Researcher Engagement in Research Communication in Japan: Surveying Practices, Awareness, and Challenges

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These slides are purely a representation of survey results and do not represent the opinion of Springer Nature.

About this slide deck

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- In this survey, we mean “research communication” as communication and dissemination of research and research outputs such as press releases, media interviews, use of social media, lectures, and more. In this survey, we have decided to exclude research communication at conferences.

- In this survey, we mean “wider community”, as audiences outside of one’s specialized field including the non-researcher audiences and the general public.

Executive Summary (1)

Background

1

- The objective of this survey was to understand researchers' habits, objectives, motivations, and challenges in carrying out effective research communication to the wider community. Additionally, we aimed to deepen our understanding of the support researchers are currently receiving or are interested in receiving.
- This survey was run in Japan between 13th January 2023 and 28th February 2023, and received 1063 deemed completes.
- The survey was offered in both Japanese and English with 97% of the respondents taking the survey in Japanese.
- The survey was distributed *via* several methods including social media and email campaigns.

Executive Summary (2)

Survey Responses

1. **Value and interest of communicating research**: **About 90%** of respondents find it important to communicate their research and expressed interest in sharing their research with the wider community. **More than 75%** of them acknowledged the benefits of research communication and expressed enjoyment in communicating their research to the wider community.

2. **Choosing what to communicate**: Many respondents chose to communicate research that they believed would be of interest to society and research that they found interesting and proud of.

3. **Objectives of research communication:** The two main objectives for researchers to communicate their research were sharing research findings that they think are of interest to society and the wide dissemination of their research and research findings.

4. **Target audience:** The main target audiences were the general public and researchers within their research community, followed by students and researchers outside of their research community.

5. **Language used for research communication**: Nearly half of the respondents stated that they communicated their research exclusively in Japanese and the other half used both English and Japanese.

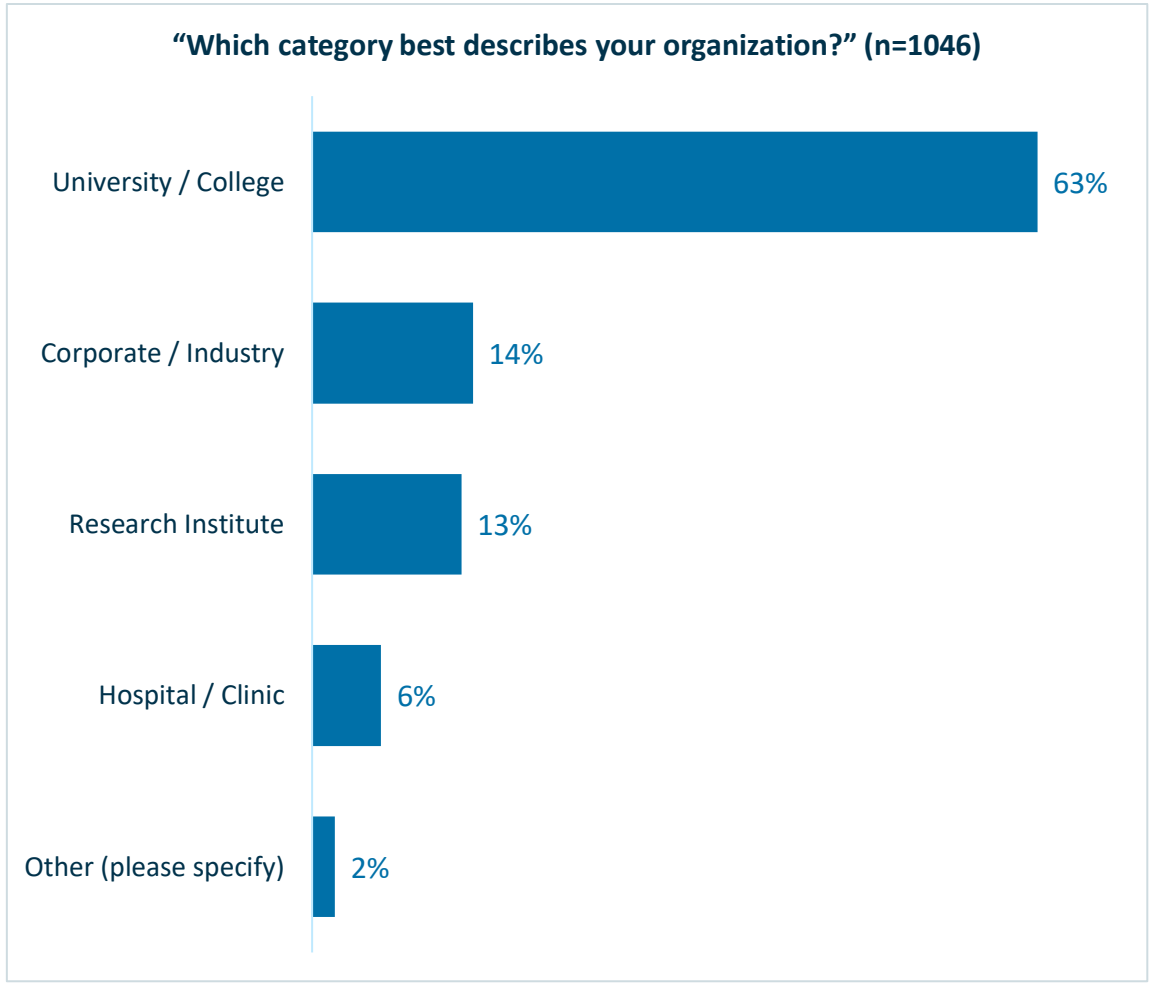
6. **Additional source of motivation:** Researchers are more likely to be motivated to communicate their research if their organization and/or funders acknowledge it as part of research achievement during assessments, as well as when there is interest shown by the general public and students.

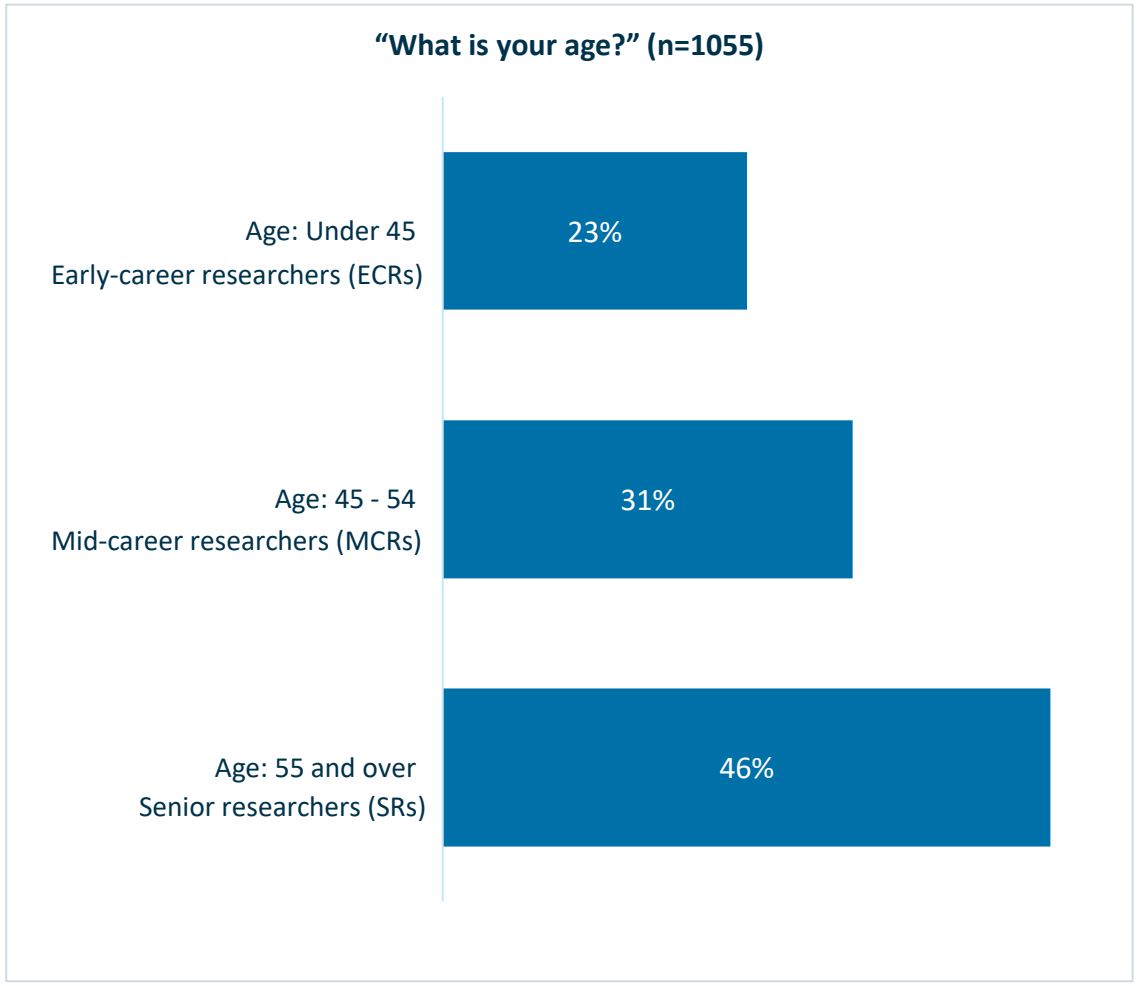
7. **Challenges of communicating research: Over 50%** stated that the reason preventing them from communicating their research was the lack of opportunity. In terms of challenges, **66%** of the respondents found plain language writing for non-specialists to be a challenge in research communication.

8. **Support, resources, and training for communicating research: More than 75%** of respondents wish to receive more support in carrying out effective research communication. Many responded that they were not aware of the resources offered at their organizations and indicated that additional support or training asked in the survey (Questions 20 & 21) would be helpful for their communication efforts.

Majority of respondents are senior researchers and work at universities

Demographics (1)





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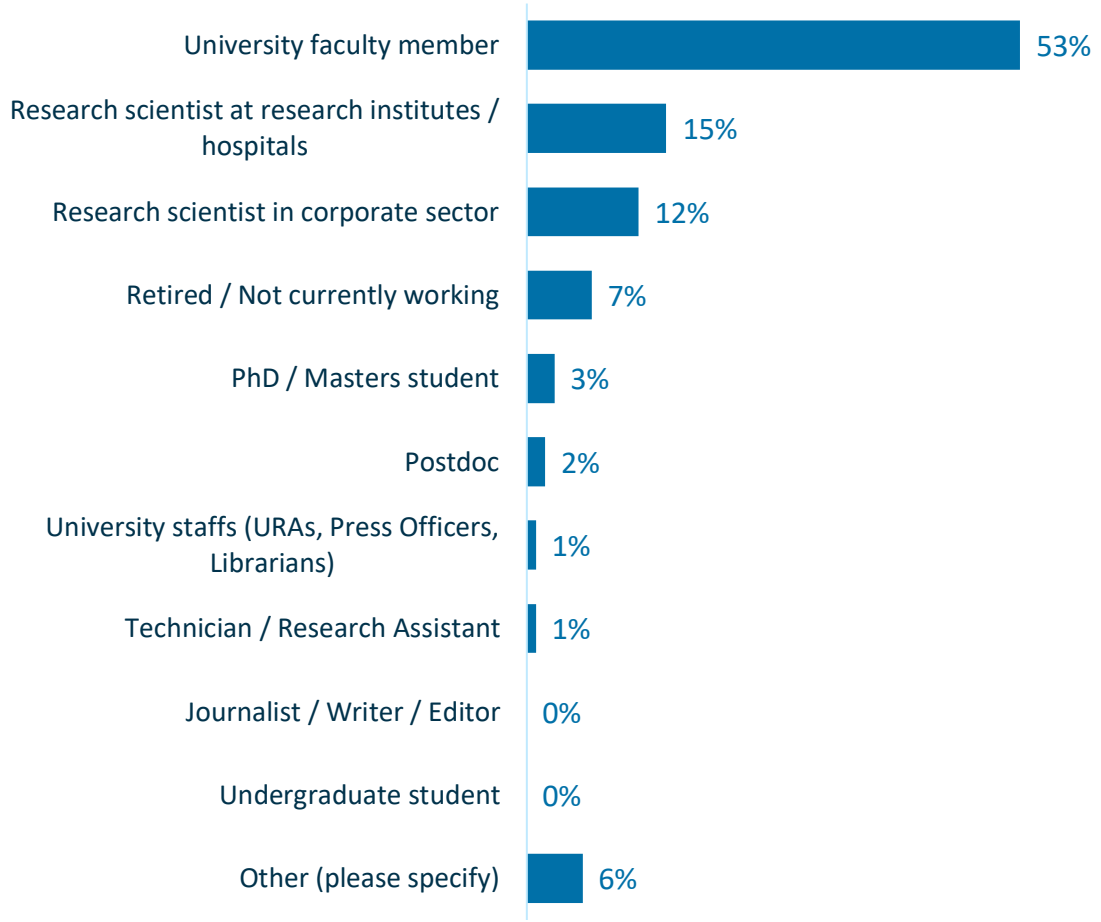
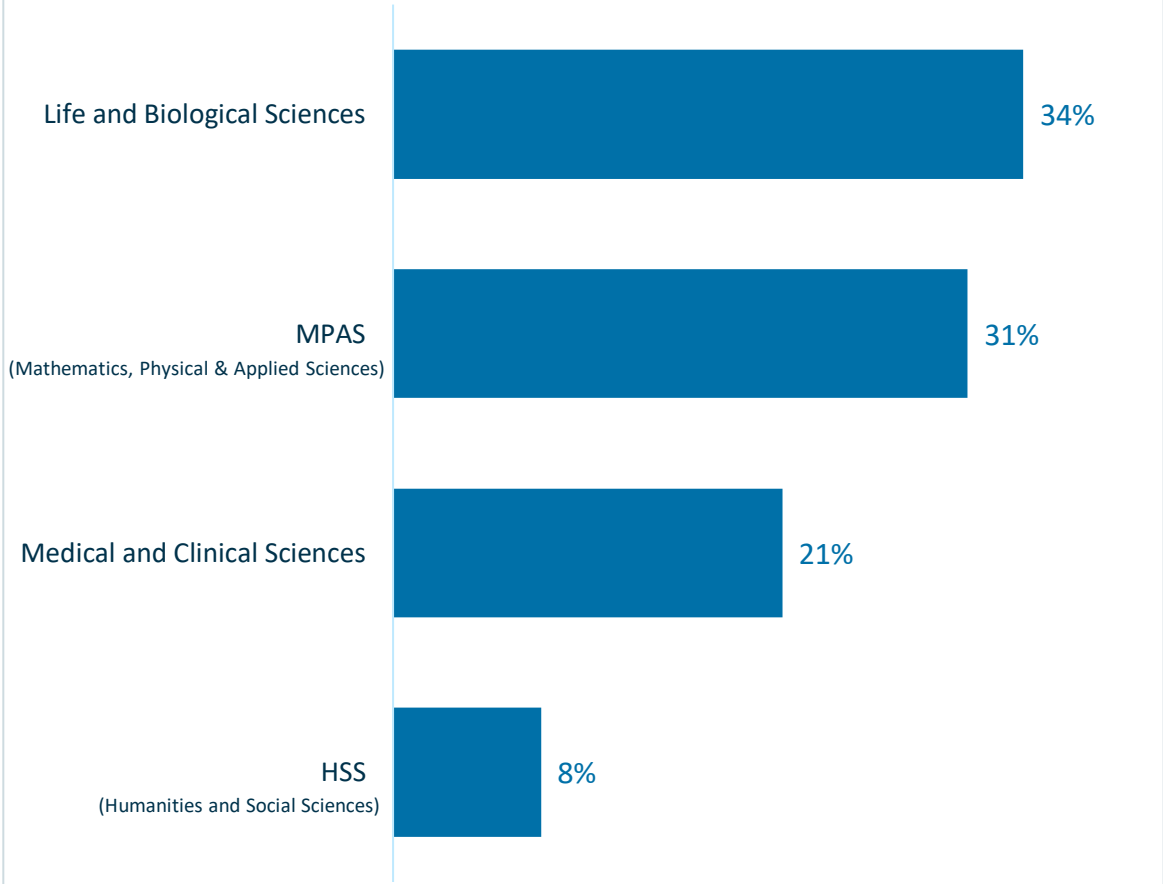
Most respondents from university in “Life and Biological Science” and “MPAS (Mathematics, Physical & Applied Sciences)”

Demographics (2)

“Which of the following job titles best applies to you?” (n=1053)



“Which of the following best describes your broad subject field?” (n=1042)



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Survey Results

1. Survey Responses
2. Appendix*(from Slide 30)

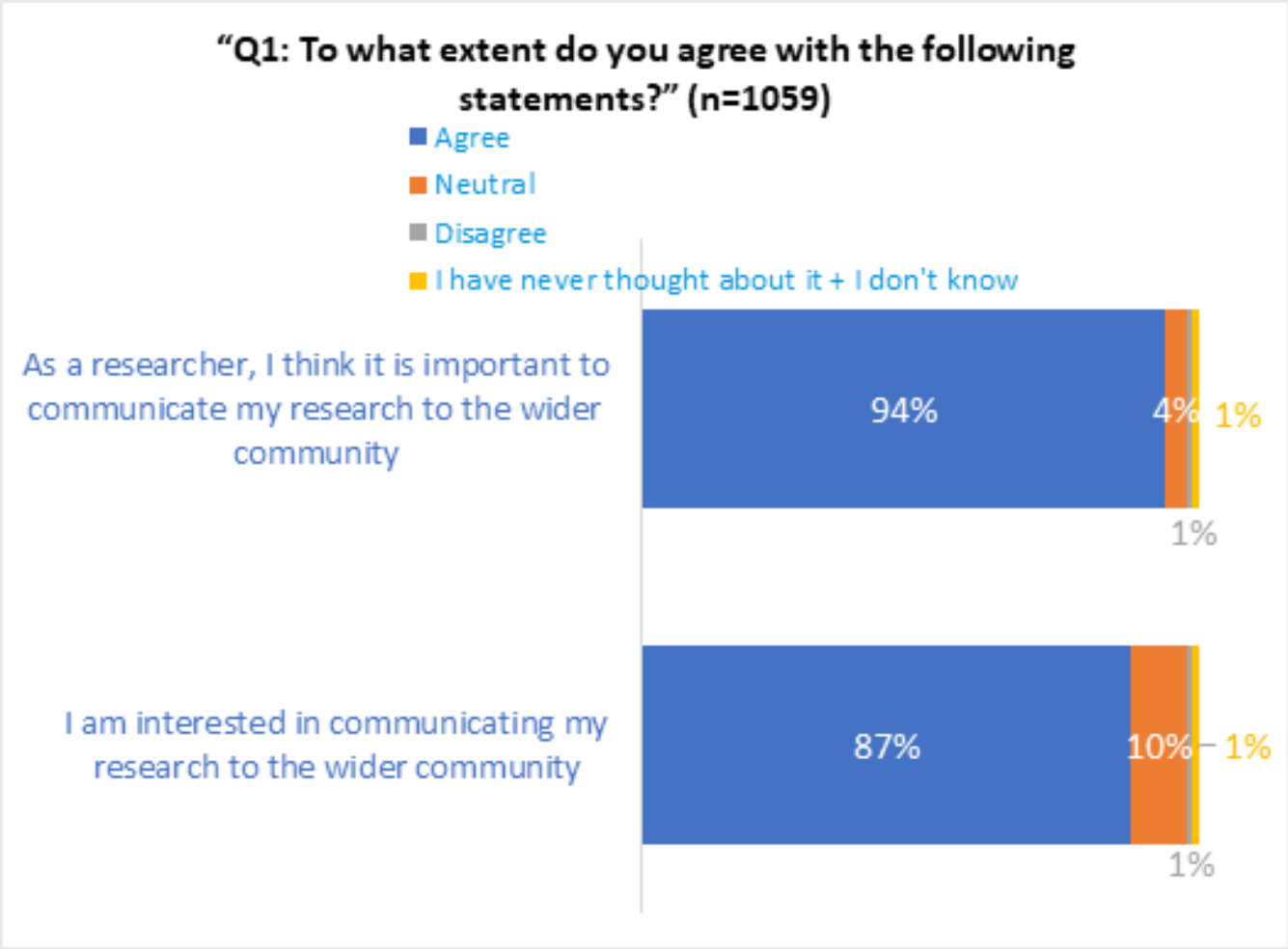
***Information about the Appendix**

Some of the survey results have been tabulated based on the categories below in bullet points. For these additional analyses, you will find a link in the slides that are linked to the Appendix section.

