



TEXAS

The University of Texas at Austin



Extent and Impact of UT Austin Student Volunteerism and Participation

Prepared for the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs

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“I gained a sense of personal fulfillment from helping young students grow and develop new skills. It was rewarding to see them improve in both sports and teamwork, and I felt proud to be part of that journey. Volunteering also helped me develop stronger leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills, as I had to work closely with both the students and other volunteers. It gave me a deeper sense of connection to the community and the satisfaction of making a positive impact on the lives of others.”

Student Volunteer

“I ended up making my own organization my senior year with a friend and I’ve had such a huge boost in my confidence in myself and my future. Seeing people with the same career goals as me and choosing to lift one another up has been a game changer.”

Student Organization Participant

Overview

- The annual economic impact of UT Austin student volunteerism is approximately \$100 million per year and 5 million hours
 - This is fueled by high rates of measured volunteerism across the student population and conservative assumptions about the economic value of the labor performed
- Students express high levels of satisfaction and reciprocal impact to themselves and the organizations they have served
- Volunteerism and participation in student organizations contributes to a broad array of life skills and preparation for life beyond UT
- Volunteerism and participation can be nurtured to increase this impact further
 - 20% of UT Austin students have not volunteered or participated in student organizations in the last year (15% have not ever)
 - Among those, a significant share have interest in engaging in volunteerism (77%) and participation (55%)

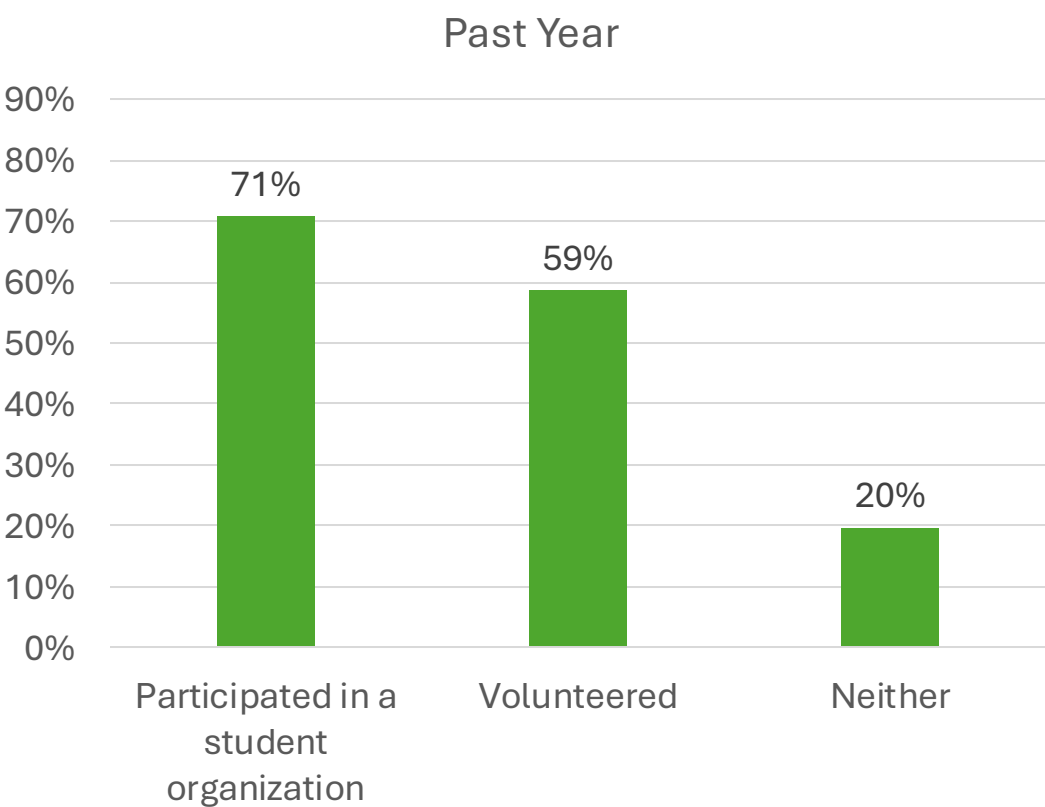
Introduction

- The Interim Vice President for Student Affairs approached the BBR to undertake an analysis of
 - The impact of the volunteer activities of students at UT
 - Extent of participation in student organizations
- Inspired by President Hartzell's charge to the University during his State of the University address

"...help students find their passion, find out what they really want to do, and help position them for at least that first position after UT"
- The goals of analyzing this student involvement will help
 - Project the economic value of volunteer hours that students contribute to the local community
 - Quantify what students are actually learning by volunteering
 - Measure what students are learning by participating in a University club or organization

Volunteerism Projected Economic Impact

The estimated economic contribution of student volunteerism is summarized in the table below. Our methodology depended on applying the average volunteer rate of 59% across UT Austin’s student body of 54,000 students, with an assumed contribution of \$20 per hour. The survey measures the rate of volunteerism and the associated hours during Spring 2024, Summer 2024, and Fall of 2024



UT Austin Student Population AY 2024	54,000
Rate of Volunteerism in the Past Year	59%
Average Projected Hours per Student per Year	160
Value of Volunteerism (\$/Hr.)	\$20
Total Annual Volunteer Hours	5 million per year
Total Impact of Volunteerism in Past Year	\$102 million per year

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Background on Student Volunteerism

- Research on volunteerism performed by young people has shown that across different contexts (e.g., age, nationality and education) the benefits perceived include the opportunity to gain work-related experience, skills and qualifications that can help volunteers in their education and careers (Smith et al., 2010)
- Research on college student volunteerism shows that attitudes, subjective norm and perceived control strongly influence intentions, which predict actual behavior, while cognition impacts these factors indirectly but not behavior directly.
 - Chen et al. (2022) demonstrated that involvement in volunteerism and organizational participation is a key component of a holistic university education, fostering both civic responsibility and personal development among undergraduates.
 - Keyes (2006) emphasized that flourishing youth exhibit higher levels of psychological and social well-being, which align with positive developmental outcomes.

Background on Student Participation

- Involvement in campus organizations enhances student learning and leadership by fostering critical thinking, civic engagement, and identity development (Kilgo, Ezell Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015).
- According to recent national data, students who participate in organizations report stronger connections to campus, improved communication and teamwork skills, and higher preparation for life after graduation (NSSE, 2023).

Methodology

- Qualtrics survey among registered students in Spring 2025
- Mixed methods design
- Sampling frame of 10,000 randomly selected students obtained from the Office of the Registrar
- Survey fielded from Feb 27 to Mar 28
- Initial invitation plus three reminders
- Chance to win one of 50 gift cards (\$50)
- Final sample size of 806 surveys (863 students started surveys)

Mixed Methods Design

- Quantitative

- Rates of engagement and hours served
- Types of organizations and types of duties
- Impact to self and organization
- Skill level and impact associated with National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies
 - ☐ Career & Self-Development
 - ☐ Communication
 - ☐ Critical Thinking
 - ☐ Leadership
 - ☐ Professionalism
 - ☐ Teamwork
 - ☐ Technology

- Qualitative

- Personal reflections on volunteer and participation experiences

Definitions in the Survey

Volunteerism

- *Volunteerism is the act of contributing your personal time and talents as an individual and/or as part of a group to conduct a service or support a philanthropic organization.*
- *Note that volunteers are not paid for their involvement.*
- *We are interested in your volunteerism quite broadly.*
- *Examples include unpaid time at a church food pantry, city animal shelter, Austin Parks Foundation, student-run organization, campus facilities/programs such as the UT Microfarm, sorority/fraternity, sports club/intramural team etc.*

Participation in Student Organizations

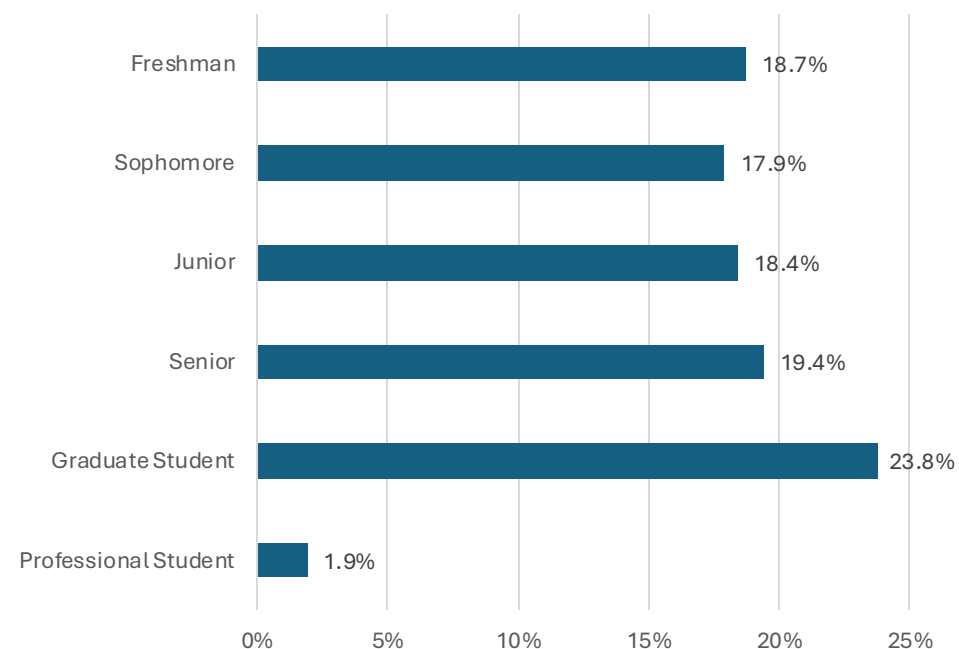
- *We will also ask you about your participation in student organizations here at UT Austin.*
- *Examples of student participation that are relevant to this survey are clubs, fraternities, sororities, intramural teams, and other UT Austin student organizations where you are not paid for your involvement.*

