

AECs and supporting animal carers

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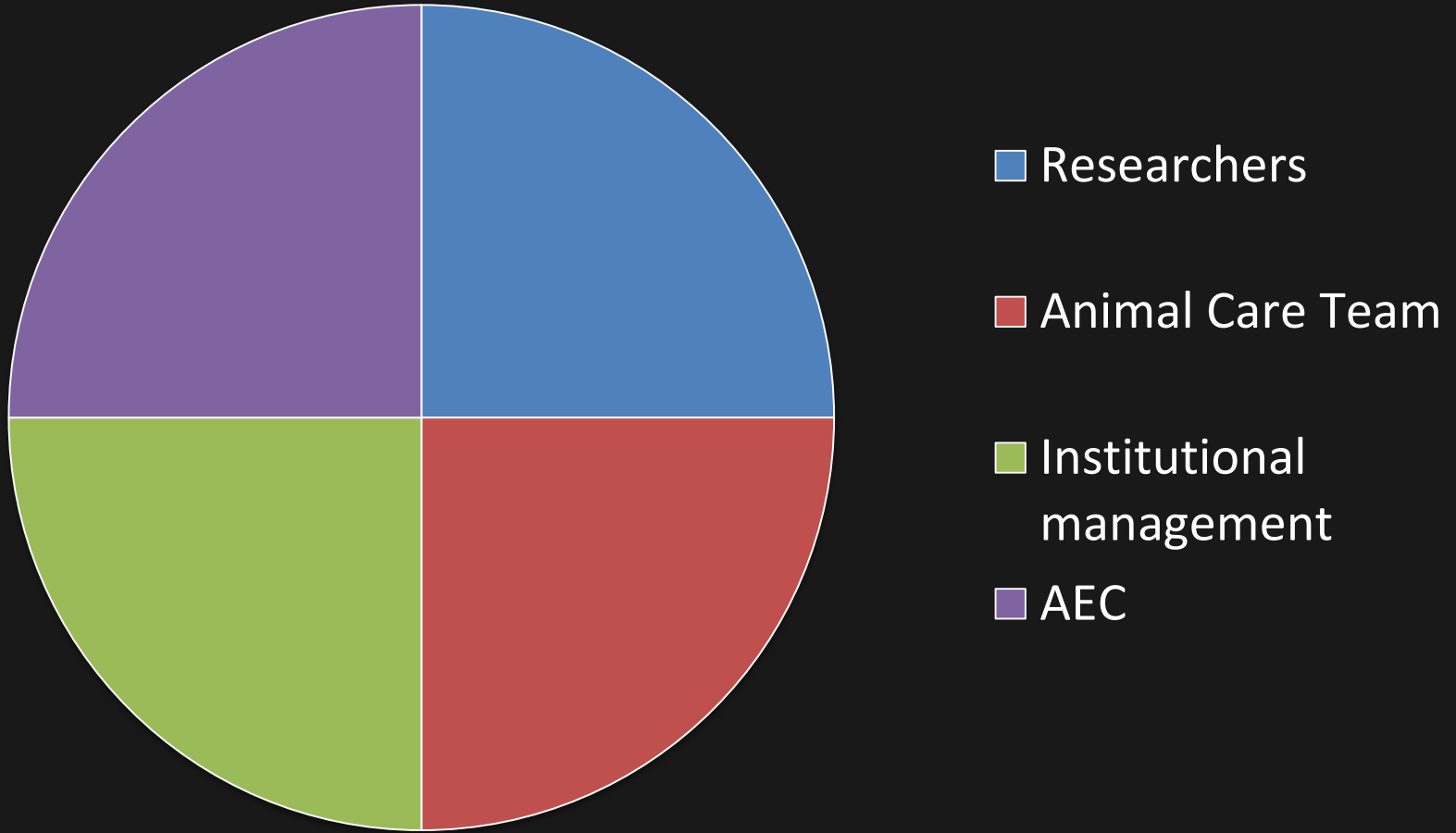
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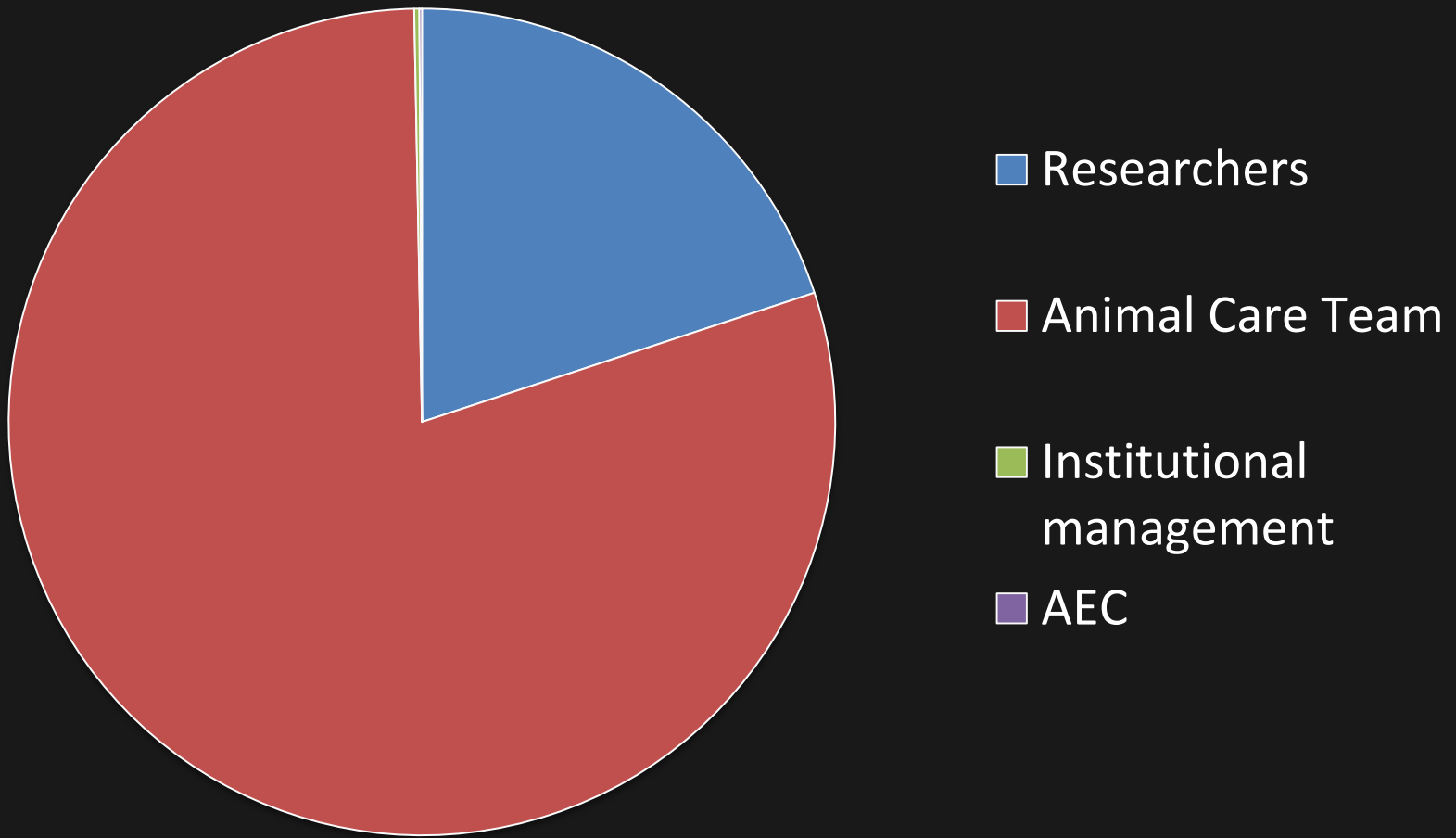
Which is “the forgotten species”?



