Volunteer Round Up: July 2022

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An Engaged, Mission-Driven Community of Readers

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

At Words Alive, we envision a world where everyone is connected to the power of reading and the innumerable ways that it enriches our lives. We also know that empowering experiences turn individuals into agents of change and advocates for their own education, and that when everyone can read, whole communities thrive! At Words Alive, we believe that the world we envision is made possible through the simple, essential, and effective act of reading together.

Reading has the power to change the world. A book helps you understand the story of someone different than you. At the same time, stories have the power to reflect our own experiences back at us and tell us: We are not alone.

Words Alive values our community's life experiences, cultural background, family and loved ones, gender identity, faith and beliefs, socio-economic status, where you live, education, abilities, and talents. We are a compassionate community—one where each of us are respected, cherished, and celebrated.

At Words Alive, representation matters. We are committed to reflecting the lived experiences of our community in our programming and curriculum; governance and policies; leadership, staff, and volunteers; partnerships and collaborations; and through the work we do every day to advance our mission.

Reading has the power to change the world, but only when we bring our words alive with our actions.

As such, at the end of the calendar year, Words Alive takes a close look at the demographics of our volunteer community to identify opportunities to continue to support our community and become more deeply aligned and congruent. The data reflected in this report was collected during the course of 2022

This report's release date is December 16th, 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER

o   Our volunteer corps is becoming more racially diverse but does not yet reflect the communities we serve. We need a diverse network of volunteer recruitment sources locally in San Diego County. Additionally, we need to make sure these volunteers have access to forward-facing roles interacting directly with the communities we serve to support our equity goals.

o   43% of new volunteers recruited during January through June of 2022 were under 25 years old. This is on pace with 2021 recruitment tends. We should continue to develop opportunities for participation that do not rely on advanced credentials or skillsets. We should review our trainings to make sure they include guidance for how to best support younger volunteers without professional work experience or knowledge of tools such as calendar scheduling, Excel, Google Docs, etc.

o   We should continue to develop internships and other leadership opportunities with our younger volunteers in mind. In an effort to develop more appreciation strategies unique for this demography, Words Alive added additional Youth Volunteer awards to the 2022 Volunteer Appreciation Celebration. Overall, 20% of volunteers recognized at this year's Volunteer Appreciation Celebration were under 18 years old. Additional recognition strategies to target this demographic could include distributing swag for volunteers who reach certain benchmarks of service, or raffles.

o   We need sources of recruitment for skilled volunteer support around fundraising, PR/communications, human resources, legal, and event planning.

o   We should revisit our policies around court-mandated service and formerly incarcerated nonviolent offenders as the communities we serve are disproportionally impacted by the criminal justice system.

o   As in-person events become more common, Words Alive should be intentional about attending community festivals, fairs, and other family-friendly events to support volunteer recruitment, brand recognition, and book distribution across San Diego. This would help us reach our recruitment goals and provide in-person volunteer opportunities outside of a classroom.

NOTABLE TRENDS FROM 2021

o   71% of the new volunteers recruited in 2022 are under the age of 35. The aggregate total of volunteers under 35 years is 78%. This is likely due to the accessibility of our virtual roles and the flexibility they provide to the volunteer to participate on their own schedule. Words Alive is consistently attracting a younger volunteer base compared to conventional wisdom of who our volunteers are.

o   Our volunteer base is continuing to become more racially diverse. The aggregate totals currently sit at 43% of volunteers identifying as White, 34% identifying as Asian, 12% identifying as Hispanic or Latinx, 6% identifying as Black or African American, and 3% identifying as Middle Eastern.

o   23% of the new volunteers recruited in 2022 had a graduate or professional degree as their highest level of education, down from 25% in 2021. The number of new volunteers currently in high school dropped from 30% in 2021 to 20% in 2022, but the number of new volunteers in middle school increased and currently sits at 6%. Additionally, new volunteers with a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education is up to 30% in 2022 from 25% in 2021.

RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING

o   So far in 2022, we connected with 320 potential volunteers. Of those 320 potential volunteers, 289 registered for a virtual orientation session. Of those participants, 236 completed volunteer applications and moved forward in the onboarding process, an 82% follow through rate.

o   Of our new volunteers, 61 came from San Diego with an additional 32 came from other parts of the county. Overall, 123 new volunteers came from California. 26 new volunteers also joined us from the following states: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. This brings the total number of states outside California represented in the Words Alive community to 37. Words Alive welcomed 26 volunteers from 14 countries including: Algeria, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand. This brings the total number of countries outside the United States to 25.

o   So far in 2022, Words Alive has had **386** volunteers report at least one act of service for Words Alive, including **154** Page Turners.