- Age group - Grouping selected based on the breakdown of respondents as shown on slide 5. The data on the spreadsheet in Figshare will have a different age grouping as well.
- Organization – please see slide 5
- Subject field – please see slide 6
- Language used for research communication (“English only” or “Both English and Japanese”)
- Communication method (“press release” or “lectures and demonstrations for the general public”)

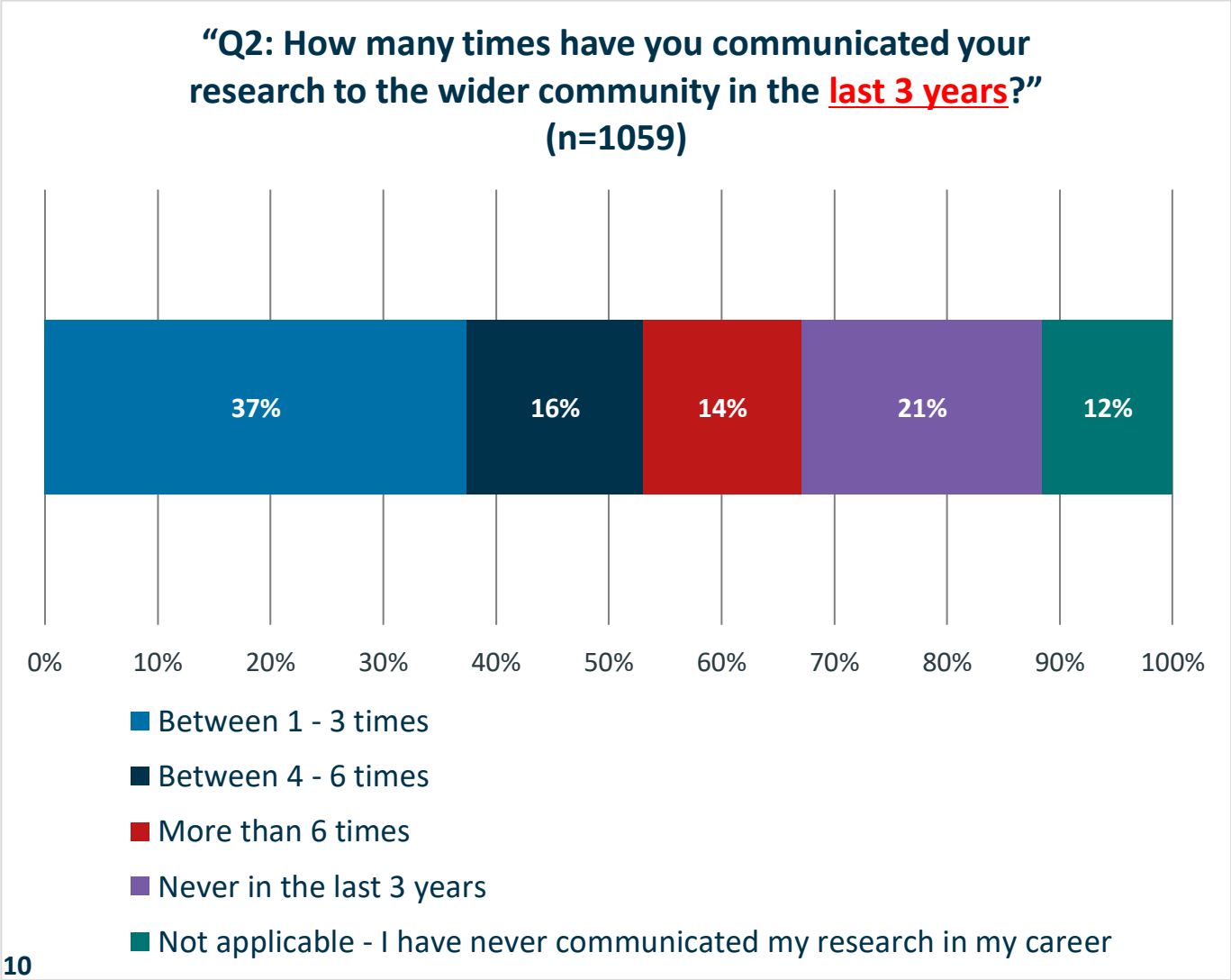
1. Survey Responses

Q1. Is research communication important / interesting to you?



- About 90% of respondents agreed that it is important to communicate their research and expressed interest in communicating their research to the wider community.

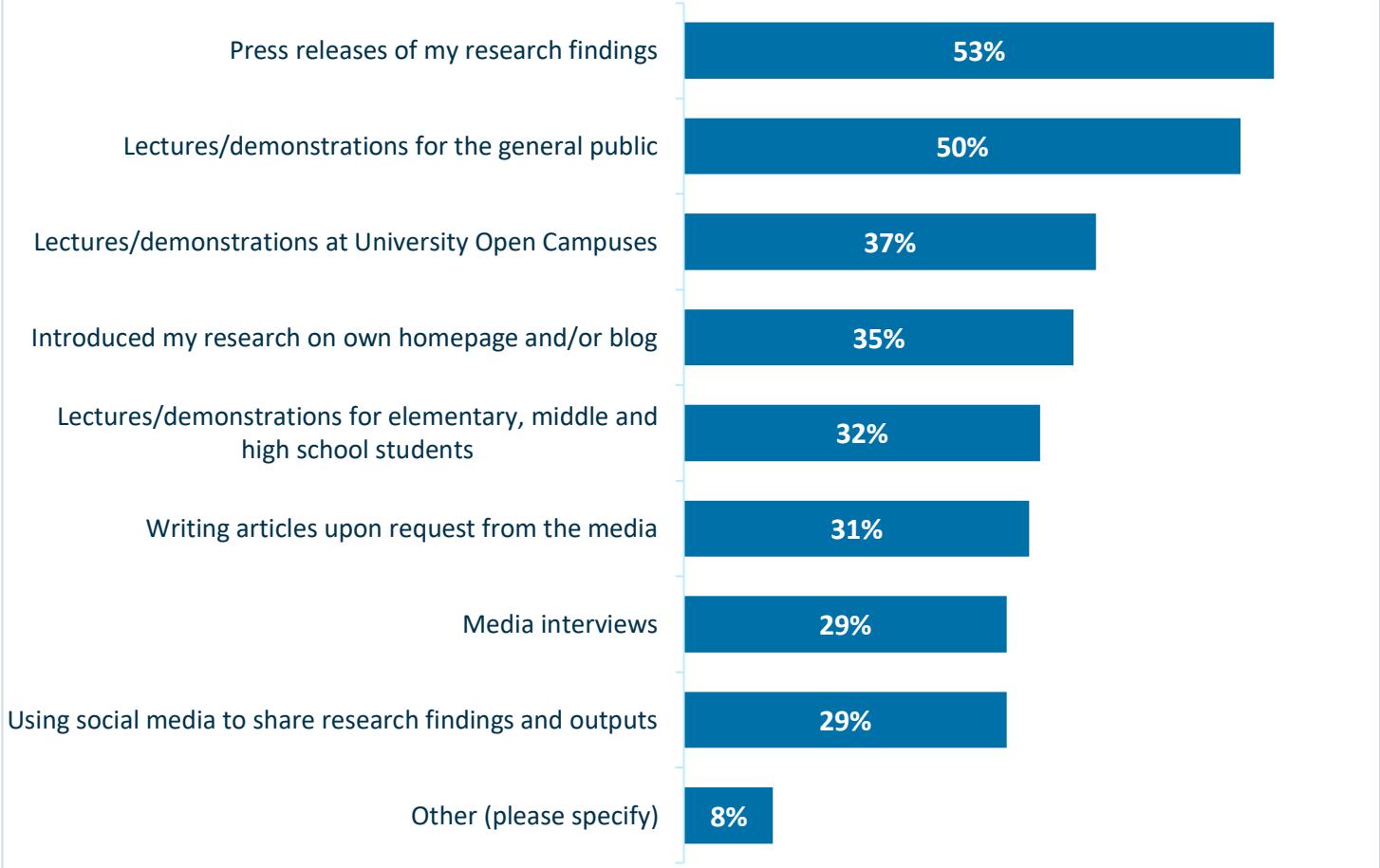
Q2. How often do you communicate your research?



- 67% of the respondents have communicated their research to the wider community in the last 3 years.
- 21% have not communicated in the last 3 years and 12% of the respondents have never communicated research in their career.

Q3. Methods of research communication

"Q3: What have you done to communicate your research to the wider community" Please select all that apply (n=708)

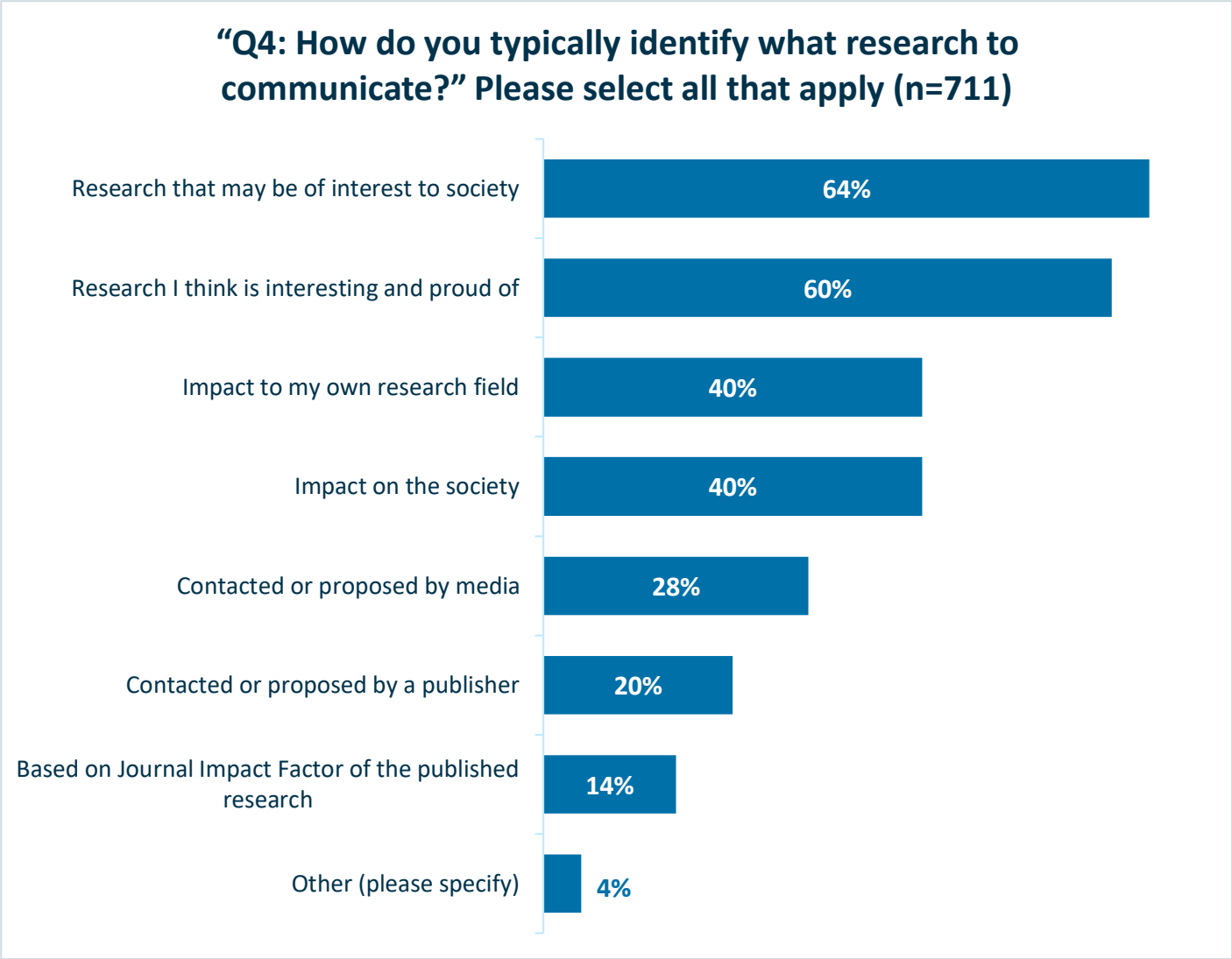


- Of those who communicated their research in the past 3 years, more than 50% said they have done press releases and/or delivered lectures/demonstrations for the general public to communicate their research findings to the wider community.
- A similar percentage of researchers indicated that they have undertaken the remaining options.

For further analysis by age group, subject field, and language, see here.

- Press release and lectures/demonstrations to the general public was the most common method across all age groups.
- Higher proportion of Senior Researchers (SR) shared their research findings by writing articles upon requests from the media.
- ECRs were more likely to use social media to communicate their research to the wider community.

Q4. Identification of what research to communicate



- Of those who communicated their research in the past 3 years, 60% said they chose to communicate research that they believed would be of interest to society and research that they found interesting and proud of.
- 40% considered research that would have an impact either within their own field or for the society.

For further analysis by language, see here.

- Breaking down by language, we observed that researchers who use both Japanese and English with research communication considered "Impact to my own research field", "Impact on the society" and "Based on the journal impact factor of the published research" more often than those that communicated only in Japanese.

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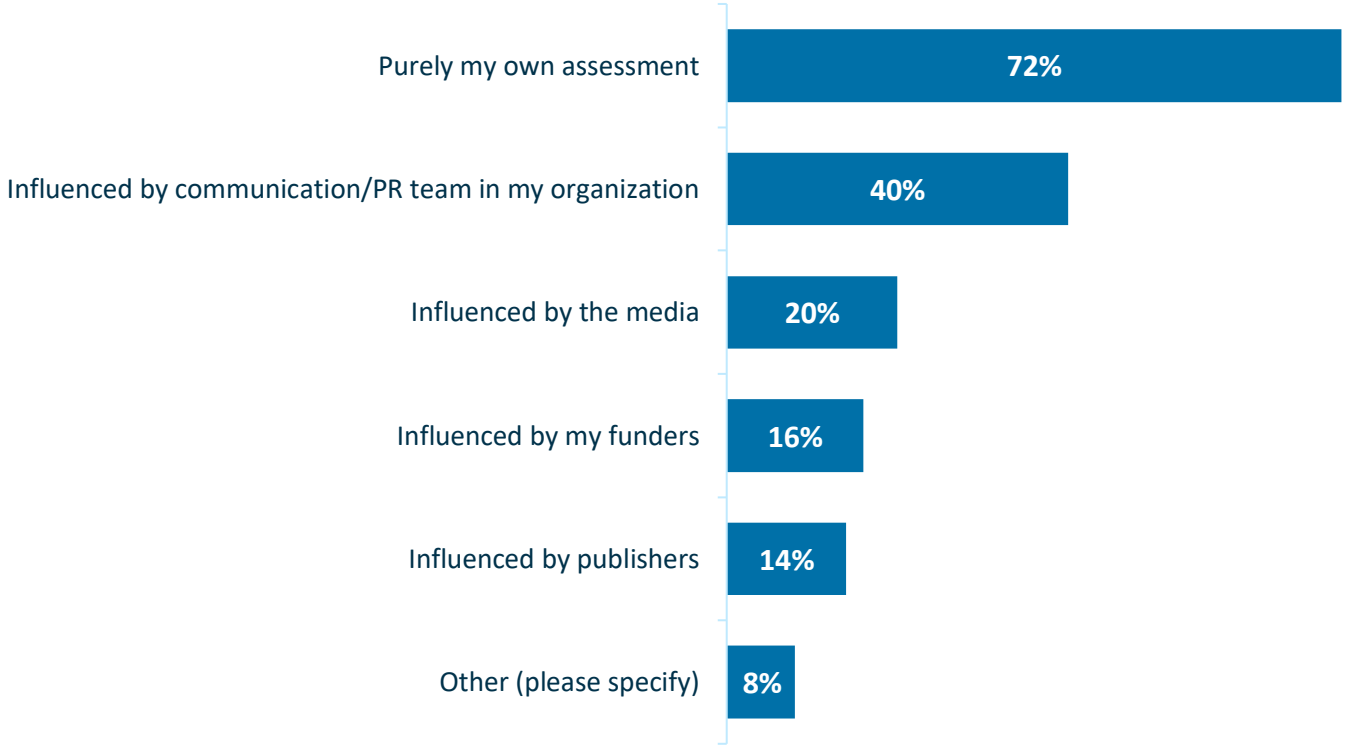
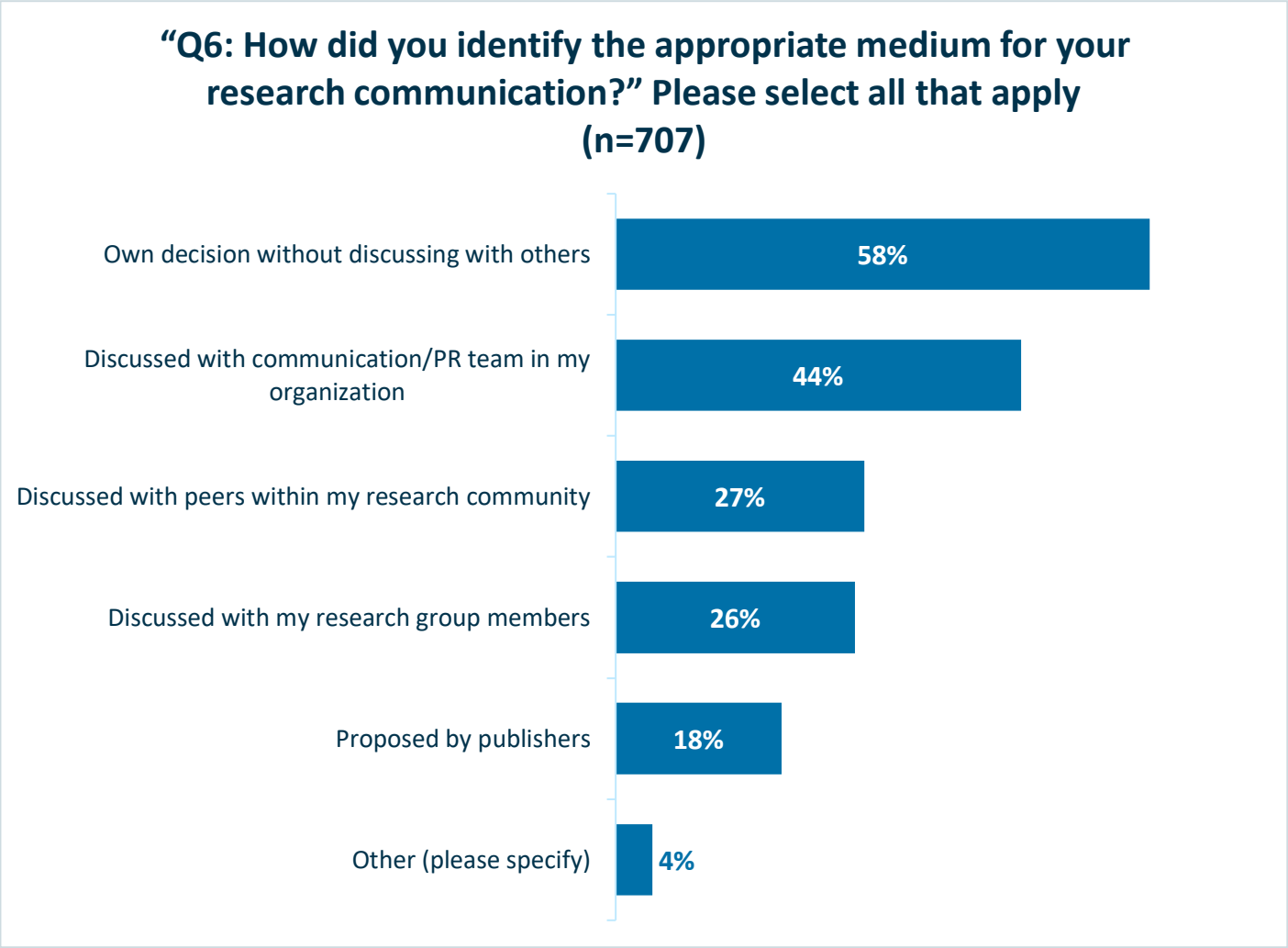
Q5. Regarding Q4, how respondents chose what research to communicate

"Q5: Regarding the previous question about how you selected which research to communicate, to what extent is this judgment based on your own criteria or influenced by others?" Please select all that apply (n=711)



- Of those who communicated their research in the past 3 years, over 70% said the decision to select what to communicate was based on their own criteria.
- 40% said it was influenced by their organization's communication/PR team.
- Other: Co-authors and their manager/PI.

Q6. How respondents identified the appropriate medium for research communication



- Of those who communicated their research in the past 3 years, the majority of the respondents (58%) reported that they made their decision independently when it came to selecting the medium for communicating their research.

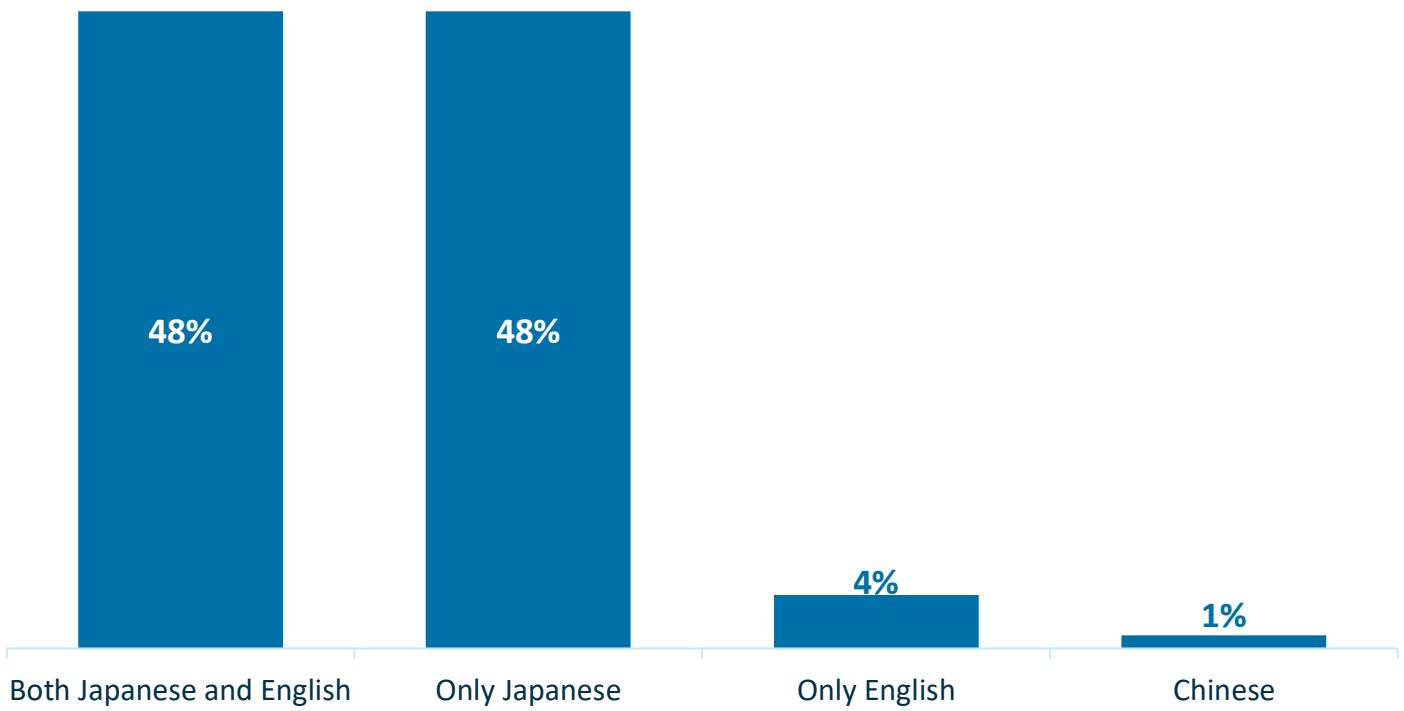
- 44% discussed with their organization's communication/PR teams.