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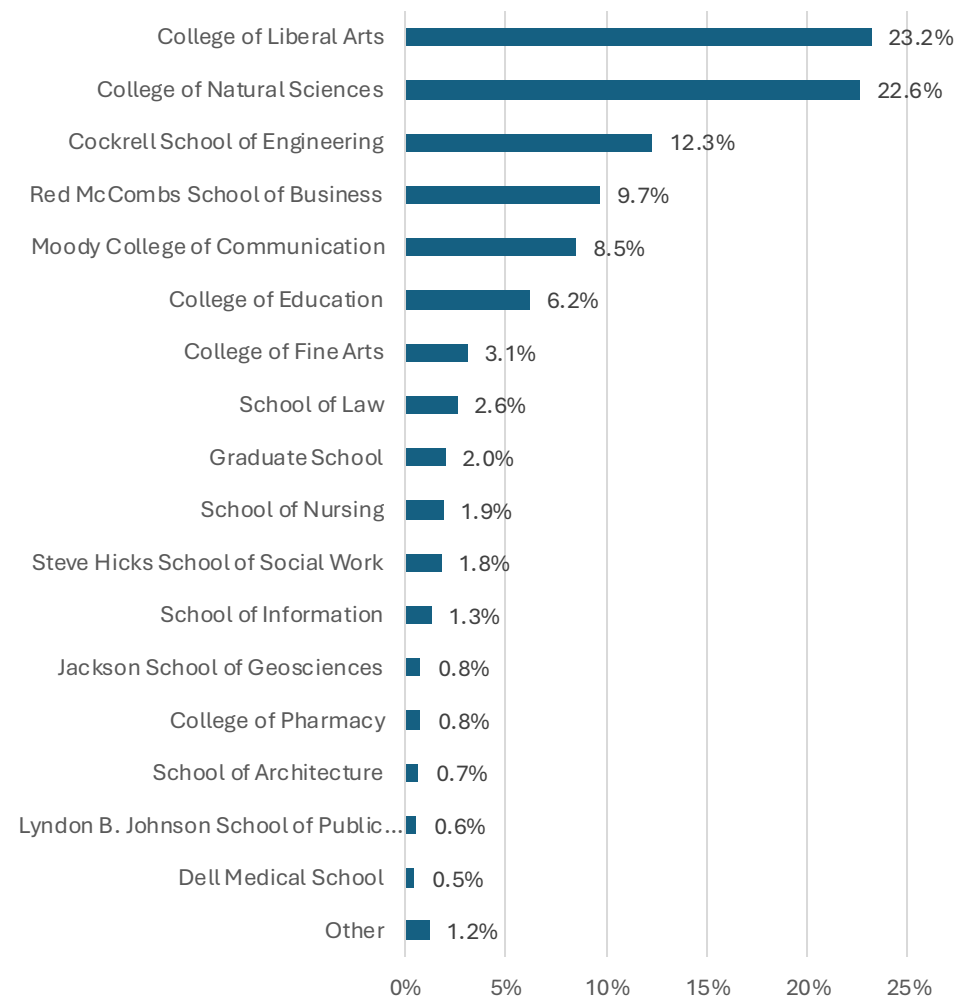
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Demographics

What is your current class standing as of January 2025?



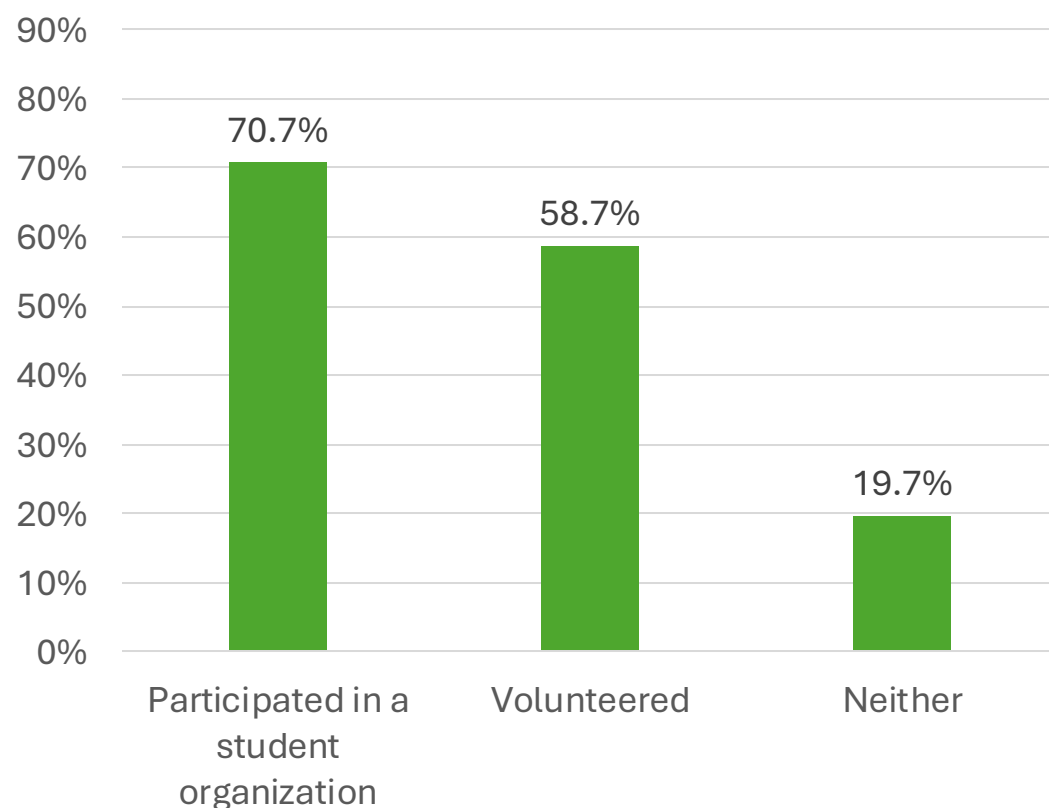
What is your college or school?



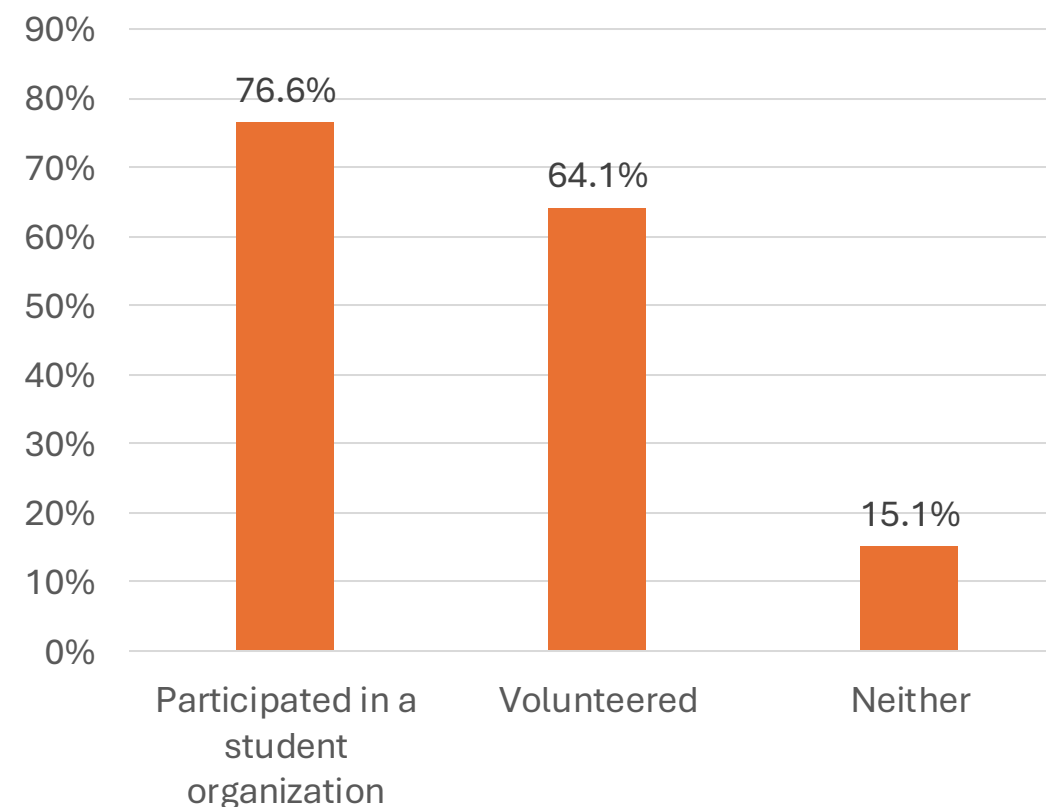
Student Volunteerism and Participation Rates

- 71% of students participated in student organizations in the last year; 59% of students volunteered in the last year
- Throughout their time at UT Austin, 77% of students have participated in student organizations and 64% of students have volunteered

