

# EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

NMAS REVIEW 2020-21

*Part 2: Perceived Effectiveness*

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# INTRODUCTION

The Effectiveness Survey was conducted as part of the review of the National Mediator Accreditation System (NMAS). This report is part 2 of a series of findings from the Effectiveness Survey.



# BACKGROUND



## This Report

- Results and Analysis —  
Part 2: Perceived Effectiveness



## Goals

- Perceived Effectiveness of NMAS
- Baseline for variety of practice in Australia



## Respondents

- Mediators
- MSB Member Orgs

## NMAS EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

From February 1 to April 1, 2021, a select group of stakeholders was invited to complete the Effectiveness Survey as part of the review of the National Mediator Accreditation System (NMAS). Over 600 people participated in the survey. Once the data was *cleaned* (tidied up to remove duplicates, incomplete submission, etc.), there were 512 survey responses suitable for analysis.

For more information about the review, visit [NMAS Review 2020–21](#).

## PURPOSE

The Effectiveness Survey was designed to collect preliminary information to establish a baseline of the perceived effectiveness of the NMAS. For the purpose of the survey, *effectiveness* was defined as the extent to which respondents perceive the NMAS Standards as helpful within a specified context. This report provides the results and analysis of the data collected.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

- MSB Member Organisations (MSB Orgs)
  - Recognised Mediator Accreditation Bodies (RMABs)
  - Training Organisations (TOs)
  - RMABs who also offer training (RMAB/TOs)
  - Other types of organisations (Other MSB Orgs)
- Mediators
  - NMAS accredited mediators (currently accredited)
  - NMAS accredited mediators (formerly accredited)
  - NMAS trained mediators who have elected not to pursue NMAS accreditation (never accredited)



# WHAT'S NEXT

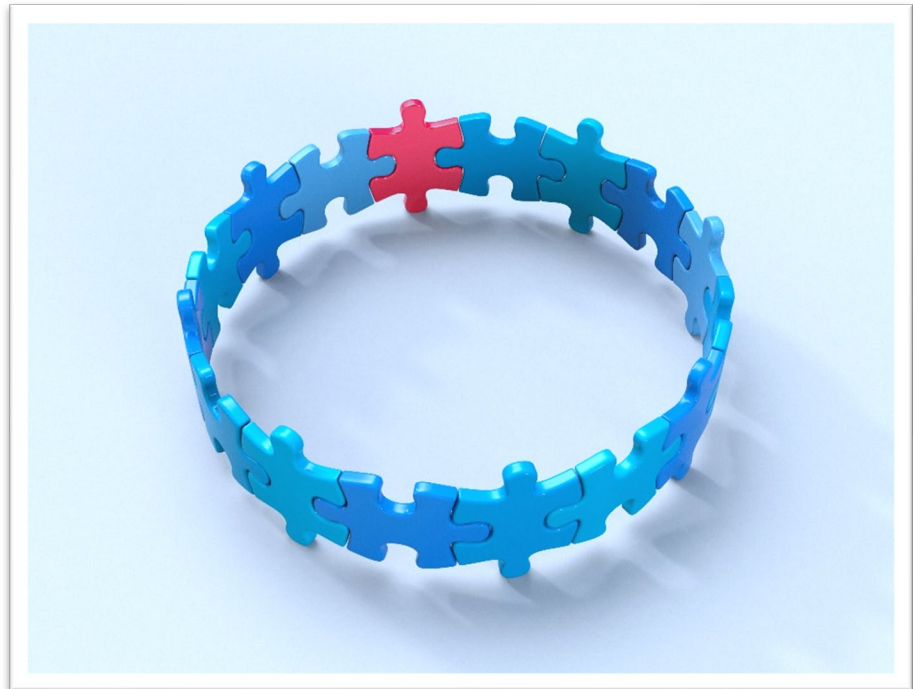
The data from the Effectiveness Survey is important for many reasons.

Apart from providing a wealth of information on MSB Orgs and mediator perceptions of the NMAS' effectiveness, it will inform the content and structure of several main NMAS Review survey questions.

It will also have an essential role in triangulating the NMAS Survey data. This is particularly important for data that does not lend itself easily to tests for statistical significance, i.e., tests that identify if differences between groups are likely to result from chance or the type of people who participated in the survey (sampling error).

For more information about the NMAS Review, visit the [NMAS Review Hub](#).

*Although it is not the primary survey, the Effectiveness Survey is an integral part of the NMAS Review*




# IMPORTANT INFORMATION WHEN READING THE GRAPHS


- Due to rounding, some graphs add up to slightly more or less than 100%.
- Due to some questions allowing multiple responses, some graphs may add up to over 100%.
- To ensure respondents remain de-identified, questions receiving 10 or fewer responses to a given option may be removed or obscured to prevent re-identification.
- Percentages representing values of <2% (10 or fewer respondents) are shown within tables as 1.99% and as <2% when labelled within the graph.







PART 2: DO MSB  
MEMBER  
ORGANISATIONS  
AND MEDIATORS  
PERCEIVE THE  
NMAS AS  
EFFECTIVE?



*The NMAS was perceived as most helpful in relation to promoting mediator credibility*

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, the NMAS was perceived as helpful. Importantly, MSB Orgs and mediators agree that the NMAS is most helpful in relation to promoting mediator credibility. This is a tremendous endorsement of everyone involved in the development and implementation of the NMAS, especially those who, from the outset, recognised the nexus between the quality of ADR services and community confidence in ADR.<sup>1</sup>

Except for continuing professional development (CPD), MSB Orgs perceived the NMAS as more helpful than mediators across each of the specified contexts. In contrast, only 55% of MSB Orgs perceived the NMAS as helpful in relation to planning or offering CPD, the lowest rating across all categories considered.

For mediators, the NMAS was perceived as least helpful in relation to promoting or developing mediation services, closely followed by guiding everyday practice. Specifically, close to a third of mediators perceived the NMAS as neutral at best in terms of helpfulness in these areas.

Table 1 shows the comparative perceptions between MSB Org and mediators in terms of the rank order for each context and is calculated as the combined total of the responses 'very helpful' and 'somewhat helpful'.

## PERCEIVED HELPFULNESS RANKING

MSB ORGS	MEDIATORS
1. Promoting mediator credibility (90%)	1. Promoting mediator credibility (82%)
2. Promoting mediation as a profession (87%)	2. Training & accreditation (76%)
3. Training & accreditation (84%)	3. Promoting mediation as a profession (75%)
4. Guiding everyday mediator practice (81%)	4. Participating in CPD (72%)
5. Promoting or developing mediation services (81%)	5. Guiding everyday mediator practice (69%)
6. Planning or offering CPD (55%)	6. Promoting or developing mediation services (67%)

Table 1: Perceived effectiveness rankings MSB Orgs (Figure 7) and mediators (Figure 8)

<sup>1</sup> See [A History of the Development of the Standards](#), Mediator Standards Board Website.

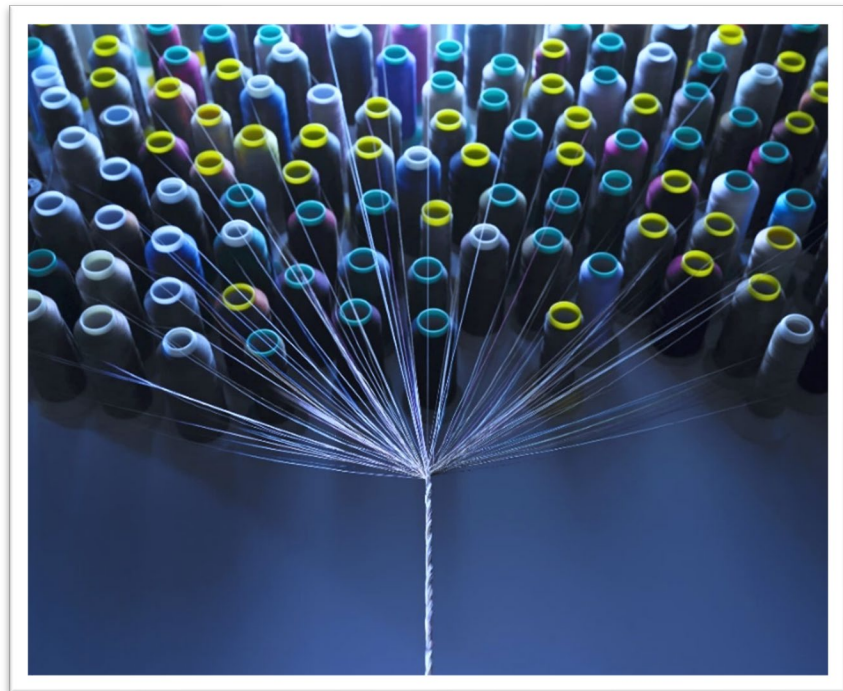
An important caveat when comparing the differences between MSB Orgs and mediators is that testing did not reveal statistical significance,<sup>2</sup> i.e., confirmation that there is less than a 5% chance that the differences were due to chance or the sample of respondents. This means that these results may not be generalisable across MSB Orgs and mediators more broadly.

Even so, these findings provide valuable information and serve as a prompt for further investigation.

When asked about how often they refer to the NMAS, specifically Part II Approval Standards and Part III Practice Standards, MSB Orgs reported referring to them more often than mediators. This was particularly so in relation to initial accreditation, where 26% of mediators reported never referring to the Approval Standards.

Despite less than 2% of mediators reporting zero years of accreditation,<sup>3</sup> 9% of mediators suggest they never refer to the Approval Standards in relation to reaccreditation requirements, and 11% report never referring to the Practice Standards in regard to competency and practice requirements.

While this may simply result from over a quarter<sup>4</sup> of the mediators falling within their first 2-year accreditation cycle, when considered in combination with the findings on perceived effectiveness, it raises important questions. Further research may be useful to identify ways to optimise mediators' perceptions and engagement with the NMAS, particularly given its potential use as a public-facing document and reference point within the intake process.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>2</sup> For a layperson's overview of statistical significance, see [HBR: A Refresher on Statistical Significance](#).

<sup>3</sup> See NMAS Review 2020-21 Effectiveness Survey Part 1 Findings, p. 31 Figure 14: Number of years accredited as a mediator (Survey Q37).

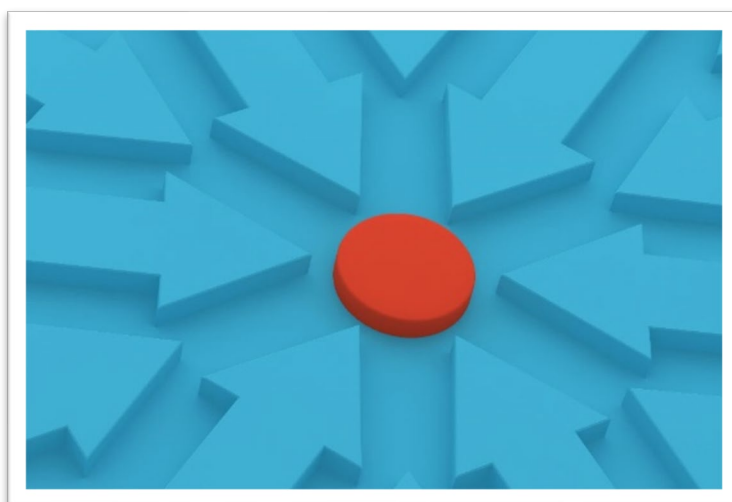
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See [National Mediator Accreditation System](#), Part III Practice Standards at [3.2(d)].