For further analysis by age group, see here.

- ECRs tended to communicate more with their group members than other age groups.

Q7. Language used for research communication

"Q7: Which language did you use to communicate your research and research findings?" Please select all that apply (n=710)



- Of those who communicated their research in the past 3 years, nearly half of the researchers stated that they communicated their research in both Japanese and English or exclusively in Japanese.

For further analysis by communication method (press release and lectures/demonstrations for the general public), see here.

- For those who replied "press releases" in Q3; 57% used both Japanese and English, 40% used just Japanese.

- For those who replied "lectures/demonstrations for the general public" in Q3; 52% used both Japanese and English, 48% used just Japanese.

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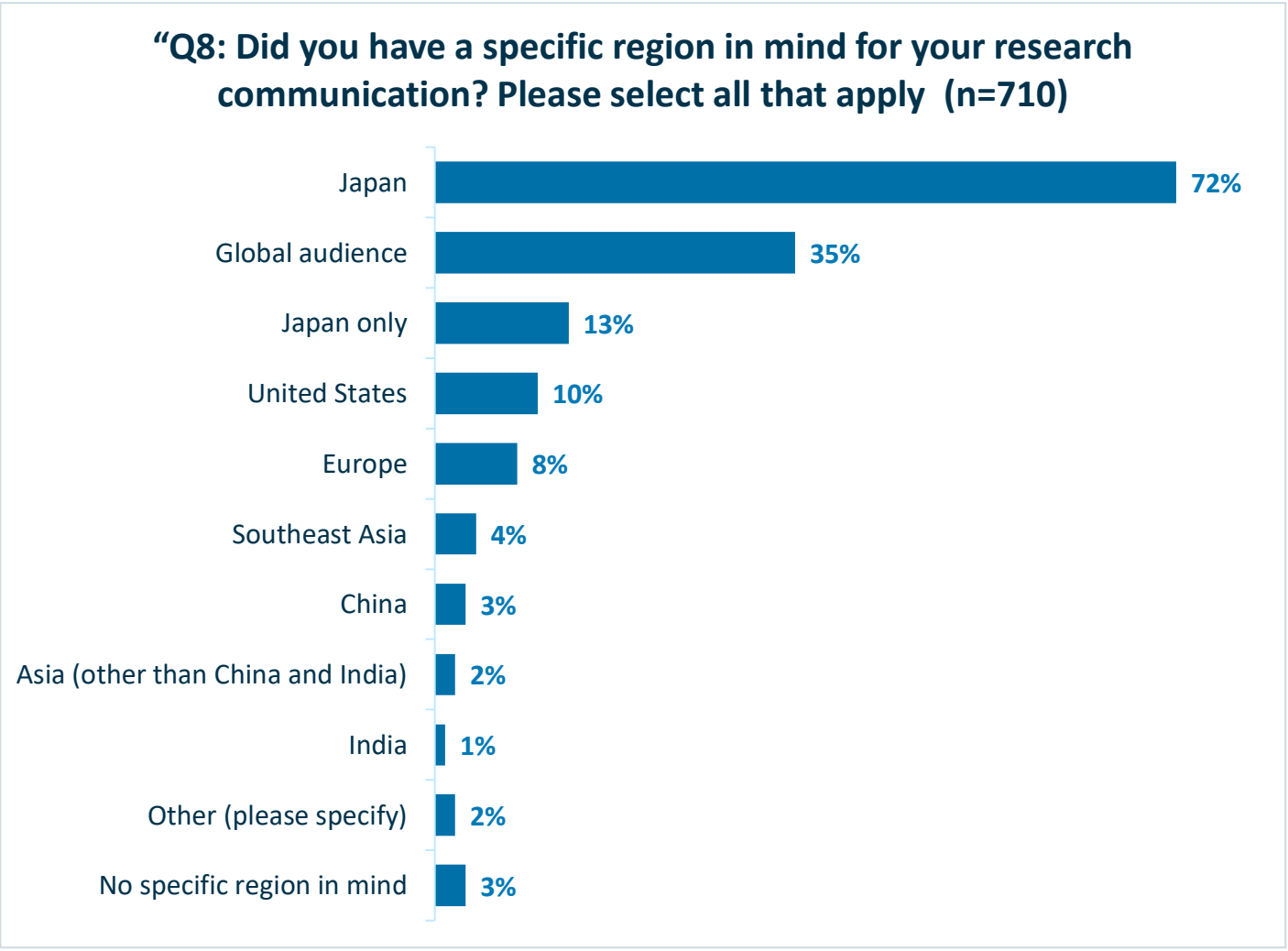
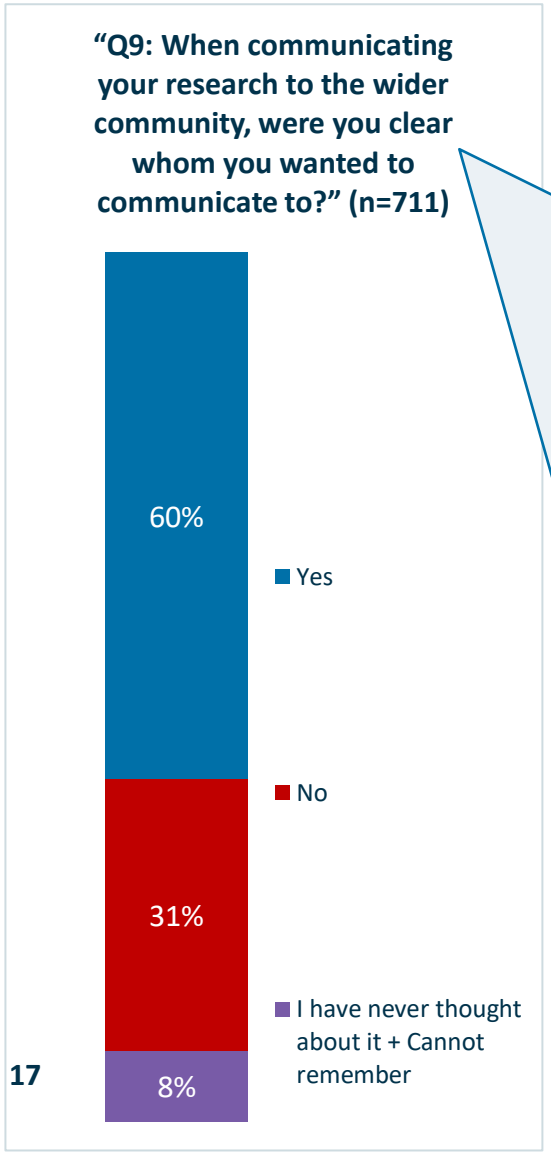
Q8. Target regions for research communication

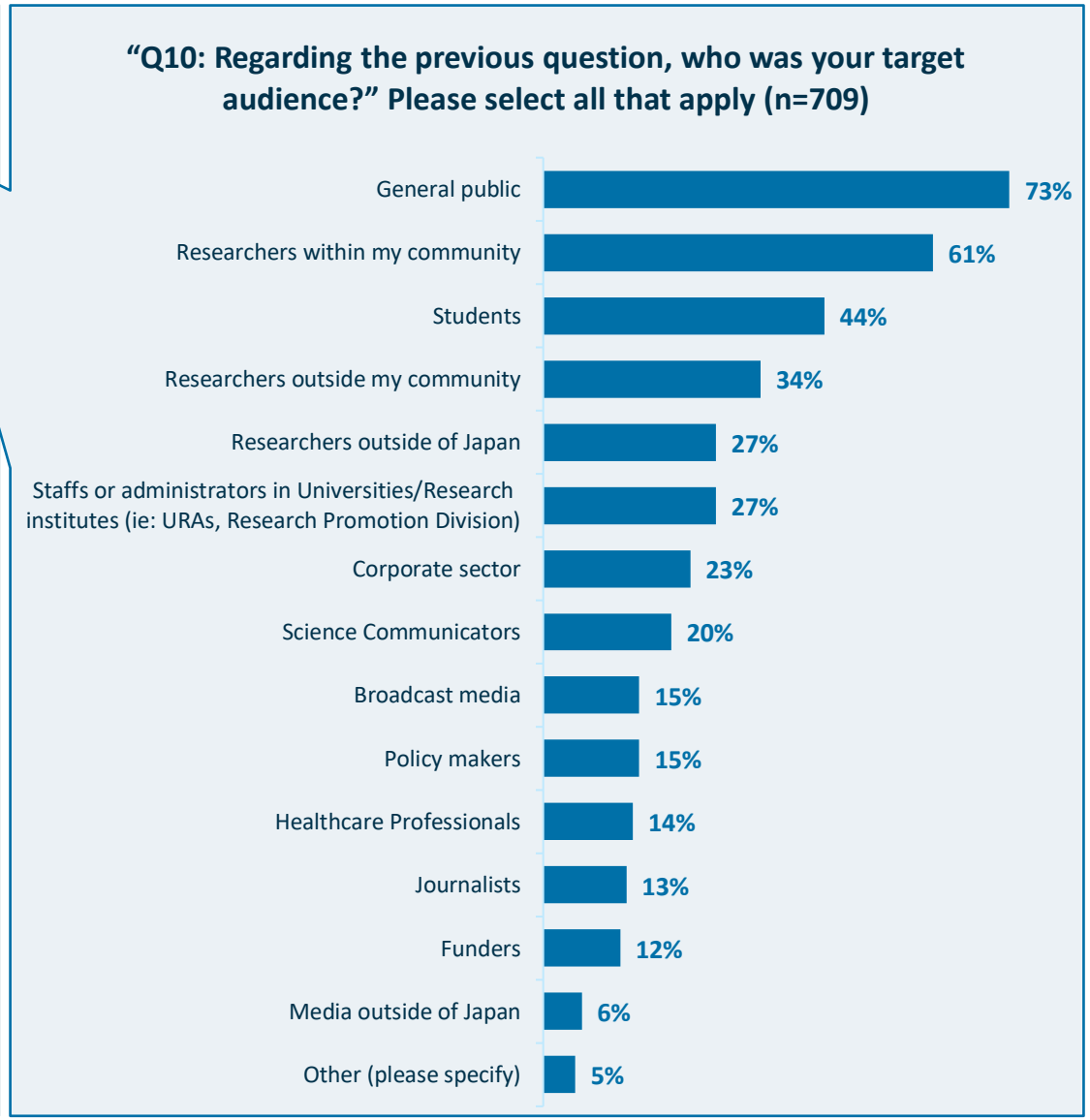


- Over 70% of respondents who had recently shared their research specified Japan as one of their target regions for communicating their work.
- 13% had Japan as their sole target audience.

For further analysis by language, see here.

Q10. Target audience for research communication





- Of those who had recently communicated their research, 60% reported having a clear idea of the intended audience for their research communication.
- The majority of respondents aimed to reach the general public and researchers within the community as their target audience. This was followed by the students and researchers outside of their community.
- Science communicators, broadcast media, and journalists were 20%, 15%, and 13%. Only 12% selected funders as their target audience.

For further analysis by subject field, organization, and type of communication, see here.

- A higher proportion of HSS researchers are targeting policy makers as their target audience.
- A higher proportion of Medical and Clinical Science researchers are targeting healthcare professionals as their target audience.
- Corporate researchers are targeting researchers in the corporate sector more often than researchers from other sectors.

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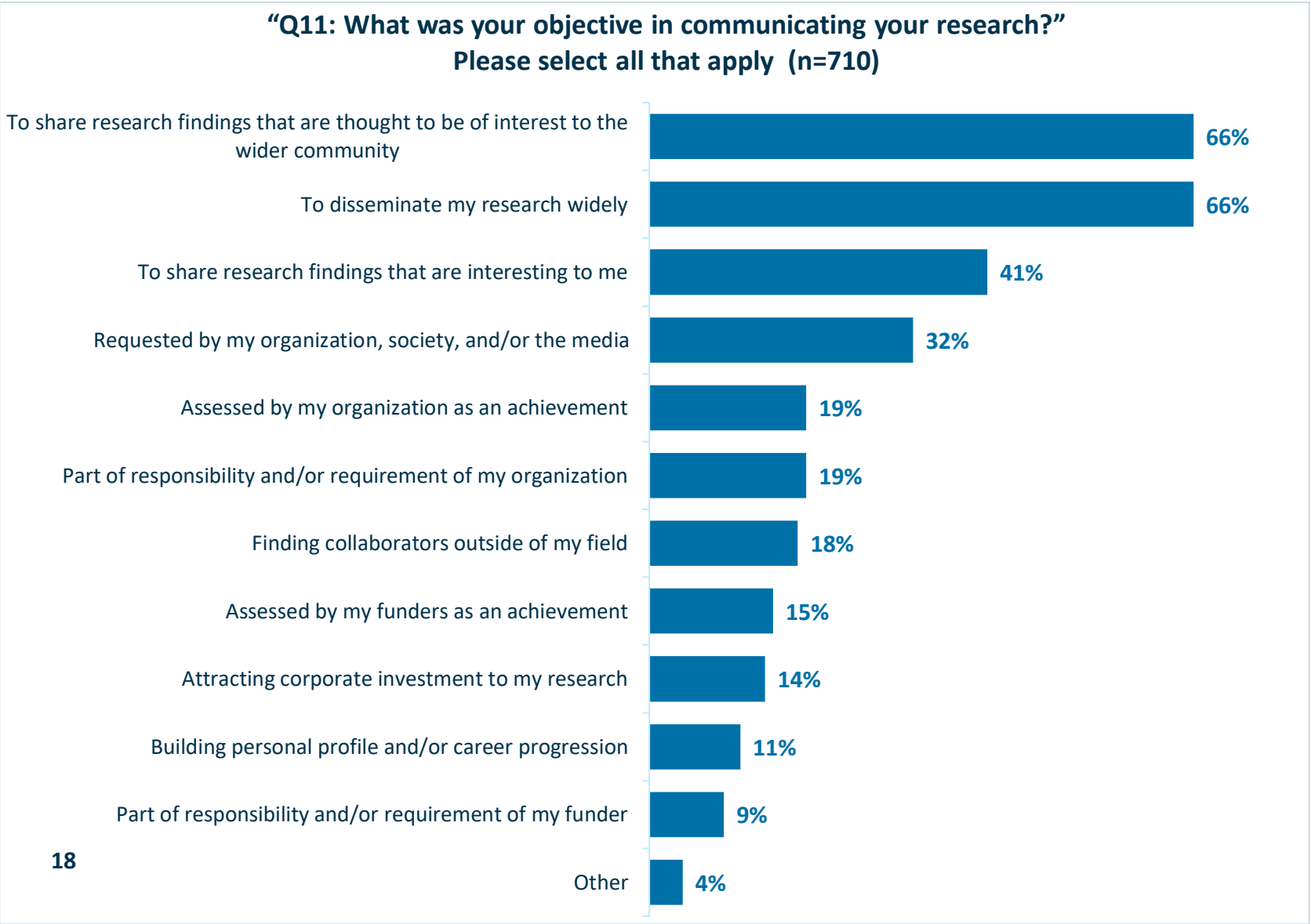
Q11. Objectives for research communication



- The main research communication objectives selected by the majority of those who recently shared their research were "To share research findings that are thought to be of interest to the wider community" and "To disseminate my research widely".
- 41% said their objective was "To share research findings that are interesting to me".
- 32% responded "Requested by my organization, society, and/or the media".
- 19% and 15% responded "Assessed as an achievement by my organization and funders".

For further analysis by age group, see here.

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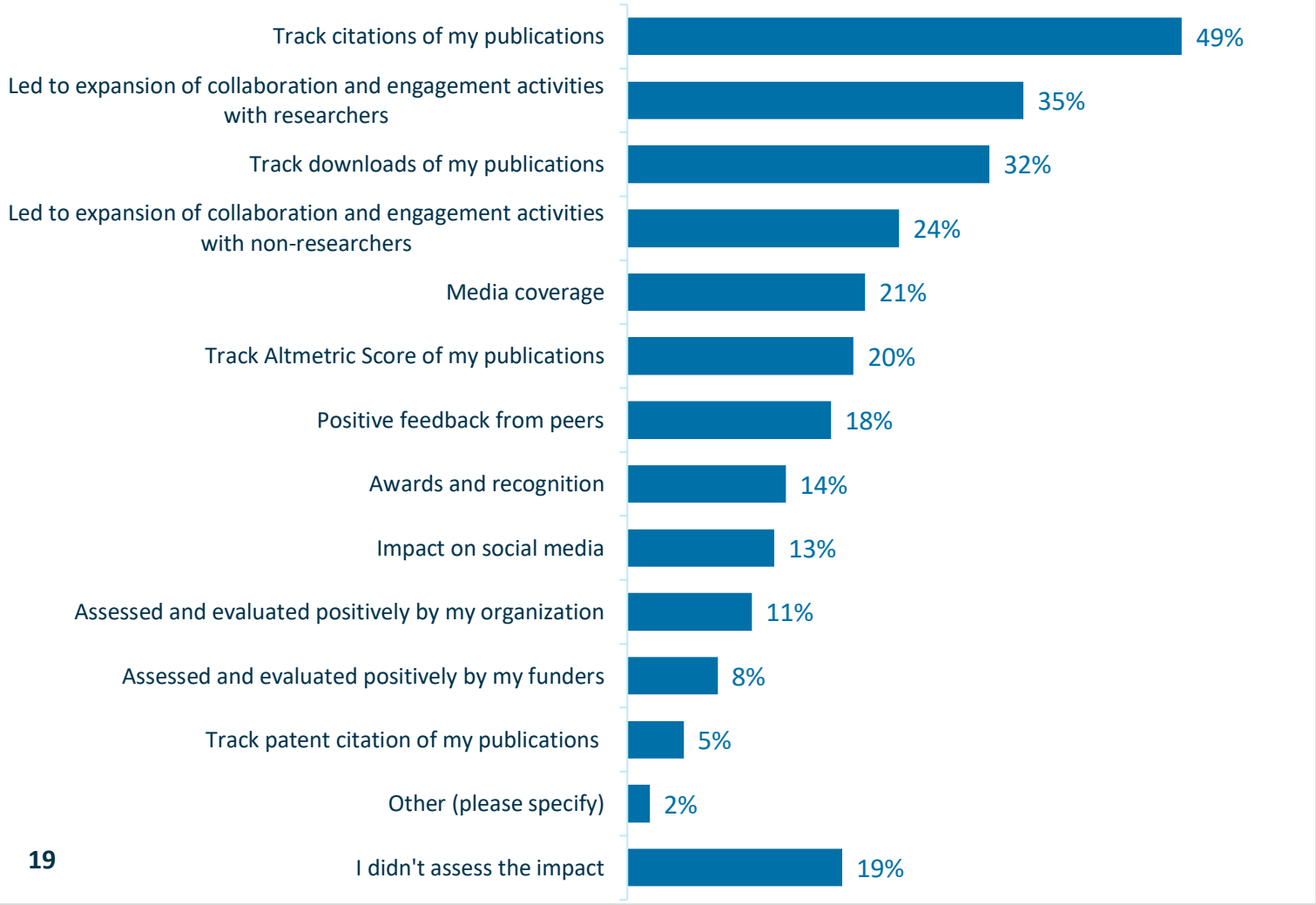
Q12. How the impacts and benefits of research communication was tracked



- About half of those who communicated their research kept track of their publication citations to evaluate the impact of their research communication.

