



Report – user survey core facilities 2023

Note: This represents a translation from the original report in Swedish.

Summary

Surveys aimed at users are an instrument for continuously developing the core facilities at Karolinska institutet (KI) and Region Stockholm and for promoting the highest quality and relevance for KI's and Region Stockholm's researchers. In the fall of 2021, an open survey aimed at users of core facilities was conducted on behalf of the then Infrastructure Council. In the fall of 2023, a follow-up open survey was conducted. To follow the development over time, the results of the 2023 survey are compared with the results of the [survey conducted in 2021](#).

It is positive that there is still a very high proportion of respondents who indicate that the service provided by the core facility is important or very important for their research and that so many are satisfied or very satisfied with the interaction with the core facility.

A total of 158 people responded to the survey, the majority of whom were active at KI (77%), 11% at Region Stockholm and 8% at both Region Stockholm and KI. 95% of respondents indicate that the service provided by the core facilities is important or very important for their research.

A total of 158 people responded to the survey, the vast majority of whom were active at KI (77%), 11% at Region Stockholm and 8% at both Region Stockholm and KI. 95% of respondents indicate that the service provided by the core facilities is important or very important for their research.

This survey focuses on the overall landscape of core facilities and there may of course be significant differences between individual core facilities.

Conducting the survey

In the autumn of 2021, an open survey to users of core facilities was conducted on behalf of the Infrastructure Council. The same survey (with minor modifications) was published and open for feedback 10 October – 16 November 2023. Additions to the 2023 survey include whether the user has taken part in, training in technology and methods, offered by the core facility and which organisation within Region Stockholm the respondent belongs to (Appendix 1). Information about, and a link to, the survey was sent to heads of department at KI and to FoU managers at Karolinska Hospital. In addition, it was included as a news item in both KI's and Region Stockholm's newsletters.

Results and comparisons

A total of 171 people responded to the survey. 13 people answered no to the question about GDPR and did not answer the survey. 34 people had not used KI's core facilities in the last two years and these were therefore also removed. This gives a total of 124 responses that were included in the analysis for 2023. Since all responders could provide answers for a maximum of 5 core facilities, N, i.e. the number of responses, varies for the different graphs.

In the 2021 survey, questions focused on use in the last two years. The survey was therefore conducted again in October–November 2023, with broadly the same questions. Questions with free-text answers have been reduced due to the difficulty of summarising these results.

Of the respondents, 77% reported that they were active at KI, 8% at KI and Region Stockholm, 11% at Region Stockholm and 4% were not active at either KI or Region Stockholm. The latter came, for example, from another university, the pharmaceutical industry or were affiliated with KI. The distribution of respondents is similar to the 2021 survey. There are large variations in response rates from the different departments, which may be due to the fact that the information regarding the survey did not reach all employees (Figure 1). For example, no one from MTC responded to the survey in 2023, compared to 17% in 2021. Of the respondents, 44% use the core facility service monthly or more often compared to 50% in 2021.

The median number of core facilities used by a respondent was two, but there was a significant variation up to ten core facilities. The survey offered the possibility to provide answers for five core facilities. Very few people used more than five core facilities. In the following, all responses are summarised, so in some cases the number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

KI's core facilities offer a wide range of services. There is a large variation in the number of users per core facility, which probably reflects, among other things, the large variation in the services provided. The responses in 2021 from those working in Region Stockholm indicated that they only use a limited number of core facilities and that they have more difficulty finding the right service. For 2023, a greater spread can be seen for the facilities used by Region Stockholm users (data not shown).

