

# Witnesses to Hunger

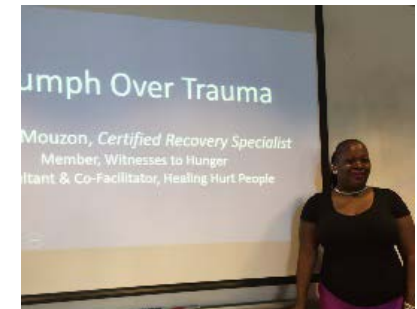
## EVALUATION REPORT *January 2017*

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DREXEL UNIVERSITY  
Center for

Hunger-Free Communities



## ABOUT WITNESSES TO HUNGER

### Witnesses to Hunger

Witnesses to Hunger is a program that is building a movement. We launched in 2008 in Philadelphia to make sure that people who have known poverty and hunger firsthand have an opportunity to speak their minds, show their experiences, and inform policymakers, the press, and the public about what is needed to break out of poverty. Our first exhibit was in December 2008, and within 5 months, the exhibit was at the U.S. Senate during the time that Congress was making big decisions about child nutrition programs. Witnesses to Hunger has been informing the national dialogue on hunger and poverty ever since. Witnesses to Hunger members have spoken out on just about everything: food, water, housing, jobs, wages, safety, justice, and the joys and challenges of parenting.

Now Witnesses to Hunger is in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Camden, New Haven, Washington DC, and beyond. We have held over 25 exhibits, been featured in over 200 news stories, won awards, been included multiple times in the Congressional Record, and provided several testimonies at the city, state, and national levels.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report represents the first time we have been able to take a long pause and think about how well we're doing as a group – to reflect and self-evaluate. We set out to find out how each of us views our work and our actions, and to find out from our partners what they value most about Witnesses to Hunger. We held focus groups and interviews, created surveys, and sought feedback from our members, partners, and staff.

We learned that what members of Witnesses to Hunger value most is the sense of connection to others committed to “breaking the chain” of poverty, and that one of the most important roles of the program is to connect members and sites with one another. We were glad to learn that our partners truly value our work, and that our staff is devoted to our success. We also learned that most of us want to take more local action, and to see direct impact in our own communities. For these kinds of actions, we will need more training and time to invest in members’ professional development. Then, we’ll be ready to get back on the road, train others, and build a lasting movement to eradicate poverty.

We invite you to have a look at what we learned, and to join and support us in our next steps forward.



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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report includes survey responses from members of Witnesses to Hunger, staff at Witnesses to Hunger site organizations, and partners from other organizations that have worked with Witnesses to Hunger. The responses from members have a **blue background**, staff have a **red background**, and partners have a **purple background**.

### Graphs:

Each graph shows the **number of people** who selected a particular answer choice. Not everyone who started the survey finished it, so at the top, all graphs show the number of people who responded to each question, called "N." Those who started the survey but didn't answer that question are called "Missing." Numbers next to each bar or pie section show the number of people who chose that answer.

### Question Types:

**1** Choose one from a list (Example: How often do you participate in program activities?). We show all answer choices and how many people selected each one.

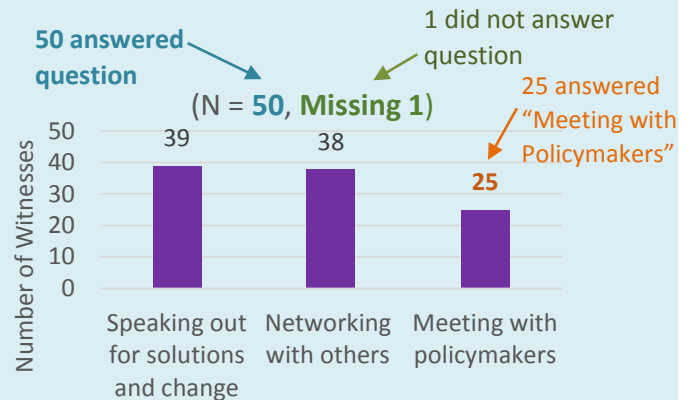
**3** Choose top 3 from a list (Example: What do you think are the TOP 3 core activities of Witnesses to Hunger?). We show the three answer choices selected most often by all people.

**ALL** Choose all that apply. (Example: What benefits have you experienced as a member of Witnesses to Hunger?). We show the top 2 or 3 answer choices selected most often by all people, unless otherwise specified.

### Written Responses:

When people were able to explain their answers in their own words, we show some answers that represent group themes. We may have shortened or changed answers slightly to make them easier to read and understand, but we did not change their meaning.

What are the top 3 most important activities of Witnesses to Hunger?



### Higher Enthusiasm Today

"When I first joined I didn't know what to expect or how to feel. **Today I am happy that I can voice my opinions** on hunger issues and many others." - Member



## EVALUATION OF WITNESSES TO HUNGER

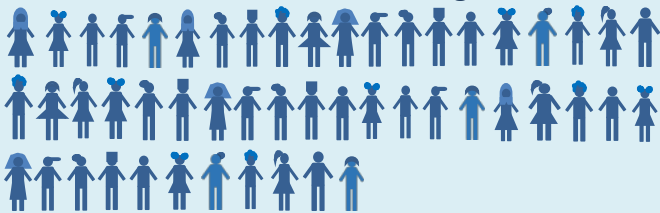
Over the last year, we talked with various stakeholders, including members of Witnesses to Hunger, staff members at Witnesses to Hunger sites, and organizational partners, about how to strengthen and improve the Witnesses to Hunger program.

We wanted to understand the most important values, activities, and processes of the program, as well as some of the challenges, impacts, and opportunities for growth and development.

First, we held focus groups and interviews with members of Witnesses and staff to learn what they thought about various elements of the program.

Next, we used this information to create three anonymous online surveys. We sent the surveys to Witnesses to Hunger members, site staff, and partners.

51 members of Witnesses to Hunger



6 Witnesses to Hunger site staff members



17 organizational partners



### EVALUATION TIMELINE

**October-December 2015** – *Interviewed & Held Focus Groups with members of Witnesses and Site Staff*

**January-March 2015** – *Analyzed Interviews & Focus Groups*

**April 2016** – *Finished Evaluation Progress Report*

**May 2016** – *Designed Evaluation Survey*

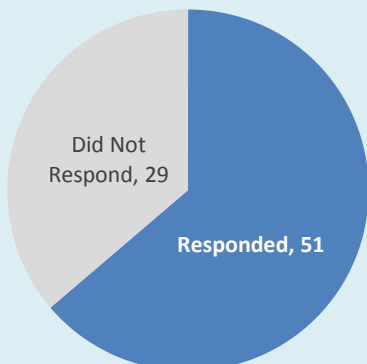
**June-July 2016** – *Distributed Online Survey to Witnesses, Site Staff, and Organizational Partners*

**August-September 2016** – *Analyzed Survey Responses*

**January 2017** – *Finished Final Evaluation Report*

## STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE RATES

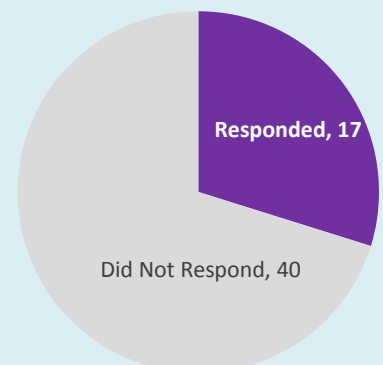
Witnesses to Hunger Members  
Contacted = 80