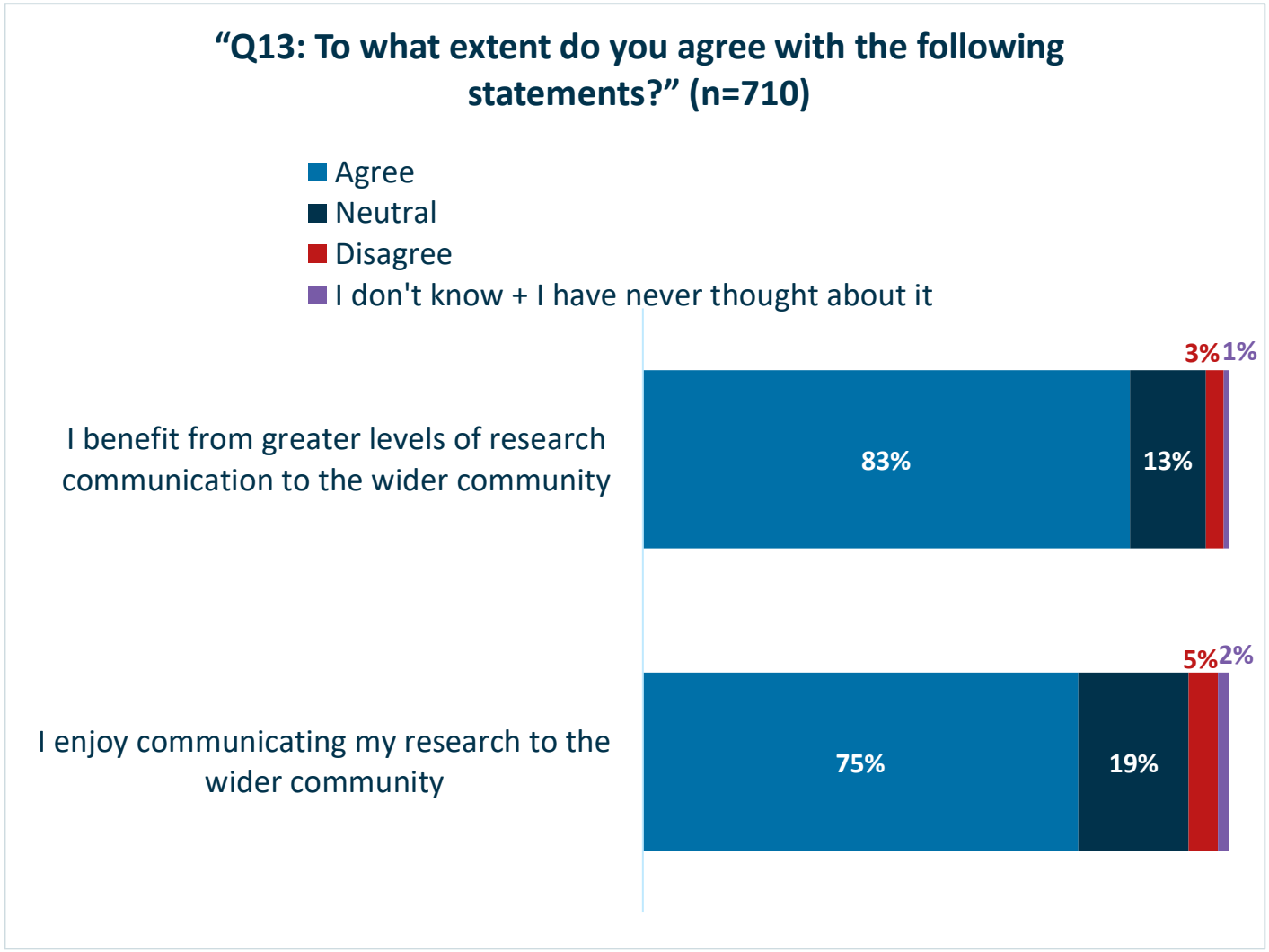
- About a third of respondents either assessed their research communication impact by looking at the expansion of collaboration and engagement activities with other researchers or tracked the downloads of their publications.

For further analysis by language, age group, subject, and communication methods, see here.

- 9% of those who communicated in both Japanese and English did not assess the impact. This value was 27% for those who communicated only in Japanese.

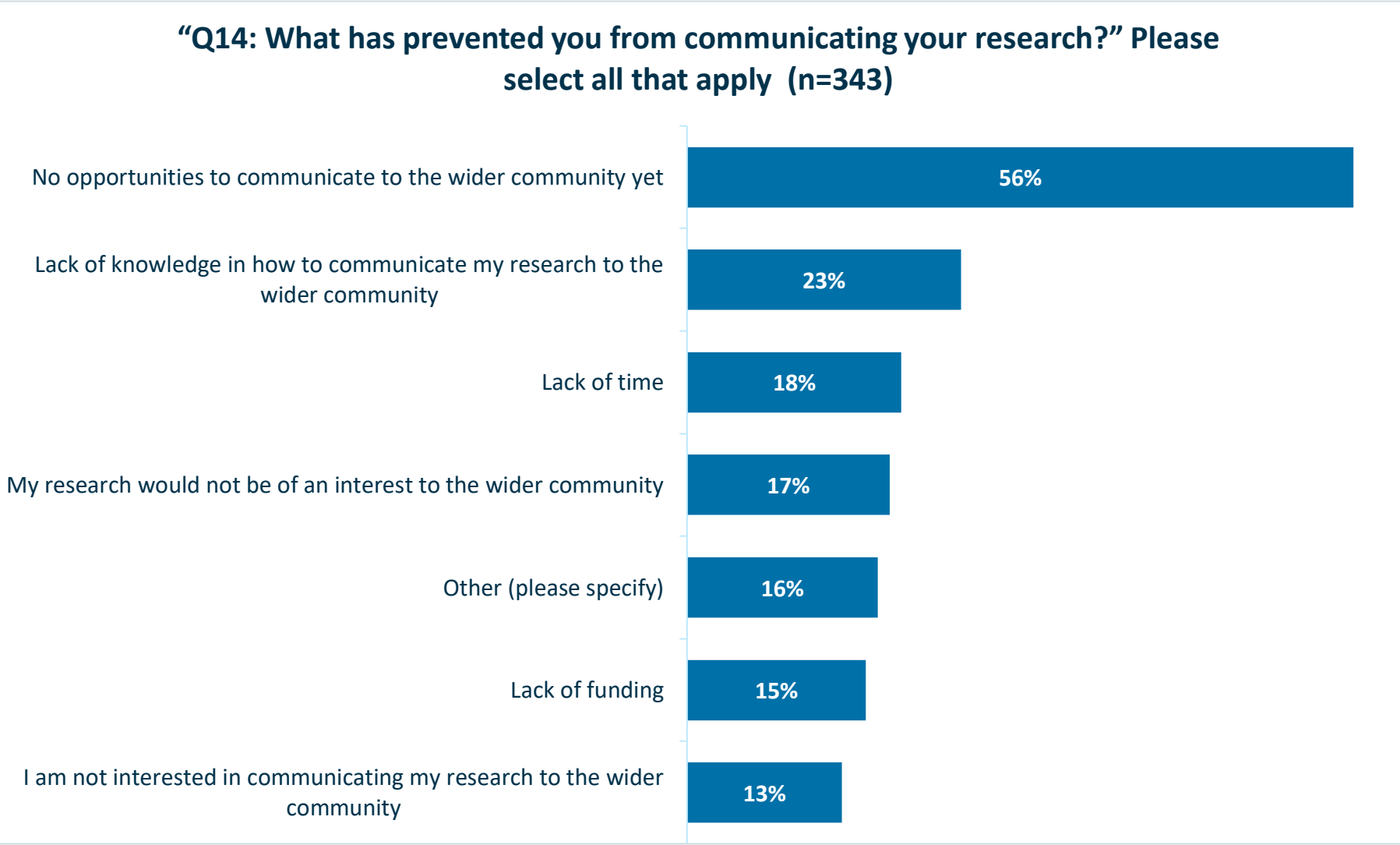
- We observed higher response rates for every multiple-choice selections (other than "I did not assess the impact") for researchers who communicated in both languages compared to those who communicated only in Japanese.

Q13. What researchers felt about communicating their research



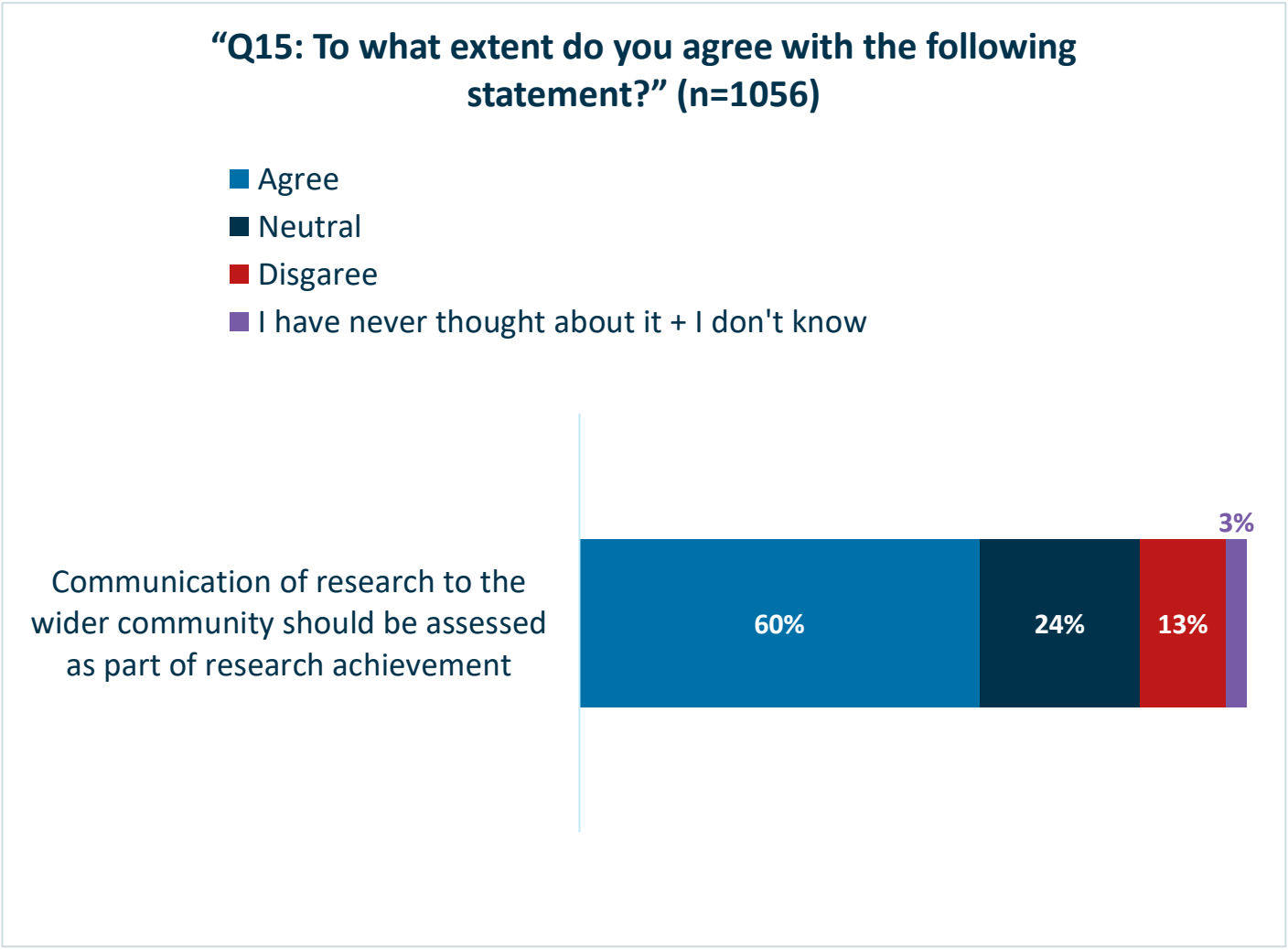
- Of those who communicated their research in the past 3 years, more than 75% of researchers acknowledged the benefits of research communication and expressed enjoyment in communicating their research.

Q14. Reasons for NOT communicating



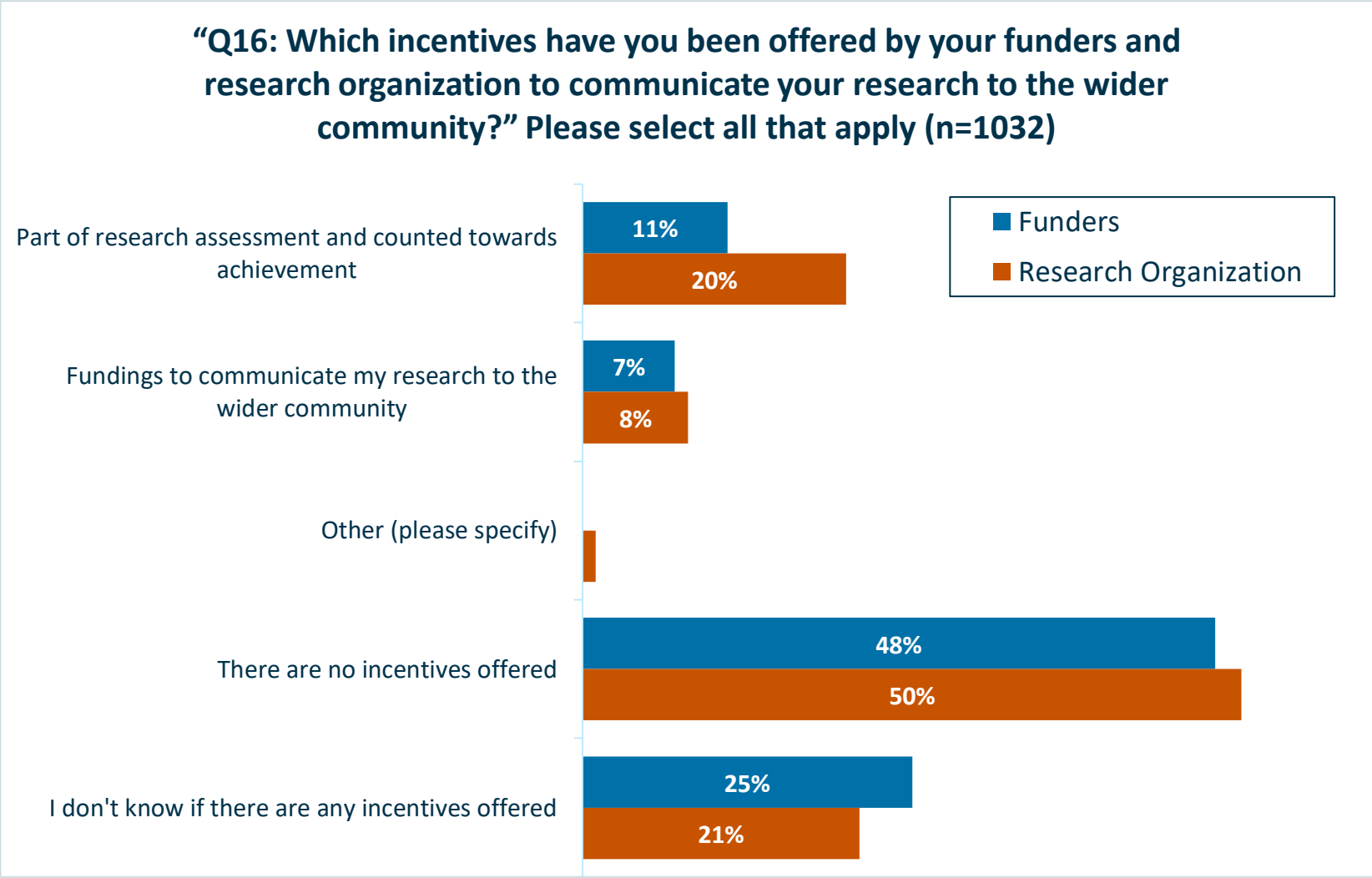
- Those who reported not having communicated their research in the last three years or ever before were questioned about the reasons that prevented them from doing so.
- More than half said it was due to a lack of opportunities to communicate their research.
- Approximately a quarter of the respondents stated that the reason for not communicating their research was the lack of knowledge.
- Other preventions include: COVID-19 restrictions, confidentiality reasons/company policy.

Q15. Should research communication be considered as a part of research achievement?



- All respondents were asked about their perspective on whether communication of research to the wider community should be assessed as part of research achievement.
- 60% agreed to the statement, that it should be considered as part of research achievement. We found similar trends in responses across different age groups or subject fields.

Q16. Incentives offered by your funders/research organization to communicate



- Overall, a higher percentage of respondents reported being offered incentives to communicate their research by their organization rather than their funders.
- However, most of the participants reported that they did not receive nor were aware about any incentives for communicating their research to the wider community.

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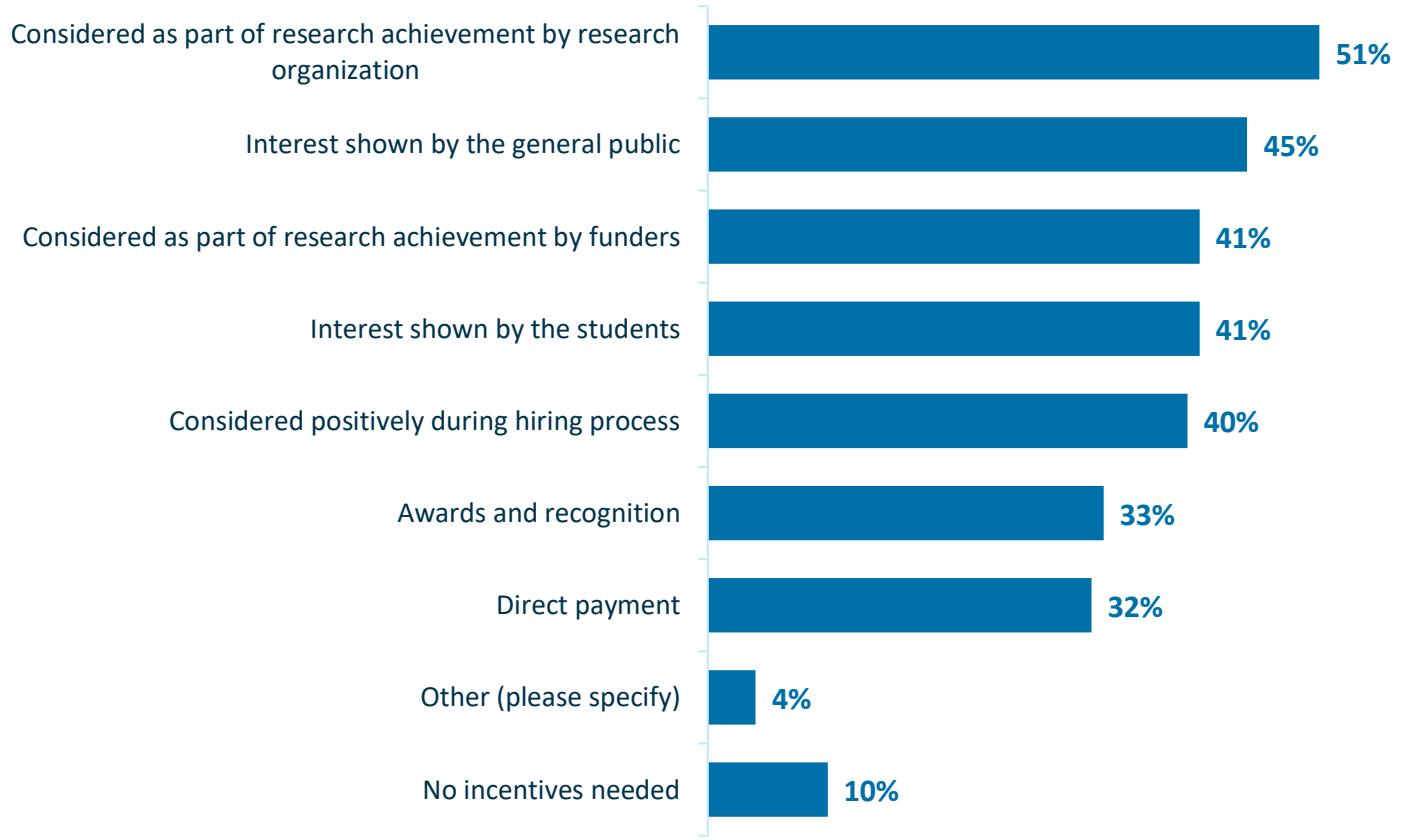
Q17. What would motivate you to communicate more

"Q17: What would motivate you to communicate more with the wider community?" Please select all that apply (n=1055)



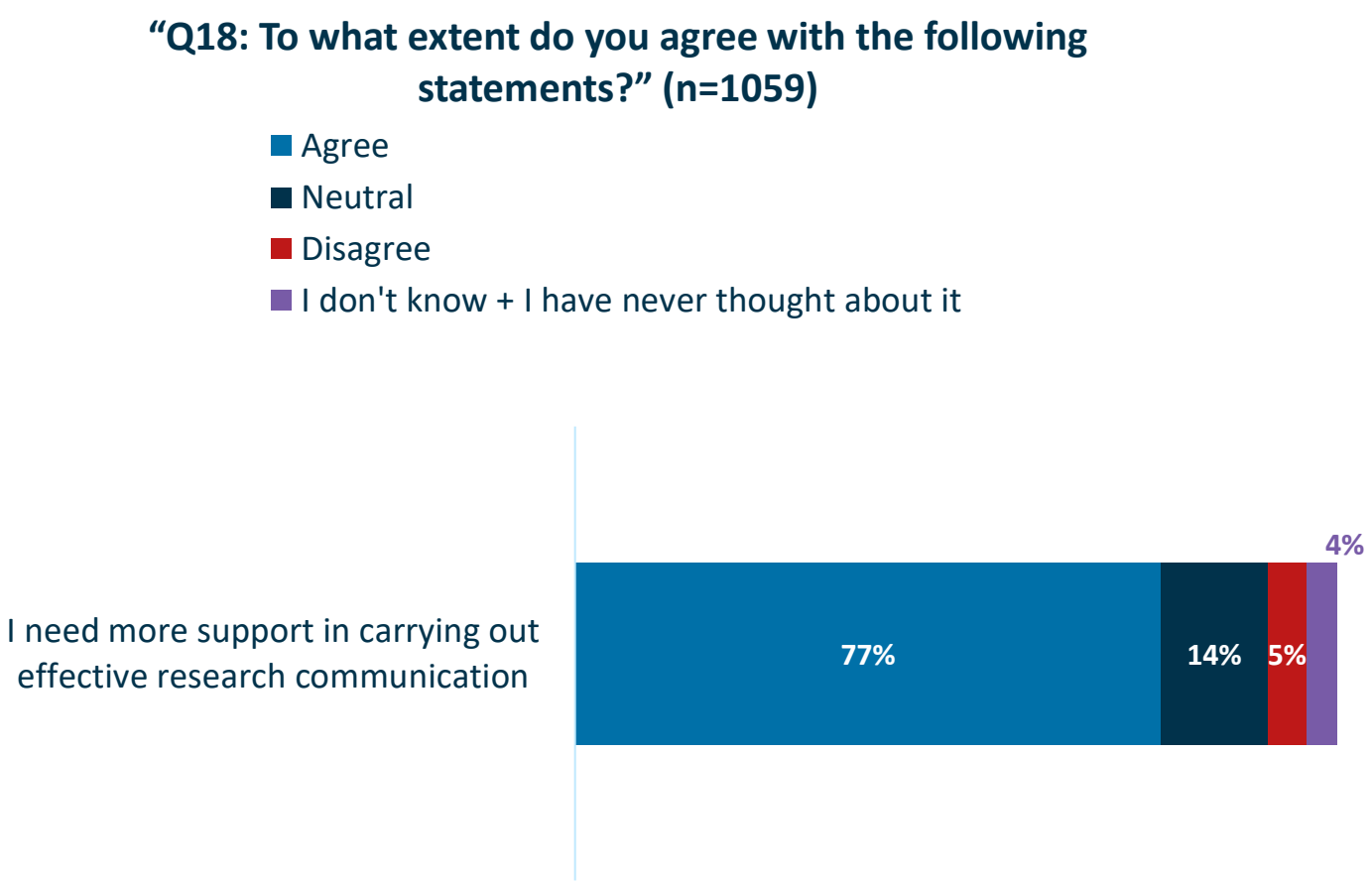
- Respondents were more likely to be motivated to communicate more if their research organization or funders acknowledged research communication as a part of research achievement.

