



# Association **Engagement** Index 2022

The 3Cs of Engagement



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# Executive Summary





# Executive Summary

The Association Engagement Index (AEI) is a **global benchmark study** that measures the performance, **relationship strength, and outcome of engagement tactics** as seen through the eyes of associations' members and customers.

51 associations across multiple industries and professions participated in the 2022 edition of AEI, generating more than 12,700 responses from members and customers around the world. This robust benchmark shows a moderate level of engagement overall with an Engagement Index Score of 88. This score, while adequate, means there is work to do to raise the engagement score to at least a strong position.

Personalization and quick, easy access to products and programs that meet members' needs and interests are key for future engagement and relationship strength. Associations must leverage technology solutions like Artificial Intelligence to ease access and help tailor communications and content to meet audience needs and expectations.

This is particularly important due to the increase in digital assets across all associations coming out of the pandemic. Omni-channel engagement and activation is crucial for members moving forward. It is no longer about virtual vs. in-person - rather, it is about the right channel, for the right activity. Members have become used to engaging virtually, and as a result now want choice for many aspects of association life, such as committee meetings, task forces and special interest groups.

Whilst less than half of respondents indicated their preference for in-person participation only at annual meetings/conferences or trade shows, these traditional platforms are still ranked highest for providing value for connectivity and collaboration.

Members and customers from around the world have shared their insights. The outcome is clear: associations will increase their relationship strength and enhance engagement if they focus on **the 3Cs of Engagement: Choice, omni-Channel and Customization.**



“MCI congratulates those participating associations who recorded a strong Index score and encourages all associations to evaluate their performance and develop new activation strategies to enhance engagement,” says Nikki Walker, MCI’s Global Vice President of Engagement, Associations & Communities.

“We hope this benchmark and the key findings will help associations better understand what actions to take to have the highest impact on engagement.”

## Methodology

- ◆ Data gathered from members and customers of 51 participating associations between September 19 and November 4, 2022, by anonymous online survey resulting in 12,713 responses from 118 countries and aggregated.
- ◆ Index Engagement Score applied from -50 (very weak) to +150 (very strong).
- ◆ The AEI measures the relationship strength based on three key performance indicators as evaluated by members and customers:
  - ◆ **Performance:** how highly do they rate the association’s performance
  - ◆ **Benefit:** how do they evaluate the benefits & value provided by the association
  - ◆ **Preference:** how much they prefer the association vs. other sources of knowledge/content etc.

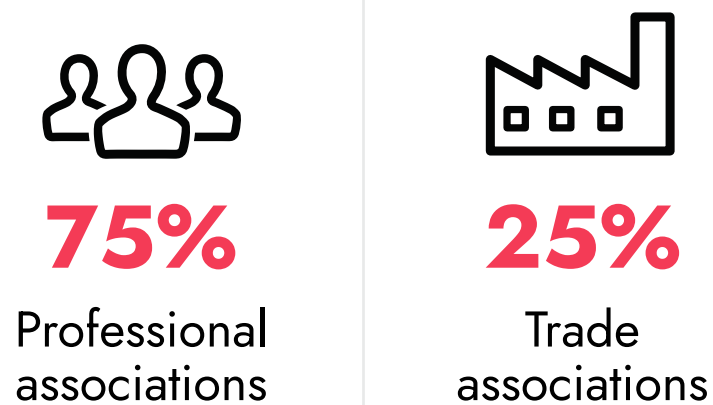
# Participating Associations

This Index reports the relationship strength (Index Engagement Score) and performance metrics as evaluated by the members and customers of the participating associations, of which 75% were Professional Societies and 25% Trade Associations representing a broad range of industries and sectors.

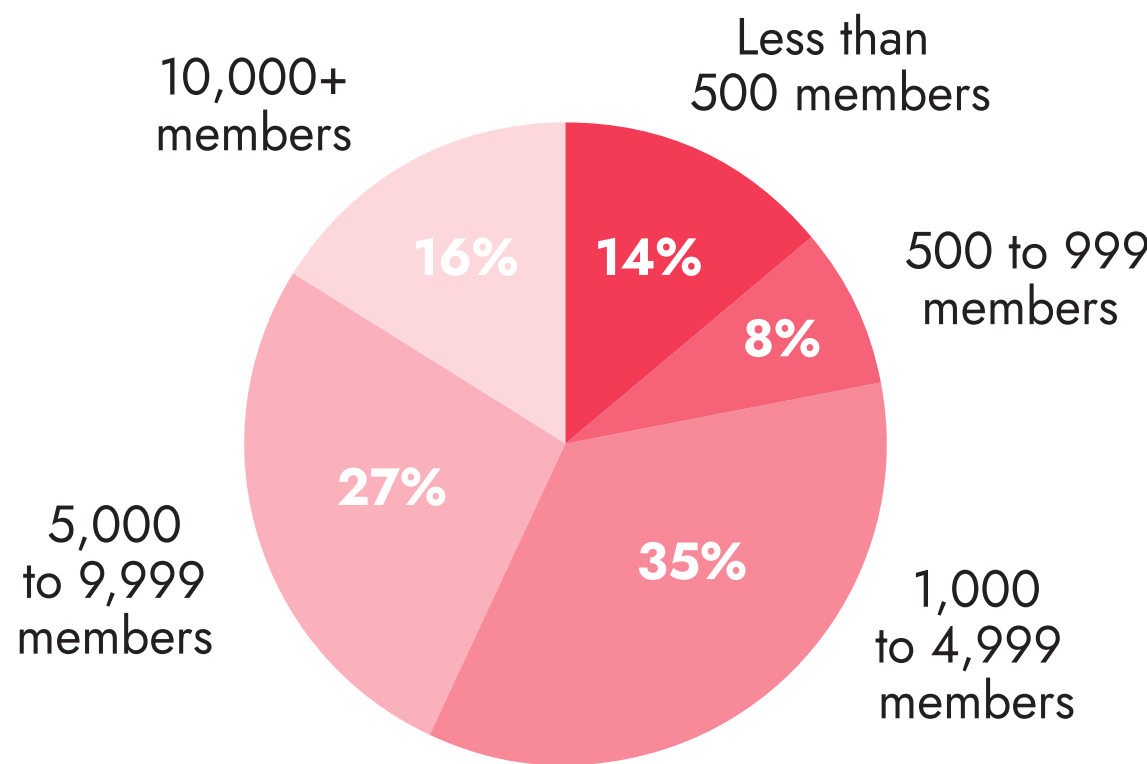
The associations represent a healthy variation in size and a comprehensive geographic spread with both internationally oriented and nationally focused organizations.

