

Open survey to users of core facilities funded by KI and Region Stockholm



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Summary

As part of the efforts to develop KI's core facilities and achieve the highest quality and relevance for KI and Region Stockholm researchers, KI's Infrastructure Council decided to conduct surveys aimed at the target group. Surveys are a tool in KI's coherent quality system. This report summarises the results of an open survey carried out in November-December 2021.

A total of 223 individuals responded to the survey, most of whom specified KI as their place of employment. Respondents could answer questions for up to five core facilities.

From a methodological perspective, it can be noted that there is good correspondence with the results obtained when the survey was conducted as a targeted survey. There is a possible bias in that those who use and appreciate core facilities are more inclined to respond to this type of survey.

95% of the respondents state that the services provided by the core facilities are important or very important to their research. 50% replied that they use the core facility's service monthly or more often. All in all, this indicates that core facilities are important strategic assets for KI.

There is considerable variation in the number of users per core facility, which probably reflects, amongst other things, the diversity of services provided. The replies from the respondents working at Region Stockholm indicate that they use only a small number of core facilities and that they find it harder to locate the right service, so it is proposed that specific communication initiatives are defined for this target group.

It is gratifying to find that all in all, 90% of the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their contact with the core facility. Even if the general impression from the results is that KI's core facilities are effective, there is room for improvement as regards many of the investigated areas, and it is these areas that should be the focus for efforts to further improve the operations. It should also be noted that this survey concerns the entire landscape of core facilities and that there can therefore be considerable differences between individual facilities. It is proposed that focus interviews be conducted to elucidate the different perspectives and needs of Region Stockholm and KI, and that a few questions be selected for regular follow-up surveys.

Assignment

At its meeting of 11 January 2021, the Infrastructure Council decided *that* Karin Dahlman-Wright be tasked with leading the development of a survey for core facility users at KI and Region Stockholm (Annex 1).

It was proposed that the previously appointed working group for core facilities, supplemented by representatives from Region Stockholm, would be responsible for the production, execution, and analysis of the survey. For the group's composition, see Annex 2. The work would be done in consultation with Terese Stenfors at the evaluation unit at the Department of Learning, Informatics, Management and Ethics (LIME). Within short, Terese was replaced by Per Palmgren, LIME.

Production and execution of survey

The working group and Per Palmgren drew up a total of 24 questions for the survey, three of which concerned background information (Annex 3).

In addition, the working group decided:

that the survey would be available in Swedish and English (Annex 3),

that a targeted and an open survey¹ would be conducted, and

that respondents would be given opportunities to develop their answers.

The results of the target survey are given in Annex 4.

To answer for a core-facility, respondents were instructed to choose from an alphabetical list and to consider only the past five years.

A link to the open survey and a reminder were distributed by the heads and administrative managers of departments. The link was also distributed on the KI staff portal and in KI News (Swedish and English).

¹ Open survey means that you spread a web link widely and where anyone can answer. In a targeted survey, only selected individuals can respond.

Results

223 surveys were returned. 75% of respondents reported that they worked at KI, 11% at KI and Region Stockholm and 11% for Region Stockholm (Annex 5, Table A). The remainder came from other universities, (affiliates of) the pharmaceutical industry, etc. When the results are analysed by group, the KI/Region Stockholm group has been combined with the Region Stockholm group, as the number of respondents in each would otherwise be too small and because both indicate ties to clinical research.

Users of core facilities are found throughout KI, with a considerable breadth of users between departments (Annex 5, Table B). The departments with most users are the departments of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology, Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics, , Cell and Molecular Biology, Biosciences and Nutrition, , Physiology and Pharmacology and Clinical Science and Education, and Stockholm South General Hospital. 6–17% of the users come from these respective departments. The first four have a focus on experimental research, the department of Physiology and Pharmacology has a focus on experimental and clinical research, while the Department of Clinical Science and Education, Stockholm South General Hospital has a focus on clinical research.

The respondents comprised the following employee categories: Researcher (e.g. professor, senior lecturer, assistant professor), 52%; Postdoc researcher, 21%; and Doctoral student, 14% (Annex 5, Table C). “Other” included lab manger, PI, statistician etc.

The median number of core facilities used by a respondent was two, but there was considerable variation up to eight (Annex 5, Table D). Respondents were able to give answers for five core facilities. Very few used more than five. After the first iteration, 46% of respondents stated they were users of additional core facilities; after the second iteration, this figure was 47%, after the third 41% and after the fourth 71%.

