

ACE for Wildlife Network[®] Annual Partner and Affiliate Survey

Prepared by Woodland Park Zoo Evaluation & Impact, 2025



ADVANCING CONSERVATION THROUGH
EMPATHY FOR WILDLIFE[®]



I have found the ACE for Wildlife Network to be one of the best resources for advancing understanding and conservation action in my 40 years of working as an educator in zoos and Aquariums.

- Survey respondent



Credit: Joel Miller, Milwaukee County Zoo

Report Contents

Survey Overview & Monitoring Questions	4
Summary of Results	5
Recommendations	8
Network Outcomes	9
Network Affiliation, Involvement, and Roles	11
Overall Experience and Network Participation	19
Organizational Investment in Empathy	31
Awareness and Use of Network Resources	39
Use of Empathy Practices in Organizations	47
Final Reflections, Gratitude, and Personal Impact	57
Appendix	61

Annual Survey Overview

This year's ACE for Wildlife Network Member and Affiliate Survey was sent to 807 valid email addresses during October and November 2025 (Any Network member who had registered an account prior to the end of August was included in the survey invitation). Two hundred completed or mostly complete responses were received (27% response rate).

Throughout this report, "Partner" is used to note responses from Network Members (i.e., staff or volunteers who work in Partner organizations) while "Affiliate" is used to note those from other organizations. The analysis detailed on the following pages includes comparative results for variables of interest, including differences between Original Partner orgs, New Partner orgs, and Affiliates; length of personal involvement in the Network; whether a respondent had empathy-related training in the past year; and organizational role or job function.

Statistics Notes: Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are noted alongside results where observed, typically by an asterisk. Most values in the report are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point (pp), so some results may total just above or under 100%. Survey questions that are 'select all that apply' are identified in the report and will often sum to greater than 100% because respondents could select more than one response option.

Questions about this survey and report may be directed to [Woodland Park Zoo's Evaluation & Impact team](#).

The survey was co-developed by the Advancing Empathy and Evaluation & Impact teams with input from Network committees to better understand the ACE for Wildlife Network experience from the perspective of two overarching evaluation questions:



What is the overall state of the Network in the following areas...

- Partner and Affiliate representation?
- Member role within organizations?
- Communication about empathy practices and projects internally and externally?
- Perceived organizational investment in empathy?
- Use of empathy-related practices within organizations?



To what extent are Network participants aware of, and using, collaboratively developed resources?

- Partner and Affiliate representation?
- Member role within organizations?
- Communication about empathy practices, projects, and initiatives internally and externally?
- Perceived organizational investment in empathy?
- Use of empathy-related practices within organizations?

Summary of Results

Survey participation expanded this year, reflecting broad engagement across organizations, roles, and Network affiliation status (Partner and Affiliate).

Survey responses came from 103 total orgs, nearly twice as many as last year's 63. We received at least one response from each of 29 Network Partner orgs, and the distribution of responses from Network Partners and Affiliates shifted in this year's results toward a near-equal split. Just over a third were from staff or volunteers of the original 19 Partner orgs, and 17% were from new Partner orgs. About a third of respondents had been involved in the Network for 3 or more years, another third 1-2 years, and another third less than a year. Original Partners generally reported longer involvement than new Partners or Affiliates. Nearly all respondents (94%) worked in zoos or aquariums, mainly in education or learning roles. Other roles, such as Conservation, Volunteer Engagement, Animal Care, and Evaluation, were also represented.

Overall, experience with the Network, value, and sense of welcoming remain strong.

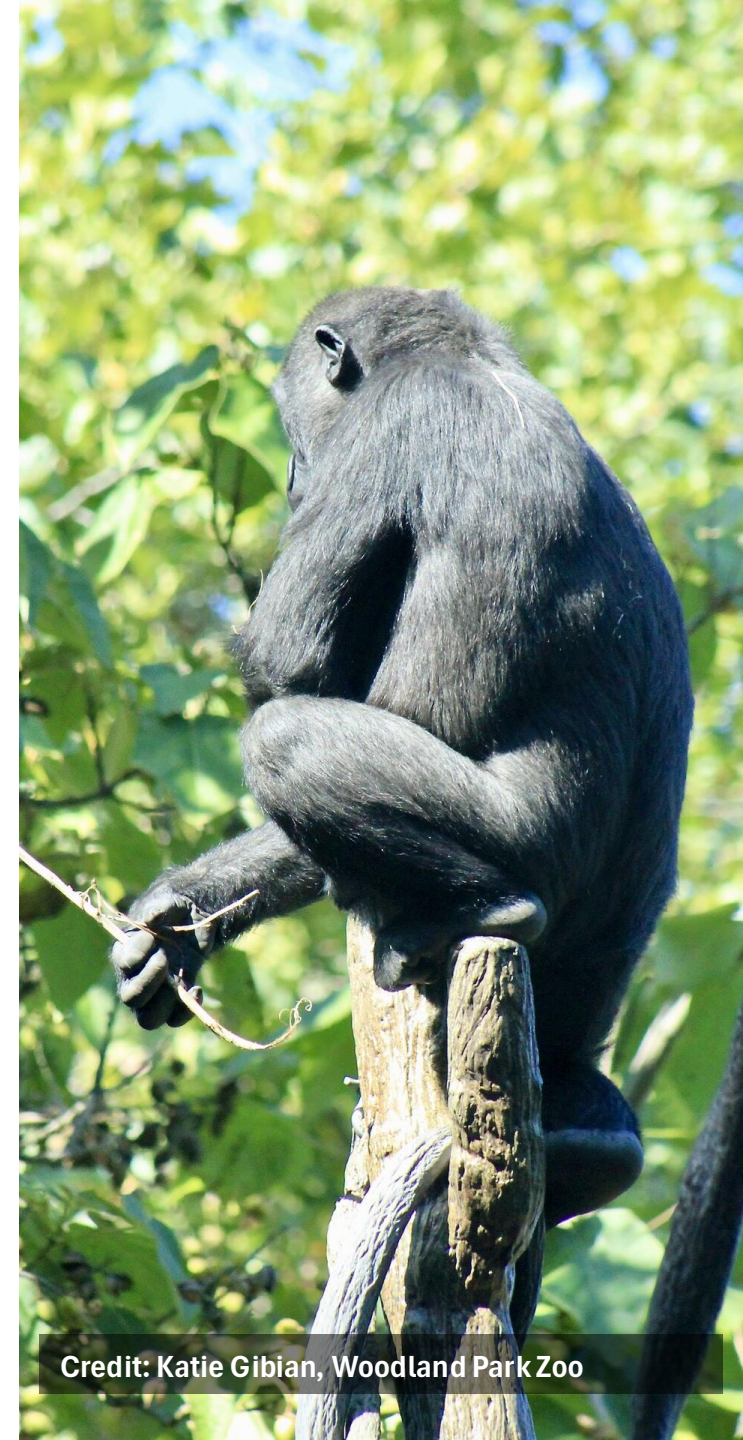
Across multiple measures, depth of engagement appeared to have a stronger positive influence than Network affiliation. Participating in empathy training within the last year, the length of time involved in the Network, and active Network participation were more strongly associated with positive overall experience and value than Network affiliation. Respondents noted a few opportunities for improvement,

including their own need to make more time for involvement, a desire for more frequent communication about Network events and resources, a desire for more in-person and virtual events, and greater ease in navigating the Network Website and Resource Library.

Participation patterns show a broad reach with opportunities for deeper involvement by those who are newer to the Network.

The Network is successfully reaching people, but there is likely an opportunity for deeper engagement. Many participants, especially those newer to the Network, wanted to be more involved, pointing to an opportunity to more clearly support and guide people into deeper levels of involvement – about half of respondents said they'd like to increase their involvement in the year ahead. Affiliates and new Partners reported greater interest in deepening their engagement, suggesting a pipeline of future contributors if opportunities are known.

Most respondents participated in the Network in low-barrier ways, such as reading the Newsletter (93%), Discussion board (74%), and accessing resources from the website (70%). More active forms of engagement, such as posting on the Discussion Board, presenting on empathy projects, or attending learning groups, were less common. Partners were more likely to participate in these ways than Affiliates. Network staff may continue to think about ways to encourage deeper engagement among Network participants, particularly Affiliates.



Credit: Katie Gibian, Woodland Park Zoo



Credit: Carolyn Lewis, Zoological Society of Milwaukee

Summary of Results

There is a steady commitment to Network involvement, empathy-related training, and organizational investment.

Respondents reported frequent internal communication about empathy (62%) and frequent participation in empathy-related trainings (54% received training, 24% presented about empathy at a conference or other professional gathering), indicating strong organizational commitment to empathy-based practices and projects. Survey respondents also felt their leadership invested heavily in empathy and were supportive of their Network participation, with Partners more than Affiliates, suggesting an opportunity for Network resources to increase understanding and buy-in among orgs with less experience with the Network at large.

Respondents are increasingly aware of Network resources and find them useful in their practice.

Respondents rely on the Resource Library and the Newsletter as their primary access points to Network resources. Awareness and use of resources continue to rise—especially for the Empathy Training Toolkit, which remains a high-value resource to Network participants. Partners consistently engage more deeply with resources than Affiliates, suggesting continued opportunity to strengthen resource awareness among Affiliate audiences. Overall, strong ratings for resource utility indicate that when resources are used, they meaningfully support practice for both Partners and Affiliates.

Over half were aware of each of the 12 resources on the survey, except for the Mission Statement Analysis Report (46% aware; 6% used). The Empathy Training Toolkit had the highest awareness and use (88% aware; 51% used). Among the four resources consistently asked about over time (2023–2025), most showed increased awareness *and* use, including the Empathy Training Toolkit, Network Welcome Guide, and Network Directory.

Empathy practices were used frequently and intentionally, especially among Original Partners and those with longer Network involvement.

Use of empathy practices is widespread among respondents and growing - 87% used practices often, up from 78% last year - and most (86%) believed that empathy practices were relevant to their daily roles. Respondents also reported intentional use of many of the individual empathy practices, with minimal differences seen between Partners and Affiliates. When presented with a list of 12 empathy-related practices, over half of the respondents said they have intentionally used each in their work this year (2025). Drawing attention to how animals make choices/have agency, Sharing how orgs care for animals and their wellbeing, and Highlighting traits or personalities of animals (including using names/pronouns) were each selected by 91%. Providing opportunities for guests to interact with animals or practice caring actions towards animals was selected least (57%).



Credit: Eric Carlson, Georgia Aquarium

Summary of Results

Respondents did not articulate many challenges in their Network participation, though a few identified areas for continued reflection or improvement.

Survey respondents provided very few comments about opportunities for improvement or challenges they've faced participating in the Network this year. One respondent offered an insight that may be helpful to keep in the foreground as the Network team embarks on strategic planning and expansion. They said, "...One challenge I find in my work is knowing which of the various strategic communications resources out there is the best fit for a given project at my institution. How does ACE differ from or align with other conservation communication communities and tools that AZA Partners use...Are we reinventing the wheel?..." Being able to clearly articulate the Network's unique position and contribution to the field at large may be valuable to Network participants, org leadership, and others on the periphery of this work.

Respondents expressed gratitude for the Network and often shared anecdotes about the personal and professional impact.

Finally, it was heartwarming and validating to receive several comments from respondents about how valuable the Network has been to them, both personally and professionally. Many of these comments are presented throughout this report as examples of the profound progress and achievements made by

everyone involved. One respondent concluded with, "For me, this is a life-giving space and alters the historic way I see the purpose and function not only of zoos and aquariums, but our ability and responsibility to coexist with wildlife in community together. This collective challenges the social norms of power dynamics and priorities and brings people from diverse backgrounds together for collaboration through the threads of empathy in practice. Very grateful to have connected and be a part of this caring and compassionate family of learners and leaders." Reflections like this are a reminder that the Network is a valuable and welcoming community space where professionals rediscover purpose, make connections, and share a collective commitment to fostering empathy for wildlife.



Credit: Joel Miller, Milwaukee County Zoo

Recommendations

- ✓ Encourage and **reinforce ongoing empathy-based trainings** at Partner orgs and beyond. More training is associated with a higher frequency of practice use.
- ✓ **Promote and support orgs in using practices that were reported relatively lower in frequency**, such as using critical anthropomorphism, highlighting connections, using mimicry/storytelling, and providing opportunities for guests to interact with animals/practice caring actions.
- ✓ **Continue to promote empathy practices** and provide resources that help people understand their connection to them across organizational roles.
- ✓ **Consider ways to assist Network participants in communicating about empathy-related practices and projects within their own orgs**, especially new Partners and Affiliates. Showcasing the ways in which those who do communicate about empathy at the orgs may be one useful strategy (via the Newsletter or other Network communications).
- ✓ **Promote resources or messaging that help ‘make the case’ for Network participation** to leadership, especially for Affiliates and those with less experience in the Network.
- ✓ **Consider engaging executive leaders in the Network to understand how they personally demonstrate empathy investment** at their own orgs. Lessons learned may help others gain support among their own leadership.
- ✓ **Promote resources in ways that highlight where and how to access them**, in addition to possibilities for how Network participants might use them in their daily work.
- ✓ **Continue to engage committees and the Network at-large in seeking topics for future resources** that will be useful to them and their organizations.
- ✓ **Build on past success in platforms like the Resource Library, Discussion Board, and Newsletter** by continuing to think about ways to support New Partners and Affiliates in sharing their own resources or participating in discussions.
- ✓ **Discuss the previously defined Network outcomes with relevant committees** to understand the extent to which these are still relevant to their work and the work of the Network. Revise priority outcomes based on feedback.

Network Outcomes Addressed in the Survey



Progress Made



More information needed



Opportunity

Access the full [Network Outcome Map](#) for additional detail.

Outcome	Progress	Survey-Based Evidence
Partners and Affiliates are aware of resources to implement empathy-based practices in their own work.		Notable increases in awareness of select resources. Partners have slightly higher awareness and use of resources than Affiliates (though high for both groups).
Partners and Affiliates increasingly use ACE for Wildlife Network resources in their work.		Resource usage and useful improved for most of those listed consistently on the 2023-2025 surveys including; Empathy Training Toolkit and Network Welcome Guide.
Partners and Affiliates feel empowered to make change with their own organization.		Not specifically measured on the survey. Opportunity for discussion or outcome refinement.
Partners and Affiliates express increased buy-in to using empathy practices in their work at their institutions.		Perceived leadership investment in empathy practices & projects remains high, however decreased slightly this year from last year. Likely due to increase in survey response from Affiliates.
Partners and Affiliates view the Network as relevant to their role.		Perceived relevance of empathy practices to daily role was high among respondents regardless of Network affiliation (Partner vs Affiliate). Those who have had longer involvement in the Network were most likely to provide higher relevance perceptions.
Partners, Affiliates, and volunteers implement empathy practices in their roles at their institutions.		Empathy practices were used widely among all respondents. We saw fewer differences in practice use this year by Network affiliation, indicating widespread adoption of empathy practices throughout the Network.
Institutional decision-makers provide platforms for staff working on empathy to share out to other staff Partners through updates, lunch and learns, etc.		Internal communication about empathy practices and projects was high. Those from original Partner orgs were most likely to communicate frequently. Slight decrease overall from last year is likely due to increase in Affiliate response. Additionally, about half said they had participated in empathy training this year and a quarter said they presented about their empathy work at a professional gathering.
Institutional decision-makers allow staff time and space to participate in the Network in a next-level manner (e.g., serve on a committee).		Perceived support of org leadership in providing space and time for participating in the Network is high among respondents. Slight decrease this year from last year is likely due to increase in response from Network Affiliates.
Non-Partner AZA organizations feel they can contribute their organizations' perspective and learning about empathy with the Network after joining.		Participants generally felt welcome to share opinions and perspectives with the Network at-large. This sentiment improved from last year with Affiliates and those with less time involved in the Network reporting slightly lower welcoming ratings. Sentiment is positive overall with continued room for upward growth.



I've been involved with the Network for several years and am grateful for the support and collaboration among Network Partners, Affiliates, and the ACE for Wildlife team at WPZ. Being part of this community and integrating empathy best practices into my work is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job!

- Survey respondent

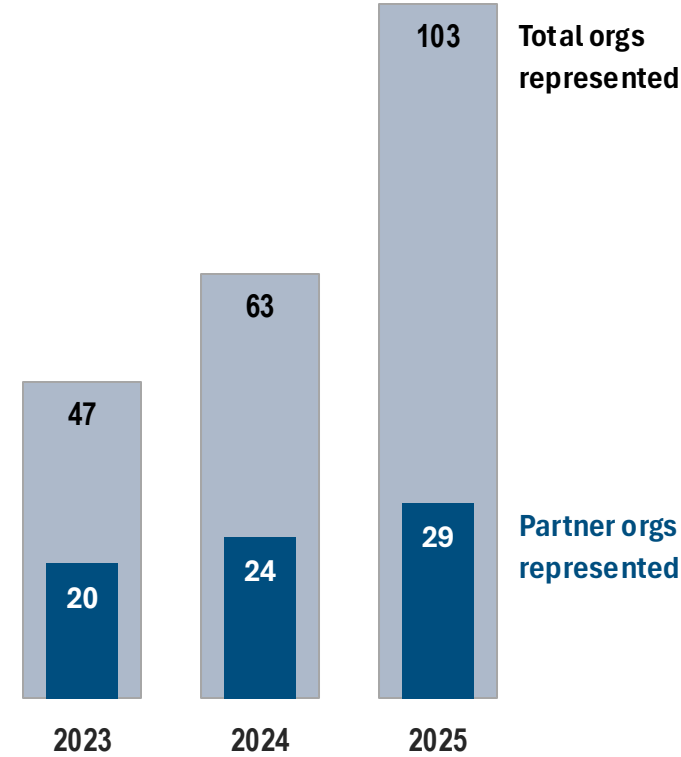
Network Affiliation, Length of Involvement, Committee, and Organizational Roles



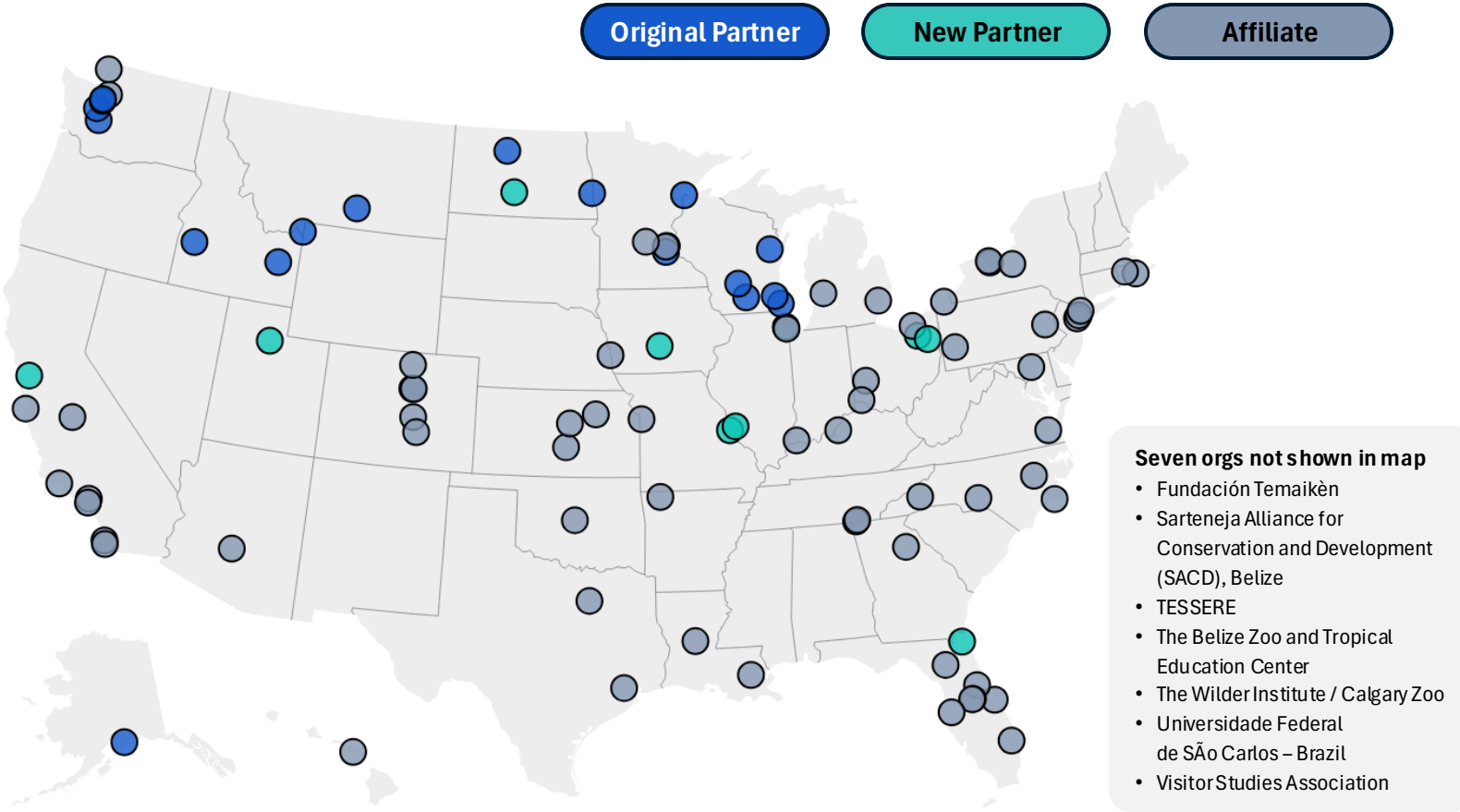
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The number of organizations represented in this year's survey grew substantially from previous years.

The number of organizations represented in the survey response has increased substantially year over year. This year's total (103) represents a 63% increase in the number of orgs represented compared with last year's survey.



We received at least one response from each Network Partner organization (29) in addition to 74 other organizations (most within the United States, 5 international).

