

# Experiences of People Seen in an Acute Hospital Setting by a Liaison Mental Health Service: Responses from an Online Survey

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## Background

- The UK has recently expanded the provision of liaison mental health services in the NHS
- Little work has been undertaken to explore first-hand experiences of these services in the UK, particularly since this recent expansion
- The existing literature shows mixed results and poor response rates and is limited to single sites

## Aim

- The aim of this study was to gain insights into UK service users' experiences of LMHS in both emergency departments and acute inpatient wards

## Methods

- Cross-sectional internet survey via the social media platform Facebook
- The survey was initially advertised from May-July 2017 and re-run from November 2017-February 2018 specifically focussing on male respondents due to a poor response rate
- The survey featured a structured questionnaire divided into three categories: the profile of the respondent, perceived professionalism of LMHS and overall opinion of the service
- Structured responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and latent class analysis
- Free-text responses were transcribed verbatim and interpreted using framework analysis
- This work formed part of the first phase of LP-MAESTRO, a programme aiming to evaluate the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of different configurations of liaison psychiatry services in England (National Institute for Health Research HS&DR programme 13/58/08)

## Discussion

- Our findings are generally more negative than those of previous studies [1,2] and feedback from the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Psychiatric Liaison Accreditation Network [3]
- It is possible that the governmental drive to assess, treat and discharge 95% of patients seen in emergency departments within four hours of attendance has had a detrimental effect on the quality of care received
- Our findings are in keeping with wider issues surrounding healthcare delivery in acute settings
- Negative attitudes towards those who self-harm sadly still exist, possibly accounting for some experiences captured here
- It is possible that those who were dissatisfied with liaison services were more likely to complete the survey
- The use of recruitment via the Internet precludes commentary on the representativeness of the study population
- Our results should be regarded as signals rather than definitive findings

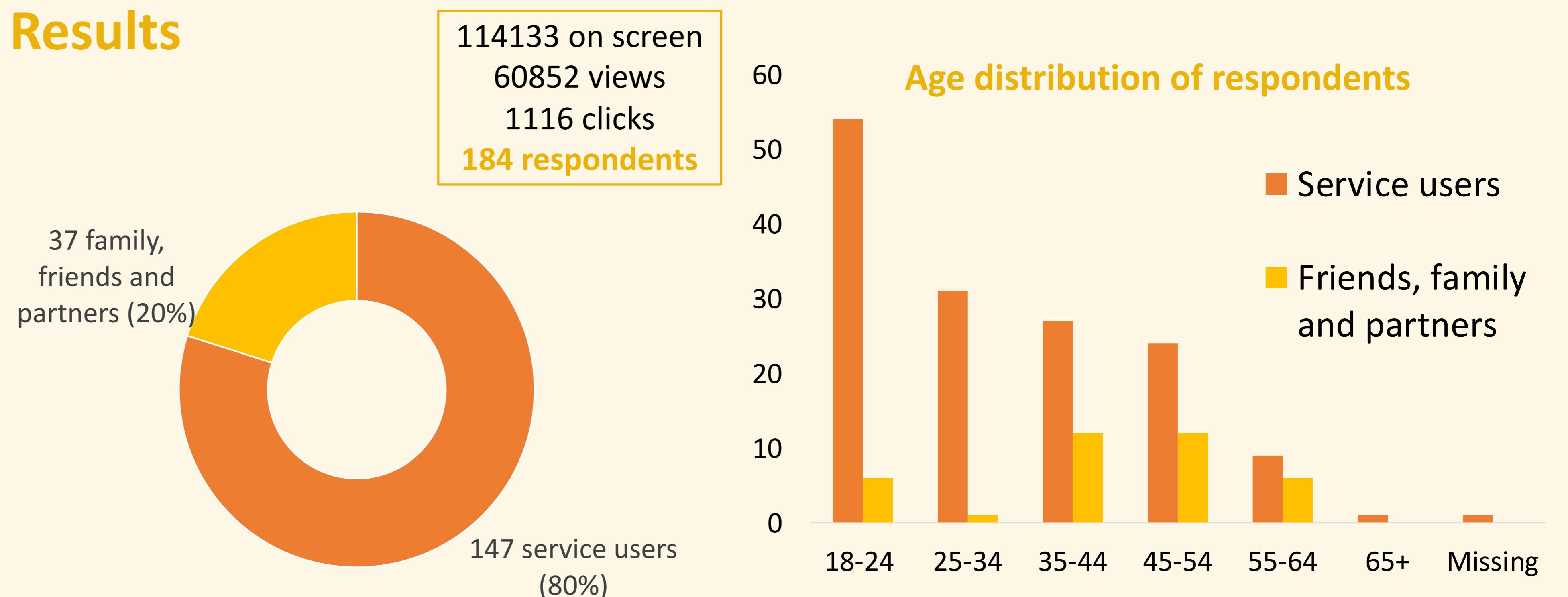
## Conclusions

- Respondents perceived liaison services more frequently as negative than positive, representing a cause for concern
- Experiences with liaison services can be inherently therapeutic and influence engagement with treatment and future psychiatric care
- Close attention must be given to evaluating and improving liaison mental health services from both organisation and interpersonal perspectives

