ANNUAL SURVEY
Grants Management
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

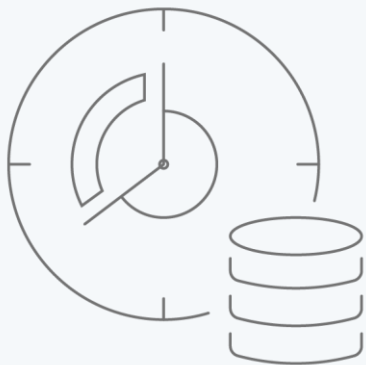February 2021
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REI Systems, NGMA, and GWU Conduct an Annual Grants Survey

- Identify issues and priorities

- Let you see how you fit

- Help advocate for what you need

What are the biggest findings?

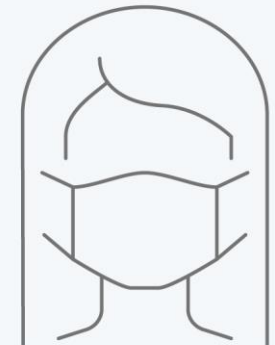| More time spent on compliance than anything else | Admin spend appeared to increase significantly in 2020 over 2019 | Many can't measure performance, or don't know if it improved (more than 56%) | COVID had a huge impact on performance (61% said more than 10% impact) |

Contents

- Introduction and methodology

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- Administrative spend on grants management

- Performance and burden

- Strongly supported issues… and those that are not

- Significant challenges and success factors

- Key takeaways

REI Systems, GWU, NGMA

The **National Grants Management Association** provides tools and resources for grants professionals to support and maintain high levels of grants management competency and to establish standards of excellence for grants managers. Visit ngma.org

The **Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration** is a focal point for public affairs education, research, and public service at the George Washington University. Visit tspppa.gwu.edu

REI Systems provides grant management solutions, analysis and advice. We digitize government to produce healthier citizens, safer communities, and better lives. Visit reisystems.com

Introduction and Methodology

Purpose: The purpose of the grants management survey and analysis is to inform the grants community of cross-cutting issues and trends so as to help improve grants management, and to support advocates for better grant management
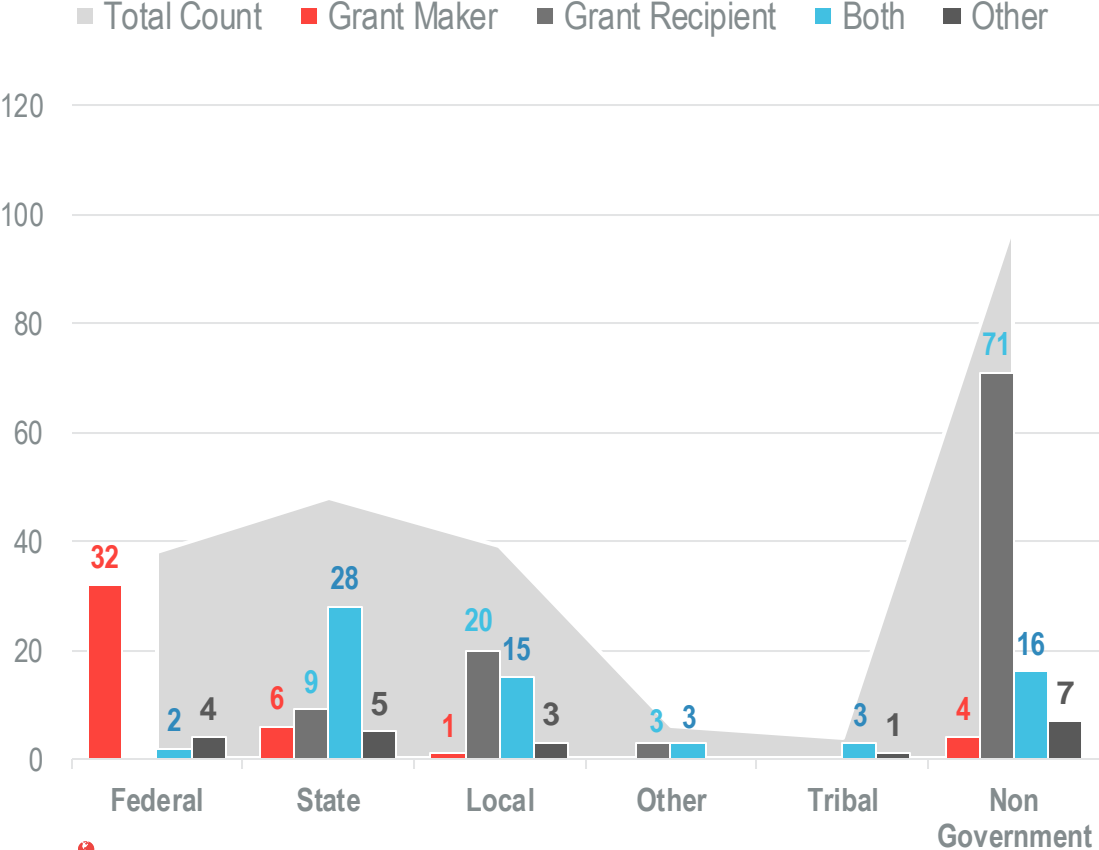
Survey Design: GWU, REI, and NGMA developed a survey of grant managers in 2016 to help identify key practices, major challenges, and related topics that could help inform the grants management community. Revisions were made to the survey for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, to maximize the opportunity to evaluate the trend of responses over time

Survey Administration:

▪ During November 2020, we invited more than 5,000 professionals in grant management and related fields to take the survey online. Others (Grants.gov) also distributed the survey on our behalf

▪ Those invited to respond included NGMA members, attendees of Grants Management Breakfast Forum events, and other grants professionals that REI and GWU have been able to identify. Those receiving the survey were encouraged to forward it to colleagues

▪ Responses were anonymous, though respondents were offered the chance to receive these survey results if they chose to share their name and email address
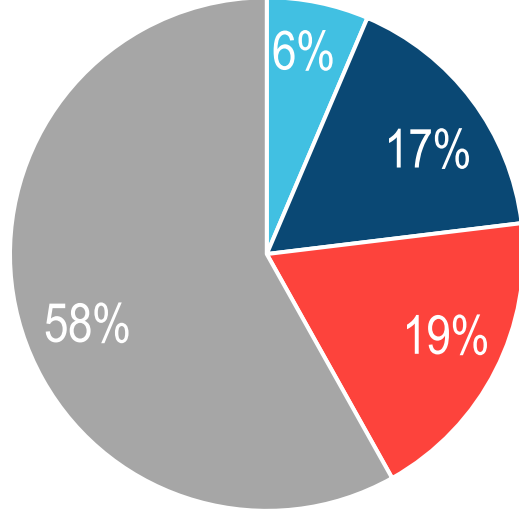
Respondents Included a Mix of Federal, State / Local & Non-Profit Grant Managers

233 Responses

Legend: Total Count, Grant Maker, Grant Recipient, Both, Other

Category	Grant Maker	Grant Recipient	Both	Other
Federal	32		2	4
State	6	9	28	5
Local	1	20	15	3
Other		3	3	
Tribal			3	1
Non Government	4	71	16	7

