

Here and Now: Seniors' Issues for the 21st Century

Survey Results

Prepared by:
Ontario Society (Coalition) of Senior Citizens' Organizations

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About the Project

The Ontario Society (Coalition) of Senior Citizens' Organizations' "Here and Now: Seniors' Issues for the 21st Century" survey was created through a grant from Social Development Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program. The survey is part of a larger intensive peer networking project to enable OCSCO's over 140 member organizations to identify current and emerging issues of concern to their communities and, in so doing, learn from each other's experiences in order to achieve a strong, collective seniors' voice. The province-wide consultation has been identified as a priority of OCSCO by its members. Information gleaned from the survey and its consultations will be disseminated through an educational forum and coverage on OCSCO's website and newsletters as well as through the publication and distribution of this report.

Methodology

The survey questions were compiled after consultations with seniors from across Ontario and through input from OCSCO's staff and board members. Both closed and open-ended questions were included. Once finalized, the survey was distributed to all of OCSCO's member organizations in three mailings over a period of five months (May-September 2005). Thirty-five organizations completed and returned the survey to the OCSCO offices for a total response rate of 24% (35 out of 148 organizations). Results were tabulated by an OCSCO staff member in the autumn of 2005 and were reviewed by the organization's Executive Director and Board of Directors in December of that year.

Findings

A. Issues

Findings from the "Here and Now" survey point to convergence among seniors' organizations as to those issues which they consider most important to them, their work and for the future. Results should be of no surprise to anyone familiar with seniors' activities and causes over the last decade in Canada – with health care and issues relating to housing and home care taking precedence before all others.

Over 94% of respondents ranked health care as "important" or "very important" to their organization, followed closely by home care (88%) and Medicare (85%) in Question One.

In Question Two, an open-ended question where respondents could provide multiple answers, health care/Medicare received the most mentions from respondents as being the most important area of their organization's work (12% of total responses). Affordable housing and providing cultural and social programs (including recreation) to seniors came in second with 8% of all.

Looking to the next ten years in Question Four, another open-ended question allowing for multiple responses, the most frequently mentioned issue organization's felt they would need to address in the coming decade were those relating to general health care at 14% followed closely by the more specific privatization of health care with 13% - or a total of 27% of all responses combined. Interestingly, as will be addressed in the section on multicultural issues, meeting the needs of multicultural seniors as well as perceived future demographic changes of seniors ranked very highly on this forward-looking question – with 13% and 10% respectively.

In terms of lesser important issues, 69% of respondents ranked trade policy as "somewhat important" or "not important" followed by immigrant issues (55%) and literacy (46%). Of these, only trade policy and immigrant issues received a majority of "cool" (i.e. "somewhat important" or "not important") rankings.

B. Existing Challenges of Seniors' Organizations and Needs

Question Three dealt exclusively with respondents' perceived challenges that they are currently facing. The challenge most often ranked as "significant" or "very significant" was fundraising (74%). The second and third most important challenges are being heard by government bodies and finding members for your committees or boards (both at 71%).

As for those issues most often ranked as "least important" or "somewhat important", respondents chose getting projects done on time and within budget (43%), networking with other seniors' groups (40%) and getting relevant up-to-date information (37%) – although the trend indicates that all seven provided challenges received a majority of support as being "significant" or very "significant".

Question Five built on the challenges currently faced by seniors' organizations and those issues identified in Question Four. Here, respondents were asked to identify the matters they feel will be of importance in the next decade and what kind of support respondents they believe will be needed in order to meet existing and new challenges. The question was asked in an open-ended format and respondents could give multiple answers. Two needs were mentioned by almost a quarter of all respondents each – developing better information sharing/distribution and garnering better outreach to non-seniors' populations and governments (both at 23% of all responses).

C. Analysis of OCSCO Services

Questions Six through Ten dealt with existing OCSCO services and what respondents would like to see from OCSCO in the future.

The top three services OCSCO provides were agreed by respondents to be health promotion (85% "important" or "very important"), mailings from OCSCO (76%) and advocacy (73%). Since the largest amount of OCSCO's health promotion work appears in our newsletters and other mailings in the form of educational inserts, this points to the success the organization has achieved in creating outreach-based communication materials for its members.

The service respondents were most likely to rank as "not important" or "somewhat important" was OCSCO's songbooks (61%). This indicates the known disconnect between users of OCSCO's songbooks – which tend to be individual seniors and seniors' residences or hospitals – and its member organizations – which tend to be cultural or issue-oriented organizations. Since only member organizations were invited to participate in the survey, songbooks appear on the surface to be unpopular. However, sales of the books show their importance – if only to a different segment of the senior population. The second and third least important services were internet and computer training (55%) and OCSCO's 1-800 telephone number (46%). The latter is of no surprise given that many respondents come from the Greater Toronto Area and would not be concerned with long-distance charges when trying to contact OCSCO.

While there was some consensus among respondents in grading existing OCSCO services, there is very little agreement among member organizations as to what other services would be best to pursue in the future. Responses included assisting with board development of seniors' organizations, teaching English as a second language and volunteer training - a truly mixed bag.

Questions Eight and Nine considered OCSCO's quarterly newsletter, *OCSCO Outreach*. Respondents universally ranked the newsletter's editorial content (94%), frequency of publication (94%) and readability (93%) as "good" or "excellent". While still receiving a positive grading, *OCSCO Outreach's* design layout saw a small dip in ranking with only 77% of respondents indicating it to be "good" or "excellent". In an open-ended

question about what respondents would like to see included in future editions of the newsletter, 50% selected more news about current issues affecting seniors, with the next most popular choice being articles about OCSCO's services (14%).

Question Ten dealt with OCSCO's website and asked respondents what changes, if any, they would like to have made to <http://www.ocSCO.ca>. Unfortunately, so few individuals responded to this open-ended question that tabulation of results was not possible.

In terms of methods of communication, 43% of respondents preferred both email and regular mailings. 19% of respondents indicated email only as a preference for receiving information from OCSCO. However, despite the number of OCSCO members who have access to email, 38% of all respondents indicated regular mail only – demonstrating that most future mailings should continue to be spent via regular post, although perhaps with an additional electronic edition for those with email access.

D. Multicultural Issues/Needs

OCSCO's members from multicultural communities received an additional one-page questionnaire about their specific issues and needs.

The three services/programs ranked most often as “high need” were advocacy on seniors' issues with government bodies (64%), networking opportunities for your organization (55%) and joint educational seminars and forums with OCSCO (45%). The three services/programs which received most frequent ranking as “low need” were computer training for your linguistic group (55%), production of resources (55%) and staff or board training (55%). These findings point to the fact that there is no clear consensus among multicultural groups about what services and programs can best be used to fit their needs.

Of note is how, in the general survey, respondents tended to not rank multicultural issues as being of any real importance to their organization currently – with issues relating to new Canadians and immigrants even falling into the bottom three category. However, these issues did appear in many respondents' choices of what they felt would be the most important matters in the next ten years. In other words, while many of OCSCO's member organizations are not currently working on multicultural issues, they recognize their growing importance in the future – especially as more and more of the seniors' population comes from ethnically and culturally diverse communities.

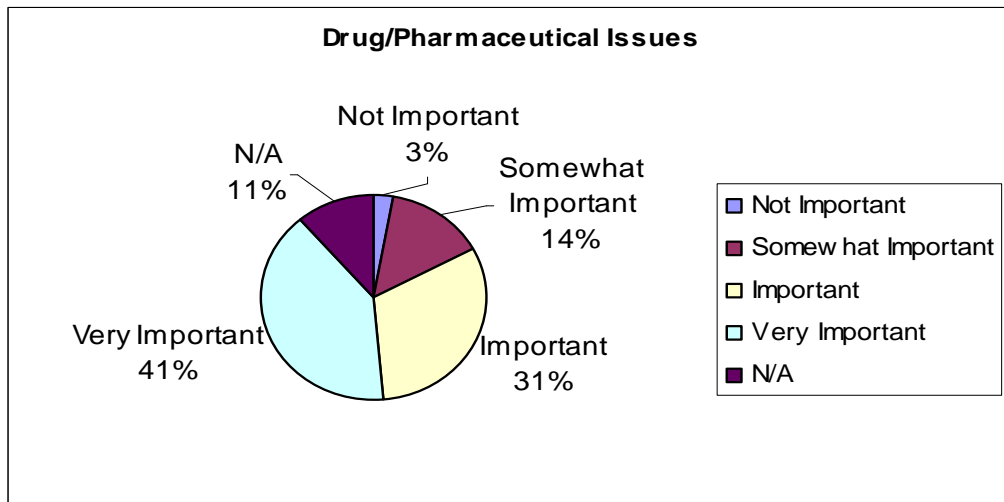
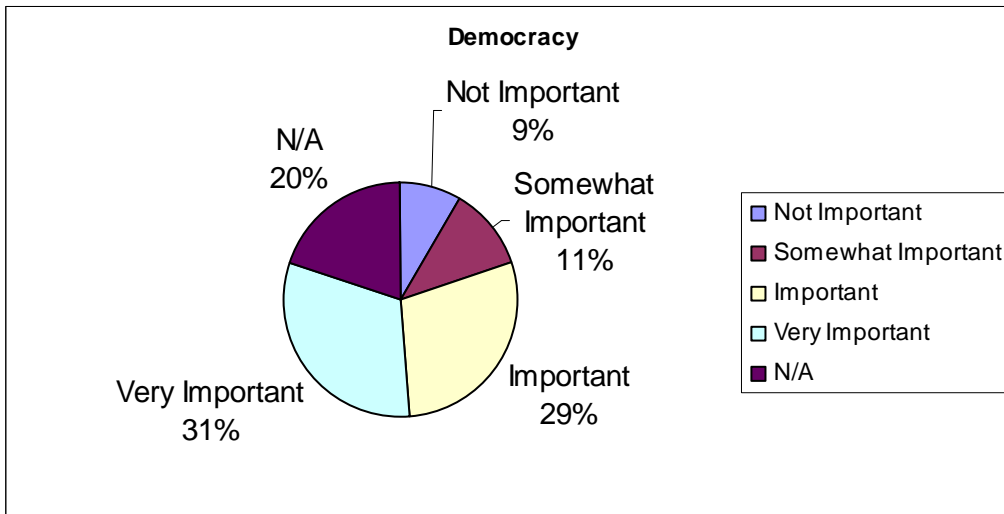
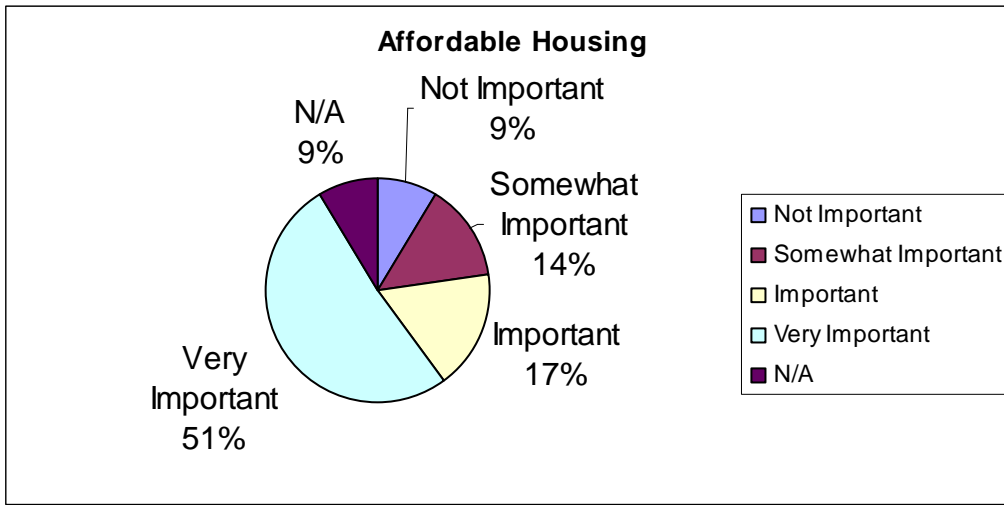
About OCSCO

