



ADCH

Association of Dogs and Cats Homes

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Volunteer Experience Survey

2023 Assessor Pilot

Full Report on Findings - Published 5th January 2024



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Introduction

This Volunteer Engagement survey represents a new area of research for the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH), looking into the individual experience and evaluation of, and motivations for volunteering at our charity.

The information shared in this report will help ADCH shape our volunteering strategy in 2024. Brief interpretation of the data can be found in this report, but more comprehensive data analysis will be carried out when relevant by the staff team.

Please be aware that this report is for internal use only.

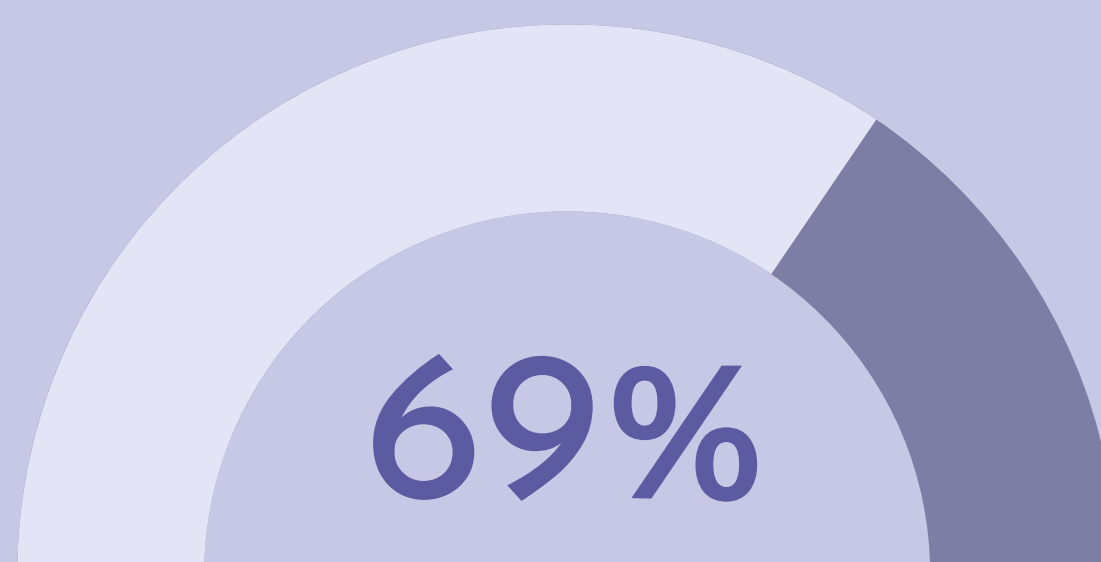
Background

This survey was carried out as a pilot and shared with a the largest sub-set of ADCH volunteers, our Assessors. It was available for completion from the 3rd November 2023 and the 26th November 2023 via the Jotform platform online, accessible via internet browser on both desktop computers and mobile.

Questions were designed by Emily Sockett (ADCH Training and Assessment Manager) in collaboration with Rebecca Cooper (ADCH Executive Director) and Charlotte Fielder (ADCH Trustee).

Survey Return Rate:

31 surveys returned out of a total of 45 sent out.

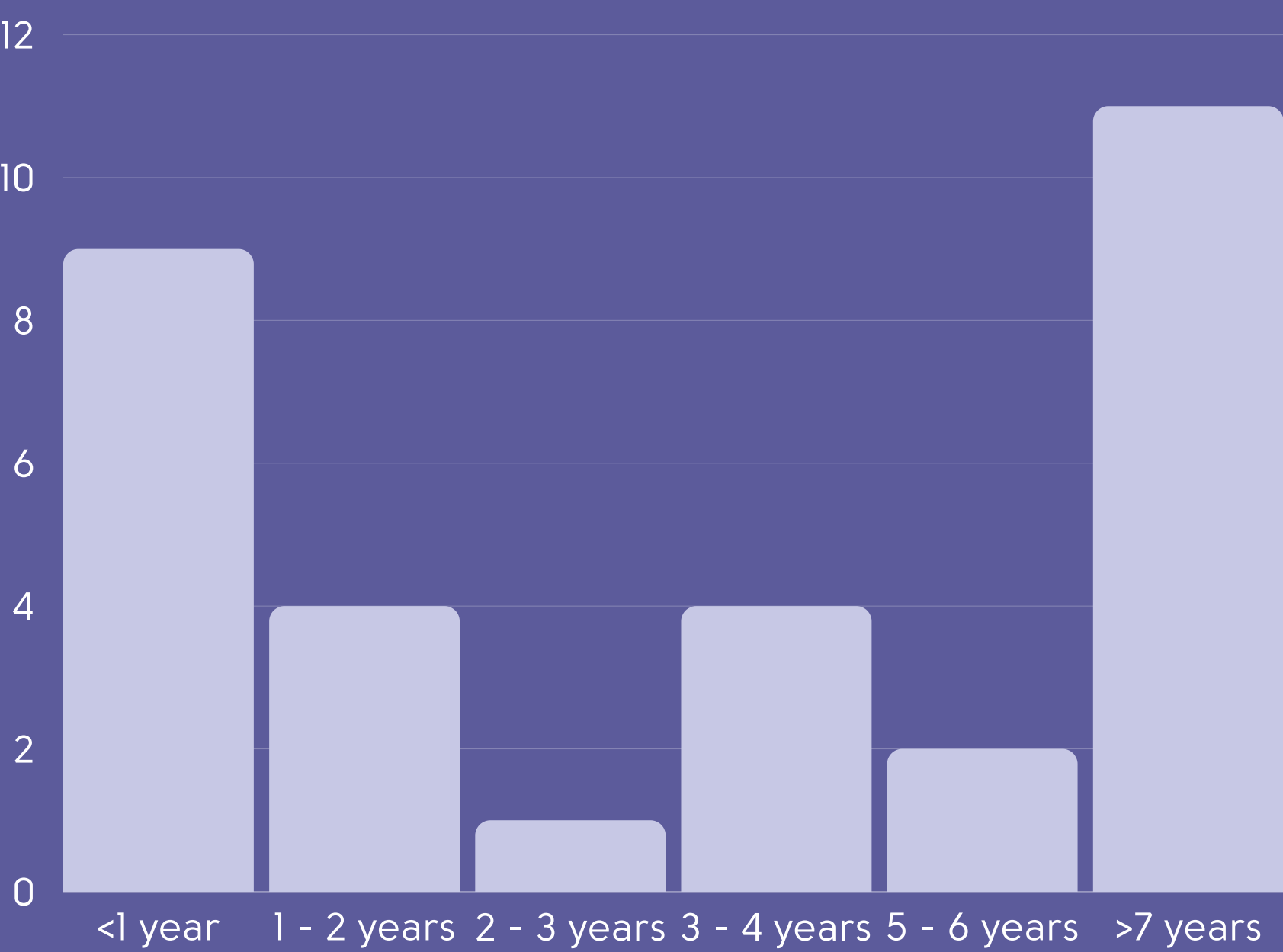


The survey was available online for three weeks. It was promoted through the Assessors' Update and respondents were encouraged to complete it via individual emails to those who had not yet responded.



Length of Service in any Volunteer Role at ADCH

Including contributions as a Trustee, Committee Member or other voluntary role.



This data is reflective of the trends in volunteer Assessor recruitment over the past ten years at ADCH.

