

SSWLHC Conference
October 19, 2022

*Transforming Health Care:
Social Prescribing is the Future of Health Care*

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The Problem: Loneliness

PREVALANCE:

- 20% of U.S. adults feel lonely often or all the time (Mullen, 2019)

CLINICAL IMPACT:

- Chronic loneliness can lead to clinical issues like depression, dementia, heart issues, premature mortality, and suicide

UTILIZATION IMPACT:

- 34% of hospitalized patients are socially isolated compared to those not hospitalized in the last year (Wray, 2021)

HEALTHCARE COST IMPACT:

- Medicare spends \$6.7 billion more on socially isolated patients (AARP, 2017)

Quick facts about loneliness

Loneliness is natural

Loneliness isn't something only older people feel

There are different types of loneliness

Think about how you describe loneliness

Loneliness is fixable

Loneliness is not a mental health condition

Social Determinants of Health



What is Loneliness?



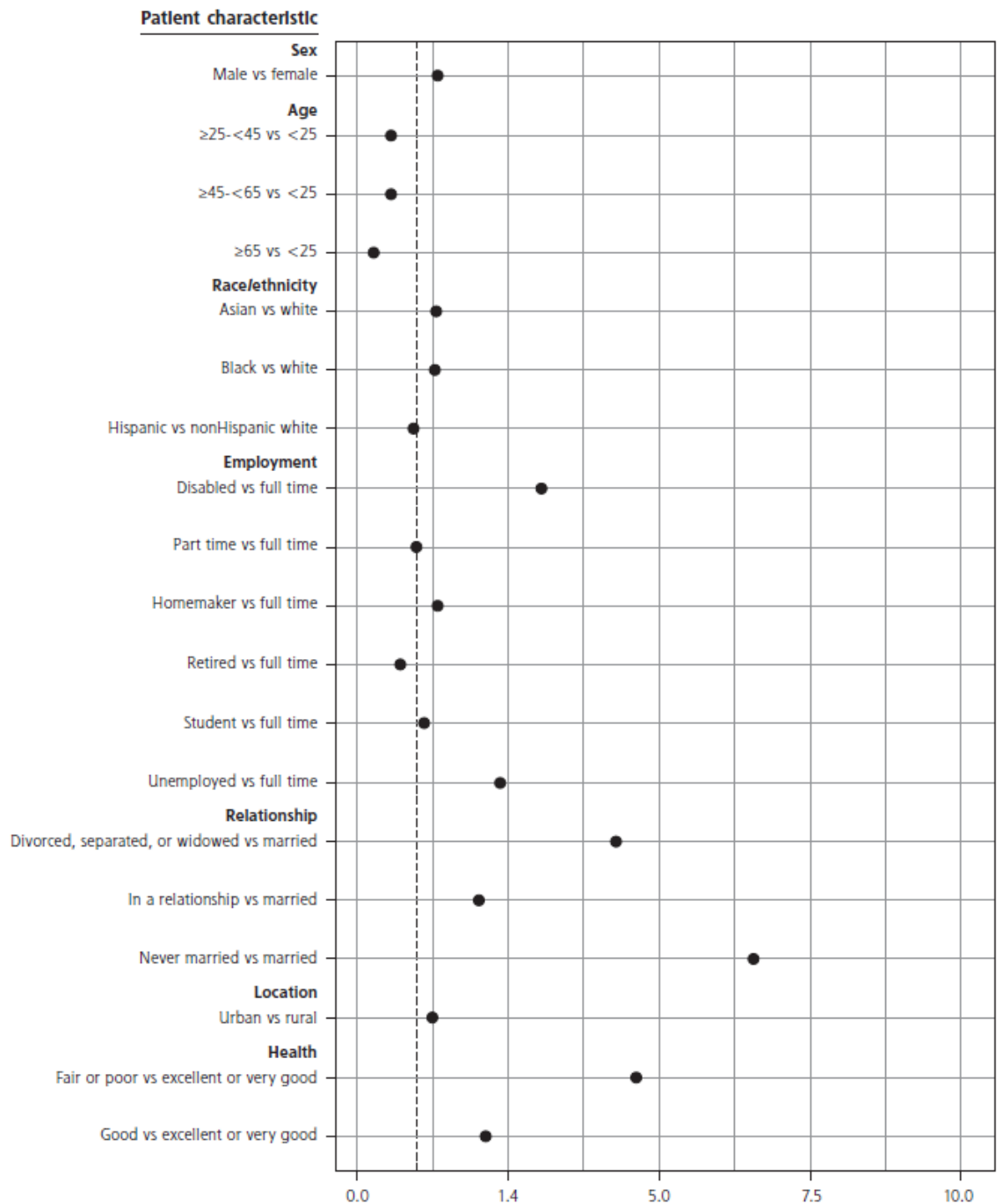
LONELINESS:

Subjective- The dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between your desired and actual social relationships.

20% of US adults report feeling lonely often or all the time (Mullen, 2019; Straus, 2021)

SOCIAL ISOLATION:

Objective- Marked by factors like living alone, having few social network ties, having infrequent social contacts.



Loneliness in Primary Care Patients:
A Prevalence Study.
Annals of Family Medicine.
Mullen, March/April 2019

Three Types of Loneliness:

Intimate/emotional



Three Types of Loneliness:

Relational



Three Types of Loneliness:

Collective



Three Types of Loneliness:

Collective



Three Types of Loneliness:

Collective



Three Types of Loneliness:

Collective



Loneliness
and Health:

What does the
research say?



Loneliness and Health:

What does the research
say?

Those who are lonely
have a 30% increased
risk of stroke and heart
disease (Valtorta, 2016)

Loneliness and Health:

What does the research
say?

Those who are
chronically lonely have
a 40% higher risk for
developing dementia
(Sutin, 2018).

Loneliness and Health:

What does the research
say?

Veterans who feel lonely sometimes or often are 3 times more likely to experience suicidal ideation (Straus, 2021).

Loneliness and Health:

What does the research
say?

Social isolation, loneliness, and living alone have a significant effect on risk for mortality, which exceeds the risk associated with obesity.

The risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

(Holt-Lunstad, 2017)

LONELINESS:
The Impact
on Healthcare





Social Prescribing

- Addresses social determinants of health
- Patient gets a *social prescription* from a healthcare professional
- Connects medical care with community assets

Types of Social Prescriptions:

Walking group

Yoga and Meditation class

Art classes... ***such as VA's Veteran Arts Initiative!***

Gardening club

Music events

Healthy cooking or lunch clubs

Religious reading groups

Civic engagement and volunteer groups

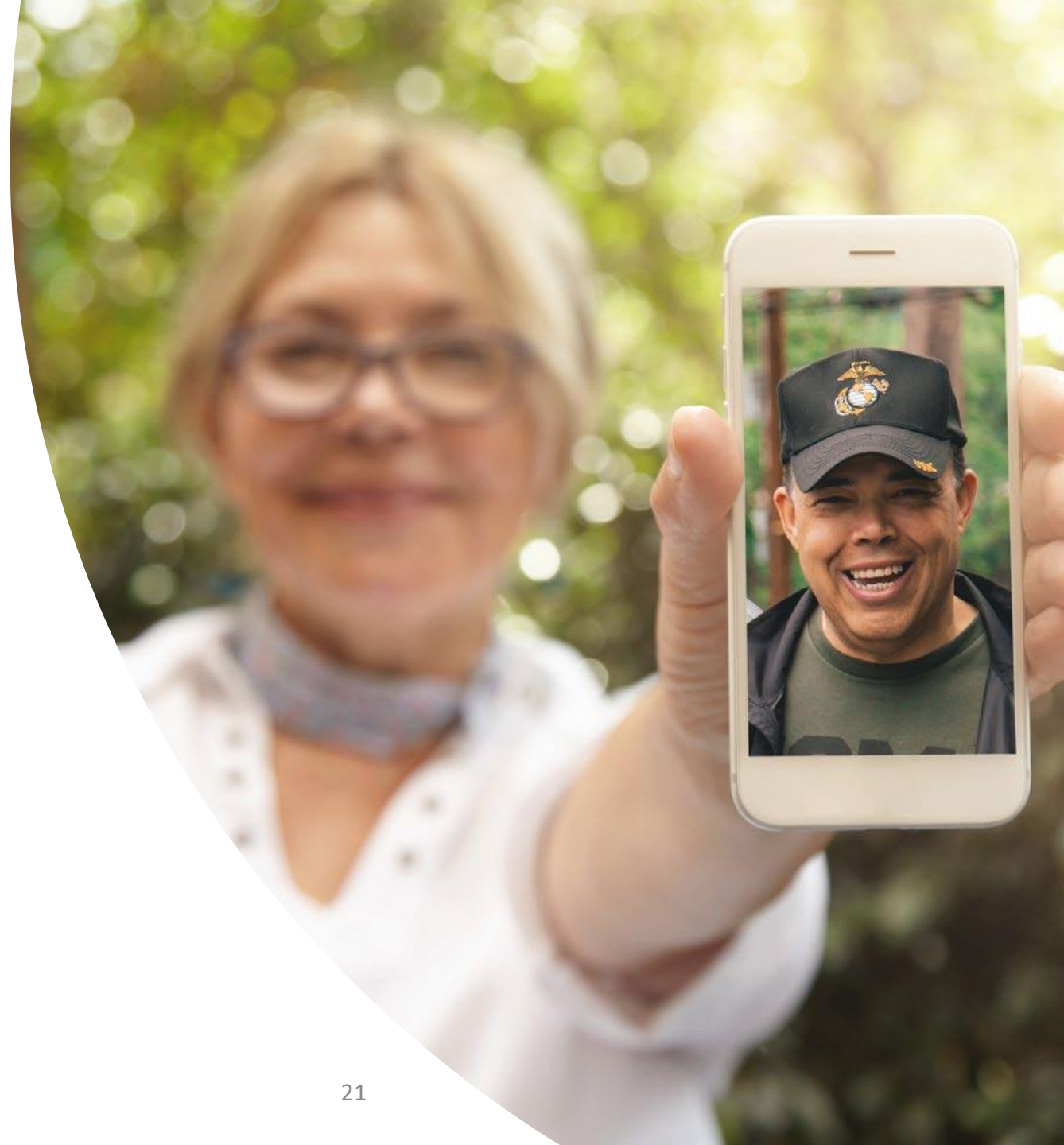
Library meet-up

Telephone Friendship Services... ***such as VA's Compassionate Contact Corps!***

Friendly home visits... ***such as VA's Volunteer In-Home Visitor Program!***

