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CREATING CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

EMPLOYEE ON-LINE SURVEY

EDDIE SHEPPARD PhD & PHILIP COPPARD

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STORMY LAKE CONSULTING

Background

The CBE is committed to improving its public engagement practices. It's one of CBE's top priorities this year. The opinions of parents, students and the general public are important to gather and consider during this process.

Parents, students and the general public were asked about their satisfaction with past experiences, effective communication and engagement methods, topics that are important to them and how they would like to be consulted on decisions that affect them.

This input will help to develop a new system-wide approach to public engagement. This new approach will allow the CBE to do a better job of listening to and understanding people's views on decisions that affect them.

Method

An online survey was fielded between November 14 and December 14, 2015. In total, 2596 employees completed the survey.

- ATA = 1456
- Staff Association = 808
- CUPE = 173
- Construction and Maintenance Trades Unions = 24
- Exempt Employee = 106
- Missing = 29

Employees were invited to take a 10 minute survey to discuss their past, present, and future engagement experiences within the CBE.

Method

All quantitative analyses in this report were conducted using SPSS, which is a program used for statistical analysis in social sciences.

A statistically significant result indicates that there is a significant difference between group means.

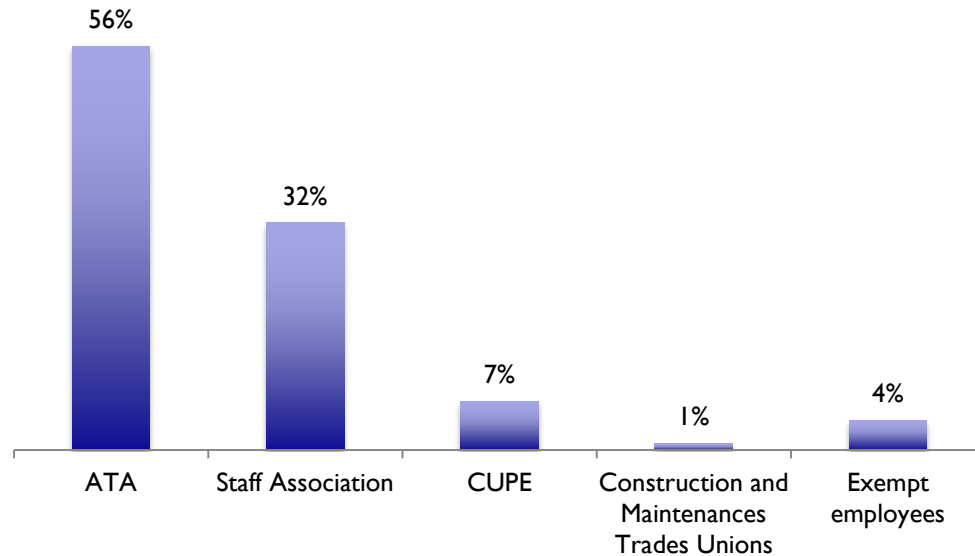
Significance was determined using the following significance levels:

- Significant: $p \leq .05$ (indicates less than 5% chance the results occurred)
- Marginally significant: $p = .05 - .10$
- Not significant: $p > .10$

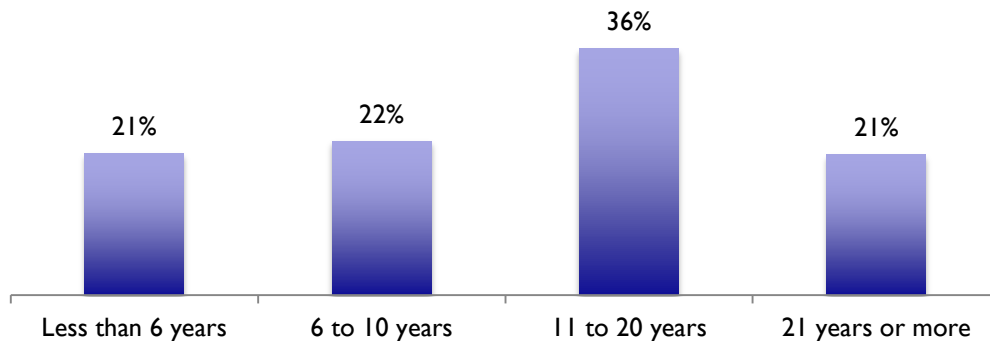
A p -value represents that probability that the results occurred by random chance. Therefore, a p -value of $\leq .05$ indicates that there is less than a 5% chance that the differences obtained were due to chance alone. The smaller the p -value, the more confident you can be in stating that the difference was truly significant.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

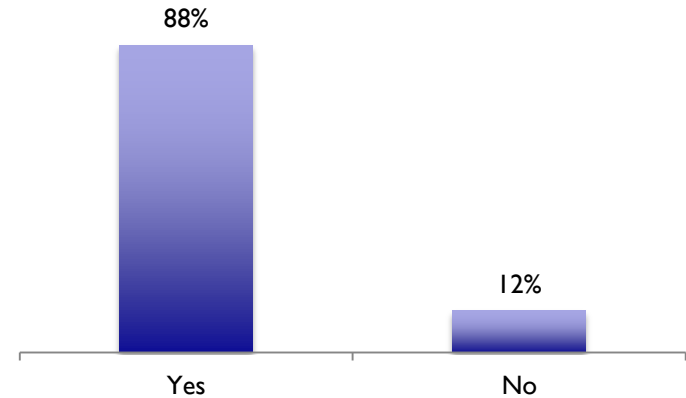
Employee profile



Length of employment



Do you work in a school?



ATA: Alberta Teachers' Association
CUPE: Canadian Union of Public Employees

The average length of employment was 12.98 years ($SD = 8.94$)

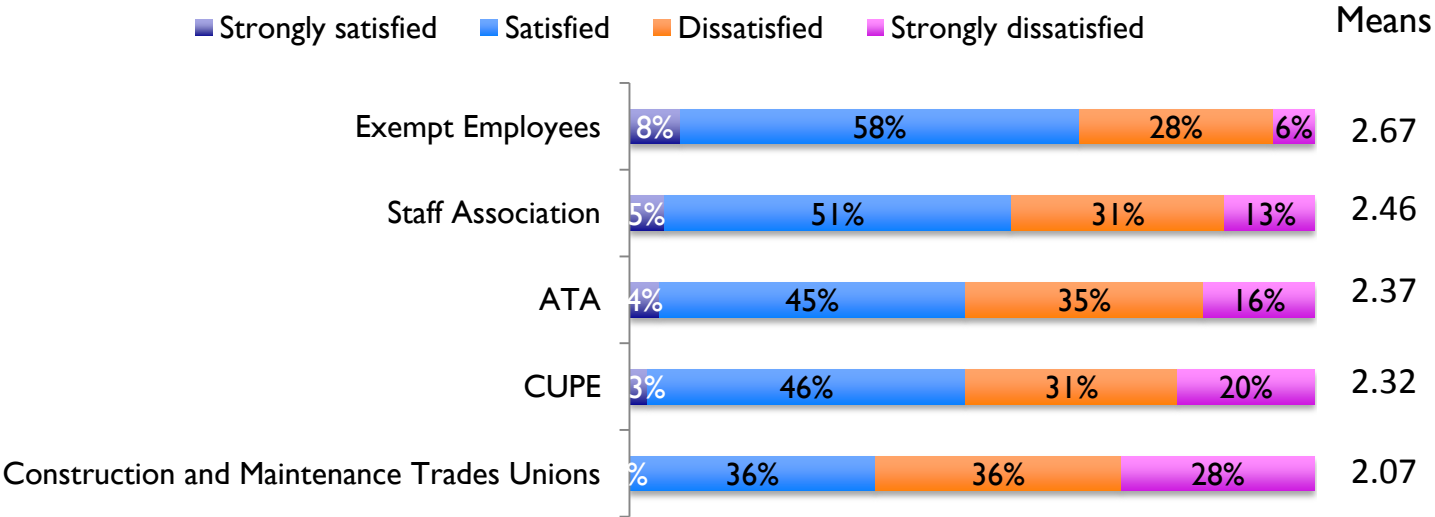
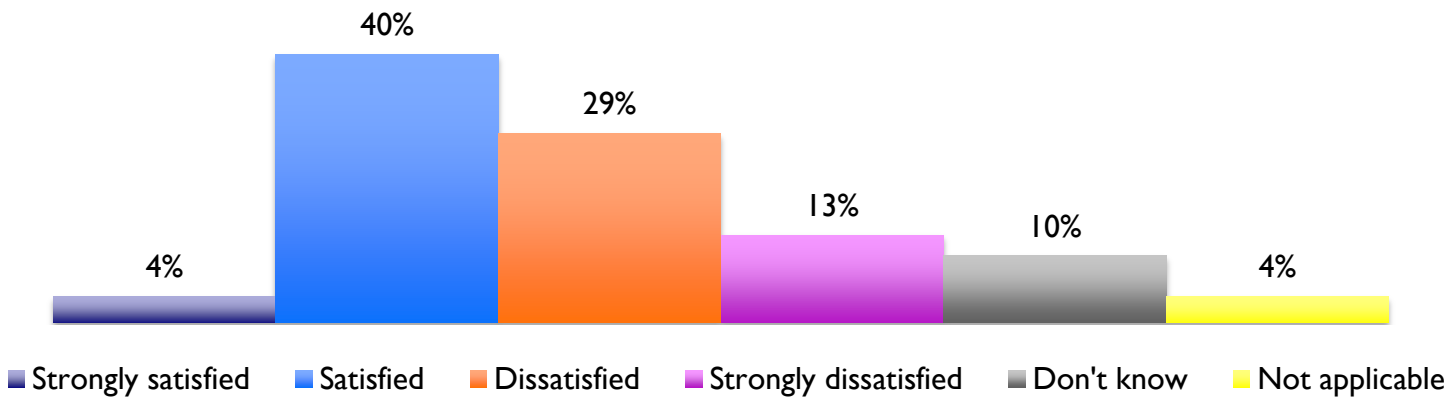
PERCEPTIONS OF PAST ENGAGEMENT

“I am routinely asked by my immediate school Administration for feedback and opinions about school-related issues. At the school-level, I am almost always included in decisions about school initiatives, and I would say that, overall, our entire Staff is included in these discussions. In 12 years of teaching I have almost never been asked for input into System-wide initiatives, nor had feedback requested/reviewed.”Employee

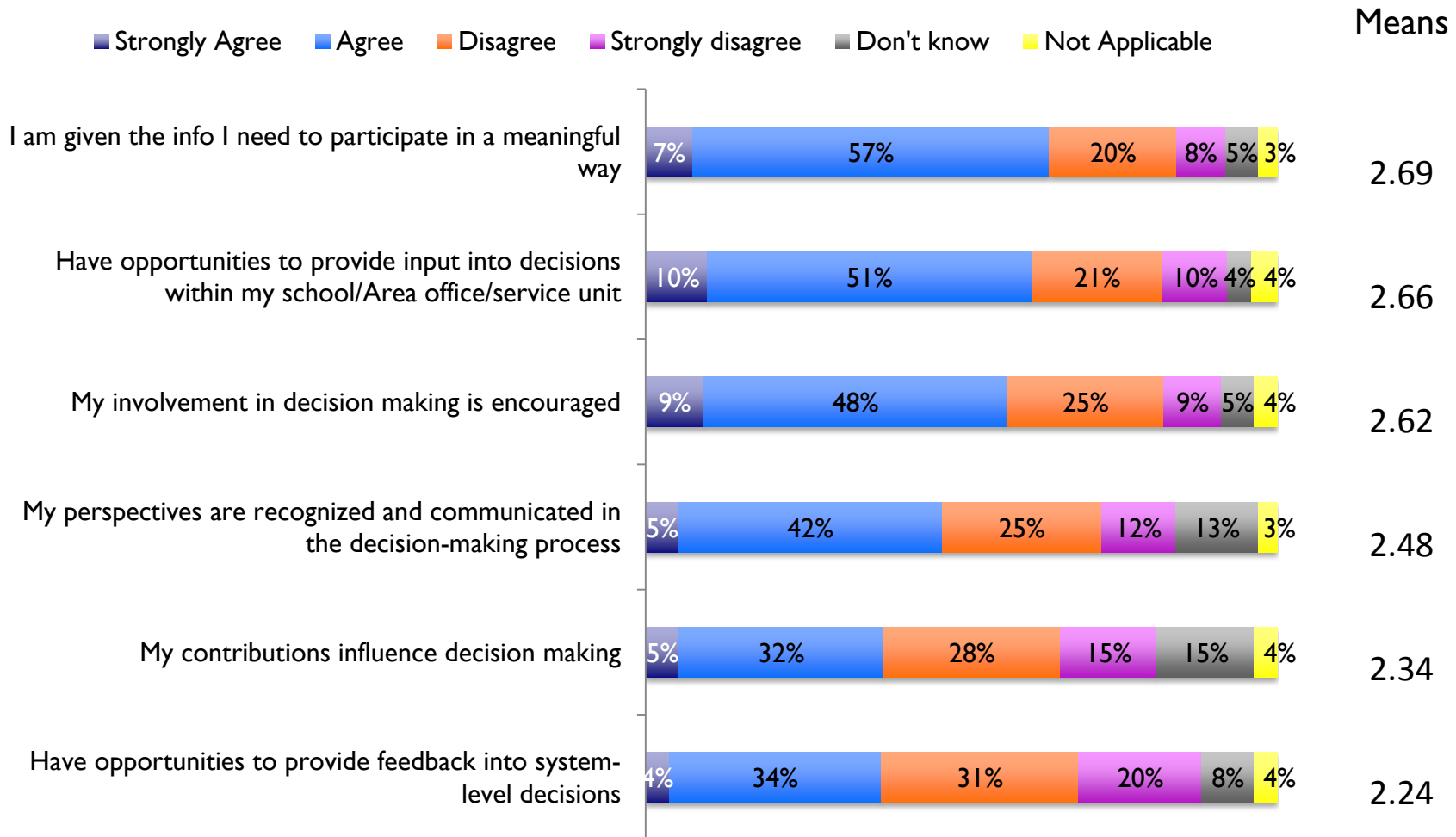
“I have never felt encouraged to participate in the public engagement process.” Employee

“I'd like to see facility operators more involved at projects beginning... too often things are done without consulting us.”
Construction and Maintenance Trades

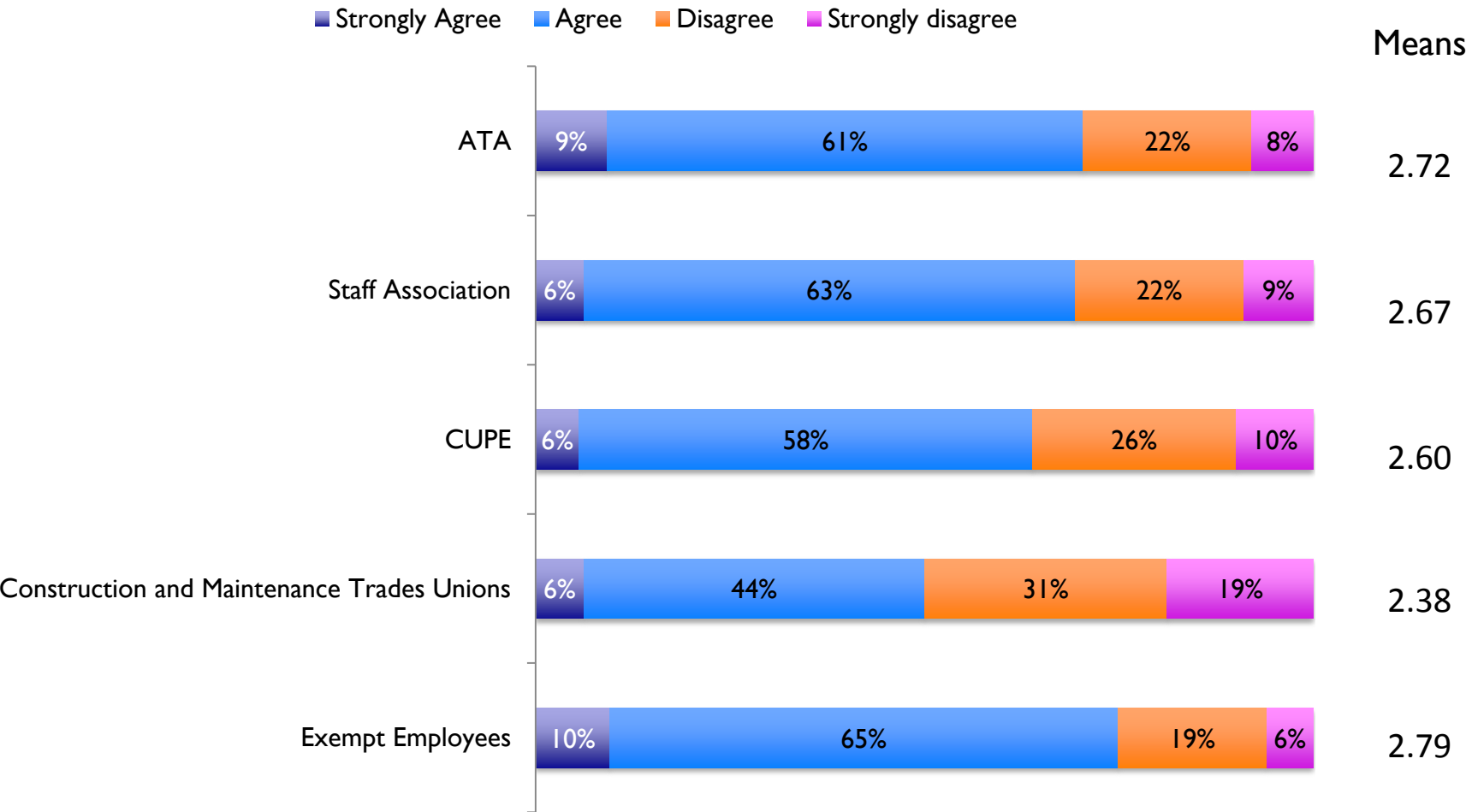
Overall satisfaction with past engagement



