



Alumni Tracer Study

Overview

About This Report: This PDF summary presents the consolidated findings from Acicis' comprehensive alumni tracer study, covering cohorts from 1995 to 2005. The report provides a snapshot of key outcomes across all surveyed alumni.

For detailed exploration: If you wish to examine each dataset in more detail, including extended qualitative data and the ability to download individual figures and explore specific cohort breakdowns, please visit our interactive webpage at <https://www.acicis.edu.au/acicis-tracer-study/>

Multiple response questions: For some survey questions, respondents were able to select multiple answers. In these cases, the total percentages will add to more than 100%. This is intentional and reflects the full range of experiences and activities reported by respondents.

Rounding variations: Some charts and statistics may show slight variations from 100% due to the rounding of data to whole numbers. These minor discrepancies do not affect the integrity or interpretation of the findings.



Overview

Now marking 30 years of operations, Acicis has completed tracer studies for its first decade of cohorts (1995 to 2005). These years represent the consortium's formative period of in-country study in Indonesia and provide valuable insight into the long term outcomes of its earliest alumni.

Drawing on data collected through multiple survey rounds conducted between 2021 and 2025, the study offers the most comprehensive snapshot to date of the enduring value of an Acicis experience. Alumni were surveyed over a four year period and Acicis achieved a strong response rate across cohorts, reflecting both the high levels of alumni engagement and the lasting significance of their time in Indonesia.

The research was carried out under the University of Western Australia's human ethics framework and forms the foundation for a longer term program of alumni tracer work.

Together, these findings highlight the professional, academic and personal impact of studying in Indonesia and illustrate the many ways alumni continue to stay connected with the country today.



Highlight Stats



301

alumni completed the tracer study



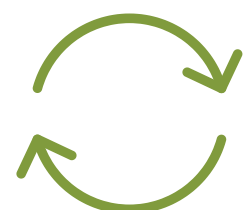
54%

average response rate across surveyed cohorts



28%

of respondents work in the education sector



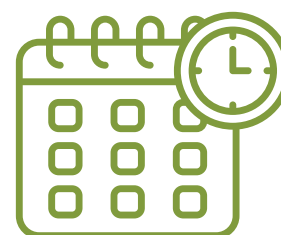
39%

have returned to Indonesia for paid employment



53%

have engaged in Indonesia related employment, internships, or volunteering outside of Indonesia



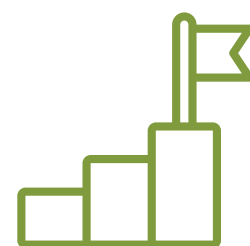
35%

continue to use Indonesian at least monthly in their social life



79%

reported an extremely positive impact on the ability to interact with individuals different from themselves



75%

said their Acicis experience shaped their career path



30%

feel very connected to Indonesia today



Demographics

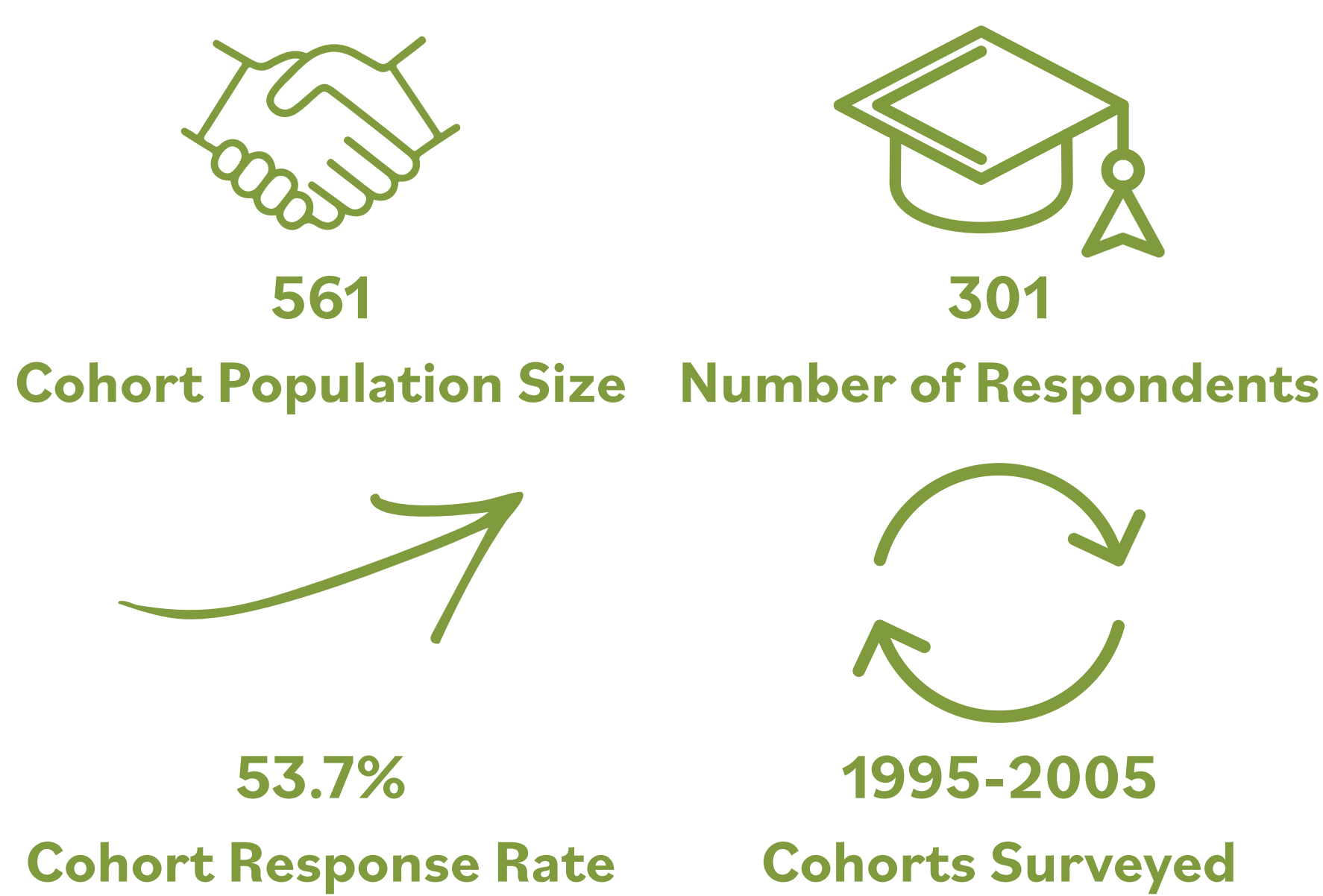
These questions capture key background information of surveyed Acicis alumni, including their current employment sectors, geographic distribution, and the relevance of their occupations to their in-country study experience. Together, these indicators provide a snapshot of where early Acicis alumni are now working and how their professional pathways have evolved since completing their programs in Indonesia.

Demographic Overview

Across the first decade of Acicis programs (1995–2005), 561 alumni were invited to participate in the tracer study. Of these, 301 responded, producing an average response rate of 54.6 per cent. To maintain the integrity of the dataset and ensure that comparisons across cohorts were meaningful, a minimum response rate threshold was set for inclusion in the aggregated analysis. The 1996 and 2001 cohorts did not reach this threshold and are therefore not included in the combined results.

The survey was administered between 20 and 30 years after respondents completed their in-country programs, with the exact timing differing by cohort. This long-term window allowed the study to capture alumni experiences well into their careers, providing richer insights into the lasting effects of their Acicis programs. The nine cohorts that met the inclusion criteria were surveyed between 2021 and 2025, creating a substantial and consistent dataset for analysis.

Together, these responses offer a detailed overview of Acicis’ early alumni outcomes, highlighting professional pathways, ongoing engagement with Indonesia, and the broader impact of immersive study experiences on participants’ personal and professional development.