The Solution: Compassionate Contact Corps

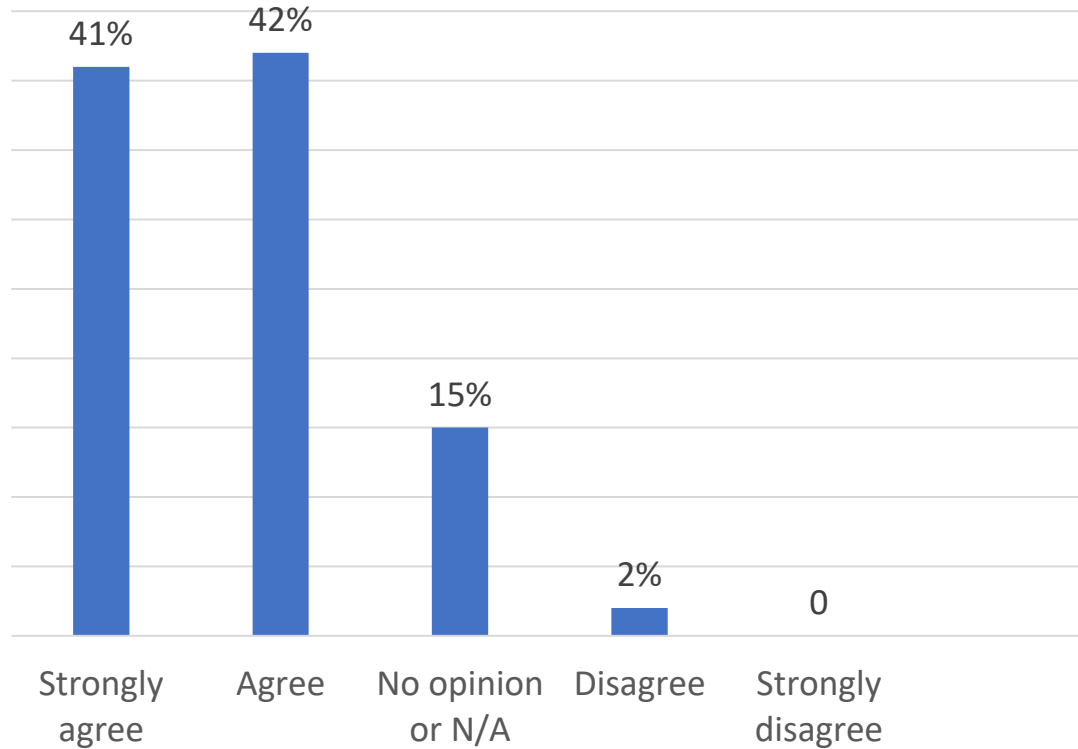
- **Vision:** Engaging Veterans who are feeling lonely through meaningful connections
- **Mission:** Compassionate Contact Corps reduces Veterans' feelings of loneliness by matching them with a trained VA volunteer for regular friendly conversations
- **Goals:** Reduce Veteran loneliness for a healthier and more engaged Veteran population



