

# Volunteer Survey

2025 Report



**ALONE**

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

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# Introduction



At ALONE, volunteers are at the heart of our mission and vision. We envision an Ireland where Older People can age comfortably and securely at home, staying closely connected to their communities. Our volunteers are essential to making this vision a reality. By dedicating your time and support, you help make our services more impactful and effective, ensuring that Older People experience positive aging at home.



# Our Approach to Volunteering

This report presents the key insights from the 2025 Volunteer Programme Survey, designed to gather feedback to improve ALONE's volunteer experience and support.

The survey covered several important areas, including:

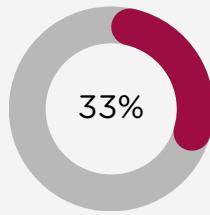
- volunteers' overall experiences
- the benefits of volunteering
- the impact of last year's improvements
- awareness of new support initiatives
- challenges faced by volunteers and older people
- interest in additional training and social events
- and feedback on the support provided by ALONE.



At ALONE, we deeply value our volunteers and see them as the heart of everything we do. Your commitment is what fuels our mission to reduce loneliness and isolation among Older People. We're dedicated to continuously improving your experience as a volunteer, making it both meaningful and impactful. Our goal is to ensure that, together, we're building a brighter future - one where Older People feel supported, connected, and valued in their communities. Thank you for being such an essential part of ALONE's vision.

