

Appeals

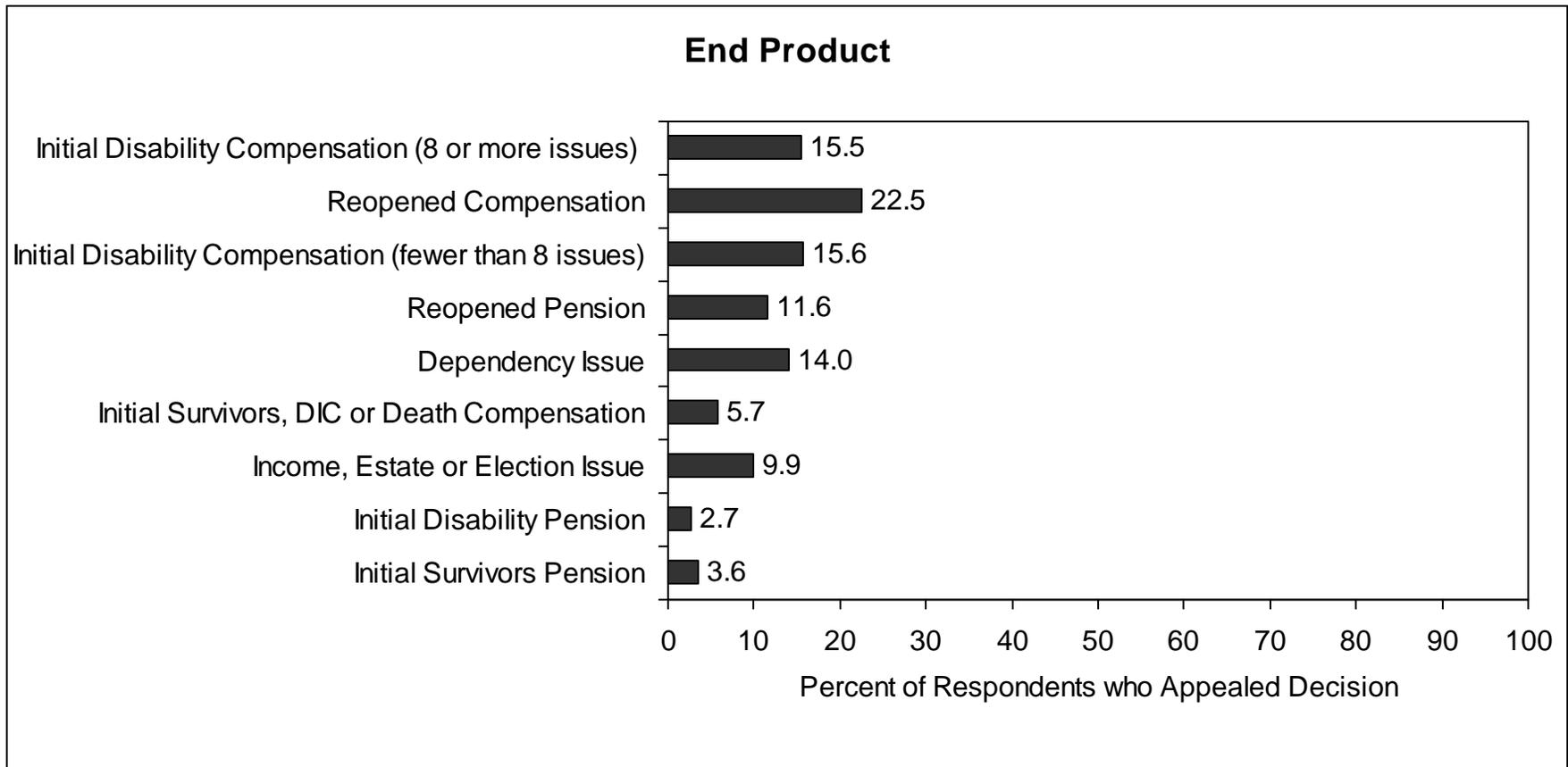
Findings from the 2003 Survey of Veterans Satisfaction with
the VA Compensation and Pension Claims Process



Surveys and Research Staff
Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity
Veterans Benefits Administration