## Profiles of Participating Associations

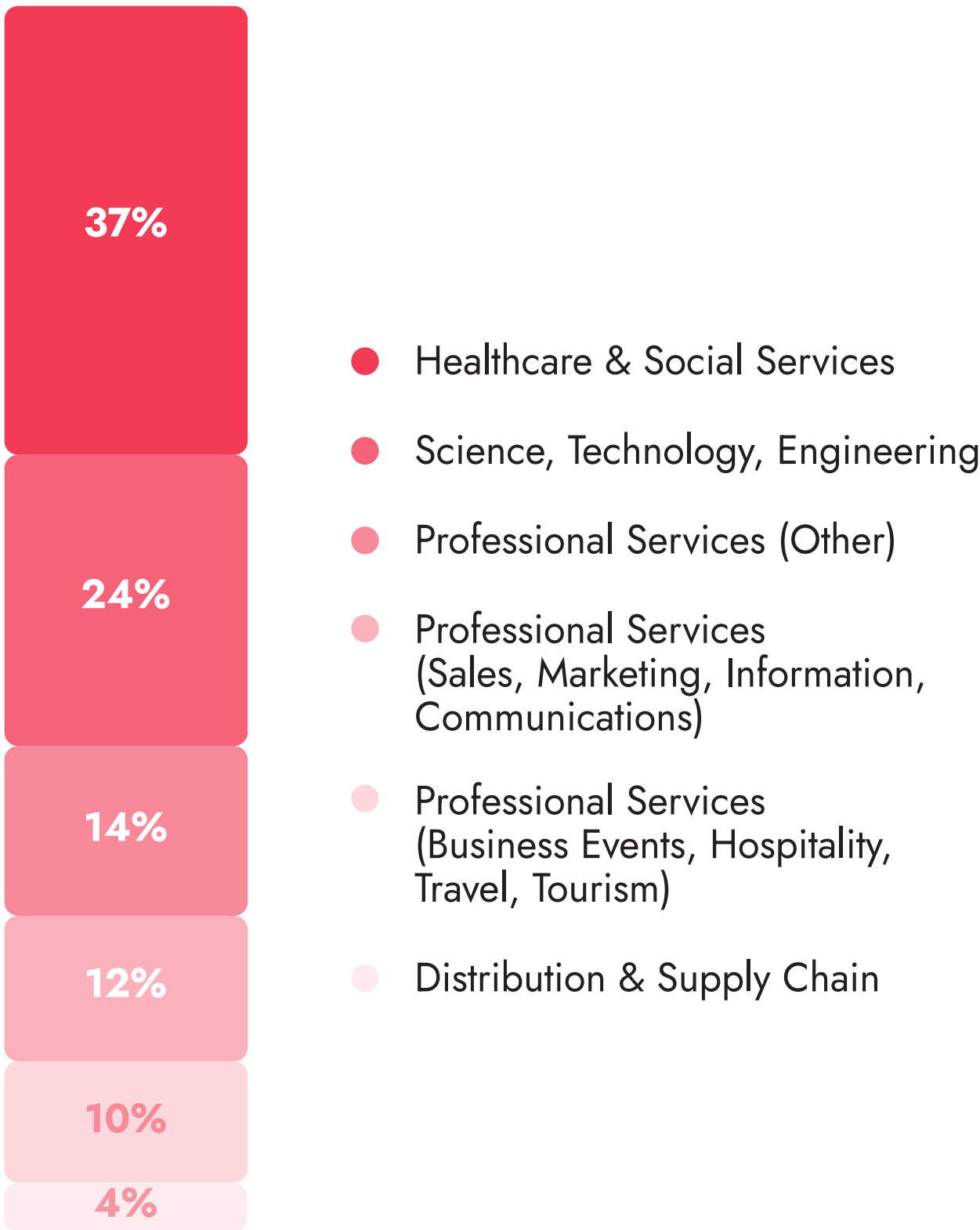
### Type



### Size



### Sector of Activity





## Thank you to the **51 Participating Associations** and the invaluable insights from their members and customers.

- ♦ American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry
- ♦ American Association of Physics Teachers
- ♦ American Industrial Hygiene Association
- ♦ American Nurses Association (& subsidiaries: ANCC, Foundation, Academy)
- ♦ American Society for Clinical Pathology
- ♦ American Society for Nondestructive Testing
- ♦ American Society for Nutrition
- ♦ American Society of Plant Biologists
- ♦ ASIS International
- ♦ Association of Bio Molecular Resource Facilities
- ♦ Australian Dental Industry Association
- ♦ Australian Diabetes Educators Association
- ♦ Brewing, Food & Beverage Industry Suppliers' Association
- ♦ British Promotional Merchandise Association
- ♦ Canadian Association for the Study of the Liver

