

# ARN Evaluation: Some findings

# What is ARN?

2-year project funded by IDRC.

Overall goal:

*“to build research capacity and grow the ‘APC Action Research Network’ (ARN) of researchers who are, uniquely, located in organisations that can do national and regional advocacy supported globally by APC staff.”*

APC supports action-oriented research *“intended to generate evidence to support advocacy activities with the utmost objective of achieving change”*.

# The evaluation

Commissioned in October 2011

Done mid-term rather than at end of project:

- To inform activities in the final project period
- To inform APC planning beyond end of project
- To inform planning of research capacity building

# Focus of the evaluation

Focus on 3 of 7 ARN objectives:

- building research capacity and growing the network
- building the capacity of the network to engage in future networking and advocacy
- conducting research and building advocacy on
- sustainability of ICT use by civil society (envsys) and use of wireless spectrum to address the access gap (OS)

# Methodology

- Background reading
- Reanalysis of data from NLF
- *On-line surveys*

Four key groups of actors identified:

- The country researchers: *survey*
- The APC project team and consultants: *survey*
- Participants in March 2010 NLF: *documents and re-analysis*
- “End-users” of the communications and media outputs: *Not done – too early*

# On-line surveys

Set of mostly open-ended questions sent to the nine APC staff and consultants who worked most closely on the project.

On-line survey (mix of closed- and open-ended) for:

- ARN researchers proper (envsys and OS)
- 5 researchers on earlier OS research

*(Complication: 2 researchers involved in both OS and envsys – 1 answered twice, 1 answered once)*

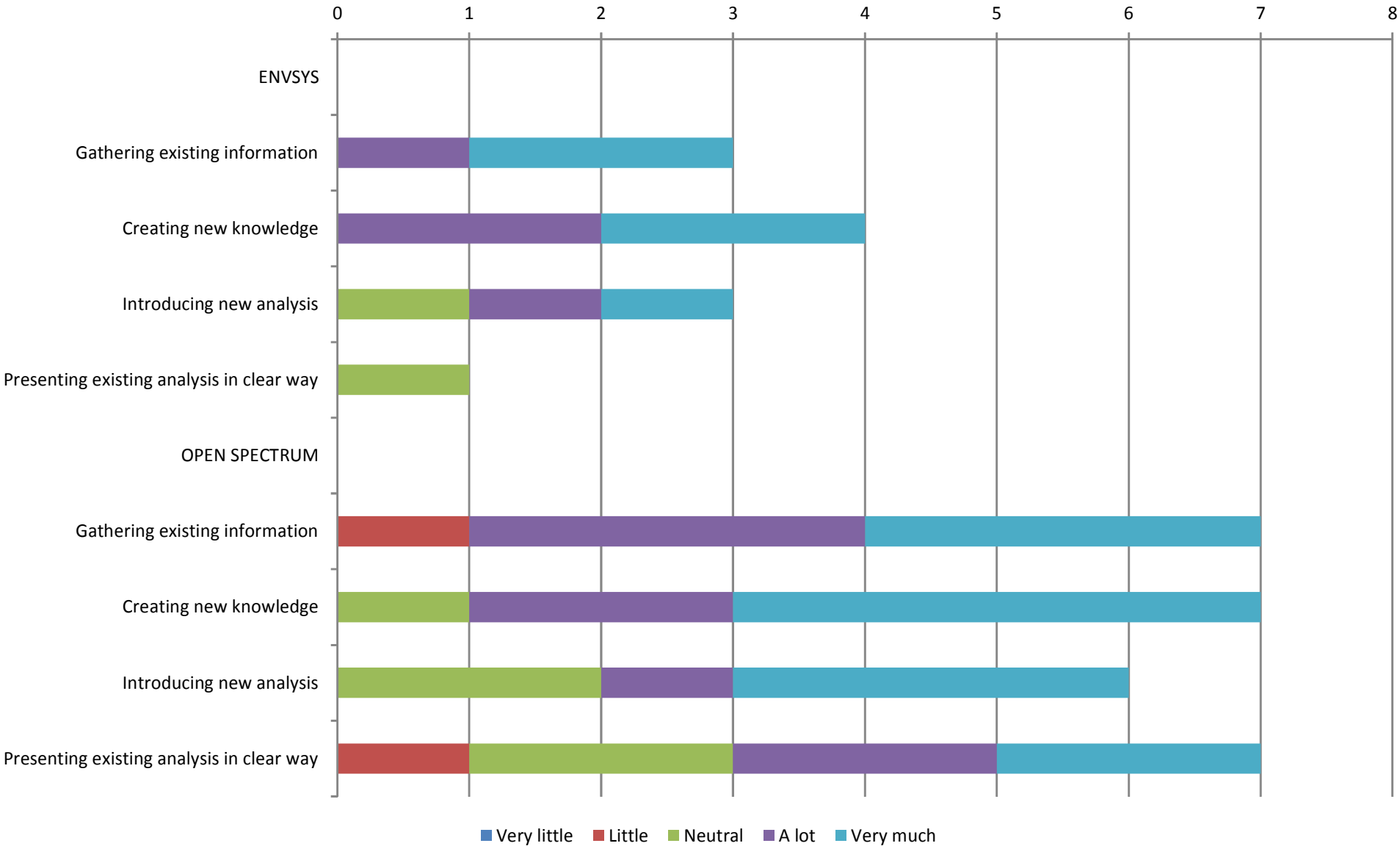
Full response rate for all aspects with Karen's help

