

SURVEY OF VETERANS SATISFACTION WITH THE VA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

EVALUATION AND PLANNING PHASE

2002 Summary Report

National Results and Performance Trends



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

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Executive Summary

- Nationally, 74.7 percent of all surveyed veterans were very or somewhat satisfied with the evaluation process in 2002. This was not a significant difference from the previous year's performance of 74.9 percent. Also, 82.4 percent of all surveyed veterans were very or somewhat satisfied with the planning process in 2002. This also did not differ significantly from the previous year's performance of 82.9 percent.
- These four areas were identified as having the greatest influence on whether or not a veteran will be satisfied with the EVALUATION process. VA should focus on improving and/or maintaining customer satisfaction in these areas in order to ensure veteran satisfaction with the evaluation:

Length of time to determine entitlement to VR&E services was very or somewhat reasonable.

Respondent felt counselor completely or mostly understood their feelings and concerns.

Respondent was very or somewhat confident that counselor gave good information and advice during evaluation.

Respondent felt time scheduled for evaluation was very or somewhat convenient.

- These four areas were identified as having the greatest influence on whether or not a veteran will be satisfied with their PLAN development. VA should focus on improving and/or maintaining customer satisfaction in these areas in order to ensure veteran satisfaction with the development of a plan:

Respondent felt plan is appropriate to achieve their vocational goals.

Respondent felt counselor spent adequate time and resources in developing the plan.

Counselor was very or somewhat responsive to respondent's primary method of contact.

Respondent felt time scheduled to develop plan was very or somewhat convenient.

Executive Summary – Significant Trends

Evaluation Phase

- VR&E's performance did not significantly increase on any customer service items relating to the EVALUATION process between 2001 and 2002.
- VR&E's **performance decreased** on these customer service items relating to the EVALUATION process between 2001 and 2002. A summary of 2001 and 2002 national performance on each of the items follows below:

Question	2001	2002
Percent who completely or mostly understood eligibility requirements for program when they submitted application	64.0	60.5
Percent who said VA completely or mostly explained steps necessary to qualify for VR&E program	71.4	68.8
Percent who said VA sent them a letter or called to set up an individual appointment with a counselor	93.6	92.1

Planning Phase

- VR&E's **performance increased** on these customer service items relating to the PLANNING process between 2001 and 2002.

Question	2001	2002
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that their counselor spent adequate time and resources developing the plan	77.7	80.5
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that the plan was appropriate to achieve their vocational goals	82.2	85.1
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that the plan was designed to minimize aggravation of their disability	80.9	84.4
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that the plan reflects current conditions and characteristics of the job market	78.1	81.0
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that the plan was designed with potential employment/employers in mind	77.7	81.9
Percent who did not have to repeat the same information to more than one person during the planning process	70.9	75.0

- VR&E's performance did not significantly decrease on any customer service items relating to the PLANNING process between 2001 and 2002.

Executive Summary – Significant Trends

Overall Program

- VR&E performance did not increase significantly on any customer service items relating to the overall VR&E program between 2001 and 2002.
- VR&E's **performance decreased** on these customer service items relating to the VR&E PROGRAM between 2001 and 2002.

Question	2001	2002
Percent who felt it was very or somewhat easy to obtain information from the VR&E program	72.2	68.7
Percent who felt the VR&E program thus far was much better or better than expected	53.4	50.1
Percent who would recommend the program to other disabled veterans	93.3	91.7

NOTE: This survey's sample included only those who were in the evaluation or planning phases, or those who had just completed the planning phase within the previous four months; therefore the respondents' ability to evaluate the program as a whole is somewhat limited.

Introduction and Methodology

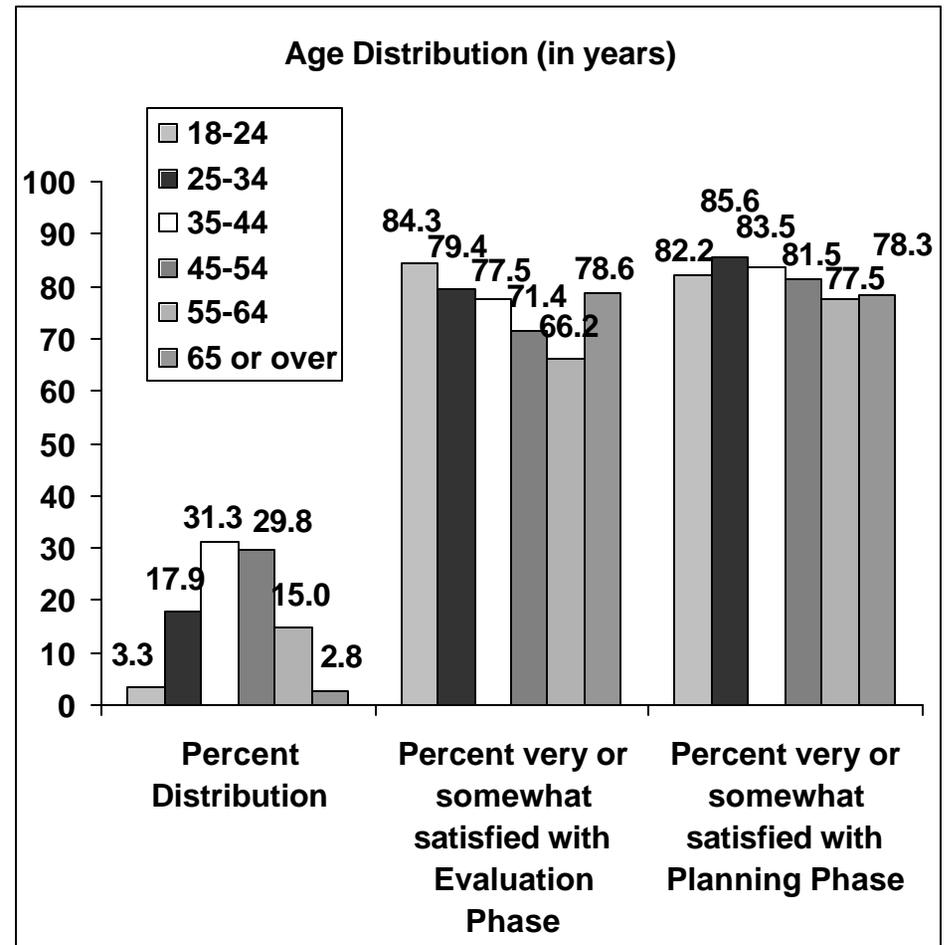
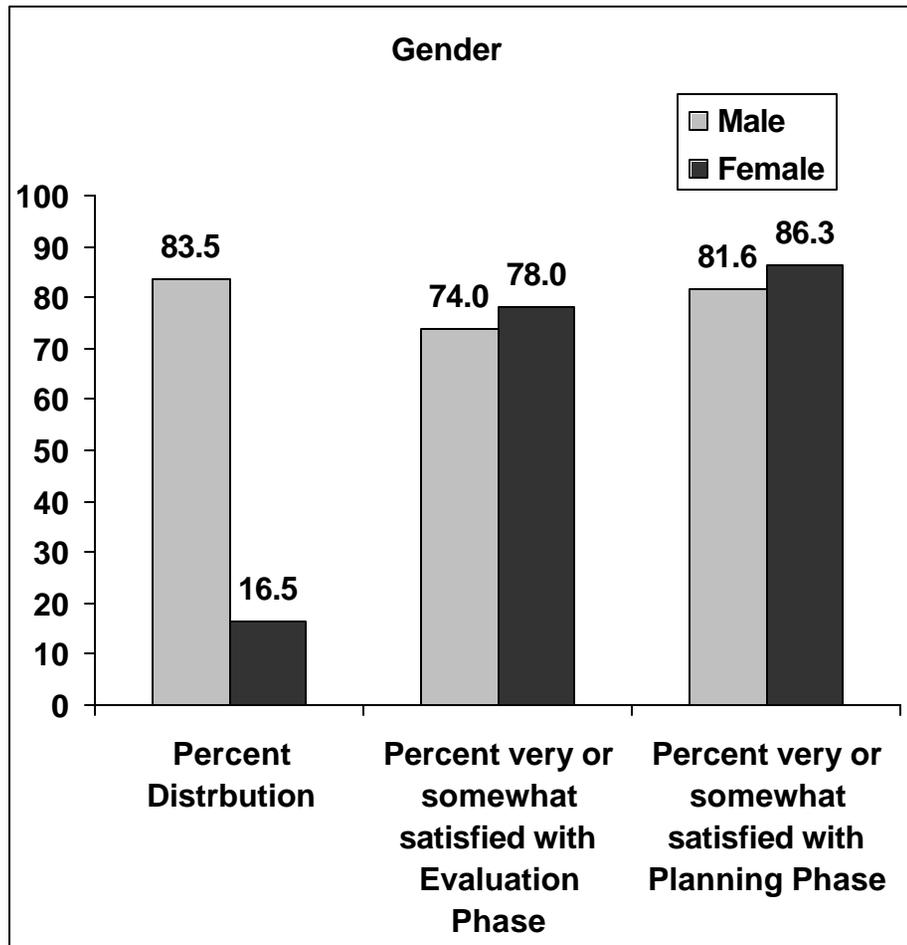
This document presents the results of the 2002 *Survey of Veterans Satisfaction With the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, Evaluation and Planning Phase* for the Nation on selected survey questions. Data are given for 2001 and 2002, and in certain cases 1999 and 2000; and results were significance-tested for performance differences between 2001 and 2002.

The data in this report were collected from December of 2002 to February of 2003 using mailed questionnaires. The sample consisted of 6,000 persons (out of a total population of 30,499 persons) who were in the application, evaluation or planning phases of the VR&E program, or who had just entered the rehabilitation phase within the previous four months. This included those who interrupted or discontinued the program at any time between the period the sample was drawn and data collection was complete. The sample was drawn proportionate to the number of cases within each Regional Office (RO), but was not designed to yield data for any one RO specifically. A total of 3,022 respondents completed the Evaluation and Planning Phase questionnaire for a response rate of 50.4 percent.

The questionnaire was designed by VBA and is based on information gathered from focus groups with veterans and front-line VR&E employees. It was tested for clarity and relevance in cognitive interviews with veterans, and then pretested in the field from June to August 1999. Using the information from the pretest reports, the VBA Surveys and Research Staff and Caliber Associates modified the questionnaire. Other minor changes have been made since the pretest which are detailed in the national reports produced by Caliber Associates. The 2002 Evaluation and Planning questionnaire is included in this report as an Appendix.