- ♦ Canadian Association of Gastroenterology
- ♦ Ceramic Tile Distributors Association
- ♦ Construction Specifications Institute
- ♦ Council of European National Top-Level Domain Registries
- ♦ Emergency Department Practice Management Association
- ♦ European Society of Association Executives
- ♦ Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance
- ♦ Globalaw
- ♦ Horticultural Trades Association (inc. Association of Professional Landscapers)
- ♦ Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International
- ♦ Interaction Designers Association Vancouver
- ♦ International Association for Vegetation Science
- ♦ International Headache Society
- ♦ International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation
- ♦ International Society of Blood Transfusion
- ♦ International Technology Law Association
- ♦ Medical Library Association
- ♦ National Business Aviation Association
- ♦ National Child Support Enforcement Association

- ♦ National Office of Animal Health
- ♦ New York Women in Communications
- ♦ PCMA
- ♦ Professional Development Consortium
- ♦ Renewable UK
- ♦ SAE International
- ♦ Society For Clinical Data Management
- ♦ Society of Fire Protection Engineers
- ♦ Society of Toxicology
- ♦ Society of Vertebrate Paleontology
- ♦ Special Libraries Association
- ♦ The European Direct Selling Association
- ♦ The European Society of Coloproctology
- ♦ The Paleontological Society
- ♦ The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
- ♦ The Society for Standards Professionals
- ♦ Volunteering New Zealand Incorporated

Thank you also to the Endorsing Organizations



# Key Findings

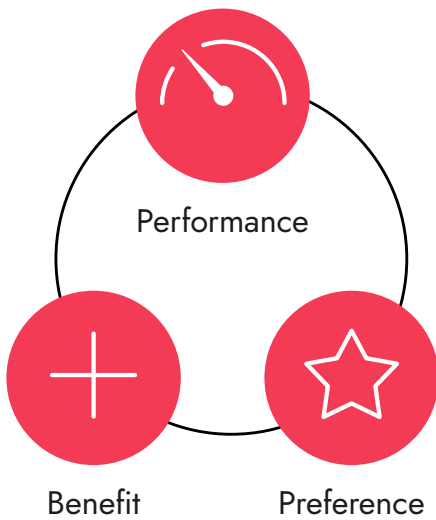




# Key Findings

Based on the three critical indicators of performance, benefit, and preference; associations overall record a middling relationship strength with their members and customers leading to a moderate Index Engagement Score of 88. Scores range from 50 weak to 122 strong.

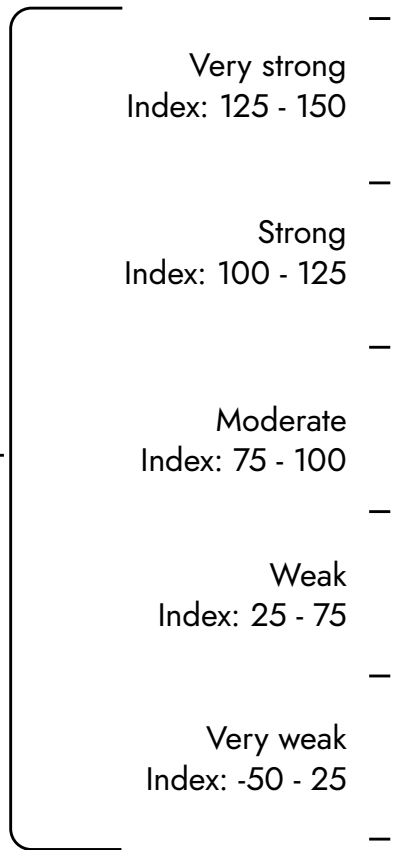
## 3 Key Performance Indicators



= Relationship Strength



## Index Score



20%

67%

13%

= 88

## Index Engagement Score

Interestingly, there is very little deviation within the overall 88 Engagement score according to the age of members. However, those who are retired (aged 70+), and most likely honorary members, are the ones tipping the balance and showing a higher relationship strength. To be future-proof, associations must consider the interests, preferred style of engagement and ease of access desired by the younger members of their community.



20% of associations outperformed the benchmark with a strong relationship and engagement score. With the vast majority (67%) in the moderate range, it is clear that associations can improve their engagement strategies and understanding of the key drivers, so as to enhance their relationship with members.

