Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Office of Development Effectiveness

Review of Operational Evaluations completed in 2014

www.ode.dfat.gov.au

What are operational evaluations?

Strategic evaluations

- Produced by ODE
- Cross-program

Operational evaluations

- Managed by country and regional programs
- Individual aid investments
- Previous policy: all aid activities valued at $10m or more must be independent evaluated at least once

Why conduct the Review of Operational Evaluations?

- Compare the quality of operational evaluations before and after AusAID-DFAT integration

- Facilitate opportunities for learning from operational evaluations

Review of Operational Evaluations completed in 2012	Review of Operational Evaluations completed in 2014
Conducted by consultants	Conducted in-house by an ODE team
All 87 evaluations completed in 2012	A sample of 35 evaluations completed in 2014
Qualitative data collected	Primarily desk review
Synthesis of lessons	Highlighting a small number of lessons
Word document	Quality review in powerpoint

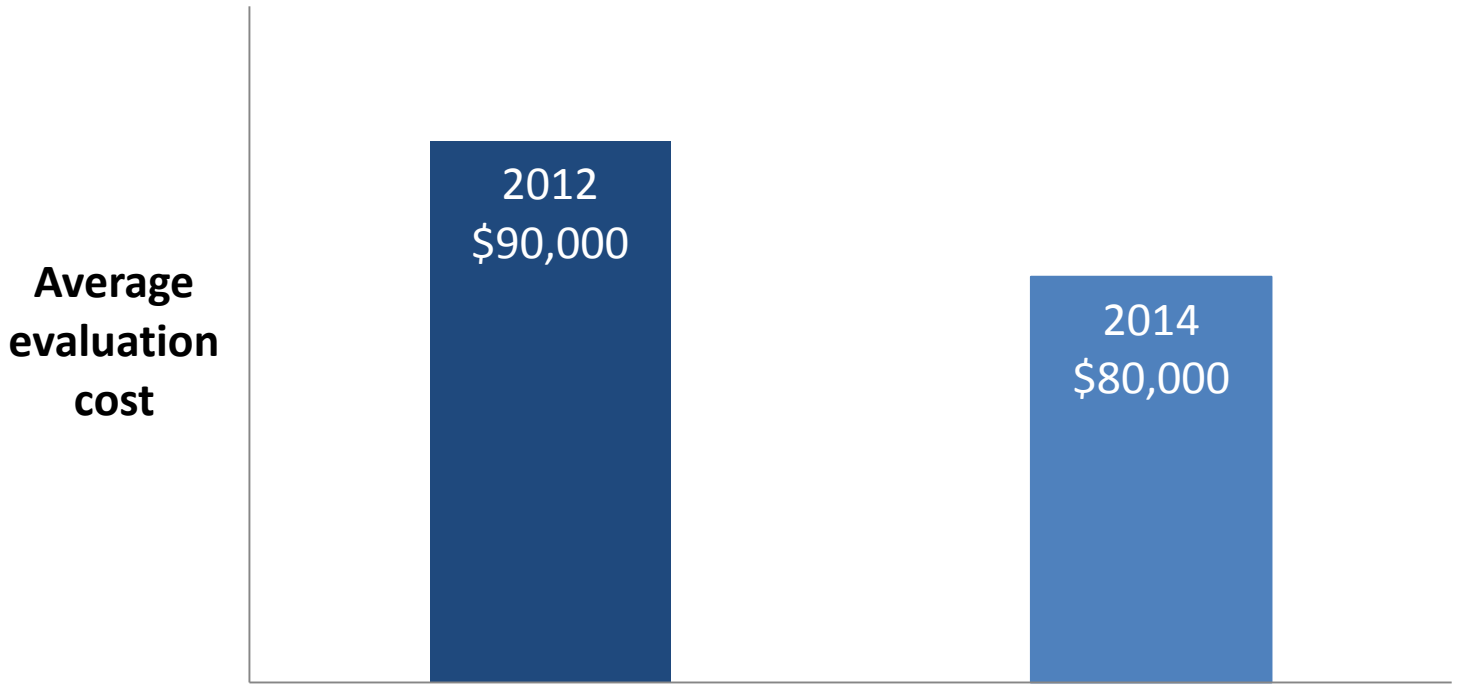
Quality criteria

1) Executive Summary
2) Purpose of evaluation
3) Scope of evaluation
4) Appropriateness of methodology and use of sources
5) Adequacy and use of M&E
6) Context of the investment
7) Evaluation questions
8) Credibility of evidence and analysis
9) Recommendations

We also collected data on….

- Evaluation characteristics
- Good practice evaluations
- Novel lessons on aid and development