Past Year



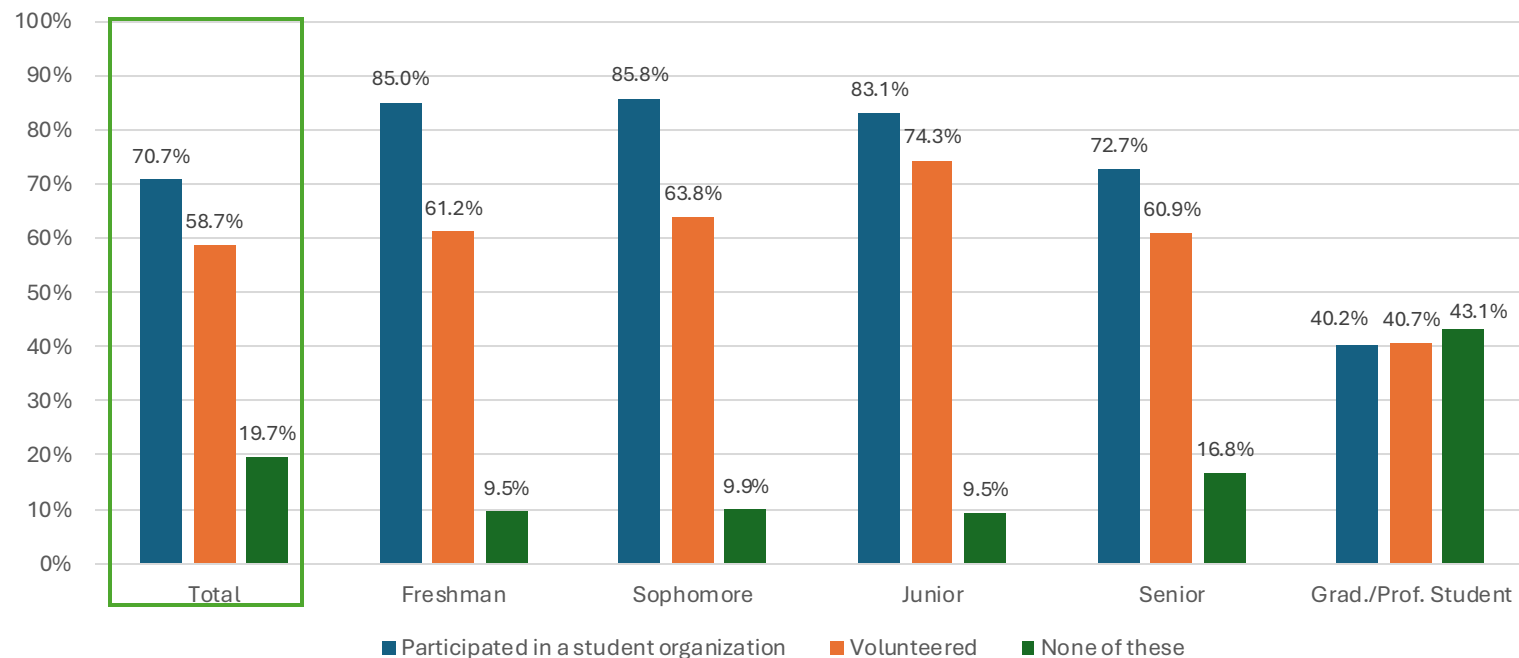
All Time



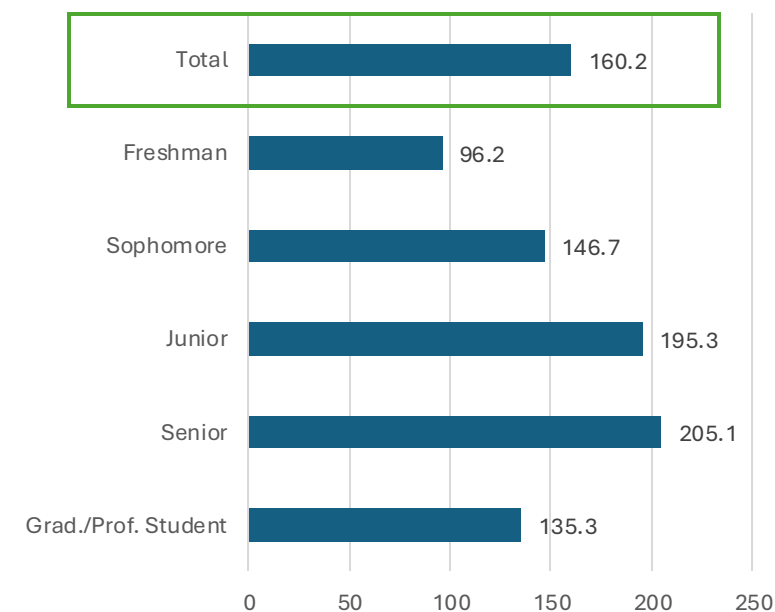
Student Involvement: Rates and Extent

- 71% of UT Austin students participated in student organizations in the last year; 59% of students volunteered in the last year
- These rates remain steady over time based of class standing
- Volunteer hours on average were 160 hours per student in the last year
- The number of hours doubles over time based on class standing

Volunteerism and Participation Rate in the Last Year by Standing



Total volunteer hours last year
(projected weekly average)



Projected Economic Impact of Volunteerism

This report presents the direct effect of volunteerism from the perspective of the labor costs avoided by the organizations for whom UT Austin students perform volunteer duties.

The survey measured the rate of volunteerism and the associated hours during Spring 2024, Summer 2024 and Fall of 2024

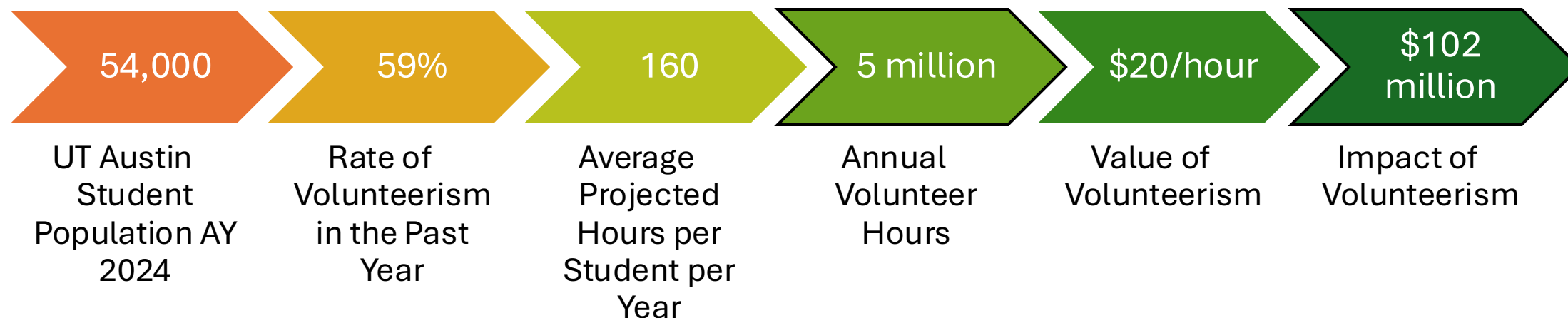
The methodology used to estimate the economic impact of student volunteerism incorporated:

- The average volunteer rate of 59% across UT's student body in the last year.
- 54,000 enrolled students in the fall of 2024
- An assumed economic contribution of \$20 per hour.

The value of volunteerism (\$20/hour) is a conservative, evidence-based assumption by the research team for the UT Austin community. This rate does not assume any fringe benefits. A report by the Independent Sector (2024) place the value of volunteerism at \$33.49 per hour.

Projected Economic Impact of Volunteerism

The survey measured the rate of volunteerism and the associated hours during fall of 2024, summer 2024 and spring 2024. The value of volunteerism is an evidence-based assumption by the research team, with most volunteer activities reported as taking place within the Austin area and surrounding communities



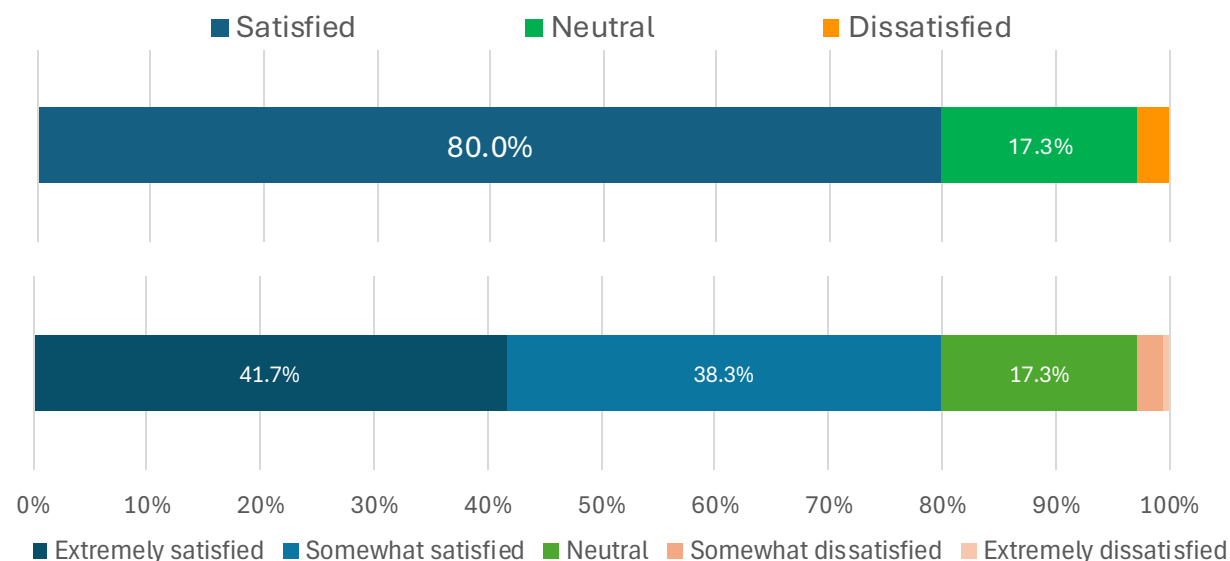
Outcomes

- Satisfaction
- Impact
- Skill Level Competencies
 - Perceived Impact on Competency Growth
 - NACE Competency gains

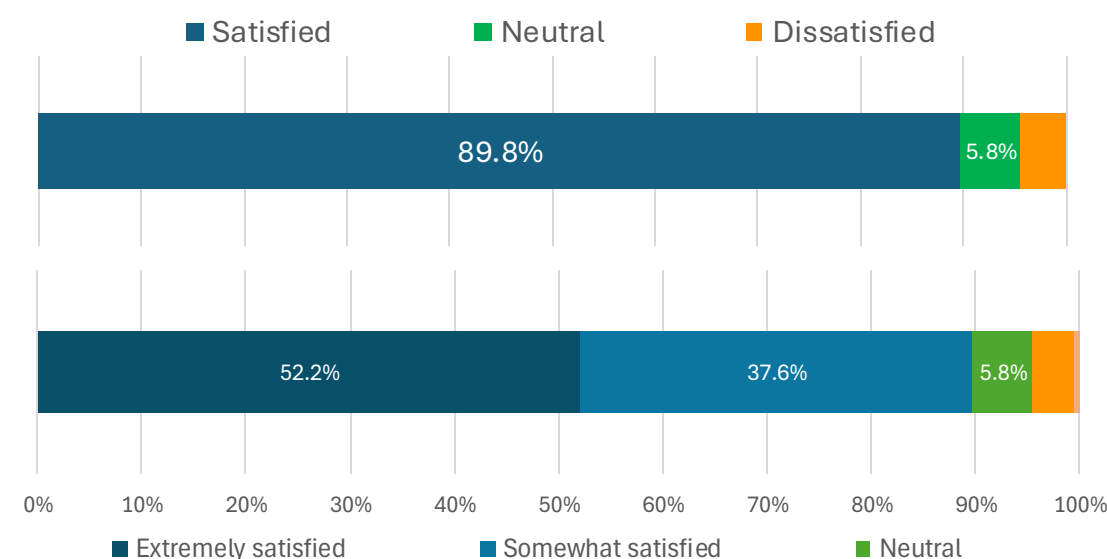
Satisfaction on Student Experience

- The survey revealed the personal, social, and professional value of involvement, highlighting how volunteerism and organization participation contribute to fulfillment, leadership, and post-graduation readiness
- These topics were chosen to amplify student voices and illustrate the wide-ranging impacts of engagement