# APC qualitative assessment of ARN

Main achievements included:

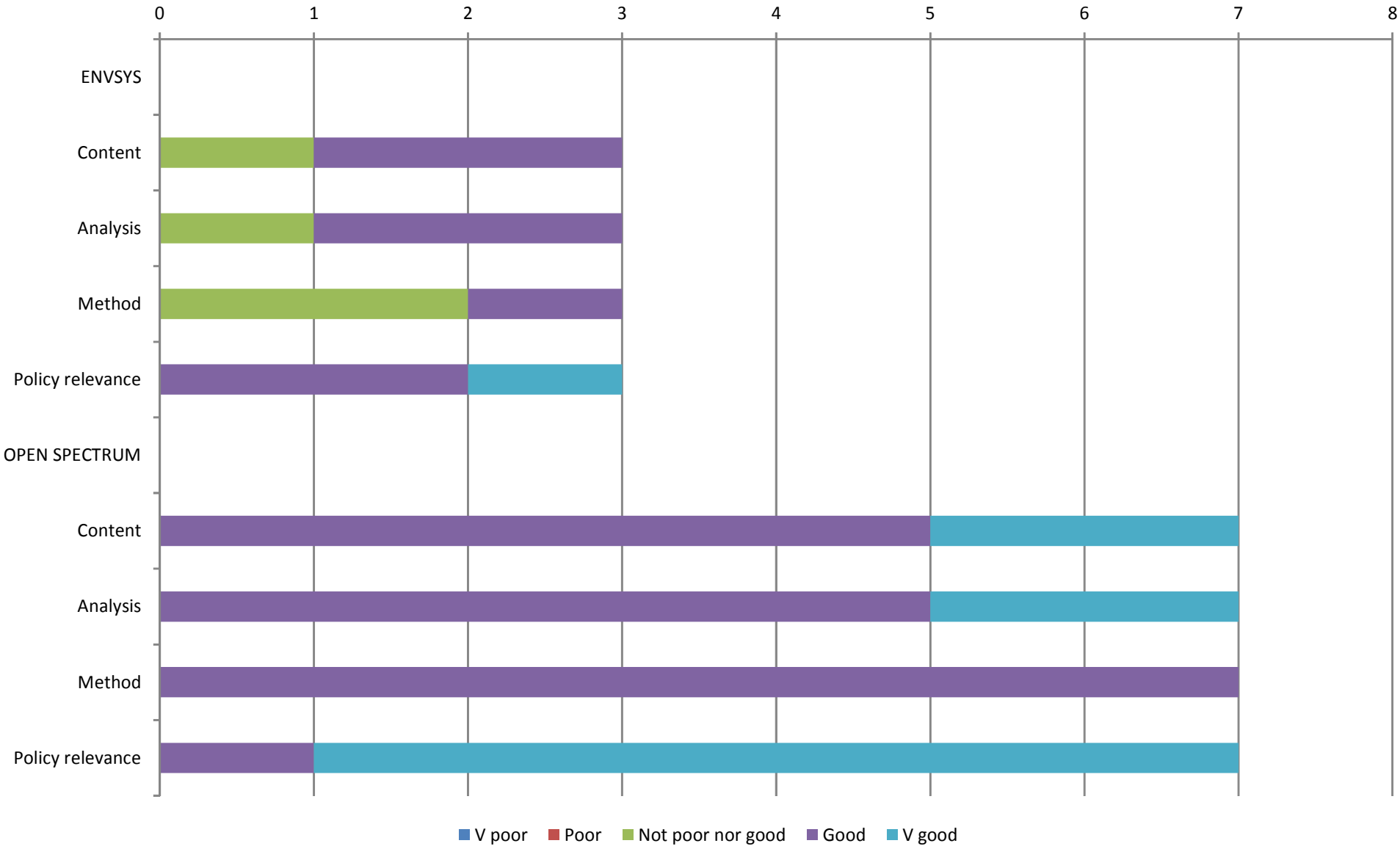
- provided opportunity and resources for APC members to explore difficult but important fields that were often new for them and APC
- Benefits went beyond members
- Stimulated further research
- Development of “story-telling” methodology for documentation