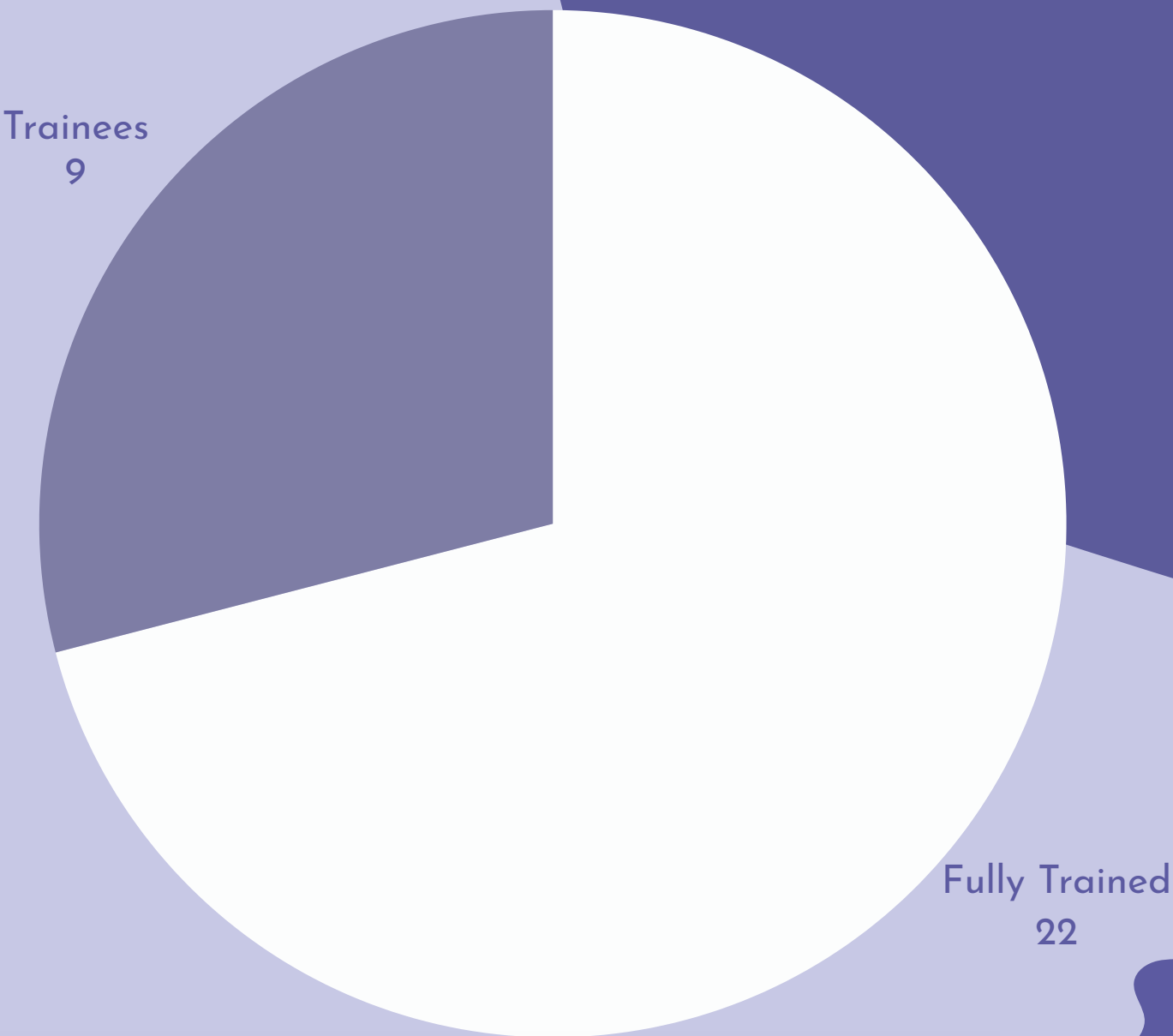
11 of the respondents were long-term volunteers, many of whom carrying out multiple voluntary roles at the charity (e.g.: Trustee and Assessor).

From 2020 - 2022 there was a dip in Assessor recruitment while assessments were paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There has been an increase in the recruitment of Assessors during 2023 as a result of the creation of the Training and Assessment Manager role.

Assessor Training Status

As a result of ADCH’s volunteer recruitment efforts during 2023, almost a third of respondents are not yet fully trained as Assessors.



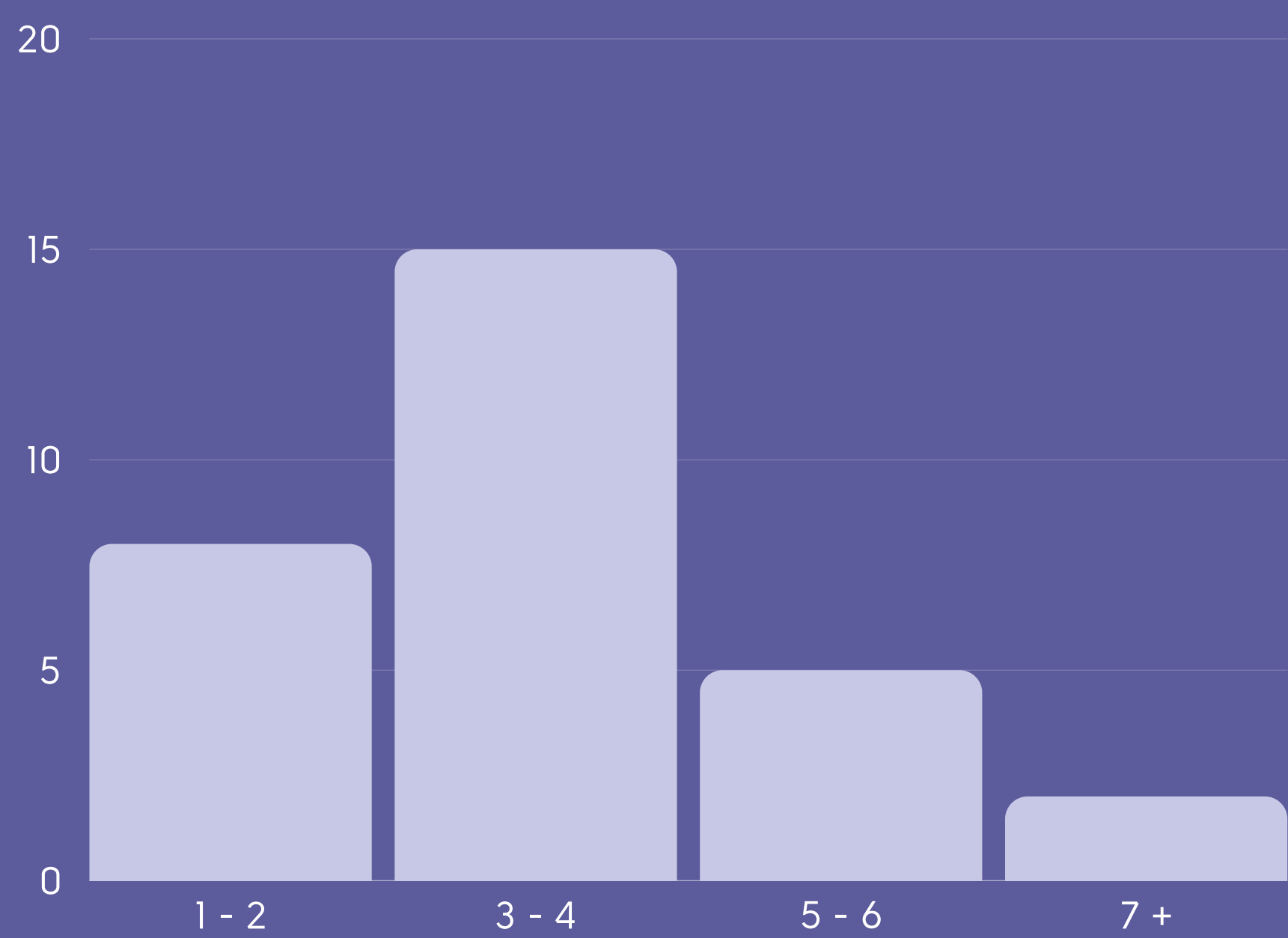


Number of Assessments Able to Carry Out Per Year

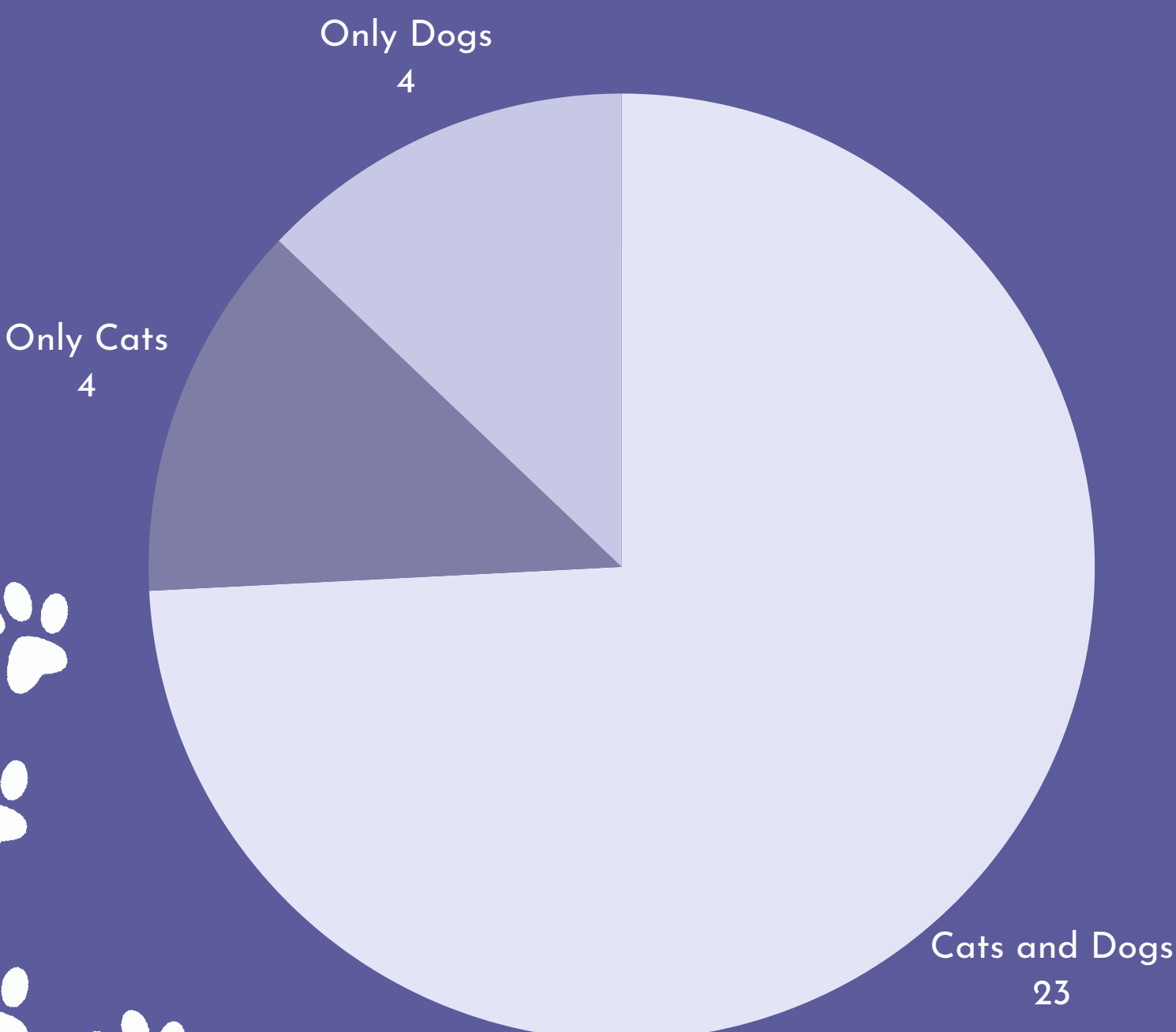
The data here is encouraging for ADCH as our projections require that (at its current size) our current volunteer Assessors must carry out between 2 and 4 assessments a year for the charity to ensure all Members requiring assessments are visited.