ROLES

We actively recruit interns, activating a total of 4 interns so far in 2022. Interns receive training in professional environment to support their role as needed, as well as participate in guided professional development opportunities to support their personal, professional, and academic goals.

HOURS

- o Words Alive volunteers contributed 8,244.5 hours so far in 2022, including the service work of our Page Turners. According to Independent Sector, the current estimated national value of volunteer hours is $29.95, and in California it is estimated at $33.61, bringing the value of volunteer contributions in 2022 to just over $277,097.

NOTES & FUTURE REPORTING

This report is missing demographic data on existing Words Alive volunteers before 2020 when this survey was implemented. It also does not yet include demographics on Page Turners as we do not require a volunteer application for participation in that program and we have not yet figured out how to aggregate that demographics data.

The next report will be issued at the end of the 2022 calendar year.

This report is produced in collaboration with Words Alive's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Taskforce, consisting of board members, staff, and volunteers.

For any questions about this report, data, or opportunities to join our movement to connect children, teens, and families to the power of reading, please do not hesitate to contact our team: info@wordsalive.org. Learn more about our work: www.WordsAlive.org.

Aggregated Survey Data (Jan 2020 – June 2022)

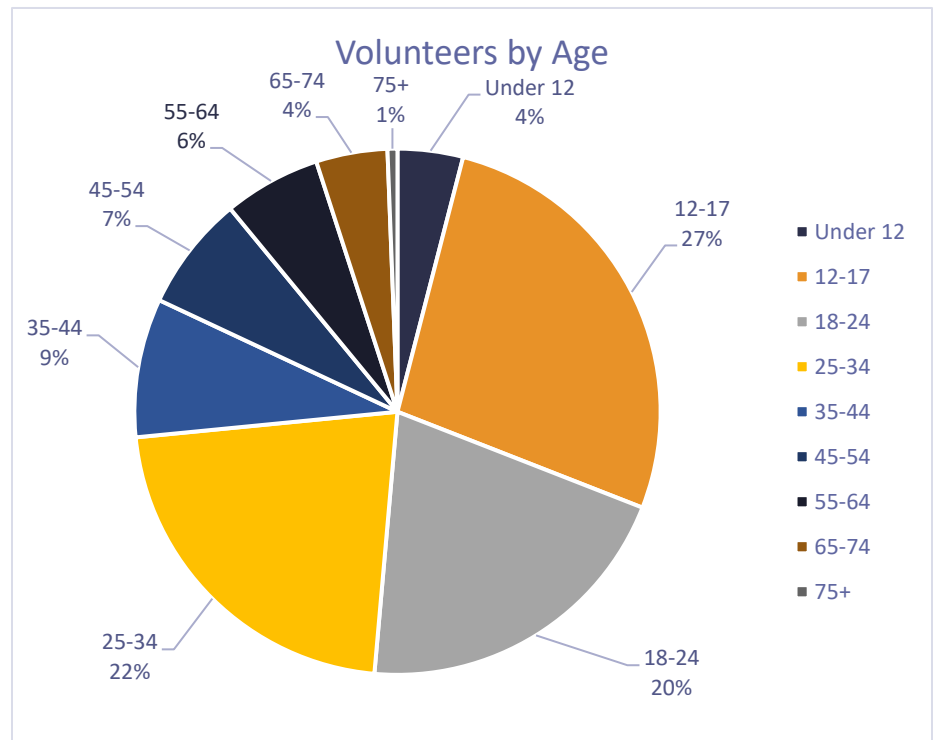## A LOOK AT THE AGGREGATE DATA ABOUT THE WORDS ALIVE COMMUNITY

This data includes all survey responses spanning 30 months - from January 1, 2020, through June 30th, 2022, with updated information on age, gender, race, and education level. Military status, disability, and LGBTQIA identification were added at the beginning of 2021 and reflect the responses submitted between January 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

This section of the report is meant to provide Words Alive staff, lead volunteers, organizational leadership, and investors with a look at the results of recruitment efforts around inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. It is meant to be used as a flashlight to look at the results of the work we are doing and provide directionality for next steps as an organization. Some recommendations, reflections, and thoughts on our growing edge – that is the space where we believe we have the strongest potential to grow even amidst the initial discomfort it may cause – are included with the intention to continue to help us develop in this space.