Demographics

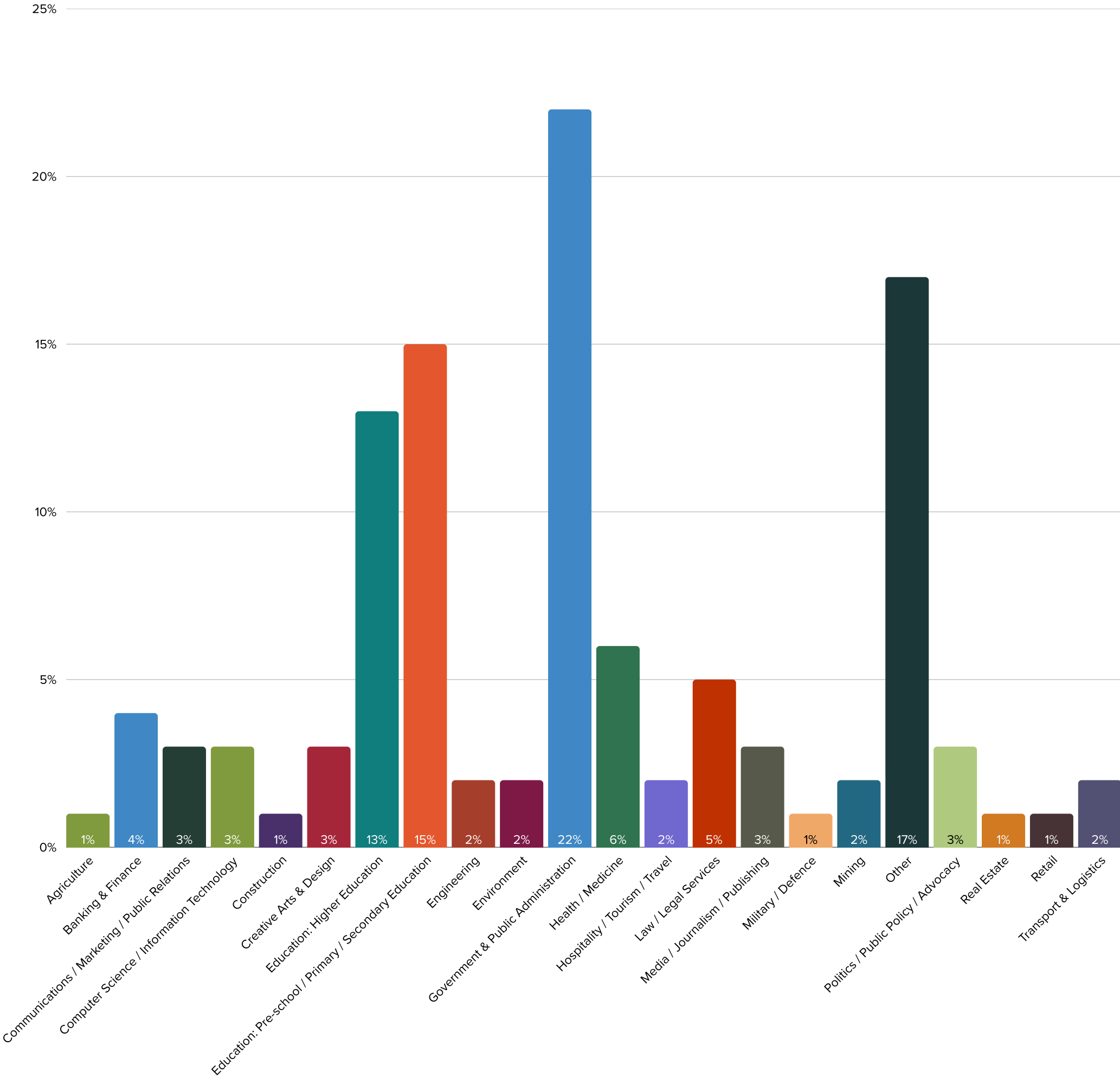
In which industry/ies are you employed?

Across all surveyed cohorts, respondents were most commonly employed in government and public administration (22%), followed by education at both higher education (13%) and pre-school / primary / secondary education (15%).

These two sectors have consistently represented the largest areas of employment since the consortium’s early years, reflecting Acicis’ long-standing role in preparing graduates for public service and education-focused careers. Smaller but steady representation was also found in law and legal services, communications and public relations, and media and journalism.

“I was 19 years old when I started my Acicis year in Yogyakarta... It made me culturally aware and sensitive to the challenges and joys of learning a new language in an immersion context. After graduating I went on to join the Australian public service as an Indonesian linguist... I now support language and literacy development of students who are new to learning English. Participating in the Acicis program has been a very positive experience and has had a huge impact on my career path..” 1995 respondent

“When I joined Acicis I thought I would finish the program then return to my life in California. However I realized quickly in Yogya that I loved living and working overseas, and so I stayed and got my first job in international aid at the end of 2005. Being able to speak Indonesian helped me secure that job. I’ve been working in international aid ever since.” 2005 respondent



Demographics

In which country are you currently employed?

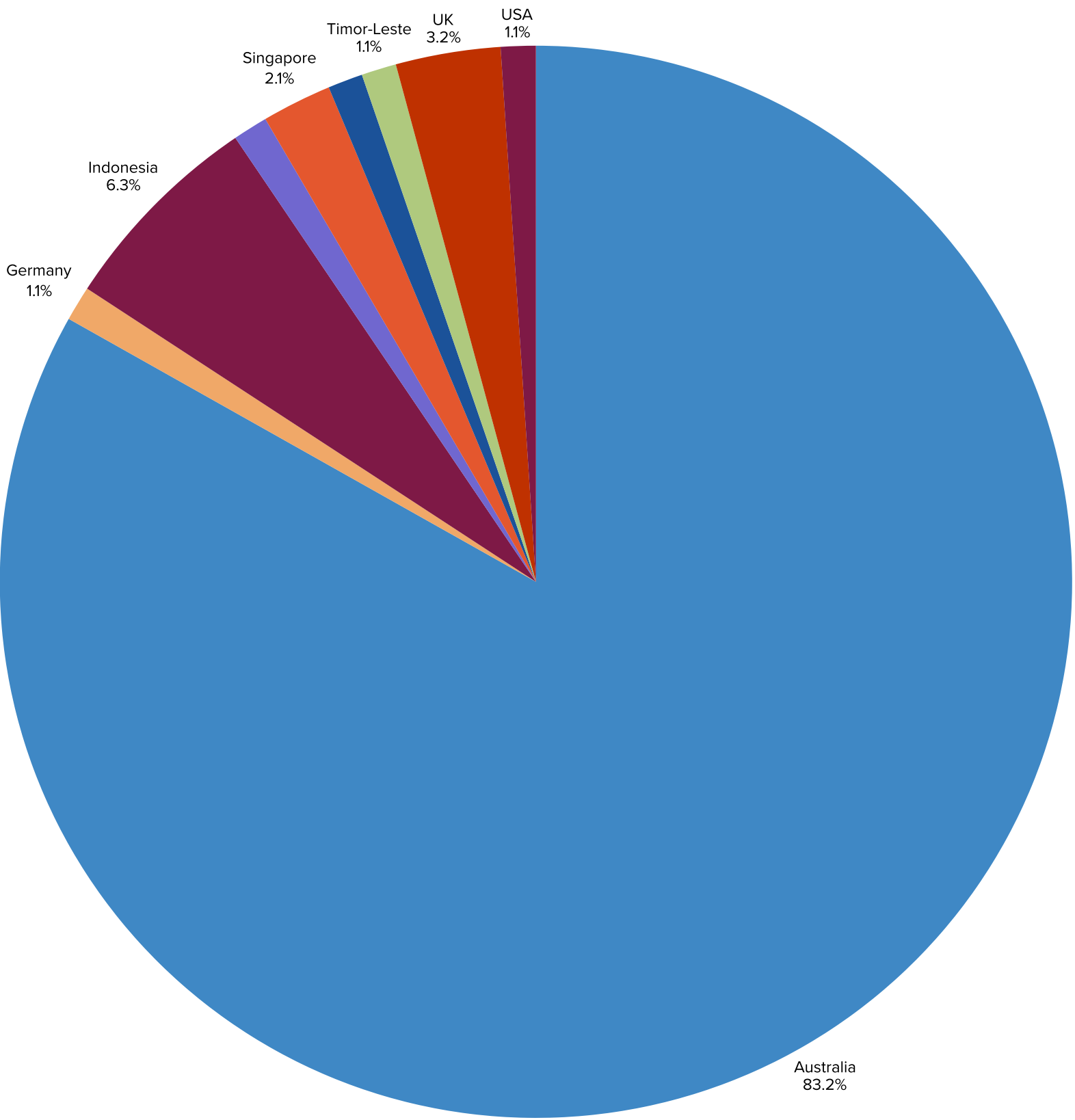
The majority of respondents across all cohorts reported being employed in Australia (79%). A smaller but consistent share (6%) indicated they were currently employed in Indonesia, reflecting ongoing professional engagement beyond their study programs. The remainder were employed in other international locations, including Singapore, Thailand, and Timor Leste, which many attributed to their time in Indonesia.

This distribution has remained relatively stable across cohorts, suggesting that while most Acicis alumni build their careers in Australia, a significant proportion continue to work internationally or maintain professional links with Indonesia.

“The Acicis immersion program gave me solid grounding in understanding real-world Indonesian society. For me, it was a springboard to launching my life here.” 1997 respondent

“After living in Indonesia for 6 months as part of the Acicis program, it really sparked a determination to return to Indonesia as part of my journalism career... While I was only able to live in Jakarta for 2 1/2 years as my employer was downsizing the office and I was transferred to Singapore, it drove my passion for Southeast Asia, where I ended up living for almost 20 years”. 1999 respondent

“I was able to start my current career in Timor Leste (East Timor) in large part due to my language and cultural skills acquired during my time on the Acicis program.” 1997 respondent



Demographics

Is your current occupation related to the Acicis program(s) that you completed?

Across all surveyed cohorts, around one in ten respondents (10%) reported working in the same field as their Acicis program, while a further 17% were employed in a related field.