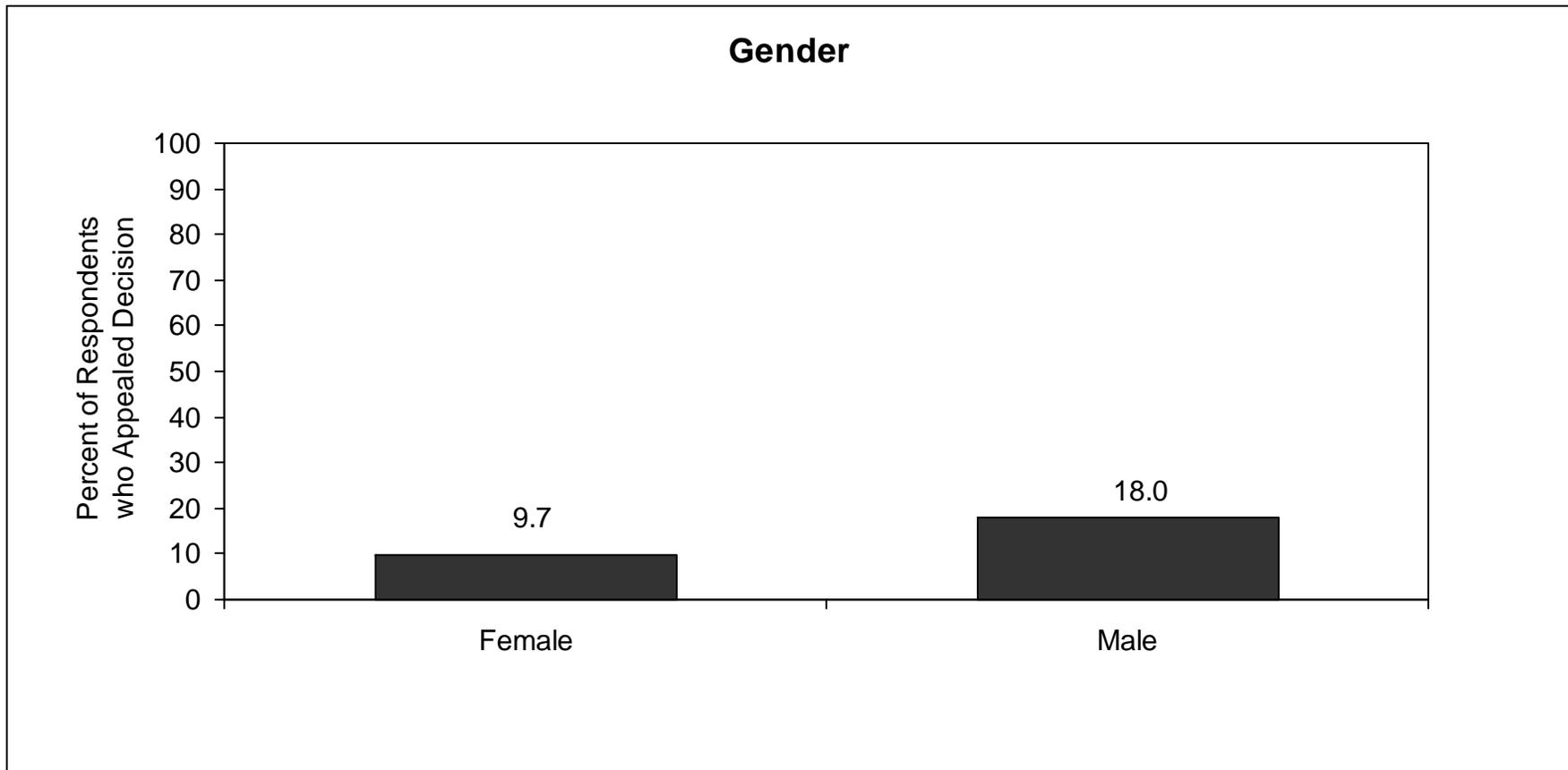
Prepared by Ronda Britt
March 2004

Appeals by Demographic Group



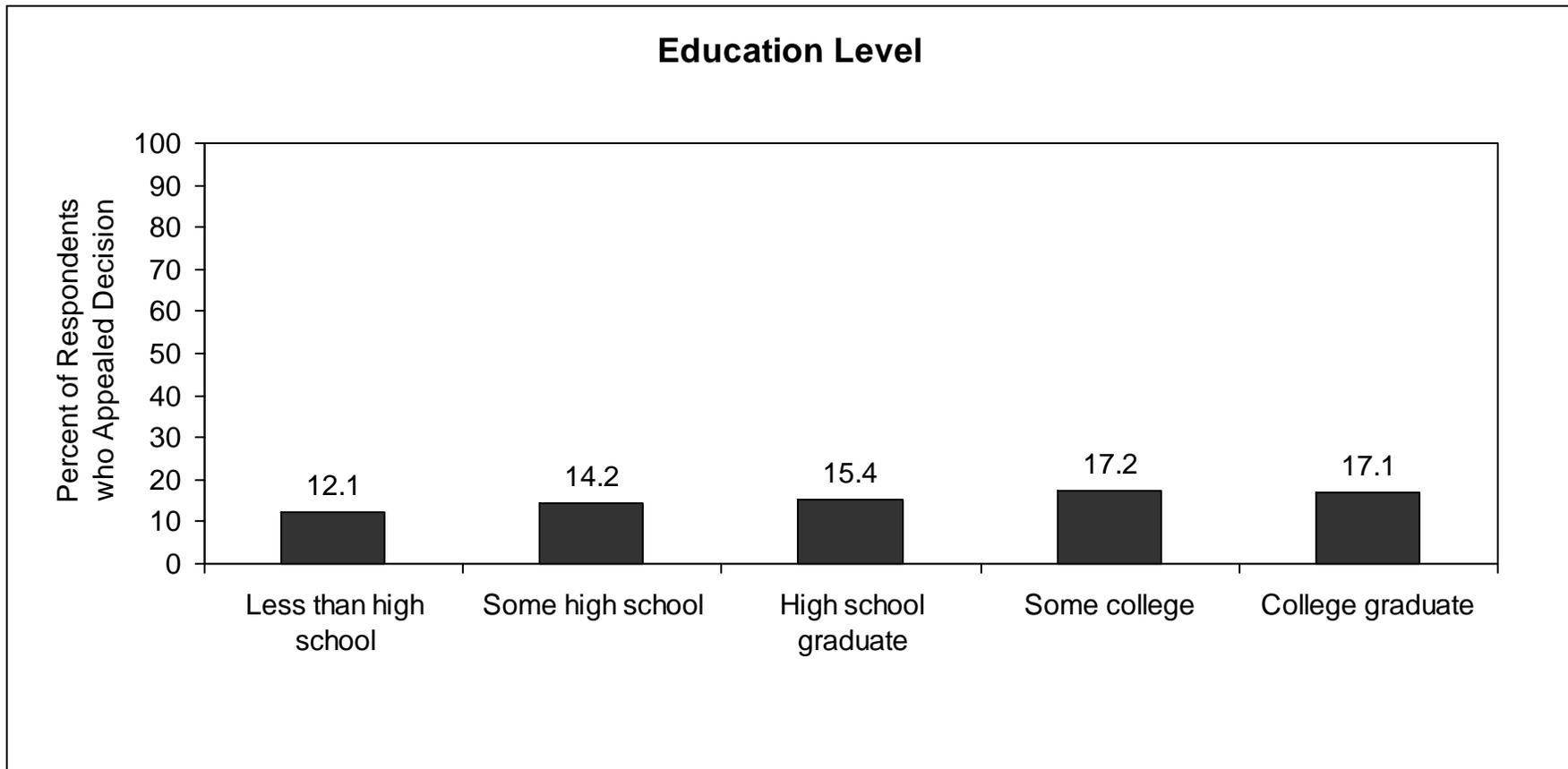
- The type of claim with the highest percentage of appeals (22.5 percent) is the Reopened Compensation claim; the end product with the lowest percentage of appeals is the Initial Disability Pension claim (2.7 percent).