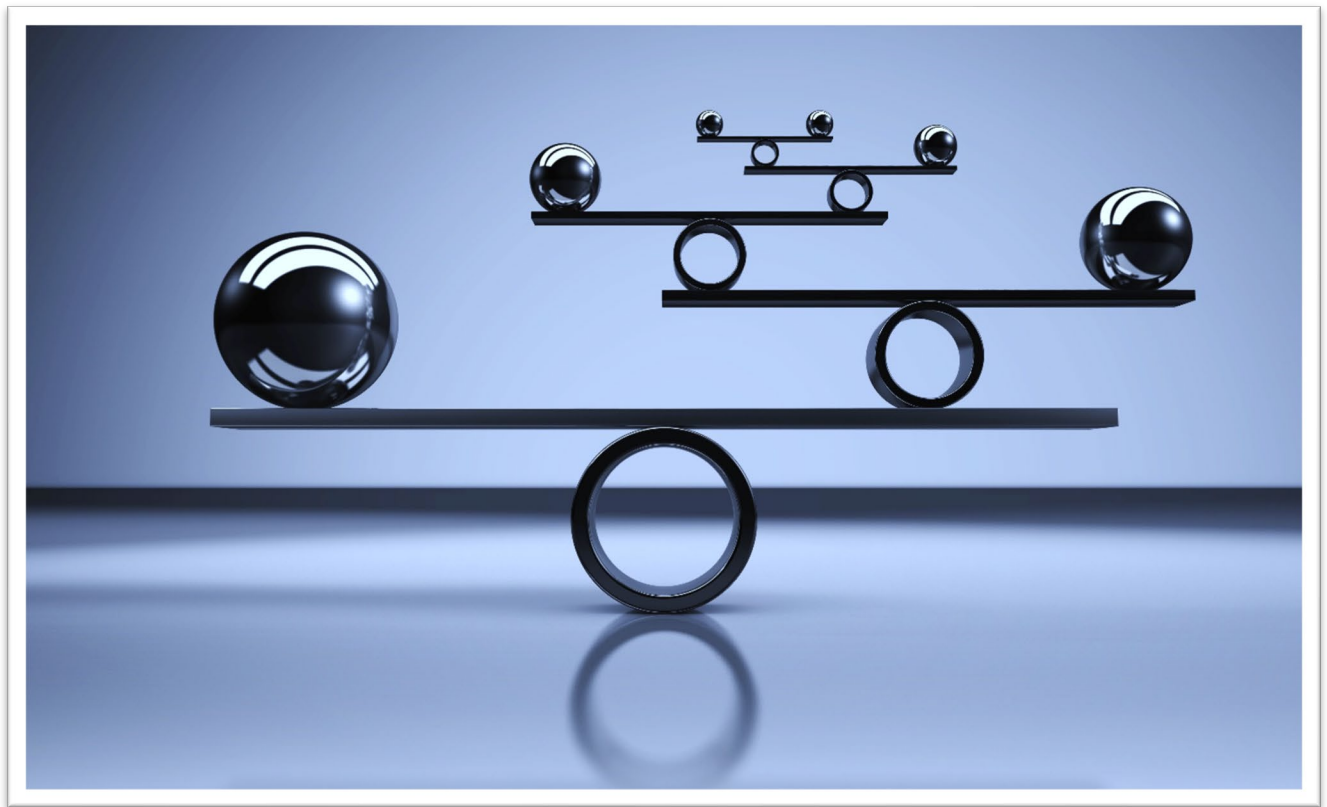
*Celebrate those who have contributed to the development and implementation of the existing NMAS*

# PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Celebrate those who have contributed to the development and implementation of the existing NMAS: MSB Orgs and mediators alike have offered a resounding endorsement of the NMAS for its helpfulness in promoting mediator credibility.
2. Conduct further research into improving MSB Orgs' perception of NMAS' helpfulness in relation to planning and/or offering CPD.
3. In collaboration with MSB Orgs involved in training and initial accreditation, review the role of the NMAS in the training and accreditation of mediators and develop strategies to ensure mediators are familiar with their potential obligations upon accreditation.
4. Investigate ways to maximise mediator perceptions of NMAS helpfulness, including ways to promote mediator engagement with the NMAS, particularly the Approval and Practice Standards.
5. Conduct further research into potential differences between MSB Org and mediator perceptions on the role of the NMAS in promoting mediation as a profession, and promoting and/or developing mediation services.
6. To facilitate the recommendations above, clarify the existing nomenclature to ensure the distinction between the NMAS—which covers the entire accreditation system, including the responsibilities of the MSB and MSB Orgs—and the Standards, which describe the approval and practice requirements for mediators.



# PART 2: FINDINGS



# PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS



## Regularity

- Initial accreditation
- Renewal of accreditation
- Practice and competency

## REGULARITY

Before asking MSB Orgs and mediators to give their opinion on the effectiveness of the NMAS, it was important to establish how often, if at all, they referred to the NMAS. In particular, we were interested in how often they referred to Parts II and III, the Approval and Practice Standards, in relation to mediator accreditation and practice. Please note, while the correct terminology for this concept is 'oftenness', we have substituted it with the word 'regularity' to assist readability.



## Helpfulness

- Training and accreditation
- Promoting and developing services
- Guiding everyday practice
- Offering or participating in CPD
- Promoting mediator credibility
- Promoting mediation as a profession

## PERCEIVED HELPFULNESS

As a concept, effectiveness can be challenging to define and, as a result, hard to measure. Therefore, in consultation with the MSB and for the purpose of the NMAS Review, effectiveness was defined as the extent to which the NMAS was perceived as helpful in relation to six specific contexts (see left).

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MSB ORGS AND MEDIATORS

While it was possible to consider perceived helpfulness generally, it seemed important to establish whether these perceptions differed between the MSB Orgs and the mediators themselves. Thus, in this section of the report, we discuss the similarities and differences found, including the extent to which any such findings might be generalisable beyond the respondents of this survey.



## Differences

- MSB Orgs vs mediators



# REGULARITY – MSB ORGS

## FINDINGS

Almost all MSB Orgs reported referring to the Practice and Approval Standards in relation to mediator accreditation, reaccreditation and guiding everyday practice. However, concerning reaccreditation and guiding everyday practice, MSB Orgs were split evenly regarding how often they referred to the Approval and Practice Standards. In each context, 48% of MSB Orgs said they referred 'often' and 48% said they referred 'sometimes'. Interestingly, the biggest differences emerged in connection to the Approval Standards and initial accreditation. In this context, the proportion of MSB Orgs who refer to the Approval Standards 'often' increased to 55% and the number who 'never' refer to the Approval Standards rose to 6%.

This suggests that the Standards within the NMAS serve as an important reference point for MSB Orgs. However, further investigation may be helpful to find out more about why some MSB Orgs refer to the Approvals Standards more often for initial accreditation. It may also be useful to learn more about the contexts within which MSB Orgs might not refer to the Approval or Practice Standards at all. This may be important to gain further understanding of the way that various membership types might use the NMAS.

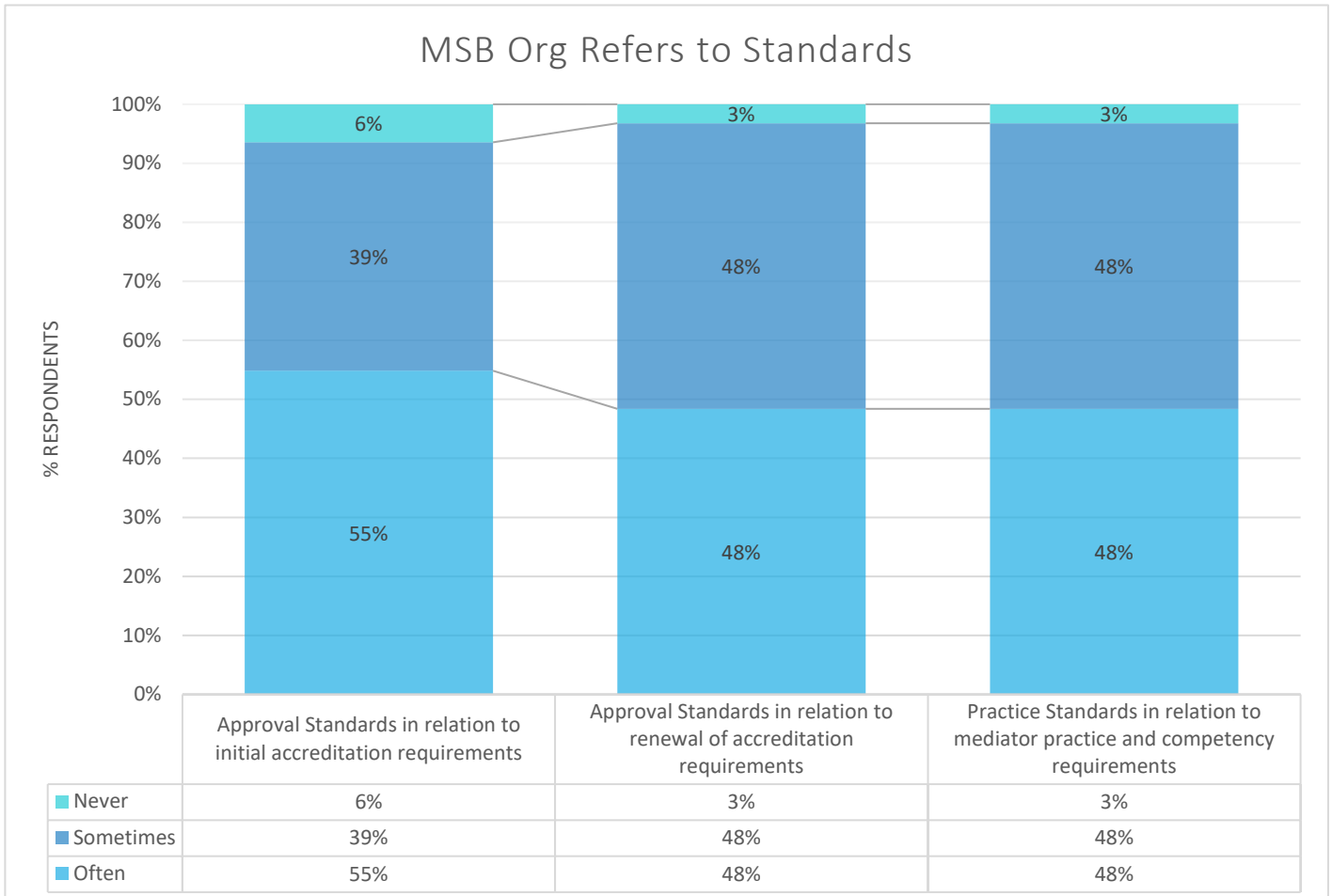


Figure 1: Regularity with which MSB Org refers to Approval and Practice Standards (Survey Q21–Q23)

# REGULARITY – MEDIATORS

## FINDINGS

It may come as no surprise that the most common reason mediators gave for referring to the Approval Standards is for reaccreditation, with just over two-thirds saying they referred to the Approval Standards 'sometimes' and one-quarter specifying 'often'. Further, they also reported referring to the Practice Standards as a guide for everyday practice at relatively similar rates. This suggests that 89% of these mediators make at least some ongoing reference to the Standards in guiding their everyday practice.

