

WHAT DO AID WORKERS THINK ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THEIR WORK?

AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF
ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN THE HUMANITARIAN AID SECTOR

PRACTICUM REPORT SPRING 2022
JULIEN J. STUDLEY GRADUATE
PROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

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Executive Summary

This independent research project at The New School was developed to investigate aid workers' attitudes toward anticipatory action. The report will be submitted to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in support of its role fostering the scaling up of the anticipatory approach within the humanitarian system.

Anticipatory action, an approach to humanitarian aid which links early warnings to actions designed to protect communities ahead of a hazard, is a growing area of disaster management. Emerging evidence, including through independent impact evaluations in Bangladesh, Somalia, and Ethiopia, demonstrates the benefits and effectiveness of anticipatory action. However, it is not yet mainstream in the humanitarian sector. To further understand why, the research team has implemented a project to reveal what aid workers think about the purpose of their work. The team created a survey that received responses from a total of 100 aid workers across 43 countries.

- In response to a humanitarian crisis scenario, most respondents chose a somewhat anticipatory approach (44%) with an anticipatory approach not far behind (37%), and this group includes more White men who have worked in the humanitarian sector for longer. Much fewer respondents chose a reactive approach (19%), and this group includes more women, people of color, and younger aid workers.
- Most respondents feel comfortable with initiating the response when there is between a 40 to 60% likelihood (an average of 50%) the shock will impact the community, with our most hesitant acting once the likelihood of the shock reaches 90%.
- The survey revealed that younger aid workers and those who have worked in the sector for less time are more likely to choose a more people-centered approach (as opposed to being donor-driven).
- The data reveals that 34% of aid workers feel they have little to no influence over how their organization responds to crises, and 44% of respondents feel they have little to no autonomy within their organization to change the way it engages in aid.
- Aid workers identified six aspects of the aid system they would like to see changed: fairer resource allocation, a restructuring of the hierarchies in the aid system, increased flexibility of donors, localization of aid, faster response to shocks, and increased anticipatory action.
- For future studies, we recommend researchers expand the participant pool, investigate additional questions that surfaced during data analysis, and develop partnerships for a longitudinal study.

Introduction

The humanitarian aid sector was created to alleviate suffering and help people recover from crises. Traditionally, most studies of the international humanitarian system have concentrated on structural dynamics, laws, and organizations to explain the character of and propensity for changing action and performance, but this investigation focuses instead on the mindset of aid workers. What do aid workers think about the purpose of their job? How do they feel about emerging approaches like “anticipatory action”? Do these types of policy changes affect what it means to be a humanitarian?

Our study is motivated by lessons, evidence, and debates emerging from pilot programs in the humanitarian sector that seek to demonstrate the benefits of acting ahead of predictable hazards or before they cause humanitarian needs. The premise that anticipatory action, when possible, is cheaper, faster, more dignified, and helps protect development gains is confirmed by [independent impact evaluations in Bangladesh, Somalia, and Ethiopia¹](#).

These programs involve the use of forecasts, triggers, and rules to release pre-arranged financing for the implementation of pre-agreed plans that can reduce the impact of shocks such as floods, droughts, cyclones, and communicable diseases on vulnerable people—as opposed to waiting for needs to grow after a disaster happens to mobilize a response.

While there is a long way to go before anticipatory action becomes mainstream, this is a potentially transformative change, operationally as well as culturally. It challenges the “when” of humanitarian action; i.e., whether humanitarian action should happen when suffering is foreseen, not only seen, and poses a question about how the idea of what a humanitarian worker is and does has been changing along with the sector. Aid workers now have access to resources and skill sets their predecessors did not, which has been changing the way they approach their work. As the aid sector adapts to respond earlier and better to crises, it is important we learn more about the mindset of those leading the work and how their experiences and expectations are shaping the job.

To address these questions, we collected data directly from a diverse sample of aid workers using an online survey. The questionnaire was designed to elicit ethical, psychological, and practical aspects related to the nature, principles, and objectives of humanitarian action. It built on and sought to inform a debate prompted by Juan Chaves-Gonzalez (Humanitarian Financing Strategy Analyst at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and

¹ *Background to anticipatory action*. Anticipatory Action Toolkit. (n.d.). Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://anticipatory-action-toolkit.unocha.org/background/>

Visiting Scientist at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health) during his residence at The New School's Graduate Programs in International Affairs and the Zolberg Institute on Mobility and Migration (academic year 2021–2022), in a piece (not yet published), "Suffering as a matter of principle?" He argues that beliefs about the world make a difference in what humanitarian workers do in practice. Adopting an anticipatory approach, therefore, involves forming and holding new norms about the legitimacy, value, and feasibility of getting ahead of suffering as a humanitarian objective.

The data gathered in this study supports that argument insofar as most aid workers would prefer not to wait for disasters to act but are oftentimes held back by operational models, organizational cultures, deeply rooted beliefs, and incentive structures that are, more sensitive to peaks in humanitarian need and associated calls from outside the sector to "do something" rather than shifts in risk. Surprisingly, a finding of our study suggests there is a high tolerance for acting amid uncertainty. Most aid workers think that the time to respond to a disaster is when there is a 40-60% chance of it happening, which is practically no different than a coin flip, and is similar to the thresholds we see across documented anticipatory action programs.

Background

The humanitarian system has been around since the late 19th century and early 20th century and, over roughly the past hundred and fifty years, it has primarily functioned in a reactionary manner to humanitarian crises. After World War II, the humanitarian aid sector boomed, providing long-term and short-term recovery systems for the development of countries impacted by the conflict. This burgeoning system was soon enmeshed in the Cold War as the world was split into the First World (the Western democratic countries), the Second World (the Soviet Union and its allies), and the Third World (former colonies that had gained independence). Through humanitarian work, the First World could relieve the suffering of the Third World in the name of 'goodwill,' but more so to expand their own sphere of influence. In 1970, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that required each economically advanced country to provide aid to developing countries equal to a minimum of [0.7% of GNP](#)² by the end of the decade—though only a handful of countries ever achieved this level.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the influence of non-governmental organizations and wealthy philanthropists began to increase. At the same time, the United Nations and the World Bank began to play a larger role in development work in a post-colonial effort to provide aid to former colonies. Some former aid recipient countries became important economic and political powers in their own right; one prominent example is the relationship between China and Africa. With this shift came different approaches to aid described as '[development cooperation on the basis of mutual self-interest](#)'³ which stressed a horizontal relationship and pushed against the colonial vertical tendency where some countries were aid givers and others were aid receivers. Over the years, the focus shifted toward developing effective ways of spending aid money, including the rise of impact evaluations—methodologies allowing agencies to determine the effectiveness of aid programs for their target populations. Furthermore, unprecedented world crises such as the Rwandan genocide during the early 2000's forced states to reconsider their global political commitments to humanitarian intervention, leading them to adopt a responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine.

² United Nations. (2022, April 1). *Where can I find the first General Assembly resolution setting 0.7% of GDP as the target for development assistance? - ask dag!* United Nations. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://ask.un.org/faq/273591>

³ Phillips, K. (2013, December 17). [web log]. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/history-foreign-aid>.

It was not until the early 21st century that the ethics and methods of a reactive approach to humanitarian aid were formally questioned. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti put pressure on the humanitarian aid system, leading to the [Transformative Agenda](#)⁴, a set of protocols meant to ensure the system could scale-up collectively to respond rapidly to large-scale emergencies. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which led the Humanitarian Reform Process, the humanitarian system was less efficient than it should be, particularly in the areas of governance, leadership, duplication, and cooperation between organizations. The United Nations Secretary-General convened the first World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, a venue for governments, agencies, academia, world leaders, civil society, and the business sector to push for deeper transformation within the international humanitarian system and an effort to situate humanitarian action in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Attempting to address climate-related shocks before they happen is not a new idea; Indigenous communities have been predicting and preparing for [disasters](#)⁵ for [a long time](#)⁶. It is important to acknowledge that the concept of anticipatory action in the broadest sense has been around since before it was officially introduced in the humanitarian aid sector. In addition to the forecasting systems implemented by aid organizations, other sectors including healthcare, transportation, and finance as well as Indigenous knowledge systems have long adopted tools to predict crises and protect people, infrastructure, assets, and systems from damage and collapse. Prior to its official recognition in the sector, the practice of anticipatory action had been pioneered by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Start Network who have experimented with forecast-based financing and early action protocols on a small scale since 2010. It was not until 2018 that the term “anticipatory action” became more widely used in the sector. The then Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, gave a speech in Dublin

⁴ IASC *Transformative agenda*. IASC Transformative Agenda | IASC. (n.d.). Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-transformative-agenda>

⁵ Jigyasu, R. (2020, August 6). [web log]. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.preventionweb.net/blog/harnessing-knowledge-indigenous-communities-drr>.

⁶ Dube, E., & Munsaka, E. (2018). The contribution of indigenous knowledge to disaster risk reduction activities in Zimbabwe: A big call to practitioners. *Jamba*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v10i1.493>

[proposing](#) changes in the humanitarian financing system that revolved around the idea of moving towards an anticipatory approach⁷.

ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN ETHIOPIA

In 1984-85, a devastating drought in Ethiopia led to crop failure, livestock losses, and famine. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children perished, shocking the world.

In response, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) created the Famine Early Warning Systems Network – known as FEWS NET.

When Ethiopia experienced another exceptional, year-over-year drought in 2015-16, the country suffered crop and livestock losses and water shortages. However, this time FEWS NET provided warning of the drought in advance, and USAID took early, robust action.

FEWS NET's work in Ethiopia is an example of the anticipatory approach: using early warning of an impending hazard, swiftly followed by early action, to save lives.

The sector's ability to predict hazards and measure their impacts is now much more accurate and robust than it was even just a decade ago. Acting ahead of disasters is possible due to the available technology and data. The work to better understand how different forecasting tools can be used to make humanitarian action more effective continues today. OCHA is facilitating small-scale pilot studies funded through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) that use forecasting tools to trigger the release of pre-arranged financing to UN agencies for the implementation of pre-agreed interventions. Emerging evidence

and independent impact evaluations of these pilots suggest that a more anticipatory approach to humanitarian action is more effective than a reactive approach. Is the experience and evidence thus far that anticipatory action is not only possible but more efficient and impactful persuasive enough? What do aid workers think?

⁷ CERF FOR THE FUTURE: Anticipatory humanitarian action - united nations. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2022, from https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/cerf_ag_anticipatory-action_20181017_en_0.pdf

Findings

Overview of the Survey Pool

The following data was compiled from a survey distributed to a group of humanitarian aid workers from organizations including Habitat for Humanity, the International Rescue Committee, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Anticipation Hub, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, the Start Network, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Humanitarian Practice Network. Our total number of participants was 100, with participants working in 43 countries. See **Figure 1**. It is important to note that not every participant provided demographic information. Participants reported originally being from across the globe, with the majority concentrated in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, India, Italy, Germany, and France. See **Figure 2**.

Figure 1: Countries Where Most Participants Are Based

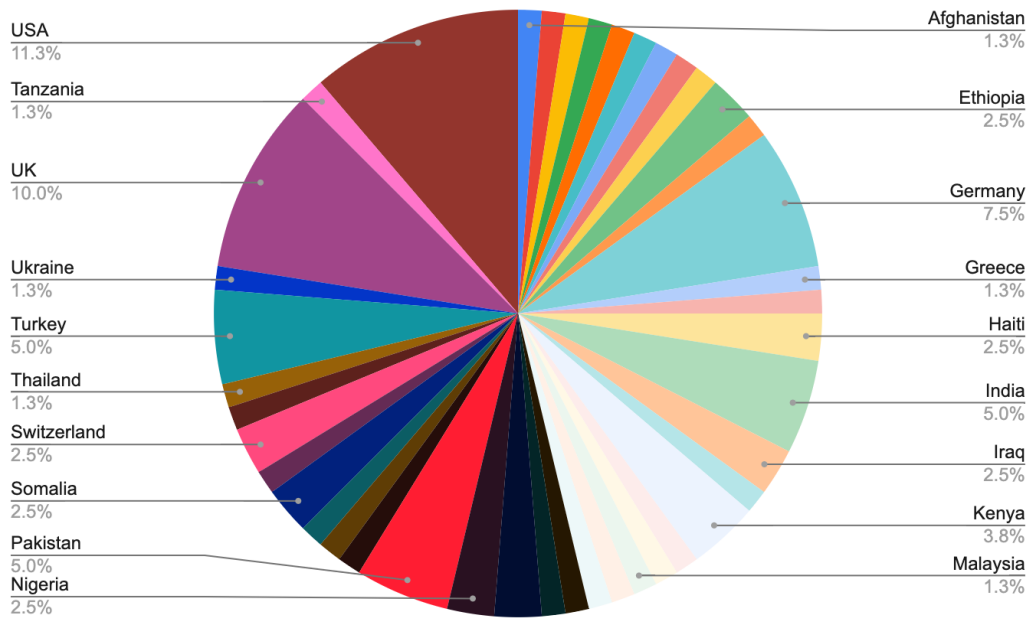
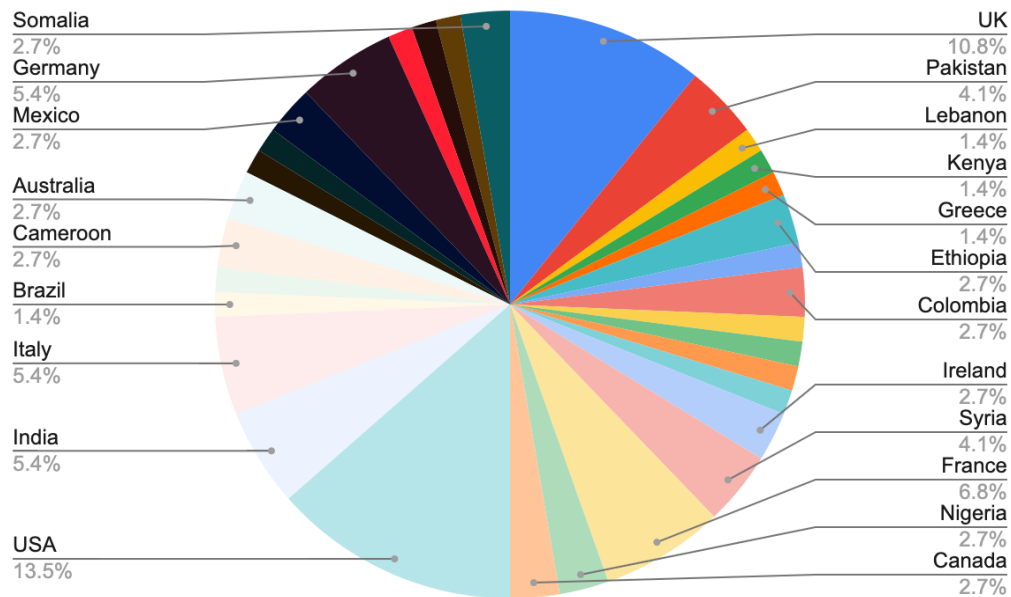