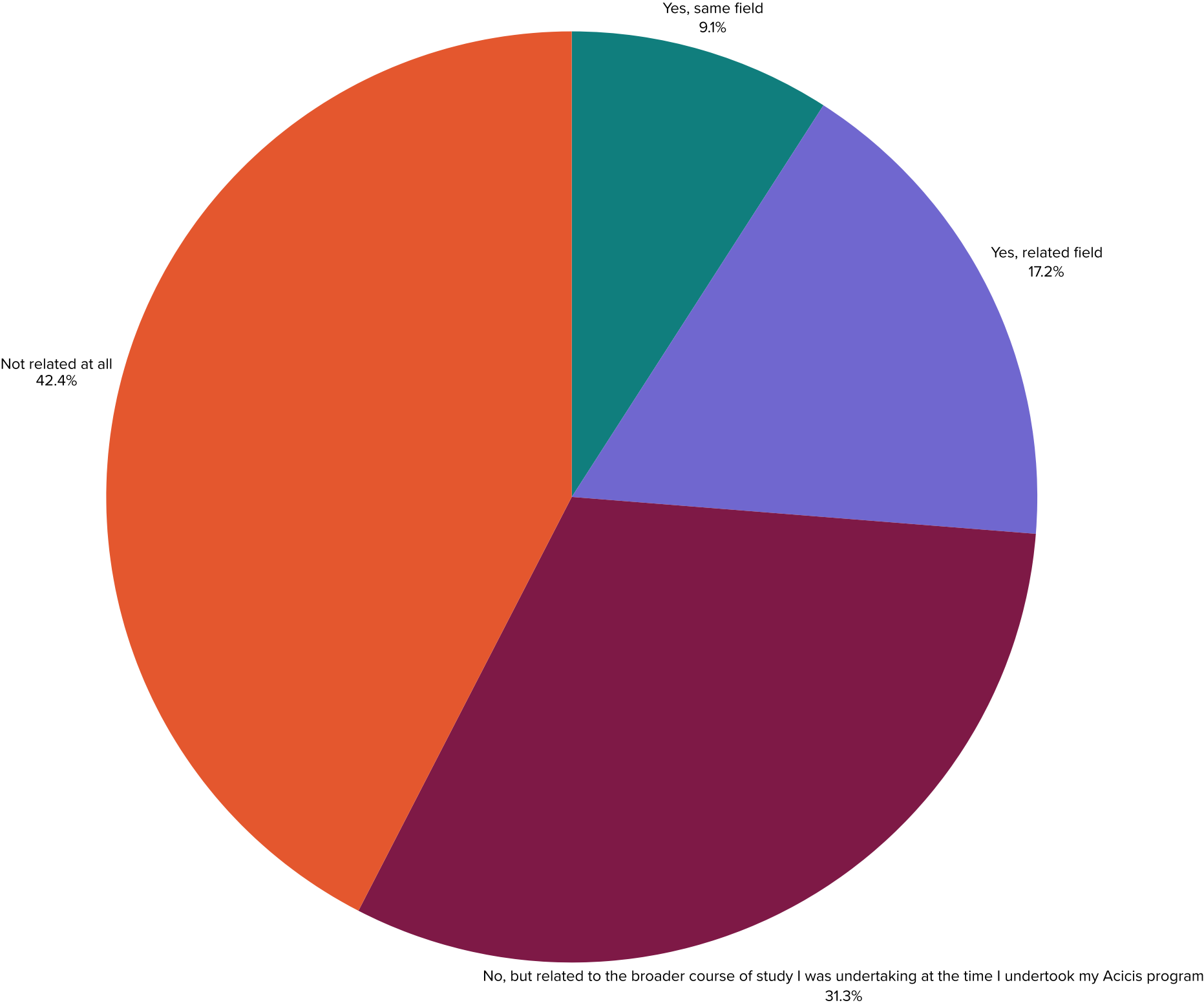
An additional 31% indicated their current work was linked to the broader area of study they pursued while undertaking their program. Combined, this suggests that roughly 60% of respondents continue to work in areas connected to their Acicis experience.

“I became an interpreter/translator for the UN, freelanced, worked for DFAT and then became an Indonesia analyst.” 1997 respondent

“On a personal level I developed curiosity and a love of story while living and studying in Indonesia. This resulted in an understanding of what career path I wanted – which is the career I am in still today.” 1998 respondent

“After I completed my studies and with my Indonesian and cultural skills I’d gained, I found employment straight after Uni in work with and in East Timor where I worked for 2 years. I then returned to Melbourne and worked with Oxfam on the Indonesia programs for 7 years including their Yogyakarta earthquake response.” 1999 respondent

“It helped me to develop the deep linguistic and cultural experience, as well as academic networks necessary to pursue further studies (up to the PhD level). It also provided real in-country knowledge and lived experience of the higher education system in a specific part of the Indian Ocean region, which is highly relevant to my current role.” 2005 respondent



Impact on Career and Skills

These questions explore how Acicis programs have influenced respondent’s professional trajectories, employability, and skill development. They measure the extent to which studying in Indonesia has shaped respondent’s’ career paths, enhanced their workplace capabilities, and contributed to long-term professional growth. Together, these findings illustrate the enduring impact of an Acicis experience on alumni’s confidence, adaptability, and capacity to work across cultures and disciplines.

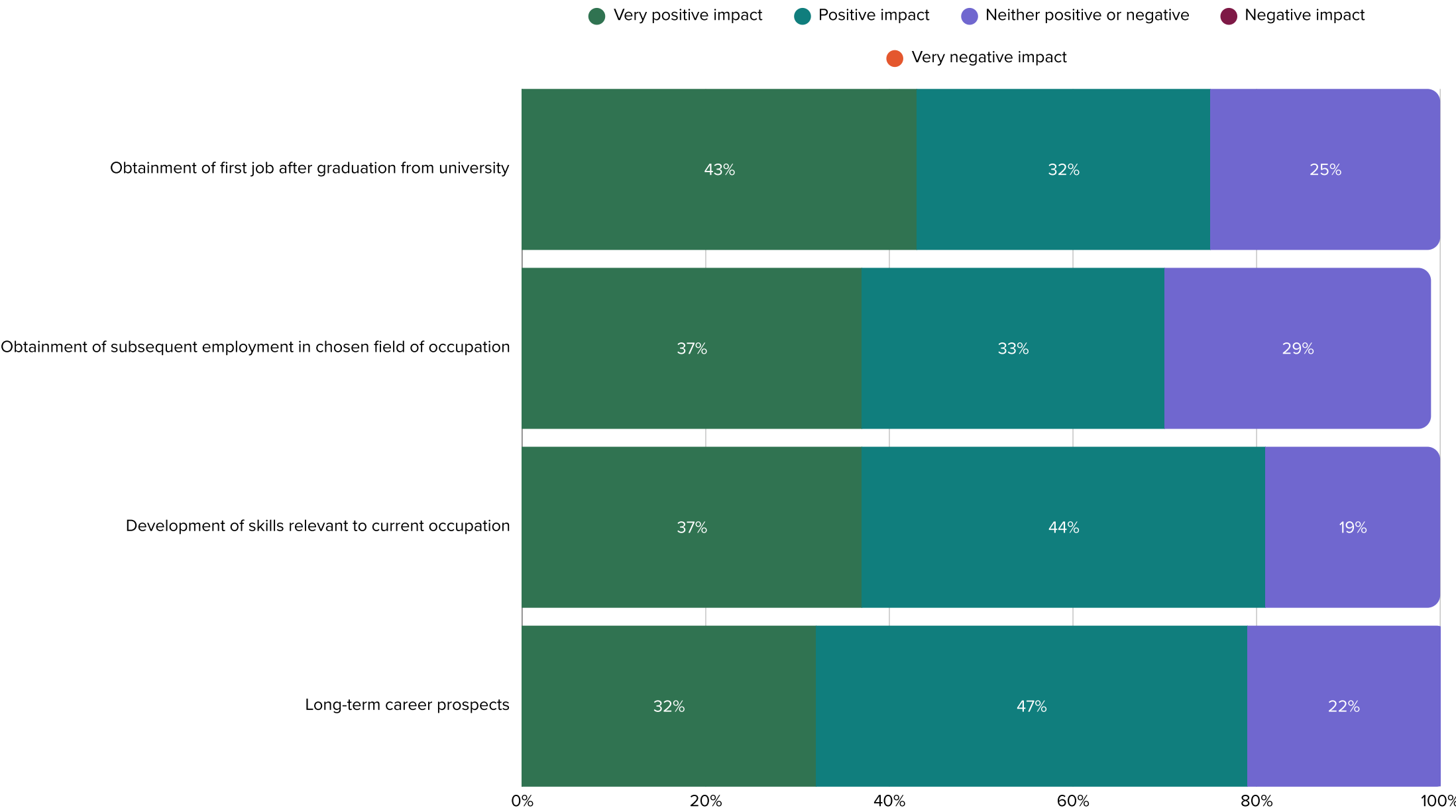
Please rate the nature and extent of the impact your Acicis experience has had on the following aspects of your career:

Across all cohorts, respondents reported a consistently positive impact of their Acicis experience on their career outcomes. The strongest results were seen in obtainment of first job, where 43% of respondents indicated a very positive impact. Across each outcome, over 70% of respondents indicated a positive or very positive impact.