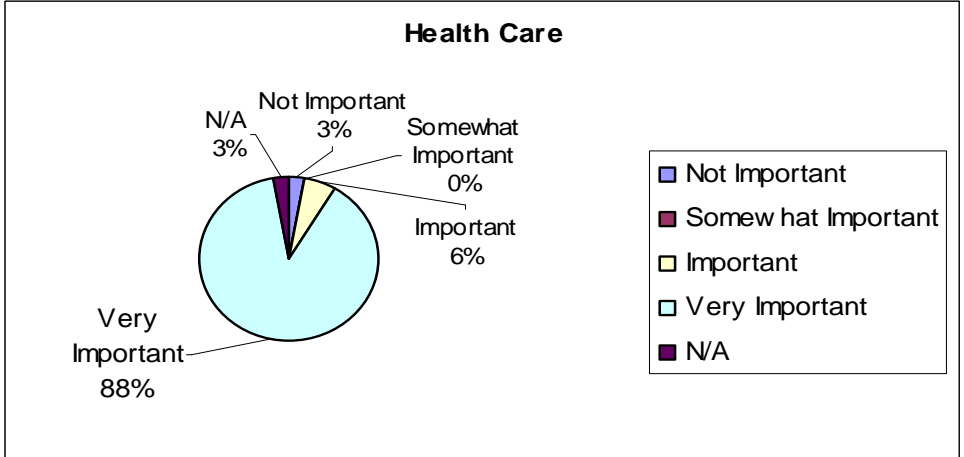
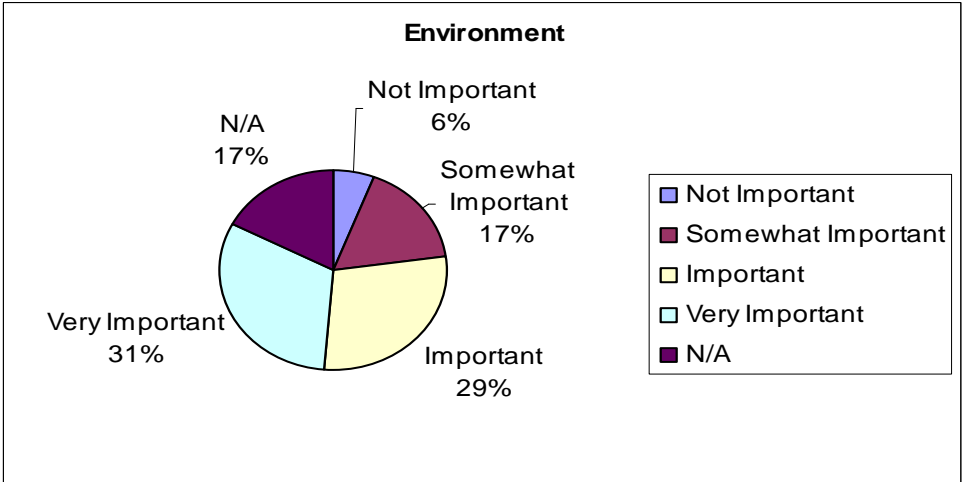
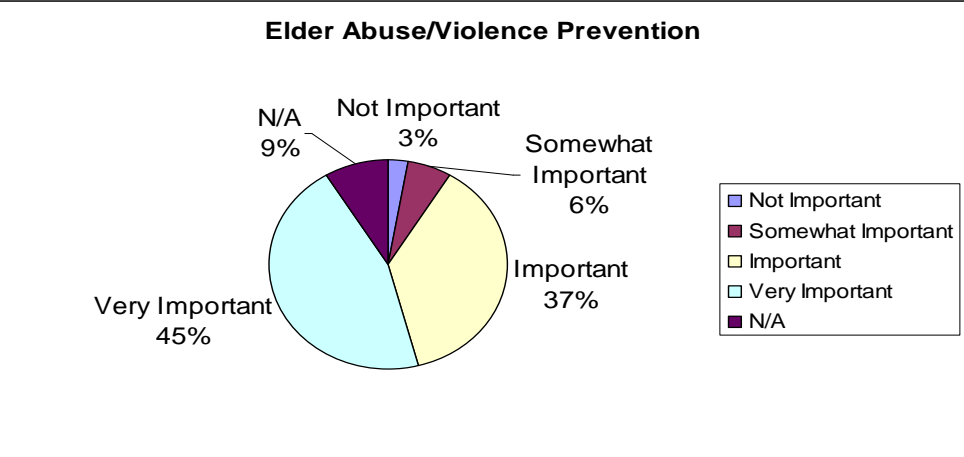
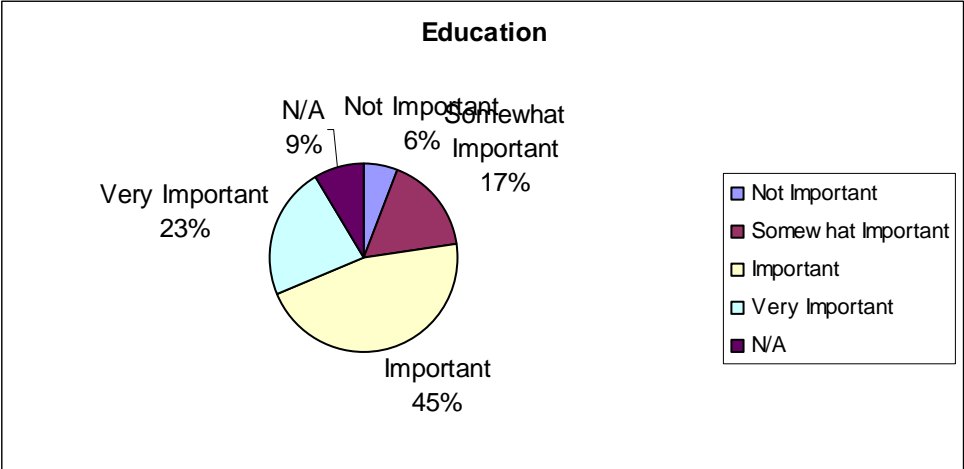
OCSCO is a provincial organization and a registered charity. Founded in 1986, its mission is to improve the quality of life for Ontario's seniors through offering education programs, policy and research, information, referral, counseling, research materials, outreach and support, self-help and volunteer programs. OCSCO's membership includes over 140 seniors' organizations and individuals representing 500,000 senior citizens from across Ontario. OCSCO is community-based and not-for-profit and includes organizations representing seniors, ethnocultural, health, native, recreational, retiree, disability and women's organizations.

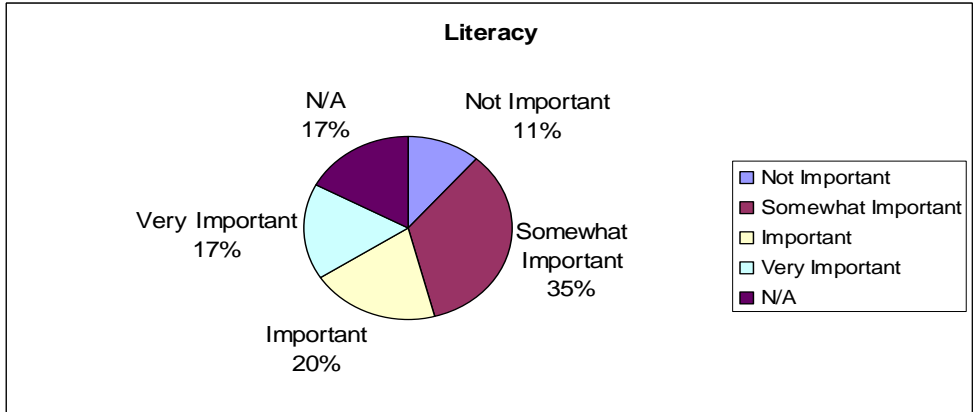
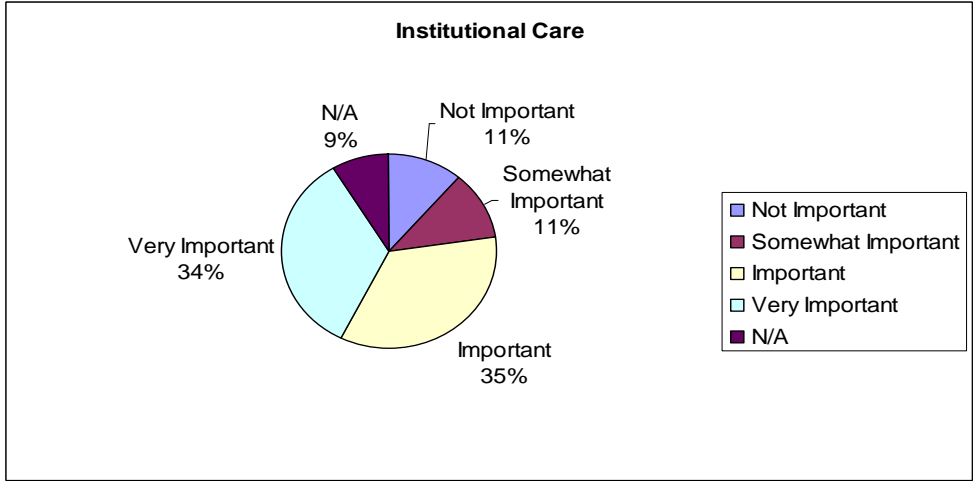
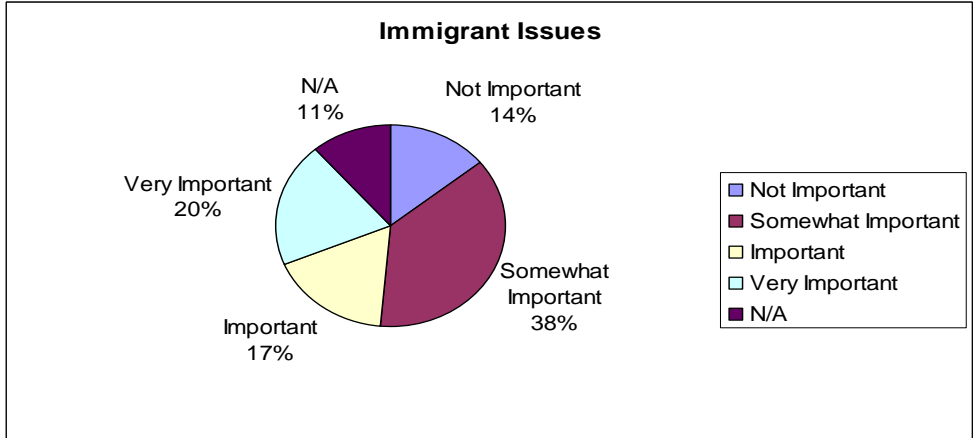
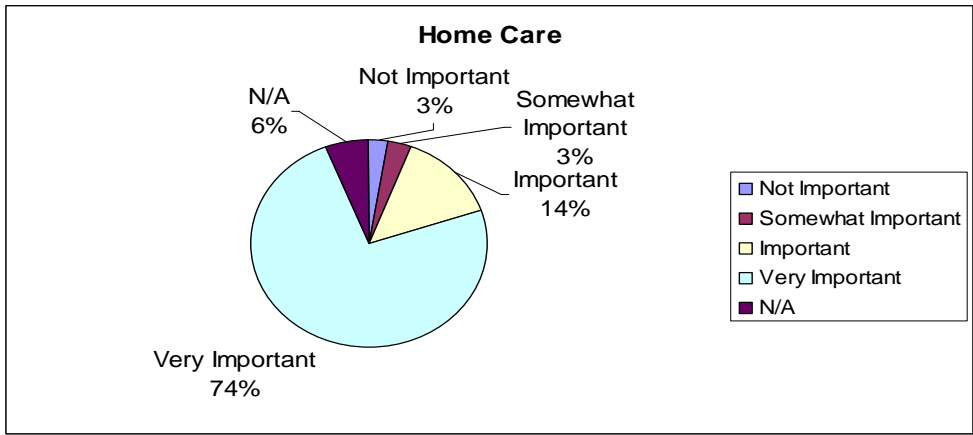
OCSCO's programs include: Educational Programs, Information, Referral and Counselling Services, Outreach and Support, Self-help Services, Volunteer Programs, Policy and Research and a toll free telephone line: 1-800-265-0779.