Figure 2: Countries Where Most Participants Are From



The participants vary in age with most of them in the age range of 25 - 44 See **Appendix C Fig. 1**. 55.8% of participants identify as female, 43% male, and 1.2% non-binary or other. See **Appendix C Fig. 2**. Almost half of the participants identify as White, with others identifying as Black or African-descent, Asian, Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish, Middle Eastern or North African, Pacific Islander, and Other. See **Appendix C Fig. 3**. The organizations for which participants work skew more towards climate action and disaster risk reduction than development. See **Appendix C Fig. 6-8**. Most respondents consider the focus of their organization to be 'Protection,' 'Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene,' 'Health,' 'Early Recovery,' 'Education,' and 'Food Security.' See **Figure 3**. The majority of our respondents report working in management roles, expert roles and roles of senior leadership. The remaining participants work in communications and public affairs, operations and logistics, administration, budget and finance, human resources, and other. See **Figure 4**. Responders reported working in the sector equally for 5-10 years and over 10 years with the remaining working for between 2-5 years and under 2 years. See **Figure 5**.

Figure 3: Focus of Organizations at which Participants Work

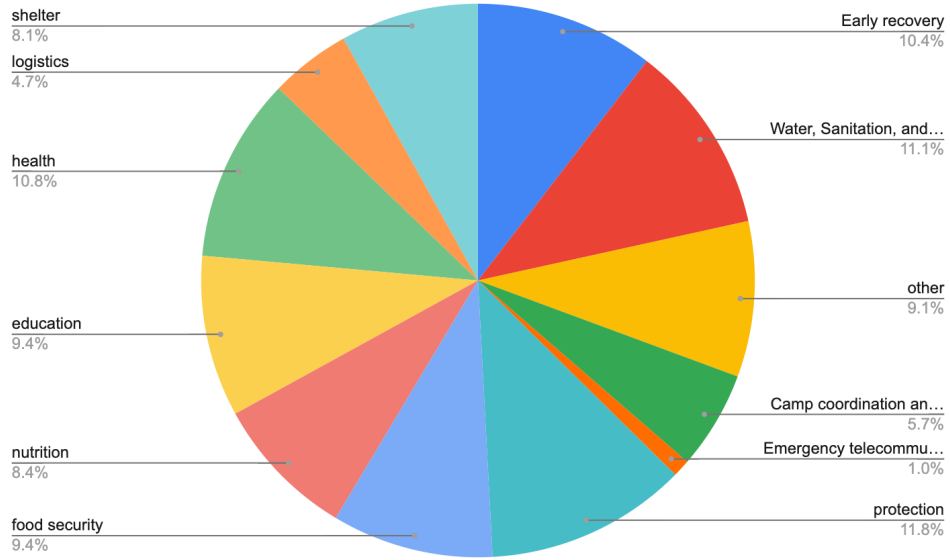


Figure 4: Role of Participants in Their Organization

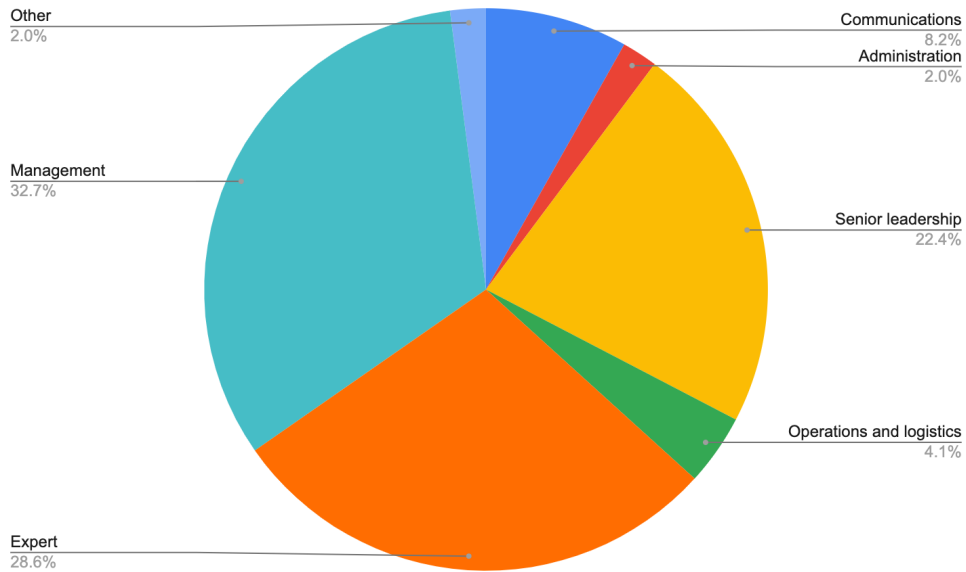
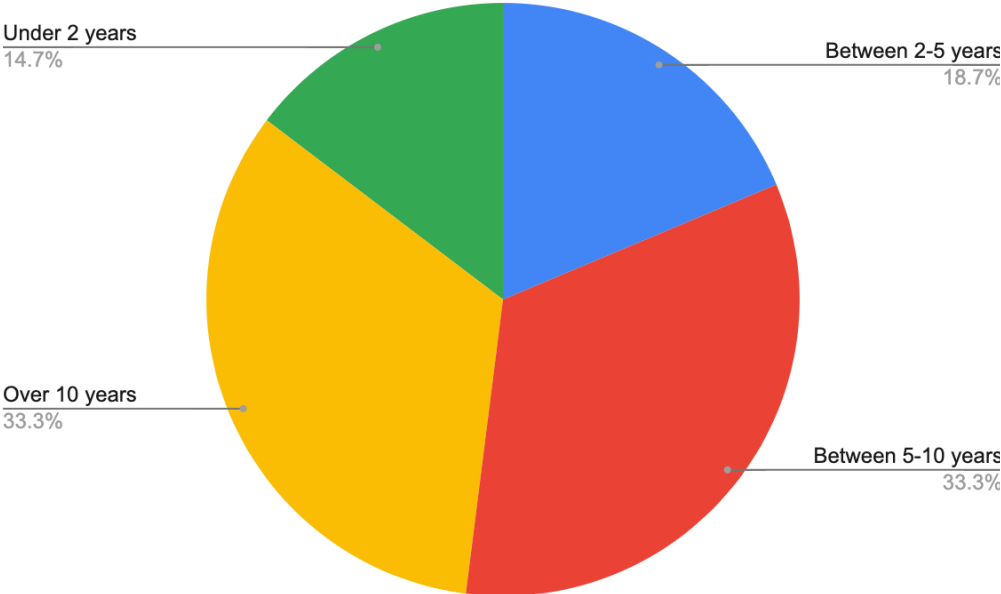


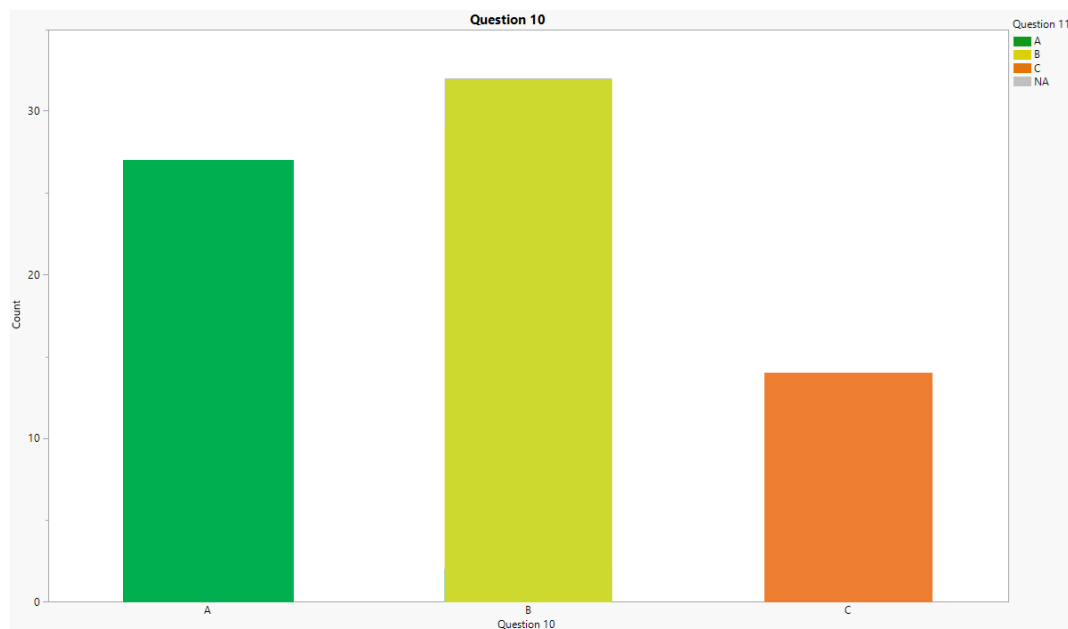
Figure 5: Length of Time Participants Have Worked in the Humanitarian Sector



Aid Worker Propensity for Anticipatory Action

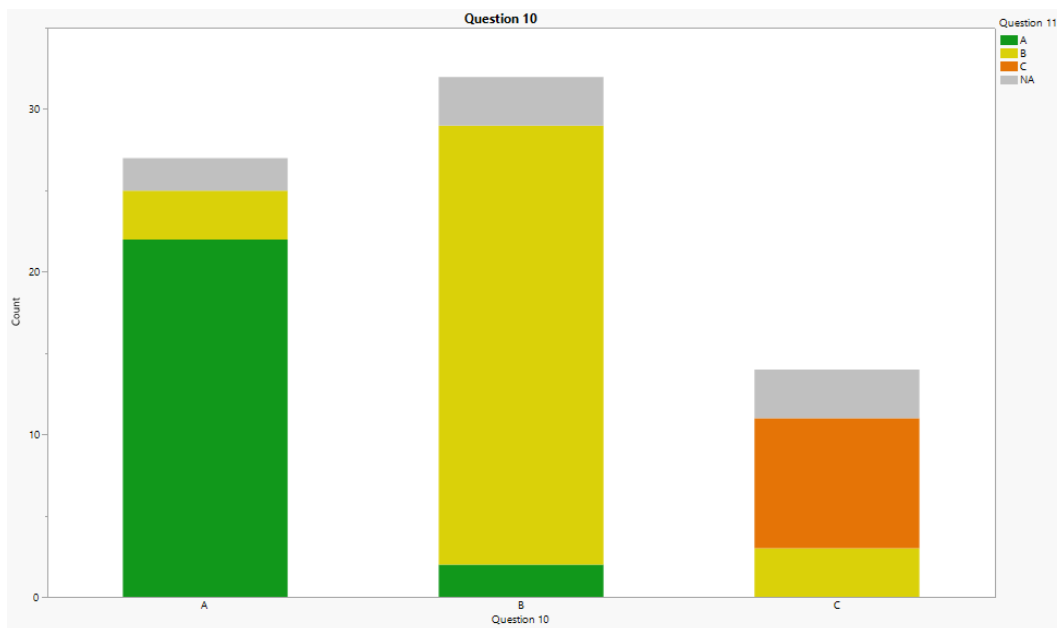
One goal of our survey was to determine the current level of receptivity of aid workers to anticipatory action. We asked respondents to react to a drought scenario where their multiple-choice answers correspond to anticipatory, somewhat anticipatory, and reactive approaches to humanitarian action. The most common answer was somewhat anticipatory (44%) with anticipatory not far behind (37%), and much fewer people chose a reactive approach (19%). See **Figure 6**. This demonstrates a general acceptance of anticipatory action but still a hesitancy to go all-in on the approach. Those respondents that lean toward anticipatory action tend to be White men who have worked in the humanitarian sector for more than five years, while there is no noticeable trend regarding age. There is more hesitancy among women, people of color, and aid workers who have worked in the humanitarian sector for less than five years; this could indicate more risk aversion among these groups. See **Figures 8 and 9 and Appendix B Fig. 1**.