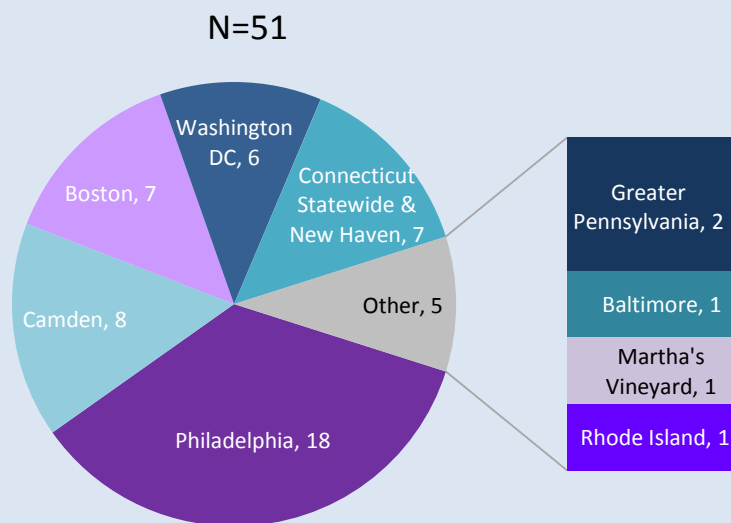
Witnesses to Hunger Site Staff  
Contacted = 8



Witnesses to Hunger Partners  
Contacted = 57



### MEMBERS | SURVEY RESPONSES BY SITE



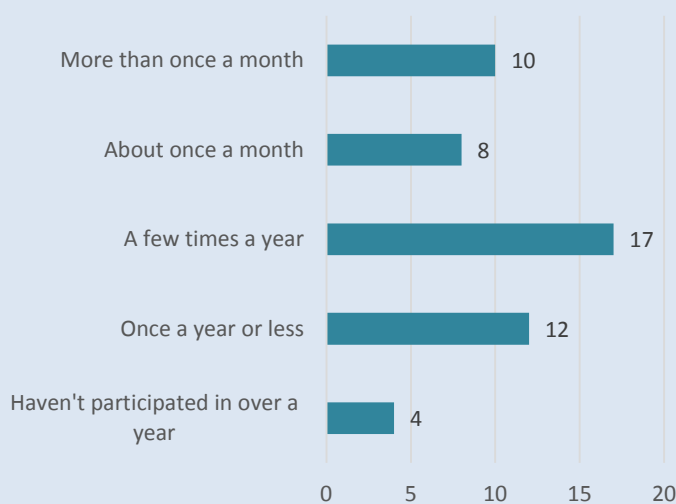
Witnesses to Hunger has **10 sites** along the East Coast. At least one member of Witnesses to Hunger from each site participated in the survey. 51 members completed at least some questions, and 44 members completed the entire survey.



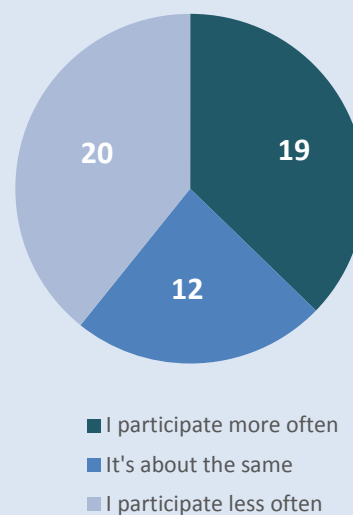
### MEMBERS | PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES

Most members of Witnesses to Hunger participate in activities a few times per year. About equal numbers say that their participation has increased or decreased over time.

How often do you participate in Witnesses to Hunger activities? (N=51)



How has your participation changed over time? (N=51)

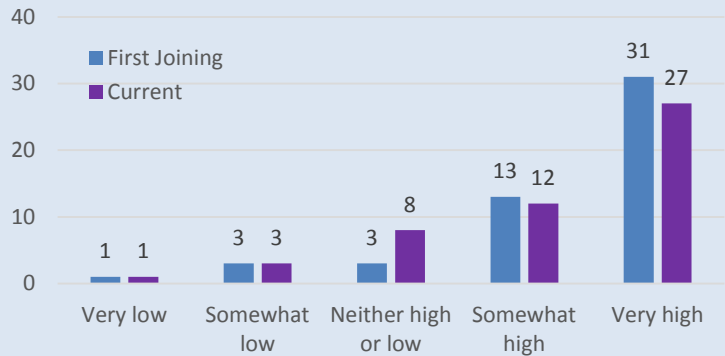


## MEMBERS | ENTHUSIASM ABOUT PROGRAM

We asked members of Witnesses about their enthusiasm for the program both when they first joined Witnesses to Hunger and today. Over three-quarters reported very high or somewhat high enthusiasm both today and when they first joined.

Below are some of the ways that members of Witnesses explained how their feelings shifted over time.

How would you rate your enthusiasm for Witnesses to Hunger? (N=51)



### Higher Enthusiasm Today

“When I first joined I didn't know what to expect or how to feel. **Today I am happy that I can voice my opinions** on hunger issues and many others. Some of our politicians do hear us as well as try to address some of these issues – even if it's baby steps.”

### No Change

“There is no real difference. I was excited when I first joined because **I finally had a platform to tell my story and advocate for change.** I feel the same way almost 2 years later. Nothing happens overnight, but my voice will hit the right ears at the right time.”

### Lower Enthusiasm Today

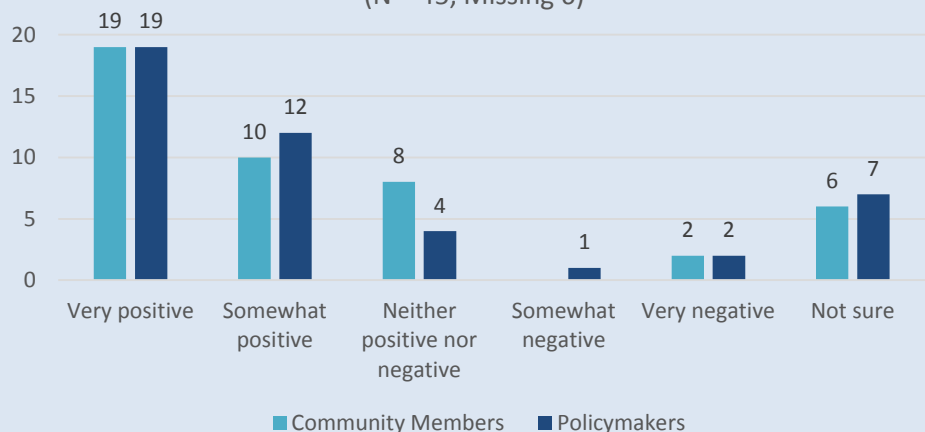
“At first I was excited to tell my story, but I felt like **I didn't really connect with the group more often.** I felt like I was [moving] away from everyone while I am still going through my situations and didn't feel [any] change.”