Operational evaluations use modest resources

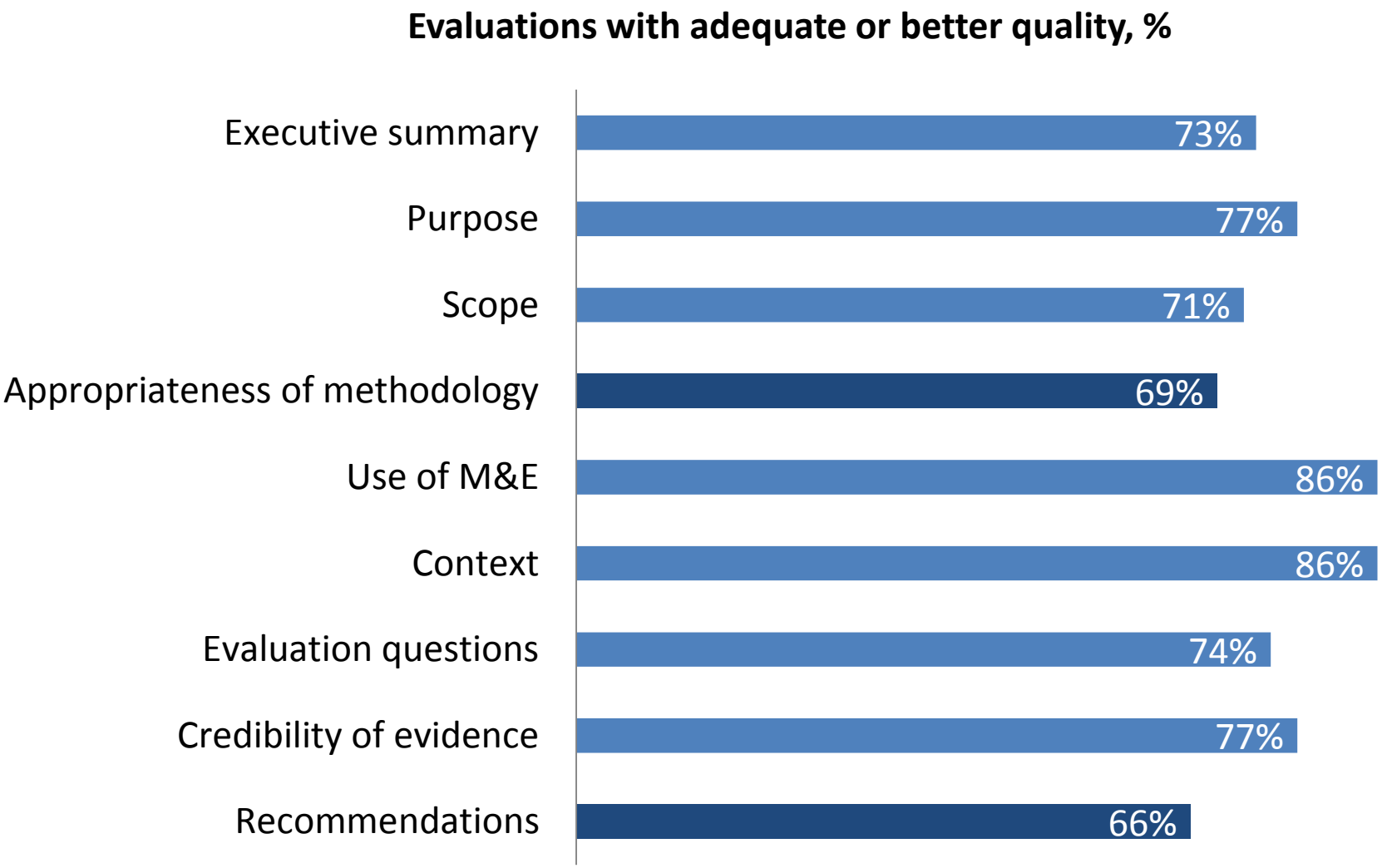


- Average evaluation cost as a proportion of activity value was 0.37%

Operational evaluations use modest resources

- Average working days: 72
- Average fieldwork days: 32.5
- A quarter of evaluation teams included a DFAT staff member

The quality of operational evaluations is good



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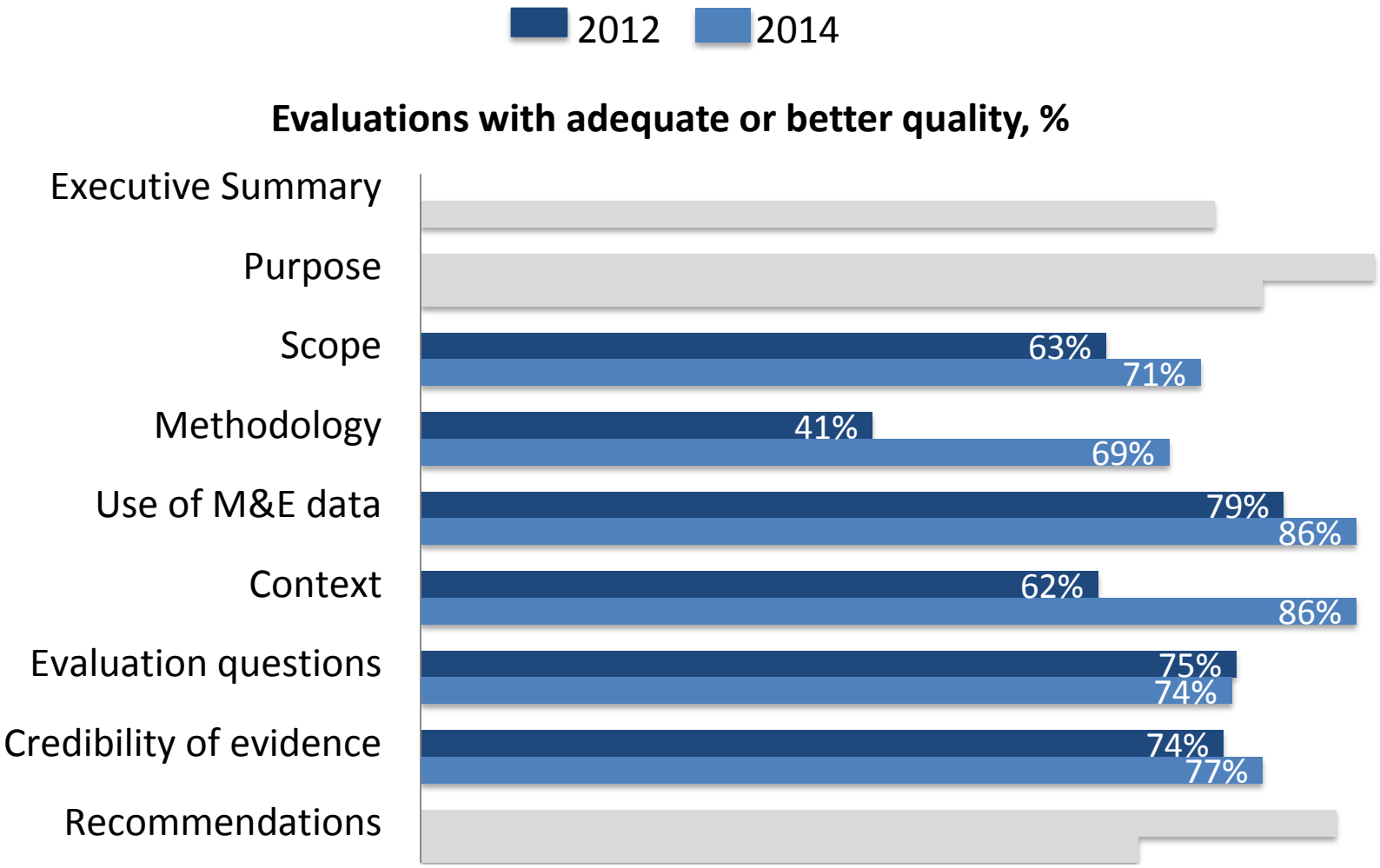