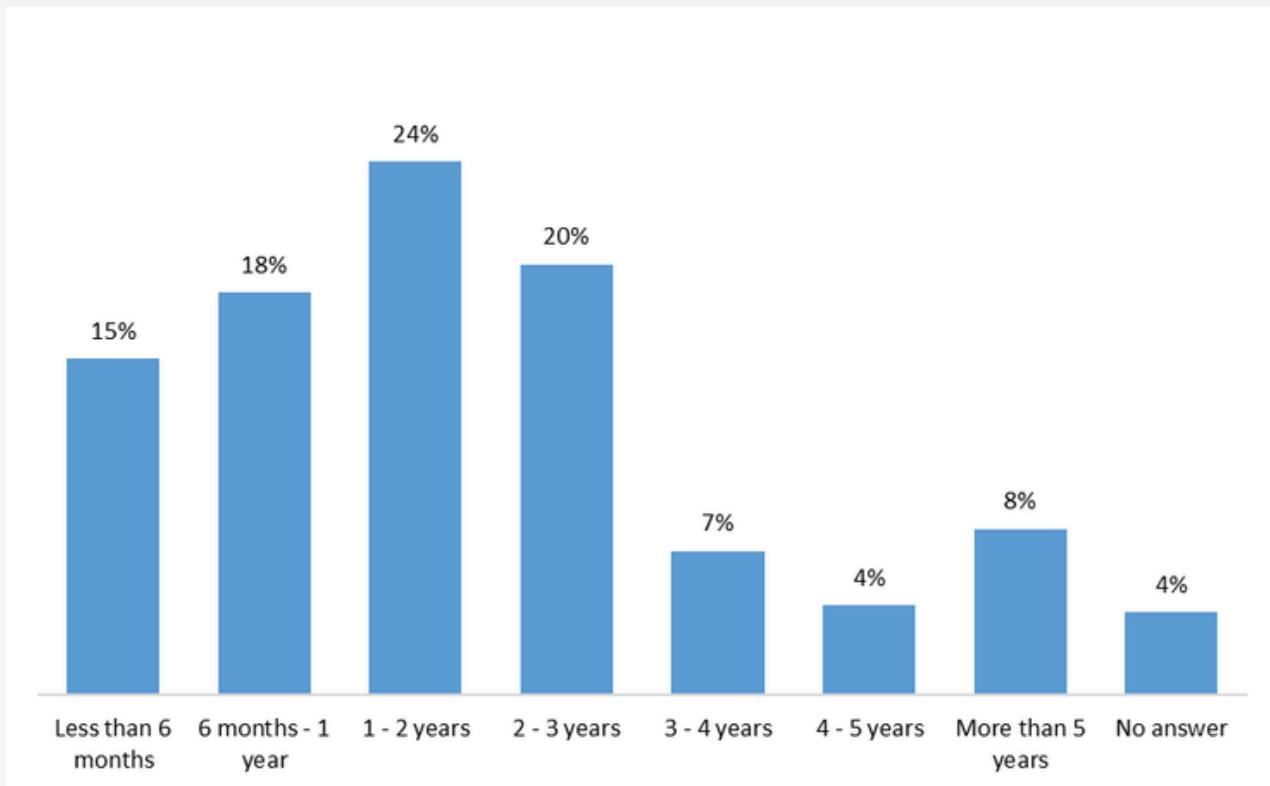


# The Volunteer Survey

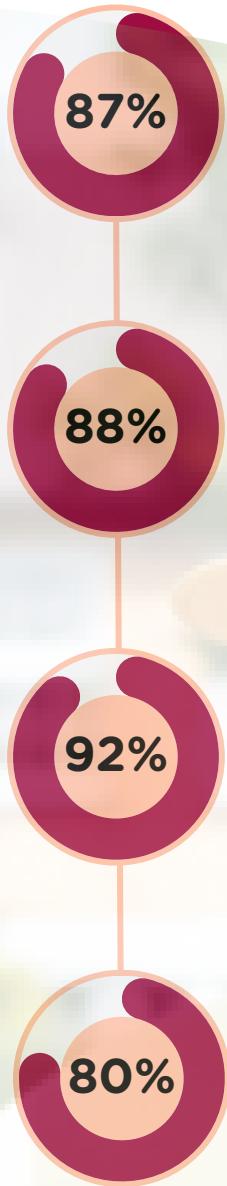


In 2025, the survey was sent to 2,649 active volunteers, with 864 completing it, representing a response rate of 33% - a 1% increase from 2024 and continues the upward trend observed since 2023, when 2,063 volunteers were invited and 560 responded, yielding a 27% response rate.

The volunteers who took part in the survey have been with us for:



We want to extend a sincere thank you to all our volunteers for taking the time to share your feedback. We're thrilled with the level of engagement in this survey and truly appreciate your thoughtful input. Your positive feedback encourages us, and the concerns and challenges you've highlighted are equally important—they help us learn, grow, and improve. While we know perfection is a journey, our focus remains on listening to you, valuing your contributions, and taking action to address your needs. We hope this level of engagement continues, and we look forward to working together to make our volunteer experience even better.



Of volunteers are satisfied or very satisfied with their experience

Of volunteers would recommend ALONE Volunteer opportunities to others

Of volunteers would recommend ALONE services to an Older Person they know

Of volunteers felt valued and recognised by ALONE

“ I have truly made a fabulous friend, this benefit alone is immeasurable. No, I have made a best friend. I get the benefit of 76(?) years of experience on all manner of matters, current and personal. I can help a fellow human being to maintain a dignified and even enjoyable life and I get a close, very valued buddy in the process ”

# Key Findings



Of volunteers reported benefiting from being an ALONE Volunteer

Of volunteers are aware of the Volunteer Assistance Programme

Of volunteers felt prepared to start their role after the initial training

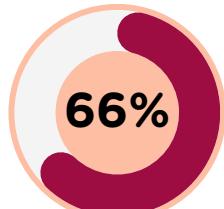
Of volunteers are aware of access to additional training

“ —

You become more resourceful with practice, gain insights to the info needed & how to answer more common questions better. You learn how to listen better, to empathize authentically. You develop your judgement about what the caller needs, a chat, some info or something more urgent.

— ”

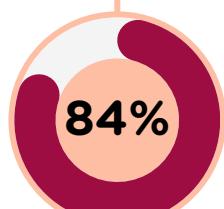
# Key Findings



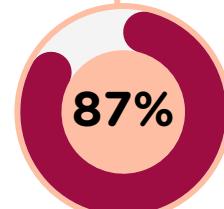
Of volunteers responded they read the Volunteer Brief



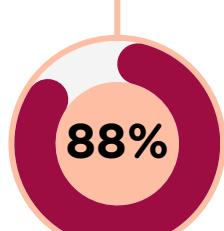
The support provided most often by the VSB volunteers focuses on small jobs around the house, technology assistance, and accessing information online. 32,047 practical supports were carried out by volunteers across seven categories, which translates to 1.5% increase in practical supports delivery



of VS&B volunteers are aware of the BFriend App, out of which 39% uses it on weekly basis



of volunteers indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of volunteering in ALONE (1% ↑)



Of volunteers would recommend ALONE volunteer opportunities to a friend, family member, etc. (same as last year).



