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LIFE18 NAT/GR/000768

Improving human-bear coexistence in 4 National Parks of South Europe

Action D5 Follow-up surveys on the perception and behavior of the stakeholder groups

Final Report of Action D5

Τελική έκθεση δράσης D5

Rapporto finale dell'Azione D5

January 2025

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## SUMMARY

This report includes an initial section with a general overview of the main outcomes of Action D5 and two separate parts, one for Greece (Prespa National Park, Northern Pindos National Park, Rodopi Mountain Range National Park), and another one for Italy (Maiella National Park). The initial section will start with an overview of how the outcomes of the action addressed its objectives, with a concentration on the two main topics of Action D5, namely, participatory scenarios and the survey (questionnaires). The parts of the report devoted to each country will present a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis based on the main results of questionnaire data analysis, which will provide insight for the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM.

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Αυτή η έκθεση περιλαμβάνει μια αρχική ενότητα με μια γενική επισκόπηση των κύριων αποτελεσμάτων της Δράσης D5 και δύο ξεχωριστά μέρη, ένα για την Ελλάδα (Εθνικό Πάρκο Πρεσπών, Εθνικό Πάρκο Βόρειας Πίνδου, Εθνικό Πάρκο Οροσειράς Ροδόπης) και ένα άλλο για την Ιταλία (Εθνικό Maiella Πάρκο). Η αρχική ενότητα θα ξεκινήσει με μια επεξήγηση του τρόπου με τον οποίο τα αποτελέσματα της δράσης αντιμετώπισαν τους στόχους της, με επικέντρωση στα δύο κύρια θέματα της Δράσης D5, δηλαδή τα συμμετοχικά σενάρια και τα ερωτηματολόγια. Τα μέρη της έκθεσης που είναι αφιερωμένα σε κάθε χώρα θα παρουσιάζουν μια ανάλυση δυνατοτήτων, αδυναμιών, ευκαιριών και απειλών (SWOT) με βάση τα κύρια αποτελέσματα της ανάλυσης δεδομένων ερωτηματολογίου, η οποία θα παρέχει κατευθύνσεις για το σχέδιο After-LIFE του LIFE ARCPROM.

## SOMMARIO

Questo rapporto comprende una sezione iniziale con una panoramica generale dei principali risultati dell'Azione D5 e due parti separate, una per la Grecia (Parco Nazionale di Prespa, Parco Nazionale del Pindo Settentrionale, Parco Nazionale dei Monti Rodopi), e un'altra per l'Italia (Parco Nazionale della Maiella Parco). La sezione iniziale inizierà con una panoramica di come i risultati dell'azione hanno raggiunto i suoi obiettivi, concentrandosi sui due temi principali dell'Azione D5, vale a dire gli scenari partecipativi e l'indagine (questionari). Le parti del rapporto dedicate a ciascun paese presenteranno un'analisi dei punti di forza, di debolezza, delle opportunità e delle minacce basata sui principali risultati dell'analisi dei dati del questionario, che fornirà informazioni per il piano After-LIFE di LIFE ARCPROM.

## Introduction and rationale

Action D5 (Follow-up surveys on the perception and behaviour of the stakeholder groups) has been designed as a monitoring action for Action C1 (Stakeholder consultation and involvement). Its rationale was to provide additional input for participatory processes (platforms) established and operating in Action C1, so that these later processes and stakeholder interaction in platforms could remain on constructive pathways. Action D5 had a twofold objective and set of outcomes: First, to empower stakeholder in participatory scenario development so that they can adopt good practice in bear conservation and management based on available or attainable stakeholders input and resources. Second, to gather and analyze quantitative data by means of a survey (questionnaire), which would engage relatively large samples of participants on reflecting upon bear conservation and management as well as their interaction in participatory processes (platforms). Overall, the actions has achieved its objectives by offering a rich array of scenarios worked together with stakeholders and rich questionnaire data to reflect upon participatory processes and their added value. In that regard, stakeholders were able to weigh alternatives and consider exploiting the full potential that was available in each context for adopting good practice in bear conservation and management.

## Participatory scenario development

A participatory scenario development procedure was implemented in order to provide a mechanism for monitoring the adoption of good practice in bear conservation and management in each national park (see D5.1 Scenarios for stakeholder involvement in adoption of good practice). Across parks, “business-as-usual” scenarios described futures as baseline conditions, projecting current conditions to the future without any improvement towards adopting good practice in bear conservation and management. “Small-effort” scenarios were displayed to demarcate a clear departure from business-as-usual and present an improvement over baseline conditions. “Best-case” scenarios were formulated to portray ideal developments and improvements in each park. Although such developments may not have been readily attainable in each park, they nevertheless provided insight for further improvement in case “small-effort” scenarios were achieved. Scenarios involved different topics, for instance, of human safety (topics: Bear Emergency Teams; bears approaching human settlements; waste management systems; traffic accidents in the regional road network), damage prevention methods and compensation of damage caused by bears (topics: electric fences; livestock guarding dogs; illegal poisoned baits; compensation of local producers from damage caused by bears) and developmental options (topics: certification of bear-friendly products/services; development of bear tourism). All these scenarios provided guidance and scaffolded stakeholder interaction in platform and participatory processes during the course of the project.

## Questionnaires

Two different questionnaires were developed and administered to participants in platforms (one Greek, one Italian questionnaire; see D5.2 Questionnaire for monitoring stakeholder perceptions and behaviour). The main aim was to obtain quantitative measures for stakeholder perceptions and behavior. Data collection was combined with workshops held in the frame of Action C1 in order to facilitate participant contribution. The total number of questionnaires gather and analyzed was 1111 (904 in the three Greek National Parks; 207 in Maiella National Park) (see D5.3 Questionnaire data analyzed). Qualitative questionnaire data provided opportunities to explore trends with each park as well as similarities and differences between parks. In Greek National Parks, questionnaire data highlighted the platforms’ value in enhancing stakeholder dialogue and enabling collective action. Several issues were also determined for strengthening participatory processes, for instance,

addressing structural barriers, promoting inclusivity, and further enhancing opportunities for practical on-the-ground action. In Maiella National Park, the main outcomes were an improvement in respondents' knowledge, the fact that the park was considered a reliable source of knowledge for bears in the area, as well as the fact that working methods in the platform were appreciated by participants.

## **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis informed by questionnaire data**

In this final report of Action D5, we present a processing of questionnaire data gathered and analyzed in each country, in order to perform an adapted Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. Our adapted SWOT Analysis outlines specific ingroup items (pertaining to each key stakeholder group) and intergroup items (referring to relationships between key stakeholder groups), which would prove crucial for bear conservation and management, especially, the transfer of good practice as well as agreement between stakeholders. The aim is to arrive at detailed outcomes and recommendations for key stakeholder groups and inform the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM.



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Improving human-bear coexistence in 4 National Parks of South Europe

Action D5 Follow-up surveys on the perception and behaviour of the stakeholder groups

**Final Report of Action D5 for the Greek National Parks**

**Rapporto finale dell'Azione D5 per i Parchi Nazionali Greci**

**Τελική έκθεση δράσης D5 για τα Εθνικά Πάρκα στην Ελλάδα**

December 2024



**20 ΧΡΟΝΙΑ  
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## SUMMARY

This report presents a processing of questionnaire data gathered and analyzed in the three Greek National Parks in the frame of Action D5 of LIFE ARCPORM, in order to perform an adapted Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. The adapted SWOT Analysis outlines specific ingroup items (pertaining to each key stakeholder group) and intergroup items (referring to relationships between key stakeholder groups), which would prove crucial for bear conservation and management, especially, the transfer of good practice as well as agreement between stakeholders. The aim is to arrive at detailed outcomes and recommendations for key stakeholder groups and inform the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM.

## SOMMARIO

Questo rapporto presenta un'elaborazione dei dati del questionario raccolti e analizzati nei tre parchi nazionali greci nel quadro dell'Azione D5 di LIFE ARCPORM, al fine di eseguire un'analisi adattata dei punti di forza, delle debolezze, delle opportunità e delle minacce (SWOT). L'analisi SWOT adattata delinea elementi specifici all'interno del gruppo (pertinenti a ciascun gruppo di stakeholder chiave) ed elementi intergruppo (riferendosi alle relazioni tra i gruppi di stakeholder chiave), che si rivelerebbero cruciali per la conservazione e la gestione dell'orso, in particolare il trasferimento di buone pratiche e accordi tra le parti interessate. L'obiettivo è arrivare a risultati e raccomandazioni dettagliati per gruppo di stakeholder chiave e informare il piano After-LIFE di LIFE ARCPROM.

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η παρούσα αναφορά περιλαμβάνει μια επεξεργασία δεδομένων ερωτηματολογίου που συγκεντρώθηκαν και αναλύθηκαν στα τρία Ελληνικά Εθνικά Πάρκα στο πλαίσιο της Δράσης Δ5 του LIFE ARCPORM, προκειμένου να πραγματοποιηθεί μια προσαρμοσμένη Ανάλυση Δυνάμεων, Αδυναμιών, Ευκαιριών και Απειλών (SWOT). Η προσαρμοσμένη αυτή ανάλυση σκιαγραφεί συγκεκριμένα ενδοομαδικά στοιχεία (που αφορούν κάθε ομάδα βασικών ενδιαφερομένων μερών) και διομαδικά στοιχεία (αναφέρονται στις σχέσεις μεταξύ των βασικών ομάδων ενδιαφερομένων μερών), τα οποία θα αποδεικνύονταν ζωτικής σημασίας για τη διατήρηση και τη διαχείριση της αρκούδας, ιδίως για τη μεταφορά καλών πρακτικών καθώς και τη συμφωνία μεταξύ των ενδιαφερομένων μερών. Ο στόχος είναι να καταλήξουμε σε λεπτομερή αποτελέσματα και συστάσεις για κάθε ομάδα βασικών ενδιαφερομένων μερών και να τροφοδοτήσουμε με τα αποτελέσματα αυτά το σχέδιο After-LIFE του LIFE ARCPROM.

## Chapter 1: Rationale and methodology of the Report

The final report for the Action D5 (Follow-up surveys on the perception and behavior of the stakeholder groups) in the three Greek National Parks (Northern Pindos National Park, Prespa National Park, Rodopi Mountain Range National Park) was based on the questionnaire data, which have been gathered and analyzed in this action, and which were closely related to Action C1 in terms of data collection (Stakeholder consultation and involvement). A first presentation of the main results of data analysis has already been given in another deliverable of Action D5 (Bormpoudakis et al., 2024; Questionnaire data analyzed-Greek National Parks). Our rationale in this final report is to focus on the most important outcomes and trends for selected stakeholder groups, give a synopsis of such findings, and inform the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM accordingly.

The methodology we followed has been used in a deliverable of Action C1 of LIFE ARCPROM (Hovardas, 2021a) and builds on an adapted template of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, which has been widely used in human dimension actions in LIFE projects (Hovardas, 2018, 2020, 2021b).

SWOT analysis has been frequently employed for documenting prospects and barriers for organizations to develop. Aspects of that kind may refer to internal characteristics of an organization or to features of its environment. In this typical usage, “Strengths” denote internal aspects, which would favor the future development of the organization, “Weaknesses” correspond to internal aspects, which would hinder development, “Opportunities” stand for environmental aspects, which would foster development, and “Threats” refer to environmental aspects, which would compromise the development of the organization under analysis.

In our adapted use of the SWOT template, we assume that key stakeholder groups may display some characteristics, which pertain to each group separately (ingroup aspects) and that there may also be aspects in the interrelationship between stakeholder groups (intergroup aspects), which can prove decisive for accomplishing an objective. The main objective in LIFE ARCPROM with a concentration on Actions C1 and D5 is the promotion of good practices and stakeholder agreement for bear conservation and management. Questionnaire data gathered in the three National Parks in Greece have revealed both ingroup and intergroup aspects of key stakeholder groups, which would be instrumental for either facilitating bear conservation and management or making it difficult. In this adapted arrangement with reference to stakeholder groups, “Strengths” and “Weaknesses” would be ingroup aspects favoring or hindering bear conservation and management, respectively, while “Opportunities” and “Threats” would comprise intergroup aspects (aspects related to stakeholder interaction), once again, promoting or blocking bear conservation and management, respectively.

The stakeholder groups we selected for the SWOT analysis are: Primary sector producers (livestock breeders and famers) and beekeepers, who suffer most damages caused by bears and may benefit from the implementation of damage prevention methods and other initiatives like the certification of bear-friendly products and services; other residents in the National Parks, who participated in Platforms and Workshops organized in Action C1 (Stakeholder consultation and involvement) and represent the majority of the local population; employees of the Natural Environment Climate & Change Agency (NECCA) who are responsible for operationalizing bear conservation and management in each National Park; and entrepreneurs and employees in the tourism sector, who may gain from any enrichment of the tourist product of National Parks based on bear presence.

In the next chapter we present the adapted SWOT template as we described it above, singling out specific results of the questionnaire data analysis of Bormpoudakis et al. (2024). These results and the framing which will follow will be insightful for the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM and for the sustainability of participatory processes in the three Greek National Parks. Specifically, any initiatives planned for the future should capitalize on “Strengths” and “Opportunities”, while addressing the adverse impact of “Weaknesses” and “Threats”.

## Chapter 2: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The adapted SWOT Analysis is presented in Table 1. Primary producers and beekeepers both perceived that human-bear conflict was increasing (“Weaknesses”), and that stakeholder conflict was also increasing in time (“Threats”). These two groups suffer most bear damages and are expected to voice their concerns in participatory processes and any other occasion, which seem to address both human-bear conflict as well as related stakeholder conflict. On top of these items, primary producers were rather pessimistic about Platform dynamics as compared to other stakeholder groups, especially, in terms of participants honouring agreements and attitude change referring to both bear attitudes and intergroup attitudes (“Weaknesses”). A last “Weakness” identified for primary producers is that they believed that Platform operation may itself introduce stakeholder conflict. This item highlights the dynamic of participatory processes and, moreover, underscores the importance of professional facilitation as a core ingredient of Platform operation. The latter concern, that Platforms were likely to introduce stakeholder conflict, was shared by other residents (“Weaknesses”).