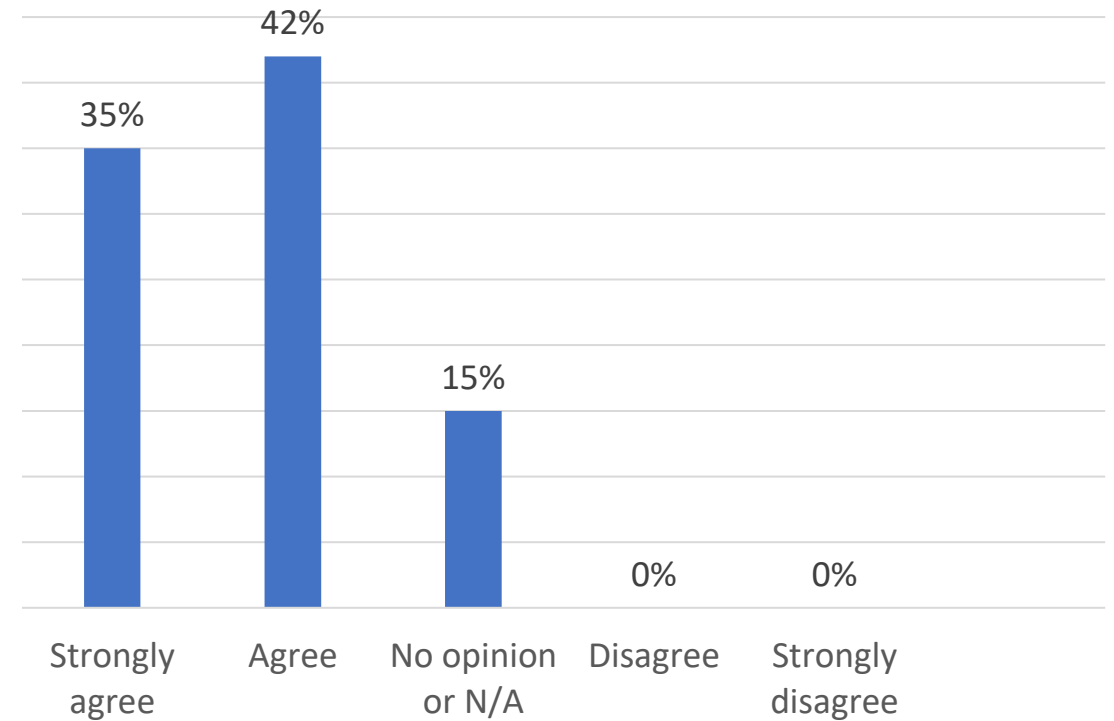
Compassionate Contact Corps



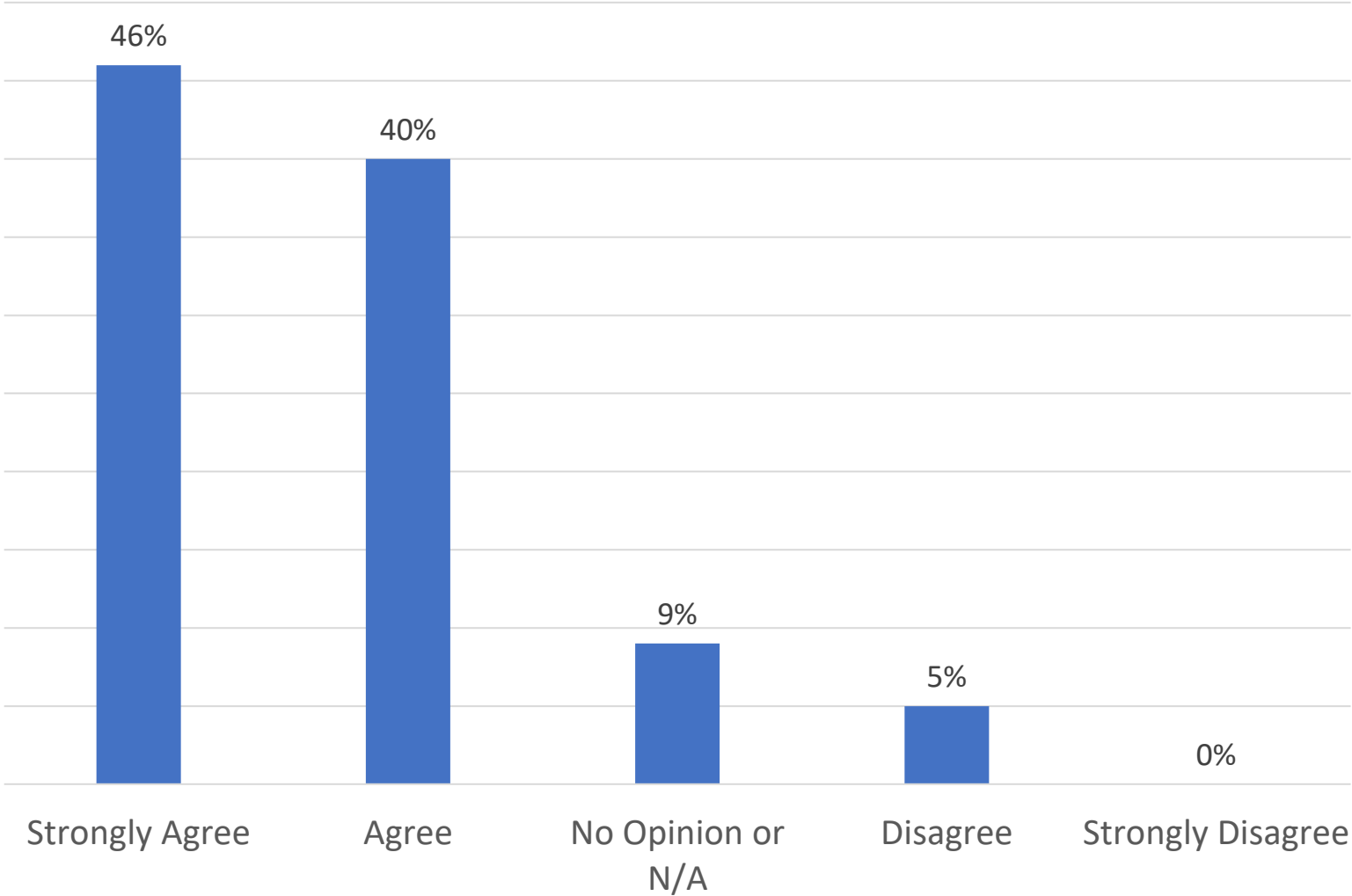
Q: The Compassionate Contact Corps visits help me feel less lonely