ADCH’s Strategy for 2024 - 2030 includes ambitious targets to extend Membership to 50% of the sector. In order to do this recruitment of additional Assessors is imperative. Alternately, increased engagement of Assessors

carrying out more assessments is possible, however, this may prove a challenge when looking at the availability of Assessors, many of whom work full-time in senior management roles.



Species Able to Assess



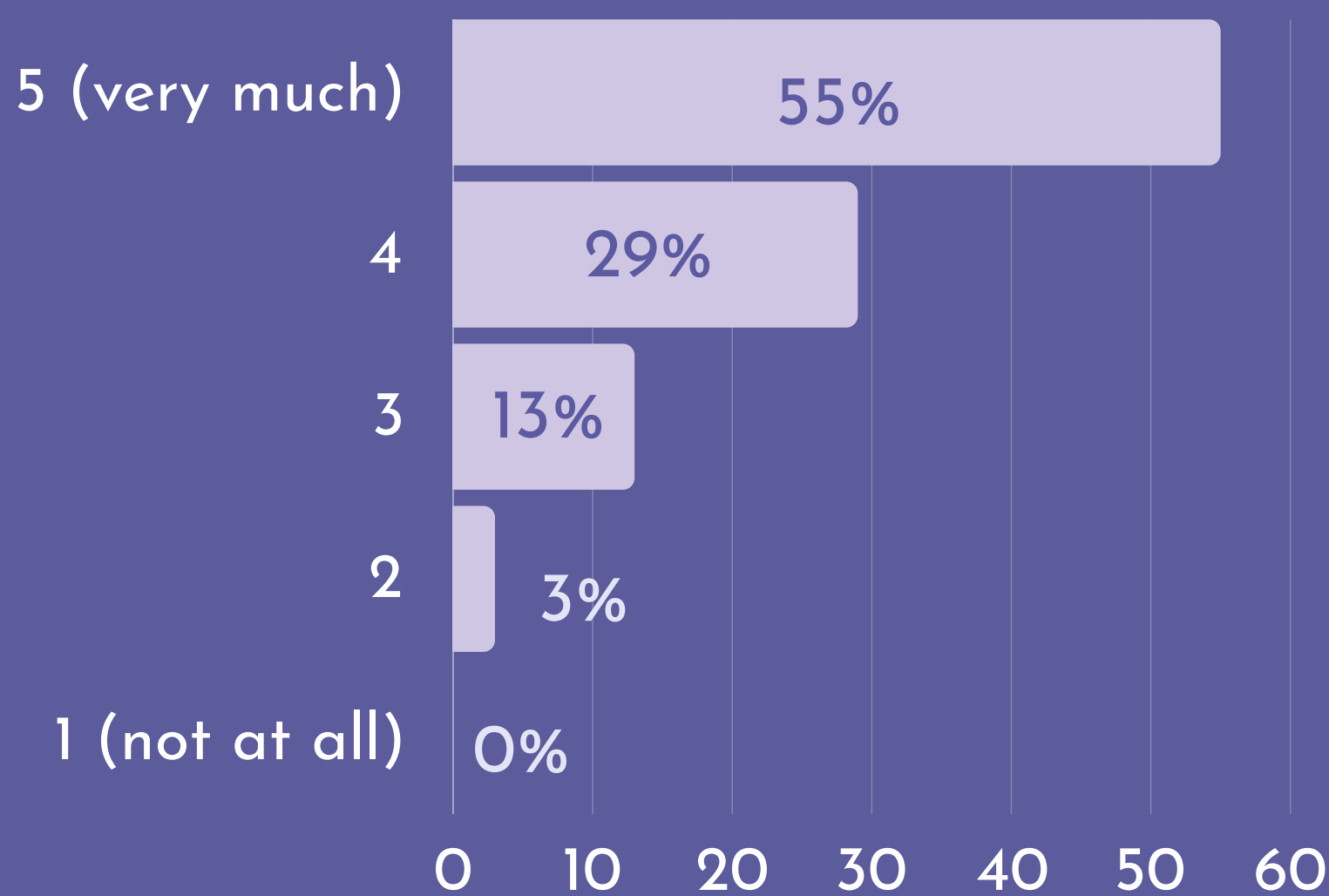
Almost 75% of Assessors are able to assess both cats and dogs, representing careful recruitment of volunteers who bring a range of knowledge and experience to the organisation.

8 species-specialists allow for expertise to be shared throughout the cohort.



Engagement Questions

How much do you enjoy volunteering as an ADCH Assessor?



“ [I] wish I had more time to help ”

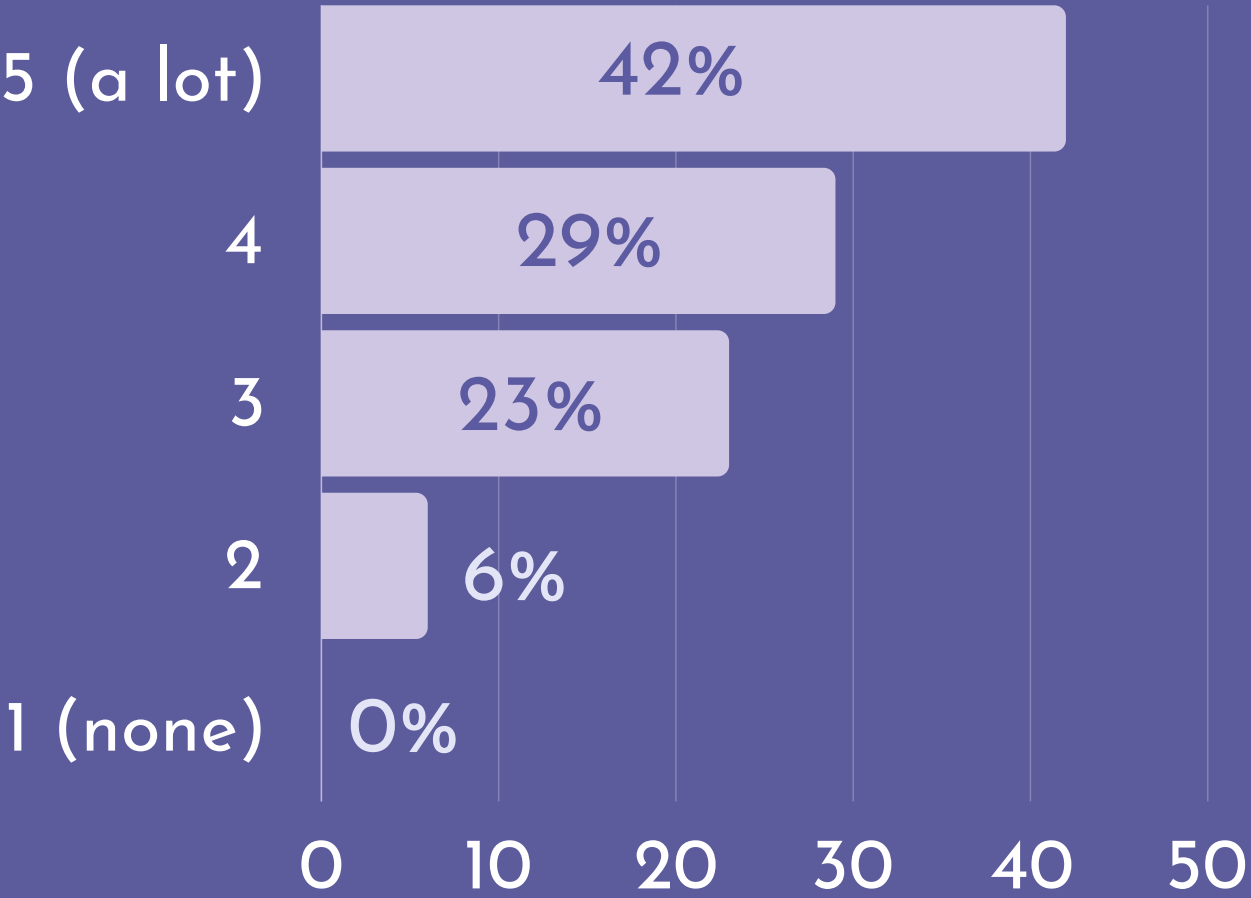
What changes would you make to your role as an ADCH Assessor to make it more enjoyable?

This question was an optional question with a blank text box to collect qualitative feedback. Responses have been grouped by theme where more than one respondent indicated this change.