Figure 6: Bar Chart of Responses to Question 10 (the drought scenario) where A represents an anticipatory approach, B represents a somewhat anticipatory approach, and C represents a reactive approach



Anticipatory action comes with the inherent risk that a crisis will not manifest or be as severe as predicted. We told our respondents that the drought in the original scenario turned out to not be as severe as expected so the anticipatory approach resulted in resources not being allocated as efficiently as possible. We asked whether they would make the same choice next time. We wanted to find out whether the possibility of “wasting resources” when crises fail to develop deters aid workers from being anticipatory in the future. None of our respondents who chose an anticipatory or somewhat anticipatory approach to the first scenario chose to change to a reactive approach for the second hypothetical crisis. See **Figure 7**.

Figure 7: Stacked Bar Chart of Responses to Question 11 Based on Question 10 where A represents an anticipatory approach, B represents a somewhat anticipatory approach, and C represents a reactive approach



“
**MORE NO REGRETS APPROACHES
 WITH EARLY WARNING WORK – THE
 DROUGHT EXAMPLE I HAVE BEEN
 DEBATING FOR MONTHS WITH
 DECISION-MAKERS! (I WORK IN AN
 EARLY WARNING TEAM AS A
 SCIENTIST)**
 ”

Figure 8: Mosaic Plot of Question 10 (the drought scenario) and Gender where A represents an anticipatory approach, B represents a somewhat anticipatory approach, and C represents a reactive approach

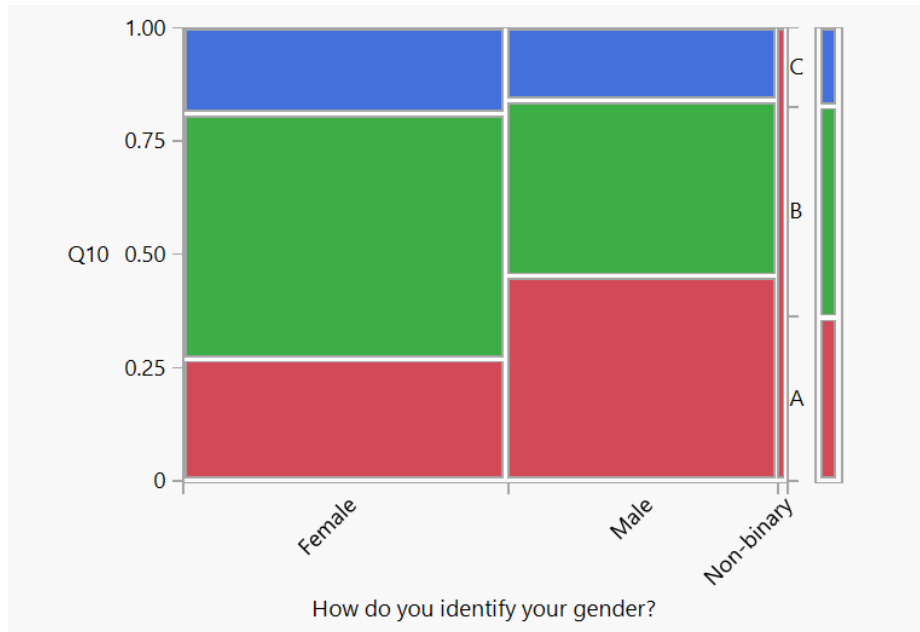
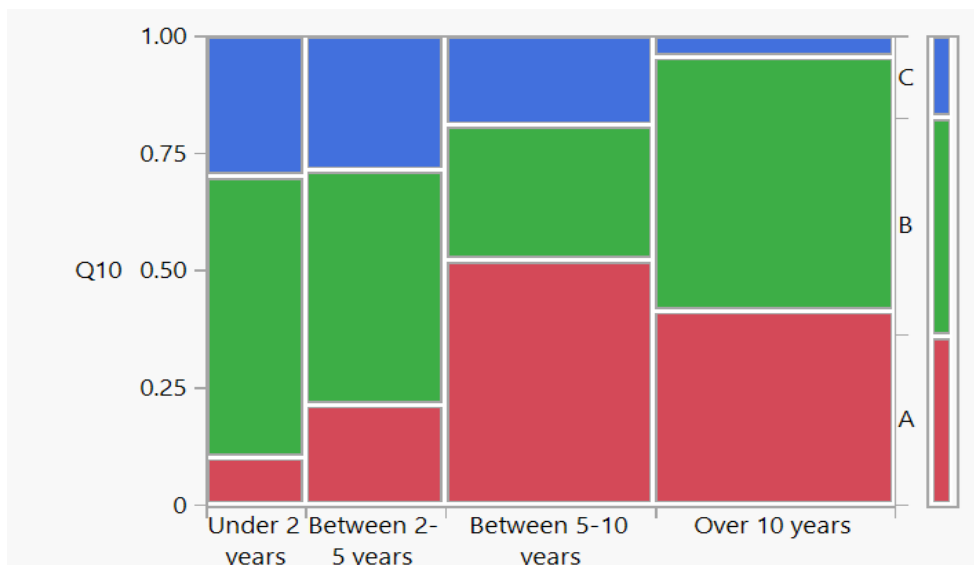


Figure 9: Contingency Analysis of Question 10 (the drought scenario) and Years in the Humanitarian Sector where A represents an anticipatory approach, B represents a somewhat anticipatory approach, and C represents a reactive approach



We further wanted to understand the desired reaction time of humanitarian action. In OHCA’s anticipatory action pilot studies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and the Philippines, the threshold is 50%. When the likelihood of a disastrous impact of a monsoon in Bangladesh, drought in Ethiopia, or a cyclone in the Philippines reaches 50%, anticipatory action is activated and the release of pre-arranged financing is triggered. When asked how likely a crisis needs to be before our respondents recommend aid mobilization, **most respondents feel comfortable acting when there is between a 40 to 60% likelihood the shock will impact the community.** See Figures 10 and 11. This is in essence a coin flip. However, more importantly, it means that the desired reaction time of survey respondents aligns with the actual reaction time in OCHA pilot studies. Not a single respondent chose to act after there was more than a 90% likelihood of the shock, so even our more hesitant and risk-averse respondents are still somewhere along the spectrum of anticipatory. Anticipatory action has been proven to be cost-effective and effective in saving lives. We thought that it may be the attitudes of aid workers that are holding the system back from evolving but, based on these results, it seems like that is not the case. So what is preventing anticipatory action from being scaled up beyond small-scale pilot studies?

Figure 10: Histogram of How Likely a Shock Needs to Be Before Desired Action Time

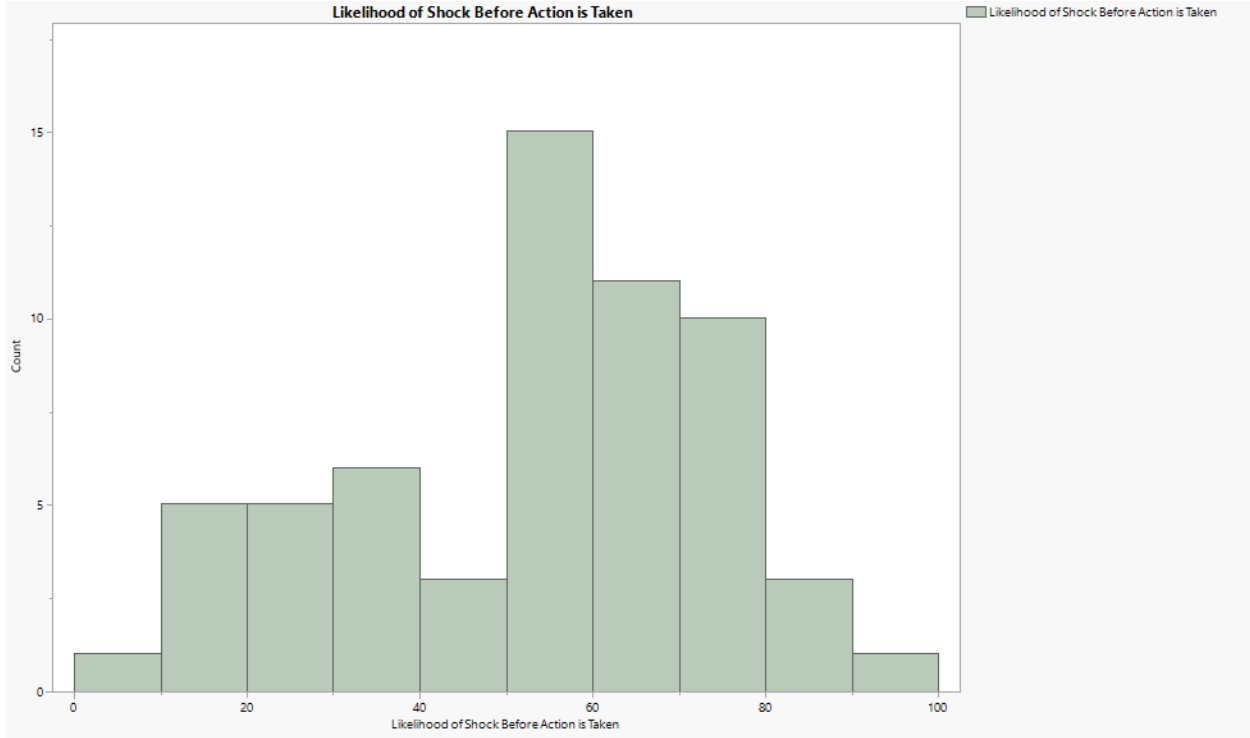
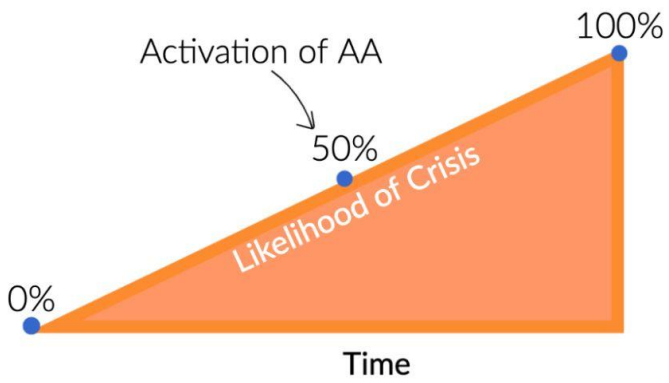
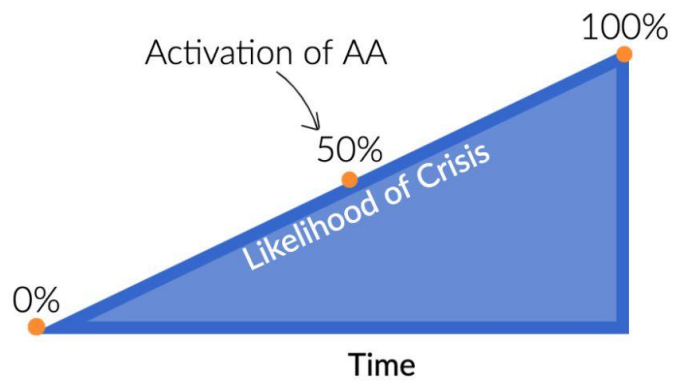


Figure 11: Comparison of Threshold of Anticipatory Action in OCHA Pilot Studies and Average Desired Threshold of Anticipatory Action by Survey Respondents

OCHA Anticipatory Action pilot study



Average survey response



Influence and Autonomy of Aid Workers

In the concluding section of the survey, we asked aid workers how much influence they feel they have over how their organization responds to crises and what degree of autonomy they have within their organization to change how it engages in aid planning and implementation. The data reveals that 34% of respondents feel they have little to no influence over how their organization responds to crises, and 44% of respondents feel they have little to no autonomy within their organization to change the way it engages in aid. See **Appendix B Fig. 3 and 4**. Although aid workers feel the need to change the status quo in their organizations, they do not feel capable of doing so.

Over half of the female respondents and the one non-binary respondent feel like they have either very little or no autonomy within their organization to change the way it engages in aid planning and implementation, whereas three quarters of male respondents believe they have either moderate or very much autonomy. The same gender trend exists for how much influence aid workers feel they have over how their organization responds to crises. The more recent the individual has become an aid worker, the less influence and autonomy they feel like they have. See **Figures 12-15**. This supports our theory that women and newer aid workers tend more towards risk aversion in the aid sector and indicates that this group of aid workers needs to be empowered to feel like they have the power to make structural change in the humanitarian sector. The results for ethnicity and region are inconclusive and require further study. See **Appendix B Fig. 5-8**.