- About 40 – 45% of respondents were motivated to communicate their research if interest shown by the general public or students, as well as if it was considered positively during the hiring process.

For further analysis by age group, see here.

- A higher proportion of ECRs selected "considered as a part of research achievement by research organization and funders", considered positively during the hiring process", "direct payment" and "awards and recognition" compared to other age groups.

Q18. Do you need support to communicate your research effectively?



- All respondents were asked about their perspective on whether they needed more support in carrying out effective research communication.

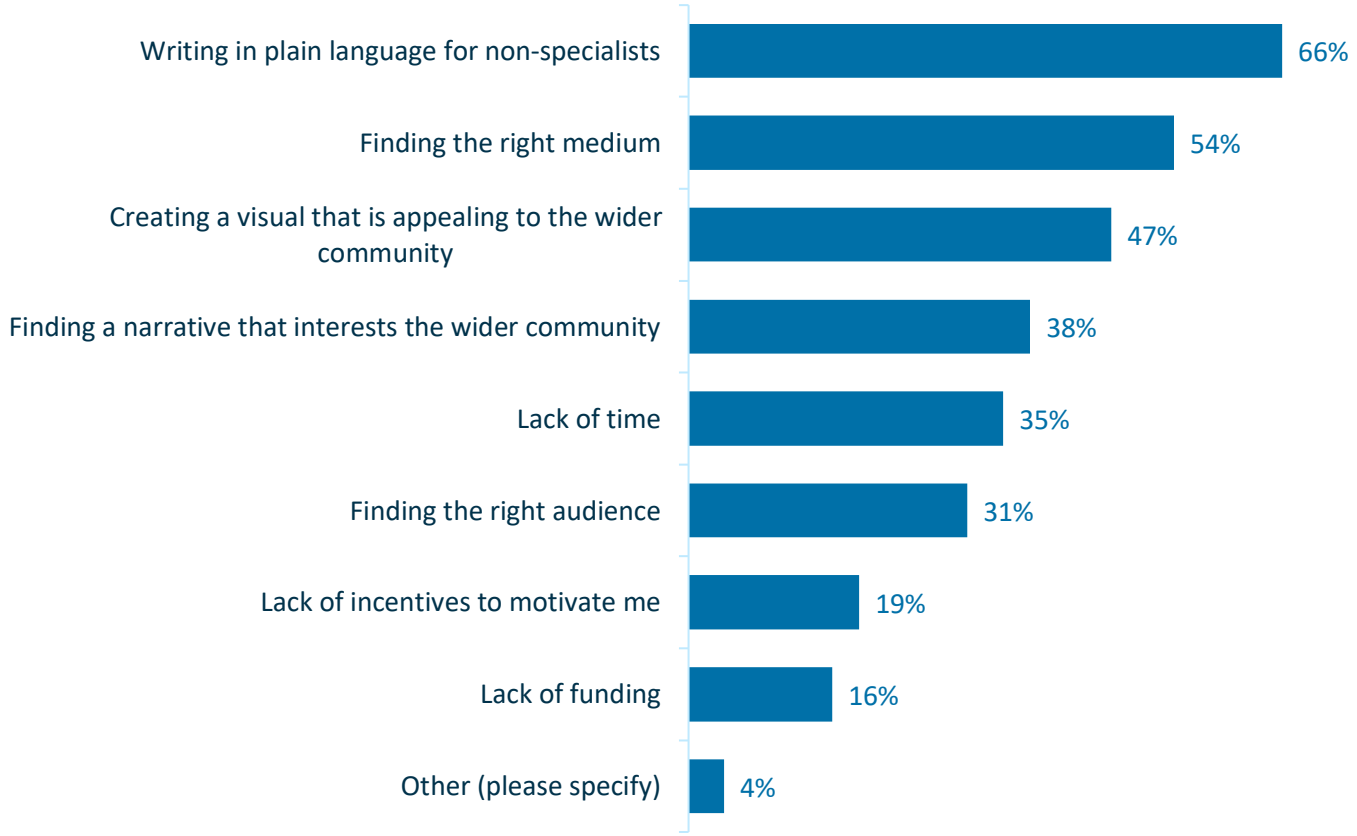
- Almost 80% of the respondents agreed that they need more support in conducting effective research communication.

For further analysis by age group, see here.

- While all age groups responded that they need support, a higher proportion of ECRs (85%) agreed with this statement compared to SR and MCR (74%, 73%).

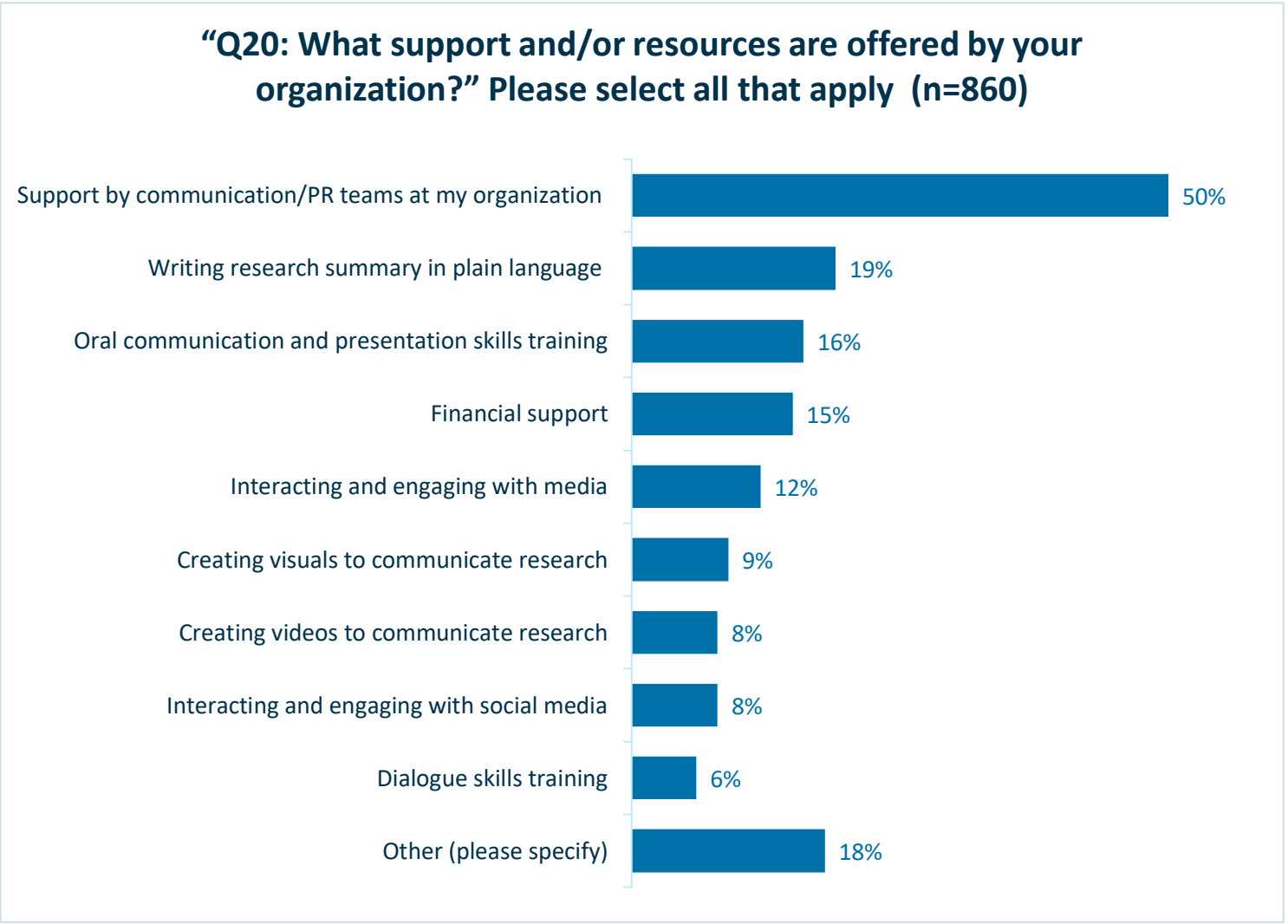
Q19. Challenges for communicating research

"Q19: What are the challenges to communicate your research to the wider community?" Please select all that apply (n=1052)



- When respondents were asked about their challenges to communicate their research, 66% reported difficulties with writing in plain language for non-specialists.
- More than half of the respondents reported having difficulties in finding the appropriate medium to communicate their research.
- Many found creating appealing visuals or narratives to be a challenge.

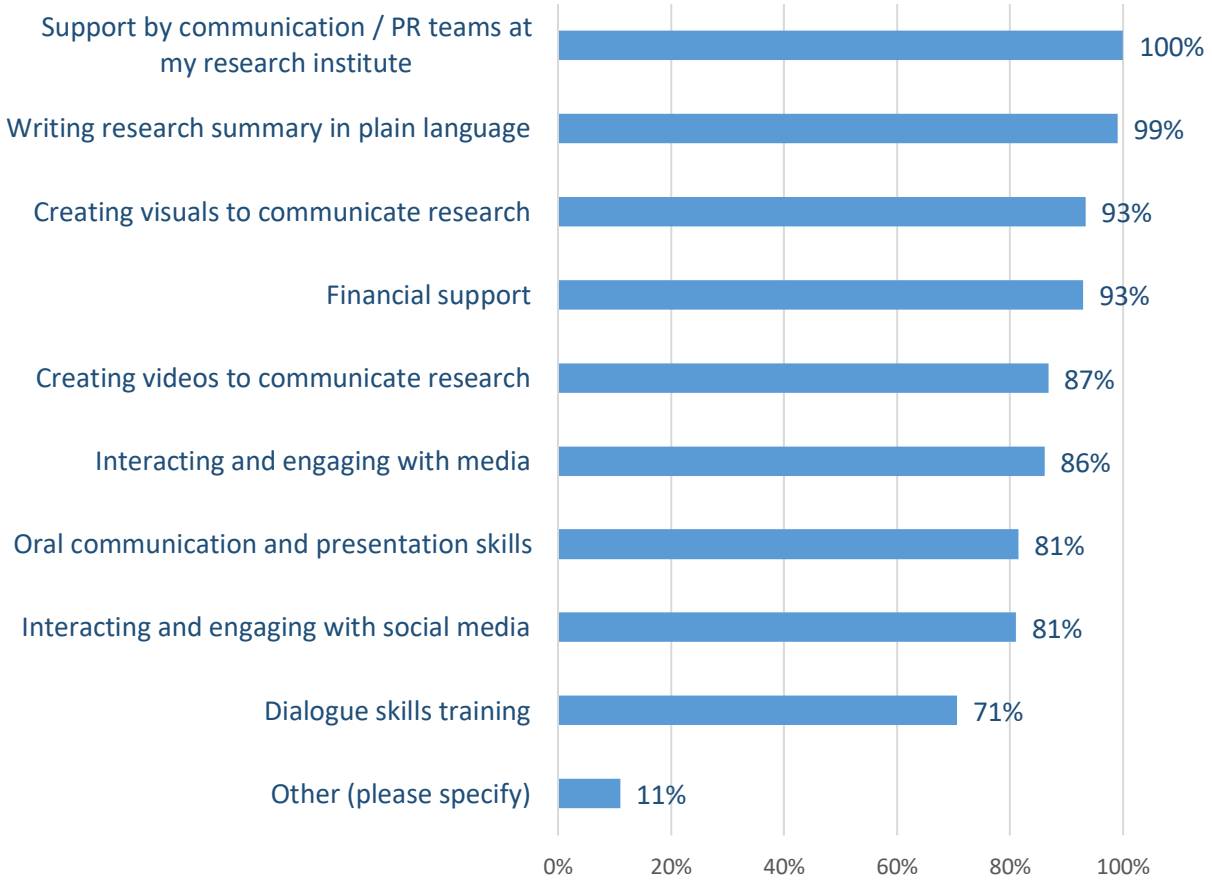
Q20. Support and resources offered by your organization



- When asked about the resources and support available at their organizations, half of the respondents stated that they received support from the communication/public relations teams.
- Approximately 10 – 20% of the respondents were aware of support and resources provided by their organizations, such as writing research summaries in plain language and improving oral communication and presentation skills.
- Other text comments stated that they either received minimal or no support at all, or were simply unaware of the support available to them.

Q21. What support or training has been/would be helpful?

Q21: What support and training has been, or think is most effective to help you communicate your research to the wider community? (n = 756)



- 71 –100% of the respondents indicated that the support mentioned in the multiple-choice selections has helped/would be helpful for their communication efforts. The number of respondents to this question was 756.
- Considering responses from Q20 and Q21, researchers may be receiving minimal or no support at all or were simply unaware of the support available to them.

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Thank you

For any questions, please contact:
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2. Appendix

Q3. Additional analysis - Methods of research communication by age group, subject field, language

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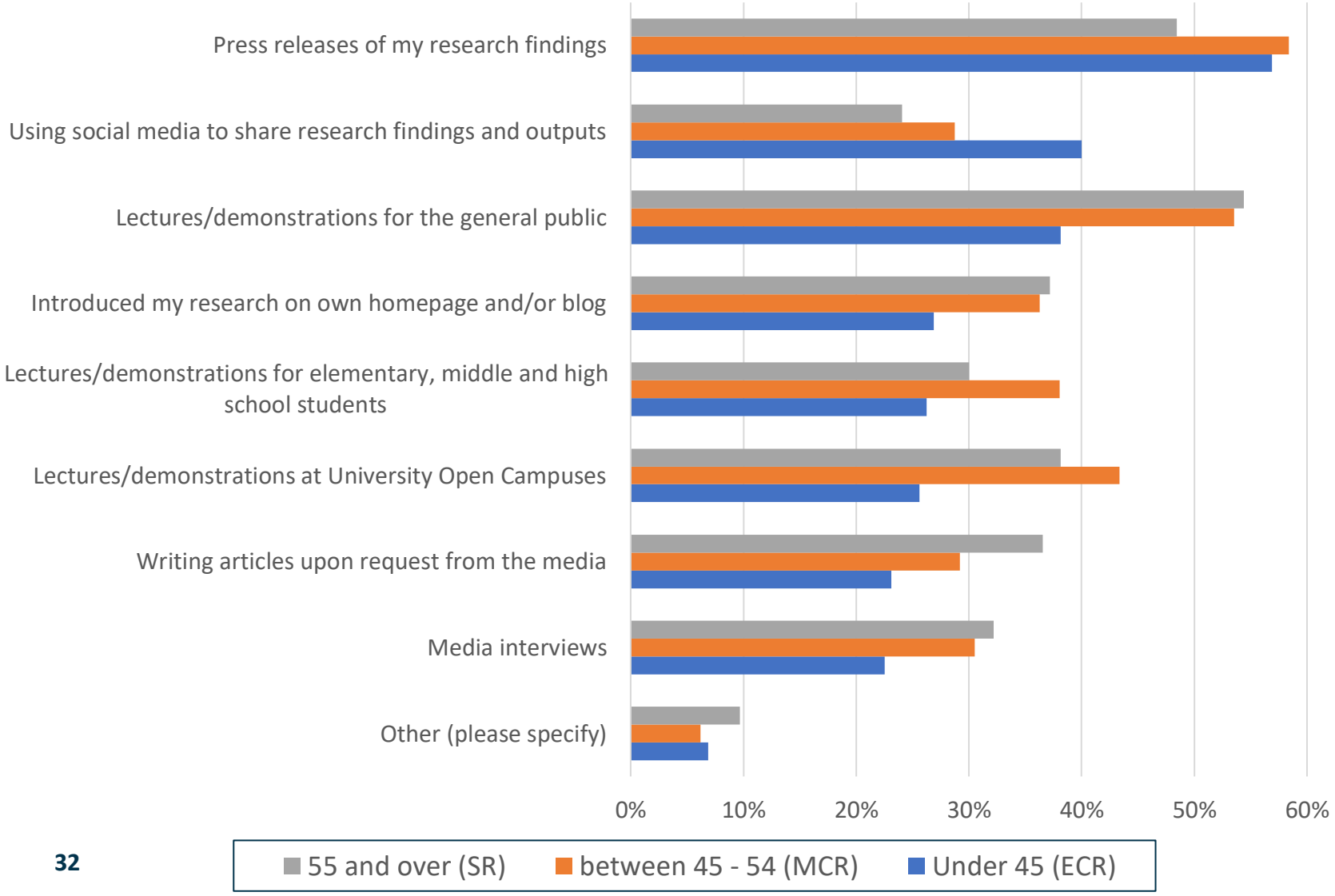
Q3. Methods of research communication

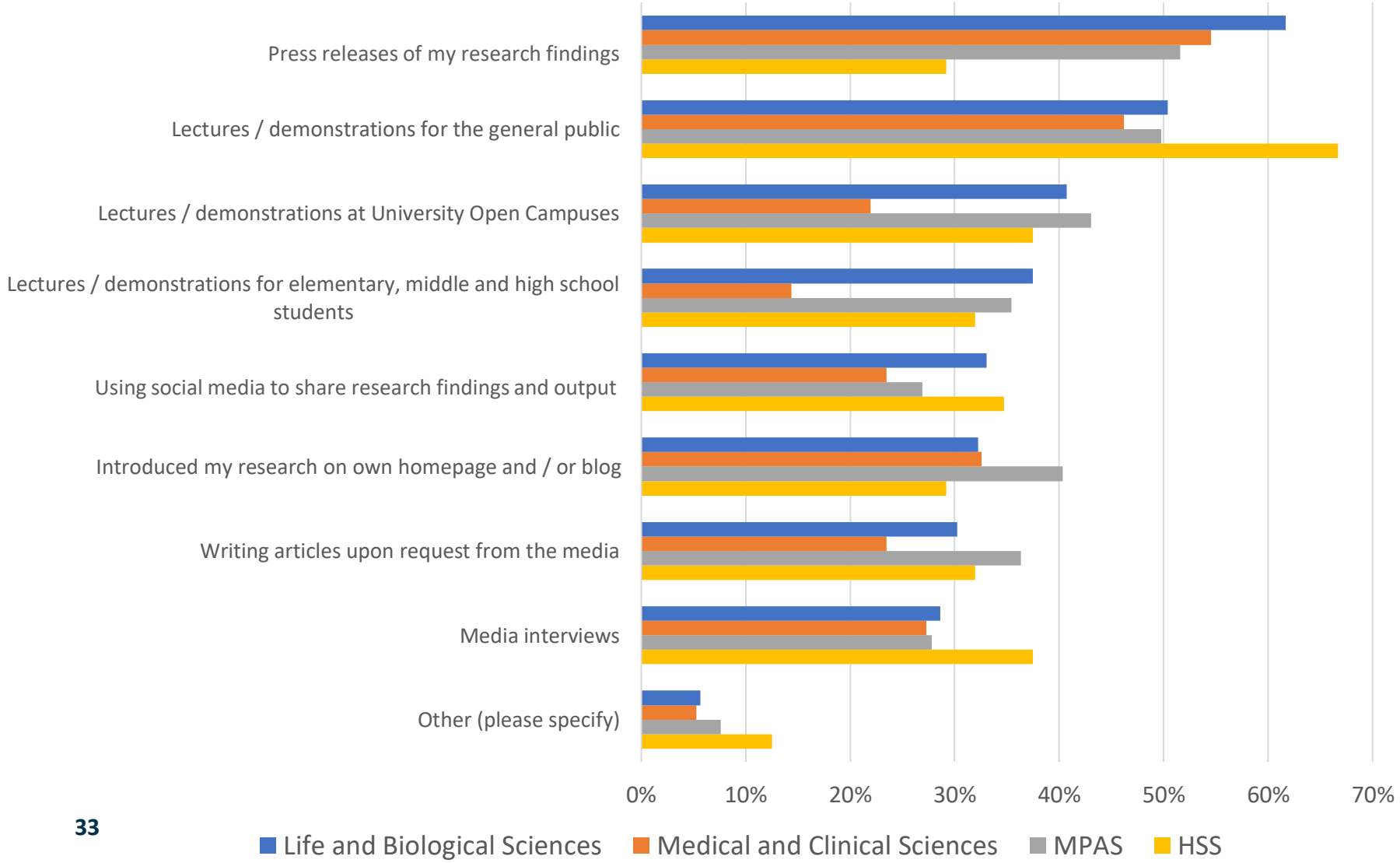
Breakdown by age group



- Press release and lectures/demonstrations to the general public were the most common method across all age groups.
- ECRs were more likely to use social media to communicate their research to the wider community.
- A higher proportion of SRs shared their research findings by writing articles upon requests from the media.

