




Defending Civic Space in the Fight Against Corruption Amid a Changing Global Landscape

UNCAC IRG Meeting
June 18th, 2025

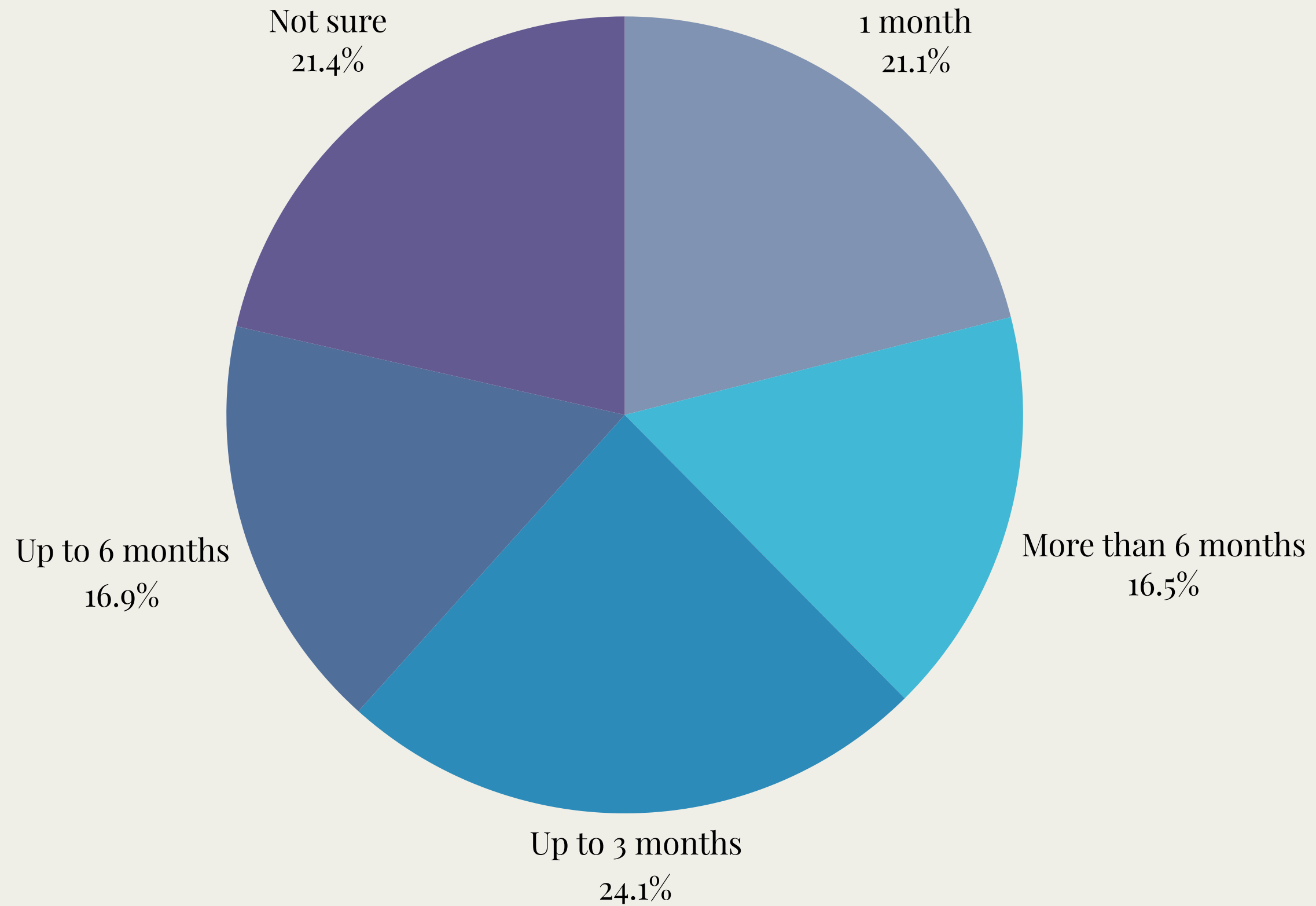
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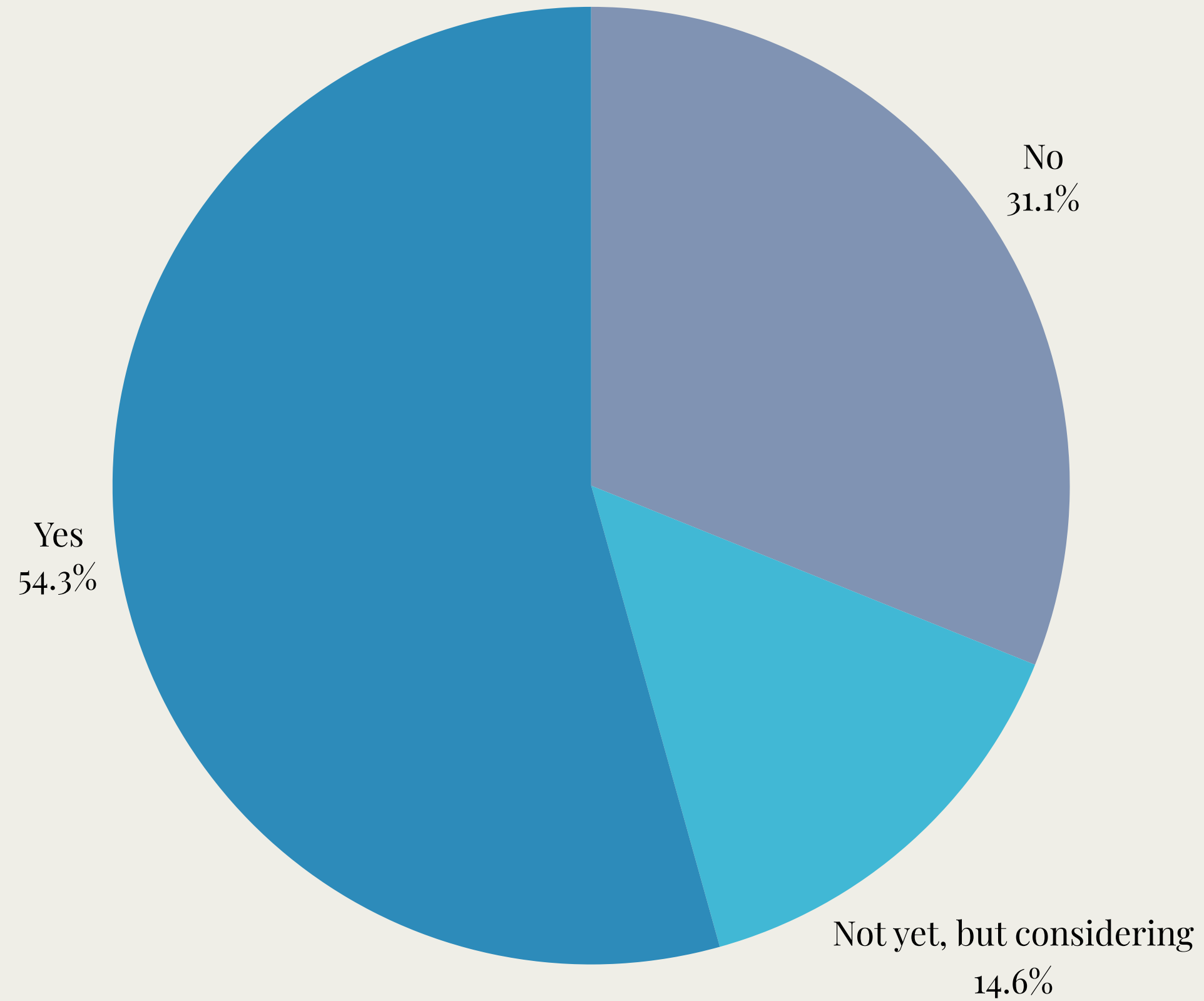