The same groups that tend towards an anticipatory approach to humanitarian aid also tend to feel as though they have more influence and autonomy within their organizations, and those that tend towards a more reactive approach tend to feel as though they have less influence and autonomy. There is a correlation between the two, but it is unclear whether tending toward a more anticipatory approach makes one feel more influence and autonomy or whether feeling more influence/autonomy makes one tend toward a more anticipatory approach. There may also be a confounding variable. Regardless, empowering aid workers to make them feel as though they can change the way their organization engages in aid planning and implementation will help the system move towards a more anticipatory approach to humanitarian aid.

Figure 12: Mosaic Plot of Question 15 (amount of influence) and Gender

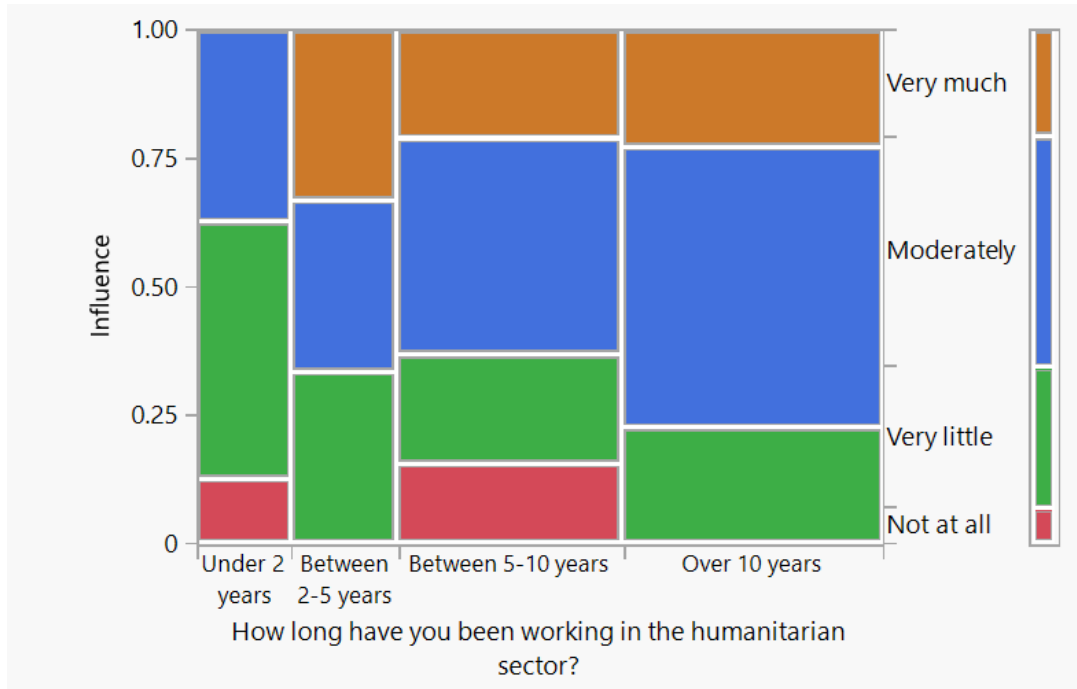


Figure 13: Mosaic Plot of Question 15 (amount of influence) and Years in the Humanitarian Sector

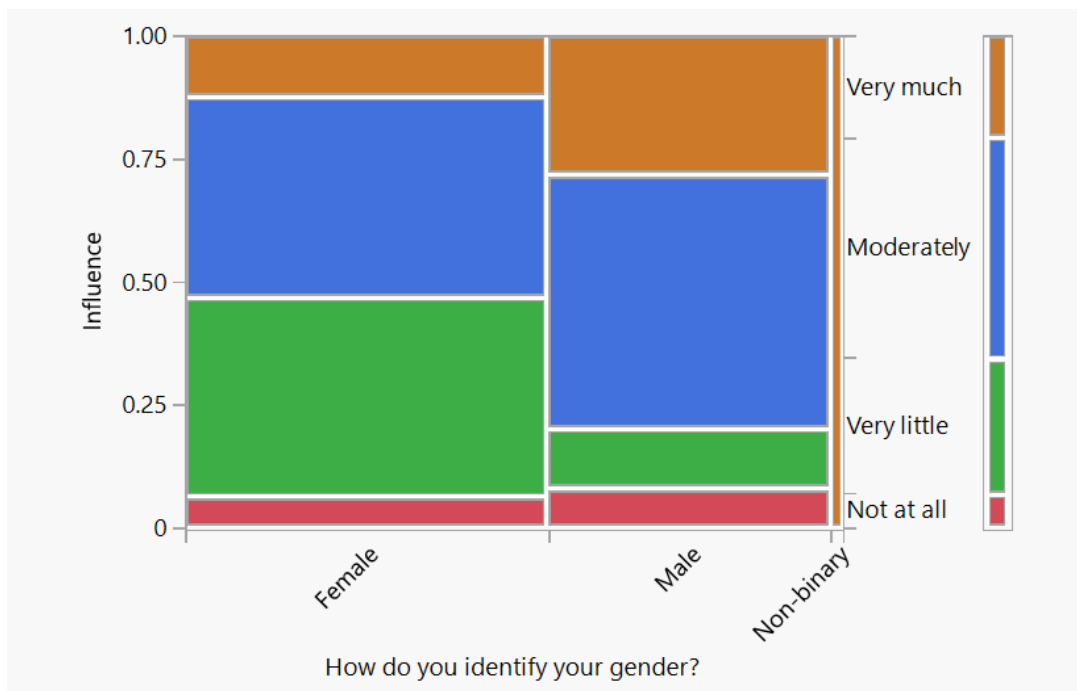


Figure 14: Mosaic Plot of Question 16 (amount of autonomy) and Gender

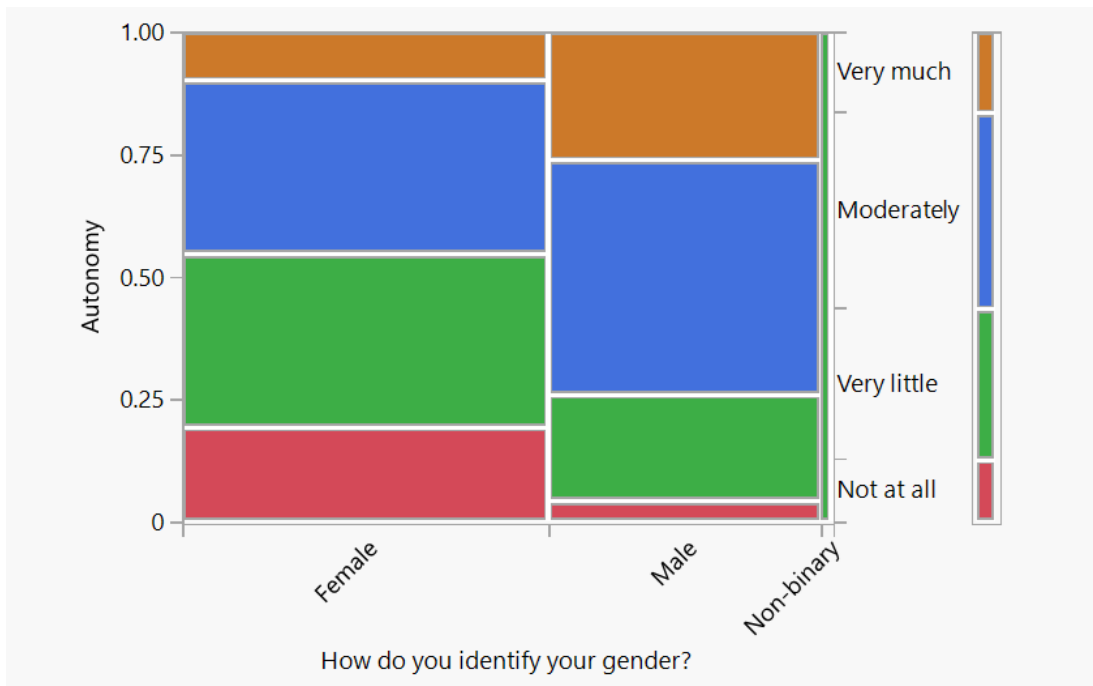
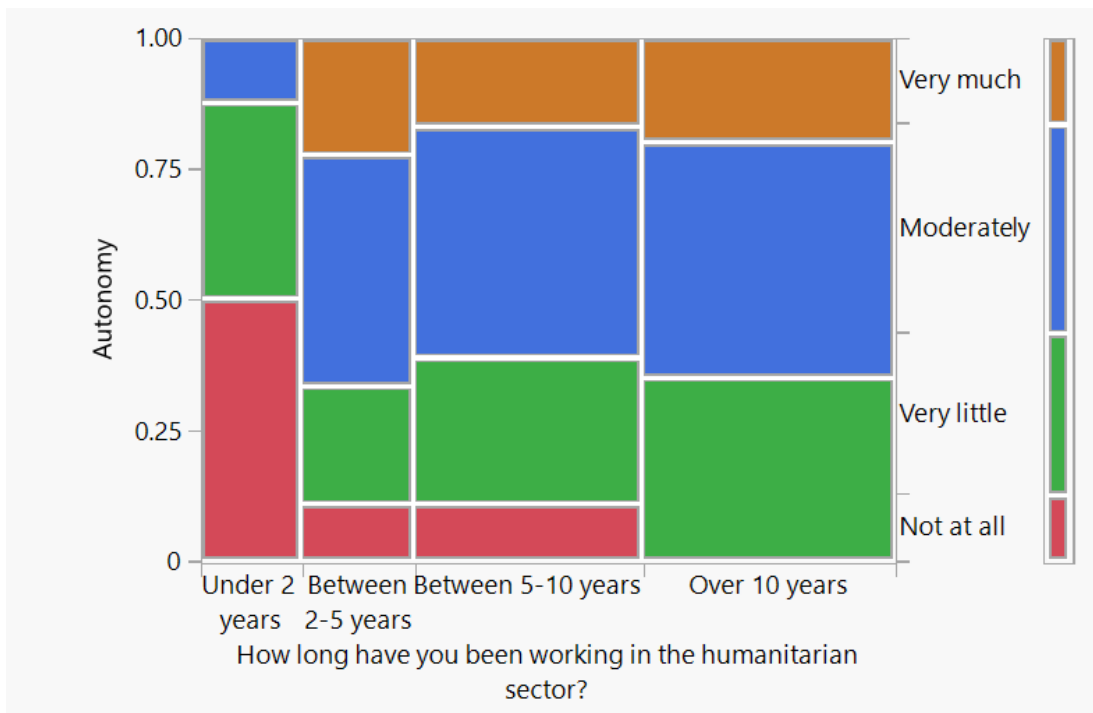


Figure 15: Mosaic Plot of Question 16 (amount of autonomy) and Years in the Humanitarian Sector





Negotiating Priorities

In our survey, we asked respondents to use a sliding scale to indicate where they would stand on several trade-offs and dilemmas. To analyze a trend in these “tradeoff” questions, we placed the more people-centered approaches to delivering aid below the 50% mark, while the more organizational-centered options were placed beyond the midway point. In this sense, when gathering the respondents’ averages, if they rose above 50%, it would indicate a propension towards an organizationally-minded approach or, below 50%, a more people-centered approach.

Although there was a consensus among respondents that accountability to affected people instead of donors (Q1); allocating funding to local organizations instead of international ones (Q2); and long-term strategies versus short-term solutions (Q3), were preferable, the average of their responses stood closely behind the 50% mark. When cross-referencing these results with the age and experience of the respondents, there was a slight trend that indicated that those below 34 years old leaned more toward a people-centered approach to humanitarian action than those above that age, which largely chose a more organizational approach.