Requests for more regular networking opportunities with other Assessors	3 respondents
Expression of wanting to do more volunteering but not having the time to do so	3 respondents
Requests for more training opportunities	3 respondents
“A cut off point for rescues [to reply by] who you are trying to contact to carry out the assessments who just don’t engage”	1 respondent
“Have more of an awareness of the experiences of others in assessing”	1 respondent



How much impact do you think you have on ADCH Members and the sector as a whole by volunteering as an ADCH Assessor?



Verbatim comments on why the impact of volunteering might be perceived as low demonstrate a frustration with the inability for ADCH to provide adequate support to Members who might be struggling to meet the Minimum Standards after an assessment.

What changes would you make to your Assessor role to make more of an impact on ADCH Members and the Sector as a whole?

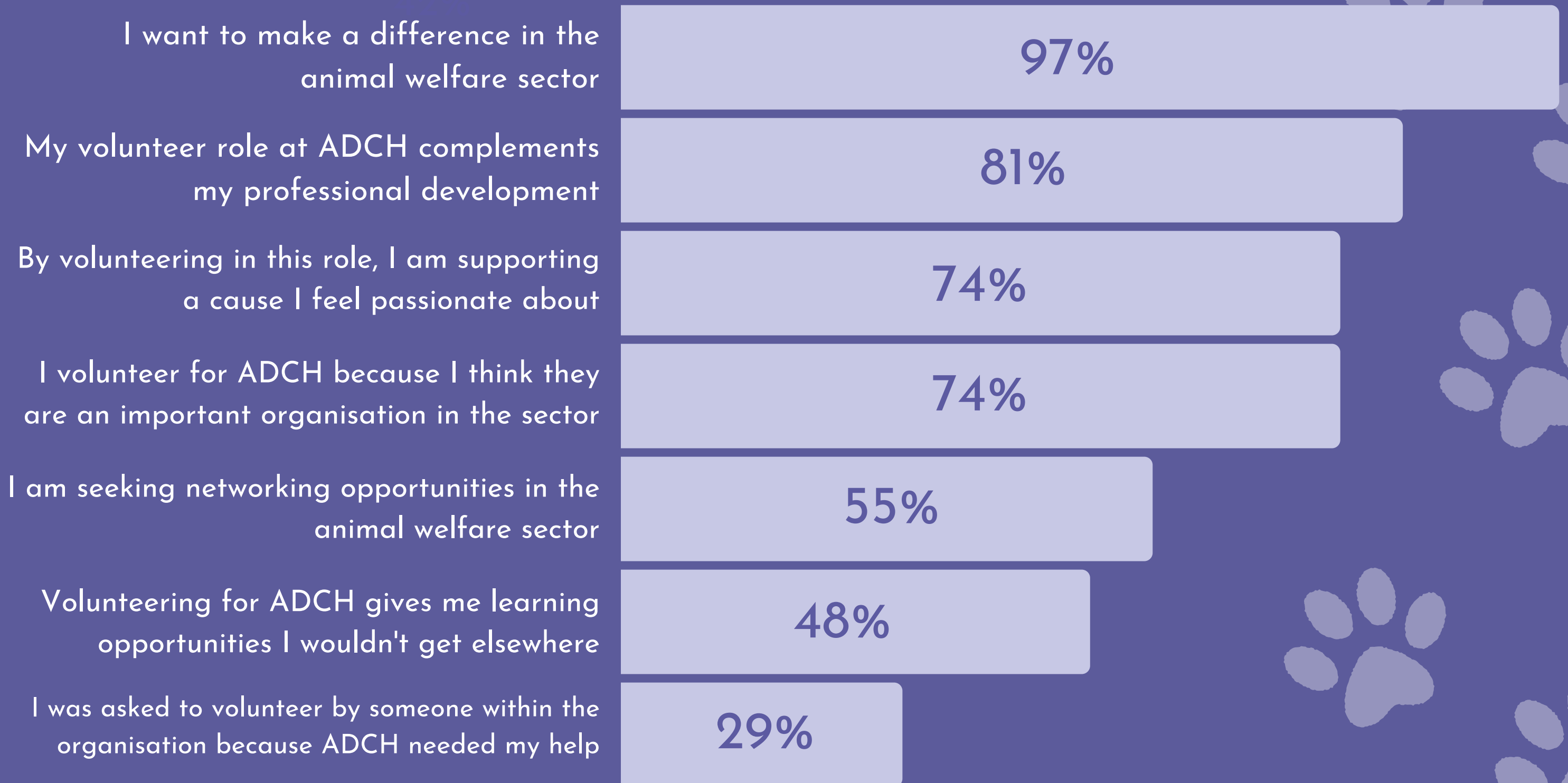
This question was an optional question with a blank text box to collect qualitative feedback. Responses have been grouped by theme where more than one respondent indicated this change.

The ability to offer mentoring and support to the Member being assessed	2 respondents
"I think it's the standards themselves and the culture of ADCH that have the biggest impact rather than me as an individual. Again, greater training and in turn, confidence in giving advice and support would greatly help in driving positive impact."	1 respondent
"More knowledge about grants available and other help so I can inform the rescues when on site"	1 respondent
"I'd like an assessors' hoodie that has ADCH on it so I am not going in [my employer's] uniform and car and giving the impression that [my employer] are inspecting against their own standards. I think it would look more inclusive. Perhaps with the tag line of ADCH on it, or wording that emphasises that we are here to help."	1 respondent





Which of the following describe your reasons for volunteering for ADCH?



[I] really enjoy the company of those who do so much

It feeds my soul and gives me energy





Are there any other reasons why you volunteer for ADCH?

"I feel i have a wealth of knowledge and experience that could be of benefit to the wider sector and enjoy being able to share what I can to benefit people and animals."

"[I] really enjoy the company of those that do so much"

"I gain insight into sector challenges , it gives me a more rounded view of what's happening on the ground"

"I love you all!"

"It's my way of immersing with like minded people that have a pragmatic view at a high level that you don't always get in other parts of my charity."

"To help encourage those not Members to try to reach the standards and join."

"I want to help rescues to meet the standards through supporting them, both through and after the assessment process."

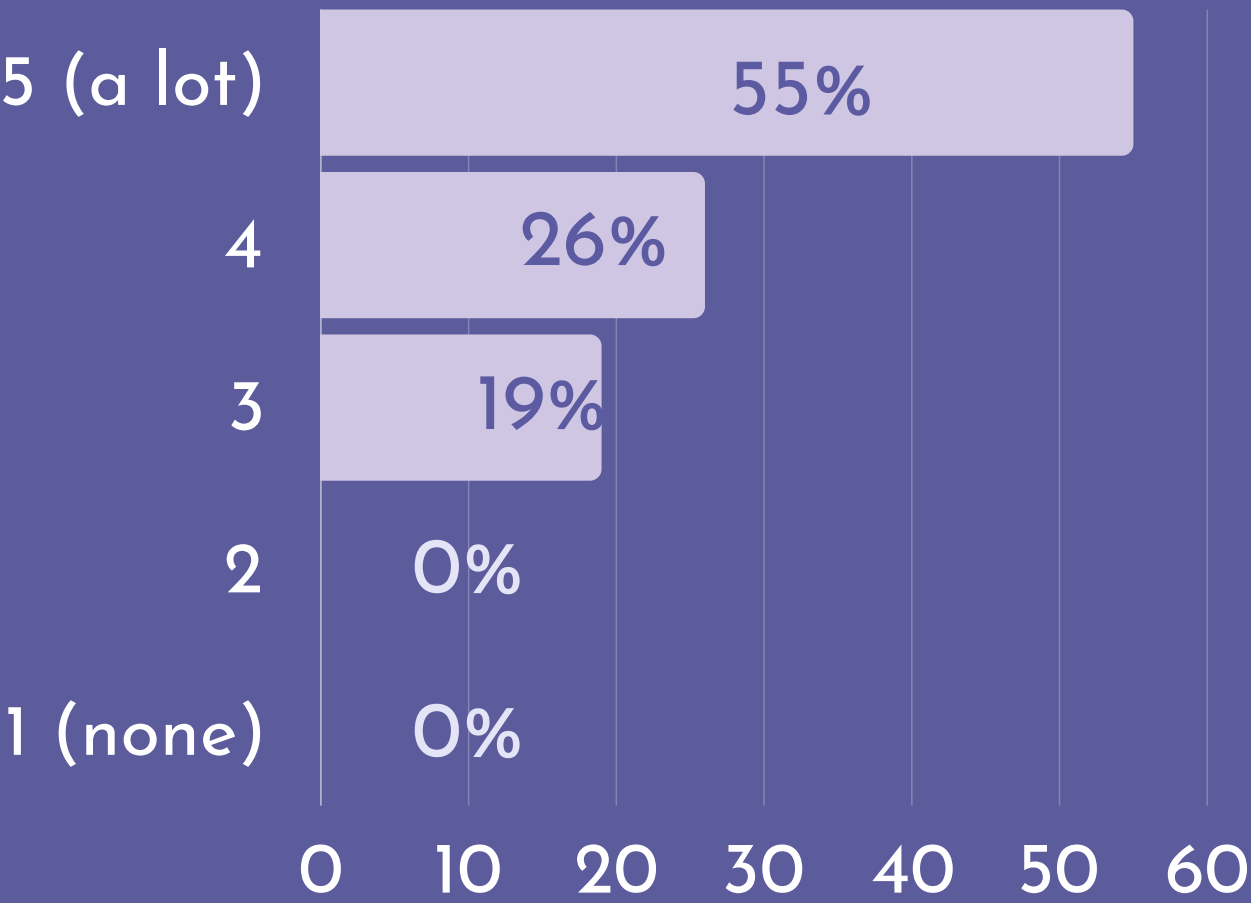
"[being an Assessor helps me to] further my understanding of sector guidance which helps in my current role"

"It feeds my soul and gives me energy, my current role can be quite depleting"

"It's great to be able to learn from the experience of others, and have a network of likeminded people to go to for support, and to support, when things are particularly tough."