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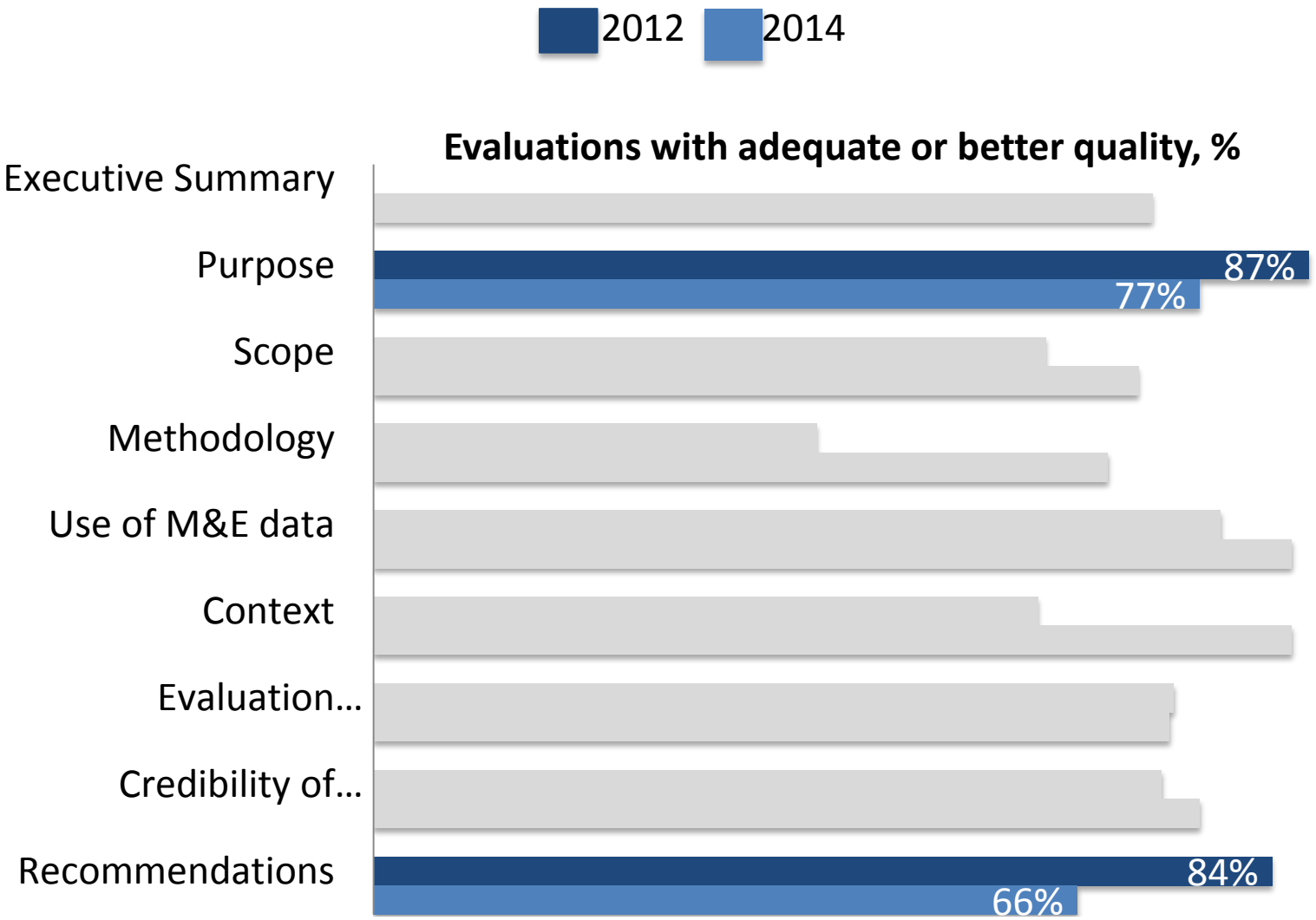

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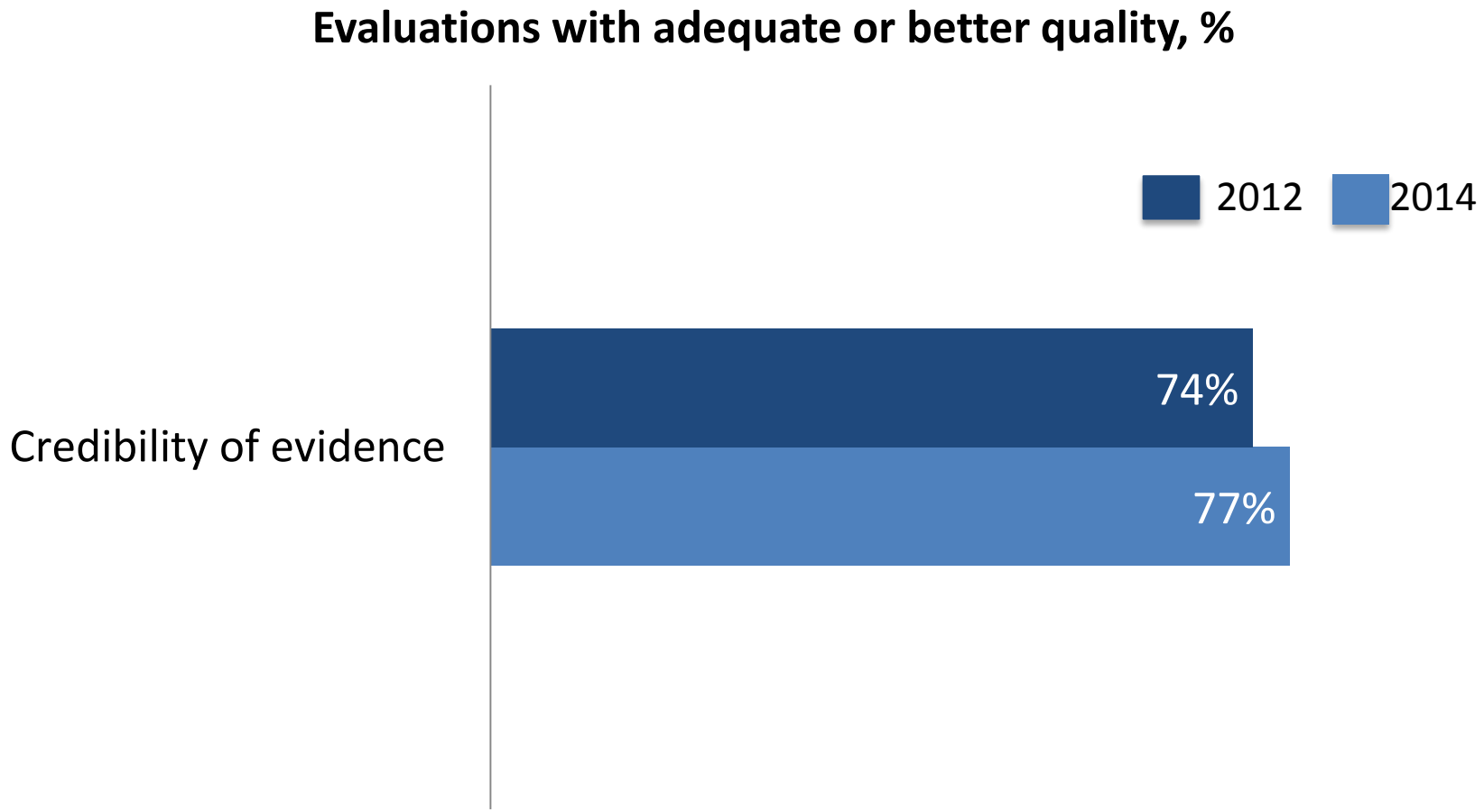
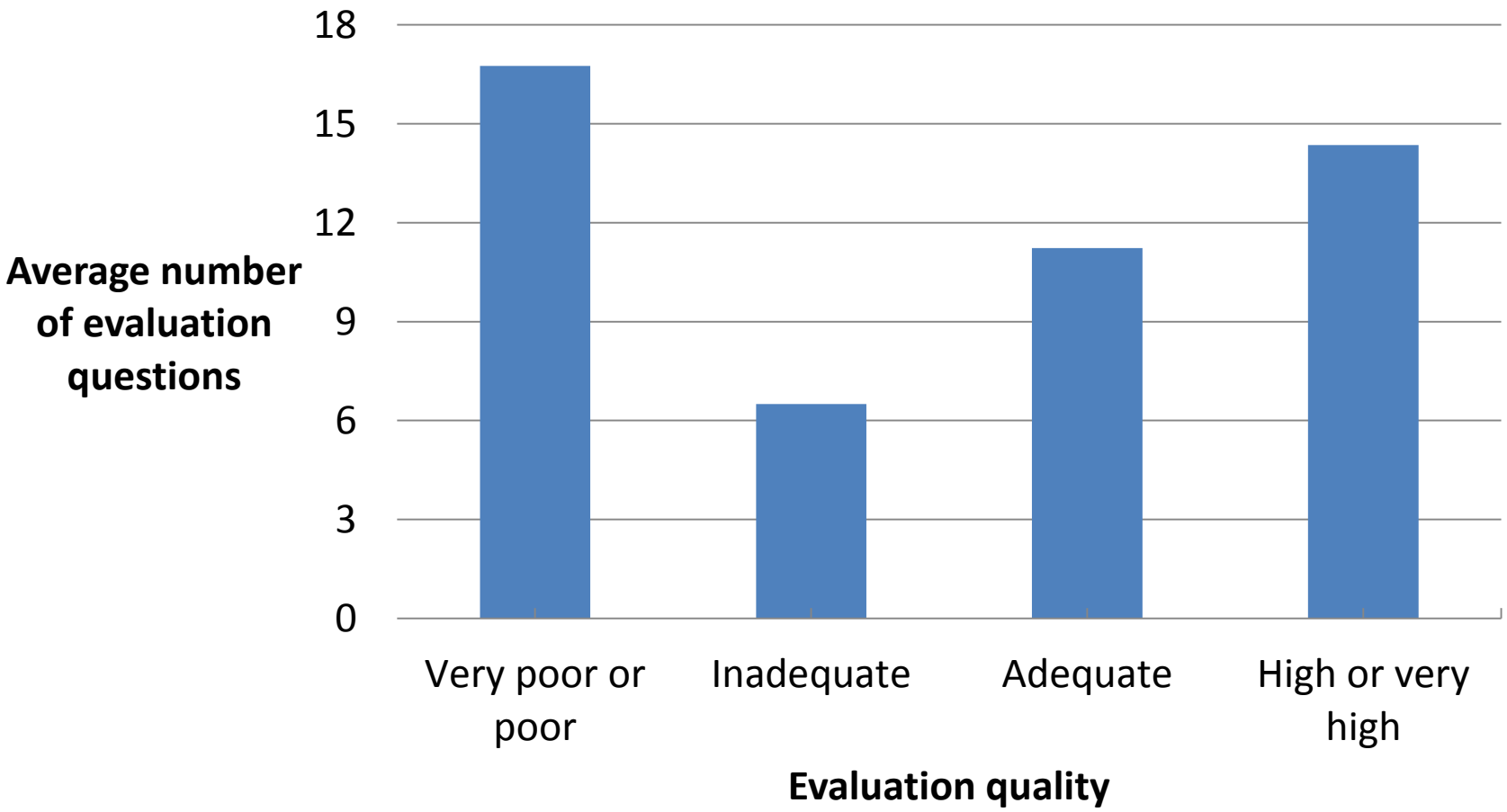