Data on the impact of the cuts to foreign assistance gathered since January shows that organizations have very limited funding runways, and need to think about alternative partnerships and structures to continue their work.

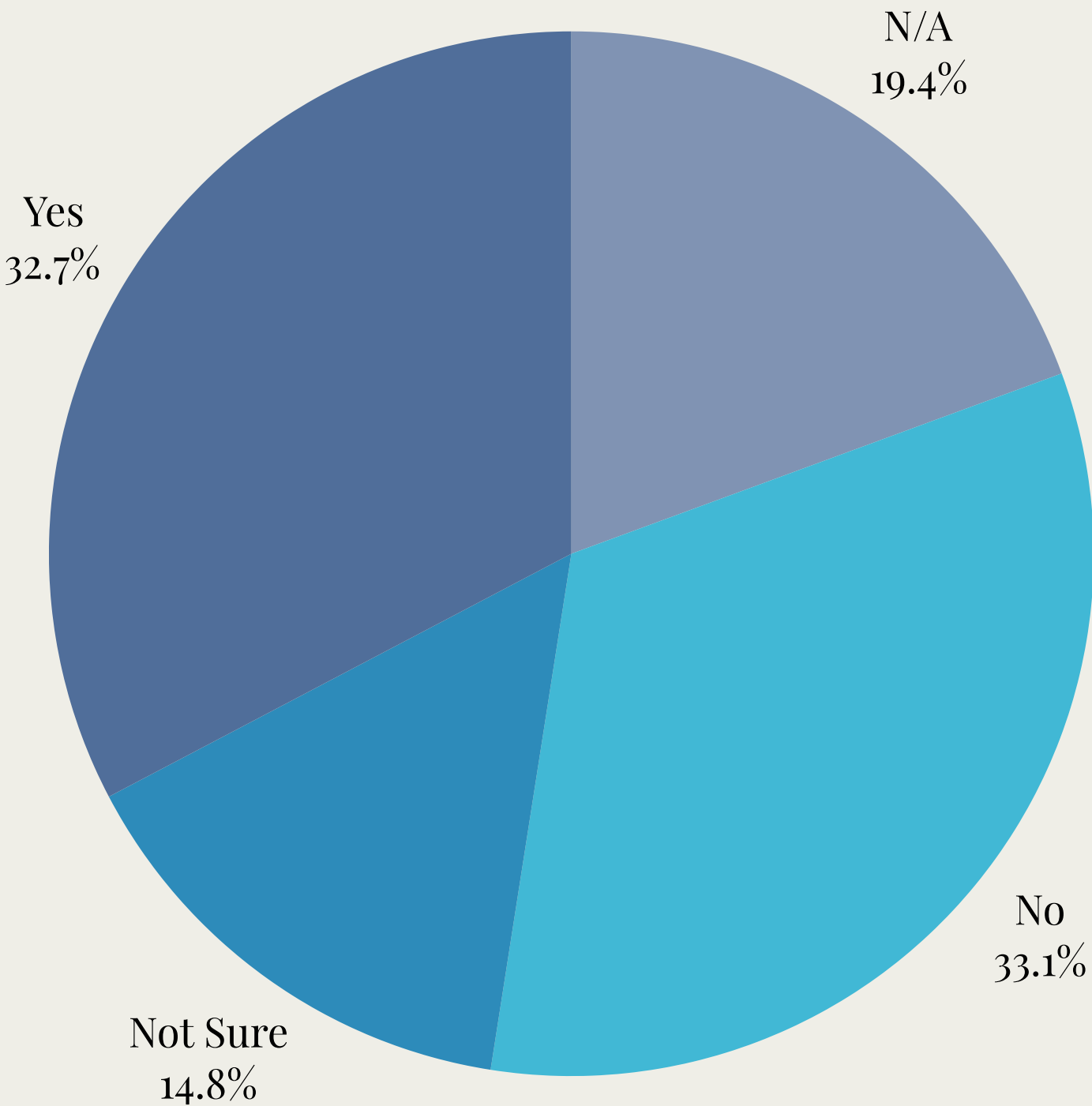