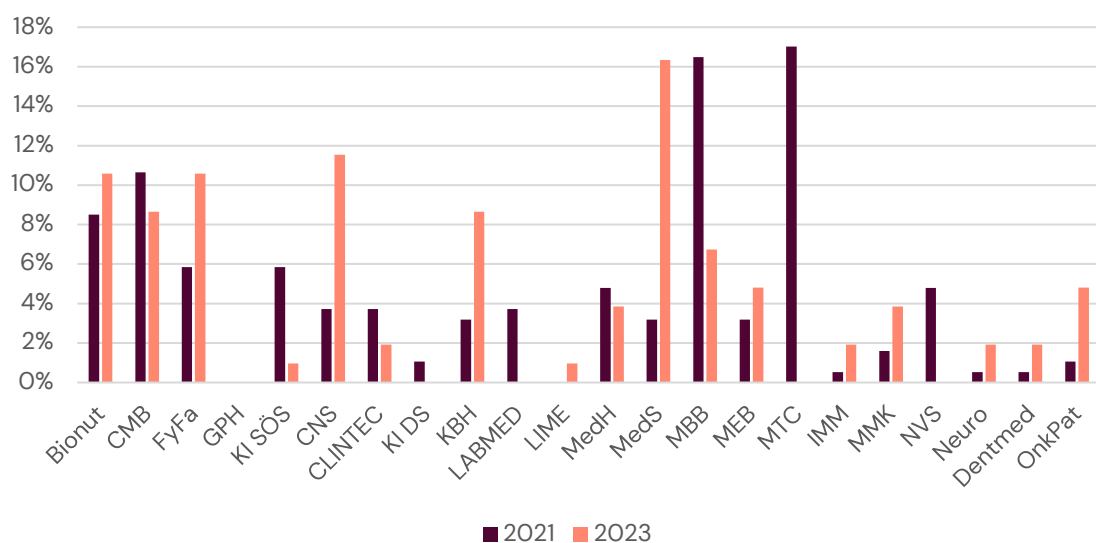


Figure 1. Department at KI that the user is employed at. Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. N (2021) =188, N (2023) =104.

Users of core facilities are found widely within KI departments, with a significant range in the number of users between departments (Figure 1). The departments with the most users in 2021 were MTC, MBB, CMB, Bionut, Fyfa and KI SÖS. In 2023, most users of core facilities were from MedS, CNS, FyFa and Bionut.

In the 2023 survey, 59% of respondents were in the group "Researchers (e.g. professor, associate professor, assistant professor, senior lecturer)", 18% of postdocs and 14% of doctoral students (Appendix 2). 'Other' included Radiation Protection Expert and Research Engineer.

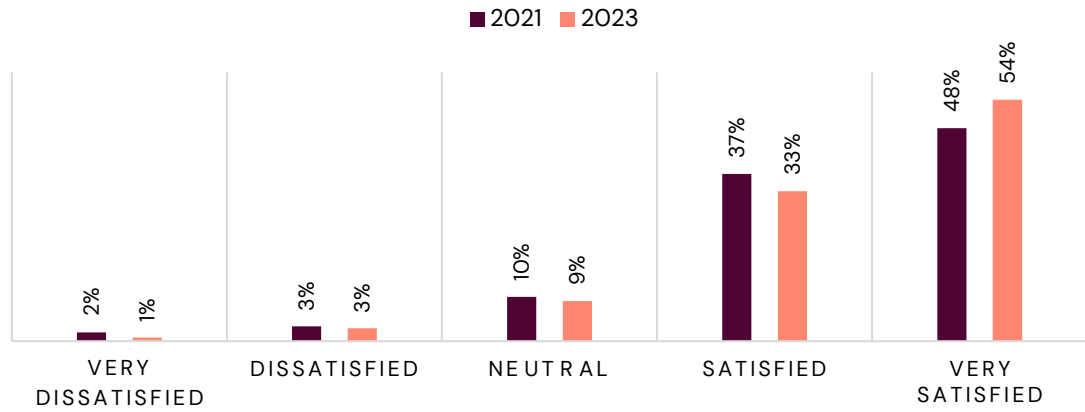


Figure 2. Response to the question "How satisfied are you with the core facility?". Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. N (2021) =303, N (2023) =254.

The majority of users remain satisfied or very satisfied with the core facilities (Figure 2). In 2023, 87% responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the core facility, compared to 2021 when 85% responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied. The respondents who are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied have all used different core facilities, which does not indicate a problem with a specific core facility.