Satisfaction with Volunteerism



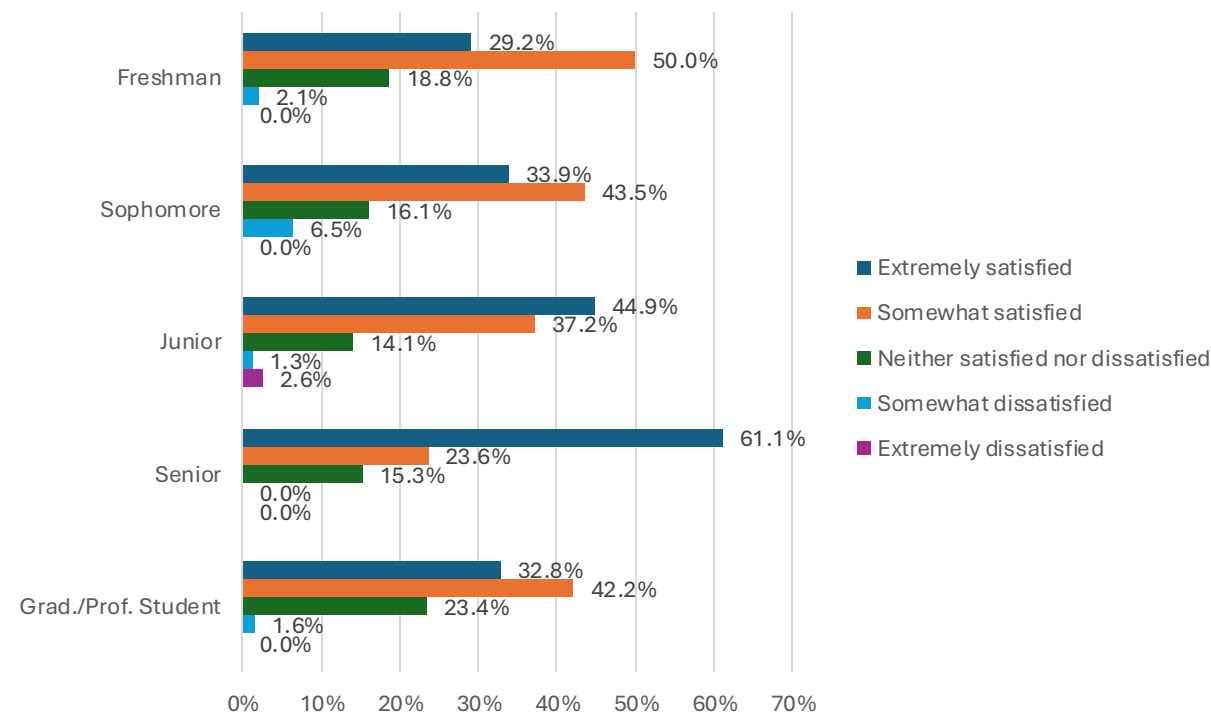
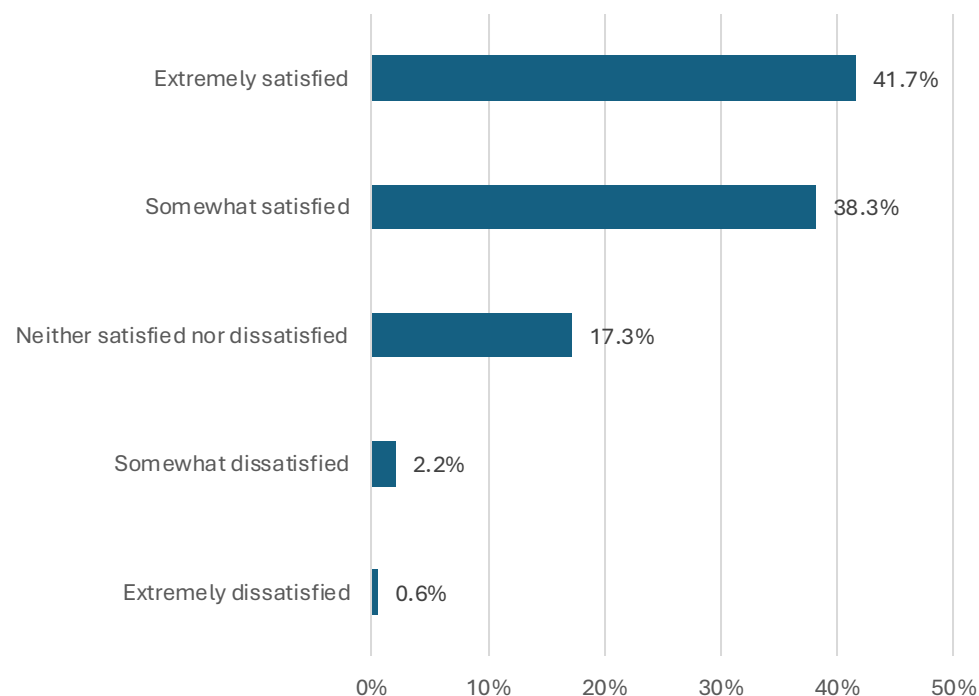
Satisfaction with Participation



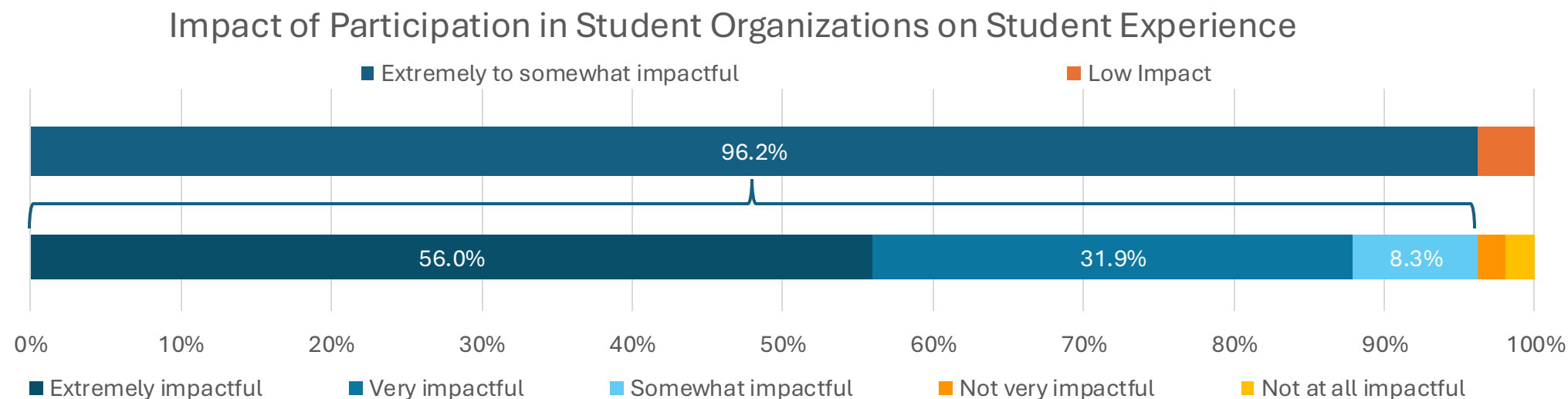
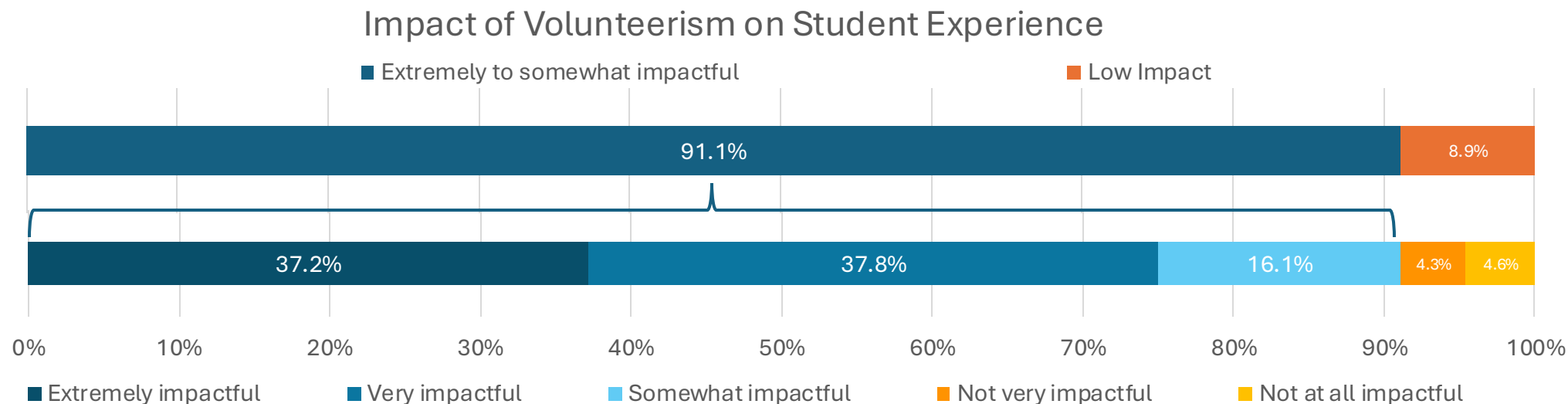
Student Satisfaction with Their Volunteerism Experience

- Student volunteers are highly satisfied with their experience; 80% are extremely or somewhat satisfied
- That satisfaction trends higher over time with class standing; 85% of seniors who have volunteered are extremely or somewhat satisfied

Overall, how satisfied were you with your volunteer engagement at UT Austin?

