

# Volunteering during lockdown



**NOTE:** *Text translated in the context of a Translation Work Experience module by students in the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ UK.*



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\*Télé-Bénévolat® = Our term for all voluntary work done from a distance through different mediums (phone, email, videolink, etc)

# Background information

- **24th January 2020:** The first 3 cases of COVID-19 are recorded in France
- **23rd February:** Launch of the ORSAN\* strategy
- **12th March:** Emmanuel Macron gives presidential address confirming the spread of the virus
- **14th March:** Transition to stage 3 of the ORSAN strategy (circulation of the virus nationwide, introduction of measures designed to limit the effects of the pandemic)
- **16th March at 8pm:** announcement of lockdown starting on 17th March at midday
- **11th May:** progressive easing of lockdown

\*acronym referring to the organisation for the French healthcare system's response to exceptional healthcare situations

# Looking closer to support better

- **20th March – 7th April:** launch of #COVID-1 survey of 20,324 representatives of associations (*Mouvement associatif, Réseau National des Maisons des Associations*, in collaboration with DJEPVA\* with the support of R&S) to find out about the human and economic impacts of the crisis during lockdown (commencing 17th March).
- **14th May:** launch of #COVID-2 survey of representatives of associations (same representatives as the #COVID-1 survey) to clarify economic impacts and support needs, in the context of gradual lifting of restrictions (commencing 11th May)
- **10th March:** launch of the annual *Baromètre d'Opinion des Bénévoles* (Internal Survey for Volunteers) on the theme of "volunteering in the digital age", in collaboration with several partners. Approximately 900 statements from volunteers received until the interruption of the survey due to lockdown placing it "out of context".
- **Mid-April:** discussions with partners to adapt this initial survey and decision made to look at the reality of "volunteering in lockdown"
- **28th April-11th May:** statements received from 2,365 volunteers for the second survey.

\* Direction de la Jeunesse, de l'Education populaire et de la Vie associative du Ministère de l'Education nationale (*Department of Youth, mainstream Education and community Life of the Ministry of National Education*)

# Objectives of the 2nd survey

**Rallying of several partners:** government service in charge of charities, volunteering specialists, platform administrators connecting volunteers and associations, stakeholders in the digital community...

**With 2 main objectives:**

- 1. Observe the ways in which volunteers have adapted** to these exceptional circumstances during lockdown:
  - How they have relied on digital technology to develop or initiate new ideas
  - How, similarly to remote working, circumstances have favoured the breakthrough of Télé-Bénévolat® as a way of volunteering remotely, as individuals or in groups
- 2. Inform the associations** about the prospects offered by Télé-Bénévolat®:
  - How to integrate practices acquired during lockdown into their daily lives
  - How to promote and support new ideas based on the results of this survey and on the experiences of other associations

# Methodology

- Online survey conducted **between 28th April and 11th May 2020**
- **2,365** respondents representing the diversity of volunteers in France:
  - From all regions
  - Of all ages
  - Working with associations of different activities (sports, health, social, culture, leisure, mainstream education, environment...)
  - In a range of roles (support workers, facilitators, project managers and directors)
  - With varying volunteering hours (from several hours a year to more than 10 hours per week)
- **Results weighted** according to the quotas applied to "gender" and "age" variables, based on the results of the *IFOP-France Bénévolat-Recherches & Solidarités\** national survey of 2019.

\*IFOP is an international polling and market research firm.

# Before lockdown

*With conditions requiring remote intervention, our intentions are clearer and stronger.*



# Looking back at the 1st survey

- **A key date:** Speech from the French President on 12th March confirming that *"...despite our best efforts to slow the virus down, it continues to spread at an accelerated rate. We feared this might happen. This is why I'm asking tonight that those over 70, those who suffer with chronic illnesses or with respiratory problems, and disabled people, stay at home as much as possible..."*
- From the results of the following question, the quick preparation of some volunteers became apparent:
- *"The current events mean we must consider the risks of an epidemic. Thus, insofar as you will be unable to travel for the time being, is it likely that digital tools would allow you to continue your voluntary work for the association?"*
- **A two-pronged approach:**
  - Responses from 505 volunteers received before 12th March
  - Responses from 348 volunteers received after 12th March
  - For accurate comparison, the social compositions of the two groups were checked

# Quick preparation

*The current events mean we must consider the risk of an epidemic. Thus, insofar as you will be unable to travel for the time being, is it likely that digital tools would allow you to continue your voluntary work for the association?*




	Before 12th March	After 12th March
You are already established in this type of remote intervention	59%	61%
You plan to get started, if the need arises	7%	13%
This would not be possible, by the nature of your work	20%	18%
You don't have the technical skills or the know-how	1%	2%
Unsure	7%	4%
No response	5%	3%
Total	100%	100%

Increased  
intent

Reduced  
uncertainty

# More determined profiles

*You plan to get started, if the need arises*

		Before 12th March	After 12th March	
Gender	Male	7%	15%	
	Female	8%	10%	
Age	Under 50s	8%	6%	
	50-59 year old	5%	14%	
	60-64 year old	7%	15%	
	Over 65	7%	14%	
How often	Several hours a year or a month	11%	11%	
	Several hours each week	6%	14%	
	At least 10 hours each week	7%	13%	