Appeals by Demographic Group



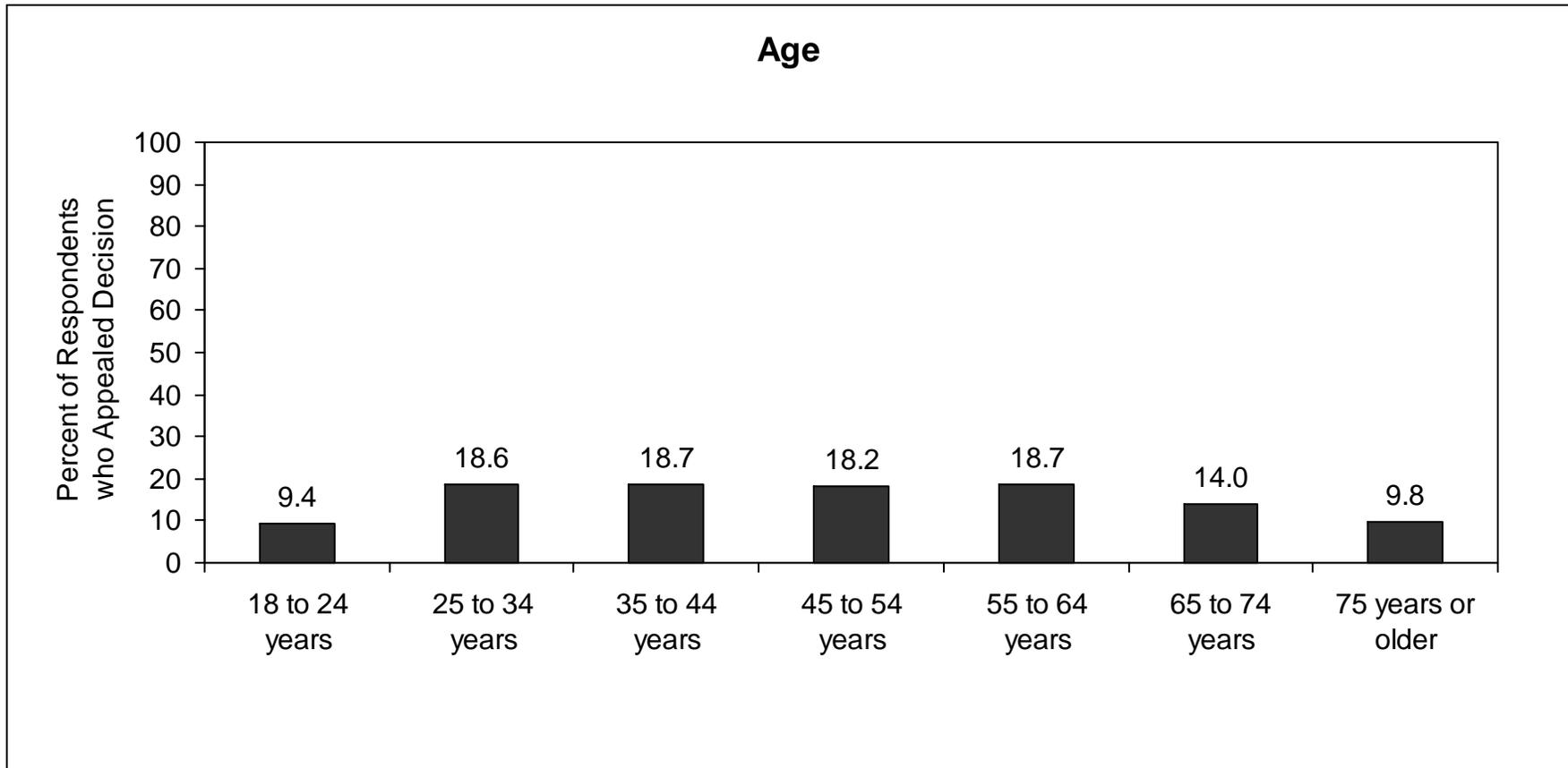
- Men were significantly more likely to appeal than women, with 18.0 percent of men appealing their claim vs. only 9.7 percent of women.