## MEMBERS | COMMUNITY & POLICYMAKER RESPONSE

Overall, members rated responses to their Witnesses to Hunger site as mostly positive, with policymaker responses slightly more positive than community member responses.

How would you rate **community members'** and **policymakers'** responses to your Witnesses to Hunger site? (N = 45, Missing 6)



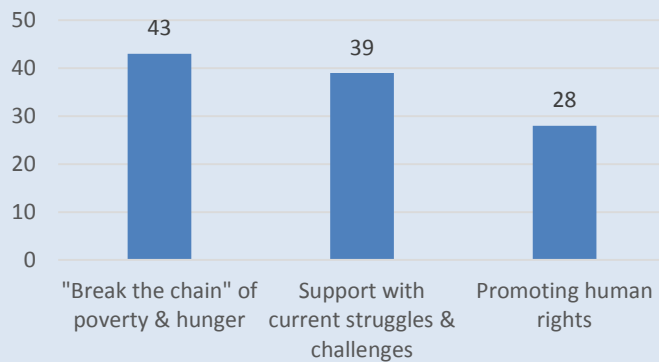




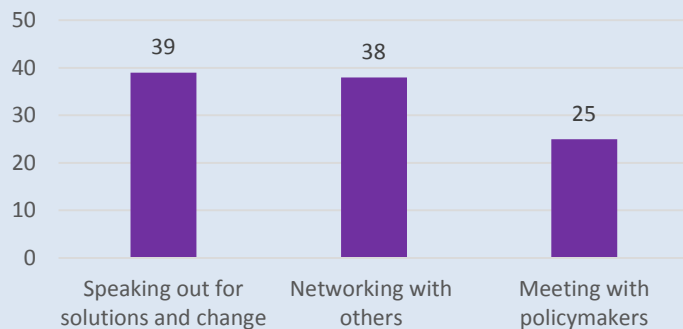
## MEMBERS | CORE VALUES & ACTIVITIES

Members of Witnesses to Hunger each chose their top 3 most important **values** and **activities** of the program. Below are the top 3 chosen by all members from all Witnesses to Hunger sites.

What do you think are the top 3 core **values** of Witnesses to Hunger?  
(N = 51)



What do you think are the top 3 core **activities** of Witnesses to Hunger?  
(N=50, Missing 1)



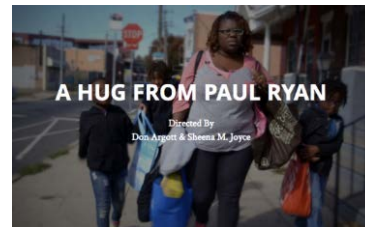
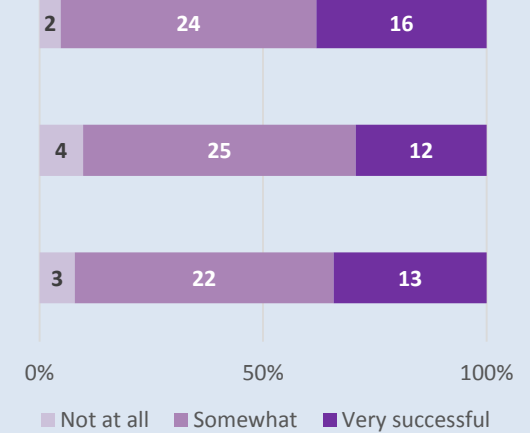
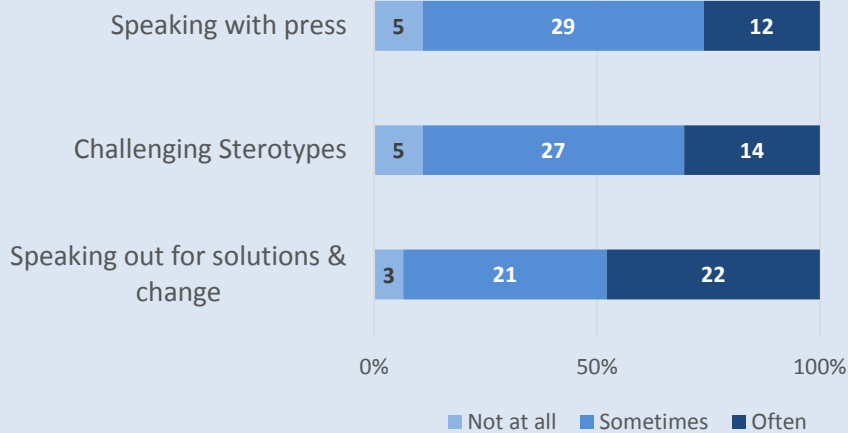
## MEMBERS | FREQUENCY AND SUCCESS OF ACTIVITIES

Members of Witnesses rated the **frequency** and **success** of major activities of the program. We grouped these activities into four main categories: **speaking out**, **events**, **policy**, and **community**.

### SPEAKING OUT

How often do you see this activity happening at your site? (N=46, Missing 5)

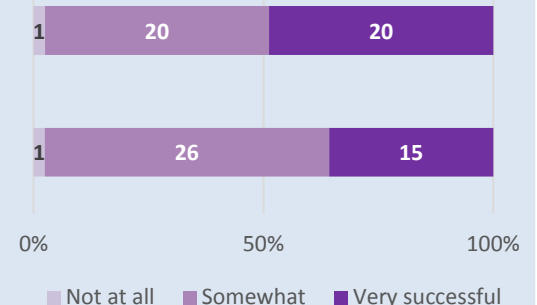
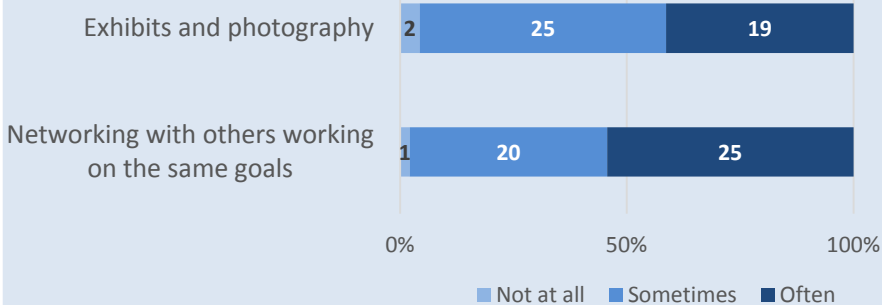
How **successful** do you think this activity is at your site? (N=45, Missing 6)



### EVENTS

How often do you see this activity happening at your site? (N=46, Missing 5)

How **successful** do you think this activity is at your site? (N=45, Missing 5)



