

CPA SMALL BRANCHES 'HAVE YOUR SAY' SURVEY REPORT

Authors:
Flora Longley-Cook, Network Coordinator
Charlotte Corby, Programmes Officer
12 March 2025



Introduction

The Small Branches Network survey gathered insights from Small Branches members and staff to shape the 2025 Workplan. With 101 respondents from across all regions, the survey identified key challenges, jurisdictional priorities, and opportunities for growth.

While challenges in parliaments varied across Branches and Regions, the most frequently highlighted issues were Separation of Powers, Parliamentary Infrastructure and Resource, and Financial and Budget Oversight.

The most pressing issues in Small Branches jurisdictions were Climate Action and Sustainable Development, Economic Growth, and Technology & Innovation.

In-person events were the most valued network function, yet 38% of respondents said they had not participated in a programme or event in the past two years, citing resource constraints and a lack of awareness as key barriers.

Most respondents viewed the Network's governance structure as clear and well-functioning, though 38% said they were unfamiliar with it.

CPA HQ Staff will be integrating action points based on these findings into the 2025 Workplan, ensuring that the Network remains responsive and aligned with members' needs.

We extend our sincere thanks to all respondents and those who shared the survey, whose insights will directly inform The Small Branch Networks approach.

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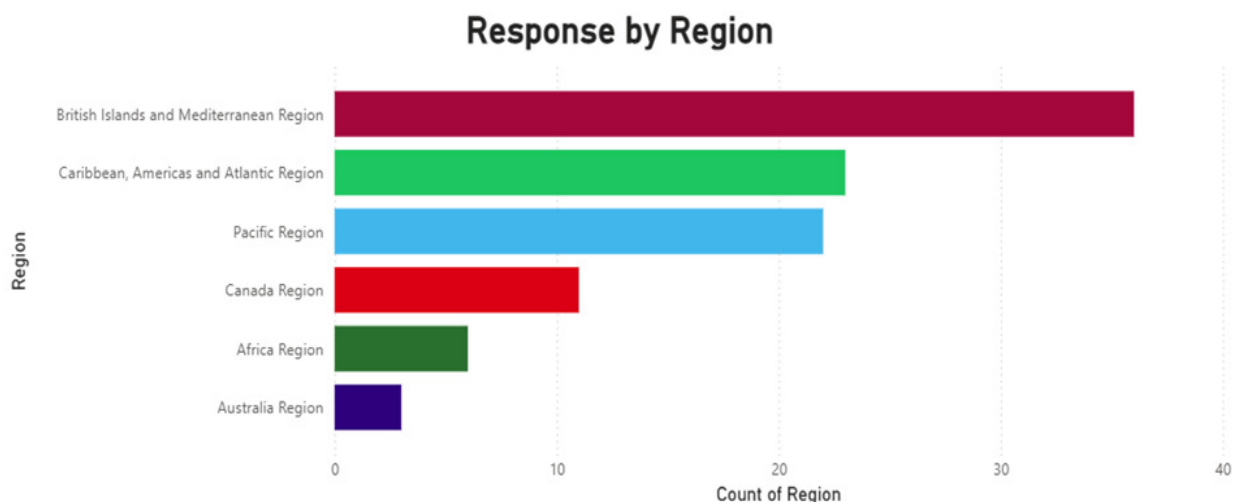
Methodology

The aim of the survey was to gather input from members and staff in the Small Branches Network on their priorities and experiences. The findings have been used to shape the 2025 Network Workplan and to identify the focus for the Small Branches 2025 Workshop. Both qualitative and quantitative questions were included in the survey.

The survey was distributed to members and staff of Small Branches via emails to Regional and Branch Secretaries, and QR codes were shared directly with attendees of the 40th Small Branches Conference, held alongside the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Sydney, Australia. The survey remained open for one month, and informed consent was obtained at the start of the survey.

A total of 101 individuals responded to the survey. Power BI was used to analyse the quantitative data, enabling dynamic insights, while qualitative responses were reviewed by CPA Headquarters staff, who identified themes and patterns.

This methodology can be repeated annually or biennially, using the same questions with adjustments based on insights and learnings, to develop learnings of change over time.