“I think it’s fair to say my Indonesian language skills and knowledge of the region made me stand out and got me my first job at SBS after graduating. I then became a foreign correspondent again in Indonesia.” 2002 respondent

“Immersion in Asian culture has led to my current business career based in Singapore trading commodities... While the actual study matter was not directly relevant the cultural experience has proved invaluable.” 1999 respondent

“Participating in Acicis has made an enormous impact on my career and life. I did Acicis, did Honours on an Indonesia-related topic, then did a PhD on an Indonesia-related topic, and then got a post-doc as an Indonesianist. I developed skills as an anthropologist during that time and landed a job which required an anthropologist with expertise in Asia.” 1997 respondent



Impact on Career and Skills

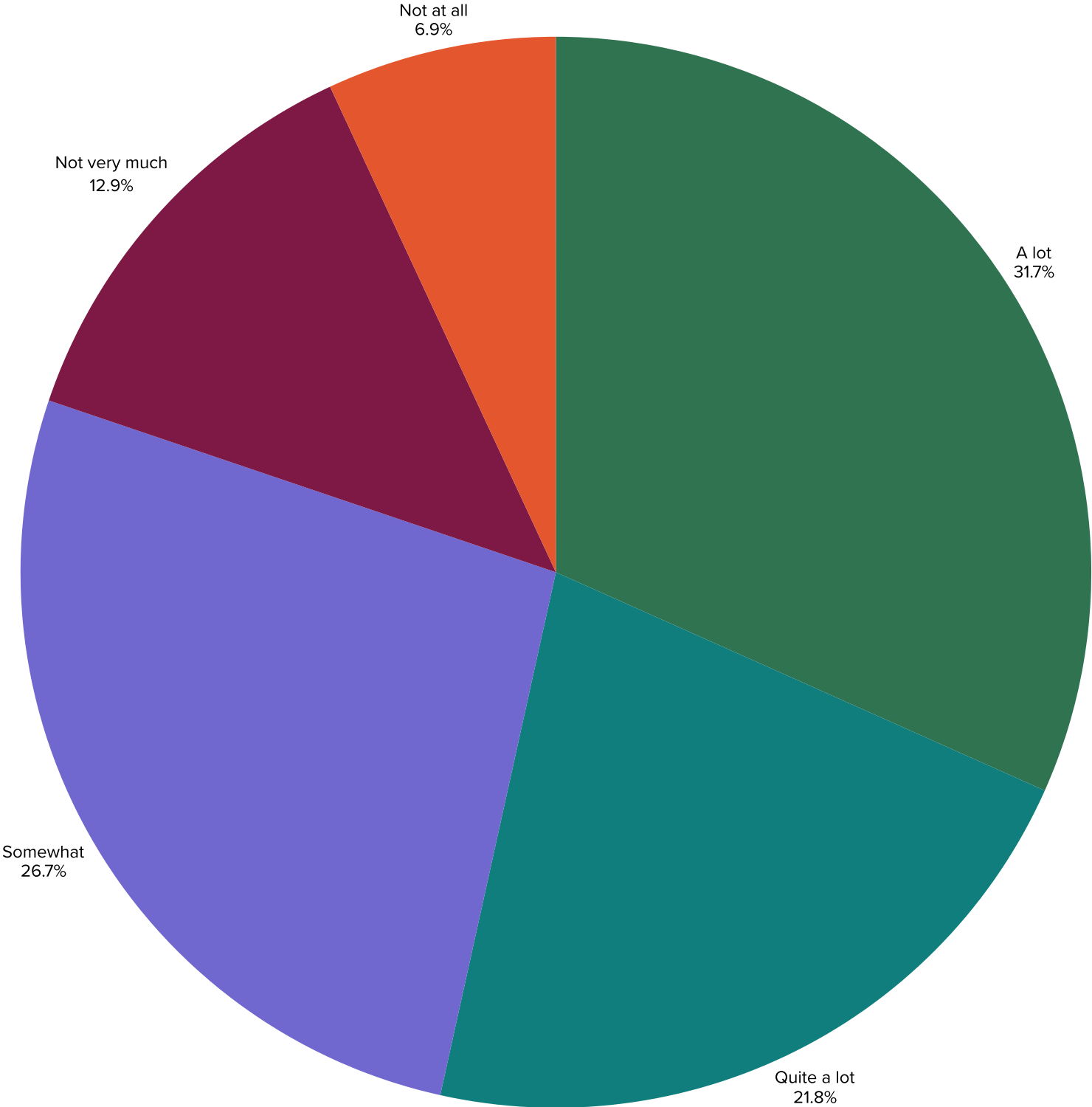
To what extent has participating in an Acicis Program influenced your career path to date?

Across all cohorts, nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated that their Acicis experience had influenced their career path to some degree. On average, 32% reported it had influenced their career a lot, and a further 23% reported it had influenced their career quite a lot. 20% of respondents felt their participation had little or no impact on their career path.

“It allowed me to enhance my language skills to a level that inspired me to return to study a Graduate Diploma in Education (Indonesian Language Teaching). The cultural experience was also an invaluable experience in creating a strong relationship with and love of Indonesia and resulting in extended travel through the archipelago post my Acicis study. Acicis formed the basis of my career path.” 1997 respondent

“Participation in Acicis has not influenced my career path but it does not mean to say that it has not influenced my personal interests in Indonesia, the language and its people. I am midway through my career and seek to use my Indonesian studies background at some point in the future.” 1998 respondent

“I have been working for projects supporting Indonesian government policy for large parts of my career, including design and implementing social protection programs in remote communities. Language skills, as well as understanding and appreciating so many aspects of Indonesian society, have influenced my career path and that was facilitated by the Acicis program.” 1999 respondent



Impact on Career and Skills

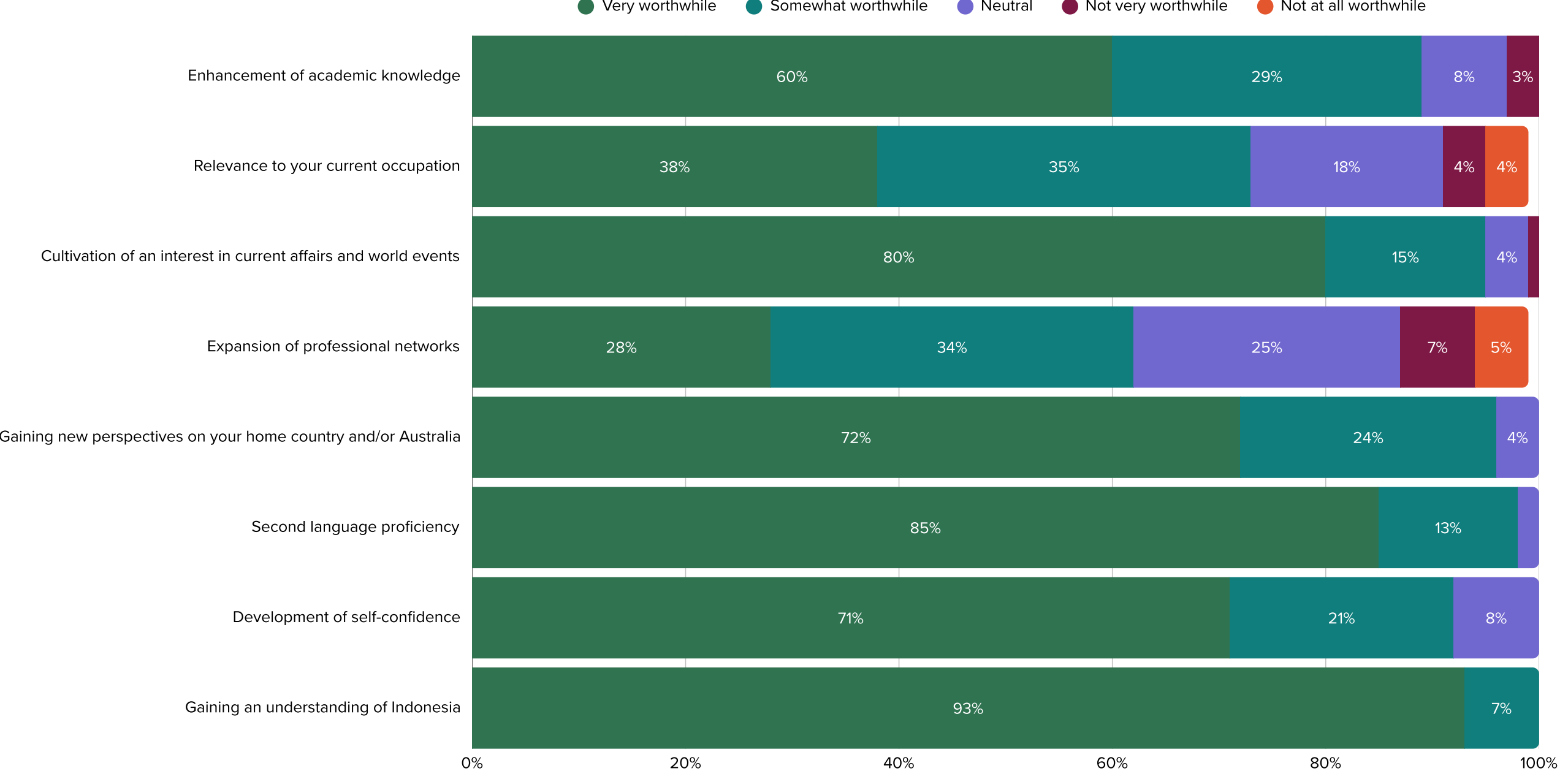
To what extent do you consider your experience in Indonesia with Acicis worthwhile with regard to the following?

While overall sentiment was positive, results across cohorts show variation in how respondents assess the long-term worth of their Acicis experience. The strongest outcomes were reported in gaining an understanding of Indonesia, developing self-confidence, cultivating new perspectives on Australia, and second language proficiency. In contrast, expanding professional networks and relevance to current occupation scored more modestly, suggesting that personal and cultural impacts were more consistent than professional benefits.