The following gives the total number of responses, which is why this number exceeds the number of respondents.

As can be seen in Figure 1, there is wide variation in the number of users per core-facility, which reflects the diversity of services provided. This wide variation in the number of users between core facilities means that some core facilities that have a large number of users will have a significant impact on the overall results. “Other” includes amongst others: Histocore (10), uMOVE (2), eHealth (2).

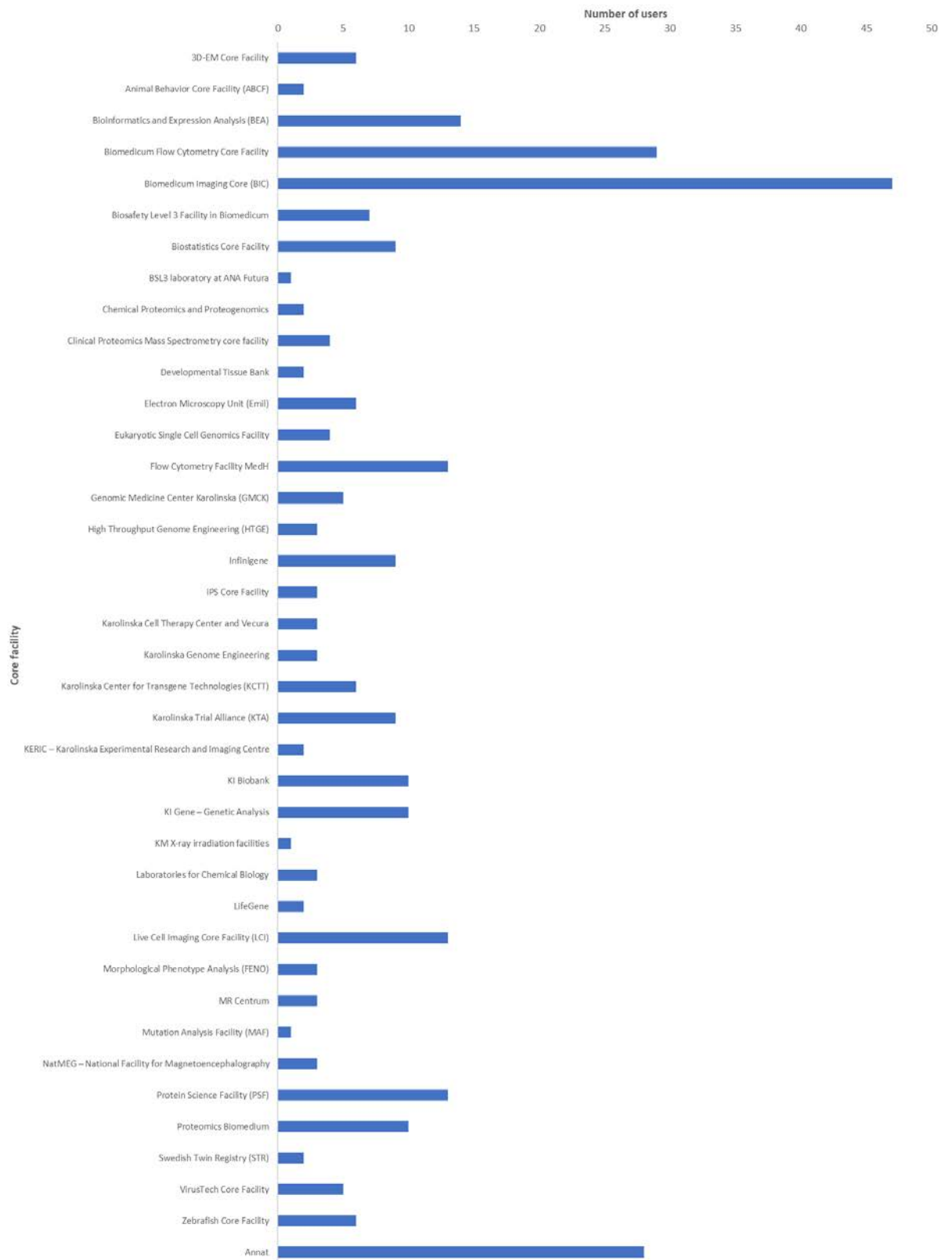


Figure 1: Number of users per core facility.

