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Evolving the Field

Potential Directions for the Nuclear Policy Community

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Introduction

In December 2021, Ploughshares Fund conducted a survey of the international nuclear policy community to draw a portrait of the sector and determine areas of opportunity over the upcoming years. The survey was distributed widely in the community, with 158 responses received. It produced a rich demographic portrait of its respondents, alongside a vast body of perspectives on the sector and its future.

These survey findings paint a picture of a global community of activists, academics, advocates, philanthropists, researchers, journalists, and others trying to make sense of where change is possible and how to adapt the nuclear field in light of the world's continual tumult. These perspectives were gathered at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic – globally wreaking havoc for the better part of two years – unleashed existential, strategic, emotional, intellectual, and logistical upheavals in the field. As the world grapples with increasing nationalism and militarization,¹ communities are reckoning with how racism, sexism, and other discriminatory systems shape global power, how fields are constructed, and how organizations maintain the status quo. With the public seemingly more activated around the climate crisis and justice issues rather than nuclear weapons, this survey paints a complex picture of hope, frustration, and a desire for a field to adapt, if not to radically reinvent itself.

This document builds on a variety of influential reports that documented segments of the nuclear community, including [Greater Than: Nuclear Threat Professionals Reimagine Their Field](#) and [Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy: Gendered Impacts of Covid-19](#). It grounds the findings in this moment in time, while looking towards potential futures. It seeks to understand where the community wants the field – and its composite organizational parts – to move in the coming years. It aspires to illuminate areas ripe for collaboration. It hopes to acknowledge the remarkable work already in practice and to identify gaps and areas where there is appetite for more activation. This report offers a snapshot of the nuclear community, pausing for a moment to take stock in the service of seeding and fostering a healthier, more adaptive field.

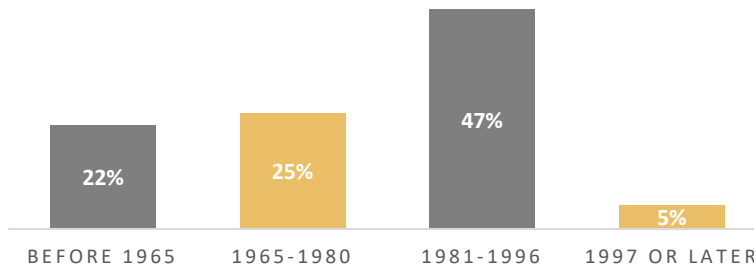
¹ Responses to this survey were gathered prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine; thus, this global development is not reflected in the findings.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

The survey was distributed by Ploughshares Fund to its networks – both grantees and non-grantees – and was ultimately completed by 158 people. Respondents completed the survey anonymously. The following section presents a portrait of those who completed the survey.

Identity

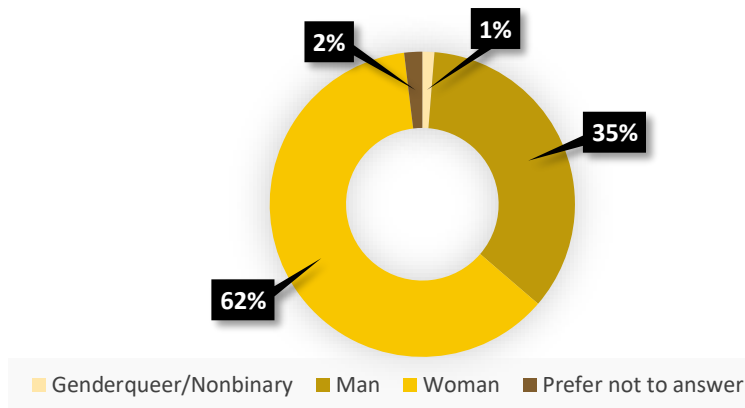
AGE. Millennials account for nearly half of respondents, with a proportional representation of respondents born before 1965 and between 1965-1980.



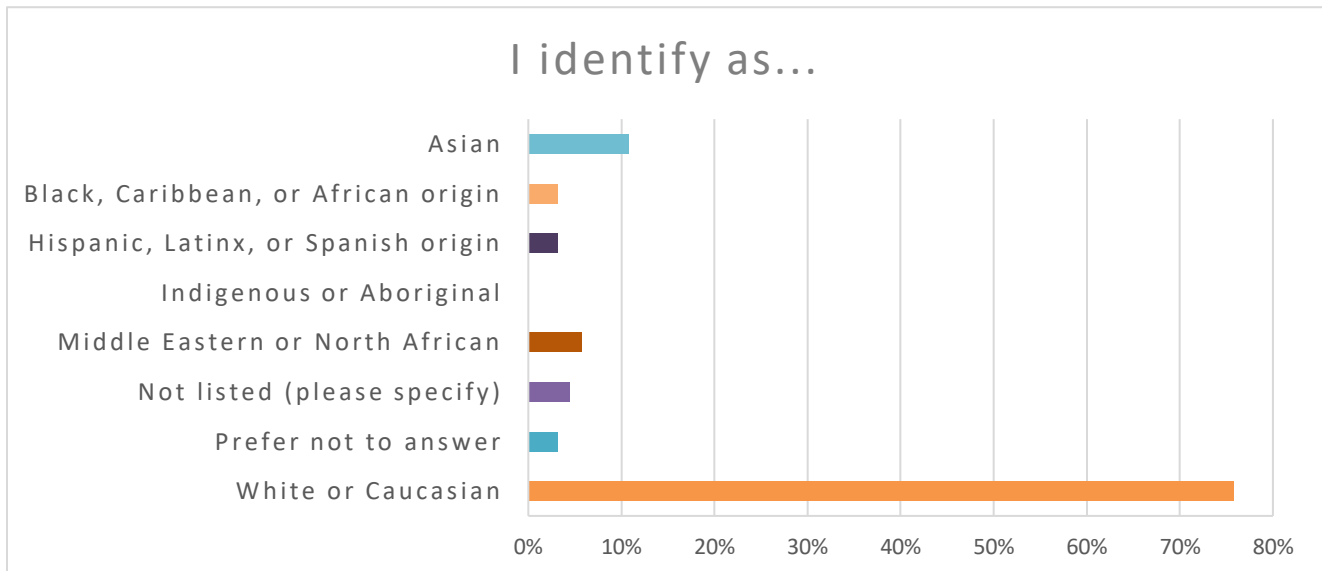
51%	of respondents who identify as women...	...are millennials (born 1981-1996)
69%	of respondents from US-based organizations who identify as Asian; Black, Caribbean, African origin; Hispanic, LatinX, Spanish origin; and Middle East or North African...	
70%	of respondents from organizations based in Asia and Europe...	

GENDER. The respondent group has a majority of women (62%) and a smaller proportion of men (35%), with a small number of genderqueer / non-binary individuals (1%). No respondent identifies as transgender.

What is your gender identity?



RACE/ETHNICITY. The respondent group predominantly identifies as White/Caucasian (76%), with 11% identifying as Asian, and relatively small cohorts (under 6%) as other races/ethnicities. No respondents report being Indigenous or Aboriginal (Native American, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, Aboriginal Australian, or Native Hawaiian). Survey respondents were able to identify as multiple races/ethnicities.