“I believe my year in Indonesia with Acicis was immeasurable in terms of impact – an amazing opportunity to develop both personally and professionally. I believe it was key to my earlier life experience and assisted me a great deal personally and professionally.”
2000 respondent

*“I have been extremely fortunate to have spent most of the two decades of my professional career (largely in or attached to government) working in roles where my linguistic capabilities have been *core* to my work... The Acicis program was central to providing me the skills, cultural awareness and contacts that I have had to rely on on a daily basis throughout my career.”* 2003 respondent

“As someone who grew up only in a little bubble in Perth, it really opened my eyes to new perspectives on life, politics, and humanity in general. Our semester was unique from a social upheaval situation as well so seeing that first-hand was incredible.” 1998 respondent



Impact on Career and Skills

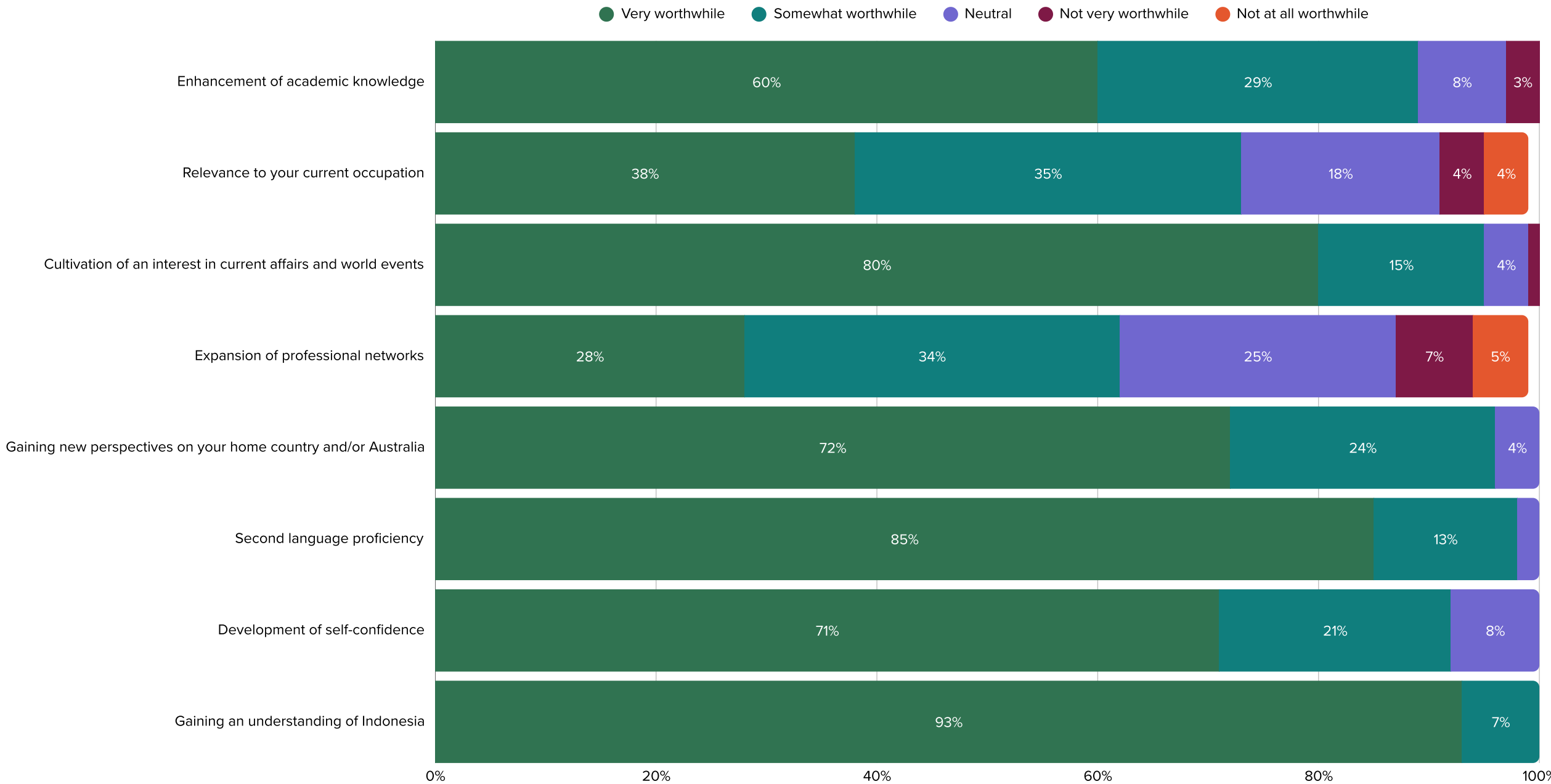
Please rate the extent to which your experience in Indonesia with Acicis has impacted each one of the following skills

Across all cohorts, respondents consistently rated their Acicis experience as having a strong positive impact on professional and interpersonal skills. The highest-rated outcomes were communication, capacity to adapt and learn quickly, and the ability to interact with individuals different from oneself, with an average of almost 70% of respondents describing the impact as extremely positive. Critical thinking and problem-solving also ranked highly, while creativity and entrepreneurship showed more mixed responses.

“Through independent field work in East Java I was able to develop a range of critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills, combined with collaborative practices and the opportunity, as an undergraduate, to experience a fundamentally different social and cultural reality.” 1995 respondent

“As a young student it gave me a safe space to learn a new culture and language in a short period of time and really develop in my confidence to try new things and negotiate problems as they arose”. 1997 respondent

“My Acicis program was one of the hardest things I had done in my life but also the most rewarding. I am sure that I think differently about the world and have different values as a result. It was not only about the interactions with Indonesian people but also with the other Acicis participants some of whom remain life-long friends.” 1995 respondent



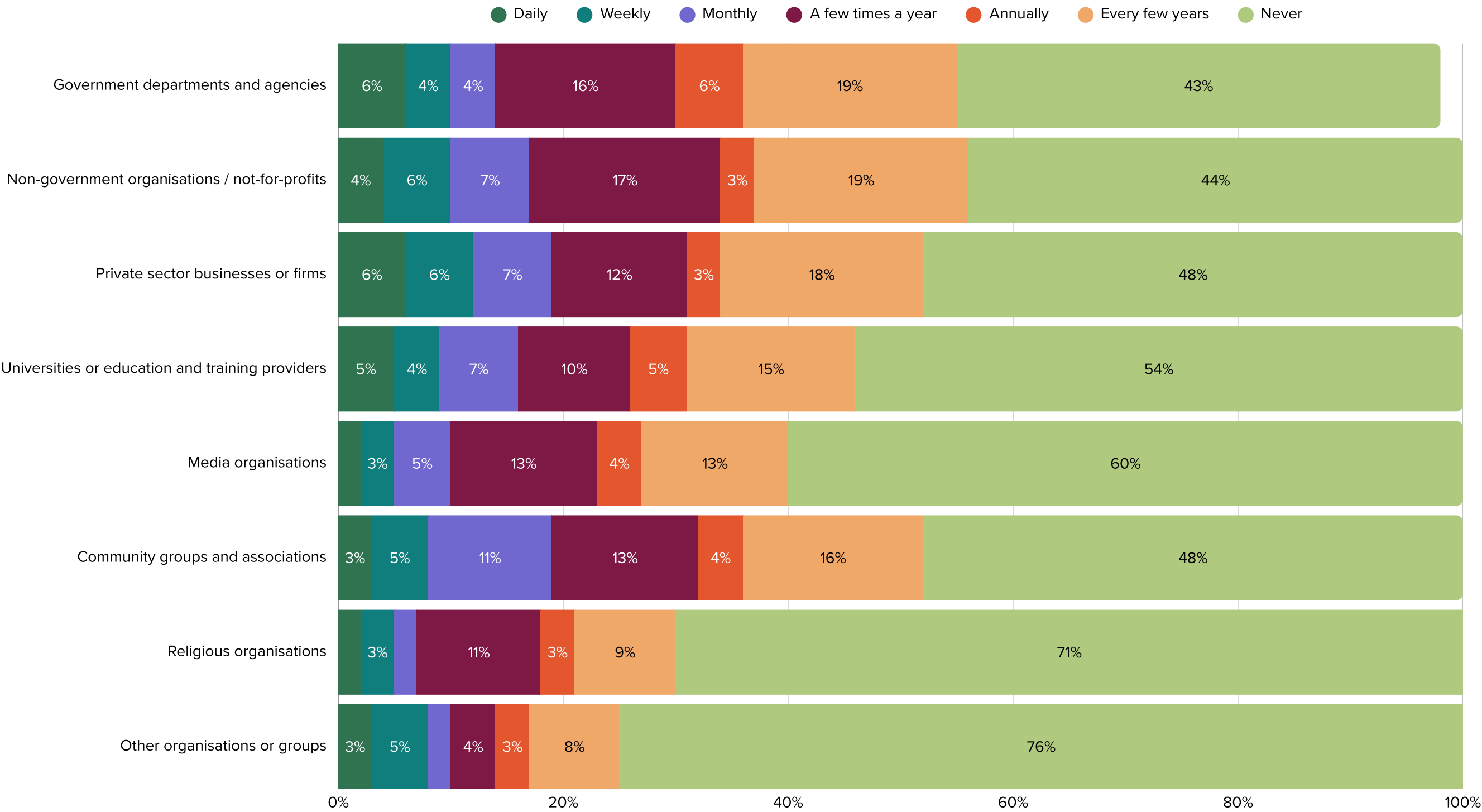
Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

How often do you interact with the following groups or organisations in Indonesia?