“I have enjoyed speaking with older people as I often miss spending time and chatting with my grandparents who have passed away..”

“— I feel that the older person I’m supporting has blossomed since we were introduced and that shows the positive impact being a volunteer can have.”

“I like to think that the time I spend befriending takes me to a different space in my head which really helps me.”

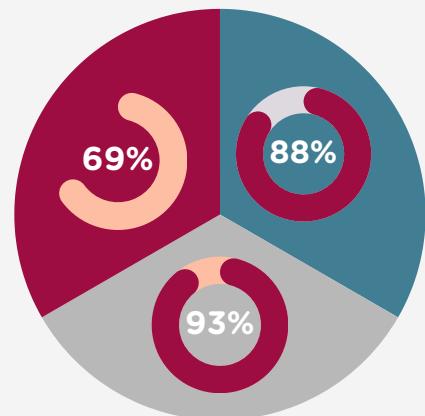
“— I have gained a new lovely friend ”

## Volunteer satisfaction with support

69% of 662 Visitation Support & Befriending Volunteers strongly agree or agree they receive support from their support staff (the same 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row)

88% of 194 Telephone Support & Befriending Volunteers strongly agree or agree they receive support from their support staff (1% ↑)

93% of 45 National Support Referral Line Volunteers strongly agree or agree they receive support from their support staff (1% ↓)



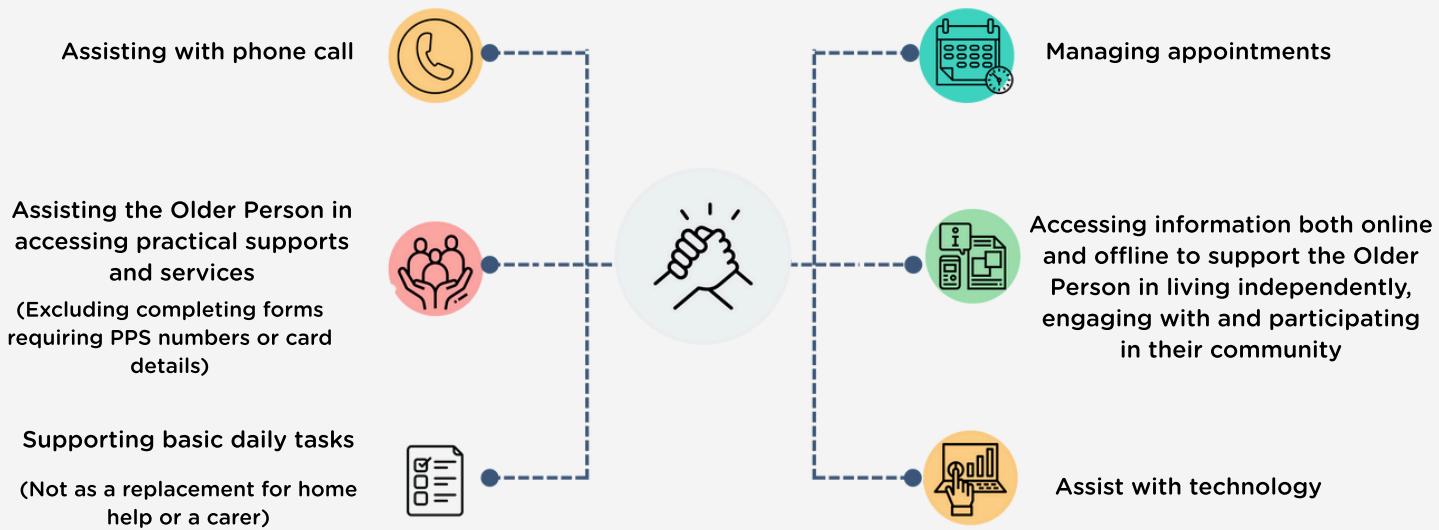
“—

“I feel valued for what I do and supported if needed, so I have a really positive experience with Alone. The background staff are very happy and helpful, I feel I am contributing in a small way to benefit the older person so, I honestly couldn't ask for more.”