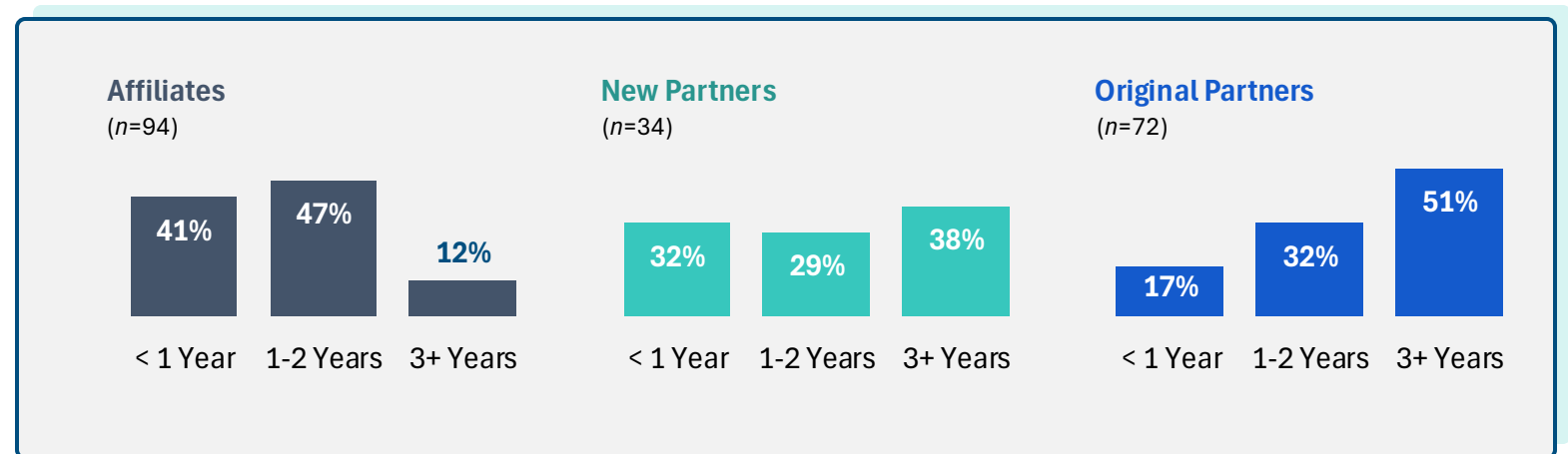
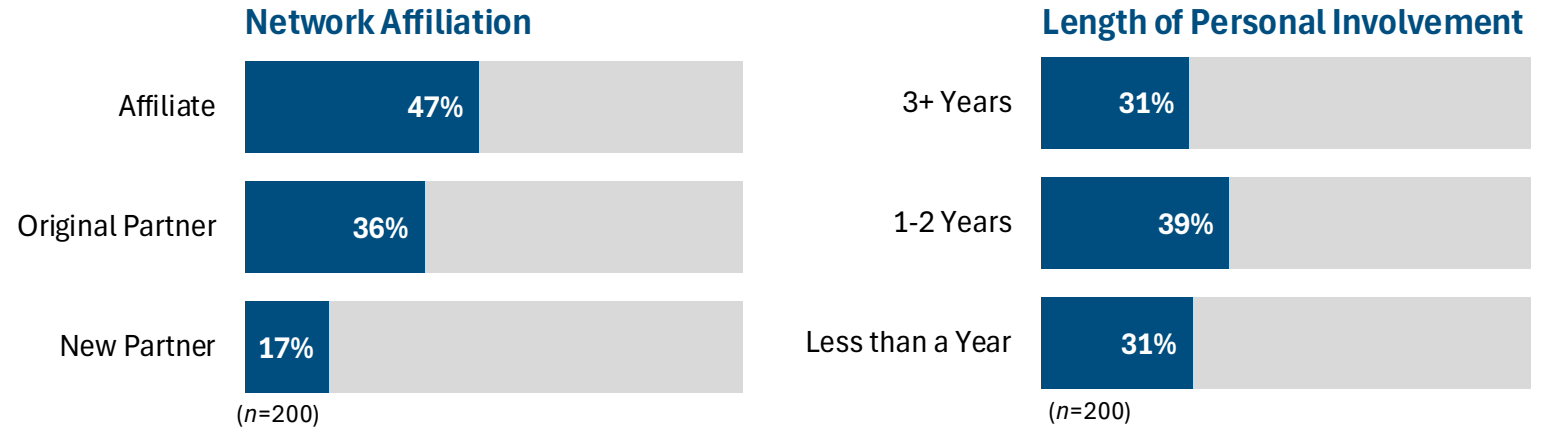


Partner and Affiliate representation, including the length of Network involvement.

This year, just over half (53%) of our survey respondents came from those at Network Partners. This represents a decrease from 71% in last year's survey and could be an indicator of substantial Network growth. This generally aligns with the actual distribution of Network participation - in 2024, about two-thirds (66%) of Network participants were from Partner orgs, and in 2025, about half (51%) were from Partner orgs. As the Network grows and diversifies, it is likely that the distribution of responses to this annual survey will follow suit.

This year, we included a new question asking respondents to indicate how long they have been personally involved in the Network. Overall, the response was evenly distributed between those newer to the Network and those with longer involvement. Not surprisingly, Network Affiliates reported less time in the Network than Partners, particularly those from original Partner organizations (51% of these respondents reported 3 or more years of Network involvement, compared to 38% for new Partners and 12% for Affiliates).

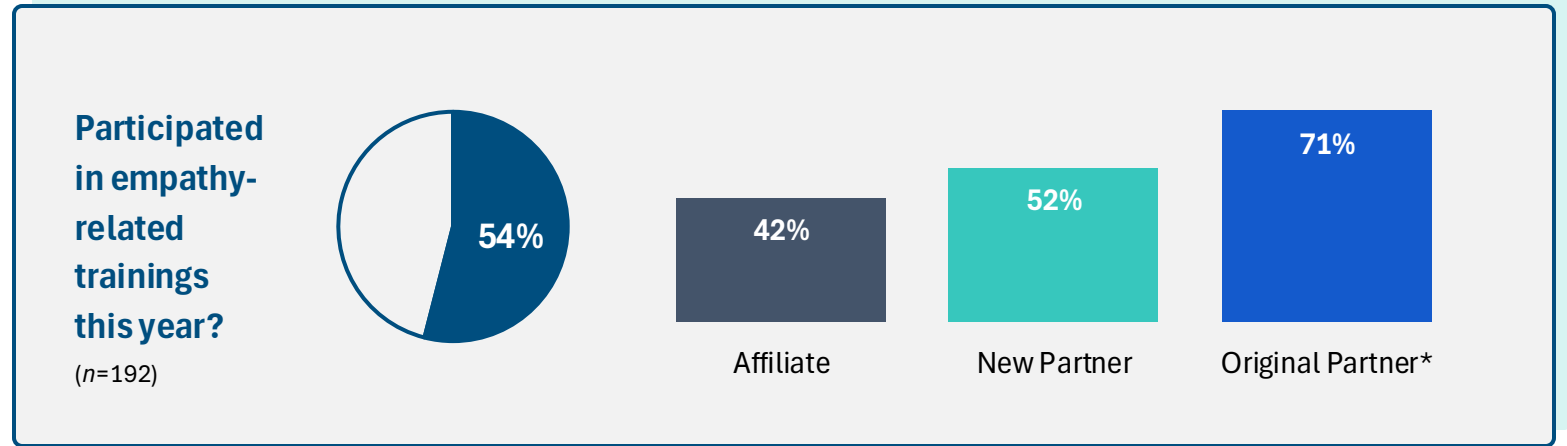
Just under half of responses (47%) came from those at non-Partner orgs (Affiliates). About a third (36%) came from original Partner orgs, and 17% were from new Partner orgs. Not surprisingly, those from original Partner orgs generally reported being involved in the Network longer than new Partners and Affiliates.



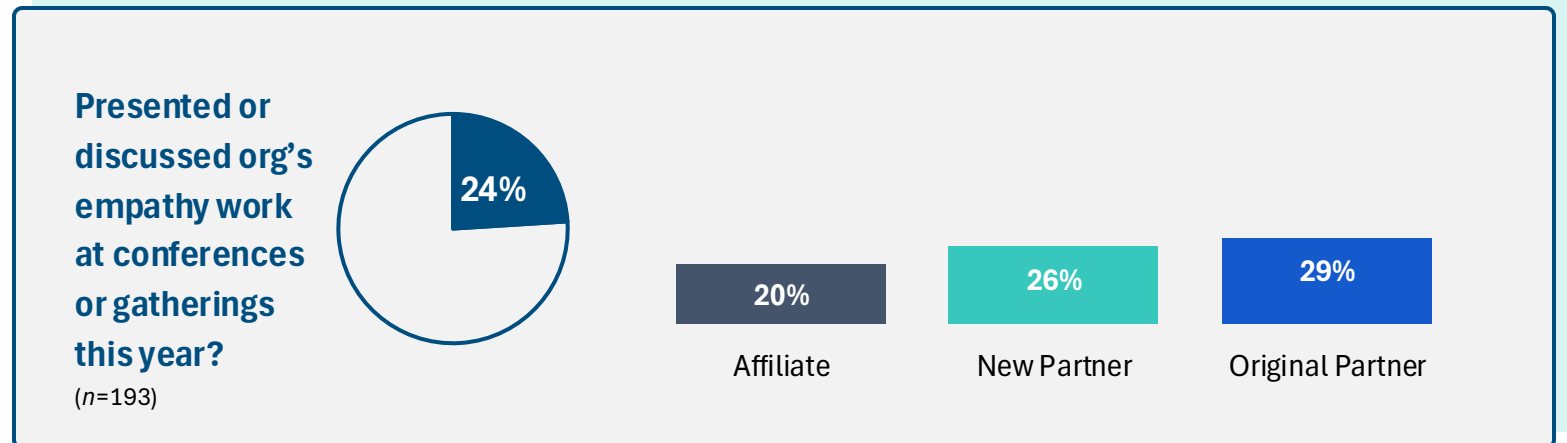
Partners were more likely to engage in empathy-related training and presentations than Affiliates.

About half (54%) of respondents participated in some training - original Partners significantly more than new Partners, and Affiliates, respectively. About a quarter (24%) of respondents presented about their org's empathy work this year. Partners were more likely to present than Affiliates, though the difference between affiliation groups was much less distinct. Respondents listed a variety of professional associations, meetings, and gatherings that they presented at beyond Network events and the annual Empathy Summit.

About half of respondents (54%) said they participated in some empathy-related training in the past year, and a quarter (24%) said they had presented about their org's empathy work at professional conferences or gatherings. Network Partners were more likely to do both - original Partners were significantly more likely to say they had participated in training.



Some who have shared empathy work this past year mentioned the gatherings/meeting where work was discussed including: Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Association of Zoo & Aquarium Docents and Volunteers, Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education, American Public Garden Association, Empathy Cafes, Environmental Education Society, Massachusetts Visitor Studies Association, Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance, ACE for Wildlife Network Empathy Summit, International Association of Avian Trainers, Association of Professional Humane Educators, Manatee Research Symposium (University of Florida).



Q's: In the past 12 months have you had empathy-related training & have you presented or discussed your empathy work at conferences/gatherings?

*Notes a statistically significant difference

Most respondents were in education and learning roles within their orgs.

Nearly all respondents (94%) said they worked for a zoo or aquarium. Most held roles within Education and Guest Engagement (74%). Conservation, Volunteer Engagement, Animal Care, and Evaluation roles were held by 12-17% of respondents.

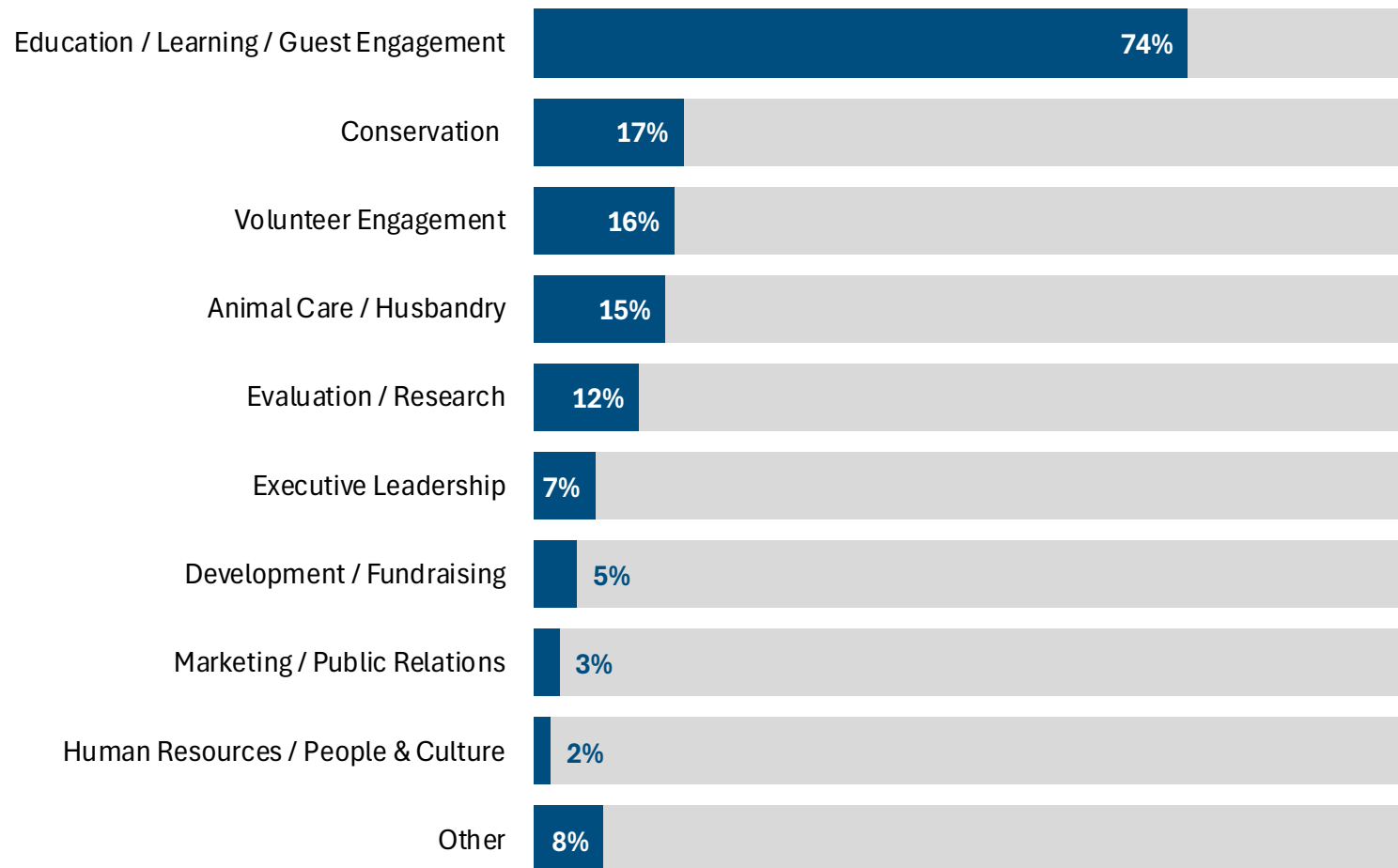
8% of respondents said “Other” when asked their role within their org and listed: Accounting, Admin/Grants, Exhibits/Graphics, Gift shop, Community outreach, Ambassador Animal Programs, and Empathy Team Leader.



This year, one respondent wrote in a role that was specific to “Empathy” in their job title, “Empathy Team Leader.” As the Network grows, more positions dedicated specifically to empathy development among audiences may become more common across organizations.

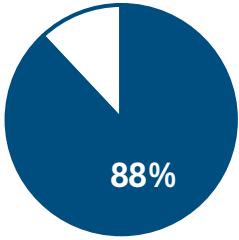
Within their organizations, respondents mostly held education, learning, and guest engagement roles. Other roles, such as conservation, volunteer engagement, and evaluation, were held by fewer than 20% of respondents overall.

(n=200)

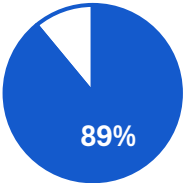


Most respondents knew who their Network contact was; a few were unaware of their Network affiliation.

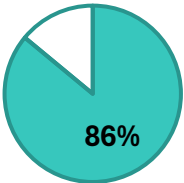
Most respondents (88%) said they were aware of their primary point of contact for the Network. Those who said they were from a Partner org were asked whether they knew who their org's primary point of contact for the Network was. Those from original Partner orgs and new Partner orgs were equally likely to say they knew their point of contact (89% and 86%, respectively).



The majority of respondents (88%) said they were aware of who their primary Network contact was. 14 individuals either did not know or were unsure. 5 respondents believed their orgs were Partners (but are Affiliates and were removed from analysis of this question).
(n=99)



89% of those from original Partner organizations said they were aware their primary point of contact for the Network.
(n=63)

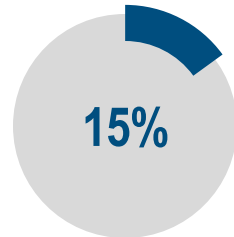


86% of those from new Partner organizations said they were aware their primary point of contact for the Network.
(n=24)

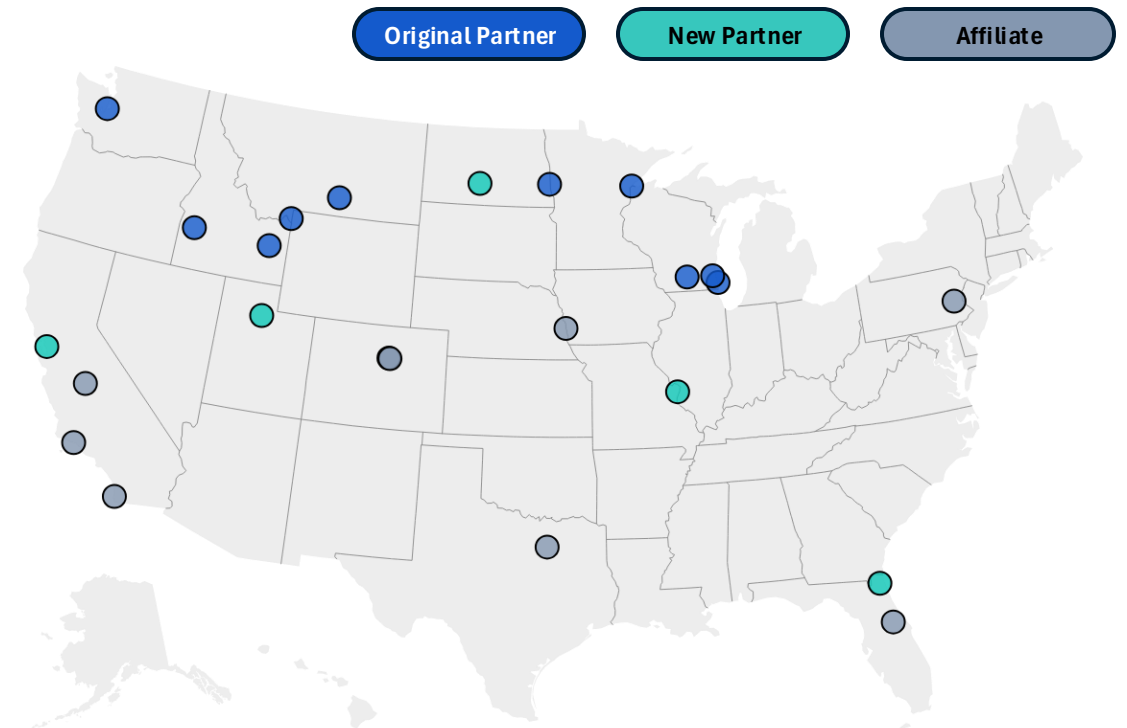
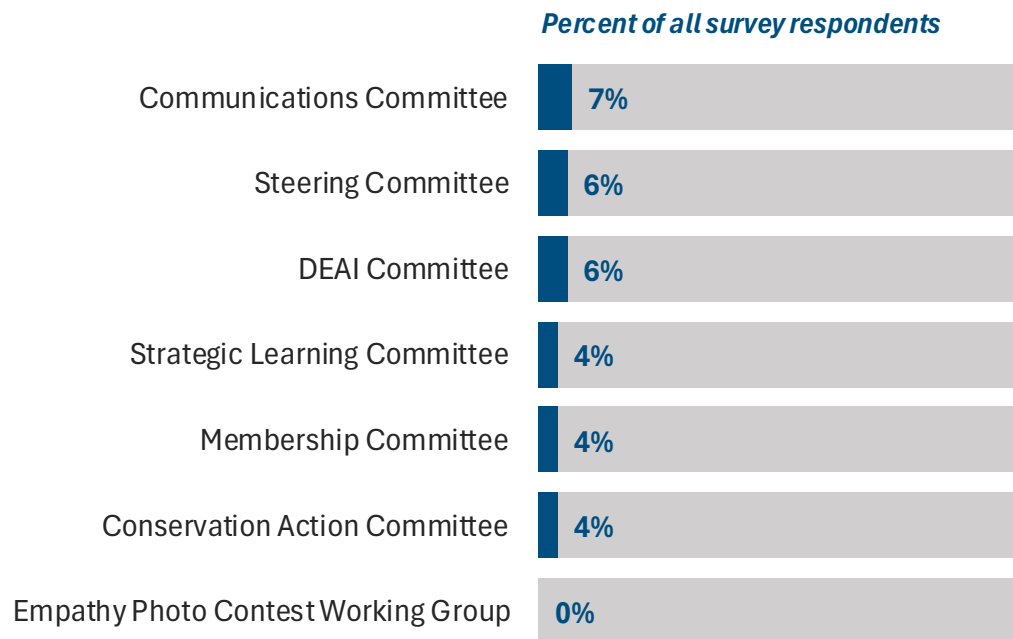
We received a broad representation of responses from those serving on Network committees.

Thirty respondents (15%) said they were part of at least one Network committee. We received at least one response from a representative of each committee except for the Empathy Photo Contest Working Group.

(n=195)



25 organizations were represented among respondents who reported serving on Network committees.



Q: Do you serve on any ACE for Wildlife Network committees? (Select all that apply)

Data above represent % of survey sample (e.g., 7% of survey respondents were members of the Comms Committee).

Not shown in map: Visitor Studies Association, and Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo



The network has been instrumental in my career and has been such a gift. I am very grateful for all the work and collaboration that occurs through this network. I am also grateful for the friendships that have been made- as my participation in this network has allowed me to connect with people on a much deeper level.

- Survey respondent

Overall Experience and Participation in ACE for Wildlife Network



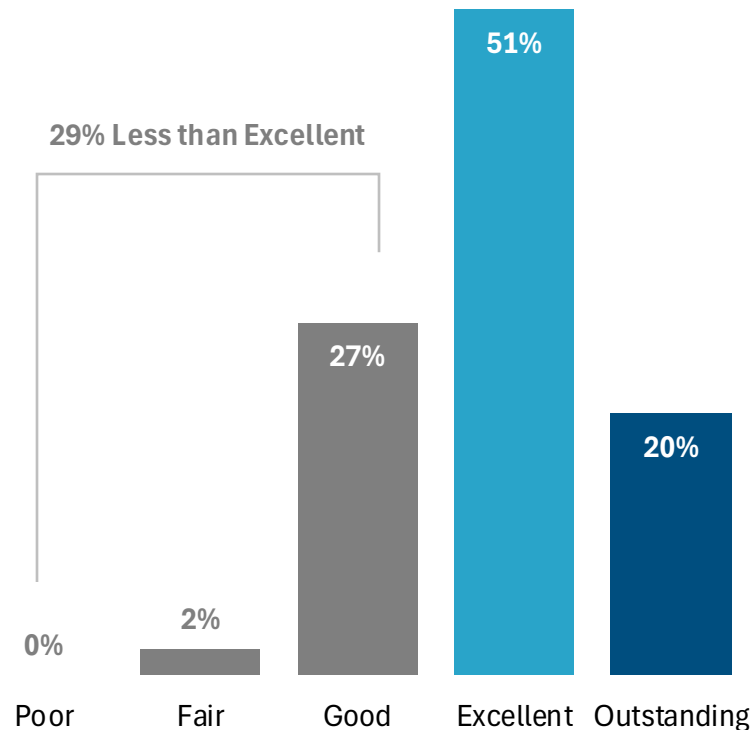
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Respondents rated their overall experience in the Network positively.