Stakeholders in animal care



Time spent with laboratory animals



The 'eyes and ears' of the AEC?

The animal carer's workplace

It's not a desk job:

- **Early starts**
- **Service role**
- **Physical fatigue**
- **Unique WHS risks**
- **PPE**

The animal carer's workplace

Work can't be postponed...

- Weekends, public holidays
- Limited access to off-site meetings
- Pressure to turn up when sick

The animal carer's workplace

Work conditions:

- **Physical environment**
 - Isolated
 - Split sites
 - Noise, smells
- **Academic culture**
 - Prof, Dr
 - Conferences
- **Pay scale**

Animal carers suffer in silence

The conflicting emotions felt by laboratory animal technicians are starting to come to light

ANDY COGHIAN

"LARRY will always be in my heart," says Sally Walshaw. "I cried before and after the euthanasia session, but I didn't want to upset Larry by crying during the session itself. I spent a lot of time with him on his last day, and gave him lots of treats. Then Larry received a sedative, and about 10 minutes later the euthanasia was administered."

Larry was a 10-year-old rabbit and one of Walshaw's favourite charges in a lab at Michigan State University, where she cared for animals. Larry had become uncontrollably wheezy from a

torturers and murderers.

The scale of unease emerged earlier this month in Aviemore at the annual meeting of the UK Institute of Animal Technology (IAT), which represents 2200 lab-animal workers. Keith Davies, operational director of the animal facilities at Cardiff University, presented preliminary results of an investigation into the

"What emerged was a picture of repressed but deeply felt emotions and frustration at not feeling able to show grief"



New Scientist 2008

Emotional risk factors in animal care occupations

- Involvement in euthanasia
- Witnessing animal cruelty
- Limited financial resources
- Poor communication with management
- Lack of training
- Conflict in workplace or personal life

Rank et al (2009)

Emotional risk factors for laboratory animal carers

- Personal ethical tension
- Public perception
- Grief/guilt
- Management pressure
- Potential for Burnout or Compassion Fatigue (CF)

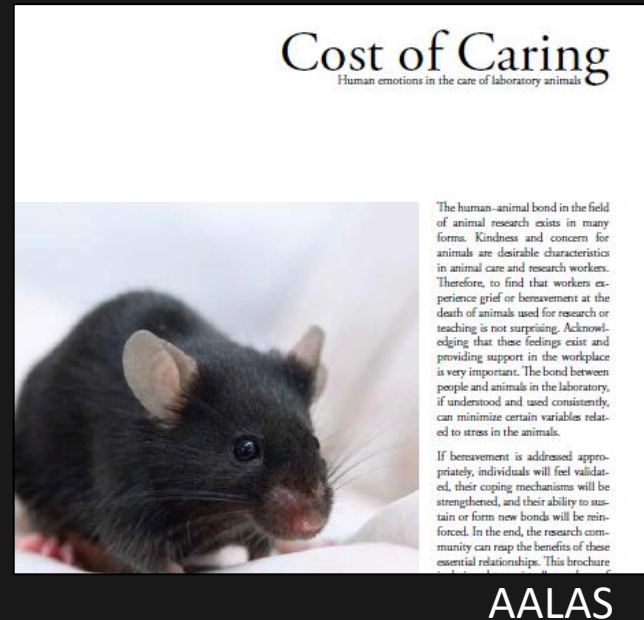
'Burnout'

- Burnout more common than CF
- Diminished interest
- Feeling “robotic”
- Feeling under-resourced
- Work/life imbalance

Rank et al (2009)

Compassion Fatigue (CF)

- A potentially serious, chronic reaction to grief
- May include:
 - Depression
 - Sleeplessness
 - Poor appetite
 - Severe mood swings



Literature review

Davies and Lewis 2010

Coping mechanisms:

- Sharing with someone else
 - At work
 - External colleagues (conferences)
- Alcohol
- Professional counsellor

Literature review

Davies and Lewis 2010 (cont)

Communication issues:

- Feeling isolated within the organisation
- Lack of communication from research staff
- [Perceived] expectation to hide emotion

Literature review

Arluke (1999)

Impact on animal technicians:

- Visited 9 animal facilities for several weeks each
- Interviewed 135 staff

Literature review

Arluke (1999) (cont)

Findings:

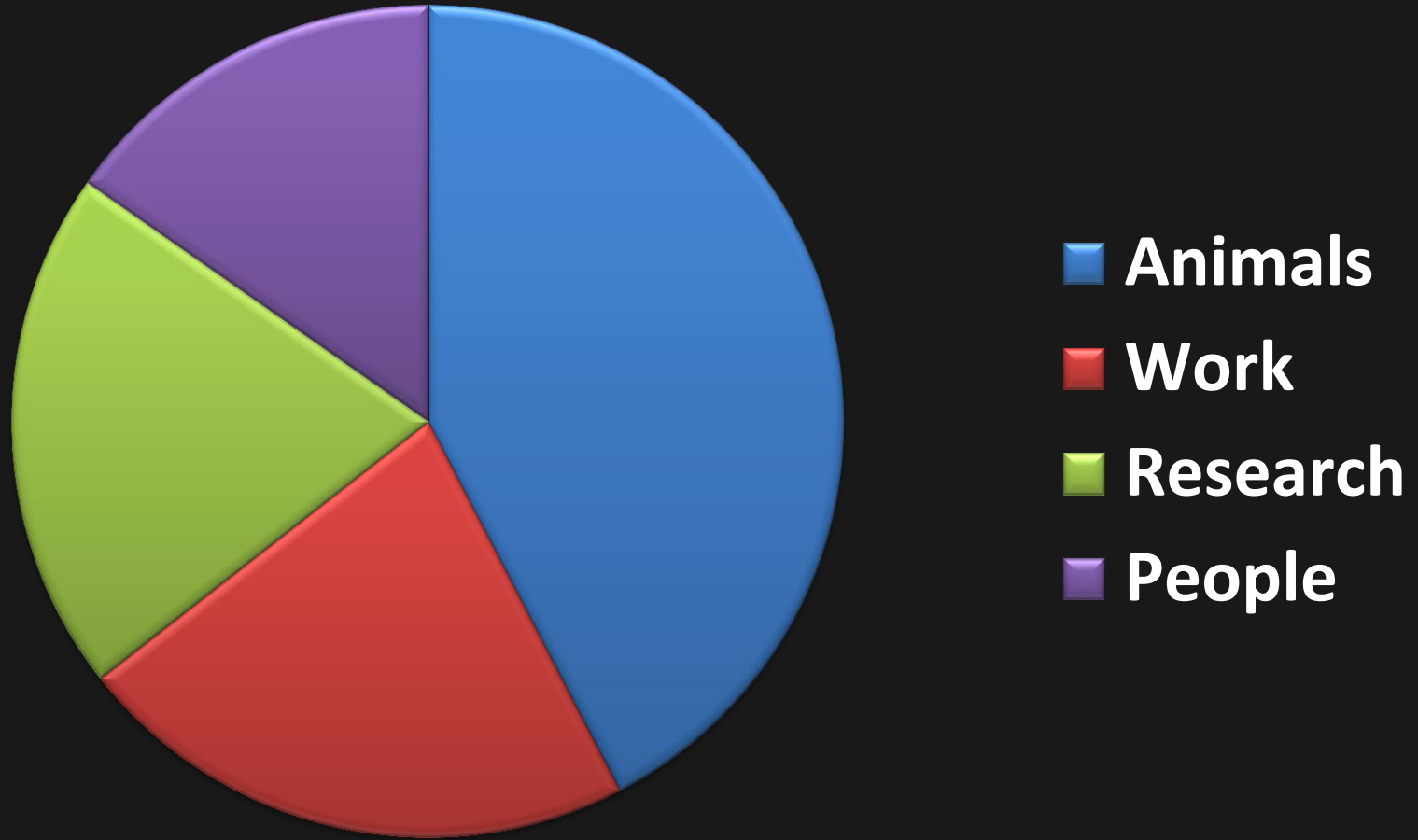
- All staff developed attachments to animals
- Anger at perceptions of animal research
- Doubts about the value of some research
- Hidden feelings:
 - Only 10% described feelings of guilt at first
 - Increased to 90% later in study

Survey of ANZLAA members 2015

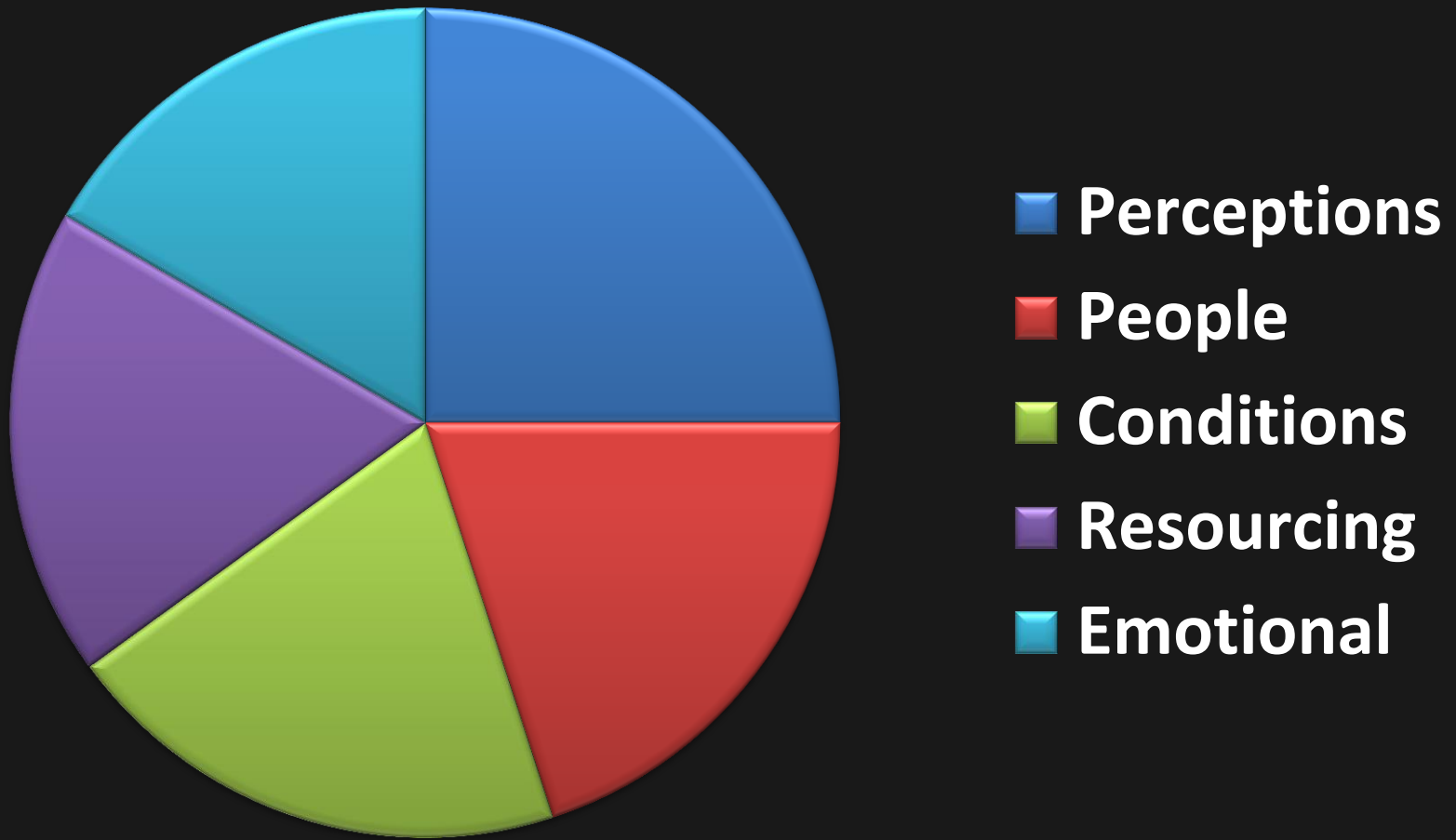
(ANZLAA: Australian and New Zealand Laboratory Animal Assoc)