Constraints and Considerations

It is important to consider demographic differences between survey respondents and the wider network. For instance, 36% of respondents were from the British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM) region, even though BIM branches constitute only 16% of the total branches in the network. Conversely, while branches in the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic (CAA) region make up 34% of the network, they accounted for just 21% of individual respondents.

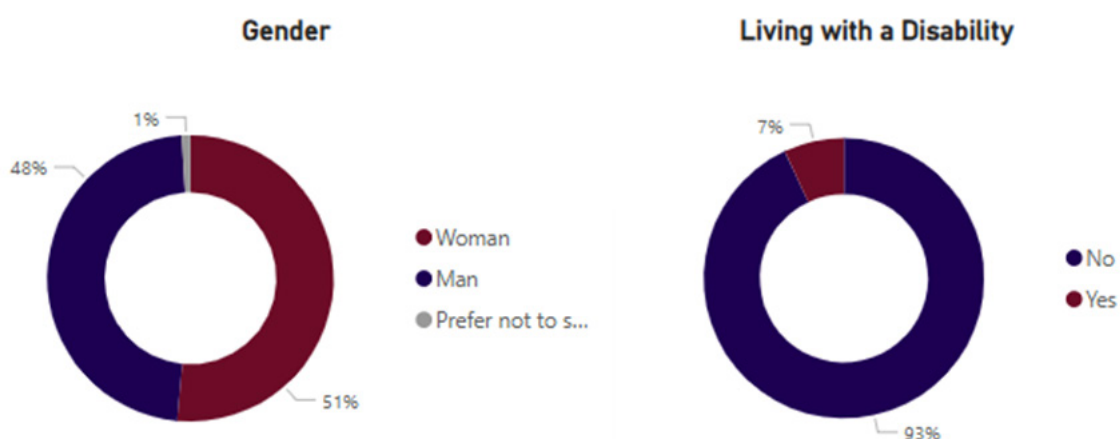
Additionally, many respondents attended the CPC, as such, the sample may reflect a more active segment of the Small Branches Network.

Survey Demographic

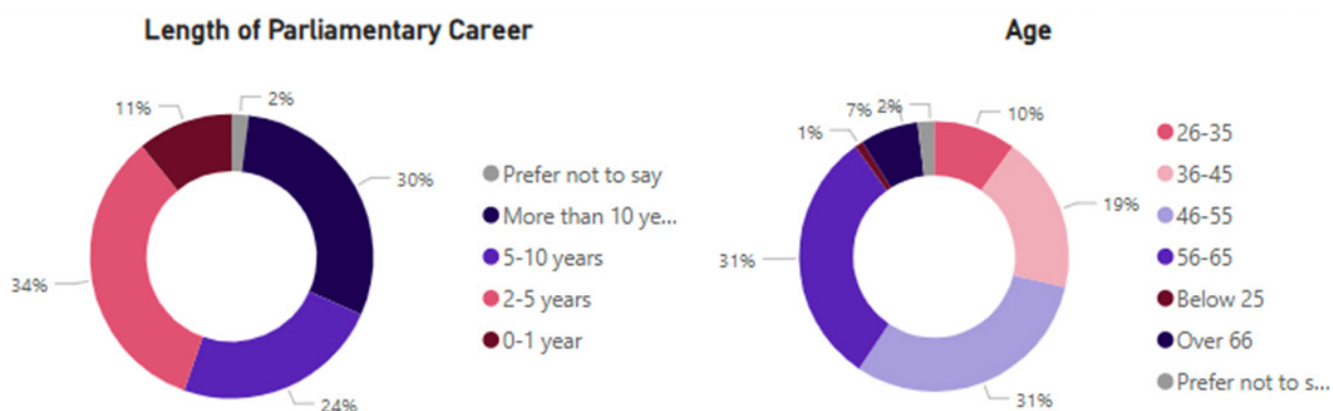
Branch Participation: Nearly 80% of the Branches (38 out of 50) responded to the survey. Most branches gave 1-2 responses, with the highest number of responses from a single branch being 9 responses.

Gender Balance: The gender split was nearly even, with 48% identifying as female and 51% as male.

Disability Representation: 7% of respondents identified as living with a disability.