Remaining financial resources



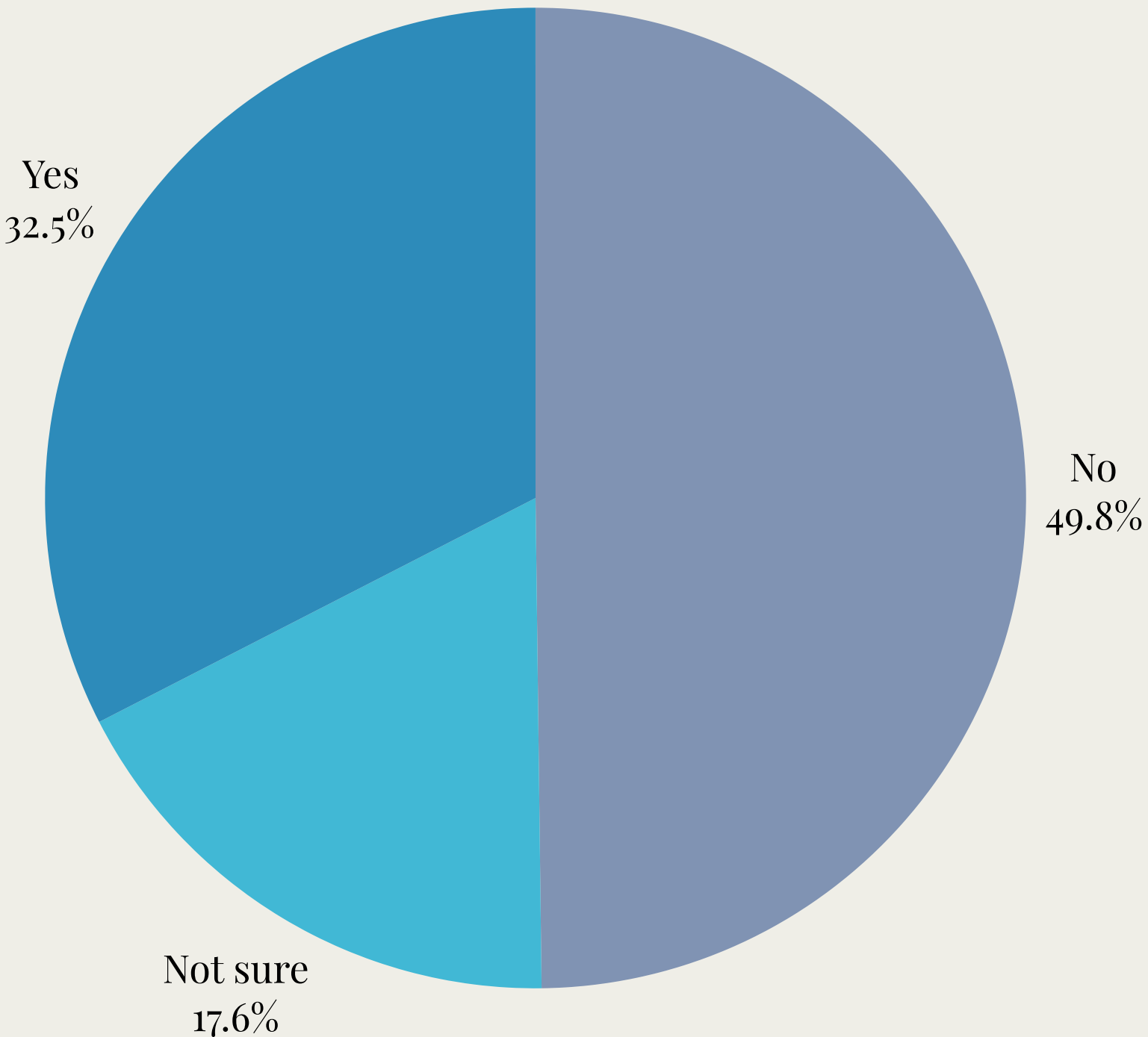
Staff laid off or furloughed



