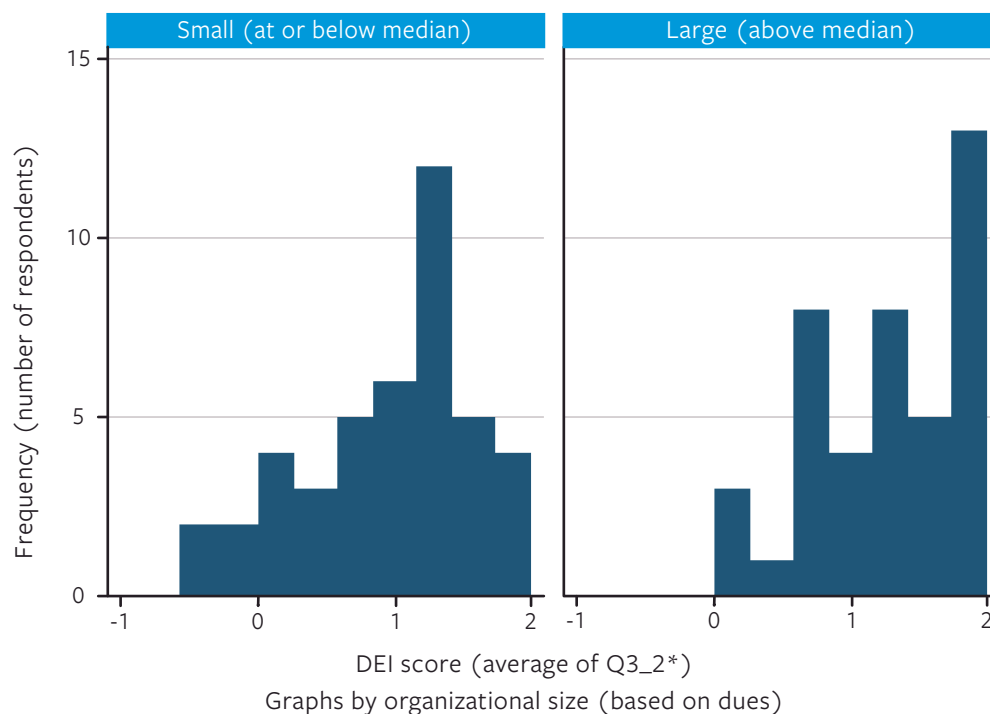
Male leaders are significantly more confident about their organizations' PSEAH environment as compared to female leaders.<sup>13</sup> Figure 18 shows male respondents more tightly clustered around higher overall PSEAH scores. Figure 19 shows DEI scores by organizational size.

**Figure 18. PSEAH confidence and respondent gender**



Larger NGOs have higher DEI scores than smaller NGOs.<sup>14</sup> The average DEI score for smaller NGOs is slightly below “good,” while that of larger NGOs is slightly above “good.”<sup>15</sup> No respondents from larger NGOs indicated an overall negative DEI environment.

**Figure 19. DEI confidence and organizational size**



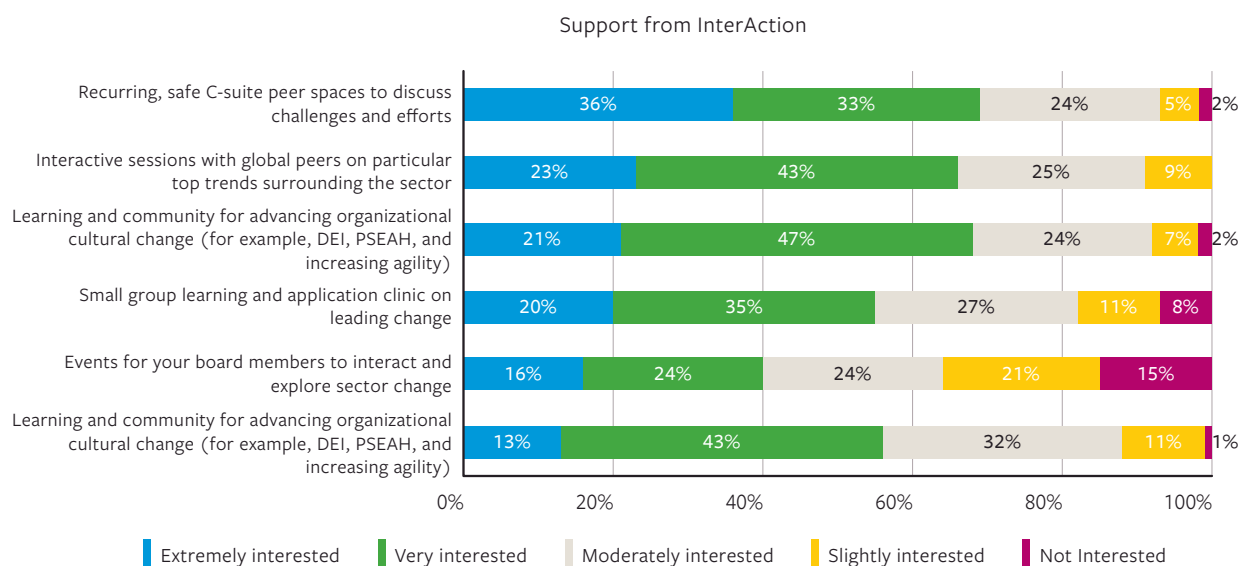


## IV. SUPPORT FROM INTERACTION

InterAction NGO Futures' mission is to accelerate NGOs' ability to adapt and evolve in service of their missions.