Greatest gains observed amongst male respondents, over 50s and those committing the most time to volunteering

# Lockdown and the Télé-Bénévolat® breakthrough

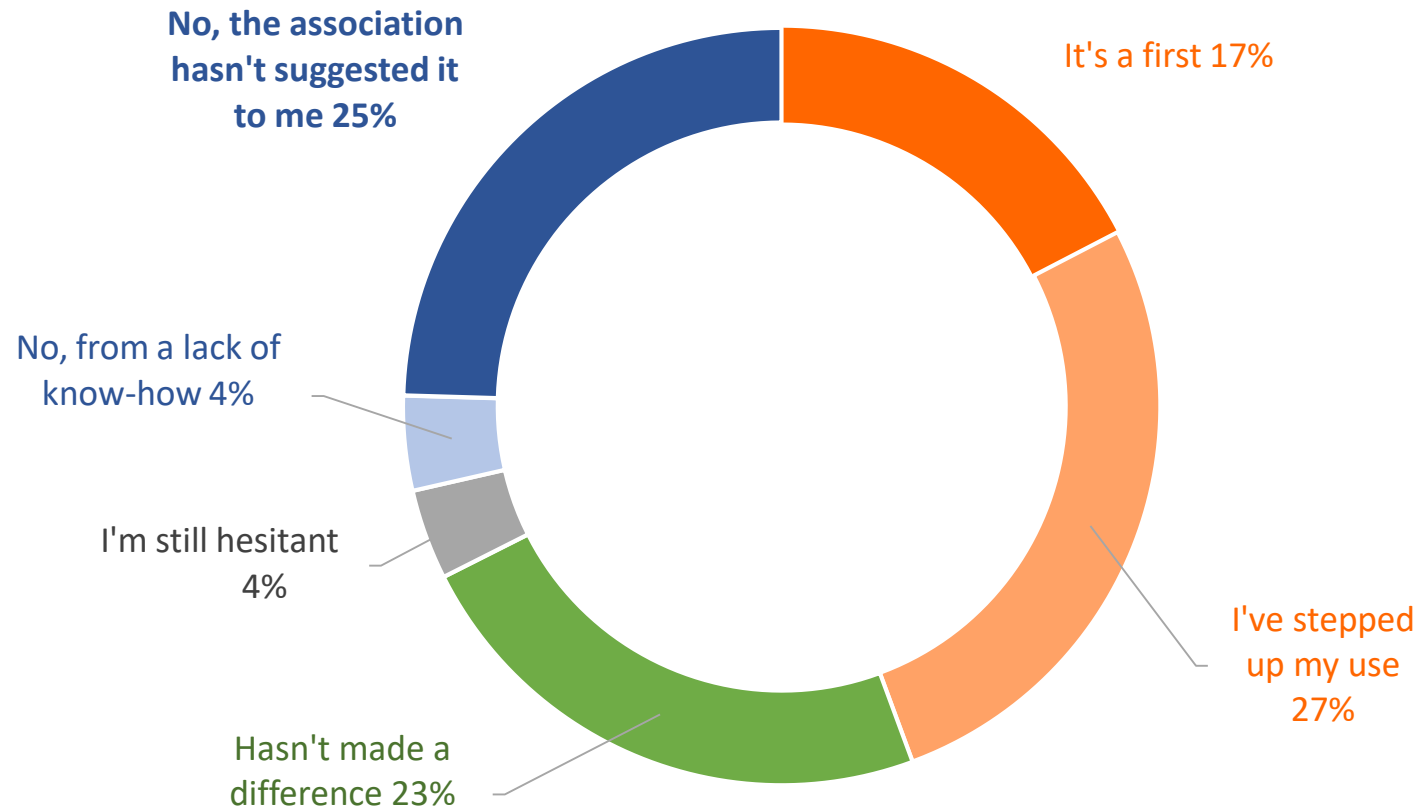
# An increase in uses

- **Necessary adaptation to the constraints of lockdown:**
  - A greater awareness of the digital possibilities to keep the link between different association stakeholders (managers, volunteers, members, employees as well as partners).
  - The need to expand the use of digital technology is becoming more evident as the lockdown period continues; for collaborative efforts, training, new ways of working etc...
- **Favourable conditions:**
  - A willingness on behalf of many individuals to make themselves useful during the crisis
  - The example of remote working with, for some volunteers, professional tools and know-how made available to the association
  - For some, a new availability linked to lockdown: partial working hours, reduced timetables for students, stricter isolation for vulnerable people, etc...
- **Some digital uses are already commonplace in associations:**
  - To the point of being completely normalised and not being considered as volunteering time
  - Others were able to be scaled up, shared and adapted in certain associations.