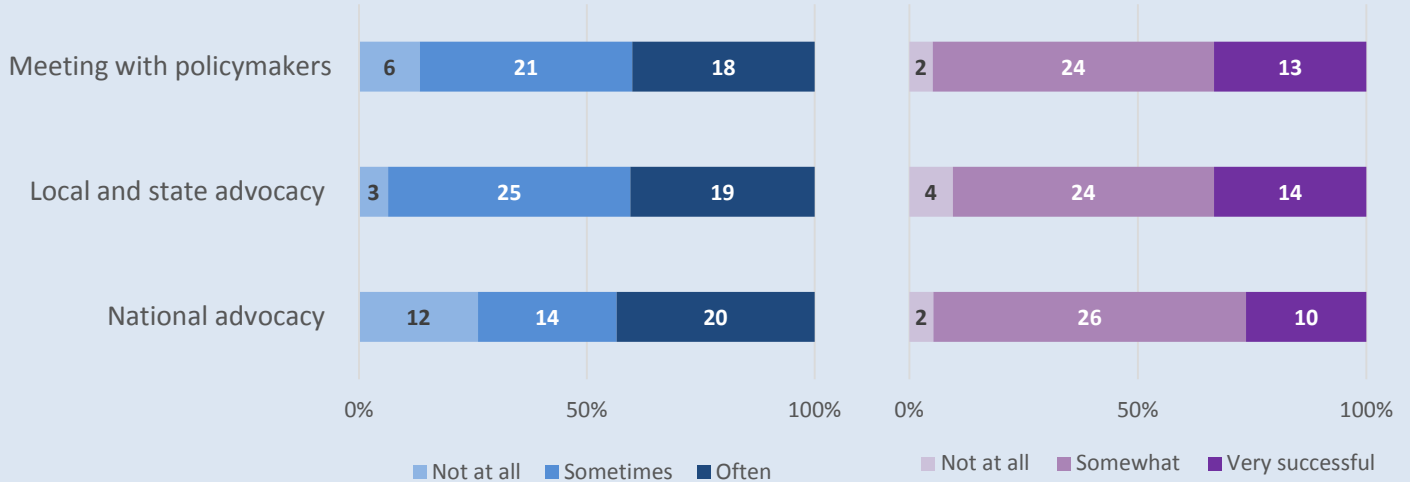
MEMBERS | FREQUENCY AND SUCCESS OF ACTIVITIES

Members identified **networking with others** and **speaking out for solutions and change** as activities happening most often, and rated **exhibits & photography** and **speaking with press** as most successful.

**POLICY**

How often do you see this activity happening at your site? (N=46, Missing 5)

How successful do you think this activity is at your site? (N=45, Missing 6)

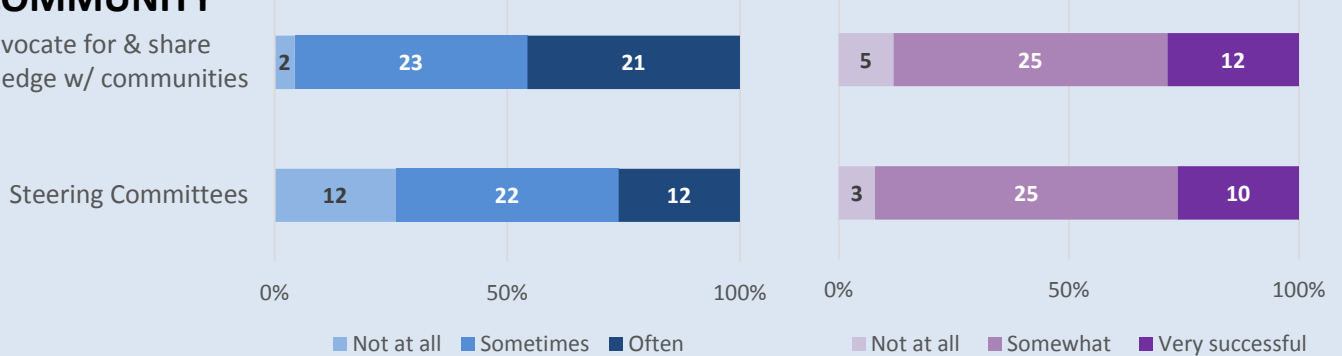


**COMMUNITY**

Advocate for & share knowledge w/ communities

How often do you see this activity happening at your site? (N=46, Missing 5)

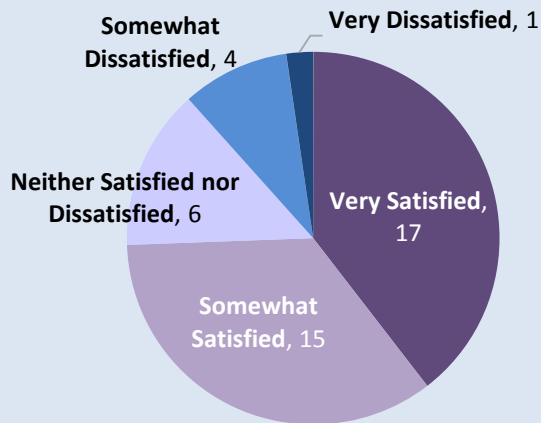
How successful do you think this activity is at your site? (N=45, Missing 6)



## MEMBERS | LEADERSHIP SATISFACTION

Most members described themselves as very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the Witnesses to Hunger leadership.

How **satisfied** are you with the Witnesses to Hunger leadership structure?(N=43, Missing 8)



### Very Satisfied

"I am satisfied because [staff] and Witnesses have built a **common ground** on what we want as individuals and as an organization! We all have the **same passion for change**, and no matter what happens we can still all agree on what we believe in, and that's change!"

### Somewhat Satisfied

"I think there needs to be **more education** on the grass roots level, and financial support from the appropriate government departments...There needs to be **more interaction** on a personal level **with people in need**... Perhaps a special event from time to time would create more of a community within the community."

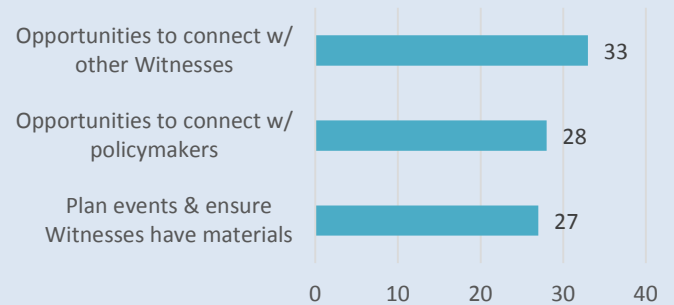
### Somewhat Dissatisfied

"Witnesses makes moves for the better, [but] it [doesn't] benefit me because the same people do every event. **Everybody should have a voice** not just one."

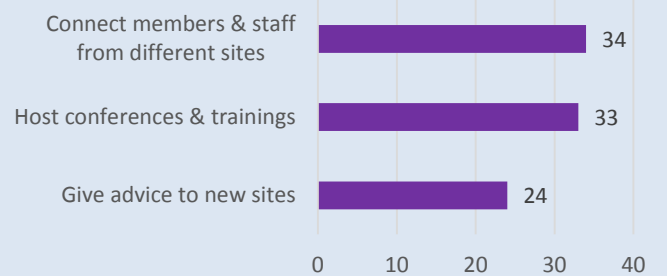
## MEMBERS | STAFF SUPPORT

Members said that the most important roles of the local site & National Office staff are to connect members to one another and to policymakers, and support the members' professional development.