## References

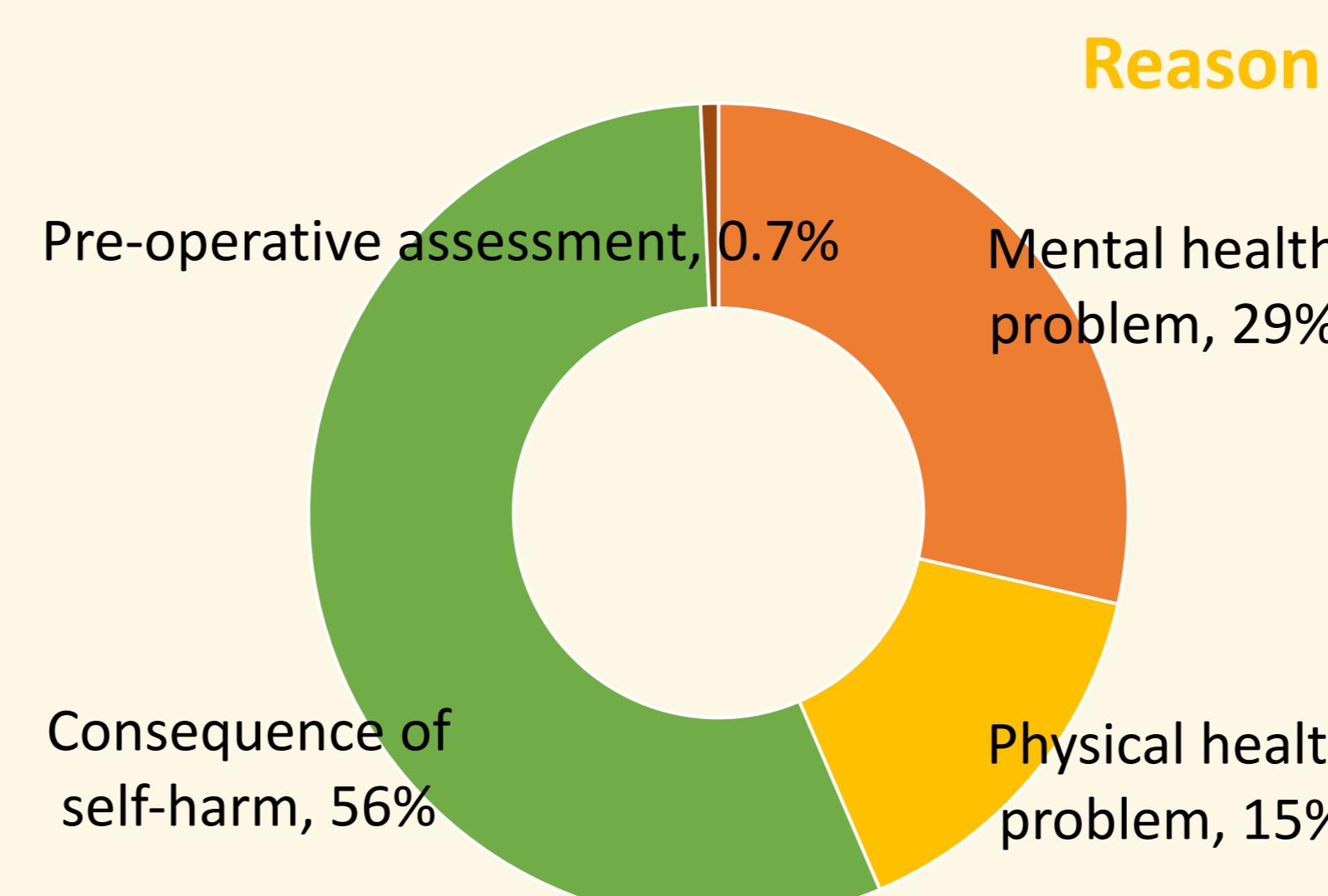
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## Results