Although primary producers and beekeepers held the above-mentioned reservations for Platform operation, they both seemed to acknowledge some merit for participatory processes as well. Indeed, primary producers believed that stakeholder interaction in Platforms can influence wider stakeholder interaction, which was also shared as a “Strength” by entrepreneurs and employees in the tourism sector. This would mean that Platform developments would not just be confined to the process itself but could diffuse in the wider region. Beekeepers were relatively optimistic with regard to Platform operation (participants honoring agreements; prospects for attitude change in terms of bear attitudes and intergroup attitudes). Such optimism was also echoed by other residents. Being at the same time optimistic about participatory processes and holding concerns about their dynamics and outcomes may seem contradictory at a first glance. However, it certainly denotes the multiplicity and heterogeneity of motives and incentives of stakeholders taking part in these processes.

A series of quite encouraging items for participatory processes featured in “Opportunities” for all stakeholder groups, delineating the potential of collaboration. Primary producers and employees of the Natural Environment Climate & Change Agency (NECCA) had highest percentages of good working relations with all other stakeholders and were trusted the most. This is crucial for any joint action to be planned and pursued on the ground, since primary producers are the ones to suffer most damage from bears and NECCA employees the ones to implement locally national policy on bear conservation and management. Other residents and participants engaged in the tourism sector presented a quite balanced preference of working with stakeholder groups and trust, which once again signifies the potential for collaboration. Decreasing ingroup favoritism for primary producers is also pointing towards the same direction, because it means that primary producers were gradually more willing to work together and trust other stakeholders as well apart from members of their own group.

All stakeholder groups selected for the adapted SWOT Analysis underlined the need for more action leading to tangible outcomes (“Threats”; lack of common and practical). On the one hand, this may indicate the limited potential for concluding cycles of planning, initiation of action and reflection upon its outcomes within the time frame of LIFE ARCPROM. On the other, it may also reveal the challenges in stakeholders agreeing to launch initiatives where they will work together towards achieving shared goals. Whatever the reasons for limited action, this “Threat” may quite paradoxically also imply that stakeholders would like such action to be planned and pursued locally. This is an indication of another contradictory set of findings, where “Weaknesses” or “Threats” may go along with expectations and prospects provided that stakeholder interaction is steered constructively. A last finding showcasing contradictions in stakeholder perceptions was that NECCA employees seemed to value Platforms for information credibility, reducing human-bear conflict, and local expectations, however, these items fluctuated considerable in time for this stakeholder group. Fluctuation of positions reflects that these are not stable but quite context- and time-dependent.

Table 1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis for key stakeholder groups

	Primary producers (livestock breeders and farmers)	Beekeepers	Resident-other	Employees of the Natural Environment Climate & Change Agency (NECCA)	Entrepreneurs and employees in the tourism sector
Strengths [ingroup aspects favoring (good practice in/agreement for) bear conservation and management]	Believed that stakeholder interaction in the Platform can influence wider stakeholder interaction	Optimistic about platform dynamics	Optimistic about platform dynamics	Valued Platforms for information credibility, reducing human-bear conflict, and local expectations	Believed that stakeholder interaction in the Platform can influence wider stakeholder interaction
Weaknesses [ingroup aspects hindering (good practice in/agreement for) bear conservation and management]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived human-bear conflict increasing</li> <li>• Pessimistic about platform dynamics</li> <li>• Concerns that Platforms may introduce stakeholder conflict</li> </ul>	Perceived human-bear conflict increasing	Concerns that Platforms may introduce stakeholder conflict	Considerable fluctuation of perceived Platform outcomes and weaknesses	Peripheral role in stakeholder interaction
Opportunities [intergroup aspects favoring (good practice in/agreement for) bear conservation and management]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quite high percentages of good working relations and trust</li> <li>• Decreasing ingroup favoritism</li> </ul>	Preference of working with and trusting primary producers	Balanced preference of working with stakeholder groups and trust	Quite high percentages of good working relations and trust	Balanced preference of working with stakeholder groups and trust
Threats [inter-group aspects hindering (good practice in/agreement for) bear conservation and management]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing time trend of stakeholder conflict</li> <li>• Lack of common and practical action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing time trend of stakeholder conflict</li> <li>• Challenging intergroup collaboration</li> <li>• Persistent trust deficit</li> <li>• Lack of common and practical action</li> </ul>	Lack of common and practical action	Lack of common and practical action	Lack of common and practical action

Note: The content of the table includes main outcomes of questionnaire data (N=904) analyzed for the three Greek National Parks (Bormpoudakis, D., Hovardas, T., Chatzinakos, G. Questionnaire data analyzed-Greek National Parks. Deliverable of Action D5, LIFE18 NAT/GR/768 ARCPROM. December 2024).

## Chapter 3: Implications for the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM

The adapted SWOT Analysis we presented, which was based on questionnaire data collected from the three Greek National Parks, revealed a series of items for key stakeholder groups, which need to be taken into account for informing the After-LIFE plan of LIFE ARCPROM. For instance, primary producers (livestock breeders and farmers) and beekeepers, who suffer most damage caused by bears, were the stakeholder groups with the most diverse positioning. This was expressed mainly in the number of bullet points in Table 1 under “Weaknesses” for primary producers (ingroup aspects which may hinder bear conservation and management) and “Threats” for beekeepers (intergroup aspects which may hinder bear conservation and management). The above considerations indicate that any follow up action oriented towards participatory processes and stakeholder engagement needs to delve deeper into ingroup reservations for primary producers and intergroup reservations for beekeepers.

That being said, the positioning of most stakeholder groups included in the SWOT Analysis towards Platform operation and outcomes was quite contradictory, showcasing both the potential of participatory processes for stakeholder co-creation of solutions as well as the possible pitfalls that may be encountered when implementing such processes. Perceived dynamics seemed to be, overall, supportive for stakeholder participation but noted either persisting human-bear and stakeholder conflict, limited potential to influence participant attitudes or even the possibility of participatory processes themselves introducing conflict as major items to consider. These items should problematize Platform establishment and operation in new contexts and provide insight for the continuation of participatory processes in the three Greek National Parks. Furthermore, they imply that professional facilitation should be secured to coordinate and monitor the processes and guide stakeholder interaction towards constructive trajectories.

A common denominator across stakeholder groups when elaborating on intergroup aspects disfavoured bear conservation and management was lack of common and practical action. With this positioning, stakeholder groups would most probably like to highlight that they were not able to observe much action of this kind during LIFE ARCPROM. This can be attributed to either lack of common ground and commitment of stakeholders to launch such action or to the fact that the time frame of LIFE ARCPROM may not have been large enough to enable the conclusion of a full cycle starting from planning of joint stakeholder action, moving to implementation and then to reflection and evaluation of its outcomes. We would like to suggest that these considerations on common and practical actions with tangible outcomes on the ground should orient any future participatory processes in the three Greek National Parks. New goals and objectives of stakeholder collaboration should be a primary focus on any novel effort to work on the scoping of Platforms and stakeholder participation and of the ongoing facilitation of such processes.

To this end, the process of participatory scenario development, which was followed in the interface of Actions C1 and D5 of LIFE ARCPROM (Hovardas, 2021c), needs to be closer monitored and reflected upon, as well as updated, anytime stakeholders need to reconsider and redirect their interaction towards more realistic options. In this case, small-wins should be planned based on small effort scenarios (improvement over baseline conditions based on minimal stakeholder input; see Hovardas, 2021c), where participants have to be cognizant of what can be achieved within available time-frames. Provided that small-wins are possible and can be timely accomplished, participants may expect a positive feedback loop to develop, where tangible outcomes from participatory processes would catalyse improvement of working relations and trust building between key stakeholder groups and then allow new incentives to emerge for planning of future stakeholder action.

Social experimentation with damage prevention and human safety actions (e.g. designing and implementing bear-proof garbage containers/bins) should be combined with innovation in terms of developmental opportunities based on bear presence like certification of bear-friendly products and services. This synergy would deliver a more balanced portfolio of actions, where damage prevention is accompanied by projects aiming to support local income. In this regard, a tighter involvement of stakeholder groups with peripheral contribution, especially, those who may provide access to new stakeholder networks and funding opportunities, may expand the scope and horizon of stakeholder interaction.

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# LIFE ARCPROM



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## LIFE18 NAT/GR/000768

Improving human-bear coexistence in 4 National Parks of South Europe

### Final Report of Action D5

### Resoconto finale dell'Azione D5

### Τελική έκθεση δράσης D5



December 2024





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## SUMMARY

Action D5 of the LIFE ARCPROM project focused on administering questionnaires to stakeholders to assess their perceptions and behaviours regarding coexistence with the Apennine brown bear, as well as to evaluate changes over the project's duration. Conducted in Italy and Greece, this action faced distinct challenges in each context, including the need to adapt questionnaire strategies due to differing social environments and timelines. In Maiella National Park (MNP) in Italy, the first platform was established in 2021, whereas in Greece this task experienced delays due to COVID-19 that impacted the drafting of D5 questionnaires. For this reason, rather than following a longitudinal approach with yearly comparisons, in MNP the study adopted a beginning-to-end methodology to evaluate changes.

Questionnaires dissemination occurred through multiple methods, including platform meetings, workshops in the Park villages, and social media. The first phase of data collection in 2022 garnered 70 responses, predominantly from Park residents, over half of whom were women aged 30–60. Initial findings indicated strong support for the bear's presence (91% were happy to coexist with bears), though gaps in knowledge were apparent. Critical issues identified included insufficient information on bear behaviour, improper handling of waste, and limited exposure to educational events. Stakeholders largely relied on the Park and other trusted entities for reliable information. Workshops and local meetings were viewed as crucial tools for raising awareness and fostering collaboration, with over 83% of respondents rating them positively.

The 2024 phase expanded the sample to 137 responses, reflecting increased participation from both residents and tourists. Although the demographic composition remained consistent, with over 50% women and a majority aged 30–60, responses showed a growing confidence in bear-related knowledge, with 35% rating their understanding as good or excellent. Interestingly, younger respondents continued to report lower levels of knowledge. The perception of the challenges to promote coexistence remained consistent, with unattended food sources and lack of information about bears identified as primary concerns. Trust in the Park as a reliable source of information remained strong (83%), followed by environmental organizations and control bodies.

The Stakeholder Platform played a central role in fostering collaboration and problem-solving. Initial hesitation from participants unfamiliar with participatory mechanisms evolved into a positive working climate, with 100% satisfaction reported by the end of the project. Stakeholders valued the platform for identifying actionable solutions, enhancing knowledge, and establishing new collaborative relationships.

Overall, the results from both phases of the questionnaire underscored a high level of social acceptance for the Apennine brown bear. Critical coexistence issues were limited to a minority of the population, aligning with the positive feedback gathered through platform activities under Action C1. Workshops, educational efforts with WWF Italy, and stakeholder engagement significantly improved local and tourist awareness of bear-related topics.

In conclusion, Action D5 revealed that the LIFE ARCPROM project effectively aligned with community and stakeholder needs, reducing complexities in planning coexistence-promoting initiatives. The consistency between stakeholder perspectives and community attitudes reflects a favourable social environment for coexistence. The project not only demonstrated its capacity to meet immediate challenges but also provided a robust framework for future activities, ensuring the continuity of efforts to support coexistence between humans and the Apennine brown bear.

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η Δράση D5 του έργου LIFE ARCPROM επικεντρώθηκε στη χορήγηση ερωτηματολογίων σε ενδιαφερόμενους φορείς για την αξιολόγηση των αντιλήψεων και των συμπεριφορών τους σχετικά με τη συνύπαρξη με την καφέ αρκούδα των Απέννινων, καθώς και για την εκτίμηση των αλλαγών κατά τη διάρκεια του έργου. Πραγματοποιημένη στην Ιταλία και την Ελλάδα, αυτή η δράση αντιμετώπισε διαφορετικές προκλήσεις σε κάθε πλαίσιο, όπως η ανάγκη προσαρμογής των στρατηγικών των ερωτηματολογίων λόγω διαφορετικών κοινωνικών περιβαλλόντων και χρονοδιαγραμμάτων. Στο Εθνικό

Πάρκο Maiella (MNP) στην Ιταλία, η πρώτη πλατφόρμα δημιουργήθηκε το 2021, ενώ στην Ελλάδα η υλοποίηση αυτής της δράσης καθυστέρησε λόγω COVID-19, επηρεάζοντας τη σύνταξη των ερωτηματολογίων της Δράσης D5. Για αυτόν τον λόγο, αντί να ακολουθηθεί μια διαχρονική προσέγγιση με ετήσιες συγκρίσεις, στο MNP υιοθετήθηκε μια μεθοδολογία από την αρχή έως το τέλος για την αξιολόγηση των αλλαγών.

Η διάδοση των ερωτηματολογίων έγινε με διάφορες μεθόδους, όπως συναντήσεις της πλατφόρμας, εργαστήρια στα χωριά του Πάρκου και μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης. Η πρώτη φάση συλλογής δεδομένων το 2022 συγκέντρωσε 70 απαντήσεις, κυρίως από κατοίκους του Πάρκου, εκ των οποίων πάνω από το ήμισυ ήταν γυναίκες ηλικίας 30–60 ετών. Τα αρχικά ευρήματα έδειξαν ισχυρή υποστήριξη για την παρουσία της αρκούδας (91% ήταν χαρούμενοι να συνυπάρχουν με αρκούδες), αν και υπήρχαν εμφανείς ελλείψεις στις γνώσεις. Κρίσιμα ζητήματα που εντοπίστηκαν περιλάμβαναν ανεπαρκή πληροφόρηση για τη συμπεριφορά της αρκούδας, ακατάλληλο χειρισμό απορριμμάτων και περιορισμένη συμμετοχή σε εκπαιδευτικές δραστηριότητες. Οι ενδιαφερόμενοι βασιζόνταν σε μεγάλο βαθμό στο Πάρκο και σε άλλους αξιόπιστους φορείς για αξιόπιστες πληροφορίες. Τα εργαστήρια και οι τοπικές συναντήσεις θεωρήθηκαν κρίσιμα εργαλεία για την ευαισθητοποίηση και την προώθηση της συνεργασίας, με πάνω από το 83% των συμμετεχόντων να τα αξιολογούν θετικά.