For evaluation quality, the key is ‘everything in moderation’



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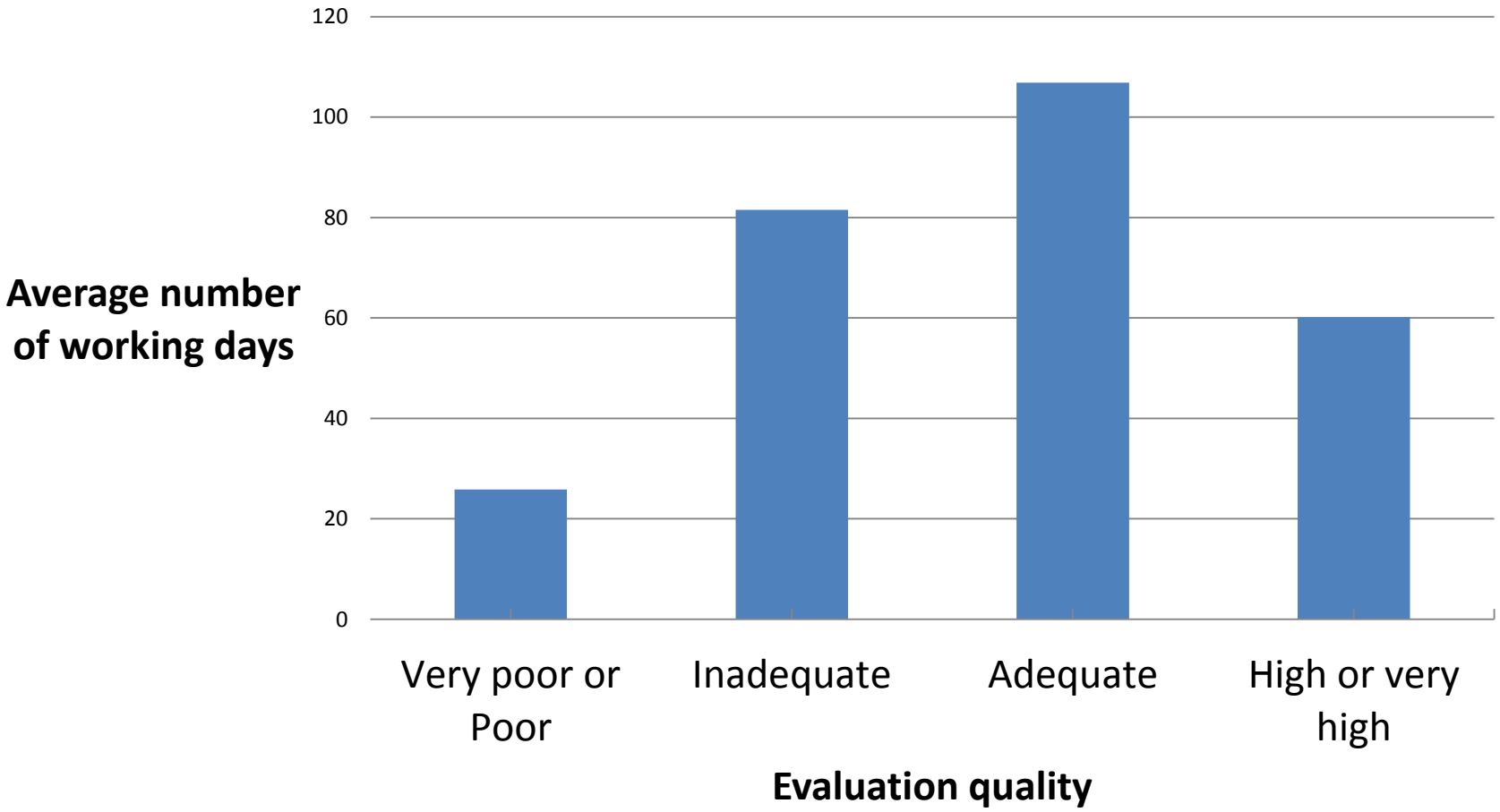