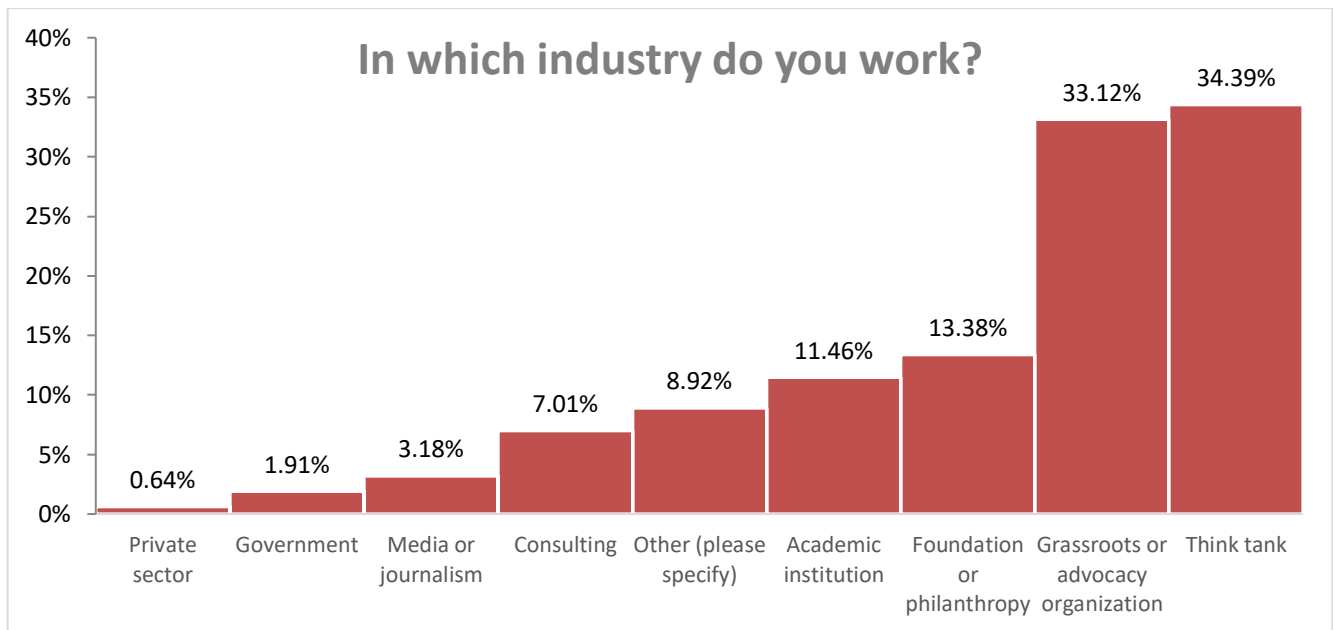
Organizational Representation

GEOGRAPHY. This survey intentionally broadened the traditional US-orientation of the field and asked individuals not in US-based organizations to showcase their distinct perspectives. Twenty-one individuals from organizations based in Europe and Asia participated in this survey, which accounts for 14% of survey respondents.



Of those based in the US, 60% work for organizations headquartered in Washington, DC. Of those headquartered elsewhere in the US, 10% have a branch in DC.

INDUSTRY. Approximately one-third of respondents work for grassroots or advocacy organizations, with another one-third working at think tanks. Academia and philanthropy each account for 10-15% of the full respondent population. There are very small numbers of respondents from the private sector, media, consulting, and government.²

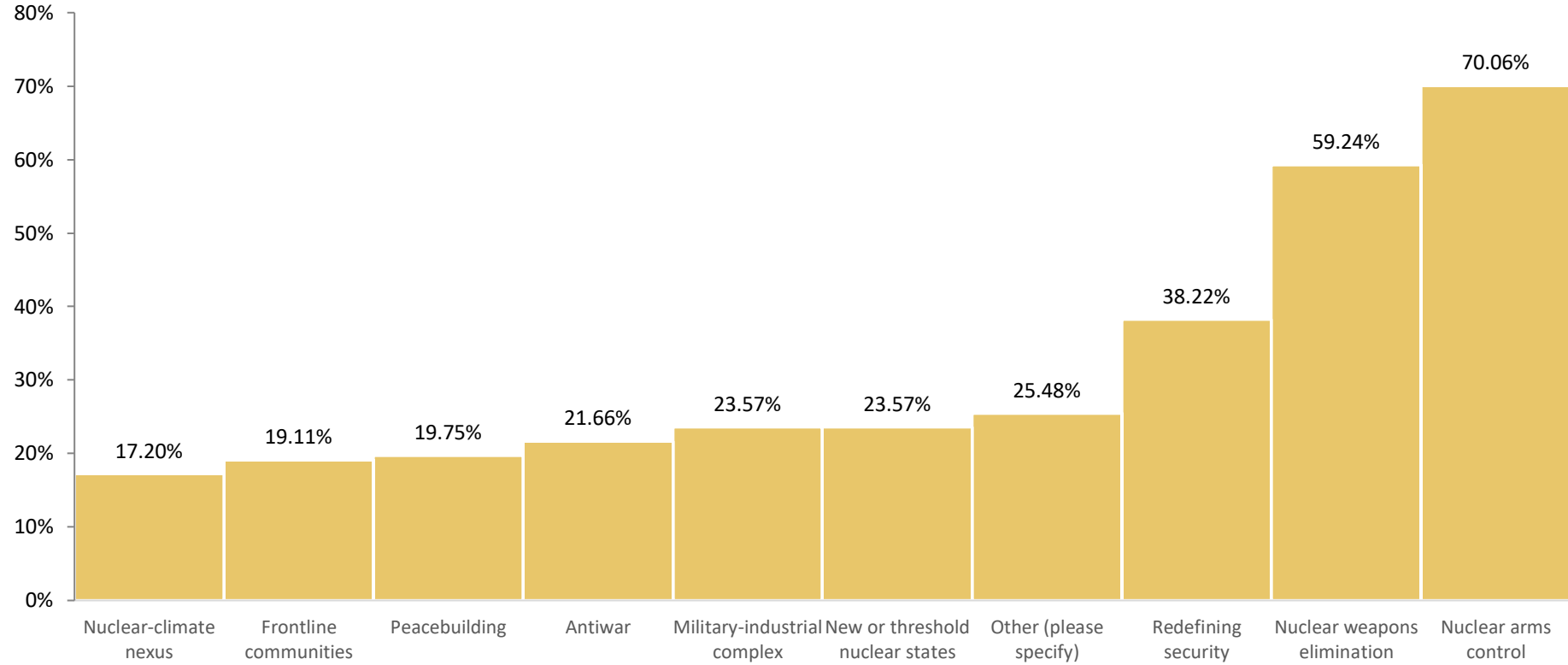


AREA OF FOCUS. Nuclear arms control (70%), nuclear weapons elimination (59%), and redefining security (38%) dominate the organizational areas of focus for respondents, with the nuclear-climate nexus, frontline communities, antiwar advocacy, and peacebuilding the focus of the fewest

² The survey did not actively seek respondents from the government sector.

respondents (20% or less). 'Other' includes: women's peacebuilding, sanctions compliance, US foreign policy (Asia, Middle East, etc.), nuclear security, science and technology, and existential risks.

On which topic(s) does your organization focus?