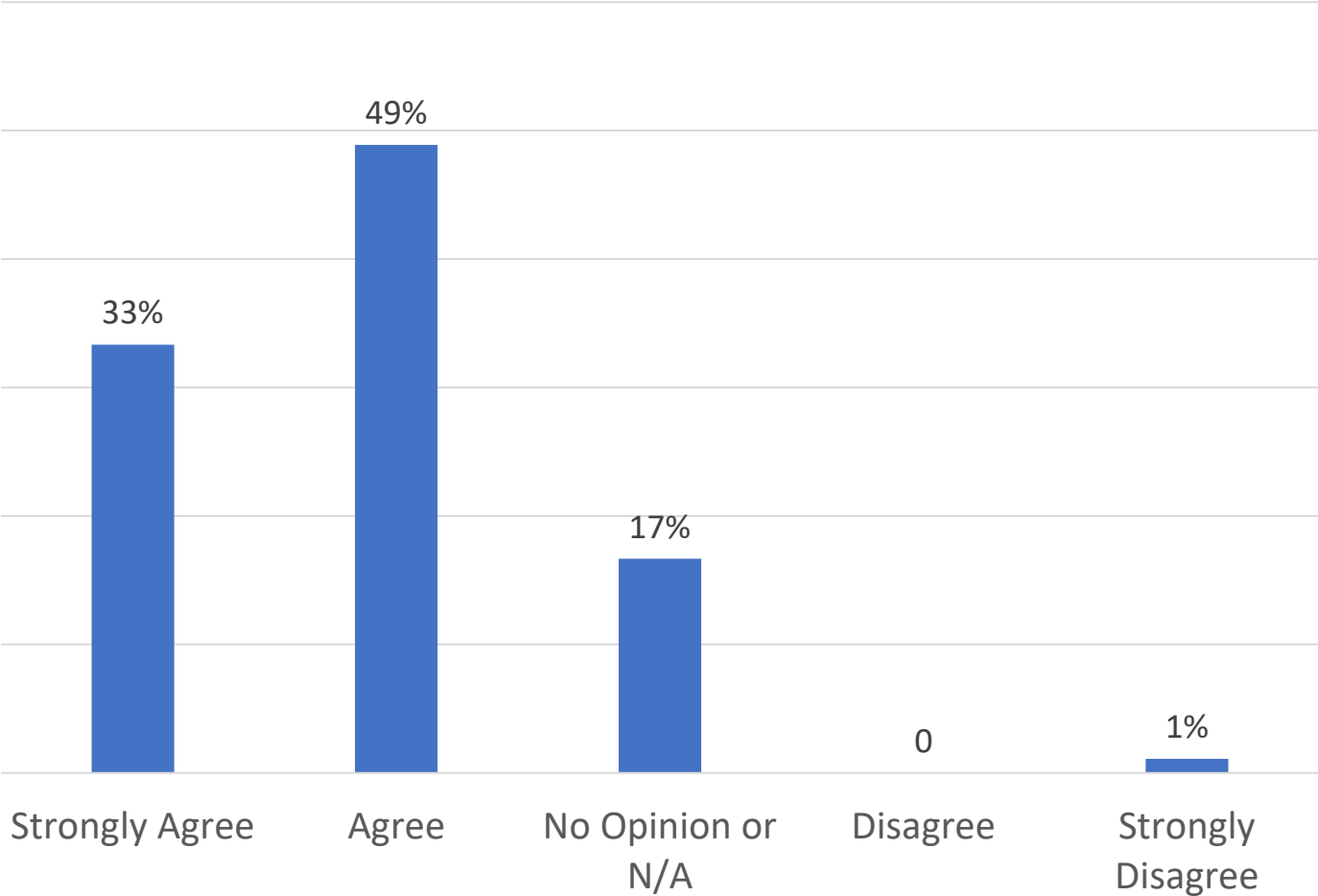
Q: The Compassionate Contact Corps program has increased my overall well-being



**Q: Compassionate
Contact Corps makes
me feel like the VA
cares about my overall
well-being.**



Q: (to volunteers) This program has increased my overall well-being.



Microsoft Teams

Meeting with Ryan Larkin

2022-06-10 12:38 UTC

Recorded by

Ryan Larkin

Organized by

Ryan Larkin

Thank you for attending!

NEXT STEPS:

- Talk to patients, co-workers, friends and family about what you learned today
- Clinical staff should screen for loneliness using the UCLA 3-item loneliness scale (*hardly ever/some of the time/often*):
 - How often do you lack companionship?
 - How often do you feel left out?
 - How often do you feel isolated from others?
- Develop social prescribing programs to decrease loneliness in your patient population
- Helpful websites:
 - volunteer.va.gov/ccs.asp
 - engagingolderadults.org
 - endsocialisolation.org