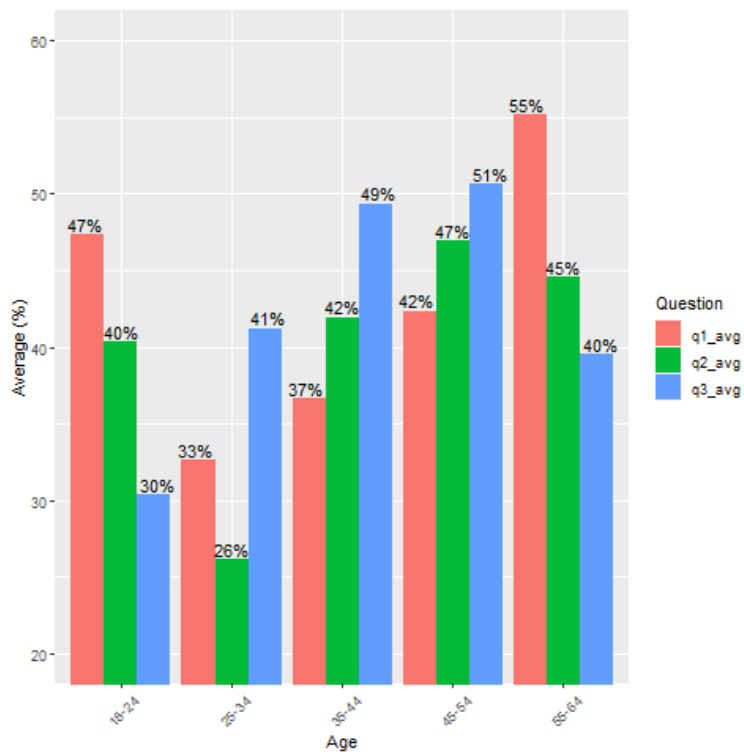
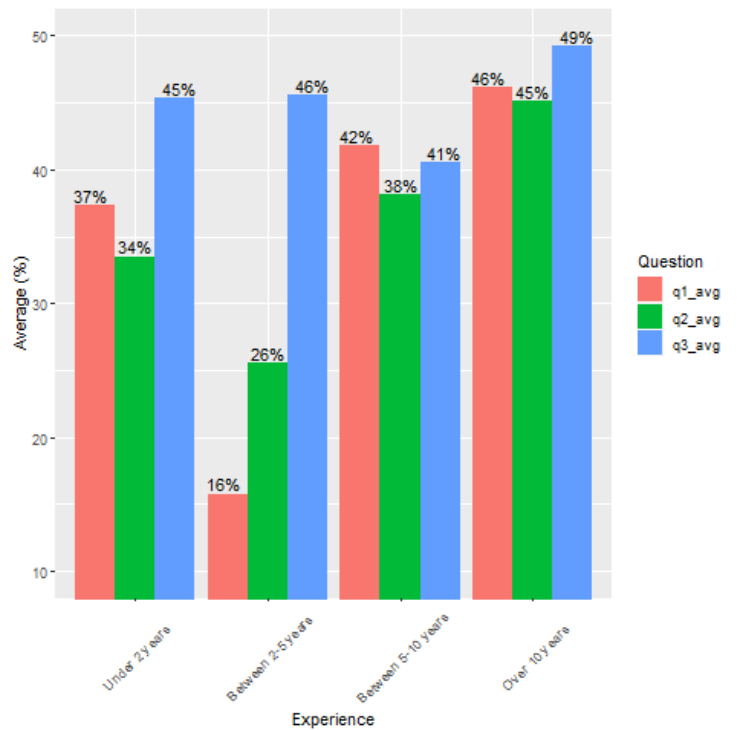


Figure 16: Analysis of the average responses of aid workers of different age ranges to Q1, accountability to affected people instead of donors, Q2, Allocating funding to local organizations instead of international ones, and Q3, long-term strategies versus short-term solutions.

Figure 17: Analysis of the average responses of aid workers of different levels of experience to Q1, accountability to affected people instead of donors, Q2, Allocating funding to local organizations instead of international ones, and Q3, long-term strategies versus short-term solutions.



Additionally, the data showed that those working in humanitarian organizations for under 5 years proved to also adopt a more human-centered approach while those more senior to this field chose values that would favor donors and short-term responses.

We decided to cross-reference this trade-off question with the age and experience level of respondents to see whether there would be any trends regarding younger and more recent aid workers standing on the opposite side of the spectrum of those older and more experienced. From these findings, we can tentatively conclude that younger aid workers who have not been in the field for very long feel a greater propension towards a more human approach to delivering aid and have not yet been conditioned by the sector to change their attitudes towards a more organizationally minded approach. The data shows that younger aid workers may be bringing innovative perspectives and phasing in a new chapter in the aid sector.



A Desire for Structural Change

When asked an open-ended question “*What would you change about the way the aid system works?*,” the answers of our respondents fit into six main themes: fairer resource allocation, a restructuring of the hierarchies in the aid system, increased flexibility of donors, localization of aid, faster response to shocks, and increased anticipatory action..

In terms of donor flexibility, several aid workers agreed that donor interests should be deprioritized, and more autonomy should be given to local organizations and the needs they express. One respondent replied, saying “Donors shouldn’t be dictating priorities. Rather it should be based on need and evidence. Also, greater emphasis on local organizations as legitimate partners rather than just quotas.”

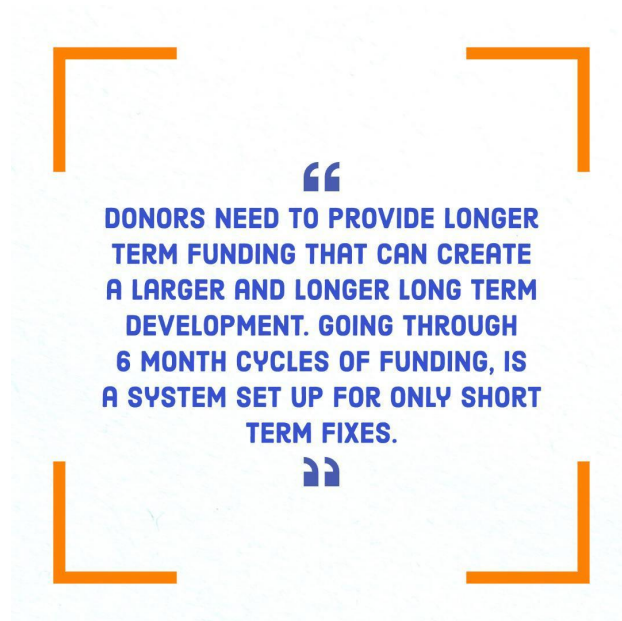
Regarding the topic of localization, a theme that most respondents wrote about and in line with their opinions on donor flexibility, aid workers agreed that local leaders and organizations should have more control over funding allocation instead of solely applying orders from international organizations to their local context. “Make localization real by investing in building capacity and funding national/local organizations and networks. Seek new ways of working together and avoid silos coordination promoted by Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster sectors and OCHA.” says one humanitarian worker. Another reflects, “I think that humanitarian organizations have to listen more to the local people to understand their reality”, a consensus among many workers on the need to center and prioritize the voices of local communities when creating aid plans, a system not widely used within aid work.

The increase of anticipatory action plans was also mentioned by quite a few respondents, all of which claimed that the aid work sector and local communities would greatly benefit from long-term planning through the prediction and preparedness for future shocks and, in this way, be more proactive rather than reactive. At the same time, some aid workers did write that the response systems that



were currently in place within the sector needed to be quicker to prevent further damage to communities after a shock happens. One respondent says:

“We need to be proactive rather than reactive. Aid/assistance is coming in too late. A lot could be done ahead of time were the communities meaningfully consulted and had leadership over the preparedness and response. This is increasing and should continue: bridge the gap between humanitarianism and development, coordinate better and reinforce each other.”



Lastly, many respondents showed a strong opposition to the current hierarchies and resource allocation within the sector, claiming that the salaries paid to those in higher positions were far too high and could have been used to further help communities.

Convergently, many also claimed that the power dynamics within the aid work sector were discriminatory and impeded new ideas from reaching the top.

Conclusions

The data compiled through this survey is an unprecedented look into humanitarian aid workers' behaviors and attitudes toward their work. After careful analysis of both the history and scope of the application of anticipatory action in the humanitarian aid field, as well as the data we gathered from 100 aid workers, we find that there is a demand within the aid field to move towards a more anticipatory approach. There was still more hesitancy than we had predicted before distributing the survey, pointing to a number of factors that had not been considered and which call for further research. Considering this, we submit the following recommendations:

1. Expand the participant pool

This research is only a beginning, and our findings are limited due to the relatively low number of aid workers we collected data from, narrow demographics we reached, lack of widespread distribution, and the short time within which this research was carried out.

While analyzing the demographics of our respondents, we concluded that the findings may be insufficient to make broad conclusions about humanitarian aid workers across the world as most of the population that we reached is White and from Western countries. Thus, we recommend further research conducted in non-Western areas and with populations that are underrepresented. Furthermore, we recommend a diversified age range. Most of the population that participated in the survey are in the age range of 25-44, so we believe it would be beneficial to gain further insight into populations in the age range of 45-64 who have seen the humanitarian sector change throughout time.

As mentioned in our background section, the anticipatory action approach has been tested through various pilot programs. While we have gathered opinions from aid workers in several sectors, we did not gather data specifically from aid workers who are part of the pilot studies which exclusively focus on anticipatory action. We believe it would be of benefit to research aid workers in these pilot studies to help the sector understand how participating in anticipatory action efforts affects the attitudes of aid workers about the purpose of their work and how anticipatory action can be scaled up. Further, it may be beneficial to conduct surveys with both scientists and donors to comprehend their values and views of anticipatory action, and understand the best ways to encourage the practice to be supported by those stakeholders.

2. Investigate additional questions that surfaced during data analysis

The survey we conducted gave us a better understanding of what aid workers think about the purpose of their work. However, as we analyzed our data and answered our research questions, more questions surfaced. If this survey is reimplemented, there are a few additional questions that should be investigated to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the behaviors and attitudes of aid workers. When given a climate-related shock scenario, the most common response selected was a somewhat anticipatory approach rather than a fully anticipatory approach. It would be beneficial to ask a follow-up question to find out the reasoning behind this decision-making. This could be presented in a multiple-choice format with options including lack of trust in the effectiveness of anticipatory action, insufficient resources or infrastructure, and not enough empowerment to take risks. Both of our scenarios were climate-related, so it would also be useful to give an additional conflict-related scenario to understand the different complexities of these different contexts.

We asked respondents to rank their priorities by identifying where they fall on several tradeoffs such as accountability to affected people vs. accountability to donors and long-term sustainability vs. short-term emergency response. It would be beneficial to add an additional tradeoff scenario of allocating resources for the alleviation of suffering vs. allocating resources for the prevention of suffering. We attempted to understand aid workers' perspectives on this tradeoff by asking two multiple choice questions, but this led to inconclusive results because the respondents were not forced to choose between the two.

We discovered that a high percentage of humanitarian workers feel that they do not have influence within their organizations and autonomy within the humanitarian sector. If the humanitarian aid sector is going to evolve with the (possibly shifting) beliefs and attitudes of humanitarian workers, they need to feel empowered to take risks and advocate for change in the system. It is necessary to further investigate how to empower humanitarian aid workers, especially those in groups that feel lower levels of influence and autonomy. This could be accomplished through optional “explain your answer” sections after certain questions and generally more specific free response questions.

3. Partner with groups in civil society and academic institutions for a longitudinal study

Although this study was an unprecedented look at the opinions of aid workers regarding their field, it was only a snapshot of the perspectives of 100 respondents, with many important

groups underrepresented. To further this research, a subsequent and more detailed survey should go out over a period of 5 years to humanitarian aid workers to better gauge the evolution of the anticipatory action mindset within the sector, giving researchers a more longitudinal analysis of this issue that would allow trends to emerge in the data. In this way, the evolution of perspectives on the transition to a more anticipatory approach to humanitarian aid is recorded, especially to determine any correlation between the willingness of aid workers to pursue it and the growth of its prominence in the field.

The survey analyzed in this report was distributed mostly to contacts of the Anticipation Hub, which could have created a minor skew towards anticipatory action favored responses. In this way, diversifying our respondent pool by distributing the survey to “reactive” international organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Food Programme, and Oxfam, would give us a more comprehensive view of the perspectives of a wider range of aid workers. Additionally, distributing the survey within civil society organizations, faith-based organizations and organizations in the medical field will provide a more grassroots perspective on the willingness to pursue anticipatory action within the field.



Appendix A: Survey Questions

What Aid Workers Think about the Purpose of Their Work

This survey examines the perspectives of aid workers. It is being conducted by an independent research team of students – Lindsay Myers, Marla Teixeira, and Sofia Navarrete Zur – under the supervision of Professor Peter Hoffman and Practitioner-in-Residence Juan Chaves-Gonzalez (of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) at The Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs at The New School in New York City. The purpose of this research project is to gain a better understanding of your views on humanitarian principles, aid, and action. It is anticipated that the following survey will take 15-20 minutes to complete. This survey is anonymous and no personal information will be shared. The data collected from this survey will only be used to produce a report that will be submitted to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The data will be kept on the researchers' computers until May 2022 and will be deleted within three months of the publication of the report.

We ask that you respond in an individual capacity and not as a representative of your organization. This Qualtrics survey does not ask questions that would yield information that could be used to identify a respondent. You are free to refuse to answer any questions.

The benefits of your participation are that it will contribute to a greater understanding of values and decision-making in the humanitarian sector. There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

1. What age range do you belong to?
 - a. 18-24
 - b. 25-34
 - c. 35-44
 - d. 45-54
 - e. 55-64
 - f. 65-74
 - g. 75+

2. How do you identify your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Other _____

3. Which category best describes you? (You can select more than one)
 - a. White (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.)
 - b. Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (Eg: Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc)
 - c. Black or African descent (E.g.: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc.)
 - d. Asian (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.)
 - e. Indigenous or Aboriginal (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.)
 - f. Middle Eastern or North African (Eg: Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.)
 - g. Pacific Islander (Eg: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, etc.)
 - h. Some other race, ethnicity, or origin

4. In what country are you currently based?
 - a. Dropdown menu

5. What country are you originally from?
 - a. Dropdown menu

6. What is the focus of the organization you currently work for?
 - a. Sliding scale (__% humanitarian)
 - b. Sliding scale (__% development)
 - c. Sliding scale (__% climate action and disaster risk reduction)

7. Within which [sector](#) do you consider the organization you work for fits best? (You can select more than one)
 - a. Camp coordination and camp management
 - b. Early recovery
 - c. Education
 - d. Emergency telecommunications
 - e. Food security
 - f. Health
 - g. Logistics
 - h. Nutrition

- i. Protection
 - j. Shelter
 - k. Water, sanitation, and hygiene
 - l. Other
8. How long have you been working in the humanitarian sector?
- a. Under 2 years
 - b. Between 2-5 years
 - c. Between 5-10 years
 - d. Over 10 years
9. In your workplace, which role best describes your position? (You can select long-term one)
- a. Senior leadership (e.g., country director, division/department head, head of agency)
 - b. Management (e.g., program manager, program advisor, section/branch chief)
 - c. Expert (e.g., consultant, technical/thematic advisor, analyst)
 - d. Operations and logistics
 - e. Communications and Public Affairs
 - f. Administration, budget and finance, human resources
 - g. Other

As a reminder, we ask you to respond in an individual capacity that reflects your own personal views and ethics, not as a representative of your organization and its policies.