It should be noted that the quantitative data shown in this report represent valid measurements of various elements of customer satisfaction and, as such, are more reliable than qualitative sources of information such as comment cards or focus groups. Survey results provide data used to monitor VBA's performance against customer service standards, provide insight into the key drivers of satisfaction with the VR&E program, and provide the customers' views of organizational performance as required by the Government Performance and Results Act. It is also likely that this information will be included as part of the ongoing Departmental review of the entire VR&E program.

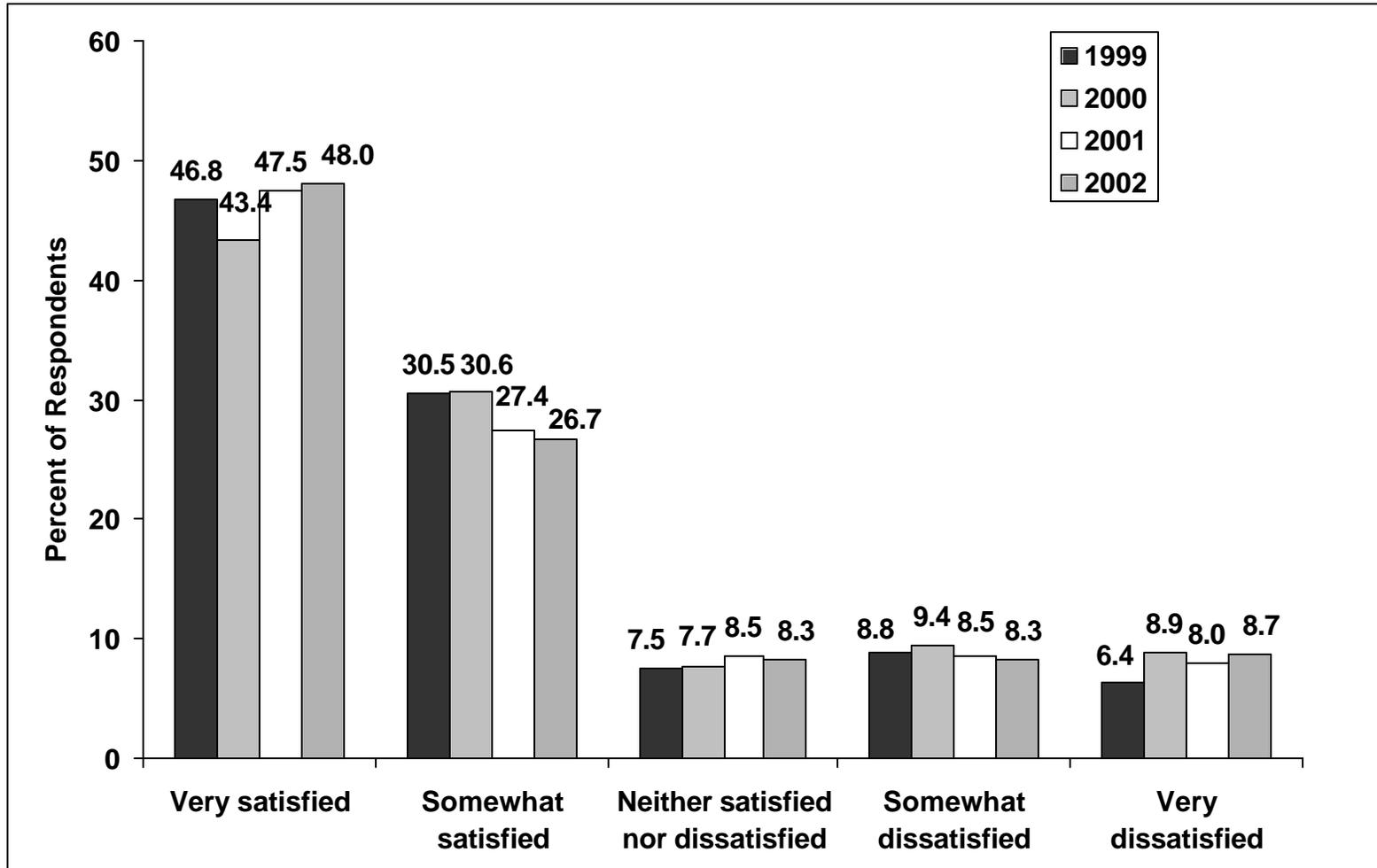
Respondent Characteristics by Satisfaction with Phase



- The majority of the respondents were men (83.5 percent), and 61.1 percent of the respondents were between 35 and 54 years of age.
- Women reported being slightly more satisfied with both the evaluation and planning phases than men (78.0 percent vs. 74.0 percent for the evaluation phase, and 86.3 percent vs. 81.6 percent for the planning phase).

Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

Overall Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase, 1999-2002



Almost half (48 percent) of the respondents were very satisfied with the evaluation phase of the program; which was not a significant increase from the percent very satisfied in 2001 (47.5 percent).

Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

Introduction to Quadrant Analysis

Quadrant analysis is a useful tool in determining which individual performance areas need improvement in order to raise the overall quality of service. The analysis involves determining the importance of individual performance areas (how meaningful an area is to the veteran) and VA's performance in each area. Generally, items with high importance but relatively low performance are those which deserve immediate attention.

Each of the variables represented in the Quadrant Analysis graph are plotted on the basis of:

- 1) **Importance:** This is represented by a variable's correlation with the *overall satisfaction with the particular phase* of the VR&E program. These correlations determine the degree to which variables are related to overall satisfaction. Zero indicates no correlation, and 1 indicates perfect correlation. The closer a variable's correlation (Importance) is to 1, the stronger that variable's relationship is with the overall satisfaction with the particular phase. *Variables that have stronger correlations are considered to have higher importance.*
- 2) **Performance:** This is represented by a variable's topbox percent (the percent of people who answered positively to a performance item). Topbox percents represent how well VA is performing within a given area (for example, the percent who thought their counselor completely or mostly understood their feelings and concerns). *The higher the percent, the better VA is performing.*

The quadrant analysis is divided into four quadrants (sections) based on the following combinations of the plotted location of a variable:

Quadrant I: Critical Improvement Areas (high importance, low performance)

Quadrant II: Maintain Relationship Building Variables (high importance, high performance)

Quadrant III: Lower Return on High Performance (low importance, high performance)

Quadrant IV: Lower Return on Investment (low importance, low performance)

The horizontal line in the plot represents importance and is placed at .50, which indicates relatively high correlation. The vertical line represents performance and is placed at a percentile representing the average of the performance items, (rounded up or down in increments of 5 percent). The quadrant lines can be moved up or down, left or right, to include more or fewer items in each quadrant. The plotted numbers within each section of the graph correspond with the performance items listed on the following page. These numbers also refer to the question numbers used in the questionnaire.

Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

Items in Quadrant Analysis

Quadrant I contains two (2) items on which VA is not performing as well as it could be, but which significantly impacts veterans satisfaction with the evaluation phase.

- **Question 27** Counselor completely or mostly understood respondent's feelings and concerns during evaluation.
- **Question 31** Respondent generally able to get needed information on first call or contact with counselor.

Quadrant II contains four (4) items on which VA is performing well and which are important to overall satisfaction. VA should maintain current practices and resources for these items so that performance does not decline and negatively affect satisfaction.

- **Question 26** Respondent was very or somewhat confident that counselor gave good information and advice during evaluation.
- **Question 28** Evaluation process reflected the courtesy, compassion and respect due to a veteran of the United States.
- **Question 30** Counselor was very or somewhat responsive to primary method of contact.
- **Question 38** Length of time to determine entitlement was very or somewhat reasonable.

Quadrant III contains six (6) items on which VA is performing well but which, while important to overall satisfaction, do not have as great an impact as other items.

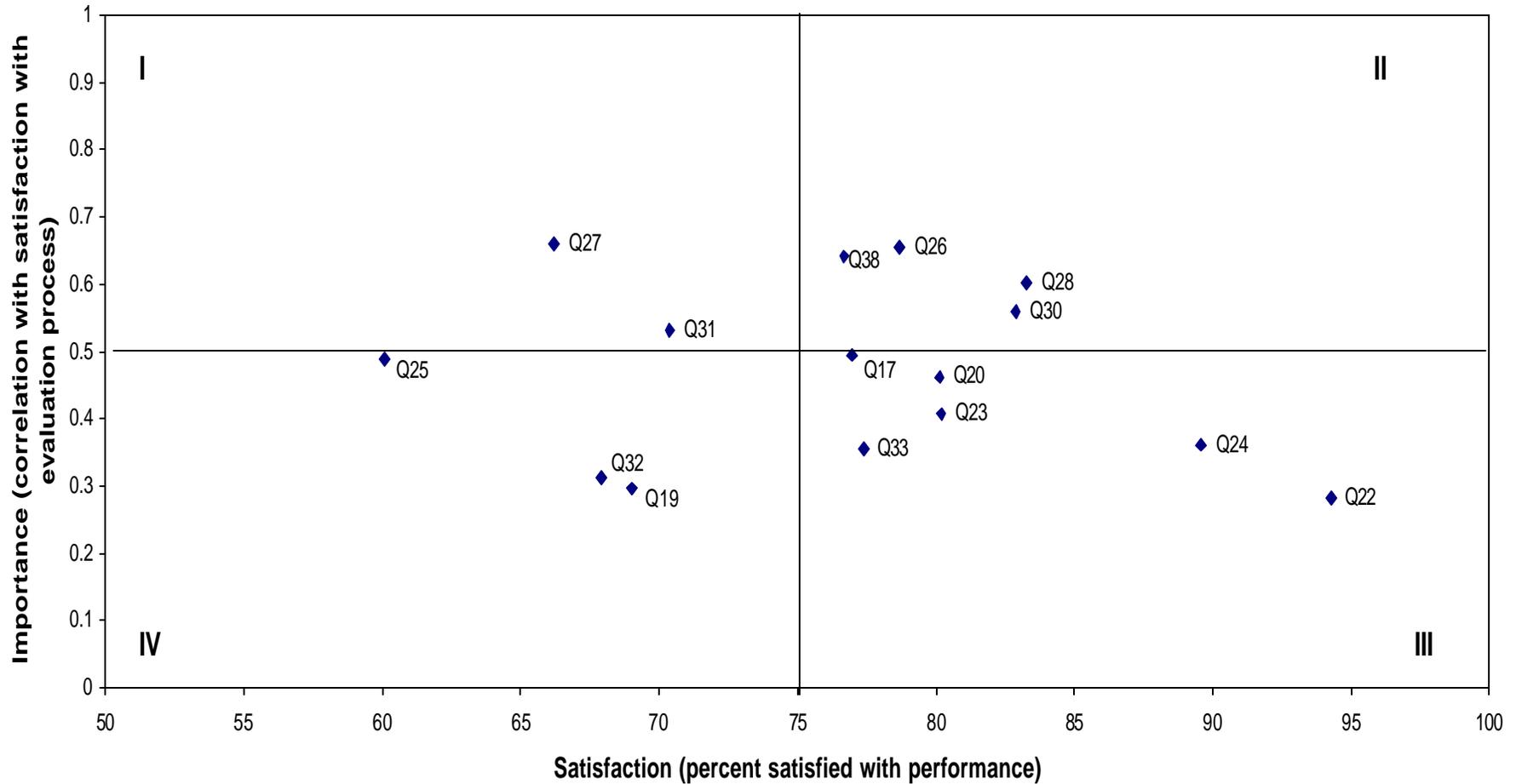
- **Question 17** Length of time from appointment notification to initial meeting was very or somewhat reasonable.
- **Question 20** Time of evaluation was very or somewhat convenient.
- **Question 22** Counselor explained purpose of tests taken during evaluation.
- **Question 23** Tests seemed appropriate during evaluation.
- **Question 24** Counselor explained tests in an understandable way.
- **Question 33** Respondent was able to access voice mail of counselor.