If the use of a given core facility is broken down into respondents from KI, KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm, it is clear that KI accounts for the most diverse use (Figure 2). KI Biobank, Karolinska Trial Alliance (KTA) and the Genomic Medicine Centre Karolinska (GMCK) stand out for having a large proportion of users from KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm.

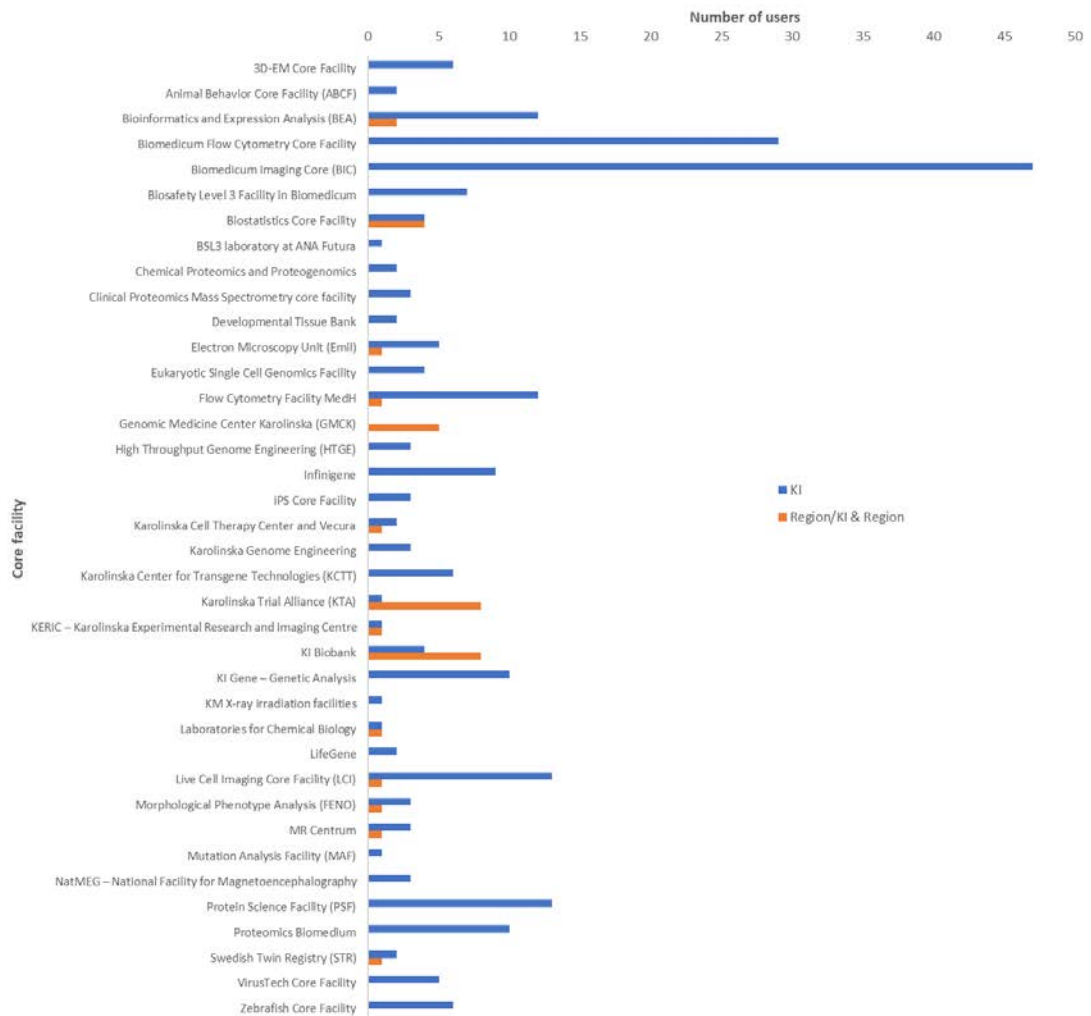


Figure 2: Number of users of a given core facility. Blue bar: KI. Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm.

Satisfaction with the core facility

The vast majority of users are satisfied (37%) or very satisfied (48%) with the core facility (Figure 3A). There is little difference in satisfaction between the KI group and the KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm group (Figure 3B).