# Télé-Bénévolat<sup>®</sup> during lockdown

*"Since lockdown, have you taken part in Télé-Bénévolat<sup>®</sup>? In other words, do you use digital devices for your remote volunteering activity (computer, smartphone or telephone, telephone conferences...)"*

The important role and potential of associations driving the trend



Télé-Bénévolat<sup>®</sup>: a practice for around 2/3 of volunteers

# What our volunteers said...



*The interface for getting in touch with isolated people is perfect. I fully intend to continue using this after lockdown!*

*I carried out a tutoring project for children living in shelters. Digital tools worked perfectly for me. Even though this assignment will finish at the end of June, I intend to register for another assignment with Bibliothèque sans frontières (Libraries Without Borders)*

*I celebrated my grandson's birthday on videocall. It gave me the idea to organise something similar for the 2 or 3 associations in which I'm involved.*

*We realised that before, the digital platform was mainly used to communicate externally. But with lockdown and all the discussions that we have had between volunteers, we've become aware that it could also be used internally.*

*I started by making masks from home, and I fully intend to get involved remotely with Solidarités Nouvelles pour le Logement\*.*

\*an organisation that aims to provide more affordable accommodation

# Lockdown: a catalyst for some...

*Télé-Bénévolat®*, a first during lockdown,  
experienced especially by:

Under 25-year olds

- A strong desire to act
- Better knowledge of digital tools

One-off volunteers

- Going one step further in their volunteering and with increased availability

Those volunteering in the social, healthcare, and international solidarity sectors

- New kinds of involvement for volunteers "in the field"

*Looking ahead*

Two target groups to be given priority when proposing *Télé-Bénévolat®* assignments. Either one-offs, or alongside usual assignments.

An opportunity for new projects? For example, the fight against intergenerational isolation.



# ...and an accelerator for others

*Télé-Bénévolat®*, an improved skill.  
Especially for:



*Looking ahead?*

A desire to get involved, despite professional and familial constraints.

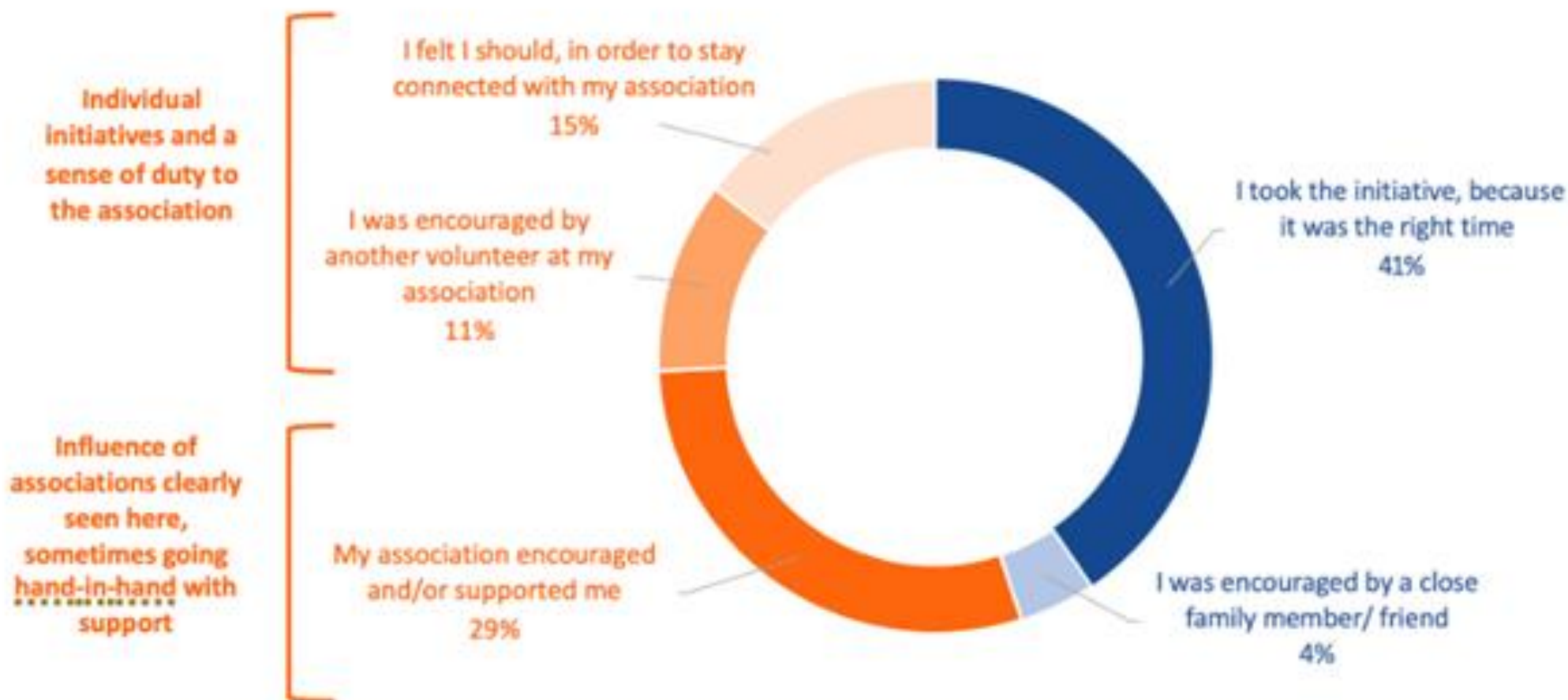
A desire to get involved, a desire for flexibility

New habits for maintaining contact between two projects to be preserved

An opportunity for new projects?