AGE

Words Alive did not begin collecting this data until the beginning of 2020. Because we did not have solid data, a perception that our volunteers were primarily retiree-aged became prevalent within our community. However, between the large increase in our volunteer base and active data collection over the past 30 months, we have seen a consistent trend of younger volunteers joining Words Alive.

o   Date Range: 1/1/2020-6/30/2022

o   N = 821

o   69% are under 35.

o   47% are under 25 years old.

Volunteers by Age

- Under 12 — 4%
- 12-17 — 27%
- 18-24 — 20%
- 25-34 — 22%
- 35-44 — 9%
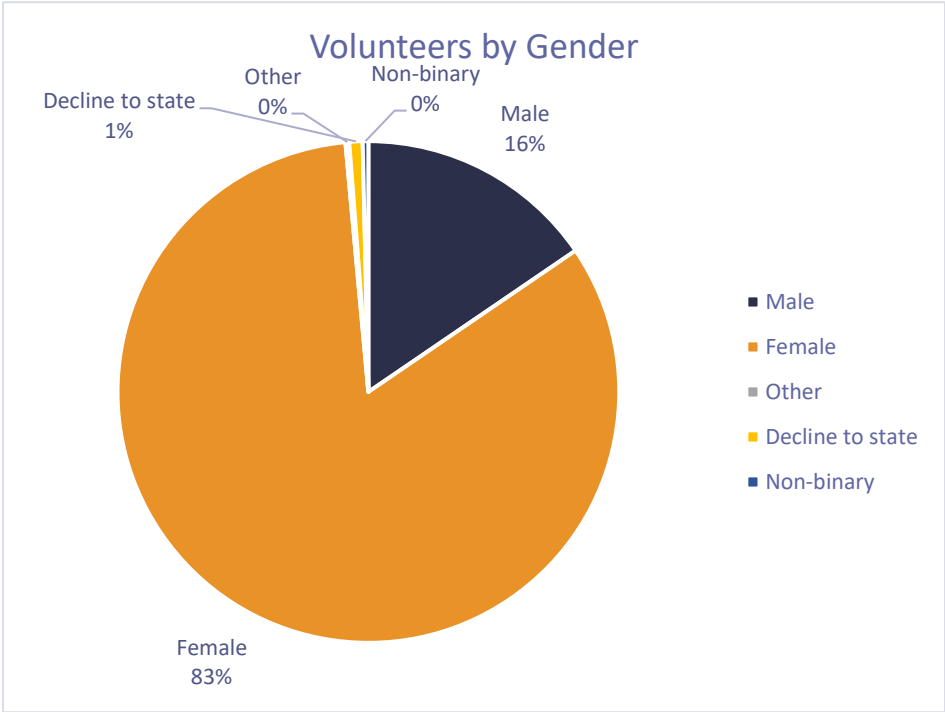- 45-54 — 7%
- 55-64 — 6%
- 65-74 — 4%
- 75+ — 1%

o   *Growing Edge*: Our volunteers span five generations, which provides broad perspective when considering life experiences and expertise. The growing prominence of younger voices can begin to add credibility to the relevancy of the work we are doing. Staff and Lead Volunteers will benefit from an investment in training on multi-generational workforces and tactics and resources.

GENDER

Words Alive has been tracking gender identity since the beginning of 2020. The figure below has been consistent over the past 30 months.

o   Date Range: 1/1/2020-6/30/2022

o   N = 821

o   Three respondents identified as non-binary, two identified as other, and seven declined to state their gender, suggesting that 1% of our volunteers do not identify as male or female.

o   *Growing Edge*: To continue to be inclusive of gender identity, Words Alive has normalized

Volunteers by Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Decline to state
- Non-binary

Other 0%
Decline to state 1%
Non-binary 0%
Male 16%
Female 83%

strategies like introductions with pronouns in email signatures, meetings, trainings, and programming. Additionally, Words Alive's IDEA Taskforce (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) has developed a training module, Words Matter, that covers the importance of pronoun and name usage with students, volunteers, and community members. Male reading role models should remain a priority for the organization as well to bring our volunteer base into closer alignment with the students we serve.