## APC assessment of contribution of research

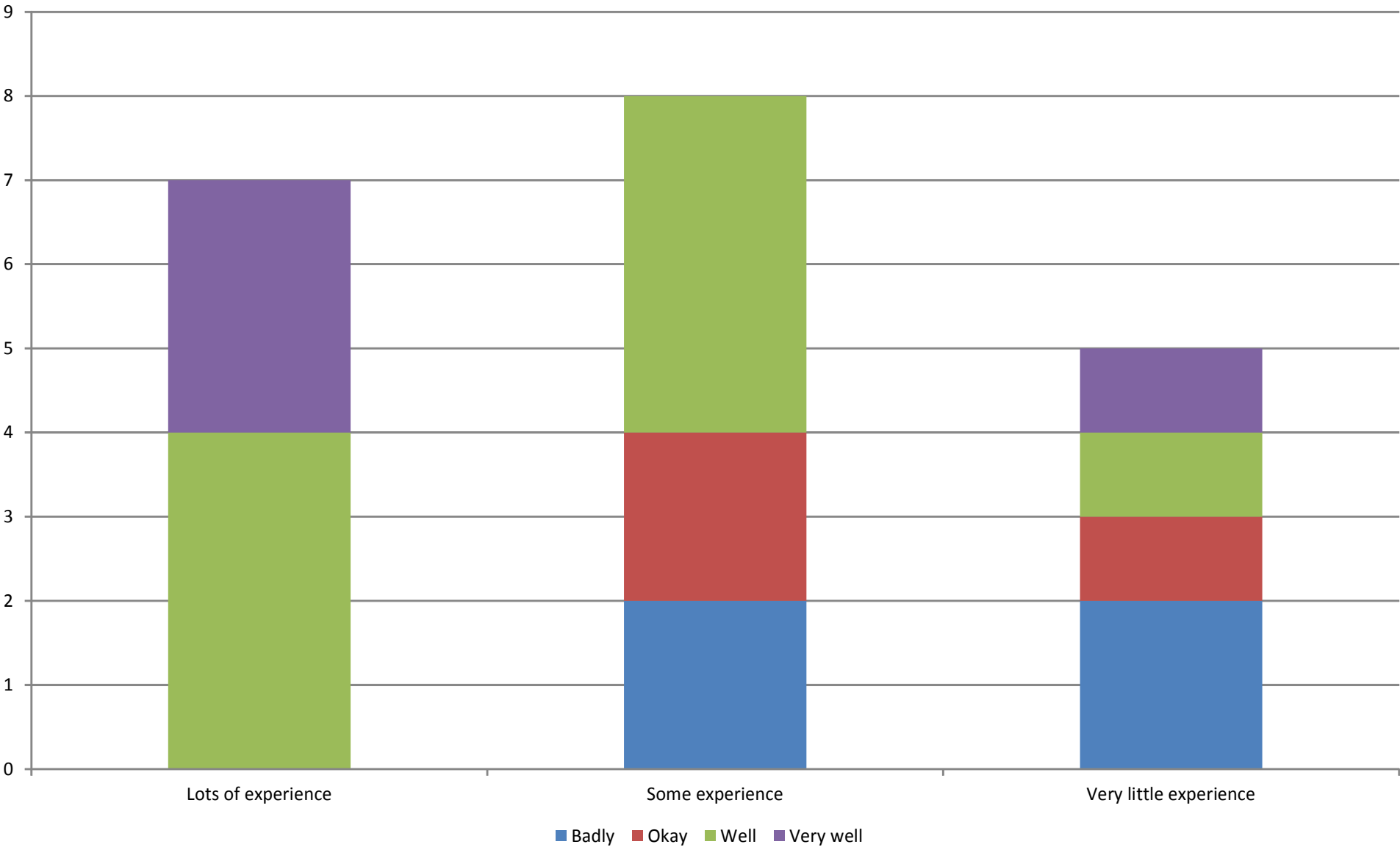