Η φάση του 2024 διεύρυνε το δείγμα σε 137 απαντήσεις, αντικατοπτρίζοντας αυξημένη συμμετοχή τόσο από κατοίκους όσο και από τουρίστες. Παρόλο που η δημογραφική σύνθεση παρέμεινε συνεπής, με πάνω από το 50% γυναίκες και την πλειονότητα ηλικίας 30–60 ετών, οι απαντήσεις έδειξαν αυξανόμενη εμπιστοσύνη στις γνώσεις που σχετίζονται με τις αρκούδες, με το 35% να αξιολογεί την κατανόησή του ως καλή ή εξαιρετική. Ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζει το γεγονός ότι οι νεότεροι συμμετέχοντες συνέχισαν να αναφέρουν χαμηλότερα επίπεδα γνώσεων. Η αντίληψη των προκλήσεων για την προώθηση της συνύπαρξης παρέμεινε συνεπής, με τις ανεπιτήρητες πηγές τροφής και την έλλειψη πληροφόρησης για τις αρκούδες να εντοπίζονται ως κύρια ζητήματα. Η εμπιστοσύνη στο Πάρκο ως αξιόπιστη πηγή πληροφοριών παρέμεινε ισχυρή (83%), ακολουθούμενη από περιβαλλοντικές οργανώσεις και ελεγκτικούς φορείς.

Η Πλατφόρμα των Ενδιαφερόμενων Φορέων διαδραμάτισε κεντρικό ρόλο στην προώθηση της συνεργασίας και της επίλυσης προβλημάτων. Η αρχική διστακτικότητα από συμμετέχοντες που δεν ήταν εξοικειωμένοι με συμμετοχικούς μηχανισμούς εξελίχθηκε σε ένα θετικό κλίμα εργασίας, με το 100% να δηλώνει ικανοποίηση μέχρι το τέλος του έργου. Οι ενδιαφερόμενοι εκτίμησαν την πλατφόρμα για τον εντοπισμό εφαρμόσιμων λύσεων, την ενίσχυση των γνώσεων και τη δημιουργία νέων συνεργατικών σχέσεων.

Συνολικά, τα αποτελέσματα και των δύο φάσεων του ερωτηματολογίου ανέδειξαν υψηλό επίπεδο κοινωνικής αποδοχής για την καφέ αρκούδα των Απέννινων. Τα κρίσιμα ζητήματα συνύπαρξης περιορίστηκαν σε μια μειοψηφία του πληθυσμού, ευθυγραμμιζόμενα με τα θετικά σχόλια που συλλέχθηκαν μέσω των δραστηριοτήτων της πλατφόρμας στο πλαίσιο της Δράσης C1. Τα εργαστήρια, οι εκπαιδευτικές προσπάθειες με το WWF Ελλάδος και η συμμετοχή των ενδιαφερόμενων βελτίωσαν σημαντικά την τοπική και τουριστική ευαισθητοποίηση για θέματα που σχετίζονται με τις αρκούδες.

Συμπερασματικά, η Δράση D5 αποκάλυψε ότι το έργο LIFE ARCPROM ευθυγραμμίστηκε αποτελεσματικά με τις ανάγκες της κοινότητας και των ενδιαφερόμενων, μειώνοντας τις πολυπλοκότητες στον σχεδιασμό πρωτοβουλιών που προωθούν τη συνύπαρξη. Η συνέπεια μεταξύ των απόψεων των ενδιαφερόμενων και των στάσεων της κοινότητας αντικατοπτρίζει ένα ευνοϊκό κοινωνικό περιβάλλον για τη συνύπαρξη. Το έργο όχι μόνο απέδειξε την ικανότητά του να αντιμετωπίζει άμεσες προκλήσεις, αλλά παρείχε επίσης ένα ισχυρό πλαίσιο για μελλοντικές δραστηριότητες, διασφαλίζοντας τη συνέχιση των προσπαθειών για την υποστήριξη της συνύπαρξης μεταξύ ανθρώπων και της καφέ αρκούδας των Απέννινων.

## RIASSUNTO

L’Azione D5 del progetto LIFE ARCPROM è consistita nella somministrazione di questionari agli stakeholder per valutare le loro percezioni e i loro comportamenti riguardo la convivenza con l’orso bruno marsicano, e per monitorare i cambiamenti nel corso del progetto. Svolta in Italia e in Grecia, l’azione ha affrontato sfide specifiche in ogni contesto, tra cui la necessità di adattare le strategie di somministrazione dei questionari a causa delle differenze nel contesto sociale e nelle tempistiche. Nel Parco Nazionale della Maiella (PNM) in Italia, la prima piattaforma è stata istituita nel 2021, mentre in Grecia l’azione ha subito ritardi causati dal COVID-19 che hanno influenzato l’elaborazione del questionario D5. Per questo motivo, invece di seguire un approccio longitudinale con confronti annuali, nel PNM per valutare i cambiamenti è stata adottata una metodologia di confronto tra l’inizio e la fine del progetto.

La diffusione dei questionari è avvenuta attraverso diversi metodi, tra cui gli incontri della piattaforma, i workshop nei paesi del Parco e i social media. La prima fase di raccolta dati, nel 2022, ha restituito 70 risposte, principalmente da residenti nel Parco, di cui oltre la metà erano donne di età compresa tra i 30 e i 60 anni. I risultati iniziali hanno mostrato un forte sostegno alla presenza dell’orso (il 91% era favorevole a convivere con esso), anche se sono emerse lacune nelle conoscenze. Tra le questioni critiche identificate vi erano l’insufficiente informazione sul comportamento dell’orso, la gestione impropria dei rifiuti e la scarsa partecipazione a eventi educativi. Gli stakeholder facevano in gran parte affidamento sul Parco e su altri enti per ottenere informazioni accurate. I workshop e gli incontri locali sono stati considerati strumenti fondamentali per sensibilizzare e promuovere la collaborazione, con oltre l’83% dei partecipanti che li ha valutati positivamente.

La fase del 2024 ha consentito di ampliare il campione a 137 risposte, riflettendo una maggiore partecipazione sia dei residenti che dei turisti. Sebbene la composizione demografica sia rimasta coerente, con oltre il 50% di donne e una maggioranza nella fascia 30–60 anni, le risposte hanno mostrato una crescente fiducia nelle conoscenze sull’orso, con il 35% che ha dichiarato di avere una comprensione buona o eccellente. Interessante notare che i giovani continuavano a riferire livelli di conoscenza inferiori. La percezione delle criticità per la convivenza è rimasta coerente, con fonti di cibo non sorvegliate e mancanza di informazioni sugli orsi identificate come principali problemi. La fiducia nel Parco come fonte affidabile di informazioni è rimasta alta (83%), seguita da organizzazioni ambientali e organi di controllo.

La Piattaforma degli Stakeholder ha svolto un ruolo centrale nel promuovere la collaborazione e la risoluzione dei problemi. L’iniziale esitazione dei partecipanti, non abituati a meccanismi partecipativi, si è trasformata in un clima di lavoro positivo, con il 100% di soddisfazione riportata alla fine del progetto. Gli stakeholder hanno apprezzato la piattaforma per l’identificazione di soluzioni, il miglioramento delle conoscenze e l’instaurazione di nuove collaborazioni.

In generale, i risultati di entrambe le fasi del questionario hanno evidenziato un alto livello di accettazione sociale per l’orso bruno marsicano. Le problematiche in tema di convivenza si limitavano a una minoranza della popolazione, in linea con i feedback positivi raccolti attraverso le attività della piattaforma nell’ambito dell’Azione C1. Workshop, iniziative educative con il WWF Italia e il coinvolgimento degli stakeholder hanno migliorato significativamente la consapevolezza locale e dei turisti su temi legati alla presenza dell’orso.

In conclusione, l’Azione D5 ha dimostrato che il progetto LIFE ARCPROM si è efficacemente allineato ai bisogni della comunità e degli stakeholder, riducendo le complessità nella pianificazione di iniziative per promuovere la convivenza. La coerenza tra le prospettive degli stakeholder e le attitudini della comunità riflette un contesto sociale favorevole alla convivenza. Il progetto non solo ha dimostrato la capacità di affrontare sfide immediate, ma ha anche fornito una solida base per le attività future, garantendo la continuità degli sforzi a supporto della convivenza tra esseri umani e orso bruno marsicano.

## Chapter 1. Follow-up surveys on the perception and behaviour of the stakeholder groups in the Maiella National Park

Action D5 is aimed at administrating questionnaires to stakeholders to assess their perception and behaviours and to evaluate if and how they changed during the years of platform operation. Actions C1 and D5 were developed in Italy and Greece with the same methods and objectives. However, the different social context and the different timing of Action C1 (see below) determined the need for MNP staff to adjust *i)* the strategy for questionnaire administration and *ii)* the length of the questionnaire.

In Italy the first platform was established in June 2021 so the years of platform operation are 2021, 2022 and 2023. However, due to Covid restrictions, in Greece the C1 platforms were established with a delay and this created a delay also in the delivery of the questionnaire whose general structure was available only in 2022. The questionnaire administration pattern foreseen in the proposal (one administration for each year of platform operation) could thus not be implemented in MNP and needed to be adjusted: a comparison between the end and the beginning rather than a cohort longitudinal approach was thus chosen. Results from the feedbacks collected in 2022 have compared with the ones coming from questionnaires administrated in 2024 after the last year of platform operation. In this document we thus report the results of questionnaire administration, as well as a beginning-end comparison of results. All the details about the drafting of the questionnaire, its adaptation to the Italian context and the questionnaire administration strategy, can be found in the document D5.3 (Questionnaire data analysed-Maiella National Park) while the final structure of the questionnaire administrated can also be found in Annex 1.

In MNP, questionnaires were distributed with the aim of collecting the perceptions of the stakeholders of the LIFE ARCPROM project regarding the relationship with the Apennine brown bear, the dissemination of knowledge on the bear and on the behaviors to be followed to achieve a lasting coexistence, the relationships between stakeholders, the main information and communication channels. The questionnaire was disseminated according to different methods, on multiple occasions where stakeholders met in the area. First, during the Platform meetings: participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire themselves; subsequently, via e-mail, they were asked to disseminate it to the members of the organization they represented in the Platform. Secondly, filled-in questionnaires were collected during the 3 workshops organized in the project area in the frame of Action C1. In these occasions, a QR Code was used to allow participants to fill out the questionnaire directly from their smartphone. The older people were assisted in filling it out by the Park technicians involved. Finally, the collection of filled-in questionnaires was also implemented through the use of MNP social media channels.

The following table summarizes the feedback received. Overall, 207 questionnaires were collected, in line with the number foreseen in the proposal (200), although not equally distributed over the two years of investigation (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of questionnaires collected at the beginning (2022) and the end (2024) of the platform operation in MNP.

Year	Number of collected questionnaires
2022	70
2024	137

### 1.1 Results of the questionnaire administration at the beginning of the project

The first distribution of the questionnaire assessing stakeholder perceptions started in spring 2022. The first months of the year were in fact dedicated to the adaptation of the Greek version, to make it usable for the Abruzzo context (for details see the document D5.3 *Questionnaire data analysed-Maiella National Park*). The first step for questionnaire dissemination took place during the Platform work: the representatives of the stakeholder categories involved were asked to fill out the questionnaire and then to disseminate it among their associates. Secondly, feedbacks were collected during the annual workshops held in 4 villages of MNP (for details see document C1.2 *Report of Action C1*).

Overall, 70 filled-in questionnaires were collected. The detailed results of this first year of collection are reported in Annex 2, while here below we report the summary of what emerged.

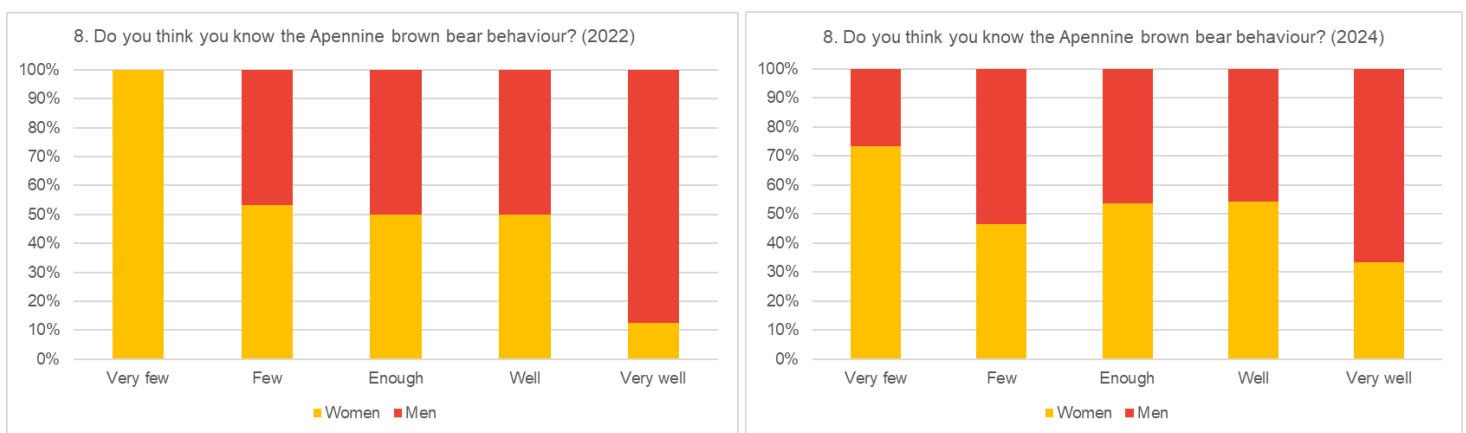
The **sample** is made up of over 90% of people from Abruzzo, mainly living in the territory of the Maiella National Park. Over half of them are women, over 60% fall into the 30-60 age group. The sample interviewed has an excellent relationship with the presence of bears (over 91% are happy to live in a region where bears also live), but they believe that there are critical situations or situations perceived as such by the rest of the population. The majority of those interviewed believe they have a poor to intermediate **knowledge** of the Apennine brown bear, while only 25% believe they have good or excellent knowledge. Among the main factors that determine **critical situations** in coexistence with the bear, the interviewed underline the lack of information on the nature of the bear and its behavior, the adoption of wrong behaviors in front of the bear, the lack of attention to potential sources of unattended food near population centers (e.g. wastes). Almost 43% of those interviewed declared that they had never participated in events or meetings in which the behavior or ethology of the bear was discussed in depth. The reason for this lack lies in most cases in the absence of offers of such events in the area in which the interviewees live (or in their poor publicity). Considering the privileged **information channels** for obtaining truthful information on bears, the great majority (around 87%) indicates the Park and other protected areas, followed by control bodies (Police, Forestry Carabinieri), research bodies or universities, and environmental organizations. The vast majority of those interviewed believe that **local meetings** (like the ones organized during the C1.2 Action) are an important tool for raising awareness and spreading knowledge about bears (83% indicate good to excellent), and equally they believe that **cooperation** between different subjects is necessary to achieve effective results (around 82% indicate good to excellent). Approximately 25% of the total interviewees were involved in the **work of the Stakeholder Platform**. Those who did not participate, despite being contacted, did so due to lack of time or human resources to dedicate within their organization. The feedback regarding the **working climate** within the Platform and the proposed working **method** is decidedly positive. This result was not obvious at the beginning of the process, because the SHs involved had never experimented with mechanisms and methods of participation and the initial approach had quite an impact for many of them. However, trust in the promoting body and in the facilitator allowed a progressive adaptation to the method and the achievement of the expected results. All the interviewees believe that participating in the Platform's work can contribute to identifying shared solutions for coexistence with the bear; most of them identified the main reason for their participation as the possibility of identifying and proposing new solutions in terms of coexistence. In addition to this, to improve their knowledge of bears and to acquire useful ideas for the dissemination of good practices and knowledge in the area. Among the organizations deemed necessary for the proper functioning of the Platform, the associations of breeders and beekeepers are indicated, followed by the Park and the Municipalities. All the participants in the Platform say they are available to sign **collaboration agreements** for the implementation of coexistence actions, in particular with institutions (60%) or even with other participating organizations (30%).