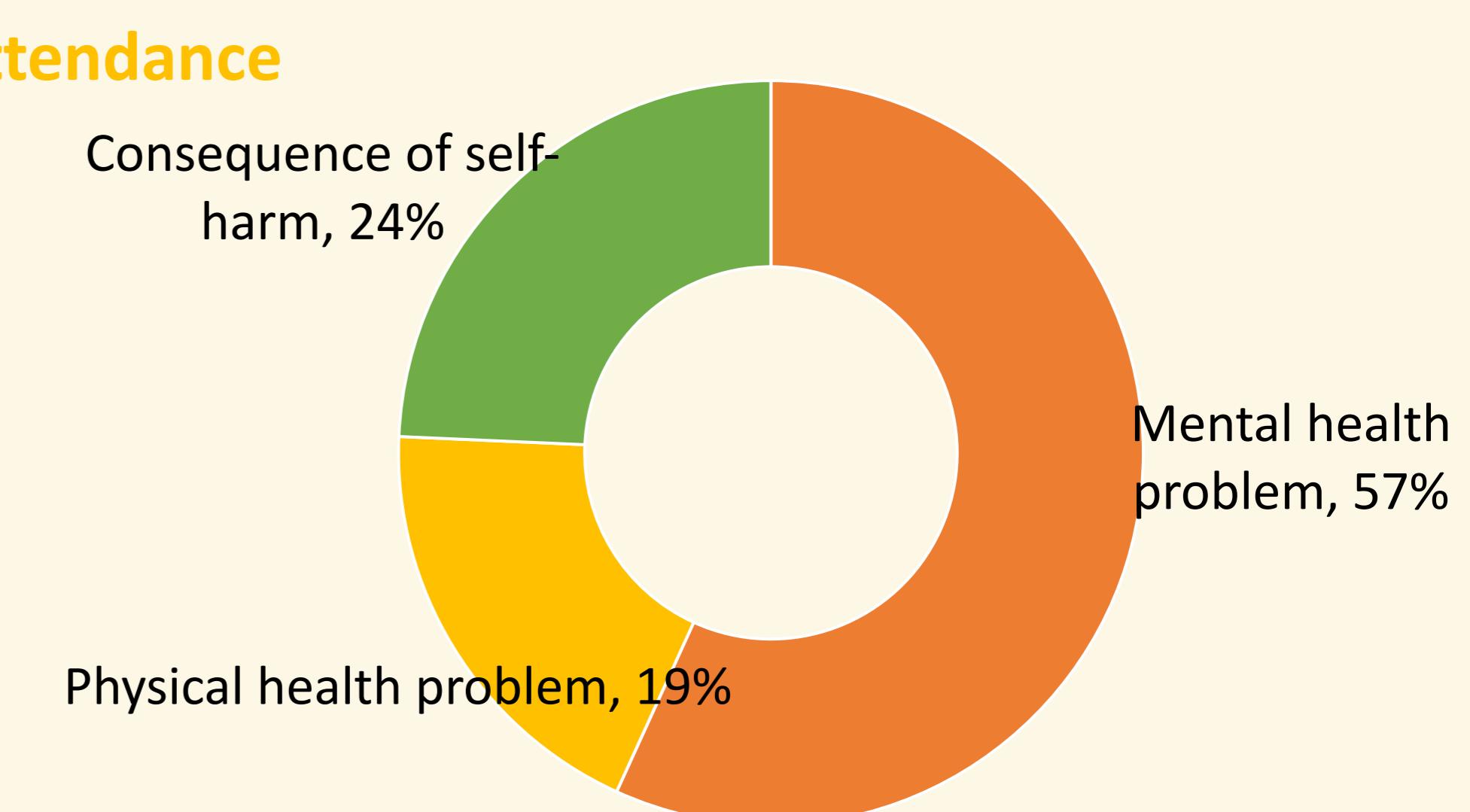
### Service users

86% female  
40% had contact with LMHS in previous 6 months  
54% were worried about their mental health



### Friends, family and partners (FFPs)

78% female  
43% had contact in previous 6 months  
57% worried about their loved one's mental health



Assessment came at a good time for 57% service users and 22% FFPs  
Assessment was done in a private place for 66% service users and 19% FFPs

16% service users and 35% FFPs were offered advocacy during contact  
27% service users and 32% FFPs were signposted to other services

24% service users and 24% FFPs felt understood by LMHS  
29% service users and 38% FFPs felt comfortable during contact with LMHS  
21% service users and 22% FFPs found initial contact with LMHS helpful  
31% service users and 27% FFPs found overall contact with LMHS helpful