Question 1: What Are the Most Important Issues for Your Organization?

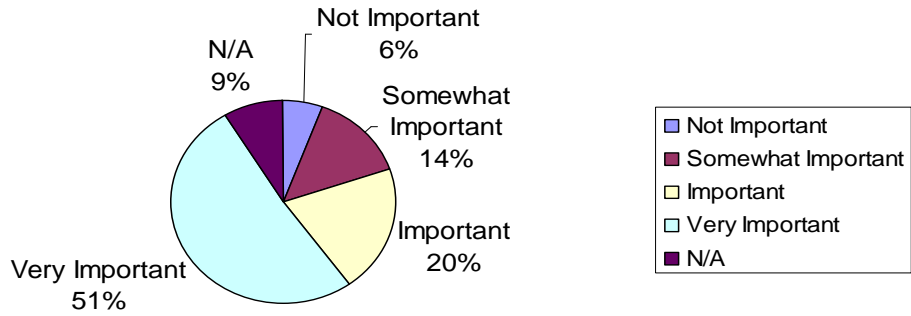
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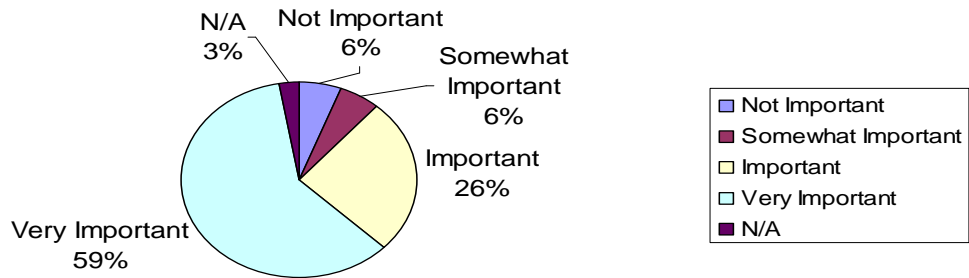




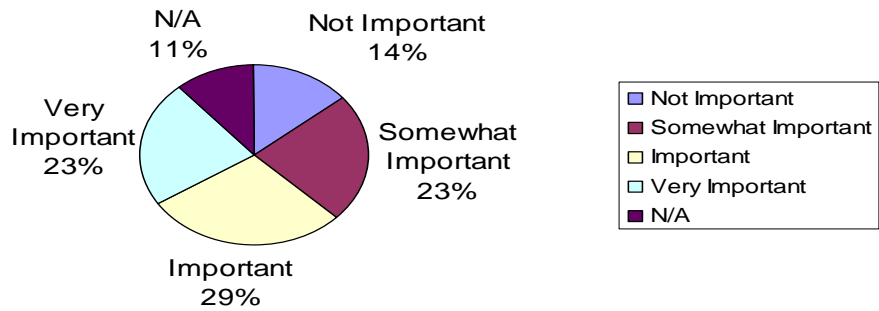
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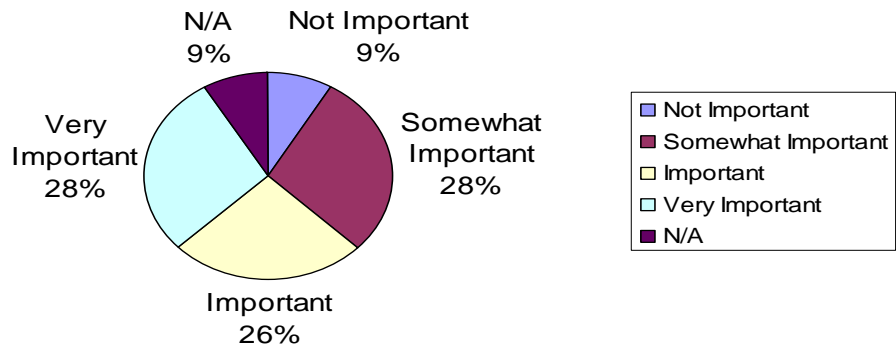
Medicare

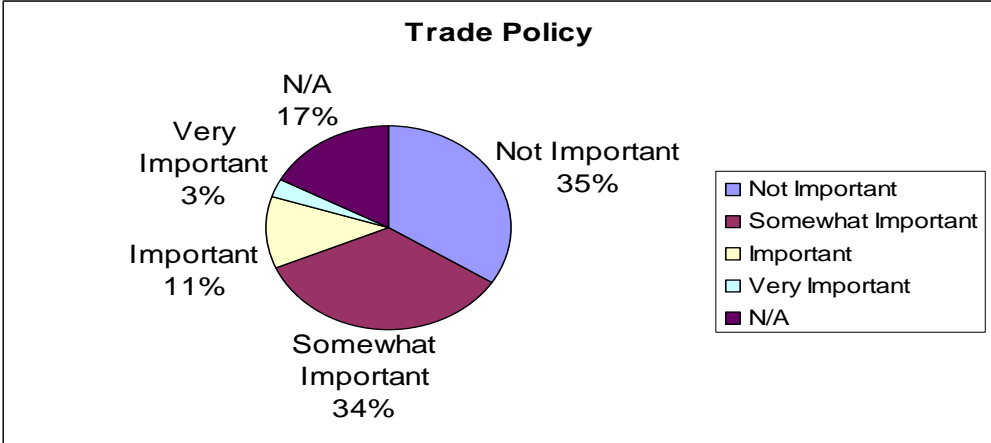
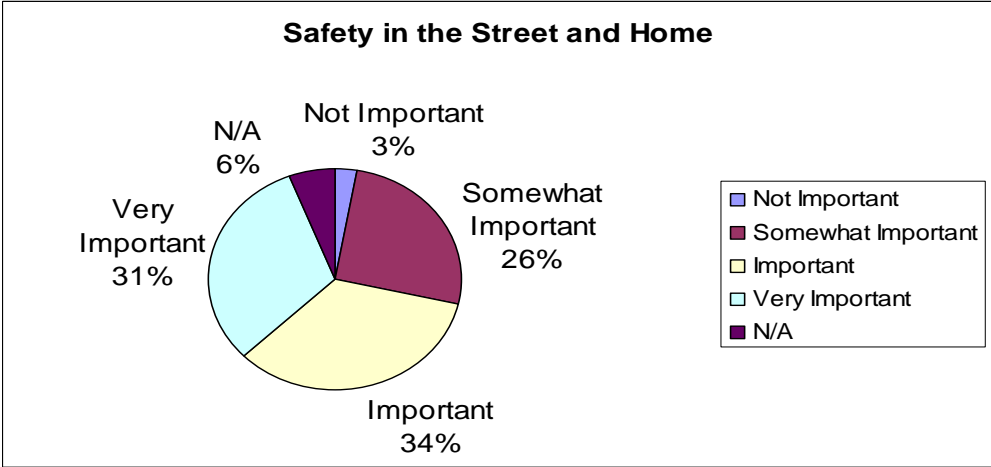
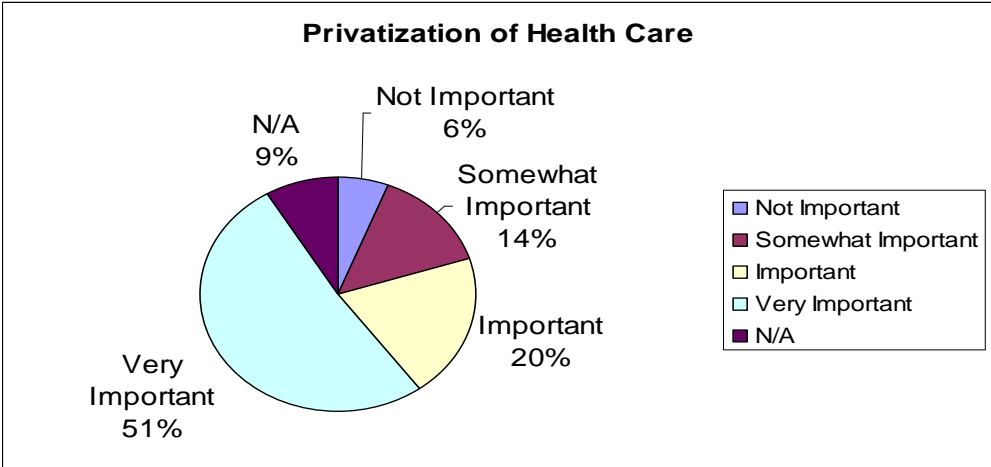
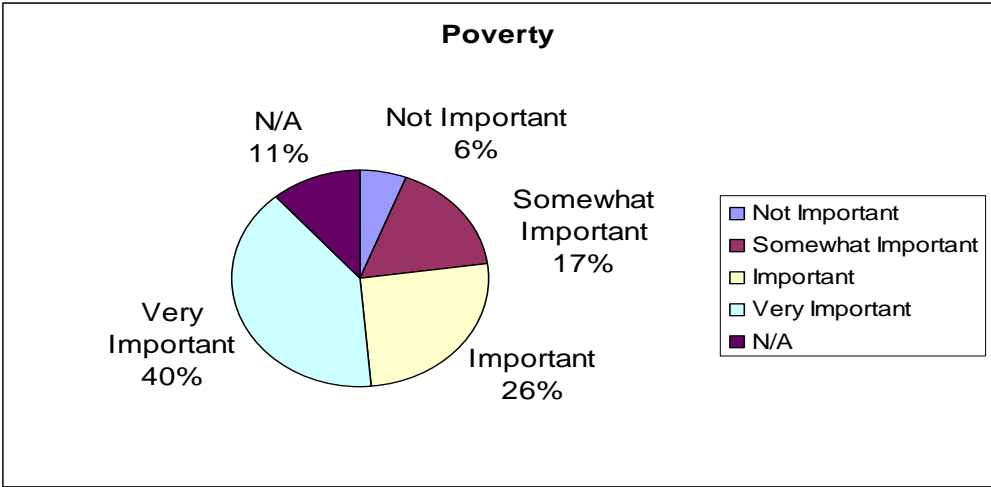


Multicultural Issues

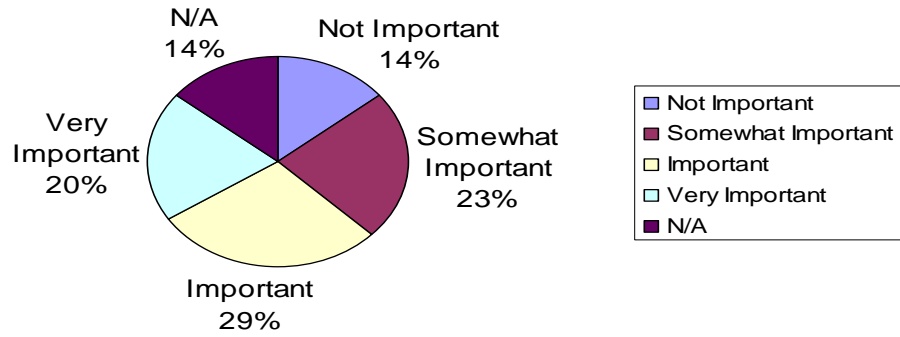


Pensions (CPP/OAS)