Notably, mediators reported substantially less engagement with the Approval Standards within the context of initial accreditation, with 26% selecting 'never' referring to them. This is despite the Approval Standards stipulating that they apply to any person seeking accreditation.<sup>6</sup> One explanation may relate to the transition period at the introductory phase of the NMAS, which offered experienced mediators automatic initial accreditation. With 38% of mediators reporting 13+ years' experience,<sup>7</sup> it may be that many did not need to engage with the Approval Standards for initial accreditation. Another explanation may be that mediators responded to the question with only a recent period in mind, so experienced mediators may have selected 'never' as they had not recently referred to initial accreditation requirements. Further investigation and/or analysis may be required to test a range of potential hypotheses.



<sup>6</sup> See [National Mediator Accreditation System](#), Part II Approval Standards at [1.1].

<sup>7</sup> See NMAS Review 2020–21 Effectiveness Survey Part 1 Findings, p. 30 Figure 13: Number of years as a mediator (Survey Q35).

### Mediator Refers to Standards

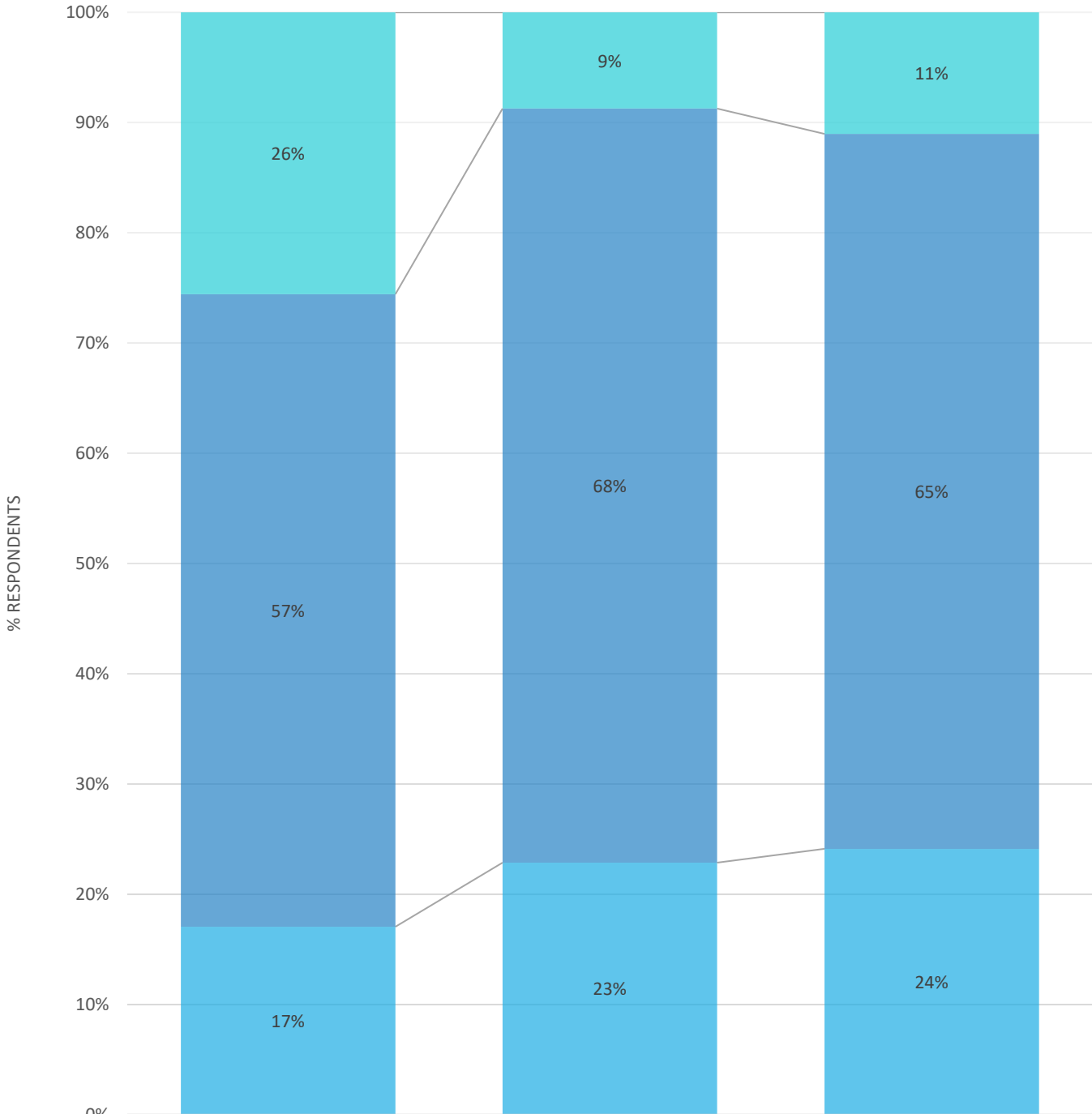


Figure 2: Regularity with which mediator refers to Approval and Practice Standards (Survey Q60–Q62)

# REGULARITY – INITIAL ACCREDITATION

## FINDINGS

MSB Orgs suggest that they refer to the Approval Standards more frequently than mediators when it comes to initial accreditation requirements. Notably, a little more than half of the MSB Orgs said they referred to them ‘often’, whereas only 17% of mediators reported the same. Unlike the vast majority of MSB Orgs (94%), around a quarter of mediators (26%) claim they never refer to the Approval Standards in relation to initial accreditation.

It is not surprising that so many MSB Orgs reported such a substantial level of engagement. This may be explained by the role MSB Orgs play in providing training and/or assessment that satisfies the requirements for accreditation<sup>8</sup> and/or assessing if the requirements for accreditation have been met.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, mediator results seem at odds with the inherent requirement for them to engage with the Approval Standards to obtain their initial accreditation. While it may be tempting to brush this off as a legacy of the grandfathering provisions, as previously discussed (Figure 2), it may be appropriate to conduct further investigations to establish whether there are alternative explanations for the findings or other factors inhibiting mediator engagement.

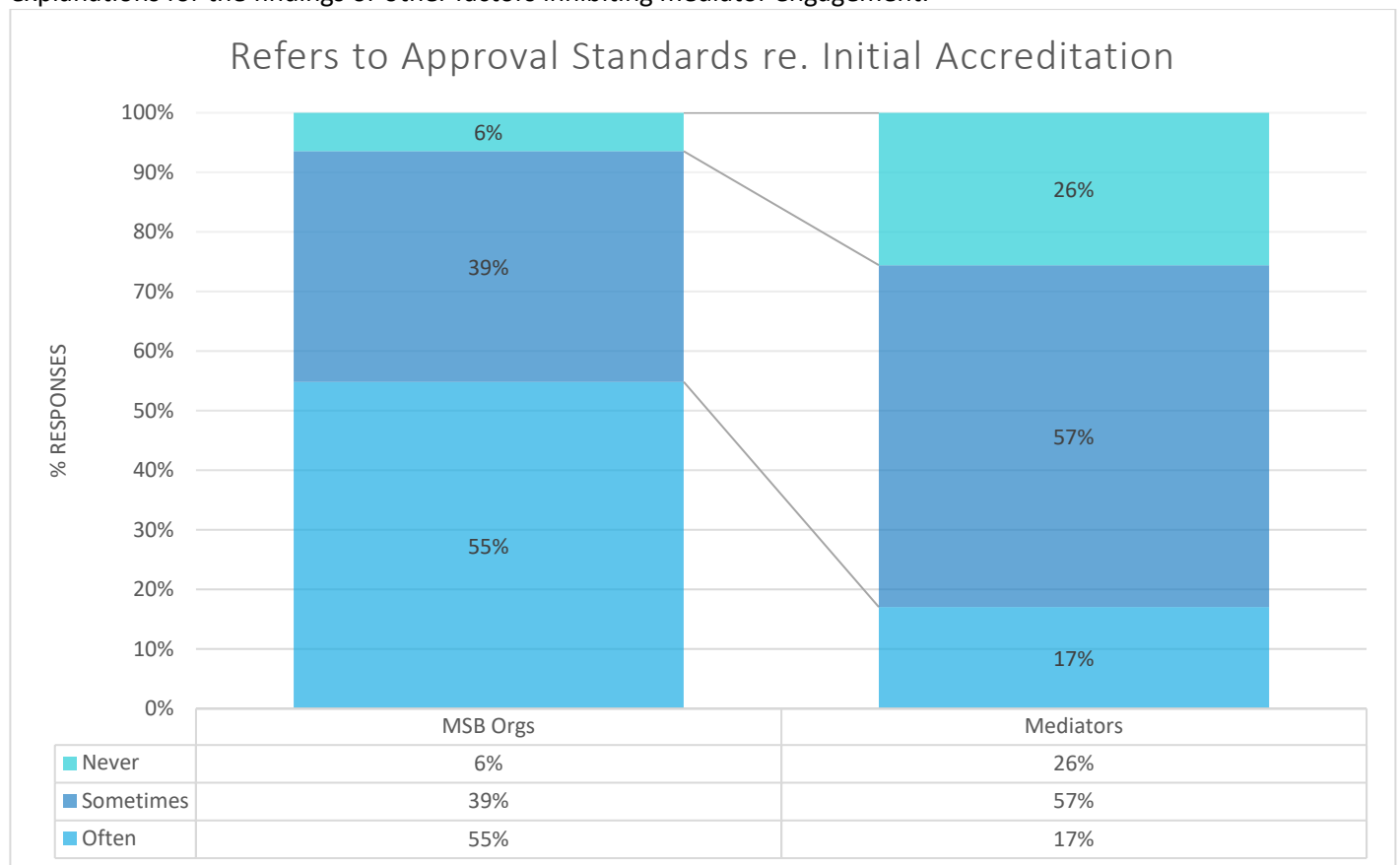


Figure 3: Comparative regularity of reference to Approval Standards in relation to initial accreditation requirements (Survey Q21 & Q60)

<sup>8</sup> Above n6 at [2.3] and [2.4].

<sup>9</sup> Ibid at [2.6].

# REGULARITY – REACCREDITATION

## FINDINGS

MSB Orgs said they referred to the Approval Standards regarding reaccreditation more often than mediators, with twice as many MSB Orgs (48%) stating they referred to them 'often'. On the other hand, most mediators (68%) said they 'sometimes' referred to the Approval Standards' reaccreditation requirements. This appears consistent with the 2-year mediator accreditation cycle.