10. Imagine you are the humanitarian coordinator of a country in the Horn of Africa where severe drought happens every ~3 years. The seasonal forecast issued today shows high chances of failed rains for the next season that starts in three months. Rainfall could fall anywhere between 50% to 70% below the average level of the past 40 years. The warning cautions stakeholders should “prepare for the worst”, although it is yet uncertain which specific regions will be affected and to what extent. Severe drought in the Horn of Africa has led to famine-like conditions three times in the past decade. More than 2 million people that never recovered from previous shocks face a high risk of malnourishment, loss of income, displacement, water shortages, and disease. Your advisors put three options on your table on strategies the humanitarian country team could pursue to avoid the worst outcome. Which one would you take?
- a. *Don't wait. Start delivering all the help possible immediately, even though there is still significant uncertainty about whether the drought will materialize and how the crisis might unfold.*

- b. *Wait four to six weeks for an updated forecast to give you a clearer picture of the scale, duration, and severity of the drought. At that point, you will plan and start a more targeted response.*
- c. *Wait until it becomes clear if drought conditions have materialized and where it is most severe. You launch a needs assessment in the hardest-hit regions to establish what help people need most. At that point, you scale up the response to alleviate suffering.*

11. Now consider the aftermath of this scenario. The rainy season is over. In the end, the drought was not nearly as severe as the seasonal forecast suggested. That is very good news for the country. Nevertheless, the humanitarian country team wonders whether their capacity to respond would have been sufficient had the crisis been worse. Specifically...

-If you choose option a, the general feeling among the humanitarian country team is that the money could have been better spent or saved for a future crisis.

-If you chose option b, the general feeling among the country team is that the timing and speed of the response were generally appropriate.

-If you chose option c, the general feeling among the humanitarian country team is that acting sooner might have prevented suffering.

Would you change your decision next time?

- a. *No, I would choose the same approach*
- b. *Yes, I would:*
 - *Choose option a*
 - *Choose option b*
 - *Choose option c*

12. You are stationed in a rural village in a region where seismologists predict there is an increasing risk of a volcanic eruption in the next 6 months. This could result in loss of life and property, and longer-term damage to the economy and wellbeing, but it is still rather early to determine exactly when and how severe the crisis will be.

I would recommend we mobilize in response to the crisis when there is a __% chance that it will impact our community.

- a. *Sliding scale*

13. Where are you most likely to stand on decisions that involve the following trade-offs or dilemmas? Use the sliding scale to indicate your answer.

Allocate funding to local organizations vs allocate funding to international organizations

- Sliding scale (%)

Accountability to affected people vs accountability to donors

- Sliding scale (%)

Long-term sustainability vs short-term emergency response

- Sliding scale (%)

14. How much do your individual choices, reflected in your answers to the questions above, align with those that the organization you work for would take?

- *Very much*
- *Moderately*
- *Very little*
- *Not at all*

15. How much do you feel you have influence over how your organization responds to crises?

- *Very much*
- *Moderately*
- *Very little*
- *Not at all*

16. Do you feel that you have enough autonomy within your organization to change the way it engages in aid planning and implementation?

- *Very much*
- *Moderately*
- *Very little*
- *Not at all*

17. In your work, to what extent do you take action in response to people in need?

- *Very much*

- Moderately
- Very little
- Not at all

18. In your work, to what extent do you take action in response to people at risk?

- Very much
- Moderately
- Very little
- Not at all

19. In your work, to what extent do you take longer term development goals into account when planning a humanitarian intervention?

- Very much
- Moderately
- Very little
- Not at all

20. What would you change about the way the aid system works?

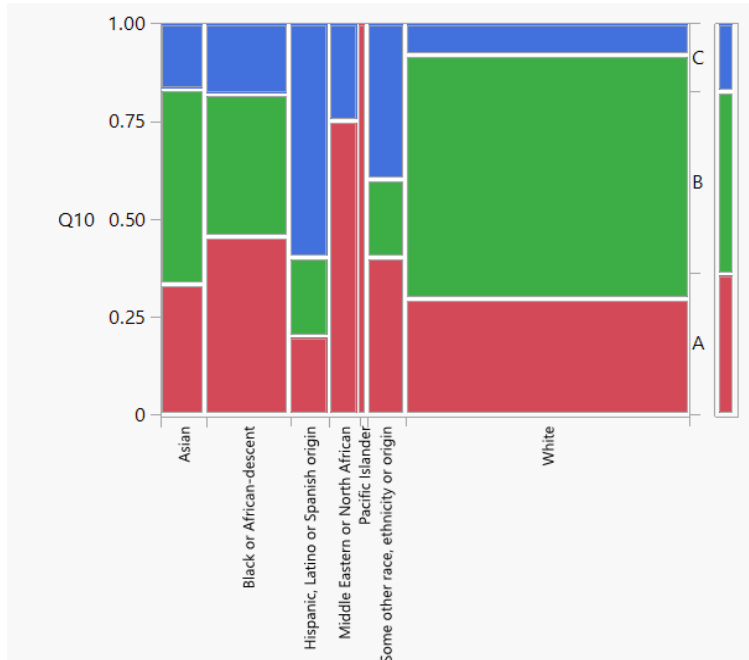
21. Are you interested in receiving the results of our study via the email provided?

- a. Yes
- b. No

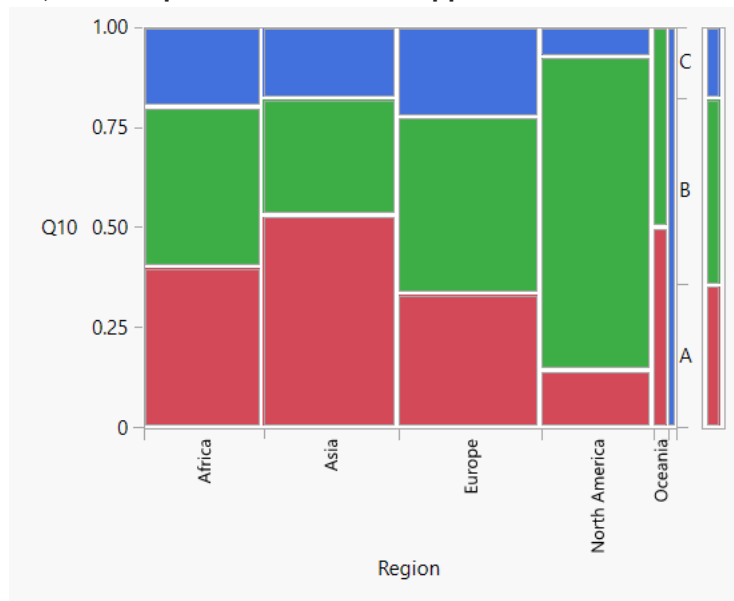
Thank you!

Appendix B: Figures Not Included in Text

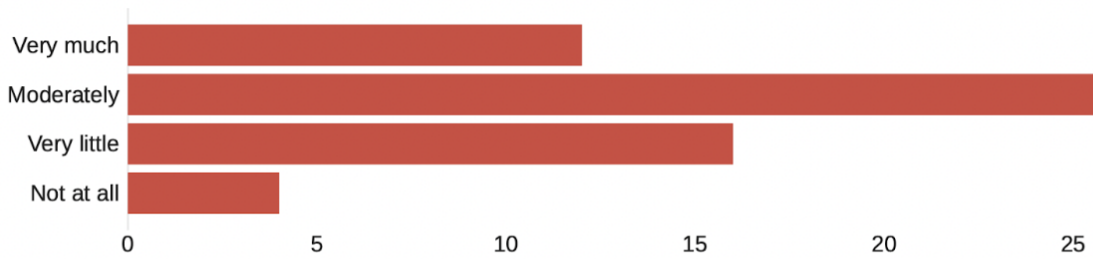
Appendix B Fig. 1: Mosaic Plot of Question 10 (the drought scenario) and Ethnicity where A represents an anticipatory approach, B represents a somewhat anticipatory approach, and C represents a reactive approach



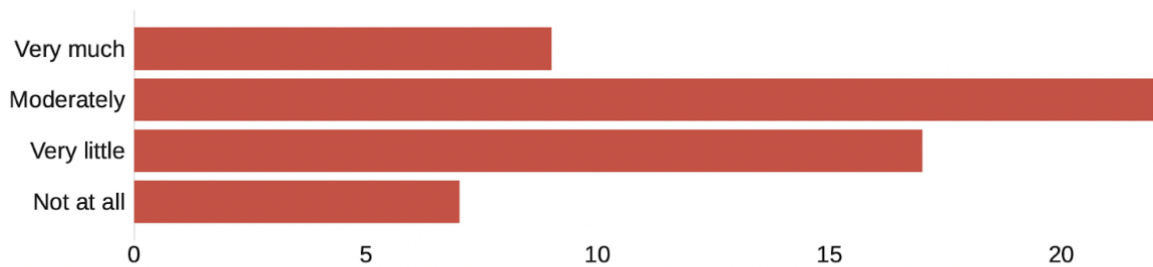
Appendix B Fig. 2: Mosaic Plot of Question 10 (the drought scenario) and Region Where Aid Workers Are Based where A represents an anticipatory approach, B represents a somewhat anticipatory approach, and C represents a reactive approach



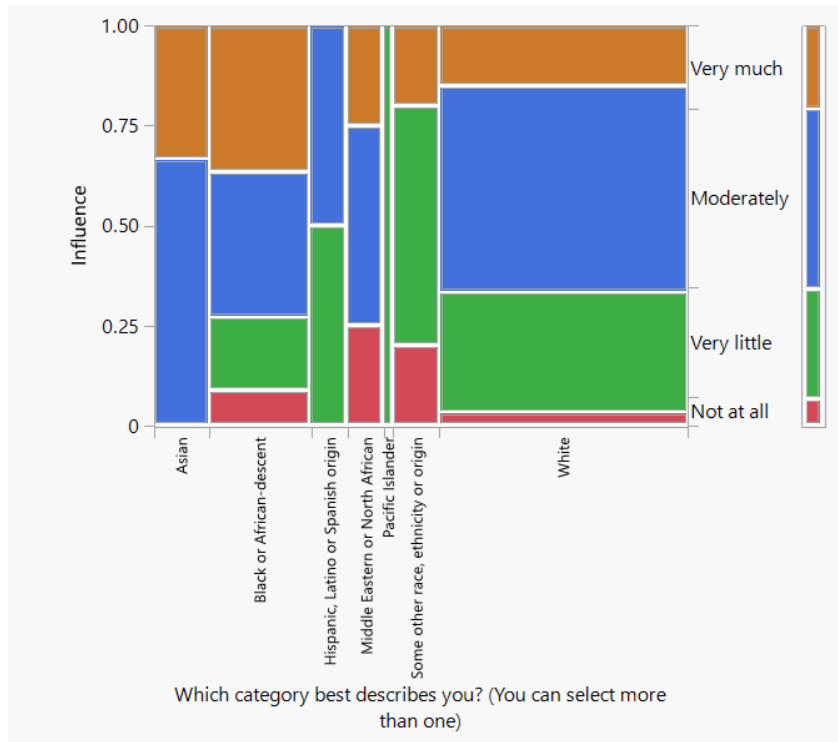
Appendix B Fig. 3: How much do aid workers feel they have influence over how their organization responds to crises?



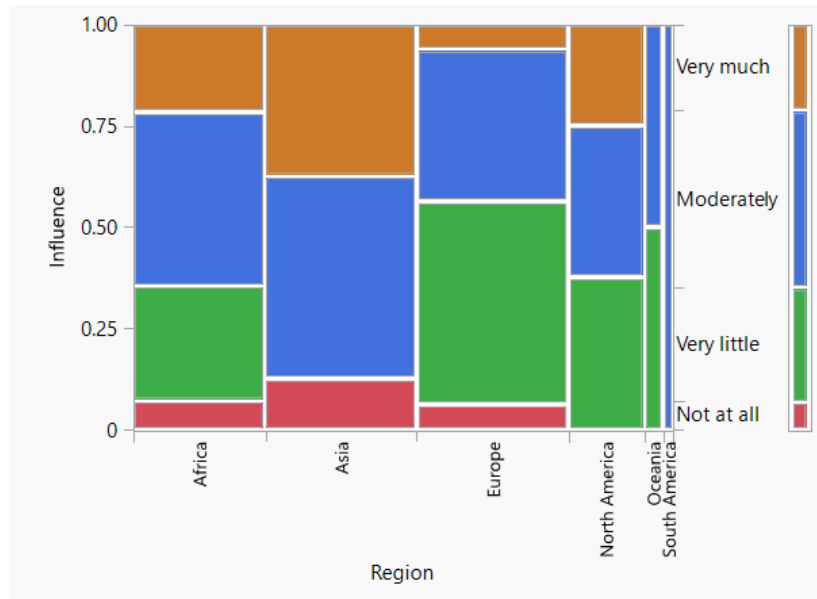
Appendix B Fig. 4: How much do aid workers feel they have autonomy within their organization to change the way they engage in aid planning and implementation?