" I [...] very much believe that we should help and encourage improvements and share knowledge."

How satisfied are you in your role as a volunteer at the ADCH?



Respondents indicated a desire for additional networking opportunities for Assessors, as well as support for increased opportunities to voice feelings, experiences and opinions to the staff team and Trustee Board, having an impact on how ADCH carries out its work. The opportunity to share their evaluations of volunteer experience through this survey was appreciated.

What would you like to see being done to increase your satisfaction in your role as an ADCH volunteer?

"More regional get togethers...so we can discuss local problems"
"Feel like the trustees are more in contact with members"
"What is already happening! Opportunities to feedback and to learn."
"I think that ADCH values their volunteers, however I feel like sometimes there's an awful lot expected in terms of time. I don't always feel listened to"
"To get fully trained"

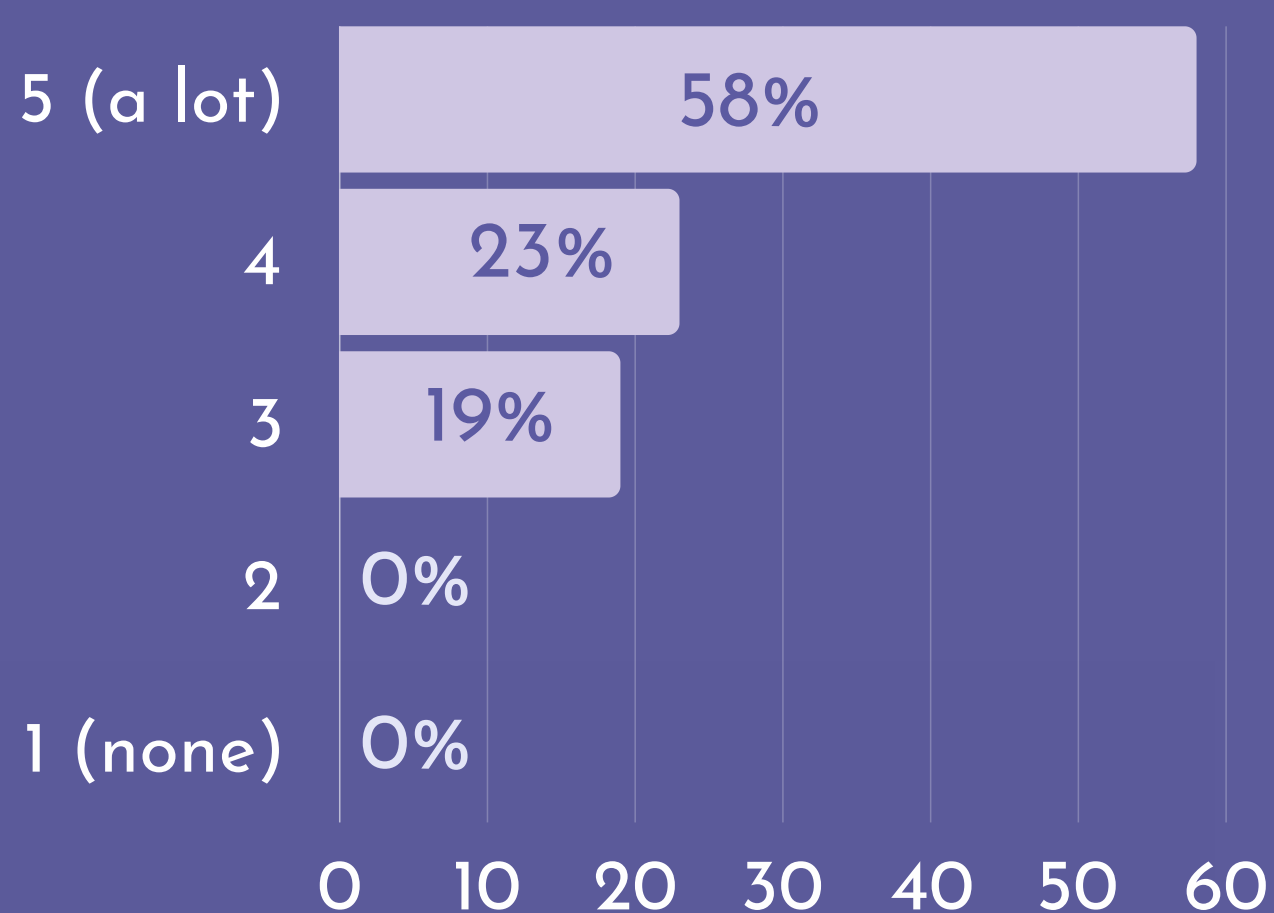
Interestingly, this question also generated several responses from volunteers who expressed a desire that they want to engage more with ADCH as a volunteer but struggle to find the time.

“Keep up the good work!”





How valued do you feel by the ADCH in your role as a volunteer?

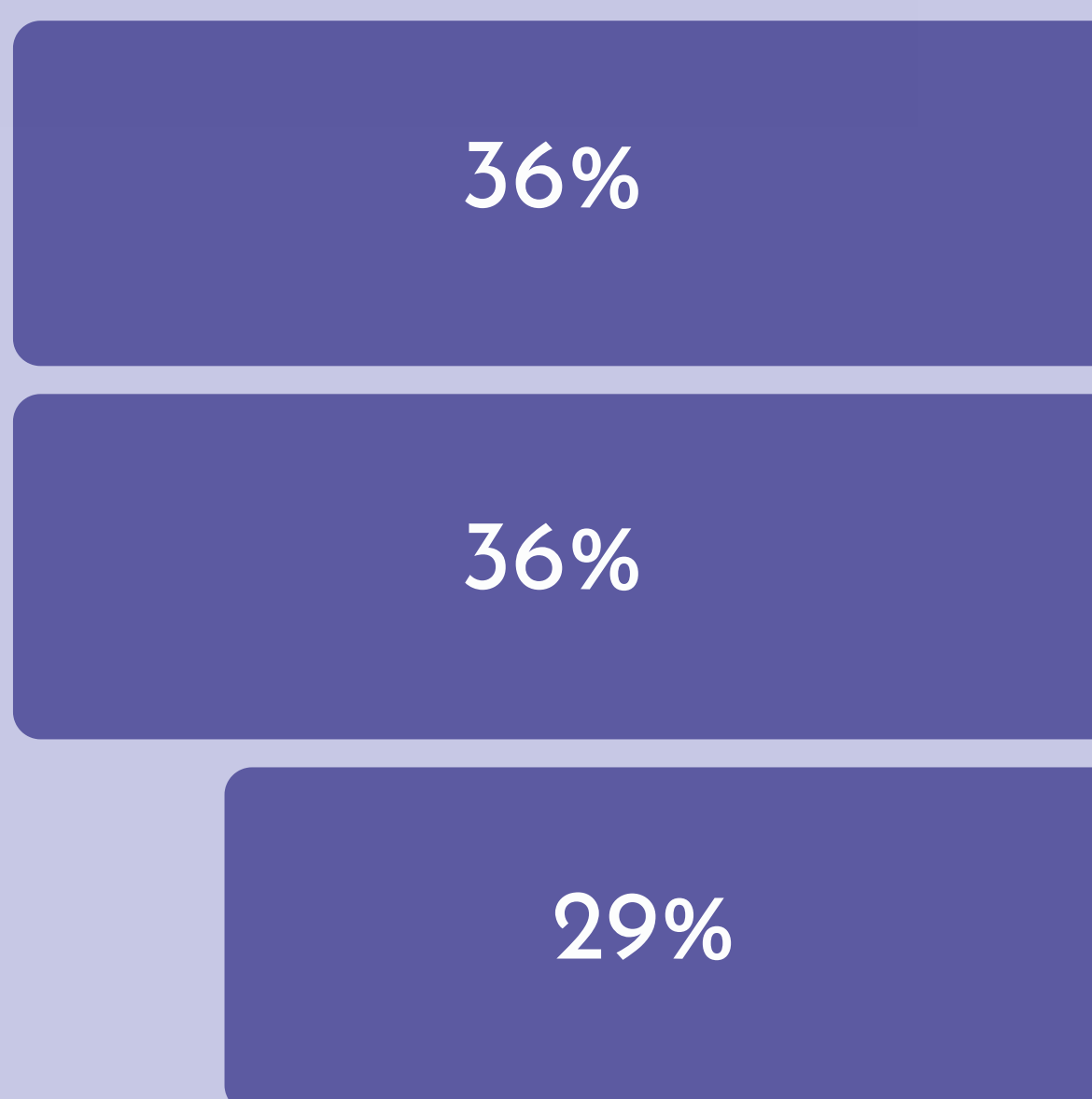


Volunteers generally feel valued by ADCH, but verbatim responses indicate that the Assessors feel that the Members of ADCH do not fully understand or appreciate the roles that volunteers play at our organisation.