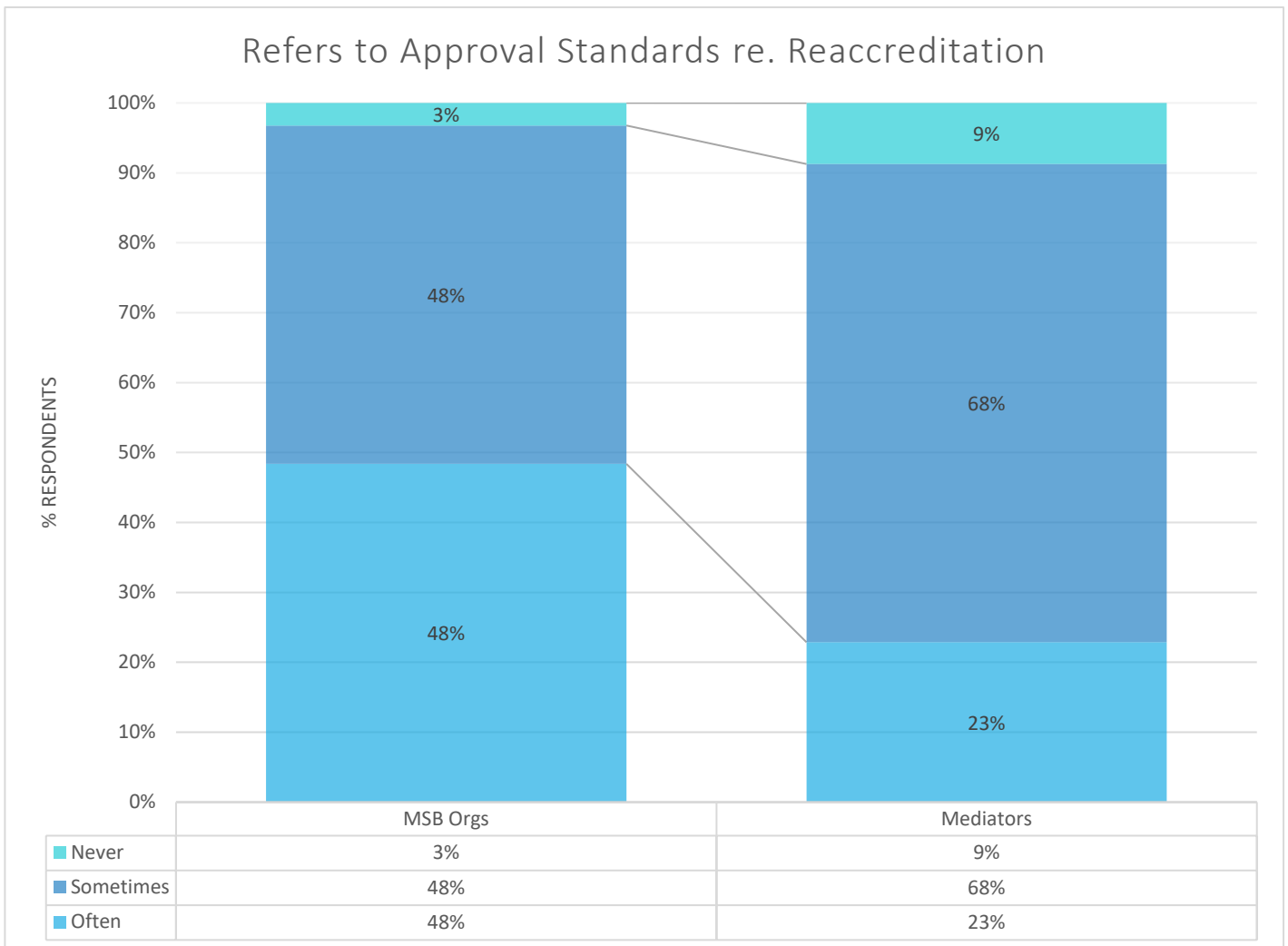


Figure 4: Comparative regularity of reference to Approval Standards in relation to renewal of accreditation requirements (Survey Q22 & Q61)

# REGULARITY – PRACTICE & COMPETENCY

## FINDINGS

In keeping with previous findings, MSB Orgs report referring to the Practice Standards with more frequency than mediators. Almost half of MSB Orgs said they referred to the Practice Standards 'often', compared with only 24% of mediators who report the same. Interestingly, a small proportion (11%) of mediators revealed that they never refer to the Practice Standards in relation to their practice and competency.

Further research is required to understand what motivates MSB Orgs and/or mediators to turn to the Practice Standards to guide mediator practice. For example, it may be valuable to know the pain points that drive the most MSB Org engagement. Alternatively, it may be beneficial to learn more about the variables that determine which mediators are more likely to adopt the Practice Standards as their touchstone.

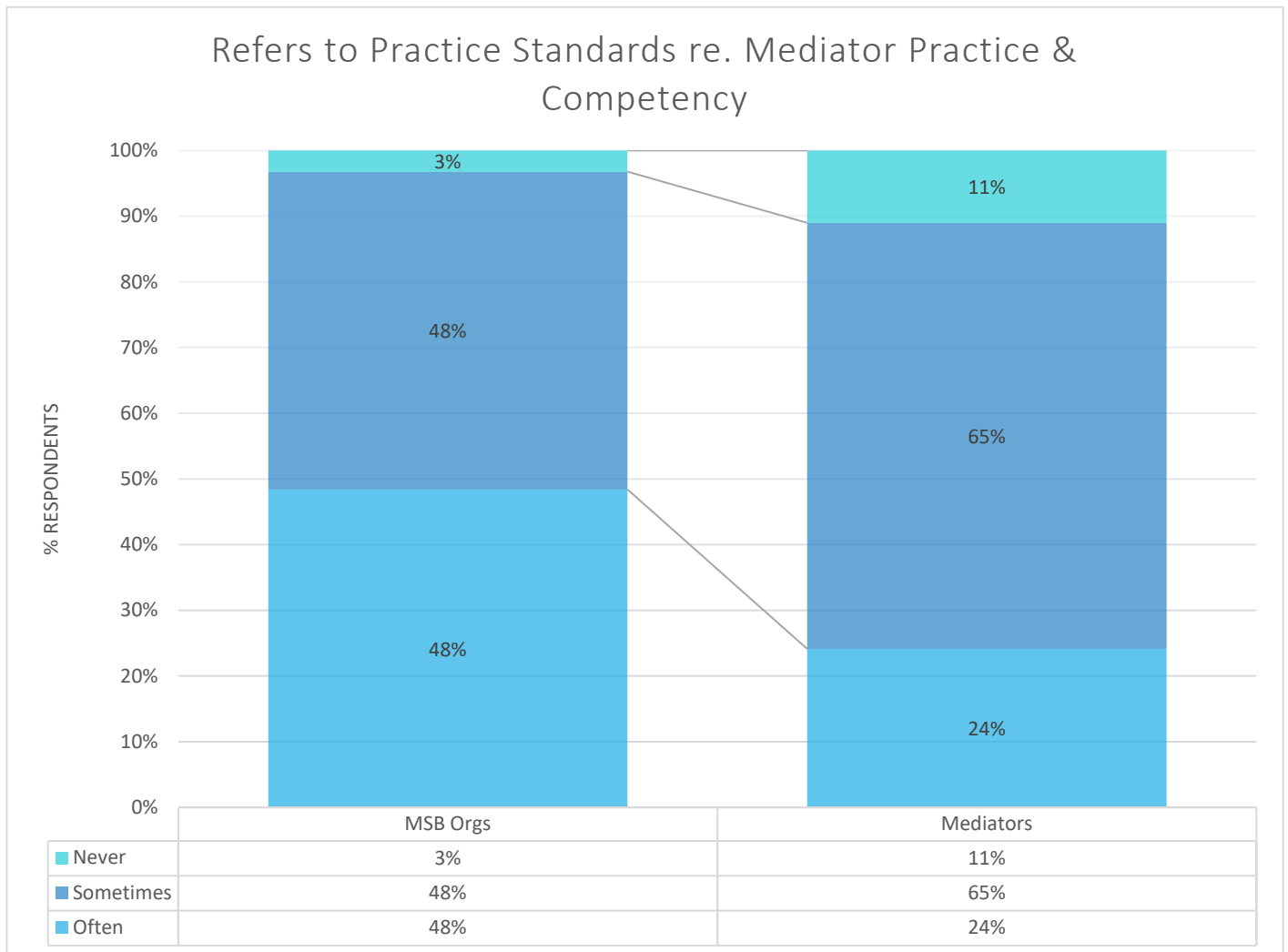


Figure 5: Comparative regularity of reference to Practice Standards in relation to mediator practice and competency requirements (Survey Q23 & Q62)



# PERCEPTIONS OF NMAS HELPFULNESS

## FINDINGS

Overwhelmingly, MSB Orgs and mediators perceived the NMAS as at least somewhat helpful in all six contexts considered. Positively, respondents perceived the NMAS to be most helpful in promoting mediator credibility (85%), followed by promoting mediation as a profession (81%). This is a powerful endorsement of the valuable role the NMAS plays within the dispute resolution community. Differences between MSB Orgs and mediators will be considered in the following sections of the report.

It is worth noting that the NMAS was perceived as least helpful in relation to CPD, with 14% saying it was 'not so helpful' or 'not helpful at all'. This will be explored further in the following sections.

