

# *Policymakers' Unmet Desire for Science*



**research 4 impact**  
**r4impact.org**

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*Thanks to the Rita Allen Foundation and William T Grant Foundation for very generous funding.*

# Policy engagement among researchers

- Most common/visible forms:
  - Dissemination: op-eds, white papers, social media
  - Collaborative relationships oriented toward *formal collaboration*: task force/committee participation, consulting arrangement, research partnership
- Another (less resource-intensive and also less visible) form:
  - Collaborative relationships oriented toward *informal collaboration (knowledge exchange)*

# Policy engagement among researchers

- Collaborative relationships between researchers and policymakers are vital for research translation and evidence-based policy (*e.g., Brownson et al. 2006, Bogenschneider and Corbett 2010, Oliver et al. 2014, Peterson 2018, Crowley et al. 2021, Levine 2021*)
- Some policymakers regularly engage with researchers (*e.g., Weiss and Bucuvalas 1980, Hird 2005, Bogenschneider 2020*)
- Here I ask: Do policymakers have the collaborative relationships they want to be having? Is there unmet desire?

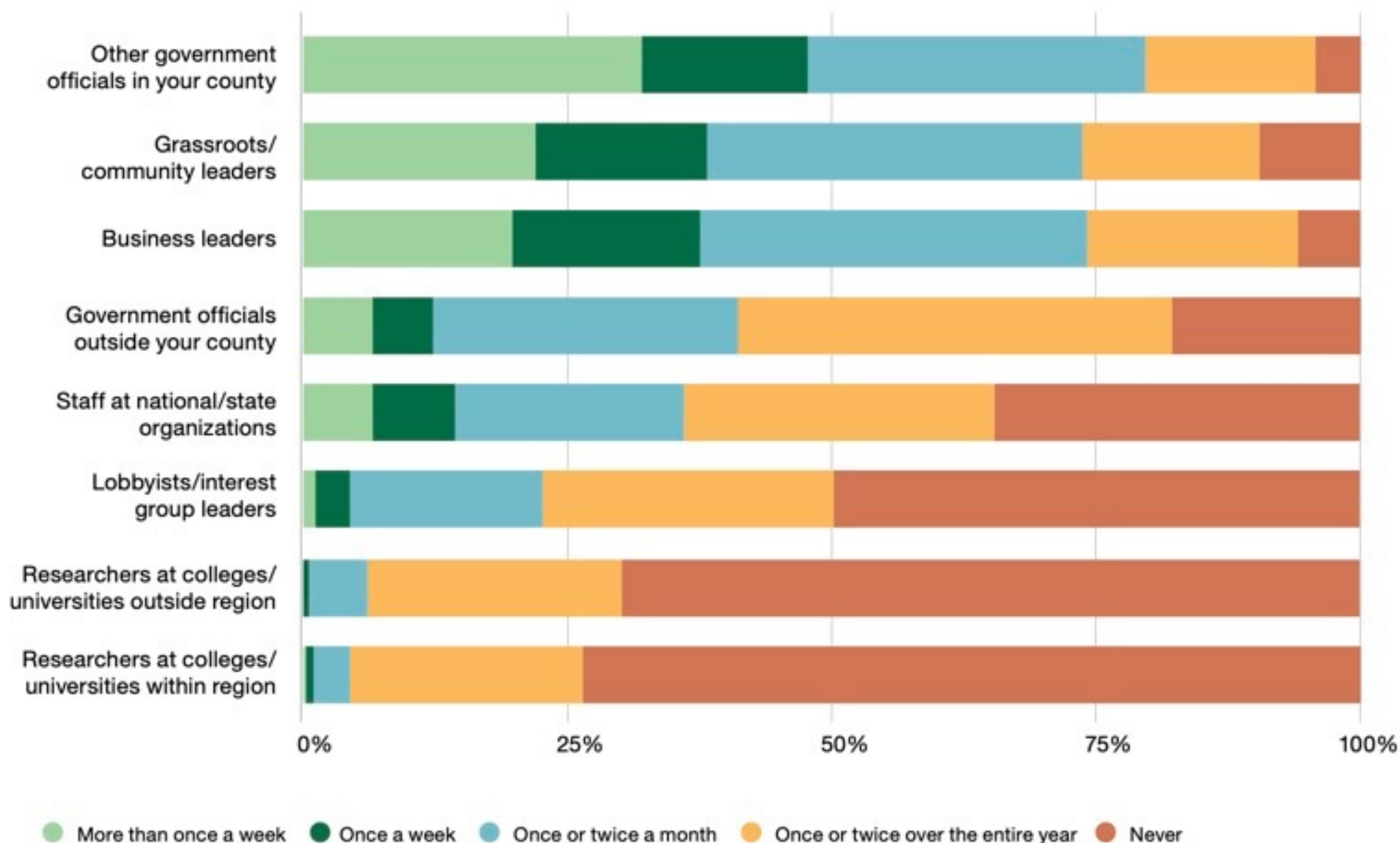
# Survey of Local Policymakers

- Initial motivation: research4impact outreach to local policymakers in spring 2020