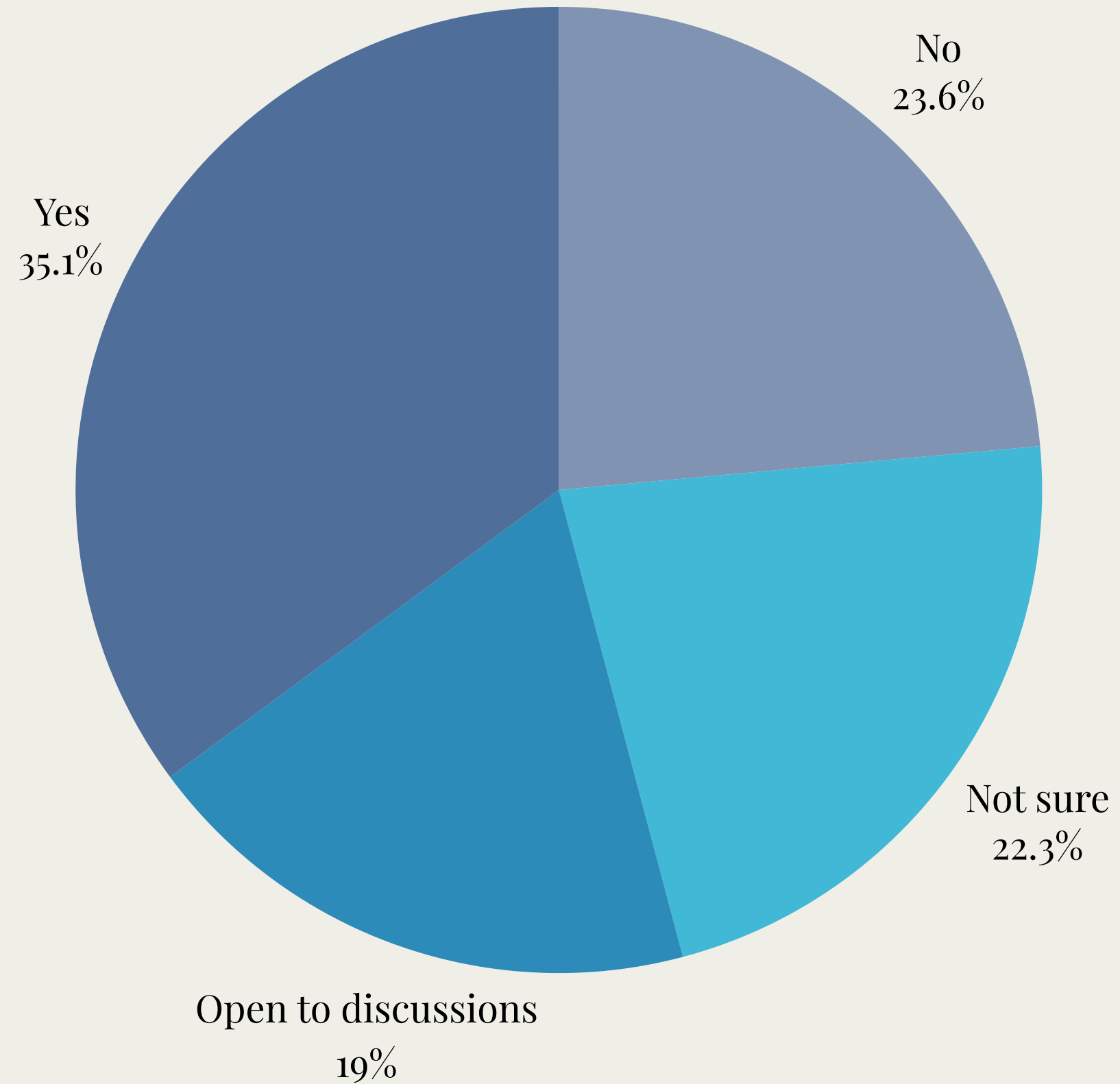
Considering closing 1 or more offices



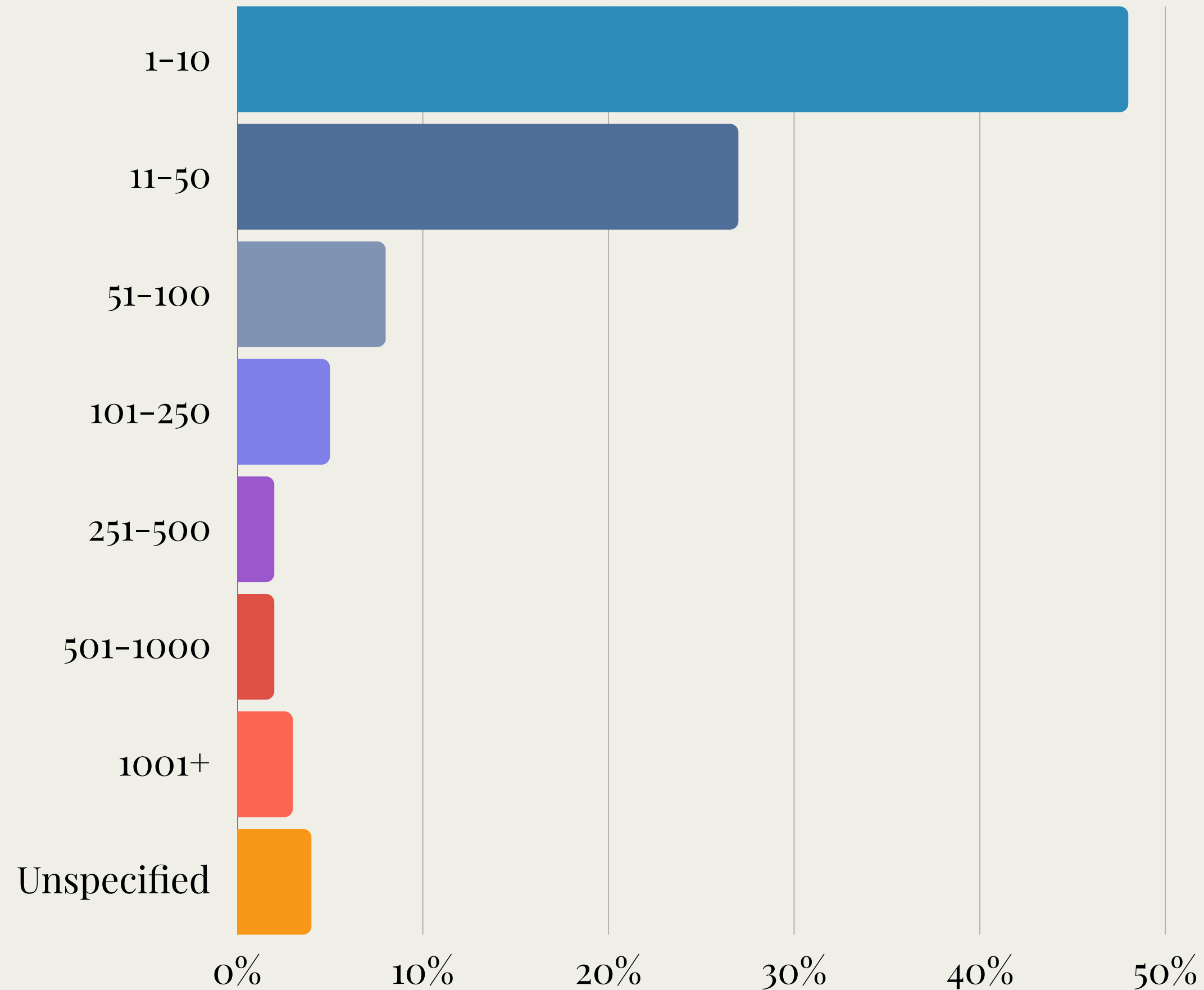