General perceptions

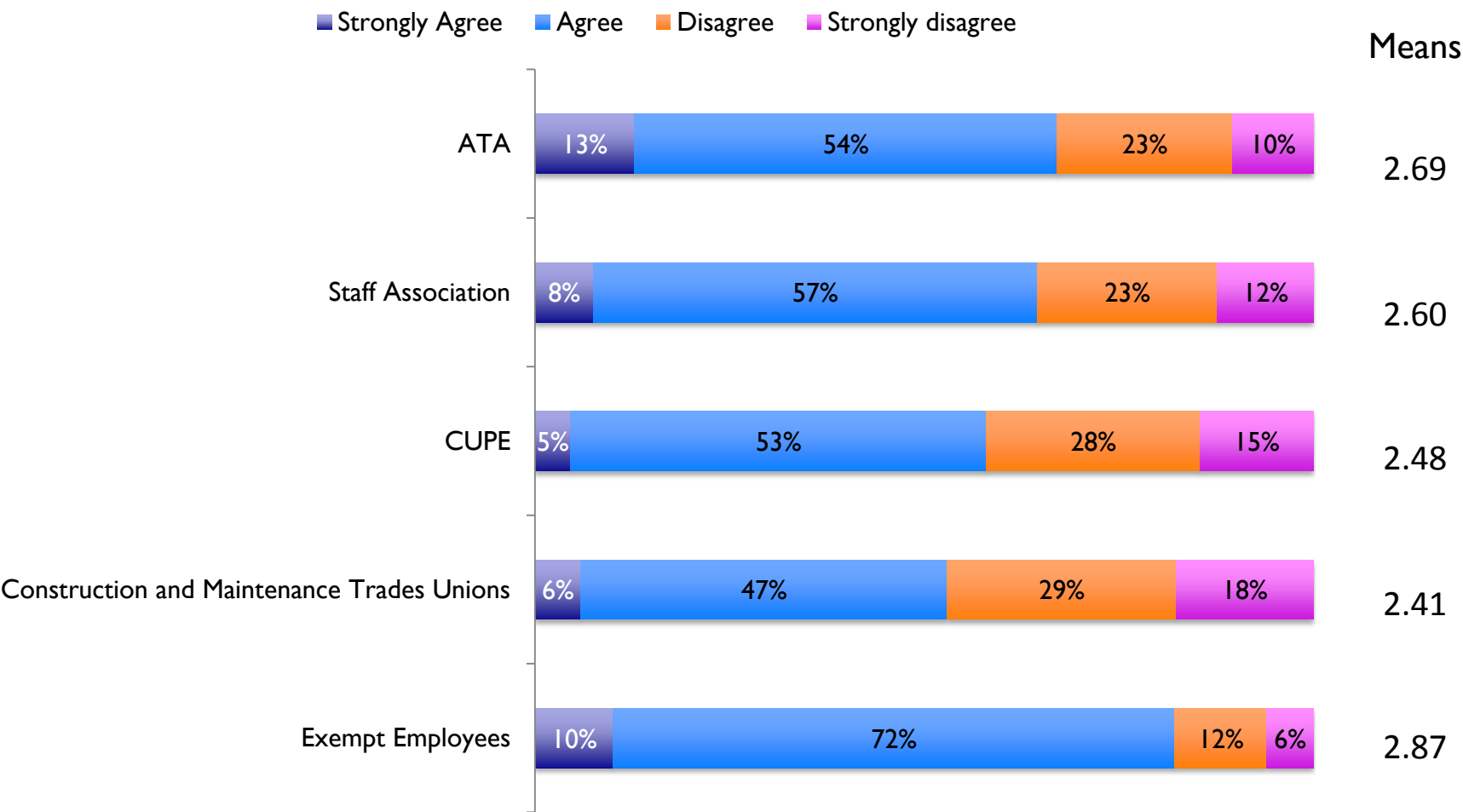


I am given the info I need to participate in a meaningful way

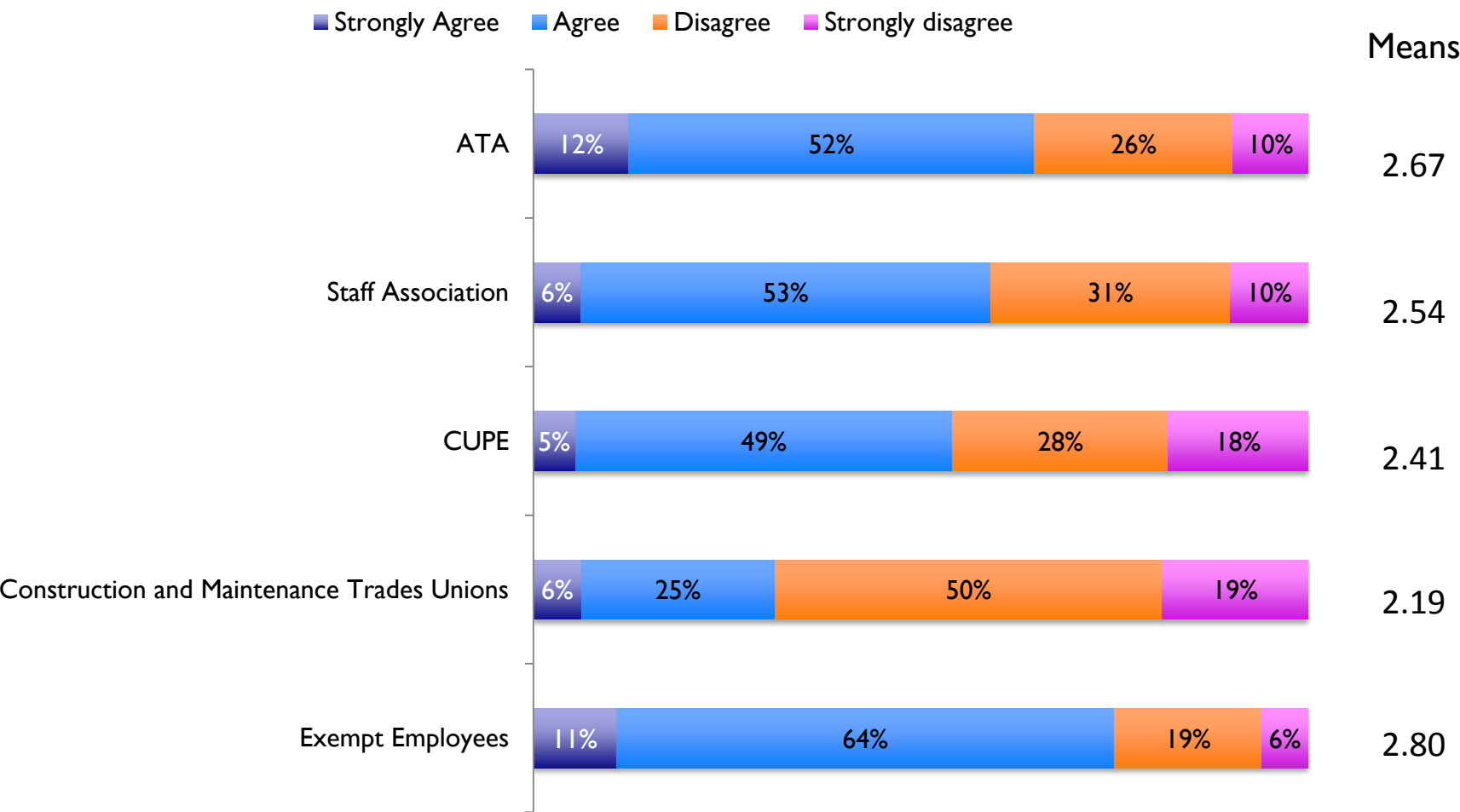


Differences are marginally significant¹¹

I have opportunities to provide input into decisions within my school/Area office/service unit



My involvement in decision making is encouraged



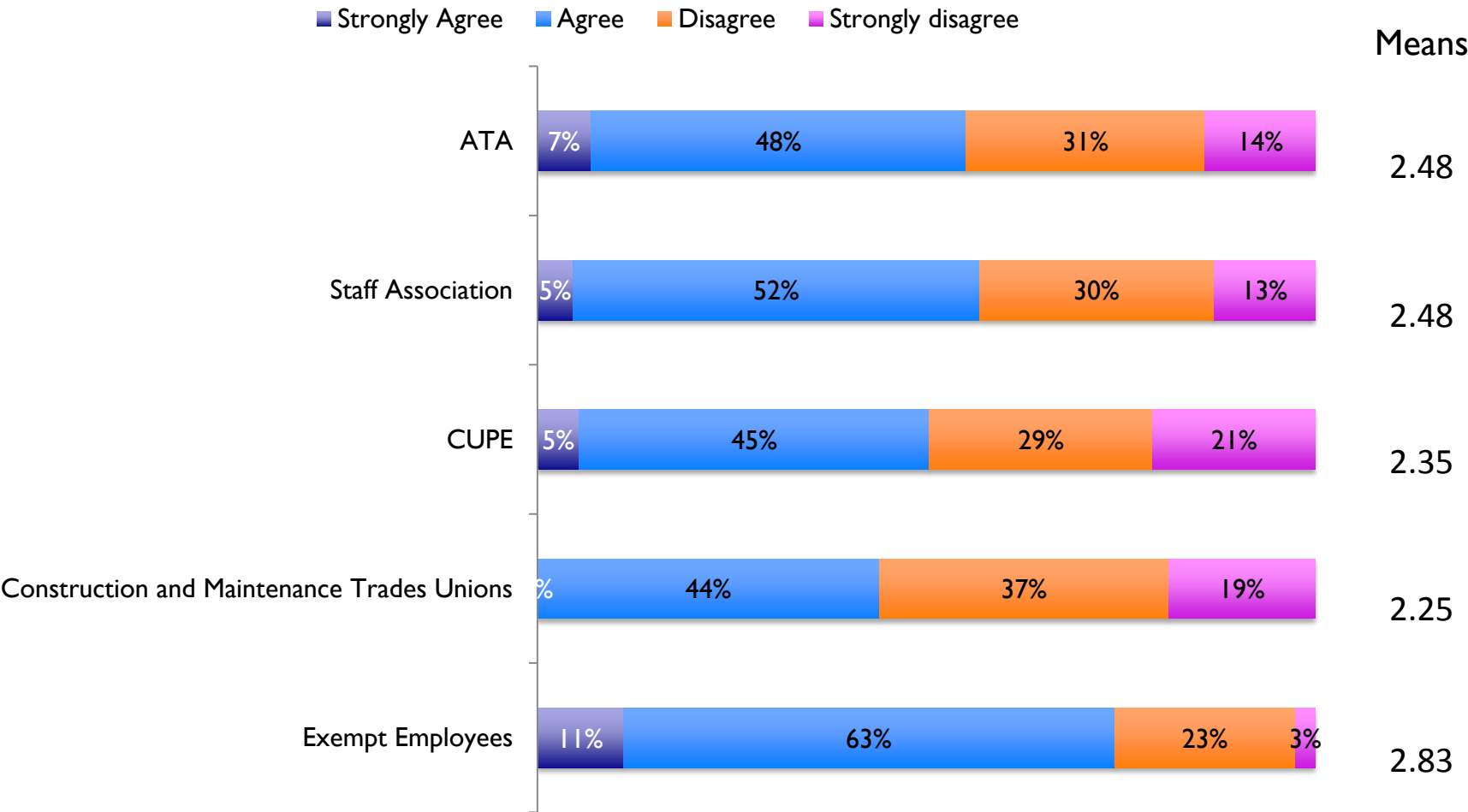
Encourage involvement from everyone

The CBE may want to consider finding more ways to encourage everyone to provide their opinions and feedback, especially those who will be impacted by the decision.

“Encouraging teachers to be part of decision making. We are on the 'front lines' and see where the strengths and needs lie.” Employee

“I have never felt encouraged to participate in the public engagement process.” Employee

My perspectives are recognized and communicated in the decision-making process



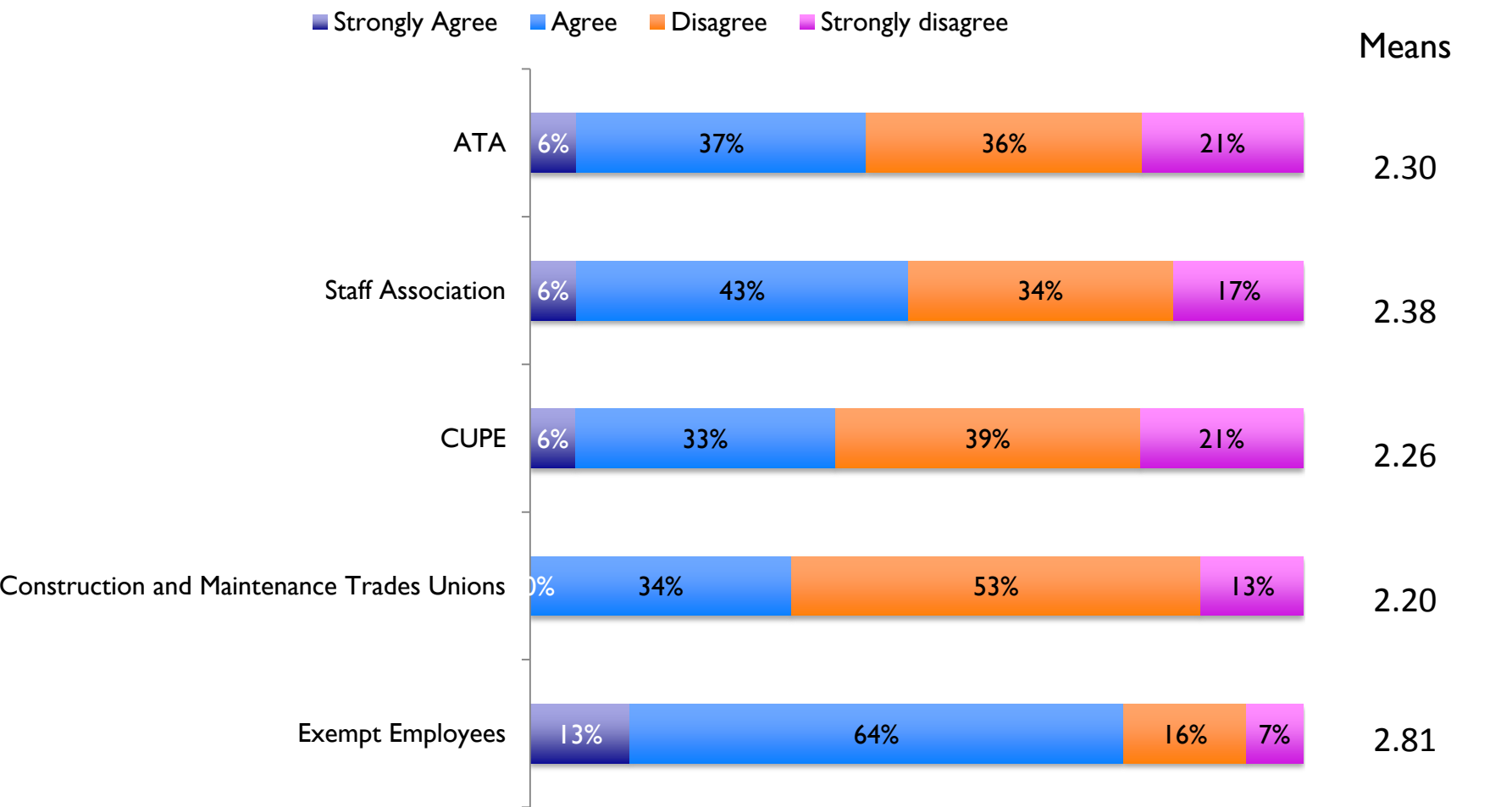
Recognize the contributions of employees

By actively acknowledging the participation of employees, the CBE will help build the trust of these individuals moving forward.

“School staff need to know that if we take the minutes out of our day to give input that it is a valuable use of our time and that we can actually affect change within the system.”
Employee

“Show me that someone is listening to my concerns as a teacher who is marginalized by not having the same rights and benefits as the rest of the staff. When this is achieved then I can say that the CBE has shown improvement on how it asks for opinions and feedback on decisions that effect me and our staff. Thank you for asking for my opinion.”
Employee

My contributions influence decision making



Employees are largely unaware of how their input impacts decisions

By providing employees with information regarding how their input was used in the decision making process, the CBE will help employees understand why the resulting decision was made.