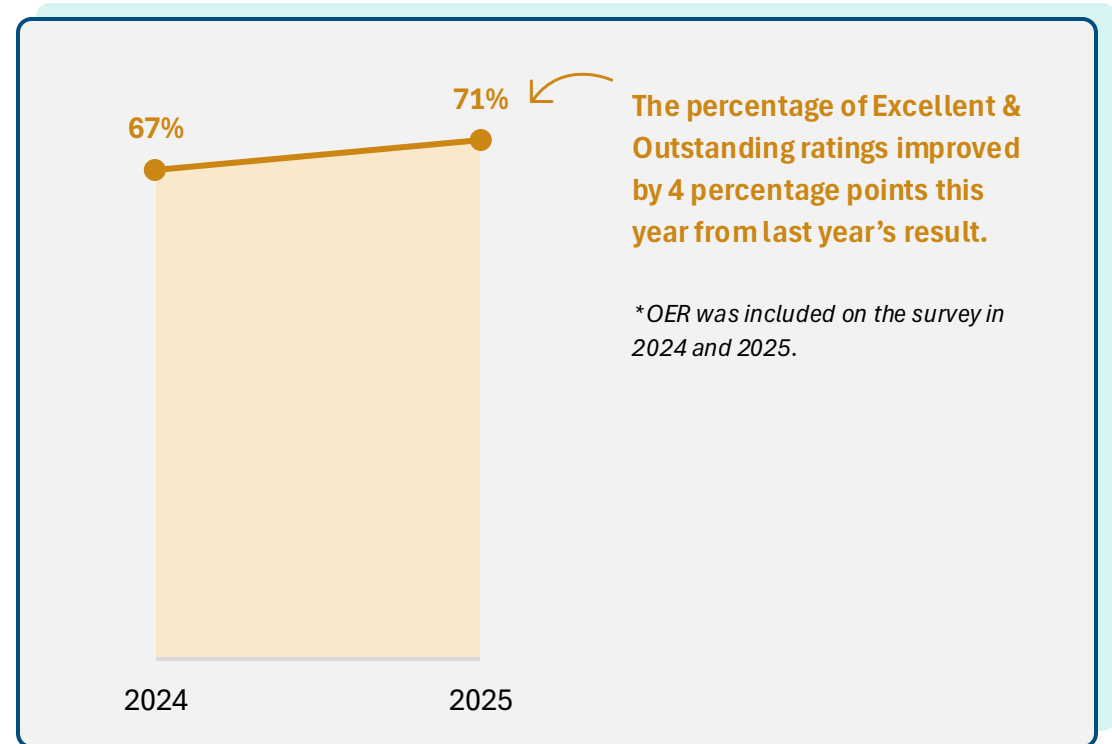
Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience participating in the Network in the past year. About 1 in 5 (20%) said their experience was Outstanding, typically indicating an ‘exceeds expectation’ experience. Half (51%) rated their experience as Excellent, generally indicating a ‘meets expectations’ experience. Ratings of ‘Less than Excellent’ may highlight areas for improvement. Looking at open-ended suggestions for improvement, most who gave a Less than Excellent experience stated they simply have not been as involved as they had been previously or wished to be. One said, **"It's not you, it's me. My team is currently rebuilding and the projects I'm focusing on are currently not empathy focused. I'm certain I'll be back to your resources in the next year."**

71% of respondents said their experience in the Network this year was Excellent or Outstanding.

(n=193)



Overall Experience Rating (OER) improved from last year's survey result. Network participants continue to report positive experiences year over year.



Network Partners gave higher overall experience ratings than Affiliates.

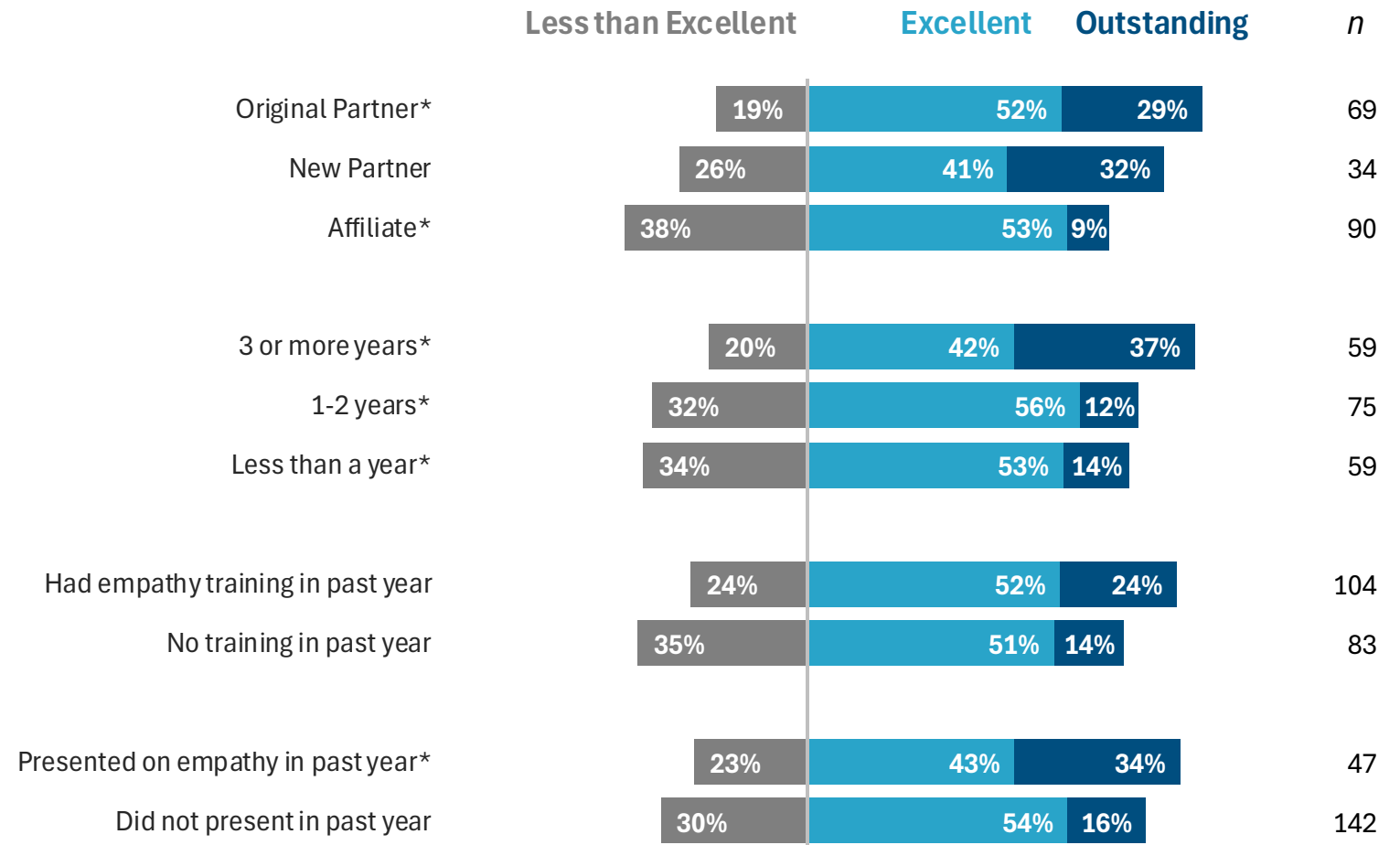
Being a Network Partner, the length of time involved, and participating in empathy-related training or presenting about empathy work in the past year were associated with higher reported Overall Experience Ratings.

Network Partners, particularly those from original Partner orgs and those with 3+ years of Network experience, were more likely to provide higher OER than Affiliates and those with less Network experience. Participation in empathy-related training and presentations on empathy work at meetings and conferences was also associated with higher OERs.



Continue to consider ways to inform, encourage, and engage Network Affiliates, including encouraging participation in empathy-related trainings and opportunities to present on their empathy work.

Respondents from Network Partner orgs, those with three or more years of Network experience, those who participated in empathy trainings, and those who presented on their empathy work in the past year reported higher Overall Experience Ratings.



Q: Please rate your overall experience in the Network in the last 12 months? [Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, Outstanding]

*Notes a statistically significant difference



Opportunities for Improvement

Those who gave an Overall Experience Rating of Less than Excellent were asked how their experience in the Network could be improved. 25 respondents provided a comment - **Most noted that their lower-rated experience in the Network was more due to their own lack of involvement or ability to participate, and hoped or planned to be involved more in the future.**

Need to make more time to be involved in the Network.
13 of 25 comments

“I personally need to find more time to really engage with the resources available to me and be more active with the Network.”

“It's not you, it's me. My team is currently rebuilding and the projects I'm focusing on are currently not empathy focused. I'm certain I'll be back to your resources in the next year.”

More frequent communication for resources & events.
3 comments

“If you are not on a committee, it can feel hard to stay up to date sometimes.”

More events, both in-person and virtual.
3 comments

“More coffee chats...to connect with others in the network... opportunities/trades/shares across organizations”

Trouble finding or accessing resources.
2 comments

“...I wasn't able to attend [a webinar], and I haven't found how to watch recordings.”

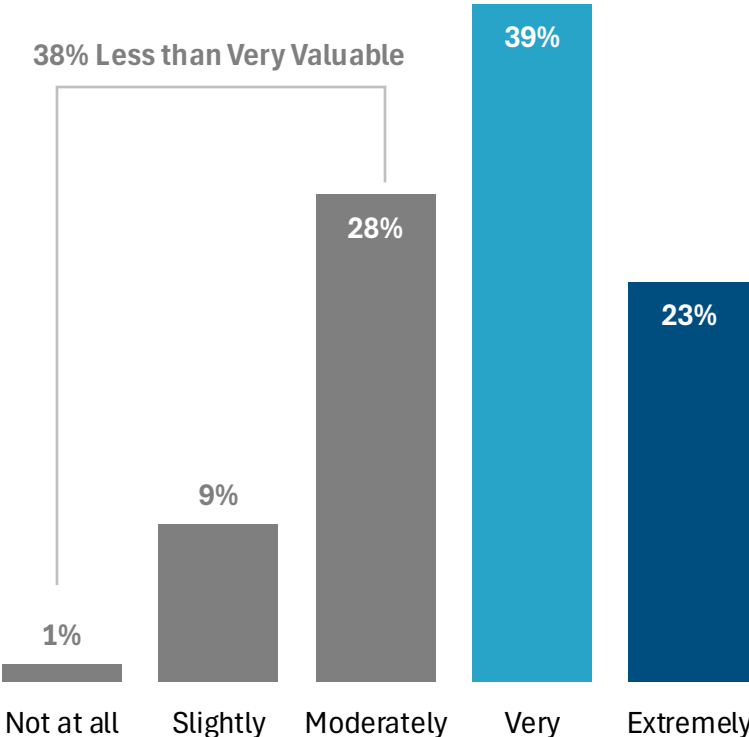
Help with Network orientation.
1 comment

“Mentors to help initiate and guide an organization (to) start empathy training with staff.”

Respondents' overall perception of the Network's value was high.

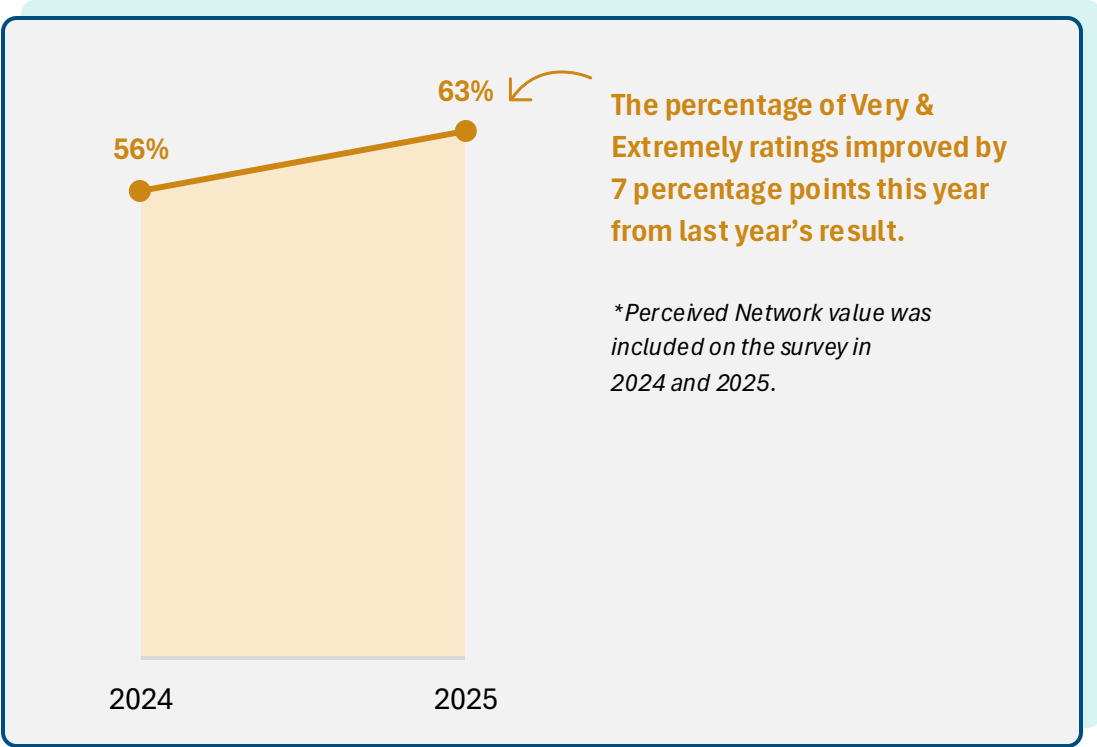
About two-thirds (63%) said that the Network has been Very/Extremely valuable to their work during the past year.

(n=192)



The ACE for Wildlife Network continues to provide a valuable space for professional networking and development among Partners and Affiliates alike. Last year, just over half (56%) of respondents said they believed the Network to be Very or Extremely valuable to them in their work. This year, 63% of respondents said the same (a 7-percentage point increase). One respondent noted, “...this has been a shining light in my professional journey. I cannot imagine my career forward without somehow staying involved in the ACE Network-- it is an incredibly kind, caring, and understanding group that is truly working from all sides to help wildlife in the best ways we can.”

Respondent ratings for perceived Network value improved this year from last year's survey results (56% vs. 63% Very/Extremely Valuable, respectively).

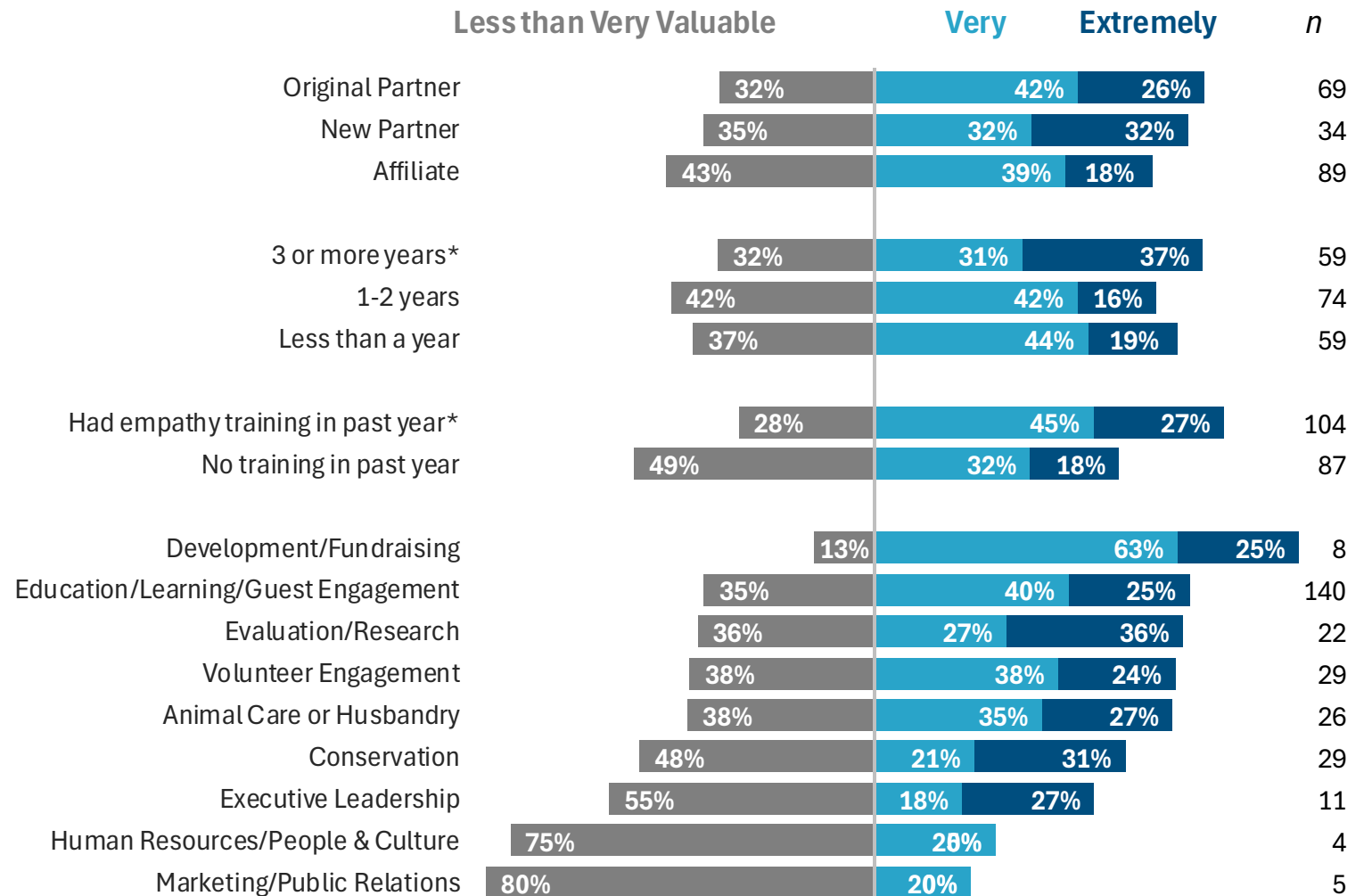


Partners and those with longer involvement in the Network report higher value perceptions.

Those who provided the highest value perceptions for the Network included Partners (original Partners slightly higher than new Partners), those who've had 3 or more years of personal involvement, and those who've had some empathy-related training in the past year.

Since samples are small within each role category, generalizations should not be made, but these comparative results are presented for additional context and reflection. Most roles found the Network to be valuable in their work; those less likely to provide higher value perception ratings included Conservation, Executive Leadership, Human Resources, and Marketing/Public Relations.

Respondents who were from original Partner orgs, had 3+ years of involvement in the Network, and those who've had empathy-related training or presented about their work in the past year had higher perceptions of how valuable they believed the Network to be to their work.



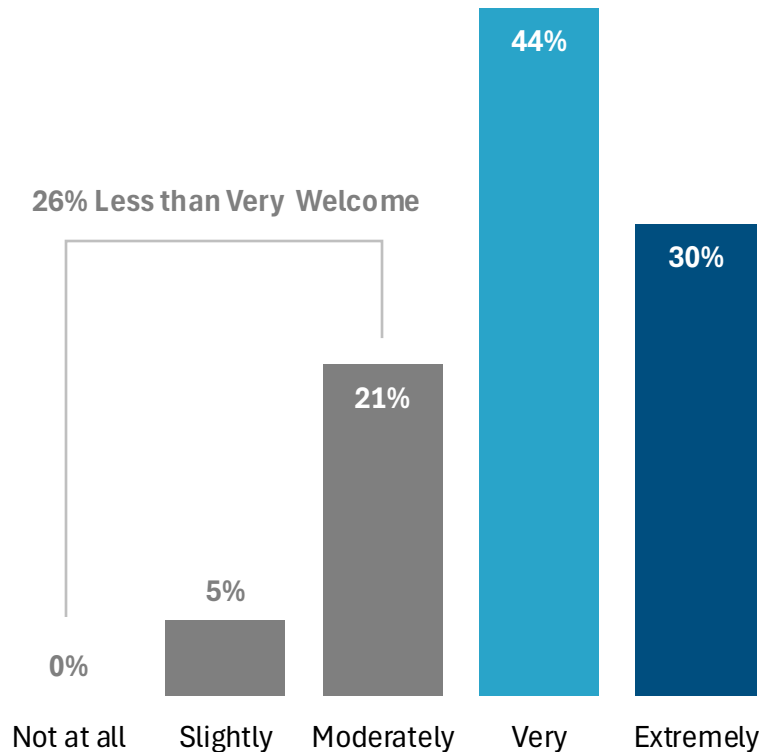
Q: In the past 12 months, how valuable has the ACE for Wildlife Network been to you and your work?

*Notes a statistically significant difference

Nearly all felt at least moderately welcome to share their opinions with the Network.

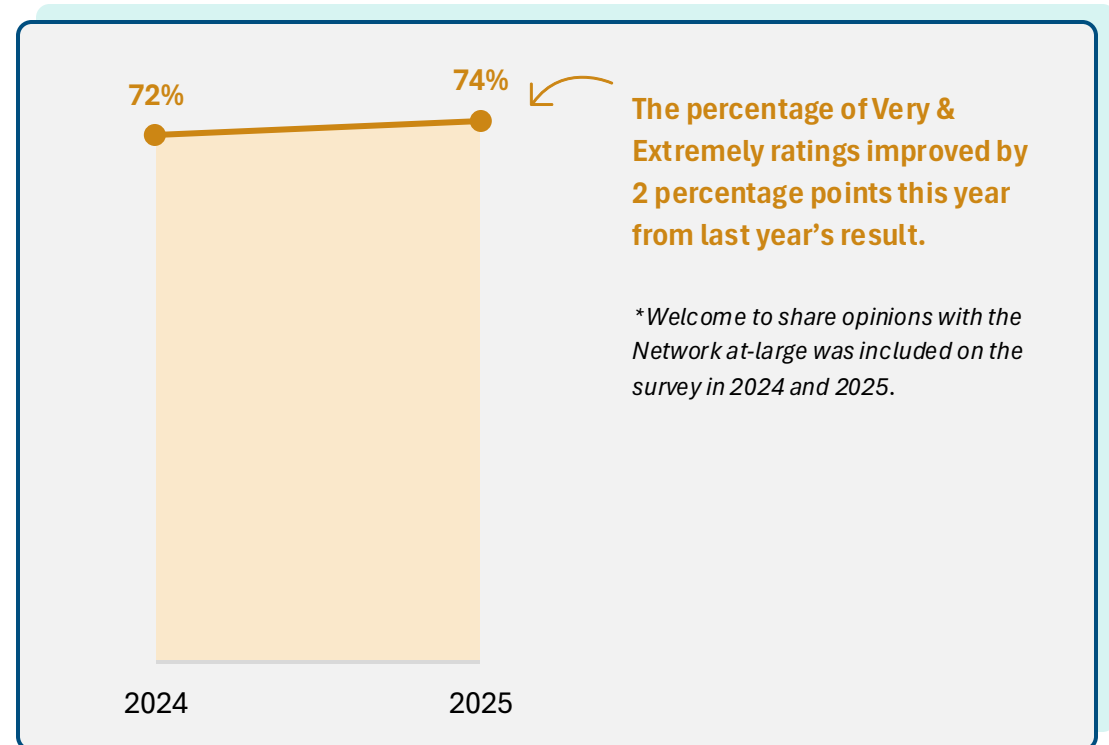
About three-quarters (74%) said that they feel Very/Extremely welcome to share their opinions with the Network at large.

(n=189)



About three-quarters (74%) of respondents felt Very or Extremely welcome to share their opinions with the Network. This sentiment has remained consistent from last year's survey (2-percentage point increase). It is clear that Network staff and participants work hard to create a comfortable and supportive environment for zoo and aquarium professionals. One respondent noted, "I find the network very welcoming and helpful in creating an empathy practice at my zoo." Another said, "The community has been super welcoming, and I've learned a lot from others in the network."


Perception of being welcome to share opinions with the Network has remained high over time (a 2-percentage point increase) from last year's survey result.