What should the **staff at your Witnesses to Hunger site** do to support members of Witnesses?  
(N=44, Missing 7)



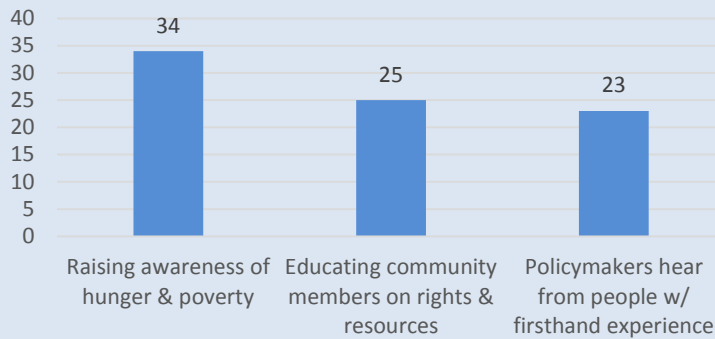
What should the **Witnesses to Hunger National Office** do to support members of Witnesses?  
(N=44, Missing 7)



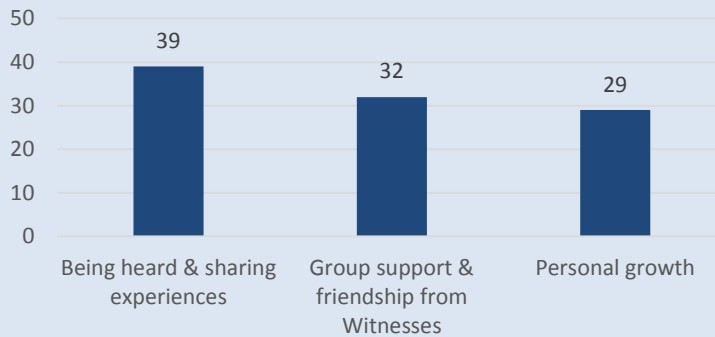
## MEMBERS | BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

Members of Witnesses also identified major community benefits, individual benefits, and challenges of participating in the program. The top three options they selected most often are shown below.

What are the top 3 **benefits** you have seen happen in your **community** as a result of Witnesses to Hunger? (N = 45, Missing 6)



What are the top 3 **benefits** you have experienced as a **member** of Witnesses to Hunger? (N = 45, Missing 6)



What are the top 3 **challenges** you have experienced as a **member** of Witnesses to Hunger? (N = 45, Missing 6)

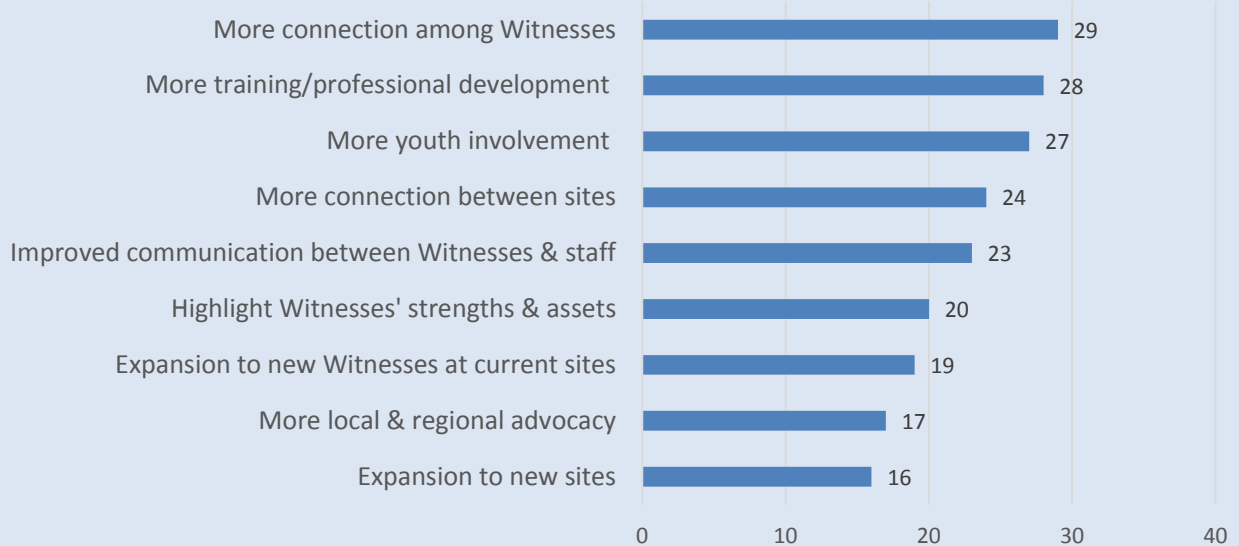




### MEMBERS | FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Members of Witnesses also identified major community benefits, individual benefits, and challenges of participating in the program. All options are shown below, ranked by how often they were chosen.

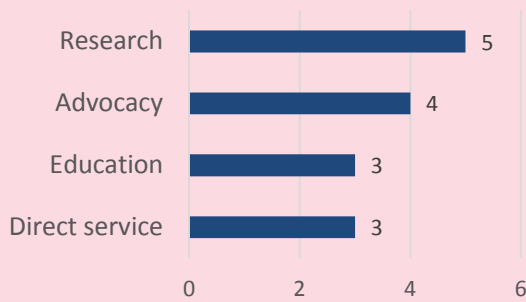
How should Witnesses to Hunger **improve** in the future? (N = 44, Missing 7)



## STAFF | CHARACTERISTICS

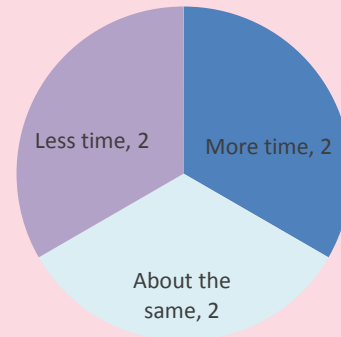
6 Witnesses to Hunger staff members from sites in Boston, Camden, New Haven, Philadelphia, and Washington DC responded to the survey. Focus of Witnesses to Hunger site organizations included research, advocacy, education, and direct service.

What is the focus of your organization? (N=6)



Note: Total does not add up to 6 because staff were allowed to select more than one focus.

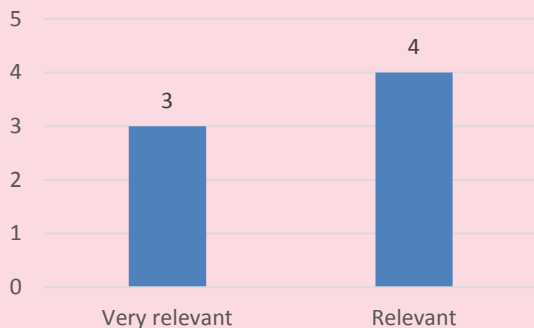
How has your time dedicated to Witnesses to Hunger changed since your site began? (N=6)



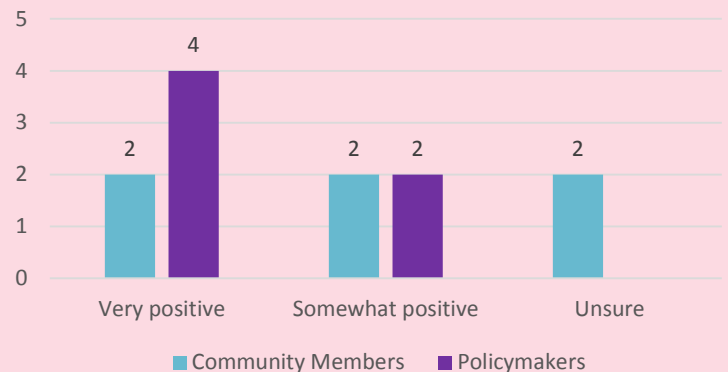
## STAFF | RELEVANCE & RESPONSES TO SITES

Staff reported that Witnesses to Hunger was either very relevant or relevant to their organization's mission, and that people usually respond positively to their site. Staff said that policymakers' responses slightly more positive than community members' responses.