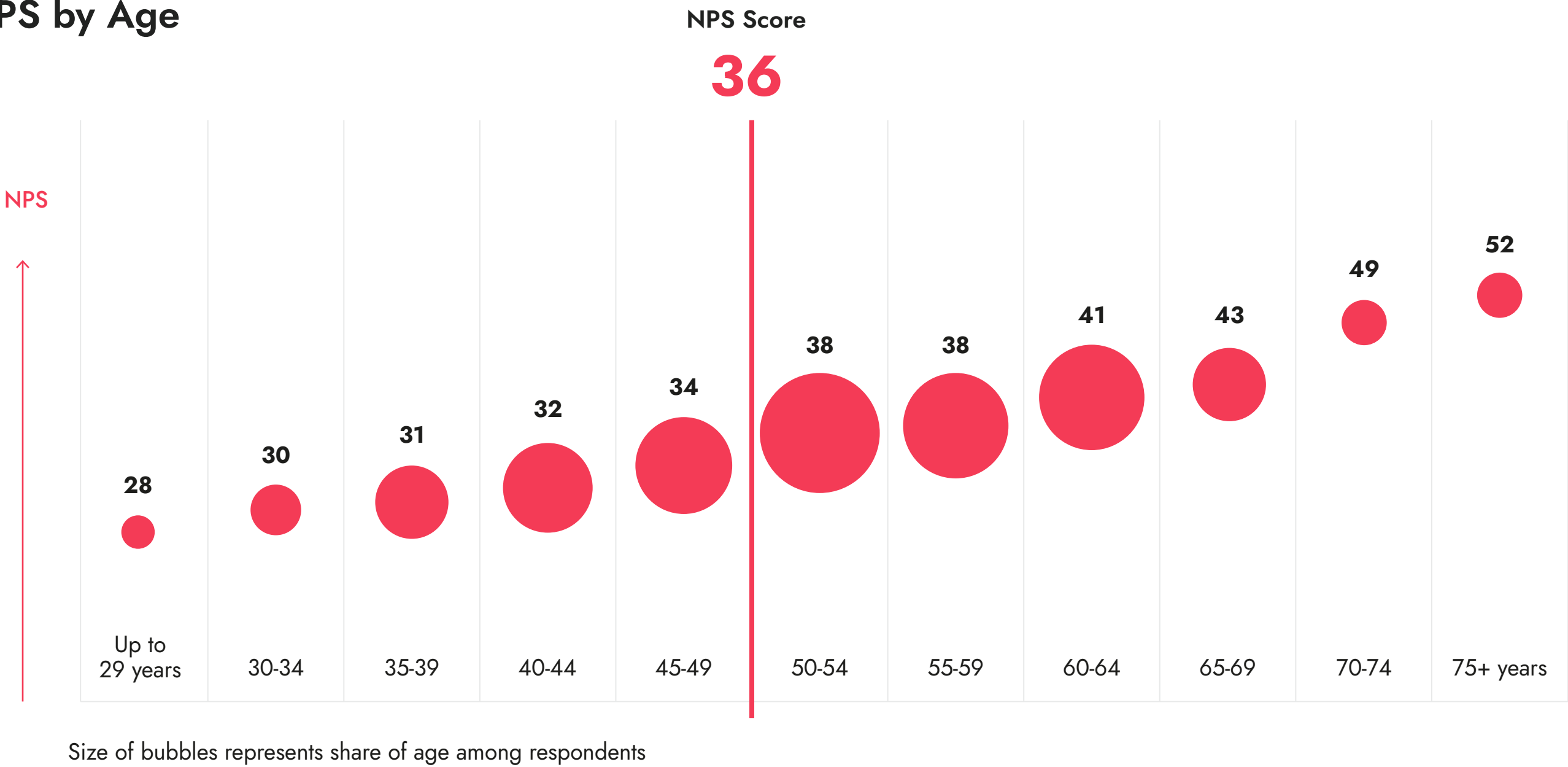
# Focus on the younger generation

The importance of focusing on the younger target audience becomes very clear when asking members if they would recommend their association to others – the older a member is, the more likely he/she is to recommend; the younger the member, the least likely. Whilst age did not remarkably affect the members’ relationship strength with their association, there is clear variance when reviewing the Net Promoter Score (NPS).

More and more associations are starting to consider actively involving younger professionals in the governance structure, ensuring that their voices are heard in the boardroom. At the least, strategy and vision need the input of this target audience. Associations must consciously seek to better understand what drives and motivates Millennials

and Gen Z to secure their involvement, active engagement, and brand loyalty. Relevance of content is vital to Millennials and Gen Z, but also equally important to Gen X. Fostering innovation and ease of access to products/programs and content were amongst other key drivers for Gen Z and Millennials.