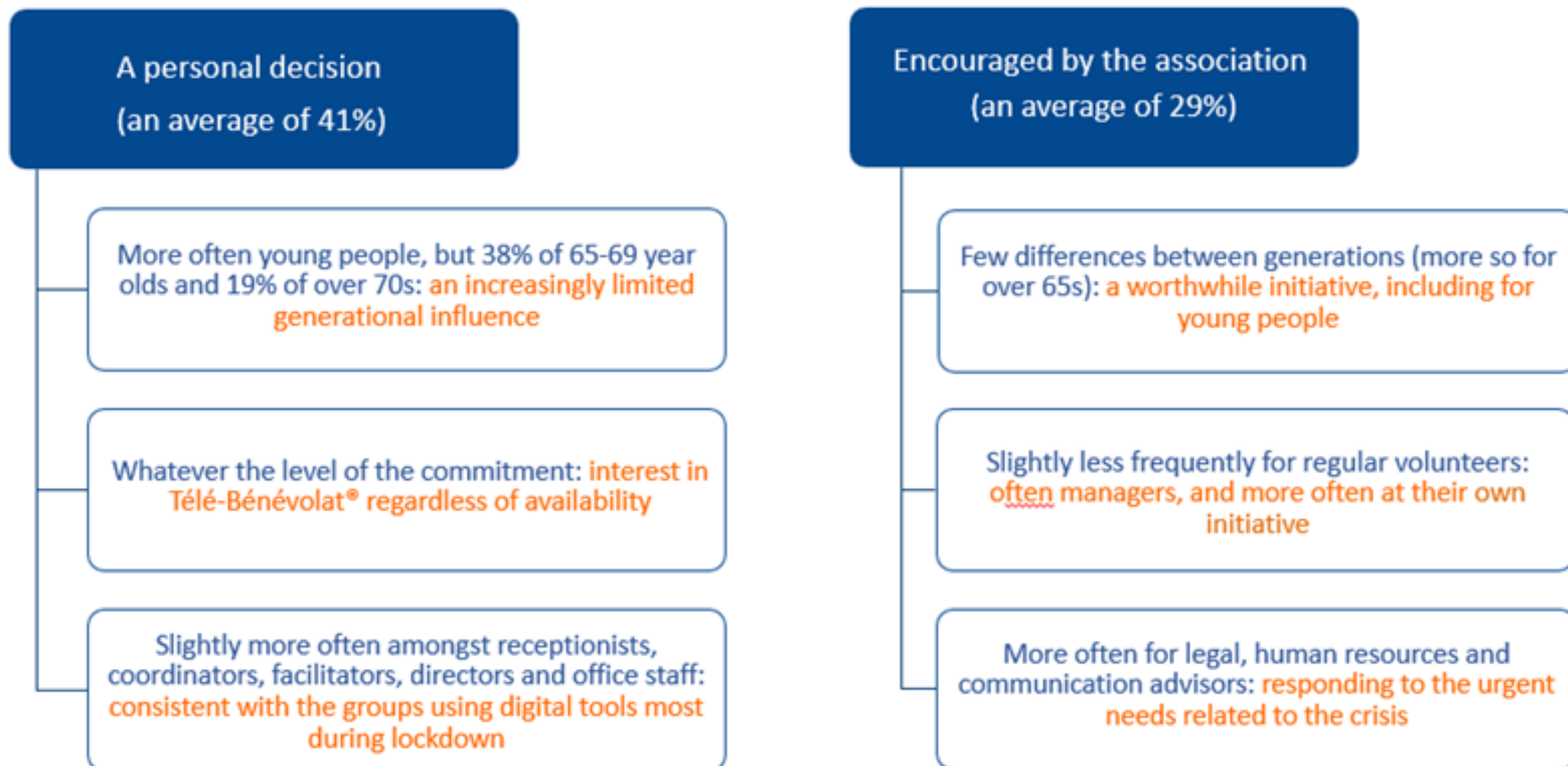
# First steps towards Télé-Bénévolat®

*"If getting involved with Télé-Bénévolat® was a first for you over lockdown, how did this come about?"*