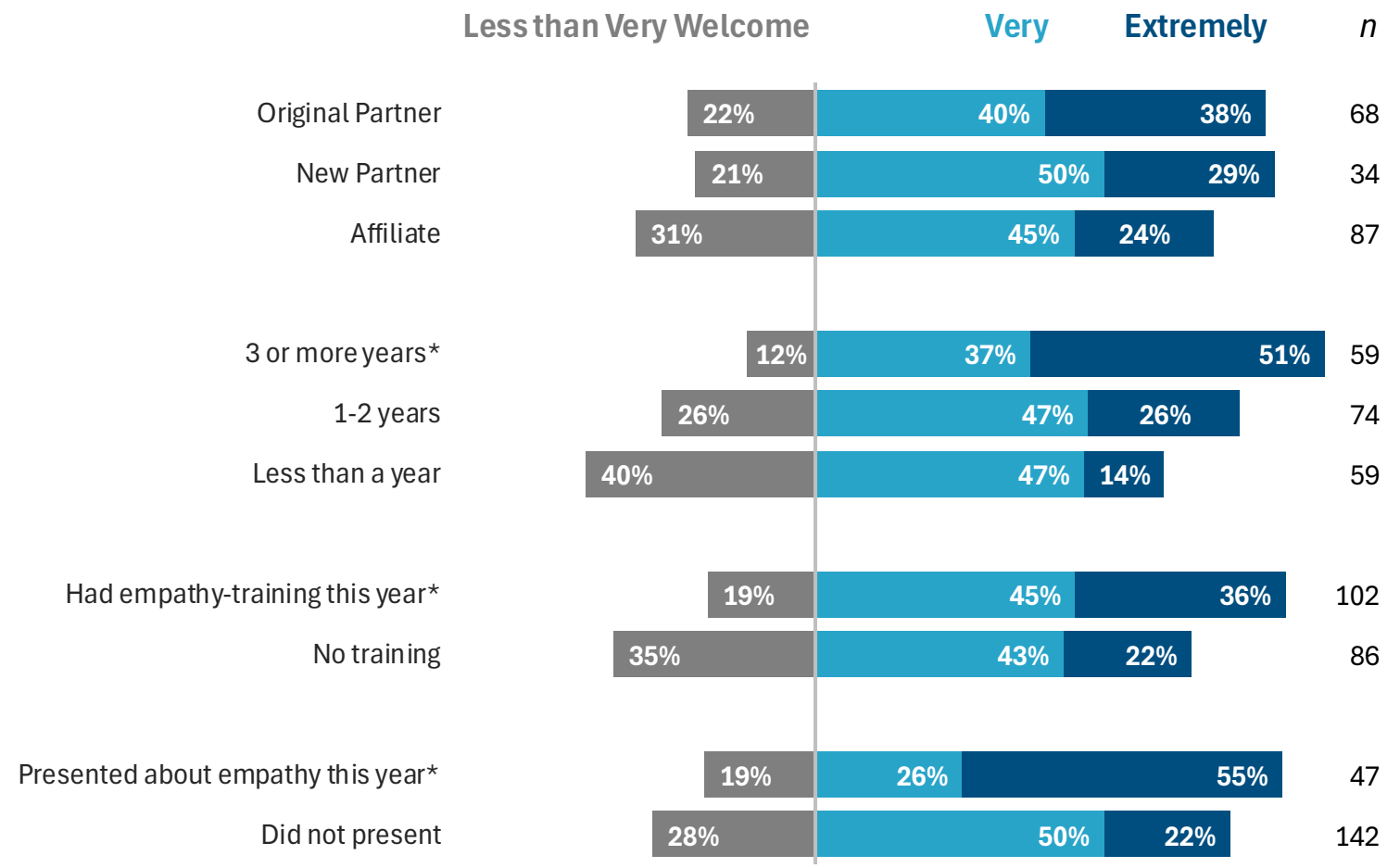
Length of Network involvement was most associated with feeling welcome to participate.

The length of personal involvement in the Network and participation in empathy-related trainings or presentations were most strongly associated with perceptions of feeling welcome to share opinions with the Network at large. Those with longer involvement felt more welcome to share opinions (88% Very/Extremely welcome) than those with 1-2 years (73%) or Less than a year (61%) of involvement.

Although Network Partners were slightly more likely to feel welcome to share opinions than Affiliates, the difference was much less distinct. This result is evidence of the work that has gone into creating consistent experiences and resources for Network participants regardless of their org-level affiliation including: Adding Network mission and empathy definition at the top of all events, showcasing new resources in on-going on-boarding sessions, offering multiple opportunities for on-boarding, connecting with individuals on LinkedIn and work conducted by the Steering committee to understand how participants wish to “belong” in this shared Network space together.

 **Continue successful efforts that ensure everyone feels welcome** to participate in the Network regardless of org affiliation.

88% of those who had been involved in the Network for 3 or more years said they felt Very or Extremely welcome to share opinions with the Network at-large. Length of personal involvement, having empathy training, or presenting on empathy were better indicators of feeling welcome to share opinions with the Network than Partner or Affiliate status.



Q: How welcome do you feel to share your own opinions, perspectives, and learning about empathy with the Network at-large?

*Notes a statistically significant difference

Most read the Newsletter and participate by reading Discussion Board posts and accessing resources.

Fewer respondents reported participating in the Network in active ways, like posting/responding to posts, presenting at learning groups, or attending other events. Those who were from Partner orgs were more likely to report participating in these ways than Affiliates.

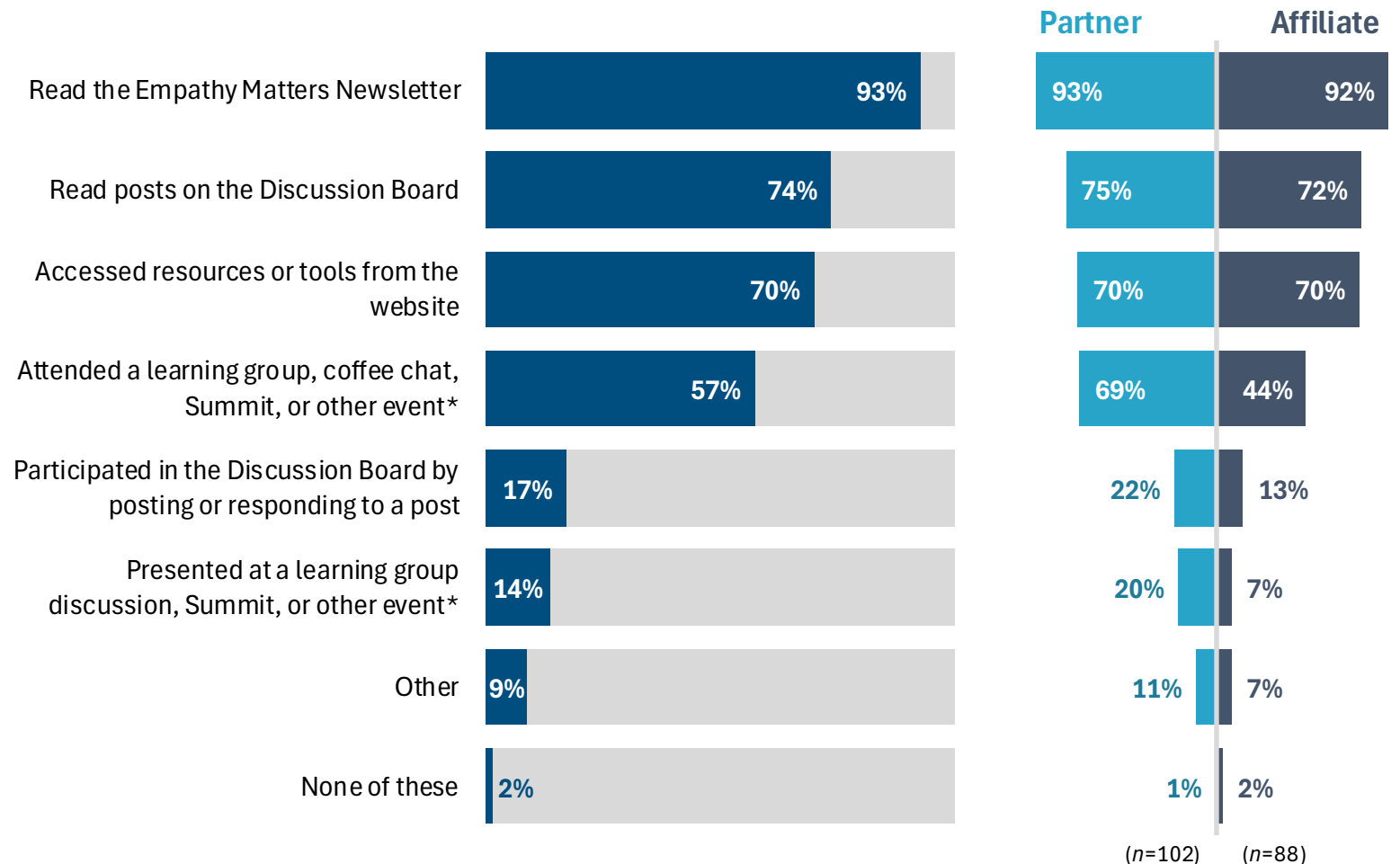
Nearly all respondents (93%) said that they have participated in the Network this year by reading the Newsletter. About three-quarters have read posts on the Discussion Board (74%) and accessed resources or tools from the website (70%). Just over half (57%) said they participated in a learning group, coffee chat, the Summit, or another Network event.



Platforms such as the Newsletter, Discussion Board, and Resource Library are valuable and well used by participants. Continue to strengthen these, and support Partners and Affiliates in making their own contributions to each.

Network Partners and Affiliates were equally likely to participate in general ways, such as reading the Newsletter, the Discussion Board, and accessing resources. Partners were more likely to engage actively, such as attending learning groups, posting on discussion boards, and presenting at events.

(n=190)



Which of the following ways did you participate in the ACE for Wildlife Network in the past 12 months? (Select all that apply)

*Notes a statistically significant difference between Partners and Affiliates

About half said they'd like to increase their Network participation in the year ahead.

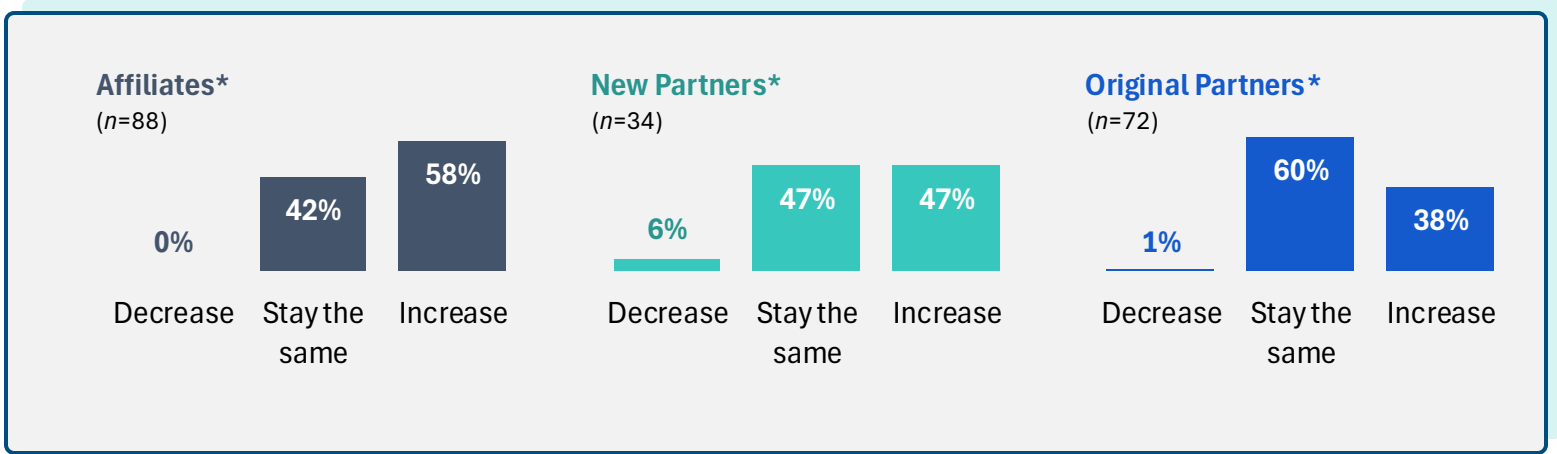
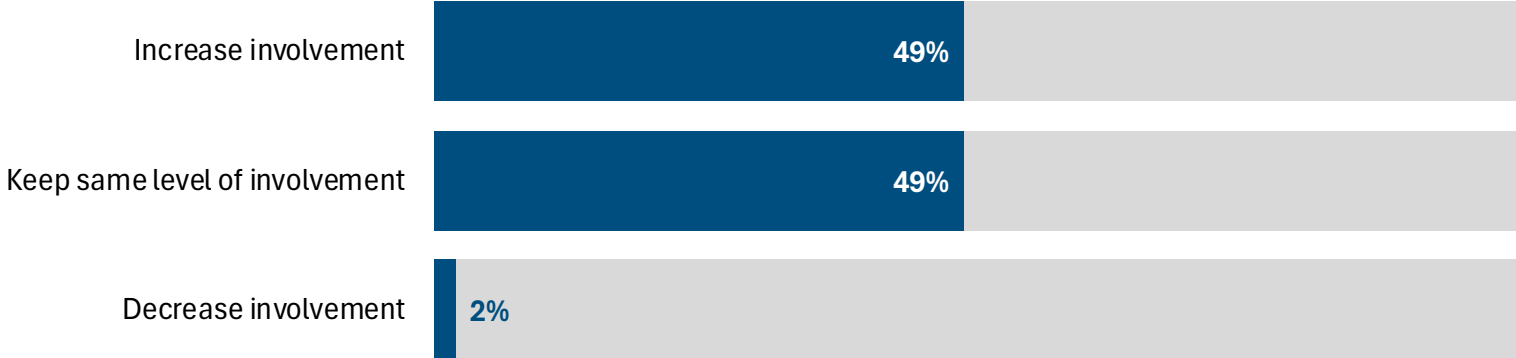
About half of the respondents (49%) said they hoped that they could increase their Network involvement in the coming year. Another half (49%) were happy with their current level of involvement and hoped to maintain it. Just a few individuals said they would like to decrease their involvement (2%). As seen in last year's survey, **Affiliates were more likely to say they were interested in increasing their involvement in the Network (58%) than new Partners (47%) or original Partners (38%).**



Continue to promote opportunities for Network involvement considering specific ways Affiliates and new Partners can join and contribute.

The majority of respondents said they'd like to maintain their current level of Network involvement (49%) or increase it (49%). Affiliates and new Partners were more likely than original Partners to indicate a desire to increase their Network involvement.

(n=190)



Q: Based on your current level of participation, how would you like to participate in the Network in the next 12 months?

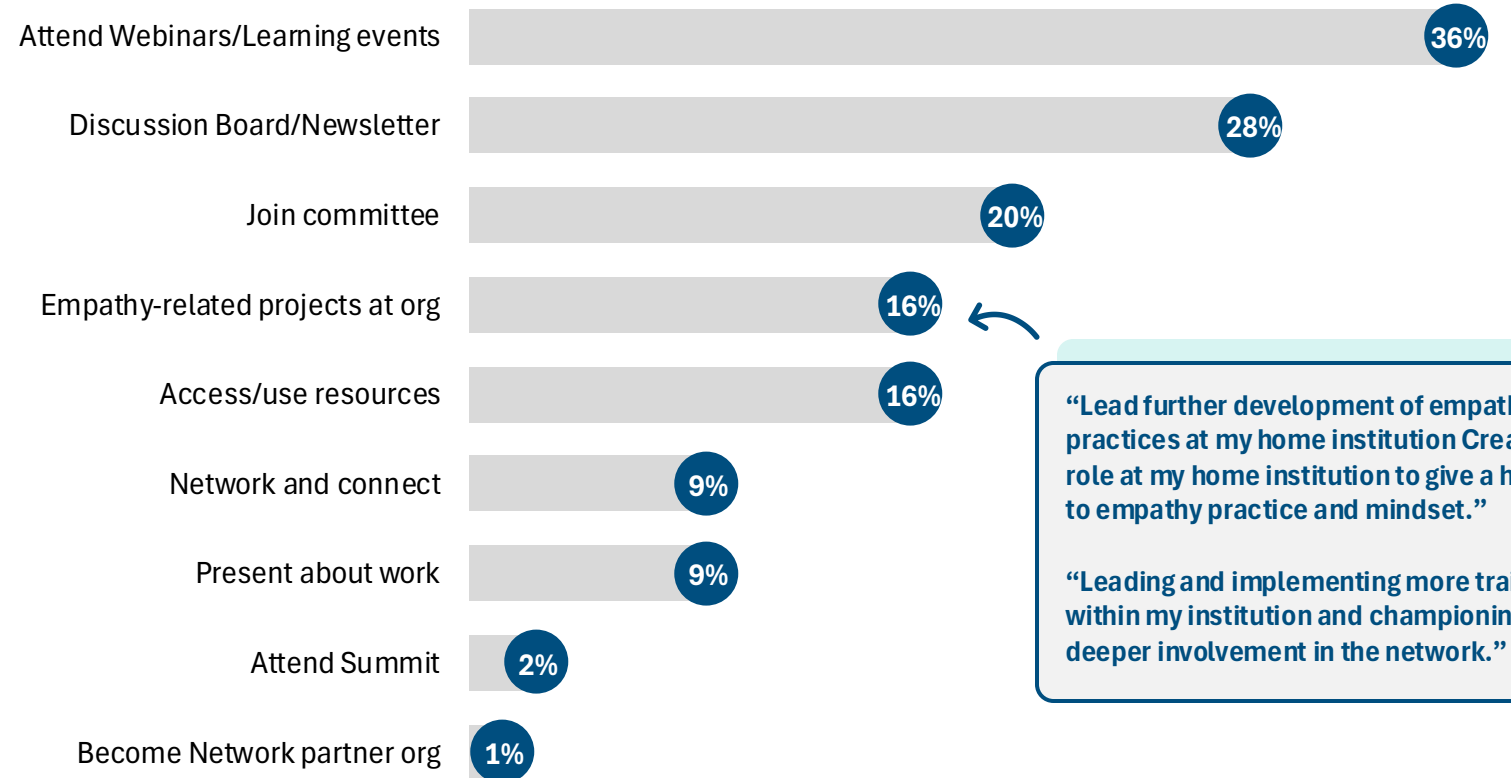
*Notes a statistically significant difference



Credit: Joel Miller, Milwaukee County Zoo

How do respondents wish to engage in the Network this year?

81 respondents commented on how they'd like to increase their involvement in the Network over the next year. 36% said they'd like to attend more Network events, such as webinars, coffee chats, and learning groups. **16% commented on wanting to apply their learning to policies, practices, and trainings at their own orgs – including one who said they hoped to create an empathy-specific role at their org.** One said they would like to explore becoming a formal Network Partner.



“Lead further development of empathy practices at my home institution Create a role at my home institution to give a home to empathy practice and mindset.”

“Leading and implementing more training within my institution and championing deeper involvement in the network.”

Note: Aggregated verbatim comments can be accessed [here](#) by the Network program team.



My organization and I are so thrilled to be a part of this network; incorporating empathy into our education program and zoo-wide practices is in many ways a shared top priority, and it's so amazing to have a support structure to help ensure we do it as best we can. Thank you!

- Survey respondent

Organizational Investment in Empathy Practices and Projects



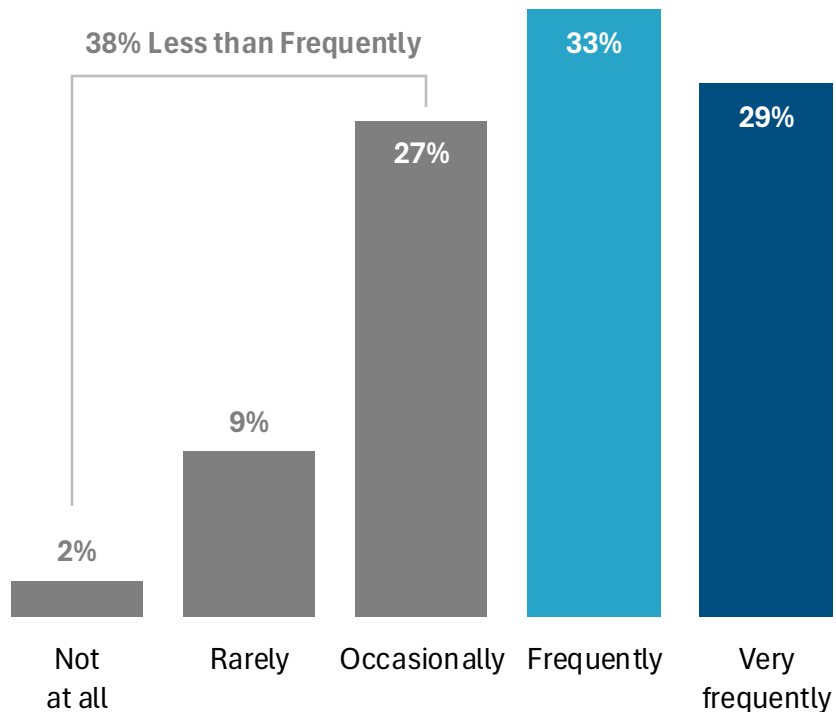
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Internal communication about empathy projects has remained consistent.

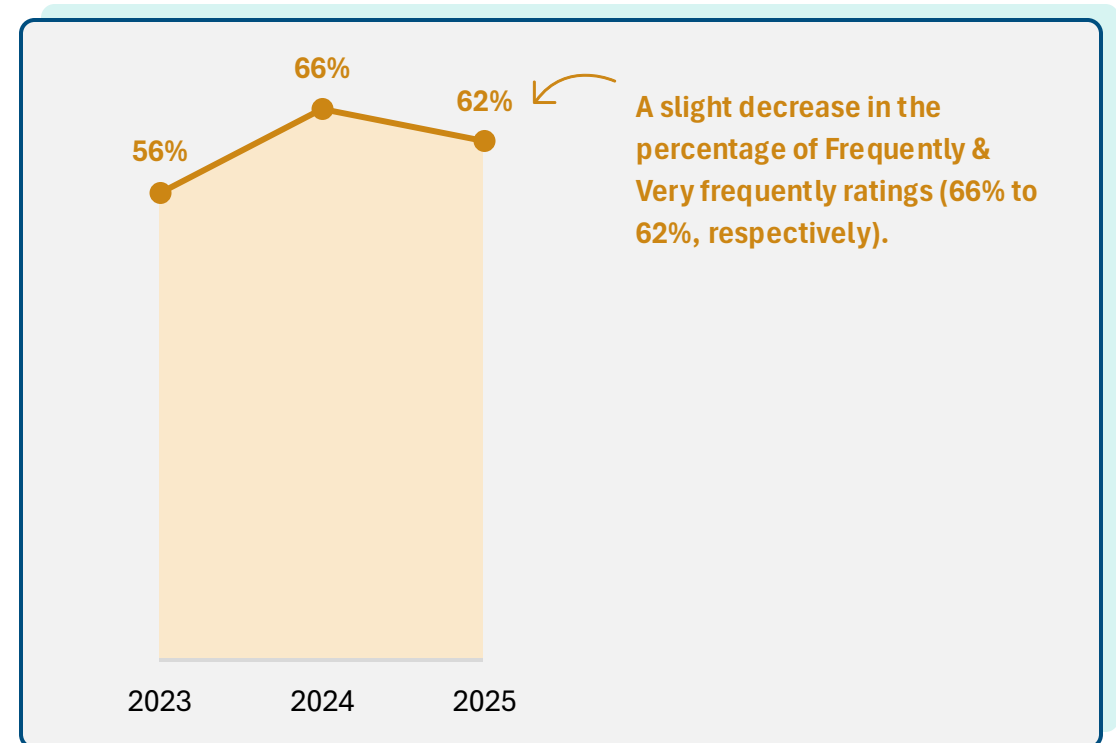
Internal communication about empathy-related practices and projects within orgs has remained fairly consistent over time. This year, 62% said they believed that staff communicated Frequently or Very frequently about empathy practices and projects, a slight decrease from the previous year's result of 66%.

Just under two-thirds (62%) said that staff at their organizations have communicated Frequently or Very frequently about empathy projects.

(n=190)



Reported frequency of internal org-wide communication about empathy practices and projects has remained stable over time – we saw a slight decrease this year from last year's results (66% to 62% Frequently/Very frequently).



Q: In the past 12 months, how frequently have staff in your organization communicated internally about empathy-related practices or projects?