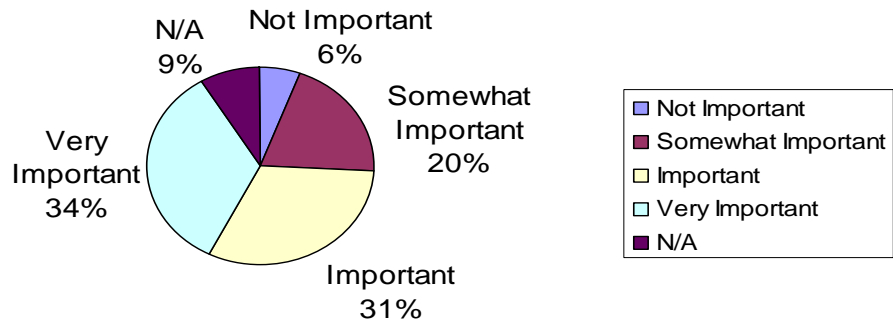




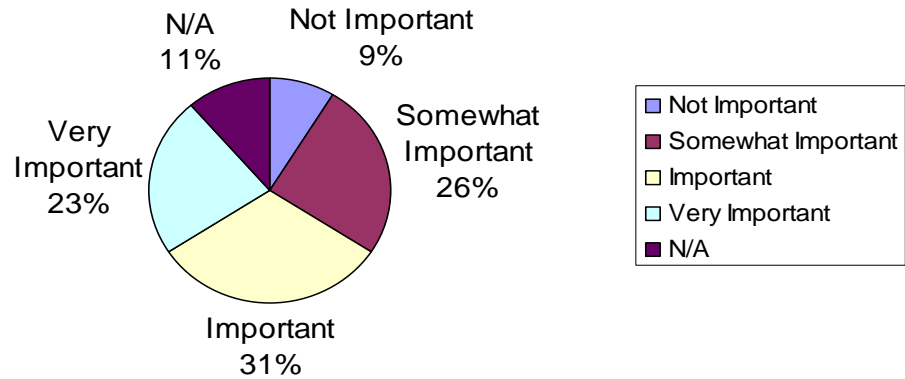
Taxation



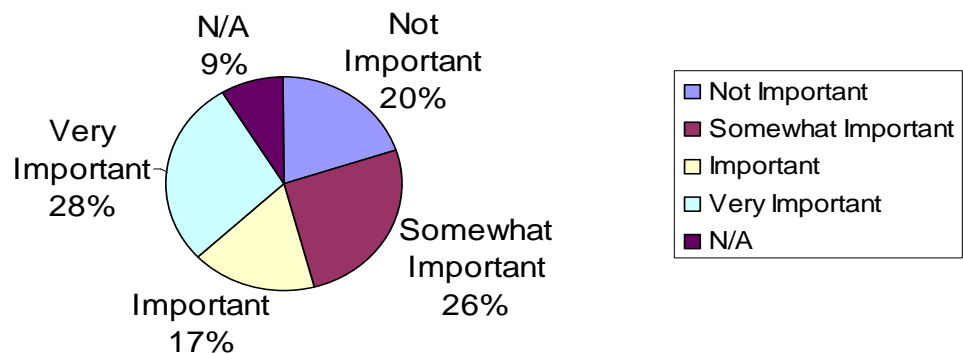
Transportation Issues



Women's Issues



Workers' Rights



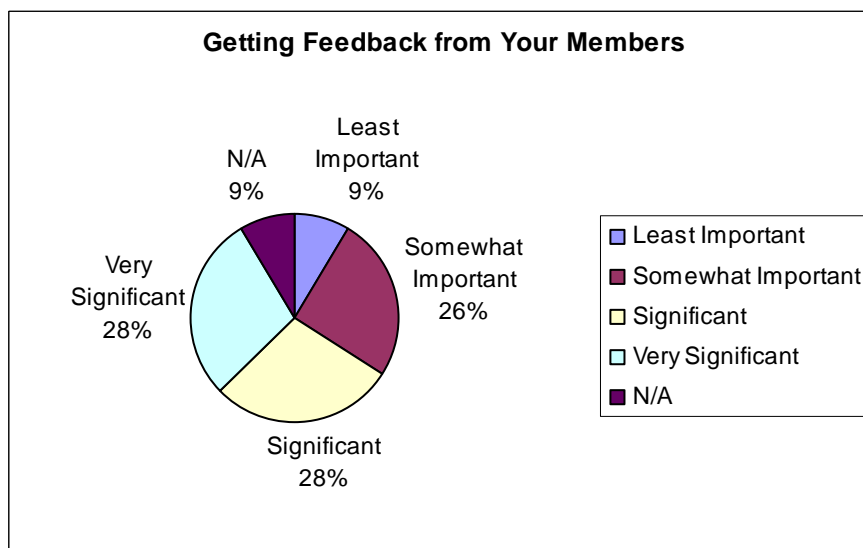
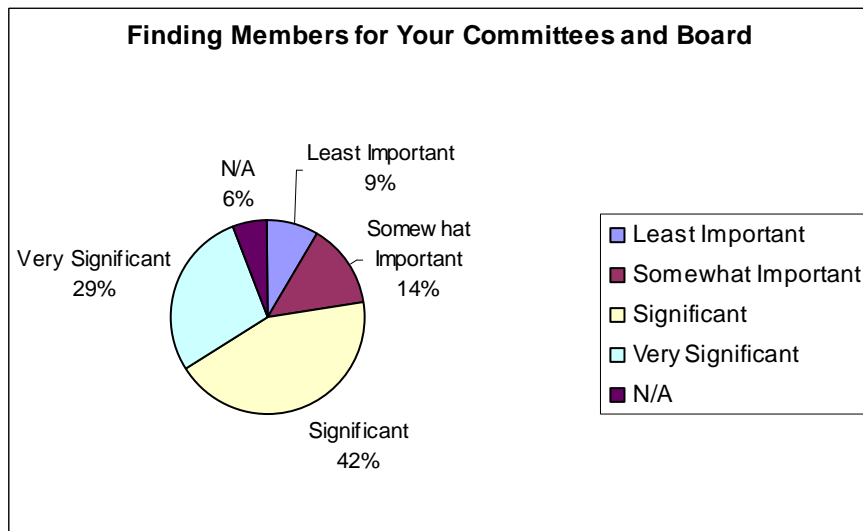
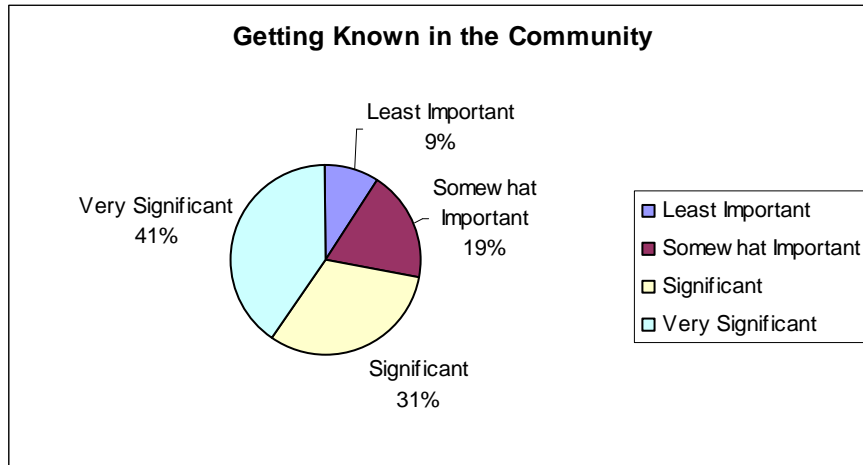
Question 2: What Are the Most Important Areas of Work for your Organization?
(Open-Ended, Multiple Answers Allowed)

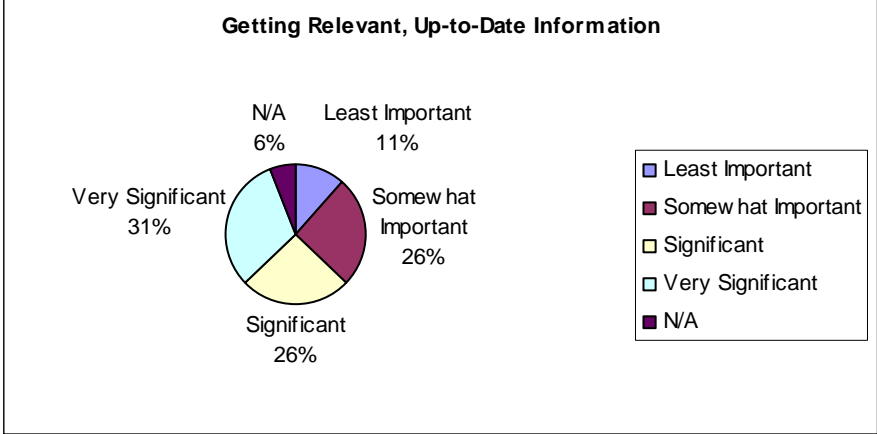
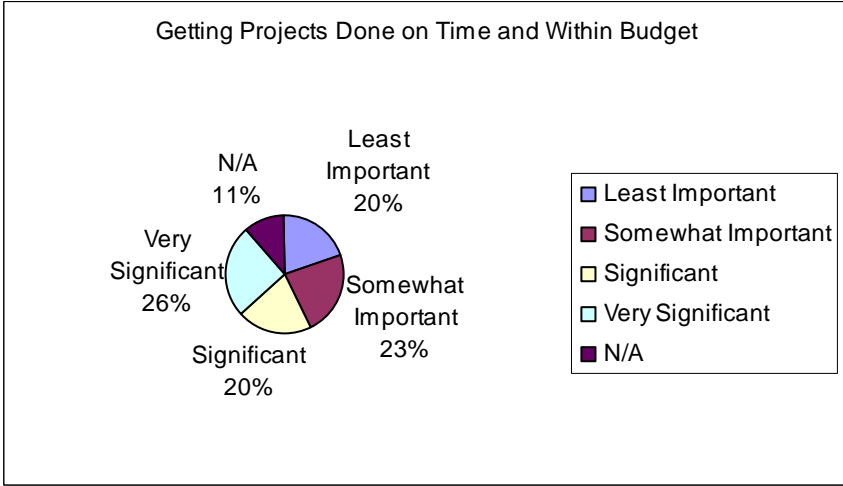
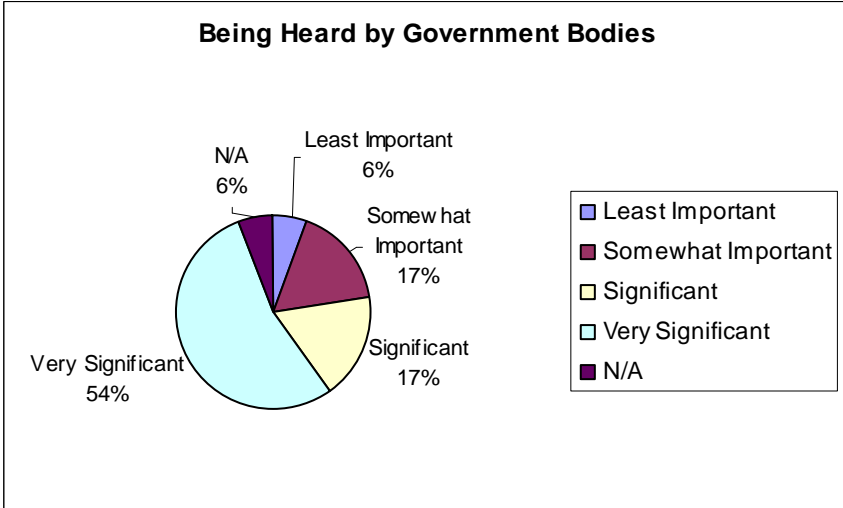
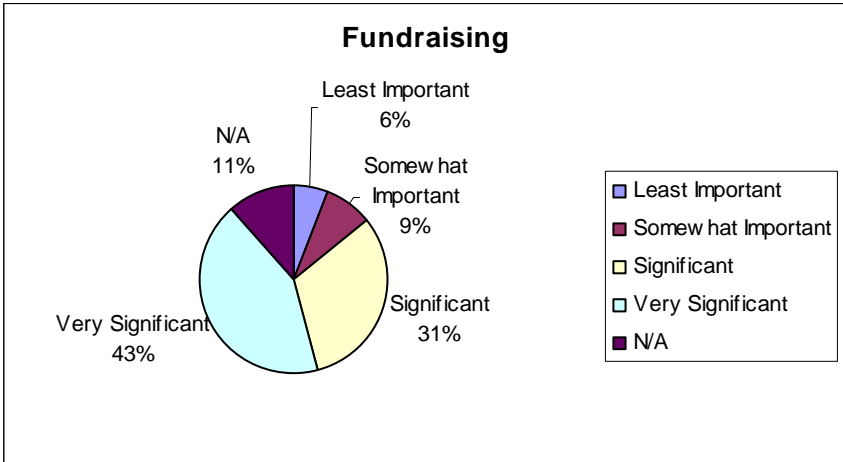
Area	Number of Times Given as a Response	Percentage of Total Responses N=117
Health Care/Medicare	11	9%
Affordable Housing	9	8%
Providing Cultural and Social Programs (including Recreation) to Seniors	9	8%
Home Care	8	7%
Advocacy	7	6%
Financial Issues (Pensions, Tax Credits, Budgeting Assistance)	7	6%
Education	6	5%
Multicultural Issues	5	4%
Fraud & Violence Prevention	5	4%
Long Term Care	5	4%
Transportation Issues	4	3%
Privatization of Health Care	3	3%
Looking After Needs of Seniors by Providing General Programs and Services	3	3%
Outreach/Collaborative Work with Other Organizations	3	3%
Fundraising	3	3%
Aboriginal Justice and Reform	2	2%
Frail/Disabled Seniors	2	2%
Pensions	2	2%
Caregivers Issues	2	2%
Mental Health Issues	2	2%
Immigrant Issues	2	2%
Peace and Environmental Issues	1	1%
Anti-Nuclear Proliferation	1	1%
Preservation of Public Services	1	1%
Electoral Reform	1	1%
Volunteer Development	1	1%
Poverty Eradication	1	1%
Conferences	1	1%
Tours	1	1%
Acceptance of Gay Lifestyle	1	1%
Pharmaceutical Issues	1	1%
Counselling	1	1%
Changing Attitudes Towards Ageing	1	1%
Employment	1	1%
Seat Belt Campaign	1	1%
Homelessness	1	1%
Women's Issues	1	1%
Information Technology Training	1	1%

Question 3: What are the Most Significant Challenges Faced by Your Organization?