By Industry

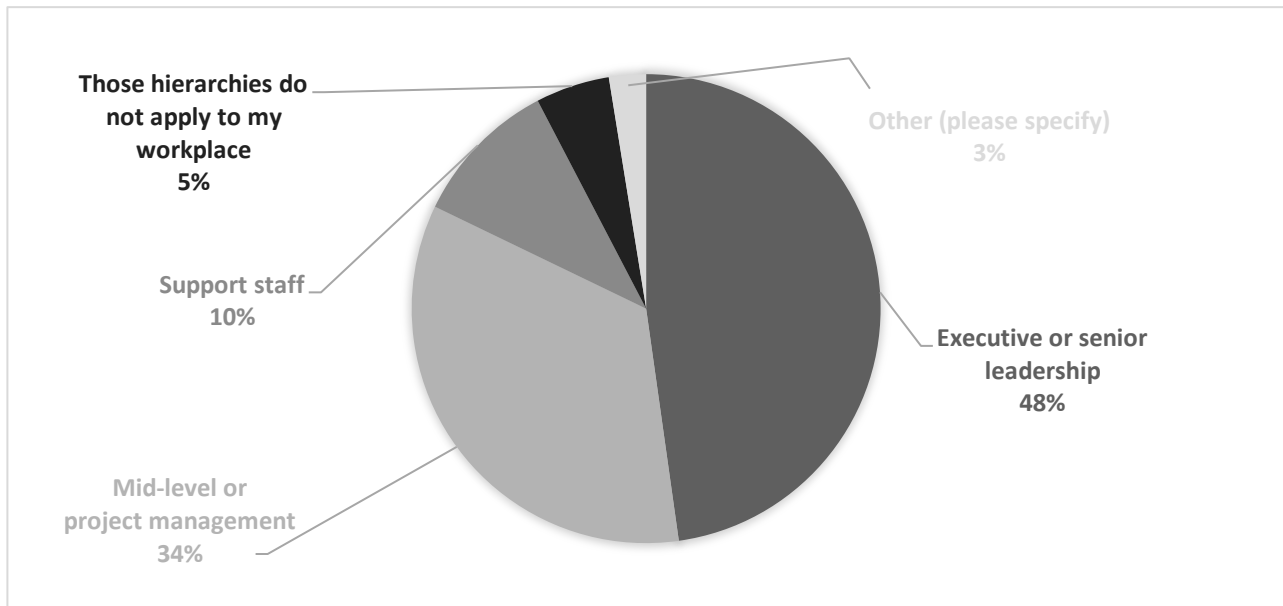
Over 60% of respondents from Europe- and Asia-based organizations work at think tanks, compared to 25% of U.S. respondents.

By Focus Area

Respondents from Europe-based organizations are highly represented on the topics of nuclear arms control (83.3% of Europe-based respondents) and nuclear weapons elimination (55.6% of Europe-based respondents). Respondents from Asia-based organizations work only on the topics of nuclear arms control, nuclear weapons elimination, and the nuclear-climate nexus.

Workplace Roles

Nearly 50% of respondents identify as executive or senior leadership, with about one-third of respondents in mid-level or project management roles.



Respondents from US-based organizations who identify as Asian; Black, Caribbean, or African origin; Hispanic, LatinX or Spanish origin; or Middle Eastern or North African have significantly lower proportional representation (31%) in executive or senior leadership positions and higher proportional representation in mid- and support-level positions.

Respondents who identify as women and men are proportionally represented in executive and mid-level/project management positions. There are no genderqueer/non-binary respondents in executive or senior leadership positions.

Though they represent only 22% of respondents to the survey, 42% of respondents ages 57 and older are in executive or senior leadership positions.

Field Changes Over Two Years

The world has changed significantly in the last two years, with a global pandemic only one of several environmental, political, and social shifts that have impacted the nuclear field. Respondents to the survey elevated the following areas as the most significant changes facing the nuclear field. Each of the following are opinions offered by multiple survey respondents.

Wider Geo-Political Landscape

Global political cooperation atrophying. Respondents report that the pandemic revealed the unwillingness of countries to work cooperatively to tackle global challenges, as did the growth of nationalism and the decline of relationships between nuclear armed states.

Changes in regional powers. The removal of Trump in the **United States** lowered the urgency of the nuclear threat for many and contributed to an overall feeling of stagnation regarding policy progress in the executive branch and in Congress. The Biden administration is more focused on nuclear weapons modernization than on arms control, with US nuclear weapons well past their expected lifetimes. Tensions between the US and China have worsened. There are growing concerns about **China's** militarization and related activities, as well as **Russia's** aggressive behavior and use of chemical weapons as an assassination weapon. Instability continues in **India** and **Pakistan**. There is greater risk of nuclear proliferation in the **Middle East** because of Trump's attempt to end the JCPOA, and there is a new hardline government in **Iran**. Hawkish forces are quietly working to oppose a US-North Korea peace deal and turn **South Korea** into a nuclear-armed state.

Decreased public interest in nuclear weapons issues. Some respondents note a decline of attention on the issue and disillusionment that solutions are possible. This pessimism is rooted in a variety of factors, including greater public interest in issues like the pandemic, climate change, or other topics in which younger voices are more engaged.

Nuclear Field

Perceptions of the nuclear threat (prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine). Respondents perceive the significance of the nuclear threat slightly higher than they did two years ago (from an average of 8.23 to 8.57 out of a total of 10), though the urgency of the threat remains relatively stable. Respondents from Europe- and Asia-based organizations express overall lower assessments of both the significance and urgency of the threat compared to the total respondents, though they note an increase in both the significance and urgency of the threat from two years ago to now. Respondents in executive positions

express slightly higher assessments of both the significance and urgency of the threat, though they identify an increase in the significance from two years ago and a decrease in the urgency.

Intersectionality. Respondents cite more awareness and focus on the intersections of nuclear weapons with other issue areas, particularly climate, racial, health and economic justice.

Field polarization. Efforts to address nuclear threats have become more scattered and disorganized; infighting has increased; and the pandemic has impeded cooperation, personal connections, and the development of collective networks.

Innovation. Respondents recognize that the field needs to find new, innovative ways to address the nuclear threat, collaborate with new partners, and engage the public.

Grassroots/frontline communities' orientation. The human impact of nuclear weapons is becoming more of a public conversation, with the mending of relationships between the disarmament community and impacted frontline communities. Respondents note that the field, which has become highly professionalized and expert-oriented, may be returning to a more grassroots-driven model.

Funding landscape shrinking. There is increased insecurity in the funding landscape, with a major grantmaker exiting the field.

Organizational Ecosystem

Improved diversity and inclusion, but still a long way to go. There is significantly greater awareness of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice issues over the past two years, with some steps taken towards diversity and inclusion (particularly when it comes to race and gender). According to many respondents, there has been less concrete progress than they would have hoped.