- Sent to all registrants for 2 symposia
- 108 respondents (55% response rate)
- Benchmarked with IAT (UK) survey 2002

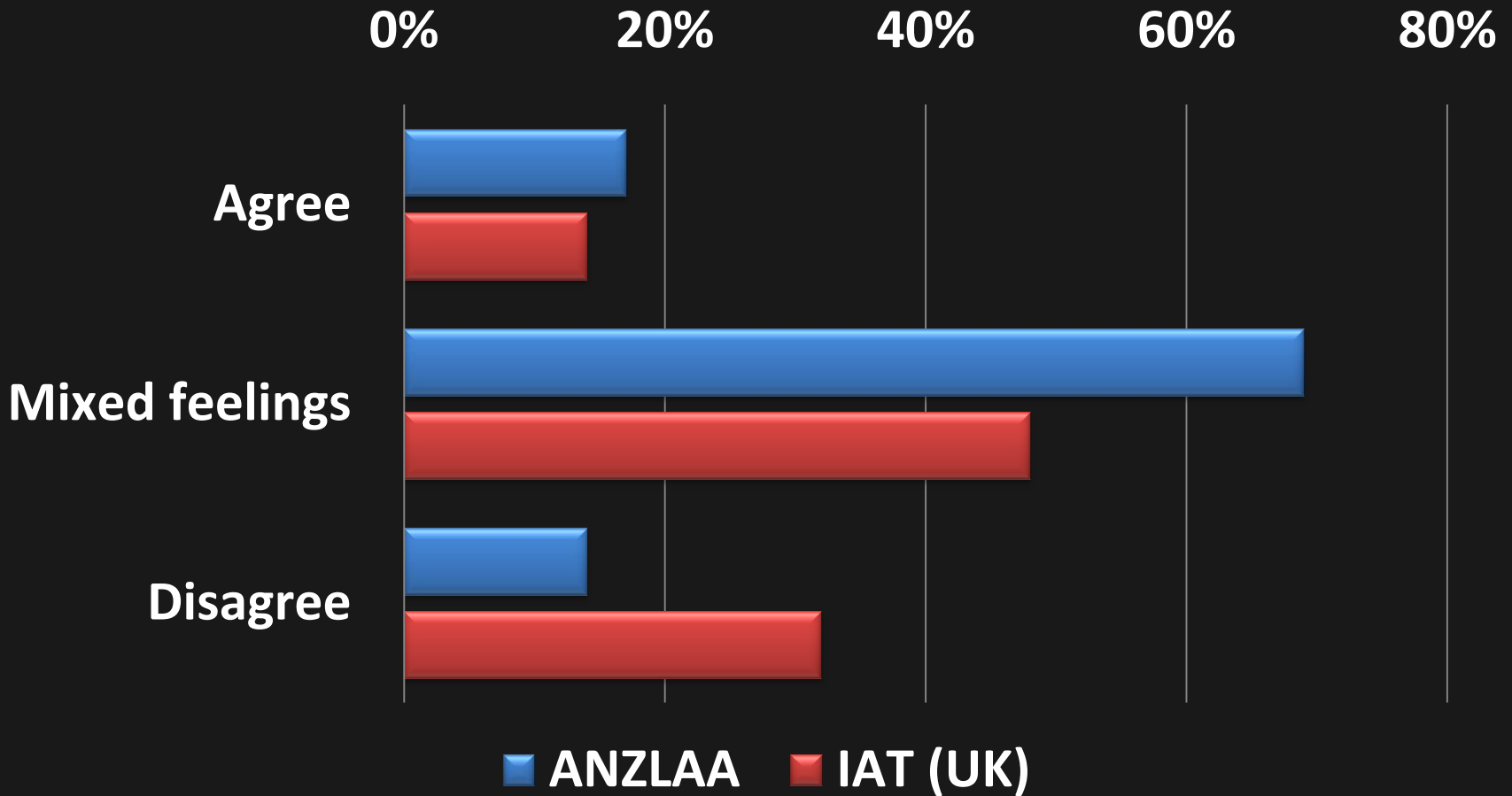
ANZLAA Survey: “One thing that I like...”