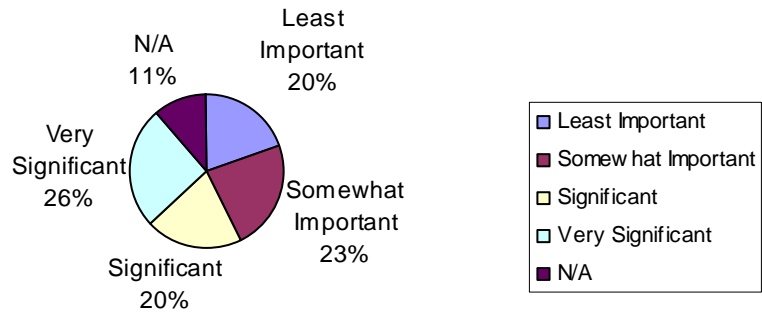
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Results for Each Provided Challenge:

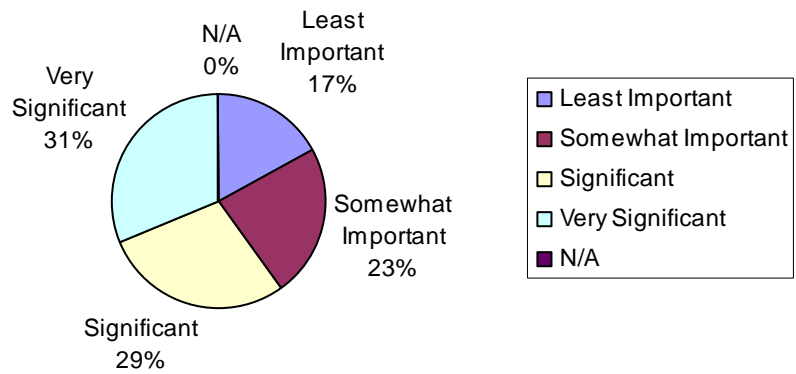




Getting Projects Done on Time and Within Budget



Networking with Other Seniors' Groups



Question 4: Ontario has gone through huge changes in the past decade and more are on the horizon. Think about the next ten years. What issues do you think your organization will have to deal with?
 (Open-Ended, Multiple Answers Allowed)

Issue	Number of Times Given as a Response	Percentage of Total Responses N=69
Health Care (General)	10	14%
Privatization of Health Care	9	13%
Meeting Needs of Multicultural Seniors	9	13%
Funding Issues	8	12%
Demographic Changes	7	10%
NA	5	7%
Housing	5	7%
Transportation	4	6%
Pensions	4	6%
Home Care/Long-Term Care	4	6%
Volunteer Issues	2	3%
Elder Abuse	2	3%

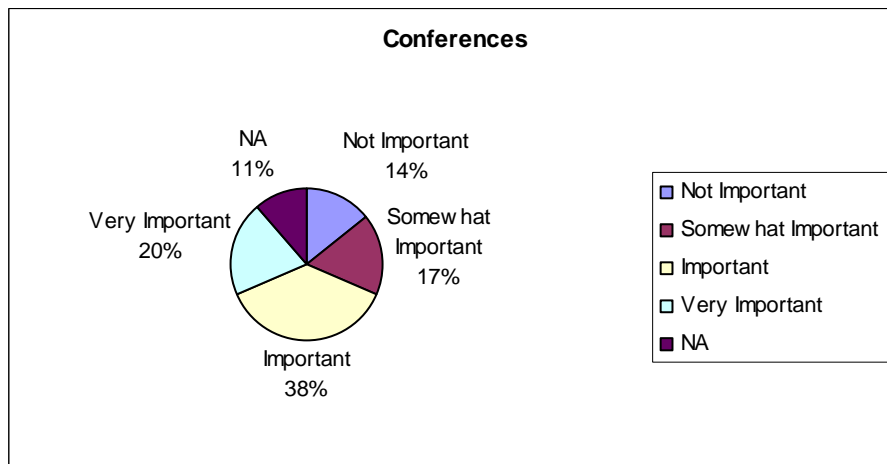
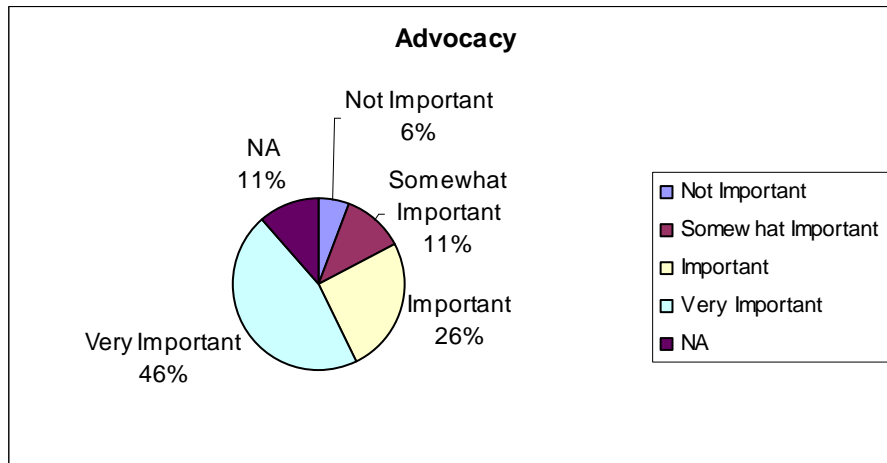
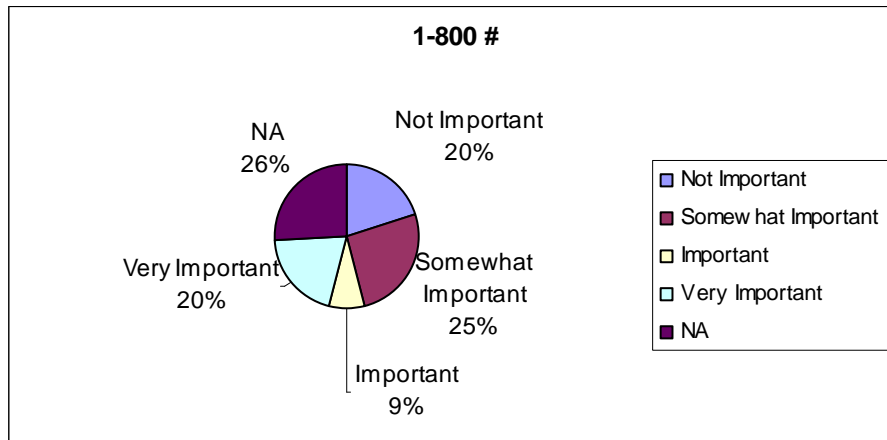
Question 5: What kind of support do you think will improve your ability to respond to these emerging issues and needs?

(Open-Ended, Multiple Answers Allowed)

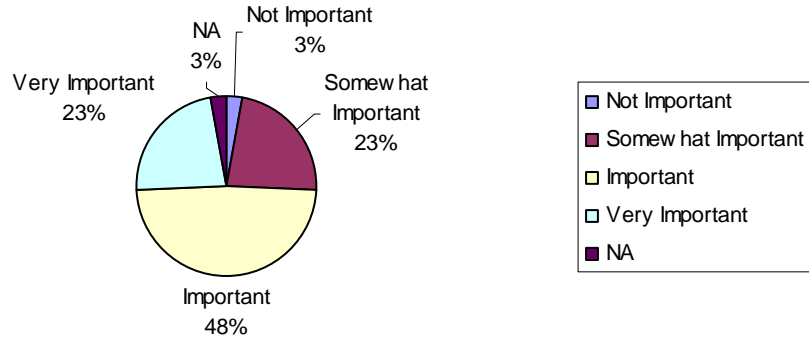
Type of Support	Number of Times Given as a Response	Percentage of Total Responses N=53
More Information Sources/Sharing	12	23
Better Outreach to Non-Seniors' Populations & Governments	12	23
Coalition/Partnership Building	8	15
Getting Better Financial Support	8	15
Creating a Better Volunteer Base	7	13
N/A	6	11

Question 6: We try to provide services that are useful to you. Let us know which ones you use and how you would rate them.

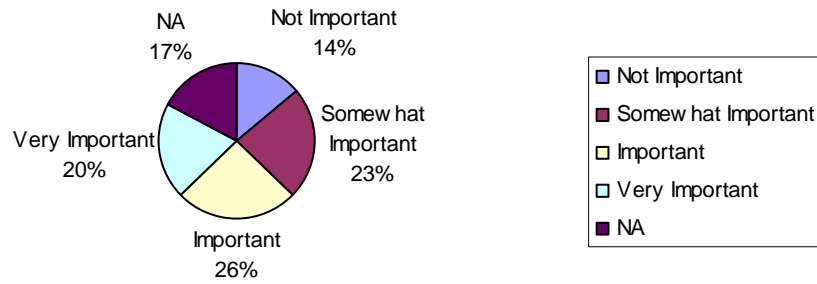
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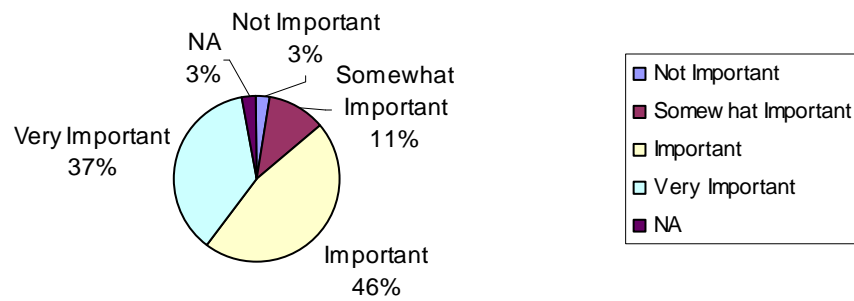
Educational Forums