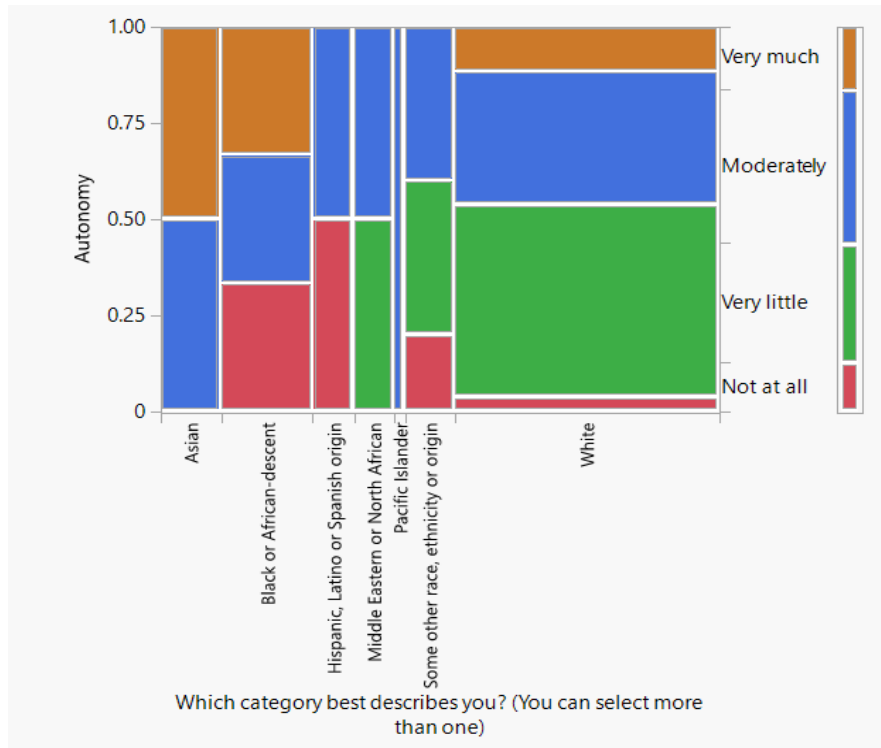
Appendix B Fig. 5: Mosaic Plot of Question 15 (amount of influence) and Ethnicity



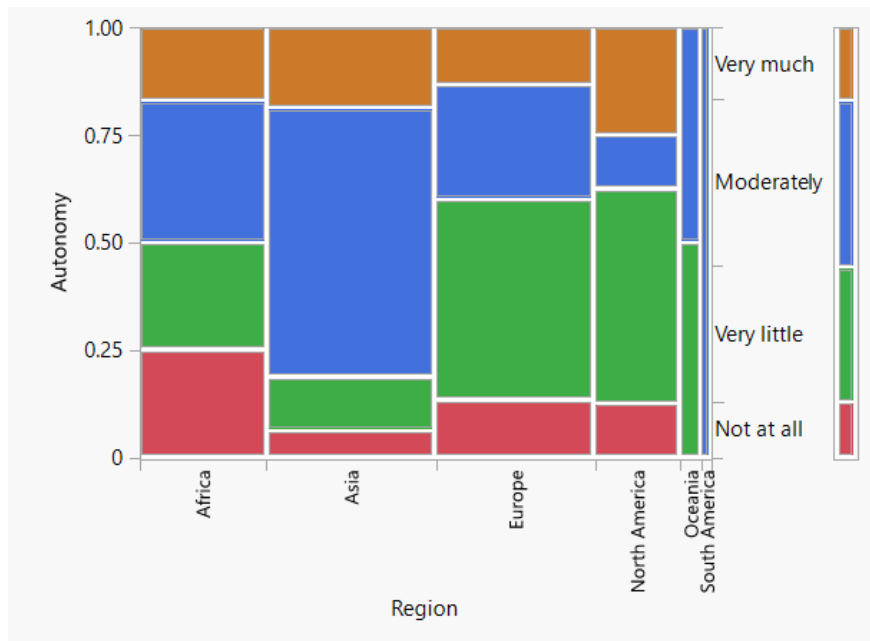
Appendix B Fig. 6: Mosaic Plot of Question 15 (amount of influence) and Region Where Aid Workers Are Based



Appendix B Fig. 7: Mosaic Plot of Question 16 (amount of autonomy) and Ethnicity

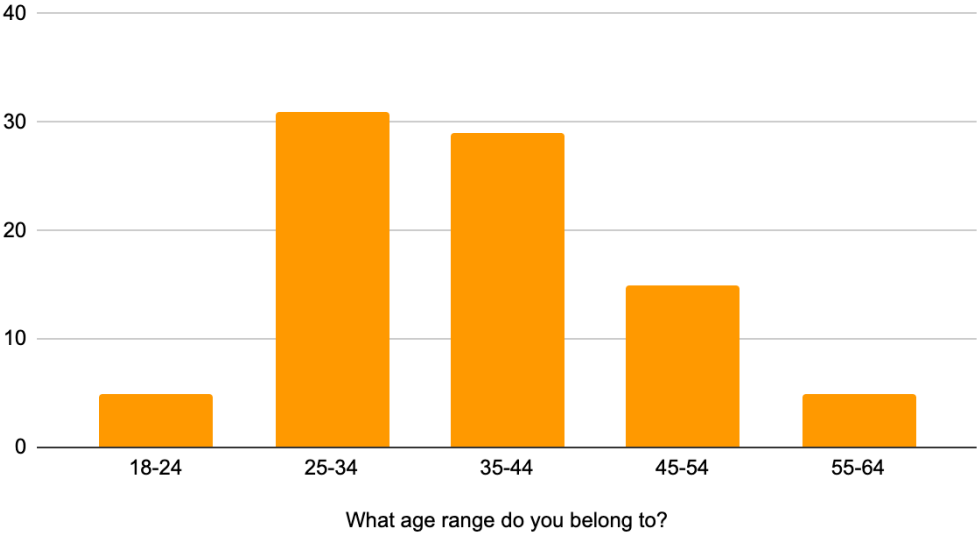


Appendix B Fig. 8: Mosaic Plot of Question 16 (amount of autonomy) and Region Where Aid Workers Are Based

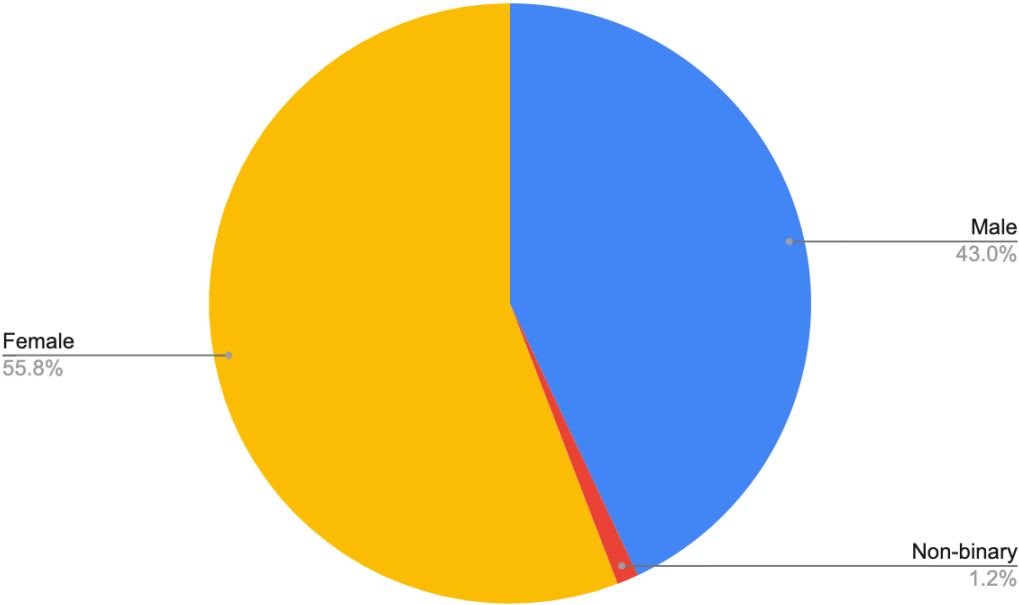


Appendix C: Demographic Information

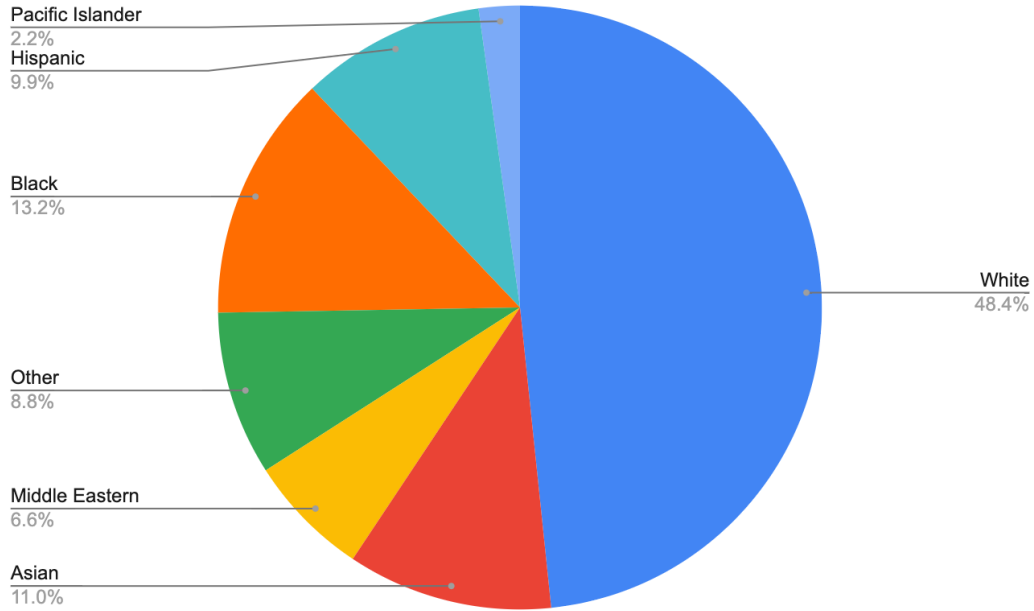
Appendix C Fig. 1: Age of Participants



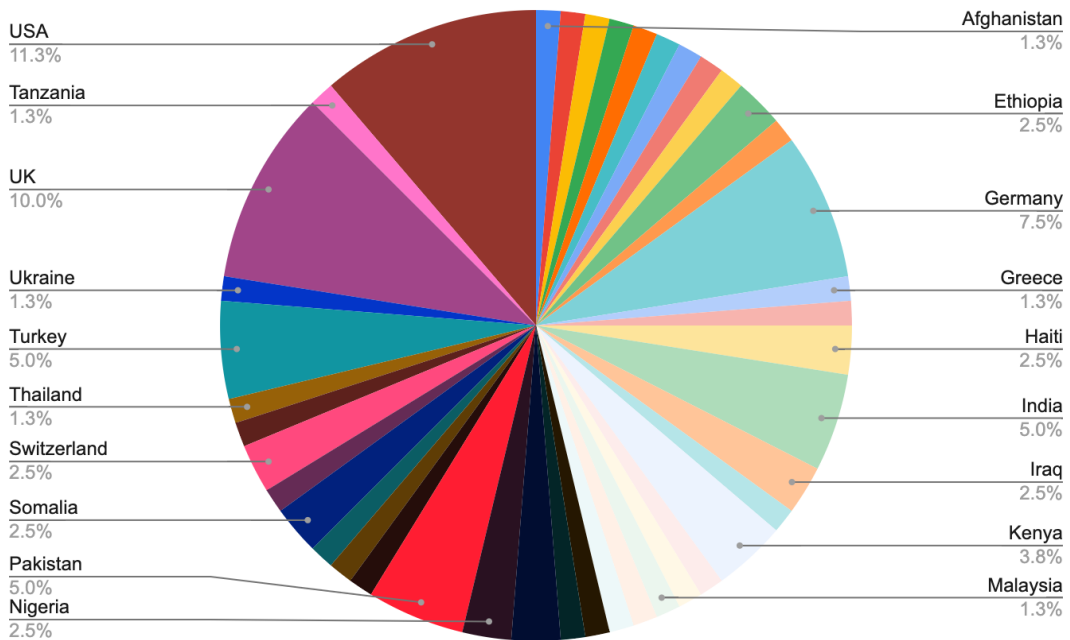
Appendix C Fig. 2: Gender Identity of Participants