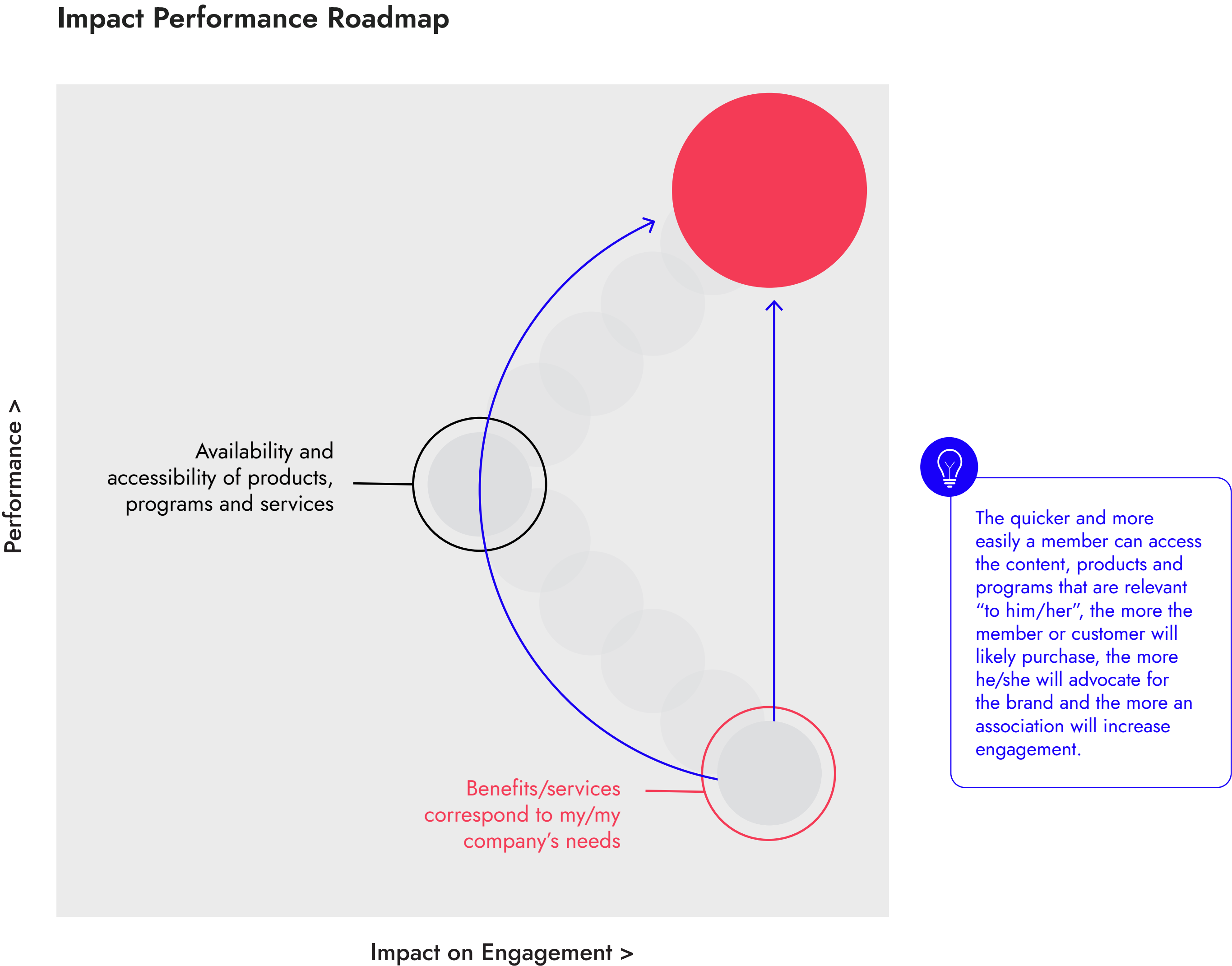
NPS by Age



However, for all age groups, the Index reveals that associations must improve the personalization and customization of their members’ and customers’ experience and access. The AEI Impact Performance Roadmap shows that members want easy access to benefits and services that correspond to “my or my company’s needs”. However, they do not highly rate associations’ performance in this regard.

If associations focus on leveraging technology, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning algorithms, predictive analytics, and data to understand customer preferences and personalize their journey, they will increase their members access to relevant content and programs, quickly and seamlessly.

This in turn enhances the member experience, creates a greater intimacy and relationship strength with the association and impacts engagement. Additionally, this focus puts members’ and customers’ needs and interests at the heart of the association’s actions enhancing member/customer centricity.