How relevant is Witnesses to Hunger to your organization's mission? (N=6)

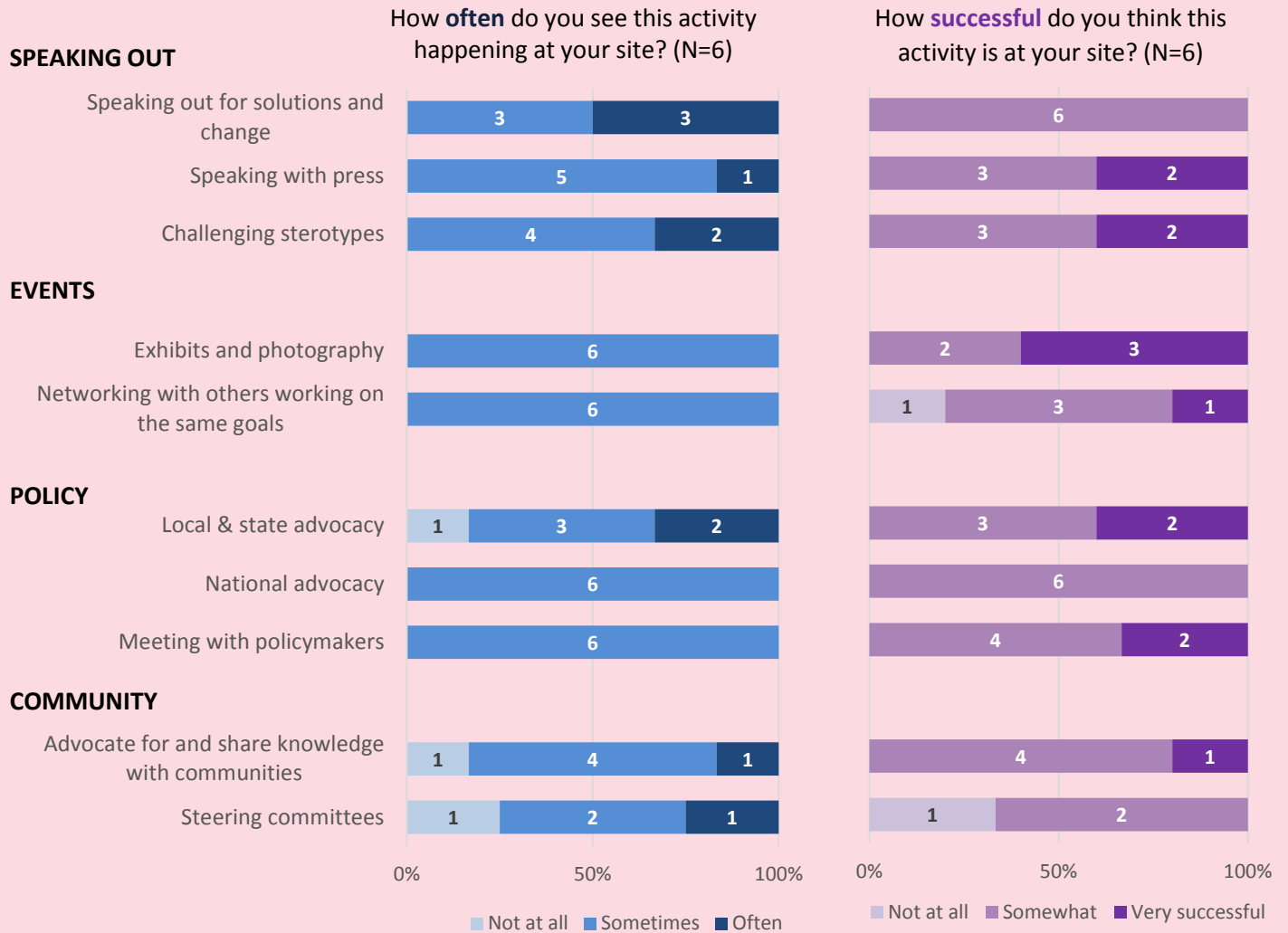


How would you rate community members' and policymakers' response to your WTH site? (N=6)



## STAFF | ACTIVITY FREQUENCY & SUCCESS

Like the members of Witnesses, staff also rated the **frequency** and **success** of major activities of the program. We grouped these activities into four main categories: **speaking out**, **events**, **policy**, and **community**. Staff identified **speaking out for solutions and change** as the activity happening most often, and **exhibits and photography** as most successful.

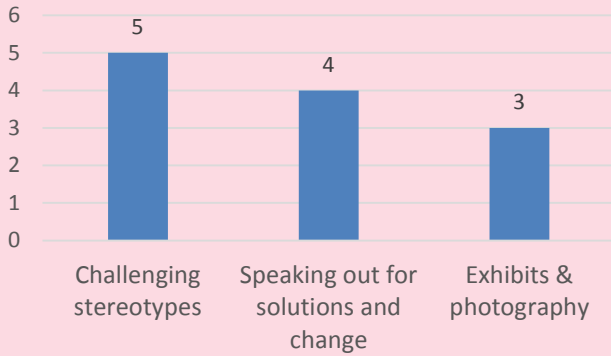




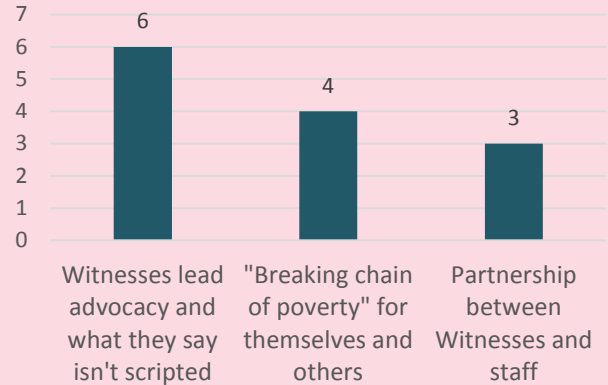
## STAFF | CORE VALUES & ACTIVITIES

Like members, Witnesses to Hunger staff each chose their top 3 most important **values** and **activities** of the program. Below are the top 3 chosen by all staff from all sites, which overlap with members' top 3.