# Survey of Local Policymakers

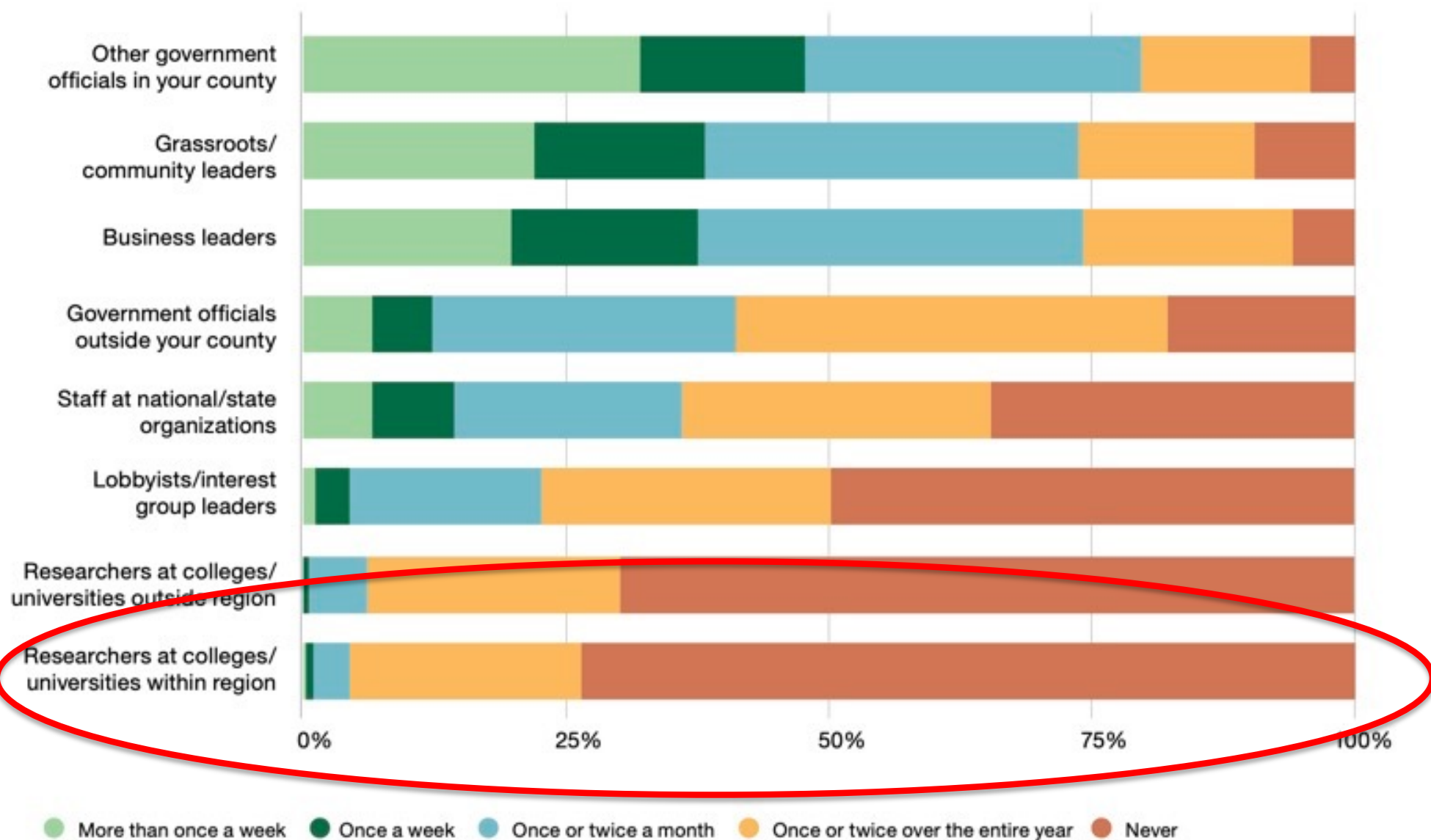
- Initial motivation: research4impact outreach to local policymakers in spring 2020
- National sample collected by CivicPulse
- Focus on local policymakers because they're important
- Focus on local researchers because new collaborative relationships are highly doable
- N=541
- Spring 2021
- Survey weights to increase sample representativeness