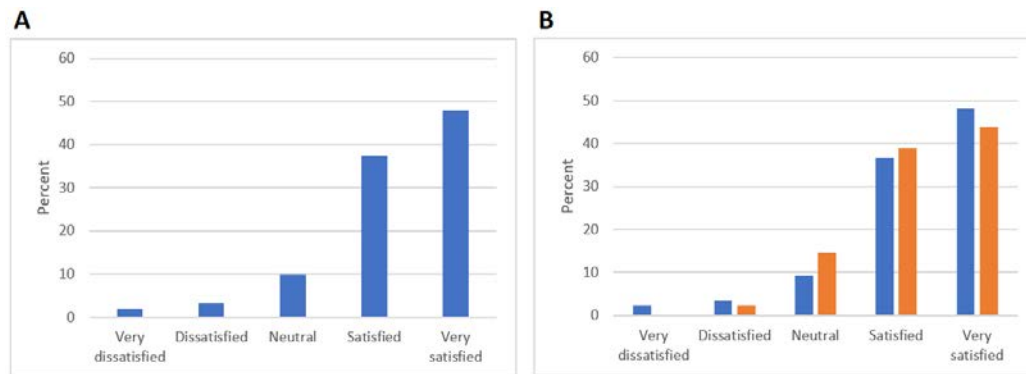


Figure 3: How satisfied are you with the core facility? A. All respondents. B. Blue bar: KI (n=258). Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm (n=41).

Find the right service?

The majority of the responses show that it is relatively easy to find the desired service, where 76% said that it was easy to find the right services to a high or very high degree (Figure 4A). However, the KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm group did not report the same ease of finding the right service (Figure 4B).

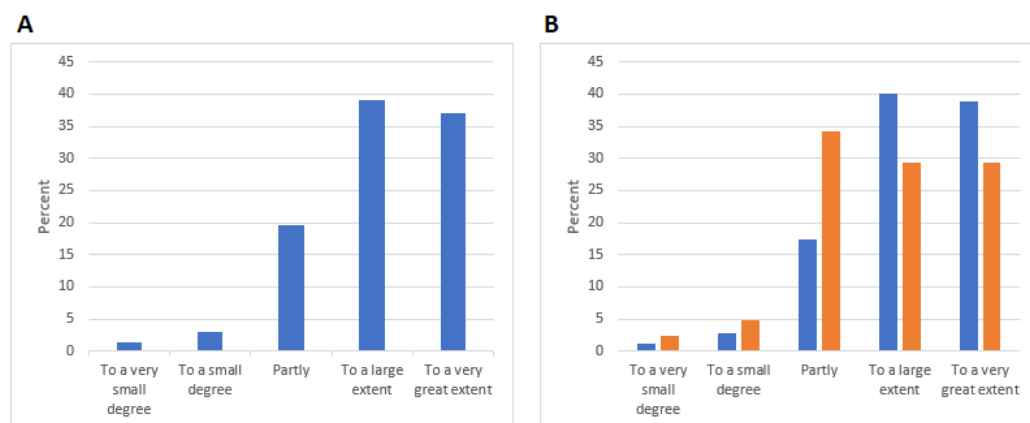


Figure 4: Has it been easy to find a core facility offering the service you want? A. All respondents. B. Blue bar: KI (n=260). Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm (n=41).

Among respondents, just over 70% said that they felt that the information on the core facility website was sufficient to a high or very high degree (Annex 5, Table E).

The majority of the respondents made contact with the core facility via colleagues (52%; Annex 5, Table F), 26% via the website, or 16% via personal recommendations. “Other” comprised “already known about”, “donated equipment”, “is at the department”, “through email contact” and “through personal recommendations”.

From the fact that relatively few respondents answered that they contacted the core facility services via the web and that many report that they only partly felt that it was easy to find the right service and that the information on the website was sufficient, it can be inferred that there is potential to improve the websites, which could help even more people find core facility services.

Communication with the core facility

Most respondents were happy with their communication with the core facility, with 87% answering that it was effective to a high degree or very high degree (Figure 5A). The KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm group were no less positive in their response (Figure 5B).