Appeals by Demographic Group



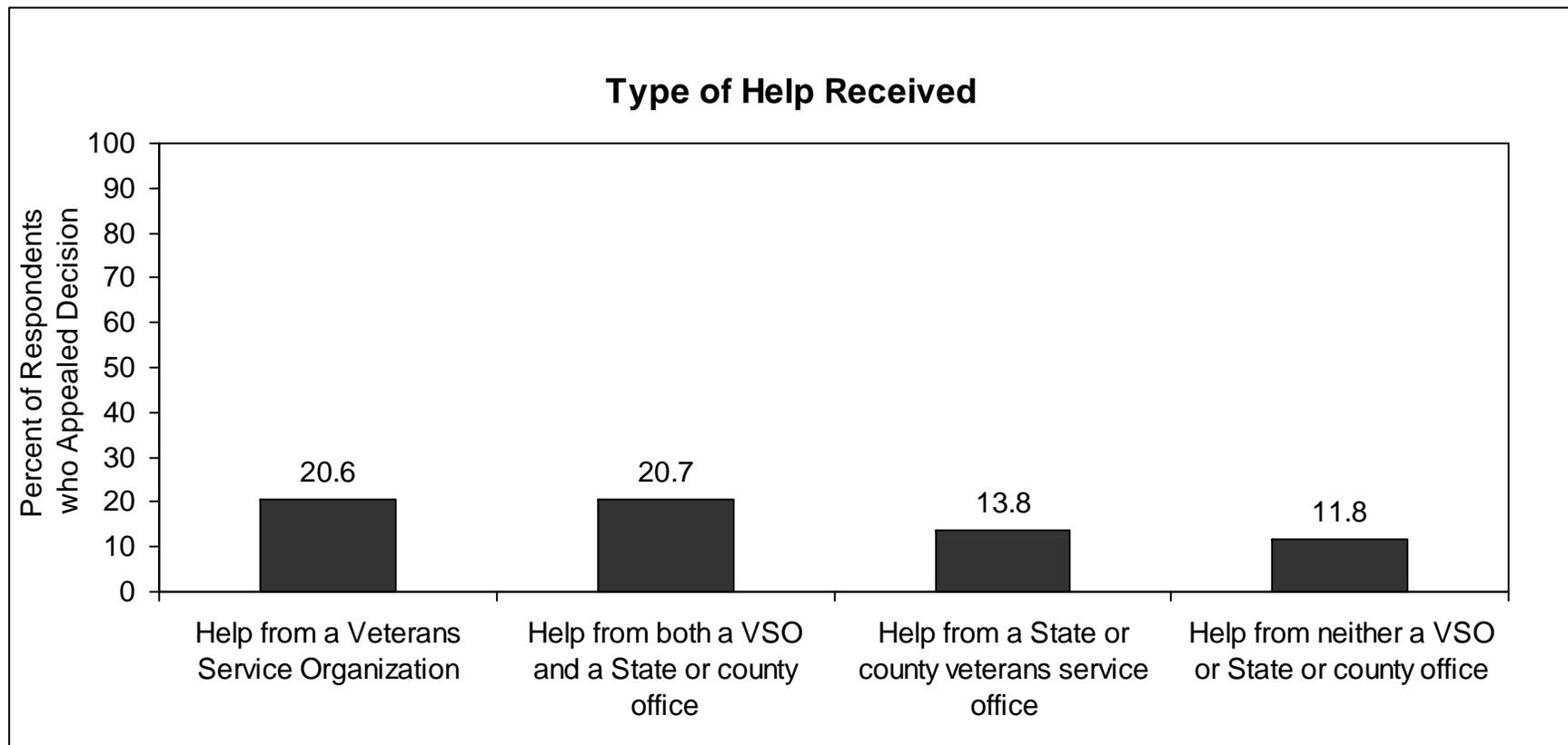
- There was not much variation in the percentage of appeals when shown by the education level of claimants. However, those with at least some college education were slightly more likely to appeal (roughly 17 percent of those who were college graduates or had some college education) than those without a high school diploma (12.1 percent).

Appeals by Demographic Group



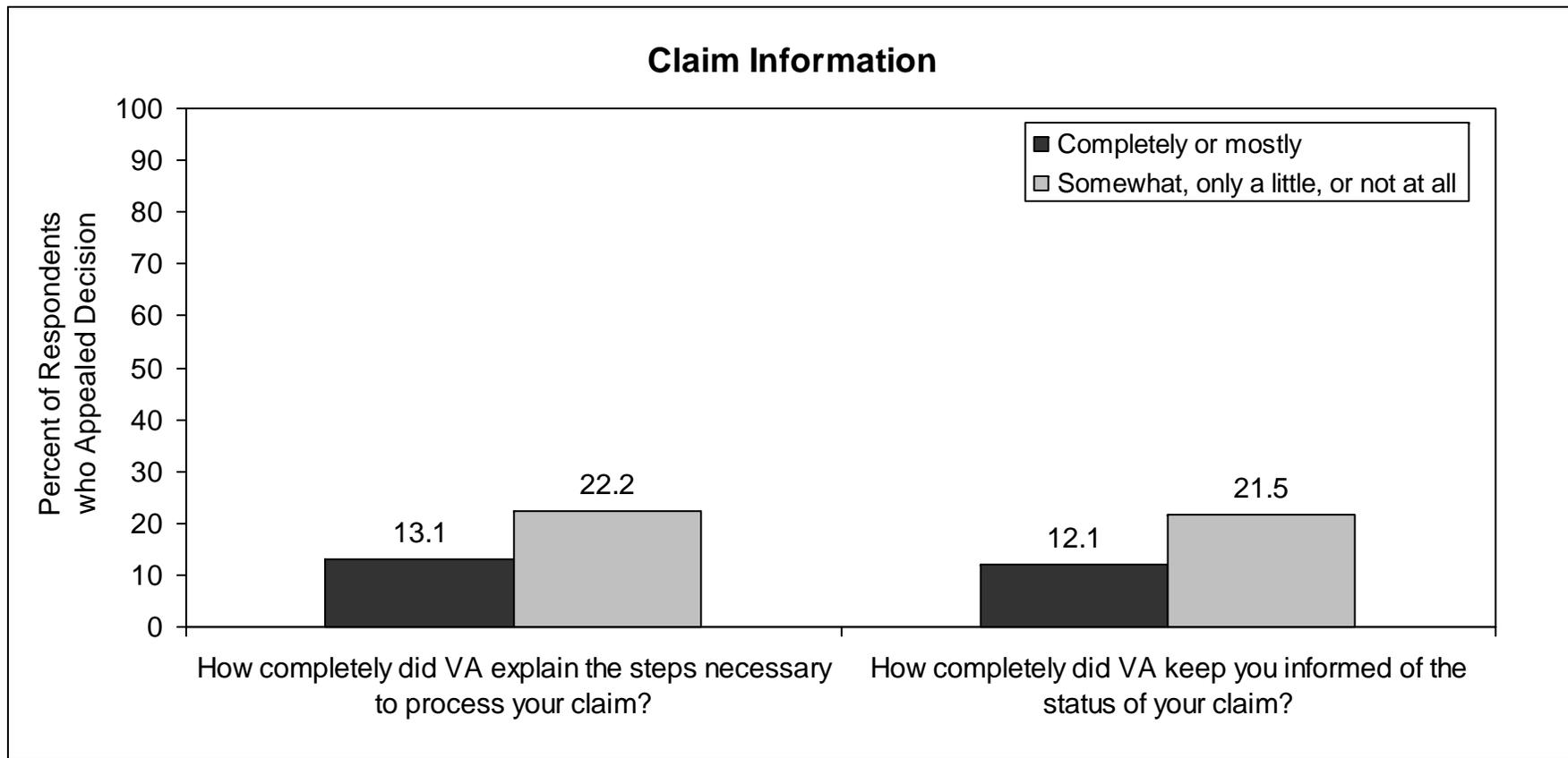
- The percentage of appeals within each age group was also fairly comparable, with the two exceptions being the youngest (only 9.4 percent of 18 to 24 year olds appealed) and the oldest (9.8 percent of those 75 or older appealed).