Age and Parliamentary Careers: Respondents represented a range of ages and parliamentary tenures, with most careers spanning from 2 years to over 10 years.

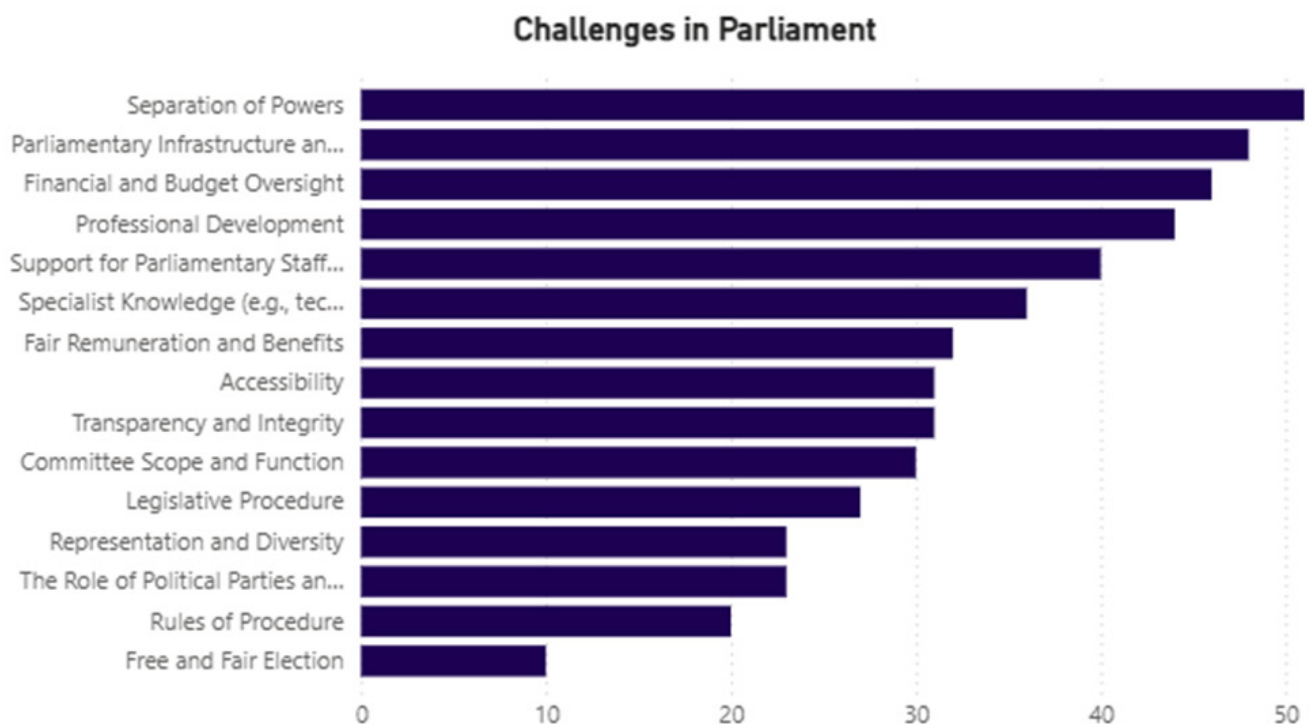


Survey Results Challenges

Respondents were asked to reflect on the challenges within their Parliament and select from a list of multiple-choice options based on the *CPA's Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*.

Separation of Powers was not a standout challenge for a particular region, instead it was consistently identified as an issue across all regions. **Financial and Budget Oversight** were particularly noted as challenge for the CAA and Pacific Regions. **Parliamentary Infrastructure and Resources** were also widely recognised as challenges, especially with the BIM and Pacific Regions.

Accessibility and **Representation and Diversity** were identified as challenges by respondents who reported living with a disability.