Quadrant IV contains three (3) items on which VA is not performing as well as it could, but which are also not considered to have as great an impact on overall satisfaction as other items. There is a lower return on investment in these items, but, given resources, improvement could be sought.

- **Question 19** Location of evaluation was very or somewhat convenient.
- **Question 25** Results of evaluation completely or mostly matched respondent's particular skills and abilities.
- **Question 32** Respondent did not have to repeat same information to more than one person during evaluation process.

Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

Quadrant Analysis



Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

Predictors of Satisfaction with Evaluation (Logistic Regression)

Logistic regression is a statistical procedure used to predict the likelihood that an event will occur. The object is to use information from several predictor variables (or, independent variables) to determine which of those variables can correctly predict responses on a dependent variable, this means that by improving performance in certain individual service areas, there is a definite likelihood that we will increase a veteran's satisfaction with the overall phase. The logistic regression model tells us which predictor variables relate with the dependent variable and which have the strongest influence.

The logistic regression model presented here used *satisfaction with the evaluation phase* as the dependent variable. The responses to this variable were dichotomized into either *satisfied* (responses of very or somewhat satisfied) and *not satisfied* (responses of neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied).

Four (4) independent variables were used in this model:

- 1) In general, how convenient was the TIME scheduled for this evaluation?
- 2) During the evaluation, how confident or sure were you that your counselor gave you good information and advice?
- 3) During the evaluation, how well did you feel your counselor understood your feelings and concerns?
- 4) How reasonable was the length of time it took VA to determine whether you were entitled to VR&E services, once you had the initial meeting with your counselor?

These four variables were chosen for the model because they had a relatively high correlation with overall satisfaction with the evaluation phase. Variables in the logistic regression summary table on the next page are presented with their respective **odds ratio statistics** and are **listed in order of predictive strength**. Odds ratios estimate how much more likely an individual is to end up in the group we are trying to predict (satisfaction) than in the other group (dissatisfaction). For example, veterans who thought the time to determine entitlement was very or somewhat reasonable were about 7 times more likely to be satisfied with the evaluation phase than veterans who did not think the time was reasonable.

The logistic regression summary table also includes a **percent correctly classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied**. This percentage summarizes the "fit" between the actual and predicted classifications of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The logistic regression procedure uses information from each of the predictor variables in a model and classifies individuals into one of the two target groups (satisfied or not satisfied). It then looks at how each individual was actually classified (how each respondent actually responded) and compares its prediction of a response with the actual response. The closer this percentage is to 100, the more accurate the model is in predicting satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

Predictors of Satisfaction with Evaluation (Logistic Regression)

Predictor Variables	Odds Ratios
Time to determine entitlement was very or somewhat reasonable	7.77
Respondent felt counselor completely or mostly understood their feelings and concerns during evaluation	4.26
Respondent was very or somewhat confident that counselor gave them good information and advice	3.87
Respondent felt time scheduled for evaluation was very or somewhat convenient	2.31

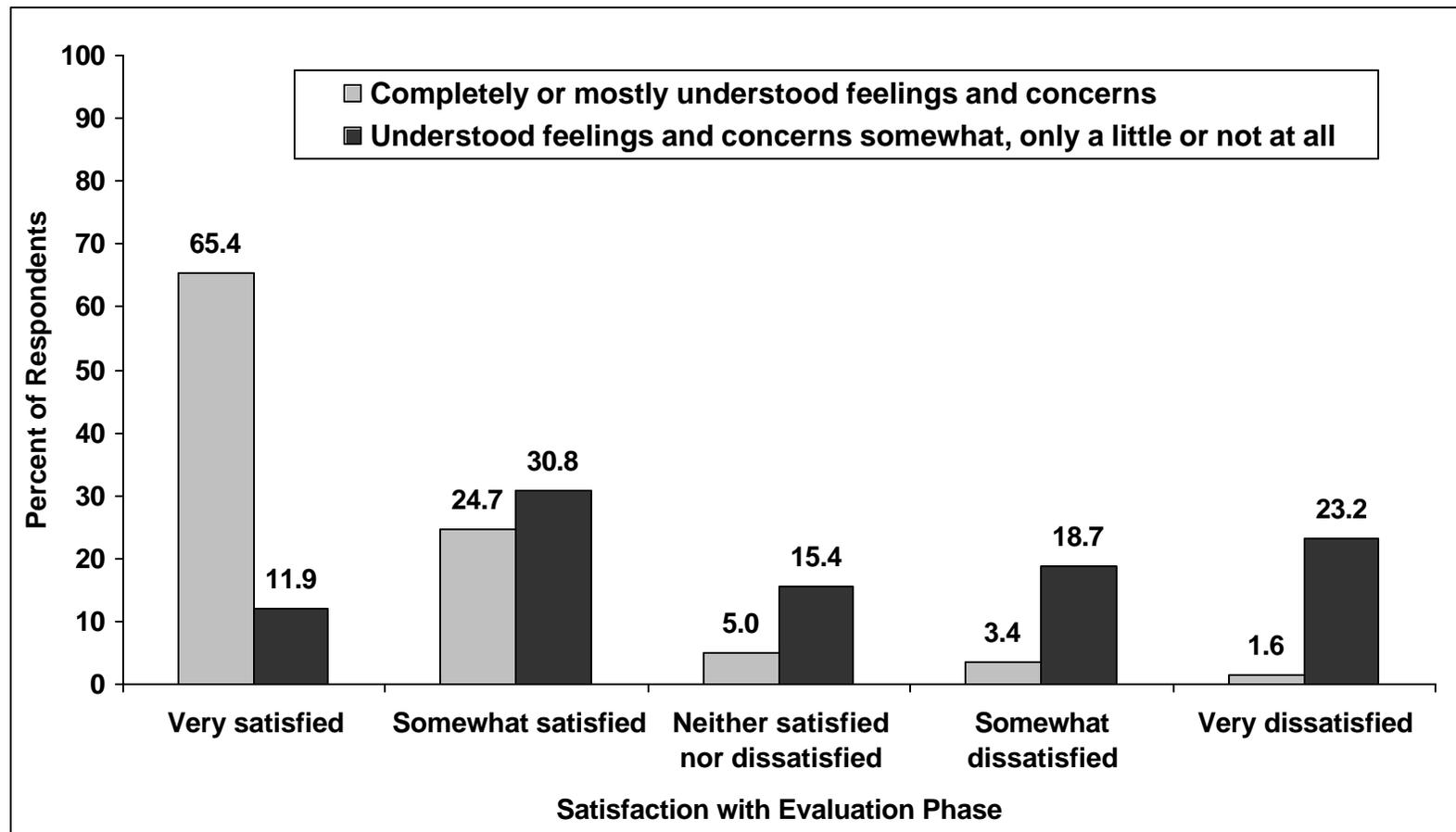
Percent correctly classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied: 85.7%

Number of cases included in this analysis: 2,142

- Considering the effects of all four predictor variables, the **time to determine entitlement being reasonable** was the strongest predictor of satisfaction with the evaluation phase. Veterans who thought the time to determine entitlement was reasonable were over 7 times more likely to be satisfied with the phase than veterans who did not think the time was reasonable.
- Veterans who felt their counselor understood their feelings and concerns during the evaluation were over 4 times more likely to be satisfied with the process than those who did not feel understood.
- Respondents who were confident that their counselor gave them good information and advice during the evaluation were almost 4 times more likely to be satisfied with the evaluation phase than those who were not confident that the counselor gave them good information and advice.
- Finally, those who felt the time of the evaluation was convenient were a little over twice as likely to be satisfied with the process than those who did not feel the time was convenient.