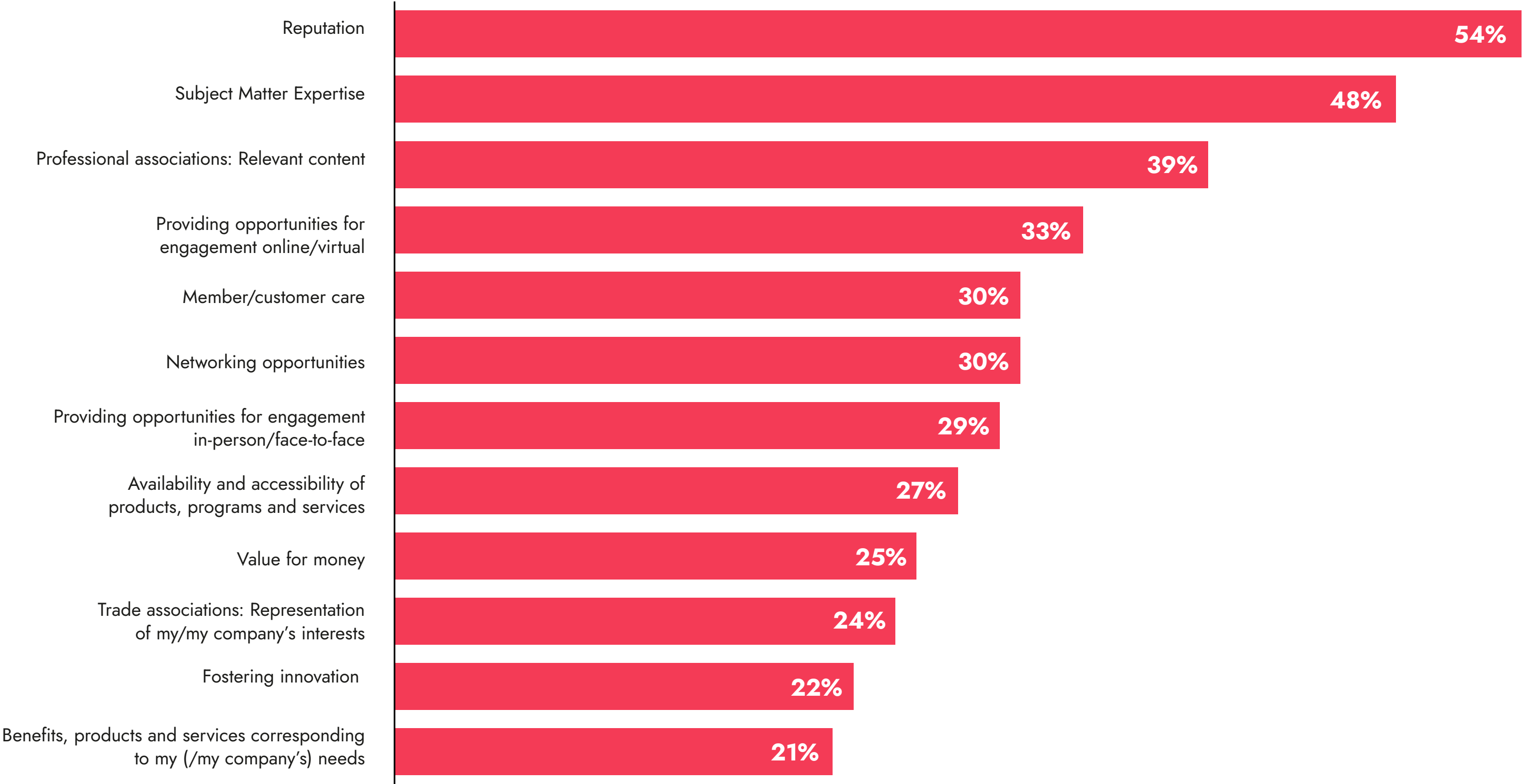


The Impact Performance Roadmap above provides associations with a clear route for improving the customer journey and member experience, thereby enhancing engagement.

A deeper dive into the Performance Evaluation shows that only 21% of the AEI respondents consider associations “excellent” at providing benefits and services that meet “my needs”. Or in the case of trade associations less than one quarter (24%) consider their association “excellent” in representing “my company’s interests.”

Conversely reputation and subject matter expertise rank highly – with more than half of the respondents awarding excellence to their association’s reputation.

Performance Evaluation

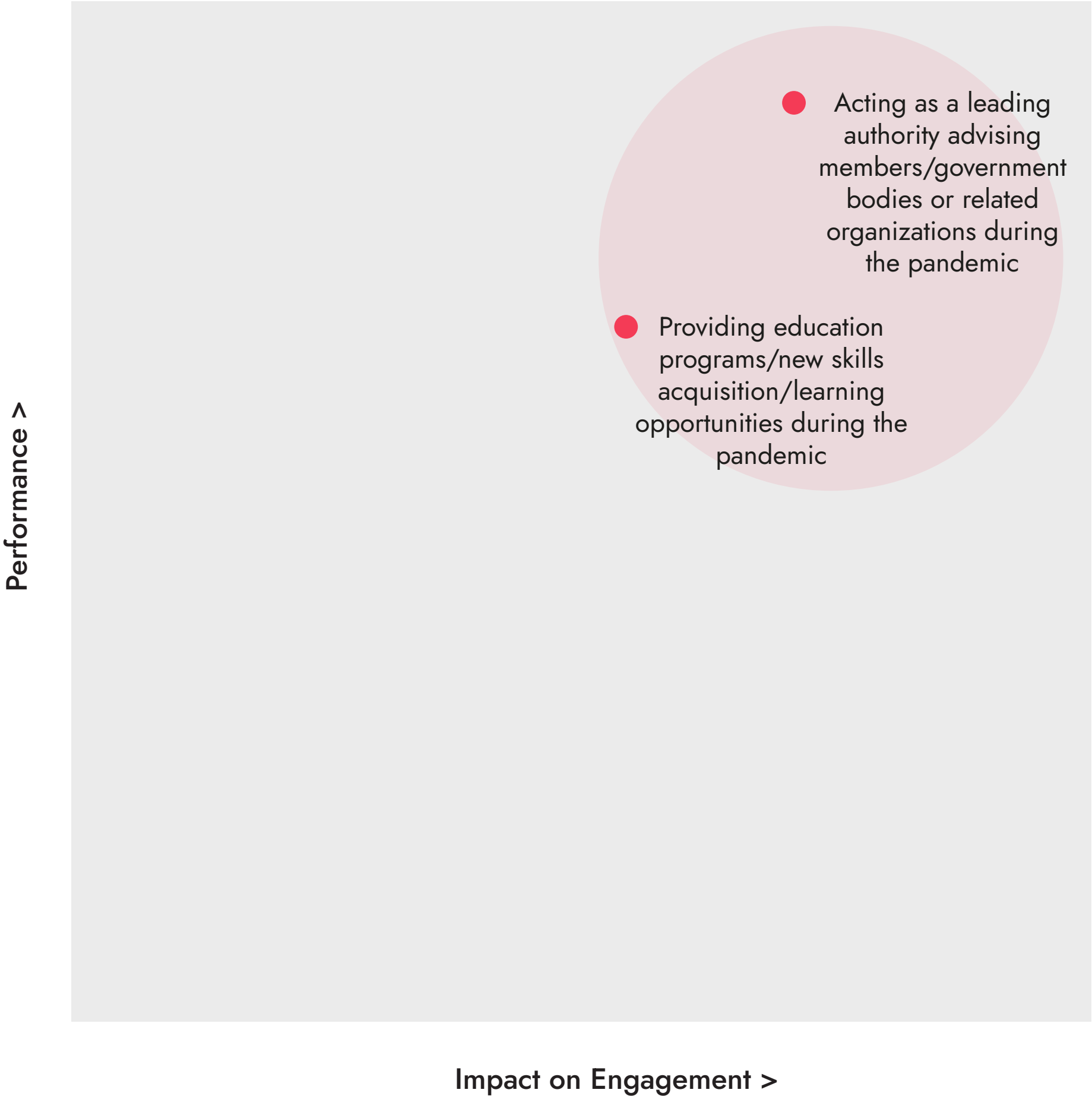


# Impact during the pandemic

The strength of associations’ brand, reputation and subject matter expertise also had a positive impact on members as we look back on the pandemic years. Associations leveraged their position of authority and focused on knowledge enhancement, and in these areas, members felt supported.