What do you think are the top 3 core **activities** of the Witnesses to Hunger program? (N=6)



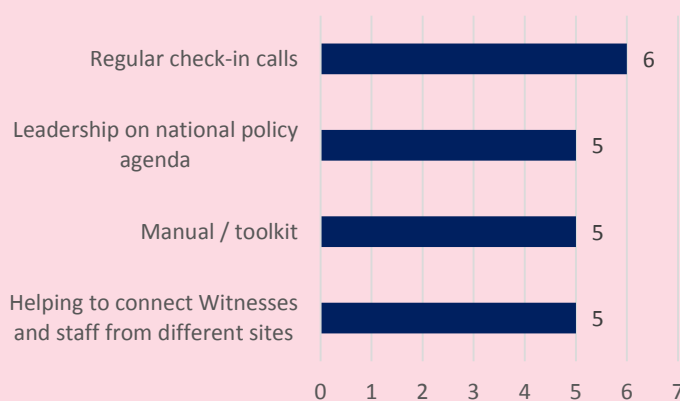
What do you think are the top 3 core **values** of Witnesses to Hunger? (N=6)



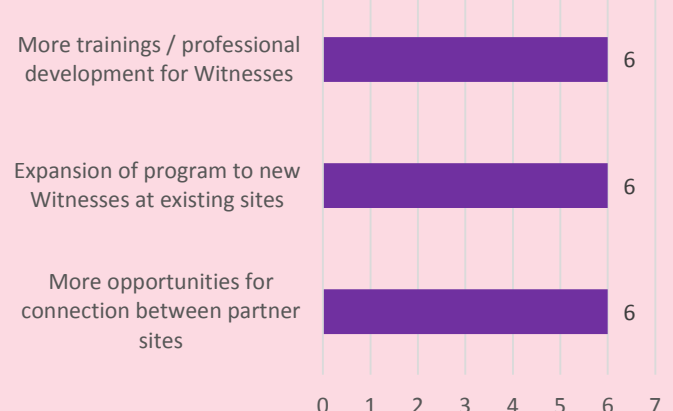
## STAFF | SUPPORT & FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Staff, like members of Witnesses, believed that connecting sites with one another through check in calls and meetings was a major priority for the National Office. Staff also wanted to see more trainings and professional development for current members and expanding the program to new members.

What are some of the most important ways the National Office can support partner sites? (N=6)



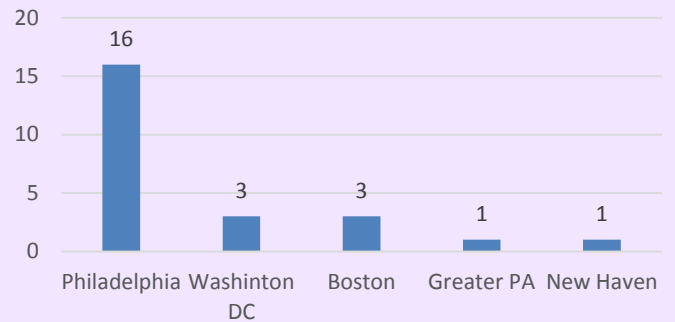
How should Witnesses to Hunger improve in the future? (N=6)



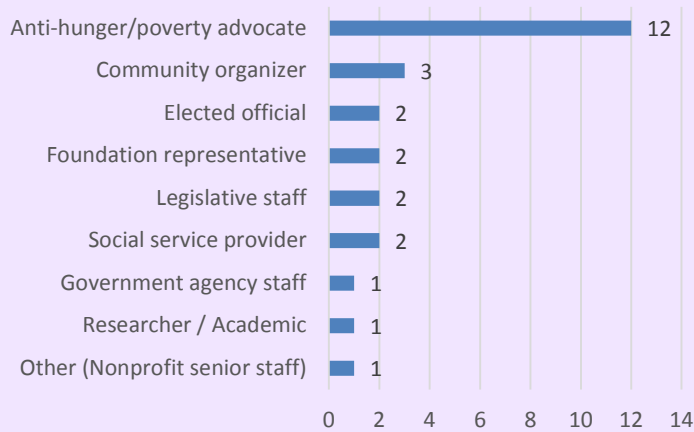
**PARTNERS | CHARACTERISTICS**

We invited partners from organizations and agencies who have worked with Witnesses to Hunger over the years, including anti-hunger advocates, community organizers, elected officials, foundation representatives, and others. Most had worked with the Philadelphia site, and over half had been involved with Witnesses to Hunger for over 3 years.

Which Witnesses to Hunger site(s) have you worked with? (N = 17)

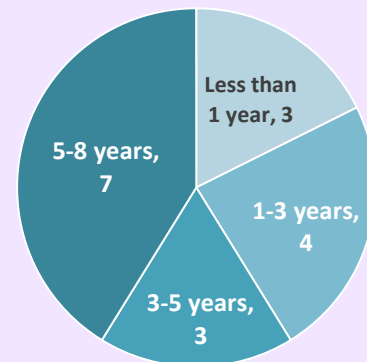


Which of the following best represents your field or position? (N = 17)



Note: Total does not add up to 17 because partners were allowed to select more than one field/position.

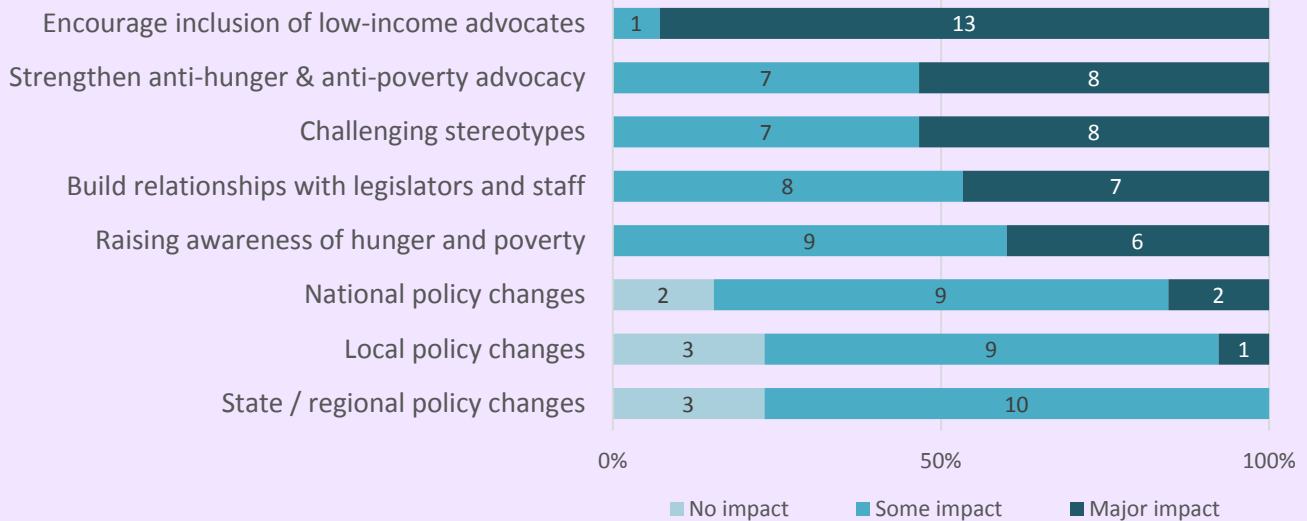
How long have you been involved with Witnesses to Hunger? (N = 17)



**PARTNERS | WITNESSES TO HUNGER PROGRAM IMPACT**

Partners reported that some of Witnesses to Hunger’s biggest impacts has been transformation of the advocacy process, encouraging inclusion of low-income advocates as well as strengthening anti-hunger & anti-poverty work.