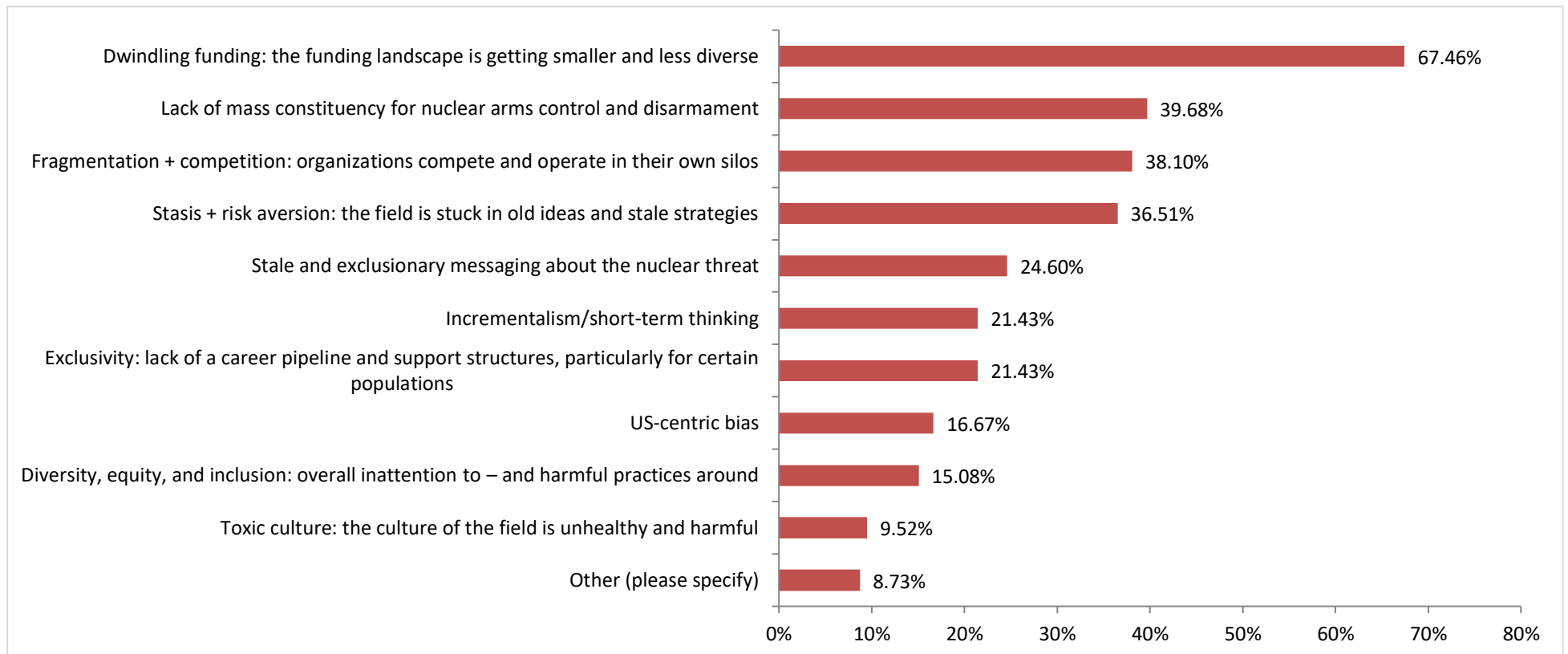
Improved cultures. The nuclear field has begun confronting some of its most difficult organizational issues, as shown through a variety of recent initiatives. People are less willing to tolerate toxic workplace situations, with a significant shift toward more human-centered environments that emphasize work-life balance.

Greater attention to younger voices. There seems to be greater interest in this field from younger generations, as well as a new awareness that the field needs to rely on the next generation, but few resources exist to support their engagement.

Critical Challenges

Pressing Field Challenges

When asked about the three most important challenges the field needs to address, the leading response by far is **dwindling funding** (67% of respondents). Following with similar levels of response (35-40% of respondents) are: (1) **lack of a mass constituency** for nuclear arms control and disarmament; (2) **fragmentation + competition**: organizations compete and operate in their own silos; and (3) **stasis + risk aversion**: the field is stuck in old ideas and stale strategies.³



³ Many of these challenges are drawn from [N Square's Greater Than: Nuclear Threat Professionals Reimagine Their Field](#).

57%	<p>of respondents in Europe- or Asia-based organizations identify dwindling funding as a primary challenge...</p> <p><i>Compared with 71% of respondents in US-based organizations</i></p>
46%	<p>of respondents who identify as women see stasis as a primary challenge, with 100% of genderqueer/nonbinary identified respondents elevating it as a challenge...</p> <p><i>Compared with 21% of respondents who identify as men</i></p>
50%	<p>of respondents from organizations based in Asia and Europe see US-centric bias as a pressing challenge...</p> <p><i>Compared with 21% of respondents from US-based organizations</i></p>
14%	<p>of respondents from organizations based in Asia and Europe identify fragmentation as a key challenge...</p> <p><i>Compared with 37% of respondents from US-based organizations</i></p>

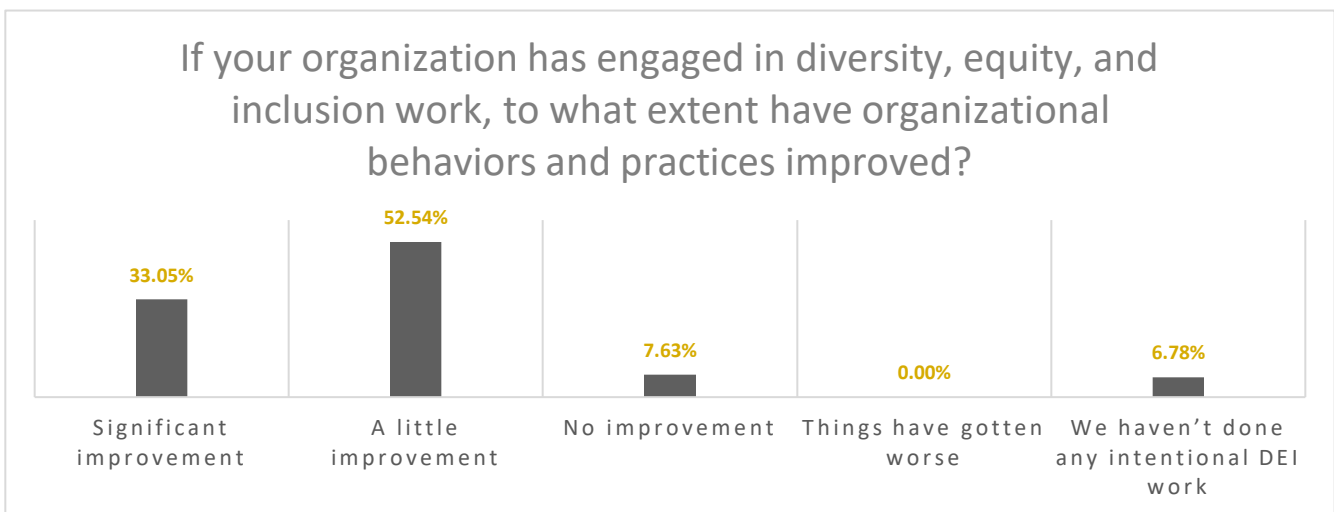
Respondent Insight

“Yes, fragmentation + competition, but the problem is not that we are operating in our own silos. The problem is that we cannot join forces to launch truly effective coalition efforts because we are all starved for resources and therefore **MUST** take credit for any victories, [and] cannot risk list-poaching or losing any of the precious little limelight that makes us visible to funders.”

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) emerge as a dominant theme throughout this survey. Most respondents note that their organizations have engaged with DEI issues and that organizational practices have improved as a result. Still, there is a pervasive feeling that while trainings are taking place, task forces are being created, and policies are changing, there is a long way to go to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Some also report that after an initial wave of action, enthusiasm has slipped. Others remark that though their DEI work had been productive, employees are still reporting not feeling safe or supported.

Have DEI Efforts Made a Difference?



A majority of respondents experienced ‘significant’ or ‘a little’ improvement (totalling 86%) in organizational behaviors and practices resulting from their organization’s DEI work. Executives and senior management tend to see greater improvement than others. Respondents in US-based organizations who identify as Asian; Black, Caribbean, or African origin; Hispanic, LatinX or Spanish origin; and Middle Eastern or North African see less improvement, with only 25% seeing ‘significant’ improvement, 50% ‘a little’ improvement, and 10% ‘no’ improvement. Interestingly, 15% of these same respondents note that their organizations have not done intentional DEI work, compared with 7% of the full respondent pool. All respondents in organizations based outside of the US note that their organization has engaged in DEI work, with 92% assessing that they have experienced ‘significant’ or ‘a little’ improvement in organizational practices.

