Impact Assessment Report 2023

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Service Civil International

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FREE
HUGS

Introduction

Service Civil International (SCI) is an international voluntary service organisation established in 1920. It consists of 40 branches and groups in every continent and of more than 90 partners all around the world.

Our vision is a world of peace, social justice, and sustainable development, where all people live together with mutual respect and without recourse to any form of violence to solve conflicts. With the mission to promote a culture of peace by organising international volunteering projects with local and global impact, SCI adheres to the values of volunteering, non-violence, respect for human rights, solidarity, respect for the environment, inclusion, empowerment and cooperation.

When we talk about *peace* in SCI, we refer to the concept of **positive peace**, where different levels contribute to the attainment of true peace:

Inner Peace

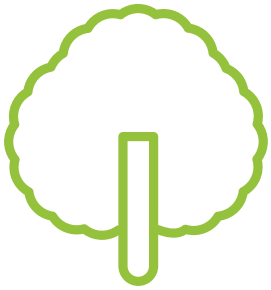
Is sometimes referred to as “peace with myself”, or inner harmony, peaceful state of mind, and psychological well-being.

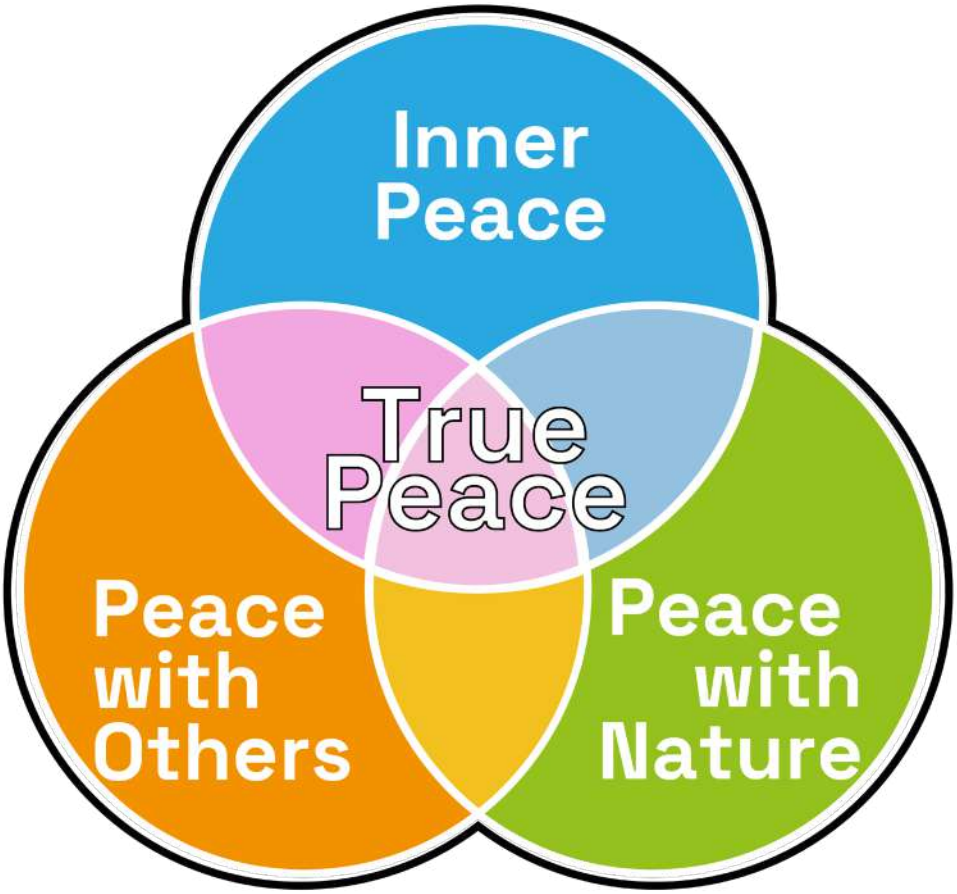
Peace with Others

Relates to the effects of our relationships, behaviours and communication towards other people and society at large. Living together in peace is about accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way.

Peace with Nature

Refers to the respect for the environment, a feeling of connection with nature, awareness of the link between one’s daily choices and the effect on the planet as well as the relationship between climate change and violent conflict, personal and civic responsibility regarding sustainability, and active engagement in the protection of the planet.





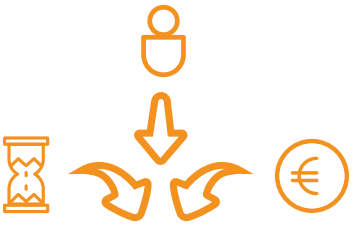
SCI organises volunteering projects with international volunteers and local communities, as well as events and training courses, touching the lives of thousands of people every year.

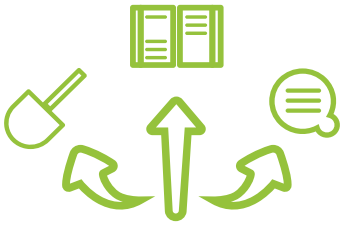
After 100 years of activities, SCI identified the need to measure its impact through a structured framework applied on a global scale. This need led to the development of an impact measurement framework in 2021, with the aim to move beyond anecdotal evidence and establish a systematic method for evaluating SCI's contributions to peace, social justice, and sustainable development.

SCI's impact framework : What is impact for SCI?

SCI's impact measurement framework defines "impact" as SCI's contribution to a world characterised by peace, social justice, and sustainable development. This aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and it is an extension of SCI's Strategic Plan for 2020-2023. Our core values (volunteering, non-violence, respect for human rights, solidarity, environmental respect, inclusion, empowerment, and cooperation) underpin this framework.

Central to this framework is an underlying Theory of Change, linking SCI's **inputs** (volunteers, staff time, funds, goods) to **outputs** (engagement in activities) and long-term **impacts** on individuals, communities, and the environment.





IT'S SO 1868!
THOMAS, ES IST ZEIT
MILITARY CONSCRIPTION
PREPARE FOR PEACE
NOT WAR
WEHRPFLICHT ABSCHAFFEN
ABOLISH MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

From Inputs to Impact: The Impact Theory of Change

A theory of change seeks to lay out the anticipated path to impact that a specific organisation's programmes, or practices, such as workcamps, follows to achieve positive change. The Impact Theory of Change, used as the methodology of this framework, is a further elaboration of SCI's Strategic Plan. It establishes the impact objectives of SCI activities and identifies inputs - investments made by SCI, support organisations and volunteers - that can be expected to result in direct outputs and lead to intended outcomes and impacts to the individual behaviour, host local communities, and the Environment.

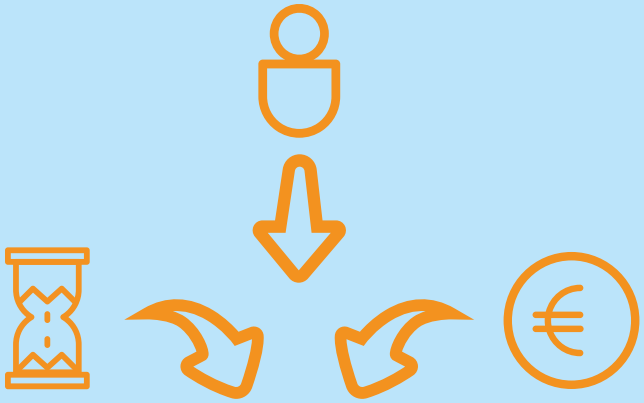
The Impact Theory of Change builds off the Impact Standard and connects to relevant Sustainable Development Goals and Targets.

This framework focuses on the impact monitoring level. However, it is important to explain how to arrive there through the theory of change framework (input, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact).

For illustrative purposes, without aiming to illustrate the full range of SCI activities, here are some key cause-effect relations:

SCI's resources: Inputs

- Volunteers
- Staff time
- Funds and goods raised from private and public contributors



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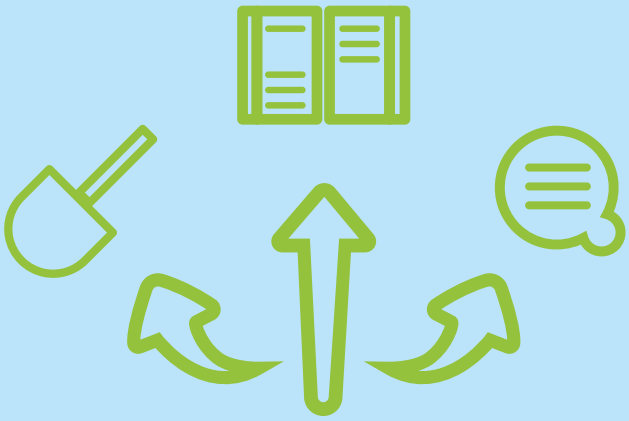
SCI's activities: Outputs

- Workcamps
- Long term volunteering projects realised for local communities
- Campaigns, Information through social media, etc.
- Workshops
- Volunteers engage in intercultural communication and learning
- Training and/or information about SCI and peace work
- Provided information by staff and volunteers on how reduce environmental footprint, etc



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SCI's outcomes: Impact

- Participants engage in behaviour to promote inner peace, peace with others and with nature.
- Local communities show increased cross-cultural competence, more effective communication skills and more positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusiveness.
- Increased awareness on SCI's environmental footprint, carbon reduction and offsetting, etc.

Measuring impact at different levels

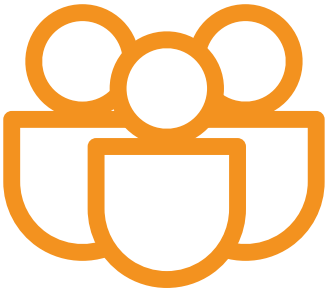
The framework assesses impact at three levels:

Participants

It focuses on personal growth areas such as inner peace, peace with others, and peace with nature. Indicators include self-awareness, self-esteem, inclusivity, and environmental consciousness.

Communities

It evaluates SCI's impact within local communities, measuring cultural understanding, participation, and community perception of SCI's work.



Environment

It analyses SCI's environmental footprint, particularly in terms of CO2 emissions and broader sustainability efforts.

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour change

The choice of measures and indicators in this document was partly informed by the general understanding that behaviour change occurs in a logical order: by learning knowledge and new skills, people will change their attitudes and beliefs, which will, at the end, change their behaviour. This approach is widely used in the evaluation of a variety of programs, it ensures that all aspects of behaviour change are taken into consideration, providing a clear and logical structure for the evaluation process.[1]

1. Knowledge or skills

↓

2. Attitudes and Beliefs

↓

3. Behaviour Change

> *"I am more aware of the presence of rhododendrons and non native plants and how they impact on nature. I now know the importance of native species and I am keen to promote and encourage this."*

Choice of Indicators

The development of an evaluative framework involves the selection of appropriate indicators to measure a particular construct. The indicators presented here are informed by, or adapted from various established scales. These scales were chosen due to their well-established validity and reliability in measuring the constructs of interest, as well as their broad applicability to diverse populations. They provide a solid foundation for the evaluative framework and increase the likelihood of producing reliable and valid results.

To measure our impact, we chose established indicators:

- The Activism Orientation Scale (AOS)[2]
- The Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS)[3]
- The Nature-Relatedness scale (NR-[6])[4]
- The Attitude toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG)[5]
- The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP)[6]
- The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI)[7]
- The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)[8]

Methodology and Implementation

We collect data via surveys that track the changes in volunteer perceptions before, right after, and 6 months after their workcamp participation, plus a community survey.

The methodology, implementation and analysis have been conducted in collaboration with the University of Antwerp.

To measure the impact at the different levels, four surveys were developed:

Participant level:

1. Baseline survey
2. 1st follow-up survey
3. 2nd follow-up survey

Community level:

4. Community survey

Environment level:

To measure the impact on the environment, a separate tool was planned to be used but due to time constraints this measurement has been postponed to the next year.

These surveys aim to translate the theoretical aspects of the framework into quantifiable data, providing an empirical basis for assessing SCI's contributions towards its vision of global peace and social justice. They effectively capture the essence of the initial impact framework, especially in terms of participants' inner peace, community impact, and environmental awareness.

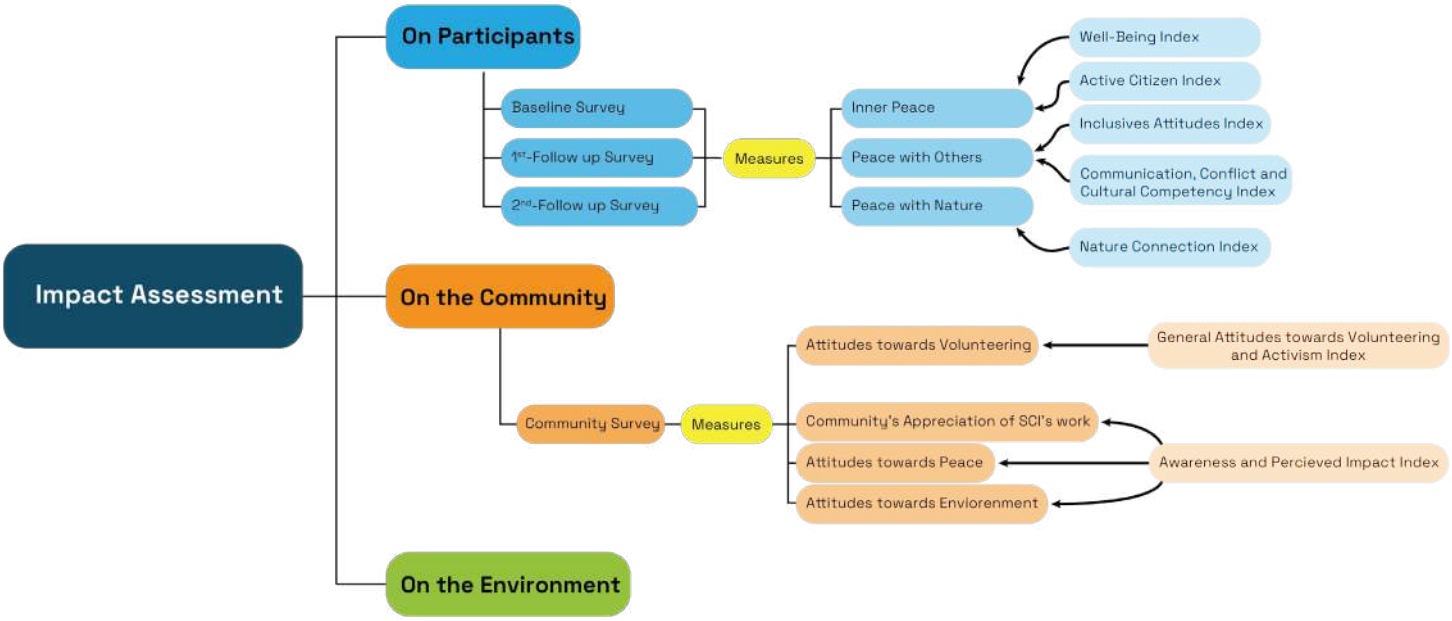
More specifically, the surveys measure:

→ **Impact on participants**, i.e. the volunteers, relating to the different levels of peace:

- To measure the level of Inner Peace, we use the **Wellbeing index** (aligning with the framework's focus on self-awareness, self-esteem, and life satisfaction) and the **Active Citizen index**
- To measure the level of Peace with Others, we use the **Active Citizen index, Inclusives Attitudes index**, and the **Communication, conflict and cultural competency index**.
- To measure the level of Peace with Nature we use the **Nature connection index**.

→ **Community Impact** by capturing the community's appreciation of SCI's work and its impact on cultural understanding, activism, local peace and environment through the index on **General attitudes towards volunteering** and activism and the **Awareness and perceived impact on community** index.

→ **Environmental Sustainability** by capturing both participant and community commitment to eco-friendly practices and awareness.



Participant Level

Baseline and Follow-Up Surveys for participants are used to measure any changes in attitudes and behaviours pre- and post-SCI activities. They measure aspects like inner peace, community involvement, and environmental awareness, reflecting the key areas outlined in the impact framework.

Participants in a workcamp received three anonymous online questionnaires: one a week before their activity (baseline survey), one a week after their activity (1st follow-up survey), and one six months after their activity (2nd follow-up survey).

Surveys were sent to participants who participated in a workcamp between end of July and end of August 2023. The year 2023 served as a pilot year for the impact assessment and in the future, we are aiming to send the survey to a wider selection of workcamps participants.

Community Level

The Community Survey served to collect insights on SCI's impact within local communities, focusing on cultural perceptions and community benefits.

The community survey was completed by interviewing local community representatives in selected activities. In 2023, we focused on 4 countries representing 3 continents: Greece, India, Nigeria and Switzerland.

The Interviews were conducted either as online surveys or a paper version of the same survey, to accommodate different realities regarding internet connection. People interviewed were the villagers and/or indirect beneficiaries. In 2023, about 30 participants from 5 workcamps filled in the community survey. It's important to note that these results cannot be generalised and rather serve as case studies.

Results

In total, 168 volunteers participated in the baseline survey, 147 in the 1st follow-up survey and 43 in the 2nd follow-up survey.

Given that the number of answers to the 2nd follow-up survey is insufficient to draw a reliable generalisation, we will not consider these results for this year.

28 community members participated in the community survey. We approached the community survey as an opportunity to start a conversation with our local communities on the impact of our activities, with the goal of gathering a sample of answers and not a statistically significant amount to draw general conclusions. So we treated these answers rather as case studies.