Years of Experience

Legend: 0-2 Years, 3-5 Years, 6-10 Years, More than 10 Years

- 0-2 Years: 6%
- 3-5 Years: 17%
- 6-10 Years: 19%
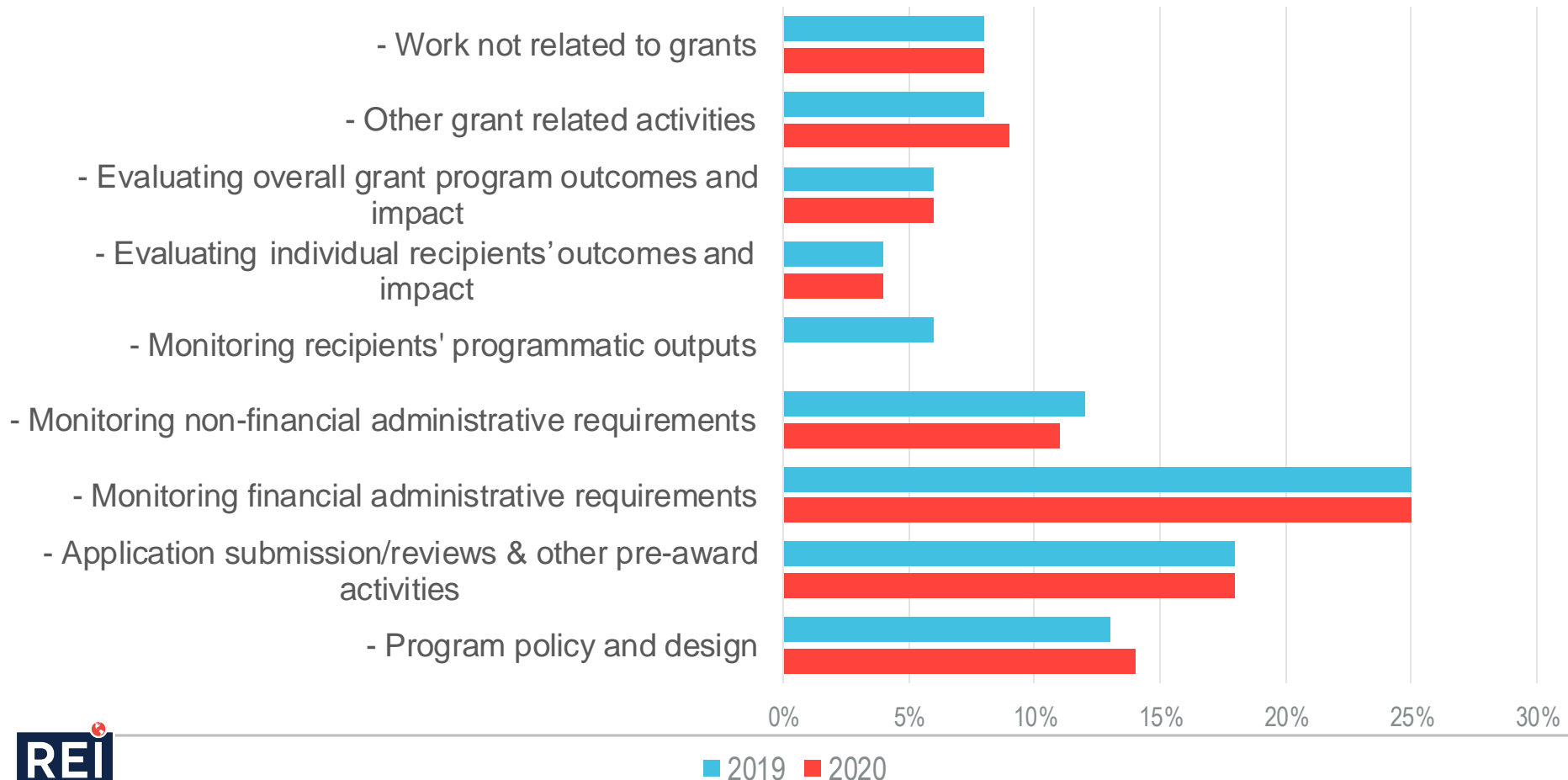- More than 10 Years: 58%

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How Grant Managers Spend Their Time

Grant Managers' Work is Consistent; The Biggest Task is Still Compliance Monitoring

Compliance takes more time than any other activity

1.3. How much time do you spend on the following grants management activities?
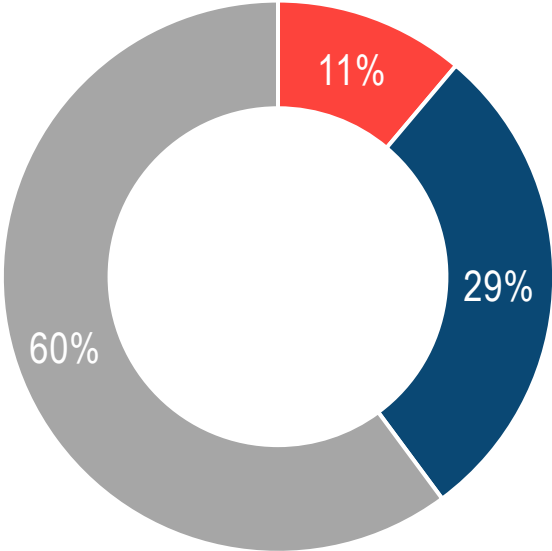
Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2020

Few Organizations Require That Their Staff Receive Grants Management Training

and certification requirements are even more rare

1.8. Does your organization require formal grant training of your staff?

Required Training

- Yes, with Certification
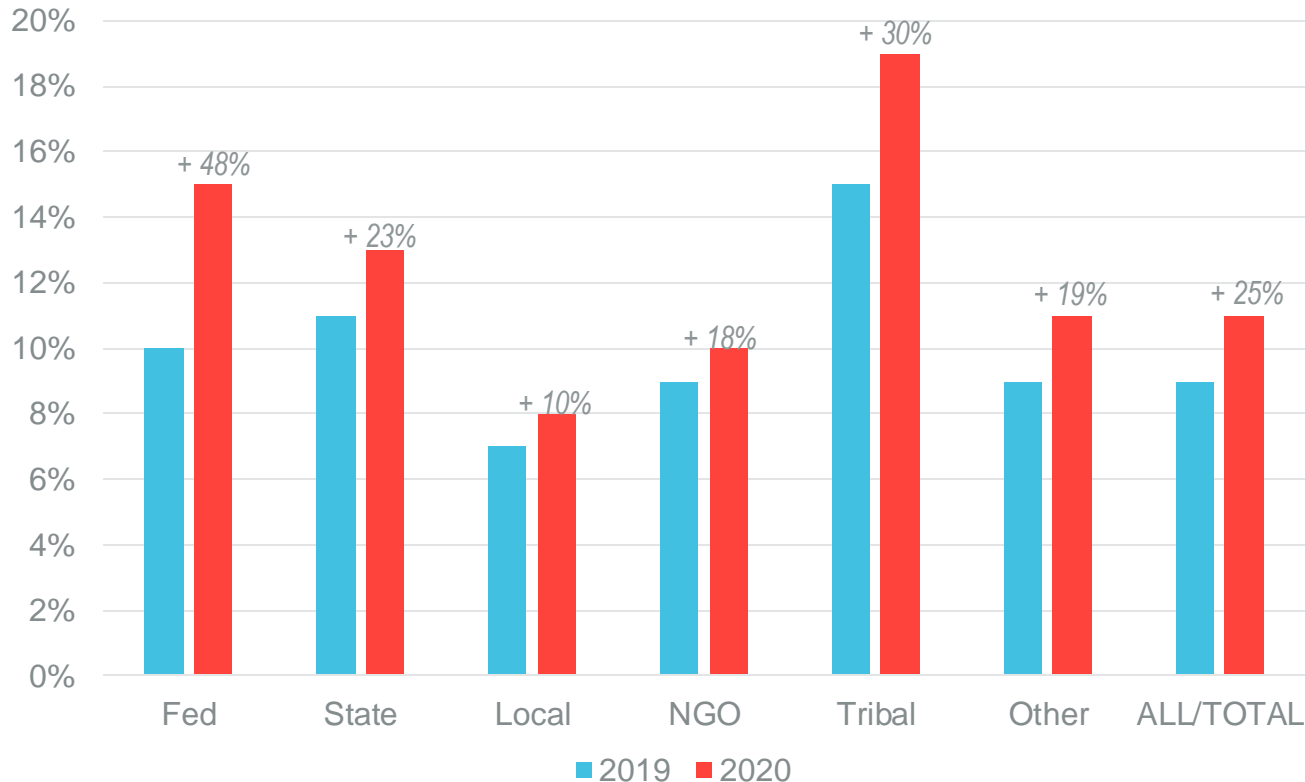- Yes, but no certification
- No training required

11%
29%
60%

Administrative Spend on Grants Management

Admin Spend on Grants Management seems to have increased significantly

Even as grant volume increased due to COVID…

1.7. What percentage of the annual value of grants processed by your organization does [your organization's] administrative budget constitute?