Appeals by Selected Customer Service Experiences



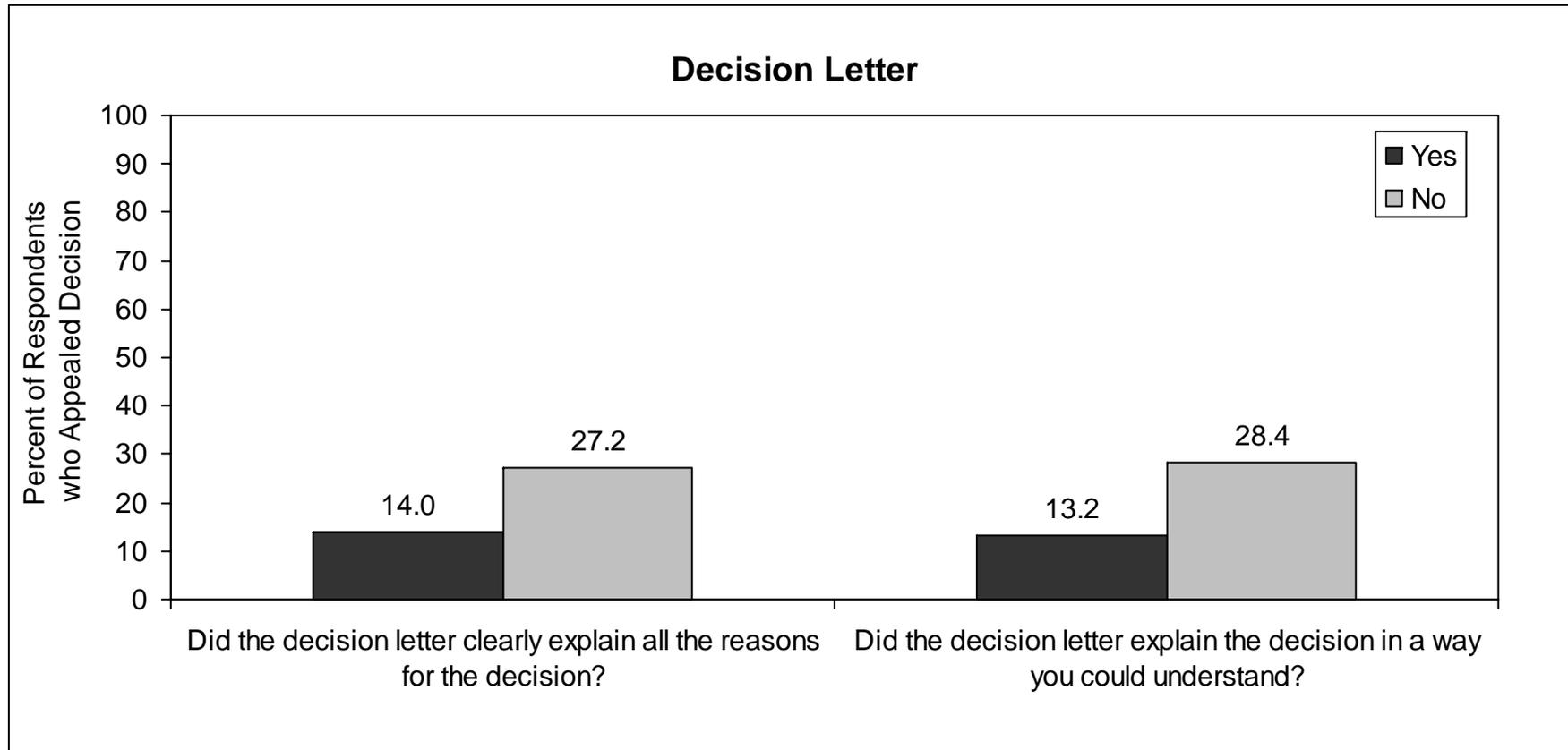
- The percentage of respondents who have appealed the decisions on their claims is much higher for those who received help from a Veterans Service Organization (20.6 percent) or both a VSO and a state or county office (20.7 percent), than for those who only received help from a state or county office (13.8 percent), or for those who did not receive help from either a VSO or a state or county office (11.8 percent).