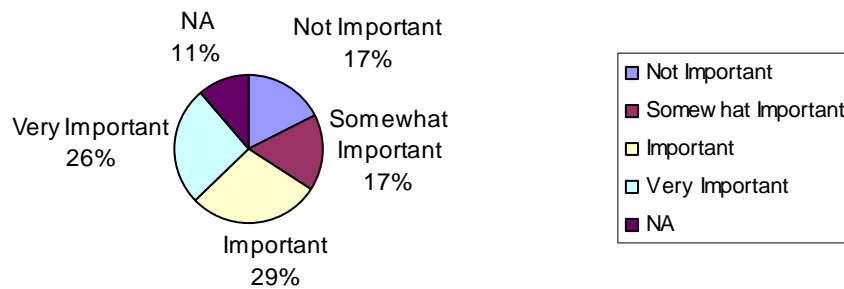
Emails

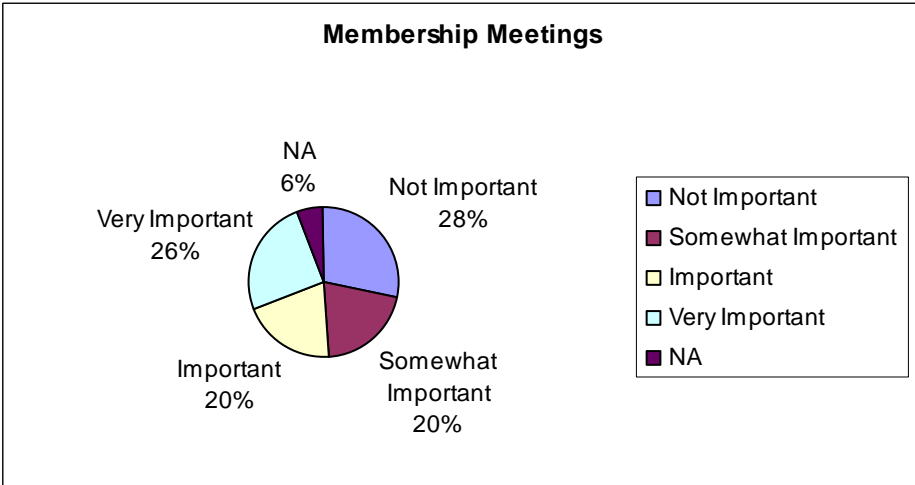
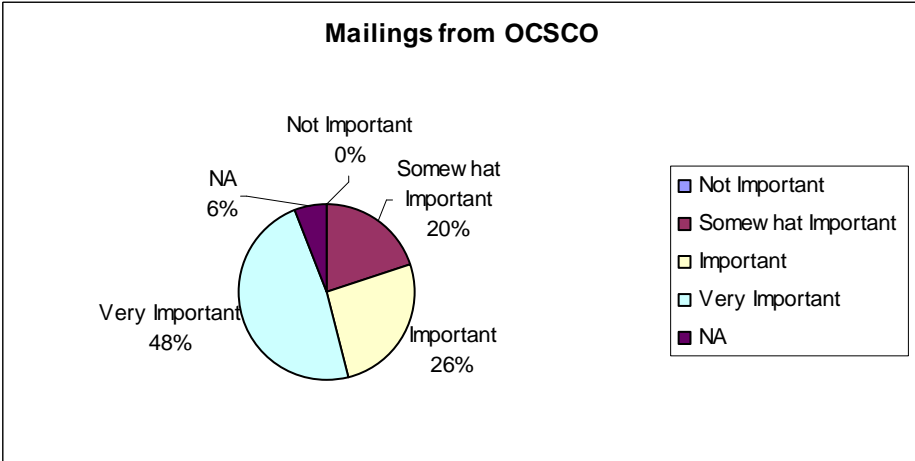
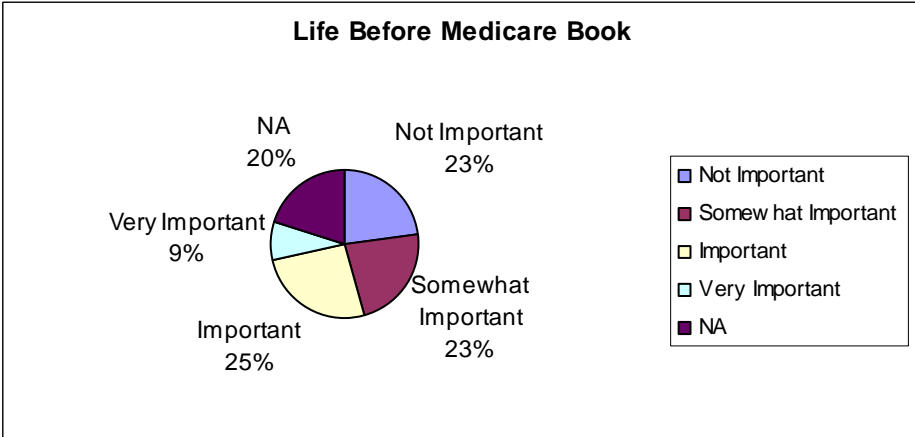
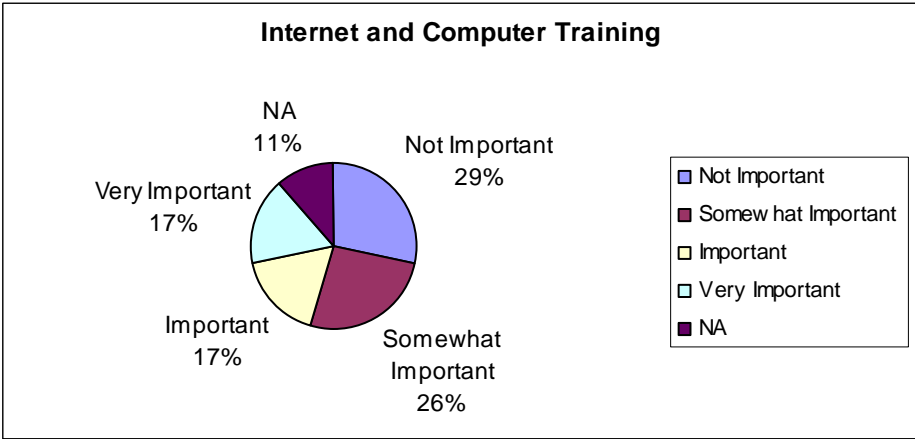


Health Promotion

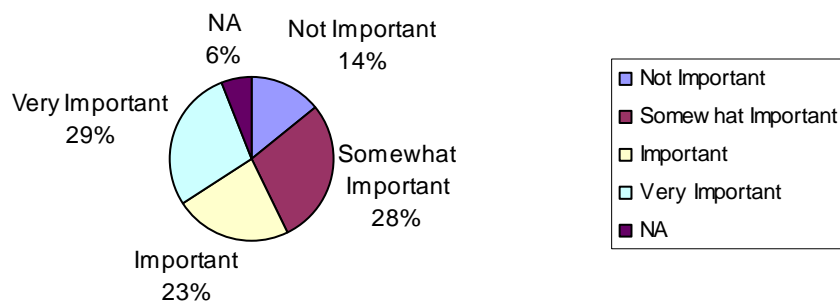


Information, Referral and Counselling

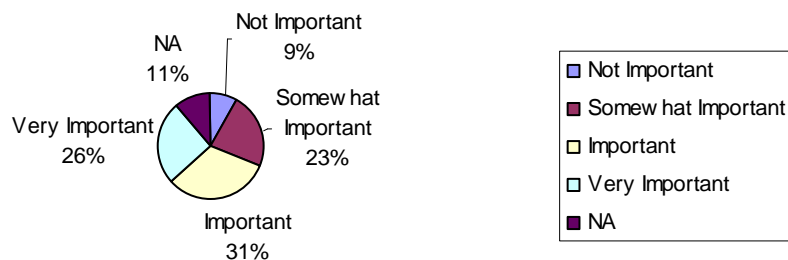




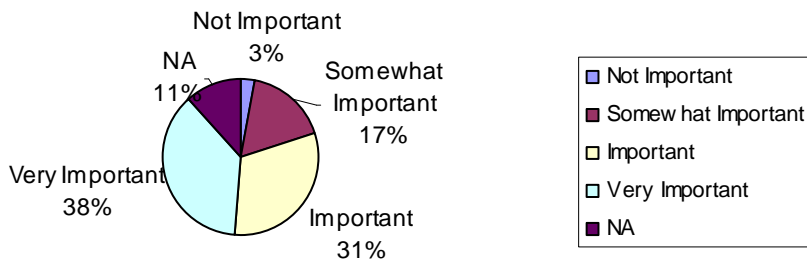
Multicultural/Educational Programs



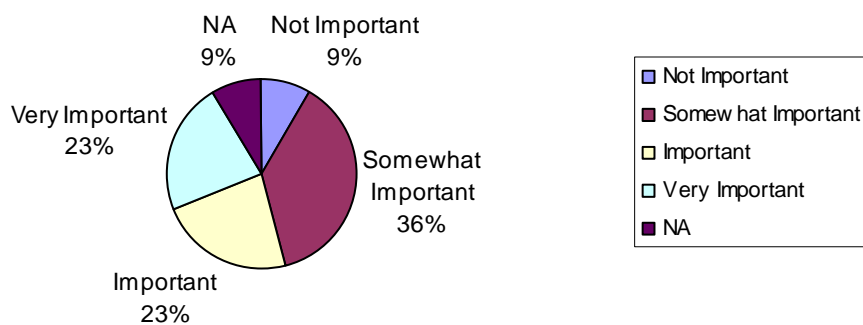
Networking

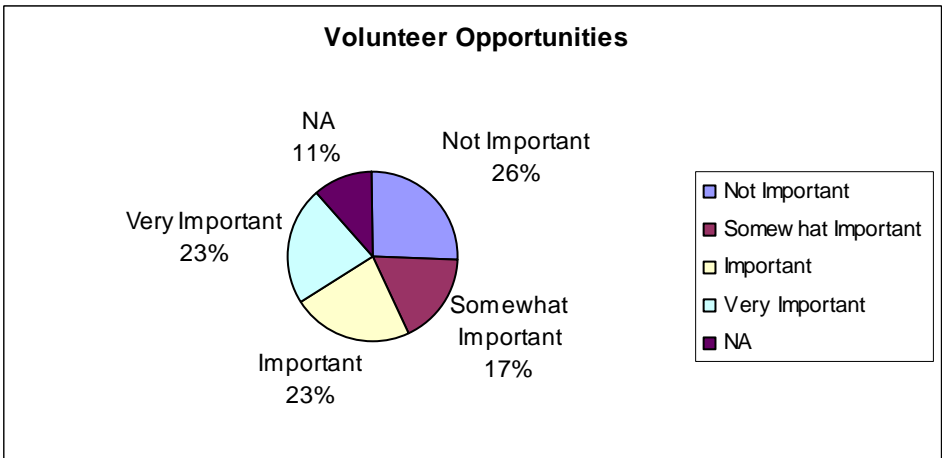
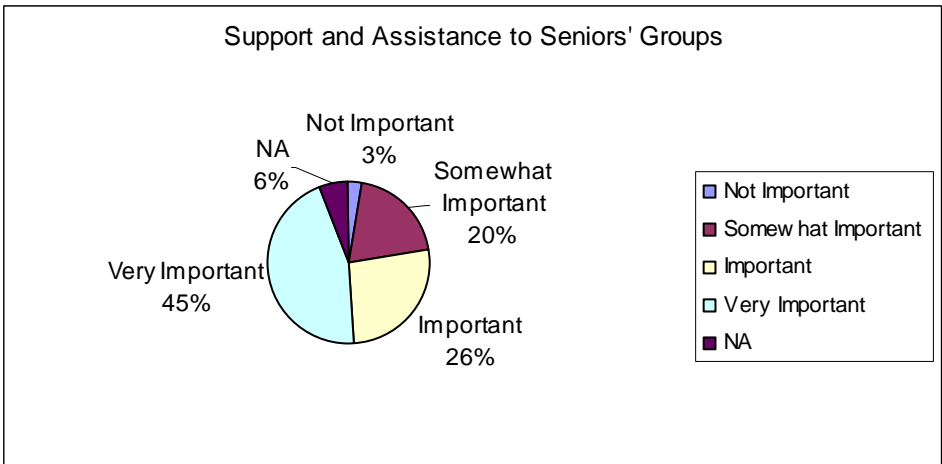
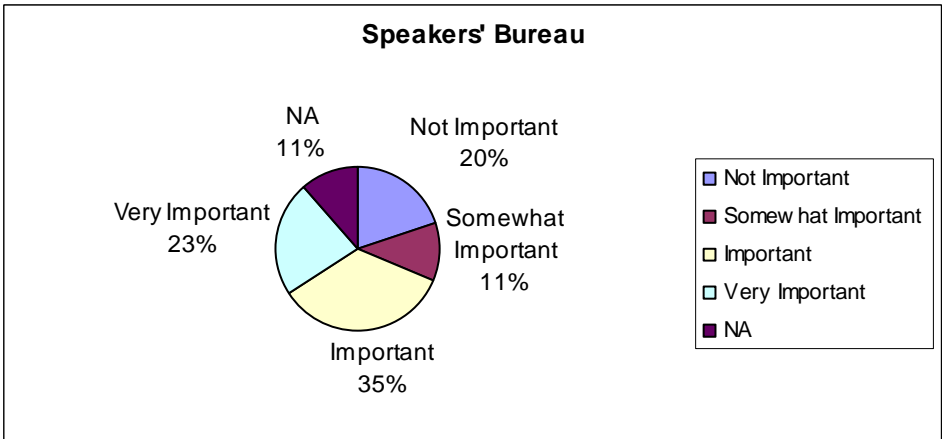
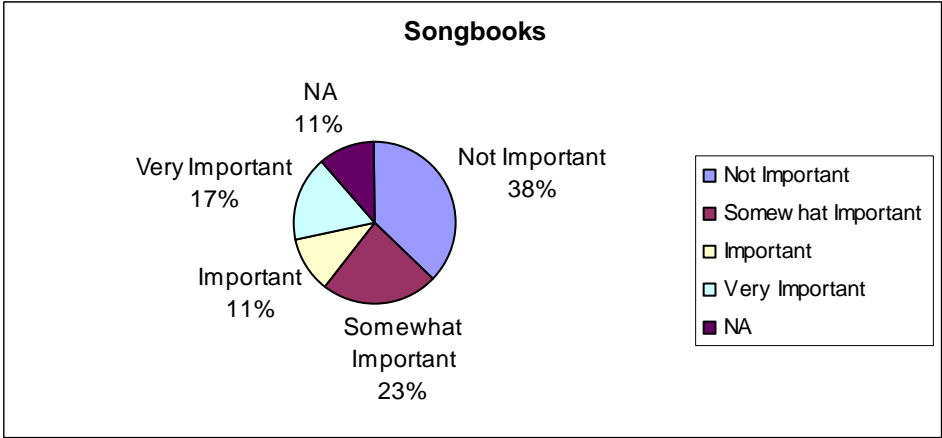