Influences on Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

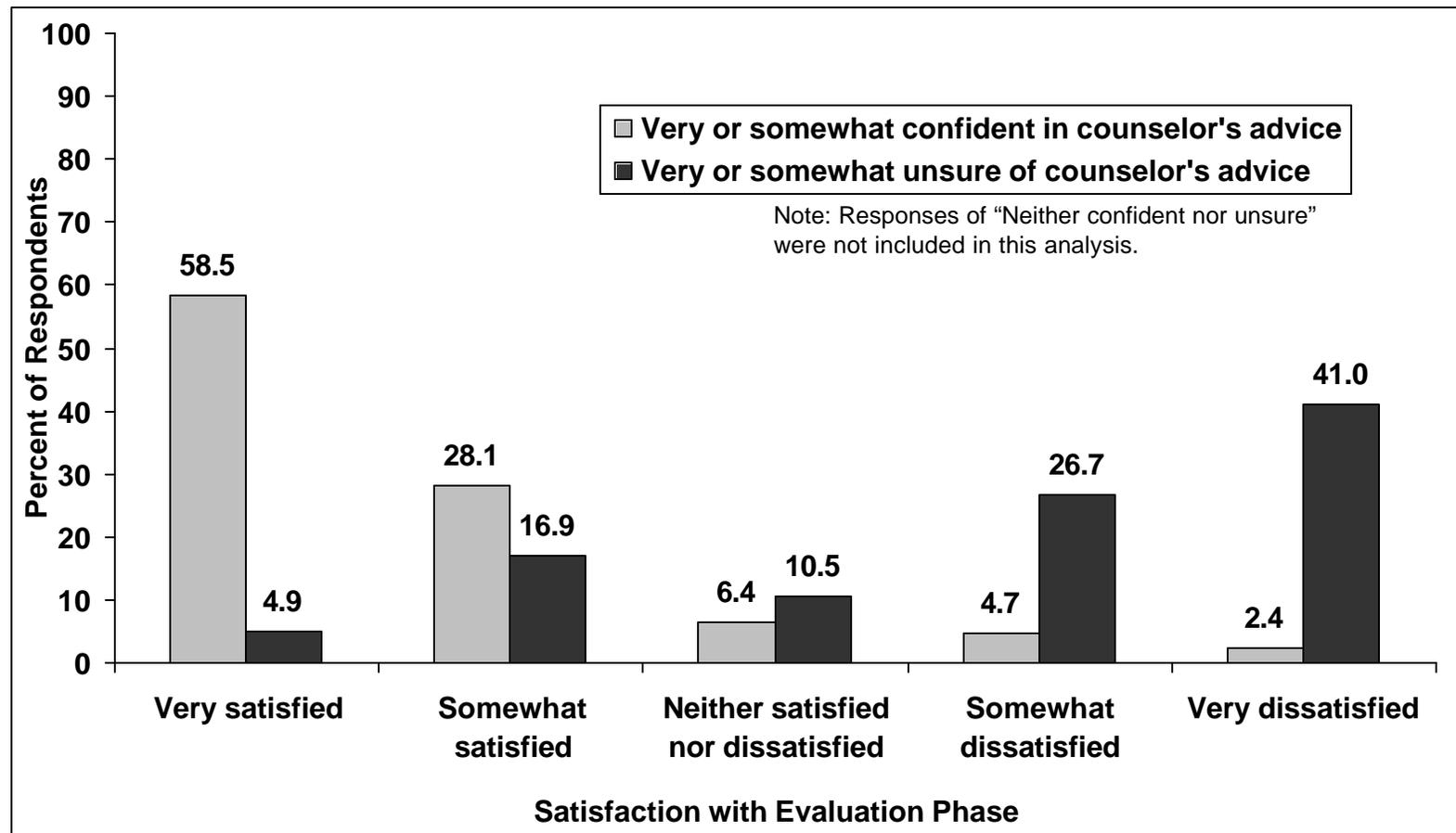
Overall Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase by How Well Counselor Understood Feelings and Concerns



This variable has a very powerful relationship to overall satisfaction with the evaluation phase: respondents who thought their counselor completely or mostly understood their feelings and concerns were over 5 times more likely to be **very** satisfied with the evaluation process (65.4 percent) than those who felt their feelings were understood somewhat, only a little, or not at all (11.9 percent).

Influences on Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

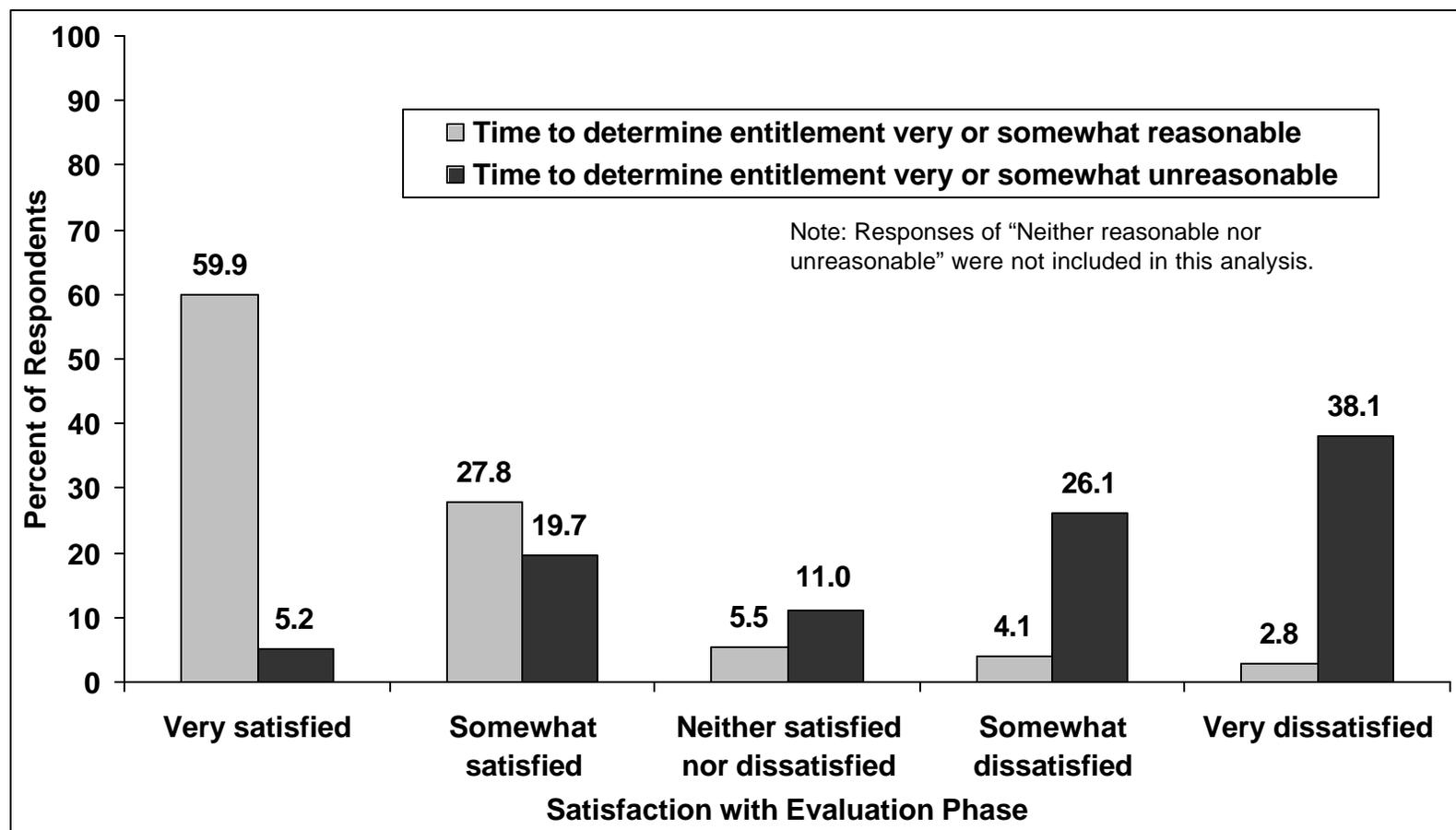
Overall Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase by Confidence in Counselor's Advice



Those respondents who felt confident that their counselor was giving them good advice were almost 12 times more likely to be very satisfied with the evaluation process (58.5 percent) than those who were unsure about their counselor's advice (4.9 percent). Those unsure were also 17 times more likely to be very dissatisfied with the evaluation phase than those who expressed confidence (41.0 percent vs. 2.4 percent).

Influences on Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase

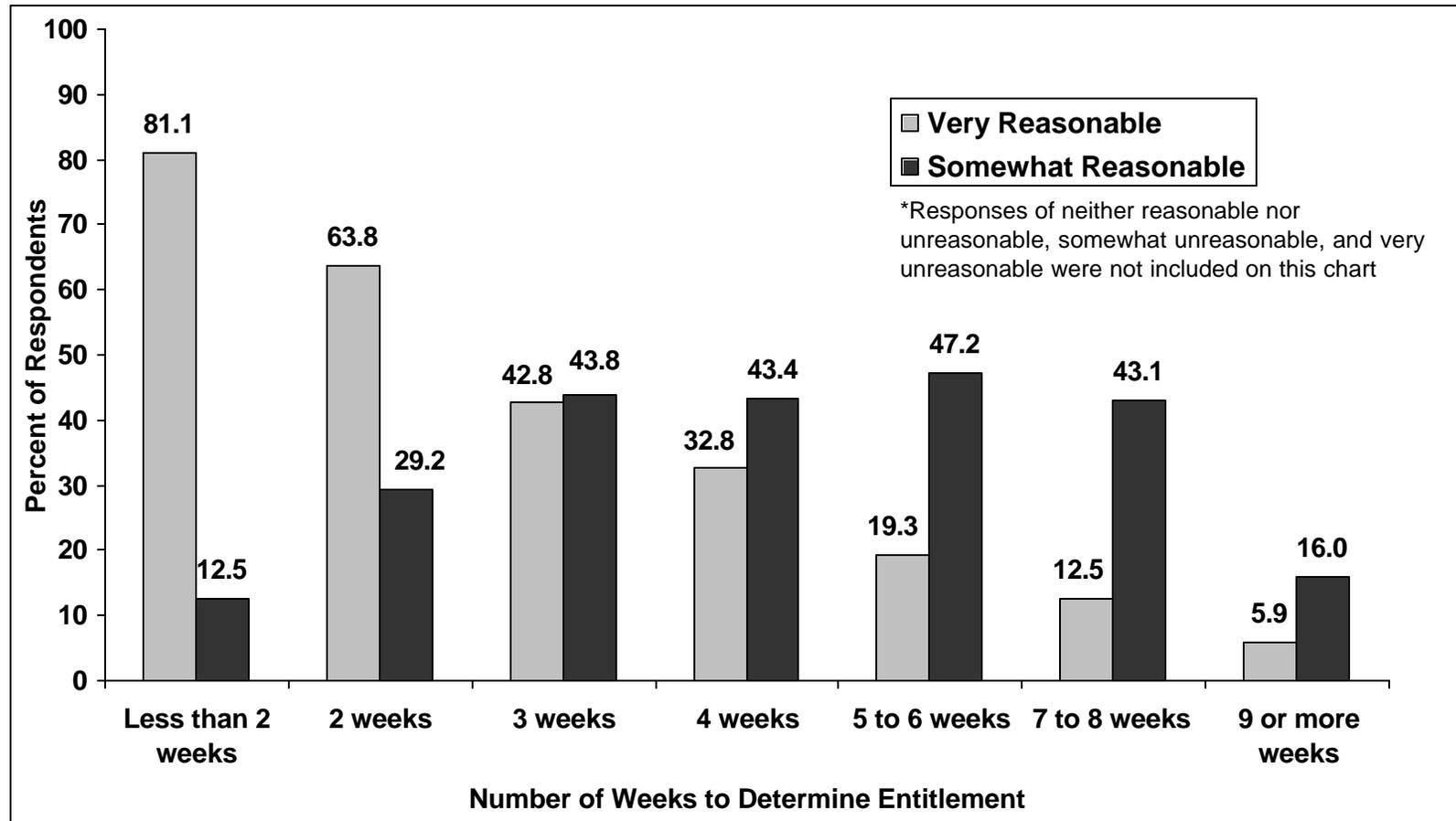
Overall Satisfaction with Evaluation Phase by Reasonableness of Time to Determine Entitlement



Of those who found the length of time to determine entitlement very or somewhat unreasonable, only 24.9 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with the evaluation phase, compared with 87.7 percent of those who found the length of time reasonable.