Appeals by Selected Customer Service Experiences



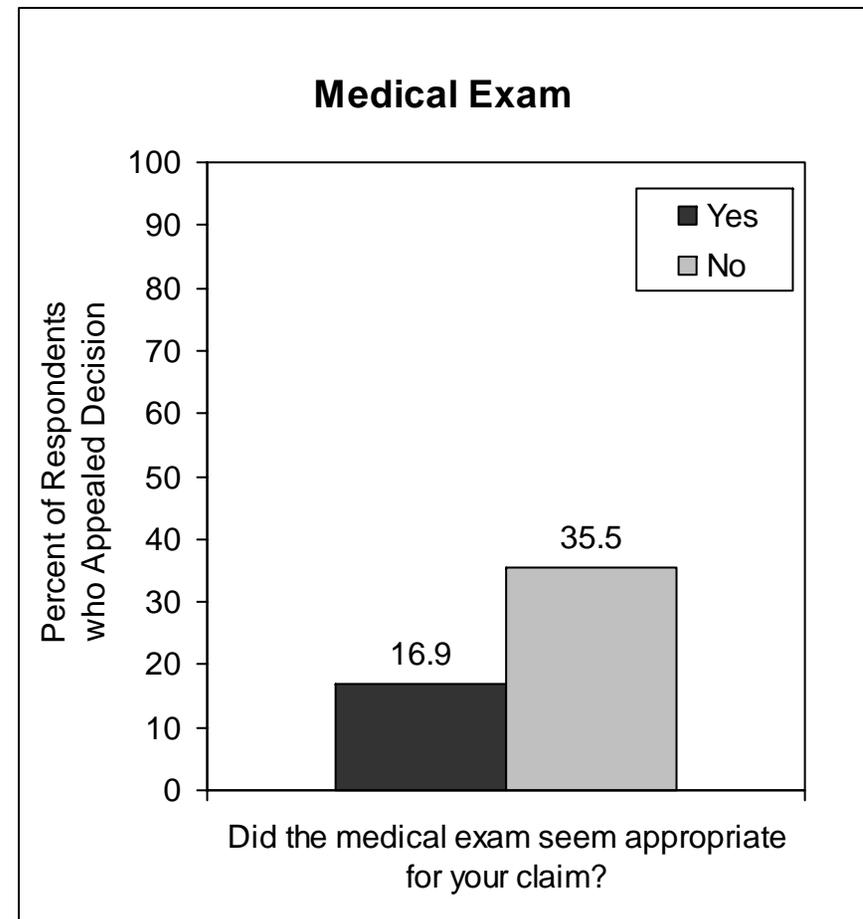
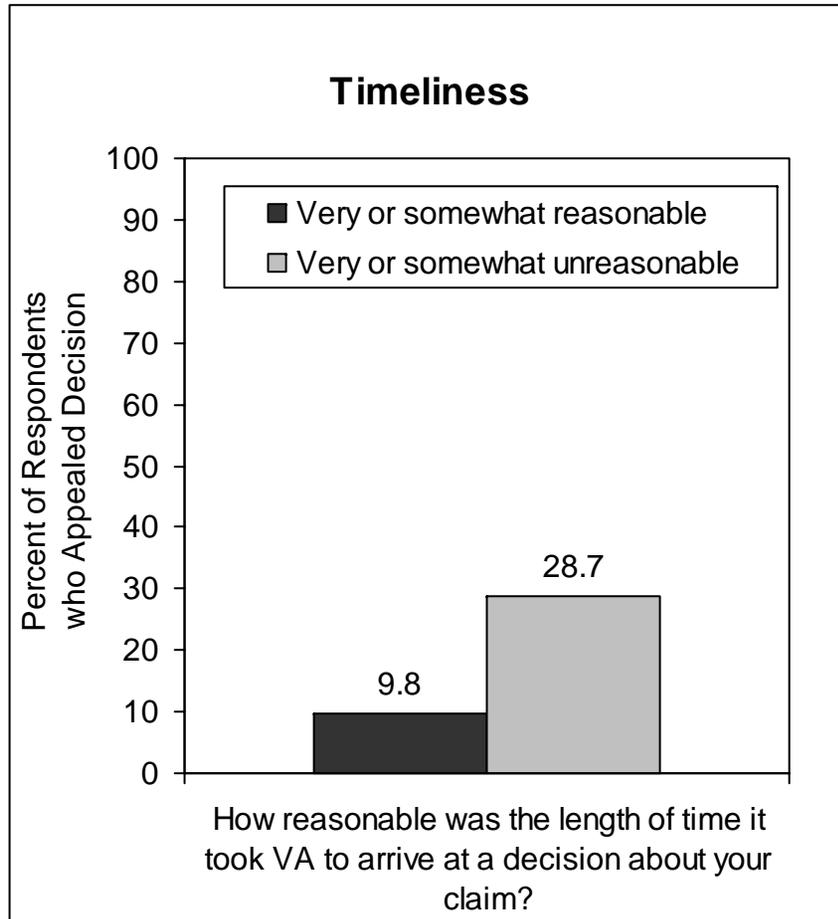
- The percentage of respondents who appealed was much higher for those who felt VA did not sufficiently explain the claim process steps (22.2 percent) or did not keep them adequately informed of their claim status (21.5 percent), than for those who were satisfied with the explanation of claim process steps (13.1 percent) or status updates (12.1 percent).