# Télé-Bénévolat® - Open to all

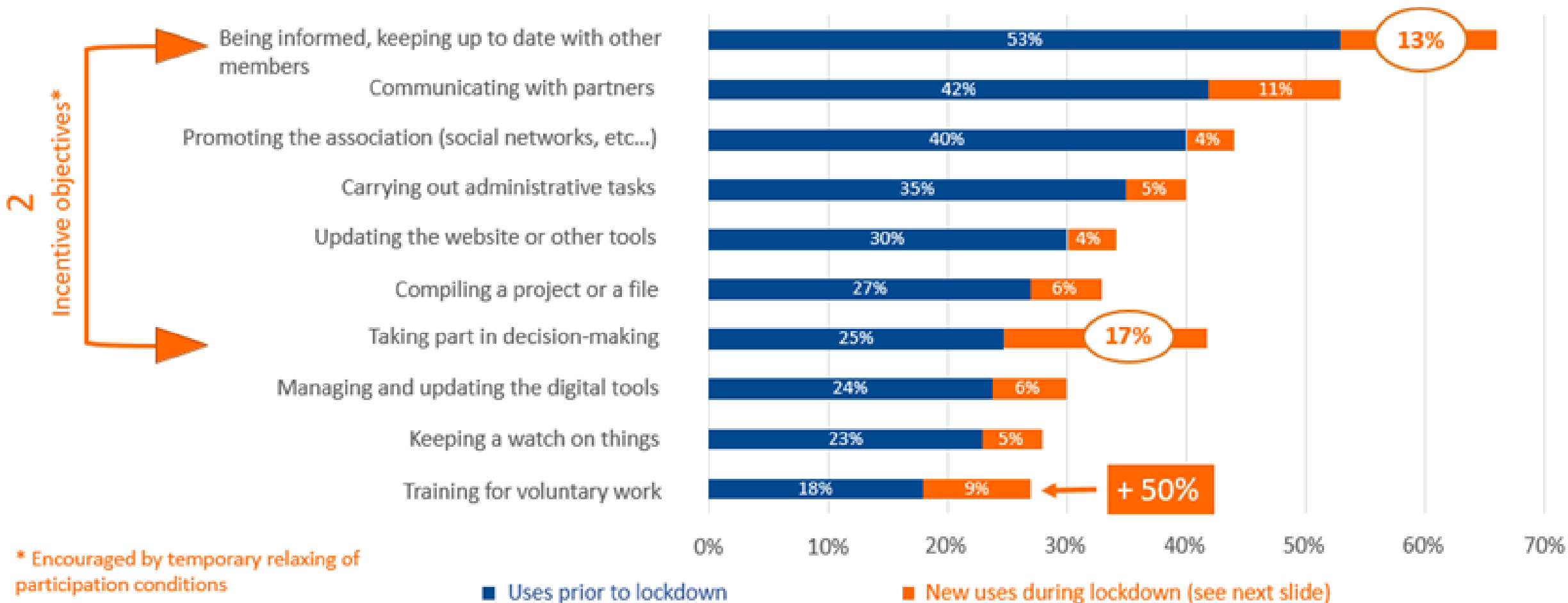
*Few typical profiles, whether Télé-Bénévolat® was undertaken through a personal initiative or encouraged by the association*



# Experiences of Télé-Bénévolat® during lockdown

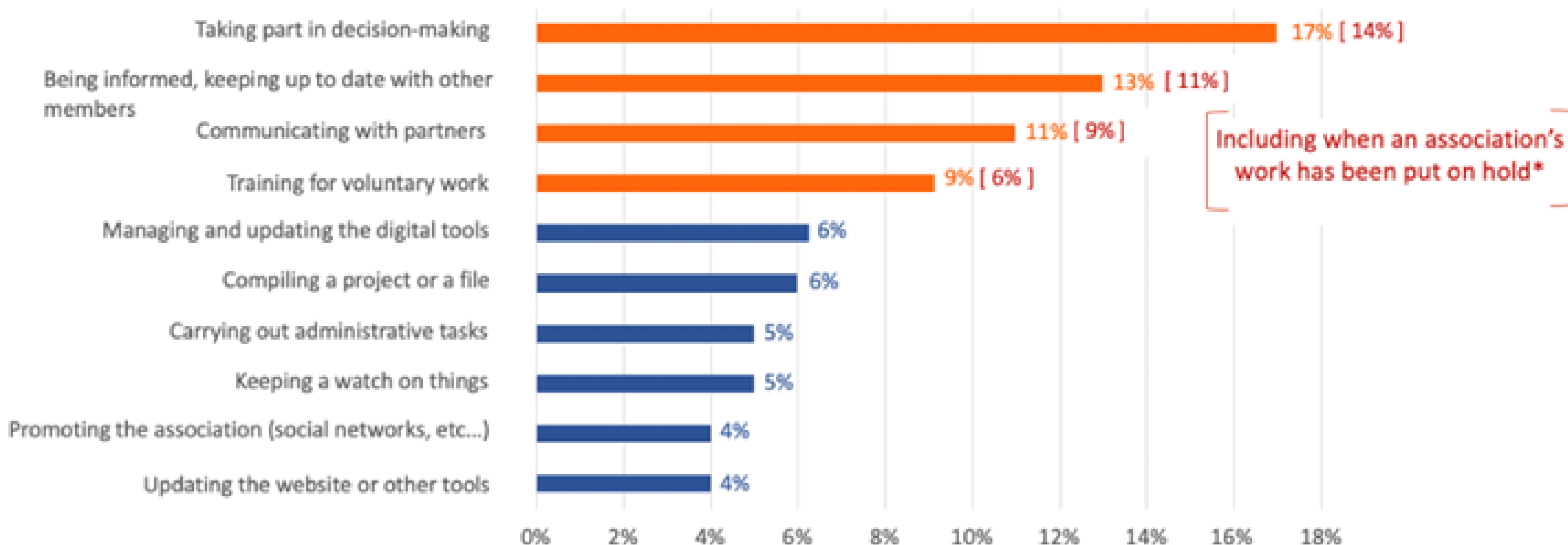
# Télé-Bénévolat®: what's it for?