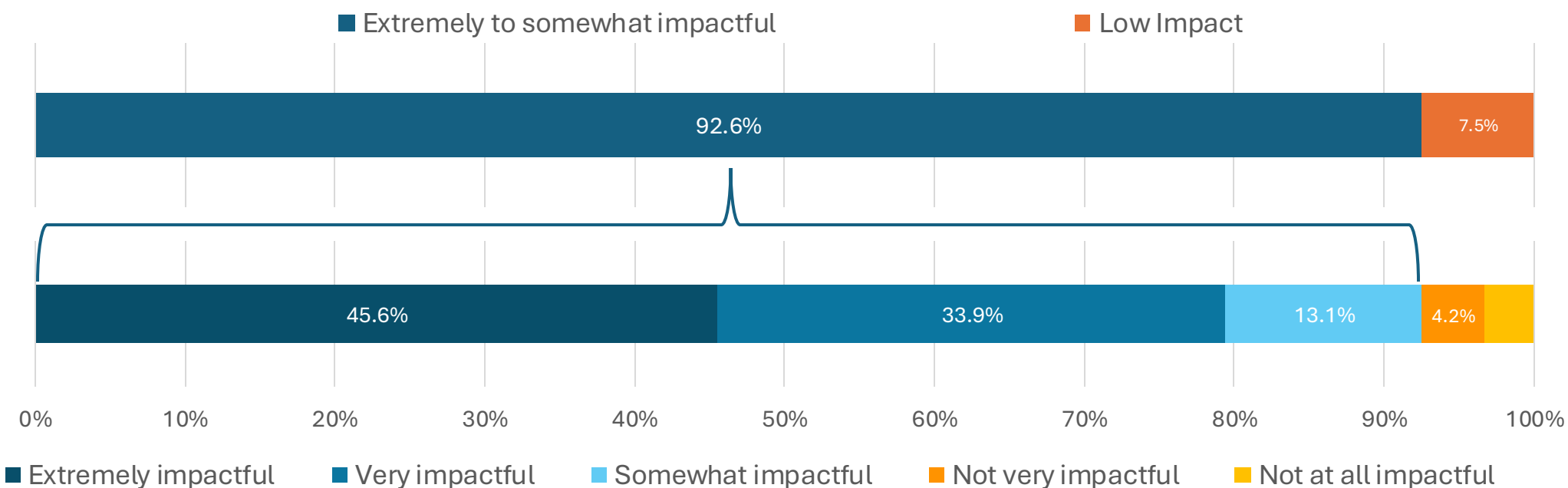


Impact on Student Experience



Impact of Participation in Student Organizations on Life Preparation

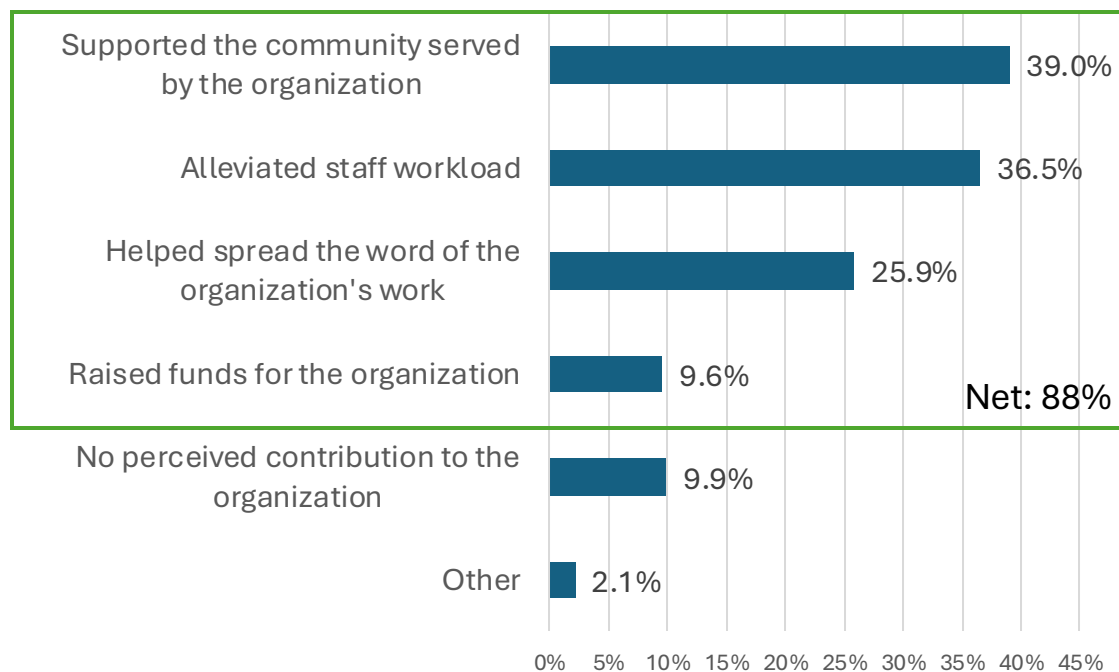
Impact of Participation in Student Organizations on Student Experience



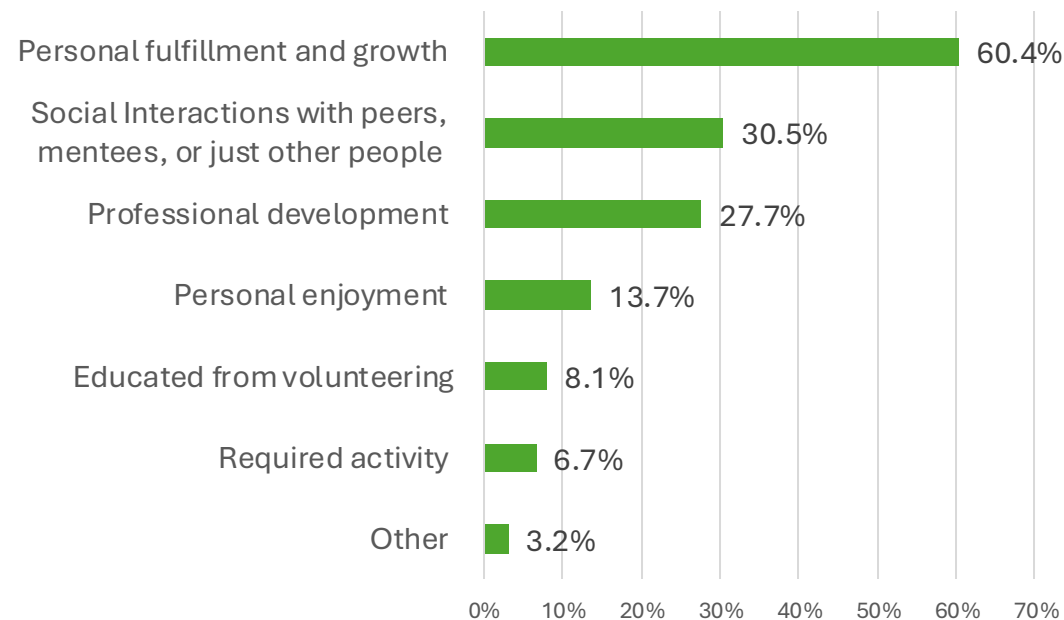
Benefits from Volunteerism

- Students recognize that their volunteerism helps support the communities served by the organizations for which they volunteer, alleviated the workload of staff, helps promote the organizations to their communities
- Students themselves perceive personal growth, social interaction and professional development as the primary benefits

Benefits to the organization from volunteerism



Benefit to student from volunteer service to the organization



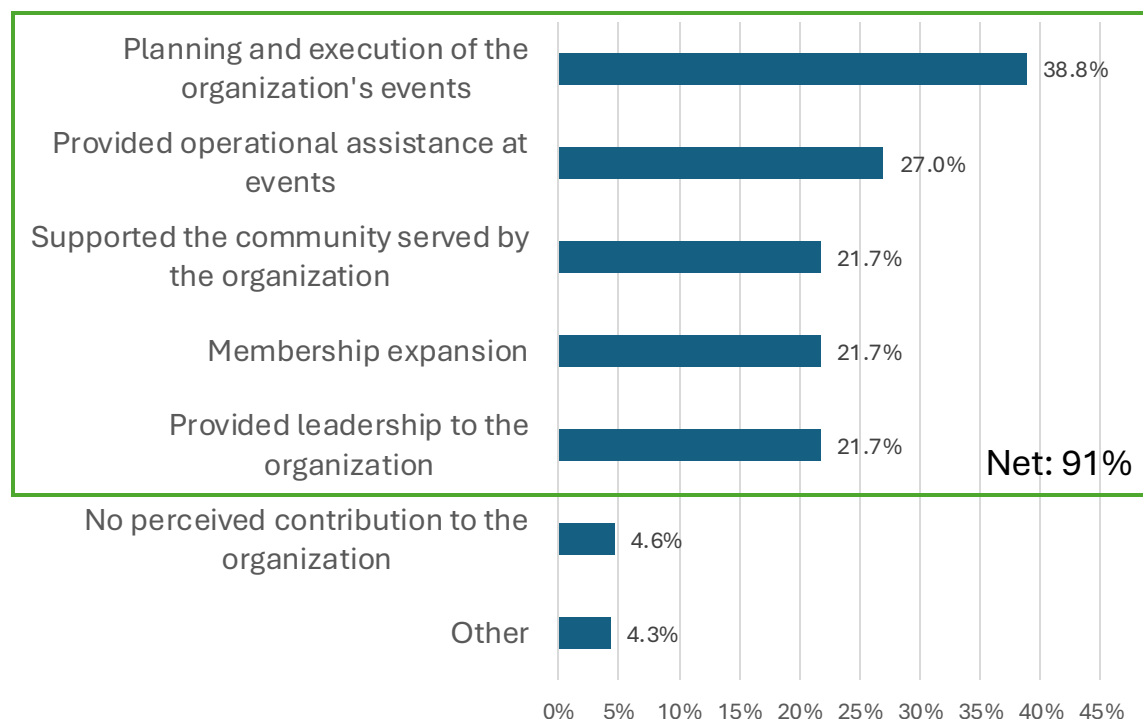
Student Anecdotes about Making a Difference from their Volunteerism

- Supporting the community
 - *“By volunteering, I helped foster a positive environment... contributed to a stronger sense of community among students, parents and coaches.” — Graduate Student*
 - *“Helping the community.” — Senior*
- Helped spread the word of the organization’s works
 - *“Showed that the organization cared about serving the community and others and promoted recruitment of new members.” — Senior*
 - *“Supporting independent film and contributing to Austin's cultural scene... creating an inviting and supportive environment for donors.” — Graduate Student*
- Raised funds for the organization
 - *“Raised money.” — Sophomore*
 - *“Sense of community, empowering others, raised funds for blindness.” — Junior*
- Alleviating their staff workload
 - *“Alleviate staff and other members from tasks, distribution and lessening of workload.” — Sophomore*
 - *“It was due to interns like me that records were categorized and put into the system which would have taken months...” — Junior*

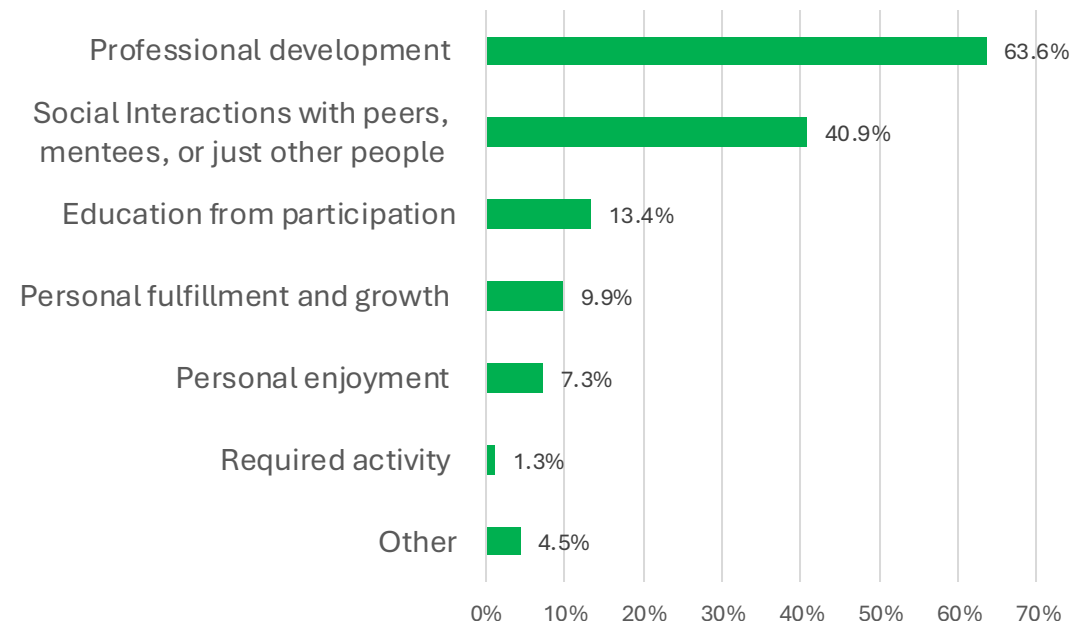
Benefits from Participation in Student Organizations

- Students recognize that their participation helps the organization execute events, support the communities served by the organizations in which they participate, support membership expansion and provides leadership to the organizations
- Students themselves perceive professional development and groups create community, foster belonging within the organizations.