What level of impact do you think Witnesses to Hunger has had on each of the following activities? (N = 15, Missing 2)



**Building Relationships with Legislators**

“Witnesses’ presence in Philadelphia and PA has made for closer ties to Senator Casey, and with other congressional anti-hunger champions such as Rep. Jim McGovern. Witnesses have **helped to strengthen the commitment of champions** - don't underestimate the importance of this.”



**Strengthening Anti-Hunger & Anti-Poverty Advocacy**

“The [members of] Witnesses very selflessly put a human face on hunger and poverty, which **lays the ground work for fair and effective solutions** to these issues.”

**Challenging Stereotypes**

“Witnesses have dispelled stereotypes by showing how **hard-working** they are, and what **good parents.**”

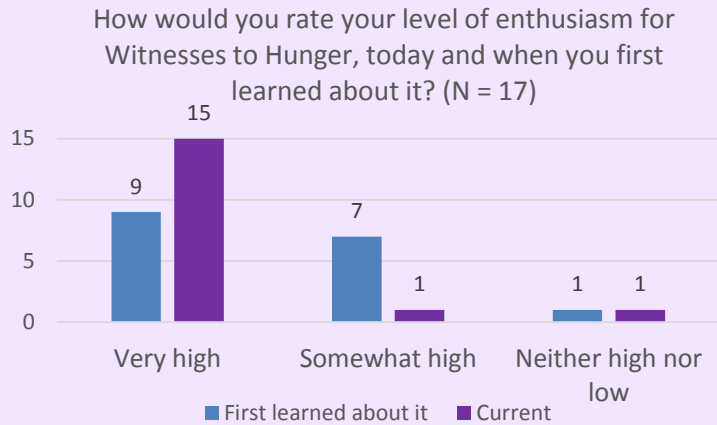


**National Policy Changes & Including Low-Income Advocates**

“Pushing the **expansion of WIC to age 6** in Child Nutrition Reauthorization – the Witnesses were [the] only ones doing this, and then [it was] included in Senate CNR bill. Paul Ryan publicly acknowledged he was wrong about “takers” frame. The **ONLY expert witness at House poverty hearings** was [a member of] Witnesses!”

**PARTNERS | ENTHUSIASM ABOUT WITNESSES TO HUNGER**

Overall, partners reported higher enthusiasm today compared with first learning about the program.



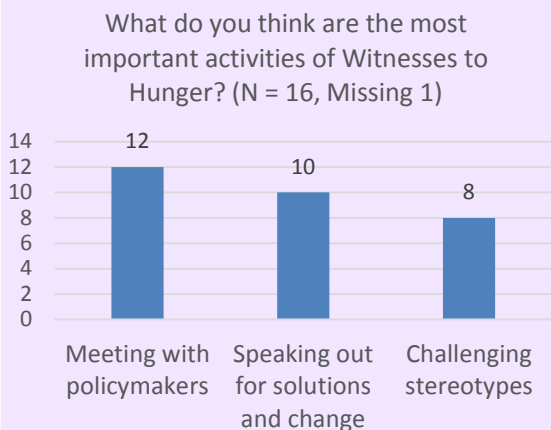
**Higher Enthusiasm Today**  
 “Their stories are so powerful. I love the photo exhibits but have been **excited to see the Witnesses telling their stories more** (taking it beyond just the audience that proactively goes to the exhibits) **in the media and to key policymakers.**”

**No Change**  
 “No difference, just a **deeper dedication** and connection to the members of the program. Over the years I've been able to build relationships through the program and **cherish the sacrifice** of all the women.”



**PARTNERS | CORE ACTIVITIES**

Like members and staff, speaking out for solutions and change was a top 3 activity for partners.



**PARTNERS | FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

**More Resources**  
 “I would like them to be able to do more of what they're doing, so **more resources to allow more supports** to help the Witnesses be more effective advocates, and to expand capacity to recruit more.”

“Many of [the members] are taking the extra step to put their stories out there and sacrifice a lot to make it happen. It would be great to work with them to **provide the services** they need to **progress economically.**”

**Policy Recommendations**  
 “I love when they offer **recommendations for policy change** - more of this, and let's make sure allies amplify them to shape the DC organizations' policy agendas.”

## ALL | WHAT MAKES WITNESSES TO HUNGER UNIQUE?

### TAKING ACTION

“Providing space and opportunity for **people directly affected by hunger and poverty to make their opinions and thoughts heard** in places where action can be taken and change can happen is enormously powerful.” – Staff



### COURAGE

“Our courage through what we do!” – Member

“Because it brings about **hard core conversations** that **everyone else is afraid to discuss.**” – Member

### FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE

“We can speak for ourselves. [We are] **not made to change our words** around.” – Member

“**No one can tell our stories but us** because we have lived them. I may not know policy but I do know how the current policies affect me and my children.” – Member

“Witnesses to Hunger is unique because we are an advocacy group based off of **experience and not just facts.**” – Member



### DIRECT ADVOCACY

“I feel that the **meetings with law makers** and officials helps make Witnesses to Hunger different than any other program.” – Member

“Witnesses have something extremely valuable to contribute to public decision-making. Instead of advocates like me finding people to tell their stories without follow-up, Witnesses ensures that **story-tellers become on-going advocates.** To me, that's pretty unique and incredibly important.” – Partner



## CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

Witnesses to Hunger is at an important transition point, moving beyond its beginnings as a research and advocacy project and becoming a sustainable community advocacy program that spans the country. This evaluation highlights many strengths of the Witnesses to Hunger program, as well as some opportunities for future development.

In the next few years, Witnesses to Hunger will continue to build on **key strengths**, including:

- ▶ **Speaking out for solutions and change** in as many spaces as possible, including opportunities with both government representatives and community members
- ▶ **Providing testimony, education, and specific policy recommendations for legislators** at all levels of government
- ▶ **Continuing our exhibits of photography** highlighting firsthand experiences of hunger and poverty
- ▶ **Expanding our strong supportive network of advocates**, including more members at existing sites and new sites across the United States, and involving children and youth in advocacy

Witnesses to Hunger will also incorporate some of the **opportunities for growth and development** identified by members, partners, and staff, including:

- ▶ **Increasing training and professional development opportunities** for members to build on their advocacy skills and knowledge
- ▶ **Connecting Witnesses to Hunger members and sites with one another** to strengthen relationships, learn from one another, and take action together
- ▶ **Creating more partnerships** with organizations in each city to magnify our advocacy network
- ▶ **Expanding local action** and advocacy, building on existing work at the national level

We learned over the past 18 months that we cherish our connections to one another, and that it's important to find more ways to stay connected and to keep our bonds strong. When we are standing together, arm in arm, we are all powerful.



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