Newsletters

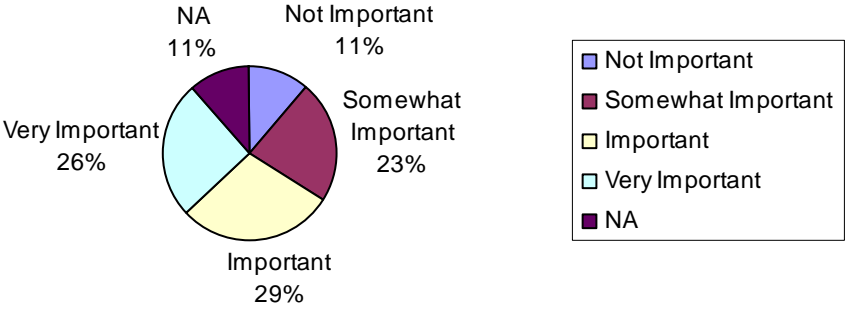


Resource Centre





Web Site



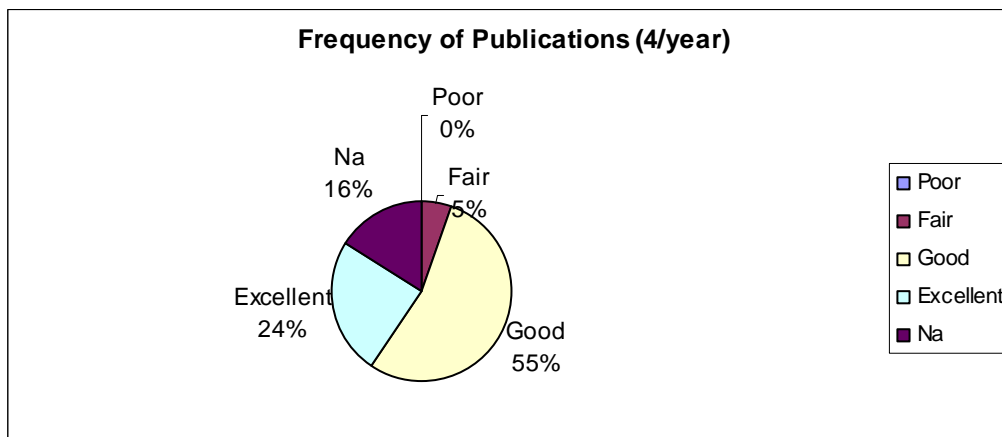
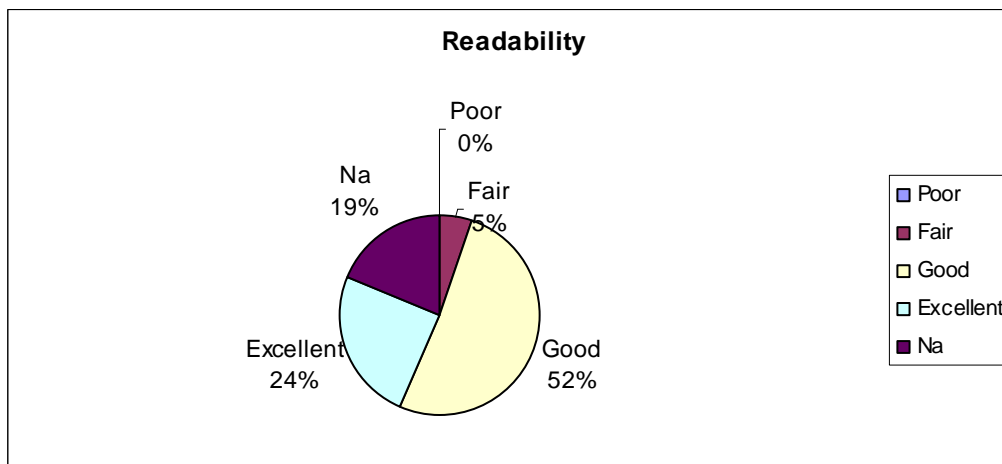
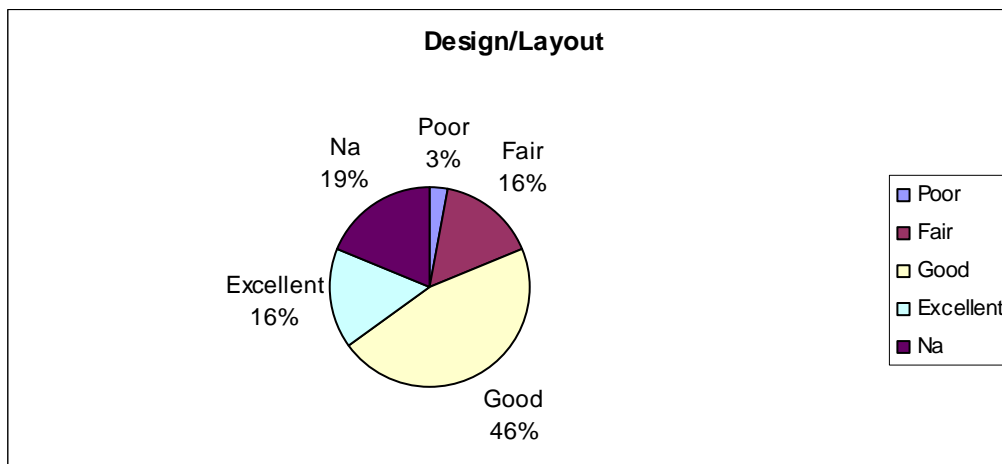
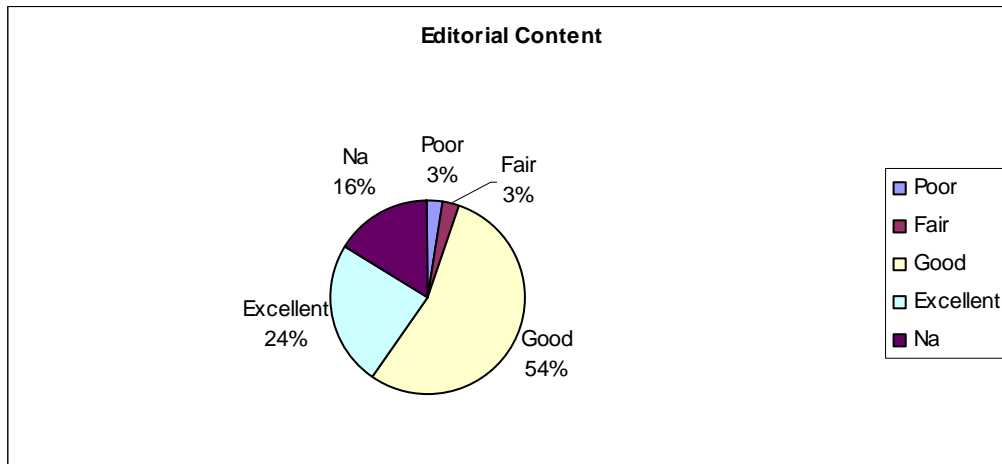
Question 7: What educational and other programs and services can OCSCO provide to support you?
(Open-Ended, Multiple Responses Allowed)

- Technical support for computer training graduates
 - Networking workshops
 - More information on latest trends
 - How to talk to the TTC to improve Wheel-Trans
- Further focus groups with Toronto multicultural communities
- Help us get funds to start active living programs for seniors
 - A revised list of services available
 - Volunteer Training
 - Board and Committee Development
 - More computer training
 - Booklet of where to get help
- Encouraging government support for programs to help educate seniors
 - English as a Second Language instruction for seniors
 - A better Speakers' Bureau
- Explaining to government about the need for better care funding
 - More multicultural education programs

None of the above programs and services were indicated by more than one respondent.

Question 8: Please evaluate OCSCO's newsletter, *OCSCO Outreach*, in regard to the following areas

N=35



Question 9: What type of articles would you like to see in our newsletter?

Type of Articles	Number of Times Given as a Response	Percentage of Total Responses N=36
News About Current Issues Affecting Seniors	18	50%
More on OCSCO Services	5	14%
Advocacy Updates	4	11%
Research Updates	4	12%
Individual Experiences	3	8%
Information on Fundraising Opportunities	2	6%

Question 10: If you use our web site, what changes, if any, would you like to see?
(Open-Ended, Multiple Responses Allowed)

So few respondents answered this question that tabulation of the data is not possible.