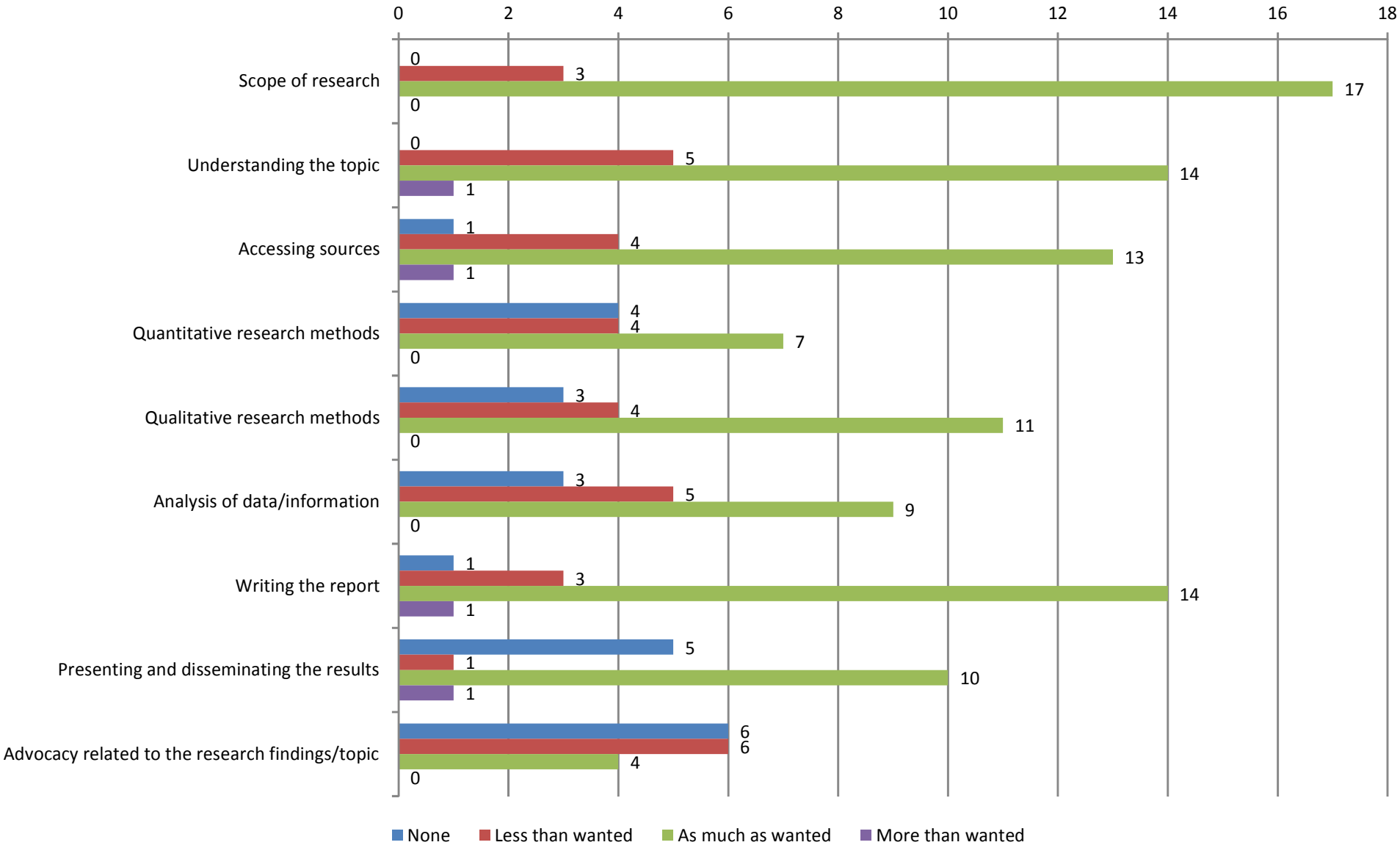
# APC assessment of quality of research