Timeliness of Entitlement Determination

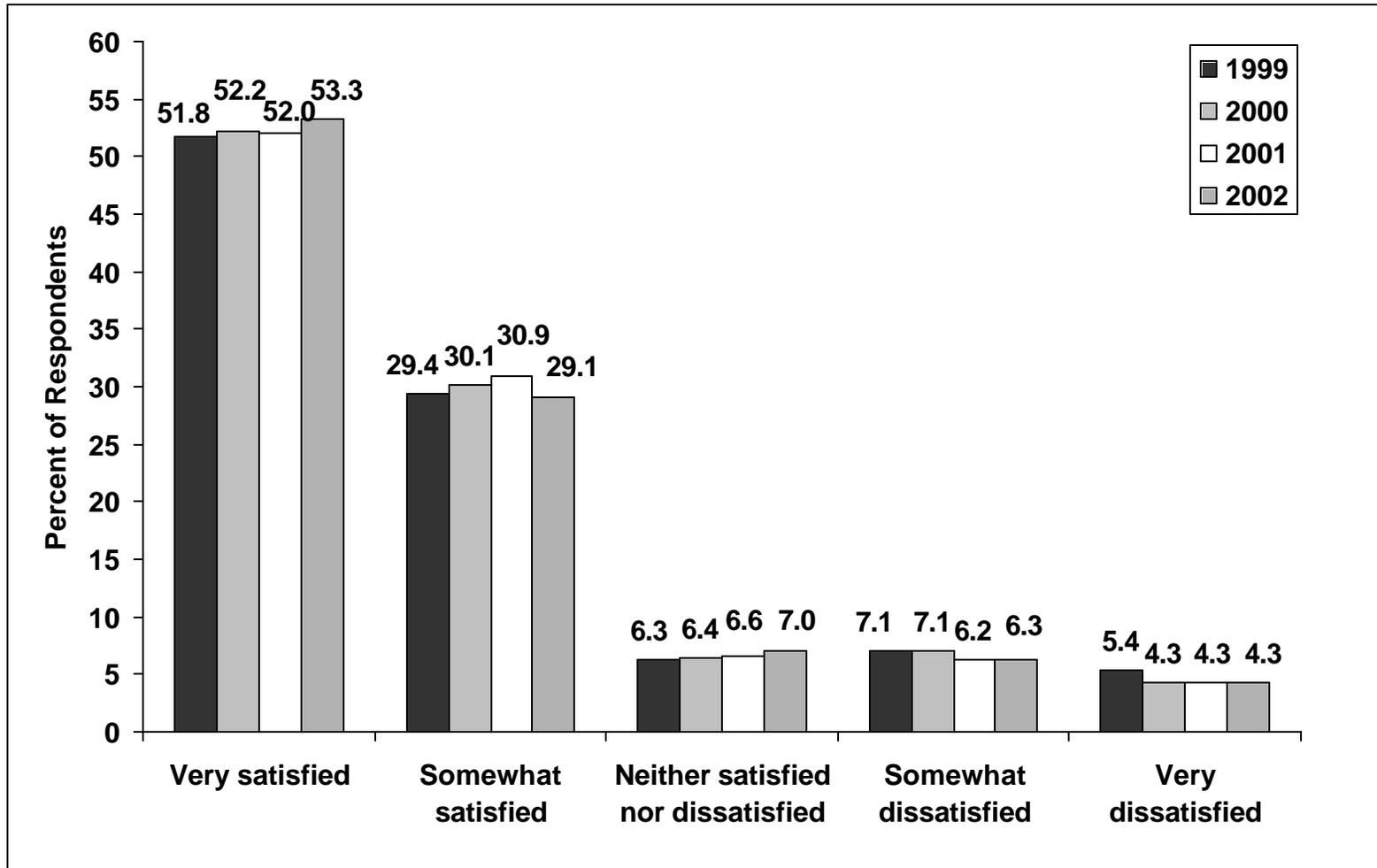
How Reasonable was the Length of Time to Determine Entitlement?



An overwhelming majority (81.1 percent) of respondents thought receiving their entitlement determination within 2 weeks was **very** reasonable; in contrast, less than half (42.8 percent) of the respondents who waited 3 weeks to receive their entitlement determination viewed that timeframe as very reasonable, and the percentage continued to decline for those who waited longer than 3 weeks.

Satisfaction with Planning Phase

Overall Satisfaction with Planning Phase, 1999-2002



Overall satisfaction with the planning phase has remained relatively stable from 1999 to 2002, with just over half being very satisfied and approximately 30 percent being somewhat satisfied.

Satisfaction with Planning Phase

Items in Quadrant Analysis

Quadrant I contains four (4) items on which VA is not performing as well as it could be, but which significantly impacts veterans' satisfaction with the planning phase.

- **Question 45** Counselor spent adequate time and resources in developing the plan.
- **Question 48** Plan was designed to minimize aggravation of respondent's disability.
- **Question 50** Plan reflects current conditions and characteristics of job market.
- **Question 53** Time scheduled for developing plan was very or somewhat convenient.

Quadrant II contains six (6) items on which VA is performing well and which are important to overall satisfaction. VA should maintain current practices and resources for these items so that performance does not decline and negatively affect satisfaction.

- **Question 44** Plan reflects individualized services which meet respondent's needs.
- **Question 46** Plan reflects respondent's intentions and expectations for rehabilitation.
- **Question 47** Plan is appropriate to achieve respondent's vocational goals.
- **Question 49** Plan adequately reflects respondent's interests, aptitudes, and abilities.

- **Question 55** Counselor was very or somewhat responsive to primary method of contact.
- **Question 59** Planning process reflected courtesy, compassion and respect due to a veteran of the United States.

Quadrant III contains one (1) item on which VA is performing well but which, while important to overall satisfaction, does not have as great an impact as other items.

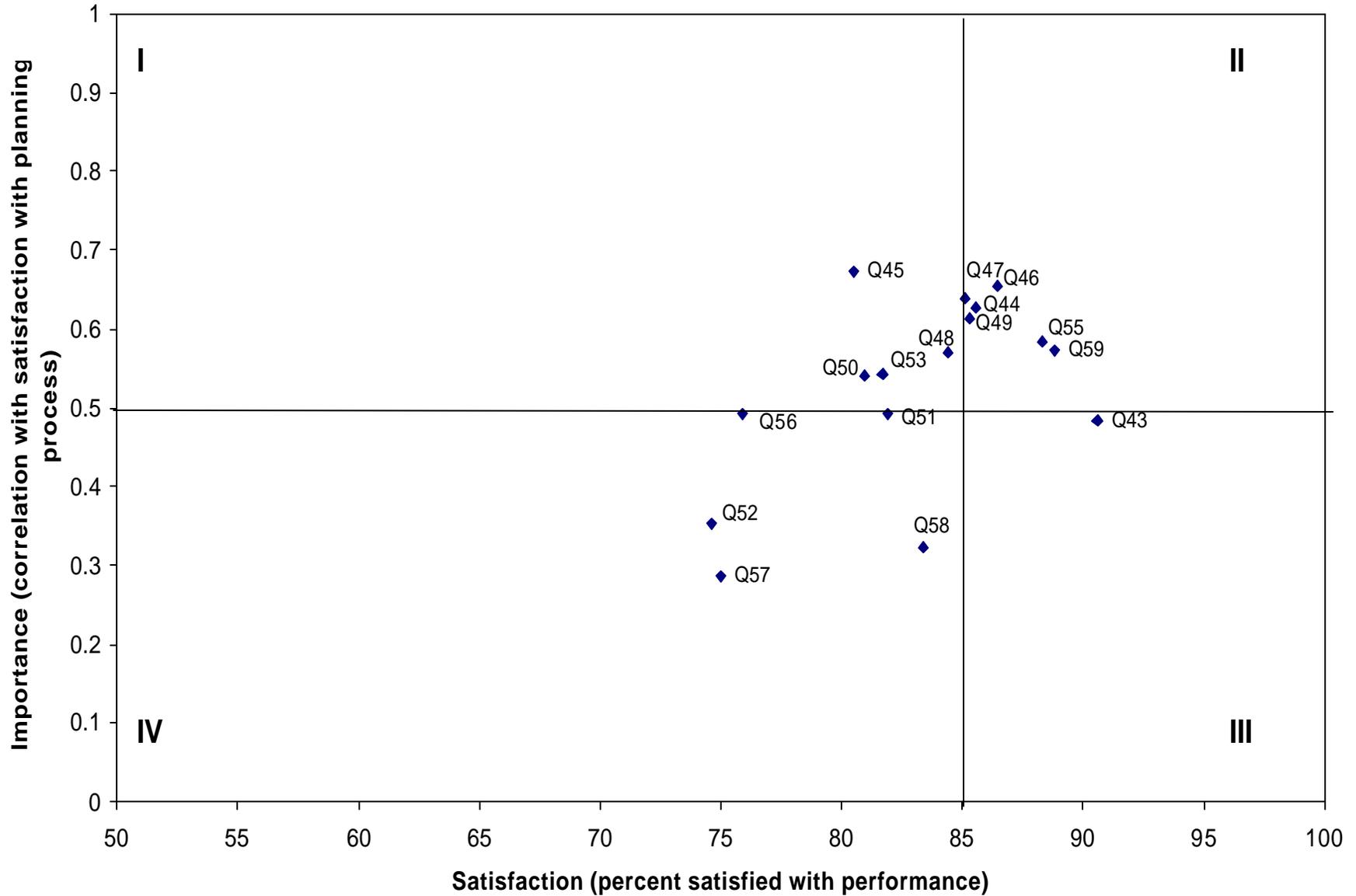
- **Question 43** Respondent actively participated in developing plan.

Quadrant IV contains five (5) items on which VA is not performing as well as it could, but which are also not considered to have as great an impact on overall satisfaction as other items. There is a lower return on investment on these items, but, given resources, improvement could be sought.