### Latent class analysis results

#### Class 1 (46%)

Generally disliked experience  
Did not feel comfortable or understood

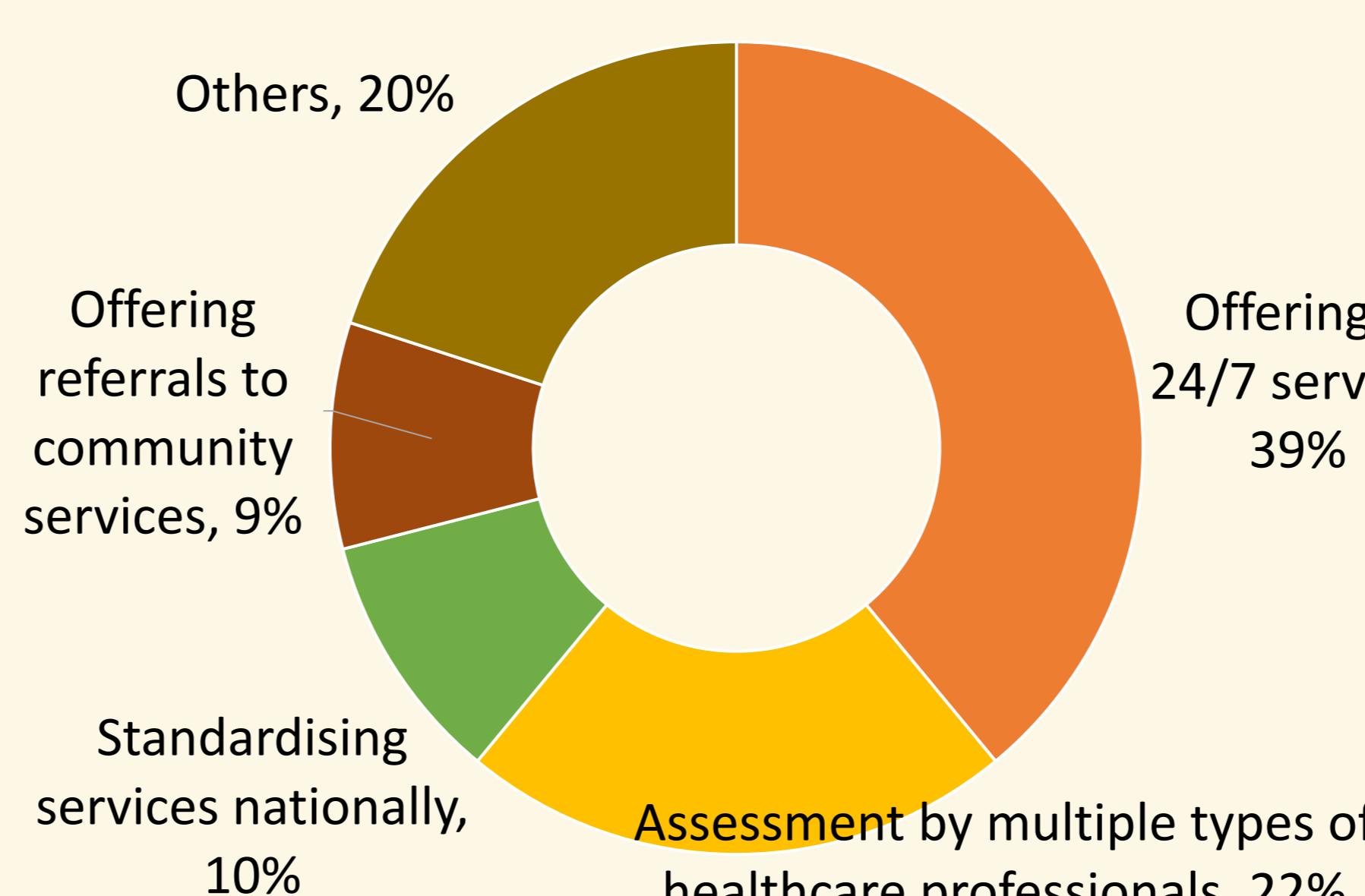
#### Class 2 (36%)

Found the experience helpful  
Felt comfortable and understood

#### Class 3 (18%)

Unable to ascertain opinions  
Did not answer questions pertaining to helpfulness

### Most important features of liaison psychiatry services according to all respondents



- See patients more quickly following referral
- Assessment by a psychiatrist and mental health nurse
- Treatment with respect and compassion
- Listen to the friends, family and partners who accompany the service user
- Improved knowledge of local services and third sector organisations
- Clearer communication about next steps
- 24/7 emergency mental health service for vulnerable people