Question 11: Is there anything else you want to tell us?
(Open-Ended, Multiple Responses Allowed)

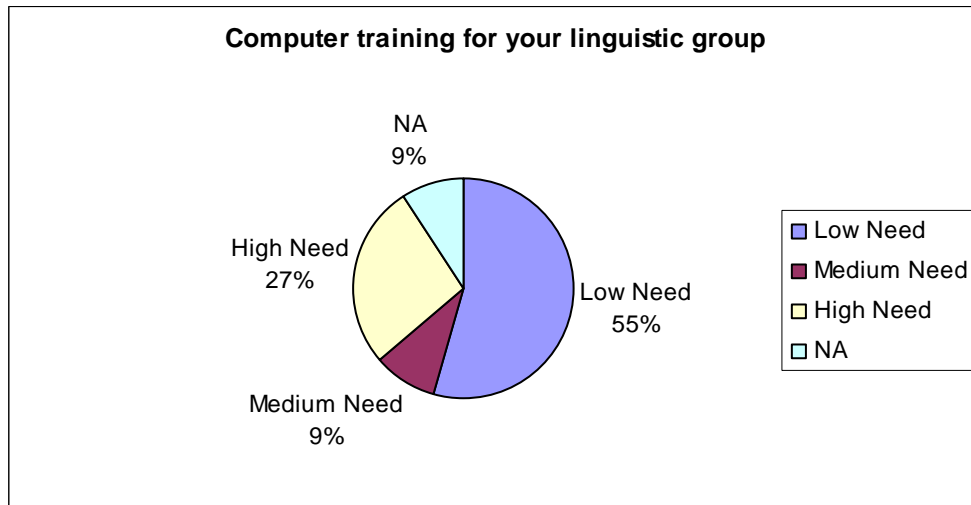
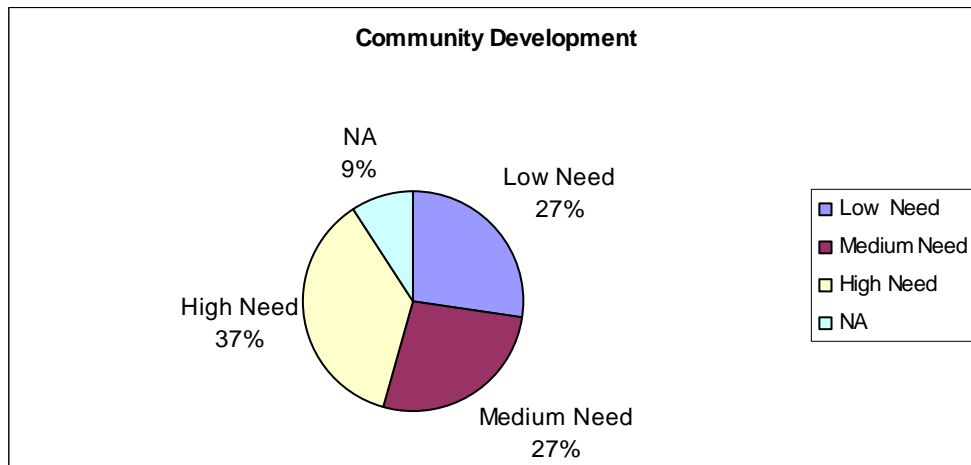
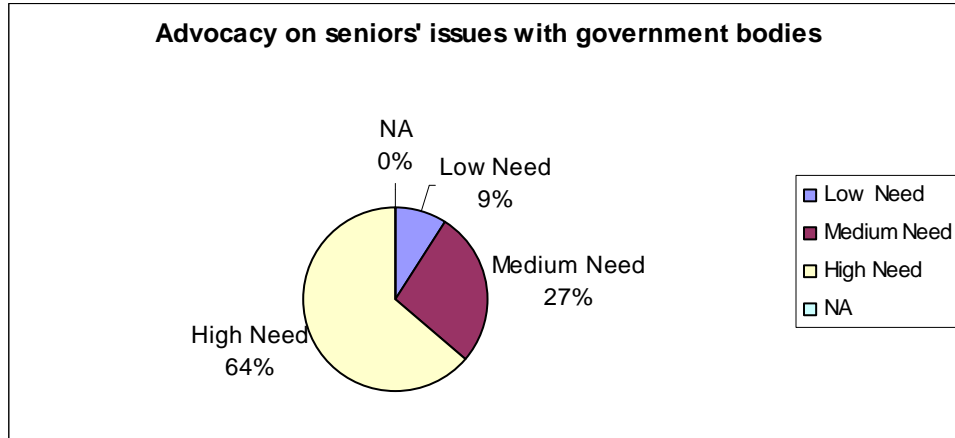
So few respondents answered this question that tabulation of the data is not possible.

Question 12: Please check your preferred method for us to communicate with you.
(Multiple Responses Allowed)

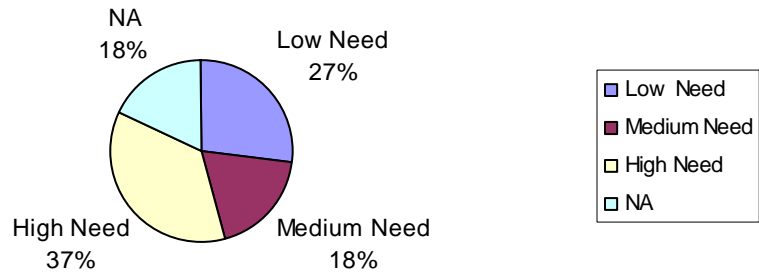
Method of Communication	Number of Times Checked	Percentage of Total Responses N = 37
Regular mailings of newsletters and upcoming events	14	38%
Email of Newsletters and Upcoming Events	7	19%
Both (Mailings + Emails)	16	43%

Addendum: Needs of Multicultural Organizations' Survey

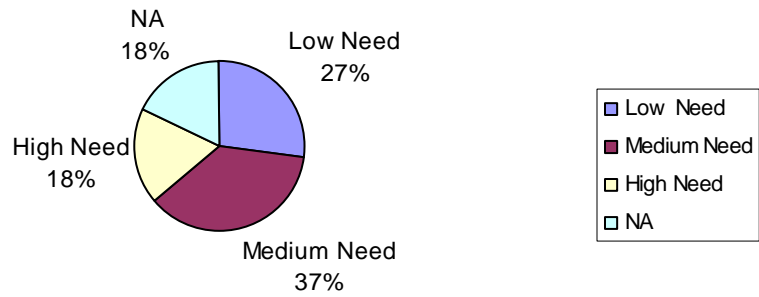
Question: In order for OCSCO to further assist you, could you please let us know your organization's level of need for each of these items by placing the correct number in the boxes provided.



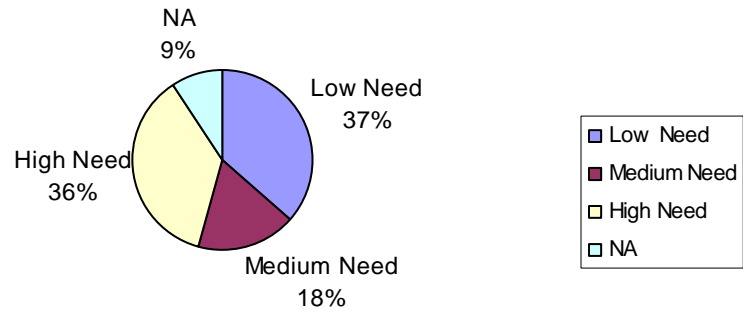
Group training around preparation of fundraising proposals



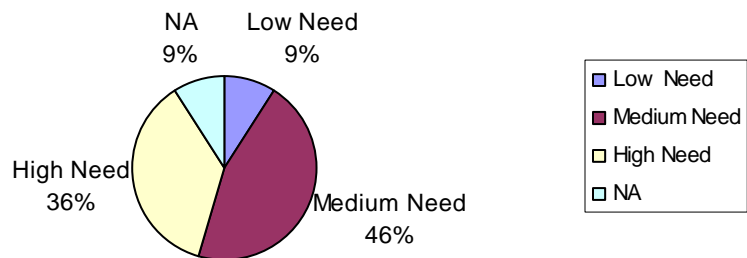
Help with issues



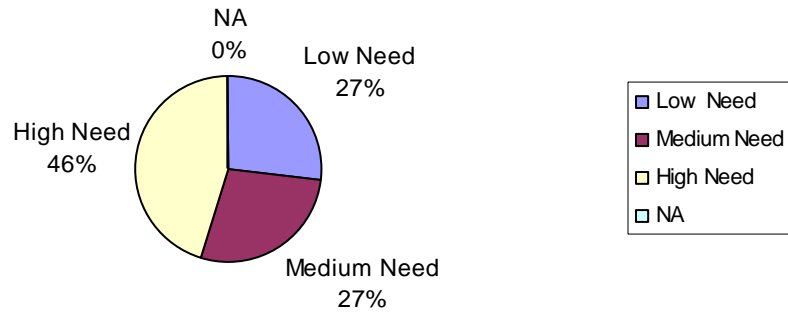
Information about access to services in Toronto



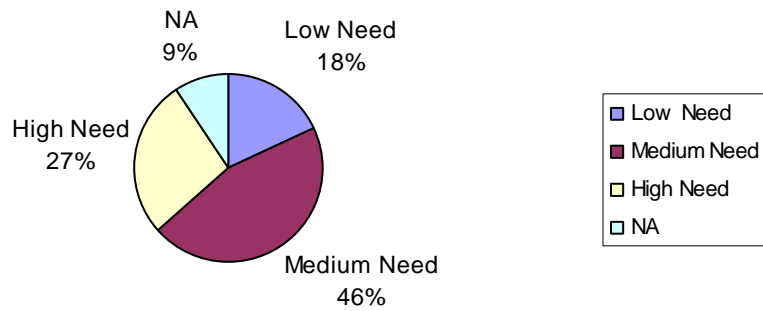
Information and referral



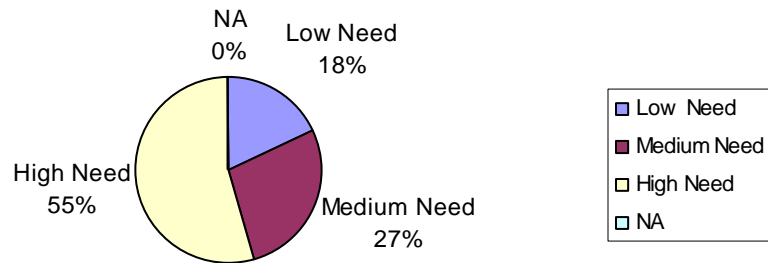
Joint educational seminars and forums with OCSCO



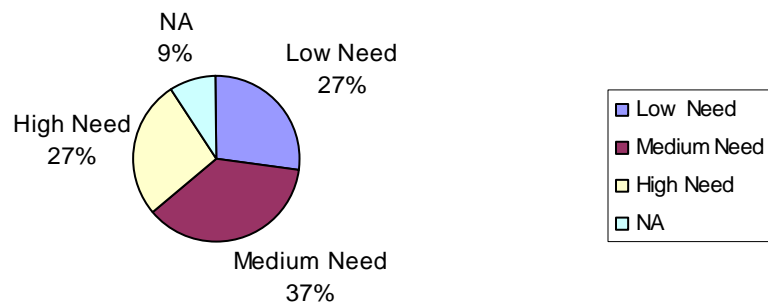
Liaison between agencies



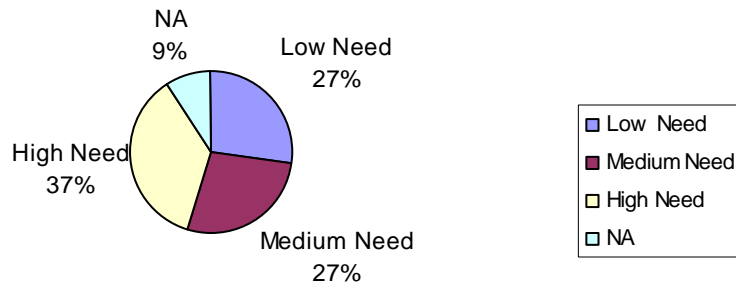
Networking opportunities for your organization



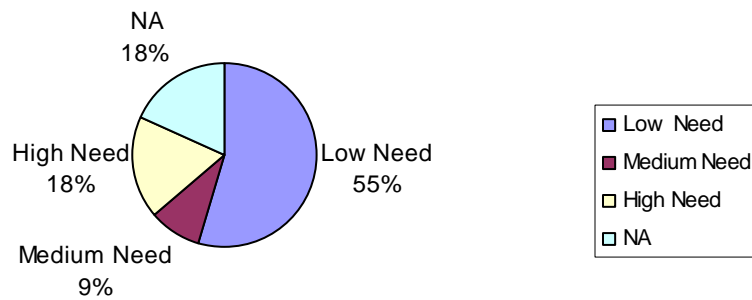
OCSCO outreach staff to assist you with special needs



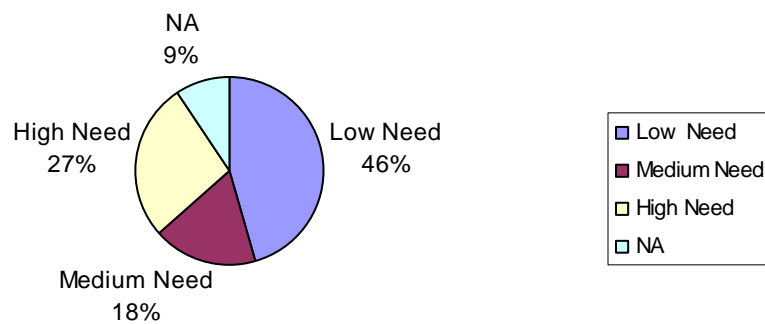
Partnership with OCSCO on community or provincial projects



Production of resources



Research and policy analysis



Speakers for your meetings