### *1.2 Results of the questionnaire administration at the end of the project and beginning-end comparison*

The questionnaire was distributed in the last year of the project to evaluate any differences in the responses collected, compared to the first year. Since this was a "work-closing" questionnaire, some questions were formulated in the past tense, to better investigate the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the work carried out within the Platform. Also in this case, questionnaires were *i)* distributed to the participants of the Platform and, subsequently, to their associates and *ii)* disseminated during the annual workshops and at events linked to other actions within the Life ARCPROM. Additionally, in 2024 feedbacks were also collected through the publication of a post on the social media channels of the Park (see document D5.3 for details).

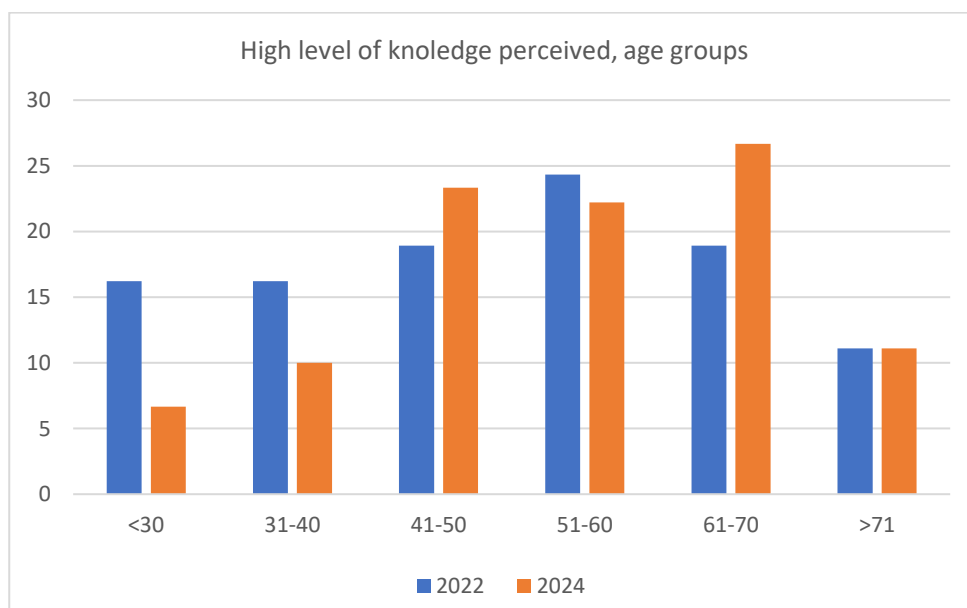
Overall, 137 responses were obtained. The detailed results of this last year of collection are reported in Annex 3, while here below we report the summary of what emerged in comparison with results obtained in 2022. In addition to what is shown by the graphs in the annexes, a more in-depth reflection is proposed by analyzing the composition of the sample for the different questions of the survey (where significant).

The **sample** that responded to the survey in 2024 almost doubled compared to the first year, with a significant increase of feedback from people living outside the region (also thanks to the period of the survey implementation that favored a touristic representation). However, the number of Abruzzo residents still increased compared to 2022 (from 70 to 82 people). The sample composition remains unchanged: over 50% of the sample are women, mostly falling into the 30-60 age group (53%). Even the relationship with the Apennine brown bear (personal and perceived among the population) remains substantially unchanged, despite a larger presence in the sample of potentially more hostile subjects, such as breeders/farmers. In this regard, it's worth highlighting that all the economic subjects interviewed expressed satisfaction with the presence of the bear in the territory in which they live. There is no substantial difference in the responses, regarding gender, in both the 2022 and 2024 editions: men and women respond to the questions with approximately the same percentages. After 4 years of project, the perception of one's **knowledge** about bears, overall, increases: over 35% of those interviewed believe they have good or excellent knowledge. Looking at the data in detail, we note that men believe they have better knowledge, with particular regard to the range of responses falling within the "very well" category. This distinction is much more marked in 2022 while in the second edition of the survey this gap weakens.



Picture 1. Comparison between male and female responses to question 8. "Do you think you know the behavior of the Apennine brown bear?"

However, considering only the 3 highest levels of knowledge, we note that the answers do not respect the proportions by age group of the interviewees: young people, in particular, mainly believe they have poor knowledge (especially in the 2024 edition), while the most represented age groups are those between 40 and 70 years old (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Age analysis for question number 8, limited to high levels of perceived knowledge.



Continuing with the questionnaire, also in 2024 the first two main **critical factors** for coexistence remain the presence of potential unattended food sources and the lack of information about the bear and its behavior, followed however by the difficulties encountered by the injured parties in requesting reimbursements and compensation (the procedures are considered long and complicated). There is a slight increase in the number of people who have never participated in in-depth meetings, while the reasons remain substantially unchanged compared to 2022 (most people complain about the absence of events in their territory). The category most represented among those who have never participated in in-depth meetings (in particular in 2024) are tourists, much more abundant in the second year of the investigation. The subject that receives the most trust for the reliability of the **information** remains the Park (with over 83% of preferences), followed this time by environmental organizations and then by control bodies (Provincial Police and Forestry Carabinieri). The percentage (already high in 2022) of people who identify local **workshops and meetings** as an important tool for coexistence is significantly increasing (over 66% indicate high importance, 87% from good to high importance), and the same goes for **cooperation** between different subjects as necessary for coexistence, which rises from 69 to 77% as a very important element. The same number of stakeholders filled out the section dedicated to the **Stakeholder Platform's work**, confirming the reasons that led some not to participate, despite having been contacted. The already-good perception of the **working climate** on the Platform further improves, with 100% extremely positive responses, while satisfaction with the proposed **method** remains unchanged (good). Confidence in the Platform as a place for identifying effective and shared solutions for coexistence continues to improve (from 65 to 79% of extremely positive responses); the interviewees were then asked if their expectations regarding the initial motivations for participation had been met: the majority of them believed they had contributed in identifying and proposing actions for coexistence and in establishing new relationships and collaborations with other organizations present in the Platform. At the end of the project it was possible to ask which organizations would have been better represented in the Platform's work (starting from the same categories proposed at the beginning of the work) and the participants identified waste management bodies and Municipalities as the main absentees (with the exception of the Municipalities, the categories considered fundamental initially were instead all involved in the work carried out). As a final topic, the Platform participants were asked if they had managed to **collaborate with other organizations** not only in identifying actions for coexistence, but also in their implementation. Over 70% collaborated with others, especially in the last year of the project, both with institutions (mainly the Park), but also with other participants in the Platform.

## Chapter 2. SWOT Analysis – Action D5 for key-stakeholders' groups

In addition to the data analysis set out above, based on cumulative responses, with insights mainly by gender and age, a SWOT Analysis was developed regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks related to the path to coexistence with the Apennine Brown Bear analyzing the responses of the interviewees, grouped by **homogeneous categories of stakeholders**.

In particular, strengths and weaknesses are considered internal aspects of each group of stakeholders, while opportunities and risks concern aspects linked to the interaction between different groups.

To complete this analysis, the responses from both years of the survey were considered, valorizing in particular the results of the last year, which are more representative of the arrival point of the participatory path conducted by the stakeholders.

Thanks to what emerged from this analysis (shown in the following table), it will be possible to direct the activities related to after-Life, trying to enhance the strengths and opportunities of the different groups, minimizing the risks and trying to reduce the weaknesses.

In this regard, it is underlined that action D5 is strictly related to action C1 – Stakeholders consultation and involvement, to whose report please refer for the details contained in the Action Plan of the Stakeholder Platform, which form the basis for drafting the after-Life plan: the Action Plan was in fact built taking into consideration the critical issues that emerged from the discussion of the SHs, their capabilities and will for the future, and the results of the D5 surveys, in order to design and implement shared actions for coexistence.

In general, it can be observed that there is a low level of conflict among the participants in the work linked to the presence of the bear. Even the most damaged categories (breeders, beekeepers, etc.) perceive its value and are willing to find shared solutions.

However, participants recognize that within the categories they represent, there are several cases of hostility, which need to be addressed: first of all, as regards the primary sector, guaranteeing easy access to prevention and compensation measures (and, as clearly emerged during action C1, guaranteeing a homogeneity of approach inside and outside the Park), but in general, improving the widespread knowledge of the correct behaviors to follow to keep the bear wild as well as its way of behaving.

There is an appreciation for the participatory process, and the moments of discussion and listening are overall considered an excellent tool for building the path towards coexistence.

Once again, interviewees from the primary sector are those with the greatest difficulty in participating, especially due to the limited time available. However, it is underlined that their representatives have always participated in the platform's work.

Collaboration between different subjects is also considered fundamental for the success of coexistence actions. Between the first and second surveys the propensity to collaborate also with subjects belonging to other categories and, above all, with subjects other than parks and institutions improved.

As expected, knowledge of the Apennine brown bear and its behavior decreases in groups with fewer specific skills (not only primary producers, but also tourists and the local community), accordingly with what emerged during the Platform's work. In fact, the Platform Action Plan is particularly focused on this topic.

Finally, the Park enjoys excellent trust from stakeholders as a source of truthful and reliable information.

This aspect is of particular importance in view of the work to be carried out in the coming years, especially in terms of disseminating knowledge and raising awareness of the local community.

	<b>Primary producers</b> (Farmers/Breeders, Beekeepers, Truffle hunters, Hunters, Farmers trade associations)	<b>Environmental associations and educators</b>	<b>Local Community</b> (Students, Housekeepers, Retired, Others)	<b>Experts</b> (Protected area managers, Surveillance bodies, Researchers)	<b>Tourists</b> (Entrepreneurs and employees in the tourism sector, Hiking operators, Tourists)
<b>Strengths</b> ingroup aspects favoring bear conservation and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantial tolerance regarding the presence of the bear</li> <li>• High trust in protected areas as an information source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High knowledge of bear's behavior</li> <li>• Very high trust in the participatory process</li> <li>• High trust in protected areas as an information source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantial satisfaction with living in an area where bears also live</li> <li>• High trust in protected areas as an information source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High satisfaction regarding the presence of the bear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High satisfaction regarding the presence of the bear</li> <li>• High trust in protected areas as an information source</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b> ingroup aspects hindering bear conservation and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of time to attend meetings</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of bear behavior</li> <li>• Strong discrepancies between treatment inside/outside the Park, especially for damage compensation</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low to medium knowledge of bear behavior</li> <li>• Perceived a certain hostility from some categories towards the bear</li> <li>• Perceived lack of knowledge among the population of how to behave in the presence of bears</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite the field of work, only medium to high knowledge of bear (in particular surveillance bodies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low to medium knowledge of bear behavior</li> <li>• Poor participation in the participatory process and in-depth meetings (in particular tourists and tourist operators)</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> intergroup aspects favoring bear conservation and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium-high trust in workshops as a tool to improve coexistence as cooperation between different organizations (especially beekeepers)</li> <li>• Good trust in the platform as a place to improve coexistence. Willingness to cooperate, in particular with same group's organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation between organization very well valued</li> <li>• High rate of collaboration with other organizations, both protected areas and other associations participating to the platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High trust in workshops as a tool to improve coexistence and knowledge</li> <li>• High interest in the topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very high trust in the participatory process and willingness to collaborate with other organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High trust in workshops as a tool to improve coexistence and knowledge</li> </ul>

	<b>Primary producers</b> (Farmers/Breeders, Beekeepers, Truffle hunters, Hunters, Farmers trade associations)	<b>Environmental associations and educators</b>	<b>Local Community</b> (Students, Housekeepers, Retired, Others)	<b>Experts</b> (Protected area managers, Surveillance bodies, Researchers)	<b>Tourists</b> (Entrepreneurs and employees in the tourism sector, Hiking operators, Tourists)
<b>Threats</b> inter-group aspects hindering bear conservation and management	Lack of confidence in the Workshops as a tool to improve coexistence with the Apennine brown bear (especially for hunters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of knowledge of bear behavior among their stakeholders, also considering prevention measures and damages compensation</li> <li>• Poor collaboration with public bodies, because of their absence at the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived lack of knowledge on how people should behave: there is little attention to unattended sources of food (waste / unprotected chicken coops); too high speed on roads</li> <li>• Lack of opportunities for in-depth analysis of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in involving some key stakeholders (e.g. Municipalities, Provinces and Region)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived lack of knowledge of bear behavior among population (concerning speed on roads, most of all) and on how people should behave at bear presence</li> </ul>

Table 2. SWOT Analysis on D5 survey's questionnaire, for homogeneous SHs' categories.

## Chapter 3. Conclusions

Overall, the results of the questionnaires in both years of the investigation gave encouraging results regarding the level of social acceptance of the Apennine brown bear. It was immediately clear that the presence of the bear is considered critical by a small part of the population, but not by the majority. This outcome of Action D5 is in line with the platform work carried out in the frame of Action C1. In fact, also stakeholder representatives participating to the meeting did not raise critical coexistence issue but rather suggested possible actions to improve the already-good coexistence context. Listening to stakeholders and the local community provided precise indications on the gaps to be filled and some aspects to work on, and several of them were already addressed during the project. Local communities were reached both through the workshops carried out in the villages of the Park as part of the Action C1.2, and through the educational activities developed in collaboration with WWF Italy. This extensive work improved knowledge of the bear in the area and increased sensitivity of inhabitants and tourists, as demonstrated by the data from the second questionnaire.