"If you have used digital tools for your remote volunteering during lockdown, this is for...":



# New uses

*Digital uses developed during lockdown: more internal exchanges and preparation for what comes next*



\* For around 80% of associations this standby period did not prevent some digital uses



# The advantages of Télé-Bénévolat®

Using digital technology for your voluntary work during lockdown allows you to:

First, anticipate the future

Go forward with ideas and projects despite difficult circumstances

42%

Prepare to return to work

37%

Finally get back in touch with other volunteers

32%

Test new tools or improve your skills

28%

Help the association to grow using digital tools

21%

Familiarise yourself with certain digital tools

18%

Get your association's former volunteers back on board

13%

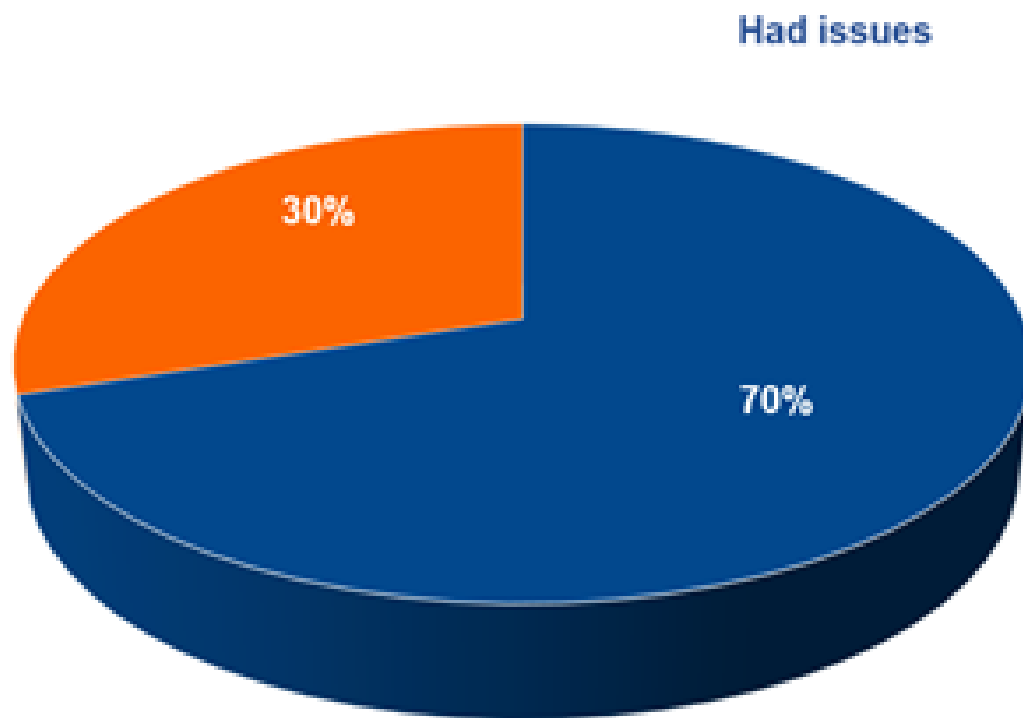
A new dynamic

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%

Ensuring continuity and thinking of tomorrow: training, improving relations (including with former partners)

# Common issues with digital tools

Had no issues



Had issues

Human-level issues experienced less by over 65s: are they more accustomed?

With technical aspects (breakdown, connection problems...)

23%

On a human level (feelings of isolation, lack of relationships and togetherness...)

16%

With knowledge of digital tools/needing to be trained

16%

Due to a lack of information, coordination or of a designated go-to

8%

Due to personal organisation (children, remote working...)