- **Question 51** Plan was designed with potential employment/employers in mind.
- **Question 52** Location where plan was developed was very or somewhat convenient.
- **Question 56** Respondent generally able to get needed information on first call or contact with counselor.
- **Question 57** Respondent did not have to repeat same information to more than one person during planning process.
- **Question 58** Respondent was able to access counselor's voice mail.

Satisfaction with Planning Phase

Quadrant Analysis



Satisfaction with Planning Phase

Predictors of Satisfaction with Planning (Logistic Regression)

Predictor Variables	Odds Ratios
Respondent felt plan is appropriate to achieve their vocational goals	10.23
Respondent felt counselor spent adequate time and resources in developing plan	5.52
Counselor was very or somewhat responsive to respondent's primary method of contact	3.71
Respondent felt time scheduled to develop plan was very or somewhat convenient	3.12

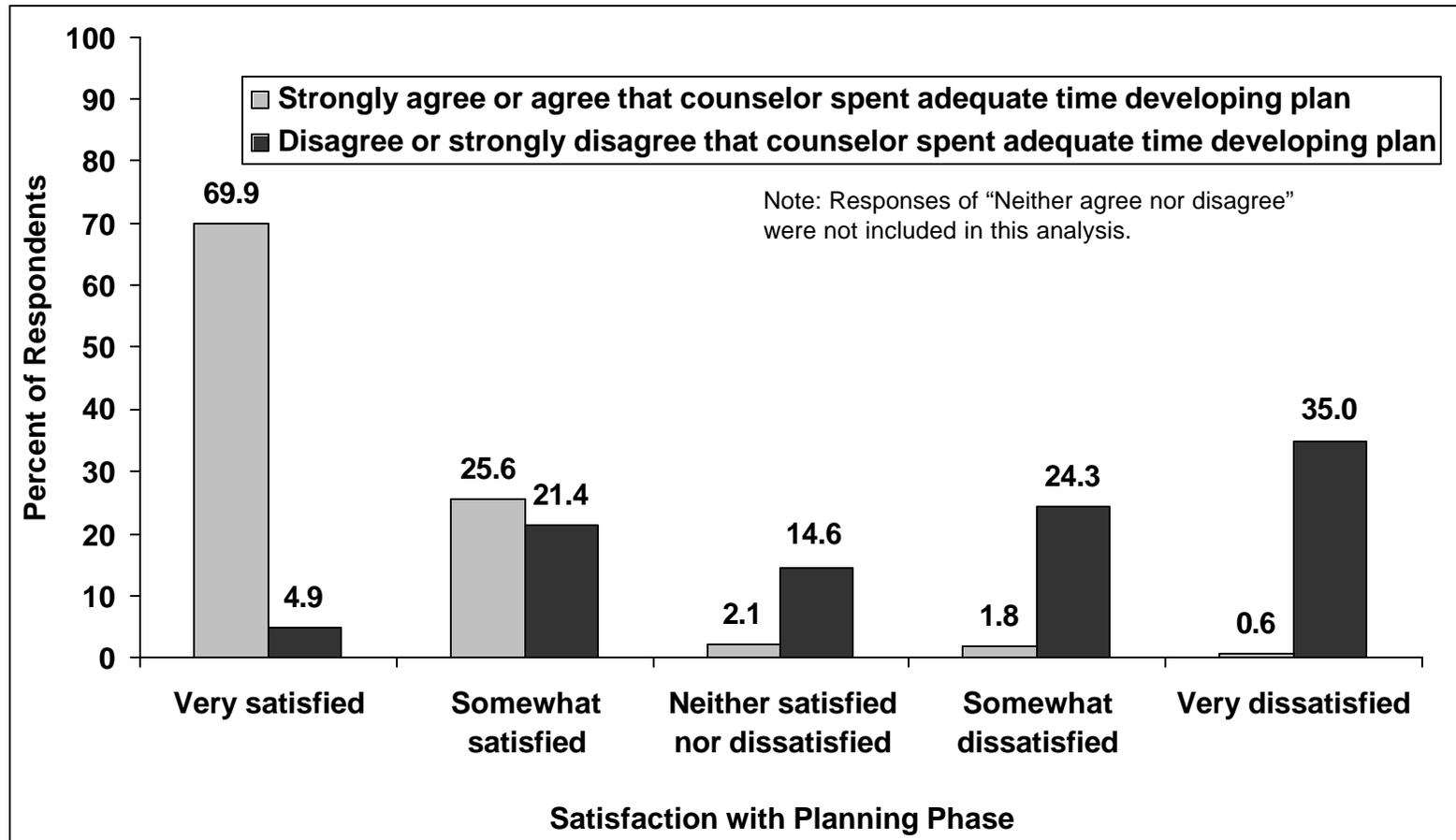
Percent correctly classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied: 92.0%

Number of cases included in this analysis: 1,413

- Considering the effects of all four predictor variables, the **plan being appropriate to achieve the respondent's vocational goals** was the strongest predictor of satisfaction with the planning phase. Veterans who thought the plan was appropriate were over 10 times more likely to be satisfied with the planning phase than veterans who did not think the plan was appropriate.
- Veterans who thought their counselor spent adequate time and resources in developing the plan were over 5 times more likely to be satisfied with the planning phase than veterans who did not think the time and resources spent were adequate.
- Respondents who felt their counselor was responsive to their primary method of contact were over 3 times more likely to be satisfied with the planning phase than those who said the counselor was not responsive.
- Finally, those who thought the time scheduled to develop the plan was convenient were 3 times more likely to be satisfied with the phase than veterans who did not find the time convenient.

Influences on Satisfaction with Planning Phase

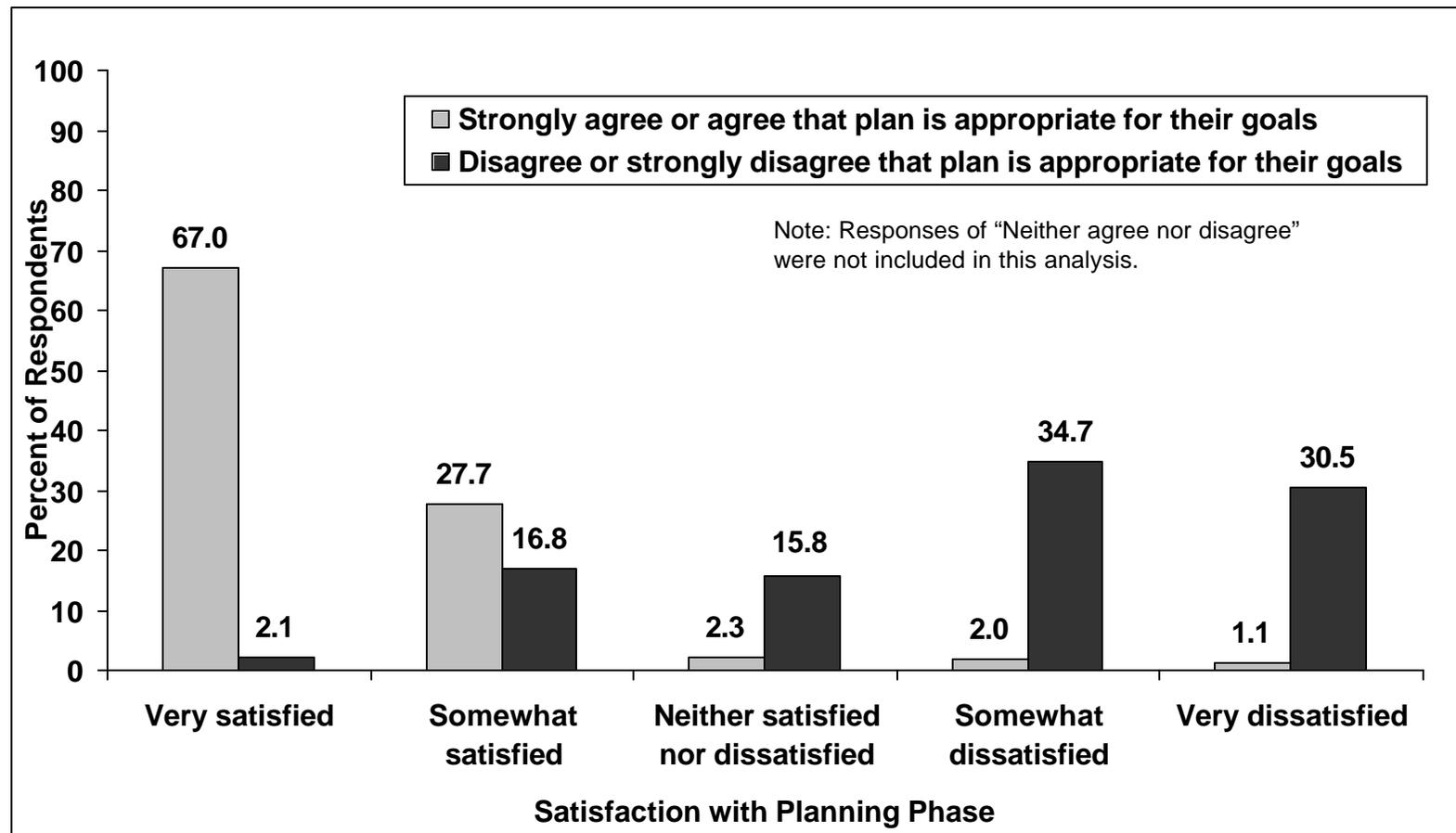
Overall Satisfaction with Planning Phase by Whether Respondents Agree that Counselors Spent Adequate Time and Resources in Developing the Plan



A strong influence on overall satisfaction with the planning phase is the counselor's effort in developing the plan: 69.9 percent of respondents who feel the counselor spent adequate time and resources developing their plan were very satisfied compared to only 4.9 percent of those who did not feel adequate time was spent.