Across all cohorts, many respondents continue to maintain meaningful points of contact with Indonesia, particularly with government agencies, NGOs, universities, and private sector organisations. Although only a small proportion engage on a daily or weekly basis, a significant number report connecting a few times a year or every few years, indicating that their links remain active even decades after their in-country experience.

“We have over 25 offices and 300 staff in Indonesia that I am overseeing – we deal with various customers in the private sector, whilst we also deal with various government agencies who regulate our industry.” 1998 respondent

“I am an academic at an Australian University and my country of research focus is Indonesia. I therefore have reason to be in regular contact with my Indonesian collaborators, many of whom are in research agencies in the Government, while others are in Universities... My job also involves running New Colombo Plan-funded field schools to Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, which necessitates organising lectures, seminars, community visits, field trips etc with a range of sectors. I have also helped deliver some Australia-Awards training in Jakarta and also in Sydney to Indonesia policy advocates and activists.” 2000 respondent



Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

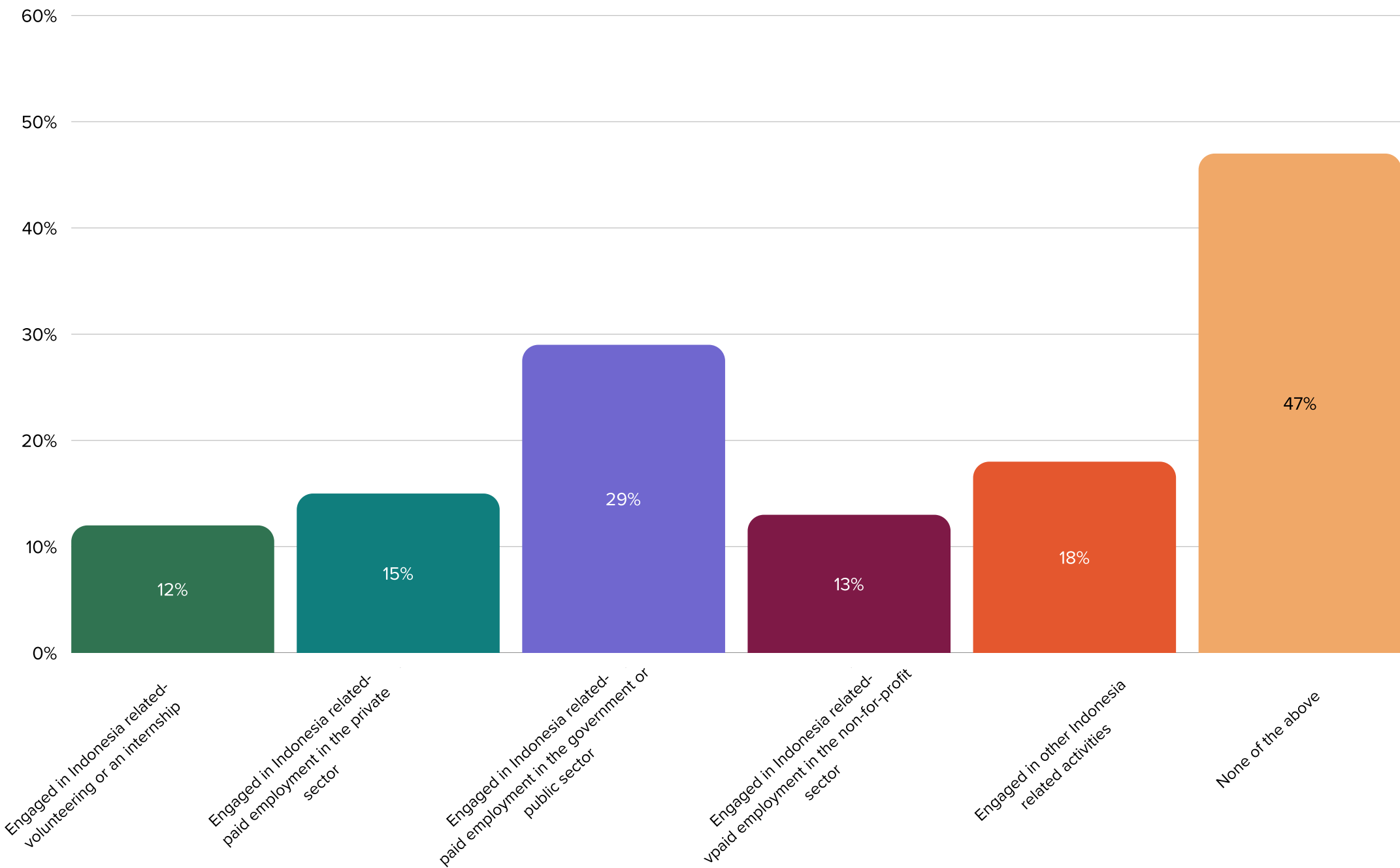
These questions explore the extent to which Acicis alumni have maintained linguistic, professional, and personal ties with Indonesia since completing their programs. They consider how frequently alumni use Indonesian language, whether they have returned to Indonesia for work or study, and the degree to which they remain connected through friendships, networks, or ongoing engagement with Indonesian society. Together, these indicators provide insight into the durability of alumni connections and the long-term influence of their in-country experiences.

Since studying in Indonesia with Acicis, have you done any of the following while residing in a country other than Indonesia?

Many respondents have maintained an Indonesia-related focus in their professional lives even while based outside Indonesia. Across all cohorts, over 50% of respondents reported engaging in some form of Indonesia-related employment, volunteering, or activity, with paid work in the government or public sector emerging as the most common pathway (29%). A smaller but consistent share worked or volunteered in Indonesia-related roles in the private or not-for-profit sectors, or engaged in other Indonesia-related activities.

“I work for a large American multinational corporation that has had me living and working in Indonesia, Malaysia and currently Singapore. My Bahasa language skills and broader Asian business knowledge has absolutely influenced my career path to date. At the time of my budding career it was a very unique skillset to have i.e. Asian Studies (language) and Finance.” 2000 respondent

“In a former role I was working within the State Government for approximately 8 years on trade and investment engagement with Southeast Asia, with a lot of focus on building the bilateral relationship with Indonesia, including supporting government to government engagement, visits, program development etc...” 1995 respondent



Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

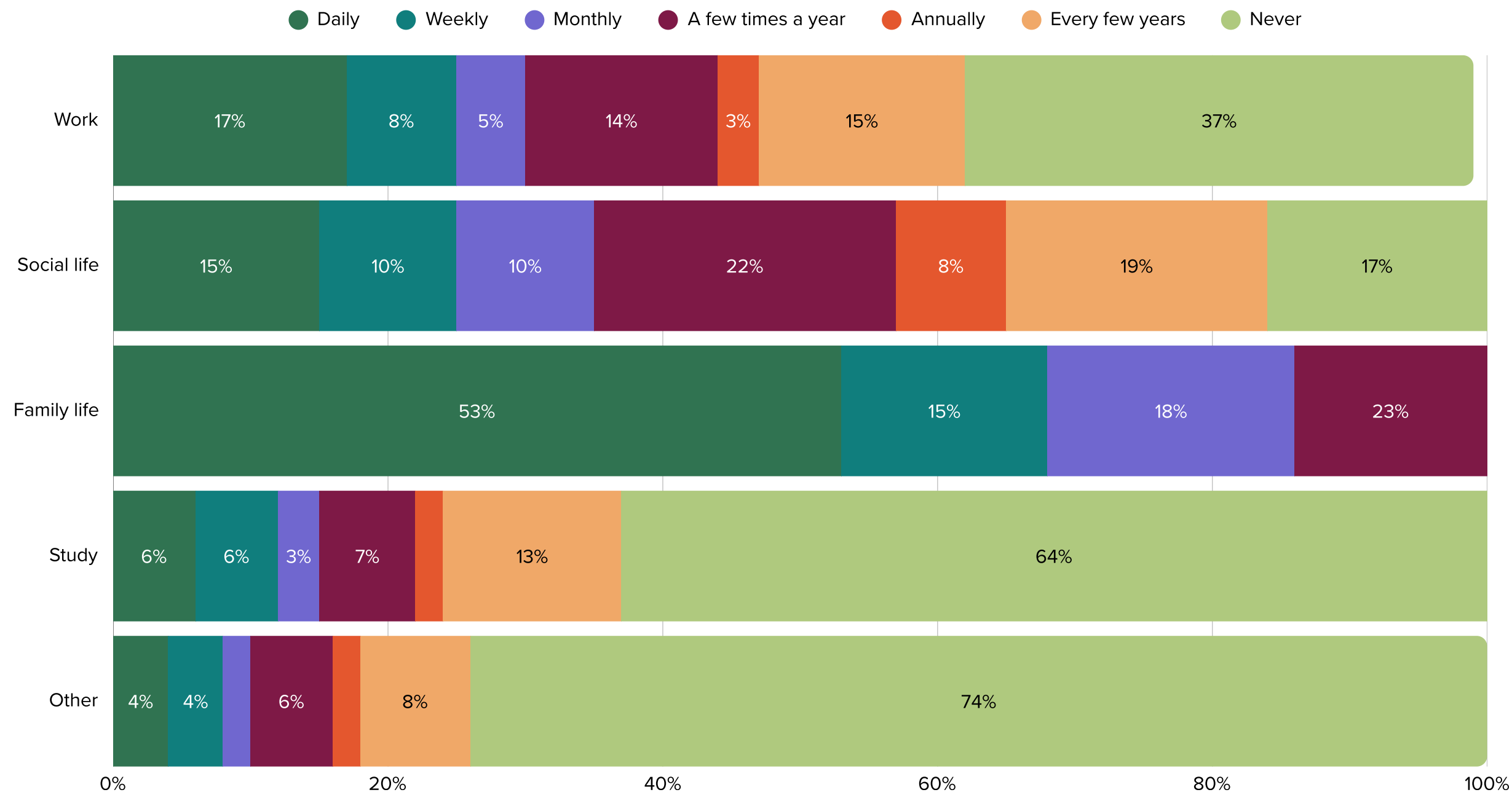
How often do you currently use Indonesian language in the following areas of life?