Admin Spending as a percent of grant value

Chart data:

Category	2019	2020	Change
Fed	10%	15%	+ 48%
State	11%	13%	+ 23%
Local	7%	8%	+ 10%
NGO	9%	10%	+ 18%
Tribal	15%	19%	+ 30%
Other	9%	11%	+ 19%
ALL/TOTAL	9%	11%	+ 25%

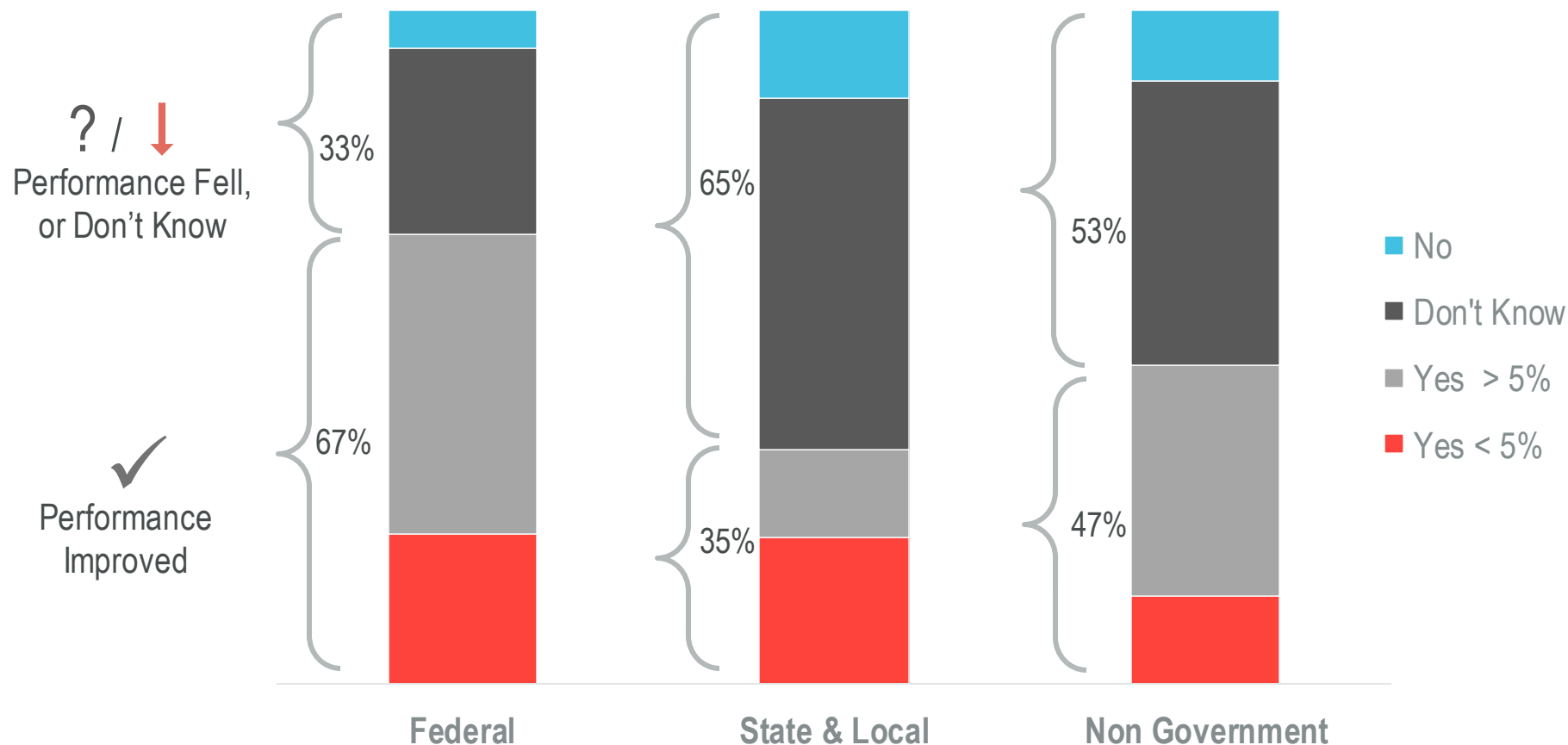Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2020

REI
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Performance and grantee burden
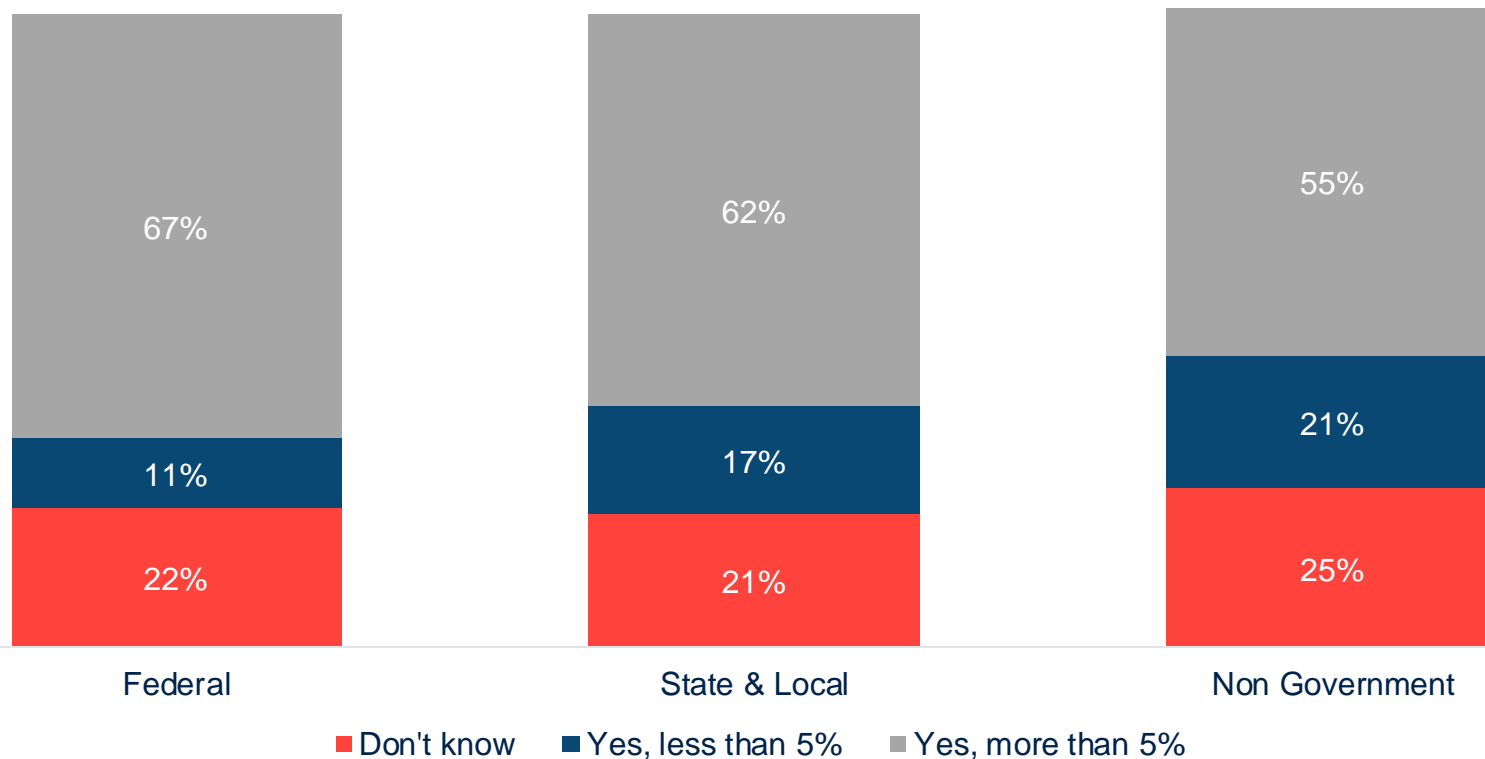
Outcome Improvements were lower in 2020