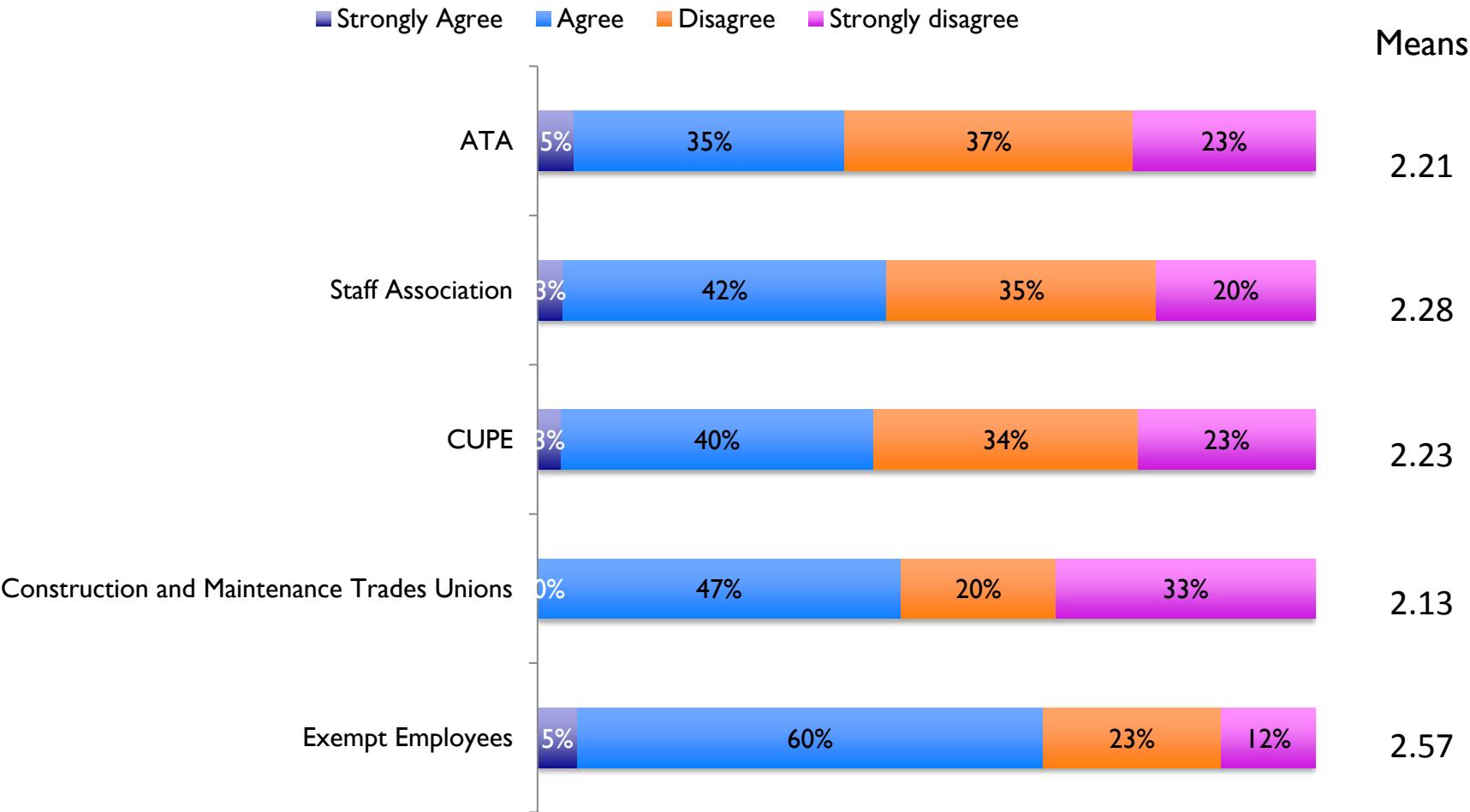
“Demonstrate with specific actions that the feedback is being taken seriously and is having an effect in some constructive and clear way.”

Employee

“Be sure to inform use on how our opinions and feedback have directly affected change.”

Employee

I have opportunities to provide feedback into system-level decisions



Key findings

44% of employees noted that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their past engagement experiences.

- Dissatisfaction is greatest amongst construction and maintenance trades, ATA, and CUPE employees.
- Construction and maintenance staff say they experience a level of exclusion from CBE engagement that other employees do not.

Exempt employees are the most satisfied, while construction and maintenance staff report the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Key findings

While those who have participated in public engagement initiatives indicate that the sessions and opportunities for input were reasonably effective, the majority feel that the CBE falls short in the early and later stages of engagement.

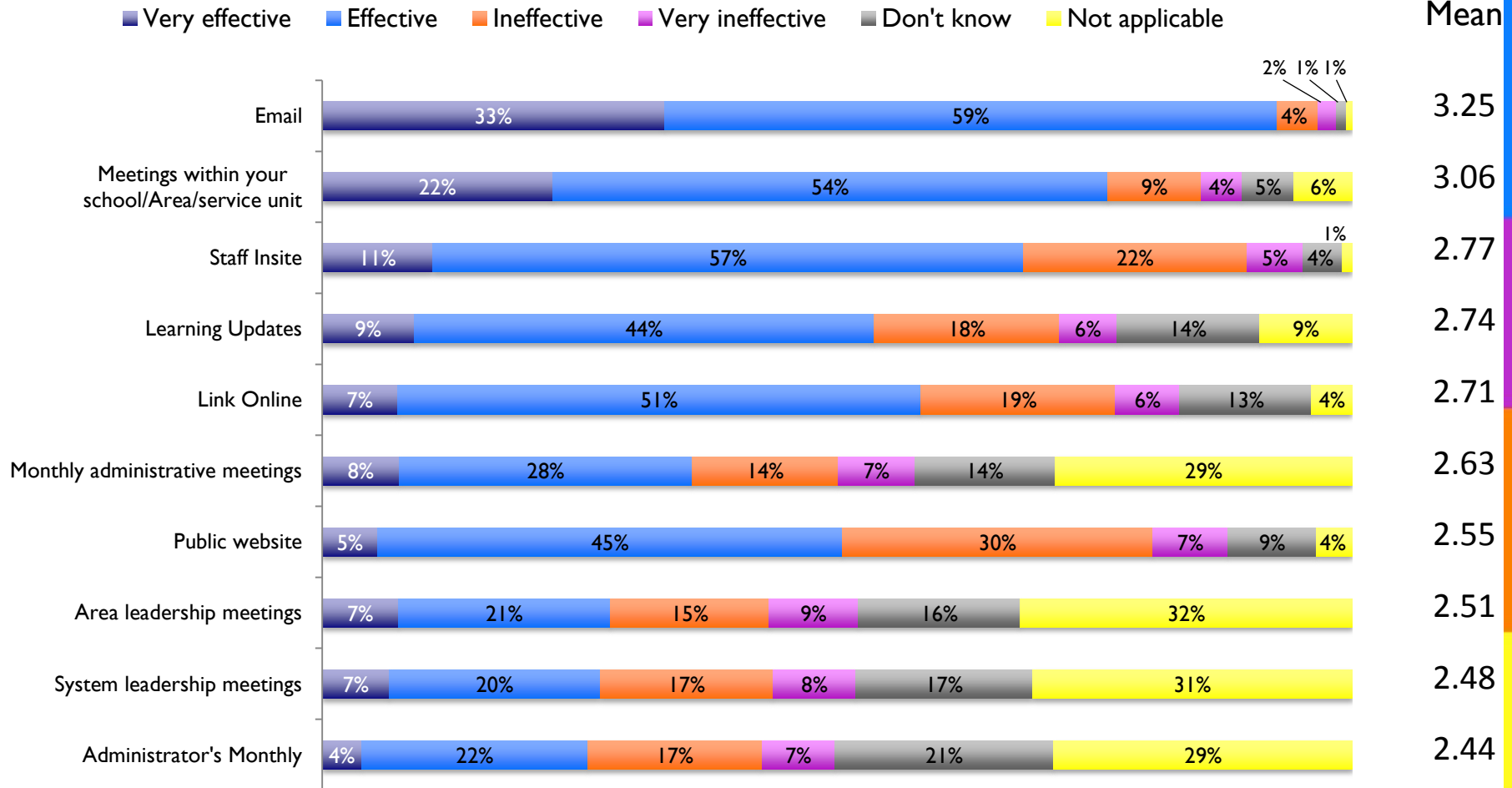
In these early and later stages, it's the information about the purpose of engagement and closing the loop that isn't as effective as it could be. This includes: what decision is being made, how input will be used, factors that influence decision-making, sharing the results in a timely manner, how input was used and changes in the process communicated along the way.

EFFECTIVE METHODS TO INFORM

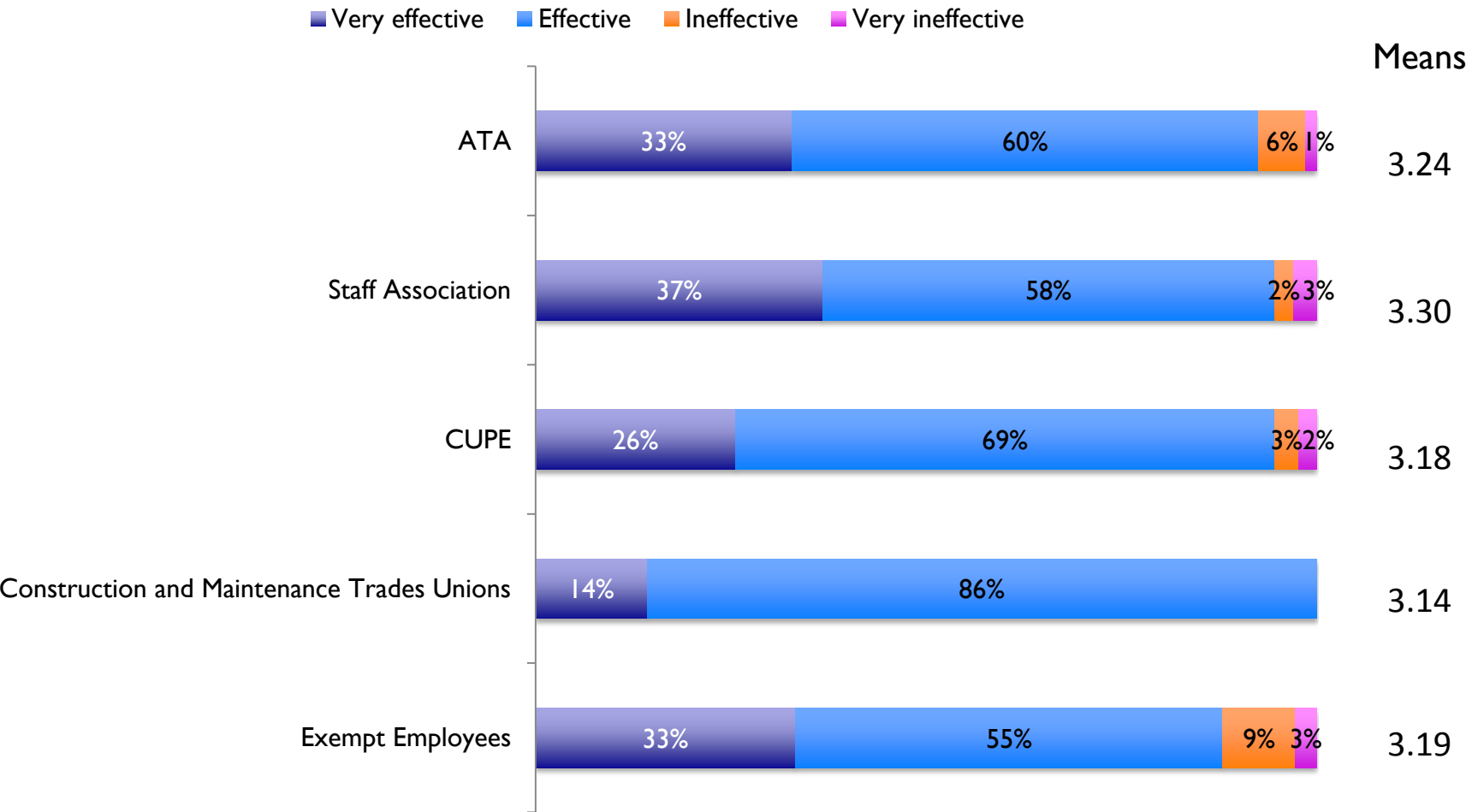
“The methods provided already are sufficient. However, it is important that they arrive in a timely manner and that the language is clear.” Employee

“The problem is not that I am uninformed. The problem is lack of input into decisions.” Employee

Effective methods to inform employees



Email



Email

Email is the most effective method due to its sheer convenience.

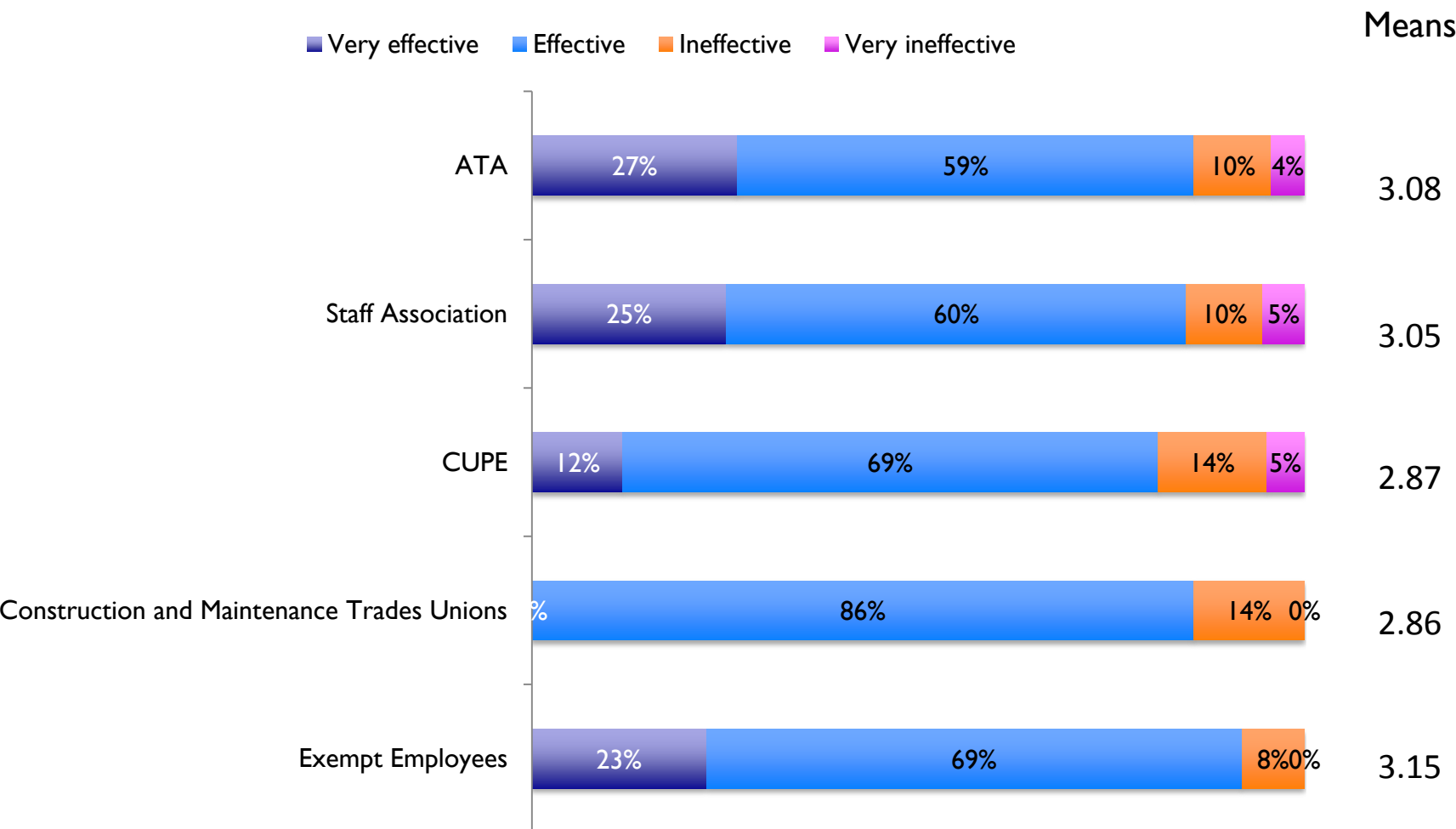
“Email works the best, but when large changes happen, such as report cards, it needs to be highlighted, not something that I have to read in the learning updates when I have time, because then I probably won't notice.” Employee

“Email is the best or sending a link to go to. People don't want to have to go somewhere for a meeting or have a meeting that takes up our time when we can read about it.” Employee

However, the content, length and sheer volume of emails must be considered.

“For me, information gets lost in the seemingly endless number of emails sent each day. I simply don't have the time to read everything that is sent out via the web.” Employee

Meetings within your school/Area/service unit



Meetings within your school/Area/service unit

Face-to-face meetings ensure that voices are heard.