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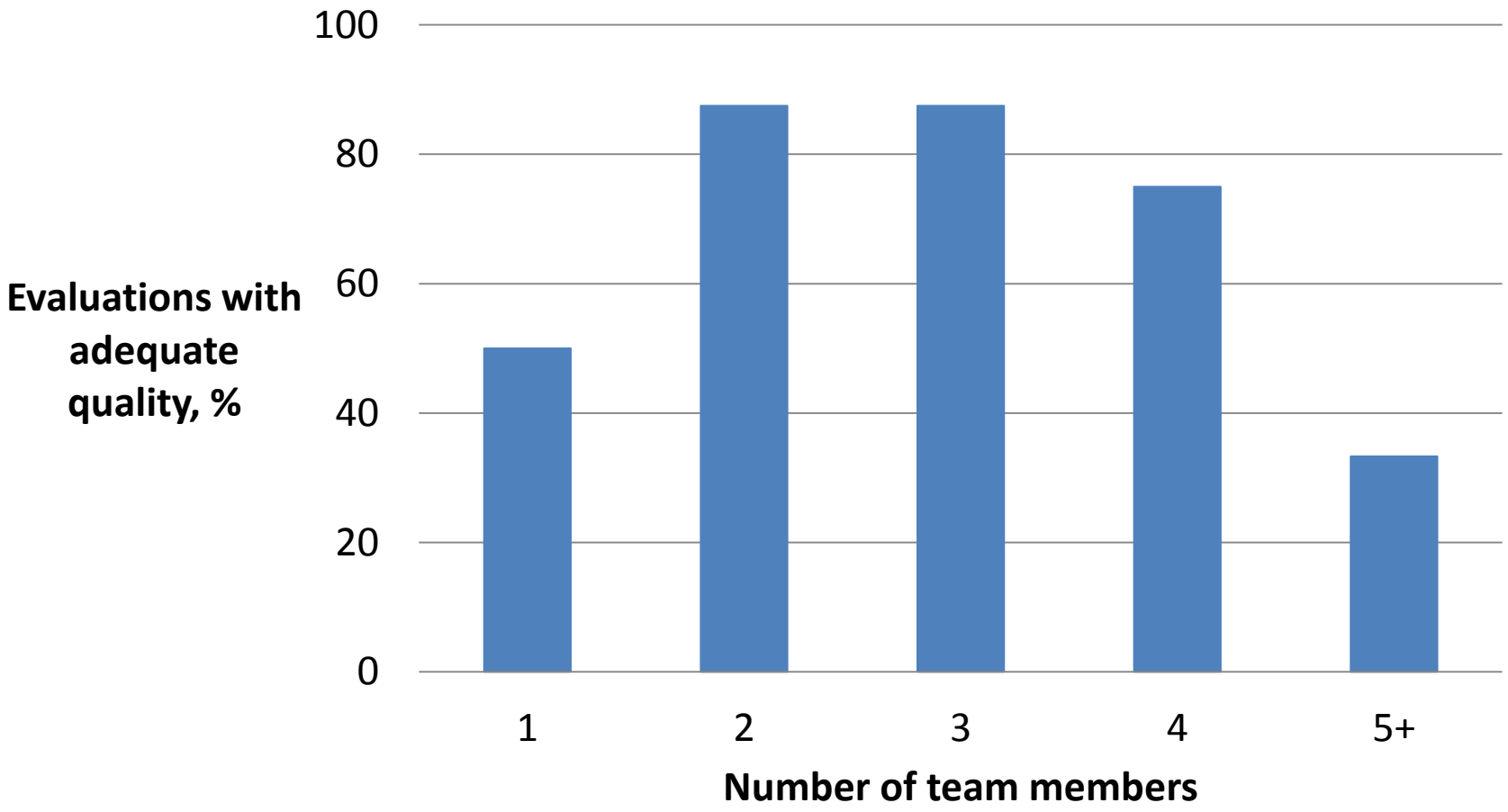

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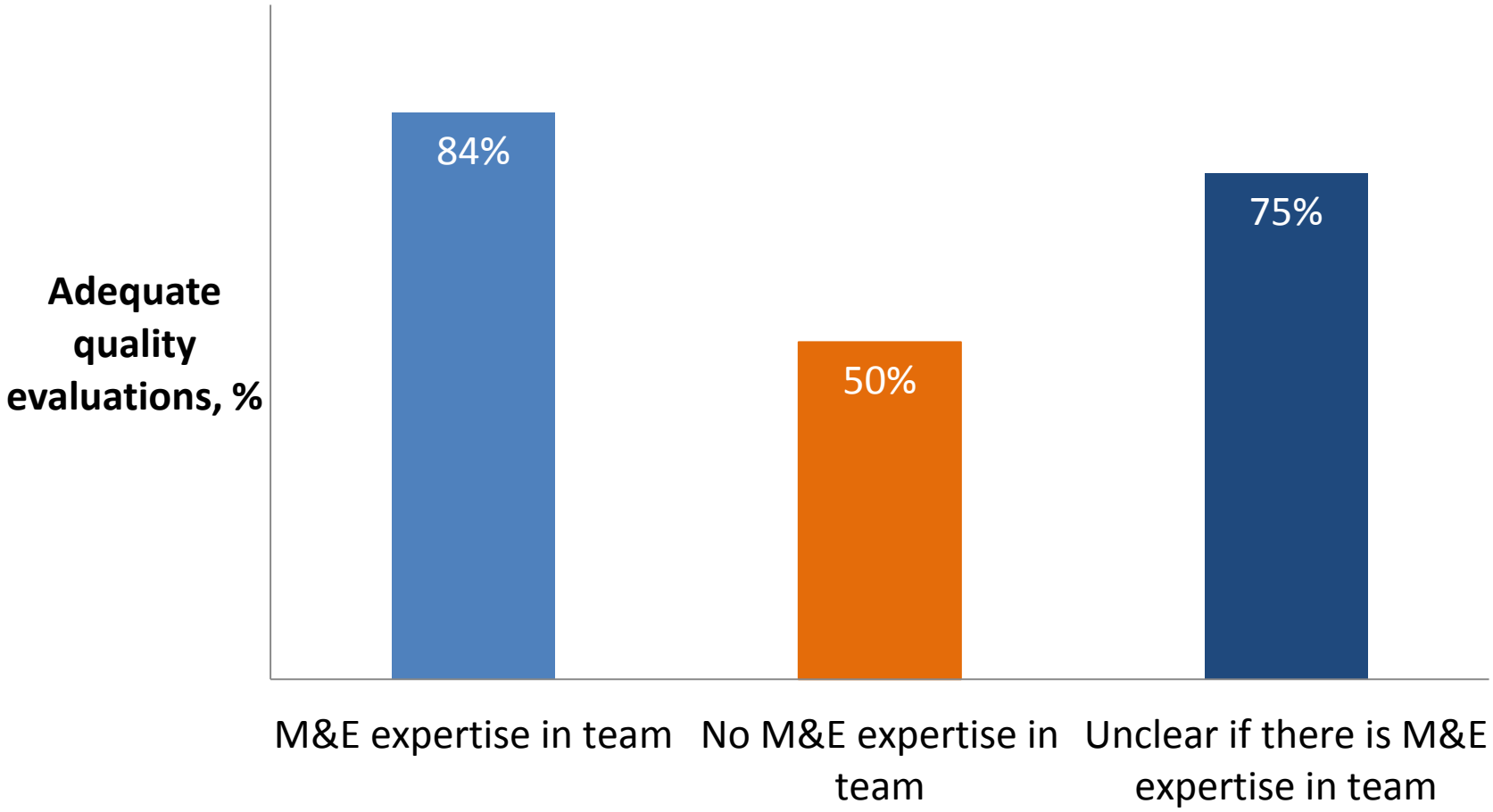