There was only low-level support for formalised recognition (e.g.: awards), with several volunteers suggesting that they 'don't need to feel more valued'. This supports the findings on motivations for volunteering for ADCH (pg. 8) where it was indicated that Assessors generally volunteer for altruistic reasons looking to improve animal welfare.



Which of the following would make you feel more valued by the ADCH for your voluntary contributions to their work?



Recognition and celebration of volunteer contributions in internal ADCH communications (e.g.: In the Assessors' Update)

Recognition and celebration of volunteer contributions in external ADCH comms (ie: with Members and beyond. e.g.: in The Scoop)

Awards/Recognition at ADCH Events (e.g.: Annual Conference)



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Other comments on making volunteers feel more valued at ADCH:

"I think some better communication to the organisation that you are attending to let them know we do this voluntarily and that we do so for good reasons of helpfulness. they often are wary and see us as "inspectors". This obviously changes as you build rapport with the organisation but some information on our role and aims in the info that goes out to the organisation would be good for me."

"Make us more human to rescues, [create] awareness of the volunteering role itself."

"I suggest extra post assessment support for difficult cases"

"I don't need to feel more valued, I feel appreciated for what I am able to contribute and I appreciate the opportunities given to me as a volunteer, not least being able to attend conference and open meetings etc to network, keep updated and to learn."

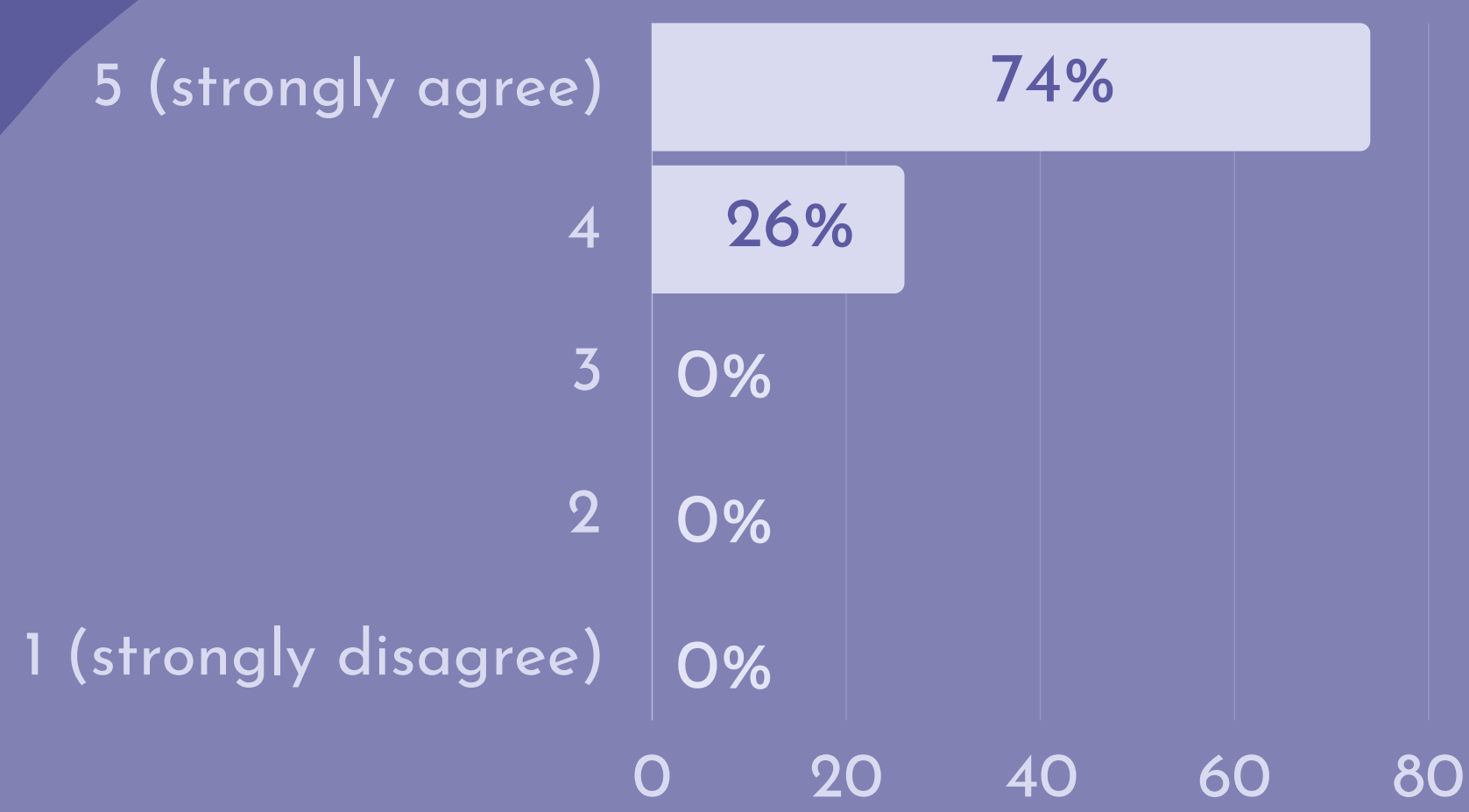
"I don't need recognition or to feel more valued"

"Listening - this is the first time I've been asked for my opinion on my volunteer role".

"I don't feel we need any recognition as individuals. Maybe as the team we are all part of."

"Maybe feature write ups or short VTs of...volunteers in their roles...fun stats at meetings eg longest distance assessor travelled..."

"I am kept up-to-date with what is happening across the ADCH, its Members, and the wider sector"

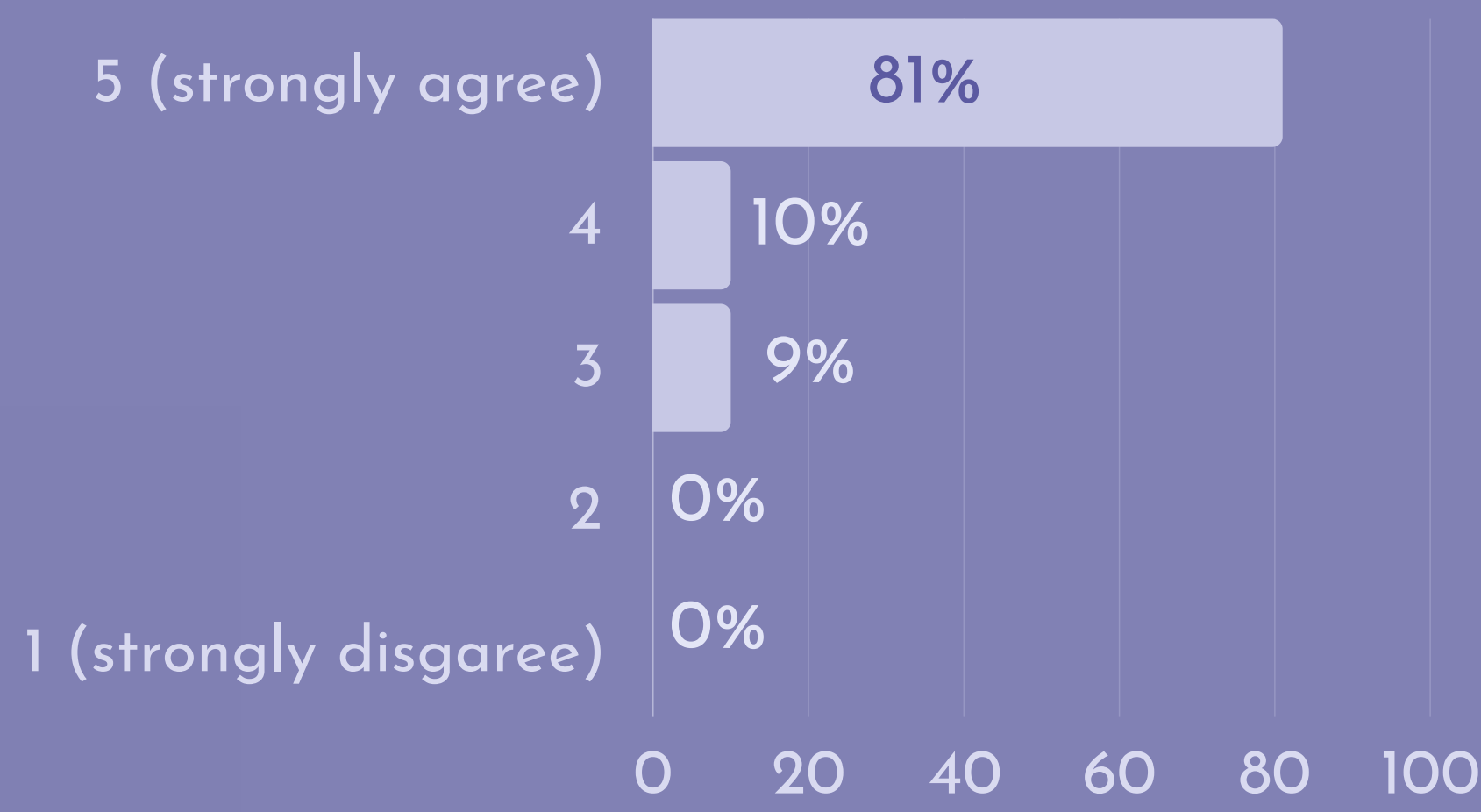


All volunteer Assessors are signed up to ADCH's Member newsletter, The Scoop.