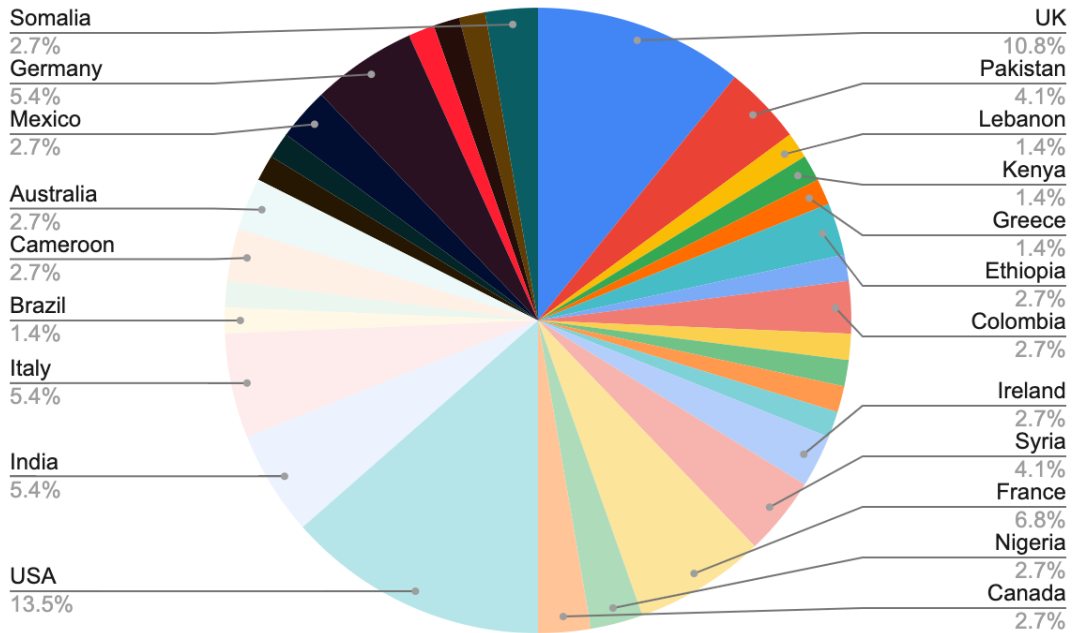
Appendix C Fig. 3: Ethnic and Racial Identity of Participants



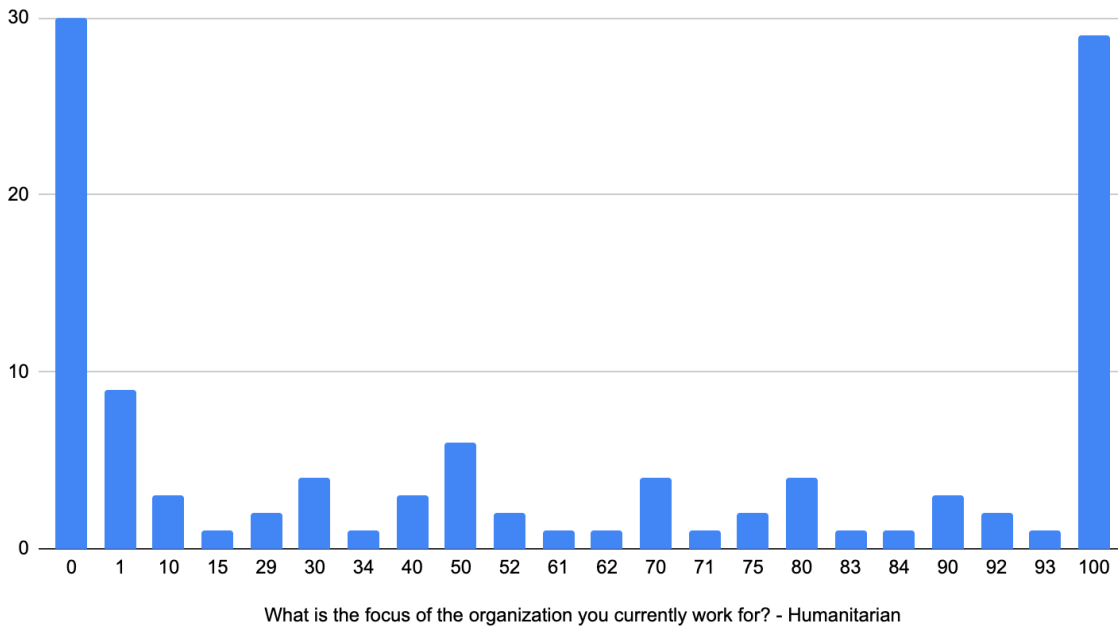
Appendix C Fig. 4: Countries Where Most Participants Are Based



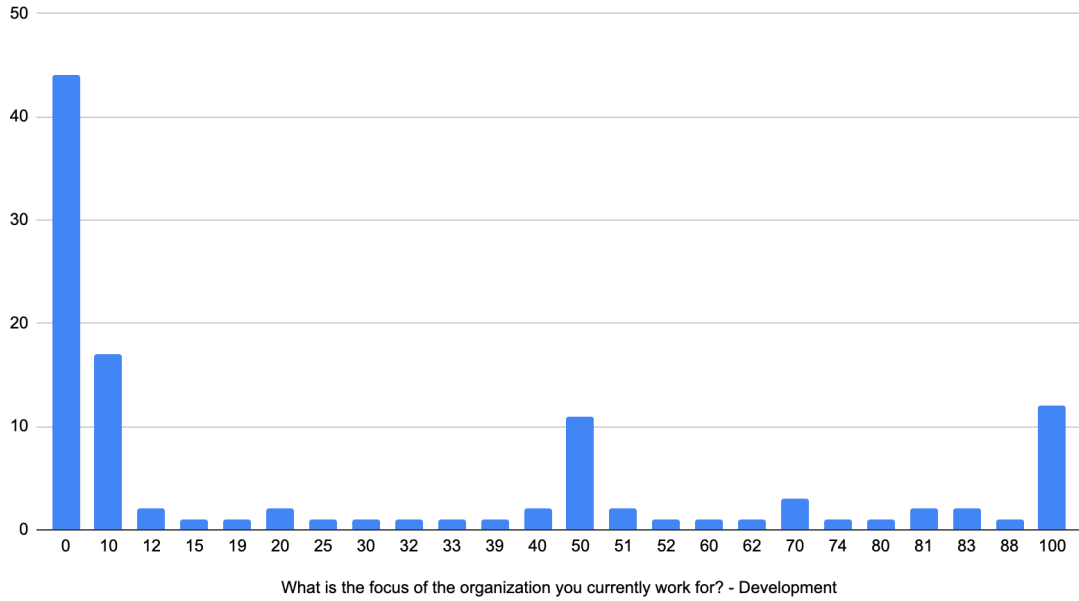
Appendix C Fig. 5: Countries Where Most Participants Are From



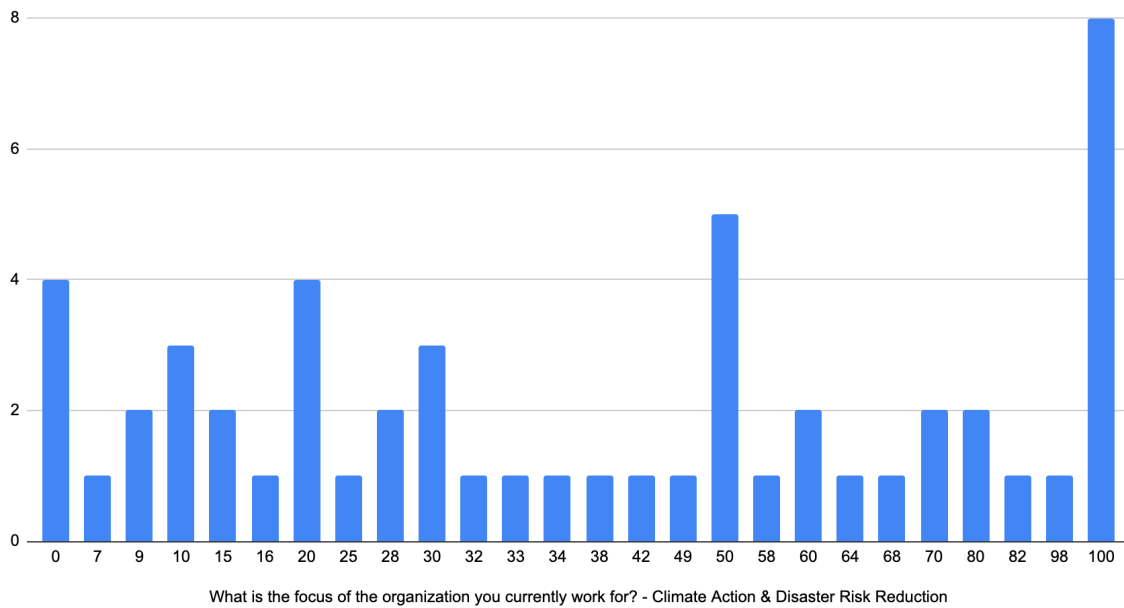
Appendix C Fig. 6: How focused on Humanitarianism are the organizations where participants are based



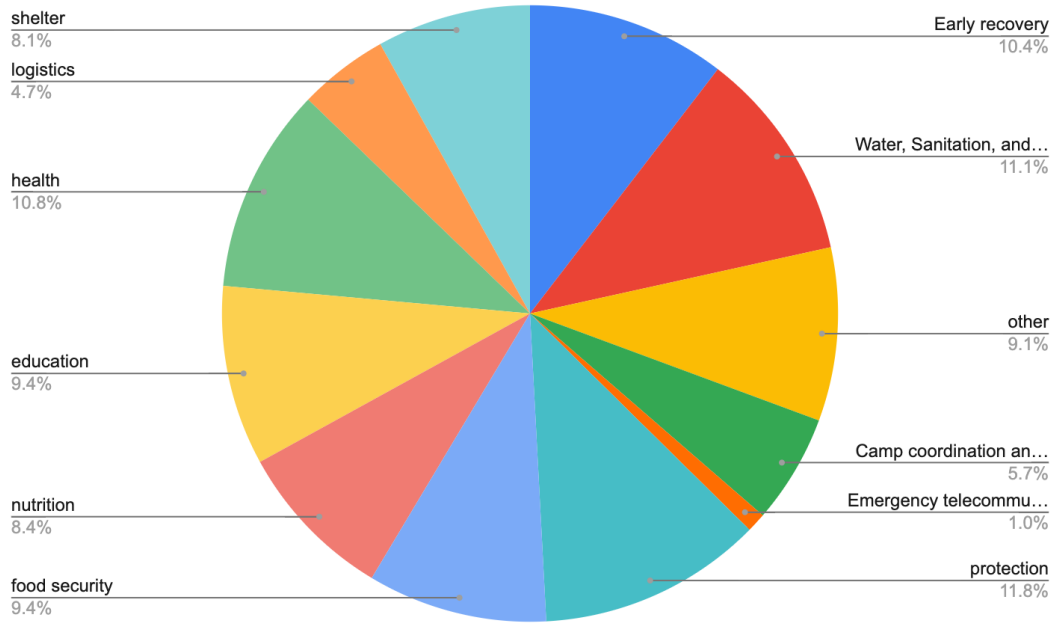
Appendix C Fig. 7: How focused on Development are the organizations where participants are based



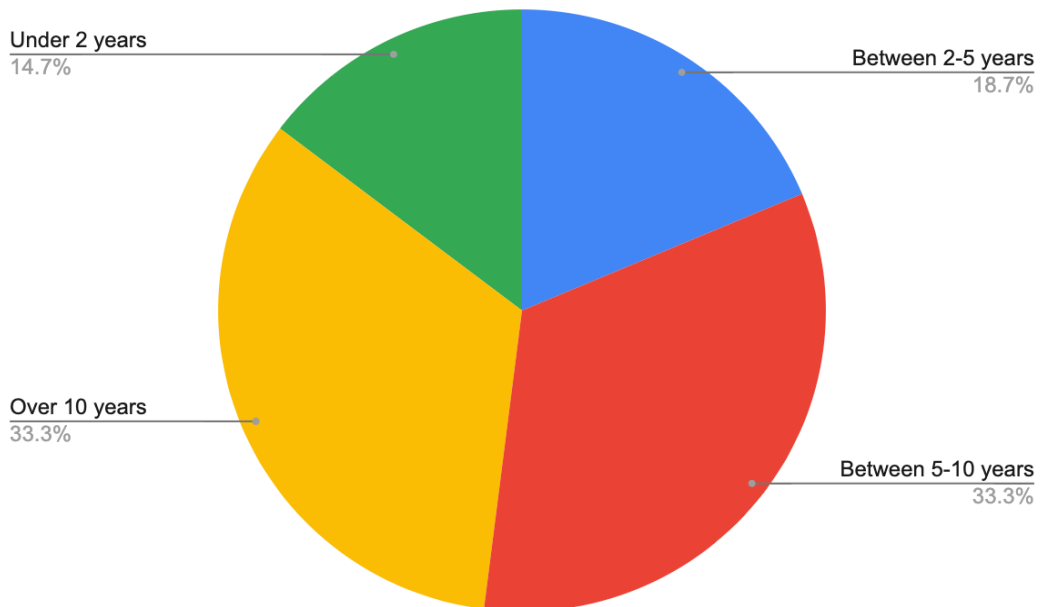
Appendix C Fig. 8: How focused on Climate Action & Disaster Risk Reduction are the organizations where participants are based



Appendix C Fig. 9: Focus of Organizations at which Participants Work



Appendix C Fig. 10: Length of Time Participants Have Worked in the Humanitarian Sector



Appendix C Fig. 11: Role of Participants in Their Organizations