Baseline Survey

Number of Participants:

168

1st follow-up Survey

Number of Participants:

147

2nd follow-up Survey

Number of Participants:

43

Community Survey

Number of Participants:

28

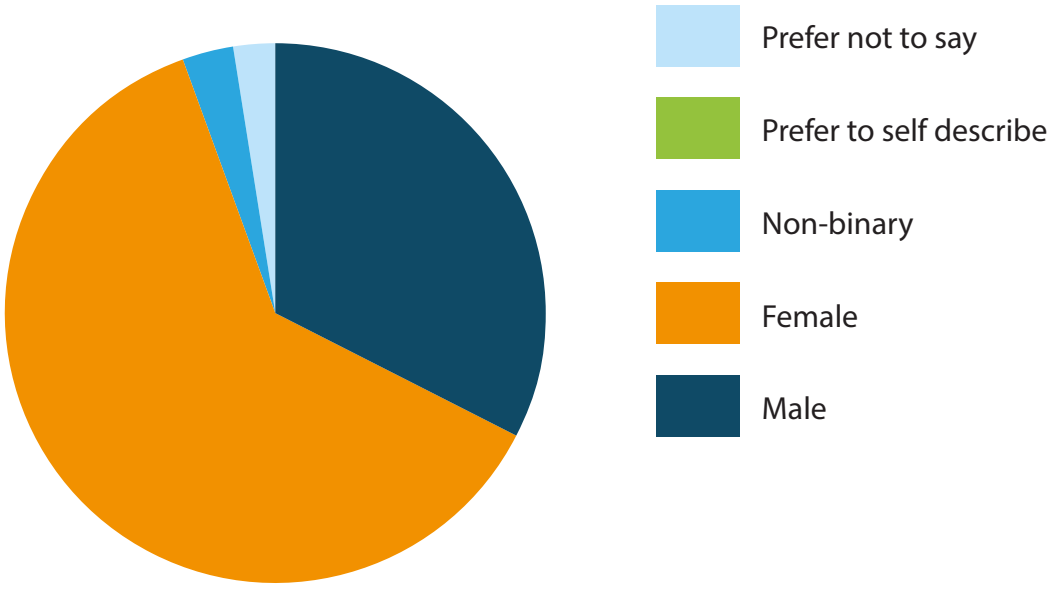
Please note that for illustrative purposes, the numbers used to create the graphs in this report have been rounded.

Participants Survey - Results

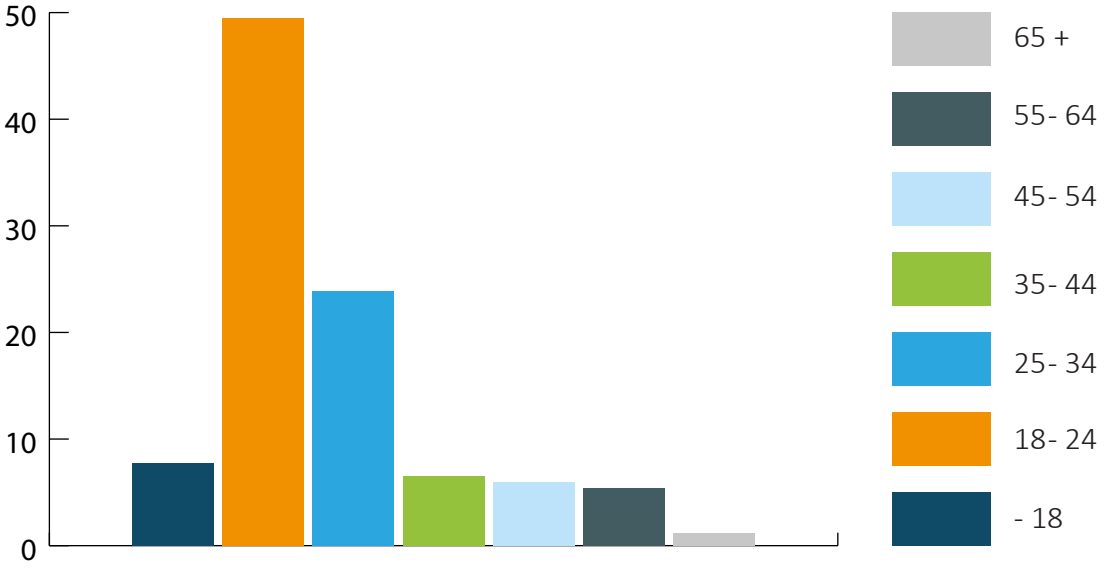
Who answered our baseline survey?

From our survey, we can paint a picture of the typical SCI volunteers as being a young woman who reached a high level of formal education, has previous experience with volunteering but not necessarily with SCI and did not have an experience living abroad for an extended period of time.

Gender

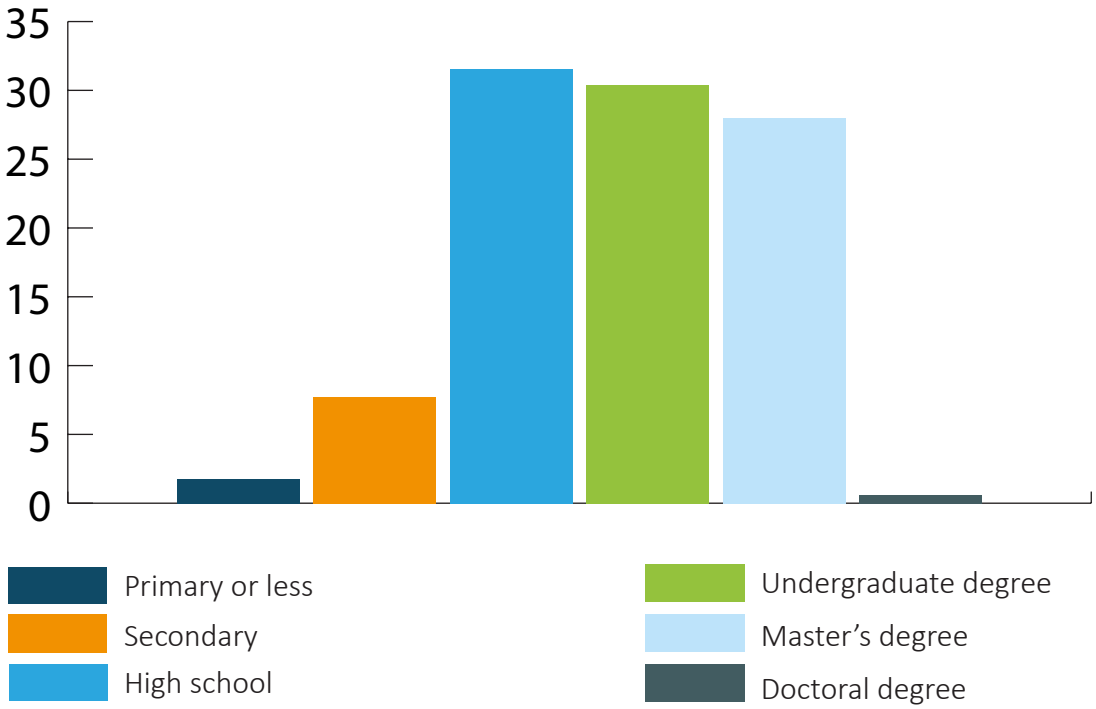


Age

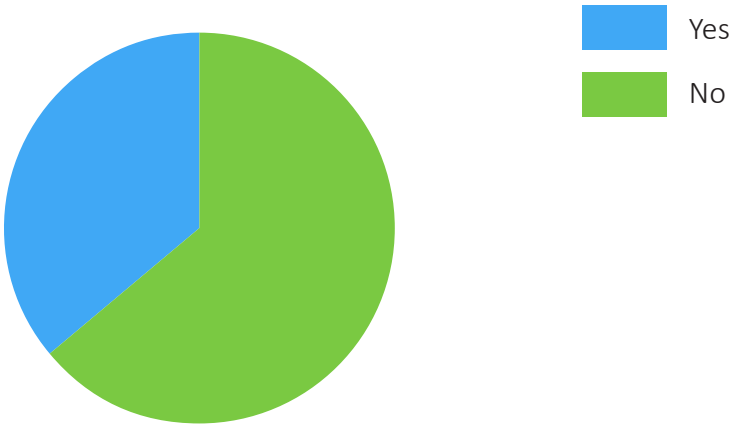


From the total of participants responding to the baseline survey, approximately 80% were 34 years old or under, the majority being 18-24 years old. Moreover, almost ⅔ of the participants (64.8%) identified as females or non-binary.

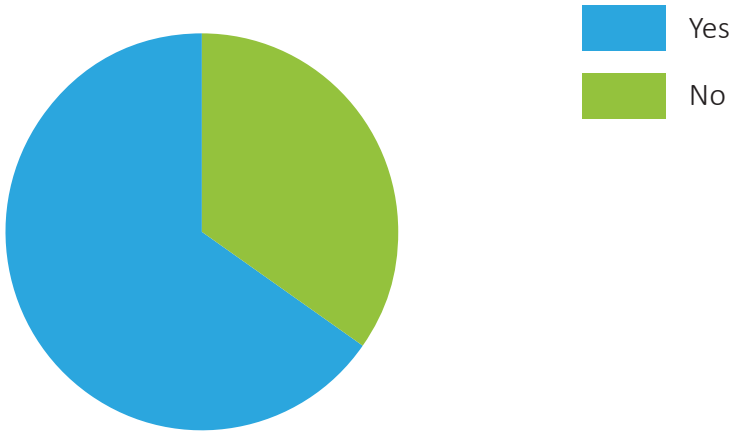
Formal education



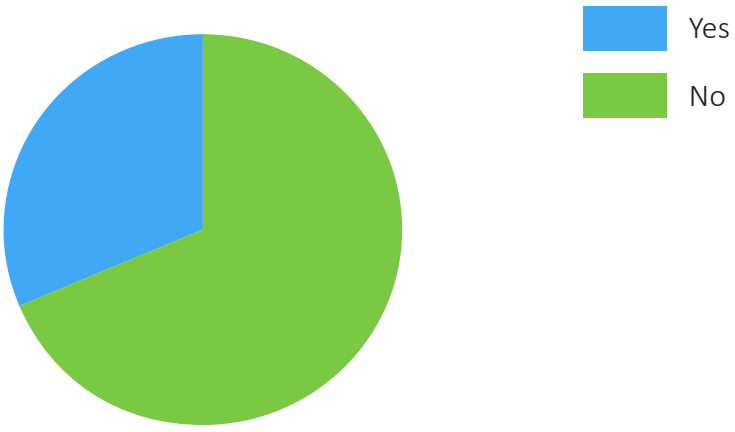
Previous experience living abroad before, for at least one year



Previous volunteering experience



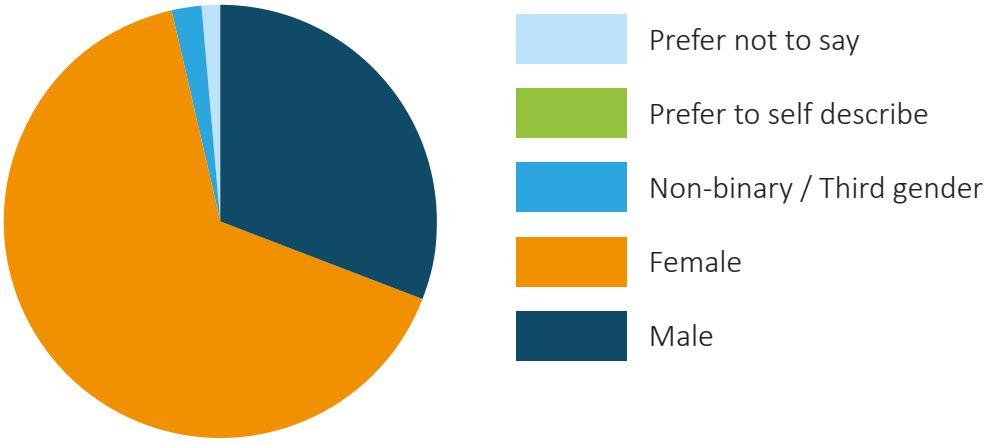
Previous volunteering experience with SCI



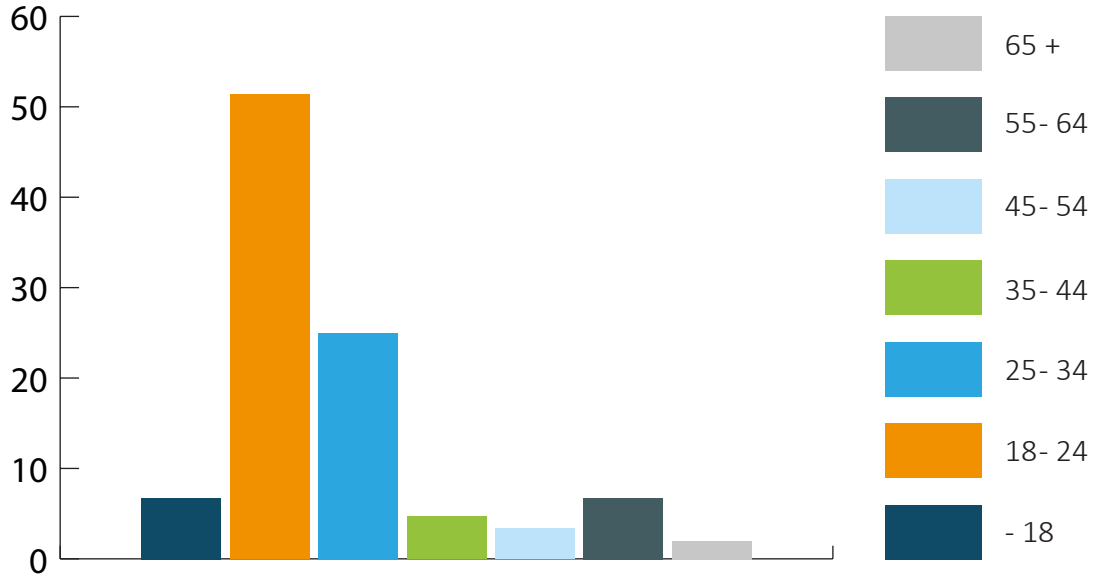
From the total of 167 participants, over 65% were involved in volunteering before, with slightly over ⅓ being involved in a previous SCI volunteering activity. A bit over one third of them (35%) have lived abroad for at least 1 year before volunteering.

Who answered our 1st follow-up survey?

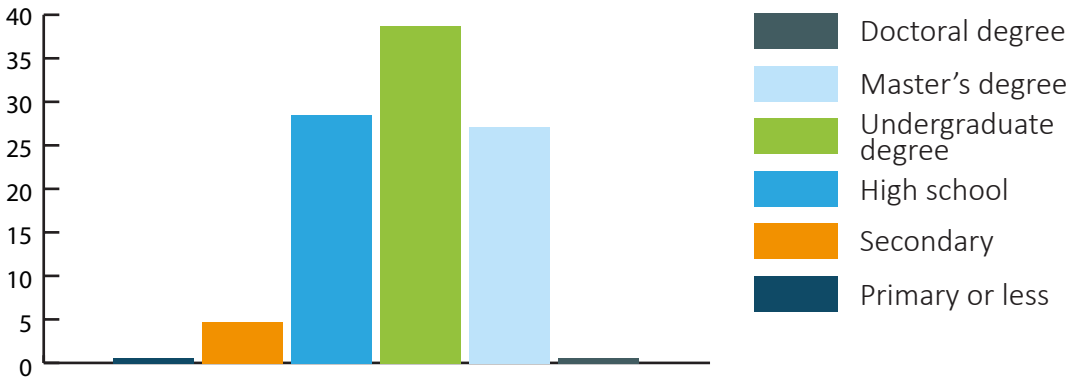
Gender



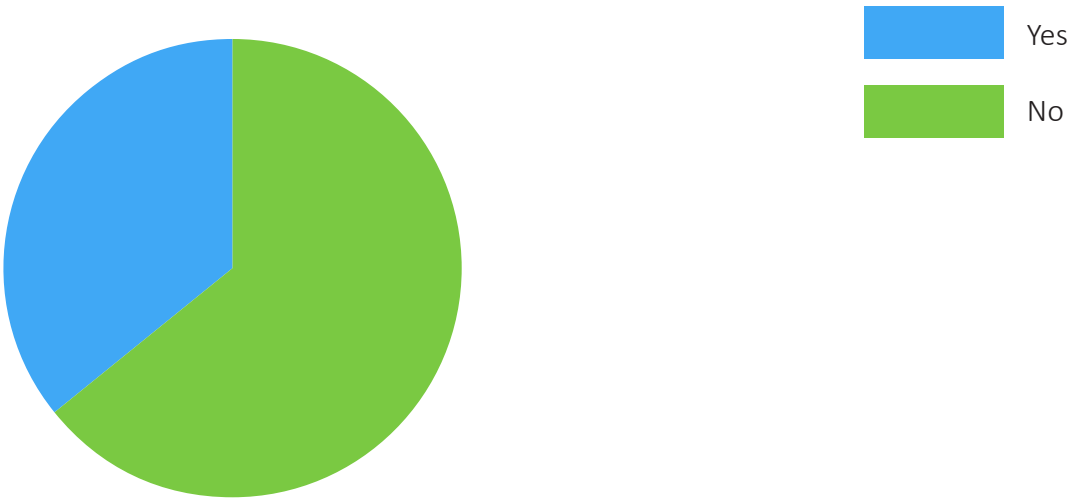
Age



Formal Education



Previous experience living abroad before, for at least one year

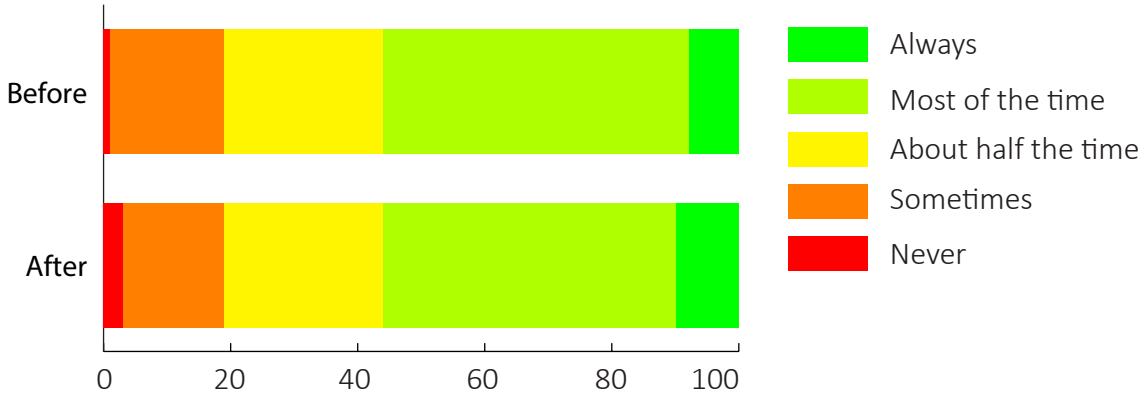


Our volunteers' answers

The following graphs show the results of the survey taken before (baseline survey) and after (1st follow-up survey) the workcamps.