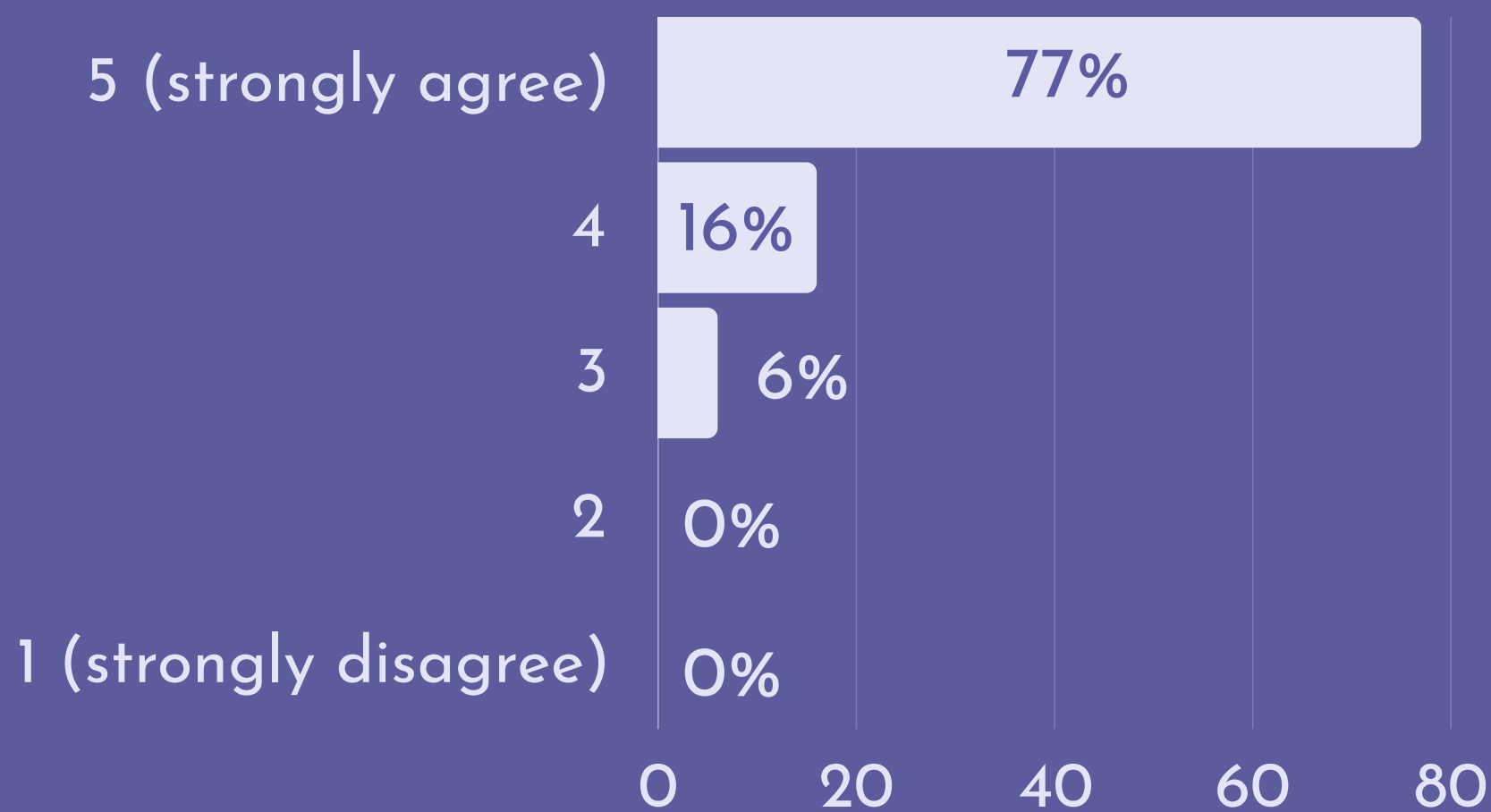


"The ADCH responds to my emails and/or phone calls in a timely manner"

Volunteer Assessors now have a dedicated line manager in the Training and Assessment Manager.

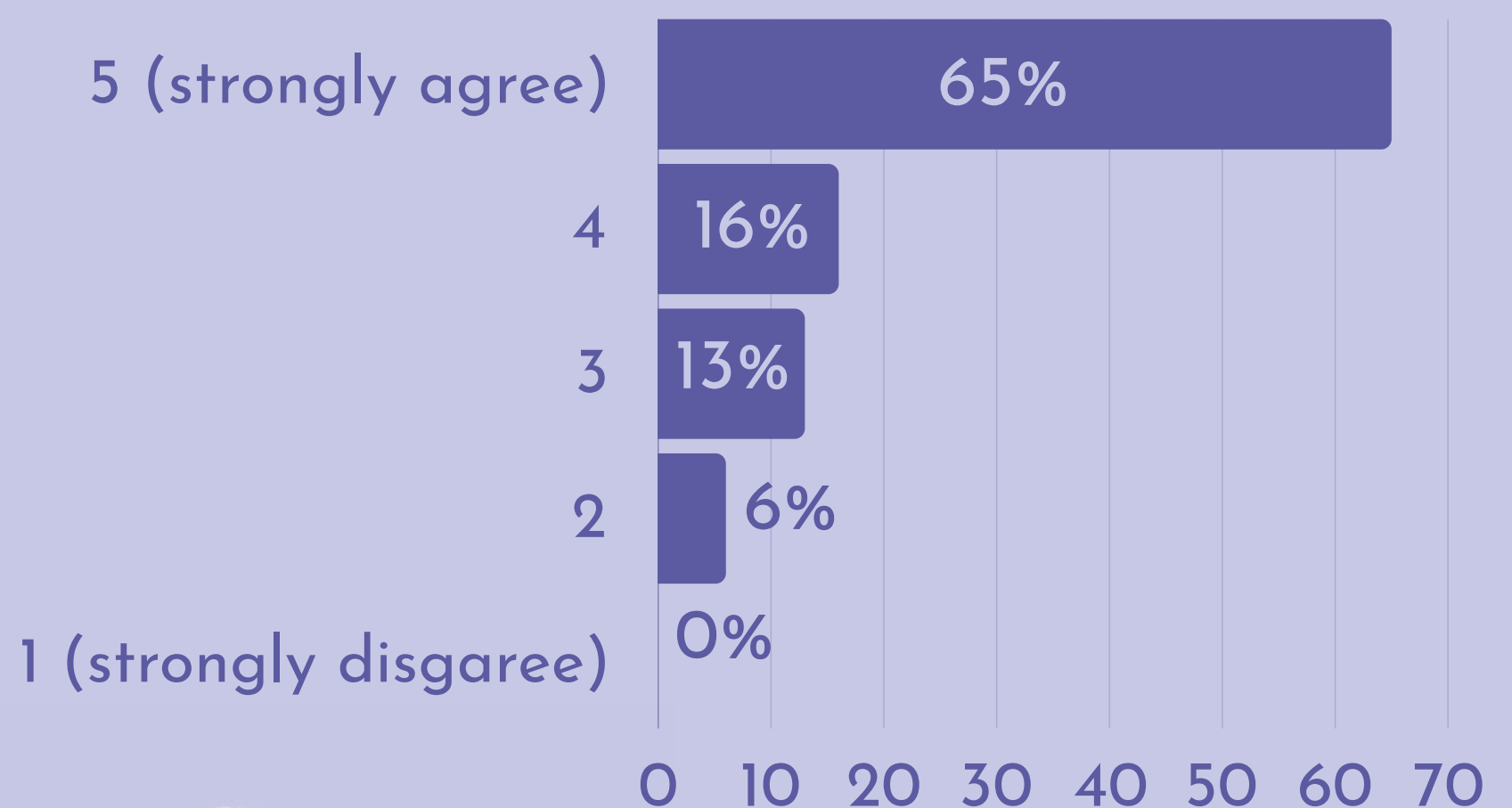


"I understand the ADCH's goals and the impact it aims to have on the sector"



"I know where to find information relating to my role as a volunteer" (e.g.: the Volunteer Expenses Policy)

Towards the end of 2023, a new area of the ADCH website was established to enable all information about, training on and documentation relating to volunteering and assessments and at ADCH to be centralised and accessible to all Assessors.