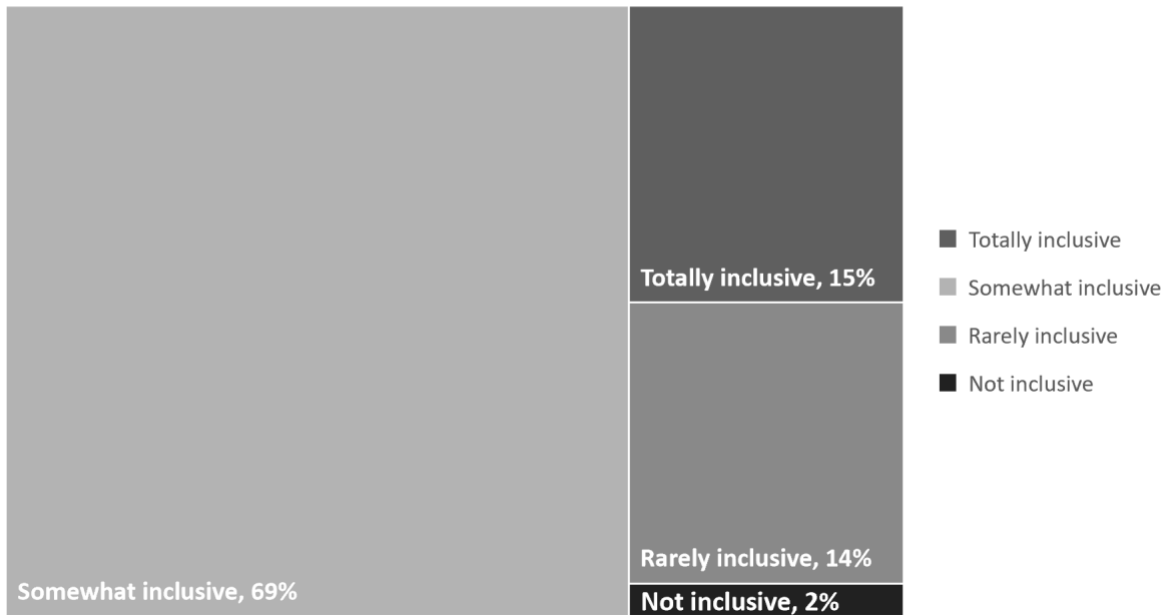
That said, much more needs to be done. This includes:

Diversity. There is a feeling that there are only specific pockets where progress has been made around diversity. For some, these pockets include the professional staff, but not the Board of Directors or their broader networks. For others, staff and Board have become more diverse, but panels remain traditionally white and male. For still others, public experts have diversified, but not less visible roles (e.g., research partners).

Respondents from **Europe- and Asia-based organizations** note a general lack of diversity in the workplace along lines of gender, age race, class, people with disabilities, and sexual orientation, highlighting gender most frequently. Some feel there is more of a focus on gender, religion, immigrant and LGBTQ diversity than there is on race.

Inclusion. Many respondents perceive that much of the DEI work has focused on diversity, with inclusion taking more of a back seat in shifting workplace- and field-based practices.

To what degree do you feel that this field is inclusive of you - your perspectives and identity?



<p>17% of respondents from US-based organizations who do not identify as Caucasian</p> <p>18% of respondents born after 1981</p> <p>19% of respondents who identify as women</p> <p>50% of respondents who identify as genderqueer/nonbinary</p> <p>50% of respondents who identify as Black, Caribbean, or of African origin</p>	<p>feel this field is rarely inclusive of them.</p>
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Respondent Insights

“I do not have a background in nuclear policy and I feel that the traditional members of the field don't respect my opinions/work as much because I don't have a PhD. The field has a difficult time valuing other forms of knowledge.”

“As a young professional in a support staff role, my skills are not valued in the field and my opportunities for career advancement are slim to none.”

“I'm white, which means I don't stick out, but [I] am a young, queer woman, which means a lot of nuclear messaging isn't targeted at me or is targeted at me exclusively in a DEI way, preventing me from being counted as an analyst in my own right. I get invited to all the "gender in nukes" talks, but not the actual substantive talks.”

“The emphasis on identity is fine but it doesn't raise money and work for stopping proliferation. Yes, I said it and I mean it.”

In addition to building on existing initiatives that seek to advance equity and inclusion in the nuclear field (e.g., [Organizations in Solidarity](#), [Gender Champions](#), etc.), respondents emphasized the following when asked to identify the most important thing the community could do to be more inclusive:

- **Nurture younger professionals.** Incentivize entrance into the field through paid internships; offer competitive compensation; support emerging professionals' development through training, mentoring and convenings; and coach leaders of older generations about how and when to 'step back.'
- **Reorganize the workplace to prioritize diversity, advancement, and belonging for underrepresented groups.** Focus on the full hiring and retention pipeline (e.g., qualification measures, position design, compensation, growth plans); provide platforms and paid opportunities for diverse voices (e.g., attending conferences or publishing research); create workplace environments where belonging - including open conversations about racism, bias, and toxic cultures - is welcomed, and where disenfranchised groups (particularly people of color) can “express the reality of their experiences without expecting them to do the work to fix it.”
- **Platforms for impacted communities.** Raise up people from communities who experience and are impacted by nuclear dangers.
- **Incentivize and hold organizations accountable for DEI commitments.** Donors should be stricter when it comes to integrating DEI considerations into funding proposals and reporting.

- **Reframe the ‘DEI’ conversation.** Gain a deeper understanding of institutional racism, racist extreme capitalism, sexism, colonialism, and white supremacy, and how these affect the ‘normative thinking/actions’ about nuclear weapons. Also, foreground the following questions when thinking about programming: (1) Who is listened to the most and who is not listened to enough; (2) Who do nuclear weapons protect and who do they harm; and (3) How does the prioritization of nuclear weapons in our national budget impact vulnerable communities?

Equity. Equity was brought up less frequently than diversity and inclusion. There was a feeling from some respondents that the field needs specific standards and expectations when it comes to DEI work as a whole to move from diversity towards equitable practice. Some respondents note that while policy recommendations have been made, their organizations have ‘gotten stuck’ in the implementation.

Respondent Insights from Europe- and Asia-Based Organizations

How do DEI discussions in your geographical area differ from those based in the US?

“The conversation on racial DEI is very different in the US due to a different history with the topic. It would be important for us to have a conversation that recognises our own problematic history and focuses on unique ways how some folks are marginalised here. The class access issue is similar but different as well, and would need to be treated uniquely as well. Finally, any DEI issues here are exacerbated by the small and insecure composition of the field. Many people from marginalised groups who don't have family wealth to fall back on simply can't afford to try to make a career in our field because it is so insecure, or if they are in the minority who try to do that, they have to deal with a high amount of minority stress.”

“The conversations and debates in the US are much more progressive and advanced than in Asia. There is an openness and candour to addressing DEI which is less prevalent in Asia where there is a stronger culture of deference, unwillingness to “rock the boat” and change the status quo for fear of reprisals. We want to change that but we are a minority and need to be bold in our ambition but sensitive in our approach so not to alienate those whom we are trying to engage and bring along with us.”