ACTION

***Separation of Powers* and *Financial Oversight* will be the focus of the next Small Branches Workshop and will also be featured as workshop topics at the next CPC Conference.**

When given the opportunity to elaborate on the challenges in their Parliaments, respondents highlighted several recurring themes:

- Respondents highlighted challenges around **SEPARATION OF POWER**, including the scrutiny power in the executive. They remarked that opposition and non-government parliamentarians (and committees) lack resources and support for research, drafting, and interpretation of legislation, even suggesting they may be denied the right to information.
- Respondents reported a range of **RESOURCE LIMITATIONS** such as lack of funding to improve accessibility; lack of meeting rooms, staff, researchers, and offices; lack of technological infrastructure which support parliamentary debates, documentation, and public communication. It was also noted that ministers often face overwhelming constituency demands without sufficient support. In some cases, sub-national Parliaments remain reliant on federal governments for resource allocation.
- Respondents particularly highlighted **RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS WITHIN COMMITTEES AND JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES**, citing a lack of structure, focus, and effectiveness. Many noted the absence of best practice knowledge, which limits committees' ability to function efficiently.
- Respondents highlighted a **LACK OF DIVERSITY** in parliament, describing it as a male-dominated space. Concerns were also raised about physical accessibility.
- Respondents highlighted a need for **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**, citing lack of training and guidance to carry out their parliamentary responsibilities as a challenge. This is especially pertinent for new Ministers.
- Alongside the above points, other recurring challenges related to **LOCAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION, LEGISLATIVE PRODUCTIVITY, and BALANCING CUSTOMARY PRACTICES WITH MODERN LEGISLATIVE DEMANDS**.

ACTION

Research and mapping projects related to improving resources and delivering human resources capacity strengthening have been integrated into the 2025 Workplan to address key issues raised around *Resource Limitations*.