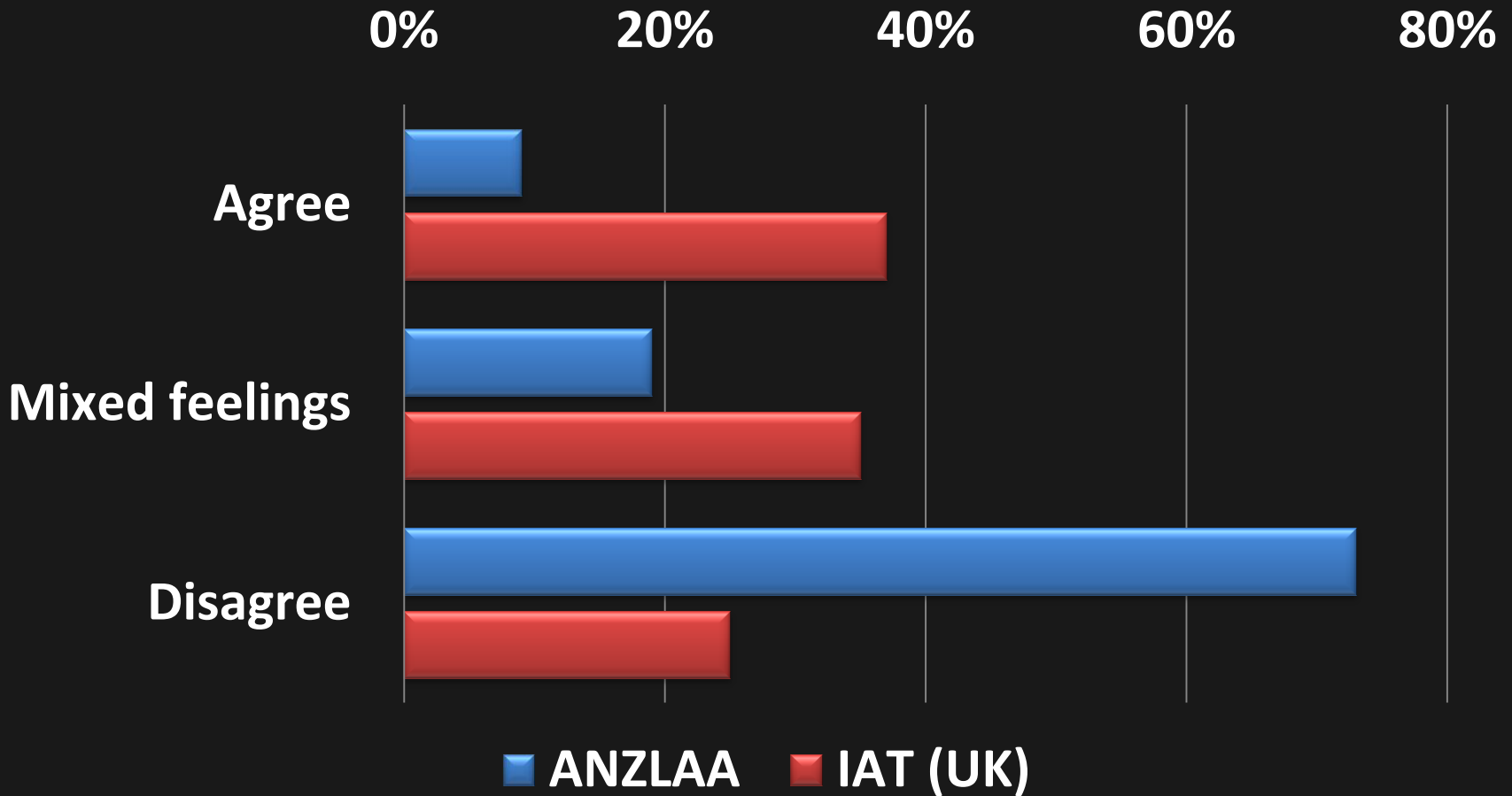
ANZLAA Survey: “One thing that I dislike...”