An important result highlighted by the questionnaire survey concerns the collaboration between the organizations participating in the platform. This result, not at all obvious at the beginning of the participatory process, is even more important considering that many of them did not know each other. Some relevant stakeholders to promote coexistence, such as beekeepers, collaborated not only in the C1 actions, but also operationally in the C10 action, linked to the creation of the Bear Friendly label, establishing a bond with the Park that will continue after the end of the LIFE ARCPROM project.

In conclusion, feedbacks collected through questionnaire administration showed that the platform work was in line with the needs raised by the community and the final plan to promote coexistence, elaborated as a final product of Action C1 (see Document C1.2) includes the needs emerged from Action D5. This consistency between the stakeholder representative thoughts and the community thoughts in an index of an equilibrium in the social context, where both people with economic interest and the community perceive the bear presence in a similar way and claim for similar needs to improve human-bear coexistence. This is an advantageous situation for the Park as it implies a reduced complexity in the development of coexistence-promoting actions. In this framework the LIFE ARCPROM project resulted essential: lots of the needs reported by both the stakeholders and the community were addressed with the LIFE ARCPROM and this provided a “concreteness” of the platform work and an immediate improvement of some issues, emerged in the last year of survey.

Action D5 provided data to understand that with Action C1 and, in general, with the LIFE ARCPROM, MNP is going in the right direction. This essential information not only allowed the evaluation of the platform work as positive, but also will lead the development of the after-LIFE activities.

## Annex 1 – Questionnaire distributed in Action D5, in the MNP

### Section 1. Sample characteristics

1. In which province do you live?

- Chieti
- L'Aquila
- Pescara
- Teramo
- Outside the Region

2. Is your home or business located within a protected area?

- Yes, the PNM
- Yes, another National Park
- Yes, in a minor protected area
- No

3. How old are you?

- <30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41-50 years
- 51-60 years
- 61-70 years
- > 71 years

4. Do you want to tell us your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Rather not answer

5. What is your main occupation?

- Breeder / shepherd
- Beekeeper
- Truffle / mycological expert
- Managing body of the MNP or another protected area
- Municipality or Province employee or administrator
- Region employee or administrator
- Public veterinarian
- Private veterinarian
- Surveillance Corps (Police or Carabinieri)
- Environmental association
- Hiking Association
- Association with a socio-educational purpose
- Tour operator
- Hunter
- Professional Association
- Student
- Researcher
- Expert
- Retired
- Other

### Section 2. Perceived human-bear interaction

6. How do you judge your relationship with the presence of the Apennine brown bear?

- Its presence is absolutely indifferent to me
- I am happy to live in an area where the bear also lives
- His presence is a source of stress for me and interferes with my activity

7. In general, in your region, how do people experience the presence of the bear?

- Quite well, the bear is generally accepted
- So-so, there are several situations in which the presence of the bear is problematic
- Quite badly, in general the bear is a problem and its presence generates conflict

8. Do you think you know the bear's behavior?

Not at all → I'm an expert (*likert scale*)

9. What do you think are the main factors that favor the onset of problems between humans and the Apennine brown bear in your region? (maximum 3 answers)

- The presence of the bear near the roads
- The high speed maintained by motorists
- There are too many bears
- The lack of information on the nature of the bear and its way of behaving
- Lack of attention to food sources left unattended (bins, abandoned waste, ...)
- The high presence of courtyard animals inside villages (eg chicken coops)
- The reduction of natural habitats available to the bear
- Many people assume wrong behaviors in the presence of the bear
- Compensation arrangements for bear damage are complicated and time-consuming
- Poor ability to listen to problems by the Bodies in charge
- The tendency to consider the bear as a tourist attraction
- Lack of coordination between the Bodies that deal with land management

10. Have you ever attended a meeting on the Apennine brown bear where the technicians illustrated data on its diffusion / behavior of the species / how to behave in its presence?

- Never
- Once
- Several times
- I am a technician

11. If you answered "Never" to the previous question, why?

- No meetings have ever been organized in the area where I live
- I don't care about the topic
- I didn't have time, but the topic interests me

### **Section 3. Communication methods used by stakeholder groups**

12. What are the sources of information that you trust the most regarding the Apennine brown bear? (maximum 3 answers)

- Parks and protected areas
- Control bodies (forest police, provincial police, park rangers)
- Region, Provinces, Municipalities
- Associations of breeders / farmers / beekeepers / truffle seeker
- Local media (press / radio / TV / internet)
- National media (press / radio / TV / internet)
- Social media (Facebook / Instagram / Twitter)
- Veterinarians
- Research bodies and universities

- Environmental associations and organizations
- Hunters
- Individual breeders / farmers / beekeepers / truffle hunters
- Other

#### **Section 4. Perceived strengths and weaknesses of Platform operation and consensus estimate**

13. Do you think that meetings organized in the area (such as the one organized on 2-3 of April in Sulmona and San Valentino) can improve the relationship between people and the Apennine brown bear?  
Not at all → Definitely yes (*likert scale*)

14. Do you think that the collaboration between different subjects (organizations / communities / bodies in charge) can be useful to improve the coexistence between man and bear?  
Not at all, there are already persons in charge → Definitely yes, everyone's commitment is needed (*likert scale*)

15. Do you participate directly in the work of the Apennine brown bear-human coexistence platform within the Life-ARCPROM project?

- Yes
- No
- I have been contacted, but have never participated

16. If you did not participate despite being contacted, why?

- I don't care about the topic
- I don't think these kinds of tools are useful
- I have no time
- I had difficulty in identifying someone who could participate within my organization

17. How do you judge the climate inside the platform?

- Everyone participates constructively
- Sometimes differences of opinion and perspective generate quarrels and difficulties in understanding
- You can't work, the climate is too tense

18. How do you evaluate the working method of the Platform?

- Good, the presence of a facilitator helps to achieve the objectives of the meetings
- Can be improved: sometimes I have the feeling of not being able to fully express my point of view
- Not good, every time I went away unhappy

19. Do you think that participating in the Platform can help to identify shared solutions for the improvement of human-bear coexistence?  
Not at all → Definitely yes (*likert scale*)

20. Which of the following results would you like to have achieved with the work of the Platform?  
(maximum 3 answers)

- To improve the participants' knowledge of the Apennine brown bear
- To improve the participants' knowledge on bear damage prevention measures
- Understand damage compensation mechanisms
- Make other organizations aware of some situations that should be resolved
- Helping to identify and propose new solutions that make it possible to improve human-bear coexistence
- Establish collaborations with other subjects in the area, aimed at improving the level of human-bear coexistence
- Understand how other organizations work in the area in terms of human-bear coexistence
- Help improve the perception of the Apennine brown bear by those who live and enjoy our region



#### Section 4. SHs interaction and working relations

21. Which organizations do you think should participate in the work of the platform in order to achieve the expected results?

- Associations of Farmers / Breeders
- Beekeepers' associations
- Associations of truffles / mycological experts
- Management bodies of protected areas
- Public administrators: Municipalities
- Public administrators: Provinces
- Public administrators: Region
- Veterinary ASL
- Surveillance bodies (Police or Carabinieri)
- Waste management bodies
- Environmental associations
- Hiking associations
- Associations with socio-educational purposes
- Tour operators
- Associations of Hunters
- Other

22. If you said "other", who?

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23. Would your organization be willing to sign a commitment to carry out human-bear coexistence actions on the territory?

- Yes, with the institutions (Park management bodies, local administrations)
- Yes, both with institutions and with other organizations participating in the platform
- Yes, only with other organizations participating in the platform
- No

24. Can we contact you again at the end of the project, to have you fill out the questionnaire again and evaluate any changes in the answers?

- Yes
- No

25. if so, please leave us your e-mail address (it will remain in the Park archives and will not be used for any other purpose):

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Thank you!

#### Informed consent

Filling in the questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous.

The questionnaire data will be used exclusively to monitor the work of the platform and the perceptions of local communities within the LIFE ARCPROM project.

The Maiella National Park and the coordinator of Actions C1 (Consultation and involvement of stakeholders) and D5 (Follow-up surveys on the perception and behavior of stakeholder groups) of the Life ARCPROM project, Tasos Hovardas, will be responsible for data management. Access to these data will be provided

exclusively to Life ARCPROM partners and only for the pursuit of the project objectives (data analysis for project deliverables and scientific publications).

The results of the data analysis will be presented in the report of Action D5 (Follow-up surveys on the perception and behavior of stakeholder groups) of the LIFE ARCPROM project and any publications that will be presented on the basis of these results. In any case, the above commitment to the anonymity of respondents will be rigorously applied, as the presentation of the results will focus on general trends and comparisons and not on the responses of individual participants.

- I have read and understood.

## Annex 2 – Results of the questionnaires at the beginning of the project



What does the local community think?  
Results of the Questionnaire for 2022:  
Coexistence with the Apennine brown  
bear in the territory of  
Maiella National Park

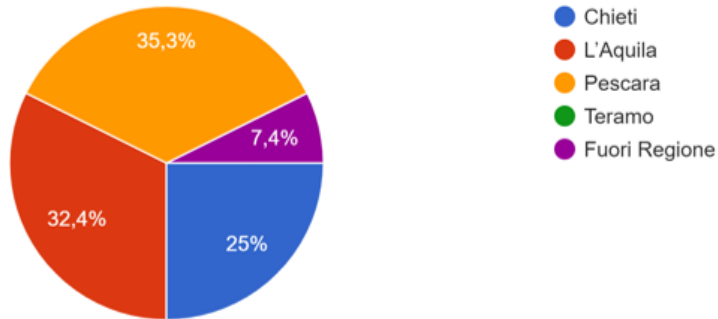


Sulmona, November 31st 2022  
action D5

# Section 1: the sample

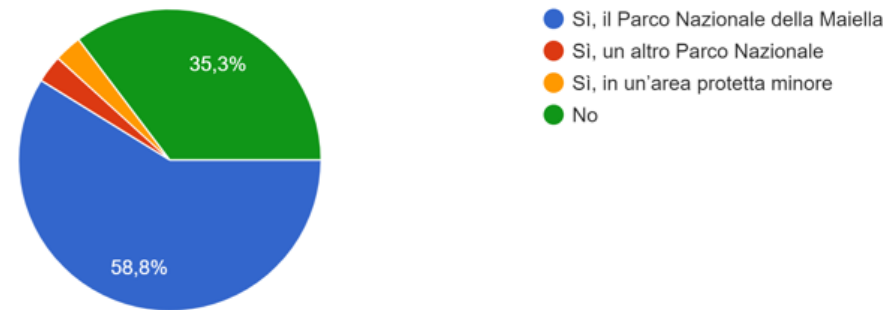
1. In wich Province do you live?

68 risposte



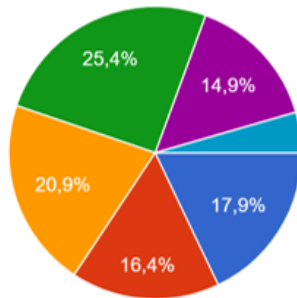
2. Does your house or your activity stand inside a Protected Area?

68 risposte



### 3. How old are you?

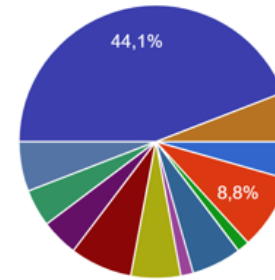
67 risposte



- <30 anni
- 31-40 anni
- 41-50 anni
- 51-60 anni
- 61-70 anni
- >71 anni

### 5. What is your main occupation?

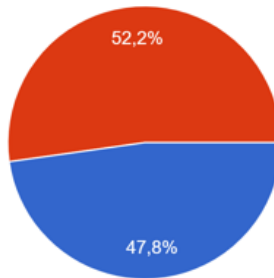
68 risposte



- Breeder/shepherd
- Beekeeper
- Truffle hunter/mycological expert
- Managing body of the PNM or another protected area
- Municipality or Province
- Region
- ASL veterinary surgeon
- Private veterinarian
- Surveillance body (Police or Carabinieri)
- Environmental association
- Hiking association/society
- Association with socio-educational purposes
- Tour operator
- Soccer player
- Trade association
- Student
- Researcher
- Expert on the subject
- Retired
- Other
- Hiking association

### 4. Do you want to tell us your gender?

67 risposte

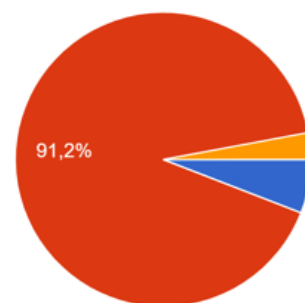


- Male
- Female
- I prefer not to answer

## Section 2: the relationship with the Apennine Brown bear

6. How do you rate your relationship with the presence of the Apennine brown bear?

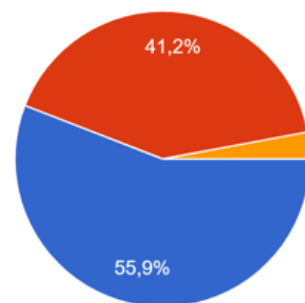
68 risposte



- His presence is absolutely indifferent to me
- I'm happy to live in an area where the bear also lives
- His presence for me is a source of stress and interferes with my activity

7. In general, in your region, how do people experience the presence of bears?

68 risposte

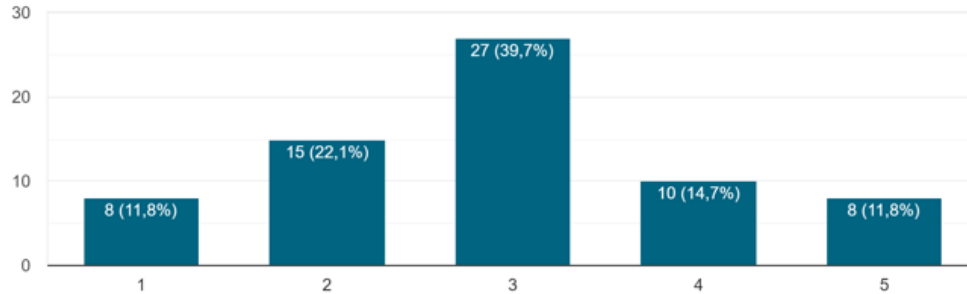


- Pretty good, the bear is generally accepted
- So and so, there are situations in which the presence of the bear is problematic
- Pretty bad, in general the bear is a problem and its presence generates conflict

# Section 3: knowledge about the Apennine Brown bear

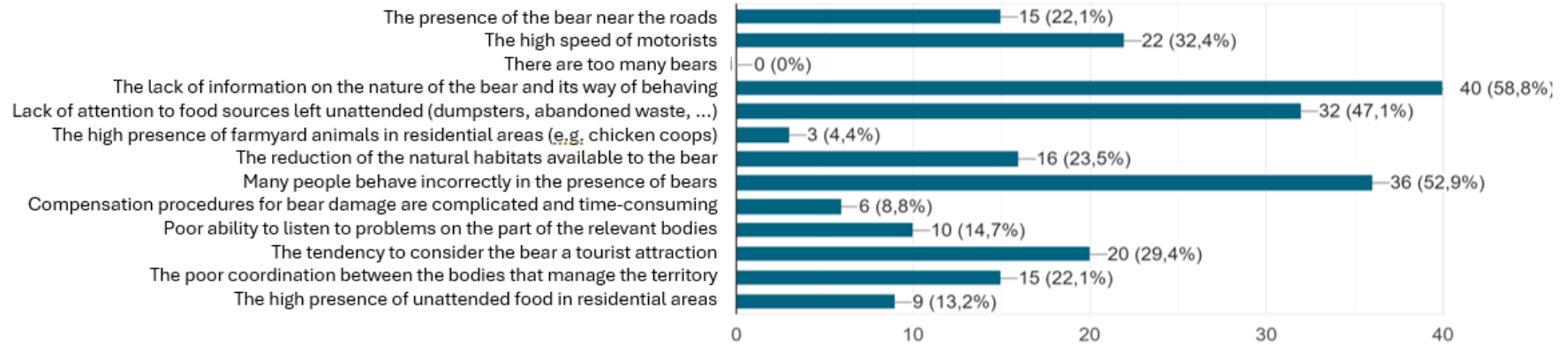
8. I Do you think you know bear behavior?