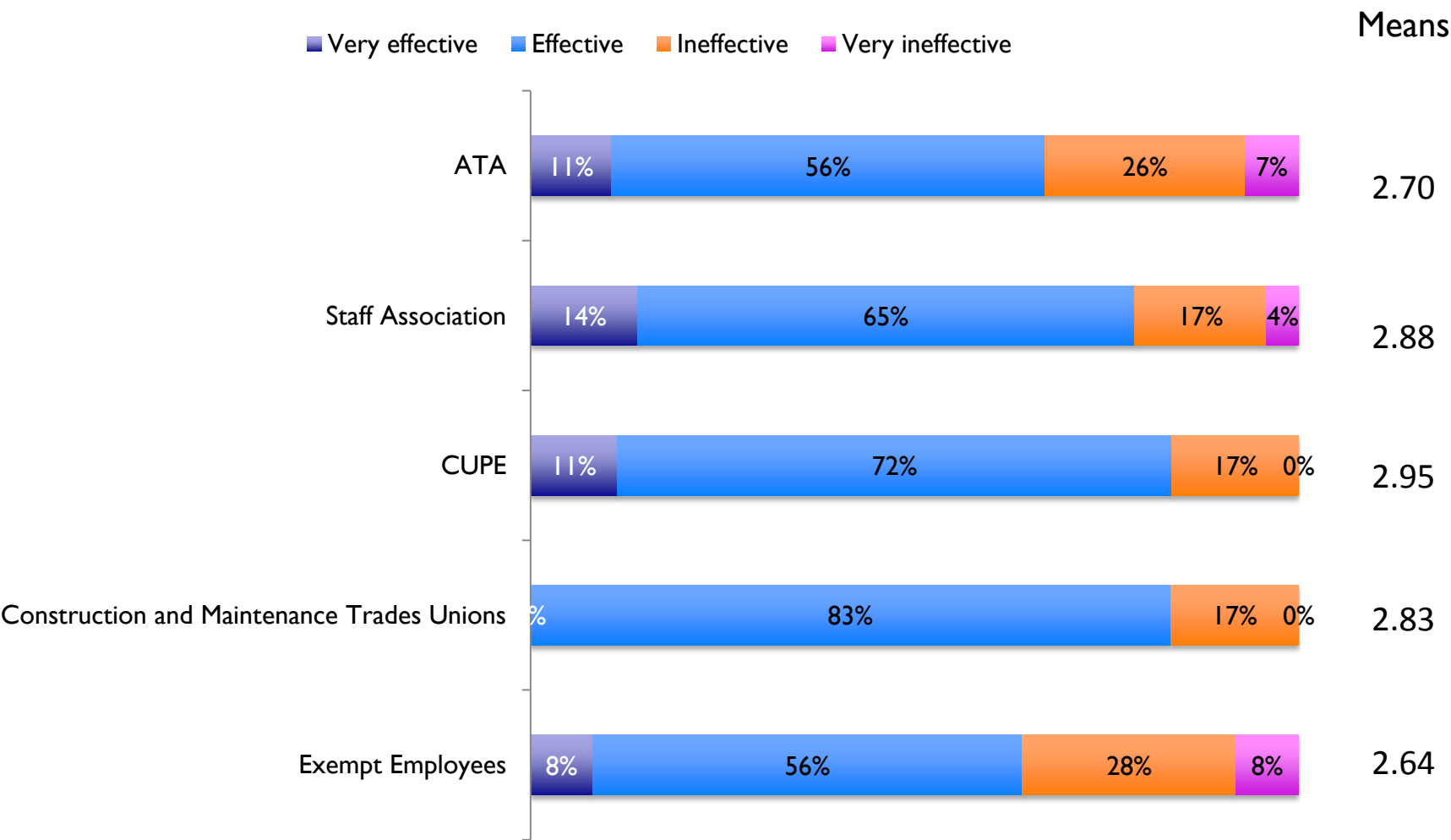
“If you want my opinion, I need to see you. I want you to hear what I have to say, not what I believe in. Surveys like these limit my responses. I feel that healthy debate and conversation is much more effective.”

Employee

“Meetings regarding certain meetings and the ability for all staff to sign up and attend. Sometimes information stays within the select few in the school and doesn't make it all the way around.”

Employee

Staff Insite (employee intranet)



Staff Insite

Staff Insite has the opportunity to be effective, but it is currently not user friendly.

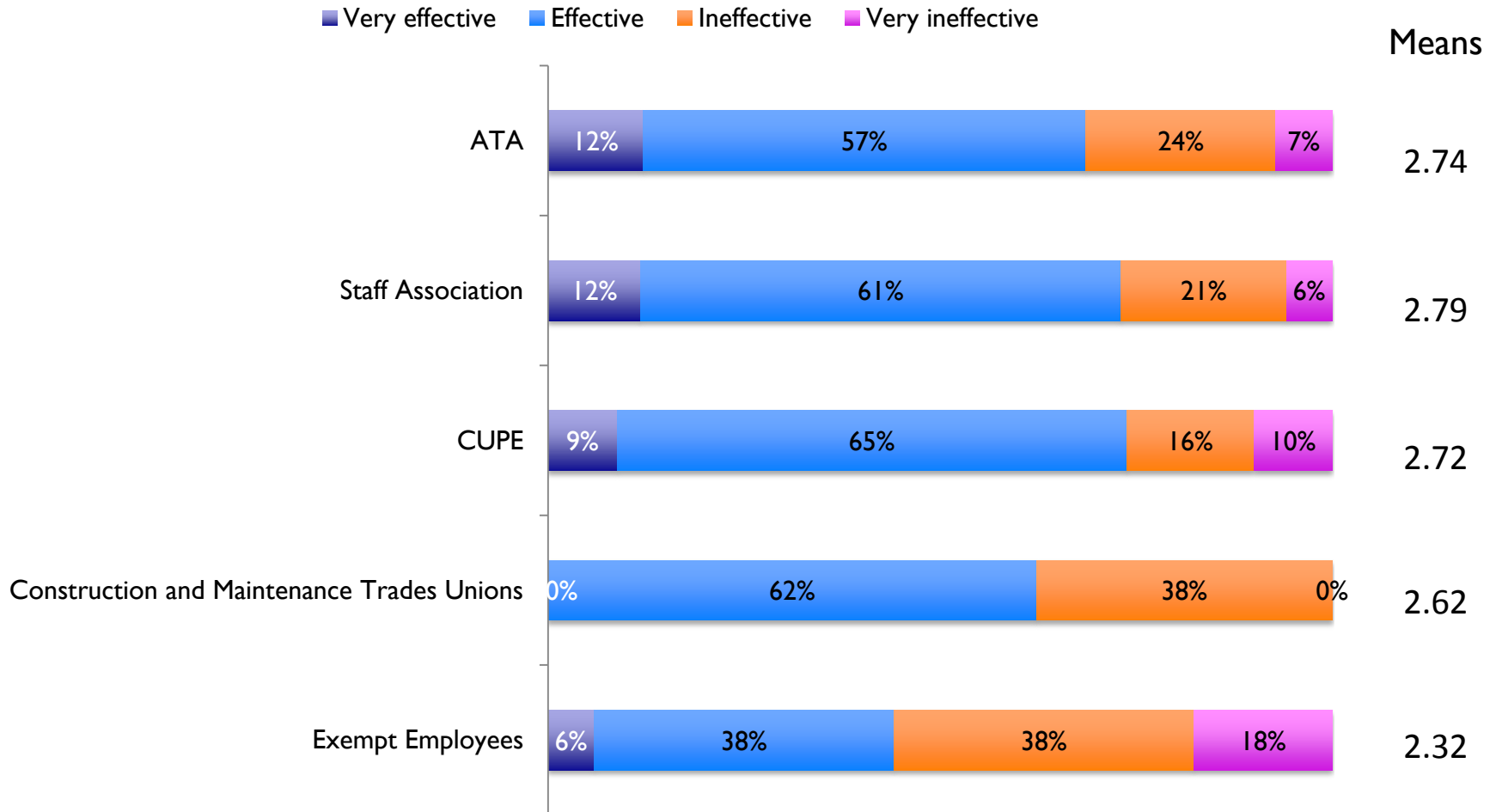
“I think there is excellent information on Staff Insite, however part of the problem is you have to go fishing to find it. I wonder if and when things are updated, an information link is posted or communicated.”

Employee

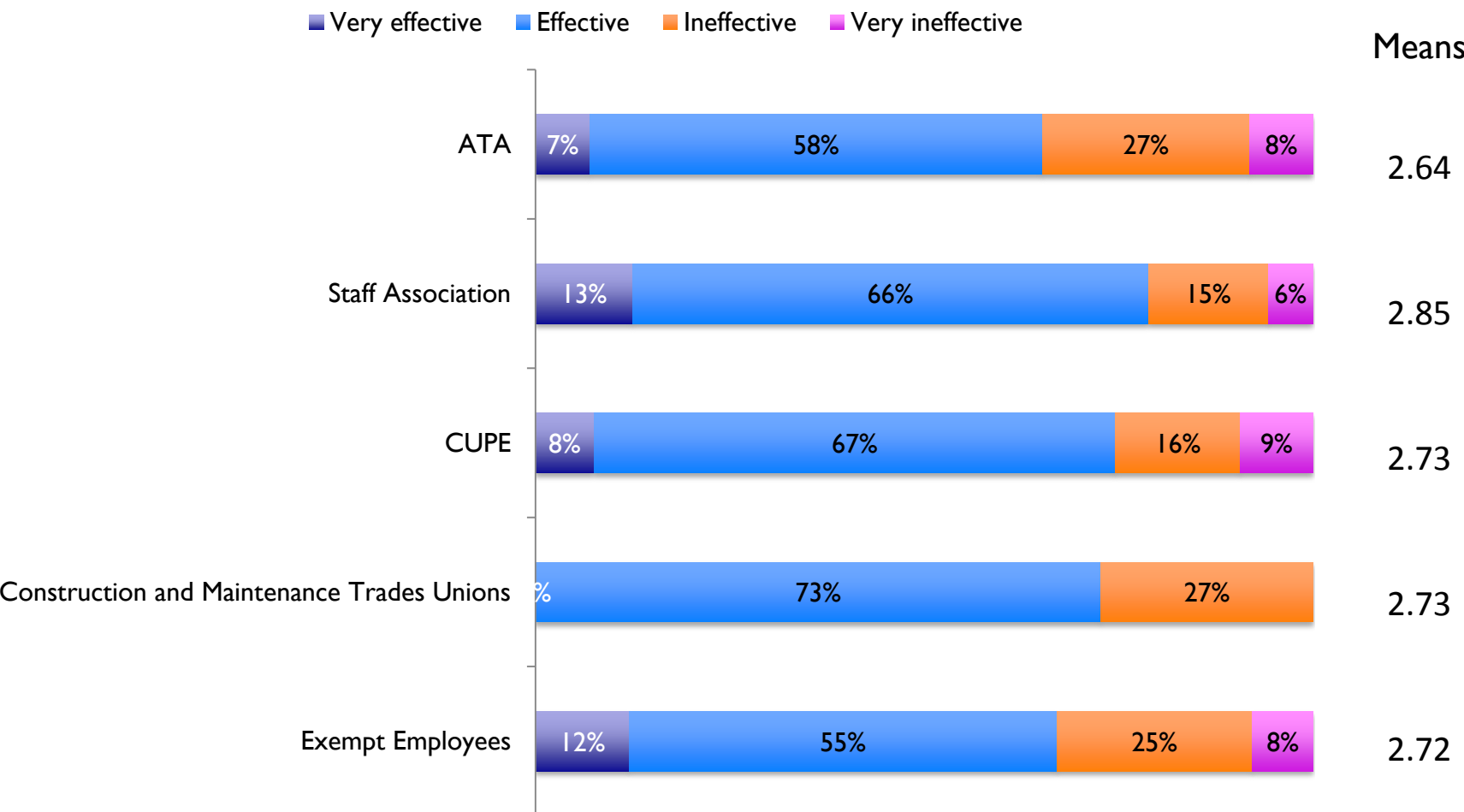
“The Staff Insite needs to be reorganized to be user friendly. Often information is under a menu (if you can find it) related to another drop down menu. NOT USER FRIENDLY! The search often doesn't help you get to where you want to go.”

Employee

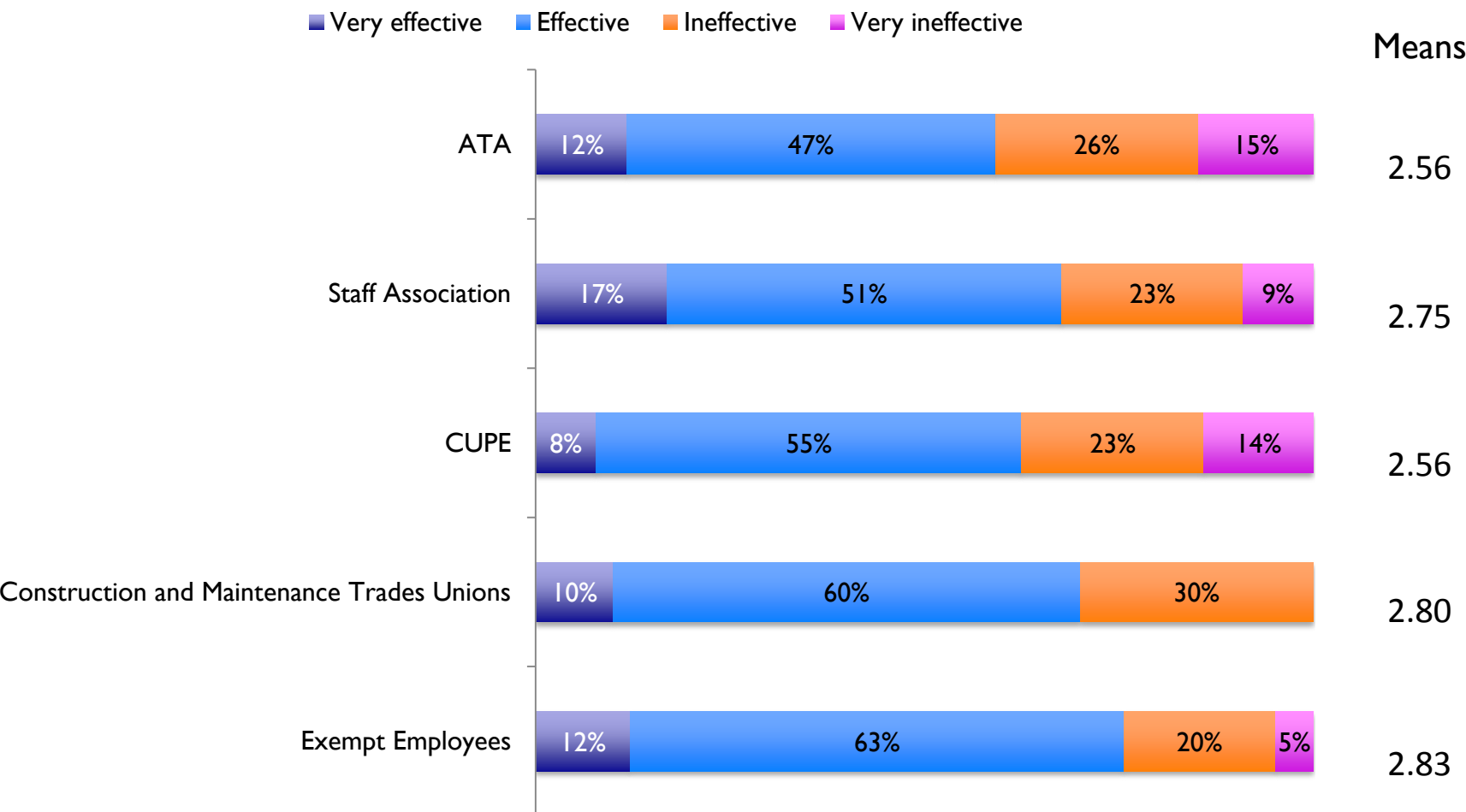
Learning Updates (weekly e-news)



Link Online (e-news sent every two weeks)