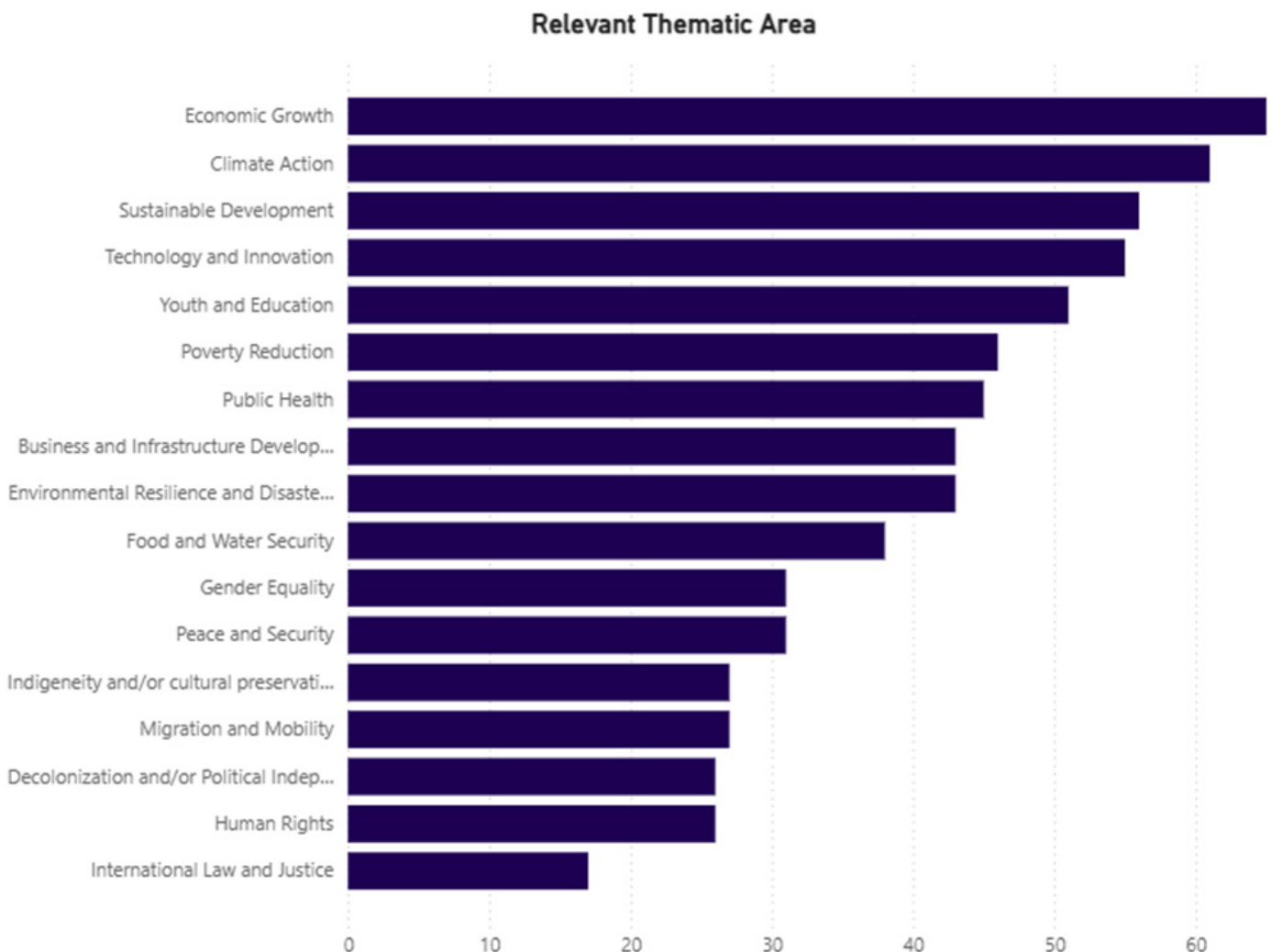
Survey Results

Jurisdiction Priorities

Respondents were asked about the thematic priorities in their jurisdiction, selecting from a list of multiple-choice options with including an 'other' option.

Climate Action and **Sustainable Development** were prioritised, particularly by the Pacific and the CAA Regions. **Economic Growth** was also prioritised, particularly by the BIM and Canada Regions.

Technology and Innovation were also identified across regions as a jurisdictional priority, especially among respondents with parliamentary careers spanning over 10 years.



Survey Results

2025 Workplan

Respondents were asked what they would like the Small Branches Network to focus on in 2025. An open text box allowed for unrestricted answers, enabling original ideas and priorities to emerge. The following recurring themes were identified:

- Many respondents highlighted the need for more **COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING**, calling for opportunities for small branches to build relationships, share experiences, work together and combining efforts.
- Respondents called for more **ECONOMIC** and **LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT**, to address challenges Small Branches face in resourcing and capacity for legislative drafting.
- Respondents highlighted **CLIMATE ACTION** and **ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE** as a key focus, including a need for tailored solutions, access to financing, and sustainable development.
- Respondents also emphasised the importance of **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LEGISLATORS AND STAFF**, particularly in areas such as financial and governance literacy, staff resources, training (including committee-specific and career development) and addressing administrative gaps to strengthen parliamentary infrastructure.
- Many respondents shared interest in focusing on how **TECHNOLOGY** can be leveraged to improve governance and enhance parliamentary operations.

ACTION

Evaluating network engagement channels and developing a network engagement plan has been integrated into the 2025 Workplan, to enable further *collaboration and networking* and *improved communication* within the Small Branches Network.

Survey Results

CPA Functions and Outputs

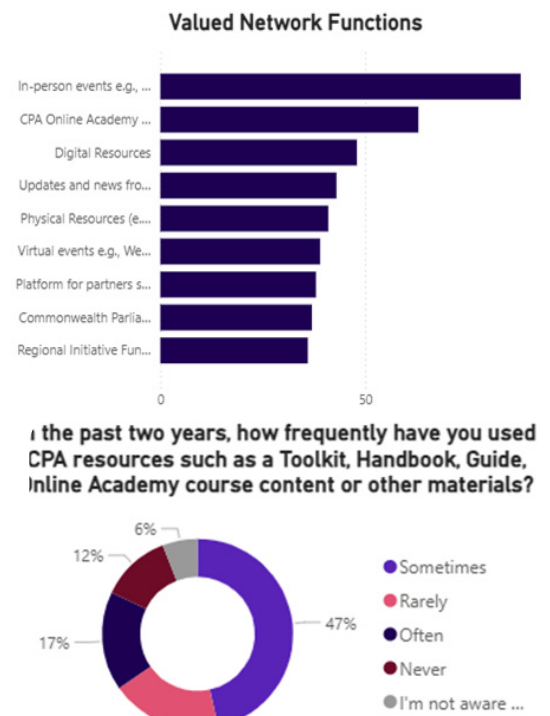
Respondents were asked which current and past Network Functions they value and which CPA Outputs they have used in the past two years.