The Federal Government reported the most improvements

6.3. Have your organization's / your recipients' outcomes improved over the past 12 months?

? / ↓
Performance Fell, or Don't Know

✓
Performance Improved

33%
67%

65%
35%

53%
47%

Federal

State & Local

Non Government

■ No
■ Don't Know
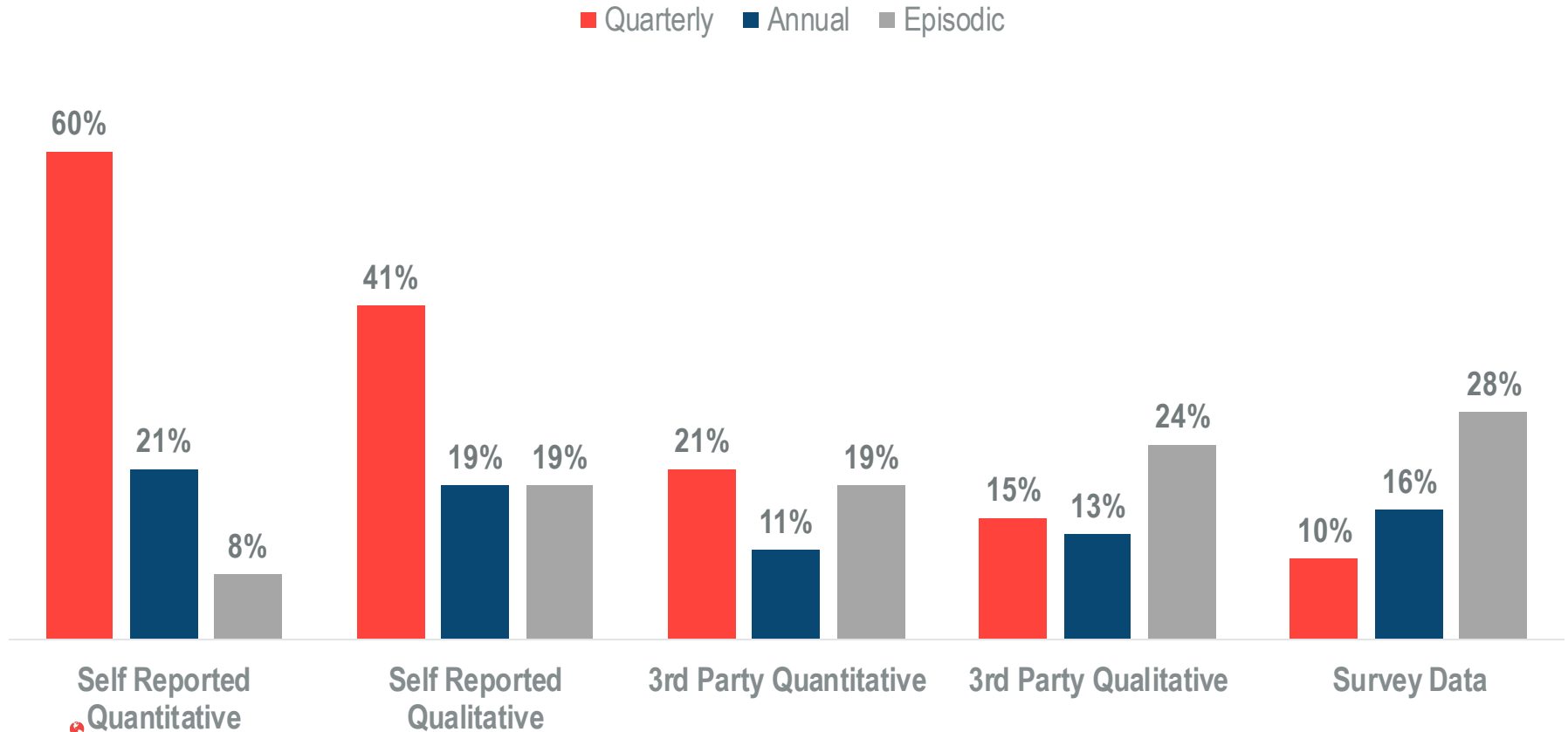■ Yes > 5%
■ Yes < 5%

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Perhaps Because The Pandemic Significantly Affected Outcomes

6.4. Were your organization's / your recipients outcomes impacted by the pandemic declaration in March 2020?

	Federal	State & Local	Non Government
Yes, more than 5%	67%	62%	55%
Yes, less than 5%	11%	17%	21%
Don't know	22%	21%	25%

Legend: ■ Don't know ■ Yes, less than 5% ■ Yes, more than 5%
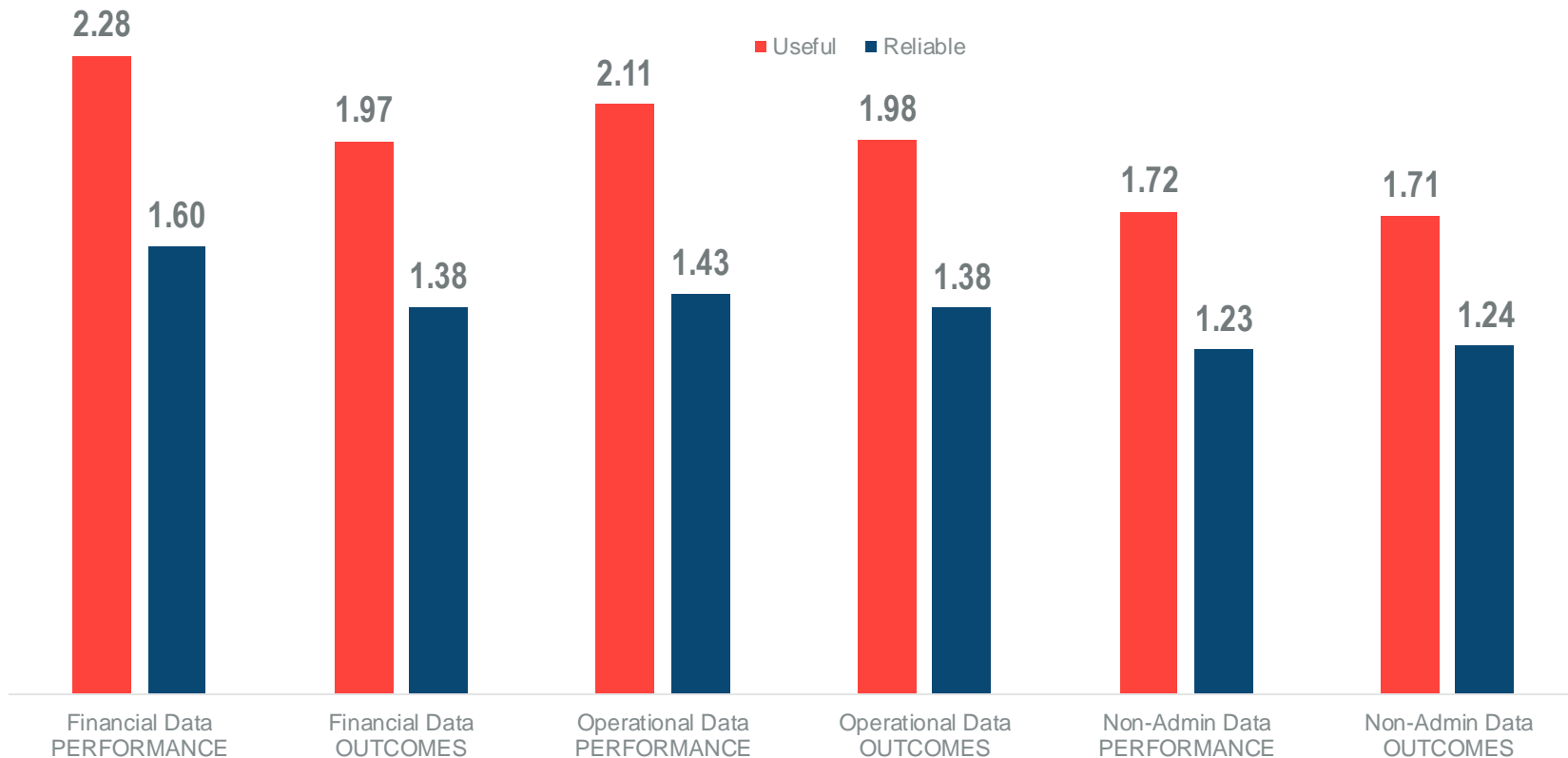
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Grant Managers Use More Self Reported Than Third Party Gathered Data