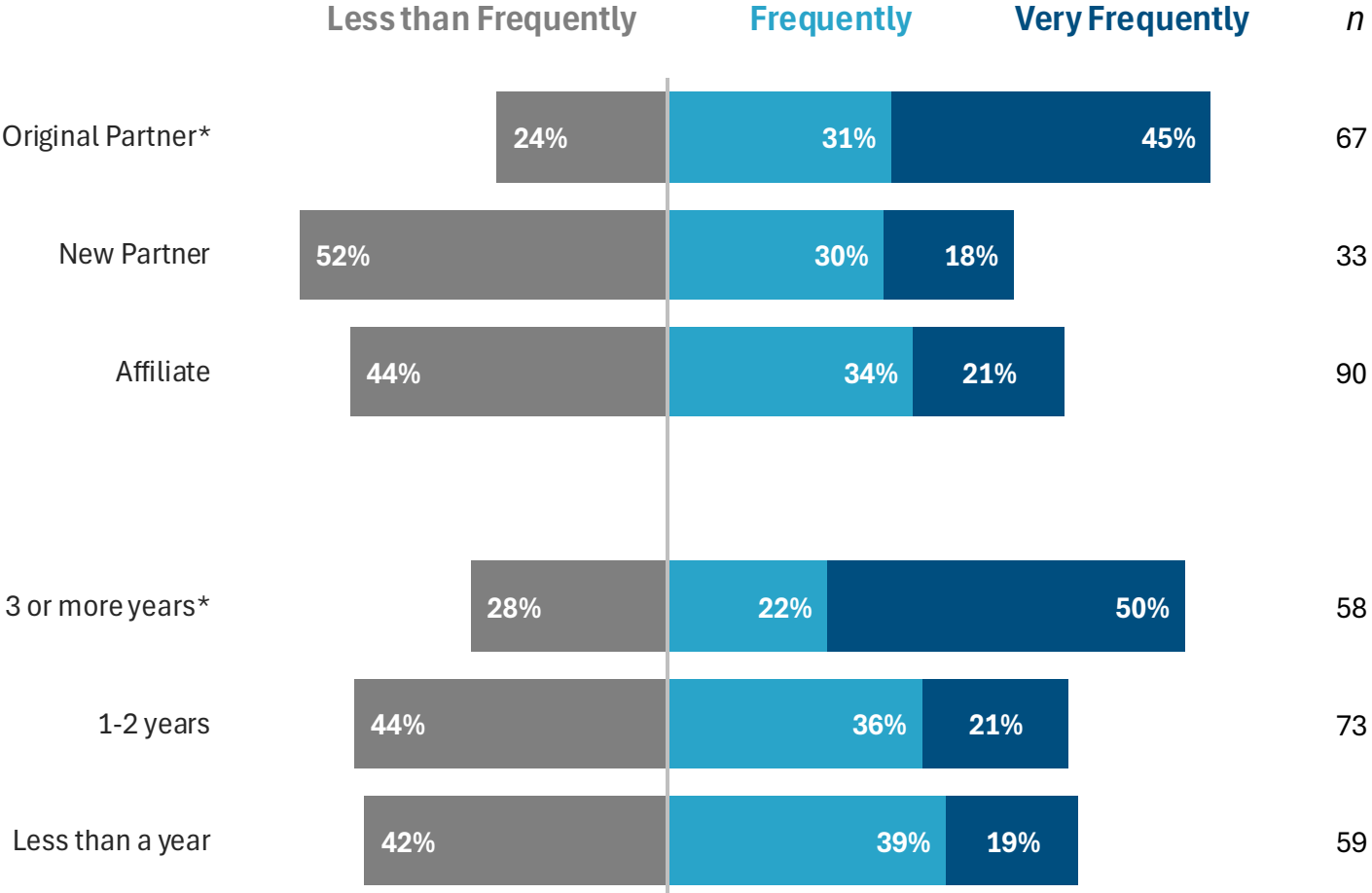
Original Network Partners were most likely to communicate about empathy internally.

Original Partners and those with longer personal involvement in the Network were most likely to say that staff at their orgs communicated about empathy-related practices and projects in the past year (76% Frequently/Very frequently and 72%, respectively). New Network Partners and Affiliates were less likely to say their orgs have communicated about empathy internally in the past year. It is likely that capacity building from funding opportunities and longer Network involvement has led to increased internal communication within orgs about their empathy work.



Consider ways to help Network participants communicate about empathy-related practices and projects within their own orgs, especially for new Partners and Affiliates. Showcasing the ways in which those who do communicate about empathy at the orgs may be one useful strategy (via the Newsletter or other Network communications).

Those from original Partner orgs and those with longer personal Network involvement were more likely to say that staff at their orgs communicated frequently about empathy-related practices and projects.



Q: In the past 12 months, how frequently have staff Partners in your organization communicated internally about empathy-related practices or projects?

*Notes a statistically significant difference

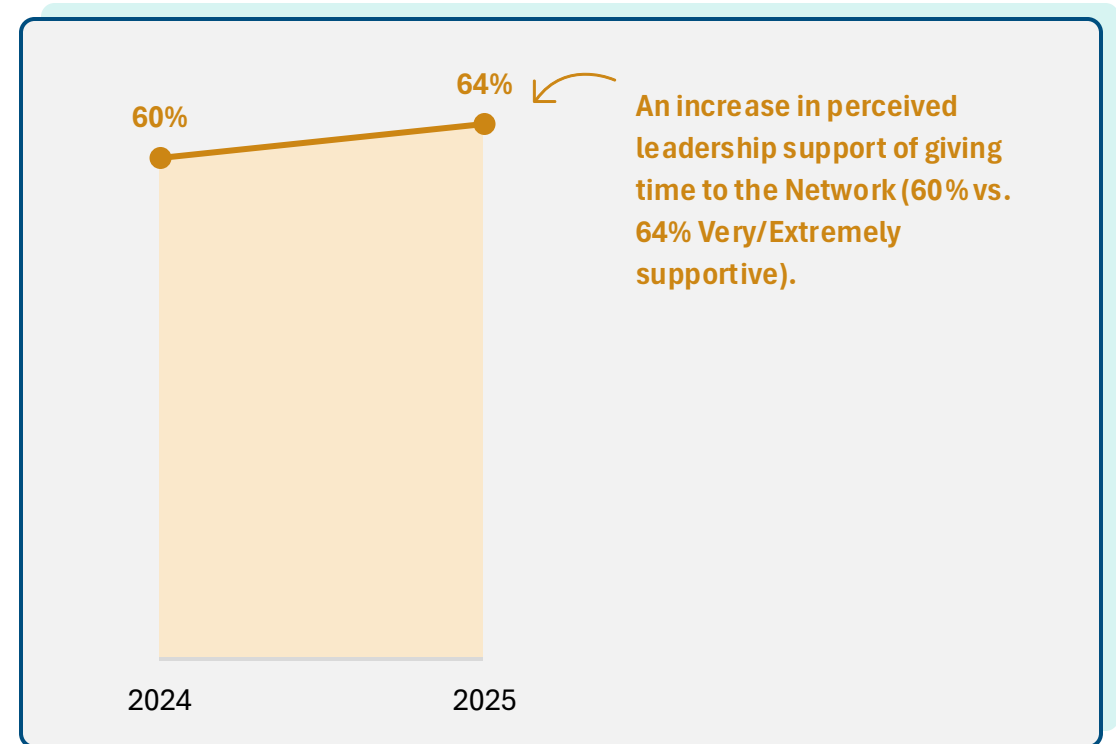
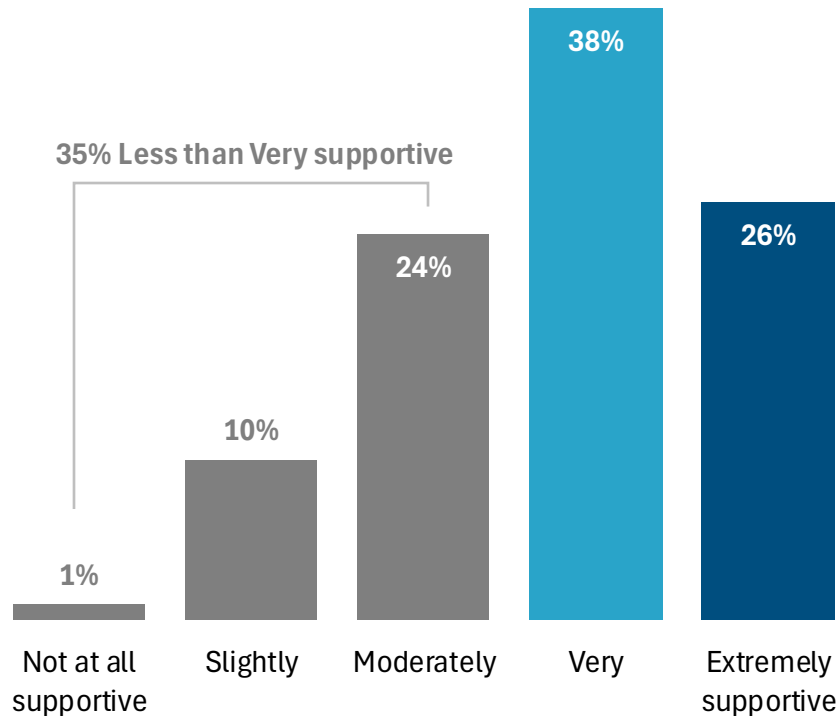
Perceived leadership support in giving time to the Network.

Nearly all respondents (88%) in this year's survey believed their organization's leadership was at least moderately supportive of their involvement in the Network – giving time and resources to participate in Network activities and events. In the most positive ratings (Very/Extremely supportive), this represented a slight improvement from last year's survey (60% vs 64% respectively).

About two-thirds (64%) of respondents said they believed their leadership was either Very or Extremely supportive of their Network involvement.

(n=185)

This year, we saw an improvement (4 percentage points) in respondents saying they believed their leadership was either Very or Extremely supportive of their involvement in allowing time and resources to participate in the Network.



Q: From your perspective, how supportive is your organization's leadership in allowing you time and resources to participate in the ACE for Wildlife Network? [Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely]

Partners perceived their leadership to be more supportive of Network participation than Affiliates.

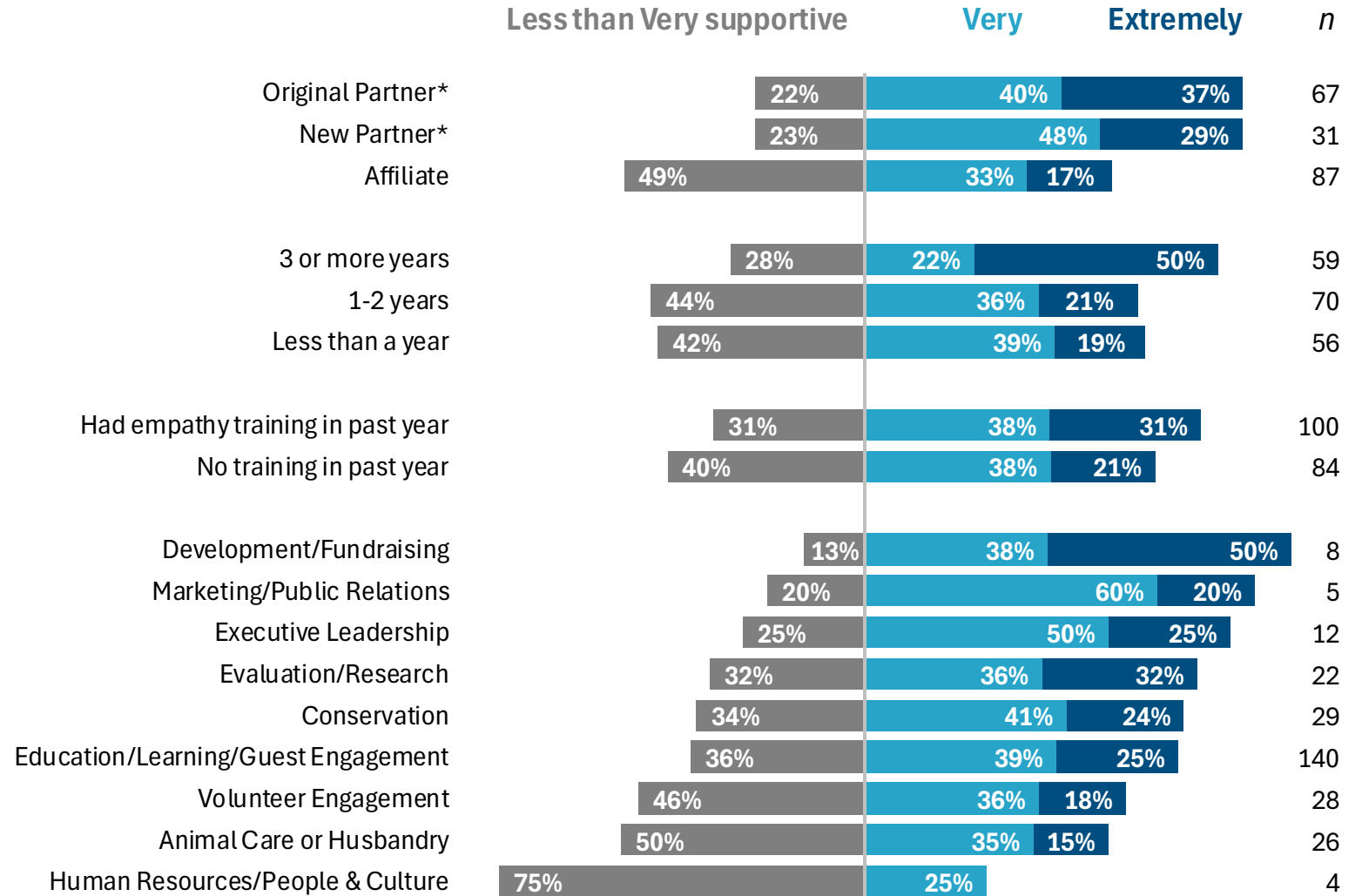
Those who felt their leadership was most supportive of Network participation were Partners and those who had 3 or more years of personal Network involvement. Those who had empathy-related training in the past year were also more likely to say their leadership was supportive of Network participation.

Small samples within most role designations make direct comparison challenging, though it may be useful to tailor resources that ‘make the case for Network participation’ to leadership in different roles or departments (education, volunteer, administration, animal care, etc.).



Promote resources or messaging that help ‘make the case’ for Network participation to leadership, especially for Affiliates and those with less experience in the Network.

Network Partners, those with longer involvement, and those who’ve had training in the past year, believed their leadership was more supportive of allowing time and resources for participating in the Network.



Q: From your perspective, how supportive is your organization's leadership in allowing you time and resources to participate in the ACE for Wildlife Network? [Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely]

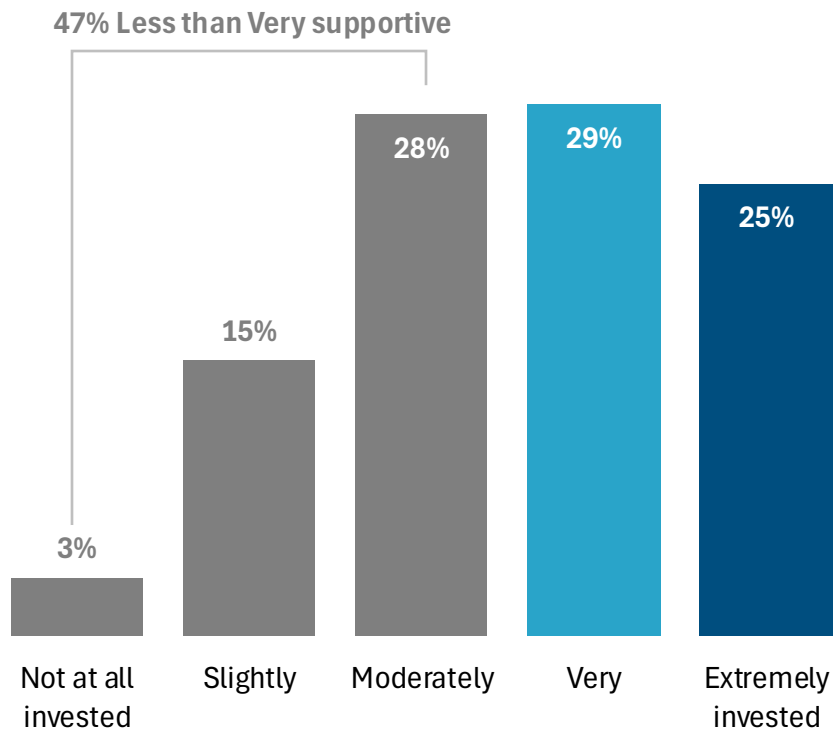
*Notes a statistically significant difference

Perceived investment by leadership in empathy practices and projects.

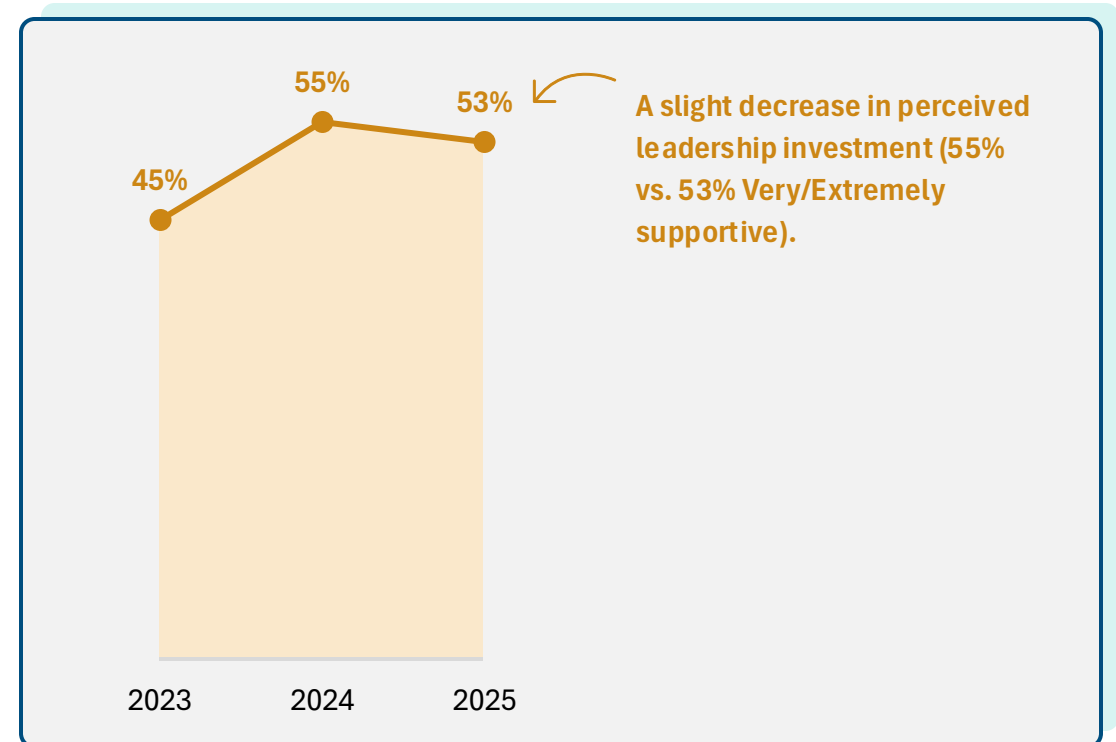
Most respondents (82%) believed their leadership was at least Moderately invested in empathy-related practices and projects in their orgs. This year's result remained similar to last year's survey – 53% Very/Extremely invested compared to last year's 55%. The slight decrease was not statistically significant.

Most (82%) said they believed their leadership was at least Moderately invested in empathy practices and projects. Over half (54%) said they were Very/Extremely invested.

(n=187)



In this year's survey (and last year's), about half of the respondents felt their leadership was either Very or Extremely invested in empathy-related practices and projects.



Q: From your perspective, how invested is your organization's leadership in empathy practices and empathy-related projects? [Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely]

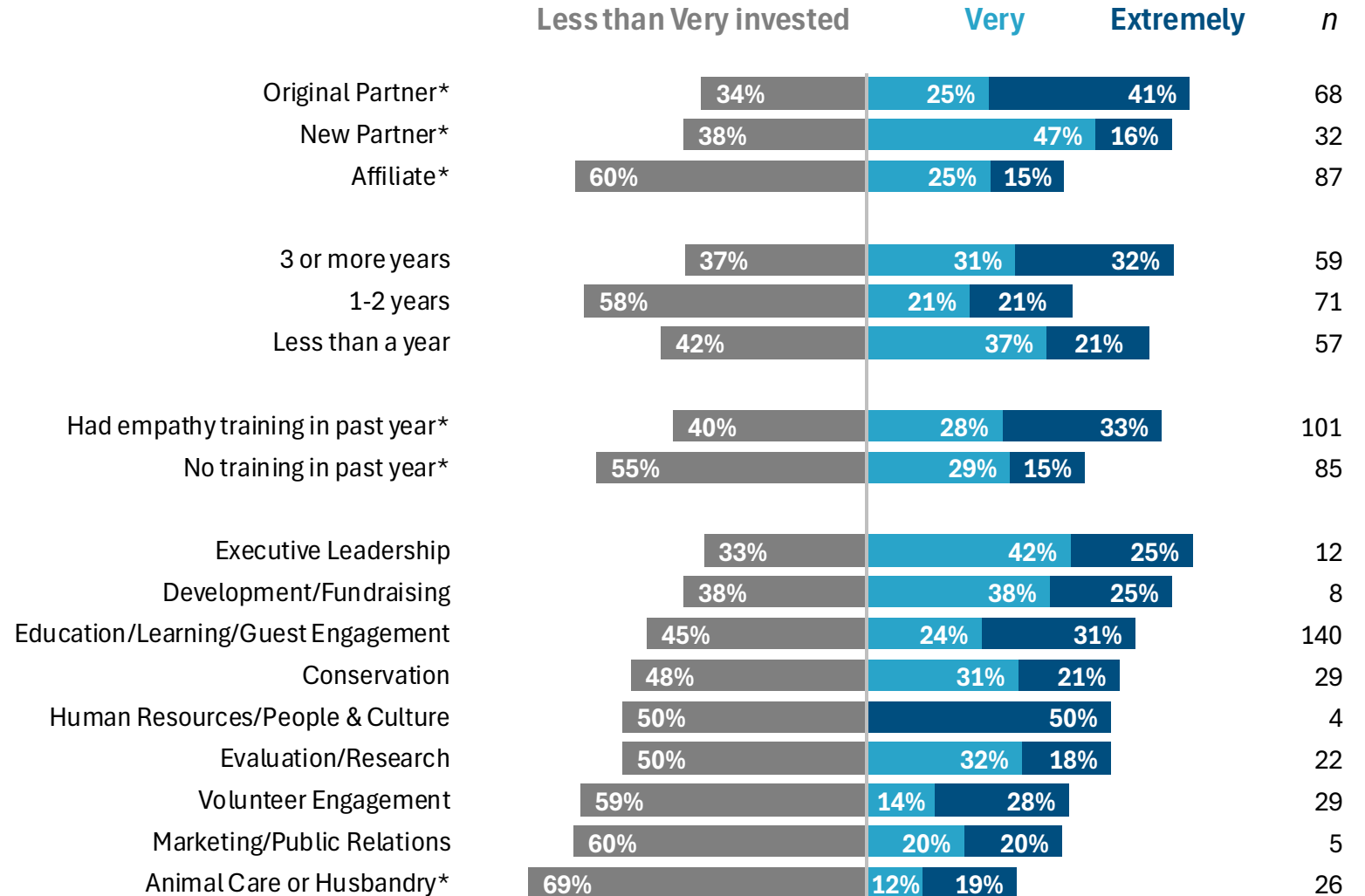
Perceived leadership investment was highest among those from original Partner orgs.

Those from original Partner orgs were most likely to give the most affirmative response (Extremely invested) when asked to rate their perception of leadership's investment in empathy practices and projects. Those with 3+ years in the Network and those who've had empathy training in the past year were also more likely to have higher perceived investment ratings. Although small samples within role categories make generalized comparisons difficult, it may be useful to note that those in roles such as animal care are less likely to report higher perceived leadership investment than those in other roles, such as education/learning or conservation.