The overall level of usage of Indonesian language among respondents remains notably high, given the 20–30 years that have passed since they completed their programs. Across all cohorts, 15% reported using Indonesian daily in work or social contexts. Notably, 23% of respondents reported using Indonesian language daily or weekly in their family life, representing a number of respondents who have gone on to build families together with Indonesian people or other Indonesian language speakers.

“All of the work I have done after finishing my undergraduate degree has required Indonesian language skills – either directly (ie, translation and interpreting) or indirectly (ie, useful to have because some people on the program are Indonesian, or activities are run in Indonesia or East Timor).” 2002 respondent

“My first role in Consulting required Indonesian fluency – this and my indo in country experience is what secured the job for me – I then had a 20 year consulting career with large corporations and regularly worked back in Indonesia.” 1998 respondent

“My Indonesian language skills were directly relevant to my career in the first 7 years post-graduation. The academic interests that contributed to my completion of the Acicis program, and various experiences during the program are also relevant to the skills and attributes that led me to succeed in various roles. I am drawing on some of these skills, attributes and learnings now in my PhD program.” 1999 respondent



Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

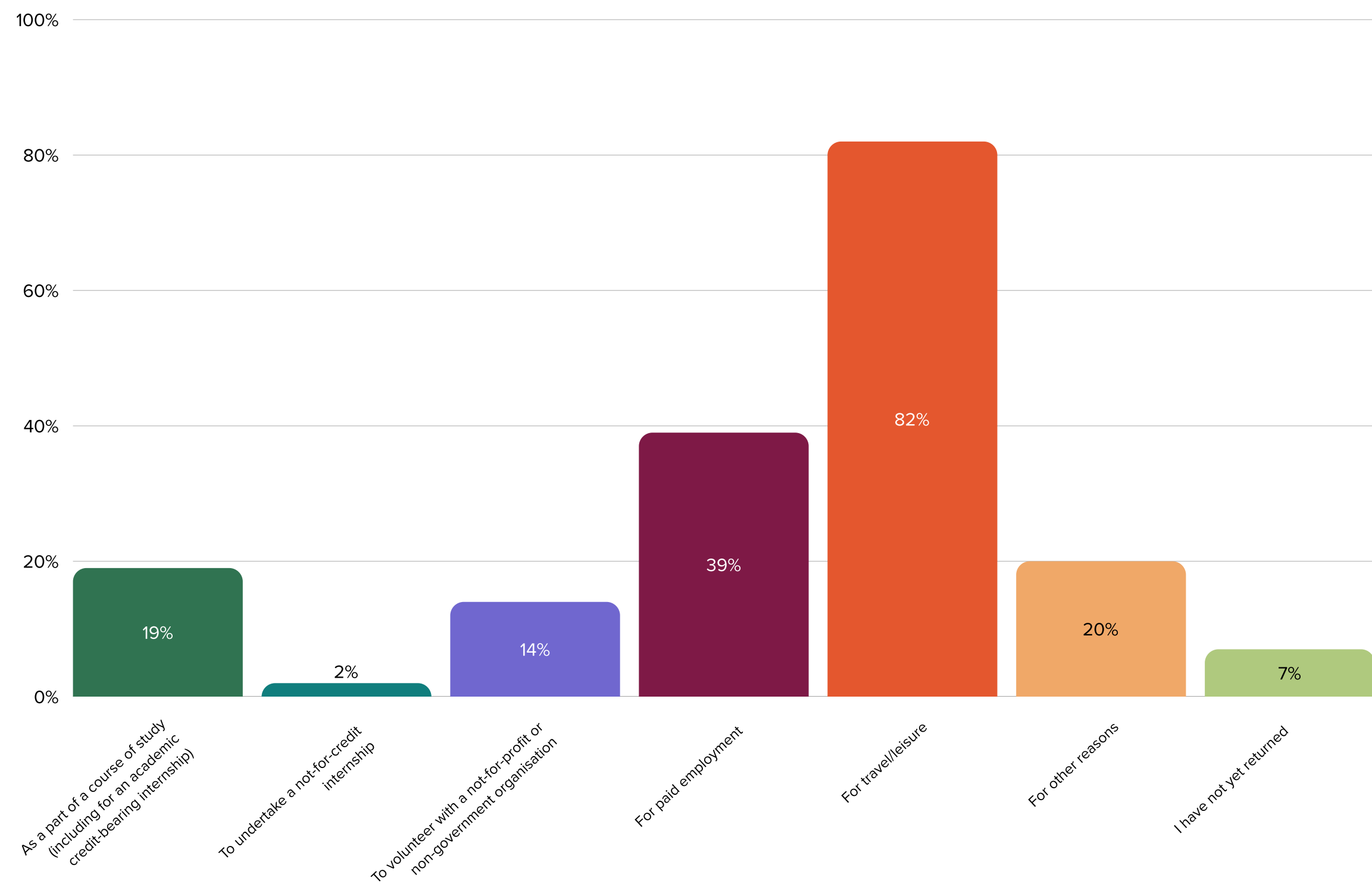
Since studying in Indonesia with Acicis, have you returned to Indonesia for any of the following?

A large majority of respondents have returned to Indonesia since completing their Acicis program, demonstrating enduring personal and professional engagement with the country. Across all cohorts, over 80% reported at least one return visit, with the most common reasons being for travel or leisure (82%) and, notably, paid employment (39%). This rate of return for professional work is particularly significant, indicating that many respondents have built sustained career links with Indonesia or the wider region.

Smaller numbers reported returning for further study, volunteering, or internships, suggesting a continuing though less common academic or community connection. Only a small minority (7%) had not returned at all.

“My wife is Indonesian, my kids are Indonesian passport holders, we have property in Indonesia and visit very often. It is my second home.” 1998 respondent

“This was a significant part of my past and I remain connected to the people I met there but my professional and contemporary ties to the country and the language have faded over time. I do love returning on holiday and allowing the language to magically reappear though – it is quite a thrill to be able to speak to the locals in their language when travelling. 1997 respondent



Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

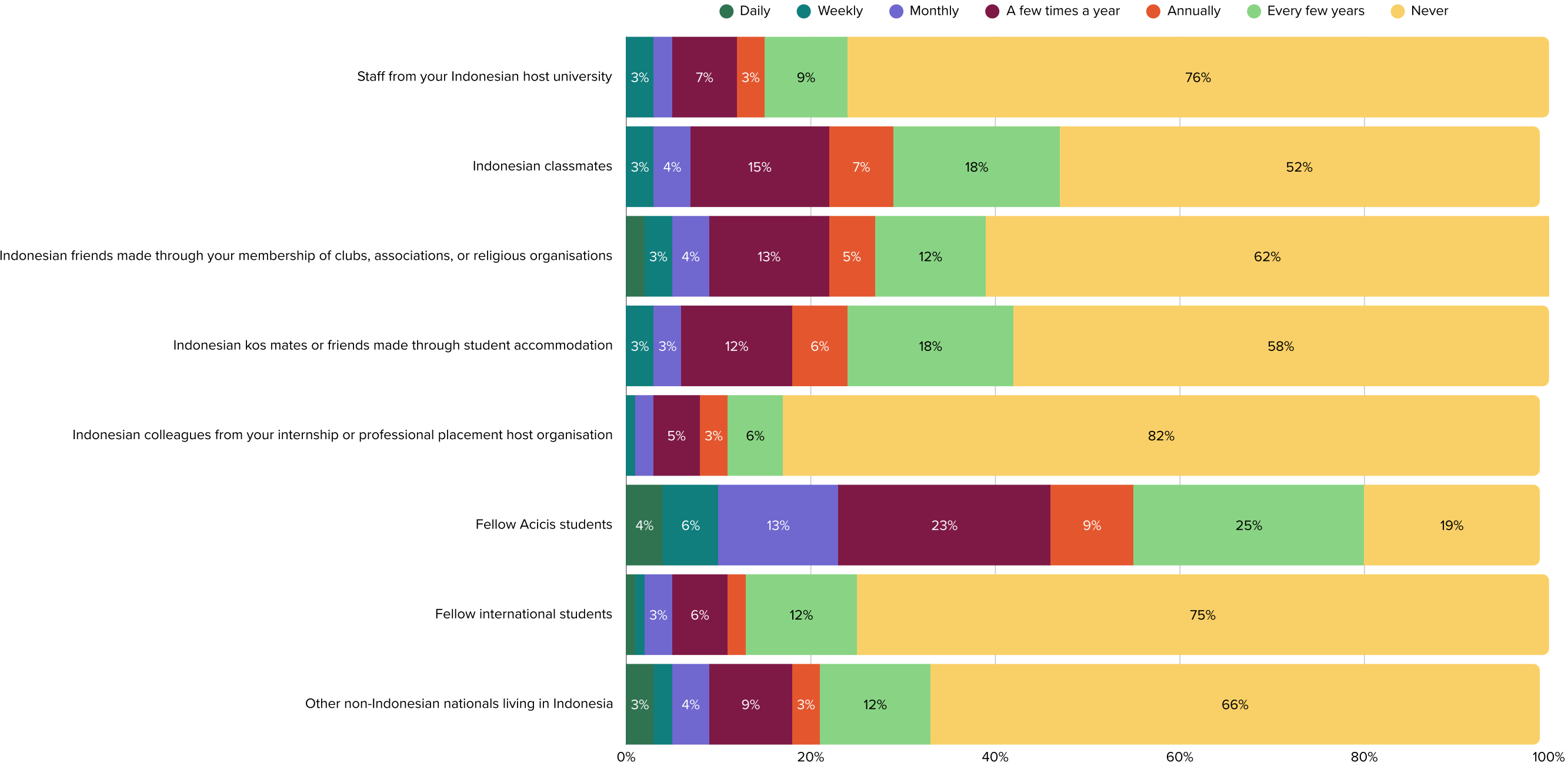
How often do you communicate with the people you met during your time in Indonesia on an Acicis program(s)?