7%

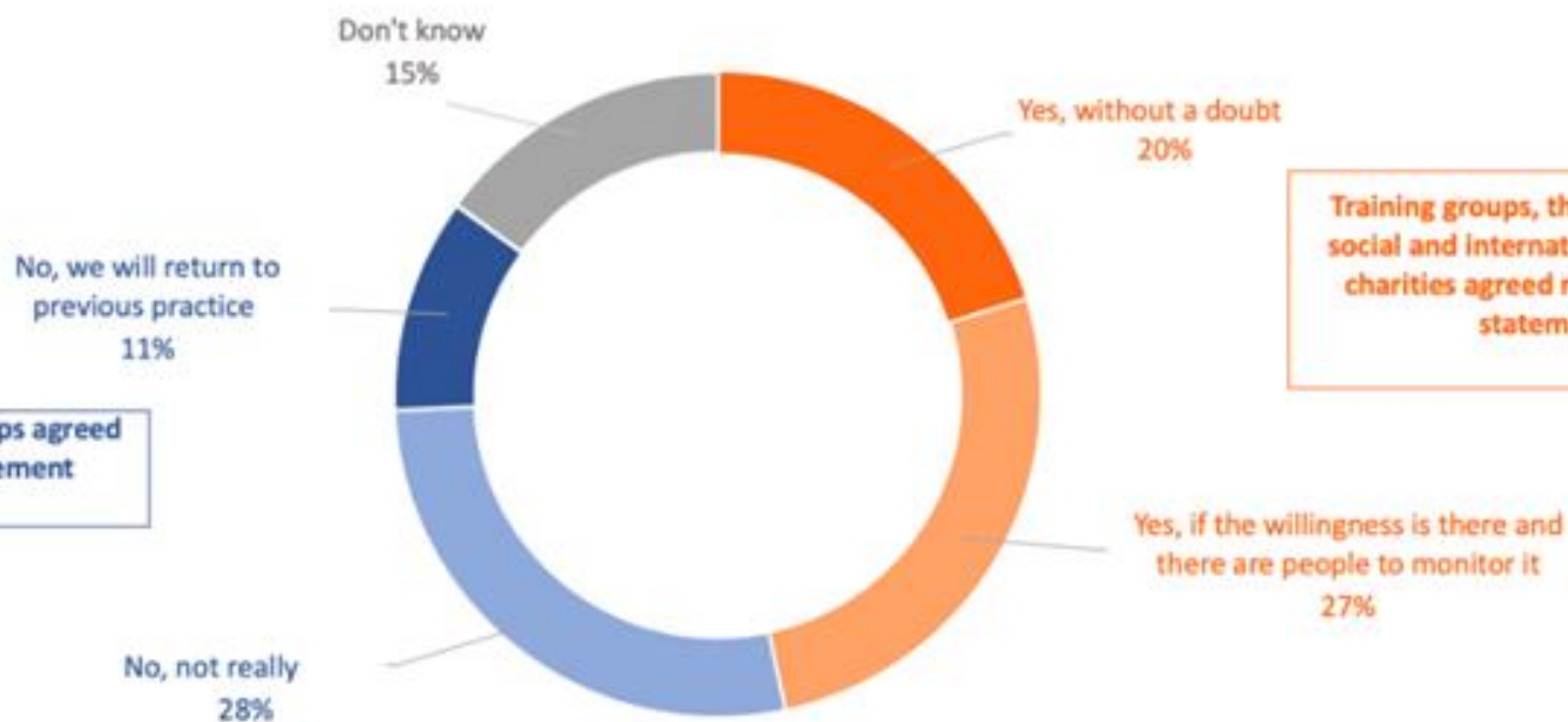
Technical difficulties increased with age : 12% of under 25s yet 25% of over 70s



Outlook for the future

# How does tomorrow look for your association?

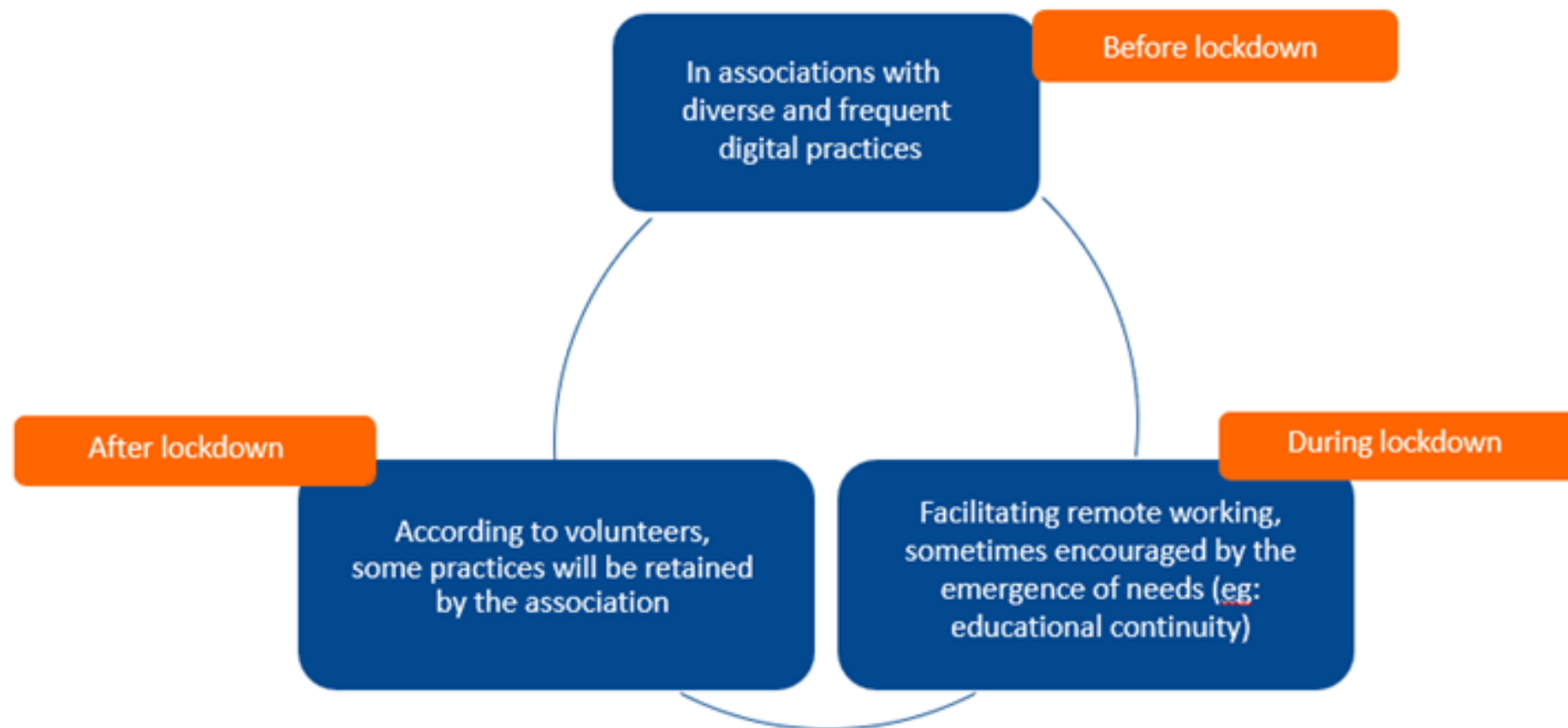
*"Looking to the future, do you think this two-month period will change the way your association works, favouring Télé-Bénévolat®?"*