Appeals by Selected Customer Service Experiences



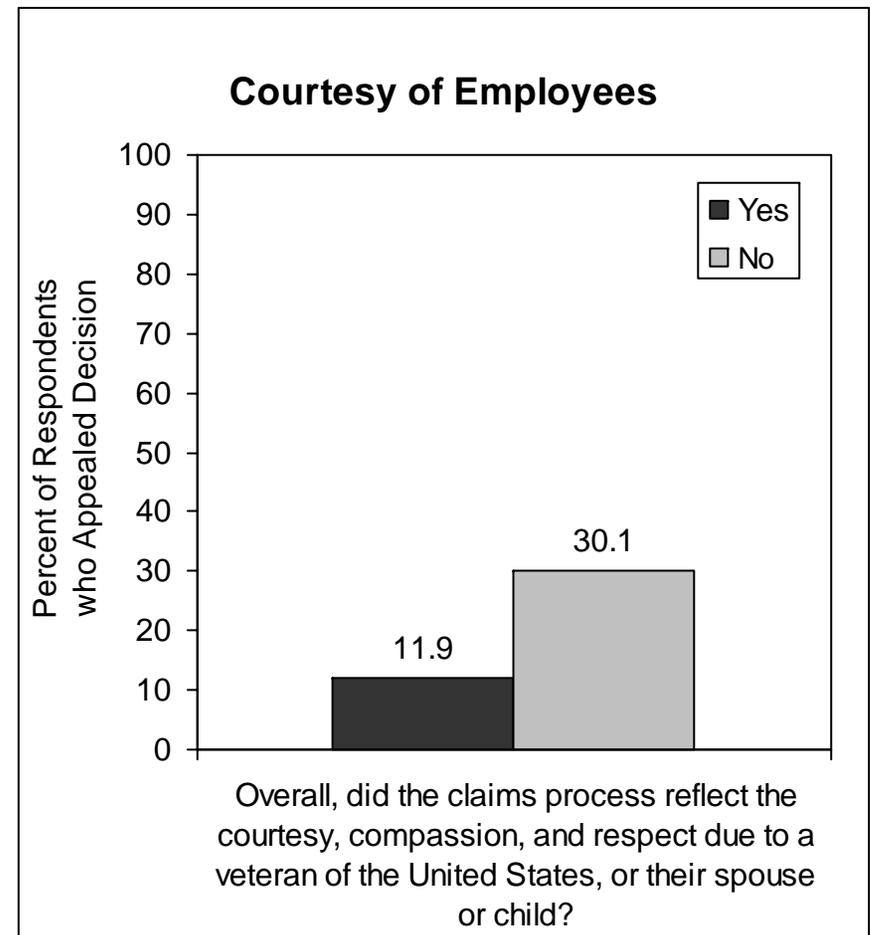
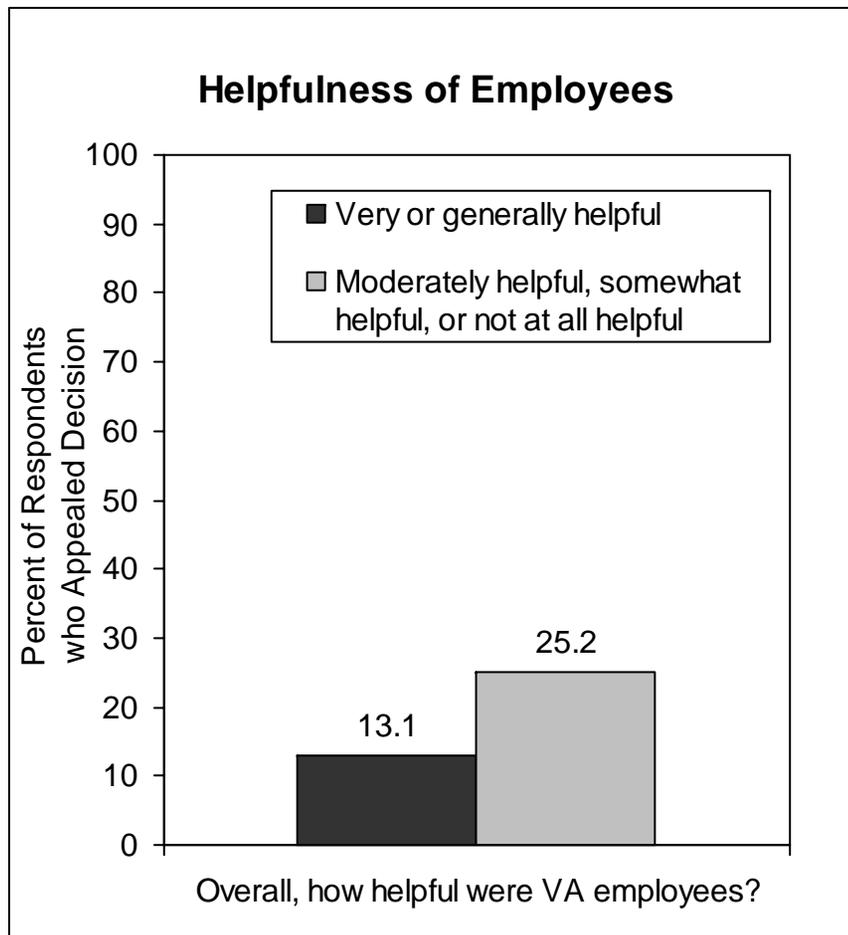
- Survey respondents who did not understand the decision letter were twice as likely to appeal as those who did find the letter clear and understandable. Of those who thought the letter clearly explained all of the reasons for the decision, only 14.0 percent appealed; vs. 27.2 percent of those who thought the letter did not clearly explain the reasons behind the decision. Likewise, 13.2 percent of those who found the letter understandable appealed, vs. 28.4 percent of those who did not find it understandable.