## Practical Supports

Our Visitation Support & Befriending volunteers continue to make an incredible difference every day, delivering an outstanding 32,047 practical supports across seven categories this year—a wonderful 1.5% increase from last year! To continue strengthening this vital work, we're excited to be developing a new Practical Supports Project. This initiative will bring clarity around what counts as a practical support in your role and provide simple guidance on how to record these moments of support through the BFriend App. By doing so, we can better support and protect both you and the Older Person, ensure timely communication, and make sure every practical support and wellbeing need is captured and responded to.

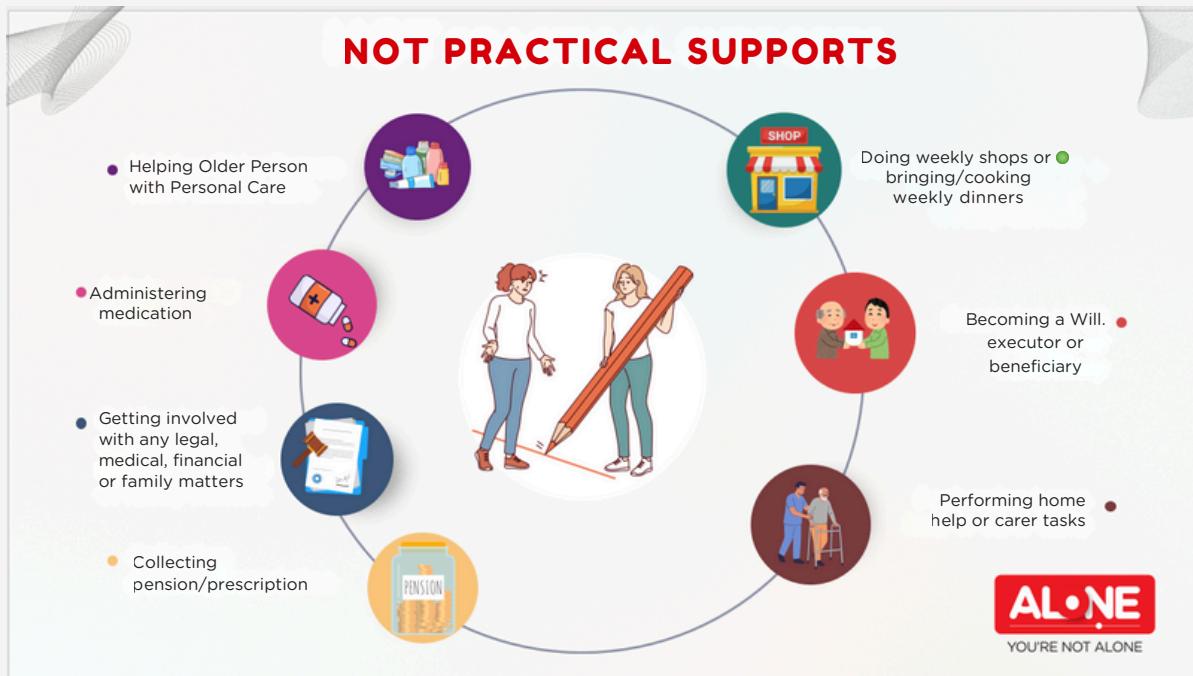
## Practical Supports



### Remember...

...for your own safety and for the wellbeing of the Older Person, please note that the following items do not fall under the scope of practical support for ALONE volunteers.

# Highlights of Specific Findings



To maintain healthy boundaries and ensure the best experience for both you and the Older Person, please do not carry out any tasks included on picture above.