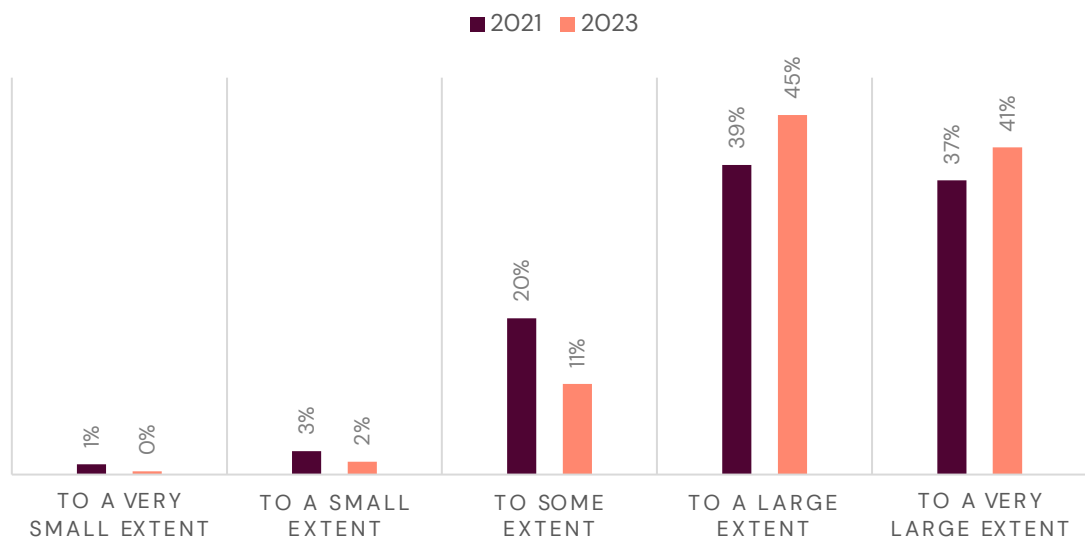


Figure 3. Response to the question "Has it been easy to find a core facility that offers the service you wanted?". Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. N (2021) =305, N (2023) =245.

Users of KI's and Region Stockholm's core facilities find it easy to find a core facility that offers the service they want (Figure 3). A positive development is that the proportion of people who answered "To some extent" in the 2023 survey had decreased compared to the 2021 survey.

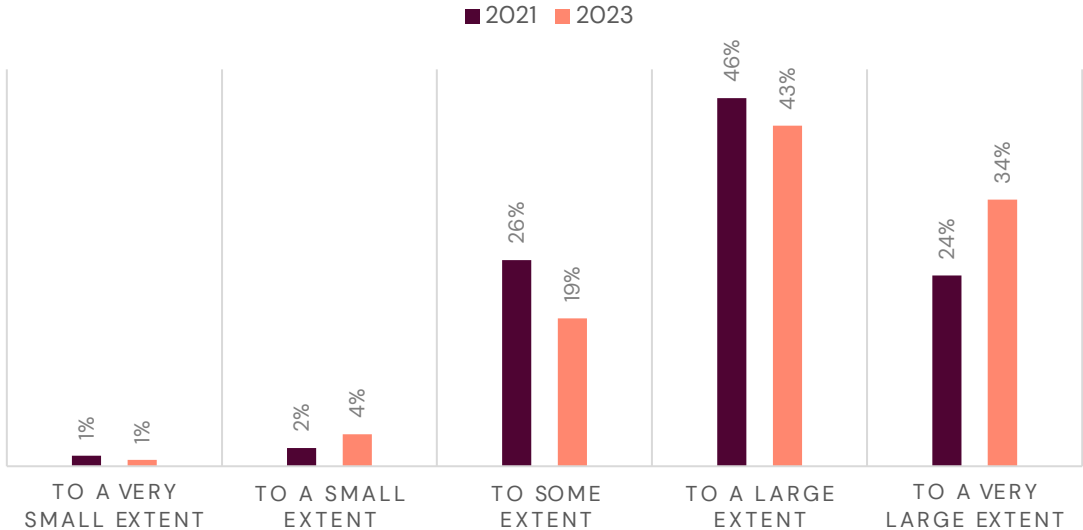


Figure 4. Response to the question "Has information on the core facility's website been adequate?". Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. N (2021) =304, N (2023) =247.

Most users find that the core facilities have sufficient information on their respective websites (Figure 4). In 2023, work started on harmonising the information on the websites of the facilities funded by the Infrastructure Council. This work is well advanced and is expected to be finalised in the spring 2024.