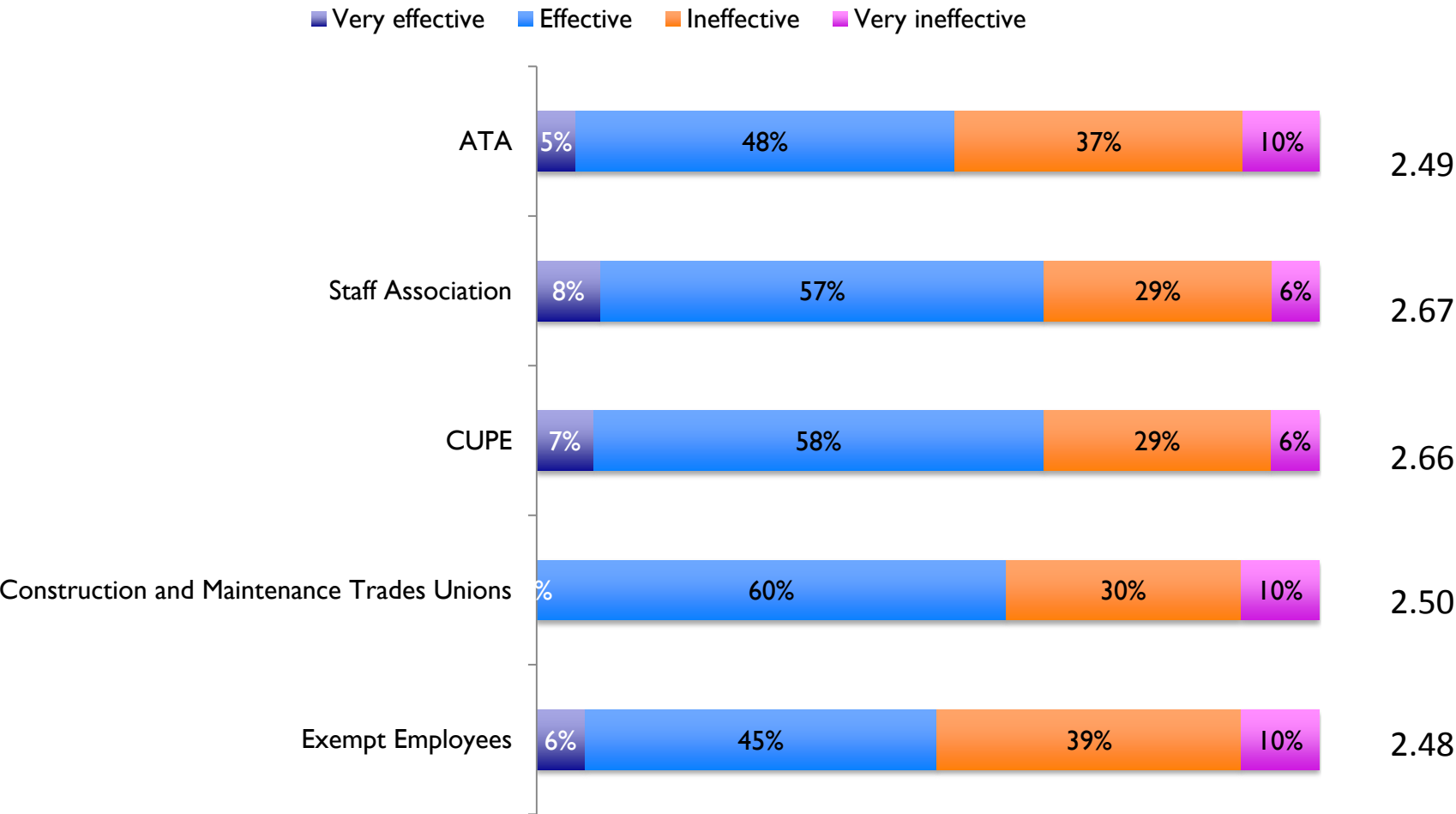


Monthly administrative meetings

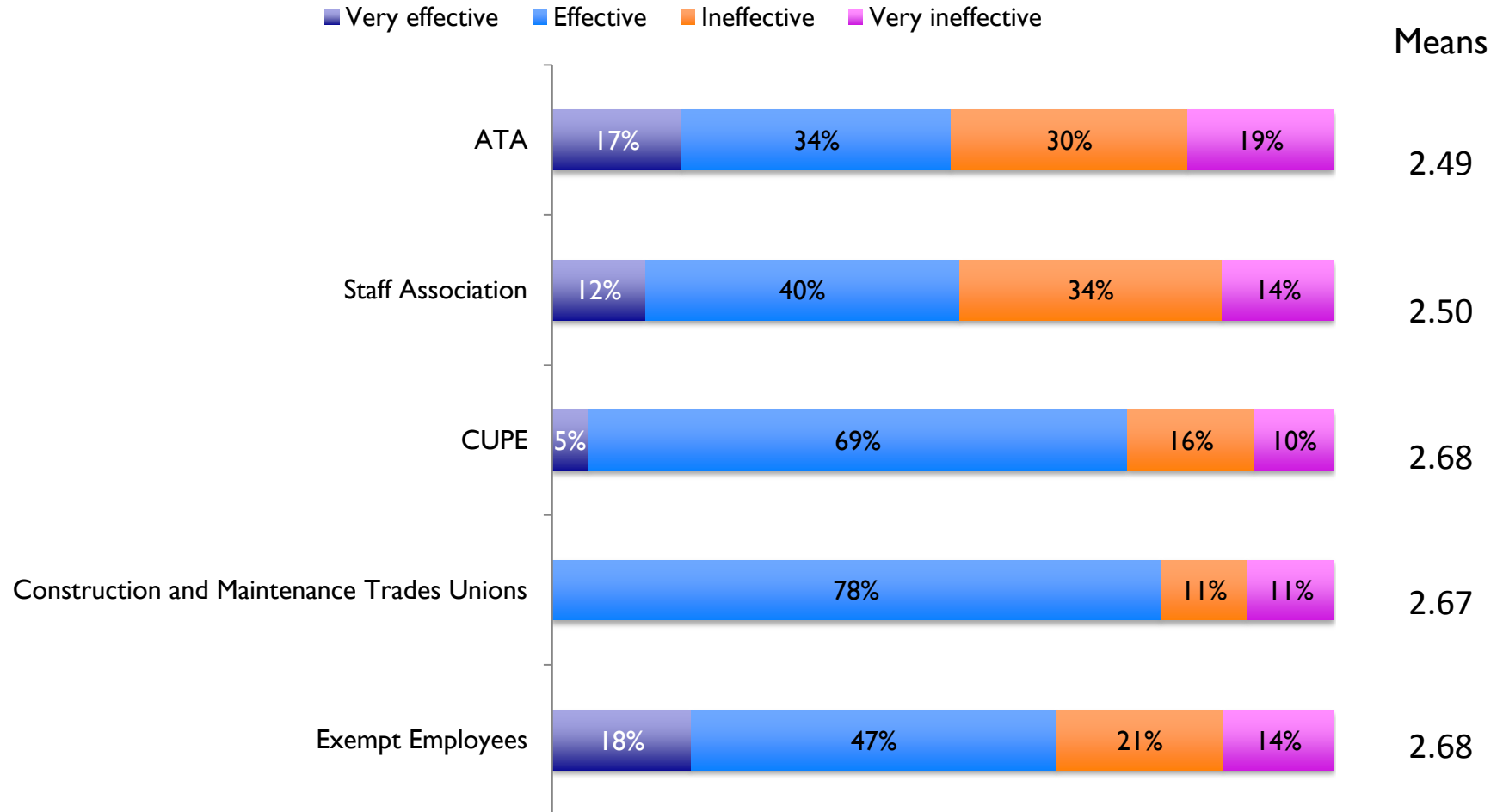


Public website

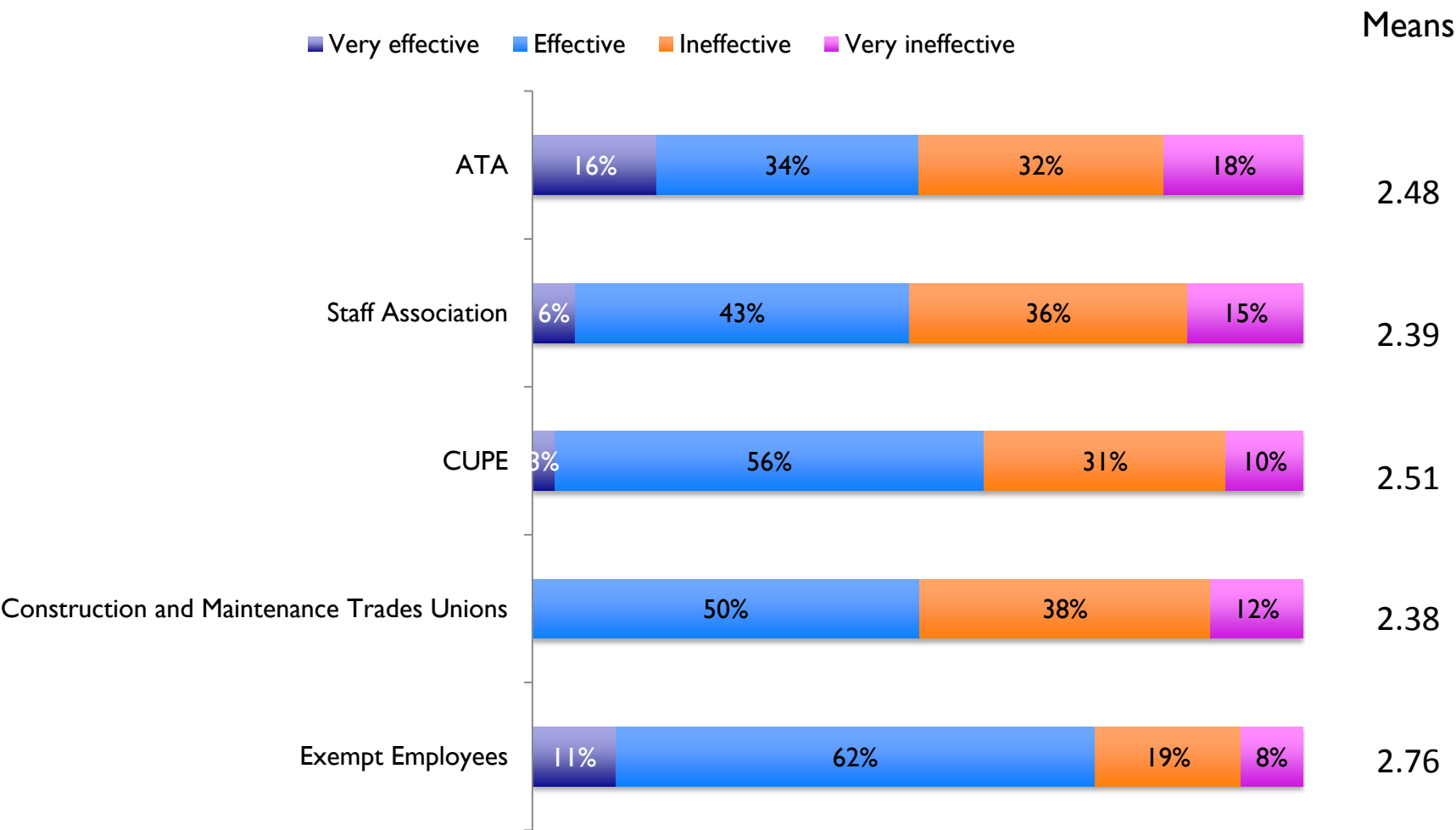
Means



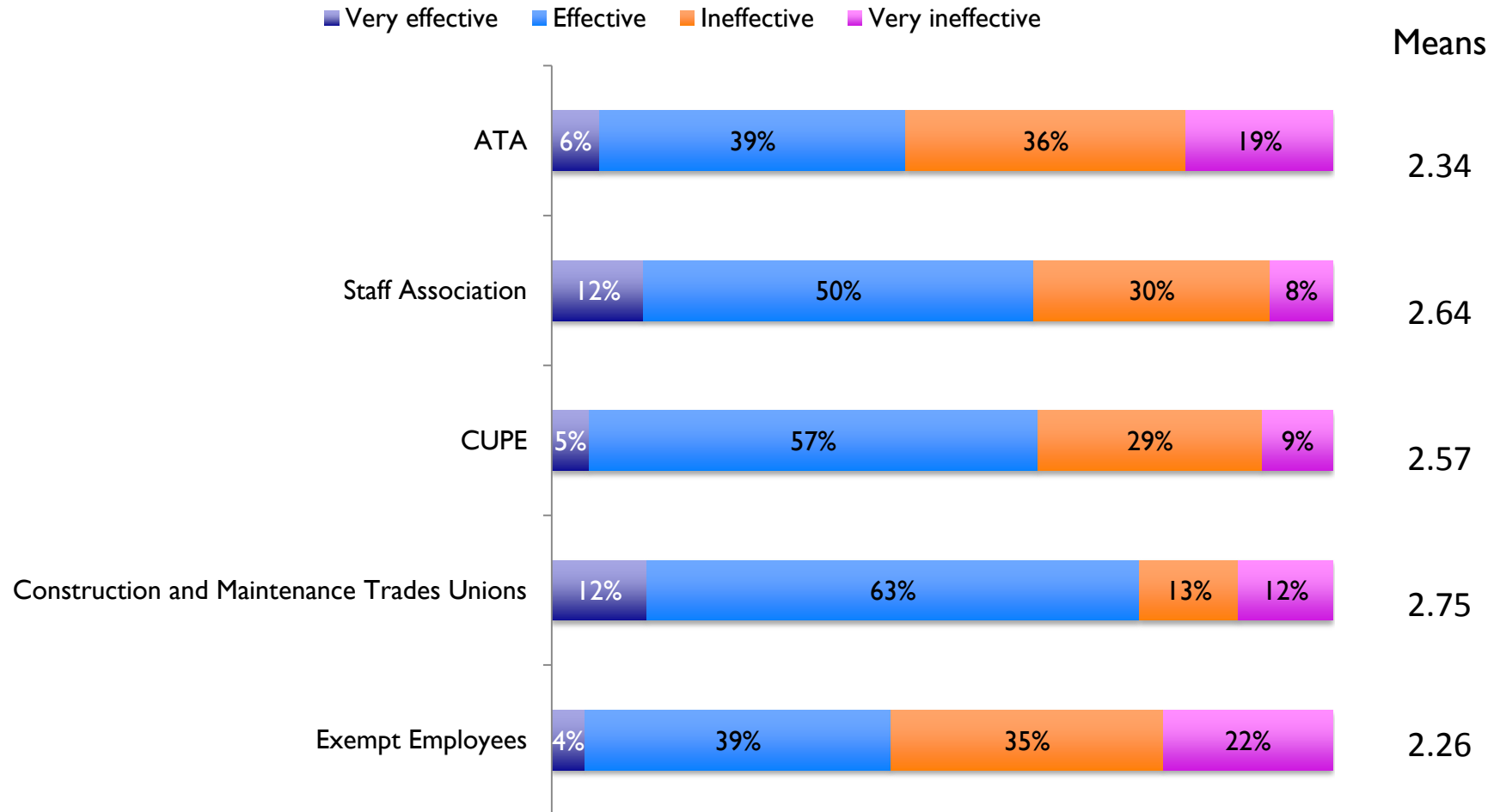
Area leadership meetings



System leadership meetings



Administrator's Monthly (e-news & Staff Insite page)



Simplify the location of information

Employees do appreciate the various ways in which they can obtain information from the CBE. However, many believe that there are far too many places to look for information. A streamlined approach would be beneficial.

“Have a central place that has only up to date information and forms - where I can count on the current information being there - old information is removed and replaced.” Employee

“It is not that these methods are necessarily ineffective. They need to be centralized as a one stop shop to honour and respect the time pressures employees feel and the way they want to commit to their work.” Employee

“It needs to be concise and focused in one place. We have to go to seemingly a million different places to collect the information. It needs to be more centralized.” Employee

Key findings

Forms of communication that directly connect with employees (i.e., email and face-to-face meetings within the school/Area/service unit) are the most effective way to inform individuals about decisions that will impact them.

As communication becomes more distant and system-based, its effectiveness for employees declines.

- This is due, in large part, to the fact that a large majority of staff feel excluded from system-level communication and information.

The approach of having a school/Area/service unit representative attend meetings and then relay information back to other staff is not always effective. Many employees indicated they are not well informed about the outcomes of meetings.