3.1. Please indicate the frequency with which you submit (or expect your grantees to submit) various types of data.

■ Quarterly ■ Annual ■ Episodic

	Quarterly	Annual	Episodic
Self Reported Quantitative	60%	21%	8%
Self Reported Qualitative	41%	19%	19%
3rd Party Quantitative	21%	11%	19%
3rd Party Qualitative	15%	13%	24%
Survey Data	10%	16%	28%

Note: Most respondents use more than one type of reporting source

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Financial Data Collected Continues to be Perceived as Most Timely, Useful & Reliable

**3.2. Please tell us how timely, useful and reliable different types of data are for your program.**

Legend: ■ Useful (red) ■ Reliable (dark blue)

Category	Useful	Reliable
Financial Data PERFORMANCE	2.28	1.60
Financial Data OUTCOMES	1.97	1.38
Operational Data PERFORMANCE	2.11	1.43
Operational Data OUTCOMES	1.98	1.38
Non-Admin Data PERFORMANCE	1.72	1.23
Non-Admin Data OUTCOMES	1.71	1.24

Strongly Supported Issues – and Those That Are Not…

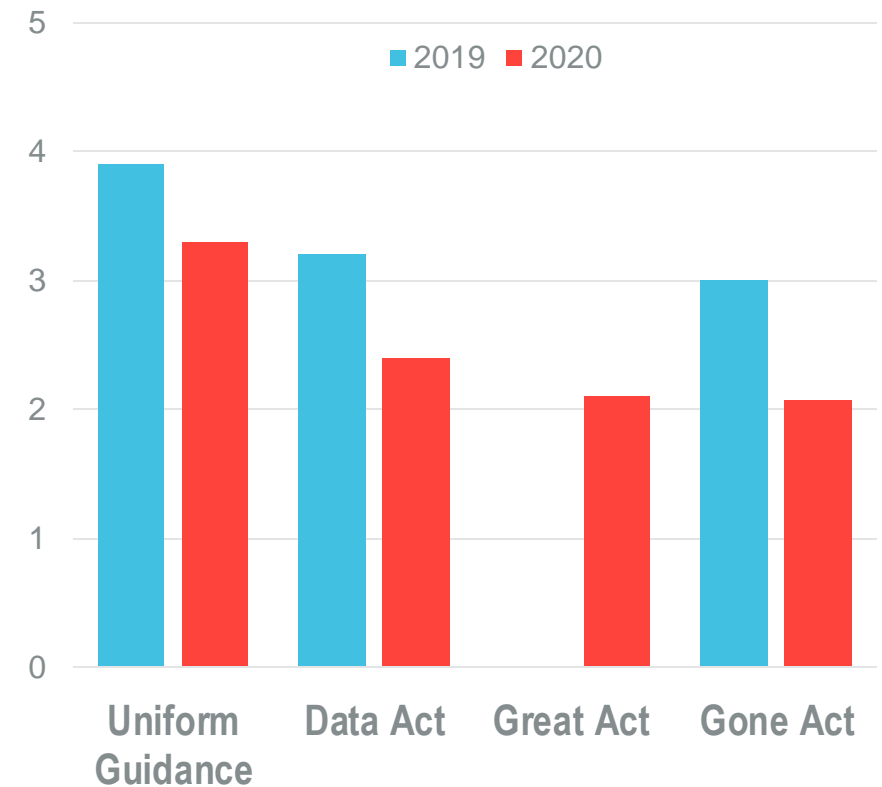# Of All Survey Topics, Respondents Feel Strongly About

5.4. Should state governments and federal agencies share data *and* automate interactions more than they do today?

STATES AND FEDS SHOULD SHARE DATA AND AUTOMATE INTERACTIONS MORE
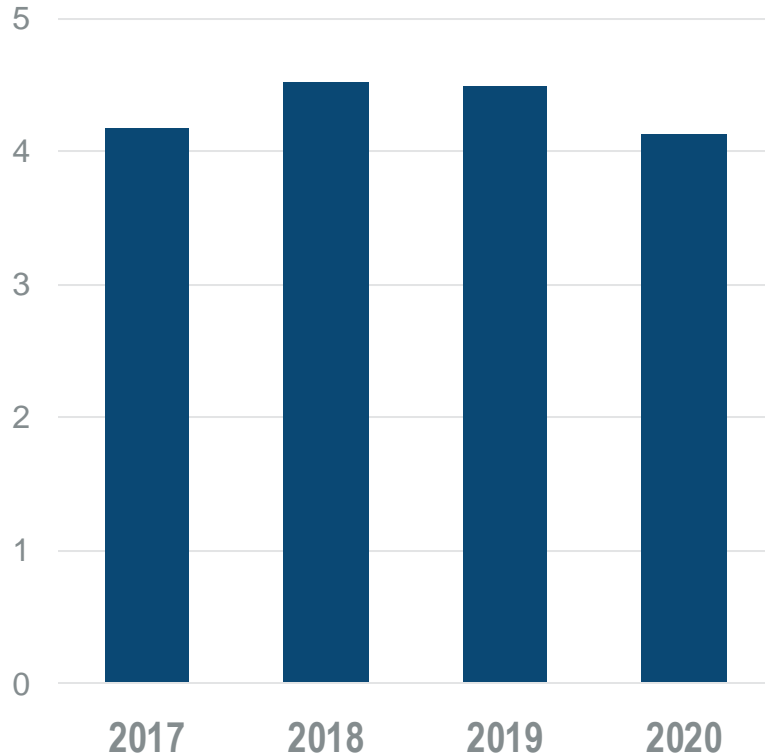
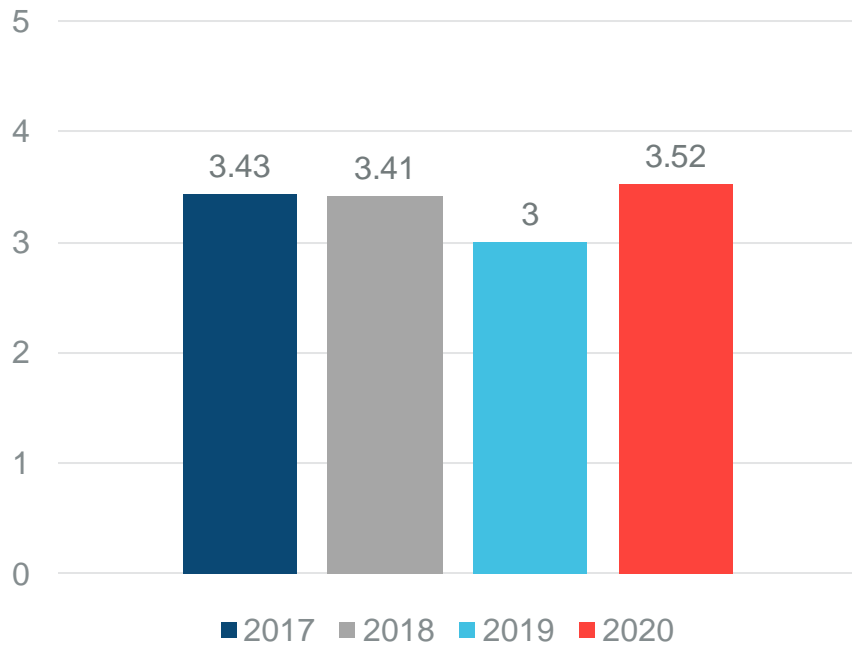**5.2. Please rate the impact of the executive and legislative directives on your day-to-day lives**