**Figure 1: WHICH STAKEHOLDERS DO LOCAL POLICYMAKERS INTERACT WITH?**



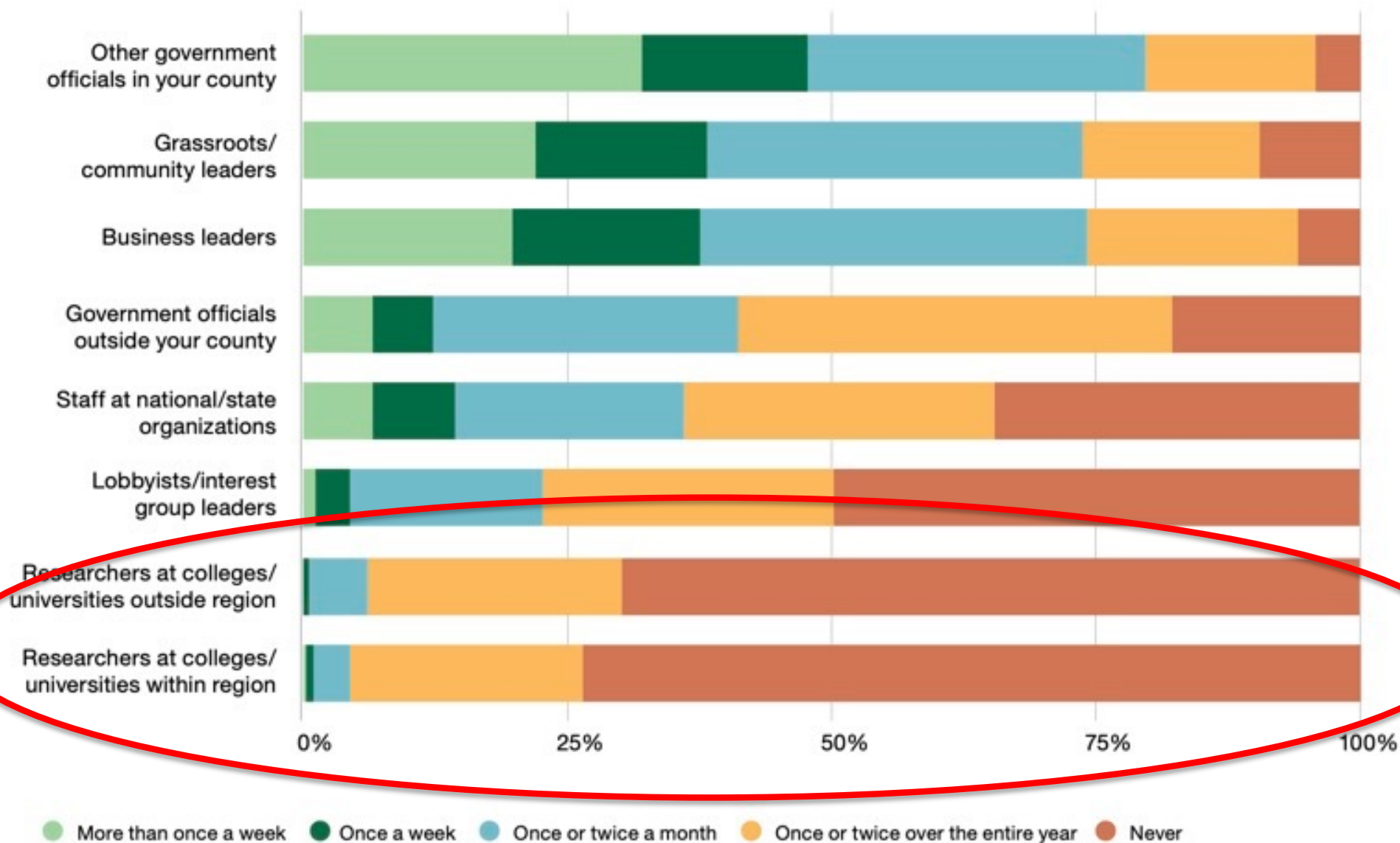
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