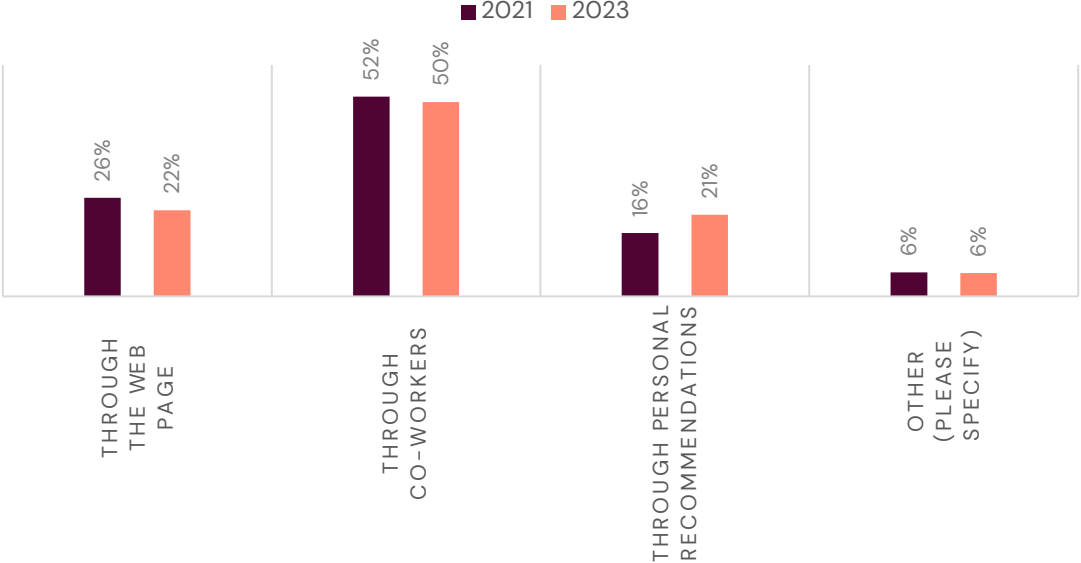


Figure 5. Response to the question “How did you get in touch with the core facility?”. Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. N (2021) =305, N (2023) =246.

The most common way of getting into contact with the core facility was through colleagues (Figure 5), but also through personal recommendations or the website. Other ways of coming into contact with the core facility included through seminars, graduate schools and through physical proximity to the core facility.

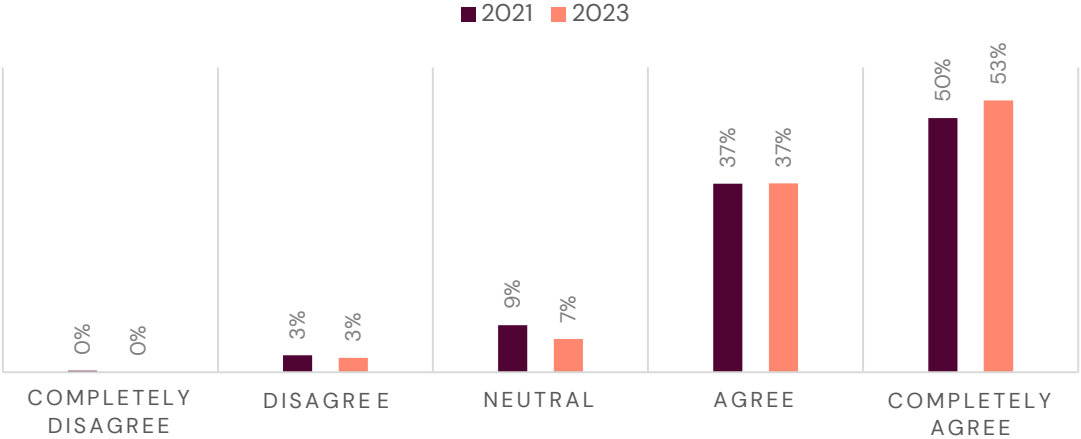


Figure 6. Response to the question “Overall, I am satisfied with the response from the core facility”. Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. N (2021) =302, N (2023) =245.

90% of users are overall satisfied with the core facility they have used, a slight improvement compared to the 2021 survey (Figure 6).

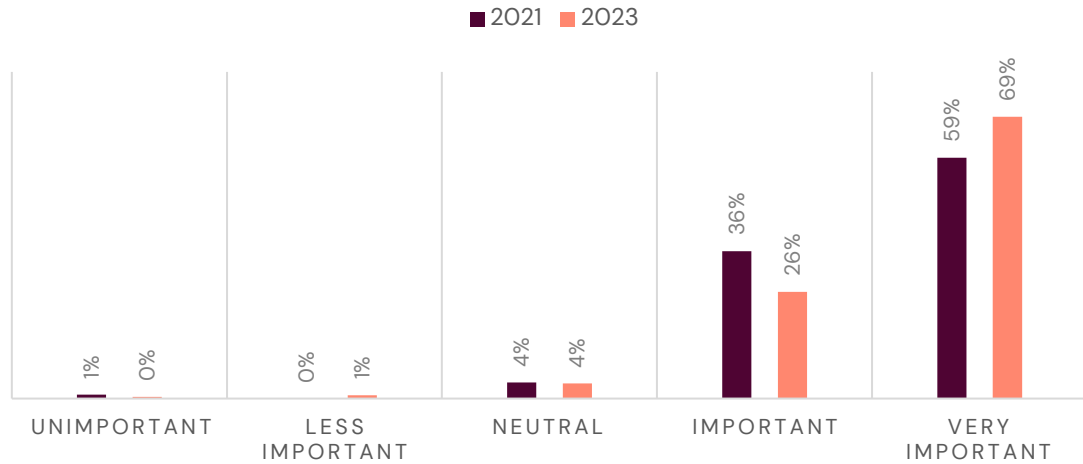
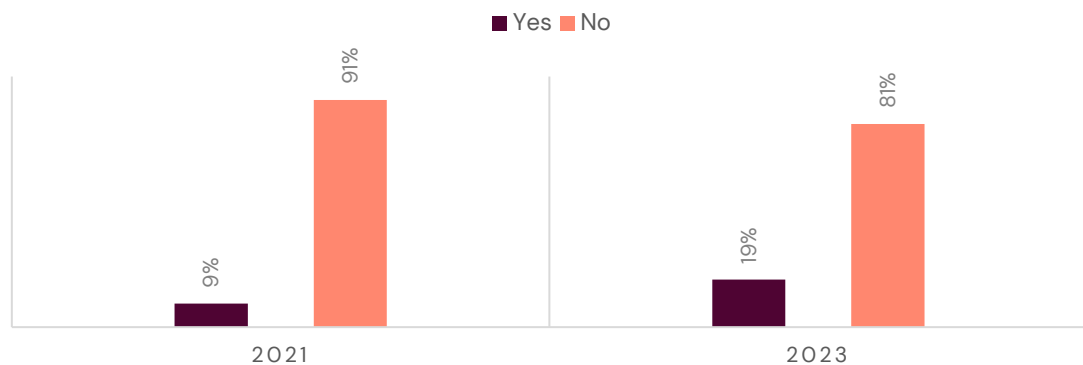