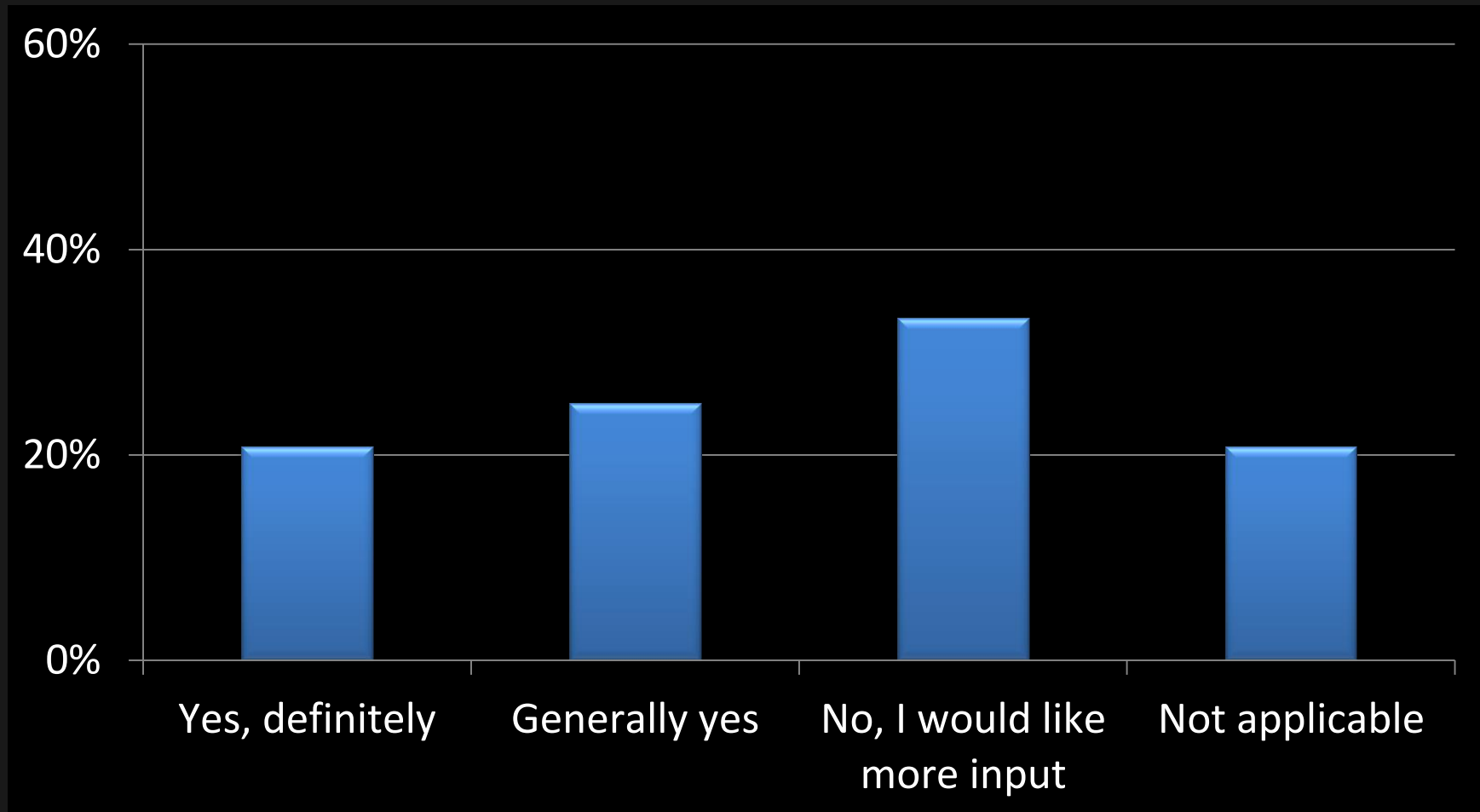
“My role is valued by society”