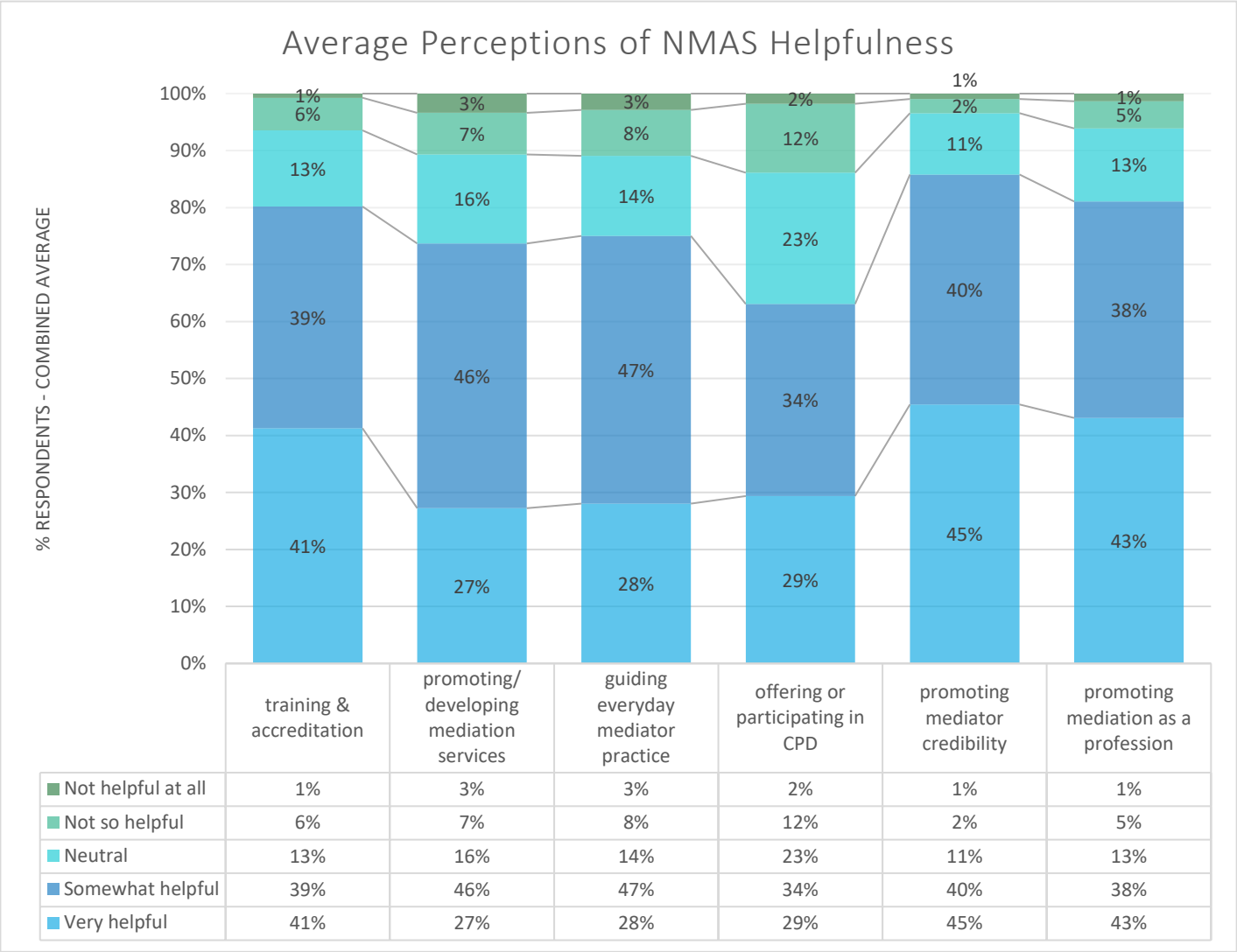


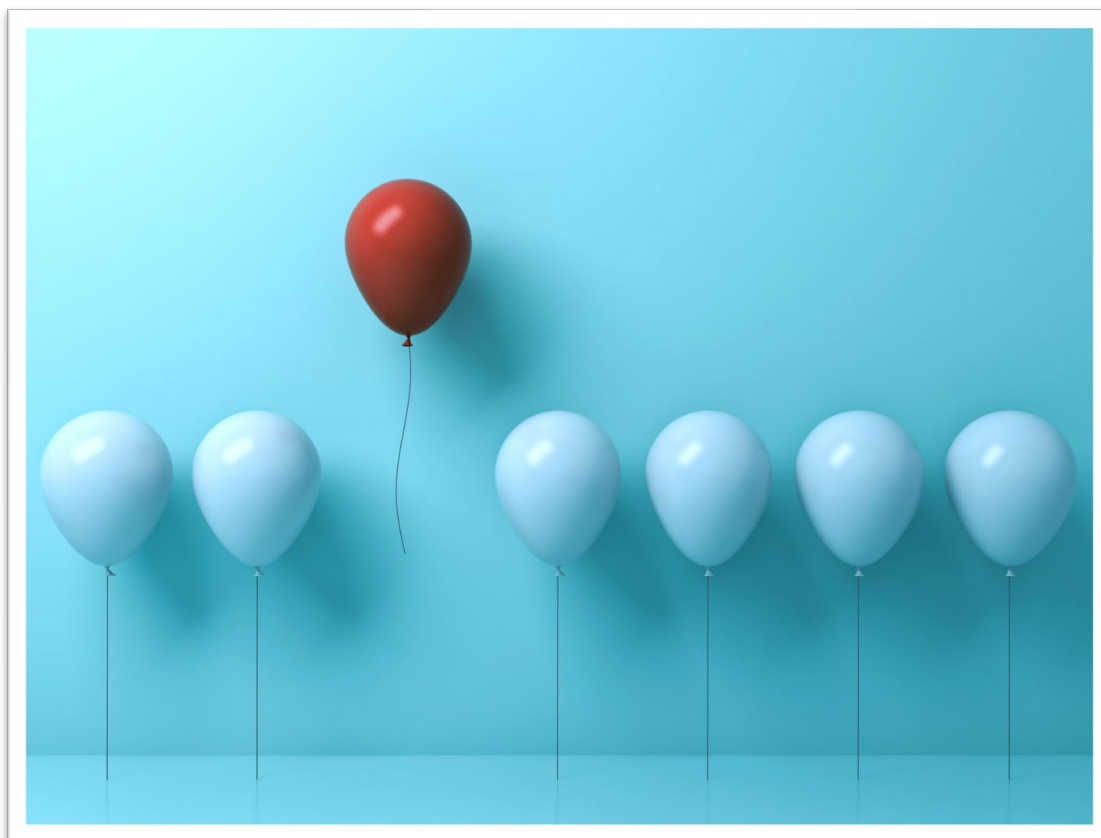
Figure 6: Combined average of MSB Org and Mediator perceived helpfulness of NMAS – all areas (Survey Q28–Q33 & Q64–Q69)

# NMAS HELPFULNESS – MSB ORG PERCEPTIONS

## FINDINGS

Overall, MSB Orgs said the NMAS was very helpful or somewhat helpful in all but one of the six contexts. Specifically, MSB Orgs rated the NMAS as the most helpful in relation to promoting mediator credibility, with not a single respondent indicating the NMAS was not helpful in this regard. Similarly, over 80% of MSB Orgs suggested the NMAS was helpful in relation to both promoting mediation as a profession and training and accreditation. Again, this is a testament to the high regard with which MSB Orgs hold the current NMAS.

Interestingly, when comparing across contexts, MSB Orgs identified the NMAS was least helpful in relation to planning or offering continued professional development (CPD), with just 55% indicating at least some degree of helpfulness. This was the lowest level of perceived helpfulness across all categories for both MSB Orgs and mediators. Given that the NMAS requires RMABs (the largest group of MSB Org respondents) to have the capacity to provide or refer members to CPD activities<sup>10</sup> and that the MSB has an obligation to support, complement and encourage MSB Orgs in their efforts to meet their responsibilities,<sup>11</sup> further research into this area may be an important priority for the broader NMAS Review.



<sup>10</sup> See [National Mediator Accreditation System](#), Part IV Recognised Mediator Accreditation Bodies at [1.3].

<sup>11</sup> See [National Mediator Accreditation System](#), Part VI Mediator Standards Board at [1.3].

### MSB Org Perceptions of NMAS Helpfulness

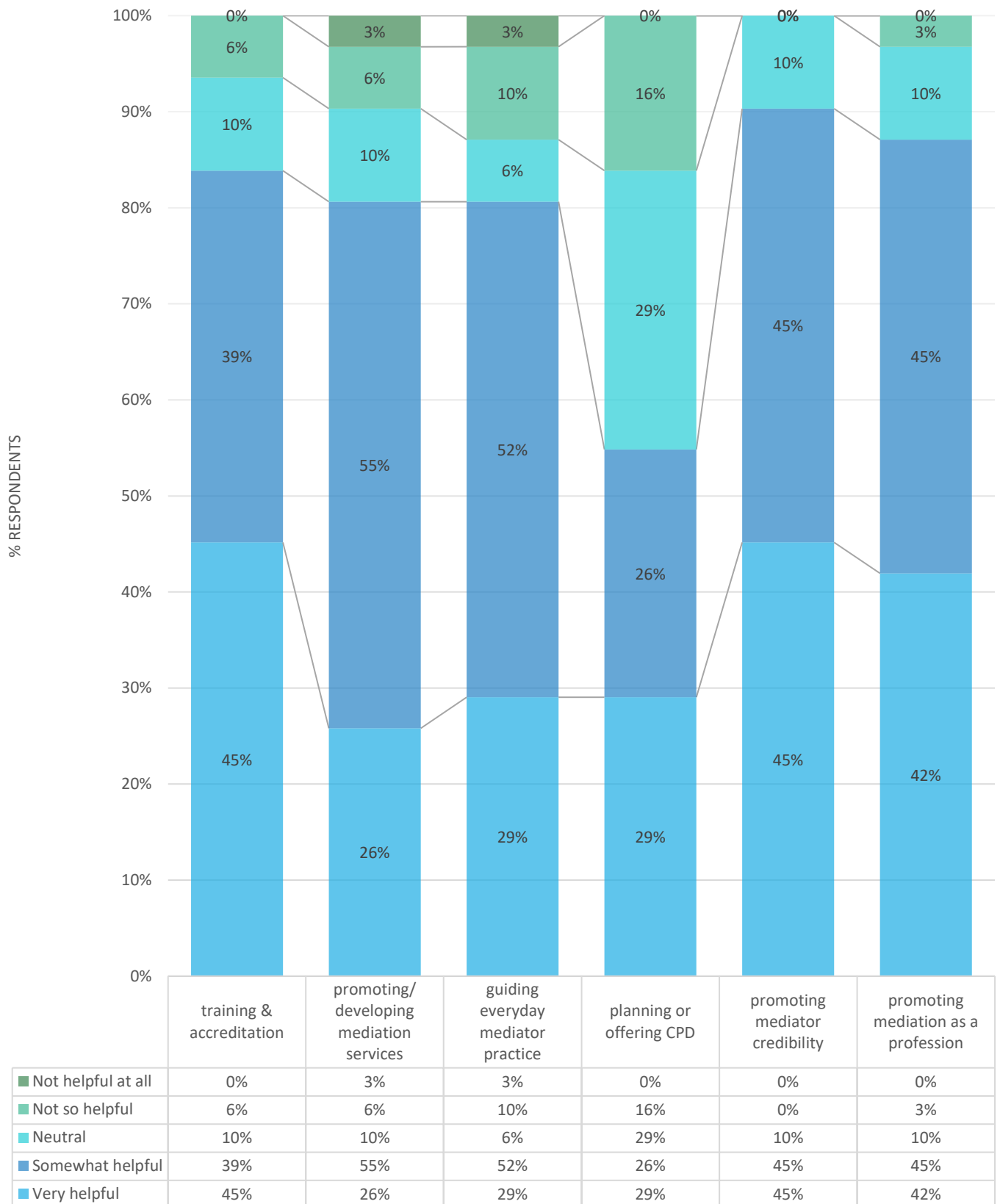


Figure 7: MSB Org perceived helpfulness of NMAS – all areas (Survey Q28–Q33)

# NMAS HELPFULNESS – MEDIATOR PERCEPTIONS

## FINDINGS

Overall, more than two-thirds of mediators said the NMAS was at least 'somewhat' helpful across all of the six contexts. However, like MSB Orgs, mediators said the NMAS was most helpful in relation to promoting mediator credibility, with over 80% indicating it was either 'somewhat' or 'very' helpful in this regard.