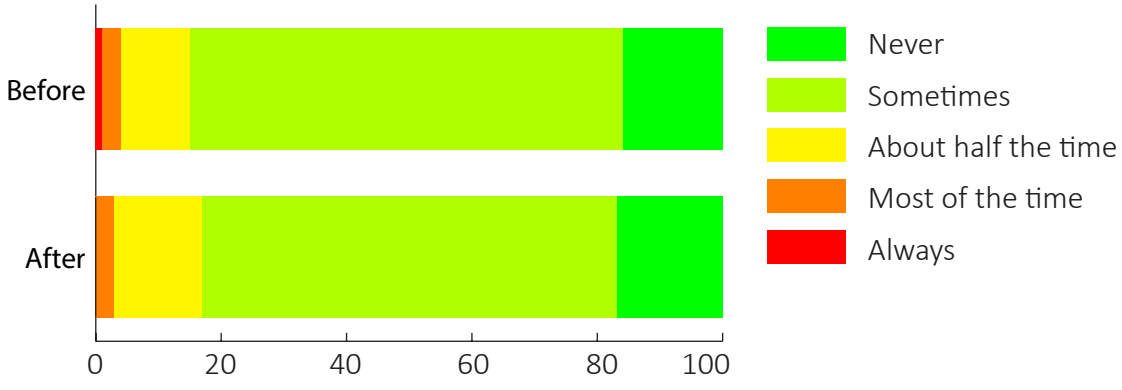
Wellbeing index

How often do you feel at peace with yourself and the world around you?

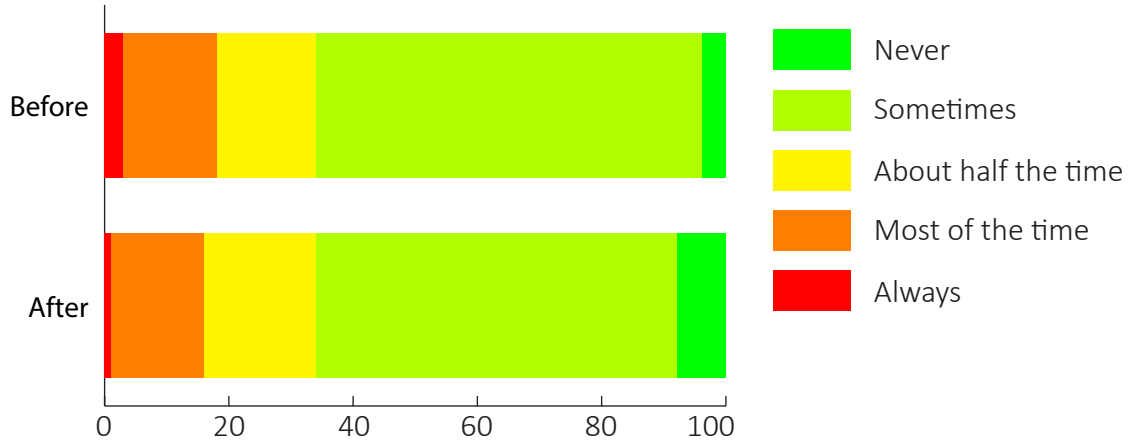


Participants overall expressed a profound sense of inner harmony, often feeling at peace with themselves and the world around them, already before the workcamp. After it, the extremes increased.

How often do you lose control over your thoughts and emotions?

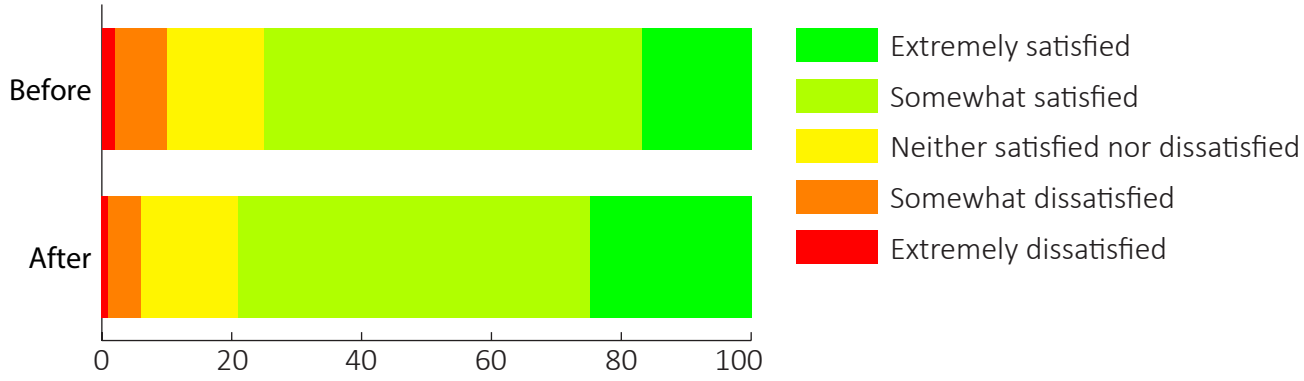


How frequently do you find yourself feeling stressed, anxious or worried?



In general, participants only "sometimes" felt like they lost control over their emotions and experienced negative feelings. They also displayed a fairly high level of life satisfaction, which increased after the workcamp.

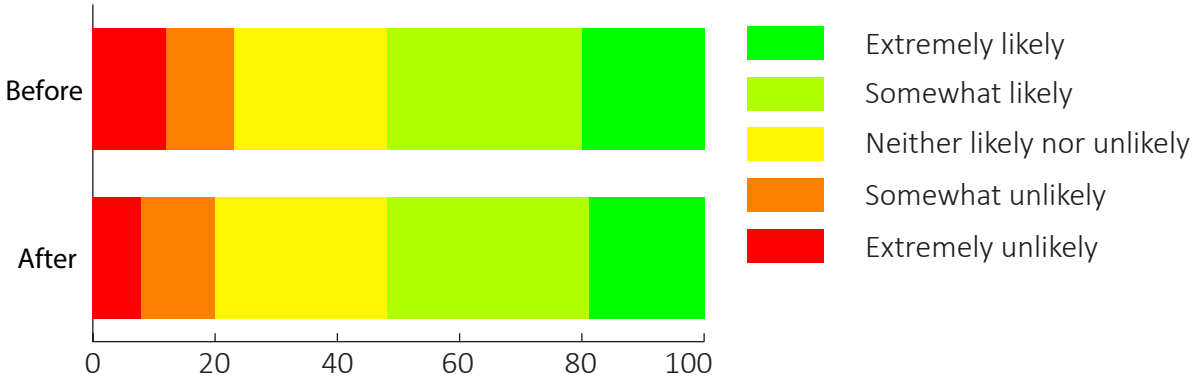
To what extent do you feel a sense of contentment or satisfaction with your life?



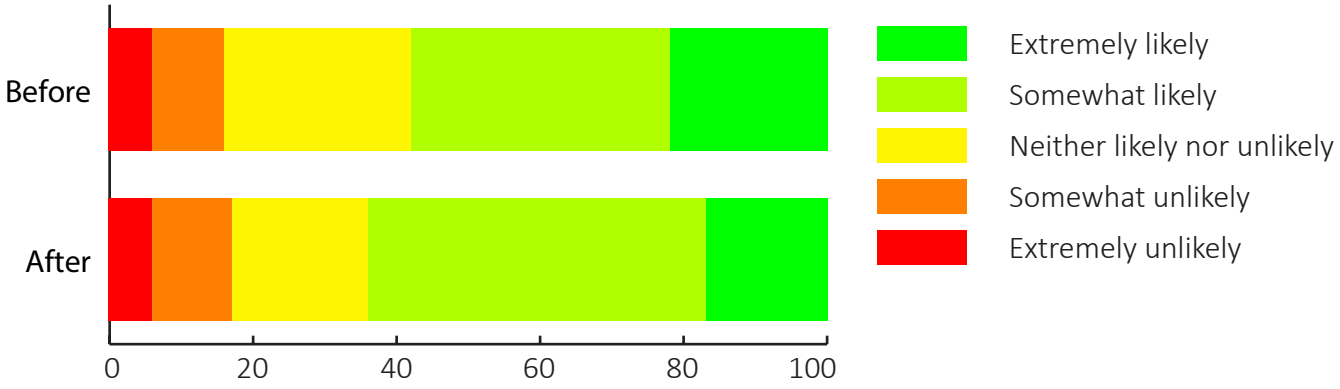
Active citizen index

How likely is it that you will engage in the following activities:

Display a poster, social media post or bumper sticker with a peace message.

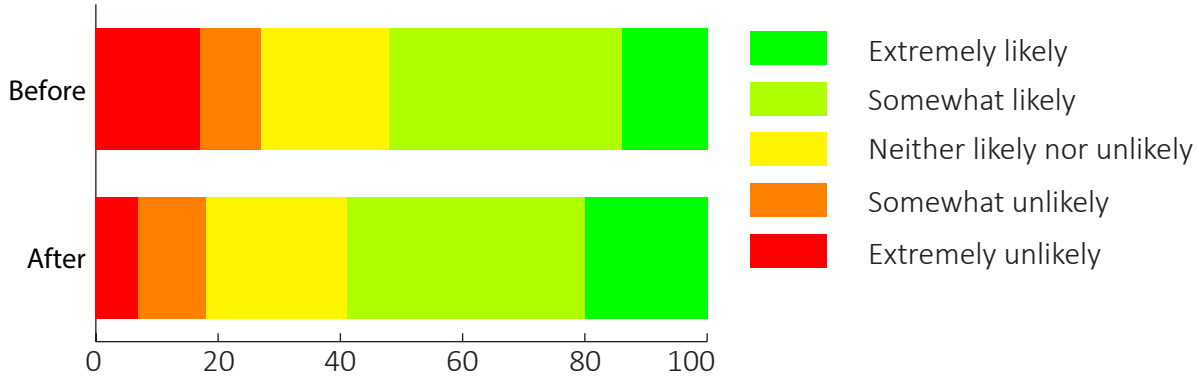


Distribute information representing a particular peace activity.

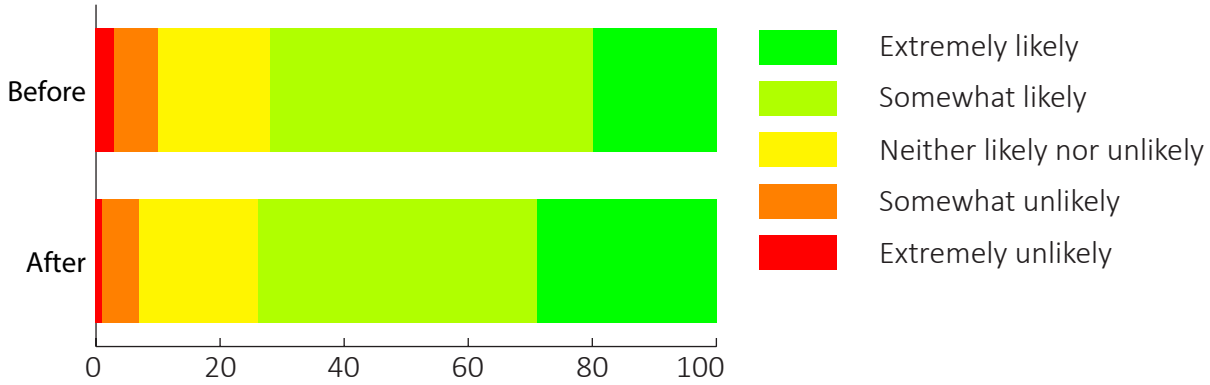


The group showcased a commendable inclination towards peace advocacy. Many are willing to champion peace messages and distribute related information.

Confront jokes or statements that oppose peace.



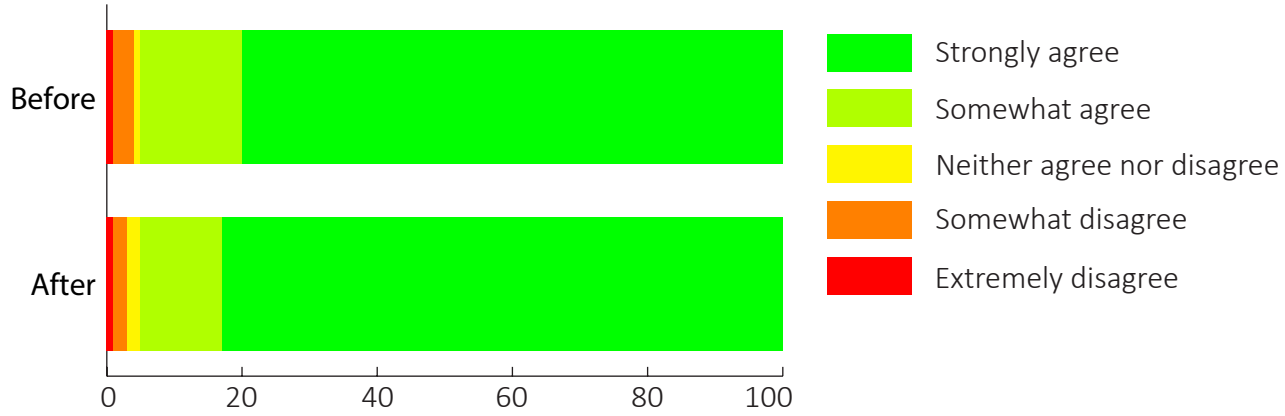
Try to change a friend's or acquaintance's mind about the value of peace activities.



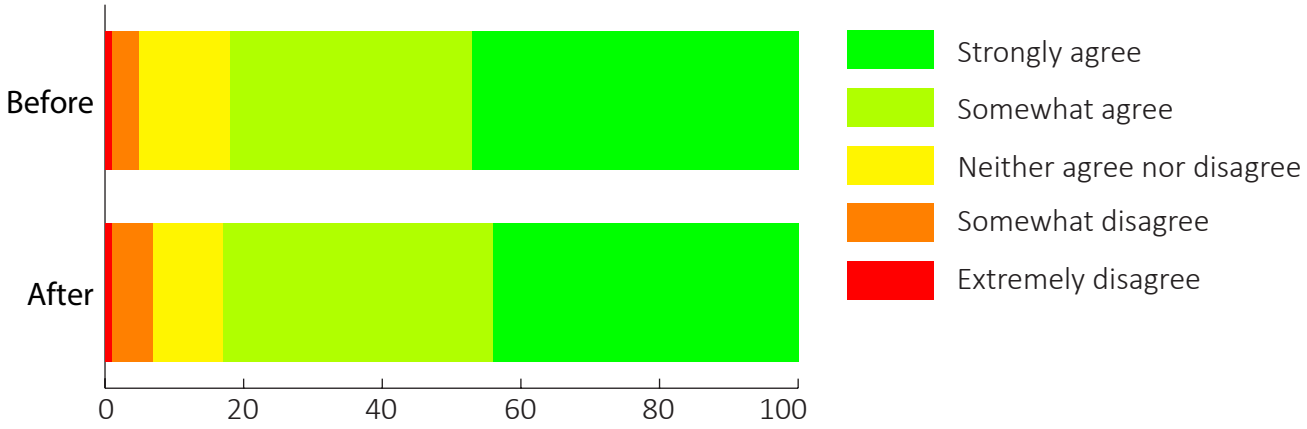
Volunteers seem ready to champion peace in their surroundings, by confronting jokes or statements that oppose peace and trying to change a friend's or acquaintance's mind about the value of peace activities. Notably, before the activity, 17% of them considered it extremely unlikely that they would confront jokes or statements opposing peace, and this figure dropped to 7% after the activity, increasing the likelihood of positive action.

Inclusive Attitudes Index

I believe that everyone should have equal access to resources and opportunities.