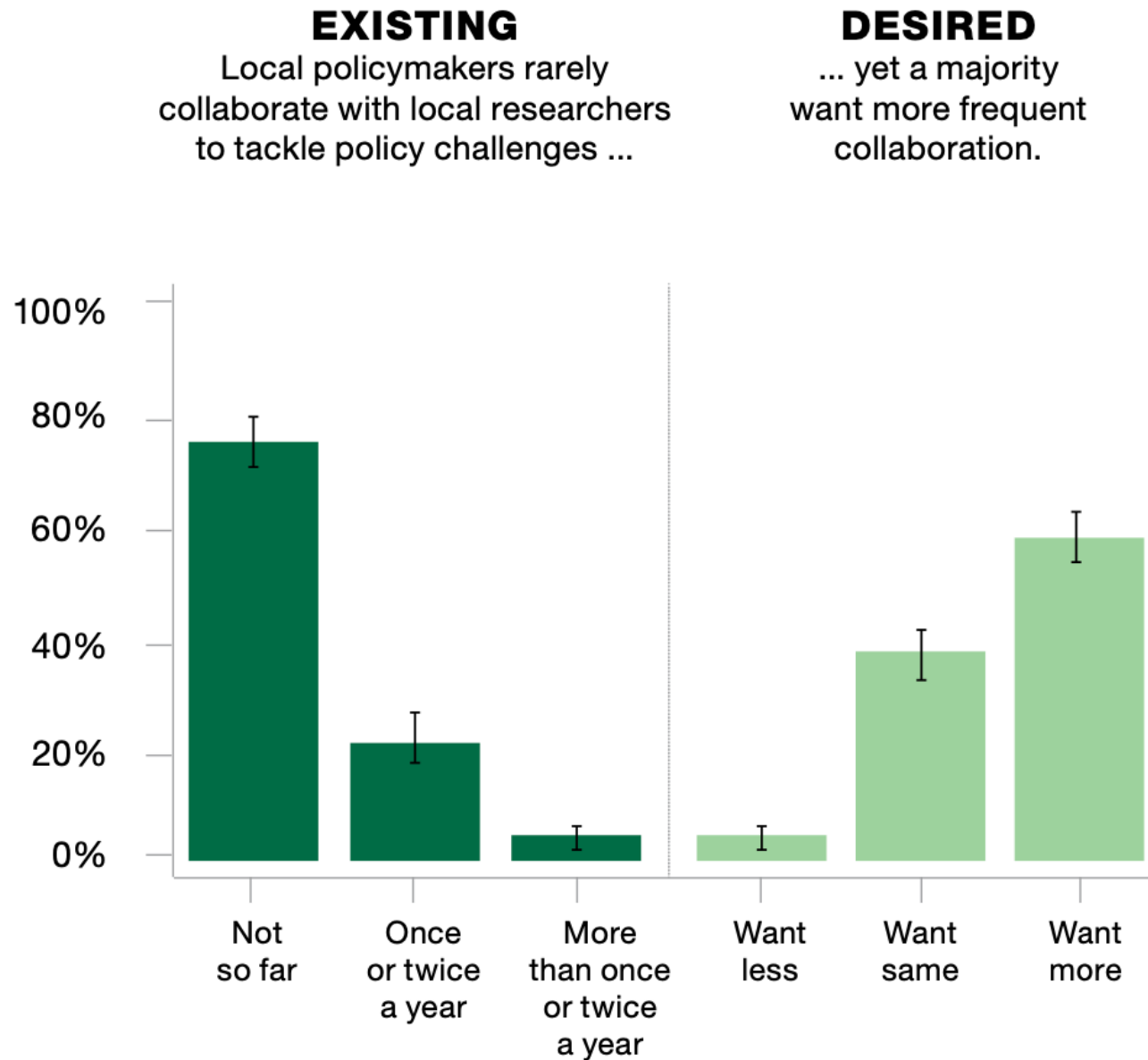
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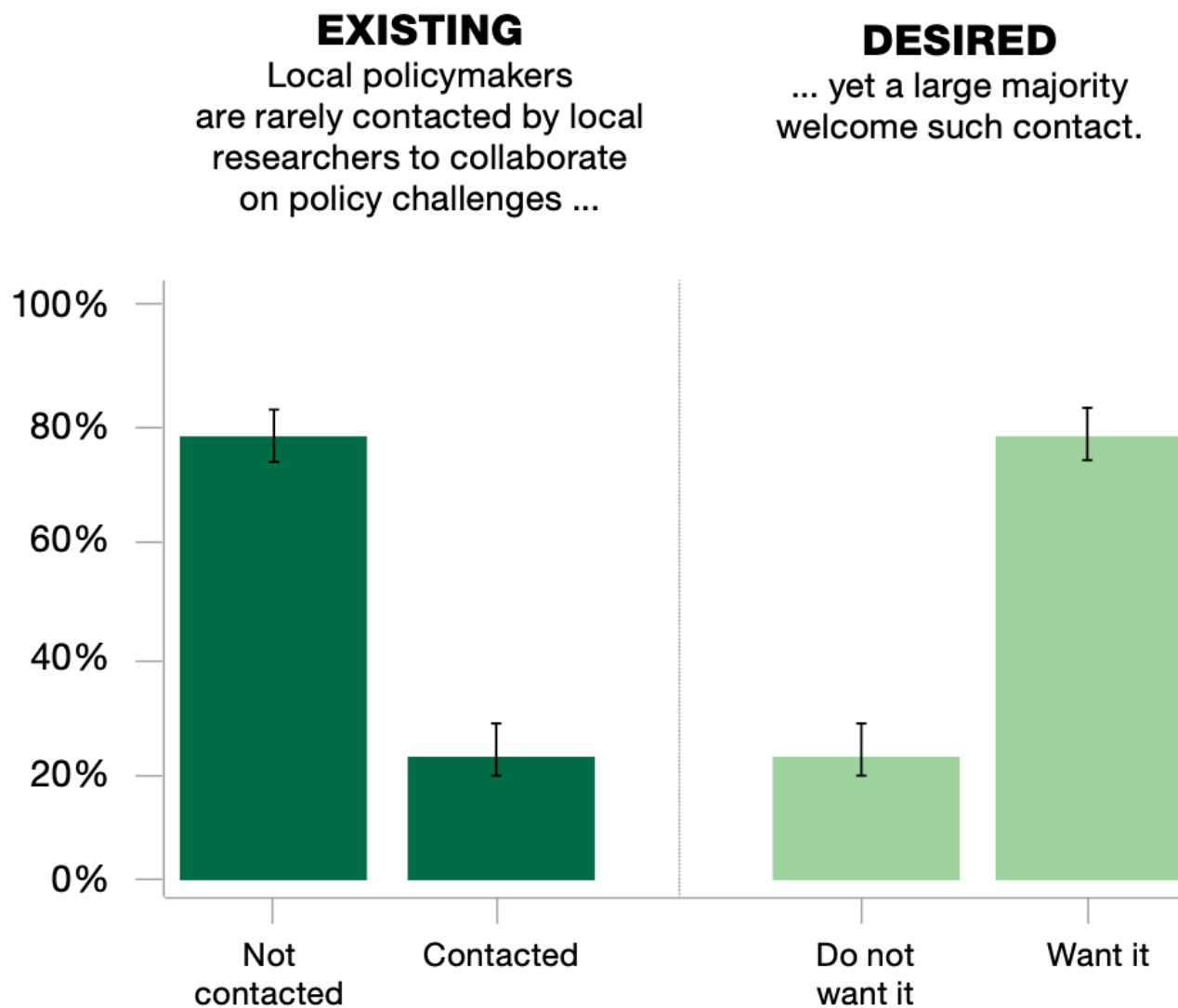
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