In contrast, mediators found the NMAS least helpful in promoting or developing mediation services and guiding everyday practice. Just over one-fifth of mediators (22%) felt neutral in both contexts, with 12% and 8% respectively, indicating it was not helpful. Just over 10% of mediators also said the NMAS was not helpful in relation to participating in CPD. This suggests that further research is required to identify strategies to improve mediator perceptions of the NMAS concerning these contexts.

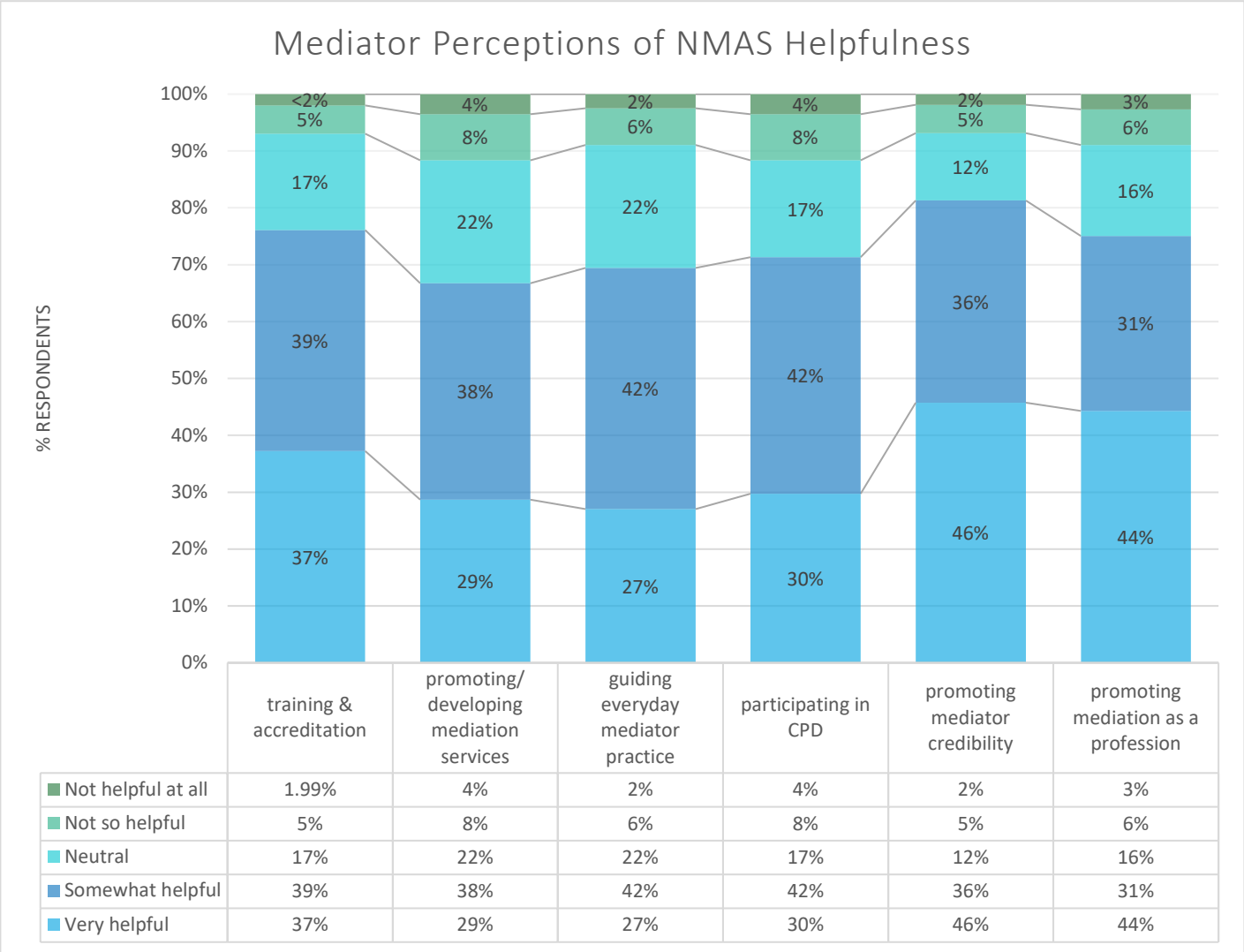


Figure 8: Mediator perceived helpfulness of NMAS – all areas (Survey Q64–Q69)

*We found no statistically significant differences in perceived helpfulness between MSB Orgs and mediators*

# COMPARATIVE PERCEPTIONS

## WHAT IS STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

When using data, it is essential to be aware of its limitations. For example, it is crucial to consider whether any results are simply the product of chance or if they represent a pattern that might be generalisable to a broader group.

Testing for statistical significance is one way to make such an assessment. The level of significance is often expressed as a p-value between 0 and 1, with a lower p-value indicating it is less likely that the results are random. Typically, p-values of less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ) are considered statistically significant and suggest that a given difference between groups has a probability of less than 5% of being the result of chance or an error with the group sampled.

In contrast, results that are not statistically significant, whilst informative, might best be understood as potentially representative of only those who responded to the survey.

Such considerations provide essential information for decision-making and, in this case, contribute to an evidence-based review of the NMAS. For a layperson's overview of statistical significance, including its limitations, see [HBR: A Refresher on Statistical Significance](#).

## MSB ORGS VS MEDIATORS

There appears to be a general consistency across perceptions of helpfulness, especially across the areas of training and accreditation, promoting mediator credibility, and promoting mediation as a profession. This suggests that the NMAS was perceived at a similar level of helpfulness by mediators and MSB Orgs in these three contexts.

While there are some differences worth highlighting in the remaining contexts, it is important to note that we found no statistically significant differences in any of the six contexts.

This means that it is not possible to state, with the requisite degree of certainty, that the following findings indicate generalisable patterns of difference between MSB Orgs and mediators concerning perceptions of helpfulness in these areas. Instead, care must be taken to limit their scope to be representative of the group who participated in this survey.

# COMPARATIVE – TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION

## FINDINGS

Compared to mediators (37%), more MSB Orgs (45%) reported the NMAS as 'very helpful' in relation to training, accreditation, and reaccreditation. In keeping with this, a larger number of mediators (17%) felt neutral compared to MSB Orgs (10%).

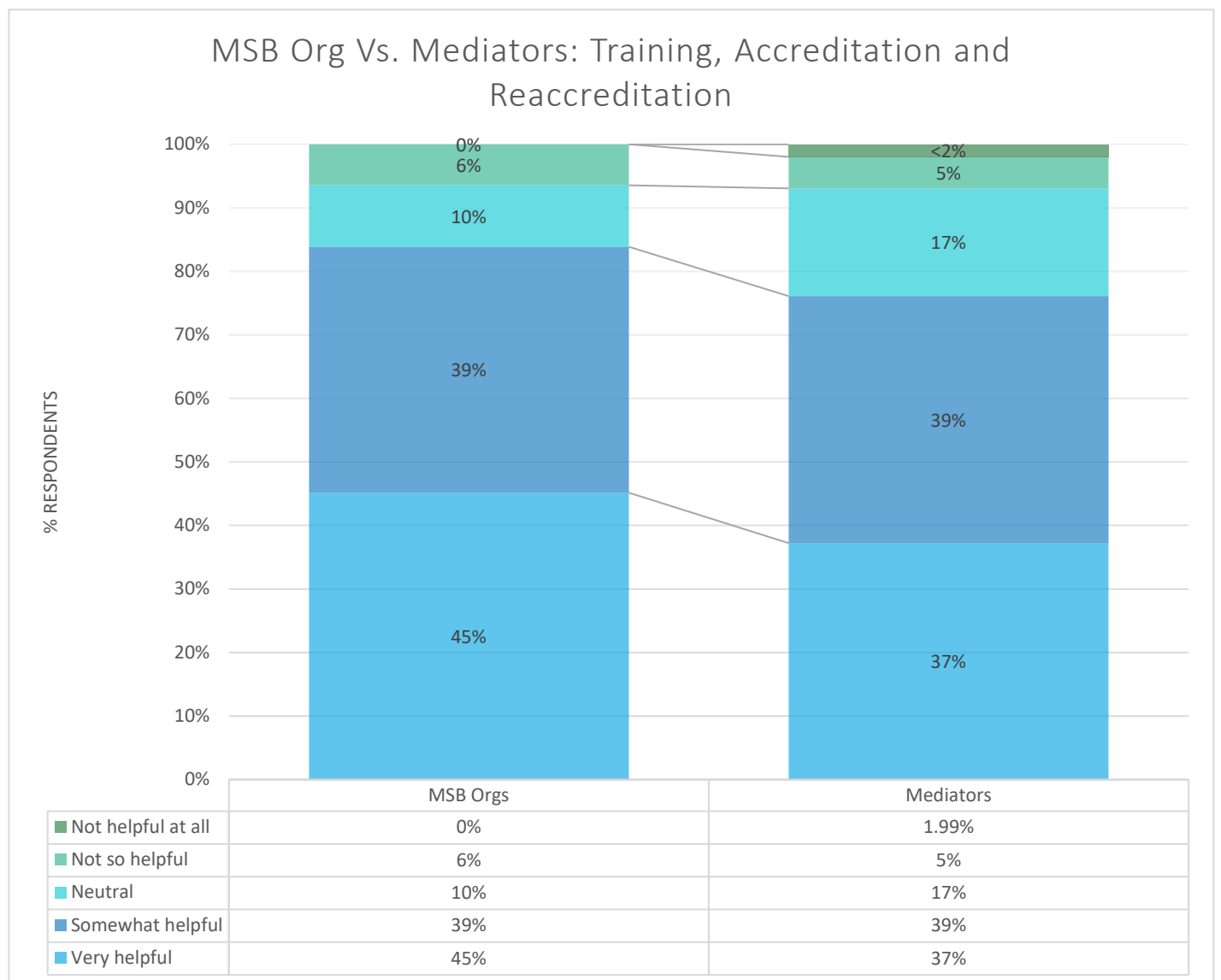


Figure 9: MSB Org Vs. Mediators: Perceptions of NMAS helpfulness in relation to Training, Accreditation, and Reaccreditation (Survey Q28 Vs. Q64)



# COMPARATIVE – DEVELOPING SERVICES

## FINDINGS

More MSB Orgs (81%) than mediators (67%) described the NMAS as helpful in relation to promoting or developing mediation services. However, when compared to MSB Orgs (10%), double the proportion of mediators (22%) felt neutral in this regard. Further research may be required to identify the distinct elements of the NMAS that might account for the different levels of perceived helpfulness reported by MBS Orgs and mediators.