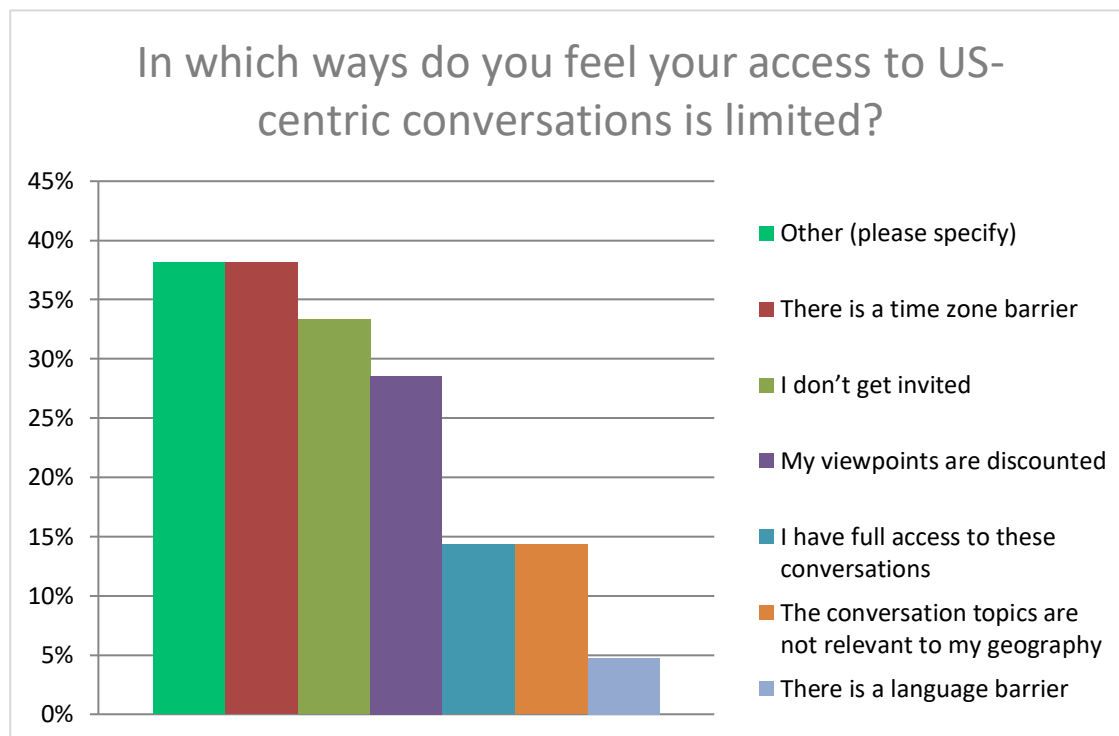
“The environment in the UK is very different due to the UK's history as a colonial power. There is [a] lack of education in schools within the UK on these issues whereas civil rights, emancipation, etc. is taught in the US. Decolonialization of the UK's empire is not taught in the UK, so the discussions you have now about DEI often comes back to the point about people not understanding why the UK's population is so diverse.”

A Focus on Geographical Diversity + Inclusion

The nuclear field has historically been dominated by US-based organizations and conversations about US-focused issues. This survey directed several questions to respondents from organizations based outside of the US to understand their perspectives on a variety of issues. Nineteen respondents from Europe-based organizations and three respondents from Asia-based organizations participated in the survey. No responses were received from respondents in organizations based in Central and South America, Australia, the Middle East, or Africa.

Nearly 100% of respondents from Europe- and Asia-based organizations state that they are either ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ interested in being more engaged with their US-based counterparts (equally divided at 48% between ‘very interested’ and ‘somewhat interested’). This perception amplifies in intensity for those born after 1980, where 63% are ‘very interested’ in being more engaged with their US-based counterparts.

When asked about the reasons for limited access to US-centric conversations, respondents note the most significant barriers are ‘other’ (which includes an elaboration of many of the choices provided), time zone complications, not receiving an invitation, and having their viewpoints discounted.



Many respondents feel that there have been gains made because of virtual conferences during the Covid-19 pandemic, but there is apprehension that this inclusivity will decrease when in-person convenings resume. ‘Other’ includes an emphasis on the options provided, including an emphatic

frustration at either not being invited or having conversations turn quickly to US-focused subject matter. Interestingly, all respondents who report discounting of viewpoints are in executive/senior leadership roles, with 75% of all executives/senior leaders from Europe- or Asia-based organizations noting that their viewpoints are discounted (compared with 29% of the full respondent pool).

When asked how international, non-US-based organizations uniquely contribute to nuclear policy conversations and related initiatives, responses are generally divided into three categories:

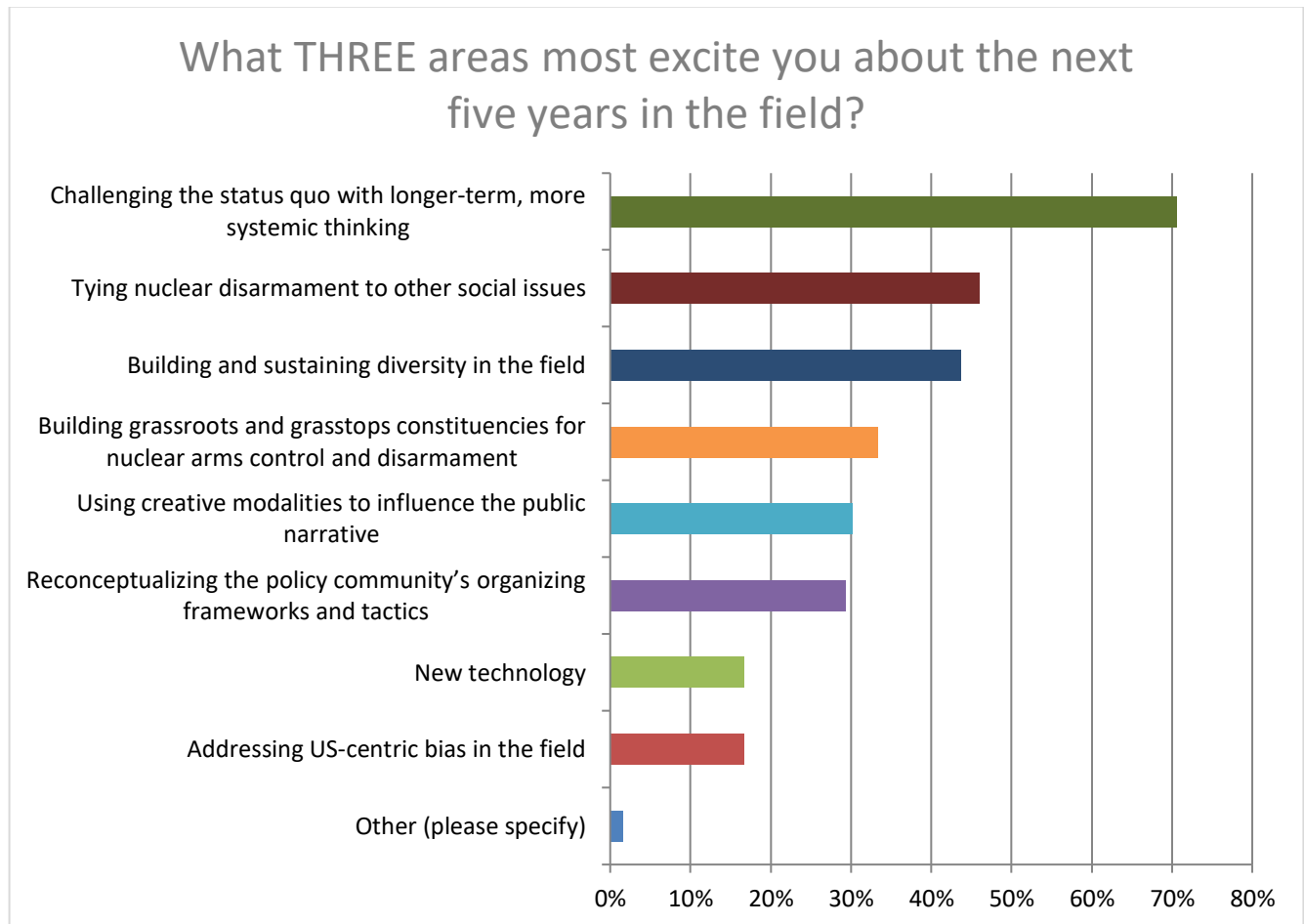
1. **Diversified products.** Respondents emphasize the importance of publishing research in languages other than English, focused on other regions, and informed by different educational backgrounds.
2. **Alternative perspectives.** Respondents suggest that non-US-based contributors offer new perspectives to which US counterparts do not have access, including those from a range of different states, middle powers, and countries without nuclear weapons. They also cite the importance of a ‘reality check’ on US bias that challenges areas where there is consensus in the US and envisions other futures beyond the ‘eternal nuclear’ scenario. They state that non-US contributors can shift the conversation away from deterrence thinking towards disarmament (which those from Europe-based organizations note is more common in Europe) or at least promote disarmament conversations within and between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. Finally, non-US-based organizations have the potential to center the impact these weapons have on communities that host them or have endured their effects, and can help disrupt the Cold War attitudes that have defined the nuclear space.
3. **Seed transnational collaboration.** Respondents propose the possibility for new collaborations and bridge building to emerge from more global conversations.