Q3. Methods of research communication

Breakdown by subject field



- Out of the methods of research communication that were surveyed, press release was the most common method for research communication for researchers in Life and Biological Sciences, Medical and Clinical Sciences and MPAS. This was not the case for HSS.
- Within HSS, a higher proportion of researchers have given lectures/demonstrations for the general public to communicate their research to the wider community compared to other methods.

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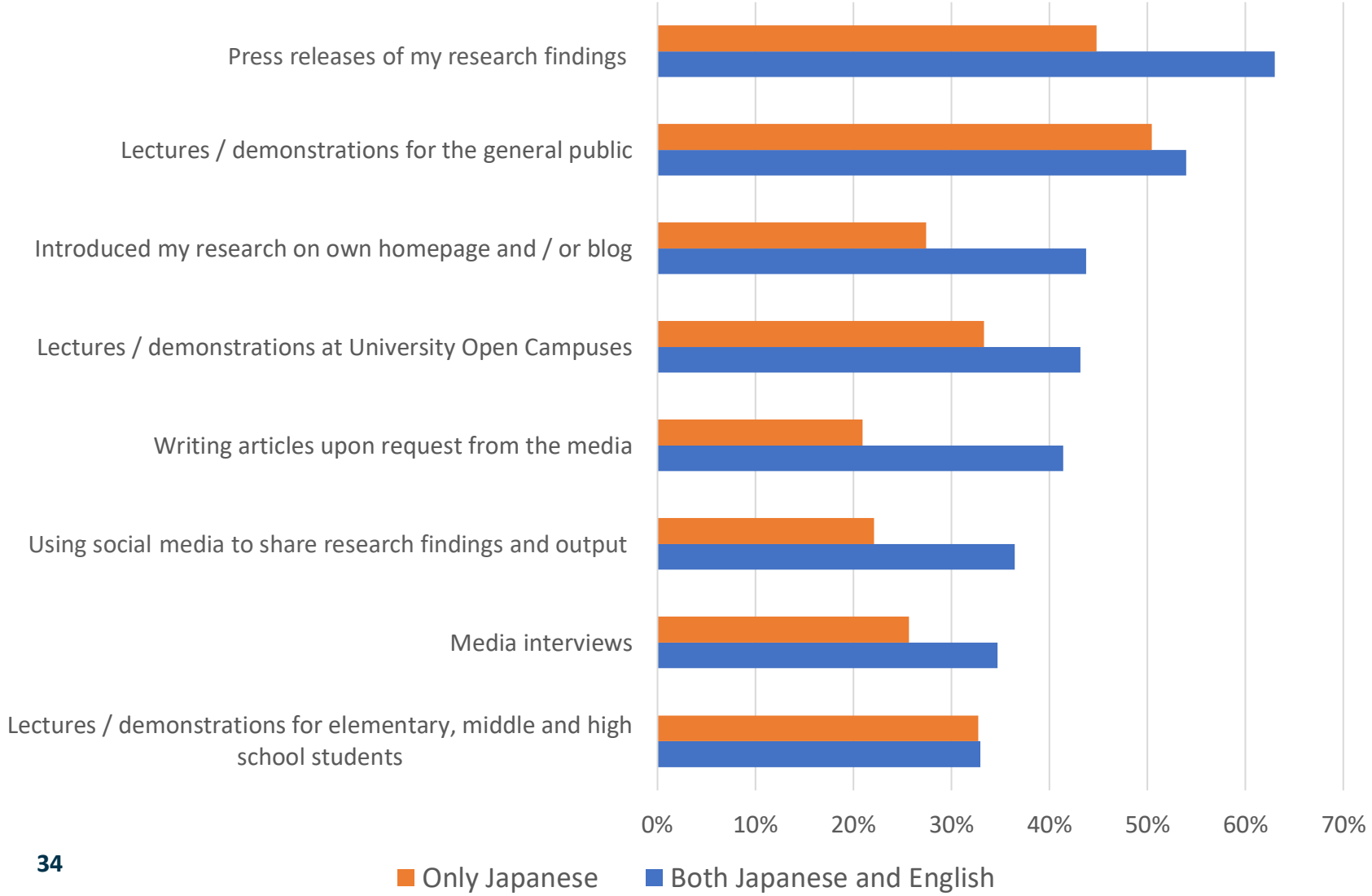
Q3. Methods of research communication

Breakdown by language



- Researchers who use both English and Japanese seem to be overall more active to communicate research compared to those that only communicate in Japanese.
- Press release and lectures/demonstrations for the general public are the most common method to communicate research regardless of language choice.

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Q4. Additional analysis - Identification of what research to communicate by language

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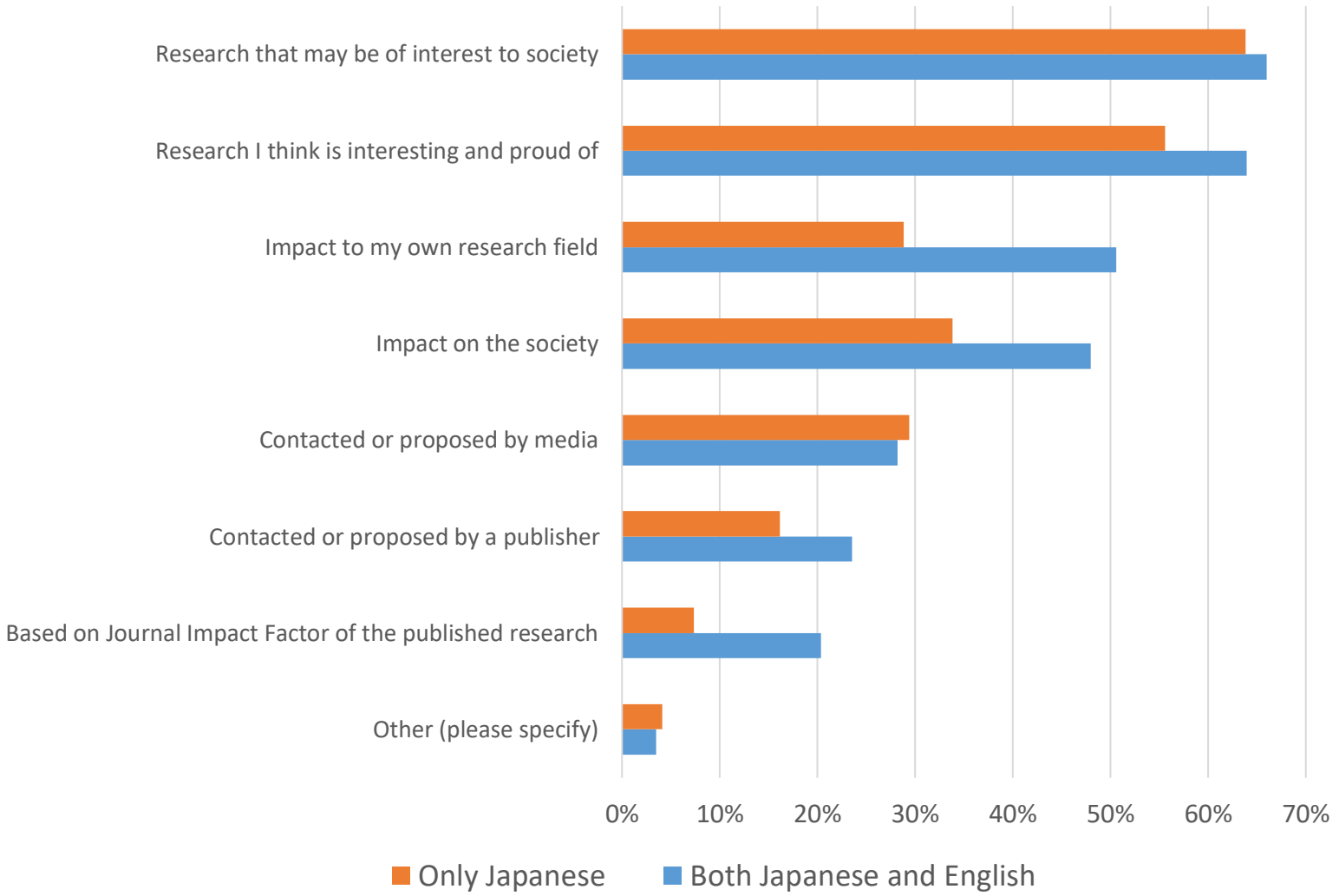
Q4. Identification of what research to communicate

Breakdown by language



- Breaking down by language, we observe that researchers who use both languages with research communication considered “Impact to my own research field”, “Impact on the society” and “Based on the journal impact factor of the published research” more often than those that communicated only in Japanese.

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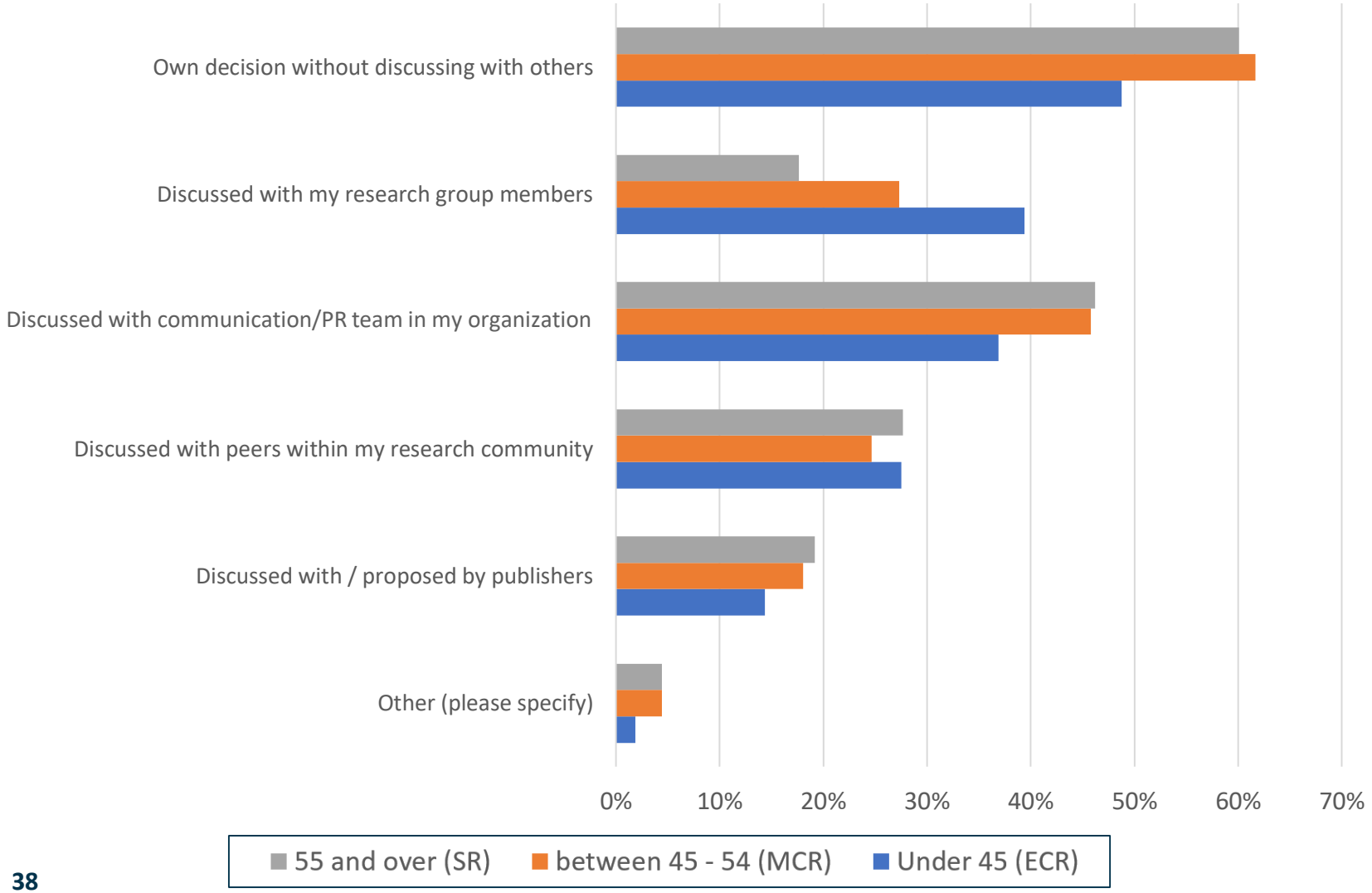
Q6. Additional analysis – Identification of the appropriate medium for research communication by age group.

Q6. How did you identify the appropriate medium for research communication?

Breakdown by age group



- A higher proportion of ECRs discussed more with their group members than other age groups to decide on the medium.

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Q7. Additional analysis – Language of choice for press release and demonstrations/lectures for the general public and by the age group

Q7. Language of choice for press release and demonstrations/lectures for the general public

Press release

Language of choice	# of responses	%
Both Japanese and English	216	57%
Only Japanese	152	40%
Only English	10	3%
Chinese	6	2%
Other (please specify)	0	0%
NET	378	100%

Demonstrations/lectures for the general public

Language of choice	# of responses	%
Both Japanese and English	185	52%
Only Japanese	171	48%
Only English	1	< 1%
Chinese	4	1%
Other (please specify)	1	< 1%
NET	357	100%

Q7. Language of choice

Breakdown by age group

Column % n (# of responses)	25 – 34 (Age)	35 – 44 (Age)	45 – 54 (Age)	55 – 64 (Age)	65 or over (Age)	NET
Both Japanese and English	62%	42%	44%	47%	64%	48%
	24	49	99	100	70	343
Only Japanese	38%	53%	53%	50%	28%	48%
	15	63	121	107	31	339
Only English	0%	5%	3%	2%	7%	4%
	0	6	7	5	8	26
Chinese	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	0	2	2	2	0	6
Other	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
	0	1	0	1	1	3

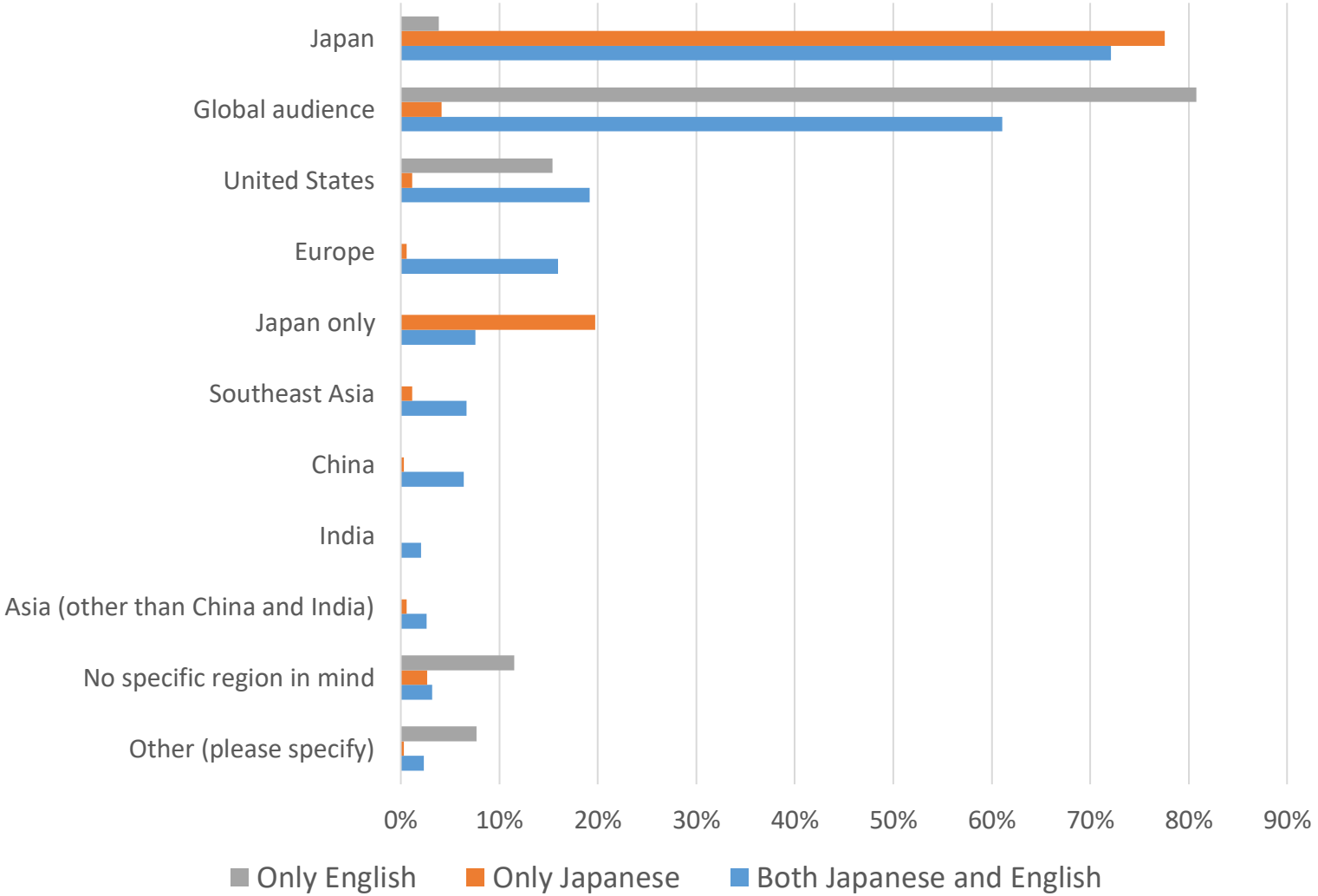
- Age of under 25 is not included in the table above

Q8. Additional analysis - Target region by language

SPRINGER NATURE

Q8. Target Region?

Breakdown by language



- Survey participants that communicated only in English did not often have Japan in mind. (Number of responses for “only English” is low. n = 26 for “Only English”, whereas n = 344 and 340 for “Both Japanese and English” and “Only Japanese”)

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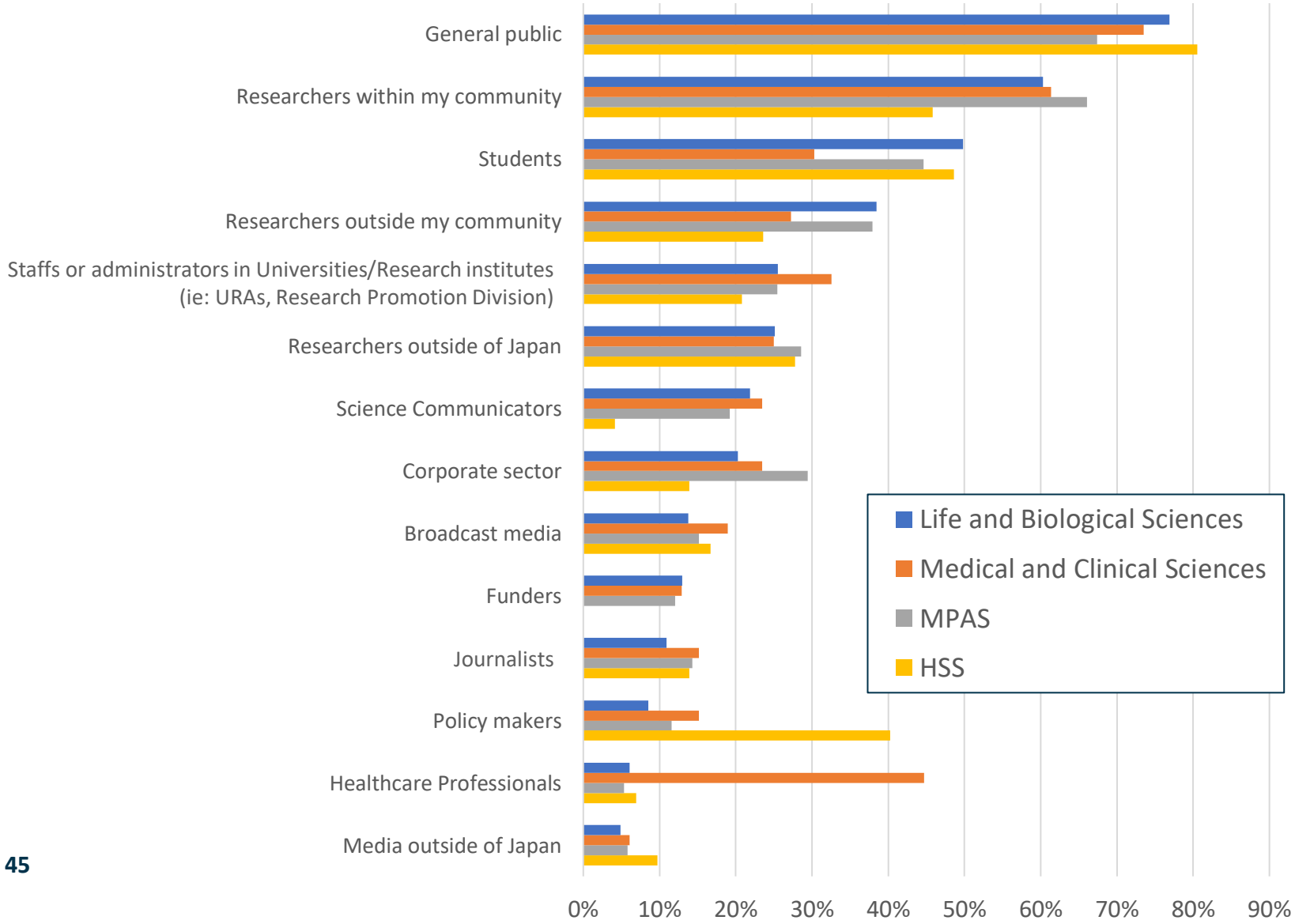
Q10. Additional analysis - Target audience by subject field, type of organization, and communication method

SPRINGER NATURE

Q10. Who was your target audience?