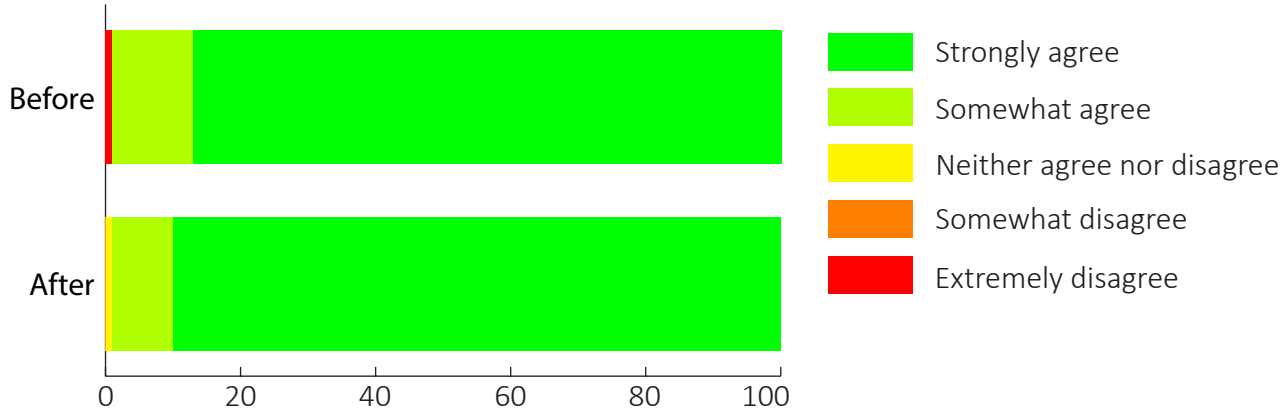


A society that has a variety of cultural groups is more able to tackle new problems as they occur.

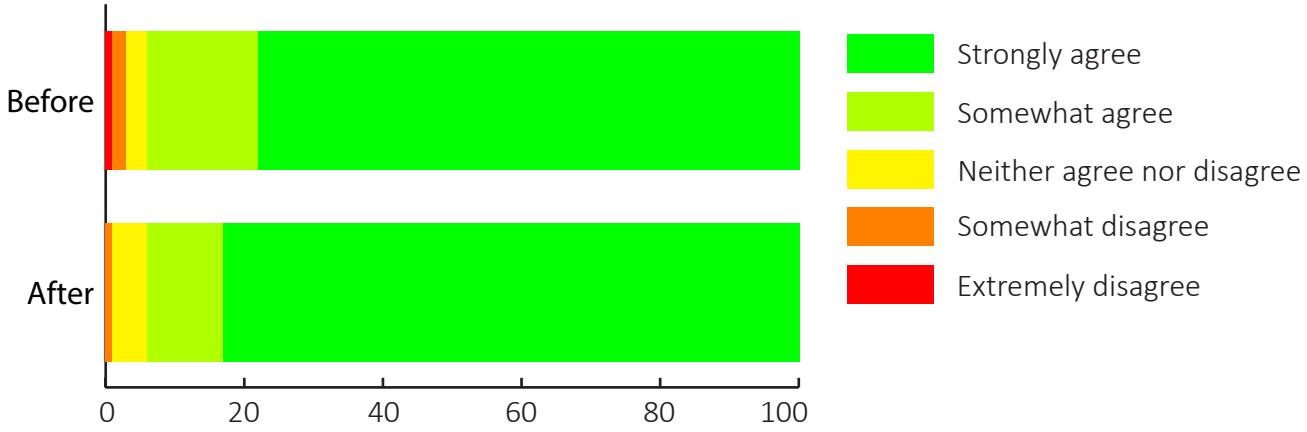


The willingness of our volunteers to advocate for peace is rooted in strong beliefs about equality and the enriching benefits of cultural diversity. The overwhelming consensus is that a diverse society is not only fairer, but also more resilient.

I would accept a person of a different religion, culture or sexual orientation as a citizen of my neighbourhood.



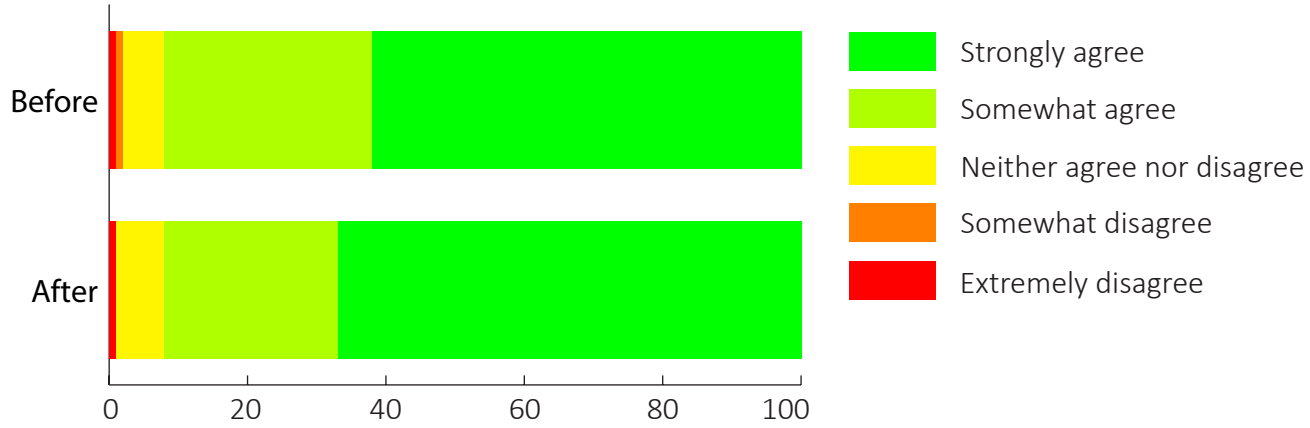
I would accept a person of a different religion, culture or sexual orientation as a family member.



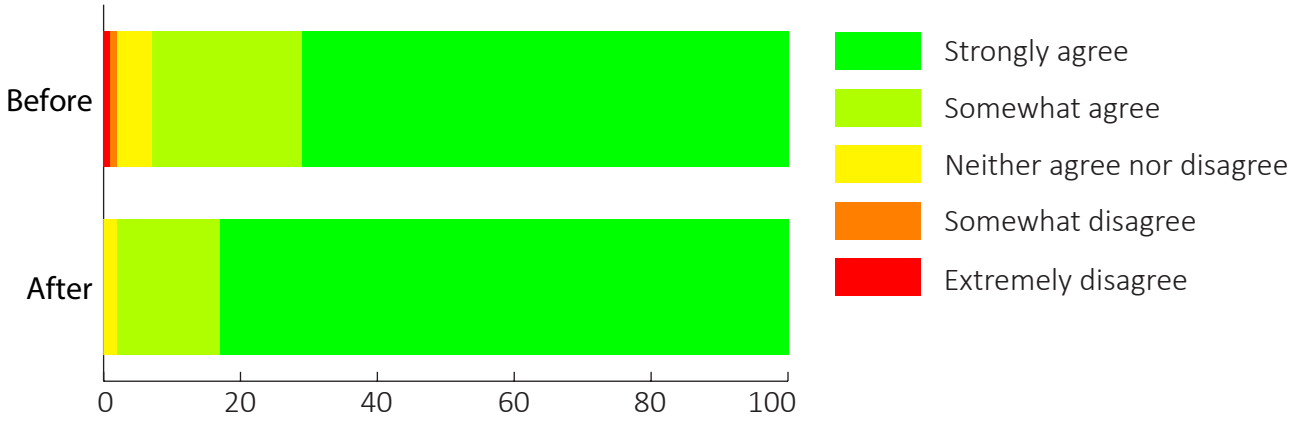
Embracing diversity, the group overwhelmingly welcomes individuals from varied backgrounds into their neighbourhoods and families, even more so after meeting diverse people at the workcamp.

Communication, conflict and cultural competency

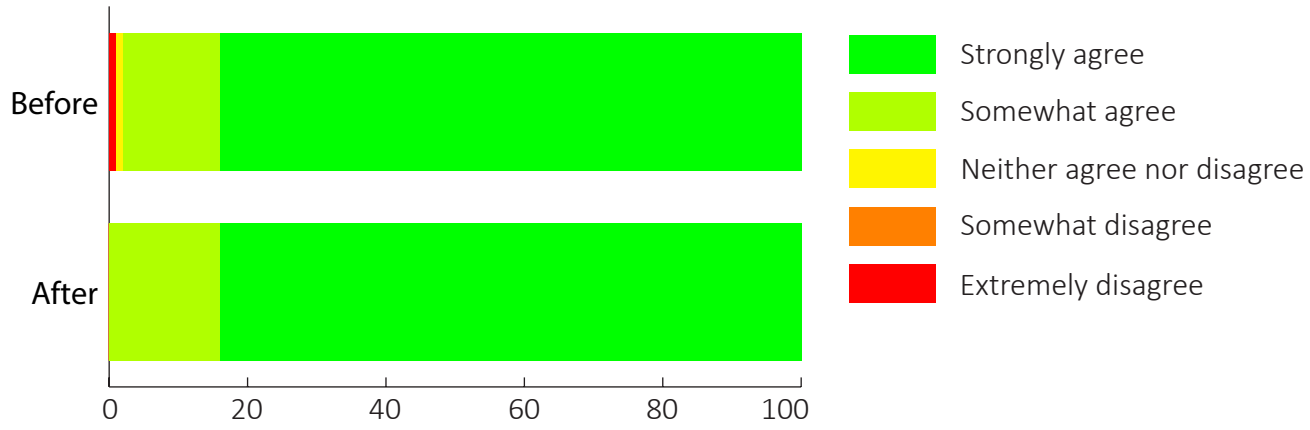
I will always try to promote my ideas through non-violent means.



I am comfortable working in a multicultural environment.



I approach all individuals with respect and dignity, regardless of their cultural background.

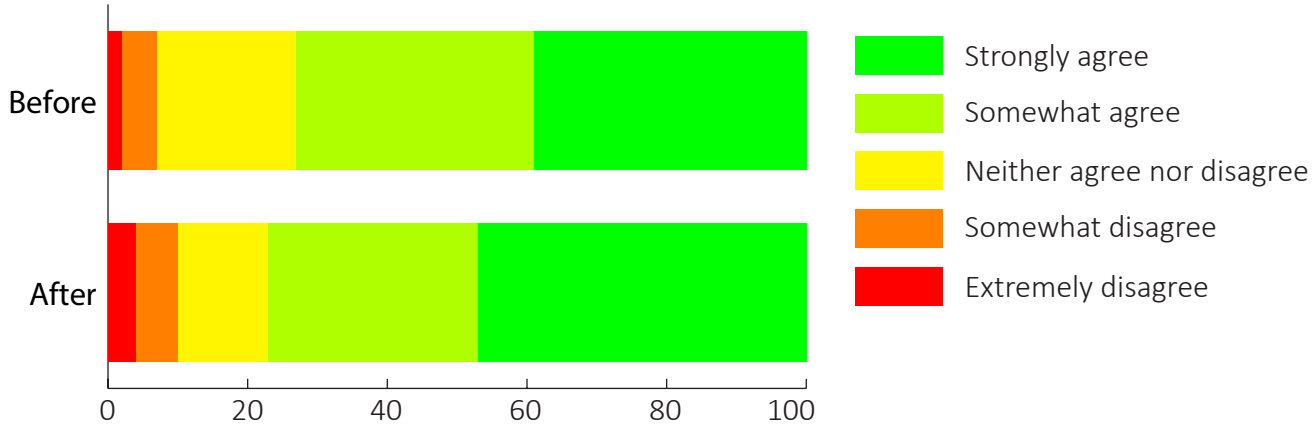


A significant number of participants (84.40% in the follow-up survey) asserted that they approach all individuals with respect and dignity, regardless of their cultural background.

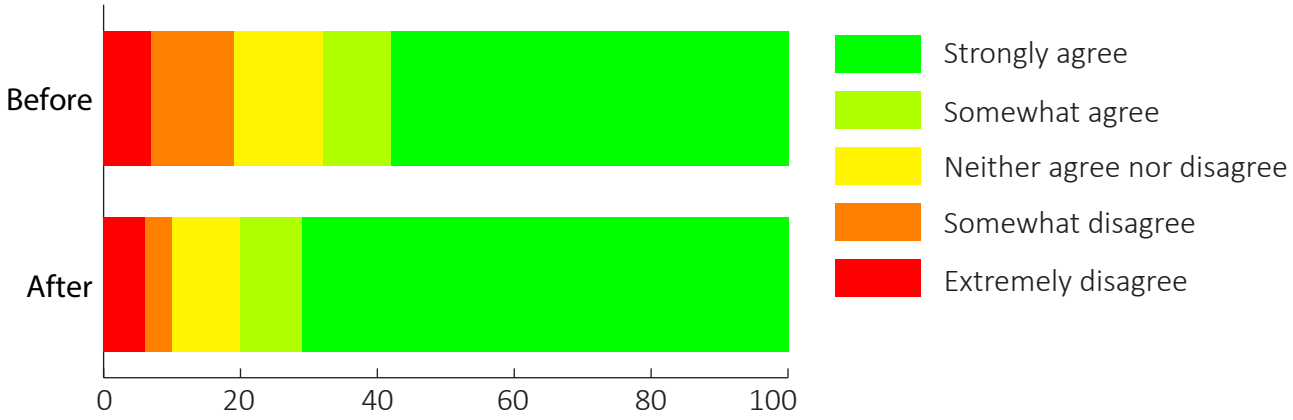
While many were already very comfortable in an international setting and practising non-violent communication, this increased after the workcamp experience.

Nature Index

I mostly use bicycles or public transport to reduce pollution.



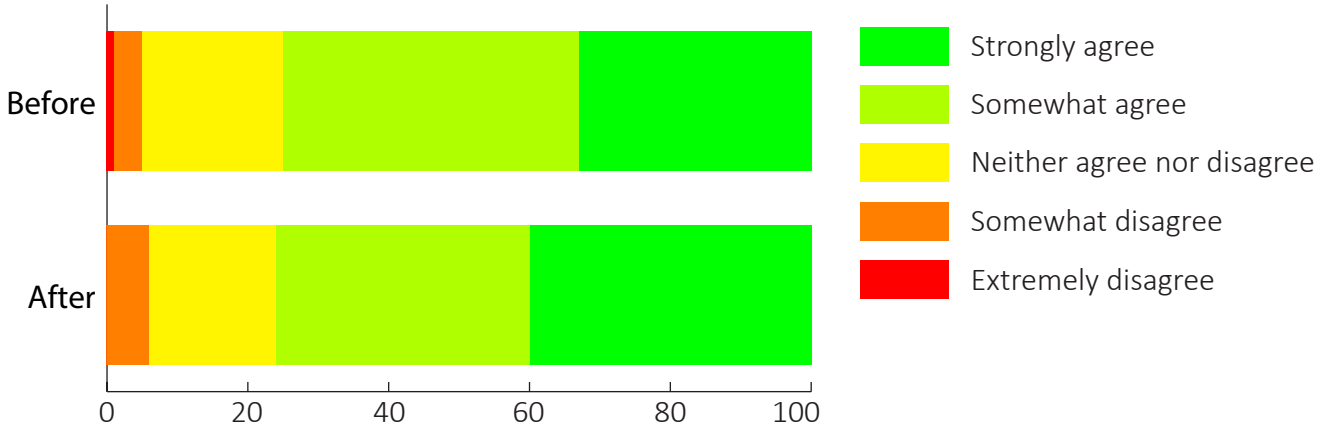
I sometimes litter when I'm out in nature.



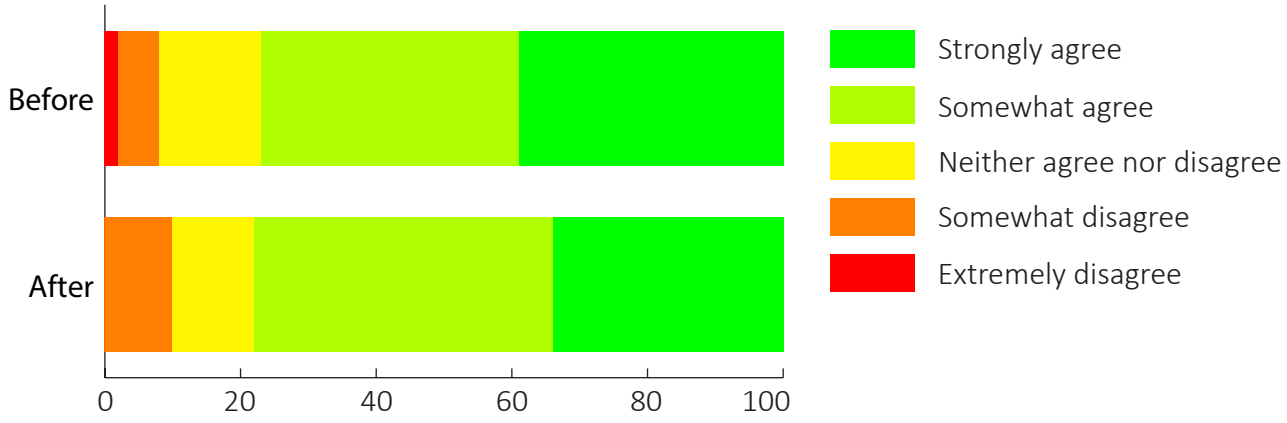
Many expressed a preference for bicycles or public transport, with more than 75% agreeing (47.17%) or strongly agreeing (30.19%) that they do so to reduce pollution, in the 1st follow-up survey.

A vast majority of volunteers (72.38%) expressed strong disapproval of littering after the workcamp, emphasising their respect for the environment.

I feel very connected to all living things and the earth.