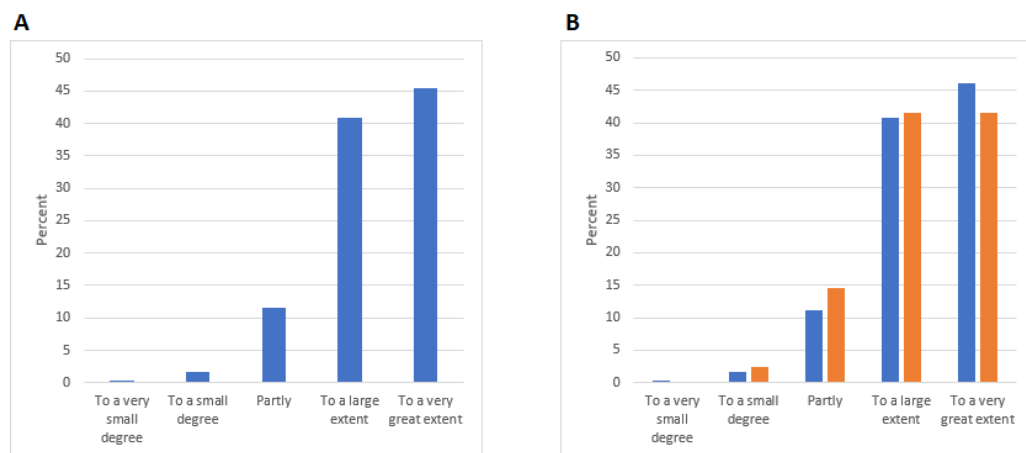


Figure 5: Communication with the core facility has been effective. A. All respondents. B. Blue bar: KI (n=258). Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm (n=41).

Most respondents were happy with the queue system, with 80% answering that the queue system was effective to a high degree or very high degree (Figure 6).

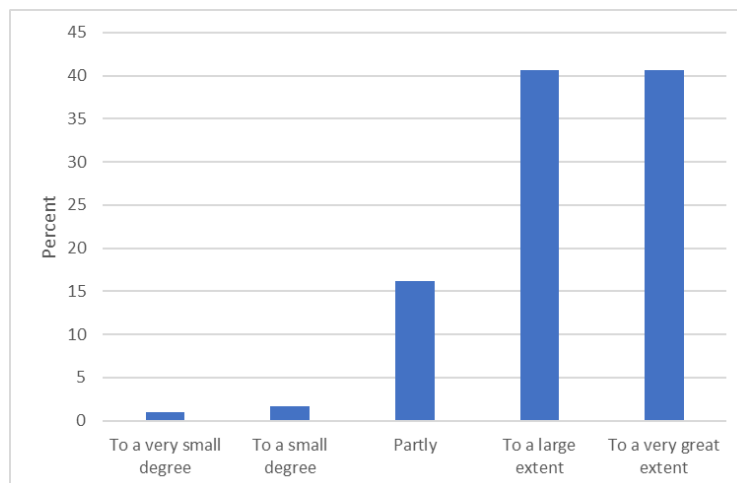


Figure 6: The queue system has been effective.

About 70% felt that the waiting time was reasonable to a high degree or very high degree (Annex 5, Table G) and 62% felt that the price was reasonable to a high degree or very high degree (Annex 5, Table I).

It is gratifying to see that 90% of respondents were all in all satisfied with the core facility's professionalism (Figure 7A). No conclusions can be drawn as to whether there is any difference in satisfaction between groups (Figure 7B).

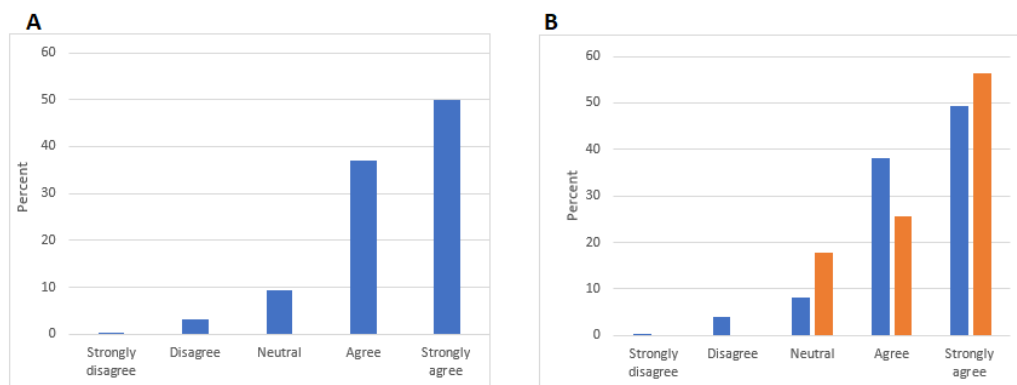
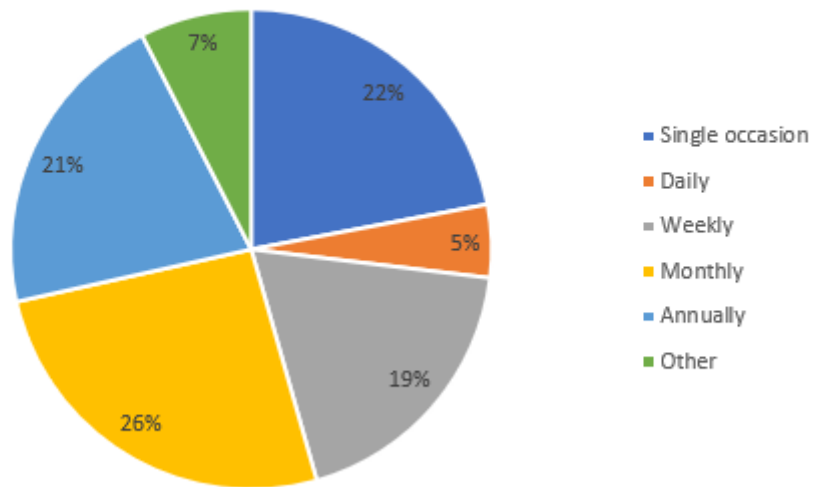