Many respondents continue to maintain at least some contact with people they met through Acicis, though the frequency and nature of this communication varies. Across all cohorts, more than 40% of respondents reported having some form of ongoing contact with their Indonesian classmates, Indonesian kos mates, and fellow Acicis students. Accompanying qualitative responses suggest that for those that have not maintained contact, this is often due to practical rather than personal reasons – particularly the limited availability of social media and digital communication platforms at the time respondents first studied in Indonesia.

“1995/96 was a time when internet and email was just coming onto campus in Australia and only one campus in Yogya. As such everything was snail mail and a lot of communication was lost with Indonesian friends, kos mates and international students after a few years. Different times than if the same program was run now.”
1995 respondent

“I have made lifelong friends with the family I lived with in Yogyakarta. We keep in contact via Whatsapp, Facebook and email. I have been to visit them a number of times.” 1997 respondent

“I have professional connections in my work as a research fellow and development specialist and I have now accumulated two decades of fieldwork and I have familial connections as I married an Indonesian whom I met on Acicis and we have 2 young children, we call them ‘indoz’ who are part of a broad network of Indonesian/Australian families, many who also met on the Acicis program.” 2000 respondent



Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

Currently, how connected do you feel to Indonesia?

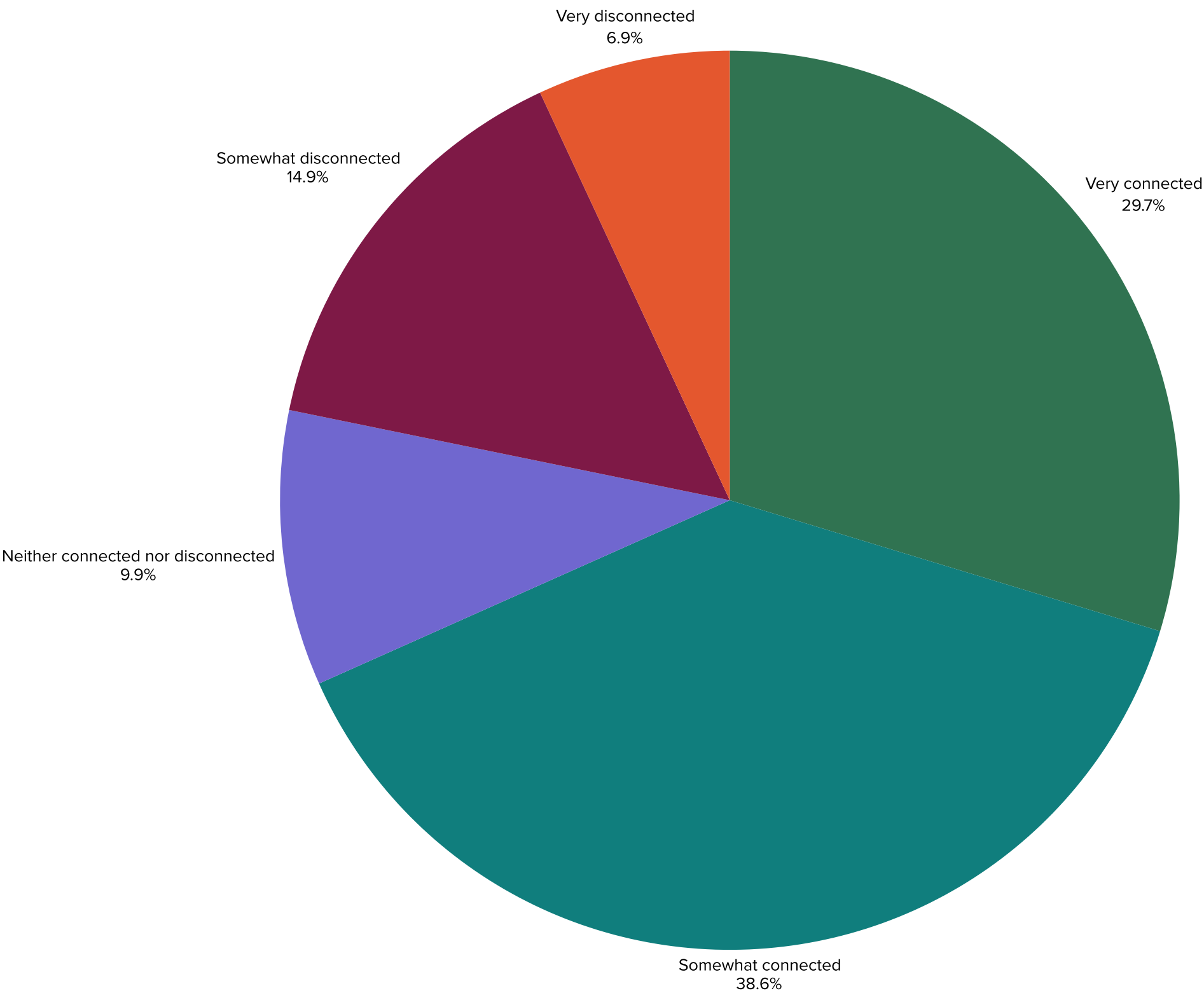
Across all cohorts, most alumni continue to feel some degree of connection to Indonesia, though the strength of that connection varies. On average, 30% described themselves as feeling very connected and another 39% as somewhat connected, meaning almost 70% of respondents retain at least a moderate sense of connection decades after their in-country study.

Only a small minority (22%) felt somewhat disconnected or very disconnected. These results suggest that while intensity of connection naturally diminishes over time, the majority of respondents continue to identify a personal, cultural, or professional link with Indonesia well beyond their student experience.

“Indonesia and Indonesian language will always be close to my heart... I have celebrated every major milestone birthday (21, 30, 40) in Indonesia and hope to take my family there again soon as we can travel and things ease”. 1995 respondent

“I have a personal connection with Indonesia and will always have an affinity for the country and its people due to the experience I had living and studying there.” 2005 respondent

“I have remained living and working in Indonesia for the largest part of the last 21 years... I subsequently pursued a PhD program with my substantive fieldwork being in Indonesia and I continue to conduct research on and in Indonesia. I am now a permanent resident of Indonesia working in Higher education and collaborating with Australian scholars in teaching and research” 2002 respondent



Ongoing Connection with Indonesia

Would you encourage current Australian or international university students to study in Indonesia with Acicis?

Support for Acicis remains overwhelmingly strong across all surveyed cohorts. 87% of respondents said they would strongly encourage others to study in Indonesia through Acicis, with the remaining respondents largely indicating they would encourage participation. No respondents across any cohort reported that they would discourage students from taking part.

This consistently high endorsement rate—sustained even two to three decades after alumni completed their programs—underscores the long-term value participants place on their in-country experiences. It also suggests a high level of trust in Acicis as a meaningful and transformative study opportunity, both personally and professionally.

“I was away from all my usual support networks but being with other Acicis students and having access to the regional director & staff meant that I wasn’t in a completely unfamiliar environment. This meant I could get support when I needed it.” 1995 respondent

“International programs (such as Acicis) are an essential investment for Australia. As an Island nation, without land connections to neighbouring cultures and languages, we must encourage and financially support Australians, of any age, to understand, respect and collaborate with our neighbours. Every Australian uni student should be given the option to do an in-country semester with a partner university. Another reality is that a significant number of our uni students live closer to Indo than Melbourne.” 1998 respondent

“I often tell people that my Acicis semester abroad was the best six months of my life. It was an incredible experience, and I’ll always be grateful to Acicis for making it possible.” 2004 respondent