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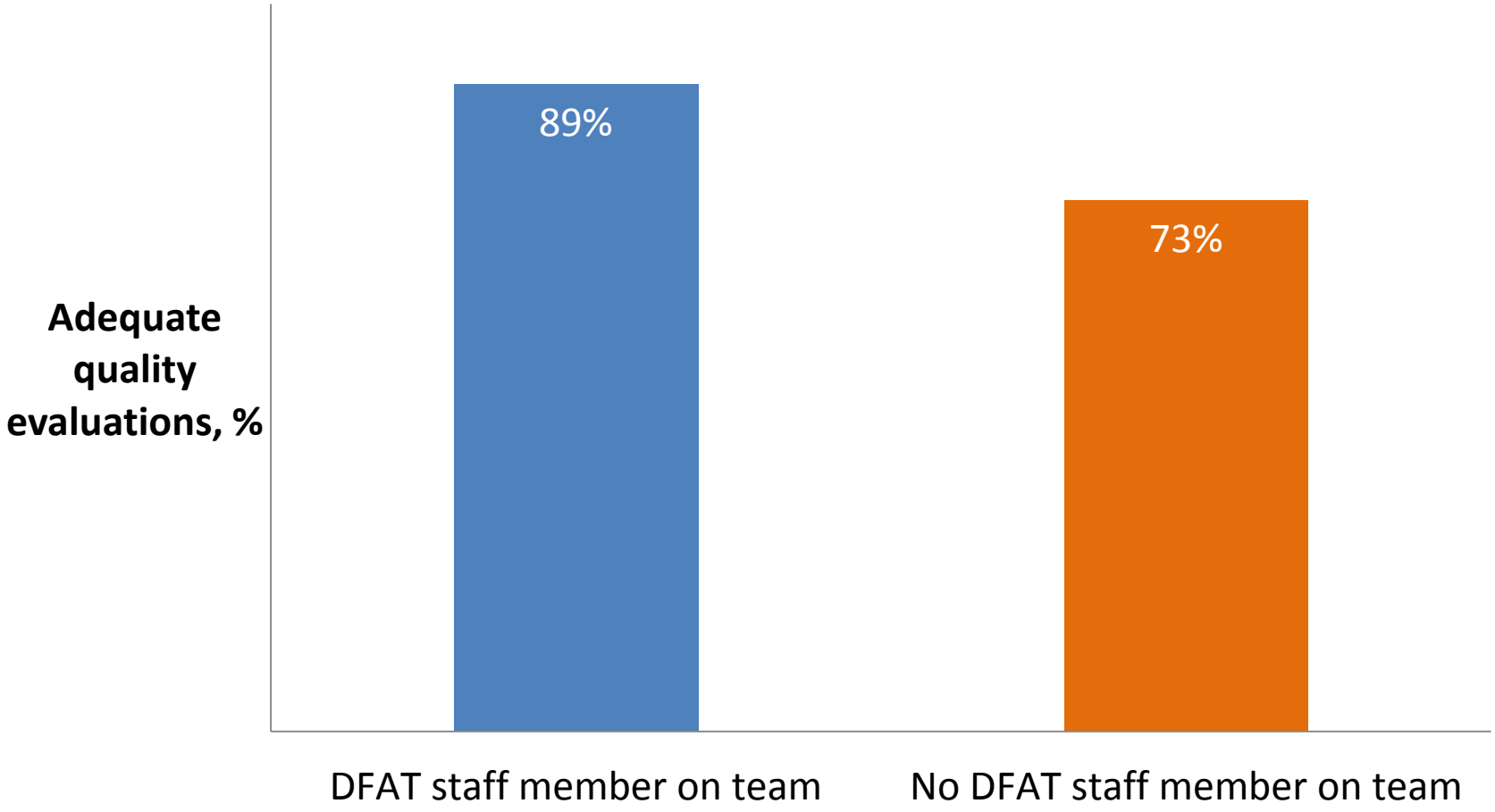
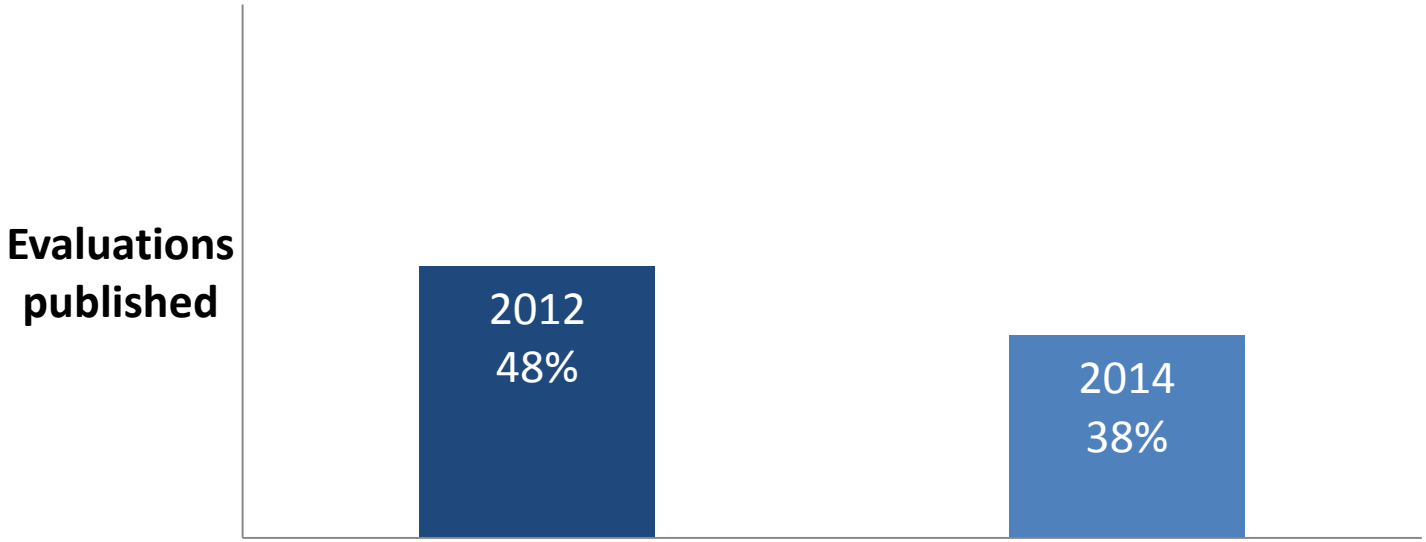