**I** We asked CEOs to rate their interest in the following forms of InterAction support.

**Figure 20. Interest in support from InterAction**



The desire for recurring, safe C-suite peer space to discuss challenges and efforts remained strong, with the majority of respondents very or extremely interested (Q4.1). Learning about trends also rose high, both in the form of interactive sessions and as a digest highlighting major trends and adaptive best practices.

Even with the middling interest area of “learning and community for advancing organizational cultural change (for example, DEI, PSEAH, and increasing agility),” 56% of responding CEOs are extremely or very interested in the offering. Half of the open-ended comments related to DEI and PSEAH were encouragement for toolkits, best practice sharing, policy guidance, and related peer learning (Q4.1).

Interest in events for board members to interact and explore sector change polled of lowest interest, though still showing a majority of respondents having moderate or better interest levels.

## NGO Futures at InterAction

InterAction's **NGO Futures** program mission is to accelerate NGOs' ability to adapt and evolve in service of their missions. The InterAction NGO Futures initiative creates a safe exploration and co-learning space among sector leaders in support of transformational change. It facilitates peer learning, supplemented by events with outside experts, to build awareness and agility skills, leveraging the savvy of leaders to affect sustainable change.

**Futures Digest:** Quick tips for leaders in a changing world, revolutionizing sector change.

**Future Thinkers:** Monthly/quarterly NGO leader discussion groups unpack today's shifting ecosystem.

**Webinars and Workshops:** We bring in leaders of change to share practices and spark conversation.

**CEO Retreat and Forum CEO Track content:** Futures hosts sessions on the changing world, organization response highlights, and agility skills. Past sessions include Accelerating the Pace of Change; Fostering Innovation; Future of NGOs; Boards in Transformational Change; Business Models; and Change Leadership.

**Guest appearances:** Futures shares the InterAction birds-eye perspective on the changing operational ecosystem and sector response through remarks to C-suites, boards, and on public panels.

**CEO survey:** Annually, Futures takes the pulse of InterAction Member CEOs on organizational adaptation in the changing world.

**Issue-specific collaborations:** Programs on **combating disinformation**, **protecting civic space**, **innovative finance**, **risk management**, and **climate change** are some of the larger future-forward InterAction initiatives.

Learn more [here](#) and get engaged via the NGO Futures mailing list [here](#).

## ENDNOTES

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- 1 To honor the prioritization given for each topic, priorities were weighted such that each top-selected priority carries a value of three, the second choice a value of two, and the third choice a value of one. Note, the third through sixth placing collective priorities were extremely close, receiving 69, 68, 65, and 64 weighted points, respectively.
- 2 On a scale of -2, strongly disagree, to +2, strongly agree, smaller organizations averaged 0.81, less than somewhat agree; larger organizations averaged 1.26, more than somewhat agree,  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.02$ .
- 3 On a scale of -2 to +2, the difference is 0.47 (0.40 for the board compared to 0.87 for the organization overall),  $n = 93$ ,  $p = 0.00$ .
- 4 Smaller NGOs are slightly below neutral (-0.14), larger NGOs are slightly above neutral (0.40),  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.04$ .
- 5 No data available for prior years.
- 6 The means are as follows. Business model: 1.76. Geographically distributing authority: 1.56. Social enterprise collaboration or deployment: 1.38. Mergers and acquisitions: 0.76.
- 7 Environmental sustainability practices: 2.23 for smaller NGOs, 2.88 for larger NGOs,  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . DEI: 3.09 for smaller NGOs, 3.55 for larger NGOs,  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.04$ . PSEAH: 2.28 for smaller NGOs, 3.48 for larger NGOs,  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Cultivating agility: 2.63 for smaller NGOs, 3.31 for larger NGOs,  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . Size are divided at the median, using InterAction membership dues, which are based on annual expenses, as a proxy.
- 8  $N = 84$ ,  $p = 0.90$ .
- 9 We asked: “Consider your organization’s goals and accomplishments over the past year. Please also consider the relative effort and expense directed toward accomplishing each goal. Overall, to what extent did your organization accomplish its goals?”
- 10 Based on a regression of Q2.7\_1 (effectiveness) on Q2.2\_1 through Q2.4\_1 (change spectrum), controlling for organizational size (measured by InterAction dues), and assuming the points on the change spectrum are equidistant,  $n = 80$ ,  $p = 0.05$ .
- 11 Responses are measured on a scale of -2, strongly disagree, to +2, strongly agree. Significant 2020 funding losses: -0.82. Over the next few years: -0.41.  $n = 93$ ,  $p = 0.00$ .
- 12 Correlation coefficient = 0.35 (on a scale of negative to positive one, indicating a moderate positive correlation),  $n = 93$ ,  $p = 0.00$ .
- 13 1.05, or good, compared to 0.66, closer to neutral,  $n = 85$ ,  $p = 0.03$ .
- 14 0.34 points higher, based on a regression of the DEI score on size and controlling for respondent gender.  $N = 85$ ,  $p = 0.01$ .
- 15 The average for smaller NGOs is 0.94, compared to 1.28 for larger NGOs. (For the DEI and PSEAH indices, a value of -2 indicates very poor, -1 poor, 0 neutral, +1 good, +2 very good.)



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