IMPACT ON DAY-TO-DAY LIVES

# Use of Risk Strategies and Interest in Analytics remain High

4.2 To what extent is your grant program or organization using a risk-based strategy (i.e. focused attention on aspects that involve greater risk) to monitor current recipients?

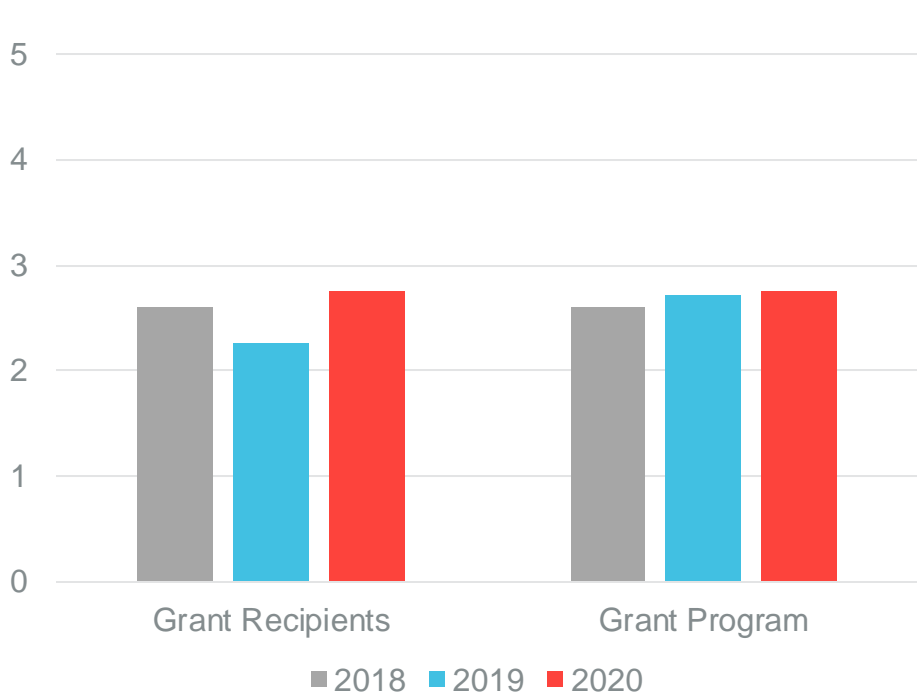**4.1. To what extent are your executive leaders and managers interested in evaluation and data analytics?**

USE OF A RISK-BASED STRATEGY TO MONITOR RECIPIENTS

- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP INTEREST IN ANALYTICS

- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
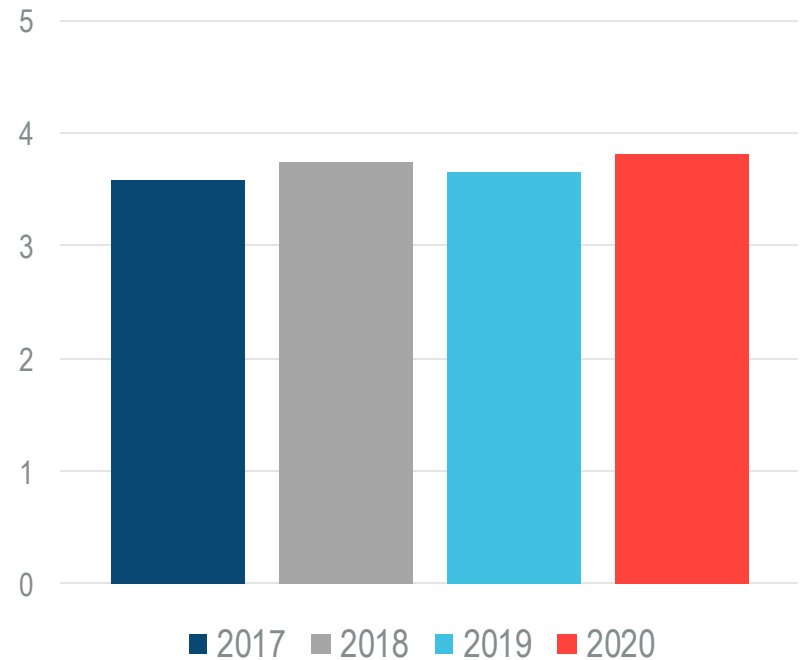
Respondents Also Seek Improvement

5.2 How effective are your data systems in helping you to analyze and improve the performance of you or your recipient or your grant program?