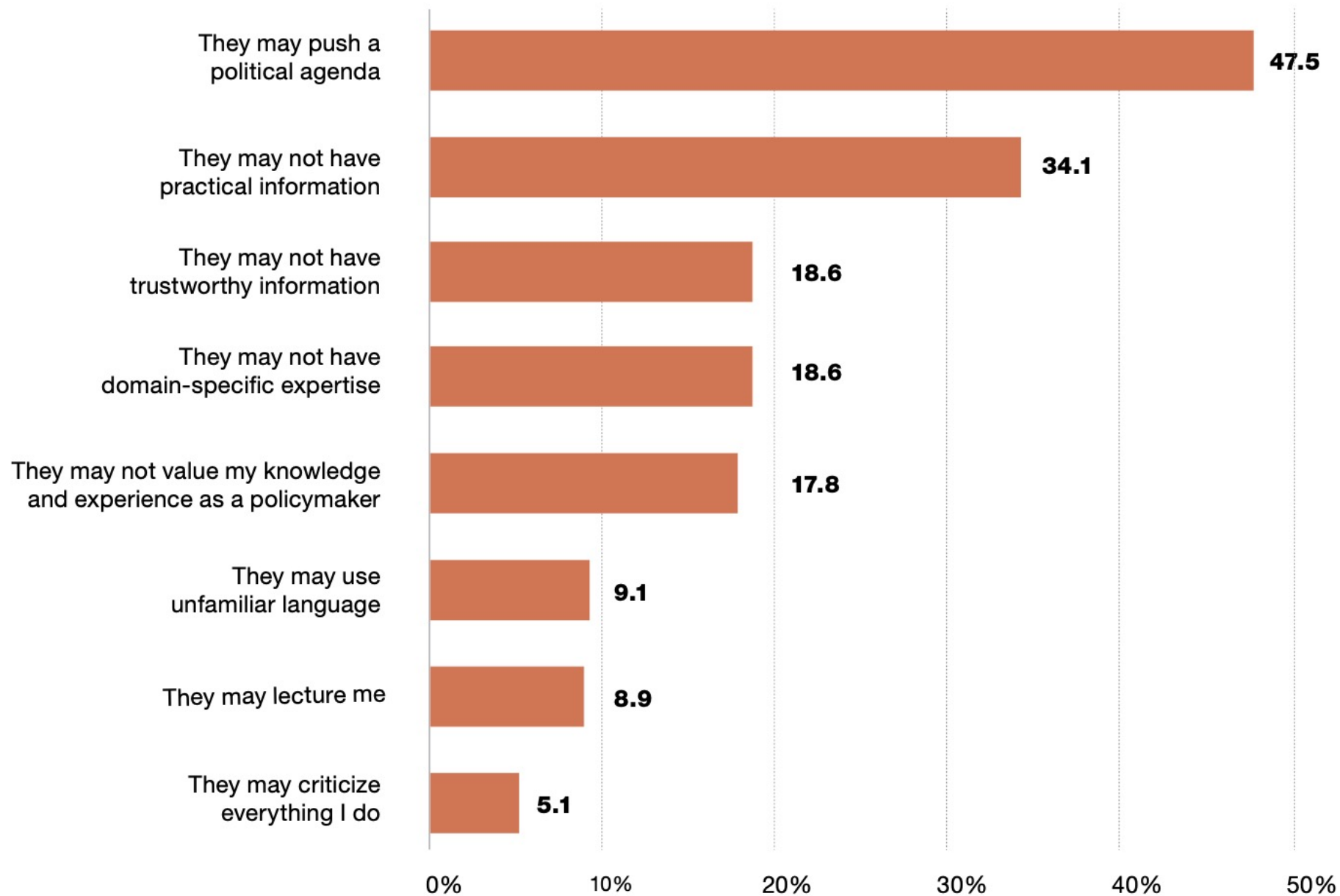
*Figure 2:* **LOCAL POLICYMAKERS WANT MORE COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL RESEARCHERS**