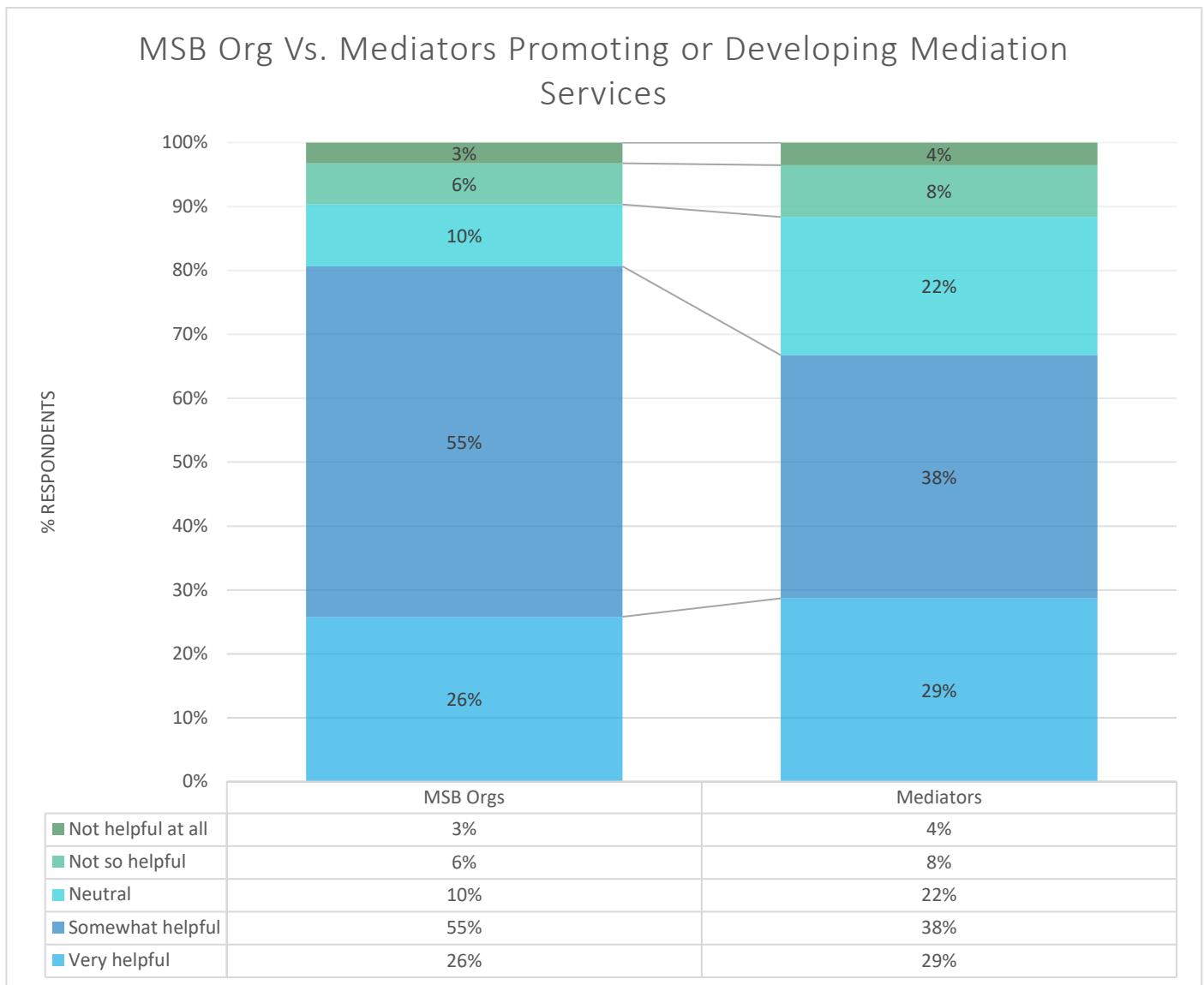


Figure 10: MSB Org Vs. Mediators: Perceptions of NMAS helpfulness in relation to promoting or developing mediation services (Survey Q29 Vs. Q65)

# COMPARATIVE – GUIDING EVERYDAY PRACTICE

## FINDINGS

While more MSB Orgs (81%) than mediators (69%) reported perceiving the NMAS as helpful in guiding everyday practice, a higher proportion of MSB Orgs (13%) also reported perceiving the NMAS as 'not so helpful' or 'not helpful at all', when compared with mediators (8%). More mediators (22%) felt neutral compared to MSB Orgs (6%). Further research may be required to understand how MSB Orgs and mediators use the NMAS to guide mediator practice to inform potential strategies for increasing perceived helpfulness within this context.

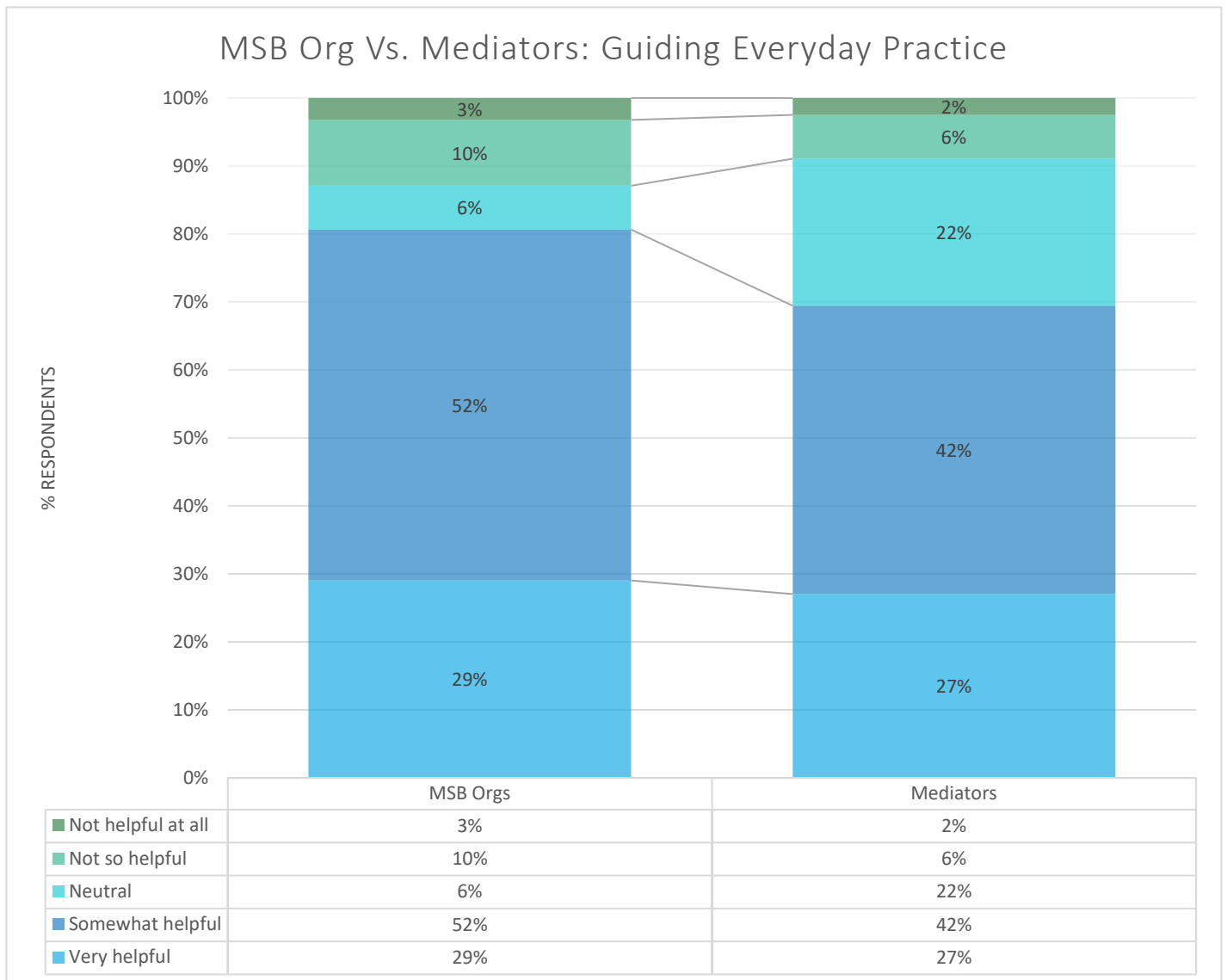


Figure 11: MSB Org Vs. Mediators: Perceptions of NMAS helpfulness in relation to guiding everyday practice (Survey Q30 Vs. Q66)

# COMPARATIVE – PLANNING OR OFFERING CPD

## FINDINGS

In comparison to mediators (17%), a larger proportion of MSB Orgs (29%) felt neutral about the NMAS in the context of planning or offering CPD. In keeping with this, a greater proportion of mediators (72%) than MSB Orgs (55%) perceived the NMAS as helpful in this regard. Further research is required to understand the substantial disparity between perceptions of these MSB Orgs and mediators, as it may provide crucial information on ways the NMAS might better meet the needs of its various users.

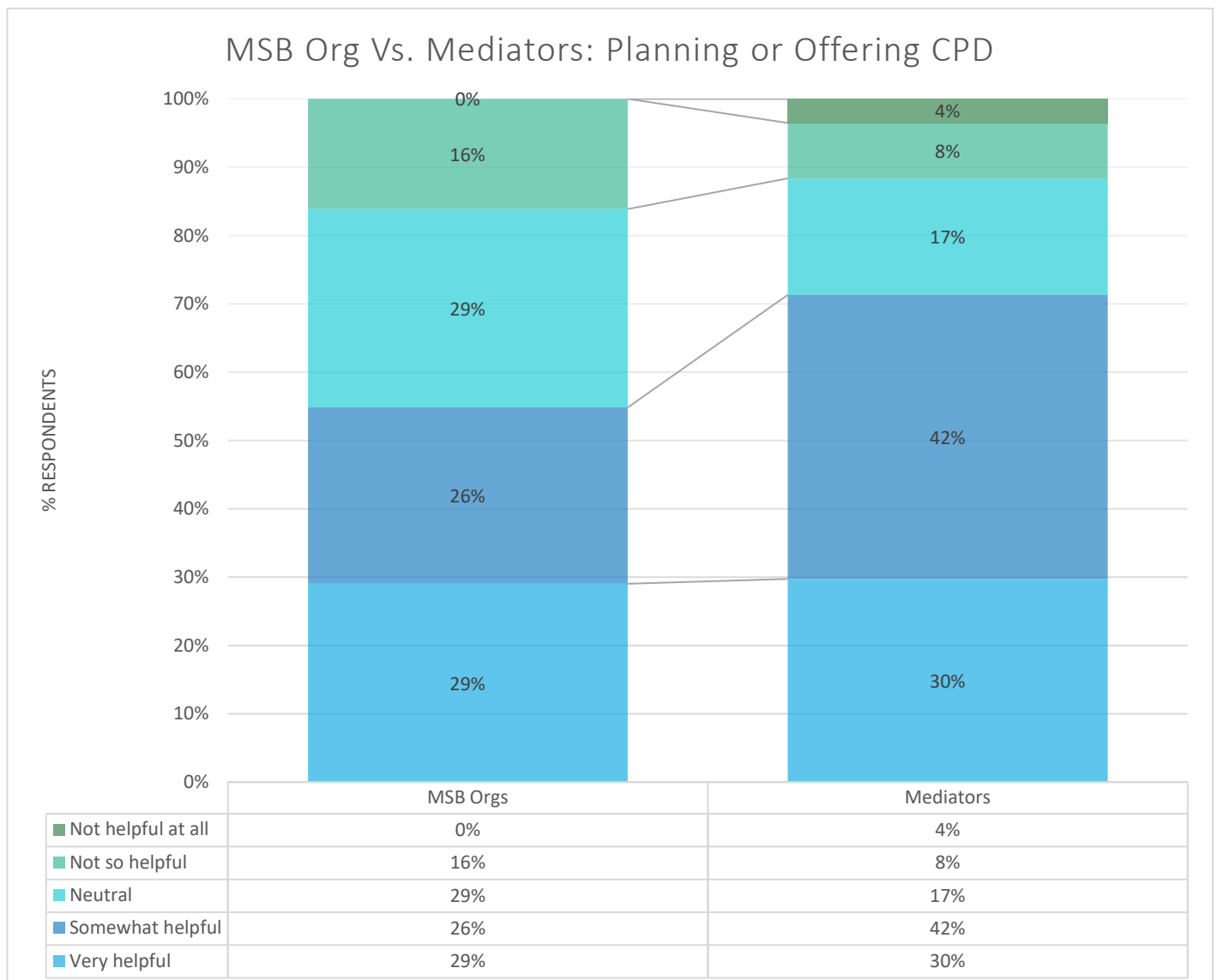


Figure 12: MSB Org Vs. Mediators: Perceptions of NMAS helpfulness in relation to planning and/or offering CPD (Survey Q31 Vs. Q67)