There are questions about how well operational evaluations are used

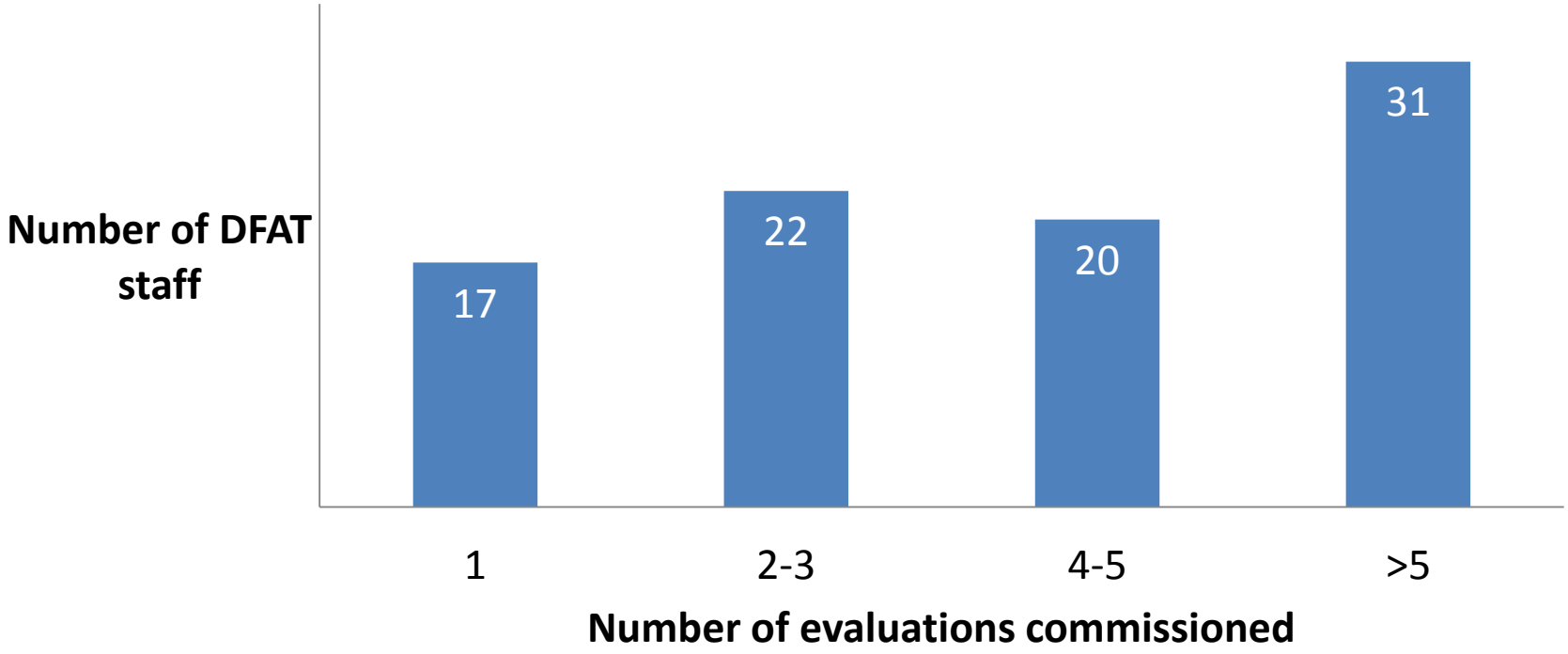
Able to locate 16 out of a possible 35 management responses