Figure 7: All in all, I am satisfied with the core facility's professionalism. A. All respondents. B. Blue bar: KI (n=259). Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm (n=39).

The importance for research

It can initially be noted that many of the respondents use the core facility's services relatively regularly (Figure 8A). Over 50% of the respondents use the core facility monthly (most commonly) or more frequently. "Other" includes "when needed for an experiment", "quarterly", "occasionally", during an ongoing research project". More respondents in the KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm group only used core facilities on the odd occasion (Figure 8B).

A



B

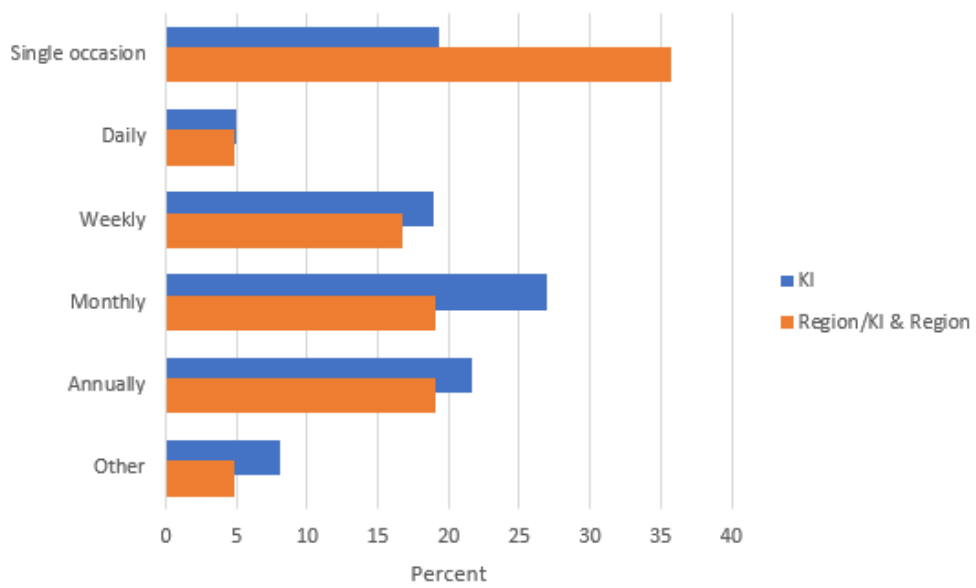


Figure 8: How often do you use the core facility? A. All respondents. B. Blue bar: KI (n=259). Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm (n=42).

The service that the core facilities provide is considered important (36%) or very important (59%) to the respondents' research (Figure 9A). There is no difference between the KI group and the KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm group (Figure 9B).