As part of their future-proofing and engagement strategies, associations should build on these strengths and continue to leverage them, as well as formalize these initiatives into contingency planning for future scenarios.

## Associations Future-proofing and Engagement Strategies



Future engagement

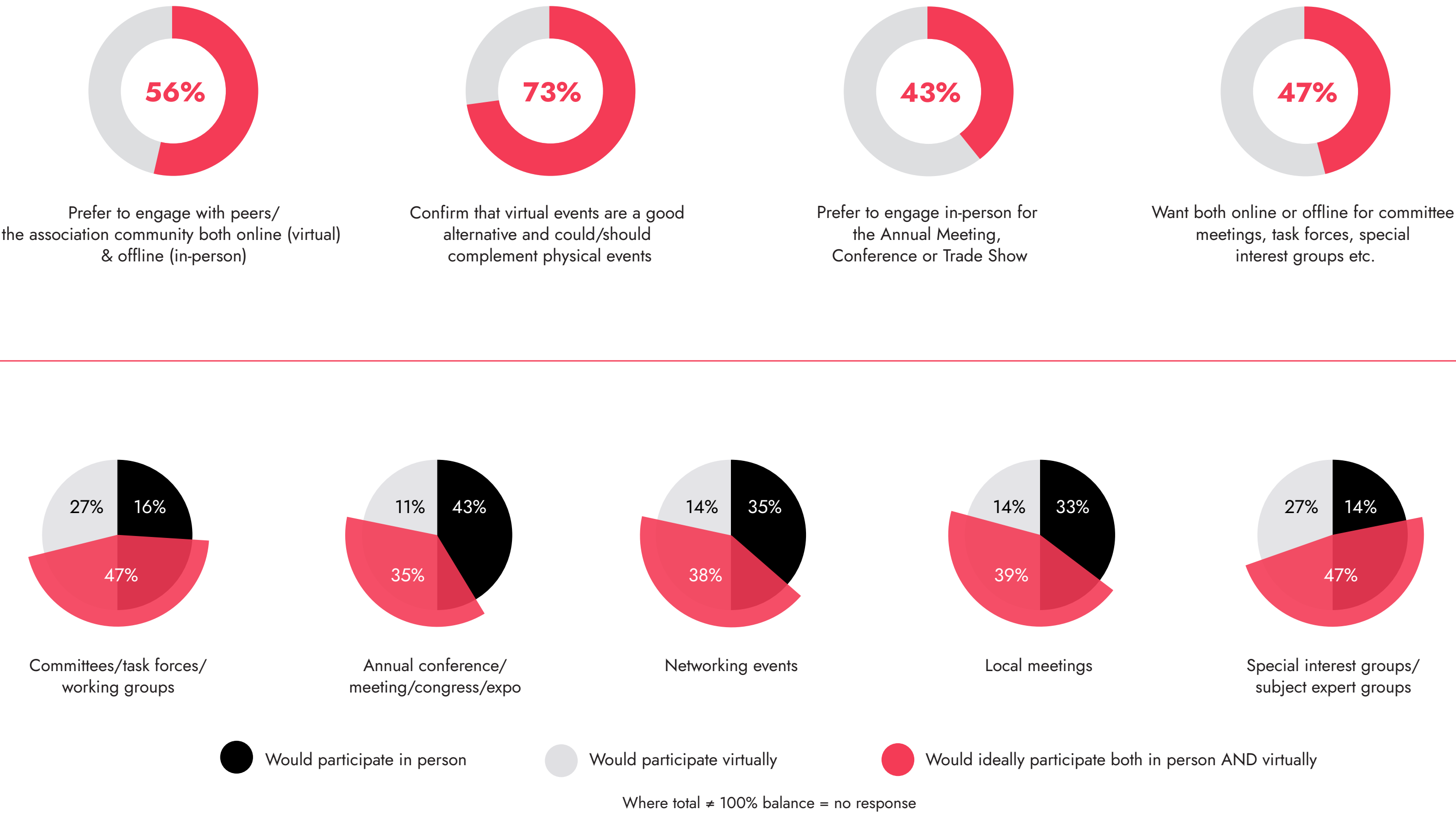
Finally, what are members and customers expecting from associations in the post-pandemic world?

The overwhelming response is choice! It is no longer a question of virtual vs. in-person – members and customers want to choose the right channel and means of engagement. Associations must leverage an omni-channel approach and build on the agility and ways of working that were introduced during the pandemic.

In all cases more than one third want flexibility!

The Right Channel for the Right Activity

When asked about their preferences relative to specific association activities or programs, the message is loud and clear - the right channel for the right activity!