Benefits to the organization from student participation



Benefit to student from participation in student organizations



Student Anecdotes about Making a Difference from their Participation

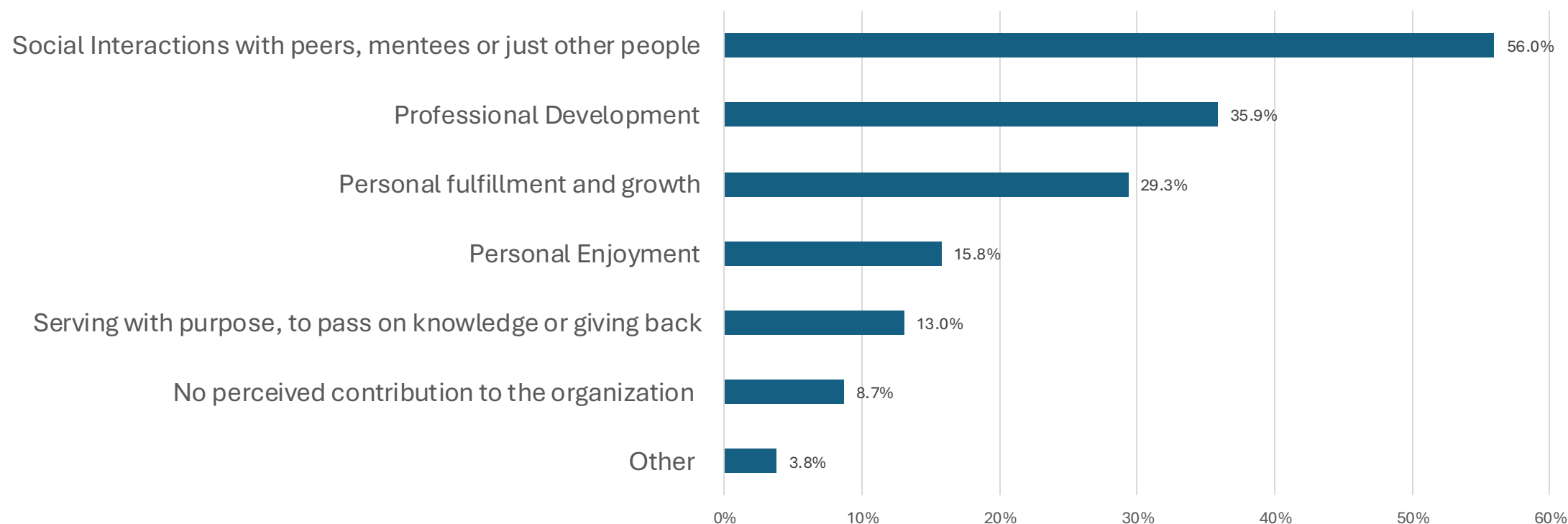
Specific examples of the benefits to organizations from student volunteerism and/or participation highlight the support provided to execute events, support the communities served by the organizations in which they participate, support membership expansion and providing leadership to the organizations

- Planning and Executing the events & Membership Expansion
 - *“Providing leadership and experience to student government.” — Professional Student*
 - *“My administration expertise helped to keep everything structured.” — Senior*
- Provided Operational assistance through Active Participation
 - *“Brought leadership/community into my organization, helped plan events that increased participation in my org.” — Senior*
- Bridging External and Campus Communities (Helping the communities)
 - *“I helped provide essays to the Texas Orator, organize discussions to mitigate political polarization for BridgeTexas... direct multiple teams working on projects to help nonprofits...” — Senior*
 - *“Through research, mentoring, and service programs like Project SEED and Neighborhood Longhorns, I’ve helped connect UT with local communities supporting equity in education, early literacy and inclusive healthcare pathways.” - Senior*
- Promoting Organizational Visibility with Leadership
 - *“My PR internship allowed for promotion about our org/radio station/events... My Social internship has brought crowds to our weekly deep listening. My Live Audio internship... improved our band recordings.” — Sophomore*

Student Perceptions on Volunteering

- Students who perceived a benefit from their volunteerism and/or participation summarize those benefits overall as being primarily associated with being apart of a community, professional development and personal growth

Student Volunteerism and/or Participation Stories



Student Anecdotes about Benefits They Received

Specific examples of the benefits from student volunteerism and/or participation highlight the belonging part of a community, professional development and personal fulfillment and enjoyment

- Social Development
 - *“I had to work closely with both the students and other volunteers... deeper sense of connection to the community.” — Professional Student*
 - *“Opportunity to grow as a leader, learn from teamwork and gain more interpersonal skills.” — Professional Student*
- Professional Development
 - *“Opportunity to grow as a leader, learn from teamwork and gain more interpersonal skills.” — Professional Student*
 - *“Develop stronger leadership, communication and problem-solving skills.” — Professional Student*
- Personal Fulfillment & Growth
 - *“Gain experience, fulfillment sense of purpose.” — Sophomore, Extremely Satisfied*
 - *“I gained a sense of personal fulfillment from helping young students grow... and making a positive impact.” — Professional Student*
- Personal Enjoyment
 - *“Community and enjoyment.” — Junior, Extremely Satisfied*
 - *“I really enjoyed getting to spend time with the kids, which contributed to the work I hope to do in Child Welfare.” — Junior, Extremely Satisfied*

NACE Competencies

The survey measured the skill level and impact associated with National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies (Hua et. al., 2022) among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

These competencies are valued by employers and are generally considered crucial for career readiness

- Career & Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

The Value of Student Involvement on Career Readiness

- The next slides explore how student involvement - through both volunteering and group participation - relates to key life skill competencies
- Results are presented at the aggregate and detailed level for student perceptions of their skill level for each competency level and, separately, the impact of their volunteerism and participation in student organizations on those life competencies

- 5-point impact and skill scales were used

To what extent has your volunteerism and/or participation in student organizations on campus helped you to develop the skill of ...

- Extremely Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Not Very Impactful
- Not at All Impactful

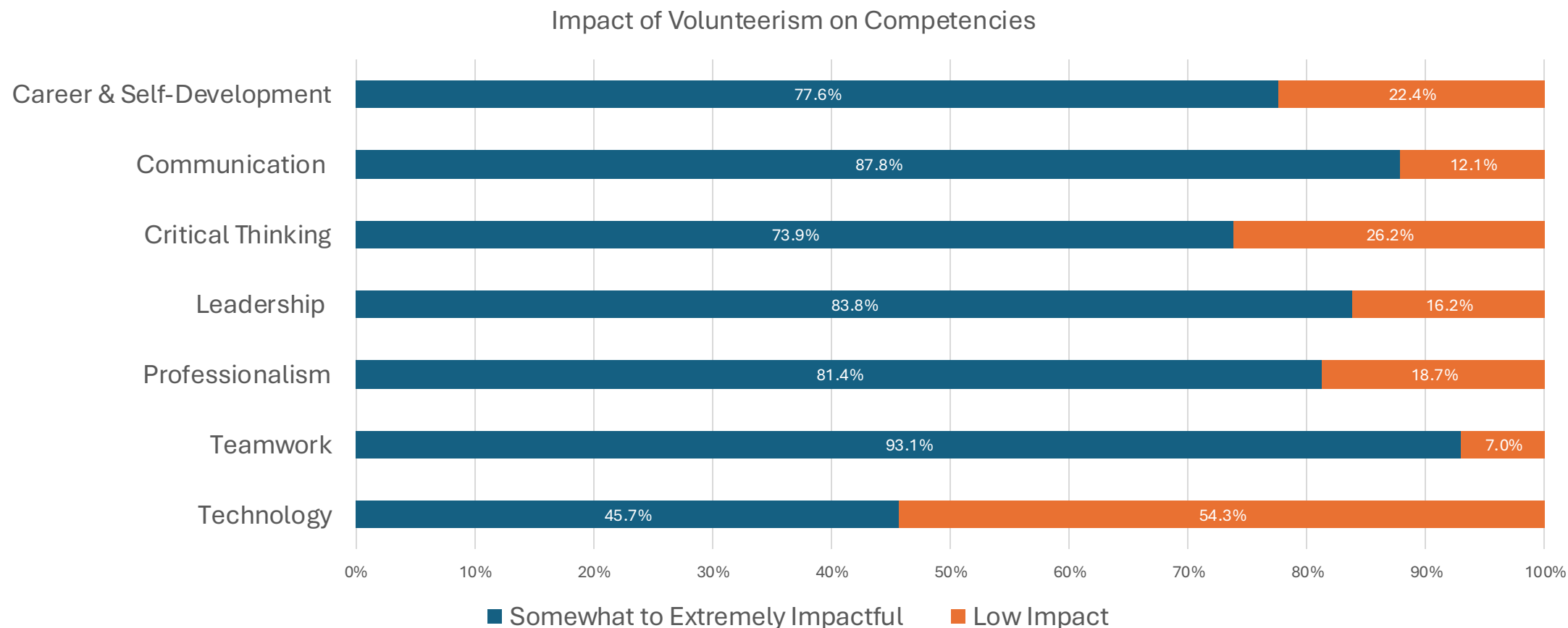
How would you rate your ability ...