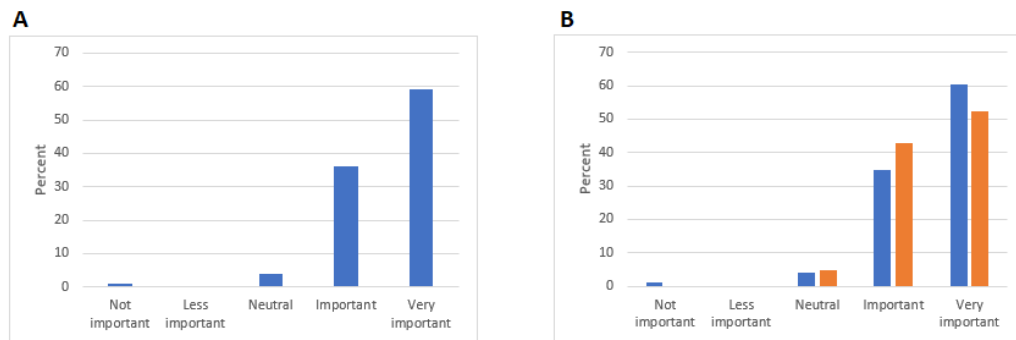


Figure 9: How important is the service provided by the core facility for your research? A. All respondents. B. Blue bar: KI (n=259). Orange bar: KI/Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm (n=42).

Annex 5, Table I shows that approx. 9% of respondents report that a core-facility employee was included as a co-author of a scientific paper. The ensuing analysis will reveal any difference between core facilities in this regard.

Conclusions and proposals for action

One must always ask how representative a survey is of the operation it aims to survey. The results that emerge from this survey correspond closely with the results of the same survey when conducted as a targeted survey a few months earlier (Annex 4). One consideration is whether people who are positive for whatever reason towards core facilities and are frequent users were more inclined to respond to the survey. The number of questions might also have enhanced this effect.

An extensive survey has given KI a basis on which to develop core facilities on a general level, as well as information about which questions would be pertinent to include in regular follow-ups. Even if core facilities carry out their own surveys, surveys at an overall level serve a different and complementary purpose.

Initially it is noted that core facilities are strategically vital to the research conducted at KI and Region Stockholm. 95% of the respondents report that the services provided by the core facilities are important or very important to their research. 50% of the respondents use the core facilities monthly or more frequently.

It is gratifying that 90% of the respondents are all in all satisfied with the professionalism of the core facility. Even if the general impression is that KI's core facilities work well, this applies to the collective repertoire of core facilities, and there could be considerable differences between individual core facilities. It also emerges that there is clear improvement potential in many respects at a general level.

There is wide variation in the number of users per core-facility, which reflects, amongst other things, the range of services provided. Respondents working at KI/Region Stockholm and at Region Stockholm only use a small number of core facilities, and so it has been proposed that specific communication initiatives be defined for this target group.

From the fact that relatively few respondents answered that they contacted the core facility services via the web, it can be inferred that there is potential to improve the websites, which could help even more people finding core facility services. This should be handled under the "Digital profiling of KI's core facilities" project, which is being run by the Infrastructure Council as part of the ["Strategy for Karolinska Institutet's research infrastructure 2021 - 2024"](#).

Approx. 9% of respondents reported that core-facility employees were included as co-authors of scientific papers. Further work should focus on whether this concerns certain core facilities, whether all core facilities apply the same authorship practices, and whether this is clear and transparent for users of the core facility.

It is proposed:

that KI conduct regular surveys targeted at core facility users at an overall level as part of its quality work, as they would be a valuable complement to surveys conducted by the core facilities themselves,
that these surveys concentrate on a smaller number of questions,
that any surveys conducted by the core facilities include the same questions,
that the core facilities that receive more than seven respondents in this survey be given access to their replies,
that the open-ended answers given are to be analysed,
that relevant information from this survey be incorporated into the "Digital profiling of KI's core facilities" project,
that specific initiatives be targeted at clinical researchers,
that focus interviews be conducted with users of core facilities that highlight researchers' perspectives and needs, and
that the results of this survey will be communicated in the same channels as those used to communicate the survey itself.

Annexes

Annex 1: The Infrastructure Council's decision

Annex 2: Composition of the group

Annex 3: Survey design

Annex 4: Targeted survey for users of core facilities funded by KI and Region Stockholm including result tables

Annex 5: Result tables from the open survey for users of core facilities funded by KI and Region Stockholm



§ 10

Survey to users of core facilities at Karolinska Institutet and Region Stockholm

The Infrastructure Council decides: to instruct Karin Dahlman-Wright to lead the work of conducting a survey of the users of core facilities at KI and the Stockholm Region at a cost of approximately SEK 100,000 according to the submitted proposal.

Minutes

Lena Lewin

Adjusted

Adjusted

Anders Gustafsson

Lars Frelin

Correct extract is certified

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