Entire org at risk of closure



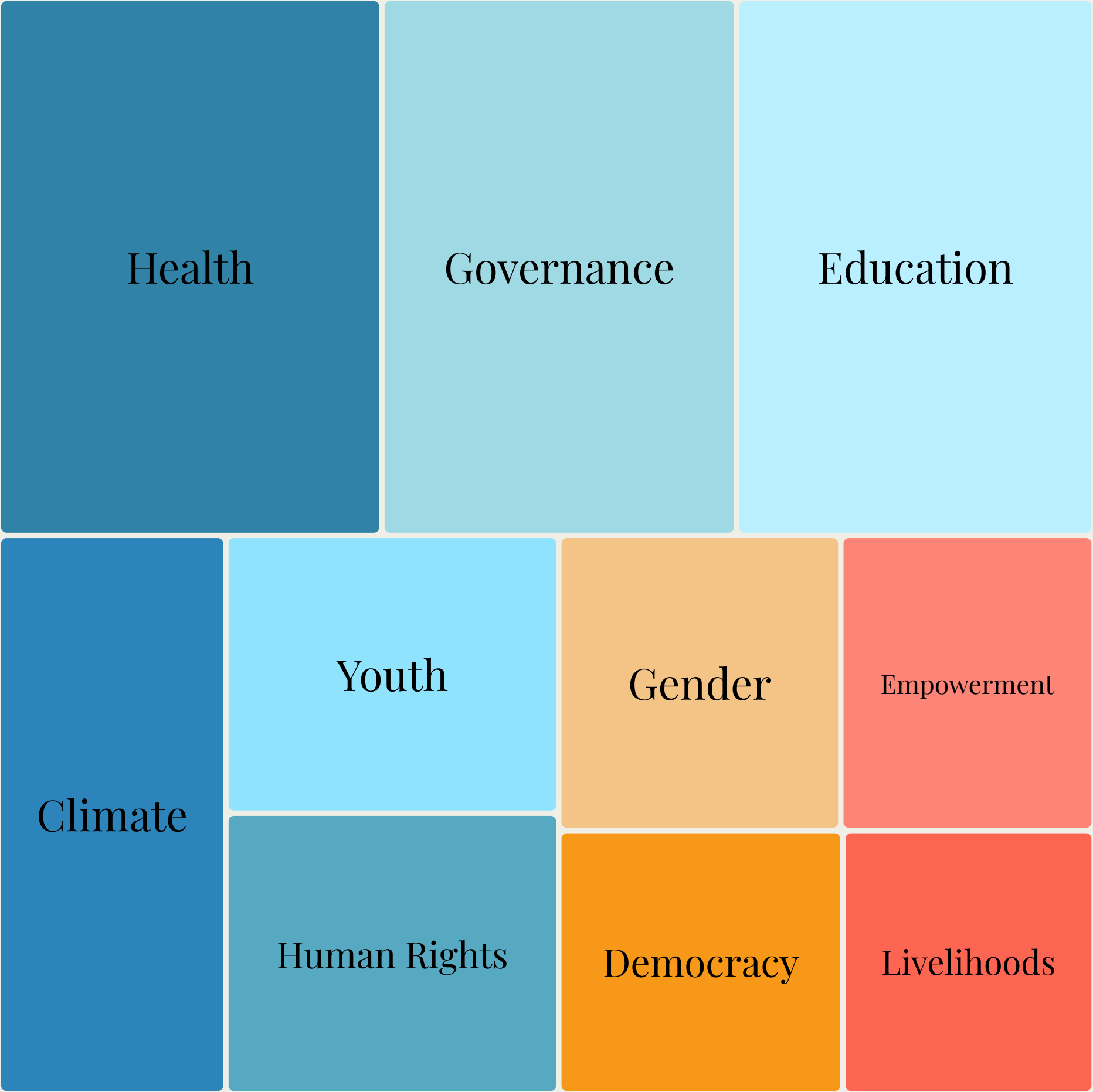
Actively considering restructuring or merging