RACE

Since Words Alive began collecting this data at the beginning of 2020, we have seen the percentage of Asian-identified volunteers skyrocket up to 34% from 10% in the past 30 months, whereas White-identified volunteers dropped to 43% from 60% during that same time period. We have also seen increases in Middle Eastern- and Hispanic/Latinx-identified volunteers, and still have room for growth.
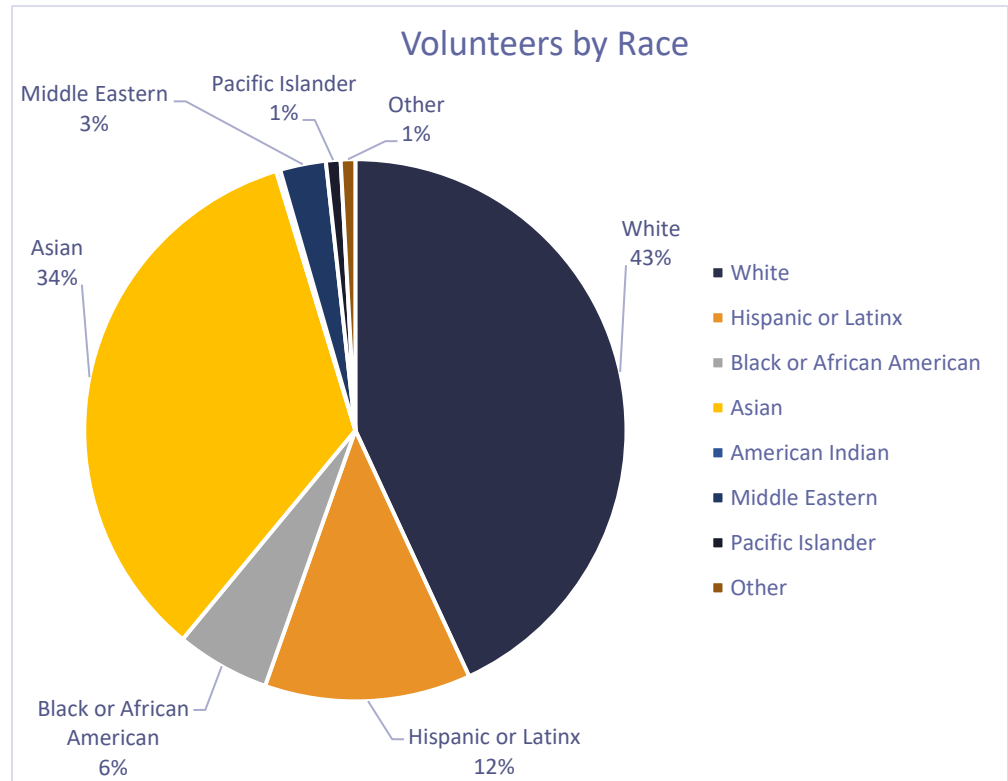
o   Date Range: 1/1/2020-12/31/21

o   N = 805

o   43% of respondents identify as White

o   34% of respondents identify as Asian

o   12% of respondents identify as Hispanic or Latinx

Volunteers by Race

Middle Eastern 3%
Pacific Islander 1%
Other 1%
White 43%
Asian 34%
Black or African American 6%
Hispanic or Latinx 12%

Legend:
- White
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian
- Middle Eastern
- Pacific Islander
- Other

o   16 respondents listed 'biracial' or 'multiracial' without additional information and are not reflected in this graph.

o   *Growing Edge:* Our volunteer demography along racial lines is changing but we still have opportunity to improve our recruitment strategies so that our volunteer base reflects the communities we serve. It is important to celebrate the racial diversity in our community and our ability to grow as an organization in this space, even while we continue to invest in recruitment tactics to continue to better align the demography of our volunteers with that of the students and families we serve. A concentrated look at outreach to service partners in Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, and Middle Eastern communities should lead that work. Additionally, offering recruitment materials, orientations, and training resources in the languages spoken by the families we serve at home could remove access barriers.

EDUCATION

Similar to a perception in the age of our volunteers, the lack of data led to a perception that the majority of Words Alive volunteers are former educators with advanced degrees. However, over the past 30 months, 30% of our new volunteers are currently in high school themselves, while 25% have completed their undergraduate education. This is a departure from the conventional wisdom.

- o Date Range: 1/1/2020-6/30/2022

- o N = 807

- o 30% of respondents have some high school education as their highest level of education.