Figure 7. Response to the question "How important was the service that the core facility provided for your research?". Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. $N(2021) = 305$, $N(2023) = 245$.

95% of users find the service provided by the facility important or very important (Figure 7).



Figur 8. Response to the question "Have you included anyone from the core facility as a co-author of a scientific article?". Answers are shown as a proportion of the answers. $N(2021) = 299$, $N(2023) = 243$.

19% of users report including someone from the core facility as a co-author on a scientific article, which is an increase of 10% since the 2021 survey (Figure 8).

Conclusions and recommendations

One must always ask how representative a survey is. The results of this survey show a good correspondence with the results of the survey conducted in 2021. It has to be taken into account whether individuals who are in favour of core facilities for various reasons and/or are heavy

users might be more likely to respond to the survey. The survey also had many questions, which may have further increased this effect.

Through a comprehensive survey, KI has an instrument to follow the development of its core facilities over time at an overall level as part of its quality work.

Initially, it is noted that core facilities are strategically important for KI and Region Stockholm's research. 95% of respondents report that the service provided by the core facilities is important or very important for their research. It is gratifying that 90% of the respondents are overall satisfied with the interaction with the core facility. Although the overall impression is that KI's core facilities function well, this refers to the overall repertoire of core facilities and the data is too limited to make statements about individual core facilities. There is a large variation in the number of users per core facility, which may reflect, among other things, the large variation in the services provided. Some methods are used regularly, while others may be used on an occasional basis.

In the 2021 survey, relatively few respondents said that they had come into contact with the core facility services via the web. This was interpreted as if there was potential to further improve the websites. This is being handled within the project "Digital profiling of KI's core facilities", which is supervised by the Infrastructure Board within the framework of the "Strategy for Karolinska Institutet's research infrastructure 2021-2024". Updating of the core facilities' websites began in 2023, to simplify navigation and harmonise the format. It is anticipated that this will make it easier to find the right facility and simplify contacts between the researcher and the facility. The update will be completed in June 2024 and hopefully the next survey will show that an increased proportion of users finding the core facility via ki.se.

In the 2021 survey, around 9% of core facility staff reported co-authoring a publication; in the 2023 survey this had increased to 19%. Further work should focus on whether this is focussed to certain core facilities, whether all core facilities apply the same practice for co-authorship and whether this is clear and transparent to the user of the core facility. It is important to note that the core facility should not require co-authorship;

it is up to the PI to decide on the author list. The increase may be due to the fact that the services provided by the core facilities are more advanced and that the core facility therefore performs more sophisticated analyses for the researcher.

It is recommended:

to regularly carry out surveys aimed at users of core facilities at an overall level, as part of the quality work, as these constitute an important complement to surveys carried out by individual core facilities,

to in the next survey (2025) follow up whether the update of the core facilities' websites has resulted in improvements regarding ease of contact,

to be observant of how co-authorship among core facility staff evolves over time,

to raise co-authorship at a meeting with core facility managers, and

to communicate the results of this survey through the same channels as was used to communicate about carrying out of the survey.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey questions

Appendix 2: Kompletterande resultat från enkäten (Swedish)