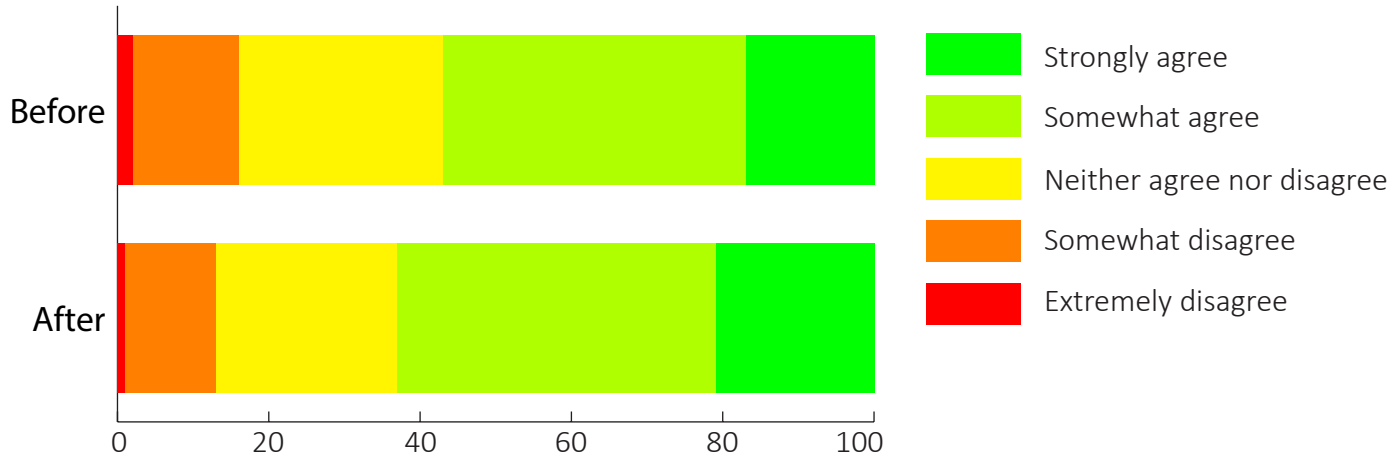
It is possible for humans to live in ways that do not harm the environment.



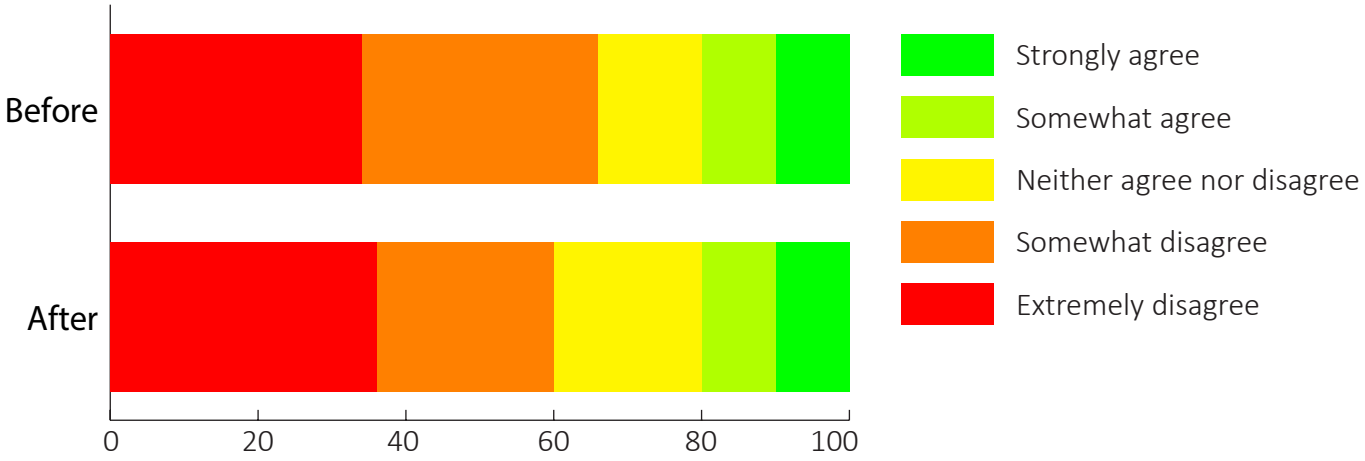
Participants revealed a deep spiritual and emotional bond with the environment. Many felt a profound connection to all living entities and our planet.

Participants believe in a harmonious coexistence between humans and the environment. In the follow-up survey, this belief was strongly endorsed by 33.64% of the participants, with another 43.93% somewhat in agreement.

I buy local and/or organic food.



I don’t eat animal derived food.



When discussing sustainable consumption, participants showed a preference for local and/or organic food. After the workcamp, a combined 62.97% either strongly or somewhat aligned with this sustainable choice.

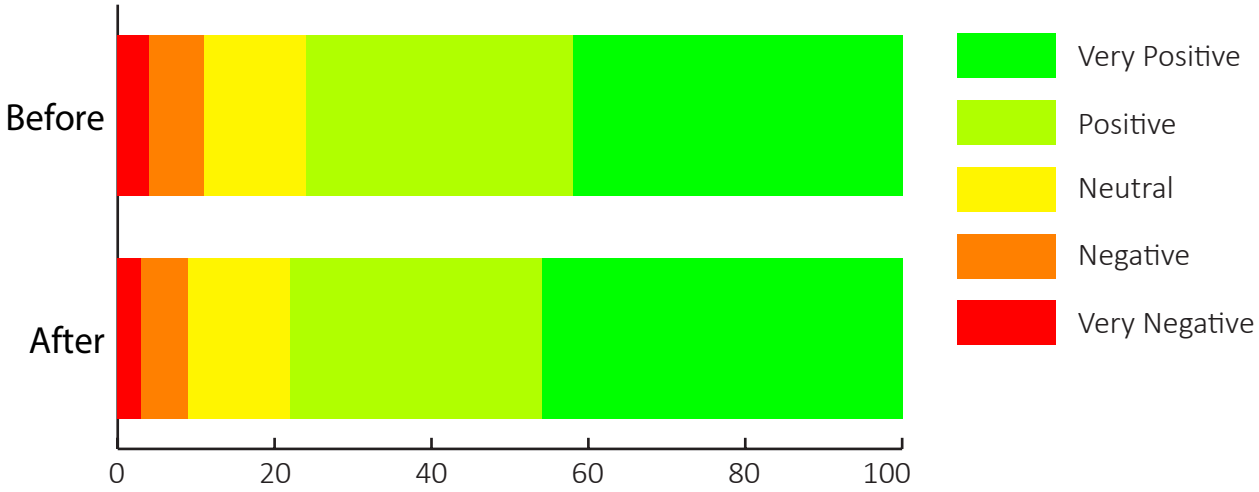
When it came to dietary preferences, the responses were diverse. On the topic of avoiding animal-derived food, the majority showed a strong inclination or a slight preference towards omnivorous diets (60%), and a 20% either somewhat or strongly leaned towards vegetarian or vegan choices. This is definitely an area where there is room for more awareness-raising.

Participants Survey - Results Summary

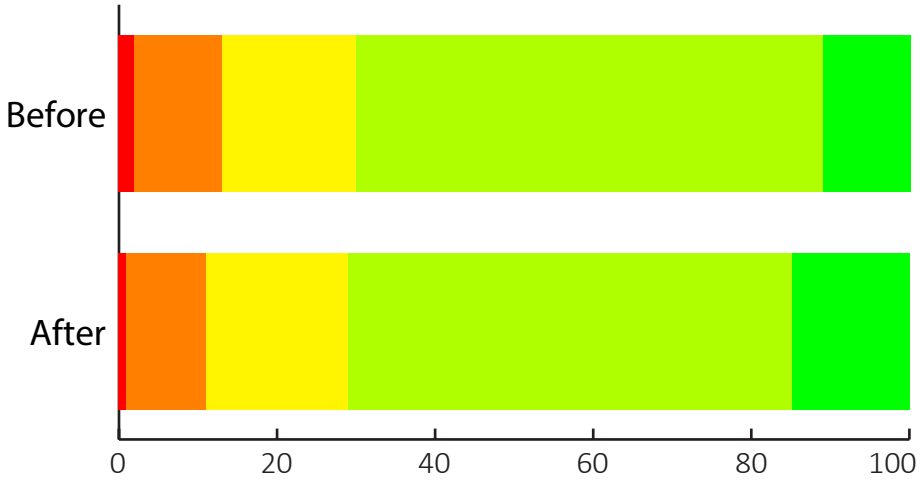
Overall, the results paint a picture of a group of people who are highly committed to inclusion, who value inner peace as well as a peaceful relation to others, and are respectful of diversity. They are inclined to act for peace in their communities, and they care about environmental sustainability and conscious choices. While there are varied individual preferences, the collective vision is clear: a commitment to respect, diversity, responsibility, and a more sustainable future.

All these characteristics are true already before the workcamp, and always enhanced after taking part in the SCI activities. In particular, when comparing the attitudes before and after the SCI activity, we found two statistically significant differences in the participants' feelings of being stressed, anxious, or worried and in their stance on littering, suggesting a potential enhancement in emotional well-being after the activity and a reinforced commitment to environmental responsibility.

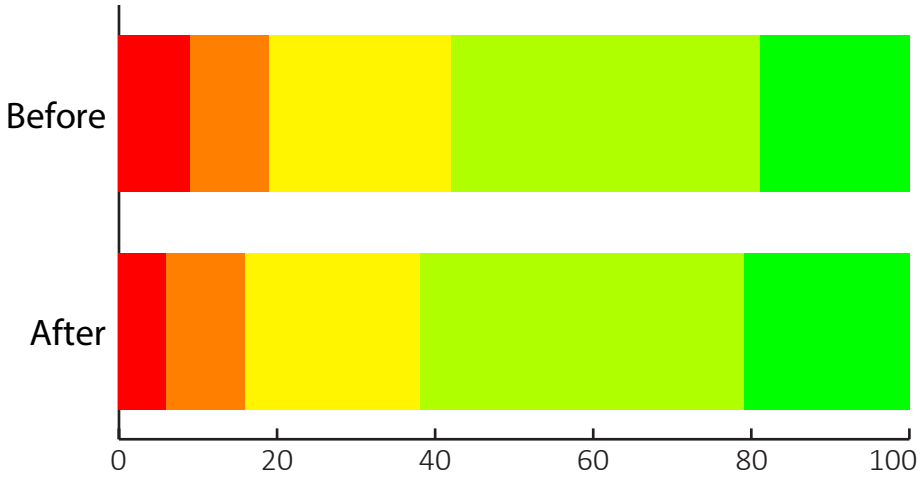
Participants Overall



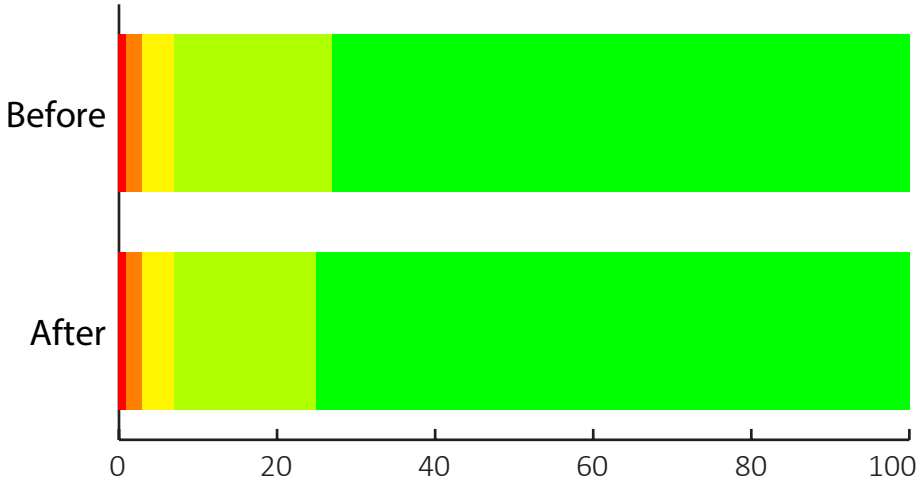
Well-Being Index



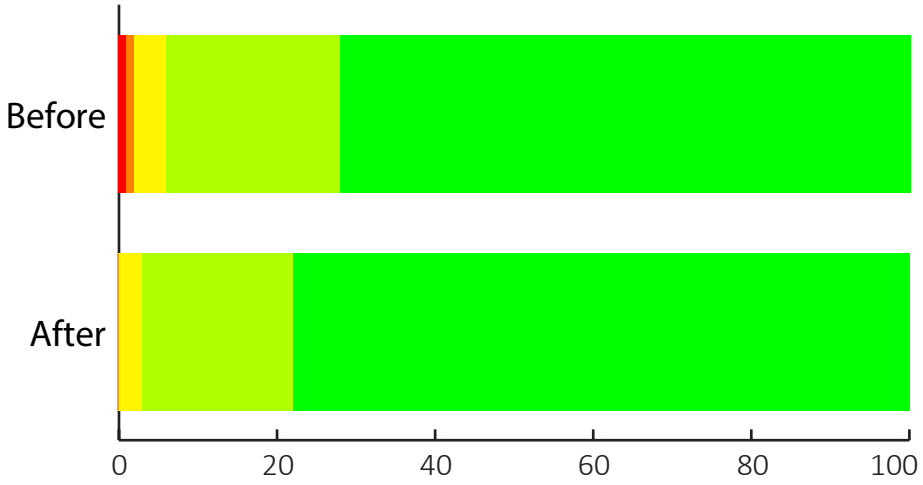
Active Citizen Index



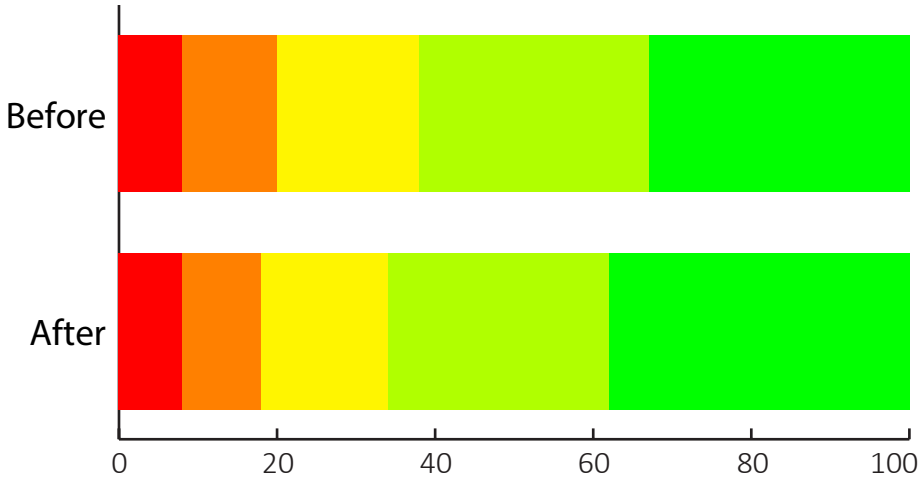
Inclusive Attitudes Index



Communication, Conflict and Cultural Competency



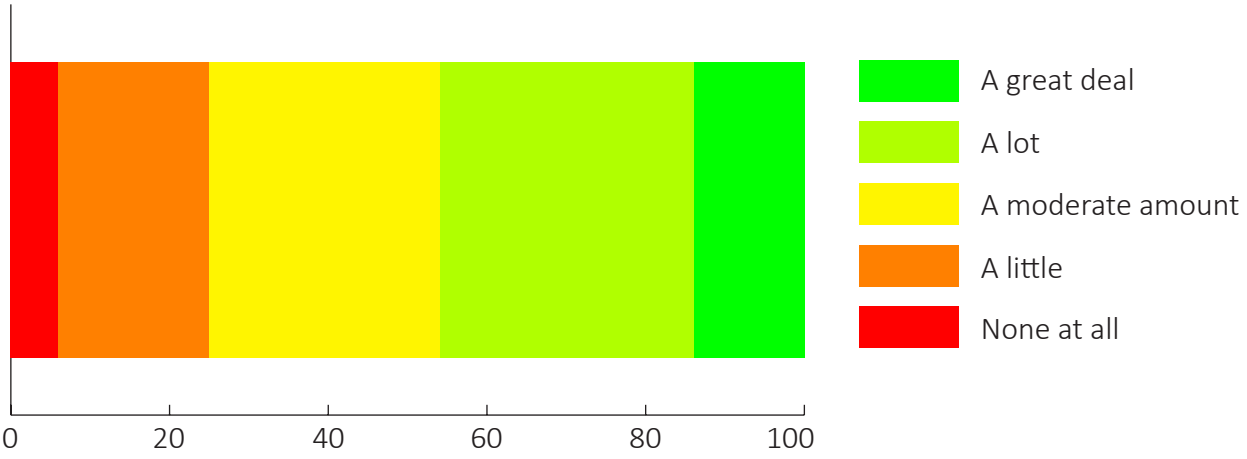
Nature Connection



Perception of change and participants' satisfaction

The following questions were asked only after the activity - in the 1st follow-up survey, and inquired about the volunteer's own perceptions of change and satisfaction with the activities.