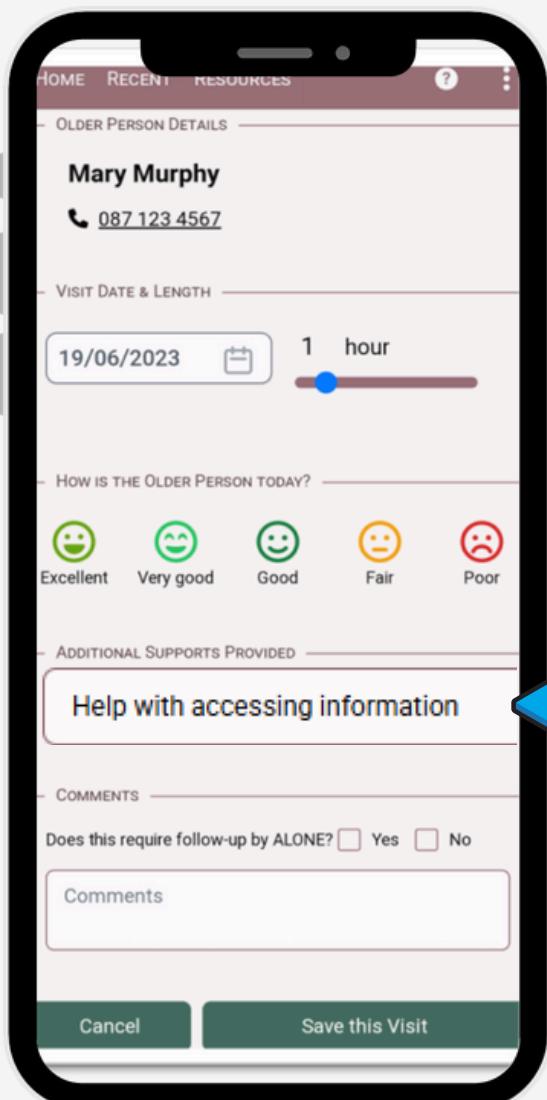
**If you are asked to provide support in any of these areas, or if you are unsure whether a task qualifies as practical support, please contact us through the BFriend App, your Volunteer Support Officer, the Older Person's Support Coordinator, or by emailing [Volunteer@alone.ie](mailto:Volunteer@alone.ie).**

“

Mostly just keeping them company. Sometimes I'll help them to find a number in their phonebook and dial for them, sometimes I'll read things aloud to them that they can't see, occasionally I'll replace a battery in a hearing aid. I'll regularly look something up for them online - e.g. a news story of interest, an obituary they've missed, an old song or just a topic that we're talking about and want to know more on.”

## Using the BFriend App to Record Practical Supports

Recording practical support ensures we can measure impact, identify gaps, and continually improve how we empower older people to live independently at home.



By logging practical supports, we capture the small but vital actions that build an older person's confidence and quality of life over time - Every support provided counts!

Record Practical Supports provided here!



## Clearer Guidance for Telephone Support & Befriending Volunteers

Telephone Support & Befriending volunteers requested clearer guidance on record keeping, professional communication, and clarification on service boundaries. It's essential to record clear, professional notes in the comments section when documenting calls with older people. These notes provide valuable context for the next volunteer making contact and for staff who may need to follow up in certain situations.

Our Telephone Support & Befriending service is designed to offer older people regular companionship and support, with each call lasting up to fifteen minutes. These brief but meaningful check-ins help ensure that the people we support feel safe, well, and socially connected.



Because calls are scheduled every 15 minutes, it can be tempting to stay on the line a little longer—especially when you're enjoying the conversation—but keeping to the planned time helps us reach everyone who needs us. If you ever need a gentle way to wrap up, you might try saying: "I've really enjoyed our chat today, but I have a few more calls to make so we can support everyone."

This helps you manage your time while staying warm, kind, and supportive.



## Support with challenging calls for NSRL Volunteers

Although the majority of NSRL volunteers reported experiencing no major challenges in their role, some shared that one of their main challenges is feeling prepared to support callers in distress — including those experiencing depression, suicidal thoughts, loneliness, or anxiety. To help everyone feel more confident and supported in these moments, we will be scheduling three annual training sessions focused on maintaining healthy boundaries, signposting callers to appropriate services, and handling sensitive or emotionally difficult calls.

**A gentle reminder that NSRL is not an emergency line, and you are never expected to manage crises alone. As well as your NSRL Coordinator, our Volunteer Assistance Programme is available whenever you need support, and additional training is always on hand to help you navigate challenging situations.**



To provide both TS&B and NSRL volunteers with greater clarity and confidence, we've created a new ALONE Boundaries Training for Telephone Support & Befriending & NSRL Volunteers, featuring real-life scenarios you might encounter on calls. this training is designed to be practical, insightful, and supportive. We hope you find it valuable!"