“What would be effective is if my principal brought the information back to the school that was disseminated at their meetings. We have a disconnect.” Employee

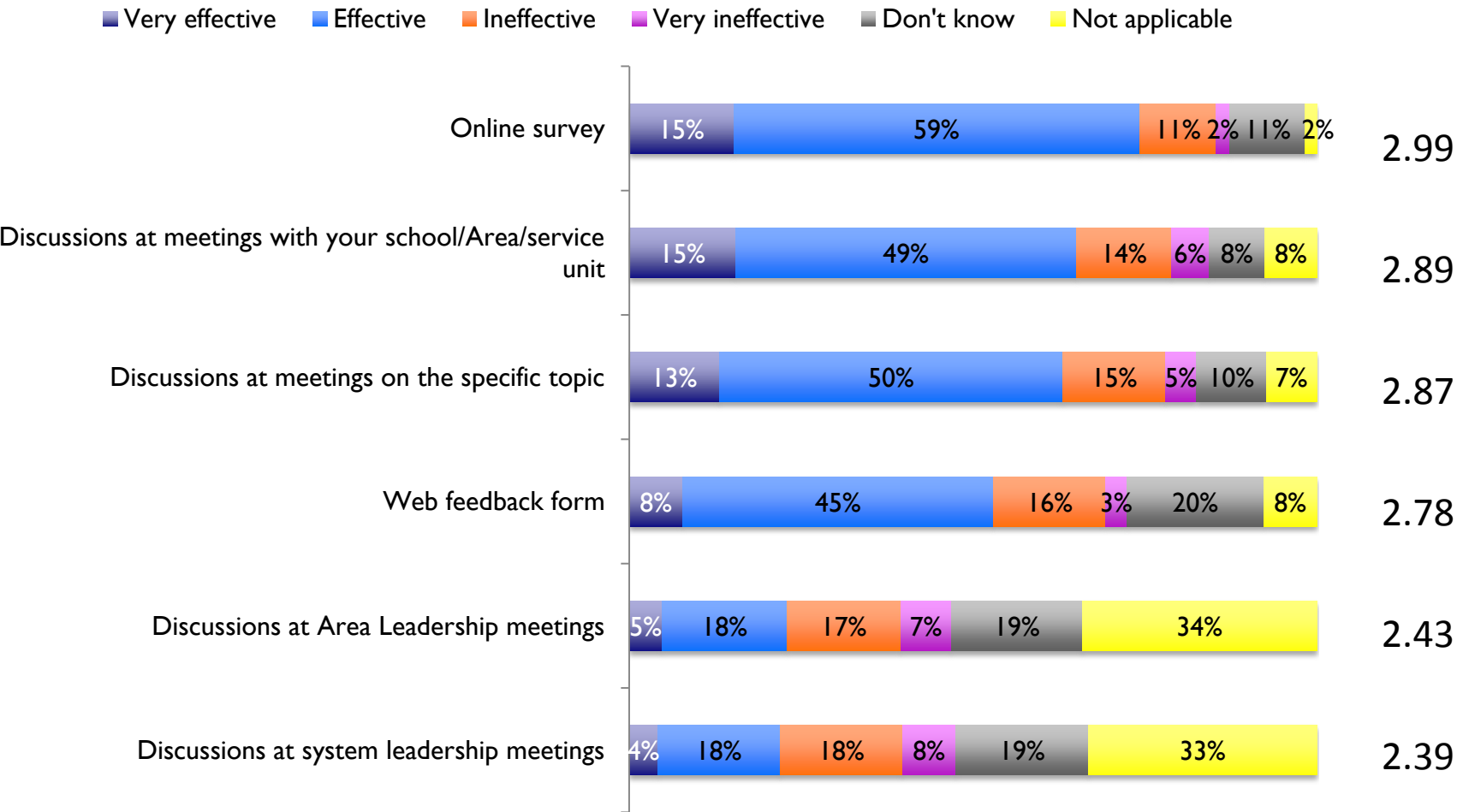
EFFECTIVE METHODS TO GATHER FEEDBACK AND OPINIONS

“The problem does not seem to be the methodology of GATHERING input, but rather the follow-up beyond that point and the observation that little/nothing seems to be done with the input that is provided.” Employee

“I don't know that we have a problem gathering feedback from school based people - it is getting over the widely held impression that one's feedback is not taken into account that is the problem. Many school-based people feel that in the past input has been gathered but not considered.” Employee

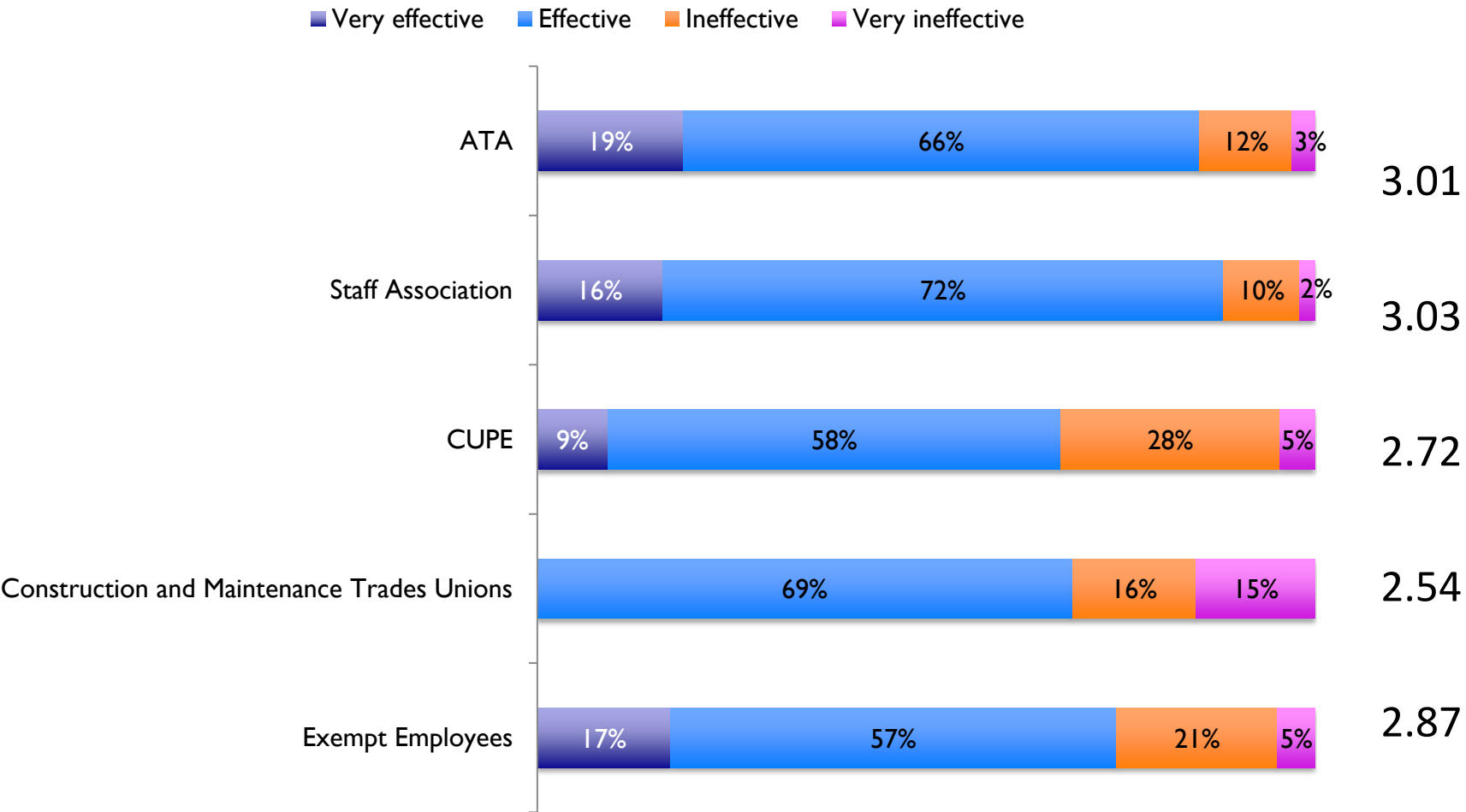
Effective methods for gathering feedback

Means



Online survey

Means



Online surveys

The efficiency of online surveys is very attractive to employees who are already exceptionally busy.

“Surveys are highly effective to gather concise data from high quantities of people. I find this method far superior to get a general understanding. More specifics that come from the survey can then be handled with meetings/ committees focused on the areas which require resolutions.”

Employee

“Online anonymous surveys would probably be the most efficient and effective way to gather open and honest opinion.”

Employee

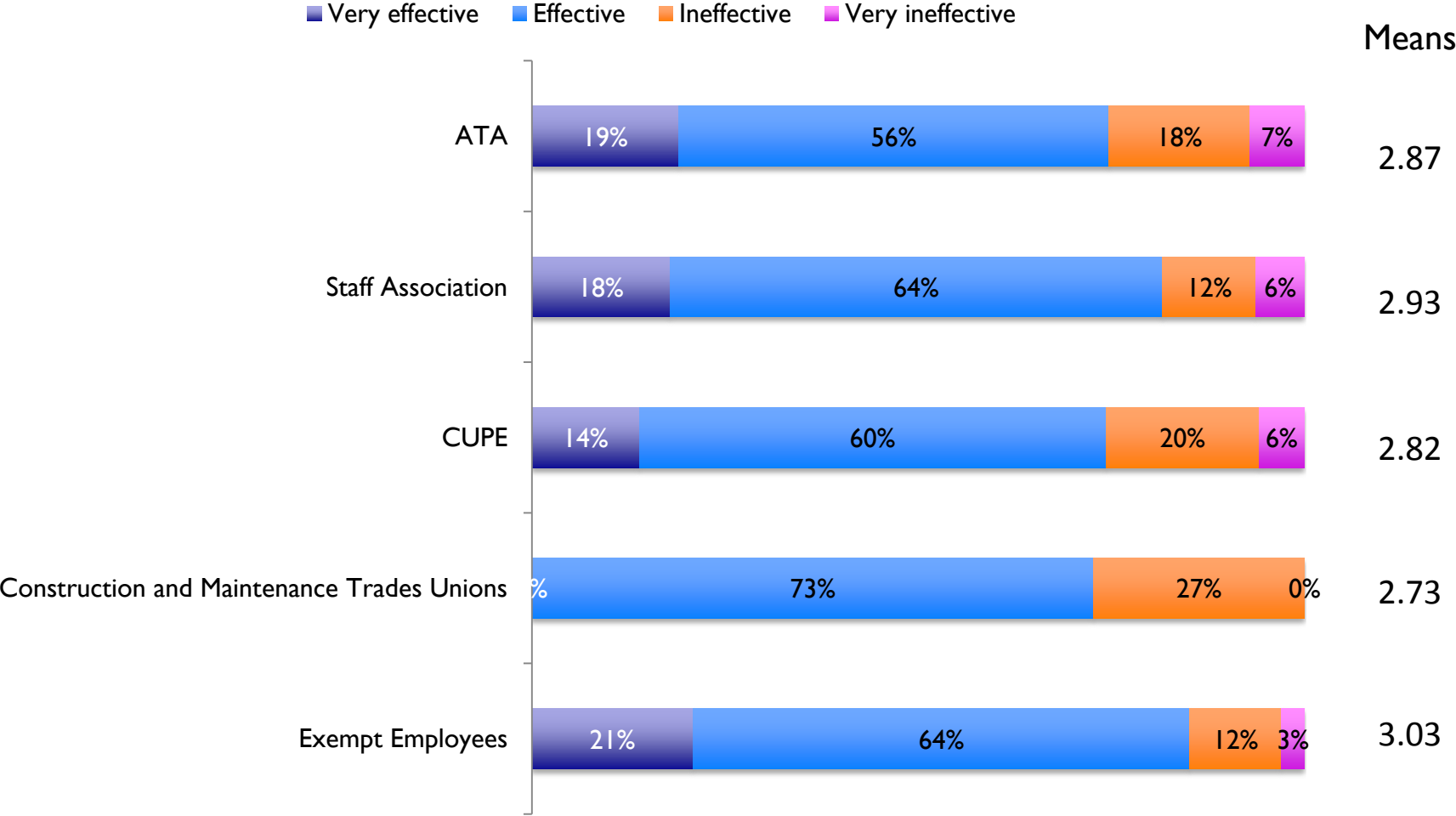
Online surveys

Online surveys that allow for confidentiality and anonymity are the most preferred options.

“At least in a survey I am free to be open and honest about my opinions, because of the relative anonymity and nobody to 'compete' with as described above in meeting situations. I don't mind if my opinion is not shared by the rest of the survey takers, because I don't even know what else is being said.”
Employee

“Right now I don't feel SAFE speaking up if my opinions go against the current theories being used by the CBE.”
Employee

Discussions at meetings with your school/Area/service unit



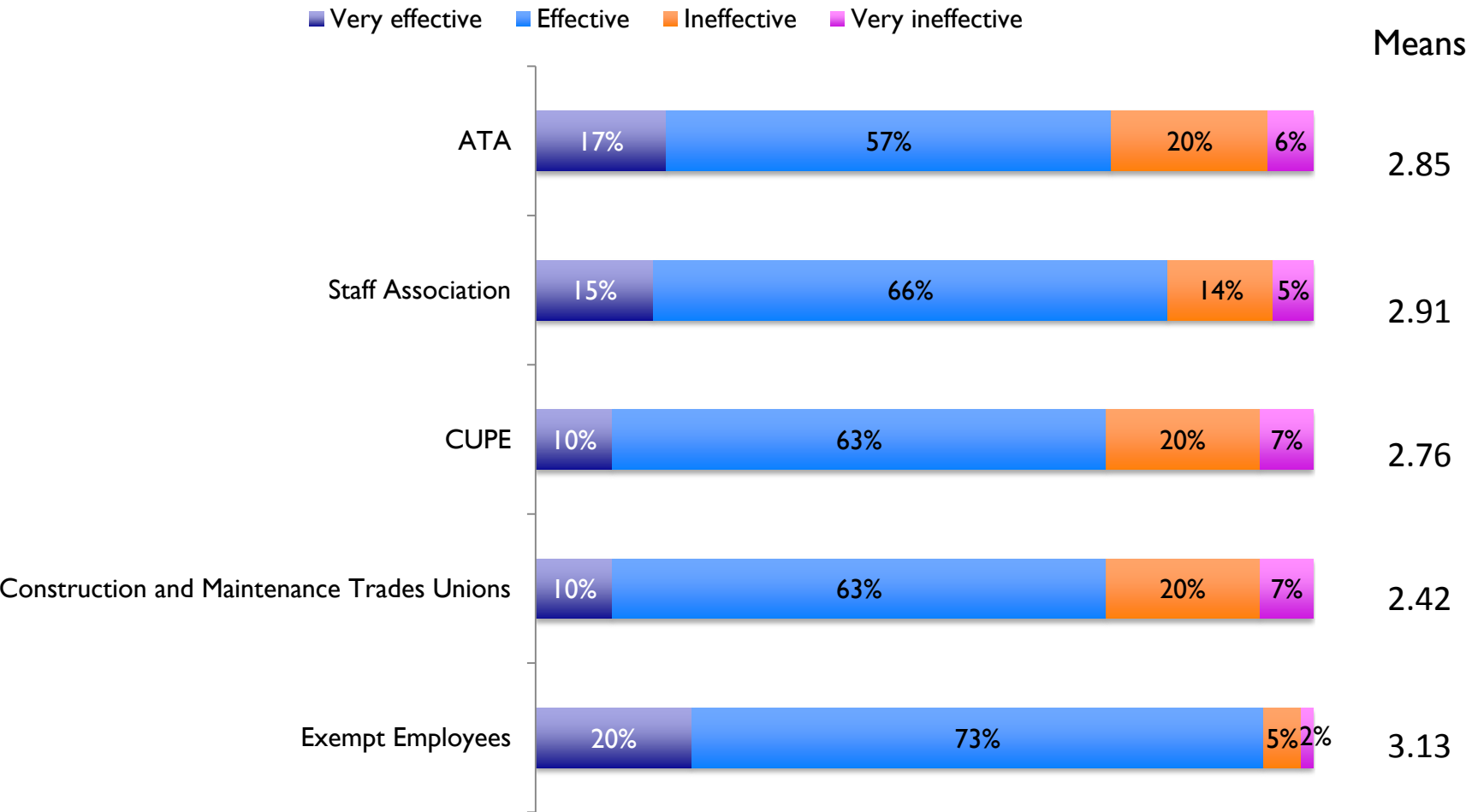
Discussions at meetings with your service unit

Open dialogue allows people to feel like they have been heard, and also allows for questions to be asked and addressed in real time.

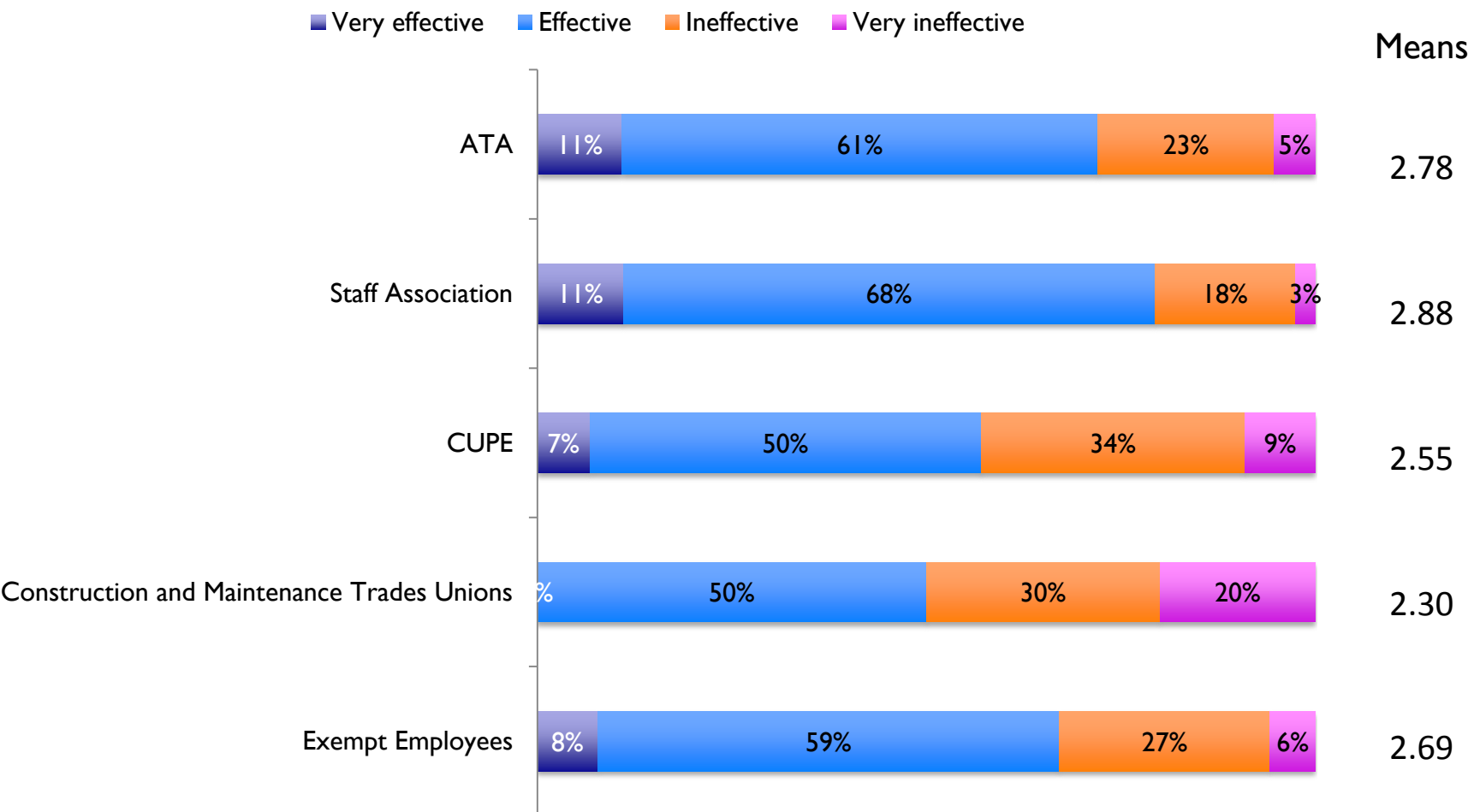
“Meetings in person where you can have a discussion and get your point across seem to be the most effective because at least one feels like they have been heard.”
Employee