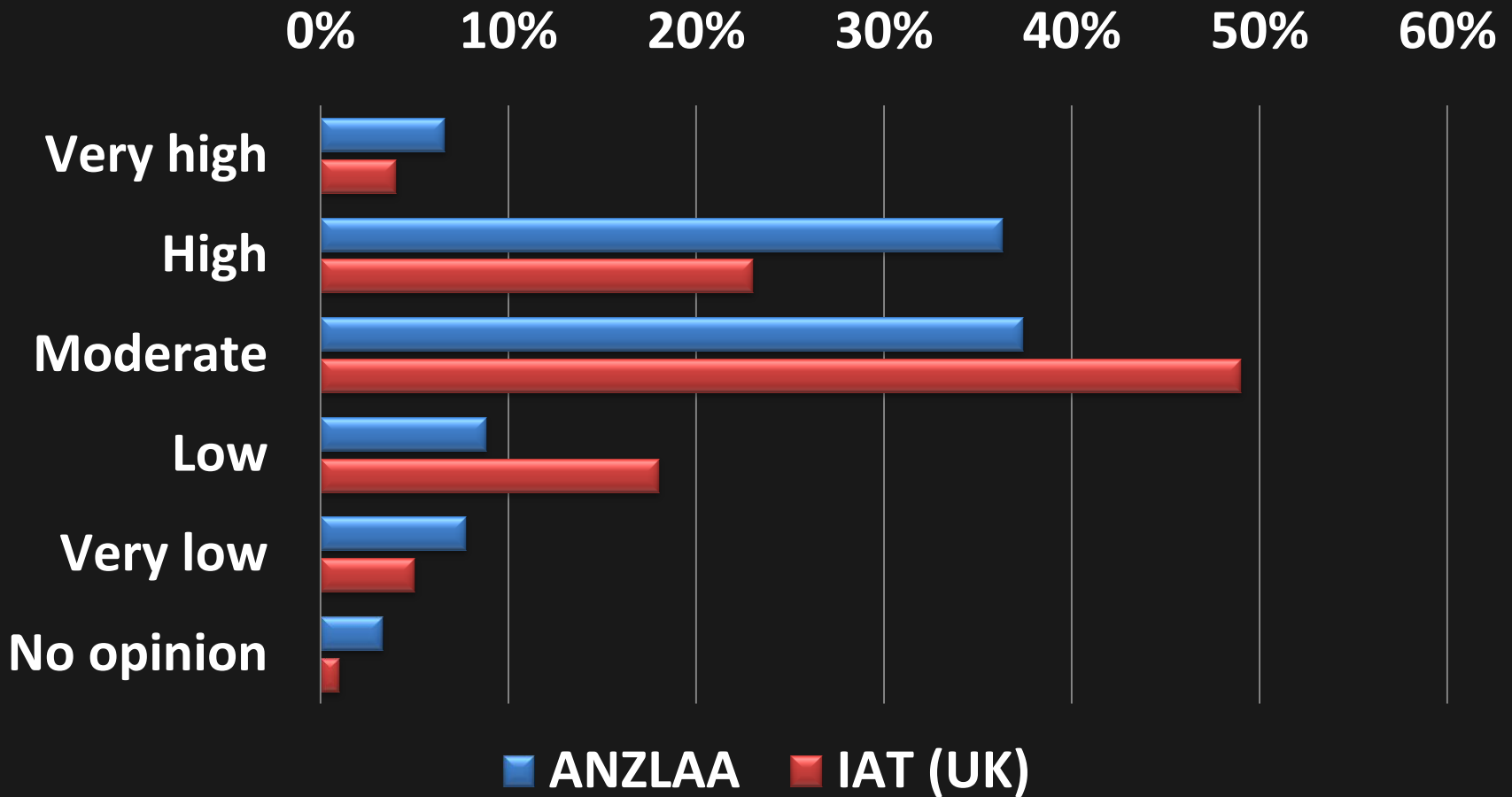
“I am concerned about my personal security”



Do you think your institution gives you enough input into ethical decisions relating to animal research?



Satisfaction with salary



Member of a trade union



Ideas for AECs

Practical support:

- Training and conferences
- AEC membership
- Staff-friendly facility design
- Rational SPF procedures

Ideas for AECs

Emotional support:

- Adopting animals
- Lab pets
- Animal memorials

Memorials

In Japan:

- Established for many decades
- 95% of research institutions conduct memorial services for laboratory animals
- 72% have a permanent memorial
- Mostly for “appreciation” or “consolation”
- Only 2% to appease animal rights!



Nishikawa and Morishita (2012)

Other resources

- ANZLAA
- American Association for Laboratory Animal Science:
 - <http://care.aalas.org/>
 - “Caring for Animals – It’s Not Just My Job...It’s My Passion”



Conclusions

- Physical and emotional challenges
- Under-recognised
- 'Eyes and ears' of the AEC
- Value AEC support
- Good staff welfare =
Good animal welfare