Appetite for Change

This survey sought to determine where there is energy and groundswell for making change. The following sections outline the areas where respondents see potential for change, excitement about the future, and appetite for collaboration.

Excitement for the Future

When asked to consider the next five years, respondents note they are most excited by the following: challenging the status quo with **longer-term, more systemic thinking** (71%), **tying nuclear disarmament to other social issues** (46%), and **building and sustaining diversity in the field** (44%).



That said, respondents grouped by specific demographics have somewhat divergent responses about what most excites them in the upcoming five years. Those noted below are the segmentations where there is a significant differentiation from the broader respondent pool.

Through a geographic lens:

- Those **outside of the US** rank all areas similarly, though diversity ranks higher proportionally (57%), challenging the status quo ranks lower (64%), and tying nuclear disarmament to other social issues ranks significantly lower (29%).

Through an ethnicity/race lens:

- Of the small number of respondents from **Europe- and Asia-based organizations** who identify as **Asian or Hispanic, LatinX or Spanish origin** – 100% identify challenging the status quo as an exciting area. Two-thirds of that population identify building and sustaining diversity as an issue that excites them. Other issue areas rank 33% or lower, with no respondents identifying US-centric bias as an area of excitement.
- For respondents in **US-based organizations who identify as Asian; Black, Caribbean, or African origin; Hispanic, LatinX or Spanish origin; or Middle Eastern or North African**, challenging the status quo ranks higher (78%) than in the total respondent pool. For this group, all other topics garner under 40%. This group also ranks the following areas higher than the full respondent pool: addressing US-centric bias (30%), reconceptualizing the policy community's organizing tactics (35%), and using creative modalities to influence the narrative (35%). Those who identify as **Asian** in US-based organizations rank challenging the status quo slightly lower (67%) and building diversity and tying nuclear disarmament to other social issues significantly lower (33%), whereas they rank creative modalities to influence the public narrative (44%) and building grassroots and grassroots constituencies (44%) higher than the full respondent group.

Through a gender lens:

- The views of respondents who identify as **women** also diverge somewhat from the wider respondent group. While this population still ranks challenging the status quo as the area with the most excitement (62%), building diversity (49%) and tying disarmament to other social issues (46%) show strongly as secondary areas.
- **Men** are more excited about challenging the status quo (81%), with the same 'second' choice areas identified as the full respondent pool lagging by nearly 40 percentage points.
- Those identifying as **genderqueer/non-binary** select challenging the status quo and tying nuclear issues to other social issues at 100%, with reconceptualizing organizing tactics and building grassroots constituencies as secondary areas of excitement (50%).

Through an age lens:

- Respondents **born before 1965** rate the top area as challenging the status quo (70%), but more closely rank tying nuclear disarmament to other social issues (57%) and building grassroots and grassroots constituencies (53%). This group ranks building diversity significantly lower (23%).

Change Potential

When asked to consider the potential for change, respondents describe which challenges over the next 3-5 years have the most potential for change, using weighted averages to identify the areas where respondents perceive the most potential.

										3.1
2.3	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.9		
US-centric bias	Lack of mass constituency for nuclear arms control and disarmament	Toxic culture: the culture of the field is unhealthy and harmful	Incrementalism/short-term thinking	Dwindling funding: the funding landscape is getting smaller and less diverse	Fragmentation + competition: organizations compete and operate in their own silos	Stasis + risk aversion: the field is stuck in old ideas and stale strategies	Exclusivity: lack of a career pipeline and support structures, particularly for certain populations	Stale and exclusionary messaging about the nuclear threat	Overall inattention to – and harmful practices – around diversity, equity, and inclusion	

Respondents see **DEI** as the area with the most change potential, with **stale and exclusionary messaging, exclusivity, and stasis and risk aversion** as the next three areas cited by respondents with potential to make change over the coming years. Eighty percent of all respondents and 88% of respondents born after 1981 note that DEI has ‘significant’ or ‘enormous’ potential to make change. A greater percentage of respondents from Europe- and Asia-based organizations view DEI as having ‘enormous’ potential to make change (53.85% compared with 25.64% of the total population), as do respondents born after 1981 (32%) and respondents identifying as women (36%). Respondents in US-based organizations who identify as Asian; Black, Caribbean, or African origin; Hispanic, LatinX or Spanish origin; Middle Eastern or North African see less potential than total respondents around DEI, fragmentation, and incrementalism.

The areas respondents see the least potential to make change is **US-centric bias**, with 14% of total respondents seeing ‘no potential’ to make change. While respondents note excitement about addressing the **lack of mass constituency for nuclear arms control and disarmament**, they rank it second-to-last from the lens of change potential, with 13% of total respondents and 17% of those born after 1981 seeing ‘no potential’ to make change.

Let's Talk About Taboos

Survey respondents were asked: "Which topics does this community stay away from because they are too taboo, but you wish it would engage?" This prompted extensive reflection from respondents, who identified a series of topics that appear below in descending order from most frequently identified to least. Responses that arose only once are not listed here.

- **Abolition and disarmament.** By far the most discussed area, respondents note abolition and disarmament are both taboos, jettisoned in favor of the often DC/university-oriented, 'safer' topics of nuclear arms control, risk reduction, and non-proliferation. Respondents offer a range of explanations and context for this taboo, from a hesitancy to challenge deterrence theory to the importance of exploring how to live with nuclear weapons more safely.
- **Racism, sexism, and ageism.** The next most frequently discussed area, this topic includes the racism and sexism ingrained in the nuclear weapons complex and militarist paradigm (along with how racism shapes the US' foreign policy agenda), the tie between stale/exclusionary messaging and who is (and is not) in leadership positions, and the ways these 'isms' show up in organizations (e.g., discrimination, sexual harassment, pay inequity).

Respondent Insights

"The field definitely has a major issue with stale and exclusionary messaging/incrementalism that is not inspiring to everyday people nor to people in the field if we're being honest. It doesn't inspire confidence trying to write/advocate on these issues when being forced to "both sides" things when there are very clear instances when the US needs to be criticized more, or having to water down messaging so as not to scare off Congress. It's just ridiculous, and a lot of it feels gatekeep-ish in the sense that old white men are constantly calling the shots and anyone that deviates from the norm is dismissed or labeled as too idealistic. I'm over the same old tactics that clearly aren't working. And it also is not the most enjoyable work environment to constantly be the only brown face in a (zoom) room -- especially after so many orgs made commitments last year to DEI efforts but fell off as soon as it was no longer a popular fad and they realized they actually had to do the work. It has made me lose so much faith in this community and I don't feel that supported to be honest."