*Figure 3:* **LOCAL POLICYMAKERS WELCOME CONTACT FROM LOCAL RESEARCHERS**



*Figure 4:* **LOCAL POLICYMAKERS' WORRIES ABOUT INTERACTING WITH LOCAL RESEARCHERS**



# Take-Aways

- Substantial evidence of unmet desire for science among local policymakers
  - Patterns remain regardless of partisanship/gender/age
  - Also reasonable evidence it's not just “cheap talk”

# How researchers can surface and meet unmet desire

- New collaborative relationships often don't arise on their own, even when people would find them valuable (*Levine 2023*)
- Researchers/org leaders who seek policy engagement can start by asking: Do we have the collaborative relationships with policymakers that we want to have?
  - Legitimize and elevate informal collaboration in addition to dissemination and formal collaboration
- Then two approaches:
  - Directly communicate to policymakers in a relational way
  - Organizational leaders can use unmet desire surveys & matchmaking

# Tool for Organizational Leaders: Unmet Desire Survey

[Ideas ↗](#)[Initiatives ↗](#)[Talent Hub ↗](#)[Policy Entrepreneurship ↗](#)[About Us ↗](#)

## How Unmet Desire Surveys Can Advance Learning Agendas and Strengthen Evidence-Based Policymaking



Adam Levine → October 24, 2022

Science Policy

# Possible topics for Q&A

- Among researchers who want to reach out themselves:
  - How should you reach out?
  - How should you communicate with policymakers?
- Among organizational leaders:
  - (How should you design and field an unmet desire survey?)

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