68 risposte



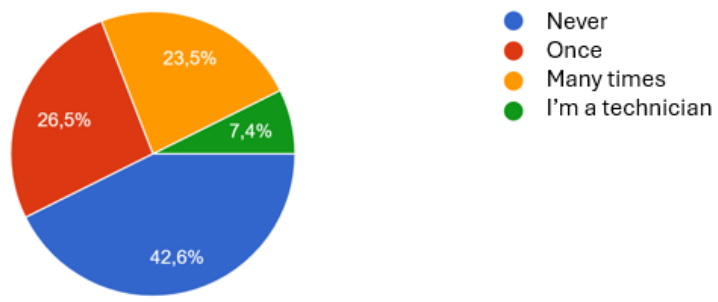
9. What do you think are the main factors that favor the emergence of problems between humans and the Apennine brown bear in your region? (maximum 3 answers)

68 risposte



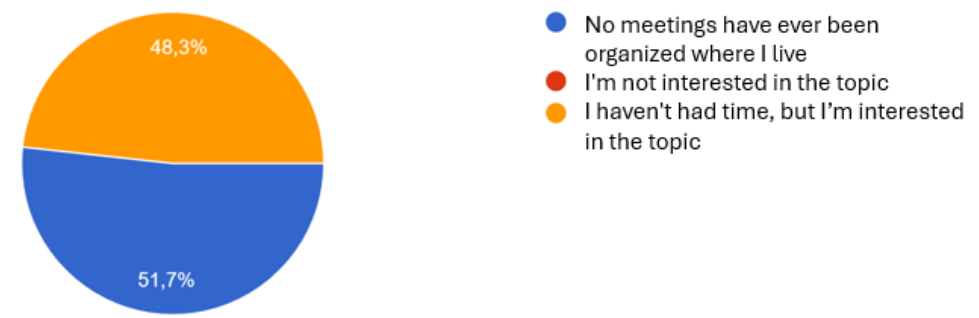
10. Have you ever attended a meeting on the Apennine brown bear in which the technicians illustrated data on its diffusion / behavior of the species / how to behave in its presence?

68 risposte



11. If you answered Never, why?

29 risposte

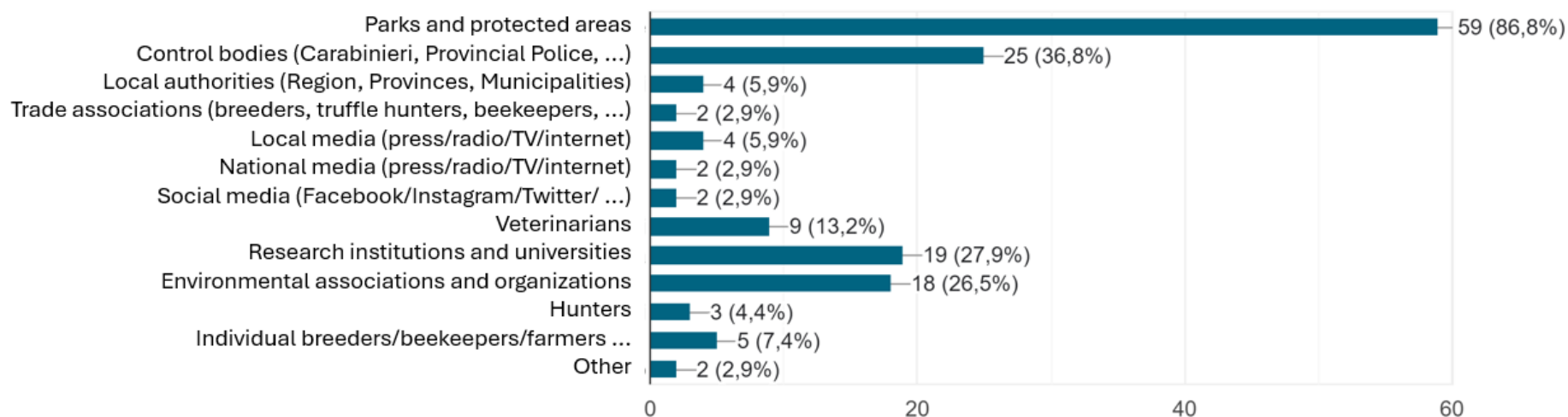




## Section 4: Communication channels

12. What sources of information do you trust most when it comes to the Apennine brown bear? (maximum 3 answers)

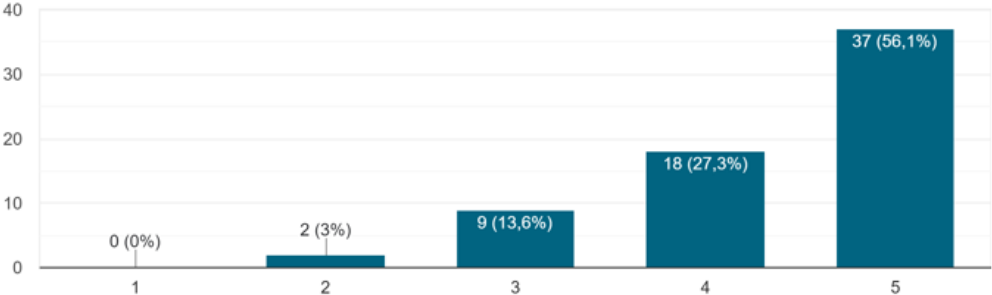
68 risposte



# Section 5: Participation and cooperation

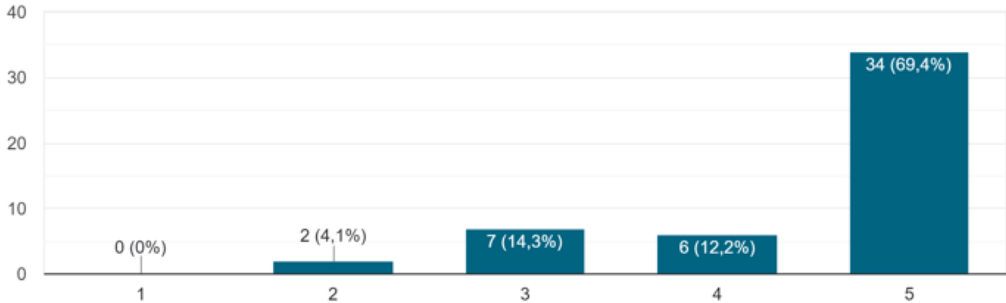
13. Do you think that moments of discussion organized on the territory (like the one organized on 2-3 April in Sulmona, San Valentino, Pescocostanzo, Palena) can improve the relationship between people and the Apennine brown bear?

66 risposte



14. Do you think that collaboration between different subjects (organisations/communities/institutions) can be useful for improving human-bear coexistence?

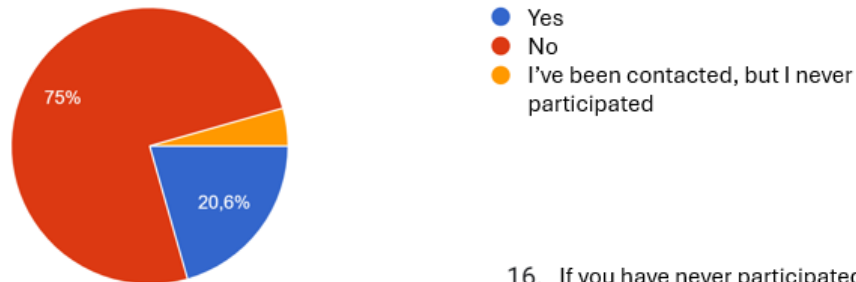
49 risposte



# Section 6: the work of the SHs platform

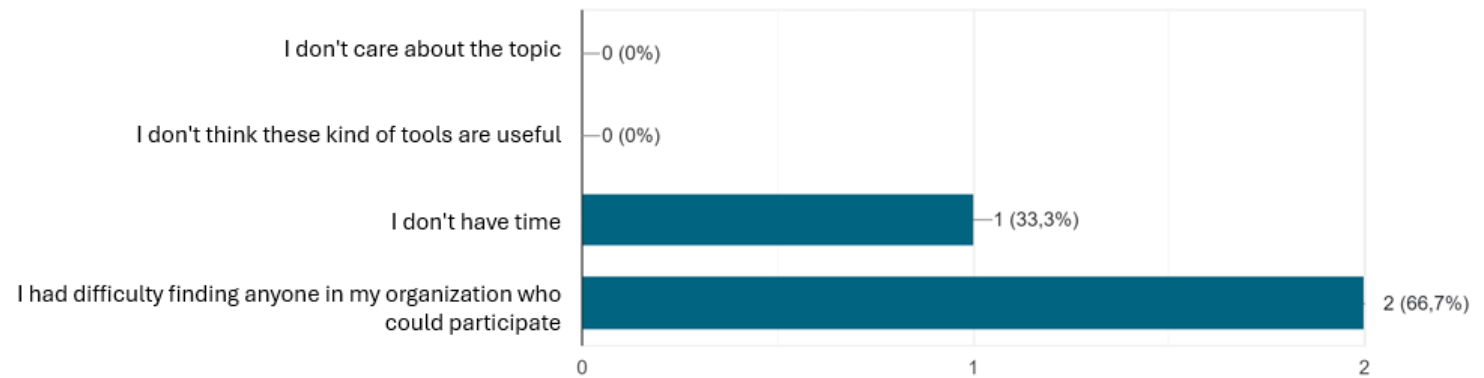
15. Do you participate directly in the work of the Platform for human-Apennine brown bear coexistence as part of the Life-ARCPROM project?

68 risposte



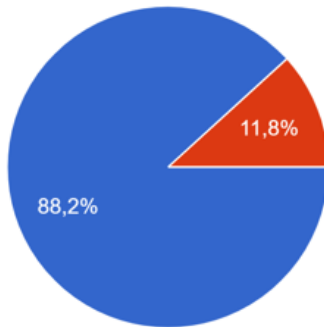
16. If you have never participated, despite having been contacted, why?

3 risposte



17. How do you rate the climate within the platform?

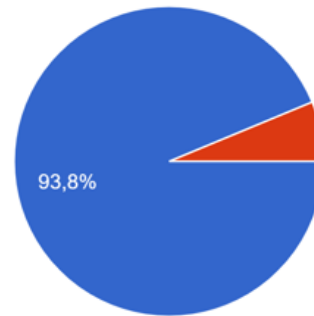
17 risposte



- Everyone participates in a constructive way
- Sometimes differences of opinion and perspective generate arguments and difficulties comprehension
- You can't work, the climate is too hostile

18. How do you evaluate the Platform's working method?

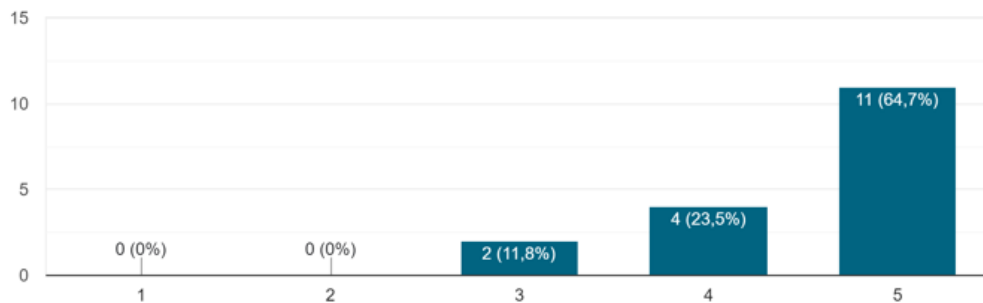
16 risposte



- Good, the presence of a facilitator helps you achieve your goals meetings
- Can be improved: sometimes I have the feeling of not being able to fully express my point of view
- Not good, I left every time dissatisfied

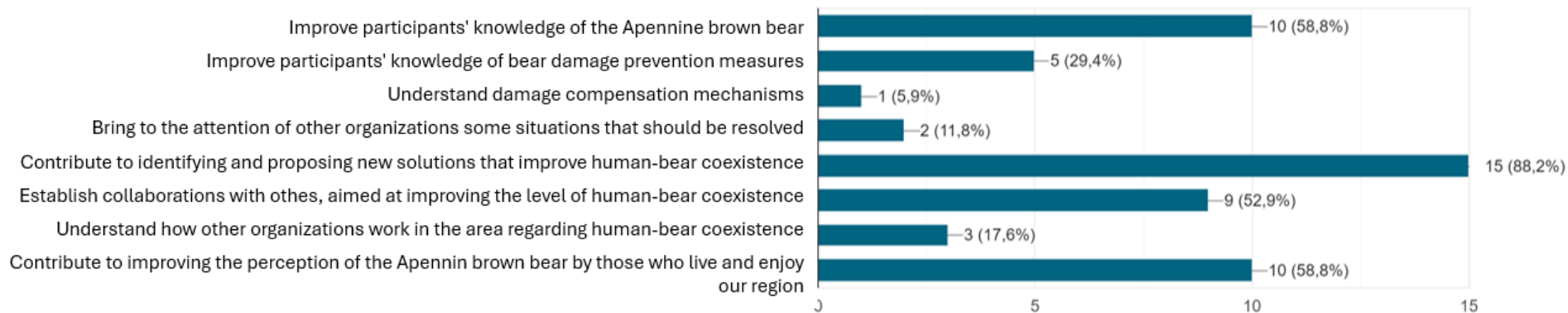
19. Do you think that participating in the Platform can help in identify shared solutions for improving human-bear coexistence?