- **Hypocrisy of nuclear weapon possessor states, particularly the US.** Respondents highlight the flawed assumptions based in the field, where US extended deterrence is viewed as 'good' and nuclear weapons in other countries are seen as 'bad.' Some question whether it is appropriate for nuclear armed countries to claim moral and actual leadership in nuclear disarmament, given the structural inequalities and post-colonial power dynamics embedded in these conversations. Some link this challenged positioning to the taboo of discussing eliminating the US nuclear arsenal or cutting the defense budget and building up potential forces for peace, like the State Department. Alternatively, states with a history of colonization or negative experiences with

empires (e.g., DPRK, Iran, Pakistan) may have an understandable and legitimate reason to pursue nuclearization and WMD, as this is one of the only ways to deter Western aggression and gain international status.

- **Nuclear energy.** Some respondents note a hesitancy to discuss the role of nuclear power in a carbon constrained future, including from an impacted community perspective regarding the consequences of uranium mining.
- **Philanthropic power dynamics.** Several reference how funder incentives or disincentives drive choices and decisions. This includes the identification of metrics and manipulation of reporting towards the positive, distorting the field's ability to assess what is working and what is not.
- **Military industrial complex.** Respondents cite a reluctance to take on the military industrial complex, including the think tanks, academics, and organizations that benefit from or receive funding from the weapons industry.
- **Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.** The 'emotional' stories of those impacted by nuclear weapons are often deprioritized in the face of a dehumanized 'facts and science' approach.
- **Mental health.** Several respondents point to mental health and chronic illness and how the field's perceptions of a 'strong' employee/organization mirrors the perceptions of strength that perpetuate the nuclear status quo and military-industrial complex. While the community pays lip service to mental health and work-life balance, it does not pursue it seriously and rewards working all the time.
- **Individual countries.** Respondents note several countries and contexts that are taboo. **Israel**, for instance, is simply not discussed. Respondents also question why the community does not do more to address the risks surrounding **India/Pakistan**. In the case of **China**, respondents note the need for a holistic vision of how the field should address militaristic anti-China rhetoric and legislation. On **North Korea**, respondents stress the absence of and need for a step-by-step approach toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Energy for Collaboration

There are many exemplary collaborations currently taking place in the field. Respondents celebrate these collaborations and highlight the organizations and coalitions that are pioneering efforts around futures thinking, advocacy, field consolidation, applying gender and cultural lenses to nuclear issues, engagement of youth constituencies, and more.

Survey respondents perceive energy to build new collaborations in the following areas. They are listed in order from most frequently identified to least. A topic is only listed here if it was raised by more than one person.

Intersectional collaborations. With a disproportionate focus on the climate/nuclear nexus.
Build a grassroots people’s movement. Broaden the popular base for nuclear disarmament.
Field-wide communication initiative. A shared communications plan to change the public narrative.
Support young, emerging leaders. Training, support, rotational fellowships.
Reconceptualizing the policy community’s organizing and advocacy frameworks and tactics. Including developing an advocacy strategy based on longer-term goals that will increase collaboration and expand the public and policymaker constituencies for nuclear arms control and disarmament.
Emerging technologies. Build ties to tech/digital communities. Explore how changes in data and tech transform governance and accountability, and investigate new counter-proliferation techniques.
Reframing nuclear disarmament/deterrence. Critical analysis of field assumptions.
Film/television. Stories about nuclear risks to generate more public/policymaker interest.
Arts. Connecting arts and science, public art projects.
Long-term forecasting/foresight. With a focus on alternative security strategies.
Academic collaborations. Greater collaboration between academics and NGO policy experts, including an outreach strategy to increase visibility on campuses.
Engaging the next generation. Education on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.
Engaging with thought leaders from other countries, particularly non-Western states.
Consolidation efforts. Further work to consolidate and reimagine the future of the field.

The top-identified area where there is energy for new collaborations is by far intersectional collaborations. More than double the number of respondents raise this issue over the second-most raised issue (building a grassroots people’s movement), with many respondents highlighting the promising potential of the climate/nuclear nexus. Respondents see consistent possibility in this area, emphasizing its potential to build power, shift narrative, source more funding, and elevate nuclear issues on public and policymakers’ agendas.

The second most raised issue - building a grassroots people’s movement – reflects some tension in the findings. Specifically, the lack of a mass constituency for nuclear arms control and disarmament – rated highly as a pressing field challenge – ranks second to last in change potential, and yet is the second most noted area where there is energy for collaboration.

Respondent Insight

“We need to build significantly more aligned campaigns that unite the power of the grassroots with the intel and knowledge of the grassroots and advocacy pros. Inside baseball and the field work should be two sides of the same coin rather than completely distinct operations. All of this needs to be coupled with powerful narrative work to shift the domestic and global narrative on security and threats.”

Funders and Collaboration

Respondents also offer ideas for how funders can better incentivize collaboration. Besides simply sourcing more funding for the field and identifying other foundations that fund areas tangential to the nuclear issue (e.g., climate, social justice, economics, public health, etc.), the most significant recommendation by far is for funders to fund and incentivize – rather than penalize – collaborations. Respondents suggest:

- Establishing expectations that prioritize collaborative projects;
- Increasing the funding pool to ensure larger margins and less zero-sum competition;
- Requiring larger organizations to collaborate with smaller organizations, potentially through micro-grant programs;
- Providing funding and convening platforms that allow time to build collaboration;
- Shifting behaviors to support emergent or inaugural strategies, such as those that allow for experimentation and learning from failure; and
- Celebrating collaborations and consolidations (e.g., bonuses, prizes).

This also necessitates a survival safety net that subsidizes collaboration *in addition to* funding basic survival/organizational health.

Specific Collaboration RFP Ideas

- Challenge grants where diverse grantees (e.g., grassroots, not just inside the beltway groups) work together, marketing opportunities to communities who may not have access or philanthropic visibility.
- Fund projects led by professionals at early career stages, from different organizations. Early and mid-level staff excel at collaboration between organizations.
- A hybrid project proposal bringing together nuclear weapons and another topical social issues (reparations for indigenous people, climate crisis mitigation, countering anti-Asian hate, etc.).
- Encourage proposals that involve interaction and production of material that links NGOs with universities.

Conclusion

While this survey does not represent the viewpoints of the comprehensive nuclear community, it does paint a more extensive picture than has been seen in recent history. Creating an opportunity for a broad swathe of community members to be heard is, however, only a first step in working towards intentional change. Responding to and working with these perspectives will be necessary to build trust in the community and create the platform for a vibrant and responsible new chapter. As respondents note: there are already major changes underway in the field, with many new developments galvanizing the energy and enthusiasm of community members. The hope is that the survey will surface these points of promise, so that both the NGO and funder communities can help foster them to fruition.

Several elements must be kept in mind as the community transitions to its next chapter. It is important to continue to buttress the impressive ongoing work happening in the field and champion those who are already investing energy to make change. It will also be vital to provide platforms for new collaborations and initiatives and to take risks on ideas, people, initiatives, and the ‘taboo conversations’ that fall outside of traditional approaches.

While some see a narrowing of possibility because of decreased available funding, engaging with these perspectives – particularly where intersections with other sectors are explored – may in fact broaden the funding landscape. In the complex dance between funders and grantees, it will be necessary for all players to engage each other in direct, honest, and strategic conversation.

The work called for from this survey cannot and should not be the purview of any one organization. Each player will need to determine where they have the greatest potential for impact, if and how collaboration can amplify that impact, and how to create an operating culture in which all in the community have the opportunity to offer their skills towards shaping a safer world.