Across all regions, **In-Person Events** and **CPA Online Academy Courses** were chosen as the most valued functions. The Pacific Region also valued access to resources such as **Digital Resources**, the **Regional Initiative Fund** and **platforms for partnerships**, while the Canada Region valued **Virtual Events**.

However, nearly a third of respondents reported that they **never or rarely use CPA resources** such as courses and toolkits, with an additional **6% unaware of their availability**.

Respondents were invited to suggest improvements to existing Network functions and outputs, as well as propose new initiatives. Several recurring themes emerged:

- Respondents called for more **CAPACITY BUILDING on existing** CPA tools and resources, as well as training on **additional topics** such as committee procedures, and parliamentary administration.
- Respondents recommended stronger **OUTREACH TO NEW MEMBERS**. Transition training and mentoring from former Members—particularly for first-term MPs—were also highlighted.
- Respondents called for more opportunities for **PEER-ENGAGEMENT** such as regional meetings to share experiences and best practices.



ACTION

An activity to scope donor funding and income opportunities has been integrated into the 2025 Workplan, to identify funds to deliver more *capacity building activities* for Small Branches.

Survey Results

Participation

Respondents were asked about their participation in CPA events over the past two years.

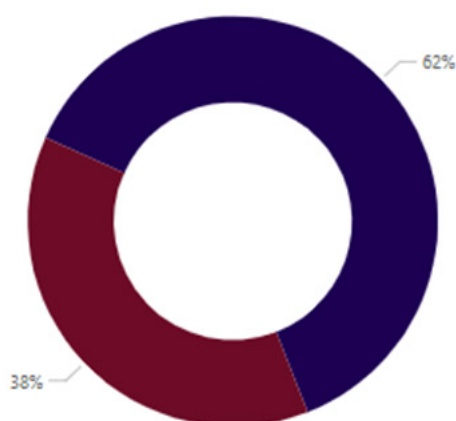
The majority of respondents who had attended a CPA event had participated in the **CPA Conference** (53%), while a quarter had attended a **Workshop** (26%).

38% of respondents said they hadn't participated in any events.

Among them, almost half (40%) cited a **lack of resources** as a barrier, while a quarter pointed to **lack of communication** (24%). A quarter of respondent said that **they didn't know the programmes or events took place** (24%).

Please note that some respondents completed this survey whilst attending the 67th CPA Conference (CPC), which may skew the data regarding event attendance in comparison to the wider Small Branches Network membership.

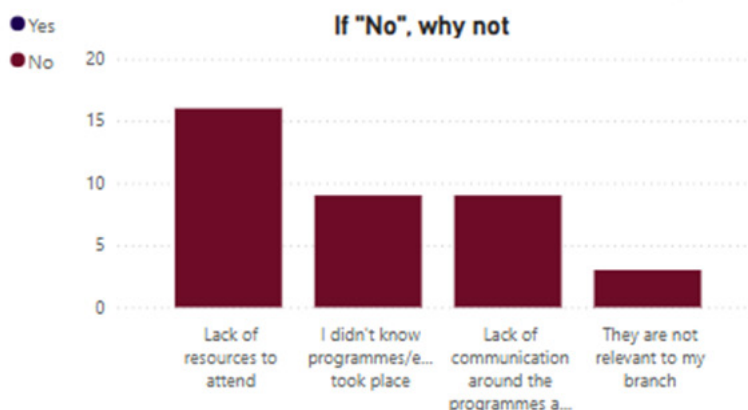
In the past two years, have you participated in a Small Branches Network programme or event?



If "Yes", which programmes or events



If "No", why not

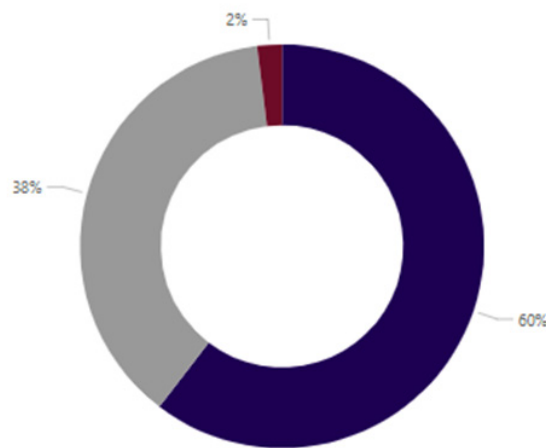


Survey Results

Network Governance

While most respondents felt that the Small Branches Network has a clear and well-functioning governance structure, **38% of respondents did not know what the Small Branches governance system was.**

Does the CPA Small Branches Network have a clear and well-functioning governance structure?