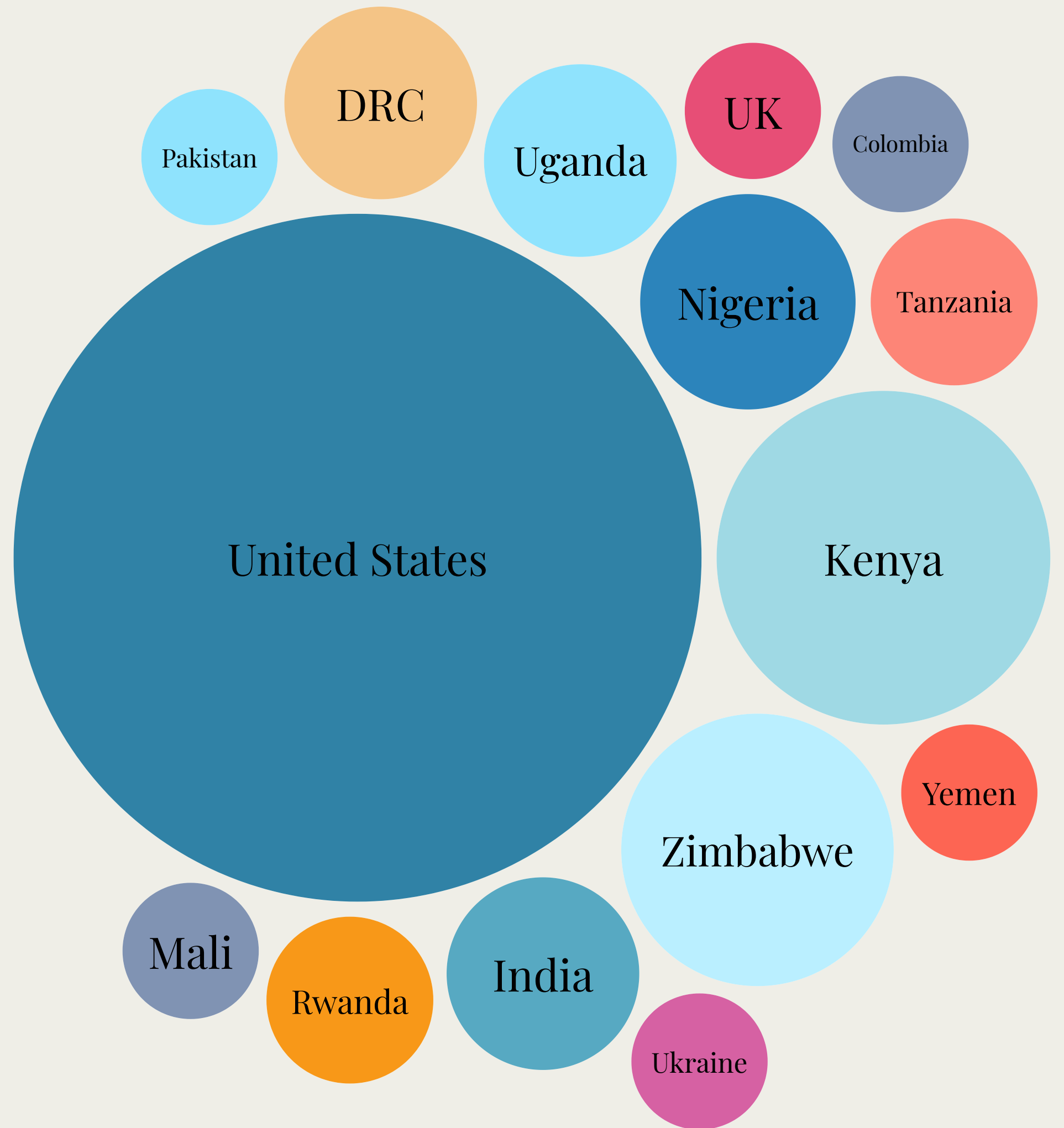
Size (employees)



Sectors most affected



Where they're based



Impact on Civic Space

Aid cuts fundamentally undermine the ability of civil society to uphold, protect and defend human rights and to exercise their freedom of association, protected under Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

01

Reduced organizational effectiveness and sustainability

02

Heightened threats, surveillance and legal restrictions

03

Aid cuts as cover for governments to roll back progressive policies

04

Shut down of media outlets exacerbates press freedom issues

05

Increased room for non-democratic actors to grow influence

Impact on the Anti-Corruption Field

We've seen this story before- 2019 aid cuts in Central America led to increased organized crime and corruption (Small Wars Journal)

01

Shifts in norms away from transparency and accountability

02

Race to the bottom in terms of standards

03

Diminishes oversight mechanisms and judicial institutions

04

Undermines a level playing field for business

05

Reduces cross-border and transnational efforts to fight corruption

Examples of Impact on the Anti-Corruption Field

Perhaps too early to show causation in every case- but certainly a very strong correlation between US foreign assistance cuts and increased corruption

01

El Salvador- since cuts to governance support, Bukele has arrested and intimidated scores of lawyers and watchdogs

02

Cancellation of anti-human-trafficking work targeted at addressing forced labor compounds that fuel digital fraud like investment scams in SE Asia.

03

Cut funding for International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)- investigations now dropped.

04

Cut support to Somalia- Al- Shabab have seized dozens of towns since as corruption has increased

05

Zambia- sharp escalation in illicit financial flows via corporate tax avoidance without oversight mechanisms funded by US

Advice to CSOs

This is the most difficult period for civil society globally in a generation. We need to reimagine this moment as a time to do things differently

01

Don't under-estimate the psycho-social impacts of all of this

02

Focus on risks- security, political, legal, financial; and double down on local legitimacy

03

Investigate new ways to message the importance of what we do

04

Find ways to move from filling gaps to providing value for the field- and look at strategic alliances across sectors

05

Collectivize resources/pool back-end capacity and explore synergies with other organizations