There are questions about how well operational evaluations are used

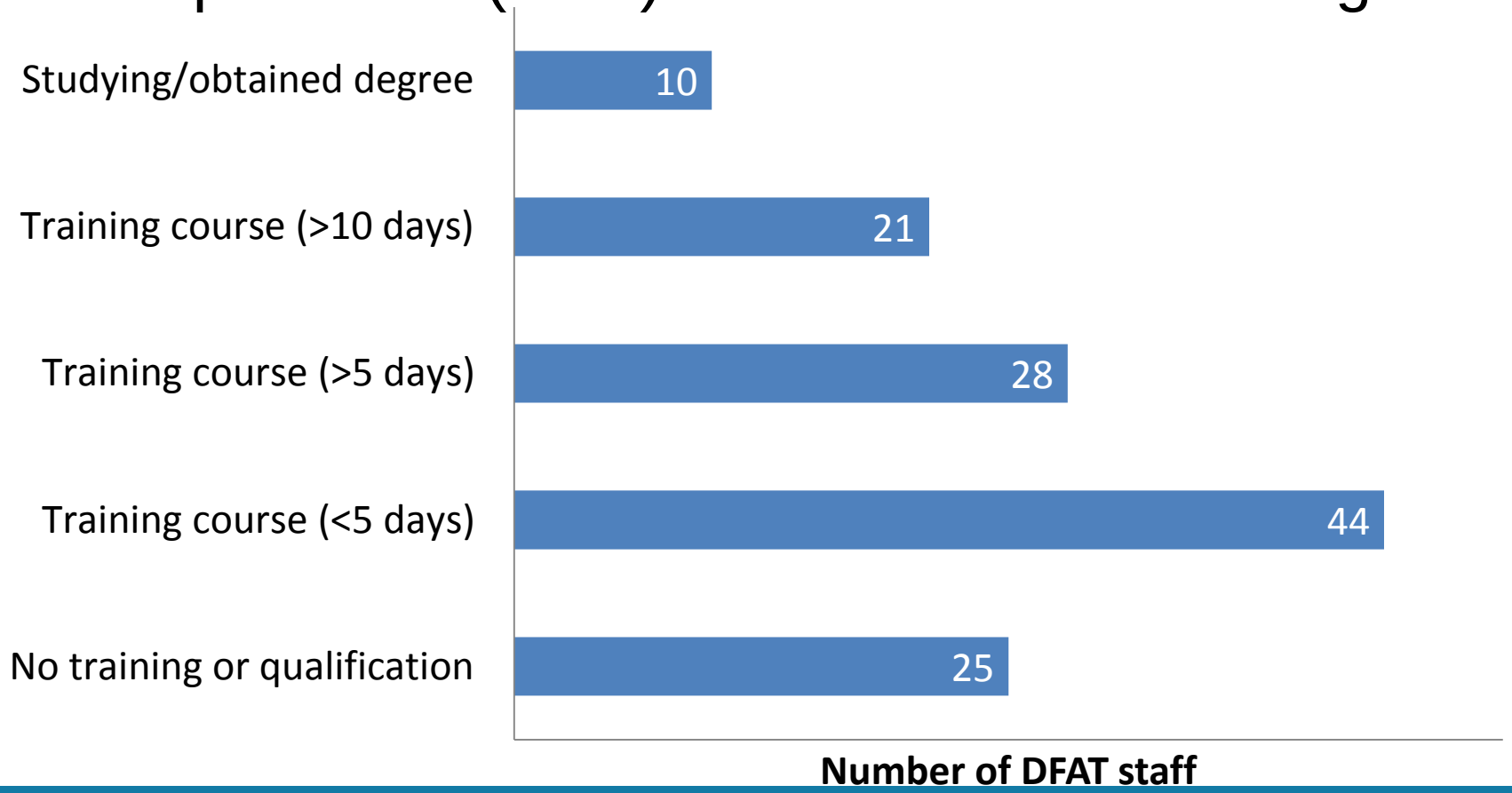
DFAT does not have sufficient capacity to conduct large numbers of evaluations in-house

- 90 respondents (80%) had commissioned an evaluation



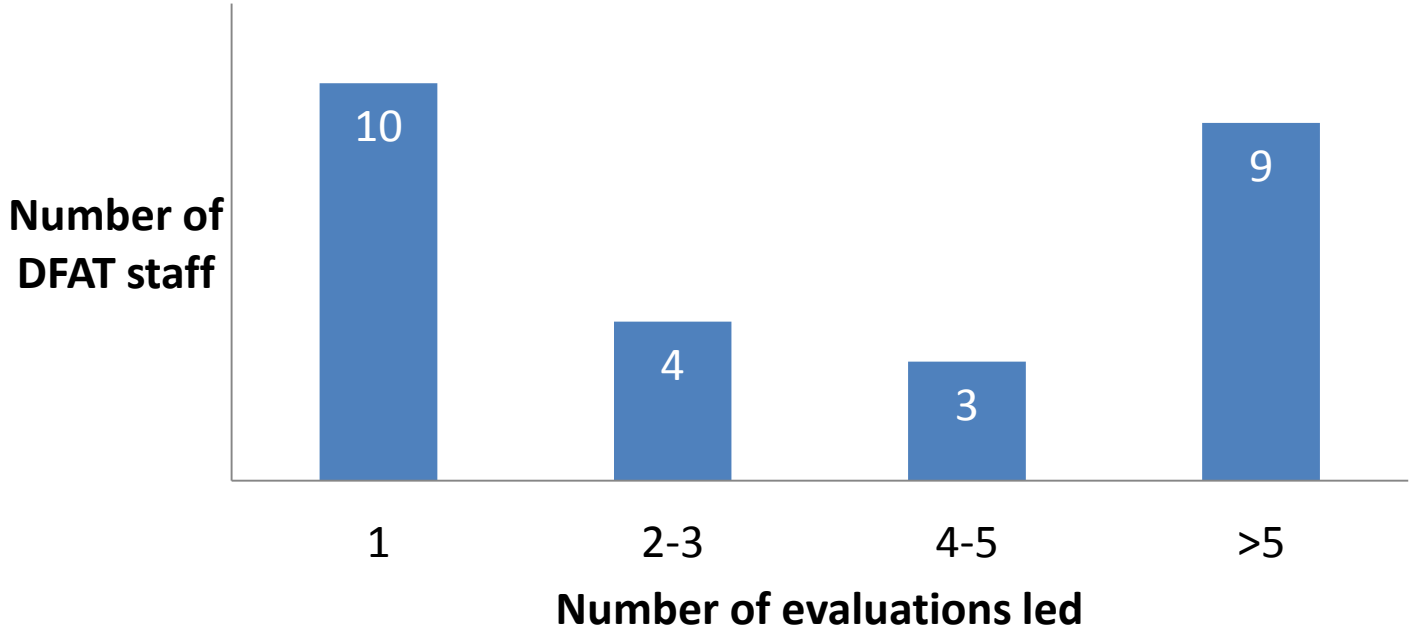
DFAT does not have sufficient capacity to conduct large numbers of evaluations to in-house

- 88 respondents (80%) have had some training



DFAT does not have sufficient capacity to conduct large numbers of evaluations in-house

- 57 respondents (50%) had played a substantive role in an evaluation team
- 26 respondents (23%) had led an evaluation team



Recommendations

1) DFAT's Executive has the opportunity to consider planned, completed and published evaluations. This should be provided through regular reporting from ODE

2) Senior managers (particularly SES Band 1) have direct involvement in deciding what is evaluated in their program, to ensure relevant and useful evaluations are conducted

Recommendations

3) DFAT staff are included on evaluation teams to the extent possible

4) The updated evaluation policy, and associated guidance and reporting, focuses on encouraging recommendations which are clear, relevant and feasible

Recommendations

- No management response
- IEC endorsed the recommendations
- ODE acting on recommendations in revision of evaluation policy

Learning from operational evaluations

- Good practice evaluation products – ODE website
  - Timor-Leste: Roads for development
  - Pacific division: Ending violence against women
  - Indonesia: Law and justice
  - Enterprise Challenge Fund Pilot Program
  - Africa program: Australia-Africa Community Engagement Scheme

Learning from operational evaluations

- Evaluation snapshots
  - Gender equality and working with the poorest: Laos Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement Program
  - Supporting the private sector: Enterprise Challenge Fund
  - The challenges of cascade training: Malaysia Australia Education Project for Afghanistan
  - Assessing value for money: Different methods from three operational evaluations
  - The perils of minimising costs: Regional HIV Capacity Building Program