17 risposte



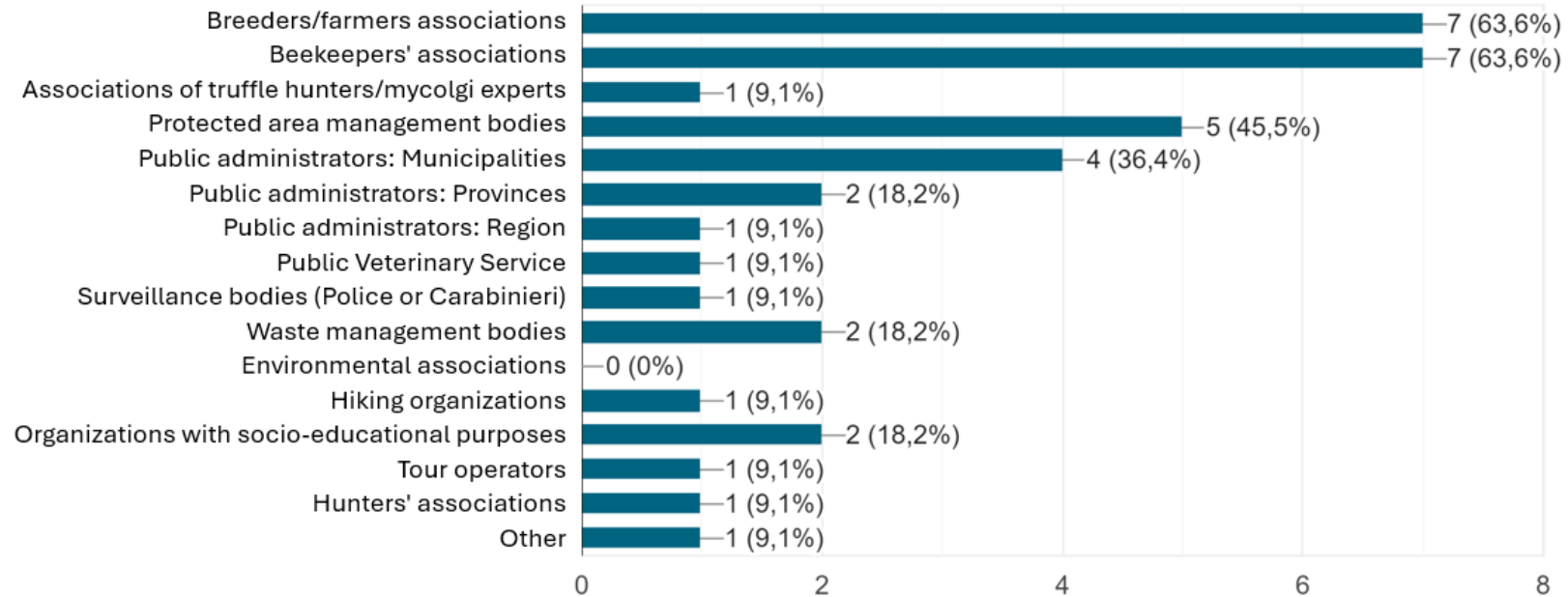
20. Which of the following results would you like to see achieved with the Platform's work? (maximum 3 answers)

17 risposte



21. Which organizations do you think should primarily participate in the platform's work in order to achieve the expected results? (maximum 3 answers)

11 risposte



22. If you answered Other, who?

*All organizations should be involved with specific projects*

23. Would your organization be willing to sign an agreement for the implementation of human-bear coexistence actions in the area?

10 risposte





What does the local community think?  
Results of the Questionnaire for 2024:  
Coexistence with the Apennine brown  
bear in the territory of  
Maiella National Park



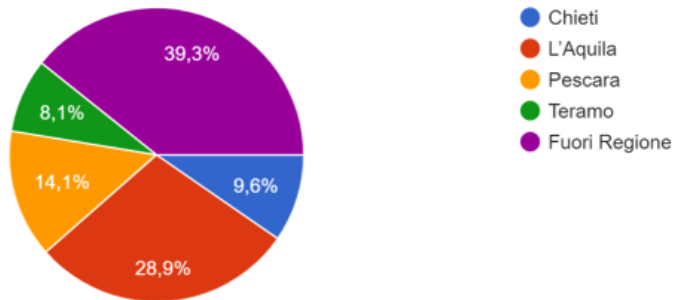
Sulmona, August 31st 2024  
Action D5



# Section 1: the sample

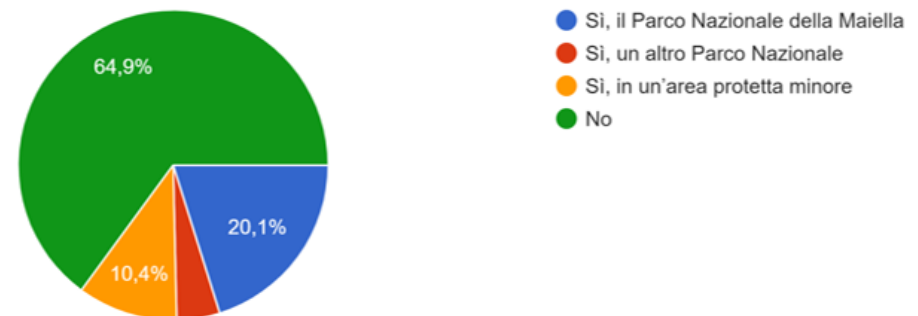
1. In wich Province do you live?

135 risposte



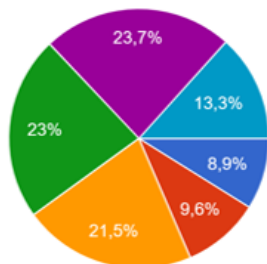
2. Does your house or your activity stand inside a Protected Area?

134 risposte



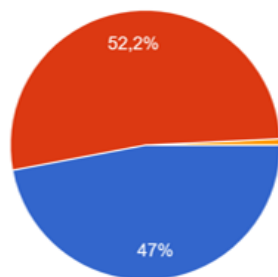
### 3. How old are you?

135 risposte



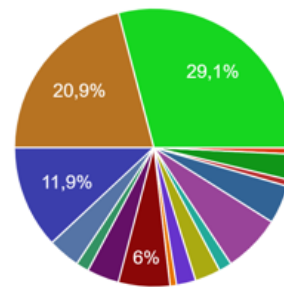
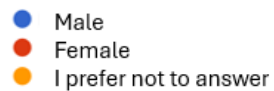
### 4. Do you want to tell us your gender?

134 risposte



### 5. What is your main occupation?

134 risposte

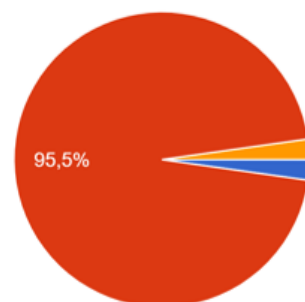


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## Section 2: the relationship with the Apennine Brown bear

6. How do you rate your relationship with the presence of the Apennine brown bear?

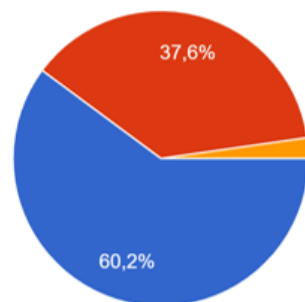
134 risposte



- His presence is absolutely indifferent to me
- I'm happy to live in an area where the bear also lives
- His presence for me is a source of stress and interferes with my activity

7. In general, in your region, how do people experience the presence of bears?

133 risposte

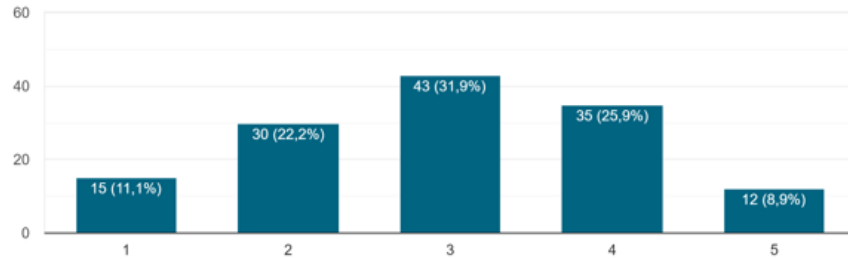


- Pretty good, the bear is generally accepted
- So and so, there are situations in which the presence of the bear is problematic
- Pretty bad, in general the bear is a problem and its presence generates conflict

# Section 3: knowledge about the Apennine Brown bear

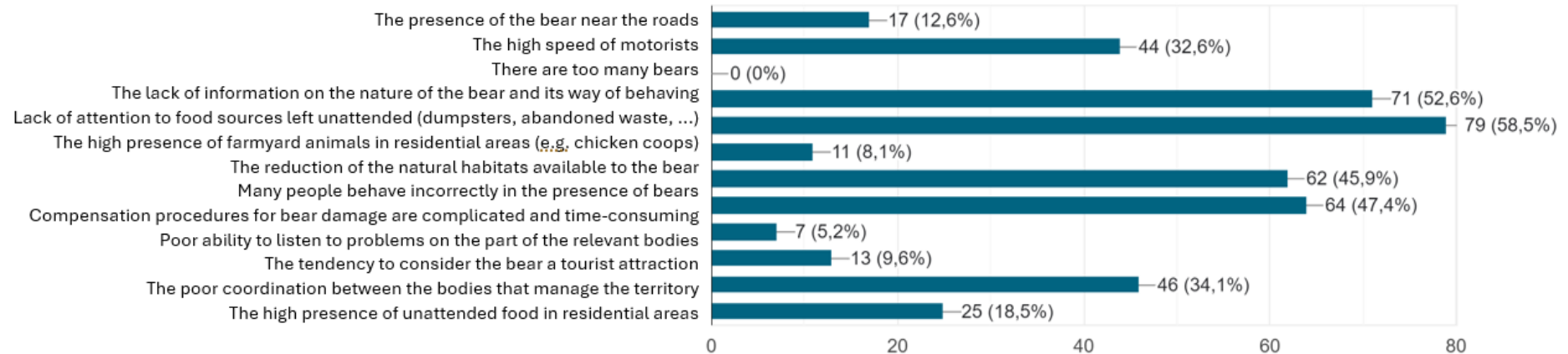
8. Do you think you know bear behavior?

135 risposte



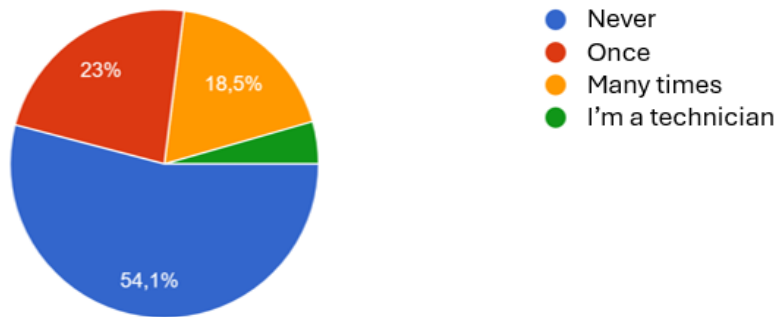
9. What do you think are the main factors that favor the emergence of problems between humans and the Apennine brown bear in your region? (maximum 3 answers)

135 risposte



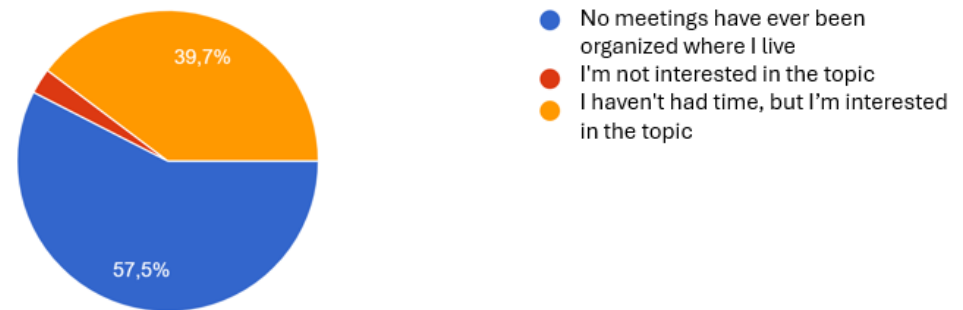
10. Have you ever attended a meeting on the Apennine brown bear in which the technicians illustrated data on its diffusion / behavior of the species / how to behave in its presence?