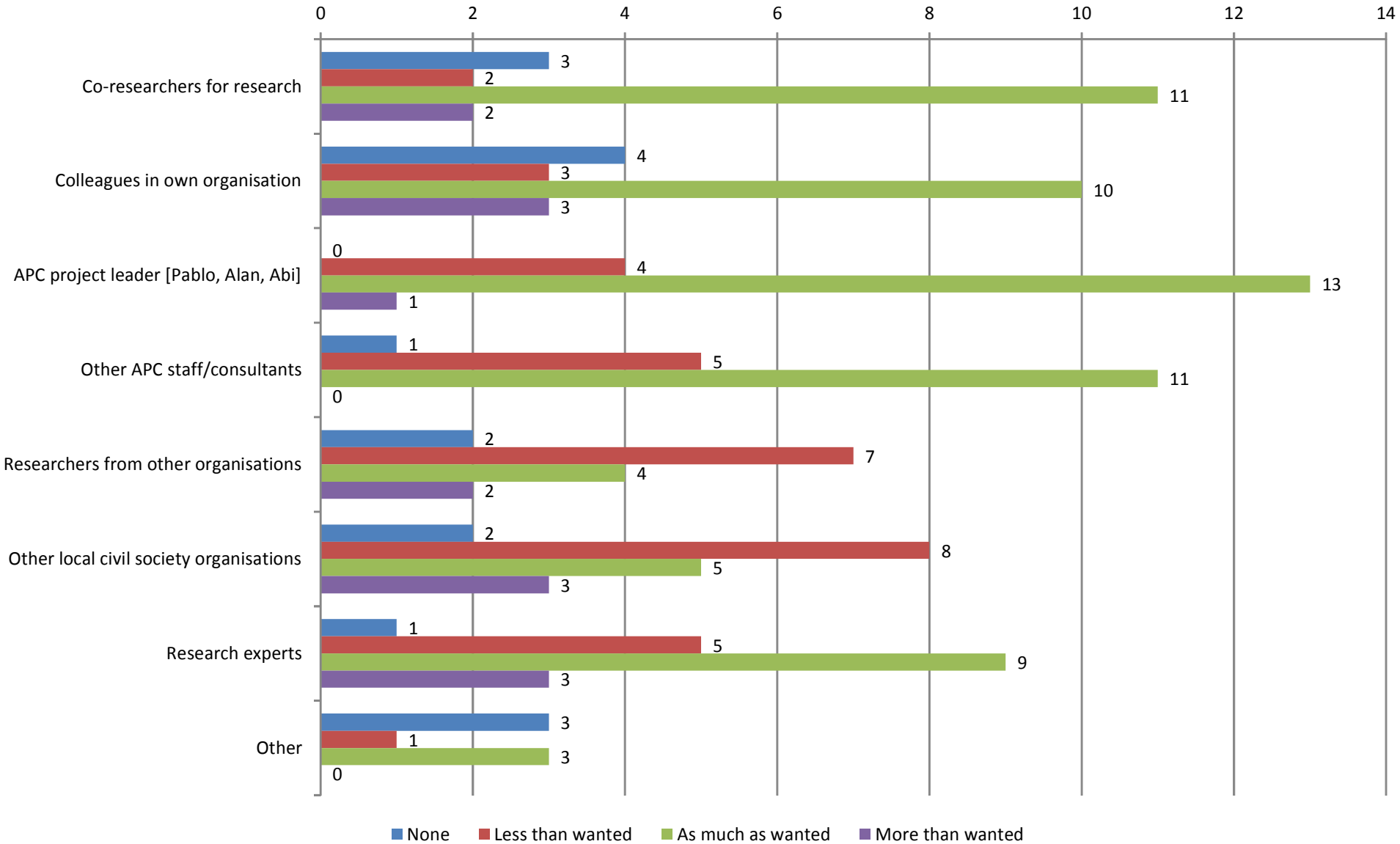
## Past research experience and self-assessed performance