Volunteers by Eduction Level

Graduate/Professional degree 22%

middle school (adjusted) 3%

Some high school 30%

Some graduate school 5%

- middle school (adjusted)
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Trade school
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate school
- Graduate/Professional degree

High school graduate 3%

Bachelor's degree 25%

Some college 12%

- o New in 2022 is the middle school (adjusted) category. In 2021, eleven respondents have not begun high school yet were not reflected in previous reporting. Aggregate data reflects that 3% of new volunteers since 2021 are in middle school. Words Alive has existing relationships with several schools such as La Jolla Country Day School and The Bishops School that could serve as additional recruitment sources. Additionally, launching Page Turners programs at local schools could deepen relationships while increasing our volunteer base.

- o 27% of volunteers have some graduate-level education or have completed graduate/professional degrees.

- o *Growing Edge:* The breadth of the educational background of our volunteers should not be reflective as a values statement on the importance of education in the lives of these volunteers, as that is a ubiquitous value amongst all our volunteers. We should consider the reading level of the language we use in training and written communications to ensure readability by the broadest spectrum of volunteers. As we build out our internal infrastructure, we should consider grouping volunteers with advanced degrees with our volunteers in college and high school to provide organic development opportunities. An example could be a volunteer with a PR/Marketing background supporting the Social Media Squad in an advisory capacity.
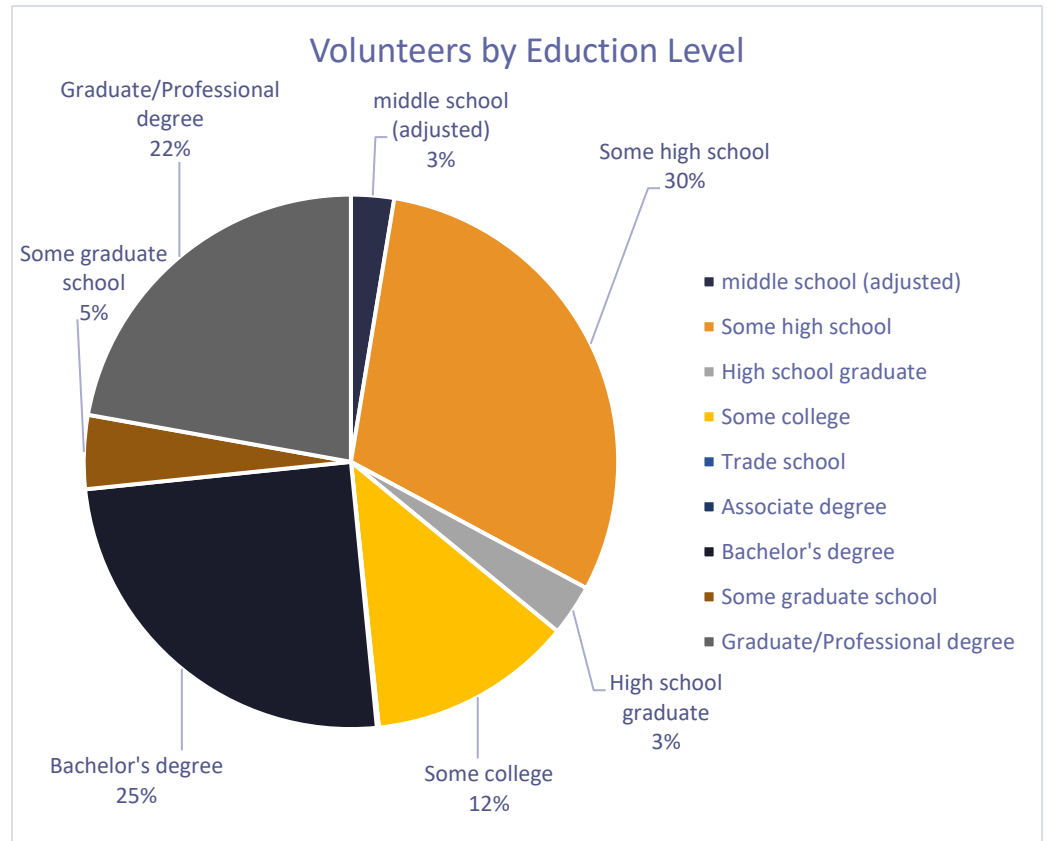
MILITARY STATUS

Words Alive collects data on military status for grant reporting purposes. There are 125,000 military families in San Diego County. Actively targeting this demographic for volunteer recruitment would increase representation for the students in military families served through Words Alive programming.

o   Date Range: 1/1/2021-6/30/2022

o   N = 399

o   6% are active military or veteran.

o   Both Military Veterans and Military Dependents increased from 1% in 2021 to 2% in June 2022.