Influences on Satisfaction with Planning Phase

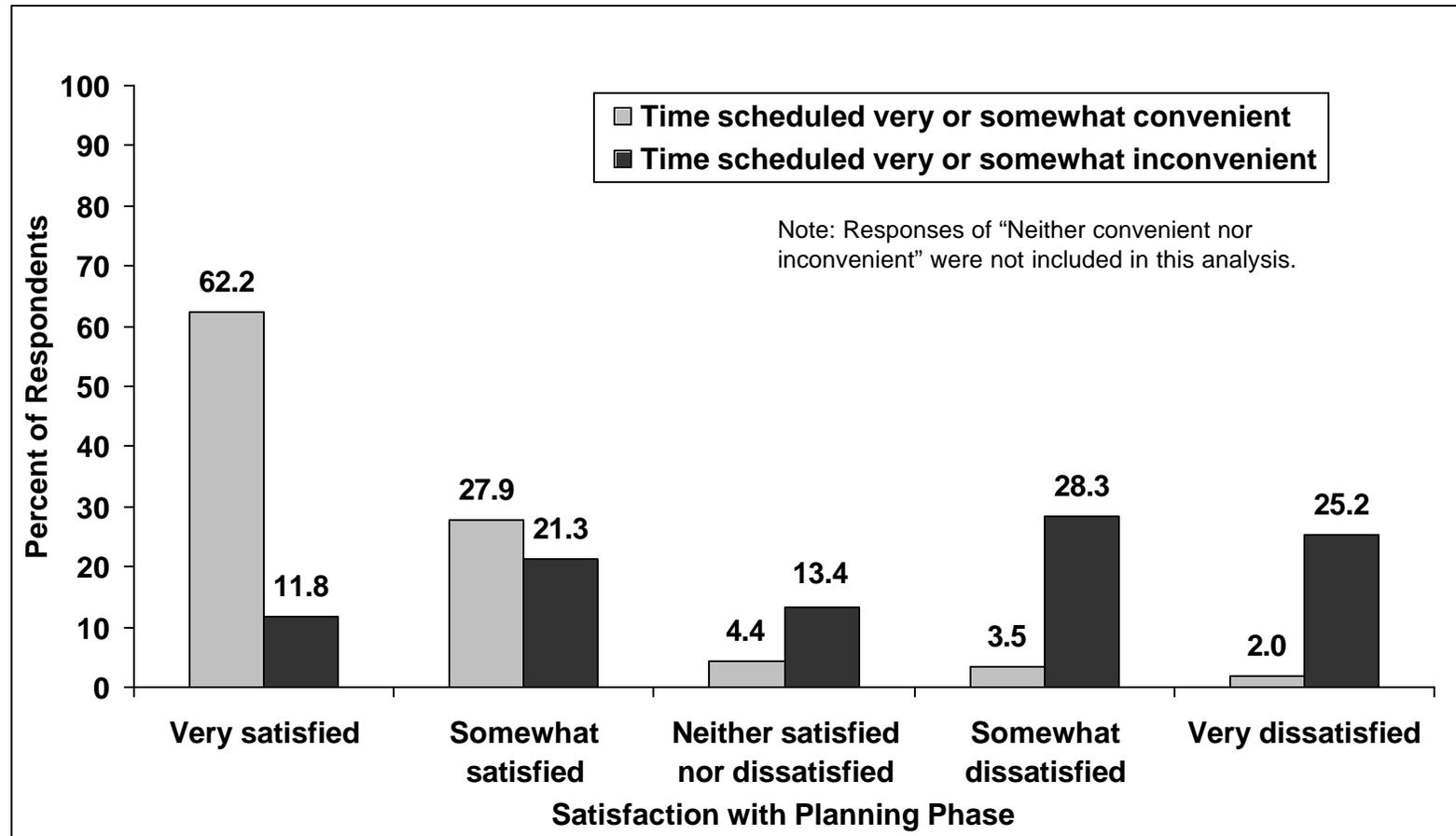
Overall Satisfaction with Planning Phase by Whether Respondents Agree that Plan is Appropriate for Achieving Their Vocational Goals



Only 2.1 percent of respondents who did not feel that their plan was appropriate for achieving their vocational goals were very satisfied with the planning phase, but 67 percent of those who did think the plan was appropriate reported being very satisfied with the planning phase.

Influences on Satisfaction with Planning Phase

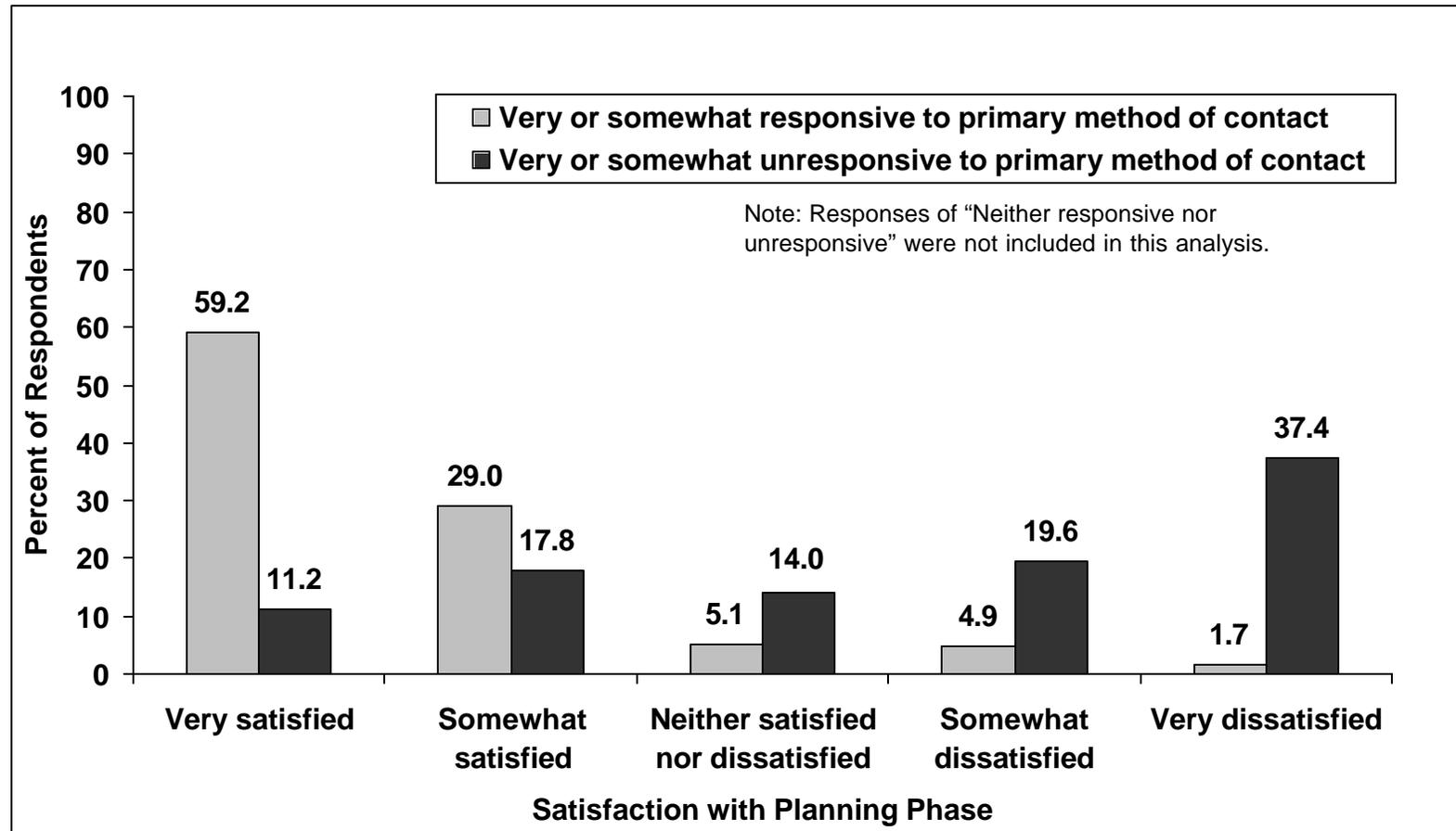
Overall Satisfaction with Planning Phase by Whether Time Scheduled for Developing the Plan was Convenient



The time scheduled for developing the plan also has a strong relationship with a respondent's overall satisfaction with the planning phase. Nine out of ten respondents (90.1 percent) who thought the time was convenient were also very or somewhat satisfied with the planning phase, compared with only a third (33.1 percent) of those respondents who thought the time was inconvenient.

Influences on Satisfaction with Planning Phase

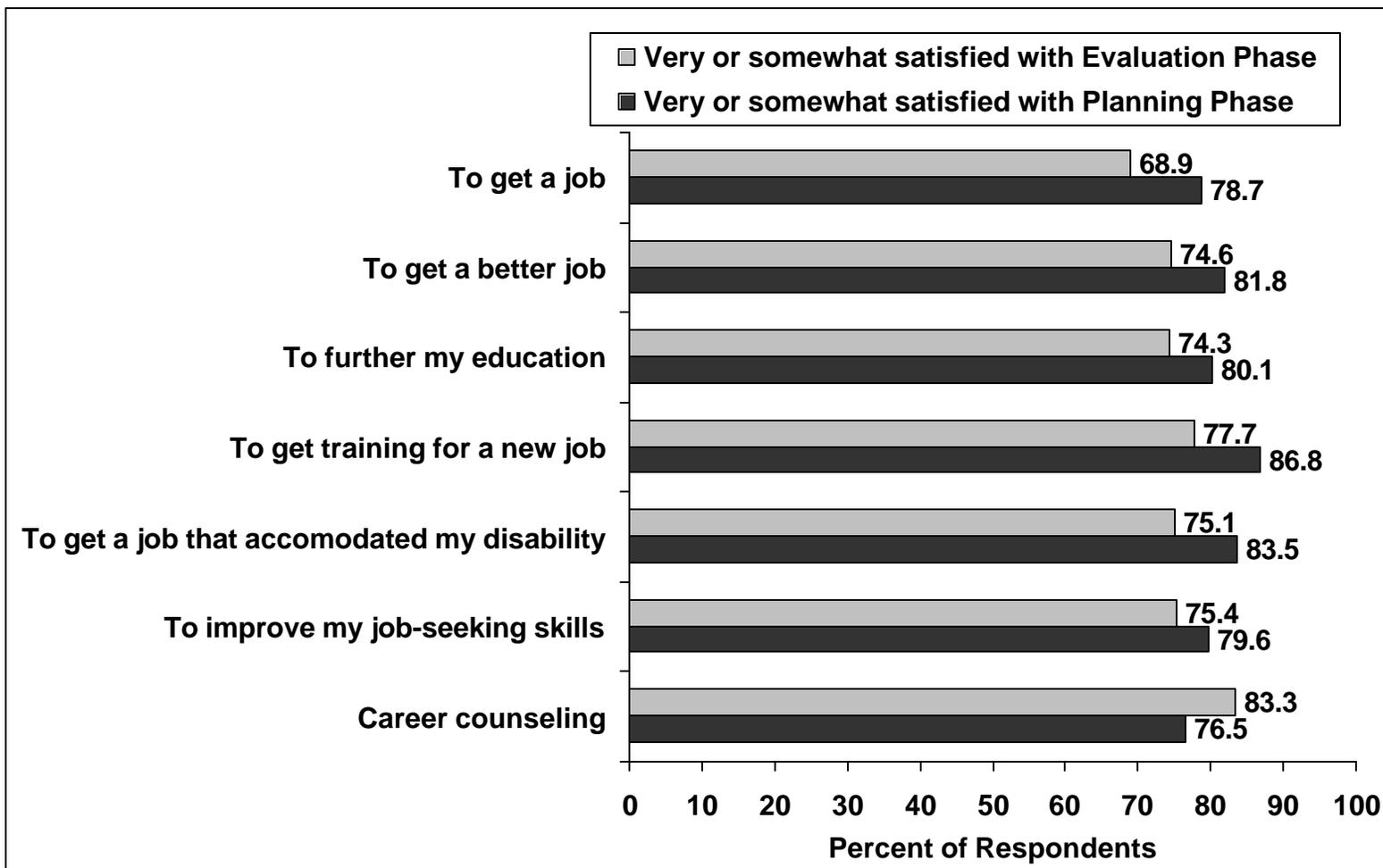
Overall Satisfaction with Planning Phase by Whether Counselor was Responsive to Respondent's Primary Method of Contact