“The best way to get feedback from school staff is face to face. At least that way we can feel like we were heard. An online survey is a little impersonal.”
Employee

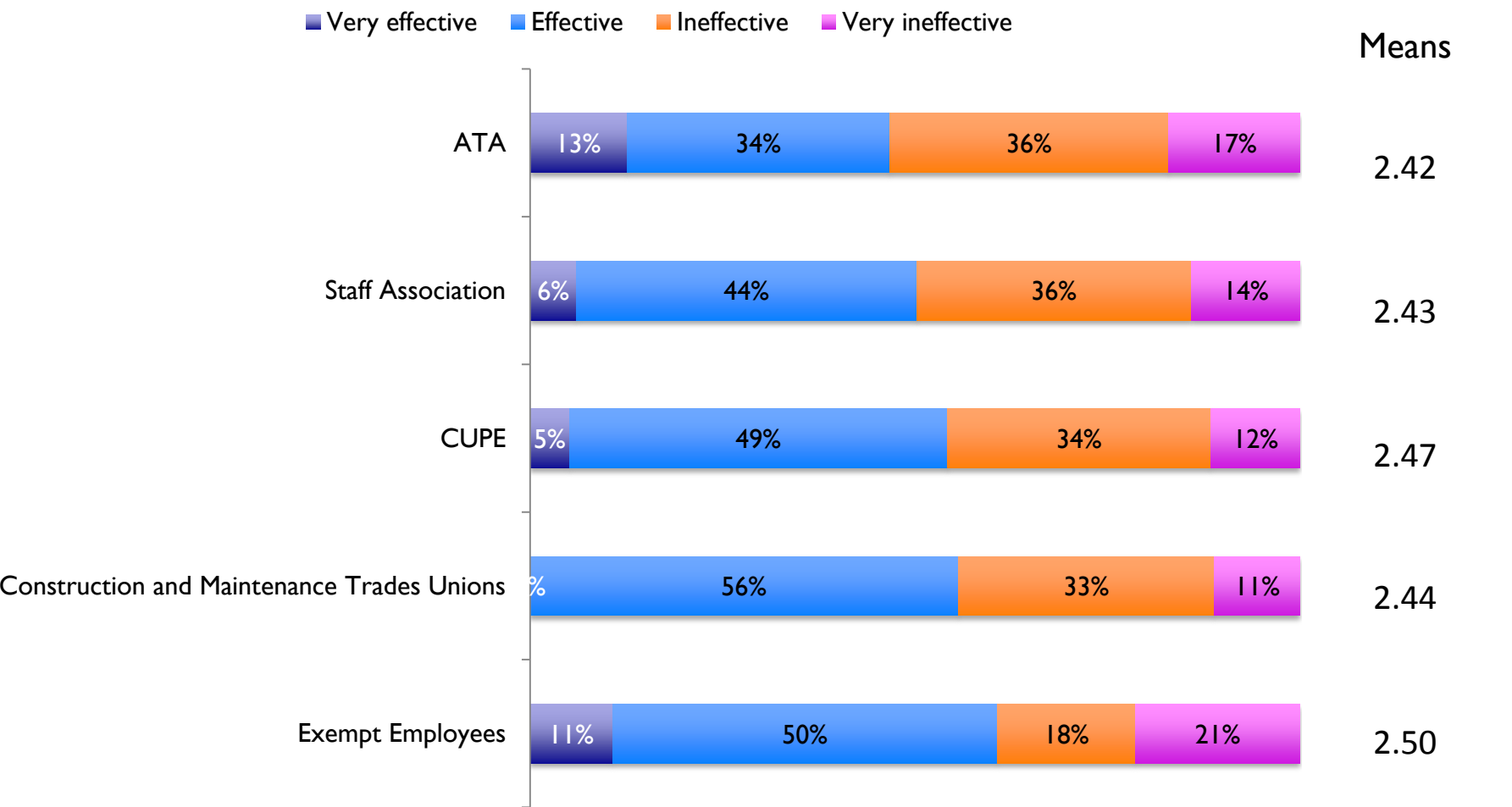
Discussions at meetings on the specific topic



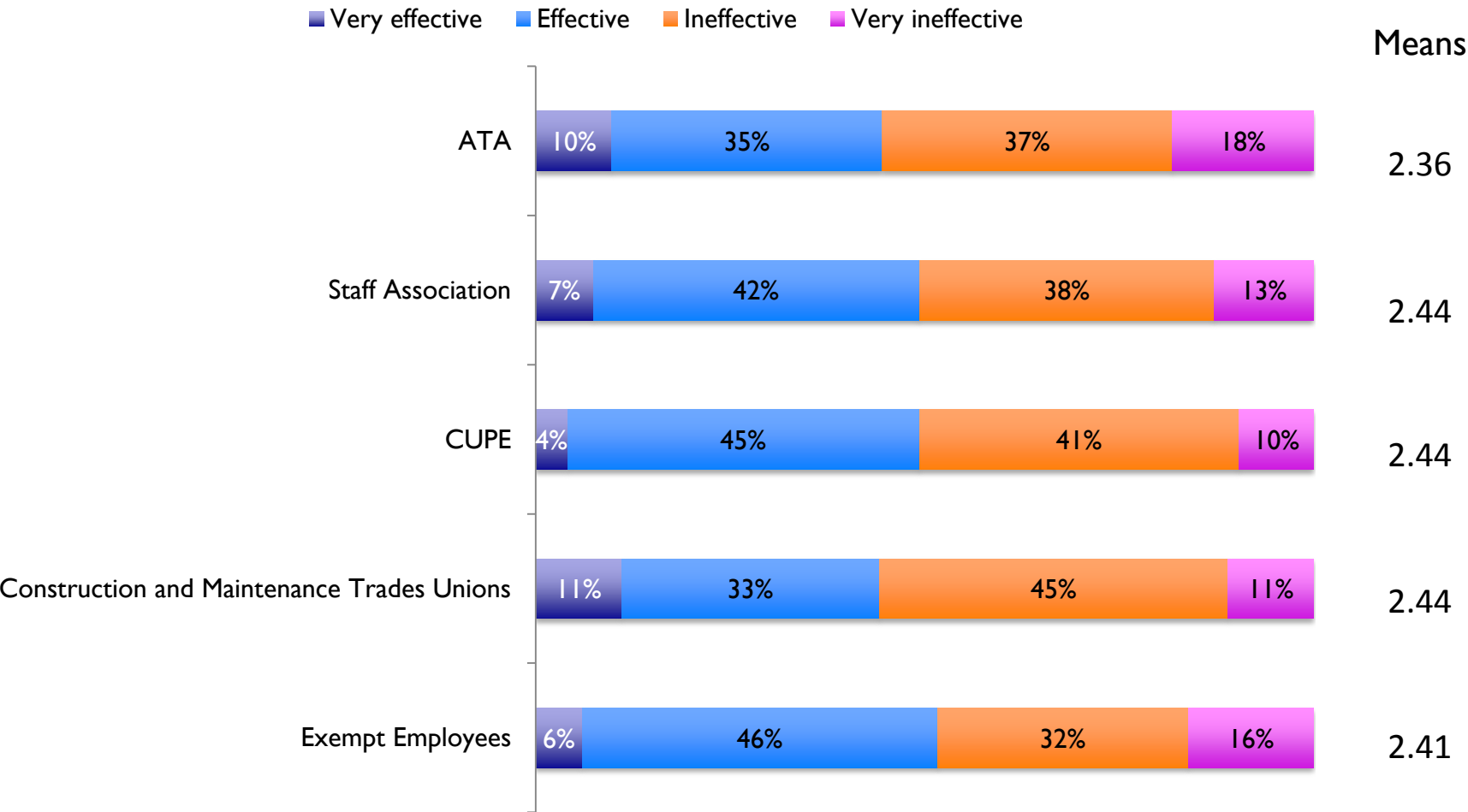
Web feedback form



Discussions at Area Leadership meetings



Discussions at system leadership meetings



Multiple methods

Utilizing several forms of engagement, the CBE can ensure that all employees have an opportunity to participate in the engagement process.

“Provide more opportunity to do so (provide feedback) in multiple ways. It isn't always easy to make it to scheduled meetings with other work demands. Just as we do for students, choose multiple modes and means to gather data. Sometimes a meeting works for some, while a survey may be preferred by others. Also, provide enough time for feedback. Tight timelines don't always encourage participation.” Employee

Be inclusive

The CBE needs to include the voice of all employees (when applicable). Many employees feel they are unaware of the decisions being made.

“Support staff are not included in most of these areas of engagement.” Employee

“I find that most requests for feedback and opinions are geared towards teaching staff. I feel that Education Assistants, as front-line staff working with students, have many things to offer in supporting students in finding their success.”

Employee

“I'd like to see Facility operators more involved at projects beginning... too often things are done without consulting us.”

Employee

We, Lunchroom Supervisors are the last ones to know anything. There are very little opportunities to express our thoughts, feelings, and opinions.”

Employee

Opportunities are there, but skepticism exists

Employees do acknowledge that there are several avenues through which they can provide their feedback and opinions.

Their concerns relate to their opinions not being heard.

“I feel our opinions are being requested but I do not feel they are considered. Nothing seems to change based on our input.”

Employee

“I think the CBE asks for input. However it appears confusing as to how honest the process is.”

Employee

“I feel I have plenty of opportunity to provide feedback. I feel, however, my feedback is rarely taken into consideration.”

Employee

Key findings

Online surveys are the most effective for gathering input from employees.

- This is especially true when surveys are short, focused, anonymous, and can be completed when the participant desires.

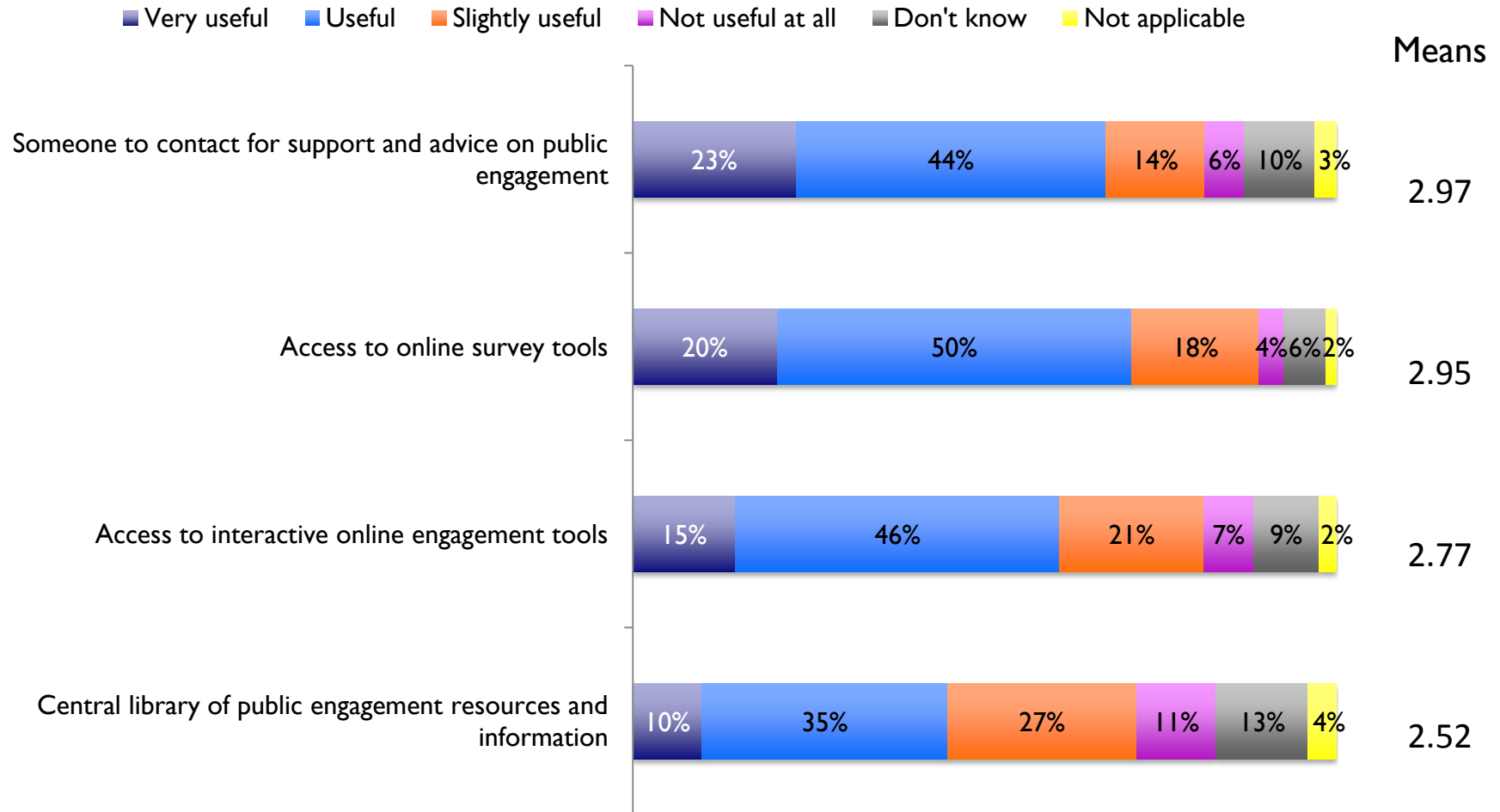
When issues are considered to be “more important,” employees want to provide their feedback during face-to-face meetings where question and concerns can be addressed immediately.

Many employees feel that their feedback is largely overlooked by the CBE and that engagement is not sincere.

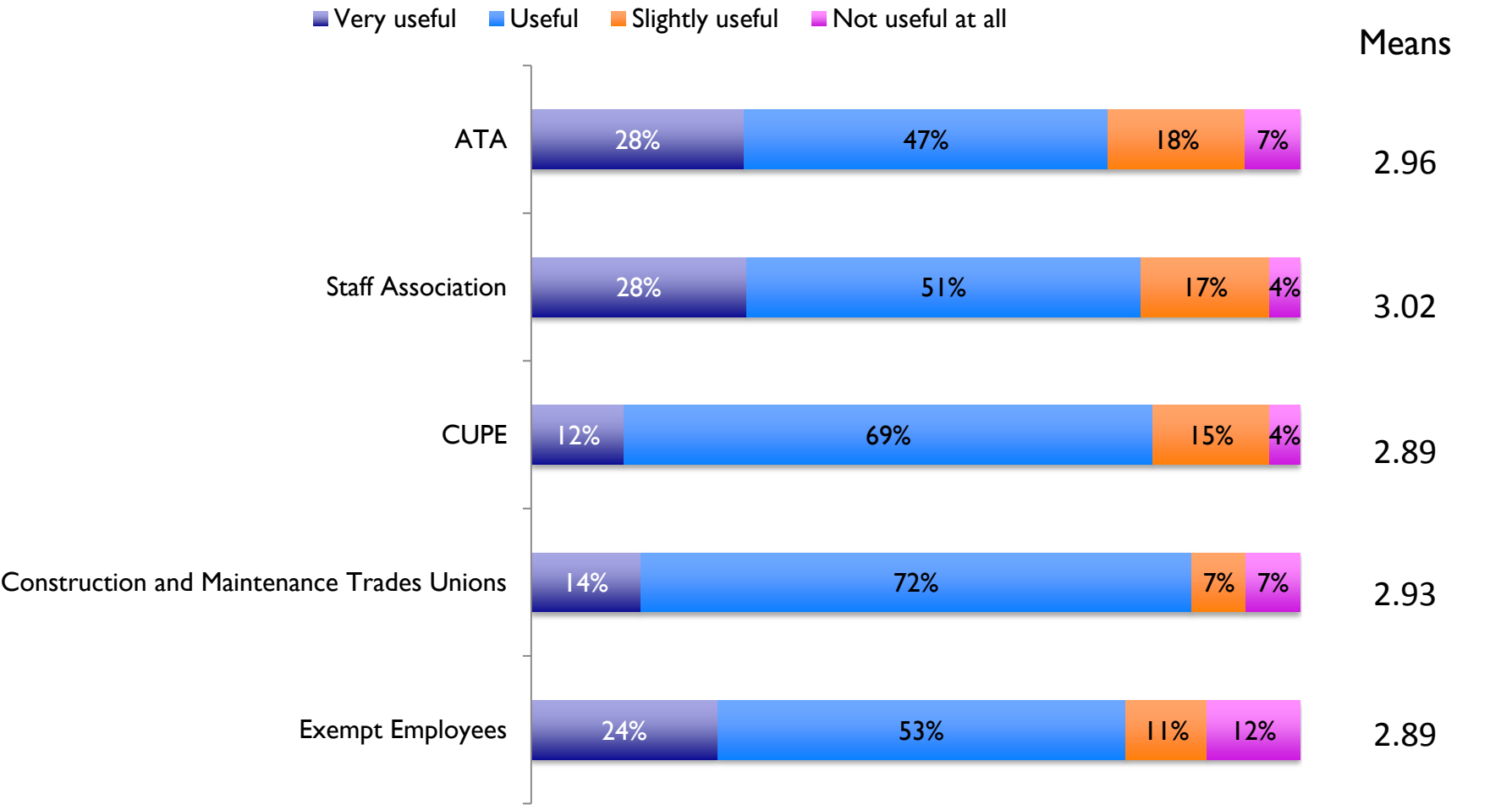
“I feel like my opinion is not valued. We are often asked for our opinions, but it feels more like it is an exercise to say we were asked, but it falls on deaf ears.” Employee