135 risposte



11. If you answered Never, why?

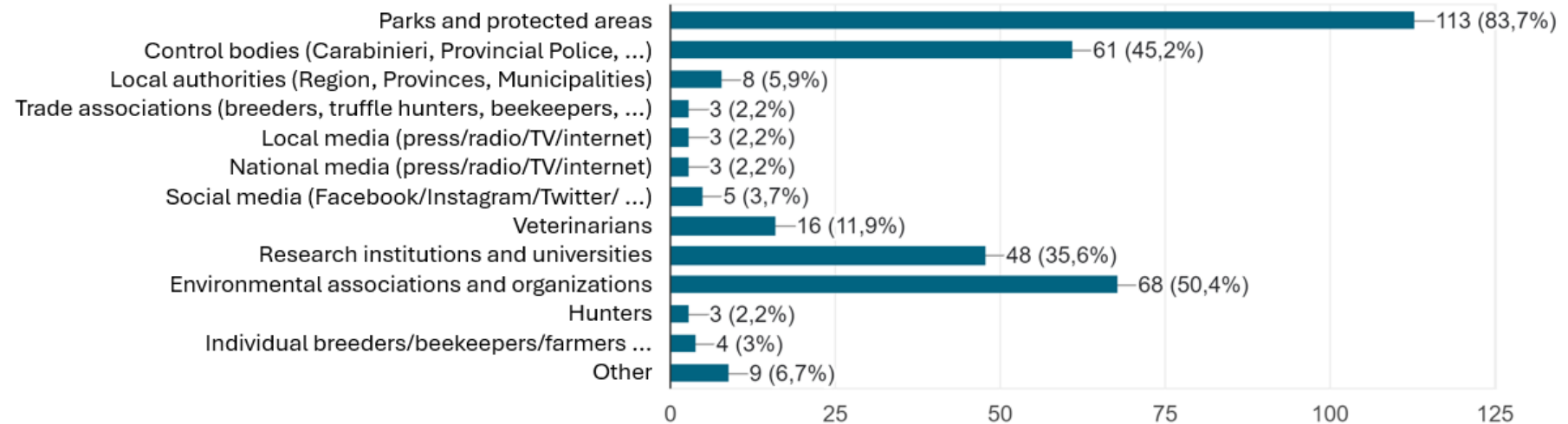
73 risposte



## Section 4: Communication channels

12. What sources of information do you trust most when it comes to the Apennine brown bear? (maximum 3 answers)

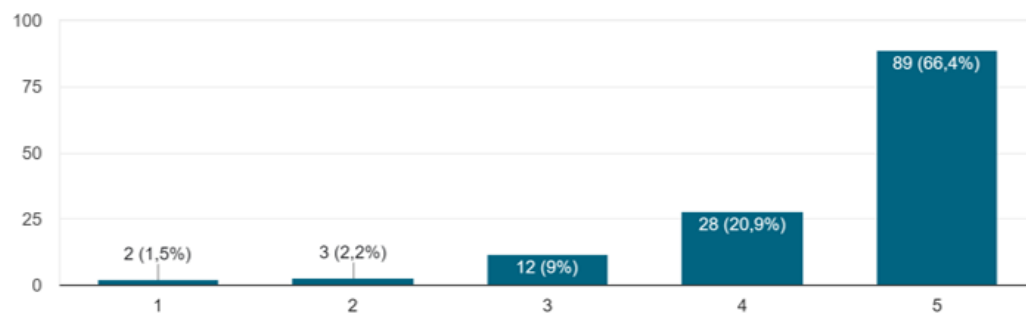
135 risposte



# Section 5: Participation and cooperation

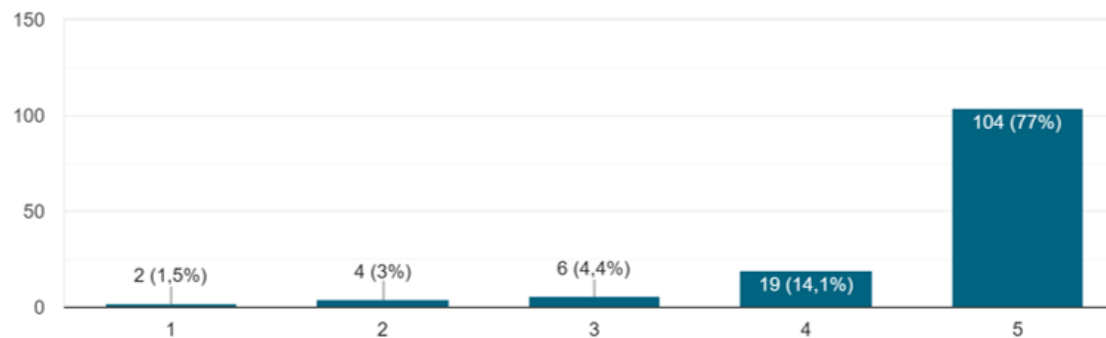
13. Do you think that moments of discussion organized on the territory can improve the relationship between people and the Apennine brown bear?

134 risposte



14. Do you think that collaboration between different subjects (organisations/communities/institutions) can be useful for improving human-bear coexistence?

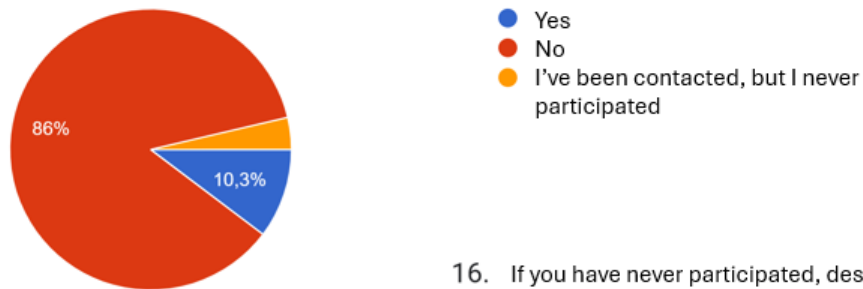
135 risposte



# Section 6: the work of the SHs platform

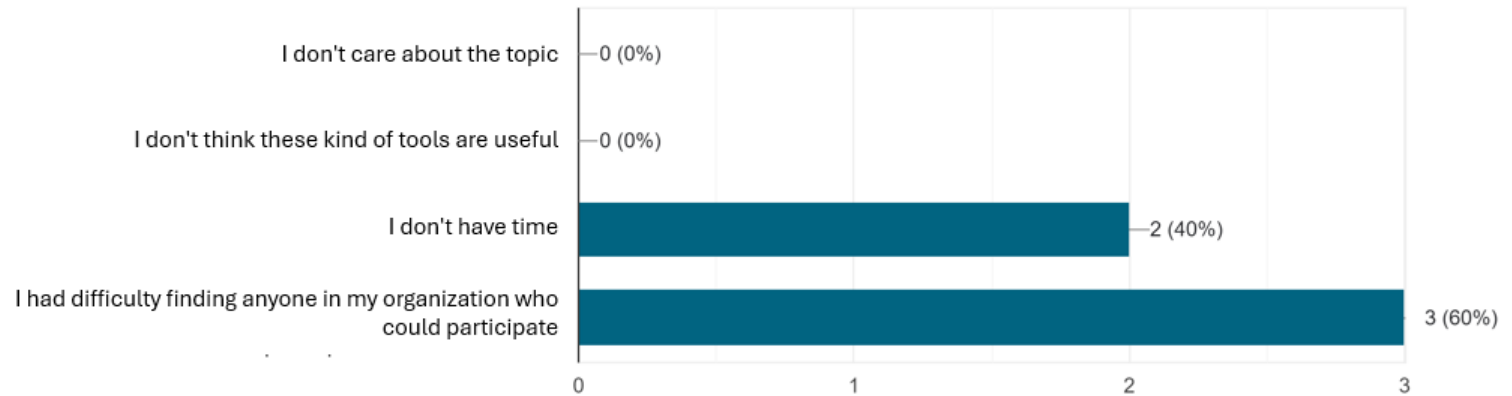
15. Do you participate directly in the work of the Platform for human-Apennine brown bear coexistence as part of the Life-ARCPROM project?

136 risposte



16. If you have never participated, despite having been contacted, why?

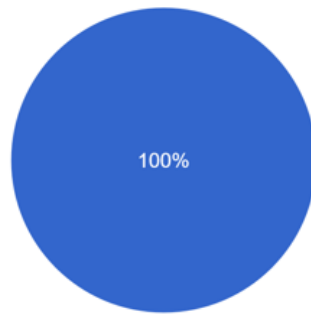
5 risposte





17. How do you rate the climate within the platform?

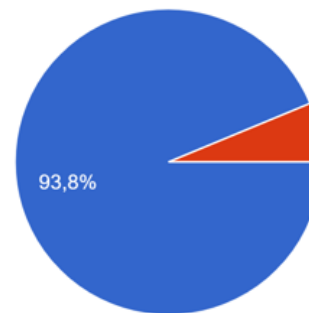
15 risposte



- Everyone participates in a constructive way
- Sometimes differences of opinion and perspective generate arguments and difficulties comprehension
- You can't work, the climate is too hostile

18. How do you evaluate the Platform's working method?

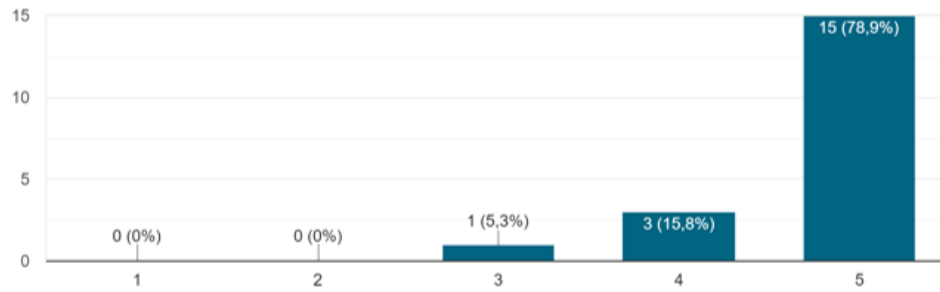
16 risposte



- Good, the presence of a facilitator helps you achieve your goals meetings
- Can be improved: sometimes I have the feeling of not being able to fully express my point of view
- Not good, I left every time dissatisfied

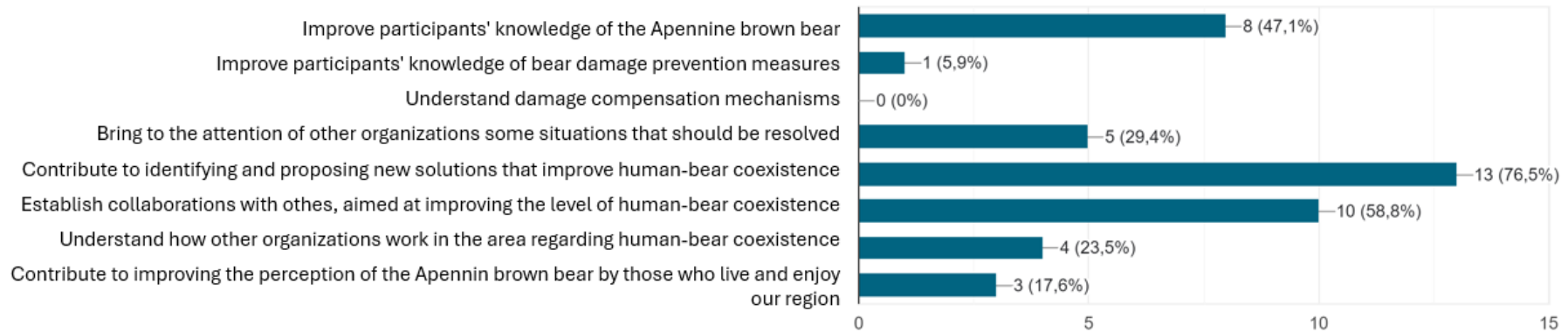
19. Do you think that participating in the Platform can help in identify shared solutions for improving human-bear coexistence?

19 risposte



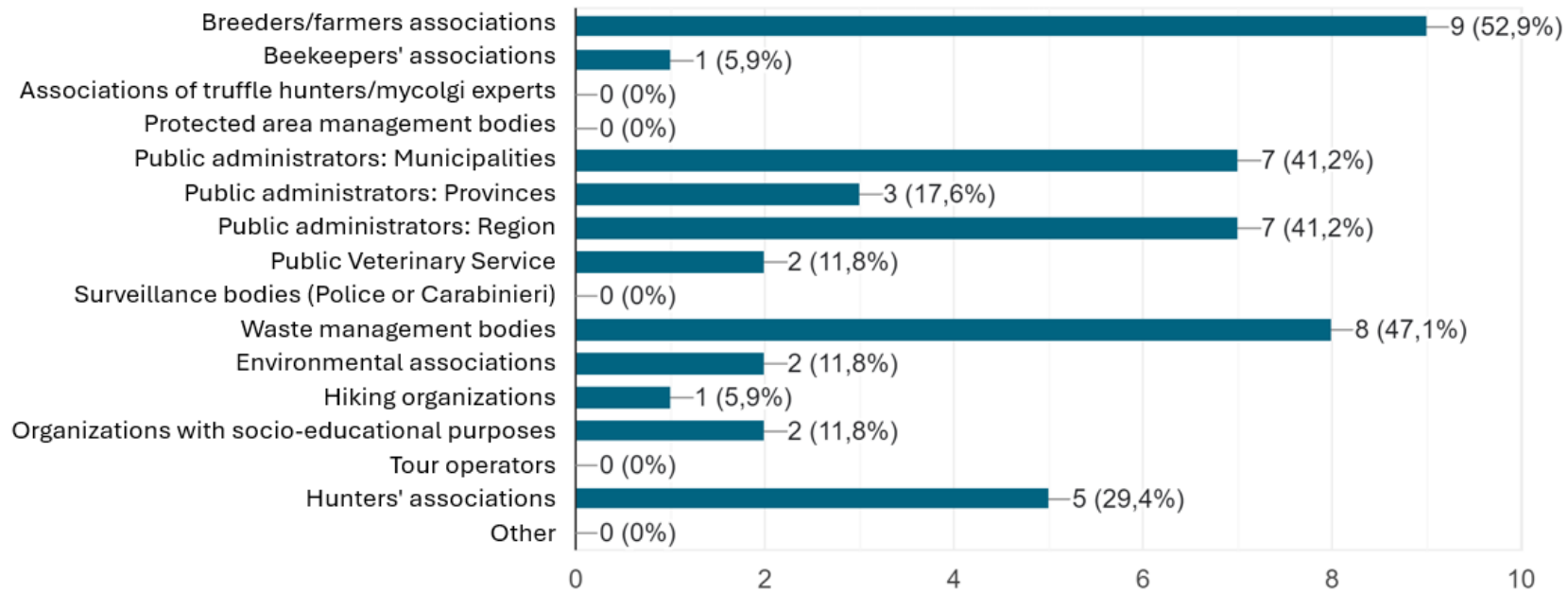
20. Which of the following results do you think have been achieved with the Platform's work? (maximum 3 answers)

17 risposte



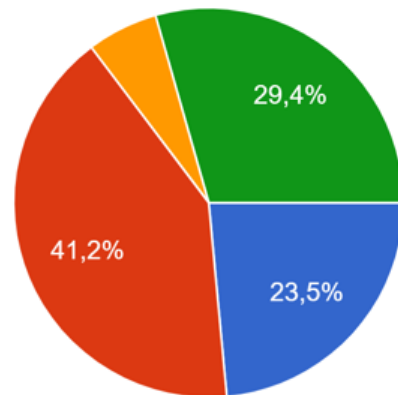
21. Which organizations do you think were under-represented at the platform's work, which would have allowed better results to be achieved? (maximum 3 answers)

17 risposte



23. Has your organization managed to collaborate with other participants in the Platform to carry out human-bear coexistence actions in the area?

17 risposte



- Yes, with the institutions (managing bodies of Parks, local administrations)
- Yes, both with institutions and with others organizations participating in platform
- Yes, only with other organizations that participate in the platform
- No