- Beginner - I am just now beginning to acquire this skill
- Developing - I am improving in this area
- Competent - I do this skill pretty well
- Advanced - I am above average at this skill
- Expert - Others look to me to teach them this skill

- Data are presented at the detailed and aggregate level

- ☐ High impact vs low impact
- ☐ High skill vs low skill

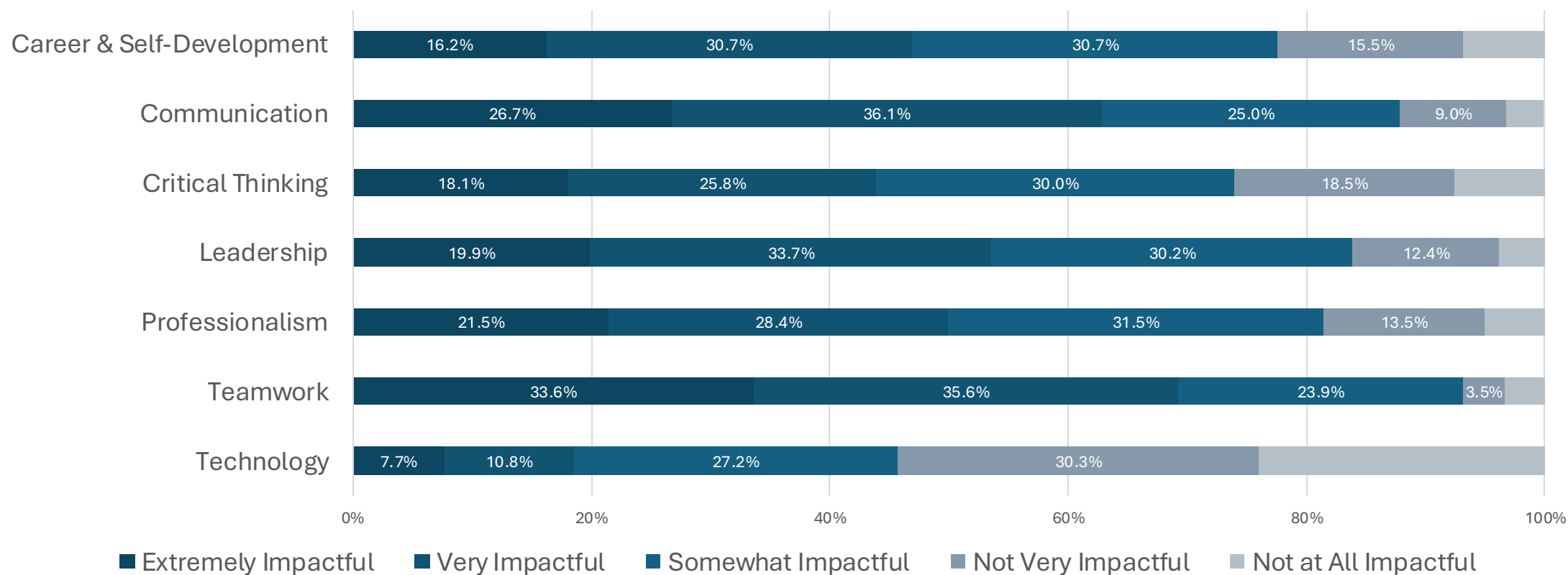
Impact of Volunteerism on Competencies



Among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

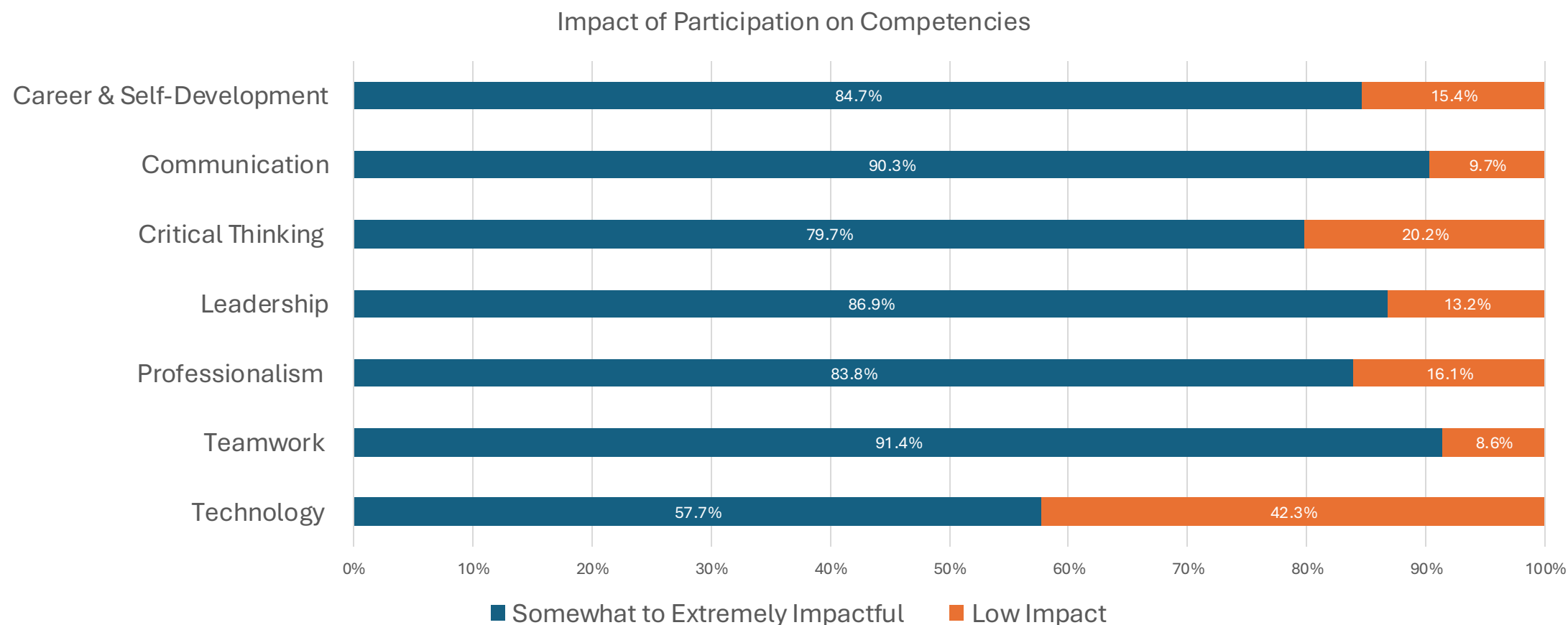
Impact of Volunteerism on Competencies

Detailed Impact of Volunteerism on Competencies



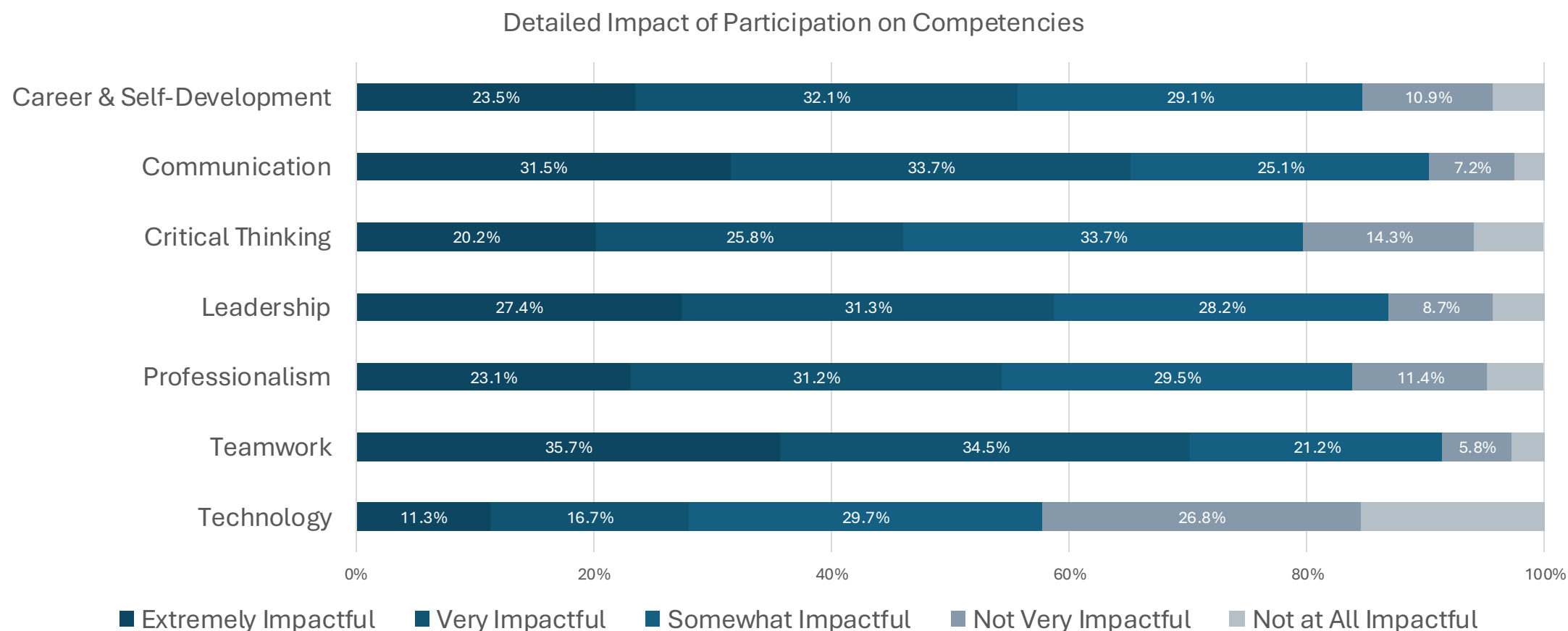
Among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