# COMPARATIVE – MEDIATOR CREDIBILITY

## FINDINGS

MSB Orgs and mediators shared the view that the NMAS was the most helpful in relation to promoting mediator credibility, with almost half of both respondent groups saying the NMAS was 'very helpful' in this regard. While no MSB Orgs suggested the NMAS was not helpful in this context, a small proportion of mediators (7%) said otherwise. This finding reflects well on the NMAS as it currently stands and suggests it is held in high regard by MSB Orgs and mediators alike. Further research may be required to understand these variations.

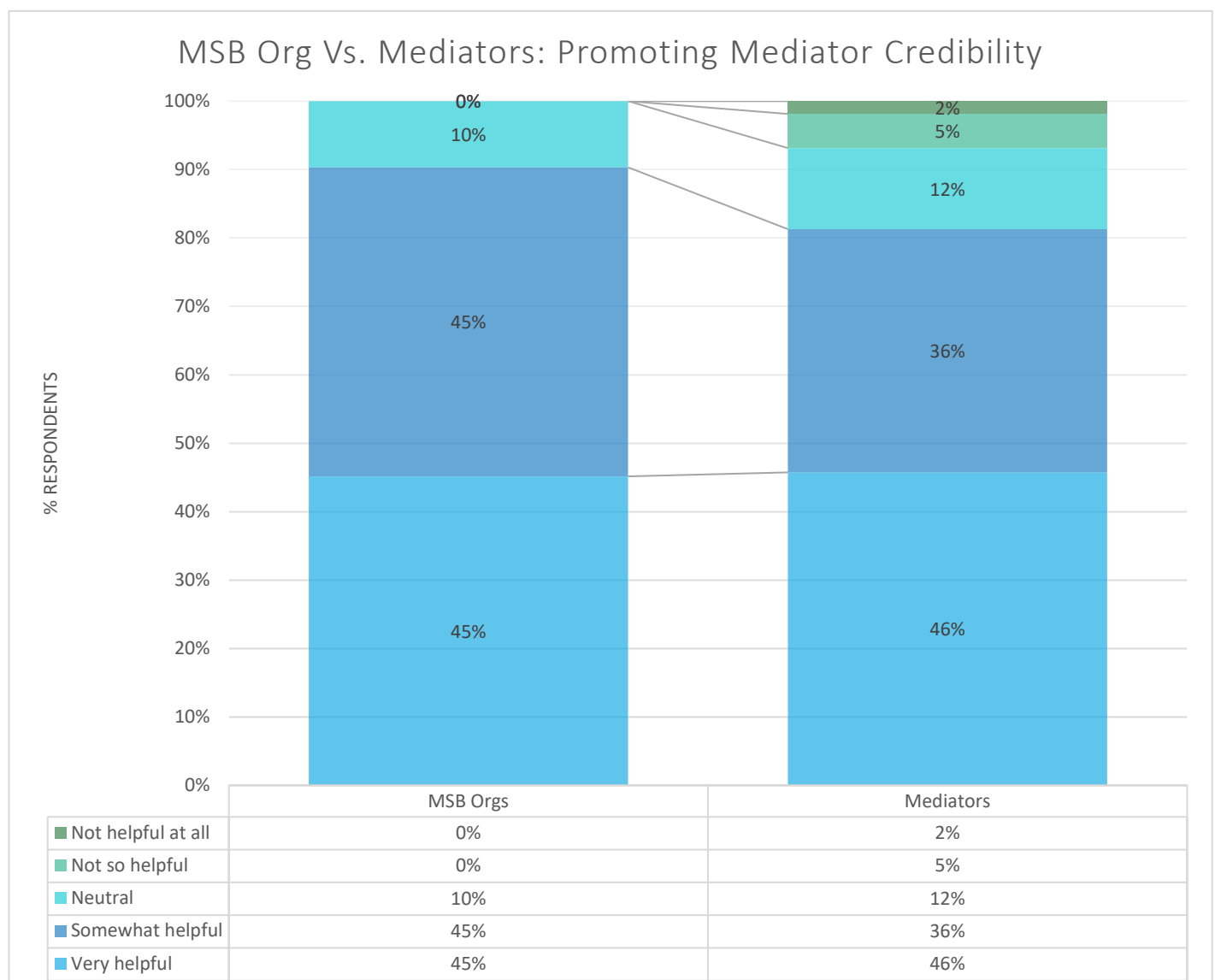


Figure 13: MSB Org Vs. Mediators: Perceptions of NMAS helpfulness in relation to promoting mediator credibility (Survey Q32 Vs. Q68)

# COMPARATIVE – MEDIATION AS A PROFESSION

## FINDINGS

In relation to promoting mediation as a profession, more MSB Orgs (87%) reported the NMAS as helpful than mediators (75%). While almost no MSB Orgs said the NMAS was ‘not helpful’ in this regard, 9% of mediators suggested otherwise. In addition, more mediators (16%) than MSB Orgs (10%) felt neutral. Further research may be required to account for the differences between these two respondent groups. This includes the extent to which mediation is likely to be a viable profession for many mediators, as discussed in [Part 1 of the Effectiveness Survey](#).<sup>12</sup>

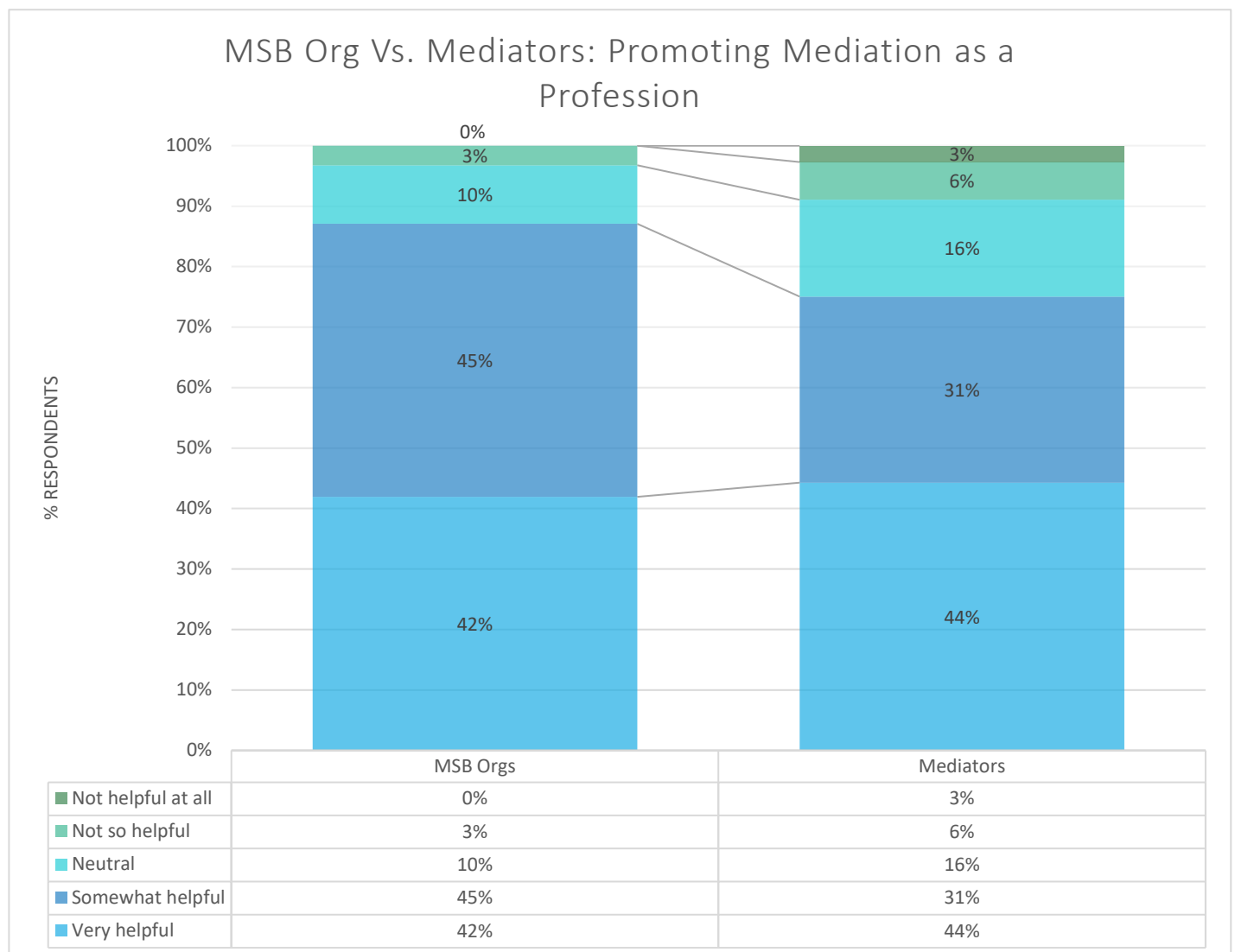


Figure 14: MSB Org Vs. Mediators: Perceptions of NMAS helpfulness in relation to promoting mediation as a profession (Survey Q33 Vs. Q69)

<sup>12</sup> See NMAS Review 2020-21 Effectiveness Survey Part 1 Findings, p.21 Figure 6: Typical number of medications per month (Survey Q45) and p.24 Figure 8: Mediator practice as a proportion of overall work (Survey Q40).

# UP NEXT

PART 1 – PARTICIPANTS

PART 2 – PERCEIVED  
EFFECTIVENESS

**PART 3 – OTHER FACTORS**

PART 4 – MEDIATOR STYLES

*PART 3 looks at other factors that may impact perceptions of effectiveness, such as mediator type and experience*