Sport and culture groups agreed least with this statement

Training groups, then healthcare, social and international solidarity charities agreed most with this statement

# A virtuous circle



Advantages for “connected” associations, but a greater consideration necessary for other associations: need of a global approach, not just technical, pitfalls to avoid...

See study [La place du numérique dans le projet associative\\*](#) R&S – [Solidatech](#) 2019

\*The place of digital tools in associative projects

# What about you?

*"In terms of your personal activity using Télé-Bénévolat® within your association, do you think that going forward this may develop?"*

There are still volunteers to convince, encourage, and support!

Didn't respond  
7%

I still don't know  
29%

I'm afraid of being overwhelmed and having difficulty keeping up  
2%

I got involved, I enjoyed it, and I want to continue

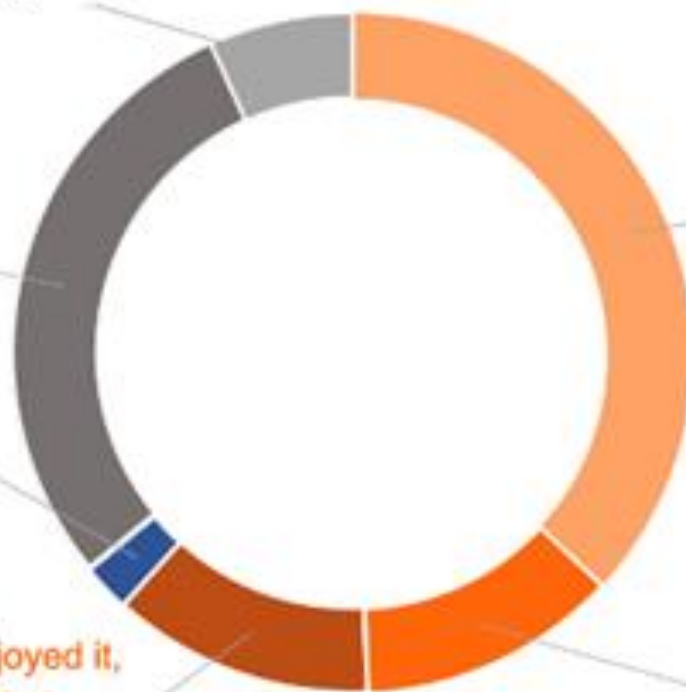
It was already happening, and it will continue as it is  
37%

It was already happening, and will progress further

**12%**

More enthusiasm amongst under 35s

**12%**



# Les atouts du numérique

- **During lockdown** many solutions enabled associations, most of which had been put on hold, to maintain links between directors and volunteers, and where possible with service users. This has meant that people could stay up-to-date, official guidelines could be shared and certain services could be provided
- **For the associations that remained active**, digital technology made it possible to be more efficient, with remote action helping to avoid certain journeys, which are synonymous with risks due to the COVID-19 circumstances
- **Many associations were able to think about the future and prepare for their return**, through finalising projects, maintaining precious links with other volunteers and members, as well as with private and public partners
- **Many volunteers seized these opportunities** to stay in contact with their association, to be useful, to test new tools and to train themselves to be more efficient going forward. Some volunteers were also able to work alongside other associations, in response to certain needs



**Le Télé-Bénévolat®** : has proven itself to be a particularly effective crisis management tool

# The role of associations

- **Today's challenge** is to make the most of digital assets, of new Télé-Bénévolat® practices and of the involvement of new volunteers motivated by the crisis, in order to support the recovery and to overcome future difficulties.
- **Volunteers themselves attest to associations' power to inspire**: Télé-Bénévolat® was a first for 17% of volunteers, often on the initiative of their associations, however 25% did not take this step because their association did not offer it to them.
- **An opportunity to integrate** and support volunteers who stayed “inactive” during lockdown towards new practices involving digital technology, benefitting themselves and their association.
- **Taking all aspects of digital technology into account**, which is now more important than ever, not only from a technical or economic perspective, but also in terms of organisation, HR management, support for people less at ease with these tools, etc...



**Le Télé-Bénévolat®** : a dimension to be taken into account by those involved in the charity sector (heads of networks, support points for community work, community centres...)

# Beyond this survey

*The invaluable role of the organisations involved in this study has helped associations draw lessons from their experiences of lockdown and make the most of these results. This was done through a process that allowed for coordination as well as consistent observation.*



TOUS bénévoles .org



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webassoc.org  
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