IMPORTANT TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO GATHER INFORMATION

Important tools and resources to gather information



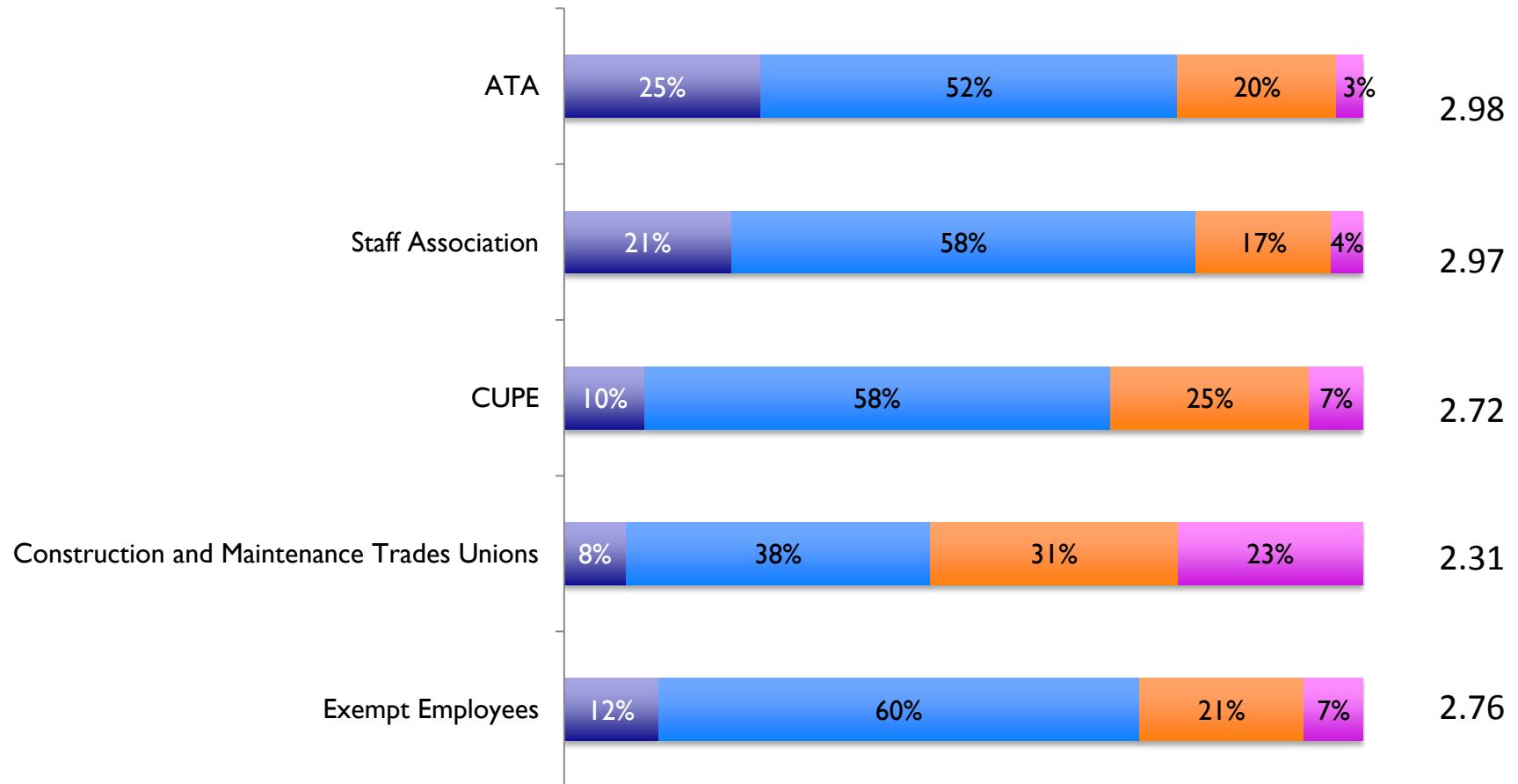
Someone to contact for support and advice on public engagement



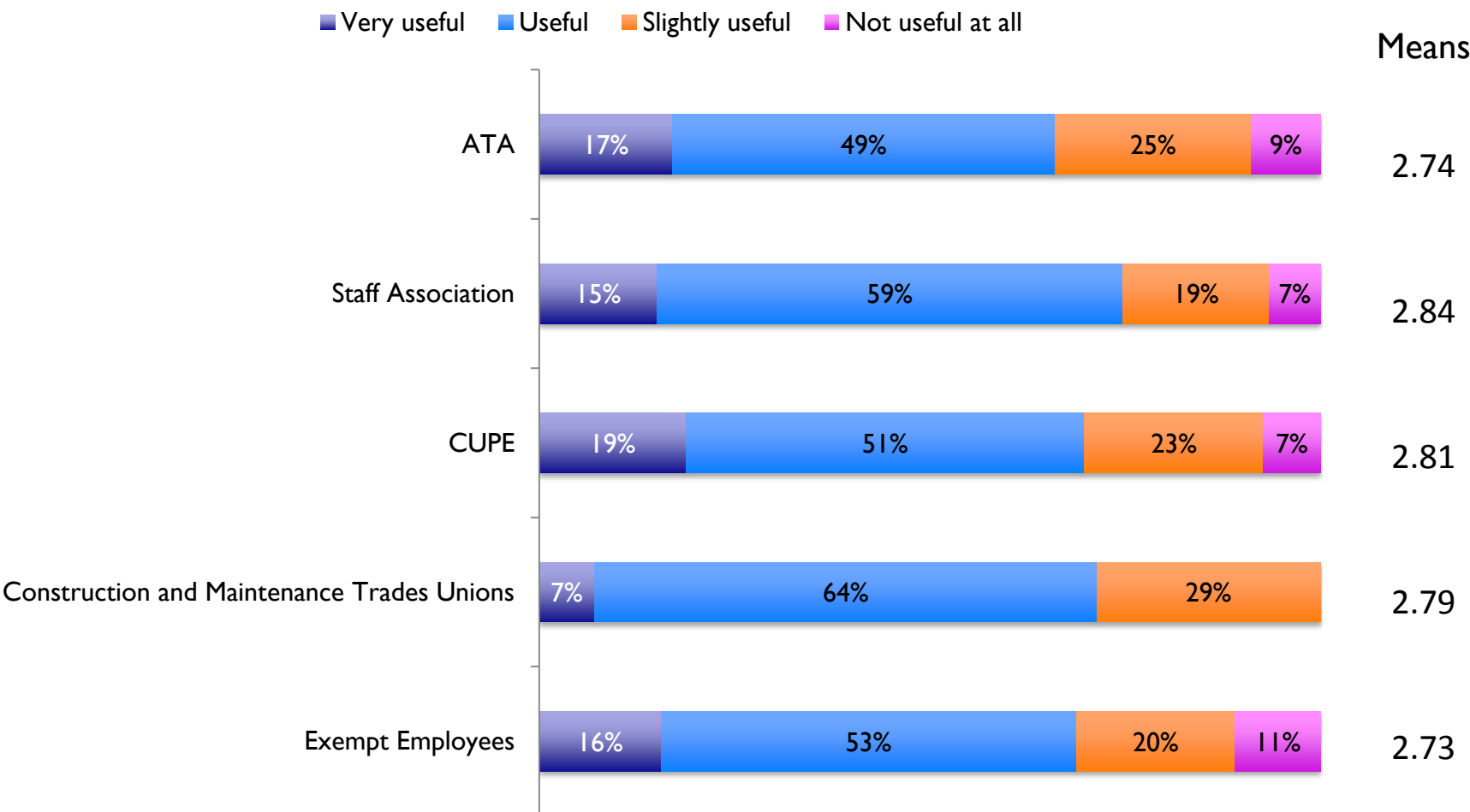
Access to online survey tools

■ Very useful ■ Useful ■ Slightly useful ■ Not useful at all

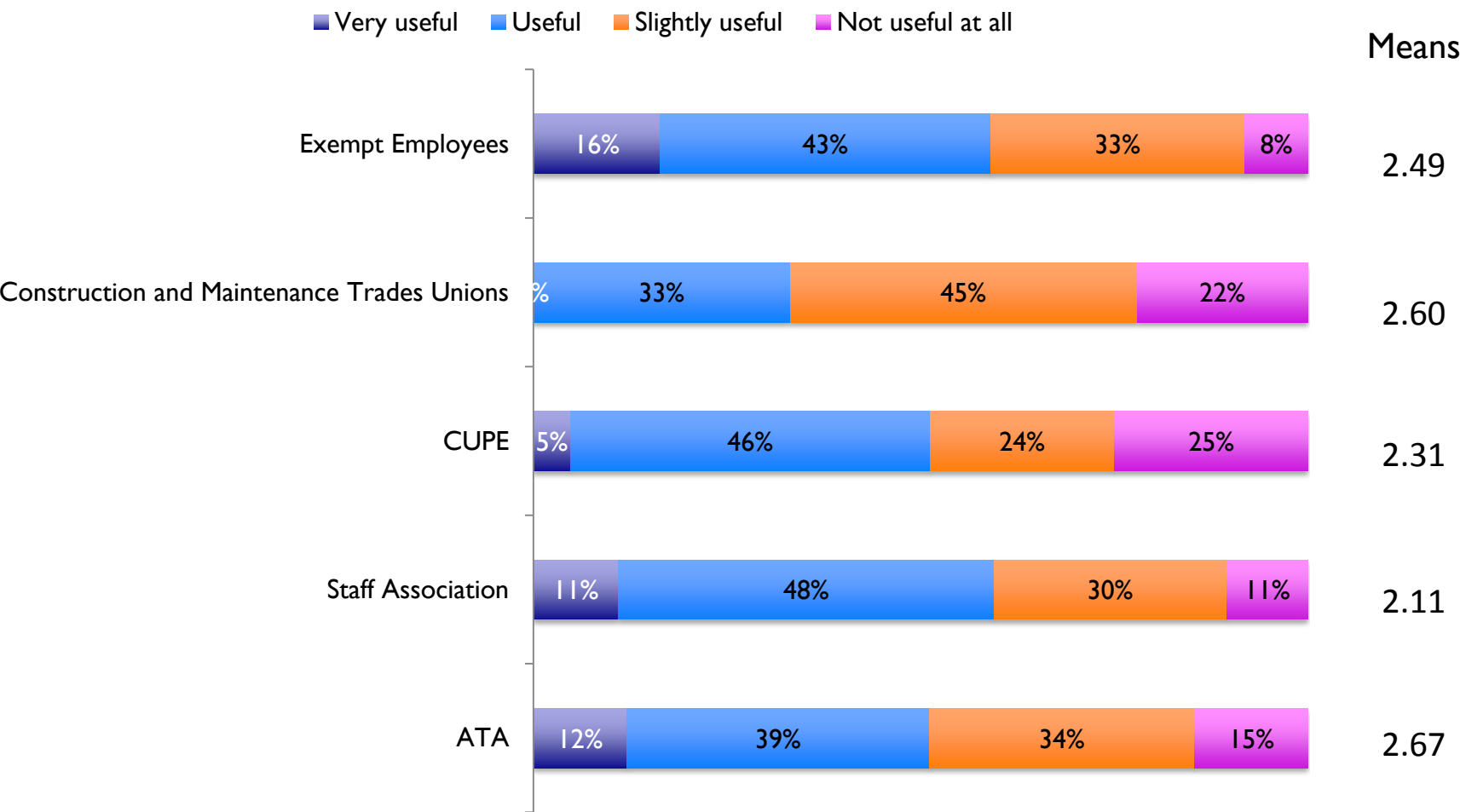
Means



Access to interactive online engagement tools



Central library of public engagement resources and information



Key findings

It is important for employees to feel connected and engaged.

- Direct communication with an individual is the strongest method for gathering information.
- Conversations allow for more detailed information, and questions can be addressed directly.

Online survey tools are effective for gathering information, but they do have a level of ambiguity that people don't always appreciate.

- Surveys are most effective for topics and issues that are easy to understand.

SCHOOL AND SYSTEM-BASED ENGAGEMENT

Many have not been asked for their feedback

Many employees are more than willing to provide their thoughts and opinions on issues. However, a large majority note that they have never been asked by the CBE to provide their input, especially on system initiatives.

“At a system level . . . none. At an Area level . . . none. At a school level, there have been a few instances where advice and opinions were sought regarding our marginalized students.”
Employee

“I'm expected to come to work each day and do my job but I have not been asked for my opinions or feedback on anything that impacts my work.”
Employee

In 20+ years, I have NEVER been consulted in a meaningful way about issues that affect my work.”
Employee

Engagement needs to be authentic

A common perception exists that, when employees are given the opportunity to provide their thoughts and feedback, decisions were already been made prior to engagement.

“I have attended many sessions. It is well known that the CBE already has the solution/answer, but goes through the motions to appear as if public opinion matters.”
Employee

“Like this survey, you want to think you are including the teachers, but really it has only ever been a case of decisions being made without the input of the people who make everything in the school happen.”
Employee

Genuine engagement takes place in the school

Employees do feel that they have the opportunity to provide feedback and opinions at the school level, but it does not extend beyond this.

“Very satisfied with input regarding decision making at a school level, not so much at a system level.”
Employee

“At the school level, I have been consulted on many things. Above that level, nothing.”
Employee

“I am always consulted at the school level, but hardly ever consulted at the system-level.”
Employee

TOPICS TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON

Topics employees want to provide feedback on

The classroom is the primary focus for all employees. They want to be involved in decisions that impact classrooms, learning, and students.

“Anything that affects student learning conditions or directly impacts students in my classroom.”
Employee

“Decisions and initiatives that directly impact our school and teaching and learning.”
Employee

“Class size, support for special needs students and ELL students.”
Employee

Additional topics to give feedback on

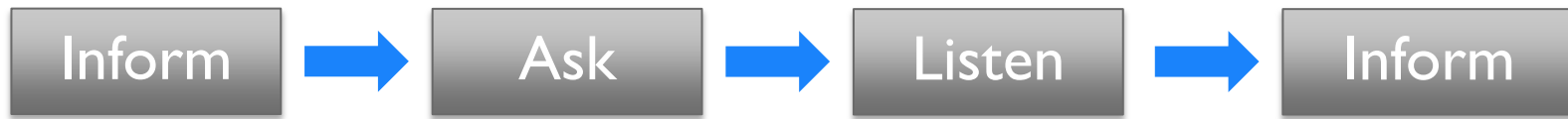
- Reporting and assessment
- Classroom settings
- Class supports
- Curriculum changes
- Professional development
- Working conditions
- Availability of resources
- Budgets (school and system)
- Timetables
- Individualized Program Plans
- School administration (i.e., individuals who run the school)
- Lunchroom supervision
- Facility maintenance

Note: Items ordered from most to least mentioned 70

WAYS TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Improving the engagement process

Engagement is viewed by many employees as a cycle of informing, asking, listening and informing.



“Give all the information about the topic before opinions and feedback are requested.”

Employee

“Ask me at all. This is the first time I've ever been asked about any system level initiative in 9 years.”

Employee

“Listen to us when you do ask for our opinions rather than asking just for the sake of saying you consulted us.”

Employee

“By not only asking us for opinions and feedback, but by getting back to us on HOW our opinions and feedback have directly affected change.”

Employee

Following the process, share the results

There is a system-wide perception that decisions are already made prior to engagement. This perception is strengthened by the fact that the CBE does not share the results of engagement with them.

Sharing the results and analysis with employees will strengthen their trust in the decisions that are made, even if they disagree with them.

“Provide data and information to support decisions that are made so if my ideas did not appear to be acknowledged I would understand why not.” Employee

Feeling valued

For employees to fully commit to the engagement process they need to feel valued during the engagement process.

“If I felt like my opinion was actually valued, I would want to be involved.
But I don't have time for meaningless exercises that fall on deaf ears.”
Employee

“Make all CBE workers feel that they matter.”
Employee

THANK YOU