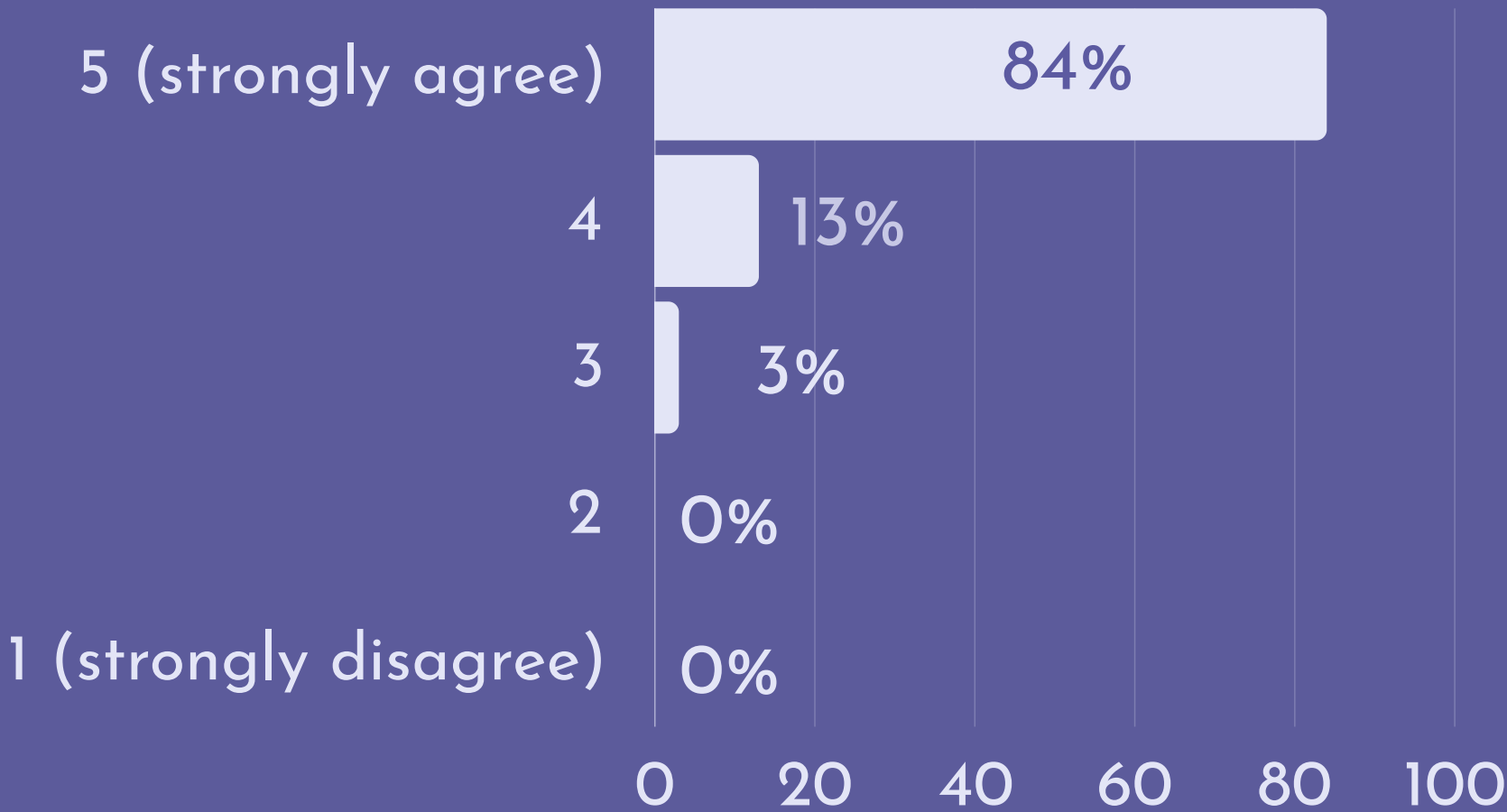


"I know who to talk to at the ADCH if I have a problem or question relating to my volunteering"



Volunteer Assessors now have a dedicated line manager in the Training and Assessment Manager.

Fortnightly 'surgery hours' have been established to provided dedicated 1-on-1 support.



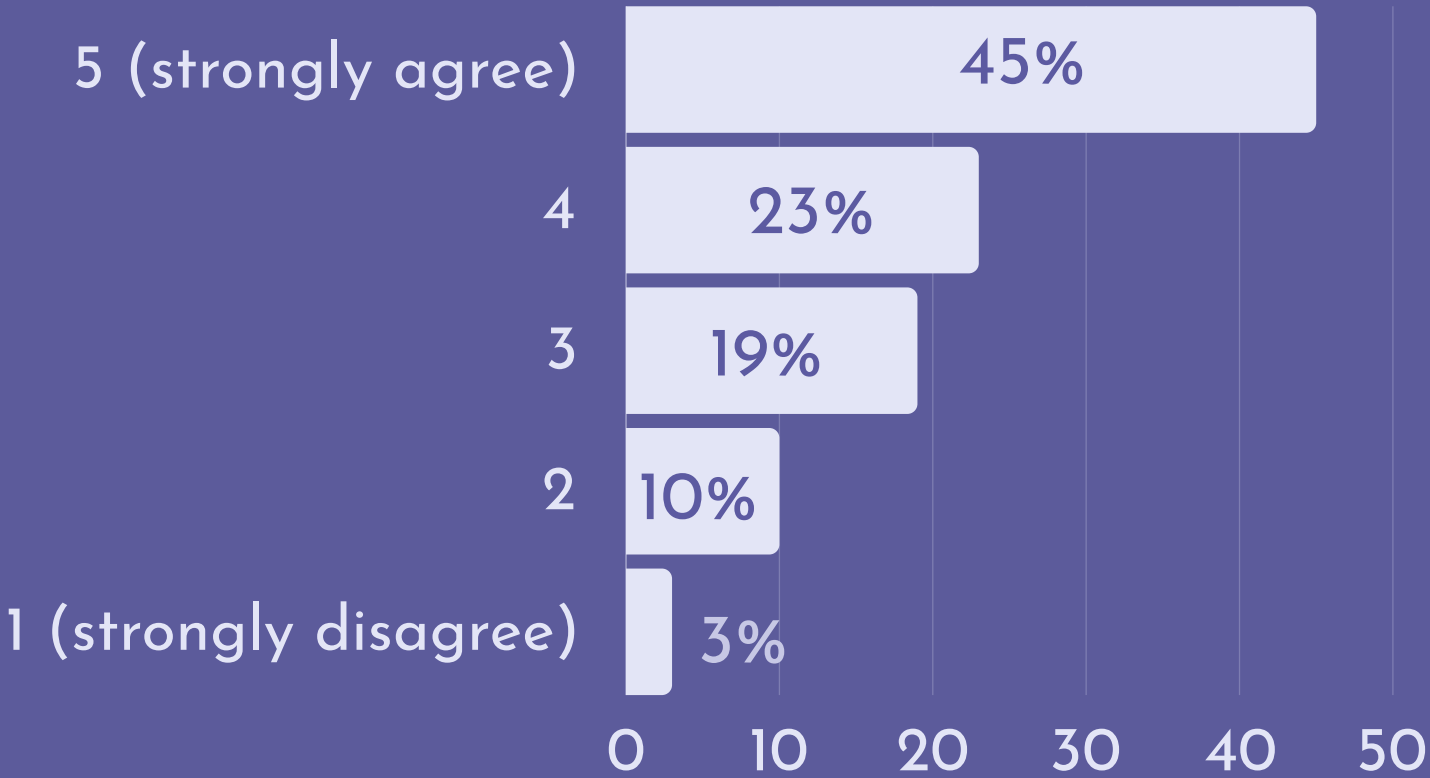
"The training and induction I was given for my role was satisfactory for me to carry out my volunteering with confidence"

All Assessors are required to shadow 2 external assessments of ADCH Members before they are able to complete assessments on their own.

Monthly Assessors' Forums are held online delivering training on a variety of issues relating to the role of ADCH Assessor.

In 2024, a pilot scheme of 'mock assessments' will allow for on-site training and moderation of Assessor scoring.

Additional training requests can be found on pg. 17.





Additional comments relating to volunteer experience at the ADCH:

<p>"I'm not sure where I find information, related to volunteering such as Expenses, and training so far has been minimal. I think I may have missed something? This will always be likely due to my availability."</p>	
<p>"The support team are amazing"</p>	<p>"Difficult due to being in NI and lack of trained assessors."</p>
<p>"I was one of the first assessors so training was slightly different back then"</p>	<p>"haven't had training as yet so can't comment yet"</p>
<p>"Living in Ireland does make me feel disconnected from a lot of the members and restricts my volunteering ability"</p>	<p>"Both as an organisation itself and as a group of people, everyone is so supportive of each other and it is lovely to be part of such a special group."</p>
<p>"I didn't have official training when I started in my assessor role but by carrying out assessments alongside experienced assessors, I gained in confidence quickly. Prior to becoming an ADCH assessor, I was asked to trial using the ADCH standards when carrying out foster visits in my role at [omitted] so I had plenty of knowledge about application of the standards."</p>	<p>"My induction was poor - due to lack of resource at the time"</p>
<p>"All I would add is that it would be great, if possible and where appropriate, to have more volunteers that don't necessarily work/volunteer for member orgs - perhaps more animal welfare professionals such as vets, behaviourists and physical rehab specialists to drive broader awareness and understanding of ADCH, of its welfare standards and best practice, and what it is working to achieve. In turn, their expertise could be a fantastic support to ADCH, and they could help drive interest in membership and in associate membership opportunities perhaps."</p>	





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Are there any topics related to or aspects of the Assessment process which you would like to receive additional support and/or training on?

**ADCH
Importation
Standards**

**Pre and
Post
Assessment
Communications**

**Multi-site
Assessments**

**Opportunities to
meet with other
Assessors and
compare scores**

**Assessing Foster
Networks**

**How ADCH can
support its Members
to reach compliance
with Standards**

**Grants
available to
Members.**

**What to do when a
rescue is not engaging
positively with the
assessment process**

**Understanding
what happens at
SAWC and how
reports are put
together**