● Yes ● I don't know what the Small Branches Network's governance structure is. ● No

Of the respondents who provided reflections on either the Small Branches governance framework, or the CPA more broadly, the following points were raised:

- Respondents highlighted the importance of **HOLDING SMALL BRANCHES AND THE SECRETARIAT ACCOUNTABLE**, ensuring that the resources accessed are used effectively to develop their branch where applicable. They suggested greater outreach to local branches to create a “snowball effect” of vibrancy and better fulfil the CPA mandate. There were also calls to centre deliverables and request members to provide feedback on how their branch has benefited or developed from participation in workshops, conferences, and resources.
- The **COMMUNICATION OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK** was also raised by respondents, calling for greater visibility of key staff contacts and stakeholders within the central CPA.

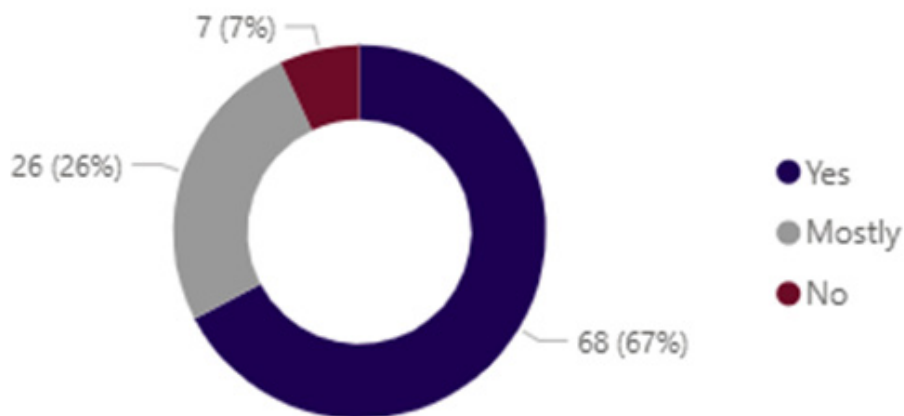
ACTION

A Fund Tracking Tool and Network Activity Log has been developed to enhance *accountability* to the network. This will support network management, track resources use and activities, and ensure transparency.

Survey Results Communication

The majority of respondents were happy or mostly happy with how they are kept informed about the Small Branches Network.

Are you satisfied with how you are kept informed?



Respondents were asked to suggest improvements that could be made to Network communication. Recurring responses included the following

- More **ACCESSIBLE AND USER-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION INTERFACE** which can facilitate direct conversations, peer engagement, and access to digital resources.
- More **DIRECT COMMUNICATION** with members, with option for opting in.

ACTION

The Online Community Platform, introduced to the CPA in 2024, will be utilised by the Small Branches Network to provide opportunities for *direct communication and peer-to-peer engagement*.

List of Action Points

- Separation of Powers and Financial Oversight will be the focus of the next Small Branches Workshop and will also be featured as workshop topics at the next CPC Conference.
- Research and mapping projects related to improving resources and delivering human resources capacity strengthening have been integrated into the 2025 Workplan to address key issues raised around Resource Limitations.
- Evaluating network engagement channels and developing a network engagement plan has been integrated into the 2025 Workplan, to enable further collaboration and networking and improved communication within the Small Branches Network.
- An activity to scope donor funding and income opportunities has been integrated into the 2025 Workplan, to identify funds to deliver more capacity-building activities for Small Branches.
- A Fund Tracking Tool and Network Activity Log has been developed to enhance accountability to the network. This will support network management, track resources use and activities, and ensure transparency.
- The Online Community Platform, introduced to the CPA in 2024, will be utilised by the Small Branches Network to provide opportunities for direct communication and peer-to-peer engagement.