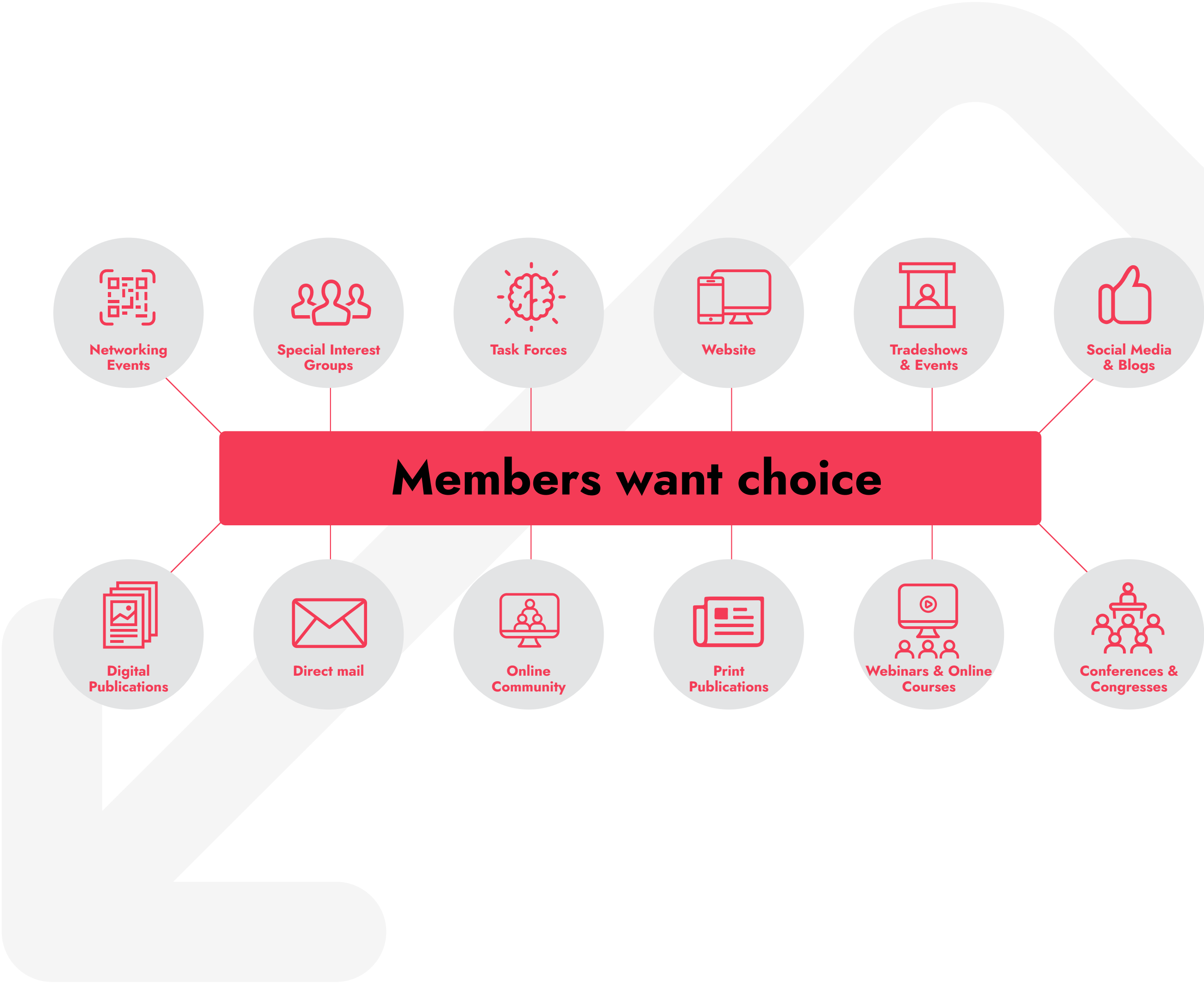




Many associations are struggling to understand the “right” way forward. Should they revert to pre-pandemic behavior, formats and design or maintain the positive transformation, agility and new ways of working that have emerged from the pandemic period?

Members and customers have shown that the “right” way is omni-channel. It fits with customization and choice.

The more an association can facilitate that choice, the more it ensures the member/customer journey matches the needs of the individual or company the higher the relationship strength and engagement impact.



# Call to Action



Choice, omni Channel and Customization



# Call to Action

Members and customers from around the world, working in multiple professions and industries have shared their insights.

The outcome is clear, associations will increase their relationship strength and enhance engagement if they focus on **the 3Cs of Engagement: Choice, omni-channel and customization.**

In summary, we recommend associations to:

- ◆ Review engagement strategies against this benchmark
- ◆ Build on the agility, ways of working, and connectivity implemented during the pandemic
- ◆ Develop specific engagement strategies for Millennials and Gen Z
- ◆ Be sure to offer a choice and multiple channels – both offline and online
- ◆ Involve young professionals in designing future strategy and relevance
- ◆ Leverage technology (data, preferences, algorithms, AI etc.) to help customize (personalize) members' access to content, programs etc.
- ◆ Adapt in line with members' evolving needs and preferences

Members and customers want a choice – the right program, service, or product, at the right time, through the right channel. Associations must enhance the members' journey with as much customization as possible based on their needs and preferences. Customization is a key driver of emotional connectivity and increased relationship strength which in turn lead to higher engagement.

**They must adopt the three Cs of engagement: give members a choice, leverage multiple channels and customize their journey.**



# What's Next





# What's Next

Over the next few months, MCI will continue the Engagement Series and publish more segmented analysis and various benchmarks arising from the Association Engagement Index. Some of the segments will include generation, association type, industry sector, geography and more...

If you have a specific request for a deeper analysis of AEI Findings, please contact us [associations@wearemci.com](mailto:associations@wearemci.com)

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**Generation Engagement** – what drives Millennials and Gen Z?



**Association Engagement** – differences between professional societies and trade associations.



**Sector Engagement** – benchmarking various sectors such as healthcare; science, engineering, technology; professional services.



**Geographic Engagement** – cultural or regional diversities.



# Association **Engagement** Index 2022

Choice, omni Channel and Customization