In considering resources to promote 'the case for empathy investment', **it may be of interest to engage the executive leaders in the Network to understand how they personally demonstrate empathy investment to their own orgs.** Lessons learned here may help others gain support among their own leadership.

Partner orgs were more likely to believe their leadership was Very or Extremely invested in empathy practices and projects. Those with more time in the Network and who have received training this year also believed their leadership had higher investment in empathy practices & projects.



Q: From your perspective, how invested is your organization's leadership in empathy practices and empathy-related projects? [Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely]

*Notes a statistically significant difference



This has been a shining light in my professional journey. I cannot imagine my career forward without somehow staying involved in the ACE Network...I will be a lifetime supporter, and use the practices no matter where my career takes me. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all you do, the network you sustain, and the bridges you have supported the creation of.

- Survey respondent

Awareness and Use of Select Network Resources

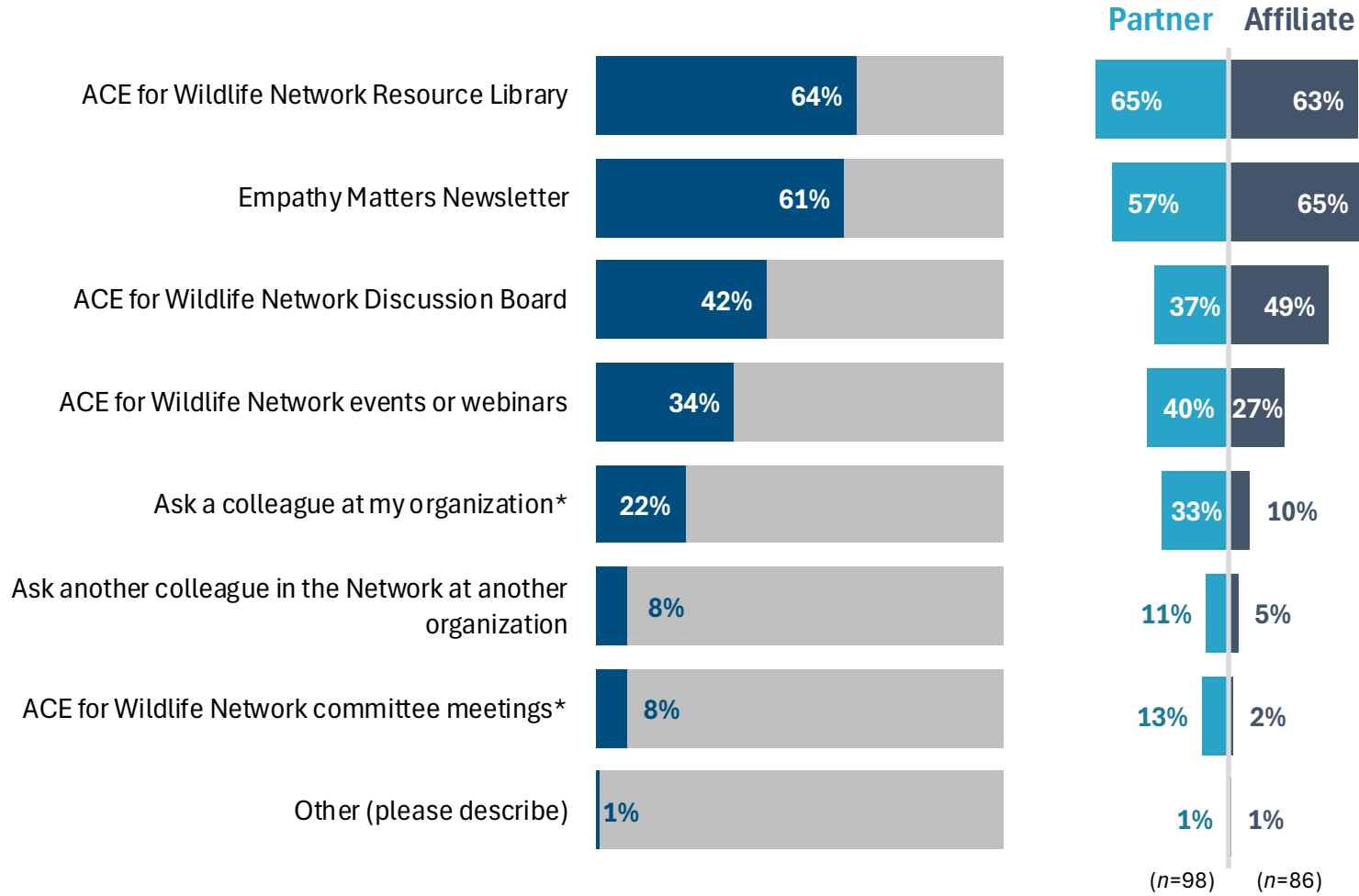


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The Resource Library and Newsletter were the go-to sources for seeking Network resources.

When asked about where they most frequently go to find Network resources, most respondents mentioned the Resource Library (64%) or the Empathy Matters Newsletter (61%). Additional sources were mentioned by just under half or fewer. Generally, Partners and Affiliates mentioned sources at similar rates, with Partners more likely to say they'd ask a colleague at their own organization or seek resources through Network committee meetings.

About two-thirds of respondents said the Resource Library (64%) and the Empathy Matters Newsletter (61%) were their most frequently used sources when seeking Network Resources. Partners were more likely to ask colleagues at their own orgs and to use committee meetings than Affiliates.



Q: Where do you most frequently go to find ACE for Wildlife Network resources? (Select all that apply)

*Notes a statistically significant differences between Partners and Affiliates.

Respondents reported broad awareness and overall use of Network resources.

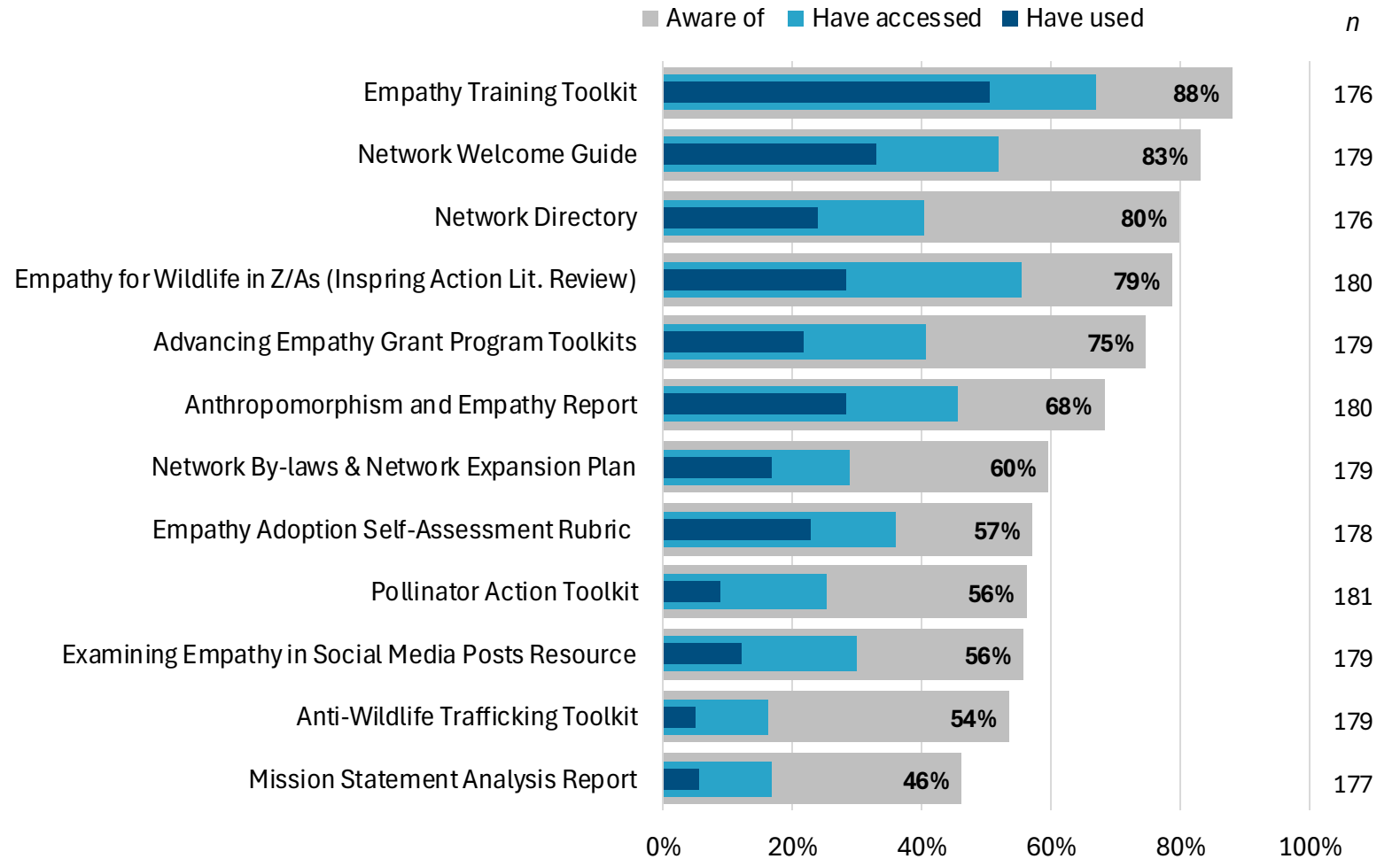
Nearly all respondents (89%) said they were aware of at least one Network resource listed on the survey.

Respondents had the highest awareness and use of the Empathy Training Toolkit (88% and 51%, respectively). Respondents had the lowest awareness of the Mission Statement Analysis Report (46%). Generally, resource use was associated with resource awareness (i.e., higher levels of awareness were associated with greater use).



Continue to promote resources in various ways that highlight where and how to access them, as well as how Network participants might use them in their daily work or within their orgs.

Self-reported awareness of Network resources ranged from a low of 46% (Mission Statement Analysis Report) to a high of 88% for the Empathy Training Toolkit. Overall, just over two-thirds (68%) of respondents said they have used at least one of the resources listed on the survey.

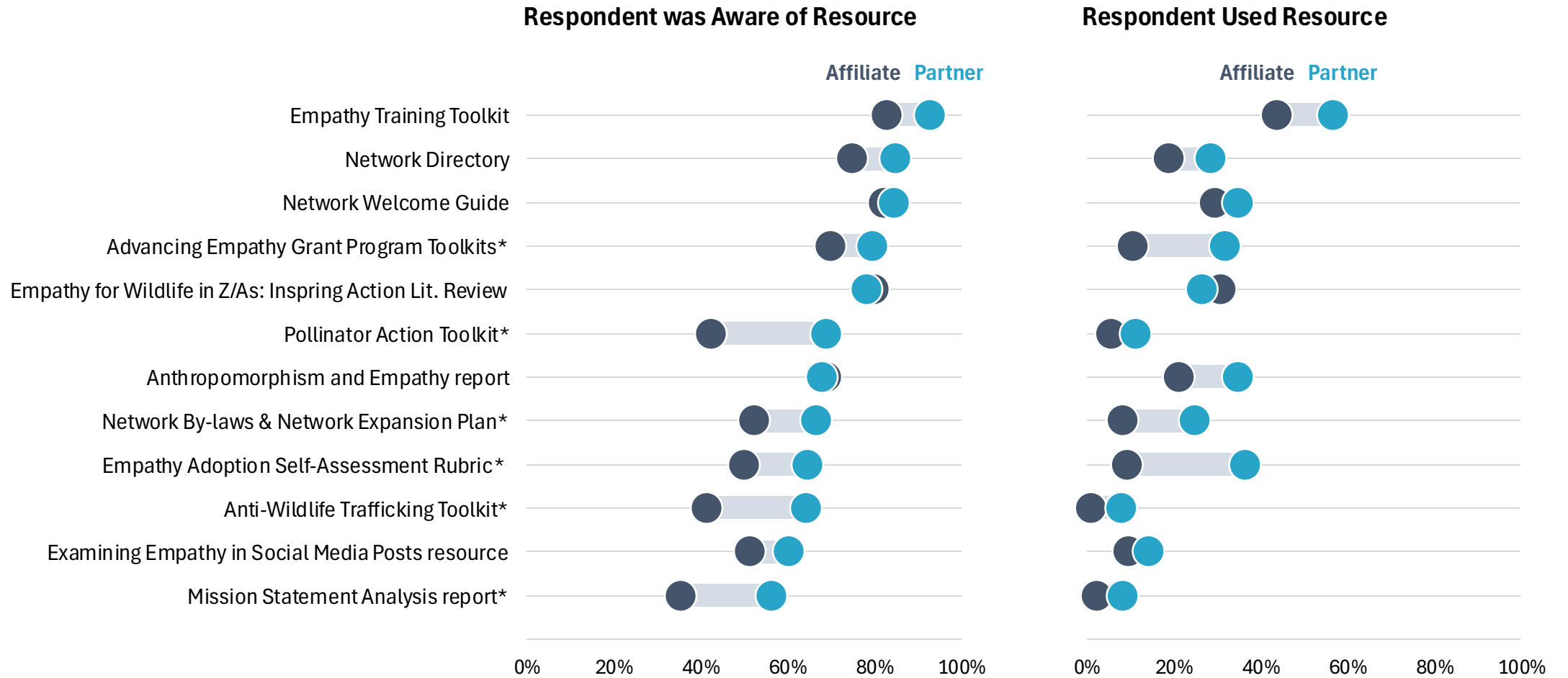


Q: For each of the following ACE for Wildlife Network resources, select the option that best describes your awareness and use of the resource.

[Not aware of this Resource, Aware of but haven't accessed, Accessed but haven't used, Used this resource]

Network Partners had higher awareness and reported use of resources than Affiliates.

Network Partners tended to have higher overall awareness and reported use of Network resources than Affiliates. Those where statistically significant differences in awareness or use occurred included: AE Grant Toolkits, Pollinator Action Toolkit, Network By-Laws and Expansion Plan, Empathy Adoption Self-Assessment Rubric, Anti-Wildlife Trafficking Toolkit, and Mission Statement Analysis report. **When promoting Network resources, continue to consider spaces where Partners and Affiliates are likely to seek and receive information.**



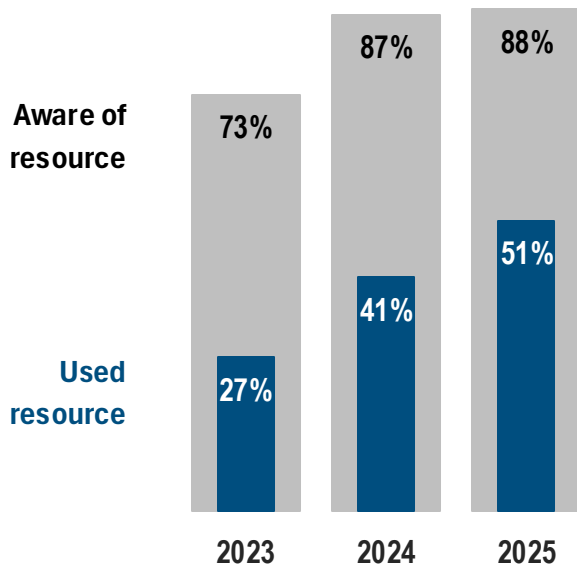
Q: For each of the following ACE for Wildlife Network resources, select the option that best describes your awareness and use of the resource.

*Notes a statistically significant differences between Partners and Affiliates

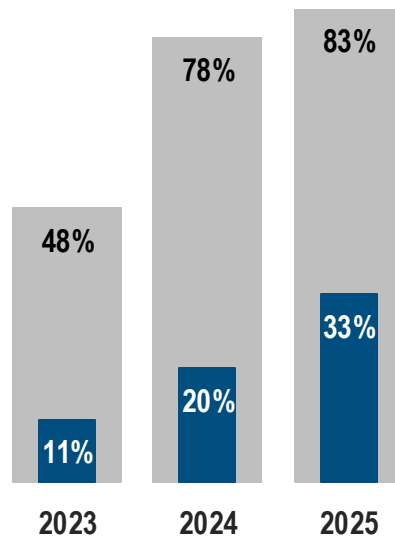
Empathy Training Toolkit and Welcome Guide have seen growth in awareness and use.

We have consistently asked about awareness and use of three Network resources across each previous survey (2023-2025) and included the Network Directory on the 2024-2025 surveys. **Since 2023, there has been a substantial increase in both awareness and use of the Empathy Training Toolkit and the Network Welcome Guide. Awareness of the Network Directory remained consistent, but use of the resource improved.** There was a slight decrease in awareness and use of the Pollinator Action Toolkit compared with last year's survey result, but it remains slightly higher than the initial 2023 result.

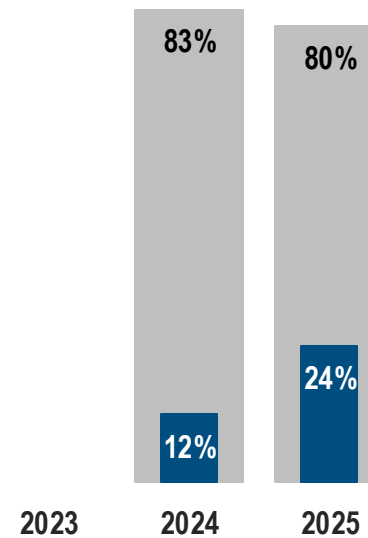
Awareness and use of the Empathy Training Toolkit increased each year.



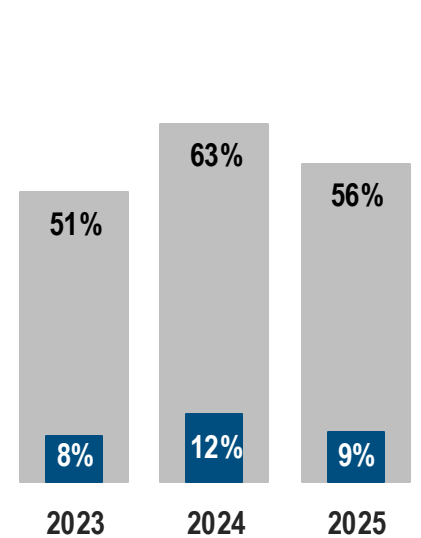
Awareness and use of the Network Welcome Guide increased each year.



Use of the Network Directory increased each year.



Awareness and use of the Pollinator Action Toolkit decreased slightly this year.



How useful were resources to those who said they've used them in their work?

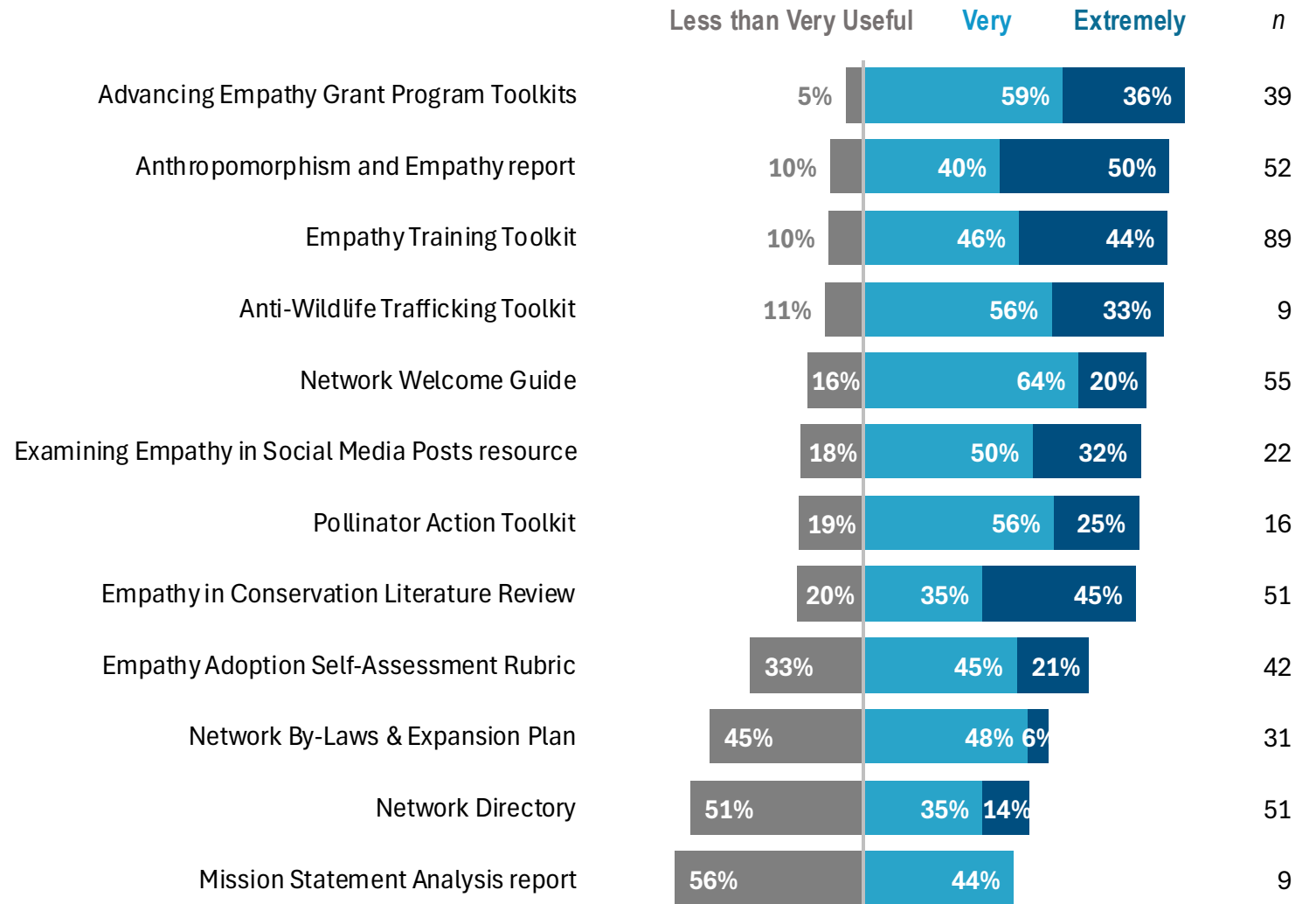
Most resources listed were rated highly by respondents in terms of their perceived usefulness.

95% of respondents who used the Grant Program Toolkits said they were Very or Extremely useful. Other highly useful resources included the Anthropomorphism & Empathy report (90%), Empathy Training Toolkit (90%), and Anti-Wildlife Trafficking Toolkit (89%). Resources with lower ratings by comparison included those that were more policy-oriented like the Empathy Adoption Self-Assessment Rubric (66%), Network By-Laws & Expansion Plan documents (54%), Network Directory (49%), and Mission Statement Analysis report (44%).



It could be worth exploring what makes resources like the Network Directory particularly useful, or less useful to participants, and what, if anything, we could do to improve awareness, application, and ease of use of this resource. It may also be worth reviewing the list of 'resources' asked about in the survey to include usefulness ratings only for those intended for deeper application, rather than policy or reference.

Most respondents found the resources we asked about highly useful. The Grant Program Toolkits, Anthropomorphism & Empathy report, and Empathy Training Toolkit were rated highest by survey respondents.



Network Partners and Affiliates generally felt similarly about resource usefulness.