Volunteers by Military Status

Legend:
- Active Military
- Military Veteran
- Military Dependent
- Not Applicable
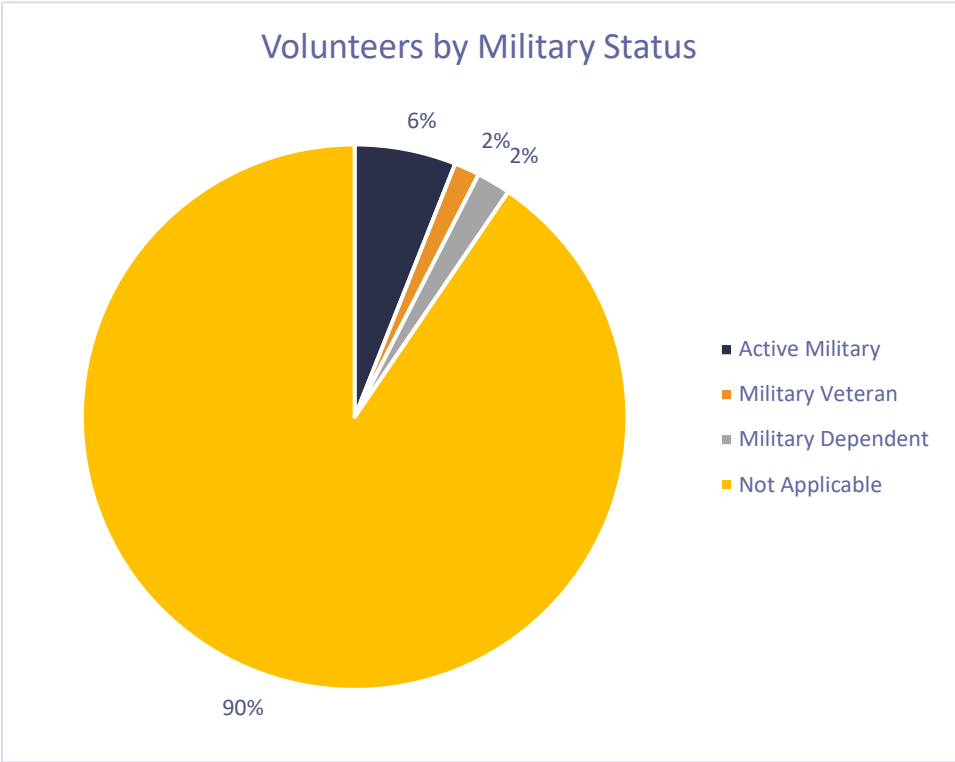
o   The question was added mid- January 2021 and was not included in the 2020 survey.

o   Not applicable refers to respondents who answered the question but were not active military, veterans, or military dependents.

o   *Implications*: Military volunteers may need certification for their service work, and accurate tracking of hours will be necessary. The concentration of military in San Diego County means there is room for growth in this area. Resuming our partnership with the Armed Services YMCA, or build relationships with new partners such as Support The Enlisted Project (STEP), and providing recruitment materials could be a good on-ramp to bring in more military volunteers.