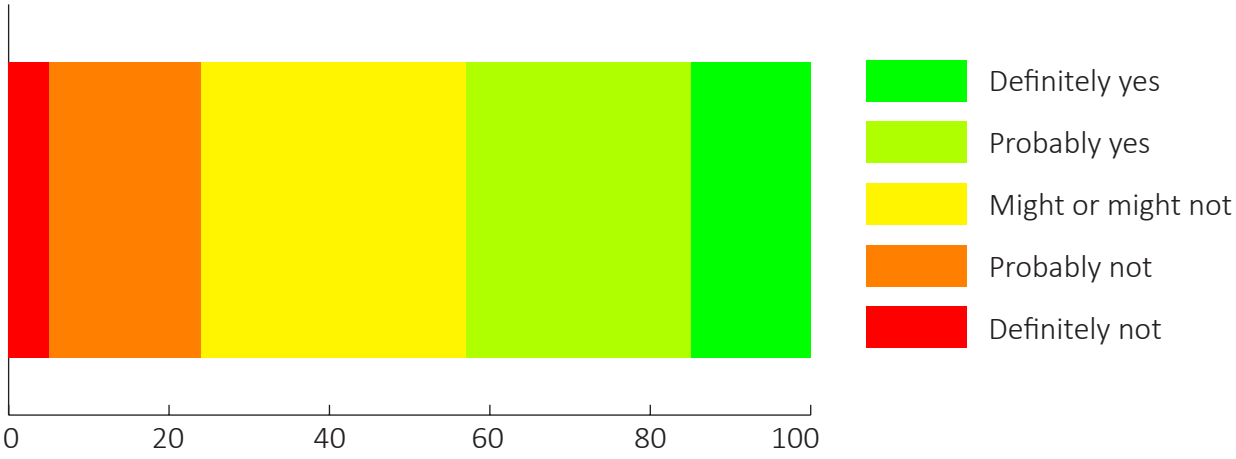
To what extent do you think that the SCI activity you participated in has led to a change in your behaviour?



The changes we observed so far are reflected in the perception of the volunteers themselves. The majority of participants (75%) believe that the SCI activity they participated in determined a change in their behaviour in a moderate amount or higher, with 32% thinking that the activity contributed "a lot"to the change in their behaviour and 14% "a great deal".

> *"Being around so many kind and open minded people made me realise how intolerant and conservative my workplace is, and lead me to decide I want to change career path"*

Do you feel that the activity has transformed your perception of peace?



While not all participants saw a connection between their activity and peace, a good number of them could identify a change in their perception of peace after the activity.

> *"I used to think about peace as the absence of conflict, now I think about peace as an active act of acceptance and support."*

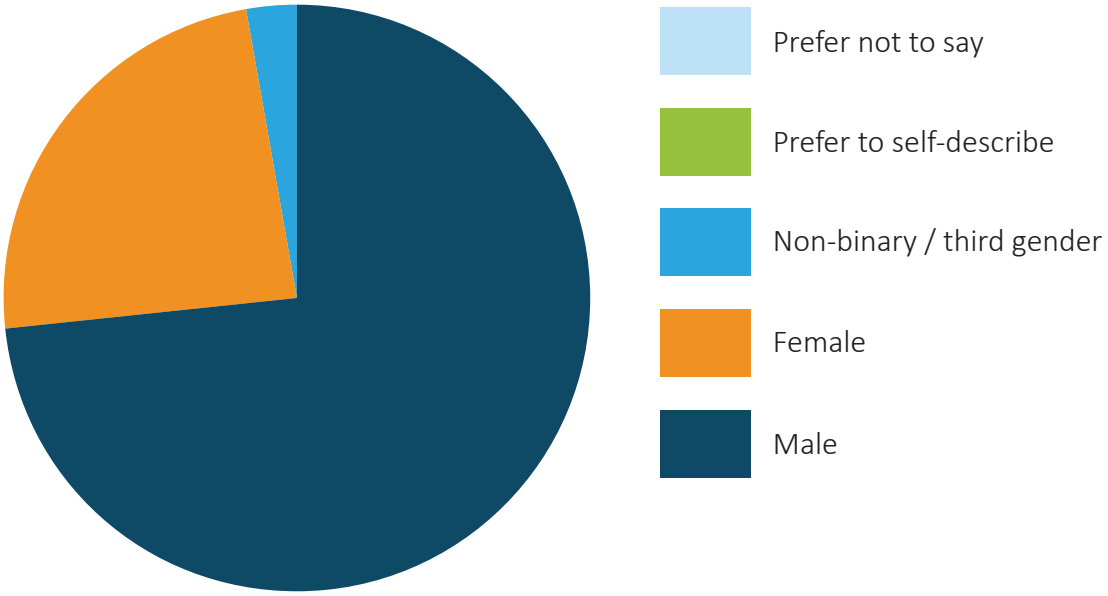
In summary, the SCI activities have left a significant, positive mark on participants, fostering personal growth, enhancing intercultural understanding, and promoting peace. While there's always room for improvement, the overarching sentiment is one of gratitude and appreciation for the transformative experiences provided by SCI.

Community Survey Results

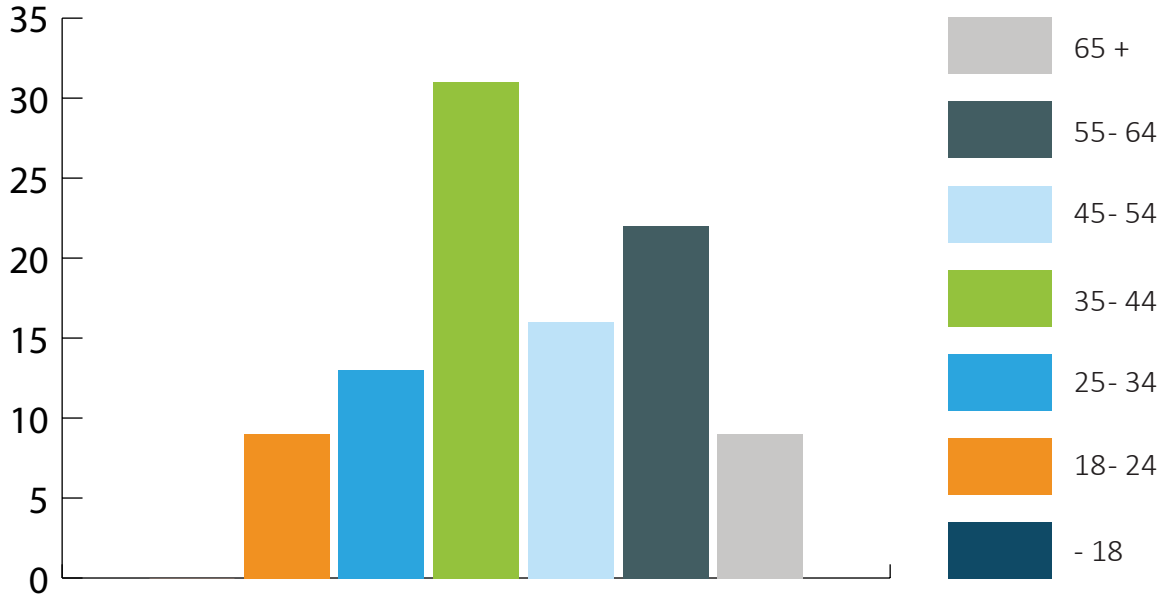
Who answered our community survey?

While from this survey we cannot draw any generalisations, given the small sample of respondents, we can note that the majority of community members interviewed were men older than 35 years of age and with a high level of education.

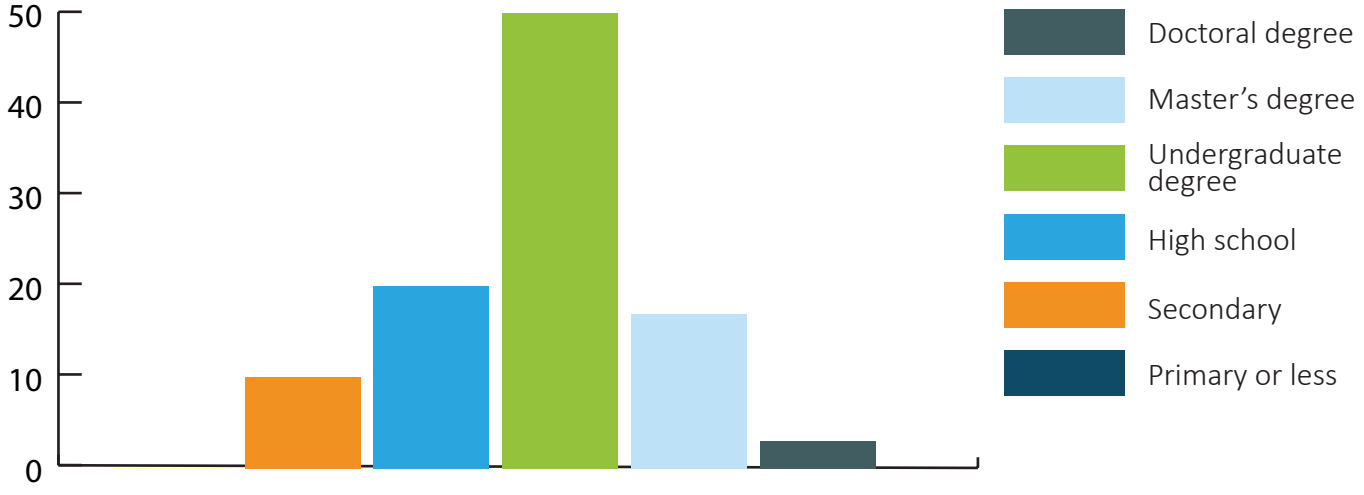
Gender



Age



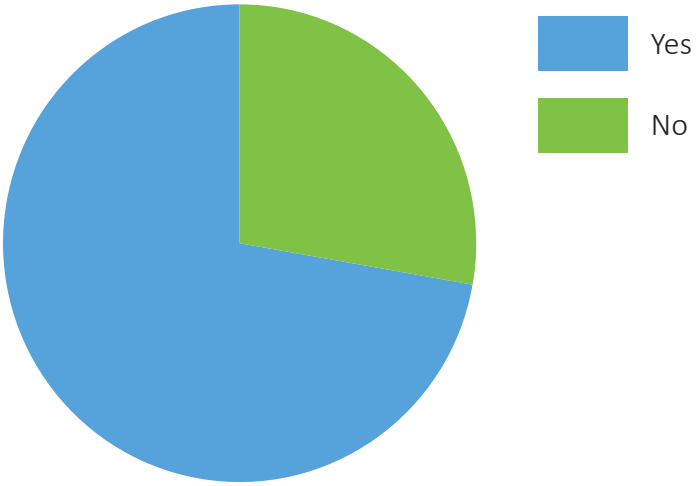
Formal Education



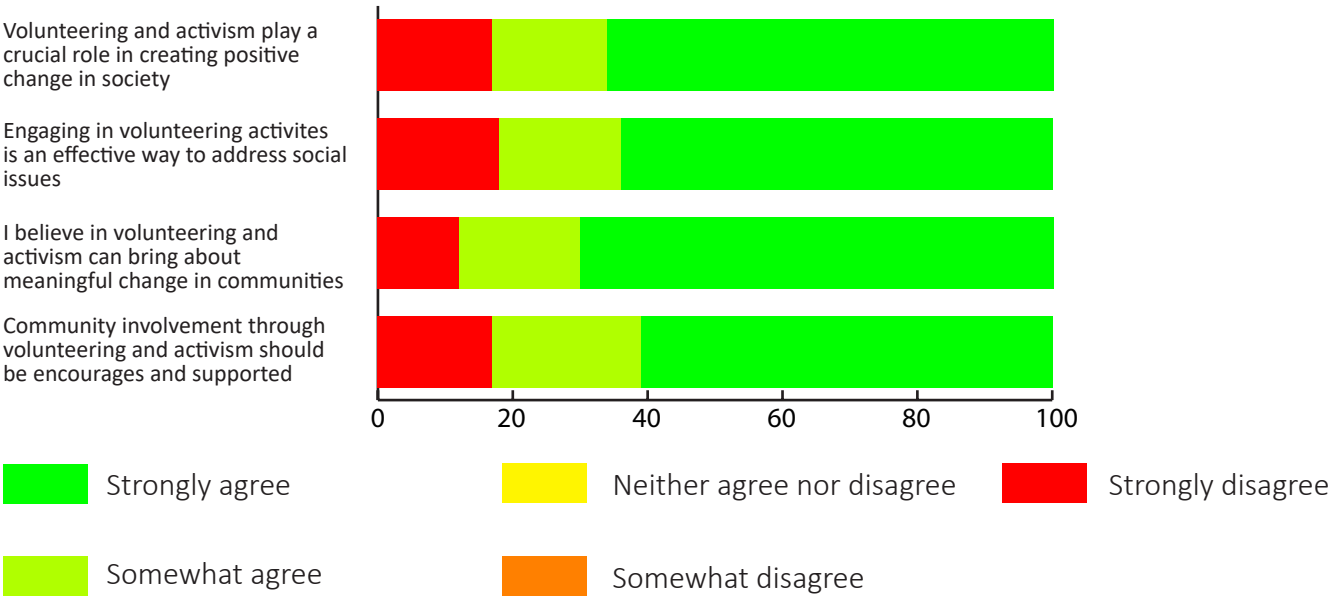
Our community members' answers

General attitudes towards volunteering and activism Index

Have you ever participated in any volunteering activity?



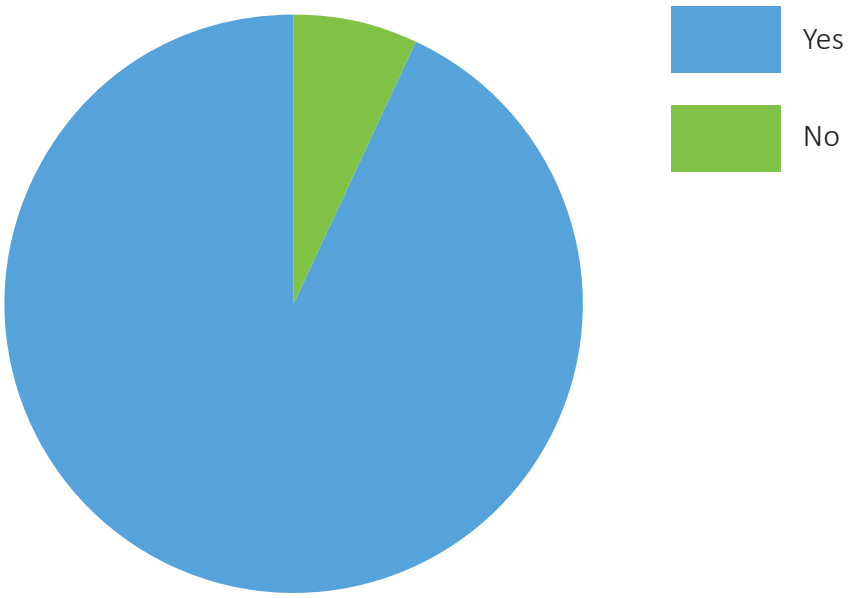
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



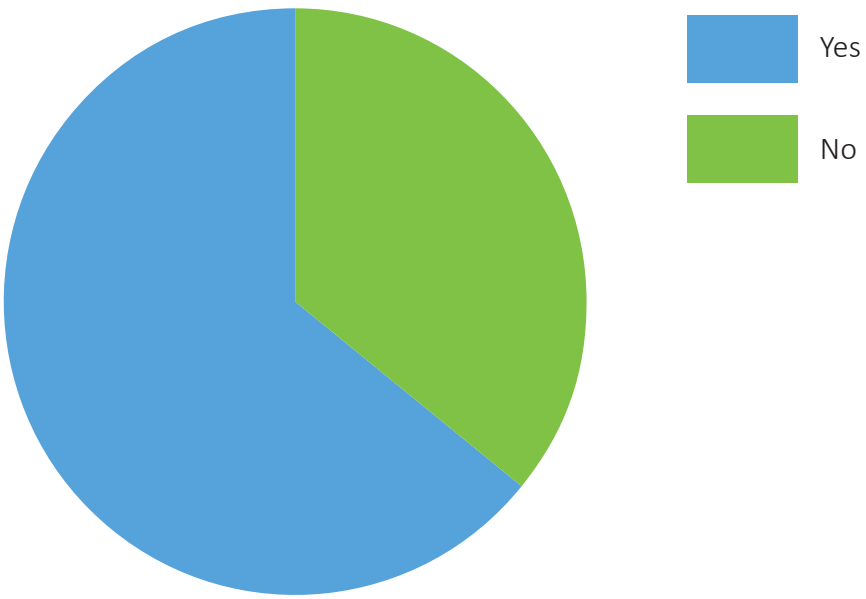
The majority of respondents experienced volunteering before, and express a strong belief in the power of volunteering and activism to address social issues and create meaningful change.

Awareness and perceived impact on community Index

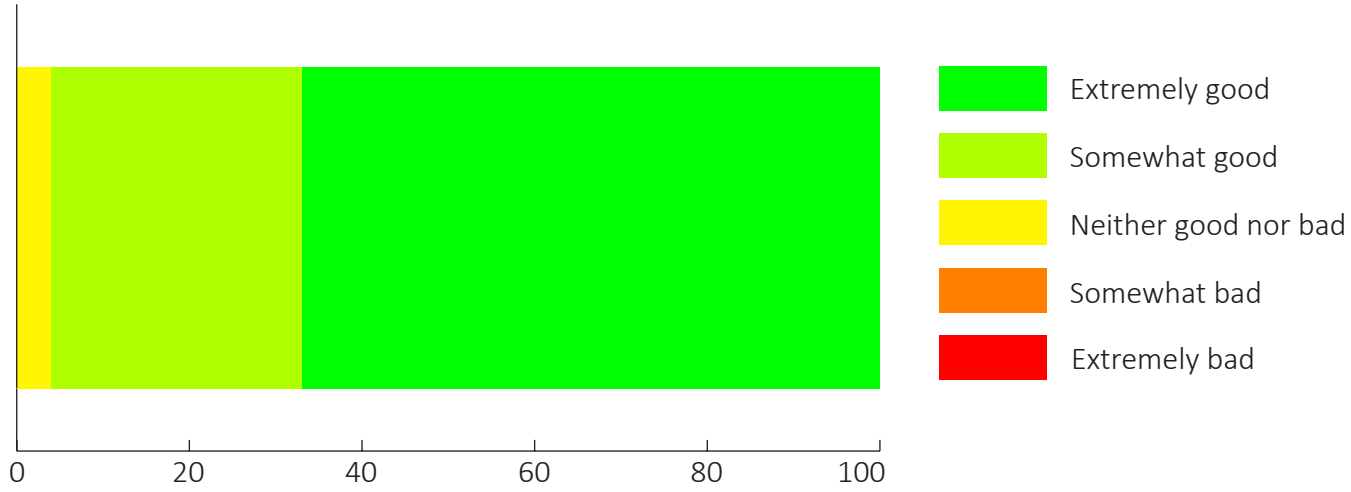
Have you heard about the SCI activity happening in your community?