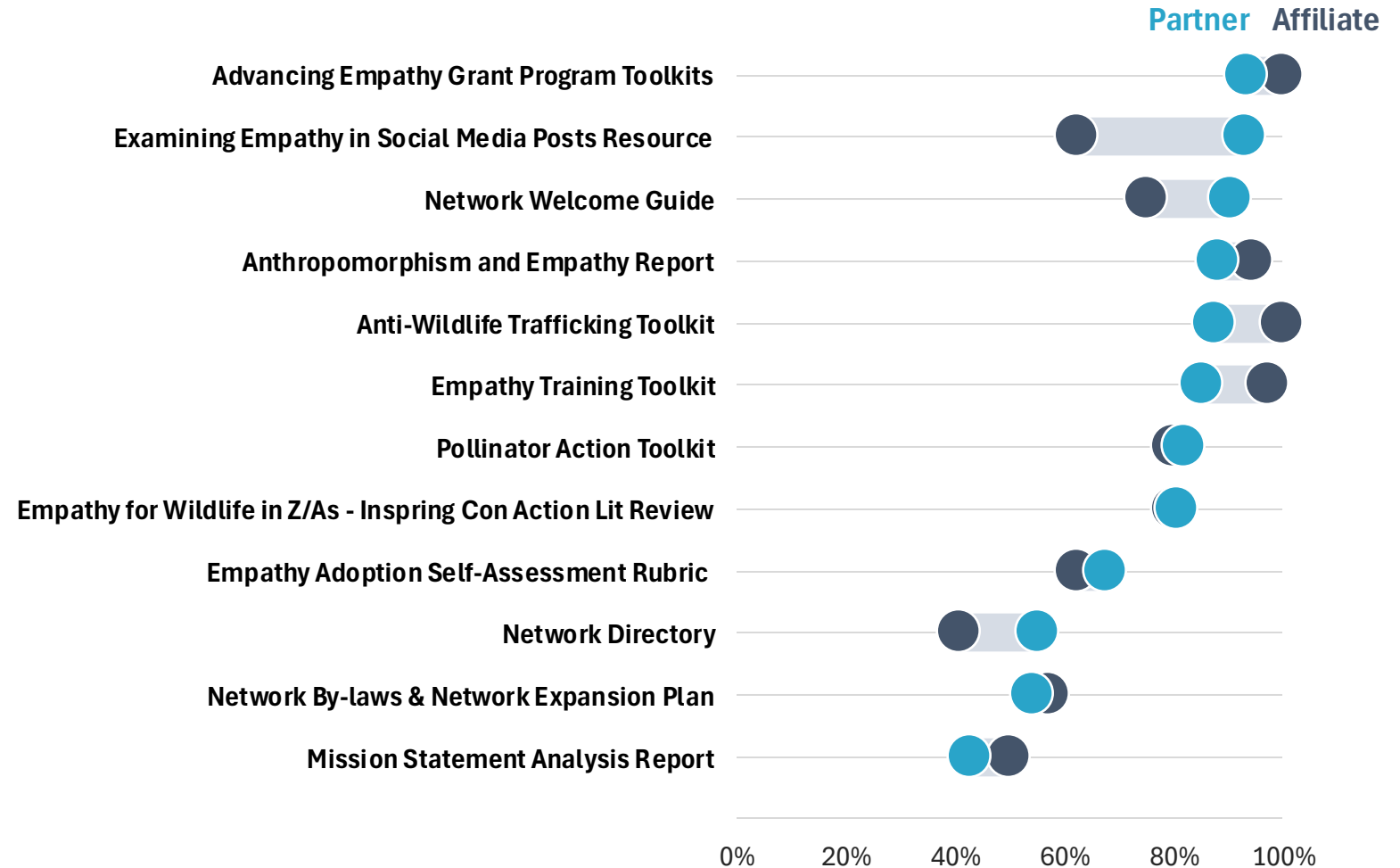
There were no statistically significant differences between Partners and Affiliates in how useful they found Network resources. While Partners and Affiliates appeared to differ in their ratings of the Examining Empathy in Social Media Posts resource, the small sample sizes (14 Partners and 8 Affiliates) mean those descriptive differences should be interpreted with caution.



Resources produced by the Network have been useful to Partners and Affiliates alike.

Continue to engage committees and the Network at-large in seeking topics for future resources that will be useful to them and their organizations.

Partners and Affiliates who used resources generally provided similar ratings for perceived usefulness. However, Affiliates were less likely to report higher ratings for the Examining Empathy in Social Media posts resource, the Network Welcome Guide, and the Network Directory.

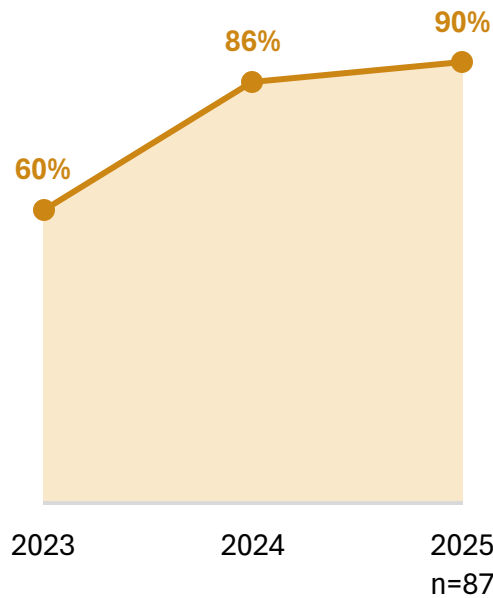


Ratings of usefulness for select resources have improved year over year.

We saw improvements in usefulness for three of the four resources we have consistently asked about in previous surveys. Nearly everyone who used the Empathy Training Toolkit this year (90%) said it was either Very or Extremely useful. Most who used the Network Welcome Guide (84%) and Pollinator Action Toolkit (81%) said it was Very/Extremely useful. There was a decline in the Network Directory's usefulness, but given the small sample in 2024's survey, this difference is not significant and unlikely to be a cause for concern.

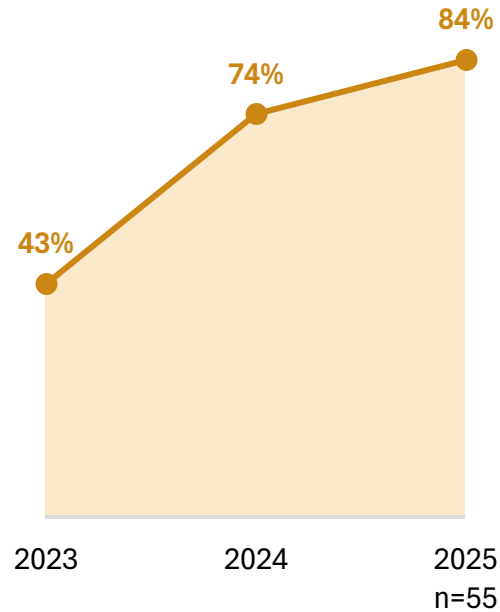
90% of those who used the **Empathy Training Toolkit** said it was Very/Extremely useful.

% Very/Extremely Useful



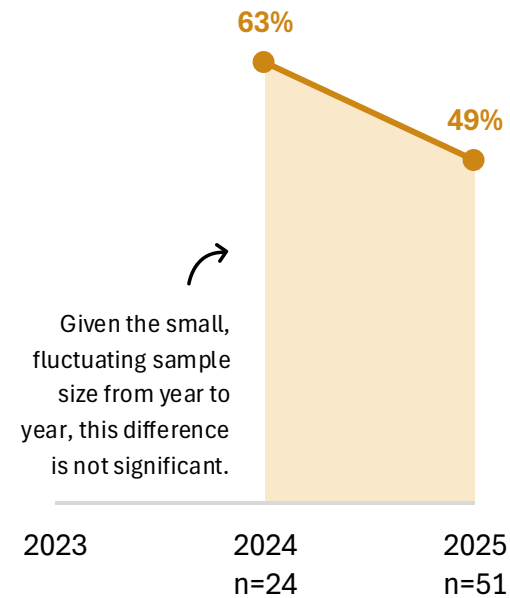
84% of those who used the **Network Welcome Guide** said it was Very/Extremely useful.

% Very/Extremely Useful



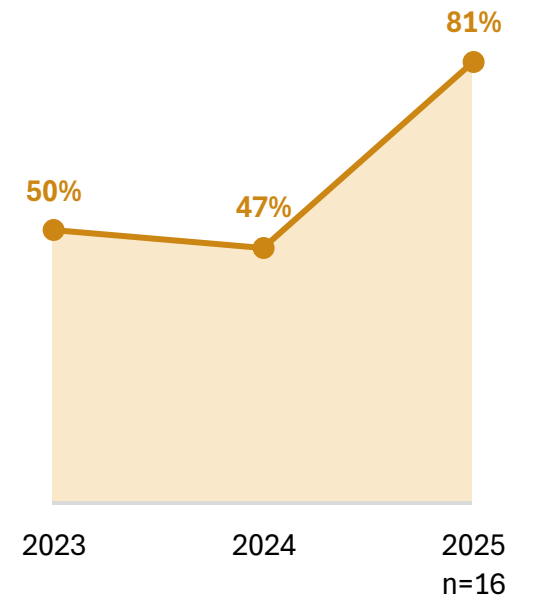
49% of those who used the **Network Directory** said it was Very/Extremely useful.

% Very/Extremely Useful



81% of those who used the **Pollinator Action Toolkit** said it was Very or Extremely useful.

% Very/Extremely Useful



Use of Empathy Practices Within Organizations

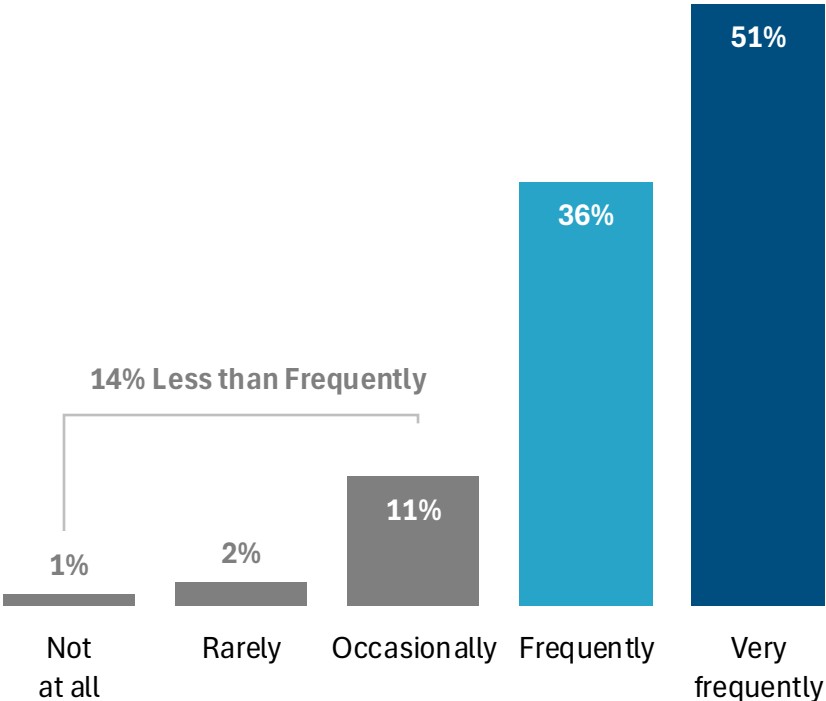


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Frequency of using empathy practices in daily work has increased year over year.

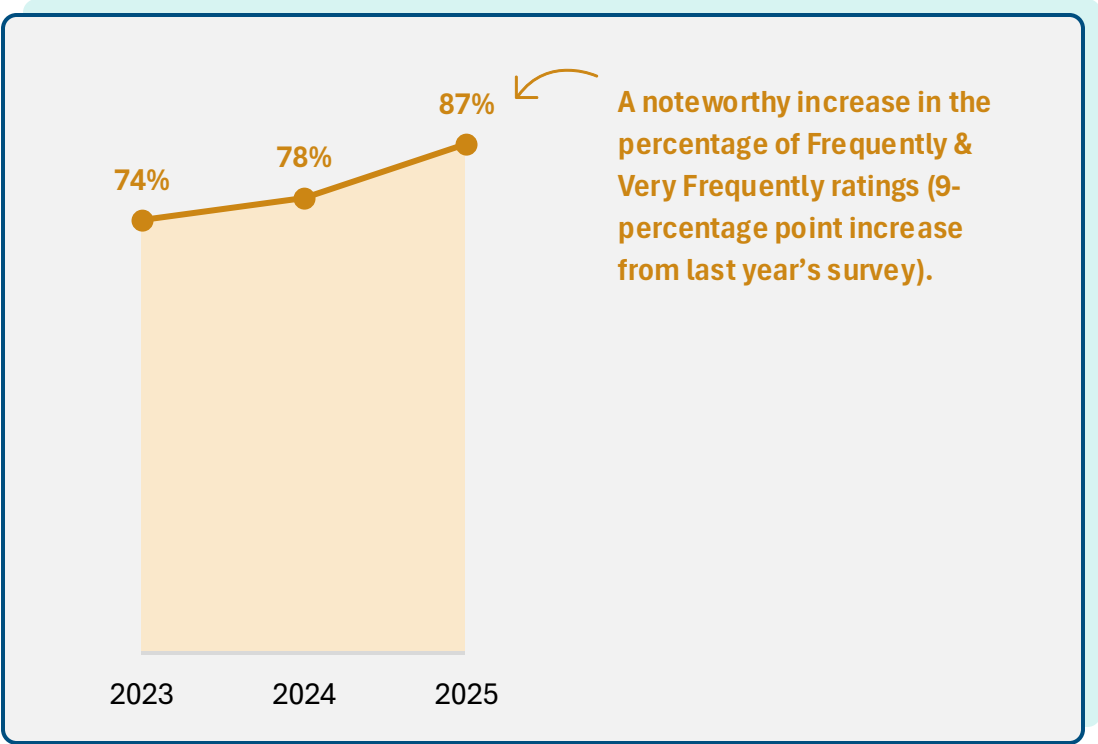
Most respondents (87%) reported that they use empathy practices in their work either Frequently or Very Frequently. Only 14% reported using practices less frequently (all of these were Network Affiliates).

(n=187)



Each year, we have asked respondents to note the frequency at which they believe they use empathy practices in their daily work. **The proportion of those who say they Frequently or Very frequently use empathy practices in their work has increased each year** since 2023, with a noteworthy 9 percentage point increase this year (78% to 87%, respectively).

Self-reported use of empathy practices in daily work has increased steadily over time. We saw a notable 9-percentage-point increase this year compared to last year's survey results (78% to 87%).



Q: In the past 12 months, how often did you use empathy practices in your work?

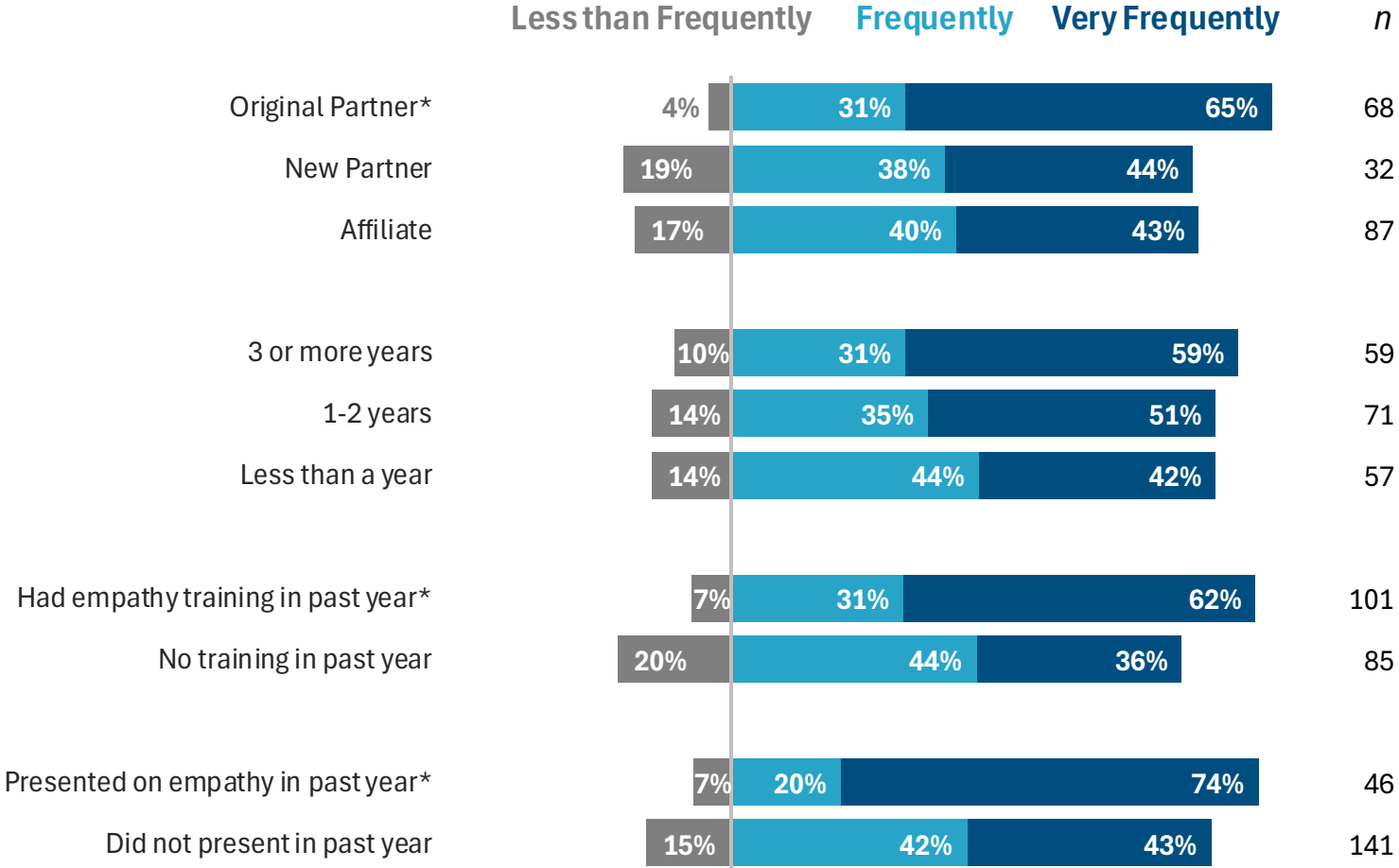
Those who had training this year were more likely to say they used empathy practices in their work.

Original Partners and those with longer Network involvement were more likely to say they use empathy practices frequently in their daily work. However, **the degree to which respondents reported participating in empathy-related training (or presenting about their org’s empathy work at professional gatherings) may be one of the best indicators of frequent use of empathy practices.** 62% of those who had empathy-related training in the past year said they ‘Very frequently’ used empathy practices in their work, compared to 36% of those who did not have training in the past year.



More opportunities to participate in empathy-related training are likely to result in higher use of practices across orgs and roles.

Respondents from original Partner orgs and those with longer Network involvement were significantly more likely to say they use empathy practices in their work Very frequently. Those who had participated in trainings this year were also highly likely to say they used empathy practices in their work with high frequency.



Q: In the past 12 months, how frequently have staff Partners in your organization communicated internally about empathy-related practices or projects?

*Notes a statistically significant difference

Each empathy practice was used intentionally by over half of respondents.

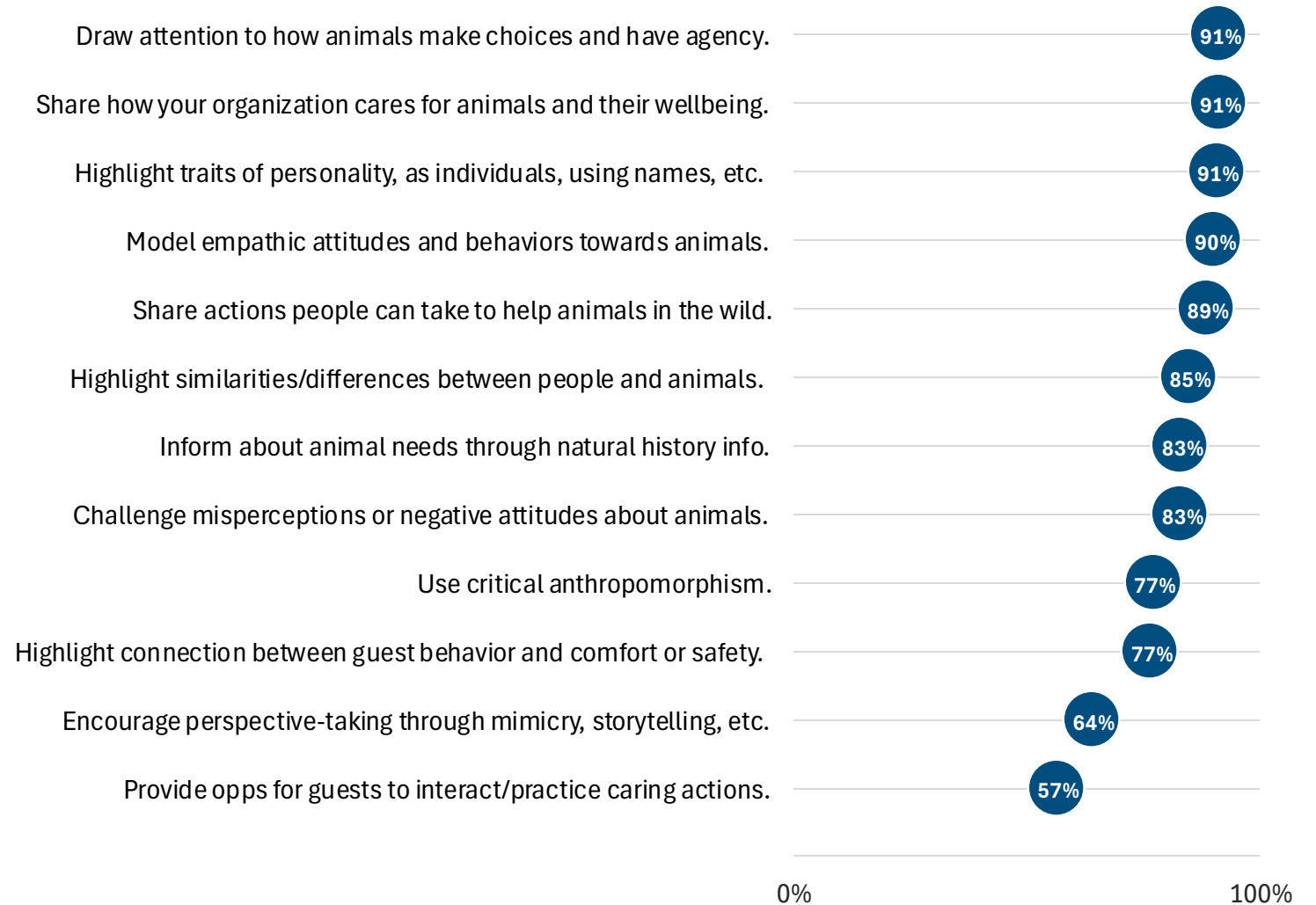
Respondents noted which practices they have used intentionally in the past 12 months. Each practice was selected by more than half of respondents. **Practices used by nearly all respondents (≥90%) included *Drawing attention to animal choice/agency, Sharing messages about animal care/well-being, Highlighting personalities/individuals/names, and Modeling empathic attitudes towards animals.***

Most respondents (77%) reported *Using critical anthropomorphism* and *Highlighting connection between guest behavior and animal comfort/safety*. Relatively, fewer reported *Encouraging perspective-taking through mimicry, storytelling, etc.* (64%) and *Providing opportunities for guests to interact with or take caring actions towards animals* (57%).

Only 3 reported not using any of the listed practices; one said they do not use the practices but evaluate them. Another mentioned they were just getting to know the practices (i.e., too soon to use them intentionally), and the other noted that they didn't feel they used practices, but that they informed the design of their exhibit.

Respondents reported using most of the listed empathy practices intentionally in their daily work this year. Drawing attention to animal choice/agency, sharing how orgs care for animals and their well-being, and highlighting personalities, names, etc., were among the highest used practices.