DISABILITY

Words Alive's mission is to connect children, teens, and families to the power of reading regardless of ability and their lived experiences should be reflected in our volunteer corps. Similar to military status, comparing this data to available student data could inform future recruitment strategy. If we are serving students with disabilities, we need to develop resources to remove barriers to accessibility and increase representation in our volunteer corps.
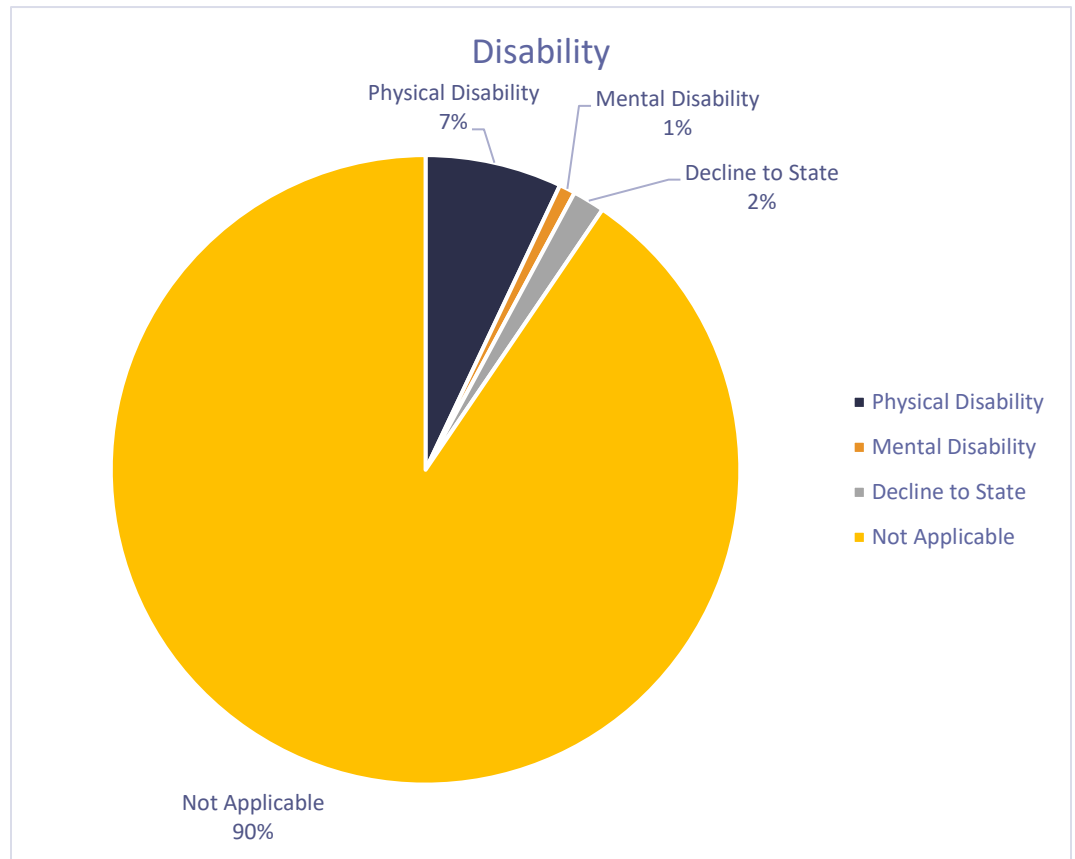
o Date range: 1/1/2021-6/30/2022

o N= 399

o 6% of respondents reported having a physical disability.

o 1% of respondents reported having a mental disability.

o 2% of respondents declined to state.

o Not applicable refers to respondents who answered the question but do not identify as having a physical or mental disability.

o *Implications*: Increasing accessibility in our programming, program delivery, and volunteer roles and responsibilities would remove barriers preventing individuals with disabilities from volunteer service and help us recruit more volunteers who identify as having a physical or mental disability. As Words Alive returns to in-person programming, the accessibility of all partner sites is a priority.

Disability

Physical Disability 7%
Mental Disability 1%
Decline to State 2%
Not Applicable 90%

Legend:
- Physical Disability
- Mental Disability
- Decline to State
- Not Applicable

LGBTQIA IDENTIFICATION

Words Alive is committed to representing authentic voices in both classroom content and volunteer representation. According to a 2021 Gallup poll, there are 18 million LGBTQIA identified adults living in the United States. Additionally, Gallup estimates that "21% of Generation Z Americans who have reached adulthood identify as LGBT." Our organizational focus on selecting diverse titles and celebrating individuals' lived experiences should be reflected in the diversity of our volunteer corps—with only 12% of respondents identifying as LGBTQIA, there is room for growth in this area.

o Date Range: 1/1/2021-6/30/22

o N = 394

o 12% of respondents identify as LGBTQIA

o Not applicable refers to respondents who answered this question but did not select an LGBTQIA identification.