## Improving our Check In Calls

You told us in the survey that you'd like more regular check-in calls and personal contact from staff. We've taken this on board. We're now moving forward with a project to enhance the volunteer check-in call process, making these calls more consistent, meaningful, and supportive. This update will also improve how check-ins are recorded, helping us maintain clarity and accountability across the entire volunteer programme.



## Social Events

We currently host two social events each year—one in May for National Volunteering Week and another in November for International Volunteer Day. These gatherings are a wonderful chance to connect, meet the team, and celebrate our amazing volunteer community.

Thanks to your positive feedback, we'll continue running these events. Many of you also asked for more opportunities to meet socially, so we're exploring informal online meet-ups between our main events for anyone who'd like to drop in and chat.

We're also committed to making events as accessible as possible by offering a variety of times and rotating locations. While this can be challenging across large regions, we'll do our best to ensure the travel burden doesn't fall on the same volunteers each time.





## Supports Available to You

Overall, the survey highlighted a decrease in awareness of additional supports available to all volunteers. This is what we have in place to support you.

## Volunteer Assistance Programme

As a volunteer, you have access to a free and confidential care service! You can schedule sessions anytime from Monday to Sunday, between 7 AM and 9 PM.

For details on how to access the Volunteer Assistance Program (VAP), check your Volunteer Role Guide or reach out to your Volunteer Support Officer, Telephone Support Coordinator or NSRL Coordinator.

Qualified and experienced counsellors will listen in confidence and make sure you get the help you need. The VAP includes four solution-focused counselling sessions that Volunteers can access when you need extra support. It provides first -line response, prevention, triage and short-term resolution services.



## Additional Training Available

To help you in your role and enhance the positive impact you're making in your community, additional self-learning training modules are available to you! This training is in an online format to allow for greater flexibility, enabling you to learn at your own pace and participate from anywhere, while keeping training consistent and accessible across the entire organisation.

## Training Hub

In your Volunteer Training Hub, you'll find a variety of training resources tailored just for you as a volunteer. These include:

- Boundaries Training for Volunteers
- Active Listening & Communicating with Empathy

# Highlights of Specific Findings

You'll also have access to trainings focused on meeting the specific needs of the older people you support, such as:

- Supporting Older People with Their Mental Health
- Supporting Older People with Symptoms of Cancer

Please go to the Training Hub to see what other training we have for you!

## How to Access Self-Learning Modules for Each Role:



### Visitation Support & Befriending Volunteers:

Find your training in the "Resources" section of the BFriend App at [www.bfriend.alone.ie](http://www.bfriend.alone.ie).

### Telephone Support & Befriending Volunteers

Access your training through the "Settings" section of your Telephone Support App.

### National Support & Referral Line Volunteers

Your training materials are available on Sharepoint under the "ALONE Training & Resources for NSRL Volunteers" section.

## Your ALONE Support Team

Remember - You can always contact ALONE through the BFriend App, by calling the National Support & Referral Line on 0818 222 024, by emailing [volunteer@alone.ie](mailto:volunteer@alone.ie).

# Highlights of Specific Findings



Or, if you ever need a hand or just want to check in, we're always here for you. Reach out to the staff member who supports your volunteer role:

- VS&B volunteers: Your Volunteer Support Officer or Older Person's Support Coordinator.
- TS&B volunteers: Your Volunteer Support Officer or Telephone Support Coordinator.
- NSRL Volunteers: Reach out via Teams chat or email [nsrl@alone.ie](mailto:nsrl@alone.ie).



## Volunteer Brief

Thank you to everyone who shared feedback on the Volunteer Brief. One key insight was a 17% drop in readership, with volunteers telling us that limited time, communication overload, and the length of the brief made it challenging to keep up. We also learned that 12% of volunteers weren't aware the brief existed.

We're taking this on board and making improvements to ensure the Brief truly supports you. Over the coming weeks, we'll be simplifying and shortening content, spotlighting the most important updates, and adding more engaging visuals. We understand that most volunteers contribute 1-2 hours each week, and we don't want the Brief to add to your time commitment. Our goal is to make it easier, quicker, and more enjoyable to stay connected.



# Thank You!

We extend our gratitude for your invaluable contribution to our survey aimed at enhancing our services for older people. Your dedication and insights makes a significant impact on the lives of those we work with.

**Thank you from everyone at ALONE for being a crucial part of our mission.**





YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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