(n=184)



Q: In the past 12 months, which of the following empathy practices have you intentionally used or applied to you work? (Select all that apply)

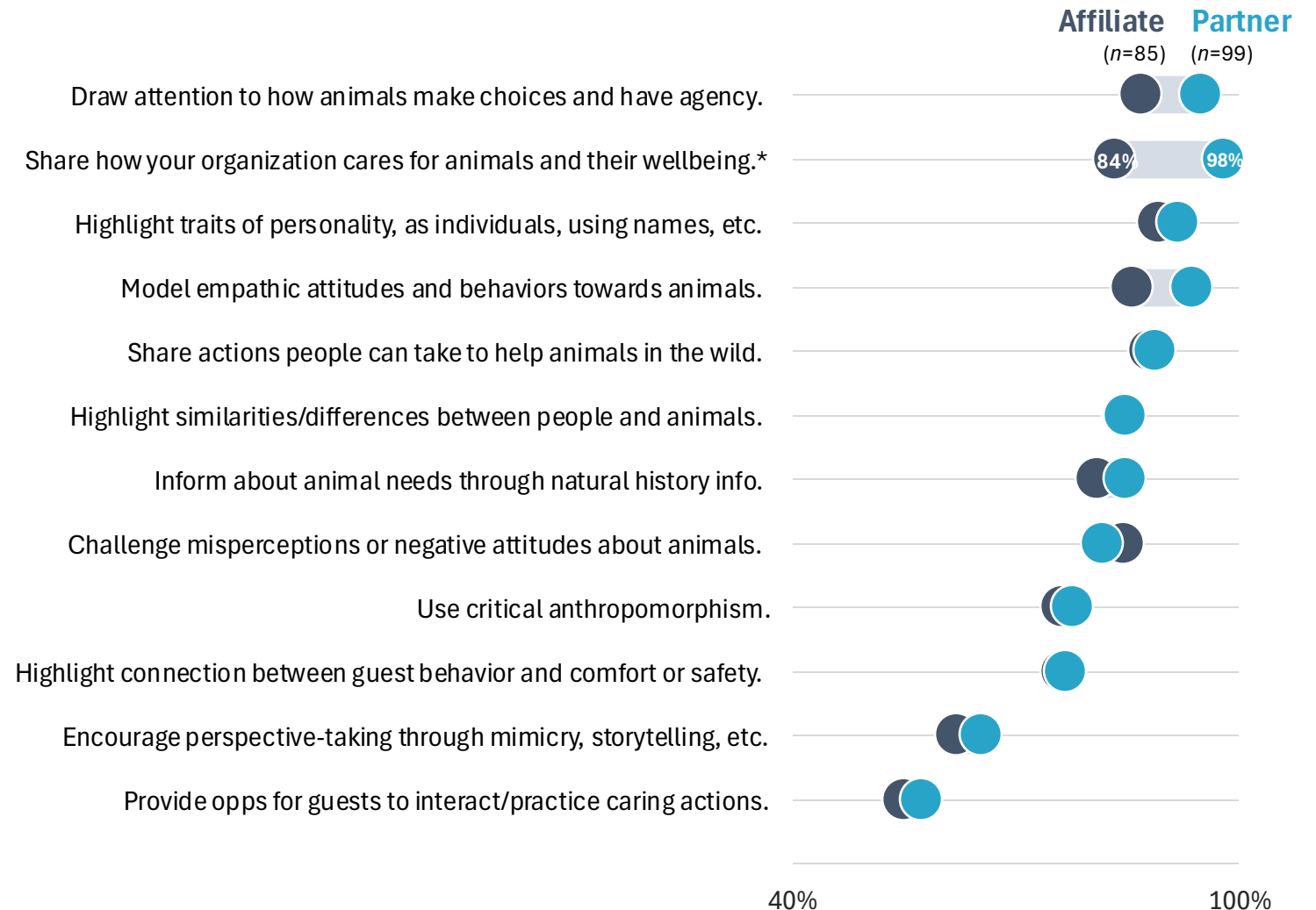
Partners and Affiliates used empathy-related practices at similar rates.

This year, Partners and Affiliates selected empathy-related practices they used intentionally in their work at similar rates. This could be an indicator that practice use is becoming more widespread, 'the norm', for organizations that are involved in the Network, regardless of their affiliation. Additionally, there were no significant differences in reported practice use among original Partners, new Partners, and Affiliates.



Empathy practice use among respondents is high regardless of Network affiliation. We may continue to think about ways to promote and support orgs in using practices that were reported relatively lower in frequency, such as Using critical anthropomorphism, Highlighting connections, Using mimicry/storytelling, and Providing opportunities for guests to interact with animals/practice caring actions.

This year, Network Partners and Affiliates selected empathy practices they intentionally used at similar rates. Differences were slight except for **Sharing how your org cares for animals/wellbeing**, which was selected by **98% of Partners vs. 84% of Affiliates**.



Q: In the past 12 months, which of the following empathy practices have you intentionally used or applied to you work? (Select all that apply)

*Notes a statistically significant difference

Those in guest-facing roles use empathy practices more often than those in non-guest-facing roles.

Each empathy-related practice was compared by role (practice use among those who selected a role vs. those who did not). Statistically significant differences are highlighted in the chart below – blue indicates a role that selected practices more often than the total number of respondents who weren't in that role, and orange indicates a role that selected practices less often than the total number of respondents who were not in that role. Most roles selected practices at similar rates, with traditionally more guest-facing roles selecting empathy practices at higher rates. Samples within most role categories are small, so results are provided for reference but should be interpreted with caution.

	Overall n=184	Education n=140	Conservation n=29	Volunteers n=29	Animal Care n=25	Evaluation n=21	Executive n=12	Development n=8	Marketing n=5	Human Res. n=4
Share how your organization cares for animals and their wellbeing.	91%	92%	97%	86%	96%	71%	92%	100%	80%	100%
Draw attention to how animals make choices and have agency.	91%	92%	97%	86%	96%	81%	100%	88%	80%	75%
Highlight traits of personality, as individuals, using names, etc.	91%	91%	90%	90%	92%	86%	92%	88%	80%	75%
Model empathic attitudes and behaviors towards animals.	90%	91%	97%	97%	96%	71%	83%	88%	80%	75%
Share actions people can take to help animals in the wild.	89%	94%	97%	93%	80%	76%	100%	63%	80%	50%
Highlight similarities/differences between people and animals.	85%	88%	90%	90%	88%	76%	83%	38%	80%	100%
Challenge misperceptions or negative attitudes about animals.	83%	86%	86%	83%	84%	67%	83%	63%	80%	75%
Inform about animal needs through natural history info.	83%	86%	93%	93%	80%	76%	83%	50%	80%	25%
Use critical anthropomorphism.	77%	78%	83%	76%	76%	71%	83%	63%	60%	25%
Highlight connection between guest behavior and comfort or safety.	77%	82%	76%	86%	88%	62%	75%	63%	40%	50%
Encourage perspective-taking through mimicry, storytelling, etc.	64%	69%	66%	76%	56%	57%	58%	63%	40%	50%
Provide opps for guests to interact/practice caring actions.	57%	64%	69%	72%	72%	48%	42%	38%	40%	25%

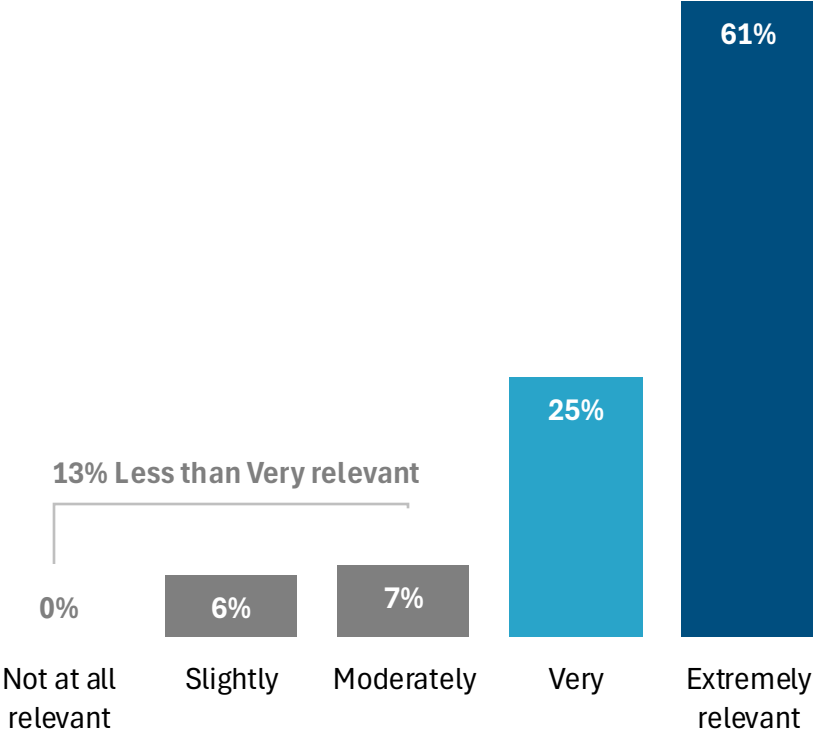
Q: In the past 12 months, which of the following empathy practices have you intentionally used or applied to your work?

Most believed that empathy practices were relevant to their daily roles.

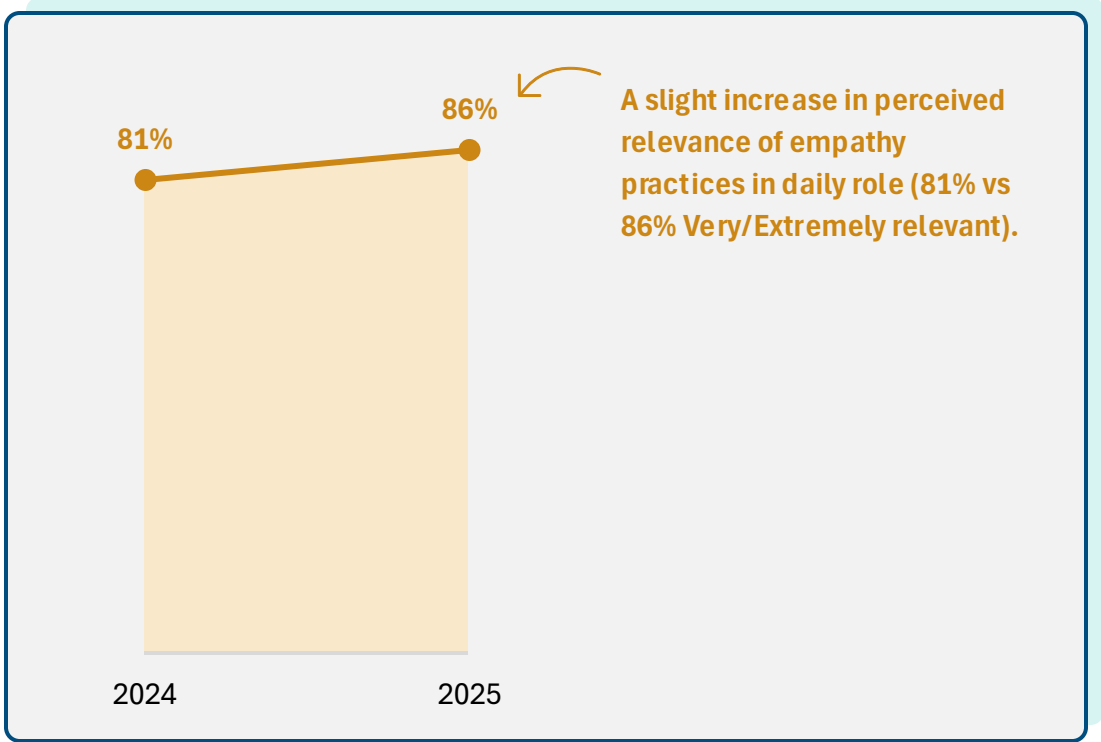
Nearly two-thirds (61%) of respondents felt that empathy practices were Extremely relevant to their daily roles. Another quarter (25%) said they were Very relevant, and just a handful (13%) said the practices were Slightly or Moderately relevant. Compared to last year's survey results, we saw a slight improvement in this sentiment among survey respondents – 81% Very/Extremely relevant to daily work role vs. 86% Very/Extremely relevant to daily work role.

Most (86%) said they believed that empathy practices were either Very or Extremely relevant to their daily roles.

(n=187)



We saw a slight improvement in the overall perception that empathy practices were either Very or Extremely relevant to respondents' daily roles (81% vs. 86%).



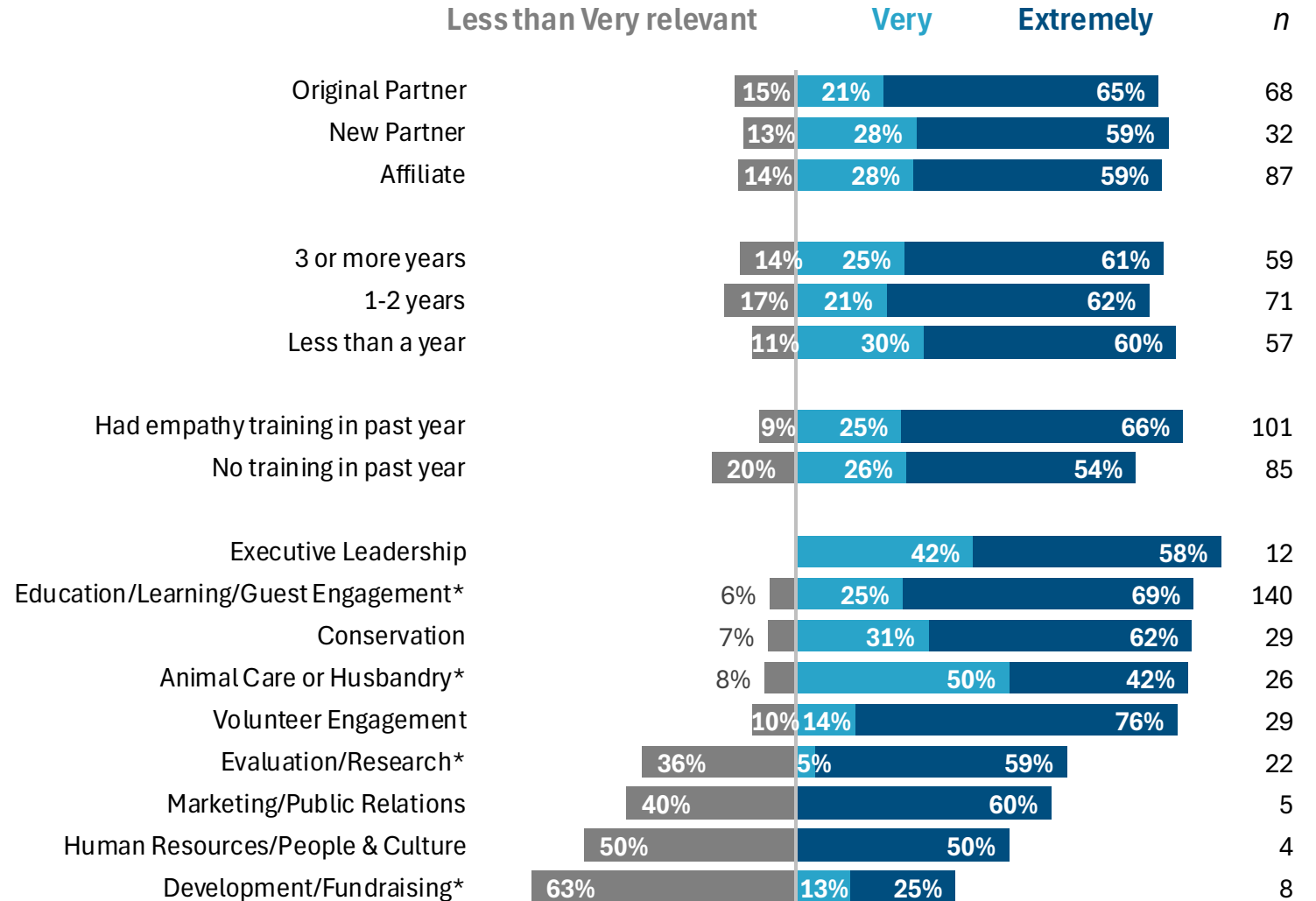
Empathy practices were relevant to the daily roles of most survey respondents.

Unlike many of the survey's comparative results, Network affiliation (Partner/Affiliate) and length of involvement had little bearing on the degree to which respondents felt that empathy practices were relevant to their daily roles. Those in Education and Animal Care roles were statistically more likely to give higher relevance ratings than those who were not in those roles. Conversely, those in Evaluation and Development roles were statistically less likely to provide higher relevance ratings compared to those who were not in those roles. **This relative consistency across comparison groups suggests that the Network is making strong progress in helping people understand the relevance of empathy practices across organizations and roles.**



Continue to promote empathy practices and provide resources that help people understand their connection to them, even in roles that are less visitor-facing.

Respondents felt empathy practices were relevant to their daily work roles, regardless of affiliation or length of involvement in the Network. Those who had training this year were more likely to report higher perceptions of relevance, as were those in Education and Animal Care roles.



Q: How relevant are empathy-practices to your daily work role? [Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely]

*Notes a statistically significant difference

Exciting ways Network participants have used empathy practices this year.

Empathy practices in new exhibits, interpretive graphics, and programs.

“In our new World of Darkness exhibit at the Bronx Zoo, we used empathy framing for our graphics for the common vampire bat. When interpreting animals that are more likely to inspire fear and disgust, we make an effort to interpret them in ways that combat, rather than play into, those feelings.”

“I rewrote the graphic panels in our small animal building from the animal's perspective and then asked the guests how they would accomplish the same behavior or what tool they would use to mimic the adaptation.”

“We just opened a new building to house our animal ambassadors in full view of the public and most of the signage addresses the individual animals by name, includes pictures to identify that animal, and discusses that animal's personal story and link to conservation action. We're also trying to update our presentation methods to allow the animals more choice and control when doing encounters.”

Respondents were asked if they had any unique or interesting ways they used empathy practices in their work this year. **57 respondents discussed ways they have used empathy practices in new interpretive signage/exhibits, in programs designed to engage diverse communities and/or to foster empathy for a variety of animals and plants, and in staff development.**

Using empathy practices to reach new audiences and communities.

“Connecting with nonverbal seniors and seniors in severe cognitive decline has improved. Providing touch opportunities and making connections with the animals and as a person has shown a response and a perceived positive change in behavior from short term of minutes to long term end of the program.”

“This year, we created a Beloved Animal Ofrenda for Día de los Muertos, offering opportunities for guests to learn about and engage with Latine culture while cultivating deeper empathy for all living creatures.”

Using empathy practices in staff development and reflection.

“Staff and volunteers are encouraged to engage in reflective practice to deepen their understanding of how empathy shapes their facilitation. This includes exploring how they apply empathetic approaches in their interactions, identifying personal strengths and recognizing areas for continued growth. Reflections foster a culture of intentionality, emotional intelligence, and continuous improvement in empathetic delivery.”

“We use empathy techniques to help leaders in the community explore unconscious biases and mindfulness tools.”

“Used empathy practices when helping staff through a new HRIS system, when working out a housing issue and when having difficult conversations about performance.”

“Creating a culture here for empathy towards co-workers. Large group discussions on emotional intelligence and leadership traits and how we handle situations.”



One of the most valuable ways you've helped my facility is by providing a forum for connecting with other zoos about empathy topics, sharing resources, and fostering discussion.

- Survey respondent

Final Comments, Gratitude, and Personal Impact



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Additional Food for Thought

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about their Network experience, which is often a space where they take time to offer additional positive comments or constructive feedback. **It was notable this year that none of the 36 comments provided included a negative sentiment or challenges; a couple posed questions or comments about specific issues that were top of mind for them.**

One respondent was curious about how the Network can position and differentiate itself in the landscape of other similarly missioned groups and research initiatives in the field at-large. They wrote, “I am grateful for the ACE for Wildlife Network and resources! One challenge I find in my work is knowing which of the various strategic communications resources out there is the best fit for a given project at my institution. **How does ACE differ from or align with other conservation communication communities and tools that AZA Partners use,** such as the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI), National Association for Interpretation (NAI), and behavior change research models such as Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM), the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) or the NERO research for conservation action visitors to zoos want to hear about (actions that are Novel to them, Easy to do, have Response efficacy, and are Onsite)? **Are we reinventing the wheel? Are we continually re-packaging and re-branding social science research for informal learning environments? Or is there a unique purpose and place for each group and approach?** Genuine question that I wish I had more time to noodle on might make for a great paper or discussion topic!”

One respondent wanted to share that although their org is not AZA accredited, the ability to compete for small grants, if ever possible, would greatly improve their ability to implement empathy practices into their work saying, “My institution is accredited by AAM but is not an AZA institution so we aren't eligible to become a network Partner. **As a small to midsize organization, being eligible for even small grants (less than \$1000) from the network would make a huge difference** in our ability to implement empathy best practices that we learn from participating in the network.”

Warm Words of Gratitude and Impact

Most of the final comments included warm words of gratitude. Some of the most heartwarming of these have already been shared at the beginning of each section throughout this report.

“It has been great to see the research behind practices I've implemented for years, as well as the support from other organizations to find ways to make all of these practices more common or standard across the industry.”

“You've been a fantastic resource and being new to the Conservation and zoo spaces, your work has been very helpful!”

“Thank you for all of the support both through answering questions and providing relevant, professional resources!”

“I have enjoyed learning more about the ACE Network and the resources available and look forward to learning more in the future!”

“I really enjoyed going to the summit and meeting folks and talking about empathy..”

“I appreciate being a part of this network personally and organizationally. “

“It ultimately has been a positive resource to refer to when creating programs and improving my programs and presentations.”

“I have really enjoyed the newsletters and learning about upcoming events.”

“So grateful for this resource and I'm excited to be able to dig in more!”

Note: Aggregated verbatim comments can be accessed [here](#) by the Network program team.



Credit: Katie Gibian, Woodland Park Zoo



For me, this is a life-giving space and alters the historic way I see the purpose and function not only of zoos and aquariums, but our ability and responsibility to coexist with wildlife in community together. This collective challenges the social norms of power dynamics and priorities, and brings people from diverse backgrounds together for collaboration through the threads of empathy in practice. Very grateful to have connected and be a part of this caring and compassionate family of learners and leaders.

- Survey respondent

Report Appendix



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Analysis Notes and Reference Links

When interpreting statistical results, it is important to consider both statistical and practical significance, as well as the limitations and assumptions of the statistical methods used. It is important to note that statistical significance does not necessarily imply practical significance or importance. A result may be significant, but the strength of association or effect size may be small. It is also possible for a result to be above the significance threshold yet still have important practical implications.

In this survey's results analysis, nonparametric analysis (Chi-Square tests for independence) was used to examine significant differences between variable groups. This test was chosen because all variables compared were categorical; either ordinal or nominal in scale, and in most cases, sample sizes within groups were small. When analyzing the data, a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$ was used. This means that a result was considered statistically significant if the probability of observing that result due to chance alone was less than 5%. Significant differences are noted within the report alongside visualized data, where appropriate.

The open-ended comments from respondents in this survey were analyzed using a general inductive approach. This involved reviewing the responses and identifying patterns and themes that emerged from the data, rather than imposing a pre-determined coding scheme unless otherwise noted within the report.

Results in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number percent. Decimals that are equal to or greater than 0.5 are rounded up, and those that are less than 0.5 are rounded down. This can contribute to slight discrepancies, with totals falling just above or below 100%. These differences are small and do not significantly affect the survey results. In other questions, a respondent could have selected more than one response (select-all-that-apply). In these cases, totals will often exceed 100%.

Reference Links

The following links are provided for additional reference and are hosted within Woodland Park Zoo's internal SharePoint environment. Files may be accessed by WPZ staff. Questions or requests for additional resources may be sent to WPZ's [Evaluation & Impact team](#).



[Survey Questions PDF](#) (Network staff access)



[Anonymized verbatim comments from open-ended questions](#) (Network Staff Access)