A Closer Look

o   N= 28
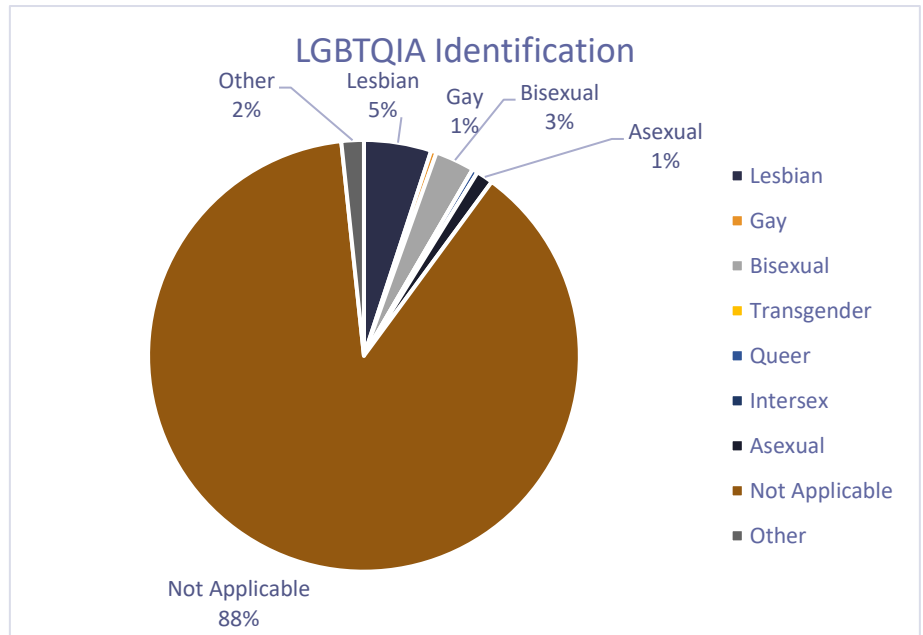
o Of the 12% of respondents who identify as LGBTQIA, this is a closer look at how they identify.

o The percentage of new volunteers who identify as queer is currently 12% up from 4% in December 2021.

o The percentage of new volunteers who identify as gay is currently 6% up from 3% in December 2021.
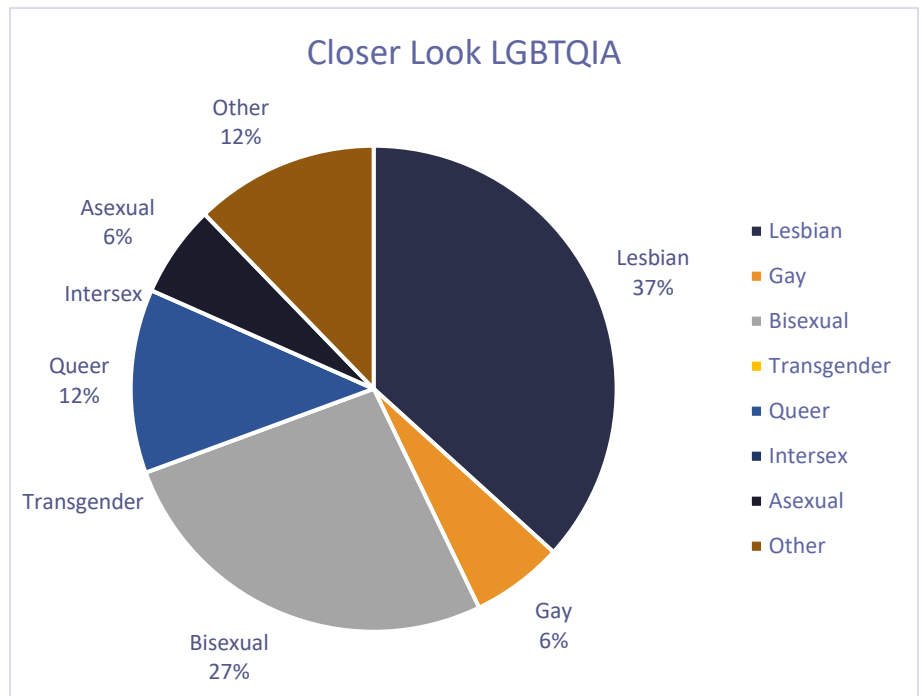
o *Implications*: The LGBTQIA community has a documented struggle regarding representation in the media and public spaces. Our focus on LGBTQIA inclusive content in book selection and curriculum makes Words Alive a unique organization to develop relationships with local LGBTQIA organizations and for volunteer recruitment. We can increase the number of LGBTQIA identified volunteers through targeted recruitment and we should place them in forward-facing roles.

LGBTQIA Identification

Other 2%
Lesbian 5%
Gay 1%
Bisexual 3%
Asexual 1%
Not Applicable 88%

Legend:
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer
- Intersex
- Asexual
- Not Applicable
- Other

Closer Look LGBTQIA

Other 12%
Asexual 6%
Intersex
Queer 12%
Transgender
Bisexual 27%
Gay 6%
Lesbian 37%

Legend:
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer
- Intersex
- Asexual
- Other