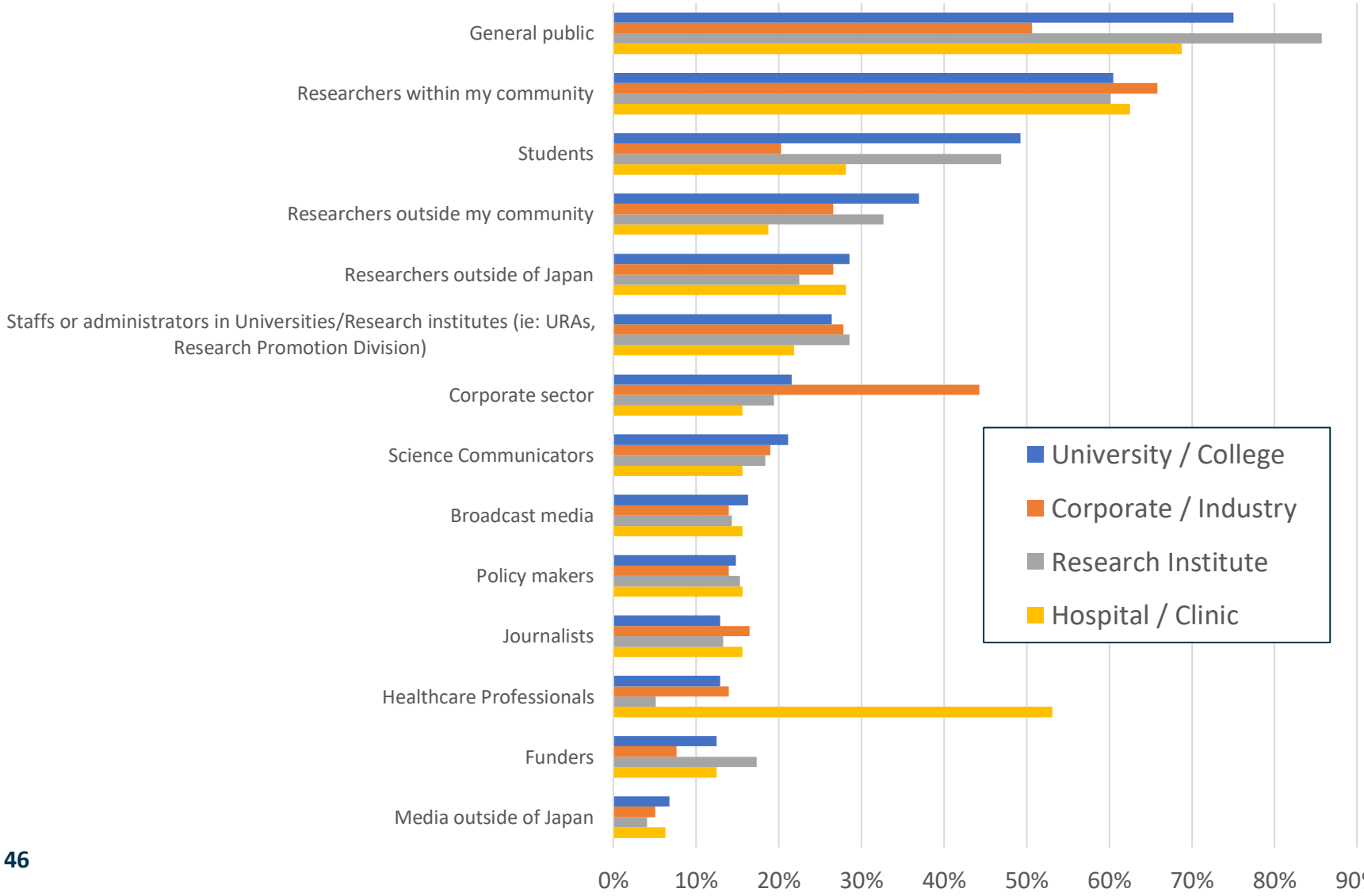
Breakdown by subject field



- Researchers from all disciplines have the general public in mind the most when communicating research.
- A higher proportion of HSS researchers are targeting policy makers as their target audience than researchers from other subject fields.
- A higher proportion of Medical and Clinical Science researchers are targeting healthcare professionals as their target audience than researchers from other subject fields.
- Compared to other subjects, researchers in Medical and Clinical Sciences are targeting students less.
- Compared to other subjects, HSS researchers are targeting science communicators less.

Q10. Who was your target audience?

Breakdown by the type of organization

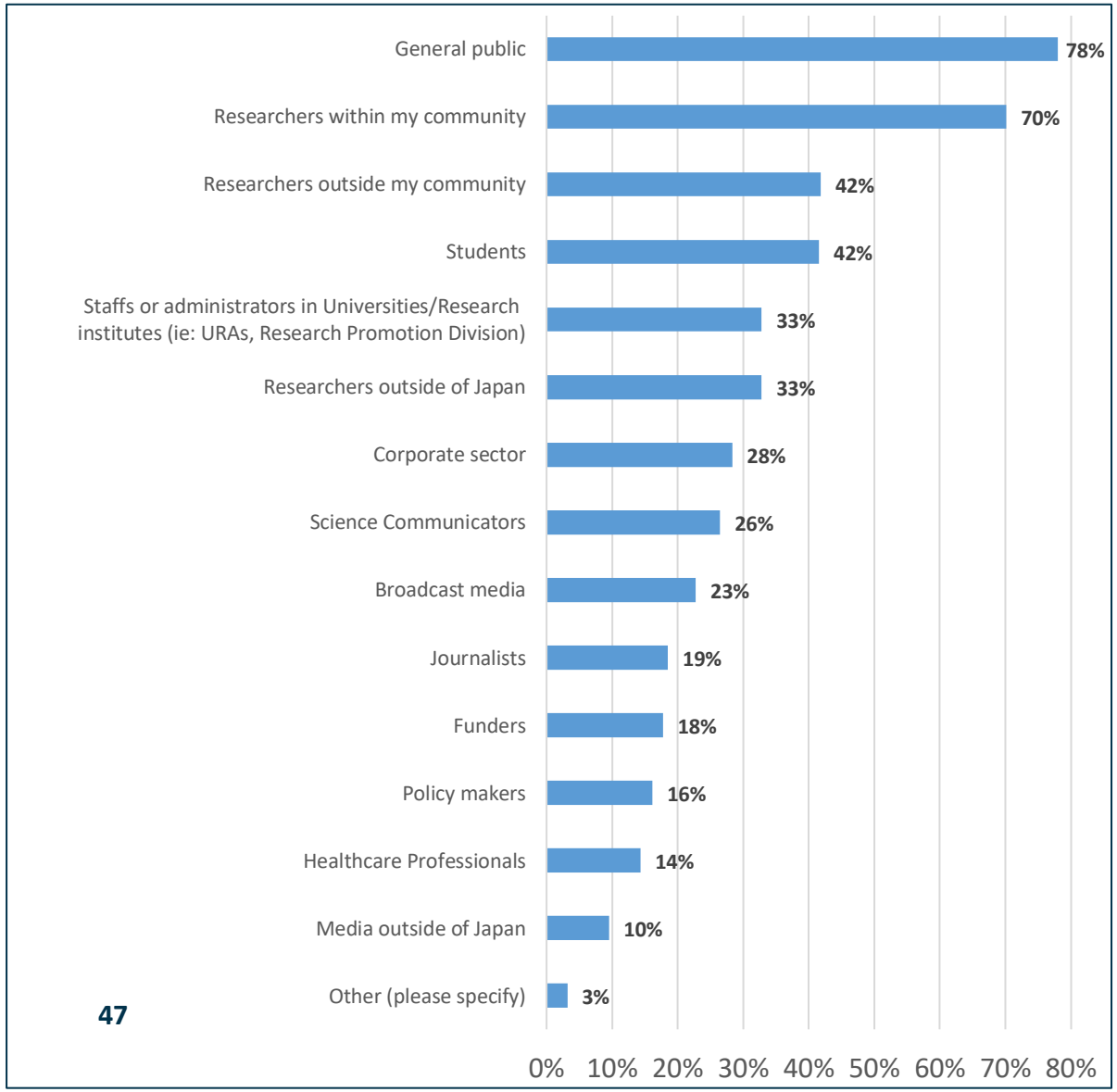


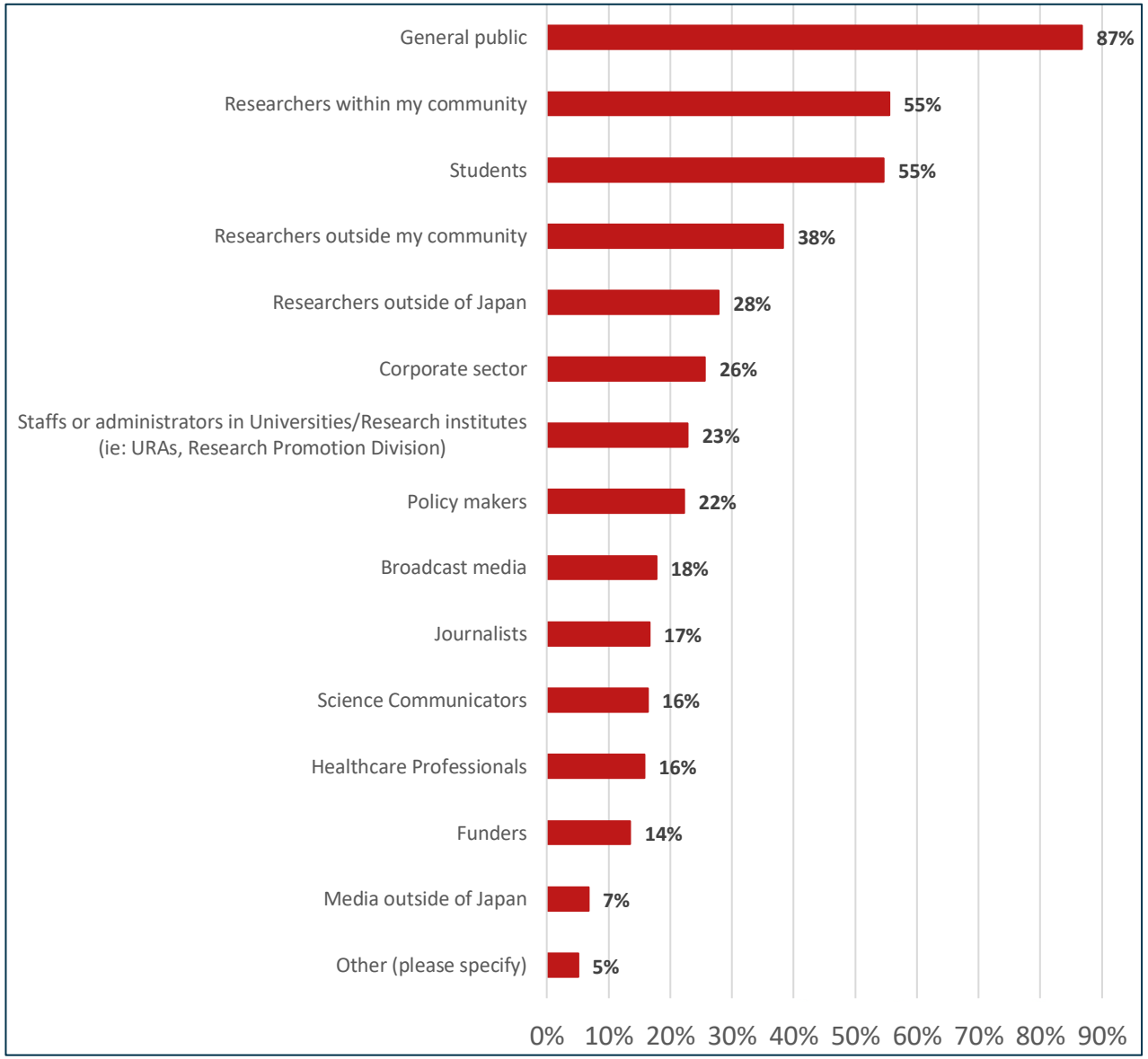
- Researchers from Hospitals/Clinics are targeting healthcare professionals more often than researchers from other types of organizations.
- Corporate researchers are targeting the corporate sector more often than researchers from other types of organizations.

SPRINGER NATURE

Q10. Who was your target audience?

Left: press release, Right: lectures/demonstrations to the general public



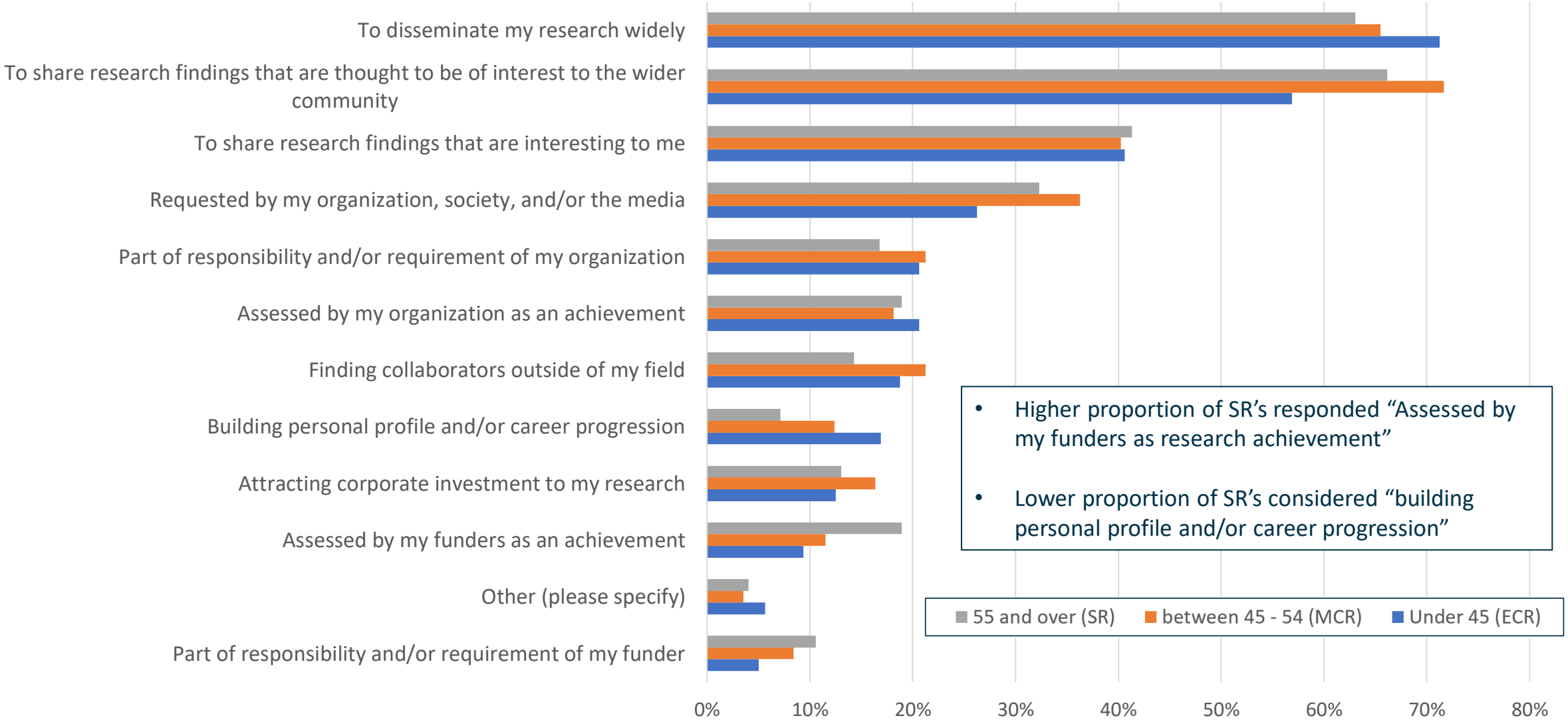


Q11. Additional analysis - Objectives for research communication by age group

SPRINGER NATURE

Q11. Objectives for research communication

Breakdown by age group

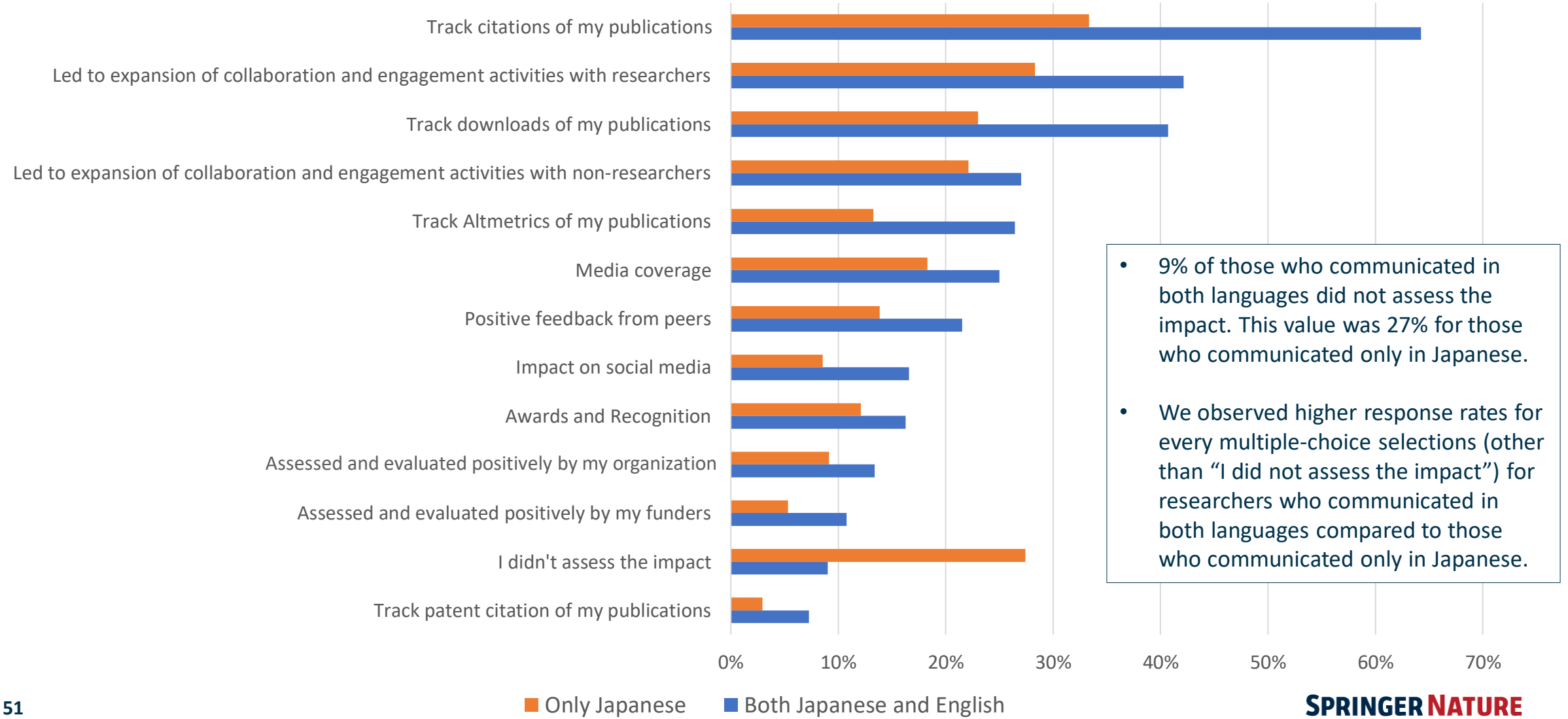


Q12. Additional analysis – Methods of tracking impacts and benefits by language, age group, subject and communication method

SPRINGER NATURE

Q12. How were the impacts and benefits tracked?