Appeals by Selected Customer Service Experiences



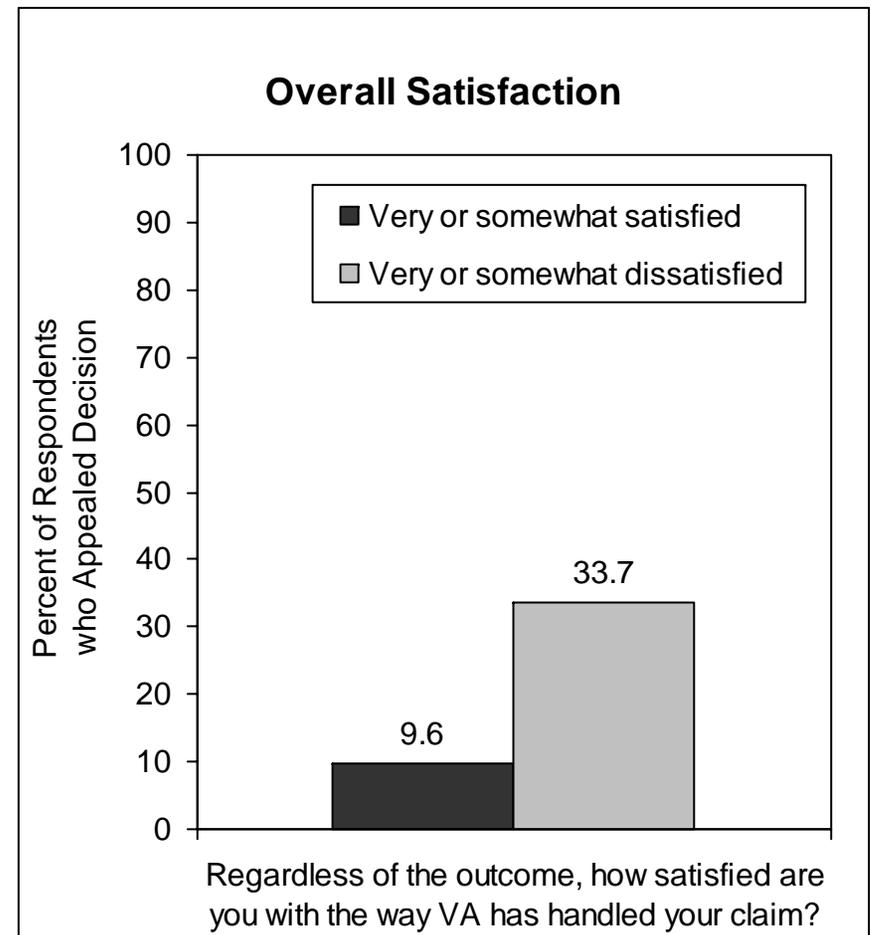
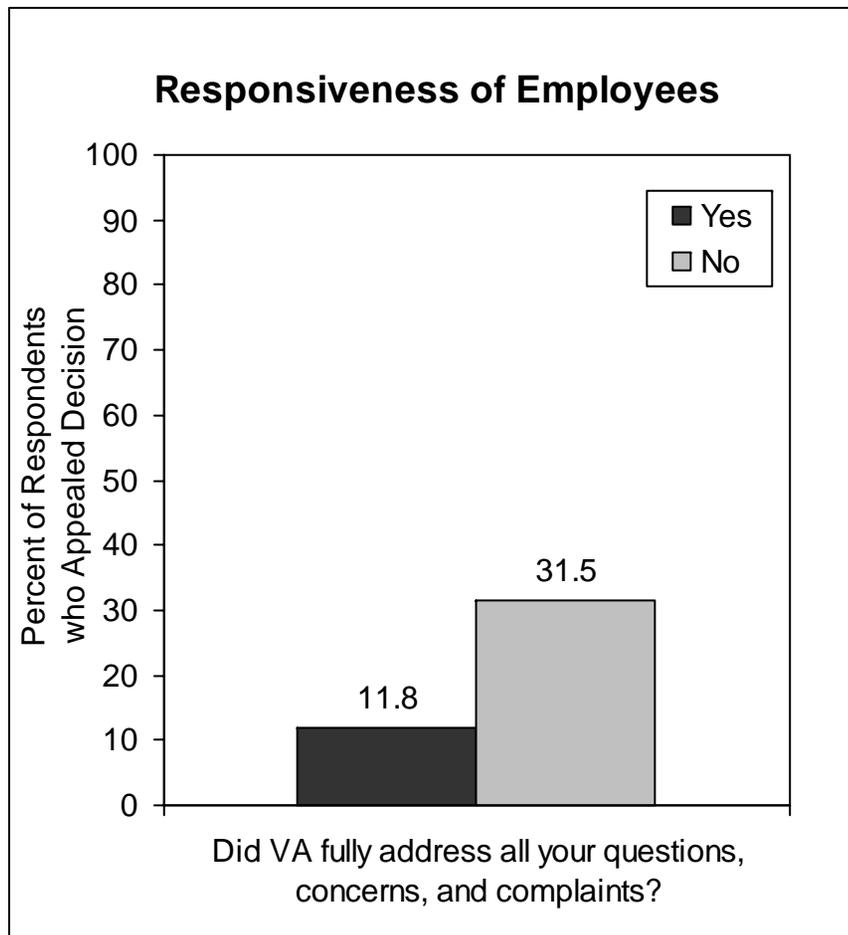
- The timeliness of the claim processing also had a significant impact on the percentage of those who appealed. Only 9.8 percent of respondents who thought the time was very or somewhat reasonable appealed, vs. 28.7 (3 times as many) percent of those who found the wait unreasonable. Respondents who found the medical exam appropriate for their claim were much less likely to appeal (16.9 percent) than those who thought it was not appropriate (35.5 percent).

Appeals by Selected Customer Service Experiences



- The helpfulness and courtesy of the employees throughout the claims process also had a significant impact on the likelihood of appealing. Of those respondents who found the VA employees very or generally helpful, only 13.1 percent appealed, compared with 25.2 percent of those who thought the employees were only moderately, somewhat, or not at all helpful. Of those respondents who thought the employees were courteous, only 11.9 percent appealed, vs. 30.1 percent of those who did not feel they were treated with courtesy and respect.

Appeals by Selected Customer Service Experiences



- Only 11.8 percent of respondents who felt that their questions, concerns, and complaints were fully addressed appealed their claim decision, vs. 31.5 percent of those who did not feel that their questions were fully addressed. Overall, of those who were satisfied with the way their claim was handled, only 9.6 percent appealed the decision; however, three times as many (33.7 percent) of those who were not satisfied with claim handling chose to appeal their claim decision.