5.2. How well equipped do you feel your organization is to successfully meet your grant program's mission?

SATISFACTION WITH DATA SYSTEMS IS NOT HIGH…

CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO MEET GRANT PROGRAM MISSION INCREASED SINCE 2019

Left chart legend: ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

Right chart legend: ■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020
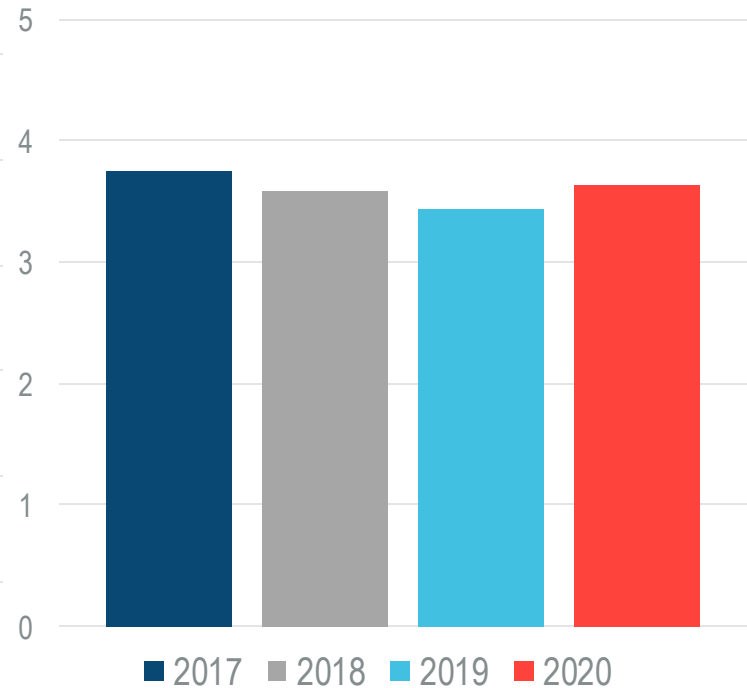
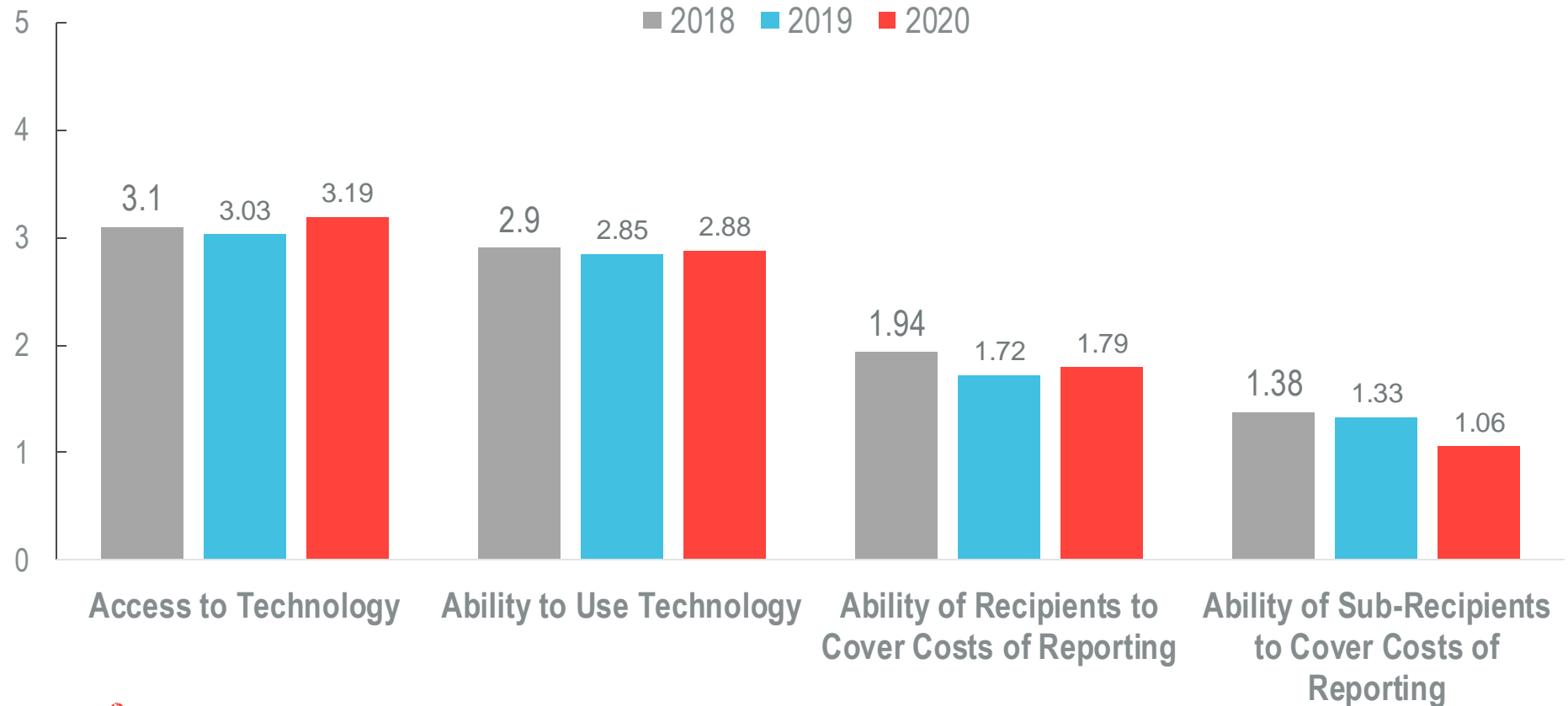# Grant Reporting Automation Improves But Still Has Some Way to Go

2.2 How would you describe the method used by your grantees to submit reporting
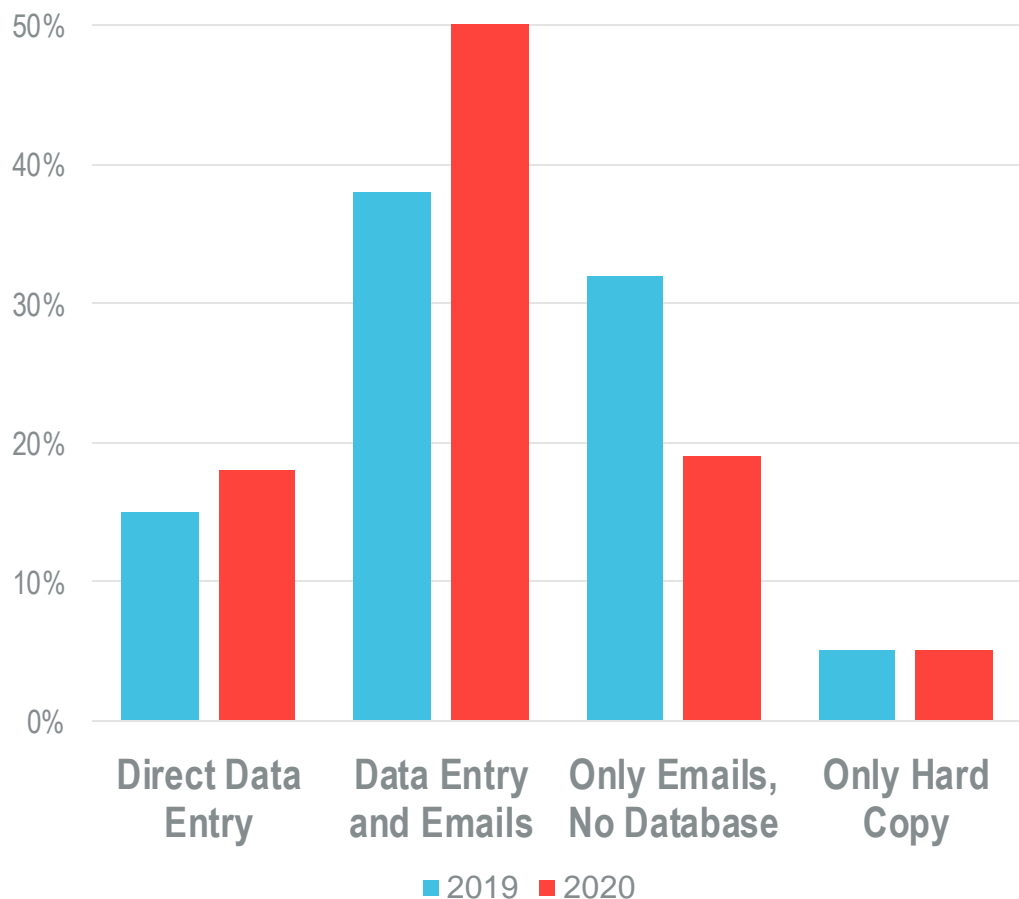
Grant reporting isn't sophisticated or efficient