The responsiveness of the counselor is also important during the planning phase: 59.2 percent of those who thought their counselor was very or somewhat responsive to their primary method of contact were very satisfied with the plan development vs. only 11.2 percent of those who thought their counselor was unresponsive. Likewise, over one-third (37.4 percent) of those who thought the counselor was unresponsive were very dissatisfied with the planning phase.

Influences on Satisfaction with Evaluation and Planning Phases

Overall Satisfaction with Evaluation and Planning Phases by Reason Respondent Applied for VR&E Program

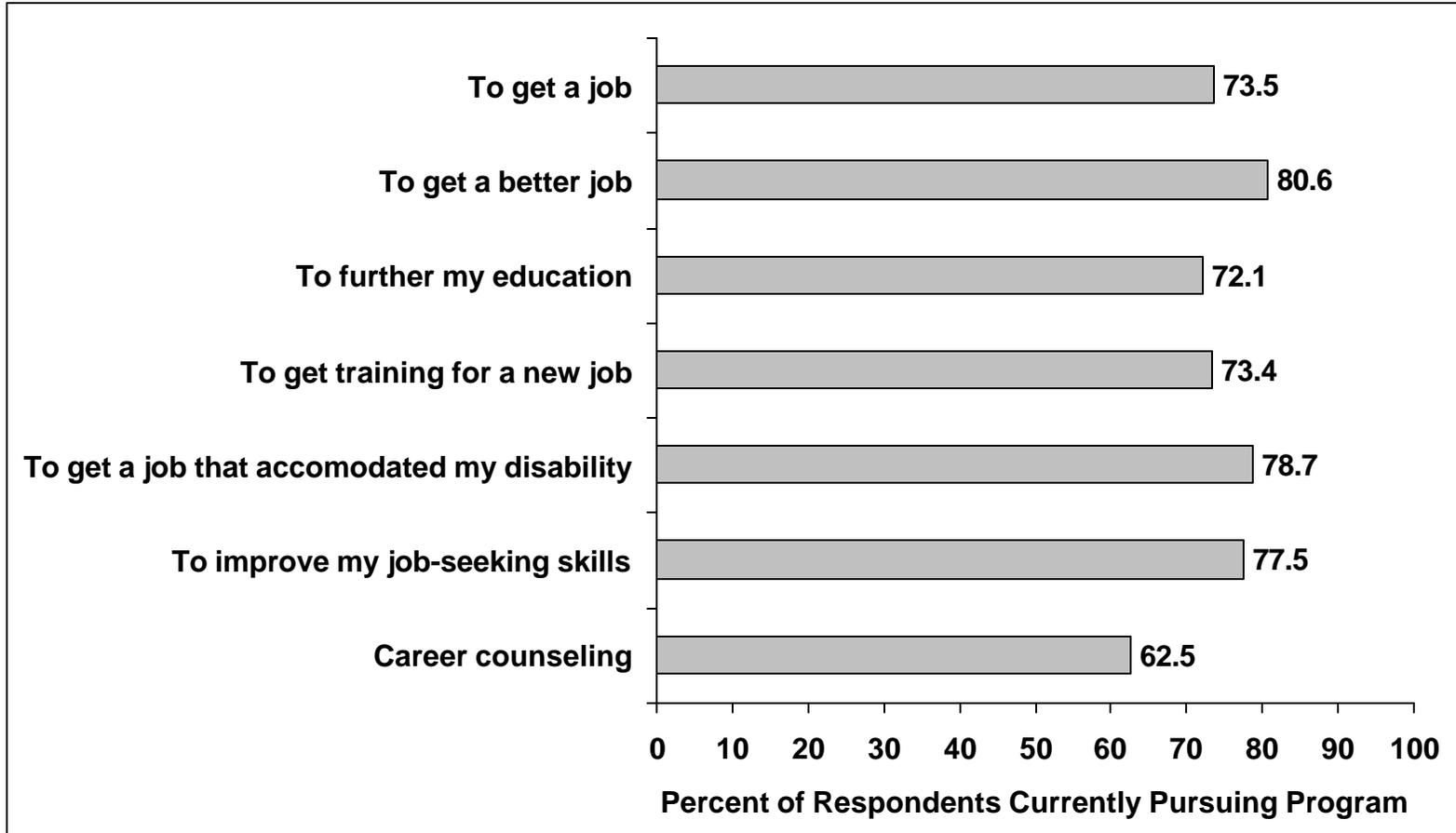


Those most satisfied with the evaluation phase were respondents who applied to the VR&E program to obtain career counseling (83.3 percent). Those who applied to get training for a new job were most satisfied with the planning phase (86.8 percent).

NOTE: Respondents were asked to mark only one of these reasons.

Current Status in VR&E Program by Reason for Applying

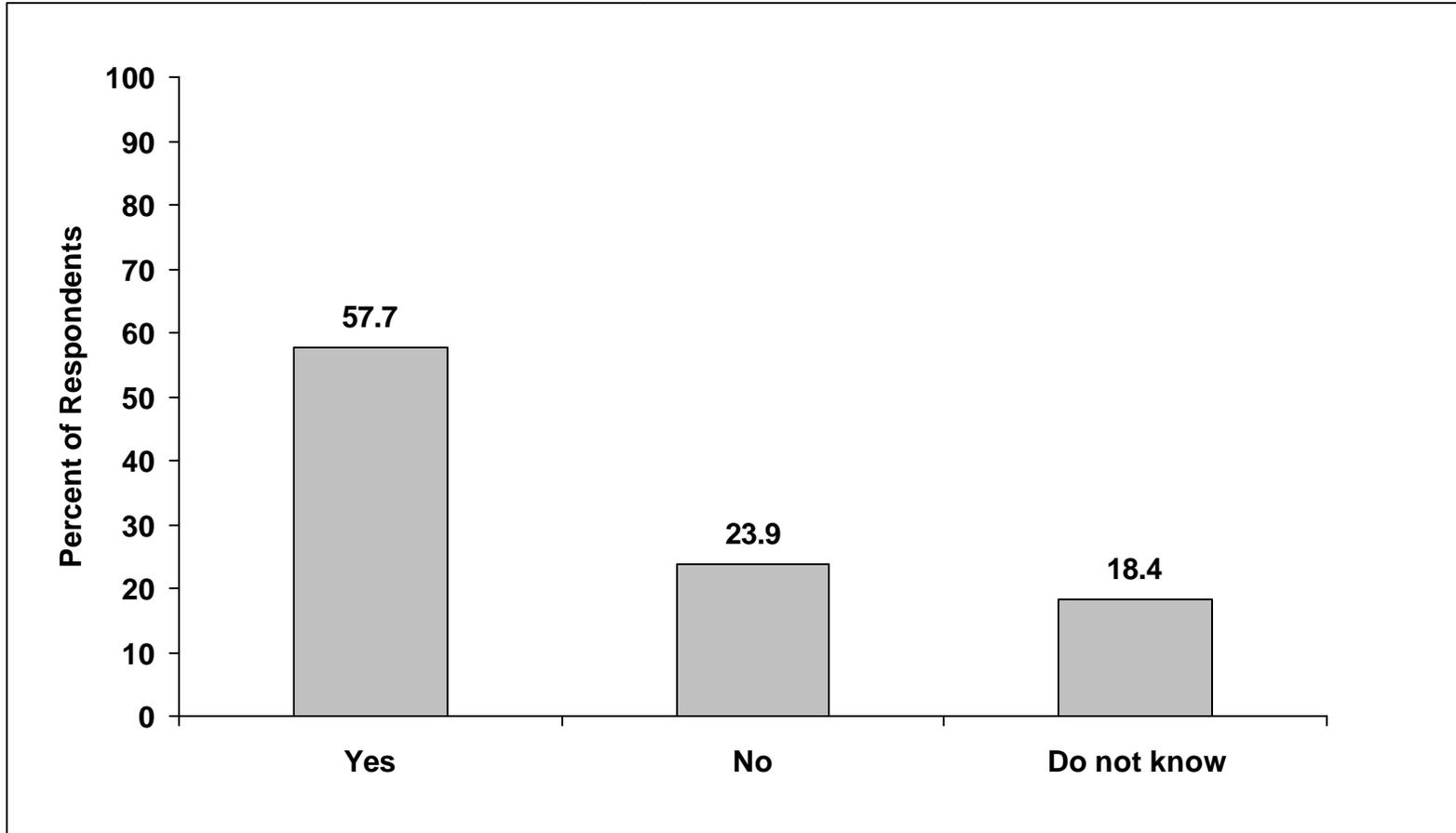
Percent of Respondents Currently Pursuing VR&E Program by Reason Respondents Applied for VR&E Program



Respondents who said they applied to the VR&E program **to get a better job** were the most likely to be currently pursuing the program (80.6 percent). Over three-fourths of those who said they applied **to get a job that accommodated their disability** (78.7 percent) and of those who applied **to improve their job-seeking skills** (77.5 percent) were currently pursuing the program.

Overall Impressions

During the Evaluation and Planning Phase, Do You Feel That There was Sufficient Focus on Your Future Employment?



Overall, 57.7 percent of respondents in the Evaluation and Planning phases felt that the focus on their future employment was sufficient.