Impact of Student Participation on Competencies



Among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

Impact of Student Participation on Competencies

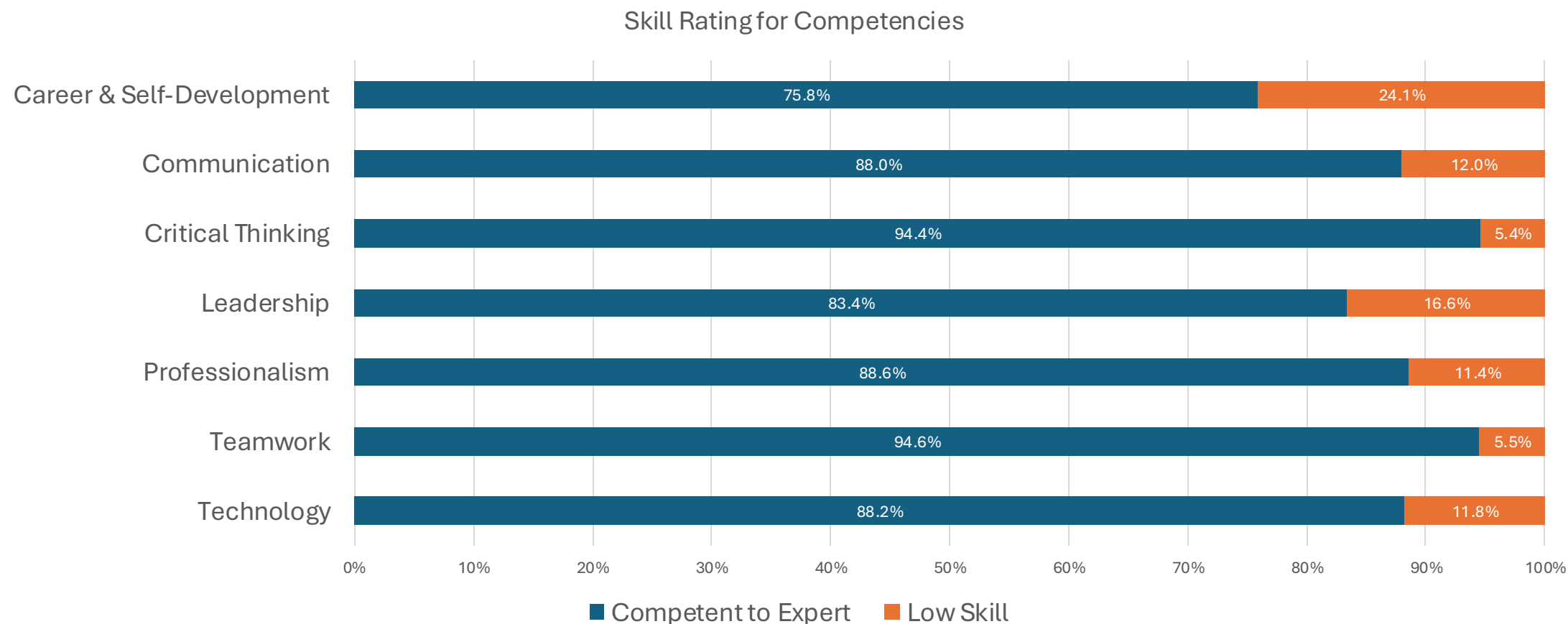


Among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

Perceived Skill Growth Through Volunteerism and Campus Involvement

- The following data reflect students' perceived improvement in key skills as a result of their involvement in volunteer work and student organizations
- Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which their participation helped them develop specific competencies
- These results illustrate students' self-reported growth in areas such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving—highlighting the impact of co-curricular engagement on skill development

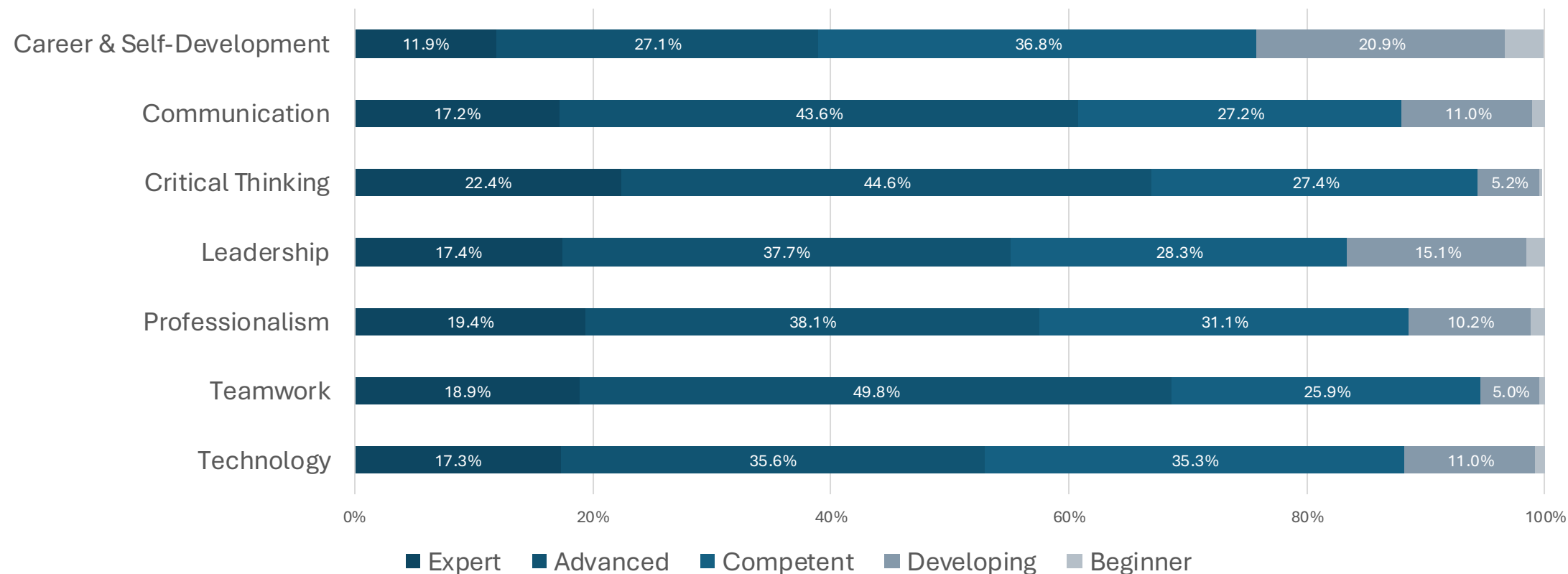
Skill Level of Competencies



Among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

Skill Level of Competencies

Detailed Skill Rating for Competencies

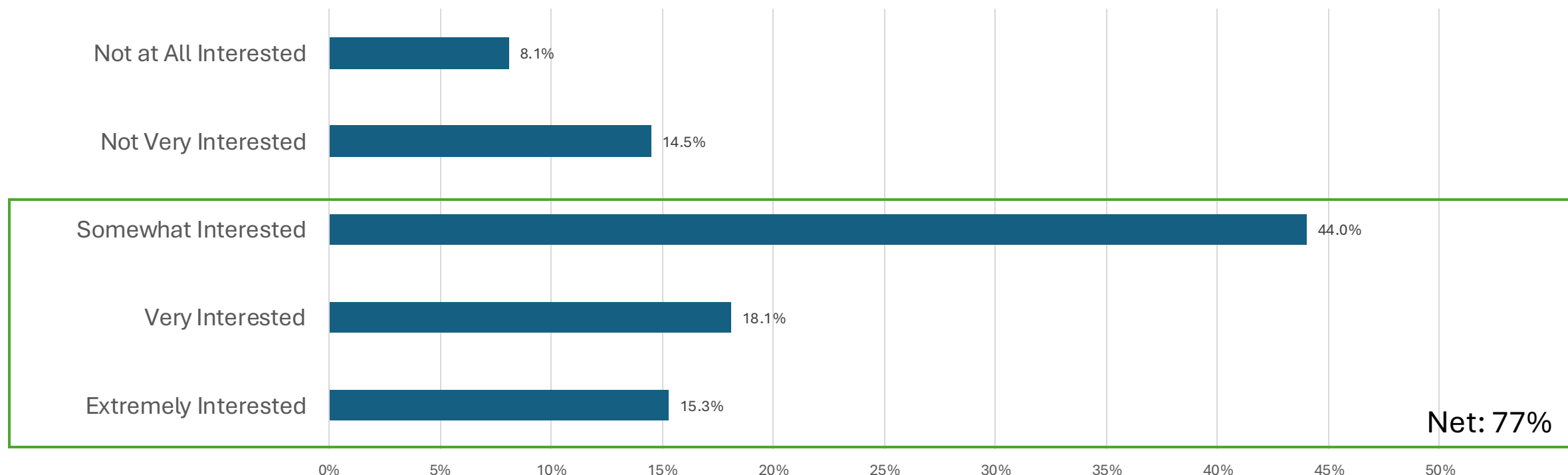


Among those who volunteered or participated in student organizations

Future Volunteer Interest among Inactive Students

- Approximately 3/4 (77%) of those without prior volunteer engagement expressed some interest in future volunteerism

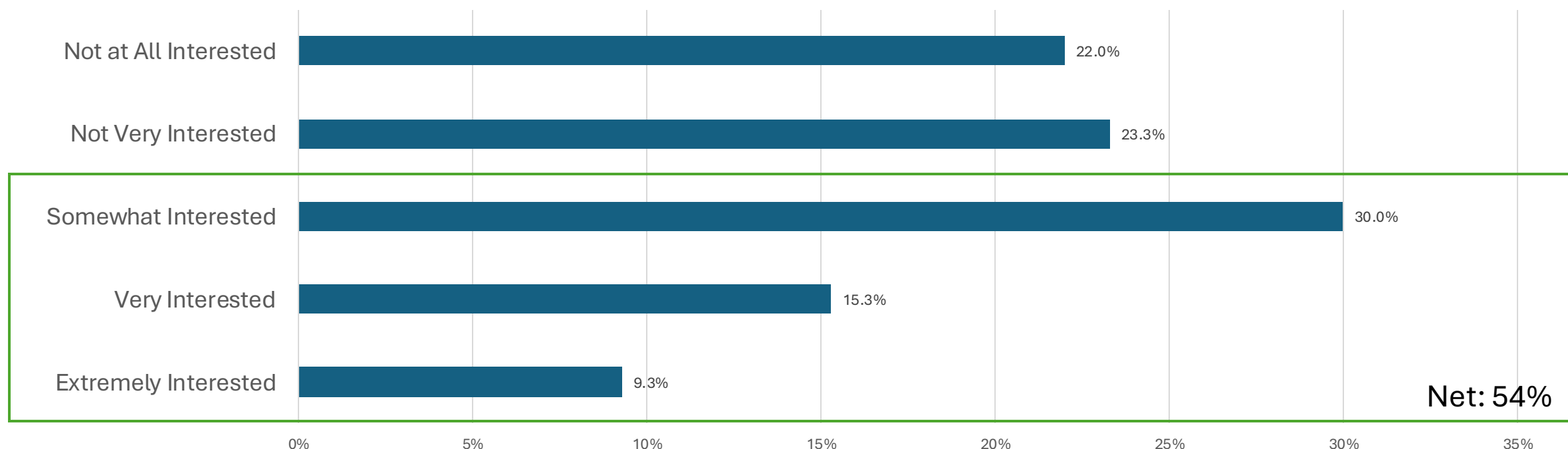
Interest in Volunteering in the Future Among Students with No Prior Engagement



Future Participation Interest among Inactive Students

- More than half (54%) of those without prior participation engagement expressed some interest in future participation in student organizations

Interest in Participating in a Student Organization Among Students with No Prior Engagement



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