Have you or anyone you know participated in or collaborated with the SCI activity?

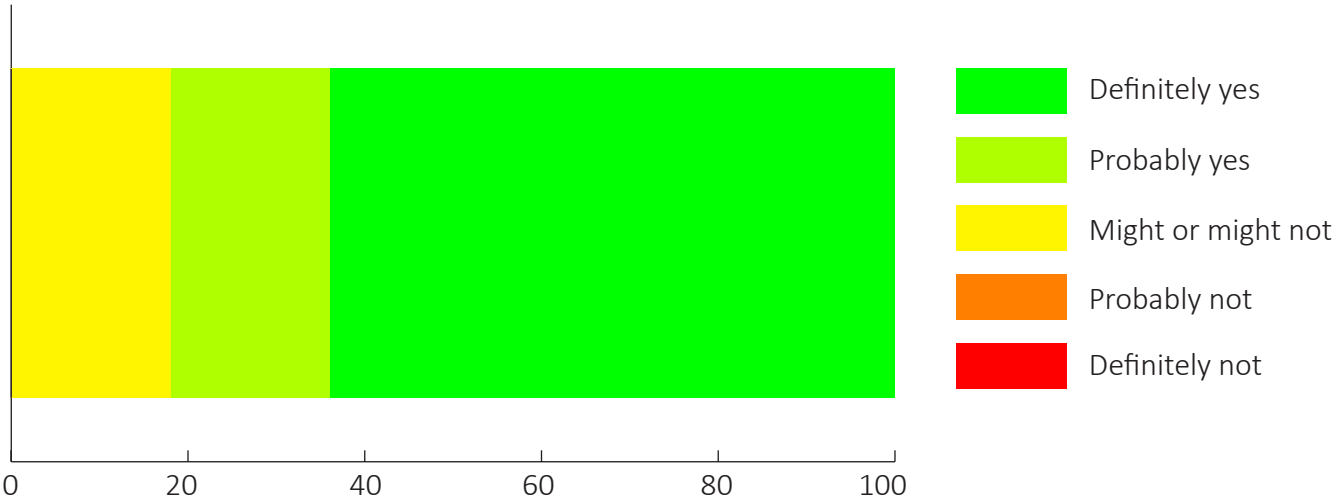


How would you describe your overall perception of the activity?



Almost all respondents were aware of the SCI activity happening in their community and most of them also participated in it themselves, or know someone who did. At the end, they reported a very positive perception of the activity (68% extremely good), underscoring the significant impact of these initiatives.

Have you observed any positive changes in the community as a result of the activity?



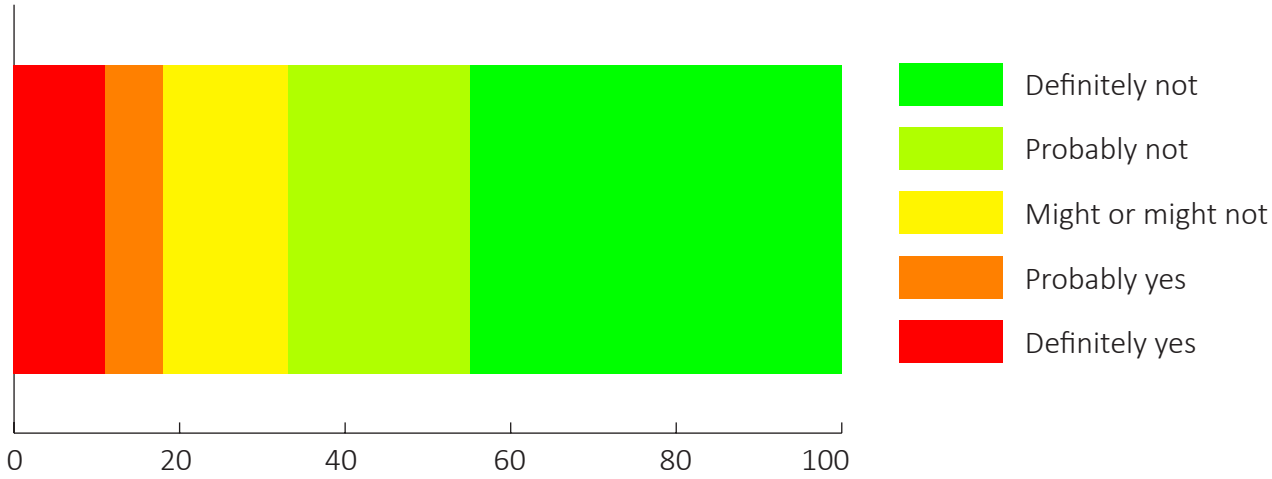
Approximately 82% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the SCI activities have been instrumental in bringing about positive change in community attitudes towards peace, justice, and equality.

If you did notice any positive impacts, please explain

The answers highlight the positive impacts of various community initiatives, emphasising a significant shift towards sustainable practices and increased awareness. They describe how:

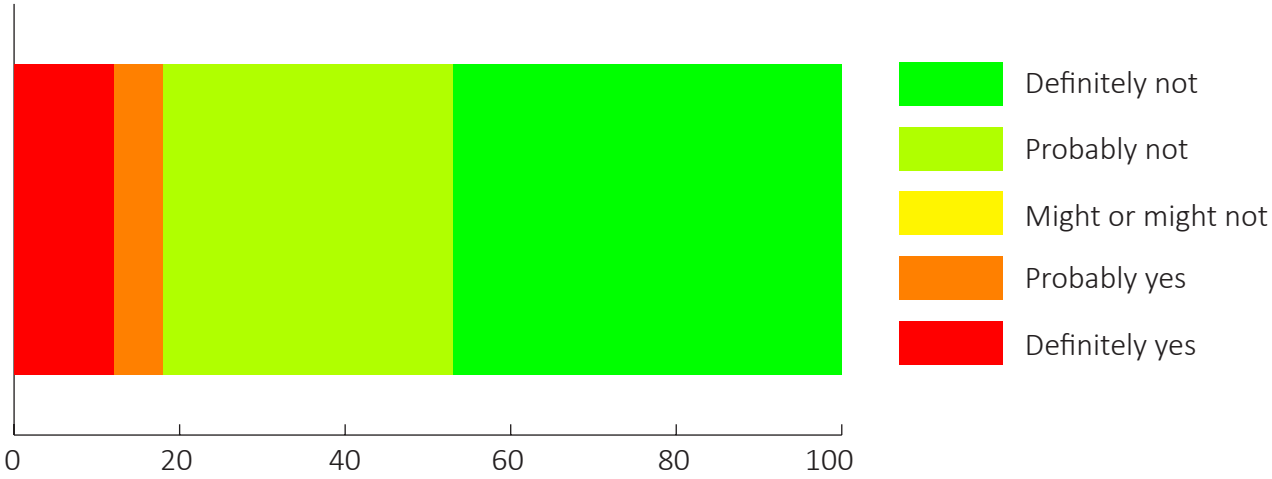
- The community has actively reduced plastic usage, engaged in tree planting, and taken steps to nurture plant life, showcasing a heightened environmental consciousness. The restoration of a dry stone wall has garnered positive attention from passersby, appreciating the work done.
- There has been a noticeable improvement in personal health and hygiene, alongside a rise in voluntary work and overall awareness, attributed to activities such as plantation, plastic collection, and summer camps. A specific initiative, the plastic awareness project, has successfully influenced the habits of around 90 families since July 2022, encouraging them to refrain from disposing of plastic in nature.
- The SCI West Bengal group has been particularly proactive, launching the “To say no plastic” initiative, which has contributed to a gradual decrease in plastic pollution locally. People passing by the initiative sites have expressed their gratitude, indicating community support.
- In Nigeria, the Ubuntu project has introduced the Eruwa community in Oyo state to permaculture, fostering an understanding of its importance and applications in daily life and farming. This project has also played a role in educating the community about gender equality.
- Collaboration between VWAN and SCI in Nigeria has proven to be impactful, promoting sustainable development in volunteerism at both local and global levels. There is a strong community willingness to replicate and sustain these initiatives across various local communities, highlighting the long-term potential of these efforts.

Have you observed any negative changes in the community as a result of the activity?

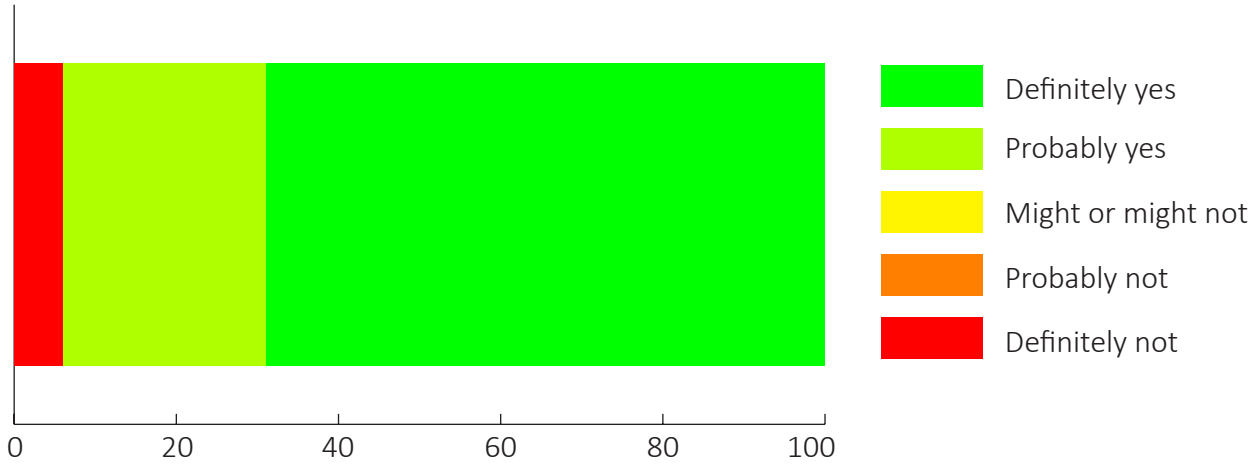


While the support for SCI activities and their perceived positive impact is strong, some community members also observed negative changes in the community, such as difficulty in convincing of the voluntary nature of the collaboration.

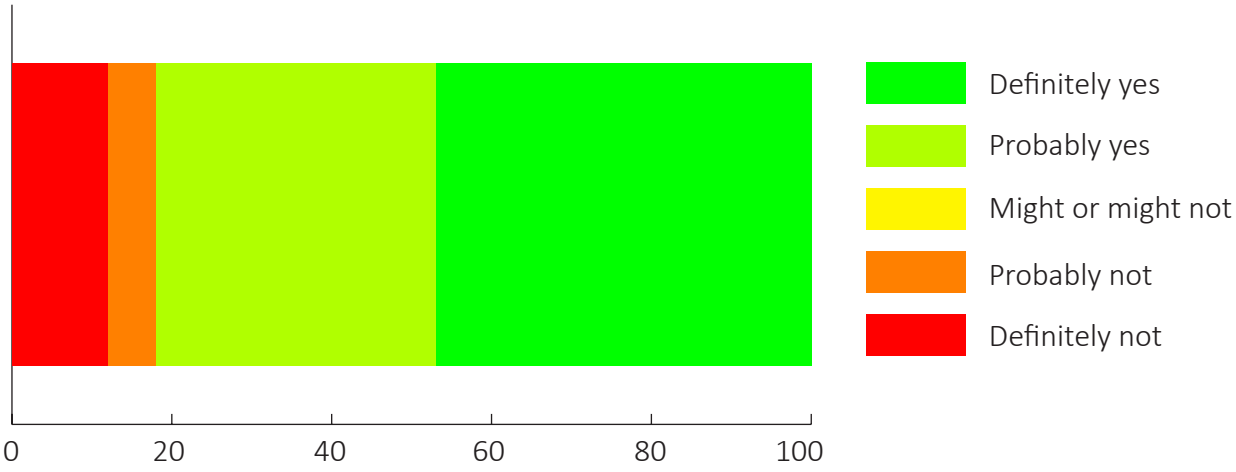
Have you observed an increase in community participation in local environmental activities or projects since the activity took place?



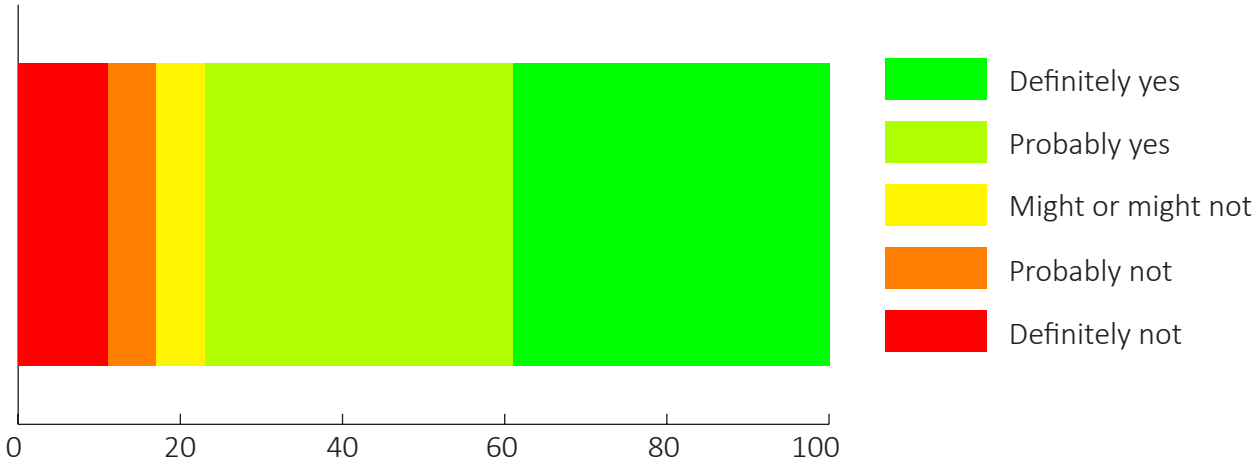
Have community members gained a better understanding of environmental issues and their impact on your community through the activity?



Has the activity encouraged community members to collaborate and work together on environmental conservation efforts?



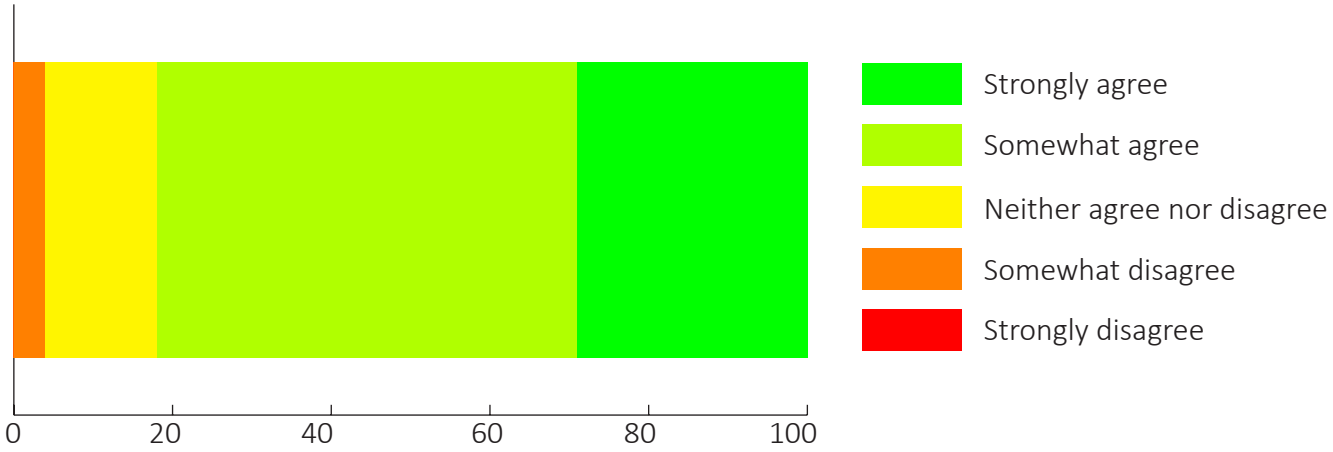
Do you think the activity has inspired community members to actively engage in environmental activities or organisations?