Reporting varies by grant, and even by grantee

■ 2019 ■ 2020

Satisfaction With Technology and Costs to Cover It Continues to be Low

2.1 Rate your satisfaction with the technology, your program or organization's use of it and the technical assistance provided to your staff, recipients, and sub-recipients to use it.
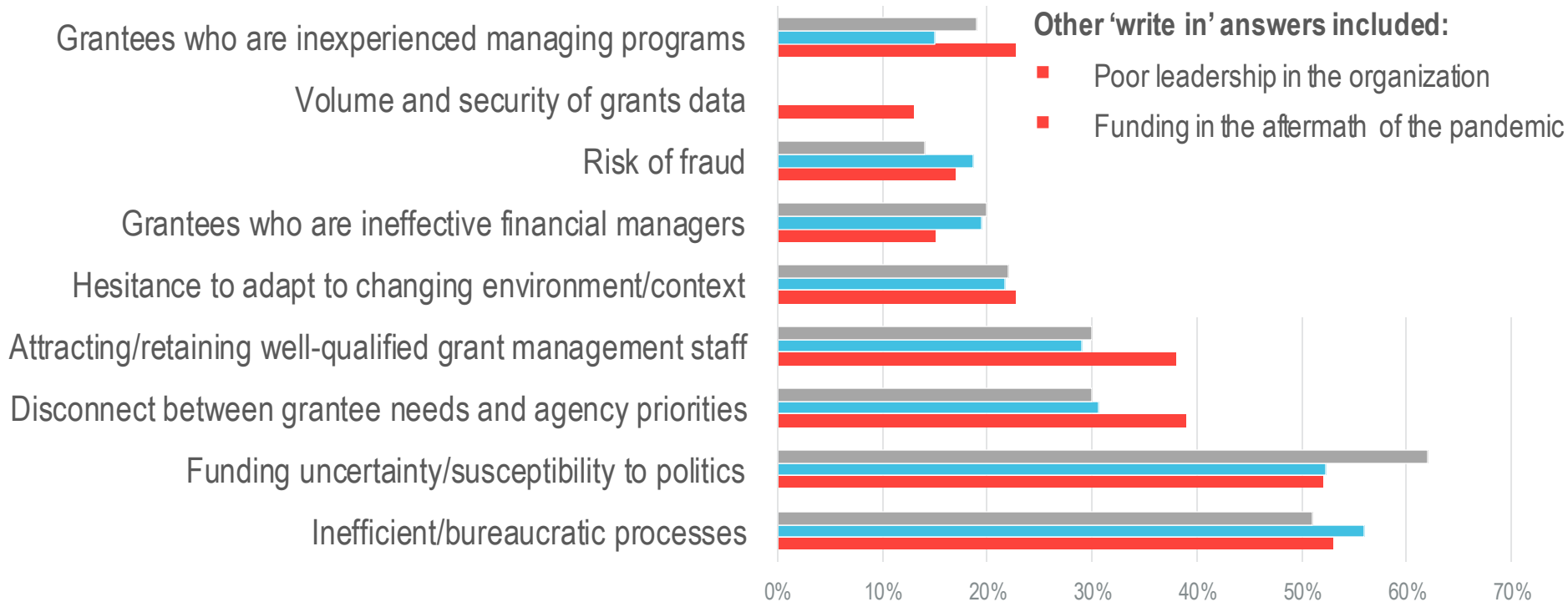

Legend: ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Access to Technology	3.1	3.03	3.19
Ability to Use Technology	2.9	2.85	2.88
Ability of Recipients to Cover Costs of Reporting	1.94	1.72	1.79
Ability of Sub-Recipients to Cover Costs of Reporting	1.38	1.33	1.06

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Significant Challenges and Success Factors

Challenges: Funds Uncertainty Recedes a Bit, Concerns Over Bureaucracy Increase

6.2. What do you think are the most significant challenges facing grants management?

Other 'write in' answers included:

- Poor leadership in the organization
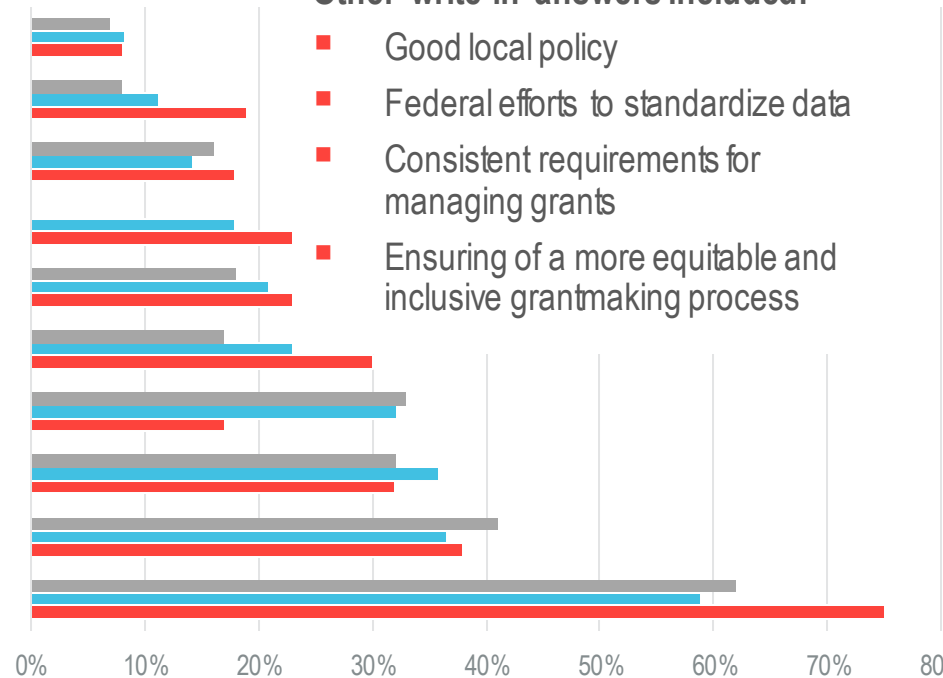- Funding in the aftermath of the pandemic

Qualified Staff, Tech. Assistance, and Org Structure are Perceived Keys to Success

6.1. What are the most significant factors in the success(es) your organization has had in grants management in recent years?

Other 'write in' answers included:
- Good local policy
- Federal efforts to standardize data
- Consistent requirements for managing grants
- Ensuring of a more equitable and inclusive grantmaking process

Key Takeaways

Improving systems, more training and streamlining processes continue to be priorities

6.7. What are your Top 5 priorities over the next 3 years?

Takeaways from Our Analysis

- Admin Spend appeared to increase significantly in 2020

- Grants managers continue to spend more time monitoring compliance than any other activity; this has continued to increase over the years.

- 56% of respondents said that Performance Outcomes did not improve or they didn't know if they did

- 78% said that the Pandemic affected Outcomes

- The GREAT Act starts to make its impact felt

- Grants managers aren't happy with their technology, particularly accessibility and cost.

- Systems, Training, Efficient processes remain priorities

Suggestions from Survey Respondents- Priorities for Effort to Improve

6.6 What do you think should be the highest priorities / best ways to improve grant mgmt?

Processes

- Simplification in grant making; Diversity and inclusion taken into consideration in grant making.
- Standardizing reporting
- Quarterly meetings are important between the grantor and recipient as well
- Make the indirect cost rate proposal process less onerous
- Uniform application and performance standards across federal agencies.
- Having clear and realistic expectations and expectations in grant language.
- Consistent and streamlined grants processes across the grants lifecycle
- Bring in more diverse stakeholders and intentional engagement from the communities the grants are intended to help.

Personnel

- Knowledgeable staff
- More and affordable training
- Adequate Staffing
- Attracting highly qualified, enthusiastic career-track employees
- Mandatory certification

Suggestions from Survey Respondents- Priorities for Effort to Improve

6.6 What do you think should be the highest priorities / best ways to improve grant mgmt? (cont'd)

Systems

- One common federal grant platform for applying, managing and data reporting

- Ensure federal agencies that have failing, long outdated IT systems have the resources to update/replace those systems.

- Automating grants management systems to tie outcomes and financial side together. We can't measure efforts against outcomes, but a good grant management system would help us as a non-profit to do so.

- Periodic "facelifts" to older, stodgier (federal) grant management portals

- Reduction of reporting burden by consolidation of electronic systems;

Data

- Data analytics tailored to the type of grant program - objectives.

- Standardization of data

- Improved data management via grants management system;

- Education on performance inputs and outputs

Thank you!

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