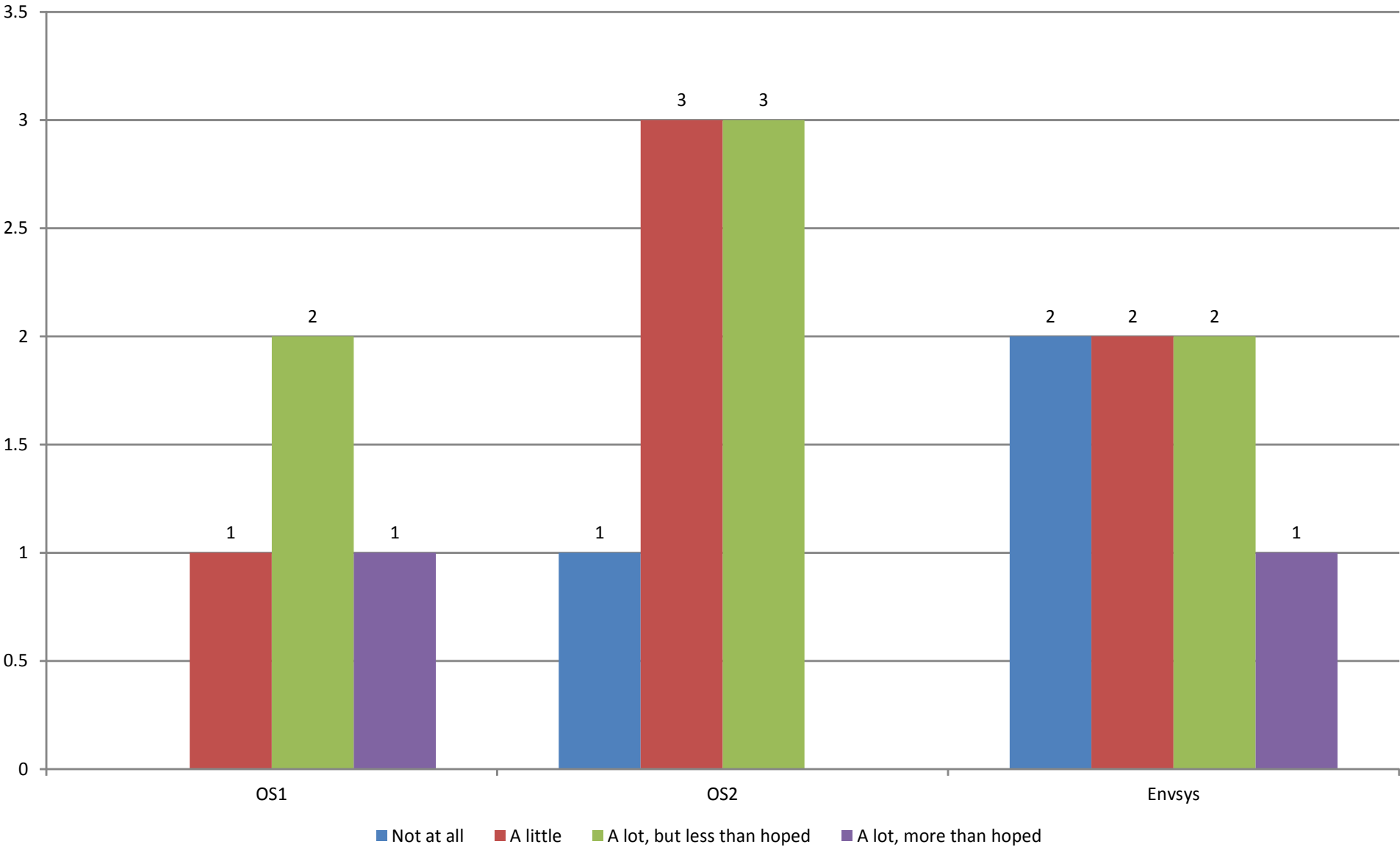
## Amount of assistance received



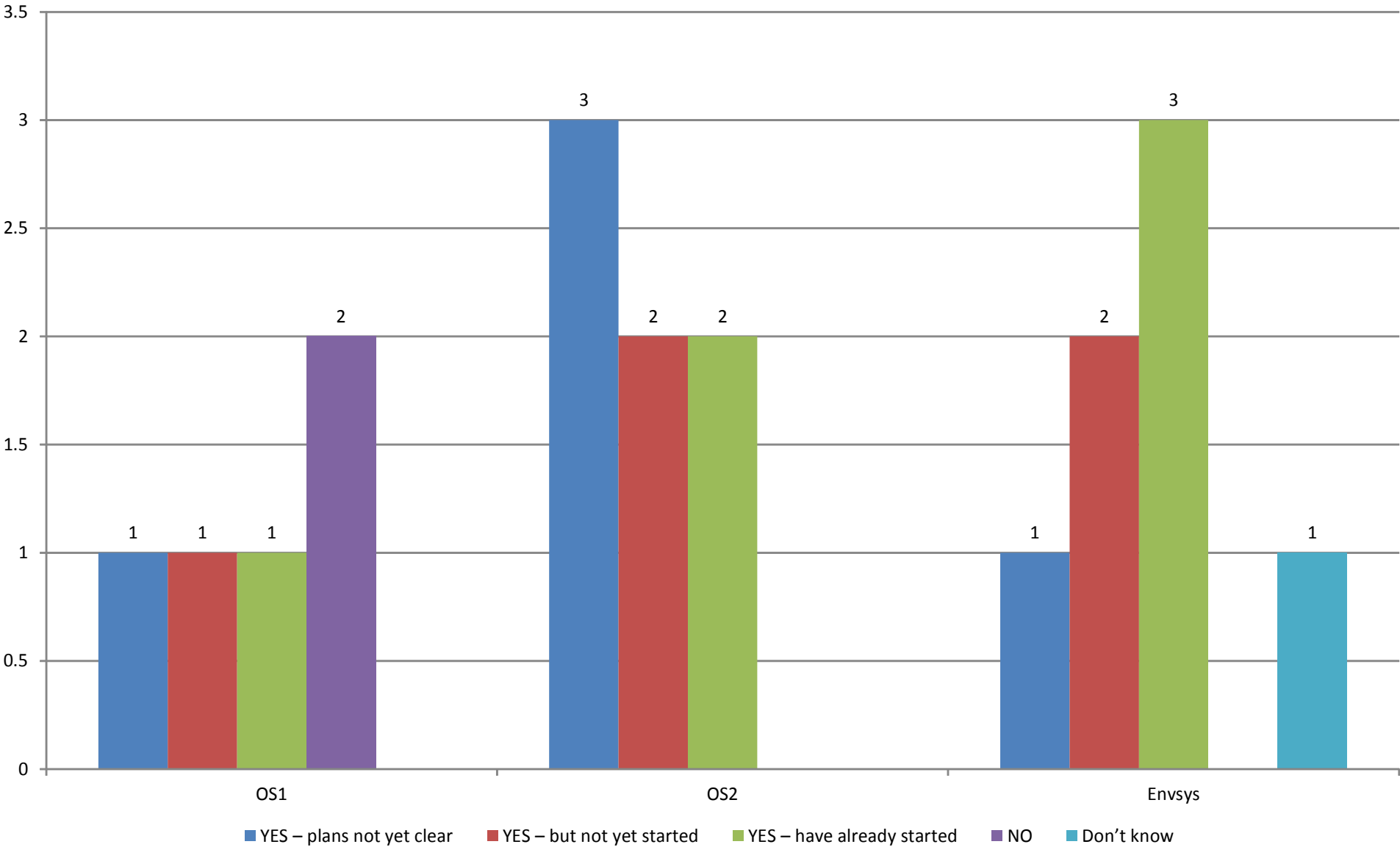
## Amount of assistance received by source



# Use of research in advocacy



## Plans for further similar research



# The way forward

Staff members were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the following observation made in email correspondence:

*In general, most APC member organisations have more capacity and feel more comfortable identifying research needs and using research results of others than in doing research themselves. Instead of trying to turn our partners into researchers, should we not encourage them in the areas that they are strong and collaborate with research institutions so that they produce research that we can use?*

# Responses from APC staff/consultants

4 agreed, 3 not sure, 1 disagreed

But those who agreed noted:

- Diversity among APC members
- APC members can do some parts of research and collaborate with other (“like-minded”) (“experts”) to do the rest.

Those who disagreed said:

- Research creates strong and informed advocates
- APC members often have “on-the-ground” understanding that experts don’t always have
- ARN approach has brought “great benefit (and probably pain!)”



# Preferred approach for getting evidence for advocacy