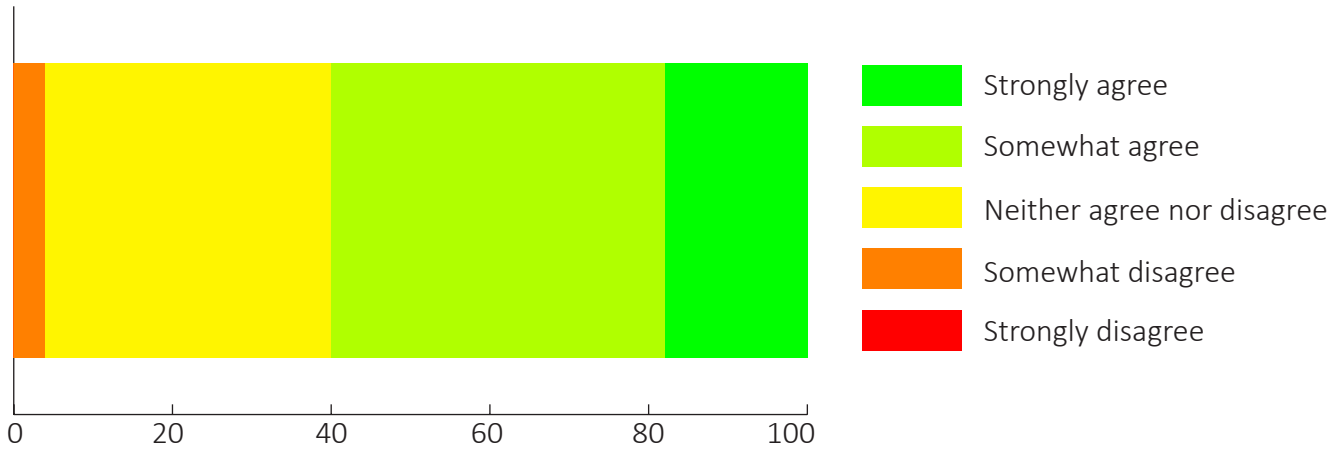
The impact of the activities on communities' attitudes towards the environment seem to be positive, with 82% of respondents observing a certain or possible increase in community participation in local environmental activities, 94% observing a definite or probable increase in understanding of environmental issues and their impact on their community, 76% observing an increased willingness to collaborate and work together on environmental conservation efforts, and 94% having observed a positive influence on engagement in environmental activities or organisations.

Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements:

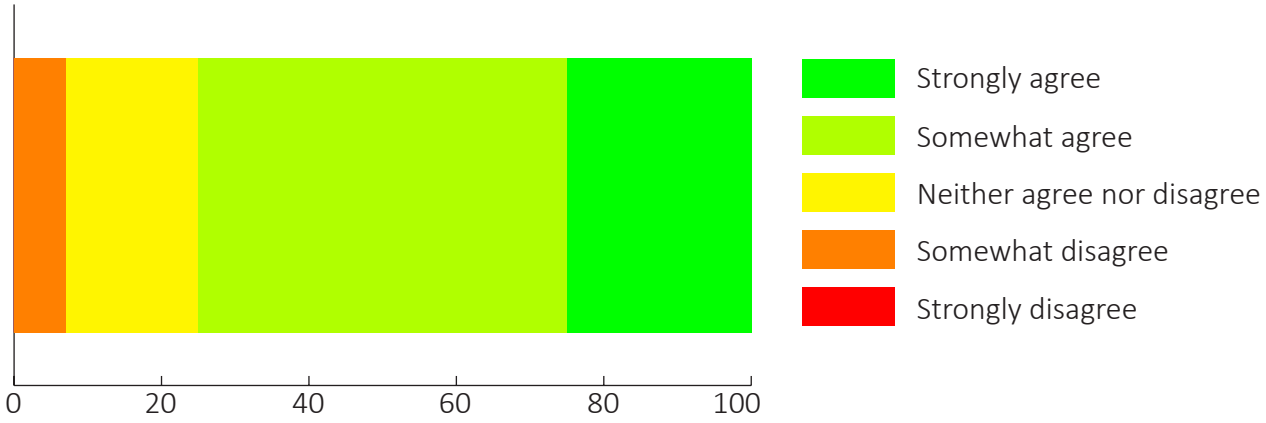
The activity in our community contributed to fostering a culture of peace and non-violence.



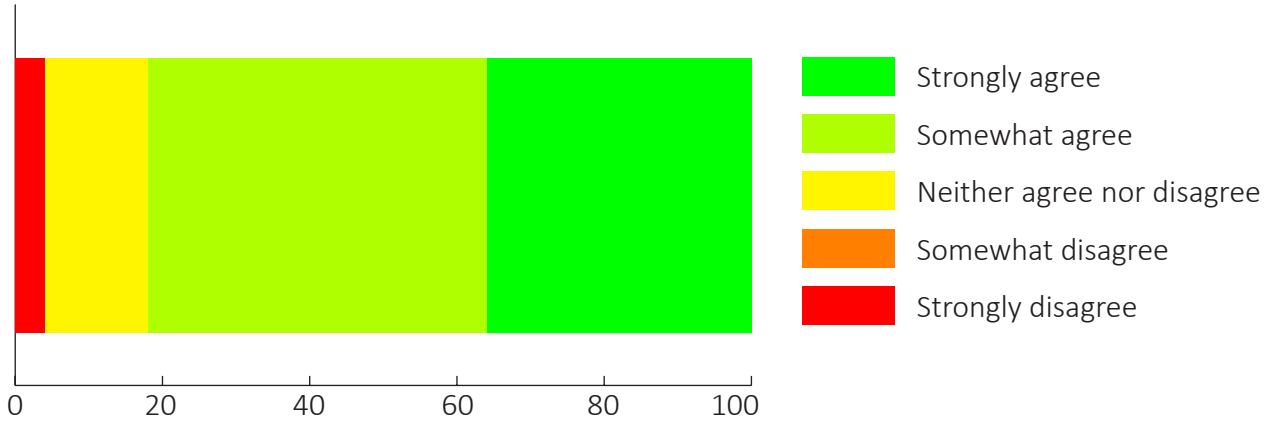
The activity has had a positive influence on community members' attitudes towards peace-related activism.



The activity has inspired community members to actively participate in activities promoting peace and social harmony

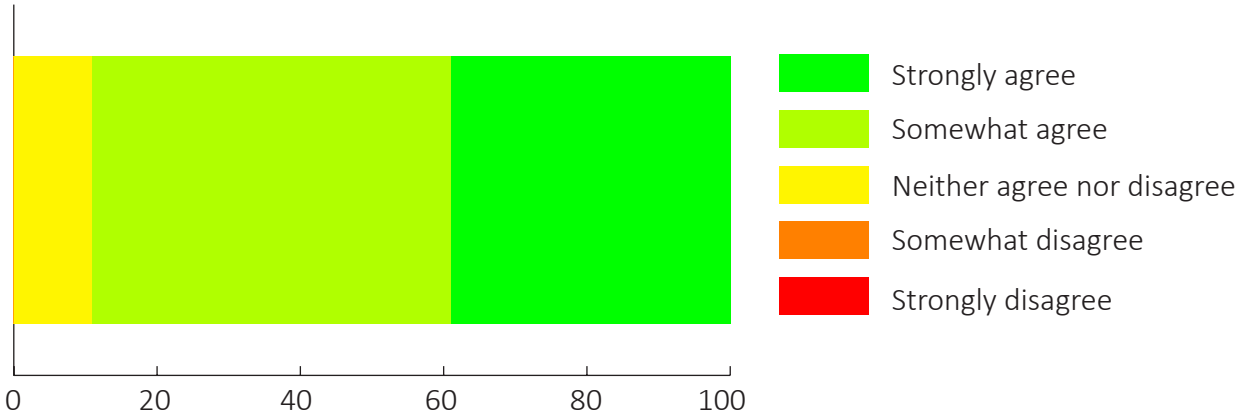


The activity has been a catalyst for positive change in the community's attitudes towards peace, justice, and equality



The impact of the activities on communities' attitudes towards peace and peace activism is less evident than the one on environmental dimension. Still, according to respondents, SCI activities have played a crucial role in promoting peace and social harmony, with a majority of respondents feeling inspired to contribute to these causes. Approximately 82% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the SCI activities have been instrumental in bringing about positive change in community attitudes towards peace, justice, and equality.

The activity has positively influenced our community's attitudes towards different religions and cultures

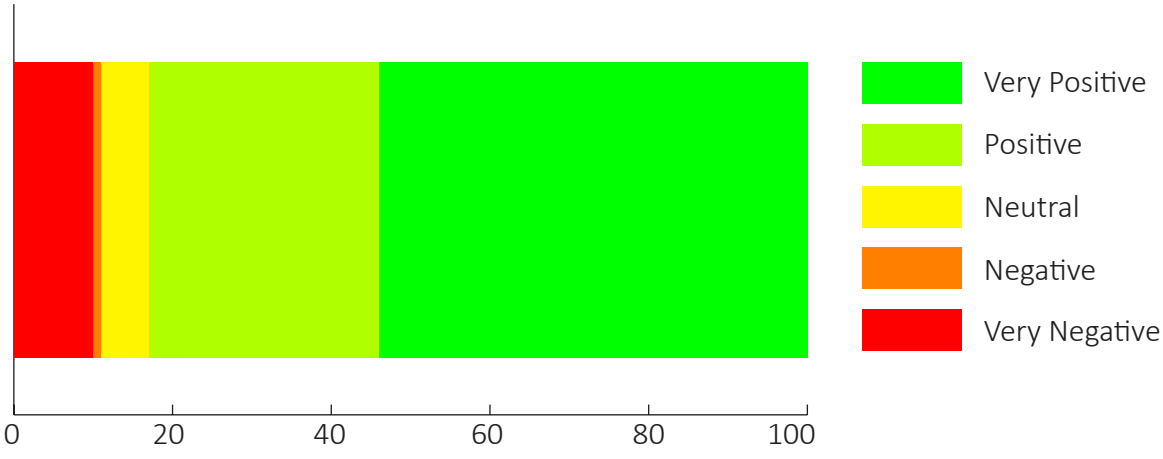


Finally, the majority of respondents (89%) either agree or strongly agree that the activity facilitated interreligious and/or intercultural understanding.

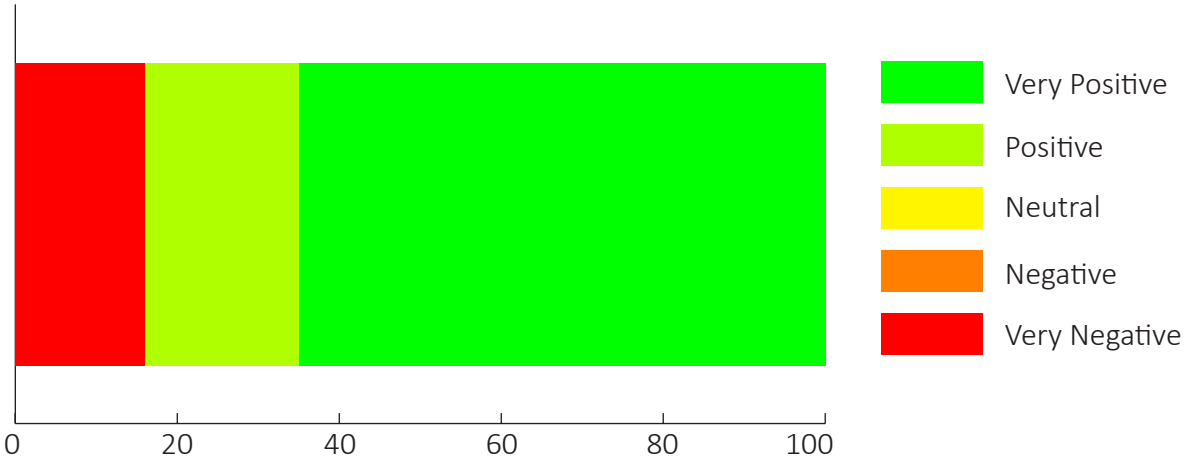
Community Survey - Results Summary

Overall, the results suggest that communities are positively inclined towards volunteering and they see it as a valuable tool to drive positive change. SCI activities encouraged an increased involvement in environmental conservation efforts and inspired peace actions and more openness towards others. Some negative impacts were also observed, and respondents provided valuable feedback to improve collaboration in the future.

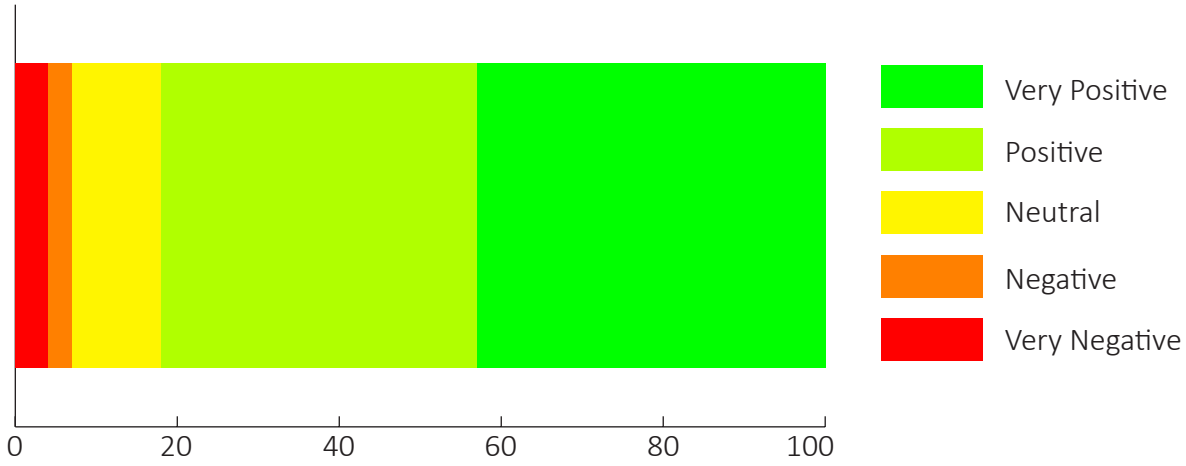
Community Overall



General Attitudes towards Volunteering and Activism Index



Awareness and perceived Impact on Community Index



In conclusion, the SCI activities have had a profound impact on the communities, fostering a sense of involvement and contributing to positive changes in attitudes towards peace, justice, and equality. The survey results provide valuable insights that can be used to enhance future initiatives, ensuring that they continue to drive positive change and foster a sense of community across diverse regions.

Environmental Impact

We plan to measure and evaluate our impact on the environment, both in terms of volunteer projects organised and general operations of our organisations around the world.

As a network organisation whose activities heavily involve international travel, it is important to check our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and other environment polluting factors to make sure that we honour our value of respect for the environment and we decrease our environmental impact year after year.

This impact level is a work in progress; it will be measured in the coming years and results will be introduced in future reports.

Conclusions

The two initial volunteer surveys (baseline and 1st follow-up) and the community survey reveal a progressive and positive impact of the organisation's activities on both participants and communities. Participants reported a significant shift in attitudes and behaviours towards peace, cultural understanding, environmental responsibility, and personal growth. Local communities reflected similar positive changes, with a strong belief in the power of volunteering and activism to address social issues.

However, challenges like financial constraints, time commitments, and the need for improved communication strategies were identified.

Overall, the results seem to underscore the efficacy of SCI's initiatives in fostering a sense of involvement, peace, and social harmony across diverse regions.

After the 2nd follow-up survey with volunteers, we can see that the SCI activities have left a significant, positive mark on participants who responded, fostering personal growth, enhancing intercultural understanding, and promoting peace. While there's always room for improvement, the overarching sentiment is one of gratitude and appreciation for the transformative experiences provided by SCI.

At the community level, 70% of the survey respondents reported positive changes in the communities as a result of the SCI activities, underscoring the significant impact of these initiatives in promoting peace and social harmony. Community members overall acknowledged the positive community impact, emphasising the effectiveness of volunteering. Despite challenges in conveying altruism and occasional local resistance, the activities inspired substantial community engagement and advocacy for peace and equality. These insights suggest the need for enhanced communication and expectation management to further the success of future SCI initiatives.

Footnotes

[1]Bowers & Cannon-Bowers, 2014; Pavlas et al., 2009

[2]The Activism Orientation Scale (AOS) assesses activist propensity across social action behaviours, ideological positions, and personal characteristics. The AOS demonstrates strong psychometric properties and allows assessment of activist propensity across a wide range of social action behaviours (Yankah et al., 2017).

[3] The Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) has been used extensively to measure communication competence in different cultures, as well as in a variety of settings to assess the communication skills of professionals (Cui & Awa, 1992; Hald et al., 2015).

[4] Nature-Relatedness scale (NR-6) measures the strength of connection to nature and has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of nature relatedness, with good psychometric properties (Nisbet et al., 2009).

[5] The Attitude toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG) is an established scale used to measure an individual's attitudes towarzds the LGBTQ+ community (Preuß et al., 2020).

[6] The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) measures an individual's ecological worldview, and has been applied extensively to different populations to measure environmental attitudes and behaviours (Lundmark, 2007; Stern et al., 1995).

[7] The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) is a self-report inventory designed to assess an individual's cross-cultural adaptability. It has been used extensively in research and has demonstrated high reliability and validity (Davis and Finney 2006).

[8] The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) is a self-report measure that assesses an individual's cultural intelligence, defined as the ability to adapt to and function effectively in culturally diverse situations. It has been used in a variety of settings, including academic and organisational contexts, and has demonstrated good psychometric properties (Bücker et al. 2016).

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Impact Assessment Report

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Service Civil International (SCI) is an international voluntary service organisation established in 1920. It consists of 40 branches and groups in every continent and of more than 90 partners all around the world.

This report highlights the difference SCI's initiatives are making around the world.

Through evaluations, it tells the story of how our efforts inspire volunteers, uplift communities, and help care for our planet.