Breakdown by language

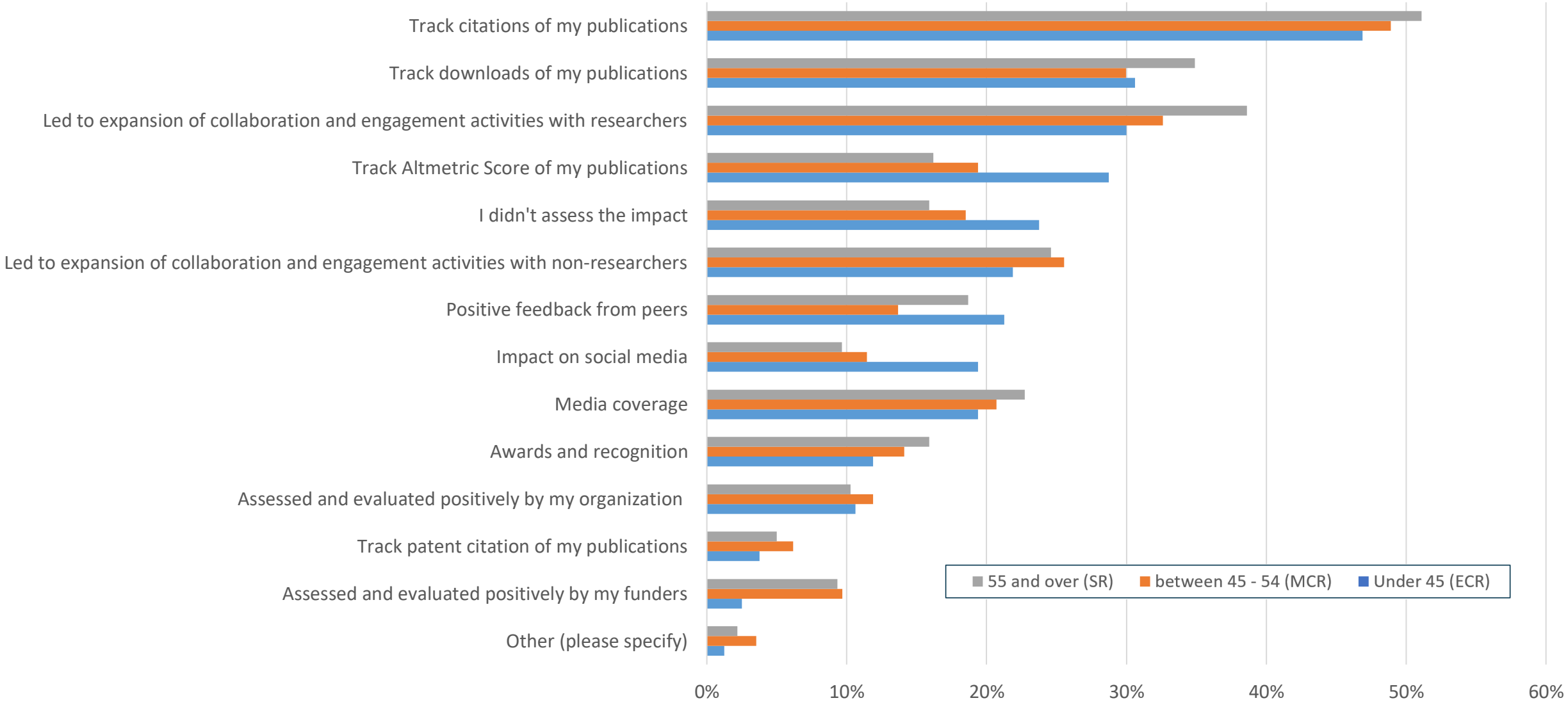


- 9% of those who communicated in both languages did not assess the impact. This value was 27% for those who communicated only in Japanese.
- We observed higher response rates for every multiple-choice selections (other than “I did not assess the impact”) for researchers who communicated in both languages compared to those who communicated only in Japanese.

SPRINGER NATURE

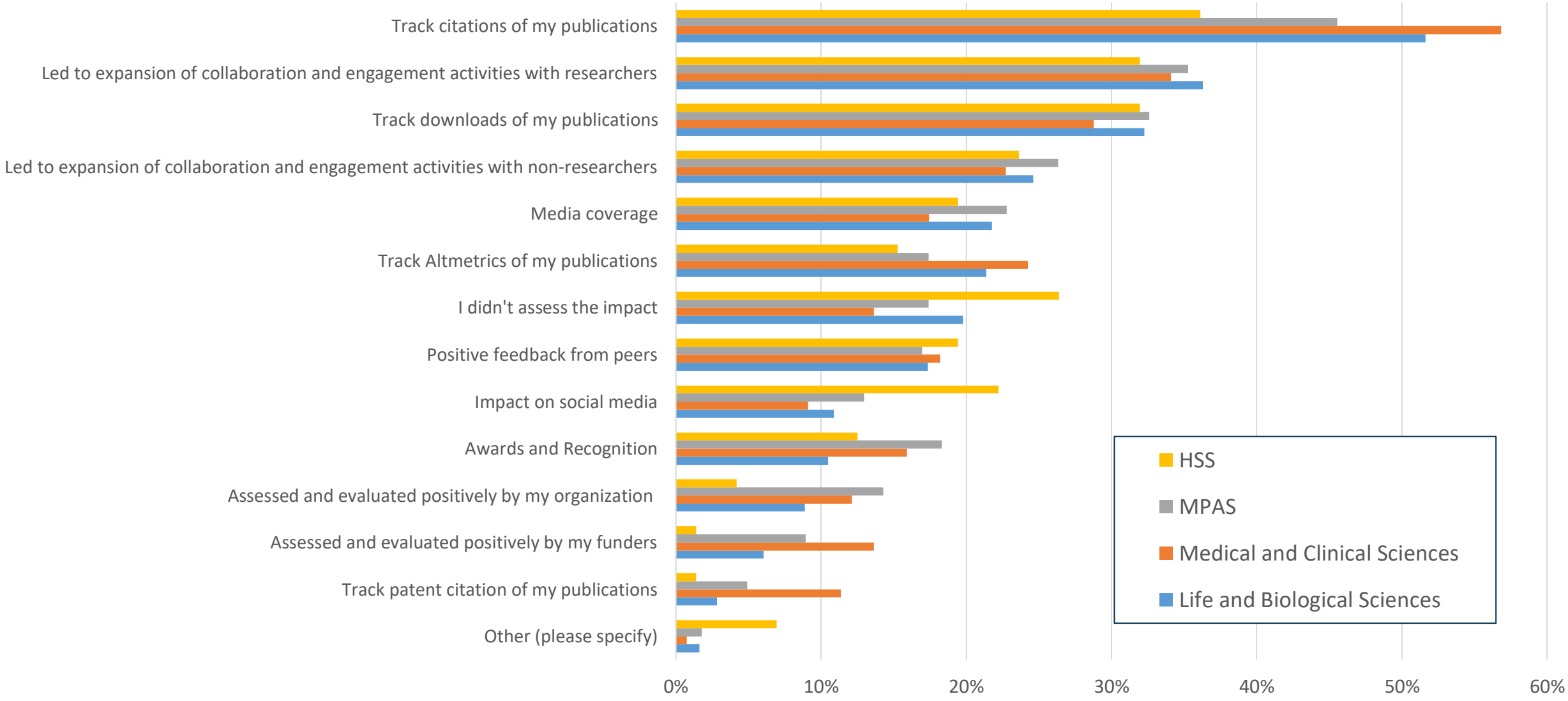
Q12. How were the impacts and benefits tracked?

Breakdown by age group



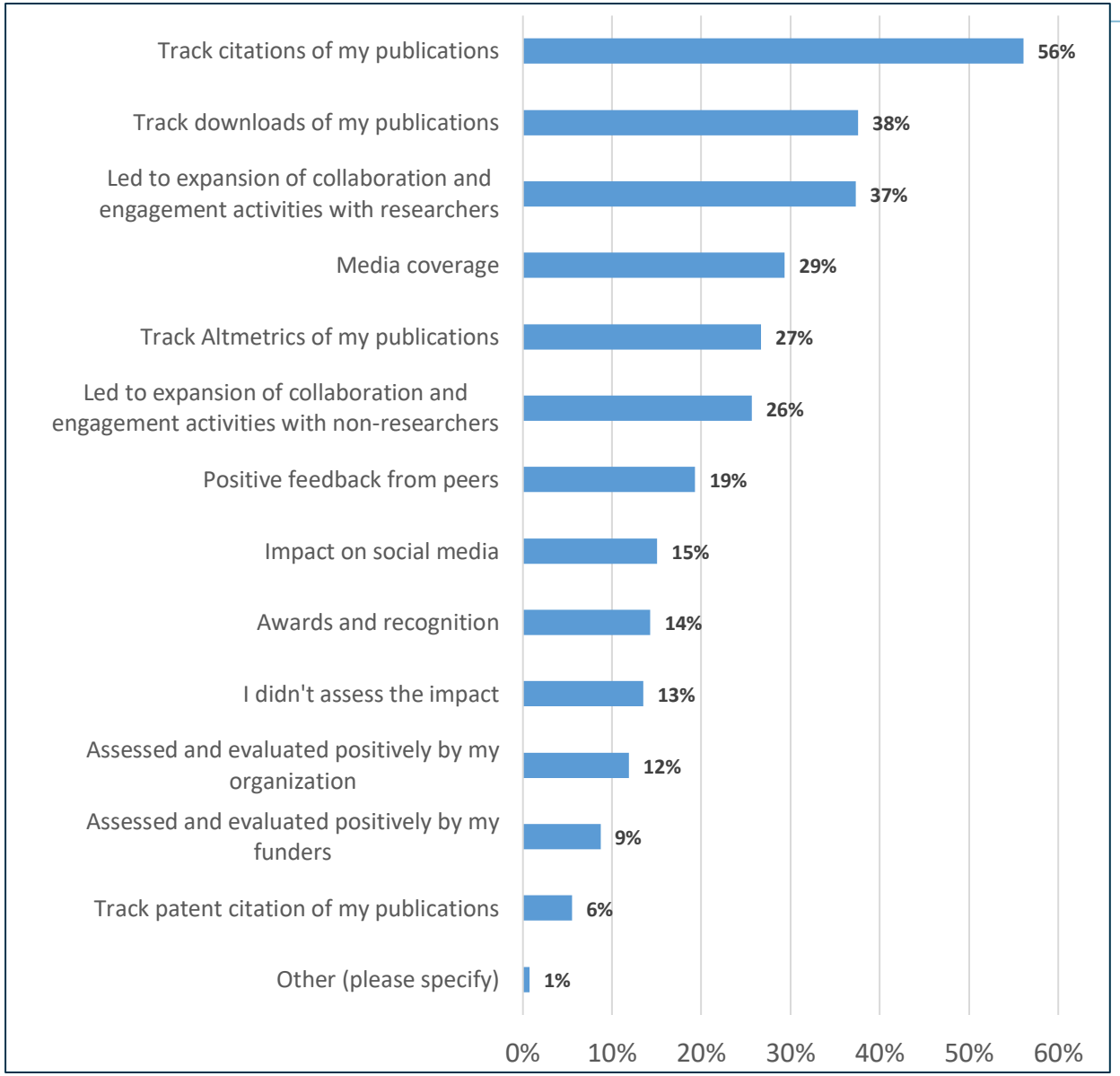
Q12. How were the impacts and benefits tracked?

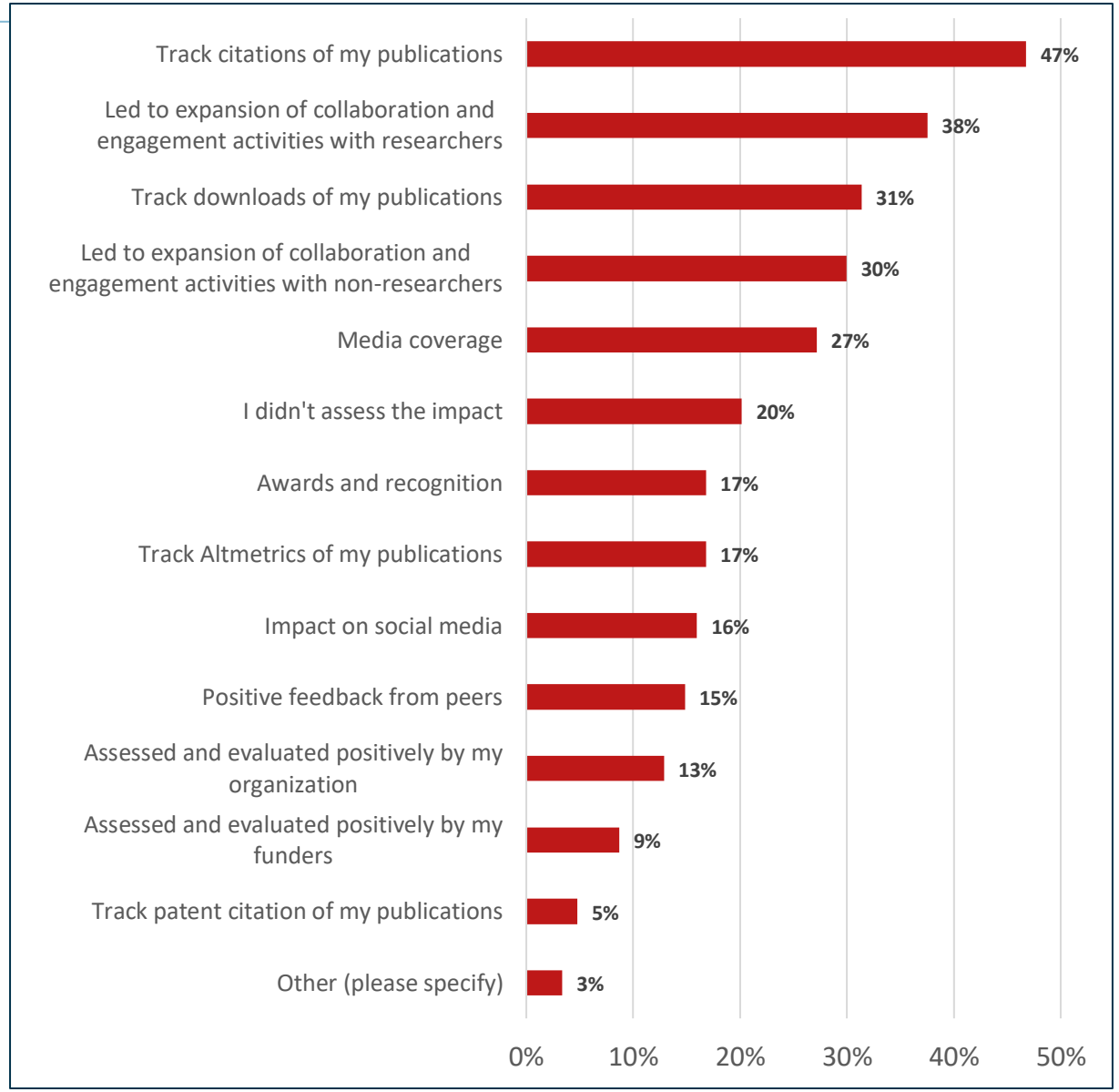
Breakdown by subject



Q12. How were the impacts and benefits tracked?

Left: press release, Right: lectures/demonstrations to the general public



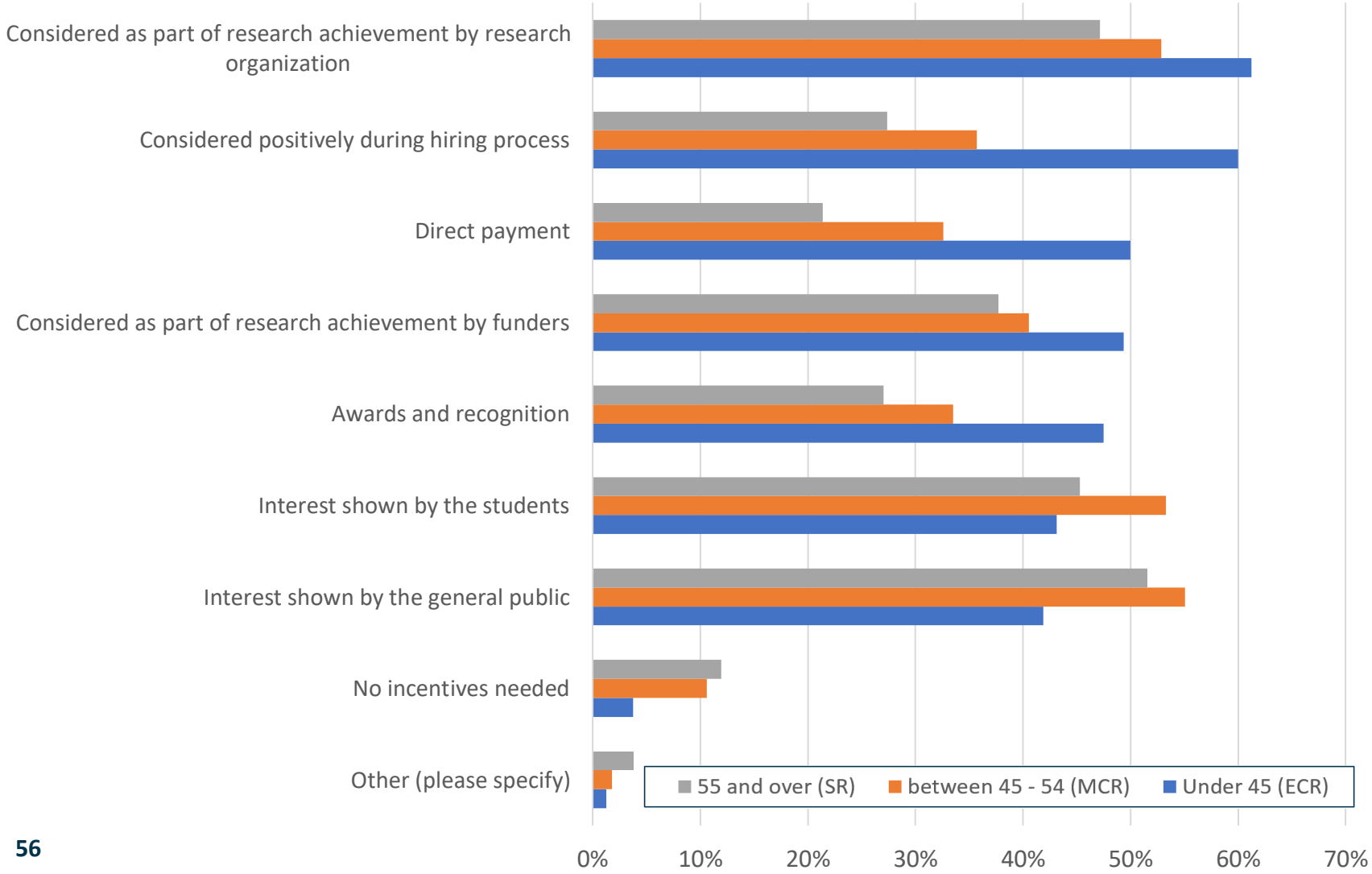


Q17. Additional analysis – Possible source of motivations to conduct more research communication by age group

SPRINGER NATURE

Q17. What would motivate you to communicate more?

Breakdown by age group



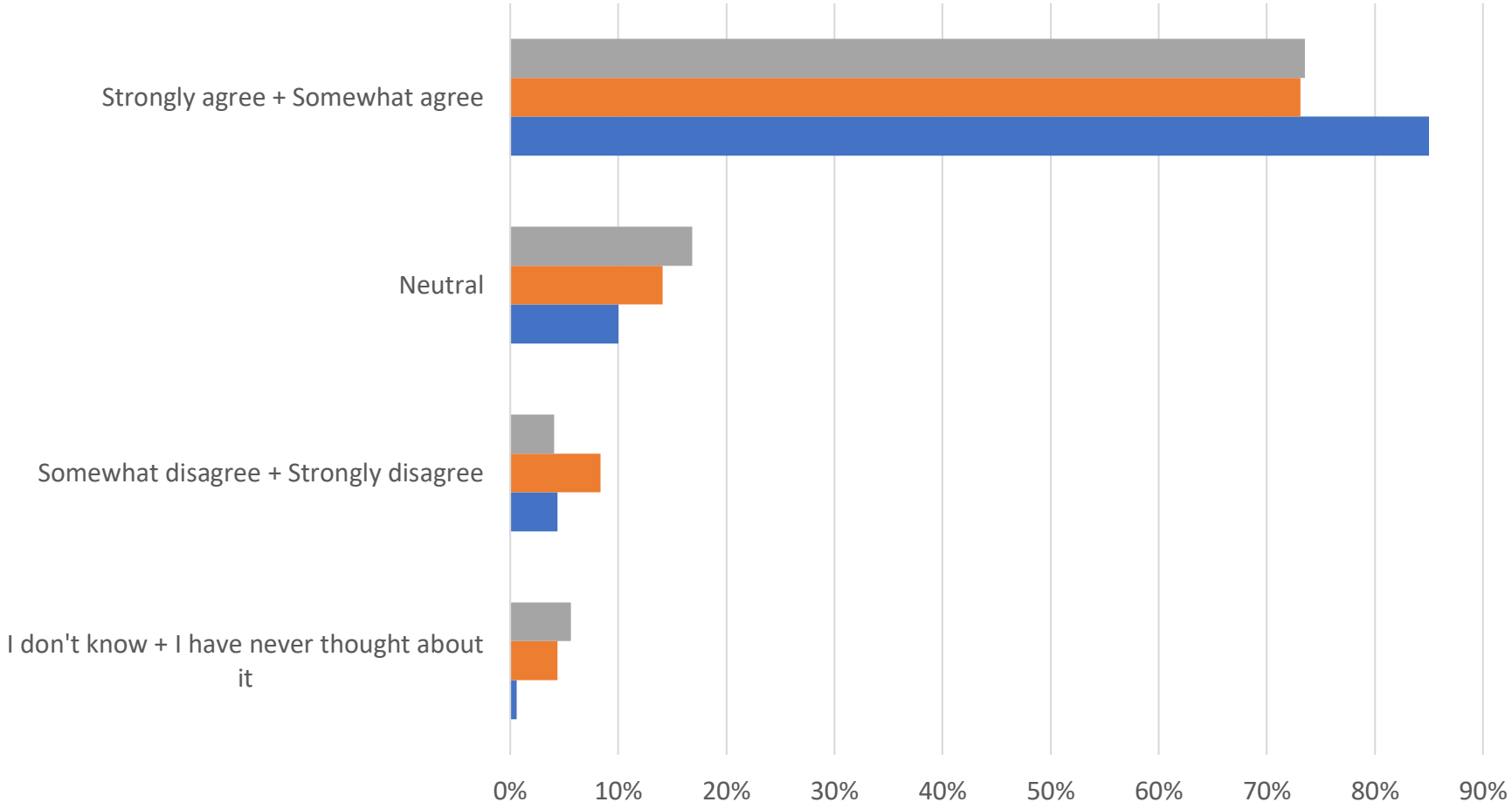
- A higher proportion of ECRs selected “considered as a part of research achievement by research organization and funders”, “considered positively during the hiring process”, “direct payment” and “awards and recognition” compared to other age groups.

Q18. Additional analysis – Demand for support by age group

SPRINGER NATURE

Q18. Do you need support to communicate your research effectively?

Breakdown by age group



- A higher proportion of ECRs agreed with the statement compared to researchers from other age groups.